

JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER. A play, with songs.

Written and performed by Tayo Aluko, with Iain Jackson, piano

The Y Theatre, Leicester. Monday, October 23, 2017

Greetings, and Welcome. Democracy in Europe is looking decidedly shaky right now, what with the latest crisis welling up in Spain adding to the troubles of leaders around the region. Who would have thought that the prospect of Home Rule might be so real in Europe in this day and age? And not just there in Spain, but in Northern Ireland too! The ugly scenes on the streets of Barcelona the other week were reminiscent of those in the cities of Venezuela, where the much-maligned socialist leadership is battling with internal strife provoked not just by an economy previously over-reliant on oil but also by external interference by the USA and her allies here in Europe. This meddling in foreign affairs by the Western powers is at the heart of practically all of the conflicts around the Middle East, Africa and South America today, and it is shameful that the imperialist histories behind them are not only badly neglected, but wilfully suppressed by our leaderships and our media. Desires of various peoples in far-flung parts of the world for self-determination, which independence seemed to have satisfied decades ago, are still bubbling away, thanks to the structures created by bureaucrats, politicians and commercial entities even before most of us were born. The descendants of those powerful people seem even less well-equipped to deal with the situation we find ourselves in today, but they are at the very least impressive in the way they try to project knowledge and competence, not least when criticising other peoples and administrations. There is no doubt that the rise in far-right anti-immigration parties and their growing influence in European politics is due to the influx of desperate migrants from Africa and the Middle East, but it would be good to think that the public at large, and even more importantly, their politicians in this part of the world are better informed about the forces that shaped today's woes, and realise that they remain at play today. This play provides a snapshot of some of those stories from a few decades ago, and it is hoped that it gives not just a bit of historical education, but inspiration to those of us who think we can only watch helplessly as our leaders lead us blindly toward a dangerous abyss. 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 last August.

Iain Jackson, Piano and original incidental music. Iain is a graduate of the University of Birmingham and Birmingham Conservatoire, where he studied piano accompaniment. Now in demand as a freelance accompanist based in the Midlands he works at the Birmingham School of Acting and performs regularly with a variety of groups all over the country. As a self-taught jazz pianist Iain worked for a number of years onboard cruise ships including for P&O, Sun Cruises and Carnival Cruise Lines. As a solo pianist Iain is very interested in early jazz idioms such as Ragtime and Boogie-Woogie, and has recently been composing his own works in these genres.

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 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 27:Dugdale Arts Centre, Enfield, London

2018: March 17: Riverhouse Barn, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey; **March 29:**The Lowry, Salford;

April 18: Alnwick Playhouse, Northumberland; **April 19:** Queen's Hall, Hexham, Northumberland;

April 20: The Maltings, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland; **April 26:** Cast in Doncaster, Yorkshire;

April 27: The Heron Theatre, Milnthorpe, Cumbria

Call Mr. Robeson: Oct 28:Dugdale Arts Centre, Enfield; **Nov 24:** Stanley Halls, South Norwood, London;

Nov 25: Market Theatre, Ledbury; **February 2018:** USA & Canada tour.

April 5: European and British Association for American Studies' Conference, London

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