

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Karel Roessingh, Piano
Intrepid Theatre (Metro Studio), Victoria, British Columbia, Canada.**

Wednesday, February 20, 2013.

Greetings, and Welcome. I passed through Victoria last week on the way to Salt Spring Island, and was greeted by a parade of fire-fighters commemorating colleagues lost in the line of duty, and unveiling a stature in their honour. A few days ago, their brave work was highlighted when a fire broke out in Victoria, sadly claiming three young lives. Two days ago, I was at a dinner party at which one of the guests suddenly took ill. I was amazed by the speed with which the paramedics arrived in the ambulances, took care of her and took her to hospital. These two examples of public service impressed me, and I am aware that it is easy for people take these workers for granted. One remembers the debate during the recent US elections, where the republicans were argued for drastic cuts in public and social services – teachers, fire fighters, nurses etc. I confess to not knowing much about the Canadian situation, but my understanding is that many provincial governments (and the Federal Government) lean toward the republican standpoint, especially in these harsh economic times, and would like to see public services cut, including public schools. I was invited into two Victoria secondary schools yesterday to talk about Paul Robeson. I mentioned his championing of trade unions as one of the most effective means of protecting workers and their families. Sadly, these youngsters seemed not to know much about trade unionism, and therefore about the struggles that people before them fought so that workers enjoy decent work conditions while providing us with top class service. The youngsters will probably be aware of the strength of collective action though, having witnessed recent uprisings worldwide, including here in Canada, and knowing the power that people acting together have to effect change in society. One hopes that those of us older ones don't forget to join with those who resist greed, injustice and conflict wherever we encounter it, for the sake of our children's future. 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.

Karel Roessingh, Piano. Dutch-born Karel was raised in Calgary, and began his professional musical career in 1970. He studied jazz arranging and composition at Berklee College of Music in Boston, and completed a degree in secondary music and mathematics education at University of Victoria. He is frequently a featured specialist at jazz workshops, and writes jazz tunes for his own and other groups, and has composed extensively for film, television and video productions, many of which been broadcast world-wide. He has several recordings to his credit, from solo piano to orchestral compositions, and has just completed writing a series of music for interactive toys made by Fisher Price. Karel is a councillor and former Mayor of the District of the Highlands.

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 23: Douglas College, New Westminster, BC. **Feb 24:** East Bay Center for Performing Arts, Richmond, CA; **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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