

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

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

The Square Chapel, Halifax, January 10, 2013.

Greetings and Welcome.. I must be the proudest man in Yorkshire today. This afternoon, my daughter graduated with a distinction in broadcast journalism from Sheffield University, and this week, she started a job with The Guardian in London! I of course pray that she will achieve great things and continue to make her family proud, but I am reminded that in certain parts of the world, she would be entering a very dangerous profession. For those who don't specialise in reality TV or fashion (important as they are to many) broadcast journalism can be very threatening to the authorities. My favourite internet news channel democracynow.org only last night featured a Somali journalist who spent six years in Guantanamo Bay without charge, suffering all kinds of torture. He is to be commended for his bravery in deciding to go round telling the truth about that establishment, after regaining his freedom. Democracy Now! regularly features another journalist – this time an African American called Mumia Abu Jamal who was a vociferous critic of the Pennsylvania Police on radio in 1970s Philadelphia, for their brutality against Black people. He was framed on a murder charge, sentenced to death, and is now entering his thirty second year in prison, despite the fact that he was clearly innocent. He remains a prolific broadcaster and writer and easily makes much more sense than the much of the American government (listen to him on prisonradio.org). Paul Robeson suffered a kind of imprisonment because of his own determination to speak truth to power decades ago, but you will agree that his story is particularly inspiring. Whilst I don't wish any such suffering on her, I will be proud of my daughter if her career involves her also informing the public about things that really matter, that our leaders would rather we didn't hear. She will be carrying on a great tradition of service that includes Robeson, who used his art as a powerful weapon in support of the world's oppressed. 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.

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, in which he also acts. 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 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 trained at Croydon College, where he also spent 3 years as Practitioner-in-Residence in their Theatre Design department. He collaborated with *Call Mr. Robeson* director Olusola Oyeleye on *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) and *The Playground* (Time Out Critics' Choice/Polka Theatre, London). Other design credits include: *A Christmas Carol & Peter Pan* (Tickled Pink), an open-air *Romeo & Juliet* (Cornucopia Theatre), *Payne Killer* (Merton AbbeyFest 2012), *The Passion* (This Way Up Theatre), *The Liar* (South Hill Park, Bracknell), *Dance or Die* (contemporary dance performance choreographed by Avant Garde Dance's Tony Adigun), *Cinderella* (Library Theatre, Luton), *Voices in the Alleyway & Yes, I Still Exist* (Spread Expression Dance), *The Fiddler* (Unicorn Theatre), *Next Door* (Cockpit Theatre) and film short *The Judge* for Faith Drama, *The Riddle of the Sands & Laurel & Hardy* (Jermyn St Theatre), *The Famous Five* (Tabard Theatre), *Hansel & Gretel* (UK tour incl. Greenwich Theatre), *Stockholm* (BAC), open-air tours of *The Merchant of Venice & The Railway Children* (Heartbreak Productions) and the award-winning UK/International touring production of John Retallack's *Hannah & Hanna* (Time Out Critics' Choice). He has just designed Shakespeare 4 Kidz' new UK/international touring production of *The Tempest*.

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:

January 17: Headgate Theatre, Colchester; **January 18:** Fisher Theatre, Bungay

January 19: Tristan Bates Theatre, London; **March 7:** Old Fire Station, Oxford

March 22: Belgrade Theatre, Coventry; **March 27:** Queen's Hall, Hexham;

March 28: Customs House, South Shields; **March 29:** Alnwick Playhouse

March 30: The Maltings, Berwick-upon-Tweed

Tayo Aluko & Friends

24- 26 Mount Pleasant, Liverpool L3 5RY

info@tayoalukoandfriends.com www.callmrroberson.com

facebook: Call Mr. Robeson Twitter: @CallMrRobeson

