

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Dennis Nelson, Piano

Dramatic Hall, Peekskill Central Market, Peekskill, NY. Sunday, September 1, 2019

Greetings, and Welcome. There are still some folks around who as children or at most, teenagers, were in Cortlandt Park seventy years ago when violence met Paul Robeson and his supporters as he came to sing songs of peace and brotherhood. That experience would have stayed with them, and would likely have determined the course of their lives thereafter. They might be alarmed at the state of this country and the world so many decades later, and troubled by the devastation being perpetrated by seemingly deranged, middle-aged gangster world leaders. They would however do well to look at the youth who have taken their place and decided to fight for the future of the planet. The teenage climate activist who recently crossed the Atlantic on a zero-emissions boat to reach these shores to highlight the international climate crisis is perhaps the most noted example. Contrast that with the actions of #45 and the president of Brazil, and one can easily see that wisdom doesn't necessarily always increase with age. Paul Robeson was always keen to remind young people that great positive change came from youth action, and that great figures like Frederick Douglass and Nat Turner took their bravest actions when still young. Robeson's own father, like countless others, escaped slavery in his mid-teens to make the arduous journey to the relative freedom of New Jersey. Less than two centuries later, this is more than matched by those young Africans desperately crossing the Sahara and the Mediterranean to reach a confused and hostile Europe, rather than stay in their war-torn and poverty-stricken homes. Many perish en route, but their brave sacrifices at least alert us to the crises that need our attention and action, in the same way that young people migrating to the southern U.S. border draw attention to intolerable circumstances in parts of Latin America. As youth integrated schools in the 1950s and '60s, set up the Black Panther Party, more recently Black Lives Matter, Occupy, March for Our Lives and Extinction Rebellion, and now in overwhelming numbers back those older politicians whose policies happen to align more closely with Paul Robeson's than anybody else's, we older ones should trust and support them in their efforts to save humanity itself. 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 the Harare International Festival of the Arts in May 2018.

Dennis A. Nelson (Piano) Dennis studied at the Brooklyn Conservatory of Music and at Hofstra University. He is organist and choir director for Trinity Baptist Church in Brooklyn, and accompanist for the New York City Labor Chorus. He is a member of The New Hope Ensemble, a gospel/jazz quintet, and Instrumental Sounds Of Praise (ISOP), a gospel big band aggregation. His songs have been recorded by artists including gospel singer Valerie Boyd, R&B/gospel singer Desiree Coleman-Jackson and actress/singer Jeannette Bayardelle. Recent keyboardist/writer recording credits include: "Never Turning Back" by the New Hope Ensemble, "Autumn Breezes - Songs For The Harvest" by Gwen Davis-Young, and "For Seasons Of Love" by the Hallmarx Music Group.

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 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**

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