

# DanceTabs

## Lucy Guerin Inc – Untrained – London

By Graham Watts on June 10, 2013 in [Reviews](#) · 0 Comments



Alisdair Macindoe, Ross McCormack, Michael Dunbar and Jake Shackleton in Lucy Guerin's *Untrained*. © Julieta Cervantes. (Click image for larger version)

### About author



Graham Watts

Work for DanceTabs  
Reviews on Balletco

Dance Writer/Critic.  
Member of the Critics' Circle, Chairman of the Dance Section and National Dance Awards Committee. Writes for leading dance magazines & websites - in UK, Europe, USA, Japan & cyberspace. Graham is based in London.

### Share this article

[Tweet this](#)

[Digg it](#)

[Add to Delicious](#)

[Share on Facebook](#)

### Lucy Guerin Inc

#### *Untrained*

London, Purcell Room at Queen Elizabeth Hall

6 June 2013

[www.lucyguerin.com](http://www.lucyguerin.com)

[www.southbankcentre.co.uk](http://www.southbankcentre.co.uk)

The most powerful and innovative of ideas often stem from a surprisingly simple premise. There is so much new dance made every day, all over the world, utilising the same limited movement potential, and how to create something new and interesting from this finite range of possibilities is the challenge for every choreographer. Lucy Guerin's idea for *Untrained* couldn't be more mundane: take two highly-skilled male dancers and two men without any movement training whatsoever; and then put them through the same regime of executing a catalogue of movement exercises, one after the other. The concept might seem as dull as ditchwater but it turns out to be anything but boring. In fact, I have rarely laughed so frequently watching dance (excepting Pina Bausch) and this 70-minute show rattled along without the need for any watch-watching.

*Untrained* began life in Australia in 2008 but has now been performed across five continents. Regular cast changes are necessitated because the inexperienced members quickly lose their raw edge. It's not that they become skilled, just accustomed to performing, thereby shedding their credibility as the untrained. The pair filling these shoes at the Purcell Room comprised Michael Dunbar (a freelance user experience designer, which seems a

### Get Connected

[RSS Feed](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Flickr](#)

### DanceTabs Contributors

Aimee Tsao | Alan Helms | Brendan McCarthy |  
Dave Morgan | Eric Taub | Graham Watts |  
Jane Simpson | Jann Parry |  
Jordan Beth Vincent | Kenneth Archer & Millicent  
Hodson | Kevin Ng | Laura Cappelle |  
Lewis Segal | Lewis Whittington |  
Lynette Halewood | Margaret Willis |  
Marina Harss | Matthew Lawrence |  
Natasha Rogai | Oksana Khadarina |  
Rym Kechacha | Steve Sucato | Valerie Lawson |  
Bruce Marriott (Ed)

### DanceTabs Tweets

### Related Posts

[Lucy Guerin Inc – Weather at Melbourne Festival – Melbourne](#)

[Julien Cottureau – Imagine Toi – London](#)

[RUBBERBANDance Group – Gravity of Center – London](#)

[Meryl Tankard – The Oracle – London](#)

[Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch – Nur Du \(Only You\), part of World Cities 2012 – London](#)

---

 Stumble it
 

---

 Subscribe by RSS
 

---

strangely appropriate job for this sort of performance) and Jake Shackleton (a former pianist now working as an environmental engineer with the Port of Melbourne Corporation). They are already beginning to look like seasoned stage performers, not least in employing creative comedic skills, both in their physical and spoken humour.



Michael Dunbar in in Lucy Guerin's *Untrained*.  
© Julieta Cervantes. (Click image for larger version)

They had been chosen well for the purposes of visually setting the scene for physical comedy. Dunbar is a large man, tall with a notable belly, but he moves gamely and with surprising flexibility; Shackleton has a full beard and a full head of hair, close cut at the sides. He resembles the American comedian, Zach Galifianakis (the small bearded one in the *Hangover* trilogy), giving his initial nervous stiffness an immediate humour. While they obviously failed abysmally to match the suppleness and range of the two trained dancers in the early trials (ranging from pirouettes to breakdance spins) they began to gain equality when carrying out physical theatre tasks (such as mimicking the movement of an inquisitive cat that is electrocuted and showing how they remove and replace a t-shirt).

The trained dancers – Alisdair Macindoe and Ross McCormack (whom I remember well from his recent work with Les Ballets C de la B) – are also in an overt competition with one another, with the second to demonstrate exercises always trying to outdo the first, while Mike and Jake are just about surviving each move!



Alisdair Macindoe, Ross McCormack, Michael Dunbar and Jake Shackleton in Lucy Guerin's *Untrained*.  
© Julieta Cervantes. (Click image for larger version)

It is probably counter-productive to seek too much insight from this caper and I was initially struck by a brief concern about dance being reduced to a series of circus tricks performed in turn by skilled and unskilled practitioners.

It seemed like a new celebrity dance game where the willing amateurs are put up to compete against their professional partners, heightened by the fact that we all clapped after each “round”, which is perhaps just one stage removed from holding up scorecards. It is also so unashamedly Antipodean and macho that it could have been the premise for a new *Fosters* commercial: imagine two men holding the cans of lager in their tent on the beach; the phone goes and a large man with a beer belly comes into shot, saying (imagine Aussie accent) “*how do I impress me girlfriend at the dance hall, mate?*”.....

The opening exercises exacerbate the differences between the two pairs of men, with the untrained always having to follow the trained, but their natural wit and humour quickly establishes a synergy and when the dancers begin to talk about themselves (including brief, incongruous monologues about relationships with their fathers) the four become equals in spite of the disparity in the freedom of their accompanying movement. *Untrained* may begin as if some cruel locker room initiation being dolled out to the High School nerds but it ends in one big bromance. You can just see these four together on a bachelor party to Las Vegas.

Tags: Alisdair Macindoe, Jake Shackleton, Les Ballets C de la B, London, Lucy Guerin, Lucy Guerin Inc, Michael Dunbar, Pina Bausch, Purcell Room, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Ross McCormack, South Bank, Untrained, Zach Galifianakis

[Previous Post](#)  
**English National Ballet Announces 2014 Season and New Barbican Performances**

[Next Post](#)  
**Mini-Gallery - ROH Chance to Dance pupils in The Rite of Spring**

### Recommended for you



October 28, 2012  
**Lucy Guerin Inc – Weather at Melbourne Festival – Melbourne**



December 18, 2012  
**Julien Cottreau – Imagine Toi – London**



May 4, 2013  
**RUBBERBANDance Group – Gravity of Center – London**

### Submit your comment

Your name  Your name is required

Your email  An email address is required

Website

Message

- Notify me of follow-up comments by email.
- Notify me of new posts by email.

# DanceTabs

## Popular tags

London, The Royal Ballet, Sadler's Wells, Royal Opera House, New York, George Balanchine, New York City Ballet, English National Ballet, Swan Lake, Christopher Wheeldon, San Francisco, Giselle, San Francisco Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, Frederick Ashton, Alexei Ratmansky, Kenneth MacMillan, Wayne McGregor, Romeo and Juliet, Paris Opera Ballet, Tamara Rojo, Tchaikovsky, Pina Bausch, The Nutcracker, Coliseum, Don Quixote, Jerome Robbins, William Forsythe, Mariinsky Ballet, Bolshoi Ballet

- Boston
- London
- Los Angeles
- New York
- San Francisco
- Sydney
- Washington

- Tags
- Archives
- Site Map
- Contact Us

---

DanceTabs © 2013 All Rights Reserved  
© All here is copyright DanceTabs and the author concerned. Do not steal our words or pictures please. Thank you.

☺