

Learning to turn on, tune in and drop out

STRUGGLE TO STAY ON THE RELENTLESS NEWS CYCLE

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LUCY Guerin doesn't tweet. She doesn't have a blog. Using the internet as a tool to generate news?

"It's not really my thing," shrugs the 50-year-old choreographer, a hint of an apology in her voice.

No, the Melbourne-based theatremaker prefers to pour a glass of wine, sit down and tune into the SBS nightly news.

It's certainly a sign of our times when an admission like that raises an eyebrow, or prompts curiosity from the younger generation.

It used to be struggling to Keep Up With The Joneses that haunted our moral consciousness; now, it's Keeping Up With The News that's set our competitive spirits racing.

So fascinated was Guerin by the increasing pressure on our society to keep in touch with current affairs that she created an explosive dance-theatre work, *Human Interest Story*, which explores the consumption of news and how it affects our everyday lives.

"It's stressful, don't you think?" Guerin asks. "There's absolutely no downtime these days. And that's very much the subject of this work — the fact that the news, whether you pay attention to it or not, is always murmuring away in the background of our lives.

"If you switch it off or neglect it you actually feel a sense of guilt, like you're shaking off your responsibility as a human being. It's a wonderful thing to know what's going on in the world but, God, it's hard sometimes."

One would expect Guerin to be a self-confessed news junkie, but she admits that "that hasn't always been the case. I'm much better now, but



it's actually something that I go in and out of, and something that I do struggle with sometimes. Especially when I'm making a new dance work as I tend to get absorbed into a bit of a bubble." Emotional attachment and our capacity to feel empathy is

a theme that runs through the piece. It's impossible, Guerin reckons, to respond to everything that happens — not because we don't care but because "there's so much suffering that it's difficult to feel that you're having the appropriate response to

Fascination: Lucy Guerin explores how news can affect our lives in *Human Interest Story* (above) Picture: Aaron Francis

DANCE
Human Interest Story
Belvoir



everything. Sometimes you hear about it and you brush it off and get on with your emails or making a cup of tea or whatever. There's a certain callousness about that."

Since its premiere in Melbourne last year, *Human Interest Story* has played to sell-out crowds in Perth and Adelaide, but don't think Guerin is resting on her laurels. Currently in rehearsals in Melbourne, Guerin and her eight dancers will continue to intensively workshop the piece right up until opening night at Belvoir on September 2.

Just like the news, the show constantly changes and shifts.

"We update it each time we perform it, so there are always current news articles being incorporated into it, and there's always one news story from that day in the show. It needs to be a show that stays incredibly current, for obvious reasons."

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Human Interest Story, Upstairs Theatre, Belvoir, Surry Hills; September 2-18, \$39-\$59, 9699 3444, belvoir.com.au Tickets are sold out, so contact the box office for information about returns or standing room