

Australian Stage

The Nargun and the Stars | ERTH

PRINT EMAIL

Written by [Anna Locke](#)

Friday, 20 February 2009



Photos - Prudence Upton

This stage adaptation of **Patricia Wrightson's** Australian classic is a visually spectacular production showcasing remarkable puppetry and animation.

Commissioned and presented as part of the **Perth International Arts Festival** and **Sydney Festival**, *The Nargun and the Stars* is co produced by **Erth Visual and Physical** and **Barking Gecko** theatre companies. Adapted by **Verity Laughton** and directed by **Scott Wright** and **Wesley Enoch** it is a magical, dreamlike interpretation of a poignant tale.

The Nargun and the Stars tells the story of *Simon*, a recently orphaned boy who goes to live at his cousins' remote farm. He meets the creatures of the land; the water based trickster *Potkoorok*, the shadowy *Turongs*, the cave dwelling *Nyols*, and the *Nargun* – a huge, living rock from the beginning of time. The *Nargun* has been expelled from the south by humans, and is re-awoken from sleep by the clearing of bush by machines.

Although classed as a "family" show, it is moderately scary and I heard a number of younger children crying after an impressively scary scene. As child friendly as the production tried to be, there were moments when even I was startled, and I wouldn't recommend it if your child is prone to nightmares about monsters! That said, the tale is simple, and the visual effects are plentiful enough to keep any youngster enthralled for the 1 hour and 15 minute duration.

As *Simon*, **Tom Green** was impressive. He portrayed the sense of confusion and aloneness at the beginning of the piece naturally and believably, and interacted without difficulty with the numerous puppets. **Bill Young** and **Annie Byron** as the older (50+) cousins *Charlie* and *Edie* worked well together, but I felt their characters lacked depth and connection (which I concede isn't a large fault in context).

The set (**Steve Howarth**), lighting (**Bernie Tan**), audiovisual (**Samuel James**), and soundscape (**Phil Downing**) were outstanding. The technical elements complemented each other and were truly amazing in their detail and scale. The puppets, designed by **Bryony Anderson** and ranging from a bird on a stick to the oversized machines and the *Nargun* itself, were awe-inspiring. I particularly enjoyed the *old ewe* whose characterisations were a joy to watch.

The silent stars of the show were the puppeteers: **Colin Sneesby**, **Sharon Kerr**, **Jacob Boehme**, **Jo Clancy** and **Josh Bond**. They effortlessly brought the story and the wonderful characters to life. In particular, the large, moss covered *Nargun*; a "rock" half the size of the Regal Theatre's stage, was impressive to watch. It moved fast, fluidly and was very intimidating!

What I felt the adaptation lost was the descriptive nature of **Wrightson's** work. Although it has been (numerous) years since I read the book in its entirety, I remember the lyricism of her words in describing the land. In this production much of the detail is replaced by the design elements, and whilst I thought all were superb, it still lacked the depth of **Wrightson's** prose.

As a whole however, this is still a must see for the festival, particularly if you wish to introduce your children to some outstanding theatre. *The Nargun and the Stars* is an easily accessible story with good acting, great puppetry and some stunning, visually spectacular scenes.

Perth International Arts Festival in association with Sydney Festival presents
ERTH Physical and Visual Inc

The Nargun and the Stars

Adapted by Verity Laughton from a novel by Patricia Wrightson

Co-Directors Scott Wright, Wesley Enoch

Venue: Regal Theatre

Dates/Times: Thur 19 - Sat 21 Feb @ 7pm; Tue 24 - Sat 28 Feb @ 7pm

Matinees: Sat 21 Feb, Sat 28 Feb, Sun 1 March @ 11am & 1.30pm

Tickets: A Reserve \$45/Friends \$40 B Reserve \$35/Conc \$30 C Reserve \$30 Child (under 14) \$20

Bookings: 9484 1133 perthfestival.com.au Festival Info 6488 5555