

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

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Nicki Allan, Piano**

**Cast In Doncaster, Wednesday October 22, 2014.**

**Greetings, Welcome.** A few weeks ago, NHS midwives went on strike for a day. Last weekend, health workers were also part of a national demonstration of public service workers from all over the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland demanding better pay and conditions. These two significant news items have receded away from public consciousness in the same way as something even more serious has, for the time being – that being the Ebola crisis. If we think NHS workers are heroes, just think of the health workers in the West African countries fighting a more devastating threat than people here have ever known, and hopefully will ever know. It is only a matter of if, not when Ebola will reach these shores, and the heroism of the health workers will be called upon, and they are more likely to rise to the challenge if they feel that they are properly valued and remunerated, which they clearly don't at present. They see costs rising faster than their pay packets, at the same time as top executives are reaching levels of wealth unseen before. They also see cuts in vital services across the board while billions continue to be spent on the arms industry and on fuelling conflicts abroad. They note that many of their co-workers have come from all over the globe for relatively better wages and conditions than they can command at home, while enduring racism here in this country, and calls for them, along with all migrants, to be sent home. "We are all in this together" is a phrase that is more appropriate for workers here to use in relation to their counterparts in Ebola-stricken countries, rather than our elite leadership to suggest that they are in with the workers here, which they patently aren't. The concept of solidarity with other people struggling is one that Paul Robeson believed and demonstrated all his life, and which trade unions here struggle to keep alive. We ignore the Ebola crisis at our peril, but also, allowing the massive differences in the wealth of nations to continue will be detrimental to our health as well, so we need to pay attention to all means at our disposal to help the development of Africa and other parts of the world, which by definition also means promotion of peace, fair trade and justice and equality. It also means the redression of inequalities everywhere, at the risk of being labelled troublemakers, even for demanding fair wages and conditions for really important jobs. 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. He recently developed a piece titled *WHAT HAPPENS?* featuring the writings of African American Langston Hughes, for performance with live jazz accompaniment. He is currently a Writer On Attachment with the Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse Theatres.

**Nicki Allan, Piano** Louise is an award-winning jazz vocalist and educator teaching voice at the Royal Northern College of Music. She is also a songwriter, session musician, mother and wife. She works with the jazz orchestras and big bands in the North of England. She works on cruise ships and has her own jazz sextet. [nickiallan.com](http://nickiallan.com)

**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 25, Enfield:** Dugdale Centre; **Oct 29, Nelson:** ACE Centre; **Oct 30, Oxford:** Old Fire Station; **Dec 3, Tallaght, Dublin:** Civic Theatre; **Dec 5, Kilkenny:** Watergate Arts Centre; **Dec 6, Limerick:** 69 O'Connell Street; **Dec 10, Waterford:** Garter Lane Arts Centre. **Jan 15 2015, Spokane, Washington, USA:** Bing Crosby Theatre; **Feb 20 – March 1: New Zealand** Fringe Festival; **March 4 – 15: Adelaide** Fringe Festival, Australia; **March 28, Richmond, Yorks:** Georgian Theatre Royal; **April 1, Liverpool:** Unity Theatre; **April 22, Aberystwyth:** Arts Centre; **April 23, Abertillery:** The Metropole; **April 24 & 25: Newport:** Riverfront Arts Centre.

**Tayo Aluko & Friends**

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