

One to Watch

TANIA HAMMIDI



PHOTO: LYDIA DANILLER

Groundbreaking transgender choreographer and dancer Sean Dorsey was named one of this year's "Top 25 to Watch" by "Dance Magazine," a historic breakthrough for transgender visibility—and for dance. *Curve* caught up with Dorsey to congratulate him.

What an honor to be named one of the "25 to Watch." Did you know that was coming?

It was a total surprise and a real thrill. It feels great, feels like it's building on the energy and success of my premiere and tour of *Uncovered:*

The Diary Project last year. I think bringing the show out to New York brought more national attention to my work.

What does getting this award mean to you?

I'm in amazing company—the "25 to Watch" is *Dance Magazine's* annual "who's hot" list. It's very affirming of my choreographic craft and my vision as a dance artist. It's also a huge breakthrough to be honored this way as a transgender and queer dance artist.

Your concert, *Uncovered: A Diary Project* documents the life of FTM activist Lou Sullivan. But it drew more than trans folks to the audience. What is it about dance that brings people together?

I think dance has always been at the core of culture. This show drew a phenomenal range of people—trans people, queer people, folks who are HIV+, gay men, dance fans, history buffs, theater lovers. We have always been enrapt by dance because the human body in motion is fundamental to our shared experience. I think the show actually turned audiences on to the importance of knowing and documenting our trans/queer history.

Will *Uncovered* be returning to the stage in 2010?

Yes, we're bringing the show back to San Francisco February 4-7, 2010 at Dance Mission Theater. Come see us! The concert is the culmination of a year-and-a-half-long archival research process that informed the work and provided my—very rich—source material. I worked with text from the real-life diaries of transgender and queer people, and then spent a year specifically researching the lifelong diaries of Lou Sullivan. Before his death, he bequeathed 30 years of his journals, letters and personal papers to the GLBT Historical Society. I spent a year researching Lou and these materials.

In the past you've worked with Antony and the Johnsons, and so many performers hosting Fresh Meat Productions. Who are you working with now?

I am working with some tremendously talented performers—they are gorgeous movers but also have excellent theatrical training and instincts, which is key in my work. I don't want empty vessels doing rote movement onstage, all of my choreography is rooted in a very strong sense of place, or character, or emotion. My work is deeply—sometimes painfully—human.

So what is hot on your agenda this year?

It has been a truly excellent year. I am so proud *Uncovered* and how deeply and powerfully the show has moved and affected people. I now want to bring the work to other cities. I welcome fans, theaters, festivals, colleges, universities and conferences to get in touch with me through the website (freshmeatproductions.org) to bring the show to other places. I'm also excited for my 9th annual Fresh Meat Festival of transgender and queer performance June 17-20, 2010. I'll be performing some of the new work there.