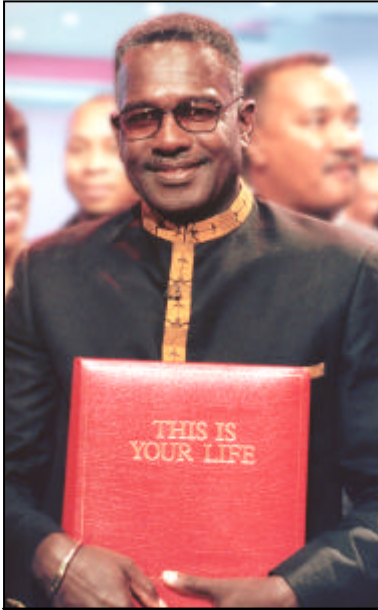


**Rudolph Walker. OBE.**  
] Profile 2006.



**“Rudolph Walker is respected by people from all walks of life; cultures and age groups...he is not only a true pioneer but also a British national treasure.”**

**\*Awarded the OBE. in the Queen’s 80th birthday honours on 17th June 2006.**



**Born on the multicultural Caribbean twin islands of Trinidad & Tobago. The eldest of three and the only son of a very strict mother, increased Rudolph's sensitivity and empathy towards women, bringing out a driving ambition to succeed, in the hope of supporting his family. This meant shouldering the responsibilities of manhood much earlier than most and instilled a strong sense of duty.**

Anyone born in the land of carnival, steel band and calypso, inherits a creative flair and an urge to impress and compete. This gave him the chance to release his inhibitions and the opportunity to perform and entertain. Even at an early age, Rudolph possessed that extra special something. Though a quiet, shy boy - he gave his first impressive performance whilst in primary school at the tender age of 5 and from then on was completely hooked on the dream of becoming an actor and began developing a true love for the stage... a love which has remained with him throughout his long and successful career. Inspired by the likes of Derek Walcott, Paul Robeson and Sydney Poitier, he progressed on with his love of acting throughout school and formed his own theatre company, working with men well beyond his own years. Upon leaving school at 16, he took up an apprenticeship as a compositor with the local government printing office, continuing to perform with Derek Walcott's - Trinidad Theatre Workshop and for his own now flourishing theatre company. However, realizing the artistic limitations of a small island, he wanted to explore the wider world and Britain beckoned. At first his mother was filled with the fears and insecurities of such a move, but after overhearing a conversation on a local bus between two women - one confessing her regret of preventing her son from immigrating to America, only to realize much later that it was a terrible mistake. That day Rudolph's mother returned home, gave him her blessings and lived to see his tremendous success.

In 1960, the young but mature Rudolph sailed to Britain - having no previous experience of leaving home; living alone or racial prejudice. Overwhelmed by the excitement of new prospects, he never contemplated for a minute the daunting tasks or challenges ahead. Armed only with a strict, disciplined upbringing and a natural warmth, Rudolph soon melted into the British lifestyle, quickly learning the ropes of survival. He immediately obtained employment as a compositor by day and studied drama by night at the City Literary Institute; taking time off occasionally for small parts in television and film. In 1964, encouraged by the Director Charles Marowitz and his tutors at the institute, Rudolph decided to take the plunge into a full time acting career. For eight years he performed in repertory companies all over the country; then came his big break with the comedy series 'Love Thy Neighbour.' The series was extremely controversial for its time and had a huge impact on the British public. It was an instant success, featuring for the first time - *a black actor playing a major character*; the first time - *a black actor had broken into mainstream and on prime-time television*. TV audiences showed their appreciation by voting him 'TV Personality Of The Year'. "Love Thy Neighbour" - five year run was an enormous success, proving equally popular around the world in countries such as Australia, Africa and the Caribbean and was later made into a movie. It is still regularly shown and enjoyed by millions around the world. Rudolph's ever impeccable performance made such a indelible mark that it finally brought the due recognition to black acting talent and opened the doors for those who followed.

In the midst of all this, he found time to get married and become a doting father of two (son Darren and daughter Sheona). Having not grown up with his own father, he greatly valued the importance of his role in his children's lives. The same conflict faced before he left his Caribbean home came back to haunt him *how to cope with the dilemma of two such strong commitments - his family and career*... he chose to commit wholeheartedly to both.

**In August 1992, the Trinidad & Tobago High Commission presented Rudolph with the "Scalet Ibis Award" for his outstanding and meritorious service.**

Following the huge success of "Love Thy Neighbour", Rudolph returned to his first love - *the theatre*. Once again he paved the way for those who followed, proving that as an 'actor' rather than as a 'black actor', he could enrapture and capture audiences in any medium, whether it be television, film, theatre or radio. There followed critical acclaim with performances in well known classics such as;- Caliban in 'The Tempest' (directed by Jonathan Miller) - The Old Vic Theatre; Flavius in 'Timon of Athens' and Friar Lawrence in 'Romeo and Juliet' - The Young Vic Theatre, as well as the title role in Othello. Other inspiring roles such as Gower in Shakespeare's "Pericles"; Blind Blue in Derek Walcott's "Odyssey" and Tuck in Naomi Wallace play "Slaughter City" for the Royal Shakespeare Company, working both in Stratford-Upon-Avon and at the Barbican Theatre in London. The King in "King of England" - Theatre Royal Stratford - *(for which he won the Time-Out and O1 for London Award for Best Actor)*; "Play Mas" and Idi Amin in "For The West" both started at the Royal Court Theatre and transferred to London's West End; the title role in the hilarious comedy "Victor And The Ladies" - London's Tricycle Theatre; Joe Mott in "The Iceman Cometh" with Kevin Spacey - the Old Vic Theatre *(which won the Bafta Award for 'Best Play' in 2000)* and Tutor in 'Electra' with Zoe Wannamaker -

The Donmar Theatre in London's West-End.

### **Fellow member of the Royal Society of Arts.**

Rudolph consistently works with great integrity and dignity; for him the quality of a piece or role has always been of crucial importance and has managed to fulfill this in a wide range of roles in films, television, radio and the theatre. On television, some of his most notable roles includes... General Ali in the feature "The Death of a Black President"; BBC Screen One dramas "Bitter Harvest" and "Escape from Kampala"; BBC drama series "For the Greater Good" and "Black Silk" (in which he played the leading character of Barrister Larry Scott); as well as P.C. Gladstone in the BBC's hugely popular comedy series "The Thin Blue Line", written by Ben Elton and starring Rowan Atkinson. The first series broke audience records and a second series was promptly recorded and aired in Autumn 1999. That same year on his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday, the BBC honoured him with a surprised 'live' show of '**This Is Your Life**'. In 2000, Rudolph's name took pride of place on the prestigious list of the '**100 greatest and most influential black people in British history**' for the millennium history archives. In 2001, he joined the cast of BBC's long running, highly rated television soap drama 'Eastenders' as the popular character 'Patrick Truman'. The show which started in 1986, won '**The British Soap Awards**' in 2002, 2003, 2005 and 2006. In 2002, he received the **Emma Award for 'Best Actor'**; **2003, 'The Trailblazer Award'** (from the Screen Nation & Tv Awards) and in 2005 a '**Lifetime Achievement Award**' (from GG2 Leadership & Diversity Awards), presented by Sir Ian Blair QPM – Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police.

One of his most identifiable features is his distinguished, deep velvety voice; enjoyed by millions of listeners overseas on the BBC's World Service Radio and in the U.K. in BBC Radio Dramas. Amongst many memorable highlights of his film career was working alongside notable actors such as Richard Burton, Elizabeth Taylor and Joan Fontaine.

Rudolph undoubtedly has tremendous resilience and keeps both feet firmly on the ground; making himself available to support his peers, passing on his expertise and knowledge. Through this he has gained their respect, appreciation and gratitude for not only paving the way, but for also setting an impeccable example for them to follow.

Even so, Rudolph is not fully contented with his achievements to date and the deep burning desire still rages for more new and exciting challenges. However, he looks forward to the day when the 'powers that be' offer parts to black actors that are not solely race specific, but based purely on acting skills and suitability for the role. A hope more impassioned by the knowledge that there are many talented black British youngsters still waiting in the wings for the chance to achieve their ambition and hope to see them thrive on a level playing field.



**Rudolph's commitment to inspiring and supporting others goes beyond the acting arena and has given patronage to the following organizations:-**

#### **Patron for:**

**The Theatre Royal - Stratford.**

**The Little Haven Children's Hospice.**

*Supporting terminally ill children and their families.*

**Eastside Young Leaders Academy.**

*Supporting young displaced or excluded black British school boys.*

**Birmingham Centre for Art Therapies.**

*Improving quality of life through various art therapies.*

**SENIORS (Lewisham).**

*Resource centre for the over 50's in London.*



as Caliban in the Tempest.



Rudolph with the cast of Eastenders, receiving the 'Best Soap Drama Award'.



With wife Dounne Alexander.



Rudolph, as Patrick Truman - 'Eastenders'.

**Special Drama Awards:**

1980 - two schools (Tulse Hill and Dick Shepherd schools) established the 'Rudolph Walker Drama Awards' as a set standard of achievement for their drama students. Many has gone on to become actors.



**Other Charitable Activities:**

**For over 30 years, Rudolph has supported countless charities (attending functions, events, visits and donating prizes, etc). Amongst those closest to his heart are:-**

**The Vic Lewis Showbiz Eleven and David English's - 'Bunbury Cricket Club'.**

*From its inception over 30 years ago, Rudolph has played hundreds of celebrity cricket matches, helping to raise more than £9 million for worthy causes.*

**Joining Hands In Health** (natural health awareness campaign).

**Equity annual Tennis Tournaments.**

**Sir Cliff Richards Tennis Tournaments.**

**BBC Children-in-Need.**

**Children of Courage Awards.**

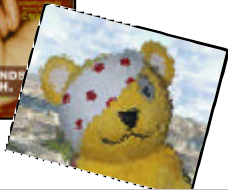
**The African Caribbean Leukaemia Trust.**

**Comic Relief.**

**Northampton Cricket Club.**

**Schools and Prisons**

*(make regular visits to uplift, motivate and inspire).*



Top : at celebrity tennis tournament. Supporter of 'Joining Hands in Health, and Children In Need. Below, with Virginia Wade and Sir Cliff Richard.



To quote his words:-

*'An Actor's life for me is one which keeps you creative; forever developing, growing, flourishing and enriching, yourself and others. Therefore you cannot afford to become complacent or relaxed for too long... hence retirement is never a choice; you simply go on to 'the end.'*