

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

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Martin Robinson, Piano**

**Pavilion Arts Centre Studio Theatre, Buxton, Friday 30 January 2015**

**Greetings, Welcome.** A day or two ago, there was news that the National Health Service is desperately short of doctors and nurses. Many such valuable staff go to other countries where they can earn more for less stressful work than they face here, particularly in the Accident and Emergency. There is talk of reducing the training times for consultants, so that more can be brought on stream sooner. Still they need more doctors and nurses, and fast. There seems to be a steady supply of such personnel from Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa, which poses two serious questions: what happens to the people in those countries who need those doctors and nurses? Aren't there too many foreigners here anyway (as many political leaders – of all political hues – are asking, in a bid to garner as many votes as possible from the public. And why are so many of them coming in here anyway, to use our free health service? The conflicts in most other parts of the world, which our political classes, the money markets and the military industrial complex are as responsible for as anybody else, of course play their part, but too many people here are not as sympathetic to those explanations as perhaps they ought to be. And we continue to create jobs here by manufacturing more arms and ridiculously expensive lethal weapons systems. I also heard a senior Welsh politician criticised for saying that relocating Trident to Wales was not a good idea, despite the employment opportunities it would bring, and daring to mention the Holocaust in his argument, noting that those weapons would cause even more destruction than the Nazis did to the Jews. What a mess this world is in, and who do we hear with good ideas for creating more peace, more employment, better relations among peoples of the world without being criticized in one way or another? Not enough, sadly. Thus it was with Paul Robeson, who was so far ahead of his time in connecting the dots and looking at the big, international picture. The world could do with more people like him, despite whatever it was that made him less than perfect, and one hopes that hearing his story today will inspire some of us to stand up more for peace, justice and fairness, in whatever way we can. 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.

**Martin Robinson, Piano and original incidental music.** Martin Robinson has wide experience playing as pianist for choirs and soloists. On saxophone and keyboards he has played throughout Britain and in Europe with his own jazz band, *Skokiaan*, and with Mamadou Diaw and other bands and singers. He is delighted to be working with Tayo Aluko on a show with such a strong message.

**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: Feb 20 - March 1, Wellington:** New Zealand Fringe Festival; **March 4 - 15, Australia:** Adelaide Fringe; **March 27, Millom, Cumbria:** Beggars Theatre; **March 28, Richmond, N. Yorkshire:** Georgian Theatre Royal; **April 1, Liverpool:** unity Theatre; **April 23, Abertillery:** The Metropole; **April 24, 25, Newport:** The Riverfront; **May 2, Manchester:** The Mechanics Institute; **May 16, Walton-upon-Thames:** Riverhouse Barn; **May 23: Barnsley Civic Hall**

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