

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Roland Perrin, Piano
Norden Farm Arts Centre, Maidenhead, Sunday 22 September, 2013.**

Greetings, and Welcome. The news out of Nairobi clearly very disturbing and alarming. We are preaching to the converted when we describe the terrorists as religious extremists, with whom no reasoning is possible. That they are from one African nation terrorising innocent citizens of another is bad enough, but that innocent victims of other countries (including Great Britain) are also caught up in it makes it immediately of international interest. The shopping centre is said to be Israeli owned, and this might have had a bearing on the terrorists' choice of target. Religious extremism is not limited to Muslims of course – the very phrase “War on Terror” which sparked off the contemporary round of madness that has been going on for just over a decade, can be said to have been coined by, and/or inspired by other religious extremists - thinking that their religion and world view is superior to that of other people who happen to have darker skins. It is this kind of racism that causes conflict, and the kind of Apartheid that we saw in South Africa, and, it must be said, that we see in Israel/Palestine. Most of the world agrees this is an unacceptable crime against humanity, and many Islamic extremists see it as one of many reasons to justify their mad terrorist acts. Only a week or so ago, yet another act of terrorism occurred in the heart of the United States, with another mad man (clinically assessed to be so) took many other innocent lives in Washington DC. There are clearly far too many arms in the world today, and when people call for the arms industry to be curtailed, they themselves are denounced as unreasonable or naïve. Many called Paul Robeson those names when he openly supported the Soviet Union in his time - and not only that – unpatriotic. What he was doing then was promoting a system whereby people lived in peace and harmony with each other, and where there were fewer inequalities and injustices in society. Many more voices like his are clearly needed in our world today, and when they are denounced as being too radical, it is those denouncers that one should be wary of. The mad men aren't just out there on the streets causing terror, many of them are in the corridors of power, causing terror around the world. We need to call them for what they are. 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 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 three awards at the London Ontario Fringe in June 2012 and Best Solo Show at the Stratford UK Fringe this June. He has performed the play around the UK, Canada, Nigeria, Jamaica and the USA (including New York's Carnegie Hall in February 2012). His other piece titled FROM BLACK AFRICA TO THE WHITE HOUSE - a talk about Black Political Resistance, illustrated with Spirituals, has also been performed on 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.

Roland Perrin, Piano

Born in New York, pianist Roland Perrin spent his childhood roaming the planet with his itinerant family. Eventually settling in London, Roland has established himself as one of the foremost musicians working in the jazz and world music areas. He has toured and recorded with Dudu Pukwana, Najma Aktar, Moses Fan-Fan, Aster Aweke, and his own band, *Limited Edition*. He is also currently working on an animated musical film he has conceived, titled *Echoes of the Shtetl* based on the story of his grand parents' emmigration from Russia to New York at the turn of the 20th Century.

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 Designs have featured in productions by companies as diverse as Ladder to the Moon, Trestle, Ariya, Full House Theatre, London Shakespeare Workout, Rouge28 Theatre and Impetuous Kinship. Recent design credits include: *Peter Pan* (Tickled Pink Productions), *Dance or Die* (contemporary dance performance choreographed by Avant Garde's Tony Adigun), *Cinderella* (Library Theatre, Luton), *Voices in the Alleyway* and *Yes, I Still Exist* for Spread Expression Dance, Faith Drama's *The Fiddler* (Unicorn Theatre) & *Next Door* (Cockpit Theatre), *The Famous Five* (Tabard Theatre), Chalkfoot's acclaimed *The Riddle of the Sands* and *Laurel & Hardy* (Jermyn St Theatre, London & UK tours) as well as tours of *Queen Elizabeth's Elephant* and *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, *Hansel & Gretel* (UK tour incl. Greenwich Theatre), *Stockholm* (BAC), and open-air tours of *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Railway Children* (Heartbreak Productions). Phil also designed the award-winning UK & international touring production of John Retallack's *Hannah & Hanna* (Time Out Critics' Choice). Other productions in collaboration with Olusola Oyeleye include *The Security Guard*, *Ella* (RichMix), *High Life* (Hampstead Theatre), *Coming Up For Air* (UK tour), *Ma Joyce's Tales from the Parlour* (Oval House Theatre) and *The Playground* (Time Out Critics' Choice, London).

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: October 1 – 26, London: Tristan Bates Theatre, Covent Garden (part of Tayo Aluko & Friends's **The Paul Robeson Art Is A Weapon Festival**); **November 7, Oxford:** Ruskin College; **November 9, Helmsley Arts Centre.** **January 17, Corby:** The Core.

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