



Liberation

Written by Ntombizodwa Nyoni

Directed by Monique Touko

Commissioned by the Royal Exchange Theatre.

Produced by the Royal Exchange Theatre
and Factory International, Manchester



This easy read is designed for visitors to the
Sensory Adapted performance of Liberation

Contents

Page 3 - Content warnings for this show

Pages 4-5 - Information about the Royal Exchange Theatre

Page 6 - Information about the show

Pages 7-8 - Information about the cast and creative team

Pages 9 - Information about the set design

Pages 10 - What is Liberation about?

Pages 11-29 - What happens in the story?

Pages 30-31 - Explanation of words

Pages 32 - Who to speak to if you have any questions

Content warnings for this show

Age guidance

12+

Contains racist language, addresses themes of colonialism, racism and child mortality, and references threatened violence.

Lighting/effects

There is some haze. There are also video screens that show some pictures and words that lift up and down.



Sound

The cast are all heard through mics and there is a Djembe (drum) played live on stage, this is quite loud.



Information about the Royal Exchange Theatre

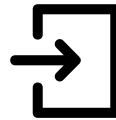
The Royal Exchange café and Rivals bar will be open to audiences from 11am.



If you're coming in a wheelchair, you can use the lift to enter the building from St. Ann's entrance.



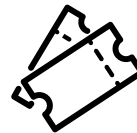
If you are walking, you can use both the St. Ann's entrance and the Cross Street entrance.



When you arrive, you might be asked by a member of the security team if they can look inside your bag. This should only take a few minutes.



You will also be asked to show your ticket.



You will then go into the Great Hall, which can be quite noisy and busy.

You will also see areas where you can buy souvenirs and refreshments.



You can put your coat in the cloak room for £1.



You will be able to take your seats in the theatre from around 5.30pm.



Entering the Theatre

The Theatre is where the audience sit and watch the performance.

The theatre is made up of three levels.

The round stage in the middle is where the actors perform. If you are sat on the ground floor you may have actors walking past you during the show.



Information about the show

The first half of the show starts at 6pm, there is an interval at 7pm. The second half is from 7.25pm.



This means the show will end at around 8:20pm.



The play is performed 'in the round' which means that the audience sits in a circle around the action on stage.



Mobile phone and tablets are permitted inside the theatre. No photography is allowed during the performance and we ask you not to use the devices during the show as it can be distracting for others.



Hot drinks are not allowed inside the theatre, but cold drinks can be transferred into plastic glasses.



You can come and go from the show. If you need to leave, it is okay to go and come back. During the play, there will be people around who you can ask for help if you need. There is also a quiet place called the Lounge you can sit in.



You are allowed to make as much noise as you like. The actors really enjoy it when you clap and get excited.



For this sensory adapted performance the intensity of sound and the lighting effects will be reduced, and the house lights will be kept on.



Information about the cast and creative team

Actors:



Actor name **Leonie Elliott**
Character name Alma La Badie



Actor name **Eric Kofi Abrefa**
Character name Kwame Nkrumah



Actor name **Rudolphe Mdlongwa**
Character name Makumalo Hlubi



Actor name **Tonderai Munyevu**
Character name Jomo Kenyatta



Actor name **Tachia Newall**
Character name
Len Johnson



Actor name **Pamela Nomvete**
Character name Amy
Ashwood-Garvey



Actor name **Joshua Roberts-Mensah**
Character name
Joe Appiah



Actor name **Bex Smith**
Character name
Betty Dorman



Actor name **Nicola Stephenson**
Character name
Dorothy Pizer



Actor name **Eamonn Walker**
Character name
George Padmore

Information about the cast and creative team

A list of the creative team who worked on the show:

WRITER	Ntombizodwa Nyoni
DIRECTOR	Monique Touko
SET DESIGNER	Paul Wills
COSTUME DESIGNER	Sunny Dolat
COMPOSER	Ife Ogunjobi
LIGHTING DESIGNER	Matt Haskins
VIDEO DESIGNER	Dick Straker
SOUND DESIGNER	Alexandra Faye Braithwaite & Nick Lodge
MOVEMENT DIRECTOR	Kloé Dean
CONSULTANT DRAMATURG/DIRECTOR	Chinonyerem Odimba
FIGHT& INTIMACY DIRECTOR	Bethan Clark
VOICE & DIALECT COACH	Joel Trill
DRAMATHERAPIST	Samantha Adams
GROUNDING & SAFE PRACTICE	Uwarobosa Enobakhare
ASSOCIATE MOVEMENT DIRECTOR	Cache Thake
HODGKISS ASSISTANT DIRECTOR	Robert Furey
FACTORY FELLOW	Stef Reynolds
CASTING DIRECTOR	Sophie Parrott CDG
STAGE MANAGER	Shannon Aisha Martin
DEPUTY STAGE MANAGER	Sarah Barnes
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER	Joshua Cole-Brown

Information about the set design

There is a screen surrounding the higher level of the platform that is raised and lowered throughout the show. This screen shows different videos and images.



The set design is a wooden floor that has raised levels.

What is Liberation about?

Inspired by true events in Black British history, Liberation is a powerful new play which traces the private lives of activists who fought to liberate Africa.

The play is set in Manchester in October 1945. Africa's freedom and future is in the hands of her descendants at the Fifth Pan-African Congress at Chorlton-on-Medlock Town Hall.

With decades of championing change under their belts, emerging African & Caribbean activists and scholars offer new radical ideas of liberation.

However, the organiser, Trinidadian activist George Padmore is unsure who to pass the baton to. Kwame Nkrumah is fuelled by an idealistic desire to become the first Black president of the Gold Coast. Young, resourceful Jamaican social worker Alma La Badie is grappling with the truth behind who must be sacrificed for the cause. And what of the revered Amy Ashwood-Garvey how does she ensure the voices of Black women are heard?

A story of hope, friendship and the consequences of a long-denied awakening unravels in the congress halls and bars of Manchester, but at what cost?



What happens in the story?

The first half

The play begins with George Padmore dictating a telegram. It is a call to arms for all colonised peoples of the world. They are invited to attend the fifth Pan African Congress in Manchester to plan and build towards the freedom of Africa from European imperialism.

We see George and his partner Dorothy together.

In the next scene, it is Day One of the Congress. Actor Joshua Roberts-Mensah who is playing the character Joe Appiah is playing a drum. We meet all the characters, parading in fine clothes to music and Joe Appiah is drumming. The characters meet and greet each other. There are political banners demanding change. The atmosphere is lively.

During this moment, Kwame, Joe and Makumalo are established as friends. They each have their own personal motivations for attending the Congress. They see Betty with Len, and Joe and Makumalo tease Kwame that he has missed his chance with her.

Dorothy urges George to start the Congress, but he mentions the guest of honour Du Bois has not yet arrived. Amy Ashwood-Garvey is introduced to the Congress as the wife of famous activist Marcus Ashwood-Garvey.



What happens in the story?

Amy talks to the Congress. She sets the scene that at the end of the second world war, Churchill talked of freedom, but that freedom is not a reality for everyone. She says both the newly formed Labour Government and Churchill's previous Conservative government are silent, and so now the masses must rise and claim their freedom. The others all chant their support.

After her speech, Amy chats to Jomo about his bar Cosmopolitan Club.

Elsewhere, Betty asks if Kwame has spoken to George about co-writing the manifesto and George says he hasn't yet. George approaches and gives instructions to Betty and Kwame about the plans for the Congress. Betty leaves and Kwame tentatively asks George about working on the manifesto together. George brushes him aside, telling him to focus on his speeches. Kwame agrees. Betty returns to find Kwame is frustrated. Betty encourages Kwame not to give up.

Alma La Badie rushes in. She is wet from the rain and annoyed that she has missed Amy Ashwood-Garvey's speech. Both Kwame and Betty assume she is a volunteer. Betty is quite assertive and instructs Alma where she needs to be. Alma ignores Betty and leads the conversation in her own way, saying she needs to freshen up. Kwame asks her name, and she tells them she is Alma La Badie. She leaves. Betty worries that Alma will be a troublemaker.



What happens in the story?

In the next scene, Alma La Badie is addressing the Congress. She gives a speech about her work at a Liverpool orphanage. She describes the situation of mixed heritage children who have been left behind by coloured* American troops and born to married English women; whose husbands were serving overseas. And that when the husbands returned, they were not forgiving of their wives and rejected the mixed-heritage children who had to be given up. Alma La Badie says more funding is needed for the orphanages.



***coloured is a dated term used in the 1940s which today would be considered racist. Now, we would use the term black.**

In the next scene, we leave the Congress and are at the boarding house of Kwame, Makumalo and Joe. It is the evening of Day One. The atmosphere feels different as we see them interacting privately. Kwame is very focussed on organising George's notes, and the other two are getting ready for a night out at the Cosmopolitan Club. Makumalo and Joe are keen to meet and chat with the women. They encourage Kwame to get together with Betty before someone else does. Kwame insists they are just friends. They tease him about his manhood and his sexual potency.

What happens in the story?

We learn that Joe is a law student.

Makumalo was a medical student who quit to pursue his acting career. Kwame teases him about the lack of quality roles he has played on screen. Makumalo and Joe tease Kwame about being George's puppy and his ambitions to be a great African Leader. They ridicule his attempts to appear more African by changing his name from Francis to Kwame Nkrumah.

Joe questions Kwame on whether he will return to his studies, and Kwame says he does not need recognition from a white man's institution. He wants to be his own man, and not a poor imitation of a White man. Joe reminds Kwame that he is studying at the white man's university and asks whether that makes him a white mimicry.

They continue to bicker and banter together. Joe and Kwame reveal they both have ambitions to be Presidents. They discuss what makes a good leader and try to out-compete with each other. Kwame says he wants to appeal to young people and to mobilise them to action. Kwame compares his and Joe's friendship to Jesus and Judas, implying that he is the Messiah. Joe scoffs at this idea. Makumalo gives up with them and encourages them all to leave for the club.



What happens in the story?

The next scene takes place in the Cosmopolitan Club later the same evening. Jomo is serving the drinks. He encourages everyone to let their hair down. Dorothy tries to get George to dance but he says he is too tired. Kwame approaches and tries to talk to George about the manifesto, but George is dismissive. Jomo asks what is bothering George and he says he is worried that Du Bois will not come because he is upset with him for appearing to leave the NAACP (a US Civil Rights Organisation) out of things, even though he wasn't, and he has since apologised. Amy is dismissive of Du Bois, claiming it is typical American behaviour to put themselves at the centre of everything. She also claims that Du Bois' previous congresses have been too exclusive and full of intellectuals. She says that here in Manchester there is a much broader mix of people.

Jomo, Dorothy and Amy remember previous activist meetings they have attended together. They remember being heckled and spat at. They also remember the good quality food Amy prepared. Jomo complains about his second wife's cooking, and Dorothy is surprised to learn he has two wives.



What happens in the story?

Joe arrives and speaks to Amy calling her “aunty”. She is not impressed and challenges him to see her as a sexy young woman. Joe is embarrassed and praises Amy, to which she replies that she knows what she has achieved and wants to know what he has done. He lists some of his achievements, and Amy says that next time they meet she hopes to be shaking the hand of a President.

George tells Dorothy he is ready to leave, and they both go.

Len and Betty arrive at the bar and order drinks.

Alma arrives and meets Amy, they are pleased to meet each other and impressed by each others’ achievements. Alma says she was late today because of the death of an abandoned baby in her care. Len is moved by this. Amy Betty, realising she earlier mistook Alma for a regular volunteer, asks why Alma didn’t say who she was. Amy is cross with Betty, telling her she should know them both, as they are the only two black women to speak at the Congress.

Len says he heard Alma’s Congress talk in the morning and shares his own experience of growing up in a mixed-heritage family.



What happens in the story?

Alma asks if Len will be speaking, he says that he is just an observer for the Manchester Communist Party. He says he is a man of action rather than a politician. He talks about African students, at which point Kwame interrupts him to remind him he is African. Len is not impressed with this comment, saying he is Mancunian and adding that he knows who he is and that he wouldn't be a successful fighter if he didn't. Len explains he's boxing career was shortened because of the 'colour bar' (a racist rule which excluded men of colour from fighting). Makumalo hears this and says that he has stage combat experience. Len is impressed that Makumalo is an actor, and they spar together. As the men spar and the others debate whether Southern or West Africans are better, Jomo reminds them all to work together.



It is the next day (Day Two of the Congress) and George Padmore addresses the delegates. He reads biased and negative press coverage the Congress has been receiving, which demands the delegates all go home. Kwame interrupts and talks about how their homes have been overtaken by imperialism. He demands the colonialists get out. The Congress members chant Get Out in Zulu, Swahili and Krio.

What happens in the story?

In the next scene, after George's Congress speech, Alma and Len chat. Alma is impressed by Len's grasp of Krio. He says he learnt it from his dad and goes on to talk about his childhood experiences of racism growing up in Manchester. Both are feeling that they don't fit in. They talk about their dreams. Alma wants to chair an international network to support abandoned children of colour. Len says he would like to help and that he knows Paul Robeson (a famous American singer, actor and professional sports star) who might be able to help. Alma is grateful that Len will help her. Len leaves and she starts to practice her next congress speech.

Without her knowing, Kwame approaches and listens to Alma practising her speech. He interrupts and tries to charm her. She is unimpressed by him. Kwame wishes that Alma would give Betty a chance and that maybe the two of them could be friends. Alma says she has no time for Betty. Kwame challenges Alma, saying they should all be in solidarity with one another. Alma pushes back, saying that to stand in solidarity she doesn't need to be in friends with everyone. They discuss leadership and gender. Alma challenges Kwame to follow her as leader, rather than the other way around, at which point Amy interrupts them.. Both women leave.



What happens in the story?

As the women leave, Betty arrives and asks Kwame to take notes for her as she has to pop home to change. Kwame is annoyed at being given instructions. Betty asks what is wrong, and he expresses his frustration.. He feels George is holding him back. Betty encourages him to use Dorothy to get George to act in his favour. She kisses him.

Dorothy arrives and interrupts the kiss. Dorothy reminds Kwame to get to his session. Dorothy then speaks privately with Betty. She wants Betty not to get too involved with Kwame. Makumalo arrives and asks Betty if the rumours about George and Du Bois having fallen out are true. Dorothy puts Makumalo right and tells him not to spread lies.

In the next scene, Jomo Kenyatta gives his Congress speech. He talks about the oppressive and violent destructive nature of colonialism.



What happens in the story?

It is now Day 3 of the Congress. Upstairs in the town hall, Kwame speaks with Dorothy to say the kiss she saw between him and Betty was nothing. Dorothy wonders if Betty knows that. Kwame goes on to say that he wants more responsibility and to be taken more seriously by George. Kwame reveals that he has seen some letters sent to George about him, which are patronising and question his intellect. Dorothy says that he should not have been snooping in George's things. Kwame continues to express his frustrations and goes on to say that George has shared private thoughts that trouble him, including how he feels about having left his wife Julia and their daughter Blydon. . Kwame asks Dorothy to talk to George on his behalf. Dorothy clearly tells Kwame to do it himself and not to use her.

In the next scene, Makumalo gives his Congress speech. He talks about how the colonial powers have made the right to assembly and the right to protest illegal. This means the struggles and oppression that the African people face cannot be spoken about.

What happens in the story?

In the upstairs gallery of the Town Hall, Kwame tells George that he is putting out a new press release to address the rumours. George forbids this, and Kwame again becomes frustrated, reminding George that he is joint secretary. He says that before he met him, he thought George was a militant activist who would strongly defend himself against rumour, but now he wonders if George is losing his energy for the fight. Jomo and then Amy tell Kwame to show respect, but Kwame continues to publicly challenge George's leadership. Kwame says he does not need a mentor anymore. He says he has his own political ideology, which he calls Nkrumaism. The others all laugh at this. They question what it is. Kwame shares his ideas, including that he wants to create a free African Super State. They argue amongst themselves about the role of the leader versus the cult of the personality. As the conversation continues, Kwame becomes more isolated from everyone. George challenges Kwame to leave if he doesn't like the way things are being run. Dorothy suddenly arrives to say that Du Bois has turned up and that the reason he was late was because of a miscommunication about the location of the Congress.



What happens in the story?

George is suddenly energised by this and gives instructions to everyone about what needs to happen. He also asks Amy to step aside as the Chair of the Congress. She accepts this with grace, although both her and Alma are clearly unhappy . Everybody hurries out, leaving Amy and Alma alone. Alma expresses how unhappy she is, saying that Amy has been doing a fine job. Amy is cross – she knows she is doing a fine job. She doesn't want pity. She reminds Alma this is the reality for women in the movement, and that if she can't handle it, she had better think about trying to follow in her footsteps.

The interval

What happens in the story?

The second half

It is Day 4 of the Congress. It is the evening, and we are in the Cosmopolitan Club.

George, Len, Betty, Joe and Makumalo (adorned with a Zulu headring, ceremonial belts and ankle rattles) are on the dance floor. Makumalo leads a traditional ancestral Zulu dance. Alma sits alone. Kwame, Dorothy and Amy are at the bar.

Jomo is unimpressed by Alma, Kwame, Dorothy and Amy for not joining in. Amy observes how much more energised George is now.

George talks to Len, Joe and Makumalo about Du Bois. Everyone is very inspired by Du Bois. Du Bois has encouraged Len to become an MP. George invites Alma into the conversation, but she is resistant. Makumalo flirts with Betty. George leaves them all to it.

What happens in the story?

Len orders drinks at the bar, and during this he calls Kwame “mate” which Kwame does not like. Amy tells Dorothy and Jomo that she is unhappy at being introduced only as Marcus’ wife. They discuss her ex-husband Marcus. After Marcus died, Amy had him entombed in London, against the wishes of his second wife, also called Amy. Jomo disapproves of this, Amy defends her actions. In another part of the club, Len talks to Alma, Joe and Makumalo. Len notices that Alma has been quiet today. Betty and Joe are unhappy with Kwame’s previous behaviour towards them, and Makumalo encourages them to talk with him, but they resist.

Makumalo approaches Kwame to try and talk to him, but Kwame is rude and undermines Makumalo. Joe joins in and defends Makumalo and challenges Kwame. At the bar, Amy reveals to Jomo and Dorothy that she has stolen the Chairman’s sign. She hides it in her bra. Alma approaches to order a drink and when Amy asks for another, Alma questions whether she has had enough.

This angers Amy.



What happens in the story?

In another part of the bar, Betty tries to speak with Kwame. He is dismissive. She reminds him of the kiss. Kwame interrupts saying she kissed him. Betty wants to talk about the nature of their relationship, but Kwame tells her to keep her voice down. Betty returns to Len upset. Seeing Betty upset, Len challenges Kwame's behaviour and asks to go outside to fight it out. Jomo says no one should fight as the police will come.

Alma laughs at their behaviour and Betty challenges her for laughing. Alma challenges Betty's commitment to the cause and questions whether as a white woman she can truly connect with and understand their lived experience of Blackness. Alma is angry at Betty and the men for encouraging her. The evening ends badly and everyone leaves.

What happens in the story?

The next day is Day 5 of the Congress. George is at the typewriter drafting the Congress manifesto. Dorothy enters. George can tell something is bothering her. Dorothy asks George if he sees her as family. She wants to understand if George really loves her, or if he just enjoys her connections and the people she can introduce him to. She asks George about what he told Kwame. George says that Kwame caught him in a drunken moment. George confides in her that he feels the pressure of meeting everyone's expectations of him, as a father, husband, leader, radical, communist, journalist, threat, Trinny, friend, brother and mentor. Dorothy reassures George. George is worried about who can provide the next generation of leadership. George feels like they might be on the cusp of significant change, but he is frustrated about who might lead that, and wonders whether Kwame has it in him. Dorothy encourages George to keep going and to maintain his faith in Kwame.

At the Congress, Amy Ashwood Garvey gives a speech about the plight of the black woman, and how they are just as an important part of the struggle but that they are often overlooked by the men.



What happens in the story?

After Amy's speech, Len and Alma talk. Alma is upset that last night Len went to see how Betty was, rather than check in with her. Amy enters and asks to talk with Alma. Alma is reluctant, but Len leaves and the two women talk.

Alma explains how disappointed she is with the people she has met. No one is living up to her high expectations. Amy reminds her that all the activists are just people, with their own strengths and flaws and that it is hard work, and no one is going to thank you for your sacrifices. Alma accepts that she may not get thanks from the men, but that she expected more from Amy. Alma continues, saying that love and softness should also be included in the Manifesto. She says "Love is resistance too." Amy gives her the Chairman sign. Together they leave to go to the restaurant and join the others.

It is the final afternoon of the Congress, and the characters meet at the Forum Restaurant.



What happens in the story?

George talks through the draft manifesto with Jomo, Amy and Dorothy. Jomo says that Du Bois has asked them to consider how to organise themselves moving forward. Jomo wonders who they should pass the baton of leadership on to. Amy wants to nominate herself, but Jomo says she can't do that. Jomo suggests Makumalo. Dorothy says her money is on Len. Amy praises Alma's qualities. They all share a joke about Betty not being a suitable candidate. Jomo also recognises that Joe's legal experience could be useful. George who so far has remained quiet, suggest Kwame may yet make a good President.

They all hope that the delegates find themselves and emerge in their own right, rather than trying to copy what has gone before. Amy worries that if they don't, they could be back here in 50, 80 or 100 years still trying to solve the same problems. Jomo reflects that the next generation must recognise their own faults in order to find the strength to effect real lasting change.

Outside the restaurant, Kwame apologises to Joe and Malukamo for his actions. They accept this and are friendly towards each other again.

What happens in the story?

Alma enters and Kwame tries to apologise to her too. They each wonder about how the future will play out and what their roles in it will be. Kwame says that no matter where they both go in the world, they will have had this moment in Manchester and that that will forever connect them. Alma asks Kwame if it was worth coming, he says “we’ll see.” He asks the same question of her, and she replies with the same answer “we’ll see.”

All the delegates enter and pose for official photographs.



The play ends.

Explanation of words

Krio - an English-based Creole language of Sierra Leone.

Mancunian – terms used to describe someone from Manchester.

Manifesto - a written statement of the beliefs, aims, and policies of an organization, especially a political party.

Marcus Garvey – A Jamaican political activist of the time.

Mentor - a person who gives a younger or less experienced person help and advice over a period of time.

Messiah - a saviour or liberator, and in the context of Judaism and Christianity often meaning Jesus Christ.

Militant – some who is active, determined, and often willing to use force.

Monogamy - the practice being married to only one person at a time.

MP – Member of Parliament.

NAACP - National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (an American civil rights organization formed in 1909 to fight for the advancement of African Americans).

Pan-African - a political ideology that promotes solidarity and unity among people of African descent both on the continent and around the world.

Paul Robeson - a famous American singer, actor and professional sports star of the time.

Radical - believing or expressing the belief that there should be great or extreme social or political change.

Swahili - a Bantu language originally spoken by the Swahili people, who are found primarily in Tanzania, Kenya, and Mozambique.

Trinny – a person from Trinidad.

Zulu – an ethnic group, a language, and a former Kingdom in Southern Africa.

Questions

If you have any other questions please do reach out.

Find information online [here](#)



Email us on access@royalexchange.co.uk



Call Box Office **0161 833 9833**



Or come in and **talk one of our friendly Box Office** team members, Monday - Saturday from 11am



We hope you enjoyed your visit to the Royal Exchange Theatre.

See you soon!