

JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER. A play, with songs.

Written and performed by Tayo Aluko, with Nicholas Howe, piano

The Heron Theatre, Beetham, Cumbria. Friday 27 April, 2018

Greetings, and welcome. It was interesting to observe the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting the other day, and notice the affection and reverence all the leaders appeared to have for the Queen, notwithstanding the fact that she, like the institution itself, represents the last direct link with the dead Empire. Diminishing levels of respect accrue to those running her government, as epitomised for instance by the current and previous home secretaries who have found themselves caught up in a trap that they laid for others in an effort to pander to those who wanted to see immigration reduced by any means necessary. And if those means resulted in the lives of elderly Caribbean people being destroyed, so be it – they are expendable. If racism can be said to exist anywhere in British politics, this suggests that in this current government, you can find it in the workings and culture of the highest echelons, however vociferously they express regret and apologize for their actions, or more likely, for having been exposed. Where else would a foreign secretary use the words “picanninnies with water-melon smiles” and get away with it? Not in the Labour Party under its present leader, that’s for sure. He admits that there are pockets of Anti-Semitism in his party, and promises to address it using due process, but this is not good enough for many, even within his own party. As an African who has seen pictures of him getting arrested at an Anti-Apartheid rally decades ago, and then speaking up in parliament on behalf of the Windrush generation a few years ago when the “hostile environment” policy was first mooted, he gets my vote any day. There has long been a history of vilification of those who fight for justice for themselves or others against the capitalists and imperialists, and this play pays honour to some of them. It is hoped that with this reminder of history, we recognise today those who are worth defending, and those on whom sustained pressure should be maintained, for they serve the interests of the few, not the many. 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.

Nick Howe, Piano. After leaving college, Nick taught in the South Ribble area for thirty years, during which time he played for the Guild Singers in Chorley and as many as four local Gilbert & Sullivan societies, playing every single one of the G&S operas several times in the process. He accompanied Preston Opera for fifteen years under five musical directors, and continues to play in the Opera orchestra. More recently he has been playing keyboard synthesizer for musical societies around Lancashire, and for the Blackpool Symphony Orchestra.

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:

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 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

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