

JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER. A play, with songs.

Written and performed by Tayo Aluko, with Horacio López Redondo, piano

Riverhouse Barn Arts Centre, Walton on Thames. Saturday, March 17, 2018

Greetings, and welcome. Righteous indignation has been expressed as the Russian president “upped the ante” by closing down the British Council in Russia, in addition to expelling British consulate officials. The arts, and opportunities for cultural exchange between the two peoples is therefore severely compromised over the next several years, as the war of words (at least) escalates. The British Council is not listed among the supporters of a brilliant exhibition, *Legacies of Biafra*, by artists from different parts of Nigeria, at the Brunei Gallery at SOAS, London, which I had the pleasure of visiting earlier today. I was also privileged to meet three of the artists, one of whom reminds us that “Great Art creates dialogue,” another of whom described how as a child in Biafra he walked hundreds of miles a day in search of safety and refuge from the madness, as I was being chauffeur-driven to school daily in Lagos, almost oblivious of the disaster befalling my country. That artist mentioned his daily gratitude for the gift of Art, through which his mind, and that of all Nigeria, can be healed. The legacy of the war plays out today, half a century later, as there is renewed talk of secession and maybe war in the country, to add to the terrorism plaguing the North. One of the most powerful pieces was one that placed the war in historical context, highlighting the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, the partition of Africa and the colonial period. The dubious blessing of oil is also graphically illustrated, but through it all, one overriding theme is that of hope for peace through dialogue; through remembering and honouring those lost. Hardly a part of the world is conflict-free today, and the fingerprints of the British are always present, however vociferously they profess indignation for the machinations of other countries, and wish that others would only adopt good, honest British values. This play is an attempt to remind us of the history of the British in Africa, and to contribute to honest dialogue, through Art. 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.

Horacio López Redondo, Piano. Horacio began his musical education in Spain at the age of 5. He was on the MA Piano Accompaniment program at the Royal Academy of Music with teachers Mr Malcolm Martineau and Mr James Baillieu, where he graduated in 2013 with Distinction, and was Highly Commended in the “Christian Carpentier Prize” for Piano Accompaniment Exam. In 2012 he won the Accompanist Competition at the “Canolfan Gerdd William Mathias” Festival in Caernarfon, Wales, and also won the Second Prize at the “Ludmilla Andrew Russian Song Prize” competition, at the Royal Academy of Music. Since his arrival in London in 2010, Horacio has performed as an accompanist at some of the most prestigious London venues, including the Wigmore Hall, Blackheath Halls, St. James’ Piccadilly, The Forge, King’s Head Theatre and Southwark Cathedral, and in other parts of the country such as Canterbury Cathedral, Bristol Cathedral or “The Venue” at Leeds College of Music.

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: March - May 2018: The Lowry, Salford; Alnwick Playhouse; Queen's Hall, Hexham; The Maltings, Berwick-upon-Tweed; Cast, Doncaster; Heron Theatre, Beetham; Theatre by the Lake, Keswick (see website)

Call Mr. Robeson: March – May 2018: UK tour (see website: www.callmrrobeson.com)

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