

## Heavy weather: cloudy with a chance of plastic bags

Philippa Hawker

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FOR her new work exploring the weather - as experience and inspiration - choreographer Lucy Guerin used all kinds of research tools. She visited the Bureau of Meteorology. She took a snow machine to the rehearsal room. She thought about the nature of cause and effect. But most of all, she says, she focused on the human body, and the way it takes on the rhythm and dynamics of the surrounding world.

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*Weather*, which has its premiere at the Melbourne Festival next week, uses its subject as a source of inspiration. What she has created, she says, "is not acting out a theme. You want to be influenced and inspired by ideas from the real world, but then at a certain point it has to be dance that we are looking at. It's really important that we let the movement and the dance affect us on their own terms."

For Guerin, it feels almost like a return to pure movement, after working recently with text, and incorporating other mediums into her pieces.

In the rehearsal studio, Guerin's six dancers did a lot of work with "formations and fronts, lines of people coming across, and affecting other people or the space in particular way". What emerged was movement that alternates between something quite constructed and choreographed and moments that feel chaotic, wild, almost improvised.

She brought in the fans and the snow machine, as well as a confetti cannon and several hairdryers, to explore everyday objects and products that reproduce weather effects. It was also a search for ideas for the set, for a way of "making moving air visible". In the end, these objects became part of the process, rather than appearing in the final version, but one thing has remained: plastic bags.

They have become a potent visual element, whether they react to the movement of air or are gathered in a large mass that looks like a cloud. At one point, they become part of the choreography. They also carry another charge: they are a strong symbol, for Guerin, of waste and of the impact that people can have on the world around them.

When it came to the score, she decided, with composer Oren Ambarchi, on "a quite relentless, quite metrical" piece of music. It is probably not something people would associate with the weather, with its erratic and unpredictable aspects, she says. But the constant rhythm provided a certain drive, and the possibilities of working with or against the metre.

Distilling all this work, discovery and exploration to an hour of performance has not been easy, she says. "Weather is like choreography; it's so kinetic, it's about movement and displacement of air, it has limitless possibilities for dance." What has come out of this piece, she adds, could well be the basis of something else. "You often find the next work in the one you are working on."

She has been thinking about dance trends, and how some choreographic preoccupations seem to be coming back - although not necessarily for her.

"Sometimes I wish I could return to the simplicity of my earlier works, because they were more minimalist in nature, and very clear, and very affecting. But I just can't do that any more." She is intrigued by why this is the case. "You think you have a choice about what you make. And when you are young, you do. When I was making

my first piece, I thought, I can do anything I want. I can choose to be this or that kind of choreographer.

"But choices are informed, in the end, by your whole history, not just your dance history." What you make comes from who you are. Yet a large part of what she does as an artist, she says, "is to look at that, and see how I can move it somewhere else. It's wanting to challenge what 'me' is."

***Weather* is eligible for *The Age* Critics Award for best new major Australian work premiering at this year's Melbourne Festival.**

*This story was found at: <http://www.theage.com.au/entertainment/dance/heavy-weather-cloudy-with-a-chance-of-plastic-bags-20121011-27ffs.html>*



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