

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

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

Unity Theatre, Liverpool. Saturday October 7, 2017

Greetings, Welcome. The political establishment (well, the Conservative Party at least) is in deep disarray right now, and one can almost sympathise with their party leader. Almost, but not really, when one considers the things that she presided over as home secretary and on assuming leadership. Contrast that with the fortunes of the leader of the Labour Party, starting with his having been condescendingly given “the sympathy vote” to allow him to contest the leadership election, in order to allow the debate to be widened, to be made that more interesting. That was followed by extreme vilification by all sections of the mainstream media (the Guardian included), ridicule by the public at large, and dismissal and disloyalty by the vast majority of his parliamentary party. But he kept going, all the while sticking to what he felt in his bones was right. A few pragmatic compromises here and there (maybe on Brexit, perhaps) but who’s laughing now? The bravery and determination shown by him and his colleagues is nothing short of remarkable, and one watches with anticipation what will happen over the next few months. The prospect of a Socialist Prime Minister is not actually so laughable after all. That may scare some people, but one could argue that this will be because of the way Socialism has been painted for decades. If Mr. Corbyn wants to point at other examples of the potential of his beliefs (there will be disagreements on some points of course) he could do no better than to use the story of Paul Robeson, who similarly refused to bend in the face of media onslaught and the disloyalty shown towards him by those who wanted to swim with the tide. Who knows what would happen in his country if Corbyn were to become prime minister here, inspiring the progressive movement over there? Robeson might in fact have cause to thank President No. 45 for creating the circumstances, for paving the way for a socialist No. 46. 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.

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 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: Oct 21: Nottingham Contemporary; **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 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, London

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