Group had to turn people away



By ANN NUGENT

CANBERRA was represented on several fronts at the Adelaide Festival.

Canberra's performance group Splinters presented *Cathedrals of Flesh* to capacity audiences at the old Adelaide Jail. Indeed Splinters were turning people away at the door. The Meryl Tankard Company performed *Chants de Mariage I and II* at the Odeon Theatre in Norwood. And on my last day in Adelaide I saw a spirited performance by Narrabundah College drama students in the courtyard of the splendidly remodelled multi-arts centre at the old Lions Flour Factory, along the river from the Festival Centre. Adelaide boasts an extraordinary number of performance spaces, and the Festival makes use of all of them.

So it was with some sympathy that on my return from Adelaide, I read Joe Woodward's pleas for a performance space. For the past two years young performers from Stage Coach have been staging *Canberra Kids/Real Kids* for young tourist audiences. The show, sponsored by the Tourism Commission, was performed in the theatrette of the Jolimont Centre. This venue is no longer available and Stage Coach is looking for a replacement venue but with no luck.

Woodward says all the show requires is a space, a carpeted floor would do, capable of seating 120 young people and a circular performance area of six metres in diameter. Performances take place Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday nights. Joe Woodward can be contacted on phone 290 1675 or fax 290 2198.

Major Barbara got off to a booming start with a Salvation Army band playing many stirring old favourite hymns at the Playhouse vestibule on opening night. Shaw's play, performed by a fully professional cast directed by Tessa Bremner, runs for a good three hours. This polished production of *Major Barbara* finishes next Saturday, April 4, at the Playhouse. Bookings can be made by phoning 257 1077.

At the ANU Arts Centre, Tony Turner directs a production of Peter Shaffer's dark play *Equus*, which tells the story of a disturbed young man who adores horses and ultimately mutilates them. *Equus* plays at the ANU Arts Centre Wednesday to Saturday at 8pm until April 11.

The very popular puppet and drama production, *Charlotte's Web*, plays at the Canberra Theatre until Saturday, April 4. Public performances are Thursday, April 2, at 6pm, Friday, April 3, at 7.30pm, and Saturday, April 4, at 11am and 2pm. Bookings can be made by phoning 257 1077.

Several new shows open on Thursday, April 2. Ross McGregor returns to Canberra to direct *Under Milk Wood* by Dylan Thomas as part of Rep's 60th anniversary program. Ross McGregor was artistic director of Canberra Repertory from 1973 to 1978, directing 25 plays during that period. Since then he has worked extensively in theatre and film in Sydney. Currently Ross McGregor is director of the Actors' Centre.

Under Milk Wood, conceived as a play for voices, re-creates the community of the small Welsh town of Llareggby, based on a town Laugharne in which poet Dylan Thomas had lived. Music for the show has been composed by Jim Cotter. *Under Milk Wood* promises a feast of language, music and, under McGregor's direction, dramatic pleasure. *Under Milk Wood* plays at Theatre 3, Ellery Circuit, Wednesdays to Saturdays, April 3 to April 25, at 8pm. There is no performance on Good Friday. A concession night is offered Wednesday, April 8, for students, pensioners and the unemployed with tickets specially priced at $11. Bookings can be made by phoning 257 1950.

Opening at Belconnen Community Theatre, also on April 2, is the Phoenix Players' production of *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole aged thirteen and three-quarters*. It plays April 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11 at 8pm and April 5 at 2pm.

The Latin America Alive Theatre Group is presenting *Papa Querido* (Dear Father) at the Ralph Wilson Theatre, Gorman House, April 2, 3 and 4 at 8.30pm. The Latin America Alive Theatre Group is committed to bringing Latin American writing and music to Australian audiences. *Dear Father* is being performed in Spanish with English "subtitles".

Achoo! Momentum Theatre are presenting Anton Chekhov's *The Sneeze*. The season starts at Lake Tuggeranong College Theatre at 8pm, Thursday, April 2.

The Australasian Playwrights' Conference, scheduled to take place at the Australian National University April 19 to May 2 offers a lot more than playreadings

May 2 offers a lot more than playreadings and workshop productions. Although ANPC's productions, forums, panels and readings are open to participants on a casual, daily basis, paid-up members of the ANPC receive considerable reductions in fees for all activities.

A nine-day dramatic writing workshop is being conducted by professional playwright Timothy Daly as part of this year's conference. The workshop runs for three hours daily and is provided free to participants in the conference, however numbers are strictly limited. Members of the ANCP are also able to make use of the ANCP's play-reading advice service throughout the year. So joining the ANCP makes good sense for local Canberra writers.

For this year's conference, artistic director Kingston Anderson has assembled playwrights from Australia, Fiji, Indonesia, Singapore, Papua New Guinea and New Zealand. Inquiries about the conference and membership should be addressed to Australian National Playwrights' Centre, PO Box 1566, Rozelle, NSW, 2039. Phone (02) 555 9377, fax (02) 555 9370.

In Sydney, playwright Michael Gow runs New Stages, a space (at the Sydney Theatre Company's Wharf Studio) for playwrights to try out new work. Five young playwrights have been invited to be part of New Stages Affiliated Writer Scheme for this year.

In Canberra ACTEST, the brainchild of George Huitker, encourages the work of local playwrights. Playscripts can be sent to ACTEST, PO Box 703, Mawson, ACT, for consideration.

Pamela Rabe and John Howard star in the Sydney Theatre Company's production of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* now playing at the Drama Theatre the Sydney Opera House. Pamela Rabe is certainly worth a trip to Sydney.

The actors of Eureka! Theatre have been getting to know people with mental and physical dysfunctions in preparation for their program of lunchtime and evening plays at the rehearsal room of the Canberra Theatre, commencing April 25. Eureka! is presenting three "thought-provoking and very funny" contemporary plays about mental and physical dysfunctions, written by British playwright Peter Barnes. The season starts with *Nobody Here But Us Chickens*.

Jigsaw Theatre starts its public season of *Treehouse*, a performance with a conservation message, with two performances at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve on April 11, at 11am and 2pm. The show moves to Belconnen Community Centre with performances at 11am and 2pm, April 14 to 16, and April 21 to 23. If your children saw *Mono Log* at school, then they have seen *Treehouse*, renamed for its public season.

After its successful reception in Adelaide, Narrabundah College drama students are presenting one performance only of *Trampoline of Dreams* (a play for 5- to 10-year-olds) at the Hawk Theatre, Narrabundah College, Saturday, April 11 at 10.30am. Tickets for children and adults cost $3.

On the theatre restaurant scene, June Bronhill appears Wednesdays to Sundays at the School of Arts Cafe, Queanbeyan. Inquiries and bookings on 297 6857. *Tasdine* has a return season at Tarzan's Theatre Restaurant, Holt, until April 4. *The Brady Bunch* arrive at Tarzan's April 10. Inquiries and bookings, 254 6123.



The cast in rehearsal for Canberra Repertory's production of *Under Milk Wood*, directed by Ross McGregor