

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko

With Martin Robinson, Piano

The Brindley, Runcorn. Saturday, October 3, 2015

Greetings, Welcome. What an outrage. For the umpteenth time, a crazed gunman has cut down a number of innocent lives in a previously unknown American town. The senselessness of the action, the criminal and needless waste of lives, the untold horror and anguish caused to the bereaved and the nation has been expressed with characteristic eloquence by the American President, along with the intense frustration and exasperation of all decent people at those forces that see to it that the purchase and use of firearms is such a profitable enterprise, despite the untold damage they cause. Now consider the innocent people killed in an Afghan hospital overnight, in a sustained bombardment by coalition forces supposedly targeting terrorists. Whether or not it was true that terrorists were sheltering in the hospital, civilians, patients and staff of an international medical charity – some of the best people in the world just for what they do – were needlessly and mindlessly slaughtered by those that insist that it is necessary for humanity to maintain a military industry capable of causing untold damage worldwide – supposedly for the sake of national security. In addition to ballistic and chemical weapons, we must also have nuclear ones – for the sake of our national security. And every politician worth his salt must join in the show of bravado and claim to be ready to use it when necessary. So, when one comes along saying he will not do this, he is criticised and ridiculed, even by colleagues at the top of his own party. Jeremy Corbyn should be seen as a breath of fresh air, as one who should be listened to and not dismissed so readily by those who should know better. Paul Robeson, another proud socialist, was not just dismissed, but hounded and demonised by his country and his people. His story is another illustration that the world cannot afford to continue wasting such huge opportunities to embrace peacemakers like these when they come along, and to rally behind them as strongly and bravely as we can. Only then can we hope to find solutions to the lunacy that our leaders continue to perpetrate. I hope you enjoy the show.

Tayo Aluko. Writer, Performer. 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. He has been published in *The Guardian*, *The Morning Star*, *NERVE Magazine*, *Modern Ghana* and *Searchlight Magazine*. He is currently working on a new play.

Martin Robinson, Piano and original incidental music. Martin Robinson has wide experience playing as pianist for choirs and soloists. On saxophone and keyboards he has played throughout Britain and in Europe with his own jazz band, *Skokiaan*, and with Mamadou Diaw and other bands and singers. He is delighted to be working with Tayo Aluko on a show with such a strong message.

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 & Assistant Director. Phil's Set & Costume Design credits include: *Saint/Jeanne* and *Spring Awakening - The Musical* (Chelsea Theatre), *Hairspray*, *Cabaret & Attempts on her Life* (Amersham & Wycombe College), *Lord of the Flies & Grimm Tales* (Colet Court School), *The Tempest & Pinocchio* (UK/UAE tours for Shakespeare4Kidz), *The Wizard of Oz*, *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*. His Set Design credits include *Our House* (Elgiva Theatre), *Cinderella* (Library Theatre, Luton) and *Next Door* (Cockpit Theatre). Other collaborations with director 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 tour of *Kwaidan*, a Japanese ghost story with puppets.

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:

October 7 – 10: Alphabetti Theatre, Newcastle upon Tyne; **October 16:** Seven Arts, Leeds;

October 17: Paul Robeson Theatre, Hounslow; **October 24:** Swindon Arts Centre;

October 25: Redgrave Theatre, Bristol; **October 28:** The Witham, Barnard Castle;

October 31: Teatro Technis, Camden, London;

Nov 7: Paramount Hudson Valley, Peekskill, New York;

Nov 12 - 15: Centenary College, Hackettstown, New Jersey;

Nov 19 - 22: Bus Stop Theatre, Halifax, Nova Scotia

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