

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Michael Conliffe, Piano

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry. Friday 22 March, 2013.

Greetings, and Welcome. They say things are getting serious in Cyprus. If they weren't part of the Euro zone, we might not have to worry, but worry we must. It seems our fate is in the hands of politicians, bureaucrats, bankers and "the markets"; that the Russians, Germans and goodness knows who else have to play their cards right in order to prevent a catastrophe happening, and spreading our way. Our precious mortgages might be at risk, even though our Chancellor has unveiled a "clever" but unconvincing measure to help people get onto the property ladder. Others say it's just a way of the wealthy being helped to get a second home. Having seen an interesting film recently, I wonder whether we can't look at this whole matter a little differently. Ken Loach's *The Spirit of '45* shows interviews with a collection of pensioners who were around in 1945, when the National Health Service was created, with a vision of providing health care to everybody, free at the point of use. Mass affordable housing was also provided by the state. Other interviewees included trade unionists, academics and other experts of a "leftist" persuasion, commenting on the thinking behind the Labour policies of the time, and how much in synch they were with the aspirations of the general public. Coal, steel, water, rail industries and the Post Office and were nationalised, as it was thought that these crucial services should exist for the benefit of all people, and not for shareholders of private companies, since greed ignores public good. The contemporary Labour party appears quite different from their forebears, but the general population here and elsewhere seem to show almost the same dissatisfaction and anger about injustice and inequality in society. Paul Robeson's anger was expressed very clearly, to his personal detriment. Nonetheless, he felt he had to say them for the good of all mankind, so he persisted. Few voices can match his, but if we look and listen hard enough, we'll find many are there, calling for equality, peace, justice and human rights. Some even dare to use scary, old words like "Nationalisation" and "Socialism". They're waiting for the rest of us to listen, join in, get involved, and get organised, so that we, the people, can use our collective power to make those walls of inequality come 'a-tumblin' down. I hope you enjoy the show.

Tayo Aluko. Writer, Performer, Producer. Tayo was born in Nigeria, and now lives in Liverpool. He worked until recently as an architect and property developer, with a special but frustrated interest in eco-friendly construction. He has fronted orchestras as baritone soloist in British concert halls, and has also sung in Germany, Ireland and Nigeria. He has performed lead roles in such operas and musicals as Nabucco, Kiss Me Kate and Anything Goes. CALL MR ROBESON won the Argus Angel Award for Artistic Excellence and Best Male Performer Award at the 2008 Brighton Festival Fringe, two Merit Awards for Excellence in London in 2010 and three awards at the London Ontario Fringe last June. He has performed the play around the UK, the United States of America, Canada and Nigeria, and at New York's Carnegie Hall in February 2012 for his 50th birthday. His other piece titled FROM BLACK AFRICA TO THE WHITE HOUSE - a talk about Black Political Resistance, illustrated with Spirituals has also 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.

Michael Conliffe, Piano and original incidental music.

Mike started playing piano by ear as child, playing gospel in church and later discovering Jazz, which he went on to study at Liverpool Community College and Leeds college of Music. As well as playing regularly in Jazz festivals round the UK, Mike has toured both coasts of America with Call Mr Robeson, culminating in the February 2012 performance at Carnegie Hall with Tayo. Mike also performs in another two-hander, a Jazz drama *God Bless the Child* about Billie Holliday. He plays regularly as soloist and with Swing and Function bands at weddings, other celebrations and at corporate events. Mike also teaches piano to aspiring Pop, Blues and Jazz musicians and to singer/song writers.

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, Assistant Dramaturge. Phil's Set & Costume Designs have featured in productions by companies as diverse as Ladder to the Moon, Trestle, Ariya, Full House Theatre, London Shakespeare Workout, Rouge28 Theatre and Impetuous Kinship. Recent design credits include: *Peter Pan* (Tickled Pink Productions), *Dance or Die* (contemporary dance performance choreographed by Avant Garde's Tony Adigun), *Cinderella* (Library Theatre, Luton), *Voices in the Alleyway* and *Yes, I Still Exist* for Spread Expression Dance, Faith Drama's *The Fiddler* (Unicorn Theatre) & *Next Door* (Cockpit Theatre), *The Famous Five* (Tabard Theatre), Chalkfoot's acclaimed *The Riddle of the Sands* and *Laurel & Hardy* (Jermyn St Theatre, London & UK tours) as well as tours of *Queen Elizabeth's Elephant* and *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, *Hansel & Gretel* (UK tour incl. Greenwich Theatre), *Stockholm* (BAC), and open-air tours of *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Railway Children* (Heartbreak Productions). Phil also designed the award-winning UK & international touring production of John Retallack's *Hannah & Hanna* (Time Out Critics' Choice). Other productions in collaboration with Olusola Oyeleye include *The Security Guard*, *Ella* (RichMix), *High Life* (Hampstead Theatre), *Coming Up For Air* (UK tour), *Ma Joyce's Tales from the Parlour* (Oval House Theatre) and *The Playground* (Time Out Critics' Choice, London).

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, Hexham:** Queen's Hall; **March 28, South Shields:** Customs House; **March 29: Alnwick,** The Playhouse; **March 30, Berwick-upon-Tweed:** The Maltings; **April 5, Henley on Thames:** The Kenton Theatre; **April 6,** Bolton Octagon; **April 24, Grantham:** Guildhall Arts Centre; **April 25: Stafford** Gatehouse; **April 26: Ilkley** Playhouse; **May 18: Doncaster** Little Theatre; **May 29-31 and June 2: Stratford-upon-Avon** Fringe Festival; **June 28: Lymm Festival;** **August: USA/Canada tour;** **September 11, Southport:** The Atkinson; **September 13: Braintree** Arts Centre; **September 14, Shrewsbury:** Theatre Severn; **October 1 – 26, London:** Tristan Bates Theatre, Covent Garden.

Tayo Aluko & Friends
24- 26 Mount Pleasant, Liverpool L3 5RY
Tel: 0151 707 8187

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

