

JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER. A play, with songs.

Written and performed by Tayo Aluko, with Phil Blandford, piano

The Merlin Theatre, Frome. Saturday 26 May, 2018

Greetings, and welcome. Another society-changing vote happened in Ireland yesterday, and things will be very different there from now on, particularly for women. Although the result was nowhere near as close as the Brexit one, the passions and tensions, and the disappointment and disbelief in the losing camp were apparently as high. Most of those in favour of retaining the status quo did so because of profound religious beliefs, and they doubtless are wondering how their maker could have let such a travesty come to pass. The same religion that they follow (in its various denominations) was spread across the globe with the Empire, and before that, was used as one of the justifications for enslaving my ancestors. Strange then that among the most ardent and fundamentalist of practitioners of the religion are, like me, descendants of the most defiled and historically oppressed of peoples on the planet. As today's result has shown, change is inevitable, but it seems that this is a harder fact to grasp the more devoted you are to religious doctrine, even when evidence suggests that too many people suffer as a consequence of our misrepresentation and misinterpretation of the good teachings of the various prophets. Too many are also aware of prophets of other kinds who tried to warn their people about coming invasions of territory, resources and the mind by stealth or force, and who continue to do issue such warnings today, often at great risk to their lives and livelihoods. This play pays tribute to a few of them who run the risk of being forgotten to history, and indeed one man who in his own small way, made history. May these stories of acts of individual and collective heroism, some by ordinary people like the rest of us continue to inspire the rest of us, for the battles that lie ahead, in all parts of the world. May the freedom unleashed to the benefit of hundreds, nay thousands of women in Ireland and then elsewhere, prove to be a force for good, bringing seismic change to millions around the globe. 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.

Philip Blandford, Piano. Phil holds a degree in Music from Bristol University and an Advanced Certificate from the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music. He regularly provides music for a variety of events in the South West, South Wales and further afield. He has developed a repertoire of hundreds of songs from the last hundred years or so. He is a regular accompanist for several local groups, including Bristol Opera, North Avon Youth Theatre Company and the Amadeus Choir. He also accompanies numerous professional singers and instrumentalists. He plays in several jazz bands of all traditions, specialising in the 1920s styles.

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: August 19: Gabriola Festival, BC, Canada
August 22 – 26: Edmonton Fringe, Alberta, Canada

Call Mr. Robeson: 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

24 – 26 Mount Pleasant, Liverpool L3 5RY Tel: 0151 707 8187
www.tayoalukoandfriends.com

info@tayoalukoandfriends.com www.justanordinarylawyer.com
facebook: Just An Ordinary Lawyer. **Twitter:** @1OrdinaryLawyer

