

DANCE PARTY

Fresh Meat Festival

Sixth annual event features work by transgendered, queer performers

Kate Schatz

Thursday, June 14, 2007

The phrase "fresh meat" may conjure up a lot of images, but a tranny-glam rock performance probably isn't one of them. Neither is a "goth dyke" writer from Los Angeles, a queer hula troupe or a radical transgender aerialist hanging from the ceiling. But this is San Francisco, and these are the performers audiences will see at the sixth annual Fresh Meat Festival.



"It's the only festival of its kind," says Sean Dorsey, the founder and artistic director of Fresh Meat Productions. "This year we're featuring nine world-premiere performances by nationally recognized artists who put their transgender and queer twists on traditions."

These twists include Na Lei Hulu I Ka Wekiu's Fresh Hula, which blends traditional and contemporary versions of the Hawaiian dance; the cumbia and mapale dances of Adriana Sanchez's Colombian Soul; and the drumming of Taiko Ren. Other performers include performance artist Imani Henry, aerialist Miguel Chernus-Goldstein, and Ryka Aoki de la Cruz (the "goth dyke" writer).

This year's lineup is a bit dance-heavy, which is no coincidence. Dorsey is a transgender choreographer, and he founded Fresh Meat in part to address the fact that "transgender and queer dance artists had fewer opportunities to present our work in high-production-value theater." He adds that "the trans and queer communities have been alienated from dance; it hasn't reflected our lives or stories, and so (Fresh Meat) is also a way to inspire and show our communities that these bodies do belong in dance."

Fresh Meat began as an event organized by a group of artists and activists; it later morphed into Fresh Meat Productions, an arts organization that offers year-round transgender arts programming.

Many communities look forward to this festival, which is what Dorsey wants. "The audience is an amazing convergence of people," he says. "You have these mainstream heterosexual dance lovers meeting up with young gender-queer folks who've never set foot in a dance theater." Much of this anticipation is due to Fresh Meat's reputation; Dorsey and his collaborators have been credited with raising the bar for LGBT performance with their high production values and top-notch performers.

The festival, Dorsey says, "is a way for (the trans and queer communities) to gather together and ... finally see ourselves reflected onstage in a positive and authentic way. There is an explosion of incredibly dynamic, groundbreaking, inspiring transgender artists in this country right now, and America needs to see us."

8 tonight and Fri., 7 and 10 p.m. Sat., ODC Theater, 3153 17th St. (at Shotwell Street), S.F.
\$15 (advance purchase recommended). (415) 863-9834, www.ticketweb.com.
www.freshmeatproductions.org.

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