

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Nicholas Howe, Piano

Theatre By The Lake, Keswick. Wednesday, 2 May, 2018

Greetings, Welcome. It seems that we are getting into in something of a deeper mess with Brexit, and divisions in the country being reflected in government. Still, the prime minister wishes to assure us that everything is under control. It would be nice to believe her, although one recalls how the immigration crisis was used as one of the main arguments for leaving Europe, how white vans were paraded round London with notices warning illegal immigrants to go home. And most recently, members of the Windrush Generation were unwitting victims of those policies, although there are suggestions that even though the government had been warned that these people might be affected, no heed was taken, in the drive to meet deportation targets. For “inadvertently” misleading parliament, the home office minister resigned, but it remains to be seen how much longer her predecessor will survive the scandal, or Brexit. Still, we will believe her that everything is under control. After all, the deception is inadvertent at best, unlike across the water where we find out (surprise, surprise) that the 45th American president is not necessarily the healthiest *ever*. That is only the latest of untruths that we have now lost count of. Politicians who tell the truth most of the time are a rare breed indeed, and the closest we have in this country appears to be the leader of the opposition, but for some reason, the media portrays him as a danger to the nation. So they did with Paul Robeson, whose speeches, writings and actions were all to do with warning his country and the world about forging peace and brotherhood with the Soviet Union in particular, and the world in general, in addition to making sure that his people got a fair share of the American pie. He was dismissed as a dangerous communist, and his legacy buried, to this day. One can only imagine what kind of world we would have today if he had been listened to in his time. It is hoped that his story will inspire us to give his descendant peacemakers here and elsewhere a fairer hearing, and a change to get their hands on the levers of power, to exercise on behalf of the many, not the few. 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.

Nick Howe, Piano. After leaving college, Nick taught in the South Ribble area for thirty years, during which time he played for the Guild Singers in Chorley and as many as four local Gilbert & Sullivan societies, playing every single one of the G&S operas several times in the process. He accompanied Preston Opera for fifteen years under five musical directors, and continues to play in the Opera orchestra. More recently he has been playing keyboard synthesizer for musical societies around Lancashire, and for the Blackpool Symphony Orchestra.

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 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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