

# Speak of Me As I Am

## What Would Paul Robeson Do?

It's a question that will be answered in "Speak Of Me As I Am," a one-man show about the legendary actor, singer and freedom fighter. Robeson, who was 77 when he died in 1976, comes down from the heavens in the play - in the form of singer/actor KB Solomon - to give his perspective on today's youths and other timely topics.

Robeson also uses his return to Earth to clear up popular misconceptions about him, such as the notion that he was unpatriotic and a pawn for communists.

Written and produced by Solomon and Krys Howard, "Speak Of Me As I Am" has won raves for its honest portrayal of the iconic Robeson. Solomon, a classically-trained singer, has been lauded even by those who knew Robeson. Los Angeles Journal Reviewer Ed Rampell said that he thought that he was actually watching Robeson as he watched Solomon's performance.



KB Solomon

"Solomon's performance is a marvel not to be missed. The towering basso profundo opera singer has the icon's stature, mannerisms and smile down, and his mellifluous voice is a delight that sometimes had the audience singing along ...," Rampell wrote.

The show includes Solomon singing many of Robeson's classics, including "I Dreamed I Saw Joe Hill Last Night," "Porgy's Plenty of Nothing," "The House I Live In," "Danny Boy" and Robeson's signature hit, "Old Man River."

Jeffrey Anderson-Gunter directs the show. Anderson-Gunter, a longtime supporter and regular attendee of the National Black Theatre Festival, is best-known as an actor in

films such as "Marked for Death," "Predator," "Only the Strong" and "Don't Be a Menace ...". He also starred on the television shows "Hudson Street" and "Union Square," but perhaps he is most remembered as the dreadlocked face that morphs into another face at the end of Michael Jackson's "Black or White" video.

Kirk Taylor is the show's musical director. The Bridgeport, Conn.-native first embraced music as a small child, but acting also became a love of his. He has appeared on stage in shows like "5 Guys Named Moe," "Signed, Sealed, Delivered" (a Stevie Wonder tribute opposite Chaka Khan) and the one-man show "Jelly Roll! The Music And The Man." He has appeared in films like "The Cotton Club," "The Last Dragon," "Death Wish 3," "Full Metal Jacket" and "School Daze." These days, Taylor records and performs in Southern California with The Angel Chorus, a Gospel ensemble under the leadership of legendary producer Scott V. Smith.

- The Chronicle



Kirk Taylor



Jeffrey Anderson-Gunter



The real Josephine Baker.

KRT Photo

## Bananas

Familiar to television viewers for her appearances on such shows as "Girlfriends," "Las Vegas" and "The Parkers," Sloan Robinson pays homage to a true pioneer and trailblazer in "Bananas."

American-born icon Josephine Baker had to travel across the Atlantic to Paris in the 1920s so that audiences could view her for the content of her character - and great singing and dancing talents - and not the color of

her skin. By the 1930s, Baker was the most famous (or infamous, some say) and richest black woman in the world. She bared more than her soul to audiences around the world. The title "Bananas" refers to the scantily skirt of bananas that she wore during her early shows, which she performed topless.

The cabaret-style play is set much later in Baker's bittersweet life. It's 1961 in Paris and Robinson as Baker takes the audience on an amazing journey through the performer's life through dance, song, monologues and costumes that will draw oohs and aahs.

The New York born actress has received thumbs-up from critics and audiences for her honest portrayal as Baker. "Bananas," which Robinson wrote, has had longtime engagement at the The Vintage Hollywood Private Club, a performance venue that pays homage to old black Hollywood.

This is not the first time that Sloan Robinson has tackled the role of entertainment heavyweight. She won an NAACP Theatre Award for Best Female Performance for "Yesterday Came Too Soon...The Dorothy Dandridge Story," which she brought to the 2003 National Black Theatre Festival. Both women blazed new trails for black females in show business, but both their lives were not all curtain calls and roses. Before their deaths, both women had a string of unhappy romances and trouble making ends meet. The beauty of Robinson's creative gifts is that she is able to take audiences beyond the headlines and heartaches to expose the real women behind the legend.



Sloan Robinson

Aug. 6 at  
8 p.m.  
Aug. 7 at 8 p.m.  
Aug. 8 at 3 & 8 p.m.  
at WFU's The Ring

**Ticket Price: \$37**

INCLUDES BOTH SHOWS