

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Glen Giffney, Piano

Threlkeld Village Hall, Friday, August 7, 2015

Greetings, Welcome. The extent of the worldwide outrage at the killing of Cecil the Lion in Zimbabwe was quite remarkable. One particular statistic stood out for me - that Cecil probably brought in more in a week as a tourist attraction when alive than was paid to have his life ended. I await news of Zimbabwe's Tourism authority suing the American government for loss of future profits. That may sound far-fetched, but probably understandable in a world where a multinational company can sue a government for loss of profits, when the government takes steps to prevent sales of a particular product. Philip Morris, the Tobacco giant is currently suing the governments of Australia and Uruguay for doing such things as putting health warnings on cigarette packets, preventing corporate branding or showing pictures of diseased lungs on the packaging. Unbelievable as that may sound, such action by corporate entities like chemical companies, producers of genetically modified foods etc will be able to do this under new trade agreements being brokered between the United States and governments around the world. The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) are two such agreements currently being negotiated *in secret* right now, and which critics argue will be bad for the environment, for health and for the welfare of workers worldwide. The migrations from South to North America right now are partly due to existing trade agreements, and these will likely intensify there and in Europe as greater levels of poverty are created worldwide. The fact that very few people appear to know about this is worrying, but there are groups trying to get the word out – groups like 38 degrees, War on Want and Friends of the Earth. Hardly left-wing extremists, but marginalised and largely ignored by mainstream media and society at large nonetheless. So it was when Paul Robeson tried to draw the attention of all that would listen, to policies of his and other governments that he saw as being detrimental to world peace and justice. Today, people such as Julian Assange and Edward Snowden are suffering in different ways for trying to do the same. If I persuade one or two people to find out more about these Trade Agreements and these people I have mentioned, I would have done the state some service. Better still, if more people are as outraged by their discoveries as they were over the death of Cecil, there may yet be hope of stopping corporate slaughter of massive international proportions. 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.

Glen Giffney, Piano. Glen trained at Chetham's School of Music in Manchester, and then at the Royal Northern College of Music. He has been involved in numerous prestigious competitions throughout the UK and performed at the European Piano Teachers association in Belgium. He was a finalist in the Keldwyth Award held here in the Lake District. Although classically trained, Jazz has always been a passion in Glen's life and he is currently furthering his career as a Jazz musician.

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 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), *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) and *Next Door* (Cockpit Theatre). Other collaborations with director 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 tour of *Kwaidan*, a Japanese ghost story with puppets.

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:

August 8: Lower Holker Village Hall, Cark, Cumbria;
October 1, 2: CLF Art Café, Peckham, London; **October 3:** The Brindley, Runcorn;
October 7 – 10: Alphabetti Theatre, Newcastle upon Tyne; **October 16:** Seven Arts, Leeds;
October 17: Paul Robeson Theatre, Hounslow; **October 24:** Swindon Arts Centre;
October 25: Redgrave Theatre, Bristol; **October 28:** The Witham, Barnard Castle;
October 31: Teatro Technis, Camden, London;
Nov 7: Paramount Hudson Valley, Peekskill, New York;
Nov 12 - 15: Centenary College, Hackettstown, New Jersey;
Nov 19 - 22: Bus Stop Theatre, Halifax, Nova Scotia

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