

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

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Michael Conliffe, Piano  
Tristan Bates Theatre, Covent Garden, London, 5, 6 October, 2013.**

**Greetings, and Welcome.** The next step in the proposed privatisation of the NHS was taken today, with the announcement that health workers' promised 1% pay rises will not happen next year. "We must make cuts", we continue to be told, "because of the terrible mess the last government left us in". The people that are expected to bear the brunt of the cuts are the rank and file of ordinary working people who keep the country living and working. The big bosses at the tops of the pyramids (health executives included) need to be paid extremely handsomely to keep them interested in doing their jobs. Such is the logic of modern capitalism. It seems that the more successful a capitalist class is, the less it pays the workers that work for the elite, and the more the natural and human resources are to be exploited in its quest for unending profit. Unless, of course, the workers resist. That ultimate exploitation of human beings – slavery – in time ends when the slaves themselves revolt. Such was the response of the people from whom Paul Robeson and many of our forebears are descended, and to whom Robeson always paid tribute whenever he could. He also reminded people constantly, as did those that came after him, that the fight was not won and that people needed to know how much power they had in organising and acting together. It will not be surprising if, in the next few weeks and months, trade unions call strikes (the fire fighters did a few weeks ago, the postal workers are threatening one in response to the intended reduction of their work conditions as part of the privatisation of that industry, and the health workers may do too, because they feel that they are underappreciated and underpaid for the crucial work that they do). When they see billions being spent on war-mongering around the world, they refuse to accept the argument that resources are scarce for them, being in the caring business, feel that resources should not be used so unsparingly instead on killing. If and when they protest as they plan to, they will be relying on the rest of us to support them. 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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