

JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER. A play, with songs.

Written and performed by Tayo Aluko, with Manuel Bagorro, piano

Harare International Festival of the Arts, Zimbabwe. Saturday, Sunday, May 5, 6, 2018

Greetings, and welcome. It is an absolute honour that my first ever trip to Zimbabwe is to perform at the first post-Mugabe HIFA, sharing stories that recall great moments in African struggles against white domination, how we are connected to people in the furthest reaches of the earth (and have been for centuries), and how the lives of individuals from Africa and the Diaspora can influence people elsewhere, and vice versa. One of the most significant influencers of the struggle for African independence was a German philosopher who was born two hundred years ago to the day: Karl Marx (May 5, 1818 – March 14, 1883). Marxism, Socialism and Communism seem to be dead and buried in today's neo-conservative ultra-capitalist world, and it is easy to forget how huge its potential was perceived to be in Africa and around the globe. That potential was never allowed to fully emerge, but the ideas, in their original form and as adopted by African freedom fighters remain there to be studied and examined for clues as to how to help us today. Another hugely influential individual was born over two thousand years ago in Palestine, and his life and death continue to influence billions around the planet to this day, though not necessarily in the best of ways. It is often unknown or forgotten by many of his followers that his execution by the authorities was thought necessary because of his revolutionary ideas. Your last leader similarly appeared to have long forgotten the teachings of Karl Marx by the time he was forced out of office, but as a "new generation" takes over the helm, one hopes that they may be reminded of Marx's and Christ's revolutionary thinking. As for the rest of us, the stories told in this play will remind us of Henry Olonga and Andy Flower, whose 2003 protest contributed in no small measure to the demise of Mugabe, and whose story can be a source of inspiration for us, should the new leadership need to be reminded that democracy can be defended rigorously and effectively on the field of sports, or in the world of the arts. Similarly, you should also know how the actions of thousands upon thousands on the streets of Harare and other cities in Zimbabwe late last year inspired millions around the globe, including this writer, and reminded us that in the search for lasting change, individual and communal actions really, really count. 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.

Manuel Bagorro, Piano. Manuel Bagorro was born in Zimbabwe of a Portuguese father and an Irish mother. He was educated at Hartman House and St George's College. He grew up loving music and studied music formally at the Zimbabwe College of Music. He went abroad in the 1980s to pursue his career as a concert pianist and during his 15 year stay in the UK he won a number of awards and performed for, among others, former President Robert Mugabe, Nelson Mandela and the Queen, Elizabeth II. He is the founder and Artistic Director of Harare International Festival of the Arts, and Artistic Director of Bay Chamber Concerts in Maine, USA.

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 19: Belgrade Theatre, **Coventry; 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: 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. **August 10:** Community Music Center, Portland, OR, USA; **August 12 – 15:** Ashland Community Center, Ashland, OR; **August 21 – 25:** Edmonton Fringe, Alberta, Canada

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