

JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER. A play, with songs.

Written and performed by Tayo Aluko, with Thomas Kell, piano

The Parliament Chamber, The Inner Temple, London. Monday 21 May, 2018

Greetings, and welcome. I didn't have the privilege of meeting Olatunji Sowande, Esq., but was lucky to be introduced to his story by his nephew and others who knew him, not least of whom was Kim Hollis QC, now Director of Public Prosecutions in the British Virgin Islands. She wouldn't be occupying that position now, she would argue, had it not been for Mr. Sowande giving her her start, as he quietly did with many others. Although not an absolute first himself, Mr. Sowande's quiet, modest example helped to open doors for the many barristers, QCs and judges of colour who populate the Inns of Court today, and who for example are on hand to lend their skills to the likes of those seeking justice after the Grenfell Tower disaster last year. In the many other bodies interested and active in the enquiry, people from all backgrounds and nationalities are involved, even in the newly constituted Conservative-majority Council of Kensington and Chelsea. All this, thanks to the people on the streets making sure their voices were heard and their demands met. Gone therefore are the days when White Privilege meant that only people of a certain class and colour decided on the lives of ordinary people in this country, and now with even the Royal family welcoming a person of African ancestry into their fold, no level of society is safe, some would say, and goodness knows where it will all end. The history of the British and other European Empires is sadly too poorly understood, and the more descendants of that shared history penetrate into all levels of British society, the better it will be, so long as those who attain positions of power and influence use their positions for the betterment of *all* people. They owe that to all those whose previous struggles helped us to where we are today. Even though others went as far as giving their very lives, Mr. Sowande's contribution, however modest, is noteworthy. 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, and at the Harare International Festival of the Arts, Zimbabwe in May 2018.

Thomas Kell, Piano. Thomas is a musician and arts producer, with a particular interest in African theatre. Between 2007 and 2015 he was the Administrative Director of Tiata Fahodzi, working, successively with Artistic Directors Femi Elufowoju, jr, Lucian Msamati and Natalie Ibu. Until recently he was a Senior Programme Manager for the British Council working on the worldwide Shakespeare Lives initiative. Other commitments include directorships at Pursued by a Bear Theatre Company and the Elufowoju Jr Ensemble and consultancy for Tangle Theatre, The Art Machine and Faith Drama. He is Director of Music for the churches of Our Most Holy Redeemer, Exmouth Market and St Mark's Myddelton Square, in Clerkenwell. Thomas studied music in Görlitz, Germany before taking up the Organ Scholarship at Trinity College, Oxford where he was responsible for supervising the musical celebrations for the tercentenary of

the Chapel. Thomas has never been to Nigeria but is grateful to the many artists, such as Tayo Aluko, whose skill and talent make him feel as if he has!

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; "Suffer"; "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 26: Merlin Theatre, **Frome.** **August 19:** Gabriola Festival, BC, Canada

August 22 – 26: Edmonton Fringe, Alberta, Canada

Call Mr. Robeson: 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**

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