

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

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

The Attic Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, May 29 – 31; June 2, 2013.

Greetings, and Welcome. Two young men have been giving us Nigerians as bad a name as it is possible for us to have. The Woolwich murderers have baffled everyone, including their families, by their actions, giving racist elements more reason to demand that we all go back to where we came from. A few of the promising young men I entered secondary school with in Lagos in 1973 are in this country, pursuing numerous respectable professions. One in particular became a consultant oncologist and haematologist in the NHS, but a glass ceiling prevented him from achieving his full potential here, so he went to Canada a few years ago, where his expertise was rightly acknowledged, and he flourished as a consultant and as an educator. He specialised in cancer and sickle cell - a blood disorder found mainly in African and some South Asian peoples, and condemns the majority of its sufferers to frequent episodes of excruciating pain and to death in childhood. As he was a sufferer himself, his special understanding of the subject and his brilliance led to him being highly respected in the UK and internationally for his academic and clinical work on sickle cell in particular. He once told me that as a sufferer, he didn't expect to reach the age of fifty, and as with most of his opinions, he was sadly right, and died last Sunday, a week from his fiftieth birthday. Despite the conditions that drive so many of us Nigerians away from our home, and despite the obstacles put in his way here in the UK, Dr. Adebayo Olujohungbe got to the top of his profession and changed the lives of thousands around the world for the better. His short life mirrored that of Paul Robeson, who suffered as much resistance to doing good as it is possible for a human being to endure, but touched millions' lives, and continues to inspire people to this day. If he were around now, he would probably be causing controversy by arguing that whilst we rightly condemn the actions on London's streets last week, we should also condemn the killing of thousands of innocent people abroad, in our name. He would suggest that we should be pouring billions into caring, not killing. Adebayo Olujohungbe was a brilliant example of the potential that would be so unlocked, and I dedicate these performances to his memory. 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 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. 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:

June 28: Lymm Festival; August: USA/Canada tour; September 11, Southport: The Atkinson; **September 13: Braintree Arts Centre; September 14, Shrewsbury:** Theatre Severn; **October 1 – 26, London:** Tristan Bates Theatre, Covent Garden; **November 9, Helmsley Arts Centre**

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