

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Tammy Lynne Hall, Piano
Phoenix Theatre, San Francisco. Thursday, January 31, 2013.**

Greetings and Welcome. I had the pleasure of doing a workshop with some young people at the African American Arts and Cultural Center yesterday. I got them to name some famous historic African American artists, civil rights campaigners, and sports people. The name of Jackie Robinson came up, and it turns out coincidentally that today is his birthday. His image is even there on Google's home today. I am reminded that Paul Robeson was instrumental in pushing Robinson up the final rungs of the ladder to being the first Black man in professional baseball. Robinson would much later speak against Robeson when he appeared before the House UnAmerican Activities Committee, despite the fact that he owed his own career to the older man. The youngsters hadn't heard of Robeson, and were not aware that he also paved the way for the more famous names that they mentioned, but I think they got the message. Robeson in his time never failed to acknowledge those (famous and otherwise) who went before him in the struggles that would eventually lead, through him, to there being a Black man in the White House. In the lead up to the first inauguration, I listened hard for a mention Robeson's name, but missed it. Same the second time around. His relative obscurity today gives a truth to the lyric in Ol' Man River, which goes, "He don't plant taters, he don't plant cotton, and dem dat plants 'em is soon forgotten". It is my contention that most of what Robeson said in his time could help us out of the mess we are in today, so with any luck, his name will come back into prominence soon, and I look forward to the day when his image appears on Google's home page. 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 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.

Tammy Lynne Hall, Piano. Tammy began playing piano at age four and she lives her life devoted to the pursuit and expression of love and beauty through music. Music has taken Tammy all over the world, including performances in Japan, Europe and Mexico. Other venues of note include Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, Sala Filharmonica (Trento, Italy), Herbst Theatre, Yoshi's and Kuumbwa Jazz in Santa Cruz, California. She currently performs with Kim Nalley, Houston Person, Mary Wilson, Denise Perriet, Veronica Klaus and Pamela Rose. She has also had the honor of performing with Etta Jones and David "Fathead" Newman.

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 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:

Feb 1: Phoenix Theatre, San Francisco; **Feb 6:** Bing Crosby Theatre, Spokane, WA; **Feb 8, 9:** Langston Hughes Performing Arts Institute, Seattle, WA; **Feb 10:** From Black Africa to the White House. At Langston Hughes Performing Arts Centre, Seattle; **Feb 16:** ArtSpring, Salt Spring Island, BC; **Feb 20:** Intrepid Theatre, Victoria, BC; **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.

Tayo Aluko & Friends

24- 26 Mount Pleasant, Liverpool L3 5RY

info@tayoalukoandfriends.com www.callmrrobeson.com

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