

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Louise Gibbs, Piano

Edale Village Hall, Saturday January 25, 2014

Greetings, and Welcome. We enter the centenary of the outbreak of World War I with the shocking but irrefutable realisation that we have not evolved as a species, when it comes to war mongering. Indeed, technological advance seems to have made us more barbaric and uncivilised with each passing year – whether our weapons of choice be drones, AK47s or home-made bombs strapped to our bodies. As we watch representatives of the warring sides in the Syrian conflict start the heretofore impossible task of engaging in dialogue, it is worth remembering how that civil war started three years ago – peaceful demonstrations (inspired by others elsewhere in the region) being met with state violence, and escalating from there, with arms pouring in from East and West. Paul Robeson, writing in his book *Here I Stand*, described the coming of World War II thus: “*The years that I lived abroad witnessed the rise of fascism: the crash of martial music and the sound of marching jack-boots drowned out the songs of peace and brotherhood.*” He would have known of the equivalent voices of peace that had been ignored and unheard as his own country plunged into civil war in the previous century. If anything should come out of these coming years’ commemorations of WWI, it should surely be a greater recognition of those who for centuries have called for peace, and for an end to the big business (for that is what it is) of war. **Peace News** and **Campaign Against Arms Trade** are two organisations that most people have probably not heard of, but who have for decades have been quietly and determinedly trying to educate the public about the bravery of ordinary people working for peace in the world, and about the extent to which our leaders are complicit in the fuelling of worldwide conflict. These brave activists deserve exposure and support, so that gentle songs of peace and brotherhood may rightfully ring forth over the thunder of bombs. 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 British concert halls, and has also performed lead roles in such operas and musicals as *Nabucco*, *Kiss Me Kate* and *Anything Goes*. **CALL MR ROBESON** won the Best Musical Show award at the Atlantic Fringe in Halifax, Nova Scotia and the Best Solo Show at the Stratford Fringe in 2013, three awards at the London Ontario Fringe in June 2012, and the Argus Angel Award for Artistic Excellence and Best Male Performer Award at the 2008 Brighton Festival Fringe. He has performed the play around the UK, the United States of America, Canada, Jamaica and Nigeria, and at New York’s Carnegie Hall in February 2012 on his 50th birthday. His other piece titled **FROM BLACK AFRICA TO THE WHITE HOUSE** - a talk about Black Political Resistance, illustrated with spirituals has also 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 has recently been appointed president of the Birmingham Clarion Singers. He is currently working with The Maltings Theatre, Berwick on a new piece, titled *What Happens?* featuring the writings of Langston Hughes, to be performed with live jazz accompaniment. He is a current writer on attachment with the Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse theatres.

Louise Gibbs, Piano and original incidental music.

LOUISE GIBBS is a freelance musician, educator and writer. Principally a jazz vocalist and composer, she has dusted off her pianist skills especially for the northern performances of *Call Mr Robeson*. She has performed and recorded with top UK and US artists, and has just released her latest composition *Seven Deadly Sings* – a 50-minute song suite for voice and septet – featuring Louise on vocals with a stellar lineup. She has four previous albums to her name: *Invitation* (1998); *Love You Madly* (1999); *More Questions Than Answers* (2005), and *Everybody’s Song But Our Own* (2008). She was previously Associate Professor, Course Leader for the Postgraduate, and the Jazz Programmes, at Leeds College of Music, and Director of the Leeds International Jazz Conference (2008-2011)



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