

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Roland Perrin, Piano

The Riverhouse Barn, Walton on Thames, Saturday 16 May, 2015

Greetings, Welcome. It was a relief not to have needed a passport to enter the Tory enclave of Walton-on-Thames today, coming all the way from the Labour Republic of Liverpool, and bearing news of a long-dead African American Socialist. It was even more pleasing to hear on arrival that the show was sold out, so the borders of this little town clearly need to be tightened! For those millions who are now worried about the possible consequences of unrestrained Tory government, little things like knowing that you are not alone, and that one can gather in safety among others of a like mind gives one hope that all is not lost, and reminds us that where there is life, there is hope. Robeson's story is a perfect example of that philosophy, and it mirrors that of thousands who went before him and sacrificed their livelihoods - and even their lives - so that we can enjoy the freedoms we enjoy today. He paid dearly for espousing overtly socialist ideals, and in his country today (and even here to a lesser extent) people can still suffer greatly for doing the same. One hopes that left-of-centre activists here won't begin to find their lives increasingly more difficult during the next five years, but as long as the Human Rights' Act remains in force, there will be some measure of protection. Not so much so in many other parts of the world, or even in the USA, where there are countless examples of activists who are in prison on trumped-up charges, and whose very lives are in danger at the hands of the police and legal authorities. One such is Mumia Abu-Jamal, who has managed for years to broadcast brilliant essays from behind bars (www.prisonradio.org), where he should not be. Right now, he is ill in SCI Mahanoy, and is being deliberately denied proper medical attention, in an attempt to kill him off. Yet, only a few days ago, his most recent broadcast, on the the 30th anniversary of a mass killing of a group of African Americans by the Philadelphia police (members of the MOVE Organisation), reminded us how not pursuing justice for those victims then has brought us to the point where police killings of Blacks is almost a daily occurrence. We have a fight on our hands, and for the sake of future generations, we should all join in, and certainly not lose hope. That would be a disservice to those who went before. 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 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 has been published in *The Guardian*, *The Morning Star*, *NERVE Magazine*, *Modern Ghana* and *Searchlight Magazine*. He is currently working on a new play.

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 many others including his own "Blue Planet Orchestra". He recently had a major work for choir, jazz band, solo singer and narrator, commissioned by Crouch End Festival Chorus, titled *Lansky, The Mob's Money Man* premiered at the Southbank Centre in London.

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:

May 23: Barnsley Civic Hall **August 7:** Threlkeld Village Hall, Cumbria
August 8: Lower Holker Village Hall, Cark, Cumbria; **October 3:** The Brindley, Runcorn;
October 17: Paul Robeson Theatre, Hounslow; **October 24:** Swindon Arts Centre;
October 31: Teatro Technis, Camden, London;
Nov 7: Paramount Hudson Valley, Peekskill, New York;
Nov 12 - 15: Centenary College, Hackettstown, New Jersey

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