

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

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Michael Conliffe, Piano**

**Lymm Baptist Church, June 28, 2013.**

**Greetings, and Welcome.** The Moors murderer Ian Brady has been seen by the public recently for the first time in ages, trying to persuade a tribunal that he should be allowed to go into an ordinary prison so that he can end his own life. Meanwhile, he is forcibly fed by a tube up his nose, as the state determines (and he himself has shown) that he is not sufficiently in control of his mental faculties to make such a momentous decision as to starve himself to death. Thousands of miles away, several other prisoners are being forcibly fed by the same method, although their feeding tubes are said to be much thicker and thus more painful, and the method used particularly unhygienic. I talk of the detainees at Guantanamo Bay, dozens of whom have been found to have no case to answer, yet have been incarcerated there for over a decade. These men are being denied their right to exercise an internationally recognized method of protest, despite the fact that they are probably in better mental health than Brady. We will not have the opportunity to see them the way we have seen Brady, for they are very much out of sight, if not out of mind. Also out of sight but not out of everybody's mind is Private Bradley Manning, who despite the fact that he is on trial in the US at present on charges of leaking state secrets, or information which showed that governments around the world can't always be trusted to tell us the truth, is being tried away from public view. Another American, Edward Snowden, is being branded a traitor to the USA and is on the run for doing the same thing, and his flight from the authorities has gripped many around the world. Then there's Julian Assange in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London. Nelson Mandela (bless him) was himself labelled an enemy of the state and imprisoned, and the falseness of that particular state at that time is no longer in doubt. So it was with Paul Robeson, whose crime was using his formidable voice and fame to fight for oppressed people around the world and to speak truth to power. He too has been hidden from view for far too long, and I hope his story inspires many of us to continue to seek the truth, and to support those brave truth tellers who act in the interests of justice and humanity, despite what our leaders say about "National Security". I hope you enjoy the show.

**Tayo Aluko. Writer, Performer, Producer.** Tayo was born in Nigeria, and now lives in Liverpool. He worked previously 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 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 three awards at the London Ontario Fringe in June 2012. 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. His 15-minute play, HALF MOON, which also deals with ancient Africa has been performed several times in the UK. He has recently been appointed president of the Birmingham Clarion Singers.

**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. 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 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:**

**July 6, Leeds:** Leeds University Students Union; **August 11, Berkeley, California:** Freight & Salvage; **August 16, Gabriola, Canada:** Gabriola Festival; **August 18 – 24, Nanaimo, Canada:** Fringetastic; **August 31 – Sept 4, Halifax, Canada:** Atlantic Fringe; **September 12, Southport:** The Atkinson; **September 14, Shrewsbury:** Theatre Severn; September 22, Maidenhead: Norden Farm Arts Centre. **October 1 – 26, London:** Tristan Bates Theatre, Covent Garden; **November 9, Helmsley Arts Centre**

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