

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Katherine Marsh Collins, Piano
Whitaker V. Middleton Fine Arts Center, Claflin University,
Orangeburg, South Carolina, Tuesday, February 26, 2013.**

Greetings, and Welcome. “I congratulate you in taking the proper action in spite of its possible consequences.” That was a line that jumped out at me from a movie I saw last night - “Gifted Hands” - based on the book of the same name by the pioneering, renowned African American neurosurgeon, Dr. Ben Carson. Thankfully, the consequences in his case were favourable, and a life was saved. Carson had become a doctor thanks to a decision made by his mother decades earlier – to make her two sons read two books each a week and give her a report. She had been worried about the amount of mindless TV they watched. That decision was unpopular with the boys, but it helped lift them from poverty and go on to achieve great success in life. As we shall see, the love of books is something Dr. Carson shared with Paul Robeson, who, decades before, had taken certain actions which proved to have grave consequences for him personally. They however helped open the doors through which actors like Cuba Gooding Jr (the movie’s lead actor) would eventually walk, as did its African American director, Thomas Carter. These three African Americans are a small part of our positive history, which stretches back far beyond the slavery of our recent ancestors to the dawn of humanity. That history has been lost to too many of us, but we are fortunate that it is all there to be discovered - in books. Books that tell stories of greatness, pride, humanity, incredible achievements in art, science, agriculture, and all other areas of human endeavour. As in Robeson’s case, others may try to muffle our potential, but we can break through those barriers and succeed. In fact, we not only can, we must, because in my view, it is the only way to repay our debt to those who went before us, overcame barriers and opened the doors for us to walk through today. We must also always take actions that help those that walk behind us. One such action could be sharing all our positive stories. Another could be to read more than we currently do, particularly on African History. It’s truly inspirational. 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 fifteen-minute play, HALF MOON, which also deals with ancient Africa for a modern young audience has been performed several times in the UK.

Katherine Marsh Collins, Piano. Kathy was a child prodigy on the piano and organ from her early days in Cornwells Heights, Pennsylvania.. She studied piano performance and music theory at the Philadelphia Conservatory of Music, and at Chestnut Hill School of Music. She graduated from Rutgers University with a degree in Sacred Music. She is currently organist and pianist in several churches in the Charleston area. Mrs. Collins is also an accomplished composer and arranger of sacred music.

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:

Feb 28, Mar 1, San Jose, CA: Theatre on San Pedro Square. **March 7, Oxford, UK:** Old Fire Station; **March 22, Coventry:** Belgrade Theatre; **March 27, Hexham:** Queen's Hall; **March 28, South Shields:** Customs House; **March 29: Alnwick,** The Playhouse; **March 30, Berwick-upon-Tweed:** The Maltings

Thanks to: Joy Barnes, Dr. Peggy Ratlif, Carolyn Ravenell, Annette Greivious and colleagues at Claflin University, and to Ty and Kathy Collins of Charleston.

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