

JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER. A play, with songs.

**Written and performed by Tayo Aluko, with Elaine Joe, piano
Havana Theatre, Vancouver, Friday, Saturday, May 10, 11, 2019**

Greetings, and welcome. The trade war between the USA and China is being described as something of an existential threat to the world economy. It remains to be seen how the perception of this threat compares with that of the reported international climate emergency, and the fact that BC has recently elected its (and the nation's) second Federal Green MP indicates that this province is ahead of much of the country in some ways. However, this will not satisfy members of Extinction Rebellion BC, who, like their counterparts around the globe, feel that political establishments have failed to protect us from impending doom. Their statement of intent says in part, "*Extinction Rebellion BC acknowledges the traditional owners and protectors who inhabited and looked after this land for millennia. We acknowledge that this land was stolen from them and that sovereignty has never been ceded.*" The history of this country, as with that of your southern neighbours, involves nothing short of genocide; and after the holocaust had been meted out onto indigenous Americans, the industrial enslavement of millions of Africans followed. Justification for their enslavement was apparently found in the Bible, and backed up by a eugenics movement which posited that the White Aryan race was superior to all others – a philosophy that allowed the extermination of millions of First Nations peoples, and a total disregard and denial of their history and culture. Africans and Indigenous Canadians thus have a shared history, in that both our peoples had the misfortune to come up against the greed and violence of European invaders. There are many ways of telling these complicated stories, only one of which is through the eyes of a Nigerian lawyer in mid-20th Century London. The economic and political systems that the Europeans imposed on the world are now threatening our very existence, and descendants of all those players - Black, Red, Yellow, White, whatever - need to come together to save the planet. One way might be to call on the superior wisdom of the people who cared for these lands before the White Man came. 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.

Elaine Joe, Piano: Elaine studied with the Royal Conservatory. She works as a performer, teacher, composer and accompanist. She plays for four choirs in a wide range of styles. In her spare time, she performs with an accordion squeezebox circle, dances and plays djembe on the beach and is learning cello. Away from the music, she can be found on the mountain, snowboarding, cross-country skiing or roller blading in the summer. She has a passion for treehouses, and sometimes practices in the trees.

Thanks to Yvon & Valerie Raoul

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 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), Totally Over You, by Mark Ravenhill (Lawrence Batley Theatre), The Promise, by Chris Cooper (Belgrade Theatre Tour) Amanda was the Artistic Associate at Hull Truck Theatre, under the Arts Council's Changemakers Programme, where she directed Abigail's Party.

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: July 12, 19: Buxton Fringe Festival, Derbyshire, UK

Call Mr. Robeson: July 11, 18: Buxton Fringe Festival

Tayo Aluko & Friends

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