

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

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Alex Eddy, Piano**

**Bishop Center for the Performing Arts, Aberdeen, WA. Saturday, Feb. 1, 2020**

**Greetings, and Welcome.** And so it came to pass, yesterday. The man who boasted that he could go onto New York's 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, shoot somebody, and nobody could do a thing about it, just got a group of highly paid, very privileged adults to prove him right: from this day forth, as long as you are President of the United States, you can, conceivably, get away with murder. The whole world watched the show in disbelief as it was made acceptable that an important trial could be held with no witnesses called – especially as it was known that the evidence they would have presented would be detrimental to the defense's case. As far as Truth is concerned, this was a case of “see nothing, hear nothing, say nothing” (truthful). There's no knowing what will follow, as #45 and his millions of supporters will be even more emboldened than ever by the new setting of the bar. And so the circus rolls on to the next town, where the main act is the battle to decide the next Democratic nominee. One candidate is standing openly as a Democratic Socialist; and despite the fact that, like in 2016, he has the largest following (particularly among young people) and raises the most funds, the powers-that-be in the Democratic Party and in the mainstream media appear hell-bent on ensuring that another “acceptable face of Capitalism” (to follow Obama's) is nominated. Paul Robeson also had socialist messages of peace, freedom and justice to deliver, but he delivered them too effectively for the Establishment's liking - so much so that they were either ignored or distorted. Had they been heeded, the world would arguably be a much safer and kinder place now; but we can at least seek hope in younger generations, as they shout loudly about the looming climate catastrophe. Even here, we have to be vigilant. Some of you may have heard the story of the Ugandan woman who was cropped out of a photograph showing a small group of young climate activists at the Davos summit the other week. In some eyes, apparently, only White people have the ideas and wisdom to save the world. On the basis of evidence from Capitol Hill this week, or a country like Australia, they should probably think again. I hope you enjoy the show.

**Tayo Aluko. Writer, Performer.** Tayo was born in Nigeria and now lives in Liverpool, UK. He has fronted orchestras as baritone soloist in concert halls, and performed lead and solo roles in operas, musicals and oratorios. *CALL MR ROBESON* has won numerous awards at festivals in the UK and Canada, and taken him as far afield as the North West Territories of Canada to Australia and New Zealand, including New York's Carnegie Hall. 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 writer Langston Hughes, 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 2017 and the Harare International Festival of the Arts in 2018. He was one of a group of ten “outstanding writers of colour” (including the 2019 Booker Prize joint winner) invited to write and perform responses to artefacts held in Oxford's Pitt Rivers Museum in 2019. He is working on a new play inspired by the life and music of Black British composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor.

**Alex Eddy, Piano.** Alex received his bachelor's degree at Evergreen State University, in Olympia, majoring in music composition. He is the rehearsal pianist and occasional music director at the Bishop Center, and music director for the 7th Street Kids, a summer children's theater program. He has directed seven plays/musicals, and co-written a musical called *Back In the World*, which dealt with an Iraq war vet returning home and trying to come to terms with his experiences on the battle front. He is excited to be part of this production as he has long been an admirer of Paul Robeson's activism.

**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: *Showcase* (Soho Theatre); *Arawa* (Mboka Festival); *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* (Producer 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, Arcola); 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 senior lecturer at St Mary's University, 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, Set & Costume Designer.** Phil's recent Design credits include: *Cinderella* (MAC, Stoke-on-Trent), *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, Shakespeare 4 Kidz), 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. He has also designed the multi-award-winning monodrama *Call Mr Robeson*, *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 award-winning international 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 2015, he has been the Resident Creative Designer at Colour House Children's Theatre nr 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:**

**What Happens?: Feb 13:** Hofstra University, Long Island, NY

**Call Mr. Robeson: Feb 29:** St. Andrew's Sports & Community Centre, Handsworth, **Birmingham, UK;**

**March 3:** The Miners Theatre, **Ammanford, Wales; March 14:** Dragon Theatre, **Barmouth, Wales;**

**Just An Ordinary Lawyer: June 19: Histon Library, Cambridgeshire, UK**

**Tayo Aluko & Friends**

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