

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Michael Conliffe, Piano
Warehouse Theatre, Croydon. Friday 4 – 20 May, 2012. Week 1**

Greetings and Welcome. I understand there were no local elections in London yesterday, unlike the rest of the country, where people were voting mainly for council seats, and in some cases, like in my home city of Liverpool, for a Mayor. The Labour candidate won there. Just as well, as three fascists (out of a field of twelve white men) were in contention for the position, hoping to repeat the success of the BNP in winning seats for the European Parliament. Here in London, at the time of writing, it is assumed that the Tory candidate will retain the Mayoral seat, while the London Assembly will go to Labour, ushering in a period of potential stagnation as the two powers lock horns (mirroring the chaos in America) while the rest of the population look on and suffer. Or do they? I believe the Occupy London protesters are planning to revive their campaign as the weather improves, and as the Olympics draw closer. That probably means that the London authorities will bear down on protesters with even more ferocity than last time round. And with the way our media portrays these things, it could be forgotten that the reasons for the protests are the grave inequalities in our society, the wasting of vast resources on meaningless wars, destruction of life, property and creation, for the sake of greed. Words, music, art, caring, and many such unquantifiable and intangible concepts are the stuff of life - things that nurture the soul, engender peace. Nobody believed or demonstrated this more than Paul Robeson. His endless calls for people in authority to focus on love and not hate led to him being sidelined and vilified as a dangerous revolutionary. He famously said "My Art is my weapon against oppression". Big as he was, he showed that gentleness and love were indeed powerful forces, especially when practiced and enjoyed by many people together. I hope that his example will inspire us to make and support art, and use it to join the fight for peace around the world. That, after all, is the mark of civilisation.

Tayo Aluko. Writer, Performer, Producer. Tayo was born in Nigeria, and now lives in Liverpool. He worked until recently as an architect and property developer, with a special but as yet frustrated interest in eco-friendly construction. As a baritone, he has sung as soloist in British concert halls accompanied by orchestra, and has also sung in Germany, Ireland and Nigeria. He has performed lead roles in such operas and musicals as Nabucco, Kiss Me Kate and Anything Goes. CALL MR ROBESON won the Argus Angel Award for Artistic Excellence and Best Male Performer Award at the 2008 Brighton Festival Fringe, and two Merit Awards for Excellence in London in 2010. He has performed the play around the UK, the United States of America, Canada and Nigeria, and at New York's Carnegie Hall in February 2012 for his 50th birthday. His other piece titled FROM BLACK AFRICA TO THE WHITE HOUSE: a talk about Black Political Resistance, illustrated with Spirituals has also been performed in 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. A song from his CD, RECALLING ROBESON is featured as the July 2008 song of the month on the Labor Notes website.

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, in which he also acts. 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 artistic director of Ariya, associate producer for Collective Artistes and a Fellow of the Royal Society for the Arts.

Phil Newman, Designer, Assistant Director and Dramaturge. Phil's Set & Costume Designs have featured in productions by companies as diverse as Ladder to the Moon, Trestle, Ariya, Full House Theatre, London Shakespeare Workout, Rouge28 Theatre and Impetuous Kinship. Recent design credits include: *Peter Pan* (Tickled Pink Productions), *Dance or Die* (contemporary dance performance choreographed by Avant Garde's Tony Adigun), *Cinderella* (Library Theatre, Luton), *Voices in the Alleyway* and *Yes, I Still Exist* for Spread Expression Dance, Faith Drama's *The Fiddler* (Unicorn Theatre) & *Next Door* (Cockpit Theatre), *The Famous Five* (Tabard Theatre), Chalkfoot's acclaimed *The Riddle of the Sands* and *Laurel & Hardy* (Jermyn St Theatre, London & UK tours) as well as tours of *Queen Elizabeth's Elephant* and *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, *Hansel & Gretel* (UK tour incl. Greenwich Theatre), *Stockholm* (BAC), and open-air tours of *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Railway Children* (Heartbreak Productions). Phil also designed the award-winning UK & international touring production of John Retallack's *Hannah & Hanna* (Time Out Critics' Choice). Other productions in collaboration with Olusola Oyeleye include *The Security Guard*, *Ella* (RichMix), *High Life* (Hampstead Theatre), *Coming Up For Air* (UK tour), *Ma Joyce's Tales from the Parlour* (Edinburgh Fringe 2010 & Oval House Theatre) and *The Playground* (Time Out Critics' Choice/Polka Theatre, London).

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:

May 25 - June 5: Piccolo Spoleto Festival, Charleston, South Carolina; **June 6 - 17:** London Ontario Fringe Festival; **June 23 - July 1:** Washington DC. DC Black Theatre Festival;
August 26, 27: Greenbelt Festival, Cheltenham Race Course; **October 13:** Otley Courthouse
October 22: Hawth Theatre, Crawley; **October 24:** Arlington Arts Centre, Newbury
October 25: Ashcroft Arts Centre, Fareham; **October 27:** Forest Arts Centre, New Milton

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