

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Jonathan Jarvis, Piano
Robin Hood Theatre Club, Averham, Newark. Saturday, March 12, 2016

Greetings, Welcome. “I’m really worried for my country, you see?,” is a line Paul Robeson utters halfway through this play, sometime in the late 1940s. Forty years since his passing, millions of his compatriots must be feeling exactly the same, what with scenes from Chicago yesterday. It is remarkable that parallels can be drawn between Donald Trump and Paul Robeson, but each in his own way has been responsible for violent reactions to words that they have spoken. In Robeson’s case, speeches against the imperialistic and militaristic tendencies of his country, and the relegation of millions of her citizens to second-class status led to the infamous Peekskill riots in 1949. Trump represents the total opposite, and in fact is an embodiment of Robeson’s fears. Surely, all delusions of that country being the “leader of the free world” are now truly dead and buried? This gives an opportunity to citizens to see through their governments’ historic support for American and Western imperialism and war-mongering worldwide. Robeson’s words and deeds have been continuously suppressed. The more radical speeches of Dr. King similarly so (it was he who referred to his country as the “greatest purveyor of violence in the world”) as are the worlds of thousands of American citizens who have always spoken for equality, justice and peace there and worldwide. One only need do a little research into the Black Panther Party to find that not only were many of their number subjected to state-sanctioned assassination, but many linger in prison after decades, for daring to call for equality for Black people. It can be argued that the Trump controversy is actually good for America, because, as an African proverb goes, “The way to treat a boil is to lance it.” The ugliness that festers in the underbelly of that country is being exposed by the incredible amount of support that Trump’s hateful rhetoric has received (even from some apparently intelligent African-Americans), and in a country built on genocide and slavery, it is perhaps a bit much to expect protest to always be peaceful. What Chicago tells us however is that like Robeson, there are enough people out there who refuse to accept the politics of hate, but there are many ways to demonstrate this. Art is perhaps the most beautiful and peaceful way of getting such messages across, and one longs for the day when billions will be spent on Art. 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 repeteured 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, *TheRiddle 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, Rouge28Theatre'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 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; **April 14, Preston:** Symposium at IBAR, University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) **October 21: Nottingham** Playhouse

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