

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Tim Mottershead, Piano
Rotunda Theatre @ Buxton Fringe. Thursday, July 11, 2019

Greetings, and Welcome. It was very striking (and worrying) when in the then-crowded Conservative Party leadership contest a few weeks ago, the frontrunner seemed to echo, almost exactly, the words of USA President #45 when he gave his opinion on how the UK should deal with the EU over Brexit. And yesterday, following #45's barrage of insults against the UK's Ambassador to the US (in language that confirms his total ignorance of the word "diplomacy") and the candidate's reluctance to back the diplomat, the country lost an apparently well-respected civil servant. Throw in the fact that Mr. Johnson has expressed willingness to exclude Parliament from the final stages of the Brexit process, and it seems clear that our public institutions have almost been taken over by reactionary forces of which Johnson is an unpleasant manifestation. That notwithstanding, he remains the clear favourite, if the pundits (even the "impartial" BBC) are to be believed. The similarity with what has gone on in US politics over the last few years, down to the extent of media attention given to unsavoury characters at the expense of examining abuses of power and process here and abroad, is frankly frightening. Whoever the next Prime Minister is, the fact that he would have been chosen by such a small percentage of the British population in such a divided period in our history must prepare us for turbulent times ahead - hopefully not including violence - as the majority of the populace lose all faith in their government. This brings to mind the occasion in December 1951 when Paul Robeson led a delegation to the United Nations and presented a petition titled "We Charge Genocide," in the context of ongoing lynching and general violence against African Americans. This at a time when he had gone from being one of the most loved entertainers in his country to one of the most reviled, because of the forthright ways in which he expressed his critical opinions of his country and his government, of speaking truth to power. At the bidding of #45, the Ambassador has been sacrificed, and this surely raises the prospect of this country, its institutions and its citizens being sold to those in charge of the American government. This suggests a profound crisis, and we need leadership prepared to stand up to bullies. As such, we should be vigilant in the face of attempts to undermine the current Leader of the Opposition, whatever his faults. Anti-Semitism is definitely not one of them, despite the narrative being constructed for our consumption. Speaking truth to power is. On that, his record is long. 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: Arawa (Mboka Festival); Sidney's 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 (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); 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 lecturer at UCA and St Mary's Universities, 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, Designer, Assistant Director. Phil's recent Design credits include: *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, Shakespeare4Kidz), 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. For *Call Mr Robeson* director Olusola Oyeleye he has also designed *The Security Guard* (Colour House), *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 multi-award-winning 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 2016, he has been the Resident Creative Designer at Colour House Children's Theatre near 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: July 18: Buxton Fringe Festival; 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

Tayo Aluko & Friends

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