

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Timothy Steele, Piano
Multicultural Arts Center, Cambridge, MA. Thursday August 22, 2019**

Greetings, and Welcome. Two of your nation's most high-profile politicians were banned from entering Israel recently, because their presence there was deemed to be contrary to the best interests of that country. One of them, Rashida Tlaib, was in the process prevented from visiting her very old grandmother, for Palestine is where Rep. Tlaib was born. It is interesting that Ms. Tlaib had been offered a deal: to be allowed to go as long as she refrained from speaking about the Israeli occupation of Palestine. It is reported that she was tempted to accept, but was dissuaded by her own grandmother, who must realise that in so doing, she was increasing the likelihood of never seeing her granddaughter again. In contrast to the bravery of these women, the narrative of the American and Israeli governments is that the Congresswoman and her colleagues are anti-Semitic, and support terrorism. A similar description was given decades ago to justify Nelson Mandela's long incarceration. The same with the Black Panthers, some of whom - like the brave journalist Mumia Abu Jamal - are in jail after thirty years. Also Julian Assange, who exposed the truth about your government's violence and corruption abroad. And so it was with Paul Robeson, whose image in the minds of most Americans (if they are aware of him at all) remains that of being intent on the violent overthrow of this country in the 1940s. By contrast, seventy years ago this month, the ability of ordinary citizens to be provoked into violence by the press and politicians was demonstrated when two massive riots met Paul Robeson as he attempted (and finally succeeded) to give a concert in Peekskill, NY, because he had called for equality and justice at home and abroad. For his pains, he was prevented from plying his trade for several years. Presaging what happened to the congresswomen by over sixty years, Robeson was also offered a deal: you can have your passport back and start to travel and earn again, as long as you agree to stop criticising your country. The congresswomen and the rest of the citizenry can take inspiration from people like Robeson who refused to stop telling the truth, and eventually triumphed. 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.

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: *Showcase* (Soho Theatre); *Arawa* (Mboka Festival); *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* (Producer 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, Arcola); 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 senior lecturer at St Mary's University, 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, Set & Costume Designer. Phil's recent Design credits include: *Cinderella* (MAC, Stoke-on-Trent), *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, Shakespeare 4 Kidz), 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. He has also designed the multi-award-winning monodrama *Call Mr Robeson*, *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 award-winning international 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 2015, he has been the Resident Creative Designer at Colour House Children's Theatre nr 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: Sept 1: Dramatic Hall, Peekskill, NY, USA; **Sept 13:** Heron Theatre, Beetham, UK; **Sept 14:** Llanbedr Village Hall, Crickhowell, Wales; **Sept 26, 27:** Theatr Clwyd, Mold, Wales; **Oct 26:** Littleport Library, Cambs, UK.

Just An Ordinary Lawyer: Sept 28: Theatr Clwyd, Mold, Wales

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