Programme Announced for IWM London Free Late – The Night Before the Somme

30 June, 8pm – Midnight
Free

On the eve of the centenary of the Battle of the Somme, join us for a FREE LATE at IWM London with film screenings, live music, immersive theatre and poetry exploring the themes of love, fear, hope and courage.

For one night only, IWM London’s iconic Atrium will become a stage, where throughout the evening visitors will be surrounded by live music, poignant words from the letters and diaries in IWM’s collections and a series of short plays offering a snapshot into the thoughts and feelings of men and women who were there on the 30 June 1916.

Highlights include:

- Watch the critically acclaimed play Raising Lazarus by slam poet, Kat Francois which charts the true story Francois’ relative, Private Lazarus Francois a young Caribbean soldier who fought for a country that had enslaved his African forebears a century before. (8.45 – 9.45pm)

- See Magic Lantern Tales, the visceral show by poet and broadcaster Ian McMillan, and photographer Ian Beesley. Using a magic lantern projector, they tell the story of the war from the first hand perspective of the men who survived, such as Harold Hayward who went over the top three times in the Battle of the Somme (10.45 – 11.30pm)

- Extracts from the immersive production Dr Blighty will be performed, which tells the story of the million Indians who travelled to fight in the war and in particular, the group of wounded young men who took refuge in a temporary hospital at Brighton’s Royal Pavilion.

- Explore the First World War Galleries, and encounter as you walk through actors from Past Pleasures – performing and bringing to life the heartfelt letters and diaries in our collections, from nurses to soldiers.

- The powerful documentary, The Battle of the Somme will be screened in the Cinema. Filmed before and during the Battle a hundred years ago, it conveys the reality, fear and of men on the front line faced. Hear from our panel of experts and commentators, chaired by BBC correspondent Kate Aide as they explore its impact, propaganda and war correspondence.

- Gain exclusive free access* to visit Real to Reel: A Century of War Movies taking you behind the scenes of some of the most iconic war films from The Battle of the Somme though to Casablanca, Atonement and Jar Head. See for the first time film props, costumes, clips, scripts, sketches and designs, displayed alongside original artefacts from IWM’s collections.

- During ‘Hope’ (10.15 – 10.45pm), you’ll be serenaded with ‘Keep the Home Fires Burning’ and other hits from the time, performed by a 100 strong chorus from local community choirs*
The Pop Up Bars will be serving ‘Gunfire’ rum tea which was enjoyed by soldiers at the front during the First World War.


The show will close with ‘Courage’, when BBC Young Musician of the Year finalist, Stephanie Childress will be playing IWM’s Western Front Violin – which was crafted out of a pine tree that was growing on the Somme while the Battle raged on around it.

— Ends —

*Community Choirs – include the Imperial War Museums choir, Singers from Morley College, Achord Chamber Choir, South Bermondsey Singers, Waterloo Oasis Singers and Koruso. The music will be arranged and conducted by Andrea Brown, and also performed by the Tippet Voices.

**Only valid for The Night Before The Somme from 1 July you can book tickets at iwm.org.uk

For more information please contact:

- Harriet Thompson, Assistant Press Officer, hthompson@iwm.org.uk / 020 7416 5436
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About Magic Lantern Tales by Ian McMillan and Ian Beesley

“We often view war as a series of huge historical sweeps and this show reminds us that war is made by people who each have their own narrative of what happened.” Ian McMillan

Ian McMillan – who Carol Ann Duffy describes as “One of today’s greatest poetry performers” – presents The Verb every week on BBC R3 and he’s a regular on BBC Breakfast, Coast, Pick of the Week, Countryfile, Last Word and The Arts Show. Previously, Ian has been resident poet for English National Opera, UK Trade & Investment, Yorkshire TV’s Investigative Poet and Humberside Police’s Beat Poet. He’s been a castaway on Desert Island Discs and was featured on The South Bank Show. @IMcMillan www.ian-mcmillan.co.uk

Ian Beesley Hon FRPS is artist in residence for Bradford Institute for Health Research. His work is held in the collections of IWM (Imperial War Museums), National Media Museum Bradford and The Smithsonian Museum Washington USA. He was awarded an Honorary Fellowship of the Royal Photographic Society in 2012. www.ianbeesley.com

“Ian Beesley is a photographer with a specific vision, meticulous observation, a journalist’s eye for detail and a poetic touch” The Independent

About Raising Lazarus by Kat Francois

Kat Francois is a performance poet, playwright, director, actor, comedian, and workshop facilitator. She was the first person to win a televised poetry slam in the UK, on BBC3 in 2004, and a year later went on to win the World Slam Poetry Championships in Rotterdam.

A well-known performance poet on the London poetry scene, Kat has been hosting a monthly poetry and music event, Word4Word, for 13 years at Theatre Royal Stratford East. Kat creates a positive and welcoming space for poets and musicians to share their work attracting both new and established artists, all interspersed with her comedic hosting.
Kat is an established director of youth theatre, devising plays for theatres including Theatre Royal Stratford East, Roundhouse Camden, Lyric Theatre Hammersmith, as well as performances at Arcola Theatre, and Camp Bestival. www.katfrancois.com

**About Past Pleasures**

Past Pleasures is the UK’s leading professional costumed live historical interpretation company, providing interpreters and creating reproduction historic costumes covering all periods at many of the UK’s most important heritage venues. From Henry VIII and his family at Hampton Court Palace to King Henry II, Princess Alys and Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine at Dover Castle, Past Pleasures’ costumed characters are bringing history to life for Historic Royal Palaces, English Heritage, the BBC, The Museum of London, the National Trust and many more.

In 2015, the company was commissioned to recreate the sealing of Magna Carta at Runnymede for the Magna Carta 800 celebrations and chosen by the Waterloo 200 committee for the New Waterloo Dispatch, travelling across Europe in the footsteps of Major Percy and Commander James White RN to bring news of the Iron Duke’s victory at Waterloo.

Past Pleasures also provide: large scale historical festivals; an extensive range of education sessions; single historical figures for guided tours; training programmes for heritage site staff and historically themed corporate entertainment packages.

**Real to Reel: A Century of War Movies** (opens 1 July 2016)

*Real to Reel: A Century of War Movies*, is a new major exhibition that goes behind the scenes of some of this century’s iconic war films that have captured the imagination of cinema-going audiences across the generations.

In the 100th anniversary year of the release of *The Battle of the Somme* film, this immersive new exhibition explores how film-makers have found inspiration in compelling personal stories and gripping real events from wars of the past century. Featuring some of the most celebrated and provocative war movies from across the decades – such as *The Dam Busters, Where Eagles Dare, Apocalypse Now, Battle of Britain, Das Boot, Casablanca, Jarhead, Atonement, Saving Private Ryan* and *War Horse*, this exhibition shows how film-makers have used war’s inherent drama to translate stories of love and loss, fear and courage, triumph and tragedy into blockbusters for the big screen.

*Real to Reel: A Century of War Movies* will bring together for the first time a unique combination of film clips, costumes, props, scripts, sketches and designs, alongside original archival material and artefacts from IWM’s collections. Accompanied by immersive audio-visual installations, the exhibition will explore the film-making process and how war movies have shaped popular perception of conflicts.

**About IWM London**

IWM London

IWM London - IWM’s flagship branch - tells the stories of those whose lives have been shaped by war through the depth, breadth and impact of our Galleries, displays and events. Explore what life was like at home during the Second World War in A Family in Wartime; delve into the world of espionage in Secret War; visit our award-winning Holocaust Exhibition; discover stories of bravery in The Lord Ashcroft Gallery: Extraordinary Heroes; see work by some of Britain’s most significant 20th Century artists in our art galleries or take in our latest special exhibition. Our family learning sessions and events encourage debate and challenge people’s perceptions of war.

Open daily from 10am – 6pm (except 24 – 26 December)
IWM London, Lambeth Road, London, SE1 6HZ.
T: 020 7416 5000 E: contact@iwm.org.uk
iwm.org.uk / @I_W_M / www.facebook.com/iwm.london

IWM
IWM (Imperial War Museums) tells the story of people who have lived, fought and died in conflicts involving Britain and the Commonwealth since the First World War.

Our unique Collections, made up of the everyday and the exceptional, reveal stories of people, places, ideas and events. Using these, we tell vivid personal stories and create powerful physical experiences across our five museums that reflect the realities of war as both a destructive and creative force. We challenge people to look at conflict from different perspectives, enriching their understanding of the causes, course and consequences of war and its impact on people’s lives.

IWM’s five branches attract over 2 million visitors each year. IWM London, our flagship branch, marks the Centenary of the First World War with permanent First World War Galleries and Atrium with iconic large object displays. Our other branches are IWM North, housed in an iconic award-winning building designed by Daniel Libeskind; IWM Duxford, a world-renowned aviation museum and Britain’s best preserved wartime airfield; Churchill War Rooms, housed in Churchill’s secret headquarters below Whitehall; and the Second World War cruiser HMS Belfast.

About the First World War Centenary
2014 - 2018 marks the centenary of the First World War, a landmark anniversary for Britain and the world. IWM is marking the centenary by leading a vibrant, five year programme of cultural activities across the world. 2016 is the centenary of the Battle of the Somme. For more information visit www.1914.org.