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

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, With Michael Conliffe, Piano Zoo Southside, Edinburgh Festival Fringe Friday 6 – Monday 30 August, 2010

Greetings and Welcome. Three years ago, I premiered this play here at the Fringe, with the ink literally still drying on the script, and some frantic last-minute dramaturgy and directing going on even on the walk to the venue. To make matters worse, three days into the one-week run, I caught a virus and practically lost my voice. And then despite the audiences apparently loving it, I got only one official review, and it was decidedly lukewarm. Oh, and I lost of money, as is the norm with Edinburgh. However, giving up wasn't an option, and a few hundred performances on three continents and two awards later, I am clearly hoping for better luck this time - not just for the sake of my colleagues and I, but for the sake of Paul Robeson's name and legacy. I am sure you will agree that his story desperately needs to be told to as large an audience as possible, internationally. He has certainly been an inspiration to me, and I know he has inspired thousands around the planet with his vision of the possibility of a better world. What the world needs now as much as at any time in the past, is inspiration, and there is no better person than Robeson to inspire and remind us how we as individuals can join the fight for freedom, justice and equality for all.

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Tayo Aluko. Writer and Performer. Tayo was born in Nigeria, and now resides in Liverpool. He worked until recently as an architect and property developer, with a special but as yet frustrated interest in eco-friendly construction. As a baritone, he has sung as soloist in British concert halls accompanied by orchestra, and has also sung in Germany, Ireland and Nigeria. He has also 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, Best Male Performer Award, and a nomination for the Best Show at the 2008 Brighton Festival Fringe. He has performed the play around the UK and to audiences on both coasts of the United States of America and Canada, and in Lagos, Nigeria. Tayo's other piece titled I GOT A HOME IN BARACK: 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 is now part of the permanent exhibit at the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool. His CD, RECALLING ROBESON is featured as the song of the month on the Labor Notes website in July 2008.

## Michael Conliffe, Piano and original incidental music

Mike started playing piano by ear as child, playing gospel in church and later discovering Jazz, which he went on to study at Liverpool Community College and Leeds college of Music. As well as playing regularly in Jazz festivals round the UK, Mike has toured both coasts of America with Call Mr Robeson. Mike also performs in another two-hander, a Jazz drama *God Bless the Child* about Billie Holliday, in which he also acts. He plays regularly as soloist and with Swing and Function bands at weddings, other celebrations and at corporate events. Mike also teaches piano to aspiring Pop, Blues and Jazz musicians and to singer/song writers.

Olusola Oyeleye, Director and Dramaturg Olusola works across a wide spectrum of arts genres including opera, music theatre, and dance. She was resident director on Trevor Nunn's production of George Gershwin's musical Porgy and Bess, and was English National Opera's first black staff director. She has directed productions for Adzido Pan African Dance Company at the Royal Festival Hall. She directed Don Kinch's Coming Up For Air (UK tour), Anita Franklin's The Resurrection of Roscoe Powell (Soho Theatre), The Shelter for the Royal Shakespeare Company Early Stages Festival (Barbican Theatre), and *Medea*, Ariya at (Royal National Theatre Studio); *The* Playground by Beverley Naidoo, at Polka Theatre, was a Time Out Pick of the Year. Dido and Aeneas, Ariya (Tricycle & BAC). Productions abroad include: Akin Euba's Orunmila's Voices: Songs from the Beginning of Time in New Orleans, and Chaka: An Opera in Two Chants in St Louis. For the British Council Write a Story, Ghana and Twelfth Night, Zimbabwe. Her poetry has been set to music by Akin Euba. Her most recent production, High Life by Lizzy Dijeh has completed a successful run at the Hampstead Theatre. Olusola is the artistic director of Ariya, the executive director of BushBoy Productions and the associate producer with Collective Artistes.

Phil Newman, Designer & Assistant Director Phil's Set and Costume designs have featured in productions by companies such as Ladder to the Moon, Trestle Theatre, Chalkfoot Theatre Arts, London Shakespeare Workout, Rouge28 Theatre, Heartbreak Productions and Impetuous Kinship. Recent design credits include the acclaimed Laurel & Hardy (Jermyn Street Theatre, London and forthcoming UK tour), Yes, I Still Exist (Spread Expression Dance), Stockholm (BAC, London), Full House Theatre's national tour of Hansel and Gretel (incl. Greenwich Theatre), a new musical version of The Famous Five (Tabard Theatre, London), Xmas Reloaded (Old Red Lion Theatre, London) and Chalkfoot's recent production of The Riddle of the Sands at Jermyn Street, The Playground (Time Out Critics' Choice/Polka Theatre, London), High Life (Hampstead Theatre, London), Coming Up For Air (UK tour) and Victoria Evaristo's Ma Joyce's Tales from the Parlour (Oval House, London and also playing at Zoo Southside, Edinburgh Fringe 2010). Future projects include the set design for Faith Drama's forthcoming production, Next Door at the Cockpit Theatre, London and Full House Theatre's Cinderella at the Library Theatre, Luton.

Sound Design: David Darlington & Liam McDermott. Lighting Design: Gareth Starkey. Sound Engineering: Derek Murray. 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 Company Stage Manager/Technician: Miguel Figueredo. Stage Hand. Leila Gwynne.

## **Future Performances include:**

September 25. The Old Town Hall, Hemel Hempstead October 13 – 15 Clwyd Theatr Cymru, Mold, North Wales October 16: Wyeside Arts Centre, Builth Wells, Mid Wales

October 23: Blaenavon Workmen's Hall. Blaenavon. South Wales

November 4: Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, Guildford

November 27: Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

December 11: Lincoln Performing Arts Centre, Lincoln

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