

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Bogdan Dulu, Piano

The Igloo Church, Inuvik, Northwest Territories, Canada. Thursday November 17, 2016

Greetings. As we travelled North to Inuvik, I was excited to learn that we would end up 14 degrees north of the Arctic Circle. It had been suggested that I might be the first Black person that some locals in “fly-in” communities had ever seen. It was therefore suitably humbling to meet a Jamaican, a Nigerian and a Kenyan in the airport lounge on our arrival yesterday, who by all accounts have been living and/or visiting here very happily for several years! I was also reminded earlier this week, of an African American who had been through these parts over a hundred years ago. Matthew Henson was part of a 1909 polar expedition to Greenland, and claimed to have been the first person to reach the Geographic North Pole, although the white leader of the expedition is the one who received the credit. The facts remain disputed to this day, I believe, but suffice it to say that however honoured I am to be declared a member of the “Order of Arctic Adventurers,” we mustn’t forget that we have reached here by following footprints that other, greater people have left in the snow. It is significant that the four Inuit men that were part of Henson’s party are not named in his Wikipedia reference, and therein lies another story: the indigenous people, without whom that expedition would have been impossible, are too readily overlooked. They and their ancestors would have traversed the Geographical North Pole countless times before 1909, but history, as written by the conquerors, the invaders, the colonizers, has no place for them. Paul Robeson, another pioneer in civil rights and anti-colonialism, is another whose name is forgotten to most people in the world, and even though he never reached this far North, his massive footprints have led me through the snow to Inuvik today. His contribution to the struggle for oppressed, exploited and marginalised people found some resonance with students in East 3 School this morning, and with some difficulty, we were able to come up with three names of people who had fought for Indigenous people’s rights: George Erasmus, Louis Riel and Michel Sikiyea. Who knows what the mention of those names could do for some of those youngsters, but as we enter more frightening times following the recent US elections, and with the current threat to the Sioux people in Standing Rock, one hopes that some of them will be inspired to one day join the list of great people who stood for unity, peace and love, in the face of greed, tyranny and hate, and that their children will tread similar paths through the snow to wherever brave duty calls them. I hope you enjoy the show.

Tayo Aluko. 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.

Bogdan Dulu, Piano and original incidental music. Romanian-born, pianist Bogdan Dulu (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.

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 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, *The Riddle 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 Olusola Oyeleye 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:** 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

Nov 19: Northern Arts & Cultural Centre, Yellowknife, NWT;
Nov 21: Bompas Elementary School, Fort Simpson, NWT; **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.

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