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Presents

# Trembling Before G-D

**A Film by Sandi Simcha DuBowski**

2001. Israel/USA. 84 min. In English, Hebrew and Yiddish with English subtitles.

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**TREMBLING BEFORE G-D - Credits**

**A Film by Sandi Simcha DuBowski**

Simcha Leib Productions and Turbulent Arts  
present  
in Association with Keshet Broadcasting Ltd. (Israel)  
in co-production with Pretty Pictures (Paris)  
and Cinephil Ltd (Tel Aviv)  
***Trembling Before G-d***  
a film by Sandi Simcha DuBowski

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In Creative Collaboration with  
and Edited by  
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"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

# TREMBLING BEFORE G-D - 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 thousands-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.

## TREMBLING BEFORE G-D – 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.

## **TREMBLING BEFORE G-D – 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 an 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 three 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.

## **TREMBLING BEFORE G-D – 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 is 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," is 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 is the son of an ultra-Orthodox 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's 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," 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 is 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 that 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 is a 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, 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.

### **Post-Film Subject Updates**

- Michelle has lost 130 pounds through surgery. She is now happily in love with a Cuban woman who grew up a Jehovah's Witness. Michelle and her girlfriend hosted a Friday night dinner for 70 Hasidic, Orthodox, and ex-Orthodox gays and lesbians when the film launched at New York's Film Forum.

- Mark has grown his beard and returned to the ultra-Orthodox yeshiva world that he loved. He is learning full-time to obtain smicha, (ordination to become a rabbi), following in his father's footsteps. He had even moved to his parent's house, the house that his father kicked him out of as a teenager for being flamboyantly gay.

- Israel saw his father once before he father moved to Jerusalem and severed contact once and for all. Following his father's recent death, Israel was invited to the first family function in over 30 years - his sister's grandson's wedding - where an ultra-Orthodox nephew, Yitzhak, has now adopted Israel and Carl as his uncles and visits their home with his children.

- "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. Malka's ultra-Orthodox brother from Boro Park, Brooklyn who she has not seen for four years, went to New York's Film Forum to see the film twice, called her, and flew her to New York for Shabbat where she met children of his she had never known. Malka emailed me saying that we have acted as a shaliach or messenger to reunite her family - which was her greatest hope... Her brother is determined to show the film to their father who will not go to a movie theater nor watch television - the father still refuses to see it. "Malka" and "Leah" have recently stepped foot out of the closet, no longer in silhouette, and are doing public appearances with the film.

- 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. David reunited once again with Rabbi Yosef Langer, the Chabad rabbi who directed him to seek conversion therapy. This was at San Francisco Premiere as the Closing Night of the Jewish Film Festival in front of 1400 people at the Castro Theater. Rabbi Langer apologized to David. When the film opened theatrically in the Bay Area, Rabbi Langer hosted a Shabbat for 120 people - gay, straight, lesbian, transgender, Orthodox, Hasidic, Reform and Conservative. David feels like his life has come full circle.

- I played shadchan (matchmaker) and introduced Rabbi Steve Greenberg to his partner of 3 years, an actor and opera singer also named Steve. Rabbi Greenberg has come on board half-time as Trembling's Director of Education.

- Twelve Orthodox synagogues have invited the film to be screened in the synagogue and 18 have co-sponsored post-screening discussions and sent their members to participate.

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## TREMBLING BEFORE G-D – About the Filmmakers

**Sandi Simcha DuBowski** (Director, Producer) is a filmmaker and writer based in New York. His current project, *Trembling Before G-d* is currently in theatrical release in the United States, Israel, and Germany (in the U.S. with New Yorker Films), and was launched at New York's Film Forum to incredible audience, critical, and box office response. It broke Film Forum's Opening Day box office records previously held by *Paris Is Burning*. *Trembling* has been the recipient of ten awards including The Teddy Award for Best Documentary at the Berlin Film Festival, The Mayor's Prize for the Jewish Experience at the Jerusalem Film Festival, and The Grand Jury Prize for Best Documentary at OUTFEST Los Angeles. The film was nominated for the 2002 Independent Spirit Awards for the IFC/Directv Truer Than Fiction Award. The L.A. Weekly named it one of the 10 Best Films of 2001. It is being co-produced and broadcast by Keshet/Channel Two in Israel, the first co-production with U.S. producers and will be broadcast in Israel in late 2002. Arte in France/Germany will also broadcast it in 2002.

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.

DuBowski 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-five foundations including The Creative Capital Foundation, The Nathan Cummings Foundation, The Jerome Foundation, and The National Foundation for Jewish Culture's Fund for Jewish Documentary Filmmaking. At the World Premiere of *Trembling* at the Sundance Film Festival, director DuBowski and Rabbi Steve Greenberg, the first openly gay Orthodox rabbi, hosted the first-ever Shabbat at Sundance and with partner Working Films, an unprecedented Mormon-Jewish gay dialogue. They have launched an Orthodox community education project in the U.S., Israel and the U.K. (already eight Orthodox synagogues have invited the film to screen), which just received funding from Steven Spielberg's Righteous Persons Foundation. DuBowski, Rabbi Greenberg and Working Films are launching a tour in 2002 of Christian theological seminaries in the American South. 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 Fullbright 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 Turbulent Arts projects include: *The Weather Underground*, the new documentary by Sam Green (*The Rainbow*

*Man/John 3:16*, Official Selection 1997 Sundance Film Festival) that 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 soundtrack for *Trembling Before G-d*. Other films Zorn has composed soundtracks for 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*, Raul Ruiz's *The Golden Boat* (producer, James Schamus), and *She Must Be Seeing Things*.

## **TREMBLING BEFORE G-D - Awards**

### **Teddy Award for Best Documentary, Berlin Film Festival**

Mayor's Prize for the Jewish Experience, Jerusalem Film Festival

Grand Jury Prize for Best Documentary, OUTFEST Los Angeles

Chicago Film Festival – Gold Plaque, Best Documentary

### **International Federation of Film Societies, Special Mention, Berlin Film Festival**

Audience Choice Award for Best Documentary - Seattle Lesbian and Gay Film Festival

Best Documentary, Turin Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, Italy

Audience Award, Pink Apple Film Festival, Switzerland

Vito Russo Award, The New Festival, New York

Washington D.C Jewish Film Festival, Special Mention

Nominated for 2002 Independent Spirit Award, IFC/Directv Truer Than Fiction Award.  
One of the 10 Best Films of 2001, L.A. Weekly