

Sean Dorsey: Changing the Face of Modern Dance

By Petra Voorman

When most of us think of modern dance, we think of abstract, inaccessible movement by gossamer-clad non-transgendered people—art that certainly does not speak to the transgender experience.

Enter Sean Dorsey. Sean Dorsey is one of the world's first transgender modern dance choreographers. Dorsey makes innovative, passionate and deeply moving dances that give audiences insight into aspects of being transgender and queer. Dorsey's choreography explores transgender themes, including coming out (or not) to family, transphobic violence, love and relationships, the inadequacy of language, and our relationships with our bodies.

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While his work speaks directly to and for our community, Dorsey's work is praised by transgendered and non-transgendered audiences alike. Critics have called Dorsey "a powerhouse performer" whose work is "trailblazing," "exquisite," "stunning," and "intelligent and evocative." Dorsey regularly performs in theaters and festivals in his hometown San Francisco, and now tours his work nationally and internationally. His work has been requested by theaters from Salt Lake City to Stockholm.

"There is no one else doing what I'm doing. I know, because as a younger artist I ached for peers, for role models. I push through the periods of feeling isolated and focus on getting the work done, getting my work out there. It's incredibly important for trans communities to get to see ourselves reflected onstage. It's

affirming, empowering—unlike non-trans people, we don't have the luxury of seeing our lives positively reflected in the arts. I can't tell you how many people have approached me after watching me perform who were moved to tears, who thanked me for being who I am and doing what I'm doing."

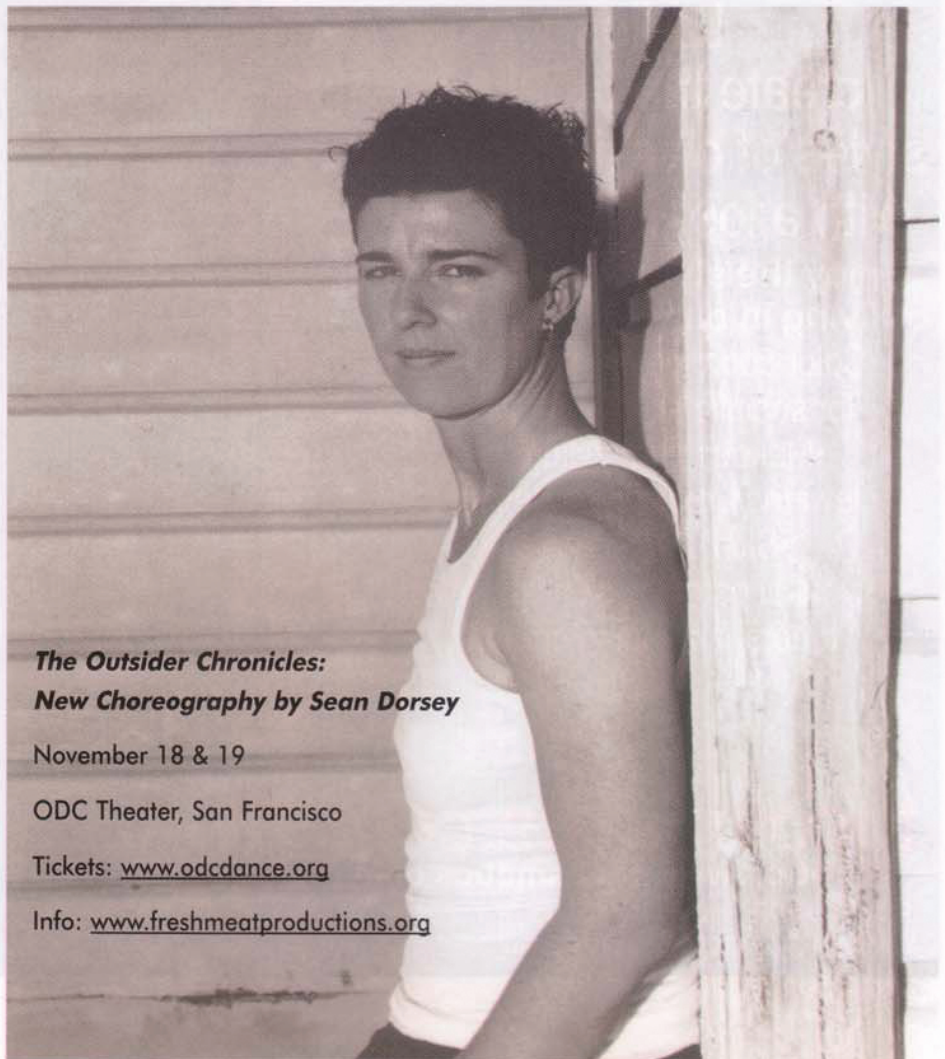
Dorsey's work does move audiences to tears—pieces like *Second Kiss*, a moving duet about a 4th grader's adrenaline-filled plunge into first love, (almost) passing as a boy. Hoping for a first kiss, the young trans character's fear of disclosure and rejection is palpable—even painful—but Dorsey provides comic relief through his humorous portrayal of typical 4th-grade angst and antics.

Dorsey made history last year when he became the first out transgendered artist

to receive a prestigious San Francisco Arts Commission Individual Artist Commission, which he is using to create a new concert of work. *The Outsider Chronicles* will premiere at San Francisco's ODC Theater November 18 and 19.

The Outsider Chronicles uses Dorsey's signature fusion of dance, text, storytelling and original music to dive into the world of the gender outsider. His new pieces will include trans tales of foiled first love, lovers' spats, coming out (or not) to family, road trips, police brutality, and the joys of therapy.

Dorsey is optimistic about the future of transgender arts: "We're finding our voices, we're taking up space, we're mentoring each other ... The world has only begun to see what we can do." *TV*



***The Outsider Chronicles:*
New Choreography by Sean Dorsey**

November 18 & 19

ODC Theater, San Francisco

Tickets: www.odcdance.org

Info: www.freshmeatproductions.org