

STRANGERS NO MORE

Press Kit

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Strangers No More **Synopsis**

In the heart of Tel Aviv, there is an exceptional school where children from forty-eight different countries and diverse backgrounds come together to learn. Many of the students arrive at Bialik-Rogozin School fleeing poverty, political adversity and even genocide. Here, no child is a stranger.

The film follows several students' struggle to acclimate to life in a new land while slowly opening up to share their stories of hardship and tragedy:

Mohammed, a sixteen-year-old refugee from Darfur, witnessed the killing of his grandmother and father before escaping alone through Egypt to Israel. Having never been in a school before, his sharp mind and tremendous determination enable him to make up the years of study he never had.

Johannes arrived at Bialik-Rogozin after spending most of his life in refugee camps across the Middle East. His father struggles to obtain a work visa while twelve-year-old Johannes struggles to adjust to attending school for the first time. After a slow start, his teachers realize that he is nearly blind in one eye and take him to an eye clinic. With his new glasses, before long, he is reading and writing – and helping other newcomers to adjust.

After the murder of her mother, **Esther** and her father fled South Africa with nothing, in search of safety and peace of mind. At Bialik-Rogozin, they are welcomed with clothing, food and counsel on beginning a new life. Esther's teachers try to relieve the trauma of a nine-year-old girl who believes her mother will return.

With tremendous effort and dedication, the school provides the support these children need to recover from their past. Together, the bond between teacher and student, and amongst the students themselves, enables them to create new lives in this exceptional community.

Upon graduation, Mohammed provides the finest evidence of the school's ultimate success -- declaring his dream to return to Darfur and build a school for the children of the village he once fled.

Strangers No More **Director's Statement**

It's hard to film a miracle. Telling the story of the remarkable Bialik-Rogozin School in Tel Aviv -- an extraordinary place where one can experience a sense of humanity so rich and pervasive it often feels impossible -- seemed a tremendous responsibility.

Among the 750 refugees and immigrants from forty-eight countries and every known religion, we chose to follow three children who fled their homelands in Darfur, South Africa, and Eritrea. Over the course of fifteen months, we portrayed their struggles to forget the past and rebuild their lives in this rarest of communities, where truly no one is a stranger.

Simon & Goodman Picture Company **Biography**

Kirk Simon and Karen Goodman have made over twenty documentaries and recently won an Academy Award for *Strangers No More*. Their films have garnered four previous Oscar nominations, several Emmys and the DuPont-Columbia Award for Independent Programming. They have received filmmaking grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, the Ford Foundation, and the American Film Institute.

Their documentaries have been broadcast nationally on PBS, HBO, and MTV, and screened at festivals around the world including the New York Film Festival, Sundance, New Directors / New Films, London, Berlin, Montreal and St. Petersburg. In addition, they have overseen and filmed dance preservation projects for the Paul Taylor Dance Company and Lincoln Center's Library and Museum of the Performing Arts.

Both Mr. Simon and Ms. Goodman are active voting members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. They have served as consultants to the National Endowment for the Humanities Media Program, on the Documentary Screening Committee for the Academy Awards and as judges for the Emmy Awards and the DuPont-Columbia Broadcast Journalism Award.

Simon & Goodman Picture Company **Filmography**

Strangers No More (2010)

Academy Award Winner: Best Documentary Short Subject

A documentary profiling a school in south Tel Aviv, where children from forty-eight different countries and diverse backgrounds come together to learn. The film follows students who share their difficult stories and struggle to acclimate to life in Israel.

MASTERCLASS (2010) - HBO

A nine-part series that documents the experience of a small group of emerging young artists working with a notable mentor. The series encourages young artists to pursue their dreams and hopes to help fill a void in arts education in America. With Placido Domingo, Liv Ullmann, Edward Albee, Frank Gehry, Jacques d'Amboise, Olafur Eliasson, Bill T. Jones, Michael Tilson Thomas and Julian Schnabel.

The Sealed Orders of Liv Ullmann (2009) - HBO

After a lifetime of learning - and two Academy Award nominations – actress Liv Ullmann comes full circle by mentoring a group of talented teenage drama students. In the midst of preparing to direct Cate Blanchett in "Streetcar Named Desire," she takes time out to work with the young actors on the same play. Together, they surprise and learn from each other, underscoring the importance of passing experience on from one generation to the next.

Locks of Love: The Kindest Cut (2008) - HBO

A film about Locks of Love, an organization that provides hairpieces to financially disadvantaged children from around the country who have lost their hair from cancer treatments, alopecia, or other medical conditions. The film tells the stories of the people who donate their hair and of two children who are being helped by Locks of Love.

Rehearsing a Dream (2006) - HBO

Academy Award Nomination: Best Documentary Short Subject

The National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts brings together the country's most promising high school performing, visual and literary artists for one transformative week. With Michael Tilson Thomas, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Vanessa Williams and Jacques d'Amboise.

Coming Out Stories (2006) - MTV/Logo

An eight part documentary series portraying the diverse journeys of gays and lesbians as they experience coming out – including a mayor of a small California city to his constituency, an identical twin to her sibling and a husband to his wife of twelve years. “This touching series marks a high point for the network.”
Entertainment Weekly

Smashed: Toxic Tales of Teens and Alcohol (2004) - HBO

IDA Nomination: Best Documentary

Spirit Award

Parent's Choice Award

Stories of teenagers and their families whose lives have been brutalized by the tragic link between drinking and driving. "Haunting..." - New York Times

Kindergarten! (2004) - HBO

IDA Nomination: Best Documentary Series

The first-ever real life documentary series for kids, 13 episodes following a year in the life of one Kindergarten class. "If all parents watched, there would be wholesale changes in the educational system across America" – Philadelphia Inquirer

The Incredible Human Body (2002) - National Geographic/PBS

National Geographic Special about the world within us. Narrated by Kate Burton. "Stretches the bounds of the biological documentary" - LA Times

No Applause, Just Throw Money (1998) - PBS

Emmy Award: Documentary Editing

New York Emmy Award: Outstanding Informational/Cultural Program

Silver Prize: Leningrad Film Festival

A kaleidoscopic film featuring 101 New York Performers. Premiered at New Directors/New Films and Sundance film festivals before its national broadcast on P.B.S. "An exuberant film" - New York Times.

Heart of a Child (1997) - HBO

Cable Ace Award: Best Documentary Special

The emotional story of a child in need of a heart and lung transplant and the desperate search for a donor. "One of the year's five best... Likely to remain lodged in some corner of your consciousness for years to come..." - Tom Shales, Washington Post.

27th and Prospect: One Year in the Fight Against Drugs (1997) - HBO

Cable Ace Award nomination: Best Public Affairs Special

Produced for the "Faces of Addiction" series. A portrait of an inner city neighborhood's struggle to combat the perils of substance abuse in their community.

The Telephone (1997) - The American Experience/PBS

Chronicles the early history of the telephone. Narrated by Morley Safer and featuring the voices of Spalding Gray, Frank Whaley, Kurt Vonnegut, and Julianne Moore.

Buckminster Fuller: Thinking Out Loud (1996) - American Masters/PBS

Emmy Nomination: Outstanding Cultural/Informational Program

DuPont-Columbia Silver Baton for Independent Programming

A feature length documentary biography of the American innovator. Premiered at the Sundance Film Festival. "A top notch documentary." - San Francisco Chronicle. "Splendid and wittily absorbing...mesmerizing." - Detroit Free Press.

Cairo Unveiled (1992) - National Geographic

Explores the role of women in Egypt through the eyes of one of the country's most celebrated belly dancers. Broadcast as the season premiere of the Explorer series.

Backstage at Masterpiece Theatre (1992) - PBS

Emmy Award Nomination: Outstanding Informational/Cultural Program

An hour-long 20th anniversary retrospective chronicling the series' two decades of drama through excerpts and interviews with John Hurt, Ben Kingsley, Peggy Ashcroft, Alistair Cooke and others.

Chimps: So Like Us (1990) - HBO

Academy Award Nomination: Best Documentary Short Subject

Emmy Award: Outstanding Informational/Cultural Program

The story of man's closest living relative, the chimpanzee, through the eyes of Jane Goodall, the naturalist who has devoted a lifetime to safeguard them. "More affecting than the big screen's "Gorillas in the Mist"- Hollywood Reporter.

Children's Storefront (1988) - PBS

Academy Award Nomination: Best Documentary Short Subject

A stirring portrait of an extraordinary educational oasis in Harlem.

Isaac In America (1986) - American Masters/PBS

Academy Award Nomination: Best Feature Documentary

Biography of Nobel Laureate Isaac Bashevis Singer. Screened at the New York Film Festival and Sundance Film Festival.

Light of Many Masks (1981) - Discovery Channel

Balinese culture viewed through its unique masked dance-drama. Premiered on Channel 4 in the U.K. and the Margaret Mead Film Festival.