

I am in the happy position of being able to report a personal victory in a recent fight against an employer. A NorthWest university cancelled a talk and a performance I was due to give because I had the temerity to inform them that in the event that the UCU staff being out on strike on the day of the talk, I would not cross the picket line, as requested by them. Being a member of Equity, the actors' union, I had no hesitation in reaching my decision. For having taken that stand (even though the strike was called off before the date scheduled for the talk), I stood to lose the expected fees. I took the matter to my union, who submitted a claim for loss of earnings at the local Court. The university contested it, but eventually settled out of court. That was the first time I had ever needed the union's services, despite years of membership, and faithfully paying my dues. Even though this is a single, small victory for an individual member, it is a great story to be able to share to any trade unionist who wonders why they need to be active in their union, and/or why to keep paying their subs. You just never know. In the wider world, of course, unions are very active, fighting for the rights of workers around the country, and similar struggles are going on around the world – even in the USA. Nowhere however are the struggles proving more dramatic than in France, where people have joined the trade unionists on the streets en masse. In this country, it is clear that those in power care less about the ordinary citizens than they do about making sure that their fellow members of the 1 per cent get as much out of the public and the public purse as they can, while paying those that actually produce the wealth as little as possible. Paul Robeson, both in his country and everywhere else that he visited or had an interest in, was keen to use his big baritone voice to remind people of the power of trade unions, and to encourage membership in them, including, in the US, ensuring that Black workers were not only members, but in the leadership. There is no doubt that such activism is needed today, at all levels, especially in societies where Black workers suffer the additional stresses of being minorities in a capitalist society. In the words of the song that Robeson made famous, “*where working folk are out on strike / Joe Hill is at their side; Where working folk defend their rights, that's where you'll find Joe Hill*” It is sad to say that I am finding it something of an uphill struggle convincing young Black actors in Liverpool to join and be active in Equity, but the work continues. I am pleased to be among so many active Black trade unionists here today. Solidarity!

**Tayo Aluko. Writer, Performer.** Tayo was born in Nigeria, worked as an architect in Liverpool for many years. He has fronted orchestras as baritone soloist in concert halls, and has also performed lead roles in opera, musicals and oratorio. *CALL MR ROBESON* has won numerous awards at festivals in the UK and Canada, and continues to be performed after 16 years. He delivers a number of lecture/concerts and talks on Black Political Resistance using art and song. 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 has developed a piece titled *WHAT HAPPENS?* featuring the writings of African American writer Langston Hughes, for performance with live jazz accompaniment. He has been published in *The Guardian*, *The Morning Star*, *NERVE Magazine*, *Modern Ghana*, *Searchlight Magazine*, *Counterfire* and *Counterpunch*. His latest production is a radio play, *PAUL ROBESON'S LOVE SONG*, recorded during lockdown with actors from the USA and Canada, and now streaming online. Talks he gives include *ART AS A WEAPON – SOME PAN-AFRICANIST EXAMPLES*, a survey of artists in the African Diaspora. His third one-man musical play (a work in progress), is *COLERIDGE-TAYLOR OF FREETOWN*, inspired by the life and music of the Black British Composer, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. He is also working on a screenplay telling the story of Pastor Daniels Ekarte (d. 1964), known as the African Saint of Liverpool.

**Tim Mottershead, piano.** Tim studied music at Liverpool Community College and Aberdeen University. He has learned most from a long association with composer-pianist Ronald Stevenson (1928-2015) who was a pioneer of 'World Music'. As a consequence, Tim is conversant with many genres, particularly Indian classical music, performing with the group Raga Jyoti from 2000 to 2012. He currently teaches at Bhavan Indian music school. Besides performing with Tayo, he is accompanist to Let's Sing Community Choirs, and works regularly with vocalist Bill Holmes in a wide variety of repertoire. In the autumn they undertake their biggest project to date, when they will perform Marvin Gaye's protest album 'What's Going On' in its entirety.

Call Mr. Robeson was premiered at C-Soco at the Edinburgh Fringe on August 12, 2007, with Michael Conliffe accompanying Tayo Aluko then, and for several years thereafter.

**Director and Dramaturge:** Olusola Oyeleye.

**Set & Costume Designer:** Phil Newman.

**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.

Some voices in the HUAC scene used from

*Are You Now or Have You Ever Been?*

by Eric Bentley, recorded by L A Theatre Works.

**Male Voice Choir:** Liverpool Male Voice Choir

**Future Performances include:**

**20 October: Just An Ordinary Lawyer @** St. George's Hall, Liverpool

**24 October: Talk on Paul Robeson,** for Counterfire, London

**25 October: Words Behind 4Wings @10.** Performance by 4Wings users and staff of a drama written by Tayo Aluko, inspired by stories shared by the women. St. George's Hall, Liverpool

**26 October: Participant, Book Launch.** Pastor Daniels Ekarte and the African Churches Mission. Liverpool, 1931-1964. Writing on the Wall BHM23

**27 October: This Little Light** (A Paul Robeson presentation). Bolton Socialist Club

**29 October: Art As A Weapon – Some Pan-Africanist Examples.** Faversham Town Council.

**31 October: Just An Ordinary Lawyer.** The Courtyard Theatre, Shoreditch, London

**7 November: Call Mr. Robeson.** St. Ives Library, Cambs

**8 November: Call Mr. Robeson.** St. Neots Library, Cambs

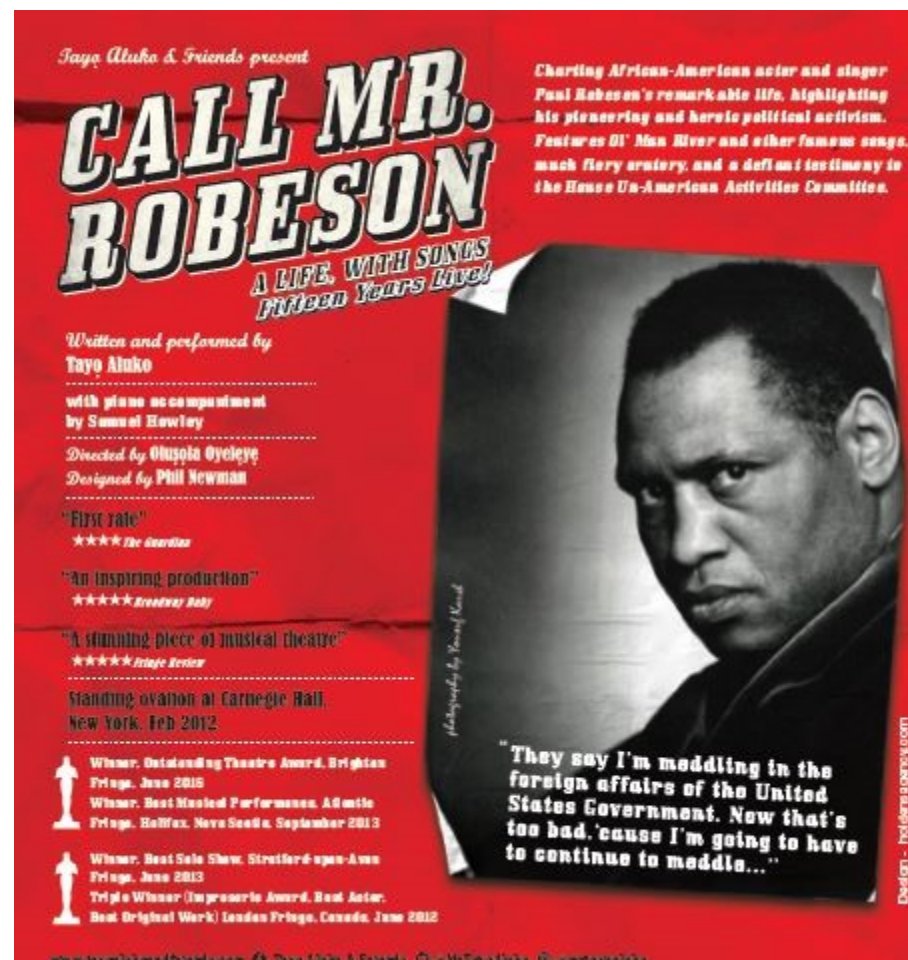
**Tayo Aluko & Friends**

**Liverpool L15 3LA**

info@tayoalukoandfriends.com www.tayoalukoandfriends.com

facebook: Tayo Aluko & Friends Twitter: @MrTayoAluko

instagram: mrtayoaluko tel: +44 7990 608 074



**Written and performed by Tayo Aluko**  
**Accompanied by Tim Mottershead**

**Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester**  
**Friday 29 September, 2023**  
**for North West UNISON Black Members**