

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

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Julian Raphael, Piano**  
**The Moorings, Wellington, New Zealand. Fri - Sun 20 - 22 February 2015**

**Greetings, Welcome.** On arrival in this country for the first time ever a few days ago, one of the topics of discussion I heard on the news was the recent decision to send New Zealand troops back to Iraq to help in the fight against Islamic State. They are allegedly going there to provide training in combat techniques to Iraqi forces, though there are apparently many observers who are questioning the wisdom, effectiveness and real motives of this deployment. There is after all a long history of western powers going to other parts of the world under the guise of humanitarian aid, when in actual fact they were pursuing selfish national, militaristic and commercial interests. It brings to mind something that Paul Robeson once said in a telegram to the USA president in 1946, demanding that the perpetrators of a lynching of four Black men be apprehended and brought to justice: *"Only when our government has taken such action toward protecting its own citizens can its role in aiding the progress of peoples in other countries be viewed with trust and hope."* Robeson was in Wellington 55 years ago at the end of a long and eventful career. While here, he spoke out just as bravely, in support of striking waterside workers who were fighting for better pay and working conditions, and expressing his anger at what he learned about historic and ongoing persecution of Māori. I would like to assume that the fact that your government is again spending huge amounts of money on war, and sending young kiwis into an extremely dangerous arena means that they are doing so in the knowledge that in the time since Robeson's visit, their work at home is now done – the work of ensuring that equal opportunities are available to all New Zealanders (including the indigenous people of this land) inequality has been eradicated, workers in all industries are satisfied that they get fair pay for their hard work, and that greed, criminality and corruption at the highest levels of politics, banking and industry are things of the past. I am pleased to say that in the short time I have been here as a visitor, I have been made to feel very welcome and I have seen little to disabuse me of this picture of a peaceful country clearly totally at ease with itself. I hope you enjoy the show.

**Tayo Aluko. Writer, Performer, Producer.** Tayo was born in Nigeria, and now lives in Liverpool. He worked previously as an architect and property developer, with a special but as yet frustrated interest in eco-friendly construction. He has fronted orchestras as baritone soloist in concert halls, and has also performed lead roles in such operas and musicals as *Nabucco*, *Kiss Me Kate* and *Anything Goes*. *CALL MR ROBESON* has won numerous awards at festivals in the UK and Canada, as well as highly favourable reviews in the press – most notably in the Guardian and on BBC Radio 4. He has toured the play around the UK, the USA, Canada, Jamaica and Nigeria, and at New York's Carnegie Hall in February 2012 on his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. He also delivers a lecture/concert called *PAUL ROBESON – THE GIANT, IN A NUTSHELL*, and another one titled *FROM BLACK AFRICA TO THE WHITE HOUSE*: a talk about Black Political Resistance, illustrated with spirituals has 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. His 15-minute play, *HALF MOON*, which also deals with ancient Africa has been performed several times in the UK. He recently developed a piece titled *WHAT HAPPENS?* featuring the writings of African American Langston Hughes, for performance with live jazz accompaniment.

**Julian Raphael, Piano and original incidental music.** Julian Raphael is a community musician and music educator whose philosophy and teaching style are influenced and informed by music-making of the world's cultures. His company Community Music Junction has been operating in Wellington for the past eight years, and he tours the country running choral and instrumental workshops for schools, teachers and various communities. Julian directs the Wellington Community Choir, the Wellington Community Children's Choir, MaleVocale and the Hutt Valley Community Choir as well as a number of daytime singing groups under the banner "Sing for your Life".

**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.** Phil's Set & Costume Design credits include: *Spring Awakening - The Musical* (Chelsea Theatre), *The Tempest & Pinocchio* (UK & UAE tours for Shakespeare4Kidz), *A Christmas Carol & Peter Pan* (Tickled Pink), an open-air *Romeo & Juliet* (Cornucopia Theatre), *The Liar* (South Hill Park), *Dance or Die* (Hoxton Hall), *Voices in the Alleyway & Yes, I Still Exist* (Spread Expression Dance), *The Fiddler* (Unicorn Theatre) and film short *The Judge* for Faith Drama, *The Riddle of the Sands & Laurel and Hardy* (Jermyn St Theatre), *The Famous Five* (Tabard Theatre), *Hansel & Gretel* (UK tour), *Stockholm* (BAC), open-air tours of *The Merchant of Venice & The Railway Children* (Heartbreak) and the award-winning UK/international touring production of *Hannah & Hanna*. Set Design credits include *Houdini* (UK tour), *Our House* (Elgiva Theatre), *Cinderella* (Library Theatre, Luton) and *Next Door* (Cockpit Theatre). Others with Olusola Oyeleye include *A Wing, A Prey, A Song* (Guest Projects Africa), *High Life* (Hampstead Theatre), *The Security Guard* (Merton AbbeyFest 2012), *Ella* (RichMix), *Coming Up for Air* (UK tour), *The Playground* (Polka Theatre) and *Ma Joyce's Tales from the Parlour* (Oval House/Edinburgh). He has just completed Set Design work on Rouge28Theatre's new puppet show *Kwaidan*.

**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: March 4 - 15, Australia:** Adelaide Fringe; **March 27, Millom, Cumbria:** Beggars Theatre; **March 28, Richmond, N. Yorkshire:** Georgian Theatre Royal; **April 1, Liverpool:** unity Theatre; **April 23, Abertillery:** The Metropole; **April 24, 25, Newport:** The Riverfront; **May 2, Manchester:** The Mechanics Institute; **May 16, Walton-upon-Thames:** Riverhouse Barn; **May 23: Barnsley Civic Hall**

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