

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

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Timothy Steele, Piano  
ATHE, Boston, Saturday, August 4, 2018**

**Greetings, Welcome.** Had this conference been titled "*Theatres of counter-revolution,*" everybody here would be happy at the state of this country and of the world, for there is no denying that the clock has been turned back several centuries in the space of a few years. If anything positive can be taken from this, it is that it makes us confront our history afresh, in a way that the optimism of recent years may have made many think no longer necessary. And what better way to teach history than through performance? This makes this particular gathering of people extremely dangerous in the eyes of those who rejoice at the ascendance of the present administration, for we have decided to dedicate our lives to showing those we teach that we stand on the shoulders of brave fighters from the past, who can give us inspiration for today's battles. And who more inspiring than Paul Robeson, who despite his huge fame and fortune decided to use his art as his weapon in support of all oppressed people, and not just here in the United States. His internationalism was unusual among artists and activists of his day, and his struggle lonely, but both America and the world had the opportunity to see in him the best that humanity had to offer, and how to use one's gifts for the service of humankind. His own constant references to the people who paved the way for the likes of him reminds us that he is himself worthy of inclusion in that long list of people to whom we refer when we talk about those that shaped or changed history. The fact that he was denied a fair hearing in his time (and since) contributed in no small measure to where we are today, for he spoke of nothing more than a need for peaceful coexistence among all people, and the fair sharing of the gifts and resources of the world, including the practice and enjoyment of art. We are in that same place of need today; and in recognising that we have been here before and that through our work we can inspire people to recognise the efforts of heroes past and use their own talents in the service of humanity, we find ourselves in a revolution that cannot, must not stop.

**Tayo Aluko. Writer, Performer.** Tayo was born in Nigeria, and now lives in Liverpool, UK, where he worked previously as an architect. He has fronted orchestras as baritone soloist in concert halls, and performed lead roles in such operas and musicals as *Nabucco*, *Kiss Me Kate* and *Anything Goes*. *CALL MR ROBESON* has won numerous awards at festivals in the UK and Canada, and has taken him around the UK, the USA, Canada, Jamaica and Nigeria, including New York's Carnegie Hall in 2012. He delivers a lecture/concert titled *FROM BLACK AFRICA TO THE WHITE HOUSE*: a talk about Black Political Resistance, illustrated with spirituals. 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 deals with ancient Africa has been performed several times in the UK. His piece titled *WHAT HAPPENS?* features the writings of African American Langston Hughes, and is performed with live jazz accompaniment. He has been published in *The Guardian*, *The Morning Star*, *NERVE Magazine*, *Modern Ghana* and *Searchlight Magazine*. His play *JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER* has been performed on three continents, including at the National Black Theatre Festival in Winston-Salem, North Carolina in August 2017 and at the Harare International Festival of the Arts in May 2018.

**Timothy Steele (Piano)** Mr. Steele is an active vocal coach, collaborative pianist, and conductor, and has taught for twenty-six years on the opera faculty at New England Conservatory. He has served as assistant conductor/pianist for over 180 productions with twenty-five opera companies, including Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Boston Lyric Opera, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra, Wolf Trap Opera, Central City Opera, and PORT Opera. He assisted with the Pulitzer Prize winning opera *MADAME WHITE SNAKE* for productions in Boston and Taiwan and the *OUROBOROS TRILOGY* in 2016. For three years, he collaborated with WaterFire-Providence on a unique and popular series of opera evenings. In Boston he has performed with Emmanuel Music, the Handel and Haydn Society, and the Commonwealth Shakespeare Company, among others.

**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), and *Twelfth Night* (British Council Tour, Zimbabwe). 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.** Phil's Set & Costume Design credits include: *Saint/Jeanne* and *Spring Awakening - The Musical* (Chelsea Theatre), *Hairspray*, *Cabaret & Attempts on her Life* (Amersham & Wycombe College), *Lord of the Flies & Grimm Tales* (Colet Court School), *The Tempest & Pinocchio* (UK/UAE tours for Shakespeare4Kidz), *Beauty & the Beast*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *A Christmas Carol & Peter Pan* (Tickled Pink), *Romeo & Juliet* (Cornucopia Theatre), *The Liar* (South Hill Park), *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*. Other Design credits include *Our House* (Elgiva Theatre), *Cinderella* (Library Theatre, Luton), *Next Door* (Cockpit Theatre) and Rouge 28 Theatre's tour of *Kwaidan*, a Japanese ghost story with puppets. Other collaborations with director Olusola Oyeleye include *High Life* (Hampstead Theatre), *A Wing, A Prey, A Song* (Guest Projects Africa), *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). He recently designed musicals *Carousel* and *Fame* for Amersham & Wycombe College.

**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 Aug 5: Boston** Center for the Arts; **Aug 10:** Community Music Center, **Portland, OR, Aug 12 – 15: Ashland** Community Center, Ashland, OR; **Aug 17: Denman Island** Community Hall **Aug 21 – 25: Edmonton** Fringe; **Nov 12: Alphabet City, Pittsburgh, PA**

**Just An Ordinary Lawyer: Aug 19: Gabriola** Festival, BC, Canada  
**August 22 – 26: Edmonton** Fringe, Alberta, Canada

#### **Tayo Aluko & Friends**

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