

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

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Karel Roessingh, Piano  
Denman Island Community Hall. Friday, August 17, 2018**

**Greetings, Welcome.** The Queen of Soul is dead. Tributes have flowed from literally every corner of the earth. Even here on Denman, there will be many mourning but also delighting in the memories of the beauty of her work over the years. The performance that drew her largest ever audience was at the first inauguration of President Obama in 2009 (I was there!) To the tune of God Save the Queen, embellished as only she could, she sang, *Let freedom ring!... Land of the noble free*, The optimism of that occasion is very much a pipedream now, and many are awakening to what Malcolm X called, with reference to what Africans were living under then, and to a large extent now, an American Nightmare. Such nightmares are of course centuries old, and have also been experienced by the First Nations people of this land, brief research into which tells me included the Pentlatch people of what is now known as Denman Island. Such nightmares (including genocide) were also visited on indigenous peoples around the world, and on a tour to Australia and New Zealand in 1960, Paul Robeson sought out and spoke up for their Aboriginal peoples, much to the embarrassment of the authorities in Australia, Britain and America. As an orator, he deserves his place in an impressive line-up that includes people like Frederick Douglass, Dr. King and Malcolm X to name but three. Here in Canada, the politician George Erasmus made a memorable speech on Self-governance in 1990, in which he argued that “*there are three nations in Canada, and one of them is Aboriginal.*” Aretha Franklin’s passing is sad indeed, but one looks forward to the impressive music and oratory that will form part of the celebration of her brilliant life. The star turn will most likely once again be that of Barak Obama, returning the compliment she paid him in 2009. One is grateful for the fact that he is still alive and well, and at the top of his oratorical game, for the Queen of Soul deserves nothing less than a president who really knows how to *Think ...* and what it means to ... *Show a little respect.* 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.

**Karel Roessingh, Piano.** Dutch-born Karel was raised in Calgary, and began his professional musical career in 1970. He studied jazz arranging and composition at Berklee College of Music in Boston, and completed a degree in secondary music and mathematics education at University of Victoria. He is frequently a featured specialist at jazz workshops, and writes jazz tunes for his own and other groups, and has composed extensively for film, television and video productions, many of which been broadcast world-wide. He has several recordings to his credit, from solo piano to orchestral compositions, and has produced CDs for Valdy, Maureen Washington and many other artists. Karel is a councillor and former Mayor of the District of the Highlands.

**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 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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