

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

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Karl Iverson, Piano

Community Center Hall, Ashland, OR. Sunday - Wednesday, August 12 - 15, 2018

**Greetings, Welcome.** Flying into Ashland from further North the other day, the haze from above and the smell of the smoke once we landed, with no sign of forest fires in the immediate vicinity, made me marvel at how things going on hundreds of miles away can have undesirable consequences on the daily lives of people unrelated to those events. So it is in the world of politics, and Americans often forget how their country has been responsible for, or contributed directly to smoke, ashes and rubble around the world for centuries. The Middle East; Latin America; Africa; South East Asia – no region has escaped the benign influence of United States foreign policy as forged in the boardrooms of Washington and/or Wall Street. And as new fires erupt in the forests of California, your leadership announces plans for an expansion of the military budget to combat threats perceived to be coming from outer space! Meanwhile, here on the ground, racial tensions continue to increase, with White Supremacists being given the freedom to vent their hate on the streets of the capital, with the suggestion that they have the backing of #45 and those around him. This all brings to mind that in a letter to President Truman in 1946, after four Black men were lynched in Georgia, Paul Robeson demanded that *“the Federal Government take immediate effective steps to apprehend and punish the perpetrators of this shocking crime and to halt the rising tide of lynch law. Only when our government has taken such action toward protecting its own citizens can its role in aiding the progress of peoples of other countries be viewed with trust and hope.”* When natural and man-made disasters seem to be of less interest here on earth (remember Puerto Rico?) than conjured “threats from outer space, we need to remember that in the same way as the rains eventually come to douse out fires that prove too much for us, people like Robeson emerge every once in a while to remind us of the power of love and collective action as the perfect antidote to the hatred that burns around us and the inequality that blights our society. As Robeson and others like him also reminded us, as our leaders continue to cast their gaze into space, it falls on us to deploy those weapons of peace and harmony ourselves now. I hope you enjoy the show.

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

**Karl Iverson (Piano)** Karl has been teaching and performing at various theaters in the Rogue Valley for more than 10 years. He also works with many of the local high school theater programs and has an extensive background in musical theater performance, arranging and orchestration. Mr. Iverson holds a degree in music from SOU. He is currently, or has recently been working on Avenue Q with Oregon Cabaret Theatre, Always ... Patsy Cline with LGP; Into The Woods with Oregon Conservatory for Performing Arts and Oliver! With Camelot Theatre Company

**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: *Tin* (The Lowry), *Ti-Jean and his Brothers* (Collective Artistes & Sustained Theatre, Cottesloe), Resident director on Trevor Nunn's West End production of *Porgy and Bess* (Savoy Theatre), staff producer at English National Opera, Spirit of Okin and Sankofa for Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble, (National & International tours), *Coming Up For Air* (The Drum & UK tour), *The Resurrection of Roscoe Powell* (Soho Theatre), *The Shelter* (RSC Barbican Theatre), *Medea* (Ariya, Royal National Theatre Studio), *The Playground* (Polka Theatre, Time Out Critics' Choice Pick of the Year), *High Life*, (Hampstead Theatre), *Maybe Father*, (Talawa, Young Vic), and *Twelfth Night* (British Council Tour, Zimbabwe). Opera includes: 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* with the St. Louis African Chorus, *Dido and Aeneas* (Tricycle/BAC), *God's Trombones* (Fairfield Halls) and the second cast revival of Jonathan Miller's production of *The Mikado* (English National Opera). Olusola has also worked in Ghana, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Hungary and the Czech Republic. She has been a visiting lecturer and Artist at Universities in South Africa and London, and was Head of the Acting Studio at Morley College. Her poetry has been set to music by Akin Euba and performed at both Harvard and Cambridge Universities. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society for the Arts.

**Phil Newman, Designer.** Phil's Set & Costume Design credits include: *Saint/Jeanne* and *Spring Awakening - The Musical* (Chelsea Theatre), *Hairspray*, *Cabaret & Attempts on her Life* (Amersham & Wycombe College), *Lord of the Flies & Grimm Tales* (Colet Court School), *The Tempest & Pinocchio* (UK/UAE tours for Shakespeare4Kidz), *Beauty & the Beast*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *A Christmas Carol & Peter Pan* (Tickled Pink), *Romeo & Juliet* (Cornucopia Theatre), *The Liar* (South Hill Park), *Dance or Die* (Hoxton Hall), *Voices in the Alleyway & Yes, I Still Exist* (Spread Expression Dance), *The Fiddler* (Unicorn Theatre) and film short *The Judge* for Faith Drama, *The Riddle of the Sands & Laurel and Hardy* (Jermyn St Theatre), *The Famous Five* (Tabard Theatre), *Hansel & Gretel* (UK tour), *Stockholm* (BAC), open-air tours of *The Merchant of Venice & The Railway Children* (Heartbreak) and the award-winning UK/international touring production of *Hannah & Hanna*. Other Design credits include *Our House* (Elgiva Theatre), *Cinderella* (Library Theatre, Luton), *Next Door* (Cockpit Theatre) and Rouge 28 Theatre's tour of *Kwaidan*, a Japanese ghost story with puppets. Other collaborations with director Olusola Oyeleye include *High Life* (Hampstead Theatre), *A Wing, A Prey, A Song* (Guest Projects Africa), *The Security Guard* (Merton Abbey Fest 2012), *Ella* (Rich Mix), *Coming Up for Air* (UK tour), *The Playground* (Polka Theatre) and *Ma Joyce's Tales from the Parlour* (Oval House/Edinburgh). He recently designed musicals *Carousel* and *Fame* for Amersham & Wycombe College.

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

#### **Forthcoming Performances Include**

**Call Mr. Robeson: Till Aug 15:** Ashland Community Center, **Ashland, OR;**

**Aug 17: Denman Island Community Hall Aug 21 – 25: Edmonton Fringe; Oct 4:** Court Theatre, **Tring, UK; Oct 5:** Clapham Library, **London, UK; Nov 12:** Alphabet City, **Pittsburgh, PA**

**Just An Ordinary Lawyer: Aug 19: Gabriola Festival, BC, Canada**

**August 22 – 26: Edmonton Fringe, Alberta, Canada**

#### **Tayo Aluko & Friends**

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