

## Review: Sean Dorsey's Secrets

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In its third year of Out in the Tropics — a performing art series that highlights contemporary GLBTQ artists and their work in dance, theater and film — FUNDarte opened this year's series with Sean Dorsey Dance and *The Secret History of Love*. The performance on Saturday, May 12, at The Colony Theater, was equal parts dance concert and theatrical performance that both educated and inspired as much as it entertained by laying bare the landscape of gay love through the ages in the pre Stonewall eras of the 20th century.

Through movement and dialogue, both live and recorded, the company brings to light the personal tales of the community's elder GLBT generation and how they found or fought for their intimate, intense, and passionate love despite discrimination and warranted fear of persecution and prosecution. At the heart of this dance production was Dorsey's "soundscore" that included recorded live interviews with gay elders and their personal true accounts of first loves; of heartbreaks and police brutality; and of the inception of the cornerstone of gay life before such ideas as gay community or gay movement came to being — the underground bars and watering holes from the speakeasies of the 1920s, to the wartime joints of the 1940s, and the clandestine clubs of the 1950s.

The interviews painted a picture of life in Chicago's Boystown; to New York City's Harlem and Greenwich Village; to New Orleans' French Quarter; and to Boston's South End. The first recorded interview reveals that "secrets are our greatest industry." In these charming, chilling, and heart rendering testimonies a unique, fragile, yet precious love abounds. There were moments recounted of excitement, passion, fear, and genuine humor in these personal accounts of both life-long loves, or loves of long ago and the elegant to fanciful trappings of the roaring '20s to the dapper dress of the '50s.

A running thread in both the live and recorded dialogue is Dorsey's character's search for love in a time where same sex "fraternizing" was punishable by fines, prison time, and in some cases death. The overhanging question of love was, "Where and how do I find it?" in a world of supreme secrecy.

The other three dancer/performers advise, cajole, push, and point the way to booze, dancing, and the special fraternity of the secret night spots. At times Dorsey would speak to a recorded voice of an assumed psychoanalyst who was leading her patient to his ultimate goal. At other times both parts of the dialogue were recorded while Dorsey danced a physical soliloquy as counterpoint. At others he lip-synched to his own-recorded voice.

These various levels of imitated, recorded, and live voice that made the soundscore so intriguing would change the surface of the audience experience from an instant visceral moment to one that was subtler.

The company consisted of a quartet, with Dorsey and three other male dancers who moved tirelessly through lyrical-looking minuets of sinewy phrases of constantly changing partners, and which incorporated lifts like punctuation after a long important sentence. The dancers moved through the historical landscape with subtle yet marked change in costume while the tenor of their movement changed in tone from energetic bursts to the intimate couplings at the dénouement of the piece.

As a whole this piece that Dorsey self-described as dance theater, endeavors to gain appreciation for an inconceivable time in the social fabric of GLBTQ persons — before the modern age we live in now of Kurt Hummel's on *Glee* and U.S. presidents affirming the right to gay marriage. The precious secret of the love that once "dare not speak its name" is as enduring as the political and cultural movements that came after to ensure its right to be heard.

Photo: Lydia Danglier

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