

THE DETROIT JEWISH NEWS

Community

Final Filming for 'Shoah Ambassadors' Holocaust Documentary Takes Place at Berman Center

By Danny Schwartz - 10/11/2021 11:00 AM 21 0



"Shoah Ambassadors" Curtis Bates and Hailey Callahan, the Detroit Children's Choir and Michigan-based Holocaust survivors gather for final filming.

Keith Famie, after about two years of filming, believes the song and scene at the Berman Center wraps the film up perfectly.

Three generations gathered at the Berman Center for the Performing Arts on Oct. 3 for the filming of the final scene of Keith Famie's *Shoah Ambassadors* [Holocaust documentary](#).

The closing scene in the Berman Center will see Shoah Ambassador Curtis Bates singing his song “Never Again” with nine Michigan-based Holocaust survivors, the Detroit Children’s Choir and ambassador Hailey Callahan on stage with him for a climactic final scene and message of solidarity together.

The song “Never Again” came to fruition during production after Bates and Michigan-based Holocaust survivor and painter, Rene Lichtman, had a one-on-one interview at Lichtman’s home. Since Lichtman has an artistic expression of his own, he decided to create a painting called *Never Again*.

The Michigan-based Holocaust survivors who participated in the filming were Edith Maniker, Elizabeth Silver, Fred Lessing, Katherine Sattler, Gita Griesdorf, Irene Miller, Rene Lichtman, Sabina Heller and Sheri Kohen.

Throughout the day of filming, melding of the three generations took place, including Bates and Callahan telling the choir students about their journey and encouraging them to learn more about the Holocaust. And the Holocaust survivors and choir students connected as well.

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Bates, along with Callahan, has been filming for the project for just about two years now. Bates believes his song and the movie as a whole fulfills its task.

“It bridged the gap of the generations where we had young children, young adults and the survivors, and I feel like that’s a link that’s missing within

communities,” Bates said. “It’s been exciting getting to meet the survivors and make something they really connect to and feel strongly about. It’s really given me a new insight and perspective on life and how people really can make it through things you wouldn’t even be able to imagine.”

Camera focuses on Holocaust survivor Fred Lessing, subject of award-winning short film *Bear and Fred*.

Gita Griesdorf, one of the survivors who participated in the filming, loved Bates' song and requested to have it sent to her.

"I think it's the best experience I could ever expect," she said. "It was organized beautifully and had a very warm atmosphere. I'm happy I was a participant today."

Detroit Children's Choir Executive Director Sandee Singer said it was an overwhelming emotion seeing all the generations come together.

"It was so great to bring these young people face-to-face with real Holocaust survivors that maybe they thought were just a story in a book," Singer said. "It's amazing to be able to meet someone who has shown so much positivity throughout their life even though they suffered such tragedy and such tremendous loss, but they're happy and thriving and still telling their stories to these young people so we can make sure this never happens again."

Famie, after about two years of filming, believes the song and scene at the Berman Center wraps the film up perfectly.

"The song takes the audience on a journey through the lives of young people, the lives of civil rights, the lives of the Holocaust and the lives of oppression. It takes them all through that, and then the Holocaust survivors and the Shoah Ambassadors film becomes a catalyst to human rights globally, not just the Holocaust," Famie said.

"The most exciting part today was the Holocaust survivors enjoyed it," Famie continued. "They were tapping their feet and clapping their hands and they're saying they love the song. It touches me to see them get excited about being part of something. If nothing else, we made their lives more enriched today from this moment. The idea was to bridge those big generation gaps, and we did it."

Shoah Ambassadors will premiere at a community showing Nov. 11 at the Emagine Novi Theatre and make its debut on DPTV/PBS on Nov. 18. PBS is also looking at a second airing in December.

Famie and the Shoah Ambassadors team are still raising the necessary funds to ensure the film production will be seen internationally. To learn more about the film and/or to support, visit shoahambassadors.com.



The generations come together as Holocaust survivors, the Detroit Children's Choir and the Shoah Ambassadors participate in the filming.

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