

Articles by Jamie Windborne

Fresh Meat 2007 celebrates transgender arts community

MISSION DISTRICT — The 6th Annual Transgender and Queer Performance Festival, Fresh Meet 2007, took place at the ODC Theater June 14 through 16. Hailed as the Bay Area's highest profile transgender arts event, Fresh Meat 2007 was a featured presentation of the 10th Annual National Queer Arts Festival and part of Gay Pride Month.

The program included Hula, taiko, modern dance, traditional Colombian dance, theater, hip hop, aerial dance and much more. This year's Fresh Meat Festival featured nine world premieres by nationally recognized artists who put transgender and queer twists on traditional forms.



Artistic director **Sean Dorsey** curated the special lineup, calling it "an extraordinary powerhouse lineup of artists who are reclaiming tradition and blazing new paths with their art." Performances included Sean Dorsey, Colombian Soul, Na Lei Hulu I Ka Wekiu, Taiko Ren, Freeplay Dance Crew, **Imani Henry**, **Miguel Chernus-Goldstein**, **Shawna Virago**, **Julia Serano**, **Ryka Aoki de la Cruz** and Triple Threat Taiko.

The festival is especially important to Bay Area's growing transgender arts community because of its break-through presentations in bringing forward vibrant voices that enrich San Francisco's diverse lifestyles.



The festival's premiere performances included artistic director Sean Dorsey's new dance theater trio that explored bullying and the brutal consequences of resisting gender norms. Recognized as the nation's first out transgender modern dance choreographer, Dorsey presented "Bullied", a dance theater piece for a trio of dancers (including **James Graham** and **Adam Kenyon Venker**) navigating their way into, through or out of masculinity, while confronting the brutal consequences of bullying.

According to Dorsey, "The transgender community faces violence and attempts suicide at double to three times the rate of the general population. It often starts with bullying. Being different, and betraying masculinity in particular, is not tolerated — it's punished, and it's punished severely."



Dorsey's choreography for this performance combined eloquent forms with tense moments that explored rough interactions and dynamic variations of space between the dancers. The intimate and sometimes horrifying sketch of a gender queer youth bullied by schoolyard predators evoked repressed emotions while examining the physical invasion of personal space. "I got shoved into a metaphorical locker — more so than I care to tell," Dorsey's character narrated within the theater piece.

Freeplay Dance Crew's trans/queer dancers re-defined hip hop with their new ensemble piece, "Wait A Minute". Freeplay Dance Crew, myspace.com/freeplaydance, was founded in 2000 by **Joshua Klipp** and **Jonathan De Lima**. They have appeared on stages such as the San Francisco Hip Hop Dance Festival and the San Francisco Pride Main Stage.

"Wait A Minute", choreographed by **Sarah Bush** and the rest of the FDC ensemble, worked up the audience with its playful and flirtatious dance maneuvers. The highlight of the performance was when the dancers formed a single line, one behind another, and removed each others' shirts to signal a gyrating, floor-slapping climax to the act.

Julia Serano closed out the evening with a biting, non-fiction monologue that explored the realities of life as a transgender woman in the contemporary queer community. Julia Serano, juliaserano.com, is an Oakland-based writer, spoken word performer and trans activist. She is also the author of "Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity" (2007), a collection of personal essays that explores how misogyny frames many popular stereotypes and assumptions about transsexual women.

Fresh Meat 2007's opening night reception also celebrated the opening of Fresh Meat in the Gallery, its fourth annual transgender visual art exhibition presented in ODC's Gallery through July 6. Gallery hours are Wednesday through Saturday 2 to 5 p.m. and during evenings when the theater has performances. Admission is free.

Fresh Meat Productions is the nation's first arts organization dedicated to year-round transgender arts programs, which include the annual Fresh Meat Festival, performances by artistic director Sean Dorsey's award-winning dance company, and visual and media arts events.

ODC Theater is at 3153 17th Street (at Shotwell). Visit odctheater.org or freshmeatproductions.org for more information.