

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko,

With Michael Conliffe, Piano

Theatr Elli, Llanelli. Wednesday 5 October 2011

Greetings and Welcome.

Seattle, Washington State, USA has been on my mind recently. Not because of a former prisoner returning there from Italy in the full glow of the world's media, but because there is something else going on there, called "Occupy Seattle". This is one of many such events going on in many cities in America, where citizens are occupying a prominent square for as long as they can, hoping to make it their version of Egypt's Tahrir Square. This started a week or so ago in New York, where people were called to "Occupy Wall Street" (occupywallst.org). People are fed up with the corporations calling the shots as far as government policy is concerned, spending trillions on war, on banks, and propping up dictatorships around the world rather than on taking care of their citizens, young and old, by providing Medicare, Medicaid, Education, clean energy and so on. It appears that the authorities there want it to remain a silent revolution, but they may just be burying their heads in the sand. In Greece, Spain and elsewhere, people are occupying the streets too, refusing to accept what their governments tell them: that ordinary folk have to bear the brunt of the austerity measures needed, we are told, to save the world's economies. Many people see this as saving the wealth of the elite, and are calling for active opposition to this. Although people are not protesting as dramatically here as they are elsewhere, there is a tradition of dissent that can be called on. I understand that here in Llanelli a hundred years ago, the people gave the authorities a good run for their money. Were Paul Robeson here then, he would have been alongside them, as he was during the 1920s and 30s. Were he here now, he would be ready to join those calling for action today, and urging the rest of us to join them too. I hope his story inspires some of us to do what we can to stand in solidarity with those who wish to see peace and prosperity for all, both here and elsewhere.