



## Conversation Piece

30 Aug 2012-16 Sep 2012 , **Dance**, **Surry Hills**, **Theatre**, **Theatre reviews**  
Recommended

*Belvoir and choreographer Lucy Guerin join forces to present much more than just a talkfest*

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*First published on 24 Aug 2011. Updated on 17 Sep 2012.*

### This event has finished

You might interpret the title of the latest production at Belvoir St Theatre any number of ways, but, first and foremost, *Conversation Piece* is a vigorous coming together and dialogue between two usually separate modes of performance: theatre and dance.

It begins with, yes, a conversation – one that is, we're assured, entirely improvised. Alisdair Macindoe, Rennie McDougall and Harriet Ritchie have the kind of meaningless, meandering chat in which talk ricochets from subject to subject. They go from discussing the origins of the word 'vomitorium' to a story about projectile vomiting; from the fate of Sizzler to all-you-can-eat Korean barbecue; from the extravagance of oysters to the ins and outs of sexbots and blow-up dolls. It's fun eavesdropping on the conversation much in the same way it's fun eavesdropping on any spirited conversation between friends, but it's ultimately forgettable stuff.

Except that we won't forget it, because Macindoe, McDougall and Ritchie record their eight minutes of idle patter on their iPhones. The three of them are replaced by Alison Bell, Matthew

Whittet and Megan Holloway – who are fed, through headphones, the entirety of that conversation. The eight minutes are re-enacted – utterance for utterance – but the words emerge like something regurgitated, stripped of all the rich non-verbal cues that were present in the initial interaction. Delivered in this way, it practically ceases to be communication at all.

When Macindoe, McDougall and Ritchie return to the floor and begin to dance – the others continuing to babble away – we're reminded of the vital eloquence of body language.

This is only one of several ways in which Macindoe, McDougall and Ritchie's improvised overture of chit-chat is recreated throughout *Conversation Piece*. Over the course of the production it's embedded in a variety of conversations or would-be conversations: compressed into one rambling crazy-person monologue, reinterpreted into a grating gossipy overheard phone call or blurted out piecemeal in a series of baffling non-sequiturs.

But some of the most evocative moments of communication, and communication breakdown, are those presented through dance: Bell's wobbly attempts to emulate Ritchie's virtuosic movements; Holloway struggling to keep up with a meticulously choreographed routine; McDougall wildly mirroring Holloway's own insane dance moves.

The scenes themselves are linked with the logic with which a conversation might flow. Bell's awkward pas de deux is followed by her hilarious smirking revenge, wherein she pummels the passive Ritchie with unconstructive negativity.

*Conversation Piece* is about more than just people conversing of course – or 'conversating', as Ritchie cheerily calls it on opening night. There's a clue embedded in the original definition of the word 'conversation', which originally didn't just mean 'speaking together' but, quite more broadly, 'living together'. Choreographer Lucy Guerin and her performers have sought to capture nothing less than the myriad challenges of living with our fellow human beings: a preoccupation it shares with all the greatest theatre. They pull it off with grace, wit and flair.

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Words by Darryn King |

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**[Conversation Piece video](#)**

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## Conversation Piece details

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### Belvoir St Theatre

**Address**

25 Belvoir Street  
Surry Hills 2010

**Telephone** 02 9699 3444

**Price** from \$29.00 to \$62.00

**Date** 30 Aug 2012-16 Sep 2012

**Open** Tue 6.30pm, Wed-Fri 8pm, Sat 2pm & 8pm, Sun 5pm

**Director:** Lucy Guerin

**Cast:** Alison Bell, Megan Holloway, Alisdair Macindoe, Rennie McDougall, Harriet Ritchie, Matthew Whittet

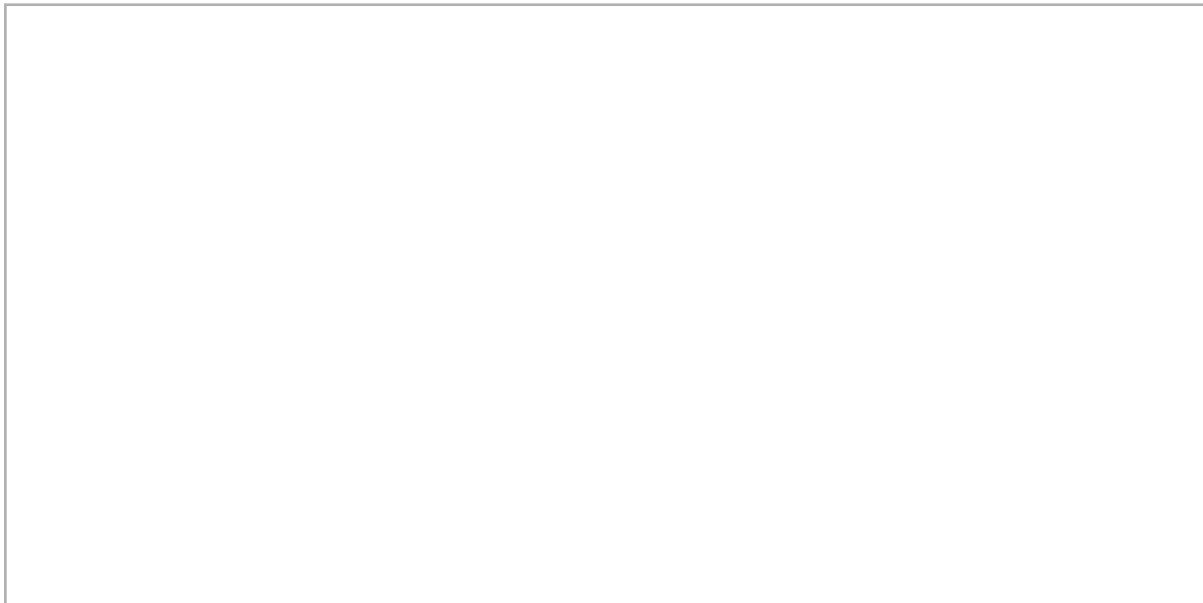
[Belvoir St Theatre details](#)

[Surry Hills area guide](#)

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## Belvoir St Theatre map

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*If this map or venue details are incorrect then please Contact Us*

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## Restaurants near Belvoir St Theatre

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**Al Aseel**

139m - This Lebanese canteen offers pre-theatre specials to Belvoir patrons between...



**Nourishing Quarter**

187m - What Gluten is the protein found in wheat and alternative grains...



**El Bulli**

189m - Spain Ferran Adria – a culinary blend of Salvador Dali and David...

**Bars & pubs near Belvoir St Theatre**



**Cleveland's**

189m - We can just imagine what the hipster-haters think of Cleveland's. Half...



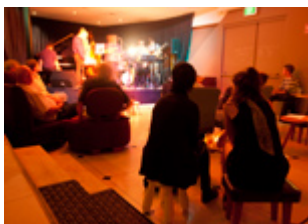
**The Tea Parlour**

191m - With high tea only served at boutique hotels and CBD tea rooms, the custom...



**Porteno**

214m - Smoke; meat; salt; fire; beers; rock'n'roll and a tonne of Brylcreem all...



**505**

132m - There's a sense of joining a secret society when you enter that...



**The Norfolk**

181m - This Cleveland Street pub is a straight-up hipster hive. The place is...



**Gardel's Bar**

214m - Carlos Gardel, the handsome baritone and legendary king of the tango, is the...



**Strawberry Hills Hotel**

218m - Once a wizened watering hole for elderly gents and gig-goers spilling over...



**The Dove and Olive**

246m - Like many of Surry Hills' watering-holes, the bar formerly known as the...



**Vini**

266m - No matter how many winning new enoteche chef-owner Andrew Cibej opens (see...



**Other venues near Belvoir St Theatre**

**Vampt Vintage Design**

98m - Specialists in collectable and unique pieces of mid-century modern design,...



**High Heels of Sydney**

264m - Kinky footwear for fetishists and fantasists as well as lingerie, naughty...

**Mao & More**

232m - Mao and More opened eight years ago as a Sinophile playroom of antique...



**David Met Nicole**

285m - This store features items for the well dressed home. From London town to...

**I Ran The Wrong Way**

263m - Ethical and sustainable curiosities.



**Friends of Leon Gallery**

288m - The gallery provides an outlet for young, emerging artists to show their...

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**k** — map is completely wrong, please update

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