

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

**Written and Performed by TayoAluko, with Bogdan Dulu, Piano**

**Northern Arts & Cultural Centre, Yellowknife, NWT, Canada.**

**Saturday November 19, 2016**

**Greetings.** Since the recent US elections, far-right groups have been reportedly emboldened by the astonishing success of the President-elect to increase attacks on women and on racial, religious and sexual minorities. I mean here, in Canada. And things will only get worse, as your country starts to experience a new wave of immigration – from the United States in particular. The Americans who will be seeking refuge here in the coming years will not all be white heterosexuals either, so the ugliness is likely to increase, despite the fact that Canada has hitherto been regarded as being particularly welcoming of refugees from conflict zones around the world in recent times. The presence of American refugees is not a new thing. Vast numbers have long fled here as the option of remaining in their country was not a viable one for young men and women who refused to participate in the wars their leaders were prosecuting – in Vietnam, in Afghanistan, in Iraq. Even larger numbers fled slavery in the United States centuries ago, contributing to Canada's image as having a long history of sanctuary, refuge and tolerance. It of course depends on who is telling the story. First Nations people view your recent history totally differently, and their continued presence here in such large numbers is a testament to the formidable resilience and triumph of human spirit over tyranny and attempted genocide. The Truth & Reconciliation Commission regarding residential schools is a powerful way of addressing uncomfortable and shameful histories, with painful stories finally getting a public airing. Another way is art, and one knows how effective it is when the maker of the art is persecuted by those in authority. Paul Robeson personified this, and it is reassuring to know that the extremely diverse cast of the Broadway musical *Hamilton* drew criticism from the incoming administration for expressing their concerns directly to the Vice-President-elect after a performance he chose to attend. Robeson said, "*My art is my weapon in defence of my people and all oppressed people of the world.*" The reaction to the *Hamilton* cast's action shows just how potent a weapon art is, and one hopes that here in Canada, you will continue to support those who choose to use art to tell stories, however uncomfortable. The world needs such weapons now more so than any other kind, more so than at any other time in history, in defence of all – from the Indigenous to the most recent newly arrived. 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 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:**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 21:**Bompass 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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