

## **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 12, 2019**

**Greetings, and welcome.** As we prepare to watch England play New Zealand in the Cricket World Cup finals on Sunday, it may surprise some to learn that England has never once won the competition. The men's, that is – as the women's team has won it three times. That may account for the expectation surrounding the Lionesses – England's team during the recent Women's Football World Cup competition. Many among the English may not have noticed the sense of entitlement, a feeling of divine destiny, almost, that the Lionesses would not only get to the finals, but would also cause a huge upset and return victorious from France with the trophy. It was therefore humbling for the English that they would ultimately end up in fourth place – denying their compatriots a much-needed boost in national morale in these bizarre political times. It is worth reflecting on where this attitude comes from, namely Empire, and before that, Slavery. And the way those two world-changing phenomena were achieved: with the aid of lethal technology – the manufacture of weaponry that would obliterate people by the dozen, in the hundreds, the thousands – and appropriate those people's territories and resources for the motherland. This is not to say that the British or other European Empires were the first on earth (there is enough evidence of impressive ones elsewhere in the world, including in Africa), but it frames the world view of most people today, and its origins should therefore be continuously examined and scrutinised. This is necessary not just for people of English descent, but for those from the former colonies, as too many of us are also ignorant of the history behind the state of the world, and indeed of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It is interesting how and why that last territory has proved to be such an inconvenience to those who seek to put the "Great" back into Britain, but that's another story. That notwithstanding, may the best side win on Sunday, whatever the origins of their players, and may they remind us all that no country is complete or viable without the histories and the contributions of its minorities.

**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 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 19: Buxton Fringe Festival; Sept 28: Theatr Clwyd, Mold, Wales**

**Call Mr. Robeson: July 18: Buxton Fringe Festival; 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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