

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Mary Pitchford, Piano

Market Theatre, Ledbury. Saturday November 25, 2017

Greetings, Welcome. They say it is a sign of madness when you repeat something over and over again, expecting to get a different result. Capitalism is clearly not working - for the many, certainly. One very good illustration of this is the housing crisis, but in the recent budget, all that was offered were promises to build more houses for sale, accompanied by some changes to stamp duty in order help first-time buyers. An expansion of social housing is clearly an idea too far, as it begins to smack of Socialism, and we can't have that, can we? We won't know until we try it, and it hasn't been tried here for decades; not even during the last Labour administration. However, indications are that people here in the UK are showing a real hunger for it under Corbyn's Labour. In the US, a self-declared Socialist, despite his huge popularity, was robbed of the chance to become their president, and instead we have who we have. Paul Robeson was part of earlier attempts to adopt Democratic Socialism there, but by his time the juggernaut against that idea was already approaching full speed. He campaigned for its adoption in African colonies, including then Rhodesia, and had he still been alive, he would have rejoiced with everybody else when they finally won their independence. A few decades later, change has come to Zimbabwe again, but we have the American experience of nine years ago to remind us that saying so over and over again during election campaigns is not enough – not by a long shot. The jubilation that follows Mugabe's departure will only lead to disappointment and maybe even disaster unless it is accompanied by efforts to ensure that true Socialism is given a chance to emerge there for once. The scenes on the Zimbabwean streets in the last fortnight suggest that like here, in the US and in many other places, the people are really hungry for that kind of change. We must be vigilant though, for among those rejoicing and making overtures towards the people of the new Zimbabwe are arms dealers, multinationals and other kinds of capitalists; and as they say, a leopard can't change its spots. If one sees what looks like a rock offering a stepping stone across a river, one would be wise to check that it isn't really a crocodile hungry for its next meal. I hope you enjoy the show.

Tayo Aluko. Writer, Performer. Tayo was born in Nigeria, and now lives in Liverpool, where he worked previously as an architect. 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 other play *JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER* has been performed on three continents, including at the National Black Theatre Festival in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

Mary Pitchford, Piano. After graduating from The Royal Academy of Music, Mary toured the UK with various theatre groups as composer, musical director and performer, notably the award-winning Ragazzi Theater Company at The Edinburgh Fringe Festival. In 1992 she emigrated from London to California for 23 years where she performed and recorded with a diverse array of musicians including David Grisman, David Archuleta, Mark Wills, Michelle Shocked, Earl Thomas and Orla Fallon. She has also worked with NYTC (*I love you, you're perfect, now change*) and played with The Berkeley Symphony for The Mark Morris Ballet Company. Mary currently lives in Malvern and works as a freelance musician, teacher and composer.

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: February 2018: USA Canada tour (see website for details).
April 5: European and British Association for American Studies' Conference, London
April 28: Swanland Village Hall, E Yorkshire; **April 29:** Barton Assembly Rooms, N. Lincolnshire

Just An Ordinary Lawyer: March 17 2018: Riverhouse Barn, Walton-on-Thames;
March 29: The Lowry, Salford; **April 18:** Alnwick Playhouse; **April 19:** Queen's Hall, Hexham;
April 20: The Maltings, Berwick-upon-Tweed; **April 26:** Cast in Doncaster;
April 27: The Heron Theatre, Milnthorpe

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