

PERFORMANCE

Coming Together in Art, Sex, and Chaos with Fresh Meat



Kali Boyce, Scarletto, Sean Dorsey and Shawna Virago

By **Sondra Solovay**

Fresh Meat rocked the house with an explosive fifth anniversary event at ODC Theater. The sizzling transgender and queer performance festival — started by artistic director Sean Dorsey as a one-time event in 2002 — has played to sold-out crowds annually ever since.

A pioneer in transgender performance, legendary artist Kate Bornstein created *XX: Reflections on My 20th Birthday* to mark *Fresh Meat's* coming of age. With her typical gentle charm, spicy humor, and fierce insight, Kate invites the audience to journey with her as she celebrates her 58th year ("Yeah, I'm a 58-year-old man; this is what it looks like!") and simultaneously her 20th year since waking up "girl" in 1986. She shares stories of beauty and survival from a life filled with at least "two ages, three genders, and four or five sexualities" and imparts crucial lessons of self-love. Kate's billi-

moves with dynamic drumming. The deep reverberation of the music, like most of *Fresh Meat*, is felt as much as heard. JenRO, Juba Kalamka, Katastrophe, and Scarletto perform together — a very good choice. With Juba sporting little more than a red apron, the foursome gets the audience riled up with some raucous hip hop. DowneFX Dance Company follows, filling the stage with at least ten hip hop dancers. Feel-good performers, their tight moves, superb gymnastics, and a sassy aesthetic make the troupe noteworthy. ryka aoki de la cruz's compelling "Seppuku," though a little uneven at times, delivers some of the evening's most insightful analysis. ryka bemoans the death of all the cool/outsider characters in stories. Upon learning that, even in *Rent*, the trans woman of color dies, ryka's "*Rent* friends" defensively argue that at least nobody kills her. ryka responds,

those pasties!) Imani Henry tells a thought-provoking tale about losing family who have been "saved." Delivering powerful, all-female breakdance, Sisterz of the Underground's Extra Credit Crew is fresh and tight. Bay Area icon Shawna Viraga rocks out with her usual combo of compelling, biting lyrics and yummy guitar, despite some sound problems. Miguel Chernus-Goldstein's "Cherry Blossoms" is an audience favorite. This stunning, glowing, impeccable aerial dance highlights the beauty of the human form and the many forms in which human beauty comes.

Fresh Meat also features an art gallery. The show was too packed to access all the art, but of note is Dylan Vade's *Trannymals*. A San Francisco original, wickedly witty, reverent, and irreverent, *Trannymals* demand to be seen to be understood. Vade's vision

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First up is the heart-pounding rhythm of Taiko-Ren, a phenomenal high-energy group combining crisp

moves with dynamic drumming. The deep reverberation of the music, like most of *Fresh Meat*, is felt as much as heard. JenRO, Juba Kalamka, Katastrophe, and Scarletto perform together — a very good choice. With Juba sporting little more than a red apron, the foursome gets the audience riled up with some raucous hip hop. DowneFX Dance Company follows, filling the stage with at least ten hip hop dancers. Feel-good performers, their tight moves, superb gymnastics, and a sassy aesthetic make the troupe noteworthy. ryka aoki de la cruz's compelling "Seppuku," though a little uneven at times, delivers some of the evening's most insightful analysis. ryka bemoans the death of all the cool/outsider characters in stories. Upon learning that, even in *Rent*, the trans woman of color dies, ryka's "Rent friends" defensively argue that at least nobody kills her. ryka responds, "But someone does, the writers! ...I want new stories. If you go into things expecting to live, things change."

Fresh Meat artistic director Sean Dorsey's "Creative" is a delightfully clever, poignant story of a transgender 13-year old and his misguided guidance counselor, told through dance and spoken word and delivered with the perfection for which Sean is known. Shuga-Glida Blues Revue brings smooth sounds, and Harlem Shake adds the burlesque that can drive any audience to distraction. (Turns out they can twirl as well as shake, so keep your eyes on

those pasties!) Imani Henry tells a thought-provoking tale about losing family who have been "saved." Delivering powerful, all-female breakdance, Sisterz of the Underground's Extra Credit Crew is fresh and tight. Bay Area icon Shawna Viraga rocks out with her usual combo of compelling, biting lyrics and yummy guitar, despite some sound problems. Miguel Chernus-Goldstein's "Cherry Blossoms" is an audience favorite. This stunning, glowing, impeccable aerial dance highlights the beauty of the human form and the many forms in which human beauty comes.

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Reflecting on the awesome outlaw space brimming with art, love, sex, and chaos, Bornstein said it best: "If I'm an elder, I get to say, 'I am so proud of my children!'"

For more information about *Fresh Meat*, go to www.freshmeatproductions.org. For more information about *Trannymals*, go to www.trannymals.com ▼