

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.
Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko,
With Michael Conliffe, Piano
The Belgrade Theatre, Saturday 27 November 2010

Greetings. The students are at it again – it used to be against wars in far off lands, but, this time it's about having to go into debt to get educated, when those that made the decision got it free in their time. Not fair, they say. I heard an American lady say how fortunate the British students are, compared to Americans, where in the top universities, fees run up to about \$50,000. In America too, I have seen huge neighbourhoods literally behind universities where they don't even have descent homes, not to talk of schools. Back in my home county of Nigeria, we once had universities that rivalled those abroad in the 1950s and 60s, but the situation is now dire. Interestingly, Paul Robeson was offered a visiting lectureship at Legon University in Ghana towards the end of his life, but his travails in America rendered him too unwell to take it up. What a wonderful inspiration he would have been to those African students, and who knows what a difference he would have made to the future of Ghana. Still, his story survives, and it is never too late for young people to be inspired to fight to make the world a better place, where everybody has equal opportunities to learn. And in the same way as he kept fighting for peace and justice right to the bitter end, I trust that all of us will be inspired to do the same, whatever our age. It seems there are more and more battles to come.

Tayo Aluko. Writer and Performer. 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. 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.

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. 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.

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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), Faith Drama's forthcoming production, *Next Door* at the Cockpit Theatre, London, *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 at Edinburgh Fringe 2010). Future projects include the set design for 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: Professor Anthony Howard at Warwick University, and his students, Sita Thomas, Yacine Sekkoum and Emil Rybczak

Future Performances include: Dec. 11: Lincoln Performing Arts Centre; Jan 4 – 23: Theatro Technis, London. **Jan 25 2011:** Darlington Arts Centre; **Jan 26:** The Met, Bury; **Jan 27:** The Lowry, Salford; **Jan 28:** Guildhall, Derby; **Jan 29:** Junction, Goole; **Feb 5:** Eastgate Theatre, Peebles, **Feb 6:** Eden Court Theatre, Inverness. **March 3:** The Plough, Great Torrington, Devon; **March 5:** The Arc Theatre, Trowbridge

Tayo Aluko and Friends

24- 26 Mount Pleasant, Liverpool L3 5RY Tel: 0151 707 8187

info@tayoalukoandfriends.com www.callmrrobeson.com

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