

## **CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs**

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

**Centre Stage at Surrey Civic Centre, British Columbia, Canada.**

**Friday November 25, 2016**

**Greetings.** Yesterday was a day of mourning in the United States. Not because they were forced to watch their President-elect give the traditional Thanksgiving Day address, but because the original inhabitants of those lands consider the coming of the White Man a disaster. And what a disaster that was, but the First Nations peoples of that country are still here to tell their story, and choose to mark the day differently. They also continue to resist forces of tyranny, as demonstrated by the action going on at Standing Rock. The stories of their cousins here in Canada are similarly bleak, but impressive and inspiring, just by the mere fact of their survival against the odds, and their own continued resistance to the despoilment of their lands by mining companies. It is therefore somewhat ironic that the recent US election has led to a surge of applications by Americans wishing to emigrate to Canada, the new “land of the free.” Canada opening her arms to Syrian refugees recently has contributed to this lovely image, but sadly, the “poster boy” of international refuge does also have its own questionable record. Research reveals that about one in every three incidents of conflict in mining worldwide involves a Canadian company: from Australia to Latin America to Africa, not to talk of at home. And I recently heard about alleged Canadian involvement in the undermining of Haiti’s sovereignty over the last few decades. This may be shocking news to many, but not to all, and it takes brave people to reveal truths like these, often enduring ridicule, and even persecution, in the process. There isn’t much out there to satisfy those wishing to know more about this, but, for those who don’t know it already, I hear that the name Yves Engler is one worth looking up. I also understand that there will be a documentary coming out in the new year, called *Dangerous Hope*. I was honoured to meet its maker, Elaine Brière, last night, and marvelled at her tenacity in getting such a story out there, despite very many odds, and I very much look forward to seeing it when it’s done. Brière and Engler, each in their own way, follow the tradition of Paul Robeson, who decided to use his art as his “weapon in defence of [his] people and all oppressed people of the world.” As Canada braces itself for a new immigrant crisis (Americans) one hopes that more great art like this is produced, to ensure that certain classes of immigrants are not discriminated against – most importantly the truth-tellers and the “radicals” among 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 Abbey Fest 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 100<sup>th</sup> 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**

**Call Mr. Robeson: Dec 2:** Lyman Center, New Haven, CT;

**Feb 4:** ACT Arts Centre, Maple Ridge, BC;

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

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

**Feb 28:** Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY.

**Just An Ordinary Lawyer: Jan 11 – 28:** Theatro Technis, London, UK;

**Jan 16:** Theatre Royal, Bath, UK; **Feb 2:** Intrepid Theatre, Victoria, BC, Canada

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