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Rob Steinberg proud to be cast in '12 Years a Slave'

November 06, 2013 | By Amy Longsdorf, Special to The Morning Call

No film this season has generated more awards buzz than "12 Years a Slave," British filmmaker Steve McQueen's adaptation of the autobiography of Solomon Northup (Chiwetel Ejiofor), a [New York](#)  violinist sold into slavery in 1841.

Playing a pivotal role in the film is Havertown, Delaware County, native Rob Steinberg, who is proud to be associated with a movie many critics are hailing the best of the year.

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"Every time I think of it, I get goose bumps. I am living daily with goose bumps," says Steinberg of the movie, which opens Friday at Frank Banko Alehouse Cinemas at SteelStacks in Bethlehem. The Tuesday night screening will be followed by a free talk-back with Bethlehem resident Robert Kilker, a popular culture and film [expert](#).

"12 Years" begins in upstate New York, where Northup, a free black man, lives and works as a musician. Steinberg plays the role of a shopkeeper whose customers include Northup and his wife and children.

"The man I play, Parker, treats all men equally," Steinberg says. "He doesn't judge anyone by the color of his or her skin."

Northup learns quickly that not all men are like Parker. Duped by con artists who offer him a job in Washington, D.C., Northup awakens to find himself in shackles. The more he insists he's a free man, the more he's beaten and humiliated.

Stripped of his name and redubbed Platt Hamilton, Northup winds up being sold to Edwin Epps (Michael Fassbender), a monstrous plantation owner who seems to delight in "breaking" strong-willed slaves.

A dozen years later, Northup meets Canadian abolitionist Samuel Bass (Brad Pitt) who stands up to Epps and carries letters from Northup to his friends and family back home. One of the letters reaches Parker, who makes the journey from New York to [New Orleans](#) to try to rescue Northup.

Even though Steinberg has appeared in countless films, including "Die Hard," "Unlawful Entry," "Single White Female," "Ricochet" and "Lay the Favorite," he's something of a late bloomer when it comes to acting.

Growing up in Merion Park, Montgomery County, Steinberg always imagined he'd follow in the footsteps of his father, an entertainment lawyer who represented famed producer Thom Bell as well as reggae superstar Bob Marley. After graduating from Tulane University in New Orleans, Steinberg wound up working as a record man in [New York City](#), where he helped launch the heavy metal band the Scorpions.

It was a very bad [car](#) accident on the corner of 18th and Park Avenue in New York City that prompted Steinberg to change directions and take up acting.

"The car accident was definitely a life-changing event because before the accident, I worried about being rejected as an actor," says Steinberg. "Afterward I thought, 'I survived being hurled through a windshield at 70 mph, I can survive a little rejection.'"

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"If someone tells me I'm not right for a role, I think, 'Cool. I'm alive.'"

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