

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

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

Tristan Bates Theatre, Covent Garden, London, Wednesday 16 October, 2013.

Greetings, and Welcome. Despite the routine claims that British institutions are inevitably “the best in the world”, we have another reminder today that we can’t always trust the people who are supposed to be looking after us. Doubts are being cast over certain senior officers in the police regarding an incident that led a senior politician to reluctantly resign. In the USA, the government appears close to avoiding a major crisis that ran the risk of jeopardising the world economy seemingly because of the perceived irresponsibility and stubbornness of people elected into office by Tea Party activists, and allegedly funded by some of the dodgiest, richest people in the world to do their bidding. Some British politicians recently and in the past have also been found wanting in terms of integrity, and questions have even been asked regarding a recent Prime Minister who now makes huge amounts of money dealing with apparently corrupt and/or repressive governments around the world. Rather than taking all these things lying down, people can do worse than to continue to take an interest in seeking the truth wherever it lies, and at least inform themselves and others as best they can, and also support those that protest injustices wherever they occur. Such is what lies behind the decision of the postal workers to go on strike for a day next month – they fear that the recent privatisation will result in the loss of jobs, and reduction in wages and conditions for those who remain employed in the new regime. This may cause some disruption to many (how much this can be in one day remains to be seen) and it runs the risk of alienating the workers from the public as a result. If the public agree that the continued drive toward profit at all costs is not necessarily a good thing, then the public ought to support the postal workers’ strike. Traditional trade unionism suggests that other workers’ unions would join the strike to make it more effective, for as the saying goes, “an injury to one is an injury to all” and such solidarity gives future protection to other workers who are not necessarily affected right now. Paul Robeson would, I think, urge us to stand by the postal workers, and others who seek to protect themselves and the rest of us against the ongoing race to the bottom for British and other workers. 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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