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## Guerin's choreography fuses concepts to dance

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What happens to your psyche when you die, or maybe just change? The Australian choreographer Lucy Guerin offered some absorbing possibilities March 29 in her company's first visit to DiverseWorks.

Guerin, who honed her postmodern sensibilities as a dancer with Tere O'Connor and Bebe Miller during the 1990s, often treats bodies like stick figures to be bent joint by joint. But they make such funny faces, you can't doubt their humanity. There are no big stage-eating leaps or even virtuoso spins; just a straight-on obsession to detail. Every finger counts. And boy, can Guerin fuse all the elements of a concept into a dance.

In the abstract *Melt*, bodies, video and sound were thrillingly integrated. Dancers Roz Warby and Stephanie Lake, confined to a space about 4-feet square, were like an ice sculpture melting to evaporation. The lines between flesh and screen were blurred by Michaela French's hip motion graphics, some of which were projected onto the dancers: snowflakes landed on their hands, lines followed their moving limbs, "hot spots" flashed on their backs. Franc Tetaz' cracking, dripping sound score was great, too.

Warby and Lake were awesome -- earthy but also light on their feet through movements that were alternately pinprick precise and curvy. Sensation flowed visibly through their limbs -- from the fingers of one hand, down the arm, across the shoulders and chest, and down the other arm to its hand and fingers. Who knew standing still could be so mesmerizing?

Warby is an edgy, swift little brunette, but she's also appealingly Chaplinesque. Lake is a taller and softer-bodied blonde with a fresh, prom queen's face but a good mean streak, too. Guerin's other two dancers are intriguing, too. Byron Perry is a compact dynamo and Trevor Patrick makes Woody Allen look like the Incredible Hulk.

Patrick was the central character in *The Ends of Things*, a penetrating study of a small man whose life is changing, or maybe ending. His huge, ill-fitting clothes -- constantly pulled on and off -- are a metaphor for his misfit nature. His most "alive" moments come when he fantasizes over his butterfly collection. Still, a recorded phone call from a life insurance company sets him reeling.

"How'd you feel if you were to pass away?" a voice asks. Before he can answer, he's put on hold, then cut off. "This conversation is terminated."

The ingenious set is a tentlike room with a back wall where video shows the man's meager furnishings. He's confined to that inner space early on, as the other three dancers move outside. Their actions suggest what's happening even further inside his head. Lake was alluring as his

sexual nature, alternately a hot mama and a butterfly being pinned. Warby was his questioning side, maniacally (and wonderfully) goofy. Perry strongly conveyed his aggressiveness. When Patrick neatly folded his removed shirt and pants, the egos "folded" up, too.

In the program notes, Guerin said she was exploring "inside and outside in both a physical and a psychological sense and the breakdown of the boundaries between what is real and what is imagined." The egos strip down the walls of the man's room and leave him covered. But he's resilient. He emerges with a look that says, "Hey, I'm still here!" It's soon clear, however, that "here" is no longer a familiar place. There's only static on the radio, and his egos are curled on the floor like rocks.

Patrick -- curious, resigned and terrified -- fights his impulses, including the urge to rip out his own heart. The egos are no help. Even roused to their feet, they're expressionless shells.

*The Ends of Things* also has touching humor going for it. At the end, the man can't resist popping back onto the stage to see if his frozen egos have moved. "OK, guys. Caught you! No? Sure you don't want to join me?," he motions to them. "Nope. Well, guess I'm on my own, then." And he disappears for good.

We can only hope Guerin returns sometime soon. Her tour continues to Miami, Ottawa and New York. For details, see her Web site, [www.lucyguerin.com](http://www.lucyguerin.com)

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