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Fresh Meat fest offers antidote to Trump

NEWS

by David-Elijah Nahmod

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Actor Rotimi Agbabiaka is one of the performers in this month's Fresh Meat Festival. Photo: Courtesy Fresh Meat Productions

Sean Dorsey has been a trailblazer in the dance world. What sets his company, Sean Dorsey Dance, apart is the fact that Dorsey, who choreographs and performs with his dancers, is a transgender man.

"Contemporary dance and ballet alike have a long and continuing history of completely excluding trans bodies and stories," Dorsey told the Bay Area Reporter. "No trans dancers, no trans choreographers, no trans content. Modern dance and ballet still default to heterosexual partnering, heterosexual love duets, heterosexual thematic content, exclusively cisgender dancers and choreographers, binary gendered roles and costumes."

The success of Sean Dorsey Dance flies in the face of that tradition.

"As a transgender and queer choreographer/dancer, I want to give LGBTQ audiences the gift of seeing themselves onstage," he said.

"Seeing trans and queer bodies in exquisite motion, queer love duets, trans thematic content, queer sass and resilience and humor."

Audiences will get to see that during the upcoming Fresh Meat Festival, June 15-17 at Z Space in San Francisco.

Like many LGBTQ people, Dorsey, artistic director of the festival, was deeply affected when Donald Trump unexpectedly ascended to the presidency. Trump has made it clear that he intends to deport immigrants from the country, which could affect many queer couples. Trump has surrounded himself with a who's who of anti-gay politicians, most notably Vice President Mike Pence, a supporter of conversion therapy.

Just last week, many LGBT people were offended when Trump declined to issue a Pride proclamation, which President Barack Obama had done for all eight years of his presidency.

Dorsey calls Fresh Meat an "antidote to Trump."

"This nation is being 'governed' by a racist, anti-immigrant, anti-LGBTQ, anti-science, anti-Muslim, anti-intellectual, anti-earth, anti-world peace administration," Dorsey said. "The Fresh Meat Festival is about elevating the voices of trans and queer artists, especially LGBTQ artists of color. The performances we present are beautiful, powerful, timely, radical."

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And though Sean Dorsey Dance is one of the festival performers, Dorsey was quick to note that he's more of a curator for the Fresh Meat Festival – many different performances will be seen and heard, such as actor Rotimi Agbabiaka.

"There are 13 different artists over three nights," he said. "Audiences will get to see: opera, hip-hop, vogue dance, bachata, bomba, contemporary dance, theater, spoken word, folk-punk music, R&B, Americana music and standup-storytelling. There is truly something for everyone."

Dorsey spoke highly of the performers, most of whom are already well-known in their own right.

"It's really an exceptional lineup this year," he said. "We've got jaw-dropping vogue by House Of Energi; brilliant standup-storytelling by Devi Peacock; same-sex ballroom champions Robbie Tristan and Ernesto Palma; national queer bachata champions Jahaira Fajardo and Angelica Medina; genius singer-songwriters StormMiguel Florez and Shawna Virago; and fierce hip-hop by Embodiment Project."

Dorsey also addressed his hope for what audiences would take home after viewing the Fresh Meat Festival.

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"Community, nourishment, hope," he said. "An outlet for rage and frustration. An outlet for joy and bliss. Insight. Wisdom. Sass. Sexiness. Delight. Awe. Beauty. There is no other event like this in the nation -- people look forward to it all year long, tickets sell out fast, and our after-parties are legendary, too."

For ticket information, visit <http://freshmeatproductions.org/>.

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