

REVIEW: Pieces for Small Spaces

By [Shirley McKechnie](#) ArtsHub | Monday, December 17, 2007

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Pieces for Small Spaces

Lucy Guerin Inc.

Lucy Guerin Inc Studio, West Melbourne

Choreographer, Lucy Guerin, her Board and Sponsors (Australia Council for the Arts, Bluebottle and The Myer Foundation) are all to be congratulated for this little gem in our dance calendar.

Now conducted on an annual basis, *Pieces for Small Spaces* provides opportunities for young dance artists to experiment and to have their work seen by the wider profession. Such opportunities are rare once dancers leave the protective environment of their tertiary education institutions. A good dance studio, time and some modest financial support makes a world of difference in a profession noted, in Australia, for its helplessness in providing these basic necessities for its rising artists. Such is the funding situation for dance development in this country.

This year's crop of *Pieces for Small Spaces* has produced two remarkable solos and a group piece that is an exemplary example of the craft of choreography. Antony Hamilton's *The Counting* is an ensemble piece for six women and one man. As the program notes explain 'It exploits the basic and fundamental choreographic practice of setting movements to musical counts'. In fact it does much more than this. Hamilton has created a counterpoint of rhythmic and dynamic tensions to an insistent beat of oddly accented 3/4 time. Syncopation, fast, finely tuned movement and interesting groupings contrast fluidity with stillness, drooping curves with immobilised vertical lines. It is a compelling work and could easily be developed to occupy a larger space and a more distributed audience, perhaps in the round.

Stephanie Lake continues to impress as a truly fine contemporary dancer. In *Last Thoughts on Woody Guthrie* she is both creator and performer. In an extended solo she dances to words spoken by Bob Dylan and manages to create a heightened poetic statement in which natural gesture morphs into fragmented but recognisable dance movements. It is all done with fine articulation, an expansive use of space, a commanding presence and that most difficult of all things in dance; subtlety combined with wit.

Lee Serle's solo *A Little Murky* inhabits an entirely different kind of space. His is an enclosed world of tiny gestural shifts, controlled, full of tension, quivering on the edge of instability. Serle's long elegant body seems almost petrified. It occupies the centre of the stage and barely leaves it as if tied there by some unseen force. It is a powerful statement and in Friday night's performance it was accompanied by the tolling of the bells from St James Old Cathedral almost next door. The program note credited 'Tool' with the music but for this reviewer the majestic resonance of the bells overpowered it and to great effect.



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