

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

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Roland Perrin, Piano**

**Tristan Bates Theatre, Covent Garden, London, Tuesday 22 October, 2013.**

**Greetings, and Welcome.** Not having studied political science formally or informally, it may be quite naïve to ask exactly what the job of a government is, and then to posit an answer oneself. One hesitates therefore to suggest that might be to ensure that the governed are enabled to live healthy and prosperous lives with decent education, jobs, healthcare, housing, security, and good access to food, clothing, and not least, the arts as nourishment for the spirit. Many would argue that certain some of these should be basic and easily accessible, and if not free at the point of need, then at least affordable to most. Healthcare is one such. Water is another. Electricity and gas? Well, in order to live comfortably in a temperate climate, these are also essential, and should perhaps not be left to the market. But these have been taken out of State ownership, and we see prices rising daily, with the government apparently powerless to stop what will become inevitable: many vulnerable people dying in winter due to their inability to afford to heat as well as eat. It also doesn't matter who the government sells assets to: arms go to vicious, cruel regimes, and electricity generation goes to a foreign company that is (heaven forbid – State owned!), and partly financed by a “communist regime” (though many would question the validity of that term) with a questionable civil rights record. Security of supply is therefore not entirely assured, nor are prices, or waste disposal. People concerned with Africa might also worry about the supply of uranium to power the plants – it is alleged that France went to war in Mali recently not to safeguard peace, but the supply of that particular essential element – in an apparent continuation of colonialism of the West by Africa for her natural resources. The British army might therefore have more reason to be drawn into future wars in that region, though the pretext will probably remain the spread of democracy and Western values. As the sale of various countries' assets to the highest bidder continue, perhaps more people will join those that call for a rethink, wanting to save something for future generations. Even though we don't get reports of these, such protests are going on around Europe, where ordinary people are being made to suffer austerity, and Brazilians had theirs yesterday. Paul Robeson's story might conceivably inspire more people to take interest and action here. 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.

### **Roland Perrin, Piano**

Born in New York, pianist Roland Perrin spent his childhood roaming the planet with his itinerant family. Eventually settling in London, Roland has established himself as one of the foremost musicians working in the jazz and world music areas. He has toured and recorded with Dudu Pukwana, Najma Aktar, Moses Fan-Fan, Aster Aweke, and his own band, *Limited Edition*. He is also currently working on an animated musical film he has conceived, titled *Echoes of the Shtetl* based on the story of his grand parents' emmigration from Russia to New York at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

**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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