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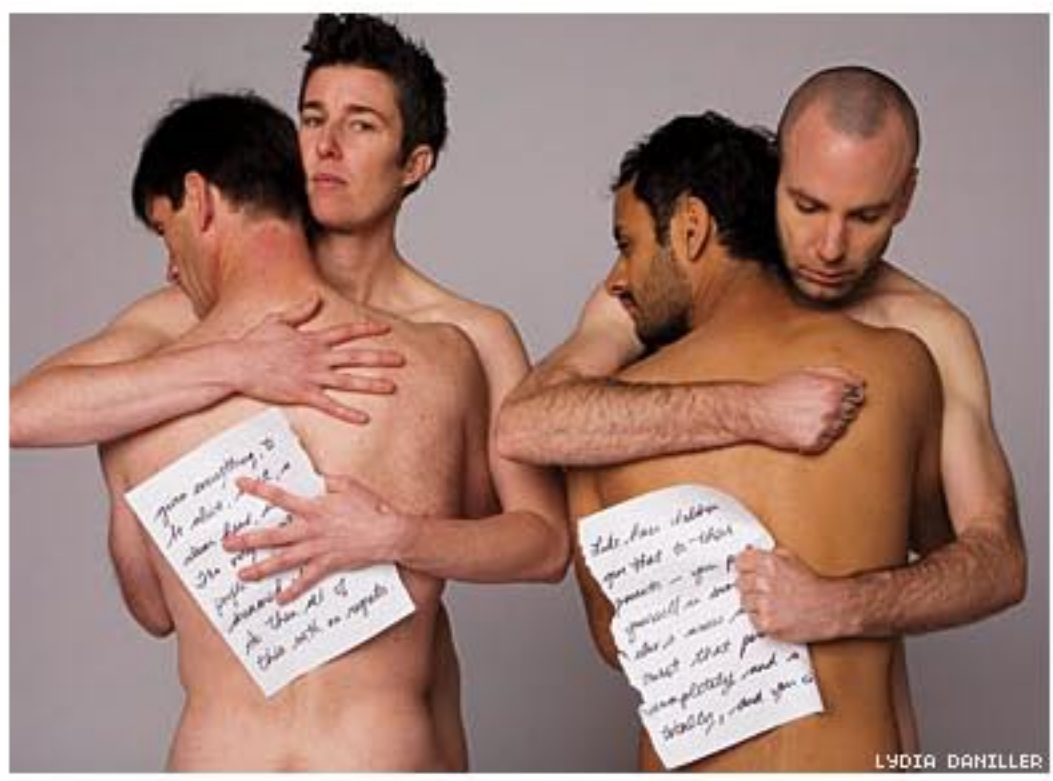
# Dear Diary, in Dance

Choreographer Sean Dorsey uncovers the lives of a gay transgender pioneer in a deeply felt suite of modern dances.

**By Winston Gieseke**




Using real-life stories from the diaries of gay and transgender men, *Uncovered: The Diary Project* transforms tales of love, courage, pop idols, and bathhouse antics into a wonderfully imaginative and powerful theater piece that fuses modern dance with narrative storytelling.

The project — which innovative trans choreographer and dancer Sean Dorsey spent a year and a half researching—features a two-part program of dances that explore universal issues of love, loss, belonging, and isolation derived from the specific experience of being a transgender individual.

One segment, *Lou*, is drawn from the journals of trailblazing transgender activist Lou Sullivan, the first transgender man to die of AIDS. When he died in 1991, Sullivan left 30 years of personal writings — many of them vivid testaments to the joys of gay sex — to the San Francisco GLBT Historical Society as a way of ensuring that the progress he'd made would live on.

"Lou literally opened the book of his life for us, giving us a naked, honest look at his inner journey as a trans man," says Dorsey. "He was so gorgeously articulate, candid, and descriptive in his diaries — it gave me such clear inspiration and vocabulary for the choreography."

The other piece, *Lost/Found*, is a hilarious duet that tells the story of a transgender man who's given the opportunity to vicariously experience the childhood he never had via a boy's diary that he buys at a thrift shop. The idea, Dorsey says, came out of his own experiences keeping a journal as a child as well as the journal of a young nontrans boy whose entries thinly masked his own identity issues and search for masculinity.

Featuring four performers — Dorsey, Brian Fisher, Juan de la Rosa, and Nol Simonse — the show enjoyed sold-out runs in San Francisco and New York in 2010, and Los Angeles in 2011. It will be touring the country in 2012.

While Dorsey understands that modern dance isn't a genre for the masses, he's made every attempt to make Uncovered as accessible as possible. "My goal as an artist is to make dances that people can actually understand and relate to."