

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

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Jason Collins, Piano**

**Theatre Royal, Bury St. Edmunds. Thursday, September 18, 2014**

**Greetings, Welcome.** It has been interesting watching the Scots getting so engaged and excited about the Independence vote. The turn-out figures have made politicians in the rest of the UK jealous, and Western-supported dictatorships abroad are the only others that can boast (or manufacture) such numbers. The referendum will change the UK forever, and there's no telling how far the ripples will spread, but spread they will. Now that the vote is out of the way, perhaps we can now look at other things that deserve more attention than they have been receiving recently, one of which is Ebola. It is not just a West African problem, it is a world problem, especially with the amount of travel to and from that part of the world. It is easy to forget that one of the reasons why the affected countries have insufficient numbers of health workers on the ground to deal with the crisis is that many of them are here, working in the NHS. The reasons for this are too numerous to go into here, but suffice it to say that they are symptomatic of human and mineral resources from that part of the world all too often ending up in the West, with the wrong kind of exchange going on. Some people have commented on the different approaches between, for instance, the USA and the UK who have sent military personnel over to West Africa, and Cuba who have sent doctors. Cuba also took the side of African countries in their anti-colonial struggles, so it is not surprising that many African people were (and still are) inclined to embrace socialism. Among the best known African leaders to do so were Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Patrice Lumumba, Amilcar Cabral, Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, Samora Machel and Nelson Mandela. Add to this list those here in the UK who call for the NHS to be kept public, reduce military spending and divert the resources to education and social care – be it here on in Africa and elsewhere - one begins to wonder whether socialism might have something to offer in these times. Paul Robeson thought so in his time, but though his message and voice were deliberately suppressed, they are still relevant to us today. As events worldwide continue to show that military responses to crises are wasteful, perhaps we can persuade our leaders to try new, peaceful and constructive approaches. 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 as yet frustrated interest in eco-friendly construction. He has fronted orchestras as baritone soloist in concert halls, and has also performed lead roles in such operas and musicals as *Nabucco*, *Kiss Me Kate* and *Anything Goes*. *CALL MR ROBESON* has won numerous awards at festivals in the UK and Canada, as well as highly favourable reviews in the press – most notably in the Guardian and on BBC Radio 4. He has toured the play around the UK, the USA, Canada, Jamaica and Nigeria, and at New York's Carnegie Hall in February 2012 on his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. He also delivers a lecture/concert called *PAUL ROBESON – THE GIANT, IN A NUTSHELL*, and another one titled *FROM BLACK AFRICA TO THE WHITE HOUSE*: a talk about Black Political Resistance, illustrated with spirituals has 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 recently developed a piece titled *WHAT HAPPENS?* featuring the writings of African American Langston Hughes, for performance with live jazz accompaniment. He is developing a new play titled *JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER* as writer on attachment with the Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse Theatres. He has recently been appointed president of the Birmingham Clarion Singers.

**Jason Collins, Piano and original incidental music.**

Jason moved from Sussex to East Anglia back in 2004 to study Music at East Anglia, primarily in Conducting. He studied Piano under the direction of Christopher Green-Armitage and Conducting with Sharon Choa. Since then he has directed many choirs in East Anglia and manages The Fisher Theatre in Bungay. He is also Musical Director for the Bungay Choral Society.

**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.** Phil's Set & Costume Design credits include: *Spring Awakening - The Musical* (Chelsea Theatre), *The Tempest & Pinocchio* (UK & UAE tours for Shakespeare4Kidz), *A Christmas Carol & Peter Pan* (Tickled Pink), an open-air *Romeo & Juliet* (Cornucopia Theatre), *The Liar* (South Hill Park), *Dance or Die* (Hoxton Hall), *Voices in the Alleyway & Yes, I Still Exist* (Spread Expression Dance), *The Fiddler* (Unicorn Theatre) and film short *The Judge* for Faith Drama, *The Riddle of the Sands & Laurel and Hardy* (Jermyn St Theatre), *The Famous Five* (Tabard Theatre), *Hansel & Gretel* (UK tour), *Stockholm* (BAC), open-air tours of *The Merchant of Venice & The Railway Children* (Heartbreak) and the award-winning UK/international touring production of *Hannah & Hanna*. Set Design credits include *Houdini* (UK tour), *Our House* (Elgiva Theatre), *Cinderella* (Library Theatre, Luton) and *Next Door* (Cockpit Theatre). Others with Olusola Oyeleye include *A Wing*, *A Prey*, *A Song* (Guest Projects Africa), *High Life* (Hampstead Theatre), *The Security Guard* (Merton AbbeyFest 2012), *Ella* (RichMix), *Coming Up for Air* (UK tour), *The Playground* (Polka Theatre) and *Ma Joyce's Tales from the Parlour* (Oval House/Edinburgh). He has just completed Set Design work on Rouge28Theatre's new puppet show *Kwaidan*.

**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: Sept 20, Pershore:** Number 8 Arts Centre; **Sept 25, Bath:** American Museum (This Little Light); **Sept 27, Windsor:** The Firestation; **Sept 28, Broadstairs:** Sarah Thorne Theatre Company; **Oct 2, Diss:** Corn Hall; **Oct 3, Gt. Yarmouth:** St. George's Theatre; **Oct 4, Cambridge:** Mumford Theatre; **Oct 5, Borehamwood:** The Ark; **Oct 8, Peterborough:** Key Theatre; **Oct 9, Bedford:** The Place; **Oct 10, Chelmsford:** Cramphorn Theatre; **Oct 12, King's Lynn:** Arts Centre; **Oct 17, Bradford:** Alhambra Studio; **Oct 22, Doncaster:** Cast; **Oct 25, Enfield:** Dugdale Centre; **Oct 29, Nelson:** ACE Centre; **Oct 30, Oxford:** Old Fire Station; **Dec 3 – 10: Republic of Ireland Tour: Dublin, Blanchardstown, Kilkenny, Limerick, Waterford.**

**Tayo Aluko & Friends**

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