

The Canberra Times

Untrained dancing talent full of surprises



*Stars of Untrained,
from left, James Shannon, Dean Cross, Richie Merzian and
Allan Raeyers.*

Photo: Gary Schafer

By Jacqueline Williams

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It was not a good start to Allan Marc Raeyers' last dance rehearsal yesterday. As he made his way to the Canberra Theatre's Courtyard Studio he stumbled over a flight of steps.

Though Raeyers is not exactly nimble at about 2m tall, the bread packer by day and untrained dancer by night admits his nerves got the better of him.

In a matter of hours Raeyers, from Canberra, will stand in front of dozens of strangers in Lucy Guerin's dance experiment *Untrained*.

Visions of his acclaimed "moon walk" at high school formals have been flashing through his mind the past few days.

"I am totally out of my comfort zone," he said. "I was nervous two months ago at the audition, the nerves haven't really subsided."

Raeyers' mother encouraged him to audition for *Untrained*, which is said to be unlike any other contemporary dance production.

He will be joined on stage tonight by two professional dancers who have performed in theatres across Australia, and another like him, who has had no dance training.

The four men will respond to a series of written instructions, some ordinary, others hilarious. For Raeyers and his untrained partner Richard Merzian, there's no backing out.

Guerin said, "They [untrained dancers] stood out at auditions ... these two in particular are actually quite natural movers, although they're not trained, they are quite coordinated.

"I think they both have a secret interest in dancing and wanted to try something different."

Guerin has always been interested in movement and has worked with numerous highly trained dancers. *Untrained* gave her an opportunity to explore unrefined movement and how everyday movements expose who we are.

"Just seeing how brave they [untrained dancers] are, how courageous they are to attempt these really difficult things that are so far out of their comfort zone has been amazing," she said.

"You can see with each performer that their history has really influenced the way they move."

Guerin got more out of her experiment than she expected and what started as a workshop emerged into a rare, but comic, look at dance.

"It's an experience for the audience, where they can really empathies with the performers on stage."

Untrained at The Canberra Theatre tonight and tomorrow from 8pm.