

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Michael Conliffe, Piano
Tristan Bates Theatre, Covent Garden, London, Tuesday 23 October, 2013.

Greetings, and Welcome. It is sad to hear of the loss of hundreds of jobs at the Grangemouth Petrochemicals plant earlier today, with its owners' decision to shut it down. The refinery is also at risk. Negotiations broke down because the workers refused to accept a revised offer downgrading their pay and conditions, and the owner and main shareholder decided to pull the plug. Other workers in the group will be scared, and placing hope on an alternative buyer being found. Fuel prices for much of the UK will be affected if the refinery also closes, so the public will be taking an interest. Also of interest is the fact that the same issues – pay and conditions – are at the heart of many disputes in many industries: the postal workers, teachers, health workers, fire fighters etc. I come from an oil-producing country which has never had (as far as I know) a single refinery. It would make a lot of sense for us to have some, but the multinational companies and the governments of the more industrialised countries have seen to it that our capacity to do so has never materialised, making the county a source of cheap labour, cheap materials and huge profits. This is multiplied scores of times around the developing world in a way that indicates why wealth discrepancies between rich and poor nations show no signs of being reduced. Thinking about other European countries where the vast large numbers of people are revolting against austerity measures, the workers in this part of the world are finding themselves more and more at risk, and it looks as though before too long, such disputes might be coming to a workplace near me and you. The prospect of nationalising the refinery has been dismissed, and it may be that the plant, just like much of the rest of the country's assets and industry, may be sold off to the highest bidder, who will wish to protect and maximise their profits by paying workers less and less. As we can see from Paul Robeson's story, he believed that people who fought so that we can enjoy what we do today can only be honoured by continuing their struggle. Otherwise we take steps backwards, towards what his own father endured - slavery. It might seem like a hell of a long way to that situation, but as they say, the journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step. 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.

Thanks to: Frances Rifkin, Sian Evans, Yasmin Mohammed, Barbara Cohen.

Tayo Aluko & Friends
24- 26 Mount Pleasant, Liverpool L3 5RY
Tel: +44 151 707 8187

info@tayoalukoandfriends.com www.callmrrobeson.com
facebook: Call Mr. Robeson **Twitter:** @CallMrRobeson

