

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

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

Tristan Bates Theatre, Covent Garden, London, Friday 11 October, 2013.

Greetings, and Welcome. We come to the end of a day of frenzied trading in Royal Mail shares, with instant profits being made by those who could afford to buy shares. In what can be described as bare-faced bribery, postal workers were offered shares too, and many refused to take up the offer, though others understandably did. May they not live to regret their actions, and carry too much guilt for partaking in the robbery of their own family silver. They will still need to hold on tightly to whatever profits they have made because in all likelihood their pay and conditions will deteriorate as the new shareholders immediately start looking for ways to maximise their profits. To achieve that, workers' pay and conditions will likely start on a downward trend, as will job numbers. Their union, the CWU are threatening strike action, and it will be interesting to see who will support them, should that actually happen. Other workers have their own gripes – notably those in the NHS, who see their own beloved service being primed for privatisation. If people think that couldn't happen to that beloved institution, it is worth remembering that the Iron Lady herself described the Royal Mail sell-off as “a privatisation too far”. The more militant unions and activists will call for as many workers and unions to support the postal workers, to try to halt what they describe as a “race to the bottom”. That we are quite a way down the track already was confirmed today when it was announced that the Red Cross is beginning to distribute food to the poor – not in any far-off part of the world, but here in Britain! There is little happening at government level here or anywhere else in the world to suggest that more and more workers and their families will not soon be queuing up for food too. Perhaps the numbers will get so large one day that people will then decide that enough is enough, and start to fight back. That is what is happening in certain other parts of Europe, although curiously the media isn't exactly awash with those images, just as we are seeing more images of the London Stock Exchange today than we are of food banks. Paul Robeson would urge us to see through the media hype and decide where we need to focus our attention and action, lest we all end up being fed by the Red Cross. I hope you enjoy the show.

Tayo Aluko. Writer, Performer. 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 three awards at the London Ontario Fringe in June 2012 and Best Solo Show at the Stratford UK Fringe this June. He has performed the play around the UK, Canada, Nigeria, Jamaica and the USA (including New York's Carnegie Hall in February 2012). His other piece titled FROM BLACK AFRICA TO THE WHITE HOUSE - a talk about Black Political Resistance, illustrated with Spirituals, has also been performed on 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.

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. Phil's Set & Costume Design credits include: *The Tempest* (UK/UAE tour for Shakespeare4Kidz), *A Christmas Carol* & *Peter Pan* (Tickled Pink), an open-air *Romeo & Juliet* (Cornucopia Theatre), *Dance or Die* (contemporary dance choreographed by Avant Garde'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) & film short *The Judge* for Faith Drama, *The Riddle of the Sands* and *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). *Call Mr Robeson* is one of several shows Phil has designed for director Olusola Oyeleye. Others include *The Security Guard*, *Ella*, *High Life* (Hampstead Theatre), *Coming Up For Air* (UK tour), *Ma Joyce's Tales from the Parlour* (Edinburgh 2010/Oval House) and *The Playground* (Time Out Critics' Choice/Polka Theatre). Most recently, Phil designed the settings for *Houdini* (UK tour) and he will be designing Shakespeare 4 Kidz' forthcoming UK/UAE tours of *Pinocchio* and *Macbeth*.

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: Until October 26, London: Tristan Bates Theatre, Covent Garden **November 7, Oxford:** Ruskin College; **November 8: Oxford** Spires Academy. **November 9, Helmsley Arts Centre. January 17, Corby:** The Core.

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