

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Jonathan Jarvis, Piano

Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton. Thursday, March 17, 2016

Greetings, Welcome. The Conservative Disability Group shut down its website yesterday in protest against yet more disability cuts. That's saying a hell of a lot, very eloquently indeed. It is hard to imagine how the Chancellor can spin himself out of that, having in the same budget awarded even more tax breaks to the wealthy. It's probably best to not mention it at all, and hope that it will all blow over. This is a well-used tactic employed by politicians and the media. For example, only the other day in the US, another big day of primaries was held, and people would be fooled into thinking that on the "saner" Democratic side, there is only one candidate running, and is the one likely to face whoever the Republicans nominate (I choose not to mention any monstrous names here for once). Even the socialists out there (there are likely to be one or two in the audience, I reckon) would be surprised to learn that a self-proclaimed socialist still has the chance of winning the Democratic Party's nomination. Bernie Sanders continues to give Mrs. Clinton a run for her money, but he is constantly being deliberately overlooked in the post-primaries broadcasts and debates, and his speeches not aired. For that reason, American audiences did not get to hear one politician talk about extreme wealth inequality in their country, or suggestions that health and education should be available to all, and free at the point of delivery, as we (still) have it in this country. To think that someone who millions of Americans think is worthy of their vote and their money by way of thousands of small donations should be deliberately silenced is a sign that this person is dangerous – not to their country, but to the powers-that-be: the corporate and political interests. The truths that Sanders (or the Green Party's candidate Jill Stein for that matter) speak however become no less true by their being ignored or suppressed: international banking ruined the world economy, and everywhere, the weak are being made to pay for it, while the true culprits not only get away with it, they continue to do very nicely, thank you. Paul Robeson was portrayed as a dangerous man too. One wonders how far the human race has come since his time when we still see people who talk about peace and brotherhood ignored by the establishment. The rest of us can do our best to listen to them, celebrate and support them, speak the truth and fight the fight. 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.

Jonathan Jarvis, Piano. Jonathan read Music at the University of Huddersfield, majoring in solo performance. In 2014, he toured to Rotterdam with the University Big Band, and also played with the University Symphonic Wind Orchestra, who performed one of his own arrangements as part of their concert series. Jonathan repertoured for several established amateur musical societies including the Huddersfield Gilbert and Sullivan Society and the Halifax All Souls Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society. He has been heavily involved with the Music for Youth Festival, appearing at the Royal Albert Hall on three occasions with award-winning big band, *Jazz Vehicle*.

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:

March 18, Coalville, Leics: Century Theatre; **March 19, Hoton:** Hoton, Cotes & Prestwold Village Hall; **March 20, Radcliffe-on-Trent:** Grange Hall; **March 26: Derby Theatre;**
April 14, Preston: Symposium at IBAR, University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN)
May 8, Bowen Island, BC, Canada: Cates Hill Chapel; **May 13, Duncan, BC, Canada:** Cowichan Performing Arts Centre; **May 17, 18, Brighton Fringe:** Marlborough Theatre; **July 1: Penally Village Hall, Pembrokeshire;** **July 2: Solva Memorial Hall, Pembrokeshire**
July 3, Frome: Westway Cinema; **May 21: Doncaster Unitarian & Free Christian Church**

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