

STRUCTURE & SADNESS/LUCY GUERIN INC

January 10th 2007 12:00 am | Theatre | Review - By *Diana Simmonds*

The whole is much less than the sum of its parts.

SYDNEY FESTIVAL 07

Choreographer Lucy Guerin's company comes to Sydney (from Melbourne) laden with plaudits and an international reputation for past works. This work, *Structure & Sadness*, was also well received on its premiere outing at last year's Melbourne Festival (see foot of this page for other opinion). And at it's first night in the Opera House's Drama Theatre it was greeted with enthusiastic applause from a large section of the audience.



Others in the audience, including me, were puzzled by the rapturous whooping and pleased only that the festival's About an Hour series lives up to its implied promise: it's only an hour.

Structure & Sadness is inspired by the collapse during construction of a huge span of Melbourne's West Gate Bridge in October 1970. The six dancers, Fiona Cameron, Antony Hamilton, Lina Limosani, Alisdair Macindoe, Kirstie McCracken and Byron Perry (also credited as co-choreographers with their director) perform discrete and disparate sequences around two main pieces of "business": the building of a house of cards that snakes across and around the stage; and the construction and deconstruction of a bridge in neon lights.

These elements, particularly the painstaking propping of card upon card upon card, dominate the humans both in terms of interest and fascination: will the cards do their stuff? Will anyone make a mistake? How much further will the construction go before something goes wrong? If it falls, will they start the damn thing all over again?

Towards the end of the piece, five dancers work in the darkened foreground while a backlit compadre on a perilous stepladder takes full audience focus as he does things with the neon tubes. These occupy the back wall and represent a stylised bridge - or chaos, depending what he's doing. It's a strange way to treat dancers who speak to us in - according to the bump available - a "unique movement vocabulary".

In the main, the hapless dancers flail with some futility on the periphery, almost ignored in the face of much weirdly absorbing activity. This could be seen as a metaphor for human endeavour in the face of implacable industrial might, however it could also be seen as an uneven series of ideas which are never fully explored and never fulfil their potential. For instance, *Crimson and Clover* (the Joan Jett version, I think) gets an amusing workout, two dancers duet briefly with long sticks, two others explore the possibilities of being joined by a length of elastic material - and so on.

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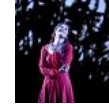
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