

## Soweto Gospel Choir – Blessed (2005)

Written by bluelover

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1. Shewane 2. Asimbonanga / Biko 3. Joko Yahao 4. A Place In Heaven 5. Njalo 6. I Bid You Goodnight 7. Lelitungelo Ngelakho 8. Oh Happy Day [play](#) 9. Noyana 10. Masigiye'bo 11. Swing Down 12. Weeping

[play](#)

13. Thapelo 14. Woza Meli Wami 15. Mbube 16. Tshepa Thapelo 17. Khumbaya 18. Nkosi Sikelel'iAfrika (South African National Anthem)

Personnel: Joshua Mcineka (guitar); Mpupile Mathibe (saxophone); Vusimuzi Shabalala (keyboards); Lucas Bok (bass instrument); Mandla Modawu (drums); Sipho Ngcamu, Bongumusa Mabaso (percussion).

As on their now-celebrated debut album, *Voices From Heaven*, this miraculous ensemble from Johannesburg's notorious/iconic Soweto township moves between Anglican-inspired and gospel-tinged hymns plus assorted home-wrought styles. The selections, performed in four languages including English, are either presented in a cappella arrangements, backed by a guitar band with percussion or wreathed in clapping, stomping and whistles. Soloists Sipokazi Luzipo and Vincent Jiyane are especial stand-outs; the latter's performance on "Weeping" could wring tears from a stone. Other unforgettable moments include "Noyana" and "Thapelo" but it is the more well-known tunes that fully reveal the ensemble's power to transform. "Oh Happy Day," "Swing Down, Sweet Chariot," "Khumbaya" and Solomon Linda's deathless "Mbube (aka "Wimoweh" and "The Lion Sleeps Tonight") are resuscitated and refreshed, as is "Nkosi Sikelel'iAfrika," South Africa's soaring national anthem. The atmosphere, while moving, is in no way sad or depressing. In fact, other than the awe-inspiring beauty of the singing, which seems to build a rainbow bridge between this world and the next, the overwhelming impression is of upbeat courage, dignity, grace and hope. --Christina Roden

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It takes a talented choir to make "Khumbaye" sound fresh again, and this South African choral unit has what it takes. On their 2006 Grammy-nominated album, BLESSED (the follow-up to their critically acclaimed 2005 debut), the multilingual group perform goosebump-inducing renditions of gospel classics like "Oh Happy Day" and "Swing Low Sweet Chariot," as well as Zulu spirituals and township jive. With more than 30 wonderful singers doing their best on excellent material, this is musical Prozac with no harmful side effects.

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