

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Michael Conliffe, Piano
Greenbelt Festival, Cheltenham Race Course, August 26 & 27, 2012**

Greetings and Welcome. Last Thursday, August 23rd, was Slavery Remembrance Day. Many will be forgiven for not having known that, but in Liverpool, the day is marked annually by the International Slavery Museum, and this year, a crowd followed a Brazilian samba drumming band on a walk through the city to remember the African ancestors captured, lost at sea, and enslaved in the Americas. At the Albert Dock, a libation was offered, and the museum building named after Martin Luther King, Jr. On August 23rd 1791, a slave uprising broke out in St. Domingo, led by one Toussaint L'Ouverture, which thirteen years later resulted in victory for the people of the newly named Haiti. It is in honour of L'Ouverture and those fighters that the day is commemorated internationally. L'Ouverture is not as well known today as he deserves to be, at least here in the UK, but he leaves a great revolutionary legacy. So does Paul Robeson – also somewhat overlooked, but no less deserving of the reverence and honour afforded better known figures of recent history. This is perhaps due to the general perception of him as a revolutionary. The theory that revolutionaries will always be consigned to obscurity falls down when one considers that another revolutionary is perhaps the most famous figure in the history of humankind. His name: Jesus of Nazareth. It may be the violent and dramatic nature of their deaths that makes some revolutionaries more famous than others. Famous or not, all dreamed a better world and effectively communicated that dream to the masses - in words, deed and song, and this set them on a fatal collision course with the powers that be. Still, their dreams live on, and potentially inspire the rest of us to not only dream, but to also act upon that dream in whatever way we can. May we continue to seek out stories of the ordinary and extraordinary heroes of the past and present, celebrate them and keep their dreams alive by joining them in the fight peace, justice and freedom, at whatever personal cost. I hope you enjoy 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, and two Merit Awards for Excellence in London in 2010. 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. 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. 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 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), 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, about Ella Fitzgerald (Rich Mix). Opera includes: Akin Euba's Orunmila's Voices (Jefferson's Arts Centre, New Orleans) and Chaka, with the St. Louis African Chorus, Dido and Aeneas (Tricycle/BAC), God's Trombones (Fairfield Halls) and 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. Her poetry has been set to music by Akin Euba and performed at 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. She was part of New World Nigeria, the sports and cultural programme organised by the Nigerian Olympic Committee.

Phil Newman, Designer and Assistant Director/Dramaturg 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: Romeo & Juliet (Cornucopia Theatre), Payne Killer (Abbeyfest 2012), The Passion (This Way Up Theatre), The Liar (South Hill Park, Bracknell), Peter Pan (Tickled Pink), Dance or Die (Avant Garde), Cinderella (Library Theatre, Luton), Voices in the Alleyway and Yes, I Still Exist for Spread Expression Dance, Faith Drama's film short The Judge, The Fiddler (Unicorn Theatre) & Next Door (Cockpit Theatre), The Famous Five (Tabard Theatre), The Riddle of the Sands and Laurel & Hardy (Jermyn St Theatre, London & UK tours), Queen Elizabeth's Elephant and The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists, Hansel & Gretel (UK tour), Stockholm (BAC), and open-air tours of The Merchant of Venice and The Railway Children (Heartbreak Productions). The award-winning UK & international tour of John Retallack's Hannah & Hanna (Time Out Critics' Choice). With director Olusola Oyeleye: 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 Theatre) and The Playground (Time Out Critics' Choice/Polka Theatre, London). Phil trained at Croydon College where he also spent 3 years as Practitioner-in-Residence in their Theatre Design department.

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:

Oct 6, Liverpool: Capstone Theatre; **Oct 13, Otley:** Otley Courthouse; **Oct 22, Crawley:** Hawth Studio; **October 23, Frome:** Merlin Theatre; **Oct 24, Newbury:** Arlington Arts Centre; **Oct 25, Fareham:** Ashcroft Arts Centre; **Oct 26, New Milton:** Forest Arts Centre; **November 15, Orangeburg, South Carolina:** Claflin University; **Nov 18, Manchester:** Royal Exchange Theatre

