

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

**Written and performed by Tayo Aluko, with Angus Carmichael, piano**

**Alnwick Playhouse. Wednesday 18 April, 2018**

**Greetings, and welcome.** *“If you are not careful, the newspapers will have you hating the people who are being oppressed, and loving the people who are doing the oppressing.”* This is a quote attributed to Malcolm X, that fearful, dangerous revolutionary. It comes to mind as one watches Labour back-benchers attacking their leadership over anti-Semitism that they seem to believe is rife in and unique to their party, while saying nothing as unarmed Palestinians are gunned down in full view of the world in Gaza. It comes to mind when our leaders use questionable legal justification to authorise bombing raids in foreign nations (and arm tyrants elsewhere), while remaining patently unable or unwilling to solve the housing crisis on these shores. It comes to mind when one contrasts the news coverage of the passing of a former US First Lady with that of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela. It also comes to mind as Cuba enters a new era today when the second Castro hands power over to a new leader who was actually not a part of the revolution in that country – a revolution that saw off a capitalist oligarchy and brought in the longest-surviving socialist state in the world. Despite the poor state of their economy (thanks in large measure the five-decade-long economic embargo by the USA) it remains the envy of the world when it comes to health and education being free on demand to all its citizens. Their support for African peoples trying to shake off the yoke colonialism is legendary, as is the way they sent doctors round the world to help in times of crisis and to provide rudimentary care and training. This was perhaps most starkly illustrated when during the recent Ebola crisis Cuba sent a medical corps to West Africa and the Americans sent the Army. When in the US, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) heavily-handedly apprehend, detain and deport people who have lived and contributed there for decades, forcibly separating them from their long-established families, we smugly look on and describe it as another symptom of a country whose madness we have watched peak over the last few years. That is, until we see it happening here, to The Windrush Generation, whose forebears had been trafficked by the British to the Caribbean, enslaved there, and whose parents had been invited to this country to help rebuild it after the ravages of WWII – a war fought with the aid of millions of British subjects. Skeletons can't remain in cupboards forever, for former Home Secretaries of former Empires. This play seeks to add to lighting of those dark corners, so that we can be reminded of whose side we need to be on, as we seek to right the wrongs of history, and of today. 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 it 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 2016 Edinburgh Fringe, and featured in the National Black Theatre Festival in Winston-Salem, USA last August.

**Angus Carmichael, Piano.** Gus was born in Edinburgh and studied piano with Audrey Innes from St Mary's Music School and David Parkhouse from London. His musical interests and styles are very broad. He was accompanist for the folk singer Mary Sandeman, worked as session keyboard player with the late Billy Mackenzie and has accompanied Rowan Atkinson. He performs concerts for Music in Hospitals, works with performing arts students at Edinburgh College, accompanies singers/instrumentalists, plays in a jazz quartet and teaches piano.

**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: April 19:** Queen's Hall, Hexham;

**April 20:**The Maltings, **Berwick-upon-Tweed;** **April 26:** CAST in **Doncaster;** **April 27:** Heron Theatre, **Beetham;** **May 3:** Theatre by the Lake, **Keswick;** **May 5, 6:** Harare International Festival of the Arts, Zimbabwe;

**May 19:** Belgrade Theatre, **Coventry;** **May 21:** The Inner Temple, **London;** **May 26:** Merlin Theatre, **Frome.**

**Call Mr. Robeson: April** Pulic Hall; **April 28:** Swanland Village Hall; **April 29:** Barton Assembly Rooms;  
**May 2:** Theatre by the Lake, **Keswick;** **May 11, 12:** Castillo Theatre, **New York;** **May 20:** North Dalton Village Hall;  
**May 24:** Dorchester Arts Centre;  
**May 25:** Bridport Arts Centre. [www.callmrrobeson.com](http://www.callmrrobeson.com)

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

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