



RANDOLPH MATTHEWS - WALTER TULL IN B MAJOR (100 words) PRESS RELEASE.

Acclaimed International jazz vocal performer and composer Randolph Matthews presents Walter Tull In B Major, a show that celebrates the short, vivid life of a black pioneer - a professional footballer and first world war hero - and the strength and joy to be found in grace under pressure.

In being major.

Featuring dynamic modern songs delivered in Matthews' remarkable, expressive voice - variously heard unaccompanied, improvised, embellished with effects and buoyed by a mighty trio on piano, double bass, drums and percussion.

"Dazzling improvisational skills. Flawless and world class!" - Jazz FM

RANDOLPH MATTHEWS - WALTER TULL IN B MAJOR (415 words) PRESS RELEASE.

"One of the great Jazz voices, a unique and stylish performer - not to be missed on any account!"

- The Guardian

"A stunning McFerrin-esque talent!" - Songlines

"Dazzling improvisational skills. Flawless and world class!" - Jazz FM

"This man's not just original, he's out there." - Blues & Soul Magazine

"Beautifully entertaining, languorous and unashamedly expressive." - Flux Music Magazine

In the foot-steps of legends such as Bobby McFerrin and Kurt Elling, Randolph Matthews has in two decades of performing captured the attention of music lovers across all genres, receiving in 2017 The People Choice Award at Ascona Jazz Festival. As jazz vocalist, songwriter and composer with a distinctly unique sound, he has opened concerts for and shared stages with a whole host of high-calibre artists from the jazz, blues and contemporary music scenes such as Grammy-award-winning Herbie Hancock, Grace Jones and Pat Metheny's Richard Bona. Rooted deeply in jazz, blues and folk, Randolph's music looks to explore the fine line between the divine and secular with musically piercing and attuned stories of life.

WHO ON EARTH IS WALTER TULL?

Often accompanied only by his own looped voice Randolph is a master of solo performance, utilising technology alongside his powerful yet graceful tone in order to create blossoming musical landscapes and rich sonorous textures. His new project 'Walter Tull In B Major' is an ambitious collaboration with some of the finest musicians in Britain today.

The four performers set out to explore musically the journey of professional footballer and 1st World War soldier Walter Tull, an extraordinary hidden

figure in the history of humanity and equality for black people. The work is an ode dedicated to Walter's life story, beginning with his childhood in Folkestone (also the home of Randolph Matthews!) and his success as a professional footballer, right up to his ground-breaking achievements in gaining respect for black people via his assertiveness throughout World War One. Randolph's dynamic, modern composition confronts the issues of Walter Tull's remarkable life 100 years ago, which is still relevant today, and not just for people of colour. With breath-taking vocals it's a celebration of courage, resolve and one man's composure to live as an equal within society.

MORE ABOUT WALTER TULL: <http://www.randolphmatthews.co.uk/contact/info/>

LINE-UP:

Randolph Matthews - vocals & loop sampler

Alcyona Mick (London Jazz Orchestra, Yazz Ahmed, Tori Freestone, Ibrahim Maalouf) - piano

Vidal Montgomery (Omar, Courtney Pine, Carleen Anderson) - double bass

Tristan Banks (Roy Ayers, Steve Winwood, Hexagonal) - drums & percussion

RANDOLPH MATTHEWS - WALTER TULL IN B MAJOR (1330 words) PRESS RELEASE.

"The rich enveloping world of Randolph Matthews." Jazz-wise.

"A stunning, McFerrin-esque talent." Song-lines.

"Dazzling improvisational skills. Flawless and world class." Jazz FM.

Acclaimed international vocal performer, composer and multi disciplinary Randolph Matthews presents *Walter Tull In B Major*, a jazz show that celebrates the short, vivid life of a black pioneer - a professional footballer and first world war hero - and the strength and joy to be found in grace under pressure.

In living your best life. In being major.

Featuring dynamic modern songs delivered in Matthews' remarkable, expressive voice - variously heard unaccompanied, improvised, embellished with effects and buoyed by a mighty trio on piano, double bass, drums and percussion

"Walter's story connected with me immediately," says the London-raised, Folkestone-based Matthews. "I was inspired by his courage and resilience and struck by how relevant his challenges are to those still facing people of colour today. His life deserves a musical backdrop. I wanted to be the first to do it."

Walter Tull was one of Britain's first black footballers, and the first black army officer. Born in 1888 in Folkestone, Kent, the son of an English mother and a Barbadian carpenter - himself the son of a slave - Tull was orphaned at the age of eight and raised in a children's home (now Action for Children) in east London. He went on to work at a printing yard and enjoy an amateur spell at a local club, Clapton F.C, before signing for Tottenham Hotspur in 1909, aged 21. The racial abuse that ensued from the terraces eventually saw him demoted to reserves.

Snapped up by Northampton, Tull was about to sign for Rangers F.C when war broke out and he enlisted in the two Footballers Battalions, rising through the ranks and fighting at the Battle of Somme as a sergeant. In 1917, despite regulations that forbade "negroes" from becoming infantry officers, he was commissioned as a

second lieutenant in the Special Reserves. Cited for bravery under fire after leading his company of 26 men to safety in Italy, he never received the Military Cross recommended for him. Tull was killed in action in France in March 1918, aged 30. His body was never found.

"Walter was an extraordinary Edwardian figure whose legacy is slowly being acknowledged," says Matthews, who tells Tull's story through the prism of lyrics based in fact and fired by imagination, and through music laced with harmony, melody and meaning - and the risk embracing, revolutionary spirit of jazz.

"Jazz was originally political music. Our music. Music that expressed our truth and functioned as therapy, that took the revolution out into the audience and beyond. The jazz medium allows me to respond to the life of a person who rose above prejudice a century ago, and whose life has clear parallels with my own."

A hugely charismatic performer, Matthews has been captivating international crowds for two decades now, working with the A-list likes of Herbie Hancock and Mulatu Astatke and winning accolades including a Best Live Performance nomination at the 2018 Jazz FM Awards along the way. His live shows are testaments to the power and potential of the voice, each show imbued with the sort of fourth-wall-smashing dynamism so intrinsic to the roots of jazz.

A recent turn as a featured vocalist in the 2019 BBC Prom *Duke Ellington: Sacred Music* at the Royal Albert Hall proved as revelatory for Matthews as it did for those around him: "At the centre of the music is spirituality and hope. Ellington wrote variations on this theme and made every performer integral to the music in a deep, meaningful way. It reminded me that the essence of the Walter Tull story is living your truth, and that I'm like a conduit for this message."

The son of parents from Grenada, a 50-minute flight across the Caribbean from Barbados, Matthews has also battled discrimination in order to follow his truth both as an artist and a human being. Like many people of colour, he's had to leap higher hurdles to gain recognition. Racism is racism, he says, referencing a shock verbal encounter on the streets of Folkestone, Kent, where he moved with his family five years ago, to a house near the home in which Walter Tull was born.

"I knew that this was not necessarily the future of Folkestone because of the bright, engaged young people I meet there. I've done outreach work in

schools where I tell the story of Walter in my own way artistically. And like most things which have real meaning," he adds with a smile, "I didn't feel like it was the end."

The musicians gracing *Walter Tull in B Major* are among the finest in Britain today: award-winning double bassist Vidal Montgomery, the driving force behind artists such as Omar, Courtney Pine and Carleen Anderson. Drummer/percussionist Tristan Banks, erstwhile collaborator with icons from Roy Ayers to Marcos Valle and lynchpin of rising star trio Hexagonal. Lauded pianist and composer Alcyona Mick, whose CV

spans the London Jazz Orchestra and headline acts Yazz Ahmed, Tori Freestone and Ibrahim Maalouf.

Matthews has collaborated with all three musicians on material for the show, and particularly with Mick. "Alcyona has such sensitive musicianship, and I appreciate her strong feelings on where we can go harmonically." There will be pieces that make the most of Matthews' famed improvisatory skills - a football scene, say, or a battlefield, reimagined on the fly - and songs that tell of home and work and the strength that comes from truth, synergy and love.

The song 'Walton Road' visualizes Tull's childhood home in a terraced house in Folkestone, the family seated around the hearth, his siblings chattering, his mother combing his hair, his father speaking in a voice whose broad Barbadian accent is both reassuring and at odds with the whiteness of the seaside town they find themselves in.

"I can recall eating salt fish and yam as a kid in Camden while listening to my parents' Caribbean voices," says Matthews. "Walter's father arrived in England hoping for a better life, and like Walter and so many people of colour in those times his very presence would have evoked reactions and feelings in people. The show is also a reminder that black British history predates the Windrush."

Another song, 'Working It', is a rhythmic ode to Tull's apprenticeship in a printing yard, all handclaps and *acapella* voices, loop samples and harmoniser.

Then there is the compelling title track, with its pulsing B major chords and 'be major' theme.

"It's a utopian view, given the atrocity of war and a life cut short. But we stand on the shoulders of the giants who went before us, and so many of us aren't even aware these people existed. There's a new generation of young black footballers who could do with knowing who Walter Tull was, and everyone everywhere can find inspiration in Walter's courage and composure in the face of adversity."

At a time when people of colour are still treated as lesser than, still denied equality on the pitch and off, *Walter Tull in B Major* prompts us to live our best lives, to confront the obstacles that seek to diminish, to have hope, stay positive.

Be major. Nominated by Jazz Fm for 'Best Jazz Live Performance' in 2018 Hermon Jazz is super proud to present exactly this, an opportunity to experience Randolph Matthews, a fantastically inventive musician, close up in the context of touring his brand-new, Arts Council supported project 'Walter Tull in B Major' !! Inspired by his belief that the power of the human voice changes lives in incredible and significant ways, Randolph's music - full of positive energy and humour - is not just an audible feast for Jazz aficionados but likewise an eye- and ear-opener for anybody who values the genuine endeavour of cutting out a niche for humanity in a confused world!

