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Lucy Guerin piece puts communication on trial

By [Mark Kanny](#)

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We've come a long way from old-fashioned letters and face-to-face conversations. Yet choreographer Lucy Guerin wonders whether text messaging and e-mails and all the other choices for getting in touch really help us to communicate better in the ways that matter most.

Saturday night, Pittsburgh Dance Council presents Guerin's "Aether," a full-length piece inspired by her reaction to the profusion of communications technologies. Her company, Lucy Guerin Inc., appears as part of [Pittsburgh Cultural Trust's](#) Australia Festival.

Guerin uses all the devices herself, and was interviewed in Singapore, where her company was performing on an Asian tour that also included South Korea and Shanghai, China.

"Does this technology make it any easier for any of us, or is it just an interesting something everybody experiences?" she says. "The facility and ease of communication help us in one sense, but there's this other level. The drive is really strong in us to be understood by those we love and others around us. That's still quite difficult."

Guerin was 7 when she began dancing seriously, then took some time off in high school and, instead of going to college, resumed dance classes, becoming increasingly engrossed in the art form.

After dance college in her hometown of Adelaide, Australia, she moved to New York City in 1989, where she took classes at Merce Cunningham Studios, danced professionally with several companies and began choreographing.

"I guess I've made 20 to 25 works, nothing compared to Merce Cunningham," she says. "I loved performing when I was a dancer, but as I started to choreograph, I found it more difficult to keep perspective. I found it very difficult to fully enter into the performance. There's a sense of self needed to perform, but I needed to look at the whole thing, analyzing it. It's harder with dance than music, since you can't really see the whole piece as a dancer (because) you're mostly looking out at the black auditorium."

Guerin moved back to Australia in 1996, and says incorporating her own dance company in 2002 in Melbourne "changed things radically. It gave us an infrastructure and a board who are very supportive."

Working independently, the free-lancer lifestyle, had meant no work between specific projects and no ongoing funding.

"Aether" is a work in two contrasting parts without intermission. She says the opening is the more abstract and that "the dancers do not really represent characters. They create the texture dynamics of communications itself. There are layers of sound and movement, including motion graphics and projected images. (This part) creates an immersion effect of a lot of information and detail."

The second half is pared back, including hardly any music, to concentrate on duets. "I worked a lot on the urge to communicate," Guerin says. "I asked the dancers to go to say something but then at the last movement reroute that impulse to their bodies. It's quite difficult."

Additional Information:

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'Aether'

Presented by: Pittsburgh Dance Council

When: 8 p.m. Saturday

Admission: \$19-\$40

Where: [Byham Theater](#), Downtown

Details: 412-456-6666

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