

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

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Dan Gaynor, Piano  
Community Music Center, Portland, OR. Friday, August 10, 2018**

**Greetings, Welcome.** I perhaps cannot be blamed for feeling a little trepidation coming out West from the UK, via New York and Boston, to be with you today. Not only are there multiple fires raging in the state just South of here, but this city was the site of some racial/racist disturbances only last weekend. A little surprising, as I had heard of Portland described as one of the most liberal cities in the USA. I was then reminded of the fact that Oregon was founded as a state with laws that specifically excluded African Americans until the 1920s, and that it later became a magnet for the Ku Klux Klan. As we also know, this, like most of the Northern United States, became a so-called "White state" through acts of genocide against the original inhabitants of this land, many of whose descendants are now relegated to reservations and are being prevented from enjoying ancestral lands stolen from their forebears by European immigrants. And as the hatred and the fires burn on, the Administration announces plans to boost a military force to protect the nation from threats from outer space! The counter-demonstrations that the world saw last weekend, and the way they and not the white supremacists were attacked remind us that progress has been made in the hearts and minds of the ordinary people. It is they, and not those in power, who are the real agents of change. And while efforts are made to distract us from the matters that need to be dealt with here on the ground, we should maintain our resolve to remind elected representatives of what is expected of them, and remind ourselves of the power that we actually possess when we act together in love for each other and for the planet. Paul Robeson was particularly effective in demonstrating this through his words, actions and speeches, and was therefore seen as particularly dangerous by the authorities, who did all they could to muffle his voice. As the powers-that-be seek to make us consider spending billions waging war in outer space, we need inspiration for how to tackle problems that exist here on the ground and to quench the fires of hate that burn in the hearts of all too many of us, and there is no better figure than Paul Robeson as an example of what can be achieved through the force of simple, honest love. 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 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. His 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.

**Dan Gaynor (Piano)** Dan is a pianist native to Portland, Oregon. He has performed with the Oregon Symphony Pops, the Portland Gay Men's Chorus, the American Metropole Orchestra, Gino Vannelli, Micky Dolenz, Kurt Elling, Sara Gazarek, Chuck Israels and many others. He has also performed with innumerable local artists, from Nancy King to Esperanza Spalding. His collaborative piano work has ranged from opera and cabaret to vaudeville and circus. His keyboard playing appears on over 30 compact discs, and he has worked as a bandleader, record producer, university instructor, and music director. Dan believes the audience is the heart of every performance and feels honored to share the love of music with every audience he encounters.

**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: Aug 12 – 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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