

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Martin Pickett, Piano

The Firestation, Windsor. Saturday, September 27, 2014

Greetings, Welcome. I remember performing in Liverpool's Roman Catholic Cathedral one day in late 2001 at a multi-faith service involving people from literally all corners of the earth who had gathered together to celebrate their different religious beliefs, and through beautiful and uplifting words and music, share the joys of fellowship and recognition of the goodness of humankind. An acknowledgement of humanity's collective desire for health and for peace above all else, regardless of where we find ourselves on the planet. There was an involuntary but loud collective groan when it was announced that the first bombs had just been dropped on Afghanistan, in a war which was said at the time to be a war on terror, the battleground being a rather well defined "axis of evil". Thirteen years later, we are back in the same place, the axis is now more like a deranged axeman's slashes at demons only he can see, with all the sane and innocent around him scampering in all directions for dear life. The song I sang on that day was one sung often by Paul Robeson: Deep River, one line of which goes, "*Oh don't you want to go de gospel feast – dat promised land where all is peace?*" In his time, Robeson's calls for peace and brotherhood were dismissed as communist propaganda, in the same way that those who approach crises in our time with means other than military are ignored. Take the Cuban government's response to the Ebola crisis in West Africa. What have those international outcasts done? Instead of sending soldiers over like the USA, the UK and others, they've sent doctors. Perhaps Robeson, the Cubans and peacemakers worldwide deserve more of an airing than they are getting today, and more attention given to non-military approaches to the world's ills. One very simple one is finding ways of correcting the injustices and inequalities that plague our societies. A continuation of rampant capitalism and growing militarism is surely not the way. We should have learned that by now. 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. 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 is developing a new play titled *JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER* as writer on attachment with the Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse Theatres. He has recently been appointed president of the Birmingham Clarion Singers.

Martin Pickett, Piano and original incidental music.

Martin has been a freelance jazz pianist and teacher since 1998. He currently leads a quintet whose debut CD was released in 2011. He has recorded two other CDs as leader and has appeared on six others. He has acted as house pianist for many acclaimed soloists visiting the region including Art Theman, Julian Siegel, Alan Barnes, Adam Glasser, and Bobby Wellins. He studied music at Bristol University, with an emphasis on composition. This has continued to be an important part of his musical life and he has amassed a large portfolio of music for varying ensemble sizes.

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: Sept 28, Broadstairs: Sarah Thorne Theatre Company; **Oct 2, Diss:** Corn Hall; **Oct 3, Gt. Yarmouth:** St. George's Theatre; **Oct 4, Cambridge:** Mumford Theatre; **Oct 5, Borehamwood:** The Ark; **Oct 8, Peterborough:** Key Theatre; **Oct 9, Bedford:** The Place; **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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