

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Roland Perrin, Piano

Brighton Dome Studio Theatre, Tuesday 24 September, 2013.

Greetings, and Welcome. “Go back to your constituencies and prepare for battle!” is one of the most famous endings to a party leader’s conference speech in recent times. How apt it is now, although such aggressive talk has not been the style of Labour Party leaders in recent times. Many in the labour movement feel that the current incarnation of the party (is it “One Nation” Labour?) is too similar to the current coalition government, or to most governments everywhere to come up with the kind of fiery – and believable – rhetoric that convinces activists and the listening public that this party is positioning itself sufficiently far away from other mainstream parties to not just win power, but also to make the necessary changes to change the lives of ordinary working people here and elsewhere for the better. Too often, winning power at all costs seems more important than principles, many of which get ditched along the way. Many would argue that some principles need to be re-embraced by this party, a simple but very urgent and current one being to align the party firmly behind those who wish to use whatever weapons they have at their disposal to stop what was described as “A privatisation too far” by none other than the Iron Lady herself. The last resort of working people is the withdrawal of their labour, that being how victories have always been won in struggles between the 99% and the 1%. Not knowing the content of the Labour leader’s speech at the time of writing, one can only assume that a true socialist leader (I believe he has now embraced that scary term!) would have announced his willingness to back those who feel that strike action is necessary to halt the privatisation of the Royal Mail, which would otherwise bring with it runaway prices and deteriorating terms and conditions of employment for its workers. Many other workers are presumably ready to stand alongside the postal workers if necessary, and first in line are could well be NHS employees, though there would be quite a queue! The question is which side the Labour leadership - and the rest of us - would be on. There is no doubting where Paul Robeson would have stood, and even though his own choices led to him having one hell of a rough time, his example is simply inspiring to many today. He is one person one would really take seriously when he urges us to “prepare for battle”, for we certainly have many to fight. 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 frustrated interest in eco-friendly construction. He has fronted orchestras as baritone soloist in British concert halls, and has also performed lead roles in such operas and musicals as *Nabucco*, *Kiss Me Kate* and *Anything Goes*. CALL MR ROBESON won three awards at the London Ontario Fringe in June 2012 and Best Solo Show at the Stratford UK Fringe this June. He has performed the play around the UK, Canada, Nigeria, Jamaica and the USA (including New York’s Carnegie Hall in February 2012). His other piece titled FROM BLACK AFRICA TO THE WHITE HOUSE - a talk about Black Political Resistance, illustrated with Spirituals, has also been performed on 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.

Roland Perrin, Piano

Born in New York, pianist Roland Perrin spent his childhood roaming the planet with his itinerant family. Eventually settling in London, Roland has established himself as one of the foremost musicians working in the jazz and world music areas. He has toured and recorded with Dudu Pukwana, Najma Aktar, Moses Fan-Fan, Aster Aweke, and his own band, *Limited Edition*. He is also currently working on an animated musical film he has conceived, titled *Echoes of the Shtetl* based on the story of his grand parents’ emmigration from Russia to New York at the turn of the 20th Century.

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 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: October 1 – 26, London: Tristan Bates Theatre, Covent Garden (part of Tayo Aluko & Friends's **The Paul Robeson Art Is A Weapon Festival**); **November 7, Oxford:** Ruskin College; **November 9, Helmsley Arts Centre.** **January 17, Corby:** The Core.

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