

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Paulette Vassell, Piano

Tara Theatre, Earlsfield, London. 6 – 8 July, 2017

Greetings, Welcome. Grenfell may yet come to be seen a major turning point in history like 9/11, or the Great Fire of London, which happened way back in 1666. Still, all these centuries later, we know that that disaster led to major advances in building regulations and in fire fighting, and in fact to the very fabric of London. Less known to British people is the Triangle Factory Fire in New York in 1911, where 145 garment workers (mostly immigrant women) lost their lives in another high-rise building whose owners were less concerned about their workers' safety than the bottom line. That preventable disaster, still commemorated annually by people on the American Left, also led to major advances – in occupational safety legislation and trade union activism. Another thing we learned from Grenfell is how remote, ineffectual, and frankly untrustworthy many people in authority can be when the welfare of ordinary people is concerned, and how much power those ordinary people have within them, demonstrated admirably when they are mobilized to act for a good cause. Paul Robeson was well aware of this in his time, and tried his best to alert those fighting for equality and justice in the USA and around the world, of the need for unity across all sectors, and of collective action. The authorities in his country however chose to portray him as a dangerous radical bent on the violent overthrow of his government, in which the people were instructed to trust. As we are reminded by recent news on the Iraq War enquiry, it is our leaders who most often should be trusted least, and those whom they fear that have something worthwhile to say. Indeed, one is reminded of the way that the two World Trade Centre towers (and another building) dramatically collapsed, while Grenfell remains standing, like a grotesque monument to inequalities in our society. May it not just be radical voices who see Grenfell as an opportunity to effect genuine change in social housing and in the crazy property speculation market. As the Nigerian poet, Ben Okri says in his ode to Grenfell, "*See the tower, and let a world-changing dream flower.*" 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.

Paulette Vassell, Piano and original incidental music. Paulette is a singer, pianist, composer and arranger. She studied music at Goldsmiths College, having grown up in the gospel tradition. She has accompanied singers and instrumentalists in the classical, gospel and light jazz genres as well as performing as soloist in her own right. She was in the music faculty at Goldsmiths College for several years and continues to enjoy a busy schedule teaching privately and at FE Colleges and Secondary Schools.

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 8: Tara Theatre, London; **July 13,15,16:** 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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