



HOW TO DANCE IN OHIO

A FILM BY ALEXANDRA SHIVA

SYNOPSIS

"The camera mostly follows three risk averse, shy girls with varying degrees of verbal and social skills as they navigate all of the horrors of young adulthood...with the grace that comes with overcoming. ...At the screening I attended, virtually every member of the audience was grinning when the lights came up."

- Gwen Ifill, Washington Week

"A touching, gentle-hearted look at teenagers on the autistic spectrum preparing for their first formal dance, How to Dance in Ohio offers a refreshingly upbeat, even cheerful look at people and their families coping with the condition. ...Its engagement with its subjects will help generate understanding and empathy among mainstream viewers, and that can only be a good thing."

- Hollywood Reporter

"As rare as it is to see young men on the spectrum appear on screen, it's that much more rare to see young women on the spectrum — which makes Shiva's film all the more important."

— Hello Giggles

A first kiss, a first dance. These are the rites of passage of American youth that hold the promise of magic, romance and initiation into adulthood. For kids from all walks of life, these first steps toward intimacy are at once exciting and terrifying. For some teenagers and young adults on the autism spectrum, the transition can be nothing less than paralyzing. In Columbus, Ohio, a group of young people with an array of developmental challenges prepares for an iconic event — a spring formal dance. They spend 12 weeks confronting and practicing their social skills as they prepare for the big event, to be hosted at a local disco. Working with their trusted psychologist, they deconstruct fear and larger-than-life social anxiety one step at a time by picking dates, dresses, and, ultimately, a King and Queen of the Prom. HOW TO DANCE IN OHIO is a story of the universal human need to grow, connect and belong as uniquely dramatized by individuals facing the deepest struggle toward social survival.

In HOW TO DANCE IN OHIO, we get to know three girls transitioning into adulthood. The film takes us inside their group therapy sessions, their relationships with their families and their private thoughts as they struggle to understand and navigate the social rules that surround the suspenseful and heightened experience of a first date. Through their stories, and a chorus of other young women and men confronting similar issues, these girls reveal the hard work, perseverance and resilience it takes to be a part of contemporary society, along with the extraordinary challenges of being different. Entertaining, funny and heartbreaking, HOW TO DANCE IN OHIO challenges us to question and celebrate the path to human connection and to rethink the definition of normal.

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KEY SUBJECTS INCLUDE:

Dr. Emilio Amigo

A clinical psychologist with a community-based practice in Columbus, Ohio. He has been providing private and group social skills therapy for children, teens and adults on the autism spectrum for the past 20 years. His approach is simple - if you are going to help these individuals learn how to be social, it has to be fun, which is evident in every activity he prepares. But what happens during these sessions is anything but simple, as he works attentively with these individuals to help navigate them through their deepest social struggles in living with autism.

Marideth Bridges

A 16-year-old high school student who is the happiest when she is home alone in her room with her computer. She is a big thinker and fact-seeker, less interested in sharing her knowledge than in collecting it. Still, her parents and her younger sister are able to engage her in their family life, and even at Amigo Family Counseling, she seems to be tentatively exploring the idea of having a date for the Spring Formal.

Caroline McKenzie

19 years old, is transitioning into life as a college student at Columbus State Community College. She is studying Japanese with the dream of going to live in Japan someday. She is wary of the challenges and changes inherent in growing up, but is in love with her boyfriend Jay, who she met in Dr. Amigo's group session.

Jessica Sullivan

22 years old, living at home with her parents and her dog Maximus, but trying to gain the skills and money she will need when she is ready to live on her own. She has a job in a local bakery that provides a work-training program for individuals on the autism spectrum. Jessica is a romantic, and has a deep longing to connect with and be understood by others, and she fully embraces the challenges of the Spring Formal in every way.

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DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In my work as a documentary filmmaker, I am interested in stories about people trying to find belonging. How do they create worlds for themselves that make sense for them when they find themselves in the margins? I have found that people who have the most to share about being human are the ones who are most struggling. In telling the stories of so-called outsiders, I ask audiences to consider the boundaries that place them there.

The daughter of very close friends of mine is on the autism spectrum and she is non-verbal. As I've watched her grow up, I've wondered what coming of age would look like for her, and thought about the specific issues girls with autism face as they move into adulthood. I had seen and read very little about girls with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and wanted to explore this further.

Coming of age is complicated for everybody, whether you're going to your first dance, or your first date, or simply trying to make a new friend. It was very important to me that the struggles and obstacles that ASD added for these individual be presented in a dramatic way, but in a way that general audiences could understand and relate to. I wanted to try to give the audience the feeling that they are there with our subjects, rather than watching them from a great distance, and I worked hard with my Director of Photography Laela Kilbourn, and later my Editor Toby Shimin, to achieve this. Although it's often difficult to relate to experiences that are not our own, the access the subjects allowed our team hopefully allows people to connect with what they see and reflect on their own struggles.

We started the process of making this film by talking it through in great detail with the psychologist – it was very important that he understand what the filming was going to look like and make sure we would not impact treatment negatively. From there, we spoke with the clients and their parents in a “town hall” meeting to answer as many questions as possible and to address their concerns. I spent the first week on site with my producer Bari Pearlman and our crew meeting with four to five of the counseling clients at a time, describing everything from where we would be in the room to how close the equipment would be to them. Some people were more curious about the physicality of filming and wanted to touch the camera and boom, and others had specific questions about why we wanted to do this. They shared with us why they wanted to participate, and overwhelmingly it was that they wanted their particular experience to be known to others. It was a collaborative process with the subjects from the beginning,

I think the film is really about our need to grow, connect and belong. The young adults in How to Dance in Ohio struggle deeply with the challenges around social connection. The film follows them as they persevere, and is a testament to their resilience. My work often seems to circle back to the notion that there are many different ways to be a person, and I hope the intimate nature of this film allows that to resonate for everyone. I hope others fall in love with these individuals as much as I did.

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FILMMAKERS BIOS

Alexandra Shiva - Director/Producer

Alexandra Shiva graduated from Vassar College in 1995 with a BA in Art History. After spending extensive time in India, she produced and directed BOMBAY EUNUCH, a feature-length documentary that follows a makeshift family of eunuchs as they struggle to survive in modern Bombay. In 2001, BOMBAY EUNUCH was awarded Best Documentary at New York's New Festival and the Special Jury Award at the Florida Film Festival and was followed by a 6-week theatrical release.

Alexandra's second documentary STAGEDOOR follows five kids through a musical theater summer camp program in the Catskills. STAGEDOOR premiered at SXSW in 2005, and in 2006 had its theatrical debut at Film Forum in New York and aired on Sundance Channel.

In 2010 she created a short film for Turnaround For Children, a non-profit education reform organization based in New York and Washington DC.

Her third feature documentary HOW TO DANCE IN OHIO world premiered in competition at the 2015 Sundance Film Festival. It focuses on a group of teenagers and young adults on the autism spectrum preparing for an iconic American rite of passage -- a Spring Formal.

Bari Pearlman- Producer

Bari Pearlman is an award-winning documentary producer and director. In addition to HOW TO DANCE IN OHIO, Bari produced Lee Storey's SMILE TIL IT HURTS: THE UP WITH PEOPLE STORY (2009), and has been a consulting producer on many fiction and non-fiction projects including Lucy Kostelanetz' WE DON'T WANNA MAKE YOU DANCE (2013). As a television producer, her credits include two episodes of the A&E docu-drama series THE FUGITIVE CHRONICLES (2010), Derek Cianfrance's documentary SHOTS IN THE DARK (2001) for Court TV/Channel 4, and Joe Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky's VH1 FAN CLUB: ABBA (2002), and she was Post Production Supervisor for the first season of CBS's BLUE BLOODS (2010-11).

As a director, Bari's work has been supported with grants from NYSCA, The Jerome Foundation, The Hartley Film Foundation, The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation, and the Lucius and Eva Eastman Foundation, and developed through the 2006 Sundance Producer's Conference and residencies at LMCC Swing Space on Governors Island and Yaddo. Her feature documentary DAUGHTERS OF WISDOM (2007) was released theatrically in 2008. NANGCHEN SHORTS (2011) is now playing in film festivals and museums. In 2009, Bari directed the development trailer THE STRANGEST TOWN IN ALASKA for Cypress Films. Her first film was the award-winning short documentary MAH-JONGG: THE TILES THAT BIND (1998).

Jason Blum – Executive Producer

Emmy award winning producer, Jason Blum is the founder and CEO of Blumhouse Productions, a production company that has pioneered a new model of studio filmmaking- producing high-quality micro-budget films. Blumhouse has a first-look deal with Universal Pictures and brings the concept of auteur, independent filmmaking to genre films by giving directors creative freedom to tell their stories. Since its launch, Blumhouse has produced the renowned PARANORMAL ACTIVITY, THE PURGE, INSIDIOUS, and SINISTER franchises.

Blumhouse's award-winning movies include the Academy Award winning WHIPLASH with Sony Pictures Classics, which won both the Grand Jury and Audience prizes at Sundance, and the Emmy award winning The NORMAL HEART for HBO.

Blum, a member of AMPAS, was previously co-head of the Acquisitions and Co-Productions department at Miramax Films in New York. At Miramax, he was instrumental in acquiring over 50 films including THE OTHERS, SMOKE SIGNALS, A WALK ON THE MOON and THE HOUSE OF YES.

Blum has produced over 75 films and TV series throughout his career. His credits also include: THE READER, for which Kate Winslet won an Academy Award; HYSTERICAL BLINDNESS, starring Uma Thurman, which aired on HBO and garnered Thurman a Golden Globe Award; and HAMLET starring Ethan Hawke, Bill Murray, Sam Shepard and Kyle MacLachlan. His documentary credits include Alexandra Shiva's previous film STAGEDOOR.

Blum began his career as the producing director of the Malaparte theater company, which was founded by Ethan Hawke.

Toby Shimin – Editor

Editor Toby Shimin began her film career as a sound editor, where she worked on such projects as FIRE FROM THE MOUNTAIN and WORKING GIRLS, which won a Special Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival. She switched to picture editing in 1988 when she cut THE CHILDREN'S STOREFRONT, which was nominated for an Academy Award.

Since then, she has cut numerous films that have premiered at Sundance, including A LEAP OF FAITH, MARTHA AND ETHEL, MISS AMERICA and OUT OF THE PAST, which won the Audience Award. She has cut several diverse projects for PBS, including AIDS WARRIORS, SEABISCUIT, for which she received an Emmy nomination and Emmy-nominated REPORTING AMERICA AT WAR. THREE OF HEARTS: A POST-MODERN FAMILY, premiered in September 2004 at the Toronto Film Festival, and TWO SQUARE MILES was part of the 2006 Independent Lens series on PBS, EVERYTHING'S COOL, premiered in 2007 at Sundance. A SEA CHANGE has won several festival awards, including the 2010 NOAA Environmental Hero award. In 2011, BUCK won the Audience Award at Sundance and was short-listed for the 2012 Academy Awards.

Toby is a principal of Dovetail Films. She studied film at Hampshire College, where she earned a Bachelors of Arts. She currently lives in New York's Hudson Valley where she is co-curator of the film series, Depot Docs.

Laela Kilbourn – Director of Photography

Laela Kilbourn's documentary feature credits include the Sundance 2008 hit AMERICAN TEEN; the Emmy-nominated WORD WARS; and SYNC OR SWIM, winner of the Billie Award for Journalism from the Women's Sports Foundation. She filmed the History Channel's eleven part docu-series SANDHOGS, and has worked on projects for NBC, AMC, A&E, Nick Jr., ESPN, MTV, VH1, WeTV, the Trio Channel, TruTV, and TV One. Her narrative work includes the award-winning JUNE WEDDINGS as well as HIC! OPEN A DOOR IN THE USA, winner of the BAMKids Film Festival Best Live Action Short Award and Prix Jeunesse International Finalist, and she was additional camera on the acclaimed FX series THE AMERICANS. Her work in collaboration with contemporary visual artists includes BLIND SIDE, an installation piece at the Whitney Museum of American Art.

She is a member of the International Cinematographers Guild and New York Women in Film & Television, and has served as a Juror for the Brooklyn International Film Festival, Documentary Feature Awards, and as a guest speaker at The New School, Department in Media Studies & Film, Graduate Certificate in Documentary Media Studies.

She has a degree in social anthropology from Harvard University.

CREDITS

Directed and Produced by
Alexandra Shiva

Producer
Bari Pearlman

Executive Producer
Jason Blum

Director of Photography
Laela Kilbourn

Editor
Toby Shimin

Composer
Bryan Senti

Associate Editor
Joy E. Reed

Assistant Editor
Jennifer Stamps

Field Sound Mixer
Josh Isaac

Assistant Camera
Cole Pisano
Coleen Mleziva

Production Assistants
Max Eberle
Ruth Lang
Andrew Fiscus

Featuring
Emilio Amigo
Marideth Bridges
Caroline McKenzie
Jessica Sullivan
and
Ashley Amigo
Jodi Bridges
Margaret Bridges
Michael Bridges
Saundra Goettemoeller
Shaun Klingensmith
Johanna McKenzie
Greg McKenzie
Sarah Perry
Patrick Sullivan
Teresa Sullivan

With the Participation of

Daniel Annis
Christopher Arrieta
Zach Barrett
Nicholas Barry
James Baughman
Christopher Blackwell
Timothy Blackwell
Graydon Boock
Derek Bradford
Colin Carroll
Jack Casey
Brian Cloppert
Jasmine Crawley
Tatianna Crosby-Edwards
Valarie Culp
Donald Custers
Natalie Davis
Dylan Del Riesgo
Meagan Denny
Catie DiFrank
Justus Dominguez
Megan Doran
Phil Evans
Aimee Evans
Sebastian Finch
Remington Goudy
Marshall Green
Dan Grunde
Christopher Hale
Uriah Hammock
Nicholas Heitz
Tristan Honscheid
Eric Hopkins
Joel Hunt
Shawn Javery
Eric Kittel
Justin Konst
Spencer Larsen

Andrew Lund
Alexandra Lutz
Eliah Marcum
Ricardo Martinez
Christopher Mazzotta
Zach Miculka
Nicholas Morris
Brion Nicholson
Kalib Perine
Kenneth Phillips
Gabriel Ratliff
Jake Dassler-Richardson
Steven Savoie
Kris Schaefer
Gaurav Schrader
Danielle Seitz
Melissa Shipley
Nicholas Sims
Joe Sisco
Ryan Small
Brooke Sowers
Joel Stands
Sarah Studer
Drew Swanson
Ben Sykora
Michael Tarantelli
Joshua Toulmin
Thomas Van Atta
Christian Vazquez
Jacob Voronkov
Casey White
Armand Whitehouse
Sondra Williams
Missy Williams
Delaney Williams
Harvey Wolff
Adrin Woods
Grant

And

Darryl Abbington
Megan Amigo
Angela Denny
Susan Flatt
Joanna George
Sophia Green
Gloria Goudy
Wesley Goudy
Ashley Hamberg
Carolyn Lee
Misty Johnson
Sam Menker
Laura Osborn

Alan Ratliff
Bryson Rontsong
Chloe Rothschild
Michelle Seymour
Sean Shirk
Chase Smith
Lauren Strawn
Chris Swanson
Tom Swanson
Michael Tarantelli
Audrey Todd
Alex Yates

Julia Ratliff

Additional Camera
Ezra Bookstein
Nadia Hallgren
Cole Pisano

Additional Field Sound Mixers
Eric Vucelich
Timothy Dutton

Title Design
Allison Brownmoore
Anthony Brownmoore
Blue Spill

Score Music Consultant
Mary Ramos

Digital Intermediate Colorist
Will Cox

Digital Intermediate Online Editor
Owen Rucker

Digital Intermediate Producer
Caitlin Tartaro

Post Production Services
Final Frame

Visual Effects

Oh, MY! Productions
Joy E. Reed

Legion
VFX Supervisor - James David Hattin
VFX Producer - Nate Smalley
VFX Coordinator - Rachel Borkow
Lead Artist - John R. McConnell

Mechanism Digital
VFX - Lucien Harriot
VFX Artist - Fangge Chen
VFX Coordinator - Ashley Cortes

Sound Design
Margaret Crimmins

Re-Recording Mixer
Tony Volante

Post Production Sound Facility
Sound Lounge

Transcription
Lisa Smith

Equipment Rental
Ohio HD Video
The Camera Department
Central Grip & Lighting
Hello World

Office Manager for Gidalya Pictures
Kerry Monnelly

Post Production for Blumhouse Productions
Philip Dawe

Advisor
Dan Cogan

Sales Agent
Andrew Herwitz
The Film Sales Company, Inc.

Legal Services
Iddo Arad, Frankfurt Kurnit Klein & Selz, PC
Chris Perez, Donaldson + Callif, LLP

Accounting Services
Alan Wong, Baker Tilly Virchow Krause, LLP

Insurance Services
Film Emporium - Darren Henshaw & Csilla Criner
Front Row Insurance Brokers, LLC. – Kent Hamilton & Tina Ortiz

Filmed on Location in Columbus, Ohio
with the assistance of
The Office of Ohio Governor John R. Kasich
The Greater Columbus Film Commission - Thomas McClure

Apogee Hair Studio – Rhonda Brown
Central Ohio Transit Authority - Kelly Stephenson
Columbus State Community College - David Wayne
David's Bridal - Charly Rok
Educational Service Center of Central Ohio - Fred Ruoff
Encore at Crosswoods – Jeff Lauback
Food For Good Thought – Sarah Duplessis
Franklin Park Conservatory - Lori Kingston
Graeter's Ice Cream - Jason Hudson

The Hair Raizers – Sheila Sullivan
Moore Comics – Laura & Rob Moore
New Albany High School
Oakstone Academy - Jessica Gebert
Tandoori Grill – Syed Abban

Original Music Performed by
Piano - Aaron Kotler & Joseph Martin
Flute - Alex Sopp
Oboe - Matt Dine
Clarinet - Alicia Lee
Violin - Bryan Senti
Viola - Andie Springer
Cello - Noah Hoffeld
Bass - Joe Higgins
Celeste - Bryan Senti

Music Mix- John Hull

Recorded at Creekside Sound and Terminus Studios

Licensed Music

“FIREWORK”

Written by Katy Perry, Mikkel Eriksen, Tor Erik Hermansen, Sandy Julien Wilhelm and Ester Dean

Performed by Katy Perry

Courtesy of Capitol Records under license from Universal Music Enterprises
(Acoustic Remix arranged by Bryan Senti and John Hull)

Other Music

"ALONE"
by Kenny G
Performed by Kenny G
Arista Records

"STAYIN' ALIVE"
By Barry Gibb, Maurice Gibb & Robin Gibb
Performed by The Bee Gees
Bee Gees/Reprise

"WOMANIZER"
By Rapheal Akinyemi & Nikeshia Michelle
Briscoe
Performed by The Gym All-Stars
Ubisoft Entertainment

"TEENAGE DREAM"
By Lukasz Gottwald, Benjamin Joseph
Levin, Max Martin, Bonnie Leigh McKee,
Katy Perry
Performed by Katy Perry
Capitol Records

"THE WOBBLE"
By Michael Antoine Crooms, Jonathan
Bashan Dumas, Victor Owusu Jr, Frank
Brent Rodriguez, Pjarro Ahmund Scott,
Johnathan Ali Wright
Performed by V.I.C.
Warner Brothers Records

"FOREVER"
By Robert L. Allen, Christopher Maurice
Brown, Jamal F. Jones, Andre Darrell
Merritt, Brian Kennedy Seals
Performed by Chris Brown
RCA Records

"THE BARE NECESSITIES"
By Terry Gikyson
Performed by Sam Menker

"YEAH!"
By Christopher Brian Bridges, Garrett R.
Hamler, LaMarquis Jefferson, James
Elbert Phillips, Jonathan H. Smith, Patrick
Michael Smith
Performed by Usher (With Lil Jon &
Ludacris)
Arista Records

"I WANNA BE LIKE YOU"
By Robert Sherman & Richard Sherman
Performed by Sam Menker

"COLONEL HATHI'S MARCH (REPRISE)"
By Robert Sherman & Richard Sherman
Performed by Sam Menker

"CALL ME MAYBE"
By Tavish Crowe, Carly Rae Jepsen &
Joshua Keeler Ramsay
Performed by Carly Rae Jepsen
Schoolboy Records

"CASEY JUNIOR"
By Frank Churchill & Ned Washington
Performed by Sam Menker

"NEVER GONNA GIVE YOU UP (CLUB
MIX)"
By Mike Stock, Matt Aitken & Pete
Waterman
Performed by Rick Astley
Remix by The Rickrollerz

"TRY"
By Michael James Ryan Busbee & Ben
West
Performed by Pink
RCA Records

For Lucy

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