STAGE

Fiasco's of intriguing events

Alternative theatre makes a welcome return. GORDON SHELDON reports.



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THE SPLINTERS performing group, which originated in Canberra, has returned home after an absence of almost 18 months. During that time they have been performing in Adelaide and Melbourne.

Splinters' last show in Canberra was *Whirled on a Fatal Floor*, which was given at Yarralumla Brickwords early last year.

The group comprises 10 people of diverse skills. They are writers, performers, musicians, artists and puppeteers. The shows are devised and worked up by the group and are quite unlike other theatrical shows seen around these parts.

Splinters' style and intent are impossible to categorise. They follow no rules and fit into no generally accepted notion of theatre. The shows — "events" might be a better word — tumble over themselves in music, poetry, ingenuity, anarchic inspiration and sheer exuberance.

Like their other productions, *Theatre Fiasco* needs no formal theatre space. Any reasonably sized hall will do. There is no set as such: the players simply walk into whatever space there is and get on with the show. It seems sometimes that it has been put together just before it starts.

Whatever else it is, Splinters' work is not dull. It deserves to be seen, if only to demonstrate that rules are not necessary and that theatre, like life, can be a chaotic, unresolved business.

Theatre Fiasco will be performed at the Causeway Hall, Narrabundah from May 23 to 26. Pauline Cady (telephone 247 8152) can give more details of the groups plans and proposed performances.

Women on a Shoestring

WOMEN on a Shoestring will present a fresh production of *Over the Hill*, by Merrilee Moss, for a season of lunchtime and evening performances in the Rehearsal Room, Canberra Theatre Centre, opening on May 16.

After its earlier successful production in Canberra, *Over the Hill* has been rehearsed again, with some rewriting, and will be taken to La Mama Theatre, Melbourne after the return season in Canberra. It will play in Melbourne from May 30 to June 10.

Over the Hill is directed by Jenny Brigg and Lynne Ellis, and performed by Camilla Blunden and Chrissie Shaw. The play is a comedy about women in middle age, reputedly a time of crisis, when women lose their looks and men turn to younger women.

Is that what the menopausal season means for modern women? Is it the end of the road? Has time run out?

This is a time for reflection, a time to look backwards as well as to the future. It is a time, say the writers, for women in the 1990s to break new ground.

In the play Jill and Jude have reached that tempestuous point in their lives and they go over the hill to confront the excitement — and the panic — that lie ahead.

Over the Hill opens on May 16 and plays until May 19.

