

Jamaican in Wales was the event that preceded the performance of this play today, featuring the local Jamaican-born artist Audrey West. Well-known as she is here in Barmouth, she won't be as well-known as another Jamaican who lives elsewhere in Britain: Michael Holding. The famous fast-bowler (who is actually briefly mentioned at the end of this play) is now a highly-respected commentator of the game. Even if readers saw this before, it is worth revisiting: there is a famous video of him speaking during Covid times, shortly after the racist murder of George Floyd. Holding was talking about racism and the need for education to combat it. Getting very emotional during the interview, he gave examples of how the dehumanisation of Black people has gone on for so long that racism is now "part of the DNA" of most people, even if they deny that they have a racist bone in their body. How to undo centuries of brainwashing to try to make things better and fairer? Plays like this aim to be part of the armoury that we have at our disposal for this task. And it is so huge a task that even powerful Black people are part of the problem, as has always been the case. Two British politicians illustrate this. There is the one who has decided along with so many others that Palestinians are basically so inferior to Israelis that the murder of tens of thousands of them can still not be described as a genocide, or as ethnic cleansing. He is foreign secretary of Great Britain. The other, currently the leader of the opposition, not only talks down the country of her birth (my own country too, as it happens), but talks up the benefits that colonialism brought to all the parts of the world that were lucky enough to be overrun by British violence. It seems that her stance was adopted as a deliberate ploy to make sure that the Conservative Party chose her above all else to become their next leader. The possibility of her becoming Prime Minister cannot be discounted, as the example of our brothers and sisters in the United States has recently shown us: an openly racist convicted criminal can become President, and to do so, one has to be selective about what stories and what histories one chooses to tell (or invent), and just as importantly, which ones one chooses to believe. One looks forward to the day when politicians, regardless of their colour, speak the truth about history, and join the majority of decent people in the world (and using arts as often as possible) in the fight for basic humanity, and for peace, equality and justice.

Tayo Aluko, Writer, Performer. Tayo was born in Nigeria, and 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 17 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 radio play, *PAUL ROBESON'S LOVE SONG*, was recorded during lockdown with actors from the USA and Canada, and now streaming online. He has developed one of his poems – "*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 is *COLERIDGE-TAYLOR OF FREETOWN*, inspired by the life and music of the Black British Composer, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor.

James Salmon, Piano. James is a versatile musician based in Aberystwyth, where he has made his home for over two decades since leaving his birthplace Reading. With classical foundations underpinning his work, he has evolved into an accomplished jazz performer and theatre musician. A multi-instrumentalist at home on piano, saxophone, and as a vocalist, James brings his talents to arranging, composing, and accompanying across a wide range of musical genres.

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**



Tunji Sowande

Future Performances Include:

December 4. Coleridge-Taylor of Freetown @ Unity Theatre, Liverpool
Dec 7. Coleridge-Taylor of Freetown @ Courtyard Theatre, London

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TAYO ALUKO & FRIENDS
present

JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER

— (?) —

A PLAY, WITH SONGS

**Written and performed by Tayo Aluko,
with James Salmon, piano**

**Dragon Theatre, Barmouth
(with “Jamaican in Wales”)
Saturday, 23 November, 2024**