



The Dance Enthusiast Asks

Sean Dorsey's Message To Trans, Gender-Nonconforming & Queer Communities



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Sean Dorsey Dance in BOYS IN TROUBLE. Photo by: Kegan Marli

In Conjunction with The 18th Fresh Meat Festival in San Francisco

WHO: Acclaimed transgender choreographer and activist Sean Dorsey.

WHAT: The 18th Fresh Meat Festival featuring transgender & queer performance

WHEN: Thursday-Saturday, June 20-22, 2019

WHERE: Z Space, 450 Florida Street, Between 17th Street and Mariposa, San Francisco

TICKETS: <http://freshmeatproductions.org/fresh-meat-festival-2019/>

Sammi Lim for The Dance Enthusiast: Happy 15th anniversary to [Sean Dorsey Dance](#)! Was there a moment when you felt the company was officially on a trajectory to success? What areas did you focus on up to that point?

Sean Dorsey, Artistic Director of **Sean Dorsey Dance**: Thank you! It's amazing to be at this 15-year milestone and look at the scope of my journey so far. Being recognized as the nation's first acclaimed transgender modern dance choreographer has been an intense mix of success and accolades along with intense discrimination and loneliness. Ultimately I feel incredibly blessed!

At the heart of EVERYTHING is my love for dance and my love for the transgender & queer community. I love making dances; I love performing dances; I love teaching trans/gnc/nb/queer classes with an explicitly trans-supportive pedagogy; I love speaking out and fighting for trans equity in the dance field. I try to focus on my heart, the healing power of Dance, and to my faith in the long arc of justice.



Sean Dorsey, the U.S.' first acclaimed transgender modern dance choreographer.
Photo by Lydia Daniller, 2019.

How far along is the 20-city tour of BOYS IN TROUBLE?

Sean Dorsey: We've visited 9 cities on what will be a 2-year 20-city tour. So far we've been to Maui, Los Angeles, Reston VA, Washington DC, Sheboygan WI, and even Stockholm, Sweden! Along with performing BOYS IN TROUBLE on tour, we lead free trans-supportive dance workshops and host community gatherings and forums. It means we get to connect deeply with local trans and queer communities.

I have to add that it's incredibly rare for a dance company to tour this widely, let alone a trans/queer company! I've worked really hard to advocate for trans visibility, build relationships and build up this company, and we're so proud.

This Fall, we tour to Atlanta, Austin, Seattle and San Jose. Folks can visit our [tour calendar](#) to

learn more.



Sean Dorsey Dance in BOYS IN TROUBLE. Photo by Lydia Daniller.

The 18th annual Fresh Meat Festival is bookended by performances of BOYS IN TROUBLE. Does this require shifting into a different headspace?

Sean Dorsey: Yes, I have to change hats a lot. In the three weeks before producing this month's Fresh Meat Festival, I toured Sean Dorsey Dance to Los Angeles, spoke at a national theater conference in Miami, and spoke at a national dance conference in Cleveland. It's not just changing airports – it's juggling my roles as choreographer/dance, national trans equity activist, and festival curator and producer! I love ALL of it, but I sure am behind on sleep at the moment!

The Fresh Meat Festival also commissions new work, this year being world premieres by Jahaira Fajardo and Angelica Medina, Star Amerasu, Tajah J and the The Singing Bois. For the sake of potential applicants, could you please describe how to get involved in future festivals?

Sean Dorsey: Fresh Meat Productions invests in the creative expression and cultural leadership of transgender and gender-nonconforming communities. One of our programs is FRESH WORKS!, which commissions and presents new works by trans, gender-nonconforming and queer artists of color.

We're always looking at new work by new artists – and we welcome submissions to our annual Fresh Meat Festival. We welcome submissions of high-caliber professional work by dance, theater and music artists! Folks can check out our [website](#) or [submission link](#) for more info.

The Fresh Meat Festival centers transgender, gender-nonconforming artists of color and is presented in a venue that is fully wheelchair accessible for artists and audiences; we offer ASL interpretation and work on providing other supportive access accommodations.



Sean Dorsey in 2007. Photo by Lydia Daniller.

Who was the first trans artist you looked up to and regarded as a role model?

Sean Dorsey: Well, here's the thing. I grew up without seeing a SINGLE person like me in the modern dance world. I never saw, knew or heard of a single transgender modern dance choreographer, dancer, teacher or anything.

This is what fueled my journey as an activist and a choreographer. I am passionate about creating dances that embody and express trans and queer experience, bodies, humor, touch and heart. Modern dance continues to be a profoundly transphobic and cis-centric form that excludes trans expression and leadership at every turn.

I'm always humbled when I meet younger trans and nb folks today who say they've been following me for years on [Instagram](#) or [Twitter](#) or online – or who say that they chose to begin dancing because of me (!). I know what it feels like to feel profoundly isolated and alone, so it is profoundly moving for me to hear that I am making a difference in someone's life.

I am very mindful that everything in my life has been made possible by my 'transcestors' – transgender and gender-nonconforming artists and activists whose art and activism and organizing literally made my life possible. In this high-speed internet era, our culture tends to erase and forget these elders and ancestors, but they are the ones who broke down the door and made our lives possible! Tamara Ching, Miss Major Griffin-Gracy, Lou Sullivan, Felicia Elizondo, Vanesa Karine Camara, Kate Bornstein, Sylvia Rivera, Marsha P. Johnson and so many more. Black trans women, trans people of color, disabled trans leaders. We owe you everything.

Having broken the glass ceiling on various counts, you're an inspiration to countless others. What message would you like to convey to your fans and audiences?

Sean Dorsey: Everywhere I go, I say this: I love being transgender. And I LOVE transgender and gender-nonconforming people! I say these things because America doesn't value transgender lives, bodies or communities and is currently hell-bent on harming us.

Trans and gender-nonconforming people are powerful, resilient, wise, sexy, capable, gorgeous and creative! We deserve love, support, resources, health care, education and freedom from white supremacy, racism, ableism, colonialism, misogyny, fat-phobia, transphobia, homophobia and anti-immigrant-of-color hatred.

Dear trans, gender-nonconforming or queer communities: You are beautiful and unique. Your body is perfect just the way it is. Your heart is powerful and deserves love and healing. The world needs you here. We need your art and activism and leadership and friendship. Let's keep working in solidarity so we ALL get the love and justice we deserve!

<https://www.dance-enthusiast.com/features/the-dance-enthusiast-asks/view/Sean-Dorseys-Message-To-Trans-Gender-Nonconforming-Queer-Communities-2019-06-17>