

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

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Paul Simons, Piano

The Bus Stop Theatre, Halifax, Nova Scotia. Saturday, Nov 21, 2015

**Greetings.** The city of Brussels was in practical shut-down mode today, with the government having declared it at imminent risk of a Paris-style attack. Highly armed police are patrolling the city, as in Paris, London, New York and heaven knows where else. TV screens are awash with images of jet fighters and other military hardware, and arms manufacturers and traders are getting immeasurable amounts of free global publicity for their wares – for an industry that certainly doesn't need this publicity, it being, along with the drugs trade, perhaps the biggest market in the world. This marketing was also apparent in the coverage of the attacks in Bamako, Mali the other day. Where did those troupes and all that military hardware spring from? French military were involved in the rescue, as apparently were some members of US Africa Command (AFRICOM). Talk of military market penetration into deepest West Africa – one of the poorest places on the planet where health, infrastructure and education and all other basic requirements lose out in the allocation of the country's very scarce resources. That there is so much of a foreign presence in a place like that – commercial as well as military – illustrates the fact that the country's resources are not that scarce. Gold and Uranium are but two commodities that attract foreign companies (Canadian included) there, and the extraction of these resources out of Africa to enrich the West is obviously a source of great disaffection among the people, and what the foreign forces are really there to protect. Religion has little to do with it, and sadly this kind of truth is lost in the media frenzy that has accompanied the recent attacks. One wonders how much less effort the politicians and media would have to exert on their narratives if the people they represent had invested as much in providing schools and universities, factories and offices, hospitals and pharmacies, theatres and concert halls as they have in extractive industries and arms supplies? And those same governments involved in such practices abroad, how well have they done for all their citizens at home? In a 1947 telegram to President Truman demanding punishment for the lynch-murderers of four Black men in Georgia, Paul Robeson said, *"Only when our government has taken ... such action toward protecting its own citizens can its role in aiding the progress of peoples in other countries be viewed with trust and hope."* Those words ring sadly as true today as they did then. 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 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:**

**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

**May 13:** Cowichan Performing Arts Centre, Duncan, BC;

**Nov 13 - 22:** North West Territories, BC, Canada; **Nov 25:** Surrey Civic Theatres, Surrey, BC, Canada

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