In *Corridor*—a roughly hour-long piece from 2008, given its US premiere at Baryshnikov Art Center—Lucy Guerin asks a lot of her performers, members of the Melbourne-based Lucy Guerin Inc. All we, her audience, have to do is sit there in two single rows of chairs flanking the long sides of a runway and tuck away our feet and our belongings, since dancers can scarcely lunge our way or hurdle by very close to our toes. We do have to shift our gaze back and forth, seeking the next outbreak of imagery—which can feel strained—but if ever there were a dance in non-traditional theater space that kept viewers in their place, this is it. We start off with a distinct THEM-and-US feeling.

Occasionally, some dancers roll a light panel behind our chairs from one end of the room to the other. It's kind of an MRI experience, at least, visually; it doesn't quite achieve a full-on claustrophobic feel, and I don't know if Guerin intended it to do so. But it does give you a sense of being hemmed in and controlled by alien machinery you don't really grok.

At the sneakily-timed onset of the piece, one and gradually all of the six dancers—secretly embedded within the audience—answer ringing cellphones, rise and aimlessly stroll the corridor while conversing with their callers. All looks reasonably normal until one fellow's facial expressions, movements and gestures take on an odd cast that gets odder still. The Ministry of Silly Walks lives!

If the dancers' shoulders were hangers, their bodies would be suits of clothes waggling and flapping in strong gusts of wind.

One guy picks up a cordless mic and offers capsule descriptions of some facet of each dancer's appearance and moves: "She's wearing a little bit of lipstick. She's giving a kick to the side. His shirt is very stripey." This segues into pairings of one dancer with a talker...
who calls out instructions like—my favorite—"Do snake. Do serpent. Do snake. Do serpent."
Guerin then experiments with having the partners in each pair mirror each other's movements.

A stream of little things spliced together with precision and creepiness, Corridor is totally abstract yet resonant with powerful, cartoonish imagery—like slapstick without contact, like wild rebounds from invisible sites of impact. The dancers' superior agility of motion and mood, and their physical abandon and courage, particularly in a few outrageous solos, will exhilarate and terrify you. And you're so close, why, when bodies slam to the floor, you feel it in your own bones, but you have to just sit there and take it.

The final segment, it seems to me, zooms the dancers out of the realm of the personal. A distorted voice from on high now issues the instructions, and these call for global and cosmic missions more appropriate to angels or supermen than men. One by one, the dancers drop the shell-like robes they'd donned and quietly leave the space.

It seems like death. Or it could be a refusal to engage with the instructions. Or maybe it's both. The lights go off, and we're left with only the space's glaring-red EXIT signs to stare at. Brilliant. The final instruction.

Corridor continues its BAC run tonight at 6:30 and 8:30 and concludes with a 5pm performance tomorrow, Sunday. Space is very limited. Call 212-868-4444 or purchase tickets online here.

Lucy Guerin Inc. will present a 2006 work, Structure and Sadness, at Dance Theater Workshop, October 1-3 (7:30pm). For information and ticketing, click here.
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