

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

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Ariel Kasler, Piano**

**London Fringe 2012 at McManus Studio June 8 – 16, 2012.**

**Greetings and Welcome.** As I crossed the US/Canadian border a few days ago, the Canadian Prime Minister was arriving in Europe, and having meetings with his new French counterpart. He had a few suggestions as to how the Europeans should deal with their financial crisis. M Hollande, a socialist in the midst of a band of capitalist leaders, recently won office despite suggesting that the very wealthy should be heavily taxed, and that austerity is not the solution to the crisis, since that costs too many jobs, particularly among young people. Mr. Harper appears not to agree, thinking that the most important thing is to restore “confidence in the markets” in order to “promote growth”. Where austerity has been tried (e.g. Greece and Spain) unemployment among young people is approaching 50%, and for some strange reason, the populations are out on the streets protesting. Here in Canada, protests going on in the streets of Montreal and other places are being portrayed as unwarranted and aimless violence, just as across the border in America (Occupy Wall Street and nationwide). Nothing to do with a perception that people have had enough of the inequalities and injustices in society and want their voices to be heard. Paul Robeson’s was taken as a dangerous threat to society, for calling for peace and equality. He would surely be at one with the Occupy Movement here in Canada, were he around today. It remains for the rest of us who can, to lend our own voices to those that the politicians refuse hear, until we achieve the change that we really can believe in, and those walls of inequality finally come tumbin’ down. 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, 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 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. He sits on the Board of the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall and Events Company.

### **Ariel Kasler, Piano and original incidental music**

Ariel Kasler is a pianist, guitarist, and teacher of the Alexander Technique living in London, Ontario. Born in Israel, Ariel graduated from Berklee College of Music in 2005, and has since worked as a musician on land and on cruise ships. In London, Ontario, he is a highly in demand collaborative pianist at Western University, and a freelance performer and teacher. Most recently, Ariel has played guitar for the the Grand Theatre production of Hair, and the H.B. Beal Secondary School production of Hairspray.



**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 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* (Edinburgh Fringe 2010 & Oval House Theatre) and *The Playground* (Time Out Critics' Choice/Polka Theatre, 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:**

**June 23 - July 1:** Washington DC. DC Black Theatre Festival; **August 26, 27:** Greenbelt Festival, Cheltenham Race Course; **October 6:** Capstone Theatre, Liverpool; **October 13:** Otley Courthouse; **October 22:** Hawth Theatre, Crawley; **October 24:** Arlington Arts Centre, Newbury; **October 25:** Ashcroft Arts Centre, Fareham; **October 27:** Forest Arts Centre, New Milton; **November 18:** Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester; **November 21:** Rhodes Arts Complex, Bishop's Stortford

These performances are dedicated to the memory of my ex-classmate from King's College, Lagos, Nigeria: Istifanus Ibrahim Mutahir (aka Samba) who was one of the 153 passenger and crew who died on June 3 in an airplane crash in Lagos. May their deaths rededicate us to finding ways of allocating resources more sensibly to the things that really matter.

#### **Tayo Aluko & Friends**

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