

Sunday Afternoon, February 12, 2012, at 3:00
Judy and Arthur Zankel Hall

Tayo Aluko & Friends
In association with
Inbrook and Smaller Earth Present:

CALL MR. ROBESON

A Life, with Songs

Written and Performed by
Tayo Aluko

With Michael Conliffe, *Piano*

Directed by Olusola Oyeleye

Designed by Phil Newman

With special guests:
NEW YORK CITY LABOR CHORUS
JAY FLUELLEN, *Piano*
SHELBY BANKS, *Soprano*
GREGORY THOMPSON, *Piano*
DAWN PADMORE, *Soprano*

PLEASE SWITCH OFF YOUR CELL PHONES AND OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES.

NOTES ON THE Program

Greetings and Welcome!

I had a dream (actually, it seemed more of a nightmare at the time) about 18 or 19 years ago. I was in a café opposite New York's Carnegie Hall where I was scheduled to give a concert the following day. The people started to arrive by the hundreds, for my concert. But they were a whole day early! I ran out of the café, waving my hands frantically, shouting, "Not today, not today! Come back tomorrow!"...Then I woke up, sweating, heart pounding. Why I, then a lowly employed architect who happened to love singing, should picture myself center stage at Carnegie Hall is beyond me, but here I am, and I am happy to say that I got the right date!

Another story is worth retelling. The day was June 23 1995, the time approximately 6:30 a.m. This architect was actually up and about, and believe it or not, singing in public. The Friends of Sefton Park Palm House in Liverpool were raising funds for the refurbishment of the famous landmark, which had lain derelict for decades. They had chosen to use the occasion of the Summer Solstice to hold an event called the Dawn Chorus, and I had been asked to sing. I chose what I thought to be an appropriate song: "My Lord, What a Morning." This lady came up to me afterwards and said, "You remind me of Paul Robeson. Do you sing many of his songs?" I think that may have been the first time I had heard his name, and I certainly didn't know his music. By chance (is that what it was?) I

stumbled upon his biography two months later, read it, was amazed not just by his incredible story, but by the fact that it seemed to have been almost completely buried. I decided to do what I could to correct that, and here I am.

Robeson's story has been incredibly inspiring to me and to practically all that have heard it through me. Since 2007, I have performed it a few hundred times on four continents — to people from as young as seven to as old as one hundred and five! Everybody of course takes something different from it. For me it was two things. First was a pride in Africa. Thanks to his father, the Reverend William Drew Robeson, Paul and his siblings—even as far back as the turn of the last century, when racism in America was much greater than it is now—learnt about the real history of Africa, and found a pride in that history, a pride that is often hard for children of Africa to find and hold on to today.

The other thing was a belief in the power that lies within us as human beings—as individuals able to find strength in difficult times, or when people gather in large numbers to work for the common good, and achieve the seemingly unachievable. The American Civil Rights Movement that owes so much to people like Robeson, that gave America its first Black President and allows us all to sit as equals in a place like Carnegie Hall without a second thought, is one example. Another is the South African liberation struggle—again, one that Robeson was a part of, even as far back as the

1930s. Such movements are almost as old as mankind. After a lull of a few decades, we are seeing people waking up in all corners of the earth, rising up and demanding change. Robeson would, I am sure, be with those who are rediscovering this strength in mass action—from the streets of the Middle East to the squares in the many cities and towns around America and elsewhere around the world, the people having decided that things just cannot be allowed to continue the way they have for so long. And even when governments and politicians unleash the might of their armed forces on these people whose only crime

is to dream of peace, justice and equality (the powers that be in American cities appear no less guilty than the tyrants elsewhere) the bravery of the people remains incredible and awe-inspiring.

Paul Robeson's talent, achievements and example are similarly awe-inspiring, and I am grateful that he chose to reveal his story to me, and inspired me to share that story around the world. I am always gratified by the reactions to that story, and hope that it continues to inspire people to join the fight for freedom, peace and justice worldwide, and most importantly, to keep dreaming.

MEET THE Artists

TAYO ALUKO



Mr. Aluko (*Writer, Performer, Producer*) was born in Nigeria, and now lives in Liverpool. He worked until recently as an architect and property developer, with a special but as yet frustrated interest in eco-friendly construction. As a baritone he has sung as soloist in British concert halls accompanied by orchestra, and has also sung in Germany, Ireland, and Nigeria. He has performed lead roles in such operas and musicals as

Nabucco, Kiss Me Kate, and Anything Goes. Call Mr. Robeson won the Argus Angel Award for Artistic Excellence and Best Male Performer Award at the 2008 Brighton Festival Fringe, and two Merit Awards for Excellence in London in 2010. He has performed the play around the UK, the United States, Canada, and Nigeria. His other piece titled *From Black Africa to the White House: A Talk About Black Political Resistance*, illustrated with Spirituals has also been performed in three continents. He researched, wrote, and narrated to camera a piece on West African History before the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, which forms part of the permanent exhibit at Liverpool's International Slavery Museum. A song from his first CD, *Recalling Robeson* is featured as the July 2008 song of the month on the Labor Notes website.

MICHAEL CONLIFFE

Mr. Conliffe (*Piano and original incidental music*) started playing piano by ear as child, playing gospel in church and later discovering jazz, which he went on to study at Liverpool Community College and Leeds College of Music. As well as playing regularly in jazz festivals round the UK, he has toured both coasts of America with *Call Mr. Robeson*. Mr. Conliffe has

also performed in another two-hander, a jazz drama *God Bless the Child* about Billie Holliday, in which he also acts. He plays regularly as soloist and with swing and function bands at weddings, other celebrations and at corporate events. Mr. Conliffe also teaches piano to aspiring pop, blues, and jazz musicians and to singer/songwriters.

OLUSOLA OYELEYE

Ms. Oyeleye (*Director and dramaturge*) is an award-winning writer, director, and producer working in opera, music theater, visual arts and dance. Theater includes *Tin* (The Lowry), *Ti-Jean and his Brothers* (Collective Artistes & Sustained Theater, Cottesloe), resident director on Trevor Nunn's West End production of *Porgy and Bess* (Savoy Theater), staff producer at English National Opera, Spirit of Okin and Sankofa for Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble (national and international tours), the award-winning *Call Mr Robeson* (UK tours, New York Fringe, and Carnegie Hall), *Coming Up for Air* (The Drum & UK tour), *The Resurrection of Roscoe Powell* (Soho Theater), *The Shelter* (RSC Barbican Theater), *Medea* (Ariya, Royal National Theater Studio), *The Playground* (Polka Theater, *Time Out* Critics' Choice Pick of the Year), *High Life*, (Hampstead Theater), *Maybe Father*, (Talawa, Young Vic), *Twelfth Night* (British Council Tour, Zimbabwe), and *Ella*, a monodrama

about Ella Fitzgerald (Rich Mix). Opera includes *Akin Euba's Orumila's Voices: Songs from the Beginning of Time* (Jefferson's Arts Centre, New Orleans) and *Chaka: An Opera in Two Chants* with the St. Louis African Chorus, *Dido and Aeneas* (Tricycle/BAC), *God's Trombones* (Fairfield Halls), and the second cast revival of Jonathan Miller's production of *The Mikado* (English National Opera). Ms. Oyeleye has also worked in Ghana, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. She has been a visiting lecturer and artist at Witswatersrand University, Johannesburg and CENCE, University of Port Elizabeth, South Africa; Goldsmith's and Middlesex Universities, London; and was head of the acting studio at Morley College. Her poetry has been set to music by Akin Euba and performed at both Harvard and Cambridge Universities. Ms. Oyeleye is artistic director of Ariya, associate producer for Collective Artistes, and a fellow of the Royal Society for the Arts.

PHIL NEWMAN

Mr. Newman's set and costume designs have been featured in productions by companies as diverse as Ladder to the Moon, Trestle, Ariya, Full House Theater, London Shakespeare Workout, Rouge28 Theater, and Impetuous Kinship. Recent design credits include *Peter Pan* (Tickled Pink Productions), *Dance or Die* (contemporary dance performance choreographed by Avant Garde's Tony Adigun); *Cinderella* (Library Theater, Luton); *Voices in the Alleyway* and *Yes, I Still Exist* for Spread Expression Dance; Faith Drama's *The Fiddler* (Unicorn Theater); *Next Door* (Cockpit Theater); *The Famous Five* (Tabard Theater); Chalkfoot's acclaimed *The Riddle of the Sands*; and *Laurel & Hardy* (Jermyn St. Theater, London and UK tours), as well as tours of *Queen Elizabeth's Elephant* and *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, *Hansel & Gretel* (UK tour incl. Greenwich

Theater), *Stockholm* (BAC), and open-air tours of *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Railway Children* (Heartbreak Productions). Mr. Newman also designed the award-winning UK and international touring production of John Retallack's *Hannah & Hanna* (*Time Out* Critics' Choice).

In addition to *Call Mr. Robeson* Mr. Newman has designed several other productions in collaboration with director Olusola Oyeleye, including *The Security Guard*, *Ella* (RichMix), *High Life* (Hampstead Theater), *Coming Up for Air* (UK tour), *Ma Joyce's Tales from the Parlour* (Edinburgh Fringe 2010 and Oval House Theater), and *The Playground* (*Time Out* Critics' Choice/Polka Theater, London). He trained at Croydon College where he also spent three years as practitioner-in-residence in their theater design department.

Sound Design: David Darlington and Liam McDermott.

Sound Engineering: Derek Murray.

Lighting Design: Gareth Starkey.

Recorded Percussion: Oludele Olaseinde **Voices:** Shamus Maxwell, Paul O'Neill, Felix Pring, Kat Bishop, Suzanne Goldberg, Harry Arkwright, and from the original HUAC hearing of June 12 1956, "Honorable" Senators Walter, Arens, and Scherer.

Male Voice Choir: Liverpool Male Voice Choir

CHRISTINE YACKEE

Ms. Yackee (*Stage manager*) first worked with Tayo Aluko in November 2009 when she served as lighting technician as he performed *Call Mr. Robeson* at the DCAC in Washington, D.C. She has gone on to work as a production assistant for the 2010 and 2011 Capital Fringe Festivals and venue

manager for the Bedroom Theater during the 2010 Capital Fringe Festival. She also served as stage manager for *The Mousetrap* at First Stage in Tyson's Corner, directed by Jessica Lefkow. She is thrilled to be working again with Tayo Aluko as he returns to the east coast with his powerful masterpiece.

Call Mr. Robeson Credits

Music (incidental and sung) includes:

My Lord, What A Mornin' (Trad.) Arr. H Burleigh
Nobody Knows de Trouble Ah Seen (Trad);
Steal Away (Trad.) Arr. H Burleigh
Ballad for Americans (Robinson)
Song of the Volga Boatmen (Trad.)
We'll Keep a Welcome (Jones)
The Old Folks at Home (Foster)
Joshua Fit de Battle Ob Jericho (Trad.) Arr. L Brown
Iwe Kiko (Trad.)
Swing Low, Sweet Chariot (Trad.)
An Eriskay Love Lilt (Trad)
Ol' Man River (Kern, Hammerstein)
Joe Hill (Robinson)
Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel (Trad.) Arr L Brown
Git on Board, Little Children (Trad.)
Deep River (Trad.)
Oh, Freedom (Trad.)
We Shall Overcome (Trad.)
Just A Wearyin' For You (Jacobs-Bond, Fisher)
Goin' Home (Dvorak, Fisher). Arr. Fisher

Mr. Robeson's words as spoken on stage culled and adapted from various sources, including:

Here I Stand, by Paul Robeson (Beacon Press)
Paul Robeson Speaks. Ed: Philip S. Foner
Paul Robeson, by Martin Bauml Duberman
Othello by William Shakespeare
Paul Robeson: Tribute to An Artist (Documentary) Narrator, Sidney Poitier;
Director, St. Claire Bourne
Paul Robeson: Speak of Me As I Am (Documentary) Director, Rachel Hermans

There will be a 20 minute intermission after the performance

NEW YORK CITY LABOR CHORUS
Oh Freedom (Negro Spiritual)
Ode to Workers (Beethoven, Words: NYCLC)
Rockin' Solidarity (Words: Ralph Chaplin)

JAY FLUELLEN, *Piano*
Praise Worship: Kum Ba Ya
Arr: Jay Fluellen

TAYO ALUKO, *Baritone* and SHELBY BANKS, *Soprano*
Bess, You Is My Woman Now (from *Porgy and Bess*, by George Gershwin)
Acc: Jay Fluellen

SHELBY BANKS, *Soprano*
This Little Light of Mine
Arr: Jacqueline Hairston
Accompaniment: Jay Fluellen

GREGORY THOMPSON, *Piano*
Deep River (from "Negro Melodies" by Samuel Coleridge Taylor)

DAWN PADMORE, *Soprano*
Noliwe's Aria (from *CHAKA* by Akin Euba)
Eri Ngeringe (from *4 Igbo Songs* by Joshua Uzoigwe.)

TAYO ALUKO
Rise Up, Mother Africa!
Words and Melody by Tayo Aluko
Arrangement and accompaniment by Jay Fluellen

Stage Manager: Jeremy Robinson

NEW YORK CITY LABOR CHORUS

Founded in 1991 by three activist union women—one of whom, Barbara Bailey, remains our president—the New York City Labor Chorus is joyfully celebrating its 20th anniversary year. With trips to Cuba, Wales, Sweden and Canada, the Chorus has dramatically increased its international reputation for singing for social and economic justice. We hosted The Singing Voices of Japan to support the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 2010 in an emotion-filled concert at Riverside Church. In a world increasingly dominated by anti-union and warmongering forces, this multi-racial and multi-generational chorus of men and women stands as a beacon of hope in a troubled world.

Led by music director Jana Ballard and accompanist Dennis Nelson, the chorus has sung songs of freedom and struggle that have inspired thousands. We continue to support Labor through song at union meetings, schools, rallies, and community protest gatherings.

When the nurses union met to organize the chorus was there. When there was a demonstration to protect public housing the chorus was there. When Pete Seeger celebrated his 90th birthday in Madison Square Garden the chorus was there. When the 100th anniversary of Paul Robeson was celebrated at Carnegie Hall the chorus was there. When thousands of young people “Occupied Wall Street” we were there. When workers march in union strong, the chorus will always be there.

The New York City Labor Chorus is dedicated to all those working people around the world who are struggling for a better life. We hope our songs give strength to them.

New York City Labor Chorus
(501c3 non-profit organization)
275 Seventh Avenue c/o CWE 18th floor
New York, NY 10001
(212)929-3232
Website: www.nyclc.org

JAY FLUELLEN



Jay Fluellen, D. M. A. is a Philadelphia born musician composer, college

professor, educator, accompanist, pianist, singer, and organist/choir director. He has a doctorate in music composition from Temple University. Since January 1997 he has been an organist and choir director at the historic African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas. In May 2011 Dr. Fluellen received the Christian R. and Mary F. Lindback Foundation Distinguished Teaching Award given to high school teachers in the School District of Philadelphia.

SHELBY BANKS



Shelby Banks, a lyric soprano, began developing her talents in Rochester, New York. She has performed in concert halls throughout the US and Europe, particularly delighting audiences with her renditions of Spirituals. Ms. Banks has received acclaim for her performances of *Ancestral Legacy: A Concert of African American Song*, which features musical works depicting the African and African American experience. Some highlighted career moments include being invited to perform for the touring

exhibit of the Amistad Freedom Schooner; singing at the church of Abraham Lincoln; New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C. for a celebration of President Obama's inauguration; and performing as a guest of the International Slavery Museum for Slavery Remembrance Day in Liverpool, England. Ms. Banks was a North Carolina Regional Finalist in both the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and the Leontyne Price Vocal Competition. In addition to her musical career, Ms. Banks has produced contemporary theater and touring concert performances for "Music Amongst Friends." Ms. Banks is frequently sought out for her master classes and workshops on the Interpretation and History of Negro Spirituals and is currently a principal teaching artist for New York City Opera. This year, Ms. Banks makes her recital debut in Copenhagen, Denmark.

GREGORY THOMPSON



Pianist, Gregory Thompson, is Associate Professor of Music and Faculty Accompanist at Central State University in Wilberforce, OH. He received a bachelor of arts in piano performance from Limestone College, Gaffney, SC; a mas-

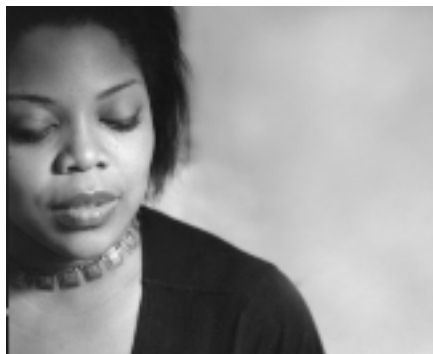
ter of music in piano performance from the Peabody Conservatory of Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD; and a doctor of musical arts from the University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC. Dr. Thompson has held professorships at Morris College, Benedict College, Claflin University, and Johnson C. Smith University.

Dr. Thompson has performed as a solo and collaborative artist in various venues in the United States, Europe, and Asia, including Carnegie Hall in New York, The Steinway Gallerie, Schloss Leopoldskron, and The Marmolle Hall in Salzburg Austria. He has also

performed with the Peabody Symphony, The Baltimore Symphony,

The Charlotte Philharmonic, and The South Carolina Philharmonic.

DAWN PADMORE



Dawn Padmore, Liberian-born soprano, a versatile classical artist, is known for presenting diverse repertoire to listeners internationally. Referred to as “a resonating soprano” by Bernard Holland, music critic of *The New York Times*, Ms. Padmore has performed in acclaimed venues such as the Kennedy Center where she made her debut in 2007, and the Miller Theater. She was a

featured soloist in the world premiere of Akin Euba’s opera, *Orunmila’s Voices*, with the Jefferson Performing Arts Society Orchestra. Ms. Padmore was invited to sing at the inauguration of the Republic of Liberia’s President, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the first female African president, and performed for Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Bishop Desmond Tutu in Minneapolis as part of the annual National Youth Leadership Council’s conference. She has performed internationally—in Africa, Europe, the Caribbean and North America. Ms. Padmore has also performed as a soloist with the Minnesota Orchestra, St. Paul Civic Orchestra (MN) and the Delaware Symphony. She was a young studio artist with the Des Moines Metro Opera Company.

CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON

Christopher Johnson is a native of Tulsa, Oklahoma and a graduate of The Institute of Sacred Music at Yale University. He presently serves as Director of Music and Organist at

Riverside Church, artist-in-residence at Union Theological Seminary, and as director of music at the Interchurch Center in New York City.

JEREMY ROBINSON

Mr. Robinson (*Stage manager*) is Development and artist liaison Manager at Inbrook, with responsibilities ranging from script development to artist management. He has worked with Inbrook in this capacity both Off-Broadway and at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in Scotland. Prior to joining the staff at Inbrook, he was a

participant in the Learning to Work (LTW) Program and served as an intern at Inbrook’s theatres at 45 Bleeker Street. He graduated from Cascades High School with New York State regent’s diploma, merit awards, and outstanding achievement awards in English and history.

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And a belated 50th Birthday to you Chris, for February 10 2012!

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Kadija George (London, UK)

Further contributions always welcome!

Thanks also to the following:

Calvin Wynter & Stuart Martin of Inbrook, for their involvement in securing the gig, and for their organisation of the event.

The Bay Area Paul Robeson Centennial Committee salutes Tayo Aluko and his superb play, *Call Mr. Robeson*.

For information on Paul Robeson, please visit: www.bayarearobeson.org

To contribute Paul Robeson Memorabilia to our collection, please contact:

research.bayarearobeson@yahoo.com

Fraternal Greetings from Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives, a non-profit organization devoted to the preservation and dissemination of the history of the North American role in the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939).

Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives

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SPECIAL THANKS

Dedicated to the memory of:

My late brother, Bankole Olumide Aluko (Senior Advocate of Nigeria), who, when he played King Lear at King's College Lagos in 1974 had me play his daughter, Goneril. I confirm that that was the last time I ever wore a dress.... In public Or private!

My late mother, Janet Adebisi Aluko (nee Fajemisin), who made me enter the Unilag Staff School Choir (no ifs, no buts) at the age of seven. Thank you for setting me on the road.

And my late father, Dr. Timothy Mofolorunso Aluko, who, after seeing Call Mr. Robeson in Lagos in October 2008, dropped his reservations and said to me, "If you want to do this full time, you have my blessing".

I thank you all, and think I can feel you and Big Paul are smiling down on us today.

Tayo Aluko & Friends

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