

# JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER. A play, with songs.

Written and performed by Tayo Aluko, with Karel Roessingh, piano

Directed by Amanda Huxtable, Designed by Emma Williams

Metro Studio Theatre, Victoria, British Columbia. Thursday February 2, 2017

**Greetings, welcome.** It was great to arrive in Victoria to the news that lawyers in BC and around the country are offering free legal services to Muslim Canadians and immigrants in response to the horrific shooting in Quebec a few days ago, and indeed earlier. There is perhaps no better response from the profession (presumably and hopefully led by Muslim lawyers), and it matches the outpouring of love and solidarity that followed the atrocity. It is a sad fact of life that such things may well occur again here in BC, because there are far too many people whose ignorance and bigotry, combined with access to weapons, from simple knives to machine guns will cause innocent people to lose their lives needlessly. When one considers the havoc that has been wreaked around the world in the name of religion in the last century, and the recent changes in the political landscape south of your national border and elsewhere, one is filled with dread. Hope can however be kept alive by recalling the fact that peoples of all races and religions have triumphed over tyranny in the past, largely by reaching across divides with expressions of common humanity and decency. Furthermore, one of the most potent weapons we have in the fight against racism is education about the histories that have led to the world being the way it is today. This play is an attempt to contribute to this effort, and to share inspiring stories of people who have fought for the freedoms that we enjoy now. It is also an attempt to remind us of the horrors perpetrated by the forebears of many of us in the West, lest we forget how and why we have a supposedly better standard of living than people in other parts of the world, or become complacent about the possibility of descendants of past victims striking out in retaliation for injustices visited upon their ancestors. As we enter Black History Month, we are reminded that Black History is everybody's history, and that our shared future is dependent on all of us embracing each other with a determination to understand how and why the wrongs of the past came about, to seek ways of avoiding and correcting the mistakes made by our some of our ancestors, and indeed to be inspired by the bravery and humanity of others of 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*.

**Karel Roessingh, Piano.** Dutch-born Karel was raised in Calgary, and began his professional musical career in 1970. He studied jazz arranging and composition at Berklee College of Music in Boston, and completed a degree in secondary music and mathematics education at University of Victoria. He is frequently a featured specialist at jazz workshops, and writes jazz tunes for his own and other groups, and has composed extensively for film, television and video productions, many of which been broadcast world-wide. He has several recordings to his credit, from solo piano to orchestral compositions, and has produced CDs for Valdy, Maureen Washington and many other artists. Karel is a councillor and former Mayor of the District of the Highlands.

**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:**

**April 20:** Theatre Royal, Bury St. Edmunds; **May 30, 31:** Manchester Central Library;  
**June 3, 4:** Marlborough Theatre, Brighton; **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

### **Tayo Aluko & Friends**

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