



PRODUIRE AU SUD  
FESTIVAL DES CINÉASTES  
NANTES

# SUNFLOWERS IN THE DARK

Zimbabwe

2019 Nantes Produire au Sud

## MAIN DATA

**Category:** Human Drama, Prose, Fantasy – Arthouse

**Length :** 100'

**Language :** Shona, Ndaou and occasional English

**Shooting location :** Zimbabwe

**Shooting dates :** October-November 2021

**Expected date of completion :** December 2022

## PRODUCTION

**Budget :** 505 000 €

**Financing in place :** 0 €

**Production company :** Ambidextrous Pictures, Mahaka Media

**Workshops and platforms attended :** Mannheim Meeting (2018), Durban Filmmart, (2019), Rotterdam Lab/ Cinemart (2020)

**Current situation :** development stage, seeking for partners

### Ben MAHAKA, producer

Ben Mahaka is a multi-award-winning producer, director, cinematographer and writer. Starting in 1996, after earning a Business Administration degree, he has been a highly sought-after producer and director, with over 90 directing and producing credits on commercials, short films, development communications films and two low budget features, garnering five national arts merit award nominations, two directing awards and one editing plaudit. He has worked in Africa and Southeast Asia. He is patron and sits on several boards of various organisations in Zimbabwe. His 13-part TV drama series, *Gaza*, recently premiered on local TV to much acclaim. Ben is a La Fabrique Des Cinema Du Monde alumnus (2016).



### Tapiwa CHIPFUPA, director

A left-field director, writer and producer, Tapiwa Chipfupa completed her honours degree in 2009 at AFDA, where she participated in a South Africa/Finland exchange programme and produced and co-directed two documentaries: *A Kosovo Fairytale* and *The Land of Milk and Honey*. She obtained her Masters with distinction in 2015. Her most recent project (*The Bag on My Back*, 2013) generated sales from European broadcasters and was selected as a LOUMA Catalogue Project for distribution in Europe and West Africa. Based in Zimbabwe and working independently, she is developing several projects: *The Other Half of the African Sky*, a feature documentary, has already received several awards, and now a fiction feature, *Sunflowers in the Dark*, which won the Produire au Sud and Cinemart Award at Durban Filmmart 2019.



## SYNOPSIS

*Sunflowers In The Dark* traces Paidamoyo's attempts to reconcile the difficult relationship she has with her husband Kevin within the confines of the complex traditions and customs of Zimbabwean society. Unfolding as sharp-edged, non-linear and fragmented magical-realist journey, her story is told through a combination of flashbacks, dreams and real-time events. The film begins with Kevin (39) attacking a sleeping Paidamoyo (27) in a fit of rage because she has not heard their baby daughter Ruvarashe (5 months) crying. Awakened from a terrible nightmare, she is groggy and disoriented. Kevin only cares that the baby is crying – such is the couple's daily existence. Trapped in the house with a volatile Kevin, Paidamoyo's tale begins to unravel through her memories and dreams as she tries to make sense of her life with her husband. Haunted by terrifying dreams where a mysterious figure pursues her, her attempts to find freedom are continuously thwarted by her unstable husband. Paidamoyo begins to realise she must break free of Kevin's grip on her before it is too late and that the answers that she seeks lie in the dreams that torment her. She tries to escape from the house and Kevin one last time.



## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

« There are many elements of conduct or ways of doing things within a society that are considered as normal and yet when closely examined most possibly fall into the category of the absurd. Unspoken, unchallenged and unacknowledged they remain simply as the status quo. Yet this status quo facilitates for certain prejudices to exist within a people. *Sunflowers in the Dark* is a magic tale that approaches these real life injustices with a beguiling blend of anger, sorrow and occasional humor. A surreal poetic meditation, the film explores the complexities of relationships and the social norms that exacerbate them through the eyes of newly married Paidamoyo. [...] Like a sunflower in the dark, Paidamoyo is stuck in no man's land. She desires freedom from her husband's ill treatment and yet cannot defy her Uncle and head of the family, Chris who insists she must remain with her husband as custom requires. To do so would mean she would be ostracized. This tug of war between constantly wanting to be free while being afraid to step out and becoming an outcast is at the centre of the film's narrative. »

## CONTACTS

**Producer :** Ben Mahaka (Mahaka Media) - [benmahaka@me.com](mailto:benmahaka@me.com)

**Director :** Tapiwa Chipfupa (Ambidextrous Pictures) - [tapiwachipfupa@gmail.com](mailto:tapiwachipfupa@gmail.com)