

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Thomas Kell, Piano
Clapham Library, London. Friday 5 October, 2018

Greetings, Welcome. *Dancing Queen* was played as she approached the dais to close the Conservative Party conference. She joked about staying up all night fixing the signage behind her, and then made a speech that sections of the press praised glowingly. That is down to interpretation, I suppose, as was the description of her movements as she entered stage left as *dance*. The image of someone trying desperately to fix a broken, crumbling house on meagre resources comes to mind, and it looked to me that the home keeper, in full view of the nation, brazenly helped herself to some of her neighbour's bricks: like the idea of starting a council house-building programme, and ending austerity! Mrs. May must be admired though, for giving the illusion of being original in her thinking as well as appearing to hold firm to her principles while those around her pull her Party in all directions over Brexit. In that one regard alone, she is on the same page with the leader of the opposition whose detractors within his party and without are doing their best to undermine him with all kinds of allegations. He is standing firm and remaining calm, and apparently taking huge swathes of the British public with him on a road to a more socialist future – as much as modern politics and society will allow. Paul Robeson knew a thing or two about taking abuse from all sides while holding firm onto the strongly held belief that his country could be better than it was in his time, and that socialism would be part of that better tomorrow. The truth of those two positions is ever more obvious now, with the hijacking of the levers of power by reactionaries so soon after a self-declared socialist saw the Democratic Party Presidential ticket stolen from him by the Party establishment. The elite's sense entitlement was shown to be a bad mistake in that case, and the display of privilege and entitlement by the maybe soon-to-be confirmed Supreme Court Judge may similarly have unforeseen consequences. I hope you enjoy the show.

Tayo Aluko. Writer, Performer. Nigerian-born and a former architect, Tayo lives in Liverpool, UK. 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.

Thomas Kell, Piano. Thomas is a musician and arts producer, with a particular interest in African theatre. Between 2007 and 2015 he was the Administrative Director of Tiata Fahodzi, working, successively with Artistic Directors Femi Elufowaju, jr, Lucian Msamati and Natalie Ibu. Until recently he was a Senior Programme Manager for the British Council working on the worldwide Shakespeare Lives initiative. Other commitments include directorships at Pursued by a Bear Theatre Company and the Elufowaju Jr Ensemble and consultancy for Tangle Theatre, The Art Machine and Faith Drama. He is Director of Music for the churches of Our Most Holy Redeemer, Exmouth Market and St Mark's Myddelton Square, in Clerkenwell. Thomas studied music in Görlitz, Germany before taking up the Organ Scholarship at Trinity College, Oxford where he was responsible for supervising the musical celebrations for the tercentenary of the Chapel.

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 Wyevalle 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 nr Wimbledon.

Tonight's performance is dedicated to the memory of Shirley Newman, Phil's mother, who passed away recently.

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: Oct 21: Hebden Bridge Trades Club;

Nov 3: Heart of the City Festival, Vancouver, BC; **Nov 12:** Alphabet City, **Pittsburgh, PA**

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