

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko,

With Michael Conliffe, Piano

Clwyd Theatr Cymru, Mold, 13 – 15 October 2010

Greetings and Welcome. Several thousand feet deep down in the bowels of the earth, the miners - good, decent working men are trapped, certain to die, unless a miracle happens. They know that between them and freedom lies several tons of hard rock. They find some explosives, but if someone sets it off, he dies. They draw lots. The unlucky one has a young wife. Up steps our hero, he blows the rock away, and himself with it, and the others walk free. Not Chile, but a coal mine in Wales. Our hero is David Goliath as played by Paul Robeson. He sacrificed his life for others' freedom. I hadn't realized until the Chilean story reminded me of the Robeson film, Proud Valley, how his character's story mirrored that of the real man – he sacrificed his wealth, his career, his health because he knew he had to say and do the things he did so that one day his people in America, his friends in Wales and all over the world could be free from exploitation and injustice. It seems we are coming dangerously close to reliving the conditions that existed in the hard times of the past, and we definitely need heroes to stand up against the forces of greed and injustice that are lining up against ordinary decent folk. Not that many names come to mind immediately, but I am sure that Robeson's story will inspire some to discover the hero in themselves and do what they can to continue the good fight that he and others fought so we can be free today.

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Tayo Aluko. Writer and Performer. Tayo was born in Nigeria, and now resides 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 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, Best Male Performer Award, and a nomination for the Best Show at the 2008 Brighton Festival Fringe. He has performed the play around the UK and to audiences on both coasts of the United States of America and Canada, and in Lagos, Nigeria. Tayo's other piece titled I GOT A HOME IN BARACK: 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 is now part of the permanent exhibit at the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool. His CD, RECALLING ROBESON is featured as the song of the month on the Labor Notes website in July 2008.

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. 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 Dramaturg Olusola works across a wide spectrum of arts genres including opera, music theatre, and dance. She was resident director on Trevor Nunn's production of George Gershwin's musical *Porgy and Bess*, and was English National Opera's first black staff director. She has directed productions for Adzido Pan African Dance Company at the Royal Festival Hall. She directed Don Kinch's *Coming Up For Air* (UK tour), Anita Franklin's *The Resurrection of Roscoe Powell* (Soho Theatre), *The Shelter* for the Royal Shakespeare Company Early Stages Festival (Barbican Theatre), and *Medea, Ariya* at (Royal National Theatre Studio); *The Playground* by Beverley Naidoo, at Polka Theatre, was a Time Out Pick of the Year. *Dido and Aeneas, Ariya* (Tricycle & BAC). Productions abroad include: Akin Euba's *Orunmila's Voices: Songs from the Beginning of Time* in New Orleans, and *Chaka: An Opera in Two Chants* in St Louis. For the British Council *Write a Story*, Ghana and *Twelfth Night*, Zimbabwe. Her poetry has been set to music by Akin Euba. Her most recent production, *High Life* by Lizzy Dijeh has completed a successful run at the Hampstead Theatre. Olusola is the artistic director of Ariya, the executive director of BushBoy Productions and the associate producer with Collective Artistes.

Phil Newman, Designer & Assistant Director Phil's Set and Costume designs have featured in productions by companies such as Ladder to the Moon, Trestle Theatre, Chalkfoot Theatre Arts, London Shakespeare Workout, Rouge28 Theatre, Heartbreak Productions and Impetuous Kinship. Recent design credits include the acclaimed *Laurel & Hardy* (Jermyn Street Theatre, London and forthcoming UK tour), *Yes, I Still Exist* (Spread Expression Dance), Stockholm (BAC, London), Full House Theatre's national tour of *Hansel and Gretel* (incl. Greenwich Theatre), a new musical version of *The Famous Five* (Tabard Theatre, London), *Xmas Reloaded* (Old Red Lion Theatre, London) and Chalkfoot's recent production of *The Riddle of the Sands* at Jermyn Street, *The Playground* (Time Out Critics' Choice/Polka Theatre, London), *High Life* (Hampstead Theatre, London), *Coming Up For Air* (UK tour) and Victoria Evaristo's *Ma Joyce's Tales from the Parlour* (Oval House, London and also playing at Zoo Southside, Edinburgh Fringe 2010). Future projects include the set design for Faith Drama's forthcoming production, *Next Door* at the Cockpit Theatre, London and Full House Theatre's *Cinderella* at the Library Theatre, Luton.

Sound Design: David Darlington & Liam McDermott. **Lighting Design:** Gareth Starkey. **Sound Engineering:** Derek Murray. **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

Future Performances include:

October 16: Wyese Arts Centre, **Builth Wells**, Mid Wales

October 23: Blaenavon Workmen's Hall, **Blaenavon**, South Wales

November 4: Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, **Guildford**

November 27: Belgrade Theatre, **Coventry**

December 11: Lincoln Performing Arts Centre, **Lincoln**

January 25, 2011: Darlington Arts Centre

January 26: The Met, Bury

January 27: The Lowry, **Salford**

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