

Melbourne Festival

Begins with sound ideas

By SUZANNE BROWN

CHOREOGRAPHER Lucy Guerin considered cancelling her first Melbourne Festival show when her collaborator and friend, composer Jad McAdam died of an aneurism in July.

The 30-year-old McAdam had devised *The End of Things*, which looks at everyday details of "endings" — such as the tone after a telephone connection is broken, the clacking of a film reel at its end, and records playing into their grooves.

While devastated by McAdam's death, Guerin decided to continue with the show and found another composer (Frank Tetaz).

"We've kept a few of the sound ideas I talked about with Jad, although obviously it's gone in another direction," says Guerin.

One of McAdam's strongest ideas was having several turntables, like a sound installation, at the back of the stage playing the end grooves of records. "It's not quite as evolved as if Jad was doing it but it still works very well," says Guerin.

A choreographer who usually explores abstract ideas, Guerin has chosen to use a narrative in this show mainly in response to audience criticisms that her work is inaccessible.

The End of Things is about an older man (Trevor Patrick) who lives alone in a small house. Patrick's role is more acting than abstract dance.

"I have never done this before where I have had a dancer representing a human being or a character," says Guerin. "It's been really interesting contrasting a character

with that more abstract way of working."

In *The End of Things*, dancers Ros Warby, Brett Daffy and Stephanie Lake present the central character's state of mind during three days when he slowly loses his grip on reality. This is symbolised by various endings occurring such as the milk and toothpaste running out.

"I find the idea of endings seductive and scary. It's almost like that idea of wanting things to be over. It's the idea of moving into the next state," says Guerin.

"It's also the range of feelings endings can produce; it can be quite dramatic and catastrophic but also can just trail off into this empty feeling of loss. The latter is the one I've been more interested in this piece."

The End of Things, which opens tonight at the National Theatre, is the first work Guerin has choreographed for her own company since *Heavy*, in 1998.

A sought-after choreographer, who has worked in New York and completed commissions for Mikhail Baryshnikov's White Oak Dance Project and *Chunky Move*, Guerin finds



Lucy Guerin: Now using narrative.

Picture: JERRY GALEA

THE AGE
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it difficult to balance creating her own work and doing commissions.

"When you do your own project, you have a lot more control. Although it's a lot more work and more stressful, you take bigger steps in your own work," says Guerin.

"If I do too many pieces, it's not enjoyable anymore and I feel dried up and forced to think of ideas.

"This year, I had to make a few too many works so I'm trying to figure out how I can sustain my practice without having to churn out five works a year. I'm interested in making fewer works and touring them and being involved in projects that are more collaborative so I don't have the full responsibility." ■