

It's hard to warm to such icy precision

DANCE MELJ

Choreographed by Lucy Guerin,
The Lucy Guerin Company,
Chunky Move Studios until September 29

Hilary Crampton

In the warm ambience of the Chunky Move Studios, Lucy Guerin offers us a choreographic exploration of temperature — first as an abstract concept, then as an experience of human relationships.

Section one proves more successful both in choreographic structure and in illustrating the theme. It uses Ros Warby and Stephanie Lake, in a tightly crafted duet that barely moves from a central position.

As the lights dim, we see them posed asymmetrically like a fanciful ice carving, their bodies tightly bound in slender skirts, their stature reduced by the giant shadow they cast upon a rectangular screen.

Warby fixes us with an almost fearsome gaze, her precisely shaped hands outlined by a tiny rectangle of light. Slowly she begins to move — twitches, reshapens the hands, returns to icy stillness. Her action is angular, staccato, punctuated by the occasional plinks of Frank Tetaz's score.

The action progresses



Phoebe Robinson, foreground, and Ros Warby in *Melt*, the Lucy Guerin Company's exploration of temperature.

through tiny increments, gradually expanding in size and pace. Lake joins in, offering a cool foil to Warby's demonic intensity.

Angles give way to curves, gestures seem to slip sideways

into nothingness. Body parts collapse suggesting the disintegration of icicles.

The dancers shiver, then support and caress each other, rubbing rapidly as if trying to warm

white through rosy hues to a white-hot intensity as the dancers strive upwards like bubbles erupting to the surface.

Section two opens with three dancers, two males: Kyle

Kremerskothen and Toby Mills, and a female; Phoebe Robinson. They stand posed, like cut-out dolls awaiting the hands of an animator. The female veers first to one male and then the other. They touch, counter and support each other but never really engage. Around the perimeter two more females, Warby and Lake, watch the central action. The dance continues in the same vein, dancers splitting apart and coming together.

While it is fair to say that Guerin is deliberately avoiding the linear progression of section one, there seems insufficient differentiation in the overall dynamics to allow the audience to develop a satisfying reading. The very nature of Guerin's style which eschews any sense of emotional engagement, virtually negates the stated intention.

The glowing orange walls dominate, imposing their own temperature on the dance, defying the best efforts of lighting designer John Dutton, who isolates and illuminates the dancers through a subtle balance of light and shade.

Nevertheless there are some excellent performances, Warby never offering less than maximum intensity of focus. Robinson, a newcomer to Melbourne, also performs with a delicate clarity that is a pleasure to watch, while all five match the precise placement that Guerin's work demands.

PICTURE: VIRGINIA CUMMINGS

MZ/PR/11