

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

**Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Michael Conliffe, Piano
Rose Theatre, Edge Hill University, Thursday 17 November 2011**

Greetings and Welcome. The incongruity of having a bank – that most potent of symbols of capitalism – being nationalised has been ended today, with the sale of Northern Rock to Virgin Money. Selling it at a time when shares are at an all-time low means that it represents a significant loss to the exchequer, by a chancellor from the party that supposedly understands business better than any other. There is of course nothing new about a national asset being sold cheap to capitalists, in this country or anywhere else, and promises that the new bank will be run in such a way that the ordinary person on the street benefits will probably be taken with a pinch of Syrian salt. If the new owners were to come up with a funding scheme that would make it easy for businesses to gainfully employ most of the million or so unemployed youth, maybe in the caring professions, many will rejoice. It is perhaps more likely that it will lend to, or invest in businesses that will bring sure-fire profits, like those involved in the arms industry, since all over the world, there seems to be limitless demand for weapons of mass destruction. Our governments are always very happy to sell these to foreign dictators and cleverly claim to be working for world peace at the same time. Paul Robeson openly criticised the American government for being so hypocritical in his time. There are several doing so today, many of whom have recently been evicted from Wall Street (occupywallst.org). It is likely that a similar fate awaits the people occupying St. Paul's (occupylsx.org), but there are several cities around the country, America and the world where ordinary citizens continue demanding a change from the system where money buys politicians and dictates national and international policy. The trade unions here are making their voices heard too, and all these movements would benefit from more of us doing more than watching from the sidelines. I trust Robeson's story and example inspires more of us to do just that, in whatever way we can. I hope you enjoy show.