

There is a certain irony in the fact that I am today performing at one of the four internationally revered Inns of Court as a recently convicted criminal. Three weeks ago, I and six co-defendants were found guilty of aggravated trespass and/or minor criminal damage to an arms factory, and some others were also found guilty a week ago of *intent* to deface another factory with - shock horror! – red paint. Bizarrely, some in the latter group are possibly going to receive custodial sentences! The two cases (there are more ongoing) were brought by the Crown against Palestine Action, an organisation that has targeted Elbit Systems, an Israeli-owned arms manufacturer and its subsidiaries, who manufacture drones and missiles on various sites around the UK and market them worldwide as having been battle-tested – on Palestinians. The defence arguments made on our behalf by our eminently capable barristers – including prevention of war crimes, and protection of life and property – were ruled as inadmissible by the Courts, in the person of a single judge in one case, and in the other case, by a jury very strongly directed by the judge to reach a unanimous guilty verdict. Down the road from here, “honourable” Members of Parliament pass laws that ensure that more and more citizens are destined to become political prisoners in the UK, joining Julian Assange, who has been in a high-security prison for over four years now for exposing war crimes committed by Western governments in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, and risks being sent to the USA to live the rest of his life in the misery of a maximum security facility there. Meanwhile, we have politicians of questionable morality, zero integrity, a seemingly unquenchable thirst for war, and unconditional support for oppressive regimes abroad ruling this and other powerful countries. These and many other examples of abuse of law and power are really quite similar to the abuses perpetrated in yesteryear, some of which are portrayed in today’s play. We are therefore arguably in a similar civil rights struggle today, even if that appears less obvious here than in other countries, like France, where public engagement and anger at the ruling elite are altogether greater than we see here. In such an atmosphere, when one recalls that people like Nelson Mandela and Jomo Kenyatta were portrayed as terrorists in their time, a criminal conviction for anti-war protesting is a badge of real honour that I wear with pride. The legal community also has a fight on its hands. Barristers recently demonstrated the power of mass action. The battle, as they say, continues. 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 opera, musicals and oratorio. His first play, *CALL MR ROBESON* has won numerous awards at festivals in the UK and Canada, and continues to be performed after 16 years. He delivers a number of lecture/concerts and talks on Black Political Resistance using art and song. 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 writer Langston Hughes, for performance with live jazz accompaniment. He has been published in *The Guardian*, *The Morning Star*, *NERVE Magazine*, *Modern Ghana*, *Searchlight Magazine*, *Counterfire* and *Counterpunch*. His latest production is a radio play, *PAUL ROBESON’S LOVE SONG*, recorded during lockdown with actors from the USA and Canada, and now streaming online. He is working on another one-man musical play, inspired by the life and music of the Black British Composer, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. He has recently had two poems published, and developed one of them – “*GREATNESS*” IN A TIME OF COVID – into an online international performance and mapping project and a workshop examining colonial history. He is also working on a screenplay telling the story of Pastor Daniels Ekarte (d. 1964), known as the African Saint of Liverpool.

Thomas Kell, Piano. Thomas studied music in Görlitz, Germany and was an Organ Scholar at Trinity College, Oxford. He is Director of Music for the churches of Our Most Holy Redeemer, Exmouth Market and St Mark’s Myddelton Square, Clerkenwell. He is also an arts producer, with a particular interest in African theatre. He was Administrative Director of Tiata Fahodzi, alongside founding Artistic Director Femi Elufowoju, jr and his successor Lucian Msamati. He is currently a director of the Elufowoju jr Ensemble and oversaw its hit inaugural production, *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi’s Wives* (Arcola Theatre, BBC Radio 3. Other recent producing work includes Tangle’s tours of *Volpone* and *Richard the Second* and Pursued by a Bear’s *Nothing on Earth*.

Just an Ordinary Lawyer was premiered at the Edinburgh Fringe
on 4th August, 2016 by Tayo Aluko, with Angus Carmichael on
piano

Directed by **Amanda Huxtable**
Designed by **Emma Williams**
Dramaturgy: **Esther Wilson**
Lighting Design: **Mark Loudon**
Sound Design: **Noel Inyang & Tayo Aluko**

Future Performances Include:

**2 June and June 9: Just An Ordinary Lawyer @ Vauxhall Law
Centre, Liverpool**

17 June: Paul Robeson – The Giant, In a Nutshell.
Birch Community Centre, **Manchester**

**22 June: Just An Ordinary Lawyer @ Liverpool African
Caribbean Centre**

30 July: Just An Ordinary Lawyer @ EBFringe, Eastbourne
**5-19 August (odd dates only) Call Mr. Robeson @ Edinburgh
Fringe**

**6-20 August (even dates only) Just An Ordinary
Lawyer @ Edinburgh Fringe**

12 October Just An Ordinary Lawyer.

For Law Society of Scotland, EICC, Edinburgh

Tayo Aluko & Friends

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TAYO ALUKO & FRIENDS
present

JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER

(?)

A PLAY, WITH SONGS

**Written and performed by Tayo Aluko,
with Thomas Kell, piano**

**The Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn,
London, 22 May, 2023**