

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Scott Flanigan, Piano

The Watergate Theatre, Kilkenny, Friday December 5, 2014

Greetings, Welcome. A friend who lives in Dublin told me the other day that the Irish economy is on the rise again after years of absolute crisis and austerity, and that one of the features of this is a resumption in the rise of property prices. That's a little ironic to hear in the week when the country is reeling from its first (hopefully last) fatality among the homeless in Dublin from the effects of exposure to declining temperatures. One wonders how much of the growing economic pie will be devoted to housing as the economic recovery continues. I understand that for decades now, The State has withdrawn progressively from the provision of social housing in Ireland, with the majority of housing needs being met by the private sector. Like the boom that this country experienced before the financial crisis, it is clear that "the markets" are volatile, unpredictable, cruel and unforgiving. The death of Jonathan Corrie earlier this week has rightly shone a light on a crisis that too little attention has been paid to, which is that the State exists to provide protection to its people (this is largely what taxation is for), but in too many parts of the world, this is patently not happening, even in many so-called advanced economies. The world is watching the United States with about as much horror as they did over half a century ago when their Black citizens violently oppressed by endemic racism. Today, that country seems to be practically back to those days, with blatantly racist policing and law. Paul Robeson once said openly that only when his country took steps to properly protect its own citizens would its self-professed role as the world's policeman be viewed with trust and hope. He was branded unpatriotic, irresponsible and dangerous for such pronouncements, but few can now argue with the fact that his words were prophetic, and sadly remain rather relevant today. There will be people here in Ireland who have similarly been ignored for too long, especially as economic recovery is seen as the most desirable of goals - people who call for more resources to be allocated to social services and less to militarism for instance; people who caution against the exploitation of workers in the pursuit of profit. We have Robeson's example to show that such people should be sought out, and their counsel taken. 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 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.

Scott Flanigan, Piano and original incidental music. Scott is one of the most in-demand keyboard players in the province as a jazz performer, composer and educator. Having started with the Ulster Youth Jazz Orchestra, Scott studied music at Queens University and has performed with Van Morrison, Linley Hamilton and Jean Toussaint. He is currently pursuing a Masters degree in jazz performance at Dublin Institute of Technology.

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: **Dec 5, Kilkenny:** Watergate Arts Centre; **Dec 6, Limerick:** 69 O'Connell Street; **Dec 10, Waterford:** Garter Lane Arts Centre; **Jan 16, Spokane, Washington, USA:** Bing Crosby Theatre; **Jan 30, Buxton, Derbyshire:** Pavilion Arts Centre **Feb 20 - March 1, Wellington:** New Zealand Fringe Festival; **March 4 - 15, Australia:** Adelaide Fringe; **March 27, Millom, Cumbria:** Beggars Theatre; **March 28, Richmond, N. Yorkshire:** Georgian Theatre Royal; **April 1, Liverpool:** unity Theatre

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