

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

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

The Marlborough Theatre, Brighton, Tuesday, May 18 2016

Greetings, Welcome. I wonder how many of you took time to listen to every word of the Queen's speech earlier today. It is generally agreed to represent something of an oddity, its origins lost somewhere in the mists of time, whereby a reigning monarch with a tremendous amount of pomp shows to her subjects just how little power rests in her own hands, and how she is in actual fact a mouthpiece for whichever government is in power on the day. As such, there are many items of great import that do not feature in such a speech, as discussion of them would be inconvenient for the government. Putting the question of the EU referendum aside, measures that would reduce the ever-growing inequalities between rich and poor in the country are said by the leader of the opposition to be woefully lacking. One eye-catching bill is the one that makes it a criminal offence for companies to prevent their employees from aiding tax evasion. This will have the financial services industry "getting creative" over the next few years, and their legal experts and their friends in high places miraculously failing to find many criminals to convict for activities that flout the bill. I guess it would have been unreasonable, after the media hype that accompanied the recent global anti-corruption summit, to expect there to be anything that also criminalises abetting the depositing of foreign assets in British banks and tax havens? That would certainly not be good for business, for growth or the markets, so Her Majesty's Government cannot do that just now. It would therefore take many more decades for the return of such assets to their countries of origin, but this does not mean that people should not continue to call for such action. When Muhammadu Buhari, the Nigerian President recently expressed a preference for a return of stolen assets over an apology from Mr. Cameron for some loose remarks about corruption in Nigeria, he was echoing the words of thousands who have been referring to the theft that has been going on for centuries, much of which was on behalf of Her Majesty's Government (and this does not only mean the current monarch.) One person who was always at pains to point out the injustice of colonialism and the slavery that preceded it was Paul Robeson, and he also drove the point home by reminding all that would listen that the same system that stole from the vast majority of the world's people also stole from the poor in the very seats of empire. That situation persists today, and when people like Jeremy Corbyn in the UK and Bernie Sanders in the US are dismissed as dangerous idealists, they are, in my opinion, in very good company, and very much worth a lot more of my time than a speech written for the Queen by the current leaders of this country. 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, 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 at the Edinburgh Fringe 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. She also plays a mean Tango.

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:

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

