

Monday, April 12, 2021

S A N F R A N C I S C O

BAY TIMES

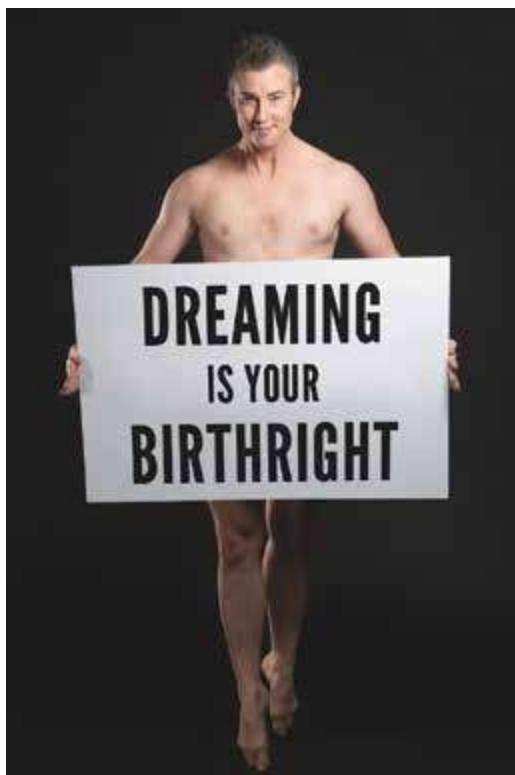
LGBTQ News & Calendar for the Bay Area

Sean Dorsey Dance Performs for You 'AT-HOME' April 16–18

The Arts, like all aspects of American life, have been turned upside down by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"For dancers, our body is our instrument—as are touch, partnering, and sharing breath," explains San Francisco-based transgender choreographer Sean Dorsey.

Last March, Dorsey and his award-winning all-queer ensemble Sean Dorsey Dance were in the rehearsal studio four days a week, creating a new full-length production *The Lost Art Of Dreaming*. When the pandemic hit, their entire project (and livelihood) was thrown into question.



"It felt like bitter irony," says Dorsey. "Our new project *The Lost Art Of Dreaming* investigates and imagines expansive Futures. Shelter in place hit, we were on lockdown and living in fear, and we were asking ourselves, 'What's this about expansive Futures?'"

From day one of shelter in place, however, Dorsey continued employing his dancers—and the company has met and rehearsed on Zoom every single week since. This April 16–18, the company will share the fruits of their creative labor with an online weekend event they call Sean Dorsey Dance's AT-HOME Season—and they're offering it for free with closed-captions for Deaf and Hard-of-hearing audiences.

Over the last year, the pressure to feel creative and productive was intense. Dorsey says, "I'd see artists on Instagram posting things like, 'Gosh, isn't the pandemic great for catching up on things and starting new projects?' ... to which my internal answer was, 'Ummmmm, no, the pandemic decidedly *isn't* great for trans and queer communities.'

Dorsey continues, "Sometimes we'd meet [on Zoom] and just needed to share space and conversation, sometimes we felt super creative, sometimes we felt awful and super uncreative. We're like a family that way—being present and showing up as our true selves, however we feel. I am so blessed by my incredible dancers/collaborators."

Since rehearsing or performing in person is off the table until the Bay Area reaches herd immunity, or at least until the dancers are all vaccinated, Dorsey had to take another approach to his choreography.

"Over the last year, we've met on Zoom to plan and choreograph a series of outdoor dance films," he says. "I was interested in exploring the Body as a portal between the present moment and the Future—taking ourselves outdoors and putting our bodies in relationship with the earth, Time, the sky, and the sun."

Dorsey started a collaboration with acclaimed Bay Area cinematographer Annalise Ophelian (who directed the *MAJOR!* documentary about pioneering Black transwoman activist Miss Major, and the groundbreaking SYFY series *Looking for Leia*). Following strict COVID protocols, Ophelian filmed the company in various outdoor locations.

The result is a series of eight stunning dance films, featuring the company in a host of outdoor locations: on hillsides, under trees, along shorelines, and more. These films are exquisite, intimate, and radiate with Dorsey's gesture-rich choreography. Dorsey and his dancers Nol Simonse, Will Woodward, and Raul Torres-Bonilla are magnificent in costumes designed by longtime artistic collaborator, Costume Designer Tiffany Amundson.

These dance films will premiere—along with a special message from Dorsey, and a sneak-peek of upcoming events that are part of "*The Lost Art Of Dreaming*" project—at Sean Dorsey Dance's AT-HOME Season this April 16–18. Tickets are free (donations are welcome), and the

program will be Closed-Captioned for Deaf and Hard-of-hearing audiences. Dorsey himself is Hard-of-hearing, and has a passion for disability justice.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, says Dorsey, it brought an unforeseen urgency to the project. “As a company, we had to grapple with what it means *now*, of all times, for trans and queer communities to try to dream and imagine expansive Futures.”

Dorsey continues, “In the face of a deadly global pandemic, continued state violence against Black communities, escalating anti-trans legislation across the country, and a powerful civil rights movement for Black Lives—we know that more than ever before, our communities *need* supportive spaces to dream and imagine our expansive, liberated Futures.”



Indeed, Dorsey intends to do just that in a myriad of ways: in coming months, Dorsey and his company will host “DREAM LABS”: free, supportive workshop gatherings where participants are supported to dance, write, and creatively express what it is they most dream of. Dorsey will also teach his popular trans-supportive dance classes and workshops.

And, last but not least, Sean Dorsey Dance will return to the studio to create a new full-length dance-theater work for stage: *The Lost Art Of Dreaming*. The company plans to perform the world premiere performances in April 2022 at San Francisco's Z Space before taking the work on tour across the U.S.

"When our communities are safer, and have had supported access to the vaccine—when it is truly safe to gather in person," says Dorsey, "then we'll return to these community engagement elements of the project, and get to return to the rehearsal studio."

Dorsey continues, "I can't wait to be with my collaborators and our audiences in person again."

A Dream Consortium

A consortium of 5 prestigious presenters co-commissioned *The Lost Art Of Dreaming*: American Dance Festival (Durham, NC), Dance Place (Washington, D.C.), 7 Stages (Atlanta, GA), Velocity Dance Center (Seattle, WA), and San Francisco's own Queer Cultural Center (San Francisco, CA; producers of the National Queer Arts Festival). The work is also being developed through residencies with the National Choreography Center in Akron (Akron, OH).

Each of these presenters will support the project during its creation, and will present the work on tour.

Dance Place, a multi-faceted dance venue in Washington, D.C., has supported and presented Dorsey several times since 2014, including hosting Dorsey in Creation Residencies.

Associate Curator & Producer Sarah Greenbaum shares, "Sean is an incredible artistic partner, a thoughtful community organizer, and an exceptional dancemaker and teacher. Each time Sean Dorsey Dance comes to D.C., Sean and his collaborators fill our theater (and our community!) with care and joy."

Heidi Howard, Artistic Director of Atlanta's 7 Stages theater, has also commissioned Dorsey multiple times and supported his work with creation residencies (including Dorsey's acclaimed *The Missing Generation* about the early AIDS epidemic).

Howard explains, "We really feel that, now more than ever, we need artists to dream a new reality—so we can break down the binary systems of a broken old norm. Sean is a visionary who we know will take us on this journey in the most beautiful way. We can't wait to share his new work with Atlanta audiences."

Erin Johnson, Interim Artistic Director and Managing Director of Velocity Dance Space in Seattle, WA, joins the list of presenters who have brought Sean Dorsey Dance back again and again.

Johnson says, "Sean Dorsey is a hug on a mission. He is fiercely passionate about sharing stories and celebrating human-ness through dance, and his work, from dance moves to emails to our

staff, is lovingly done and thoughtfully crafted.” Johnson adds, “Dorsey is a change-maker whose vision will have a lasting impact.”

Sean Dorsey Dance will visit Velocity, Dance Place, and 7 Stages as part of a planned 10+ city tour across the U.S., touring the work on and off through 2024.

“And Sweden! We’re going back to Stockholm!” adds Dorsey exuberantly.

Imagining expansive, joyful, and liberated Futures feels like just the balm we all need right now: but be sure to register in advance for your free ticket, since you’ll need a special web link to access the free AT-HOME program!

Sean Dorsey Dance’s AT-HOME Season

April 16–18, 2021

April 16 @ 5 pm; April 17 @ 5 pm; April 18 all-day on-demand

www.seandorseydance.com

Published on April 8, 2021