Adelaide rides new wave of arts

New Aboriginal work will be highlighted at next year's Adelaide Festival, write Bryce Hallett and Michelle Griffin.

OR Paul Grabowsky, it's not enough to import critically acclaimed international acts for his first Adelaide Festival as its artistic director. No, Grabowsky wants to use the 50-year-old festival to foster a whole new wave of Aboriginal

The 2010 program, announced yesterday at the Don Dunstan Playhouse, clearly flags Grabowsky's vision of the venerable festival's future.

'I've commissioned or supported new Aboriginal work across literally every genre in the festival," says Grabowsky. "I would hope that in future Adelaide festivals this can be seen a place where contemporary Aboriginal work can be shown as a regular part of the festival and as a concerted

One of the most intriguing works in next year's program is Ngurrumilmarrmeriyu (Wrong Skin), a collaborative work produced by Nigel Jamieson, inspired by Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet and featuring the Chooky Dancers from Elcho Island, using theatre, dance and

The visual arts biennale hosts Putsch, contemporary art by Queensland's ProppaNOW collective, featuring Vernon Ah Kee and Gordon Hookey.

Then there is Wata, a "kind of concerto" performed by contemporary music specialists the London Sinfonietta alongside the songmen of the Northern Territory's Roper River region, whose traditions inform the

"I think there's a lot to celebrate in bringing together the very, very old and the very, very new," says Grabowsky.

He hopes next year's festival will provide a compelling case for his plans to use the arts to create employment and leadership training in Aboriginal communities. "It makes a lot of sense when you consider that artistic practice is central to the Aboriginal experience," he says

He plans to present this as a formal strategy document to the Federal Government before the next budget. "If it's seen as a mainstream employment initi-



Elcho Island's Chooky Dancers are working on a new collaboration as part of the 2010 Adelaide Festival.

ative, it stands a chance of being properly funded," he says.

The program also, not unexpectedly, puts an emphasis on music, in varying classical and modern forms, but theatre, dance, the visual arts, free outdoor concerts and lighting shows are also well represented.

Among the highlights: the Wayne Shorter Quartet (Grabowsky calls them "without any sense of hyperbole, the best jazz group in the world"); Shanghai Beauty, performed by the Jin Xin contemporary dance troupe; Good Morning Mr Gershwin, a celebration of the American composer's music by France's Montalvo-Hervieu group; and an adaptation of William Faulkner's 1929 novel The Sound and the Fury by New York theatre group Elevator Repair Service

The Womadelaide festival headline is Ravi Shankar, and Adelaide Writers Week features scientist Richard Dawkins, historian and travel writer William Dalrymple and novelist Sarah

Grabowsky's large-scale centrepieces, however, aim to give the festival's 50th

The biggest diva of them all

THEY call her Claudia. Many mighty singers have tackled Gyorgy Ligeti's imposing opera Le Grand Macabre, since it was first staged in 1978, but the real star of the production that will open next year's Adelaide Fest val is a 17-metre fibreglass model of a naked woman (right).

"To give a sense of her scale, my head is as big as her eyeball," says the festival's artistic director, Paul Grabowsky.

She will rotate upon the stage of Adelaide's Festival Theatre as she did in Brussels, Rome and London - and performers will

anniversary celebrations a due sense of occasion: Mahler's Symphony No. 8, also known as Symphony of a Thousand, will unite the Adelaide Symphony and Tasmanian Symphony orchestras under the baton of Arvo Volmer; and the Australian premiere of Ligeti's absurdist opera Le Grand Macabre, directed by Alex Olle



make their entrance via her mouth, her breasts and her, ahem, buttocks

Claudia is the brainchild of the Catalan theatrical group La Fura

"We came up with the body as a

(La Fura dels Baus) and Valentina Carrasco, promises patrons a bang for their buck (see breakout box).

When it comes to the marketing and promotion of festivals, the term "pre-eminent" is regularly coined to trumpet Adelaide, despite the fierce rivalry of interstate competitors in recent

universe to serve for the stage," Alex Olle, of La Fura dels Baus, told Reuters last year.

'We couldn't decide at first if it should be male or female but we chose a woman because there was more space."

times. But the City of Churches has cultivated a rich cultural platform affording exclusivity and experimentation.

'The real heroes of the festival were the audiences in the '60s who embraced new and different things, and encouraged its growth," Grabowsky says. "It's the audience that has made the

festival successful and I've tried to do projects for the 50th anniversary which are about th people of Adelaide and let then bask in their own glory.'

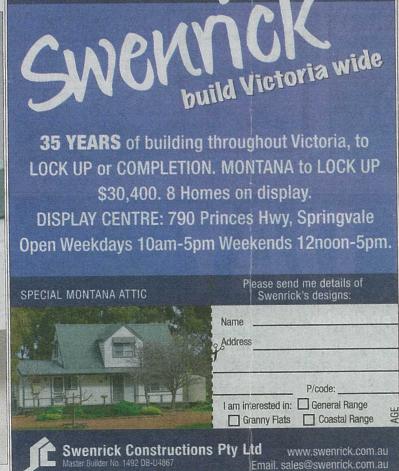
Whatever the conservative pockets of resistance of the Adelaide establishment, the fes tival, with its sprawling Fringe, remains an important rallying point. "It's good that with my experience I can shake the tree little by taking risks and by having the confidence to be bold," Grabowsky says.
The artistic director observe

that metropolitan festivals hav been shown to be well run by impresarios but that practising artists bring another, arguably deeper, dimension. "There's a difference in head space. My work as a pianist and compose and my perpetual restless interest in other artists, natura means I always think about things from a performer's perspective. I respond to colour, texture and movement, and lik many artists I have a passion for the moment.'

The 2010 Adelaide Festival runs fror February 26 to March 14. adelaidefestival.com.au

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