

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

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Thomas Pawson, Piano

The Media Centre, UCLan, Wednesday November 17, 2021

Greetings, and Welcome. *"We heard the explosion, but as the woman was delivering her baby, we just had to carry on, praying we'd all be alright."* Think not of Liverpool, but of Sana'a, Gaza, or Kabul. And think not of a Christian convert or failed asylum seeker, but of a highly trained soldier. Not of home-made bombs, but of the latest lethal technology, made here in Lancashire, and sold by the British Government. And when you do think of Liverpool, think of the fact that last month, a trade fair happened there, in which wealthy arms manufacturers and dealers met for two days, ignoring the sound of peace protesters outside, who had urged their Council politicians and building owners for months to cancel the event. And when you think of NHS buildings being under attack, think not of taxi cabs, but of corporate headquarters, and the Houses of Parliament, where next week, a Health Care Bill will be debated and voted on, the result of which, thanks to the healthy Tory majority, is likely to mean that the privatisation of the beloved Health Service will come one step closer, as killer cells continue to eat away at our main defence system: the opposition party, and the numbers of activists on the streets dwindle to a sorry handful. When you think of boosting our immunity to such threats, think of the kind of person who has the ability to draw thousands and thousands, and uses his platform to help us identify the rapacious profiteers, the war-mongers, and show us how, by our collective action, we can achieve peace and justice here and abroad, and also find ways of saving the planet. The kind of person who, as a result of the threat he poses to the Establishment and to colonisers abroad, is portrayed by the media as a dangerous threat to society. Think of the truth of what Malcolm X said: "If you're not careful, the newspapers will have you hating the people who are being oppressed, and loving the people who are doing the oppressing," and about those journalists who are jailed or killed for reporting the truth about the crimes of our so-called leaders. Think about the politicians here and abroad who are prevented from assuming power despite the fact that they are *not* corrupt or dishonest, but genuinely wish to work for the many, not the few, or for outside interests. Stories like that of Paul Robeson help us think this way, to recognise who our real enemies are, and how to fight them. 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. 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 created a piece titled *WHAT HAPPENS?* featuring the writings of African American Langston Hughes, performed with live jazz accompaniment. He has been published in *The Guardian*, *The Morning Star*, *NERVE Magazine*, *Modern Ghana*, *Searchlight Magazine*, *Counterfire* and *Counterpunch*. His play *JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER* has been performed on three continents, and deals with Black liberation struggles around the world. 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. His radio play, *PAUL ROBESON'S LOVE SONG*, recorded during lockdown with actors from the USA and Canada, now streams online.

**Thomas Pawson, Piano.** Tom is a pianist and piano teacher from Lytham St. Annes who in previous exams achieved some of the highest marks ever recorded with the music syllabuses. He is currently working towards his Diploma in piano.

**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 design credits include: *Aladdin & Cinderella* (MAC, Stoke-on-Trent), *The Little Mermaid*, *Pinocchio*, *The Wonderful World of Oz* and *The Tempest*, *Around the World in 80 Days & Jungle Book* (Elgiva), *Bernarda Alba*, *Saint/Jeanne & Spring Awakening* (Chelsea), *Kwaidan* (UK/International tour), *Sister Act*, *Gypsy*, *Carousel*, *Hairspray & Cabaret* (Amersham College) and a huge walk-through Xmas Grotto at Wyevale Garden Centre in 2017. He has designed *High Life* (Hampstead), *Coming Up for Air* (UK tour), *The Playground* (Polka) and *Ma Joyce's Tales from the Parlour* (Oval House/Edinburgh). Further credits include: *Lord of the Flies* (Colet Court), *Dance or Die* (Avant Garde Dance), *Voices in the Alleyway & Yes, I Still Exist* (Spread Expression Dance), *The Riddle of the Sands & Laurel and Hardy* (Jermyn St), *The Famous Five* (Tabard), open-air tours of *The Merchant of Venice & The Railway Children* (Heartbreak) and the original multi award-winning international touring production of John Retallack's *Hannah & Hanna*. Phil is an Associate Artist of Gbemisola Ikumelo's Faith Drama, for whom he has designed *Custody* (Oval House), *The Fiddler* (Unicorn) and *Next Door* (Cockpit). Since 2016, he has been Resident Designer at Colour House Children's Theatre nr Wimbledon where he has now designed over 24 shows in addition to writing musical adaptations of *Alice in Wonderland*, *Hansel & Gretel* and, most recently, *Red Riding Hood*. Phil has won several awards at film festivals around the world for his Production, Set & Costume Design work on Reeltime Productions' 2019 Doctor Who spin-off drama, *Sil and the Devil Seeds of Arodor*.

**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. Some voices in the HUAC scene used from *Are You Now or Have You Ever Been?* by Eric Bentley, recorded by L A Theatre Works. **Male Voice Choir:** Liverpool Male Voice Choir

**Forthcoming Performances Include:**

**Call Mr. Robeson: November 19:** Hull Truck Theatre;  
**November 26:** Royal Court Theatre Studio, Liverpool  
**Just An Ordinary Lawyer: November 20:** Hull Truck Theatre;  
**November 27:** Royal Court Theatre Studio, Liverpool.

**Tayo Aluko & Friends**

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