

**JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER. A play, with songs.**  
**Written and performed by Tayo Aluko, with Colin Hazel, piano**  
**Belgrade Theatre, Coventry. Saturday 19 May, 2018**

**Greetings, and welcome.** An American friend emailed me yesterday, expressing excitement at today's Royal Wedding, and lamenting the fact that yet another school massacre in her country might detract from the historic international event. One news item that the wedding has definitely overshadowed is the continued coverage of the carnage in Gaza where peaceful Palestinian protesters have been gunned down, in full view of the world, by the Israeli armed forces, with full support from the current American administration. One fears that the fact that the world's attention is focused on Windsor today might lead to yet more brazen action by Israel, and this led me to wonder what happened in relation to South African Apartheid on 29 July 1981, when Charles and Diana got married. Thankfully, (and one hopes this is repeated today) my research found no reported massacre, but it turns out that the Springboks, the South African rugby team, were touring New Zealand, and doubtless inspired by the successful campaign started here in the UK, Anti-Apartheid protesters were in full force in New Plymouth, as part of a campaign that managed to force the cancellation of two of the tour's fixtures. Dramatically, the final in Auckland in September was disrupted by a low-flying aeroplane dropping flour bombs on the pitch, but the game and the series was eventually won by New Zealand. The Springboks' own aeroplane, on its flight to New Zealand had been refused permission to refuel in next-door Australia, and had to do this in the USA – the long-time supporter of the Apartheid regime. Parallels therefore abound between 1981 and today, in worldwide revulsion of the depths to which the South African government would sink in its desperation to maintain control over the indigenous population. It reminds one of the ugliness that was displayed in the last gasps of the British Empire, some of which is recounted in this play. What all this points to is the fact that, thanks to growing international isolation, and despite continuing support from discredited regimes around the world (including here) the days of Israeli Apartheid are numbered. It took another two years after the 1981 Royal Wedding before Apartheid officially ended in South Africa. May it be shorter in Palestine. One wish the newlyweds well, as one does the nameless couples in Palestine who have chosen this day of all days to get married, as the occupier continues to drop tear gas bombs on them from the skies. Their acts of love and defiance against tyranny are inspirational, and demand our solidarity. 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.

**Colin Hazel, Piano.** Colin Hazel graduated with a music degree from the University of Nottingham he worked for two years as a multi-instrumentalist in Giffords Circus, a touring company that combines circus, theatre and live music. Since then he has been keyboardist and singer with a variety of bands, cabaret performer, pianist and occasional MD for theatre shows. He is currently editing and arranging a book of keyboard music by historic female composers.

**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 21:** The Inner Temple, London;  
**May 26:** Merlin Theatre, Frome. **August 19:** Gabriola Festival, BC, Canada  
**August 22 – 26:** Edmonton Fringe, Alberta, Canada

**Call Mr. Robeson: May 20:** North Dalton Village Hall; **May 24:** Dorchester Arts Centre; **May 25:** Bridport Arts Centre.  
**August 10:** Community Music Center, Portland, OR, USA; **August 12 – 15:** Ashland Community Center, Ashland, OR;  
**August 21 – 25:** Edmonton Fringe, Alberta, Canada; **Oct 4:** Tring Theatre, Hertfordshire **www.callmrrobeson.com**

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

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