

**JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER. A play, with songs.**  
**Written and performed by Tayo Aluko, with Jonathan Ellis, piano**  
**Manchester Central Library. Tues, Weds, 30, 31 May, 2017**

**Greetings, welcome.** Manchester has featured worldwide in the last week for the saddest of reasons, but perhaps the abiding memory most people will retain is that of the people's defiance, and their resolve to come together to resist the efforts of those seeking to divide them. Among students of African history, Manchester also looms large as the site of the fifth Pan-African Congress, held in Chorlton-cum-Hardy in October 1945. Organised partly by people of African descent in the city, it hosted men and women from the African Diaspora whose deliberations would contribute significantly to the eventual attainment of independence, and some of whom, like Kwame Nkrumah, Hastings Banda and Jomo Kenyatta, would become leaders of their respective countries at independence. Their calls for unity between the peoples within the various colonies, and across the continent and the Diaspora, were part of their resistance to the British policy of "divide and rule," which delayed independence, resulted in civil wars, and whose effects continue to be felt in former colonies to this day. Few will argue with the fact that a grasp of the history of imperialism – the ultimate in foreign intervention – might give people here and abroad a better understanding of the conflicts that we have to watch almost helplessly today, which is why it was helpful - in my opinion - for Jeremy Corbyn to remind us that last week's atrocity should not be blamed only on the suicide bomber, his accomplices or his religion. That was seen as a daring statement to make, especially with the election only days away, and he has predictably been criticised by the usual suspects. Nonetheless, Corbyn does us a great service by reminding us about Western interventionist history, and when we see past the media bias against him, we realise that he has consistently proved himself to be on the right side of history practically his entire political life. One example of that was captured in the photograph of him being arrested in the 1980s for campaigning against Apartheid. In doing that, he was following in the footsteps of the Manchester cotton workers who in 1862 refused to touch slave-grown cotton from America, significantly contributing to the abolitionist cause by so doing. I strongly believe that those of us who vote Labour on June 8 will be putting ourselves on the right side of history, standing alongside, and paying suitable tribute to all who have stood for peace, unity and love. 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 such operas and musicals as *Nabucco*, *Kiss Me Kate* and *Anything Goes*. His first play, *CALL MR ROBESON* has won numerous awards at festivals 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, including New York's Carnegie Hall in 2012. He 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 developed a piece titled *WHAT HAPPENS?* featuring the writings of African American Langston Hughes, for performance with live jazz accompaniment. He has been published in *The Guardian*, *The Morning Star*, *NERVE Magazine*, *Modern Ghana* and *Searchlight Magazine*. *JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER* premiered at the Edinburgh Fringe in August 2016, and will feature in the National Black Theatre Festival in Winston-Salem, USA, later this year.

**Jonathan Ellis, Piano and original incidental music.** Jonathan studied music at RNCM and Manchester University. He achieved 1st class degrees from both institutions and has since attained postgraduate-level diplomas in accompaniment and chamber music. At college, he won many prizes as accompanist and solo pianist. He currently performs regularly as a soloist, as chamber musician, as vocal and instrumental accompanist, choral/operatic répétiteur. He is a regular accompanist for City of Manchester Opera, Bury Choral Society and the Pennine Spring Music Festival.

**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, including 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: June 3, 4:** Marlborough Theatre, Brighton; **June 7:** Muson Centre, Lagos, Nigeria;  
**June 11:** The Place, Bedford; **July 12, 14, 16:** Buxton Fringe Festival;  
**July 3 – 5:** National Black Theatre Festival, Winston-Salem, USA; **August 21 – 26:** Edinburgh Fringe;  
**Sept 24, 25:** Swallow Theatre, Whithorn, Dumfries & Galloway

**Call Mr. Robeson: June 10:** Leominster Festival; **July 6 – 8:** Tara Theatre, London;  
**July 13, 15, 16:** Buxton Fringe Festival; **August 21 – 26:** Edinburgh Fringe

#### **Tayo Aluko & Friends**

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