Splinters and monkeys score grants

A CAPITAL LIFE

By Robert Macklin

CANBERRA performing arts groups — and Splinters in particular — have scored well from the Australia Council grants just announced.

Splinters, the innovative group specialising in fire, fireworks and spectacular mega-puppetry, will receive $50,000 for a multi-media performance of *The Oracle*, $5000 for masterclasses in innovative theatre techniques from Janine Peacock and $2000 to "collate" their creations since 1985.

Other grants include $16,100 to the Canberra Youth Theatre for a project, *Piper at the Gates of Hell*; $8100 to Elizabeth Paterson for an "outdoor performance of images and objects based around performing monkeys"; $5400 to Timothy Kain to allow the commissioning of guitar music; and $4531 to the Musicological Society for a concert of traditional Chinese music.

While Liz Paterson's "performing monkeys" project might sound a little odd, those who know her work will be delighted that she has received council support. She is one of those rare talents who would shine in any company.

It is also gratifying to see Splinters given recognition; the funding should allow the group to spend more time in the creative — as opposed to the performing — process.

● Good to see that while all the flak was flying over Wayne Berry's forced resignation, ACT Arts Minister Bill Wood kept his head down and retained the portfolio.

Mr Wood, like his Liberal counterpart, Gary Humphries, has a genuine interest in the arts and even in off-duty hours may be found attending performances and exhibitions for the sheer pleasure of it.

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● *In the Federal arena Michael Lee is yet to make an impact. His one recent foray into the portfolio — on the future of the National Museum of Australia — is discussed in some detail in Sunday's edition.*

● *Fast Forward* favourite, Gina Riley stars in the first of the six State Theatre productions to reach Canberra. *Falsettos*, a modern musical, opens next week at the Canberra theatre.

● Interesting luncheon for "media identities" at the Hyatt where we sampled their Italian spread which is the flavour of the month. I was sat beside the Channel 10 newsreader Greg Robson and am happy to report he's just as pleasant off the box as on.

Actually, the Promenade Cafe in the Hyatt is featuring an excellent exhibition and sale of Gay Emmerson's traditional landscapes of the Canberra region. Well worth a visit for the show alone.

● *Thrilling invitation this week from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York to attend Monday's opening of Nolan's* Ned Kelly *paintings, the first major retrospective for an Australian artist in the Big Apple.*

Naturally, I declined. Who could leave Canberra now that Autumn's here.





Susan Innis: three roles in production of *Chicago*.

● Domenic Mico's Tuggeranong Community Arts group is presenting a very short season of the lively musical, *Chicago*, from next Thursday with the lovely Susan Innis as director, choreographer and playing the important role of Velma Kelly.

It sounds great fun and I believe that another local group will be producing the same show later in the year. It might be interesting to compare.

Curiously, another production — Tennesee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* — is also doubling up. Geoff Borny's memorable work has no sooner closed at the ANU Arts Centre when Fenner Hall, an ANU college, opened its offering — starring Judy Burnett in her first dramatic role — at the Ralph Wilson Theatre, Gorman House. It's the last night tonight.

● **Very appropriate that Heide Smith, our premier photographer, should have the honour of the first art exhibition at the new Legislative Assembly. However, *The Canberra Times's* Richard Briggs is a pretty dab hand himself as the accompanying "double-vision" of Sir Mark Oliphant attests.**

● *Our more mature readers will be pleased to hear that a feature film is to be made on the life of Sir Hubert Opperman, best known in Canberra as a well-respected Minister for Immigration in the 1960s but immortalised by his own cycling feats 40 years previously.*

"Oppy" won just about everything in his sport and the $10 million film — a romantic action adventure — will be directed by Nadia Tass whose credits include Malcolm and The Big Steal.

● Still on film, Steele Rudd buffs (in which your columnist is numbered) will be delighted with the news that the Film Finance Corporation is backing a remake of the classic *On Our Selection*. The production is in the sensitive hands of Tony Buckley and stars Leo McKern as Dad and ... wait for it ... Joan Sutherland as Mum.

Can't come soon enough.

● **Congratulations to two Canber-**



Richard Briggs's double-vision of Sir Mark Oliphant at the Heide Smith exhibition in the new ACT Assembly building.

rans on the road to fame and fortune in the arts — George Ellis of the School of Music has just won a $1500 conductor's scholarship; 18-year-old Annette Dubow from Lake Tuggeranong College is off to Stratford-Upon-Avon as part of her Singapore Airlines Young Shakespearean Artist of the Year award.

● *For those travelling in the region this weekend, I'm told an excellent luncheon and art exhibition awaits on Sunday at the School House Gallery at Lake Bathurst, just beyond Tarago on the Queanbeyan-Goulburn Road. The featured artist is Alex Hall. And if you reach Batemans Bay, spare an evening for* An Unexpected Guest *by the Bay Theatre Players, one of those beaut murder mysteries hardly anyone produces these days.*

● Once more it's time to dig out those old musical instruments, LPs, CDs and even sheet music for sale and exchange at Canberra Grammar's third Music Mart scheduled for May 1. All proceeds to the John Barrett Music Scholarship Fund.

● **Heritage Week (April 16-25) has not received quite the prominence it's due this year, but among the many interesting events this weekend are guided walks around Yarralumla Nursery, the Parliamentary Triangle, the early Westlake settlement and others. A call to the Canberra and District Historical Society will produce the details.**

● *Canberra's long-time private arts benefactor, CAPO, launched its 1994 theme at the Commonwealth Club this week for the big fund-*

Club this week for the big fund-raising ball and auction later in the year. Somewhat surprisingly, it chose the grand old Kenneth More movie, The Titanic.

The ball itself should be a very grand occasion in Old Parliament House but I was reminded of that lovely quote from Lord Grade who made the financially disastrous movie, The Raising of the Titanic. *"It would have been cheaper to lower the Atlantic."*

Dutch fortepianist gives sparkling performance



MUSIC

By W. L. HOFFMANN

THE VISITING Dutch fortepianist, Bart van Oort, provided an extremely fine recital at the Canberra School of Music on Wednesday night, with playing of sparkling technical accomplishment matched to interpretative realisations of a notable quality.

It was simply the finest fortepiano playing that we have heard in Canberra in many years.

Too often the use of period instruments in works of the late 18th and early 19th centuries is regarded as the most important aspect of, indeed in some cases the sole justification for, the performance of music of this period. But this was not the case at this recital.

There were significant expressive and interpretative elements in Bart van Oort's playing, providing wholly satisfying musical rewards for the listener while still giving the works presented their proper aural and historic perspective.

Two Haydn sonatas made up the bulk of the first half of the program. Haydn's piano music does not appear in recital programs as often as its quality warrants; but there are special musical demands, both interpretative and technical, to a satisfactory realisation of these works which deter many performers.

So the inclusion of two of these fine sonatas was to be welcomed, and doubly so in the beautifully proportioned and idiomatic performances they received on this occasion.

Between them there was a nice stylistic contrast with the inclusion of the *Wurttemberg Sonata in A minor*, by C. P. E. Bach, a work of a highly individualistic character and expressive content, and it too received an enlivening performance, and one that delightfully caught the music's sudden changes of mood.

The second half opened with a crisply delineated and flowing performance of Mozart's *Sonata in C major, K 330*, which conveyed both the charm and the underlying strength of the work, and provided in the slow movement playing of notable expressive variation and beauty.

To conclude, there were two Beethoven works, first the *Rondo in G, Op 51*.

ven works, first the *Rondo in G, Op 51, No 2*, and then the *Sonata in E major, Op 14, No 1*.

The latter was played with a strength and range of tonal quality allied to a firm and persuasive interpretative approach which not only made for a rewarding performance but was a convincing demonstration that the earlier Beethoven piano works can be satisfactorily realised on the fortepiano.