

JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER. A play, with songs.

Written and performed by Tayo Aluko, with Jason Collins, piano

The Lakeside Theatre, University of Essex, Colchester. Thursday, 19 October 2017

Greetings, and Welcome. News out recently revealed that some of Jeremy Corbyn's closest advisors were monitored by MI5 in the past because they were communists. It is a wonder that this hasn't yet caused the levels of panic and hysteria seen in the United States and South Korea over the nuclear sabre-rattling between two pretty scary world leaders. That this "revelation" should be considered newsworthy at this moment in time is interesting, considering the number of so-called trouble-makers that have been the subject of such state surveillance in the past, right up to now. When in recent times environmentalist campaigners were considered such a threat to national security that the state sent in undercover policemen to infiltrate them and have relationships and even children with some of their members, the intelligence agencies can be said to be somewhat suspect in their choice of targets. That in 2017, attempts should be made anew to scare the public about the Red Menace speaks to what some people refer to as the desperate last gasps of a system in decline. The clash of systems is of course decades old, and was played out on African and Caribbean soil, and there, it was the socialists and communists who were on the side of those resisting colonial domination by the Capitalist West. Their denigration now is thus part of a long tradition, and one which should be treated with some suspicion. That is not to say that all is fine and dandy in the inner circles of the Left, for therein lies another long tradition of internal conflict and division, which the Right have always exploited successfully, and using to hold on to power and influence for so long. The political, economic and environmental climate around the world is demonstrating now perhaps more than ever, that the capitalist system is not only not working, but is propelling the world toward some sort of abyss. The people who need to be subjected to surveillance – not by the state but by the rest of us – are those with their hands on the levers of power, in whom we continue to trust at our peril. They should worry us more than the people surrounding a figure who might soon be bringing us the closest approximation of what a socialist administration might look like. Considering what the current and recent lot have done, a change of that kind is actually quite attractive, and not at all scary. 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.

Jason Collins, Piano. After graduating from Norwich University back in 2007 Jason has been involved with many projects across Norfolk & Suffolk, both in music and business. Jason is based in Bungay running three businesses in the catering and hospitality sector, and being director of his youth choir and the local choral society. He is delighted to be working with Tayo once again on this, his first venture out to Colchester.

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 20: Wellingborough Afro-Caribbean Association;
Oct 23: The Y, Leicester; **Oct 27:** Dugdale Arts Centre, Enfield

Call Mr. Robeson: 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.

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