



Weather, by Lucy Guerin, explores humanity's complex relationship with a forceful environment.

Guerin's 2012 dance is about cause and effect and explores the human connection to the overwhelming forces of the elements. At its core is a reminder that we cannot control the weather. We are not masters of the universe.

Then the curtain opened, and we were at once enthralled by a puffy illuminated white cloud above the stage, (a set designed by Robert Cousins), and a dried leaf caught in a cyclone, an image created by a man's blustery gestures and whistling. But that first section was cut short by a technical glitch.

What happened? Guerin's program notes made us eager to blame the weather. Hmm, the dance is about cause and effect. I envisioned the wind causing one of those gnarly eucalyptus trees outside to fall and smash my car too.

Weather resumed in minutes, and the blustery opening section was even more intriguing the second time. More dancers appeared and a simple side step in a square let them travel all over the stage. Like dust devils and twisters dressed in loose-knit sweaters and tiny trunks (costumes by Shio Otani), they leaned into turns and spiraled, and they formed figure eights. Their side steps grew exponentially, as did the pulsing score, tempo and tension.

Like the dancing, Oren Ambarchi's score is relentless, and it sets a constant, mechanical rhythm. In one big climax, the men and women had to hold hands to maintain their footing. Thump thumps and scraping sounds rattled the building with the power of a boiler ready to burst.

Guerin's dance is inspired by weather. She brought a snow machine into her studio. She visited meteorologists and interviewed people in Canada about changes in the ice freeze and melt. But to say her dance is about weather is like saying rain is wet.

The beauty of *Weather* is in the abstraction, the subtle hints of weather and how it affects everything we do. There are invisible dramas imbedded in simple sequences. While the choreography is relentless, dancers move with loose precision. In one section, they line up and perform a remarkable sequence of gestures accented with a domino movement. Guerin smartly repeats that, and watch for the arms that hook, and those balletic turns that precede faces grimacing.

The movement often feels chaotic, but is highly structured. The design appears much like a map, with dancers appearing as grid lines or invisible cold fronts. The pinnacle of the work is how Guerin makes

moving air visible.

Lights brightened in the icy white cloud above the stage and white globs fluttered down like snow. Only then could we realize the entire cloud was made of plastic trash bags. The bags covered the stage and became a strong visual and sonic element. The dancers became orgasmic cheerleaders with trash bag pom-poms, and they did bag tricks, which began to drag. A man covered another man's head and body with a large bag- dangerous thing we're taught never to do – then made a poufy chef's hat.

The energy heated up again when dancers seemed to skate on a pond. A man twirled a woman by one leg and one arm as they do in Olympic competition. A disturbing image had a man manipulate a limp, helpless woman. The suggestion was that we have no control over the weather, or the universe.

In the end, the group surrounded a twirling woman as the score climbed to a torturous height. The physicality was jaw-dropping, and would be tough not to think of a tornado scooping up whole towns in Oklahoma.

Still, while the plastic bags symbolized the waste and ugliness of humans, in *Weather*, they were soft and clean like fresh fallen snow. In one serene moment, the dancers linked arms while on their backs to become a giant snow shovel. They pushed away all of the bags to reveal a shiny floor that looked more like smooth ice on a sunny day.

Dancers: Amber Hanes, Talitha Maslin, Alisdair Macindoe, Kirstie McCracken, Kyle Page and Lilian Steiner.

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Weather at Mandeville Auditorium, UC San Diego, was made possible by a generous anonymous patron.



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Eitland, Kris

Title:

Aussie Lucy Guerin brings relentless 'Weather' to Mandeville

Date:

2013

Citation:

Kris Eitland, Aussie Lucy Guerin brings relentless 'Weather' to Mandeville, San Diego Story, 10 October 2013

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