

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

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko,**

**With Michael Conliffe, Piano**

**The Old Courtroom, Brighton Festival Fringe**

**Thursday 6 to Sunday 9 May 2010**

**Greetings and Welcome.** It is interesting that I as a Nigerian-born artist am performing here today after having posted my vote in the British elections before leaving Liverpool a few days ago. Interesting because the man whose story I am sharing with you today lived at a time when Black Americans initially did not have the vote, but later were sometimes lynched for even registering to vote. His campaigning work back in the day helped pave Mr. Obama's path to the White House, even though he is largely forgotten. I don't expect nearly as much change here in Britain as there has been in America, and I feel that Mr. Robeson would argue that the change even in America has been insufficient. Back in Nigeria, another man did his own campaigning in subtle ways through the medium of the satirical novel. Even at the age of 91, the nation saw publication of his final work imagining a West African President repenting of earlier sins of corruption, experiencing spiritual rebirth and showing a better way forward for his country's politicians. That author has recently gone to join Mr. Robeson and the other ancestors, followed a few days after by the Nigerian President. They leave behind them a country much in need of spiritual rebirth, just as many nations worldwide (including Britain, notwithstanding the game of musical chairs that has been played in this election) do. I would like to pay tribute to that author alongside Paul Robeson, and proudly dedicate these performances to my father, T.M. Aluko (June 14, 1918 – May 1 2010)