

I learned a few years ago from someone working with an organisation called Stop the JNF (Jewish National Fund) that in Occupied Palestine, there is a national park called the Ayalon Canada Park, described as a tourist destination for Israelis. What is not found in a cursory internet search is that the park is built on the ruins of three ancient Palestinian villages - Imwas, Yalu and Beit Nuba from where occupants were evicted (ethnically cleansed) in 1967. I understand that outside the entrance to the park, donors to its establishment are commemorated with plaques on a wall built out of the rubble of the ruined villages, and that one of those names is that of Paul Robeson. This was clearly a startling revelation, troubling revelation to me. When one thinks about it however, one will not be surprised to learn that Robeson might very well have happily donated to European Jews' search for a land of safety, given his deep love for Jewish people and their history and culture. I also doubt that his support would have remained unquestioned up to 1967, by which time he was already living in reclusive retirement and ill health in Philadelphia. I say this because in an essay I did for Radio 3 recently (in which I dwelled on his mental distress), I argued that in the space of twelve months he made two very contradictory declarations on one subject. He told an interviewer in Honolulu in March 1948 that if war was declared in the Holy Land, he would go to Palestine to sing for Jewish troops as he had done for Loyalists during the Spanish civil war. Exactly one year later, he spoke at an Anti-Apartheid rally in London, pointing out that the Nationalists had succeeded in setting the Africans against the Indians in Natal, warning that *"They have provoked a fratricidal clash which unless checked very quickly may have the same tragic consequences for the non-European people of South Africa as the Arab-Jewish conflicts had for the people of Palestine."* In other words, whatever he had thought previously of the formation of Israel, he had become aware of the atrocities long before his name was placed at the entrance to the park. And what a wonderful coincidence that he mentioned South Africa and Palestine in one sentence back in 1949, and that that country has helped open the eyes of the whole world to truth behind the genocide that is unfolding before our eyes. A man so far ahead of his time as Robeson was, though long dead, deserves for his story to be told, as do all the Palestinian martyrs and freedom fighters. In the words of their late poet Refaat Alareer, such stories, like white, long-tailed kites in the sky, give us hope for truth, justice and freedom.

Tayo Aluko. Writer, Performer. Tayo was born in Nigeria, worked as an architect in Liverpool for many years. He has fronted orchestras as baritone soloist in concert halls, and has also performed lead roles in opera, musicals and oratorio. *CALL MR ROBESON* has won numerous awards at festivals in the UK and Canada, and continues to be performed after 16 years. His other play, *JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER* has itself been performed for He delivers a number of lecture/concerts and talks on Black Political Resistance using art and song. He researched, wrote and narrated to camera a piece on West African History before the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, which forms part of the permanent exhibit at Liverpool's International Slavery Museum. His 15-minute play, *HALF MOON*, which also deals with ancient Africa, has been performed several times in the UK. He has developed a piece titled *WHAT HAPPENS?* featuring the writings of African American writer Langston Hughes, for performance with live jazz accompaniment. He has been published in *The Guardian*, *The Morning Star*, *NERVE Magazine*, *Modern Ghana*, *Searchlight Magazine*, *Counterfire* and *Counterpunch*. His audio play, *PAUL ROBESON'S LOVE SONG*, recorded during lockdown with actors from the USA and Canada, and now streaming online. His third one-man musical play, *COLERIDGE-TAYLOR OF FREETOWN*, inspired by the life and music of the Black British Composer, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, premieres in Brighton in May. He is also working on a screenplay telling the story of Pastor Daniels Ekarte (d. 1964), known as the African Saint of Liverpool.

Andy Davies, Piano. Andy is a Welsh pianist based in the North West. He studied Music at the University of Manchester and has since worked as a pianist and musical director across the country and abroad. Andy is accomplished in a variety of genres, from classical, to musical theatre, to pop, jazz and everything in between. His career has seen him perform as a soloist, an accompanist, in pit bands, function bands and on cruise ships. He recently performed as a deputy on the UK tour of *Annie* and is currently Musical Director on the BA course in Musical Theatre Performance at The Hammond. Andy thoroughly enjoys the variety of his career and has very much enjoyed working with Tayo.

Call Mr. Robeson was premiered at C-Soco at the Edinburgh Fringe on August 12, 2007, with Michael Conliffe accompanying Tayo Aluko then, and for several years thereafter.

Director and Dramaturge: Olusola Oyeleye.

Set & Costume Designer: Phil Newman.

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.

Some voices in the HUAC scene used from

Are You Now or Have You Ever Been?

by Eric Bentley, recorded by L A Theatre Works.

Male Voice Choir: Liverpool Male Voice Choir

Future Performances include:

**10-12 and 24-26 May: Coleridge-Taylor of Freetown
Rotunda Theatre @ Brighton Fringe**

**28 Aug 2024: Call Mr. Robeson. North American Festival of Wales,
Pittsburgh, PA, USA**

**October 19. Coleridge-Taylor of Freetown
Wellingborough African Caribbean Association, Northamptonshire**

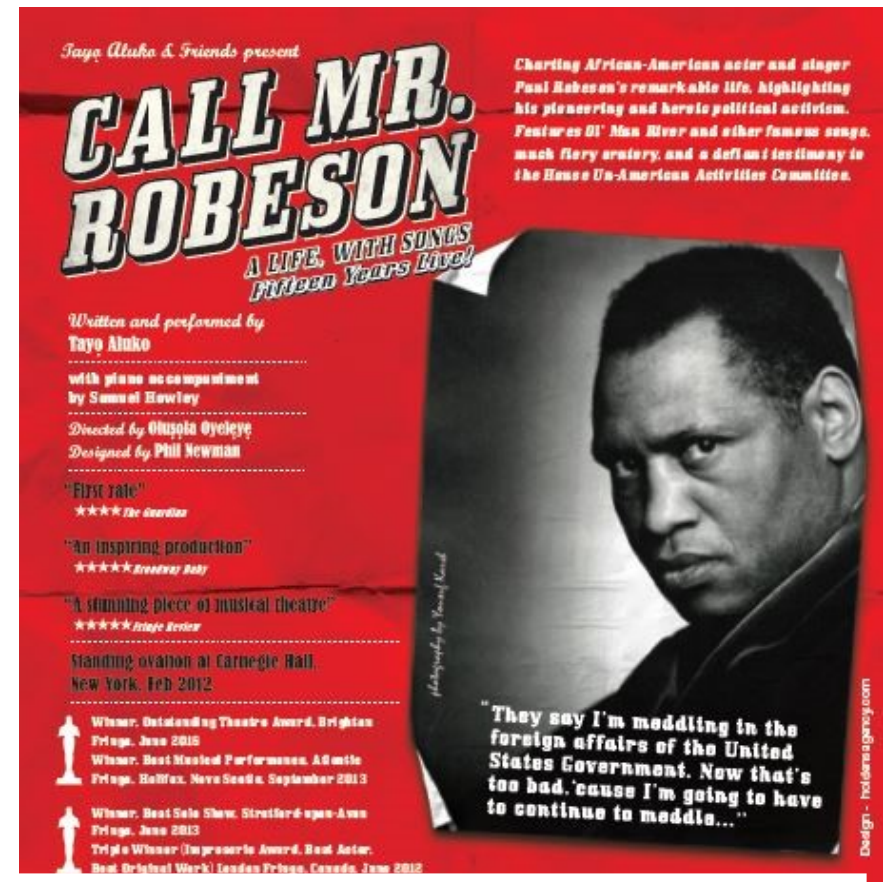
**Tayo Aluko & Friends
Liverpool L15 3LA**

info@tayoalukoandfriends.com www.tayoalukoandfriends.com

facebook: Tayo Aluko & Friends **Twitter:** @MrTayoAluko

instagram: mrtayoaluko **tel:** +44 7990 608 074

**Tayo Aluko & Friends
and
UNISON Bolton present**



**Written and performed by Tayo Aluko
Accompanied by Andy Davies**

**Bolton Octagon Studio
Saturday, 9 March 2024**