

# Interview

ARTS AND FILM GUIDE

## THIS IS THE END

JONATHAN MARSHALL popped along to a rehearsal of LUCY GUERIN COMPANY'S latest work, *The End Of Things*. He liked what he saw.

At the rehearsal for Lucy Guerin's latest work - *The End Of Things* - I ran into old Barmie Kosky stalwart, theatre-maker Tom Wright. The development of *The End* was tragically arrested by the demise of Lucy's collaborator and friend, DJ Jad McAdam. This led Lucy to turn to Tom for dramaturgical advice. Tom observes that what he likes about Lucy's choreography is how she produces compelling, highly abstract images from a strong base in ideas and themes ("all the work's already been done for me," he notes). He has therefore advised her to ignore those who claim that she needs to make her work somehow "more relevant" or "accessible." By the end of the interview I found myself chiming in on Tom's side.

Many audience members such as myself are immediately taken by Lucy's often punist attention to the potentials of bodily structure. Much of what makes her work so fascinating however is the tension generated by Lucy's obvious anxiety regarding the place of meaning and accessible emotional expression in contemporary choreography.

Lucy notes that "the Post-Modernist statement of 'anti-performance' has already been made. I can't see any point in repeating a statement made by a previous generation." Consequently while Lucy echoes the early Post-Modernists in rejecting the old, often heavy-handed imperative for dancers to 'emote' during performance, she also rejects an entirely mathematical, formally driven approach. Lucy's work may be post-Expressionist, but it is not anti-Expressionist. Even so, Lucy remains adamant that "dance is capable of expressing other ideas than just that of a character and their experience." *The End* in fact "has both."

The show employs a classic device from Expressionist theatre and Modernist literature. Trevor Patrick plays the central, bemused, introverted character for whom the rest of the activity on stage is a reflection of his state of mind. Lucy says that if the

other dancers have characters at all, "they're all coming from him. He projects certain characterisations onto them."

Lucy relates that she has been strongly influenced by works such as Kafka's *The Trial* and T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland* which explore "meaning in meaninglessness." She is however keen to point out that she "didn't want it to be this big doom-and-gloom fest." For every ending there is a beginning, in this case leading to a gradual stripping back of the theatrical elements of the production to leave us with Patrick as a deliberately ambiguous choreographic presence.

"It's whether I'm interested in a work that counts," Lucy points out, "whether I'm fascinated and engaged. I don't really need to know all of the meaning of a show. My interest is in the way it makes me feel or the ideas that I see coming through. It's not necessarily about whether I got that he was so and so's father. But a lot of people have a strong attachment to that way of looking at a show, and I don't know what you do about that."

Personally, I'm with Tom: ignore 'em Lucy!

*The End Of Things* is performed at the National Theatre from 19th to 28th October as part of the Melbourne Festival. Bookings can be made on 136 166 at 7pm. There are student discount tickets available for this show.

Jonathan Marshall is a regular contributor to *Inpress* and an M.A. graduate of the University Of Melbourne who writes on all aspects of performance, cult film and general weirdness.