

The Outsider Chronicles

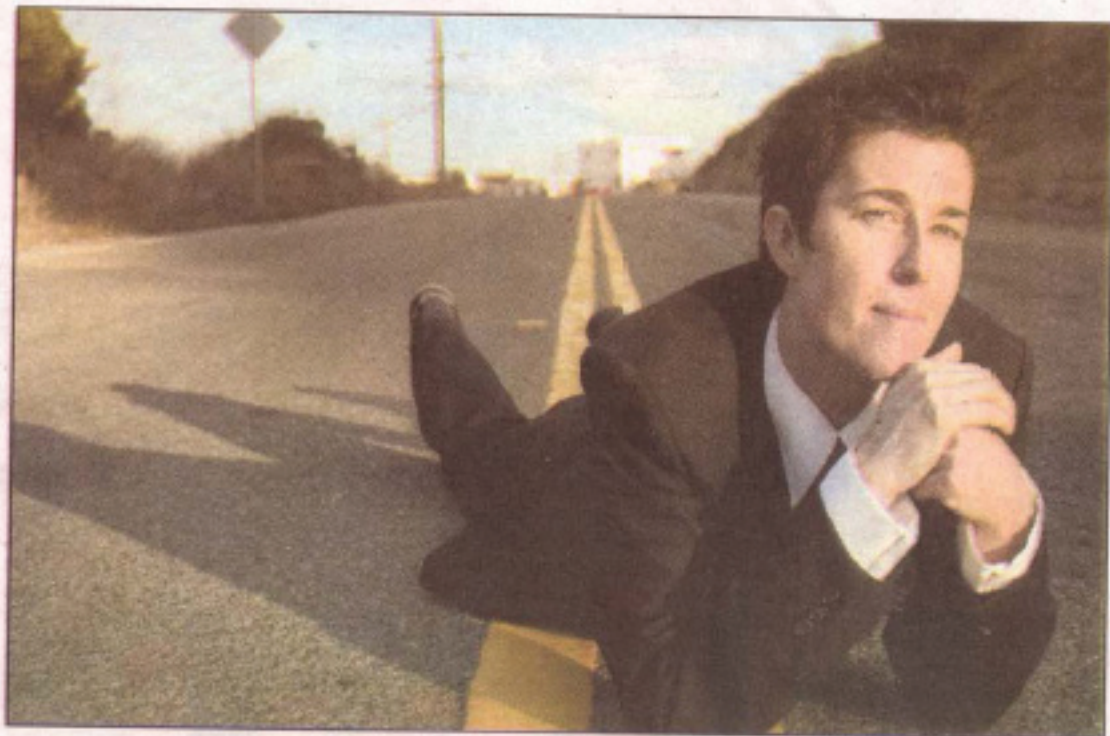
By **Sondra Solovay**

Fierce, captivating, novel, laugh-out-loud funny, and overwhelmingly intimate, *The Outsider Chronicles* establishes choreographer and central dancer Sean Dorsey as one of San Francisco's most important performance visionaries. Playing to a sold-out theater, Dorsey's compelling blend of dance and storytelling alternately elicits applause, giggles and tears. Part of the magic of Dorsey's work is his ability to nonchalantly introduce the dance community to transgender realities and the transgender community to the world of dance; while this balancing act would lead others to create bitter diatribes about "not fitting in" Dorsey navigates this terrain with a grace and dignity far beyond his 33 years. Few other nationally recog-

nized dancers must put up with mainstream reviews that, while complementary, discuss the size of the dancer's breasts. Similarly, few dancers have the hurdle of attracting audiences that are alienated by the medium itself. The consummate outsider himself, somehow Dorsey makes it all seem very natural. Unlike much of modern dance, his work is accessible, sophisticated, and personal. At heart he is a storyteller who expertly uses the tools of movement, poetry, and music to communicate.

Composed of five distinct but related dances created between 2003 and 2005, *The Outsider Chronicles* is a particularly interesting performance because it demonstrates Dorsey's progression as a choreographer. His earliest showcased creation, "Red Tie, Red Lipstick" (2003) is technically rawer

than his later work. Set to a poem by transgender hip hop poet



Sean Dorsey

Marcus Van, the pas de deux featuring fellow dancer Mair-Culbreth, is a powerful tale of police brutality against transgender and queer people explored with breathtaking clarity. Culbreth joins Dorsey in five of the six pieces and is a joy to watch. Of the two, her roles are more wide-ranging and this strong, talented dancer is clearly up to the challenge. In "Second Kiss" Culbreth transforms into a feisty fourth-grader as the two explore first loves and "passing." In the newer piece "6 Hours", Dorsey tackles parental relationships and the gender coming out process during a six-hour road trip with a lover. Here his use of space and movement is more sophisticated than in earlier pieces and the story more subtle, though delivered with the sweetness characteristic of his work. His writing is

exceptional for its poignancy: "I can respect that you need all that armor ... but I just figured by now I'd earned a place inside of it." The evening ends with the premiere of the solo piece "Creative" which takes on gender correction therapy with hilarious and touching results. In comparison to the rest of the show, here Dorsey addresses the audience directly, momentarily obliterating any remaining divide between performer and audience. *The Outsider Chronicles* is exceptionally inviting and totally charming. Watch for excerpts in the Women on the Way Festival at Dance Mission in January, 2006. Check out freshmeatproductions.org for more info. ♣