



David Le of Sean Dorsey Dance in 'The Lost Art of Dreaming.' Photo by Lydia Daniller

Utopia, please: Sean Dorsey Dance's 'The Lost Art of Dreaming' returns to refresh spirits

A year after its premiere in SF, the 'full-throttle' show returns after spreading liberating queer reverie throughout the country

By MARKE B. SEPTEMBER 26, 2023



"Dreaming is your birthright!" proclaims groundbreaking trans dancer [Sean Dorsey](#) and his company in the celebratory spectacle that is "[The Lost Art of Dreaming](#)" (Fri/29-Sun/1 at Z Space, SF). The show, which is a culmination of Dorsey's participatory philosophy of queer-trans liberation and centering, premiered in SF a

culmination of Dorsey's participatory philosophy of queer-trans liberation and centering, premiered in SF a year ago to acclaim, and has since been on the road around the country, from Seattle, WA to Reston, VA, embedding the seeds of healing and spreading fairy dust to a community exhausted by constant attacks on its right to exist.

"The Lost Art of Dreaming is "a fusion of full-throttle dance, intimate storytelling, intricate costuming, and exquisite queer partnering" performed by the stellar company, and accompanied by a gorgeous "soundscore" of new and commission musical works, including artistic polymath Dorsey himself singing for the first time. And the show for everyone: "If you hate modern dance, this is the show for you!" says Dorsey. "It's accessible, and is rooted in story and actual human experience: It's not abstract, snooty, or unintelligible. This is dance by humans, for humans. And it's about how blessed we are to be here, right now, right here."



In the **year since I last spoke with Dorsey** about the ever-evolving show, some of his own dreams have come true, **including winning an Emmy Award for his work** on the short film *Sean Dorsey Dance: Dreaming Trans and Queer Futures*, produced by KQED and directed by Lindsay Gauthier. Another feather in the cap of one of our most vital artists. I spoke with Sean about the show, its soundscore, and the need to revel in queer joy right now more than ever.

48 HILLS *First off, congratulations on the Emmy! What was it like to win, especially for something that highlighted your artistic history in the queer community?*

SEAN DORSEY You know, as a kid, I absolutely NEVER imagined I could become a professional dancer, let alone a choreographer and cultural producer—because I never saw a single transgender person in modern dance. It wasn't like "oh, I don't think I'm good enough" – the possibility literally didn't even exist in my mind. Because the world told me trans people didn't belong in Dance.

So the past 20 years of my creative process, my choreography, and my activism have been about changing culture, and creating doorways and pipelines for trans and queer folks.

So when our team won an Emmy for the short documentary “Sean Dorsey Dance: Dreaming Trans & Queer Futures” ... I mean, it was already incredible having this gorgeous KQED-produced film made profiling me and my work (directed by the amazing Lindsay Gauthier). That alone is a gift. But then to win an Emmy award?!? As a transgender person, I am so proud to have an Emmy statuette in my home!

48 HILLS *It's been a year since *The Lost Art of Dreaming* was last seen in San Francisco. Can you tell me how it has evolved, and how your own artistic practices or philosophy may have evolved along with it?*

SEAN DORSEY Since the world premiere last year, we've toured the show to eight cities (and counting!) — from Seattle to Stockholm. And I can viscerally feel how the show just keeps getting deeper and juicier. It's a great privilege to get to tour a show so extensively. It allows us to really hone the show.

When we go on tour, we do a week-long residence in each city, so we get to really connect with local communities as we lead workshops, community conversations and more. The show itself has been enriched and informed by all of this community engagement.



Sean Dorsey. Photo by Lydia Daniller

48 HILLS *The global backlash against LGBTQ+ rights has only gained steam since the Lost Art of Dreaming premiered. Why is dreaming a transgender and queer utopia more essential than ever?*

SEAN DORSEY You said it so beautifully: we deserve not just liberation but utopia! YES!

That is actually the genesis of this project: I felt called to create a show that in turn calls us to return to the Source of all things: longing. Gravity, magnetism, love, orbiting planets—everything in creation is driven by the pull of longing. And our desires and dreams are a living force that deserve our collective love and attention, especially if we are seeking justice and liberation.

And let us not forget about JOY! In the face of such escalating hate and violence against our communities, we NEED joy, we need pleasure, we need love and we need each other.

48 HILLS *This has been a big tour, with lots of dates. How has “The Lost Art of Dreaming” been received on the road?*

SEAN DORSEY OK, this is another WOW. Audience feedback to “The Lost Art Of Dreaming” has been so, so deep—the post-show conversations in the lobby, the messages, emails and DMs I get from people who have seen the show.

People tell us they’re moved to tears all throughout the show, that this work is touching them deeply, stirring and awakening that Divine but shut-down place inside of them where their dreams have been tucked away, censored, or harmed. This show reminds them that dreaming is their BIRTHRIGHT, that they are worthy of joy and pleasure and love and connection.

Because the show is also about joy, pleasure and awe, there’s also hooting, stomping, snapping and whistling from audiences during the show that tells us the work is really resonating with them.



From 'The Lost art of Dreaming.' Photo by Kegan Marling

48 HILLS *Tell me a little bit about the music—many people contributed original and commissioned music, including yourself! What was it like to compose music for your own work, and how did you choose the others*

SEAN DORSEY Music has been a passion and a calling since I was young: I started playing piano when I was five, and I've composed music for a long time. I've directed all of my shows' soundscores, which always includes working closely with composers.

But this is the first show of mine (it only took me 19 seasons lol) where I sing, and where I've composed music for the soundscore. It was sort of a "coming out" for me!

I am blessed to work with such incredible composers: Jesse Olsen Bay, Anomie Belle, LD Brown, Frida Ibarra, Alex Kelly, Ben Kessler and Kelsey Lu. The music in this show is soul-stirring, ecstatic, and divine!

And I have so much love for my brilliant dancer-collaborators: Brandon Graham, Héctor Jaime, David Le, and Nol Simonse. And obviously we get a lot of attention for the stunning costumes in the show, designed by Tiffany Amundson, Krystal Harfert and Melissa Castaneda. Our Technical Director/Goddess Emily Paulson another genius, as is gorgeously talented Lighting Designer of 20 years (and counting!) Clyde Sheets.

SEAN DORSEY DANCE: THE LOST ART OF DREAMING Fri/29-Sun/1 at Z Space, SF. [Tickets and more info here.](#)