

# SEAN DORSEY DANCE

## BOYS IN TROUBLE

Saturday, February 8, 2020

2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

Glorya Kaufman International Dance Center  
University of Southern California



Photo: Kegan Marling

### KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- Sean Dorsey is an award-winning San Francisco-based choreographer.
- He is hailed as the first acclaimed transgender modern-dance choreographer and is the founder of Fresh Meat Productions, the first organization in the United States dedicated to creating, presenting, and touring multidisciplinary programs by trans artists.
- *BOYS IN TROUBLE* is the newest work by his company, Sean Dorsey Dance.

### MODERN DANCE

The term “modern dance” describes a broad genre of concert/theatrical dance that emerged in the United States and Europe in the late nineteenth century as a rebellion against the classical ballet tradition, and achieved widespread success in the twentieth century. It has been defined and redefined many times, and has evolved with new generations of choreographers.

American modern dance can be broadly divided into three eras: early modern (1880–1923), associated with the work of Isadora Duncan, Loie Fuller, et al.; central modern (1923–1946), the era of Martha Graham; and late modern (1946–1957), the era of Merce Cunningham, who paved the way to the postmodern era.

### DANCE AND GENDER

“[T]he modern-dance field was and is still today so religious about its adherence to gender normativity, to heteronormativity, to behaving and creating according to the gender binary . . .” —Sean Dorsey in the *Seattle Times*

“Ballet is widely seen as putting women on a pedestal—male dancers literally lift them over their heads—reinforcing conventional ideas about masculinity and femininity.” —Madison Mainwaring in the *New York Times*

Ballet and modern dance are traditionally rooted in a binary view of gender. Roles and dance techniques are sharply divided between two genders, canonical works are structured around binary gender roles, professional ballet dancers have long trained in separate men’s and women’s classes, and costumes (in ballet, notably down to the shoes) are clearly divided along binary gender lines.

But in the twenty-first century, both modern and ballet companies are beginning to challenge tradition. Matthew Bourne’s *Swan Lake* presented an all-male ensemble of swans in place of the traditionally female group, and Justin Beck has brought gender-neutral roles to New York City Ballet, to name just two examples. Same-sex romantic storylines have also started to appear in dance works with increasing frequency. Sean Dorsey’s work, with his all-gender company and with Fresh Meat Productions, has played an instrumental and leading role in a growing movement of dance beyond the binary.

### FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- How does *BOYS IN TROUBLE* represent masculinity?
- Did it make you think about masculinity in new ways?
- Why is dance an important space for challenging binary views of gender?

## IF YOU LIKED THIS EVENT, YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK OUT:

- ◉ Dancing the Archives: Emerging Choreographers and Living History @ USC, 2/13/20  
[bit.ly/VVDancingArchives](http://bit.ly/VVDancingArchives)
- ◉ Paul Taylor Celebration @ USC, 2/26/20  
[bit.ly/VVPaulTaylorCelebration](http://bit.ly/VVPaulTaylorCelebration)
- ◉ Dorrance Dance: *SOUNDS*space @ USC, 3/4/20  
[bit.ly/VVDorranceDance](http://bit.ly/VVDorranceDance)
- ◉ The Missing Generation Oral History Project  
[seandorseydance.com/the-missing-generation-lgbtaids-oral-history-project](http://seandorseydance.com/the-missing-generation-lgbtaids-oral-history-project)
- ◉ Events and Classes at the USC Gloria Kaufman School of Dance [kaufman.usc.edu](http://kaufman.usc.edu)
- ◉ Dance at REDCAT [www.redcat.org](http://www.redcat.org)
- ◉ Highways Performance Space [highwaysperformance.org](http://highwaysperformance.org)

## DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

ANDREW JUSTICE of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about today's event. These are all electronic resources, which you can access through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at [libraries.usc.edu](http://libraries.usc.edu).

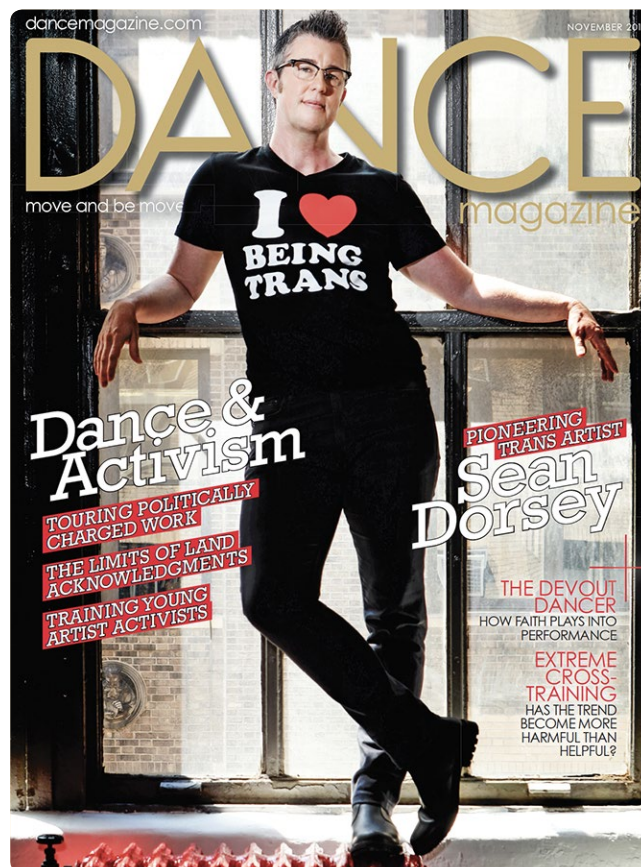
### ARTICLES

- ◉ Bauer, Claudia. "Sean Dorsey." *Dance Magazine* 93:11 (2019), 22–26. Available via EBSCOhost and Gale Cengage
- ◉ Fisher, Michele. "Sean and Shawna: Trans Performers Sean Dorsey and Shawna Virago Have Found Love Outside the binary. (Interview)." *Curve* 23:4 (2013), 22. Available via EBSCOhost and Gale Cengage
- ◉ Luengsuraswat, Bo. "Rewriting the Written: FTM Self-Making and the Performance of Possibilities in Sean Dorsey's *Uncovered: The Diary Project*." 2009. Available via eScholarship (UC Open Access Publications)
- ◉ Voorman, Petra. "Sean Dorsey: Changing the Face of Modern Dance." *Transgender Tapestry* 109 (2005), 26. Available via EBSCOhost and ProQuest
- ◉ "World Play: Choreographers Who Combine Dance and Text Discuss Their Unique Set of Dilemmas." *Dance Magazine* 87:4 (2013), 30–34. Available via EBSCOhost and Gale Cengage

### SCHOLARLY STUDIES

- ◉ Hammidi, Tania. *Dance, Dress, Desire: Drag Kings, Prison Wear, and the Dressed, Dancing Body*. PhD dissertation, University of California Riverside, 2010. Available via ProQuest
- ◉ O'Rear, Jess. *The Spectacle of Transformation: (re) presenting Transgender Experience through Performance*. MA thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 2015. Available via Texas ScholarWorks
- ◉ Tikkun, Kaitlyn. *Embodiment Beyond the Binary: Sean Dorsey and the Trans Genderqueer Presence in Contemporary Concert Dance*. MFA thesis, University of California Irvine, 2010. Available via ProQuest

Fact: Sean Dorsey was the first openly trans dancer to appear on the cover of *Dance Magazine*—on the its November 2019 issue.



### Other Notable Works by Sean Dorsey Dance

- ◉ *THE MISSING GENERATION*, a dance-theatre work giving voice to long-term survivors of the AIDS epidemic
- ◉ *The Secret History of Love*, created using oral histories with LGBT elders
- ◉ *Uncovered: The Diary Project*, based on the archives of trans activist Lou Sullivan

Sean Dorsey Dance uses their tech rider as an opportunity to advance gender inclusivity. It requires venues to

- ◉ open the show with the words "Good evening, everyone" instead of the binary-gender-upholding "Good evening, ladies and gentlemen"
- ◉ make their facilities all-gender during the company's run