

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

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Dorian Ford, Piano**

**Ark Theatre, Borehamwood, Sunday October 5, 2014.**

**Greetings, Welcome.** The two coalition parties are currently vying with each other to demonstrate who is to be trusted more to provide us with the basic and good things to be expected in this part of the world. They each accuse the other of being detrimental to the welfare of the man and woman on the street, and promise that things like the National Health Service is safer in their hands than in that of any other party, Labour included. At the same time, the newly emergent UK Independence Party are making huge waves with their anti-Europe and anti-immigrant views, gaining in popularity by the day because it is proving remarkably easy to persuade the public that as all mainstream parties have failed the working people by letting in so many immigrants to steal their jobs, they are the true representatives of the the White Working Class. The same White Working Class are the beneficiaries of the thousands of Black workers without whom the NHS and practically all other public services would grind to a halt overnight, but for some reason this simple fact is lost in the national discourse. That many of these Black workers are from West Africa, which is the epicentre of what may soon turn out to be an international pandemic is also a subject that could do with closer examination, as international forces have conspired to suck human and mineral resources out of Africa for the benefit of the West for centuries. The Ebola epidemic is a good opportunity to have a conversation as to why it is probably not in our best interests for the present situation to continue unchanged. People like Paul Robeson tried long and hard to start such a conversation, but people in authority decided to vilify him. There are people today whose voices echo his but are drowned out by those with readier access to the media, however undeservedly. I am thinking for instance of Greens and Socialists (many factions thereof, sadly), who like Robeson have ideas that are really worth paying attention to, and who might be able to help check what some see as a slow but sure resurgence of fascism on these shores and elsewhere. However hard the task may seem, we need to do what we can to amplify the voices of reason. 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 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.

## **Dorian Ford, Piano**

Dorian Ford is a pianist, composer and improviser based in London. Recent performances include his trio at Ronnie Scott's, The Wigmore Hall late series, his duo at St. James Theater and his quartet at The Manchester Jazz Festival 2014 and, closer to us right now, The Mill Hill Jazz Club to critical and public acclaim.

**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:** **Oct 8, Peterborough:** Key Theatre; **Oct 9, Bedford:** The Place; **Oct 10, Chelmsford:** Cramphorn Theatre; **Oct 12, King's Lynn:** Arts Centre; **Oct 17, Bradford:** Alhambra Studio; **Oct 22, Doncaster:** Cast; **Oct 25, Enfield:** Dugdale Centre; **Oct 29, Nelson:** ACE Centre; **Oct 30, Oxford:** Old Fire Station; **Dec 3, Tallaght, Dublin:** Civic Theatre; **Dec 4, Blanchardstown:** Draiocht; **Dec 5, Kilkenny:** Watergate Arts Centre; **Dec 6, Limerick:** 69 O'Connell Street; **Dec 10, Waterford:** Garter Lane Arts Centre.

**Tayo Aluko & Friends**

24- 26 Mount Pleasant, Liverpool L3 5RY Tel: 0151 707 8187

[info@tayoalukoandfriends.com](mailto:info@tayoalukoandfriends.com) [www.callmrrobeson.com](http://www.callmrrobeson.com)

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