

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

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

Tullynesle and Forbes Hall. Thursday 12 April, 2018

Greetings, Welcome. The funeral service was held yesterday for Winnie Madikizela Mandela, and one of the people giving a eulogy was Graca Machel, widow first of Samora Machel, the former leader of Mozambique, and then of Nelson Mandela, Winnie's ex husband. Mrs. Machel occupies a unique position in modern world history in having been First Lady in two African countries whose Heads of State had been leaders of revolutionary struggles against white domination. She is therefore worth listening to on those rare occasions when her voice reaches us. This time she said it would have been nice for Winnie to have heard all the words of effusive praise while she was still alive, having been sidelined for so long. Certainly, in the coverage of her passing, many commentaries referred to violence that surrounded her during her long struggle against Apartheid in her country, and not to her crucial role in bringing that regime to an end. Her husband was famously called a terrorist by none other than Margaret Thatcher, as were other freedom fighters up and down the continent. Winnie and all those others were in good company, among whom Paul Robeson looms large. His weapons of choice were his voice –speaking and singing, - his pen and his sheer determination to keep going, regardless of whatever forces were trained against him. Indeed, his own life story is as remarkable as those who were restricted to fighting their formidable adversaries on African soil because he chose to use his profile and his relative freedom to fight on behalf of not just his own people in America, but for white oppressed in that country as well as Africans and oppressed people literally all over the world. When the Soviet Union treated him much better than his own government and supported those seeking freedom in Africa, it was no surprise that he promoted peace and friendship with them. The war-mongers however chose to ignore him, paint him as being intent on the violent overthrow of his own government, and persecute him in many ways, short of actual assassination. As we now seem to be being led toward military hostilities with Russia, one wonders how different things might have been if he and people like him had been listened to from the beginning of the Cold War years. Few people would compare with Robeson, but there are many who once again speak and sing the language of peace, however loudly our leaders beat drums of war. Like Graca Machel and others in Africa, may their voices of reason be heard and heeded before it is too late. 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 13: Phoenix Centre, **Newton Dee; April 14:** **New Deer** Pulic Hall; **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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