

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Tim Mottershead, Piano
Rotunda Theatre @ Buxton Fringe. Thursday, July 18, 2019

Greetings, and Welcome. In the US, the clock of racial progress has been moving steadily forward since the days of Slavery, Reconstruction, the Jim Crow Era, the Civil Rights Movement, the election of Black Senators and Congress people, Supreme Court Justices, the country's first Black President, etc. Recently, the clock's mechanism has swung backwards with such force that the hands flew off its face. Two years ago, the hour hand was found in the Charlottesville, Virginia, where White Nationalists chanted "Jews Will Not Replace Us!" This gave a clue as to the likely position of the second hand, and sure enough, it was found lodged in an oak tree in a park near Peekskill, New York, seventy years ago, when the cries being heard were "Go Back to Russia, Nigger!" "Dirty Commie!" "Dirty Kike (Jew)!" Paul Robeson and his fans had been met by a baying mob who had been persuaded by their politicians and the media that Robeson was the most dangerous of Anti-Americans, and that his voice needed to be silenced. What had he been saying? That African Americans shouldn't fight against what he considered a non-racist country, for a country he thought was definitely racist. Now we have #45 telling four Congresswomen of colour to "Go back to their own countries," but that he doesn't have a racist bone in his body. Again, thousands are cheering him on, and hundreds of politicians remaining tight-lipped while trying to convince us that we are still in 2019. What those women had been saying was how deplorable, cruel and inhumane conditions in the detention centers at the US/Mexico border are. They also happen to be four of the most progressive Democrats on Capitol Hill, pointing at all the injustices and inequalities, the lack of provision in healthcare, and so many other ills in their country, and the global climate emergency. The ladies' response has been to argue that the president is trying to distract the public from the horrors being perpetrated by him and his administration, and that he is succeeding. It appears that this is happening here in the UK too – the media, many in politics, indeed including some in the Labour Party have homed in on an alleged anti-Semitism problem in the Party, pointing the collective finger at its leader. His record of fighting against Apartheid, and for example saving a Jewish burial ground in his constituency from developers and the Council years ago (then led by one of his most ardent current detractors) suggests that we need to listen to what Mr. Corbyn is saying about what the government is doing to the country, and give him our support. I hope you enjoy the show.

Tayo Aluko. Writer, Performer. Nigerian-born and a former architect, Tayo lives in Liverpool. 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. His audiovisual piece on West African History before the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade is 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. He originated a piece titled *WHAT HAPPENS?* featuring the writings of African American Langston Hughes, is performed with live jazz accompaniment. He has been published in *The Guardian*, *The Morning Star*, *NERVE Magazine*, *Modern Ghana* and *Searchlight Magazine*. His 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 at the Harare International Festival of the Arts in May 2018.

Tim Mottershead, Piano. Tim studied music at Liverpool Community College and at Aberdeen University. He is regarded as an authority on the English composers Edmund Rubbra and Alan Rawsthorne, and has contributed to several scholarly publications, most notably *TEMPO*. He is a keen advocate of world music, having performed or written in several genres from Iraqi Oud music, to Gamelan, to music for Maypole dancing. He played in the Indian classical music group Raga Jyoti from 2000 to 2012.

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: *Showcase* (Soho Theatre); *Arawa* (Mboka Festival); *Last Shift* (York Theatre Royal); *A Raisin in the Sun* (Farnham Maltings); *Tin* (The Lowry), *Ti-Jean and his Brothers* (National Theatre, Cottesloe), Resident director to Trevor Nunn, *Porgy and Bess* (Savoy Theatre), Staff Producer, English National Opera; *Spirit of Okin* and *Sankofa*, Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble (UK & International tours), *Zhe* (Producer Collective Artistes, Soho Theatre), *The Shelter* (RSC Barbican Theatre), *Medea* (Ariya, National Theatre Studio), *The Playground* (Polka Theatre, Time Out Critics' Choice Pick of the Year), *High Life* (Hampstead Theatre), *Maybe Father* (Talawa, Young Vic), *Twelfth Night* (British Council, Zimbabwe). Opera includes: *The Pied Piper of Chibok* (Grimeborn Festival, Arcola); 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* (St. Louis African Chorus), *Dido and Aeneas* (Tricycle/BAC). Olusola has worked in The Gambia, Ghana, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Hungary and the Czech Republic. She is a senior lecturer at St Mary's University, and was Head of Acting at Morley College. Her poetry has been set to music by Akin Euba and performed at Harvard and Cambridge Universities. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society for the Arts.

Phil Newman, Set & Costume Designer. Phil's recent Design credits include: *Cinderella* (MAC, Stoke-on-Trent), *The Little Mermaid & The Wonderful World of Oz* (UAE tours, S4K International), *Pinocchio & A Christmas Carol* (Voice of the Show, Chesham), *The Mikado* (Network Theatre), *Jungle Book* (Elgiva Theatre), *Bernarda Alba*, *Strange Land*, *Saint/Jeanne & Spring Awakening* (Chelsea Theatre), *The Tempest & Pinocchio* (UK/UAE tours, Shakespeare 4 Kidz), Japanese ghost story *Kwaidan* (UK/International tour), *Carousel*, *Hairspray & Cabaret* (Amersham College) and a huge walk-through Xmas Grotto at Wyevale Garden Centre, Aylesbury in 2017. He has also designed the multi-award-winning monodrama *Call Mr Robeson*, *High Life* (Hampstead Theatre), *Coming Up for Air* (UK tour), *The Playground* (Polka Theatre) and *Ma Joyce's Tales from the Parlour* (Oval House/Edinburgh). Further credits include: *Lord of the Flies* (Colet Court), *Dance or Die* for Avant Garde Dance's Tony Adigun, *Voices in the Alleyway & Yes, I Still Exist* (Spread Expression Dance), *The Riddle of the Sands & Laurel and Hardy* (Jermyn St Theatre), *The Famous Five* (Tabard Theatre), open-air tours of *The Merchant of Venice & The Railway Children* (Heartbreak) and the original award-winning international touring production of John Retallack's *Hannah & Hanna*. Phil is proud to be an Associate Artist with director Gbemisola Ikumelo's Faith Drama Productions, for whom he has designed *Custody* (Oval House), *The Fiddler* (Unicorn Theatre) and *Next Door* (Cockpit Theatre). Since 2015, he has been the Resident Creative Designer at Colour House Children's Theatre nr Wimbledon.

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" Representatives Walter, Arens and Scherer. **Male Voice Choir:** Liverpool Male Voice Choir

Forthcoming Performances Include

Call Mr. Robeson: Aug 22: Multicultural Arts Center, Cambridge, MA, USA; **Sept 1:** Dramatic Hall, Peekskill, NY, USA; **Sept 13:** Heron Theatre, Beetham, Cumbria; **Sept 26, 27:** Theatr Clwyd, Mold, Wales; **Oct 26:** Littleport Library, Cambs.

Just An Ordinary Lawyer: July 12, 19: Buxton Fringe Festival; **Sept 28:** Theatr Clwyd, Mold, Wales

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