

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

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Angus Carmichael, Piano**

**Queen's Park Arena, Glasgow. Friday, May 3, 2019**

**Greetings, and Welcome.** It is a tremendous honour to be invited to celebrate that great occasion sixty years ago when Paul Robeson joined thousands marching on May Day 1959, and his contribution was rightly the highlight of the day. The iconic photograph of him singing to a packed out crowd is most impressive, and even if the numbers were swelled by his presence there, it is certain that Workers' Day back then would have drawn much larger numbers than it does today. Robeson and the trade union leaders would likely have reflected on the American origins of Workers Memorial Day - started in memory of workers who were executed on trumped-up murder charges in Chicago in 1887, after violence had broken out at huge demonstrations for better working conditions the year before. Forty years later, another trade unionist, a Swedish immigrant to America, was executed because he posed a great threat to the bosses as a trade union organiser, particularly using his music to inspire and energise workers in their fight for their rights. Paul Robeson would spend much of his life honouring Joe Hill, whose life was ended by the bullet in Salt Lake City in November 1917. The song that was written about Joe Hill is still sung today, over a century later, and still inspires. So too does the story of Paul Robeson, despite the fact that tremendous efforts were made to silence him from singing and speaking out for equality, peace and justice. Trade Unions here and internationally have suffered similar fates – their powers have been severely curtailed by the State, and their relevance and importance are not as well appreciated by the workers as they used to be, which is why photographs from May Days past seem so remarkable and even unbelievable today. Captured in those photographs however are myriad stories of activism that can be researched and retold, and used to inspire the current generation of workers and activists and remind us of the need to gather together again in huge numbers and organise, as we watch the gap between the rich and poor continue to widen. The same arguments made then still hold today – we must not believe politicians' and elites' rhetoric that seeks to drive wedges between us, to send our youth to fight and kill for causes that only serve to enrich the warmongers. Better to use the planet's resources wisely, share them fairly; better to live in peace and celebrate our commonality, promote equality, justice and art, and use that last commodity, as Robeson did, as our weapon in defence of all oppressed people of the world. 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 at the Harare International Festival of the Arts in May 2018.

**Angus Carmichael, Piano.** Edinburgh born pianist/accompanist Gus Carmichael B.Mus/PGCE studied piano with Audrey Innes at St Mary's Music School and David Parkhouse in London. He was accompanist for the folk singer Mary Sandeman, worked as session keyboard player with the late Billy Mackenzie and has accompanied Rowan Atkinson. His broad musical interests and styles include performing concerts for Music in Hospitals, working with performing arts students at Edinburgh College, accompanying, playing in a jazz quartet and teaching piano. He premiered Tayo Aluko's other play *JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER* with him at the 2017 Edinburgh Fringe.

**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: Arawa (Mboka Festival); Sidney's 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 (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); 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 lecturer at UCA and St Mary's Universities, 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, Designer, Assistant Director.** Phil's recent Design credits include: *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, Shakespeare4Kidz), 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. For *Call Mr Robeson* director Olusola Oyeleye he has also designed *The Security Guard* (Colour House), *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 multi-award-winning 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 2016, he has been the Resident Creative Designer at Colour House Children's Theatre near 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: May 7- 10, Vancouver, Canada:** Havana Theatre  
**July 11, 18: Buxton Fringe Festival**

#### **Just An Ordinary Lawyer:**

**May 10, 11, Vancouver, Canada:** Havana Theatre; **July 12, 19: Buxton Fringe Festival**

#### **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 **Tel:** +44 151 707 8187