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## Copycats dance to the tune of the pros

BY NICHOLAS ADAMS

30 Jun, 2011 07:29 AM

So they think they can't dance, but that's not stopping Richard Merzian and Allan Raeyers from trying. The two men stand in stark contrast: Mr Merzian, bespectacled and wearing a suit, is a public servant for the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency. Mr Raeyers, built like a rugby player and wearing a jersey to match, works as a bread merchandiser. The only thing they have in common is an affinity for dance.

Both lack the requisite training to be labelled dancers. Instead they are men who like to dance, but previously it has been behind closed doors.

Mr Raeyers said he had always wanted to dance.

"I like ballroom dancing, because you get to dance with beautiful ladies," he said.

Regrettably for him, director Lucy Guerin uses an all-male cast in *Untrained*.

The show moves through a series of tasks within a marked square on stage. The novice duo try to emulate the moves of accompanying professionals.

The choreography aims to highlight the honesty of the ways in which the novice dancers try to execute the moves. Despite five days of training before the performances, Mr Merzian joked that the "two professionals will just be cutting shapes, and we'll just be flopping about behind them".

The aspiring dancers beat more than 20 other enthusiasts who auditioned to be part of the show in Canberra.

The performance has been recast with local novices at each new venue as the production has pirouetted around the country to sell-out shows.

*Untrained* has tapped into the fact that dance attracts all types of men. By putting them on show it challenges perceptions of masculinity. Mr Raeyers said, "One of my friends is already calling me twinkle toes."

The untrained dancers attempt to balance being honest with performing for the public.

Mr Merzian said he was excited to draw on the audience's reaction to the performance.

"If you're not working with the crowd, you're missing out on the beauty of being on stage," he said.

"But then again, who knows? On the night, I might just freeze up."

• **Untrained will play at the Canberra Theatre Centre on July 29-30.**

