

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

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

**Wellingborough African Caribbean Centre. Friday, 20 October 2017**

**Greetings, and Welcome.** Some of you may have heard that the “Taking A Knee” protest spread across sports and continents to a football field in Germany last week, when all the players of Hertha Berlin, (only one of whom was visibly Black) knelt before their match against Schalke. What a powerful symbol of international solidarity. This was made even more powerful when the article I read (thanks to facebook friend) reminded us that the gesture first made by the African American football star Colin Kapaernik over a year ago was a refinement of his previous gesture of sitting during their national anthem, after having a conversation with a white soldier who had initially felt insulted, but then suggested that kneeling, which American soldiers do to honour their fallen comrades, might be even more meaningful. The act of sitting and talking with someone who on the face of it might have profound differences has thus become an international symbol of protest, thanks in part to the intervention of the 45<sup>th</sup> President. The controversy surrounding his recent comments to the widow of another African American soldier who died in Mali recently goes on to remind us of the fact that African people have shed blood for (and in) the USA for centuries, so the continued physical, social and economic violence against them is totally out of order. People from Africa and the Diaspora have similarly shed blood for the British, and while the level of violence against their descendants here is not as high as in the USA, there remains much for us to protest and fight against. At least one way of doing this is finding out more about the sacrifices and contributions of those who went before us, honouring and celebrating them, and getting from them inspiration for those struggles that we undertake today on behalf of ourselves, our compatriots (of all creeds and colours) and people in far off lands, for as the footballers in Berlin so eloquently showed last week, an injury to one is an injury to all, and injustice knows no colour, so neither should our search for justice, part of which demands that we sit, talk and listen to each other. 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.

**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 23:** The Y, Leicester; **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 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**

24 – 26 Mount Pleasant, Liverpool L3 5RY Tel: 0151 707 8187

[www.tayoalukoandfriends.com](http://www.tayoalukoandfriends.com)

[info@tayoalukoandfriends.com](mailto:info@tayoalukoandfriends.com) [www.justanordinarylawyer.com](http://www.justanordinarylawyer.com)

**facebook:** Just An Ordinary Lawyer. **Twitter:** @1OrdinaryLawyer

