A show with a difference, in a bus depot

By ANN NUGENT

CANBERRA'S local theatre group Splinters always makes theatre with a difference. Imagine having your feet washed and being offered jasmine tea. Imagine witnessing fireworks and a fantastic machine "war". It's all part of Splinters' latest mega-production, *Flowers of Gold*, opening on Wednesday, December 16, at the cavernous Kingston bus depot. You won't miss the building: "Splinters" is spelt out in huge purple letters on the Wentworth Avenue side of the depot.

More than 80 people from Splinters and other theatre groups in Canberra have combined to produce "a procession of experiences for the audience". I am told that *Flowers of Gold* is a more light-hearted production than Splinters' usual fare. The show will play nightly at 8.30 until December 19.

THEATRE

Hot Property, a play combining dramatic action and satirical songs, finishes on Saturday, December 19, at the Ralph Wilson Theatre, Gorman House Arts Centre. Written and directed by Tessa Bremner, with music composed by Jeff Evans and Chrissie Shaw, it tells the story of a woman parliamentarian who attempts to balance conscience and ambition. *Hot Property* plays Tuesday to Saturday at 8pm. Tickets $17.50 for show only; $39.50 for show and dinner at Clarry's Cafe. Bookings: 249 7377.

Dimboola Christmas has been specially devised by the Gallery Players for the entertainment of residents of nursing homes. Directed by Jane Bradhurst, it has already been performed at Goodwin Village Retirement Home, and will play at the Canberra Nursing Home this week. *Dimboola* is the archetypal Australian wedding. *Dimboola Christmas* is being given one public performance, on Thursday, December 17, at 7.30pm at the Hughes Community Hall. At $4 a ticket, *Dimboola Christmas* should chase away some of the recession blues.

The rock musical *Hair* continues at the Canberra Theatre until December 19. Bookings: 257 1077.

My sights are turning towards Sydney for the Sydney Festival and Carnivale, which once again will range across all art forms including art, film and video, and a writers' week. Carnivale events take place across the city and suburbs.

Theatre productions in this festival mainly use small casts. The largest imported show is Theatre de Complicite's production of *The Street of the Crocodiles*, based on stories by Polish writer and artist Bruno Schulz. It has a cast of 10 actors. *The Street of Crocodiles* comes to Australia from London's Royal National Theatre. It will play at York Theatre, Seymour Centre, from January 7 to February 6. Bookings: 02-266 4930 or 02-364 9400.

Barbara Ewing plays Alexandra Kollontai in a one-woman show of the same name. Kollontai was a member of Lenin's cabinet and of the Bolshevik Central Committee that voted for the armed uprising in 1917, yet her name has been expunged from official history. Ewing's presentation is based on Kollontai's personal diaries. The show will open at The Playhouse, Sydney Opera House, on December 31, and will play till January 9. Bookings: 02-250 7777.

Ken Campbell, a comic described by critic Michael Billington as "the British Theatre's antic visionary", is probably best known to TV viewers as Alf Garnett's neighbour. Campbell will appear in *Furtive Nudist* at The Playhouse, Sydney Opera House, from January 12 to 30. Bookings: 02-250 7777, or Festival Ticketek 02-266 4930.

NIDA will present the world premiere of *My bruvar is so god*, written and directed by Carlton Lamb, at the NIDA Studio, 215 Anzac Parade, Kensington, from January 11 to 30. Bookings: 02-266 4930.

If you are looking for shows

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If you are looking for shows for children, the Flying Fruit Fly Circus will perform under the big top, Moore Park, at various times from January 12 to 25. Bookings: 02-266 4930.

The Sydney Theatre Company will present Theatre of Image's production of *The Happy Prince*, adapted from Oscar Wilde, at STC's Wharf Theatre from December 31 to January 30. Bookings: 02-250 1777 or 02-266 4800. The Sydney Theatre Company's production of *Death and the Maiden* continues at the Wharf Theatre until February 6.

At the Drama Theatre of the Sydney Opera House from January 2 to February 27, STC will stage *Dancing at Lughnasa*, by Brian Friel and directed by Patrick Mason.

In Canberra, Christmas party entertainments continue at Tarzan's Theatre Restaurant and the School of Arts Cafe, Queanbeyan. *The Good Ship Lollipop* entertains at Tarzan's. Reservations for dinner and show: 254 6123.

At the School of Arts, the traditional Bull 'n' Bush parties are under way, Wednesdays to Saturdays. Dinner and show: $39.50. Bookings: 297 6857.