Bridge to lost lives

Structure & Sadness
Sydney Opera House
Dance

A chance meeting with an old school friend started choreographer Lucy Guerin thinking about the Westgate Bridge tragedy. The bridge, linking Melbourne's western suburbs to the inner city, collapsed on October 15, 1970, killing 35 construction workers.

"I was speaking to this friend and he told me how our teacher had told us about the tragedy at the time and had got quite upset about it," says Guerin. "I'd actually forgotten that but I was wondering whether maybe that day at school had somehow planted a seed in my subconscious."

Guerin's new show, Structure & Sadness, part of the Sydney Festival's About An Hour series, is inspired by the disaster and explores the parallels between the celebration of the scale of the builders' achievement and the toll on lives.

Heavy toll... the precarious bridge

Guerin has formed many of the dance moves around engineering principles involving tension, compression and torsion.

"We spend a lot of time in the first part of the performance developing a large structure representing the bridge, which is a fairly precarious structure," says Guerin. The second half takes part after the collapse and deals with the losses suffered by the families and the lives of those men.

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