

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Timothy Steele, Piano
Boston Center for the Arts, Sunday, August 5, 2018**

Greetings, Welcome. LeBron James has put his tremendous fortune toward setting up a school for at-risk children. In doing so, he recognised that the public school system is failing such people, and that those with the means and the profile can do a lot to improve the situation of the less financially fortunate - those victims of the harsh capitalist system under which we survive. Another sportsman who made headlines recently for so publicly exposing the shortcomings of the authorities is Colin Kaepernick, with his "Taking A Knee" protest – a protest which has spread across sports and across continents. Both these men follow in the giant footsteps of Paul Robeson, who at the height of his fame and fortune in 1949 said, *"I refuse to let my personal success, as part of a fraction of one percent of the Negro people, explain away the injustices to fourteen million of my people; because with all the energy at my command, I fight for the right of the Negro people and other oppressed labor-driven Americans..."* If he were he alive today, he would be using his platform to draw attention for example to a 2015 report by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston titled "The Color of Wealth in Boston" that stated that the inequality in household assets in this city was 30,000 to one, white households vs. African-American. A truly shocking statistic that cannot only be blamed on the present administration but on a system that not only perpetuates and increases such disparities but also somehow manages to successfully hide such information from the public. The media ensure that jokers of one sort or another occupy our headspace constantly while anybody that challenges the status quo or draws attention to really important information is denigrated and/or marginalised. Like Robeson, another figure in the furthest margins of society (in prison where he has spent over three decades) is the former Black Panther and journalist Mumia Abu Jamal. A two-minute broadcast from him (available online at prisonradio.org) can give us more information and guidance than a day's news from most networks. The least we can do is to seek out, listen to and amplify such voices of truth. I hope you enjoy the show.

Tayo Aluko. Writer, Performer. Nigerian-born and a former architect, Tayo lives in Liverpool, UK, 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. His audiovisual piece on West African History before the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade 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 originated a piece titled *WHAT HAPPENS?* featuring the writings of African American Langston Hughes, 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 26 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 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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