



Goldies Dance winner Sean Dorsey
By Deborah Giattina
One look at Sean

Dorsey — a debonair dancer with slightly mussed hair and innovative modern dance choreographer — and two words instantly come to mind: dip me!

But watching him dance, you see more of a rough-and-tumble Gene Kelly than a gliding Fred Astaire. Which isn't to say he can't throw down a steamy tango, as he does in *Red Tie, Red Lipstick*, a moving pas de deux about violence against a transgender couple. Dorsey featured the piece, with narration by trans poet Marcus Van, in his first full-length show, *Outsider Chronicles*, staged last year at ODC Theater and soon to be remounted Nov. 16 to 18 at the Dance Mission Theater.

Since moving to San Francisco in 2001 from Vancouver, Dorsey has blazed a fierce trail for transgender performers. He immediately became enamored with the city when he met site-specific choreographer Lizz Roman while visiting here with the Kokoro Dance company. "There was very little release technique or inversion work in Vancouver," the native Canadian recalls. "I totally fell in love with her [Roman's] movement and what she was doing."

The feeling was mutual, and Roman gave the young dancer a spot in her company. Dance Brigade founder Krissy Keefer also went mad for Dorsey, granting him a solo slot in the now-defunct Lesbian and Gay Dance Festival. Even our pampered SF LGBT audience wasn't used to seeing butch-looking dancers like Dorsey onstage, and its response was ecstatic.

By the spring of 2002 he was in ODC Theater's Pilot Program, which nurtures emerging choreographers as they develop new work eventually showcased on the theater's floor. Three months later he founded the groundbreaking Fresh Meat Productions, which brings trans and queer performers, filmmakers, musicians, and writers together annually to tell their stories through their chosen artistic discipline. Since the first two-day show at ODC Theater that summer, Fresh Meat has moved on to cosponsoring Tranny Fest, a festival of independent trans cinema now helmed by Dorsey's partner, filmmaker Shawna Virago, and also helped to organize national tours of trans artists. Currently, Dorsey, the nonprofit's artistic director, is organizing a show for a trans printmaker at the Femina Potens gallery and another solo show for a trans visual artist.

Amid all the organizing, marketing, and promoting, Dorsey brought his own point of view to queer performance with last year's *Outsider Chronicles*, via an individual artist grant from the San Francisco Arts Commission. Written and choreographed by Dorsey, the program combines modern dance with music and narration in five stories that reflect the life of a transgender person — as well as any human being who has ever had a crush, a secret, or a high school guidance counselor with a textbook full of bad advice. Each vignette (most performed with dance partner Meir Culbreth) expresses a language of movement that is boldly real and acutely honest.

Through Fresh Meat and his own choreography, Dorsey has been able to combine art and activism in a way that creates alliances, fosters a community of like-minded artists, and changes our notion of what defines dance and, at its most basic level, our bodies. Next on the horizon, the onetime housing and poverty activist who realized his dance career almost accidentally while on a hiatus from grad school plans to use his Gerbode Emerging Choreographer Award to continue combining his two great passions. Tentatively titled *Some Went Untold*, the envisioned piece will be based on interviews Dorsey conducts with trans folk across the land.

"I'm still, like, 'Hello, hello, hello, where are all the trans dancers?'" Dorsey says. "I'm hoping very soon that there will be more trans dancers to work with." He also hopes to find the time to learn ballroom dance. Let the dipping begin!
(Deborah Giattina)