

Inspiring chorale morale

'Harmony' sounds
depths of members'
struggles and triumphs

By SCOTT CANTRELL
Classical Music Critic

Editor's note: An incomplete review of this movie was published in Friday's The Movies section. Here is the full review.

You'll want a big box of tissues handy before you sit down to watch *The Power of Harmony*.

MOVIE REVIEW

The Power of Harmony

A Starring Timothy Seelig and the Turtle Creek Chorale. Directed by Ginny Martin. Not rated. 70 min. At the Dallas Angelika.

Named best documentary at the 2005 USA Film Festival, it celebrates the 25th anniversary of the Turtle Creek Chorale, Dallas' nationally acclaimed gay men's chorus. But it also records deeply personal stories of painful struggles and rejections, some finding happy endings only in the camaraderie of the chorus.

"We were brought together because of our love of music," chorale director Timothy Seelig says early on, "but we've been held together by so much more." One singer calls the chorale "a holy place, an island ... where the outside is no longer hurtful."

There's plenty of hurt — condemnation from parents and churches — scattered among soaring, soothing music from the chorale's impressively professional performances at the Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center.

The most excruciating drama is Zan Moore's attempt to reconnect with parents he hasn't spoken to for 23 years, ever since they had him trailed and publicly condemned by their Jehovah's Witness church.

His grandmother primly pronounces homosexuality "incompatible with scriptural teaching." His mother happily greets her "precious lamb" on the phone, but at the last minute the parents back out of a reunion. "We will probably not see each other before they die," Mr. Moore sadly concludes. "I know for sure that my family has rejected me."

Several singers tell of trying to suppress their true identities to fulfill parents' — and society's — expectations. Mark Cargill married his high school sweetheart, but living a lie led to depression and attempted suicide. Dr. Seelig was married and the father of two children — and director of music at a big Baptist church in Houston. Telling the truth cost him his job, home and car. His daughter emerges happily affirming, but his son remains distant.

"I waited till I was 35 to find out what was truth for me," he says. "And that truth was that God made me the way I was — gay as a goose."

AIDS leaves a tragic shadow over the chorale, which has lost 140 singers to the disease. "It was such a waste of such wonderful people, talented, kind people," says one singer. But positive things come out of the horror. Watching these men face one death after another, pianist Anne Albritton finds courage and support for her own battle with breast cancer.

There are tears of joy, too. The camera follows partners Richard Galvan and Mark Hayward as they travel to Guatemala to adopt a baby boy. It's hard to imagine any parents radiating more love than these two men. And near the end, bass Fred Moore returns to the chorale after losing his second leg to diabetes. Rare's the marriage with the deep devotion between him and 30-year partner Dan Fuller.

Only the hardest heart will be unmoved by this lovingly crafted and deeply touching documentary, in high-definition video and audio. And keep the tissues handy.

E-mail scantrell@dallasnews.com

DallasNews.com/extra

BOX OFFICE BUZZ

The up side

A troupe of local heroes is making good. The folks behind *The Power of Harmony* report that the new documentary about Dallas' Turtle Creek Chorale earned more than \$6,000 on a single

screen at the Dallas Angelika last week. Not quite *Just Like Heaven* numbers, but not too shabby for a low-budget doc. Director Ginny Martin's film is aiming for the festival circuit and a gradual art-house rollout.

E-mail rholtzer@dallasnews.com