

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

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Jonathan Jarvis, Piano  
Upper Broughton Village Hall. Friday, March 11, 2016**

**Greetings, Welcome.** Refugees are constantly in the news, and the situation doesn't look like getting any better any time soon. It is in this kind of climate that people express disquiet about the numbers of people seeking to come into this country, and even the Archbishop of Canterbury has become embroiled in the debate. Whilst it is easy to rejoice in the fact that the debate here is at a much higher level of sophistication than on one side of the presidential debate in the US, one cannot be too complacent, and ignore the fact that people in many parts of this country and around Europe are expressing views that are not too different from the more extreme ones we hear from the front-runner for that high office. Some observers point to similarities between conditions in Europe today and those in Germany in the 1930s, reminding us that Hitler was the result. They also caution us that increasing focus on refugees and migrants is often an easy way of distracting the attention of the public from the policies of our leaders which attack the wellbeing of the majority of people – attacks on the vulnerable in society, and the continued drive to extract the most from workers for as little as possible in the way of pay and conditions. So, on the one hand, junior doctors are being criticised for daring to go on strike, part of their argument being that their government refuses to provide necessary resources to the health service, while having no problem spending billions on prosecuting wars abroad, or maintaining lucrative commercial relationships with regimes abroad with very questionable human rights records. People that point these truths out are generally relegated to the margins, but they continue to speak for peace, justice and freedom. Such was the fate of Paul Robeson, but there can be no contesting the fact that however much his good name was tarnished, many of the things he said then serve as warnings that we would do well to heed now. One example is this, "...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." The least we can do is persuade our friends in America and indeed ourselves to be reminded of the voice and wisdom of people like Robeson, for we continue to forget them at our peril. 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.

**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 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; **April 14, Preston:** Symposium at IBAR, University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN)

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