

BODY-SPEAK

Choreographer LUCY GUERIN sheds some light on modern communication. KELLY FARRELL finds out about her 'gr8' new dance work, *Aether*.

There's no doubt the way we communicate with each other has changed. Try and remember the last time you sat down and wrote a letter with that outdated tool the pen, for example. But what do all these changes in the mode of communication *mean* in terms of the way we interact with the world and each other?

Aether, the new offering from choreographer Lucy Guerin, tackles just these questions. Working with motion graphics designer, Michaela French, Guerin's production examines how we are constantly required to make decisions about what information we let in and which we keep out. But she also asks how individuals in such an environment make sense of each other. "I suppose I feel that, in spite of all these techniques for communication, I'm just not sure what sort of difference that's made to how we can really make ourselves understood," she muses.

Does this mean the performance is anti-technology? "No, not at all!" she exclaims "I'm not at all interested in saying that it's a modern evil that we're suffering under. I actually

think it's going to develop a new language or a new kind of way of communicating that's as sophisticated or more sophisticated than letters from the past but it just seems to have a very different quality - it's much faster, and more fragmented and much...*more*."

Guerin's CV is impressive. As well as dancing with major international companies, including Mikhail Baryshnikov's White Oak Dance Project, closer to home she's choreographed for *Chunky Move*, *Danceworks* and *The Australian Opera*. This is not her first collaboration with French and she clearly relishes the process of sharing the development of an idea. And there is a certain privileging of the collaborative relationship itself - when they work together, the idea is selected on the basis of whether it suits the collaboration, not vice versa.

That's not to say Guerin doesn't appreciate working with new faces. While she likes to have a core of people who know and understand her process, working with new people can have the benefit of assisting with clarity. "I



suppose when you work with new people, you really have to explain yourself and articulate better than you do with your old people," she says.

And Guerin clearly doesn't shy away from a challenge. For instance, the very title of this production, *Aether*, doesn't

suggest itself to the physicality of dance. Does this make representing the subject a tricky undertaking? "It is difficult," Guerin admits, "but I think I generally try to choose things that don't obviously translate into movement because otherwise they can often be clichéd or a bit too easy so you end up with something predictable, in my opinion."

Part of the difficulty with *Aether*, Guerin says, was in finding a vocabulary able to adequately represent the fragmented and chaotic nature of the onslaught of data and communication we receive. She is careful to point out that this is not a production that *describes* communication. She isn't interested in literal representation but rather "the kind of textual physical palette I might use. It's almost like a rhythmic thing. I think modern technology or modern communication does have a particular rhythm."

Lucy Guerin's Aether is on at the North Melbourne Town Hall until 27th March, Tuesday to Thursday at 7pm and Friday at 9pm. Tickets \$22/\$15. For bookings, phone 9685 5111.