

Many things are so awful and awkward that it is often preferable not to speak about them; pretend they never happened, or aren't happening. And when they are happening to others, we are grateful they aren't happening to us, and we hope they never will. We find safety in whatever routine our lives shape for us and continue with the determination that we and our loved ones will continue to be okay. Violence against women and girls, a central theme of this play, is one case in point. In this play, it is taking place in the context of war, whilst it is happening somewhere far away, like Sudan, Congo, or Palestine. It is striking that the description of the events of October 7, 2023 included reports of Palestinian men filming themselves raping Israeli women and children, and that this footage had been viewed by many people, including the outgoing American president. It was such behaviour that was given as justification for the genocide we are still witnessing, and the widening war. Also striking is the fact that despite the thousands of hours of footage released by Israeli soldiers celebrating their destruction of Palestinian property and infrastructure, and the questionable propaganda videos they released as "evidence" of military activity under Palestinian schools and hospitals, the alleged videos of rapes by Palestinians have, as far as I know, never surfaced. It is on the other hand beyond doubt that stories of Israelis gang-raping male Palestinian prisoners are credible, as are reports of Palestinian women being herded into buildings where Israeli men await them. That is however not being talked about by our politicians or our media. Another thing that remains unspoken is how those same actors and other members of the establishment conspired to ensure that the one politician who would not, had he been allowed to become Prime Minister, have given the go-ahead for this genocide to begin. The complicity of so many was quite remarkable and frightening to see, and this extends to those who bought into the propaganda that turned so many against a man who would have been the most anti-war and pro-people Prime Minister in living memory. We often feel powerless to act. However, the time must come when act we must. Although not well-known about, there are people not far from us who take direct action (see palestineaction.org for example). Many get arrested, some get imprisoned (as journalists in this country also have, recently). They inspire us to be more than bystanders. One is reminded of the quote: "Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little."

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.

Annabel Ohene, Piano. Annabel Ohene is a pianist and singer based in Manchester, UK, with Ghanaian and British heritage. She has been accompanist for the Rose Choir and the Barlow Singers in Sheffield, and played in the pit orchestra for theatre productions at Chesterfield Pomegranate Theatre. By day, she works as an engineer, and by night, expresses herself through music. She is a current member of the Hallé Choir, and is passionate about the healing and uniting power of music.

COLERIDGE-TAYLOR OF FREETOWN

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:

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

October 23. Concert: **Black Activist Song Cycle**, St. George's Hall, Liverpool.

October 29. Participant, Knowsley MBC BHM event. Huyton Library

November 11: **Freedom First**. Jazz concert, London

November 22. **Just An Ordinary Lawyer** @ Exeter University, Devon

November 23. **Just An Ordinary Lawyer** @ Dragon Theatre, Barmouth, Wales

December 4. **Coleridge-Taylor of Freetown** @ Unity Theatre, Liverpool

Dec 7. **Coleridge-Taylor of Freetown** @ Courtyard Theatre, London

Tayo Aluko & Friends

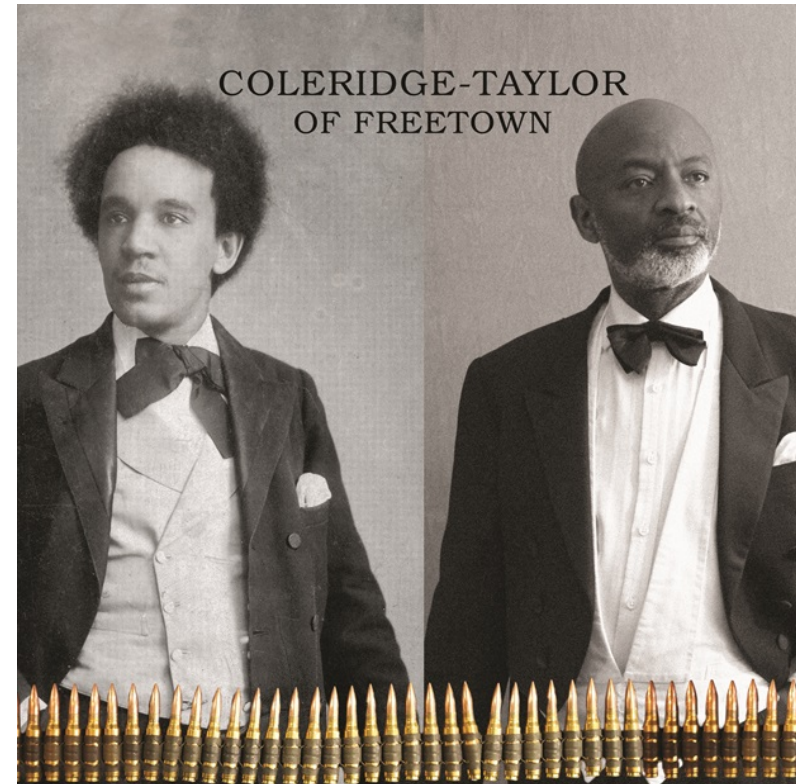
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Tayo Aluko & Friends
Present



Written and Performed by
Tayo Aluko

With Annabel Ohene, Piano

Wellingborough African Caribbean Association
Saturday 19 October 2024