

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

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko**

**With Glen Giffney, Piano**

**The Alphabetti Theatre, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Wednesday October 7, 2015**

**Greetings, Welcome.** A property owning democracy is very desirable to some people – most in the Tory Party apparently, though one understands that there are many in that party who are uneasy about the government's obsession with rolling the State back out of every part of our lives, that Councils should not be getting into the provision of housing for their citizens, and that Housing Associations should have their assets taken off them and sold to the private sector. The market, we are told, will provide. The fact that this policy, introduced by Mrs. Thatcher in the 1980s has led to the total unaffordability of housing for ordinary people today doesn't matter. Nor does the fact that there is a growing concentration of wealth and property in the hands of a smaller and smaller elite, as an ever growing part of our population grows more and more disenfranchised. Still, we are being asked to believe that we are being ruled by the party of ordinary working people, and that the main opposition is now being led by someone who is to all intents and purposes, a lunatic who would drive this nation and the world to the brink of extinction, if the unthinkable happens, and Jeremy Corbyn becomes Prime Minister in 2020. If the warmongering that we are witnessing around the world today doesn't achieve that before 2020, and we have another Tory government after that, we can rest assured that if it becomes necessary to protect the country, the new Tory Prime Minister will not hesitate to launch a nuclear bomb. So, the future is bright - as long as we don't have a socialist in charge. Well, if anybody is interested in what possibilities exist if we were to follow a different path, we could do a lot worse than to revisit the life and thoughts of Paul Robeson, who, though not a perfect human being by any means (and who is?) had so many things to say that posed a threat to the elites and the status quo of his time that he had to be neutralised, and his memory erased. In hearing his story again today, I hope that more of us can be emboldened to see beyond the lies of those who purport to represent working people, and fight to make sure that those who really do so get the opportunity to serve the people in the way they really should. | 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. 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 8 – 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

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