

JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER. A play, with songs.

Written and performed by Tayo Aluko, with Horacio López Redondo, piano

Directed by Amanda Huxtable, Designed by Emma Williams

Theatro Technis, London, January 2017, Week 2

Greetings, welcome. More knowledgeable scholars and followers of contemporary Africa will be able to explain better than I can how it was that the current leader of The Gambia got into power in the first place. It would not be the first time that a seemingly unsuitable person has filled one of the most demanding roles in world politics, nor the last time that he would try to cling on to power by any means, fair or foul. The difference this time is that it is not so obvious (to me at least) whether there are international powers pulling the strings that are creating his strange dance. This is being portrayed as a totally indigenous affair which once again risks exploding into violent internal conflict, and some fear, even civil war. It raises the question as to how much longer we Africans can continue to blame the West for our ongoing troubles, and when we start taking responsibility for our internal and regional affairs. It is easy to use such examples to divert attention away from the ways in which Western interference has long been at the heart of many, if not most of Africa's ills, albeit with the connivance of many among the African elite. As the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) begins to assemble forces next door to the Gambia, the irony that imported military rather than economic might is being shown is striking. Projects like ECOWAS and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU - since replaced by the African Union) have, rather like the continent itself, failed to achieve their full potential, and once again it will be possible to point the finger at external parties for evidence of sabotage of their goals and efforts. One hopes that the more we know about history like this, the better the chances of avoiding repeating past mistakes, especially by copying other countries, large and small, in electing unsuitably qualified and frankly, dangerous leaders. 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*.

Horacio López Redondo, Piano. Horacio began his musical education in Spain at the age of 5. He was on the MA Piano Accompaniment program at the Royal Academy of Music with teachers Mr Malcolm Martineau and Mr James Baillieu, where he graduated in 2013 with Distinction, and was Highly Commended in the "Christian Carpentier Prize" for Piano Accompaniment Exam. In 2012 he won the Accompanist Competition at the "Canolfan Gerdd William Mathias" Festival in Caernarfon, Wales, and also won the Second Prize at the "Ludmilla Andrew Russian Song Prize" competition, at the Royal Academy of Music. Since his arrival in London in 2010, Horacio has performed as an accompanist at some of the most prestigious London venues, including the Wigmore Hall, Blackheath Halls, St. James' Piccadilly, The Forge, King's Head Theatre and Southwark Cathedral, and in other parts of the country such as Canterbury Cathedral, Bristol Cathedral or "The Venue" at Leeds College of Music.

Horacio plays a selection of piano pieces by composers from Africa and the Diaspora as pre-show music.

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), and is an Artistic Associate at Hull Truck Theatre, under the Arts Council's Changemakers Programme.

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: Until Jan 28: Teatro Technis, London

Feb 2: Intrepid Theatre, Victoria, BC, Canada

April 20: Theatre Royal, Bury St. Edmunds; **June 8:** CAST in Doncaster

Call Mr. Robeson: 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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