

Structure and Sadness

Jill Sykes, reviewer
January 9, 2007

In a tightly packed hour, six dancers convey the tragic impact of a bridge collapse that killed 35 men.

Genre

Dance

Location

Drama Theatre

Address

Sydney Opera House, Sydney

Date

9 January 2007 to 12 January 2007

Tickets

\$25 plus booking fees.

Phone Bookings

(02) 9250 7777

Online Bookings

www.sydneyparahouse.com

Review

In a tightly packed hour, the six dancers in Lucy Guerin Inc convey the tragic impact of a bridge collapse that killed 35 men.

The tragedy happened in Melbourne in 1970, yet even now, as people cross the rebuilt West Gate Bridge, they remember that workers died in the making of it - a moving final image in *Structure and Sadness*.

For all its tragic components, this is an unexpectedly beautiful dance piece. Lucy Guerin emphasises the collaborative nature of its development. As director, she earns the credit of bringing the elements into a cohesive whole.

The atmosphere is buoyant at first as the dancers build a construction like a pack of cards, requiring a ladder to reach its peak. Life goes on as usual in the suburbs until disaster strikes - that moment of "what were you doing when ... ?" Although you know the inevitable, the visual and aural collapse of the construction is mesmerising and horrifying.

Falling bodies and crushing concrete are graphically conveyed. Some survived. Those who died left emotionally damaged families and a distressed community. Sensitive choreography - fractured gestures, crumpled torsos, dysfunctional rhythms - captures this emotional cost.

Elastic cords are used like a human-sized cat's cradle stretched between dancers which, with long planks, signifies the building of the bridge. They continue to appear after its fall as a symbol of tension in the mind: physical and mental collapse merging.



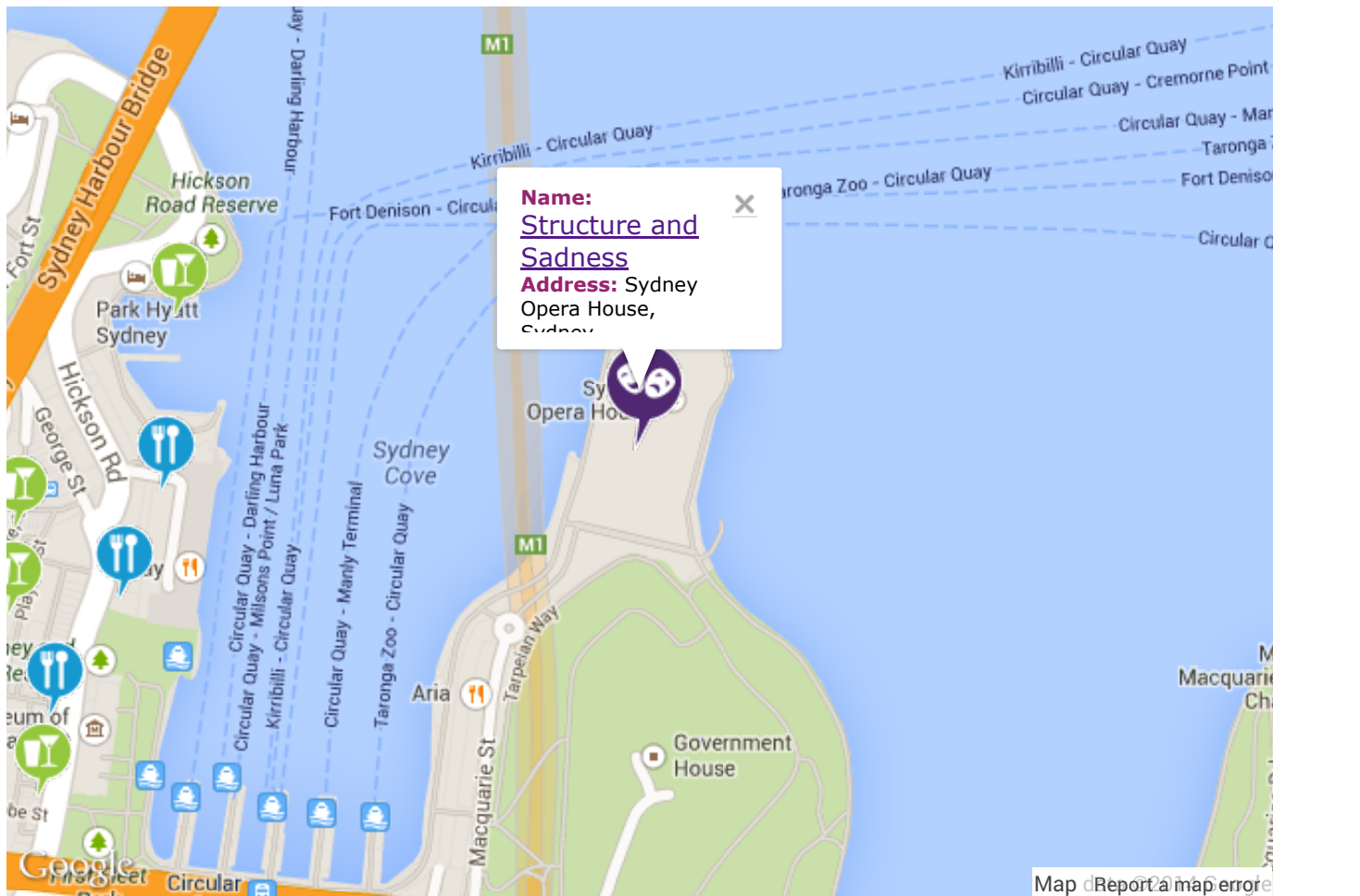
A scene from *Structure and Sadness*.

Photo: Jeff Busby

The beauty of *Structure and Sadness* lies in its context of history and grieving. While the drama is powerful, it is not presented as mere spectacle. This is a glimpse of the past from which people have learned and grown. The style of storytelling is shaped by regret, which gives it an awful beauty.

The performers - Fiona Cameron, Antony Hamilton, Lina Limosani, Alisdair Macindoe, Kirstie McCracken and Byron Perry - make it happen as theatre and dance. There are important contributions from Gerald Mair's music and set and lighting design by Ben Cobham and Andrew Livingston.

Anyone who thinks dance is a tulle-wrapped fairytale will consider this a discovery. Those who know it is many other things should find this piece a finely wrought experience.



When news happens: send photos, videos & tip-offs to 0424 SMS SMH (+61 424 767 764), or [email us](#).

[Did you know you could pay less than \\$1 a day for a subscription to the Herald? Subscribe today.](#)

More Entertainment

Copyright © 2007. The Sydney Morning Herald.