

# CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Meryn Williams, Piano  
The Miner's Theatre, Ammanford, Wales. Tuesday 3 March, 2020

**Greetings, and Welcome.** *"The audience and local media outlets reacted in an overwhelmingly positive way."* This was a short report of a performance of this play given in Lagos, Nigeria in January 2010. The report was "Classified," in an internal memo in the US Embassy in Abuja, the capital city. The report is available on the web, thanks to Wikileaks. I also looked up Ammanford, and found that an intelligence expert, born right here, has a theory about the mysterious death of a Welsh spy whose body was found in his London flat in August 2010. These two titbits are among millions of previously unknown facts, including corruption in high places around the world, released in the Global Intelligence Files in 2012, from information "obtained" from a private intelligence contractor. Two years earlier, Bradley (now Chelsea) Manning supplied even more explosive information about US, UK and other government malpractice around the world, including the famous image of innocent ambulance workers being gunned down remotely in Iraq. Today, Manning is in jail in the US, and the publisher of Wikileaks, Julian Assange, is fighting extradition to the US in a hearing at Woolwich Crown Court, which a reporter describes as a show trial. The reporter is not a professional journalist but a former ambassador who has "gone native," in the sense that he no longer acts in the best interests of the British State, as his previous job required. The professional journalists, on the other hand, appear not so keen to let the general public have the facts; and even though the trial is going on right now, most of us don't even know it. Assange's legal team argue that his conviction is entirely political, and they and concerned observers argue that this is a very dangerous moment in British and world affairs, where governments can use nefarious reasons to punish, imprison and even kill journalists who try to reveal the truth about what is done in our name. That an amateur journalist (see [www.craigmurray.org.uk](http://www.craigmurray.org.uk)) is the best current source of information on this case is an indication of how worried we should be about the state of journalism, and indeed, democracy itself. Media manipulation was more obvious in the run-up to the last election than it is now, and we will live with the consequences for the next several years. Littering the set are copies of FBI reports and negative media stories about Paul Robeson, who deserves to be restored to his rightful place in public consciousness. His story surely reminds us to be vigilant, and to not stop seeking what it is the politicians and the media are hiding from us. 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 and solo roles in operas, musicals and oratorios. *CALL MR ROBESON* has won numerous awards at festivals in the UK and Canada, and has taken him as far afield as the North West Territories of Canada and Australia and New Zealand, including New York's Carnegie Hall. 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 the Harare International Festival of the Arts in May 2018. He was one of a group of ten "outstanding writers of colour" invited to write and perform responses to artefacts held in Oxford's Pitt Rivers Museum in September 2019.

**Meryn Williams, Piano.** After graduating from Cardiff University Meryn has spent much of her time as an accompanist and amateur. She was the winner of the Morfydd Owen prize and Associate of the London College of Music and was accompanist at the Stuart Burrows masterclasses. Meryn is the accompanist for Wales West and Channel Islands for the Royal Academy of Dance London. She is currently leading the Newport Gwanwyn project and is musical director of two choirs.

**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: March 14:** Dragon Theatre, **Barmouth, Wales;**

**May 13:** Morganstown Village Hall, **Cardiff, Wales**

**Just An Ordinary Lawyer: June 18:** **Ysgol Aberconwy, Wales.**

**June 19:** **Histon Library, Cambridgeshire, UK**

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