Getting the best from Splinters

By KAREN MIDDLETON

THE theatre of convention — v its velvet curtain, stage and sea audience — is not the only plac put on a show. When the almost-anarc Canberra theatre group, Splinters, take the floor, nobody is allowed to sit s least of all the paying public.

Splinters stages its shows in out-of- theatre places and on the move. Its la offering, *The Crime of Yelling*, is no ception, with performances to be held side and around an unused gardener's tage in Melba Street, Downer, opposite Downer oval.

The Crime of Yelling was devised workshopped in February when the gr went to Fremantle, former home of America's Cup, to do some post-Cup formances. Much of the show's na stems from the atmosphere the ac found in the renovated city and from attitudes of people there.

It was staged at the Prism Gallerie the harbour city and the Splinters m bers used the old warehouse that they t to call home for their month-long stay workshop space. Legal hitches with commodation and the difficulty in fin a suitable performance area formed pa the basis for the nomadic-style show.

Group member Amanda Ruck plained that the piece relied on mo with the actors presenting a series of vignettes and the audience following the scenes.

"The audience never stands still," Ruck said. "It's environmental theatre . . . Each section is very different. I suppose what ties it together is that all of us have written something."

Splinters functions as a collective, and with equal input comes equal disagreement. The members have various ideas about what their craft is and why they perform. Actor David Branson preferred to call Splinters' style of theatre "performance art".

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"You could call it semi-review sketch because we do comic review sort of things as well," Branson said. "I call it performance art in the context that it is also environmental theatre, it is also slapstick."

Other group members, including actor Patrick Troy, were not keen to invoke the connotations of the phrase "performance art", made trendy by musician/performer Laurie Anderson and other contemporary entertainers.

"We prefer people to come without preconceptions and see what they think of our stuff, as is," Troy said. "It's not poetry but there is poetry in it. There's live music . . . It just really is a play in the old-fashioned sense, where everyone [involved] is working toward a common goal."

The Crime of Yelling is the third show



Amanda Ruck, from Canberra theatre group Splinters, in a scene from *The*

group Splinters, in a scene from *The Crime Of Yelling*

for Splinters, with its previous offerings, *This Fantastic Lake* and *The Massive Love of Risk*, drawing good audiences of the curious among both fringe and mainstream theatregoers.

Splinters will stage *The Crime Of Yelling* at the gardener's cottage, Melba Street, Downer, tonight, tomorrow and Saturday at 8pm. There will also be a 10.30pm show on Saturday, followed by a party featuring Canberra band Black Dogs. On Sunday, Splinters is holding a "Big Backyard" open afternoon at the house, with a performance at 1.30pm.