

The recent announcements by energy companies of the gargantuan profits they made in the last year confirm the irony that the best industry to be in, the one in which the people at the top earn the most in the world, is the one responsible for the worst environmental pollution, and the climate catastrophe that lurches menacingly and alarmingly towards us. Failing that, one could go into mining – digging deep into Mother Earth for commodities that we have become dependent on, one way or another. There are billions to be made there, though not by those “on the ground,” labouring in atrocious conditions. Another highly lucrative industry is arms manufacturing and dealing. The creation and sale of tools of mass murder and destruction has made a small number of plainly evil people and companies stupendously rich. Yet, in order to keep their wealth growing, they keep stoking up conflict at any opportunity, with enough willing politicians and journalists to persuade an always-trusting public of the need for perpetual war. Then there is human trafficking, which top Western politicians are all too ready to denounce, while completely ignoring the facts that firstly, the desperation of the victims is caused by a combination of the crimes listed above, and secondly that today’s trade is as nothing, compared to the activities of the original human traffickers of modern times – the Europeans, who didn’t stop at capturing and trading in Africans and others, but did the same with their own poor too. In the case of Britain, many innocent people were criminalised and transported to the far corners of the earth in the colonial project, with some genocide and ethnic cleansing thrown in for good measure. And while real criminals have always enjoyed unlimited wealth and freedom, critics of the system have also always been killed, criminalised, incarcerated and almost forgotten, be it the likes of Julian Assange and Mumia Abu Jamal today or those of yesteryear, some of whom are mentioned in this play. My final lines here must however go to the survivors of the Grenfell fire of 2017, some of whose words have been fashioned into a powerful play which I watched last night at the National Theatre. I cannot recommend it highly enough, though I must warn you to be prepared to be very angered by the fact that the many criminals behind that tragedy remain at large: not a single conviction has come after all this time. Through *Grenfell: In the Words of Survivors*, we are eloquently called upon to help them find justice. If today’s play evokes anything approaching that feeling, I will consider my gift properly shared.

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 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. Talks he gives include *ART AS A WEAPON – SOME PAN-AFRICANIST EXAMPLES*, a survey of artists in the African Diaspora. His third one-man musical play (a work in progress), is *COLERIDGE-TAYLOR OF FREETOWN*, inspired by the life and music of the Black British Composer, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. He is also working on a screenplay telling the story of Pastor Daniels Ekarte (d. 1964), known as the African Saint of Liverpool.

Wendy Hammond, Piano. Wendy Hammond comes from a well-known musical family in Thailand. Born in the UK, Wendy moved to Thailand at the age of six. In her music education there she achieved distinction through all levels. She taught music in International Schools there while also accompanying the Bangkok Symphony Orchestra and Bangkok Music Societies. Since returning to the UK in 2012, she has accompanied numerous musicals, plays, choirs, instrumentalists and singers. Wendy has taught students of all ages for more than 40 years while continuing to direct and accompany.

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:

5-19 August (odd dates only) **Call Mr. Robeson @ Edinburgh Fringe**
6-20 August (even dates only) **Just An Ordinary Lawyer @ Edinburgh Fringe**
26 September: Dodging Bullets, in #BlackBoyJoyGone, for Blackfest @ Unity Theatre, **Liverpool**
12 October Just An Ordinary Lawyer.
For Law Society of Scotland, EICC, **Edinburgh**
14 October. Just An Ordinary Lawyer
Tullynessle Hall, **Aberdeenshire**
20 October. Just An Ordinary Lawyer
St. George's Hall, **Liverpool**
7 November: Call Mr. Robeson. St. Ives Library, Cambs
8 November: Call Mr. Robeson. St. Neots Library, Cambs

Tayo Aluko & Friends

www.tayoalukoandfriends.com e: info@tayoalukoandfriends.com

facebook: Tayo Aluko and Friends

Twitter: @MrTayoAluko **instagram:** mrtayoaluko

Tel: +44 7990 608 074

E B FESTIVAL FRINGE

AND

TAYO ALUKO & FRIENDS
present

JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER

— (?) —

A PLAY, WITH SONGS

Written and performed by **Tayo Aluko**,
with **Wendy Hammond**, piano

Grove Theatre, Eastbourne

Sunday 30 July, 2023