

JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER. A play, with songs.
Written and performed by Tayo Aluko, with Josh Wood, piano
C Place @ Edinburgh Fringe. 22-28 August, 2022

As a visitor from England, one is struck by certain differences between that country and Scotland. The two biggest are the fact that Scottish Water is nationalised, as opposed to the water companies in England, which are now being roundly criticised for polluting waterways and beaches with sewage, while their bosses swim all the way to the bank. The other difference is that barristers here are not on strike, as they are in England (and Wales). The legal system here is different, but as an observer of two recent political cases, one cannot say for certain that it is superior. In favour of superiority, some cite the case of Alex Salmond, former First Minister, found not guilty of alleged sexual offences against female staff, thanks to a (female-majority) jury. The case of Craig Murray however, is baffling. He reported (accurately, in my view) on the Salmond case, but the accuracy led him to be charged of contempt of court and ultimately jailed, following a trial conducted without a jury. Mr. Murray, like Mr. Salmond (more vociferously than the current First Minister) argue for independence from Great Britain, which brings me to another case in England which is of greater relevance to the themes of this play than those of these two Scots. In 2011, the High Court in England found against the British Government in a case where three representatives of the Mau Mau (the name given to the Kenyan resistance movement) who some sixty years earlier had been subjected to serious abuse and torture (including castration) at the hands of the colonial powers. A subsequent appeal by the government that the case was time barred was rejected, and the British government ended up paying substantial damages to the victims, and paid for a memorial to the victims to be erected in Nairobi. One cannot comment on the possible implications of this case on calls for greater reparations for colonialism, but the fact that three ordinary Kenyan people could walk up to a British solicitor who happened to be in Nairobi on another case and achieve this result is nothing short of remarkable. It was presumably Legal Aid that enabled the lawyers to take the case on, and it is the denuding of that fund that the English and Welsh criminal barristers are striking over. Barristers striking over pay, over the ability to represent the common man and woman, indicates that the British government has once again stirred forces whose powers they may once again have underestimated. 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.

Josh Wood, Piano. Josh Wood is an Edinburgh based pianist who has recently graduated from the university of St Andrews. Having previously played for, and musically directed numerous musical productions at the university, including Sweeney Todd, Chicago, and the Pirates of Penzance in the last 5 Years. He is delighted to return to theatre again this fringe.

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

Forthcoming Performances Include:

Just An Ordinary Lawyer: Till August 28: C Place @ Edinburgh Fringe;

October 17: Birmingham Rep (Corporate event).

Call Mr. Robeson: Till Aug 27: Edinburgh Fringe; **November 4:** Grove Theatre, Eastbourne

Paul Robeson's Love Song: September 4: Tayo Aluko's Zoom Room

Tayo Aluko & Friends

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