

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by TayoAluko, with David C Williams, Piano

Bolton Socialist Club. Friday, January 29, 2016

Greetings, Welcome. He emigrated for health reasons. His parents sent him thousands of miles across the Atlantic Ocean because he was sickly, and his prospects would be better in that land far away. He survived, and prospered, so much so that to this day, his name is behind a great scholarship that has benefitted students from all over the world. Indeed, a whole country was named after him for a long while. Today, there is controversy as to whether a monument to Cecil Rhodes should be taken down from Oriel College, Oxford, because he is now seen to represent one of the starkest and worst examples of colonialism, imperialism and rapacious capitalism there is. There might be an argument for keeping his statue in place and replacing the existing inscription to describe him for what he really was. That way, the true story may replace the false representation, rather than be buried, or “whitewashed” altogether. This description is being used in another controversy – that of the forthcoming Oscars in Hollywood, where for the second year in succession, not a single actor or director of colour has been nominated for an award, notwithstanding the excellence of movies produced by them. Watching the American election race right now, it is clear that millions in that country really want to whitewash the country, and not just its history. Still, there will always be inescapable truths, and determined truth-tellers. And they need to be brave, for the stories they have a need to tell can land them in a lot of trouble. Just ask Chelsea Manning, Julian Assange, Mumia Abu Jamal and hundreds, nay, thousands of others who have feared for their country, and spoken out, losing their lives in some cases – Malcolm X and Dr. King being the most famous examples. Paul Robeson died 40 years ago last week, and the date was barely mentioned, at a time when the warnings that he gave decades ago need to be sounded again, loud and clear. If ever Hollywood needed a great story, this one is ripe for the telling. His time will come, and even though this giant of a man, this “Tallest Tree in Our Forest” remains dead and buried from public consciousness, may there one day before too long be a nomination for a director, actor, writer or whoever for telling the story of Paul Robeson, whose ancestors were unwilling migrants to the New World from the land colonised by Rhodes and his like. 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.

David C Williams, Piano. David studied at The Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester. He has been employed as Director of Music of Holy Innocents Church, Fallowfield and as School Organist at Bury Church of England High School. He has also been Director Music at St. Paul’s Parish Church, Royton. David has got a teaching degree from Edge Hill University for a P.G.C.E in secondary music teaching.

OlusolaOyeleye, 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), *Beauty & the Beast*, *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), *Next Door* (Cockpit Theatre) and, most recently, Rouge28 Theatre's new tour of *Kwaidan*, a Japanese ghost story with puppets. Other collaborations with director OlusolaOyeleye include *High Life* (Hampstead Theatre), *A Wing, A Prey, A Song* (Guest Projects Africa), *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 started design work on musicals *Carousel* and *Fame* for Amersham & Wycombe College.

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:

February 12, London: 40th anniversary tribute, Marx Memorial Library; **February 25 – 28, New Westminster, BC, Canada:** Anvil Theatre;

March 10, Stapleford: St. Helen's Parish Church Hall; **March 11, Upper Broughton Village Hall;**

March 12, Averham, Notts: Robin Hood Theatre Club; **March 17, Wolverhampton:** Arena Theatre; **March 18, Coalville, Leics:** Century Theatre; **March 19, Hoton:** Hoton, Cotes & Prestwold Village Hall; **March 20, Radcliffe-on-Trent:** Grange Hall;

March 24: Doncaster Unitarian & Free Xtian Church; **March 26: Derby** Theatre

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