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Lucy Guerin Inc.'s latest production, *Weather*, does not compare favourably with the power of many of her past works such as *Structure and Sadness*, *Aether*, and *Tense Dave* (which was a 2003 collaboration with Michael Kantor and Gideon Obarzanek). In a lot of ways, *Weather* is reminiscent of 2010’s *Human Interest Story*, a work that looked at the effect that a constant barrage of information has on our lives. In that work, dancers manipulated newspapers, responded to newsreaders on televisions, and performed in front of an enormous military tank, which served as a reminder of war. This new work sees Guerin exploring another topical issue: climate change. Unfortunately, there just do not seem to be enough ideas articulated in this piece for it to really work.
Weather begins well, with a solo by dancer Alisdair Macindoe. One of the features of Guerin’s work is the use of vocalisations, with dancers making strange noises to mimic or counterbalance the movement patterns. For his solo, Macindoe creates the sound of a whistling wind, moving in response to an unseen breeze. It is the most accessible reference to ‘weather’ in this entire work, and it is also one of the most beautiful and well-developed sequences.
Long walking patterns reference meteorology as well as the passage of time – but these sequences do not develop beyond their simple pacing. Partnering work, in which dancers manipulate each others' bodies (matching vocal utterances to each movement) are successful but do not seem to be specifically linked to this work and its unique exploration.

Central to Weather is the set design (by Robert Cousins). At one point hundreds of white plastic bags fall from the ceiling like snowflakes. Many hundreds more bags are left behind, packed together tightly like an upside down shag carpet. Occasionally, a few stray bags will drift to the floor, but whether this is accidental or intentional is never really made clear.

A notable (if peripheral) aspect of Weather is the casting of dancer Harriet Ritchie, who has performed with Guerin over a number of years and is, arguably, one of the strongest dancers of her generation. Ritchie is visibly pregnant in the work. At times it seems as though her role has been modified; Ritchie continues the walking sequences as the other five cast members move into more physical, contemporary dance movement. She serves as a counterbalance, or even, perhaps, as the master manipulator for the rest of the cast, setting the dancers to spin like tops, or directing hip isolations with a flick of her fingers.
Some commentators have seen the inclusion of a pregnant dancer in a work about climate change as a statement about our responsibility for future generations. You certainly could read it that way, although this is a work that deals almost entirely with abstract movement (with the key exception, of course, of Macindoe's opening solo).

This work has some powerful moments, such as when the dancers play amongst the fallen bags, sliding joyfully across the floor. However, Weather does not quite reach the heights of some of Guerin's recent works, something that is sure to disappoint many of her fans.

Tags: Aether, Alisdair Macindoe, Gideon Obarzanek, Harriet Ritchie, Human Interest Story, Lucy Guerin, Lucy Guerin Inc, Melbourne, Melbourne Festival, Merlyn Theatre, Michael Kantor, Robert Cousins, Structure and Sadness, Tense Dave, Weather

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