

JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER. A play, with songs.

Written and performed by Tayo Aluko, with Anja Kuncic, piano

Smock Alley Theatre 1662 (Boys' School), Dublin. 11 – 16 March, 2019

Greetings, and welcome. It was quite a surprise to be asked repeatedly after performing *Call Mr. Robeson* here last week, why I didn't sing *Kevin Barry*, the song composed in tribute the young revolutionary executed by the British a hundred years ago. Robeson's recording of the song endeared him to many Irish, clearly to this day. He and Barry would probably have met had the latter survived longer than his eighteen summers, reprising the historic meeting between the two great liberators some generations earlier: Frederick Douglass and Daniel O'Connell. Those two remarkable men demonstrated way back then an unusual understanding of the necessity for people from different parts of the world to join in and be inspired by the struggles of others against their oppressors. The success of the Southern Irish against the British Empire left in place a border that has now come to haunt them in this time of Brexit, which many campaigned or voted for in a kind of nostalgia for the days of Empire, when Britain was supposedly at her greatest. As repercussions of the arbitrary drawing of borders by Europeans across other people's lands in past centuries continue to be manifested in conflicts around the globe, from Israel/Palestine to India/Pakistan and beyond, and as many more people from Africa and the Diaspora find themselves settling on this side of the border, it is worth finding ways to understand the histories of Empire and struggle that continue to bring our peoples together here today. This in itself will promote cohesion between the various communities and also provide inspiration as we seek ways in which to unite against the reactionary forces that are growing across Europe and the Atlantic. This play seeks to pay tribute to the many people who fought and died so that Africa and her children, like Ireland and hers, could be free, and to remind us of the need to continue their struggle, shoulder to shoulder. I hope you enjoy the show.

Tayo Aluko, Writer, Performer. Tayo was born in Nigeria, worked as an architect in Liverpool for many years. 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* won numerous awards at festivals in the UK and Canada, as well as highly favourable reviews in the press – most notably *The Guardian* and 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 in August 2017, and at the Harare International Festival of the Arts, Zimbabwe in May 2018.

Anja Kuncic, Piano. Ms. Kuncic, a native of Slovenia, and studied both classical and jazz at the music conservatories in Ljubljana. As accompanist to singers, instrumentalists and choirs, Anja has performed at diverse venues such as The Slovenian National Philharmonic Hall, Slovenian Parliament, Paraninfo Theatre in Madrid, RTE Radio Dublin, The Sugar Club. She regularly appears in musical theatre in and around Dublin and has also worked with the Downtown Big Band and the Irish Film & Pops Orchestra. Anja founded and runs her own mobile piano school, Piano Lessons Dublin (pianolessons dublin.com).

Thanks to Baibre Ni Fhloinn & Noel O'Donovan, Winding Stair Bookshop & Gaiety School of Acting

Amanda Huxtable, Director. Amanda studied Recreational Arts in the Community Degree foundation course at Manchester Metropolitan University, and Communications and Cultural Studies at The University of Leeds. She is also currently studying Social Sciences, The Arts Past and Present and Early Modern European History at the Open University. Amanda served as Artistic Director of Yorkshire Women Theatre Company in Leeds from 2004-2009. She is 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 and The Yellow Doctress - all by Marcia Layne. Freelance Director credits include: Bread and Roses by Ian Kershaw, (Oldham Coliseum). Wonder By Poppy Burton- Morgan (Edinburgh Fringe) Lady of Situations By Vanitas Arts, Shirley Harris and Seni Seneviratne,(Sheffield) She was Associate Director on Wakefield Mysteries,adapted by Nick Lane (Theatre Royal Wakefield) Directed HD100 Chol Theatre, (Lawrence Batley Theatre). Continent Chop Chop, by Virtual Migrants, (National Tour), The Dressmaker's Gift, by Anita Franklin (Liverpool's Write Now International Festival), Totally Over You, by Mark Ravenhill (Lawrence Batley Theatre), The Promise, by Chris Cooper (Belgrade Theatre Tour) Amanda is the 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. Her recent design work includes "Abigail's Party" at Hull Truck Theatre, directed by Amanda Huxtable, with whose company Hidden Gems she also worked 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; "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 now in its tenth year 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. 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. Her latest R4 play Me Myself I has just been nominated for the Tinniswood Prize.

Lighting Design: Mark Loudon; **Sound Design:** Noel Inyang and Tayo Aluko

Forthcoming Performances Include

Just An Ordinary Lawyer: May 10, 11, Vancouver, Canada: Havana Theatre
Call Mr. Robeson: March 27, Cambridgeshire: Histon Library; **April 5, OH, USA:** Kent State University;
April 15, New Brunswick, NJ, USA: Paul Robeson Community School for the Arts
May 3,4, Glasgow: Queen's Park Arena; **May 7- 10, Vancouver, Canada:** Havana Theatre
What Happens?: April 9: Theatr Clwyd, Mold, Wales; April 10: Liverpool Philharmonic Music Room

Tayo Aluko & Friends

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