

NEW YORKER FILMS PRESENTS

TREMBLING BEFORE G-D

A Film by Sandi Simcha DuBowski

**TEDDY AWARD FOR
BEST DOCUMENTARY
Berlin Film Festival 2001**

**SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL
Official Selection 2001**

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CREDITS

“TREMBLING BEFORE G-D”

A FILM BY

Sandi Simcha DuBowski

PRODUCED BY

Sandi Simcha DuBowski & Marc Smolowitz

CO-PRODUCERS

James Velaise, (Pretty Pictures, Paris)
Philippa Kowarsky, (Cinephil, Ltd. Tel Aviv)

**CREATIVE COLLABORATION AND
EDITED BY**

Susan Korda

EDITOR IN ISRAEL

Johanna Prenner (for Keshet Broadcasting Ltd.)

COMPOSER

John Zorn

MUSIC SUPERVISOR

Carole Sue Baker and Jon L. Fine
Ocean Park Music Group

POST PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR

Lizzie Donahue

CINEMATOGRAPHERS, USA

Donna Binder, Sandra Chandler, Mik Cribben
Jim Denault, Ken Druckerman, Sandi Dubowski
Kirsten Johnson, Kevin Keating, Karen Kramer
Jennifer Lane, David Leitner, Marie Pederson
Ben Speth, Fawn Yacker, Andrew Yarme

CINEMATOGRAPHERS, UK

Noski Deville, Sandi DuBowski

CINEMATOGRAPHERS, ISRAEL

Nili Aslan, Sandi DuBowski, Issa Freij,
Jackie Matithau, Yoram Milo, Yitzhak Portal
Abigail Sperber

ISRAELI PRODUCTION SERVICES

Philippa Kowarsky (Cinephil, Ltd., Tel Aviv)

ISRAELI PRODUCTION COORDINATORS

Sharon Roling, Danny Wool

ISRAELI ARCHIVAL RESEARCH

Claudia Cala Levin

NEW YORK CITY PRODUCTION / ENSEMBLE SILHOUETTE SHOOTS

PRODUCER

Sandi DuBowski

CO-DIRECTORS

Sandi DuBowski, Susan Korda

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY	David Leitner
PRODUCTION COORDINATOR/CAMERA ASST.	Yael Bitton
PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS	Maya Cohen, Steve Goldstein, John Grauwiler, Nurit Jacobs, Yigal Nizri, Eugene Patron, Kelly Stupple, Micha Wald
PROPS AND WARDROBE	Shlomo Ashkinazy
SET PHOTOGRAPHY	Jack Louth, Amy Steiner
ADDITIONAL SOUND RECORDING	Judy Karp, Claudia Katayanagi, Steve Robinson David Roche, Peter Toole
ADDITIONAL CAMERA	Ari Amit, Adam Bailey, Robert Bennett Liz Dory, Gerald Jones, Marcia Machado Michael Pearlman, Chloe Stewart, Maggie Warwick, Shiri Wilk
PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS	Akiva, Alex Bing, Ari Chesir, Erin Edmison Sagheer Bin Faiz, Yaffa Grinblatt, Malachi Handler, Avram Heilman, Avital Levy, Tara Mateik, Saul Nachsen, Janelle Rothenberg, Sara Scully, Nike Silberstein, Heather Tenzer, Daniel Wagner, David Wilson
PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS, TURBULENT ARTS	Suzanne Bultmeyer, Alexander Georges, Caroline Ghiennes, David Harris, Lawrence Inglee, Astrid Menze, Nathalie Petersen, Dan Schmeltzer Owen Wolf, Pieter Valk
SUPERVISING SOUND EDITOR	Bill Seery (Mercer Street Sound)
ASSISTANT SOUND EDITOR	Alex Noyes
ONLINE EDITOR	Egon Kirincic
ASSISTANT EDITORS	David Baum, Yael Bitton, Lizzie Donahue Akiko Iwakawa, Aljernon Tunsil
POST PRODUCTION SERVICES	FMC Filmmakers Collaborative David Beatrice, David Ebmeier John Johnson, Julisa Sorvino-Castro

FIVE POINT PICTURES	Jonathan Berman
ONLINE SERVICES	Postworks Billy Baldwin, Ron Demartin Monte Matteotti, Jill Silverman
POST PRODUCTION SOUND SERVICES	Skywalker Sound, A Division of Lucas Digital, Ltd Glenn Kiser, John Mardesich
RE-RECORDING MIXER	Lora Hirschberg
DOLBY CONSULTANT	Thom "Coach" Ehle
DIGITAL TAPE TO FILM TRANSFER	DMZ/Heavylight Digital Eric Solstein, Benton Bainbridge Tom Edmon, Robert Luttrell, Kris Schumacher
PRINCIPAL TRANSCRIBER	Alexandra Stoll
TRANSCRIPTION	Lynn Bernard, Elaine Chapnik, Brave New Words/Eugene Corey Helping Hands Network Ileana Montalvo, Michal Shemesh, The Typettes
TITLE DESIGN/ANIMATION	Andrew Capelli, S.O.I (Arturan Consortium)
PRODUCTION COUNSEL	Robert L. Seigel, Esq. Daniel, Seigel, And Bimble, LLP
PRINT GRAPHIC DESIGN	Pascale Willi
INTERNET/TECHNOLOGY CONSULTANT	Dana Friedman (Dragonfly Technologies)
MUSIC CONSULTATION	Frank London, Lorin Sklamberg
ADDITIONAL LEGAL SERVICES	Pat O'Brien (San Francisco)
ATONEMENT CEREMONY FOOTAGE	Courtesy of CBS TV News Archives
"THE DYBBUK"	Courtesy of The National Center For Jewish Film, Brandeis University
HASIDIC DEMONSTRATION FOOTAGE	Courtesy of Phil Zwickler And Realis Pictures
"ELOHAI NESHAMA"	Courtesy of Victoria Hanna

PERFORMED BY VICTORIA HANNA

"MIPNEY MA"

PERFORMED BY THE KLEZMATICS

Courtesy of Aviv Productions, Inc.

"NIGHT SAIL"

PERFORMED BY ESTA

Courtesy of Teev Productions, Inc.

Running Time: 84 mins.

Aspect Ratio: 1:66

Sound: Dolby SR

SYNOPSIS

“Trembling Before G-d” is an unprecedented feature documentary that shatters assumptions about faith, sexuality, and religious fundamentalism. Built around intimately-told personal stories of Hasidic and Orthodox Jews who are gay or lesbian, the film portrays a group of people who face a profound dilemma - how to reconcile their passionate love of Judaism and the Divine with the drastic Biblical prohibitions that forbid homosexuality. As the film unfolds, we meet a range of complex individuals - some hidden, some out - from the world's first openly gay Orthodox rabbi to closeted, married Hasidic gays and lesbians to those abandoned by religious families to Orthodox lesbian high-school sweethearts.

Many have been tragically rejected and their pain is raw, yet with irony, humor, and resilience, they love, care, struggle, and debate with a thousand-year old tradition. Ultimately, they are forced to question how they can pursue truth and faith in their lives. Vividly shot with a courageous few over five years in Brooklyn, Jerusalem, Los Angeles, London, Miami, and San Francisco, “Trembling Before G-d” is an international project with global implications that strikes at the meaning of religious identity and tradition in a modern world. For the first time, this issue has become a live, public debate in Orthodox circles, and the film is both witness and catalyst to this historic moment. What emerges is a loving and fearless testament to faith and survival and the universal struggle to belong.

"A man who lies with a man as one lies with a woman, they have both done an abomination: they shall be put to death, their blood is on them."

- Leviticus 10:13

"For women to rub against each other in the position of sexual intercourse is forbidden...It is fitting for the court to administer lashes for this transgression."

- The Shulchan Aruch, the 16th century authoritative code of Jewish law.

Even HaEzer 20:2

SUBJECT BACKGROUND

For the first time, homosexuality has become a live, public debate in Orthodox circles. In just the past five years, a vibrant gay Orthodox community has begun to emerge, moving from isolation to organization. The late 1990's marks a kind of Stonewall for the Orthodox lesbian and gay world through the founding of the Gay and Lesbian Yeshiva/Day School Alumni Association, The Orthodykes and The Tzvi Aryeh AIDS Foundation in New York; the revival of The Orthodykes and the gay Orthodox organization, HOD, in Israel; and the establishment of Jerusalem's first gay and lesbian community center, The Jerusalem Open House. Rabbi Steve Greenberg, the first openly gay Orthodox rabbi, is finishing a book entitled *Of Wrestling with God and Men* which grapples with The Bible, Jewish tradition and homosexuality.

Yet, while the United States and other nations have witnessed an incredible advancement in lesbian and gay civil rights and visibility, Orthodox and Hasidic communities have been largely opposed to homosexuality viewed as anything other than sin or sickness. At their worst, the consequences Orthodox gays and lesbians face for "coming out" inside the community include: being disowned from families; expulsion from yeshivas and synagogues; forced psychological treatment including attempted conversion to heterosexuality; arranged marriages and subsequent living of double lives; rabbinical courts that separate children from gay and lesbian parents; no access to sexuality education and HIV prevention information; refusal to care for or bury those with AIDS; widespread public condemnation from rabbis and religious media; alcoholism, suicide and self-destructive sexual behavior for those who cannot cope.

There is largely public silence around the issue, but there are, however, a number of examples of public condemnation of homosexuality from the Orthodox world. Opinion divides over what exactly the passages in the Torah and Talmud (Rabbinic Teachings) condemn - homosexual relationships or marital ceremonies, specific sexual practices like *mishkav zachar* (anal sex), or lesbianism at all.

In recent years, members of the Orthodox establishment have opposed the gay/lesbian synagogue marching in New York's Salute to Israel Parade and the inclusion of any mention of homosexuals who died in concentration camps in The U.S. Holocaust Museum or New York's Museum of Jewish Heritage. Orthodox politicians and rabbis vehemently testified against The New York Gay and Lesbian Civil Rights Bill in 1986 and New York's Domestic Partnership Bill in 1998 and busloads of right-wing Orthodox Jews and Hasidim protested the hearings. In Israel, Orthodox parties increased their power in the Knesset and hostility in the Knesset against issues such as lesbian and gay domestic partnership or funding in national health plans for AIDS drugs has been vocal and uncompromising. In a Sephardic Kabbalistic yeshiva in Jerusalem, an atonement ceremony for homosexuals, adulterers, and masturbators was held complete with *tehillim* (prayers), ice cubes rubbed on the arms, and shofar-blowing.

At the same time, more and more Orthodox rabbis are faced with increasing numbers of congregants and yeshiva students who are coming out as gay and Orthodox families are finding their own harsh views on homosexuality challenged by loved ones. All face an existential crisis of how to hold true to the truth and Divinity of the Torah while not rejecting those who want to help build the people of

Israel, yet find themselves to be gay or lesbian. Homosexuality marks a line in the sand that most Orthodox authorities and people will not cross, but hopefully this film will inspire the seeds of change.

About the Production

Sometimes you choose films, sometimes films choose you. I began “Trembling Before G-d” out of curiosity, a desire to explore the Orthodox world. I do not think I ever anticipated that such intense and challenging six years would follow and that the film would set me on a path of spiritual awakening and greater religious observance. I was 24 years old, and had moved back to Brooklyn. I made a gender-blending short video with my 88 year-old grandmother called “Tomboychik” that went on to have a rich festival, museum, and TV life and had a job researching and producing videos about the Christian right-wing for Planned Parenthood.

In 1995, I met Mark, the son of an ultra-Orthodox rabbi, at The International Conference of Gay and Lesbian Jews. He was thrown out of seven yeshivas (religious schools) for homosexual activity across England and Israel. By the time I met him, he had abandoned Orthodox practice, and was in and out of the hospital with AIDS-related infections. Mark and I were born nine days apart the same year, and we became like chavruses (study partners) in a yeshiva without walls. He and I went to Jerusalem, where he vowed he would never return, to revisit the yeshiva world he loved, went on religious pilgrimages to the tops of mountains, sought out rabbis and Hasidic rebbes, and filmed. He began to awaken to all he had lost by rejecting that world.

I spent the next five years criss-crossing the globe even just trying to locate people and spent thousands of hours becoming part of the simchas (joys) and pain of the incredible Orthodox and formerly Orthodox gays and lesbians I had the privilege of meeting and sharing my life. It took incredible effort - dozens of screenings in living rooms, innumerable flyers, newspaper ads, TV/print coverage, word-of-mouth, email forwarding, non-stop networking in person and over the Internet. As I met more and more Hasidic and Orthodox gays and lesbians, some thrown out of yeshivas for being gay, others forced into heterosexual marriages, a number disowned and abandoned by their families, it became clear that my level of responsibility and accountability to this deeply hidden community had to be paramount. It was clear that this film could be a vehicle not just of personal exploration, but a powerful catalyst for the birth of a community that would gain mass public voice for the first time - an exhilarating, if frightening prospect.

My work as a director on “Trembling Before G-d” has been inseparable at times from my role as movement-builder whether as shaliach (messenger), community organizer, referral service, peer counselor - even shadchan (matchmaker.) I helped found a West Coast support group for Orthodox gays and lesbians in Los Angeles. I introduced the first openly gay Orthodox rabbi to his partner (celebrating two years and counting!)

For every brave soul that stepped forward to be filmed, there were more than a hundred unseen hands worldwide shaping this creation. Having not grown up Orthodox, but a Conservative Jew, many

took me under their wing, and gave me a love of Shabbat, Torah study, prayer, and Orthodox Judaism for which I will be forever grateful. I began learning the Torah portion every week with a Hasidic gay man who has run an underground Talmud study group for Orthodox and Hasidic gay men in his home in New York for 25 years. I began attending a once-a-month Shabbat dinner for Orthodox gay men on the Upper West Side in New York. In Israel, after locating a safe house, I organized an underground Shabbat for over twenty Orthodox gays and lesbians who had never met each other.

“Trembling Before G-d” was my film school and my religious training all wrapped in one. I also became a fundraiser and enlisted the support of over 24 foundations from The Rockefeller Foundation's Film/Video/Multimedia Fellowship to The National Foundation for Jewish Culture's Fund for Jewish Documentary Filmmaking to The Creative Capital Foundation to The Nathan Cummings Foundation. I threw six major benefit parties in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Miami and there are now hundreds of donors supporting the work.

For many years, I kept inside the community, amassing hundreds of hours of interviews and cinema verite with a wide range of people. People took incredible risks to be interviewed. One ultra-Orthodox lesbian in Israel, whose husband did not know she was a lesbian, agreed to appear in silhouette with her voice changed, because after twenty years of trying and failing to change to heterosexual, she was falling apart. With her identity revealed, she could have jeopardized her own life and welfare as well as the lives of her many children and grandchildren, but she believed so strongly in the project's urgency and necessity, that Orthodox rabbis and families suffer from a total lack of life-affirming information about what it means to be lesbian or gay, that she came forward to tell her story. I met David, too, who had tried to change his homosexuality for twelve years. He was the first currently Orthodox gay man from an Orthodox family who agreed to go on camera. Fearful of being exposed, he must have pulled out of the film five times. Others who I interviewed did pull out, including one Hasidic gay man who is now pursuing getting married to a woman.

At a certain point, it became clear that I would need to confront the Orthodox rabbinic establishment to press for interviews, as I felt by this time I had grounded myself in enough stories that I could be a credible witness to Orthodox gay experiences. It was a project I approached with great trepidation. Filming in ultra-Orthodox communities where most people do not go to movies nor own televisions proved sometimes more complicated than the issue of homosexuality. At points, I had to borrow a TV/VCR and secretly bring it to rabbis in Jerusalem to show them clips from the film and convince them to participate. Orthodox women leaders were also very hesitant to break the rules of *tsnius* (modesty) and speak about how they dealt with lesbianism in such a public medium. Of fifty *rebbeztins* (rabbi's wives), female mental health professionals and teachers I approached, only one agreed to come on board the project.

In the end, I gathered the first filmed interviews from ten Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox rabbis from Israel, New York, and Los Angeles about how they grapple halachically (Jewish law), and communally with homosexuality, and have begun an invaluable archive that I seek to expand.

The frustration of finding so few people who would come forward to be open to the camera and the inability of filming on holy days like the Shabbat, forced me to seek creative solutions to representing the unseen. In the Winter of 2000, I gathered people to create giant silhouetted tableaux of Orthodox and Hasidic life on a sound stage --from a Hasidic mother and her family lighting Shabbat candles, to a lively Orthodox wedding-- with the bride and groom and other parts played by Hasidic/Orthodox and ex-Hasidic/Orthodox gays and lesbians and their children. It felt like a beautiful combination of live shadow puppetry and stained glass. The hidden became a revelation and invisibility became illuminated, as the community formed behind the screen to create their image.

Sandi Simcha DuBowski

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF FILM SUBJECTS

David is an Orthodox gay man now living in Los Angeles and son of a chazzan or cantor. In an interview, he tells of how he tried to change his homosexuality for more than a decade. One rabbi instructed him to eat figs and say a set of prayers for months. Another told him to flick a rubber band on his wrist and bite his tongue every time he felt an attraction to men. He went on countless shidduchim or arranged dates with women. To escape the pressure, he isolated himself far away from any Orthodox neighborhood in Los Angeles, avoided kosher restaurants and synagogues and prayed alone in his house. I travel with him to confront the first person he came out to 20 years ago - Chabad-Lubavich Rabbi Yosef Langer of San Francisco - who had told him to seek reparative therapy. He describes the pain this advice caused him and asks the Rabbi how after over a decade of failing to change, he expects him to live celibate and alone for the rest of his life. The Rabbi does not have an adequate answer. He loves David as a Jew but cannot accept any endorsement of sexual activity and the two engage in an honest, difficult conversation. David returns home to Los Angeles devastated, without hope of finding a heter or permission. I film David making an emotional trip to Israel, where he goes to the Kotel, or Jerusalem's Western Wall, to cry to G-d and seek guidance to live completely as who he is.

Michelle, a lesbian who grew up Hasidic in Boro Park, Brooklyn. The morning we filmed in Boro Park at a children's carnival during Passover, she had a fight with her sister about making her sexuality public and the shame it would bring on the family. They stopped speaking for a year. Daughter of a world-renowned chazzan or cantor, Michelle was disowned seven years ago and has barely seen the rest of her family since. Ironically, Michelle is following in her father's footsteps by pursuing a devotion to singing - except she sings in front of men, prohibited by Jewish law. The film tracks her isolation at the time when she thought she was the only Hasidic lesbian.

"Devorah," an ultra-Orthodox lesbian in Israel, who is falling apart after being married for nearly 20 years and having numerous children and grandchildren. She has stretched niddah, the time during and after menstruation when a wife is not to touch her husband, to its outermost limits. She is wrestling with whether she should tell her husband about her sexuality, her desire to find a girlfriend, and her inability to go on. She is filmed in silhouette with her voice changed.

Mark, whose ultra-Orthodox father is a rabbi in London. The film follows Mark's embrace of the Orthodox practice that he had abandoned after being rejected by the Orthodox world. Mark was harassed and given tranquilizers and monitored in yeshiva in England. In desperation, the rabbis shipped him to Israel where they believed there was no homosexuality. He was then kicked out of numerous yeshivas in Israel for homosexual activity. He has been racked with opportunistic infections from AIDS, but is on protease inhibitors and is persevering. Mark is the melody of the film, an uplifting joyful presence in the face of so much challenge. The film follows Mark in his return to the yeshivas he loved and on a pilgrimage to Israel's Mt. Meron for the holiday of Lag B'Omer where thousands of Orthodox Jews flock for all-night dancing, praying, and bonfire-burning. One sees his desire to stay spiritually alive in a deteriorating body. The film ends on Mark building a Sukkah, an open-roofed structure that symbolizes the wandering of the Jews in the desert for forty years, and their survival under G-d's protection. For the

Sukkot holiday celebration, Mark cooks a huge feast for twelve gay men (including one gay rabbi who used to be Hasidic) who miraculously all squeeze around his small table under the sky and sing and eat into the night.

Israel is funny and fierce. He takes on a healing and preaching role in the "Big Knish Tours" he leads through Brooklyn's Hasidic neighborhoods of Boro Park and Williamsburg. The tours help him come to terms with his flight from a difficult childhood there in the late 1940's and 1950's, the shock therapy used to try to cure his homosexuality, and his rejection of the religious world forty years ago for an "out" identity. Israel's father is 98 years old, and lives a few miles from him yet they have not seen each other for over twenty years. Only at the end of the film do we witness a reunion by phone. This phone call is woven with images of Israel and his lover Carl celebrating their 25th Anniversary with their adopted family of friends.

"Malka" and "Leah," who became high-school sweethearts in Brooklyn's Bais Yaakov, an ultra-Orthodox girl's school. They will soon be celebrating their 12th anniversary. "Malka's" father is a prominent rabbi in Brooklyn and coming out to her family has been very difficult. Though the two adhere to a very strict level of observance, it is very much within the boundaries of the home they have created together. When Orthodox gays and lesbians visit "Malka" and "Leah" for Shabbat, there is one rule around their bountiful table: Just chew!

Rabbi Steven Greenberg, the world's first openly gay Orthodox rabbi. He received his B.A. in philosophy from Yeshiva University and his rabbinical ordination from its Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary. He is a Senior Teaching Fellow at CLAL - The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership, a pluralistic organization which is dedicated to preparing Jewish leaders to respond to the challenges of a new era in Jewish history. He is one of the founders of The Jerusalem Open House, the Holy City's first gay and lesbian institution. Rabbi Greenberg is finishing a book "Of Wrestling with God and Men", which grapples with The Bible, Jewish tradition and homosexuality.

Shlomo Ashkinazy, psychotherapist. Shlomo has run a confidential support group for Orthodox gay men for almost 20 years.

Like "Devorah," the following people are filmed in silhouette with their voices changed and appear briefly in the film. They will appear, along with others, more extensively on the film's website:

"Chaim," an Orthodox gay man who is happily partnered with another observant man. He has organized the New York Gay and Lesbian Yeshiva/Day School Alumni Association virtually from its inception in 1995.

"Ben Aaron," a closeted Hasidic man who grew up in Brooklyn who has been the unofficial rabbi of the Orthodox gay community in New York for the past 25 years.

"Sue" and "Tova," an Orthodox lesbian couple, one a rabbi's daughter, who have created a home together in Jerusalem.

"Shmuel," a Hasidic gay grandfather who speaks of the moment he told his Orthodox friend he was gay, and how happy he was that once before he dies, he could have a "coming out" experience. He recently did tell his wife. Otherwise, his children and grandchildren are unaware about his active sexuality.

Updates

- Michelle has lost 130 pounds through surgery.
- Mark has grown his beard and returned to the ultra-Orthodox yeshiva world which he loved. He is learning full-time to obtain smicha(ordination to become a rabbi), following in his father's footsteps. He has broken up with his boyfriend and moved to his parent's house, the house that his father kicked him out of as a teenager for being flamboyantly gay.
- Israel's father moved to Jerusalem without telling him and has severed contact with him once and for all.
- "Malka" and "Leah" have cut off ties with "Malka's" family until they recognize and respect her relationship with "Leah." The two are planning to have children, raise them Orthodox, and send them to yeshiva. They are looking for a father.
- David finally told his parents that he was in the film after four years of fearing to do so. It was not a problem. Once they heard that major rabbis were also participating all his fears were for naught.
- I played shadchan (matchmaker) and introduced Rabbi Steve Greenberg with his partner of 1 _ years, an actor and opera singer also named Steve.

FESTIVAL AWARDS

2001 Berlin Film Festival

The 2001 Teddy Award for Best Documentary

The Teddy Award is the most prestigious international award for gay and lesbian cinema. The nine members of this international jury represented USA, Germany, UK, Italy, Norway, Canada, Ukraine, and The Netherlands.

"The Teddy Award for the best documentary film goes to "Trembling Before G-d", by Sandi Simcha DuBowski, for its ground-breaking discovery of the secret life of lesbian and gay Jews all around the world and of their fight for recognition of their beliefs."

The International Federation of Film Societies, Special Mention

Founded in 1947, FICC-IFFS is the international umbrella organization for film societies. Jurors hailed from Germany, Switzerland, France, and Italy.

"Taking compelling examples, this moving documentary shows the seeming incompatibility of the Jewish Orthodox rules of faith and homosexuality. The meticulously researched material interweaves a theological view with personal experience of life, and gets the audience involved in contemplating a deep conflict."

2001 Turin Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, Italy

Best Documentary

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Sandi Simcha DuBowski (Director, Producer) is a filmmaker and writer based in New York. His latest project, "Trembling Before G-d", is a USA/France/ Israel co-production. It has been co-produced with Keshet Broadcasting/Channel Two in Israel, the nation's most significant television network and the station's first-ever outright co-production with U.S. producers. "Trembling Before G-d" is the recipient of the Vito Russo Award, the New York Gay and Lesbian Film Festival's "prize for a project in development or production which upon completion will make a significant, international contribution to lesbian and gay film." Trembling Before G-d" was also selected for POV's Extreme Close-Up Workshop, IFFCON, and The Independent Feature Project's No Border for Docs. Earlier this year it was selected for the Sundance Film Festival and the Berlin Film Festival; in the latter it won the Teddy award for Best Documentary.

DuBowski's award-winning short, Tomboychik, received the Golden Gate Award for Best Short Documentary at The San Francisco International Film Festival, was broadcast on WNET, and has screened at The Whitney Museum of American Art, The Rotterdam Film Festival, and The Jewish Museum's "Too Jewish?" show among other museums and festivals worldwide.

Previously, DuBowski worked for nearly three years as a Research Associate at Planned Parenthood Federation of America merging strategic analysis and video of the anti-abortion movement and the Christian right. One of the videos he produced, Missionaries Form Militias, which documented national anti-abortion leader Rev. Matt Trehwella calling for the formation of armed militias, was screened for Attorney General Janet Reno and top federal law enforcement officials after Paul Hill's murder of abortion provider Dr. Bayard Britton. The piece was excerpted on CBS News, reported on by The New York Times, Newsweek, USA Today, and The Nation, and is being used by the Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment to train human rights activists. The pieces were broadcast in "Hey There Good Neighbor," a five-part series curated by The Whitney Museum of American Art and The Getty Center for the History of Art and Humanities.

His work and writing have appeared in The New York Times, New York Magazine, Vogue, Filmmaker, The Independent, Esquire, The Boston Globe, The Village Voice, Out Magazine, Planet Out Television, The Advocate, In The Life TV, The Jewish Week, The Forward, and The Jerusalem Post. He is a recipient of the Rockefeller Foundation's 1999 Film/Video/Multimedia Fellowship.

In addition, his work has received support from Skywalker Sound -- a division of Lucas Digital, Ltd.-- as well as over twenty foundations including The Creative Capital Foundation, The National Foundation for Jewish Culture's Fund for Jewish Documentary Filmmaking, The Jerome Foundation, The Nathan Cummings Foundation, The Ruth/Allen Ziegler Foundation, Andrew Tobias and Charles C. Nolan Funds of Stonewall Community Foundation, The Paul Robeson Fund for Independent Media, The Tom Healy

and Fred Hochberg Foundation, The H. van Ameringen Foundation, The Mathilde & Arthur B. Krim Foundation, The New York State Council on the Arts, The Michael Palm Foundation, The Burstein Family Foundation, The Rita J. and Stanley H. Kaplan Family Foundation, The Ted Snowdon Foundation, The Recanati Foundation, The Rapoport Family Foundation, The Richard Nathan Anti-Homophobia Trusts, and The Lucius and Eva Eastman Fund.

In 1992, DuBowski graduated Magna Cum Laude from Harvard University. He received two Ford Program for Undergraduate Research grants for his work on homosexuality in Hollywood and independent film.

Susan Korda (Creative Collaborator and Editor) has edited a variety of television and film projects including Al Reinert's Academy Award nominated "For All Mankind", Ken Burns' executive produced "The West", and Dick Rogers' "The Midwife's Tale." Her own films include the award-winning documentary "Vienna is Different: 50 Years After the Anschluss" and "One of Us", a personal documentary about family ties, memory and the true nature of deformity. Both films premiered at the Berlin Festival in 1989 and 1999 respectively. Vienna is Different screened at the Sundance Film Festival and won a Silver Medal at the Chicago Film Festival.

Korda was the recipient of a Fulbright Scholarship from 1992-1994 at which time she resided in Berlin. Currently, she teaches narrative film production at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. She was recently Story Consultant for Alan Berliner on his new film, The Sweetest Sound which will premiere at The Berlin Film Festival in 2001. Susan Korda's next screenplay is a *roman a clef* comedy set in a brothel.

Marc Smolowitz (Producer) is a founding executive of Turbulent Arts, an international film production, distribution and sales company based in San Francisco.

Other producing projects at the company include "The Weather Underground", the new documentary by Sam Green ("The Rainbow Man/John 3:16", Official Selection 1997 Sundance Film Festival) which is being co-developed by KQED-TV in San Francisco.

He has theatrically distributed feature length narrative and documentary films, including the award-winning "Lilies" (John Greyson, Canada -- Winner of the Canadian Oscar for Best Picture in 1996); "Never Met Picasso" (Stephen Kijak, USA); "Marian" (Petr Vaclav, Czech Republic); "Bye Bye" (Karim Dridi, France/Tunisia), "Fanci's Persuasion" (Charles Herman-Wurmfeld, USA); "Menmaniacs: The Legacy Of Leather" (Jochen Hick, Germany/ USA), and "Uncut" (Official Selection, 1998 Berlin International Film Festival, Teddy Bear Prize), John Greyson's provocative follow-up to "Lilies."

Prior to launching Turbulent Arts, Marc Smolowitz enjoyed a varied career in the fields of independent film production, exhibition and distribution. Most notably, for three years, he served as the Coordinator of IFFCON, the International Film Financing Conference--the prestigious, annual co-production gathering for North American Independent Producers who are seeking financing and acquisition abroad,

now in its seventh year. He was also the Program Coordinator of the San Francisco International Film Festival for three years.

John Zorn (Composer) has composed for jazz ensembles, symphony orchestras, rock bands, and films. The only constant in his music is a restless desire to move forward, to experiment with sound, in all of its various manifestations. Zorn founded Masada, which blurs klezmer, classical, jazz and avant-garde in an exploration of Jewish cultural identity. Their compositions number over two hundred, including the double-disc set, *Bar Kokhba*, and *The Circle Maker*.

Since 1995, Zorn has been the executive producer of Tzadik, a record label he founded that is dedicated to releasing the best in avant garde and experimental music, featuring David Krakauer, Frank London, Marc Ribot, and Anthony Coleman among others. One series, *Filmworks*, contains the CD of "Trembling Before G-d." Other films Zorn has composed include "Port of Last Resort" --a documentary on Jewish refugees who fled to Shanghai from Nazi Germany--, Ela Troyano's "Latin Boys Go To Hell" (Strand Releasing), Raul Ruiz's "The Golden Boat" (producer, James Schamus), and *She Must Be Seeing Things*.

PRESS CLIPS FROM SUNDANCE

“A film that stirred much emotion in the audience and immediate interest from buyers was *Trembling Before G-d*, a five-year investigation into the hidden lives of gay Orthodox Jews.”

-- Washington Post, January 30, 2001

“*Trembling Before G-d*. A powerful, troubling film about the nightmarish situation gay and lesbian Orthodox Jews face when, refusing to abandon either their sexuality or religion, they try to reconcile their essential natures with a community that holds them in contempt. Wrenching stories of struggle and denial were collected over a five-year period by director Sandi Simcha DuBowski.”

-- Los Angeles Times, January 17, 2001, Kenneth Turan

“Among the excellent documentaries shown were...the intense *Trembling before G-d*, the director Sandi Simcha DuBowski's film on Orthodox Jews trying to reconcile their faith with Orthodoxy's less than tolerant traditions.”

--- New York Times, January 29, 2001, Elvis Mitchell

“*Trembling Before G-d*, a fascinating examination of gay Orthodox Jews. Who knew? These men and women find themselves in the grips of an impossible dilemma - unwilling to give up their sexual identities but at the same time unwilling to give up their faith, even though it disdains and rejects them. Its amazing that the filmmaker, Sandi Simcha DuBowski, got access to this hidden world - one he explores with lyricism and insight.”

--- Newsweek.com, David Ansen

"American documentaries, always a bright spot at the festival, continued to shine this year....Sandi Simcha DuBowski presented *Trembling Before G-d*, an incisive study of homosexuality in Orthodox Jewish communities the world over."

-- Time Out New York, February 1-8, 2001, Nicole Keeter

“Happily, the film has a hero: Rabbi Steven Greenberg, whose joyousness stands in marked contrast to the pervasive suffering. In what has to be a Sundance first, DuBowski and Rabbi Greenberg invited believers and nonbelievers, Jews and gentiles, to a Sabbath dinner. Some fifty Sundancers took time out from chasing the next hot title to break bread and discuss something other than movies. It was to its credit that the meal felt more like a spiritual respite than a promotional tie-in.”

--- The Nation February 26, 2001, B. Ruby Rich

"*Trembling Before G-d*, a passionately open-eyed documentary about the wrenching conundrum of being gay and an Orthodox Jew at the same time"

-- Entertainment Weekly, February 9, 2001, Owen Gleiberman

“The film interviews many in this situation...and paints an honest, warm, layered picture of their highly conflicted lives. DuBowski and two of the film's subjects answered questions about the movie for 45 minutes, the longest post-screening Q & A I've witnessed so far.”

--- Newsweek.com, B.J. Sigismund

“Always rich in documentaries, Sundance this year has produced early favorites...there is *Trembling Before G-d*, a documentary about gay Hasidic and Orthodox Jews declaring their sexuality while trying to preserve their place in the religious community.”

---- New York Daily News, January 25, 2001, Jami Bernard

“Our favorite stuff (as always) was in the Documentary section, where we were blown away by three groundbreaking projects: Sandi Simcha Dubowski's *Trembling Before G-d*, a devastating and nuanced portrayal of the issues facing gay and lesbian Orthodox Jews as they grapple with these seemingly incompatible identities.”

-- Planet Out

"Sandi Simcha DuBowski's haunting *Trembling Before G-d*, which makes the case for gay Orthodox Jews marooned between their faith and the equally powerful need to be true to their sexual selves. Luckily for DuBowski they're a preternaturally chatty and witty bunch, whose isolation from their roots (it would take an open-minded rabbi indeed to embrace someone claiming membership in a group called the Orthodykes) is evoked by the director's astute visual composition. Surprisingly, the establishment they're up against includes some pockets of, if not acceptance, then certainly sympathy: One straight Orthodox youth, clearly at a loss after a tirade from a gay lapsed Jew who has lost contact with his censorious family, breaks his baffled silence to offer his fallen brother a slice of cake. In the end, given the uncompromising proscription of homosexuality in the Jewish texts, one has to agree with the voluble black sheep who, in sorrow and anger, concludes it may not be possible to be gay and Orthodox, and

with the compassionate Israeli therapist who tells his gay religious clients that they will struggle with an intractable contradiction for the rest of their lives.

--- The LA Weekly, Ella Taylor

"There were still parties every night, including one with Radiohead, but it's a sign of the times that one of the hottest soirees at the fest was a candlelight havdalah ceremony marking the end of Shabbat, conducted by a gay rabbi."

--- Independent Film Channel - IFC Rant, March-April 2001, Richard Bainbridge

"Sandi Simcha DuBowski looked radiant at Sundance as his long-awaited *Trembling before G-d* a feature-length documentary about those who are gay and Orthodox Jewish is getting good buzz. His film was feted the previous night with kosher hors d'oeuvres and a Havdalah ceremony led by Rabbi Steve Greenberg, the first openly gay Orthodox to hold that position. Evidently, throughout the entire religious night the cell phones were a'ringing."

--- Bay Area Reporter, January 25, 2001

"This film about gay and lesbian Orthodox Jews who refuse to abandon their religion even though the institution's hierarchy rejects them is one of those rare films that makes visible the invisible and has the capacity to forever change the world it surveys. Engaged filmmaker Sandi Simcha Dubowski began this film by asking himself how he could reconcile being gay with being a religious Jew.

Six years later, his journey produced this transcendent film that speaks to everyone who has experienced being an outsider. I frankly had little interest in learning why gays and lesbians wanted to stay within one of the most specifically homophobic religious traditions, and I went to see it out of duty rather than desire. I was wrong. The film is about the longing for a relationship with G-D and an unwillingness to let go of the rituals of union with G-D and community.

Artistic values alone would merit recommending this film. The questions raised in the film are universal. One follows the journey of a diverse group including a lesbian couple from Miami, an effeminate British gay man with AIDS, and the first out Orthodox Rabbi as they seek community and a relationship with the G-D of their understanding.

The journey, the closet, the fear, the rapture are what the film documents. No easy answers are given. In the best tradition of documentaries, the film places the questions right in the lap of the viewer. Engaged, indeed.”

-- LGNY, Jim Fouratt