



**Festival views**  
 By SARAH McNEILL

In a festival that has so far lacked “wow” factor, **The Nargun and the Stars** produced a few gasps from its young audience for its breathtaking set design and several loud sobs at the huge and scary Nargun.

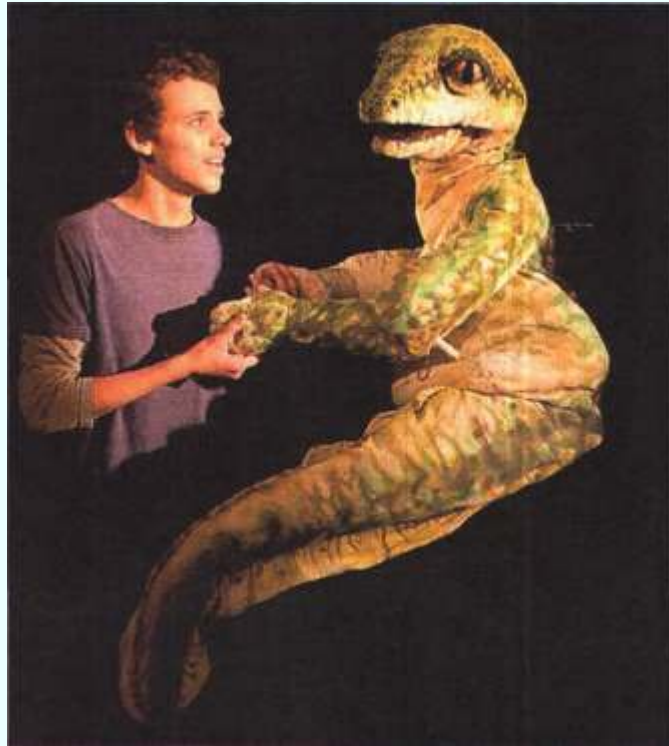
Patricia Wrightson’s 1974 Australian children’s fantasy book, set in the bush and steeped in Aboriginal myths, has been brought, very visually, to life by Erth Visual and Physical Theatre Company.

The story of the orphaned Simon (Tom Green), who moves to the country to stay with distant cousins, Edie (Annie Byron) and Charlie (Bill Young) and discovers the angry rock Nargun and several other endearing mythical creatures, is full of wonderful designs.

In front of brilliant, digitally-animated backdrops of bush, forests, swamps and machinery, puppeteers skilfully animate frogs, birds, mischievous Turongs, a friendly Potkoorok and a huge, angry and unwelcome rock creature.

Such impressively sophisticated effects are a little at odds with the narrative’s clumsy simplicity.

The obviously stated and



■ Simon (Tom Green) meets the wise and witty Potkoorok.

woodenly delivered dialogue moves as slowly as the Nargun itself towards a dark conclusion – and a tragic one if ever we were to believe that the Nargun’s anger at noisy human invasion was valid.

The chiaroscuro lighting, necessary for black-light puppetry, creates a formidably dark setting.

Edie and Charlie are warm-hearted characters against the stilted performance of the young Simon, but surprisingly none of the actors has mastered the idea of stepping directly into the line of light, often performing in shadowed darkness.

Although the narrative is not as strong and direct as one might have hoped, undoubtedly the design

values are a highlight and well worth the trip into a mythical outback.



**Water** and blood. These elements are hallmarks of director Matthew Lutton’s work, but for the first time in **Antigone**, they almost succeed in not distracting from the essential storyline

In a pure white spotlight centre on the Subiaco Arts



Centre stage, a shallow pool of water represents Oedipus' tears – and I confess I only know this because Matthew explained it afterwards.

Symbolism piles up in an operatic atmosphere: the mournfully silent Eurydice (Nicola Bartlett) drops the bloodied clothes of the dead or dying in an old washing machine, dead Polynikes walks the battlefield, his soul unable to rest; sand, water, blood, petals and lights fall from the sky and the doomed descendants of Oedipus' tortured relationship with his mother splash in and out of his tears.

As the singing Chorus, Rachael Dease sings out the pain in her deep rich voice, not matched by Kingsley Reeves' monotonously spoken Chorus.

The newly appointed king, Kreon (Colin Moody), makes his first law, instantly broken by Antigone (Kate Mulvaney).

She anoints her traitorous dead brother, against Kreon's demand that his body be left for the dogs and birds and she is sentenced to death.

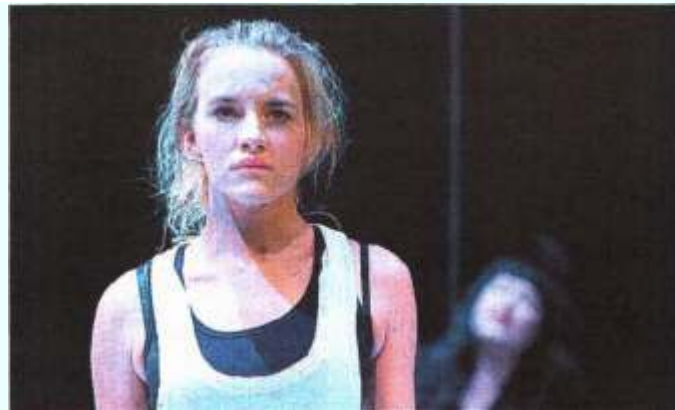
Kreon fights to preserve his law and his dignity as the city tentatively stages a revolt.

Kate Mulvaney and Nicola Bartlett are excellent and Colin Moody is outstanding. His Kreon is no statesman; he is more like a cheap corporate dictator, seething with

barely repressed rage beneath his arrogant but reasoned arguments.

Antigone marks a new era of maturity for the long-time theatre partners, Matthew and Eamon Flack. Matthew exercises restraint in his set design and directs his excellent cast with precision.

Eamon's adaptation of Sophocles' play is sophisticated and eloquent, its contemporary political references implicit. It is a compelling production.



■ Kate Mulvaney is a deeply intelligent and passionate Antigone