

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Martin Robinson, Piano

BT Convention Centre, Liverpool. September 9, 2014

Greetings, Welcome. “Never mind air strikes, give us boots on the ground.” This is my plea to those international leaders that have taken it upon themselves to police the world. The global threat that needs this urgent action is Ebola – for once, a genuine danger in need of our undivided attention. Like many contemporary crises in Africa, this one features less in the media and in public consciousness than most, and recently got most coverage when a British nurse was flown home and successfully treated. It was good to hear (albeit briefly) news of a 50-bed medical unit being built in Sierra Leone by the British military, but reports from *Medicins Sans Frontiers* suggest that these “boots on the ground” urgently need to be applied in vastly multiplied numbers - by the hundreds at least, if the crisis is to be checked. Otherwise, it may be only a matter of time before the first undetected case reaches these shores. Trade Unionists are perhaps best placed to understand how this cannot be seen just as an African crisis. Here in the UK, they work alongside several West Africans, without whom the NHS would literally grind to a halt. I presume that they are at the forefront of calls for support for their counterparts back home, and trade unions here will hopefully be supporting their African counterparts at this crucial time. Trade Unionists will understand more readily than most why and how this show of solidarity is necessary in the fight against the forces that devote billions to militarism and only hundreds to medicine and social care, even in this part of the world. This is as good a time as any to remind ourselves of the need for international solidarity, and Paul Robeson serves as one of the best carriers of that message. It is up to us to echo his deep voice, for we need such voices to be heard again now – here, in Africa and elsewhere. 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.

Martin Robinson, Piano and original incidental music. Martin Robinson has wide experience playing as pianist for choirs and soloists. On saxophone and keyboards he has played throughout Britain and in Europe with his own jazz band, *Skokiaan*, and with Mamadou Diaw and other bands and singers. He is delighted to be working with Tayo Aluko on a show with such a strong message.

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: Sept 18, Bury St. Edmunds: Theatre Royal; **Sept 20, Pershore:** Number 8 Arts Centre; **Sept 25, Bath:** American Museum (This Little Light); **Sept 27, Windsor :** The Firestation; **Sept 28, Broadstairs:** Sarah Thorne Theatre Company; **Oct 2, Diss:** Corn Hall; **Oct 3, Gt. Yarmouth:** St. George's Theatre; **Oct 4, Cambridge:** Mumford Theatre; **Oct 5, Borehamwood:** The Ark; **Oct 8, Peterborough:** Key Theatre; **Oct 9, Bedford:** The Place; **Oct 10, Chelmsford:** Cramphorn Theatre; **Oct 12, King's Lynn:** Arts Centre; **Oct 17, Bradford:** Alhambra Studio; **Oct 22, Doncaster:** Cast; **Oct 25, Enfield:** Dugdale Centre; **Oct 29, Nelson:** ACE Centre; **Oct 30, Oxford:** Old Fire Station; **Dec 3 – 10:** Republic of Ireland Tour

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