

CALL MR. ROBESON. A life, with songs.

Written and performed by Tayo Aluko, with Gus Carmichael, piano

Quaker Meeting House Edinburgh Fringe. 21 - 26 August 2017

One hopes that the infamous violence in Charlottesville will not be forgotten in coming decades, particularly if, as has already been demonstrated, it leads to major changes at the top of the US administration. Unlikely as that may seem, we were reminded only last weekend of what is being described as “Britain’s Tienanmen Square,” where 18 people were killed by government troops when demonstrating for reform of parliamentary representation. At the time of the Peterloo massacre in Manchester in August 1819, only 2% of the population had the vote. The bicentenary in two years’ time and a forthcoming film will do a lot to correct the obscurity of this seminal but forgotten moment in British political history. Charlottesville has been compared to 1930s Germany, but Americans have an incident much closer to home and slightly more recent than that, which has also receded from public consciousness. The Peekskill riots of 1949 however presented at the same time both the best and the worst of American life in 1949, when Paul Robeson and his supporters were confronted by Nazis and Fascists. Good triumphed over evil then, as it did in Charlottesville and Boston recently, and it is clear that those battles of the past can serve as inspiration to us for those battles that lie ahead. It is also worth remembering that the scum that cause the violence and the terror on the streets around the world are either pawns in larger games being played by people in powerful positions, and are sometimes misguidedly reacting to the injustices that they see perpetrated by those purport to lead the rest of us. We would do well to continue to call these big boys to account and to justice, as much as we do to the little devils and clowns who command a lot more of our attention than they deserve.

Tayo Aluko. Writer, Performer. Tayo was born in Nigeria, and now lives in Liverpool, where previously worked as an architect. He has fronted orchestras as baritone soloist in concert halls, and has also performed lead roles in operas and musicals. *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 it around the UK, the USA, Canada, Jamaica and Nigeria. He delivers a lecture/concert called *PAUL ROBESON – THE GIANT, IN A NUTSHELL*, and another one titled *FROM BLACK AFRICA TO THE WHITE HOUSE*: a talk about Black Political Resistance, illustrated with spirituals. He researched, wrote and narrated to camera a piece on pre-Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade West African History, 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 been published in *The Guardian*, *The Morning Star*, *NERVE Magazine*, *Modern Ghana* and *Searchlight Magazine*. His other play, *JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER* was recently performed at the National Black Theatre Festival in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. He has developed a presentation titled *WHAT HAPPENS?* in which he performs the works of African American poet and writer Langston Hughes, with live jazz band, and is working on new writings.

Olusola Oyeleye, Director and Dramaturge. Olusola is an award-winning writer, director and producer working in theatre, opera, music theatre, visual arts and dance. She was resident director on Trevor Nunn’s West End production of *Porgy and Bess* (Savoy Theatre), staff producer at English National Opera, and has had productions touring internationally, to the USA, 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. She is a fellow of the Royal Society for the Arts.

Phil Newman, Designer. Phil’s set and costume designs have featured in numerous small, medium scale and outdoor productions touring the UK and internationally, including the USA and the UAE. They encompass drama, family & children’s shows, comedy, dance, pantomime and musicals as well as devised, interactive and youth projects.

Forthcoming Performances Include

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; **Nov 24:** Stanley Halls, South Norwood, London; **Nov 25:** Market Theatre, Ledbury