

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Jason Collins, Piano

The Seagull, Lowestoft, Sunday May 4, 2014

Greetings, Welcome. “Peacemaker, Leader, Visionary” reads the depiction of the famous politician on the recently completed mural in Ireland, but there are many people who would contest the use of those words in relation to Gerry Adams. The question remains however as to how many of our current politicians can be so described with accuracy. Even the US president joked last night how the Nobel Peace Prize is given to just about anybody these days, but in this centenary of WW1, it would be wonderful if we could have many figures that we could readily identify as peacemakers. They do exist in abundance, but sadly they are drowned out by the noise of those that command the airwaves: politicians, entertainers and business people. For that reason we don’t hear much of organisations like *Peace News* or *Campaign Against Arms Trade*, who should have a much higher profile than they do today. A bit more is known about the Trussell Trust - a charity proving more effective than the government at ensuring that people on the margins of society get fed on a daily basis - in this, one of the richest nations on earth. In the USA, similar organisations look after the poor (funny how the middle class there are the ones that get mentioned the most) while their military expenditure continues to run into billions. In my own home country of Nigeria the dichotomy is more acute, as “security” takes the biggest slice of the budget cake, giving us one of the clearest examples in the world, of scarce resources being wasted and misdirected, while urgent issues of inequality and injustice remain unresolved – leading to conflict and terrorism. Paul Robeson bravely used his fame and celebrity not for personal aggrandisement but to challenge the powers-that-were to realign their efforts for the betterment of society. Like many others then and now, he paid dearly for his outspokenness. There is no question that he was definitely a true visionary whose story can be used to inspire future leaders to be the real peacemakers. I hope you enjoy the show.

Tayo Aluko. Writer, Performer, Producer. 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 United States of America, 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 has recently been appointed president of the Birmingham Clarion Singers. He is currently working with The Maltings Theatre, Berwick on a new piece, titled *What Happens?* featuring the writings of Langston Hughes, to be performed with live jazz accompaniment. He is a current writer on attachment with the Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse theatres.

Jason Collins, Piano and original incidental music.

Jason moved from Sussex to East Anglia back in 2004 to study Music at East Anglia, primarily in Conducting. He studied Piano under the direction of Christopher Green-Armitage and Conducting with Sharon Choa. Since then he has directed many choirs in East Anglia and today is the first time working with Tayo which has been a wonderful experience, and hopefully won’t be the last. Jason manages The Fisher Theatre in Bungay and is Musical Director for the Bungay Choral Society.

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: May 10, Goole: Junction; **May 29, Derry:** Playhouse; **May 30,** Lisburn: ISLAND Arts Centre; **May 31,** Donaghmore: Bardic Theatre; **June 1,** Downpatrick: Down Arts Centre; **June 25:** Ashbourne Festival;

June 26: What Happens? (Tribute to Langston Hughes @ The Matlings, Berwick-upon-Tweed

June 27: What Happens? @ Alnwick Playhouse

June 28: What Happens? @ Phoenix Theatre, Blyth

Tayo Aluko & Friends

24- 26 Mount Pleasant, Liverpool L3 5RY Tel: 0151 707 8187

info@tayoalukoandfriends.com www.callmrroberson.com

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