

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Glen Giffney, Piano
Alphabetti Theatre, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Friday, October 9, 2015

Greetings, Welcome. We hear today that the National Health Service is in a very precarious situation, and is in fact facing the worst financial crisis in a generation. This comes on the back of the fact that junior doctors have threatened to go on strike soon. One would not have known that things were amiss in the NHS, given the ebullient speeches given both by the Prime Minister and the Health Secretary at the recent Tory Party Conference, but attempts have been made for several years to persuade us that the NHS is safe in the Conservatives' hands. The Labour Party are not blameless in this though – it was after all during the Blair era that the Private Finance Initiative was introduced, and that is said to be contributing to much of the current malaise. However, there is now a new leadership to that party, and Jeremy Corbyn has always opposed policies of his party which were described as “privatisation by stealth”, and routinely backed nurses' and doctors' demands for better pay and conditions, in the same way as he backed such calls from workers in all public sectors. In his leadership campaign, he talked repeatedly of vast amounts of money to be saved by not renewing Trident, and when he recently confirmed that his life-long policy of opposing nuclear war would mean he would never “press the button”, he was roundly criticised, even by shadow cabinet members. The fact is that when someone consistently speaks for peace, for workers' rights, for free and easy access to health and education, for public services to be publicly owned, and then refuses to change those policies once he becomes leader of a major political party, he immediately marks himself out as a man of principle – something sadly lacking in much of top-flight politics today. Paul Robeson never entered the political arena, though he proudly supported the Progressive Party in the US on their way to a crushing defeat in the 1940s, but he stuck by his guns and continued to fight for what he believed, at great personal and professional cost. When we see such figures emerge today, one should embrace and support them, so that another half century down the line, when the NHS is fully private, half the world has been incinerated, their populations have come to join us on this small island, and our children are homeless, poorly educated, unhealthy and competing for a handful of menial jobs, we can at least say that we were among those that recognised and supported prophets when they appeared in our midst. 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 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. He has been published in *The Guardian*, *The Morning Star*, *NERVE Magazine*, *Modern Ghana* and *Searchlight Magazine*. He is currently working on a new play.

Glen Giffney, Piano. Glen trained at Chetham's School of Music in Manchester, and then at the Royal Northern College of Music. He has been involved in numerous prestigious competitions throughout the UK and performed at the European Piano Teachers association in Belgium. He was a finalist in the Keldwyth Award held here in the Lake District. Although classically trained, Jazz has always been a passion in Glen's life and he is currently furthering his career as a Jazz musician.

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 & Assistant Director. Phil's Set & Costume Design credits include: *Saint/Jeanne* and *Spring Awakening - The Musical* (Chelsea Theatre), *Hairspray*, *Cabaret & Attempts on her Life* (Amersham & Wycombe College), *Lord of the Flies & Grimm Tales* (Colet Court School), *The Tempest & Pinocchio* (UK/UAE tours for Shakespeare4Kidz), *The Wizard of Oz*, *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*. His Set Design credits include *Our House* (Elgiva Theatre), *Cinderella* (Library Theatre, Luton) and *Next Door* (Cockpit Theatre). Other collaborations with director 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 tour of *Kwaidan*, a Japanese ghost story with puppets.

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:

October 10: Alphabetti Theatre, Newcastle upon Tyne; **October 16:** Seven Arts, Leeds; **October 17:** Paul Robeson Theatre, Hounslow; **October 24:** Swindon Arts Centre; **October 25:** Redgrave Theatre, Bristol; **October 28:** The Witham, Barnard Castle; **October 31:** Teatro Technis, Camden, London; **Nov 7:** Paramount Hudson Valley, Peekskill, New York; **Nov 12 - 15:** Centenary College, Hackettstown, New Jersey; **Nov 19 - 22:** Bus Stop Theatre, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Tayo Aluko & Friends
24 – 24 Mount Pleasant
Liverpool L3 5RY

info@tayoalukoandfriends.com www.callmrrobeson.com
facebook: Call Mr. Robeson **Twitter:** @CallMrRobeson

