

JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER. A play, with songs.

Written and performed by Tayo Aluko, with Mary Pitchford, piano

Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton. Thursday 5 October 2017

Greetings, and Welcome. There are disasters, and there are disasters. The spectacle at the Tory Party conference yesterday was painful to watch, even for some who are not Conservative voters or supporters, but they are probably not as embarrassed as the citizens of another country with whom we have a close relationship. In that country, the recent mass killing by a lone gunman was certainly another disaster – one they didn't need to add to other disasters that their citizens on the mainland and in dependent territories in the Caribbean have suffered recently with the devastation of the hurricanes. It was interesting to hear their president state that the Puerto Rican disaster was not quite as bad as the one in New Orleans, even though Katrina's devastation was made worse by human failings. And when events like Las Vegas happen, one sometimes can't help thinking of the numbers of innocent people that are routinely killed by the dozen in places like Yemen and Syria by Western armaments. Whilst our capacity to meet the challenges thrown at us by hurricanes and the like may be limited, it seems that our love for the use of, and trade in arms is limitless, notwithstanding the horror they can unleash. The fact that the invention and use of firearms is what has led to world domination by Europe and her descendants seems to have been wiped from our collective memory, but the links between the violence of history and the violence of today is symbolised by our leaderships' relationship with those who procure and profit from the manufacture, sale and use of armaments, or who see the provision of the basics of life as a business opportunity, and not a human right. So when people who are ignored or vilified when they repeatedly call for peace and justice, later describe disasters that happen in nations that are responsible for creating horrors elsewhere as "a case of chickens coming home to roost," they are sometimes being unfair, but only sometimes – it depends on whom the disaster befalls. 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 featured in the National Black Theatre Festival in Winston-Salem, USA, in August.

Mary Pitchford, Piano. After graduating from The Royal Academy of Music, Mary toured the UK with various theatre groups as composer, musical director and performer, notably the award-winning Ragazzi Theater Company at The Edinburgh Fringe Festival. In 1992 she emigrated from London to California for 23 years where she performed and recorded with a diverse array of musicians including David Grisman, David Archuleta, Mark Wills, Michelle Shocked, Earl Thomas and Orla Fallon. She has also worked with NYTC (*I love you, you're perfect, now change*) and played with The Berkeley Symphony for The Mark Morris Ballet Company. Mary currently lives in Malvern and works as a freelance musician, teacher and composer.

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: Oct 6,7: Unity Theatre, Liverpool; **Oct 11:** Waterside Arts Centre, Sale; **Oct 14:** Beggar's Theatre, Millom, Cumbria; Waterside Arts Centre, Sale; **Oct 19:** Lakeside Theatre, Colchester; **Oct 20:** Wellingborough Afro-Caribbean Association; **Oct 23:** The Y, Leicester; **Oct 27:** Dugdale Arts Centre, Enfield

Call Mr. Robeson: Oct 7: Unity Theatre, Liverpool; **Oct 21:** Nottingham Contemporary; **Oct 28:** Dugdale Arts Centre, Enfield; **Nov 24:** Stanley Halls, South Norwood, London; **Nov 25:** Market Theatre, Ledbury.
February 2018: USA & Canada tour.

Tayo Aluko & Friends

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