

Weather

Reviewed by Jordan Beth Vincent
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Lucy Guerin Inc.
The Malthouse, Merlyn Theatre
Until October 21

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PLASTIC shopping bags are a universal symbol of First World consumer excess, and when used on stage they offer the bonus of making pleasant rustling sounds. In *Weather*, a work about climate change, an enormous mass of bags hangs over the dance space like an ominous cloud. Like non-biodegradable snowflakes, the bags drift to the ground - toys for the dancers to toss up, roll in and slide through.

An opening solo by Alisdair Macindoe gives the impression that his limbs are responding to the nudges of a whistling wind. Other dancers spin and leap past, caught in an entirely different maelstrom.

Powerful, too, is the moment when the bags fall. The dancers stand still and hunched as the plastic slides down their bodies before diving into joyful play among the litter.

Fans of choreographer Lucy Guerin's work will find much that is familiar in *Weather* - aside from the props - in the way bodies are manipulated in partnering work, the use of voice, and even the abstract approach to what is a broad, amorphous theme.

Despite the enormity of climate change as a topic, this work seems to run short of movement ideas. Long sections featuring the dancers walking in spiralling pathways seem unnecessary. Fascinating moments - such as when dancer Lee Serle is enveloped in a plastic cocoon - are flattened by a lighting design that shies away from any dramatic impact until the end, when a golden glow captures the rotations of the dancers' hips.

Guerin's choreographic work plays with the tension between controlling and being controlled. Bodies often move like puppets; torsos lead and limbs flail wildly in directional response. Even in the deadpan, perplexed expressions on the faces of the dancers, we have the sense that there is an unseen hand at work and the dancers seem as surprised by the ensuing bodily pathways through space as we are.

But there is also a purity in *Weather*, with clean lines and precise rhythms balancing the sense of randomness created by the plastic bags.

This work is eligible for The Age Critics Award for best new major Australian work premiering at this year's Melbourne Festival. The winner will be announced on October 26.

This story was found at: <http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/dance/weather-20121022-281b1.html>





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