



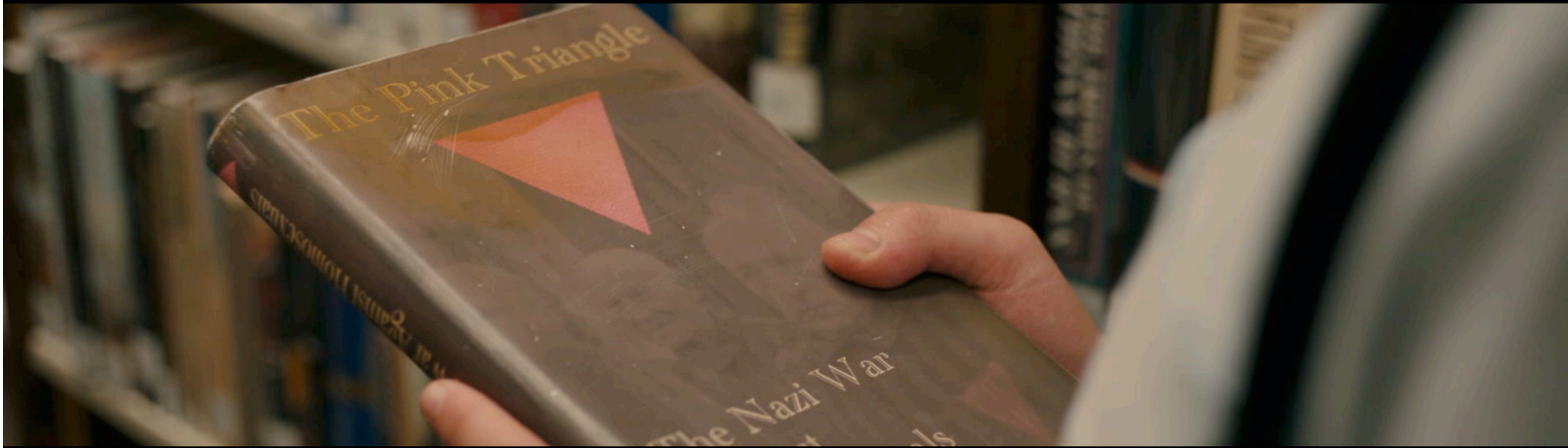
A religious, LGBTQ, coming-of-age story

# UNSPOKEN

Written, Directed, and Produced  
by Jeremy Borison

2024, 91 minutes, USA, HD  
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# UNSPOKEN PRESS KIT



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# THE STORY

## Logline

When a closeted, religious teenager finds a love letter from before the Holocaust written to his grandfather by another man, he discovers that he might not be alone. With the help of his high-school crush, he sets out to find the mysterious author of the letter and uncover both his grandfather's identity as well as his own.

## Synopsis

NOAM STEIN is a senior in high school, who is a bit out of place in his Modern Orthodox Jewish community in Cleveland. All his family wants is for him to find a nice girl to date, but Noam finds himself more aware of a particular boy in his class. Raised in a deeply conservative and religious community, he can barely say the word "gay" to himself. So he is especially shocked when he discovers a love letter written to his grandfather from before the Holocaust, by a man named 'M.'

Noam doesn't know where to turn first. He's scared to ask his mother MICHELLE, who knows more than she's willing to share and forbids Noam from delving into his grandfather's past. Even if Noam dared to tell his sister TALI, her upcoming wedding has everyone preoccupied. He knows one openly gay kid in his community choir, but Noam doesn't even know how to approach the boy.

Noam soon finds someone unexpected to confide in. His high school crush, JONAH, has decided to research gay persecution in the Holocaust for a class project. Noam shares his grandfather's letter with Jonah, and the two set out to learn more about Noam's Opa and the mysterious man named 'M.' It isn't long before they discover his name is Meyer and, shortly after, that Meyer is still alive.

Noam and Jonah's search brings them closer together as they spend more and more time alone, but it also begins to attract attention. His best friend ZACH catches him sneaking off with Jonah and suddenly becomes uncomfortable around Noam. His mother finds his research and freaks out, destroying all the progress he and Jonah have made. Noam begins to date MIRIAM, a close family friend and classmate, after learning about another boy in the community who came out as gay and was rejected by his family.

As the pieces fall into place, Noam and Jonah discover the whereabouts of the mysterious man. They drive through the night on the eve of Noam's sister's wedding and find him, but the man is completely confused by their story. Noam learns that all of his expectations were misled, and realizes he must finish this journey of self-discovery on his own.

# CREDITS

## THE CAST

Noam	Charlie Korman
Jonah	Michael Zapesotsky
Michelle	Katherine Kamhi
Miriam	Liz Richman
Zach	Victor Kallett
Tali	Jenna Herz
Kyle	Danny Chon
Mrs. Fleischman	Ayelette Robinson
Rebecca	Jill Karrenbrock
Ari	David Elliot Pevsner
Ms. Helfgott	Rita Zohar
Meyer	Robert Paden
Rabbi Gross	Steve Sobel
Deena	Avra Friedman
Lev	Kai Logan Fishman
Rachel	Ariana Perlson
Eitan	Max Mattern
Choir Leader	Donovan Tyrone Woods
High School Girl	Caledonia Rose Wilson
Librarian	Catherine Bruhier
Nurse	Mary Cavaliere

## THE CREW

Written, Directed, Produced by	Jeremy Borison
Director of Photography	Benji Dell
Producers	Yichen Ma, Nico Blanco Zhenia Tananko, Nikit Doshi
Line Producer	Eden Braunstein
Production Design	Layne Austin Simescu
Casting	Hannah Borison
Editing	Kevin Birou
Music	Michael Paraskevas



# CAST BIOS



**Charlie Korman**

Noam

Charlie Korman lives in Los Angeles and attends the School of Cinematic Arts at the University of Southern California. Charlie has most recently been seen in Season 2 of *Hacks* on HBO. He will be featured on the upcoming 4th season of *Barry*, also on HBO. He is starring in the feature film *Unspoken*, the directorial debut of Jeremy Borison. Charlie has been acting professionally since age five, when he portrayed Tiny Tim in *A Christmas Carol*, at the Denver Center for the Performing Arts.

**Michael Zapesotsky**

Jonah

Michael Zapesotsky lives in Orange County, by way of Israel, then San Francisco. He was only seven years old when he received his breakout role in the Israeli series "Yellow Peppers," which he starred in for four years. Since then, he has gone on to star in various films including "Hooligans" and "The Scarlet Thread." He can be seen currently on the Israeli show "Dismissed," where he plays the supporting role of Mikey on Season 2.



**Katherine Kamhi**

Michelle

Katherine Kamhi received her breakthrough role in "All My Children" as Pamela Kingsley. She then went on to star in "Guiding Light," and made her feature debut as Meg in the cult classic "Sleepaway Camp". Katherine has appeared in numerous prime time network television dramas including a recurring role in "Dragnet" as Detective Hubble, and guest roles in "Ghost Whisperer," "General Hospital," and "The Young and the Restless". Katherine has also appeared in "Bones", "Without a Trace", "Judging Amy" "The Practice" and "NYPD Blue".

# CREW BIOS

## **Jeremy Borison** | Writer, Director, Producer

Jeremy Borison is a queer, Modern Orthodox filmmaker whose work explores the intersection of religion and sexuality and aims to create discourse through nuanced storytelling. His films have received grants from organizations including Micah Philanthropies, Aviv Foundation, and the Steven Spielberg supported Jewish Story Partners, for their efforts in creating discourse around LGBTQ inclusion in religious communities. Jeremy has been selected for various initiatives that explore art and religion, as an Asylum Arts Fellow, a writer for Imagination Productions, a fellow of the Start South art therapy program, and a Filmmaker in Residence for the Jewish Film Institute. He recently completed his debut feature film, 'Unspoken,' and is currently working on a documentary feature about the Supreme Court lawsuit between Yeshiva University and its Pride Alliance, regarding the Orthodox institution's rejection of an LGBTQ club on campus.

## **Benji Dell** | Director of Photography

Benji Dell is a cinematographer working in Los Angeles and Detroit. He is a graduate of the University of Michigan Screen Arts program and earned his M.F.A. in cinematography from the American Film Institute. Benji's work has premiered at SXSW and earned a Student Academy Award. He has worked on ad campaigns for Sketchers, Nike, Ashworth, and Mountain Dew. His most recent commercial and music video work includes spots for Jaden Smith, Intel, and Google, and he recently wrapped on the Netflix film 'End of the Road' starring Ludacris and Queen Latifah.

## **Kevin Birou** | Editor

Kevin Birou grew up in metro Detroit and studied filmmaking at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Since 2015, he has worked primarily with Steven Spielberg's production company Amblin Partners, as an Assistant Editor on 'West Side Story,' 'Ready Player One,' and many more. His most recent credit includes Editor on Apple TV's "The Crowded Room" featuring Tom Holland and Amanda Seyfried. Kevin has edited multiple features, short films, and documentaries, which have earned awards at Palm Springs FF, New York SFF, and most recently Best Narrative Feature at Austin Film Festival.

## **Nikit Doshi** | Producer

Born in Kenya, Nikit has produced films in Australia, India, East Africa, and Los Angeles. He previously founded Alpas Entertainment, which co-financed THE JOURNEY IS THE DESTINATION with Martin Katz (HOTEL RWANDA) and Voltage Pictures (THE HURT LOCKER). Directed by Bronwen Hughes (FORCES OF NATURE) and written by Oscar nominee Jan Sardi (THE NOTEBOOK) the film premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival and is now streaming on Netflix. His most recent film BRUT FORCE stars Tyler Posey (TEEN WOLF) and Patricia Velasquez (THE MUMMY SERIES).

# CREW BIOS CONT.

## **Zhenia Tananko** | Producer

Zhenia Tananko is a Producer who believes in the cinema's ability to heal, give hope, change, develop and nurture. She was born in Ukraine, then moved to the US to pursue a degree in Film and Television Production from the University of Michigan. With a background in medical studies, Zhenia eventually moved into producing to impact the world through meaningful content.

## **Yichen Ma** | Producer

Yichen Ma received her BA from University of California, San Diego and her MFA in Producing at AFI. After college, she worked at MTV China where she observed first-hand the delicate balance between art and commerce. Her most recent credit was an associate producer on 'The Monkey King,' which was selected as a Student Academy finalist.

## **Layne Austin Simescu** | Production Designer

Layne Austin Simescu is a production designer from Traverse City, Michigan. She received her B.A. in film studies from the University of Michigan, and currently works in the film and television industry in Chicago. Her credits include shows such as Apple TV's 'The Shining Girls' and FOX's 'The Big Leap.' Her most recent feature work was art directing 'Disfluency,' which won Best Narrative Feature at the 2021 Austin Film Festival.

## **Hannah Borison** | Casting

Hannah Borison is a Casting Assistant based in Los Angeles, earning her first Casting Director credit on 'Unspoken.' She is passionate about finding undiscovered talent, and bringing independent voices to the screen. She started her career as an assistant at Nancy Naylor Casting before moving on to Coordinator of current programming at NBC Universal. Other previous positions include Echo Lake Entertainment, Sirius XM, and She Ready Productions.

## **Michael Paraskevas**

Composer

Michael Paraskevas is a Los Angeles based composer whose credits include *Shazam! Fury of the Gods*, *Frozen II*, *Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania*, *This World Won't Break*, *Hawkeye*, and the Emmy-nominated score to *WandaVision*. Texas-born and raised, Michael studied music composition at the University of Tulsa and film scoring at the Seattle Film Institute, where he studied with Hummie Mann. Since then, he has worked closely with distinguished composer, Christophe Beck on many of today's biggest hits.





# DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I was raised in the Modern Orthodox Jewish community in Cleveland, Ohio, where coming out as gay was impossible. Homosexuality is taboo in the Orthodox world, and LGBTQ individuals are often ostracized from their communities. As a teenager, I feared that being gay meant losing everyone I loved. And though I ultimately came to terms with my sexuality, I did not feel safe enough to come out until I had left my hometown.

Most individuals who come out in the Modern Orthodox community leave religion altogether, but I didn't want homophobia to steal my identity. Instead, I became active in Jewish LGBTQ organizations and advocated for change within the Orthodox Jewish world. I spoke in Orthodox communities about the struggles of being gay, and partnered with organizations to create social programs and support groups for queer individuals from Orthodox backgrounds.

It soon became clear to me that the best way to create social change was to integrate my work in the Orthodox LGBTQ world with my work in film. 'Boxes' was the first project to emerge from that realization. It is a short film that follows a Holocaust survivor and her gay granddaughter, each of whom is hiding her own secrets. I wrote and directed the project as a way to help Modern Orthodox viewers identify with LGBTQ people, through the shared experience of oppression and hiding.

While screening 'Boxes' at various events and festivals, however, it became apparent that there is a resistance to acknowledging gay persecution in the Holocaust that goes above and beyond the Modern Orthodox community's present-day homophobia. I started to see a parallel between the way queer stories are forcibly hidden in the Orthodox world today and the way they were systematically hidden during and after World War II.

This realization is what sparked the story of 'Unspoken,' a film about a boy who is forced to hide in his religious community and discovers that his grandfather had a parallel hidden identity during the Holocaust. My goal in telling this story is to welcome audiences into a place of compassion and understanding, and help a community that has long identified with its own persecution recognize its role in the persecution of others.

While I hope this film will enlighten religious communities and validate LGBTQ experiences, I also believe it will resonate with any audience that understands the fear of being alone. 'Unspoken' is not just a queer film, nor is it just a religious film. It's a coming-of-age story about a young adult who is struggling to find his own identity and where he fits into the world. The details of Noam's journey are specific to my own experiences, but his search for love and understanding – the heart of this film – is universal.



# TECHNICAL INFORMATION



Production Dates      June, July & September, 2022

Locations                Los Angeles

Language                English

Total Run Time        91 minutes

Camera                  Alexa Mini

Exhibition Formats     DCP

Color information       Color

Aspect Ratio            1.85

Sound                    5.1

Rating                    This film is not yet rated

