

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Philip Blandford, Piano
Dorchester Arts, Thursday May 24, 2018

Greetings, Welcome. One cannot overlook the significance of a Tory minister agreeing on air that the public will be ready to pay significantly more in tax to fund the National Health Service not only to save it from the crisis it is in presently, but also to achieve and maintain the high standards that they expect of it. This flies in the face of what the unions allege has been happening over the last few years – the deliberate underfunding of the service, and the increasing outsourcing of services to the private sector (including American companies) in a bid to deliver it up for privatisation. It certainly runs counter to what one believes to be core Conservative belief, which is that the State should have as little as possible to do with services, and that the markets should prevail in all things. Grenfell Tower may yet prove to be a ghastly manifestation of this policy at work at its extreme, yet there will be others in the cabinet who wish to stick fast to the principle of minimal State interference. There is therefore inconsistency at the heart of government, even though the opposition are seemingly less able to exploit it as they are to do themselves damage by fighting over anti-Semitism. Not quite as dangerous, perhaps, as the consequences of the divisions at the top of the American government, which has led to the suspension of disarmament talks between No. 45 and the leader of North Korea. The hostility toward that country by the American establishment goes back several decades, and Paul Robeson's was a lone voice, 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!*" If he were listened to then, things would be different now. There are people being dismissed right now who are similarly calling for peace and justice, and they are being dismissed by our leaderships. It remains for the rest of us to know who to listen to, amplify their voices with ours, and our action, and remove the power from the least deserving, one at a time, if necessary. 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 and the Harare International Festival in May 2018.

Philip Blandford, Piano. Phil holds a degree in Music from Bristol University and an Advanced Certificate from the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music. He regularly provides music for a variety of events in the South West, South Wales and further afield. He has developed a repertoire of hundreds of songs from the last hundred years or so. He is a regular accompanist for several local groups, including Bristol Opera, North Avon Youth Theatre Company and the Amadeus Choir. He also accompanies numerous professional singers and instrumentalists. He plays in several jazz bands of all traditions, specialising in the 1920s styles.

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 25: Bridport Arts Centre; **August 10:** Community Music Center, Portland, OR, USA;

August 12 – 15: Ashland Community Center, Ashland, OR;

August 21 – 25: Edmonton Fringe, Alberta, Canada; **Oct 4:** Tring Theatre, Hertfordshire

Just An Ordinary Lawyer:

May 26: Merlin Theatre, Frome;

August 19: Gabriola Festival, BC, Canada; **August 22 – 26:** Edmonton Fringe, Alberta, Canada

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