

This is a play in which the uncomfortable subject of rape is addressed. Spoiler alert: it is one of survival of one individual, but in far too many cases, as in the well-publicised one in India last week, it sometimes ends in murder. Following one such case involving one of their own in Kolkata late last week, doctors went on strike, and there were huge protests all over the country over the weekend. The perpetrator(s) will hopefully be apprehended soon and subjected to the full force of the law. Despite the fact that in the same country some years previously, nationwide protests followed another horrendous case in which the perpetrators were tried and punished and laws passed, this most recent case is sadly unlikely to be the last. How true it is to suggest that such incidences are rarer in these parts (per capita if nothing else) I don't know, but we recall the case of Sarah Everard, raped and murdered by a single policeman who thankfully is currently serving a life sentence in jail. These cases pale into statistical insignificance when compared to what goes on in war. The current situation in Occupied Palestine was started on the pretext of rapes by Hamas operatives on Israeli women and children. Conclusive evidence of this has never, as I recall, been presented, but the war rages on, with women in Gaza and the West Bank almost certainly being subjected to the same treatment as victims everywhere else. A 2022 documentary, *Tantura*, by Israeli director Alon Schwarz includes interviews of elderly Israeli veterans literally boasting about raping Palestinian women. Considering the number of conflicts happening around the globe right now, the figures don't bear contemplation, but it has always been thus, wherever the conflicts are, or the nationality of the soldiers. Ukraine, Russia, Congo, Sudan and elsewhere right now, other places historically, of which Sierra Leone (where this play is set) is a recent example. When I first set out to write a play in which I would sing Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's songs, I had a hunch that it would be interesting to set it in his father's birth place. Little did I know that it would lead me to such a dark place, but I guess it was inevitable because I have long felt keenly that what has happened to my continent, Africa, is repeated rape. I even wrote a song about it, with which I end the play. However, as in the case of the young woman involved in the story, I see Mother Africa as a survivor, and a remarkable source of healing and beauty, exemplified, as in just one extraordinary example, in the beautiful music of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor.

**Tayo Aluko. Writer, Performer, Producer.** Tayo was born in Nigeria, and worked as an architect in Liverpool for 15 years. He has fronted orchestras as baritone soloist in concert halls, and has also performed lead roles in opera, musicals and oratorio. His first play, *CALL MR ROBESON* has won numerous awards at festivals in the UK and Canada, and continues to be performed after 17 years. His second, *JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER* has been performed internationally for 8 years. He delivers a number of lecture/concerts and talks on Black political resistance using art and song. He researched, wrote and narrated on film a piece on West African History before the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, that is 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. Publishers of his writing include *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, is now streaming online. His next project is likely to be a screenplay telling the story of Nigerian, Pastor Daniels Ekarte (d. 1964), known as the African Saint of Liverpool.

**Kristin Weichen Wong, Piano.** Kristin is a Taiwanese performer/artist based in Edinburgh. Her works span across multiple disciplines, including music, dance, and theatre. Kristin recently performed her new solo show, *Born This WEI* (2024), and appeared in *Gypsy* (2023), *Brief Encounter* (2023), and *A Streetcar Named Desire* (2023) at Pitlochry Festival Theatre. Kristin also devised new works and site-specific performance, e.g., *All Gone!* (2024), *Weaving Webs in Motion* (2023), *Oblique, Open, Filtered, Framed* (2022). As a creative, she believes in the power of story-telling, which connects us and binds us to each other. This year, Kristin is thrilled to be part of Tayo's new play, *Coleridge-Taylor of Freetown* and to be helping to bring this beautiful story to life.

# COLERIDGE-TAYLOR OF FREETOWN

Writer, performer: Tayo Aluko

Pianist: Kristin Wong

Director: Mojisola Kareem

Set & Costume Designer: Phil Newman

Sound Design: Liam McDermott

Lighting Design: Tayo Aluko

Dramaturgs: Esther Wilson and Jennifer Farmer

Dance/Movement Dramaturg: Funmi Adewole

Arrangement of *Rise Up, Mother Africa!*: Deirdre Pascal  
(Words and melody by Tayo Aluko)

Recorded Voices: Julius Obende, Dorcas Seb, Tayo Aluko, others.

Opening poem by Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

Song settings to poetry by:

Kathleen Easmon (*Big Lady Moon, When We're Left Alone With Mother*), Paul Laurence Dunbar (*Candle Lightin' Time, Who Knows?*) Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (*Hiawatha's Vision*), Sarojini Naidoo (*A Lovely Little Dream*), Christina Rossetti (*When I am Dead, My Dearest*), Ella Wheeler Wilcox (*O Praise Me Not*), Tayo Aluko (*Rise Up, Mother Africa!*)

Future Performances include:

**Till Aug 24: Coleridge-Taylor of Freetown**

C Alto @ Edinburgh Fringe

**August 28 Call Mr. Robeson @ North America Festival of Wales, Pittsburgh, PA, USA**

**August 31. Call Mr. Robeson @ Atlanta Black Theatre Festival**

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

**October 20. Call Mr. Robeson @ Narth Village Hall, Wales**

**Tayo Aluko & Friends**

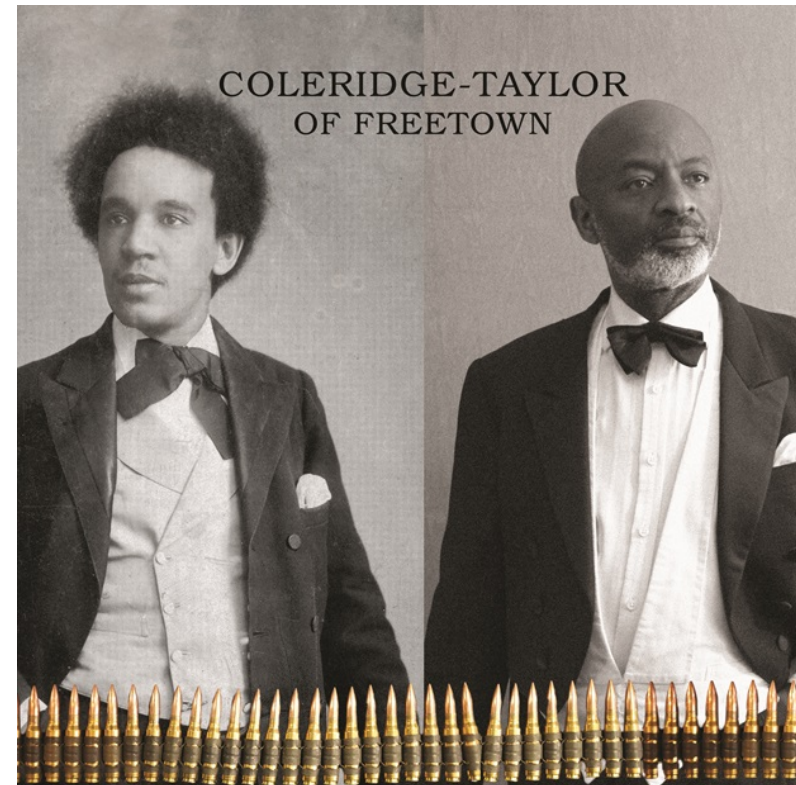
**Liverpool L15 3LA**

info@tayoalukoandfriends.com www.tayoalukoandfriends.com

facebook: Tayo Aluko & Friends Twitter: @MrTayoAluko

instagram: mrtayoaluko tel: +44 7990 608 074

**Tayo Aluko & Friends  
and  
Utopia Theatre present**



**Written and Performed by  
Tayo Aluko**

**With Kristin Wong, Piano**

**C Alto @ Edinburgh Fringe  
5-24 August 2024 (Week 3)**