

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Tim Mottershead, Piano

Rotunda Theatre, Buxton Fringe, 12 – 16 July, 2017

Greetings, Welcome. It would be nice to assume that no people from racial or religious minority groups feel particularly unsafe walking the streets of Buxton these days, as many in other parts of the country, particularly in London, do - given the attacks on them over the last few months. Too many continue to blame “minorities” for all the world’s ills, despite the fact that British society owes so much to people whose origins lie elsewhere. Furthermore, the control shown by the victims of the attack outside the Finsbury Park mosque the other week demonstrated tremendous humanity, as did their strong participation in the rescue efforts after the Grenfell Tower disaster. The poor performance of the authorities before and since the fire serve as a better indication as to who is indeed to blame for much that is unsatisfactory in this country. The safety and wellbeing of ordinary people at the lower end of the economic and social scale was shown to be seemingly of less importance than maintaining those systems that increase the gap between rich and poor. Meanwhile, billions can be found at the drop of a hat when it is necessary to prop up a failing government, or to contribute to, or prosecute military conflict abroad, causing untold misery in the process. These are the kinds of conditions which led Paul Robeson to criticize his government at home and abroad for claiming to be the saviour and protector of the free world while keeping so much of its population in poverty and danger at home. It is good to see and hear so many artists and others following his lead today, even though one struggles to think of any in this country or in his who have done so with so much bravery or sacrifice. As things worsen, may it be the case that more of us join the growing numbers of people here and abroad who are ready to identify the real enemies of the people, and bring them to account with all peaceful means and weapons at their disposal, including their art, their words and their songs. 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.

Tim Mottershead, Piano. Tim Mottershead studied music at Liverpool Community College and at Aberdeen University. He is regarded as an authority on the English composers Edmund Rubbra and Lancashire born composer Alan Rawsthorne (1905-1971), on whom he has published a biography. He has contributed to scholarly publications, including *Piano Professional*, *Musical Opinion*, and most notably *TEMPO*, with articles in nearly every issue from 2005-14. As a composer of more than a 150 works, he now writes mainly for specific performance projects. In 2005, he undertook a short tour of universities and societies with a recital to celebrate the centenary of Alan Rawsthorne. Tim is a keen advocate of world music, having performed or written in every conceivable genre from Iraqi Oud music, to Gamelan, to music for Maypole dancing. He plays in the Indian classical music group Raga Jyoti who, shortly after their formation in 2000, were awarded first prize at the Buxton Fringe Festival, and also performed for Ravi Shankar.

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), and *Twelfth Night* (British Council Tour, Zimbabwe). 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: Till July 16: Buxton Fringe Festival; **August 21 – 26:** Edinburgh Fringe; **Sept 2, 7:** MUSON, Lagos, Nigeria; **Sept. 29 & Oct 1:** Bedwas Workmen's Hall, Caerphilly; **Sept. 30:** Memorial Hall, Pembrokeshire; **Oct 7:** Unity Theatre, Liverpool; **Oct 21:** Nottingham Contemporary; **Oct 28:** Dugdale Arts Centre, Enfield

Just An Ordinary Lawyer: July 12, 14, 16: Buxton Fringe Festival; **Aug 21 – 26:** Edinburgh Fringe; **Sept 24, 25:** Swallow Theatre, Whithorn, Scotland; **Oct 5:** Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton; **Oct 6, 7:** Unity Theatre, Liverpool; **Oct 11:** Waterside Arts Centre, Sale; **Oct 19:** Lakeside Theatre, Colchester; **Oct 20:** Wellingborough Afro-Caribbean Association; **Oct 23:** The Y, Leicester; **Oct 28:** Dugdale Arts Centre, Enfield

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