

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

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Martin Robinson, Piano  
Theatr Clwyd, Mold, Wales. Friday & Saturday, 26 & 27 September, 2019

**Greetings, and Welcome.** Paul Robeson was so famous and important in his day that among the places he visited were the Houses of Parliament as a guest of Tony Benn and his father, Viscount Stansgate in 1958, and previously, the White House in 1946 to where as a not-so-welcome guest, he led a delegation to protest then-President Truman's continued inaction on lynching of Black Americans. Were he to return to our world today, he would surely be wondering why the character of the holders of the highest offices in those buildings are being impugned so intensely, and how apparently dysfunctional the political institutions in both countries are – perhaps even more so than in his day. He would be interested in the fact that the United Kingdom Supreme Court has been able to cause the British Government so much trouble, and wonder whether the US Supreme Court is capable of doing the same. It may even be that an even higher body, the United Nations, might have to be called upon to intervene. Interestingly, Paul Robeson preceded Malcolm X by about a decade when he led a delegation there in 1951, titled "We Charge Genocide." Right now. This week, the UN has been discussing the very urgent issue of Climate Crisis, with an impassioned contribution from the very remarkable Greta Thunberg. By contrast, "# 45" used his time to talk about trade sanctions, nationalism, the supposed threat of Socialism, and war. One is reminded of a passage from Robeson's book, *Here I Stand* written partly to counter the relentless negative coverage he had to endure for years from 1949. He wrote of his despair on seeing on his return to Germany in 1939, after several years away, that "*the crush of martial music and the sound of jackboots [had] drowned out the songs of peace and brotherhood.*" World War II followed. It appears that with the rhetoric and behaviour of many of the most powerful world leaders today, we are risking not just continuing armed conflict but environmental catastrophe. We would be wise to listen out for those voices that are being drowned out by the noises coming from such characters, and being amplified by the mainstream media. In addition to two of my favourite contemporary figures who I think come closest to espousing many of Robeson's views – Jeremy Corbyn and Bernie Sanders ("the artist must take sides,") I always like to mention figures like Julian Assange, Chelsea Manning and Mumia Abu Jamal, and in my home country of Nigeria, the journalist and activist Omoyele Sowore - all of whom present such threats to the powers-that-be that they are incarcerated in the hope that their messages are continually suppressed. I urge those who don't know those names to seek out and amplify those voices of truth, justice, peace and brotherhood. 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 and solo roles in operas, musicals and oratorios. *CALL MR ROBESON* has won numerous awards at festivals in the UK and Canada, and has taken him as far afield as the North West Territories of Canada and Australia and New Zealand, including New York's Carnegie Hall. 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 the Harare International Festival of the Arts in May 2018. He was one of a group of "outstanding writers of colour" invited to write and perform responses to artefacts held in Oxford's Pitt Rivers Museum in September 2019.

**Martin Robinson, Piano.** Martin Robinson has wide experience playing as pianist for choirs and soloists. On sax and keyboards he has played throughout Britain and in Europe with his own jazz band, Skokiaan, and with Mamadou Diaw and other bands and singers. He is delighted to be working with Tayo Aluko on a show with such a strong message.

**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: Oct 26: Littleport Library, Cambs;**

**Feb 1: Bishop Center, Aberdeen, WA, USA; March 3: The Miners Theatre, Ammanford;**

**April 13 – 17: Sogang University, Seoul, S. Korea.**

**Just An Ordinary Lawyer: Sept 28: Theatr Clwyd, Mold; Nov 2: Unity Theatre, Liverpool**

**Tayo Aluko & Friends**

**First Floor, Liver House, 96 Bold Street, Liverpool L1 4HY, UK**

info@tayoalukoandfriends.com www.tayoalukoandfriends.com

**facebook:** Call Mr. Robeson **Twitter:** @CallMrRobeson

+44 7990 608 074; USA: +1 914 733 5267