

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

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Meryn Williams, Piano**

**Letterston Memorial Hall, Letterston, Pembrokeshire. Saturday September 30, 2017**

**Greetings, Welcome.** This party conference season, a fundamental debate has been started about whether the economy should undergo a radical redirection and follow a socialist model, or as the prime minister argued the other day at a speech marking the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the independence of the Bank of England, whether only capitalism can provide prosperity for the majority of people. It is interesting to note that it was in South Wales back in 1928 that Paul Robeson started his own journey toward becoming an avowed socialist - a position he maintained for the rest of his days despite the unpopularity of his stance, even among many of his own race. Seeing the exploitation of white people in the mines by other whites persuaded him to support the concept of workers getting together to demand that the fruits of their labour be enjoyed by the many, not the few. Racial justice remained his primary concern, and the fact that the Soviet Union became a major force in the fight for freedom for his people in the United States and in Africa cemented his love of Socialism. If he were around today, he would probably not be entirely surprised to find that his country is not as different from his time as he would have hoped, notwithstanding the fact that its most recent leader was Black, as there was only the most diluted tinge of Red in his policies and actions. He would recognise scenes where people pointing out injustices in their country were painted as unpatriotic and ungrateful, because he had been there himself. He would be familiar with the concept of the political leader being ridiculed for espousing the socialist ideal, and dismissed as a dangerous extremist, because he campaigned for one such politician in his own country himself, only to see him completely wiped out in the polls. He would be familiar with the mainstream media continuing to seek out examples of socialism failing, without revealing the machinations of capitalists and war-mongers to undermine the experiment, because he railed out against this in his day. And he would invite us all to join him on his side of the debate, and of history. 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, and 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, and has already been performed on three continents, including at the National Black Theatre Festival in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

**Meryn Williams, Piano.** After graduating from Cardiff University Meryn has spent much of her time as an accompanist and amateur. She was the winner of the Morfydd Owen prize and Associate of the London College of Music and was accompanist at the Stuart Burrows masterclasses. Meryn is the accompanist for Wales West and Channel Islands for the Royal Academy of Dance London, and currently works for "With music in mind" a charity which helps people who live in isolation. She has two choirs and is currently musical director of Cor Meibion de Cymru Cardiff branch. She has recently joined the Welsh International Academy of voice.

**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: 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.

**Just An Ordinary Lawyer: Oct 5:** Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton; **Oct 6,7:** Unity Theatre, Liverpool; **Oct 11:** Waterside Arts Centre, Sale; **Oct 14:** Beggar's Theatre, Millom, Cumbria; Waterside Arts Centre, Sale; **Oct 19:** Lakeside Theatre, Colchester; **Oct 20:** Wellingborough Afro-Caribbean Association; **Oct 23:** The Y, Leicester; **Oct 27:** Dugdale Arts Centre, Enfield

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