

Arts & Cul

Adrenalin-filled musical adventure a winner, at a gallop

MUSIC
DEAD HORSE BAND

The Famous Spiegeltent, October 14
Jessica Nicholas Reviewer

DEAD horses feature more than once in this year's Melbourne International Arts Festival. There's Dood Paard, the experimental theatre company from Holland (Dood Paard means 'dead horse' in Dutch). And there's the Dead Horse Band, an

band about the music she has written for this remarkable eight-piece ensemble; her 'dead horses' literally leap with life.

Sunday's concert opened with a 2005 composition, *Dead Horse 1*, an abstract portrait of the Snowy High Plains. Dissonant strings, staccato piano and bracing percussion conjured up craggy and often precipitous peaks, the players either tipping or hurtling down the steep harmonic descent that

served as a recurring motif. *Dead Horse 3* — receiving its public premiere — was equally suspenseful, the strings racing and plunging in dissonant stabs that brought to mind the film scores of Bernard Herrmann.

The Gift, another new piece, was performed solo by pianist Rohan Murray, who fearlessly maintained the work's savage, bristling momentum. Neal's music is extraordinarily demanding and Murray, along with his

fellow performers, negotiated its twisting unpredictability with awe-inspiring precision.

Particulate Zoo mimicked the randomness of small particles in motion as the band members alternated delicate harmonics with dramatic sweeps and jabs. And in *Concave City*, Phil Collings' powerful drumming helped anchor the ensemble's sharp-edged, shifting riffs.

This is music that requires an extraordinary amount of focus

and concentration from performers, who were visibly breathy by the concert's end. Neal's compositions — her so-called "horses" — are wild, headstrong, and those who attempt to hop aboard a band of adrenalin-filled adventures are in for a truly worth the effort.

The Dead Horse Band performed "Mash Out" tonight at the H Town, 252 Swanston Street, c

Program notes click for some

By JO ROBERTS

IT WAS intended as a cost-cutting and environmentally friendly move, but it's one that has caught many festival-goers off guard.

For the first time this year, patrons to the Melbourne International Arts Festival are not receiving house programs — the black-and-white hand-outs that contain cast and crew infor-

