

Living Arts

THE BOSTON GLOBE SATURDAY, MAY 11, 2002

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'Celebration' time

Wellesley filmmaker Daniel Stedman takes his acclaimed, unconventional 4½-minute movie to the Cannes Film Festival this weekend. **F8**

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'Celebration' continues for Wellesley filmmaker

By Catherine Foster
GLOBE STAFF

A 6-year-old boy, looking anxious, steps up to a microphone and looks out over a crowd of friends and relatives. He looks at his mother and then announces, "I am a homosexual."

It's his coming-out party, and people in the crowd erupt in cheers, shake his hand, or burst into tears. At the end, he looks a bit puzzled.

This unconventional 4½-minute film, "Celebration," has won its young filmmaker a number of worldwide film festival awards and is sending him to the Cannes Film Festival. Heady honors for someone who is only 23 — and who happens to be straight.

Daniel Stedman, who spoke by phone from his home in Wellesley while preparing to leave for France, says his first film is more about identity than sexuality. "I think my film speaks to all audi-

ences, because it's about the struggle to find your identity in a society that expects that you will put a label on your identity, and then they judge you critically for your decision."

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"Celebration" will be shown at the Boston Gay and Lesbian Film Festival at the Museum of Fine Arts at 4 p.m. today and 5:30 p.m. tomorrow. 617-369-3770. Information is available from the MFA Web site, www.mfa.org.

For a film that's been out only since August, "Celebration" has achieved fame quickly, winning the award for best American short film at the New York/Avignon Film Festival, the Teddy Award from the Berlin International Film Festival, and the Audience Award from the Turin International Gay and Lesbian Film Festival.

Shooting the film took only two days, but casting took two years. "I started in the beginning of my junior year of college," Stedman says, "but I could not find a family who would let their little boy play the part. I even paid a casting agent."

The next year he held an audi-



Daniel Stedman examines the search for identity in a critical world in his highly acclaimed short film "Celebration."