Dance review: Conversation Piece

DANCERS are known for letting their bodies, not their mouths, do the talking.

Conversation Piece - Tramway, Glasgow

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Yet for the first eight minutes of Conversation Piece, this truism is completely reversed.

Three dancers walk on stage, and the audience plays voyeur to a friendly chat between friends. The topics are banal yet frequently witty: skin rashes, excess hair, when it's acceptable to tell a new friend they've got something on their teeth – and the lovelife of Gwyneth Paltrow and Chris Martin, to name but some. All this is discussed and laughed over as if we weren't there. Crucially, their seemingly unimportant banter is recorded on the iPhones all three are holding.

When the dancers are joined by three actors, we start to realise the relevance – and enormous cleverness – of what just took place. For the next 60 minutes, the conversation which opened the show becomes, in effect, the script.
Having taken the dancers' iPhones, the actors listen back to the recorded words through headphones, and repeat them out loud. Later, one turns them into an improvised phone conversation we're only privy to one side of.

And so it goes on – this fascinating re-hashing of triviality about celebrity marriages and hairy shoulders – with occasional bursts of razor-sharp movement, perfectly executed.

Australian choreographer Lucy Guerin created the structure and moves and asks pertinent unspoken questions about technology's capacity to connect and isolate in equal measure.

But from that starting point, copious praise must be heaped on the six performers, who, miraculously, create a brand new show for every performance.

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