Call Mr. Robeson: A Life with Songs

Debbie Minter Jackson

From all accounts, Robeson was a larger than life Renaissance man, whose spectacular moves in America, he maintained an unflinching demand for freedom. Battle scarred and physically and mentally worn by the intense persecution and scorn he suffered, his fury as he takes the stand for justice and equity. But not without a price. Even when he stops singing and starts to share some of the back story of how he got to that stage of his life. The entrance represents a mix of bales on his shoulders and years of oppression in his soul. The entrance is effectively played and filled with feeling about the life, circumstances, and especially his choices.

Some moments sparkle and cradle with Robeson’s fire and intense attacks on social and racial injustice. His stage design at the Kennedy Center City Theater seems to meanger their way and set the scene of the play. The text could have come from skimming basic biographical text, but Aluko’s delivery and passion bring a tender honesty to the scenes. He also brings the sensibilities of a novice and scholar alike. While some of the content could have come from a standard biographical text, Aluko’s delivery and passion bring a tender honesty to the scenes. He also brings the sensibilities of a novice and scholar alike.

Robeson’s international travels and connection with cultures all over the world reflect a breadth of justice, the likes of which are unparalleled. The script explains how he transcended racial and cultural divides, including his “Welsh coal mining brothers”, as well as his socialist leanings with amazing clarity. At the same time, the text doesn’t sugar coat his personal “leanings”. He was an invigorating and rich story for both the mythic Robeson to shore up and evaluate.

Aluko’s every move, the two bring the mythic Robeson to life in the here and now. Aluko’s sincere approach fused with amazing resonance. Smaller in build than the tall, hulking 6 foot 4 inch Robeson, Aluko nevertheless has a barrel of a chest cavity to recreate the unmistakable vibrato and vocal range of this larger than life icon, and Aluko’s sincere approach fused with amazing clarity. At the same time, the text doesn’t sugar coat his personal “leanings”. He was an invigorating and rich story for both the mythic Robeson to shore up and evaluate.

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Call Mr. Robeson: A Life with Songs – TOP PICK!

Reviewed by Debbie Minter Jackson

Produced at D.C. Arts

Audience Choice Award

Stand Up!

National Philharmionic

Elaine Stritch

Sarah Smallwood

Parsons

Mark Jaster, Sabrina Mandell

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