

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

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Rowland Cotterill, Piano**

**Nottingham Contemporary. Saturday October 21, 2017**

**Greetings, Welcome.** The incredulity, the outrage, the outcry has been swift. How could it be that someone so inappropriate could be given such a prestigious role? One to which he is so ill-suited? A job that would make him and his country the laughing stock of the world? What were the voters thinking of, and just how will those whose job it is to justify the appointment spin it as a step in the right direction? Perhaps we will wake up and find that it was just a bad dream. The World Health Organisation's website suggests that we may be victims of an elaborate "fake news" prank, for at the time of writing, they name their Global Ambassador for non-communicable diseases as Michael Bloomberg, the billionaire former mayor of New York and well-known philanthropist. Nothing to worry about then, as he is credited to have given billions to many causes, including public health, presumably in his own country of the USA, often called the greatest country in the world. Their public health system should thus be the envy of the world, and as we speak, their president and his secretary for health will be taking steps to improve on their record. Here in the United Kingdom, the same would be the case, with all talk of privatisation and underfunding being dismissed as "political tickle-tackle." The health and international development secretaries will point to their proud record of ever-increasing funding of the NHS, and paying their staff so well that many of their best doctors and nurses routinely travel abroad on a voluntary basis to help improve health standards in developing countries. The thought of the NHS's very survival depending on medics from countries who would be much better off retaining their skills and talent at home would be anathema. So, when so much hot air is expelled at the appointment of the latest Goodwill Ambassador (a purely honorary role), the words of Paul Robeson come to mind. In protesting the lynching of four Black people in Georgia some seventy years ago, he wrote to the then president of the United States demanding that he apprehend and punish the perpetrators of that crime, stating that, "*only when our government has taken [such] action toward protecting its own citizens can its own role in aiding the progress of people in other countries be viewed with trust and hope.*" If only those words were not as true, necessary and relevant today as they were then. 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.

**Rowland Cotterill** trained as organist, pianist and song accompanist during his study in Cambridge, and has given recitals in Coventry Cathedral, King's College Cambridge, and at the University of Warwick, where he lectured for many years in English and in the History of Music. He is a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists and an Associate of the Royal Schools of Music. He has directed shows ranging from Shakespeare to Hare, and worked as musical director in productions of Gilbert and Sullivan and of Brecht's *Threepenny Opera*.

**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 28:** Dugdale Arts Centre, Enfield, London; **Nov 24:** Stanley Halls, South Norwood, London; **Nov 25:** Market Theatre, Ledbury.  
**February 2018:** USA Canada tour.

**Just An Ordinary Lawyer: Oct 23:** The Y, Leicester; **Oct 27:** Dugdale Arts Centre, Enfield, London  
**2018: March 17:** Riverhouse Barn, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey; **March 29:** The Lowry, Salford;  
**April 18:** Alnwick Playhouse, Northumberland; **April 19:** Queen's Hall, Hexham, Northumberland;  
**April 20:** The Maltings, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland;  
**April 26:** Cast in Doncaster, Yorkshire; **April 27:** The Heron Theatre, Milnthorpe, Cumbria

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