



FIG TREES

A DOC-OP ABOUT AIDS, PILLS & GERTRUDE STEIN

104 Min., HD, 2009 • Writer/Director/Producer: John Greyson • Composer: David Wall
With: Van Abrahams, David Wall, Denise Williams, Deb Overes, Ezra Perlman, Alexander Chapman
DOPs: Ali Kazimi, Jesse Rosensweet • Design: Bill Layton • Editor: Jared Raab

In 1999, South African AIDS activist Zackie Achmat went on a treatment strike, refusing to take his pills until they were widely available to all South Africans. This symbolic act became a cause celebre, helping build his group Treatment Action Campaign into a national movement -- yet with each passing month, Zackie grew sicker...

FIG TREES is a documentary opera about AIDS activists Tim McCaskell in Toronto and Zackie Achmat in Capetown, as narrated by an albino squirrel, an amputee busker and St. Teresa of Avila. Telling the story of Zackie's treatment strike in song, and the larger story of the fight for pills on two continents, and across two decades, FIG TREES performs musical and political inversion on the music and words of Gertrude Stein's 1934 avant-garde classic *Four Saints in Three Acts*. Using compositional techniques of chance, inversion, and polyphony, FIG TREES finds points of political harmony and musical convergence in operatic and documentary sequences that profile the overlapping stories of various activists: Tim McCaskell, Gugu Dlamini, Stephen Lewis, Simon Nkoli... and Zackie himself.

CREDITS

Writer/Director John Greyson's films include *Proteus*, *The Law of Enclosures*, the AIDS musical *Zero Patience*, and *Lilies*, which won four Genies including Best Film. • Composer/Singer David Wall is a well-known singer, composer and recording artist who has collaborated with artists/activists Marilyn Lerner, Bruce Mao, Naomi Klein, and Avi Lewis. • Award-winning DOP's Ali Kazimi (*Continuous Journey*, *Narmada: A Valley Rises*) and Jesse Rosensweet (*The Stone of Folly*, *Paradise*) are filmmakers in their own right. • Production Designer Bill Layton's credits include television and features for John Waters, Midi Onodera, Annette Mangaard, and Greyson. • Tenor Van Abrahams (Zackie) has sung roles with the Edmonton Opera, the Mexican National Opera, the Leiderkranz Opera, and the Canadian Opera Company • Jared Raab is an editor and short film director (*Viva Jopo*, *Jew-Boy*) who also produces the web-series *Nirvana the Band the Show*. • Funded by the Canada Council for the Arts & the Ontario Arts Council. A project of the Future Cinema Lab.

CONTACT

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