

Review: One of RISING's opening events, the captivating 'Pendulum' was a masterclass in unity



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Upon entering NGV International to experience the premiere season of *Pendulum*, part of Melbourne's inaugural RISING festival program, we briefly pause in the foyer before staff members point us in the direction of the escalators.

Sneaking glances at some of the gallery exhibits en route to the third-floor performance space, we almost collide with fellow attendees a couple of times – *oops*.

We're ushered into a dark room filled with 39 low-hanging, spotlit, bronze, bell-shaped pendulums; spaced equidistantly and in straight-line formations.

Around the performance space's periphery, audience members are invited to stand, perch on a bench or sit on the floor – choose your own adventure.

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There's a definite *Night At The Museum*-type vibe; like we're being granted exclusive access during the gallery's closing hours.

Pendulum is a performance installation created by choreographer [Lucy Guerin](#) and percussive artist [Matthias Schack-Arnott](#).

The minimal stage lighting fades further until only the lip of one suspended bell is illuminated. A single dancer enters the performance space, walking over to this bell to gently set it in motion. One by one, the remaining six dancers follow suit, launching their respective pendulums.

Acting as light sources, the pendulums also double as speakers for Schack-Arnott's score, which is cued live and echoes every single ebb and flow of movement.

Bosco Shaw's lighting design focuses on the pendulums, which in turn illuminate the dancers sporting matching Harriet Oxley-designed tracksuits, sand-coloured with a slight shimmer, and black trainers. Only very occasionally, a single dancer provides a barely-heard verbal cue ("Go", "Ten") for pendulums to be launched by multiple dancers in unison.

Watching these pendulum arcs, slicing through and illuminating the space with metronomic precision, is hypnotising, and their momentum, whether micro or macro, informs Guerin's innovative choreography throughout. As such, the dancers are in a constant state of flux; at the mercy of gravity since each movement or step is directly influenced by a pendulum swing.

Dancers glide, duck and weave around these moving bells – often barely clearing their trajectories (only once, a couple of pendulums collide) – and their agility is astonishing, especially during fast-paced floorwork.

Even though Guerin draws from a relatively-pedestrian movement vocabulary for *Pendulum*, the spatial and kinaesthetic awareness on display here is staggering, demanding intense, sustained focus from this exceptional group of dancers.

The overall audience experience is intriguing and meditative – a credit to Lucy Guerin Inc., Schack-Arnott and stage techs, who made *Pendulum* look so utterly effortless.

All RISING events until Friday June 4 have been cancelled due to the current Victorian lockdowns. Stay tuned for an announcement regarding the festival's closing events from June 4 to June 6.