

Birmingham

ISSUE 448 MAY 2024

What's On

FILM | COMEDY | THEATRE | GIGS | VISUAL ARTS | EVENTS

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★★★★★
 'THIS PRODUCTION HAS GLAMOUR AND GRIT'
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THE ALEXANDRA EST. SINCE 1901

15 - 20 JULY
atgtickets.com/birmingham

inside:

COME FROM AWAY

award-winning musical stops off at Birmingham Hippodrome



LADY NADE

plays her part in The Mystery Tour at Kitchen Garden Cafe



THE OLIVE BOY

crude and compelling comedy at the Old Joint Stock Theatre



PRESENTS

A night of stunning classical music and favourites inspired by

Classic Hall of Fame



Presented by: **Aled Jones**

Joined by Classical Brit Nominee Soprano **Carly Paoli** & Tenor **Gareth Dafydd Morris**

Conductor: **Anthony Brown**

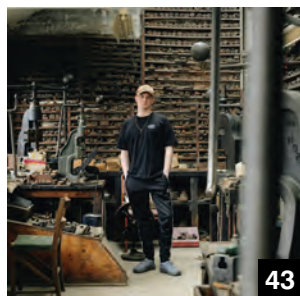
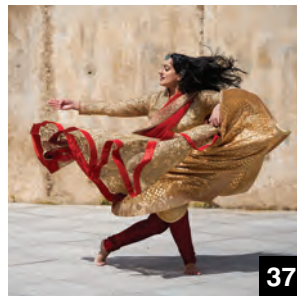
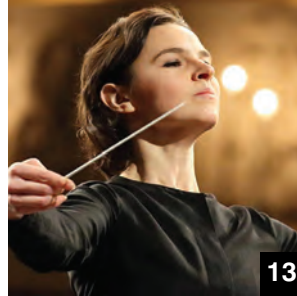
Photo: Danny Kaan

Dates & Venues:

- 17 May - Bournemouth Pavilion
- 25 May - Birmingham Symphony Hall
- 26 May - Basingstoke Anvil
- 29 May - Cheltenham Centaur
- 30 May - Bath Forum

Tickets:





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What's On

MEDIA GROUP

Jessica Clixby jessica@whatsonlive.co.uk Subscriptions: subscriptions@whatsonlive.co.uk 01743 281714
 Contributors: Graham Bostock, Diane Parkes, Patsy Moss, Steve Adams, Sue Hull, Reggie White, Sue Jones, Liz Day, Chris Eldon Lee
 Publisher and CEO: **Martin Monahan** Accounts Administrator: **Julia Perry** julia@21std.com 01743 281717

Managing Director: **Davina Evans** davina@whatsonlive.co.uk 01743 281708

Sales & Marketing: hello@whatsonlive.co.uk

Editorial: **Lauren Foster** lauren@whatsonlive.co.uk 01743 281707 : **Brian O'Faolain**

brian@whatsonlive.co.uk 01743 281701 : **Abi Whitehouse** abi@whatsonlive.co.uk :

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Chicago back on tour

Hit musical Chicago is to visit three Midlands venues as part of a new UK & Ireland tour. The much-loved show will stop off at the Regent Theatre in Stoke-on-Trent in the autumn (Monday 25 - Saturday 30 November) before returning to the region in 2025, first at Birmingham's The Alexandra (Monday 14 - Saturday 19 April) and then at the Grand Theatre in Wolverhampton (Monday 23 - Saturday 28 June). To find out more and book tickets, visit chicagothemusical.com

Plans revealed for fan park ahead of Euro 24

Immersive fan park brand 4TheFans has named Forum Birmingham as one of its venues for this summer's Euro 2024 football tournament. Nearly 2,000 fans will come together to watch the matches on some of the biggest anti-glare screens in the UK. Alongside the football, supporters are being promised DJ sets, competitions, giveaways and games, plus banter and analysis from former Aston Villa and Birmingham City player Emile Heskey... Further information is available at 4thefans.tv



Hippodrome announces festive family musical

Birmingham Hippodrome's new musical theatre department has announced its first full production - a festive family musical called The Jingleclaw which has been created with three- to seven-year-olds in mind. Set in a cosy village in the snowy mountains, the show tells the story of a young musician named Astrid and the mischievous forest creature of the title. The production will show in the Hippodrome's Patrick Studio from Thursday 12 December to Saturday 4 January. Further information and tickets are available at birminghamhippodrome.com

Music For Youth gets new home in Birmingham

The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO) has announced a new working partnership with national youth music charity Music For Youth (MFY) which will see the latter making a move to the second city and taking up residence at the CBSO Centre. The two organisations will work together 'to help support the city's vibrant music culture and make Birmingham a centre for young people's music'.

James Martin to cook up a treat at Symphony Hall

Celebrity chef James Martin will bring his all-new live tour to Birmingham's Symphony Hall next spring (Saturday 1 March). Commenting on the news, James said: "Be prepared for a laugh-out-loud, high-energy night out filled with tantalising flavours that will leave your tastebuds craving!" Tickets for the show are available by visiting ticketmaster.co.uk



Cinematic break-beat trio at The Conservatoire

The Royal Birmingham Conservatoire's line-up of entertainment for the month of May includes a performance by GoGo Penguin. The cinematic break-beat trio will be playing music from new album Everything Is Going

To Be OK when they perform at the venue on Saturday the 11th. To find out more about what's happening at the Conservatoire over the next few weeks, visit bcu.ac.uk/concerts

Local football clubs in fundraising call to fans

Local football clubs Aston Villa, Birmingham City and West Bromwich Albion are encouraging fans to fundraise for their respective community foundations by tackling the Great Birmingham Run 10k or half marathon on Sunday 5 May. To find out more about the running route and the charities, and to sign up, visit the website at greatrun.org

An evening of classical favourites with Aled

Aled Jones (pictured) returns to Birmingham late this month (Symphony Hall, Saturday 25 May) to present a concert of classical favourites and cinema scores performed by 'the majestically large' Fulltone Orchestra. Led by Anthony Brown, the orchestra will perform alongside Classical Brit Awards nominee Carly Paoli and Welsh National Opera's Gareth Dafydd Morris. For further information and to purchase tickets, visit bmusic.co.uk



Sir Ian at the Alex

A new play adapted from Shakespeare's Henry IV Parts I & II - and starring Sir Ian McKellen - is coming to the Midlands.

Stopping off at Birmingham theatre The Alexandra in the summer (Wednesday 10 - Saturday 13 July), Player Kings will see Sir Ian taking on the role of Sir John Falstaff.

For further information and to book tickets, visit the website atgtickets.com



Burger Fest back in Birmingham

Burger Fest is returning to Birmingham next month. Taking place on Saturday 15 June at The Bond in Digbeth, the popular street-food event promises 'a fun-filled day of indulgence and entertainment'. Tickets are available via the website designmynight.com

Viral sensation at the Glee Club

Comedian and viral sensation Christopher Hall is visiting Birmingham in the autumn as part of his live stand-up tour, A Girl For All Seasons. Social-media star Chris makes a stop-off at the city's Glee Club on Wednesday 25 September. To find out more and book tickets, visit the website at glee.co.uk



Strictly's Johannes gets ready to pull on his Kinky Boots!

Strictly Come Dancing favourite Johannes Radebe will star as Lola when a new touring production of hit musical Kinky Boots visits Birmingham Hippodrome next year. The show

stops off at the venue from Tuesday 15 to Saturday 19 April. For further information about the production and to purchase tickets, visit the website: birminghamhippodrome.com

War Horse to return to the region's theatres in 2025

The National Theatre's smash-hit production of War Horse is returning to the region next year. The critically acclaimed show, based on Michael Morpurgo's celebrated novel, will visit the Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, from Tuesday 4 to Saturday 8 March, and the Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton, the following week (Tuesday 11 - Saturday 22 March). To find out more and book tickets, visit the theatres' websites.



New three-day fashion event heading for the NEC

Tickets are now on sale for The Good Clothes Show - a first-of-its-kind three-day shopping event taking place at Birmingham's NEC in the autumn.

Featuring brands, artisan makers, sustainable boutiques, vintage treasures, celebrity contributors and industry heavyweights, the show runs from Friday 20 to Sunday 22 September. Further information and tickets are available by visiting thegoodclothesshow.com



Howzat! VIP experiences at Edgbaston this summer

There's plenty of cricket to enjoy at Birmingham's Edgbaston Stadium this summer. As well as Warwickshire County Cricket Club's home matches, the venue will also play host to an England versus West Indies Test match and the adrenaline-pumping T20 Finals Day. If you fancy enjoying a day out at Edgbaston in real style, there's a range of VIP packages available from which to choose. Visit keithprowse.co.uk to find out more.



Comedy and clay in The Core's Studio space

Although Solihull theatre The Core's main auditorium is currently closed, the venue's Studio space is set to host a number of shows across the coming weeks. Highlights include stand-up offering *The Muslims Are Coming* (Sunday 12 May), interactive children's production *Claytime* (Saturday 1 June) and an evening with local improv group *Box Of Frogs* (pictured, Friday 7 June). To check out the whole line-up of shows, visit thecoretheatresolihull.co.uk



New Our Town exhibition opens at Music Museum

Coventry Music Museum has opened a new exhibition inspired by the BBC drama series *This Town*.

Taking the title *Our Town*, the exhibition opened last month, with stars of the critically acclaimed TV show in attendance at the launch. The series was created and written by Stephen Knight, the man behind *Peaky Blinders*.



Ten years of Digbeth firsts

Digbeth First Friday is celebrating its 10th anniversary.

The popular monthly event showcases 'the latest exhibitions and live performances by some of Birmingham's most exciting galleries and artist-run spaces'.

The 10-year milestone is being celebrated on Friday 3 May. To find out more about what's going on, visit digbethfirstfriday.com



Big birthday weekend for popular Birmingham venue

Birmingham venue The Roundhouse is celebrating its 150th anniversary this month with a 'big birthday weekend'.

Highlights of the three-day celebration, taking place from Friday 10 to Sunday 12 May, include free kayak tours and family crafts, a

silent disco, a murder-mystery night and the return of the hugely popular Heritage Boat Tour...

For further information about the birthday weekend, visit the venue's website: roundhousebirmingham.org.uk

Squash championships return to Birmingham

The British Open Squash Championship is returning to Birmingham next month (Sunday 2 - Sunday 9 June).

The action will be split between Edgbaston Priory Club, for the first two rounds, and Birmingham Repertory Theatre, from the third round onwards.

For further information and to book tickets, visit birmingham-rep.co.uk

which aims to 'spark ideas, curiosity and creativity', is hosting its first-ever arts & culture festival next month.

Taking place on Sunday 2 June at Warwick Arts Centre and in the University of Warwick's Faculty of Arts building, the event will explore world culture and feature workshops and activities connected to music, dance, theatre, poetry, food, history, circus skills, textiles, art and languages.

To find out more, visit resonatefestival.co.uk

More acts announced for Moseley's folk festival

Comedians Mark Steel, Zoe Lyons (pictured) and Lindsey Santoro have been added to the line-up for this year's Moseley Folk & Arts Festival (Friday 30 August -



Sunday 1 September). The trio of laughter merchants will perform on the venue's always-popular Speaker's Corner stage. To find out more about the event and book tickets, visit the website: moseleyfolk.co.uk



Jurassic-themed event to stop off in Birmingham

A Jurassic & Ice Age-themed event is stopping off at Birmingham's Maxstoke this month.

Showcasing 50 life-sized animatronics with moving parts and realistic features, The Land Of Giants stops off in the city from Saturday 18 May to Sunday 2 June. To book tickets for the event, visit thelandofgiants.uk

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06 May | Town Hall



Dionne Warwick: Don't Make Me Over

11 May | Symphony Hall



London Symphonic Rock Orchestra

13 May | Symphony Hall



Lee John of Imagination

15 May | Town Hall



Wild Isles Live

17 May | Town Hall



Richard Marx

19 May | Symphony Hall



The Fulltone Orchestra, Carly Paoli & Aled Jones

25 May | Symphony Hall



The Lion Inside

25 & 26 May | Town Hall



The Zombies

28 May | Town Hall



bmusic.co.uk

There's something for everyone this May!

Welsh National Opera double bill in Birmingham

Welsh National Opera return to Birmingham Hippodrome this month with a mouthwatering double bill. Taking up residence at the Hurst Street



venue mid-month, the Cardiff-based company will present Mozart's *Così fan tutte* (pictured) on Friday 10 May and Benjamin Britten's *Death In Venice* on Saturday the 11th. To find out more and book tickets, visit birminghamhippodrome.com

A Stratford summer for Windsor's Merry Wives

A new production of one of Shakespeare's best-loved comedies opens at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon next month.



Directed by Blanche McIntyre and starring *Sex Education*'s Samantha Spiro (pictured), *The Merry Wives Of Windsor* runs in repertoire at the venue from Wednesday 5 June to Saturday 7 September. For further information and to book tickets, visit rsc.org.uk

Engineering Heritage Award for local hybrid car

Birmingham Museum Trust's 1927 Lanchester petrol-electric hybrid car, which was developed in the city, has been recognised with a special Engineering Heritage Award.

Currently on display at Thinktank science museum, the car is the only surviving prototype of the innovative petrol-electric hybrid motorcars built by the Lanchester Motor Company.



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Flatpack brings nine days of exciting events to the city

Popular Birmingham festival Flatpack returns at venues throughout the city this month.

Taking place from Friday 10 to Sunday 19 May, the annual event features a boundary-pushing programme of art, tech, music and spoken word alongside transformative films, premieres and performances from around the globe.

Highlights of this year's festival - which features 80 shows and events - include an

outdoor screening of cult horror classic *Carrie* at Birmingham Botanical Gardens, a BAFTA-qualifying short-film competition, the return of award-winning Japanese performance duo Usaginingen, and an artist-led spa promising 'access to a higher consciousness'.

To check out the whole festival programme and purchase tickets, visit the website at flatpackfestival.org.uk

City to host its first-ever ska & reggae festival

The first-ever Birmingham International Ska & Reggae Festival takes place at the end of the month.

The three-day event - which runs from Friday 31 May to Sunday 2 June at Thornborough Farm in the city's Kings Norton district - will feature, among many others, The Pioneers, Stranger Cole, Symarip and Basil Gabbidon (*Steel Pulse*).

Alongside the music, the festival also features market traders, vintage stalls and a 'tempting array' of street food.

For further information about the event and to book tickets, visit skiddler.com

Literary festival back in Stratford for a 17th year

Crime writer Val McDermid, children's author Michael Rosen and actor David Troughton are among the well-known names contributing to the spring edition of the Stratford Literary Festival.

Now in its 17th year and featuring talks, workshops and performances, the event takes place in Stratford-upon-Avon from Wednesday 1 to Sunday 5 May.

To check out the complete festival line-up, visit stratfordliteraryfestival.co.uk

Sounding Change at University of Birmingham

University of Birmingham's artist residency programme, Sounding Change, will showcase three emerging music & sound artists over the next few weeks.

First up will be Azizi Cole, performing at the university's Elgar Concert Hall on Saturday 25 May. Azizi will be presenting *Body Clock*, a new work reflecting on the influence that music can have on the body...

Five days later, on Thursday the 30th, BEAST (Birmingham Electro-Acoustic Sound Theatre) will take its sound system on the road, join forces with artist & musician Antonio Roberts and co-curate a night of electronic and experimental music and visuals at Centrala.

The trio of artists is completed by Bullyache - aka Courtney Deyn and Jacob Samuel. The duo will present a radical reimagining of Kenneth McMillan's ballet, *L'histoire de Manon*, mixed with the erotic thriller *Showgirls*, at Elgar Concert Hall on Saturday 8 June. Courtney and Jacob will be joined for the occasion by drag queen Barbs and the University of Birmingham String Ensemble... To find out more about Sounding Change, visit birmingham.ac.uk

KAY MELLOR'S



THE SYNDICATE

Starring

**SAMANTHA
GILES**

and

**BROOKE
VINGENT**

BASED ON
THE HIT
BBC SERIES



THE WITTY LOTTERY DRAMA DIRECTED BY GAYNOR FAYE

TUE 25 - SAT 29 JUN

THE
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MONEY TALKS

Gaynor Faye, Brooke Vincent, Samantha Giles and Oliver Anthony chat about starring in Kay Mellor's *The Syndicate*, which comes to the Midlands in June...

The *Syndicate* was a family affair long before it arrived on television in 2012, complete with a cast of famous faces.

Written and produced by 'titan of TV' Kay Mellor, her daughter, actress Gaynor Faye, was the series' script editor.

"I just knew that it was going to be a hit," Gaynor recalls. "She captured the brothers, the family, the whole arena of what winning the lottery and such a substantial amount of money brings people - both the good and the not so good!"

The first series was adapted for the stage by Kay in what proved to be her final venture into theatre before her death in 2022. She had already asked Gaynor to co-direct the project with her, and now the actress is 'going it alone' in a move that she confesses has been rather daunting.

"Mum's shoes are big ones to fill, but I understand what her vision was for this production because I had been by her side from the very beginning. I'm excited for everyone to see it."

The play tells the story of five supermarket workers whose lottery syndicate numbers come in just as their jobs and livelihoods are under threat.

Will a share of the jackpot make their dreams come true or their nightmares a reality? One thing is for certain: the win of a lifetime will change their lives, loves and relationships forever...

Adding to the family feel of *The Syndicate* is Gaynor's son, Oliver Anthony, who will play the part of Jamie.

Oliver believes that having three generations of one family involved in the production brings a unique experience to audiences: "There's real heart to this show and a lot of love for it; it just feels special. Kay had been mentoring me for the last four years. She knew how hard the industry can be and said she saw potential in me. She took me under her wing and really helped me learn the business, both in front of the camera and behind.

"To now be involved with the stage show, and Gaynor, my mum, directing it too, it just feels special. I have so many wonderful memories of my grandmother - every day beside her was a dream."

While he's no stranger to the *Syndicate* story - having starred in series four of the BBC drama - Oliver is making his theatre debut as Jamie.

"I've been a part of this story since Kay

adapted it into a theatre script. I played the role of Jamie in the development workshops of the play and actually read the part in the auditions for many of these other amazing actors. So to then be on the other side of the auditioning process as an actor, and get the part, is incredible. Now I really want to prove I deserve my place in the show and give it my best shot. I'm grabbing this opportunity with both hands."

After so much time playing Jamie during casting, what is it about the character that appeals to Oliver so much?

"He's so electric and brings this energy to the stage that I just absolutely love. He's very three dimensional - he's got a switch in him which can make him villainous - and that's always amazing to play as an actor - but then he's also got this real sense of love and connection with his brother, which I totally understand."

For actresses Brooke Vincent and Samantha Giles, the chance to work on a Kay Mellor production was too good an opportunity to miss.

Brooke, who became a household name playing Sophie Webster in ITV soap *Coronation Street* from 2004 to 2019, says landing the role of Amy was a real thrill: "I've kind of taken a step back to have my two boys, so this is my return to acting and I'm so excited. I love Kay's work; it's so real and there's such a sense of warm northern humour that I just adore."

Samantha, meanwhile, was looking for a new challenge after recently leaving the role of *Emmerdale*'s Bernice Blackstock, a part she'd played on and off for 26 years.

"A lot of people are only used to seeing me as Bernice, who is this glamorous person. My *Syndicate* character of Denise is the polar opposite!

"She's a bit on the frumpy side and life hasn't been so good to her. She's just totally different to Bernice, which is so lovely to play. I think Kay's writing is so good. She's able to create real stories and wonderful characters that people can relate to and who reflect how ordinary people live."

As veterans of TV drama, having navigated the fast pace of *Soapland* for so many years, Samantha and Brooke will surely find taking to the stage in front of a live audience a walk in the park... won't they?

Brooke laughs: "No, of course I'll be nervous! But the way I deal with it is just to think there's no point worrying now - I need to just wait until I'm on stage and then be nervous

and face the fear!

"It's that sense that you're in a team - you all have a part to play to bring the show to life, and you just need to feed off that."

Samantha agrees: "It's been 14 years since I've done a play, so I *am* feeling nervous, but I think if you weren't nervous you might not care. Nerves are good, and I think the more we do it, the more confident we get. I just think you can't beat live theatre. Just to hear the reaction from the audience and have that shared experience - there's nothing like it."

For Brooke, taking on the role of Amy has been a delight: "She's more Rosie Webster than Sophie Webster! I've never played a dolly bird before. She even comes out with hair extensions!

"I'm such a tomboy in real life, so the part has been great to take on, because usually when you read a role you can see yourself in the character. I love that Amy is so different to me."

Samantha is just as enthusiastic about the character *she* plays: "Denise is quite mumsy at the start, always putting everybody else before herself, and it's interesting to see the change that happens during the course of the play - especially when she gets her hands on the money!"

Part of the appeal of *The Syndicate* is that there won't be a theatregoer anywhere in the UK who hasn't dreamt of winning the lottery. So how would Brooke and Samantha react if their numbers came up?

Brooke dreams of "buying a giant house with my girlfriends and moving everyone in. But now, with all the kids, I'm not sure that would be a great idea!"

Samantha is more philosophical: "I know this might sound really glib, but I have everything I need. I've got a roof over my head, food on the table, and everyone is healthy. I'm not into designer clothes and things like that. But I suppose if I won the lottery I'd buy a place abroad.

"But this play is a reminder to be careful what you wish for. With money comes greed, and then a sense of desperation about what you're willing to do to keep it."

.....

The *Syndicate* shows at Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, from Tuesday 18 to Saturday 22 June, and then at The Alexandra, Birmingham, from Tuesday 25 to Saturday 29 June

Flatpack Festival




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Birmingham  flatpackfestival.org.uk

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Classical music from across the region...



Old World Symphony with the CBSO & Oksana Lyniv

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Wed 29 May

Ukrainian conductor Oksana Lyniv takes the helm for a concert which is promising 'dark passions from the soul of Eastern Europe'. Osana's fellow Ukrainian, Bohdana Frolyak, is one of three composers whose music (her

adagio) features on the programme.

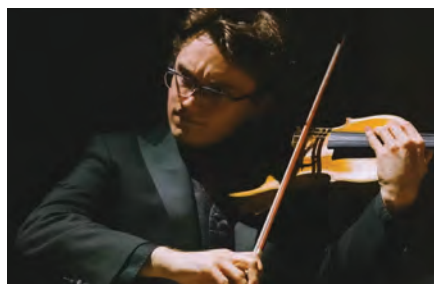
The other two are Tchaikovsky - his Violin Concerto is performed by Andrii Murza - and Antonín Dvořák, whose Seventh Symphony completes the two-hour concert.

The Romantic Revival Orchestra

CBSO Centre, Birmingham, Thurs 23 May

'Accessible music for all, brought to you by the young musicians of tomorrow' is the name of the game for the Romantic Revival Orchestra (RRO), a brand-new ensemble of talented musicmakers that features (mostly current) Royal Birmingham Conservatoire students.

Focusing on romantic repertoire, presented alongside new and contemporary tonal compositions, the RRO here bring their first season to a close, performing a programme that features new music alongside Dvořák's Sixth Symphony and Wieniawski's Second Violin Concerto performed by Maciej Rzepczyk (pictured).



Tøkió Myers: Awake But Dreaming

St Paul's Church, Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham, Thurs 9 May

Seamlessly integrating music from the past and present, former Britain's Got Talent winner Tøkió Myers here performs his new solo classical album, a collection of original music inspired by the birth of his first daughter.

"If I hadn't gone to dark places in life and explored as much as possible the extremities of music, then I could've never understood how beautiful and perfect simple music is," explains the 40-year-old Londoner. "I've learnt after all these years that my training and experimenting were essential, in order for me to finally understand, appreciate and truly feel how to play the simplest of pieces. It feels like an awakening."

Oliver Janes & John Reid In Concert

Elgar Concert Hall, The Bramall, University of Birmingham, Fri 10 May

A familiar face to West Midlands' classical music fans, Oliver Janes (pictured) was just 21 and fresh out of the Royal Academy of Music when he was appointed the section leader of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra's clarinets...

This Barber Lunchtime Concert finds Oliver teaming up with duo partner John Reid to treat audience members to an intimate recital of his favourite works for clarinet and piano...

The programme features compositions by Martínů, Gipps and Brahms.



Czech National Symphony Orchestra

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Tues 21 May

Now in its 31st year, the Czech National Symphony Orchestra is one of Europe's top symphonic ensembles.

With a repertoire that regularly encompasses both classical and contemporary, the orchestra this month visits the region to present a programme featuring works by Copland (Appalachian Spring), Beethoven (Piano Concerto No5 'Emperor') and Smetana (Vltava).

The concert concludes with Dvořák's much-loved Symphony No8, a genial work packed with folk melodies and the sounds of the forest. The concert is conducted by Steven Mercurio (pictured).



ROTTEN TO THE CORE

John Lydon - aka the Sex Pistols' Johnny Rotten - is out on tour and heading for the Midlands...



John Lydon first took to the stage as Johnny Rotten, frontman of the Sex Pistols, almost 50 years ago - but his upcoming appearance at Coventry's Warwick Arts Centre is something a bit different. His UK touring show, I Could Be Wrong, I Could Be Right, offers an honest and uncensored glimpse into the life of a legend. Here, Lydon not only explains what the audience can expect from the evening but also talks about his loves and his losses - and last year's surprise Eurovision bid...

John Lydon is not a man who appreciates being censored. The legendary frontman and lyricist of the Sex Pistols and Public Image Ltd has caused his fair share of political earthquakes during a unique and extraordinary career.

The man they call Johnny Rotten has been dubbed many things. A revolutionary, an icon, a provocateur and an immortal, he became a poster boy for the cultural revolution which transformed music for good. And he's not finished yet. This year he's heading back out on the road for a fresh leg of his acclaimed spoken-word show, *I Could Be Wrong, I Could Be Right*.

Promising to 'tell it how it is' during the audience Q&A sessions, absolutely nothing will be off limits. This is John Lydon, live and untamed.

"This is a format which suits me down to the ground, to be honest," he says, "because if there's one thing you can guarantee, it's that I'm never gonna run out of words! I've basically spent my whole life being censored. So this is me; honest and unscripted. It's *my* thoughts, in *my* lingo, right or wrong, straight from the horse's mouth."

A lot of incredibly turbulent water has passed under the bridge since the last leg of Lydon's spoken-word tour.

He's lost two of the most important people in his life; his beloved wife of more than 40 years, Nora, and his long-time tour manager, Johnny 'Rambo' Stevens. He also had a crack at Eurovision.

"I just can't get over the loss of Nora; I don't think I ever will," says Lydon, who cared full-time for his wife in her later years as she battled Alzheimer's.

"It's hard at night, and I don't want to throw myself into creating more music right now which would just be a series of 'woe is me' misery songs. That's not the right thing to do."

The reason he threw his hat into the Eurovision ring last year, in a failed bid to represent Ireland, was entirely down to Nora. The poignant and personal song, *Hawaii*, was inspired by one of the couple's favourite holidays and was, in his words, 'as close to accurately portraying the situation' as he could get.

"I'm very glad I was able to perform the song on Irish TV so I could show it to Nora before she died. It might not have been chosen, but it did put a big smile on her face, and she was very proud of me.

"But I'll never sing that song again, because

it's just too heartbreaking. I just can't go there; it was so deeply personal."

"And then I lost Rambo, my all-time best mate and manager. There never has been, and never will be, anyone remotely like him. He lived life to the full and enriched the lives of so many."

Life has thrown its fair share of curve balls in Lydon's direction over the years.

The son of working-class emigrants from Ireland and the eldest of four brothers, he grew up in the shadow of Arsenal FC's Highbury stadium, regularly having to care for his siblings due to his mother's ill health.

At the age of seven, Lydon contracted spinal meningitis and spent a year in hospital. He suffered from hallucinations and severe memory loss that lasted several years. It was the first step towards the birth of Johnny Rotten.

He was kicked out of school at 15 for dying his hair green, and was soon on the London nightclub scene with the likes of Sid Vicious and Jah Wobble.

By 1975, he was hanging around SEX, the fetish clothing shop launched by Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood, meeting the people who would go on to form the Sex Pistols.

His scintillating vocal delivery and forthright lyrics - matched with the band's power and energy - soon saw the Pistols build up a word-of-mouth following.

Lydon looks back on those times with great fondness, but admits that the rift with his 'sneaky rat' former Pistols bandmates, which ended up in court in a bitter dispute over licensing of the back catalogue, can never be healed.

Relishing the opportunity to challenge and thrive, John Lydon remains a mischievous maverick who continues pushing back the boundaries.

"I make music because I love it. I've got an enormous record collection and every now and then recognise a gap in something I'd really like to hear - that will then be the seed for the next album I'll make.

"When I lose interest in music, I will stop. I don't force it. We're well known for taking long intervals between projects, but I think that benefits the work itself."

As a writer, Lydon has published two best-selling volumes of memoir: the excoriating *Rotten: No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs*, and the ridiculously entertaining and uncompromising *Anger Is An Energy: My Life*

Uncensored. But he credits his 2004 appearance on *I'm A Celebrity, Get Me Out Of Here!* as the moment the majority of people got the chance to discover what he was really like. Which is why he's relishing the chance to get back on stage for a show he describes as 'unlike anything else I've done'.

"I like to think I've always been able to converse fluently in a down-to-earth way; not waxing lyrical with a load of toff talk. Once the ice is broken, it paves the way for a bloody good chat, and a good time to be had by all.

"The thing I love about this show is that I don't know exactly what I'm going to be doing from one venue to the next. I like that 'in at the deep end' approach; that's how to learn to swim. That's what the Sex Pistols was. There was no game plan, no greedy ambitions, which is why it was so excellent - ahead of its time, or maybe miles behind, depending on your point of view.

"This show's the same. I'll go on, on a wing and a prayer, and see what happens; do what feels right. And whatever questions I'm asked, I will give an honest answer.

"That's usually the recipe for a fantastic evening - it's like going into an atmospheric old pub for the first time and discovering that everyone in there is a mate."

So this show is all speech and no music, then?

"Well, not completely. I've been known to break out into a bit of karaoke on occasion and start an Abba singalong, and no two nights turn out the same way.

"This time I'm thinking I might go down the Alvin Stardust route - I think some of his classics need dusting off, don't you? Who doesn't love a bit of My Coo-Ca-Choo?"

He smiles. "This is what life should be, throwing point and purpose out the window and just enjoying it. Do what you feel.

"Everything is a gift. It's just that sometimes it can take time to find that out."

.....

John Lydon: I Could Be Wrong, I Could Be Right visits Palace Theatre, Redditch, Wednesday 8 May; Huntingdon Hall, Worcester, Thursday 9 May; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, on Friday 10 May; Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-trent, Saturday 11 May; Tamworth Assembly Rooms, Sunday 12 May & Walsall Arts Centre, Saturday 25 May; Birmingham Town Hall, Sunday 9 June

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Live music from across the city..

Teddy Swims

O2 Academy, Birmingham,
Thurs 16 & Fri 31 May

Creating music which touches its forelock in the direction of a variety of genres, rising-star Teddy Swims - real name Jaten Collin Dimsdale - has made a big splash in a short time, having initially built a significant following via song covers performed on his YouTube channel back in 2019 & 2020.

The Georgia-born singer-songwriter is making not one but two Birmingham stop-offs this month in support of his debut studio album, *I've Tried Everything But Therapy (Part 1)*. The record is described by its publicity as 'a heart-on-your-sleeve... cards-on-the-table body of work brimming with soul, sorrow and solace'.



Elbow

Resorts World Arena, Birmingham, Fri 10 May

Across 20-plus years and 10 studio albums, Manchester band Elbow have scored some massive successes, in the process winning, among other coveted gongs, three Ivor Novellos, a Mercury Music Prize and a Brit Award.

Comprising lead singer Guy Garvey, Craig Potter, Mark Potter, Pete Turner and - joining this year - touring & session drummer Alex Reeves, the band boast a well-deserved reputation for delivering arena shows that combine scale with intimacy.

This month's Birmingham concert comes in support of recently released chart-topping album *Audio Vertigo*.



Paloma Faith

Symphony Hall, Birmingham,
Sun 5 & Mon 6 May

Former magician's assistant Paloma Faith launched her debut album, *Do You Want The Truth Or Something Beautiful?*, 15 years ago and has since gone on to release a

further five records. Her most recent offering, this year's *The Glorification Of Sadness*, is being supported by these two Birmingham gigs. It is also, sad to say, Paloma's 'divorce album', produced by the London-born 42-year-old as a response to the end of a 10-year relationship with the father of her two children.

Arab Strap

Castle & Falcon, Birmingham, Wed 22 May

Featuring core members Aiden Moffat (vocalist) and Malcolm Middleton (multi-instrumentalist), Arab Strap built their reputation around stark and sordid autobiographical narratives concerning the misadventures of youth. Time moves on, however, and Aiden is comfortable about admitting the inspiration for their lyrics in more recent times has tended to come from "things I've read that interest me".

The boys' Birmingham stop-off comes in support of their latest album, the 12-track *I'm Totally Fine With It Don't Give A Fuck Anymore*.

Gary Numan

O2 Institute, Birmingham, Fri 31 May

London-born electronic & industrial pioneer Gary Numan first caused a stir as lead singer of new wave band Tubeway Army. He released debut solo album *The Pleasure Principle* in 1979 - scoring a number-one hit with his most famous song, *Cars* - and visits Birmingham to celebrate the record's 45th anniversary.



Lady Nade

Kitchen Garden Cafe, Birmingham,
Wed 8 May

Folk, Americana, soul, jazz, blues and roots are combined to excellent effect in the music of Bristol-born Lady Nade - aka Nadine Gingell - who crowdfunded her first album and has since produced two further records. Boasting vocals that call to mind Nina Simone, she's stopping off at the Kitchen Garden Cafe to play her part in *The Mystery Tour*. The initiative sees her joining fellow singers Hollie Rogers and Daisy Chute 'to champion the essence of collaboration in music, paying homage to the strength and creativity of female artists in the industry'.



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A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH



Festival explores life and death through cafes, catacombs and caterpillars

A ground-breaking festival in Birmingham this spring brings together coffins and cakes, walks and wakes and authors with absent friends.

Organised by community-interest company BrumYODO, A Matter Of Life And Death takes place in venues across Birmingham and the West Midlands.

A volunteer-led group based in the second city, BrumYODO aims to create safe spaces to think and talk about death and dying. To coincide with the national campaign Dying Matters Awareness Week, it has been running A Matter Of Life And Death since 2016 and is getting ready for another great year.

Helen Tomblin, one of the BrumYODO board members, says: "This year's festival hosts some regular events, such as a tour of an undertakers, a Birmingham Catacombs walk, theatre pieces, an author event and numerous Death Cafes and In Memory events. And this year, new venues and contributors have joined the festival, including Northfield Community Partnership and The New Photo Company in Kings Heath. We're really pleased to see that the momentum is growing to promote healthy and productive conversation about death and dying."

The festival kicks off on 3 May with Tell It To The Bees at London Road Cemetery in Coventry, where storytellers Pyn Stockman and Kate Luxmoore will use music and

narrative to share tales of bees in folklore, nature, life and death. The team also perform the show at Packwood House near Lapworth on the 11th of the month.

On 7 May people have the chance to Meet The Undertakers at Kings Heath-located company A Natural Undertaking. The open evening offers an opportunity to learn more about options and choices in terms of funerals.

Life Cycle, at Northfield Community Centre on the 11th, is a family-friendly interactive day that explores the cycle of life and death through the nature of gardens. Organised in partnership with Northfield Neighbourhood Network Scheme, the event uses storytelling, arts, crafts and garden activities 'to explore the big ideas that are found in the little things around us'.

Also on the 11th, and in conjunction with The Heath Bookshop in Kings Heath, the festival welcomes writer Sarah Tarlow, the author of The Archaeology Of Loss. Sarah will be discussing her memoir, which explores the death of her husband and the universal experience of the loss of a loved one.

Kevin Thomas will lead a guided tour of Birmingham Catacombs on 12 May. Then, on the 16th, an interfaith walk around Lozells and Handsworth will explore the rituals and practices that follow death and bereavement within diverse faiths.

Together with Itzatna Arts, children's theatre show The Stories Of The Wind at The Old

Print Works in Balsall Heath on 11 May will explore Mexican folk tales and the country's famous Day Of The Dead festival.

Absent Friends events - which include an informal drink and meal and at which people share stories of loved ones who have died - take place at the Black Horse in Northfield on the 8th and Anjuna Lounge in Stirchley on the 9th.

The festival also features a number of Death Cafes at venues across the region, providing people with a space in which to chat informally over tea, coffee and cake about anything related to life and death.

Helen urges both previous A Matter Of Life And Death supporters and new visitors to give the events a go.

"The festival includes so many very different events, we hope we have something for everyone. We've done all we can to ensure as many as possible are free or low cost. Some need to be booked, some are simply drop-in. Please check our website for all the information - and we hope to see you there."

.....
For full information, including booking details, see A Matter Of Life And Death Festival 2024 on the BrumYODO events page: brumyodo.org.uk/events and follow the festival on social media @BrumYODO

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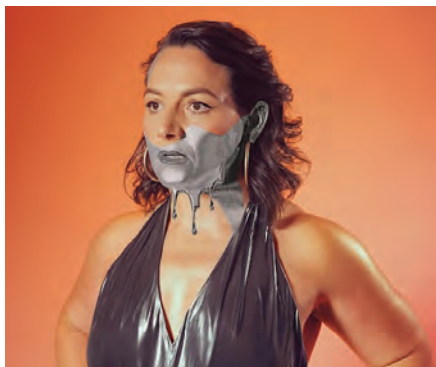


Comedy previews from across the region...

Jessica Fostekew

Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton, Thurs 16 May

"I exist in real life but am also a comedian, actor and writer," says Jessica Fostekew. "Since 2008 I've been throwing this job around like you would a walnut in a sock." Realising herself to be a feminist "the very first time somebody said: You're really funny for a woman", Jessica gets her comedy inspiration from her life, her family and, er, witchcraft - although reassuringly reveals that the latter source provides only around one per cent of her material.



Nick Helm

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Thurs 9 May; Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton, Fri 10 May; The Glee Club, Birmingham, Sat 11 May

British Comedy Award winner Nick Helm once again hits the road with another audience-pleasing mash-up of gags, stories, poems and songs.

Nick's jokes include: "I needed a password eight characters long, so I picked Snow White And The Seven Dwarves."

The gag won the Edinburgh Fringe award for best joke way back in 2011 - since which time Nick has come up with numerous other crackers!



Tom Davis

Birmingham Town Hall, Sat 11 May

"I've always thought of myself as an underdog," reveals Murder In Successville's Tom Davis to beyondthejoke.com, "though not necessarily in a negative way. I think that's what has made me. The bulk of my humour comes from constantly feeling like someone who's had a little bit of a kicking." Having left school with no qualifications, Tom's road to comedy success proved to be a long and winding one: "I'd been working on building sites for 20-odd years. I just wanted to do something for myself. I tried stand-up, and straight away I just thought 'Wow! I feel like I'm actually quite good at something: making other people laugh.'"



Horatio Gould

The Glee Club, Birmingham, Fri 24 May

Having enjoyed a sell-out success with his debut offering, Sweet Prince, at the Edinburgh Fringe, Horatio Gould is now taking the show to comedy venues across the country, including the Glee.

Running at a few minutes short of an hour, the set has been widely praised as a highly promising opening gambit from the 27-year-old comedian. Presenting himself as a beleaguered but defiant wannabe-alpha-but-sadly-beta male, Horatio has been described by UK comedy guide Chortle as 'basically a white Romesh Ranganathan'.

Rich Hall

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Wed 22 May

With much of his comedy focusing on making fun of life across the pond in his homeland, Rich Hall is best known for his creation of Otis Lee Crenshaw, a bourbon-swilling redneck jailbird from Tennessee whose many wives have all been named Brenda.

Publicity for this latest touring show, Shot From Cannons - a combination of 'new rants, knife-edge observations and thrilling musical interludes' - advises that although you'll pay for the whole seat, you'll only need the edge of it.





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Comedy previews from across the region...

Ashley Blaker

Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham, Thurs 16 May

Comedian and dad-of-six Ashley Blaker's touring show, Normal Schmormal, sees him focusing on a topic close to his heart.

The star of BBC Radio Four's hit comedy, 6.5 Children, Ashley is presenting a show about the joys of being father to three youngsters with special needs.

"Between endless meetings, countless therapists, public humiliations, failed playdates, surreal monologues and occasional violence," says the show's publicity, "it's certainly not what anyone would call a 'normal' household - but would Ashley want it any other way?"



Lou Conran

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Sat 11 May

"I trained at the Oxford School of Speech & Drama many years ago," reveals comedian Lou Conran, in providing readers with a flavour of who she is, "but I was told off for not taking acting too seriously; hence, me, now and this! I do TV warm-up, I do acting when I'm allowed, and I'm addicted to chillies, cheese and various other things beginning with the letter C.

"Oh, and I'm also one half of the award-nominated podcast Spit Or Swallow, which is flipping marvellous and you should listen to it immediately!"



Sukh Ojla

Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton, Fri 3 May; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sat 18 May; The Glee Club, Birmingham, Sun 19 May; The Rep, Birmingham, Sat 25 May; Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton, Thurs 6 June

With her life experiences including a teenage suicide attempt, a Spanish-retreat encounter with the psychoactive brew ayahuasca, and a train-station breakdown involving a cheese & onion pasty, Sukh Ojla has plenty of fantastic raw material around which to build a show.

She also has experience of being a thirtysomething living at home with her mom & dad, another situation that's provided her with plenty of comedy gold: "Living at home with my parents is essentially like living in the most passive-aggressive Air B&B of all time," she says, "except that you can't even leave them a bad review!"

Sukh visits the Midlands this month and next with The Aunty Years, a show in which she's set herself the challenge of 'figuring out middle age, pretending to be a grown-up and the joy of a Tupperware set'.



Ria Lina

The Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shropshire, Sat 4 May; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Wed 29 May; Huntingdon Hall, Worcester, Thurs 30 May

The challenge of emerging from a global pandemic, the new normal, divorce, dating in a new digital world, motherhood, and what it really means to be a woman today are among the subjects that comedian and scientist Ria Lina puts under her microscope in debut touring show Riawakening.

Jokes include: "I wanted to do a show about feminism. But my husband wouldn't let me."

Jake Lambert

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Wed 8 May; Glee Club, Birmingham, Wed 11 September

Hailed a 'joke machine' by one national newspaper, Jake Lambert is a relatively new kid on the comedy block who's made a big splash online (his videos have gained more than 150 million views).

Although visiting Shrewsbury and Birmingham as part of his first-ever national tour, the 33-year-old funnyman already has plenty of on-the-road experience under his

belt - he's previously been the support act for some of the UK's best-loved comedians, including Jack Dee, Alan Carr and Romesh Ranganathan...

Indeed, Jake is touring this debut show - titled The Sunshine Kid - while also fitting in arena dates supporting Michael McIntyre.

Ed Gamble

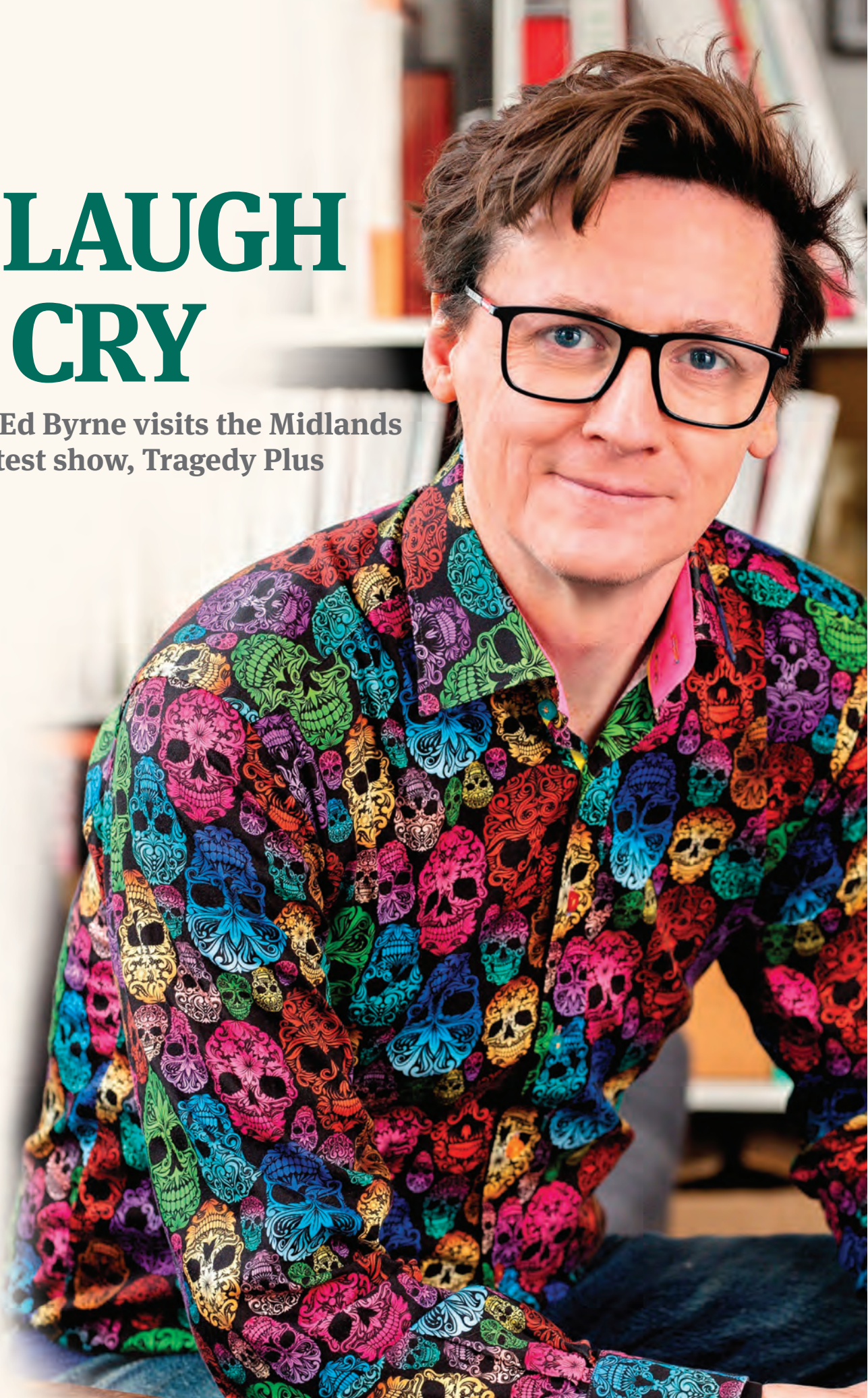
Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sun 26 May; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Sat 1 June; Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, Thurs 6 June

"I'm essentially a great guy delivering humour through your classic microphone/speaker combo," says a tongue-in-cheek Ed Gamble in describing himself. "As well as being a stand-up comedian, I'm an actor and a writer - although, to be honest, I very rarely act, and 'writing' is a very lofty term for the absolute filth I've committed to paper in the past."

Co-host (with James Acaster) of award-winning podcast Off Menu, a judge on Great British Menu, Taskmaster champion and host of Taskmaster The Podcast, Ed stops off in the Midlands this month with his brand-new touring show, Hot Diggity Dog.

TO LAUGH OR CRY

Comedian Ed Byrne visits the Midlands with his latest show, Tragedy Plus Time...



With an impressive 30-plus years on the comedy circuit behind him, Ed Byrne is a familiar face in the world of stand-up. However, his latest touring show, Tragedy Plus Time, offers something a bit different from usual, exploring the sensitive subject of grief and loss. Here, the County Dublin-born comedian explains how he has combined sadness and laughter for the show and talks about what prompted him to bring the bittersweet topic to the stage...

Is there no end to the man's talents? A staple of revered panel show *Mock The Week*, Ed Byrne has also sledded down the side of a volcano for Dara and Ed's *Great Big Adventure*, upstaged Martin Sheen and Robert Downey Jr on *The Graham Norton Show*, and demonstrated his driving skills on *Top Gear* and *The World's Most Dangerous Road*. He's also proven himself to be quiz-show dynamite on programmes including *The Chase: Celebrity Special*, *The Hit List*, *Pointless Celebrities* and *All-Star Family Fortunes*.

But for all his dalliances with the world of television light entertainment, Ed remains at heart a truly great stand-up comedian. He's honed his craft for a remarkable 30 years now, garnering a hatful of awards and a constant, borderline bewildering stream of five-star reviews along the way.

His 14th touring show, *Tragedy Plus Time*, which he's bringing to the Midlands this month, sees him heading into emotional new territory.

"It's something of a departure, and I'm slightly worried about that," he concedes. "I've never really had the desire to write a show that had an overly serious element to it. I got a lot of five-star reviews on the last show [2019's *If I'm Honest*], but some four-star ones that opined, 'Well it's funny, but that's all it is...' As if that's not enough these days. Frankly, just being funny is a furrow I've been happy to occupy. But this new show features some heart-wrenching, soul-bearing stuff."

That much is indisputable. For *Tragedy Plus Time*, Ed bravely ventures into the world of grief and loss, a decision prompted by the passing of his younger brother Paul, aged just 44, in February 2022. Comedy that takes death as its cue is not unprecedented, but it takes creative courage to explore.

"I was in two minds about whether to do a show of this nature. Then I decided this was the subject I was going to tackle, but I wasn't quite sure how to go about it. But once I started down that road, that was it... Then my main worry was, how funny is it going to be and is it going to work?"

These were legitimate concerns. This isn't gallows humour; it's something else entirely.

"The first time I performed it, it lasted more than an hour. That surprised me, but it was too long, so I had to decide whether to cut funny jokes or material that's meaningful. That kind of decision was new to me, and

what's really annoying is that the one person I would have asked for advice on that is the guy the show's about. It's like when you get dumped by someone and you're heartbroken. The one person you'd usually want to talk to about it is the very person who dumped you. I've spoken to people who worked with Paul, who was a comedy director, and they've said that his thing was, 'You can be as emotional as you like and as serious as you like, but there has to be a joke.' So the idea of saying something purely for the emotional gut-punch was off the table."

Nor is *Tragedy Plus Time* unrelenting - the genius of it is that it takes the most difficult of subject matter and encourages the audience to laugh in its face in a way they would otherwise simply never do.

"Obviously I don't want the whole thing to be an onslaught. That's partly because of the digressions, and that's why they're there. But they also illustrate how grief works, in that you can still have a good time, you can still be happy, you can still have a laugh about other things and be frivolous. But grief is always there, waiting for you when you're done with being silly.

"The show does elicit a very pure emotional response in the audience. There's something about the fact that when somebody dies, everyone else carries on like nothing's happened. Because nothing has happened to them. So there's an anger in grief, too... how can everyone else carry on as though nothing has happened?"

Ed candidly admits that mining his family's bereavement for comedic effect challenges his performing skills - and emotional bandwidth - in a unique way. Is this a nightly catharsis for the Irish comedian? To an extent, yes.

"Death is universal. We will all lose someone. So the best thing to do is laugh at it... although I was aware, when I was first writing and performing this new show, that there was a danger I might, you know, lose it onstage. I did a work-in-progress at the Museum of Comedy and there was an audible crack in my voice. On the third performance, I did actually cry on stage, and I'm sure for anyone who was there [assumes a very theatrical voice] 'it was a very powerful experience.' But I don't want it to be the sort of thing where I rip my heart out and stamp on it for the audience's delectation. I've been able to throttle back my emotions and keep them in check."

What of the origins of the concept that 'comedy is tragedy plus time'? It's widely credited to American writer, humourist and quote machine Mark Twain, as many of these things are. Having researched it, Ed says there's no conclusive proof that he coined it.

Twain's contribution to the arts might have benefitted from an audio/visual dimension, if such a thing had existed in the 1880s, but it's something Ed has avoided. Until now.

"There are WhatsApp messages from Paul that I wanted to share, and I could have just read them out. But that wouldn't have the same resonance, and you have to see them to fully appreciate the context. Then there's a video of a weird guy who produces celebrity obituaries... To be honest, I'm still tinkering with the audio/visual aspect, so there may well be more of that in the show. It's a supplementary element, though; it's not integral. I don't want anyone to worry unduly about the introduction of technology to the proceedings."

Tragedy Plus Time isn't Ed Byrne deconstructing comedy or going meta. That's not what he does. Nonetheless, this is a satisfyingly left-field move from one of the undeniable masters of comedy. It's every bit as moving as it is funny, and vice versa.

"Is it okay to talk about this stuff? I'd say this. Every night, hundreds of people who didn't know who Paul Byrne was will leave the theatre knowing who Paul Byrne was. I'm happy with that, and I think I give a good account of him on stage. I wouldn't say he's up there with me every night, but he's there every time I think about the show, and I've got to make sure I do right by him. I briefly entertained a notion of writing a one-man play, with me sitting and talking to him towards the end of his life. But you know, I'm a stand-up comic. It's what I do. I said to the audience in one of the early previews, 'Yes, it is sad - but don't worry because the show is funny. Because, believe it or not, I'm actually quite good at this.'"

.....

Tragedy Plus Time shows at Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Thursday 9 May; Dudley Town Hall, Saturday 11 May; Coventry's Albany Theatre, Thursday 23 May; Tamworth Assembly Rooms, Thursday 26 September; Huntingdon Hall, Worcester, Friday 11 October; Regal, Evesham, Thursday 5 December

GREAT ENTERTAINMENT AMPLIFIED

Making once-in-a-lifetime events even more spectacular!

Birmingham's Utilita Arena hosts jaw-dropping events and the biggest names in music and comedy. Before the summer is out, everyone from Take That to Megan Thee Stallion are scheduled on stage. The venue offers a premium service - Amplify - which does what it says on the tin: it enhances,

elevates and amplifies your experience. Booking through Amplify promises to make any show unforgettable. Live entertainment has changed over the last five years, and audiences appreciate just how special seeing your icon on stage can be. Amplify gives everyone the opportunity to

invest in their night and make sure they have the most incredible, memorable experience. Whether you want to party in style and luxury, relax in a spacious lounge with stunning views, or simply spend less time in the queue and more time with your friends, Amplify might just have something to offer.



GET AN UPGRADE

For anyone who loves the atmosphere of a thousands-strong arena but hates standing in the inevitable queue, Amplify offers Bar and Hospitality packages. The price includes premium arena seating and access to a separate bar area (with its own toilet facilities) where you can be away from the crowds before the show and during the interval. Pete Tong presents Ibiza Classics at the arena on Thursday 12 December. The Premium Bar Package grants access through a private entrance to the VIP Bar itself - so you can really enjoy your night and minimise time in the queue. The package also includes onsite parking and two complimentary drinks vouchers, for an extra budget bonus.

DINE IN STYLE

You can even make a night of it and order a meal with Amplify's bespoke pre-show dining. Catering for everything from casual bar snacks to classy four-course dining, Amplify will provide the perfect food to complement your night, maybe even with a themed snack (garlic bread before seeing Peter Kay, anyone?).

Funnyman Mo Gilligan visits Utilita on Saturday 30 November as part of his world tour, In The Moment. Amplify provides a Tapas 'Soul in a Bowl' package for £180, which includes everything from the VIP Bar package and much more. For two hours before the show, you have access to an exclusive bar - with inclusive drinks - and Amplify's informal tapas menu. You also have the option to order interval drinks in advance.



A TASTE OF LUXURY

If you want a truly special experience, try the very best Amplify has to offer, by splashing out on an all-inclusive private balcony. Private balcony Show Cubes accommodate up to 14 guests. Included in the price is your own cosy en-suite lounge, food & drink from your own bartender, and of course panoramic views of the arena. It's sure to make your evening really special - and might just be the perfect location for an extravagant birthday bash or anniversary celebration.

If you're more of a foodie, you might consider Amplify's Club Hospitality Packages. Pet Shop Boys will be appearing at Utilita on Saturday 8 June, with Club Hospitality Packages starting at £385. You'll get the best seats in the arena, a champagne reception, a bar with complimentary drinks, and table service in the private restaurant beforehand, in the interval, and even after the show is over.

The package includes a sumptuous four-course dining experience to make your evening elite and unique.



MEMBERSHIPS

For big fans of big shows, you might also want to consider an Amplify Membership, beginning at £250, with a dedicated account manager to ensure that you're always getting the best service.

Membership offers priority access to events and guarantees the chance to purchase from two to 10 hospitality packages per show - depending on membership level - with a healthy discount. Reducing the cost of many hospitality packages ensures that members can continue to enjoy the best entertainment Utilita has to offer, in style.

SPACES TO ENJOY

If you fancy some elbow room and an incredible view, then a seat on the balcony will suit you down to the ground - or perhaps up to the ceiling! Amplify has three balcony lounges, each with a private bar, toilets and extra space to get up and dance if the mood takes you. You won't miss out on the atmosphere either, with a spectacular view of the whole arena. Take That will be performing in six epic shows at Utilita between Tuesday 14 and Monday 20 May. Balcony Packages start from £130, with amazing seats and a private lounge & bar area making for a much more relaxed experience.

The crème de la crème is the Amplify Premier Lounge: seats cost £200, which includes a 'welcome' drinks reception and access to the private bar for 30 minutes after the event - meaning that you can keep the party going while you wait for the crowds to disperse.

TAKE YOUR PICK

TAKE THAT - 14 & 15, 17 - 20 May 2024

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Amplify Premium Bar Access (£170pp)
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TEXAS - 13 September 2024

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Amplify Bar & Nibbles Hospitality (£180 pp)
Amplify Freestyle Hospitality (£225 pp)

MO GILLIGAN - 30 November 2024

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You can reach Amplify's helpful team, who will talk you through all the options available, by calling 0344 338 0333 or emailing info@amplify.co.uk. Whether you want to up the party atmosphere or have a more intimate show experience, it's worth considering Amplify to upgrade your night. For all upcoming shows, visit amplify.co.uk





Sister Act The Musical

Birmingham Hippodrome, Mon 13 - Sat 18 May

After seeing her gangster boyfriend kill an employee, Reno lounge singer Deloris Van Cartier is placed on a witness protection programme and hidden in a convent, where she proceeds to take over the rehearsals of the in-house choir of nuns. Thanks to her musical expertise, the choir becomes 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...

Based on the hit Whoopi Goldberg movie of the same name, this fun-filled spectacular stars Sue Cleaver - who's best known for playing the character of Eileen Grimshaw in Coronation Street - as Mother Superior.

An Officer And A Gentleman

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Mon 6 - Sat 11 May;
Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Mon 23 - Sat 28 September

If you're a nostalgia buff with a soft spot for the 1980s, this is a night out at the theatre not to be missed.

Based on the same-named Academy Award-winning film starring Richard Gere and Debra Winger, Leicester Curve's well-reviewed show tracks the heady romance that develops between Zack Mayo - a United States Navy Aviation Officer Candidate - and a young, captivating and seriously fiery woman named Paula Pokrifki.

The story unfolds against a backdrop of classic 1980s pop songs from the likes of Blondie, Bon Jovi, Cyndi Lauper and Madonna. It also features the Oscar-bagging hit, Up Where We Belong, which was recorded by Joe Cocker and Jennifer Warnes.



Life Of Pi

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Tues 7 - Sat 11 May

Lolita Chakrabarti's innovative stage adaptation of Yann Martel's award-winning novel tells the story of teenager Piscine Molitor 'Pi' Patel, whose parents run a zoo in India but decide to sell up and emigrate to Canada.

After a storm wrecks the ship on which they're travelling, Pi is cast adrift on a lifeboat, which he shares with some of the creatures from the zoo - most notably a Bengal tiger named Richard Parker...

A menagerie of exotic creatures is at the heart of the show, all brought to life through the magic of puppetry.

"We're always improvising on stage, so it feels really live," reveals puppeteer Romina Hytten, who helps work the tiger. "That's part of making the animals feel as alive and as realistic as possible. We don't want it to be too choreographed or too set in stone. So there's room to play every night, and you get to feel that exciting buzz of not being quite sure what the tiger is going to do next."



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WNO Welsh National Opera

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WITHNAIL & SHEEHAN

Actor Robert Sheehan prepares to bring
an iconic character to the stage...



Photo credit: Manuel Harlan

The first-ever stage version of *Withnail & I* premieres at Birmingham Rep this month. The original 1987 film quickly became cult and launched the screen career of Richard E Grant, who played *Withnail*. Now it's Robert Sheehan who's taking on the role of the flamboyant out-of-work actor. Here, he talks about the challenge of playing the part and explains why he thinks the film is so widely adored...

When Robert Sheehan was offered the part of the garrulous dipsomaniac *Withnail* in the new stage adaptation of the hit 1987 film *Withnail And I*, he jumped at the chance. "It's a feast of a role to play," says the BAFTA-nominated actor. "It would have been a very difficult part to pass up because *Withnail And I* is just an incredibly well-written movie and play.

"It's such a rare piece because all the moves of the story come from these odd decisions and dynamics between the characters - and as a result of that, you have no idea how it's going to turn out."

Frequently included in 'best film ever' lists, *Withnail And I* features two out-of-work actors - *Withnail* and *Marwood* - who take a holiday in the Lake District in a cottage owned by *Withnail's* Uncle Monty, who then comes to visit - and mayhem ensues. Written by Bruce Robinson, who has adapted the script for the Birmingham Rep stage show, it is loosely based on his experiences as a young, unemployed actor. The film catapulted Richard E Grant's *Withnail*, Paul McGann's *Marwood* and Richard Griffiths' Uncle Monty into cinematic history.

"Since as far back as I can remember," says Robert, "I've been aware of the movie and its unique status as a movie that is much adored and much quoted by everyone, and the reverence that surrounds it.

"It was very much one of those formative films, and since this job has come along, a lot of friends of mine, mainly male, have told me they got into acting because of this movie. I think it's a movie that showcases some wonderful acting, and that's why it lends itself so well to the stage.

"It's very much pushing the focus onto the wonderful, dynamic performances going on and through the brilliantly bizarre and eccentric characters who make strange decisions, and those decisions become the movie. So it's a very character-driven piece."

Showing at Birmingham Rep this month, *Withnail And I* is a Rep production helmed by the theatre's artistic director, Sean Foley. Alongside Robert, Adonis Siddique plays *Marwood* and Malcolm Sinclair is Uncle Monty. So what are Robert's thoughts on

stepping into Richard E Grant's *Withnail*-sized boots?

"A lot of people have said to me it's a lot of pressure - but why is it? It's certainly pressure if you don't trust in your own ability, but if you work hard and everyone else is working hard, then you'll make something very interesting.

"The play obviously has the meat of the film because it's a very similar script, but I think it's being told quite differently. The physical universe of the stage and the changing of the scenes and the reality of trying to blend one scene with the next one all kind of accumulates to create something quite different."

For Robert, it is important to create his own *Withnail*.

"People are always going to bring a sense of the movie into the playhouse, but it's our job to tell the story and find our own way to do that. There's really no point in bringing the movie into the rehearsal room; you've got to step back from it and allow the intuitions in the room to take the story forward."

Robert first trod the boards at the age of 12, playing Oliver in *Oliver With A Twist* at his school in Ireland. As a teenager he appeared in Aisling Walsh's 2003 film, *Song For A Raggy Boy*.

He has since built up a successful career in a host of stage productions, including *The Playboy Of The Western World* at the Old Vic, *Endgame* at Dublin's Gate Theatre and Trevor Nunn's *Richard III* at the Rose Theatre. That's alongside numerous television series, including playing his BAFTA-nominated Nathan Young in the sci-fi comedy series *Misfits*, Klaus Hargreeves in *The Umbrella Academy* and Darren Treacy in *Love/Hate*. Films have included *Mortal Engines*, *Season Of The Witch* and *The Mortal Instruments: City Of Bones*.

Despite Robert clearly having had plenty of acting jobs over the past two decades, it has to be asked - what does it feel like to be playing an out-of-work actor?

"Well, we've all been there," he laughs ruefully before pausing to think. "What is it like playing an out-of-work actor? I'm probably playing an out-of-work actor who is desperate not to be out of work, but at the

same time there's a huge hypocrisy going on with *Withnail*.

"At one point, a job is floated to him, but he thinks the job is beneath him, so the audience suspects he doesn't really want to be an actor.

"He wants to be a failed actor; he wants to be a guy who can go around, attend parties and say things and essentially perform his own life, but actually I don't think he can cope with the idea of getting up every morning and working hard and taking direction. Essentially he has completely the wrong attitude going into the world of acting."

Robert believes the play taps into much within human nature.

"It says a lot about British personal identity and friendship. It demonstrates a friendship which is probably toxic. It's not the healthiest friendship in the world, but it's two people who allow for one another 100 per cent because *Withnail* has found in *Marwood* a friend who can tolerate him and enjoys him for all his flaws.

"The show is an embellishment of life, but it does have something very truthful at its core - that real friendship allows for warts and all."

And he hopes audiences enjoy this new way of seeing the classic story and its characters. "I would love people to go away and think it was great; it was like re-living the film, but there were aspects that were completely different. I hope they have a good laugh, because when you get an entire audience laughing, you get the most wonderful feeling. The rehearsal period has been hard work, but it's worth saying I haven't laughed this much in a long time. Kudos to Bruce Robinson's writing - you could come and see this show two or three times and not consciously absorb all the hilarious, bonkers images that Bruce is throwing at you. So don't just come see the show once - come and see it four or five times minimum."

.....

***Withnail And I* shows at The Rep, Birmingham from Friday 3 - Saturday 25 May**



Twelve Angry Men

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre,
Tues 7 - Sat 11 May

Familiar television face Jason Merrells (Emmerdale/Casualty/Waterloo Road) heads the cast in this brand-new touring version of Reginald Rose's gripping courtroom drama. Best known from the 1957 film starring Henry Fonda, *Twelve Angry Men* tells the story of one juror's battle to save the life of a man on trial for the murder of his father. Initially a lone voice in the wilderness, Juror Eight is faced with the monumental challenge of persuading his 11 fellow jurors to spare the defendant's life - a task made all the more difficult by the other men's prejudices and preconceptions about the trial...

The production also stars Gray O'Brien (Coronation Street), Tristan Gemmill (Casualty/Coronation Street), Michael Greco (EastEnders), Ben Nealon (Soldier Soldier) and Gary Webster (Minder).

Withnail And I

The Rep, Birmingham, Fri 3 - Sat 25 May

During the bohemian days of the late 1960s, two out-of-work thespians - Withnail and Marwood - leave behind them the bright lights of London in favour of what they hope will be a cathartic holiday in the countryside. But will their stay at the country home of Withnail's flamboyantly gay uncle help reinvigorate their booze- and drug-addled brains - and in so doing inspire them to kickstart their flagging acting careers?... Nearly 40 years after its release, the film of *Withnail And I* is widely considered to be one of the greatest British movies ever made - so the arrival of this brand-new and first-ever stage version will no doubt delight its legion of fans. The play has been written by Bruce Robinson - who wrote and directed the film - and is helmed by The Rep's artistic director, Sean Foley.

The Kite Runner

Malvern Theatres, Tues 28 May - Sat 1 June

Matthew Spangler's stage version of Khaled Hosseini's bestselling novel takes its audience on a journey across time and continents. At its heartland is the story of a friendship that exists between two young boys: Amir, a well-to-do Pashtun, and Hassan, a Hazara who's the son of Amir's father's servant. The youngsters spend their days together, flying kites and blissfully happy in one another's company - until, that is, their

friendship is devastated and their lives shattered by a display of shameful cowardice on Amir's part

Charles Dickens' The Haunting

New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme,
Fri 24 May - Sat 15 June

Charles Dickens' ghost stories are the inspiration for this spine-chiller of a play from Hugh Janes. Employed by a former associate of his uncle to catalogue a private library, book dealer David Filde encounters more than he bargained for when he visits a crumbling mansion on a desolate moorland...

You're Bard!

Halesowen Town Hall, Fri 3 May; Albany Theatre, Coventry, Sat 4 May

Joining the likes of the Reduced Shakespeare Company and zany funsters Oddssocks in searching for ways to make the works of the bard a



wee bit funnier than they might otherwise be, IK Productions here presents a show in which the audience decides just about everything - from which play is to be performed (out of a possible four), to the style in which the performance is to be presented. A quartet of experienced actors take on all the required roles.

The Rotting Hart: A New Queer Horror

Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham,
Thurs 23 & Fri 24 May

Theatre, choreography and storytelling are the vehicles via which *The Crested Fools* deliver their 'new queer horror' - a production which, while tackling the history of homophobia in Spain, also takes a look at 'the enduring hate that persists inside ourselves'.

The show visits the Old Joint Stock having made a big impression at the Edinburgh Fringe, where it was nominated for the highly regarded OffFest Award.

English

The Other Place, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, Thurs 9 May - Sat 1 June

Iranian American playwright Sanaz Toossi's humorous, poignant and Pulitzer Prize-winning drama is here making its European debut.

Set in a classroom in Iran, the play focuses on four adult students for whom learning to speak English is vital.

As the story unfolds and they attempt to perfect their accents, pronunciation and vocabulary, the classmates come to realise that there is far more to their lives than can ever be uttered through language... This Diyan Zora-directed production is being presented by the Royal Shakespeare Company in association with London's Kiln Theatre, to where it will transfer next month.

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Theatre previews from around the region

**Love's Labour's Lost**

Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, until Sat 18 May

Eager to pursue loftier pastimes, four young lads decide to boot their wenching ways into touch for a whole year. But then, as luck would have it, four young beauties unexpectedly arrive on the scene, putting the boys' resolve well and truly to the test!... One of Shakespeare's lesser performed works, *Love's Labour's Lost* gained in popularity for a while courtesy of Kenneth Branagh's film version. Taking as its theme men's preoccupation with the opposite sex, it's a work which has much to offer in the way of chuckleworthy entertainment - a claim which can't necessarily be made for *all* of the bard's comedies...

Nasty

Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham, Fri 24 & Sat 25 May

"We are an autobiographical, confessional, queer theatre company comprised of three emerging artists," explain Succulent Theatre, the trio of



talented women behind this thought-provoking new show. "We make work based on our own lived experiences and perform this through a variety of story-telling, music and movement.

"[Our new play] *Nasty* guides the audience through the experiences of two 'big' women and showcases the battles they've had with body image, eating habits, bodily functions and their compulsive need for self-pleasure! Some stories are funny, some stories are strange, some might make you shed a tear. What connects them all is that every one single person can relate to at least one of them. Not holding back from the truth of what it is to be a human, we want to teach everyone that it's completely okay to be unapologetically you - as long as you are always kind."

The Olive Boy

Swan Theatre, Worcester, Sat 18 May; Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, Tues 21 & Wed 22 May; Lichfield Garrick, Sat 25 May

When his mother dies unexpectedly, a grieving teen decides that the only way to move forward is to try and get a girlfriend. But some things in life are easier said than done... A month-long sell-out at the Edinburgh Fringe speaks volumes for the

quality of this coming-of-age comedy, a show which its producers are publicising as 'crude and compelling'.

The production has been deemed suitable for audience members aged 16-plus.

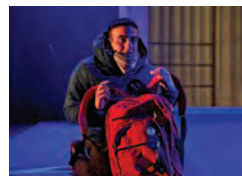
**The Boy At The Back Of The Class**

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Tues 14 - Sat 18 May

Having fled war-torn Syria, nine-year-old Ahmet now sits on a chair at the back of the classroom, a refugee kid separated from his parents, unable to speak English, and at the mercy of the school bullies.

But salvation is at hand... When one of his classmates learns of his plight, she and her friends determine to reunite the little Syrian boy with his family...

A thought-provoking exploration of the power of friendship and kindness - experienced in a world that doesn't always make sense - Nick Ahad's new play is adapted from Onjali Q Raúf's multi-award-winning children's novel of the same name...

**Beautiful Evil Things**

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Tues 14 & Wed 15 May

A one-woman play from critically acclaimed theatre company Ad Infinitum, *Beautiful Evil*

Things views the epic tale of the Trojan War through the eyes of decapitated gorgon Medusa.

"We figured hers is the most infamous of female gazes," explains the production's performer and co-creator, Deborah Pugh. "So what if we could see some of these well-trodden stories through Medusa's eyes? What would be her take on it, and who would she focus on?"

"These stories are called epics for a reason - every thread you pull can go off in 15 different directions. Even in the moment Medusa is decapitated, she gives birth from her neck to a winged horse and a golden giant. We need the audience to ignore that because we need the story to go in another direction. It's still the Trojan War as you know it; we just follow a different thread."

**Operation Julie: A Rock Musical**

Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Wed 22 - Sat 25 May

Telling the true story of Wales' biggest-ever drugs bust, *Operation Julie* is described by its producers as 'Breaking Bad collides with *The Good Life*' and is presented against a 1970s prog-rock soundscape...

If you're looking to experience a refreshingly original night out at the theatre, we would humbly suggest that this might well be the show for you...

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Theatre for younger audiences

**Madagascar The Musical**

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Thurs 16 - Sun 19 May; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Thurs 30 May - Sun 2 June

The smell of the greasepaint and roar of the crowd has tempted the furry cast of Madagascar the movie to forsake New York's Central Park Zoo in favour of treading the boards on a UK theatre tour.

Alex the Lion, Marty the Zebra, Melman the Giraffe and Gloria the Hippo are all present and correct in a show that producers promise will send your kids home positively wild (which may or may not be a good thing!). BBC and Strictly Come Dancing favourite Karim Zeroual stars.

Morgan & West's Massive Magic Show For Kids

Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Sun 19 May

Time-travelling magicians Morgan & West here make a welcome return with a show that combines 'conjuring capers, mysterious magic tricks, larger-than-life laughs, and fantastic facial furniture'. All of which the dynamic duo intend to cram into one single solitary hour of non-stop family fun! Although the production has been designed with youngsters aged five-plus in mind, the fellas are confident that younger children will also enjoy the show.

The Tiger Who Came To Tea

Lichfield Garrick, Tues 28 - Thurs 30 May; The Albany Theatre, Coventry, Fri 31 May - Sun 2 June; Worcester Swan Theatre, Wed 17 & Thurs 18 July

Everybody's favourite tea-guzzling tiger is back in town, dropping in on Sophie and her mum just as they're settling down for an afternoon cuppa... Adapted by David Wood from the late Judith Kerr's 1968 book of the same name, this 55-minute show features singalong songs and plenty of magic - not to mention a big, stripey tiger, of course!

**The Lion Inside**

Birmingham Town Hall, Sat 25 & Sun 26 May

Rachel Bright & Jim Field's bestselling story is here given the theatrical treatment by Nicoll Entertainment, whose children's shows are tailored specifically to youngsters aged three and older.

With a running time of 55 minutes, the show tells the tale of a tiny little mouse who decides he'd like to roar like the lion who lives on top of the rock under which he (the mouse) resides.

Maybe the lion would teach him how to?... Or maybe he'd just gobble him up instead!... Playfully exploring themes including facing up to deeply held fears, dealing with the experience of change, and celebrating people's differences, the production brings together the ever-popular kids'-show ingredients of puppetry, music and song.

Dinosaur Adventure Live: Trouble On Volcano Island

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Tues 28 May; Palace Theatre, Redditch, Wed 29 May

The previous Dinosaur Adventure Live production was advertised as 'the greatest prehistoric show on Earth', providing audiences with a '65 million years in the making' hour of 'roarsome' fun that was 'totally T-rex-iffic'...

If this brand-new offering proves to be anywhere near as fun-filled and slick as the producers' pun-packed publicity, then the above-listed venues could well have a 'monster' hit on their hands!

This latest adventure provides sure-to-be-awestruck youngsters with the chance to meet a selection of magnificent monsters from the mists of time - including, of course, the gigantic (but presumably in this instance not gigantically terrifying!) Tyrannosaurus Rex.

The Little Prince

Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent, Mon 27 May

Kids' theatre company Lyngo here turn their attention to Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's bestselling children's book, recounting the story of a young boy who lives on an asteroid and decides to visit Earth, courtesy of a passing flock of space-birds...

Peppa Pig's Fun Day Out

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sat 25 & Sun 26 May; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Wed 31 July & Thurs 1 August; Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Wed 28 & Thurs 29 August; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Wed 18 & Thurs 19 September; Palace Theatre, Redditch, Wed 25 & Thurs 26 September

If you've taken your little ones to any of the previous Peppa Pig stage shows - and enjoyed the experience of watching them having a fantastic time - you'll be in no doubt that this latest production is well worth catching.

The show sees Peppa, along with her family and friends, enjoying a fun-packed day at the zoo and the beach.

Parents are advised to prepare their children for all manner of cracking capers, including singing and dancing with colourful scarecrows, feeding penguins, building big sandcastles, and swimming in the sea!...

Looks like an oinktastic time is going to be had by all!



FOREVER FRIENDS

Award-winning musical *Come From Away* celebrates the human spirit
- and visits Birmingham this month...



Award-winning musical *Come From Away* is a joyous tale about people who are brought together in the most traumatic of circumstances. The real-life story of 7,000 air passengers grounded in Canada after 9/11, the smash-hit show is stopping off in the Midlands as part of its first-ever UK tour. What's On recently caught up with two of the show's creatives to find out more...

The musical *Come From Away* is an international blockbuster seen by audiences in the Americas, Europe, Australia and Asia. And yet when music & writing team Irene Sankoff and David Hein were asked if they were interested in the project, they discovered a number of people had already turned it down.

Perhaps the others felt it would be too difficult to re-tell the true story of how the people of one small town in Newfoundland came together to help 7,000 airline passengers stranded in the wake of the September the 11th terror attacks in 2001.

But Irene and David took on the challenge, and *Come From Away* premiered in the United States in 2015 to huge acclaim. It transferred to Broadway two years later and then opened in the London West End in 2019.

Now, the musical - which won four Olivier Awards - is on tour, coming to Birmingham Hippodrome this month and the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre in November.

Of course, in other hands the musical may not have been as beautifully told or as wonderfully successful, but Irene says the story had a special resonance for her and husband David, which is why they said yes.

"We were living in Manhattan on September the 11th, uptown in a student residence with people from different countries around the world," she recalls. "A lot of them were working downtown. Mercifully everyone came back, and our community really came together. There were people at that residence from all over, refugees and Americans, and we helped each other get through that time." And so when Irene and David learned about how the Canadian community of Gander had pulled together, they were determined to pay tribute to the townspeople's generosity in the musical. The couple received a grant from the Canadian government to visit Gander on the 10th anniversary of 9/11, when the town was welcoming back friends they had made a decade before.

"It was amazing," recalls David. "It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to interview the Newfoundlanders and the 'Come From Aways', which is what the Newfoundlanders call anyone who's not from there. They were all returning to commemorate the incredible friendships they had made, practically becoming family members; they got adopted out there - and we got similarly adopted!"

"We talked to everyone we possibly could, and everyone had hundreds of stories from that time. So we returned with thousands of stories that we wanted to fit into a 100-minute musical."

The couple were keen to ensure the musical was a true reflection of the experiences they had heard - but condensing all the tales into one show was no easy task.

"The very first draft, we were working with students, and we had about four hours and were about 100 pages in and the people still weren't off the planes!" recalls Irene. "So it was just a constant peeling away to get to the spine of the story, the truth of the story. There are some amalgamated characters, and some things happened to different people than we portrayed in the musical, but that was in an effort to get it into a succinct story."

And it was essential that the show reflected the experiences of both the townspeople of Gander and those passengers who had been helped.

"We tried to keep everything possible in there," David explains. "There was one story we were told about the local drugstore supplying medication to everyone around there, calling round the world trying to fill people's prescriptions and trying to speak whatever language was needed. Originally that was three scenes, and now it's one line in the show, but it's important to us because when that pharmacist came to see the show, they were like 'You got it right - that was the experience.'"

Irene and David wanted *Come From Away* to be a positive story about how people can come together to support each other, rather than a show about the horror of the attacks.

"In some ways we wrote the show because we were here over 9/11, but we didn't want anyone to be traumatised by it," David explains. "We say the word 'terrorist' in it once, and the World Trade Center once, because this is really a 9/12 story. It's a story about how a small town responded to strangers coming to their town, and how they opened their hearts and their homes and gave everything. It's about the potential that we all have to do good and to help in response to darkness. And after the pandemic it's become a show about how do you help, how do you open yourself to people you don't know but who might, after spending five days together, become lifelong friends?"

Come From Away has been popular in diverse cultures, and Irene and David believe its success is because its message is ultimately universal.

"I think it's a little bit of every person's story; you've all been in a position when you've needed help or you've been able to help," says Irene. "When we were in Japan for the show, I remember saying to the company manager 'I don't understand why you like this show' because 9/11 isn't really in their psyche the same as it is in America. And she said 'We've had our earthquakes, our tsunamis, our disasters, and it's just seeing people come together in a tragedy and help each other. That's really what speaks to us.'"

The show's international success has made the town of Gander famous worldwide - and yet many of the townspeople can't fathom what all the fuss is about; they simply did what they believe anyone would do.

"There is something about Newfoundlanders," says Irene. "I forget until I go back just how welcoming and helpful they are. It's just unbelievable. Maybe it's the cold winters, it's the being there for your neighbours, and you never know if you're going to be the next one who needs help. "I think it took them a while to be proud of what they did. They don't understand why this is such a big deal. I think some people like the attention and some people are like 'We did what we did and we would do it again, but we're not looking for any attention for it.'"

Come From Away has also made Gander a surprising tourist destination.

"The show is playing out there each summer now," David says. "And the joy of that is that when we've been out to celebrate that, every hotel is booked, every cab company is booked, the restaurants are all full. So it's been wonderful for us to give back to the people who shared their stories with us and trusted us."

.....

***Come From Away* shows at Birmingham Hippodrome from Tuesday 21 May to Saturday 1 June, and then at the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Tuesday 5 to Saturday 9 November**

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Light entertainment from around the region



JaackMaate's Happy Hour

Birmingham Town Hall, Mon 13 May

Comedy podcast series JaackMaate's Happy Hour has hit the road again, and will no doubt be packing them in wherever it stops off.

The JaackMaate of the title is actually comedian Jack Carl Dean, who's been hosting the hugely successful online show since 2018. Joined on stage by podcast co-hosts Stevie White, Robbie Knox and Alfie Indra, Jack is promising 'incredible special effects, unbelievable costumes and an insanely creative plot'. That said, he does also point out that 'the incredibility of the special effects, unbelievability of the costumes and insane creativity of the plot are subject to personal perspective and do not constitute a legally binding contract! You have been warned...

Polly & Esther

Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham,
Sat 25 & Sun 26 May

This work-in-progress production, here being presented in preparation for a summertime run at the Edinburgh Fringe, blends drag performance, musical theatre and cabaret to tell a tale about 'finding family in unlikely places'. The show is written and performed by Cardiff-based mother & daughter drag duo Polly Amorous and Esther Parade.



Mugenkyo Taiko Drummers

Malvern Theatres, Fri 10 May;
Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Thurs 16 May

Europe's longest-established taiko group, Mugenkyo fuse thundering rhythms on huge drums with layers of percussive soundscapes and the delicate sound of the shinobue bamboo flute. Since forming in 1994, the group have become widely admired for their energetic performances and impressive theatrical style, along the way making critically acclaimed appearances at numerous high-profile events, including the Brit Awards and the BBC's Last Night of the Proms. They've even performed in a Bollywood movie!



Mugenkyo visit the region this month as part of their 30th anniversary tour.

Dad's Army Radio Show

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sun 5 May;
Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Thurs 30 May

You've seen the TV show, now listen to the radio broadcast! And what a highly acclaimed one it is too, with a pair of talented actors taking up position behind their microphones to play more than 25 characters between them. The show comprises three Dad's Army episodes which have been adapted for radio for the very first time, complete with sound effects and vintage music. The featured episodes are: The Love Of Three Oranges, The Miser's Hoard and The Making Of Private Pike.



Kevin & Perry Go Large In Concert

Outdoors at the NEC, Birmingham,
Mon 6 & Fri 17 May

Midlands-based fans of Kevin & Perry Go Large have the chance to enjoy the movie 'in concert' this month. Released in the year 2000 and starring Harry Enfield and Kathy Burke, the film is being screened in a big top tent, with the soundtrack provided live by the Silver Screen Symphony Orchestra. Kevin & Perry impersonators will be in

attendance at the show, there are free glow sticks with every ticket, and 1990s fancy dress is positively encouraged.

Mind Mangler: Member Of The Tragic Circle

The Alexandra, Birmingham,
Mon 27 - Wed 29 May

Alongside their better-established theatrical endeavours, The Play That Goes Wrong and Peter Pan Goes Wrong, the ever-resourceful Mischief Theatre have enjoyed enormous success with a more-recent show called Magic Goes Wrong, from which this touring production is a spin-off. The Mind Mangler of the title - played by Henry Lewis, here joined on stage by fellow Mischief maker Jonathan Sayer - is a staggeringly inept stage mentalist whose voice is deeper than his well of talent, and whose life collapses around him as he bumbles his way through far-from-successful attempts at mind-reading and hypnotism... With a running time in excess of two hours, the show for the main part is a bit of a one-trick pony, but fans of Mischief will no doubt find plenty to keep them amused.



ALL AT SEA

The award-winning stage production of Life Of Pi
visits Shrewsbury in May...



Lolita Chakrabarti's innovative stage adaptation of Yann Martel's award-winning novel, *Life Of Pi*, stops off at Shrewsbury's Theatre Severn in May as part of its first-ever UK tour. The story centres around Pi, a teenager who becomes stranded in the Pacific Ocean with a collection of zoo animals, including a tiger named Richard Parker - brought to life on stage through puppetry.

What's On recently caught up with actors Divesh Subaskaran and Adwitha Arumugam, who will alternate the role of Pi...

What are your backgrounds?

Divesh: I was born in Malaysia and grew up in Singapore. I came to London after I did two years of military service in Singapore. I've only lived in the UK for the last four years, and I've never been to most of the places we're touring to. It's so funny because unlike the character of Pi, I'm not a very adventurous person. It took this job for me to see the country, and I'm loving it!

Adwitha: I come from Chennai, which is a couple of hours away from Pondicherry, where the play is set, and I spent a lot of my childhood there. Playing Pi, I've been able to draw on real experiences, real people I know and real images I have in my head. I came to London about four years ago for drama school. I'm really looking forward to going on tour because it's a great opportunity to see the UK. In Sheffield, for example, we went for breakfast in this quaint café that we wouldn't ever have gone to if we weren't in the show - and I had the best iced chai of my life!

With its five Oliviers and three Tonys, the show is a proven success. Have you been able to discover the part of Pi for yourself?

Divesh: I definitely feel I've found my own way into it. The creative team of Max Webster, Finn Caldwell, Scarlet Wilderink and Lolita Chakrabarti have all worked on the show for so long and have an understanding of what the story is all about and the best way to tell it. But I've not felt any pressure to be like another performer. They've been extremely gracious to me in letting me figure out this character for myself. You would think they had a formula, but I don't feel I'm filling the shoes of somebody else. It's super-exciting to come at it from my own point of view.

Adwitha: There's no space in the play to robotically go through the moves. Yann's words and Lolita's words are so beautiful, and it's such an emotionally moving play that it can't be copied and pasted.

What do you bring to the part?

Divesh: As well as reading the novel and the script, I travelled to Pondicherry a month before rehearsals. I spent time living in the French quarter. Obviously, the fact that Pi is out at sea for a year is hard for anyone to match, but I've experimented with some things - for example, trying to fast and seeing

what hunger feels like. I fasted for a week. The very first bite I had to eat - it was a croissant - was like ecstasy. Every bite after that was kind of average! Being in India was great; the environment, the people. It's completely different from where I live in London. There's a certain freedom of expression. I felt what it was like to be in hot weather, to drink chai every day. Pi is very philosophical and spiritual, so I went to the temple, mosque and church. Whenever I would walk past a temple, I would just go and sit in it for a bit and try to surround myself with what the character did. It gives you the confidence that you've been to that place and you've seen what it's like. Your sweat is different. The way you experience heat is different.

Adwitha: Obviously, I'm playing Pi as female, and that in itself changes a lot of things. It's the 1970s in India, and gender roles were quite defined at that point. Relationships change, the way Pi sees the world changes, the perspective on things changes. I'm playing Pi very differently from Divesh, but we have a very collaborative relationship: when I'm doing my run-through, he watches it and tells me things he thought worked and things he might apply to his own performance. And similarly, when he's performing, I'm sat there in the front, giving him notes when he needs it because I've been through the process. Nobody else knows what it's like to be in these shows, so we've got each other's backs.

Why do you think *Life Of Pi* has proved so successful?

Divesh: A plethora of reasons. It's a story about survival, human nature and the animalistic side of human beings. To me, reading Yann Martel's book as someone who grew up in a Hindu household, I'm thinking this guy knows his stuff when it comes to all the religious texts. But ultimately it's a story about survival and how we have this dual nature that comes into conflict sometimes. We are not just one thing; we are multifaceted. And a story about being on a boat with a tiger for a year - what's not exciting about that?

Adwitha: It's such a human story. It's the story of life. It's what every one of us goes through. Every one of us has a Richard Parker, every one of us has a lifeboat, every one of us has been stranded in the middle of the Pacific Ocean and somehow found a way

to a magic island and finally ashore. All of us have been through it, all of us relate to it, because it's a story of family, hope, survival love, belief, faith. These are things that are fundamental to human society.

Is it important for you to know what's real in the story and what's not?

Divesh: For me as an actor, it's important. Pi truly believes he was on the boat with the animals. There's no other version for him. There are discussions in the play about what actually happened on the boat, but they end up believing his story and writing it in the report. I feel that Pi truly believes this story; it's not fiction to him. He needs Tomohiro Okamoto and Lulu Chen from the embassy to validate his existence. That's why those scenes are so powerful - Okamoto is asking about facts and wants to know what happened to the ship and how he survived, and he's telling a story about orangutans floating on a rock with bananas and saving a tiger, but he really believes it.

What's it like working with puppets?


Divesh: The puppeteers do such an amazing job that it's sometimes pretty scary being up there. They do these intense animal studies, and a lot of the sounds you hear on stage are coming from the puppeteers. At the beginning it was difficult to know what that relationship was going to be like, but the more you go through the movement patterns, the more you understand the relationship; if I take a step closer, this killing machine will eat me alive! It's about maintaining that level of tension between myself and the animal. The tiger has been built to look like a real thing, and it has a mind of its own. The puppeteers dictate where it goes, and it's not the same every time. We're playing this game - one night the tiger might actually kill me!

Adwitha: It's so much fun. It's almost better than working with human beings. With the tiger puppet, it's so much more alive because there are three human beings bringing it to life. The power and presence of the puppet is so much bigger. Irrespective of how many times you've seen the puppet, when the tiger is coming at you, trying to kill you, you run!

.....
Life Of Pi shows at Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, from Tues 7 to Sat 11 May.

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Dance previews from across the region

Carlos Acosta: On Before

Birmingham Hippodrome, Mon 6 & Tues 7 May

Given that he nowadays spends his time *behind the scenes* - as director of Birmingham Royal Ballet - it's nice to see legendary Cuban dancer Carlos Acosta back in the spotlight himself, presenting a show that he conceived 14 years ago as a homage to his late mother.

Telling the powerful story of a doomed relationship, the production boasts a diverse musical repertoire - ranging from Handel to Cuban contemporary composer Omar Puente - and features Carlos' own choreography alongside contributions from Russell Maliphant, Kim Brandstrup and Will Tuckett. Carlos is joined in the show - which he's performing in celebration of his 50th birthday - by Laura Rodríguez, a founding member of his Cuban dance company, Acosta Danza.



Johannes Radebe: House Of JoJo

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Thurs 23 & Fri 24 May; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Sun 26 May

Strictly Come Dancing favourite Johannes Radebe made a major splash with his sell-out debut tour a couple of years ago and has firmly established himself on the UK dance-show circuit. He now returns with what's being described as 'a theatrical celebration jam-packed with roof-raising music, dazzling costumes, and of course, world-class dance'. Commenting on his new production, Johannes said: "Give the people what they want and need. Swirl, sip and knock it back. It's palatable, rich in taste and flavour. Served by yours truly... you're all invited down glamour street. Kindly RSVP to LOVE. Leave all your expectations at the door and welcome to the House Of JoJo!"



Strictly The Professionals

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Thurs 2 & Fri 3 May; The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton, Fri 31 May

Helmed by Strictly's creative director of choreography, Jason Gilkison, this annual extravaganza features the TV series' professional dancers strutting their stuff to a fabulous soundtrack.

Previous incarnations of the show have gone down a treat with Strictly fans, and there's every reason to suppose the 2024 edition will prove equally popular.

The 10 participating dancers are Dianne Buswell, Vito Coppola, Carlos Gu, Karen Hauer, Neil Jones, Nikita Kuzmin, Gorka Marquez, Luba Mushtuk, Graziano di Prima, Jowita Przystal, Michelle Tsiakkas and Nancy Xu.

Roshni: Sonia Sabri Company

Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome, Thurs 16 May

"We've always tried to create something which is groundbreaking and pioneering," says Sonia Sabri. "I feel proud to say that we've presented something that's very new and very different. We've been at the forefront of creating new ideas, and that's exactly what we intend to continue doing." Sonia's belief in the need to push the boundaries of dance is reflected in Roshni. Bringing together wordless storytelling, eclectic music, percussive dance and upbeat audience interaction, the show comprises three distinctive dance works that explore 'the highs and lows of life today'.



MAKING SOUNDWAVES

The RSC's *The Buddha Of Suburbia* features music by Niraj Chag, who here talks about his creative process



Musician Niraj Chag has composed music for everything from documentary soundtracks to West End musicals. His recent credits include the Royal Shakespeare Company's new production of The Buddha Of Suburbia - adapted by Emma Rice and Hanif Kureishi from the latter's 1990 novel - and Rifco Theatre Company's musical, Frankie Goes To Bollywood. Niraj stepped out of the recording studio to tell What's On about his creative practice and his journey to success...

How did you get involved in the RSC's The Buddha Of Suburbia, Niraj?

Emma Rice contacted me - I worked with her on a musical called Wah! Wah! Girls. I remember The Buddha Of Suburbia on TV growing up, so I was really excited about the project.

You've worked across multimedia: film, TV, radio and dance... Do you have a favourite medium to work in?

Every medium gives me something different, but I think if I were to choose, I really like documentary films. In things like natural history programmes for the BBC, your music is basically telling the story... The music is also mixed much louder than in any other medium, which is always quite nice!

How do you approach composing for theatre, in contrast with your other work?

It's interesting - I'm taking more from film and TV composition into how I work in theatre and dance. What I'm doing more and more in the early stages is, if I have early rehearsal video or footage, I can actually score it like a film. Directors love it as well, because they can watch the scene and the music in situ.

When you're in rehearsals, things come out - it's a more dynamic, changing beast. Instead of being a scene, it could turn into a dance segment or become a song, so it's a lot more changeable. I find if I have early rehearsal footage or some sort of visual - especially in things like dance - I can score it in time with the movement, and that really helps.

Rifco Theatre Company's Frankie Goes To Bollywood is coming to the Midlands in June and July - how do you park one project and move on to the next?

That's what I'm recording now - I'm doing some of the backing tracks. It's a case of time management and having a clear schedule in terms of what you're doing, when and how you're working... Time and space management - such a boring answer, isn't it!

What's the most challenging project you've worked on?

They're all so different... Wah! Wah! Girls was interesting because we were using a very unique technology which hadn't been used before. We were working in a totally new way, using stems and dynamic vamping - basically trying to have a live band without the live

band! It was quite an interesting challenge. When I first started in the early to mid-90s, I had a sampler which could only record 10 seconds of audio. It's what you do with that - amazing forms of music have come out of those limitations. Drum and bass came out of limited sampling, and that crunchy sound was because they had to reduce the quality, to get a longer sample time.

For me, limitation has become a part of my process as well, because now there's so much power - just having a laptop enables you to have power, which is so different to the power that was available in the 80s and 90s, or even the noughties. When you have a million sounds at your disposal, a part of the art becomes distilling that to what you want to use. The world's your oyster - limitation is a massive part of my process now.

What's your musical background?

I have no musical training - I'm self-taught. I was lucky enough to get into technology very early. I got kicked out of A-level music because I couldn't read and write music. I applied for four music degrees, and all four rejected me. I grew up in Southampton, and I moved to London just to get a record deal. That was my only mission - I got into any old course, just to get to London. That was the dream. Within a year, I had a record deal, and that gave me a little bit of confidence. That's my story in a nutshell.

You clearly had the drive and knew what you wanted to be...

That was the only thing that I had. Growing up, I knew that I wanted to be a musician. My dad was passionate about music, but it was never thought of as a career path for us. My dad came from East Africa in the early 70s. My parents didn't have any education, and my dad worked on the buses and then in a factory. Those are the two jobs he had, so it was unfathomable. The idea of the arts as a career was so esoteric to my family - but there was also this dichotomy that they both loved music.

What were your musical influences?

My brother was a big influence. It's probably because of my brother that I got into music, because he had a band. His band would do Bollywood covers. Growing up in the 80s, I had a lot of Bollywood influences, because my dad was an old-school Bollywood-head. My mum was into very devotional music, so

that was a big influence. Devotional music has this visceral power which strikes you, so it's one of the things that always resonated with me. Then 80s pop, growing up with Prince, Michael Jackson, Jean-Michel Jarre - because that was the cutting edge of technology - to early hip-hop as well.

You've earned many accolades throughout your career - which one means the most?

I wanted to be a musician, but I didn't have any training. I didn't have the opportunity to take piano lessons; I just had to learn through osmosis how to play piano. I had to learn music theory from books in my own time. I had to learn how synthesisers work, just through reading manuals for keyboards. For me, the greatest accolade is that I'm able to work in this industry.

I'm so happy and grateful that I get to do what I love every day, despite not having any technical qualifications - and probably massive imposter syndrome...

Sadly my father passed away a couple of years ago, and he loved 1940s and 50s Bollywood music - that was his thing. I never got to write anything like that for him. Doing Buddha, one of the themes is a 1940s piece of Bollywood. I got to compose what he would have been the proudest of. Part of me feels really gutted that I can't play this for him. It was emotional, but there's a bitter-sweet quality, because it's such an upbeat, happy track. A lot of that 1940s stuff was quite optimistic and joyful, and that's what my dad liked - he liked happy music.

What music do you turn to, when you have to unwind and get away from work?

The problem is, because I'm self-taught, I've learned through listening to music, and then deconstructing it, distilling it down. What's the harmonic component? What's the mix doing? What's the dynamic range? What's the mastering? So now if I listen to something, it's either nothing musical, or something so simple and innocuous that it doesn't trigger that response from me... It's like if you're a doctor, the last thing you want to do after eight joyful hours in the office is write prescriptions or do some diagnoses!

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The Buddha Of Suburbia shows at the Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, until Saturday 1 June



The Fall Guy CERT 12a (126 mins)

Starring **Ryan Gosling, Emily Blunt, Aaron Taylor-Johnson, Hannah Waddingham, Teresa Palmer, Stephanie Hsu** Directed by **David Leitch**

If you're old enough to remember cult 1970s sci-fi series *The Six Million Dollar Man*, you'll likely also recall that its star, Lee Majors, followed up his stint as bionic astronaut Steve Austin by playing a stuntman named Colt Seavers in a show titled *The Fall Guy*. Well, some 43 years after debuting on US television network ABC, the long-running series has now inspired a movie.

Recent Oscar nominee Ryan Gosling here takes the title role as the working-class hero who has plenty on his plate - tracking down a missing movie star, solving a conspiracy, and trying to win back the love of his life - and all whilst engaging in the bone-crunching business of body-bruising stuntwork... *Bullet Train* and *Deadpool 2* director David Leitch is the man at the helm of this hugely entertaining action-comedy.

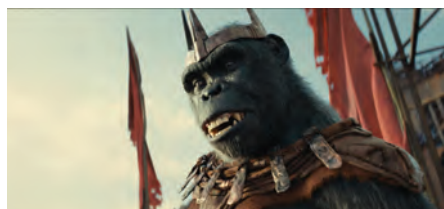
Released Thurs 2 May

Kingdom Of The Planet Of The Apes CERT tbc (145 mins)

Starring **Freya Allan, Kevin Durand, William H Macy, Dichen Lachman, Owen Teague, Peter Macon** Directed by **Wes Ball**

More monkey business from the franchise that just keeps on giving! It's over half a century since the original *Planet Of The Apes* film hit cinema screens, with astronaut Charlton Heston crash-landing on a future Earth ruled by simians and uttering the immortal line "Take your stinking paws off me, you damn dirty ape!" In the decades which have followed that first film's release, there have been a further nine movies, a television series and numerous novels and comic books. This latest film is set several generations in the future, in a world in which apes are the dominant species, living harmoniously, and humans have been reduced to existing in the shadows. As a new tyrannical leader builds his empire, one young ape undertakes a harrowing journey that will cause him to question all that he has known about the past - and to make choices that will define a future for apes and humans alike...

Released Thurs 9 May



Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga

CERT tbc

Starring **Anya Taylor-Joy, Chris Hemsworth, Charlee Fraser, Nathan Jones, Tom Burke, Angus Sampson** Directed by **George Miller**

Planet Of The Apes (see left) and *Garfield* (see right) aren't the only film franchises being revived this month...

The first *Mad Max* movie caused a significant stir way back in 1979, with Mel Gibson starring as a police officer seeking revenge for the biker-gang murder of his wife and child. Three films followed, including 2015's *Fury Road*, which went on to win six of its 10 Academy Award nominations.

Mad Max creator George Miller now returns with this all-new and original standalone action adventure that reveals the origins of Imperator Furiosa, a powerhouse character from *Fury Road*.

As the world falls, young Furiosa is snatched from the Green Place of Many Mothers and falls into the hands of a great Biker Horde led by the Warlord Dementus.

Sweeping through the Wasteland, they come across the citadel presided over by The Immortan Joe.

As the two tyrants battle for dominance, Furiosa must survive numerous trials as she plots a way back home...

Released Fri 24 May

IF CERT tbc

Starring **Ryan Reynolds, John Krasinski, Cailey Flemming**, with the voices of **Steve Carell, Phoebe Waller-Bridge, Maya Rudolph**
Directed by **John Krasinski**

Post-trauma, Bea finds that she can actually see other people's imaginary friends (the IFs of the title)...
...Or rather, she can see the imaginary friends that other people *used to have*, before they grew up and discarded them.
And Bea isn't the only one with the extraordinary superpower either - the fella who lives upstairs (played by Ryan Reynolds) can see them too. Blessed - or should that perhaps read *cursed* - with such a remarkable ability, what's a girl to do but try to help the rejected IFs find a new purpose in life?...
Jack Ryan and The Office actor John Krasinski directs and appears in this family-friendly offering, which he also wrote. He's joined by an all-star cast of both live-action and voice actors.
"Imaginary friends are adorable and all those things," Krasinski told Collider, "but they're also time capsules of your hopes, dreams and ambitions when you were the most fertile of a brain, and it never goes away. I think we're told that we're adults, instead of, what if you realise that you never stopped being a kid..."

Released Fri 17 May



The Garfield Movie CERT tbc

With the voices of **Chris Pratt, Samuel L Jackson, Hannah Waddingham, Ving Rhames, Nicholas Hoult, Cecily Strong**
Directed by **Mark Dindal**

Lasagna-loving indoor cat Garfield is about to have a wild *outdoor* adventure...
After an unexpected reunion with his long-lost father - scruffy street cat Vic - Garfield and his canine friend Odie find themselves catapulted from their perfectly pampered life into a somewhat more challenging situation - joining Vic in a 'hilarious, high-stakes

heist'...
Garfield started out as a Jim Davis cartoon-strip in the 1970s. He became such a massive hit that he's since been the star of numerous television series and a couple of live-action/CGI feature films in which Bill Murray voiced the character. Neither movie went down particularly well with the critics. Dedicated fans of the fabulous feline will no doubt be hoping that this first-ever theatrically released *animated* movie fares rather better...

Released Fri 24 May



Young Woman And The Sea CERT tbc (100 mmins)

Starring **Daisy Ridley, Tilda Cobham-Hervey, Stephen Graham, Kim Bodina, Jeanette Hain, Ethan Rouse** Directed by **Mark Dindal**

Star Wars' Daisy Ridley here takes on the role of Gertrude 'Trudy' Ederle, the first woman to swim across the English Channel. A gold-medal winner at the 1924 Olympics, Gertrude determined to join the roll call of swimmers who had previously swum the 21-mile stretch.

Designing a two-piece swimsuit and sealing her goggles with candle wax, the 20-year-old New Yorker duly made history on the 6th of August 1926, taking 14 hours and 34 minutes to swim from Cape Gris-Nez in France to Kingsdown in Kent.

Although her Channel crossing was enthusiastically celebrated at the time, it is now largely forgotten, so this new film will provide some richly deserved publicity for what was a truly magnificent achievement.

Released Fri 31 May



Hermione Wiltshire, Nicola Preparing for Birth, 2008, Courtesy the artist

MUM'S THE WORD

MAC Birmingham is set to host a new exhibition which will put the hidden history of artist mothers in the spotlight...

Hettie Judah is the curator behind Acts Of Creation: On Art And Motherhood, an exhibition which opens at Birmingham's Midlands Arts Centre next month. Presented by Hayward Gallery Touring, this major show brings together over 100 works of art by mothers - from the feminist avant-garde to the present day - and touches on the themes of creation, maintenance and loss. What's On recently caught up with Hettie to find out more about her highly anticipated show...

A new exhibition, curated by Hettie Judah and touring to Birmingham's Midlands Arts Centre (MAC) next month, explores the joys and heartaches, mess, myths and mishaps of motherhood.

Under the title Acts Of Creation: On Art And Motherhood, the exhibition approaches motherhood as a creative enterprise, albeit one which at times is tempered by ambivalence, exhaustion or grief. It's also designed to be a welcoming space, with colourful galleries and an area where visitors are invited to sit at a kitchen table and respond to the art around them.

The inspiration behind the exhibition came in 2019, when Hettie was researching the impact of motherhood on artists' careers. The project was commissioned by Dr Kate McMillan of the Freelands Foundation, who was in turn researching representation of women in the art world.

During her research, Hettie interviewed over 50 artists, and began to realise that the relationship between art and motherhood was largely uncelebrated. She started to consider how that could be rectified.

"A couple of things came out which really set my mind working as to how I might change the picture," Hettie explains. "One was the fact that very often when people were at art school or were starting out in careers, they received this really strong message that motherhood was incompatible with being an artist, and that motherhood wasn't a good subject for art."

Hettie experienced this message first-hand, studying in the early to mid-1990s. Acts Of Creation now seeks to bring the experiences of artist mothers into the limelight.

"The two things that I wanted to do with this show were to make a case for motherhood being an important subject for art - that it's potentially a subject for really good art - and to highlight that there are artists who have successfully combined motherhood and art making, and to make them visible."

Hettie was keen to collect works from earlier generations of artists who had engaged with the subject of motherhood. Each work in the show can be seen to approach the topic in a unique way.

"What was really striking, when you start to look historically, is that the same works are being remade over and over again. There was very little awareness of artists who had made

work in previous generations. It goes back to the point about motherhood not being seen as a particularly legitimate subject, and even within feminist art history, not necessarily being embraced.

"Overall I've been trying to build up a very complex and diverse picture of the experience of motherhood."

The exhibition has three themes which address these diverse experiences: Creation, which looks at conception, pregnancy, birth and nursing; Maintenance, which explores motherhood and caregiving in the day-to-day; and Loss, which touches on miscarriage and involuntary childlessness, as well as reproductive rights.

"Ever since I've been thinking about this exhibition, I've been thinking about doing a progression all the way from conception, and issues around fertility and infertility, right through to addressing maternal grief. That shape has always been part of my conception of the exhibition. There is a fourth section, which is The Temple - a big gallery that is full of self-portraits, in each of which the artist portrays themselves in relation to motherhood."

The remaining section of the exhibition addresses an experience of motherhood which is perhaps most common but most overlooked...

"It was really important to me to have Maintenance as part of the show, because in general, when we think about motherhood in art, we tend to think about the Madonna and Child, pregnancy and breastfeeding, and really tiny children. I wanted to highlight the fact that motherhood doesn't finish when a child is one year old; it's something that continues for the rest of your life.

Maintenance really addresses motherhood in the day to day; that ongoing labour of motherhood that's maybe less visible but still dominates people's lives."

Alongside the exhibition are related attractions, such as a gig theatre event from The Queer Motherhood Project, and a season of film screenings entitled Bad Mums: Motherhood In Cinema.

MAC is also hosting in-tandem exhibitions: Hidden Mothers by Tereza Buskova, and Who Cares?, produced by the venue in collaboration with Kaye Winwood and Balsall Heath CATS - an organisation supporting families who care for disabled children and

young people.

The programme also holds space to explore more sensitive topics within the theme.

"MAC are really brilliantly going to be hosting a symposium in September, which particularly addresses maternal loss and infertility. They're going to dedicate an entire day to that, in the context of the exhibition." The symposium takes place on Thursday 12 September, with presentations by artists, writers and art historians who will be sharing their research and personal work around the subject.

On the evening of the same day, an 'in conversation with' panel discussion will feature artists Felicity Allen, Jai Chuhan and Su Richardson. The panel is chaired by Hettie herself, who is certainly enthusiastic about the lively public schedule which MAC is programming to coincide with her exhibition. "It's a real dream for me. That idea of having a really engaging public face has been central to how I've planned the show. I couldn't be more thrilled that MAC have taken that idea and run with it, with this very strong public programming strand."

Many of the events programmed around Acts Of Creation - and of course the exhibition itself - are free to enter. MAC's standing as a cultural hub for the local community is something that Hettie wants to celebrate.

"It's not like a big, ticketed, blockbuster exhibition where you've got your one-hour time slot when you need to be in and out... There'll be lots and lots to look at and read, but it should all be quite inviting. I'm really happy that people feel they can drop in for about 15 minutes, and come back on another day to revisit their favourite works. My dearest wish is that the community around MAC makes it their own."

.....
Acts Of Creation: On Art And Motherhood shows at MAC from Saturday 22 June to Sunday 29 September

Acts Of Creation: Symposium & Panel Discussion take place on Thursday 12 September

Tereza Buskova: Hidden Mothers runs from Saturday 1 June to Sunday 29 September

Who Cares? runs from Thursday 6 June to Sunday 22 September



Summer Exhibition

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry,
Fri 3 May - Sun 23 June

Coventry's Warwick Arts Centre is hosting three concurrent exhibitions this month and next.

Bologna-based Rwandan artist Francis Offman's *Economics Of Painting* showcases canvases that tell stories of friendship, conversation and travel, while Swiss creative Nicole Bachmann's *There Are Tides In The Body* is a new film commission. Set across two locations in Kent and Spon End in Coventry, the film considers the body as a site of knowledge by using movement and voice to 'embody vocabulary' and create new meaning. Completing the trio of exhibitions, *Activate/Assemble/Amplify* contemplates the creative future of Coventry's children and young people. Sharing artworks and performances made throughout the year as part of youth and schools projects, the exhibition explores the participants' vision for themselves and their city.

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International Watercolour Masters

Lilleshall Hall, Shropshire, Wed 15 - Fri 24 May

The International Watercolour Masters (IWM) makes a welcome return to Shropshire this month, and as usual the exhibition will be showcasing a selection of impressive artwork by some of the world's most talented creatives. Alongside the paintings by global

masters, IWM will also present (via a giant screen in the main exhibition arena) the top 200 entries in the show's hugely popular watercolour competition, which this year was entered by thousands of people from across the world.



Dion Kitson: Rue Britannia

Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, Fri 10 May - Sun 8 September

A major solo exhibition, Dion Kitson's Rue Britannia sees the artist remodelling everyday objects to isolate and elevate ubiquitously 'ordinary' sights, such as a burst football or discarded plastic bottle. The exhibition also includes Council House Of Kitson - a new installation featuring a pebble-dashed façade and footage documenting Dion's father.

After The End Of History: British Working Class Photography 1989 - 2024

Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry, until Sun 16 June

The challenges, beauty and diversity of contemporary working-class life - as depicted by working-class artists using the medium of photography - are explored in this fascinating exhibition, curated by acclaimed photographer, writer & broadcaster Johnny Pitts.

A Hayward Gallery Touring show, the collection features work from 1989 onward and marks the 35th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall (which happened on 9 November of that year).



John Piper And 20th Century Art

Barton Court, Colwall, Herefordshire, Sat 11 - Mon 20 May

Barton Court's 10th anniversary exhibition showcases more than 50 fabrics, limited-edition prints and original works by John Piper, a Surrey-born 20th-century artist whose work often focused on the British landscape.

An official war artist in World War Two, Piper's depictions of bomb-damaged churches and landmarks, including and most notably Coventry Cathedral, hugely enhanced his reputation and led to his work being acquired by a number of public collections.

A selection of work by other 20th-century artists also features in the exhibition.



Landscape And Imagination: From Gardens To Land Art

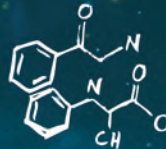
Compton Verney, Warwickshire, until Sun 16 June

Works by celebrated artists including JMW Turner, Nicolas Poussin and Anya Gallaccio feature in this new exhibition at Compton Verney, a show which explores the question of how art might work together with nature to reverse the decline of the UK's green spaces.

An accompanying selection of playful interactive activities in the exhibition galleries will provide families with the opportunity to imagine their own colourful and fantastical landscapes.



thinktank
Birmingham science museum



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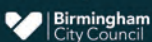
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Birmingham Museums

Events previews from around the region



Brick Fest Live NEC, Birmingham, Sat 25 - Mon 27 May

The world's largest hands-on Lego event of its kind makes its UK debut! Offering a wide range of hands-on building activities, Brick Fest Live provides families with the chance to help build a Guinness World Record-setting floor mosaic, race brick-built cars down derby ramps and play

in a brick pit with hundreds of thousands of Lego bricks. The show also features a marketplace - selling rare collectibles - and a selection of 'mind-blowing creations' from around the world, including life-sized Lego models.



Makers Central NEC, Birmingham, Sat 18 & Sun 19 May

Makers Central - the UK's largest gathering for inventors, makers and DIY enthusiasts - is this month returning to the NEC for the fifth year running. The popular family event features hands-on workshops and live demonstrations by some

of the country's most talented makers. YouTube stars and social-media influencers, including Clin Furze, The Hacksmith and Nick Zammeti, will also be in attendance at the show.

1950s Evening

The Black Country Living Museum, Dudley, Sat 11 May

Step back in time at Black Country Living Museum this month and immerse yourself in the cultural revolution of the 1950s! Visitors to the venue will enter a world of rock & roll, skiffle and rhythm & blues, as live performers take to the stage. The line-up includes Rockin'em, The Bitter Lemons, The Washboard Resonators, Lola Lamour, Helen Pearson and Joe James Thomas. The event also offers the chance to check out some vintage fashions and dance the night away in the museum's iconic streets.



UK Slot Festival

British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Sat 11 & Sun 12 May

This Scalextric-sponsored weekend features a wide range of slot cars from major manufacturers, a massive retail area 'selling everything you need for your next great race', and a host of fun activities, including family racing competitions and a stunt show.



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Events previews from around the region



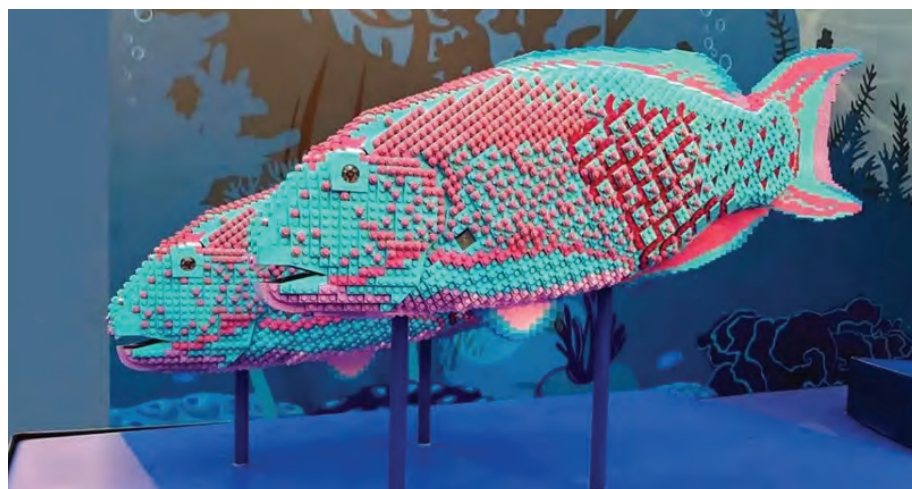
RHS Malvern Spring Festival

Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Thurs 9 - Sun 12 May

Taking the theme 'gardening for change', the RHS Malvern Spring Festival is this year celebrating evolution in the world of horticulture - and embracing the positive impact which this has on planting, people and wellbeing...

As well as showcasing new attractions, including features promoting the growth of houseplants, the festival also boasts

contributions from Alan Titchmarsh and BBC Gardeners' World regulars Adam Frost, Frances Tophill and Toby Buckland. RHS Vice President James Alexander-Sinclair takes on hosting duties. Numerous well-established elements of the festival also make a return, including show & feature gardens, the floral marquee and the Tips & Tricks Theatre.



Brick Ocean at The Engine House

Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster, Sat 25 May - Sun 2 June

Families travelling the Severn Valley Railway during this month's half-term holiday will get the chance to go 'under the sea' and admire a selection of ocean-themed brick-model installations.

Making a pit-stop at The Engine House at

Highly, visitors will find 13 impressive installations to check out, including an octopus, a parrot fish, a mako shark and a large squid - each one hand-built using thousands of bricks.

Deaffest

Various venues across Wolverhampton, Fri 10 - Sun 12 May

The UK's premiere Deaf-led film & arts festival is back for 2024 and celebrating its 15th anniversary.

Marking the special occasion with a music theme, the festival includes subtitled film screenings and numerous accessible events, including an art & photography exhibition, panel discussions, workshops and a stalls fair. The highly anticipated ninth Film & TV Awards Gala & Late-Night Party - offering plenty of excellent networking opportunities - also features.



Marvellous Materials

Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum, Mon 27 - Fri 31 May

The Thinktank team are turning the spotlight on different materials and their properties during this month's half-term holiday...

Families can investigate which materials are conductors of electricity and which are insulators, try their hand at fishing for magnetic fish, and learn about the differences between solids, liquids and gases.



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Events previews from around the region



Eastnor ChilliFest

Eastnor Castle, Herefordshire, Sun 5 & Mon 6 May

Eastnor ChilliFest is sure to pack a punch when it returns this May Day Bank Holiday weekend. Daring diners can get stuck into all things chilli related, with a wide variety of food & drink on offer to get their tastebuds tingling. The day's entertainment also includes a children's cookery school and Eastnor's ever-popular chilli-eating competition. Stilt walkers, fire-show performers, Bhangra dance workshops and live music further add to the fun.



Midlands Air Festival Ragley Hall, Warwickshire, Fri 31 May - Sun 2 June

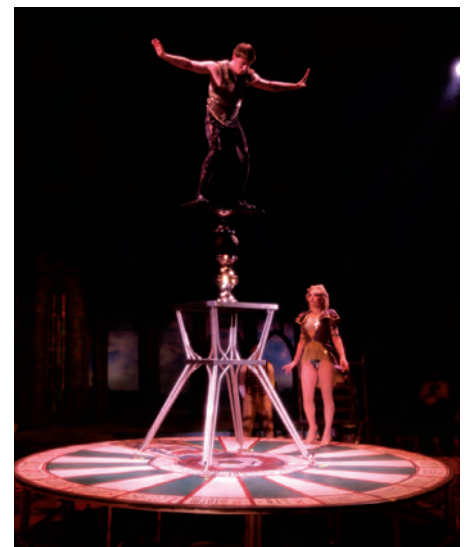
Returning to Ragley for a sixth year, the Midlands Air Festival sees more than 100 hot-air balloons taking to the sky two times a day, with special-shape balloons such as The Orient Express and Hyla the Frog making their festival debuts. And the balloons won't be the only reason for visitors to keep their eyes to the skies; the programme of entertainment also features World War Two Warbirds, World War One air

displays, fast jets, helicopters, gyroplanes, aerobatic displays, aerial ballet and flying circus acts as well as parachute and formation display teams. The festival's hugely popular Nightfire show also returns, featuring an air display of aircraft fitted with pyrotechnics, fireworks and lighting systems, a set-to-music balloon nightglow, and a sure-to-be-spectacular fireworks finale.

Giffords Circus

Sudeley Castle & Gardens, Cheltenham, Fri 10 - Mon 20 May

Giffords Circus returns to Sudeley Castle with a brand-new 'extravaganza' titled Avalon. Coming complete with 'lavish costumes, an opulent set' and a live band, the show brings together acrobats, magicians, musicians and clowns from all over the world to present a colourful medieval world of pageantry and Arthurian legend.



Birmingham Pride

Birmingham Gay Village & Smithfield, Birmingham, Sat 25 & Sun 26 May

Celebrating the Midlands' LGBTQIA+ community, Birmingham Pride will once again be getting the city partying this month. It's expected that more than 40,000 revellers will attend the event across the weekend, with an impressive 75,000-plus people either

participating in or watching the annual Pride parade through the city's streets. The festival's Smithfield site is the centre of the action, featuring a main stage, the Conrad Guest Cabaret Stage and Chic Dance Arena. Headline acts include Loreen, Sophie Ellis-Bextor and Beverley Knight.



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Your week-
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May 2024

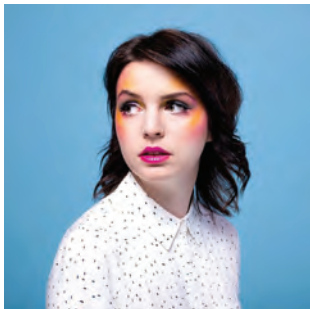


Flatpack Festival - various Birmingham locations, Fri 10 - Sun 19 May

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

What's On

Wed 1 - Sun 5 May



Emma Blackery - Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath
Fri 3 May

Mon 6 - Sun 12 May



Send In The Clowns: Tw*ts -
The Old Joint Stock Theatre
Thurs 9 - Fri 10 May

Mon 13 - Sun 19 May



An Evening With Richard Marx -
Symphony Hall
Sun 19 May

Mon 20 - Fri 31 May



Body Clock by Azizi Cole -
Elgar Concert Hall, The Bramall
Sat 25 May

VISUAL ARTS IN THE MIDLANDS

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

VICTORIAN RADICALS Exhibition presenting works by 19th-century artists, designers & makers, from the Pre-Raphaelites to the arts & crafts movement, until Thurs 31 Oct

Compton Verney, Warwickshire

A SPIRIT INSIDE A selection of works from the Women's Art Collection and the Ingram Collection, exploring how women and non-binary artists have grappled with the notion and sense of 'spirit', until Sun 1 Sep

Herbert Museum & Art Gallery, Coventry

COLLECTING COVENTRY Exhibition reflecting the Museum's collection practice via a catalogue of objects accumulated since the founding of the Herbert in 1949, and Coventry Transport Museum in 1980, Sat 11 May - Sun 27 April 2025

Midlands Arts Centre, Edgbaston, Birmingham

NEW NARRATIVES IN PHOTOGRAPHY Showcasing new work by artists based in Pakistan (Asad Ali, Hira Noor, Ume Laila and Waleed Zafar) who use photography in innovative ways. The works explore narratives of community, public space and diaspora, until Mon 27 May

MATERIAL EVIDENCE Exhibition of textile art by current and former members of pan-European group Quilt Art, inspired by the life and work of founder member Mary Fogg, until Mon 27 May

TATIANA WOLSKA: LEISURE AS RESISTANCE Wolska's first solo exhibition in the UK sees the artist using recycled materials to create captivating sculptures, until Sun 2 June

PAULINE FARRAR: TALKING POINTS Farrar returns to MAC with a new installation co-created with members of MAC's Women's Group - Making It Together. Their shared work touches on issues of isolation, disability, and the power of gardening as a rejuvenative tool for wellbeing, until Mon 26 Aug

Ikon Gallery, Birmingham

NATIONAL TREASURES: ARTEMISIA IN BIRMINGHAM & JESSE JONES: MIRROR MARTYR MIRROR MOON Jesse Jones explores the entwined histories of Gentileschi, Saint Catherine, and the pagan philosopher Hypatia, Fri 10 May - Sun 8 Sep

RBSA Gallery, Birmingham

ENAMEL MATTERS A showcase of work by members of the British Society of Enamellers, displaying both traditional and contemporary techniques, Tues 7 May - Sun 26 May

Elsewhere:

BRENDAN HANDLEY EXHIBITION Showcase of paintings by the Birmingham-based artist, who is led by the paint, the colours and his unorthodox tools to create thought-provoking works, until Sat 18 May, The Birmingham & Midland Institute

ALL SEEING EYE Window residency featuring a fine-art video installation by Katherine Howes, exploring the symbolism of the 'all-seeing eye', until Fri 31 May, Stryx JQ Gallery, Birmingham

AI FUTURES: LOOKING FOR LOVE A playful experience, taking place over a message-based dating app, in which visitors attempt to teach a robot about romance, until Sat 1 June, The Exchange, Centenary Square

BOTANICAL ARTS & CRAFTS Exhibition of botanical illustrations, paintings and crafts celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Birmingham Society of Botanical Artists, until Sun 8 Sept, Winterbourne House & Gardens, Birmingham

SPRING ART EXHIBITION Showcasing work from members of Sutton Coldfield Society of Artists, Sat 4 - Sun 12 May, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

LOVE IS REAL, AND IT'S INSIDE OF MY COMPUTER Collaboration between Babeworld and sound artist utopian_realism. The exhibition plays on the structures of the art world, prompting the viewer to renegotiate what they see as 'new and exciting', Sat 4 May - Sat 3 Aug, Grand Union, Birmingham

INTERNATIONAL GARDEN PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR EXHIBITION A selection of photographs embracing the word 'garden' in its broadest definition, Fri 10 May - Sat 29 June, The Birmingham Botanical Gardens

SILVER LINING: DION KITSON AT JW EVANS Exhibition of Kitson's artworks, coinciding with the artist's first major solo exhibition at Ikon Gallery, Sat 11 May - Fri 6 Sept, J.W. Evans Silver Factory, Birmingham

ABBEY ROAD MUSIC PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS EXHIBITION B:Music presents an exhibition of winning and shortlisted images from Abbey Road's 2023 Music Photography Awards, Mon 13 May - Fri 14 June, Symphony Hall, Birmingham



Jim Bob - O2 Academy

Gigs

PARIS PALOMA Wed 1 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

SALSEROS UK Wed 1 May, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

SCUSTIN + IZUZVO + KID CHARLEMAGNE Wed 1 May, The Night Owl, Digbeth

LIL YACHTY + JEAN DAWSON Wed 1 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth

FLETCHER + ARXX Wed 1 May, O2 Academy

JESSE AHERN Wed 1 May, The Asylum, Hampton Street

GRAYWAVE Wed 1 May, The Flapper, Cambrian Wharf

CORACLE + MATT SAYERS Wed 1 May, Red Lion Folk Club

NADINE SHAH Wed 1 May, XOYO, Digbeth

BLAIR DUNLOP Wed 1 May, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

MUSIC OF THE EAGLES BY CANDLELIGHT Wed 1 - Thurs 2 May, Lichfield Cathedral

THE ALLERGIES + SAM REDMORE Thurs 2 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

JASMINE MYRA Thurs 2 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

MICA PARIS Thurs 2 May, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

DIOCLETIAN Thurs 2 May, Devil's Dog, Digbeth

THE OFTEN HERD Thurs 2 May, Kitchen Garden,

Kings Heath

SCOTT BRADLEE'S POSTMODERN JUKEBOX Thurs 2 May, Wulfrun Hall at The Halls, Wolverhampton

EMMA BLACKERY Fri 3 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath



THE MARLEY EXPERIENCE Fri 3 May, The Night Owl, Digbeth

LEDISI Fri 3 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth

THE MERCIANS + THE ULTRA VIOLETS + JOEL FOSTER Fri 3 May, O2 Academy

SLAUGHTERHOUSE FESTIVAL Fri 3 May, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

ART THEMEN TRIO Fri 3 May, 1000 Trades, Jewellery Quarter

VINNY PECULIAR Fri 3 May, The Victoria, John Bright Street

THE MADCHESTER EXPERIENCE Fri 3 May, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

BLUE + WHISKEY AND DIAMONDS + MAX RAE Fri 3 May, The Civic at The Halls, Wolverhampton

THE MUSIC OF ABBA BY CANDLELIGHT Fri 3 May, Lichfield Cathedral

THE COLLECTIVE Fri 3 - Sat 4 May, The Jam

House, Jewellery Qtr

A VISION OF ELVIS Fri 3 - Sat 4 May, Lichfield Garrick

HAUNT THE WOODS Sat 4 May, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

OCTOBER ENDS + WHERE OCEANS BURN Sat 4 May, Devil's Dog, Digbeth

THE FEELING + DAYTIME TV Sat 4 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth

JAMES MCVEY Sat 4 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth

CVC Sat 4 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth

JIM BOB Sat 4 May, O2 Academy

KEANE + THE LATHUMS Sat 4 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham

CERI JUSTICE Sun 5 May, Actress & Bishop, Ludgate Hill

CODY PENNINGTON COUNTRY SHOW Sun 5 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth

A BOOGIE WIT DA HOODIE + FRIDAY Sun 5 May, Utilita Arena B'ham

KATHRYN WILLIAMS AND WITHERED HAND Sun 5 May, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

PALOMA FAITH Sun 5 - Mon 6 May, Symphony Hall

RESOLVE + CANE HILL + ACRES + HALF ME Sun 5 May, Devil's Dog, Digbeth

FREEMAN HKD + KILLER T + SAINTFLOEW + EXQ + NUTTY O + ENZO ISHALL + HOLY TEN Sun 5 May, Forum, Dale End

Classical Music

CBSO: PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION Featuring Kazuki Yamada (conductor) & Jeremy Denk (piano). Programme includes UK premier of *ATLAS* by Anna Clyne alongside works by Gershwin, Ravel & Mussorgsky, Wed 1 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

PAUL CARR ORGAN RECITAL Programme includes works by Vierre, Saint-Saëns, Wolstenholme & Smart, Thurs 2 May, St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham

LUNCHTIME CONCERT FEAT. ELLA TAYLOR (SOPRANO) & SHOLTO KYNOCH (PIANO) Programme includes works by Debussy & Margaret Bonds, Fri 3 May, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, Birmingham

Comedy

NURSE GEORGIE CARROLL Wed 1 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JOE LYCETT & FRIENDS Wed 1 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

BASSEM YOUSSEF Wed 1 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham



MARK NELSON, HAYLEY ELLIS, FREDDY QUINNE & ROBIN MORGAN Wed 1 May, Herbert's Yard, Birmingham

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, GEORGE LEWIS & SID SINGH Thurs 2 May, The Glee Club, B'ham

TOM ALLEN Thurs 2 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

JOE PASQUALE, BARBARA NICE, GAVIN WEBSTER & WAYNE BEESE Fri 3 May, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

JARLATH REGAN Fri 3 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry



MICHAEL ODEWALE, MATT PRICE, GEORGE LEWIS & SID SINGH Fri 3 - Sat 4 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

EDDY BRIMSON, SULLY O'SULLIVAN, DANNY DEEGAN & CARL JONES Sat 4 May, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

SUKH OJLA Sat 4 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

BIG DEAL COMEDY NIGHT Sat 4 May, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

Theatre

LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST Luke Thompson (Bridgerton) and Tony Gardner (Gentleman Jack/Last Tango In Halifax) make their RSC debuts in a contemporary take on Shakespeare's vibrant comedy, until Sat 18 May, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

THE BUDDHA OF SUBURBIA Emma Rice stage adaptation of Hanif Kureishi's exploration of family, friends, sex, theatre and belonging, until Sat 1 June, Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

THE FERRYMAN Birmingham Ormiston Academy's Year 13 students present Jez Butterworth's hit play, set during The Troubles in Northern Ireland in 1981, Tues 30 Apr - Thurs 2 May, The Old Rep, Birmingham

BLOOD BROTHERS Willy Russell's legendary musical tells the cautionary tale of two twins who, separated at birth, grow up on opposite sides of the track... Tues 30 Apr - Sat 4 May, Birmingham Hippodrome

THE WOMAN IN BLACK Susan Hill's chilling ghost story, Tues 30 Apr - Sat 4 May, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

REVISION ON TOUR: DR JEKYLL & MR HYDE Dickens Theatre Company present a new version of Robert Louis Stevenson's gothic masterpiece, Wed 1 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

LOVE NEVER DIES West Bromwich Operatic Society present the UK amateur premiere of the Andrew Lloyd Webber musical, Wed 1 - Sat 4 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

REVISION ON TOUR: ROMEO & JULIET Dickens Theatre Company breathe new life and wit into Shakespeare's tale of star-crossed lovers, Thurs 2 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

FLASHBANG An 'exuberant, explosive and gut-punching rollercoaster ride' through the ties that bind five best mates together and what happens to them when that world is blown apart. Contains strong language, loud noises, adult themes, and references to drugs, mental health and bereavement, Thurs 2 - Fri 3 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, B'ham

LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS Youth On Stage present an amateur version of the comedy rock musical, Thurs 2 - Sat 4 May, Dovehouse Theatre, Solihull

OH! WHAT A LOVELY WAR Blackeyed Theatre Company present a new version of Joan Littlewood's classic musical, Tues 2 - Sat 4 May, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

YOU'RE BARD! Shakespeare like you've never seen before, with four actors, four Shakespeare shows and endless possibilities... Fri 3 May, Halesowen Town Hall



Blood Brothers - Birmingham Hippodrome

GENERATIONS A Black British-themed spoken-word poetry piece exploring generational expectations, trauma, culture, and family differences, Fri 3 - Tues 7 May, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

WITHNAIL AND I Premiere of Bruce Robinson's new stage version of the iconic 1987 film starring Paul McGann and Richard E Grant, Fri 3 - Sat 25 May, The Rep, Birmingham

Kid's Theatre

HORRIBLE HISTORIES: ROTTEN ROYALS Birmingham Stage Company present outrageously regal scenes from history - with the nasty bits left in!, Wed 1 - Fri 3 May, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

TOSCANA STRINGS: MONKEY PUZZLE & THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS Tosca Strings are joined by former BRB soloist Laura Tye in a retelling of two family favourites - Julia Donaldson's *Monkey Puzzle* and Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind In The Willows*, Sun 5 May, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Dance

STRICTLY THE PROFESSIONALS Featuring 12 of the TV show's professional dancers alongside singers and a live band. The line-up features Dianne Buswell, Vito Coppola, Carlos Gu, Karen Hauer, Neil Jones, Nikita Kuzmin, Gorka Marquez, Luba Mushtuk, Graziano di Prima, Jowita Przystal, Michelle Tsiakkas and Nancy Xu, Thurs 2 - Fri 3 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Light Entertainment

THAT'LL BE THE DAY Nostalgic show featuring comedy, rock'n'roll and pop culture from the 1950s right through to the 80s, Tues 30 Apr - Wed 1 May, Lichfield Garrick

THE TIGERFACE SHOW A 'joyful and melancholic' comedy which asks us to rethink what it was we wanted to be when we grew up, in the hope of finding some childlike happiness in adulthood, Tues 30 Apr - Wed 1 May, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham



AN EVENING WITH AGGERS Join cricket commentator Jonathan Agnew as he regales audiences with stories from his illustrious career, both on and off the field, Thurs 2 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

DREAMBOYS The Stripped Back Tour featuring dance, chart-topping music and plenty of audience participation. Strictly 18 plus, Fri 3 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

TEENA'S SPRING TEASE Teena Bizkit hosts a variety show packed with stand-up comedy, songs, game shows, TV & music quizzes and special guests... Sat 4 May, The Core Theatre, Solihull

OPERA BOYS Sat 4 May, Artrix, Bromsgrove

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DAD'S ARMY RADIO SHOW Perry & Croft's classic 1970s BBC comedy series is brought to life by two actors playing over 25 characters, Sun 5 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

Events

PLAY UNSTOPPABLE Design your own spirit animal, add your creation to the Lego Flower Cart and share your best moves at the Play Unstoppable Dance Party, until Mon 6 May, Legoland Discovery Centre B'ham

KNITTED BLOSSOM AND POETRY TRAIL Admire the blossom in the gardens and the knitted blossom displays produced by talented volunteers and local craft groups, until Sun 9 June, Wightwick Manor, Wolverhampton

STRATFORD LITERARY FESTIVAL Featuring contributions from a range of authors, Wed 1 - Sun 5 May, various locations in Stratford-upon-Avon

REEL & MEAL: NAPOLEON DYNAMITE A screening of the 2004 indie comedy, presented alongside a themed meal, Fri 3 May, Midlands Arts Centre (mac), Birmingham

DUPLICATE PUBLISHING FAIR Bringing

together over 40 artists, illustrators, zine makers and small-press publishers from Birmingham and beyond, Fri 3 - Sat 4 May, Eastside Projects, Digbeth, Birmingham

A SPRING SOUL PICNIC An evening of live music in the gardens, Sat 4 May, Castle Bromwich Historic Gardens, Birmingham

VINTAGE AFTERNOON TEA Travel in style in a luxurious vintage carriage and indulge in a 'delectable' spread on traditional vintage chinaware, Sat 4 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

ABBA PARTY RACEDAY FEATURING THE STAFFORDSHIRE PLATE Witness some competitive jump racing, including the Staffordshire Plate Race, followed by a live performance from an Abba tribute band, Sat 4 May, Uttoxeter Racecourse, Staffordshire

GAYDON LAND ROVER SHOW Boasting hundreds of legendary off-roaders, from 1948 to the present day, Sat 4 - Sun 5 May, British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Warwickshire

DONINGTON HISTORIC FESTIVAL Weekend packed with racing and entertainment, Sat 4 - Sun 5 May, Donington Park, Derbyshire



Gaydon Land Rover Show - British Motor Museum

MODEL RAILWAY WEEKEND Featuring over 30 of the UK's most popular displays and layouts, presented at the Highley Visitor Centre, Sat 4 - Sun 5 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

THE GREAT BRITISH FOOD FESTIVAL 'Showcasing the very best of Great British produce', Sat 4 - Mon 6 May, Trentham Estate, Staffordshire

EASTNOR CHILLIFEST Live music, hot food, chilli-eating competitions and more, Sun 5 - Mon 6 May, Eastnor Caste, Herefordshire

A GRAND MEDIEVAL DAY OUT Visitors to the 900-year-old castle will be transported back to Kenilworth's medieval heyday with re-enactors throughout the grounds, Sun 5 - Mon 6 May, Kenilworth Castle

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Barton Court, Herefordshire WR13 6HN



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Gigs

DEA MATRONA Mon 6 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath
JOHN DOYLE Mon 6 May, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath
LIGHTNING THREADS + THE DAVIDSON TRIO Tues 7 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath
BRYSON TILLER Tues 7 May, O2 Academy
TORS + AINE DEAN Tues 7 May, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath
TENACIOUS D + DAVE HILL Tues 7 May, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham
ANDY IRVINE Tues 7 May, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath
DIDDY SWEG BIG BAND Wed 8 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath
SUPALUNG Wed 8 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath
LUCAS D & THE GROOVE GHETTO Wed 8 May, The Jam House, Jewellery Qtr
ASTROFUNKEN + IRIS + ADHD + ABI HUDSON + CHADNI Wed 8 May, The Night Owl, Digbeth
THE JAPANESE HOUSE Wed 8 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth
IN SEARCH OF SUN + MARANG + WELLER + SECOND CITIES Wed 8 May, The Flapper, Cambrian Wharf
EDWINA HAYES + EMILY SLADE Wed 8 May, Red Lion Folk Club
THE ILLEGAL EAGLES Wed 8 May, The Alexandra

LADY NADE + DAISY CHUTE + HOLLIE ROGERS Wed 8 May, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath
CARDINALS Thurs 9 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath
7TH STREET SOUL Thurs 9 May, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter
ALVIN GIBBS & THE DISOBEDIENT SERVANTS + CHELSEA Thurs 9 May, The Dark Horse, Moseley
A CERTAIN RATIO Thurs 9 May, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath
BIG SPECIAL Thurs 9 May, XOYO, Digbeth
THE ELVIS TRIBUTE ARTIST WORLD TOUR Thurs 9 May, The Alexandra
GRANNY'S ATTIC Thurs 9 May, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath
TANYA OPLAND & MIKE FREEMAN Thurs 9 May, Bromsgrove Folk Club
THE INDIAN SAXOPHONE Thurs 9 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry
FOOD HOUSE + CHARLIEEEEE Fri 10 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath
BRYONY WILLIAMS Fri 10 May, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway
TIGGUO COBAUC Fri 10 May, Devil's Dog, Digbeth
VACATIONS Fri 10 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth
CAMERA OBSCURA + LIZ LAWRENCE Fri 10 May, O2 Academy
NYE BANFIELD QUARTET Fri 10 May, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall

THOMPSON TWINS' TOM BAILEY Fri 10 May, Birmingham Town Hall
ELBOW + THE WAEVE Fri 10 May, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham
CORELLA Fri 10 May, Mama Roux's, Digbeth
OLIVIA RODRIGO + REMI WOLF Fri 10 - Sat 11 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham
DAFT FUNK Sat 11 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath
ELEVEN FIFTEEN + DEAF BALLOONS + ME AND THEE Sat 11 May, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway
BAILEY ZIMMERMAN + JOSH ROSS Sat 11 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth
BANNERS + IAMTHELIVING Sat 11 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth
THE BUG CLUB Sat 11 May, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath
TONICK Sat 11 May, The Crossing, Digbeth
FM Sat 11 May, The Asylum, Hampton Street
DIONNE WARWICK Sat 11 May, Symphony Hall
GOGO PENGUIN Sat 11 May, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire
ALLEGRA KRIEGER Sun 12 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath
BIG SHIP ALLIANCE Sun 12 May, The Night Owl, Digbeth
WES NELSON Sun 12 May, O2 Academy
THEATRE OF HATE Sun 12 May, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

Classical Music

CBSO: FRENCH FANTASIES Featuring Jérémie Rhorer (conductor), Elizabeth Llewellyn (soprano) & the CBSO Youth Chorus. Programme includes works by Debussy, Ravel & Stravinsky, Thurs 9 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

TOKIO MYERS: AWAKE BUT DREAMING A solo classical piano tour, featuring stripped back arrangements of his most popular works, Thurs 9 May, St Paul's Church, Birmingham

LUNCHTIME CONCERT FEAT. OLIVER JANES (CLARINET) & JOHN REID (PIANO) Programme includes works by Martinú, Gipsy & Brahms, Fri 10 May, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, Birmingham

CBSO CENTRE STAGE: DOUBLE REED BAROQUE ENSEMBLE Featuring Emmet Byrne & Rachael Pankhurst (oboes) & Nikolaj Henriques (bassoon). Programme includes works by Handel, Madeleine Dring & Zelenka, Fri 10 May, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

LUNCHTIME RECITAL Fri 10 May, Birmingham Cathedral

HALLE ORCHESTRA Featuring Sir Mark Elder (conductor - pictured) & Sir Stephen Hough (piano). Programme includes works by Brahms, Butterworth & Elgar, Fri 10 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry



MIDDAY MANTRA: TAGORE SPECIAL Featuring Sampad South Asian Arts & Heritage. Performance includes South Asian song & spoken word, Sat 11 May, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CBSO FAMILY CONCERT: CARTOON CLASSICS Featuring Olivia Clarke (conductor) & Tom Redmond (host). Programme includes works by Rossini, Wagner, Strauss, Elfman & more... Sun 12 May, Birmingham Town Hall

LICHFIELD SINFONIA Featuring Gerard Flotats (cello). Programme includes works by Dvořák, Offenbach & Rossini, Sun 12 May, Lichfield Guildhall

Comedy

NICO YEARWOOD Wed 8 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JOE LYCETT Wed 8 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, RACHEL FAIRBURN & KAZEEM JAMAL Thurs 9 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ROSIE HOLT Thurs 9 May, Midlands Arts Centre (mac), Birmingham



KAZEEM JAMAL, NICK DOODY, RACHEL FAIRBURN, JOHN LYNN & ANDY ROACH Fri 10 May, The Glee Club, B'ham

LIAM WITHNAIL Fri 10 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham



UPSTAIRS AT CHERRY REDS COMICS TBC Fri 10 May, Cherry Reds, Birmingham

TOM DAVIS Sat 11 May, Birmingham Town Hall

MATT REES, AARON JAY, LIAM PICKFORD, & JON PEARSON Sat 11 May, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

JOSH PUGH Sat 11 May, Birmingham Town Hall

KAZEEM JAMAL, NICK DOODY, RACHEL FAIRBURN & JOHN LYNN Sat 11 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

NICK HELM Sat 11 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

LUNCHTIME FAMILY COMEDY SHOW Sun 12 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

CURTIS WALKER, RICHARD BLACKWOOD, WAYNE 'DIBBI' ROLLINS, TOJU & QUINCY Sun 12 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

TEZ ILYAS, PRINCE ABDI, ESHAAN AKBAR & AATIF NAWAZ Sun 12 May, The Core Theatre, Solihull

FRANK SKINNER Sun 12 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Theatre

TWELVE ANGRY MEN Touring version of Reginald Rose's famous courtroom drama, starring Jason Merrells (Casualty/Emmerdale), Gray O'Brien (Coronation Street/Peak Practice), Tristan Gemmill (Coronation Street/Casualty), Michael Greco (EastEnders), Ben Nealon (Soldier



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Soldier) and Gary Webster (Minder/Family Affairs), Tues 7 - Sat 11 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

OKLAHOMA! Amateur version presented by Brownhills Musical Theatre Company, Tues 7 - Sat 11 May, Lichfield Garrick

JUMP Dark comedy that takes an unusual look at contemporary gay life, Wed 8 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

COMMUNITY SERVICE Stan's Cafe present an emotional and uplifting theatre show inspired by the life of Trevor Prince, one of the Midlands' first Black police officers, Wed 8 - Sat 11 May, Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

ANYTHING GOES Amateur version presented by Manor Musical Theatre Company, Wed 8 - Sat 11 May, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

PEPPER AND HONEY A timely play about change, cultural difference, and the conflict between upholding the traditions of the 'old country' and embracing those of the new, Thurs 9 May, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

GODSPELL THE MUSICAL Amateur version presented by Musical Theatre Warwick, Thurs 9 - Sat 11 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

ENGLISH European premiere of Sanaz Toossi's Pulitzer Prize-winning play, set in a classroom in Iran where four adult students grapple with the challenge of learning English, Thurs 9 May - Sat 1 June, The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon

COSI FAN TUTTE Welsh National Opera present a brand-new production of Mozart's comic opera, Fri 10 May, Birmingham Hippodrome

DEATH IN VENICE Welsh National Opera collaborate with No Fit State in a reimagining of Britten's atmospheric opera, Sat 11 May, Birmingham Hippodrome

GYPSY Amateur version of Stephen Sondheim's musical, Sat 11 - Sat 18 May, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

Dance

CARLOS ACOSTA: ON BEFORE The world-famous dancer - and director of Birmingham Royal Ballet - pays homage to his late mother in his most personal work to date, Mon 6 - Tues 7 May, Birmingham Hippodrome

Light Entertainment

AN AUDIENCE WITH AGGERS AND TUFFERS Jonathan Agnew and Phil Tufnell present an evening of anecdotes from the world of cricket,

Mon 6 May, Birmingham Town Hall

SEND IN THE CLOWNS: TW*TS A 'raucous, wild and tantalising drag revue show' celebrating the magic and madness of musical theatre. Hosted by Fatt Butcher (The Voice UK & winner of Drag Idol UK). A 'stellar line-up' of the UK's finest drag & cabaret talent also features, Thurs 9 - Fri 10 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

I COULD BE WRONG, I COULD BE RIGHT: AN EVENING WITH JOHN LYDON Join the former Sex Pistols frontman as he talks about his unique and extraordinary career, Fri 10 May, Warwick Arts Centre Coventry

SIR TIM RICE: MY LIFE IN MUSICALS Join the internationally renowned lyricist as he reflects on his illustrious career in musical theatre and shares anecdotes from 'behind the songs', Sat 11 May, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

MIDDAY MANTRA: SONG AND SPOKEN WORD Expect poetry, readings and music during this relaxed afternoon from Sampad South Asian Arts and Heritage, Sat 11 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Events

KEVIN & PERRY GO LARGE IN CONCERT A film-with-orchestra experience under a big-top tent, Mon 6 May, NEC, Birmingham

BIRTHDAY WEEKEND Celebrate Roundhouse's 150th birthday with a weekend of special events and tours, Fri 10 - Sun 12 May, Roundhouse, Birmingham

THE BABY SHOW WITH LIDL GB The UK's leading pregnancy, baby and parenting event, Fri 10 - Sun 12 May, NEC, Birmingham

FLATPACK FESTIVAL Featuring a programme of screenings and performances, walks and installations, Fri 10 - Sun 19 May, various locations across Birmingham

ENGLAND WOMEN VS PAKISTAN WOMEN Women's IT20 cricket match, Sat 11 May, Edgbaston Stadium, B'ham

THE MURDER OF JANE JACKSON: A 1950'S MURDER MYSTERY A 1950s-inspired murder-mystery night, Sat 11 May, West Midlands Police Museum, Birmingham

SPANGLISH & SANGRIA Screening of the film Spanglish with sangria and mingling, Sat 11 May, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

EUROVISION VIEWING PARTY Watch the Eurovision finals with cocktails, games and more, Sat 11 May, Old Joint Stock Pub & Theatre, Birmingham

1950S EVENING Enjoy the sounds of the 1950s with live rock & roll, jive and skiffle music, Sat 11 May, Black



Welsh National Opera's Death In Venice - Birmingham Hippodrome

Country Living Museum, Dudley

THE SPICE TRAIN Indulge in an evening of curry with friends while travelling on the Severn Valley Railway, Sat 11 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

GHOSTBUSTERS 40TH ANNIVERSARY IN CONCERT A film-with-orchestra experience under the big-top tent, Sat 11 May, NEC, Birmingham

HERITAGE GLASS AND CHURCH WALKING TOUR A journey through the history of glass, exploring the churches, canals, factories and people that made the Stourbridge glass industry what it is today, Sat 11 May, Stourbridge Glass Museum

HEAVY HORSE WEEKEND Demonstration of how horses helped tradesmen and industrialists carry out their work, Sat 11 - Sun 12 May, Blists Hill Victorian Town, Ironbridge, Shropshire

GIN TRAIN Learn about gin's tumultuous past whilst sipping, Sat 11 - Sun 12 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

UK SLOT CAR FESTIVAL Showcasing a wide range of the major slot car

manufacturers, including Scalextric, Slot.it, Carrera, SCX, NSR, Ninco and HO AFX, Sat 11 - Sun 12 May, British Motor Museum, Gaydon

1940S WEEKEND Travel back in time to the 1940s and get a taste of life in World War Two Britain, Sat 11 - Sun 12 May, Forge Mill Needle Museum, Redditch

ARTISAN, CRAFT AND GIFT MARKET Featuring talented makers, creators and enterprises from across the region, Sun 12 May, Bantock House Museum, Wolverhampton

MATILDA IN CONCERT A film-with-orchestra experience under the big-top tent, Sun 12 May, NEC, Birmingham

LIVE ON THE BANDSTAND LAUNCH EVENT: THE NITECRAWLERS & THE MELVIN HANCOX BAND Live music in the gardens, Sun 12 May, Birmingham Botanical Gardens

COLOUR BOX BINGO Alongside 'top-notch contemporary family shorts', Colour Box host Sarah Hamilton Baker will be handing out prizes aplenty, Sun 12 May, Midlands Arts Centre (mac), Birmingham



Send In The Clowns: Tw*ts - The Old Joint Stock Theatre

Gigs

SCREAM + SOULSIDE Mon 13 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

HOME COUNTIES + TATYANA Mon 13 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

RIVERSIDE + KLONE Mon 13 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth

AYANO KANEKO Mon 13 May, The Victoria, John Bright Street

LONDON SYMPHONIC ROCK ORCHESTRA Mon 13 May, Symphony Hall

ERIC CLAPTON + ANDY FAIRWEATHER LOW AND THE LOW RIDERS Mon 13 May, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

THE DEEP DARK WOODS Mon 13 May, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

KACEY MUSGRAVES + MADI DIAZ Mon 13 May, The Civic at The Halls, Wolverhampton

BON ENFANT Tues 14 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

DUMMY TOYS + ASYLUM + FATAL DOSE + PULSAR + HUMAN ERROR + ARMY OF SKANKS Tues 14 May, The Dark Horse, Moseley

LOVE FAME TRAGEDY Tues 14 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth

SICK OF IT ALL Tues 14 May, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

LANDMVRKS + THE DEVILS WEAR PRADA + LIKE MOTHS TO FLAMES + GUILT TRIP Tues 14 May, XOYO, Digbeth

STEVE WICKHAM + RAY COEN Tues 14 May, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

TAKE THAT + OLLY MURS Tues 14 - Wed 15 May, Utilita Arena B'ham

THE DREGGS Wed 15 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

MYLES SMITH Wed 15 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth

HURRAY FOR THE RIFF RAFF Wed 15 May, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

SYMPHONIC METAL

NIGHTS + SIRENIA + TEMPERANCE + SYMPHONITY Wed 15 May, The Asylum, Hampton Street

THE HANDSOME FAMILY Wed 15 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

ROB PETERS & THE SLAPDASH COWBOYS + LAUREN SOUTH Wed 15 May, Red Lion Folk Club

LEE JOHN OF IMAGINATION Wed 15 May, Birmingham Town Hall

OMEGA NEBULA + JAMJAH SOUND Thurs 16 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

FRANKIE AND THE WITCH FINGERS + MARGARITA WITCH CULT Thurs 16 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

BIG SHIP ALLIANCE Thurs 16 May, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

ROTTEN SOUND + ESCUELA GRIND Thurs 16 May, Devil's Dog, Digbeth

TEDDY SWIMS Thurs 16 May, O2 Academy

BUGEYE Thurs 16 May, The Victoria, John Bright Street

THE SHIRES Thurs 16 May, Birmingham Town Hall

KENNY THOMAS Thurs 16 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

VINCENT FLATTS FINAL DRIVE + KATIE AND THE BAD SIGN Fri 17 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

SANTU + HUNNY BUZZ Fri 17 May, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

THESE SMITHS Fri 17 May, Actress & Bishop, Birmingham

SISTER SHOTGUN + AWAKE BY DESIGN + DRIPPED EMPIRE Fri 17 May, Devil's Dog, Digbeth

BRETT YOUNG Fri 17 May, O2 Academy

COLD YEARS + WOOD AND NAILS + GUINEAPIGS Fri 17 May, Dead Wax, Digbeth

BILL FRISELL TRIO Fri 17

May, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

WHITE TYGER Fri 17 May, The Core Theatre, Solihull

THE SHIRES Fri 17 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

BRYAN ADAMS Fri 17 May, Coventry Building Society Arena

TAKE THAT + OLLY MURS Fri 17 - Mon 20 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham

IYAMAHA Sat 18 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth

MOVING PICTURES - RUSH TRIBUTE Sat 18 May, O2 Academy

BLANCMANGE Sat 18 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth

NOASIS Sat 18 May, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

PULSE + BREAK FIFTY Sat 18 May, The Asylum, Hampton Street

RANT Sat 18 May, Midlands Arts Centre (mac), Birmingham

DARKSIDE THE PINK FLOYD SHOW Sat 18 May, Artrix, Bromsgrove

THE BLACK CROWES + JIM JONES ALL STARS Sat 18 May, The Civic at The Halls, Wolverhampton

OCEAN COLOUR SCENE Sat 18 May, Uttoxeter Racecourse

DUCKS LTD. Sun 19 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

BOWEN * YOUNG Sun 19 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth

BELLAH MAE Sun 19 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth

THE IRISH HOUSE PARTY Sun 19 May, Midlands Arts Centre (mac), Edgbaston

AN EVENING WITH RICHARD MARX Sun 19 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

ARTEMAS Sun 19 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

ALEXANDER O'NEAL Sun 19 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Classical Music

THOMAS TROTTER LUNCHTIME ORGAN CONCERT Programme includes works by CHH Parry, JS Bach, J Weir, M Duruflé & G Holst, Mon 13 May, Birmingham Town Hall

CBSO: NEW WORLD SYMPHONY Featuring Joshua Weilerstein (conductor), Michael Mulroy (soprano) & The CBSO Chorus. Programme includes works by Haas, Bernstein, Shaw & Dvořák, Wed 15 May, Symphony Hall Birmingham

CELEBRATING SANCTUARY Featuring Iryna Muha (guitar and traditional instruments) & Volodymyr Vasylenko (accordion). Programme features eastern european contemporary folk music, Thurs 16 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

RBC LUNCHTIME CONCERT Featuring musicians from Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, Thurs 16 May, St Paul's Church, Birmingham

BCMG: LIGHT, AIR, SPACE Featuring Anthony Robb (flute & alto flute), Melinda Maxwell (oboe & aulos) & Mark O'Brien (clarinet & bass clarinet). Programme includes works by Saariaho, Maxwell, Birtwistle & more... Sat 18 May, Castle Bromwich Historic Gardens, Birmingham

Comedy

THE USELESS HOTLINE Mon 13 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

EMMANUEL SONUBI Wed 15 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JOE LYCETT & FRIENDS Wed 15 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, MICK FERRY & CARL HUTCHINSON Thurs 16 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

SIMON BRODKIN Thurs 16 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham



ASHLEY BLAKER Thurs 16 May, Midlands Arts Centre (mac), B'ham

KAMIKAZE CLUB COMEDY NIGHT Thurs 16 May, 1000 Trades, Birmingham

MICK FERRY, CARL HUTCHINSON, GARETH WAUGH, THENJIWE & VINNY SHIU Fri 17 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ELLIOT STEEL Fri 17 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

SYLWIA WISZOWATA + ARKADIUSZ JAKSA JAKSZEWICZ Fri 17 May, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

MILES JUPP Fri 17 May, Lichfield Garrick

JO CAULFIELD Fri 17 May, Lichfield Garrick

DANNY MCLOUGHLIN, PAUL F TAYLOR, LEROY BRITO & JACK CAMPBELL Sat 18 May, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

MICK FERRY, CARL HUTCHINSON, GARETH WAUGH & COMIC TBC Sat 18 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

SUKH OJLA Sat 18 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

HAYLEY ELLIS Sat 18 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

FRANK SKINNER Sat 18 - Sun 19 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

SUKH OJLA Sun 19 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JOHN KEARNS Sun 19 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry



Theatre

SISTER ACT THE MUSICAL Brand-new production featuring Sue Cleaver as Mother Superior, Mon 13 - Sat 18 May, Birmingham Hippodrome

HOW TO DATE A FEMINIST The Highbury Players present an amateur version of Samantha Ellis' upside-down romantic comedy, Mon 13 - Sat 18 May, Highbury Theatre Centre, Sutton Coldfield

BEAUTIFUL EVIL THINGS High-energy one-woman show 'combining physical storytelling and cut-throat wit', Tues 14 - Wed 15 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

THE BOY AT THE BACK OF THE CLASS Onjali Q Rauf's warm-hearted tale highlights the power of friendship and kindness in a world that doesn't always make sense, Tues 14 - Sat 18 May, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

LIBERATION SQUARES Three teenage girls forge an unlikely friendship in a play inspired by graphic novels, hip-hop, pop culture and real-world activists, Thurs 16 - Sat 18 May, The Rep, Birmingham

ABIGAIL'S PARTY Amateur version of Mike Leigh's modern classic, Thurs 16 - Sun 19 May, Dudley Little Theatre

WHAT'S NEXT? Middle-Weight Theatre present a one-woman show that delves into the remarkable life of Harriet Quimby, a trailblazing figure

in aviation history, Fri 17 - Sat 18 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

Kids Theatre

MORGAN & WEST'S MASSIVE MAGIC SHOW FOR KIDS 'Conjuring capers, mysterious magic tricks, larger-than-life laughs and fantastic facial furniture', all crammed into one hour of non-stop fun for all the family. Recommended for ages five-plus, Sun 19 May, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham



Dance

ROSHNI - SONIA SABRI COMPANY An intimate crafting of dance and live music, made up of three distinctive and engaging dance works: The Call, The Light, and The Wave, Thurs 16 May, Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

ELMHURST BALLET: MODE A mixed-bill of works celebrating Elmhurst's 20 years in the city. Programme includes Wayne McGregor's FAR, The Kingdom of the Shades from Marius Petipa's La Bayadère and an excerpt from Yuri Grigorovich's Spartacus, Fri 17 & Sat 18 May, Elmhurst Studio Theatre, Birmingham

Light Entertainment

JAACKMAATE'S HAPPY HOUR Join podcast favourites Jack, Stevie, Robbie & Alfie as they head out on a magical quest, Mon 13 May, Birmingham Town Hall

PSYCHIC SALLY Evening of mediumship, Mon 13 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

THE GREATEST MAGICIAN Featuring James Phelan, the magician famous for jamming the BBC switchboard after correctly predicting the lottery, Mon 13 May, Lichfield Garrick

WOLVES WEMBLEY WONDERS Steve Daley, Kenny Hibbitt, John Richards, John McAlle, Derek Parkin, Geoff Palmer, Phil Parkes and Barry Powell re-live the iconic match that saw Wolverhampton Wanderers win the 1974 League Cup Final against Manchester City, Tues 14 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

ADHD LOVE LIVE Bestselling viral duo Rich and Rox promise an evening of laughter, honest conversation and radical shame-reduction as they challenge the biggest ADHD stigmas and lies, Wed 15 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

WILD ISLES LIVE Featuring highlights from the acclaimed BBC series alongside never-before-seen footage and insight from visionary documentary producer Alastair Fothergill, Fri 17 May, Birmingham Town Hall

KEVIN & PERRY GO LARGE IN CONCERT A film-with-orchestra experience under the big-top tent, Fri 17 May, NEC, Birmingham

HELP I SEXTED MY BOSS Comedy podcast in which posh etiquette expert William Hanson and Jordan North, an authority on all things common, help audiences navigate the everyday problems of modern life, Sat 18 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham



JAMES BOND GALA NIGHT Tom Roberts comperes an evening of iconic Bond anthems. Gladstone 'G' Wilson (musical director), Clare Andress & Tom Roberts (vocals) also feature, Sun 19 May, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

Events

MUSEUM TOUR Join staff and volunteers for a guided tour of the museum, Mon 13 May, Lapworth Museum of Geology, University of Birmingham

SPRING TOTE BAG PRINTING Screen print a Spring-inspired design onto a blank tote bag, Tues 14 May, Winterbourne House and Garden, University of Birmingham

TOUCH SCREEN: FLATPACK Touch, smell and feel your way through a collection of colourful short films, Tues 14 May, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

SPRING GARDEN TOUR Join a skilled member of the horticultural team as they guide you around the garden, paying special attention to seasonal highlights and features of interest, Wed 15 May, Winterbourne House and Garden, University of B'ham

INTERNATIONAL WATERCOLOUR MASTERS Exhibition and festival featuring the world's best watercolour artists, Wed 15 - Fri 24 May, Lilleshall



Flatpack Festival - various locations in Birmingham

Hall, Shropshire

CRAFT, ART AND TEXTILE REPAIR CAFE Relaxed sessions in which participants can enjoy a natter and get some help with a craft or art project that they're stuck on, Thurs 16 May, Castle Bromwich Halls Gardens, Birmingham

ROGUES, VILLAINS & PEAKY BLINDERS - CRIMINALS OF THE LOCK-UP Explore the museum after hours and enjoy an evening talk about some of the criminals held at the lock-up in its 125 year history, Thurs 16 May, West Midlands Police Museum, B'ham

SPRING DIESEL FESTIVAL Featuring both modern and heritage locomotives, Thurs 16 - Sun 19 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

FLATPACK 2024: GREMLINS + Q&A Join Dr Catherine Lester from the University of Birmingham and Dr Kate Egan from Northumbria University as they conduct research on the connection between childhood and the horror genre, Sat 18 May, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), B'ham

FLATPACK 2024: A BRUSH WITH COMEDY

+ **Q&A** A screening of the film followed by a Q&A with Louis Moir and Spencer Jones, Sat 18 May, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), B'ham

CRAFTERAMA Craft-supplies event featuring a selection of companies selling their wares, Sat 18 May, NAEC Stoneleigh, Warwickshire

EYE MUSIC TRUST: COLOURSCAPE Venture into the intense colour and light of the walk-in labyrinth, and experience music reflecting sounds of water, earth and air, Sat 18 - Sun 19 May, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

MAKERS CENTRAL Offering a chance for budding and established makers to learn, share skills and get creative, Sat 18 - Sun 19 May, NEC, B'ham

BIG FISH LITTLE FISH X CAMP BESTIVAL 'NEON MAY-HEM' FAMILY RAVE Dance with your kids amidst the bubbles, snow-foam, confetti and giant balloons, Sun 19 May, Tunnel Club, Birmingham

FAMILY EXPLORERS: BUG HUNT Connect with nature and learn fascinating facts, Sun 19 May, Birmingham Botanical Gardens



Liberation Squares - The Rep, Birmingham



Friendly Fire Band - The Night Owl, Digbeth

Gigs

FULL FLOWER MOON BAND Mon 20 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

BETH MCCARTHY Mon 20 May, Mama Roux's, Digbeth

C.O.F.F.I.N Tues 21 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

MINAMI DEUTSCH Tues 21 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

GIRL SCOUT Tues 21 May, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

LEAH KATE + HUNTER DAILY + CEARA CAVALIERI Tues 21 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth

GO YOUR OWN WAY - THE FLEETWOOD MAC LEGACY Tues 21 May, The Alexandra

KONGERO Tues 21 May, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

FRIDAY PILOTS CLUB Wed 22 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

MUTES + SPITS MILK + STAY IN NOTHING Wed 22 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

ARAB STRAP Wed 22 May, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

LOST NOTES TRIO + MARIANNE MILLS Wed 22 May, Red Lion Folk Club

NORTHERN LIVE - DO I LOVE YOU Wed 22 May, The Alexandra

JERRY LEGER Wed 22 May, Kitchen Garden,

Kings Heath

JOOLS HOLLAND AND HIS RHYTHM & BLUES ORCHESTRA Wed 22 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

ICE NINE KILLS Wed 22 May, The Civic at The Halls, Wolverhampton

THE MUSIC OF CHAKA KHAN Wed 22 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

REBECCA DOWNES Thurs 23 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

JUDY BLU BAND Thurs 23 May, The Jam House, Jewellery Qtr

MIRANDA SEX GARDEN Thurs 23 May, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

DANNY ELFMAN PERCUSSION QUARTET Thurs 23 May, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

NICKELBACK + LOTTERY WINNERS Thurs 23 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham

TUNDE Thurs 23 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

SONNY TENNET Fri 24 May, Actress & Bishop, Ludgate Hill

BIG SKY ORCHESTRA Fri 24 May, The Dark Horse, Moseley

GRAVE PALMS + ANIMAL BONES Fri 24 May, The Night Owl, Digbeth

SYMPHONIC IBIZA ORCHESTRA FEATURING HEATHER SMALL Fri 24 May, NEC, B'ham

HUW WARREN Fri 24 May, 1000 Trades,

Jewellery Quarter

SONU NIGAM Fri 24 May, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

THE CROOKS Fri 24 May, The Rainbow, Digbeth

ONE NIGHT IN NASHVILLE Fri 24 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

GOLDIE + DOC SCOTT Sat 25 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

FRIENDLY FIRE BAND Sat 25 May, The Night Owl, Digbeth

SONS OF THE EAST + PAT BURGNER Sat 25 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth

DANNY BROWN Sat 25 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth

THE SMYTHS Sat 25 May, O2 Academy

ENGLISH TEACHER Sat 25 May, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

GREAT GABLE Sat 25 May, The Rainbow, Digbeth

KILL YR IDOLS + BDRMM + MODEL/ACTRIZ + MOCK MEDIA + BOROUGHCOUNCIL + THE BIG HELL Sun 26 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

LES SPAINE Sun 26 May, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

NICKI MINAJ Sun 26 May, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

KIM RICHEY Sun 26 May, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

Classical Music

CZECH NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA Featuring Steven Mercurio (conductor) & Mark Bebbington (piano). Programme includes works by Copland, Beethoven, Smetana & Dvořák, Tues 21 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE ROMANTIC REVIVAL ORCHESTRA Featuring Leo Jaffrey (conductor) & Maciej Rzepczyk (violin). Programme includes works by Dvořák, Mason Ma, Juliana Niu & Wieniawski, Thurs 23 May, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

RBC: DANNY ELFMAN PERCUSSION QUARTET Pre-CBSO concert showcase, featuring musicians from Royal Birmingham Conservatoire's Percussion department. Programme includes works by Sartorius, Glass, Shaw & Elfman, Thurs 23 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CBSO: BERNSTEIN & ELFMAN Featuring Fabien Gabel (conductor) & Colin Currie (percussion). Programme includes works by Bernstein, Elfman & Weill, Thurs 23 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

LUNCHTIME RECITAL Fri 24 May, Birmingham Cathedral

RBC LUNCHTIME CONCERT Featuring musicians from Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, Fri 24 May, St Paul's Church, Birmingham

THE FULLTONE ORCHESTRA WITH CARLI PAOLI + ALED JONES Also featuring Anthony Brown (conductor) & Gareth Dafydd Morris (voice - pictured). Programme includes music from classical favourites & film scores, Sat 25 May, Symphony Hall



BCMG: LOOKING FOR A MELODY Featuring Birmingham Contemporary Music Group & NEXT performers. Programme includes works by Jonathan Harvey & George Crumb, Sun 26 May, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

Comedy

ANUVAB PAL Tues 21 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

KANAN GILL Wed 22 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, CRAIG HILL & COMIC TBC Thurs 23 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

TOM ALLEN Thurs 23 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

HORATIO GOULD Fri 24 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

RORY BREMNER, ANGELA BARNES, FREDDY QUINNE, MATT RICHARDSON & JANINE HAROUNI Fri 24 May, Warwick Castle

ROBYN PERKINS, ANDREW WHITE, CRAIG HILL & COMIC TBC Fri 24 - Sat 25 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

MICHAEL MCINTYRE Fri 24 - Sat 25 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham

JON PEARSON, OMAR BADAWAY, ANDREA HUBERT + DAVE LONGLEY Sat 25 May, Rosies Nightclub, B'ham

COUNT ARTHUR STRONG Sat 25 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham



SUKH OJLA Sat 25 May, The Rep, Birmingham

SIMON AMSTEL, MAISIE ADAM, FREDDY QUINNE, SPENCER JONES & ESHAAN AKBAR Sat 25 May, Warwick Castle

KEVIN J, MR CEE, GBEMI OLADIPO, KYRAH GRAY & JAZZIE ZONZOLO Sun 26 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ADAM BEARDSMORE, HARVEY HAWKINS, LOVDEV BARPAGA, ALEX EGAN, HANNAH WEETMAN, LINDSEY SANTORO, TOM LITTLE & KWAME ASANTE Sun 26 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

NINA CONTI, GARY DELANEY, FREDDY QUINN, MATT BRAGG & STEPHEN BAILEY Sun 26 May, Warwick Castle

ED GAMBLE Sun 26 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Theatre

SWIM, AUNTY, SWIM! Siana Bagura's poetic story of friendship, loss, sisterhood, motherhood, ageing and starting again, Mon 20 May - Sat 1 June, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

THE OLIVE BOY A 'crude and compelling' coming-of-age comedy, written & performed by Ollie Maddigan, Tues 21 - Wed 22 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

KINKY BOOTS Sutton Coldfield Musical Theatre Company present an amateur version of the Tony Award-winning musical, Tues 21 - Sat 25 May, Lichfield Garrick

COME FROM AWAY Olivier & Tony award-winning musical telling the real-life story of the 7,000 air passengers from all over the world who were grounded in Canada

during the wake of 9/11, Tues 21 May - Sat 1 June, Birmingham Hippodrome

OPERATION JULIE Breaking Bad collides with The Good Life in this anarchic play accompanied by 1970s prog-rock music, performed live on stage by nine talented actor-musicians, Wed 22 - Sat 25 May, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

THE ROTTING HART - A NEW QUEER HORROR The Crested Fools present a new queer horror tackling the history of homophobia in Spain and 'the enduring hate that persists inside ourselves', Thurs 23 - Fri 24 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, B'ham

THE WITCHING HOUR National tour of James Williams' terrifying tale, Thurs 23 - Sun 26 May, The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

GREASE THE MUSICAL Coventry Musical Theatre Society present an amateur version of the iconic high-school musical, Thurs 23 - Sun 26 May, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

SCENES FROM SHAW The Crescent Theatre presents an evening of scenes from the work of George Bernard Shaw, Fri 24 - Sat 25 May, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

NASTY Succulent Theatre present an autobiographical, confessional theatre piece exploring 'the hidden side of what it means to be a woman', Fri 24 - Sat 25 May, Midlands Arts Centre (mac), B'ham

9 TO 5 THE MUSICAL Amateur version of the Dolly Parton musical, Fri 24 - Sat 25 May, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

CHARLES DICKENS' THE HAUNTING Ghost story inspired by one of Britain's best-loved authors, Fri 24 May - Sat 15 June, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

SIX CHICK FLICKS Smash-hit comedy which parodies a selection of popular chick flicks in a 'hysterical, fast-paced show', Sat 25 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

RUBBISH SHAKESPEARE: ROMEO AND JULIET Three Idiots perform Shakespeare's famous tragedy using only a box of tatty wigs, a worn floral dress, and a burst airbed they found by the bins, Sun 26 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Kids Theatre

THE LION INSIDE Puppets, music and song feature in a new stage adaptation of Rachel Bright & Jim Field's much-loved story for younger audiences, Sat 25 - Sun 26 May, Birmingham Town Hall

PEPPA PIG'S FUN DAY OUT Join Peppa and her family & friends for a fun-packed day complete with songs, dance and muddy puddles, Sat 25 -

Sun 26 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

Dance

JOHANNES RADEBE: HOUSE OF JOJO Brand-new theatrical celebration 'jam-packed with roof-raising music, dazzling costumes and world-class dance', Thurs 23 - Fri 24 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

BODY CLOCK BY AZIZI COLE A multidisciplinary piece combining music and movement to explore the influence that music can have on the body, Sat 25 May, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, University of Birmingham

Light Entertainment

MICHAEL STARRING BEN Acclaimed production celebrating the King of Pop. Featuring a live band, dazzling costumes and the performer's iconic dance routines, Mon 20 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre



TO MOVE IN TIME Tyrone Huggins' performs a monologue in which an unnamed protagonist speculates playfully about what he'd do if he were able to travel through time, Thurs 23 - Fri 24 May, The Rep, Birmingham

TWEEDY'S MASSIVE CIRCUS Join the star of Gifford's Circus as he and his friends put on their very own sophisticated circus show. What could possibly go wrong?, Fri 24 May - Sun 2 June, Royal Shakespeare Company Grounds, Waterside, Stratford-upon-Avon

WIFI WARS Live comedy gameshow where everyone can play along by logging in with a smartphone or tablet to compete in a range of games, puzzles and quizzes to win the show and prizes, Sat 25 May, Midlands Arts Centre (mac), B'ham

THE D-DAY DARLINGS A musical journey back to the heart of 1940s wartime Britain, Sat 25 May, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

I COULD BE WRONG, I COULD BE RIGHT: AN EVENING WITH JOHN LYDON Join the former Sex Pistols frontman as he talks about his unique and extraordinary career, Sat 25 May, Walsall Arena & Arts Centre



Body Clock by Azizi Cole - Elgar Concert Hall, The Bramall, University of Birmingham

POLLY & ESTHER A chaotic mother-daughter drag cabaret, written and performed by Polly Amorous & Esther Parade, Sat 25 - Sun 26 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, B'ham

Events

MINI MOTORISTS MONDAY Chance for under-fives to seek out the different colours and shapes in the museum's collection, Mon 20 May, British Motor Museum, Gaydon

RECORD FAIR Featuring 20-plus tables of quality vinyl, from classics to rarities, Sat 25 May, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

ABBA TERRACE PARTY Featuring a live Abba singer duo and three hours of Abba classics, Sat 25 May, The Button Factory, Birmingham

DIRTY DANCING BOTTOMLESS BRUNCH Enjoy 90 minutes of bottomless prosecco and food before a screening of the 80s classic, Sat 25 May, Millennium Point, Birmingham

WORD OF MOUTH THE OVER 30S DAYCLUB Sat 25 May, Bushwackers, Birmingham

THE HALAL FOOD FESTIVAL Featuring street-food vendors, Muslim lifestyle stalls and an artisan market, Sat 25 - Sun 26 May, NEC, Birmingham

BRICK FEST LIVE The largest hands-on Lego event of its kind makes its UK debut, Sat 25 - Mon 27 May, NEC, Birmingham

JURASSIC GARDENS Learn fascinating facts about dinosaurs and snap a memorable photo, Sat 25 May - Sun 2 June, Birmingham Botanical Gardens

MADE IN THE BLACK COUNTRY Celebrate the things, people and products that came from the Black Country, Sat 25 May - Sun 2 June, Black Country Living Museum,

Dudley

BRICK OCEAN AT THE ENGINE HOUSE Go under the sea and discover ocean-themed brick model installations, Sat 25 May - Sun 2 June, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

MEDIAeval MAYHEM Medieval fun for all the family, Sat 25 May - Sun 2 June, Tamworth Castle

THE ULTIMATE GERMAN CAR MEET Display of 1000 cars from German manufacturers, Sun 26 May, British Motor Museum, Gaydon

Festivals

BEARDED THEORY SPRING GATHERING Line-up includes Jane's Addiction, Amyl And The Sniffers & Sleaford Mods, Thurs 23 - Sun 26 May, Catton Hall, South Derbyshire

GLASTONBUDGET Line-up includes The Bon Jovi Experience, Absolute Bowie & Young Elton, Thurs 23 - Sun 26 May, Turnpost Farm, Leicestershire

BREAKING BANDS Line-up includes Tailgunner, Stickman & Dead Man's Whiskey, Fri 24 - Mon 27 May, Stoke Prior Sports & Country Club, Bromsgrove

CHESTER FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up includes Greg Russell, Wet The Tea & Calan, Fri 24 - Mon 27 May, Kelsall Village, Cheshire

HOWTHELIGHTGETSIN Line-up includes The Orb, Sea Power, Hercules & Love Affair, Fri 24 - Mon 27 May, Hay on Wye, Hereford

BIRMINGHAM PRIDE Line-up includes Loreen, Natasha Bedingfield & Heather Small, Fri 24 - Sun 26 May, Birmingham Gay Village

DOT TO DOT FESTIVAL Line-up includes Jockstrap, Wunderhorse & The Magic Gang, Sun 26 May, various venues in Nottingham



Gigs

JENNY COLQUITT + CRAIG GOULD Mon 27 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

HIS LORDSHIP Mon 27 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

BABE RAINBOW Mon 27 May, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

THE LOVELY EGGS Mon 27 May, XOYO, Digbeth

QUADE + MOTHS OF THE MOON Tues 28 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

TEENAGE DADS Tues 28 May, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

TINY HABITS Tues 28 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth

THE ZOMBIES Tues 28 May, Birmingham Town Hall

MF ROBOTS Wed 29 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

THE SIMON &

GARFUNKEL STORY Wed 29 May, Artrix, Bromsgrove

KING GIZZARD AND THE LIZARD WIZARD + GRACE CUMMINGS Wed 29 May, The Civic at The Halls

Wolverhampton

LOGIC Thurs 30 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

CHRIS HELME Thurs 30 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

CONCRETISM + BUNKR Thurs 30 May, The Victoria, John Bright Street

TOOL + NIGHT VERSES Thurs 30 May, Resorts World Arena, B'ham

THANK YOU FOR THE MUSIC - ABBA TRIBUTE Thurs 30 May, The Alexandra

SIMPLY DYLAN Thurs 30 May, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

SARAH MCQUAID Thurs 30 May, The Core Theatre, Solihull

LAUREN SOUTH Thurs

Tool - Resorts World Arena

30 May, Bromsgrove Folk Club

TARA CLERKIN TRIO Fri 31 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

ELLE-J WALTERS BAND Fri 31 May, The Jam House, Jewellery Qtr

GARY NUMAN Fri 31 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth

TEDDY SWIMS Fri 31 May, O2 Academy

JASON ALLAN Fri 31 May, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

THE BLEED + STILL IN LOVE Fri 31 May, The Asylum, Digbeth

VOODOO SIOUX + TAXI FOR JESUS + THE WESTLANDS + PATTIE COOPER Fri 31 May, The Asylum, Birmingham

OLI HAYHURST Fri 31 May, 1000 Trades, Jewellery Quarter

THE MAGIC OF THE BEATLES Fri 31 May, The Alexandra

SAN QUENTIN Fri 31 May, The Rainbow, Digbeth



Gary Numan - O2 Institute, Digbeth

Classical Music

CBSO: OLD WORLD SYMPHONY

Featuring Oksana Lyniv (conductor) & Andrii Murza (violin). Programme includes works by Frolyak, Tchaikovsky & Dvořák, Wed 29 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CBSO CENTRE STAGE: KEGELSTATT TRIO

Featuring Oliver Janes (clarinet), Chris Yates (viola) & Robert Markham (piano). Programme includes works by Ades, R Schumann & Mozart, Thurs 30 May, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

MWEN X BEAST X ANTONIO ROBERTS A

curated night of electronic & experimental music, with visuals. Featuring compositions from Antonio Roberts, Indira Lakshmi, Jim Osmon, Mwen & okcandice, Thurs 30 May, Centrala, Birmingham

BEST OF BALLET WITH THE CBSO

Featuring Martin Yates (conductor), Zenaïda Yanowsky (presenter) & the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Programme includes popular ballet scores from Sleeping Beauty, The Nutcracker, Swan Lake, Romeo & Juliet, Cinderella, The Firebird and Manon, Fri 31 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Comedy

MICHELLE BRASIER Tues 28 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

WATCH WHAT CRAPPENS Wed 29 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

CHRISTOPHER MACARTHUR-BOYD Wed 29 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

BRENNAN REECE, DAVE LONGLEY, AMY MATTHEWS & FREYA MCGHEE Thurs 30 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ROMESH RANGANATHAN Thurs 30 - Fri 31 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham



BRENNAN REECE, DAVE LONGLEY, ROBERT WHITE & AMY MATTHEWS Fri 31 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

SUNSHINE ON LEITH Amateur version presented by Solihull Theatre Company, Tues 28 May - Sat 1 June, Bushell Hall, Solihull School

THE KITE RUNNER Acclaimed

production based on Khaled Hosseini's bestselling novel, Tues 28 May - Sat 1 June, Malvern Theatres

SHERLOCK'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE

'Riotous spoof' featuring four actors, minimal furnishings and 'a ton of jolly good fun', Wed 29 May, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

SIX CHICK FLICKS Smash-hit comedy

which parodies a selection of popular chick flicks in a 'hysterical, fast-paced show', Fri 31 May, Stourbridge Town Hall

Kids Theatre

THE TIGER WHO CAME TO TEA Join the

tea-guzzling tiger in a delightful family show packed with oodles of magic, singalong songs and clumsy chaos. Based on Judith Kerr's best-selling children's book, Tues 28 - Thurs 30 May, Lichfield Garrick

MILKSHAKE LIVE ON HOLIDAY All-

singing, all-dancing show for younger audiences, Wed 29 May, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

MADAGASCAR THE MUSICAL CBBC star

Karim Zeroual stars as King Julien in an adventure musical based on the hit DreamWorks film, Thurs 30 May - Sun 2 June, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre



Light Entertainment

MIND MANGLER: MEMBER OF THE TRAGIC CIRCLE New mentalism

comedy from Henry Lewis and Jonathan Sayer - creators of the smash-hit The Play That Goes Wrong and BBC series The Goes Wrong Show, Mon 27 - Wed 29 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

THE SOUND OF MUZAK Dan Driver's one-man show explores 'music's profound impact on our lives', Wed

29 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

SING-A-LONG-A MATILDA Screening of the Roald Dahl classic, complete with lyrics and dance routines for audience participation. Fancy dress encouraged, Wed 29 May, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

SPIRIT OF THE BLITZ Feelgood show recreating 1940s favourites from the likes of Vera Lynn, George Formby, Max Miller and Bing Crosby. Andy Eastwood, Maggie O'Hara and Pete Lindup star, Thurs 30 May, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

DIVA OF THE DECADES Celebrating the powerhouse voices and iconic performances of the biggest divas in music, Fri 31 May, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

and their properties, Mon 27 - Fri 31 May, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

MARVELLOUS MATERIALS FAMILY SHOW Interactive family show featuring demonstrations and audience participation, Mon 27 - Fri 31 May, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

SUPERSTAR WRESTLING A host of international wrestling stars face the very best of home-grown talent and fans' favourites, Tues 28 May, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

ACT SHAKESPEARE Dive into The Tempest or Macbeth via a skills-based workshop for children aged eight to 11, Tues 28 May, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

ACT SHAKESPEARE Energetic drama workshops for children aged 11 to 14, Wed 29 May, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

UK GAMES EXPO Featuring hundreds of exhibitors showing, demonstrating, and selling tabletop games of all types, Fri 31 May - Sun 2 June, NEC, Birmingham

MIDLANDS AIR FESTIVAL Featuring over 100 hot-air balloons, Fri 31 May - Sun



Dan Driver: *The Sound Of Muzak* - The Old Joint Stock Theatre

2 June, Ragley Hall, Warwickshire

REGGAE FESTIVAL Line-up includes Dandy Livingstone, The Pioneers & Stranger Cole, Fri 31 May - Sun 2 June, Thornborough Farm, Birmingham

Festivals

FORBIDDEN FOREST Line-up includes Pawsa, Low Steppa & East End Dubs, Fri 31 May - Sun 2 June, Belvoir Castle, Nottinghamshire

BIRMINGHAM INTERNATIONAL SKA &

WYCHWOOD MUSIC FESTIVAL Line-up includes Sister Sledge, Texas & Ocean Colour Scene, Fri 31 May - Sun 2 June, Cheltenham Racecourse

Events

STREET JAM FESTIVAL DANCE COMPETITION Featuring a performance from Diversity and 100-plus dance schools from around the UK, Mon 27 May, NEC, Birmingham

MARVELLOUS MATERIALS BUSKING Fun activities exploring different materials

THE PURRFECT FAMILY TREAT!

The Tiger Who Came to Tea

LIVE ON STAGE!



★★★★★
The Times

★★★★★
Mail on Sunday

★★★★★
Sunday Telegraph

★★★★★
Daily Telegraph

★★★★★
Daily Express

★★★★★
Daily Mail

THE ALBANY theatre

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THEATRE GROUP

Competitions

WIN! with What's On...

Enter now at whatsonlive.co.uk to be in with a chance of bagging one of these fabulous prizes!



Win! A family ticket to see Peppa Pig's Fun Day Out!

Packed full of singing and dancing (and muddy puddles!), Peppa Pig's Fun Day Out guarantees giggles and snorts for all Peppa fans - *and* provides a perfect introduction to theatre for your little ones. We have a family ticket (4 tickets) to give away for this oinktastic stage show when it stops off at The Alexandra, Birmingham, on Wednesday 31 July.

Competition closes Friday 19 July



Win! Two adult weekend camping tickets to Shrewsbury Folk Festival

Shrewsbury Folk Festival returns late summer (West Mid Showground, Friday 23 - Monday 26 August) with four days of folk, Americana, blues and world music.

We are offering one reader the chance to win two adult weekend camping tickets for this year's get-together.

Competition closes Monday 5 August



Win! Tickets to ALSO Festival 2024!

Leading lights in the worlds of music, comedy, wellness, food and nature will come together when ALSO Festival heads to Compton Verney in Warwickshire from Friday 12 to Sunday 14 July. We are offering three readers the chance to each win a family ticket (4 tickets) or a pair of adult weekend tickets worth £300!

Competition closes Friday 31 May



Win! Two tickets to BBC Gardeners' World Live!

Green-fingered fans of BBC Gardeners' World Live will be delighted to know that the much-loved annual event is returning to Birmingham's NEC next month (Thursday 13 - Sunday 16 June).

And better still... we're offering two readers the chance to each win a pair of tickets to the final day of the show!

Competition closes Monday 27 May

For your chance to WIN! with What's On, visit:
whatsonlive.co.uk

BELGRADE



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ROYAL
BIRMINGHAM
CONSERVATOIRE

HIGHLIGHTS



Image: CODA. Jason Sheldon – Junction 10 Photography

Fri 3 May
Free Eastside Jazz Fridays

Sat 11 May
Gogo Penguin
Support from Caoilfhionn
Rose + DJ Echo Juliet.
Presented by Leftfoot.

Fri 17 May
Bill Frisell with Rudy
Royston and Thomas
Morgan
Presented by Stoney Lane
Live.

Sat 25 May
Wax Factory Record Fair
20 tables of vinyl, live music
plus pre-loved clothing
from GarmMountain

Sun 2 June
Birmingham Philharmonic
Orchestra
Gaelic Visions

Wed 5 June
RBC Afro-Cuban Jazz
Orchestra
@ Hockley Social Club

Fri 7 – Sun 9 June
Summer Opera: Hansel &
Gretel
Under 18s go free with a
paying adult

Tue 11 June
CODA
Festival of new and
experimental music

Thu 13 June
Epic Brass
Feat. The Tredegar Town
Band

Thu 13 – Sat 15 June
Faustus: That Damned
Woman
@ The Crescent Theatre

Fri 14 June
RBC Symphony Orchestra
with Emanuil Ivanov
Busoni's Piano Concerto
and Respighi's Pines of
Rome

Fri 21 June
The Conservatoire Folk
Ensemble

Sun 7 – Sat 13 July
Wagner's The Flying
Dutchman
(Der fliegende Holländer)

Sun 14 July
Sonata for Broken Fingers
Joe Cutler Chamber Opera
@ CBSO Centre