

Other than Ghanaians, few in the audience would have been aware that today (6th March) is Ghana Independence Day, the 68th anniversary of the day that what was previously known as the Gold Coast formally ceased to be a British colony. That name had been given to the area by Portuguese explorers after they first visited in 1741. The abundant precious metal was of more interest to them than the noble people with impressive and complex histories and cultures that had inhabited the region for millennia, and soon, those people would be violently captured and traded along with other commodities as Europeans (the British included) used their military dominance to spread genocide and to violently colonise vast proportions of the planet over coming centuries. When Kwame Nkrumah successfully led his country to independence in 1957, he was simultaneously urging other African colonies to not only demand self-rule but also form a United States of Africa, or Union of African States, to collectively resist ongoing European domination and exploitation of the Continent. By the time the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was formed in 1963, however, there had been enough European interference with leaders of various African states to sow division among themselves and make the organisation much weaker, much less radical and much more ineffective than had been envisaged by Nkrumah. The result is that Africa continues to be weak and exploited, and conflicts abound, most seriously in Sudan and Congo. Unity in Europe is also being put to the test at present as European members of NATO are scrambling to decide how to respond to the withdrawal of American support for Ukraine against Russia, their “common enemy.” In his time, Paul Robeson refused to accept the prevailing view that friendship with the Soviet Union had to cease, and he campaigned for independence of colonies in Africa and other parts of the world, suffering greatly for it. At his time of greatest need, the people who rallied around him most effectively were trade unions – people of all races and faiths, who knew that true power rested with ordinary people collectively working for peace, justice and equality, as opposed to their media and leaders, who only foment fear, division and war.

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 in demand 16 years since its premiere. His second play, *JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER* is itself 8 years old, and has been performed on three continents. 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, premiered in Brighton in May 2024.

Tim Mottershead, Piano. Tim studied music at Liverpool Community College and Aberdeen University. He is conversant with many genres, particularly Indian classical music, performing with the group Raga Jyoti from 2000 to 2012. He currently teaches at Bhavan Indian music school. Besides performing with Tayo, he is accompanist to Let’s Sing Community Choirs, and works regularly with vocalist Bill Holmes in a wide variety of repertoire. In 2024 they undertook their biggest project to date, when they performed Marvin Gaye’s protest album ‘*What’s Going On*’ in its entirety.

Tayo Aluko & Friends
and RMT
Present

Call Mr. Robeson was premiered at C-Soco at the Edinburgh Fringe on August 12, 2007, with Michael Conliffe on piano

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:

13 – 23 March. Paul Robeson's Love Song @ Dunedin Fringe (online)

April 3. Coleridge-Taylor of Freetown @ HOPS, Leeds

April 5. Call Mr. Robeson @ Highfield Trinity Church, Sheffield

June 15. Call Mr. Robeson @ Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, Detroit, MI, USA

June 19. Call Mr. Robeson @ Raritan Valley Community College, Branchburg NJ USA

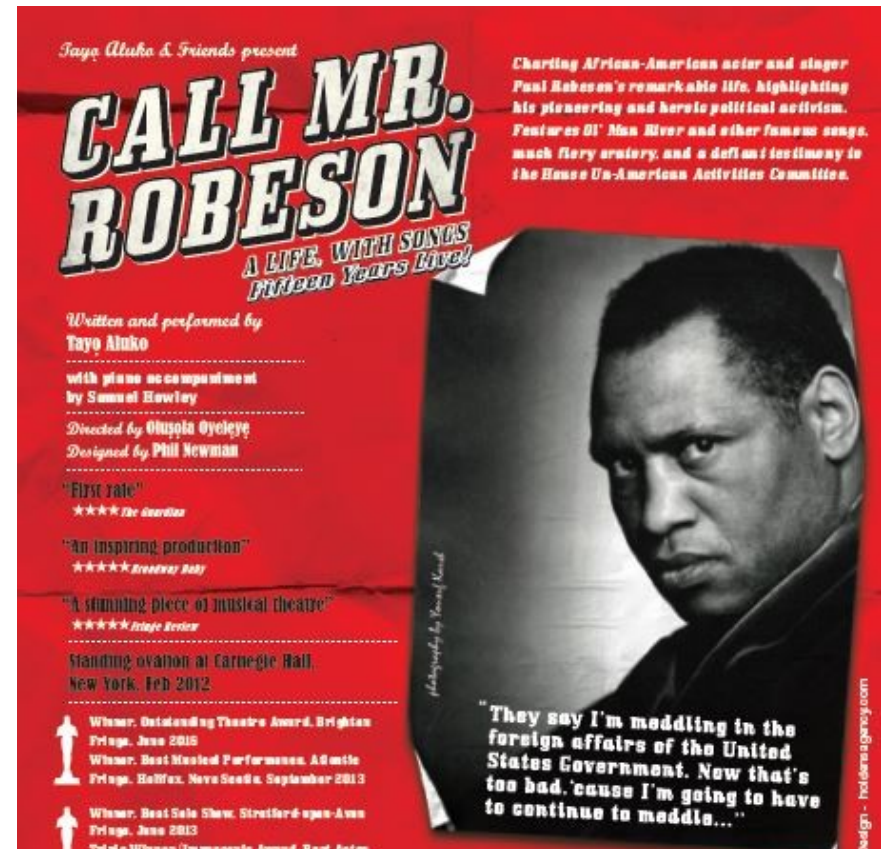
Tayo Aluko & Friends
Liverpool L15 3LA

info@tayoalukoandfriends.com

www.tayoalukoandfriends.com

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

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



Written and performed by Tayo Aluko
Accompanied by
Tim Mottershead

King George V College, Southport
Thursday, 6 March, 2025