

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Tammy Hall, Piano

East Bay Center for Performing Arts, Richmond, California

Sunday, February 24, 2013.

Greetings, and Welcome. I arrived this morning from Vancouver, which I understand might be the most expensive city in the world to live in! I met a supremely gifted West African dancer and drummer who makes a living teaching kids African song, stories and dance, but is unable to afford anything better than a windowless box room to live in. At the airport, I wondered what kind of accommodation the ordinary workers lived in, and what their work conditions were. The Vancouver-based immigration officer who admitted me back into the US (despite my mentioning Paul Robeson's name!), seemed more interested in the banana I was taking into the States with me than in finding out more about Robeson. And then on re-entering the US, the menacing look of the armed immigration and border police reminded me that I had really crossed an international border, where the mindset is quite different from Canada – to an extent. I say this because I learned of a young African American soldier who is holed up in the basement of a church in Vancouver, having taken refuge there from his government and the Canadian immigration authorities, who wish to see him suitably punished for refusing to return to Iraq to continue what he came to see as an unjust war against innocent people. The Canadian government refuse to grant him asylum, so Rodney Watson has been living in that church for four years, with police stationed outside, ready to arrest and turn him over should he dare to step beyond the sanctuary's boundaries. It is amazing that the taxpayers' resources of two nations are devoted to the case of one man whose crime is believing in peace and justice, and acting with his conscience, like Robeson did. This Black History Month, Watson reminds us not only of the very famous brave fighters for peace who went before him, but the thousands around the world who, like him, are relatively unknown. May their struggles and bravery inspire the rest of us to keep up the fight, and seek the peace that comes with obeying one's conscience. 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.

Tammy Lynne Hall, Piano. Tammy began playing piano at age four and she lives her life devoted to the pursuit and expression of love and beauty through music. Music has taken Tammy all over the world, including performances in Japan, Europe and Mexico. Other venues of note include Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, Sala Filharmonica (Trento, Italy), Herbst Theatre, Yoshi's and Kuumbwa Jazz in Santa Cruz, California. She currently performs with Kim Nalley, Houston Person, Mary Wilson, Denise Perriet, Veronica Klaus and Pamela Rose. She has also had the honor of performing with Etta Jones and David "Fathead" Newman.

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 26: Claflin University, Orangeburg, SC;

Feb 28, Mar 1: Theatre on San Pedro Square, San Jose.

March – July: UK Tour; **August 16:** Gabriola Festival, Gabriola, BC

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