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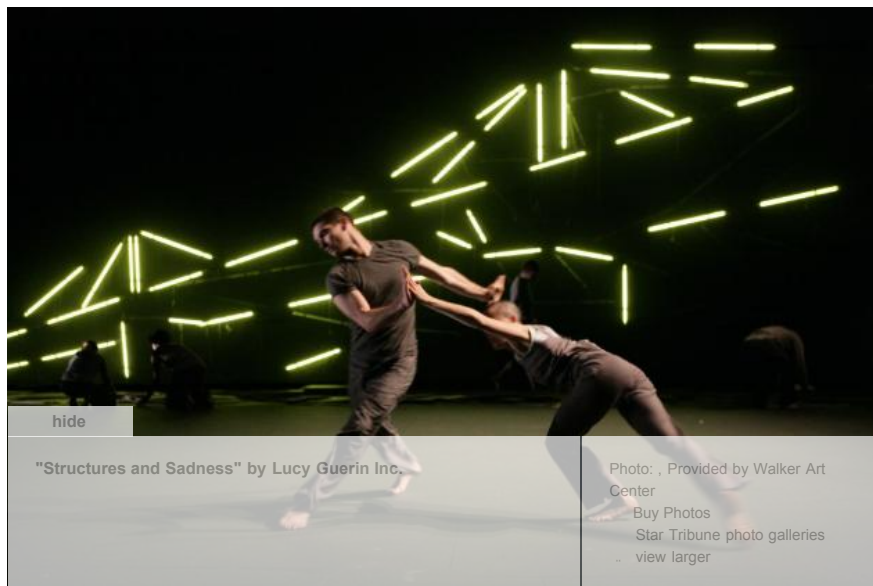
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## Dancing over crumbling bridges

Article by: CAROLINE PALMER , Special to the Star Tribune    Updated: October 7, 2011 - 11:21 AM

Australian troupe comments on the fragility of seemingly permanent structures.



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A 1970 bridge collapse in Melbourne is the contextual touchstone for Australian choreographer Lucy Guerin's quietly affecting "Structure and Sadness." The disaster's impact still resonates in that community. Audiences here can relate all too well. The work triggers memories of when the Interstate 35W bridge broke apart four years ago. Both catastrophic events are as poignant in their losses as they are in reinforcing the impermanence of our material world, even those parts made from steel and concrete.

The six industrious members of Guerin's troupe not only dance but also erect a set using lightweight squares of wood in various shapes. The pieces lean against one another in sprawling clusters, domino-like lines, even a tower requiring a ladder to reach its highest levels. As some dancers shape the environment, others locate places to exist within it. The movement is precise and succinct, as if rendered with a draftsman's eye for order, but there is also fluidity. Carefully drawn kinetic lines are easily broken and rearranged.

Guerin employs engineering principles in "Structure." An elastic band allows dancers to influence one another from afar through shifts in tension. A painter's metal plank is transformed into a balancing teeter-totter. These experiments further a specific movement vocabulary and thought process as well as signal pending danger, especially when the dancer-loaded plank ends up hovering over the throat of Joseph Simons.

When the set inevitably falls apart, the work shifts into a state of grief. We hear reports of the events in Melbourne but somehow Kristina Chan and Lilian Steiner vocalizing and flailing while perched on the plank more effectively expresses the uncomprehending shock of a devastating plunge. Words and other literal references are unnecessary. The mood of Gerald Mair's composition shifts from

#### LUCY GUERIN INC.

**What:** "Structure and Sadness," by the Australian choreographer and her company.

**When:** 8 p.m. Fri.-Sat.

**Where:** Walker Art Center,

1750 Hennepin Av. S., Mpls.

**Tickets:** \$18-\$25, 612-375-7600, or [www.walkerart.org](#)

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contemplation to chaos. Bright yellow fluorescent lights on the back wall create a fragmented pattern, but when some are dimmed they suggest the contours of a bridge.

Starting anew is always an option. The rubble gets cleared up and craggy edges of shattered emotions are smoothed away. But Guerin dramatically confirms the past can't be forgotten. It's a truly bitter reminder. The work ends with Talitha Maslin walking a plank resting upon the bodies of her fellow dancers. We rebuild, but we do so upon foundations forged by tragedy.

Caroline Palmer writes about dance.

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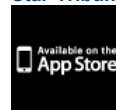
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