

Dance performance raises money for spinal cord injuries

By Graig Uhlin , Arizona Daily Wildcat, April 19, 2000

Proceeds will help offset medical costs of quadriplegic UA

The dance performance, "Inspiration Heels," opening tonight will introduce information on the spinal cord and its injuries, as well as entertain with a mix of modern and jazz dance.

The event was organized and choreographed in part by Molly Cofman, a second-year dance and theater arts graduate student.

Cofman decided to put together this event after an accident rendered her friend Tony Peth, a University of Arizona physiology graduate, a quadriplegic.

"I wanted to do something good with something I'm passionate about," Cofman said.

All proceeds from the performance, above the production costs, will go to offset the medical costs the Peth family has incurred and also to ease Peth's daily struggle with spinal cord injury.

Cofman said Peth has not yet been told about the performance. She plans to visit him after graduation and present him with a video of the dance and a check for all the funds raised. "It's going to be a surprise," she said.

After three months of fundraising, Cofman has raised just over \$6,000. After the \$2,500 in production costs are removed and the performance finishes its two-day run, she hopes to meet her goal of \$10,000.

Cofman said the performance, part of her final masters of fine arts project, combines her long-standing interest to integrate the arts and sciences.

She accumulated the medical information on her own - pulling articles on spinal cord injuries at the library and working closely with the physiology department.

"I boiled down all the scientific garb to really access the general population," Cofman said, adding that the information will include "what a person who sustains a (spinal cord) injury might expect to experience in medical costs and their daily lives."

"It is very admirable of her," said Sam Watson, assistant professor of dance, who will be performing a piece he choreographed for the event. "She really did a lot of work ... to get the awareness out on spinal cord injury."

The performance - which features four pieces choreographed by Cofman and five from guest artists - addresses the theme of inspiration.

"In putting the evening together, I wanted to get people to think about what inspires them - how they can make their lives better," Cofman said.

Cofman has also included four actors who will read selections of poetry and inspirational quotations between each of the nine dances. She said this spoken aspect will not only speak to what the following dance will address but also works to tie all the separate dances together thematically.

"It will be an evening that reflects inspiration as well as hardships," Cofman said.



Aaron Farnsworth

Dance graduate student Molly Cofman rehearses her thesis project with dance freshman Claire Hancock and senior Gina Gral at the Gittings building Friday. The dance, "Inspiration Heels," plays tonight and Thursday at the Ina Gittings Theater at 7:30 p.m.