

JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER. A play, with songs.
Written and performed by Tayo Aluko, with David Dear, piano
Unity Theatre, Liverpool. Friday, Saturday 5, 6 October 2017

Greetings, and Welcome. They say a week is a long time in politics. The contrast between the concluding sessions of the Labour and Conservative Party conferences could not be starker, and we are now contemplating the prospect of a new leader of the Tories, and therefore a new prime minister – one that would have been voted into place only by Conservatives, from a choice provided by their MPs. Democracy isn't looking too good here right now, and it's not looking much better in Spain either. As for the United States, well, no need to comment. These and other European countries colonised most of Africa and the rest of the world in one form or another, taking with them the idea that their systems of government were superior to those they encountered, and forcing their adoption practically everywhere. Many Westerners condescendingly argue that democracy doesn't work in other parts of the world mainly due to corruption, forgetting to look at the corruption in their own countries, and the duplicity, violence and cruelty that was used to acquire such power and influence in the past. The sad fact is that far too many of us from former colonies have bought into this narrative, what with the Eurocentric education and values that we are brought up with. For literally centuries, there have been those who have resisted what some term mental slavery, and have been dismissed as trouble makers who in many cases when they get too troublesome, have been eliminated. In revisiting the lives of some of these brave people, we are reminded of great sacrifices that were made in past struggles against oppression, and that it is surely incumbent upon us to continue those struggles in today's world. The obstacles may appear as insurmountable as they did in the past until we see that the those that hold power today are often as morally bankrupt and vulnerable as their predecessors. And among the most potent weapons at our disposal are an appreciation of history, and Art. We also have the ability to put our support behind those who, because they represent trouble for vested interests are ridiculed and written off as losers. Sometimes even they can become party leaders, and maybe soon, prime ministers. 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.

David Dear, Piano. David has lived and worked in Liverpool for over 30 years as a piano teacher and accompanist. He started playing piano at the age of seven, attended the Huddersfield School of Music and completed a Music Degree at the University of Liverpool. He taught music at a local Comprehensive school in Liverpool before establishing himself as a private piano teacher, and still enjoys working with schools such as King David High School and Bluecoat School. A skilled accompanist, he regularly works with students from the University of Liverpool and has performed in the University Lunchtime Recitals.

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 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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