

Acclaimed Outsider Chronicles Returns To San Francisco

By Sister Dana Van Iquity

Published: November 16, 2006

Sold-out houses. Standing ovations. Audiences moved to tears. After a wildly successful premiere last fall and touring engagements in New York and Washington, The Outsider Chronicles is back in San Francisco by popular demand. For one weekend only, Dorsey brings back his widely celebrated dance concert. If you were one of many people turned away from last year's completely sold-out run, or if you want to see the show again, this is your chance.

In an exclusive tête-à-tête with Sr. Dana, Dorsey explains what people can expect from the show. "There's funny as hell; there's sensual and sexy; there's the painfully familiar parts of our pasts; there's powerful – and there's healing...all in one jam-packed hour," he says.

"People hear the words 'modern dance' and they run for cover," Dorsey continues. "Modern dance has a reputation of being cryptic and inaccessible – even pretentious. People come to this show and change their minds about modern dance. It can be accessible, and it can be relevant to our queer and trans lives. My artistic goal is to make powerful work that really moves people in the most visceral way I know how – with the body and with storytelling."

"Audiences come up to me and say, 'I've never seen my queer story or my transgender self onstage like that. I could relate to those dancers, those characters. I feel like I was finally seen. Thank you.' And that's what it's all about for me," he says with a compelling grin. "In certain ways, it is definitely isolating and lonely sometimes to be making work without a community of peers – a community of trans choreographers. I have to create my own community: trans musicians and visual artists, queer performers, activists, and writers." He adds assertively, "I think we trans and queer people have to get a hell of a lot more creative to find and make the community we need. But our art is all the richer for it."

Dorsey has taken the Bay Area by storm with his trailblazing choreography. He was recently awarded a 2006 Isadora Duncan Dance (IZZIE) Award for Ensemble Performance of his groundbreaking choreography and the GOLDIE Award for Dance. Dorsey is the first transgender artist to receive an individual artist commission from the San Francisco Arts Commission, and was recently awarded a prestigious Wallace Alexander Gerbode Choreographer's Commission.

The Outsider Chronicles is a full-evening concert of dances that dive headfirst into the world of the "gender outsider" – revealing aspects of coming out and living as transgender. Using his signature fusion of modern dance, theater, and storytelling, Dorsey puts a genderbent twist on foiled first love, lovers' spats, coming out (or not) to family, "til death do us part," and the joys of therapy. These are full-bodied, powerful dances that use the experience of being transgender as a lens into universal questions of love, belonging, and place. Articulate, accessible, irreverently humorous, and deeply moving, Dorsey's work is celebrated by queer and straight audiences alike.

The Outsider Chronicles is performed by Dorsey along with Courtney Moreno and Sonia Reiter, and is the featured culmination of the month-long ManiFestival at Dance Mission (Dance Brigade's Festival for Social Change). The show consists of four stories. "Second Kiss" is a moving duet about a 4th grader's adrenaline-filled plunge into first love – (almost) passing as a boy. Hoping for a first kiss, the young character's fear of disclosure and rejection is palpable, but Dorsey provides comic relief through his humorous portrayal of typical 4th grade angst and antics. "Red Tie, Red Lipstick" is a pas de deux set to a poem by transgender hip hop poet Marcus Van that narrates the police brutality encountered one night by a queer/transgender couple. "In Closing" is a bittersweet look at the inevitable, irreversible processes of both falling in love and dying. It is an intimate duet for Dorsey and dance partner Courtney Moreno that is deliberate, tender, and sensual. "6 Hours": when two new lovers set off on a road trip to see family, they tackle the decision to come out (or not) and their budding relationship is put to the test. This road trip gone wrong is painfully familiar for anyone who's been confined in a car for an extended period of time with the person they love. "Creative" is a humorous dance theater solo that turns the very serious phenomenon of childhood "gender correction therapy" on its head. Dorsey plays a self-assured transgendered 13-year-old forced to endure his guidance counselor's attempts to "redirect" his gender expression. The results are unexpected: Dorsey turns the tables on the adults and the results are powerful, hilarious, and revealing. In "Creative," Dorsey embodies the queer adolescence so many of us survived – by being at turns sassy, brassy, vulnerable, and fragile. Navigating his way through the oppressive strictures of the grown-ups around him, Dorsey is forced to decide between fitting in or being "out."

Dorsey's work is carving new space for transgender and queer bodies and stories in modern dance. His work is a powerful fusion of modern dance, text, storytelling, and theater. His dances reveal aspects of coming out and living as transgender and queer to evoke universal questions of love, belonging, and relationship.

Among Dorsey's many accomplishments, he also serves as performance director for SF's TrannyFest film and video festival, and he is also the artistic director of the nation's most successful transgender arts organization, Fresh Meat Productions. Dorsey and Fresh Meat have played a leading role in fostering the Bay Area's growing transgender arts community, promoting bold new voices that have altered and enriched San Francisco's artistic landscape.

"There's a reception after the show on Thursday November 16 to celebrate opening night and to announce the public launch of my new project/concert that I'm creating with the Queer Cultural Center with support from a prestigious Gerbode Choreographer's Commission," Dorsey tells Bay Times. "Come talk to me after the show about my work and about my new work – which will involve lots of dialogue and input from the trans community. This new project is about telling our community's stories onstage."

The Outsider Chronicles will play at the Dance Mission Theater, 3316 24th Street @ Mission, Thursday through Saturday, November 16-18. Curtain at 8pm. Tickets are \$15.00, with advance tickets recommended – these shows will sell out. Contact the box office at (415) 273-4633, or for advanced tickets, try www.brownpapertickets.com.

