

Choral director searches for "perfect rhymes"

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It ain't worth a dime if it don't have that rhyme. C. Leonard Raybon, director of the Tulane choral program, may not be a songwriter by trade but he knows a good lyric when he sings one. Raybon, who wrote two songs for a new locally produced feature film, says his experience as a vocalist provides insight into the art of writing lyrics.



Songwriting has “always been kind of a sideline” for C. Leonard Raybon, director of the Tulane choral program. (Photo by Sean Gardner)

“Lyrics are what we [singers] deal in,” says Raybon. “It's the currency of our trade. We are very text-driven.”

[Raybon](#), an associate professor of music, says songwriting has “always been kind of a sideline” and something he does for personal satisfaction. He says he relished the opportunity to write for the film *My Friend, Oscar*, and enjoyed the experience collaborating with director Brian Kaz.

The film will be screened on Oct. 16 and 19 at the [New Orleans Film Festival](#).

“The director has good instincts about music and lyrics,” says Raybon. “He wanted the music throughout the film to have a vintage-y vibe.”

Following Kaz's direction, both songs evoke a campy, vaudevillian feeling. The songs, “Dear Mr. Day” and “Dominoes,” are heard over the opening and closing credits, respectively.



The indie film *My Friend, Oscar* includes two songs written by Raybon.

In “Dear Mr. Day,” Raybon sets out to strike a tone of ragged optimism characteristic of the film's title character, a mentally challenged, socially awkward man.

“Dominoes” provides a metaphor for the random occurrences in life, says Raybon.

“[We're all] in a row of dominoes. You don't get to choose which domino you are standing beside and if one falls into you, you are going to fall down.”

For Raybon, writing lyrics is a rewarding challenge.

“I like to express things and to do it in perfect rhyme. It's like a puzzle ? to say something interesting that rhymes perfectly.”