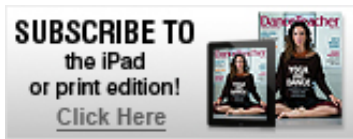




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# A Conversation with Choreographer Sean Dorsey

Posted on August 1, 2015 by Rachel Rizzuto (http://www.dance-teacher.com/author/rizzuto/)

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(http://u3bpb3gl4fv17ww0x1qt5wp2.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-

content/uploads/2015/08/SeanDorseyBWbyLydiaDaniller\_R1.jpg) Plenty of choreographers will argue that finding an audience for dance can be a Herculean task. San Francisco-based choreographer Sean Dorsey has what most would consider an added obstacle: He's transgender, and the dance-theater work he creates for his company deals mainly with transgender and queer experiences. But he says the work is universally resonant. "Whether you're transgender, straight, queer, you don't know, you're changing your mind—you can relate to the themes of the work," says Dorsey. "Longing for connection or love or community, feelings of loss or grief. We always hear from our audiences, 'I saw myself in that.'"

Dorsey's newest work, *The Missing Generation*, about longtime survivors of the early AIDS epidemic, recently began a 20-city U.S. tour.

**On using text** "I've always loved creating stories and movement. I'm really excited by the intersection of language and story and cadence and speech. I use 'dance theater' to describe my work because there's always text and language, either in the sound score or spoken live onstage by the dancers. My work is very often rooted in story or character or emotion."

**His process** "By the time we land in the studio, I've been working for a year or two years on the project—on the score. Every single thing about the movement and the structure is completely informed by the music and the content of the story and the cadence of the text. I will not, generally, have my dancers generate movement ideas to the text. I'll play them a section so they know what we're working on, but then I will play unrelated music. I don't want them creating meaning on top of meaning. There's no movement that develops separately for movement's sake."

**Audience reception** “The most conservative place we went to was when we drove in the Sean Dorsey Dance family van through Whitewater, Wisconsin. It was election time, and there were signs everywhere. We were like, ‘OK. Let’s keep each other safe.’ They have a state-of-the-art, 1,000-seat theater, and we were on a big LED sign outside—in our boxer briefs, a promotional picture. I said to my dancers, ‘We honestly might have 40 people come to this show. But people need this work. Let’s dance big for them.’ And then we had 600 people show up! In this small town. I think that, again and again, it’s beautiful and surprising how open-hearted people are.” **DT**

**Training:** Main Dance, a full-time, pre-professional studio in Vancouver

**Performance:** Member of Lizz Roman & Dancers 2000–06

**Choreography:** Founded Sean Dorsey Dance in 2005

*Photo by Lydia Daniller, courtesy of Dorsey*

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