

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

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

Unity Theatre Liverpool, Wednesday 1 April, 2015

Greetings, Welcome. “His religion is not known” was an oft repeated remark in the original news reports when it was first realised that the co-pilot of the German airliner deliberately crashed his plane into the Alps. It was suspected that it might have been a terrorist attack, by – guess who? a Muslim. So much has suspicion of our brothers and sisters in recent years been that they are blamed for so many of the ills in society today. True, in many parts of the world – the Middle East and Africa, some of them have really gone amok, but it is easy to forget what it is they are reacting to, and how a few influential and rich people are taking advantage of disquiet, ignorance and prejudice. That prejudice has also been at play in the recent elections in my home country, Nigeria, where the religion of the President-elect was oft mentioned as a possible negative, and many preferred the incumbent just because he was Christian. Never (in my humble opinion) was one so ill-suited for such a role. The man was a national and international embarrassment, and the way he got to assume power was a case of him living up to his first name – Goodluck. We in Nigeria can now look forward with hope for a better future for our country, if the meddling in our affairs that has been the norm by Western governments can be kept in check. As we turn our weary eyes to the UK general elections and try to muster some excitement for it, we would do well to remember what it was that Paul Robeson tried often to remind us of – that the real power over our destinies should lie in our own hands, and not be vested in those of a privileged – or lucky few. We should always hold them accountable, but better still, keep fighting for the change we wish to see, and make the politicians follow our lead. We should for instance insist on billions going on health services rather than on war mongering, and not necessarily take what campaigning politicians say at face value. Injustices and inequalities within our society and across borders is one of the things that causes certain people to become terrorists (they sometimes see themselves as freedom fighters) so those that put people before profit are worth giving a chance, and a fair hearing. It would be great to hear more of the policies that are offered by the Greens and the Socialists, and those others who continue to be denied access to the airwaves in these noisy times. 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.

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:

April 23, Abertillery: The Metropole; **April 24, 25, Newport:** The Riverfront;
May 2, Manchester: The Mechanics Institute; **May 16, Walton-upon-Thames:** Riverhouse Barn;
May 23: Barnsley Civic Hall
August 7: Threlkeld Village Hall, Cumbria

Tayo Aluko & Friends
24 – 24 Mount Pleasant
Liverpool L3 5RY

info@tayoalukoandfriends.com www.callmrrobson.com

facebook: Call Mr. Robeson **Twitter:** @CallMrRobeson

