

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Iain Jackson, Piano
Wellingborough Afro Caribbean Centre, Friday, October 14, 2016

Greetings, Welcome. There are a great many people (me included) who believe that Paul Robeson is one of the greatest Americans that ever lived. It will surprise many of you that it once suggested that he run for Vice President, under the Progressive Party ticket, in 1948. He declined, but strongly supported the party and the Presidential candidacy of Henry Wallace. The Progressives, one of whose policies was to foster better relations with the Soviet Union, barely registered in that year's polling, and the Cold War picked up pace. As we hear calls for protests outside the Russian Embassy in a bid to place the blame for the disastrous situation in Syria firmly at the door of the Russian President (and prepare for war), another attempt is being made to wipe out decades of history that will explain, among other things, why so many Syrians are are risking their lives daily to swell the ranks of the homeless on Britain's streets. Looking across the Atlantic at the American Presidential race (we have to because the outcome affects us all) we feel no envy toward the Americans for the choice they have to make, but we can maybe take some hope from the fact that ugly as things might look right now, that country has been even uglier in the past, but the people have triumphed. We only need to remember the institution of legalised slavery, and the Apartheid system that birthed the modern civil rights movement. While we here don't have to choose between a racist megalomaniac and a woman who has difficulty in understanding the concept of peace and justice, and who seemingly has a massive credibility deficiency, one can take solace in the fact that there are many others who will be there to "hold their feet to the fire," however successfully the mainstream media keep such people out of the limelight. How many people know that there is another woman running for President, and that her running mate is a Black man? That's the American Green Party, today's equivalent of yesteryear's Progressive Party. The two mainstream parties have conspired (there's no other word for it) for this party to be refused a look-in during this charade that they call democracy, but small independent outlets continue to spread their message. As Robeson's story tells us nearly seventy years after his near-run for VP, there are many far better people whom we should trust with our future than those that purport to lead us now, and we would do well to seek them out, hear their messages and support them. 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.

Iain Jackson, Piano and original incidental music. Iain is a graduate of the University of Birmingham and Birmingham Conservatoire, where he studied piano accompaniment. Now in demand as a freelance accompanist based in the Midlands he works at the Birmingham School of Acting and performs regularly with a variety of groups all over the country.

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, Rouge 28 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

Call Mr. Robeson: 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; **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
Just An Ordinary Lawyer: Oct 25: Burdall's Yard, Bath Spa University; **Oct 28:** Bolton Socialist Club; **Jan 16, 2017:** Ustionv Studio, Theatre Royal, Bath; **Feb 2:** Intrepid Theatre, Victoria, BC, Canada.

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