



Forget fairies, take your kids to see the potkooorks



STEPHEN BEVIS

It has taken Scott Wright more than a decade to realise his dream of bringing to life the Australian myths of potkooorks, turongs and bunyips for children brought up on a diet of fairies, dragons and unicorns.

“They know more about what comes from another country than they do about this country,” said Wright, the puppeteer-director behind *The Nargun and the Stars*, which opens tonight at the Regal Theatre.

The show by Erth Visual and Physical uses puppetry, animatronics, video projections and three actors on a big inflatable set to evoke the world of Aboriginal mythical creatures recounted in the 1974 award-winning book by Patricia Wrightson.

The Nargun and the Stars tells the story of an orphaned city boy who is sent to live in the country and discovers magical creatures including the mischievous potkooorks (water creatures), turongs (tree people) and nyols (cave dwellers). But the powerful, rock-like nargun threaten havoc after being disturbed by the noise of bulldozers and tractors.

The Nargun and the Stars, here for the Perth International Arts Festival after its premiere at the Sydney Festival last month, fed a growing appetite for arts festivals to be more than a “high-art” experience and offer shows for all the family, Wright said.

“Children’s theatre can be dumbed down too much but we treat our audience as very sophisticated

because they have such fertile imaginations,” he said.

Wright said it had taken him 11 years to bring Wrightson’s book to the stage because he needed the time to raise enough money and to accumulate enough theatrical experience to pull it off.

It took Erth two years to create the show with Aboriginal director Wesley Enoch and with help from New Zealand’s Oscar-winning Weta Workshop creature factory.

“It could be a complete dog’s breakfast, but I think we have succeeded in creating a multi-layered show,” Wright said.

The Nargun and the Stars runs until March 1.



Magical myths: Tom Green, who plays Simon in *The Nargun and the Stars* production at the Regal, meets some cave-dwelling nyols.

Picture: Sharon Smith