

# PRESS NOTES



**WORLD PREMIERE  
TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL 2019**



# GAY CHORUS DEEP SOUTH

**A film by David Charles Rodrigues**

100 Minutes | USA | 2019

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## LOGLINE

In response to a wave of discriminatory anti-LGBTQ laws and the divisive 2016 election, the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus embarks on a tour of the American Deep South.

## SYNOPSIS

Led by Gay Chorus Conductor Dr. Tim Seelig and joined by The Oakland Interfaith Gospel Choir; the tour brings a message of music, love and acceptance to communities and individuals confronting intolerance. Over 300 singers travelled from Mississippi to Tennessee through the Carolinas and over the bridge in Selma. They performed in churches, community centers and concert halls in hopes of uniting us in a time of difference. The journey also challenges Tim and other Chorus members who fled the South to confront their own fears, pain and prejudices on a journey towards reconciliation. The conversations and connections that emerge offer a glimpse of a less divided America, where the things that divide us—faith, politics, sexual identity—are set aside by the soaring power of music, humanity and a little drag.



## FEATURED CHARACTERS

**Dr. Tim Seelig** - SFGMC leader and conductor faces his painful past by performing at a Southern Baptist Church for the first time in 30 years.

**Ashlé** - The first trans-female to sing as part of an all male Gay chorus, challenges her own identity by going on tour.

**Jimmy White** - Chorus member, born in Mississippi, tries to reconcile with his conservative father who he hasn't spoken to him in 8 years.

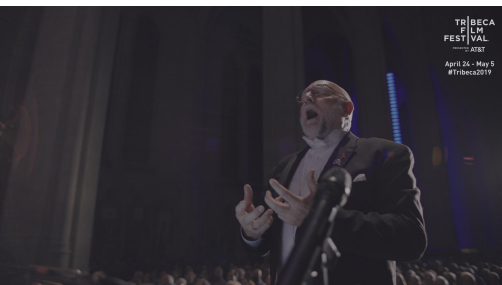
**Terrance** - Oakland Interfaith conductor and his choir bring their heart and a lot of soul to the performances.

**Riley**- A young Southerner severely punished by her parents is able to be with her community for the very first time at one of the concerts.

**Pastor Jim Dant**- Jim challenges tradition and opens the doors for the Gay Chorus's first ever performance in a Southern Baptist Church.

**Malaysia Walker** - Former Head of ACLU's trans chapter in Jackson, MS is a sign of LGBTQ resilience in the South.

**Southern Voices** - We spoke to many voices from the South; hearing stories of struggle, resilience, celebration and unity.



## **DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT**

After the 2016 elections, the one thing that shook me to the core wasn't the result of the election, it was the heightened, irrational division between the people in our country. As this division grew wider, every community that was considered "the other" felt threatened and as time went by the threat became tangible through legislation, isolationism and an uptick in violence.

I've also been "the other" my entire life. I'm the son of an immigrant and grew up between Brazil and the US, and later lived as a latino in San Francisco, where I became an ally to the LGBTQ community. Truth is, when you're "the other" you feel the need to always do better just so you can be; to belong. It also gives you perspective, it teaches you to listen, to be more open. Luckily this inner-battle to feel accepted evolved into an outer-fight for equality.

When I learned about the tour, I immediately saw a rare chance of telling an emotional story in irrational times. I saw a group of people with beautiful music and a history of activism ready to sing against all odds. Songs are the quickest way to connect with someone. It's a lightning bolt to the soul. Imagine 300 people, who've dealt with discrimination their entire lives, singing in unison. The frequency of their voices are filled with love and acceptance and a universal language echoes through everyone, no matter what you believe in.

When they were not singing, we were all listening; to hundreds, if not thousands of people throughout the southern states. From local LGBTQ members to every single Christian denomination to the folks at Jefferson's Country Store in rural Alabama. Preconceived notions were challenged at every turn of this journey. As we travelled deeper into the South, a greater depth of place opened up. The lines between conservative and liberal, faith and sexuality, red and blue started to blur. Questions began to surface: are we really living in two Americas? Can different perspectives on religion and politics build instead of divide? Is kindness enough to bring us closer? Can our human vibrations, our vibrato, become an instrument towards acceptance? If we open our ears will our hearts follow?

The hope is for Gay Chorus Deep South to raise these themes and reflections with its audience. So each voice can start a dialogue within their own community and family; and with that first note, begin to materialize a kinder, more accepting and harmonized world around them.-

**- David Charles Rodrigues, Director**

## About The Filmmakers



### **Writer and Director, David Charles Rodrigues**

David is a Greek-American-Brazilian filmmaker and equal rights activist. He's a Sundance New Frontier and Doc lab fellow. His work leverages art, music and cinematic narratives to trojan-horse challenging messages into people's hearts and minds. Rodrigues' short films and commercials have garnered over 1 billion views online and were featured at MOCA Los Angeles, MOCA Tei Pei, The San Jose New Media Biennial, Skirball Cultural Center, The Art Directors Club, Cannes Lions and Art Basel.

**Gay Chorus Deep South is his feature doc debut.**



### **Producer, Bud Johnston**

Bud is a proud native of the San Francisco Bay Area and an award winning producer of commercial and short films working alongside some of the worlds biggest brands. As a musician and filmmaker Bud hopes to craft stories that connect and inspire audiences through the power of music.

**Gay Chorus Deep South is his feature doc debut.**



### **Producer, Jesse Moss**

Jesse is a director, producer and cinematographer. His films include The Overnighters (Sundance Special Jury Prize), The Bandit, Full Battle Rattle and Speedo. For Netflix, he directed one episode of Dirty Money and recently completed The Family, a series that will premiere on Netflix in 2019.



**Editor, Jeff Gilbert**

Jeff Gilbert, ACE is an Emmy nominated film editor who has a passion for character driven narratives that deliver emotional truth, cinematic beauty and cultural relevance. Some of his most notable films of late are the Academy Award Nominated documentary Extremis, Sundance awarded and Oscar Short Listed The Overnighters and the polarizing Netflix Original The Rachel Divide.



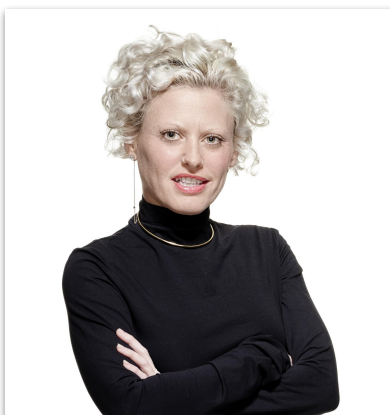
**Director of Photography, Adam Hobbs**

Originally from Asheville, North Carolina, Adam, was the DP on FINDERS KEEPERS. His work has screened at Sundance, Tribeca, SXSW and HotDocs. And has been featured in The New York Times, Variety, Entertainment Weekly, Hollywood Reporter, Indiewire, The Atlantic, and Vimeo Staff Picks.



**Composer, Bryan Senti**

Bryan is a composer, multi instrumentalist, producer, and recording artist (Ex Mykah). His films premiered at Sundance, Venice Biennale and others, and have been distributed by Lionsgate, HBO and Magnolia Pictures. He recently co-scored for the SKY TV series “Save Me” with Oscar nominee Dustin O’Halloran, called “The best TV drama of the year” - The Telegraph.



**Art Director, Melinda Gorham**

Melinda has led visual and creative for films, global brands like Google, MINI and Impossible Foods, music videos, and the arts, including exhibits for MOCA; Mike Kelley, Tom of Finland and the rebrand The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Melinda was also co-responsible for the launch of MOCATv, the first art channel on YouTube.

## **Additional Credits**

Executive Producers  
James Goode and Tony Höggvist

Additional Photography  
Thorsten Thielow

Associate Producers  
Freddie Whitman  
Harrison Watkins

Co-Producers  
Rachel Holbrook  
Jenny Gadd  
Leighanna MacFadden

Post Production Supervisor  
Jamie McBriety

Assistant Editor  
Luke Willis

Music Supervisor  
Michael Freeman

Sound Mix  
Skywalker Sound - Pete Horner

Color  
Framestore - Beau Leon

**MUSIC BY**

**THE SAN FRANCISCO GAY MEN'S CHORUS  
AND THE OAKLAND INTERFAITH GOSPEL CHOIR**