

## **CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.**

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Paul Simons, Piano**  
**The Bus Stop Theatre, Halifax, Nova Scotia. Thursday, Nov 19, 2015**

**Greetings, Welcome.** A now-obscure immigrant to the US from Sweden was executed 100 years ago today. He used words and music to educate ordinary working people about the exploitation he saw in the world at the time: *We're spending billions every year / For guns and ammunition / "Our Army" and "our Navy" dear / To keep in good condition / While millions live in misery (1913)*. As a dedicated member of the International Workers of the World, he openly challenged the Kings of Capital with such lyrics as *Workers of the world, awaken! / Break your chains. Demand your rights / All the wealth you make is taken / By exploiting parasites (1916)*. It is no wonder that when the opportunity arose, the establishment in Salt Lake City, Utah had Joe Hill executed on a trumped-up murder charge: for a person who has the ability to reach the hearts and minds of so many working people with simple songs was a "threat to national security" that had to be at least discredited, if not eliminated. In the aftermath of the Paris attacks, the military hawks command the airwaves, spreading fear and pushing for more blanket bombing of far-off lands, where the majority of victims will be more innocent, terrorised civilians. Many of them will reluctantly flee their beloved homes, resulting in "migrant crises" in neighbouring countries, and in (God forbid) an increasingly racist West. In all this, the underlying causes of the disaffection that led to the terrorist acts are sidelined, as are the policies and actions of governments that consign the majority of their populations to poverty and servitude to a wealthy elite. The biggest threat to that status quo is the person that explains it simply and effectively, like Joe Hill did. In his time, Paul Robeson did too, and suffered for it. In our time we have people like Julian Assange, Chelsea Manning, Edward Snowden and the former Black Panther Mumia Abu Jamal, who can illuminate the world more clearly in a two-minute radio essay from prison than two days' worth of mainstream media. This performance is dedicated Joe Hill's memory. A fitting tribute would be to see through the war-mongers' lies, and seek out, hear and support truth-tellers. Above all, to continue to resist and organise.

**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 operas and musicals including *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 50<sup>th</sup> 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.

**Paul Simons, Piano.** Paul's professional journey has included jazz performance, radio and television, musical theatre, recording, accompanying, arranging and teaching. He is currently the director the North Street Singers. His web address is [playit88.com](http://playit88.com)

**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:**

**Until Nov 21:** Bus Stop Theatre, Halifax, Nova Scotia;

**January 9:** The Ustinov Studio, Theatre Royal, Bath; **January 29:** Bolton Socialist Club;

**February 25 - 28:** Anvil Theatre, New Westminster, BC, Canada;

**March 17:** Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton; **March 26:** Derby Theatre

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