

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs

Written and Performed by TayoAluko, with BogdanDulu, Piano

Bompas Elementary School, Fort Simpson, NWT, Canada.

Monday November 21, 2016

Greetings. I had the great honour of meeting the local Chief of the Dene people earlier today, with his wife, and one of the gifts I was presented with was a braid of Sweetgrass. The medicinal properties of that grass have long been appreciated by their people, as is the symbolism of the three strands in the braid being necessary for and wellbeing: healthy mind, body, and spirit. The gift is also a sign of respect – not just for the recipient, but for Mother Earth who provides what we need to survive, and we show that respect by thankfully accepting what She gives us to survive, while leaving enough for others and for future generations. I also learned about the traditional name of this place: Liidlii Kue – the place where two rivers meet, where peoples have gathered from far and wide from time immemorial. Apparently you can see the differently coloured waters from two rivers flowing along side by side for many miles before they merge together into one. The number of miles over which that happens is but a short portion of the length of the great river, and it can be seen as a metaphor for the total harmony that will yet emerge between the peoples of this vast land since the coming of Europeans. The colonial history of this country is a short one compared to the length of time the Indigenous people have lived here, and in the same way as Sweetgrass springs up after being trampled by man or beast, Indigenous people have demonstrated a triumph of spirit and survived the onslaught. Europeans invaded my part of the world too – Africa, and took millions of her children to the Americas, and along that other great river, traded them as they would goods and animals. Like indigenous Canadians and Americans, they too survived, and the Mississippi, which Paul Robeson sang about, is a witness to that strength of spirit. These two rivers serve as a good reminder to us not to panic too much as we approach a new short era where people wield power by spreading fear, hate and distrust, for with the help of brave people like Robeson, like the many First Nations men and women who resisted the tyranny of the incomers, like all of us can become when we act together for each other and in love, we can soon continue along a path where we appreciate the gifts of Mother Earth better than we have done for the last few centuries, and treat her creations and each other with the respect that we all deserve. I hope you enjoy the show.

TayoAluko. Writer, Performer. Tayo was born in Nigeria, and now lives in England, having worked previously as an architect and property developer. He has fronted orchestras as baritone soloist in concert halls, and has also performed lead roles in operas and musicals. *CALL MR ROBESON* has won numerous awards at festivals in the UK and Canada. He delivers a lecture/concert called *PAUL ROBESON – THE GIANT, IN A NUTSHELL*. Another one titled *FROM BLACK AFRICA TO THE WHITE HOUSE*: a talk about Black Political Resistance, illustrated with spirituals has 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. His 15-minute play, *HALF MOON*, which also deals with ancient Africa has been performed several times in the UK. He has developed a piece titled *WHAT HAPPENS?* featuring the writings of African American Langston Hughes, for performance with live jazz accompaniment. His new play *JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER* premiered at the Edinburgh Fringe in August 2016.

BogdanDulu, Piano and original incidental music. Romanian-born, pianist BogdanDulu (BMus, MMus, DMA) is an active performer, with appearances in concerts, lectures, festivals, radio and TV broadcasts as well as outreach activities on four continents. His recent engagements include a tour of Atlantic Canada (Oct./Nov. 2015), as well as master-classes and lectures at Dalhousie University (Halifax), University of New Brunswick (Fredericton), and Douglas College (New Westminster). Dulu is on the piano faculty at the Vancouver Academy of Music and the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra School of Music. He makes his home in Vancouver, BC.

OlusolaOyelele, 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 Design credits include:*Jungle Book&High School Musical* (Elgiva Theatre), *Strange Land*, *Saint/Jeanne* and *Spring Awakening* (Chelsea Theatre), *Carousel*, *Fame*, *Hairspray*, *Cabaret&Attempts On Her Life* (Amersham & Wycombe College), *Kwaidan*(Rouge28 Theatre), *Lord of the Flies&Grimm Tales* (Colet Court School), *The Tempest&Pinocchio* (UK/UAE tours for Shakespeare4Kidz), an open-air *Romeo & Juliet* (Cornucopia Theatre), *Dance or Die* (Hoxton Hall), *Voices in the Alleyway&Yes, I Still Exist*(Spread Expression Dance), *The Fiddler* (Unicorn Theatre) and film short *The Judge* for Faith Drama, *TheRiddle of the Sands&Laurel and Hardy* (Jermyn St Theatre), *The Famous Five* (Tabard Theatre), *Hansel & Gretel* (UK tour), *Stockholm* (BAC), open-air tours of *The Merchant of Venice&The Railway Children* (Heartbreak) and the award-winning UK/international touring production of *Hannah & Hanna*. Collaborations with director OlusolaOyelele include *Heartbeat - The Musical* workshop (in Lagos, Nigeria), *A Wing, A Prey, A Song* (Guest Projects Africa), *High Life* (Hampstead Theatre), *The Security Guard* (Merton AbbeyFest 2012), *Ella* (Rich Mix), *Coming Up for Air* (UK tour), *The Playground* (Polka Theatre) and *Ma Joyce's Tales from the Parlour* (Oval House/Edinburgh). Phil has recently been appointed Resident Creative Designer at the Colour House Children's Theatre, Merton Abbey Mills where he has designed their 100th production, *Peter Pan* and their forthcoming pantomime, *Cinderella*.

Sound Design: David Darlington & Liam McDermott. **Sound Engineering:** Derek Murray. **Lighting Design:** Gareth Starkey. **Recorded Percussion:**OludeleOlaseinde **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

Nov 25: Centre Stage, Surrey, BC;

Dec 2: Lyman Center, New Haven, CT; **Feb 4:** ACT Arts Centre, Maple Ridge, BC, Canada;

Feb 11: Union County Performing Arts Centre, Rahway, NJ;

Feb 16 – 18: Evergreen Cultural Centre, Coquitlam, BC, Canada;

Feb 28:Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY.

TayoAluko& Friends
24 – 26 Mount Pleasant
Liverpool L3 5RY

info@tayoalukoandfriends.comwww.callmrrobeson.com

facebook: Call Mr. Robeson **Twitter:** @CallMrRobeson

