

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

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Nicholas Sykes, Piano**  
**The Assembly Rooms, Barton-upon-Humber. Sunday 29 April, 2018**

**Greetings, Welcome.** In 1950, during the Korean war, Paul Robeson, apparently a lone voice at the time, made a speech in New York condemning “*U.S. intervention in Korea ... with arms, ships, aircraft and men,*” (including “Negroes”) and insisting that “*the place for the Negro people to fight for their freedom is here at home--in Georgia, Mississippi, Alabama, and Texas--in the Chicago ghetto, and right here in New York’s Stuyvesant Town!*” It is no surprise to learn that power games between the U.S. and the Soviet Union lay behind that war, and on further research, that the war might have been avoided if the Americans hadn’t rejected a joint US-Soviet commission recommendation for the Koreans to form their own government. It was therefore pleasing to observe the warmth between the leaders of the two Koreas at their summit the other day, and one hopes that they might indeed be left alone to find peace and reconciliation without continued meddling by external forces. That may be naive, given that Syria is a testament to ongoing proxy wars between the two rival superpowers, even though mainstream media would have us believe that Russia and her allies are the sole aggressors. Robeson’s urgent insistence at where his people’s fight for freedom should be – at home – is also very relevant to us here today, as we watch the Labour Party shooting itself in the foot by expelling a known Black anti-racist campaigner for bringing the Party into disrepute in the climate of supposedly serious anti-Semitism in their ranks. on what strongly appears to be trumped-up charges of Anti-Semitism. A first political scalp has therefore been taken by supporters of the State of Israel who wish to silence criticism of her policies toward the Palestine people. We are entering dangerous times when Her Majesty’s Opposition, who should be concentrating on fighting the racist policies of the present administration, as epitomised by the treatment of the Windrush Generation, is instead fighting itself. They would do well to heed Robeson’s warning not to be deceived and deflected from where the real battles should be fought. 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.

**Nicholas Sykes, Piano.** Nicholas currently lives in Howden. Having retired from teaching six years ago after 33 years as Head of Music in the private sector, his last post being at Clock House School, the prep school for Bradford Grammar School. Nick now spends much of his time accompanying at music festivals and concerts, playing and conducting local choirs and music groups, including Snaith Choral Society

**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: 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: May 3:** Theatre by the Lake, **Keswick;**  
**May 5, 6: Harare** International Festival of the Arts, Zimbabwe; **May 19: Belgrade** Theatre, **Coventry;**  
**May 21:** The Inner Temple, **London; May 26: Merlin** Theatre, **Frome.**

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