

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Sahil Chugh, Piano
Edmonton Fringe, August 21 - 26, 2018**

Greetings, Welcome. There is a new movie out, titled *BlackKkKlansman*, by Spike Lee, which tells the true story of a Black police officer in 1970s USA infiltrating the Ku Klux Klan, the white supremacist, terrorist organisation. The film ends with real footage of the white supremacist march in Charlottesville last August, in which one anti-racist protester was murdered, and shines a light on how the Klan have, to all intents and purposes, infiltrated all levels of American society today, including the White House itself. Harry Belafonte also has a role of an elderly Black man recounting how he witnessed the lynching of his own friend in 1916. This was the era in which Paul Robeson entered Rutgers College as the only Black boy, and overcame the racism there to become a star pupil. Despite going on to achieve tremendous fame and fortune, he was relentless in denouncing white terrorism against his people, hoping it might end in his lifetime. A few generations later, we are reminded that the cancer still persists, and that the terrorists are emboldened when given encouragement from those in the field of politics and the media. For this reason, it is unnerving to visit Canada and hear of one of your MPs forming a new Party because of 'extreme multiculturalism,' arguing that '... it will destroy what has made us such a great country.' In choosing as he does to overlook the genocide and the land theft that was involved in making Canada what it is today, he is giving encouragement and comfort to those in society who see nothing wrong in physically or metaphorically harming Indigenous and/or non-white Canadians. He also portrays the ignorance that stops reasonable people from questioning why so many choose to flee their homelands and risk their very lives to come to a country where they are subjected to such hostility. Careful investigation will reveal that Western (including Canadian) military and commercial interference in foreign lands contributes to the strife that they are seeking refuge from, and it was the clarity with which Paul Robeson pointed such things out that made him so dangerous to the authorities in his country, and this. Notwithstanding tremendous battering to his health and his career, he decided to keep going, determined to use his art as his 'weapon in defence of [his] people, and all oppressed people of the world.' The power of art to teach, to inspire, to provoke action has been brilliantly captured in *BlackKkKlansman*, and I strongly commend it to you. I hope you enjoy this modest little show too.

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.

Sahil Chugh, Piano. Sahil is a freelance musician in Edmonton. He has worked with many local musicians of all sorts of genres including jazz, blues, country, hip-hop, etc: He has a background in musical theatre, has worked with his old high schools drama program, and also with the 11 O'Clock Number, an improvised musical group based out of Edmonton. Sahil leads his own group, the Sahil Chugh Trio, who play regularly in Edmonton.

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 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: Till August 26: Edmonton Fringe, Alberta, Canada

Tayo Aluko & Friends

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

info@tayoalukoandfriends.com www.tayoalukoandfriends.com

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