

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Roland Perrin, Piano

CLF Art Café, Peckham, London. Friday, October 2, 2015

Greetings, Welcome. Another group of innocent people were killed by a lone gunman in the USA yesterday, and President Obama has once again expressed exasperation and outrage at the system that allows that kind of madness to continue year in, year out - and rightly so. It is said that “the gun lobby” has bought up most of the politicians on Capitol Hill, and that gun control to combat such acts of domestic terrorism is therefore unlikely to happen for a long time. It is worth considering the fact that each one of the sorties made by the Russian and American airplanes over Syria in the last few days probably killed as many people as died in that small American town. It is more than likely that many of the air strike victims were innocent too, so needless waste of life is not necessarily confined to a small number of mad men for whom it is all too easy to get their hands on firearms in America. The leaderships of the world’s most powerful nations are often described as warmongers and even terrorists by many critics, and much of that criticism can be quite easily justified. Control of the arms trade is therefore something that needs to be looked at, and once again, the corruption that surrounds that trade is a huge barrier to progress. When a prominent politician stands up and indicates a desire to be different by stating that he would refuse, were he Prime Minister of the UK, to press the red button to trigger a nuclear war, and that such weaponry is unnecessary and wasteful, surely he should be applauded as a refreshing change and a rare voice of sanity in this mad world. Jeremy Corbyn was rounded upon by the media and even by some in his parliamentary Labour colleagues a few days ago, so it is clear that political elites are a major part of society’s mental illness, and a barrier to progress. The rest of us in society therefore have a role to play in supporting voices like Corbyn’s when they are raised, refusing to let politicians and arms traders that hide behind them to continue dominate the airwaves. Paul Robeson had a way of leading thousands to join in choruses of peace and hope, and I hope that revisiting his story will inspire more of us to seek out more lone peaceful voices to rally behind, for as the saying goes – “We are many – they are few.” 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.

Roland Perrin, Piano. Born in New York, pianist Roland Perrin spent his childhood roaming the planet with his itinerant family. Eventually settling in London, Roland has established himself as one of the foremost musicians working in the jazz and world music areas. He has toured and recorded with Dudu Pukwana, Najma Aktar, Moses Fan-Fan, Aster Aweke and many others including his own “Blue Planet Orchestra”. He recently had a major work for choir, jazz band, solo singer and narrator, commissioned by Crouch End Festival Chorus, titled *Lansky, The Mob’s Money Man* premiered at the Southbank Centre in London. That work is now being prepared for future performances in his native New York and other parts of the USA.

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 3: The Brindley, Runcorn;
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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