

the village

VOICE

FREE

Lucy Guerin
The Kitchen
April 10 through 13

BY DEBORAH JOWITT

Lucy Guerin pays careful attention to form. When, in

Two Lies, she shows the same brief, quiet solo performed by herself, then Rebecca Hilton, then Ros Warby, she burns the steps into our brains, but also invites us to compare individuals. We might be watching a diving competition, but without the onus of deciding who's best. And, since each woman repeats the solo at the beginning of the dance's second section, we see it six times.

At first, the women are preternaturally stiff. The skirts of their short, cream-colored frocks stand out from their thighs on small hoops. Margie Medlin lights them harshly from overhead. David Chesworth's sound score is minimal—vague hummings, a distant train, wind chimes. When the women advance together on a diagonal, now in sync, now oddly not, they might be dolls. There's a hint of confrontation: dainty cat claws; Warby repeatedly touching Hilton's shoulders, then opening her arms jerkily; Warby slipping from the circle of Hilton's arms to lie still.

The second half is identical, but movements are now allowed to breathe and stretch and melt. The women wear colored silk dresses; the lighting is misty, prone to bursts of red, blue, fuchsia. The elegant, crystalline struc-

ture tugs against the enigma of these women: Guerin sensuous even when seeming strung on wires, Hilton bold and forthright, Warby delicate, sharp, slightly sour-faced.

Robbery Waitress on Bail takes its title from a banal newspaper story in Guerin's native Australia. A robber takes a waitress hostage; she turns out to be his girlfriend and accomplice. We read the report on overhead projections. In the dance, character and event figure as evasive fragments. The story has generated movement material so obliquely as to remind me of the way a Balinese *legong* or a Javanese *bedhaya* conveys a portion of narrative by a flick of the finger, a sudden turn away. We don't strive to interpret the way the dancers suddenly acquire rubber legs that collapse and snap straight like those jointed toys strung on elastic. Fear maybe. Or conniving. Yet we easily see a stiff hand dug into another's throat as the threatening knife. When Guerin dances with Warby holding her by the shoulder, we may read hostage. Twisting hands could be dealing cards or washing. At the end, the women sit slumped against the back wall, knees apart, hips rising and falling—presenting a dual vision of prisoner and wanton. But Guerin handles her material with delicate clarity, insists on nothing. The result is beautiful, thoughtful work. Dare I call it "winning"? V



TOM BRAZIL

From the Aussie tabs to the stage: Ros Warby and Lucy Guerin in *Robbery Waitress on Bail*