

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, With Michael Conliffe, Piano

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Greetings and Welcome. I don't pretend to know much about European history, politics or economics, but it is noteworthy that Greece is in serious financial trouble, and apparently threatens to take down the European economy and banking system with it. America is worried, and China is looking on with great interest... Our Prime Minister has stated that the UK will not contribute to any bailing out of Greece either – deciding that the country credited with giving birth to British civilisation is no longer part of the family. The solution, we are told, is for mass privatisation of Greek state assets, reduction of wages and pensions, and all will be fine. In fact, they have a thing or two to learn from recent British history – Thatcher did this here, and the current government (as did the previous one) intend to continue her legacy. Our ordinary Greek brothers and sisters on the streets are rising up in protest, making their leaders know loud and clear that they will not bear the brunt of a mess of others' doing. The people in the Middle East are leading the way, bravely facing up to Western-supplied military hardware. Trade Unions here are calling out to the public to support them in their fight for OUR livelihoods. Paul Robeson in his time stood shoulder to shoulder with them and working people, and I trust that his story will inspire many of us to do the same. I hope you enjoy the show.

AN EXTRA SPECIAL THANK YOU

Quite a few people have helped me transform myself from architect to internationally touring performer, and I have already mentioned some of them earlier in this programme. It has nonetheless been very remiss of me not to especially mention some others in my show programmes before, and I wish to make amends now, lest they be forgotten, and their good names lost to history.

They are all connected with Liverpool's Cosmopolitan Housing Association. I start with Director of Development, David Griffiths and his sidekick Neil Jones, who when I presented them with a proposal for a modest block of flats in 2004, gave a remarkably convincing performance as honest straightforward public servants who felt that public money would be better spent elsewhere. They then went on to gazump me, probably because being closet eco-warriors, they felt that the land on which I proposed to build would be better used as a local wildlife resource where biodiversity could flourish. The grass, the insects, the birds, the foxes and the rats continue to enjoy the land undisturbed, seven years later. I list those two men among the great actors whose performances I have learned my new craft from. Cosmopolitan's Chief Executive, Geoff Redhead, showed strong, decisive leadership by standing solidly behind his staff, when shallower men would have believed idle tittle-tattle and gone digging fruitlessly for dirt that I am now almost convinced does not exist. The association's Board, which included at the time Su Bramley, Sue Ward, Alan Hodgkinson and Rosie Earp, were particularly impressive in maintaining a strong, dignified silence for a period of almost five years too – a feat of quiet meditation that would be envied by the most devoted of Buddhists.

The then chair of the Board, Beatrice Fraenkel is something of a role model to me. She juggles so many balls in public and private life but still found the time in her busy schedule to have a lovely letter sent to me explaining that neither a meeting with me nor a consultants' complaints procedure would be necessary. Then there was the Housing Corporation (now the Tenant Services Authority – the regulator of Social Housing), who asked Cosmopolitan themselves to commission a report into the matter. Who better to appoint than their own loyal firm of auditors, who naturally found that there was no case to answer, and that everything was above board. If I wanted to write a well-disguised satire about FIFA, I think I know where to set it.

I am grateful to all those people for guiding me away from an area where my skills were clearly being wasted, and to leave this to the real experts. I also thank them for throwing me into deep shark-infested waters, in the belief that I would discover a natural ability to swim. At the risk of being called “teacher’s pet”, I hope they think their student is doing well, and is a credit to them. I trust that they will continue to transform the lives of other Merseysiders so positively.

Tayo Aluko

Further information available on [“Tayo Aluko’s Blog: No Blacks, No Greens, No Hawks”](#)