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[Lucy Guerin Inc.: Weather, Melbourne Festival](#)

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**Lucy Guerin Inc.: Weather, Melbourne Festival -
The Malthouse, Merlyn Theatre, 18 October -**

Weather is presented by Melbourne Festival in association with Brisbane Festival and Place des Arts and marks choreographer and director Lucy Guerin's return to pure dance, after forays into text and speech within performance over the last few years. It is a contemporary group piece for six dancers - Talitha Maslin, Alisdair Macindoe, Kirstie McCracken, Harriet Ritchie, Lee Serle and Lilian Steiner.

The work begins with a lone dancer (Macindoe) on the black, edgeless stage, moving like a leaf blown around by the wind. He is accompanied by his own whistling, a sound that mimics howling wind. His solo is interrupted by a male and female dancer, who take to the stage with small irregular, jarring movements, which are made to seem nicely fluid in their execution. The huge, overhanging cloud suspended above, made from white plastic shopping bags and fabric (by Robert Cousins), is lit up and it seems like sunshine is filtering through the clouds. The light gently bathes the performers in an amber glow, as if the Winter with which the show opened is changing to Spring.

The performance begins with so much promise, but unfortunately it failed to engage me as it progressed. The dancers are very talented (the program notes indicate that the dancers had a hand in the choreography), and their group work is really incredible, their timing impeccable. The solos are well executed. The theme of nature blowing things off-course was clear and very well danced. Despite this, the work as a whole did not engage me, and I constantly felt my mind wandering. In particular, the lengthy 'blowing in the breeze' sequences left me thinking of the tall, blow-up figures one sees outside car dealerships, flailing in the air.

There is a long sequence, after the plastic bags drop from the cloud and litter the stage, where a dancer puts another performer's head in one of the plastic bags, covering his face. The dancer keeps breathing, sucking the plastic, until it is whipped off and then tied around his neck and head in various other ways. It ends with the dancer completely covered by the bag, lying on his side, having to rip his way out. The whole sequence was extremely uncomfortable and I was keenly waiting for it to finish.

Benjamin Cisterne's lighting design didn't add much to the performance, apart from the first few minutes where it appeared that sun was filtering through. This was nice, but otherwise the lighting was unexceptional, when it could have been very atmospheric considering the theme. Shio Otani's costumes are gorgeous - little black hotpants and sparkly blue crocheted jumpers. Oren Ambarchi's composition is dull and repetitious, and is possibly what made the performance less than enjoyable for me. And considering the lady and gentleman on either side of me went to sleep, I think I wasn't the only one who felt the work was a bit lacklustre.

- Astrid Lawton

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