

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Angus Carmichael, Piano

New Deer Public Hall, Aberdeenshire. Saturday 14 April, 2018

Greetings, Welcome. “Righteous power” was used as a description of the bombing of Syrian military targets by the American, French and British governments overnight. It is a curious choice of words, not least because the “righteousness” appears not to be deployed in other scenarios where innocent civilians are being killed by unrighteous regimes. Two populations that come most readily to mind are Yemen and Palestine. Further below the radar are the conflicts going on in places like the Democratic Republic of Congo where hundreds are dying daily, or the shocking slave markets in Libya, which are one consequence of “righteous intervention” some years back. Even the terrorism that many American citizens, Black, white and immigrant fear daily is temporarily removed from our consciousness. This brings to mind something that Paul Robeson wrote in 1947 in a telegram to President Truman, demanding action after yet another lynching in Georgia, that “*Only when our government has taken ... such action toward protecting its own citizens can its role in aiding the progress of peoples in other countries be viewed with trust and hope.*” That sounds to me like anger to which the word “righteous” can very justifiably be applied. There are hundreds of British citizens not very far away from here who are also angered by the thought that they have had to suffer another winter on the streets because their government tells them they lack the resources to house them adequately, but somehow find money to send aircraft and bombs to destroy homes of people thousands of miles away. That is an example of righteous anger. Today, a great woman is laid to rest whose “controversial and violent” image is the one that persists as fed to us by the media, rather than one of remarkable and admirable courage against an evil regime that stole her people’s land, and enslaved, imprisoned and killed them by the thousands while being supported by the British and other Western governments. Footage of Winnie Madikizela Mandela bravely standing up to armed South African police and army personnel and shouting them down with the sheer force of her voice and her personality shows us what righteous power is. Similarly, the music of the people at her funeral, as had been displayed at that of her husband, and indeed throughout the anti-Apartheid struggle were a display of true, righteous power, just like the spirituals which Robeson’s forefathers and mothers gave to us through people like him. May we not be deceived into forgetting in whose hands righteous power actually lies, and how it can liberate us. I hope you enjoy the show.

Tayo Aluko. Writer, Performer. Tayo was born in Nigeria, and now lives in Liverpool, UK, where he worked previously as an architect. He has fronted orchestras as baritone soloist in concert halls, and 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 has taken him around the UK, the USA, Canada, Jamaica and Nigeria, including New York’s Carnegie Hall in 2012. He delivers a lecture/concert 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 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 deals with ancient Africa has been performed several times in the UK. His piece titled *WHAT HAPPENS?* features the writings of African American Langston Hughes, and is performed 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* has been performed on three continents, including at the National Black Theatre Festival in Winston-Salem, North Carolina in August 2017.

Angus Carmichael, Piano. Edinburgh born pianist/accompanist, Gus Carmichael B.Mus/P.G.C.E., studied piano with Audrey Innes from St Mary’s Music School and David Parkhouse from London. His musical interests and styles are very broad. He was accompanist for the folk singer Mary Sandeman, worked as session keyboard player with the late Billy Mackenzie and has accompanied Rowan Atkinson. He performs concerts for Music in Hospitals, works with performing arts students at Edinburgh College, accompanies singers/instrumentalists, plays in a jazz quartet and teaches piano.

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), *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*. Other Design credits include *Our House* (Elgiva Theatre), *Cinderella* (Library Theatre, Luton), *Next Door* (Cockpit Theatre) and Rouge 28 Theatre's 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 recently designed 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: April 28: Swanland Village Hall;

April 29: Barton Assembly Rooms;

May 2: Theatre by the Lake, Keswick; May 11, 12: Castillo Theatre, New York;

May 20: North Dalton Village Hall; May 24: Dorchester Arts Centre; May 25: Bridport Arts Centre.

Just An Ordinary Lawyer: April 18: Alnwick Playhouse; April 19: Queen's Hall, Hexham;
April 20: The Maltings, Berwick-upon-Tweed; April 26: CAST in Doncaster; April 27: Heron Theatre, Beetham; May 3: Theatre by the Lake, Keswick; May 5, 6: Harare International Festival of the Arts, Zimbabwe; May 19: Belgrade Theatre, Coventry; May 26: Merlin Theatre, Frome.

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