

JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER. A play, with songs.
Written and performed by Tayo Aluko, with David Dear, piano
Unity Theatre, Liverpool. Saturday, 2 November, 2019

At one point, the activist in my play says, circa 1952, "... any trust placed in representatives of His Majesty's Government, be they Tory or Labour, is trust gravely and carelessly misplaced." We find ourselves having to make a choice of which of the two major parties to trust more, as they offer up their manifestos for the coming years. The result in Liverpool is probably much easier to call than in some nearby areas, where the Brexit vote was more successful in the referendum than in this relatively cosmopolitan city. If the main reason for voting that way was immigration and border control, it is becoming increasingly clearer that no man-made controls or technologies are up to the task of stemming the ubiquitous enforced migrations caused by the looming climate catastrophe, in turn fuelled by the processes that developed with the transportation of millions of Africans from their continent some centuries ago. The proceeds of the trade in African bodies helped develop technologies that delivered many material benefits to this part of the world, but are also now choking the planet. We see, too, that the worldwide trade in humans is continuing, so the choice facing us should surely be between those who recognise that cooperative action, at community level and also nationally and internationally, is required to address these big challenges. The great movements that led to the breaking of the shackles of colonialism from Africa and elsewhere, celebrated in this play, remind us how such action is again necessary to deliver the majority of people from the grip of those forces that continue to subject the majority of the world's population to poverty, war and environmental destruction. We see such uprisings happening in places as disparate as Latin America and the Far and Middle East. It is surely only a matter of time before those winds of change sweep through Africa again too, even if they bypass these shores, for now. 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. He was one of a group of "outstanding writers of colour" invited to write and perform responses to artefacts held in Oxford's Pitt Rivers Museum in September 2019.

David Dear, Piano. David has lived and worked in Liverpool for over 30 years as a piano teacher and accompanist. He started playing piano at the age of seven, attended the Huddersfield School of Music and completed a Music Degree at the University of Liverpool. He taught music at a local Comprehensive school in Liverpool before establishing himself as a private piano teacher, and still enjoys working with schools such as King David High School and Bluecoat School. A skilled accompanist, he regularly works with students from the University of Liverpool and has performed in the University Lunchtime Recitals.

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, Terrace"; "Huddersfield"; "The Dutiful Daughter"-co-production with Szechuan People's 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 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 & Tayo Aluko

Forthcoming Performances Include: *Call Mr. Robeson:*

Feb 1: Bishop Center, **Aberdeen, WA, USA;** **March 3:** The Miners Theatre, **Ammanford**

Tayo Aluko & Friends

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