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

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Thomas Saunders, Piano Adelaide Fringe @ La Bohème, Adelaide, Australia. Sat - Mon, 7 - 9 March 2015

Greetings, Welcome. I thought it was a joke being played on me as a visitor when I was told recently that the Australian Minister for Women is your male Prime Minister, but my independent research online revealed an article in which he nominated his repeal of the carbon tax as the best thing he did in that job, as "women are particularly interested in the household budget." I won't comment further because I also come from a country (Nigeria) where a great many citizens are quite embarrassed by their Head of State. This weekend marking International Women's Day however is a good time to examine the role of other more impressive men where women were concerned. As you will see, Paul Robeson's record (as with no less a figure than Martin Luther King Jnr) was hardly unblemished. What he did do however was acknowledge in his book Here I Stand that historically and in his own time (and this continues to be the case worldwide), African and African American women were at the forefront of the struggle for their people's liberation. All too often, men dominate and are more visible, but the movements are weakened as a result. Mrs. Eslanda Robeson was a formidable woman in her own right, and has rightly become the subject of a major new biography which I commend. I often quote Robeson in a different context (asking his president to apprehend and punish the perpetrators of a multiple lynching in Georgia in the 1940s) saying that "only when our government has taken [such] action toward protecting its own citizens can its own role in aiding the progress of people in other countries be viewed with trust and hope." As more men (and women?) are being lined up to help a new war effort in Iraq, this quote rings true in many ways. There was a time when women's equality was used as one of the pretexts for the war in Afghanistan, and it is my understanding that even there, there are more women in government than here in Australia. The world leader is Rwanda, so I am pleased to suggest that this is one other area in which the world can look to Africa for leadership. I hope you enjoy the show.

Tayo Aluko. Writer, Performer. 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

Tayo Aluko & Friends 24- 26 Mount Pleasant, Liverpool L3 5RY, UK
Tel: 0151 707 8187 info@tayoalukoandfriends.com www.callmrrobeson.com
facebook: Call Mr. Robeson Twitter: @CallMrRobeson





