

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Michael Conliffe, Piano

Stephen Joseph Theatre, Thursday 10 November 2011

Greetings and Welcome. I believe someone quite famous was buried in Scarborough today, and thousands turned out to pay their respects. It was the same with Paul Robeson in January 1976, in Harlem, New York, even though by the time of his death he had already faded from public consciousness. He had however been extremely famous (or infamous) at his prime, because he used whatever platform he could to campaign for peace, justice and equality around the world. Back in the 1930s, 40s and 50s, this was a dangerous thing to do, as the governments and the financial big-wigs saw it as interfering in the smooth running of things as they wanted them. We have big-shots scampering around Europe and America trying to rescue the world economy today also. The people are being asked to sit back and watch, as in Greece for example, a referendum was quashed and a banker has now been installed to run that economy, to the satisfaction of "the markets", whoever they may be. Community banks, credit unions, friendly societies and the like would probably make good use of the billions that our governments are spending around the world on war, and ordinary working people around the world would feel the benefits. However, talk like that smacks of socialism, or communism, such as the people occupying Wall Street, St. Paul's and other public spaces around the world are being accused of. I have no doubt that Paul Robeson would have been ready to stand side by side with the people in those squares, calling for a change to a system that clearly is not working, save for the benefit of a tiny minority of the world population. I hope his story inspires more of us to take a stand and join those people who call for fairness, equality, justice and peace, worldwide. I hope you enjoy show.