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by week listings guide



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First Word

Coventry Belgrade's 50-plus drama groups in new-member hunt

Coventry's Belgrade Theatre is looking for new members to join its drama groups for people aged 50-plus.

The groups have been set up via the recently launched Arts Gymnasium project, which is being run by the Belgrade in partnership with Age UK Coventry.

A free taster session for anyone interested in joining is being held at the theatre on Thursday 23 February.

The session will be an informal opportunity for participants to meet the workshop leaders over a cup of tea or coffee, as well as to try out drama activities and share stories. If you would like to take part, contact project manager Alice Williams by emailing AWilliams@belgrade.co.uk or calling 024 7684 6741.



RSC offers theatre groups the chance to perform in the great outdoors

The Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) is offering amateur and professional theatre groups, schools and colleges the opportunity to put on a play in its open-air performance space this summer.

Located on the banks of the River Avon in Stratford, The Dell is a 'venue' in which groups can either perform an established piece of work or create a new one inspired by Shakespeare or his contemporaries. Commenting on the opportunity, RSC Events & Exhibitions Officer Nicola Salmon said: "The Dell is a great platform for amateur theatre companies, community groups, schools, universities and professional theatre companies to perform to an audience of all ages.

"Audiences love the free productions that companies bring to The Dell, and enjoy the unique atmosphere that comes from plays being performed outside by the River Avon during the summer months."

Two performance slots are available on Saturdays and Sundays at The Dell between Saturday 3 June and Sunday 27 August. Anybody interested in mounting a production should fill in an application form, which can be downloaded from the RSC's website at: rsc.org.uk/thedell.

The closing date for applications is Monday 6 March.

British Paraorchestra to make Birmingham debut



The world's first large-scale professional ensemble for disabled musicians is making its Birmingham debut this month.

The pioneering British Paraorchestra performs at the city's Symphony Hall on Saturday 18 February. It will be joined by members of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO).

Commenting on the event, the paraorchestra's co-founder and artistic director, Charles Hazlewood, said: "If anyone thought that disability and excellence are two words that cannot be put together, then here's proof to think again. The British Paraorchestra will be joined for part of the concert by the CBSO, creating a vision of integration; a snapshot of a hoped-for near-future where it is no surprise to see a healthy number of disabled musicians sharing the stage with non-disabled ones."

The concert's programme features a repertoire spanning four centuries, including Corelli's *La Folia* and Lloyd Coleman's *Towards Harmony*. Tickets are on sale at thsh.co.uk and cbs.co.uk.

Boxing legend Floyd Mayweather at the ICC

Five-division world champion boxer Floyd Mayweather is the main attraction at a Las Vegas-themed ball at Birmingham's ICC on Saturday 4 March.

Widely considered to be one of the greatest boxers of all time and undefeated as a professional, Mayweather will take part in Q&A and meet-and-greet sessions.

Standard tickets start at £39.95 (+£2.56 fee) and include the opportunity to watch Mayweather's interview live on stage, Vegas-themed entertainment and the use of on-site bars.



Alistair McGowan to star in piano marathon

Birmingham Conservatoire is next month presenting a Gala Piano All-Nighter at the city's Town Hall. Comprising 12 hours of piano music, the event features contributions from, among others, Alistair McGowan, Peter Donohoe, Dr Anna Scott, Antony Hewitt and 'a mystery special guest'.

The evening kicks off with Hungarian virtuoso pianist Gergely Bogányi performing Chopin's Nocturnes and finishes on the Saturday morning with a performance of Messiaen's Dieu Parmi Nous on the famous Town Hall Organ. The event begins at 7:30pm on Friday 3 March and finishes at 7:30am on the morning of the 4th.



Mark Watson live in Coventry

Coventry's Albany Theatre is hosting an evening of comedy headlined by Mark Watson as part of its spring programme of entertainment. Watson will be joined by fellow comedians Alun Cochrane, Ava Vidal, Scott Gibson and Elf Lyons when he appears at the venue on Saturday 8 April.



It's official! Coventry City of Culture bid now underway

Coventry's bid to become UK City of Culture in 2021 is now formally underway.

The Coventry City of Culture Trust has been working on the bid for more than a year, with chair David Burbidge in no doubt about the benefits which success would bring.

"The truth is Coventry doesn't only want to be City of Culture in 2021," explains David, "it also very much needs this opportunity to help tackle some of the inequalities that remain, and to turn round the city's visitor economy. It's clear to me that the whole city is behind the bid - our politicians and businesses, who are supporting the bid financially, our two great universities, our cultural organisations and, most importantly, the people.

"It would bring so many benefits to the city and the West Midlands. Places like Glasgow, Manchester, Hull and Liverpool have shown how perceptions of the north can be changed. The time is right for the Midlands to stand up and deliver."

Valentine's fundraiser for Coventry's Gang Show

A special event aiming to raise much-needed funds for the Coventry Gang Show is taking place at the Triumph Standard Motor Club in Tile Hill on Friday 10 February.

The Gang Show has been a highlight of the local Scouts calendar since the 1970s, showcasing the talent and enthusiasm of performers young and old from across the city.

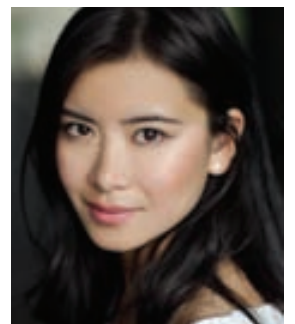
Tickets for the Valentine's-themed fundraiser are priced at £5 for adults and £3 for children, with all proceeds going towards the show.

Harry Potter Bafta Breakthrough Brit set to star in Stratford world premiere

Harry Potter star and 2014 Bafta Breakthrough Brit Katie Leung is this month taking the lead role in the Royal Shakespeare Company's world premiere of *Snow In Midsummer*, a contemporary re-imagining of a 13th century Chinese drama.

Katie is best known for playing Cho Chang, Harry Potter's first love interest in the hugely successful film versions of JK Rowling's novels.

Snow In Midsummer opens at the Swan Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon on 23 February and runs until 25 March. To book tickets, call 01789 403493 or purchase them online at rsc.org.uk



Birmingham Airport voted most punctual in the world

Birmingham Airport was the world's most punctual airport last year, according to air travel intelligence company OAG.

An impressive 91.28% of arriving and departing flights operated on time during 2016. The route to Dublin was the most punctual, with an ontime score of more than 95%.

First Word

Wicked flies back to the Birmingham Hippodrome

Wicked is returning to the Midlands next year. The West End and Broadway musical phenomenon, telling the untold story of the Witches of Oz, will show at Birmingham Hippodrome from Wednesday 4 to Sunday 29 April.

Commenting on the news, Executive Producer Michael McCabe said: "We were overwhelmed by the incredible response from audiences and critics alike when we first brought Wicked to Birmingham in 2014, and it's extraordinary to think that over 110,000 people came and saw us. The whole team at the Birmingham Hippodrome showed such tremendous enthusiasm and support, and we're all really delighted to be returning to this truly magnificent venue in 2018."

Tickets for Wicked's return to the Hippodrome go on sale next month, on Tuesday 21 March. For more information about the show, visit WickedTheMusical.co.uk



New season takes audiences on Voyages Extraordinaires

The works of Around The World In Eighty Days author Jules Verne have provided the inspiration for a Warwickshire youth theatre company's new season of shows.

Playbox Theatre's Voyages Extraordinaires features a unique sequence of global drama, presented in a newly designed and configured arena at Warwick's Dream Factory venue.

"We believe our theatre must voice debate and reflect upon crucial issues relating to today's world," explains Playbox's founder and director, Stewart McGill. "To support our work, the actors will train with guest experts in Kathak movement, capoeira, circus, dance and other artistic world techniques to make this a unique season."

Worcs Girls Can makes welcome return

A campaign aiming to change the perception of women and girls regarding sport is returning to Worcestershire after enjoying great success last year.

Worcs Girls Can is being run by Sports Partnership Herefordshire & Worcestershire from 13 to 17 February and will be delivered across the county.

Commenting on the initiative, Stephen Brewster, Sports Partnership Herefordshire & Worcestershire's chief executive officer, said: "The upcoming campaign will allow us to engage with our local schools, clubs and organisations to help break down the barriers to sport and physical activity for young women. It will also help highlight the positive effects that taking part in physical activity can have both physically and mentally."



Philosopher's Stone on the giant screen

Midlands-based fans of Harry Potter And The Philosopher's Stone can this spring enjoy the experience of a symphony orchestra performing the film's memorable score.

The performance takes place at Birmingham's Barclaycard Arena on Monday 15 May. It will be accompanied by a high-definition showing of the film on a giant screen.

Birmingham Weekender returns in 2017

Birmingham's biggest arts festival is making a welcome return in 2017. The award-winning Birmingham Weekender, taking place from Friday 22 to Sunday 24 September, offers a packed weekend of free outdoor theatre, music, art installations and performance across the city centre. The festival also features well-known local arts organisations, invited international artists and a number of significant new commissions.

"We're delighted that Birmingham Weekender will return in 2017," says Gary Topp, Director of Culture Central, the organisation responsible for the event. "The city centre will be humming with a party atmosphere - where else can you listen to a world-class orchestra or witness stunning dance performances for free, on the streets and in the shopping centres?"

"Birmingham Weekender 2017 will build on the success of the 2015 festival programme and will be even more ambitious in its scope, strengthening Birmingham's reputation as an international cultural destination."



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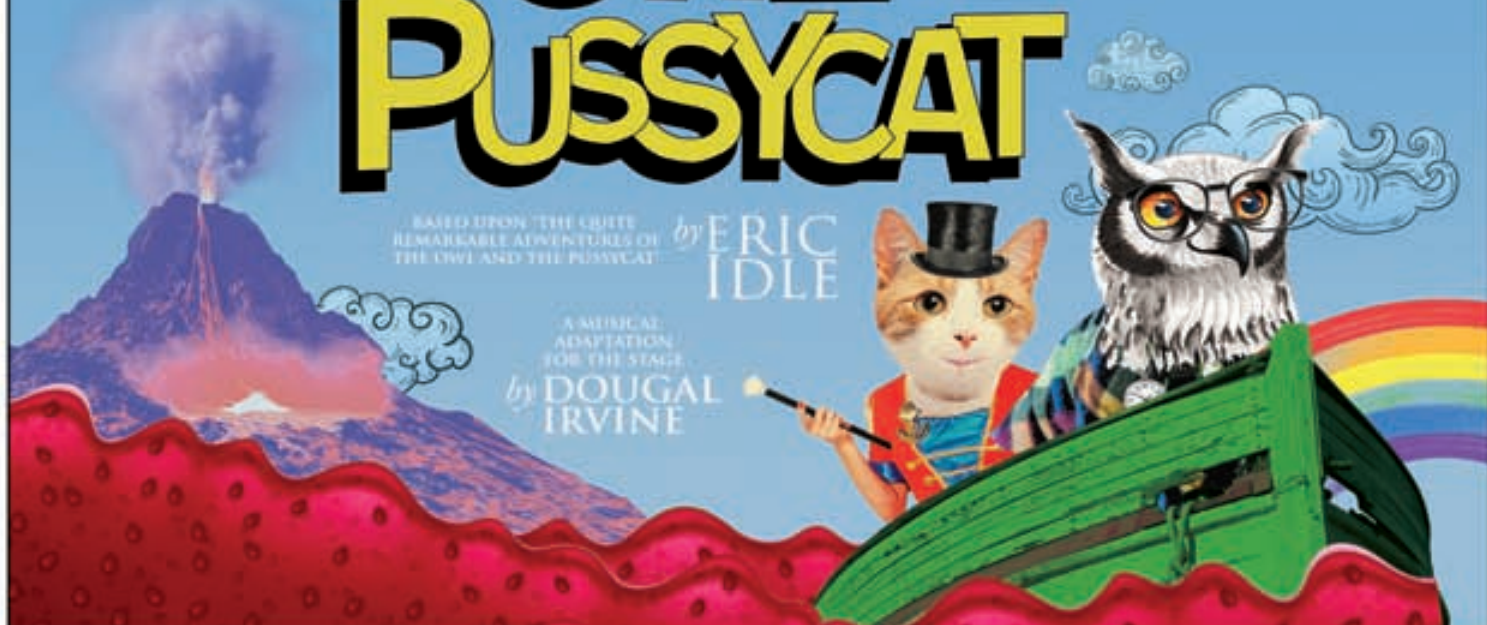
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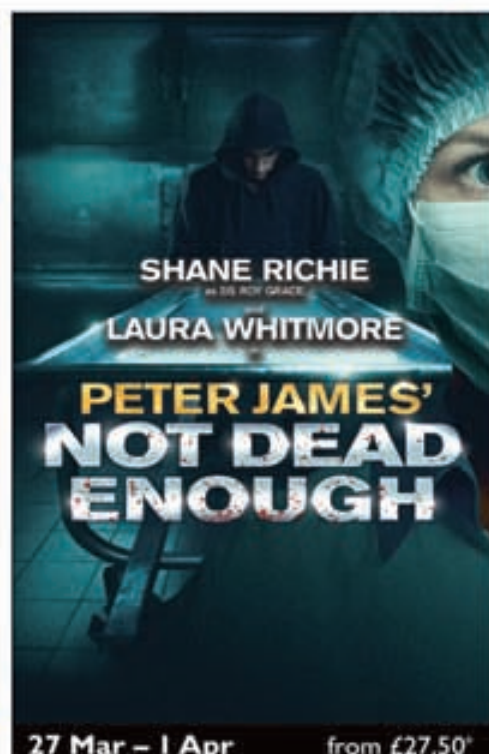
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ANGUS JACKSON

adds contemporary styling to Shakespeare's Ancient Rome

The 30th of June 2016: Just days after the EU referendum, Boris Johnson shocked the nation by announcing that he would not be standing for leadership of his party. In a speech, he described this as “a time not to fight against the tide of history but to take that tide at the flood and sail on to fortune.” Lifted almost verbatim from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, the quote hints tantalisingly at a story of betrayal and power play going on behind the scenes of the EU debate. It was an astonishing week in British history, but perhaps what is even more remarkable is the fact that it could be understood and interpreted through a reference to a 400-year-old play telling the story of 2000-year-old events.

Currently scrutinising *Julius Caesar* and its meaning for modern audiences is Angus Jackson, director of the RSC's forthcoming Rome season. This year, with the help of two other directors, Jackson is in charge of staging all four of Shakespeare's Roman plays, alongside a series of talks about their contemporary relevance, and an exhibition of political cartoons from the last 200 years that have used Shakespeare as a basis for satire.

“I think it's extraordinary that these truths run through history like the lettering through a stick of rock,” says Jackson. “They resonate across the ages: every time anybody says, ‘Et tu, Brute?’ we know what they mean, and every overly powerful individual is viewed through the lens of Caesar.”

Of the four plays, Jackson (whose previous RSC credits include *Oppenheimer* and *Don Quixote*) will direct the first and last of the season, with Iqbal Khan (*Othello*, *Much Ado About Nothing*) heading up *Antony And Cleopatra*, and Blanche McIntyre (*Two Noble Kinsmen*) leading *Titus Andronicus*. Though it's neither the first Shakespeare wrote nor the first in terms of chronological setting, *Julius Caesar* seemed like the obvious choice to start the season - beginning, aptly enough, around the Ides of March.

“Interestingly when we go to London we will actually be opening with *Coriolanus*, so there they'll be in chronological order, but I rather like what we're doing in Stratford. I thought it would be a good idea to open with my own production of *Julius Caesar*, and we wanted to tie that together with *Antony And Cleopatra*, so we're opening with this big, epic story across those two plays; and then to do the next one (*Titus Andronicus*) further in the future made sense. That's going to be really exciting and bloody, and then, when we've laid waste to this empire, we go back to the beginning (in *Coriolanus*) and show you how it started with the best of intentions, before personalities and ambitions got in the way.”

Personal ambition, rabble rousing and populist uprising are at the heart of *Julius Caesar*'s thrilling political plot, which throws the conflicted idealism of Brutus

up against the confident, smooth-talking opportunism of Mark Antony. Where Antony wins over the mob through appeal to emotion, loyalty and sheer strength of personality, Brutus makes the fatal mistake of assuming that good intentions will be sufficient to make his case. It's a pertinent predicament to our own tumultuous times, where polls mislead and every argument is laden with highly charged language.

“Rhetoric is the most brilliant thing to talk about with this play, especially right after Trump takes over from Obama. We've just had the most extraordinary rhetorician as President of America, and if you compare the way he speaks to the way Trump speaks, it's really interesting. I might also argue that the Brexit debate was swayed enormously by rhetoric, and that only after the vote did people really start filtering through the facts.”

Ironically, in attempting to secure his beloved republic from the threat of dictatorship, Brutus ends up creating a power vacuum which is filled by exactly the kind of absolute government that he feared - a story we've seen playing out again and again throughout the ages, most recently in Middle Eastern states. The fate of the country hangs in the balance, and Brutus' catastrophic failure ushers in a new era for Rome: here the Republic ends and the Empire begins.

Today, Classical history is rarely taught in-



Photo: Catherine Ashmore

depth in schools, and it's common to treat the Roman era as a single, easily digestible unit, forgetting that it actually covers a period of about 1000 years. To put that in context, it's about as long as a unified English (let alone British) kingdom has existed today – so the Romans of Coriolanus would have had about as much in common with the Romans of Titus Andronicus as 21st-century Brits have with the Anglo-Saxons. With the help of designer Robert Innes Hopkins, Jackson hopes to emphasise that rolling on of centuries between the plays.

“We thought we'd start with a kind of modern version of Rome, the idea being to give them an environment that will look to our eye now as it would have looked to them at the time. So it's got all the pillars and the steps and the togas, but rather than having cumbersome, heritage clothing and weapons, we've got people tearing around in garments they can wear in a very practical way. Then in Antony and Cleopatra, that very modern-seeming world comes into collision with the beautiful, rich, ancient society of Egypt.

“By the time we get to Titus, which is hundreds of years and hundreds of emperors later, it will all be in modern dress, with things like severed heads in Tesco carrier bags. That fits in beautifully with the overarching season, because it's like this empire has evolved and decayed and become more complex and cruel, and it's difficult to know who's really in charge. Then after we've laid waste to it

all we go back and do Coriolanus in really deep period, where they're slugging out in the mud with broadswords and it's all about how much muscle you've got.”

Cutting edge music from the likes of Laura Mvula and Mira Calix will help to open up the characters' emotional and imaginative worlds to contemporary audiences.

“If HBO and Netflix have taught us anything, it's that you can get people really interested in historical figures if you shine the light on the people and what they thought and felt. Having a moment of emotion supported by something you might hear at the Mercury Awards today immediately tells the audience that these are people that think like they do.”

Following the phenomenal success of last year's Shakespeare 400 anniversary celebrations, the Roman season was conceived by RSC Artistic Director Greg Doran partly as a way of marking 2000 years since the death of Ovid. In a sense, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* were to Shakespeare as Shakespeare's stories are to us: in the same way as Boris Johnson can describe post-Brexit machinations using Julius Caesar, so the tortured Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus* turns to the story of Philomel to explain the horrors she endures.

Though best known for directing new writing (including plays by Kwame Kwei-Armah), for Jackson, who grew up in Birmingham, working at the RSC is like a

sort of homecoming.

“It's funny - I just saw Simon Russell Beale playing Prospero in *The Tempest*, and I can remember seeing him in Nick Hytner's production when I can't have been much older than 12. My parents always brought me when I was a kid, and as soon as I got my driving licence, I would just go off by myself and see any number of shows in Stratford, so I feel incredibly comfortable there.”

“I think when you're putting on Shakespeare, if you're too reverent to do anything new with it, you end up with something that can come over a bit academic, which has its own validity, but I'm big on narrative and dramaturgy and making things fresh and interesting. As a new writing director, you treat the play like it's just been written, and I think that's the best way to approach any play - Shakespeare, Marlowe, Beckett or Brecht.”

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The RSC's Rome season at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, commences with *Julius Caesar*, which shows from 3 March to 9 September. The season then continues with *Antony And Cleopatra*, 11 March - 7 September, and *Titus Andronicus*, 23 June – 2 September. Dates for *Coriolanus* are yet to be announced.



FRI 3 - SAT 4 MAR

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Jennifer Pike
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REVIEW: The Drawing Board, Leamington Spa
Going back to The Drawing Board?
You bet we are!

Got a pen and paper to hand? Good. Scribble down 'The Drawing Board' and pin it to your noticeboard. Then the next time you're looking for somewhere to go and eat, you'll have the answer.

This fantastic bar restaurant is a couple of streets away from Leamington's main drag near the Spa Centre, and one of the town's best-kept secrets, building up a loyal clientele since it opened in April 2015.

On first glance it looks like a hipster's paradise - framed retro comic artwork, vintage children's annuals, leather sofas, mismatched dining furniture - but I'm reliably informed that a beard and a plaid shirt are not prerequisites for entry - and once you're settled in, the atmosphere is wonderfully warm and relaxed.

As indeed was our friendly waiter, Olly (complete with beard and a plaid shirt), who gave us the lay of the land and let me sample a couple of beers at the

bar to ease my selection conundrum. The 'DB' - as per logos throughout - is getting as much of a reputation for its beer selection (and its whisky and wine) as it is for its food - and with good reason. In addition to four real ales - which change regularly, courtesy of its free-house status - and wide selection of bottles and cans, there are a number of craft ales on tap, including Brewdog's beautifully fruity Dead Pony Club and the rather more potent (5.5%) Belgian brew, Vedett IPA, both of which were excellent.

But as much as I could wax lyric-ale about the beer, the food is what really knocked our socks off at The Drawing Board. The hugely inventive menu ranges from tapas and small plates to main courses, meeting the needs of everybody from casual or pre-theatre diners to those wanting a fully-fledged night out.

We opted to start with a trio of tapas (£4 each/three for £11), and despite initial selection difficulties - what to have? - were

delighted with our choices, all of which had a Latin flair. A handful of mushroom churros - a savoury take on the Spanish sweet - melted on the tongue, the Portuguese beef trinchado was a lovely mix of perfectly braised meat and smokey rich sauce, while the crispy squid in green chimmichurri was utterly magnificent - the delicate batter enveloping perfectly cooked meat - and came with the most exquisite sauce... did I detect a hint of mint in there?

Unbelievably the main courses (prices range from £11 to £21 but most are around the £15 mark) ratcheted things up even further, taken from a menu that provides a wonderful showcase of head chef Saleem Ahmed's innovative flavour combinations. My tempura sea bass with Thai-spiced butternut squash, minted broken peas and sautéed sweet potatoes was the stuff of dreams - a beautiful piece of fish coated in light crispy batter and taken to new heights by the fantastic mixture of flavours that zinged around it.

My partner chose the Devonshire crab and pancetta risotto with rocket and parmesan, enlivened by a beautiful lemon dressing that added a light but wonderful twist to another fabulous dish.

As usual, we could, and should, have stopped there, but were compelled to sample a dessert, sharing a sumptuous orange and gingerbread trifle topped with cinnamon-dusted meringue pieces. I can take or leave meringue, but the trifle was heavenly, a magnificently morish combination of orange jelly, moist gingerbread and stunning, set cream with more than a hint of crème anglais about it.

Yet another perfectly prepared and presented dish to match everything that went before it. And another example of the brilliantly contemporary food and flavours on offer at a venue where the chef's wonderful twists and winning experiments mean it's we diners who need to get back to The Drawing Board.
Steve Adams

Food:	■ ■ ■ ■ ■
Service:	■ ■ ■ ■ ■
Ambience:	■ ■ ■ ■ ■
Overall value	■ ■ ■ ■ ■
OVERALL	■ ■ ■ ■ ■

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SPRING 17

THEATRE

STOMP

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COMEDY

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World Famous
Sun 12 Feb



THEATRE
TIM CROUCH

My Arm

Wed 8 & Thu 9 Feb



COMEDY

Josie Long

Wed 15 Feb

DANCE

Early Adventures

by Matthew Bourne

Thu 16 - Sat 18 Feb



DANCE

Tango Fire

by German Cornejo

Thu 23 Feb



THEATRE

HEADLONG, NUFFIELD THEATRES SOUTHAMPTON
& WEST YORKSHIRE PLAYHOUSE

Pygmalion

by Bernard Shaw

Tue 28 Feb - Fri 3 Mar



VISUAL ARTS

Subodh Gupta

From Far Away
Uncle Moon Calls

Sat 14 Jan - Sat 11 Mar

Subodh Gupta: From Far Away, 2015 - 2016. Photo: Simon Hartmann. Photographs: David, courtesy the artist and Howard & Whit.

FAMILY HALF TERM

Dead Dudes: Zombie Making

Mon 20 Feb
Ages 11 - 15

LITTLE ANGEL THEATRE

Wow! Said the Owl

Tue 21 - Thu 23 Feb
Ages 2 - 5

Play in a Day

Tue 21 Feb
Ages 8 - 14

PINS AND NEEDLES

The Bear

by Raymond Briggs
Fri 24 - Sun 26 Feb
Ages 3 - 8



Warwick Arts Centre
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Around the world in 80 beers... in Nuneaton!

Warwickshire-based lovers of beer, sausages and lederhosen should check out The Bierkeller Nuneaton, a lively venue open four nights a week from Thursday to Sunday. As well as 80 bottled beers from around the world, 10 draught beers and a good selection of cocktail steins, the venue also offers a food menu featuring 'fantastic sausage options' and a giant pretzel. Friday and Saturday night visitors can enjoy the added attraction of a live oompah band giving it their all. For more information, visit the-bierkellernuneaton.com.

Paint and wine with your Valentine

Luxury four-star hotel Park Regis Birmingham is holding a Valentine's Day Paint & Wine Party on Tuesday 14 February. Inspired by an increasingly popular trend in America, the event sees guests following a step-by-step painting guide while at the same time enjoying glasses of wine and a 'painter's platter' of 'delicious aphrodisiacs'. Commenting on the event, Robin Ford, general manager at Park Regis Birmingham, said: "We're thrilled to be hosting our second Paint & Wine evening. Our first event in September was so successful that we knew we needed to do something to top it. This romantic evening is the perfect way for city couples to spend their Valentine's Day. Lovers will be able to gaze into their partner's eyes while overlooking the beautiful Birmingham skyline. It won't matter if you're a seasoned painter or an amateur artist because love will be in the air." For more information, visit parkregis.eventbrite.com



Indian brewery in coffee shop relaunch

Indian Brewery, the Birmingham company that provides Indian Summer lager and IPA to numerous city venues, has relaunched coffee shop Brewsmiths as an Indian street food cafe. The new venue, sited on Livery Street in Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter, will transform into a bar in the evenings. Its menu includes bacon, sausage or egg naan, pakora pops, Indian fish & chips and Chaat bombs, a Bombay Breakfast - a twist on the traditional English version - craft beer and artisan coffee.

Iconic Birmingham pub given new lease of life by brewery

Birmingham's iconic City Tavern pub is being given a 'sympathetic refurbishment' by Davenports Brewery - and will once again be known by its original name of The Bulls Head. The Victorian pub will be headed up by Brummies Simon Key (Brand Director at Davenports) and Gerard a-Walsh (General Manager). "We're excited to give this great old venue a new lease of life," says Simon. "We have a foot firmly in the past with our historic revival cask beers but also want to offer a modern, eclectic mix of local, national and international food and drink. You don't have to be a beer expert to enjoy the venue. We're all about having fun and experiencing the best food and drink the city has to offer."



It's a dog's life in Warwick

A dog-friendly cafe has opened in Warwick. Chiens et Café, the brainchild of mother-and-son business team Tanya and Dan Pare, offers a 'humans and hounds' menu. The Pares opened the cafe after finding that the town was lacking in coffee shops where dogs were welcome. Dog walkers of Warwick would be barking mad not to pop in...

Wealth of healthy eating options as new Sutton Coldfield cafe opens

A stylish new cafe has opened in Sutton Coldfield. The Windowbox is serving a healthy-eating menu that includes avo-toast - smashed avocado on bread with poached eggs and chilli flakes - French toast, flatbreads and Greek yoghurt with berries and granola. As well as its imaginative menu, the eatery also features a large indoor olive tree, a seating area outside the front of the property and a courtyard at the back.



Black Sabbath

Genting Arena, Birmingham,
2 & 4 February

Nearly five decades ago - and created by a young Birmingham band - heavy metal was born.

Black Sabbath helped define the genre they pioneered with releases such as their self-titled debut album (1970), *Paranoid* (also 1970) and *Master Of Reality* (1971). Following the break-up of their previous band, *Mythology*, in 1968, guitarist Tony Iommi and drummer Bill Ward decided to form a heavy blues rock band in Aston. They enlisted bassist Geezer Butler and vocalist Ozzy Osbourne, who had played together in a band called *Rare Breed*. Over the years, Black Sabbath have survived a number of line-up changes. The current version of the band features Osbourne, Iommi and Geezer, who this month bring their Farewell Tour back to the place where it all began.



LeAnn Rimes

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Fri 17 February



World-renowned vocalist LeAnn Rimes this year celebrates the 20th anniversary of her debut album. Rimes rose to fame at the age of 13, following her release of the Bill Mack song, *Blue*, making her the youngest country music star since Tanya Tucker in 1972. She's since racked up an impressive 44 million-plus album sales, won two Grammys, 12 Billboard Music Awards and plenty more coveted gongs besides.

Rimes here stops off in Birmingham as part of her *Remnants* tour, which includes dates both in America and the UK.

Pet Shop Boys

Barclaycard Arena, Birmingham,
Fri 24 February

Having formed in London in 1981, English electronic pop duo Pet Shop Boys features Neil Tennant (main vocals, keyboards, occasional guitar) and Chris Lowe (keyboards, occasional vocals). Not only are they listed in the Guinness Book of Records as the most successful duo in UK music history, they've also bagged three Brit Awards, six Grammy nominations and, since 1985, 42 Top 30 singles and 22 Top 10 hits in the UK Singles Chart, including four number ones.

This month sees the pair return to Birmingham to perform a set that features songs from their acclaimed new album, *Super*, and classic hits and album tracks from the past 30 years.



Kaiser Chiefs

Barclaycard Arena, Birmingham,
Sat 25 February

Fronted by the charismatic Ricky Wilson, indie rock five-piece Kaiser Chiefs formed in Leeds back in the year 2000. Their trademark sound has delivered hits such as *Oh My God*, *Ruby* and *I Predict A Riot*, helping to establish them as one of the leading bands of their generation.

Commenting on the group's 16 years together, band member Simon Rix says: "People do ask us how we've stayed together for so long, and I think it's because we're friends and we make each other laugh, no matter what's happening in our world."

Read the full interview online at whatsonlive.co.uk

Michael McGoldrick, John McCusker & John Doyle

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry,
Sun 19 February



Three members of the BBC's acclaimed Transatlantic Sessions are touring this month in celebration of their latest album.

Regarded as one of the greatest flute players of all time, McGoldrick is a founding member of Flook and Lunasa, and a current member of Capercaillie.

McCusker's unique style of fiddle playing and Doyle's impressive guitar work add to the magic.

This is a rare chance to see three of the world's finest musicians sharing a stage together.

Kings Of Leon

Genting Arena, Birmingham,
Mon 20 February

It's a family affair for Kings Of Leon. Comprising three brothers and a cousin, the Nashville-based quartet's early-career sound brought together Southern rock and blues influences. Their music has gradually developed through the years to include a variety of genres and a more alternative, arena rock sound.

They've released seven albums since their inception in the year 2000, five of them reaching number one in the UK Album Charts.

The band return to the Midlands to promote their latest album, Walls.



Andy Fairweather Low & The Low Riders

Artrix, Bromsgrove, Fri 17 February

Cardiff-born Andy Fairweather Low first established himself as a frontman with chart-topping '60s group Amen Corner. Throughout his career, his services as a

vocalist and guitarist have been much in demand, either on a touring basis or as a recording artist.

Featuring among the who's who of musicians with whom he's worked are Jimi Hendrix, Roger Waters, Eric Clapton, Van Morrison, Phil Collins, Sheryl Crow, Bob Dylan and Jimmy Page.

Sophie Ellis-Bextor

O2 Institute, Birmingham Fri 17 February



Murder On The Dancefloor singer Sophie Ellis-Bextor's latest release, Familia, marks a critically acclaimed change in her musical direction, showcasing her newfound lyrical and musical maturity.

Described by Ellis-Bextor as "the bolshier, more extrovert little sister" of previous release Wanderlust, Familia was introduced by the Radio Two A-List track Come With Us, which became an instant disco-pop anthem. She here visits Birmingham as part of an 11-date tour of the UK.

Fun Lovin' Criminals

The Assembly, Leamington Spa,
Sat 18 February

Fronted by Huey Morgan, Fun Lovin' Criminals have been performing their trademark style of hip-hop rock for over 20 years. Stylistically and lyrically eclectic, hits like Scooby Snacks and Loco cover topics such as drug use and organised crime.

A regular on UK shores, Morgan explains; "FLC always bring the mucho grande style. Of course, we want everybody to come along for the ride; we wouldn't be doing this if it wasn't for the fans."

Amber Run

O2 Institute, Birmingham, Sat 11 February

Alt-rock band Amber Run visit Birmingham this month as part of a new UK tour to promote latest offering For A Moment, I Was Lost. Commenting on the album, the band said: "It trims the fat from our previous music and gets down to the bare bones of the songs. We're songwriters, and where 5AM was a collection of songs written in our youth, these new songs are, for us, a timely response to more recent experiences."

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Orchestra Of The Swan: Mozart Meets Joanna Lee

Stratford Artshouse, Stratford-upon-Avon, Tues 14 February

As well as being held in high regard for their championing of new music, having presented more than 70 world premieres, the Stratford-based Orchestra of the Swan are also much admired for their performances of works by such legendary composers as Berlioz, Brahms, Mozart, Schumann, Strauss and Vaughan Williams.

As might therefore be expected, this latest concert sees them combining the new with the familiar.

The 'new' comes in the shape of a world premiere - Concertante for Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon & Horn - from highly rated British composer Joanna Lee.

The 'more familiar', meanwhile, sees the orchestra's principal players performing Sinfonia Concertante for Four Winds by Mozart.

The concert also features an overture written by the composer when he was just 12 years old - using the same opening theme as Beethoven's Eroica - and a performance of Haydn's Symphony no59 in A, Die Feuersymphonie.

An Audience With Lesley Garrett

Palace Theatre, Redditch, Thurs 23 February

Although many would claim that she's been displaced as Britain's best-loved soprano by Welsh wonder Katherine Jenkins, Lesley Garrett retains an army of appreciative fans and continues to produce superlative performances.

These latest Midlands appearances by the West End star follow the well-established 'audience with' format, combining song with plenty of reminiscences and not a little lighthearted chat.



European Union Chamber Orchestra

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Thurs 9 February

Boasting some of Europe's finest young professional players, the European Union Chamber Orchestra was formed in 1981, since which time



it's toured extensively both across the continent and further afield.

This latest Midlands concert sees the EUCO joined by acclaimed pianist Peter Donohoe (pictured), who'll be playing Beethoven's Second Concerto. The programme also features Beethoven's Romance for Violin & Orchestra, Haydn's rarely performed Symphony No57 and Mozart's 40th, his most personal and tragic symphony.

Roderick Williams And Iain Burnside

Malvern Theatre, Worcestershire, Sun 26 February

This month's Malvern Concert Club presentation sees club president and baritone Roderick Williams (pictured) teaming up with pianist Iain Burnside to present Franz Schubert's famous song cycle, Die Schöne Müllerin, a composition based on the works of German lyric poet Wilhelm Müller.

The duo will return next February and in 2019 to present the remaining two of the composer's three major song cycles.

The performance of Die Schöne Müllerin lasts for just over an hour and is presented without an interval.



Stamic String Quartet

Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington Spa, Fri 24 February

Warwickshire-based classical music fans of longstanding may well recall the Stamic String Quartet. The talented Czech ensemble were regular visitors to the region back in the 1990s.

Stamic are making a welcome return to these parts this month, for the first time in 11 years.

Founded in 1985 and highly regarded in classical circles across the globe, they here perform Haydn's Quartet in B flat major Op71 No1, Dvorak's Quartet No14 in A flat major Op105, and Geraldine Mucha's Quartet No1. The latter of the three works may be of particular interest to a Warwickshire audience - its London-born composer met the man who would become her husband, the Czech writer Jiri Mucha, at a party in Leamington in 1941, and subsequently went to live in Czechoslovakia.

Paul Carrack

talks fame, collaborations and keeping it in the family...

He's performed around the world with the likes of Eric Clapton, Roger Waters and Ringo Starr; had major hits with Squeeze, Roxy Music and Mike + The Mechanics; done session work for The Pretenders and The Smiths; and had his songs recorded by Eagles, Diana Ross and more. Yet despite being one of the most revered musicians and best-loved singers in the biz, Paul Carrack is also among the most unassuming chaps you'll meet, brushing off his astonishing list of achievements with a Yorkshire down-to-earthness that 40-odd years in London have done nothing to undermine.

In a sense, it's not surprising. That 'golden voice' which you'll definitely have heard on tracks like Squeeze's *Tempted* and Mike + The Mechanics' *Over My Shoulder* has never brought him household-name status. But then, this is a man who's much more comfortable in his own household, jamming in his studio with his son. Nevertheless, over the years, he's deservedly built up a loyal following, and if you're lucky enough to catch him on stage in Stoke or Birmingham this year, you can expect to experience something truly special.

"I never wanted to be super famous," Carrack explains. "I can't think of anything worse, to be honest - other than being poor and skint, which I'm not either! This is a really good place to be - I've got my own little niche going, and every now

and then I get a treat, like going out on tour with Eric (Clapton), which has allowed me to play all over the world with some amazing musicians. But you couldn't have planned it. It's just hard work and getting on with the job."

Now divorced from obligations to the big-name bands he's spent half his career performing with, these days Carrack operates as his own mini-industry, doing almost all of the instrumentation on his solo records as well as producing them under his own label, Carrack UK - often only calling on his bandmates when it's time to hit the road.

"Every time I do an album this way, I always say I'll never do it again. It just takes too long! But I've got a little studio at home, and when I start out making an album, I don't usually have much to go on - I'll just have a few bits and bobs on my phone or something like that, and then I'll start developing it.

"I married a London girl, so I've been here most of my life now, but I'm originally from Sheffield, and the rest of my band still lives there - the only one knocking around is my son, Jack. But I've been in lots of bands and helped lots of people out over the years. I'm quite happy now just doing my own thing."

Since setting up his self-titled label in the late '90s, Carrack has independently produced a total of 18 solo albums.

Beginning with little experience of the wider business back in the days before social media had started to facilitate promotion was a bold step, but over the years, Carrack UK has steadily gained traction, with successive albums working their way into the charts.

"I think it was a really smart move, and I'm not particularly noted for my smart moves! I've really enjoyed it but it has been difficult. When I did the first one, I didn't have a clue how labels worked, but I'd had some not-so-great experiences with major record labels as a solo artist, and I could sense there was a shift in how the business was working - that things were contracting. I was lucky that my good friend Peter Van Hooke had a little more experience of how the nuts and bolts of it fitted together, and he was very helpful in getting it going. What's interesting now is that it seems to be a model that a lot of people are following."

Bonding time with Jack, who plays percussion in the band and on the albums, has also been an advantage of going it alone. "He's a chip off the old block! I've got four kids and all of the others have got proper jobs, but he's a bit like me. He hated school and we used to worry about it, but he's been touring with us for the last four or five years, so he's part of the furniture now, and it's been great - he's really blossomed."



Released in January 2016, Carrack's latest album, *Soul Shadows*, reached number 25 in the UK album charts as well as taking the number one spot in the Amazon soul charts. Almost all the tracks are original numbers by Carrack himself, but exceptions include a cover of the Alfred Braggs & Deadric Malone song, *Share Your Love With Me*. The song has been covered by various artists, including Aretha Franklin, Van Morrison and The Band, though it's with the Bobby Bland original that Carrack's version has the most in common.

There's also *Bet Your Life*, a melancholy ballad about a compulsive gambler, with lyrics penned by old friend and former Squeeze bandmate Chris Difford. In an album comprised mainly of love songs, it mightn't be the cheeriest choice, but according to Carrack, it's one that always goes down well in his live sets.

"The song's just kept growing, and it's one where the band gets to stretch out a bit at the end. We've got a great lead guitarist and sax player and it gives them a chance to show off."

Though he's already been touring the album during the year gone by, 2017 will mark Carrack's biggest solo tour to date, taking in major UK venues as well as a series of international stops, with solo acoustic support from singer-songwriter Sarah Munro.

Elsewhere, Carrack is keeping his fingers in other pies. As well as continuing as Eric Clapton's keyboardist, he's also recently been gigging with Clapton bandmate Andy Fairweather Low and long-term collaborator and fellow undersung industry stalwart Nick Lowe (with whom he wrote the Diana Ross hit, *Battlefield*). Last year, a mini-tour for the trio included a set at Shrewsbury Folk Festival.

"I love singing harmonies, and I've always had this idea at the back of my mind that I'd like to get together with those guys. I had a gig at the London Palladium the year before last, and the three of us decided to do four acoustic songs in the middle of the set. We had such fun rehearsing it, and when we did the show, it went down a storm, so we started doing a bit of recording at my place too. We did an album's-worth of stuff and then almost forgot about it, but apparently there's some interest from quite a major record label, so it might even see the light of day!"

More recently, he recorded a charity Christmas single with the London Hospices Choir, a 300-strong group of patients, staff and families from 17 different hospices who came together to mark the 125th anniversary of the Royal Trinity Hospice. When Mike + The Mechanics hit *The Living Years* was chosen for the project, producer James Hawkins invited Carrack to sing it with them.

"The whole project was well underway by the time I came in. I was kind of surprised they'd chosen the song, but they felt it was the perfect message for what they're about, which is, if you've got anything to say to someone, say it now while you still can. And it was great - they really enjoyed themselves and got a bit of media attention, including a couple of TV spots. It was the number one selling CD over Christmas, and though they obviously now take downloads into consideration for the charts, I think as far as the hospices were concerned it was a big success, because it did a lot to raise their profile, which then helps them in their other fundraising activities."

There is talk of a new Paul Carrack solo album being in the works, but with the 2017 tour kicking off in early February, it could be a few more months before it's ready for release.

"I've got about six or seven songs but it's not quite enough for an album yet, and with the tour, I'm not sure when I'll get to finish it, but hopefully we'll be putting out something later this year."

.....
Paul Carrack plays Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, on Friday 17 February and Symphony Hall, Birmingham, on Friday 17 and Saturday 18 March.



Josie Long

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Wed 15 February; The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham, Fri 17 February

Josie Long's award-winning comedian pal, Nish Kumar, has referred to her as 'the David Bowie of stand-up', a description he's used on account of the 34-year-old comic's impressive capacity for reinventing herself.

London-born Long admits she likes to change her way of doing things every now and again, and is currently engaged in the business of bringing a big dose of positivity to a post-Brexit nation.

Josie's very much a political animal, but recognises that banging on too much about politics is a near-certain way to alienate an audience. Hence the enthusiastic Remainer's decision to focus on the bright side of life in this critically acclaimed touring show.

Jokes include: "When I was a kid, I asked my mum what a couple was and she said, 'Oh, two or three'. And she wonders why her marriage didn't work out..."

Six of the best...

Sean Lock

Birmingham Hippodrome, Mon 27 - Tues 28 February

Although Sean Lock is best known from the Channel Four panel game 8 Out Of 10 Cats, on which he appeared as a team captain for 10 years, he's also picked up the odd gong or two for his stand-up, so a night in his company is always a surefire bet for a big barrel of laughs.

He's visiting Birmingham this month with his latest touring show, Keep It Light.

Jokes include: "So what if Jesus turned water into wine? I turned a whole student loan into Vodka once. Your move, Jesus..." and "I'm in therapy at the moment. I don't need it, obviously, but I got all these psychiatrist gift vouchers for Christmas which my family clubbed together for. What I wanted was a crossbow..."



John Shuttleworth

Birmingham Town Hall, Sun 12 February; Stratford Artshouse, Stratford-upon-Avon, Fri 24 February

Midlands-based lovers of light comedy and understated but up-to-the-minute

fashions here get the opportunity to enjoy an allegedly 'final' evening in the company of Sheffield's raconteur par excellence.

The pigeon-fancying Shuttleworth is the creation of actor Graham Fellows - a one-time chartbuster with 1970s hit Jilted John - and has been making his presence felt on the UK comedy circuit for more than 30 years.

Topics for Shuttleworth's consideration in this farewell offering include the rise in popularity of hi-viz protective wear, the suitability of the plastic lid on takeaway coffee cups, and the excitement he felt when sucking his first mint.



Jen Brister

Artrix, Bromsgrove, Thurs 23 - Fri 24 February

Rising star Jen Brister says it's her mother who's to blame for her overwhelming need "to seek validation from a roomful

of people in varying degrees of inebriation". When Jen was young, she reveals on her website, her mum would encourage her to do impressions in front of adults.

"All the while, my mum is watching me and beaming with pride," recalls Jen. "'Jennifer,' she'd say, 'you could be the next Meryl Streep!' 'Really, mum?' 'Oh yes, every actor starts with impressions! Just look at Dustin Hoffman. Tootsie is a very good film. He did an impression of a woman and his career took off!' 'I think he was famous before Tootsie, mum.' 'I don't think so - I think he put on a dress and, poof!, he was famous. You know... maybe if you wore a dress sometimes, Jennifer, you could get famous too...'" "At this stage in my career, I'm willing to try anything, so thanks, mum!"



Justin Moorhouse

Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Fri 10 February; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sun 19 February

Justin Moorhouse is a naturally and seriously funny stand-up - which isn't something that can be said about every comedian who picks up a mic and fires off an evening's-worth of material. Audience members catching his act for the first time will find themselves in the company of a seasoned pro who knows exactly how to work a crowd.

Although his accent and style of delivery call to mind Peter Kay (no bad thing), Moorhouse is very much his own man, presenting an evening of well-honed, hugely enjoyable, adult-themed entertainment.

Jokes include: "The women you see on Jeremy Kyle are so big they have to get their leggings on prescription."



Tanyalee Davis

The Bramall, Birmingham, Thurs 16 February

Tanyalee Davis is a three foot six inches tall comedian who's happy to make reference to her height as a starting point for her comedy. "Sometimes a kid sees me," she explains, "and says, 'Wow, what happened to you? Did you get into an accident?' And I say, 'Hell, no, I just didn't eat my vegetables when I was your age, you little shit!'" Canadian-born Tanyalee, who describes herself as "the Ferrari of comedy - low to the ground and kinda racy", has been peddling her hugely successful brand of humour for over 20 years. "A good majority of my act is about my life and me," she explains. "Maybe it's from a little person's perspective, but I don't feel it's hokey midget shit anymore. It's not just generic; it's really relevant to me and the situations I've gotten into."



Richard Gadd

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sun 19 February

It says much about Richard Gadd's talent that he was able to score a big success at last summer's Edinburgh Fringe with a stand-up show he'd felt compelled to write as a result of experiencing a sexual assault. Managing to generate humour from so dark a starting point is no mean feat, and speaks volumes for the progress Gadd feels he's made since the incident changed his life five years ago. "I'm the man playing football twice a week with my football pals," he explained to the Guardian. "I thought of myself as a man, and I felt like that was taken from me, and I'm ashamed of that now. But I felt like that was the story I wanted and I needed to tell with this show."



Andy Zaltzman

The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton, Fri 24 February

Sporting a hairstyle that makes him look like Art Garfunkel on acid, Andrew Zaltzman is best known for performing comedy routines with a decidedly political bent. A regular collaborator with John Oliver, Zaltzman's work with the Birmingham-born funnyman includes radio shows Political Animal and The Department, and satirical podcast The Bugle. Jokes include, "Politicians are like God. No one believes in them, they haven't done anything for ages, and they give jobs to their immediate family." Another gag is: "Sperms are communists; well, Stalinists really - only one of them gets to achieve anything and millions of them die for nothing."



Thoroughly Modern Millie

New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham,
Mon 13 - Sat 18 February

Michelle Collins and Joanne Clifton star in this latest stage version of the hit 1967 film. Set in Manhattan during the Roaring '20s, the show tells the story of Millie Dillmount, a young woman who arrives in New York from Kansas in search of wealth, excitement and a man to marry.

Deciding to stay at the Hotel Priscilla, she meets its proprietor, the eccentric Mrs Meers, before embarking on a series of riotous and not altogether planned adventures, all of which are pleasingly punctuated by dazzling musical numbers and stunning dance routines.



Amédée

The REP, Birmingham,
Fri 24 February - Sat 11 March



Playwright, director and comedian Sean Foley, whose previous stage productions include *The Play What I Wrote* and *The Ladykillers*, is the man behind this new adaptation of Eugene Ionesco's 1954 work. A leading figure in French avant-garde theatre, Ionesco is best known for his absurdist plays, many of which reflect on the insignificance of human existence.

Amédée, his first full-length offering, features a frustrated playwright and his switchboard-operator wife. Struggling to make ends meet in a dilapidated London apartment (Foley's adaptation switches the action from Paris), the couple are becoming ever more concerned about the problem in their other room - a corpse that's causing mushrooms to sprout all over the apartment... Roxana Silbert directs this Birmingham Repertory Theatre Company production.

Dummy

The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham,
Sat 18 February

As well as being performance partners, Los Angeles-based improv duo Colleen Doyle and Jason Shotts - aka *Dummy* - are also a

couple in real life. And there's little doubt that their romantic relationship lends their improv work a very particular and impressively easygoing chemistry.

Colleen and Jason are appearing in Birmingham this month for one night only - and will be keen to quickly work out what kind of audience they're performing to... "Different cities have different styles of improv," explains Jason. "For instance, in Chicago, we're almost expected to do a one-act play for which we don't know our lines. There are some cities where you sense pretty quickly that the audience has never seen a long-form improv show and so don't know how to react to it. By contrast, in cities with theatres, longform improv's easier because people are familiar with seeing plays so are more patient. It gives you more room to take risks."

Wolf Meat

Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham,
Sat 18 February

Blending macabre humour and theatrical anarchy with a healthy sense of the ridiculous is the name of the game for *Wildheart & Lyric*, a theatre company founded six years ago by a group of friends 'in a dusty pub function room'.

The ensemble's currently touring production scored a sell-out success at the Brighton Fringe in 2015, earning praise for its seriously fast-paced storytelling, clever physical comedy, and refreshing disregard for the invisible 'fourth wall' that usually separates performers from audience.

For those who like to know that their evening of comedy comes complete with an accompanying storyline, *Wolf Meat* takes place in the drugs den of a Gangsta Granny-style 'druglo-

rd' named Margaret, where Detective Dawn Taylor is determined that justice will triumph over dirty dealing.

Scenes of nudity and violence make the suggested rating for this show 16-plus.

The Goon Show

The Bear Pit Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon,
Wed 8 - Fri 10 February; mac, Birmingham,
Sat 11 February; Henry Tudor House,
Shrewsbury, Sun 12 February

With fans down the decades having included The Beatles, Monty Python and Prince Charles, there's little doubting the impact which 1950s radio comedy programme *The Goon Show* has had on British culture and humour.

Featuring Spike Milligan, Peter Sellers, Harry Secombe and, for a couple of series in the early '50s, Michael Bentine, the show ran for nine years, each half-hour episode providing a zany mixture of puns, catchphrases, bizarre sound effects and utterly ludicrous characters.

Birmingham Comedy Festival and Fred Theatre here present 21st century audiences with the opportunity to enjoy two classic *Goon Show* radio scripts live on stage: *The House Of Teeth* and *The Jet-Propelled Guided Naafi* were both originally broadcast in 1956.





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Sister Act

Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton, Mon 27 February - Sat 4 March; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Mon 8 - Sat 13 May

Based on the hit Whoopi Goldberg movie, this stage musical, directed and choreographed by Craig Revel Horwood, sees Alexandra Burke taking the Goldberg role of Reno lounge singer Deloris Van Cartier. After seeing her gangster boyfriend kill an employee, Deloris is placed on a witness protection programme and hidden in a convent, where she takes over the rehearsals of the in-house choir of nuns. Thanks to her musical expertise, the choir become a huge success and church attendances go through the roof. But in giving the church a new lease of life, Deloris may inadvertently have jeopardised her own safety...

A fun-filled spectacular of a show with a real feelgood factor, this is a truly divine comedy that's well worth worshipping.



California Scheming

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Sat 11 February

Writer, director and performer Clare Ferguson-Walker has earned plenty of praise for this spoken-word set, a presentation described as 'a poetic narrative about a life-long fascination with America'.

When a family take a trip to California, they find themselves not only exposed to the gaudy excesses of life in Los Angeles, but also to the sobering realisation that all that glitters is not necessarily gold...

This ultimately uplifting cautionary tale is 60 minutes in length and is performed without an interval.

Wonderland

New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, Mon 6 - Sat 11 February; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Mon 10 - Sat 15 July

It was during the lifetime of the book's author, Lewis Carroll, that the wacky world of Alice's Adventures In Wonderland first made it onto the stage; in 1886, to be precise. A mere 17 years later, the topsy-turvy story and its cast of colourful characters were being interpreted through the exciting new medium of film.

One of the latest companies to join the long and noble tradition of reinventing Alice visits the Midlands this month. It's being led by Broadway composer Frank Wildhorn, whose work on shows like Jekyll & Hyde, Victor/Victoria and Bonnie & Clyde has earned him international acclaim.

"It starts with the idea of the child within us

all," explains Frank about his new show. "The opening lyrics of my song, Finding Wonderland, are 'We move too fast; we miss so much'. And it's true - there's a Wonderland in all of our lives if we could only take a breath and notice it. In this particular adventure, Alice has to rescue her own child, and in doing so, she rediscovers the child within herself."

Wendi Peters, Dave Willetts and Kerry Ellis star.



Cyrano

New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Fri 3 - Sat 25 February

Edmond Rostand's famous French play, written in 1897, recounts the story of Cyrano de Bergerac, a poet and soldier who's desperate to win the love of his brilliant and beautiful cousin, the Lady Roxane. Cyrano's best efforts to do so, however, are somewhat complicated by the fact that he's got a nose that's as big as the Eiffel Tower (that's obviously an exaggeration for effect, but you get the idea). Northern Broadsides and the New Vic Theatre join forces to present this swash-buckling tale of unrequited love.

Northanger Abbey

Lichfield Garrick, Mon 13 - Wed 15 February

Jane Austen's classic satire is here adapted by highly rated playwright Tim Luscombe. It tells the story of the bookish Catherine Morland, a 17-year-old girl whose love of a 'horrid' novel helps fuel her imagination when she visits Northanger Abbey. The home of her beloved, the one-time church is a place in which Catherine soon finds fact and fiction colliding...

Luscombe's adaptation has met with plenty of positive reviews during the course of its UK tour, and promises an evening of rollicking fun for all fans of Austen's novels. Casting includes Emma Ballantine, Eva Feiler, Jonathan Hansler, Harry Livingstone, Joe Parker, Annabelle Terry, Hilary Tones and Joseph Tweedale.



GREAT SHOWS COMING
UP AT **WOLVERHAMPTON
GRAND THEATRE**

WED 8 MAR
HALFWAY TO PARADISE
THE BILLY FURY STORY

BILLY FURY
The Story

A collage of black and white photographs of Billy Fury performing on stage, playing guitar and singing into a microphone.

THU 9 MAR
MENOPAUSE THE MUSICAL

CHERYL FERGISON
EastEnders

MAUREEN NOLAN
The Nolan

REBECCA WHEATLEY
Casualty

RUTH BERKELEY
Funny Dirty

**IN Menopause
The Musical**

Directed by Philip Miller and Choreographed by Sashia Murphy

A colorful illustration of four women in various outfits, some holding microphones, against a starry background.

SAT 11 MAR
SEVEN DRUNKEN NIGHTS

SEVEN DRUNKEN NIGHTS
THE STORY OF THE DUBLINERS

A group of men in traditional Irish attire playing instruments like fiddles and guitars.

TUE 14 – SAT 18 MAR
MUSCOM PRESENT
ALL SHOOK UP

WOLVERHAMPTON MUSICAL COMEDY COMPANY

ALL SHOOK UP

THE MUSIC OF ELVIS PRESLEY™

A silhouette of a man in a suit dancing against a red and purple background.

MON 20 – TUE 21 MAR
MR BLOOM'S NURSERY – LIVE!

**Mr. Bloom's
Nursery
LIVE!**

A man in a hat and vest standing in a nursery filled with plants and flowers.

WED 22 – SUN 26 MAR
DAVID WALLIAMS
GANGSTA GRANNY
LIVE ON STAGE!

GANGSTA GRANNY
LIVE ON STAGE!

A cartoon illustration of an elderly woman with a large bag over her shoulder, walking away.

SAT 1 APR
THE GRAND THEATRE'S GREAT GATSBY NIGHT

The Grand Theatre's
GREAT GATSBY NIGHT

A black and white photograph of a grand ballroom with many couples dancing.

SUN 2 APR
AN EVENING WITH PHILLIP DYSON

INTERNATIONAL CONCERT PIANIST

AN EVENING WITH PHILLIP DYSON

INTERNATIONAL CONCERT PIANIST

A man in a white suit standing next to a grand piano on a stage.

SUN 9 APR
PASHA KOVALEV
LET'S DANCE THE NIGHT AWAY

PASHA KOVALEV
LET'S DANCE THE NIGHT AWAY

with special guest ANYA GARNIS

BRAND NEW SHOW

A man in a tuxedo and a woman in a white dress dancing.

Theatre



The Full Monty

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury,
Mon 6 - Sat 11 February

When six men lose their jobs at the local steelworks, they find that dignity, hope and self-belief are suddenly in short supply. Until, that is, they take the plunge and become male strippers...

Ex-EastEnder Gary Lucy takes the lead role of Gaz in a show that features the music of Donna Summer, Hot Chocolate and Tom Jones.

"This may be a comedy, but the stories running through it are really strong, particularly

Gaz's," explains Gary. "He's feeling worthless because he doesn't have a job and might lose his son. His sole aim is to continue to see his boy, so he gets the guys together to make some money."

So how does Gary feel about getting naked at the end of the show? "It was quite a strange experience initially," he smiles, "but it's obviously a major part of the story. You have to make sure that you never fall out with the lighting guy, mind, as he's the one who makes sure the audience get blinded by the spotlights at the end and so don't see too much!"

In The Motherhood

mac, Birmingham, Mon 6 February; Artrix, Bromsgrove, Fri 10 February; Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton, Thurs 16 February & Albany Theatre, Coventry, Sat 18 February



In the delightful village in which they live, Nita and Bonnie run the PTA with brutal efficiency. Savvy city type Jacs is looking to make an impression and wants to get involved - but on Nita and Bonnie's watch, joining the committee is no easy task... "It was really important to me to write this play because I want to celebrate mums," says Hayley Pepler, who began work on *In The Motherhood* four years ago, when she was a participant in Birmingham Repertory Theatre's Write Away scheme for emerging playwrights. "I want to draw attention to the incredible job women are doing every day to raise the next generation in the face of enormous competing pressures about how we do it."

Pygmalion

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry,
Tues 28 February - Fri 3 March

George Bernard Shaw's classic offering tells the story of Professor Henry Higgins, an arrogant expert in phonetics who reckons he could teach any woman to speak properly. Enter, Eliza Dolittle - a young flower-seller

who's no great lover of pronouncing her aitches. But will Eliza prove a 'challenge too far' for the proper-speakin' professor, or can he manage to teach her enough to pass her off as a Duchess at the forthcoming Ambassador's Garden Party?

Based on Ovid's *Metamorphoses X*, *Pygmalion* debuted in 1914 and is widely considered to be one of the greatest plays of the 20th century. This innovative new staging - using video and sound technology to contemplate the issues of class identity and social mobility in modern Britain - is a co-production by Headlong, Nuffield Theatre and West Yorkshire Playhouse.

La Strada

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry,
Sat 11 - Sat 18 February; The REP,
Birmingham, Mon 8 - Sat 13 May



A brand new stage adaptation of Federico Fellini's 1954 movie masterpiece, *La Strada* follows the journey of Gelsomina, a young woman who's effectively sold by her mother to a brutal and hard-drinking street performer named Zampano.

When the ill-matched pair come across an itinerant circus, Gelsomina finds herself faced with a stark choice that will decide the course of her future...

La Strada is being helmed by Sally Cookson, a director known for openly challenging gen-

der norms in productions like her gender-reversed *Sleeping Beauty*, her Wendy-centred *Peter Pan*, and a highly acclaimed adaptation of *Jane Eyre*.

"Gelsomina can certainly be seen as a victim," admits Sally, "but I'm determined that we find her 'action', if you like. The relationship between Zampano and Gelsomina is an abusive one, certainly, but Gelsomina doesn't just lie down and take it - she confronts him and questions and provokes all the way through the story. Like *Jane Eyre*, she's constantly looking for a better life and striving to discover her potential, but circumstances make that very difficult for her."

Narvik

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Wed 15 -
Thurs 16 February; mac, Birmingham,
Sat 18 February

The story of a Liverpudlian man and a Norwegian woman who are 'pulled together and torn apart by war, as the events of one summer cause ripples across an ocean of time', *Narvik* started life as a 10-minute presentation. It was co-produced by Hannah Tyrrell Pinder from *Box Of Tricks*, the company now touring the show, and award-winning playwright and musician Lizzie Nunnery.

"We were really thrilled and surprised by the intense and positive response of the audience," explains Lizzie, in talking about that initial 10-minute version, "It felt like we'd hit on a really compelling central story. At that point, we knew our central character Jim, we knew it was a play about the disruption of war and memory, we knew it was, on some level, a romance. Beyond that, we wanted to tell a story about Norway, about the Arctic, and an unconventional journey through World War Two.

"I hope our Midlands audiences will find *Narvik* to be a really lively, thrilling experience. I can't wait!"

theatre for younger audiences...



Shark In The Park!

mac, Birmingham, Sun 5 February

Nick Sharratt has illustrated over 250 books, around one-sixth of which have been his own. One of these is the hugely successful *Shark In The Park!*, a children's story about a young lad named Timothy who goes to his local park to try out his new telescope. While there, he thinks he spots a shark - and not just on one occasion either, but several times in several places!

The popularity of the book prompted Sharratt to write and illustrate two follow-ups - *Shark In The Dark!* and *Shark In The Park On A Windy Day!*.

All three stories are featured in this brand new stage show from the highly rated Nonsense Room theatre company. The production is being performed three times during the afternoon and is suitable for children aged two-plus.

Heaven Eyes

Old Rep, Birmingham, Thurs 16 February

This Théâtre Sans Frontières production of David Almond's play has garnered plenty of praise on its travels over the last few months. It tells the story of three teenagers who run away from an orphanage and sail down the River Tyne on a makeshift raft. In the course of their journey they encounter two somewhat curious characters. One is an enigmatic old man known as Grampa; the other, a strange Swedish girl called Heaven Eyes. Both end up playing a significant role in the teenagers' lives, as the three friends attempt to find their way in an increasingly confusing world.

The show is suitable for audience members aged nine and older.

Wendy And Peter Pan

Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock, Thurs 16 - Fri 17 February

Faced with the crippling loss of her younger brother Tom, and convinced that his shadow still haunts her window, Wendy's heroic quest to salvage what remains of her parents'



marriage begins when the mercurial figure of Peter Pan arrives in her nursery one night... Local theatre company Split Mask here present their version of Ella Hickson's play, an adaptation of the JM Barrie classic that showed at the Royal Shakespeare Company a few Christmases ago.

Jack Frost

The Place, Oakengates Theatre, Shropshire, Sat 25 February

Jack Frost's rather unwanted ability to freeze everything with which he comes into contact may well be wreaking havoc in the village, but that doesn't stop a small girl from reaching out to him with an offer of greatly needed friendship...

This much-loved Nordic legend about a traditionally sprite-like character - and the icy impact which he has on everything that he touches - is here reimagined by the talented theatricals of Moon On A Stick. The Norfolk-based company bring to life this chilly little tale via an engaging mixture of puppetry, music and playful storytelling, presenting a lively production that's suitable for youngsters aged three-plus.

The Quite Remarkable Adventures Of The Owl And The Pussycat

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Sat 18 February - Sat 4 March

A musical adaptation of a book written by Monty Python star Eric Idle, *The Quite Remarkable Adventures Of The Owl And The Pussycat* is inspired by the famous Edward Lear poem. The story sees its two main characters, the owl and the pussycat of the title, heading out on a mission to save the world. In the process they must defeat the dastardly Firelord, his imaginary dragon, Pyron, and his henchmen, Flicker and Brimstone. "I love the Belgrade Theatre," says Idle. "It's where we first performed Monty Python live on stage in January 1970 for three sold-out midnight shows. It's very close to where we opened my play, *Pass The Butler*, in 1982, and it's totally where *The Quite Remarkable*



Adventures Of The Owl And The Pussycat will be sailing into the spotlight, to bring more nonsense to Coventry."

Michael Morpurgo's King Arthur

The Core Theatre, Solihull, Tues 21 February

The award-winning Story Pocket Theatre here presents its touring adaptation of War Horse author Michael Morpurgo's 2008 novel about the legend of King Arthur. One of the UK's leading theatre companies for younger audiences, the Guildford-based ensemble, of which Morpurgo is patron, bring both classic and original children's stories to the stage. This latest offering sees a drowning boy being rescued by a mysterious figure who claims to be Arthur Pendragon. As the old man recounts his tales, the youngster is transported back to the heady days of Camelot, the Round Table, Merlin, Excalibur, Lancelot and Guinevere - a mythical time of magic, heroism, love and betrayal. Blending physical theatre and imaginative storytelling to create a fast-moving family adventure, the production is suitable for children aged seven and older.



Billy Elliot

West End phenomenon pirouettes into Birmingham Hippodrome

On 3 March 1985, the longest industrial strike in British history was finally brought to an exhausted end. For 12 months, thousands of miners across the country had refused to work, in protest against the planned closure of UK collieries. Over the course of the year, the dispute became increasingly bitter, with frequent outbreaks of violence and families struggling to keep themselves financially afloat. But despite its unprecedented scale, the strike ultimately failed - a historic outcome seen by many as signalling the end of an era.

Set against this backdrop of confrontation, abject poverty and dashed hope is the story of Billy Elliot - a young boy with an unexpected talent for ballet whose family is at the heart of the conflict in County Durham.

Coming to Birmingham Hippodrome next month as part of its first ever UK tour, the smash-hit stage musical shows how Billy's abilities offer him a lifeline out of the world he's been born into. Sadly, the rest of his family and community are not so lucky.

"It's easy to look back on it all now and feel like you know the outcome, but when you're doing this show, it's important not to look at it in the past tense," says Scott Garnham, who plays Billy's older brother and local strike ringleader Tony. "No union strike had ever lost like this before, so when Tony goes out there, he really

believes that they're going to win."

It's this confidence in solidarity that makes the play's final revelation so utterly devastating. By the time we get to the end of the story, Tony is explaining to Billy that while he goes off to complete his dance training, everyone he knows in Easington and beyond will soon be unemployed.

At the centre of Billy Elliot is the simple tale of a little boy chasing his dream, and since the film first appeared in 2000, it's been widely credited with helping to change attitudes towards dance, giving hundreds of boys access to a previously unthought-of world and driving up standards for male dancers throughout the industry.

But there's another, arguably even more poignant, side to the story, one that's concerned with the transition from an age of nationalised industry and community solidarity into Margaret Thatcher's vision of an individualistic world in which "There is no such thing as society".

"There are sort of two different stories about trying to overcome adversity," Garnham explains, "one about a little boy trying to escape his environment, and one about the strike. And where one succeeds, the other fails spectacularly. When we go to places near mining communities, I feel like they really get what we're trying to say with our story. In Sunderland, you

could see fully grown men crying in the audience when we talked about how there'll be no pits left in 10 years' time."

Amazingly, over a decade after the musical made its stage debut, the current tour marks the first time it has moved out of the West End to visit the areas whose history it concerns.

"We were so nervous before we went to Sunderland, but it was the most amazing experience, a real career highlight. Even though this is their story, it hasn't been back there since they filmed the movie more than 15 years ago. We actually went to the Easington Town Hall, where a lot of our show is set, and met some of the people, and it's amazing the effect it still has there - even now there's still places where the people who broke the strike can't go. Then, on the opening night, we had the Easington Colliery Brass Band playing outside the theatre, which was a really nice, heartfelt moment."

Far from seeming frivolous, in many ways the musical version has an even greater, more immediate impact than the film. On stage, the clashes between miners and police are brought vividly to life.

"There are similarities obviously, but we're not trying to put the film on stage. This is very much its own thing. I think particularly the story of me and my dad is much more prominent in the musical. Also, whereas in the film Billy is the only



character who dances, in the musical, it's all about showing a distinction between the ways in which different characters move. So the choreography for the policemen and the miners has got its own language if you like, which is in contrast to the very heightened choreography for Billy."

Although it's stylised, the violence is viscerally felt, the child's perspective instilling a sense of real fear. At times, the rioting surrounds Mrs Wilkinson's ballet classes, threatening to crash down on the safe space that Billy has found for himself. Elsewhere, armour-clad officers stomp towards him with riot shields and truncheons raised, seeming to embody the oppressive atmosphere that's constantly threatening to push him over the edge.

All this isn't to dismiss the show's more straightforward pleasures. When Billy performs at his audition before an unreadable panel (a role in which the audience is cast through clever staging), we share wholeheartedly in his father's tearful pride and wonder. Meanwhile, Billy's less-than-eager foray into crossdressing with his fearlessly flamboyant best friend, Michael, is both heartwarming and hilarious - the dancing dresses, flashing lights and sparkly backdrops in *Expressing Yourself* provide one of the show's most spectacular moments. And then there's the beautiful

dream ballet, where Billy literally soars above the sadness of the world around him, in a gorgeous duet with his older self, as played by Luke Cinque-White.

Yet even this can be seen as part of the bigger picture of social change over the last few decades. The growing acceptance of unconventional characters like Billy and Michael hints at the burgeoning culture of individual expression and liberal social values that the '80s ushered in. In different times, perhaps Tony and his father would not only have been more accepting of Billy's choices, but even better equipped to deal with their own frustrations.

"Sometimes people watching the show forget that it was such a different time in 1984," says Garnham, "and that this little boy saying he wants to go off and be a ballet dancer would be like saying you want to go off into space and live with the aliens now. I think there was one review that described Tony as the villain of the piece, and I felt a bit like they hadn't really understood, whereas when you go to Sunderland or somewhere like that, they understand that there are no villains - other than maybe Margaret Thatcher!

"On the surface Tony isn't the nicest brother to Billy, but I think it comes out of a place of actually really caring. He does love Billy, but he's quite hot-headed and rash, and maybe not as in touch with his emotions as men are able to be now. He's

passionate, and that tends to come out in anger. But even though he and Billy seem very different, I think that actually, if you look a bit deeper, there are a lot of similarities between them."

For Garnham and the rest of the cast, the affection is unfeigned. Since the show began its tour a year ago, the five boys sharing the demanding title role - Adam Abbou, Emile Gooding, Matthew Lyons, Haydn May and Lewis Smallman - have grown a lot, both as performers and as people.

"When we started our rehearsals, some of them were quite timid, and although they're all fantastically talented, they each excelled at different things. Now it's virtually impossible to say who's the better dancer or singer or whatever, and they're all really confident and able to hold their own in conversations. The amount of discipline that's required for the role is incredible - I can't think of any other musical with a part like this. But I do feel like we're all one big family and we all look after each other, from the kids to the oldest cast members."



Billy Elliot shows at Birmingham Hippodrome from Tuesday 7 March to Saturday 29 April

ONE LOVE

New Bob Marley musical makes its UK debut in Birmingham



On 3 December 1976, two days before performing in Kingston's Smile Jamaica concert, Bob Marley, his wife and his manager were wounded in an assassination attempt by unknown gunmen who invaded Marley's home. The attack prompted the singer to leave the country before the end of the year, spending a month in the Bahamas before heading for England. It was here that, over the next two years, he would record the albums *Exodus* and *Kaya*, featuring iconic singles such as *One Love*, *Jamming* and *Is This Love*.

Set against a backdrop of violence and corruption in Jamaica and wider Cold War conflict across the world, this period of self-imposed exile serves as the basis for Kwame Kwei-Armah's *One Love: The Bob Marley Musical*, making its UK debut at Birmingham REP next month. Speaking to us from Centre Stage in Baltimore, where he's currently artistic director, the acclaimed British playwright, actor and director told us more about the show.

"The story actually starts about 10 years ago," Kwei-Armah recalls, "when I was approached by Island Records to write a piece using Bob Marley's music but not his story. So I wrote that, it did the rounds, and everyone said, 'That's great, but where's Bob?' So about two-and-a-half years ago, they contacted me again with the rights to use his life story. I chose as my starting point the years between 1976 and '78 because I wanted to look at the hero's journey - what made him the great man that he was, not just because of his music but because of his choices in life."

A pacifist who actively cultivated a politically neutral public profile and frequently spoke out against the bloodshed in his country, Marley nevertheless found

himself embroiled in both domestic and international conflict, targeted by those who saw him as a supporter of Michael Manley's socialist government. At the time, Western anxiety over the 'red tide' of communism was still running high, and the government's agenda was viewed with suspicion by many at home as well as abroad.

Thanks to Marlon James' Man Booker Prize-winning novel, *A Brief History Of Seven Killings*, interest in Marley's relationship with this period of Jamaican history has recently been rekindled, but what's unique about this show is how closely Kwei-Armah has worked with the Marley family and record label, providing him with unprecedented access to the personal stories behind the public persona.

"It's been wonderful but also pretty daunting. I spoke to many people in Bob Marley's life and tried to use a lot of dialogue how they described it. I sent drafts of the script to the family. Luckily, they've been very helpful - all the criticism has been very constructive. They've allowed me to adapt the story and take artistic licence where I've needed, to change things to make the story work."

Kwei-Armah is now an ardent and long-term admirer of Marley's work, but interestingly, this hasn't always been the case. As a teenager, he was more interested in soul music, reggae being more to his sister's tastes.

"It was partly just sibling rivalry, but though it sounds like madness now, it was actually a big thing at the time. In the black community when I was a child, you made a choice at about 12 years old whether you were going to be into reggae or American soul. If you liked reggae, that meant that you were rooted and cultured, and if you liked soul that meant you weren't really culturally conscious. It wasn't until I was about 19 that I heard *Redemption Song*, for what must have been about the 1500th time, but for me, it was really like the first time. At that moment, I just understood what he was saying, and from there he grew to become

my own personal poet laureate."

Years later, however, Kwei-Armah is still discovering new things about his hero as he digs deep into the details of Marley's fascinating life.

"One of the things I didn't really know before was that he was a very quiet man. And of course we know that he was deeply religious, but I think just quite how dedicated he was to his faith was an interesting thing for me to learn. I was also surprised by how many people in Jamaica really relied on him. He was like an industry, and not just musically. I mean, there were actually people lining up at his house, waiting to be given money. That was quite a humbling thing to read."

Writing the story is one thing; attempting to adequately represent such an iconic figure live on stage is quite another, and in some respects, the weight of expectation on singer and musician Mitchell Brunings, who plays the lead, is even greater than that on the writer and director of the show.

"Casting is always the hardest part of any show, and I think we were quite fortunate that I came across Mitchell on the internet. This is his first time acting, so it's been really interesting helping him develop the skills to carry a character like this, but when he sings - you just close your eyes and think of Bob..."

Under its original title, *Marley*, the show premiered in 2015 at Baltimore's Center Stage theatre. But though it was popular and warmly received in the US, the version coming to Birmingham this year will be dramatically different.

"I would say there have been fundamental changes. We've used that first production to learn lessons and have taken the time to tell a much deeper and more complex story."

Following the huge success of plays like *Elmina's Kitchen* and *Fix Up* (both directed by Angus Jackson), exploring the lives of immigrant communities in the UK, the London-born writer soon became one

of the most prominent and respected voices in black British theatre. Now he's taken his stories overseas - it's about five-and-a-half years since he became resident in the US after taking up his post at Center Stage.

"I think we're looking at a beautiful time in America for new writing, both in television and in theatre. It's a kind of golden moment, so I'm really pleased to be in America as an artistic director whilst the quality of the work is so good structurally and politically."

Both Kwei-Armah and Marley's daughter, Cedella, are thrilled to be bringing the show to Birmingham, which the latter describes as a "natural place for its UK premiere" thanks to its "great mix of cultures". In particular, she says, she's looking forward to introducing her father's story to a new generation, some of whom weren't yet born during his lifetime. Arguably, the mythology of Marley has rather overtaken the man behind it. These days, his image has become ubiquitous, plastered across a dazzling array of merchandise and increasingly disconnected from who he was and what he stood for. But Kwei-Armah maintains that Marley is as important now as he's ever been, and that as long as people come to see the show, they won't fail to be moved by his music and his message.

"Wherever I've travelled in the world, I don't think I've landed on any continent where I haven't seen some young person wearing a Bob Marley t-shirt, and I think his image and his lyrics are still political. He is the voice of the oppressed and the downtrodden. I think people will see that this isn't just a story about a vintage star - it's about a man who stood for something and whose music made a difference to people's lives. And I think that, between our Brexit Britain and our Trump America, that's something that we really need."

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One Love: The Bob Marley Musical shows at The REP, Birmingham, from Friday 10 March to Saturday 8 April.

Shobna Gulati

Ex-Corrie favourite talks about starring in Anita And Me at the Wolverhampton Grand



In the 20 years since Meera Syal's semi-autobiographical portrait of life in the Black Country in the 1970s first appeared in print, it's become something of a contemporary classic, spawning a popular film adaptation and even, much to Syal's own bemusement, becoming a GCSE set text.

In 2015, *Anita And Me* made its stage debut at Birmingham REP; now the theatre's artistic director, Roxana Silbert, is bringing the much-loved story back home to the Midlands with a run at the Wolverhampton Grand.

Starring in the show as mother to the teenage protagonist Meena (the 'Me' of the title) is Shobna Gulati, best known for her long-running role as Sunita Alahan in *Coronation Street*, as well as for her regular appearances on *Loose Women*. Taking over the role of Daljit from Ayesha Dharker, Gulati is very much looking forward to returning to the city and the theatre.

"I love Wolverhampton," she says. "I've got quite a special relationship with it, actually. When I was a dancer I used to work for Sampad, so I went round schools in Cannock, Wolverhampton and Birmingham teaching creative dance using Indian Classical dance as a basis. I was also here for 16 weeks to do panto - in those days the Grand's was the longest-running panto in the country."

Gulati describes her character Daljit as a loving but often quietly disapproving mother who, like many parents, has a "sticky relationship" with her daughter.

"I think Daljit sees a lot of herself in Meena, and is perhaps still holding onto her own

childhood through her, but obviously as a teenager Meena wants to explore things for herself. Daljit knows that she had a good upbringing back at home and she struggles to understand why that same upbringing isn't working for Meena in a different place. She never loses her temper, she's just frustrated and can't understand why Meena has to fight so often when she and her husband give her all the love and support in the world."

Meera Syal remains closely involved with the retelling of her story, and the opportunity to finally work with her - as well as with award-winning playwright Tanika Gupta - was a major factor in Gulati's decision to join the cast.

"Meera and I have always sort of missed each other on the way. We've known of each other but we've never been able to work together because our schedules have never quite matched up. I think the things that people like Meera have achieved are just amazing - they've put their heads above the parapet and just kept going despite the struggles of being 'other' in this community we all live in. And because it's semi-autobiographical, in a way, I get to play Meera's mum, so it's a real honour."

Despite not having read the book or seen the film before, Gulati immediately identified with the characters, finding elements of the story that chimed with her own experiences of growing up in an immigrant family in industrial Oldham.

"I am going to be playing my mum! Maybe that's a cop-out, but Meera and I are around the same age, and I can see a lot of my relationship with my mother when I was a teenager in this story. In fact, it's even more like my mum's relationship with my big sister. I was the youngest girl in my family, but when my sister was growing up, my mum and dad were in England bringing up a young girl for the first time.

"My sisters always used to read Jackie magazine, and although it was more Smash Hits by the time I was a teenager, I do remember slipping their copies of Jackie under my pillow at night to have a

read of it. There's a great bit in the play where Daljit's having a go at Meena about that - you know, Cathy and Clare, what do they know? All they know about is boyfriends, and it's not important. All of this - family and community - is what's important."

Things have changed considerably since 1972, but there's also plenty that's stayed the same. Perhaps more pertinently, thinks Gulati, there are aspects of Britain in 2017 which seem to have more in common with the culture of the 1970s than with life in the intervening decades.

"From a historical point of view, the story examines the movement of people into small communities and how those communities responded. You've got these areas where economically things are tough for everyone, and the thing to blame always seemed to be whoever was considered an outsider. When I was growing up, I was constantly reminded of how different I was, and for a while I thought that things were moving on, but I think we've actually gone slightly backwards now. We've gone back to people feeling suspicious of people from other places, and as a grown-up adult I'm once again reminded of how different I am, even though I was born and raised here."

Fortunately, there are movements for positive change, and this very production aims to be part of that, promoting engagement and interaction between communities.

"Anita And Me is part of the legacy of a group called the Touring Consortium, who go into theatres that don't necessarily have that engagement with the wider diverse community. Hopefully this play will be a good way of beginning a process for people who perhaps aren't quite so culturally engaged, and helping to turn the wheel forwards again."

Some places have further to go than others. Gulati has loved her time performing in Grease at Leicester's Curve Theatre, describing it as a place where "diversity permeates". As rehearsals for Anita And Me commence, that production

is still ongoing, leaving her running between Leicester and Wolverhampton in the middle of the day. It sounds like hard work, but she shrugs it off.

"I'm a bit of a boring old person now because I'm just getting up, going to work, going to another work, going home to bed, and then getting up and doing it all again! In my youth I'd have done the same, but then I'd also have gone out for a drink afterwards. I probably wouldn't have slept! But I can't burn the candle at both ends anymore..."

Though it's something she's come to relatively late in her career, musical theatre is a natural choice for Gulati, who has always sung at home and started dance classes at the tender age of seven. One of her first jobs after leaving Coronation Street was on the UK tour of Mamma Mia!, which she says was a bit like coming "full circle".

"In Western culture we often tend to put things in boxes - you either sing or dance or act or play music - whereas in Indian Classical dance you do all those things. It's expressive, so you learn to act as well as how to dance technically and to accompany, so it's a more holistic way of looking at performance. When my mum came to see Mamma Mia!, she said, 'This is what you've always wanted to do, right from when you were a little girl.'"

So with such a varied career behind her, what's next for Shobna Gulati? Is there anything still left to tick off the list? "Well, I've been making my way for the last 31 years, and I think I've done most things at some point, but do you know... I've never actually been a lead. So if there was something that would be suitable for someone of my age, I'd love to do that. I'd love to play Cleopatra in Anthony And Cleopatra. I feel like I'm ready for that now."

.....

**Anita And Me shows at
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The Red Shoes

Birmingham Hippodrome,
Tues 7 - Sat 11 February &
Wed 19 - Sat 22 July

Widely regarded as the greatest dance film ever made, *The Red Shoes* is inspired by Hans Christian Andersen's fairytale about a pair of enchanted shoes that force their wearer to dance until she dies.

The film's story centres on young ballerina and star in the making Vicky Page. When Vicky falls for the ballet company's charismatic composer, Julian Craster, the jealous Lermontov forces her to choose between love and her career, knowing full well that for Vicky, dancing is as much a necessity as living. In a sumptuous new adaptation visiting Birmingham this month, and returning in July, Matthew Bourne reinvents the movie's story live on stage.

"We have several little ballets in the piece," reveals Matthew. "There's a beach ballet, which creates a link to the actual beach when they visit Monte Carlo. We also have what we call the 'Good vs Evil' ballet, which reflects the atmosphere of what's going on in the story at that point. That's based on a famously barefoot ballet Frederick Ashton did called Dante's Sonata. We also do a bit of *Les Sylphides*, and then there's a big, grand, glamorous, waltzy ballet near the beginning to represent the world Vicky wants to be a part of.

"So it's almost like watching a bit of dance history - you can see all the references."



James Wilton Dance: Leviathan

mac, Birmingham, Fri 24 February

Be careful what you fish for...

Award-winning choreographer James Wilton here re-imagines the seminal novel, *Moby Dick*. Wilton takes on the lead role of Captain Ahab, a man hell-bent on capturing the legendary white whale of the title, and brilliantly leads a troupe of highly talented dancers through the increasingly choppy waters of Herman Melville's epic story.

Wilton's choreography is always distinctive, his productions powered by an energy the audience can almost reach out and touch. *Leviathan* is widely considered to be the choreographer's best and most finely tuned work to date.

In short, this is one whale of a tale that no self-respecting dance enthusiast can afford to miss...

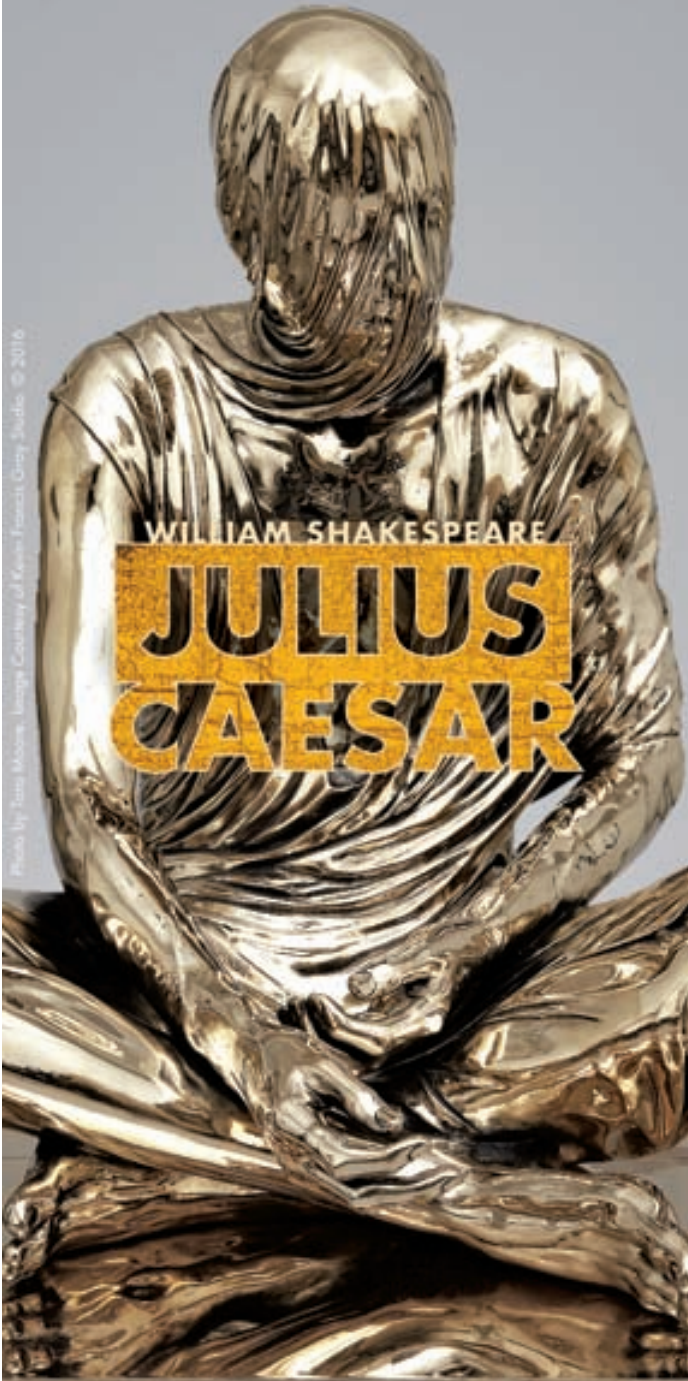


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Stepmother/Stepfather

DanceXchange, The Patrick Centre, Birmingham Hippodrome, Thurs 16 - Fri 17 February

Award-winning director and choreographer Arthur Pita dances over to the dark side with this latest double bill, produced in collaboration with HeadSpaceDance.

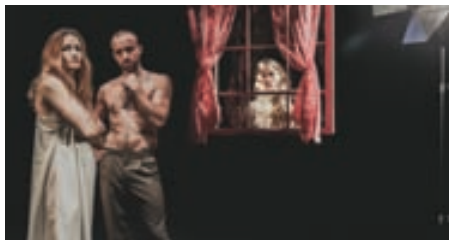
In the first piece, familiar fairytale characters including Snow White and Hansel & Gretel find themselves being pursued by 'a force of monstrous and abusive stepmothers'.

The second dancework, meanwhile, entices the audience into 'a hellish world of incest and murder'. The grisly tale it recounts is inspired by the Country Death Song, a folk-punk track from the second album of long-established cult American band Violent Femmes.



National Dance Company Wales

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Tues 21 February



This is National Dance Company Wales' first visit to Theatre Severn for five long years. As if to make up for lost time, the talented ensemble is presenting not one but three brand new pieces to its Shropshire audience... Profundis is a provocative piece accompanied by whimsical wordplay and an exotic soundtrack.

Tuplet, meanwhile, is described by the company as 'a witty and high-octane exploration of the simple notion of rhythm'.

The triple bill is completed by The Green House, an imaginative work in which, on a twisted TV set, characters discover 'the fine line between fantasy and reality'.

Matthew Bourne's Early Adventures

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Thurs 16 - Sat 18 February

Given the number of awards he's won since bursting onto the dance scene way back in the mid-1980s, Matthew Bourne is a man with a need for a seriously big mantelpiece, if not a dedicated trophy room.

Backed by the talented members of his company, choreographer Bourne has scored

some impressive theatrical hits across the decades, most famously an all-male version of Swan Lake. But before he really hit the big time, Matthew enjoyed numerous quieter successes with a number of highly innovative danceworks, some of which are featured in this celebratory show.

The programme, here presented by Bourne's New Adventures company, varies from performance to performance and is drawn from four pieces: The Infernal Galop, Town And Country, Spitfire and Watch With Mother.



Cinderella

Birmingham Hippodrome, Wed 15 - Sat 25 February

Created seven years ago, Birmingham Royal Ballet's highly regarded version of Cinderella is a beautiful and majestic work.

The company's director, David Bintley, pulls together the various elements of the classic fairytale with some impressively articulate storytelling.

The show's choreography is dramatic and bold, its grand waltzes featuring among a host of truly magical moments.

Fans of the piece will undoubtedly be happy to revisit it, newcomers delighted by what they discover.

Coppelia

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 7 February & Malvern Theatre, Mon 13 February

Since its formation in 1981, the Russian State Ballet of Siberia has built a fine reputation for its delivery of world-renowned classics.

This month sees the company returning to Wolverhampton to present a show that brings together Leo Delibes' dazzling score with some truly breathtaking choreography. When Dr Coppelius's mannequin, Coppelia, is left on the workshop balcony, she causes quite a stir - not only in the heart of the red-blooded Franz but also in the mind of his jealous fiancée, Swanilda, who foolishly mistakes Coppelia for a flesh-and-blood rival...

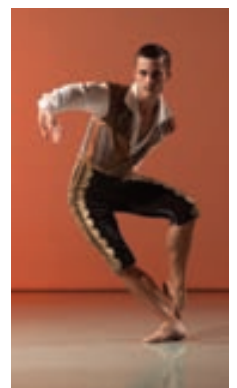
Richard Alston Dance

Malvern Theatre, Tues 28 February - Wed 1 March

A choreographer who's very much at the forefront of contemporary dance in the UK, Richard Alston takes inspiration directly from the music he uses.

This month sees his highly rated company returning to the

Midlands to perform a programme which includes two dances to piano pieces that originate from completely different worlds. Both are brand new works, by Alston and Martin Lawrance, and are accompanied live on stage by pianist Jason Ridgway.



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A Family Feast at The Fox Pizza & Carvery, Sutton Coldfield



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Tickets to Don't Dribble On The Dragon



Closes Friday 17 February

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Film

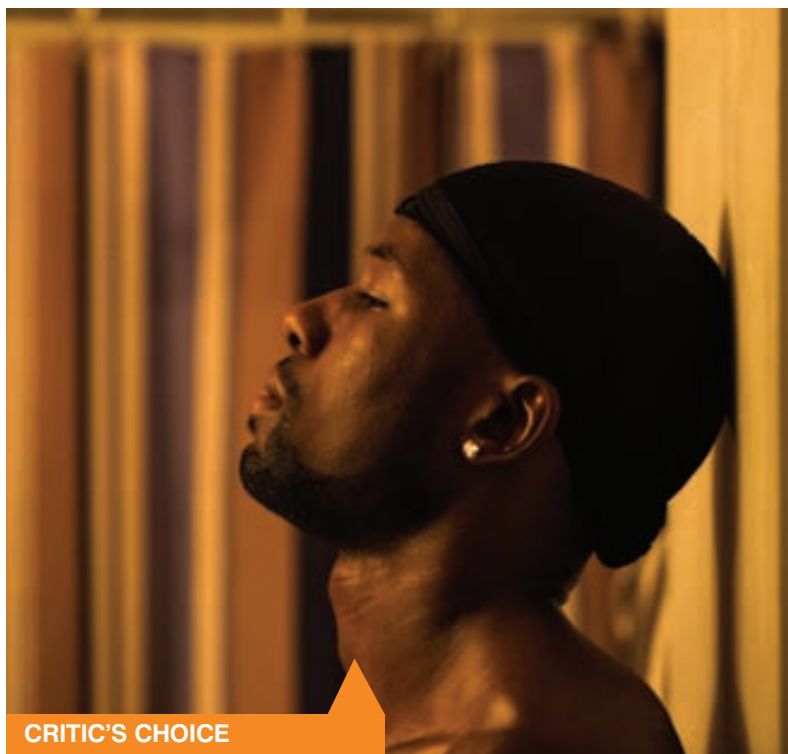
Moonlight CERT 15 tbc

Starring **Trevante Rhodes, André Holland, Janelle Monáe, Ashton Sanders, Jharrel Jerome, Naomi Harris, Mahershala Ali** Directed by **Barry Jenkins (USA)**

You don't come across a film like *Moonlight* very often. Not only does it exhibit a very distinctive directorial style but a narrative that matches it for originality. Set on the mean streets of Miami, the film focuses on one individual, Chiron. Chiron doesn't speak much but digests the world around him - which is not a nice place. His mother is a crack-smoking prostitute, his saviour a drug dealer and his best friend somebody he shouldn't really trust...

Director Barry Jenkins divides his film into three parts, each revealing a different aspect of our protagonist, titled 'Little,' 'Chiron' and 'Black.' As such, it is a fictitious biography of a black man and how he comes to be who he is. Here there are good people who do bad things and bad people who do good things. The performances are excellent across the board, although as Chiron's mother - as much a victim as her son - Naomi Harris is terrific. On the evidence here, it's hard to believe the actress ever played Miss Money Penny. The film itself won the Golden Globe for best drama.

Released Fri 17 February



CRITIC'S CHOICE

Film highlights released in February...



T2 Trainspotting CERT tbc

Starring **Ewan McGregor, Ewen Bremner, Jonny Lee Miller, Robert Carlyle, Kelly Macdonald** Directed by **Danny Boyle (UK)**

Danny Boyle made his name with *Trainspotting* back in 1996 and since then has gone from strength to strength. Here he unites the original cast with a script adapted from Irvine Welsh's *Porno*, which sees the old miscreants reunited in Scotland just as Begbie (Robert Carlyle) has been released from prison. Choose your future. Choose life.

Now Showing

Gold CERT tbc

Starring **Matthew McConaughey, Édgar Ramírez, Bryce Dallas Howard, Corey Stoll, Toby Kebbell, Craig T. Nelson** Directed by **Stephen Gaghan (USA)**

When the Canadian company Bre-X Minerals announced that it was sitting on a huge gold reserve in the jungles of Borneo, its stock price rocketed. So a luckless businessman and a geologist team up to go a-hunting.

Released Fri 3 February



Resident Evil: The Final Chapter

CERT 15 (106 mins)

Starring **Milla Jovovich, Ali Larter, Shawn Roberts, Ruby Rose, Iain Glen** Directed by **Paul WS Anderson (UK/USA/Germany/Canada/France/Australia)**

Alice (Jovovich) would appear to be one of the last humans alive on earth, so has her work cut out for her in her battle against the armies of the undead.

The sixth and supposedly final instalment in the franchise based on the video game. In 3D.

Released Fri 3 February

Loving CERT 12a (123 mins)

Starring **Joel Edgerton, Ruth Negga, Nick Kroll, Michael Shannon, Marton Csokas**
 Directed by **Jeff Nichols** (USA)

Another true-life drama about the horrors of racism in the American South, Nichols' understated film focuses on Richard and Mildred Loving, a couple who had the audacity to share a bed. Even though they were legally married, Richard was white and Mildred was black and in Virginia that meant prison. Joel Edgerton, who can apparently play anything, blends chameleon-like into Richard, a socially awkward bricklayer who sees no harm in marrying the most beautiful woman in his small community. As Mildred, Ruth Negga - an Irish-Ethiopian actress - commands every scene she's in, growing from a shy and timid wallflower into the public voice of her family's cause.

Released Fri 3 February



CRITIC'S CHOICE

Toni Erdmann

CERT 15 (162 mins)

Starring **Peter Simonischek, Sandra Hüller, Trystan Pütter, Lucy Russell**
 Directed by **Maren Ade** (Germany/Austria)

Winner of innumerable awards and a Bafta and Golden Globe nominee for best foreign language film, Toni Erdmann is an unusual beast. Indeed, Maren Ade's third feature pulls off a number of tricks. Opening in a nondescript suburb of Germany, her film tells of a lonely divorcee (Simonischek) in the autumnal years of his life. Without so much as a note of music or a caption or a whisper of exposition, Ade spins her tale in her own

sweet time, creating a small, slightly musty world which, in spite of everything, feels entirely plausible. Yet as we follow the life of this odd, old man, the spectre of the bizarre hovers at the door throughout the film's 162 minutes. And because the events are so thoroughly unpredictable, Ade manages to hold the rapt attention of her audience – without ever betraying the credibility of her scenario. Consequently, the viewer is at a loss whether to sob or to roar with laughter. In short, Ade pulls off an extraordinary balancing act, producing a surreal black comedy rooted in real life.

Released Fri 3 February

Rings CERT 15 (102 mins)

Starring **Matilda Lutz, Alex Roe, Johnny Galecki, Vincent D'Onofrio**
 Directed by **F Javier Gutiérrez** (USA)

When Julia (Lutz) watches that damned video, she discovers a new horrifying truth: there is another movie within the movie... A sequel to The Ring and The Ring Two, which were themselves remakes of the Japanese original (1998).

Released Fri 3 February



Fifty Shades Darker CERT tbc

Starring **Dakota Johnson, Jamie Dornan, Kim Basinger, Luke Grimes, Hugh Dancy**
 Directed by **James Foley** (USA)

A sequel to you-know-what, FSD follows Anastasia Steele and Christian Grey as they re-draw the boundaries of their relationship. Then Christian's past threatens to rock the boat. Expect quite a bit of coupling.

Released Fri 10 February



Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk CERT 15 (113 mins)

Starring **Kristen Stewart, Vin Diesel, Garrett Hedlund, Steve Martin, Joe Alwyn, Chris Tucker**
 Directed by **Ang Lee** (USA/UK/China)

We're unlikely to encounter a more improbable cast all year. Based on the novel by Ben Fountain, Ang Lee's latest film follows Billy Lynn as he attends a victory parade in his native Georgia. However, flashbacks to Iraq reveal a story at odds with the ticker-tape heroism.

Released Fri 10 February

Fences CERT 12a (139 mins)

Starring **Denzel Washington, Viola Davis, Stephen McKinley Henderson, Jovan Adepo, Russell Hornsby, Mykelti Williamson**
Directed by **Denzel Washington (USA)**

A likely Oscar contender, *Fences* marks Denzel Washington's third directorial outing, an adaptation of August Wilson's Pulitzer Prize-winning play of 1983. Denzel plays Troy Maxson, a refuse collector on the street and paterfamilias and alpha male in his own home. In the back yard, where he's building a fence - purportedly to keep out death and to keep in what belongs him to him - Troy recounts tales of his youth, his plans for the future and his anger with the white man's world. As the film is set in Pittsburgh in the 1950s, its patois may at first be tricky for the modern ear, but stay with it and the drama seeps out, gradually tightening its grip on the throat.

Released Fri 10 February



20th Century Women

CERT 15 (118 mins)

Starring **Annette Bening, Elle Fanning, Greta Gerwig, Lucas Jade Zumann, Billy Crudup Sula, Haley Lu Richardson, Betty Buckley**
Directed by **Mike Mills (USA)**

In the late 1970s, three different women in Southern California undergo separate experiences involving love and freedom.

The director, Mike Mills, previously brought us *Thumbsucker* (2005) and the Oscar-winning *Beginners* (2010).

Released Fri 10 February



The Lego Batman Movie CERT U (104 mins)

With the voices of **Will Arnett, Zach Galifianakis, Michael Cera, Rosario Dawson, Ralph Fiennes** Directed by **Chris McKay (USA)**

A spin-off of *The Lego Movie*, this computer-animated comic fantasy this time focuses on The Caped Crusader and the young boy he's adopted. It's emotional.

Released Fri 10 February



The Space Between Us

CERT tbc

Starring **Gary Oldman, Asa Butterfield, Carla Gugino, Britt Robertson, BD Wong, Janet Montgomery**
Directed by **Peter Chelsom (USA)**

There is a lot of space between Gardner Elliot (Butterfield) and Earth, as he was the first human to be born on Mars. He is now returning to the planet of his parents and sees our world like nobody before... Great premise - from the director of *Hear My Song* and *Shall We Dance?*

Released Fri 10 February

Hidden Figures

CERT PG (127 mins)

Starring **Taraji P Henson, Octavia Spencer, Janelle Monáe, Kevin Costner, Kirsten Dunst**
Directed by **Theodore Melfi (USA)**

The title - taken from the non-fiction work by Margot Lee Shetterly - not only refers to the mathematical data used to launch NASA's Project Mercury in 1962, but to the team of African-American women who provided it. The US reviews were rhapsodic.

Released Fri 17 February



The Founder CERT 15 (115 mins)

Starring **Michael Keaton, Laura Dern, Nick Offerman, John Carroll Lynch, Patrick Wilson**
Directed by **John Lee Hancock (USA)**



In recent years, Michael Keaton has become something of a heavyweight in acting circles. Here he plays the businessman Ray Kroc who, in 1961, bought a hamburger chain from two brothers and made it his own. The siblings were called Mac and Dick McDonald.

Released Fri 17 February

The Great Wall

CERT 12a (103 mins)

Starring **Matt Damon, Jing Tian, Pedro Pascal, Willem Dafoe, Andy Lau**
Directed by **Zhang Yimou (USA/China)**

In spite of its ominous title, this historical fantasy is actually about the Great Wall of China. At least, the construction is a major player in an epic featuring Matt Damon as a European mercenary, nomadic bandits, Chinese soldiers and a horde of monsters. In 3D.

Released Fri 17 February



Patriots Day CERT 15 (133 mins)

Starring of **Mark Wahlberg, John Goodman, JK Simmons, Michelle Monaghan, Kevin Bacon** Directed by **Peter Berg (USA)**

An account of the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing, *Patriots Day* reunites Mark Wahlberg and director Peter Berg, who previously collaborated on *Deepwater Horizon*, about another true-life catastrophe.

Released Thurs 23 February



New Art West Midlands

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, mac, Birmingham, Worcester City Art Gallery & Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Sat 18 February - Sun 14 May

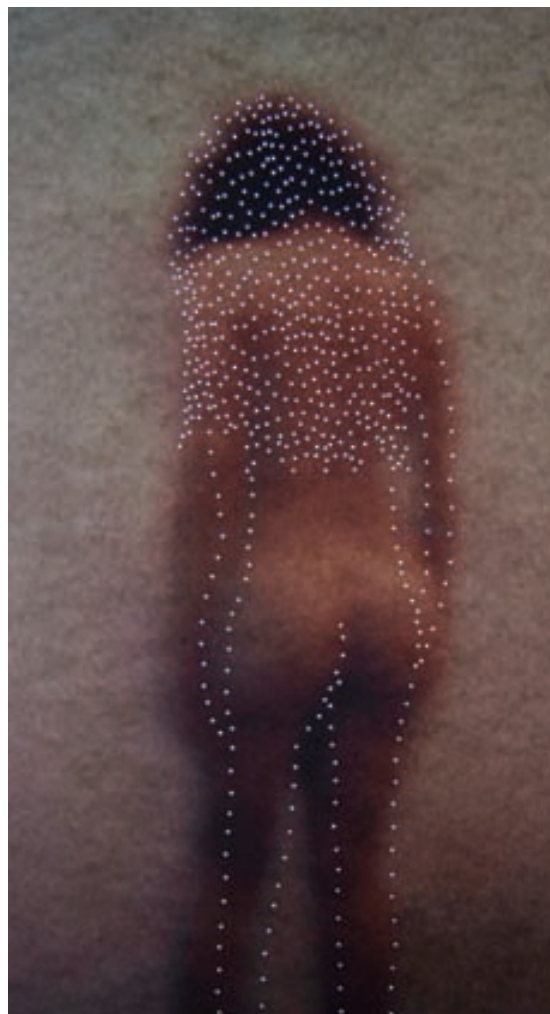
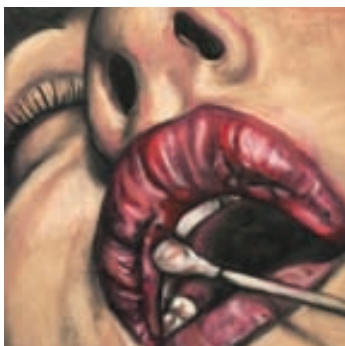
Thirty-one artists from six regional art schools this month exhibit new work at four leading galleries as part of New Art West Midlands 2017.

A launch vehicle for emerging artists, New Art West Midlands is using Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, mac Birmingham, Wolverhampton Art Gallery and Coventry's Herbert Gallery & Museum to display the new work, which includes painting, installation, sculpture, photography, video, animation and digital artworks.

Highlights of the show include Yazmin Boyle's three-metre-long metal sculptures. The sculptures are made of industrial steel strap overlaid with a feminine lace print and formed into three-dimensional funnels and circles.

Amy Inston's film, meanwhile, brings together images of Hollywood glamour and the American Dream with footage of the real domestic life of her working-class Birmingham family.

Many of the works on show take themes connected to science and biology, while numerous other pieces focus on the subjects of globalisation, migration and belonging. The exhibition is the first initiative of the rebranded New Art West Midlands network, formerly known as Turning Point West Midlands.



Francis Bacon: Two Figures In A Room

The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Birmingham, Fri 10 February - Sun 26 March

Works by Matisse, Degas and Michelangelo have all been suggested as sources for this 1959 painting by Francis Bacon. On loan from the University of East Anglia, *Two Figures In A Room* is considered to be one of the artist's finest works. Painted when Bacon was around the age of 50, it features two naked figures, widely assumed to be male lovers. Not surprisingly given its subject matter, the painting raised many an eyebrow. It was considered both daring and provocative in the conservative days of the late 1950s, a time when homosexual acts in private between men were still illegal in the UK.

Face To Face: Portraits Through Time

The Herbert Museum & Art Gallery, Coventry, Fri 3 February - Sun 4 June

This fascinating exhibition brings together works loaned from numerous sources, including the Arts Council Collection and the National Portrait Gallery. Featuring snapshots of ordinary people as well as portraits of Henry VIII, Marilyn Monroe, David Bowie and Princess Diana, *Face To Face* explores the centuries-old fascination with capturing one's own image. The display includes works by Andy Warhol and Thomas Gainsborough, and comprises paintings, photographs, sculptures and interactive activities.



Nelson Mandela, 1962 ©University of Dundee, The Peto Collection

Idris Khan: A World Within

New Art Gallery, Walsall, Fri 3 February - Sun 7 May

Given that Idris Khan grew up in Walsall, the New Art Gallery is a particularly appropriate venue in which to mount a major survey of his work. Khan's densely layered pieces - photographs, paintings, sculptures, moving images and installations - are inspired by numerous cultural sources, including literature, history, art, music and religion.

The exhibition features two new layered glass paintings, as well as a sculpture which will be on show in the UK for the first time.



The Royal Photographic Society International Images For Science Exhibition

The Hive, Worcester, Wed 8 February - Wed 22 March

Selecting the best 100 photographic images for this exhibition can't have been an easy task, given that a staggering 2,500 pictures were submitted for consideration. Despite having their work cut out, the judging panel of four have done an admirable job, selecting photographs which perfectly meet the exhibition criterion - to be visually appealing but also have a science story to tell.

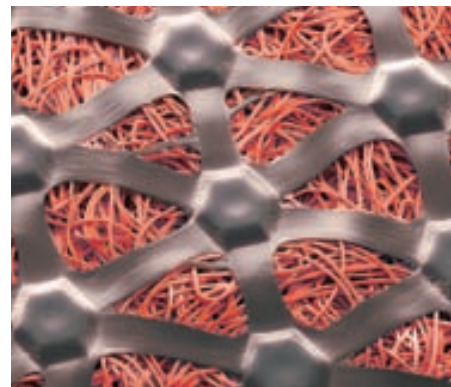
The included artworks range from highly technical images taken with expensive equipment, through to photographs shot on smartphones.

Having opened at The Crystal in London, the exhibition is visiting Worcester this month as part of a UK-wide tour. Its stop-off at The Hive, coinciding with British Science Week

(10 - 19 March), is the inspiration for a series of school workshops running at the venue, during which children can investigate the theme of 'hidden in plain sight'.

The workshops offer interactive opportunities for youngsters to investigate forensics, pollen and sound waves, guided by University of Worcester staff and students. Commenting on the RPS show, Anne Hannaford, Director of Arts & Culture at the University, said: "We're thrilled to once again be hosting the exhibition at The Hive, particularly during British Science Week. Bringing science and art together through photography sparks curiosity in young people and helps them explore and view STEM (science, technology, engineering & mathematics) subjects with interest and enthusiasm."

In addition to the RPS exhibition, two smaller Hive displays showcase the photography of Mike Hallett and David James, academics at the University who are also fellows of the RPS.



Draw New Mischief

Paccar Room, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, Sat 25 February - Fri 15 September

This free exhibition celebrates more than two centuries of political cartoons inspired by Shakespeare.

Presented to coincide with the RSC's forthcoming season of Rome-themed plays, Draw New Mischief showcases historical works from key political moments in time.

Featured contemporary cartoons include Peter Schrank's 2015 depiction of Ed Miliband and Nicola Sturgeon as the star-crossed lovers Romeo and Juliet, and Morten Morland's April 2016 cartoon of David Cameron as Hamlet, gazing at Boris Johnson's skull.

The RSC has also commissioned five cartoonists to create brand new works. The cartoonists will use Shakespeare's Rome plays to respond to political events which occur during the period that the exhibition is on show. The RSC's Rome season features productions of Julius Caesar, Antony & Cleopatra, Titus Andronicus and Coriolanus.



Hand And Mind

Grand Union, Birmingham, Fri 3 February - Sat 25 March

Connections between the realms of speech and gesture are tested in this multimedia exhibition, curated by Vanessa Boni and featuring painting, sculpture, choreography and performance. The included pieces, produced by five artists, seek to alter viewers' perceptions of the communicative synthesis of spoken language and physical gesture, in so doing unsettling political, personal and theoretical channels of communication.



Just Move Exhibition

The Works, Birmingham, Fri 3 February

Local artist David Roman has been a busy man. For this first solo exhibition, he undertook a project which saw him produce, in the space of 350 days, the same number of watercolour paintings, the shared theme of which was human movement.

"My project is about celebrating the amazing and fascinating super-machine that is the human body," says David. "Each one of the paintings tells a unique story about different people on their own journeys of self-expression."

Beyond The Door: The Koestler Exhibition For The West Midlands

mac, Birmingham, until Sun 26 March

Charitable scheme the Koestler Trust has been rewarding artistic achievement in the criminal justice sector for more than 50 years. This new exhibition features a selection of entries from the 2016 Koestler Awards competition. Presenting artwork, audio and creative writing from prisons, secure hospitals and young offender institutions in the West Midlands, the show encourages viewers to re-evaluate ex-offenders and consider the positive contributions they can make to society.

The show is curated by young people from Walsall Youth Service.





MCM COMIC CON

Cartoon characters, supernatural creatures, cosplay crowds - the MCM Comic Con is a world unto itself. What's On checks out a phenomenon that has its roots firmly planted in the Midlands region...



There can be few in the UK today who haven't witnessed the stunning spectacle of crowds of cosplayers descending on fan conventions, at least on screen if not in person.

Over the last few years, the popularity of such events has soared, with large-scale London shows attracting eye-watering attendance figures in excess of 133,000.

It's perhaps surprising then that the biggest company in the business is based here in the Midlands, running three local conventions annually in addition to shows across the country from its offices in Daventry, Northamptonshire.

Now firmly cemented in the cultural calendars of countless die-hard fans who visit every year, the hugely successful MCM (Movies, Comics & Media) group continues to grow, extending its reach beyond UK borders into Ireland, Belgium and Germany. Whether or not you're a regular visitor, if you've ever had the chance to attend an MCM Comic Con, it's not hard to understand the appeal.

Incongruously nestled behind the business-like facades of conference and exhibition centres, every MCM convention is a world unto itself, where cartoon characters spring to life and supernatural creatures freely roam, where stalls swelled with merchandise and unique fan creations stretch as far as the eye can see, and where video and tabletop gaming become serious competitive sports.

Like an old-fashioned festival of misrule, everything is upside-down. While Hollywood stars become ordinary people, sitting and talking amongst their fans, ordinary folks get their chance to enjoy the limelight, taking to the stage to perform in painstakingly handmade costumes to heartfelt and hard-earned applause, even winning accolades and prizes for their endeavours.

While young people make up a large part of the audience, it's by no means exclusive - there are fans to be found of all ages and generations, from those who grew up in the sci-fi heyday of the 1960s, to the children of the digital revolution of today.

Look closely and you might even spot whole families wearing matching costumes. It's something that's encouraged. At both MCM Birmingham and MCM Midlands in Telford, kids under 10 go free after priority entry ends at 11am. Even if you enter feeling cynical, the overwhelming dedication, warmth, enthusiasm and inclusivity of the fans is irresistible, whether you're dressed as Deadpool or a Disney princess.

But it wasn't always so. The MCM story dates right back to 2001, in those quiet days of geekdom before Spider-Man had kicked off a superhero movie revolution, before Russell T Davies had revived Doctor Who, before comics had reached out to mainstream readership, and well before the cosplay phenomenon had really taken off in the UK. Some small-scale conventions and specialised gatherings already existed, but it was SciFi Shows' Paul Miley and Wolf Events' Bryan Cooney who were the first to hatch a plan to bring something akin to the all-encompassing American fan events to Britain, also partly inspired by the NEC's nostalgic Memorabilia show, which would later be subsumed into MCM Birmingham (in 2005).

Thanks to a happy confluence of circumstances that saw attitudes change towards previously sidelined interests, conventions are now such big business that independents are constantly cropping up. But 16 years and multiple shows later, MCM's remain the biggest and most popular in Britain, unrivalled in attendance outside London.

Said MCM Expo Group CEO Bryan Cooney: "The Midlands holds a special place in our hearts. As it is, after all, where our company is based, we plan on providing an awesome show for the region's enthusiastic audience of sci-fi, comic book and film fans. We've welcomed a host of great special guests to our Midlands comic cons over the years; this time round we already have Game Of Thrones' Ian McElhinney (Ser Barristan Selmy) and Red Dwarf's Chris Barrie (Rimmer)."

In addition to these and other fantastic guests still to be announced, those planning a trip to the forthcoming shows in Telford and Birmingham can expect to see indie writers and artists filling the Comic Village, robot wars, a Steampunk Emporium with workshops and talks, a KidsZone, eSports competitions, panel discussions, changing areas, a costume repair desk and of course the Cosplay Masquerade finale, all included in the price of a ticket.

Regular stallholders like Amazing Cake Co, Manga Entertainment, Genki Gear, CeX and Tokyo Toys (who recently set up a permanent shop in Birmingham) also return, alongside a host of other local and national businesses.

And as an extra incentive to stop by in Telford, costume-clad visitors will be eligible for 50% off ice-skating at the Telford Ice Rink!

.....

MCM Comic Con Midlands is held at Telford International on Saturday 11 February.

MCM Comic Con Birmingham takes place at the NEC on Saturday 18 to Sunday 19 March.

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Events



Race Retro

Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire, Fri 24 - Sun 26 February

The presence of motorsport legend Tom Kristensen is one of the undoubted highlights of this month's historic motorsport show. Kristensen won Le Mans at his first attempt in 1997 and has triumphed in the event a record nine times, six of his victories taking place in consecutive years.

Tom is joined at this year's show by Finnish rally legends Ari Vatanen

and Markku Alén, who'll be getting back behind the wheel for a 'clash of the titans'.

Now in its 15th year, Race Retro showcases every motorsport discipline, including formula and circuit racing, rallying, hill climbs, touring cars, motorcycling, sports and GT cars.

The show also offers visitors the chance to purchase parts, spares, helmets and clothing, as well as new racing or rally cars in a special auction.

Birth Of Flight

Ironbridge Gorge Museums, Shropshire, Sat 18 - Sun 26 February

Ironbridge Gorge Museums is celebrating the birth of flight during the half-term holiday, presenting a range of themed family activities at some of its most popular attractions.

Visitors can discover the fun of flying at the Engenuity design & technology centre, building and launching a pneumatic rocket at twice-daily drop-in workshops.

There are falconry displays and kite-making opportunities to enjoy at Blists Hill Victorian Town, while people paying a visit to the Jackfield Tile Museum can decorate tiles with images of a hot-air balloon, flying saucer, aeroplane or other flying 'machine'.

Across the river, the Coalport China Museum gets in on the act too, providing visitors with the chance to sculpt their own flying creature.



Müller Indoor Grand Prix Birmingham

Barclaycard Arena, Birmingham, Sat 18 February

Indoor Grand Prix Birmingham 2017 brings together many of the country's top athletes to compete in track and field events.

Six Rio Olympic champions have been confirmed for the meeting, including four-time Olympic champion Mo Farah. The recordbreaking Laura Muir is also competing, attempting to smash Kelly Holmes' British record over 1,000 metres. And in what promises to be a spectacular clash, Britain's top female sprinter, Dina Asher-Smith, will face double Olympic champion Elaine Thompson over 60 metres.

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Caravan, Camping & Motorhome Show

NEC, Birmingham, Tues 21 - Sun 26 February

Attracting huge crowds and promising to be 'bigger and better than ever', the Caravan, Camping & Motorhome Show features over 350 exhibitors.

As well as exploring all the latest products, the show also offers buying tips, holiday

advice and a packed programme of events and entertainment. Featured fun includes cookery demonstrations, bushcraft workshops, an adventure assault course, a mobile climbing mountain, an artificial caving zone and a dog agility arena.

Television presenter and adventurer Ben Fogle heads the show's celebrity line-up, which also includes Kate Humble, Julia Bradbury, four-time Welsh National Surfing Champion Jo Dennison and Barney Harwood.

Airfix Make And Take

RAF Cosford Museum, Mon 20 - Fri 24 February



This annual family-friendly event is this year providing visitors with the chance to build a 1:72 Spitfire, Mitsubishi Zero, Albatros and Sopwith Pup. For families with younger children, there's a wooden biplane to assemble and decorate together. Modelling skills aren't required in order to take part, as staff will be on hand to provide assistance. The museum is offering all participants a 10% discount on model kits from the souvenir shop.

Brick Week

British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Sat 18 - Sun 26 February

A week of automotive-themed brick-building challenges is on offer this half term at the British Motor Museum - including the chance to help build a lifesize Mini out of Lego bricks. Visitors will be able to complete their own brick section, afterwards handing it over to professional model builders to assemble into the lifesize model.

The event also includes the 25-Brick Challenge, providing competitively minded motor enthusiasts with the opportunity to build a British car. A Mini-related museum trail and a dedicated foam-brick area for the under-fives also feature.



On The Move

Black Country Living Museum, Dudley, Sat 18 - Sun 26 February

An exploration of the region's transport heritage is the highlight of the Black Country Living Museum's half-term holiday line-up of entertainment.

As well as its celebration of all things 'on the move', the popular venue also offers visitors the chance to try out some traditional street games and experience a trip 'into the thick', sampling life in an 1850s-style coal mine.

Llangollen Mind Body Spirit Festival

Llangollen Pavilion, North Wales, Sun 5 February

At a time when world events are regularly adding an extra level of anxiety to the stresses and strains of everyday life, the chance to access some spiritual nourishment at this one-day event will prove hugely appealing to a good many people. The show features more than 60 stalls offering: alternative therapies; psychic one-to-one readings; complementary healing; mediumship, tarot and angel cards; well-being and beauty products; ethical cosmetics; crystals, incense, fair-trade gifts and alternative crafts.

There are free workshops available too, as well as a range of vegetarian and vegan food to enjoy in the Pavilion restaurant.

Chinese New Year Of The Rooster

The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, Sun 5 February

Traditional dragon and lion dances, firecrackers, magic, acrobats and folk dancing all feature in this Chinese New Year celebration. Visitors with a leaning towards craft-based activities can scratch their creative itch by getting to grips with Chinese painting, writing and origami. Theatrical endeavours include performances from local Chinese Sunday school children and an extract of Cantonese Opera performed in full cultural costume.

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CELEBRITY GUEST SPEAKERS

BEN FOGLE **JULIA BRADBURY** **BARNEY HARWOOD**

Celebrity guests may be subject to change.

The 50+ Show

NEC, Birmingham, Fri 17 - Sat 18 February

If you're old enough to remember the Glam Rock era, the three-day week and plenty of things that went before, you're the right age to get yourself along to this event.

This year's 50+ Show focuses on the four key topics of hobbies & crafts, finance & money, health and travel. Along the way it provides no shortage of evidence that life beyond that first half century can offer plenty in terms of adventure, while also recognising that there may be the occasional challenge to overcome.

So if you'd like to discover the secrets of good mental health, find out about special-interest holidays, contemplate taking up cake decorating, or fancy exploring genealogy, this is the show for you.

Hot Rods And Kool Kustoms

Coventry Transport Museum, until Sun 14 May

Retro racers abound at a show that urges you to fire up your engines and take a trip down memory lane. Featuring hot rods from across the UK and icons from both the American and British custom car scene, this exhibition of vintage vehicles comes complete with an interactive family area. Hands-on experiences include the chance to customise a real car bonnet using pin-striping techniques, race cars down a ramp with loop-the-loops and celebrate on a special winner's podium.

I'm An Arley Adventurer, Get Me Out Of Here!

Arley Arboretum, nr Bewdley, Mon 20 - Fri 24 February

Keeping kids captivated with creepy-crawly capers is Arley Arboretum's sworn intention this half-term holiday.

Little ones can explore the venue's brand new 'adventurer bug trail' and check out the mystery boxes found en route. There are crawlies hiding inside each box, but only plastic ones, to ensure the experience is suitable for youngsters of all ages.

The venue's specialist 'bug man' will be putting in a daily appearance too (from midday to 2pm), bringing along with him lots of mini beasts as well as numerous other animals, including snakes, tarantulas, lizards, an owl and a pygmy hedgehog.

Arley activities for children who'd prefer to steer clear of all things creepy crawlly include a special maze, an adventure playground and the dinosaur, fairy and pre-school Woodland Animal Trail.



Castle Quest

Tamworth Castle, Mon 20 - Sun 26 February

An event developed from numerous computer-game concepts, Castle Quest has been designed with teenagers very much in mind. As Questers make their way around the castle, they come into contact

with various characters, each with a unique word to share. Problem is, though, they'll only share that word if a task is completed or a riddle solved... On conclusion of the Quest, participants take 'the ultimate challenge' - to walk the Quest grid blindfolded, testing the success of their problem-solving skills.

February Half Term Activities at the RSC

Various RSC venues, Stratford-upon-Avon, Mon 20 - Fri 24 February

The Royal Shakespeare Company is offering so much by way of activities to enjoy this half-term holiday that it might make sense to spend the whole week in Stratford!

Highlights of the RSC's family-friendly programme include: the chance for children at different ages to create their very own shortened version of Julius Caesar; a special workshop in which kids can write

prose or poetry inspired by the history of the RSC, Shakespeare and theatre; and a behind-the-scenes look at how theatrical bruises, cuts and scars are created. The line-up also features a Storytime adventure, an afternoon of free craft activities, the chance to create a masked performance and learn the art of stage combat, and an opportunity to get to grips with the story and themes of Julius Caesar. Oh, and you can even learn how to decorate cupcakes, courtesy of the RSC's magnificently talented pastry chef. If ever a legendary theatre company had all the half-term bases covered...



Award FINALISTS in each category announced! **VOTE** for your **WINNER!**

What's On Readers' Awards

Yes, you VOTED in your thousands in the first round of nominations in the **What's On Readers' Awards - over 10,000 votes across the West Midlands region!** Now it's time for you to VOTE once more to choose your ultimate WINNER in each category! Here are the award shortlist finalists:

THEATRE: Midlands Large Theatre

- Birmingham Hippodrome
- New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham
- Regent Theatre, Hanley
- Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford
- The REP, Birmingham
- Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

THEATRE: Midlands Arts Centre

- Foxlowe Arts Centre, Stoke
- mac, Birmingham
- Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton
- The Hive, Shrewsbury
- Warwick Arts Centre

THEATRE: Best Touring Musical

- Blood Brothers
- Dirty Dancing
- Hairspray
- Mamma Mia!
- Mary Poppins
- The Jersey Boys

THEATRE: Best Touring Play

- Gangsta Granny
- Of Mice & Men
- Shawshank Redemption
- The Full Monty
- The Woman In Black

THEATRE: Best Home Produced Show In The Midlands

- Bring On The Bollywood - Belgrade Theatre, Coventry
- Gangsta Granny - Birmingham Stage Company
- Hamlet - Royal Shakespeare Company
- Singin' In The Rain - The New Vic
- The Exorcist - The REP
- The Wind In The Willows - The Old Rep, Birmingham

THEATRE: Best Pantomime In The Midlands 2016/17

- Aladdin - Grand Theatre W'hampton
- Cinderella - Regent Theatre, Hanley
- Cinderella - Theatre Severn
- Dick Whittington - Birmingham Hippodrome
- Dick Whittington - Belgrade Theatre
- Sleeping Beauty - Lichfield Garrick

THEATRE: Best Kids Show

- Disney On Ice presents Frozen
- Gangsta Granny
- Room On The Broom
- The Bear
- The Snowman
- We're Going On A Bear Hunt

THEATRE: Best Amateur Dramatic/Operatic Group

- Bilston Operatic Company
- Bournville Musical Theatre Company
- Get Your Wigle On
- Old Joint Stock Musical Theatre Co.
- West Bromwich Operatic Society (WBOS)
- Wolverhampton Musical Comedy Company (MUSCOM)

THEATRE: Best Amateur Production

- American Idiot - Old Joint Stock Musical Theatre Company
- Fame - Wolverhampton Musical Comedy Company (MUSCOM)
- Jekyll & Hyde - Bournville Musical Theatre Company
- Legally Blonde - Stourbridge Amateur Operatic Society
- Made in Dagenham - West Bromwich Operatic Society (WBOS)
- Our House - The Madness Musical - Bilston Operatic Company

DANCE: Best Production

- Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater
- BRB - The Nutcracker
- Life: Balletboyz

VOTE today at whatsonlive.co.uk

- Matthew Bourne's Sleeping Beauty
- Snow White - Vienna Festival Ballet

CLASSICAL (inc Opera):

Best Production

- Birmingham Opera Company - Dido 'n' Aeneas
- English Touring Opera - Don Giovanni
- HMS Pinafore - Sasha Regan
- WNO - Kiss Me Kate
- WNO - Sweeney Todd

CLASSICAL:

Best Orchestra/Choir

- Birmingham Bach Choir
- Birmingham Contemporary Music Group (BCMG)
- Birmingham Gay Symphony Orchestra
- Birmingham Philharmonic Orchestra
- City Of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO)

ARTS: Best Midlands Arts/Cultural Festival

- Artsfest Wolverhampton
- Birmingham Literature Festival
- Birmingham Comedy Festival
- Flatpack Festival
- Godiva Festival
- International Dance Festival B'ham

ARTS: Best Exhibition

- All The World's A Stage - Barber Institute
- Craft Open West Midlands
- Grayson Perry: The Vanity of Small Differences - Herbert Art Gallery
- Inspire 16 - Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery
- Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2016 - Wolverhampton Art Gallery

Best Independent Cinema

- Electric Cinema - Birmingham
- Light House Media Centre - Wolverhampton
- mac - Birmingham
- Old Market Hall - Shrewsbury
- Red Carpet Cinema - Burton

COMEDY: Best Midlands

Comedian

- Barbara Nice
- Greg Davies
- Jay Islaam
- Joe Lycett
- Jonny Cole

COMEDY: Best Midlands

Comedy Break-through

- Josh Pugh
- Masai Graham
- Sarah Johnson
- Stu Woodings
- Tom Christian

COMEDY: Best Midlands

Comedy Night

- Blue Giraffe - Wolverhampton
- CAN Comedy
- Comedy 42 - Lichfield Garrick
- Comedy Carousel at The Glee Club, Birmingham
- Comedy at Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury
- Just The Tonic - Birmingham

Best Midlands Music Venue

(Large: 1000+ capacity)

- Barclaycard Arena - Birmingham
- Genting Arena - Birmingham
- O2 Academy - Birmingham
- Symphony Hall - Birmingham
- Victoria Hall - Hanley

Best Midlands Music Festival

- Birmingham & Solihull Jazz Festival
- Lichfield Arts' Fuse Festival
- Moseley Folk Festival
- Shrewsbury Folk Festival
- Slam Dunk Festival

Best Midlands Musician

- Dan Owen
- Laura Mvula
- Libby Gilksman
- Scott Matthews
- Soweto Kinch

Best Midlands Live Band

- Electric Swing Circus
- Ned's Atomic Dustbin
- Peace
- Stephen Duffy & The Lilac Time
- The Twang

Best Midlands Chef

- Adam Stokes (Adams, Birmingham)
- Brad Carter (Carters of Moseley)
- Glynn Purnell (Purnell's, Birmingham)
- Luke Tipping (Simpsons, Birmingham)
- Richard Turner (Turners, Birmingham)

Best Midlands Food Festival

- Great British Food Festival - Shugborough
- Foodies Festival Birmingham
- Lichfield Food Festival
- Ludlow Food Festival
- Shrewsbury Food Festival

Best Midlands Street Food Vendor

- Andy Low 'n' Slow
- Baked in Brick
- Buddha Belly
- Bournville Waffle Company
- Vegan Grindhouse
- The Meat Shack

Best Midlands Retail

Shopping Centre

- Bullring - Birmingham
- Grand Central - Birmingham
- Mailbox - Birmingham
- Mell Square Shopping Centre - Solihull
- Merry Hill - Brierley Hill
- Telford Shopping Centre

Midlands Entertainment

Personality of the Year Award

- Adil Ray (Citizen Khan)
- Beverley Knight
- Doreen Tipton
- Julie Walters
- Lenny Henry

and choose your **WINNER!**

BIRMINGHAM

Best Arts/Theatre Venue

- The Crescent
- mac Birmingham
- New Alexandra
- Old Joint Stock
- The Old Rep
- The REP

Best Music Venue

- The Glee Club,
- Hare & Hounds
- The Jam House
- mac,
- The Roadhouse,

Best Festival

- Birmingham Comedy
- Birmingham & Solihull Jazz & Blues
- MADE Birmingham
- Moseley Folk
- Mostly Jazz, Funk & Soul

Best Visitor Attraction

- Birmingham Botanical Gardens
- Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery
- Cadbury World
- Sealife Centre
- The Jewellery Quarter
- Thinktank

Best Outdoor Event

- Birmingham Ice Rink in Centenary Square
- Birmingham Pride
- Frankfurt Christmas Market
- Magical Lantern Festival
- Summer in Southside

Best Indoor Event

- BBC Good Food Show
- Brick Live (LEGO)
- Clothes Show Live
- Grand Designs
- MCM Comic Con

Best Gallery/Exhibition Venue

- The Barber Institute
- Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery
- Birmingham Open Media
- Ikon
- mac
- Thinktank

BLACK COUNTRY

Best Arts/Theatre Venue

- Arena Theatre
- Dudley Concert Hall
- Forest Arts Centre
- Grand Theatre
- Newhampton Arts Centre

Best Music Venue

- Dudley Concert Hall
- Katie Fitzgeralds
- The Civic Hall
- The Robin 2
- The Slade Rooms

Best Visitor Attraction

- Black Country Living Museum
- Dudley Canal & Tunnel Trust
- Dudley Zoo
- RAF Cosford Museum
- Wightwick Manor
- Wolverhampton Racecourse

Best Event

- 1940s Evening - Black Country Living Museum
- Artsfest W'hampton
- Cosford Air Show
- Dudley Beer Festival
- Go Wild Week at Dudley Zoo

Best Gallery/Exhibition Venue

- Bilston Craft Gallery
- Dudley Museum & Art Gallery
- Light House Media Centre
- New Art Gallery, Walsall
- Wolverhampton Museum & Art Gallery

Best Independent Restaurant

- Indigo Restaurant, Wolverhampton
- Mad O'Rourke's Pie Factory, Dudley
- Penn Tandoori, Wolverhampton
- The Old Glasshouse, Dudley
- The Summerhouse, Dudley

Best Independent Cafe

- Cafe Cappella, Dudley
- Cozy Coffee, Dudley
- Gluttons For Nourishment,
- The Brook Coffee House, Wolverhampton
- The Old School Tea Rooms, Wolverhampton

WARWICKSHIRE

Best Arts/Theatre Venue

- Albany Theatre, Coventry
- Belgrade Theatre, Coventry
- Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford
- Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa
- The Criterion Theatre, Coventry
- Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Best Music Venue

- The Assembly, Leamington Spa
- The Copper Rooms, Coventry
- The Kasbah, Coventry
- Tin Music & Arts, Coventry
- Warwick Arts Centre

Best Festival

- Godiva Festival
- Leamington Food and Drink Festival
- Lunar Festival
- Stratford River Festival
- Warwick Folk Festival

Best Visitor Attraction

- British Motor Museum
- Coventry Transport Museum
- Kenilworth Castle
- Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust
- Warwick Castle

Best Event

- Art In The Park, Leamington Spa
- Brick Wonders, Herbert Art Gallery
- Coventry Sky Ride
- Godiva Festival
- Making Mischief - RSC

Best Gallery/Exhibition Venue

- Compton Verney
- Coventry Music Museum
- Herbert Art Gallery
- Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum
- Mead Gallery

Best Independent Restaurant

- Cheals of Henley, Henley-in-Arden
- Greyhound Inn, Coventry
- La Coppola, Leamington Spa
- Restaurant 23, Leamington Spa
- The Cross, Kenilworth

WORCESTERSHIRE

Best Arts/Theatre Venue

- Artrix, Bromsgrove
- Evesham Arts Centre
- Huntingdon Hall, Worcester
- Malvern Theatres
- Swan Theatre, Worcester

Best Music Venue

- Drummonds Bar, Worcester
- Huntingdon Hall, Worcester
- The Boar's Head, Kidderminster
- The Iron Road, Evesham
- The Marr's Bar, Worcester

Best Festival

- Asparafest, Nr Evesham
- Bromsgrove Folk
- Malvern Food Festival
- Worcester Music Fest
- Upton Upon Severn Jazz Festival

Best Visitor Attraction

- Avoncroft, Bromsgrove
- Elgar's Birthplace, Worcester
- Hanbury Hall and Gardens
- Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley
- West Mid Safari Park

Best Independent Restaurant

- Banners Café & Restaurant, Bromsgrove
- Casa Med Tapas, Bromsgrove
- Saffron's Bistro, Worcester
- The Olive Branch, Worcester
- The Royal Oak, Evesham

Best Independent Café

- Coffee No.1, Pershore
- G&Tea, Worcester
- Lorita's Bakehouse, Bromsgrove
- Mac & Jac's Cafe-Deli, Worcester
- Word Of Mouth, Evesham

Best Nightclub

- 57 Monkeys, Bromsgrove
- Marilyn's Nightclub, Evesham
- The Flag, Worcester
- The Velvet Lounge,
- Tramps, Worcester

STAFFORDSHIRE

Best Arts/Theatre Venue

- Lichfield Garrick
- New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme
- Prince of Wales Centre, Cannock
- Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent
- Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

Best Music Venue

- Lichfield Guildhall
- Prince of Wales Centre, Cannock
- Victoria Hall, Hanley
- Tamworth Assembly Rooms
- The Sugarmill, Stoke

Best Festival

- Big Feast, Stoke-On-Trent
- Stafford Arts Festival
- Lichfield Arts' Fuse Festival
- Great British Food Festival - Shugborough
- Lichfield Festival

Best Visitor Attraction

- Alton Towers
- Drayton Manor Theme Park
- Lichfield Cathedral
- Monkey Forest
- National Memorial Arboretum
- Tamworth Castle

Best Event

- Lichfield Lumiere
- Lichfield Proms in Beacon Park
- Scarefest at Alton Towers
- St. George's Day at Tamworth Castle
- The Enchanted Chandelier at Central Forest Park

Best Nightclub

- Bunker 13, Stoke
- Couture, Stafford
- Kuda, Tamworth
- Pink, Stoke
- Silks, Cannock

Best Independent Café

- 15 On The Corner, Lichfield
- Damn Fine Cafe, Lichfield
- Little Green Frog Cafe, Lichfield
- The Food Room,
- The Lounge of Lichfield
- Whitmore Tearooms, Newcastle-under-Lyme

SHROPSHIRE

Best Arts/Theatre Venue

- Theatre Severn
- The Hive, Shrewsbury
- The Place, Telford
- The Wightman, Shrewsbury
- Theatre On The Steps

Best Music Venue

- Walker Theatre
- Havana Republic, Shrewsbury
- Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury
- The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury
- The Hive, Shrewsbury

Best Festival

- Farmer Phil's Festival
- Ludlow Food Festival
- Haydn Festival
- Shrewsbury Folk Festival
- Shrewsbury Food Festival

Best Visitor Attraction

- Attingham Park
- British Ironworks Centre, Oswestry
- Dana Prison Tours
- Ironbridge Museums
- Severn Valley Railway, Bridgnorth
- Shrewsbury Castle

Best Event

- 1940s Evening at Blists Hill
- The Big Busk
- MCM Comic Con Midlands, Telford
- Shrewsbury Flower Show
- Tattoo Freeze

Best Gallery/Exhibition Venue

- Bear Steps Art Gallery, Shrewsbury
- Coalbrookdale Gallery, Ironbridge
- Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery
- Van, The Market Hall, Shrewsbury
- Willow Gallery, Oswestry

Best Shropshire Nightclub

- The Buttermarket,
- C:21, Shrewsbury
- Club Crush, Telford
- Inferno, Shrewsbury
- Pussycats Night Club, Telford

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Your week to week
listings guide
February 2017

the list



Running Wild at Belgrade Theatre, Coventry - Wed 22 - Sat 25 February

Music | Comedy | Theatre | Dance | Film | Events | Visual Arts | and more!

What's On

Wed 1 to Sun 5 February



Harry Potter Book Night at
The Hive, Worcester

Thurs 2 February

Mon 6 to Sun 12 February



Sid's Deep Sea Discovery at
Artrix, Bromsgrove

Sun 12 February

Mon 13 to Sun 19 February



Shakespearean Cottage Bird
Watch at Anne Hathaway's
Cottage, Stratford-upon-Avon

Sat 18 - Sun 26 February

Mon 20 to Tues 28 February



Chris Ramsey at
Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Sun 26 February

THROUGHOUT FEBRUARY

Visual Arts

Artrix, Bromsgrove

NEW BERNADETTE LOUISE - ACCUSED: AN AUTISM MOTHER Through her art and spoken word event, Bernadette exposes the true harm caused by the authorities to families with 'unseen disabilities', Wed 1 - Sun 26 Feb

NEW MEGAN JACKSON: BE MASCULINE, BE FEMININE, BE BOTH, BE NEITHER, BE UNAPOLOGETIC A collection of hand-painted jackets at the forefront of fashion, challenging stereotypes but also serving as statement art pieces about gender roles, Wed 1 - Sun 26 Feb

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

NIGHT IN THE MUSEUM: RYAN GANDER CURATES THE ARTS COUNCIL

Leading British artist Ryan Gander's selection of artworks from the Arts Council Collection, until Sun 12 Feb

CONNECTED HISTORIES: MUSLIMS IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR A new exhibition which explores the untold stories of more than 400,000 Muslim soldiers in the First World War, until Sun 5 Mar

BIRMINGHAM PEOPLE AND CHANGE IN THE INNER-CITY Birmingham People explores the ways in which ordinary Brummie folk have been represented in art during the 20th and 21st centuries. Change In The Inner-City focuses on the four inner-city wards of Ladywood - Nechells, Soho, Aston and Ladywood, until Fri 31 Mar

BIRMINGHAM BIG ART PROJECT Birmingham Big Art project is commissioning a major new work of public art for the city. The exhibition of shortlisted artists' proposals is here on the final leg of its tour. This is the last chance to see the models and have your say, until Sun 23 Apr

FAITH IN BIRMINGHAM, Exploring how different faiths have influenced and shaped the city, until Sun 3 Feb 2019

Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry

MADE IN THE MIDDLE A recurring touring exhibition highlighting some of the best contemporary craft and applied art from the Midlands. Part of Craftspace's 30th anniversary programme, until Sun 5 Feb

NEW FACE TO FACE: PORTRAITS THROUGH TIME Explore a centuries-old fascination with capturing our own image. Featuring paintings, photographs, sculptures and interactive activities, Fri 3 Feb - Sun 4 June

Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum

JOURNEY THROUGH JAPAN Marjorie Bell (1890-1962) travelled around Japan with her mother and cousin. During their two-month journey, they took photographs and wrote a diary. This record of their visit is displayed alongside items from the galleries collection of Japanese objects, prints and ceramics, until Sun 2 Apr

The Hive, Worcester

STAN YOUNG - A LIFE IN PAINTING Stan has been working as a painter for more than 60 years and remains inspired by people, politics and the world around him, until Sun 5 Feb

NEW INTERNATIONAL IMAGES FOR SCIENCE Showcasing 100 of the best photographic images of science. From professional researchers and photographers to dedicated amateurs and young scientists trying to capture science for the first time, Wed 8 Feb - Wed 22 Mar

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

SUBODH GUPTA - FROM FAR AWAY UNCLE MOON CALLS A major exhibition by one of India's foremost contemporary artists, until Sat 11 Mar

Worcester City Museum & Art Gallery

ENQUIRING MINDS Featuring drawings by naturalist John Gould, land and cityscape watercolours by HH Lines and local artefacts discovered by famous archaeologist Pitt Rivers, until Sat 11 Nov

NEW DAVID COX AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES Drawing on the gallery's extensive collection of paintings by Birmingham-born David Cox, the exhibition is supported by high-profile British Museum loans of works by Constable and Turner, and explores Cox's place within British art, Sat 18 Feb - Sat 3 June

Other VISUAL ARTS

THE PLAY'S THE THING Family-friendly exhibition full of treasures from the archives and the museum collection, including rarely seen props, costumes and original set designs, until Sun 10 Sept, The Swan Theatre Stratford

CINDY WILLIAMS Cindy is a Worcestershire-based pastel artist who mostly draws her inspiration from 1920s and '30s silent-film divas, until Mon 6 Mar, Evesham Arts Centre

NEW SCULPTING THE MUSEUM Sculptor Michael Shaw's dynamic contemporary sculpture, designed to put a smile on the face, Sat 28 Jan - Sat 25 Mar, Rugby Art Gallery & Museum

NEW LS LOWRY EXHIBITION Rare selection of paintings, drawings and master graphics from LS Lowry RA 1887-1976, Sat 4 - Sun 5 Feb, Whitewall Galleries, Stratford-Upon-

Gigs

THE FALL Wed 1 Feb, The Assembly, Leamington Spa

RAY COOPER Wed 1 Feb, The Red Lion Folk Club, Birmingham

BARBARA DICKSON Wed 1 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

KNOXVILLE HIGHWAY Wed 1 Feb, The Jam House, Birmingham

TOM WALKER TRIO Wed 1 Feb, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

LIVE DEAD 69 Wed 1 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

KATHRYN WILLIAMS & ANTHONY KERR Wed 1 Feb, Kitchen Garden Cafe, Birmingham

HALF MAN HALF BISCUIT Thurs 2 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

MENACE BEACH Thurs 2 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

BLACK SABBATH Thurs 2 Feb, Genting Arena, Birmingham

SEAWAY Thurs 2 Feb, O2 Academy, B'ham

HEALTHY JUNKIES Thurs 2 Feb, The Flapper, Birmingham

THE DEEP PURPLE FAMILY TREE Fri 3 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

THE WONDER YEARS Fri 3 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

SWINGING 60'S MOTOWN PRYSTALETTES Fri 3 Feb, Nailcote Hall, Berkswell, Warwickshire

ABBA MANIA Fri 3 Feb, New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

PHILLIP HENRY AND HANNAH MARTIN Fri 3 Feb, Artrix, Bromsgrove

KINGS OV LEON Fri 3 Feb, The Roadhouse, Birmingham

FREE AT LAST Fri 3 Feb, Route 44, Birmingham

DONNY OSMOND Fri 3 Feb, Genting Arena, Birmingham

STEVE 'BIG MAN' CLAYTON Fri 3 Feb, Blue Piano Restaurant And Bar, Birmingham

THEM HEAVY PEOPLE - KATE BUSH TRIBUTE Fri 3 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

LET'S HANG ON The music of Frankie Valli



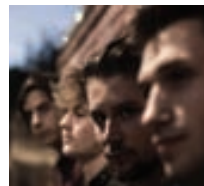
Donny Osmond -Genting Arena, Birmingham

& The Four Seasons, Fri 3 Feb - Sat 4 Feb, The Core Theatre, Solihull

CHRIS BEVINGTON AND FRIENDS Fri 3 Feb, Eleven, Sandyford, Stoke-on-Trent

HOLY THIEF, DARK ACTORS & THE LOADED Fri 3 Feb, The Tin Music And Arts, Coventry

WUZI Fri 3 Feb, Kasbah, Coventry



COMFY & ACOUSTIC featuring Nadine Khouri, Wednesday's Wolves and Ben P Williams Fri 3 Feb, The Big Comfy Bookshop, Fargo Village, Coventry

INTO THE HURRICANE Fri 3 Feb, The Flapper, Birmingham

THE JOHN OTWAY BIG BAND Sat 4 Feb, Artrix, Bromsgrove

GOODNIGHT LENIN Sat 4 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

NATHAN CARTER Sat 4 Feb, New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

GREEN HAZE Sat 4 Feb, The Marr's Bar, Worcester

THE ELVIS YEARS Sat 4 Feb, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

OYE SANTANA Sat 4

Feb, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

SWEDE DREAMZ Sat 4 Feb, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

BLACK SABBATH Sat 4 Feb, Genting Arena, Birmingham

KALEO Sat 4 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

G2 DEFINITIVE GENESIS Sat 4 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

MONTPARNASSE Sat 4 Feb, mac, Birmingham

THE CLAUSE Sat 4 Feb, O2 Academy, B'ham

PETER AND THE TEST TUBE BABIES, SUCKERPUNCH, THE NERKS & THE YOUTH WITHIN Sat 4 Feb, The Flapper, Birmingham

MIKEY PLUS SUPPORT FROM SAINT LEONARD'S HORSES & JOSEPH HICKLIN Sat 4 Feb, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

DISCIPLES + VAULTS Sat 4 Feb, Kasbah, Coventry

SAUL ROSE & JAMES DELARRE Sun 5 Feb, Kitchen Garden Cafe, Birmingham

T.REXTASY Sun 5 Feb, Artrix, Bromsgrove

BLACK PEAKS Sun 5 Feb, O2 Academy, Birmingham



Classical Music

BEETHOVEN'S FIFTH Featuring Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla (conductor), Francesco Piemontesi (piano) & the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Programme includes works by Haydn, Mozart & Beethoven, Sun 29 Jan - Thurs 2 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham



THE ROYAL LIVERPOOL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA Featuring Vasily Petrenko (conductor) & Daniil Trifonov (piano). Programme includes works by Stravinsky, Rachmaninov & Prokofiev, Wed 1 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

COULL QUARTET: ROMANTIC JOURNEY Programme includes works by Schubert, Mendelssohn & Brahms, Thurs 2 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

LIEBESLIEDER Featuring Elouise Waterhouse (mezzo-soprano), Elise Fairley (soprano), Richard James (tenor), Andrew Randall (bass), Bernard Tann & Petrina Phua (accompanists) & James Gribble (reader), Thurs 2 Feb, Birmingham Conservatoire

MARK BEBBINGTON - BROMSGROVE CONCERTS Programme includes works by Schubert, Matthew-Walker, Bliss & Beethoven, Fri 3 Feb, Artrix, Bromsgrove



PIANO QUINTETS WITH CEDRIC TIBERGHIE Also featuring Emmet Byrne (oboe); Oliver Janes (clarinet), Michael Kidd (horn) & Margaret Cookhorn (bassoon). Programme includes works by Mozart & Beethoven, Fri 3 Feb, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

ULRICH HEINEN LUNCHTIME CONCERT Programme comprises Stockhausen's Tierkreis (Zodiac) & JS Bach's Suite No.6 in D. BWV1012, Fri 3 Feb, The Barber Institute, B'ham

JOHN WILLIAMS AT THE OSCARS Featuring Michael Seal (Conductor) & Tommy Pearson (Presenter), Fri 3 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

BIRMINGHAM BACH CHOIR: COME AND SING Join Paul Spicer and members of the Birmingham Bach Choir in

rehearsing choruses from Mozart's Coronation Mass, Sat 4 Feb, Selly Oak Methodist Church, Birmingham

STRATFORD CHAMBER CHOIR: PALESTRINA AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES Sat 4 Feb, Stratford Artshouse, Stratford-upon-Avon

EX CATHEDRA: PURCELL DIDO & AENEAS Featuring Greg Skidmore (Aeneas), Angela Hicks (Belinda), Martha McLorinan (Sorceress), Amy Wood (First Witch), Elizabeth Adams (Second Witch) & Jeremy Budd (Sailor), Sun 5 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

THERE WILL BE BLOOD: LIVE Featuring the London Contemporary Orchestra, Hugh Brunt (conductor), Cynthia Millar (Ondes Martenot), Galya Bisengalieva (violin) & Oliver Coates (cello), Sun 5 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Comedy Gigs

CHEEKY MONKEY COMEDY Wed 1 Feb, The Dark Horse, Moseley, B'ham

JOSH HOWIE Thurs 2 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

GARY LITTLE, DAVE FULTON & COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON Thurs 2 Feb, The Glee Club, B'ham

ROB BECKETT Thurs 2 Feb, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

IAN STIRLING Fri 3 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ROB AUTON Fri 3 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Shropshire

IMRAN YUSUF, GEORGE RIGDEN, DAMIAN KINGSLEY Fri 3 Feb, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

AURIE STYLA, QUINCY, KEVIN J & ROADMAN DAVID Fri 3 Feb, mac, Birmingham

DANNY BAKER Fri 3 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

DAVE FULTON, GARY LITTLE, JENNY COLLIER & CHARLIE BAKER Fri 3 - Sat 4 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

FREDDIE FARRELL, SALLY-ANNE HAYWARD & TOPPING AND BUTCH Fri 3 - Sat 4 Feb, Jongleurs, Birmingham

GAVIN WEBSTER, LARRY DEAN, MARK NELSON & DARRELL MARTIN Fri 3 - Sat 4 Feb, The Comedy Loft, B'ham

GEORGE EGG Sat 4 Feb, Artrix, Bromsgrove

GAVIN WEBSTER, JUNIOR SIMPSON, TOM TOAL & ROB MULHOLLAND Sat 4 Feb, Coventry Showcase

JIMMY CARR Sun 5 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry



Stomp - Warwick Arts Centre

Theatre

LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER New staging of DH Lawrence's most famous novel, until Fri 3 Feb, The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

DIRTY DANCING The story of Baby and Jonny, told through heart-pounding music and sexy dancing, until Sat 4 Feb, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

BUDDY - THE BUDDY HOLLY STORY Award-winning musical, until Sat 4 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

DIAL M FOR MURDER Amateur production of Frederick Knott's intensely dark thriller, Mon 30 Jan - Sat 4 Feb, Talisman Theatre, Kenilworth

STOMP A British theatrical sensation, fusing percussion, dance, theatre and comedy with an exhilarating soundtrack, Tues 31 Jan - Sat 4 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

EVITA Andrew Lloyd-Webber and Tim Rice's third major collaboration opened to rave reviews way back in the late 1970s, and has since garnered a reputation as one of the greatest musicals ever to grace West End and Broadway stages, until Sat 4 Feb, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

MADE IN INDIA A new play about motherhood and blood ties between women and nations in a brave new world, until Sat 4 Feb, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

THE TWO NOBLE KINSMEN Based on Chaucer's The Knight's Tale, The Two Noble Kinsmen is attributed to John Fletcher & William Shakespeare and is best described as a tragicomedy exploring the intoxication and strangeness of love, until Tues 7 Feb, The Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

THE SEVEN ACTS OF MERCY Anders Lustgarten's visceral new play, which confronts the dangerous necessity of compassion, in a world where it is in short supply. Directed by RSC Deputy Artistic Director Erica Whyman, until Fri 10 Feb, The Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

THE ROVER Aphra Behn's anarchic

restoration comedy, rich with seduction, intrigue and danger, set in the topsy-turvy world of the carnival, until Sat 11 Feb, The Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

LOVE New play from Alexander Zeldin, written through a devising process in which the audience are invited to bear witness to an intimate story of 'family love for our times', until Sat 11 Feb, The REP, B'ham

FRANKENSTEIN The Crescent Theatre Company presents a staging of Mary Shelley's gothic tale, until Sat 11 Feb, The Crescent Theatre, B'ham

WHAT'S IN A NAME? Nigel Harman & Sarah Hadland star in the premiere of Jeremy Sams' stage adaptation of the French film and stage sensation, Le Prenom, until Sat 11 Feb, The REP, Birmingham

MARY SHELLEY The Crescent Theatre Company presents Helen Edmundson's compelling drama about the life of one of the world's most famous writers of Gothic fiction, until Sat 11 Feb, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

ROUND THE HORNE Based on the vintage BBC radio comedy sketch show, Wed 1 Feb, New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

POLICE COPS Action-packed hour of 'adrenaline-fuelled physical comedy, cinematic style and uncompromising facial hair', Wed 1 Feb, Bridge House Theatre, Warwick



HYSTERIA Terry Johnson's modern farce explores the fallout when two of the 20th century's most brilliant and original minds (Salvador Dali & Sigmund Freud) collide, Wed 1 - Sat 4 Feb, Malvern Theatre, Worcestershire

IN A PICKLE Oily Cart fuse storytelling, dance and puppetry to present a theatrical experience for younger audi-

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STRATFORD
ARTSHOUSE

SPRING HIGHLIGHTS

For full programme details - stratfordartshouse.co.uk

Fri 24 Feb, 8pm
JOHN SHUTTLEWORTH
MY LAST WILL AND TASTY MINT

Sat 25 Feb, 7:30pm
BARRY STEELE AND FRIENDS
THE ROY ORBISON STORY

Sun 19 March, 8pm
JO CAULFIELD
THE CUSTOMER IS ALWAYS WRONG

Mon 20 March, 7:30pm
ANNE REID'S CABARET SHOW
I LOVE TO SING

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ences, inspired by Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, Wed 1 - Sun 5 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

MORBID CURIOSITIES Don't Go Into The Cellar present a portmanteau of vintage blood-curdlers, featuring all-new adaptations of *The Yellow Wallpaper*, *The Old Nurse's Story* and *John Charrington's Wedding*, Thurs 2 Feb, Old Joint Stock Theatre, B'ham

TREE Join eight-year-old Sophie as she embarks on an imaginary journey of discovery through roots, branches, cells and DNA to understand why the tree at the bottom of her garden has suddenly become sick, Thurs 2 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

THE DRESSING ROOM Comedy play written by and starring Bobby Ball. Set behind the scenes of a run-down theatre, this combination of sitcom, comedy and variety also features Tommy Cannon, Stu Francis & Johnnie Casson, Thurs 2 Feb, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

WRECKING BALL Funny, surreal and unsettling new play which explores how the subtle abuses of power shape our relationships, Thurs 2 - Sat 4 Feb, The REP, Birmingham

DAME NATURE - THE MAGNIFICENT BEARDED LADY An evening of stories and characters for audiences who don't like to judge a woman by her beard, Fri 3 Feb, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

ALADDIN TROUBLE Local performers Harlequinade return with a show following the exploits of Aladdin, a lad who gets himself into trouble! Fri 3 - Sat 4 Feb, The Core, Solihull

HALF OF ME A poetically written companion piece to *Made In India* which examines the often-unheard experiences of young people born by Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ARTs), Fri 3 - Sat 4 Feb, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry



THE TEMPEST: FIRST ENCOUNTERS The RSC presents an edited version of its festive play - an ideal first experience of Shakespeare for anyone aged eight or older, Fri 3 - Sat 4 Feb, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

UNCLE BERT'S COW Interactive theatre for young audiences, Sat 4 Feb, Swan Theatre, Worcester

LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER New staging of DH Lawrence's most famous novel, Sat 4 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

SHARK IN THE PARK! A fin-tastic family musical, from the creative team behind *The Hairy Maclary Show*, in which audiences can see all of Nick Sharratt's *Shark In The Park!* stories performed live on stage, Sun 5 Feb, mac, Birmingham

Dance

SCATTERED Motionhouse Dance Theatre fuse physical dance theatre, mesmerising aerial imagery and film graphics to explore our relationship with water in all its forms, Tues 31 - Fri 3 Feb, The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

THE NUTCRACKER The Russian State Ballet Of Siberia presents one of the most famous fantasy ballets of all time... Sun 5 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

Talks

DR PHIL'S HEATH REVOLUTION Laugh, sort your life out, stay sane, plan your death and save the NHS - all in only 99 minutes, Wed 1 Feb, The Roses, Tewkesbury

THE BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC An illustrated presentation by Dr Mark Baldwin, Fri 3 Feb, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

Film

INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

T2 TRAINSPOTTING (tbc) Drama/Comedy. Starring Ewan McGregor, Kelly Macdonald. Mockingbird Cinema, Birmingham, until Thurs 2 Feb

MY SCIENTOLOGY MOVIE (15) Documentary. Starring Louis Theroux. Artrix, Bromsgrove, Fri 3 Feb

PASSENGERS (12a) Adventure/Drama. Starring Jennifer Lawrence, Chris Pratt. Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Fri 3 - Sun 5 Feb

MANCHESTER BY THE SEA (15) Drama. Starring Casey Affleck, Kyle Chandler. Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Fri 3 - Mon 6 Feb

LION (PG) Drama. Starring Rooney Mara, Nicole Kidman & Dev Patel. mac, Birmingham, Fri 3 - Thurs 9 Feb

JACKIE (15) Biography/Drama. Starring Natalie Portman, Peter Sarsgaard. mac, Birmingham, Fri 3 - Thurs 9 Feb; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Fri 3 - Thurs 9 Feb

THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE (U) Animation/Action. With the voices of Jason Sudeikis, Josh Gad. mac, Birmingham, Sat 4 Feb

GHOSTS (15) Adventure/Drama. Starring Zhan Yu, Tao Li, Ai Qin Lin. Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham, Sun 5 Feb

42ND STREET (U) Comedy/Musical. Starring Ruby Keeler, Ginger Rogers. The Electric Cinema, Sun 5 Feb



Motionhouse: *Scattered* - The Old Rep, Birmingham

NEW FILMS ON GENERAL RELEASE:

Released from Fri 3 Feb, showing at selected cinemas

GOLD (tbc)

LOVING (12a)

RESIDENT EVIL: THE FINAL CHAPTER (15)

RINGS (15)

TONI ERDMANN (15)

Events

HARRY POTTER BOOK NIGHT Pop along dressed as your favourite character and take part in numerous themed activities, Thurs 2 Feb, The Hive, Worcester

CHINESE NEW YEAR CELEBRATION Experience traditional lion dances, plus oriental food children's workshops and stalls, Sat 4 Feb, Lower Precinct Shopping Centre, Coventry

BHT

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SPRING 2017 HIGHLIGHTS

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1 FEB, 7.30PM
POLICE COPS
THE PRETEND MEN's critically acclaimed, multi-award-winning comedy blockbuster delivers an action packed hour of adrenaline fuelled physical comedy, cinematic style and uncompromising facial hair.
Age 14+

16 -17 FEB, 7.30PM
MOTIONHOUSE - SCATTERED
This astonishing production explores our relationship with water, a fundamental force in our lives. Seven dancers delve into the majesty and savagery of water, plunging into an ocean, tumbling down a waterfall and sliding on an avalanche to a frozen landscape of arctic beauty.

25 FEB, 12PM & 3PM
LAND OF THE DRAGON - 'GWLAD Y DDRAIG'
Encounter magical creatures, mythical stories and spellbinding tales from Wales in this exciting piece of puppet theatre inspired by folklore, legends and ancient stories from the Welsh book of fairy tales, *The Mabinogion*.
Age 4+

17 MARCH, 6 & 8PM
THRIVE
A visually stunning new production staged within a large set that surrounds the audience. Created especially for teenage audiences, Thrive takes on the challenging subject of trauma and beautifully portrays sensitive themes.
Age 14+

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FEBRUARY HALF TERM

AT COVENTRY MUSEUMS

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Herbert
Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry

3 February - 4 June 2017

FACE TO FACE PORTRAITS THROUGH TIME

See Henry VIII, Marilyn Monroe, David Bowie, Diana, Princess of Wales, The Beatles and more.

Featuring works by Andy Warhol, Sarah Lucas, and Thomas Gainsborough, among other loans from the National Portrait Gallery, the Arts Council Collection, The Courtauld Gallery and The Photo Archive Miners.

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Supported through public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



Gigs

MACKA B AND THE ROOTS RAGGA BAND Mon 6 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

CHELSEA GRIN Tues 7 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

MEGSON Tues 7 Feb, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

HOWIE PAYNE Tues 7 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

GRINGO STAR Tues 7 Feb, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

NORTH SEA GAS Tues 7 Feb, Kitchen Garden Cafe, Birmingham

GOSPEL CENTRAL Wed 8 Feb, The Jam House, Birmingham

UNION J Wed 8 Feb, O2 Academy, Birmingham

O DUO Featuring Owen Gunnell & Oliver Cox Wed 8 Feb, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

PHIL BEER Wed 8 Feb, The Red Lion Folk Club, Birmingham

GEORGE MONBIOT AND EWAN MCLENNAN Wed 8 Feb, mac, Birmingham

TOM GRENNAN + CUCKOOLANDER Wed 8 Feb, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

THE BREW & PISTON Wed 8 Feb, The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton

BOXED IN Wed 8 Feb, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

ROCK ICONS Wed 8 Feb, Palace Theatre, Redditch

PILL Wed 8 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

RICHARD DIGANCE THE GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY TOUR Thurs 9 Feb, Palace Theatre, Redditch

KENNY THOMAS Thurs 9 Feb, The Jam House, Birmingham

NATTY Thurs 9 Feb, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

CABBAGE Thurs 9 Feb, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

BREABACH Thurs 9 Feb, The Fleece Inn, Evesham

AMY WADGE & LUKE JACKSON Thurs 9 Feb, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

ANTHRAX Thurs 9 Feb, O2 Institute, B'ham

HIGH VALLEY Thurs 9 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

TRANSATLANTIC SESSIONS Thurs 9 Feb, Symphony Hall, B'ham

THE GRUFFS Thurs 9 Feb, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

UP4 THE DOWNSTROKE Fri 10 - Sat 11 Feb, The Jam House, B'ham

CLAUDE BOURBON, MEDIEVAL & SPANISH BLUES Fri 10 Feb, Palace Theatre, Redditch

THE GODFATHERS Fri 10 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

THE BOSS & BRYAN ADAMS EXPERIENCE Fri 10 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

UK GUNS N' ROSES Fri 10 Feb, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

THE WORLD FAMOUS ELVIS SHOW 2017 Chris Connor stars in Europe's largest Elvis production to date, Fri 10 - Sat 11 Feb, Albany Theatre, Coventry

FULLSHORE, THE DALLIANCE, DEVILS, ABSENT IDENTITY & THE BLACKWATER CONFEDERACY Fri 10 Feb, The Flapper, Birmingham

ANDY FAIRWEATHER LOW AND THE LOW RIDERS Fri 10 Feb, The Core Theatre, Solihull

BREAK STUFF Fri 10 Feb, The Asylum, Birmingham

VOODOO SIOUX Fri 10 Feb, Route 44, B'ham

SOTO & VANADINE Fri 10 Feb, The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton

THE MUSIC OF GEORGE HARRISON Fri 10 Feb, Palace Theatre, Redditch

FOOR Fri 10 Feb, The Rainbow Venues, Birmingham

LEKAN BABALOLA'S SACRED FUNK Fri 10 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE QUIET MEN Fri 10 Feb, Blue Piano Restaurant And Bar, Birmingham

TOYAH WILLCOX Sat 11 Feb, Evesham Arts Centre, Worcestershire

DREADZONE Sat 11 Feb, The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton

THE BLUES BAND

Featuring Paul Jones, Tom McGuinness, Dave Kelly, Rob Townsend & Gary Fletcher, Sat 11 Feb, Artrix, Bromsgrove

DIRE STREETS Sat 11 Feb, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

AMBER RUN Sat 11 Feb, O2 Institute, B'ham

FOREVER JACKSON Sat 11 Feb, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

BLUE NATION Sat 11 Feb, Route 44, B'ham

GEORGE BENSON - STEVIE WONDER PARTY WITH NAT AUGUSTIN Sat 11 Feb, Nailcote Hall, Berkswell, Warwickshire

NEARLY DAN Sat 11 Feb, The Assembly, Leamington Spa

OACEIS & THE COOPERS Sat 11 Feb, The Roadhouse, B'ham

SUNDARA KARMA Sat 11 Feb, The Rainbow Venues, Birmingham

THE MODFATHERS Sat 11 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

MORETALICA Sat 11 Feb, The Marr's Bar, Worcester

THESE SMITHS Sat 11 Feb, Kasbah, Coventry

STONE BROKEN Sat 11 Feb, Route 44, B'ham

TALON...THE ACOUSTIC COLLECTION Sat 11 Feb, The Core Theatre, Solihull

COUNTRY LEGENDS Sat 11 Feb, The Swan Theatre, Worcester

NOUGHTY NINETIES Sat 11 Feb, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

THE RATPACK VEGAS SPECTACULAR SHOW Sat 11 Feb, The Core Theatre, Solihull

FISHERMAN'S FRIENDS Sat 11 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

DAN SHAKE Sat 11 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

JULIAN COPE Sun 12 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

THE REMI HARRIS PROJECT Sun 12 Feb, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

KATE NASH Sun 12 Feb, O2 Institute, B'ham

FARA Sun 12 Feb, The Fleece Inn, Evesham

ALTERED BRIDGE Sun 12 Feb, The Roadhouse, Birmingham

Classical Music

NOBUKO IMAI (VIOLA) IN CONCERT Also featuring Robert Markham (piano). Programme comprises Brahms' E minor Sonata for Cello & Piano (arr viola) & Franck's Sonata for Viola & Piano, Tues 7 Feb, Birmingham Conservatoire

HOLST'S THE PLANETS Featuring the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, the CBSO Youth Chorus & Nicholas Collon (conductor), Wed 8 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham



EUROPEAN UNION CHAMBER ORCHESTRA Programme includes works by Haydn, Beethoven & Mozart, Thurs 9 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

CBSO CENTRE STAGE: BACH & HANDEL Featuring Veronika Kirova (Fute), Rainer Gibbons (Oboe), Richard Jenkinson (Cello) & Martin Perkins (Continuo). Programme includes works by Bach & Handel, Thurs 9 Feb, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

LA BOHEME OperaUpClose present Robert Norton-Hale's new English version of Puccini's tale of two couples which powerfully evidences the fact that love may not necessarily always conquer all, Thurs 9 Feb - Sat 11 Feb, mac, Birmingham

ANGELA HEWITT PLAYS BACH Fri 10 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall



NEW MUSIC ENSEMBLE Featuring Daniel Rosina (director). Programme includes works by David Ōnaç, Fumiko Miyachi & Sebastiano Dessanay, Fri 10 Feb, The Barber Institute, Birmingham

FRIDAY NIGHT CLASSICS The CBSO perform Cole Porter: Let's Do It, featuring Roderick Dunk (Conductor) & Anna O'Byrne, Caroline Sheen, David Thaxton & Scott Davies (Vocalists), Fri 10 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CHOIRS AT THE PALACE Featuring an evening of music showcasing the tal-

ents of four local choirs: - Redditch Rock Choir, the Bel Canto Singers, Arrow Vale Singers and the Redditch Community Gospel Choir, Sat 11 Feb, Palace Theatre, Redditch

BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONIC BRASS Featuring Stephen Roberts (director), Sun 12 Feb, The Barber Institute, Birmingham

TIM & TOM'S SYMPHONIC ADVENTURE Family Concert presented by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and featuring Timothy Redmond (conductor) & Tom Redmond (presenter). Programme includes works by Mozart, Wagner, Rossini, Williams & Hindson, Sun 12 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Comedy Gigs

RICHARD HERRING Mon 6 Feb, Station Pub, Sutton Coldfield

FAT PENGUIN COMEDY Wed 8 Feb, The Patrick Kavanagh, Birmingham

DEBRA-JANE APPELBY, MAUREEN YOUNGER PLUS COMIC TBC Wed 8 Feb, Kitchen Garden Cafe, Birmingham

JEN BRISTER, SCOTT GIBSON & COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON Thurs 9 Feb, The Glee Club, B'ham

JUSTIN MOORHOUSE Fri 10 Feb, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

SUSAN MURRAY & GARETH BERLINER Fri 10 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

JAMES REDMOND, SEAN PERCIVAL & COMIC TBC Fri 10 Feb, Jongleurs, Birmingham

TOM WRIGGLESWORTH, ANDY ROBINSON, SCOTT GIBSON & JEN BRISTER Fri 10 - Sat 11 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

DANA ALEXANDER, MANDY KNIGHT, JONNY AWSUM & ADAM STAUNTON Fri 10 - Sat 11 Feb, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

MATT FORDE Sat 11 Feb, The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

JAMES REDMOND, SEAN PERCIVAL & DAVID WHITNEY Sat 11 Feb, Jongleurs, Birmingham

GRÁINNE MAGUIRE Sat 11 Feb, Artrix, Bromsgrove

KEITH CARTER, PETE OTWAY, JONNY AWSUM, ARCHIE MADDOCKS Sat 11 Feb, Coventry Showcase

JOHN SHUTTLEWORTH Sun 12 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

Theatre

BIANCA DEL RIO: NOT TODAY SATAN Season Six winner of RuPaul's Drag Race, the self-professed 'clown in a gown' brings her new stand-up show to the UK, Mon 6 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

IN THE MOTHERHOOD New play by Hayley Pepper which journeys into the world of competitive parenting, Mon 6 Feb, mac, Birmingham

CATHY Cardboard Citizens present a powerful and emotive Forum Theatre show, exploring the way in which Ken Loach's 1966 film, *Cathy Come Home*, still resonates today, Mon 6 - Tues 7 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

MACBETH Six actors give Shakespeare's bloodiest play a contemporary feel in an action-packed 90-minute performance, Mon 6 - Tues 7 Feb, The Bear Pitt Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

WONDERLAND Wendi Peters, Dave Willetts & Kerry Ellis star in Frank Wildhorn's musical adaptation of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures In Wonderland* and *Through The Looking Glass*, Mon 6 - Sat 11 Feb, New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

DARE DEVIL RIDES TO JARAMA Neil Gore's celebration of the contribution and sacrifice of the volunteer International Brigades, Tues 7 Feb, The Swan Theatre, Worcester

ROBIN HOOD AND BABES IN THE WOOD Amateur production presented by CLOC Musical Theatre Company, Tues 7 - Sat 11 Feb, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

SOME GUYS HAVE ALL THE LUCK: THE ROD STEWART STORY New theatrical production celebrating the career of one of rock's greatest icons, Rod Stewart - from street busker through to international superstar! Wed 8 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

CHEKHOV'S SHORTS European Arts present an entertaining collection of one-act farces by Anton Chekhov, including *The Evils Of Tobacco*, *The Dimwit*, *The Bear*, *Swan Song* and *The Proposal*, Wed 8 Feb, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

MY ARM Tim Crouch's study of bloody-mindedness, modern art and how the things we do when we're 10 stick with us for life, Wed 8 - Thurs 9 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

THE GOON SHOW Birmingham Comedy Festival and Fred Theatre present a rare chance to see two classic Spike Milligan radio scripts on stage, complete with live sound effects and jazz band, Wed 8 - Fri 10 Feb, The Bear Pit Theatre - The United Reformed Church, Stratford-upon-Avon

CATFISH A fusion of live performance, music and interactive digital technology, exploring issues of child sexual exploitation, Wed 8 - Fri 10 Feb, Artrix, Bromsgrove

FOLLIES Music Theatre Warwick present Stephen Sondheim's musical, which follows the tribulations of four performers who return to a soon-to-be-demolished theatre in which they'd once performed, Wed 8 - Sat 11 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

FICTION Fuel Theatre present an immersive theatrical experience which takes place in total darkness and explores the areas where sleep

and wakefulness meet, Thurs 9 Feb, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

CHEKHOV'S SHORTS European Arts present an entertaining collection of one-act farces by Anton Chekhov, including *The Evils Of Tobacco*, *The Dimwit*, *The Bear*, *Swan Song* and *The Proposal*, Thurs 9 Feb, The Swan Theatre, Worcester

THAT'LL BE THE DAY Featuring a new line-up of classic gold hits from the '50s through to the '70s, Thurs 9 Feb, Bedworth Civic Hall

URSULA Tom Mansfield directs Howard Barker's play, which 'drives a dagger into the meeting points of the sacred and the profane, the body and the soul', Thurs 9 - Sat 11 Feb, George Cadbury Hall, University of Birmingham

LA BOHEME OperaUpClose present Robert Norton-Hale's new English version of Puccini's magnificent tale of two couples, powerfully evidencing the fact that love may not necessarily always conquer all, Thurs 9 Sat - 11 Feb, mac, Birmingham

STORIES TO TELL IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT Storytelling with a difference, presented as a live, late-night radio show for those who aren't asleep. Instead of records, the DJ spins stories that exist between dusk and morning, Thurs 9 - Sat 18 Feb, The REP, Birmingham

IN THE MOTHERHOOD New play by Hayley Pepper which journeys into the world of competitive parenting, Fri 10 Feb, Artrix, Bromsgrove

HER Compelling story of a 15-year-old London girl who inexplicably finds that conflict has made her an alien in her own country, Fri 10 Feb, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

THE BEST THING A Swinging '60s story of unconditional love, presented by leading full-mask theatre company Vamos, Fri 10 - Sat 11 Feb, Malvern Theatre

BEN & HOLLY'S LITTLE KINGDOM Musical adventure for young audiences, featuring games, songs and laughter, Fri 10 - Sat 11 Feb, Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton

THE MISFIT ANALYSIS Access All Areas take audiences on a journey into a world of wheelchairs and blow-up dolls, in an unconventional exploration of the autistic mind, Fri 10 - Sat 11 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

THE GUIDE TO BEING SINGLE Musical comedy about unlucky-in-love twentysomethings who conclude that the solution to their relationship problems is to stay single... Due to some of the content, this show is recommended for those over the age of 14, Fri 10 - Sun 12 Feb, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

THE GOON SHOW Birmingham Comedy Festival and Fred Theatre present a rare chance to see two classic Spike Milligan radio scripts on stage, complete with live sound effects and jazz band, Sat 11 Feb, mac, Birmingham

CALIFORNIA SCHEMING One woman's poetic narrative about a lifelong fasci-



Cathy - Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

nation with America, Sat 11 Feb, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

DOROTHY The multi-talented Sunny Ormonde (Lilian Bellamy in *The Archers*) gives a virtuoso performance as the unstoppable Dorothy in this 'hilarious play' by Jane James, Sat 11 Feb, The Bear Pitt Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

LA STRADA Sally Cookson's stage adaptation of Federico Fellini's Oscar-winning masterpiece of modern cinema, Sat 11 - Sat 18 Feb, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

SID'S DEEP SEA DISCOVERY Colourful children's show featuring CBeebies' Sid Sloane as intrepid explorer Deep Sea Sid! Sun 12 Feb, Artrix, Bromsgrove

ANNIE JNR Amateur production presented by Pauline Quirke Academy Warwick, Sun 12 Feb, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

CHINESE NEW YEAR EXTRAVAGANZA Showcase of Chinese performing arts, featuring 'the cheerful spirit of the auspicious Lion Dance and awe-inspiring contortion', Sun 12 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

THE SIMON AND GARFUNKEL STORY Direct from the West End, this 50th Anniversary special features large projection photographs, original film footage and a full, live band performing Simon & Garfunkel's greatest hits, Sun 12 Feb, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

Dance

SWAN LAKE The Russian State Ballet Of Siberia presents its version of the greatest romantic ballet of all time, brought to life by Tchaikovsky's haunting and unforgettable score, Mon 6 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

COPPELIA The Russian State Ballet Of Siberia presents the story of the doll-

maker Coppélius, whose greatest desire is to make a doll with a soul, Tues 7 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

THE RED SHOES Tues 7 - Sat 11 Feb, Birmingham Hippodrome

THE NUTCRACKER The Russian State Ballet Of Siberia presents one of the most famous fantasy ballets of all time... Sun 12 Feb, Malvern Theatre, Worcestershire



Film

INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

SILENCE (15) Drama/History. Starring Andrew Garfield, Liam Neeson. Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Mon 6 - Thurs 9 Feb; mac, Birmingham, Sun 12 - Thurs 16 Feb

HUNT FOR THE WILDERPEOPLE (12a) Adventure/Comedy. Starring Sam Neill, Julian Dennison. Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs, Tues 7 Feb

RAILWAYS (15) Documentary. Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Tues 7 - Thurs 9 Feb

MY SCIENTOLOGY MOVIE (15) Documentary. Starring Louis Theroux. Artrix, Bromsgrove, Thurs 9 - Fri 10 Feb

A SPARKLE OF LIFE (tbc) Drama. Starring Kazuko Yoshiyuki, Akira Takarada. Foreign language, subtitles. mac, Birmingham, Fri 10 Feb

FIFTY SHADES DARKER (18)

Monday 6 - Sunday 12 February

Drama/Romance. Starring Dakota Johnson, Jamie Dornan. The Electric Cinema, Birmingham, from Fri 10 Feb

THE BAND WAGON (U)
Comedy/Musical. Starring Fred Astaire, Cyd Charisse. Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Fri 10 Feb

LIVE BY NIGHT (15) Drama/Crime. Starring Ben Affleck, Elle Fanning. Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Fri 10 - Tues 14 Feb

DENIAL (12a) Biography/Drama. Starring Rachel Weisz, Tom Wilkinson. Warwick Arts Centre, Fri 10 - Wed 15 Feb; mac, Birmingham, Fri 10 - Thurs 16 Feb

LION (PG) Drama. Starring Rooney Mara, Nicole Kidman & Dev Patel. Warwick Arts Centre, Fri 10 - Thurs 16 Feb

LADY & THE TRAMP (U)
Animation/Adventure. With the voices of Barbara Luddy, Larry Roberts. mac, Birmingham, Sat 11 Feb

THE GREAT GATSBY (12)
Drama/Romance. Starring Leonardo DiCaprio, Carey Mulligan. Abbey Theatre, Nuneaton, Sat 11 Feb

MOULIN ROUGE (12a) Drama/Musical. Starring Nicole Kidman, Ewan McGregor. Abbey Theatre, Nuneaton, Sat 11 Feb

SLEEPLESS IN SEATTLE (PG)
Drama/Romance. Starring Tom Hanks, Meg Ryan. mac, Birmingham, Sat 11 Feb

THE WIZARD OF OZ (U)
Adventure/Fantasy. Starring Judy Garland, Frank Morgan. The Electric Cinema, Birmingham, Sat 11 - Sun 12 Feb

FRUITVALE STATION (15)
Biography/Drama. Starring Michael B. Jordan, Melonie Diaz. Albany Theatre, Coventry, Sun 12 Feb

SOME LIKE IT HOT (12)
Comedy/Romance. Starring Marilyn Monroe, Tony Curtis. mac, Birmingham, Sun 12 Feb

I, DANIEL BLAKE (15) Drama. Starring Dave Johns, Hayley Squires. Abbey Theatre, Nuneaton, Sun 12 Feb

NEW FILMS ON GENERAL RELEASE:
Released from Fri 10 Feb, showing at selected cinemas

20TH CENTURY WOMEN (15)

BILLY LYNN'S LONG HALFTIME WALK (15)

FENCES (12a)

FIFTY SHADES DARKER (tbc)

THE SPACE BETWEEN US (tbc)

THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE (tbc)

Events

PROFESSOR EDWARD GREGSON LECTURE AND WORKSHOP World-renowned British composer Professor Edward Gregson talks about his iconic works for brass band and conducts selected extracts with the Conservatoire Brass Band, Tues 7 Feb, St Paul's Church, Birmingham

WIZARDS ASSEMBLE - THE BIRMINGHAM PUB CRAWL Dress up in your best Harry Potter attire for a pub crawl around some of the city's best venues, Fri 10 Feb, various venues across Birmingham City Centre

MCM COMIC CON MIDLANDS Featuring eSports competitions, a 'comic village' packed with artists and writers, colourful costumes in the Cosplay Masquerade and special guests from the worlds of TV and film, Sat 11 Feb, Telford International Centre, Shropshire

DOWN UNDER LIVE Do you want to emigrate to Australia or New Zealand? Find out how at the UK's number one emigration event, Sat 11 - Sun 12 Feb, National Motorcycle Museum, Solihull

WIND IN THE WILLOWS FAMILY TRAIL

Based on the adventures of Mole, Badger, Ratty and Mr Toad, Sat 11 - Sun 19 Feb, Brockhampton Estate, Worcestershire

CHARLOTTE'S WEB HALF-TERM TRAIL Step back in time to the 1950s with this themed outdoor trail, Sat 11 - Sun 19 Feb, Croft Castle, nr Leominster

PIRATE AND PRINCESS WEEK Featuring a treasure hunt, CBeebies character meet-and-greets and a host of pirate and princess activities, Sat 11 - Sun 26 Feb, Alton Towers, Staffordshire

NATURE EXPLORER TRAIL Discover things which wriggle, crawl, dig and fly around Upton. Solve the clues, practise your wildlife detective skills, get out in the fresh air and earn a prize, Sat 11 - Sun 26 Feb, Upton House & Gardens, Warwickshire

TOY COLLECTORS FAIR Explore 550 stands filled with all kinds of for-sale collectables from the UK's leading dealers, Sun 12 Feb, NEC, B'ham

WILLOW WEAVING WORKSHOP Learn the ancient skill of willow weaving, then take home your creation at the end of the day, Sun 12 Feb, Charlecote Park, Warwick

LET THE BRAMALL ENTERTAIN YOU!



Comedy

Hal Cruttenden

Thursday 16 March, 8.00pm

We are excited to welcome legend of laughter, Hal Cruttenden, for a one-off show. Hal has performed on the John Bishop Show, The Royal Variety Performance, Would I Lie to You?, Live at the Palladium and Have I Got News For You.

We are spoiling you on the night, as Hal will also be supported by comedian/magician Alan Hudson and funny man Paddy Lennox.



Classical

Sacconi Quartet

Thursday 4 May, 7.30pm

The award-winning Sacconi Quartet is recognised around the world for their fresh and imaginative approach.

The programme will include: Suk - Meditation on the Old Czech Hymn 'St Wenceslas' (Op. 35a), Mozart String Quartet in G major (No. 14 - K. 387), Schubert String Quartet 'Death and the Maiden' (No. 14).

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Top Ten Things To See At The Roses This Spring



European Arts Co: Chekhov's Shorts
Wednesday 8 February 7.30pm



Forever Jackson
Saturday 11 February 7.30pm



Clare Teal Sings The Doris Day Songbook
Thursday 23 February 7.30pm



Vienna Festival Ballet: Cinderella
Tuesday 7 March 7pm



Cilla & The Shades Of The 60s
Thursday 16 March 7.30pm



Is That Chris Ramsey?
Friday 24 March 8pm

The Simon & Garfunkel Story

Sunday 12 February 7.30pm

Circus Of Horrors

Sunday 19 February 7.30pm

Arrival: The Hits Of ABBA

Friday 24 February 7.30pm

Lee Nelson: Serious Joker

Friday 17 March 7.30pm

Plus

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BROMSGROVE'S THEATRE, CINEMA, LIVE MUSIC AND COMEDY VENUE

February 2017

Sunday 12th February

SID'S DEEP SEA DISCOVERY SHOW
WITH SID FROM CBEBBIES



Friday 17th February

ANDY FAIRWEATHER LOW
WITH THE LOW RIDERS



Tuesday 21st February

LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER
BLUE ORANGE THEATRE PRODUCTION



Thursday 23rd February

JEN BRISTER
IS THE OTHER ONE



Friday 24th February

HARDEEP SINGH KOHLI
PRESENTS HIS MIX TAPE



Saturday 25th February

THE STYLE COUNCILLORS
THE ULTIMATE TRIBUTE TO THE STYLE COUNCIL



COMING SOON:

Phillip Henry & Hannah Martin, Mark Bebbington, George Egg, John Otway, T.Rextasy, In The Motherhood, The Blues Band, Grainne Maguire, Dirty Dancing Drive-in, A Pocketful Of Grimms, Barnstormers Comedy, Fairport Convention, CBeebies' Spottots, Stephen Bailey, Andrew Lawrence, Rachel Parris, Croft & Pearce, Stand Up for Women....

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WHAT'S ON FEBRUARY



The World Famous Elvis Show
Friday 10 & Saturday 11 February, 7.30pm
Chris Connor returns with his Incredible World Famous Elvis



In the Motherhood
Saturday 18 February, 3pm* & 7.30pm
Brand new 'Best Drama' nominated play by Hayley Peplar.
Baby matinee performance



Marty MacDonald's Toy Machine
Tuesday 21 February, 2pm
Half term fun featuring the voice of CBeebies' Justin Fletcher



Cirque Enchantment
Friday 24 February, 7.30pm
Featuring stunning choreography and breathtaking vocals!

www.albanytheatre.co.uk
Box Office: 024 7699 8964
53 Butts, Coventry CV1 3BH

@albanytheatre
The Albany Theatre
Albany Theatre

BARBARA NICE & JOSH PUGH Sat 18 Feb, Palace Theatre, Redditch

PAUL FOOT Sat 18 Feb, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

MICKEY SHARMA, DANNY WARD, JOHN NEWTON & JON PEARSON Sat 18 Feb, Coventry Showcase

BARNSTORMERS COMEDY NIGHT Sat 18 Feb, Artrix, Bromsgrove

JAMES COOK, JOHNNY CANDON & THANYIA MOORE Sat 18 Feb, Jongleurs, Birmingham

RICHARD GADD Sun 19 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

THE CHUCKLE SINGHS, DON BISWAS, HYDE PANASER, SINDHU VEE & INDER MANOCHA Sun 19 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

NORTHANGER ABBEY Tim Luscombe's staging of Jane Austen's Gothic parody, Mon 13 - Wed 15 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

FRANKENSTEIN Blackeyed Theatre present a brand new version of Mary Shelley's Gothic horror, Mon 13 - Wed 15 Feb, Malvern Theatre, Worcestershire



THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE Joanne Clifton & Michelle Collins star in a new staging of the Tony Award-winning musical, which in turn is based on the 1967 film of the same name, Mon 13 - Sat 18 Feb, New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

MACBETH Fred Theatre brings Shakespeare's tragedy of greed, lust and betrayal to life in a new and intimate production, Tues 14 - Wed 15 Feb, mac, Birmingham

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S LONG LOST FIRST PLAY (ABRIDGED) The Reduced Shakespeare Company present a celebration of our cultural heritage - as seen through the eyes of three trainer-wearing Americans, Tues 14 - Wed 15 Feb, The REP, Birmingham

ANITA AND ME Dinnerladies actress Shobna Gulati stars in Tanika Gupta's staging of Meera Syal's much-loved novel, Tues 14 - Sat 18 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

JUSTIN'S PARTY Brand new show promising 'fantastic songs, dancing and hilarious games', Wed 15 Feb, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

THE SORCERER'S APPRENTICE Blunderbus fuse music, theatre and puppetry in a heartwarming new show for children aged three to

seven (and their families), Thurs 16 Feb, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

DANCING ABOUT ARCHITECTURE New play by Kay Wootton which centres around a woman and her closest friends as they struggle to figure out the difference between what they need, what they want, and what they get, Thurs 16 Feb, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

CARMEN A new production of Bizet's tale of obsession, control and freedom, set in a torrid South American landscape of dust and concrete, Thurs 16 Feb, Malvern Theatre, Worcestershire

CIRCUS OF HORRORS - THE NEVER-ENDING NIGHTMARE An amalgamation of bizarre, brave and beautiful acts, woven into an Alice In Horrorland-type story, driven by a mainly original soundscape and performed with a forked tongue firmly in each cheek! Thurs 16 Feb, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

HEAVEN EYES Theatre Sans Frontiers present a staging of David Almond's gritty story about young people trying to find their way in the world, Thurs 16 Feb, The Old Rep, B'ham

A BRIEF HISTORY OF MUSIC The latest show from acclaimed musicians Blast From The Past takes in 600 years of musical history in 90 minutes. A whistle-stop tour of Western musical history, Fri 17 Feb, The Core Theatre, Solihull

DRACULA'S GHOST Don't Go Into The Cellar Theatre Company's inventive production, described as 'a bizarre synthesis of history and fiction', Fri 17 Feb, Palace Theatre, Redditch

JANE ENGLISH: 20B Part autobiography, part oral history, 20B is a moving exploration of what home and community really mean, and how it feels when these things are lost, Fri 17 Feb, mac, Birmingham

WILDE WITHOUT THE BOY Gerrard Logan performs a dramatisation of De Profundis, Oscar Wilde's letter to his lover, Lord Alfred Douglas, written from his prison cell in Reading Gaol, Fri 17 Feb, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

RUBY WAX: FRAZZLED! A GUIDE TO MINDFULNESS Join Ruby as she presents a follow-up to her sell-out touring show and bestselling book, Sane New World, which helps us understand why we sabotage our sanity with our own thinking, Fri 17 Feb, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

FRANKENSTEIN Blackeyed Theatre present a brand new version of Mary Shelley's Gothic horror, Fri 17 - Sat 18 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

ROMEO & JULIET Youth Theatre production of the greatest love story ever told, Fri 17 - Sat 25 Feb, Hall Green Little Theatre, Birmingham

WOLF MEAT Wildheart & Lyric bring their absurdist humour and compelling storytelling to an irreverent world of dirty deals and mistaken identity, Sat 18 Feb, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

DUMMY A two-person comedy improv show featuring Colleen Doyle and



Scattered - Bridge House Theatre, Warwick

Jason Shotts, Sat 18 Feb, Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

IN THE MOTHERHOOD New play by Hayley Pepper which journeys into the world of competitive parenting, Sat 18 Feb, Albany Theatre, Coventry

A POCKETFUL OF GRIMMS - STORY POCKET THEATRE Favourite tales are brought to life via a high-energy mix of clowning, physical theatre, puppetry and music, Sat 18 Feb, Artrix, Bromsgrove

NARVIK A new play with songs which tells the story of a Liverpoolian man and a Norwegian woman who are 'pulled together and torn apart by war, as the events of one summer cause ripples across an ocean of time', Sat 18 Feb, mac, Birmingham



SO YOU THINK YOU KNOW ABOUT... DINOSAURS? Ben Garrod (the TV scientist in Attenborough And The Giant Dinosaur) uses TV film footage and photos of his own palaeontological dinosaur digs to explain 'everything you ever wanted to know about dinosaurs - and more'... Sat 18 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

THE QUITE REMARKABLE ADVENTURES OF THE OWL AND THE PUSSYCAT A chaotic new musical which follows the Owl and the Pussycat on their mission to save the world and defeat the dastardly Firelord, his imaginary dragon, Pyron, and his henchmen, Flicker and Brimstone, Sat 18 Feb - Sat 4 Mar, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

CIRCUS OF HORRORS - THE NEVER-ENDING NIGHTMARE An amalgamation of bizarre, brave and beautiful acts,

woven into an Alice In Horrorland-type story, driven by a mainly original soundscape and performed with a forked tongue firmly in each cheek! Sun 19 Feb, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

STAND BY ME A celebration of Ben E King and The Drifters, Sun 19 Feb, New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

Dance

COPELIA The Russian State Ballet of Siberia presents the story of the doll-maker Coppélius, whose greatest desire is to make a doll with a soul, Mon 13 Feb, Malvern Theatres, Worcestershire

LA FILLE MAL GARDEE Performed by the Russian State Ballet Of Siberia, Tues 14 Feb, Malvern Theatre, Worcestershire

CINDERELLA Birmingham Royal Ballet present David Bintley's enchanting fairytale, with breathtaking designs by John McFarlane, designer of the company's famous Nutcracker production. Wed 15 - Sat 25 Feb, Birmingham Hippodrome

SCATTERED Motionhouse Dance Theatre fuse physical dance theatre, mesmerising aerial imagery and film graphics to explore our relationship with water in all its forms. Thurs 16 - Fri 17 Feb, Bridge House Theatre, Warwick

MATTHEW BOURNE'S EARLY ADVENTURES Featuring a programme of hit pieces that not only launched the career of 'Britain's favourite choreographer', but which also saw the birth of the style, wit and sheer entertainment that his company, New Adventures, subsequently brought to shows including Swan Lake, The Car Man, Edward Scissorhands and Sleeping Beauty, Thurs 16 - Sat 18 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Talks

LICENCED TO RHYME Co-hosted by Maggie Doyle and featuring Worcestershire Poet Laureate Emeritus, and past Birmingham Poet Laureate Giovanni 'Spoz' Esposito, Mon 13 Feb, Artrix, Bromsgrove

PROFESSOR ROBERT WINSTON - MODIFYING HUMANS: WHERE DOES GENETICS STOP? Wed 15 Feb, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

POETRY OPEN MIC NIGHT Featuring Ben Parker, Swan Theatre Poet in Residence, Fri 17 Feb, Swan Theatre, Worcester

JONATHAN COE: BROMSGROVE WORDS Join the award-winning novelist as he talks about his works and his pre-occupation with political issues, Sun 19 Feb, Artrix, Bromsgrove

Film

INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

BALLERINA (U) Animation/Adventure. Featuring Elle Fanning/Dane DeHaan. Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Mon 13 Feb

MANCHESTER BY THE SEA (15) Drama. Starring Casey Affleck, Kyle Chandler. Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Mon 13 - Thurs 16 Feb

SOUTH PACIFIC (U) Musical/Romance. Starring Mitzi Gaynor, Rossano Brazzi. mac, Birmingham, Tues 14 Feb

HUGO (15) Adventure/Drama. Starring Asa Butterfield, Chloë Grace Moretz. Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Tues 14 Feb

DIRTY DANCING DRIVE-IN (12) Drama/Musical. Starring Patrick Swayze, Jennifer Grey. Artrix, Bromsgrove, Tues 14 Feb

WHEN HARRY MET SALLY (15) Comedy/Romance. Starring Billy Crystal, Meg Ryan. mac, Birmingham, Tues 14 Feb

CAROL DRIVE-IN (15) Drama/Romance. Starring Cate Blanchett, Rooney Mara. Artrix, Bromsgrove, Wed 15 Feb

A MONSTER CALLS (12a) Drama/Fantasy. Starring Sigourney Weaver, Felicity Jones. Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Wed 15 Feb

THE LIGHT BETWEEN OCEANS (12) Drama/Romance. Starring Michael Fassbender, Alicia Vikander. Artrix, Bromsgrove, Thurs 16 Feb

FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM (12a) Adventure/Fantasy. Starring Eddie Redmayne, Ezra Miller. Artrix, Bromsgrove, Fri 17 Feb

GOLD (tbc) Drama/Thriller. Starring Matthew McConaughey, Edgar Ramirez. mac, Birmingham, Fri 17 - Thurs 23 Feb

T2 TRAINSPOTTING (tbc) Drama/Comedy. Starring Ewan

McGregor, Kelly Macdonald. mac, Birmingham, Fri 17 - Thurs 23 Feb; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Fri 17 - Thurs 23 Feb

20TH CENTURY WOMEN (15) Drama/Comedy. Starring Annette Bening, Elle Fanning. Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Fri 17 - Thurs 23 Feb

THE GOONIES (12) Adventure/Comedy. Starring Sean Astin, Josh Brolin. mac, Birmingham, Sat 18 Feb

TROLLS (U) Animation/Adventure. With the voices of Anna Kendrick, Justin Timberlake. Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Sat 18 Feb

SWALLOWS AND AMAZONS (U) Family. Starring Kelly Macdonald, Andrew Scott. Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sat 18 Feb

FERRIS BUELLER'S DAY OFF (12a) Comedy. Starring Matthew Broderick, Alan Ruck. mac, Birmingham, Sun 19 Feb

BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN (15) Drama/Romance. Starring Jake Gyllenhaal, Heath Ledger. Artrix, Bromsgrove, Sun 19 Feb

CELL 211(18) Drama/Thriller. Starring Luis Tosar, Alberto Ammann. Foreign language, subtitles. Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham, Sun 19 Feb

LA GRANDE ILLUSION (U) Drama/War. Starring Jean Gabin, Dita Parlo. The Electric Cinema, Birmingham, Sun 19 Feb

NEW FILMS ON GENERAL RELEASE:

Released from Fri 17 Feb, showing at selected cinemas

THE FOUNDER (12a)

THE GREAT WALL (12a)

HIDDEN FIGURES (PG)

JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 (tbc)

MOONLIGHT (tbc)

Events

JACOB SHEEP WALK & TALK Join the ranger to find out a little more about these woolly friends, Mon 13 & Fri 17 Feb, Charlecote Park, Warwick

VERVE POETRY FESTIVAL Birmingham's first festival of poetry and spoken word, Thurs 16 - Sun 19 Feb, Birmingham City Centre

WIZARDS ASSEMBLE - THE BIRMINGHAM PUB CRAWL Dress up in your best Harry Potter attire for a pub crawl around some of the city's best venues, Fri 17 Feb, various venues across Birmingham City Centre

THE NATIONAL FRANCHISE EXHIBITION Showcasing a huge range of national franchise opportunities for anyone looking to run their own business, Fri 17 - Sat 18 Feb, NEC, B'ham

THE 50+ SHOW Show focusing on four key topics: hobbies & crafts; health; finance & money; travel, Fri 17 - Sat 18 Feb, NEC, B'ham



Anatomy Lab Live - Cuttle Bridge Inn, Birmingham

CRAFTPLAY SATURDAY FAMILY STAY-AND-PLAYS Create, explore and play along with your child using unusual materials. For children up to the age of seven, Sat 18 Feb, Bilston Craft Gallery, Wolverhampton

VICTORIAN MURDER-MYSTERY DINNER Interview the suspects and try to solve this 'most perplexing mystery' whilst enjoying delicious food in the magnificent surroundings of Aston Hall, Sat 18 Feb, Aston Hall, B'ham

STUNTFEST 2017 An afternoon of 'awesome' stunts and displays for all the family, featuring some of the top UK stunt drivers and riders, Sat 18 Feb, Santa Pod Raceway, Northants

SPARK YOUNG WRITERS GROUP A monthly group for young people who're interested in creative writing, from poems and plays to editing and dialogue, Sat 18 Feb, The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon

AN EVENING WITH FRANK BRUNO Including a four-course dinner, comedian, singer and live entertainment, Sat 18 Feb, The H Suite - Edgbaston, Birmingham

THE KINGMAKER'S MEDIEVAL BANQUET A 15th-century-style evening of eating, drinking and medieval revelry with the infamous Earl of Warwick, Sat 18 Feb, Warwick Castle

BIRMINGHAM INDOOR GRAND PRIX 2017 Featuring heroes of the Rio Olympics, Sat 18 Feb, Barclaycard Arena, Birmingham

THE CLASSIC DIRT BIKE SHOW Explore several halls packed with traders, display bikes and more, Sat 18 - Sun 19 Feb, Telford International Centre, Shropshire

ANATOMY LAB LIVE Anatomist Samuel Piri performs a dissection procedure to showcase healthy and diseased internal organs, Sat 18 - Sun 19 Feb, Cuttle Bridge Inn, Birmingham

SHAKESPEARIAN COTTAGE BIRD WATCH Become a Shakespearian twitcher for the day and discover more about the birds which feature in the playwright's works, Sat 18 - Sun 26 Feb,

Anne Hathaway's Cottage, Stratford-upon-Avon

TRAINS AND TRAMS Pop along and 'have-a-go' at operating the miniature trams and check out the fun themed quiz in The Engine House, Sat 18 - Sun 26 Feb, Severn Valley Railway, Worcestershire

MAKE AND FLY A KITE Drop-in activity, complete with flight-themed trail around the town, Sat 18 - Sun 26 Feb, Blists Hill Victorian Town, Ironbridge, Shropshire

FAMILY FUN DAYS Grab those wellies and try out a natural play trail featuring stepping stones, rope swings and a winding labyrinth, Sat 18 - Sun 26 Feb, Baddesley Clinton, Warwick

FLIGHT WORKSHOPS Build a pneumatic rocket from craft materials and find out more about flight, Sat 18 - Sun 26 Feb, Ingenuity Museum, Ironbridge, Shropshire

FAMILY FUN DAYS Build a den, play hopla, splash in the puddles and have your own family adventure, Sat 18 - Sun 26 Feb, Packwood House, Solihull

BRICK WEEK Help build a lifesize Mini out of LEGO bricks and join in with a week of automotive-themed brick-building challenges, Sat 18 - Sun 26 Feb, British Motor Museum, Coventry

SPONGE Dance company Turned On Its Head takes children on a creative journey featuring lots of family interaction, Sun 19 Feb, mac, B'ham



DUBFREEZE The first major VAG event of the VW calendar, Sun 19 Feb, Stafford Bingley Hall

ROGER SWIFT, PHIL PAGGETT, HARV HAWKINS, MOSES ALI KHAN, LOVDEV BARPAGA & MASAI GRAHAM Sat 25 Feb, mac, Birmingham

GEOFF NORCOTT, SAM AVERY, STAN STANLEY & CHRIS WASHINGTON Sat 25 Feb, Coventry Showcase

ANDREW LAWRENCE Sat 25 Feb, Artrix, Bromsgrove

THE LAUGHING SOLE COMEDY FOR KIDS Sun 26 Feb, mac, Birmingham

THE NOISE NEXT DOOR'S REALLY, REALLY GOOD AFTERNOON SHOW Sun 26 Feb, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

JACK WHITEHALL Sun 26 Feb, Barclaycard Arena, Birmingham

CHRIS RAMSEY Sun 26 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry



SEAN LOCK Mon 27 - Tues 28 Feb, Birmingham Hippodrome

Theatre

MORGAN & WEST'S UTTERLY SPIFFING SPECTACULAR MAGIC SHOW FOR KIDS AND CHILDISH GROWN-UPS Fun for all as Morgan & West mix brainbusting illusion and good old-fashioned tomfoolery, Mon 20 Feb, mac, B'ham

BORN OFFENDERS The Young REP Seniors imagine a world were you can be criminal from birth, and where the only thing you've done wrong is be born, Mon 20 - Tues 21 Feb, The REP, Birmingham

NOT DEAD ENOUGH Shane Richie and Laura Whitmore star in the world premiere production of Peter James' thriller, Mon 20 - Sat 25 Feb, Malvern Theatre, Worcestershire

CIRQUE BERSERK! An evening of thrills and skills, combining contemporary cirque-style artistry with adrenaline-fuelled stunt action. Featuring over 30 jugglers, acrobats, aerialists, dancers, drummers and death-defying stuntmen, Mon 20 - Sun 26 Feb, The REP, Birmingham

A JUDGEMENT IN STONE A brand new staging of Ruth Rendell's classic thriller, Mon 20 - Sat 25 Feb, New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER Blue Orange Theatre Company present a new staging of DH Lawrence's most famous novel, Tues 21 Feb, Artrix, Bromsgrove

THE EMPTY NESTERS' CLUB John Godber's story of empty bedrooms, fresher's flu, boyfriends, long good-byes, motorway service stations and trips to Ikea, Tues 21 Feb, The Roses

Theatre, Tewkesbury

MICHAEL MORPURGO'S KING ARTHUR A fast-paced tale of magic, heroism, love and betrayal, adapted from the novel Arthur: High King Of Britain, Tues 21 Feb, The Core, Solihull

MARTY MCDONALD'S TOY MACHINE Brand new family show featuring the voice of CBeebies' Justin Fletcher, Tues 21 Feb, Albany Theatre, Coventry

SO YOU THINK YOU KNOW ABOUT... DINOSAURS? Ben Garrod (the TV scientist in Attenborough And The Giant Dinosaur) uses TV film footage and photos of his own palaeontological dinosaur digs to explain 'everything you ever wanted to know about dinosaurs - and more'... Tues 21 Feb, Malvern Theatre, Worcestershire

WOW! SAID THE OWL Little Angel Theatre present a staging of Tim Hopgood's picture book for children, Tues 21 - Thurs 23 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

THRILLER LIVE Musical celebration featuring the hit songs of Michael and The Jackson 5, Tues 21 - Sat 25 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

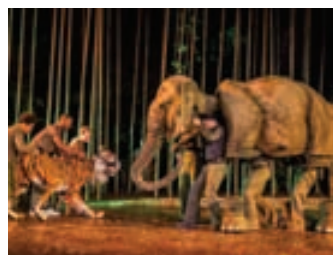
COMMUNICATING DOORS Alan Ayckbourn's time-travelling comedy-thriller, Tues 21 - Sat 25 Feb, Swan Theatre, Worcester

NUMBER 42 AND CONCLUSIONS Worcester Repertory Company present two new works, Tues 21 - Sat 25 Feb, Swan Theatre, Worcester

THE CHRIS AND PUI SHOW New stage show featuring the toys and characters from the hit CBeebies programme, Wed 22 Feb, Palace Theatre, Redditch

ALL THE LITTLE LIGHTS Award-winning new play telling the story of three girls slipping through the cracks in society, Wed 22 - Sat 25 Feb, The REP, Birmingham

RUNNING WILD The Children's Touring Partnership present a staging of Michael Morpurgo's emotional and moving story of love, loss, loyalty and 'living in the moment', Wed 22-Sat 25 Feb, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry



FOUR MINUTES TWELVE SECONDS Here To There Productions present James Fritz's deeply provocative and topical drama, Wed 22 - Sat 25 Feb, Malvern Theatre, Worcestershire

LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER Blue Orange Theatre Company present a new staging of DH Lawrence's most famous novel, Thurs 23 Feb, The Core, Solihull

CHRISTIAN LEE: POP! Magic, mirth and mayhem with the Britain's Got Talent

2016 semi-finalist, who's been described as 'Mr Bean meets Charlie Chaplin', Thurs 23 Feb, mac, B'ham

TREASURE ISLAND - CBEEBIES SPOT-BOTS A 'laugh a minute' show jam-packed with swashbuckling, cheering, booing, puppets, lots of colourful costumes, slapstick fun and maybe even a monkey or two, Thurs 23 Feb, Artrix, Bromsgrove

GRANNY'S GAME Rhubarb Theatre present a globetrotting adventure for young audiences, Thurs 23 Feb, The Hive, Worcester

CLOSER Staging of Patrick Marber's exploration of modern relationships. Age guidance is 16-plus, due to scenes of a sexual nature and strong language, Thurs 23 - Sat 25 Feb, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

SNOW IN MIDSUMMER Director Justin Audibert breathes new life into one of the most famous classical Chinese dramas, Thurs 23 Feb - Sat 25 Mar, Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

YOU WIN AGAIN - THE STORY OF THE BEE GEES In words and music, Fri 24 Feb, Palace Theatre, Redditch

CIRQUE ENCHANTMENT A concert-style cirque production featuring choreography, vocals and circus performers, Fri 24 Feb, Albany Theatre, Coventry

THE BEAR Raymond Briggs' heart-warming wintry tale, featuring puppetry, music, storytelling and plenty of laughter, Fri 24 - Sun 26 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

AMÉDÉE British playwright, director and comedian Sean Foley (The Play What I Wrote, The Ladykillers) brings Eugene Ionesco's surreal comedy to life in a new adaptation. Roxana Silbert directs... Fri 24 Feb - Sat 11 Mar, The REP, Birmingham

ALICE IN WONDERLAND Immersion Theatre present a 'larger-than-life' musical for younger audiences, Sat 25 Feb, Evesham Arts Centre

THE SOOTY SHOW TV's Sooty & friends are back, 'with guaranteed giggles for all the family'... Sat 25 Feb, Malvern Theatre, Worcestershire

LAND OF THE DRAGON Join award-winning PuppetSoup as they journey through time, landscapes and legends, into the world of the Welsh Dragon, Sat 25 Feb, Bridge House Theatre, Warwick

MY NAME IS... & THIS IS NOT LONDON Double bill of new writing. The stories of refugees across the world are reimagined, and the concept of social security questioned, Sat 25 Feb, mac, Birmingham

MICHAEL MORPURGO'S KING ARTHUR A fast-paced tale of magic, heroism, love and betrayal, adapted from the novel, Arthur: High King Of Britain, Sat 25 Feb, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

THE WITNESS FOR THE PROSECUTION The Crescent Theatre Company presents its version of Agatha Christie's most celebrated courtroom drama, Sat 25 Feb - Sat 4 Mar, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

I TOLD MY MUM I WAS GOING ON AN R.E. TRIP A 20 Stories High and

Contact co-production about young women and abortion, Mon 27 Feb, mac, Birmingham

SISTER ACT Alexandra Burke takes the lead in Craig Revel Horwood's staging of the much-acclaimed musical comedy, Mon 27 Feb - Sat 4 Mar, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

GASLIGHT Kara Tointon stars in a brand new staging of Patrick Hamilton's mystery-thriller, Mon 27 Feb - Sat 4 Mar, Malvern Theatre, Worcestershire

CIRCUS OF HORRORS - THE NEVER-ENDING NIGHTMARE An amalgamation of bizarre, brave and beautiful acts, woven into an Alice In Horrorland-type story, driven by a mainly original soundscape and performed with a forked tongue firmly in each cheek! Tues 28 Feb, The Swan Theatre Worcester

PYGMALION Radical new co-production exploring one of the most celebrated comedies of the 20th century, Tues 28 Feb - Fri 3 Mar, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Dance

TANGO FIRE Featuring German Cornejo's dance troupe, The Tango Fire Company of Buenos Aires, Thurs 23 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry



JAMES WILTON DANCE: LEVIATHAN A cast of seven use choreographer James Wilton's trademark blend of athletic dance, martial arts, capoeira and partner work to re-imagine Herman Melville's seminal novel, Moby Dick, Fri 24 Feb, mac, B'ham

DARE TO DANCE Freeman Dance present a showcase of dance disciplines, Sun 26 Feb, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

TAPPING THROUGH TIME Tapping routines through the years, performed by professional dancers, Tues 28 Feb, The Core, Solihull

RICHARD ALSTON DANCE COMPANY A double bill of brand new dance works by Richard Alston and Martin Lorraine, Tues 28 Feb - Wed 1 Mar, Malvern Theatre, Worcestershire



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