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Engaged Alvin Ailey dancers bring special bond to Lincoln Center

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Romance will be spinning on Lincoln Center's stage this season.

Alvin Ailey dancers Michael McBride and Samuel Roberts will perform together for the first time as an engaged couple, though their story dates back eight years when the two joined the company together and were paired as roommates on tour.

"I don't think it will feel any different," McBride said of performing alongside his fiancée.

The first two years of dancing and boarding together were chaotic and constantly moving. Intensive rehearsal schedules and whirlwind world tours don't lend themselves to roommate bonding time.

In 2011, however, McBride's sister passed away, causing him to miss the last few weeks of rehearsal before leaping into a 10-week tour overseas. Two weeks into the tour, McBride's emotions started catching



Alvin Ailey dancers Michael McBride, left, and Samuel Roberts will perform this week at Lincoln Center.

up with him and he turned to his roommate for support. "We realized we had more commonalities than we expected," McBride said of the first dinner the two of them shared.

In the months that followed, the two danced a duet in "Arden Court" and a solid friendship began.

By the next tour, Roberts introduced McBride to "Brothers and Sisters," a show he insisted watching with a glass of wine in hand. After performing, they'd set up a laptop between the two beds and binge watch the series. Eventually, this evolved into going on dates, though the couple

didn't announce their relationship to the company until they'd been dating for about a year.

"It's really great to have someone to travel the world with," McBride said of being able to enjoy the tour with Roberts at his side.

The most memorable choreogra-

IF YOU GO

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater performs June 14-18 at Lincoln Center. Visit alvinailey.org for details.

phy of the duo's relationship may be from the surprise proposal flash mob Roberts planned in January.

"Michael is a very particular man," Roberts joked of his idea. "And I'm a really big cheese-ball," McBride added. The two had watched videos of similar proposals online so Roberts knew spontaneous choreography was really the only way he could propose.

While the couple loves a good party, they're doing the New York thing of "invest first, party later," purchasing their first condo. It will be their first time living together in an apartment with a door, perhaps the most notable change in their relationship as the curtain rises this season.

BILL HEBERT