

NICOLAS DE JONGH

GUARDIAN

Experimental theatre live, thin though the field is, lacking cultural missionaries. Here is the Ritual Theatre. Three actors and three musicians on flute, cello and viola offer something fervently abstract with a scorn for anything linear. Abstraction is the thing for some cool, improvised and seventy minutes.

The emphasis is at first aural and oral. Three actors placed about the auditorium, each with a gourd rattle, begin to use them. Close your eyes and listen to the resonance, the crescendo of sounds and the differences between each rattle. The first variation comes with the addition of sounds from the actors, high pitched whines and groans, howls and hiccoughs. When the music arrives with a discordant cello sound, it becomes a cacophony.

The second variation is balletic. The mingling and connecting of bodies is picturesque - two heads seen together: one upside down, the other upright; Hilton McRae with hands moving like a bird of prey and tongue rolling out stretched and grotesque is imprisoned by a second figure. Both Hilton McRae and John Attenborough have voices of remarkable range.