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Dear Diary, in Dance

Choreographer Sean Dorsey uncovers the lives of a gay transgender pioneer in a deeply felt suite of modern dances.

By **Winston Gieseke**

Using real-life stories from the diaries of gay and transgender men, *Uncovered: The Diary Project* transforms tales of love, courage, pop idols, and bathhouse antics into a wonderfully imaginative and powerful theater piece that fuses modern dance with narrative storytelling.

The project — which innovative trans choreographer and dancer Sean Dorsey spent a year and a half researching—features a

two-part program of dances that explore universal issues of love, loss, belonging, and isolation derived from the specific experience of being a transgender individual.

One segment, *Lou*, is drawn from the journals of trailblazing transgender activist Lou Sullivan, the first transgender man to die of AIDS. When he died in 1991, Sullivan left 30 years of personal writings — many of them vivid testaments to the joys of gay sex — to the San Francisco GLBT Historical Society as a way of ensuring that the progress he'd made would live on.

"Lou literally opened the book of his life for us, giving us a naked, honest look at his inner journey as a trans man," says Dorsey. "He was so gorgeously articulate, candid, and descriptive in his diaries — it gave me such clear inspiration and vocabulary for the choreography."

The other piece, *Lost/Found*, is a hilarious duet that tells the story of a transgender man who's given the opportunity to vicariously experience the childhood he never had via a boy's diary that he buys at a thrift shop. The idea, Dorsey says, came out of his own experiences keeping a journal as a child as well as the journal of a young nontrans boy whose entries thinly masked his own identity issues and search for masculinity.

Featuring four performers — Dorsey, Brian Fisher, Juan de la Rosa, and Nol Simonse — the show enjoyed sold-out runs in San Francisco and New York in 2010, and Los Angeles in 2011. It will be touring the country in 2012.

While Dorsey understands that modern dance isn't a genre for the masses, he's made every attempt to make *Uncovered* as accessible as possible. "My goal as an artist is to make dances that people can actually understand and relate to."



Sean Dorsey Dance: 'Lou' 4 min trailer (from Un...

