The Undelivered: A Paul Robeson Chamber Opera

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THE UNDELIVERED: A PAUL ROBESON CHAMBER OPERA

By

Richard George Yates III

A DOCTORAL ESSAY

Submitted to the Faculty
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THE UNDELIVERED: A PAUL ROBESON CHAMBER OPERA

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In this essay, I describe my new chamber opera about Paul Robeson, *The Undelivered*. Scored for six singers and seven instrumentalists, the opera’s duration is around forty-two minutes. I discuss my process of creating the libretto, which is based on a transcript from 1956, when the U.S. House Un-American Activities Committee questioned Robeson at a hearing. The opera’s title refers to a speech that Robeson was barred from reading during the proceeding. This paper details observations about the process of writing the music from different perspectives. These include the thoughts that I was having during the time of composition as well as those that I have had since then. I also explore certain sections of the opera with a more in-depth analysis in the last chapter. The final products of this creative process, the libretto and full score of the opera, are included in the appendices.
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Chapter 1

Overview of the Subject Matter

The story of Paul Robeson is at its core about aspiring towards the principles that one values. It conveys a message of equality and diversity, describing the promotion of intellect and artistry. Robeson’s monumental efforts toward the social justice movement are unique in that he communicated his ideas by singing, acting, writing, and speaking. Through his work, he stood up for racial minorities, demanding accountability for the treatment of persecuted peoples around the world. His voice was one of insistence and urgency. But perhaps the reason that it was so resonant is that, as a black man, Robeson demonstrated virtuosity and intellect as a creator of art in so many mediums. He overturned prejudices that held that black people were incapable of being true artists. He was invested in presenting the black experience as one of intelligence and beauty. The stakes were high for such a renowned creative personality. For not only was this man responsible for his own fate, but he was also charged with the task of being a model for many others.

Robeson’s message as an activist, as one of eloquence and deep expression, is rich and engaging. It is especially resonant with current progressive social trends. However, the story of Robeson’s life is equally rich for its depiction of an imperfect human being striving to overcome his own deficiencies in order to relay a larger, more impactful dream. This models a universal narrative—Robeson as a human being attempting to find value in his life and making his mark on the world.
This man who championed so many external arenas was not always able to govern his own internal thoughts. Plagued by mental health problems, he seemingly focused with an almost superhuman intensity on particular projects of the moment, only to go through a later period of self-questioning.¹ The face that he showed to the world was a persona that he saw as necessary to bring about his dreams. Yet internally, Robeson was a man constantly questioning, changing his mind on political and personal issues.²

Paul’s personal relationships offer perhaps the best glimpse into his own changing thoughts. He was scrutinized for his relationships with other women outside of his marriage with his wife, Essie.³ This could be said to be “normal” with regard to the relationship standards of celebrities. Even so, his romantic relationships are descriptive of Robeson’s nature, important for showing the way that he treated those closest to him.

As a father, Paul often did not make himself available to his late son, Paul Robeson Jr.⁴ Although his son eventually forgave his father in his own biography about his dad, damage was certainly done.⁵ ⁶ Paul would often be traveling and away from his

² Ibid., 381-382.
³ Ibid., 286.
⁴ Ibid., 194.
⁵ Ibid., 245-246.
family for extended periods. As a result, his family could not always depend on him for emotional support.

Because of the pervasiveness of similar stories with different characters, these traits serve to link Paul as an imperfect human being—someone on the one hand capable of a brilliant performance as Othello, and on the other, someone who made many personal sacrifices in order to accomplish his ambitions. Robeson’s redeeming factor is that he was not so selfish or narcissistic that he was not concerned with other human beings. But, his relationship with those family members closest to him was particularly thorny. Even though Essie and Paulie realized that they had to allow Paul certain transgressions in order for him to complete the projects that were larger than themselves, these freedoms had personal impacts.  

In a literal sense, Robeson’s story is a tragedy. Through a certain framing, it is a bittersweet misfortune that so many people’s lives, including Robeson’s own, were sacrificed in the march towards freedom. His later period was a time of increasing mental illness—bouts of depression and an attempted suicide. In the Cold War era anxiety, his every move was being scrutinized by the U.S. intelligence agencies. He was asked to testify before the U.S. House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) and subjected to questioning about his feelings towards the U.S.S.R. He refused to comply with the

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7 Duberman, Paul Robeson, 242.

8 Ibid., 511, 498.

9 Ibid., 400.

10 Ibid., 441-442.
State Department’s mandate that he sign a non-Communist affidavit. Because he would not comply, his foreign travel permissions were revoked.\textsuperscript{11} His passport was no longer viable for traveling to international professional engagements. As a result, he was physically unable to get to Britain and Russia in order to star in movies, speak to crowds of spectators, sing recitals, or in general to feel as a welcomed member of a supporting nation.

Robeson suffered from paranoia since he knew that the FBI was bugging his home. He attempted suicide, perhaps due to his deteriorating mental health.\textsuperscript{12} Paul Jr. believed that the CIA may have been responsible for drugging his father, thus causing the paranoia and attempted suicide. Paul Jr. also suffered a similar paranoia and he himself attempted suicide after an alleged drugging incident.\textsuperscript{13}

Indeed, what we did as a “nation” to Paul Robeson is as provocative as anything else. It shows the depths to which we are all capable of descending. The tragedy is that an agent of change was ridiculed and ultimately barred from opening the door to freedom for which he and so many others desperately yearned. All too easily, the voice of the oppressed was himself oppressed, treated inhumanely, and prohibited from moving forward as an artist and communicator. When we consider the burdens and traumas that Robeson was subjected to on a daily basis, it is no wonder that he eventually surrendered— being metaphorically confined to a cell with merely a view through its bars of the future.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 388.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 498.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 499.
But to speak only of his life as a tragedy is to undermine his lasting achievements, thus leaving silent the very story that he set out to tell. After all, Robeson as the orator and artist was willing to put on a mask when it was in the service of a greater cause. He was willing to neglect his own well-being, his personal relationships, and his professional career. Whether it was becoming the first Rutgers player named to an All-American football team, or attending Columbia University Law School, the actions that he took had consequences.\textsuperscript{14} He was subjected to physical violence from the other players and was left with no prospects to be a practicing lawyer as he graduated from Columbia.\textsuperscript{15} Yet, Robeson realized early on that he was part of something much larger than his own life. His life was always in the service of social justice.

Robeson understood that his unyielding patience and calm persistence were necessary in order to someday see his dream of true freedom come to life. The outlook taken in this retelling of his life appreciates his achievements as part of the long-term coordinated effort of many others, in their own artistic and intellectual avocations, working together. The one who is the object of bigotry is not the only one affected. The one who insults suffers too as the result of turning against a fellow human being. A capacity for love is instead channeled into hate. In order to transform feelings of hatred, a unified front was, and still is, necessary.

While Robeson himself, with the help of his closest allies, achieved so many tangible results in his lifetime, this production aims to magnify and project those realities to a contemporary audience. Through its focus on Robeson’s story, the opera will connect

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 22.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 55.
broadly encompassing narratives of inclusion, justice, and love—with the hope that members of a future generation can continue this important work.

**Historical Background**

Many artistic figures crossed paths with Robeson. These include W.E.B. Du Bois, Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, and other members of the Harlem Renaissance. Musical figures, such as Duke Ellington, William Grant Still, Ella Fitzgerald, Clara Rockmore, and George Gershwin were friends or interested in collaborating with Robeson. Members of the NAACP, such as James Weldon Johnson and Walter White, politicians such as Henry Wallace, Eleanor and Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and Joseph McCarthy all played important roles in defining Robeson’s stance on many issues.

The most intimate perspectives can be seen through Robeson’s interactions with his own family, Essie and his son Paul Jr. Looking at Paul’s extra-marital romances with primarily white women, a more complicated rendering is constructed. It is with all of these stories that social justice again emerges as a front rather than simply from the actions of a single human being. Essie, for instance, was an intellectual who wrote books and plays, did field research in Africa to study African cultures, and produced speeches and writings to support her own as well as her husband’s causes.\(^\text{16}\)

Since the typical mode of presenting the life of Paul Robeson is to lead with his seminal achievements and give little priority to materials that conflict with that activity, a

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 292, 313.
kind of one-dimensional perspective often emerges. The problem is that, once the compounding facts are learned, it is all too easy for the flimsy model to be overcome by these complexities. It was my intention to treat information more democratically. Even if Paul truly was defending the rights of certain organizations to have freedom of speech over others—the Communist Party of the United States over the KKK or Trotskyists, for example—this inconsistency can be telling. It is in his internal deliberations of what causes to support and what information to relay as a public figure that the complexity and sensitivity of his situation can be appreciated.

There are many problems with simply labeling Robeson a “civil rights” hero. He was simultaneously so much more than that. He was incredibly calculating, deciding which individuals and causes needed his attention at any particular moment. He was also naturally concerned with self-preservation, trying to maintain his own stature as a public figure able to effect change. Even so, he voiced incredibly gutsy statements against U.S. actions with regard to the Cold War. He was outspoken against his perceptions of imperialist or fascist tendencies. And, he decried the ravages of racial hatred. In short, though he considered the ramifications of his actions, he was also fearless.

**Subject Matter of the Opera**

Knowing that the FBI and CIA were keeping a close watch on him, Robeson continued to make bold pronouncements against actions taking place within his own

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17 Ibid., 382.
country.\textsuperscript{18} This naturally contributed to his being called “anti-American” by many who were trying to bolster support for the U.S. during the Cold War.

There are so many events within his lifetime that could be labeled as the apex of his talents or of his impacts to his country. His appearance testifying before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) seems to me to be of incredible importance. As such, I decided to frame the opera around Robeson’s 1956 HUAC hearing. My adaptation of the transcript from the hearing for the opera will be discussed in Chapter 4.

As a well-known member of the arts community that did not want to give the names of fellow artists that were communists, Robeson insisted on not answering whether he himself was a communist. He instead turned the question around on the committee itself. In his capacity for brilliant rhetoric, Robeson claimed that it was not he that was “un-American,” but the committee, for failing to realize that by limiting the ability of citizens to support the cause of their choice, the committee was infringing on Americans’ free speech.\textsuperscript{19} He also pointed out that those responsible for the multitude of black lynchings seemed to be immune from any legal recourse, while the “reds,” “blacks,” or other minorities of this country were susceptible to grave consequences for their own non-violent activities.\textsuperscript{20}

This concept of Robeson as a defender (himself an embodiment) of the “other” is another quality that I wanted to build on in the opera. He was a powerful voice for the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 367.
  \item \textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 442.
  \item \textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 305-306, 441-442.
\end{itemize}
disenfranchised and marginalized people of the world. Reading about his life is like seeing the gradual unification of historically disparate individuals and groups. Jewish people, blacks, communists, union members, and feminists continually aided each other in the most trying moments. Because he stood up for the regular working people, promoted progressive ideals of equality, and was not accepting of racism or discrimination, Robeson was able to bring together artists, politicians, and civil rights leaders with laborers and other marginalized groups from around the world. His role as a “unifier” can be understood by bringing these stories together in a counterpoint with one another. To really grasp the far-ranging impacts of his life, though, the opera provokes contemporary viewers to consider present-day civil rights struggles as well.

The causes that Paul and Eslanda Robeson championed were not wholly solved during their lifetimes. Unquestionably, discrimination, inequity, and violence continue to this day. Robeson’s causes—outlawing lynching, abolishing the poll tax, establishing fair employment practices, fostering an attitude of peace for other world powers, and upholding the right of free speech—are certainly still relevant. News events such as racial profiling, “stand your ground,” gerrymandering, access to voting, employment discrimination, wage gaps, equal opportunities to education, and racial and group stereotypes all manifest underlying issues that are true continuations of the problems of Robeson’s era. Because racial equality is a prominent topic in the opera, viewers are encouraged to ponder and maybe effect change for these contemporary problems.

While I am not capable of changing people’s minds, I hope that the opera encourages self-reflection on these difficult topics. However, I am also cautious of depicting the story in such a way that the resultant work seems cliché, moralizing, or
directing the listener to have a certain perspective. I have attempted to avoid these problems by focusing principally on telling an artistically-rich story through the medium. My strategy was to create a compelling artistic statement and to let the work speak for itself.

I realize my shortcomings in writing an opera about a past event at a time when I was not even alive. I recognize the complexity of the sensitive issues referenced in the opera. My intention was never to privilege a particular perspective as more important than that of a fully capable listener. By putting forth this artistic work, which is an abstraction of the historical events, I empower the listener to reflect on these complicated topics.

If there were times that Robeson himself failed, it may have been those moments when he remained too rigid, too impervious to the possibility of failure. He thought deeply about what he was going to say and when and how he would say it. Consequently, he did not significantly alter his position on issues, preferring to project a tone of unity, simplicity, and clarity. The problem with this approach is that while it privileges consistency, it does not account for the local changes that may complicate the global goals. The compositional project described in this paper is an approach that not only embraces the contradictions of Robeson’s intimate versus public personas, but also suggests interactions with complicated world developments and contemporary installments of these topics. Through this perspective, Robeson’s story serves as an archetype of human intention, decision and indecision, as well as imperfection. It is in the macroscopic illumination of his story and of these timeless traits that we can learn and grow from Robeson’s actions.
Chapter 2

The Opera Question

Clara Rockmore commented that Paul Robeson was not interested in performing in operas. As a student, Rockmore studied violin at the Petrograd conservatory from the age of five. After she suffered an injury to her arm, she became a renowned player of the theremin. Clara and Paul maintained a close personal relationship, touring and performing together. Rockmore’s husband was also Paul’s manager and lawyer.21 According to Rockmore, Robeson was interested in telling a compelling story in his music. Even if he had possessed the appropriate technical skills, Rockmore did not see opera as the most effective venue for his message:

He was not dreaming about operas. If he had all the equipment under the sun, I doubt that he would want to sing opera. It didn’t make him less, it didn’t make him more. He was what he was. He was an actor-singer, carrying a message in the song. I don’t think that with some training he would have been any greater a Paul Robeson. He might have been less. There will not be another Paul Robeson. There’ll be people with as good a voice, but won’t have as much heart.22

While it is impossible to know, given a different racial situation, whether Robeson would have thrived in opera, its non-“Negro,” Euro-centric associations were unappealing to him.23 Though he was offered particular operatic roles throughout his career, he declined to play them. Instead, he carefully considered the social impact of the roles that he assumed. He preferred to sing folk songs and African-American spirituals

21 Ibid., 243.

22 Ibid., 245.

23 Ibid., 176.
since he thought that they better suited his vocal technique. He also believed that these pieces had a better capacity to convey a meaningful social message.  

When Robeson was offered the leading role, Mephisto, for a film adaptation of Gounod’s *Faust* in 1935, he declined the role. Even with a personal plea from the composer George Antheil, who was to arrange the score for the movie (which was to be conducted by the Philadelphia Orchestra’s Fritz Reiner), Robeson was unmoved. Martin Duberman cites Robeson’s insecurities with his vocal technique as well as his own personal temperament as reasons why he chose to decline singing opera.

Even George Gershwin was unable to attract Robeson to perform in his “American” opera. While Gershwin told Robeson that he had his voice in mind when writing the part of Porgy in *Porgy and Bess*, Robeson did not capitulate to the pleading of either the composer or the librettist, DuBose Heyward, to play the role. Robeson would have likely been displeased by the negative depictions of the blacks of “Catfish Row.”

Though Robeson may have dismissed the operatic genre of his day, the vibrant possibilities of today’s operatic world reinforce its ability to communicate a compelling message. Through the composition of this project, I hope to show the rich artistic merits of the genre. Robeson’s feelings towards the label of “opera” likely had much to do with its social and class associations, which were certainly not ideally reflective of his belief that everyone should be able to appreciate art. Opera, however, does not have to be elitist.

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24 Ibid., 178.

25 Ibid., 193, 245.

26 Ibid., 193.
This production will “carry the message in song”—a central characteristic of Robeson’s career. In my view, whether the “opera” label is affixed or not, the composition can be impactful in expressing this story. The fact that Robeson had conflicted feelings, due to the “baggage” of western art music, only adds to the richness of this interpretation.27

There are other precedents in the theater and opera worlds dealing with the Paul Robeson story. Portions of the opera Robeson were presented in a preview performance by Trilogy: An Opera Company in Newark, New Jersey in the fall of 2013.28 Composed by Adolphus Hailstork and with a libretto by Shauneille Perry, the full opera was premiered officially in November of 2014.29 Stogie Kenyatta wrote and continues to perform a one-man play called The World is My Home—The Life & Times of Paul Robeson. Phillip Hayes Dean’s play Paul Robeson, also treats the subject matter. The director of the movie Twelve Years a Slave, Steve McQueen, announced in November of 2014 that his next project is to make a movie about Paul Robeson.30 While I have only seen the Kenyatta production and not the others of this list, it is my understanding that these dramatic works will or have functioned primarily as retellings of the historical “life-story” of Paul Robeson. My concept is to explore the HUAC hearing through reflecting

27 Ibid., 176.


on the complexity of the historical situation in a non-linear fashion. This will yield an artistic statement that is distinctive from other models dealing with the topic.

In the opera, a complex narrative structure is achieved through the use of layering, ambiguous sonic spaces, and a dream-like monologue section. These techniques direct attention away from a clear and logical thought pattern. The concern with the “logical” pattern is that it may direct people to feel as though they should act in a certain way or perceive a “moralizing” tone through the narrative. As stated before, I do not want people to walk away from the opera and feel as though someone on a soapbox had preached to them.

While I will more comprehensively detail the ways that I achieve non-linear structures later in the paper, here are three examples for consideration at this point. First, the instrumental interlude in scene four of my opera is a dream sequence that musically expands on Robeson’s conflicting inner thoughts and emotions. At this moment in the opera, the chronological, linear structure is abandoned in order to reflect the conflicts that were going on in Robeson’s life.

Second, manipulating the original textual source for the opera, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) hearing transcript, signifies another process producing a non-realistic product. Crafting a libretto that artfully highlights what I feel to be the most impactful content, by its nature, requires the omission of certain content from the original event. (I will discuss the process of writing the libretto in a later chapter.)

Third, scene two represents an adaptation of a literal medium, the hearing, to one of greater abstraction. The dramatic strategy of creating a polyphony of dissenting
voices—critical of Robeson—highlights the inequitable power dynamic of the hearing. In this scene, a linear portrayal of the discrete events in the dialogue is abstracted through a layering process. In this way, the original material is compacted to become a non-realistic presentation of the verbal interchange at the HUAC hearing.
Chapter 3

Compositional Format and Models

The structure that I used for the opera is a continuously unfolding narrative structure, where the music is more a seamless continuation than sectionally demarcated. I explore the gradual unfolding of ideas—overlapping and reinforcing of each other through shared and new meanings. This mirrors my conception of the libretto as a polyvalent juxtaposition of textual information, culminating in the distillation of shared values such as complexity, contradiction, intention, and ambiguity.

The completed opera surpasses my initial goal of writing a 30-minute work. It is instead about 42 minutes. (Refer to Table 3.1 for the scene durations.)

Table 3.1. Scene Durations in the Opera

<table>
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<th>Scene 1</th>
<th>9’30</th>
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<tr>
<td>Scene 2</td>
<td>6’00</td>
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<td>Scene 3</td>
<td>9’45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scene 4</td>
<td>7’00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 5</td>
<td>9’30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Duration</td>
<td>41’45</td>
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To fill an evening-length concert, another work will need to be programmed to supplement my opera. Even so, the opera’s length allows for substantial character development. It also gives sufficient space to portray a rich fabric of broadly resonant topics.

Three lead singers and three auxiliary singers fulfill significant musical-dramatic purposes and allow for a substantial cast of characters. This is also a reasonable enough number of singers so that the mounting of the production will be feasible. (I hope to organize a performance of the opera in the near future.) Further, by having certain singers play multiple characters, I was able to depict more of the varied perspectives that were a part of the original HUAC hearing.

The instrumental ensemble consists of seven players: clarinet, horn, percussion, violin, viola, cello, and piano. Being able to produce a variety of timbres, this ensemble will collaborate with the singers to produce rich musical settings, yet also be relatively reasonable to assemble. The piano especially will be beneficial for its large range and polyphonic abilities. It can serve to unify the instrumental ensemble, augmenting the sound as well. Additionally, because Robeson as a singer performed with a pianist in concerts, the instrument also has an emblematic significance for this topic. The very ending of the opera, for example, emphasizes this relationship between Robeson and the pianist. There is a very simple accompaniment to his vocal part, which features a slowly unfolding piano part.

The repertoire that Robeson performed in his recitals, however, is not given a literal emphasis in this opera. Intending to present a more complex portrayal of Paul
Robeson, I chose not to have him perform arrangements of the songs that made him famous. I am not interested in furthering the stereotype of him singing “Old Man River.” Rather, in my opera, I made more abstract parallels to Robeson’s repertoire. The use of the pentatonic scale in the fourth scene, for instance, can be seen as an example of an abstraction symbolizing the folk repertoire that Robeson studied and performed.

Robeson, as stated already, went through various periods of questioning the repertoire that he performed. At times, he was against jazz, European art song, classical music, and music that was not of a “folk” quality. Even beyond thinking about Robeson’s charged personal feelings towards these pieces, having a revue of standards has been done before and seems to me cliché.

My conception was to think of using the idea of musical standards in a fragmentary way. On a more abstract level than referencing literal tunes, I chose to treat the jazz and folk styles as topics important to Robeson. I wanted to show the kaleidoscopic story of this man in not only the juxtaposition of narratives, but of music as well. This idea happened to be of an exceptional nature for the medium—the protagonist is both a singer and a speaker. Indeed, the very fact that Robeson delivered political speeches at his concerts could be among his most “radical” actions.

The jazz style, in particular, was an idiom that influenced me in the construction of the third scene. During this scene, there is a continued anxiety that I felt was represented by the recurring fragments which are like jazz “licks.” The music has an insistent, unchanging nature that persists even after new contrasting ideas have been introduced.

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introduced. I was thinking of these resurfacing jazz ideas as a prolongation of the unrest originating in the constant critique of Robeson. Due to my knowledge of Robeson’s charged and inconsistent relationship with the jazz genre, I feel that this particular musical style reflects an authentic connection with his story. I believe that the anxious sound can be heard in a sonic sense. But the perception of anxiety also has ties to his personal history, which makes the invocation more robust. Whether or not listeners are aware of these facts of Robeson’s life, it makes me, as a creator, happy to know that I was able to indirectly reflect on aspects of his life in many levels of the operatic composition.

In films, Robeson was too often subjugated to playing the subservient or otherwise flawed renditions of black characters that pervaded the mainstream mid-century film industry.32 Throughout his career, Robeson found that concerts offered a great opportunity for him to speak his mind in an unmediated setting. In between the musical selections of his concerts, he inserted spoken remarks, often of a socially-progressive nature.33 It seems essential for the opera at hand to reflect on the importance of Robeson as a performer—as the figure “on-stage.”

One way that this can be done is by referencing the music that Robeson sang as “historical” documentation. However, in keeping with my conception of Robeson as a “complex” human being, I wanted to try to get at this complexity by utilizing fragments and background layers suggesting stylistic idioms, slowly-changing manipulation and transformations of the musical material, juxtaposition, and layering. The pieces that

32 Ibid., 169.

33 Ibid., 488-489.
Robeson performed were not simply serving the “purposes” that they were written for. They were constantly changing in function and meaning for every different audience around the world where Robeson performed based on the varying remarks that he spoke and the individuated contexts of the performances.\(^{34}\)

I hoped to create a parallel in my opera to this complicated relationship between the seemingly simple stylistic idioms of the music that Robeson performed and the radically impactful functions that the performances served. By suggesting varied styles within the music of the opera, I intended to introduce these styles as recognizable archetypes and to infuse them with the complexity of the unresolved moral, social, and political themes within the libretto. As I describe throughout the paper, my use of pentatonic scales, Bach-like chorale textures, and music suggesting the jazz style is based on a general intention to abstractly refer to these musical materials in order to reflect on the music of Robeson’s life.

It is a fascinating dilemma to try to fathom the shifting perspectives on these “standards” throughout his career as a singer. It would be cumbersome to try to “recreate” the complex perceptions of these pieces as the specific embodiments of particular times and places. Even so, my concept of transforming them in the opera will hopefully open up an opportunity for reflecting on them not simply as stylistic archetypes, but in tandem with the libretto, as open vessels for communicating political, social, cultural, and ultimately human expressions.

\(^{34}\) The function and meaning that an individual listener derives from a musical performance is based on the particulars of his or her own individuated perspective. Since an audience is comprised of individual listeners, I think that it is also unlikely for the entire group of people, within a single audience, to share a common perception of the music.
Vocal and operatic works of the 20th and 21st centuries that I have been drawn to include those of Samuel Barber, Benjamin Britten, Alban Berg, Thomas Adès, Steve Reich, Osvaldo Golijov, Sven-David Sandström, Arvo Pärt, Ricky Ian Gordon, and Ned Rorem. Even though I did not emulate the style of any particular composer, I know that my experiences with studying operatic and vocal literature has been very helpful to my composing the opera. While I have a background in singing and conducting choral repertoire, I am always trying to continue to improve my own knowledge of operatic repertoire. This has been the first opera that I have endeavored to compose. So, spending a significant amount of time researching the existing repertoire has been invaluable.

In the fall semester of 2014, I studied opera literature with Professor Karen Henson. The course examined the art form through the particular lens of the singers who developed close relationships with composers. My experiences in the course were invaluable to my thinking about writing operatic music and working with singers. It was especially insightful with regard to the correspondence between Verdi and his singers. In a later chapter, I will detail my inspirations from his thoughts regarding vocal production and the declamation of text.

My composition from the fall of 2013, *A Robeson Triptych* for baritone and piano (refer to Appendix F for the full score), is an example of my adaptation of Robeson’s spoken text to a musical setting. It demonstrates how recurring motives can create unification in the extended format of a song cycle. At the time of its composition, I was not considering writing an opera on this topic. Therefore, the set of pieces was not directly used in the opera. However, my work on this composition definitely informed my thinking about how I would compose music based on these themes. Some particular
themes and ideas which were directly relevant for the opera from the song cycle include thinking about issues surrounding setting text which was originally from spoken speech, the use of the pentatonic scale (so important to Paul Robeson, as explained in the next chapter), open sonorities, and issues with setting a large amount of text.

Devising ways to vary the musical treatment and create contrasting associations and unique sound worlds for spoken texts was especially useful for the composition of the opera. I decided to set some of Robeson’s text in the Triptych as spoken speech so that it would create an authentic parallel to its original format. In the opera, I indicate the use of sprechstimme or quasi-sprechstimme to set certain texts apart from others. While I will discuss this technique later in the paper, I will give one example here.

In the third scene, Arens reads the testimony against Robeson by Thomas W. Young using sprechstimme. Robeson later phonates in quasi-sprechstimme while reading of his own accolades. I was thinking of using this technique to bring out a comedic rendering of the exchange. Robeson could be heard as trying to mock the unique vocal technique that Arens introduces. In this way, I believe that the use of the technique is justified by the way that it heightens the dramatic imagery to indicate a parallel rhetorical structure in use in the original text. I further discuss the use of the sprechstimme technique, as it relates to the text, in Chapter 4.
Chapter 4

The Process of Writing the Libretto

My goal was to better understand Robeson’s life through reading his speeches and by familiarizing myself with perspectives about him by reading biographies written by different authors. I read newspaper articles dealing with current events concerning racism, anthologies on civil rights history, and articles about new operas treating contemporary social themes. This was all in preparation for my deciding on which stories in his life I wanted to portray and how I wanted to express them.

In May of 2014, I spent a week at the Paul and Eslanda Robeson Collection at Howard University in Washington, D.C. This research opportunity greatly helped me to piece together the libretto so that it is as accurate as possible a reflection of Paul Robeson. The research helped me to appreciate the breadth of Robeson’s scholarship and his profusion of artistry. I was very interested in his music research on the use of

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pentatonic scales in numerous global cultures.\textsuperscript{38} I was surprised to see his meticulous analysis of folk music leading to his carefully conceived conclusions about the pentatonic scale being a universal language tying people together all over the world. He conducted a substantial documentation of these scales and completed a rigorous quantitative analysis to produce the unpublished theoretical manuscript in Howard’s archive.\textsuperscript{39} Seeing his notes and imagining the time he spent on this particular project was an inspiration.

But even more inspiring was being able to see his notes and annotations on one particular folded and worn copy of the speech that he wanted to deliver at the HUAC (House Un-American Activities Committee) hearing. (Refer to Appendix G for Robeson’s annotated speech.)\textsuperscript{40} The speech is folded in fourths as though Robeson had it in his suit pocket at the hearing. The copious notes on both sides of the pages refer to specific topics referenced during the hearing as well as non-related thoughts going through his head. It was from the notes written in the margins of that speech that I began to imagine his thoughts at the committee hearing. I knew that by looking at his private thoughts written on the pages, I had a very special insight into this dimension of his life.

\textsuperscript{38} Paul Robeson, Unpublished Manuscript on Pentatonic Scale Forms in Folk Music Positing a Global Perspective on Music Theory [ca. 1955-1960], Paul Robeson Collection, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C.

\textsuperscript{39} According to Martin Duberman, Robeson’s concern with the pentatonic music theory—“to the point of obsession when in an agitated state—was in the proven universality of the pentatonic scale and in the case that could be extrapolated from that proof for the commonality of human experience…. in solving the riddles of Bach he would somehow succeed in solving the problems of the world…. ” (Duberman, 438).

\textsuperscript{40} The archives at Howard University have multiple copies of many of Robeson’s speeches and writings. This speech had multiple versions showing Robeson’s edits. There was however only one folded copy that had the extensive notes referencing topics presented in the actual hearing. This strongly suggests that the other copies were drafts that he used in the composition process, whereas the speech with the notes was the copy he planned to read during the hearing.
It was finding that speech that was the impetus behind my deciding to frame the opera around the HUAC hearing.

As I was deciding which texts to choose for the libretto, I was also pleased that the testimony for the HUAC hearing was in the public record because it took place in the capacity of an official meeting conducted by a Subcommittee of the Committee on Un-American Activities of the U.S. House of Representatives. (Refer to Appendix A for the full HUAC hearing testimony.) Since U.S. Government records, which are housed and managed by the National Archives and Records Administration, are in the public domain and can be freely used, I realized that the proceedings of the HUAC hearing were both an ideal artistic vehicle as well as an available textual source for conveying the dramatic rendering of Paul Robeson that I wanted to create.

Conceptual Goals for the Narrative Design

My idea was to create a polyphony of different aspects about Paul Robeson, as a way of showing the complexity that underlies any one human being. My contemplation on the themes of his life led me to realize how easy it can be to dismiss someone based

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on a single criterion. I have had two primary goals in my telling of his story. First, I wanted to ensure that people that have not yet come across Robeson would be made aware of his legacy. Second, I wanted to present a more complicated and full rendering of him as a well-intentioned but imperfect individual. I believe that my opera achieves both of these goals. Since the opera deals with the central causes that Robeson championed, I think that it is a productive primer for viewers who may not have been aware of this great man. The second goal, of humanizing Robeson’s character, is achieved by including his remarks in the transcript which suggest an individual who was steadfast and courageous, but also someone who sometimes got angry, poked fun, was intransigent, and was often difficult to deal with interpersonally. As a human being, he was imperfect. In the opera, Robeson’s texts go beyond a monolithic rendering to get at some of the complexities he embodied.

I believe that the libretto tells Robeson’s story in a thought-provoking way. I believe that the idea of fostering a polyphony of perspectives is achieved through reference to the varied characters in the hearing. It seems as though other productions have tried to create a unified and chronological sequence of events in his life, giving a general overview. However, I do not believe that a purely chronological telling of his life story would have been the complex vehicle that could elicit powerful reactions from the audience. In order to create a fresh rendering, I think that a partly abstracted, non-literal, perspective is rewarding.

To be evocative, the narrative utilizes a departure from the main thread—the dramatic treatment of the HUAC hearing—to focus momentarily on Robeson’s inner state of mind. In the actual hearing, Robeson defiantly begins reading his statement and
gets as far as the first line, “It is a sad and bitter commentary.” The Chairman then cuts him off. Though the committee members lead Robeson to believe that he may be allowed to read his speech if he complies with their questioning, he is ultimately not allowed to read the statement.

The fourth scene of the opera is meant to be a dream-like fantasy that explores the ideas Robeson was not allowed to express. Because he did not actually read these lines of his statement, the scene is a departure from the literal events of the hearing. The instrumental doublings of the vocal part emphasize these lines and the weight attributed to them by Robeson. After the opening of the scene, the instrumental writing is meant to depict the conflicting emotions Robeson was experiencing. Because he had endured a period of mental crisis immediately preceding his appearance before the committee, the music is meant to convey the pervasive sense of anxiety caused by the many crises going on in Robeson’s life.\(^{43}\) This dream-like exploration of his inner turmoil is cut off abruptly by the Chairman’s order: “Just answer the question.” In this light, the whole seven-minute scene could be viewed as an expansion of a split-second in his internal consciousness.

**Constructing the Libretto**

I will now discuss particular ideas I had for the narrative design of the opera. Describing why I chose particular portions of the text will allow me to reflect on how

choices surrounding the construction of the narrative contributed to the rendering of an
artistic statement.

I studied the HUAC transcript for some time before I started making decisions
about the content for my libretto. (Refer to Appendix A for a reproduction of the original
transcript.) I annotated my copy of the transcript, writing notes in the margins about
themes in the document. I noted repetitions of particular words—individual names,
recurring topics of questioning, Robeson taking the Fifth Amendment, and so forth. I also
noted the general dramatic characters that I perceived from different passages in the text.
I noted when Robeson seemed “a little aloof,” “playing the committee,” as well as the
committee members coming across as “heartless” and “matter-of-fact.” I also observed
important structural features, such as where Robeson was in-effect allowed to speak at
length in monologue-like exclamations.

I wanted to capture as many of the disparate topics that were referenced by the
original transcript as possible. For this reason, it was initially very difficult for me to
make cuts. At first, I felt as though making cuts would sacrifice the original character of
the hearing. But, as the process continued, I became aware of the fact that there were
many repetitive structures that could be consolidated and many tangential references that
could be omitted. By concentrating on what I perceived to be the most important themes,
I effectively emphasized these key points for the audience, rather than overwhelming
them with many esoteric facts and details.

Just as I tried to economize the material so as to ensure the most important topics
were delivered with clarity, I decided to reduce the number of characters from the
original hearing. Representatives Doyle, Kearny, and Gordon as well as Investigator Appell do not speak often (or at all) in the original transcript. So, I felt cutting them from the personnel would be justified. In the instances when there was a statement delivered by one of these characters that was necessary for a dramatic reason, I moved it into another character’s part. For example, in the fifth scene, I moved Kearny’s lines into Scherer’s part. When I transferred lines from one character to another, I considered what impact that decision would have on the characterization of that individual. Because all of the representatives had a similar intention during the hearing—to elicit information from Robeson—I felt that the transfer of the material did not distort Scherer’s characterization within the opera. In this example, the original line assignments for Kearny and Scherer are as follows:

KEARNY: Do you know anybody who wants war?

KEARNY: Do you know of any people who want war?

SCHERER: Why do you not stay in Russia?

SCHERER: The reason you are here is because you are promoting the Communist cause in this country.⁴⁴

My decision to consolidate all of these lines to be delivered by a single character—Scherer—makes sense because the general sentiment is consistent between the two roles in this passage. Kearny and Scherer are both questioning Robeson about his Paris Statement, where he famously suggested that African-Americans should not fight on behalf of their country until the time that they could be afforded equal rights.⁴⁵ Upon


⁴⁵ There was a great controversy concerning the actual remarks that Robeson made in the 1949 Paris speech because the news media incorrectly transcribed them from
considering the unique perspectives presented by the two representatives, I determined that consolidating their lines to Scherer’s part would not be a detrimental representation of the original hearing. The main dramatic purpose of these lines, in my view, is to provoke Robeson’s explanations about the Paris speech and his powerful responses against Fascism. Robeson’s responses to the above questions illustrate his important elucidations against these allegations:

KEARNY: Do you know anybody who wants war?

ROBESON: …There is no part of my speech made in Paris which says that I said that 15 million American Negroes would do anything. I said it was my feeling that the American people would struggle for peace and that has since been underscored by the President of these United States.

KEARNY: Do you know of any people who want war?

ROBESON: Listen to me, I said it was unthinkable to me that any people would take up arms in the name of an Eastland to go against anybody, and gentlemen, I still say that. What should happen would be that this United States Government should go down to Mississippi and protect my people. That is what should happen…

SCHERER: Why do you not stay in Russia?

ROBESON: Because my father was a slave, and my people died to build this country, and I am going to stay here and have a part of it just like you. And no Fascist-minded people will drive me from it. Is that clear? I am for peace with the Soviet Union and I am for peace with China, and I am not for peace or friendship with the Fascist Franco, and I am not for peace with Fascist Germans, and I am for peace with decent people in the world.

his speech. In the uproar that followed the publishing of the incendiary statement, Robeson publicly sought to correct the record. He pointed out that the news media had incorrectly contextualized and documented the speech. While this is true, the actual wording of Robeson’s speech does strongly suggest that African-Americans should not fight on behalf of their country until they are afforded equal rights under the law. Therefore, my interpretation takes the spirit of this claim to be authentic. (This is consistent with the perspective detailed by Duberman). Robeson asserted this sentiment very clearly in Stockholm on the day following the Paris speech in his remarks at a concert on April 20, 1949. At that concert, he said that blacks should “never” fight against the U.S.S.R. (Duberman, Paul Robeson, 349).
SCHERER: The reason you are here is because you are promoting the Communist cause in this country.

ROBESON: I am here because I am opposing the neo-Fascist cause which I see arising in these committees. You are like the Alien and Sedition Act, and Jefferson could be sitting here, and Frederick Douglass could be sitting here and Eugene Debs could be here.⁴⁶

Robeson’s powerful responses are the focus here, not the questioning by the Representatives. Reducing Kearny and Scherer to a single part does not distort the idea of a questioning agent provoking Robeson to discuss these important topics. This process of cutting, consolidating, and editing the material to emphasize the most important points will be discussed in a more comprehensive fashion in the next section.

Textual Analysis: An Example of an Omission from the Original Transcript

As the writing process continued, my confidence grew in my ability to retain the viewpoints of the original characters as expressed in the hearing while making cuts from the transcript. While the initial portion of the hearing is largely similar to the transcript, without major cuts, as the hearing goes on and material is repeated, I made more significant cuts. Take for example the following passage from the original transcript:

Mr. ARENS: Do you know a woman by the name of Sheila Lind?

Mr. ROBESON: I do not recall.

Mr. ARENS: She wrote an article and I am going to lay it before you here so you can help me read it. This is the Daily Worker, 1949, in which she interviewed

you and it tells all about your achievements. Let me read you this for the record and you can follow it here. She is quoting:

“When I crossed the border from Poland into the Soviet Union,” he told me, “it was like stepping into another planet.”

Mr. ROBESON: Exactly true, no more prejudice, and no more colored feeling, that is right.

Mr. ARENS: (reading)
“I felt the full dignity of being a human being for the first time.”

Mr. ROBESON: That is right, and that is still not here.

Mr. ARENS: (continuing)
“He loved what he found there so much that until the war, he returned to Russia for each new year.”

Mr. ROBESON: Every new year, and we took a little vodka.

Mr. ARENS: (continuing to read)
“And he sent his son to school there. In Moscow he began to study Marxism.”

Mr. ROBESON: No, I started to study that in England, and all of my political education, strange to say, came in England where I lived and worked for many years and came back here. But my Marxist education, or education as you call it, is in [sic] English background of the Labor Party. I went to Republican Spain with Lord Atlee to visit the Atlee Battalion and I knew Sir Stafford Cripps and I knew all of the members of the Labor Party, so you cannot blame that on the Russians. You will have to blame that on the English Labor Party. They have just invited me to come to London next week to sing to 40,000 miners up in Yorkshire. Do you think that you could let me go?

The CHAIRMAN: We have nothing to do with that.  

Here, Robeson and Arens are talking about an article that was published in the Daily Worker. In the course of the dialogue, Arens reads statements made by the author of the article and Robeson agrees intermittently. When I was devising ideas for setting this section, I noted an interesting interplay between the two speakers that lent itself well to a musical counterpoint that would represent the repetitive structure of the dialogue. I was

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47 Ibid., 431-432.
also interested in Robeson’s comedic variation on this call and response structure, where instead of simply agreeing again with the statements being made, he agrees and then says “and we took a little vodka.” Because this is one of the few light moments in the hearing, I was initially excited to exploit it for dramatic contrast. But as my opera’s duration grew from the initial slated 30 minutes to nearly 45 minutes, I had to make further cuts to the libretto. So even though I had planned to include sections of the text such as this one, the pressure of completing the project and keeping the opera a reasonable duration impacted these decisions.

In the previous example, the general purpose of the questioning is to establish Robeson’s love of the U.S.S.R. Since this theme is certainly established elsewhere in the libretto, I felt satisfied with my decision to cut this material. Even though the humorous line would have been dramatically useful, as there are other instances that illustrate Robeson’s sense of humor, I felt that cutting this instance was reasonable. The topic of Robeson sending his son to school in Moscow is one that I initially wanted to include in the opera. However, as time considerations necessitated a tighter structure, I decided to cut the reference of this topic from the opera. I justified this because I felt that Robeson’s demonstrations of his feelings for the U.S.S.R. were well established elsewhere in the libretto.

As Robeson’s commentary in this passage continues, additional tangential topics are brought up: the particulars regarding Robeson’s study of Marxism, his travels to Republican Spain, his dealings with the English Labor Party, and Robeson’s invitation to sing for miners in Yorkshire. What is very interesting in this statement is how Robeson’s memory informs the topics that he refers to in his spontaneous responses to these
questions. His extemporaneous rhetorical abilities are quite notable throughout the hearing. In this example, he is utilizing a very simple yes-or-no type response structure to Arens’ questions. It is significant that Robeson was not asked to affirm or deny the statements, but to simply follow along with it in his own copy. The fact that he preemptively inserts his responses is illustrative of his assertive disposition in the hearing. This strategy allows him to elaborate on each of the details listed.

Robeson’s agreement with the statements extends until the point about his studying Marxism in Moscow. In response to this line, Robeson corrects Arens, making the seemingly inconsequential point that these studies started in England. Through elaborating on his studies of Marxism, Robeson directs the focus to the English Labor Party—as a consequence, pointing out that Marxism is alive and well, practiced by the social nobility of an important American ally. Then, Robeson redirects the focus of the conversation about England to discuss his recent invitation to sing there. By steering the flow of the discussion, Robeson effectively turns the questioners into the questioned.

The previous discussion shows the richness of this text. Robeson’s actions, thoughts, and abilities are on display within these lines. Yet, this richness is also difficult to capture in a 45-minute opera. A viewer’s ability to grapple with the complexity and breadth of subjects referred to is a facet that I was often considering. In this short example, there are many specific names and places referred to: English Marxism, the English Labor Party, Republican Spain, Lord Atlee, the Atlee Battalion, Sir Stafford Cripps, London, and singing for 40,000 miners in Yorkshire. This is typical of Robeson’s speech patterns. He has an extremely good memory, is able to use many particular labels,
and is very precise in his language. But, he is also meandering in his real-time stream of thought.

The specific topics referenced underscore Robeson’s interest in Marxism, well covered elsewhere in the libretto. The rhetorical style in the above passage was typical of Robeson’s demeanor in the hearing and is highlighted in many other places in the opera. Even though I decided against including this segment of the transcript, I believe its essential qualities are reflected elsewhere in the libretto.

**Textual Analysis: An Example of Adapting Text from the Original Transcript**

In the following example from the original transcript, Robeson is being questioned by Arens about whether he is a Communist Party member:

**Mr. ARENS:** Are you now a member of the Communist Party?

**Mr. ROBESON:** Oh please, please, please.

**Mr. SCHERER:** Please answer, will you, Mr. Robeson?

**Mr. ROBESON:** What is the Communist Party? What do you mean by that?

**Mr. SCHERER:** I ask that you direct the witness to answer the question.

**Mr. ROBESON:** What do you mean by the Communist Party? As far as I know it is a legal party like the Republican Party and the Democratic Party. Do you mean—which, belonging to a party of Communists or belonging to a party of people who have sacrificed for my people, and for all Americans and workers, that they can live in dignity? Do you mean that party?

**Mr. ARENS:** Are you now a member of the Communist Party?

**Mr. ROBESON:** Would you like to come to the ballot box when I vote and take out the ballot and see?
Mr. ARENS: Mr. Chairman, I respectfully suggest that the witness be ordered
and directed to answer that question.

THE CHAIRMAN: You are directed to answer the question.

(The witness consulted with his counsel.)

Mr. ROBESON: I stand upon the fifth amendment.

Mr. SCHERER: I did not hear the answer.

Mr. ROBESON: I stand upon the fifth amendment of the American Constitution.

Mr. ARENS: Do you mean you invoke the fifth amendment?

Mr. ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment.

Mr. ARENS: Do you honestly apprehend that if you told this Committee
truthfully whether or not you are presently—

Mr. ROBESON: I have no desire to consider anything. I invoke the fifth
amendment, and it is none of your business what I would like to do, and I invoke
the fifth amendment. And forget it.

THE CHAIRMAN: You are directed to answer that question.

MR. ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment, and so I am not answering. I am
answering it, am I not?

Mr. ARENS: I respectfully suggest the witness be ordered and directed to answer
the question as to whether or not he honestly apprehends, that if he gave us a
truthful answer to this last principal question, he would be supplying information
which might be used against him in a criminal proceeding.

(The witness consulted with his counsel.)

THE CHAIRMAN: You are directed to answer that question, Mr. Robeson.

Mr. ROBESON: Gentlemen, in the first place, wherever I have been in the world,
and I have been in many places, Scandinavia, England, and many places, the first
to die in the struggle against fascism were the Communists and I laid many
wreaths upon graves of Communists. It is not criminal, and the fifth amendment
has nothing to do with criminality. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court,
Warren, has been very clear on that in many speeches, that the fifth amendment
does not have anything to do with the inference of criminality. I invoke the fifth
amendment.
Mr. ARENS: I respectfully suggest, Mr. Chairman, that the witness be ordered and directed to answer this last outstanding question.

The CHAIRMAN: He has been directed to answer it and he has invoked the fifth amendment and refused to answer.

Mr. ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment.48

This dialogue was very attractive to me because it shows Robeson’s varied response strategies. As a trained lawyer, it is no wonder that Robeson uses numerous varied mechanisms to compete in verbal battles in the courtroom. He is truly in his element here. His first strategy is to point out the simplistic reductionism the committee is employing in order to peg “Communists” as the “other.” He says, “What is the Communist Party? What do you mean by that?” He then responds that the Communist Party is a legal party, like the Democratic or Republican parties. Creating a space for those in attendance to contemplate on whether people should have a right to be in the party of their choice, he adds the flourish “Do you mean—belonging to a party of people who have sacrificed for my people and for all Americans and workers, that they can live in dignity? Do you mean that party?”

This kind of faux misunderstanding gives the moment at least a tone of careful calculation, if not also the recognition of some deceit on the part of Robeson. He obviously knows what the committee means when they ask if he is a member of the Communist Party. Instead of simply answering their question—his truthful answer, which he never gives out of principle, would be a simple “no”—he draws the moment out. The effect is that he is able to embed some artful gems of wisdom, summoning much more

48Ibid., 416-417.
impactful issues than those that were being asked. These include the issue of free speech, belonging to the political party of one’s choice, and the contributions of American Communist Party members to labor and racial equality movements. Robeson, the ever-skilled solicitor, uses this strategy of inserting pearls of wisdom inside otherwise simplistic exchanges throughout the hearing.

When Arens repeats the question, Robeson responds in a different tone, one that is comic and probably delivered with some sarcasm. Instead of pretending that he misunderstands the question, or being instructive about what he thinks Communism is, Robeson now is taking a much riskier approach. He is dangerously close to seeming insubordinate when he says “Would you like to come to the ballot box when I vote and take out the ballot and see?” Because there is no publicly accessible audio record of the hearing, Robeson’s exact style of delivery is unknown. I believe that he delivered this line with sarcasm. But, I could also imagine it in the tone of pretend aloofness.

After being directed to answer the question again, Robeson responds in a structurally important way—he takes the Fifth Amendment. Since this is the first time he takes the Fifth, it launches the members of the committee into a kind of attack mode. Because these committee members oversaw numerous hearings of this kind, they would have been keenly aware of the possibilities of exploiting a witness taking the Fifth Amendment. In fact, the Fifth Amendment is a trope that is almost emblematic of the HUAC era. Hearing its invocation would have likely prompted the members of the

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49 The archives at Howard University have a magnetic tape recording of the hearing. Unfortunately, the staff informed me that it could not be requested because there is no equipment to play it back on within the archives.
committee to act in an offensive way so that the witness could be made to seem as though they were hiding key information.

In this section, the committee employs a whole repertory of devices in order to dramatize Robeson’s taking the Fifth. Scherer says that he cannot hear Robeson as he takes the Fifth. Arens tries out a legalistic-sounding argument that is probably meant to deceive unwitting respondents—“Do you honestly apprehend that if you told this committee truthfully whether or not you are presently [a registered Communist Party member]… [you] would be supplying information that might be used against [you] in a criminal proceeding.” Arens implies that in order to correctly invoke the Fifth Amendment, a witness needs to honestly believe that the information they voluntarily censor could be used against them in a criminal case. Yet, Robeson is not the type of respondent that could be tricked into believing he was incorrectly applying the Fifth. He explains, “…the fifth amendment has nothing to do with criminality. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Warren, has been very clear on that in many speeches that the fifth amendment does not have anything to do with the inference of criminality.” Robeson demonstrates his superior knowledge of case law as well as his defensive skills in the face of the committee’s offensive front.

The honorable Chairman continuously repeats his direction for Robeson to answer the question so that the court record would indicate Robeson’s repeated use of the Fifth Amendment. This tactic is to exercise repetition to try to get the exasperated witness to finally relent to the questioners’ demands.
Throughout this passage, Robeson is ambushed by a frenzy of different stimuli: the incessant ordering and directing of Robeson to “answer the question” by the Chairman, photographers taking pictures, and the never-ending succession of names of people. In the midst of all of these external stimuli, Robeson responds alternately by taking the Fifth Amendment, by inserting comic asides, or by making serious defensive statements. For example, when Scherer again suggests that Robeson is taking the Fifth Amendment in a quiet way, Robeson responds: “I invoked the fifth amendment very loudly. You know I am an actor, and I have medals for my voice, for diction.” Scherer continues prying, “Will you talk a little louder?” Robeson responds, “I can talk plenty loud, yes, I am noted for my diction in the theater.” This exchange shows how Robeson turns the bullying of Scherer into a game that he can play as well. Robeson does not let Scherer take advantage of him through his manipulative tactics. He also uses one of his best-known assets, his voice, to his advantage in the hearing.

This constant onslaught of questioning inspired me to dramatize this scene through emphasizing the repetition and the state of frenzy by layering the material. By overlapping the statements, I was able to create a polyphonic texture that I think better matches the circus going on in the confines of the hearing. This scene more than any other, I felt, lent itself to the dramatic interplay of layering. As I did not want to overuse the technique, I created a structural plan detailing the layering strategy for the texts used in this scene (Example 4.1).

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I wanted to create an ebb and flow, where certain sections were extremely thick with many layers, and others were more transparent. The topics presented by the text influenced my decision-making along these lines. At certain times, there was a text that I wanted to emphasize—for example, when Arens says: “Do you honestly apprehend, that if you told this committee whether or not you know Nathan Gregory Silvermaster, you would be supplying information that could be used against you in a criminal proceeding?” At this moment, I reduced the texture to only Arens’ text so that the listeners could grasp the important topic being presented. Because this subject matter deals with the more complicated concept of a respondent’s self-knowledge of criminality,
the idea would almost certainly be misunderstood if a thick textural layering with multiple texts occurred.

By contrast, the densest textures often utilize texts that are repetitive or non-essential. For example, as the committee members read a laundry list of names to Robeson, he simply continues to take the Fifth Amendment over and over. They ask whether he knows Gregory Kheifets, John Victor Murra, Leon Josephson, Larry Fanning, and so on. All the while, the Chairman keeps directing Robeson to “answer the question.” This texture, the point of maximal density, heightens the image of Robeson suffering from an inquisition with the deluge of questions being asked of him.

The six characters are utilized extensively during this section. The repetitions of text, textural saturation, and the dramatic character of the inquisition, make the second scene highly charged. In order to speed up the rate of delivery and heighten the textural saturation, I moved some of Arens’ statements into Scherer’s and the Third Representative’s parts. This way, some longer statements could be shortened and delivered by more characters simultaneously. The following text was moved from Arens’ part in the transcript\textsuperscript{51} to Scherer and the Third Representative’s parts in the libretto:

SCHERER: Have you ever had contact with a man named Gregory Kheifets?

THIRD REPRESENTATIVE: Who are Mr. and Mrs. Vladimir P. Mikkeev? Do you know them?

SCHERER: Now, Gregory Kheifits is identified with the Soviet espionage operations, is he not?

\textsuperscript{51} Foner, \textit{Paul Robeson Speaks}, 418-419.
THIRD REPRESENTATIVE: Mr. Chairman, the witness does not have the slightest idea who they are, and I respectfully suggest he be ordered and directed to answer that question.

SCHERER: We will get to that in just a few moments.

SCHERER: Tell us whether or not you have had contact and operations with Gregory Kheifets.

THIRD REPRESENTATIVE: Who is Victor Murra—that is John Victor Murra?

SCHERER: Leon Josephson?

THIRD REPRESENTATIVE: Leon Josephson[?]

As I mentioned, all of the Third Representative’s lines are originally from Arens’ part. I considered giving this character the name of one of the other individuals present at the hearing (Doyle, Kearney, or Appell). Ultimately, I decided against this because I thought that it would be inaccurate to the events of the actual hearing.

The above represents a different approach from how I treated the consolidation of Scherer and Kearny’s lines into a single character—Scherer. In that case, many of the lines in Scherer’s part were really his own, so it is a different situation. As I described above, the consolidation of these lines was considered on a case-by-case basis for whether it had an acceptable or detrimental effect. If, for instance, there was a situation where a theme was presented by a character that was so unique that moving the line to another character would obscure the significant biographical reference, I would have been unlikely to transfer the material.
Chapter 5

General Compositional Process: Vocal Music

Background Research: Composing the Robeson Triptych Song Cycle (2013)

In the fall of 2013, I wrote *A Robeson Triptych*, a song cycle for baritone and piano (refer to Appendix F for the full score). The piece is comprised of texts from Robeson’s speeches. During the course of the project, I began to think about the musical concept of a chorale setting as resembling the idea of a solid foundation. The supportive texture of a chorale setting struck me as an apt way of referring to the moral dimension of the topics discussed in Robeson’s speeches. I was also thinking about Robeson’s involvement in African freedom movements. As I wrote this piece, I was inspired by the freedom song genre that is a part of South African choral repertoire (Example 5.1).

Example 5.1. *A Robeson Triptych*, “South African” Choral Style, mm. 31-34

While composing the *Robeson Triptych*, I wrote an inscription that is a summation of my feelings about Robeson at that time:
Robeson was a figure interested in distilling music to its fundamentals. He was interested in showing cultural commonalities by describing the oneness of musical experience. For him, music was a distillation of the human condition to its essential catalysts. Robeson would come to epitomize the efforts of the multiculturalists in the humanities, those seeking peace and equality in justice movements, elevating the spirits of the many people he spoke or sang for or reached in his writings. His legacy must never be forgotten. For forgetting Paul Robeson would be the same as turning our backs on the very fabric of humanity.

At that time, I was not even considering the possibility of writing an opera about Paul Robeson. However, upon looking back at the intensity with which I approached and defended his life’s work, it seems to me now that the course of events was inevitable.

**Composing the Vocal Parts for the Opera**

In beginning my composition of the opera, I composed the vocal parts first, before the instrumental parts. I needed a through-line that would help me to conceptualize the opera as a whole. I assigned particular motives, tonal centers, styles, and intervals to certain singers. I composed the vocal parts in isolation because it allowed me to conceive of these aspects more clearly. Because I wanted to keep the general feeling of a realistic “courtroom” scene, I mainly used a fast-moving and syllabic text setting. I felt that this would keep the primary focus on the text, and thus clearly transmit its content to the listener.\(^{52}\)

\(^{52}\) While the physical location of the HUAC hearing was not technically a courtroom, but the Caucus Room of the Old Office Building, I conceived of the dramatic situations of the hearing and that of a court proceeding to be functionally analogous. Robeson was essentially on trial and the committee had the authority to threaten sanctions, such as being in contempt of the committee or being deported for being a Communist. Therefore, for practical purposes, the hearing had the premise and consequences of a courtroom trial.
Pragmatically, since there was so much text to set, it was natural to include fast-moving lines. This decision has a dramatic relevance because the fast melodic lines also mirror what I believe was the fast-paced feeling of the hearing. Given the fact that the hearing was so intense, and that Robeson was always getting interrupted, it was remarkable that he said as many things as he did. I wanted to keep his lines generally moving faster—as though he knew that if he spoke in a more relaxed way, or left gaps, he would certainly be interrupted. As a consequence, he does not get to rest a lot.

I wanted the listener to have a robust sense of the themes that were covered in the actual hearing. As a result, I kept a very large amount of text, given the opera’s 42-minute duration. While this decision could be said to sacrifice slower, more “melodic” vocal parts, I think it better portrays the tension in the courtroom. The fast pace reflects the never-ending feeling that Robeson may be interrupted at any time. The anxiety created by the music reminds the listener that the United States Government may eventually deport Robeson from the country for being a Communist.

In terms of melodic characteristics, the vocal parts are often embellishing pitch centers through stepwise movement or small leaps within the interval of a fourth or fifth. By repeatedly returning to these centers, the vocal lines tend to accentuate them as places of stability. Therefore, the resultant gesture is one of stasis around the centers, instead of sporadic, irregular, disjointed, or angular gestures.

This melodic strategy, I believe, better matches spoken vocal inflection. When we are speaking, we have particular points in the pitch spectrum to which we return with regularity. These are comfortable tonal centers in an otherwise dynamic conversational
situation. We deviate away from these points momentarily to give emphasis to a word, a concept, a feeling. But we still tend to return to them more often than not.

**Interlude: Verdi and “Not Singing”**

In an 1886 letter from Verdi describing the virtues of his friend and favorite baritone, Victor Maurel, the composer insists that excellent enunciation of the sung text is essential for the role of Iago in *Otello*. Verdi writes,

…Iago is not performable nor even possible without pronouncing extraordinarily well, as Maurel does . . . [non è eseguibile e non è possibile senza pronunciare straordinariamente bene, come Maurel] In that role one should neither sing nor raise one’s voice (save for a few exceptions). For example, if I were a singing actor, I would say it all at the tip of the lips, mezza voce.  

Henson describes this vocal performance concept that Verdi repeatedly references throughout his career as the “not singing” idea. She attributes his first reference to this practice some forty years before the above letter, during his work on *Macbeth*. Over the course of those four decades, according to Henson, Verdi shifted with regard to this perspective. Henson explains,

…when Verdi first articulated the idea, he did so with reference to a singer new to *Macbeth* – the soprano Tadolini – and only recommended the approach for certain scenes. Forty years later he is holding up a singer – Maurel – as a model and is recommending a kind of restrained, “tip of the lips” style of vocal expression for an entire role.

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Henson describes Verdi’s more liberal application of the “not singing” technique as an illustration for how the composer was more embracing of new trends in the theater world during the 1870s-1890s.\(^5^4\)

Henson makes the surprising point that of the 12 late-nineteenth-century operatic performers that she discusses in her book, all were actually “…naturally unimpressive—neither especially beautiful nor powerful.”\(^5^5\) The apparently lackluster nature of the voices, both in technical abilities and in terms of vocal color, would have necessitated other forms of convincing expression. In the case of Maurel, his exquisite diction earned him his praise from Verdi. This refocusing from the bel canto insistence on sonically rarefied objects to a more dramatic, “non-melodic” approach, is emblematic of larger artistic currents occurring in this time period.

Verdi’s “not singing” approach, according to Henson, is deeply tied to the rise of a perspective privileging “physiognomy” in the later half of the nineteenth-century. In much operatic commentary of the time, the word “physiognomy” is used to describe facial appearance, gesture, and movement.\(^5^6\) Given this background, Henson qualifies that Verdi, writing in this late-nineteenth-century context, did not intend for the “not singing” approach to be taken literally. Rather, she believes that Verdi intended to draw on this heightened dramatic style that was popular during this period. She writes,

\(^5^4\) Ibid., 26.

\(^5^5\) Ibid., 4.

\(^5^6\) Ibid., 7.
If Verdi had called for a style of performance that almost certainly did not require “declamation” and “acting” (the words he used in reference to Macbeth) in a literal sense, but rather a clear and at times heightened diction, an immediacy and even “nervous charge” in the delivery of the melodic line, and an awareness of the expressive potential of the body, including certain basic actorly maneuvers, by the 1870s we have something closer to what a twenty-first-century listener might understand by a formulation such as “not singing.” This seems to have included an even more text-oriented approach to melody, in which the energy and immediacies of mid-century have been replaced by an overall vocal restraint and a prioritizing of diction and textual expression over the melodic line. In certain cases that line seems actually to have been altered, with the addition of what journalists describe as “spoken effects” (“des effects . . . [de] déclamation parlée” or simply “le parlé”). Physically and histrionically, the goal seems to have been not simply to be aware of certain basic actorly maneuvers, but to engage in a thoroughgoing way with acting and the expressive potential of the body. The point of reference now, though, was no longer the large, relatively conventional gestures of Romantic acting, but new “realist” and even “naturalist” approaches to acting.  

This passage explains that Verdi’s invoking of the “not singing” technique may have had more to do with his wanting a more dramatic, text-oriented vocal and physical approach. It is noteworthy how central the physical gestures become for effectively expressing opera in this new paradigm. It is impossible to know the exact mixture Verdi was looking for between, say, bel canto style and straight un-sung dramatic theater. However, with the absence of any recorded media from the period, it is a fascinating question to consider.

The question of what operatic singing style was really like in previous centuries is one that I find myself continuously asking. The example above, for me, was very important for calling into question what I thought I knew about opera. My general conception of Verdian opera was that because it exhibits a great “melodic emphasis” (some might even say it has some “catchy tunes”), the vocal technique meant for performance would highlight these melodic aspects. As Verdi’s correspondence indicates, his preferences regarding vocal technique were not nearly so cut and dry.

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57 Ibid., 9-10.
Throughout the course with Dr. Henson on the history of singing technique in opera, this question, about how operatic singing really sounded, was unceasingly reappearing. By the end of the semester, I determined that our contemporary simplifications, as to what is meant by an “operatic vocal style,” are grossly negligent in that this purported single and streamlined “tradition” of lavish singing is not only a conceptual falsity, but also an unfortunate exclusion of artistic strands.

After this investigation into the nature of operatic singing, I gained a new confidence for taking on the deeply entrenched views of “traditional” opera held by scholars, practitioners, and listeners alike. The breakthrough for me was learning that, rather than representing a monolithic stylistic idiom, the history of opera has a richness of precedents, that give permission for deviation from the falsification that is called the “norm.” This was deeply inspiring to me since in my opera I draw on what most would call “atypical” vocal lines. However, because the so-called “tradition” is really an unfortunate simplification, it turns out that there is actually an abundance of precedents.

Scene 1: Vocal Parts Composition

My initial sketch of the Chairman’s opening speech starts with a more or less complete guide for the singer. Rhythmic values, pitch material, and some articulation are included (Example 5.2). As the sketch goes on, the vocal part eventually becomes written in a chant-like notation, which only shows the shape of the vocal lines in terms of their pitch content.
The enormous amount of text to be set in the opera presented a problem. To deal with the task, I first set up a more detailed sketch and then simplified the notation as the scene
progressed. By always notating the pitch values, I was able to carefully consider the relationships in the pitch domain from my earliest stages of composition. The rhythmic elements got filled in as the process continued. As a way of getting from the beginning of the opera to the end, so that I could conceive of it as a unified structure, these shortcuts allowed me to conceptualize a balance between the macro and micro perspectives of the project.

At first, I had the idea to set the Chairman’s speech as a recitative-like fantasy where a harpsichordist would realize a continuo-like accompaniment. The idea was to recreate this traditional style to make a dramatic association with the formality of the proceeding. While the continuo accompaniment idea was not fully implemented, there are still some vestiges of this conception in the final product.

The outlines of the Chairman’s vocal line emphasize the pitches G and C to such an extent that it is obtrusive. This emphasis grew out of the idea of incorporating an authentic cadence structure in the continuo that was repeatedly emphasizing this V-I tonal cadence idea. The C-major authentic cadence was translated into a melodic structure ordering the Chairman’s pitch space. This repetition in the pitch content emphasizes the repetition in the text. The Chairman goes on and on in this prepared speech, negatively characterizing the Communist “other.” This pedantry and his melodramatic concern over the “nefarious” and “devious” “Communist menace” is text painted by use of a dissonant upper neighbor to the C, D♭, on the text “Communist conspiracy” (Example 5.3).
Example 5.3. Text-Setting of “Communist Conspiracy,” Chairman, mm. 26-28

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>26</th>
<th>mf</th>
<th>36</th>
<th>39</th>
<th>37</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I conceived of the Chairman as a *basso buffa* vocal type, drawing on references in traditional operatic literature. He apparently thinks that he is seriously helping the U.S. to keep bad people out, but he comes across as xenophobic and racist as the hearing goes on. The use of extremely limited pitch materials transfers the focus from the music to the repetitiveness and wordiness of his speech and the use of cumbersome vocabulary and rhetorical flourishes—devices that come across to me as dry and false.

Robeson’s initial entrance draws on the G and C pitch materials introduced by the Chairman. His answers show that he is complying with all of the requests. In a way, the musical parallel brings out the concept of Robeson as “playing along with the game.” At this point in the hearing, he is still pretending to comply with the charade (Example 5.4).

Example 5.4. Robeson’s Initial Entrance, mm. 75-79

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>75</th>
<th>ROBESON</th>
<th>mf</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bar.</td>
<td>[Music notation]</td>
<td>My name is Paul Robeson. I live at sixteen Quimel Terrace, New York City,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>78</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bar.</td>
<td>[Music notation]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Robeson’s Gospel style is meant to show the possibility that he intended to incorporate some jest in his returns to the questioning (Example 5.5).
Example 5.5. Robeson’s “Gospel” Style, mm. 89-90

Robeson chooses to respond in concise parallel structures—“Oh yes,” “I am,” “That is true”—which are completely alien from the long oratorical reactions that characterize his demeanor later in the hearing. I wanted to underscore his almost angelic compliance in this passage to set up a contrast with his delivery in the following scenes.

Arens’ music tends to be much faster than the slower rhythms of the Chairman’s vocal line. Arens’ rapid delivery and higher vocal quality is meant to make his characterization seem a bit more persistent and nagging than the Chairman’s (Example 5.6).

Example 5.6. Vocal Style for Richard Arens, mm. 80-82

As the staff member who is charged with doing the most questioning, he has a great number of lines throughout the hearing. He also shares the Chairman’s appreciation of formality, asking through the official modes of protocol for the Chairman to direct Robeson to answer the questions. Further, Arens consistently repeats the same questions
over and over in the later scenes. For these reasons, I thought of his character as persistent to the point of being irritating at times.

Robeson’s vocal lines contain some niceties that draw on the idea of civility, cadence, and appropriateness (Example 5.7).

Example 5.7. Robeson, Scene 1, mm. 102-105

The settings of the text “unpacked” and “send them to you” display a clear use of tonal devices. The E♭-D figure could be interpreted as either a dissonant upper neighboring motion or a 4-3 suspension. In either case, the ideas clearly suggest tonal structures. These gestures are meant to sound like anachronistic throwbacks reflecting Robeson’s compliance with the representatives’ requests.

The matter of the passport applications and the State Department’s desire for Robeson to sign a non-Communist affidavit brings about a disagreement between Robeson and Arens (Example 5.8).
Example 5.8. Dialogue Between Arens and Robeson, mm. 111-119

It is here that Robeson begins putting his foot down, saying he will not comply with the requests. While he has been completely compliant up until this point, he changes his demeanor, making clear that he “most certainly did not and [ ] will not” sign the non-Communist affidavit.

After he is asked whether he was a member of the Communist Party, Robeson’s “Oh please, please, please” reply shows his ever-changing demeanor. While this text could have been set in a tone of exasperation, I drew on the Gospel style that I had used before to set this text (Example 5.9).
Robeson is no longer playing by the rules of the committee, but interjecting his own candid feelings on the topics. Perhaps his patience has run out or Arens has struck a nerve in his questioning. By setting this line in a Gospel style that was nevertheless playful in dramatic characterization, I thought that it would better anticipate the insubordinate tone reflected in the forthcoming passage.

Robeson’s following statement about the Communist Party being a valid party as any other combines this insubordinate tone (“What is the Communist Party? What do you mean by that?”) with a purposeful point—that as far as he knows, it is a valid ideology that practitioners of free-speech can hold (Example 5.9). As a stylistic character, I indicate for the performer to continue in the playful Gospel style. Then, I envisioned Robeson’s emotions to swell on “…people who have sacrificed for my people and for all Americans and workers, so that they can live in dignity.” I indicated for this passage to be
“impassioned,” “with emphasis.” This contrasts with the fussy repetition of the Communist Party question by Arens. Finally, I set Robeson’s digression, “Would you like to come to the ballot box when I vote and take out the ballot and see,” in a sarcastic tone that angers Arens. This intensification of the drama creates a tension that concludes the first scene, leaving the unresolved tension to be treated in the next section.

**Scene 2: Vocal Layering Technique**

As I detailed in the previous chapter, I wanted to have three or more different texts unfolding at once to reflect multiple representatives taking on the role of one force of inquisition against Robeson. I first sketched how I would like the text to overlap, deciding what text was necessary to be presented alone so that it was sure to be heard and which text could be overlapped to give the effect of many people questioning Robeson simultaneously (Example 5.10).
**Caesura** markings indicate where the text was moved out of order from the original transcript. This was to create a better flow and to adapt the text from the original linear structure so that it made sense within the new overlapping structure.

Because the overlapping structure was not a literal reproduction of the hearing transcript, it takes on a non-linear or dream-like feel. It will be obvious to a listener that the text did not unfold in this way in the hearing because so many people are speaking at once. But the effect of the textual counterpoint creates a feeling that is accurate. All of the various inquisitors are questioning Robeson and trying, futilely, to get him to speak out against the individuals they are naming (Example 5.11).
In this way, the non-literal or dream-like feeling that this technique creates is analogous to the fantasy of the fourth scene. Both scenes deal with the text in illusory
ways that distort the real-time unfolding of events. There is an unintended symmetry, then, between the second and fourth scenes of this overall five-part structure. While the second scene stacks material vertically, thus greatly compressing the original texts with reference to the temporal domain, the fourth movement prolongs the literal moment of Robeson reading one line of his speech into an extended seven-minute fantasy. The fourth scene is a prolongation of an instant while the second is a compression of a much larger segment of reality. Even though I cannot know for sure what it would have been like to be in Robeson’s shoes, I imagine that Robeson’s mental health issues and the constant questioning would have provoked an unsettling feeling within him. Thus, it was my hope to reflect these mental distortions in the musical-temporal domain with the compression and expansion of real time events.

The layering technique is meant to reach a climax of maximal density where Robeson has continued to take the Fifth Amendment for some time. At this moment, he and the questioners are all getting exasperated (Example 5.12).
Example 5.12. Maximal Density of Vocal Parts, Scene 2, mm. 80-87

A F E S S

T. ff twen ty third, nine-teen four-ty five, you at- ten-ded a mee-ting in the home of Lou-ise Bran-sten, at which were

T. ROBSON We will

Bar. mend - ment. Oh, gen-tle men, I thought I was here about some pass-ports.

THIRD REPRESENTATIVE

B. Mis-ter Chair-man, the wit-ness does not have the sligh-test i-dea who they are, and I res-

T. ff pre-sent Max Yer-gan, Fre-de-rick Thomp-son, Da-vid

T. get to that in just a few mo-ments.

B. ex-pect-ful-ly sug-gest he be or-dered and di-rec-ted

T. Jen-kins, Nan-cy Pitt-man, Doc-tor Le-na Hal-pern, and Lar-ry Fan-ning?

T. ff Tell us whe-ther or not you have had con-tact and op-er-a-tions with Gre-go-ry Khei-fets.

Bar. This is com-plete non-sense.

B. CHAIRMAN I in-voke the fifth a-mend - ment. I to an-swer that ques-tion. You are di-rec-ted to an-swer the ques-tion.
As in the first scene, the structure of the second scene is one of gradual intensification building to a point of maximal intensity. At this point, the transcript indicates a strategic shift from Robeson’s previous technique of uniformly taking the Fifth Amendment in response to whether or not he knows the various individuals. I take artistic license in dramatizing this moment of structural shift—more precisely, on Robeson’s acknowledgement of knowing Manning Johnson (Example 5.13).
Example 5.13. Robeson Contemplates on “Manning Johnson,” Transition Between Scenes 2-3, mm. 1-2 (Measure Numbers from Scene 3)

I instruct the performer to be contemplative on this text, milking the moment with a fermata. This rather sudden departure from the heightened rhythmic activity in the layering, to a point of stasis as this single F is sustained, reflects my interpretation of the strategic shift in response type that Robeson employs. Rather than evading the representatives’ questions, Robeson finally seems as though he has taken the bait and will answer them.

Scene 3: Vocal Parts Composition

The question about knowing Manning Johnson is a key point in the drama because it is here that Robeson seems to have something new to say. My interpretation makes this moment (marked “mischievously” in the score) a place where Robeson is realizing that the incessant questioning is going nowhere. So, he pretends that he is actually going to say something about Johnson. As the committee listens carefully, Robeson does a bait and switch when he basically makes a joke at the committee’s expense:

ROBESON: [contemplatively] Manning Johnson, I only have read in the papers that he said that Dr. Ralph Bunche was some kind of fellow, and he was dismissed from the FBI. He must be a pretty low character when he could be dismissed from that.
Rather than answer the committee’s question—essentially whether Manning Johnson was a Communist—Robeson delivers a tangent and a joke. The committee persists in their questioning:

SCHERER: Whether he is a low character or not, do you know him?

ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment. [ ]

ARENS: You tell us whether or not Manning Johnson was lying or whether he was telling the truth when he said that when he was a member of the Communist conspiracy he knew you as part and parcel of that conspiracy.

ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment.

I interpret Robeson’s technique as a little diversion he uses in order to try to move the conversation forward from the banal listing of people’s names. He is testing the waters, so to speak. Later in the hearing, Robeson manages to deliver much longer statements. In that context, this moment can be seen as Robeson testing the limits that the committee is imposing on him in this very abnormal kind of event.

Remarks on Specific Vocal Techniques Employed in the Opera

After I sketched the rough outlines for the vocal parts, I transcribed the parts into my notation software, completing the rhythmic notation in the process. In general, the singers are meant to approximate the atypical rhythmic groupings—for example the septuplets, quintuplets, sextuplets in rapid succession in the first scene in mm. 95-96, marked “rapidly” (Example 5.14).
This rhythmic freedom is quite common in vocal music. It is also consistent with the recitative feeling that I conceptualized for this scene.

Another vocal technique I employed is sprechstimme and quasi-sprechstimme. In the third scene, I wanted to contrast Arens’ reading of a letter from the surrounding material (Example 5.15).
For Arens, I indicated the use of the typical *sprechstimme* technique. This is commonly understood as a mixture between speaking and singing. For Robeson’s emulation of this tone, which he employs when he cites his achievements listed in “Negro periodicals,” I indicated that he sing using a *quasi-sprechstimme* vocal production. My idea was to show how Robeson was reacting to Arens’ strategy of reading negative commentary about him. When Robeson reads from his document, he attempts to use a parallel technique to Arens in order to instead describe his own positive qualities:

ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment. May I now read from other Negro periodicals, which say *[Reads from document with quasi-sprechstimme]* “Paul Robeson, Negro American,” *[normale]* and may I read from where I am a Doctor of Humanity from Morehouse, and [ ] when I received the Spingarn Medal from the NAACP?

CHAIRMAN: No.

Thus, the vocal technique is useful for showing a parallel in the rhetorical structure of the text. The *quasi* designation I used to indicate a partial or subtle usage of the technique. What I envisioned was that Robeson would just hint at the *sprechstimme* sound, rather than exaggerate the parallel with the musical technique that Arens utilizes. I thought that this would be a more tasteful usage and would reflect the similarity without creating a negative association of Robeson for the listener (i.e. as an individual that was overly theatrical).
Chapter 6

General Compositional Process: Instrumental Music

General Remarks on the Instrumental Writing

I envisioned a layering of the instruments, highlighting their individual voices. My framework for thinking about the instrumental dimension was conceptualizing it in different strands or layers. From an early stage, I was cognizant of the idea of incorporating a sixteenth-note layer that would sound something like the courtroom stenographer. The regularity of a prominent sixteenth-note pulse also struck me as resembling a military drummer leading a company to battle (Example 6.1).

Example 6.1. Snare Drum Rhythmic Motive, mm. 1-4

Because I thought of this hearing as very likely representing the most important performance of Robeson’s life (certainly with the highest stakes), I envisioned his defense to the allegations being presented as akin to the defense of a battalion under siege from enemy combat.

Another facet of the instrumental writing that I was very much aware of, dealing with singers, was how the singers could be reinforced in subtle ways by the instruments.
Since the singers will likely need some help in finding their pitches, I often employ long-held pedals in the instruments to give a grounding sonority. Some techniques that I used to vary the pedal tones include:

Table 6.1. Techniques Used to Vary the Instrumental Pedal Tones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Glissando/ Note Bends/ Portamento</th>
<th>Vary Registers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tremolo</td>
<td>Drift Rhythms or Pitch Doubling Apart from Singers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace Notes/ Ornaments</td>
<td>Blend with Percussion to Create New Sound Complexes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chromatic Turns or Figures</td>
<td>Dynamic Contrast among Individual Parts (Vertical Layers) or Sections (Horizontal Juxtaposition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dovetailing with Other Parts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vary Attack and Release Points</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The great number of pedal tones was influenced by the challenge of supporting the vocal parts without writing in a purely *colla voce* style. While I do indicate in the instrumental parts that certain passages are more or less *colla voce*, this writing is certainly not the norm (Example 6.2).
One of the challenges with this form of exact doubling is that the singer is not afforded a high degree of flexibility in performing the music. In my opera, this is very relevant, given the complexity of some of the rhythms.

Since, as I have mentioned before, the rhythms are to be treated with some freedom in the vocal performance, they will not always match with the instruments if they are performed in a *colla voce* situation. I wanted the rhythms to be a general guide for performance. My worry is that if the focus for the singers is on exactly replicating the given rhythms, they will not be focusing on other very important aspects of the performance: the dramatic characterization, the interplay with other performers and instruments, the pitch material, the dynamics and articulations. I believe that the music may come across as sounding rather contrived if the rhythms are perfect but the other performance aspects are compromised.

In this light, the pedal tones of the instruments take on an important role for creating a tonal framework for the singers. These pedals also create an interesting foil to the extremely active vocal parts. I detailed my reasoning for using primarily fast-moving
syllabic text setting, in the previous portion of the paper, as an analog to the dramatic character of the courtroom. By contrast, the long tones in the instruments set off the vocal parts through juxtaposition.

Scene 1: Basic Motivic Ideas of Instrumental Parts

Since my primary idea was to highlight the emphatic and pedantic qualities of the delivery in the Chairman’s long speech, I did not want to obscure his part with the instrumental accompaniment. I planned to embed some of the vocal pitches within an accompanimental layer of long-held notes as a frame of reference for the singer (Example 6.3).
Another layer in the accompaniment consists of what I was thinking of as a microscopic “Bach-like” counterpoint with short sixteenth and thirty-second-note fragments (Example 6.4).
Example 6.4. Contrapuntal Accompaniment Layer, mm. 19-20.

This layer is supposed to represent the stately courtroom atmosphere, with its pomp and grandiosity. The contrapuntal motive continues in short interjections in between lines of the chairman’s statement. The snare drum rhythmic motive continues throughout the first scene in the background. The feeling of militancy and battle is alive within the walls of the courtroom.
Scene 1: Generating the Pitch Material for the Pedal Layer

First, I composed the tetrachord formed by the right hand of the piano and the horn in measure 9 (A, C, F, B♭, Example 6.5).

Example 6.5. Tetrachord Voicing in Horn and Piano, m. 9

Then, I reduced the tetrachord to its most compact form (F, A, B♭, C) to derive new pitch materials. I created new tetrachords at six different transpositions and one inversion from the original (Example 6.6).

Example 6.6. Transpositions and Inversion of Original Tetrachord (T₀)

Then, I reduced the tetrachord to its most compact form (F, A, B♭, C) to derive new pitch materials. I created new tetrachords at six different transpositions and one inversion from the original (Example 6.6).

Example 6.6. Transpositions and Inversion of Original Tetrachord (T₀)

The process of composing with these transposed and inverted forms of the original tetrachord is detailed more thoroughly in the following chapter.
Scene 2: Instrumental Music

As I was composing the instrumental music for the second scene, I had in mind an abstract chromatic melodic idea occurring in little melodic flutters (Example 6.7).

Example 6.7. Chromatic Flutters in Cello, Scene 2, mm. 1-6

These quiet chromatic movements seemed to me to loosely resemble Arabic maqam.

The roll on the ride cymbal played with soft mallets is meant to create a distant-sounding murmur that suggests an otherworldliness (Example 6.8).

Example 6.8. Scene 2, mm. 1-3

This decision was in keeping with the exotic associations I had for the other music of the scene.
Scene 3: Instrumental Music

In the opening of the third scene, I included long-held notes with *forte-pianissimo* markings to activate the texture (Example 6.9).

Example 6.9. Opening of Scene 3, mm. 1-5

The dissonant pitch materials suggest an atmosphere with a feeling of angst. Because of the many tangents that occur in the text within this scene, Robeson has to be standing at the ready for anything that the questioners may ask. As the section continues, the ride cymbal punctuates the syncopations present in the other instrumental parts, creating what I hear as a “jazzy” sound (Example 6.10).
Scene 4: Concepts for Two Versions—Chamber Quintet and Opera

Scene 4: Concept for Chamber Quintet Version

I originally composed the fourth scene to be played by a chamber quintet (Oboe, Horn, Violin, Viola, Cello). (Refer to Appendix D for the chamber quintet full score.). I later transformed this material to be scored for the opera. Because I initially sketched and composed the music for the chamber version, I will now discuss the process here. In the quintet instrumental version, the players see the text of the vocal parts printed in their parts under the melodic ideas that correspond to those that are sung by singers in the opera (Example 6.11).
Example 6.11. Text Underlay in Instrumental Version, Scene 4, mm. 1-4

The idea was that the players are supposed to feel as though they are metaphorically singing by playing these vocal parts on their instruments. The resultant music, therefore, is subtly shaped by the presence of the vocal texts, and by the players’ contemplation of the dramatic themes presented. Because Robeson was not allowed to read his speech, this plan seemed like an artful way for the message to be communicated through the musical ideas.

Scene 4: Sketched Ideas for Chamber Quintet Version

In my initial sketches, I created what I thought of as a “folk-like pentatonic melody” for the viola (Example 6.12).\(^{58}\)

\(^{58}\) I thought of the melody as pentatonic even though it technically has six unique pitches. The infrequent B♭, upper neighbor adds a slight variation to a typical pentatonic form.
Example 6.12. Sketch of Viola “Folk-Like Pentatonic Melody” for Chamber Quintet

Later, I incorporated this melody into section C, where there is a layering of many ideas. I took the pitches, which were written in my sketch in a chant-style notation, and created varied rhythmic patterns. This includes setting dotted rhythms, which suggest “Scotch snaps” (Example 6.13).

Example 6.13. “Scotch snaps” Rhythm in Viola, mm. 91-93

Another musical idea that I sketched was a five-part sustained chord representing the feeling of ambiguity (Example 6.14).

I used this at the beginning of section C, as a transition from the sentimental B material into a more dissonant, jagged juxtaposition of materials. Within the chord, there is dissonance representing some of the disillusionment Robeson likely felt. In a way, it foreshadows the disappointment he felt in his later years, in addition to expressing aspects of the present mental breakdown he was suffering at the time of the HUAC hearing.59

A third sketched element was a cello snap pizzicato idea, which to me represented anger (Example 6.15).

Example 6.15. Sketch of Cello Snap Pizzicato Idea Representing Anger

I was thinking of the choral “Wafna!”60 exclamations from Carl Orff’s Carmina Burana. I used this idea in counterpoint with others in section C.

The Bach-like chorale theme presented by the oboe represents acceptance and a firm foundation—triumphing over adversity (Example 6.16).

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59 Duberman, Paul Robeson, 432-439.

60 The Latin word translates roughly to “Woe!”
Example 6.16. Sketch of Oboe Chorale Idea Representing Disillusionment and Acceptance

The homophonic chorale setting is suggested as the horn and cello are later added to play with the oboe. Initially, I had thought that the chorale idea would become increasingly distorted, until the Chairman interrupted it abruptly. I decided in the original instrumental quintet, that I would instead have an *accelerando*, spirited, and triumphant conclusion (Example 6.17). This ending was used again for the final coda in the opera version.
After drafting some of the thematic ideas, I made the following chart to plot the
dramatic trajectory for the interlude (Table 6.2).
Table 6.2. Dramatic Plan for Scene 4 Instrumental Version

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sections A &amp; C</th>
<th>Anxiety, Anger, Violence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section-B</td>
<td>Sentimental Expression, Hope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ending</td>
<td>Triumph, Conviction, Righteousness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By incorporating the sketched ideas, I was able to create a musical composition that built organically from these original threads. However, the difference between the order of the ideas in the sketch and that in the resulting composition shows that the process was not a linear trajectory.

**Scene 4: Chamber Composition Affective Structure**

The opening of the quintet projects anger by drawing on music that sounds mechanical and aggressive. In the transition from section A to section B, I planned for the feeling to change to a growing disillusionment (Example 6.18).
The B-section was to represent a nostalgic and bittersweet dimension to Robeson’s internal feelings. During this section, I decided to incorporate a flowing melody that was meant to be associated with beauty. The G♯-Dorian mode slowly takes over as the sole pitch collection, so that by the middle of the section, in measure 44, the mode is completely unified to only be that collection (Example 6.19).
For me, Section C represents ambiguity turning gradually into acceptance. In the final section, a layering of the previous ideas contributes to a feeling of synthesis. By gradually unifying these themes, I aimed to evoke a sense of completion, resolving the contradictory feelings that had been presented. There is a satisfaction of coming full circle into an understanding or acceptance, similar to the later stages of grief.
Scene 4: Chamber Composition Musical Materials

I composed a motivic idea of an alternating minor third and major third to represent the anxiety and ambiguity Robeson was probably feeling internally. In the A-section, I doubled the vocal line with at least two instruments, giving it a higher dynamic, so that it was clearly foreground material (Example 6.20).

Example 6.20. Doubling of Melody in Instrumental Version, mm. 15-17

I often doubled the vocal material in octaves, or at the interval of a ninth, as can be seen in the preceding example.

The beginning of the B-section transitions to the sentimental tone with a horn solo. The D♭ and E♭ of the horn are mixed with D♮ and E♮, which coordinate with the G♮-Dorian mode (Example 6.21).
Example 6.21. Horn at Start of B-Section, mm. 26-32

The cello adds what I thought of as a continuously-transforming passacaglia-like bass-line, which suggests a somber tone (Example 6.22).

Example 6.22. Cello Transforming “Passacaglia” Idea, mm. 39-47

The rhythms, pitches, and phrase lengths of the cello part are varied consistently, so repetitions are not exact as in a normal ostinato or passacaglia pattern. The oboe and violin expand into the upper register, while the cello expands into its lower register to emphasize the climactic point of the B-section (Example 6.23). This intensifies the drama of the sentimental expression.
Example 6.23. Expanded Registers for B-Section Climax, mm. 58-62

The ending of the B-section also features the horn solo material, with the $D_7$ reappearing—steering the music away from the Dorian mode (Example 6.24).
Example 6.24. Horn Solo at End of B-Section, mm. 69-70

The end of the B-section has a similar cadence gesture to that of the A-section. It features a variation on a call and response type of structure with the violin and viola presenting a call, followed by an answer in the other voices (Example 6.25).

Example 6.25. Call and Response in Strings at End of B-Section, mm.66-69

The C-section is meant to be eclectic, bringing back many motives in a juxtaposition of contrasting elements that is eventually unified. The multiple layers are meant to represent the complexity of the actual hearing as well as of Robeson’s thoughts. The horn part is a chromatic, fast-moving line, adding dissonance to the sound complex (Example 6.26).
This unsettling quality is augmented by a counterpoint in the oboe and *pizzicato* cello (Example 6.27).

Eventually, the violin line comes back from the B-section. This expressive music takes over and the mode becomes unified again with the G♯-Dorian collection in the strings (Example 6.28).

The sixteenth-note motive also reappears. It is worked into the held notes to suggest the faint echoes of an ever-present battle in the distance (Example 6.29).
The sixteenth-note motive then becomes more prominent as the music continues, eventually developing into the foreground material as the meter transitions to a cut-time feel (Example 6.30).

Example 6.30. Sixteenth-note Motive as Foreground Material in Section C, mm. 108-111

* Crescendo to the next dynamic, then build again
As the materials are brought into conflict, a chorale motive emerges, initially in the oboe (Example 6.31).

Example 6.31. Chorale Motive in Oboe, mm. 89-97

This motive is meant to reference Robeson’s moral foundation as well as his background growing up as the son of a church preacher.

At “Emerging from the Chaos,” the cello brings back the irregular bass-line repetitions that are originally from the B-section (Example 6.32).

Example 6.32. “Emerging from the Chaos,” Cello Bass-Line, mm. 98-107

At this point, the disparate themes are becoming further unified into a single mode, style, and feeling. The parts coalesce into a place of agreement so that the ending can be heard as a victorious achievement. The opera’s constant sixteenth-note motive returns like the snare drum of a triumphant battle.
Scene 4: Opera Version

Scene 4: Remarks on the Opera Version

I believe that the conclusion of scene four in the opera version is unsatisfying and startling because the triumphant ending from the quintet version is abruptly interrupted before its completion. In the opera version, the Chairman rudely interrupts the scene by saying, “Just answer the question” (Example 6.33).

Example 6.33. Chairman Interrupting Scene 4 in Opera, mm. 109-114.

The interlude before the interruption allows for some of Robeson’s speech to be actually sung (as opposed to in the instrumental version, where the players do not literally speak or sing the text). I have taken some artistic liberty by including this passage, as Robeson does not actually communicate the text in the hearing beyond the initial line, “It is a sad
and bitter truth.” In order to make some concessions for this historical inaccuracy, I plan to have the staging and lighting reflect to the viewer the surreal nature of this moment in the opera.

The music identifies the many internal thoughts and feelings Robeson is having in the moment. It externalizes what is going on in his head so we can appreciate the variety and complexity of his thoughts. The alternation of Robeson’s short sung phrases with forceful instrumental interjections is meant to depict Robeson being silenced by the committee (Example 6.34).

Example 6.34. Robeson’s Phrases Interrupted by Instruments, mm. 1-4
This gesture is consistent with the representatives interrupting his remarks in the courtroom proceedings. It also mirrors an abstract illustration of how Robeson was at odds with himself at this historic moment in his life, since he was just coming out of a period of personal struggle, suffering from an emotional breakdown and depression.

As the A-section dissolves into disillusionment, it is as though Robeson realizes that the committee is incapacitating his hope of delivering his speech and the hope he has for the future more generally. But because of his mental health problems, the interruptions may be distortions happening in his mind as well.

This suspension of reality is meant to capture the broader period of Robeson’s life, and the isolation and feelings of desperation that he had been experiencing just before stepping foot into the courtroom.

**Scene 4: Specific Changes for the Opera Version**

In the A-section of the opera version, I reduced the dynamics of the instrumental lines doubling the vocal part in order to balance with the singer. I added a hi-hat part, with the militant sixteenth-note rhythmic motive. I also added a piano part that draws on the sixteenth-note material in the winds and strings. (Refer to Example 6.34.) The piano part returns in the B-section to intensify the climactic point (Example 6.35).
Example 6.35. Piano Addition for Climax of B-Section, mm. 59-62

For the C-section, I added a bass drum roll, which I think adds a depth and ambiguity to the ensemble sound (Example 6.36).
The piano returns, adding to the chorale motive and intensifying the final climax. (Refer to Example 6.33.)

**Scene 5: Ascending Quarter-Note Motive**

My idea for scene five was to use dissonant ascending quarter-note chords as a layer to represent the incessant questioning and the more frequent vitriolic attacks occurring within the scene (Example 6.37).
Example 6.37. Ascending Quarter-Note Chords in Piano, mm. 19-23

The dissonance portrays the negative tone of the representatives’ critical questions and personal character assessments of Robeson. It also represents the topic referenced by the text—of violence against blacks in the American South.

There is an unchanging, almost uncomfortable sameness to the rhythmically continuous pulses. There are only a few moments varying the quarter-note pulse with half-note durations. Even in these instances, at least one voice still continues the steady quarter-note rhythm. This aspect of regularity is itself a motive or feature throughout the opera. While it seems as though it may be simplistic and dull, regularity actually takes on a special character because of the very fact that it does not change—it is static. I believe that this unchanging persistence is a marked quality that is perceivable and noted by the listener as an emphatic gesture.

Static layers, I believe, can be much more dramatically charged than layers with great surface-level dynamic qualities. The sustained tones and constant quarter-notes take us out of the everyday world and into a place of transcendence. The atemporal nature of these static structures can be beneficial for creating nebulous blurrings of time.
The domain of our unconscious resonances is one that, I argue, is not of a temporal quality. On the contrary, it is something in a kind of purgatory, by definition, ever just removed from what we can put our finger on. (The following chapter will describe in greater detail my ideas on musical composition and the unconscious.) In the opera, I use seemingly amorphous musical structures that align themselves to much longer temporal perspectives. The sustained lines or continuous strings of quarter-notes used in the fifth scene could indeed be just small fragments of processes that may take an eternity or eternities to unfold to their completion.

**Scene 5: Remarks on the Instrumental Music**

The chromatic sinking gesture in the viola, cello, and piano at the end of the vocal section in scene five is meant to represent the unfinished and unresolved aspects of the questioning (Example 6.38).

Example 6.38. Chromatic Sinking Line in Viola, Cello, and Piano, mm. 112-120
As Robeson was not allowed to read his speech, I did not want to negate this important fact by setting the final utterances of the characters with music that was confirmatory or final sounding. I wanted to retain the spirit of the ending of the original hearing in my opera. I thought that changing this fundamental structural aspect of the hearing would be damaging to forming a well-intentioned depiction of the historical event.

**Final Coda**

I incorporated a final coda, after the vocal section concludes, in order to capture the more abstract perspectives of the successes that Robeson achieved during the hearing, and more broadly, during his lifetime (Example 6.39).

Example 6.39. Final Coda, mm. 121-124
The music is from the fourth scene’s instrumental interlude. It represents Robeson’s accomplishment of writing the speech, even if he could not read it in the hearing. This music again portrays a dream-like state divorced from reality.

**Elaboration on the Chorale Motive**

Though the Chairman abruptly cuts off the interlude during the fourth scene, the final musical coda fleshes the musical gestures out, concluding the opera in a more purposeful manner. The structure is meant to elicit a feeling of satisfaction because the musical idea is finally portrayed in its completion. The *accelerando* gives the music a racing feel—a victorious, triumphant, and excited ending, driving to the conclusion. The coda includes the chorale motive, which is important throughout the opera (Example 6.40).
The chorale represents Robeson’s steadfast commitment to his causes, his firm moral foundation, his unwavering vision, his persistence, and his fortitude. While the chorale theme is not necessarily meant to represent any particular religious perspective, it gains importance within the opera because of its unchanging, emphatic nature.

Robeson spent a great deal of time studying Bach’s chorales. In the archives at Howard University, there are many worn copies of these scores with Robeson’s handwritten analysis. Incidentally, Robeson wrote the phrase “Bach Chorales” on the first page of his speech (Example 6.41). It is fascinating that I was unaware of this connection until after I had already written the chamber work. Thus, I came up with the idea for incorporating the chorale theme with a more holistic sense of Robeson’s relationship with
the chorales, after I had seen his collection of scores in the Howard archive. Yet, it is remarkable that this highly unlikely connection between the HUAC hearing and Bach’s chorales was already concretely established by his own hand on the undelivered statement itself.⁶¹

⁶¹ “Statement of Paul Robeson to House of Representatives Committee on Un-American Activities” [1956] Paul Robeson Collection, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C.
As I have already mentioned, it is unknown exactly when he took these notes. It is my belief that they were his jottings during the hearing. I think that his jotting down of his artistic pursuits on the speech was a way for Robeson to look forward to these stimulating activities (in this case, the analysis of the Bach chorales). It is possible that thinking about the positive nature of completing these projects gave Robeson a grounded feeling of
confidence and resolve in the face of the inquisition. The projects were a way for him to find an emotional reserve at a time when he was having a nervous breakdown.

I believe that for Robeson, Bach chorales were emblematic of archetypes—seemingly timeless components of musical tradition that can be used to extrapolate numerous ideas about the very nature of music itself. From theory texts, Robeson would have known of the technical facets that could be studied in the chorales, such as ideas about harmony, tonality, and voice-leading. Robeson’s own research and quantitative analysis of the characteristic features of folk musics in the world was very likely influenced by similar styles of analysis into European art music. These analyses could have included scholarship into the music of J.S. Bach. Bach’s chorales, being richly evocative capsules of western art music, may have provided a launching point for Robeson’s own theoretical work.

His search for connections—between the art music of Europe and the traditions as well as cultures of numerous countries in a global context—manifests itself in Robeson’s lifelong mission of promoting mutual connectedness rather than exclusivity. I believe that the Bach chorales were also important to Robeson because they were a key for him to feel more comfortable as a scholar in the arena of western classical music. By studying and writing about these revered objects, Robeson would have likely gained credibility in scholarly circles of the time. Further, study of the chorales meant that Robeson could advance his own musical knowledge. Since he felt self-conscious as a musical scholar throughout his lifetime, this argument is consistent with his biography.62

62 Duberman, Paul Robeson, 245.
Other Ideas for Ending the Opera

My original idea was to have the entire opera end with the fade-out that occurs with the viola, cello, and piano ending of the vocal section. (Refer to Example 6.38.) I thought that this strategy would emphasize that the drama of Robeson’s life continues on beyond the confines of the hearing proper. As the music gradually fades, it is a reminder that the problems posed in the hearing were not solved during the course of the opera. While some advances were achieved in the civil rights legislation of the 1960’s, many of the problems that Robeson faced in the hearing are still in existence even today.

An additional plan for the opera’s ending was to have the sixteenth-note motive and the stylized contrapuntal fragments from the first scene return. This would have given the ending a symmetrical parallel with the opening of the opera. The moralistic, witty, ironic tone of the opening would have been recapitulated in the concluding music. I believe that the more triumphant idea that I eventually chose for the ending better emphasizes the gravity of the positive achievements that Robeson helped to realize in his lifetime.
Chapter 7

Analytical Focus

Perspectives and Structure of the Study

My analysis of the composition of this opera as a reflection of my views on Paul Robeson considers dramatic, text-based, social, aesthetic, and musical perspectives surrounding its writing. The composition of this opera really stands for one individual’s grappling with the meaning behind someone else’s life. While it started out of an appreciation for Robeson’s accomplishments on racial issues and his ability as an artist to merge social and artistic functions, I have now come to a new understanding of this man. He was by no means perfect, and his imperfections stand to give greater credibility to his story.

I have questioned whether I have the right to project a vision of this artist at all, given that he is of such seminal importance to so many important causes. As such, further problems arise from the question of what to do about the negative aspects of his life. I am not writing an expansive biography or filming a documentary. I have had to choose judiciously what pieces of the story to assemble. However, a balanced depiction of the man in this dramatic presentation is essential. My analysis of the compositional process depicts my appraisal of these dramatic elements.

Because I am also attempting to underscore the importance of dramatic narrative elements through the musical settings, the musical analysis examines how the particular
decisions made on that level serve the goals of the opera. I have spoken about particular musical genres and pieces and their relationship to Robeson’s personal dispositions. The changing nature of the reception of the music that he performed has been additionally important to my decision-making.

On a general “aesthetic” level, the idea of appreciating the possible continuum between simple and complex interpretations of any object is referenced through my conception for the opera. This captivates me. Robeson is not unique in this regard. Everyone shares the capacity for viewing a given situation with summary judgment on the one hand, or a deep fathoming of our intellectual capabilities on the other. In the case of Paul Robeson, we are slated with the same dilemma as those of the Cold War period. We can dismiss him as a “communist sympathizer” on the one hand. Or, we can try to understand the ideals that his decisions projected.

I do not seek to change people’s minds. I am not so headstrong as to believe that I have that ability. In an artistic format like opera, however, we come with fresh eyes and ears. I believe in the power of artistry for overcoming the ingrained habits of blind repetition. I see the power of the continuum from simplicity to complexity as one of ever-changing possibilities of perspective. To shift only one gradation in the direction of a new perspective is to open ourselves up to a new world of possibility. For all we know, that click along the continuum may supplant our former black-and-white perspective. It may offer us shades of gray or—perhaps more optimistically—vibrant colors of every hue.
An Investigation of Memory and Consciousness

I composed much of the opera during the winter months of 2014-2015, during December to March. I am writing my observations on the music based on my notes and recollections during and after the composition process. While much of my decision-making with regard to pitch material was of an intuitive nature, it has been helpful, after the compositional process was finished, to investigate the chosen materials in an intentional way. By examining the tones and their relationships, one can learn why particular sonorities or successions of pitches have certain properties. Still, in my experience, relying exclusively on these assumptions, which are the product of an intentioned, rational organization of thoughts, can be limiting.

If one is to reduce the complex web of activity in the music and its unique effects in a particular moment to a series of theoretical frameworks, these constructions can run the risk of simplifying the magical or extra-rational properties of sonic production to languages that are simply inequivalent to the richness of musical artistry. As is the case with many other pursuits in life, it is my belief that to create rich musical works, a balance between intellectual and intuitive thinking styles is necessary.

Especially in the initial generative stages, I consciously tell myself that I need to withhold a critical judgment on the ideas that I am generating. If I engage this more critical perspective too early in the process, the result for me is that I am completely unable to produce any idea at all. This complete freezing or inhibition of my abilities to produce material is naturally very problematic for generating music.
Therefore, out of a practical need to create material, I have realized over time that my best plan of action is to start a project with a welcome embrace of all new ideas. As the process moves forward, and I am faced with more ideas than can be incorporated, I am forced to decide which ones to keep and which ones are not as effective for the ever-flexible purposes for which I am employing them. It is this strategy of generating options and then refining and deciding which ones are best that has proven most effective in my experience.

On the whole, I tend to keep as many ideas as possible a part of my final composition. I realize that there is an expenditure of intellect for the ideas that are generated. As human beings, we are faced with the problem of having only a limited amount of intellectual energy. I believe that there are many possibilities for any idea to be transformed into something completely new and useful. In this spirit, I am constantly thinking of ways to repurpose ideas into new roles. I also feel excited by the concept that there is a vast amount of potential in every idea, no matter how small.

Another reason that I am constantly thinking about ways to transform material to become contrasting is that I am very much aware of a continuum between similarity and contrast. This field is in mind when I am imagining motivic connections between ideas and their transformations. It is also my reference point for determining whether I want to incorporate contrasting material so that the music reflects a more dynamic state. The fact that I have a great awareness of this archetypical juxtaposition between stasis and movement, similarity and disparity, does not, however, mean that I privilege contrast as inherently superior.
I find a spiritual dimension to music that can seem very static, such as that of Olivier Messiaen. To me, the element of stasis represents a transcendence from the everyday world. It signifies a derailing of a realistic everyday temporal grid. There are certain sounds, long sustained notes, for example, to which I react very strongly. These elements have the power to disrupt our sense of reality and to cause us to probe the mysterious depths of our being. For Messiaen, music took on a spiritual profundity that stemmed from his devout Catholic beliefs. For me, it is equally spiritual. Even though I do not hold Messiaen’s strong religious convictions, I find music to be a transcendental force that is powerful enough to disrupt our everyday realities and bring us into other worlds of being.

In terms of my analysis here, I want to try to illuminate the difference between the ideas and styles of thinking that I was aware of while composing, and those that I have since observed. For this reason, my analysis of the musical materials will look at both the active, generative, process of composing and the finished product as two different focal points. I think that this will better capture the true mechanisms of which I was cognizant. It should also be more honest in appreciating those ideas that were a happy accident.

I feel pressure to exaggerate the degree of intentionality behind the ideas in my music, when the ideas were really more accurately the byproducts of unconscious or chance occurrences. This could be presented as a composer exaggerating the import of an auxiliary idea, which he or she then recontextualizes as a primal force in the genesis of the work. Saying that an element, which may have been the result of a chance occurrence or the effects of an unconscious thought process, was instead a central organizing principle that had been intentionally privileged from a very early point, suggests a degree
of dishonesty. For example, in my case, I could say that “the inversely-related aspects of temporal compression and expansion that typify the second and fourth scenes were the product of a pre-compositional design privileging a symmetrical relationship between these partitions of the macro-structure of the work.” It should be obvious that this represents a disingenuous action, simply because the statement is not true.

It is important for me to approach the work of the analysis of my own composition with candidness, transparency, and above all, honesty. I want to share with others the spiritual qualities of music that I find satisfying. Therefore, I hope to endeavor on this analysis with clarity about the things I know, but also an upfront honesty about those that I do not.

The two-part analytical structure of a composer looking back on his or her finished work takes on a new role—one that may actually be more far-reaching than the actual observations of the music. It becomes an investigation into the act of an individual’s “creative” consciousness.

**Levels of Consciousness**

I find the process of composing fascinating for many reasons. Among them is the question of what we are aware of at the time of composition. During the act of writing music, I am often not consciously aware of all of the technical reasons for why I am making choices. However, I am convinced that there are many levels of the cognitive process that are occurring beneath the conscious surface. I believe that these levels of cognition, while they are not directly accessible to the individual in the actual act of
composition, are deeply important to the process. During my analysis of my opera, I have consistently found many technical characteristics that were based on important information that I was not wholly conscious of while composing. However, these occurrences, I am convinced, would not have transpired without some level of cognitive activity to encourage certain behaviors and outcomes.

This discussion gets at another fascinating question: is it possible to quantify exactly how much I was conscious of while composing the opera? Even though I often believe that my memory is to blame for my forgetting what I was concretely thinking of in the act of composition, I also realize that there are sub-layers of cognitive processing that may be only partially accessible to me or completely inaccessible in the process of composing. An example of a partially accessible cognitive layer may be my hearing a sonority and thinking to myself that it “sounds good.” This discrimination is undoubtedly shaped by my history and intensive musical study. Clearly, my trained abilities to identify relationships among pitches, or to receive intellectual or emotional data based on an established language of musical materials, is the result of my specific experience with music.

The resulting response, that something “sounds good” is simply the byproduct of a cognitive process of which I may be only partially aware. I may or may not, for instance, be aware of the presence of any data as to why it “sounds good.” Perhaps the sound makes me smile, it reminds me of another composer or composition, or it is something that is part of a personal memory. But, it may also be a response that does not include this kind of surrounding data. As illustrated, something as seemingly simple as deciding a sound is pleasant—the very crux of the so-called “intuitive” mode of
creating—is based on a rigorous intellectual process, even if it is inaccessible to the individual during the time of creating.

**Technical Features**

I will now move on to describe how the interaction between my conscious awareness of the musical relationships at the time of composition and a more intuitive approach flavors the analytical study at hand.

Simply examining the finished composition may lead to misperceptions involving the genesis of materials. The linear nature of reading a score from left to right may lead an analyst to reasonably infer, for example, that the opera’s original snare drum rhythmic figure was my initial guiding motivic idea. By this justification, the contrapuntal motive, which starts in measure 9, could be seen as a transformation of the snare drum rhythmic cell (Example 7.1).
Example 7.1. Opening of Scene 1, mm. 1-13

Solemnly, \( \mathbf{J} = \text{ca. 60} \)

Percussion: Snare Drum (snare off)

Copyright © 2015

Percussion

Snare Drum (snare off)

\( \text{pp lightly} \)

\( \text{p} \)

\( \text{Solemnly, q = ca. 60} \)

Cl.

Hn.

Perc.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.
However, this is actually an incorrect assessment, at least in terms of the genesis of this material. The contrapuntal motive was actually my first idea. The snare drum motive was added much later, near the end of the compositional process.

This example illustrates how our assumptions as to the process of creation often correspond with our visual-spatial reading of written forms from left to right. Hence, if the generative process does not produce a product with this identical left to right disposition, our most basic assumptions having to do with the shape of the creative process can be misleading.

In fact, this cognitive flow tends more often than not to be nonlinear, at least in my case. It is rather more sporadic—based on the dynamic relationships of the blocks or units at play. Returning to the above example, the non-linear compositional process is reflected by my first composing the contrapuntal idea in mm. 9-12, extending this into the next phrase (Example 7.2), and only then developing the opening snare drum idea.
In this instance, the workflow better resembled a central idea that was expanded on outwards. Perhaps a Cartesian theoretical paradigm, in place of the linear model, would better illustrate this developmental activity.

**Pitch-Based Observations**

With regard to the pitch collections of the first scene’s opening section, I was conceiving of the pitch-based elements as two separate layers. The first layer is the pedal-like layer of the cello, piano, and horn. The second layer consists of the contrapuntal activity in the clarinet, violin, viola, and briefly the right hand of the piano. (Refer to Examples 7.1 and 7.2.) The B♭, F, A♭ initial sonority in the left hand of the piano and
cello grounds this layer with a sense of a B♭ pitch center. In contrast, the contrapuntal layer is grounded around an E♭ center with the top voice in the clarinet repeatedly departing from, returning to, and emphasizing this pitch.

The two collections bear a striking similarity— one which I was not thinking about consciously at the time of composition. Both collections have a Mixolydian quality due to the presence of the flat-seventh scale degree in otherwise major scale forms (Example 7.3). This particular scale form, called the “Bebop” scale, is used in jazz and blues genres.

Example 7.3. Mixolydian Quality of Two Transpositionally-Equivalent Collections

The collections themselves, in fact, are exact transpositions of one another. Essentially each collection consists of a major scale with both the normal and lowered seventh scale degree. As such, they are both sets of eight unique pitch classes, instead of the normal seven found in the major mode.

I certainly was not conscious of these interesting similarities between these two collections when I was actively composing. In the pedal accompanimental layer, I was primarily interested in the sound of the dominant seventh chord, built on B♭. This chord was interesting to me because of its loaded potential. Because we are conditioned to hear the dominant seventh chord, with its two tendency tones, as a chord requiring a resolution to a tonic, it seems to me to be a potent vessel for creating and prolonging tension. When
I was writing, I was no doubt thinking about E♭-major as a general tonal center. The act of avoiding or evading the normal cadence of the dominant seventh chord is thus no different than the mechanism that has been used by composers for centuries to prolong a tonal phrase structure.

This decision, to not resolve the dominant seventh chord, was made because I was thinking about the dramatic context for the introduction. I wanted the initial scene to introduce the tensions that were to be soon presented in the texts sung within the courtroom. I was attempting, therefore, to introduce musical layers that had unresolved dramatic tensions.

While the dramatic tension is expressed by the unresolved dominant seventh chord prolonged by the pedal tones (and by the use of the B♭-Mixolydian mode itself), the E♭-centered contrapuntal material also prolongs a dramatic tension through an avoidance of melodic cadence. The raised and lowered seventh scale degrees create a tension and ambiguity between the more common, and more functional major modality and the Mixolydian scale, which resembles the dominant seventh sonority, and thus undermines the E♭ tonal pitch center. This instability suggests that E♭ is actually functioning as the dominant seventh chord for A♭. The tension in the perception of the “proper” modality adds to the dramatic dimension of ambiguity or conflict.

It is interesting that the D♭’s occur only within the viola response. This suggests, perhaps, that this voice alone (sometimes) tonicizes A♭-major. In fact, the viola itself oscillates between the D and D♭ such that it would seem as though it is struggling to decide which mode to join (Example 7.4).
Example 7.4. Viola Line in Opening Section, mm. 9-11

The effect is that the viola D♭’s suggest a subdominant tonicization in the E♭ tonality.

I was not thinking consciously about this subdominant emphasis within the overall key area of E♭-major. Replacing root movement of a descending fifth with a descending fourth, in general, will cause the resulting music to sound weaker due to the lack of tonal closure. (The loss of the leading-tone resolution is significant.) While I was not thinking of plagal harmonic movement, or the less functional role of such root movement, it is stimulating to question why I may have been intuitively drawn to using this construction.

**Formal Structure**

A perspective looking at similarity and contrast, as discussed in comparing the different layers of material in terms of their pitch content, is also helpful for understanding the formal structure. I wanted to represent the formality of the courtroom in the music—almost to the point of it being a condescending or mocking quip against the proceeding. I initially composed the four-bar phrase at measure 9. Then, I wrote a four-bar repetition at 13. Finally, I wrote a 5+3 eight-bar initial phrase with the snare drum and the pedal layer. Even within this regular formal grid, I made subtle departures from a predictable structure. I was thinking of the idea of “regular phrasing” as a
departure point when composing the music so that its transformation could be thought of as a declaration against the formality of the proceeding.

Motivic Features

The contrapuntal melodic idea was also meant to reflect the officiousness of the courtroom. Drawing on the idea of a “learned style” or stile antico, I chose to use short melodic fragments in imitation with one another. By primarily standardizing the rhythmic unit to sixteenth-note values, the regularity of the music adds to this dramatic concept. The individual voices are relatively static, moving with mainly stepwise motion around their points of reference. The clarinet takes on the role of posing an initial question with the violin and viola responding in imitative gestures. Techniques such as repetition and additive motivic growth, gestural inversion (tonal, instead of real), compaction, fragmentation, repositioning of cells to new metric placements, variation of the rhythm, and repetition of pitches create ever changing micro-variations on even these concise ideas.

The exact restatement of the second phrase at measure 13 by the clarinet is meant to confirm that this is a repetition of the previous material from measure 9. The repetition of this phrase is varied by the addition of fragments in the strings. I was intending to create a more active statement that built on the previous phrase. The restatement of materials is thus a development or variation on the first phrase. (Refer to Example 7.2.)

As I have already remarked, my characterization for the snare drum was going to battle. Because it is so quiet, I imagined the image of the first scene as a battle that was being waged in the distance, only slowly coming into focus. I also thought of the pedals as representing the far-off battle. Perhaps I was envisioning a bagpipe player sustaining those chords. While the idea was associated with the image of battle, it is notable that the exact image, for instance the precise instrument or group of instruments playing the chord, was not something of which I was literally conscious. It was rather an abstracted sound to me at the time I was writing the piece.

**Scene 1: Further Analysis of Pitch Derivations of Pedals**

I will now return to the measure 9 tetrachord in the right hand of the piano and horn. As I previously mentioned, it seemed to me as though it were an appropriate sound to use for setting the tone of the scene. It is rather bright. For me, the sound of stacked fourths, quartal harmony, produces a sense of anticipation, a pondering of possibilities for events in the future. It is neither resolved nor unresolved, neither an antecedent nor a consequent. In this way, I am often attracted to the ambiguities of quartal sonorities.

This particular voicing, A, C, F, B♭, has an interesting F-major implication (Example 7.5).
Example 7.5. Tetrachord Voicing in Horn and Piano, m. 9

The chord is a juxtaposition between a tonally-oriented sound, and one which is a static, non-functional sonority. The open voicing is also much more resonant than the most compact stacking of these pitch classes, F, A, B♭, C. By orienting the pitches in this way, one becomes more aware of the F-major implications, as it basically fills in the initial pentachord of the scale, omitting only the second scale degree. I can see why I would prefer the much more ambiguous quality of the stacking which I used, over that more stepwise configuration, emphasizing the more everyday F-major scale. (However, on considering the possibilities for dislocating the chordal members through registral displacement, even this stacking could be a unique sound loaded with great potential.)

In measure 17, I chose to transform the tetrachord by transposing it to be a T_{10} transposition from the original. (Refer to Example 7.6 for the chart of permutations.)
Example 7.6. Transpositions and Inversion of Original Tetrachord (T₀)

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
T₀ & T₂ & T₃ & T₇ \\
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Example 7.6}
\end{array} & \begin{array}{c}
\text{Example 7.7}
\end{array} & \begin{array}{c}
\text{Example 7.8}
\end{array} & \begin{array}{c}
\text{Example 7.9}
\end{array} \end{array}
\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
T₈ & T₉ & T₁₀ & T₀I \\
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Example 7.6}
\end{array} & \begin{array}{c}
\text{Example 7.7}
\end{array} & \begin{array}{c}
\text{Example 7.8}
\end{array} & \begin{array}{c}
\text{Example 7.9}
\end{array} \end{array}
\]

This choice was based on my intuitive reasoning. I initially composed the left hand of the piano after writing the Chairman’s part. Building on the idea of the perfect fourth motive in the Chairman’s line, I decided to compose the lower quartal trichord as an extension of this (Example 7.7).

Example 7.7. Chairman and Piano Parts, mm. 17-18

When I returned to the scene to continue composing the other instrumental parts, I realized that the sound was still not as rich as I had wanted. So, I added the more chromatic transposition of the original tetrachord from measure 9, T₁₀. Because the chromatic pitches are occurring in the upper register, it probably sounded better to me because the upper partials of the harmonic series tend to be more chromatic.
The orchestration of the $T_{10}$ tetrachord in measure 17 (Example 7.8) is slightly different from the original in measure 9 (Example 7.5).

Example 7.8. Orchestration of $T_{10}$ Tetrachord, m. 17-19

In this configuration, the clarinet and violin are doubling the upper pitches of the basic chord, presented in the right hand of the piano. The rhythmically offset entries of the piano and horn in measure 9 are also varied in measure 17. While in the original, the horn enters at a sixteenth-note rhythmic delay, the entire tetrachord in measure 17 occurs together. Though the tetrachord is attacked by the instruments together, it occurs after an augmented rhythmic offset. Now at a quarter-rest offset instead of a sixteenth, the tetrachord enters after a different quartal sonority in the lower register. Again, at the time
of composing this, I was interested in exploring the ambiguous qualities of the quartal sound.

While I was conceiving of the D, G, C quartal trichord and the T\textsubscript{10} tetrachord as separate layers, it is interesting to note the similarities created through their combination. The simultaneous presentation of these quartal sonorities can be seen to include two quartal trichords with a minor seventh separating them (D, G, C and B\textsubscript{♭}, E\textsubscript{♭}, A\textsubscript{♭}). Because they are each comprised of the same intervallic structure, the B\textsubscript{♭} trichord is transpositionally-related to the D trichord (at the T\textsubscript{8} transposition level). (See Example 7.9.)

Example 7.9. Transpositionally-Related Quartal Trichords, T\textsubscript{8} and T\textsubscript{10}

![Example 7.9. Transpositionally-Related Quartal Trichords, T\textsubscript{8} and T\textsubscript{10}](image)

In this light, the G that was previously seen to be a disruptive force in the upper tetrachord, at odds with the quartal sound, can be thought of as simply a doubling of the G in the center of the lower trichord. The G actually serves as a unifying structure between the two seemingly disparate entities. While I was not thinking of this when...
composing the music, it is noteworthy that in this analysis, every one of the chord members plays an important role in the quartal strategy.\textsuperscript{64}

Measure 35 displays an instance of inversion, $T_0I$, in the left hand of the piano (Example 7.10).

Example 7.10. Scene 1, mm. 35-36.

Here, taking the original tetrachord in its closest configuration, F, A, B\textsubscript{b}, C, and inverting it around the C-axis yields C, D, E\textsubscript{b}, G. (Refer to Example 7.6.) Thus, the major scalar fragment becomes a minor one. While I avoided using these inversionally-related

\textsuperscript{64} It is probable that my “ear” was hearing this similarity, though my conscious brain was not recognizing the structural correlation in the above terms. Since the ear informs the brain in a physiological sense by sending it perceptual data, I often refer to my conscious state as encompassing of my auditory reporting.
tetrachords because I thought that the minor sound was on the whole not appropriate for
the scene, I did use this particular tetrachord in measure 35 (Example 7.10). I tended to
choose certain tetrachords over others when they had tones in common with the vocal
part. Because the voice contains the G-C fourth as a prominent motive, I chose to include
many transpositions of the tetrachords that contain these pitch classes.

In measure 35, the clarinet and the right hand of the piano have a contrasting
trichord, A♭, D♭, G. I imagine that this was a transformation of a T₈ tetrachord, where the
G♭ was changed to a G♮ to coordinate with the vocal part. The F of this tetrachord has
also been omitted. The resulting chromatic complex, when combined with the other
tetrachord, is a reflection of the negative image of Communists that the Chairman
describes in his text.

In measure 38, a T₉ transposition of the original tetrachord is combined with an
added C in the vocal part (Example 7.11).  

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65 As I have stated, I chose particular transformations because they had tones in
common with the surrounding musical materials. In this particular location, the G in the
tetrachord is an important pitch in the Chairman’s line.
Example 7.11. Scene 1, mm. 38-39

The D, G, C quartal trichord is embedded in the center of the sound complex, with the D and G as pitch classes of the T₉ tetrachord. (The C can be seen as a pedal tone from the repetitive motive in the voice.)

Another selection criteria for my deciding which transpositions of the tetrachord to use was how the sound of the chord represented the imagery of the text. In measure 40, the Chairman is speaking as an instructor, teaching those in the courtroom about the nefarious deeds of Communists (Example 7.12).
I thought that the sound of the chord in measure 40, basically a G-major triad in first inversion, reflected the pedagogical feeling of the text. The studiousness and arcane tone of the Chairman’s long speech was the reasoning behind my focusing almost exclusively on the simple oscillation between the G and C in the vocal line. Here, I chose to support that part with the B, D, G, C tetrachord (T₂). The orchestration of this chord, with doublings of the outer pitches in the strings, adds to its simple presentation. While it is not voiced in its original form, the D, G, C trichord is handily part of the chord—still an unchanged fixture of the layer.

Measure 44 contains another inversion of the tetrachord around a C-axis (Example 7.13).
Building on the incomplete $T_8$ version of the tetrachord presented in measure 35, the tetrachord of measure 46 is now complete (with a doubling of the D, an octave lower in the horn). (Refer to Example 7.13.) The original quartal trichord is embedded into this chord, with a doubling of the C an octave higher in the piano. This is interesting because it represents both an integration of the two structures as well as a point of chromatic tension.

Measure 47 contains a much more consonant sonority, voiced to suggest an F-major chord with an added seventh and ninth (Example 7.14).
Example 7.14. Scene 1, mm. 47-49

This transposition of the original tetrachord (T7) does not contain the D pedal of the quartal trichord, which had been present in some way up until this point during the Chairman’s speech. The untethering of this trichord fixture from the previous sound complex may suggest a development is taking place. While I was not thinking in these terms while composing the piece, it certainly helps to explain why this particular sonority sounds so striking. Because it is consonant and placed after a dissonant chordal structure, it invokes a feeling of tension and release.

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66 Again, my compositional process was influenced by my ear telling me which materials to select.
Measure 51 shows multiple relationships among the chord members. T₂ and T₇ tetrachords are both suggested, with all three members of the original quartal trichord also part of the complex (Example 7.15).

The smooth voice leading that links the two transpositions of measures 53 and 54 facilitates a change between the T₈ and T₉ tetrachords (Example 7.16).
Example 7.16. Scene 1, mm. 53-55

The quartal trichord grows to become a quartal tetrachord in measure 54, with the added upper F, which was introduced as a member of T₈. (The quartal tetrachord is D, G, C, F.)

Measure 57 presents a transformed version of a T₁₀ tetrachord, where the E₉ has been changed to be an E₃ in the inner voices, though it is still present as the lowest pitch (Example 7.17).
This is because I wrote the doublings of the vocal part first. The quartal idea is continued into the doubling, as harmonic fourths are maintained between the clarinet and horn. The horn harmonizes the vocal part by emphasizing a 5-6 motion above the vocal G. I chose to coordinate the pedals and the vocal harmonization by using an E♭ in both layers.

Measure 60 is primarily comprised of members of $T_2$ (Example 7.18).
However, the A, which is played by the right hand of the piano and doubled down the octave by the viola, is not part of $T_2$. It could be said to be an anticipation of the next chord, or an upper neighbor addition to the G-C quartal dyad.

Measure 62 maintains the E₃ in the bass but re-introduces the original tetrachord in the upper voices ($T_0$). (Refer to Example 7.18.) The quartal trichord is also present. $T_8$ is utilized in measure 64, with the presence of the G-C of the quartal structure (Example 7.19).
Measures 65 employs $T_{10}$, again with the G-C quartal dyad (Example 7.19).

The final chord of the section, in measure 68, has the exact voicing of the initial tetrachord ($T_0$), transposed up an octave, in the right hand of the piano (Example 7.20).
T₉ is perhaps juxtaposed against this, as the G₉, G, and A would be part of this collection. Also, the G-C quartal dyad is maintained.

A More “Intuitive” Approach to Composition

I have previously outlined a more conscious method of dealing with compositional materials. In this method, I was very much aware of the pitch-based aspect of the generative process and I was carefully controlling this dimension. Even so, there were many correspondences and insights, which I discussed above, of which I was not aware at the time of composition. These insights would have likely informed my working
process. Had I been aware of these features by conducting a thorough analysis at the time of composition, it is likely that the finished product would have been varied.

Memory is faulty. Notes and externalizations at the time of composition may not accurately capture the ideas, feelings, and otherwise non-descriptive mental state.

As a result of this disconnect between the modalities of thought and discourse, distortions are very likely to occur. The most frustrating part about this, in my experience, is that as the textual descriptions take over, memory is altered. This rewriting that occurs supplants any semblances or artifactual remains of what the mental process really was. Effectively, by rationalizing my cognitive state, I have rewritten the process from start to end—similar to re-formatting the hard drive of a corrupted computer. What is especially unfortunate is that I do not think those initial ideas will be accessible to me again. This can be very frustrating, for example, when I am trying to reproduce a compositional process and am unable to do so because my memory of the process is gone. Based on my former experiences, I know that I am unlikely to regain the knowledge of what my true inspirations in the moment really were. Memory, thought, and descriptive rationalization do not work like that.

This provides a very compelling case as to why I should develop new ways to keep track of these mental states for my future compositional projects. Non-textual documentations of ideas may help me to better represent the abstract, non-linear mental space. Sketches showing shapes, colors, and movement may come much closer to the ideas than words. By experimenting with these non-textual possibilities in my future
projects, I can continue this research and potentially improve my own understanding of the materials that I am constructing.
Bibliography


APPENDIX A

Original Transcript from the 1956 HUAC Hearing

Testimony of Paul Robeson before the House Committee on Un-American Activities, July 13, 1956¹

The CHAIRMAN: The Committee will be in order. This morning the Committee resumes its series of hearings on the vital issue of the use of American passports as travel documents in furtherance of the objectives of the Communist conspiracy. During recent hearings on this subject, it was revealed that Communists had developed a pattern of procuring American passports by representing that they were going to travel for business or pleasure to certain of the countries of the free world and then, upon arriving at those countries, they used devious methods of circumventing the travel restrictions so that they could attend Communist-sponsored conferences and other propaganda efforts in the Iron Curtain countries. One of the important facts which the student of the Communist conspiracy recognizes is that Communists not only create front organizations to carry on their nefarious work, but also use people who, though not actually Communist Party members, are nevertheless witting or unwitting servants of the Communist cause. Actual technical membership in the Communist Party is not, therefore, the sole criterion to be used in undertaking to ascertain whether or not a particular individual’s activities are in fact contributing to the Communist menace. Should the government of the United States, in the exercise of its sovereign power, refuse to issue passports to United States citizens who propose to use those passports as tickets of admission to conferences established as propaganda efforts of the Kremlin? Should our Government require the revelation of the specific itinerary of each citizen who proposes to travel behind the Iron Curtain? Where should the balance be struck between the promotion of international travel and the security risk of couriers, propagandists, and saboteurs? These and other questions must be resolved in the light of the realisms of today. It is in this spirit of dead earnestness that the Committee is pursuing this investigation and study. Call your first witness, Mr. Arens.

Mr. ARENS: Paul Robeson, will you please come forward? Please identify yourself by name, residence and occupation.

Mr. ROBESON: My name is Paul Robeson. I live at 16 Jumel Terrace, New York City, and I am an actor and singer by occupation, and law on the side now and then.

Mr. ARENS: Are you appearing today in response to a subpoena which was served upon you by the House Committee on Un-American Activities?

Mr. ROBESON: Just a minute. Do I have the privilege of asking whom I am addressing and who is addressing me?

Mr. ARENS: I am Richard Arens.

Mr. ROBESON: What is your position?

Mr. ARENS: I am Director of the Staff. Are you appearing today in response to a subpoena served upon you by this Committee?

Mr. ROBESON: Oh, yes.

Mr. ARENS: And are you represented by counsel?

Mr. ROBESON: I am.

MR. ARENS: Counsel, will you kindly identify yourself?

Mr. FRIEDMAN: Milton H. Friedman.

Mr. ARENS: The subpoena which requires your presence here today contains a provision commanding you to produce certain documents, including all the United States passports issued to you for travel outside the continental limits of the United States. Do you have those documents?

Mr. ROBESON: No. There are several in existence, but I have moved several times in the last year, and I just moved recently to Jumel Terrace and I could not put my hands on them. They probably could be produced. And I also lived in Connecticut and we have got a lot of stuff still packed, and if they are unpacked I will be glad to send them to you.

Mr. SCHERER: When was the subpoena served on you, Mr. Robeson?

Mr. ROBESON: I have forgotten. It was about a couple of weeks ago, and it was served at my house not long ago.

Mr. SCHERER: A couple of weeks ago?

Mr. ROBESON: 10 days ago.

The CHAIRMAN: What is the date of the return?

Mr. ARENS: May 22, 1956.
Mr. SCHERER: Did you look for the documents?

Mr. ROBESON: I have looked a good deal and Mrs. Robeson who has charge of all of this has looked and we have not been able to put our hands upon them. There is no reason not to produce them, certainly if I could find them.

Mr. ARENS: Did you file a passport application on July 2, 1954?

Mr. ROBESON: I have filed several, and I have filed so many—I have filed about 25 in the last few months.

Mr. ARENS: I lay before you a photostatic copy of a passport application bearing a signature, Paul Robeson, and ask you if that is a true and correct reproduction of the passport application which you filed on July 2, 1954.

Mr. ROBESON: An application in 1954? Yes, it is. It is just one of them, where I was going to England, Israel, and France and Scandinavian countries.

Mr. ARENS: Is this your application?

Mr. ROBESON: That is true.

Mr. ARENS: I respectfully suggest, Mr. Chairman, this document be incorporated by reference in this record marked as “Robeson Exhibit No. 1” and filed in the files of the committee.

The CHAIRMAN: It will be so incorporated.

Mr. ROBESON: My counsel suggests it may not be completed.

Mr. FRIEDMAN: May I make a statement, please, Mr. Arens, too and to the committee?

The CHAIRMAN: Counsel is permitted to accompany his client for the purpose of advising his client and not for the purpose of making statements.

Mr. FRIEDMAN: I am familiar with the rules, that is why I asked your permission. May I make his statement to you, sir? I wish to make a protest against questioning Mr. Robeson with respect to his passport application, in view of the fact that there is litigation now pending concerning his passport application and Mr. Robeson’s right to a passport. The litigation was tried in district court and it was the subject of a decision in the court of appeals in the circuit last week. There may be further hearings in the State Department and there may be a further appeal.

The CHAIRMAN: The litigation is pending at the moment?

Mr. FRIEDMAN: It is still pending.
The CHAIRMAN: Was an application made for certiorari?

Mr. FRIEDMAN: No, the time has not yet elapsed for an application for certiorari but there may possibly be. I am not his counsel in that case, and I am not speaking for counsel, but there may be a hearing somewhere with respect to this matter.

The CHAIRMAN: This is too nebulous.

Mr. FRIEDMAN: The procedure now calls for it and it is not nebulous.

Mr. ARENS: Now, during the course of the process in which you were applying for this passport, in July of 1954, were you requested to submit a non-Communist affidavit?

Mr. ROBESON: We had a long discussion with my counsel who is in the room, Mr. Boudin, with the State Department, about just such an affidavit and I was very precise not only in the application but with the State Department, headed by Mr. Henderson and Mr. McLeod, that under no conditions would I think of signing any such affidavit, that it is a complete contradiction of the rights of American citizens. It is my own feeling that when this gets to the Supreme Court, that is unthinkable that now this has been applied to any American who wants a passport.

Mr. ARENS: Did you comply with the requests?

Mr. ROBESON: I certainly did not and I will not. That is perfectly clear.

Mr. ARENS: Are you now a member of the Communist Party?

Mr. ROBESON: Oh please, please, please.

Mr. SCHERER: Please answer, will you, Mr. Robeson?

Mr. ROBESON: What is the Communist Party? What do you mean by that?

Mr. SCHERER: I ask that you direct the witness to answer the question.

Mr. ROBESON: What do you mean by the Communist Party? As far as I know it is a legal party like the Republican Party and the Democratic Party. Do you mean—which, belonging to a party of Communists or belonging to a party of people who have sacrificed for my people, and for all Americans and workers, that they can live in dignity? Do you mean that party?

Mr. ARENS: Are you now a member of the Communist Party?

Mr. ROBESON: Would you like to come to the ballot box when I vote and take out the ballot and see?
Mr. ARENS: Mr. Chairman, I respectfully suggest that the witness be ordered and directed to answer that question.

The CHAIRMAN: You are directed to answer the question.

(The witness consulted with his counsel.)

Mr. ROBESON: I stand upon the fifth amendment.

Mr. SCHERER: I did not hear the answer.

Mr. ROBESON: I stand upon the fifth amendment of the American Constitution.

Mr. ARENS: Do you mean you invoke the fifth amendment?

Mr. ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment.

Mr. ARENS: Do you honestly apprehend that if you told this Committee truthfully whether or not you are presently—

Mr. ROBESON: I have no desire to consider anything. I invoke the fifth amendment, and it is none of your business what I would like to do, and I invoke the fifth amendment. And forget it.

The CHAIRMAN: You are directed to answer that question.

Mr. ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment, and so I am not answering. I am answering it, am I not?

Mr. ARENS: I respectfully suggest the witness be ordered and directed to answer the question as to whether or not he honestly apprehends, that if he gave us a truthful answer to this last principal question, he would be supplying information which might be used against him in a criminal proceeding.

(The witness consulted with his counsel.)

The CHAIRMAN: You are directed to answer that question, Mr. Robeson.

Mr. ROBESON: Gentlemen, in the first place, wherever I have been in the world, and I have been in many places, Scandinavia, England, and many places, the first to die in the struggle against fascism were the Communists and I laid many wreaths upon graves of Communists. It is not criminal, and the fifth amendment has nothing to do with criminality. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Warren, has been very clear on that in many speeches, that the fifth amendment does not have anything to do with the inference of criminality. I invoke the fifth amendment.
Mr. ARENS: I respectfully suggest, Mr. Chairman, that the witness be ordered and directed to answer this last outstanding question.

The CHAIRMAN: He has been directed to answer it and he has invoked the fifth amendment and refused to answer.

Mr. ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment.

Mr. ARENS: Have you ever been known under the name of “John Thomas”?

Mr. ROBESON: Oh, please, does somebody here want—are you suggesting—do you want me to be put up for perjury some place, “John Thomas.” My name is Paul Robeson, and anything I have to say, or stand for, I have said in public all over the world, and that is why I am here today.

Mr. SCHERER: I ask that you direct the witness to answer the question. He is making a speech.

Mr. FRIEDMAN: Excuse me, Mr. Arens, may we have the photographers take their pictures, and then desist, because it is rather nerve-racking for them to be there.

The CHAIRMAN: They will take the pictures.

Mr. ROBESON: I will see you later, and I accept my counsel’s attention. I am used to it and I have been in moving pictures. Do you want me to pose for it good? Do you want me to smile? I cannot smile when I am talking to him.

Mr. ARENS: I put it to you as a fact, and ask you to affirm or deny the fact, that your Communist Party name was “John Thomas.”

Mr. ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment. This is really ridiculous.

Mr. ARENS: Now, tell this Committee whether or not you know Nathan Gregory Silvermaster.

Mr. SCHERER: Mr. Chairman, this is not a laughing matter.

Mr. ROBESON: It is a laughing matter to me, this is really complete nonsense.

The CHAIRMAN: It will be for a while.

Mr. ROBESON: It will be and it should be for you. It should be for you all.

Mr. ARENS: Will you please tell—
Mr. ROBESON: This whole committee.

Mr. ARENS: Will you please tell us whether or not you know Nathan Gregory Silvermaster.

(The witness consulted with his counsel.)

Mr. ROBESON: No, I do not.

Mr. ARENS: Have you ever known Nathan Gregory Silvermaster?

(The witness consulted with his counsel.)

Mr. ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment.

Mr. ARENS: Do you honestly apprehend that if you told this committee whether you know Nathan Gregory Silvermaster, you would be supplying information that could be used against you in a criminal proceeding?

Mr. ROBESON: I have not the slightest idea what you are talking about. I invoke the fifth—

Mr. ARENS: I suggest, Mr. Chairman, that the witness be directed to answer that question.

The CHAIRMAN: You are directed to answer the question of whether or not you have ever known Nathan Gregory Silvermaster.

Mr. ROBESON: In answer to that question, I invoke the fifth.

Mr. SCHERER: The witness talks very loud when he makes a speech, but when he invokes the fifth amendment I cannot hear him.

Mr. ROBESON: I invoked the fifth amendment very loudly. You know I am an actor, and I have medals for my voice, for diction.

Mr. SCHERER: Will you talk a little louder?

Mr. ROBESON: I can talk plenty loud, yes, I am noted for my diction in the theater.

Mr. ARENS: Do you know a woman by the name of Louise Bransten?

(The witness consulted with his counsel.)

Mr. ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment.
Mr. ARENS: You attended a meeting in the home of Louise Bransten, in 1945, in San Francisco, did you not?

(The witness consulted his counsel.)

Mr. ARENS: Do you have a recollection of that little session?

Mr. ROBESON: I invoke the fifth.

Mr. ARENS: I put it to you as a fact, and ask you to affirm or deny the fact, that on February 23, 1945, you attended a meeting in the home of Louise Bransten, at which were present Max Yergan, Frederick Thompson, David Jenkins, Nancy Pittman, Dr. Lena Halpern, and Larry Fanning?

Mr. ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment.

Mr. ARENS: Do you know any of those individuals whose names I have just recited?

Mr. ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment.

Mr. ARENS: Who are Mr. and Mrs. Vladimir P. Mikheev? Do you know them?

Mr. ROBESON: I have not the slightest idea but I invoke the fifth amendment.

Mr. ARENS: Mr. Chairman, the witness does not have the slightest idea who they are, and I respectfully suggest he be ordered and directed to answer that question.

The CHAIRMAN: You are directed to answer the question.

Mr. ROBESON: I answer the question by invoking the fifth amendment.

Mr. ARENS: Have you ever had contact with a man by the name of Gregory Kheifets?

Mr. ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment.

Mr. ARENS: Now, Gregory Kheifets is identified with the Soviet espionage operations, is he not?

Mr. ROBESON: Oh, gentlemen, I thought I was here about some passports.

Mr. ARENS: We will get into that in just a few moments.

Mr. ROBESON: This is complete nonsense.

Mr. ARENS: Tell us whether or not you have had contact and operations with Gregory Kheifets.
Mr. ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment.

Mr. ARENS: Who is Victor Murra—that is John Victor Murra?

Mr. ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment. Your questioning leaves me completely—I invoke the fifth amendment.

Mr. ARENS: Leon Josephson?

Mr. FRIEDMAN: I do not think that he heard that question.

Mr. ARENS: Leon Josephson.

Mr. ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment.

Mr. ARENS: Do you know a Manning Johnson?

Mr. ROBESON: Manning Johnson. I only have read in the papers that he said that Dr. Ralph Bunche was some kind of fellow and he was dismissed from the FBI. He must be a pretty low character when he could be dismissed from that.

Mr. SCHERER: Whether he is a low character or not, do you know him?

Mr. ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment.

Mr. ARENS: I would like to read you now some testimony under oath before this committee, of Manning Johnson.

Question. In your vast experience in the Communist Party, did you have occasion to meet Paul Robeson?

This is under date of July 14, 1949:

Mr. JOHNSON: Yes, I have met Paul Robeson a number of times in the headquarters of the National Committee of the Communist Party, going to and coming from conferences with Earl Browder, Jack Stachel, and J. Peters. During the time I was a member of the Communist Party Paul Robeson was a member of the Communist Party. Paul Robeson, to my knowledge, has been a member of the Communist Party for many years. In the Negro Commission of the National Committee of the Communist Party, we were told under threat of expulsion never to reveal that Paul Robeson was a member of the Communist Party because Paul Robeson’s assignment was highly confidential and secret. For that reason, he was not permitted to attend meetings of the National Committee of the Communist Party.

Mr. ROBESON: Could I protest this meeting, this reading of this? If you want Mr. Manning Johnson here for cross-examination, O.K.
Mr. ARENS: You tell us whether or not Manning Johnson was lying or whether he was
telling the truth when he said that when he was a member of the Communist conspiracy
he knew you as part and parcel of that conspiracy.

Mr. ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment.

Mr. ARENS: Have you ever been chairman of the Council on African Affairs?

(The witness consulted with his counsel.)

Mr. ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment.

Mr. ARENS: I lay before you now a document marked “Robeson Exhibit No. 2” for
identification purposes only in this record, entitled, “For Freedom and Peace, Address by
Paul Robeson, at Welcome Home Rally, in New York, June 19, 1949,” with a photograph
on it.

Mr. ROBESON: I have a copy myself.

Mr. ARENS: If you would look on the back of that pamphlet you will see, Paul Robeson,
Chairman of the Council on African Affairs. Tell us whether or not you are the Paul
Robeson alluded to in this document, a copy of which you brought with you.

Mr. ROBESON: I would be the Paul Robeson.

Mr. ARENS: Then you are or have been chairman of the Council on African Affairs.

Mr. ROBESON: I would invoke the fifth amendment.

Mr. ARENS: Do you know Max Yergan?

Mr. ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment.

Mr. ARENS: Max Yergan took an oath before this committee, and testified to tell the
truth.

Mr. ROBESON: Why do you not have these people here to be cross-examined, and is
this, Mr. Chairman—

Mr. ARENS: Under oath, this man—

Mr. ROBESON: Could I ask whether this is legal.

The CHAIRMAN: This is legal. This is not only legal but usual. By a unanimous vote,
this Committee has been instructed to perform this very distasteful task.
Mr. ROBESON: It is not distasteful. To whom am I talking to?

The CHAIRMAN: You are speaking to the chairman of this committee.

Mr. ROBESON: Mr. Walter?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Mr. ROBESON: The Pennsylvania Walter?

The CHAIRMAN: That is right.

Mr. ROBESON: Representative of the steelworkers?

The CHAIRMAN: That is right.

Mr. ROBESON: Of the coal-mining workers and not United States Steel, by any chance? A great patriot.

The CHAIRMAN: That is right.

Mr. ROBESON: You are the author of all of the bills that are going to keep all kinds of decent people out of the country.

The CHAIRMAN: No, only your kind.

Mr. ROBESON: Colored people like myself, from the West Indies and all kinds. And just the Teutonic Anglo-Saxon stock that you would let come in.

The CHAIRMAN: We are trying to make it easier to get rid of your kind, too.

Mr. ROBESON: You do not want any colored people to come in?

The CHAIRMAN: Proceed.

Mr. ARENS: Under date of December 17, 1948, Dr. Max Yergan testified before this committee under oath as follows:

Was there a group in the Council on African Affairs of Communist officials, who operated as a sort of leading caucus inside the council?

Dr. YERGAN: Not as such. The relation of Communists to the council was informal and so far as I know, not organized. Toward the end of my relation to the council it became clear to me that there was a Communist core within the council. This was very clear to me during the last months of my relations to the council.
May I ask you now, was there, to your knowledge, a Communist core in the Council on African Affairs?

Mr. ROBESON: I will take the fifth amendment and could I be allowed to read from my own statement here, while you read this statement just for a moment?

Mr. ARENS: Will you just tell this committee while under oath, Mr. Robeson, the Communists who participated in the preparation of that statement?

Mr. ROBESON: Oh, please.

Mr. ARENS: Now.

The CHAIRMAN: Could you identify that core clearly? Of whom did it consist?

Mr. ROBESON: Could I read my statement?

Mr. ARENS: As soon as you tell the committee the Communists who participated in the preparation.

Dr. YERGAN. Dr. Doxey Wilkerson was a member of that core and took the leading position. Paul Robeson was chairman of the council and certainly a part of that Communist-led core.

Now tell this committee, while you are under oath, was Dr. Yergan lying or was he telling the truth?

Mr. ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment. Could I say that for the reason that I am here today, you know, from the mouth of the State Department itself, is because I should not be allowed to travel because I have struggled for years for the independence of the colonial peoples of Africa, and for many years I have so labored and I can say modestly that my name is very much honored in South Africa and all over Africa in my struggles for their independence. That is the kind of independence like Sukarno got in Indonesia. Unless we are double-talking, then these efforts in the interest of Africa would be in the same context. The other reason that I am here today is again from the State Department and from the court record of the court of appeals, that when I am abroad I speak out against the injustices against the Negro people of this land. I sent a message to the Bandung Conference and so forth. That is why I am here. This is the basis, and I am not being tried for whether I am a Communist, I am being tried for fighting for the rights of my people, who are still second-class citizens in this United States of America. My mother was born in your state, Mr. Walter, and my mother was a Quaker, and my ancestors in the time of Washington baked bread for George Washington’s troops when they crossed the Delaware, and my own father was a slave. I stand here struggling for the rights of my people to be full citizens in this country and they are not. They are not in Mississippi. And they are not in Montgomery, Ala., and they are not in Washington, and they are nowhere, and that is why I am here today. You want to shut up every Negro
who has the courage to stand up and fight for the rights of his people, for the rights of workers, and I have been on many a picket line for the steelworkers too. And that is why I am here today.

The CHAIRMAN: Now just a minute.

Mr. ROBESON: All of this is nonsense.

The CHAIRMAN: You ought to read Jackie Robinson’s testimony.

Mr. ROBESON: I know Jackie Robinson, and I am sure that in his heart he would take back a lot of what he said about any reference to me. I was one of the last people, Mr. Walter, to speak to Judge Landis, to see that Jackie Robinson had a chance to play baseball. Get the pictures and get the record. I was taken by Landis by the hand, and I addressed the combined owners of the American and the National Leagues, pleading for Robinson to be able to play baseball like I played professional football.

Mr. ARENS: Would you tell us whether or not you know Thomas W. Young?

Mr. ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment.

Mr. ARENS: Thomas W. Young is a Negro who is president of the Guide Publishing Co., Inc., publishers of the Journal and Guide in Virginia and North Carolina. He took an oath before this committee on this issue, which you have just been so eloquently discussing, and I would like to read you his testimony:

What basis is there, if any, for believing Paul Robeson when he says that in the event of a war with Russia, the Negro would not fight for his country against the Soviets?

No matter how strongly we may believe it is false, that statement coming from Robeson is not easily disposed of. His own life story is an inspiration to humble people of whom Mr. Robeson now presumes to speak. In the first place, Mr. Robeson is now so far out of touch with the Negro thinking in his everyday emotions, he can no longer speak authoritatively about or for the race. Mr. Robeson does not speak for the young men who served their country so well during the recent war. He does not speak for the common people who read and believe in the Negro newspapers. He does not speak for the masses of the Negro people whom he has so shamelessly deserted. I have heard Paul Robeson declare his own personal disloyalty to the United States. He has no moral right to place in jeopardy the welfare of the American Negro simply to advance a foreign cause in which we have no real interest. It is my firm conviction that in the eyes of the Negro people this false prophet is regarded as unfaithful to their country, and they repudiate him.

Do you know the man who said that under oath before this committee?
Mr. ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment. May I now read from other Negro periodicals, which says [sic] “Paul Robeson, Negro American,” and may I read from where I am a doctor of humanity from Morehouse, and may I read from a statement by Marshall Field, when I received the Spingarn medal from the NAACP?

The CHAIRMAN: No.

Mr. ROBESON: Why not? You allowed the other statements.

The CHAIRMAN: This was a question, Mr. Robeson.

Mr. ROBESON: I have answered the question, and I take the fifth amendment.

The CHAIRMAN: You have invoked the fifth amendment, and you have answered the question.

Mr. ROBESON: Now, would you give me a chance to read my statement?

Mr. KEARNEY: I would like to ask you one question. Would you mind reading from some of the citations you have received from Stalin?

Mr. ROBESON: I have not received any citations from Stalin.

The CHAIRMAN: The Russian Government?

Mr. ROBESON: No, I received citations and medals from the Abraham Lincoln High School and medals from the NAACP and medals from many parts of the world, for my efforts for peace. It seems as though you gentlemen would be trying to contravene the waging of peace by your President here today. Are you for war, Mr. Walter, and would you be in the category of this former Representative who felt we should have fought on the side of Hitler? Are you in that category? Now can I read my statement?

Mr. KEARNEY: Were you in the service?

Mr. ROBESON: It is a sad and bitter commentary—

The CHAIRMAN: Just answer the question.

Mr. ARENS: Did you make a trip to Europe in 1949 and to the Soviet Union?

Mr. ROBESON: Yes, I made a trip to England and I sang.

Mr. ARENS: Where did you go?

Mr. ROBESON: I went first to England, where I was with the Philadelphia Orchestra, one of two American concert acts or groups which was invited to England to sing. I did a
long concert tour in England and Scandinavia, and in Denmark, and in Sweden and I also
sang for the Soviet people, one of the finest musical audiences in the world. Will you
read what the Porgy and Bess people said? They never heard such applause in their lives.
One of the most musical peoples in the world, and the great composers and great
musicians, very cultured people, and Tolstoy, and—

The CHAIRMAN: We know all of that.

Mr. ROBESON: They have helped our culture and we can learn a lot.

Mr. ARENS: Did you go to Paris on that trip?

Mr. ROBESON: I went to Paris.

Mr. ARENS: And while you were in Paris, did you tell an audience there that the
American Negro would never go to war against the Soviet Government?

Mr. ROBESON: May I say that is slightly out of context? May I explain to you what I
did say? I remember the speech very well, and the night before in London, and do not
take the newspaper, take me. I made the speech, gentlemen, Mr. So-and-So. It happened
that [sic] the night before in London before I went to Paris, and will you please listen?

Mr. ARENS: We are listening.

Mr. ROBESON: That 2,000 students from various parts of the colonial world, students
who since then have become very important in their governments and in places like
Indonesia and India, and in many parts of Africa: 2,000 students asked me and Dr. Dadoo,
a leader of the Indian people in South Africa, when we addressed this specific conference,
and remember I was speaking to a peace conference, a conference devoted to peace, they
asked me and Dr. Dadoo to say there that they were struggling for peace, that they did not
want war against anybody. It was 2,000 students who came from populations that would
range to six or seven hundred million people, and not just 15 million.

Mr. KEARNEY: Do you know anybody who wants war?

Mr. ROBESON: They asked me to address this conference and say in their name that
they did not want war. That is what I said. There is no part of my speech made in Paris
which says that I said that 15 million American Negroes would do anything. I said it was
my feeling that the American people would struggle for peace, and that has since been
underscored by the President of these United States. Now, in passing, I said—

Mr. KEARNEY: Do you know of any people who want war?

Mr. ROBESON: Listen to me. I said it was unthinkable to me that any people would
take up arms, in the name of an Eastland, to go against anybody and gentlemen, I still say
that. What should happen is that this United States Government should go down to Mississippi and protect my people. That is what should happen.

The CHAIRMAN: Did you say what was attributed to you?

Mr. ROBESON: I did not say it in that context.

Mr. ARENS: I lay before you a document containing an article, I Am Looking for Full Freedom, by Paul Robeson, in which is recited a quotation of Paul Robeson.

Mr. ROBESON: That is fine.

Mr. ARENS: This article appears in a publication called the Worker, dated July 3, 1949.

Mr. ROBESON: That is right.

Mr. ARENS: (reading)
At the Paris Conference I said it was unthinkable that the Negro people of America or elsewhere in the world could be drawn into war with the Soviet Union.

Mr. ROBESON: Is that saying the Negro people would do anything? I said it is unthinkable. I did not say it there; I did not say that there. I said that in the Worker.

Mr. ARENS: (reading)
I repeat it with hundredfold emphasis: they will not. Did you say that?

Mr. ROBESON: I did not say that in Paris, no,

Mr. ARENS: Did you say that in this article?

Mr. ROBESON: I said that in America. And, gentlemen, they have not yet done so, and it is quite clear that no Americans, no people in the world probably are going to war with the Soviet Union, so I was rather prophetic, was I not, and rather prophetic. We want peace today and not war.

Mr. ARENS: On that trip to Europe, did you go to Stockholm?

Mr. ROBESON: I certainly did, and I understand that some people in the American Embassy tried to break up my concert, and they were not successful.

Mr. ARENS: While you were in Stockholm, did you make a little speech?

Mr. ROBESON: I made all kinds of speeches, yes.
Mr. ARENS: Let me read you a quotation of one of your speeches and see if it comes to your mind.

Mr. ROBESON: Let me listen.

Mr. ARENS: Do so, please.

Mr. ROBESON: I am a lawyer.

Mr. KEARNEY: It would be a revelation if you would listen to counsel.

Mr. ROBESON: In good company, I usually listen, but you know people wander around in such fancy places, you know, and would you please let me read my statement at some point?

The CHAIRMAN: We will consider your statement.

Mr. ARENS: (reading)
I do not hesitate one second to state clearly and unmistakably: I belong to the American resistance movement which fights against American imperialism, just as the resistance movement fought against Hitler.

Mr. ROBESON: Just like Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman were underground railroaders, and fighting for our freedom; you bet your life.

The CHAIRMAN: I am going to have to insist that you listen to these questions.

MR, ROBESON: I am listening.

Mr. ARENS: (reading)
If the American warmongers fancy that they could win America’s millions of Negroes for a war against those countries (i.e., the Soviet Union and the peoples’ democracies) then they ought to understand that this will never be the case. Why should the Negroes ever fight against the only nations of the world where racial discrimination is prohibited, and where the people can live freely? Never! I can assure you, they will never fight against either the Soviet Union or the peoples’ democracies.

Did you make that statement?

Mr. ROBESON: I do not remember that. But what is perfectly clear today is that 900 million other colored people have told you that they will not, is that not so? 400 million in India, and millions everywhere, have told you, precisely, that the colored people are not going to die for anybody and they are going to die for their independence. We are dealing not with 15 million colored people. We are dealing with hundreds of millions.
Mr. KEARNEY: The witness has answered the question and he does not have to make a speech.

Mr. ARENS: Did you go to Prague, Czechoslovakia?

Mr. ROBESON: I sang in Prague.

Mr. ARENS: And did you make a speech there?

Mr. ROBESON: I do not quite remember. Let me hear it.

Mr. ARENS: Let me read you this: This is a quotation from one of your addresses there, and see if it refreshes your recollection. You came as a representative of progressive America.

Mr. ROBESON: I did.

Mr. ARENS: (reading)
   Not only as a representative of progressive America, but as a representative for the 12 Communists on trial in New York. I expect to return to New York to testify on their behalf.

Mr. ROBESON: I did, and I did testify on their behalf.

Mr. SCHERER: They were convicted.

Mr. ROBESON: I feel that, like the Supreme Court decision against segregation, the minority opinion of Justice Black will one day rule this country.

Mr. SCHERER: They were convicted.

Mr. ROBESON: They were convicted certainly, and every decent American today knows that the Smith Act is a vicious document.

Mr. SCHERER: That is your opinion.

Mr. ROBESON: It is a vicious document and it is not my opinion.

The CHAIRMAN: If everyone knows that, why is it still on the statute books?

Mr. ARENS: Then you did go to Moscow, on this trip?

Mr. ROBESON: Oh, yes.

Mr. ARENS: And while you were there, did you make a speech there?
Mr. ROBESON: I spoke many times and sang.

Mr. SCHERER: What year was it?

Mr. ARENS: 1949, was it not?

Mr. ROBESON: 1949, that is right.

Mr. ARENS: Did you write an article that was subsequently published in the U.S.S.R. Information Bulletin?

Mr. ROBESON: Yes.

Mr. ARENS: In that article, did you say:

Moscow is very dear to me and very close to my heart. I want to emphasize that only here, in the Soviet Union, did I feel that I was a real man with a capital “M.” And now after many years I am here again in Moscow, in the country I love more than any other.

Did you say that?

Mr. ROBESON: I would say— what is your name?

Mr. ARENS: Arens

Mr. ROBESON: We will take this in context, and I am quite willing to answer the question, and you are reading from a document and it is in context. When I was a singer years ago, and this you have to listen to—

Mr. ARENS: I am listening.

Mr. ROBESON: I am a bass singer, and so for me it was Chaliapin the great Russian bass, and not Russo the tenor, and so I learned the Russian language and the Russian songs to sing their songs. I wish you would listen now.

Mr. SCHERER: I ask you to direct the witness to answer the question.

Mr. ROBESON: Just be fair to me.

Mr. SCHERER: I ask regular order.

Mr. ROBESON: The great poet of Russia, like Shakespeare of England, is of African blood.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Let us not go so far afield.
Mr. ROBESON: It is very important. It is very important to explain this. I know what he said.

The CHAIRMAN: You can make an explanation. Did you make that statement?

Mr. ROBESON: When I first went to Russia in 1934—

The CHAIRMAN: Did you make that statement?

Mr. ROBESON: When I first went to Russia in 1934—

The CHAIRMAN: Did you make that statement?

Mr. SCHERER: I ask you to direct the witness to answer the question.

(The witness consulted with his counsel.)

The CHAIRMAN: Did you make that statement?

Mr. ROBESON: I would say in Russia I felt for the first time like a full human being, and no colored prejudice like in Mississippi and no colored prejudice like in Washington and it was the first time I felt like a human being, where I did not feel the pressure of colored as I feel in this committee today.

Mr. SCHERER: Why do you not stay in Russia?

Mr. ROBESON: Because my father was a slave, and my people died to build this country, and I am going to stay here, and have a part of it just like you. And no Fascist-minded people will drive me from it. Is that clear? I am for peace with the Soviet Union, and I am for peace with China, and I am not for peace or friendship with the Fascist Franco, and I am not for peace with Fascist Nazi Germans, and I am for peace with decent people in the world.

Mr. SCHERER: The reason you are here is because you are promoting the Communist cause in this country.

Mr. ROBESON: I am here because I am opposing the neo-Fascist cause which I see arising in these committees. You are like the Alien [and] Sedition Act, and Jefferson could be sitting here, and Frederick Douglass could be sitting here, and Eugene Debs could be here.

The CHAIRMAN: Are you going to answer the questions?

Mr. ROBESON: I am answering them.

The CHAIRMAN: What is your answer to this question?
Mr. ROBESON: I have answered the question.

Mr. ARENS: Did you send your son to a Soviet school in New York City?

Mr. ROBESON: What is that?

Mr. ARENS: Did you send your son to a Soviet school in New York City?

Mr. ROBESON: I sent my son to a Soviet school in the Soviet Union and in England, and he was not able to go to a Soviet school in New York.

Mr. ARENS: Did you say that he went to a Soviet school in New York?

Mr. ROBESON: I would have liked him to, but he could not. He went to Soviet school in London and one in Moscow.

Mr. ARENS: I again invite your attention to this article to which we have been referring, and speaking of your son and his studies, in a Soviet school in Soviet Russia: “Here he spent 3 years.”

Mr. ROBESON: And he suffered no prejudice like he would here in Washington.

Mr. ARENS: (reading)
Then studied in a Soviet School in London.

Mr. ROBESON: That is right.

Mr. ARENS: (reading)
And in a Soviet school in New York.

Mr. ROBESON: He was not able to.

Mr. ARENS: Is that a mistake?

Mr. ROBESON: That is a mistake.

Mr. ARENS: That is a printer’s error?

Mr. ROBESON: And a wrong statement by me.

The CHAIRMAN: Now, what prejudice are you talking about? You were graduated from Rutgers and you were graduated from the University of Pennsylvania. I remember seeing you play football at Lehigh.

Mr. ROBESON: We beat Lehigh.
The CHAIRMAN: And we had a lot of trouble with you.

Mr. ROBESON: That is right. deWysocki was playing in my team.

The CHAIRMAN: There was no prejudice against you. Why did you not send your son to Rutgers?

Mr. ROBESON: Just a moment. It all depends a great deal. This is something that I challenge very deeply, and very sincerely, the fact that the success of a few Negroes, including myself or Jackie Robinson can make up—and here is a study from Columbia University—for $700 a year for thousands of Negro families in the South. My father was a slave, and I have cousins who are sharecroppers, and I do not see my success in terms of myself. That is the reason my own success has not meant what it should mean. I have sacrificed literally hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of dollars for what I believe in.

Mr. ARENS: While you were in Moscow, did you make a speech lauding Stalin?

Mr. ROBESON: I do not know.

Mr. ARENS: Did you say in effect that Stalin was a great man and Stalin had done much for the Russian people, for all of the nations of the world, for all working people of the earth? Did you say something to that effect about Stalin when you were in Moscow?

Mr. ROBESON: I cannot remember.

Mr. ARENS: Do you have a recollection of praising Stalin?

Mr. ROBESON: I can certainly know that I said a lot about Soviet people, fighting for the peoples of the earth.

Mr. ARENS: Did you praise Stalin?

Mr. ROBESON: I do not remember.

Mr. ARENS: Have you recently changed your mind about Stalin?

Mr. ROBESON: Whatever has happened to Stalin, gentlemen, is a question for the Soviet Union, and I would not argue with a representative of the people who, in building America, wasted 60 to 100 million lives of my people, black people drawn from Africa on the plantations. You are responsible, and your forebears, for 60 million to 100 million black people dying in the slave ships and on the plantations, and don’t you ask me about anybody, please.

Mr. ARENS: I am glad you called our attention to that slave problem. While you were in Soviet Russia, did you ask them there to show you the slave labor camps?
The CHAIRMAN: You have been so greatly interested in slaves, I should think that you would want to see that.

Mr. ROBESON: The slaves I see are still in a kind of semiserfdom. I am interested in the place I am, and in the country that can do something about it. As far as I know, about the slave camps, they were Fascist prisoners who had murdered millions of the Jewish people, and who would have wiped out millions of the Negro people could they have gotten a hold of them. That is all I know about that.

Mr. ARENS: Tell us whether or not you have changed your opinion in the recent past about Stalin.

Mr. ROBESON: I have told you, mister, that I would not discuss anything with the people who have murdered 60 million of my people, and I will not discuss Stalin with you.

Mr. ARENS: You would not, of course, discuss with us the slave labor camps in Soviet Russia.

Mr. ROBESON: I will discuss Stalin when I may be among the Russian people some day, singing for them, and I will discuss it there. It is their problem.

Mr. ARENS: I suppose you are still going to laud Stalin like you did in 1949, or have your changed your appraisal?

Mr. ROBESON: We will not discuss that here. It is very interesting, however, whether Stalin or the Soviet people, that from 1917 to 1947, in one generation there could be a nation which equals the power of this one in one generation. That is one generation and nothing could be built more on slavery than this society, I assure you.

Mr. ARENS: Let me read you another statement by you about the Soviet Union and see if it refreshes your recollection.

Mr. ROBESON: You can keep reading about the Soviet Union and I have great friendship and great affection for the Soviet Union.

Mr. ARENS: How about your great affection now for the leader you were praising in 1949?

Mr. ROBESON: That is O.K.

Mr. ARENS: Has that affection diminished recently?

Mr. ROBESON: That is a question I will discuss among friends.
Mr. ARENS: You will hold that in reservation.

Mr. ROBESON: Yes.

Mr. ARENS: (reading)
Now, the Soviet Union is the only country I have ever been in where I have felt completely at ease. I have lived in England and America, and I have almost circled the globe but for myself, wife, and son, the Soviet Union is our future home.

Mr. ROBESON: If it were so we would be there. My wife is here and my son is here, and we have come back here.

Mr. ARENS: Let me complete this paragraph and see if it helps explain why it is not your future home.
For a while, however, I would not feel right going there to live. By singing its praises wherever I go I think that I can be of the most value to it. It is too easy to go to the Soviet Union, breathe the free air, and live happily ever afterward.

Were those your sentiments?

Mr. ROBESON: I came back to America to fight for my people here, and they are still second- and third-class citizens, gentlemen, and I was born here of the Negro people and of working people and I am back here to help them struggle.

Mr. SCHERER: Did you say that?

Mr. ROBESON: I have said that many times.

Mr. SCHERER: Did you say what he read to you?

Mr. ROBESON: I do not even know what he is reading from, really, and I do not mind. It is like the statement that I was supposed to make in Paris. Now, this was not in context, but I thought it was healthy for Americans to consider whether or not Negroes should fight for people who kick them around, and when they took a vote up North they got very nervous because a lot of white Americans said, “I do not see why the hell they would.”

Mr. ARENS: Did you, while you were in Moscow, make this statement:
Yes, the Communists march at the front of the struggle for stable peace and popular democracy. But they are not alone. With them are all of the progressive people of America, Wallace’s party, and the Negroes of the South, and workers of the North.

Mr. ROBESON: Now you are making it up, brother. I would have to get my own copy of the speech.
Mr. ARENS: I put it to you as a fact and ask you while you are under oath, to deny the fact that you made that statement.

Mr. ROBESON: I am not denying, but do not just read anything into something. How could I say what Wallace’s party would do, or what somebody else would do? That is nonsense.

Mr. ARENS: While you are under oath, why do you not deny it?

Mr. ROBESON: The Soviet Union and the People’s Democracy in China are in the forefront of the struggle for peace and so is our President, thank goodness, and let us hope we will have some peace, if committees like yours do not upset the applecart and destroy all of humanity. Now can I read my speech?

The CHAIRMAN: You have made it without reading it. Can you tell us what Communists participated in the preparation of that speech?

Mr. ROBESON: Participated in what?

Mr. ARENS: While you were in Soviet Russia, did you make statements about your academic training in Marxism? Do you recall that?

Mr. ROBESON: I do not recall that, but I have read a lot of Marx.

Mr. ARENS: Do you know a woman by the name of Sheila Lind?

Mr. ROBESON: I do not recall.

Mr. ARENS: She wrote an article and I am going to lay it before you here so you can help me read it. This is the Daily Worker, 1949, in which she interviewed you and it tells all about your achievements. Let me read you this for the record and you can follow it here. She is quoting:

“When I crossed the border from Poland into the Soviet Union,” he told me, “it was like stepping into another planet.”

Mr. ROBESON: Exactly true, no more prejudice, and no more colored feeling, that is right.

Mr. ARENS: (reading)

“I felt the full dignity of being a human being for the first time.”

Mr. ROBESON: That is right, and that is still not here.

Mr. ARENS: (continuing)

“He loved what he found there so much that until the war, he returned to Russia for each new year.”
Mr. ROBESON: Every new year, and we took a little vodka.

Mr. ARENS: (continuing to read)
“And he sent his son to school there. In Moscow he began to study Marxism.”

Mr. ROBESON: No, I started to study that in England, and all of my political education, strange to say, came in England where I lived and worked for many years and came back here. But my Marxist education, or education as you call it, is in [sic] English background of the Labor Party. I went to Republican Spain with Lord Atlee to visit the Atlee Battalion and I knew Sir Stafford Cripps and I knew all of the members of the Labor Party, so you cannot blame that on the Russians. You will have to blame that on the English Labor Party. They have just invited me to come to London next week to sing to 40,000 miners up in Yorkshire. Do you think that you could let me go?

The CHAIRMAN: We have nothing to do with that.

Mr. ROBESON: Could you not make a suggestion to the State Department that I be allowed to go?

The CHAIRMAN: That would not do any good because the courts have ruled that it is not in the best interests of the United States to permit you to travel.

Mr. ROBESON: They have not done that. They have ruled on a very technical problem, Mr. Walter, as to whether I sign an affidavit. That is all.

Mr. ARENS: In the summer of 1949, you came back to the United States; is that right?

Mr. ROBESON: In the summer of 1949, yes, that is right.

Mr. ARENS: And when you came back, did you make a speech in New York City, addressing a rally there? Do you recall that?

Mr. ROBESON: I do not.

Mr. ARENS: Let me quote from an article appearing in a paper, and see if you recall this speech.

I have the greatest contempt for the democratic press and there is something within me which keeps me from breaking your cameras over your heads.

Did you say that to the press people in New York City about the time you were addressing this rally in June of 1949?

Mr. ROBESON: It is sort of out of context.

Mr. ARENS: That was out of context?
Mr. ROBESON: I am afraid it is.

Mr. ARENS: Would you want to refresh your recollection by looking at the article?

Mr. ROBESON: Yes, that was not a meeting. Why do you not say what it was? When my son married the woman of his choice, some very wild press men were there to make a sensation out of it, and this thing was at his wedding, and I did not say “democratic press.” I said “a certain kind of press,” and I was reaching for a camera to break it, you are quite right.

Mr. ARENS: That was a misquotation?

Mr. ROBESON: It was not at a meeting. It was when I came out of my son’s wedding, and why do you not be honest about this? There is nothing about a meeting. It was a wedding of my son.

Mr. ARENS: Does not this article say, “Paul Robeson Addressing a Welcome Home Rally”?

Mr. ROBESON: I do not care what it says.

Mr. ARENS: That is wrong, too, is it? Now I would invite your attention, if you please, to the Daily Worker of June 29, 1949, with reference to a get-together with you and Ben Davis. Do you know Ben Davis?

Mr. ROBESON: One of my dearest friends, one of the finest Americans you can imagine, born of a fine family, who went to Amherst and was a great man.

The CHAIRMAN: The answer is yes?

Mr. ROBESON: And a very great friend and nothing could make me prouder than to know him.

The CHAIRMAN: That answers the question.

Mr. ARENS: Did I understand you to laud his patriotism?

Mr. ROBESON: I say that he is as patriotic an American as there can be, and you gentlemen belong with the Alien and Sedition Acts, and you are the nonpatriots, and you are the un-Americans, and you ought to be ashamed of yourselves.

The CHAIRMAN: Just a minute, the hearing is now adjourned.

Mr. ROBESON: I should think it would be.
The CHAIRMAN: I have endured all of this that I can.

Mr. ROBESON: Can I read my statement?

The CHAIRMAN: No, you cannot read it. The meeting is adjourned.

Mr. ROBESON: I think it should be, and you should adjourn this forever, that is what I would say.

The CHAIRMAN: We will convene at 2 o’clock this afternoon.

Mr. FRIEDMAN: Will the statement be accepted for the record without being read?

The CHAIRMAN: No, it will not.

(Whereupon, at 11 a.m., a recess was taken until 2 p.m., of this same day.)
APPENDIX B

The Undelivered, Opera Libretto

Libretto Annotations Key

[ ] = an omission from the original transcript
[normal text] = an addition to the original transcript
[italics text] = dramatic or staging indications
// = Text position has changed from the original transcript
[swapped] = Text that is delivered by another character from the original transcript

Scene 1

CHAIRMAN: [reading from a prepared speech] The committee will be in order. This morning the committee resumes its series of hearings on the vital issue of the use of American passports as travel documents in furtherance of the objectives of the Communist conspiracy. During recent hearings on this subject, it was revealed that Communists had developed a pattern of procuring American passports by representing that they were going to travel for business or pleasure to certain of the countries of the free world and then, upon arriving at those countries, they used devious methods of circumventing the travel restrictions so that they could attend Communist sponsored conferences and other propaganda efforts in the Iron Curtain countries. [instructing those at the hearing] One of the important facts which the student of the Communist conspiracy recognizes is that Communists not only create front organizations to carry on their nefarious work, but also use people who, though not actually Communist Party members, are nevertheless witting or unwitting servants of the Communist cause. Actual technical membership in the Communist Party is not, therefore, the sole criterion to be used in undertaking to ascertain whether or not a particular individual’s activities are in fact contributing to the Communist menace. Should the government of the United States,

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in the exercise of its sovereign power, refuse to issue passports to United States citizens who propose to use those passports as tickets of admission to conferences established as propaganda efforts of the Kremlin? Should our Government require the revelation of the specific itinerary of each citizen who proposes to travel behind the Iron Curtain? Where should the balance be struck between the promotion of international travel and the security risk of couriers, propagandists, and saboteurs? These and other questions must be resolved in the light of the realisms of today. It is in this spirit of dead earnestness that the Committee is pursuing this investigation and study. [spoken] Call your first witness, Mr. Arens.

ARENS: Paul Robeson, will you please come forward? Please identify yourself by name, residence and occupation.

ROBESON: My name is Paul Robeson. I live at 16 Jumel Terrace, New York City, and I am an actor and singer by occupation, and law on the side now and then.

ARENS: Are you appearing today in response to a subpoena which was served upon you by the House Committee on Un-American Activities?

ROBESON: Just a minute. Do I have the privilege of asking whom I am addressing and who is addressing me?

ARENS: I am Richard Arens.

ROBESON: What is your position?

ARENS: I am Director of the Staff. Are you appearing today in response to a subpoena served upon you by this committee?


ARENS: And you are represented by counsel?

ROBESON: I am.

ARENS: Counsel, will you kindly identify yourself?

FRIEDMAN: Milton Friedman.

ARENS: The subpoena which requires your presence here today contains a provision commanding you to produce certain documents, including [rapidly] all the United States passports issued to you for travel outside the continental United States. [normal] Do you have those documents?

ROBESON: [normal] No. There are several in existence, but I have moved several times in the last year, and I just moved recently to Jumel Terrace and I could not put my hands on them. They probably could be produced. And I also lived in Connecticut and we have [ ] a lot of stuff still packed, and if they are unpacked I will be glad to send them to you. [ ]

ARENS: Did you file a passport application on July 2nd, 1954?
ROBESON: I have filed several, and I have filed so many. I have filed about 25 in the last few months. [ ]

ARENS: Is this your application?

ROBESON: [Gospel-style] That is true. [ ]

ARENS: Now, during the course of the process in which you were applying for this passport, in July of 1954, were you requested to submit a non-Communist affidavit? [ ]

ROBESON: [normal] I was very precise not only in the application but with the State Department [ ] that under no conditions would I think of signing any such affidavit, that it is a complete contradiction of the rights of American citizens. It is my own feeling that when this gets to the Supreme Court, that it is unthinkable that now this has been applied to any American who wants a passport.

ARENS: [unfazed, deliberate] Did you comply with the requests?

ROBESON: [equally deliberate, matter of fact] I certainly did not and I will not. That is perfectly clear.

ARENS: Are you now a member of the Communist Party?

ROBESON: [playful, Gospel-style] Oh please, please, please.

SCHERER: Please answer, will you, Mr. Robeson?

ROBESON: What is the Communist Party? What do you mean by that? [ ] As far as I know, it is a legal party like the Republican Party and the Democratic Party. Do you mean—which, belonging to a party of the Communists or belonging to a party of [getting impassioned] people who have sacrificed for my people and for all Americans and workers, [with emphasis] that they can live in dignity? Do you mean that party?

ARENS: [pedantically] Are you now a member of the Communist Party?

ROBESON: [sarcastically] Would you like to come to the ballot box when I vote and take out the ballot and see?

ARENS: [angry] Mr. Chairman, I respectfully suggest that the witness be ordered and directed to answer that question.

CHAIRMAN: You are directed to answer the question. [Pause: Robeson consults with his counsel.]

Scene 2

ROBESON: [straight-forwardly] I stand upon the fifth amendment.

SCHERER: [meddling] I did not hear the answer.
ROBESON: [more boldly] I stand upon the fifth amendment of the American Constitution.

ARENS: Do you mean you invoke the fifth amendment? [Layering/overlapping starts.]

ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment.

ARENS: Do you honestly apprehend that if you told this committee truthfully whether or not you are presently—

ROBESON: I have no desire to consider anything. I invoke the fifth amendment and it is none of your business what I would like to do, and I invoke the fifth amendment. And forget it.

CHAIRMAN: You are directed to answer that question.

ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment and so I am not answering. I am answering it, am I not?

ARENS: I respectfully suggest the witness be ordered and directed to answer the question as to whether or not he honestly apprehends, that if he gave us a truthful answer to this last principal question, he would be supplying information which might be used against him in a criminal proceeding. [Robeson consults with his counsel.]

CHAIRMAN: You are directed to answer that question, Mr. Robeson.

ROBESON: [preaching] Gentlemen, in the first place, wherever I have been in the world, [ ] the first to die in the struggle against fascism were the Communists and I laid many wreaths upon the graves of Communists. It is not criminal and the fifth amendment has nothing to do with criminality. The chief justice of the Supreme Court, Warren, has been very clear on that in many speeches that the fifth amendment does not have anything to do with the inference of criminality. I invoke the fifth amendment.

ARENS: I respectfully suggest, Mr. Chairman, that the witness be ordered and directed to answer the last outstanding question.

CHAIRMAN: He has been directed to answer it and he has invoked the fifth amendment and refused to answer.

ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment.

ARENS: Have you ever been known under the name of “John Thomas?”

ROBESON: Oh please, does somebody here want—are you suggesting—do you want me to be put up for perjury some place, [preposterously] “John Thomas.” [sternly, with clarity] My name is Paul Robeson, and anything I have to say or stand for I have said in public all over the world, and that is why I am here today.

SCHERER: I ask that you direct the witness to answer the question. He is making a speech. [Photographers are taking photos.]
FRIEDMAN: Excuse me, Mr. Arens, may we have the photographers take their pictures, and then desist, because it is rather nerve-wracking for them to be there.

CHAIRMAN: They will take their pictures.

ROBESON: I will see you later, and I accept my counsel’s attention. I am used to it and I have been in moving pictures. [comically] Do you want me to pose for it good? Do you want me to smile? I cannot smile when I am talking to him.

ARENS: I put it to you as a fact, and ask you to affirm or deny the fact, that your Communist Party name was “John Thomas.”

ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment. [laughingly] This is really ridiculous.

ARENS: Now, tell this committee whether or not you know Nathan Gregory Silvermaster.

SCHERER: Mr. Chairman, this is not a laughing matter.

ROBESON: It is a laughing matter to me, this is really complete nonsense.

CHAIRMAN: It will be for a while.

ROBESON: It will be and it should be for you. It should be for you all.

ARENS: Will you please tell—

ROBESON: This whole committee.

ARENS: Will you please tell us whether or not you know Nathan Gregory Silvermaster.

ROBESON: [consults counsel] No; I do not.

ARENS: Have you ever known Nathan Gregory Silvermaster?

ROBESON: [consults counsel] I invoke the fifth amendment.

ARENS: Do you honestly apprehend, that if you told this committee whether or not you know Nathan Gregory Silvermaster, you would be supplying information that could be used against you in a criminal proceeding?

ROBESON: I have not the slightest idea of what you are talking about. I invoke the fifth.

ARENS: I suggest, Mr. Chairman, this record show that the witness be ordered and directed to answer that question.

CHAIRMAN: You are directed to answer the question of whether or not you have ever known Nathan Gregory Silvermaster.

ROBESON: In answer to that question, I invoke the fifth amendment.
SCHERER: The witness talks very loudly when he makes a speech, but when he invokes the fifth amendment I cannot hear him.

ROBESON: I invoked the fifth amendment very loudly. You know I am an actor, and I have medals for my voice, for diction.

SCHERER: [tauntingly] Will you talk a little louder?

ROBESON: I can talk plenty loud, yes, I am noted for my diction in the theater.

ARENS: Do you know a woman by the name of Louise Bransten?

ROBESON: [consults counsel] I invoke the fifth amendment.

ARENS: You attended a meeting in the home of Louis Bransten, in 1945, in San Francisco, did you not? Do you have a recollection of that little session?

SCHERER: [swapped] // Have you ever had contact with a man named Gregory Kheifets? //

ROBESON: [consults counsel] // I invoke the fifth amendment. //

THIRD REPRESENTATIVE: [swapped] // Who are Mr. and Mrs. Vladimir P. Mikkeev? Do you know them? //

ARENS: I put it to you as a fact, and ask you to affirm or deny the fact, that on February 23, 1945, you attended a meeting in the home of Louise Bransten, at which were present Max Yergan, Frederick Thompson, David Jenkins, Nancy Pittman, Dr. Lena Halpern, and Larry Fanning?

ROBESON: I invoke the fifth.

SCHERER: [swapped] // Now, Gregory Kheifits is identified with the Soviet espionage operations, is he not? //

ROBESON: // I have not the slightest idea, but I invoke the fifth amendment. //

THIRD REPRESENTATIVE: [swapped] // Mr. Chairman, the witness does not have the slightest idea who they are, and I respectfully suggest he be ordered and directed to answer that question. //

ROBESON: // Oh, gentlemen, I thought I was here about some passports. //

SCHERER: [swapped] // We will get to that in just a few moments. //

ROBESON: // This is complete nonsense. //

SCHERER: [swapped] Tell us whether or not you have had contact and operations with Gregory Kheifets.

CHAIRMAN: // You are directed to answer the question. //
ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment.

THIRD REPRESENTATIVE: [swapped] // Who is Victor Murra—that is John Victor Murra? //

ROBESON: // I answer the question by invoking the fifth amendment. //

ARENS: Do you know any of those individuals whose names I have just recited?

FRIEDMAN: // I do not think that he heard that question. //

SCHERER: [swapped] // Leon Josephson? //

ROBESON: [to Scherer] // I invoke the fifth amendment. // [to Third Representative] // I invoke the fifth amendment. Your questioning leaves me completely. //

THIRD REPRESENTATIVE: [swapped] // Leon Josephson[?] //

ROBESON: [directed to all representatives, in general] // I invoke the fifth amendment. //

ARENS: // Do you know a Manning Johnson? // [Layering ends.]

Scene 3

ROBESON: [contemplatively] Manning Johnson, I only have read in the papers that he said that Dr. Ralph Bunche was some kind of fellow, and he was dismissed from the FBI. He must be a pretty low character when he could be dismissed from that.

SCHERER: Whether he is a low character or not, do you know him?

ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment. []

ARENS: You tell us whether or not Manning Johnson was lying or whether he was telling the truth when he said that when he was a member of the Communist conspiracy, he knew you as part and parcel of that conspiracy.

ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment. []

ARENS: Do you know Max Yergan?

ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment.[ ] Could I ask whether this is legal.

CHAIRMAN: This is legal. This is not only legal, but usual. By a unanimous vote this committee has been instructed to perform this very distasteful task.

ROBESON: It is not distasteful. To whom am I talking to?

CHAIRMAN: You are speaking to the chairman of this committee.

ROBESON: Mr. Walter?
CHAIRMAN: Yes.
ROBESON: The Pennsylvania Walter?
CHAIRMAN: That is right.
ROBESON: [You are] the representative of the steelworkers?
CHAIRMAN: That is right.
ROBESON: Of the coal mining workers and not United States Steel, by any chance? A great patriot.
CHAIRMAN: That is right.
ROBESON: You are the author of all of the bills that are going to keep all kinds of decent people out of the country.
CHAIRMAN: No, only your kind.
ROBESON: Colored people like myself, from the West Indies and all kinds, and just the Teutonic Anglo-Saxon stock [impassioned] that you would let come in.
CHAIRMAN: We are trying to make it easier to get rid of your kind, too.
ROBESON: [serious, surprised] You do not want any colored people to come in?
CHAIRMAN: Proceed. [ ]
ARENS: May I ask you now, was there, to your knowledge, a Communist core in the Council on African Affairs?
ROBESON: I will take the fifth amendment and could I be allowed to read from my own statement here, while you read this statement just for a moment? [Robeson holds up a statement to give the committee.]
ARENS: Will you just tell this committee while under oath, Mr. Robeson, the Communists who participated in the preparation of that statement?
ROBESON: [spoken] Oh, please.
ARENS: Now—
CHAIRMAN: Could you identify that core clearly? Of whom did it consist?
ROBESON: Could I read my statement?
ARENS: As soon as you tell the committee the Communists who participated in the preparation. [ ]
ROBESON: [With purpose, Robeson moves to deliver the monologue as a mission statement to the audience.] I invoke the fifth amendment. Could I say that for the reason
that I am here today [], from the mouth of the State Department itself, is because I should not be allowed to travel because I have struggled for [many] years for the independence of the colonial peoples of Africa, and for many years I have so labored and I can say modestly that my name is very much honored in South Africa and all over Africa in my struggles for [ ] independence. [ ] The other reason that I am here today is again from the State Department and from the court record of the court of appeals, that when I am abroad, I speak out against the injustices against the Negro people of this land. [ ] That is why I am here. This is the basis and I am not being tried for whether I am a Communist, I am being tried for fighting for the rights of my people who are still second-class citizens in this United States of America. My mother was born in your State, Mr. Walter, and my mother was a Quaker, and my ancestors in the time of Washington baked bread for George Washington’s troops when they crossed the Delaware, and my own father was a slave. [with deep expression] I stand here struggling for the rights of my people to be full citizens in this country and they are not. They are not in Mississippi and they are not in Montgomery, Alabama, and they are not in Washington, and they are nowhere, and that is why I am here today. You want to shut up every Negro who has the courage to stand up and fight for the rights of his people, for the rights of workers and I have been on many a picket line for the steelworkers too. And that is why I am here today. [Robeson directs his focus back to the committee.]

CHAIRMAN: Now just a minute.

ROBESON: All of this is nonsense. []

ARENS: Would you tell us whether or not you know Thomas W. Young?

ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment.

ARENS: Thomas W. Young is a Negro who is president of the Guide Publishing Company [ ]. He took an oath before this committee on this issue, which you have just been so eloquently discussing, and I would like to read you his testimony:

ARENS: [Arens reads document with Thomas Young’s testimony using sprechstimm vocal technique.] “What basis is there, if any, for believing Paul Robeson when he says that in the event of a war with Russia, the Negro would not fight for his country against the Soviets? [ ] It is my firm conviction that in the eyes of the Negro people this false prophet is regarded as unfaithful to their country, and they repudiate him.”

ARENS: [normale] Do you know the man who said that under oath before this committee?

ROBESON: I invoke the fifth amendment. May I now read from other Negro periodicals, which say [reads from document with quasi-sprechstimm] “Paul Robeson, Negro American,” [normale] and may I read from where I am a Doctor of Humanity from Morehouse, and [ ] when I received the Spingarn Medal from the NAACP?

CHAIRMAN: No.

ROBESON: Why not? You allowed the other statement[ ].
CHAIRMAN: This was a question, Mr. Robeson.

ROBESON: I have answered the question, and I take the fifth amendment. [ ] Now, would you give me a chance to read my statement?

SCHERER: [swapped] I would like to ask you one question. Would you mind reading from some of the citations you have received from Stalin?

ROBESON: I have not received any citations from Stalin.

CHAIRMAN: From the Russian Government?

ROBESON: No, I received citations and medals from [ ] many parts of the world, for my efforts for peace. It seems as though you gentlemen would be trying to contravene the waging of peace by your President here today. Are you for war, Mr. Walter, and would you be in the category of this former representative who felt we should have fought on the side of Hitler? [ ]

SCHERER: [swapped] Were you in the service?

Scene 4

ROBESON: [begins reading his statement in the actual hearing] It is a sad and bitter commentary… [At this point in the actual hearing, the Chairman interrupts Robeson.]

[as if from a dream, divorced from reality]

ROBESON: [text from Robeson’s undelivered statement]³ …on the state of civil liberties in America that the very forces of reaction [ ], who have denied me access to the lecture podium, the concert hall, the opera house, and the dramatic stage, now hale me before a committee of inquisition, in order to hear what I have to say.

[musical interlude, ca. 6’]

Scene 5

CHAIRMAN: [interrupting, back to reality] [source is again the HUAC transcript] Just answer the question. [ ]

ARENS: Did you go to Paris [in 1949]?

³ The text is taken from the statement Paul Robeson was not permitted to read before the House Un-American Activities Committee. (Refer to Appendix G for the full text.) Paul Robeson Speaks: Writings, Speeches, Interviews, 1918-1974, ed. Philip Foner, (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1978) pp. 433-436.
ROBESON: I went to Paris.

ARENS: And while you were in Paris, did you tell an audience there that the American Negro would never go to war against the Soviet Government?

ROBESON: May I say that this is slightly out of context?

SCHERER: Do you know anybody who wants war?

ROBESON: There is no part of my speech made in Paris which says that I said that 15 million American Negroes would do anything. I said it was my feeling that the American people would struggle for peace and that has since been underscored by the President of these United States.

SCHERER: Do you know of any people who want war?

ROBESON: Listen to me, I said it was unthinkable to me that any people would take up arms in the name of an Eastland to go against anybody, and gentlemen, I still say that. What should happen would be that this United States Government should go down to Mississippi and protect my people. That is what should happen.

SCHERER: Why do you not stay in Russia?

ROBESON: Because my father was a slave, and my people died to build this country, and I am going to stay here and have a part of it just like you. And no Fascist-minded people will drive me from it. Is that clear? I am for peace with the Soviet Union and I am for peace with China, and I am not for peace or friendship with the Fascist Franco, and I am not for peace with Fascist Germans, and I am for peace with decent people in the world.

SCHERER: The reason you are here is because you are promoting the Communist cause in this country.

ROBESON: I am here because I am opposing the neo-Fascist cause which I see arising in these committees. You are like the Alien and Sedition Act, and Jefferson could be sitting here, and Frederick Douglass could be sitting here and Eugene Debs could be here.

CHAIRMAN: Are you going to answer the questions?

ROBESON: I am answering them.

CHAIRMAN: What is your answer to this question?

ROBESON: I have answered the question.

ARENS: Have you recently changed your mind about Stalin?

ROBESON: Whatever has happened to Stalin, gentlemen, is a question for the Soviet Union and I would not argue with a representative of the people who, in building America wasted 60 to 100 million lives of my people, black people drawn from Africa on
the plantations. You are responsible and your forebears for 60 million to 100 million
black people dying in the slave ships and on the plantations, and don’t you ask me about
anybody, please.

ARENS: I am glad you called our attention to that slave problem. While you were in
Soviet Russia, did you ask them there to show you the slave labor camps?

CHAIRMAN: You have been so [ ] interested in slaves, I should think that you would
want to see that. [ ]

ARENS: Tell us whether or not you have changed your opinion in the recent past about
Stalin.

ROBESON: I have told you, Mister, that I would not discuss anything with the people
who have murdered 60 million of my people, and I will not discuss Stalin with you. [ ]
Now can I read my speech?

CHAIRMAN: [The Chairman is no longer pretending that he may allow Robeson to read
his speech.] You have made it without reading it. Can you tell us what Communists
participated in the preparation of that speech?

ROBESON: [quasi-sprechstimme vocal technique] Participated in what?

ARENS: While you were in Soviet Russia, did you make statements about your academic
training in Marxism? [ ]

ROBESON: [normale] I do not recall that, but I have read a lot of Marx. [ ]

ARENS: Do you know Ben Davis?

ROBESON: One of my dearest friends, one of the finest Americans you can imagine,
born of a fine family, who went to Amherst and was a great man. [ ]

ARENS: Did I understand you to laud his patriotism?

ROBESON: I say that he is as patriotic an American as there can be, and you gentlemen
belong with the Alien and Sedition Acts, and you are the nonpatriots, and you are the un-
Americans and you ought to be ashamed of yourselves.

CHAIRMAN: Just a minute, the hearing is now adjourned.

ROBESON: [quasi-sprechstimmme] I should think it would be.

CHAIRMAN: I have endured all of this that I can.

ROBESON: [normale] Can I read my statement?

CHAIRMAN: No, you cannot read it. The meeting is adjourned.

ROBESON: I think it should be and you should adjourn this forever, that is what I would
say. [ ]
FRIEDMAN: Will the statement be accepted for the record without being read?
CHAIRMAN: No, it will not.
APPENDIX C

Sketch of Vocal Layering in Scene 2
A: [Will you please tell —]
R: [Will you please tell me —]
C: [Will it be and it should be for you. It should be for you all.] This whole committee.

A: Whether or not you know Nation Gregory Silvermaster. Have you ever known Nation Gregory Silvermaster?
R: Consults counsel
C: [No; I do not.]

A: [Do you honestly apprehend, that if you tell this committee whether or not you know Nation]
R: I invoke the fifth amendment.

A: Gregory Silvermaster, you would be supplying information that could be used against you in a criminal proceeding?
R: I have not the slightest idea.

A: [I suggest, Mr. Chairman, the record show that the witness be ordered to]
R: If what you are talking about, I invoke the fifth.
C: [You are]

A: directed to answer that question?
R: [In answer to that question, I invoke the fifth.]
C: directed to answer the question of whether or not you have ever known Nation Gregory Silvermaster.

S: The witness talks very badly when she makes a speech, but when she reads she reads with an accent. I cannot

S: hear him.
R: [I invoked the fifth amendment very badly. You know I am an actor, and I have no desire]

S: [Will you talk a little louder?]
R: [I can talk plenty loud, yes I am used to my voice, for directing.]

R: [in the theater.] Aren't do you know a woman by the name of Louise Brown?
C: [Consults counsel]
R: I invoke the fifth amendment.
A: You attended a meeting in the home of Louise Borden, in 1945 in San Francisco.
(Sekerer) Have you ever heard about
R: I invoke the Fifth Amendment! I invoke the fifth amendment.
A: Fraser, did you not? Do you have a recollection of that little session?
S: with a man named Gregory Karatz.
Now, Gregory Karatz is identical with the
Who are Mr. and Mrs. Vladimir P. Nekhnev? Do you know
R: I have not the slightest idea but I invoke the fifth amendment. Gentlemen, I protest.
A: as a fact, and ask you to affirm or deny the fact that on February 23, 1945 you attended a meeting in
S: Soviet espionage operating in the not?
3rd. team?

Mr. Chairman, the witness
R: I was there about some property.
A: some of Louise Borden, at which were present Mrs. Kaye, Frederick Thompson, David T. Lane, Henry Altman.
S: We will get to that in just a few moments.
3rd. does not have the slightest idea who they are and I respectfully suggest he be ordered to direct.
A: Dr. Hare, Helper, and Larry Tanner?

B: Tell us what or not you have any contact and questions with Gregory Arklets.

C: Do you know any of these witnesses?

D: Answer the question.

E: Who is the witness, Mr. Tatum is John Victor? F: Mr. Jordan.

Friedman: I do not know who he is.

R: the fifth amendment. I invoke the fifth amendment.

A: Well, names I have just received?

S: I hand that question.

R: Means the completely. I invoke the fifth amendment. I invoke the fifth amendment. Your question?

A: Do you know a Manny Johnson?

R: Manny Johnson, I only have read in the papers that he said that Dr. Ralph Bunch was some kind of fellow and he was dismissed from the FBI. He must be a pretty low character. I mean he could be dismissed from that. Whether he is a low character or not, do you know him?

F: I invoke the fifth amendment.
APPENDIX D

Undelivered

Statement of Paul Robeson

to

House of Representatives Committee on Un-American Activities

It is a sad and bitter commentary on the state of civil liberties in America that the very forces of reaction, typified by Representative Francis Walter and his Senate counterparts, who have denied me access to the lecture podium, the concert hall, the opera house, and the dramatic stage, now seek to silence me before a committee of investigation in order to hear what I have to say. It is obvious that those who are trying to gag me hope that abroad will scarcely grant me the freedom to express myself fully in a hearing controlled by them.

If we are discussing the auditing of the activities of Eastland and Dulles, then it is for them to question me; for it is they who should be called to account for their conduct, not I. Why does Walter not investigate the truly "un-American" activities of Eastland and his gang, to whom the Constitution is a scrap of paper when invoked by the Negro people and to whom the Black man is a menace to their racial duty? And how can Eastland pretend concern over the internal security of our country while he supports the most brutal assaults on fifteen million Americans by the white citizens councils and the Ku Klux Klan? When will Dulles explain his reckless irresponsible "brink of war" policy by which the world might have been destroyed.

And specifically, why is Dulles afraid to let me have a passport, to let me travel abroad to sing, to act, to speak my mind? This question has been partially answered by State Department lawyers who have asserted in court that the State Department claims the right to deny me a passport because of what they called my "recognized status as a spokesman for large sections of Negro Americans" and because I have "been for years extremely active in behalf of independence of colonial peoples of Africa". The State Department has also based its denial of a passport to me on the fact that I sent a message of greeting to the Bandung Conference, convened by Nehru, Sukarno and other great leaders of the colored peoples of the world. Principally, however, Dulles objects to speeches I have made abroad against the oppression suffered by my people in the United States.

I am proud that those statements can be made about me. It is my firm intention to continue to speak out against injustices to

Richard Yates

UNDEUTERED
THE UNDELIVERED

for chamber quintet

Richard Yates

Instrumentation:
  Oboe
  Horn in F
  Violin
  Viola
  Cello

Duration: 7 minutes

*Photo on cover from the Paul Robeson Collection, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.*
Paul Robeson, the African-American singer, lawyer, speaker, actor, football player, and civil rights activist, was interrogated by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) in June of 1956. The pretext for the hearing had to do with Robeson’s passport and whether he should be allowed to travel abroad, singing and speaking about the oppression of people around the world. However, the record makes clear that the U.S. Government was very uneasy about Robeson’s sympathies specifically to the Russian people, as well as his empowering words for his black brothers and sisters around the world. As Robeson quotes, the State Department officially denied his requests to travel abroad on the grounds that Robeson was a “spokesman for large sections of Negro Americans” and that he had been an active speaker for colonial independence in Africa.

During the hearing, Robeson tried repeatedly to read a statement that he had prepared in advance of the meeting. In short, he wanted to be afforded the opportunity to defend himself against the accusations that he was a Communist and an “Un-American.” Though he tried, even Robeson, the skillful lawyer who graduated from Columbia Law School in 1922 (while playing football for the NFL), was not able to persuade the committee to hear his statement. When he boldly started reading the speech, the Chairman cut him off after only the first line.

This composition for chamber quintet is an adaptation of a scene from my opera about Robeson’s HUAC hearing. The undelivered statement represents in many ways the very essence of this remarkable man. It is defiant in the face of oppression, artistically rich, and unrelenting in its moral righteousness. Robeson’s notes scrawled over the cover of the document reveal some of his many extraordinary gifts. He was deeply intellectual, learning some 20 languages, and a voracious reader of many different topics. Of interest specifically to me has been his scholarship into music theory. Robeson has an unpublished manuscript describing the unification of peoples around the world by virtue of shared pentatonic scale forms. He was uncommonly brilliant and prolific in his many pursuits.

The musical piece is meant to recreate the rapid-fire thoughts that must have been going through Robeson’s mind during the trial. Fragments of his text are incorporated into the instrumental parts—as though they are finally getting spoken through the music—nearly 40 years after Robeson’s death in 1976. As a first wave civil rights activist, Robeson paved the way for prominent figures like Martin Luther King, Jr. to make dramatic improvements in the 1960s. He was a remarkable man that stood unwaveringly in defiance of bigotry for the truths that he knew would illuminate a path for freedom.
THE UNDELIVERED

Freely, \( \mathcal{J} \approx \text{ca. 60} \)

Boldy, \( \mathcal{J} \approx \text{ca. 100} \)

It is a sad and bitter commentary

Music: Richard Yates
Text: Paul Robeson

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action, who have denied me

f

to the lecture

3

hall,

f arco

the concert hall

pizz.

the concert hall

action,

who have denied me access to the lecture

hall,

the opera house, and the dramatic stage,

before a com-

the opera house,

now hale me before a com-

now hale me before

and the dramatic stage,
mittee of inquisition, in order to hear what I have to say.

mittee of inquisition, in order to hear what I have to say.

pizz.

in order pizz.

I have to say.

f

pizz.

in order pizz.

I have to say.

rit.

mf p
dolce

mf p

dolce
Melancholy and Bittersweet,

\[ j = \text{ca. 60} \]

Ob.

Hn.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

\[ \text{mezzo} \]

\[ \text{mezzo} \]

\[ \text{mezzo} \]

\[ \text{mezzo} \]
Mysteriously,
 prostit.  

H
 poco a poco accel.

(in the distance)
With Growing Anxiety,

\[ \text{\( \downarrow \)} = \text{ca. 72} \quad \text{poco a poco accel.} \]

\[ \text{\( \downarrow \)} = \text{ca. 84} \]

\[ \text{\( \downarrow \)} = \text{ca. 72} \]

\[ \text{\( \downarrow \)} = \text{ca. 84} \]
Chorale

---

*Rising to the Challenge,

\[ \text{poco a poco accel.} \]

\[ \text{\( \mathbf{M} \)} \]

\[ \text{\( \dot{\text{\( d \)}} \) = ca. 96} \]

\*

*Crescendo to the next dynamic, then build again
APPENDIX E

THE UNDELIVERED A CHAMBER OPERA

Statement of Paul Robeson

to House of Representatives Committee on Un-American Activities

It is a sad and bitter commentary on the state of civil liberties in America that the very forces of reaction, typified by Senator Joseph McCarthy, and the Senator's counterparts in the Senate, who have denied me access to the lecture podium, the concert hall, the operatic stage, and the dramatic stage, have called me before a committee of inquisition in order to hear what I have to say. It is obvious that those who are trying to gag me here and abroad will scarcely grant me the freedom to express myself fully in a country abroad. For them, it is the United States Secretary of State, Mr. Dulles, who is sought to be gagged. It is Mr. Dulles who is to be questioned by the Committee, not Mr. Eastland and Mr. J. J. R. Bricker. The Senator Mr. Eastland and Mr. Bricker have been called to account for their conduct, not I. Why does Senator McCarthy not investigate the truly "un-American" activities of Mr. Eastland and his gang, to whom the Constitution is a scrap of paper when invoked by the Negro people and to whom defiance of the Supreme Court is a duty? And how can Mr. Eastland pretend concern over the internal security of our country while he supports the most brutal assaults on fifteen million Americans by the white citizens councils and the Ku Klux Klan? When will Dulles explain his reckless irresponsible "brink of war" policy by which the world might have been destroyed.

And specifically, why is Dulles afraid to let me have a passport, to let me travel abroad to sing, to act, to speak my mind? This question has been partially answered by State Department lawyers who have asserted in court that the Department of State claims the right to deny me a passport because of what they called my "recognized status as a spokesman for large sections of Negro Americans" and because I have "been for years extremely active in behalf of independence of colonial peoples of Africa". The State Department has also based its refusal to grant me a passport on the fact that I sent a message of greeting to the Bandung Conference, convened by Nehru, Sukarno and other great leaders of the colored peoples of the world. Principally, however, Dulles objects to speeches I have made abroad against the oppression suffered by my people in the United States.

I am proud that those statements can be made about me. It is my firm intention to continue to speak out against injustices to Negro Americans in my own country and to establish my own defense abroad. I am not afraid to be held to account for my words. My statements are the truth; I am not a liar. I am not afraid of the Senator's wrath.
**Cast:**
Paul Robeson (Baritone)
Francis Walter: Chairman (Bass)
Richard Arens: Director of Staff (Tenor)
Gordon Scherer: Ohio Representative (Tenor)
Milton Friedman: Robeson’s Counsel (Tenor)
Third Representative (Bass)

**Instrumentation:**
Clarinet in Bb
Horn in F
Percussion: Snare Drum, Ride Cymbal, Hi-Hat, Bass Drum
Piano
Violin
Viola
Cello

**Scene Durations in the Opera**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Duration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scene 1</td>
<td>9’30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scene 2</td>
<td>6’00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scene 3</td>
<td>9’45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scene 4</td>
<td>7’00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scene 5</td>
<td>9’30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 6</td>
<td>41’45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Performance Notes:**
The singers may perform with music. (They will look as though they are reading documents for the proceeding.)

Amplification of the vocalists may help correct any balance problems.

The rhythms of the vocal parts may be performed freely to accommodate the interpretation of the singers.
The fourth scene is to be performed as a fantasy exploring Robeson’s inner thoughts. It is important to remember that he was in a period of severe mental distress immediately before the hearing.

*Quasi-sprechstimme* is to be performed more on the side of sung tone than of spoken production.

Refer to the libretto and original transcript for further information about the derivations of the text from the hearing.
THE UNDELIVERED

Music: Richard Yates
Libretto: Richard Yates
(From HUAC Transcript)
The Undelivered (Scene 1)

CHAIRMAN (WALTER)

[reading from a prepared speech]

The committee will be in order. This morning the committee resumes its series of hearings on the vital issue of the use of American passports as travel documents in furtherance of the ob
During recent hearings on this subject, it was revealed that Communists had developed a pattern of procuring American passports.
by representing that they were going to travel for business or pleasure to certain of the countries of the

free world and then, upon arriving at those countries, they used devious methods of circumventing the travel restrictions

The Undelivered (Scene 1)
Cl. Hn. Perc.

so that they could attend Communist-sponsored conferences and other propaganda efforts in the

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

The Undelivered (Scene 1)

Cl. Hn. Perc.

1. iron Curtain countries. One of the important facts which the student of the Communist con-

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.
The Undelivered (Scene 1)

spira-cy recog-nizes is that Com-mu-nists not only cre-ate front or-ga-niza-tions to car-ry on their ne-fa-ri-ous work, but also use peo-ple who, though not ac-tual-ly Com-mu-nist Par-ty mem-bers, are ne-ver-the-less wit-ting
or un-wit-ting ser-vants of the Com-mu-nist cause.

Ac-tual mem-ber-ship in the Com-mu-nist Par-ty is not, there-
fore, the

sole cri-ti-e-to be used in un-der-tak-ing to as-cer-tain whe-ther or not a par-
 ti-es are in fact con-tri-bu-tion to
the Communist menace. Should the government of the United States, in the exercise of its sovereign power, re-

fuse to issue passports to United States citizens who propose to use those passports as tickets of admission
to con-feren- ce, es-tab-lished as pro-pa-gan-da ef-forts of the Krem-lin? Should our Go-vern-ment re-quire the re-ve-la-tion of the spe-ci-fic
i - ti ne ra-ry of each ci - ti zen who pro - pos es to tra - vel be - hind the I - ron Cur - tain?
Where should the balance be struck between the promotion of international travel and the security risk of couriers, pa-
ganists, and saboteurs? These and other questions must be re-solved in the light of the realities of to-day.
It is in this spirit of dead earnestness that the Committee is pursuing this investigation and study. [spoken] Call your first witness, Mr. Arens.

Paul Robinson, will you please come forward? Please identify yourself by name, residence and occupation.
My name is Paul Robeson. I live at sixteen Juniper Terrace, New York City, and I am an actor by occupation, and law on the side now and then.

Are you appearing today in response to a subpoena which was served upon you by the House Committee on
The Undelivered (Scene 1)

82

Perc.

A.

Un - A - me-rí- can Ac-ti-vi-ties?

R.

ROBISON

Just a mi-nute. Do I have the privi-ledge of ask-ing whom I am ad-dres-sing and who is ad-dres-sing

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

85

Hn.

A.

I am Ri-chard A -rens. I am Di-rec-tor of the Staff. Are you ap-pear-ing to-day in res-pose to a

R.

me? What is your po - si-tion?
The Undelivered (Scene 1)

A. sub-poe-na served u-pon you by this com-mit-tee?

A. Coun-cil will you kin-dly i-den-ti fy your- self?

R. And you are re-pre-sen-ted by coun-cil?

R. Oh, yes. I am.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

A. sub-poe-na which re-qui-res your pre-sence here to-day con-tains a pro-vi-sion

F. Mil-ton Fried-man.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.
The Undelivered (Scene 1)

Cl.

94

A.

pp

rapidly

Pno.

pp

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

pp

com-mand-ing you to pro-duce cer-tain do-cu-ments, in-clud-ing all the U-ni-ted States

pass-port is-ued to you for tra-vel out-side the con-ti-nental li-mits of the U-ni-ted States. Do you have those do-cu-ments?
No. There are several instances, but I have moved several times in the last year, and I just moved recently.

to Ju-mel Ter-race and I could not put my hands on them. They pro-ba-ly could be pro-duced. And I al-so lived in...
Con-nec-ti-cut and we have a lot of stuff still packed, and if they are un-packed I will be glad to send them.

Did you file a pass-port ap-pli-ca-tion on Ju-ly se-cond, nine-teen fift-ty four?

to you.

I have fi-led sev-eral, and
Is this your application?

Now, I have filed so many. I have filed about twenty-five in the last few months. That is true.

During the course in which you were applying for this passport, in July of nineteen fifty-four, were you...
The Undelivered (Scene 1)

113

Cl.

Perc.

A.

R.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

116

Cl.

Perc.

R.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.
that it is a complete contradiction of the rights of American citizens. It is my own feeling that when this gets to the Supreme Court, that

Did you come

it is unthinkable that now this has been applied to any American who wants a passport.
 ply with there-quests? Are you now a mem-ber of the Com-mu-nist Par-ty?

mf equally deliberate, matter of fact

1 cer-tain-ly not and I will not. That is per-fect-ly clear. Ob please,

mf playful, Gospel style

Please an-sw er, will you, Mis-ter Robe-son? Gospel/playful

please, please. What is the Com-mu-nist Par-ty? What do you mean by that? As

The Undelivered (Scene 1)
far as I know it is a le-gal par-ty like the Re-pub-li-can Par-ty and the De-mo-cre-tic Par ty. Do you mean, which- be-long-ing to a par-ty of the

Com-mu-nists or be-long-ing to a par-ty of peo-ple who have sa-cri-ficed for my peo-ple and for all A-
The Undelivered (Scene 1)

Are you a Mem-ber of the meri-can and wor-kers, that they can live in dig-ni-ty. Do you mean that par-ty?

Com-mu-nist Par-ty? mf sarcastically

Would you like to come to the bal-lot box when I vote and take out the bal-lot and see?
Chair-man, I respectfully suggest that the witness be ordered and directed to answer that question.

[Pause: Robeson consults with his counsel] You are directed to answer the question.
Scene 2

With Slowly Growing Intensity, $\frac{3}{4} = \text{ca. 60}$
Ride Cymbal with soft mallets

Perc.  
\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{ppp} \\
\text{more boldly}
\end{array}
\]

S.  

R.  
\[
\text{Do not hear the answer.}
\]

With Slowly Growing Intensity, $\frac{3}{4} = \text{ca. 60}$

Vc.  

A.  
\[
\text{Do you mean you invoke the fifth amendment?}
\]

R.  
\[
\text{pon the fifth amendment of the American Constitution.}
\]

Vc.  

A.  
\[
\text{Do you honestly apprehend that if you told this commit-tee truthfully whether or not you are present-ly-}
\]

R.  
\[
\text{a - mend - ment.}
\]

Vc.  

A.  
\[
\text{I have no desire to consider anything.}
\]

Vc.  

R.  
\[
\text{fifth amendment and it is none of your business what I would like to do, and I invoke the fifth}
\]

C.  
\[
\text{CHAIRMAN} \\
\text{You are directed to answer that}
\]

Vc.  

The Undelivered (Scene 2)

Cl.

Perc.

A.

R.

C.

Pno.

Ve.

13

Cl.

Perc.

A.

R.

C.

Pno.

Ve.

15

Cl.

Perc.

A.

R.

Pno.

Ve.

17

Cl.

Perc.

A.

R.

C.

1 Cl.

Perc.

A.

R.

C.

15

Cl.

Perc.

A.

R.

C.

17

Cl.

Perc.

A.

R.

C.

You are directed to answer that question,
The Undelivered (Scene 2)

19

Cl.

A.

ceeding.

mf

Gen-tle-men, in the first place, where-ver I have been in the world the first to die in the

C.

Mis-ter Robe-son.

Pno.

21

R.

strug-gle a-gainst fas-ci-sm were the Com-mu-nists and I laid ma-ny wreaths up-on the graves of Com-mu-nists.

Pno.

23

A.

It is not cri-mi-nal_ and the fifth a-mend-ment has no-thing to do with cri-mi-na-li-ty._ The chief

Pno.

25

A.

gest, Mis-ter Chair-man, that the wit-ness be or-dered and di-rec-ted to an-swer the

R.

just-ice of the Su-preme Court, War-ren, has been ve-ry clear on that in ma-ny spee-ches

Pno.

Vc.
last out-standing quest-ion.

that the fifth amend-ment does not have any-thing to do with the in-fer-ence of cri-mi-na li-ty. I in-voke the fifth a

He has been di-rec-ted to ans-wer it and he has in-voke the

Have you e-ver been un-der the name of "John Tho-mas?"
mend-ment. I in-voke the fifth a-mend-ment.

fifth a-mend-ment and re-fused to ans-wer.

please does some-body want are you sug-gest ing do you want me to be put up for per-ju-ry some place, "John Thom- as."

preposterously
[Photographers are taking photos.]

ask that you direct the witness to answer the question. He is making a speech.

sternly, with clarity

Excuse me, Mr. Arens. May we have the photographers take their pictures, and then desist, because it is rather nerve-wracking for them to public all over the world, and that is why I am here today.

I put it

be there.

will see you later, and I accept my counsel's attention. I am used to it, and I have been in moving pictures. Do you

They will take their pictures.

Photographers are taking photos.
The Undelivered (Scene 2)

A. so you as a fact, and ask you to affirm or deny the fact, that your Communist party name was

R. want for me to pose for it good? Do you want me to smile? I cannot smile when I am

Pno.

Vln.

Vc.

A. "John Thomas." Now, tell this committee whether or not you knew Nathan Gnessy Silver

S. laughingly Mr. Chairman,

R. talking to him, I invoke the fifth amendment. This is really ridiculous.

Pno.

Vln.

Vc.

A. mas ter.

S. this is not a laughing matter.

R. It is a laughing matter to me, this is really com-pete non-sense. It will be and it

C.

It will be for a while.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.
Will you please tell—

It should be for you all. This committee.

whether or not you know Nathan Gregory Silverman. Have you ever known Nathan Gregory Silverman?

No; I do not.

The Undelivered (Scene 2)
Do you honestly apprehend, that if you told this committee whether or not you know Nathan

invoke the fifth amendment.

Gregory Silvermaster, you would be supplying information that could be used against you in a

I have
Is it not the slightest idea of what you are talking about?

I invoke.

I suggest, Mr. Chairman, this is not the slightest idea of what you are talking about. I invoke.

I invoke.

I suggest, Mr. Chairman, this is not the slightest idea of what you are talking about. I invoke.

I invoke.

I suggest, Mr. Chairman, this is not the slightest idea of what you are talking about. I invoke.

I invoke.

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I invoke.

I suggest, Mr. Chairman, this is not the slightest idea of what you are talking about. I invoke.

I invoke.

I suggest, Mr. Chairman, this is not the slightest idea of what you are talking about. I invoke.

I invoke.

I suggest, Mr. Chairman, this is not the slightest idea of what you are talking about. I invoke.

I invoke.
The witness talks very loudly when he answers the question, I invoke the fifth amendment.

ever known Nathan Gregory Silverman.

makes a speech, but when he invokes the fifth amendment I cannot hear him.

1 invoked the fifth amendment very
Will you talk a little louder?

You know I am an actor and I have medals for my voice, for diction. I can talk plenty loud.

Do you know a woman by the name of Louise Brusten?

You attended a meeting.

Yes, I am needed for my diction in the theater. I invoke the fifth amendment.

[consults counsel]
Have you ever had contact with a man named Gregory Khets?

[Robeson consults counsel.] I invoke the fifth.

Who are Mister and Misses Vla-di-mir Mkeev? Do you know them?

Now, Gregory Khets is the fifth amendment.
The Undelivered (Scene 2)

**A.** I put it to you as a fact, and ask you to affirm or deny the fact, that on February

den-ti-fied with the So-viet ex-pore-ta-tions, is he not?

**R.** I have not the slighest idea but I invoke the fifth a-

**T.** Mis-ter Chair-man, the wit-ness does not have the slighest idea who they are, and I res

**Pno.**
This is complete non-sense.

per-tul-ly sug-gest he be or-dered and di-rected to an-swer that ques-tion.

You are di-

The Undelivered (Scene 2)
Hal - pern, and Lar - ry Fan - ning?

Do you know a - ny of those in - di - vi - du - als,

and op - er - a - tions with Gre-go-ry Khei - fets.

I do not think that he

I an - swer the ques - tion by in - vok - ing the fifth a - mend - ment.

Who is Vic - tor Mur - ra - that is John Vic - tor

rec - ted to an - swer the ques - tion.
the names I have just recited? Scherer
Le - on Jo-seph-son?
heard that ques - tion.
Robeson ff [to Scherer] ff [to Third Representative]
I in -voke the fifth a - mend - ment. I in -voke the fifth a - mend - ment. Your
Mur - ra?

R.

T.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

88

Scherer

contemplatively

[general]

Man -
Scene 3

rit. Mischievously, poco a poco accel. j = ca. 60

Cl.  

Hn.  

R.  

Vc.  

mischievously, poco a poco accel. j = ca. 60

Cl.  

Hn.  

R.  

Vl.  

Vc.  

some kind of fellow, and he was dismissed from the F. B. I. He must be a pretty low character

R.  

Vl.  

Vc.  

Ride Cymbal with brushes

p swing rhythms

p swing rhythms

p swing rhythms

p swing rhythms

Cl.  

Hn.  

Perc.  

A.  

S.  

R.  

Vl.  

Vla.  

Vc.  

You tell us

Whether he is a low character or not, do you know him?

when he could be dismissed from that. I invoke the fifth amend - ment.

p swing rhythms
The Undelivered (Scene 3)

9  poco a poco accel.

Hn.  

A.  whe-ther or not Man-ning John-son was ly-ing or whe-ther he was tell-ing the truth when he said that when he was a mem-ber

Vln.  poco a poco accel.

12  

Hn.  

Perc.  

A.  of the Com-mu-nist con-spi-ra-cy, he knew you as part and par-cell of that con-spi-ra-cy.

R.  I in-voke the

Vln.  

Vc.  

16  

Hn.  

Perc.  

A.  Do you know Max Ver-gan?

R.  fifth a-mend-ment. I in-voke the fifth a-mend-ment. Could I ask whe-ther this is le-gal?

Pno.  

Vln.  

Vc.
The Undelivered (Scene 3)

This is legal. This is not only legal, but usual. By a unanimous vote this committee has been instructed to

It is not distasteful. To whom am I talking to?

perform this very distasteful task.

You are speaking to the
Mis - ter Wal- ter?  The Penn-syl-va-nia Wal- ter?  You are the rep-re-sen-ta-tive of the
chair-man of this com-mit-tee.  Yes.  That is right.

steel work-ers?  Of the coal min - ing wor-kers and not U-ni-ted States Steel, by a - ny chance?  A great pa - tri-o.
The Undelivered (Scene 3)

You are the author of all the bills that are going to keep all kinds of decent people out of the country.

Colored people like myself, from the West Indies and all kinds, and the Teutonic Anglo-Saxon stock that

No, only your kind.
The Undelivered (Scene 3)

44

You would let come in.

We are trying to make it easier to get rid of your kind, too.

May I ask you now, was there, to your knowledge, a Communist core in the Council African Affairs?

I will take heed.

\( \text{fpp} \)
the fifth amendment and could I be allowed to read from my own statement here, while you read this statement just

Will you just tell this committee while under oath, Mister Robeson... the Communists who participated... for a moment?

[Robeson holds up a statement to give to the committee.]
The Undelivered (Scene 3)

59

Cl.

Hn.

Perc.

A.

R.

[speaking] Oh, please.

C.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

61

62

63

Perc.

R.

C.

Vc.

64

65

Freely, \( \approx \text{ca. 60} \)

Cl.

Hn.

R.

Vln.

[spoken] Oh, please.

[spoken] Could you i - den-ti-fy that clearly? Of whom did it consist?

As soon as you tell the commit-tee the Com-mu-nists who par-ti-ci-pated in the prepar-a-tion.

Freely, \( \approx \text{ca. 60} \)

pp semplice

with purpose [Robeson delivers monologue as a mission statement to the audience.]

1 in-voke the fifth amend-ment. Could I say that for the reason that I am here to-day, from the mouth of the State De-part-ment

pp semplice
itself, because I should not be allowed to travel because I have struggled for many years for the independence of the colonial

peoples of Africa, and for many years I have so bored and I can say modestly that my name is very much honored in

South Africa and all over Africa in my struggles, for independence. The other reason that I am here today is again from the

State Department and from the court record of the court of appeals, that when I am abroad, I speak out against the in-
just i-ces a-gainst the Ne-gro peo-ple of this land. That is why I am here. This is the ba-sis and I am not be-ing tried for

whe-ther I am a Com-mu-nist, I am be-ing tried for fight-ing for the rights of my peo-ple who are still se-cond class ci-ti-zens

in this U-ni-ted States of A- me-ri-ca My mo-ther was born in your state, Mis-ter Wal-ter, and my mo-ther was a Qua-ker,

and my an-ces-tors in the time of Wa-shing-ton baked bread for George Wa-shing-ton's troops when they crossed the De-la-ware, and my own fa-ther
The Undelivered (Scene 3)

was a slave. I stand struggling for the rights of my people to be full citizens in this country and they are not. They are not in Mississippi and they are not in Montgomery, Alabama, and they are not in Washington, and they are nowhere, and that is why I am here today. You want to shut up every Negro who has the courage to stand...
up and fight for the rights of his people, for the rights of workers, and I have been on many a picket line for the steel workers too. And that is why I am here today. All of this is nonsense.

Now just a mistake.
Would you tell us whether or not you know Thomas W. ["Double U"] Young?

I invoke the fifth amendment.

Thomas W. Young is a Negro who is president of the Guide Publishing Company. He took an
The Undelivered (Scene 3)

Cl.

Hn.

Perc.

A.

A.

A.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

111

116

121

read you his tes-ti-mony.

in the e-vent of a war with Rus-sia, the Ne-gro would not fight for his coun-try a-gainst the So-ven-ets? It is my
The Undelivered (Scene 3)

A. firm con-vic-tion that in the eyes of the Ne-gro peo-ple this false pro-phet is re-gar-ded as un-faith-ful to their

Pno.

129 coun-try, and they re-pu-di-ate him." Do you know the man who said that un-der oath be-fore this com-mit-tee?

R.

Pno.

132 in-voke the fifth a-mend-ment. May I now read from o-ther Ne-gro pe-ri-o-di-cai, which say "Paul Robe-son,

Perc. quasi-sprechstimme [Robeson reads from document.]" and may I read from where I am a Doc-tor of Hu-ma-ni-ty from More-house, and when I

R.

Pno.

135

Vc.
The Undelivered (Scene 3)

138

Perc.  

R.  
received the Spin-garn Me-dal from the N [Dou-ble A] C P? Why not? You al-lowed the o ther

C.  

No.

Pno.  

mf

Vc.  

mf

141

Cl.  

mf

Perc.  

R.  

mf

state-ment. I have an-swered the ques-tion, and I take the fifth a-mend-ment. Now, would you

C.  

This was a ques-tion, Mis-ter Robe-son.

Pno.  

mf

Vln.  

mf

Vla.  

mf

Vc.  

mf
I would like to ask you one question. Would you mind reading from some of the citations give me a chance to read my statement?

I have not received any citations from Stalin.

From the Russian Government?
The Undelivered (Scene 3)

No, I received citations and medals from many parts of the world, for my efforts for peace. It seems as though you gentlemen would be trying to contrive the waging of peace by your President here today. Are you for war, Mr. Walter, and would you be in the category of this former repre...
Were you in the service?

sensitive, who felt we should have fought on the side of Hitler?
It is a sad and bitter commentary as if in a dream, divorced from reality.
ma-tic stage, now hale me be- fore a com-mit-tee of in-quis-i-tion, in

or-der to hear what I have to say,
The Undelivered (Scene 4)
The Undelivered (Scene 4)
The Undelivered (Scene 4)

61
Hn.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

mp

mf

f

Poco rit.

Mysteriously,
a tempo

poco a poco accel.

pp

p

pp

ppp

Bass Drum

with pathos

Mysteriously,
a tempo

poco a poco accel.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

pp

pp

pp
With Growing Anxiety,
\( \text{\( j = \text{ca. } 72 \)} \quad \text{poco a poco accel.} \)

The Undelivered (Scene 4)
The Undelivered (Scene 4)

\[ j = \text{ca. 84} \]

\[ \text{Cl.}, \text{Hn.}, \text{Perc.}, \text{Vln.}, \text{Vla.}, \text{Vc.} \]

\[ \text{mf} \]

\[ q = \text{ca. 84} \]

\[ \text{Chorale style} \]

\[ = \sum \]

\[ \frac{3}{3} \]

\[ \text{mf} \]

\[ \text{pp} \]

\[ \text{mp} \]

\[ \text{pizz.} \]

\[ \text{arco} \]

\[ \text{ppp} \]

\[ \text{p} \]

\[ \text{f} \]

\[ \text{pp} \]

\[ \text{p} \]
The Undelivered (Scene 4)

Emerging from the Chaos

Cl.

Hn.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Emerging from the Chaos

Cl.

Hn.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.
The Undelivered (Scene 4)

accel. \[ \begin{array}{c}
\text{Pno.} \\
\text{Vln.} \\
\text{Vla.} \\
\text{Vc.}
\end{array} \]

\( j = j \) Rising to the Challenge, \( j = ca. 96 \)

\( j = j \) Rising to the Challenge, \( j = ca. 96 \)
[The Chairman interrupts Robeson's dream, bringing him back to reality.]

* Crescendo to the next dynamic, then build again

* sim.

Snare Drum (snare on)
Scene 5

With Rising Tension, \( j = \text{ca. 60} \)

[The Chairman's entrance abruptly interrupts the dream from scene 4.]

Perc.:

\[
\text{Snare Drum (snare off)}
\]

\[
\text{pp}
\]

With Rising Tension, \( j = \text{ca. 60} \)

A.

Did you go to Paris in nineteen forty-nine?

And while you were in

R.

I went to Paris.

C.

Answer the question.

With Rising Tension, \( j = \text{ca. 60} \)

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

\[
\text{pp}
\]

5

Perc.

A.

Paris, did you tell an audience that the American Negro would never go to war against the Soviet

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.
The Undelivered (Scene 5)

8

Perc.  

A.  

Go-vern-ment?

S.  

Do you know a-ny-body who wants war?

R.  

May I say that this is sligh-ly out of con-text? There is no

Pno.  

PP simply

Vln.  

Vla.  

Vc.  

11

Perc.  

R.  

part of my speech made in Pa-ris which says that I said, that fifteen mil-lion A-me-ri-can Ne-groes would do a-ny-thing. I said

Pno.  

14

Perc.  

R.  

it was my feel-ing that the A-me-ri-can peo-ple would strug-gle for peace and that his since been un-der-scored by

Pno.  

15

The Undelivered (Scene 5)
Do you know of any people who want war?

the President of these United States.

Listen to me, I said it was un-

thinkable to me that any people would take up arms in the name of an Eastland to go against

a - ny - bo - dy, and gentlemen, I still say that. What should happen would be that
The Undelivered (Scene 5)

24

Perc.

R.

t his U-ni-ted St ates G o-ver-n-m ent should go do wn to Mis-sis-sip pi and pro-tec t my peo- ple. 

That is

27

S.

Why do you not stay in Rus-sia?

R.

what should hap - pen? Be-cause my fa-ther was a slave, and my peo-ple died.

30

Perc.

R.

to build this coun-try, and I am going to stay here and have a part of it just like you. And no Fai-cut min-ded

Vln.
people will drive me from it. Is that clear? I am for peace with the Soviet Union, and I am for peace with China, and I am not for peace or friendship with the Fascist Franco, and I am not for peace with it.
The Undelivered (Scene 5)

The reason—peace with Fas-cist Ger-mans, and I am for peace with de-cent peo-ple in the world.

you are here be-cause you are pro-mo-ting the Com-mu-nist cause in this coun-try.

I am here be-cause I am op-pos-ing the ne-o-Fas-cist
cause which I see arising in these Committees. You are like the Alien and Sedition Act, and Jefferson could be.

Are you going to answer the questions?
Have you recently changed your mind about

I am answering them. I have answered the question.

What is your answer to this question?

Whatever has happened to Stalin gentlemen, is a question for the Soviet
Union and I would not argue with a representative of the people who in building America wasted sixty

to one hundred million lives of my people, black people drawn from Africa on the plantations. You are re-
The Undelivered (Scene 5)

65

spon-sible and your fore-bears

for six-ty mil-lion to one hun-dred mil-lion black peo-ple

...
I am glad you called our attention to that slave problem. While you were in Soviet Russia, did you ask them there to show you the slave labor camps? You have been so interested in slaves, I should think that...
The Undelivered (Scene 5)
and I will not discuss Stalin with you. Now can I read my speech?

[The Chairman is no longer pretending that he may allow Robeson to read his speech.]

You have made it without reading it. Can you tell us what

While you were in Soviet Russia, did

Communist partied in the preparation of that speech?
you make statements about your academic training in Marxism?

Do you know Ben Davis?

do not recall that, but I have read a lot of Marx. One of my dearest friends, one of the finest
Americans you can imagine, born of a fine family, who went to Amherst and was a great man. I say that he is as patriotic as an American.
Perc.

R.

me - ni - can as there can be, and you gen - tle - men be - long with the A - li - en and Se - di - tion

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

96

98

Perc.

R.

Acts, and you are the non - pat - riots, and you are the un - A - me - ri - cans and you ought to be ashamed of your - selves.
I should think it would be.

Just a minute, the hearing is now adjourned. I have endured all of this that I

Can I read my statement? I think it should be and you should adjourn this for ever, that

No, you cannot read it. The meeting is adjourned.
The Undelivered (Scene 5)

Perc.

F.

R.

C.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Will the state permit the record without being read?

is what I would say.

No, it will not.

The Undelivered (Scene 5)

119

Pno.

Vla.

Vc.
The Undelivered (Scene 5)

With Growing Anxiety (reprise),
A Victorious Dream, $J = \text{ca. } 72$

poco a poco accel.

*rit.*

$\text{Cl.}$

$\text{Hn.}$

$\text{Perc.}$

$\text{Pno.}$

$\text{Vla.}$

$\text{Vln.}$

$\text{Vc.}$

$\text{Bass Drum}$

$J = \text{ca. } 84$

pp

$J = \text{ca. } 72$

pizz.

poco a poco accel.
The Undelivered (Scene 5)

126

Cl.  

Vln.  

Vla.  

Vc.  

129

Cl.  

Vln.  

Vla.  

Vc.  

132

Cl.  

Vln.  

Vla.  

Vc.  

arin
Rising to the Challenge,

accel. \( \frac{j}{d} = \text{ca. 96} \) poco a poco accel. \( \frac{j}{d} = \text{ca. 96} \)

* Crescendo to the next dynamic, then build again
A Robeson Triptych

I. It was in Britain*

It was in Britain among the English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish people of that land,

*From "Here I Stand," originally published in 1958.

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that I learned that the essential character of a nation is determined not by
the upper classes, but by the common people and that the common people
of all nations are truly brothers in the great family of mankind.
And even as I grew to feel more Negro in spirit, or African as I put it then, I
al-so came to feel a sense of one-ness with the white work-ing peo-ple whom I came to know and love.
II. If we unite*

Baritone

\[ \text{If we unite, we'll get our law against lynching, our right to vote and to} \]

Piano

\[ \text{Let us march on Washington, representing fourteen million strong. Let us} \]

---

*Transcription of a tape recorded speech given at a welcome home rally at Rockland Palace in Harlem, June 19, 1949 (Paul and Eslanda Robeson Collection)
push aside the sy-co-phants who tell us to be qui-et. This is the ve-ry time when we can win-

our strug-gle. We do not

want to die in vain any more on fo-reign bat-tle-fields for Wall Street

and the gree-dy sup- por-ters of do-me-stic fas-ci-sm If we must die, let it be in Mis-sis-sip -
- pi or Georgia! Let it be where ever we are lynched and dep

rived of our rights as human beings!
III. I'm here

\( \dot{\text{J}} = 82 \)

[spoken] I'm here,

and this is the base in the struggle for the freedom
of my people in my time,
not some hundreds of years hence.

Any, any time, that you want to call on me, I'm in there fighting
for my people. Because you're with me; because we're all fighting together,
for the freedom not only of the Negro People, but of an America
which, years hence, our children can be proud of.
We'll be proud we helped create an America where they could walk this earth with their shoulders back, full of the dignity of humankind.

Nev-er say that you have reached the ver- y end. When

lead-en skies a bit-er fu-ture may por-tend; For sure the hour for which we yearn will

yet ar-ive, And our mar-ching steps will thun-der we sur- vive

bells tolling
APPENDIX G

Paul Robeson’s Annotated Undelivered Statement

It is a sad and bitter commentary on the state of civil liberties in America that the very forces of reaction, typified by Representative Francis Walter and his Senate counterparts, who have denied me access to the lecture podium, the concert hall, the opera house, and the dramatic stage, now dare me before a committee of inquisition in order to hear what I have to say. It is obvious that those who are trying to gag me here and abroad will scarcely grant me the freedom to express myself fully in a hearing controlled by them.

It would be more fitting for me to question Walter, Eastland and Dulles than for them to question me, for it is they who should be called to account for their conduct, not I. Why does Walter not investigate the truly "un-American" activities of Eastland and his gang, to whom the Constitution is a scrap of paper when invoked by the Negro people and to whom defiance of the Supreme Court is a racial duty? And how can Eastland pretend concern over the internal security of our country while he supports the most brutal assaults on fifteen million Americans by the white citizens councils and the Klu Klux Klan? When will Dulles explain his reckless irresponsible "brink of war" policy by which the world might have been destroyed.

And specifically, why is Dulles afraid to let me have a passport, to let me travel abroad to sing, to act, to speak my mind? This question has been partially answered by State Department lawyers who have asserted in court that the State Department claims the right to deny me a passport because of what they called my "recognized status as a spokesman for large sections of Negro Americans" and because I have "been for years extremely active in behalf of independence of colonial peoples of Africa". The State Department has also based its denial of a passport to me on the fact that I sent a message of greeting to the Bandung Conference, convened by Nehru, Sukarno and other great leaders of the colored peoples of the world. Principally, however, Dulles objects to speeches I have made abroad against the oppression suffered by my people in the United States.

I am proud that those statements can be made about me. It is my firm intention to continue to speak out against injustices to

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4 “Statement of Paul Robeson to House of Representatives Committee on Un-American Activities” [1956] Paul Robeson Collection, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C.
the Negro people, and I shall continue to do all within my power in
behalf of independence of colonial peoples of Africa. It is for
Dulles to explain why a Negro who opposes colonialism and supports
the aspirations of Negro Americans should for those reasons be denied
a passport.

My fight for a passport is a struggle for freedom,—freedom
to travel, freedom to earn a livelihood, freedom to speak, freedom to
express myself artistically and culturally. I have been denied these
freedoms because Dulles, Eastland, Walter and their ilk oppose my
views on colonial liberation, my resistance to oppression of Negro
Americans, and my burning desire for peace with all nations. But
these are views which I shall proclaim whenever given the opportunity,
whether before this committee or any other body.

President Eisenhower has strongly urged the desirability of
international cultural exchanges. I agree with him. The American
people would welcome artistic performances by the great singers,
actors, ballet troupes, opera companies, symphony orchestras and
virtuosos of South America, Europe, Africa and Asia, including the
folk and classic art of the African peoples, the ancient culture of
China, as well as the artistic works of the western world. I hope
the day will come soon when Walter will consent to lowering the cruel
bars which deny the American people the right to witness performances
of many great foreign artists. It is certainly high time for him to
drop the ridiculous "Keystone Kop" antics of fingerprinting distin-
guished visitors.

I find no such restrictions placed upon me abroad as Walter
has placed upon foreign artists whose performances the American
people wish to see and hear. I have been invited to perform all over
the world, and only the arbitrary denial of a passport has prevented
realization of this particular aspect of the cultural exchange which
the President favors.

I have been invited by Leslie Linder Productions to play
the title role in a production of "Othello" in England. British
Actors' Equity Association has unanimously approved of my appearance
and performance in England.

I have been invited by Workers' Music Association Ltd. to
make a concert tour of England under its auspices. The invitation
was signed by all of the vice-presidents, including Benjamin Britten,
and was seconded by a personal invitation of R. Vaughn Williams.

I have been invited by Adam Holender, impresario, to make a
costume tour of Israel, and he has tendered to me a proposed contract
for that purpose.

"Mosfilm", a Soviet moving picture producing company, has
invited me to play the title role in a film version of "Othello", as-
suring me "of the tremendous artistic joy which association with your
wonderful talent will bring us".

The British Electrical Trades Union requested me to attend
their annual policy conference, recalling my attendance at a similar
conference held in 1949 at which, they wrote me, "you sang and spoke
so movingly".

The British Workers' Sports Association, erroneously credit-
ing a false report that I would be permitted to travel, wrote me, "we
view the news with very great happiness". They invited me "to sing
to our members in London, Glasgow, manchester or Cardiff, or all four,
under the auspices of our International Fund, and on a financial basis
favourable to yourself, and to be mutually agreed". They suggested a
choice of three different halls in London seating, respectively,
3,000, 4,500 and 7,000.

The Australian Peace Council invited me to make a combined
"singing and peace tour" of the dominion.

I have received an invitation from the Education Committee
of the London Co-operative Society to sing at concerts in London under
their auspices.

A Swedish youth organization called "Democratic Youth" has
invited me to visit Sweden "to give some concerts here, to get to know
our culture and our people". The letter of invitation added, "Your
appearance here would be greeted with the greatest interest and
pleasure, and a tour in Sweden can be arranged either by us or by our
organization in cooperation with others, or by any of our cultural
societies or artist's bureaus, whichever you may prefer".

I have an invitation from the South Wales Miners to sing at
the Miners' Singing Festival on October 6, 1956 and in a series of
concerts in the mining valley thereafter.

In Manchester, England a group of people called the "Ist
Paul Robeson Sing Committee" has asked me to give a concert at the
Free Trade Hall in that city either preceding or following my engage-
ment in Wales.
I have been requested by the Artistic and Literary Director
of the Agence Litteraire et Artistique Parisienne Pour les Echanges
Culturaux to sign a contract with the great French concert organizer,
M. Marcel de Valmalette, to sing in a series of concerts at the
Palais de Chaillot in Paris.

There is no doubt that the governments of those countries
and many others where I would be invited to sing if I could travel
abroad, would have no fear of what I might sing or say while there,
whether such governments be allies and friends of America or neutrals
or those others whose friendship for the American people is obstructed
by Dulles and Walter and like-minded reactionaries.

My travels abroad to sing and act and speak cannot possibly
harm the American people. In the past I have won friends for the
real America among the millions before whom I have performed, - not
for Walter, not for Dulles, not for Eastland, not for the racists who
degrade our country's name, - but friends for the American Negro,
our workers, our farmers, our artists.

By continuing the struggle at home and abroad for peace
and friendship with all of the world's people, for an end to colonial-
ism, for full citizenship for Negro Americans, for a world in which
art and culture may abound, I intend to continue to win friends for
the best in American life. as well as many others.

[Signature]

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