

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Elaine Joe, Piano
Havana Theatre, Vancouver, Tuesday - Friday, May 7 - 10, 2019**

Greetings, and Welcome. BC voters have elected their second-ever Green Federal MP this week. This is of interest to me, coming from the UK where last week, the opposition Labour Party successfully tabled a motion in Parliament to get the Government to acknowledge and declare an environmental and climate emergency. This followed effective Extinction Rebellion protests in London, as part of which a fifteen-year-old Swedish climate activist addressed the protestors and went on to Parliament to meet the Labour Party leader and the one Green Party MP. The Conservative Prime Minister was unavailable, partly because she has the small matter of Brexit on her plate. This illustrates that despite inertia, opposition and ridicule, often, activists can achieve much, especially when they act collectively and find peaceful means of getting more and more people to join their cause. Even though BC leads the way in the country on Green representation, there is clearly no room for complacency, as much work remains to be done, and urgently – including holding your Prime Minister to account for apparently renegeing on campaign promises that helped him win office. In my home country of Nigeria, a senator recently proposed a bill to introduce full electric-car use by 2035, but it had to be withdrawn, not just for lack of support, but for active resistance, one other senator saying from the floor that it had to be defeated so that the country can continue to sell its oil. Nonetheless, the seed has been planted, and one hopes that it can grow and bloom – especially among young people there - before it is too late. Being a campaigner for what one truly believes to be right is clearly a difficult thing, requiring tremendous amounts of bravery and self-belief. Many have paid with their lives. Here in Canada, you will know of many Indigenous and other activists who suffered such fates, or others whose livelihoods were severely compromised because they represented a threat to the status quo. Paul Robeson, whose story we are sharing and celebrating today, was an excellent example of this bravery. Like too few in his time and since, he proceeded with his calls for peace, justice, equality and freedom for all, in the full knowledge that he was putting his very life and livelihood on the line. Very much a lone figure back then, the fact that he persevered is a source of inspiration to us today, as we seek reasons to keep addressing the urgent tasks before us, notwithstanding the fact that there is so much backwardness in politics. Out on the streets however, it's a different story. 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.

Elaine Joe, Piano: Elaine studied with the Royal Conservatory. She works as a performer, teacher, composer and accompanist. She plays for four choirs in a wide range of styles. In her spare time, she performs with an accordion squeezebox circle, dances and plays djembe on the beach and is learning cello. Away from the music, she can be found on the mountain, snowboarding, cross-country skiing or roller blading in the summer. She has a passion for treehouses, and sometimes practices in the trees.

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:* July 11, 18: Buxton Fringe Festival, Derbyshire, UK**

Just An Ordinary Lawyer:

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

Thanks to Yvon and Valerie Raoul

Tayo Aluko & Friends

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