

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

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

Adelaide Fringe @ La Bohème, Adelaide, South Australia. Thurs, 5 March 2015

Greetings, Welcome. I wasn't surprised to listen to today's news and glance at news website and find what I consider to be a glaring omission. I know this event took place because I was there, and in fact sang to the assembled crowd. *Joe Hill* and *Ol' Man River* were my contribution to a rally in Light Square where trade union members from across South Australia had gathered in a day of protest against the government's policies. This was not just a South Australia thing either – it was nationwide, but still, no mention in the mainstream media that I could see. Instead, we hear of politicians in Canberra holding a vigil for the two convicted drug dealers sentenced to death, though some commentators have argued that too much attention is being given to people who stood to put others' lives at risk. Also featuring was the report finding widespread racial bias in the police department in Ferguson, Missouri. It is interesting that Australians would probably not be hearing about Ferguson were it not for the thousands of ordinary people of all ages and colours standing up to demand justice and the safety of their fellow citizens, and warning repeatedly that it could so easily happen to them or someone else near them. The trade unionists at Light Square and across Australia were doing the same thing yesterday, even though the media refused to listen (or did, but would not pass on the message). The livelihoods and working conditions of ordinary people are under threat, they say, and they want to send a message to the government that they will fight for their rights. They also want as many people as possible to stand alongside them, because strength is to be found in numbers. This is what Paul Robeson strongly believed in, and why *Joe Hill*, the great trade union song was his favourite, and why his visit here to Adelaide 55 years ago is still fondly remembered in the union movement today. It is also why I am happy to pass on the message for people to join the Workers' Day March at Light Square on May 2nd. I hope you 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 50th 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 9th 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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