

JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER. A play, with songs.

Written and performed by Tayo Aluko, with Karel Roessingh, piano

Gabriola Festival, Sunday August 19, 2018

Greetings, and welcome. Two days after Aretha Franklin, another great African left to join the ancestors. The death of Kofi Annan, the Ghanaian former Secretary General of the United Nations yesterday, has drawn attention to the life of the African probably second only to Nelson Mandela in commanding the respect of people around the world for his life's work in the humanitarian agency. Like any other life and career, there were highs and lows, two of the admitted lows being his failure to heed warnings about the coming Rwandan genocide, and failure to prevent the warmongering leaders of the world from starting the Iraq conflict. Tony Blair, in his own tribute, referred to him as a good friend. Would it that Mr. Annan were around to confirm or deny that statement, for it was the untruths sold to the public that led to that catastrophic war, and to the world's No. 1 diplomat stating categorically that he considered the action illegal. One wonders whether his African birth contributed to the audacity and arrogance that led Blair and Bush to ignore his advice to obtain a UN mandate before declaring war. We are still dealing with the consequences today, and international law continues to be flouted with impunity around the world, not least by the State of Israel in her expansionist drive, and the recent introduction of laws that actually now legalise discrimination against the Palestinian people, in a repeat of what was done in South Africa. Meanwhile, conflicts continue to plague that Continent daily, so much so that the complicated histories behind them are confusing and indeterminable, even to experts. This play aims to make a small contribution to better understanding, and to reminding us of the use of music and art as a unifying and totally legal force with which to celebrate our shared humanity. 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.

Karel Roessingh, Piano. Dutch-born Karel was raised in Calgary, and began his professional musical career in 1970. He studied jazz arranging and composition at Berklee College of Music in Boston, and completed a degree in secondary music and mathematics education at University of Victoria. He is frequently a featured specialist at jazz workshops, and writes jazz tunes for his own and other groups, and has composed extensively for film, television and video productions, many of which been broadcast world-wide. He has several recordings to his credit, from solo piano to orchestral compositions, and has produced CDs for Valdy, Maureen Washington and many other artists. Karel is a councillor and former Mayor of the District of the Highlands. His latest CD, *Birdsong in the Parkade* was released last November.

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 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 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:

August 22 – 26: Edmonton Fringe, Alberta, Canada; **Nov 2 – 4:** The Producers Club, **New York**

Call Mr. Robeson: Aug 21 – 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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