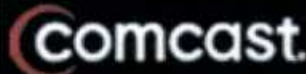




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PICA goes to extremes with Guerin's works

03/14/03

Lucy Guerin's choreographic calling card is a fascination with extremes: emotions in conflict, identities contrived and then disintegrated, radical shifts in speed and gravity.

Dueling climates of the mind are on display in Guerin's latest work, when the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art presents the acclaimed Australian choreographer's temperamental "Melt" and the pensive "The Ends of Things," which explores a life paralyzed by conformity.

Guerin's show is a return engagement. In 1999, PICA brought Guerin's experimental company to the Echo Theatre to perform "Heavy," an unsettling look at the interior landscape of dreams. Across town at the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall, the White Oak Dance Project was performing another of Guerin's works, the playful duet "Soft Center," starring ballet great Mikhail Baryshnikov.

Both works crackled with contrast: easily identifiable movement (a body in repose, a tender waltz) that Guerin wrenched from its moorings; even in lyrical vignettes, Guerin's dancers seemed at the mercy of darker impulses, their bodies in revolt against the commonplace.

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...nodic panic, a physical pursuit of the boiling point of human emotion, told in degrees.

...modern dance fans may remember Warby from her recent solo show, also presented by PICA, in which the choreographer/dancer gave a bizarre performance of such extravagant agitation that it bordered on dementia. In "Melt," she's also a bit twisted, reaching critical mass with a singular flair for distilling erratic emotion in movement.

"The Ends of Things" is more narrative, a departure from Guerin's typically abstract style. It concerns the impending death of a pathetically innocuous Everyman, played by Trevor Patrick, who compulsively orders his environment to keep the outside world at bay. It doesn't work: a trio of incubuses invades with the force of an existential tornado, demolishing both his habitat and his carefully constructed regularity.

8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, March 14-15, Portland Center for the Performing Arts, Newmark Theatre, 1111 S.W. Broadway; \$20-\$23, 503-242-1419. -- Catherine Thomas Special to The Oregonian

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