

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Colin Hazel Piano
The Cramphorne Theatre, Chelmsford. Friday October 10, 2014.**

Greetings, Welcome. I am reminded of travelling into the American Deep South with Call Mr. Robeson a few years ago. On the first of those occasions, I drove quite nervously through small Southern towns, with their pristine lawns, picket fences and the ubiquitous American flags. Perhaps I didn't need to feel so nervous there as a Black man in the 21st century, but I did. I was reminded of that on the drive down here today, into territory near where UKIP has just won their first parliamentary seat. In May, I performed in Lowestoft, and was struck by the number of UKIP flags on show, and how they outnumbered those of other political parties. I asked then, and ask now, "Where are the Greens? The Socialists?" Surely, if people are dissatisfied with the main parties, they ought to be looking more to those than to the party whose biggest issue is immigration? Perhaps I shouldn't feel so nervous here in Chelmsford, but I do, because Clacton is only a stone's throw away. I am concerned because I believe UKIP attracts the kind of people who blame all this society's ills on immigrants, of which I am one. What's more, I come from the region from where Ebola is beginning to spread across the world. Blaming immigrants and minorities for societal ills has a long history, but relatively recent examples remind us that unspeakable horrors can result from people being taken in by seemingly reasonable politicians who claim to speak for the common dispossessed, and find easy scapegoats to blame for their own failures. We immigrants are here because the same forces that cause inequalities in this country have caused even greater inequalities between this part of the world and ours, to the extent that many of our best minds have chosen to come here to contribute to this society and for example, the excellence of the NHS, when they would clearly be even more useful back home. The Ebola crisis represents an opportunity to question the way our global community is structured and to seek meaningful alternatives. Paul Robeson offered many suggestions in his time but was vilified. His voice still calls to us to never to give up the fight for a fairer, more just society, now more than ever. 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. He recently developed a piece titled *WHAT HAPPENS?* featuring the writings of African American Langston Hughes, for performance with live jazz accompaniment. He is currently a Writer On Attachment with the Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse Theatres.

Colin Hazel, Piano

Colin Hazel graduated with a music degree from the University of Nottingham he worked for two years as a multi-instrumentalist in Giffords Circus, a touring company that combines circus, theatre and live music. Since then he has been keyboardist and singer with a variety of bands, cabaret performer, pianist and occasional MD for local theatre shows. Recently he has written a series of one-act musicals based on short-stories and comics, some of which will be showcased in the new year. cjhazel.co.uk

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: **Oct 10, Chelmsford:** Cramphorn Theatre; **Oct 12, King's Lynn:** Arts Centre; **Oct 17, Bradford:** Alhambra Studio; **Oct 22, Doncaster:** Cast; **Oct 25, Enfield:** Dugdale Centre; **Oct 29, Nelson:** ACE Centre; **Oct 30, Oxford:** Old Fire Station; **Dec 3, Tallaght, Dublin:** Civic Theatre; **Dec 4, Blanchardstown:** Draiocht; **Dec 5, Kilkenny:** Watergate Arts Centre; **Dec 6, Limerick:** 69 O'Connell Street; **Dec 10, Waterford:** Garter Lane Arts Centre.

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