



Shawn Sartin/Daily Nebraskan

Members of "This Belle Tolles For You" join hands before rehearsal at Mabel Lee.

UNL dancers prove their commitment

By Gretchen Boehr
Senior Reporter

Dancers at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln have made a strong commitment to their art. They spend about 15 hours a week

in practice, plus take classes, have jobs and perform in outside dance activities.

Melissa Mapes-Raasch and Craig Ellingson are two such dancers, who perform together in "To Have And Have Knot," one of

nine dances in the Lincoln Contemporary Dance Theatre's fall recital, Nov. 2 to 5.

Despite her cold and his back injury, Mapes-Raasch and Ellingson practice their dance with a high level of energy and attention to

technique.

Laura Milan, dance professor at UNL and temporary program director, choreographed the piece, in which two dancers are tied together at the wrist by a four-foot stretch of rope.

Mapes-Raasch, a senior dance major from Sioux Falls, S.D., said she has been dancing since she was four years old.

"It's hard to see myself not dancing," she said. "Dance is so much a part of me."

dance PREVIEW

Craig Ellingson, a senior musical-theater performance major said he enjoys all areas of the performing arts.

"I can't say I'd rather sing, act or dance, I just want to perform," he said.

After graduation he wants to perform professionally in one of those areas.

Injuries are part of dancing and the show must go on, according to Ellingson and Mapes-Raasch.

Ellingson said he bruised a lower back muscle doing a dive roll while rehearsing "To Have And Have Knot."

And Mapes-Raasch said she has a trick knee that goes out once in a while when she dances. She injured her knee performing with LCDT last year.

But rehearsal continues for both dancers.

Ellingson is in five pieces for the recital, he said, which means about 15 hours of practice a week.

Mapes-Raasch is in three and said she spends about six to 10 hours a week in rehearsal.

She also is the director of Orchestis, a dance organization on campus open to all UNL students. She also takes 18 credit hours and works 30 hours a week.

Many people are under the impression dancers don't have to

take classroom theory courses, she said, but the requirements for dancers are quite similar to those of any other major on campus.

"It's difficult to fit in extracurricular activities with my schedule," she said.

Ellingson is taking 17 credit hours, works at his job and practices with the Lincoln City Ballet's "Nutcracker."

Mapes-Raasch's dance experience includes touring with the LCDT last year and dancing in New York last summer under the direction of Linda Nutter.

She also performed in "Generalities" last year.

During the summer, Ellingson performed in "Cabaret" with the Nebraska Repertory Theatre. Last year he performed in "Sweeney Todd," "A Christmas Carol," "Urban Interludes" and "Generalities."

"I try to do something in every department," he said.

Milan said Mapes-Raasch has a very powerful style of dance.

"Melissa is a risk-taker," she said.

This is evident in both Mapes-Raasch's and Ellingson's performance in "To Have And Have Knot," Milan said.

"This particular piece takes a lot of guts to do," Milan said. "Timidity is not going to make it and you have to take chances."

Mapes-Raasch said she plans to go on to graduate school to study choreography, but first she wants to go to New York and perform.

Ellingson said he wants to perform after he graduates, but he doesn't know exactly what art form he will choose.

"I enjoy the performing arts because they put you in touch with your feelings and emotions," he said. "When you perform on stage you're someone else, but there's still part of your life in it."

See DANCE on 10



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Craig Ellingson and Melissa Mapes-Raasch rehearse "To Have And Have Knot," one of nine dances to be performed by the Lincoln Contemporary Dance Theatre November 2 through 5 in the Howell Theatre.