

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

**Written and performed by Tayo Aluko, with Thomas Kell, piano**

**NOTICED/Black Solicitors' Network Black History Month Performance**

**Shearman & Sterling LLP Offices, London, Tuesday, October 31, 2017**

**Greetings.** I was impressed by the overwhelming number of people who are clearly not of English origin on tonight's guest list, right here in the City of London! One also assumes that some of the English-looking names belong to lawyers of Caribbean origin, so it is a joy to share the story of one of your forebears with you tonight. It is quite conceivable that there are some in the legal establishment and beyond who would be profoundly worried by such a gathering, for as we all know, there are many who continue to be uncomfortable about the presence of people of colour in this country, not to talk of them being so close to the epicentre of global finance and power. How worrying such gatherings can be can be seen by the reaction of one NFL team owner reacting to the "Taking A Knee" protests in the USA by suggesting that the league could not afford to "have inmates running the prison." Reactionary people in the UK will not express their fear in such unsophisticated terms of course, and indeed wouldn't need to do so at all if they see that notwithstanding their numbers, BAME lawyers don't act in unison to combat the injustices against people of colour here, or the injustices against the countries that they or their forebears came from. Such action is probably more likely if the current generation is armed with the information about what went on in the days of Empire, under the guise of "the civilisation project," and how those forces continue to shape today's world. They would recognise that one of the enslavers' and colonisers' most effective weapons, was division among those they oppressed. The brave people who went before us and opened the doors that we ourselves have walked through are surely best honoured by us continuing their work by using our talents, skills and positions of influence individually and collectively to fight today's empires, even from within the belly of the beast. I hope you enjoy the show.

**Tayo Aluko. Writer, Performer.** Tayo was born in Nigeria, and now lives in Liverpool, where he worked previously as an architect. 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.

**Thomas Kell, Piano.** Thomas is a musician and arts producer, with a particular interest in African theatre. Between 2007 and 2015 he was the Administrative Director of Tiata Fahodzi, working, successively with Artistic Directors Femi Elufowoju, jr, Lucian Msamati and Natalie Ibu. Until recently he was a Senior Programme Manager for the British Council working on the worldwide Shakespeare Lives initiative. Other commitments include directorships at Pursued by a Bear Theatre Company and the Elufowoju Jr Ensemble and consultancy for Tangle Theatre, The Art Machine and Faith Drama. He is Director of Music for the churches of Our Most Holy Redeemer, Exmouth Market and St Mark's Myddelton Square, in Clerkenwell. Thomas studied music in Görlitz, Germany before taking up the Organ Scholarship at Trinity College, Oxford where he was responsible for supervising the musical celebrations for the tercentenary of the Chapel. Thomas has never been to Nigeria but is deeply grateful to the many artists, such as Tayo Aluko, whose skill and talent make him feel as if he has!

**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: 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  
**April 28:** Swanland Village Hall, E Yorkshire; **April 29:** Barton Assembly Rooms, N. Lincolnshire

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

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