

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Colin Hazel, Piano
Histon Library, Cambridgeshire, Wednesday 27 March, 2019**

Greetings, and Welcome. When my home country, Nigeria, gained independence in 1960, we adopted a system of government set down by the colonial administration, based on the British parliamentary system. That system has been found rather wanting recently, and it is quite ironic that the matter that has defeated it has been the result of still having a colony right on England's doorstep – in Northern Ireland. In 1999, Nigeria adopted a new system of government based on the American system. In neither country can it be said to be producing examples of good governance at present. Paul Robeson traced his ancestry to the Igbo people of Nigeria where traditionally there was a system of rule by common people that generally ensured that power and authority, rather than being concentrated in a small political elite, was shared between the sexes, kinship groups, age sets, etc. The colonialists changed all that (as they did with traditional systems everywhere in the Empire), not just because it suited their political and economic ends, but also in the belief that everything about them was, simply put, *superior*. It cannot be denied that such attitudes remain in many sections of society, and lead to most of the problems we face here and around the world. There is no better figure than Paul Robeson to remind us of the folly of this argument, and how his story, like that of his Igbo ancestors, can provide a blueprint for better society. As we continue to be transfixed by Brexit while all kinds of serious local and international matters go unaddressed and continue to worsen, the words he wrote in an angry telegram to his president in 1947 demanding action after yet another lynching in Georgia could not be truer or more appropriate today than they were back then: *"Only when our government has taken ... such action toward protecting its own citizens can its role in aiding the progress of peoples in other countries be viewed with trust and hope."* I hope you enjoy the show.

Tayo Aluko, Writer, Performer. Nigerian-born and a former architect, Tayo lives in Liverpool. 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 is 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. He 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.

Colin Hazel, Piano. Since graduating with a BA (Hons) in Music from the University of Nottingham Colin has worked in a diverse range of musical areas including theatre, choral, jazz, rock, pop and music education. His performing credits include two years as a multi-instrumentalist in Giffords Circus, keyboards and vocals with a variety of bands, cabaret performer, piano vocalist and youth theatre MD. He is currently director of music at St Augustine's Church, accompanist for Cambridge's Singing Allowed Choir and keyboard player for the Barefoot Doctors blues group. He has recently published an educational book *New Horizons for Piano: Grades 2-3* which is the first in a series of books aimed at reintroducing works by historic women composers into piano education. Available at Millers, Cambridge Pianoforte and Heffers. For more details go to cjhazel.co.uk.

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: Arawa (Mboka Festival); Sidney's Last Shift (York Theatre, Royal); A Raisin in the Sun (Farnham Maltings); Tin (The Lowry), Ti-Jean and his Brothers (National Theatre, Cottesloe), Resident director to Trevor Nunn, Porgy and Bess (Savoy Theatre), Staff Producer, English National Opera; Spirit of Okin and Sankofa, Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble (UK & International tours), Zhe (Collective Artistes, Soho Theatre), The Shelter (RSC Barbican Theatre), Medea (Ariya, 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, Zimbabwe). Opera includes: The Pied Piper of Chibok (Grimeborn Festival); 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 (St. Louis African Chorus), Dido and Aeneas (Tricycle/BAC). Olusola has worked in The Gambia, Ghana, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Hungary and the Czech Republic. She is a lecturer at UCA and St Mary's Universities, and was Head of Acting at Morley College. Her poetry has been set to music by Akin Euba and performed at Harvard and Cambridge Universities. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society for the Arts.

Phil Newman, Designer, Assistant Director. Phil's recent Design credits include: *The Little Mermaid & The Wonderful World of Oz* (UAE tours, S4K International), *Pinocchio & A Christmas Carol* (Voice of the Show, Chesham), *The Mikado* (Network Theatre), *Jungle Book* (Elgiva Theatre), *Bernarda Alba, Strange Land, Saint/Jeanne & Spring Awakening* (Chelsea Theatre), *The Tempest & Pinocchio* (UK/UAE tours, Shakespeare4Kidz), Japanese ghost story *Kwaidan* (UK/International tour), *Carousel, Hairspray & Cabaret* (Amersham College) and a huge walk-through Xmas Grotto at Wyevale Garden Centre, Aylesbury in 2017. For *Call Mr Robeson* director Olusola Oyeleye he has also designed *The Security Guard* (Colour House), *High Life* (Hampstead Theatre), *Coming Up for Air* (UK tour), *The Playground* (Polka Theatre) and *Ma Joyce's Tales from the Parlour* (Oval House/Edinburgh). Further credits include: *Lord of the Flies* (Colet Court), *Dance or Die* for Avant Garde Dance's Tony Adigun, *Voices in the Alleyway & Yes, I Still Exist* (Spread Expression Dance), *The Riddle of the Sands & Laurel and Hardy* (Jermyn St Theatre), *The Famous Five* (Tabard Theatre), open-air tours of *The Merchant of Venice & The Railway Children* (Heartbreak) and the original multi-award-winning touring production of John Retallack's *Hannah & Hanna*. Phil is proud to be an Associate Artist with director Gbemisola Ikumelo's Faith Drama Productions, for whom he has designed *Custody* (Oval House), *The Fiddler* (Unicorn Theatre) and *Next Door* (Cockpit Theatre). Since 2016, he has been the Resident Creative Designer at Colour House Children's Theatre near Wimbledon.

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" Representatives Walter, Arens and Scherer. **Male Voice Choir:** Liverpool Male Voice Choir

Forthcoming Performances Include

Call Mr. Robeson: April 5, OH, USA: Kent State University;
April 15, NJ, USA: Paul Robeson Community School for the Arts, New Brunswick
May 3,4, Glasgow: Queen's Park Arena; **May 7- 10, Vancouver, Canada:** Havana Theatre
July 11, 18: Buxton Fringe Festival

What Happens?: April 9: Theatr Clwyd, Mold, Wales; **April 10:** Liverpool Philharmonic Music Room

Just An Ordinary Lawyer:

May 10, 11, Vancouver, Canada: Havana Theatre; **July 12, 19: Buxton Fringe Festival**

Tayo Aluko & Friends

First Floor, Liver House, 96 Bold Street, Liverpool L1 4HY
info@tayoalukoandfriends.com www.tayoalukoandfriends.com
facebook: Call Mr. Robeson **Twitter:** @CallMrRobeson **Tel:** +44 151 707 8187