

JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER. A play, with songs.
Written and performed by Tayo Aluko, with Philip Blandford, piano
Directed by Amanda Huxtable, Designed by Emma Williams
Burdall's Yard, Bath, Tuesday 25 October 2016

This morning, there was news about the current International Development Secretary once more wishing to cut the overseas aid budget, arguing that it needs to be more efficiently spent, and used to promote business enterprise. The meagre amounts being spoken of are but a teardrop in relation to the billions available at the drop of a hat to prosecute wars in those very parts of the world that strangely never seem able, after many decades, to get their act together. Naturally, if people on the other side of the world can't develop in the way that Great Britain has developed, the question needs to be asked why all this money is being spent on the undeserving poor? The fact that Britain developed, and continues to prosper relatively at the expense of peoples with whom they have had contact over the last several centuries tends to be conveniently forgotten in such conversations. The nature of the foreign interventions that has led to this state of affairs is really quite shocking, and, it must be said, shameful. Still, as an African proverb reminds us, the best way to treat a boil is to lance it. In other words, expose the dirt, clean it out, and release the pressure that would otherwise cause a messy, unpleasant explosion. Confronting the sordid truth is uncomfortable but necessary, and it is this that this play seeks to do in a small way, in the hope that it might generate interest in finding out more, and creating a better understanding of why inequalities of wealth exist between nations, and indeed within nations, such as this one. The stories of many heroic people who have struggled and sacrificed so that people like me enjoy the kind of life and opportunities that exist today need to be retold, to inspire the next generation of fighters for freedom and justice. They exist in all walks of life – the sporting field that we are particularly interested in today being but one. The world of politics is another, although when one sees a minister whose name suggests that her background is from one of the parts of the world that Britain colonised, it becomes clear that no section of society is free of the urgent need of learning more about colonial history, or indeed owning up to it, and the fact that the exploitative project requires collaborators from within the victimised populations. It requires the rest of us to arm ourselves with knowledge, and determination to continue the struggles of those who went before, to honour our debt to them. I hope you enjoy the show.

Tayo Aluko. Writer, Performer. Tayo was born in Nigeria, and now lives in Liverpool. He worked previously as an architect and property developer, with a special but as yet frustrated interest in eco-friendly construction. He has fronted orchestras as baritone soloist in concert halls, and has also performed lead roles in operas and musicals. His first play, *CALL MR ROBESON* has won numerous awards in the UK and Canada, as well as highly favourable reviews in the press – most notably in the Guardian and on BBC Radio 4. He has toured the play around the UK, the USA, Canada, Jamaica and Nigeria. He also delivers a lecture/concert called *PAUL ROBESON – THE GIANT, IN A NUTSHELL*, and another one titled *FROM BLACK AFRICA TO THE WHITE HOUSE*: a talk about Black Political Resistance, illustrated with spirituals. 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 been published in *The Guardian*, *The Morning Star*, *NERVE Magazine*, *Modern Ghana* and *Searchlight Magazine*. *JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER* is his second full-length play, and was premiered at this year's Edinburgh Fringe.

Philip Blandford, Piano. Phil holds a degree in Music from Bristol University and an Advanced Certificate from the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music. He regularly provides music for a variety of events in the South West, South Wales and further afield. He has developed a repertoire of hundreds of songs from the last hundred years or so. He is a regular accompanist for several local groups, including Bristol Opera, North Avon Youth Theatre Company and the Amadeus Choir. He also accompanies numerous professional singers and instrumentalists. He plays in several jazz bands of all traditions, specialising in the 1920s styles.

Amanda Huxtable, Director. Amanda trained at Manchester Metropolitan University, Recreational Arts in the Community course, followed by studying for a BA Degree in Communications and Cultural Studies at The University of Leeds. She continues to strengthen her practice by studying Social Sciences and The Arts Past and Present at the Open University. Amanda served as Artistic Director of Yorkshire Women Theatre Company in Leeds from 2004-2009. She is building her portfolio of freelance directing work across the UK. She also enjoys being part of a writer-and-director team with Marcia Layne, and together they run Hidden Gems Productions, a theatre company committed to telling rarely told Black British Stories: Black British and Bold. Theatre Directing credits for Hidden Gems tours 2010 -2016 include: Bag Lady, Somebody's Son, Lost & Found, The Yellow Doctress - all by Marcia Layne. Freelance Director credits include: The Promise, by Chris Cooper (Belgrade Theatre Tour), The Dressmaker's Gift, by Anita Franklin (Liverpool's Write Now International Festival), Totally Over You, by Mark Ravenhill (Lawrence Batley Theatre), Continent Chop Chop, by Virtual Migrants, HD100 (Chol Theatre). She was recently Associate Director on Wakefield Mysteries, adapted by Nick Lane (Theatre Royal Wakefield)

Emma Williams, Designer. Emma trained as a theatre designer at Wimbledon School of Art and has worked extensively for touring companies, most recently with Hidden Gems on "The Yellow Doctress", "HD100" for Chol at the Lawrence Batley theatre, both directed by Amanda Huxtable: "Iyalode of Eti", Utopia Theatre; "Molly's Marvellous Moustache", Fidget and "You Forgot the Mince" Imagine Theatre. Designs for the West Yorkshire Playhouse between 2003-2015 include: "Immune"; "Nine Lives"; "Refugee Boy"; "You The Player", co-production with Look Left Look Right; "Scuffer"; "Crap Dad"; "Two Tracks and Text Me"; "Runaway Diamonds"; "Broken Angel"; "Sunbeam Terrace"; "Huddersfield"; "The Dutiful Daughter"-co-production with Szechuan People's Theatre, Chengdu, China; "Coming Around Again"; "The Elves and The Shoemakers"; "Pinocchio"; "The Magic Paintbrush" and the original version of "The Yellow Doctress". Other designs include "One Among Millions", co-pro between RJC Youth Dance and Leeds University, 2016; "Brief Encounters @ Bradford Interchange, a site-specific piece for Freedom Studios; "Somebody's Son", Hidden Gems; "Strawberries in January" Traverse, Edinburgh; "The Shoe", Polka Theatre; "The Swing Left" Unlimited Theatre; "Small Objects of Desire"; Soho Poly Theatre. Opera credits include: "Siroe" Royal College of Music; "Partenope"; Admeto"; "Alceste" all for Cambridge Handel Opera at New Hall Cambridge; "La Cenerentola"; "The Tales of Hoffman" and "Genevieve de Brabant", French Institute, London.

Esther Wilson, Dramaturg. Esther writes for stage, TV & radio. Her first R4 play 'Hiding Leonard Cohen' won a Mental Health in Media award. The Heroic Pursuits of Darleen Fyles is an on-going series for Woman's Hour on R4. Her stage play 'Soulskin' toured nationally with Red Ladder. She was lead writer on the award-winning 'Unprotected'. 'Ten Tiny Toes' was shortlisted for a TMA award. In Collaboration with Paula Simms, Esther worked on 'The Quiet Little Englishman', set in a disused cinema, for Liverpool's Capital of Culture. The piece was hugely ambitious and critically acclaimed. The sequel to the R3 version of Tony Teardrop was commissioned by R4. Esther's TV work includes: Jimmy McGovern's The Street (RTS award for best newcomer), Accused, Moving On, Call the Midwife and The White Princess.

Lighting Design: Mark Loudon; **Sound Design:** Noel Inyang and Tayo Aluko

Forthcoming Performances Include

Just An Ordinary Lawyer: Oct 25: Burdall's Yard, Bath Spa University; **Oct 28:** Bolton Socialist Club; **Jan 16, 2017:** Ustionv Studio, Theatre Royal, Bath; **Feb 2:** Intrepid Theatre, Victoria, BC, Canada.

Call Mr. Robeson: Nov 13 – 22: Tour of North West Territories, Canada. **Nov 25:** Centre Stage, Surrey, BC; **Dec 2:** Lyman Center, New Haven, CT; **Feb 4:** ACT Arts Centre, Maple Ridge, BC, Canada; **Feb 11:** Union County Performing Arts Centre, Rahway, NJ; **Feb 16 – 18:** Evergreen Cultural Centre, Coquitlam, BC, Canada; **Feb 28:** Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY

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