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

## Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Michael Conliffe, Piano Fisher Theatre, Friday January 18, 2013.

Greetings and Welcome.. First Mali, now Algeria. I fear it may be somewhere else tomorrow. Western lives are being lost on African soil today, so the powers that be in the West are really getting nervous, as are the families of those working or fighting there. And most people think it's those crazy Islamic fundamentalists kicking off again. I really hope it's not going to spread, but the writing on the wall is becoming clearer by the day: where resources and people in Africa are being exploited purely for the benefit of the West, we are seeing an increase in conflict. Algeria is easier to understand, as the siege is happening on a gas facility. The story behind Mali may not be as obvious, but if one joins the dots between the abundance of uranium in Northern Mali and Niger, the fact that uranium fuels nuclear electricity generation and that France gets 75% of its electricity from nuclear power, one begins to understand why France is ready to send their army to the Sahara desert to kill Tuaregs, and be killed by them. European governments have enough on their plate with their financial troubles at home, so they don't need their soldiers and civilians being killed in Africa as well, yet again. I say yet again, because this has been going on for centuries, and people have been calling for peace, and for fair trade, but being denounced as misguided traitors. People like Paul Robeson. It is my contention that we need more voices like Robeson's around today to remind us of the fact that continuing to exploit Africa and Africans will - in the long run - be counterproductive for all humanity. 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 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 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 50<sup>th</sup> 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. A song from his CD, RECALLING ROBESON is featured as the July 2008 song of the month on the Labor Notes website.

## 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, culminating in the February 2012 performance at Carnegie Hall with Tayo. 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 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 artistic director of Ariya, associate producer for Collective Artistes and a Fellow of the Royal Society for the Arts.

Phil Newman, Designer, Assistant Director and Assistant Dramaturge. Phil trained at Croydon College, where he also spent 3 years as Practitioner-in-Residence in their Theatre Design department. He collaborated with Call Mr. Robeson director Olusola Oyeleye on The Security Guard Ella (RichMix), High Life (Hampstead Theatre), Coming Up For Air (UK tour), Ma Joyce's Tales from the Parlour (Edinburgh Fringe 2010/Oval House) and The Playground (Time Out Critics' Choice/Polka Theatre, London). Other design credits include: A Christmas Carol & Peter Pan (Tickled Pink), an open-air Romeo & Juliet (Cornucopia Theatre), Payne Killer (Merton AbbeyFest 2012), The Passion (This Way Up Theatre), The Liar (South Hill Park, Bracknell), Dance or Die (contemporary dance performance choreographed by Avant Garde Dance's Tony Adigun), Cinderella (Library Theatre, Luton), Voices in the Alleyway & Yes, I Still Exist (Spread Expression Dance), The Fiddler (Unicorn Theatre), Next Door (Cockpit Theatre) and film short The Judge for Faith Drama, The Riddle of the Sands & Laurel & Hardy (Jermyn St Theatre), The Famous Five (Tabard Theatre), Hansel & Gretel (UK tour incl. Greenwich Theatre), Stockholm (BAC), open-air tours of The Merchant of Venice & The Railway Children (Heartbreak Productions) and the award-winning UK/International touring production of John Retallack's Hannah & Hanna (Time Out Critics' Choice). He has just designed Shakespeare 4 Kidz' new UK/international touring production of The Tempest.

**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:

January 19: Tristan Bates Theatre, London; Februrary: USA/Canada Tour; March 7: Old Fire Station, Oxford; March 22: Belgrade Theatre, Coventry; March 27: Queen's Hall, Hexham; March 28: Customs House, South Shields; March 29: Alnwick Playhouse March 30: The Maltings, Berwick-upon-Tweed; April 4: The Ark, Borehamwood April 6: Bolton Octagon

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