

## **CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.**

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

**World Merit Day, BT Convention Centre, Liverpool, Thursday 24 July, 2014**

**Greetings, Welcome.** It is quite unedifying watching European political leaders trying to outdo each other in pinning blame on each other for selling arms to Russia, who is believed to have supplied the weaponry that brought down the Malaysian Airlines flight over Ukraine, with the death of close to 300 innocent civilians. That tragedy has brought back to our consciousness a conflict which seemed to have receded from our minds, at least here in Britain; a conflict that appears no less baffling, senseless and cruel than any of the others raging elsewhere, particularly in the Middle East, where chaos reigns, and indigenous and foreign powers are continuously subjecting innocent civilians to unspeakable terror. Uppermost in our minds right now is the Israeli bombardment of Palestine, the context of which is the continuing annexation of land from the Palestinians over decades, and the operation of what many term a cruel apartheid system. Almost 700 Palestinians have been killed, and their environment obliterated by the fourth largest army in the world, but there are no accusations of blame, or calls for sanctions against those supplying the Israeli Defence Force with arms, because those suppliers are mostly Western governments – primarily the USA. It is also sad to know that thousands of ordinary Jewish people in Israel, the USA and elsewhere are vilified for joining in worldwide demands for the slaughter to stop, but try as they might to control the media, the leaders cannot ignore the fact that they are out of step with common humanity. In particular, those that call for an end to the manufacture and trade in arms are routinely sidelined and mocked, as the arms industry continues to profit from slaughter. It is remarkable that the present generation of young people includes remarkable individuals who, despite their youth, show more wisdom and humanity by their survival through conflict, and by their brave stands for peace and justice. We can therefore continue to hope that there may yet be a better future for the human race than the one that the present generation of leaders seem intent of bestowing on its children. I hope that Paul Robeson's story will give added inspiration and strength to this generation of youth as they search for ways of ridding the world of the evil of perpetual war-mongering. 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 50<sup>th</sup> 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, 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:** **Sept 4, Aberdeen:** The Lemon Tree; **Sept 5, Stirling:** Tolbooth Theatre; **Sept 6, Bathgate:** Regal Theatre; **Sept 7, Whithorn:** Swallow Theatre; **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, Dublin:** Civic Theatre; **Dec 4, Blanchardstown:** Draiocht; **Dec 5, Kilkenny:** Watergate Arts Centre; **Dec 6, Limerick:** 69 O'Connell Street; **Dec 10, Waterford:** Garter Lane Arts Centre.

**Tayo Aluko & Friends**

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