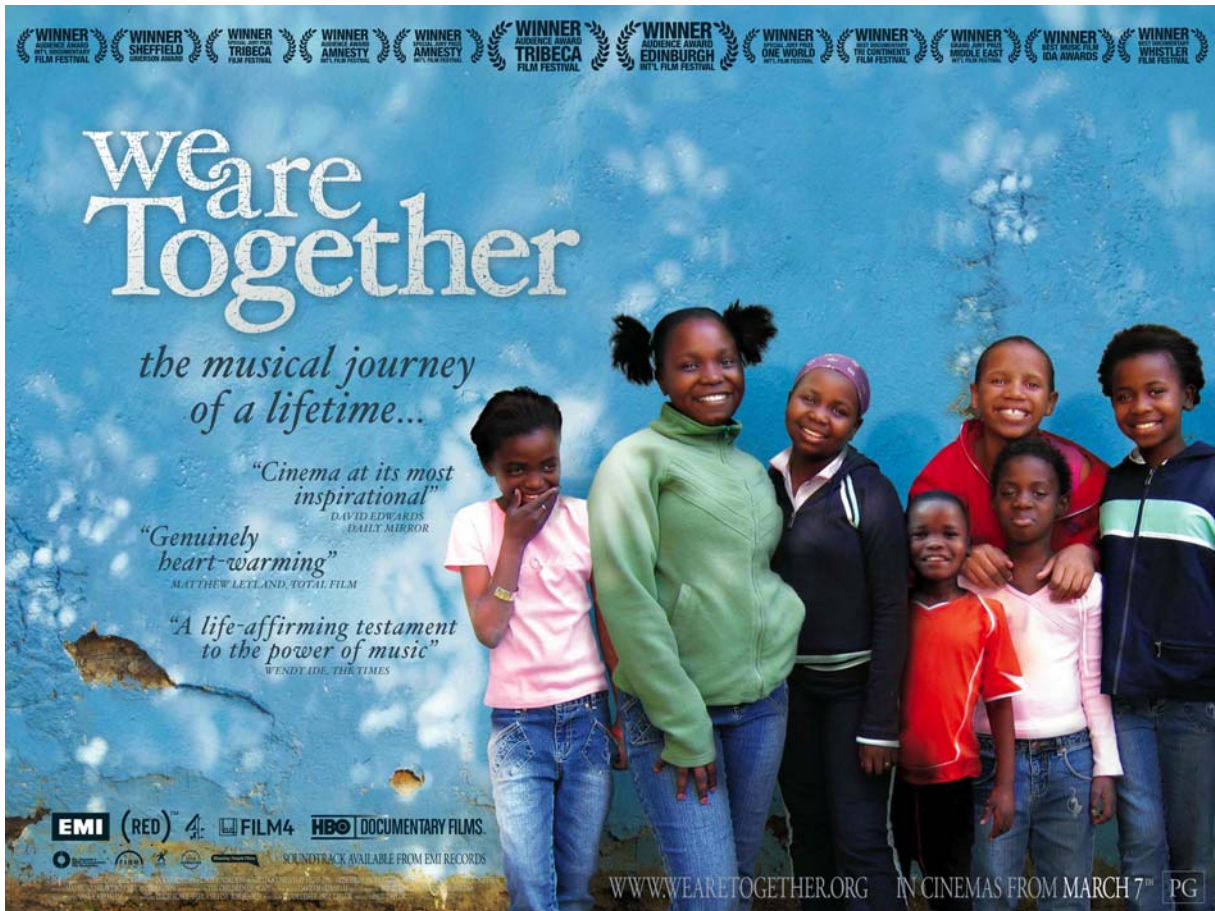




The Channel 4  
British Documentary  
Film Foundation



Shooting People Films



Directed by Paul Taylor

Produced by Teddy Leifer and Paul Taylor

[www.wearetogether.org](http://www.wearetogether.org)

DISTRIBUTOR: EMI

RELEASE DATE: 7<sup>th</sup> March

CERTIFICATE: PG

RUNNING TIME: 83 mins

UK PRESS CONTACT FOR FILM: Lyndsey Honour, 07989 945 066 [lyndsey@shootingpeoplefilms.com](mailto:lyndsey@shootingpeoplefilms.com)

UK PRESS CONTACT FOR SOUNDTRACK: Debra Geddes, EMI, [debra.geddes@emimusic.com](mailto:debra.geddes@emimusic.com)

## SYNOPSIS

Filmed over three years, *WE ARE TOGETHER* (Thina Simunye) tells the remarkable and moving story of a group of children who use music to overcome hardship and loss. It is the story of an orphanage, unlike one you've ever seen before, and of the drive of these remarkable young singers and their teachers to make it to London for a series of concerts.

Life has not been easy for 12-year-old Slindile, her siblings and her friends at the Agape Orphanage in South Africa, where most of the children have lost their parents to AIDS. But they are still kids and teenagers, bashful around boys, squabbling with each other. And when they lift their voices in song, something extraordinary happens.

As the kids at Agape orphanage continue to train for what they hope will be their big break, Slindile and her siblings are hit with more hard news - their oldest brother Sifiso, who has been sick for months, has AIDS.

With unforgettable kids, soaring music and a plot full of surprises, *WE ARE TOGETHER* arrives as a stirring and uplifting theatrical documentary.



## BACKGROUND

Filmmaker Paul Taylor spent three months in KwaZulu Natal (South Africa) in 2003 volunteering at the Agape Orphanage. He was profoundly affected by his experiences there, the children's personalities and, in particular, their beautiful singing.

He returned with Teddy Leifer (producer) to make a film and help facilitate the production of the CD that would eventually bring the children to the attention of the world.

*WE ARE TOGETHER* (Thina Simunye) has been more than three years in the making and has involved editors Masahiro Hirakubo (*Trainspotting*, *The Beach*, *A Life Less Ordinary*) and composer Dario Marianelli (*Atonement*, *Pride & Prejudice*, *Shooting Dogs*, *V for Vendetta*).

*WE ARE TOGETHER* has won the Audience Award at all of its premieres – at its European premier at the International Documentary Film Festival, Amsterdam (IDFA) it received the highest

score in the festival's history to take the award. At its North American premiere at Tribeca Film Festival 2007 it won the overall Audience Award, in which it was competing against all 157 documentary and fiction features. WE ARE TOGETHER then went on to scoop the prestigious Audience Award at its UK premiere at Edinburgh International Film Festival, beating off stiff competition from fiction and documentary titles, including RATAOUILLE, IN THE SHADOW OF THE MOON, CONTROL and Quentin Tarantino's latest offering, DEATH PROOF.

Profits from the theatrical, DVD and soundtrack release of WE ARE TOGETHER will be donated to an education program for the children of Agape and children affected by HIV/AIDS through the RISE foundation, set up by Paul Taylor and Teddy Leifer.

## **AWARDS TO DATE**

WINNER: Audience Award - Edinburgh International Film Festival

WINNER: Audience Award – Tribeca Film Festival

WINNER: Special Jury Prize – Tribeca Film Festival

WINNER: International Documentary Association Awards

WINNER: Grierson Award

WINNER: Best Documentary - Middle East International Film Festival

WINNER: Best Documentary - Whistler Film Festival

WINNER: Best Documentary - Tri Continents Film Festival

WINNER: Audience Award – International Documentary Film Festival, Amsterdam

WINNER: First Appearance Award - International Documentary Film Festival, Amsterdam

WINNER: Audience Award - Amnesty International Film Festival

WINNER: Special Jury prize - Amnesty International Film Festival

WINNER: Special Jury Prize - One World International Film Festival



## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT



It was fortunate that I was able to spend three months with the kids during my first trip to South Africa, without a camera or the intention of making a film. So when we did decide to make the film a year later, I already had a good relationship with the children and was already close to them. Hopefully this makes the film much more intimate and personal as a result – something that was very important to me.

After spending time in South Africa, we very quickly got a sense of how strong people were and how much dignity there was. There was also a lot of humour and it was so much fun to be there. In fact, the whole experience of filming in South Africa ended up with us spending such a large amount of time off camera, just laughing and having fun with the children, that despite all of the pain and sadness that we also saw, I can't think of South Africa as anything other than a place of fun and happiness. That's what the real South Africa feels like to me – not a place of just suffering and despair, which is something that we often get from some one-dimensional representations we see of Africa. But instead it's a place with much more depth, a rich continent with incredible music and incredible people. Yes, there is suffering, but there's also so much strength and spirit in the face of that adversity.

It was very important to me that some of these ideas came through in the film, and that it didn't just dwell on suffering and sadness. This really became the main theme during editing, of trying not to dwell on things and to try and snap back and forth between sorrow and joy, because that felt more like what life is really like. However, we didn't want to gloss over it either. Suffering obviously exists and it causes an incredible amount of pain, so it was important to include that side and not to diminish it. We just wanted to balance this with the other dimensions of life and try and give a realistic idea of what the experience felt like to us.

When people are suffering, it appears to me that there is also usually an incredible capacity for laughter and humor in those situations and this is a part of what makes the human spirit so powerful. So for example, it was very important to include the scene that happens very soon after the death of Sifiso, with the Moya family laughing at Khanysile (the young baby in the bathtub), even though it completely interrupts the mood of the scene in which he died. We did this firstly because this is exactly what happened in reality. That scene really happened just moments after the one that precedes it. And I've often seen it happen in other similar situations, perhaps because the laughter provides a release of emotion and expelling of that pain. But secondly this scene is important for me because it also sums up this duality between sorrow and joy, and the capacity of the human spirit to deal with suffering with humor, dignity and strength. Another example is my favorite scene in the film, in which Sifiso is on his deathbed but still finds the strength to sing with his sisters with such grace and dignity. It feels like there is such beauty in that scene, in their song, in the light streaming in, and it is the moment that sums up what the whole film is about for me. It sums up the human spirit and its strength in the face of the most horrible of situations.

Fortunately we had two wonderfully talented editors in Masahiro and Ollie, who were able carry this theme throughout the whole structure of the film and continue this sense of contrast and balance in a way that was much more than I could have really dreamt of, so any credit for this should really go to both of them.

We knew straight away that Slindile would play a major part in the film, but as time progressed it became more and more obvious to really make it her story and to tell it with her. She is such an incredible young lady with really wonderful qualities and her singing is so beautiful. She has dealt with so much but still always manages to give you a smile whatever the situation. However sad she is, she will always break out into smile and I admire her so much for that.

The whole experience taught me so much about the strength of the human spirit and the capacity for people to deal with terrible situations with so much dignity. Sharing that journey with Slindile and the children really has had a profound effect on me. In fact I learnt so much and took so much strength from the Moya family in particular – seeing the way they dealt with the passing of their brother Sifiso, and seeing how they dealt with this terrible situation all on their own.

When I returned to the UK just after Sifiso had passed away, my own father died a few months later. I really feel like I was able to deal with that situation much better, and found so much more strength because of what I had taken from the experience with the Moya family. They don't know it, and would probably be embarrassed if I told them, but they gave me so much strength, and really helped me through that period and I think that's powerful - that ability: the ability to give other people strength. I hope the film might allow the Moya family and the children of Agape to work in that way for other people too.

## KEY CAST BIOGS

### **Slindile Moya**

WE ARE TOGETHER (Thina Simunye) tells the story of Slindile Moya, her family and her friends at the Agape Orphanage. She is now 16 but was 12 when filming began. Slindile is an incredible young lady with an endearing spirit and inner strength that belies her young age.

*In her own words: "My name is Slindile Moya. I am a girl and I was born on the 18<sup>th</sup> of April 1991. I am in the film and the film is about my story. It tells people what is happening in South Africa. I stay at Agape with some children who also have no parents like me. We are singing together. I have been staying at Agape for eight years since I have lost my parents. I am 16 years old and I like singing and helping people. When I am older I want to be a nurse so I can help people. I am working very hard at school so I can achieve this. When I sing it reminds me of my home and my mother because she was the person who taught me to sing. I'm happy with the way my life is now and there are good things happening. The only thing I miss is being able to tell my mum when the good things happen. I wish I had the chance to make her happy, the way she made me feel when I was young."*

### **Sifiso Moya**

Sifiso is Slindile's older brother and was 26 when filming began. Unfortunately Sifiso has HIV. Like many of his fellow South African's in 2004, Sifiso could not afford the expensive Anti-retroviral (ARV) treatment that would have helped him live a longer and more fulfilled life. Instead the local hospice can only offer him B Vitamins to try and boost his immune system. Singing is very important to Sifiso and as he becomes more ill, he finds solace and is soothed by his sisters' beautiful songs. It gives the family strength during this difficult time. Sifiso still finds the power to sing along and tells them when they're singing wrong! He displays incredible dignity whilst battling a disease that so often denies people of just that.

### **"Grandma" Zodwa Mqadi - and The Agape Orphanage**

"Gogo" Zodwa Mqadi is the founder of the Agape orphanage. She was working as an HIV counselor and found that many of the people she was counseling expressed deep concern about what would happen to their children when they were no longer around. So Zodwa established Agape to look after these children. Agape has had a tumultuous journey, but under Zodwa's loving guidance it continues to grow stronger. While there were about 30 children living at Agape when filming began, it now looks after nearer to 50 children. Agape is a Greek word meaning "unconditional love", which is exactly what the children at Agape receive.

## **CREW BIOS**

### **Paul Taylor (Director)**

Paul first met the children of Agape while volunteering in South Africa during his summer break from film school in 2003. He spent three months with the children, and it was during this time he first heard their beautiful singing. Recognising the potential of their voices and, for that matter, looking for an excuse to return to South Africa and spend more time with them, he returned a year later with producer Teddy Leifer with the intent of making a film and helping the children develop their music further. WE ARE TOGETHER (THINA SIMUNYE) is his debut film. Amongst the awards it has won are jury prizes and audience awards at IDFA and Tribeca, as well as the audience award at Edinburgh International Film Festival. Paul is the co-founder of RISE films with Teddy Leifer where they have several new films in development and production, including a documentary with director Kim Longinotto and a new film from director Simon Chambers.

### **Teddy Leifer (Producer)**

Teddy has been producing films since he was 16. He has produced several award winning short films directed by his brother, Sam, including THE UNSTEADY CHOUGH, written by and starring Terry Jones (Monty Python) and THE 10TH MAN, executive produced by Steve Coogan and Henry Normal. WE ARE TOGETHER (THINA SIMUNYE) is his first feature. Amongst the awards it has won are jury prizes and audience awards at IDFA and Tribeca, as well as the audience award at Edinburgh International Film Festival. Teddy is the co-founder of RISE films with Paul Taylor where they have several new films in development and production, including a documentary with director Kim Longinotto and a new film from director Simon Chambers.

### **Masahiro Hirakubo (Editor)**

Masahiro is a movie editing veteran. He has worked with some of the most accomplished directors on films including TRAINSPOTTING, THE HI-LO COUNTRY, A LIFE LESS ORDINARY and THE BEACH.

### **Ollie Huddleston (Editor)**

Ollie's impressive documentary editing credits include SISTERS IN LAW, which was recently short-listed for an Academy Award and THE LIBERACE OF BAGHDAD, a Sundance 2005 winner.

### **Dario Marianelli (Composer)**

Dario has composed the scores on major motion pictures for many years. Some of his recent composing credits include PRIDE & PREJUDICE, ATONEMENT, THE BROTHERS GRIMM, V FOR VENDETTA, SHOOTING DOGS and GOODBYE BAFANA. He was nominated for Best Original Score (for PRIDE & PREJUDICE) at the 2006 Academy Awards.

### **Annie Roney (Associate Producer & World Sales)**

Annie has represented six Academy nominated/winning feature documentaries in the last seven years (JESUS CAMP, STREET FIGHT, BORN INTO BROTHELS, THE WEATHER

UNDERGROUND, PROMISES, and REGRET TO INFORM).

**MAIN CREDITS**

Directed by  
PAUL TAYLOR

Produced by  
TEDDY LEIFER  
PAUL TAYLOR

Written by  
SLINDILE MOYA  
PAUL TAYLOR

Editors  
MASAHIRO HIRAKUBO  
OLLIE HUDDLESTON

Music performed by  
THE CHILDREN OF AGAPE

Original Music by  
DARIO MARIANELLI

Photography by  
PAUL TAYLOR

Senior Producer (for HBO)  
NANCY ABRAHAM

Executive Producers  
LEIGH BLAKE  
SHEILA NEVINS (for HBO)  
JESS SEARCH

Associate Producers  
ANNIE RONEY  
PAULINE VON MOLTKE