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

## Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, With Eric Wetherell, Piano Blaenavon Workmen's Hall, Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2010

**Greetings.** I believe it was something like 83 years ago when Paul Robeson first met a group of Welsh miners in London, and visited them here in the valleys shortly after. The folk he met and the things he learned shaped his world view and remained with him for the rest of his life. A whole lifetime later, bringing his story back to the valleys, I feel the presence of Robeson, and those miners and their families who stood up bravely for their communities against the forces of greed and injustice. Many battles have been fought and won (or lost) since then, but the overriding lesson of history is that struggle always has to continue, on behalf of one's community and others around the world. This is what Robeson understood long before most people of his generation did, and as we approach times when people around the UK and around the world are gearing up for new struggles, I can only hope that the solidarity between Mr. Robeson and his Welsh friends of a lifetime ago returns to the surface to aid us in our time. I hope you enjoy the show.

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Tayo Aluko. Writer and Performer. Tayo was born in Nigeria, and now resides 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. His other piece titled I GOT A HOME IN BARACK: 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.

## Eric Wetherell, Piano

Eric Wetherell was a professional horn player for some years, having trainied at Oxford and the Royal College of Music. He attended the National Opera School for a year, and became a repetiteur at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. He then became Assistant Musical Director and conductor with the Welsh National Opera. A freelance conductor for many years with most of the BBC orchestras, Eric spent a period of time as Musical Director for HTV, and then Principal Conductor for the BBC Northern Ireland Orchestra, and finally Senior Music Producer for BBC Radio 3 in the South and West region. As a composer, Eric has written orchestral suites, jazz, wind band and brass band compositions, choral works, children's songs and music for films and TV. He is well known as an arranger and has rescored four major operas for Midland Opera, reducing the orchestration for chamber orchestra. The most recent is Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffmann*, due for performance in late autumn this year. Eric's first opera, *Foreign Field* had its first performance in Bristol last month, to critical acclaim.

Olusola Oyeleye, Director and Dramaturg Olusola works across a wide spectrum of arts genres including opera, music theatre, and dance. She was resident director on Trevor Nunn's production of George Gershwin's musical Porgy and Bess, and was English National Opera's first black staff director. She has directed productions for Adzido Pan African Dance Company at the Royal Festival Hall. She directed Don Kinch's Coming Up For Air (UK tour), Anita Franklin's The Resurrection of Roscoe Powell (Soho Theatre), The Shelter for the Royal Shakespeare Company Early Stages Festival (Barbican Theatre), and *Medea*, Ariya at (Royal National Theatre Studio); *The* Playground by Beverley Naidoo, at Polka Theatre, was a Time Out Pick of the Year. Dido and Aeneas, Ariya (Tricycle & BAC). Productions abroad include: Akin Euba's Orunmila's Voices: Songs from the Beginning of Time in New Orleans, and Chaka: An Opera in Two Chants in St Louis. For the British Council Write a Story, Ghana and Twelfth Night, Zimbabwe. Her poetry has been set to music by Akin Euba. Her most recent production, High Life by Lizzy Dijeh has completed a successful run at the Hampstead Theatre. Olusola is the artistic director of Ariya, the executive director of BushBoy Productions and the associate producer with Collective Artistes.

Phil Newman, Designer and Assistant Director/Dramaturg Phil's Set and Costume designs have featured in productions by companies such as Ladder to the Moon, Trestle Theatre, Chalkfoot Theatre Arts, London Shakespeare Workout, Rouge28 Theatre, Heartbreak Productions and Impetuous Kinship. Recent design credits include the acclaimed Laurel & Hardy (Jermyn Street Theatre, London and forthcoming UK tour), Yes, I Still Exist (Spread Expression Dance), Stockholm (BAC, London), Full House Theatre's national tour of Hansel and Gretel (incl. Greenwich Theatre), a new musical version of The Famous Five (Tabard Theatre, London), Xmas Reloaded (Old Red Lion Theatre, London) and Chalkfoot's recent production of The Riddle of the Sands at Jermyn Street, The Playground (Time Out Critics' Choice/Polka Theatre, London), High Life (Hampstead Theatre, London), Coming Up For Air (UK tour) and Victoria Evaristo's Ma Joyce's Tales from the Parlour (Oval House, London and also playing at Zoo Southside, Edinburgh Fringe 2010). Future projects include the set design for Faith Drama's forthcoming production, Next Door at the Cockpit Theatre, London and Full House Theatre's Cinderella at the Library Theatre, Luton.

Sound Design: David Darlington & Liam McDermott. Lighting Design: Gareth Starkey. Sound Engineering: Derek Murray. 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

Thanks to: Kathryn Stowers and Sharon Ford at Big Pit

## **Future Performances include:**

Nov 4: Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, Guildford; Nov 27: Belgrade Theatre Coventry Dec. 11: Lincoln Performing Arts Centre; Apr. 26 2011: The Gate, Cardiff Apr. 28: Theatr Felinfach, Lampeter; Apr 29: Taliesin Arts Centre, Swansea; Apr. 30 Miners Welfare Hall, Ystradgylnlais; May 1: Theatr Mwldan, Cardigan May 3 Grand Pavilion, Porthcawl; May 19 Neuadd Dwyfor, Pwllheli; May 20 Galeri, Caenarfon

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