

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Michael Young, Piano

69 O'Connell Street, Limerick, Saturday December 6, 2014

Greetings, Welcome. On O'Connell Street earlier today, I happened upon a group of people holding a small demonstration outside a bank. They are apparently the die-hard stalwarts who see no alternative but to keep protesting against the austerity measures that have been visited upon the Irish people since the collapse of the economy all those years ago. I understand that the latest insult (as they see it) is the levying of charges on that most natural, abundant and crucial of commodities – water. Ordinary people fear that their right to water is sacrosanct, and are in fact planning a big demonstration in Dublin next Wednesday. As a visitor from England (and a native of Nigeria) I know better than to get involved in issues that I know little about, particularly in Ireland. I survived performances in the North, and intend to get out of here in one piece. Having said that, I cannot but say that I am instinctively on the side of those who say that the world's resources are there to be managed and shared responsibly and fairly, that the fact that you don't have a huge bank balance does not mean that you are denied the basics of life. Water is one. Shelter is another. The privatisation of these two fundamental aspects of human existence surely is a cause for great concern, as was illustrated this week with the tragic death of a homeless man in Dublin. The interesting thing is that like with many protests in the United Kingdom over similarly fundamental issues, the protesters on O'Connell Street seemed not to have that much support as people carried on with their Christmas shopping. Standing up for one's beliefs and rights can often be a lonely occupation, and none learned or experienced that more acutely than Paul Robeson, who in his time experienced great vilification for standing up for the rights of his fellow human being, regardless of race, creed or location. The things he argued for in the middle of the last century still plague us today, despite some gains here and there. As he always reminded people then, the freedoms that are enjoyed today by ordinary people were won with the blood, sweat and tears of people who went before, and his voice was a rallying call for people to continue those struggles. His was a remarkable voice, but hundreds of others continue to shout for justice and fairness. I applaud those O'Connell Street protesters and wish them well next week. I hope you enjoy the show.

Tayo Aluko. Writer, Performer, Producer. Tayo was born in Nigeria, and now lives in Liverpool. He worked previously as an architect and property developer, with a special but as yet frustrated interest in eco-friendly construction. He has fronted orchestras as baritone soloist in concert halls, and has also performed lead roles in such operas and musicals as *Nabucco*, *Kiss Me Kate* and *Anything Goes*. *CALL MR ROBESON* has won numerous awards at festivals in the UK and Canada, as well as highly favourable reviews in the press – most notably in the Guardian and on BBC Radio 4. He has toured the play around the UK, the USA, Canada, Jamaica and Nigeria, and at New York's Carnegie Hall in February 2012 on his 50th birthday. He also delivers a lecture/concert called *PAUL ROBESON – THE GIANT, IN A NUTSHELL*, and another one titled *FROM BLACK AFRICA TO THE WHITE HOUSE*: a talk about Black Political Resistance, illustrated with spirituals has been performed in three continents. 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 recently developed a piece titled *WHAT HAPPENS?* featuring the writings of African American Langston Hughes, for performance with live jazz accompaniment.

Michael Young, Piano and original incidental music. Michael is a well-known pianist and musical director in the Munster area. In 2013, Michael graduated with a first class honours BMus from the Cork School of Music. He has played for many musicals in the last number of years, including productions with Limerick Musical Society, Barespace, MIDAS and most recently, his own group, New Musical Theatre (*When Midnight Strikes*, 2014).

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: *Tin* (The Lowry), *Ti-Jean and his Brothers* (Collective Artistes & Sustained Theatre, Cottesloe), Resident director on Trevor Nunn's West End production of *Porgy and Bess* (Savoy Theatre), staff producer at English National Opera, Spirit of Okin and Sankofa for Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble, (National & International tours), *Coming Up For Air* (The Drum & UK tour), *The Resurrection of Roscoe Powell* (Soho Theatre), *The Shelter* (RSC Barbican Theatre), *Medea* (Ariya, Royal 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 Tour, Zimbabwe) and *Ella*, a monodrama about Ella Fitzgerald (Rich Mix). Opera includes: 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* with the St. Louis African Chorus, *Dido and Aeneas* (Tricycle/BAC), *God's Trombones* (Fairfield Halls) and the second cast revival of Jonathan Miller's production of *The Mikado* (English National Opera). Olusola has also worked in Ghana, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Hungary and the Czech Republic. She has been a visiting lecturer and Artist at Universities in South Africa and London, and was Head of the Acting Studio at Morley College. Her poetry has been set to music by Akin Euba and performed at both Harvard and Cambridge Universities. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society for the Arts.

Phil Newman, Designer. Phil's Set & Costume Design credits include: *Spring Awakening - The Musical* (Chelsea Theatre), *The Tempest & Pinocchio* (UK & UAE tours for Shakespeare4Kidz), *A Christmas Carol & Peter Pan* (Tickled Pink), an open-air *Romeo & Juliet* (Cornucopia Theatre), *The Liar* (South Hill Park), *Dance or Die* (Hoxton Hall), *Voices in the Alleyway & Yes, I Still Exist* (Spread Expression Dance), *The Fiddler* (Unicorn Theatre) and film short *The Judge* for Faith Drama, *The Riddle of the Sands & Laurel and Hardy* (Jermyn St Theatre), *The Famous Five* (Tabard Theatre), *Hansel & Gretel* (UK tour), *Stockholm* (BAC), open-air tours of *The Merchant of Venice & The Railway Children* (Heartbreak) and the award-winning UK/international touring production of *Hannah & Hanna*. Set Design credits include *Houdini* (UK tour), *Our House* (Elgiva Theatre), *Cinderella* (Library Theatre, Luton) and *Next Door* (Cockpit Theatre). Others with Olusola Oyeleye include *A Wing, A Prey, A Song* (Guest Projects Africa), *High Life* (Hampstead Theatre), *The Security Guard* (Merton AbbeyFest 2012), *Ella* (RichMix), *Coming Up for Air* (UK tour), *The Playground* (Polka Theatre) and *Ma Joyce's Tales from the Parlour* (Oval House/Edinburgh). He has just completed Set Design work on Rouge28Theatre's new puppet show *Kwaidan*.

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" Senators Walter, Arens and Scherer. **Male Voice Choir:** Liverpool Male Voice Choir

Forthcoming Performances Include: Dec 6, Limerick: 69 O'Connell Street; Dec 10, Waterford: Garter Lane Arts Centre; Jan 16, Spokane, Washington, USA: Bing Crosby Theatre; Jan 30, Buxton, Derbyshire: Pavilion Arts Centre Feb 20 - March 1, Wellington: New Zealand Fringe Festival; March 4 - 15, Australia: Adelaide Fringe; March 27, Millom, Cumbria: Beggars Theatre; March 28, Richmond, N. Yorkshire: Georgian Theatre Royal; April 1, Liverpool: unity Theatre

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