

Turning up heat on Fresh Meat

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(Courtesy photo)

Choreographer Sean Dorsey is the founder and artistic director of the Fresh Meat Festival, an annual showcase of transgender and queer artists.

SAN FRANCISCO ([Map](#), [News](#)) - The Fresh Meat Festival has come a long way in seven years. The annual celebration of transgender and queer performance has become so popular — boasting 20 sold-out shows at the ODC Theater in the past six years — that **Sean Dorsey**, artistic director and founder of **Fresh Meat Productions**, realized it was time to move the festivities from their old stomping grounds to the considerably larger Project Artaud Theater to accommodate the growing fan base and highlight larger ensembles.

“We have a huge and very enthusiastic following: the artistry is of outstanding caliber, and the overall experience is joyful, powerful, exciting, deeply moving. So our audiences just keep expanding — and our audiences are a wonderful mix of trans people, queer people, straight people, traditional dance lovers and theater lovers. Experiencing the energy and joy of the audience is a reason to come in itself,” Dorsey says.

The draw of the Fresh Meat Festival, which gets under way tonight and runs through Sunday, is that it's the only festival of its kind in **North America**. Known for its unparalleled diversity and credited with “raising the bar for LGBT performance,” the Fresh Meat Festival has gained an international reputation for its incomparable showcase of transgender and queer artists.

This year, Fresh Meat features professional opera, hula, modern dance, hip-hop, Afro-Colombian dance, theater, clogging and a gospel choir — to name a few.

“Each year I have a different curatorial focus, which allows for new incarnations of the festival. This year, to celebrate our move, we commissioned five ensembles who challenge the boundaries of traditional art forms. This is an important part of my vision: allowing trans and queer communities to see ourselves reflected onstage in traditional culture, reclaiming our place in history as important culture bearers and leaders,” Dorsey says.

Dorsey explains that Fresh Meat was founded to “address the fact that despite the incredible wealth of talent and artistry in our transgender communities, almost no one was putting us on the nation's stages or gallery walls or film screens.”

Essentially, the event was created to afford artists an opportunity and venue to spark dialogue and build community through art. At first, the festival was intended to be a one-time deal, but the community response suggested otherwise; Fresh Meat has since evolved into a nonprofit arts organization and presents the annual festival, art exhibitions, a film festival and performances by Dorsey's own award-winning dance company.

“I want the festival to be a joyful, moving celebration that deeply affects people and inspires change and healing,” Dorsey says. “I can guarantee that you'll laugh and cheer, that you'll probably shed a tear or two, and that you will leave changed in some way. I know that sounds lofty, but it's really true — it's a deep, transformational experience. And just a ton of fun.”

IF YOU GO

Fresh Meat Festival

Where: Project Artaud Theater, 450 Florida St., San Francisco

When: 8 p.m. today-Saturday; 7 p.m. Sunday

Tickets: \$15

Contact: (415) 863-9834; www.brownpapertickets.com; www.ticketweb.com