

## **JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER. A play, with songs.**

**Written and performed by Tayo Aluko, with Katrina Ying, piano**

**Holy Trinity Church @ Edmonton Fringe. 22 – 26 August, 2018**

**Greetings, and welcome.** Anybody who saw footage of the US president at a rally yesterday, promoting coal as the fuel of the future would probably not realise that they were watching a man for whom the possibility of impeachment and indictment on criminal charges looms very large. The crowd were as enthusiastic about him as they were when he was first running for office. What was additionally amazing to me was the number of Black people in the crowd cheering away for this man who is allegedly in bed with, among many others, white supremacists. One wonders at how and where to start a conversation with such people, but as the Chinese proverb says, the journey of a thousand miles starts with a first step. This play aims to help people a number of steps along the path of knowledge of world history, regardless of where they may already be on that journey. The play would probably also be useful for the Canadian Conservative MP who has recently been tweeting about 'extreme multiculturalism,' arguing that '... it will destroy what has made us such a great country.' He seems to be unaware, or to have forgotten the genocide of the people on whose land we stand, unless of course he is one of those that doesn't consider them fully human. That would be particularly stupid, considering the knowledge that First Nations people still hold as to how to take care of the planet that we continue to kill with our lifestyle. That people like this and #45 gained enough support to rise to the influential positions they now occupy, and the fact that there are so many such supporters and politicians out there suggests that we urgently need to continue having these conversations, so that hearts and minds can be won by peaceful means before it's too late. One is grateful for the gift of story-telling and song with which to celebrate shared histories and acknowledge common humanity, as we seek solutions to seemingly intractable problems. If a few politicians have to be removed along the way, so be it. I hope you enjoy the show.

**Tayo Aluko, Writer, Performer.** Tayo was born in Nigeria, and now lives in Liverpool, where he worked previously as an architect. 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* has won numerous awards at festivals in the UK and Canada, as well as highly favourable reviews in the press – most notably in *The Guardian* and on 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.

**Katrina Ying, piano.** Katrina is a pianist, arranger, composer, accompanist and educator with diverse skills in the classical, pop, and jazz genres. She has found great success showcasing her original compositions at venues around Edmonton. She is currently attending MacEwan University and is working towards a Bachelor's in Music as a composition major. After receiving a bachelor's degree, Katrina plans to continue her education in pursuit of a masters in music. Katrina teaches private lessons at Resonate Music School & Studio and is comfortable teaching classical piano (RCM), jazz improvisation, and music theory.

**Amanda Huxtable, Director.** Amanda trained at Manchester Metropolitan University, Recreational Arts in the Community course, followed by studying for a BA Degree in Communications and Cultural Studies at the University of Leeds. She continues to strengthen her practice by studying Social Sciences and The Arts Past and Present at the Open University. Amanda served as Artistic Director of Yorkshire Women Theatre Company in Leeds from 2004-2009. She is building her portfolio of freelance directing work across the UK. She also enjoys being 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, The Yellow Doctress - all by Marcia Layne. Freelance Director credits include: The Promise, by Chris Cooper (Belgrade Theatre Tour), The Dressmaker's Gift, by Anita Franklin (Liverpool's Write Now International Festival), Totally Over You, by Mark Ravenhill (Lawrence Batley Theatre), Continent Chop Chop, by Virtual Migrants, HD100 (Chol Theatre) and most recently, Bread and Roses by Ian Kershaw (Oldham Coliseum). She was Associate Director on Wakefield Mysteries, adapted by Nick Lane (Theatre Royal Wakefield), and is an 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 and has worked extensively for touring companies, including recently with Hidden Gems 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; "Somebody's Son", Hidden Gems; "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 Generentola"; "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 an on-going series for Woman's Hour 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. In Collaboration with Paula Simms, Esther worked on 'The Quiet Little Englishman', set in a disused cinema, for Liverpool's Capital of Culture. 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.

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

#### **Forthcoming Performances Include**

**Just An Ordinary Lawyer: Till August 26: Edmonton Fringe; Nov 2 – 4: The Producers Club, New York**

**Call Mr. Robeson: Till Aug 25: Edmonton Fringe; Oct 4: Court Theatre, Tring, UK; Oct 5: Clapham Library, London, UK; Nov 1 – 4: The Producers Club, New York Nov 12: Alphabet City, Pittsburgh, PA**

#### **Tayo Aluko & Friends**

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