

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

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Gregory Thompson, Piano**

**Piccolo Spoleto Festival at PURE Theatre, Charleston. May 30 – June 5, 2012.**

**Greetings and Welcome.** Arriving in America from the UK, I am struck by the heat of Charleston and the heating up of the Presidential campaign here. Millions are being spent every week by both main parties on their campaigns, and it seems remarkably easy to continue to raise seemingly endless funds from the American people. I understand that Donald Trump is fully behind a reluctant Mitt Romney, who is apparently embarrassed by Trump's continued questioning of the President's true nationality, but he takes his money anyway (doesn't he need it). It is said that there is no guarantee that Mr. Obama will win, notwithstanding his stated intentions of providing healthcare to the poor, and taxing the wealthy more fairly, and Romney's famous statement that he doesn't care about the poor. Only in America... However, it seems that the more stridently and honestly one shows solidarity with the poor and oppressed, the more one alienates oneself from the powerful. Paul Robeson is one of the clearest example of this, and it is perhaps for this reason that since Mr. Obama's inauguration, Robeson's name remains conspicuously absent from the roll call of people whose legacy the President is acknowledged to have inherited. There were millions more who paved the way, and it is worth remembering how the mobilisation of a mass movement got Mr. Obama elected. Mass movements have also recently achieved the seemingly impossible in those parts of the world where the West has exercised undue influence for decades, and those movements inspired the Occupy movement here in the US, and stands to re-galvanise the trade unions in the modern day attack against workers.. I am sure Paul Robeson would be lending his great voice to that movement, and reminding us all of how much power we have in our own hands, and the duty we have to join in the struggle for peace, justice, freedom and equality.

**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.

### **Gregory Thompson, Piano and original incidental music**

Gregory Thompson is an associate professor at Winston Salem State University music department. He received the Bachelor of Arts in Piano Performance from Limestone College, Gaffney, SC, the Master of Music in Piano Performance from the Peabody Conservatory of Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD, and the Doctor of Musical Arts from the University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC. Dr. Thompson has held professorships at Morris College, Benedict College, Claflin University, Johnson C. Smith University and Central State University in Wilberforce, OH. Dr. Thompson has performed as a solo and collaborative artist in the United States, Europe, and Asia. He made his New York Debut at Carnegie Hall in 1979 and also performed in recital there in 1982. He has performed in many important venues including The Steinway Gallerie, Schloss Leopoldskron, and The Marmolle Hall in Salzburg Austria. He has also performed with the Peabody Symphony, The Baltimore Symphony, The Charlotte Philharmonic, and The South Carolina Philharmonic. In June, Dr. Thompson will perform in recital in Paris, France. Dr. Thompson has presented master classes in the US and Asia. He is also Head of Staff Pianists for the University of Miami at Salzburg Summer Program in Salzburg, Austria.

**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 6 - 17:** London Ontario Fringe Festival; **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

**Tayo Aluko & Friends**

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