

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Karel Roessingh, Piano
Fringetastic!, Nanaimo Museum, August 18 - 25, 2013.**

Greetings, and Welcome. Chelsea (nee Bradley) Manning has been sentenced to 35 years for passing secret documents to WikiLeaks. Some have noted how sad it is that the perpetrators of some of the murderous atrocities that he revealed have not spent a single day in jail while her “crime” of sharing embarrassing information has caused her to be singled out for the harshest treatment possible - even facing the death penalty at one point! Meanwhile, Edward Snowden is on the run from the US government in Russia, and the partner of the Guardian reporter who published his shocking findings was recently detained in London under the UK’s anti-terrorism laws, while the reporter’s paper has been forced to destroy their computer containing much as-yet unreleased information, making them vow to release future instalments from abroad. Several American journalists are also now in exile and dare not enter their own country for fear of harassment and arrest. This all makes the forthcoming commemorations of the 1963 March on Washington somewhat ironic and hollow – it having been a march for jobs and “Freedom”. As more and more journalists, web entrepreneurs and others decide to leave their countries in search of freedom, one wonders how many will base themselves here in Canada. Many argue that the current Canadian regime is very unlikely to accept as many of them as willingly as they did those fleeing the Vietnam war, and the more recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. One also wonders what would have happened (and what we would have found out about Canadian surveillance culture) if Snowden’s revelations had been published by a Canadian paper. Would we have some of your journalists fleeing to other parts of the world? How funny it is that many Americans still feel safer in Russia than they do in the USA! That would not surprise Paul Robeson, whose friendship with the Soviet Union contributed much to his own travails with his government. He must have been a little saddened at not having been invited to the 1963 event, and would probably also have been saddened by this week’s commemorations, as we don’t seem to have marched that far. He would however urge us to continue marching, and fighting for freedom today. I hope you enjoy the show.

Tayo Aluko. Writer, Performer, Producer. Tayo was born in Nigeria, and now lives in Liverpool. He worked previously as an architect and property developer, with a special but frustrated interest in eco-friendly construction. He has fronted orchestras as baritone soloist in British concert halls, and has also performed lead roles in such operas and musicals as *Nabucco*, *Kiss Me Kate* and *Anything Goes*. CALL MR ROBESON won three awards at the London Ontario Fringe in June 2012 and Best Solo Show at the Stratford UK Fringe this June. He has performed the play around the UK, Canada, Nigeria, Jamaica and the USA (including New York’s Carnegie Hall in February 2012). His other piece titled FROM BLACK AFRICA TO THE WHITE HOUSE - a talk about Black Political Resistance, illustrated with Spirituals, has also been performed on 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. His 15-minute play, HALF MOON, which also deals with ancient Africa, has been performed several times in the UK.

Karel Roessingh, Piano. Dutch-born Karel was raised in Calgary, and began his professional musical career in 1970. He studied jazz arranging at Boston’s Berklee College of Music, and completed a degree in secondary music and mathematics education at University of Victoria. He is frequently a featured specialist at jazz workshops and writes jazz tunes for his own and other groups, and has composed extensively for film, television and video productions, many of which have been broadcast worldwide. He has several recordings to his credit, from solo piano to orchestral compositions, and has recently completed writing a series of music for interactive toys made by Fisher Price. Karel is a councillor and former Mayor of the District of the Highlands, and member of a Victoria biofuel coop.

Olusola Oyeleye, Director and Dramaturge. Olusola is an award winning writer, director and producer working in opera, music theatre, visual arts and dance. Theatre includes: Tin (The Lowry), Ti-Jean and his Brothers (Collective Artistes & Sustained Theatre, Cottesloe), Resident director on Trevor Nunn's West End production of Porgy and Bess (Savoy Theatre), staff producer at English National Opera, Spirit of Okin and Sankofa for Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble, (National & International tours), Coming Up For Air (The Drum & UK tour), The Resurrection of Roscoe Powell (Soho Theatre), The Shelter (RSC Barbican Theatre), Medea (Ariya, Royal National Theatre Studio), The Playground (Polka Theatre, Time Out Critics' Choice Pick of the Year), High Life, (Hampstead Theatre), 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 Orunmila'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). Olusola has also worked in Ghana, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Hungary and the Czech Republic. She has been a visiting lecturer and Artist at Universities in South Africa and 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. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society for the Arts.

Phil Newman, Designer, Assistant Director. Phil's Set & Costume Designs have featured in productions by companies as diverse as Ladder to the Moon, Trestle, Ariya, Full House Theatre, London Shakespeare Workout, Rouge28 Theatre 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 Theatre, Luton), *Voices in the Alleyway* and *Yes, I Still Exist* for Spread Expression Dance, Faith Drama's *The Fiddler* (Unicorn Theatre) & *Next Door* (Cockpit Theatre), *The Famous Five* (Tabard Theatre), Chalkfoot's acclaimed *The Riddle of the Sands* and *Laurel & Hardy* (Jermyn St Theatre, London & UK tours) as well as tours of *Queen Elizabeth's Elephant* and *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, *Hansel & Gretel* (UK tour incl. Greenwich Theatre), *Stockholm* (BAC), and open-air tours of *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Railway Children* (Heartbreak Productions). Phil also designed the award-winning UK & international touring production of John Retallack's *Hannah & Hanna* (Time Out Critics' Choice). Other productions in collaboration with Olusola Oyeleye include *The Security Guard*, *Ella* (RichMix), *High Life* (Hampstead Theatre), *Coming Up For Air* (UK tour), *Ma Joyce's Tales from the Parlour* (Oval House Theatre) and *The Playground* (Time Out Critics' Choice, London).

Sound Design: David Darlington & 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

Forthcoming Performances include: August 31 – Sept 4, Halifax, Nova Scotia: Atlantic Fringe Festival; **September 12, Southport, UK:** The Atkinson; **September 14, Shrewsbury:** Theatre Severn; **Sept 22, Maidenhead:** Norden Farm Arts Centre. **October 1 – 26, London:** Tristan Bates Theatre, Covent Garden (part of Tayo Aluko & Friends's Paul Robeson Art Is A Weapon Festival); **November 7, Oxford:** Ruskin College; **November 9, Helmsley Arts Centre.**

Thanks to: Julia Schlieman, Chelsee Damen, Hub City Cycles, Kathy Ramsey, Gale Lund, Virginia and Ed Daniel, Patrick Courtin for the loan of his piano, and to Literacy Nanaimo Bookstore for the books.

Tayo Aluko & Friends
24- 26 Mount Pleasant, Liverpool L3 5RY
Tel: +44 151 707 8187

info@tayoalukoandfriends.com www.callmrrobeson.com
facebook: Call Mr. Robeson **Twitter:** @CallMrRobeson

