

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Jonathan Jarvis, Piano

Derby Theatre. Saturday, March 26, 2016

Greetings, Welcome. Two suicide bombers killed themselves in a confined space the other day. 22 others died with them. That was in Maiduguri. Where? In Nigeria. In a mosque. Everybody killed was Muslim. The same thing in Turkey, as happens daily in Egypt, Syria and of course, Palestine, where in the last few days, as some may have seen - courtesy of social media - an Israeli soldier execute a wounded man lying on the street. Then, there was Brussels – the one we are still all hearing about: another tragedy for all concerned, and the world, not just Europe. It is disturbing enough for the tragedies elsewhere not to appear to concern our media outlets or politicians, but it is even more so when the commentary focuses on military, police and intelligence responses being redoubled and intensified, because (we are told) these people hate us, hate our way of life, our freedoms and our democracy, and we must fight them with even more expensive weaponry and technology. A basic question that seems to have been forgotten, but in truth is actually deliberately ignored, is what these people are so angry about, currently and historically, and if any steps other than those being proposed repeatedly, might work. Some have suggested going ahead and closing Guantanamo Bay. Others mention halting the expansion of Israeli settlements into Palestinian land. Still others talk of ceasing arms sales to oppressive regimes, occupiers and dictatorships in the Middle East and around the world. Then there are those who talk of spending a lot less on militarism and giving more to soft issues like health, education, social services, and reducing inequalities and disaffection in society. It is odd that these people are nowhere to be heard at present. Not that they are saying nothing, it's just that few outlets are open to them, and those that manage to get through are labelled trouble-makers, idealists, or dangerous revolutionaries. That's how Paul Robeson came to be seen, when he stopped being just a popular singer, but also a critical observer of American and world politics. The things he said then remain pertinent today, so the need for different voices, different fighters for peace and justice is still urgent. As the next American President is such a big player, as are European leaders, we at least have the opportunity to listen to alternative voices that call for peace, justice and equality, and amplify those voices. 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.

Jonathan Jarvis, Piano. Jonathan read Music at the University of Huddersfield, majoring in solo performance. In 2014, he toured to Rotterdam with the University Big Band, and also played with the University Symphonic Wind Orchestra, who performed one of his own arrangements as part of their concert series. Jonathan repertoured for several established amateur musical societies including the Huddersfield Gilbert and Sullivan Society and the Halifax All Souls Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society. He has been heavily involved with the Music for Youth Festival, appearing at the Royal Albert Hall on three occasions with award-winning big band, *Jazz Vehicle*.

OlusolaOyeleye, 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), *Beauty & the Beast*, *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), *Next Door* (Cockpit Theatre) and, most recently, Rouge28 Theatre's new tour of *Kwaidan*, a Japanese ghost story with puppets. Other collaborations with director OlusolaOyeleye include *High Life* (Hampstead Theatre), *A Wing, A Prey, A Song* (Guest Projects Africa), *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 started design work on musicals *Carousel* and *Fame* for Amersham & Wycombe College.

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:

April 14, Preston: IBAR, University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN)

May 13, Duncan, BC, Canada: Cowichan Performing Arts Centre; **May 17, 18, Brighton** Fringe: Marlborough Theatre; **July 1: Penally** Village Hall, Pembrokeshire; **July 2: Solva** Memorial Hall, Pembrokeshire

July 3, Frome: Westway Cinema; **May 21: Doncaster** Unitarian & Free Christian Church

October 21: Nottingham Playhouse

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