



Dance Theatre on Adrenaline in Reston

Sean Dorsey Dance unpacks trans/queer perspectives with sass and playful humor.



From left: Sean Dorsey, Arvejon Jones, Nol Simonse, Will Woodward and Brian Fischer during a performance of 'Boys in Trouble.' Photo by Lydia Daniller

By [Mercia Hobson](#)

[Wednesday, May 23, 2018](#)

#Reston Community Center presented the Virginia premiere of the cutting-edge dance theatre production, "Boys in Trouble" on Wednesday, May 16, 2018, at Center Stage, Hunters Wood Plaza in Reston. In his newest work, Sean Dorsey, transgender and queer choreographer, dancer, writer and longtime trans activist, broke the audiences' hearts one moment, only to

have them yelp with laughter and applaud the next, generating a melting pot of unabashedly raw emotions.

Dorsey created "Boys in Trouble" to be extremely accessible and deeply moving to LGBTQ persons and straight persons alike. It unpacks toxic masculinity from trans and queer perspectives in brutal honesty.

ASKED IN AN INTERVIEW why people laughed at such deep subjects, Dorsey conceded that they laugh for many reasons. First, he said, his show employs "a lot of sass and playful humor." Also, as the artistic director, he and his dancers use humor as a way to crack open current loaded subjects such as gender expectations, transphobia, patriarchy, whiteness and white supremacy. And they do so through remarkable choreography and storytelling with irreverent humor. Dorsey said that his creative process, "Allows audiences to look at these subjects without judgment or shame."

Sometimes it is easier to say what something is not. "Boys in Trouble" is neither a political show nor about making a statement. Neither is it modern dance as Dorsey described being "cryptic, abstract and incomprehensible."

"Boys in Trouble" is dance theatre with stunningly gorgeous powerful movements; many in opposition, sweat illuminated in the stage lights arching above the strong dancers. Their movements possess clarity of line and body placement. The flow is communicative. "Boys in Trouble" incorporates the use of storytelling through narrative voice, the creation of dramatic situations and remarkable choreography.

It is, as Dorsey explained in the interview, dance theatre meant to convey universal emotions, "Love, longing, shame and our desire for connection and healing. ...I have a group of absolutely brilliant dancers," he said.

Dorsey acknowledged he could not have known how timely his project would become when he began it two years ago. In his program message to the audience, Dorsey wrote, "My dancers and collaborators and I talked, dreamed, wrote, cried, laughed, questioned, and imagined together over the last two years...all the process was deep, vulnerable, risky, beautiful and healing. This country has seen continued violence against black transwomen, black cis, and transmen and transpeople ...We've seen the birth of the #metoo movement...and renewed conversations about toxic masculinity."

In the opening scenes of "Boys in Trouble," the five dancers – Sean Dorsey, Brian Fischer, Arvejon Jones, Nol Simonse and Will Woodward – bring life the narration, "My arms grow the wrong type of feathers, or at least that's what they told me my entire life..." The dancers huddle together like a football team before a play; they laugh, huddle again and again, then collapse. "Different boys sniff it out in a heartbeat...I was born in the wrong capsule... I feel the heat of their laser gaze...There are inconsistencies in you boy...What the f_ _ _ _ are you?"

DORSEY acknowledged in the interview, he spent a very long time developing the structure and overall arc of the show. He hosted forums and dialogs on gender and masculinity. He listened to his dancers and collaborated.

"I want the audience, from the moment the lights go down to be drawn in, taken on a journey for those 90 minutes. I know, I guarantee that this work alters audiences and opens their hearts and minds...there is so much to be said because my number one task is to create a show that is deeply moving, and beautiful, and relatable."

Asked what fires his works, Dorsey replied, "I have experienced much joy and plenty of challenges and pain as a human and a transperson, and out of this, comes my art."

"Each of us is a glorious variation of hearts beating in the wrong direction." —Sean Dorsey
Dance, "Boys in Trouble"