

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

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Karl Iverson, piano**

**Ashland Community Centre, September 8 – 11, 2016**

**Greetings, and Welcome.** President Obama's recent trip to Laos has shed light on a long-forgotten issue – that of the millions of unexploded cluster bombs blighting that country over forty years after they were dropped by the US Military. The threat that was said to necessitate such acts of lasting destruction back then was the so-called spectre of Communism. Right now, the current threat is supposed to be terrorism, which has appeared in our modern world for reasons which apparently elude our leaders. As such, American-made bombs are falling in the Middle East (including in under-reported Yemen) once again. One shudders to think what the effect of today's bombs will have on the innocent people of that part of the world, not to talk of people here, forty years from now, and how the people who say all this is absolutely necessary or excusable today will be viewed then. I prefer to shine light on someone who believed in a different kind of weaponry. Paul Robeson famously said, "*My Art is my weapon in defence of my people, and all oppressed people of the world.*" Forty years since his death, it is sad to think that those in positions of power show no inclination to consider the possibility of using art to spread peace and love, but instead sow seeds of fear, hate and distrust, and divide us one from another while starving the majority of us of the basics of life. In his time, Robeson was seen as a danger to the United States, to democracy and to peace. Nothing could have been further from the truth, and as I hope this play demonstrates, the ability of art to help us cut through the deception and misinformation that is at the heart of much of the world's problems is easily more effective than all the weaponry, money and hateful rhetoric that is the gift of far too many politicians. May the seeds of love and peace that he sowed all those decades ago bear fruit in future generations of artists and activists. 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* premiered at the Edinburgh Fringe in August 2016.

**Karl Iverson, Piano.** Karl has been teaching and performing at various theaters in the Rogue Valley for more than 10 years. He also works with many of the local high school theater programs and has an extensive background in musical theater performance, arranging and orchestration. Mr. Iverson holds a degree in music from South Oregon University.

**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 North American Performances Include:**

**Nov 13 – 22:** Tour of **North West Territories, Canada.** **Nov 25:** Centre Stage, **Surrey, BC;** **Dec 2:** Lyman Center, **New Haven, CT;** **Feb 4:** ACT Arts Centre, Maple Ridge, BC, Canada;  
**Feb 11:** Union County Performing Arts Centre, **Rahway, NJ;**  
**Feb 16 – 18:** Evergreen Cultural Centre, **Coquitlam, BC, Canada;**  
**Feb 28:** Hofstra University, **Hempstead, NY**

**Tayo Aluko & Friends**  
**24 – 24 Mount Pleasant**  
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