

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko,

With Michael Conliffe, Piano

The Plaza, Stockport, Sunday 31st October 2010

Greetings. So, we've come to the close of another Black History Month once again. With any luck, many more people would have learned something new this month that will have increased their awareness or pride in the achievements of Black people, and inspired them. For me, there are few better examples than Paul Robeson, whose important and inspiring story some of you may be hearing for the first time ever today. Like many stories of Black Achievement, his has been buried for quite a while, despite the fact that only a few decades ago, he would have had no problem filling a theatre the size of the Plaza twenty times over any day of the week. His story is the perfect illustration that Black History is everybody's history, that Black and African struggle is everybody's struggle, and crucially that the quest for truth and the urgent task of fighting for justice and peace everywhere cannot be restricted to just one month of the year, but every month, and every day. Each and every one of us has a contribution to make to the cause, however small. I hope you enjoy the show.

Thanks to individual donors: Dr. Tony Gilbertson, Peter Brown, Jan Pell & Mike Scholes, Jill Hyde, George Fox, Han Duijvendak & Lisa Davies, Dorothy Taylor, Jane Weeks, Elspeth McLean, Carol Maggin (Liverpool), Ms. Landé Abisogun (London) Charles Boylan (Vancouver), Sinead Larkin (Derry), Ms. Kehinde Adeniji Ms. Toyin Olawoye (Lagos), Anne & Tony Brooks (Builth Wells), Kathy Jarrett-Thorp (Skelmersdale). Chris & Carl May (Newcastle), Dr. Michael Etomi (Charlotte, NC), Dr. Funke Adedeji (Notts.)

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. BLACK HISTORY FOR BEGINNERS (FIVE THOUSAND YEARS OF AFRICAN HISTORY IN FIFTY MINUTES) is a presentation he does for schools groups. 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.

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: Maxine Pennant, Jannett Crease, Eric Coates, Brian Smith & Jane Weeks.

Future Performances include:

Nov 4: Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, Guildford; **Nov 27:** Belgrade Theatre Coventry
Dec. 11: Lincoln Performing Arts Centre; **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 6:** Eden Court Theatre, Inverness.

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