Past, present, future

Choreographers Robert Moses and Sean Dorcey discuss their new, history-inspired works.

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DANCE

This weekend choreographers Robert Moses and Sean Dorcey present new dances. Moses’ Hudson, inspired by the myth of the Greek hero whose face launched a thousand ships, is at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts; Dorcey’s The Secret History of Love, based on how LGBT people used to meet, plays Dance Mission Theater. Both choreographers started dancing in their formative years; they’ll be at Philanthropist for Movement, Vancouver for Dorcey — and began choreographing professionally in San Francisco. They recently talked to the Guardian about how they came to be where they are now.

SFBG: Do you remember how dance entered your life?
Robert Moses: We danced the way kids do. My sister and family members all danced, and I was trained to get together in clubs where you showed off the steps and you had a contest. You couldn’t just jump around a little bit. You had to be the very best dancer that you could be.

Sean Dorcey: My first memory is spinning round the round room in a hall to “How to Dance” by The Chords. There was a lot of music in my house, lots of artists in my family and there was a lot of space and encouragement for that kind of activity.

SFBG: How did your formal training in dance start?
Robert Moses: I think I can remember walking into my high school and there was a dance class that was part of a class called Advanced Drama. I started studying for the dance department and I started studying dance at 12. It was going to be recreational, but I found that I was the deepest kid.

SFBG: Are all our current generation and experience to our work. And in what way does that influence what you do?
Robert Moses: It influences what you do; there’s no way it wouldn’t. You’re a member of a group and you’re also an individual who’s changing and growing. Sure, I have put perspectives on American, African, and diaspora issues. The thing to remember is what you do is not who you are.

SFBG: As a transgender person, a queer person, and an immigrant person, an individual’s social identity changes your artmaking, and I hope that brings a heightened awareness and sensitivity to the kind of themes that I explore in my music such as family, love, or searching for a place in the world.

SFBG: How does the process of making a new piece start?
Robert Moses: It’s different each time. Sometimes it starts with a topic and sometimes with just a movement. It’s something that can also involve me in some way or the music, or talk more about a subject. I also consider what a piece will be presented within a particular frame. The movement itself is created in the studio by the dancers and myself.

SFBG: How does the process feel weirdly long...
Robert Moses: It’s all about the arc of the story; music, sound, and music, music, music. It takes from two to six hours in the studio to make the final piece. It’s almost music, music, music, words, words, words. Once it’s finished, I send the draft to the dancers and we make the movement together.

SFBG: What would you like us to know about the upcoming proms?
Robert Moses: We are talking about the Greek Helen and the notion of an idealized woman, but also about the way we are the partners of the gods. I am a fan of Carl Hancock Rux’s spoken word and music; he relates to the AIDS but I am really interested in how women react to the situations they are in.

SFBG: The show is based on archival research and features the real-life stories and voices of eight LGBT elders, from 1920s spokespeople to wartime lovers and the neatly supremacist 1950s.

ROBERT MOSES’ Kin

Feb 15-25, Sun, 8 p.m., 805-645
Novellus Theater

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts

700 Howard, SF

www.robertmoseskin.org

SEAN DORCEY DANCE

Thur/Sat/Sun, 8 p.m. (also Sat/Sun, 4 p.m.), 810-S25
Dance Mission Theater

3151 24th St., SF

www.brownpapertickets.com

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