

JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER. A play, with songs.
Written and performed by Tayo Aluko, with Colin Hazel, piano
Ely Library. Saturday, July 2, 2022

The government and rail companies appear to have been surprised by the amount of public support that the striking rail workers received last week. We wait to see how that impacts negotiations between the various parties in coming weeks, but the power of collective action and effective communication of grievances was obvious for all to see. The way authorities react will vary, and currently, we are being reminded of the recent Chinese suppression of protests in Hong Kong, as the 25th anniversary of the surrender of the colony by Britain was marked days ago. The violence meted out by the British themselves as they struggled to hang on to their empire is partly recalled in this play, as is the racism that has resulted from centuries of European exploitation of Africans. That racism has spread worldwide like a pandemic, and it is particularly sad to see it demonstrated in regions like North Africa and the Middle East, with the routine enslavement and trafficking of Africans from countries south of the Sahara who are desperately seeking routes to Europe. Only last week, a few dozen were gunned down at Melilla on the border between Morocco and Spain, but the world moves on, maintaining its focus on Ukraine and the white refugees and wholesale destruction that that war has created. The promise of the hard-fought-for independence in African countries has been squandered by the elites that took over from the European colonisers, but with things going on worldwide now (the Greater Anglia drivers' strike today being one example) it should hopefully be becoming clearer that globally there is indeed a war between an elite class and the rest of humanity, and even the planet. Stories like those told in this play, even including that of an ex-colonial, would-be member of the British Establishment, can be inspirational as we contemplate the enormity of the task before us and wonder if and how we can each play a part. 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* won numerous awards at festivals in the UK and Canada. He delivers a lecture/concert called *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*, *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.

Forthcoming performances include: 7 July: Paul Robeson's Love Song. Tayo's Zoom Room;

21 – 27 Aug: Call Mr. Robeson @ Edinburgh Fringe (Also online);

22 – 28 Aug: Just An Ordinary Lawyer @ Edinburgh Fringe (Also online)

14 Oct: Call Mr. Robeson. Ucheldre Arts, Holyhead; 15 Oct: Just An Ordinary Lawyer. Ucheldre Arts, Holyhead; Nov 4: Call Mr. Robeson. Grove Theatre, Eastbourne, E. Sussex

Colin Hazel, Piano. Since graduating with a BA (Hons) in Music from the University of Nottingham, Colin has worked in a diverse range of musical areas including theatre, choral, jazz, rock, pop and music education. His performing credits include two years as a multi-instrumentalist in Giffords Circus, keyboards and vocals with a variety of bands, cabaret performer, piano vocalist and youth theatre MD. He is currently director of music at St Augustine's Church and accompanist for Cambridge's Singing Allowed Choir and the Impingtones. He has recently published an educational book, *New Horizons for Piano: Early Grades*, which is the first in a series aimed at reintroducing works by historic women composers into piano education, a subject on which he has written and spoken publicly, including an appearance on BBC Radio Cambridgeshire. The book has contributed to the increased diversity of the recent ABRSM piano syllabus and received a positive review from the European Piano Teachers Association (EPTA). For more details go to cjhazel.co.uk.

Amanda Huxtable, Director. Amanda has over 25 years of Creative practice experience in theatre and screen development. She is Co- Director at Vanitas Arts, working in development the executive team are leading research and practice into immersive digital storytelling from a diverse range of lived life experiences. **Theatre Credits:** *I leave you love* by Anita Franklin (In development with Vanitas Arts. *Everything I own* by Daniel Ward, Hull Truck Theatre, *Unknown* by Leanna Benjamin, Leeds Playhouse, *Hilda and the Northern Powerhouse* (Kate Hainsworth & Camille Hainsworth – Staples,), *Abigail's Party* (Hull Truck Theatre), *Bread and Roses* by Ian Kershaw (Oldham Coliseum), *Wondr* by Poppy Burton- Morgan (Metta Theatre, Edinburgh Festival), *Just an Ordinary Lawyer?* (Tayo Aluko), *Ladies of Situations*, (Seni Seneviratne and Vanitas Arts), *Bag Lady* by Marcia Layne (Hidden Gems). **Television;** Casting consultant for ITV Studios Coronation Streets – The Bailey's. Shadow Trainee Director on Emmerdale.

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

Tayo Aluko & Friends

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