

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

**Written and Performed by TayoAluko, with Phil Blandford, Piano**

**Ustinov Studio, Theatre Royal, Bath. Saturday, January 9, 2016**

**Greetings, Welcome.** We have been warned by the Chancellor of the Exchequer of a dangerous cocktail of global threats a-coming. To the British economy, that is, for that is of course his only concern. We are grateful, I am sure. There are many in the country who disagree with him, however, and their own warning is that an economy focused entirely on austerity is doomed to fail, not least because a low-wage economy is a low-tax economy – one unable to spend adequate amounts on the basics needed by the populace. There are those who warned recently that entering into a bombing campaign over Syria would place this country at greater risk from terrorist attack, arguing that we should have learned from the mistaken military responses to 9/11. Many have issued warnings in the years since that seminal moment - that going into foreign lands to impose democracy by dropping bombs on innocent civilians is likely to make matters worse, not better. Those warnings were repeatedly ignored, and now we see thousands upon thousands migrating across Africa and the Middle East, clambering, and literally dying to get to the safer shores of Europe. They are not always welcomed with open arms, either by the native populations (who feel that they are not always well provided for themselves) or the leaders, who find the immigrants a good diversion from their own failings. A survey of the populations of refugee camps like “The Jungle” in Calais reveals that they are populated by nationals from those countries our leaders have in their wisdom chosen to liberate by military means, whether invited or not. Were it not for the obvious presence of nuclear weaponry in North Korea, and the purported “madness” of its leader, one presumes that that country would also have been invaded by now. “Insanity,” Einstein said, “is repeating the same action over and over again and expecting different results.” Considering what Paul Robeson said as far back as 1946, one wonders who the insane ones are: *“The absence of peace in the world today is due precisely to the efforts of the British, American and other imperialist powers to retain their control over the peoples of Asia, the Middle East, Europe and Africa.”* We join in the madness by repeatedly electing war-mongers and failing to see them and the shady interests that they really serve as the real cocktail of global threats. 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 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 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.

**Phil Blandford, Piano.** Phil holds a degree in Music from Bristol University and an Advanced Certificate from the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music. He regularly provides music for a variety of events in the South West, South Wales and further afield. He has developed a repertoire of hundreds of songs from the last hundred years or so. He is a regular accompanist for several local groups, including Bristol Opera, North Avon Youth Theatre Company and the Amadeus Choir. He also accompanies numerous professional singers and instrumentalists. He plays in several jazz bands of all traditions, specialising in the 1920s styles.

**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:**

**January 23, Liverpool:** Tribute concert on the 40th anniversary of Robeson's death. Friends Meeting House. **January 29: Bolton** Socialist Club; **February 12, London:** 40<sup>th</sup> 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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