

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Ana Sofia Ferreira, Piano

The Marlborough Theatre, Brighton, Tuesday, May 17, 2016

Greetings, Welcome. The British Prime Minister is certainly not having a good run when it comes to pronouncements about existing and prospective foreign Heads of State. True, it was inconceivable that “The Donald” would emerge as a potential USA President when Mr. Cameron rightly dismissed his racist rhetoric in the way he did. The response from across the Atlantic has been characteristically immature. The Nigerian President, on the other hand, when asked if he wanted an apology for describing his country (and mine) as one of the two most corrupt in the world, said that on the one hand, he wouldn’t argue with the veracity of that statement, but more importantly, an apology was infinitely less useful than a pledge to return the assets stolen by Nigerian politicians and their British accomplices to their rightful owners – the Nigerian government and people. Such a pledge has not made the headlines as far as I am aware, and the silent masking of the safekeeping of stolen assets in British banks and offshore tax havens continues. And our President could have gone even further and requested the return of the fortunes made in the past hundred, two, three, four or five hundred years, but that would be even that much more uncomfortable to respond to. Whilst it is facile to bandy around dismissive comments at the expense of Third World leaders, Mr. Buhari’s response makes it clear that greater statesmanship has on this occasion been shown by an African leader. As we hear of current moves to send arms to the makeshift Libyan government after the wholesale destruction brought about by the coalition attacks on that country (one consequence of which is the intensification of Boko Haram’s potency) one is reminded that Western leadership has for many years been bankrupt at best, and people who love Africa are very well within their rights to point this out. One who did so very eloquently and vociferously in his time was Paul Robeson, and because his focus was on oppressed people worldwide, he was seen as especially dangerous, and deserving of the full wrath of the authorities in his country, and suspicion of those here in Britain. His pronouncements are no less true today than they were then, and in fact the need for people to revisit and heed them are arguably as urgent today as they have ever been. It is also incumbent on the rest of us to join in the fight for freedom, justice and peace everywhere in the world in whatever way we can, even if the least we do is read up on a little history, listen to words of wisdom where they are spoken, and speak carefully, wisely and humbly ourselves whenever we are afforded a suitable platform. I hope you enjoy the show.

Tayo Aluko. Writer, Performer. Tayo was born in Nigeria, and now lives in Liverpool, UK. 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, including New York’s Carnegie Hall in 2012. He delivers a lecture/concert called *PAUL ROBESON – THE GIANT, IN A NUTSHELL*. 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 has 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*. His new play *JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER* premieres in August 2016.

Ana Sofia Ferreira, Piano. Portuguese-born Ana lives in Brighton, where she teaches piano and accompanies classical and other singers and instrumentalists.

Olusola Oyeleye, 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. 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 Olusola Oyeleye include *High Life* (Hampstead Theatre), *A Wing, A Prey, A Song* (Guest Projects Africa), *The Security Guard* (Merton Abbey Fest 2012), *Ella* (Rich Mix), *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:

May 18, Brighton Fringe: Marlborough Theatre; **July 1: Penally Village Hall,** Pembrokeshire; **July 2: Solva Memorial Hall,** Pembrokeshire; **July 3, Frome:** Westway Cinema; **July 3:** Wesley Methodist Church, Frome (Frome Festival); **Aug 4 – 28: Call Mr. Robeson & Just an Ordinary Lawyer: Details tbc.;** **Sept 1:** Llandinam Village Hall; **Sept 8 – 11:** Ashland Community Centre, Ashland, OR; **Oct 13:** Edge Hill Arts Centre, Ormskirk; **Oct 21:** Nottingham Playhouse
Nov 13 – 22: Tour of North West Territories, BC.

Tayo Aluko & Friends
24 – 24 Mount Pleasant
Liverpool L3 5RY

info@tayoalukoandfriends.com www.callmrrobeson.com
facebook: Call Mr. Robeson **Twitter:** @CallMrRobeson

