

JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER. A play, with songs.

Written and performed by Tayo Aluko, with Tim Mottershead, piano

Rotunda Theatre @ Buxton Fringe Festival. Friday July 19, 2019

“It’s one small step for [a] man, one giant leap for mankind.” Fifty years ago exactly, this was the phrase that aptly described humankind’s greatest technological achievement. With it came the hope of a better future for all people, although this was probably not shared by most in Africa, where in Nigeria for example, a civil war was raging. In Congo, the population were still recovering from the shock of the murder of their great independence leader, Patrice Lumumba, and the excesses of the new President Mobutu were still not obvious to the outside world. Americans were also still reeling from the murders of Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy, and their own President, Richard Nixon, was able to bask in the glory of the lunar achievement while setting the stage for his corrupt and malign terms in office. To almost all but the most ardent internationalist Civil Rights activists there, Africa remained a long way away. Several small and big technological steps have been achieved by humankind in the time since, but one can also point to many giant leaps backward in several areas of human activity. Africa has suffered more than her fair share of these regressions, thanks to continuing interference in her affairs by international interests and internal elites, but it is getting increasingly difficult to adopt the position that the continent is irrelevant to the rest of the world. The current Ebola crisis spreading out of the Democratic Republic of Congo, where several years of military conflict have been consistently ignored by the world’s media, may once again prove this point - if what happened during the last crisis a few years ago is repeated - whereby the disease found a way into Europe and the US. Had the overthrow and murder of Lumumba 58 years ago not happened, things would undoubtedly be different there now, and the same can be said of practically every country on the Continent. As the consequences of the continued exploitation of Africa become increasingly obvious, the retelling of these stories should serve both as a warning to us as we view our current crop of leaders, but also as a source of inspiration as we continue to seek solutions to our problems.

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.

Tim Mottershead, Piano. Tim studied music at Liverpool Community College and at Aberdeen University. He is regarded as an authority on the English composers Edmund Rubbra and Alan Rawsthorne, and has contributed to several scholarly publications, most notably *TEMPO*. He is a keen advocate of world music, having performed or written in several genres from Iraqi Oud music, to Gamelan, to music for Maypole dancing. He played in the Indian classical music group Raga Jyoti from 2000 to 2012.

Amanda Huxtable, Director. Amanda Huxtable is an experienced Theatre Director, Creative Producer and Trustee. She has recently completed a successful two year role as the Changemaker and Artistic Associate at Hull Truck Theatre. Amanda is a Trustee and Chair of the Board for RJC (Reggae, Jazz, Contemporary) Dance based in Leeds. She continues to build on her portfolio of Theatre Productions across the UK and further afield. Together with Vanitas Arts based in Sheffield she is developing a special immersive theatre work called Trumpet based on the Guardian Fiction Prize book by Jackie Kay. As Co-Artistic Director of Hidden Gems with Marcia Layne, Amanda enjoyed five years touring Black British stories in the UK. Her Freelance Directorial work has toured to London, Edinburgh, Canada and the National Black Theatre Festival in North Carolina, USA. She continues to strengthen her practice by studying the Social Sciences, The Arts Past and Present and currently Early Modern European History 1500 -1780 at the Open University.

Emma Williams, Designer. Emma's recent design work includes "Jackie and the Beanstalk" Curly Tales, Leeds Playhouse, "Bad Blood Blues" Theatre Deli; "Shivers" Greenwich Theatre, national tour "The Netherlands" Two Tonne, Camden People's Theatre and touring ; "Shadows in Different Shades" Sheffield Crucible and Utopia;"Jack Frost" Barnsley Civic and "Birds Nest Billy" Fidget Theatre, national tour, "Abigail's Party" Hull Truck, "The Yellow Doctress," Hidden Gems, "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 If. Designs for Leeds Playhouse between 2003-2015 include:"Immune";"Nine Lives"; "Refugee Boy"; "You The Player" site specific 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 Theatre. Opera credits include: "The Soldier's Tale" Skipton Camerata, "Siroe" Royal College of Music; "Partenope"; "Admeto"; "Alceste" New Hall Cambridge. She also designs immersive sets for escape rooms and teaches and mentors young artists entering the industry, most recently as part of Northern Ballet's Cultural Runway collaboration with Burberry.

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

Forthcoming Performances Include:

Aug 15 – 18: Participant (singer), *Lughnasa* Frielfest, **Donegal – Derry**

Just An Ordinary Lawyer: Sept 28: Theatr Clwyd, Mold, Wales

Call Mr. Robeson: Aug 22: Multicultural Arts Center, Cambridge, MA, USA; **Sept 1:** Dramatic Hall, Peekskill, NY, USA; **Sept 13:** Heron Theatre, Beetham, Cumbria; **Sept 26, 27:** Theatr Clwyd, Mold, Wales; **Oct 26:** Littleport Library, Cambs.

Tayo Aluko & Friends

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