

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Rowland Cotterill, Piano

Rolleston Club, Sunday, April 2, 2017

Greetings. Well, it looks like it's going to be a messier divorce than many led us to believe. The provenance of Gibraltar is being argued already (the nation went to war some decades ago over a similar issue); people are wondering about the probability of a wall going up between Northern and Southern Ireland; families and communities remain divided over remaining or leaving; vicious anti-immigrant attacks continue; the Scottish Parliament is up in arms; there is panic and uncertainty about the future of many European nationals in the UK about Brits in the EU, and about the implications of Brexit on staffing levels in the hospitality industry and in the NHS. A real fine mess, and the clock has only been ticking for a few days. The invasion of foreigners is one reason that a great many people voted to leave in the first place, but one could stop a moment and consider where else foreign invasions have been taking place over the last few decades, and even centuries. It is no coincidence that many of the people risking their lives to reach these shores are coming from parts of the world that were invaded by forefathers of people from here. The disruption that those invasions caused then make the today's rumblings look like a tea party, yet we, and even more inexcusably, our leaders forget these histories and repeat the mistakes of the past. It takes some bravery for people to point these things out against the noise that reaches us through the media, and none was braver than Paul Robeson. He demanded, back in 1946, after yet another lynching of four Black men in Georgia, that "*the Federal Government take immediate effective steps to apprehend and punish the perpetrators of this shocking crime and to halt the rising tide of lynch law. 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 are clearly as relevant today as they were then, and are very much worth remembering. So too are many of the things that Robeson said, and it is my pleasure to share his words, his songs and his story with you today, in the hope that we are all inspired to do our own bit to make the world a better place, however unfashionable or dangerous are actions may appear to be. 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, including New York's Carnegie Hall in 2012. He delivers a lecture/concert called *PAUL ROBESON – THE GIANT, IN A NUTSHELL*. 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 has 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*. His new play *JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER* premiered at the Edinburgh Fringe in August 2016.

Rowland Cotterill trained as organist, pianist and song accompanist during his study in Cambridge, and has given recitals in Coventry Cathedral, King's College Cambridge, and at the University of Warwick, where he lectured for many years in English and in the History of Music. He is a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists and an Associate of the Royal Schools of Music. He has directed shows ranging from Shakespeare to Hare, and worked as musical director in productions of Gilbert and Sullivan and of Brecht's *Threepenny Opera*.

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), and *Twelfth Night* (British Council Tour, Zimbabwe). 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: *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), *Beauty & the Beast*, *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), *Next Door* (Cockpit Theatre) and, most recently, Rouge 28 Theatre's new tour of *Kwaidan*, a Japanese ghost story with puppets. Other collaborations with director Olusola Oyeleye include *High Life* (Hampstead Theatre), *A Wing*, *A Prey*, *A Song* (Guest Projects Africa), *The Security Guard* (Merton Abbey Fest 2012), *Ella* (Rich Mix), *Coming Up for Air* (UK tour), *The Playground* (Polka Theatre) and *Ma Joyce's Tales from the Parlour* (Oval House/Edinburgh). He has just started design work on musicals *Carousel* and *Fame* for Amersham & Wycombe College.

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

Call Mr. Robeson: April 29: Chelmarsh Village Hall; **May 1:** Teatro Technis, London;
May 13: Crich Glebe Field Centre; **June 10:** Leominster Festival; **July 6 – 8:** Tara Theatre, London;
July 13,15,16: Buxton Fringe Festival

Just An Ordinary Lawyer: April 20: Theatre Royal, Bury St. Edmunds;
April 21: Threlkeld Village Hall; **May 1:** Teatro Technis, London;
May 14: Doncaster United & Free Christian Church; **May 30, 31:** Manchester Central Library;
June 3, 4: Marlborough Theatre, Brighton; **June 11:** The Place, Bedford;
July 12, 14, 16: Buxton Fringe Festival

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