

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

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Thomas Saunders - Piano  
La Bohème, Adelaide, South Australia. Weds, 4 March 2015**

**Greetings, Welcome.** Earlier today, I had the privilege of standing on a stage in Light Square at a rally called by South Australian trade unions as part of a national day of protest against your government's policies as they continue to impinge on workers' rights. They argue that the policies if enacted will jeopardise workers' ability to provide a decent living for themselves and their families, or get access to decent health care, education, housing, safe and secure working environments and adequate pensions. On the contrary, they see the incomes of people at the top of the economic tree continuing to reach seemingly stratospheric heights. One of the songs I chose to sing was *Joe Hill*, about a trade union leader framed for a murder and assassinated in the United States in 1915. He paid the ultimate price for organising working people in defence of their rights, but left them with the challenge to continue organising. This song was Paul Robeson's favourite, and he sang it to the workers here in Adelaide in October 1960, when on tour here. I met at least two people who were present at that occasion, who 55 years later are still here, fighting, marching and urging others to join them in struggles that continue today, in a climate where trade unionism is much weaker than it has been in the past. Still, as Robeson demonstrated so powerfully in his time, protest and activism can sometimes be a lonely, hard road, but as long as one voice of protest is joined by another, there is hope that the flames of resistance can ignite fires the power of which can lead to tremendous change in society. The unions called for those present at Light Square today to bring more people to join them on another National Day of Action on May 2<sup>nd</sup> – Workers Day in Australia, to commemorate the struggles and sacrifices that people who went before made so that we can enjoy the freedoms we enjoy today, and to remind us that we must continue that struggle, as the threats to these basic rights mount. I trust that some of you will join them on that day. Please enjoy the show.

**Tayo Aluko. Writer, Performer, Producer.** Tayo was born in Nigeria, and now lives in Liverpool. He worked previously as an architect and property developer, with a special but as yet frustrated interest in eco-friendly construction. He has fronted orchestras as baritone soloist in concert halls, and has also 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, as well as highly favourable reviews in the press – most notably in the Guardian and on BBC Radio 4. He has toured the play around the UK, the USA, Canada, Jamaica and Nigeria, and at New York's Carnegie Hall in February 2012 on his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. He also delivers a lecture/concert called *PAUL ROBESON – THE GIANT, IN A NUTSHELL*, and another one titled *FROM BLACK AFRICA TO THE WHITE HOUSE*: a talk about Black Political Resistance, illustrated with spirituals has been performed in three continents. He researched, wrote and narrated to camera a piece on West African History before the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, which forms part of the permanent exhibit at Liverpool's International Slavery Museum. His 15-minute play, *HALF MOON*, which also deals with ancient Africa has been performed several times in the UK. He recently developed a piece titled *WHAT HAPPENS?* featuring the writings of African American Langston Hughes, for performance with live jazz accompaniment.

**Thomas Saunders, Piano.** Thomas holds an Honours degree in classical performance from the Elder Conservatorium, and has twice been finalist in the national Geoffrey Parsons Award for piano accompaniment. His compositions have been performed at the Adelaide and Melbourne Fringe festivals in recent years. He teaches piano at four schools across Adelaide and more recently has been playing piano for musicals, the cabaret festival and national/state Band Association events.

**Joanne Hartstone, Producer.** Joanne is a South Australian actor, producer, writer, director and teacher. This is her 9<sup>th</sup> consecutive Adelaide Fringe. Last year's production *'The Bunker Trilogy'* won the BankSA/Adelaide Fringe Best Theatre Award and the Advertiser Best Fringe Theatre Award. She features in *'Deadline Galipoli'* in April on Foxtel and *'Changed Forever'* on The History Channel.

**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: *Tin* (The Lowry), *Ti-Jean and his Brothers* (Collective Artistes & Sustained Theatre, Cottesloe), Resident director on Trevor Nunn's West End production of *Porgy and Bess* (Savoy Theatre), staff producer at English National Opera, Spirit of Okin and Sankofa for Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble, (National & International tours), *Coming Up For Air* (The Drum & UK tour), *The Resurrection of Roscoe Powell* (Soho Theatre), *The Shelter* (RSC Barbican Theatre), *Medea* (Ariya, Royal 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 Tour, Zimbabwe) and *Ella*, a monodrama about Ella Fitzgerald (Rich Mix). Opera includes: 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* with the St. Louis African Chorus, *Dido and Aeneas* (Tricycle/BAC), *God's Trombones* (Fairfield Halls) and the second cast revival of Jonathan Miller's production of *The Mikado* (English National Opera). Olusola has also worked in Ghana, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Hungary and the Czech Republic. She has been a visiting lecturer and Artist at Universities in South Africa and London, and was Head of the Acting Studio at Morley College. Her poetry has been set to music by Akin Euba and performed at both Harvard and Cambridge Universities. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society for the Arts.

**Phil Newman, Designer.** Phil's Set & Costume Design credits include: *Spring Awakening - The Musical* (Chelsea Theatre), *The Tempest & Pinocchio* (UK & UAE tours for Shakespeare4Kidz), *A Christmas Carol & Peter Pan* (Tickled Pink), an open-air *Romeo & Juliet* (Cornucopia Theatre), *The Liar* (South Hill Park), *Dance or Die* (Hoxton Hall), *Voices in the Alleyway & Yes, I Still Exist* (Spread Expression Dance), *The Fiddler* (Unicorn Theatre) and film short *The Judge* for Faith Drama, *The Riddle of the Sands & Laurel and Hardy* (Jermyn St Theatre), *The Famous Five* (Tabard Theatre), *Hansel & Gretel* (UK tour), *Stockholm* (BAC), open-air tours of *The Merchant of Venice & The Railway Children* (Heartbreak) and the award-winning UK/international touring production of *Hannah & Hanna*. Set Design credits include *Houdini* (UK tour), *Our House* (Elgiva Theatre), *Cinderella* (Library Theatre, Luton) and *Next Door* (Cockpit Theatre). Others with Olusola Oyeleye include *A Wing, A Prey, A Song* (Guest Projects Africa), *High Life* (Hampstead Theatre), *The Security Guard* (Merton AbbeyFest 2012), *Ella* (RichMix), *Coming Up for Air* (UK tour), *The Playground* (Polka Theatre) and *Ma Joyce's Tales from the Parlour* (Oval House/Edinburgh). He has just completed Set Design work on Rouge28Theatre's new puppet show *Kwaidan*.

**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: March 27, Millom, Cumbria:** Beggars Theatre; **March 28, Richmond, N. Yorkshire:** Georgian Theatre Royal; **April 1, Liverpool:** unity Theatre; **April 23, Abertillery:** The Metropole; **April 24, 25, Newport:** The Riverfront; **May 2, Manchester:** The Mechanics Institute; **May 16, Walton-upon-Thames:** Riverhouse Barn; **May 23: Barnsley Civic Hall**

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