

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Phil Blandford, Piano

Penally Village Hall, Friday, July 1, 2016

Greetings, Welcome. I was reminded on the drive down today of singing at a wedding many years ago, in a tiny chapel in a little Welsh village whose name escapes me now. Looking round the chapel, I was amazed to see a memorial to local boys who had lost their lives during World War 1, not in the Somme, but in Cameroon! Up to that point, I wouldn't have had the idea that young men from a small Welsh village could have had anything to do with my part of the world that far back. Furthermore, the fact that there were battlegrounds all over Africa is often overlooked, which is not to take anything away from the rightful commemorations that are going on today to mark the centenary of the Battle of the Somme. Of course, only a few hundred yards away from this village hall, we can see practice trenches for that horrendous war effort, so the saying that we are all connected cannot be demonstrated any better than by our being here together today. A hundred years later, our leaders still send young men (and now women) to kill and be killed thousands of miles away, for reasons which history will prove once again to be senseless and false. These days, the most often-used pretext is the spreading of democracy. And how brilliant an example to the rest of the world Western democracy is proving itself to be today, eh? The continued manufacture of arms even deadlier than what caused the devastating carnage a century ago indicates that we still have not learned the lessons that were there for us to learn - so much so that in that country with which we have that most special of relationships, such weapons are available to absolutely anybody on almost any high street. Going back to that Welsh wedding, it is interesting to note that it was a German man marrying an English woman, whom I knew because we were both musicians. What a contrast between the international connections that war gives us, and those that peace and love do. Nobody personifies this marriage of internationalism, peace and love than Paul Robeson, who swam against the tide in calling for peaceful coexistence between all peoples, and the use of music and art as weapons against oppression. When such peacemakers aspire to become our leaders, (Jeremy Corbyn and Bernie Sanders for example) I for one stand ready to fight with them, notwithstanding who stands opposite, or behind, to shoot them down. 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.

Phil Blandford, Piano. Phil holds a degree in Music from Bristol University and an Advanced Certificate from the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music. He regularly provides music for a variety of events in the South West, South Wales and further afield. He has developed a repertoire of hundreds of songs from the last hundred years or so. He is a regular accompanist for several local groups, including Bristol Opera, North Avon Youth Theatre Company and the Amadeus Choir. He also accompanies numerous professional singers and instrumentalists. He plays in several jazz bands of all traditions, specialising in the 1920s styles.

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 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 @ Edinbugh Fringe. **Sept 1:** Llandinam Village Hall; **Sept 8 – 11:** Ashland Community Centre, Ashland, OR; **Oct 4 – 8:** "Lawyer", Liverpool Playhouse; **Oct 13:** Edge Hill Arts Centre, Ormskirk; **Oct 14:** Wellingborough Afro-Caribbean Centre. **Oct 21:** Nottingham Playhouse **Nov 13 – 22:** Tour of North West Territories, Canada. **Nov 25:** Centre Stage, Surrey, BC; **Dec 2:** Lyman Center, New Haven, CT.

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

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

