

Birmingham

ISSUE 457 FEBRUARY 2025

What's On

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

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BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET

Director Carlos Acosta

Sir David Bintley's

Cinderella

19 February – 1 March



"A sure-fire hit"

Birmingham Mail

H BIRMINGHAM HIPPODROME

birminghamhippodrome.com



inside:

WILDE & FARCICAL

...Earnest? takes Oscar Wilde's classic to a whole new level



BUFFY REVAMPED

fast-paced production makes a return to the Midlands



YEAR OF THE SNAKE

Chinese New Year celebrated across the region



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THE OLD JOINT STOCK
PRESENTS

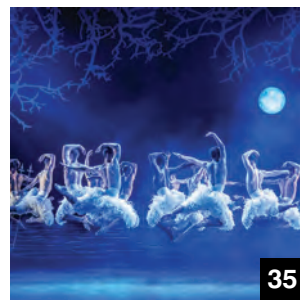
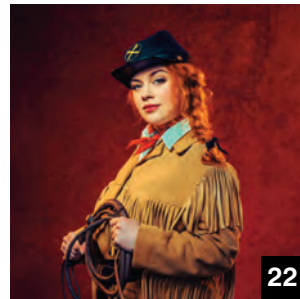
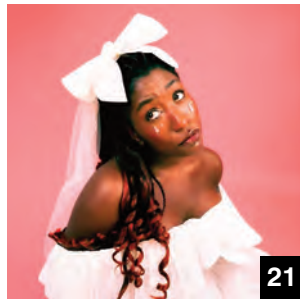
ORDINARY DAYS

MUSIC AND LYRICS BY
ADAM GWON

DIRECTED BY
KARL STEELE

9TH - 20TH APRIL 2025
THE OLD JOINT STOCK
4 TEMPLE ROW WEST, BIRMINGHAM, B2 5NY

"YOU'RE NOT
LOST
WHERE YOU'RE
SUPPOSED
TO BE"



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What's On

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Birmingham What's On



New drone light show heads Over The Rainbow

Drone light show specialists Celestial will be heading Over The Rainbow next month when they bring their brand-new production, The Wonderful Wizard Of Oz, to Birmingham. Promising to be 'a spellbinding adaptation of the beloved novel', the presentation will see hundreds of drones 'dancing across the night sky', as cutting-edge technology fuses with 'artistic brilliance'...

The Wonderful Wizard Of Oz visits the city's Edgbaston Stadium on Saturday 1 March. For further information about the show and to book tickets, visit yuup.co/wizard-of-oz



Daytime clubbing fun with Line Of Duty star Vicky

Line Of Duty's Vicky McClure has joined forces with filmmaker & broadcaster Jonny Owen and Reverend & The Makers frontman Jon McClure to launch a daytime clubbing experience. Taking the title Day Fever, the event is being held at Birmingham's O2 Institute on Saturday 1 February, from 3pm to 8pm. Tickets can be purchased at day-fever.com



Tourism summit to debut at Birmingham venue

The first-ever World Screen Tourism Summit - SET-JET25 - will take place in the autumn at Birmingham's International Convention Centre (Friday 21 November). The event is designed to showcase UK and international best practice in the growing market for 'set-jetting' - the phenomenon of tourists visiting locations they have seen in films and on television.

From panto to Pharaoh!

Birmingham Hippodrome panto legend Matt Slack will return to the venue in the spring when he stars as Pharaoh in the touring production of Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat. The show stops off at the theatre from Tuesday 20 May to Sunday 1 June. Matt will then make a welcome return to the Hippodrome next Christmas to star in its pantomime production of Robin Hood. Tickets are available by visiting the website birminghamhippodrome.com



Doves added to Moseley Folk Festival 2025 line-up

Manchester band Doves have been added to the line-up for this summer's Moseley Folk & Arts Festival.



Taking place at Birmingham's Moseley Park & Pool venue, the event runs from Friday 29 to Sunday 31 August. Doves will be joined by the previously announced Father John Misty, BC Camplight, This Is The Kit, Fisherman's Friends and Muireann Bradley. For further information and to purchase tickets, visit moseleyfolk.co.uk

Millennium Point charity seeks a new STEM star

Birmingham-based charity Millennium Point has launched its 2025 Scholarship programme and will be awarding a free degree to the lucky winner.



Continuing its ongoing mission to empower young people with opportunities in STEM industries (science, technology, engineering & maths), Millennium Point is looking to award a fully funded degree at Birmingham City University's Faculty of Computing, Engineering & The Built Environment. Students can choose from a wide range of courses in computing, digital technology and engineering. Interested parties can find out more - and apply (until Friday 7 March) - by visiting the website at millenniumpoint.org.uk

Garrick licenced to thrill with Bond theme tunes

The wait goes on for James Bond fans eager to find out which actor will replace Daniel Craig as 007. But in the meantime, they can celebrate the world's best-known secret agent by getting along to Lichfield Garrick's night of 'big Bond sounds'. Featuring all the classic numbers, including Diamonds Are Forever, Thunderball, A View To A Kill and Goldfinger, the concert is being performed by the BBC Big Band and takes place at the venue on Wednesday 19 February. Tickets can be purchased by visiting the website at lichfieldgarrick.com

Backstage at the RSC...

Midlands theatre-goers are being invited to go 'behind the scenes' at the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford-upon-Avon. Featuring as part of a programme of attractions being run by the RSC, the Scenic Workshop Tours allow visitors to explore the process of set and prop creation and watch skilled craftspeople bring a show to life. To find out more about the tours and various other initiatives, visit the website: rsc.org.uk



Exploring The City That Shaped Us

A multidisciplinary event celebrating Birmingham's diverse communities, cultures and creatives will launch at Royal Birmingham Conservatoire next month. Consisting of an exhibition, an immersive audio-visual installation and a concert with newly composed live music, The City That Shaped Us runs at the venue from Tuesday 11 to Friday 28 March. Visit bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire for further information.

Artist call-out for Birmingham Fest

Applications are now open to take part in this year's Birmingham Fest event. The 17-day festival, running from Friday 11 to Sunday 27 July and celebrating the second city's arts scene, takes place across four venues: the Blue Orange Theatre, the Crescent Theatre, the Old Joint Stock Theatre, and the brand-new Birmingham Black Box. Any artists or companies wishing to showcase their work at the event can find out more by visiting the festival's website at birminghamfest.co.uk

Bearded Theory back in the spring

The multi-award-winning Bearded Theory festival will return to Catton Park in Derbyshire in the spring (Wednesday 21 - Sunday 25 May). Promising another year of community-driven grassroots festivities, the event features Paul Heaton and special guest singer Rianne Downey. Other headliners include Iggy Pop, Manic Street Preachers and Mercury Award winners English Teacher. The Sisters Of Mercy and Leftfield also feature. For full line-up and tickets visit beardedtheory.co.uk



Badminton championships to return to Birmingham venue

The YONEX All England Open Badminton Championships makes a welcome return to Utilita Arena Birmingham next month (Tuesday 11 - Sunday 16 March). The event is the world's oldest and most

prestigious badminton tournament, having first been held in 1899. This year's get-together features 50 hours of live badminton made up of 155 matches. For more information and tickets, visit allenglandbadminton.com

Sutton Coldfield Town Hall offers panto-ticket discount

Tickets are now on sale for Sutton Coldfield Town Hall's Christmas pantomime production of Beauty And The Beast.

Presented by TaleGate Theatre Productions, the show will run at the venue from Saturday 6 to Wednesday 31 December. To book your seat, visit suttoncoldfieldtownhall.com or phone 0121 296 9543. Use the code 'Panto10' to get a 10% discount until Monday 31 March.



Stevie & Luther at the Crescent

A tribute show celebrating the music of Stevie Wonder and Luther Vandross is stopping off at Birmingham's Crescent Theatre this month. Featuring talented counterfeiter Nat Augustin and his live band, Stevie & Luther Show visits the venue on Thursday 20 February. Tickets can be purchased at crescent-theatre.co.uk

National Youth Theatre to hold free auditions at Birmingham venue

The National Youth Theatre is holding free auditions in Birmingham next month. Taking place on Saturday 22 March at the city's BOA Stage & Screen Academy, the auditions are open to young people aged between 14 and 25 and disabled and neurodivergent young people up to the age of 30. To find out more, visit nyt.org.uk



Call-out for Coventry Open art submissions

The creative prowess of artists throughout the West Midlands region will be showcased to thousands of art lovers when the Coventry Open returns to the city's Herbert Art Gallery & Museum on Friday 28 March (until Sunday 8 June). Artists have until midnight on Monday 17 February to submit their work via the online submissions portal. Organisers are encouraging entries in all mediums. To find out more about the Open, and to access the portal, visit theherbert.org

Immersive installation to open at Eastside Projects

An immersive installation taking a look at how success is measured in contemporary society will launch at Birmingham's Eastside Projects next month (Saturday 8 March, showing until Saturday 5 July). Alice Theobald's *Perfection Is A Lie (An Ode To Your Potential)* was created last summer over the course of a series of workshops at the city's Midlands Arts Centre. To find out more, visit eastsideprojects.org

BCMG to celebrate Bob Marley's 80th birthday

Basil Gabbidon (pictured) - a founder member of trailblazing local reggae band Steel Pulse - is this month joining forces with string musicians from Birmingham



Contemporary Music Group to perform a concert in celebration of what would've been the 80th birthday of the legendary Bob Marley. Taking the title *Reggae Origins: Bob Marley And Handsworth Reggae*, the concert is being held at Birmingham Town Hall on Thursday 6 February. Tickets can be booked by visiting the website at bcmg.org.uk

Birmingham theatre to host Verve poetry festival

Birmingham's Verve Festival of Poetry & Spoken Word returns this month. Featuring 'raucous performance poetry, quiet reading events, studios workshops, mind-blowing dramatic poetry, collaborative work and open-mic poetry', the event takes place at Birmingham Hippodrome from Wednesday 12 to Sunday 16 February. More information is available on the venue's website: birminghamhippodrome.com



Spring shows coming to Symphony Hall and Town Hall

Birmingham Royal Ballet, Daniel Martinez Flamenco Company, and *Strictly* stars Amy Dowden, Carlos Gu, Karen Hauer and Gorka Marquez (pictured) are among the dance artists who will be performing at Birmingham's Symphony Hall and Town Hall this spring.

The new season of shows at the two venues, both of which are managed by local charity B:Music, also includes, among plenty of

other attractions, performances by Chris de Burgh and Mercury Prize-winning Badly Drawn Boy, comedy from Andy Zaltman and Jason Manford, and family fun in the shape of *The Smartest Giant In Town* and *How To Train Your Dragon: In Concert*.

To check out the full programme and book tickets for shows at either venue - or both - visit the website bmusic.co.uk

A springtime return for AGBO Rally at Weston

The ever-popular AGBO Rally makes a welcome return to Weston Park on the Shropshire/Staffordshire border next month (Sunday 16 March).

Featuring 80 rally cars, from all vintages and eras, taking on the stages around Weston - including the iconic watersplash - the rally has been held at the venue since 1997. To find out more about the event, visit the website at weston-park.com

Birmingham-set novel to be launched mid-month

The first in a new series of books set in Birmingham is being published this month. Annie Murray's *The Pearl Button Girl* is described by its publicity as 'a compelling and heartwarming historical story' about a young woman working at one of the city's factories during the Victorian era. The book is being published, in paperback, on Thursday 13 February.

An arts centre Vortex...

A full-length and immersive movement & dance production, exploring the concept of a vortex as a physical and energetic

phenomenon in nature, is being presented at Birmingham's Midlands Arts Centre late next month.

Taking inspiration from the image of the eye of a tornado, *Vortex* is described as being both a physical and spiritual exploration. The show takes place at MAC on Friday 28 & Saturday 29 March.

More acts announced for Shrewsbury Folk Festival

Singer-songwriter Martha Wainwright (pictured) is among a host of artists recently confirmed to appear at this summer's Shrewsbury Folk



Festival (Friday 22 - Monday 25 August). Wainwright, who is celebrating the 20th anniversary of her eponymous first studio album, will be making her Shrewsbury debut, as will Cajun Roosters, Kezia Gill, Mad Dog Mcree, Morganway, Naragonia Quartet (Belgium), Rainbow Girls (USA) and Tin Giants. The Bar-Steward Sons Of Val Doonican will also be returning by popular demand... For further information and to purchase tickets, visit the event's website at shrewsburyfolkfestival.co.uk

B:Music

Town Hall & Symphony Hall

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i @bmusic_ltd
☎ 0121 7803333



Neighbours 40th Anniversary Tour
03 Feb | Symphony Hall



John Barrowman: Laid Bare
04 Feb | Town Hall



Spinach & Ricotta Ravioli
B:Eats at Symphony Hall:
11am-4pm Mon-Sat & pre-show



Transatlantic Sessions
06 Feb | Symphony Hall



Prague Symphony Orchestra
07 Feb | Symphony Hall



David O'Doherty: Tiny Piano Man
08 Feb | Town Hall



Alexis Ffrench
11 Feb | Town Hall



Caroline Hiron: Glad We Had This Chat Live
13 Feb | Town Hall



Ashton Classics
with **Birmingham Royal Ballet**
15 Feb | Symphony Hall



The News Agents Live On Stage | 17 Feb | Symphony Hall



The Lost Notes: A celebration of their album - Good Luck Shoes
25 Feb | Symphony Hall

bmusic.co.uk



Great Nights Out
start with **B:Music!**

Golf brand set to get 'into the swing' in Birmingham

Indoor golf club & lifestyle hospitality brand, Pitch, is to open a new venue on Birmingham's Colmore Square in the spring. Featuring eight state-of-the-art simulator bays and a custom club-fitting bay, Pitch Birmingham is promising 'to bring a new kind of golf and entertainment to residents when it opens in April.' To find out more, visit pitchgolf.london

Musical magic at the Old Joint Stock Theatre

Birmingham's Old Joint Stock Theatre is this year continuing with its ongoing mission 'to champion contemporary musicals and showcase bold, lesser-known works'. Included in the city-centre venue's line-up of shows for 2025 is sci-fi-infused coming-of-age musical *Be More Chill* (Wednesday 6 - Sunday 31 August) and a production of the Tony-nominated Broadway & West End winner *Bonnie & Clyde* (Wednesday 1 - Sunday 26 October). To check out the venue's whole programme of productions, visit oldjointstock.co.uk

Actors sought for new Highbury Theatre show

Midlands theatre company the Highbury Players are on the lookout for two actors. The Sutton Coldfield-located ensemble require one man and one woman to join the cast for their production of Simon Woods' comedy-drama, *Hansard* (Highbury Theatre Centre, Monday 19 - Saturday 24 May). To find out more, visit highburytheatre.co.uk

Children's hospice to host first online auction

Acorns Children's Hospice will hold its first online auction next month. A 'spectacular' array of prizes - donated by regional and national arts organisations and visitor attractions with links to film and television - will help raise money for Acorns' services, which support around 1,000 children and their families each year through their hospices in Birmingham, Worcester and the Black Country. The auction will run on the Acorns website from Saturday 1 to Tuesday 25 March. To be in with a chance of bidding for one or more of the prizes, visit acorns.org.uk. You can also follow Acorns on social media to find out about the new prizes which will be added between now and the 1st of March.



Image credit: Mycelium Network - Strevie Thompson, Custom Fibre Optics

Birmingham Light Festival makes its debut this month

A series of artworks will illuminate Birmingham this month when local producing house OPUS (Outdoor Places Unusual Spaces) presents a four-day 'light festival'. The event will feature 11 installations, located within walking distance of each other, and an accompanying programme of

more than 50 events. Birmingham Light Festival takes place across the city from Wednesday 19 to Saturday 22 February. For a full list of artworks and events - and details about how to make a booking for those events which are ticketed - visit the website at birminghamlightfestival.co.uk

'Come and sing' with the City of Birmingham Choir

The City of Birmingham Choir is inviting Midlanders to join them for a 'come and sing day' next month. Conductor/composer Jonathan Willcocks will be leading the event, which takes place at Shirley Methodist Church on Saturday 15 March. More information is available by visiting the website at citychoir.org.uk

Nigel Havers Talking B*locks in Birmingham!

Veteran TV actor Nigel Havers is bringing his brand-new show to the Midlands in the spring. Taking a 'thoroughly entertaining trot through his five decades in showbusiness', *Talking B*locks* stops off at Birmingham Repertory Theatre on Tuesday 25 March. Tickets are available online by visiting fane.co.uk/nigel-havers



Prestigious exhibition goes on show 'after dark'

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery is offering visitors the chance to enjoy the prestigious Wildlife Photographer of the Year exhibition 'after dark' this month. In partnership with Birmingham Light Festival, the museum will open its doors between 6pm and 9pm on Saturday 22 February. Further information is available at birminghammuseums.org.uk

New Horizons at city's National Sealife Centre

Sea Life UK has teamed up with Nintendo life-simulation game *Animal Crossing: New Horizons* to create a live interactive event. The 'unique adventure experience' will stop off at National Sea Life Centre Birmingham from Saturday 12 April to Monday 5 May. Commenting on the news, Sea Life's Catherine Pritchard said: "Our guests will be taken on a journey alongside characters from *Animal Crossing*, all whilst surrounded by the thousands of amazing creatures that we have in our attractions, from Green Sea Turtles to Zebra Sharks."

COMING SOON...



Sun 2 Mar



Fri 7 Mar



Sat 8 Mar



Sun 9 Mar



Tue 11 – Sat 15 Mar



Mon 17 – Sat 22 Mar



Tue 25 Mar



Tue 1 – Sat 5 Apr



Mon 14 – Sat 19 Apr

AD|| Sat 19 Apr 2.30pm

THE
ALEXANDRA
BIRMINGHAM
AN ATG ENTERTAINMENT VENUE

ATG TICKETS
atgtickets.com/birmingham*

*Fees apply

Comedy at MAC

mac
Midlands Arts Centre

Fling into Spring with brilliant belly-laughs and the best in comedy at MAC



**Nabil Abdulrashid:
Urban Battuta**
Thu 27 Feb | Ages 16+

Riotous new stand up from Nabil, as seen on *Live at the Apollo*, *Have I Got News for You* and *8 Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown*.



**Lucy Porter:
No Regrets!**
Fri 4 Apr | Ages 16+

Lucy delves into her disastrous dates, professional calamities, ruined friendships and parenting fails.



**Shaparak Khorsandi:
Scatterbrain**
Fri 11 Apr | Ages 14+

One of Britain's most beloved stand-ups lets you back into her mind (warning: it's cluttered in there)



**Richard Herring: Can I
Have My Ball Back?**
Wed 30 Apr | Ages 14+

Richard talks boll*cks as he mulls over masculinity and mortality in his much-anticipated return to stand-up.

BOOK NOW macbirmingham.co.uk | 0121 446 3232

Midlands Arts Centre, Cannon Hill Park, Birmingham, B12 9QH



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**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



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B: Intimate...



Sometimes you just want to get up close and personal.

The Jennifer Blackwell Stage at Symphony Hall is the perfect setting to enjoy live music in a more intimate experience.

The venue may be smaller than our iconic halls, but the talent is not. Discover this hidden secret in the heart of Birmingham for some of the best nights of your life.

Hayden Thorpe 02 Feb
Jenn Bostick 20 Feb
The Lost Notes 25 Feb
Jazz Sabbath 05 Mar
Kris Drever & Chris Stout 12 Mar
Alina Bzhezhinska & Tony Kofi 26 Mar
Nashville Sounds in the Round 29 Mar



See the full season

bmusic.co.uk/b-intimate

B:Music
Town Hall & Symphony Hall

A VALENTINE'S DAY TO REMEMBER

A choice of six great restaurants in which to spoil your loved one this 14th of February

Pasture

pasturerestaurant.com

New(ish) kid on the block Pasture has been welcomed into Birmingham with open arms. With rave reviews from journalists, bloggers and punters, what better restaurant to visit for a romantic Valentine's celebration... The steakhouse is running a set menu for £65pp from Thursday 13 to Saturday 15 February. Available dishes include crab toast (sensational - trust us on this one!), char su pork belly, fillet steak (sharing steaks can also be ordered), chocolate dome and more.



Bonehead

boneheaduk.com

We are yet to meet a carnivore who doesn't love Bonehead. After all, their fried chicken is among the best in the country. A more affordable option this Valentine's Day - you *may* have to wait for a table (pop into the fantastic Cherry Reds for a drink beforehand) and you *will* have to listen to a soundtrack of metal/rock (a huge plus in our book) - why not break with tradition and celebrate the occasion with a Hothead burger and some Lemonhead wings?



Orelle

orelle.co.uk

Elevate your love to new heights this Valentine's Day at Orelle, where romance meets the skyline for an unforgettable dining experience above the city lights. Enjoy four courses from Executive Chef Kiran Suvarna's exclusive menu on Friday the 14th & Saturday the 15th. Dishes include: canard tartlets, roast native lobster ravioli, 32 days dry-aged beef fillet, and a sharing dessert of pistachio praline, hazelnut cremeux, rose and raspberry.



Satori

thesatori.co.uk

Tradition meets modern artistry at fine-dining Japanese eatery Satori. Michelin recommended (they've just been added to the prestigious guide), the restaurant offers everything from delicate sushi and sashimi platters to premium A5 Wagyu beef and expertly grilled seafood. Whether you're savouring their signature miso black cod or exploring creative vegetarian options like tea-smoked miso aubergine, there's something for everyone.



La Bellezza

bigmammagroup.com

Undoubtedly the city's most beautiful restaurant, La Bellezza opened in December, much to the delight of both locals and foodies from further afield. Located in the city's Chamberlain Square, the Italian restaurant & pizzeria is a perfect spot in which to spoil your loved one this month. Offering, amongst other dishes, carbonara served from an 8kg wheel of Pecorino DOP, a six-inch-tall lemon pie, and a tonne of truffle, secure your table asap!

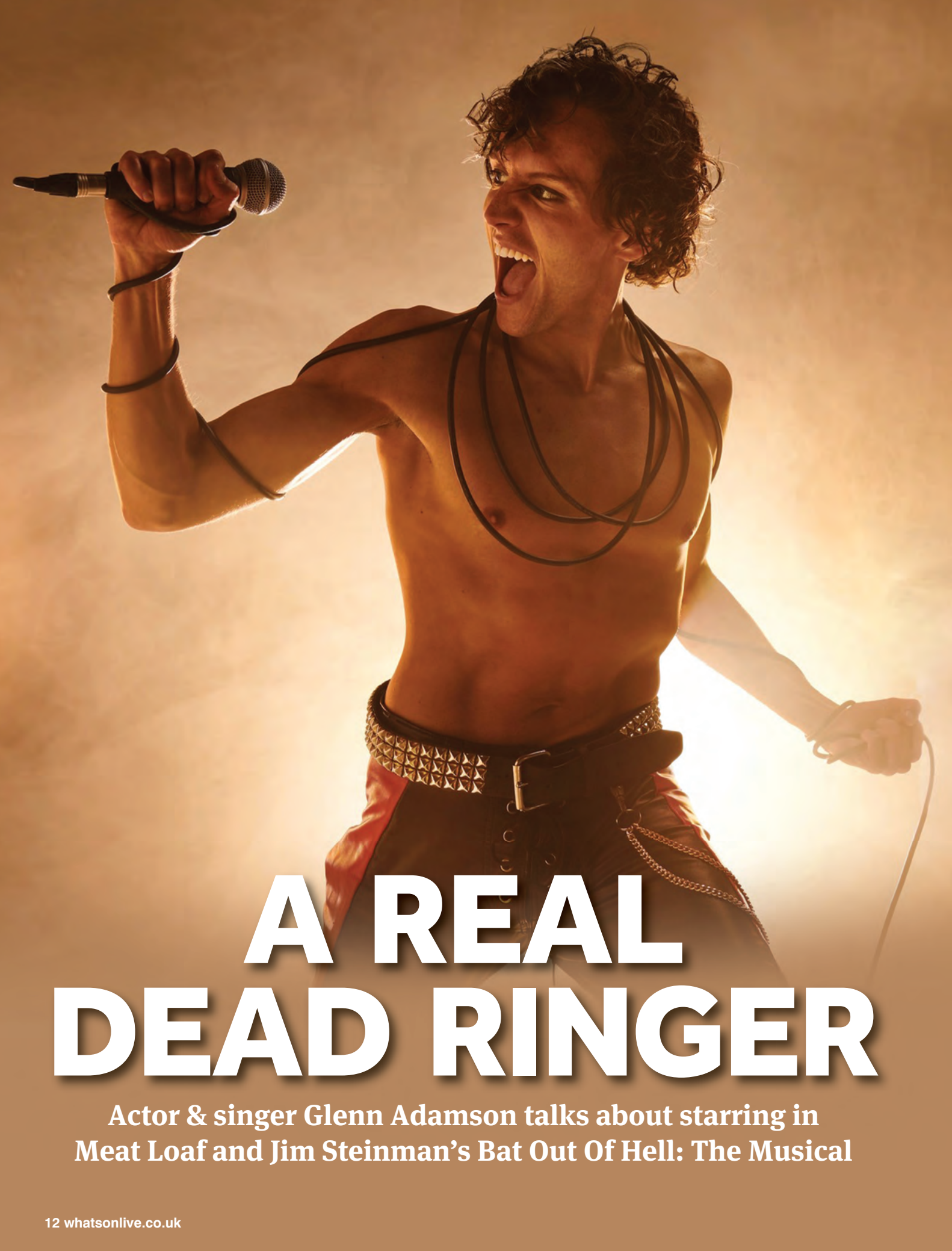


Albatross Death Cult

albatrossdeathcult.co.uk

"Put simply, Albatross Death Cult is one of the top five seafood places in the UK today," says restaurant critic Grace Dent. We agree with Grace - and you will, too! Fourteen guests gather around a kitchen counter as chefs present an ever-changing menu of 12 (or more) creative servings of (mostly) seafood and coastal ingredients that will smack you in the face like ocean spray. The cocktails and sake are fantastic, too, so why not check it out for Valentine's Day!





A REAL DEAD RINGER

Actor & singer Glenn Adamson talks about starring in
Meat Loaf and Jim Steinman's *Bat Out Of Hell: The Musical*

Jim Steinman and Meat Loaf's hit musical, *Bat Out Of Hell* - featuring songs from the latter's same-named album - visits Birmingham theatre The Alexandra this month. Telling a post-apocalyptic story, the show stars Glenn Adamson as forever-young wild child Strat, a character who is based on an ageless thrill-seeker from a classic children's story - as Glenn explains to What's On...

The songs that made Meat Loaf's name seem ready-made for a rock musical. Epic and theatrical, the album *Bat Out Of Hell* - bursting with a sense of rebellious youth - begins to tell the story of a biker romance even before you've got past the song titles (how about *Paradise By The Dashboard Light*, or *All Revved Up With No Place To Go?*). It's unsurprising, therefore, that songwriter Jim Steinman's stage show, *Bat Out Of Hell: The Musical*, takes that energy and runs - or maybe that should be *rides* - with it.

The show's story takes place in a futuristic, post-apocalyptic Manhattan, where a group of teenagers called *The Lost* were once caught in the crossfire of chemical warfare. The poison to which they were exposed froze their genes and stopped them from getting any older than 18.

A permanently youthful gang of 'Lost' boys (and girls) sounds rather familiar - and so it should: Steinman based his story on Peter Pan - and then added in a rock & roll twist! *The Lost* are led by Strat, played on the current tour by Glenn Adamson.

"Strat is the Peter Pan character," explains Glenn, "stuck at 18 forever. Raven, the female lead in the show, it's her 18th birthday. She's managed to make it to the point of 18, and her parents have kept her locked away until that point. On her 18th birthday, she decides to break out of her home to go and interact with *The Lost* - who she's been fascinated by but kept away from, in case she caught whatever's keeping them 18. She meets Strat, who has admired her from afar. She leaves her bedroom window open one night, and just like Peter Pan, he comes through. They fall madly in love. She runs away with him, to be with the *Lost Boys*, and we see the fallout of that - her family doesn't want that life for her..."

"And it's all set to the backing track of the incredible Jim Steinman and Meat Loaf."

Hints of Peter Pan might be obvious in *Bat Out Of Hell*'s storyline, but aesthetically the show offers something completely different.

"It's a *dystopian, punk-rock* Peter Pan... We've got a Tinkerbell, but he's just called Tink in the show. We've got these characters that you know and love, but it's very much a rock version of Peter Pan, with the eccentricity of Jim Steinman."

A new addition to the UK production puts Steinman's music right at the heart of the action: the live band has been brought up

onto the stage, alongside the actors. The idea was first implemented during the show's Australian arena tour, to create an epic fusion of blockbuster musical and lavish live concert.

"It's something we really wanted to do when the show came back to the UK," says Glenn, "to get the band involved rather than putting them in a pit like you would in a traditional musical - having them be part of the action... They're the most incredible musicians, and we've always known that, but it's nice for them to be seen and celebrated. A lot of these songs are so huge that people expect it to be on CD almost, or a much smaller band than we have. It's great to have them on stage, in costume, joining in with us - not like the traditional West End orchestra!"

Steinman's music certainly has a theatrical flavour, with a back catalogue including massive hits performed by Bonnie Tyler and Celine Dion, and of course, reflecting his partnership with Meat Loaf. *Bat Out Of Hell*, Glenn explains, had its origin in the world of theatre.

"Jim always intended this to be a musical - he actually wrote this musical and all this music back in the 60s. He cast Meat Loaf in the part that I play. It was actually JM Barry's estate which wouldn't let him have the Peter Pan reference at the time, so the musical fell by the wayside, but they released the music. People think it's a jukebox musical, but they don't realise that actually the musical came before the songs... It was always Jim's dream to put the show on. Meat's as well - he got to see it, just before he died, when it was finally realised in the West End."

Bat Out Of Hell: The Musical features a host of Steinman's huge hits - including *Two Out Of Three Ain't Bad* and *Dead Ringer For Love* - and also has its fair share of bombastic moments.

"The end of *Bat Out Of Hell* is pretty epic, with fire and confetti going off and all the blood. But I think the most epic moment is the beginning of *It's All Coming Back To Me Now*. When you hear the piano, the audience gives this intake of breath: "Oh my god, it's this song, the one I love"... And the beginning of *Anything For Love* is amazing."

Glenn is building up a serious portfolio of performances in rock musicals, and music has never been too far away throughout his life - even though he primarily trained as an actor.

"I did *Battle of the Bands* and things like that

- I was in a band and sang with them, but I didn't actually merge the two things together. Then I went to LIPA in Liverpool, which is Paul McCartney's school, and there was such a musical heritage. Paul would be in the building, there was sheet music, The Beatles' original copies framed everywhere - you were just submerged... I dipped my toe back into band life, then came out again with acting but also this need to sing rock & roll. I was really lucky to land *American Idiot* [the Green Day musical]. I did that here, then went over to New Zealand. I came back and got *Bat Out Of Hell*. I've also done *We Will Rock You*. I'm carving my way out as the rock & roll go-to, not a traditional musical theatre boy!"

It was during his time performing in *American Idiot* that Glenn first saw and fell in love with *Bat Out Of Hell: The Musical*. The show was running in London's West End, and Glenn auditioned for the upcoming US tour - but unfortunately it wasn't all plain sailing.

"I was originally cast in the 2020 US tour, but Covid hit basically two weeks later. I did the rehearsals, and we were one day away from the tech - all our suitcases were in America - and then they closed the theatres. We never opened and were sent home. It wasn't until the end of 2021 that I actually got to do the show. It's been a long period of my life, waiting to do it."

Happily, the wait is over, and fans of Steinman's music can now see Glenn strut his stuff as wild child Strat. The role is both physically and vocally demanding, testing Glenn to the limits.

"He's a lot wilder and more reckless than I am. He's got no fear at all. He's probably the antithesis of me. He takes a lot of energy, he's so physical. We looked at what it would be like to be left for a thousand years at age 18, without your parents and without family, living a feral life... There's a lot of stamina required. The music does it for you as well. There's something about the music that gives you the energy."

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Bat Out Of Hell: The Musical shows at The Alexandra, Birmingham, from Monday 10 to Saturday 22 February; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, from Monday 30 June - Saturday 5 July, and Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Monday 14 - Saturday 19 July

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Hinds

Castle & Falcon, Birmingham,
Tues 18 February

Black Lips, The Parrots, The Strokes and The Vaccines feature on the list of artists who Hinds credit as major influences on their sound.

Themselves likened to, among others, Velvet Underground and The Pastels, the Spanish indie rock duo - featuring Carlotta Cosials and Ana García Perrote - are stopping off at the Castle & Falcon in support of their fourth studio album, *Viva Hinds*, which was released to significant acclaim last autumn.



The Rills

Hare & Hounds, Birmingham,
Thurs 13 February; Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury,
Thurs 20 February

Described by Clash as indie-rock rabble-rousers and lauded by NME for their energetic anthems and poetic vulnerability, The Rills hail from Lincolnshire, live in London and are visiting the Midlands this month in support of their recently released album, *Don't Be A Stranger*. Coming to prominence during the pandemic, the boys are evolving their sound at a frenetic pace, so it might not be too long before well-established comparisons with, among others, The Libertines become obsolete.



Cyndi Lauper

bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham, Fri 14 February

"There's no book on 'how to be famous for dummies,'" says Cyndi Lauper, who, at 71, retains her New York drawl. "You just do what you can. All of a sudden, you get to the top of the mountain and everybody around is like, 'You can't do that! Don't do this! You'll be ruined!'"

Never a woman to rest on her laurels, Cyndi has always been ready to risk

ruination - why else would she have bravely taken the plunge into musical theatre by writing hit show *Kinky Boots*? However, it would appear that she is, now, finally, intending to take her foot off the pedal somewhat, having announced that her current tour will be her last-ever major one. It's also her first all-arena tour since *True Colors* way back in 1986. Expect all the hits, including *Girls Just Wanna Have Fun* (from which the tour is taking its title) and *Time After Time*.

Dropkick Murphys

O2 Academy, Birmingham, Tues 4 February

Proud though they unquestionably are of their punk credentials, the Dropkick Murphys are equally comfortable acknowledging the influence which bands like The Rolling Stones and AC/DC have had on their music.

Although more than a quarter of a century old now, the Massachusetts six-piece remain as popular today as they've ever been - if not more so, in fact - and are stopping off in Birmingham as part of a European tour.

Elkie Brooks

Birmingham Town Hall, Fri 28 February

With an impressive 60-plus years in the music industry behind her and 20 albums under her belt, Elkie Brooks quite rightly continues to hold the title of British Queen of Blues.

Having kicked off her Long Farewell tour at Shrewsbury Folk Festival last summer, she's this month returning to the Midlands to present a gig featuring all her greatest hits, including Pearl's *A Singer, Fool (If You Think It's Over)*, *Don't Cry Out Loud* and *Sunshine After The Rain*.

Lola Young

O2 Institute, Birmingham, Thurs 27 February

South East London troubadour Lola Young is racking up the milestones like they're going out of fashion.

From signing her first deal by the age of 18 and releasing her first body of work a year later, she then bagged a nomination for the Brits' Rising Star Award in 2021 and was chosen as the voice of the much-loved John Lewis Christmas advert that very same year. She released her first studio album in 2023 and took the US by storm last year.

Lola is visiting Birmingham in support of her second studio album, *This Wasn't Meant For You Anyway*.





IMMERSED IN HISTORY

Acclaimed author Kate Mosse is celebrating the 20th anniversary of bestselling book *Labyrinth* with a 24-date theatre tour, including numerous Midlands stop-offs along the way. Titled *Labyrinth Live: Unlocking The Secrets Of The Labyrinth*, her one-woman show uses music, imagery and film to share the inspiration behind her story.

What's On recently caught up with her to find out more...

What inspired you to take your Labyrinth show on the road, Kate?

2025 is the 20th anniversary of the UK publication of Labyrinth, and it is a book that changed my life. It meant it was possible for me to be a full-time writer. Nobody becomes a novelist thinking: 'This is how I'll make a living.' I was already in my 40s and had published four books before, but I was lucky. Labyrinth became a global super-seller and has now sold something in the region of eight million copies in 37 different languages. So, I want to say 'thank you' to all the readers that made this happen and celebrate the anniversary with them.

What format will the show take?

It's an immersive, atmospheric, dramatic two-hour piece of theatre - as opposed to a book talk - with lights, music, video, film, special effects, props and photographs. With *Unlocking The Secrets Of The Labyrinth*, from the minute the audience comes into the auditorium, they will feel a shiver down their spine because they will feel they are in medieval France. I hope they will experience that sense of the mysteries hidden in the landscape of southwest France; they will hear the music of the cloister and the sounds of the Pyrenees. I'll be sharing my inspirations behind the story of writing the book - from the very first moment I set foot in Carcassonne, in winter 1989, to the inspirational moments of climbing the mountain of Montségur in the Pyrenees six or seven years later and coming face to face with the image of the woman who would become my lead character, Alaïs, though not knowing who she was. I'll be talking about how the novel took shape, how my characters came to life, the beautiful landscape of Languedoc. We'll show a few of the pictures from the filming of the Labyrinth mini-series in France and South Africa, starring Tom Felton (Harry Potter, Planet Of The Apes), Vanessa Kirby (The Crown, Mission Impossible), Jessica Brown Findlay (Downton Abbey), and Sebastian Stan (Captain America).

What other areas will you be covering?

As well as the back story, I'll shine a spotlight on the real history that underpins the novel: the Nazi Grail hunters and Grail legends; the history of the Christian sect called the Cathars - who they were, why they were persecuted, and how they were completely wiped out; labyrinths themselves, which became very significant in Christianity in medieval Europe; hieroglyphs and ancient Egypt, and the links between those ancient religions and the Cathar religion. I've also dug out plenty of original research which didn't find its way into the novel, so

audiences will get a few unique fragments of historical insight - not least, the story of the final downfall of the Cathars (which happens after my novel has ended). In other words, it will be a mixture of familiar and brand new; perfect for anyone who loved the novel and would like to know more.

What do you love about performing live?

It was wonderful to start a new career as a performer in my 60s! I was brought up by my wonderful parents always to have a go, so when I was approached about doing *Warrior Queens And Quiet Revolutionaries* as a show, I thought; 'Well, what have you got to lose!' I was excited by the challenge - terrified, too, of course. I do a lot of public speaking and hosting of events, but a show is utterly different. When you are giving a book talk or a lecture, you stand at a lectern for 45 minutes, or are interviewed by someone else, then take questions, and it's done. A theatre show is completely different, and there is so much that could go wrong: lighting cues, sound cues, finding yourself in the wrong part of the stage, dropping a prop...

How were you before your first-ever show?

I'm confident and experienced, I'm used to standing up in front of hundreds - sometimes thousands - of people to give a speech. But, when the music started for the first preview of *Warrior Queens*, I was standing in the wings, and for the first time in my career, I thought: 'I can't go on, I can't do this.' But then, of course, the music finished and there was no choice. I went on stage and the magic happened. After that first time, my nerves calmed, and as the tour went on, I realised I absolutely loved performing.

Are you passionate about the theatre?

I love theatre - that moment sitting in the stalls when the house lights go down and you are full of anticipation for what's to come; there's nothing like it. I write plays and go to the theatre whenever I can. Starting this new career at the age of 62 was very exciting - it's another reason I decided to do a second one-woman show. It is exhilarating.

How do you prepare for a theatre show?

The key thing is to pace yourself. My default setting is to fill every minute of the day with writing, editing, doing other work. But what I learned was that when you're on stage every night, and you are travelling to a new venue every day, you must treat the afternoon as down-time because your real work will be six till midnight.

What do you hope audiences will take away from Labyrinth Live?

More than anything, that they have had a brilliant night out in the theatre. I hope they will have been moved, have laughed, have celebrated, have maybe cried; that audiences will have experienced all the emotions. I write to entertain, and I perform to entertain, so enjoyment is top of the list. Beyond that, I'd like them to have a strong sense of how women's stories are part of history, too, and how that matters. I'd like them to be thinking about the persecution of the Cathars, and the tragic ways in which history repeats itself through the generations. I'd love them to be thinking about the differences between mystery and folklore, history and legend. I also want people to come out buzzing with the joy of history and knowing that storytelling is the thing that brings us all together.

For those who know Carcassonne, I want them to feel they are there in southwest France, standing on the top of Montségur or wandering through the cobbled streets of medieval Carcassonne. It should be familiar for those who have visited and for those who've never been. I hope it will whet their appetite to go.

Why is it so important that we learn about history?

History matters because knowing about the past shines a light on the present. For history to mean anything, it has to be the story of all of us. It cannot be partial, or written with an agenda; it has to shine a light on all people, all countries, all race, all eras, all religions, in order to give a true picture. History is about telling the truth - especially about women's experiences, which have so often been ignored or left out of the official history books - because that is the only way to achieve a more equal and fairer world. I am an idealist, as you can tell, but I believe fundamentally that storytelling and putting accurate history at the heart of things will get rid of so many of the misunderstandings. Human beings always find a way to muck things up. But if we know the history, at least we can be more sympathetic to those with whom we don't agree, and maybe that leaves room for dialogue.

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Labyrinth Live shows at Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Wed 26 February; Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham, Sat 1 March; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sun 2 March; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sat 15 March; and Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Sat 5 April

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Classical music from across the region...



Prague Symphony Orchestra

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Fri 7 February

The highly regarded Prague Symphony Orchestra once again turn their talents to the business of playing Smetana and Dvořák. On this occasion, they kickstart proceedings with the former's overture to the opera *The Bartered Bride*, a mercurial piece that's been described as a high-speed showstopper of a composition. The orchestra then get their teeth into two works by Antonín Dvořák. First up is *Noonday Witch*, a symphonic poem based on the 'Lady Midday' demon of Slavic

mythology. This is then followed by a performance of his seventh symphony, a work which the composer stated "must be capable of stirring the world" - an ambition most certainly realised.

The concert programme is completed by Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No3, performed by Venezuelan pianist Gabriela Montero (pictured).

Petr Altrichter, the orchestra's chief conductor for the last 34 years, is the man at the helm.

Brahms Sextet

CBSO Centre, Birmingham, Thurs 27 February

Hailed by revered musicologist Sir Donald Tovey as the most ethereal of Johannes Brahms' larger works, the String Sextet No2 in G major is here performed by members of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra as part of its Centre Stage afternoon concert season...

Anton Bruckner's *Intermezzo* in D minor - a work inspired by folk dances but not publicly premiered until after the composer's death - completes the concert programme.



Birmingham Philharmonic Orchestra

Bradshaw Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, Sun 9 February; Pershore Abbey, Sun 16 February

One of the Midlands' best known and most admired non-professional orchestras, the Birmingham Phil here take a journey through Scandinavian soundscapes. They kickstart proceedings with Nielsen's *Maskerade* Overture and Grieg's *Peer Gynt* Suite, rounding off the evening with a 'double blast' of Sibelius, performing his final two symphonies.

Michael Lloyd (pictured) conducts.

Ex Cathedra: Chansons d'amour

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Wed 12 February

"Nurturing talent is a key feature in all of Ex Cathedra's work," says the ensemble's founder & conductor, Jeffrey Skidmore.

"Chansons d'amour platforms our current crop of future stars, who perform a seductive programme of love songs, from Monteverdi to Bach and Mozart, from Marlene Dietrich to the Carpenters, Bacharach and the Beatles.

"As Valentine's Day approaches, enjoy a little light music in the specially created romantic ambiance of the Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space at Symphony Hall!"



James Ehnes Piano Quartet

Barber Institute, University of Birmingham, Wed 12 February

Eminent Canadian violinist James Ehnes here leads his quartet in presenting a programme featuring two of Gabriel Fauré's chamber music masterpieces: Piano Quartet No1 in C minor, Op15 and Piano Quartet No2 in G minor, Op45. The former is a much-loved and exquisitely crafted composition; the latter, though less popular than the Op15 quartet, is widely considered to be one of Fauré's greatest works of chamber music.



MAY THE FARCE BE WITH YOU

Smash-hit Edinburgh Fringe show ‘...Earnest?’
comes to the Midlands



Hit theatre production ‘...Earnest?’ puts a madcap twist on Oscar Wilde’s classic farce *The Importance Of Being Earnest* and sees enthusiastic audience members take centre stage to become the stars of the show. Director & co-writer Simon Paris tells What’s On why it works, why it’s great, and why this type of seat-of-your-pants theatre is so... important.

“When I pitch it to my non-theatre friends, I say we’re putting on a very traditional, classical play, and it’s all going well until the lead actor doesn’t show up. The director comes out, apologises, and says ‘It’s okay because one of you is going to do it.’ We then find the best person in the audience to play this role, and *they* do it.”

The way Simon Paris tells it, the premise for interactive theatre company Say It Again, Sorry?’s Edinburgh Fringe smash-hit ‘... Earnest?’ sounds so simple. A traditional production of Oscar Wilde’s *The Importance Of Being Earnest* is thrown into chaos by the non-appearance of its lead, then saved courtesy of the impromptu performance of a heroic audience member. What could possibly go wrong?

Well, in common with the likes of *Noises Off* and *The Play That Goes Wrong*, the answer is, pretty much everything - but in a good way. What follows in the show is a chaotic succession of conundrums and spontaneous solutions, with the desperate director (of the play within the play) doing his best to keep the production on track as more and more audience members are drafted in to replace an ever-thinning cast.

The whole endeavour sounds like a tightrope for the (real) director and cast every night. But it’s a situation the company not only accept but embrace, explains Simon, who, as well as being that aforementioned ‘real’ director, is also one of the writers of the show.

“We’ve done it a lot, and we keep learning at every show. I guess the confidence comes from embracing failure - every time something wrong happens, it helps us learn.

“The thing is, we see it as something wrong, but for every audience member watching the show, that’s always their favourite bit; where someone turns to the wrong page of the script, or doesn’t have their reading glasses, and the audience has to pass them through the stalls to the stage - these are always the highlights.”

The play obviously and crucially relies on the involvement of the paying punters, but Simon is at pains to point out that only people who volunteer end up on the stage - shrinking violets have no need to fear being forced into the spotlight.

“The tour plays to an average of 1,000 seats a night now, and by the end of the show we’ve got eight people on stage, so the vast majority of the audience are not involved. They’re essentially living through the audience members who have been picked.

“For us, the show is about designing a path for a random audience member where they can turn into a hero. Over the years we’ve managed to really refine that. The other interesting thing that we’ve refined is the picking of audience members, because they are all completely random. There’s a way that we’ve learned about looking into someone’s eyes and figuring out if they are the person who can become a hero that night.”

Simon also claims the show is ideal for people who aren’t really all that into theatre: “If you like theatre, it’s amazing, but if you find it a little bit boring sometimes, a little bit dull, there is so much stimulation, so much laughter, so much fear in this, that it’s more like a theme-park ride than putting on a play.”

He also believes another reason for the show’s success is finding a way to interact with audiences in a warm and friendly manner, since people often tend to shy away from interactive theatre.

“We never make any audience members volunteer, and we turn them into a local hero - they become a legend, a celebrity. We’ve found a gap in the market, where there’s a way of doing this that isn’t making people feel embarrassed or awkward.”

Conversely, the company have also found a way of handling the potential show-offs who are a little too desperate to get up on the stage.

“Part of having done the show so many times is that we’ve had a lot of different types of people in it. When we get people who are really keen, the show follows a certain track to embrace what they want to give. The show *does* slightly adapt for the audience members who are selected - there’s hundreds of ways it can get tweaked based on the participants.”

The latter element clearly helps keep it fresh for director and cast alike. Simon happily admits he’s seen all 215 shows they’ve put on so far, and the cast has remained constant throughout, too.

“Normally if I’m directing a show, I can see it a maximum of a dozen times before I want to blow my brains out. I’ve literally seen this over 200 times and still look forward to it. It’s also a good sign that all the original company are still involved and raring to go again.

“The beauty of it is that it’s opening night every night - we don’t know what half of the cast members are going to be.”

The changing cast of audience members ensures every night is different, every night is fun, and every night helps the show evolve, he says.

“Every single time we’ve done the show, something mad has happened - the audience members do something we’ve never expected. For that reason, the whole company are devoted to making little tweaks and adjustments. How does a gag work slightly differently, how can the transitions to the audience members be a little smoother, how can we make every second a new gag and get a bigger laugh?”

That ongoing evolution is likely to continue for Say It Again, Sorry?’ themselves, as the company, which was founded in 2018, is considering similar treatments for other classic texts, including Shakespeare. The style of work - and how ‘...Earnest?’ itself came about - reflects the team members’ thoughts on how theatre has become a little too ‘safe’, according to Simon.

“This came from us all wanting to put a little more danger, a little more risk and a bit more life into theatre. Film and TV are amazing, and they can do so many things with storytelling better than theatre, but the one thing that theatre will always do better is being live, and we need to capitalise on that.

“What is being live? What is the ultimate ‘you had to be there’? That’s what this is.”

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...Earnest? shows at: Wolverhampton Grand Theatre on Saturday 22 & Sunday 23 February; Forum Theatre, Malvern Theatres, from Thursday 27 to Sunday 30 March; The Alexandra, Birmingham, on Saturday 17 May and Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, on Saturday 24 & Sunday 25 May.

Comedy previews from across the region...



Image credit: Michelle Huggeston Photography

Ignacio Lopez

Glee Club, Birmingham, Sun 9 February;
Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Thurs 13
February; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Wed 19
March

Cardiff-based Spanish/Welsh comedian Ignacio Lopez is a man with a rapidly growing fanbase. Not only have his videos been watched by well in excess of 20 million people, he's even had to tell a Live At The Apollo audience to quit laughing so that he

could finish his act before his time ran out. "Telling more than 3,000 people to shut up was a definite career high," says Ignacio, who, having moved to the UK to attend film school, then found himself caring more about the laughs his short films elicited than the grades they received. He's visiting the Midlands this month and next with *Senor Self-Destruct*, a show which has been described as 'a riotously funny exploration of vices, intrusive thoughts and self-improvement'.

Phil Walker

Sutton Coldfield Town Hall, Thurs 27 February;
Dave's Comedy Club, Stoke-on-Trent, Sat 15
March

Publicity for Phil Walker's Sutton Coldfield appearance late this month warns that his currently touring stand-up show may contain jokes about allergies; "So if you're allergic to jokes about allergies, please consult a doctor before attending". The line offers a small window into the comedy mind of a man who's been praised for his quick wit, infectious energy and topical material. He's also very much a comedian's comedian, as evidenced by Jason Manford's admiration for him. "If you look in your local comedy-club listings and ever see Phil Walker listed," urges the former *One Show* laughter merchant, "get a ticket. He's one of the funniest acts out there."



Nabil Abdurashid

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Sat 15 February;
The Core Theatre, Solihull, Fri 21 February;
Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham,
Thurs 27 February; Stafford Gatehouse
Theatre, Tues 15 April

In 2010, at the age of 25 and having entered the *Which Religion Is Funniest?* competition, Nabil



Abdurashid became the youngest-ever black comedian to perform stand-up at London's Hammersmith Apollo. More recent times have seen him finishing fourth in Britain's *Got Talent*, appearing as a contestant on *Celebrity Masterchef*, and voicing multiple characters for Disney's animated series *Iwaju*. The London-born 39-year-old visits the Midlands this month with 'riotous new stand-up show' *Urban Battuta*.

Zoe Lyons

Midlands Arts Centre, (MAC), Birmingham,
Fri 21 February; New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-
Under-Lyme, Mon 3 March

Zoe Lyons is high on confidence, blessed with a razor-sharp wit (always useful when you're a comedian), and was once described as 'Alan Bennett on speed'. Creating funny routines based on astute observation of life's absurdities, the former winner of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe funniest-joke award visits the Midlands this month with latest stand-up show *Werewolf*. Zoe's previously told jokes have included: "The old blind fisherman liked nothing more than coming home and putting on a pair of his favourite kippers."



Eshaan Akbar

Glee Club, Birmingham, Wed 19 February;
Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sat 22
February

"There were lots of reasons why I went into comedy," says Muslim funnyman Eshaan Akbar. "Alongside a desperate desire to be loved and the chance to bring joy to hundreds and thousands of people(!), I also love the way that comedy offers an opportunity to comment on the most ridiculous facets of our society." Eshaan has no qualms about sailing close to the wind with his material. A few years back, he was threatened with reprisals when he included jokes about the Koran in his touring show, *Prophet Like It's Hot*. He visits the Midlands this month with 90 minutes of brand-new stand-up.



Lou Sanders

Birmingham Town Hall, Thurs 27 February;
Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Fri 28 February;
Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sat 15 March;
Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sun 6 April

A huge and regular success at the Edinburgh Fringe, Lou Sanders has appeared on all manner of television comedy series, co-hosted an improvised podcast entitled *Why Is Your Bottom So Dirty?*, won series eight of *Taskmaster* and got her skates on for *Dancing On Ice*. She's here returning to the stage with *No Kissing In The Bingo Hall* - a brand-new stand-up offering which she describes as a deep, dumb show for the masses. "Just like Tom Cruise does all his own stunts," says Lou, "I'm going to do all my own jokes!" Speaking of which... previously told gags include: "I waited an hour for my starter, so I complained: 'It's not rocket salad,'" and "I was the prettiest, cleverest girl in my class. I was home-schooled."



Paddy McGuinness

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Fri 28 February;
The Civic at The Halls, Wolverhampton,
Sat 1 March

Best known as Peter Kay's sidekick in the hit TV shows *Phoenix Nights* and *Max And Paddy's Road To Nowhere* - and more recently

as a co-presenter of BBC TV series *Top Gear* and the critically panned *Road Tripping* - Paddy McGuinness is one of the UK's most popular comedy talents.

This latest tour marks a return to stand-up after a break of eight years, with Paddy having openly admitted he's hitting the road because "the money's run out". "I'm looking forward to getting back in front of a live audience," said the 51-year-old before embarking on the tour, "along with running the gauntlet of cancel culture, click bait and fake news!"



Sophie Duker

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Fri 7 February;
Glee Club, Birmingham, Wed 12 February

Former *Taskmaster* and *Celebrity Mastermind* champion Sophie Duker is a familiar television face whose favourite things include breaking hearts and telling jokes 'with the confidence of a cis straight middle-

class white man'.

Scoring a hit with second stand-up offering *Hag*, in which she waxed lyrical on subjects such as horoscopes, lesbian cruises and crystal witches, Sophie is now returning to the Midlands with *But Daddy I Love Her*, a show in which she extols the virtues of silliness over common sense and hot, wet fantasies over cold, bleak reality.



Josh Berry

Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Fri 21
February; Stafford Gatehouse, Sat 22 February

Starting out at the tender age of 16 by doing impressions of tennis players, Josh Berry's career development was greatly assisted by Andy Murray's decision to retweet one of his videos.

The Cheshire-born comedian then further enhanced his reputation when he created the character of Rafe Hubris, an Eton-educated special adviser to the Boris Johnson government as they attempted to deal with the Covid pandemic... Josh's latest stand-up show sees him mining material from his recent experience of being a best man.

Dylan Moran & Support

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Fri 28 February

Once labelled 'the Oscar Wilde of comedy', it's fair to say that Dylan Moran is a fella with a style of humour all his own. A star of much-loved Simon Pegg films *Shaun Of The Dead* and *Run Fat Boy Run*, the hugely entertaining Irish comedian specialises in stand-up rants that are often bizarre and always unpredictable.

Jokes include: "I don't do drugs. If I want a rush, I just stand up when I'm not expecting it" and "I can't swim. I can't drive either. I was going to learn to drive but then I thought, well, what if I crash into a lake?"



WHIP-CRACK-AWAY!

Hit musical Calamity Jane rides into town...



Following in the footsteps of Doris Day, West End star Carrie Hope Fletcher is donning a whole load of buckskin to play feisty Wild West heroine Calamity Jane. A new production of the hit musical, directed by Nikolai Foster and Nick Winston, marks Carrie's dancing debut on stage - an experience that is both terrifying and exciting, as she recently revealed to What's On...

Carrie Hope Fletcher has a whirlwind of a CV. The 32-year-old actress, singer, writer & vlogger has played both Éponine and Fantine in *Les Misérables*, premiered the lead role in Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Cinderella*, appeared as Veronica in the original London West End production of *Heathers*, performed the part of Beth in the national arena tour of Jeff Wayne's *Musical Version Of The War Of The Worlds* and toured the UK as Wednesday in *The Addams Family*.

She is an online sensation as well, turning her hit vlog into a bestselling book and writing novels for adults and children. She also has a successful recording career and undertook UK concert tours in both 2023 and last year.

And now Carrie is taking on another iconic role: Calamity Jane, in the Watermill Theatre production of the much-loved musical. Directed by Nikolai Foster and Nick Winston, the show is this year touring to venues across the UK, including Birmingham Hippodrome and the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre. Based on the 1953 film classic starring Doris Day, the production shares the story of Calamity's adventures in the South Dakota city of Deadwood, alongside Wild Bill Hickok, Adelaide Adams, Katie Brown and Danny Gilmartin.

"Calamity is one of those roles that has everything," says Carrie. "She's got a love story, she's comedic, she's the action hero, she gets incredible songs - beautiful songs like *Secret Love* and the big, belty numbers like *Windy City*. There are so few roles that do everything and tick all of those boxes.

"The movie has so much love surrounding it. When the show was announced, the amount of messages I got saying things like 'Oh my God, this was my comfort movie', 'this movie is the epitome of nostalgia for me', 'this was the movie I used to watch with my nan when I was a kid!'

"Everyone adores not just Calamity Jane but also Doris Day. It's going to be really wonderful to see what kind of audiences turn up."

But such deep affection for the film brings with it a great responsibility in terms of both the musical and the character, says Carrie.

"It is daunting playing Calamity. I've had a few roles over my lifetime which have had that same pressure and responsibility. Ultimately, I try not to feel it, because that's when you start playing the role based on how other people think it should be played.

"If it feels right to do certain things or to play a character in a certain way, then I also have to be true to the experience that I'm having in the rehearsal room and what the director wants. It's sometimes very daunting to think so many people love this part, but ultimately, if you get too bogged down in that, you end up doing a disservice to the role."

The film is based very loosely on real-life characters, and Carrie has been discovering more about their history.

"The true story is very different from the movie version of things. The musical is based on a story of misunderstandings, and it's not very true to who Calamity Jane and Bill Hickok actually were. They were actually quite scary, cut-throat, gunslinging people who really would shoot you if you got in their way.

"It's been fascinating delving into the history, especially their relationship with each other, because rumour has it that Bill really didn't like Calamity at all. But now they're buried next to each other! Bill died first, and his friends buried Calamity next to him when she died, as a kind of posthumous joke - to dig it in that he didn't like her and now he's buried next to her!"

Carrie may have a long list of productions to her name, but Calamity Jane will be her first chance at a dancing role.

"I've never had a role that had any great deal of dance to do before, so this is my first stab at actually being in the dance routines. It's terrifying but also exciting because I've been itching for years to have that chance. In fact, I messaged Nick Winston even before the show started to say 'Please don't shy away from putting me into the dance routines. I've

got no ego when it comes to dancing because I'm not a dancer, so if I look terrible, you can tell me and ask me to sit them out. But equally, I just want to be given the chance to do it, and if it works out, then win win!"

Carrie toured to both the Hippodrome and the Wolverhampton Grand while in *The Addams Family*.

"Birmingham Hippodrome is one of the most gorgeous theatres ever. It's one of those theatres where everyone breathes a sigh of relief when they get there because it's so big that it houses any size of set and props. When you get to somewhere like Birmingham Hippodrome or the Wolverhampton Grand, you don't have to worry."

Carrie well recalls a mishap that took place during the show's run in Wolverhampton.

"I almost broke my ankle! I was just being an idiot backstage, and I jumped out to make my friend jump and twisted my ankle. I was on the floor for about 20 minutes! It was right before the show as well, in the half-hour call."

Now Carrie is hoping audiences really enjoy the ride alongside Calamity Jane.

"The show is so wholesome; it's such a wonderful, nostalgic story. People are going to come and be immersed in the world of Deadwood City, be transported away for a while, and not have to think about the state of the world right now.

"Calamity Jane is a really fun, feelgood time, and I think our audiences will be leaving the theatre slapping their thighs and singing. That's what we hope, anyway!"

.....

Calamity Jane shows at Birmingham Hippodrome from Tuesday 18 to Saturday 22 March; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Tuesday 17 - Saturday 21 June and Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Tuesday 9 to Saturday 13 September



Hairspray Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Mon 3 - Sat 8 February; Malvern Theatres, Mon 3 - Sat 8 March

Theatre-goers looking for a memorable night of singalong fun should definitely catch this high-energy bubblegum musical when it stops off in the region this month and next.

A show which has retained its popularity despite doing the rounds for many a year now, *Hairspray* is set in 1960s Baltimore and follows the trials and tribulations of the lovable Tracy Turnblad, a young girl whose dreams of dancing on national TV lead her somewhat

unexpectedly to fighting a battle against racial segregation.

Boasting hit numbers including *Welcome To The 60s*, *You Can't Stop The Beat* and *Good Morning Baltimore*, this latest touring version of the show features former *Strictly Come Dancing* star Joanne Clifton (as Velma von Tussle) and is directed by *Hairspray* veteran Brenda Edwards.

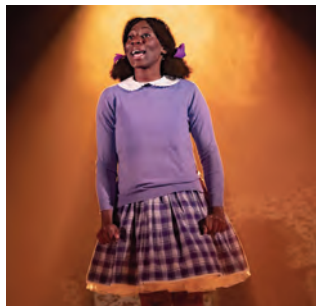
Coming To England

The Rep, Birmingham, Wed 19 February - Sat 22 February

"I was 10 years old," recalls television personality Baroness Floella Benjamin, in talking about her arrival in the UK in 1960. "When we got to England, we lived in one room in London. There were eight people in that one room, but my mum said, 'Don't cry, because this room is full of love.'

The story of Floella's journey from her home in Trinidad to begin a new life in the UK is here being told on stage, returning to the Midlands with a new look.

"This show is so joyful," she says, "the music, the sets, the colour; it's like a cauldron of excitement. It's a rich tapestry of sadness, frustration, laughter and joy, all coming together as the big H - hope."



An Inspector Calls

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Tues 4 - Sat 8 February; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 4 - Sat 8 March; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Tues 6 - Sat 10 May

When Inspector Goole calls unexpectedly on the prosperous Birling family, his startling revelations not only shatter the foundations of their lives but also challenge them to examine their consciences...

Anybody who's seen a production of JB Priestley's classic 1945 play will have no trouble understanding why it's been such a long-time worldwide hit... Stephen Daldry's award-winning production is presented by the National Theatre.



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TIM RICE
 MY LIFE IN MUSICALS
 I KNOW HIM SO WELL
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 Sun 13 Apr



Romeo & Juliet

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry,
Fri 21 February - Sat 8 March

This brand-new adaptation of Romeo And Juliet, featuring an original score that contains rap, R&B and soul music, is here receiving its world premiere.

One of the Belgrade's flagship in-house productions, the show is part of a new strand of work which sees the venue collaborate with the local community, reinforcing its stated commitment to the process of co-creation.

"The production will follow and respect Shakespeare's text," explains the theatre's creative director, Corey Campbell, "but the songs will add a layer of context, to ground it in a world that is recognisable for today's young people..."

"There's a layer of politics that's already there, and we're exploiting it. This is where we'll continue co-creating with audiences every night. They will be able to vote for which of the 'dignified' households they'd like to see take charge."

Pride And Prejudice* (*sort of)

The Rep, Birmingham, Mon 3 - Sat 8 February;
Lichfield Garrick, Tues 13 - Sat 17 May

A unique and audacious retelling of Jane Austen's most iconic love story, *Pride And Prejudice** (*sort of) has proved a winner with critics and audiences alike. Indeed, celebrity fan Sir Stephen Fry has described it as an evening of "hilarity, romance, madness and utter theatrical joy".



Alongside the raucously irreverent but admirably affectionate retelling of Austen's rollercoaster romance, the 2022 Olivier Award winner also boasts a host of pop classics, including *Young Hearts Run Free*, *Will You Love Me Tomorrow* and *You're So Vain*.

Edward II

Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon,
Fri 21 February - Sat 5 April

Edward II is perhaps best known for a scene in which the king is assassinated by having a red-hot poker thrust up his backside. But Christopher Marlowe's classic tale of love, lust and ambition has plenty to offer besides an eye-watering dose of fatal anal trauma. Here being presented by the Royal Shakespeare Company, it tells the story of a young monarch who lets his passion for

another man influence his every decision - even those which are concerned with the gravest matters of state...

(the) Woman

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry,
Thurs 27 & Fri 28 February

Taking a brutally honest look at the raw, messy truth about motherhood, award-winning writer Jane Upton's critically acclaimed play *(the) Woman* was shortlisted for the prestigious Bruntwood Prize.

"It's a howl, I think," Jane told writeaplay.co.uk, "maybe an inward scream that came from the depths of the first few years of motherhood, with a sick child, compounded by a global pandemic, feeling lonely and unsure about the future..." "The play came from my guts. I couldn't not write it. I had to heave it out of me to feel a bit better, I think."

Driftwood

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Wed 5 February;
Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Tues 11 & Wed 12 March

Long-established Midlands theatre company Pentabus here team up with Wigan-located theatrical ensemble ThickSkin to present a play by former Bruntwood Prize



winner Tim Foley. The story unfolds around the characters of Mark and Tiny, two estranged brothers who reunite on the shores of Seaton Carew in the North East of England to plan their dying father's funeral. A difficult-enough meeting is made all the trickier by Tiny's somewhat disturbing desire to gather driftwood to build a Viking funeral pyre for their dad...

A Man For All Seasons

Malvern Theatres, Tues 4 - Sat 8 February

Familiar television face Martin Shaw returns to the Midlands to star in this touring production of Robert Bolt's famous play. Best known from hit TV series *Judge John Deed*, *Inspector George Gently* and



The Professionals, Birmingham-born Martin plays the character of Sir Thomas More. A staunchly Catholic man of immense integrity, More finds himself forced to choose between his loyalty and his conscience when King Henry VIII demands a divorce from Catherine of Aragon, clearing the way for the monarch to marry Anne Boleyn. The production is helmed by former Birmingham Rep artistic director Jonathan Church.

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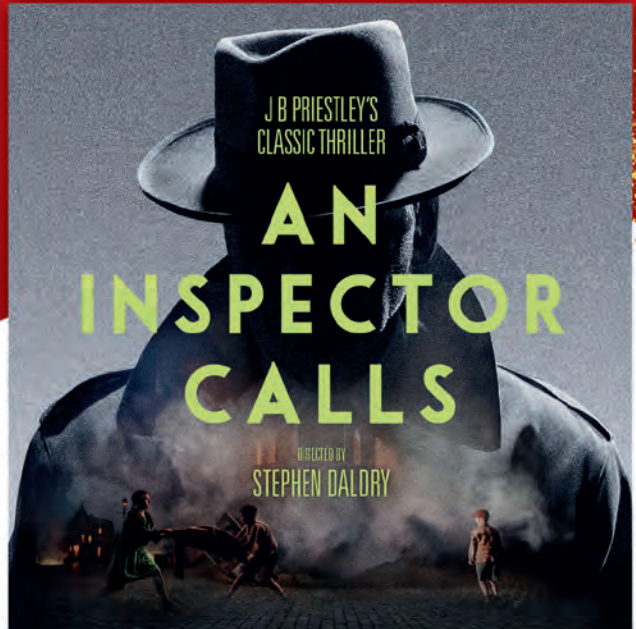


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Theatre previews from around the region



Boy On The Roof

Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton, Thurs 6 - Sat 8 February; Bridge House Theatre, Coventry, Tues 11 - Wed 12 February; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Wed 26 & Thurs 27 February; Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham, Fri 28 February; Swan Theatre, Worcester, Sun 9 March

Vamos Theatre has an impressive reputation for presenting shows which tackle difficult subject matter - and they're at it again here. The Worcester-based company uses full masks to tell its stories without words. And having previously turned the spotlight on dementia, the health service, post-traumatic stress and death, they are here returning with a show that tells the tale of an unlikely friendship between a young man struggling with ADHD and a lonely pensioner.

Far From The Madding Crowd

Swan Theatre, Worcester, Thurs 6 February; Lichfield Garrick, Thurs 20 February; The Albany Theatre, Coventry, Sat 5 April

Thomas Hardy's classic novel features spirited heroine Bathsheba Everdene and three suitors competing for her hand. Will she go for steady shepherd Gabriel Oak, wealthy farmer William Boldwood, or dashing sergeant Francis Troy? And will she choose the right man?... Conn Artists Theatre Company are the ensemble behind this latest version of Hardy's memorable tale. The production comes complete with songs of the period.



Fluff

Swan Theatre, Worcester, Fri 28 February

This critically acclaimed show aims to provide its audience with a first-hand experience of dementia via the device of a non-linear plotline. Standing squarely in the play's spotlight is title character Fluff, a woman attempting to navigate her way through her most treasured and darkest memories as she tries to piece together the story of her life, event by event and person by person.

Supported by, among other organisations, Arts Council England and the Alzheimer's Society, the show was the winner of the best theatre production award at last year's Buxton Fringe, having previously picked up glittering prizes at Birmingham Fringe.



The Last Quiz Night On Earth

New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Sat 8 February - Sat 1 March

Alison Carr's humorous exploration of how people cope with the inevitable asks the audience to contemplate a simple question - What would you do if the world was ending tomorrow? - and then provides a thought-provoking suggestion: how about a pub quiz? With a massive meteor hurtling towards Earth, an eccentric pub landlady determines to host the best - and last - quiz night in the venue's history. But as the clock ticks, tensions rise and the meteor draws ever nearer, it becomes clear that people are visiting The Four Horsemen public house for more than just a final quiz...

Handbagged

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Thurs 27 February - Sat 1 March; Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Tues 29 April - Sat 3 May

An Olivier Award nominee in the Best New Comedy category, Handbagged speculates about the relationship between Her Majesty The Queen and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, two powerful and iconic women

who were born in the same year. But what did the pair really talk about behind closed palace doors? The play was written by Moira Buffini in 2010 and memorably described by the Metro as 'a mischievous pleasure, with the sharp teeth of a kicked corgi'. Originally intended to be a one-act show, Buffini expanded Handbagged in 2013, since which time it's garnered plenty of praise from theatre critics and audiences alike.

Good For A Girl

The Rep, Birmingham, Wed 19 - Sat 22 February; Malvern Theatres, Wed 26 February; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Tues 4 March

As Queensgate Football Club advances to the later stages of the Women's FA Cup for the first time in its history, its record-breaking players find themselves faced with challenges both on and off the pitch... The real-life experiences of women in football provides the subject matter for Becky Deeks' Lucy Wild-directed play, a production which promises to be dynamic, comedic and hard-hitting in equal measure.






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Pirates Love Underpants

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Mon 17 February; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Tues 11 - Fri 14 March; Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Wed 23 & Thurs 24 April; Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Mon 26 & Tues 27 May

Claire Freedman certainly knows a thing or two about writing for children. And she's no slouch on the subject of underpants either, with her picture books including *Aliens Love Underpants*, *Aliens Love Panta Claus* and *Aliens In Underpants Save The World...* It turns out pirates are pretty keen on underpants too, as evidenced by this stage adaptation of another of Claire's books. Theatre Severn's legendary pantomime Dame, Brad Fitt, has written the show, which features a winning combination of 'music, puppetry and glittering pants of gold'.

Dance In The Dark

Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham, Sat 15 - Mon 17 February; The Albany Theatre, Coventry, Wed 19 February; Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Tues 4 March; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Tues 11 & Wed 12 March

Dreamy, multi-sensory, and providing youngsters (and their grown-ups) with the chance to pull on their PJs for a slumber party in a giant sleepover den, this brand-new show features contemporary dance, live music, audience interaction, and immersive sounds and scents. The production is being presented by Kenilworth-located company Sonrisa Arts and is ideal for children aged between three and six.



The Little Mermaid

Palace Theatre, Redditch, Wed 19 February; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Fri 21 February; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Mon 14 - Tues 15 April; Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke-on-trent, Sun 27 April

Telling the story of a beautiful mermaid princess who believes a better life awaits her out of the water, *The Little Mermaid* is here being presented by the ever-inventive Immersion Theatre and features 'dazzling sets, colourful characters, astounding choreography, original music and heaps of audience participation'.

Mr Sleepybum

The Albany Theatre, Coventry, Sat 15 February

With a nomination for best kids' show at last year's Leicester Comedy Festival to recommend it, not to mention a clutch of five-star reviews trailing in its wake, *Mr Sleepybum* is a show well worth checking out. The title character is a fella who has 'stupid, silly dreams' at night - and he's going to re-enact the whole lot of them for his sure-to-be-enthralled audience...

The show runs for 45 minutes and is suitable for children aged between three and eight.

The Tale Of Nobody Nose

Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton, Wed 19 February

Wordless storytelling, skilful puppetry and classic clowning are the winning ingredients giving rich flavour to *The Tale Of Nobody Nose*, a Black Country Touring-supported co-production presented by Goofus Theatre CIC and Theatre Porto (formerly Action Transport Theatre).

The story follows the adventures of three clowns - Boz, Yolo and Flo - as they travel by land, sea and air to help a lone puppet find 'the most important thing ever'... their own red nose...



Breathe

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Tues 18 February; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Thurs 20 February

Celebrating nature, and told from the perspective of an acorn, *Breathe* sees three storytellers use a combination of puppetry, detailed sets and live camera work to explore the inner workings of trees. A unique blend of thumping D&B and live ethereal folk songs further add to an experience during which the audience is invited to 'find the epic in the tiny'. The show is presented by Canterbury-based theatre company Half A String.



Science Museum Live

Lichfield Garrick, Tues 18 February

London's Science Museum has here partnered with Mark Thompson Productions to present a show which aims to 'ignite curiosity, fuel imagination and provide inspiration in new and exciting ways'. Running for an hour and aimed at family audiences with children aged five and older, the production covers a range of physics, chemistry and engineering topics.

MORE HAMLET FOR LESSER

Midlands actor Anton Lesser talks about
going back to his roots...



Helmed by an award-winning director and featuring a star-studded cast, the Royal Shakespeare Company's latest version of Hamlet looks a surefire hit. Midlands-born actor Anton Lesser, who plays the Ghost of Hamlet's father in the production, talks to What's On about returning to the RSC's main theatre - the venue where it all started for him way back in the 1970s...

When Anton Lesser returns to the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) in Stratford-upon-Avon this month, it will be a homecoming for the Birmingham-born actor in more ways than one. Not only is the 72-year-old a resident of the area, but his first acting job, way back in 1977, was on the very stage where he'll be joining the cast of a new production of Hamlet. It's a delightful full-circle moment, he says, not least because it will be the first time he's acted on the main stage since it was reconfigured and reopened 15 years ago.

"It does feel like a big, big circle, and it's especially nice coming back to this new - as far as I'm concerned - newly configured main house," says the veteran actor, who has become an even more familiar face in recent years courtesy of roles in high-profile TV shows such as Game Of Thrones, Wolf Hall, The Crown and Star Wars spin-off Andor. "My first job was in the old main auditorium. It was quite a baptism of fire for a youngster to go into that big house, but since it's been redesigned, it feels much more friendly and more like [adjacent theatre] The Swan."

The upcoming production of Hamlet won't be Anton's first appearance in the revamped main theatre. As well as participating in Q&As there, he's also performed in Red Sky At Sunrise. The show saw him reading the work of author Laurie Lee, accompanied by the Warwick-based Orchestra Of The Swan (OOTS), where he now enjoys the title 'Associate Artist'.

"I'm very honoured, because I'm completely starstruck by [OOTS artistic director] David Le Page. He's a wonderful violinist, composer and arranger. I sit there on the stage waiting to do my little bit of reading, and I'm in bliss at the music.

"We did one show that sold out the RSC's main house. That was my first experience of the new stage, and I just loved it - it felt very much like coming home."

But what of his first performance on the main-theatre stage almost 50 years ago?

"It was vast - so terrifying and intimidating straight after drama school," he admits - and not least because that first job started the day after he'd graduated from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA). Which is where Anton's story takes an even more fascinating twist, as he'd never even thought about being an actor until he experienced a lightbulb

moment while watching a documentary about, you guessed it, the RSC.

"I was between degrees and due to go back to do a post-graduate in Architecture. I was in Nigeria doing VSO [Voluntary Service Overseas] in an architect's office, and I saw a British Council Film about the Royal Shakespeare Company. I had this experience of complete certainty that that was what I should do. I came back to England, went to RADA, came out of RADA, and my first job was at Stratford."

Even though he expected some fallout, the complete change in career direction didn't faze his family one bit.

"My parents were wonderful, and I hope I'm reflecting a little bit of the way they behaved with me to my own kids, because they were just 'do what makes you happy - if you want to leave a secure, or apparently secure, profession for being a rogue or a vagabond, then do it.'

"It was a huge decision, but I can't claim it was courageous - it felt like a certainty that I didn't need to find; it just seemed to happen. I feel very blessed by that. It was a very extraordinary feeling. If someone had said 'you could be an actor' and I had to choose, I'd never have done it - I wouldn't have had the courage. So something bigger than me was picking me up and turning me round."

Ironically, the only play Anton had been in at school was Hamlet ("you've just reminded me!"). He then went on to play the part in a 1982 production directed by Jonathan Miller that started at the Donmar Warehouse in London before transferring to the Piccadilly. The experience has enabled him to offer a useful piece of advice to RSC debutant Luke Thallon, who takes on the title role in the new production.

"I said, all you need to know about my Hamlet is that it's the reason I've not read a review since 1982!" he laughs. "He asked why, and I told him the review said 'This is the only production of Hamlet that would've been better off without the Prince.' After that, I think some of the cast decided they wouldn't read reviews either!"

Not that Anton expects the new production to be anything less than stellar. As well as Thallon ("you can see he's built for Hamlet"), the company includes RSC veterans Nancy Carroll, Elliot Levey, Kel Matsena and Jared Harris. The latter is back at Stratford for the

first time in nearly 40 years, having earned acclaim for roles in the likes of Mad Men, The Crown and Chernobyl in the interim.

Much-lauded director Rupert Goold also returns to the RSC to helm the production, coming to the show straight from Broadway, where he directed Elton John musical Tammy Faye. He also earned rave notices for directing Dear England at the National Theatre in 2023, a show he will return to this spring. He takes over as artistic director of the Old Vic in 2026.

Goold's success is well earned, according to Anton, who admits he's a huge fan.

"What I love about Rupert is that he doesn't shy away from a big idea, and you always come away feeling very excited about something fresh, something new. You can look at this tale that gets told a million times because it's a masterpiece, but he'll do something bold with it."

The crucial element when taking a new or daring approach to a classic, says Anton, is to respect the source material. He admits he sometimes gets frustrated by directors too keen to "make their mark".

"It's understandable, but very often what happens is that the story - which we probably all agree is what's there to be served or to be told afresh or to be made accessible - gets subjugated or reduced by this big idea that the director has. It's frustrating because Shakespeare deserves the story to be revealed, not squashed.

"I was fortunate to be around in the late 70s and 80s at Stratford, when there were some wonderful directors. My favourite was Howard Davies, who always came with a bold idea, but it was always in service of telling the tale with clarity, excitement, enthusiasm, passion and heart - all those ingredients were to serve the story.

"I remember thinking what an amazing balancing act that must be for a director. Things that I've seen of Rupert's do that. With Hamlet, he has the opportunity to do it again, and that's what's really exciting me about this production and working with him."

.....
Hamlet shows at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, from Saturday 8 February to Saturday 29 March

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Light entertainment from around the region



John Barrowman: Laid Bare

Birmingham Town Hall, Tues 4 February;
Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Sun 9 February

Acclaimed appearances in Birmingham Hippodrome pantomimes have ensured John Barrowman will always hold a special place in the hearts of theatre-going Midlanders. He's making a return to the region this month with a concert show in which he'll perform some of his favourite songs, from Broadway classics to contemporary hits.



Neighbours: The 40th Anniversary Tour Live

Symphony Hall, Birmingham,
Monday 3 February

Aussie soap Neighbours is 40 years (and 9,000-plus episodes) old in 2025 - and what better way to toast the occasion than by hitting the road with a brand-new live show? Featuring plenty of surprises, never-before-heard stories 'and the inside scoop on what life is really like in Erinsborough', the show lasts for two-and-a-half hours (including an interval) and brings together some of Ramsay Street's best-loved residents. Television journalist and Neighbours superfan Leah Boleto hosts the occasion.

Jasper Carrott & Alistair McGowan

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre,
Mon 17 - Wed 19 February; Symphony Hall,
Birmingham, Thurs 27 March

Midlands comedy legends Jasper and Alistair are once again teaming up, much to the delight of their legion of fans.

Jasper's been plying his trade for many a decade now, with career highs including numerous television series and a chartbusting mid-1970s hit with the hugely amusing song Funky Moped. He's retreated into the shadows of late, but remains one of the UK's best-loved funny-men.

Worcestershire-born Alistair has followed in the footsteps of Mike Yarwood and Phil Cool to become one of the country's most revered impressionists. He's also worked extensively in the theatre, appearing in shows including Little Shop Of Horrors, for which he received an Olivier Award nomination.



Nerine Skinner: The Exorcism Of Liz Truss

Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham,
Thurs 20 February

Liz Truss may have been outlasted in Downing Street by a lettuce, but the ex-prime minister's time at Number 10 has

Buffy Revamped

Lichfield Garrick, Sat 15 February; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sun 9 March; Malvern Theatres, Sat 22 March

Calling to mind the work of ensembles such as the Reduced Shakespeare Company, Buffy Revamped is a fast-paced production that wings its way through all 144 episodes of hit 1990s television series Buffy The Vampire Slayer. Not only that, but it does so in an admirably concise 70 minutes.

The one-man production is presented by Brendan Murphy, whose central character of Spike is a fella who, as you might imagine, knows a thing or several about the now-cult US TV show...

Buffy Revamped scored a big hit in Edinburgh (and on its previous visits to the Midlands), so if you're a fan of the series, a fun evening out is pretty much a guarantee.

certainly had a longlasting effect on the comedy career of Nerine Skinner. The one-time Britain's Got Talent semi-finalist went viral with her parodies of the former PM a couple of years ago, since which time she's been much in demand on the UK comedy circuit.



Funny Stuff

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Wed 19 February

One half of longstanding comedy duo LipService, Sue Ryding is now going it alone following the unexpected death



of her double-act partner Maggie Fox. Having been left with a shipping container full of stage props, costumes, wigs, hats, shoes and, er, sheep(!), Sue is using this latest show to take a look at 'all the "stuff" we accumulate, hoard and hate to let go'. Expect plenty of humour, a little sadness, some archive footage, a badger onesie, some ruby slippers, a sinking bog and Charlotte Bronte's knickers...

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Dance previews from across the region



Matthew Bourne's Swan Lake

Birmingham Hippodrome,
Thurs 6 - Sat 15 February

Firmly established as a modern-day classic, Sir Matthew Bourne's contemporary interpretation of the universally loved Swan Lake has been the recipient of more than 30 international theatre awards.

Premiering at Sadlers Wells in 1995, Bourne's provocative version became an instant hit courtesy of its all-male ensemble, character comedy and mime - all of which not only shattered the concept of swans in tutus but also attracted a younger audience to the world of ballet.

With numerous successful tours under its belt, the show this month returns to Birmingham Hippodrome for its only West Midlands date - miss it at your peril.

BRB: Ashton Classics

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Sat 15 February

This Birmingham Royal Ballet tribute to Sir Frederick Ashton, one of England's most admired and influential choreographers, features highlights from some of his best-loved works.

The concert repertoire includes *La Fille mal gardée*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Capriol Suite* and *Voices Of Spring*.



Srishti: ekatA

Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham,
Sun 9 February

Award-winning choreographer Nina Rajarani returns to her classical roots with *ekatA* (meaning identity and oneness), a solo Bharatanatyam recital of dance pieces which she has created to perform to the musical compositions of husband/vocalist Y Yadavan. Accompanied throughout by live music, the programme is made up of a varied series of solo pieces (*Alarippu*, *Varnam*, *Padam 1* and *Padam 2*) and an ensemble finale, *Tillana*, performed by four Srishti dancers.

Giovanni: The Last Dance

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sat 1 & Sun 2
February; Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Sat 22
February; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Fri
25 April

Giovanni Pernice was surely relieved to see the back of 2024, a year during which his reputation took a significant battering following allegations made by his former *Strictly Come Dancing* dance partner, the actor Amanda Abbington.

This new tour is providing the 'Italian stallion' with the perfect opportunity to reconnect with his legion of fans and let his dance steps do the talking.

Presenting 'a mesmerising production that transcends the boundaries of live performance', *Giovanni* is once again joined by his company of 'world-class performers'.



Tap Factory

Malvern Theatres, Sat 15 February; The Albany
Theatre, Coventry, Wed 12 March

Described as 'Tap Dogs meets Stomp', *Tap Factory* is this month embarking on another UK-wide tour, taking in a couple of Midlands venues along the way.

The rhythm-based production sees an array of internationally renowned exponents of dance, gymnastics and acrobatics take to the stage to showcase their skills.

Motionhouse: Hidden

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Thurs 6 - Sun 9
February; Malvern Theatres, Tues 13 May;
Birmingham Hippodrome, Fri 10 & Sat 11
October

Premiering at Coventry's Warwick Arts Centre this month, Leamington Spa-based company Motionhouse's latest offering is an exploration of how, in an increasingly divided world, people can come together to help one another through the darkest moments they face.

"We try to connect with the audience using beautiful imagery during the show," explains Motionhouse's co-founder, artistic director & choreographer, Kevin Finnan. "And then we blend that with an emotional dance language, where you can really feel the dancers' bodies move. This is what we're aiming for - you feel it in your heart; you can feel that energy, and you want to feel the emotions that the dancers are going through. We want everyone to share the journey."





HAVING A BALL

Magic and wonder as Birmingham Royal Ballet's Cinderella makes a welcome return



With its familiar rags-to-riches narrative and happy-ever-after ending, the timeless tale of Cinderella continues to delight audiences - and not just in its Christmas pantomime form either. Next month sees Sir David Bintley's much-loved *ballet* version of the story making a welcome return to the Birmingham Hippodrome stage. What's On recently caught up with John Macfarlane - the talented designer tasked with creating the original production back in 2010 - to chat about the show...



Celebrated artist & stage designer John Macfarlane has created stunning sets for shows across the globe, but there was one story in particular that he really wanted to work on: Prokofiev's ballet Cinderella. So when former Birmingham Royal Ballet (BRB) Director David Bintley decided to create a new production of Cinderella for 2010, John was delighted to be given the task. "Cinderella has always attracted me because of the music," he says. "For such a well-known story, the music is very dark, and I think most artists and designers are always more inspired by something dark and magical. With Cinderella, there's so much for you to play with."

John had worked with BRB in 1990, designing the iconic sets for the company's production of *The Nutcracker* - a greatly loved show which still wows audiences most Christmases. But this was the first time he had collaborated with Bintley.

"When David asked me to do Cinderella, I was delighted, not just to work on Cinderella but also to work with him. That was the one chance we got to work together.

"I think in a sense the best experiences you have are when the person who is asking you to do something is on the same wavelength as you are. Then the discussion is quite minimal because you both want the same thing. He wanted to bring out the dark side as well and seemed very easy with what I was doing."

A gift from David to Birmingham to celebrate the 20th anniversary of BRB's move to the city, Cinderella premiered at Birmingham Hippodrome in November 2010, where it received critical acclaim and thrilled audiences. Its return to the Hippodrome stage in February is highly anticipated.

With Cinderella being such a familiar story, the production needed to give audiences a tale which they recognised but that also provided plenty of suspense and surprises.

"My starting point is always 'don't make it too pretty,'" John explains. "None of these big, classic ballets are lovely cuddly stories.

"The contrast in Cinderella's circumstances is absolutely critical to the ballet. You have to believe in the first scenes of Cinderella to then see the contrast. There's very little light music in that first scene with her in the kitchen, so it should be like there's no hope for her.

"If you don't feel that, then you don't get this

lovely moment when suddenly the fire pops out and something clearly magical is going to happen. If something magical doesn't happen at that point, you are going to shortchange your audiences, as the audience is going to be coming in asking how is she going to the ball, how will the ball end, how will they do the clock?"

John's transformation scene, from ash-girl Cinderella to belle-of-the-ball Cinderella, is indeed magical - not least as the lizards, frogs and mice of the kitchen become her attendants.

"I was going to do lizard footmen, whether anyone wanted them or not, because I absolutely love designing characters with animal heads! In Cinderella, it's really important that you have this world that the Fairy Godmother builds. She takes the little critters from the kitchen, as Disney and many people before him did, and she turns them into coachmen and pages and all the magical things that take Cinderella to the ball."

John painstakingly ensured the creatures were accurately portrayed. "It's like when I did the rats for *Nutcracker*. You have to be anatomically correct and they have to look real, so I did about four or five sheets of detailed drawings of lizards.

"As soon as they are beautifully made, you believe in them completely - and the quirk in it is that the lizards are wearing baroque costumes with coats and tails and shirt fronts."

When Cinderella arrives at the ball, she brings the magic with her.

"The ballroom is very normal, and then she appears and it opens up and it's the night sky. That was always something I thought would be wonderful.

"And then of course the clock needed to be this terrifying moment when the whole thing falls apart. You can absolutely hear the clock in the music. That's the wonderful thing about Prokofiev, and also Tchaikovsky - you can always tell where you're going.

"When you start working on something like Cinderella, you've got to really listen to the music. Prokofiev gives you lots of leads before the clock starts that great whirring of the mechanism, in just the same way that Tchaikovsky gives you lots of leads before Aurora gets her finger pricked in the garden in *Sleeping Beauty*."

John has designed numerous works during his hugely impressive career. These include

Swan Lake and Sir Peter Wright's *Giselle* for Royal Ballet, *War And Peace* for Opéra Bastille, *Hansel And Gretel* and *Queen Of Spades* for Welsh National Opera and a host of productions for New York's Metropolitan Opera, including *The Flying Dutchman* and *Tosca*.

"I only really do a show once, and I only do ballet and opera, because the music is so critical for me. I'm an avid reader, and yet I get nothing when I read a script. If it's an opera or ballet, then everything is informed by the music.

"I have this belief that every production, from *Elektra* to *Don Giovanni* to *Tosca*, they all have these critical moments. Some of them the audience are hugely aware of, some of them are hopefully a huge surprise, but they all have this path through."

Creating the right setting for the tale also ensures the audience enters the onstage world and becomes captivated by the story. "All those huge Prokofiev and Tchaikovsky ballets have great stories, and as long as you keep the story central, it will work. And you hopefully don't let the audience expectation down.

"So with Cinderella at midnight, you've got to really show the audience that this wonderful dream ballroom scene, and meeting the prince, have suddenly gone at the stroke of the clock. Cinderella is back to square one." The production also boasts plenty of comedy, not least via the Stepsisters, who are hideously mean but also so outrageous that they create their own humour.

"We wanted the Stepsisters to be cruel, of course, and not just slapstick and funny. David was brilliant on that, with this sort of creepy, quirky choreography for them."

And the production needed to finish not just with a fairytale happy ending but also with a grand finale that reflected Prokofiev's fabulous score.

"I think the end of Cinderella is one of the most beautiful pieces of music Prokofiev ever wrote. And so we have the Fairy Godmother and the sun coming up, and the stars. There's a magic to it as they walk into sunset or sunrise."

BRB's Cinderella shows at Birmingham Hippodrome from Wednesday 19 February to Saturday 1 March

Film highlights in February...



The Last Showgirl CERT tbc (89 mins)

Starring **Pamela Anderson, Brenda Song, Kiernan Shipka, Dave Bautista, Jamie Lee Curtis, Billie Lourd** Directed by **Gia Coppola**

When it's announced that the glittering Las Vegas revue show she's headlined for decades is soon to close, a glamorous and now-fiftysomething showgirl must reconcile with the decisions she's made and the community she's built as she tries to work out what to do next... Described by its official publicity as 'a poignant film of resilience, rhinestones and feathers', *The Last Showgirl* stars one-time *Baywatch* favourite Pamela Anderson, making a much-heralded comeback after a couple of decades in the Hollywood wilderness.

The film is the third to be directed by Gia Coppola, the granddaughter of director Francis Ford Coppola and niece of director & former actress Sofia Coppola.

Released Mon 10 February

September 5 CERT 15 (95 mins)

Starring **Peter Saragaard, John Magaro, Ben Chaplin, Leonie Benesch, Zinedine Soualem, Georgina Rich** Directed by **Tim Fehlbaum**

A live broadcast seen globally by an estimated one billion people more than half a century ago sits at the heart of this well-reviewed film from acclaimed Swiss director Tim Fehlbaum.

Set during the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich, September 5 follows an American broadcasting team as they quickly adapt from sports reporting to live coverage of the Olympic Village attack by the Palestinian militant organisation Black September. The group's act of terrorism saw two Israeli athletes murdered and a further nine taken

hostage and then subsequently killed. At the heart of the story is Geoff (John Magaro), a young and ambitious producer striving to prove himself to his boss, the legendary TV executive Roone Arledge (Peter Saragaard). Together with interpreter Marianne and mentor Marvin, Geoff unexpectedly takes the helm of the live coverage. As narratives shift and time ticks away - and with the hostages' lives hanging in the balance - Geoff finds himself not only grappling with a host of tough decisions but also calling into question his own moral compass.

Released Thurs 6 February



Captain America: Brave New World CERT tbc

Starring **Harrison Ford, Rosa Salazar, Anthony Mackie, Liv Tyler, Giancarlo Esposito, Tim Blake Nelson** Directed by **Julius Onah**

The Marvel Cinematic Universe continues to expand (this is the 35th entry) with the release of this fourth installment in the Captain America film series.

A continuation of the television miniseries *The Falcon And The Winter Soldier* (2021), the movie stars Anthony Mackie in the title role. Mackie is replacing Chris Evans, who took the part of the star-spangled superhero in each of the first three cinematic outings (not to mention in various other Marvel Cinematic Universe entries, including the blockbuster *Avengers* movies).

The storyline for this one finds Sam Wilson - aka Captain America - at the centre of an international incident following the election of Thaddeus 'Thunderbolt' Ross (played by Harrison Ford) to the presidency of the United States.

Released Fri 14 February



Bridget Jones: Mad About The Boy CERT tbc

Starring **Renée Zellweger, Leo Woodall, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Hugh Grant, Emma Thompson, Colin Firth** Directed by **Michael Morris**

Nine years after the third installment in the Bridget Jones rom-com franchise, everybody's favourite thirtysomething singleton makes a greatly anticipated return, albeit having left her 30s some considerable distance behind her. Indeed, even her 40s are in the rear-view mirror. Now 51, a widow, and the mother of two young children, Helen Fielding's iconic character finds herself once again navigating the pitfalls of dating...

Along with the two-time Academy Award-winning Renee Zellweger in the title role, Hugh Grant and Emma Thompson make a welcome return for this fourth chapter, as do Sally Phillips, Jim Broadbent, Gemma Jones and Colin Firth.

Released Thurs 13 February



The Monkey CERT tbc

Starring **Theo James, Elijah Wood, Osgood Perkins, Tatiana Maslany, Laura Mennell, Sarah Levy** Directed by **Osgood Perkins**

The Monkey is the latest Stephen King story to receive a cinematic treatment. Bringing together an experienced cast under the direction of a real master of the horror genre in Osgood Perkins, the movie focuses on the story of twin brothers Hal and Bill, around whom a series of gruesome deaths occur following their discovery of their father's vintage toy monkey, hidden away in the attic. Not surprisingly, the siblings decide to ditch the furry simian and move on with their lives, growing apart across the years. But when mysterious deaths begin happening again, Hal and Bill realise they must come together and find a way to destroy the monkey once and for all.

Released Fri 21 February



Last Breath CERT tbc

Starring **Woody Harrelson, Cliff Curtis, Simu Lu, Finn Cole, Riz Khan, Daithí O'Donnell** Directed by **Alex Parkinson**

Emmy-nominated Alex Parkinson may be a rookie when it comes to narrative-feature directing (he's making his debut with Last Breath), but he's nevertheless the perfect choice to helm this true story of an underwater rescue mission, having co-directed a documentary on the subject back in 2019.

Heralded by its producers as "a heart-pounding film" and "an electrifying story about teamwork, resilience, and a race against time to do the impossible", the movie follows seasoned deep-sea divers as they battle the raging elements to rescue their crewmate, who's trapped hundreds of feet below the ocean's surface...

At the time of going to print, the 2019 documentary is streaming on Netflix, if you fancy learning more about what really happened. **Released Fri 28 February**



THE PERFECT THRILLER!

Giovanna Fletcher talks about starring in the stage adaptation of *The Girl On The Train*, which comes to Shrewsbury's Theatre Severn next month...

What can audiences expect when they come to see the show, Giovanna?

It's a gripping night of theatre that really keeps people on the edge of their seats the whole way through as they try to work out, alongside [lead character] Rachel, what's going on. It's really thrilling, really gripping and captivating. It's just brilliant storytelling, which Rachel Wagstaff and Duncan Abel have adapted from the Paula Hawkins multi-million-selling novel. It's a great thriller that will pull audiences in and, as I say, keep them on the edge of their seats.

Who is Rachel Watson and what's her role in the story?

When we meet Rachel at the start of the play, she's clearly not at the best point in her life. Every day, she gets on the train to work, and she is completely captivated by this couple who basically are living the life that she feels she should have had, but everything's gone south for her. She's an alcoholic, she's divorced, there's so much that's gone wrong for her, and she sees this couple and totally idolises them. Then, one day, she's on the train and she sees the woman in that couple kissing someone else. All her dreams of them as this perfect couple are shattered. The next day, the lady goes missing, so the rest of the play is all about Rachel trying to piece together what, if any, her involvement in that is. Because of her drinking, she has black holes in her memory, and she can't remember everything. It's about her trying to let the memories in. Both the audience and Rachel are very much aligned with that, because the audience finds out things as Rachel does.

What makes her such a juicy character to play?

She's brilliant. I think that when you're greeted by someone at their lowest, and then you see them regain their strength and find their voice, that's an empowering part to play. She goes through so much, trying to get to a place where she's able to speak up and act in a way that she can be proud of. I think she's someone who has been dismissed for so long by society and within her relationships that it feels like an empowering thing to be the one to help her find her way.

What are the challenges of playing a drunk?

It's tricky because you don't want to see me just swaying around the stage. It's more about the emotions when you're drunk. It's more about how things are heightened. Whatever choice you make, it's just that little bit more. So that's been fun to play around with, and that's what the rehearsal process is

for - to kind of go 'How drunk are we making her at this point?' But there's not loads of slurring or anything like that. I think that mostly when you're drunk, you try not to seem drunk. It's been fun to play around with that, and there are various points throughout the play where she's trying not to drink, to gain some clarity, then it all falls apart again. It's been fun experimenting with it.

Are there surprises in store for people who have read the book or seen the film version?

Yes, absolutely. I read the play first. I hadn't read the book or seen the film, so I read the play first, and then I went back and read the novel and watched the movie. It's interesting to see the different takes and the way that each version really leans into whatever device is being used to tell the story. The wonderful thing about theatre is that it's live and right in front of you, so you don't know what's coming next or how it's going to be told. If you're a fan of the book or the film, amazing - come along and you'll love it. If you've never read the book or seen the film, don't worry - you're absolutely going to be able to follow what's going on because it's a great piece of storytelling.

You've done stage thrillers before, like *Wish You Were Dead* and *2:22 A Ghost Story*. Why do you think audiences are drawn to them repeatedly?

I've been thinking about that a lot. I wonder if it's because of the you're-all-in-this-together aspect of it. When you see a comedy, you need one person to do the audible laugh first, and then everyone knows 'This is fine, we're all in this together and we're allowed to react.' I think with thrillers it's the same thing. You're sharing all these feelings together. When there's one person who gasps, and then there's a little giggle in the audience, everyone then knows that it's okay to react. I think it's that feeling of maybe having safety in the collective. Thrillers in the theatre have been having quite the time lately, and understandably so. They're fun to tell and they're fun to sit through, feeling that shared anxiety and that shared anticipation of what's to come. Suspense unites people.

You've had such a varied career. Can you pick a few highlights?

Acting-wise, when I was in my first job in the West End, I understudied Andrea Riseborough at the Wyndham's Theatre in Ivanov. It was the Donmar season, with Kenneth Branagh and Tom Hiddleston, and I had my own part, but I also understudied Andrea. She went off one night mid-show,

and I had a three-minute warning that she might not be able to continue with the play. Suddenly, I was getting ready, then she was going to go back on, then she couldn't go on, and I think I had about 15 seconds' warning that I was going on in her place. That was such a massive high, and one that I'm super, super proud of. I feel so lucky that my career has been able to take different paths. I think the through line of each of those paths is storytelling, whether that's telling a story through playing a character and seeing things through their lives, or whether it's on the podcast [Happy Mum, Happy Baby], where I'm helping someone else tell their story.

What do you enjoy about touring a show?

There are so many amazing parts of the country that I get to see. I love seeing different theatres and going on different walks; it's just brilliant. Touring is important because not everyone can get to London to see a show. It's so important that the theatre can tour in the way that it does, and I have huge respect for the people who do it.

Is there anything you couldn't be on the road without?

I take my coffee bags everywhere, just to make sure I've got coffee, and usually some pre-cooked meals so that when I get to my digs, I've got stuff to eat for the week. And I take my walking boots, so I can have a proper walk.

How do you kick back when you're not working?

I love a jigsaw puzzle. We have the edge of the dining-room table that's not used, and I love just sitting there, switching off and trying to work out which pieces go where. The thing that I love about jigsaw puzzles is that there's a right answer, whereas in the rest of life, you're kind of plotting it all and going 'I think this is right.' With a puzzle, it either fits or it doesn't - which is quite fitting for this play, too.

.....

Giovanna Fletcher stars as Rachel Watson in *The Girl On The Train* at Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, from Tuesday 11 to Saturday 15 March.

Louisa Lytton will then play the part when the production visits The Alexandra, Birmingham, from Tuesday 29 April to Saturday 3 May, with Laura Whitmore stepping into the role when the show stops off at Malvern Theatres from Tuesday 17 to Saturday 21 June.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The University of Warwick is celebrating its 60th birthday with a vibrant exhibition of printmaking

The University of Warwick this year celebrates its 60th anniversary, as does its fascinating in-house art collection.

Works which are usually displayed around the campus have been brought together in Warwick Arts Centre's Mead Gallery - alongside works by Andy Warhol, Damian Hirst, David Hockney, Tracey Emin and more - to showcase the art of printmaking.

Taking the title *The Future Is Today: Prints And The University Of Warwick, 1965 To Now*, the exhibition illustrates how printmaking lends itself to ideals of curiosity, creativity and forward thinking - attributes which the university hoped to nurture when it opened in the wake of the post-war baby boom.

The exhibition itself is striving to carry this ethos forward, as visitors are invited to unlock their own creativity within the gallery space.

Printed works are relatively cheap and easy to produce and reproduce, and prints are a familiar sight outside of a gallery setting - whether in the form of posters, record sleeves or slogans on t-shirts. Part of the medium's power is the potential to tell otherwise unseen stories, and to quickly spread the word about contemporary issues. Important historical events can be captured and shared in print, replicated and circulated, without reliance on patrons or funders, and without censorship.

The Future Is Today is divided into broad sections which explore, for instance, political



activism and ideas of identity, imagery and control.

One of the included works from the university's collection is Richard Hamilton's *My Marilyn*, which features a selection of photos of Marilyn Monroe, revealing her own marks and amendments on the images, indicating which could be published. After her death, the images were all published, contrary to her consent. In the exhibition, Hamilton's work is displayed alongside two of Andy Warhol's iconic portraits - an emblem of Monroe's commodified image. Historically used to circulate ideas found outside of the mainstream, prints can

provide a platform for people whose voices might not otherwise be heard. At the heart of the 'hands-on' section of the exhibition - located next to a workshop area where the process of printmaking can be explored - is a library of Zines, collected by Lu Williams. Zines - small-scale, self-published works which provide an insight into an artist's perspective - have the potential to allow a disenfranchised individual's experience to be shared, acknowledged and celebrated.

The exhibition offers more than a visual treat, as the gallery periodically becomes a hive of activity. On Thursdays and Saturdays, between midday and 4pm, a print technician will be guiding free drop-in sessions, during which visitors can try their hand at printmaking.

On Thursday 6 February, the gallery will be open into the evening, hosting an event which features a print fair, live music, vintage clothing and records for sale - and, of course, printmaking!

Providing a backdrop to the workshops and events is a series of works showcasing different printmaking techniques, from the simplest potato print, through woodcuts, etchings and lithographs, to the most complex example: Polymergravure.

A newly commissioned work entitled *Placing Place* is also on display, created by Ben Sanderson, who grew up in Coventry. The work has been printed in a limited run of 60 copies, which are on sale at the venue.

As well as diving into past works and exploring present-day printmaking, the exhibition looks to the future - a selection of the pieces on display have been created in response to the climate emergency. Leonie Bradley's *Swarm*, for example, is comprised of nearly 2,000 origami fortune-tellers, representing choices which can impact the future and showing how people can unite to make meaningful change.

The exhibition as a whole contributes to this idea, highlighting the power of printmaking to galvanise people, communicate new ideas, and imagine a hopeful future.

Centre image: Andy Warhol, Marilyn Monroe (1967). Image left: Lubaina Himid, A Rake's Progress Hole in her Stocking (2022)



The Future Is Today: Prints And The University Of Warwick, 1965 To Now shows in Warwick Arts Centre's Mead Gallery until Sunday 9 March.

The Gallery Late x Print Makers Market takes place on Thursday 6 February.

Visual Arts previews from around the region



Rembrandt: Masterpieces in Black and White

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, Thurs 6 March - Sun 1 June

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery is the only UK stop-off for this major new show, which marks the first time Rembrandt's etchings have been brought out of the Netherlands as a collection.

"We are delighted to be bringing his fascinating prints to Birmingham," says Epcó Runia, head of collections at the Rembrandt House Museum, which has co-

organised Masterpieces In Black And White with the American Federation of Arts. "With this exhibition, we hope to demonstrate that each of Rembrandt's prints is a work of art in its own right. If you take the time to look at them closely, a whole world opens up to you: a world in black & white, but with enormous visual richness."

Coming soon!

Emii Alrai

Compton Verney, Warwickshire, Sat 15 February - Sun 15 June

Blackpool-born and Yorkshire-based artist Emii Alrai produces sculptures and installations that imitate



archaeological artefacts and which combine ancient mythologies from the Middle East with oral histories from her own Iraqi heritage. Her aim with her art is to highlight the contrast between the polished aesthetics of museums and the states of ruin which befall archaeological objects and the landscapes from which they are excavated.

Emii's Compton Verney commission sees her responding to the venue's nationally important Naples Collection. Through a sequence of darkening rooms, the artist dramatises the moment of archaeological discovery, at the same time considering 'themes of volcanic eruption and geological rupture as metaphors for our times'.

Eduardo Paolozzi: General Dynamic F.U.N.

Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum, until Sun 30 March

Pop Art pioneer Sir Eduardo Paolozzi once referred to himself as "a wizard in Toytown", transforming the mundane, the derelict and the mass-produced into what he described as 'surrealist' art. This Worcester City Art Gallery exhibition focuses on a series of 50 screenprints and photolithographs created by the Edinburgh-born artist between 1965 and 1970. Described by Paolozzi's friend and collaborator, JG Ballard, as "a unique guidebook to the electric garden of our minds", General Dynamic F.U.N. employs the technologies of mass-reproduction and gorges on its idols: the household names and familiar faces of consumer advertising, high fashion and Hollywood.



The Lanchester Marionettes

Bantock House Museum, Wolverhampton, until Wed 30 April

A famous Midlands puppet company - which once had a short drama written for it by legendary playwright George Bernard Shaw - comes under the spotlight in this recently opened exhibition. The Lanchester Marionettes, formed in Malvern in 1936 by already-successful puppeteer Waldo Lanchester and his ceramicist wife, Muriel, quickly established itself as the country's foremost puppet company, performing before King George VI and a young Princess Elizabeth at Buckingham Palace in 1938. The couple moved to Stratford-upon-Avon in the early 1950s, where they opened a puppet centre opposite the birthplace of Shakespeare. This fascinating show looks at a range of Waldo & Muriel's marionettes, from their earliest creations to some of the final ones they made.

Waste Age: What Can Design Do?

Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, until Sun 23 February

MAC's first collaboration with the Design Museum is a group exhibition focusing on a new generation of designers who are 'rethinking our relationship to everyday things'.



Telling the story of the environmental crisis, the show explores how design can transform waste into valuable resources.

The exhibition features a new sculptural commission inspired by clothes waste markets in Nigeria. The work has been created by Birmingham-based artist Abdulrazaq Awofeso.

Sun & Fire: Life And Death At The Dawn Of History

Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery, until Wed 30 April

Taking a look at life in ancient Shropshire, Sun & Fire provides visitors with an opportunity to learn about life in the county between 4,500 and 2,000 years ago. As its main title suggests, the exhibition has a particular focus on the significance of light and heat for people living in prehistoric times, exploring how the sun was once upon a time celebrated with huge stone circles and bright gold objects... The exhibition is interactive and has been funded by Arts Council England.



thinktank
Birmingham science museum



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Chinese New Year celebrations around the region



Chinese New Year Festival 2025

Hippodrome Square and throughout Chinatown, Birmingham, Sat 1 & Sun 2 February

Birmingham Chinese Festival Committee and Birmingham Hippodrome are once again hosting the city's annual Chinese New Year celebrations this month.

Festivities start in the city centre on Saturday 1 February with lion and dragon processions.

Celebrations then continue on Sunday the 2nd at Hippodrome Square and throughout Chinatown.

The packed programme showcases local Chinese talent and includes a range of traditional and modern music, dance and theatre performances.

Across the weekend, Southside will come alive with craft markets, food stalls, family activities and more. Events will be brought to a close with a spectacular fireworks display.



Chinese New Year at Weston Park

Weston Park, Shropshire, Sun 16 - Sun 23 February

Weston Park and the CultureKind Chinese Community have teamed up to welcome in the Year of the Snake.

On Sunday the 16th, a lantern parade, led by a traditional dancing dragon, will kickstart celebrations, after which visitors to the venue can enjoy an evening of vibrant and traditional Chinese performances.

From Monday the 17th to Sunday the 23rd, the House will be 'lit by lanterns', offering an opportunity to explore the property in a whole new light.

CultureKind Chinese Community will be exhibiting in the Rose Paterson Art Gallery throughout the month. The gallery is open daily and free to enter.

Chinese New Year of the Snake

Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, Sun 2 February

The Potteries Museum is once again hosting its annual Chinese New Year celebration. Visitors to the venue can expect plenty of lively and colourful entertainment, from traditional music and dance - including dragon and lion dance performances - to firecracker displays, acrobatics and Chinese craft workshops.



Lunar New Year Community Day

The New Art Gallery Walsall, Sat 1 February

Chinese folk fan dancing and lion dancing headline the New Art Gallery's programme of Lunar New Year entertainment.

Visitors to the event (who are encouraged to wear red or pink in celebration) can have a go at calligraphy, print lucky red envelopes (Hongbao) with artist Mengxia Liu, and complete the Red Gallery Trail.

Chinese New Year Celebrations

Trentham Shopping Village, Stoke-on-Trent, Sat 1 February

Trentham Shopping Village's Chinese New Year offering includes the chance for families to meet a mischievous panda and learn all about snakes courtesy of ZooLab.

Performances by Chinese fan dancers and live music by a guzheng player also feature, as do a number of stalls selling traditional cuisine.





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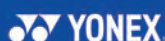
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MAKING HISTORY SINCE 1899

MAKING HISTORY SINCE 1899

Events previews from around the region



Birmingham International Tattoo

bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham, Sat 8 & Sun 9 February

This month's Birmingham International Tattoo will be one of the first events in the UK to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the end of World War Two. The show's ever-popular parade brings together massed international marching

bands and combined pipes and drums. Other attractions include the field gun competition, dog racing during the British Flyball Association competition, and performances by massed dancers and vocal soloists.



The Boogie Lights Express

Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Friday & Saturday nights from Fri 28 February - Sat 29 March

To celebrate both its own 60th birthday and the 200th anniversary of the modern railway, Severn Valley Railway is hosting this brand-new sound & light event on and in one of its steam trains. Featuring thousands of coloured LED lights and a soundtrack of iconic tunes from the

1960s to the present day, the special event includes an interactive show hosted by the legendary 'Voiceover Man' (as heard on Britain's Got Talent and The X Factor). There's also the chance for passengers to compete against one another in a special singalong game.

Tractor World Show

Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Sat 22 & Sun 23 February

A firm favourite with fans of farming, trucking, classic models and amazing machinery, the Tractor World Show makes a welcome return at the end of the month. As well as featuring hundreds of vintage, veteran, new and classic tractors, vans, stationary engines, classic commercials, lorries, trucks, Land Rovers and vintage vehicles, the show will also include historic displays of farm machinery and agricultural heritage across the weekend. The always popular live auction - with over 1,000 expected lots - makes a return on the Saturday, while Sunday's attractions include the brand-new outdoor vintage autojumble, featuring 'strictly second-hand' and motoring-themed by-gones, collectables and memorabilia.



STEM Week

RAF Museum Midlands, Cosford, Sat 15 - Sun 23 February

RAF Museum Midlands is hosting a range of fun activities for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths) Week this half term. The Galileo Dome mobile planetarium will be screening 'stunning films', while interactive show A Volatile History Of Chemistry will be available to enjoy on a daily basis in the venue's lecture theatre. Other attractions include a Search The Entire Museum trail, flight simulators, quadcopter flying, and telescope workshops presented by the Shropshire Astronomical Society.



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Returning for its thirteenth year at the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, the Coventry Open celebrates local creative talent and provides selling opportunities for artists from across Coventry and the West Midlands.

Building on the success of the last exhibition, we are delighted to announce that we will also be hosting the **Young People's Coventry Open**. This unique opportunity invites young artists aged 15-18 from across Coventry and the West Midlands to showcase their work at the Herbert.

Throughout the exhibition, we will champion the quality and diversity of the visual arts, welcoming communities and audiences from the city and beyond.



Scan to find out more



What's On recommends: Places to visit in the Midlands



Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

Millennium Point, Curzon St, Birmingham, B4 7XG
birminghammuseums.org.uk/thinktank

Located in Birmingham city centre, Thinktank offers a great day out for visitors of all ages.

From steam engines and talking robots, to gurgling guts and a chocolate-wrapping machine, the venue features more than 200 hands-on science & technology displays.

Highlights include MiniBrum - an interactive mini city for under-eights - a 4k planetarium and a science garden.

PRICES: Adults from £15.50, children (three - 15-year-olds) from £7.50, concessions £12.50, under-threes go free.

THIS MONTH: On Saturday 8 February, Thinktank is hosting a special celebration of 'women and girls in Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics', bringing together inspiring women from diverse STEM fields to showcase their amazing work.

Stratford Butterfly Farm

Swan's Nest Lane, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 7LS butterflyfarm.co.uk

Set in a large greenhouse landscaped with waterfalls, ponds and tropical plants, Stratford Butterfly Farm is home to hundreds of the world's most spectacular butterflies.

The popular venue features a 'discovery zone' - inhabited by giant silkmoths and their cocoons - and the Minibeast Metropolis - home to snakes, reptiles, amphibians and other invertebrates.

The Butterfly Farm's connections to the rainforests of Belize and the Maya civilisation are also in evidence, with more than 30 replicated ancient Maya artefacts on display throughout the attraction.

PRICES: £9.95 adult, £9.30 students and seniors, £8.60 children aged three to 16.



Compton Verney Art Gallery & Park

Warwickshire, CV35 9HZ comptonverney.org.uk

Compton Verney is widely considered to be an art gallery of international standing. The Georgian house is set in more than 120 acres of Grade II listed classical parkland, created in the 18th century by eminent landscape architect Lancelot 'Capability' Brown. Although the original estate was split up and sold a century ago, the 'pleasure grounds' still clearly reflect the sweeping grassland, ornamental lakes and Cedars of Lebanon for which Brown is famous.

PRICES: Adults £19.80, 19 - 25-year-olds £10, under-18s free.

THIS MONTH: Compton Verney is hosting a range of activities during February half-term week, including the outdoor Welly Walk, Lego Robotics workshops and the collaborative Big Brick Build.

Coventry Transport Museum

Millennium Place, Hales St, Coventry, CV1 1JD transport-museum.com

This popular museum not only houses the largest publicly owned collection of British vehicles on the planet, it also tells the story of a city which changed the world through transport.

There are 14 fully accessible galleries to enjoy at the venue, featuring pioneering bicycles, transport champions, innovative, memorable and luxurious vehicles from the last 200 years, and the world's two fastest cars.

PRICES: Adults from £15, concessions (senior & student) from £11.50, juniors (five - 16-year-olds) from £8, under-fours and essential carers free.

THIS MONTH: This half term, join the Tinker | Make | Play workshop space to take stuff apart and make old and new things that move - an activity that will help you develop your engineering skills.



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What's On recommends: Places to visit in the Midlands



Severn Valley Railway

Kidderminster: Station Dr, Kidderminster, DY10 1QX; Bridgnorth: 2 Hollybush Rd, Bridgnorth, WV16 4AX svr.co.uk

Operating mainly steam-hauled passenger trains between Bridgnorth, Bewdley and Kidderminster, this much-loved railway transports visitors on a route of about 16 miles along the beautiful Severn Valley.

The journey includes a stop-off at the Engine House Visitor Centre at Highley, where passengers can check out massive locomotives, enjoy themed exhibitions of unique railway vehicles and meet Gordon the Blue Engine. Those starting their journey at Bridgnorth will also have the option of stop-offs at Bewdley and Kidderminster, the latter of which boasts a railway museum.

PRICES: Advance (booked more than three days before visit) Freedom Of The Line adult tickets £26, child (four - 17-year-olds) £17.50, Small Family Saver (one adult and up to two children) £43.50, Large Family Saver (two adults and up to four children) £69.50

West Midlands Police Museum

The Lock-up, Steelhouse Lane, Birmingham B4 6BJ
museum.west-midlands.police.uk

The West Midlands Police Museum spans over 200 years of policing history, sharing stories about some of Birmingham's most notorious criminals, including the real Peaky Blinders.

Visitors can discover what it was really like to spend time on both sides of the bars, investigate and solve crimes in the onsite forensics lab, get hands-on by taking part in interactive displays, dress up in police uniform or take their very own mugshot. There's also a lock-up mouse trail - designed specifically for younger visitors.

THIS MONTH: This half term sees fairytale characters going on trial for their crimes - and *you* can join the court in session! Should Goldilocks be found guilty of breaking and entering, d'you think? You decide...



Hartlebury Castle

Worcestershire, DY11 7XZ hartleburycastle.com

First given to Bishop Aelhun in 855AD, Hartlebury Castle was the home of the Bishops of Worcester until 2007. Today, the venue offers three experiences for the price of a single ticket: discover the lives of those who lived and worked at the castle by checking out the Bishop's Palace; explore the fascinating history of the county in Worcester County Museum; and relax with a peaceful stroll around the grounds, taking in the views across the moat and enjoying the wildlife.

PRICES: Whole site admission - Adults £14.50, children (five - 16-year-olds) £8.25, concessions £12.50, under-fives free.

World of Wedgwood

Barlaston, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST12 9ER
worldofwedgwood.com

An award-winning tourist destination in the heart of the Staffordshire countryside, World of Wedgwood is home to the galleries of the V&A Wedgwood Collection. The multi-experience site houses hands-on creative studios and the Wedgwood factory and tea room. There's also a diverse range of retail outlets, eateries and bars to enjoy.

THIS MONTH: Little ones visiting this half term can get hands-on with potter's wheel sessions, have a go at pottery painting in the decorating studio, and take a guided tour around the famous Wedgwood factory.



DRAGONS' DEN

South Korean choreographer Eun-Me Ahn
is bringing a magical spectacle to Birmingham



Fusing modern and traditional Asian dance styles with hologram appearances and colourful projections, Eun-Me Ahn's Dragons received huge critical acclaim when it showed in London and Salford in 2023. What's On recently caught up with the avant-garde South Korean choreographer to find out more about the show ahead of its visit to Birmingham next month...

South Korean culture is currently riding a huge wave of popularity, with both K-pop and Korean film crossing boundaries and being embraced by people worldwide.

Now, iconic choreographer Eun-Me Ahn is hoping a tour of her Korean contemporary dance work Dragons will enjoy similar success with audiences across the UK.

Eun-Me, 61, has been a dance trailblazer at home and abroad for decades. Her company, which she founded in 1988, is one of South Korea's leading contemporary troupes, playing theatres and festivals around the world (they also performed at the FIFA World Cup in South Korea in 2002).

Recently working with Gucci - posing for an exhibition exploring the contributions of legendary Korean artists - Eun-Me brought Dragons to the UK in 2023, the show proving to be a huge hit with audiences in London and Salford. The production's new tour, taking in eight venues, will stop off at Birmingham Hippodrome next month.

Eun-Me believes the world has finally woken up to the powerhouse which is South Korean culture.

"The Korean people have a special kind of talent," she says. "We combine historical background with personal vision. We've had to struggle to survive. Since the Korean War ended, we have tried very hard to develop our country and prove ourselves.

"Culture can be more powerful than armies, and the Korean people want to share their culture with other people.

"Education was very important. People studied dance and music and history. At the same time, we accepted modernity and new ideas of politics and economics. And we did that in a very positive way, importing ideas from the West - from Europe and America - but also keeping our own culture and traditions. It was very natural for us to mix them together."

This blend of past and present is beautifully captured in Dragons.

"The dragon is a very symbolic creature.

Everybody knows it, and we have many, many stories about dragons. But the dragon in Asia has many sides. Sometimes it is very good. Sometimes the dragon has humour. Sometimes it is a brave hero. And sometimes it becomes very bad."

In the show, the traditional heritage of these mythical beasts is combined with cutting-edge technology to create a stunning kaleidoscope of past and present. Dragons features a cast of seven live-on-stage dancers interfacing with six guest performers, who appear as holograms. These six young dancers come from Malaysia, Japan, Indonesia, Taiwan and South Korea, with five of them born around the year 2000 - a Year of the Dragon.

The idea of combining holograms and stage performance was first sparked by having to use technology to communicate during Covid-19 lockdowns.

"I needed to develop a way that people could communicate with each other, and the only solution was online technology. And so Dragons is a piece about the condition of the world, the young generation who are in the world, and how they had to fight.

"It was the first time for them. Young people had never had this kind of world disaster in their life. It didn't matter which country; it happened to all of us suddenly."

Eun-Me and her team spent months directing and filming the six dancers. The development of the piece was painstaking.

"This process took a long time because we had to do it one-by-one. We had to teach them the movement using cell phones, and sometimes we couldn't even see their whole bodies. But we never gave up. And when we made the final show, I saw it in the theatre and just shouted 'Wow!' It was unbelievable; we had made a beautiful moment."

Eun-Me chose non-professional dancers as the guest performers, as she believes they bring a magic of their own.

"I'm trying to introduce the culture and traditional dance of each of their countries.

And then the young people's energy - how beautiful they are - that was a very important development.

"They bring their originality to our dance, which can't be learned. The body is a pure land, and when they dance and do something, it tells us a lot. I said to them 'Whatever you say, say something,' and they really did say something! It's not through professional eyes, but they are smart and beautiful, and they tell us more sometimes as they are."

An exceptionally charismatic performer, Eun-Me takes to the stage as one of the dancers in Dragons. She's also designed the show's spectacular costumes and overseen the creation of its dazzling sets.

The Dragons tour is presented by Dance Consortium, a group of 21 large-scale venues across the UK & Ireland which aims to bring top-quality contemporary dance from across the world to local audiences. Eun-Me is looking forward to sharing her production with those audiences.

"I care about the whole world; how we can use dance to communicate with all people. It is a very beautiful weapon to use. I love travelling, to go abroad and meet new people - especially the kids. They love my piece because I put sunlight and salt and pepper in it for them!

"It's good to be touring to new cities in the UK because it's a way for us to bring our stories to those audiences. Historically, the UK has a strong arts & culture scene, but our Korean approach is different. So, two countries meet together and can learn more about each other.

"This show will give audiences lots of new ideas. Visually, it's sparkling and shiny. Dragons is a dance of miracles."

.....
Eun-Me Ahn Dance Company's Dragons shows at Birmingham Hippodrome on Tuesday 25 & Wednesday 26 March

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Your week-
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listings guide
February 2025

the list



Jason Donovan: 'Doin' 'Fine 25 at Symphony Hall, Birmingham - Sun 16 February

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

What's On

Sat 1 - Sun 9 February



James Bay -
O2 Academy Birmingham
Sat 8 February

Mon 10 - Sun 16 February



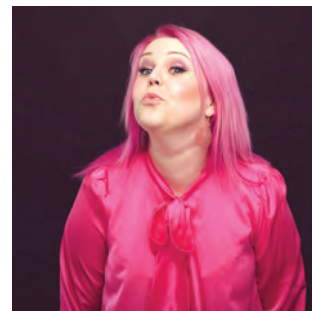
Caroline Hirons -
Birmingham Town
Thurs 13 February

Mon 17 - Sun 23 February



Coming To England -
The Rep, Birmingham
Wed 19 - Sat 22 February

Mon 24 - Fri 28 February



Lindsey Santoro -
The Glee Club, Birmingham
Thurs 27 & Fri 28 February

VISUAL ARTS IN THE MIDLANDS

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR Exhibition of powerful photographs showcasing animal behaviour, spectacular species and the fragility of our planet, until Sun 20 Apr

MODERN MUSE BY ARPITA SHAH A series of photographic portraits celebrating the identities and experiences of young South Asian women from Birmingham and the West Midlands.

CURTIS HOLDER: DRAWING CARLOS ACOSTA Curtis Holder, winner of Sky Arts Portrait Artist of the Year in 2020, was commissioned to draw Carlos Acosta, director of Birmingham Royal Ballet. This display brings together portraits Curtis made during the competition and his working sketches.

Compton Verney, Warwickshire

REUNITED: THE LAMENTATION ALTERPIECE After 30 years of its central panel being housed in the National Gallery of Scotland's collection, this is a chance to see a rare masterpiece, reunited, until Fri 28 Feb

THE REFLECTED SELF A 'sumptuous' exhibition diving into the fascinating history of portrait miniatures, until Sun 23 Feb

BREATHING WITH THE FOREST An immersive video installation that illuminates the ecosystem surrounding a capinuri tree (*Maquira coriacea*) in the Colombian Amazon, recreating a real plot of Amazonian forest in astounding detail, Sat 8 Feb - Sun 6 April

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, until Sun 27 April

Ikon Gallery, Birmingham

FRIENDS IN LOVE AND WAR - L'ÉLOGE DES MEILLEUR-ES ENNEMI-ES Curated collaboratively, the exhibition interrogates friendship as a fundamental human relationship essential to individual wellbeing and society, until Sun 23 Feb

Midlands Arts Centre, Edgbaston, Birmingham

RUBBISH REDESIGNED: INNOVATIVE DESIGNERS FROM THE MIDLANDS Group exhibition exploring the rise of imaginative approaches to circular design and waste innovation

across the West Midlands, and addressing the pressing need to reconsider how we utilise and recycle our planet's resources, until Sun 2 Mar

RBSA Gallery, Birmingham

RBSA FRIENDS EXHIBITION 2025 Exhibition of works by the wider RBSA community, showcasing artists at all stages of their careers, until Sat 8 Feb

RBSA SOLO EXHIBITIONS Featuring works in textile by Margaret Fairhead RBSA, dry-point prints by Satinder Parhar GRBSA and ceramics by Patrick O'Donohue ARBSA, until Sat 22 Feb

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM: REMEMBERING IS PAINFUL, FORGETTING IS UNBEARABLE

Exhibition that questions the role of art in the practices of remembering, bearing witness, confronting, and transforming trauma, Tues 11 - Sat 22 Feb

Also:

VICTORIAN BUILDINGS A foyer exhibition of paintings and prints by Birmingham-based artist Barbara Shackley, until Sat 1 Mar, The Birmingham & Midland Institute

IF STARS EVER FELL? Exhibition reflecting on the appeal of art and artists, until Sun 16 Mar, Prayer Room Gallery, Digbeth

MOTHERSHIP Exhibition highlighting work undertaken by the mothers and children who have taken part in the Mothership Residency, a co-working creative space with integrated radical childcare options, Mon 10 Feb - Sat 19 Apr, Stryx, Jewellery Quarter

A GRANDLY STRANGE EXHIBITION Step into the marvellous, mechanical magic of the Automata Installation, crafted by Leeds-based Grandly Strange Puppet Theatre, and packed with quirky characters and curious contraptions, Sat 15 - Sun 23 Feb, Thimblemill Library, Smethwick

LUMINOUS THREADS Step into a world of 'light and wonder', as children and adults are invited to 'a magical evening of creativity, connection and enchantment in a glowing gallery and secret garden of luminous creatures and plants', Sat 22 - Sun 23 Feb, Stryx, Jewellery Quarter

CAROLYN BLAKE: FURTHER THAN MEMORY CAN REACH Exhibition of paintings which takes a journey around the grounds of Winterbourne House, from the time it was built to the present day, Mon 24 Feb - Sun 14 Sep, Winterbourne House and Garden, Birmingham

Gigs

APOLLO ANTHEMS Sat 1 Feb, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

BAD WITH PHONES Sat 1 Feb, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

THE ATLANTICS Sat 1 Feb, The Night Owl, Digbeth

NIRVANA UK Sat 1 Feb, O2 Academy

VENTURA + THE STRAZE + TENDER VENETTA! Sat 1 Feb, Dead Wax, Digbeth

MADBALL + FACE UP! + FALSE REALITY Sat 1 Feb, The Asylum, Hampton Street

DUBLONDE Sat 1 Feb, The Flapper, Cambrian Wharf

ACROBVT Sat 1 Feb, The Victoria, John Bright St

SOUL & QAWWALI FT. CHAND ALI KHAN & LEO TWINS Sat 1 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

LUTHER: LIVE Sat 1 Feb, Symphony Hall

THE FLOYD EFFECT Sat 1 Feb, The Crescent Theatre, Sheepcote St

KATE BUSH PIANO SESSIONS WITH MOMENTS OF PLEASURE Sat 1 Feb, Tower Of Song, Pershore Rd

KILLERSTREAM Sat 1 Feb, Joe Joe Jims, Cofton Hackett

OH WHAT A NIGHT! - THE MUSIC OF FRANKIE VALLI Sat 1 Feb, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

THE LONGEST JOHNS + EL PONY PISADOR Sat 1 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

RODEOS ON THE ROAD Sat 1 Feb, The Wulfrun at The Halls W'hampton

CUTTING CREW Sat 1 Feb, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

FOOLS LIFE Sat 1 Feb, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

TTSSFU Sun 2 Feb, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

HAYDEN THORPE & PROPELLOR ENSEMBLE Sun 2 Feb, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall



James Bay - O2 Academy, Birmingham

TOTO + CHRISTOPHER CROSS Sun 2 Feb, bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham

TAYLORMANIA Sun 2 Feb, The Alexandra

THE GARRY ALLCOCK TRIO Sun 2 Feb, Tower Of Song, Pershore Rd

MORGANISATION Sun 2 Feb, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

RICH PARSONS Sun 2 Feb, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

SAM GREENFIELD + GARETH DONKIN Mon 3 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

YOUNG KNIVES Tues 4 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

BRYONY WILLIAMS Tues 4 Feb, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

DROPKICK MURPHYS + GOGOL BORDELLO Tues 4 Feb, O2 Academy

MAN OF THE WORLD: THE MUSIC OF PETER GREEN Wed 5 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

BIG WOLF BAND Wed 5 Feb, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

ORIGAMI ANGEL + SATURDAYS AT YOUR PLACE Wed 5 Feb, O2 Academy

ZETRA Wed 5 Feb, The Asylum, Hampton Street

DUNES Wed 5 Feb, The Victoria, John Bright Street

VIRGINIA KETTLE'S ROLLING FOLK + WILL KILLEEN Wed 5 Feb,

Red Lion Folk Club, Vicarage Road

TWRP Wed 5 Feb, XOYO, Digbeth

INDISPÖSED + CRUSH VELVET + PRETTY BLEED Wed 5 Feb, The Rainbow, Digbeth

JAMIE LAWSON Wed 5 Feb, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

GIRL SCOUT Thurs 6 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

THE BLACK JEANS Thurs 6 Feb, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

BILLY LOCKETT Thurs 6 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

G-EAZY + MARC E. BASSY + GOODY GRACE Thurs 6 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

KAWALA + TEENAGE DADS Thurs 6 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

OMAR RUDBERG Thurs 6 Feb, O2 Academy

THE MECHANIST + CONTEMNO Thurs 6 Feb, Subside Bar, High St

REGGAE ORIGINS: BOB MARLEY + HANDSWORTH REGGAE Thurs 6 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

TRANSATLANTIC SESSIONS Thurs 6 Feb, Symphony Hall

RACHEL MUSSON, NEIL CHARLES, MARK SANDERS Thurs 6 Feb, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

EMMA MCCARTHY Fri 7 Feb, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

Saturday 1 - Sunday 9 February

THESE SMITHS Fri 7 Feb, Actress & Bishop, Ludgate Hill

JAY DAVIS Fri 7 Feb, 1000 Trades, Jewellery Quarter

KARMA SHEEN + SONS OF SEVILLA Fri 7 Feb, The Night Owl, Digbeth

BORN TRAPPY Fri 7 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

EVERYONE YOU KNOW Fri 7 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

SAM SCHERDEL Fri 7 Feb, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

SIAMESE + BLACKGOLD + CHAOSBAY Fri 7 Feb, The Asylum, Digbeth

GRIEF RITUAL + WORN OUT + DEAD MOB + UPTIGHT + BLYTHE BLADE Fri 7 Feb, The Flapper, Kingston Row

THE BASIL GABBIDON BAND Fri 7 Feb, Joe Joe Jims, Cofton Hackett

GRAY + CARA MAY + SOPHIE GRACE + ELLIOT JAMES Fri 7 Feb, The Rainbow, Digbeth

CAMPBELL/JENSEN Fri 7 Feb, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

THE DETOURS Fri 7 Feb, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

BOOTLEG BLONDIE Fri 7 Feb, Lichfield Guildhall

AND FINALLY... PHIL COLLINS Fri 7 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

THE BLACKHEART ORCHESTRA Fri 7 Feb, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

WHAT THE FUNK? Fri 7 Feb, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

THE FAZELEYS + EL HUMMO + ECHO THEORY + SWEATY WEDNESDAY Sat 8 Feb, The Dark Horse, Moseley

THE JOHNNY CASH EXPERIENCE + THE CASH CATS Sat 8 Feb, The Night Owl, Digbeth

SUB-RADIO Sat 8 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

COREY KENT + LORI MCKENNA Sat 8 Feb, O2 Academy

JAMES BAY + LEIF VOLLEBEKK Sat 8 Feb, O2 Academy

SYNTH Sat 8 Feb, Castle & Falcon, Digbeth

ROOTED + CHERRYDEAD + MAGNATAS COURT + ORPHIX Sat 8 Feb, The Asylum, Hampton St

JUST DOIN' IT - STATUS QUO TRIBUTE Sat 8 Feb, Joe Joe Jims, Cofton Hackett

PERSPECTIVE + LINKAI + TIA LAMB + SECRET LOVE ORCHESTRA + SUNSCAPE Sat 8 Feb, The Rainbow, Digbeth

SUPERSONIC QUEEN Sat 8 Feb, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

DAN BYRNE Sat 8 Feb, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

ELO AGAIN Sat 8 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

HARRIET Sat 8 Feb, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

RISE AGAINST + L.S. DUNES + SPIRITUAL CRAMP Sun 9 Feb, O2 Academy

THE SHAKEDOWN BROTHERS Sun 9 Feb, The Junction, Harbourne

VOWER Sun 9 Feb, Dead Wax, Digbeth

NERINA PALLOT Sun 9 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall



EDGELARKS + KEITH DONNELLY + THREADED Sun 9 Feb, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

MY BOYZ BEATZ Sun 9 Feb, Tower Of Song, Pershore Road

NAOMI BEDFORD AND PAUL SIMMONDS Sun 9 Feb, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

BOWLING FOR SOUP + WHEATUS + MAGNOLIA PARK Sun 9 Feb, The Civic at The Halls, Wolverhampton

THE HISTORY OF ROCK Sun 9 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

SMILE - THE MAGIC OF GREGORY PORTER AND NAT KING COLE Sun 9 Feb, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

Classical Music

CBSO COME AND SING: HAYDN'S CREATION Workshop led by Simon Halsey CBE (conductor), Sun 2 Feb, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

RBC: LUNCHTIME MUSIC Featuring Juliet White (trumpet), Joanne Sealey (piano), Ellen Smith (mezzo-soprano) & Elizabeth Haughan (piano). Programme includes works by Clarke, Anderson, Mahler & more..., Mon 3 Feb, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

RBC VOXBOX: RAVISHING DELIGHTS - HANDEL'S ARRIVAL IN ENGLAND Featuring Chris Bucknall (conductor), Mon 3 Feb, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

RBC CELEBRITY ORGAN SERIES: ERWAN LE PRADO Tues 4 Feb, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

CBSO: KAZUKI CONDUCTS SHOSTAKOVICH & BARTÓK Featuring Kazuki Yamada (conductor) & Isabelle Faust (violin). Programme also includes a UK premier of Yashiro's Symphony for Large Orchestra, Wed 5 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

RBC BIRMINGHAM NEW MUSIC: ANTI-VALENTINES Programme comprises premieres by RBC's Composition Department, Wed 5 Feb, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

CBSO CENTRE STAGE: SCHUBERT OCTET Featuring Eugene Tzinkindelean & Lowri Porter (violins), David BaMaung (viola), Arthur Boutillier (cello), Tony Alcock (double bass), Oliver Janes (clarinet), Nikolaj Henriques (bassoon) & Elspeth Dutch (horn), Thurs 6 Feb, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

PRAGUE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA Featuring Petr Altrichter (conductor) & Gabriela Montero (piano). Programme includes works by Smetana, Prokofiev & Dvořák, Fri 7 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

RBC ALTERNATIVE ORCHESTRA Featuring Daniele Rosina (conductor). Programme comprises new works by RBC composers, Fri 7 Feb, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

BARBER LUNCHTIME CONCERT: SONGS OF LOVE AND DANCES OF DEATH - LECTURE RECITAL Featuring Kenneth Hamilton (piano). Programme includes works by Liszt, Mozart & Saint-

Saëns, Fri 7 Feb, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, Birmingham

THE MIDLAND SINFONIA: MUSIC FROM STAGE & SCREEN Programme includes works by Barber, Walton, Mahler & more..., Sat 8 Feb, St Laurence Church, Alvechurch

SOUTH BIRMINGHAM SINFONIA Programme includes a selection of film music, Sat 8 Feb, St Francis' Church, Bournville, Birmingham

CBSO BENEVOLENT FUND CONCERT Featuring Kazuki Yamada (conductor) & James Ehnes (violin). Programme includes works by Shostakovich & Tchaikovsky, Sat 8 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

ECHO RISING STARS: THE VOICE OF FOLK Featuring São Souleza Larivière (viola) & Marianna Bednarska (percussion). Programme includes works by Mansurian, Verdapet, Liqeti & more..., Sun 9 Feb, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

BIRMINGHAM PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA Programme includes works by Nielsen, Greig & Sibelius, Sun 9 Feb, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

Comedy

MARK SIMMONS, ALUN COCHRANE, TANIA EDWARDS & CARL JONES Sat 1 Feb, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

MĂLĂELE, MINCU, FRÎNCU ȘI BIRTAȘ Sat 1 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

THOMAS GREEN, ERIC RUSHTON, MC HAMMERSMITH & BETHANY BLACK Sat 1 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ROB NEWMAN Sat 1 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

BASSEM YOUSSEF Sun 2 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

CELYA AB Sun 2 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

RAY O'LEARY Sun 2 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

ADAM ROWE, DALISO CHAPONDA, JENNY COLLIER & FREDDIE QUINN Tues 4 - Wed 5 Feb, Herbert's Yard, Birmingham

ROB AUTON Wed 5 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

THE ALTER COMEDY CLUB Wed 5 Feb, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

MASOOD BOOMGAARD Thurs 6 Feb, The Glee Club, B'ham

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH MICHELLE SHAUGHNESSY & COMIC TBC Thurs 6 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

PADDY YOUNG Fri 7 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

BARBARA NICE Fri 7 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

TOM WARD, ANDY ROBINSON, JAMES ELLIS & MICHELLE SHAUGHNESSY Fri 7 - Sat 8 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

DAVID O'DOHERTY Sat 8 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

MIKE NEWALL, PETER BRUSH, DAVID HOARE & TOM TOAL Sat 8 Feb, Rosies Nightclub, B'ham

AHIR SHAH Sat 8 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

KATHERINE RYAN Sat 8 Feb, The Civic at The Halls W'hampton

ANIA MAGLIANO Sat 8 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

IGNACIO LOPEZ & TOM EVANS Sun 9 Feb, The Glee Club, B'ham

HENNING WEHN, PAUL TONKINSON, NINA GILLIGAN & WAYNE BEESE Sun 9 Feb, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

Theatre

BIRDSONG Acclaimed stage adaptation of Sebastian Faulks' epic story of love and loss, Mon 27 Jan - Sat 1 Feb, The Rep, Birmingham

MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS Lucy Bailey directs Ken Ludwig's stage adaptation of the Agatha Christie classic. Michael Maloney stars as celebrated sleuth Hercule Poirot, Tues 28 Jan - Sat 1 Feb, The Alexandra, Birmingham

TALKING HEADS Amateur version of two Alan Bennett classics - A Chip In The Sugar and Bed Among The Lentils, Thurs 30 Jan - Sat 1 Feb, The Old Rep, Birmingham

LORD OF THE FLIES Warwick University Drama Society presents an amateur version of William Golding's dystopian novel, Thurs 30 Jan - Sat 1 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

COMMUNITY Coming-of-age comedy drama, set in the heart of Birmingham, which explores themes of identity, belonging and friendship, Thurs 30 Jan - Sat 8 Feb, The Rep, B'ham

THE ANCIENT OAK OF BALDOR Frozen Light Theatre present a multi-sensory fantasy-realm experience for audiences with profound and multiple learning difficulties, Mon 3 - Wed 5 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre, B'ham

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PRIDE & PREJUDICE* (*SORT OF)

Comedy retelling of Jane Austen's iconic love story, Mon 3 - Sat 8 Feb, The Rep, Birmingham

HAIRSPRAY Hit musical based on the iconic film of the same name. Joanne Clifton stars as Velma von Tussle and Brenda Edwards directs, Mon 3 - Sat 8 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS Martin Shaw stars as Sir Thomas More in Robert Bolt's award-winning play, Tues 4 - Sat 8 Feb, Malvern Theatres

SLEEPING BEAUTY Cloc Musical Theatre Company keep up the festive spirit with a magical retelling of the much-loved pantomime, Wed 5 - Sat 8 Feb, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

10 NIGHTS The story of one man's spiritual journey - navigating 'smug worshippers, shared bathrooms, and recurring thoughts of chunky chips', Thurs 6 - Sat 8 Feb, Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

THE LITTLE MERMAID PwC's annual charity pantomime, this year raising funds for Nacoa Nacoa (the National Association for Children of Alcoholics), Thurs 6 - Sat 8 Feb, The Alexandra, Birmingham

JEKYLL AND HYDE The Crescent Theatre Company present an amateur version of Robert Louis Stevenson's Gothic horror story, Sat 8 - Sat 15 Feb, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

HAMLET Luke Thallon takes the lead in a new production of Shakespeare's most famous play. Jared Harris, Anton Lesser and Nancy Carroll also star. Rupert Goold directs, Sat 8 Feb - Sat 29 Mar, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

Kid's Theatre

TOOOB Angel Exit Theatre present a gentle sensory adventure with an original soundtrack, movement and interactive fun. A 'perfect introduction to theatre for the very young', Sat 1 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

THE SNOWFLAKE The tale of a snowflake, a little girl and her pappie - all longing for their own special place in the world. Suitable for children aged between three and six, Tues 4 Feb, Brierley Hill Library; Wed 5 Feb, Dudley Library; Thurs 6 Feb, Stourbridge Library; Sat 8 Feb, Halesowen Library (11.30am & 1.30pm showings at all venues)

THE WONDERLAND GARDEN Unique show for younger audiences, bringing together live music and theatre to tell a story of discovery, joy and renewal, Sun 9 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Dance

MOTIONHOUSE: HIDDEN Brand-new production exploring how, in an increasingly divided world, light can come out of darkness in times of crisis, Thurs 6 - Sun 9 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

DANIEL MARTINEZ FLAMENCO COMPANY: ART OF ANDALUCIA FLAMENCO DANCE An immersive experience bringing the passion and energy of Andaluca to life, Fri 7 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

MATTHEW BOURNE'S SWAN LAKE Bold and witty reinvention of Tchaikovsky's masterpiece, featuring an all-male ensemble, Thurs 6 - Sat 15 Feb, Birmingham Hippodrome

SRISHTI: EKATA Choreographer Nina Rajarani returns with a solo Bharatanatyam recital of dance pieces which she's created to perform to the musical compositions of husband/vocalist Y Yadavan, Sun 9 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

Light Entertainment

SEND IN THE CLOWNS: C*CK OF AGES A 'raucous, wild and tantalising' drag revue show celebrating the magic and madness of musical theatre, Wed 29 Jan - Sat 1 Feb, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

OH WHAT A NIGHT! Featuring the music of Frankie Valli & The Four Seasons, Sat 1 Feb, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

DATE NIGHT: THE IMPROVISED HISTORY OF (NEARLY) EVERYTHING 'A unique form of spontaneous comedy featuring two performers, a selection of anachronistic hats and an improv experience like no other'... Part of Wolverhampton Literature Festival, Sat 1 Feb, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

NEIGHBOURS: THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR Join favourite faces from Ramsey Street as they share stories from the show's 40-year history, Mon 3 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

QUEENZ - DRAG ME TO THE DISCO! 'A live vocal drag extravaganza where dancing queenz and disco dreams collide for the party of a lifetime', Mon 3 - Tues 4 Feb, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

JOHN BARROWMAN: LAID BARE New show in which the West End and Broadway star 'offers an insight into his passion for life and profound love of song and story', Tues 4 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

STAR TREK VS STAR WARS Comedians battle it out to discover which is the best franchise in the ultimate clash of fandoms. Rik Carranza hosts, Thurs 6

Feb, Old Joint Stock Theatre, B'ham

BINGO AT TIFFANY'S Award-winning character comedian Tracey Collins hosts an evening of 'hilarious bingo games, raucous singalongs and glamorous dancing', Fri 7 Feb, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

BOLLYWOOD TIME MACHINE Evening filled with laughter, dance and timeless melodies, Sat 8 Feb, The Core, Solihull

WIDOW TWANKEY'S DIRTY PANTO An unscripted, improvised adult panto that takes traditional pantomimes and 'flips them over for a good spanking in a riotous, unpredictable show', Sat 8 Feb, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

Talks & Spoken Word

LEE NELSON: ASSEMBLY Join the poet, performer & organiser as he intertwines various themes to explore the idea that division only exists if we allow it. Part of Wolverhampton Literature Festival, Sat 1 Feb, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

THEY MAY HAVE EVEN EATEN HAM! Naomi Paul uses her Jewish background to explore themes of migration, belonging and identity. Part of Wolverhampton Literature Festival, Sat 1 Feb, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

MEET THE AUTHOR: SHARON HADLEY-FORD Discover the inspiring journey of Wolverhampton-born Sharon Hadley-Ford, who, after 25 years in the bouncy-castle business, decided to pursue a BA in creative writing. Part of Wolverhampton Literature Festival, Sat 1 Feb, Wolverhampton Central Library

STARS OF SLAM Evening of 'top-notch' spoken word, in which five poetry slam champs are given the opportunity to showcase their work. Part of Wolverhampton Literature Festival, Sat 1 Feb, Making Space at Wolverhampton Art Gallery

IN CONVERSATION WITH ABI DARÉ - 'AND SO I ROAR' Join Abi as she discusses her much-anticipated second novel. Part of Wolverhampton Literature Festival, Sat 1 Feb, Georgian Gallery, Wolverhampton Art Gallery

SEE YOU AT THE CROSSROADS Join Casey Bailey, Jordvn Emanuel and Zakariye for an afternoon of poetry, music and a panel discussion. Part of Wolverhampton Literature Festival, Sun 2 Feb, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

CELEBRATING THE WINDRUSH CHILDREN - A SHOWCASE OF AUTHORS Featuring book readings, interviews, music, dance, and spoken word performances. Part of Wolverhampton Literature Festival,

Sun 2 Feb, Georgian Gallery, Wolverhampton Art Gallery

NATURE CRISIS Experience the power of poetry 'to confront and illuminate the urgent environmental challenges of our time'. With Kuli Kohli, Tom Allsopp, Cherry Doyle, Ros Woolner, and Simon Fletcher. Part of Wolverhampton Literature Festival, Sun 2 Feb, Making Space at Wolverhampton Art Gallery

SHAPARAK KHORSANDI: SCATTERBRAIN A love letter to letter writing and a trip back through the early years of one of Britain's best-established stand-ups. Part of Wolverhampton Literature Festival, Sun 2 Feb, Bilston Town Hall

SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN POETS Santosh K Dary, Priyanka Joshi, Navkiran Kaur and Kuli Kohli share funny, poignant and thought-provoking stories drawn from their lives and Indian heritage. Part of Wolverhampton Literature Festival, Sun 2 Feb, Making Space at Wolverhampton Art Gallery

15 YEARS OF THE INBETWEENERS - IN CONVERSATION WITH JOE THOMAS A stripped-back event in which Joe talks about his time on the hit show and takes questions from the audience, Wed 5 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

Events

WOLVERHAMPTON LITERATURE FESTIVAL Featuring a programme of literature, poetry, dance and more, Fri 31 Jan - Sun 2 Feb, various venues across Wolverhampton

CHINESE NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS Traditional and modern music, dance and theatre performances showcasing local Chinese talent, Sat 1 - Sun 2 Feb, Southside, B'ham

ASTRONOMY AT ASTON HALL Celebrate National Astronomy Week with star gazing and other activities, Sat 1 Feb, Aston Hall, Birmingham

GIRLS THAT GEEK: SUSTAINABLE FUTURES One-day event in which young women (age 12 and upwards) can explore opportunities to work in art and technology, Wed 5 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), B'ham

WOMEN AND GIRLS IN STEM DAY A special celebration of women and girls in Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM), Sat 8 Feb, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

THE 2025 BIRMINGHAM INTERNATIONAL TATTOO Bringing together massed marching bands, displays and pipes & drums, Sat 8 - Sun 9 Feb, bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham

CLASSIC BIKE SHOW The UK's biggest classic off-road show, Sat 8 - Sun 9 Feb, Telford International Centre, Shropshire

A quiz to end
all quizzes!

NEW VIC

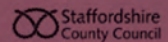
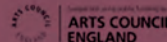


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Gigs

INHALER Mon 10 Feb, O2 Academy

HENRY WAGONS Mon 10 Feb, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

TREMONTI + FLORENCE BLACK Tues 11 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

DEAN LEWIS Tues 11 Feb, O2 Academy

ANKOR + CONQUER DIVIDE Tues 11 Feb, The Asylum, Digbeth

ALEXIS FFRENCH Tues 11 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

BACK IN THE DAY Tues 11 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

THE MESSTHETICS + JAMES BRANDON LEWIS Wed 12 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

ASWAD Wed 12 Feb, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

QUEENSRYCHE Wed 12 Feb, XOYO, Digbeth

CRAIG SUNDERLAND + RACK & RUIN Wed 12 Feb, Red Lion Folk Club, Vicarage Rd

THE CARPENTERS: VOICE OF THE HEART Wed 12 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

THE RILLS Thurs 13 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

MARGARITA WITCH CULT + MEATDRIPPER Thurs 13 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

SALSEROS UK Thurs

13 Feb, The Jam House, Jewellery Qtr

DELIGHTS Thurs 13 Feb, Actress & Bishop, Digbeth

AMBLE Thurs 13 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

BAYSIDE Thurs 13 Feb, O2 Academy

WINGS OF DESIRE Thurs 13 Feb, Dead Wax, Digbeth

HAPPYDAZE Thurs 13 Feb, The Asylum, Digbeth

RED METHOD Thurs 13 Feb, The Flapper, Cambrian Wharf

JULIENNE MWANZA WITH JOEL OGOE Thurs 13 Feb, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall

QUEEN EXTRAVAGANZA Thurs 13 Feb, Symphony Hall

MINOR GOLD Thurs 13 Feb, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

THE ILLEGAL EAGLES Thurs 13 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

SOME GUYS HAVE ALL THE LUCK Thurs 13 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

THE HARVESTERS Fri 14 Feb, Bromsgrove Folk Club

THE ANSELLS + CHARM + THE LAST PIONEERS + RED LIGHT CAMERA Fri 14 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

MOFGY + SPLITTING EDGES + AWAY FANS Fri 14 Feb, The



Inhaler - O2 Academy, Birmingham

Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

DAVE MANINGTON'S RIFF RAFF Fri 14 Feb, 1000 Trades, Jewellery Quarter

WARREN ZEIDERS + WESKO Fri 14 Feb, Institute, Digbeth

CIRCA WAVES + PEACE + CORELLA Fri 14 Feb, O2 Academy

GOLDEN LIFE Fri 14 Feb, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

MADINA LAKE + GREYWIND Fri 14 Feb, The Asylum, Hampton Street

SAOR + OFNUS + SAARKOTH Fri 14 Feb, The Flapper, Kingston Row

THE ED PUDDICK BRUM BAND Fri 14 Feb, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall

CYNDI LAUPER Fri 14 Feb, bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham

OH MY GOD! IT'S THE CHURCH Fri 14 Feb, XOYO, Digbeth

SOS - SOUNDS OF SOUL Fri 14 Feb, Joe Joe Jims, Cofton Hackett

MONKEY BUSINESS Fri 14 Feb, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

SEXBOMB: THE MUSIC OF TOM JONES Fri 14 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

TOTALLY TINA Fri 14 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

80S ANTHEMS BY CANDLELIGHT Fri 14 Feb, Lichfield Cathedral

THE JOE MASTERTSON TRIO FEATURING SUZI WOODS Fri 14 Feb, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

THE RESIDENTS Fri 14 Feb, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

PLEASUREINC. Sat 15 Feb, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

GEORGIA CRANDON Sat 15 Feb, The Night Owl, Digbeth

BIG PIG Sat 15 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

THE REYTONS Sat 15 Feb, O2 Academy

THE SMITHS LTD Sat 15 Feb, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

OBSCURA + SKELETAL REMAINS + GOROD Sat 15 Feb, The Asylum, Hampton St

CRAIG DAVID Sat 15 Feb, bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham

THE KATE GEE BAND Sat 15 Feb, Tower Of Song, Pershore Rd



Dean Lewis - O2 Academy

Classical Music

THOMAS TROTTER ORGAN CONCERT

Programme includes works by Mendelssohn, Böhm, Stanley & more..., Mon 10 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

EX CATHEDRA: CHANSONS DAMOUR

Featuring Jeffrey Skidmore (conductor), Wed 12 Feb, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

RBC: KUSS QUARTET Featuring Jana Kuss & Oliver Wille (violins), William Coleman (viola) & Mikayel Hakhnazaryan (cello). Programme includes works by Mozart & Bartók, Wed 12 Feb, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

JAMES EHNES PIANO QUARTET Featuring James Ehnès (violin), Jonathan Vinocour (viola), Raphael Bell (cello) & Inon Barnatan (piano). Programme includes works by Fauré, Wed 12 Feb, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, Birmingham

RBC: PIANO EN POINTE Featuring Sarah Potjewijd (piano) & students from Elmhurst Ballet School. Programme includes works by Tchaikovsky & Prokofiev, Thurs 13 Feb, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

RBC LUNCHTIME CONCERT Thurs 13 Feb, St Paul's Church, Birmingham

TOM HALL MARIMBA CONCERT Thurs 13 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

CSO: KAZUKI CONDUCTS DVOŘÁK 9 Featuring Kazuki Yamada (conductor - pictured) & Suyoen Kim (violin). Programme also includes works by Villa Lobos & Mendelssohn, Fri 14 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham



LUNCHTIME RECITAL Fri 14 Feb, St Philip's Cathedral, Birmingham

BARBER LUNCHTIME CONCERT: THE QUEEN'S SIX - MAPPING THE STARS

Featuring Elisabeth Paul & Tom Lilburn (alto), Nicholas Madden & Dominic Bland (tenor), Andrew Thompson & Simon Whiteley (baritone/bass). Programme includes works by East, Ferrabosco, Dering & more..., Fri 14 Feb, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, Birmingham

CSO EXPLORES: THE NEW WORLD SYMPHONY Featuring Kazuki

THE PAT FULGONI BLUES EXPERIENCE Sat 15 Feb, Joe Joe Jims, Cofton Hackett

THE CHRIS STAPLETON EXPERIENCE Sat 15 Feb, Artrix, Bromsgrove

SYNTH Sat 15 Feb, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

DREADZONE Sat 15 Feb, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

THE ROCKET MAN Sat 15 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

WHITNEY HOUSTON BY CANDLELIGHT Sat 15 Feb, Lichfield Cathedral

JAKE XERXES FUSSELL Sun 16 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

FLESH CREEP + NERVE AGENT Sun 16 Feb, Subside Bar, Digbeth

JASON DONOVAN Sun 16 Feb, Symphony Hall

SNOW PATROL Sun 16 Feb, bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham

ELLIOT GALVIN Sun 16 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Edgbaston

CAGE THE ELEPHANT + SUNFLOWER BEAN + GIRL TONES Sun 16 Feb, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

LIONEL - THE MUSIC OF LIONEL RICHIE Sun 16 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

RICH PARSONS Sun 16 Feb, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield



Micky Overman - *The Glee Club*, Birmingham & Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Yamada (conductor) & Black Voices. Programme includes works by Dvořák & African American Spirituals, Sat 15 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

PADDINGTON BEAR'S FIRST CONCERT Presented by members of the University of Warwick Orchestra. Tom Newall conducts, Sun 16 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Comedy

SARAH KEYWORTH & CEYLA AB Mon 10 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

BORED TEACHERS Tues 11 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ADAM KAY, JAMES REDMOND, GEOFF NORCOTT, ROB ROUSE & THENJIWE Tues 11 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

SOPHIE DUKER Wed 12 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JACOB HAWLEY Wed 12 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, IAN SMITH & STEVE WILLIAMS Thurs 13 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

MICKY OVERMAN Thurs 13 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

MICKY OVERMAN Fri 14 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JOJO SUTHERLAND, IAN SMITH, STEVE WILLIAMS & JOE KENT-WALTERS Fri 14 - Sat 15 Feb, The Glee Club, B'ham

THE NOISE NEXT DOOR, ADAM FLOOD, JOSH JAMES & JACK CAMPBELL Sat 15 Feb, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

PHIL NICHOL, JOE KENT-WALTERS, ADA CAMPE & COMIC TBC Sat 15 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

SHAZIA MIRZA, FATHIYA SALEH, ESTHER MANITO & SHALAKA KURUP Sat 15 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

DOUBLE TROUBLE, KAT BOYCE & TOMMY SANDHU Sat 15 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

NABIL ABDULRASHID Sat 15 Feb,

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

TOMMY SANDHU Sat 15 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

SHAZIA MIRZA, NOREEN KHAN, ESTHER MANITO & CHANTEL NASH Sat 15 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

KEVIN J, KAT BOYCE, DIESEL & DALISO CHAPONDA Sun 16 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

CARL HUTCHINSON Sun 16 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

BAT OUT OF HELL The 'ultimate rock experience', featuring the music of Jim Steinman and Meat Loaf, Mon 10 - Sat 22 Feb, The Alexandra, B'ham

THE LITTLE MERMAID Presented by Mary Stevens Hospice and starring EastEnders' Ricky Groves as King Triton, Britain's Got Talent finalist Amy-Lou as Ursula, comedy favourite Silly, Will as Seb, children's entertainer Wally Wombat as Persil and Ella Fisher as Ariel, Tues 11 - Wed 19 Feb, Stourbridge Town Hall

RULES FOR LIVING Lichfield Players present an amateur version of Sam Holcroft's family-driven comedy, Wed 12 - Sat 15 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

RAFFLES: A GENTLEMAN THIEF Jonathan Goodwin's one-man play, featuring EW Hornung's Edwardian-era gentleman thief, Thurs 13 Feb, West Midlands Police Museum

TALES TILL RAMADAN One-woman show in which Eleanor Martin takes a spiritual quest through a collection of Muslim heritage stories from Rumi, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Somalia and Iraq, Thurs 13 - Sat 15 Feb, The Rep, Birmingham

SUPERNATURAL Midland Opera Company present a showcase of scenes from Hansel & Gretel, Cinderella, Der Freischütz, The Magic Flute, Le Villi and Iolanthe, Fri 14 - Sat 15 Feb, The Blue Orange Theatre,

Birmingham

THE QUEEN OF SPADES OPWA present a new version of Alexander Pushkin's tale of tragedy, betrayal and love, Fri 14 - Sat 15 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

THE WIZARD OF OZ Adult panto featuring Drag Race stars Kyran Thrax (The Tin Queen), Marina Summers (Glinda), Divina De Campo (The Wizard) and A'Whora (Wicked Witch of the West), Sat 15 Feb, The Old Rep, Birmingham

LOVE VS TRAUMA 'Poetic and powerful' tale for adults and teenagers that follows the experiences of a lost soul navigating the landscape of memory. Part of Smethwick Puppetry Festival, Sun 16 Feb, Brasshouse Community Centre, Smethwick

Kid's Theatre

FLYING WITH STRINGS Interactive puppet show inspired by the avian world of Britain, Europe and beyond. A marionette-making workshop also features. Part of Smethwick Puppetry Festival, Sat 15 Feb, Bear Bookshop, Bearwood, Birmingham

DANCE IN THE DARK Sonrisa Arts present an interactive dance & music show for children aged three to six, Sat 15 - Mon 17 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

PEACHY AND ME Storytelling, magic, and comedy entwine in a celebration of friendship, connection and self-belief, Sun 16 Feb, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

FLYING WITH STRINGS Interactive puppet show inspired by the avian world of Britain, Europe and beyond. A marionette-making workshop also features. Part of Smethwick Puppetry Festival, Sun 16 Feb, Smethwick Library

BEACHED Strangeface present a 15-minute puppetry show in which visitors are invited to don headphones and enter a magical world. Part of Smethwick Puppetry Festival, Sun 16 Feb, West Smethwick Park Pavilion

Dance

ROSHNI Sonia Sabri Company fuse Kathak dance and live global music inspired by the stories and experiences of everyday people, Wed 12 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

PIANO EN POINTE Students from Elmhurst Ballet School present an evening of ballet, accompanied by BMus 4 pianist Sarah Potjewijd. The programme includes excerpts from *The Nutcracker* and *Romeo & Juliet*..., Thurs 13 Feb, Recital Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

ASHTON CLASSICS WITH BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET The company presents highlights from favourite Sir Frederick Ashton ballets, whilst the Sinfonia play some of the scores that inspired his creations, Sat 15 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Light Entertainment

GROTTO Character/stand-up comedian Terry Victor presents his critically acclaimed comic celebration of outrageous diversity, featuring 'more burley than burlesque' drag, Thurs 13 Feb, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

SEXY RUDE HARP CONCERT Join singing harpist Sam Hickman for a multi-disciplinary performance featuring satirical storytelling and comedic song, Fri 14 Feb, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

BUFFY REVAMPED Fast-paced, one-man, 70-minute show taking a journey through all 144 episodes of hit 1990s TV series *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*, Sat 15 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

TRÉS TRÉS CABARET A 'silly and saucy' night of entertainment, Sat 15 Feb, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

MUSICALS BY CANDLELIGHT: DUETS Featuring some of the most epic love duets in musical theatre, presented alongside some more comedic and character-driven offerings, Sat 15 - Sun 16 Feb, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

WONDERS OF OUR UNIVERSE An evening of cosmic exploration, weaving together storytelling, visuals and live music, 'to take audiences on an emotionally charged journey through the universe', Sun 16 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

Talks & Spoken Word

CAROLINE HIRONS: GLAD WE HAD THIS CHAT LIVE Join the podcast star as she presents a one-stop shop for all things beauty, skincare and beyond. The show also features an exclusive on-stage skincare demo, a Q&A and a special guest appearance, Thurs 13 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall



Monday 10 - Sunday 16 February

LESLEY SMITH: SEX AND THE TUDORS
Join the Tutbury Castle curator for a 'rip-roaring tumble through the sexual exploits of the Tudors', Thurs 13 Feb, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

JIMMY WHITE - THE WHIRLWIND TOUR
An in-conversation event, hosted by John Virgo and featuring 1997 world champion Ken Doherty as special guest, Sat 15 Feb, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

Events

MUSEUM LATES: FROM SKETCH TO STREET
Take an exclusive peek behind the curtain as the Collections Team showcase the fascinating work they do, Tues 11 Feb, British Motor Museum, Gaydon

VERVE POETRY FESTIVAL 2025
The popular poetry and spoken-word festival is back for an eighth year, Wed 12 - Sun 16 Feb, Birmingham Hippodrome

KEELY KLASSIC
Bringing together a host of Britain's world-class track & field talent, Sat 15 Feb, Utilita Arena Birmingham

MY BLOODY VALENTINES
A Dungeons After Dark experience, Sat 15 Feb,

Warwick Castle

PIRATE TAKEOVER
Discover buried treasure and live out your own pirate story, Sat 15 - Sun 23 Feb, Alton Towers, Staffordshire

FESTIVAL OF ARCHERY
Aim high this half term with live shows, hands-on archery sessions and a grand-final shoot-off, Sat 15 - Sun 23 Feb, Warwick Castle

WAKING UP WITH WASSAILING
Family-friendly week opening the museum for 2025, Sat 15 - Sun 23 Feb, Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove

CYCLAMEN CELEBRATION 2025
Featuring over 350 different plants, Sat 15 - Sun 23 Feb, Birmingham Botanical Gardens

FEBRUARY HALF TERM
Join mini-court sessions based around putting fairytale characters on trial, Sat 15 - Sun 23 Feb, West Midlands Police Museum, Birmingham

SMETHWICK PUPPETRY FESTIVAL
Featuring puppet shows for families, performances for adults, puppetry workshops, exhibitions and more, Sat 15 - Sun 23 Feb, various venues across Smethwick & beyond

ZOOBEE'S MAGIC ACADEMY
Packed with spellbinding fun for the whole



Verve Poetry Festival - Birmingham Hippodrome

family, Sat 15 - Sun 23 Feb, Hatton Adventure World, Warwick

FREDDO'S MAGIC SHOW
Freddo is back for half term with another magical show, Sat 15 - Sun 23 Feb, Cadbury World, Bournville

WELLY WALK
Pull on your wellies, pick up a map from the Welcome Centre and hunt for some marvellous welly creations, Sat 15 - Sun 23 Feb, Compton Verney, Warwickshire

STEM WEEK
Try a range of fun Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) activities, Sat 15 - Sun 23 Feb, Royal Air Force Museum Midlands, Cosford

BIG BLUE BIRTHDAY BASH
Celebrate Thomas the Tank Engine's birthday at Thomas Land, Sat 15 - Mon 24 Feb, Drayton Manor, Tamworth

FISH PUPPET WORKSHOPS WITH LORI HOPKINS
Make your own fish puppet with Lori Hopkins, before or after watching a performance of Beached, Sun 16 Feb, West Smethwick Park Pavilion

CHINESE NEW YEAR
Experience the magic of a lantern procession, watch traditional Chinese performances, and immerse yourself in cultural beauty, Sun 16 - Sun 23 Feb, Weston Park, Shropshire/Staffordshire border



ENTRANCED

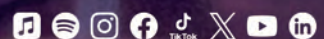
BY CANDLELIGHT

Thursday 6 March 2025 at 7:30pm

St Mary's Church, Warwick

Breathtaking orchestral soundscapes by **Pink Floyd, Philip Glass, The Orb, David Bowie, Brian Eno, Erik Satie** and **J.S. Bach**, all enhanced by atmospheric lighting.

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Birmingham ISSUE 467 FEBRUARY 2025

What's On

PLAY | COMEDY | THEATRE | DANCE | VISUAL ARTS | EVENTS

BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET

Sir David Bintley's **Cinderella**
19 February - 1 March

WILDE & FAIRCIAL
Edward's secret Oscar Wilde's classic is a world new story

BOY ON THE ROOF
The musical's return to the Midlands

HAVING A BALL
The comedy's back in the Midlands

PANTS OF GOLD
Stage version of Panto Love

YEAR OF THE SNAKE
Chinese New Year celebrations

BIRMINGHAM HIPPODROME
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Coventry & Warwickshire ISSUE 467 FEBRUARY 2025

What's On

PLAY | COMEDY | THEATRE | DANCE | VISUAL ARTS | EVENTS

RSC

EDWARD II
The King is dead, long live the King. And his boyfriend.

BOY ON THE ROOF
The musical's return to the Midlands

HAVING A BALL
The comedy's back in the Midlands

PANTS OF GOLD
Stage version of Panto Love

YEAR OF THE SNAKE
Chinese New Year celebrations

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Wolverhampton & Black Country ISSUE 467 FEBRUARY 2025

What's On

PLAY | COMEDY | THEATRE | DANCE | VISUAL ARTS | EVENTS

THE GLOBAL PHENOMENON COMES TO WOLVERHAMPTON

WarHorse
The acclaimed National Theatre production

WILDE & FAIRCIAL
Edward's secret Oscar Wilde's classic is a world new story

BOY ON THE ROOF
The musical's return to the Midlands

HAVING A BALL
The comedy's back in the Midlands

PANTS OF GOLD
Stage version of Panto Love

YEAR OF THE SNAKE
Chinese New Year celebrations

GRAND
11 - 22 March
grandtheatre.co.uk

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Shropshire ISSUE 467 FEBRUARY 2025

What's On

PLAY | COMEDY | THEATRE | DANCE | VISUAL ARTS | EVENTS

THE GIRL ON THE TRAIN
THE THRILLER THAT SHIPPED THE WORLD

WILDE & FAIRCIAL
Edward's secret Oscar Wilde's classic is a world new story

BOY ON THE ROOF
The musical's return to the Midlands

HAVING A BALL
The comedy's back in the Midlands

PANTS OF GOLD
Stage version of Panto Love

YEAR OF THE SNAKE
Chinese New Year celebrations

TUE 11 - SAT 15 MAR 2025
THEATRESEVERN.CO.UK | 01753 682281

Your FREE essential entertainment guide for the Midlands

Staffordshire ISSUE 467 FEBRUARY 2025

What's On

PLAY | COMEDY | THEATRE | DANCE | VISUAL ARTS | EVENTS

THE VERY HUNGRY CATERPILLAR SHOW
4 ERIC CARLE STORIES | 75 MAGICAL PUPPETS

TAKING PRIDE...
Jane Austen's classic turned on its head in the Midlands

WEREWOLF...
The Lure brings new shanties to the Midlands

YEAR OF THE SNAKE
Chinese New Year celebrations

gatehouse theatre Weds 26 & Thurs 27 March
gatehousetheatre.co.uk | Box Office 01785 619 080

Your FREE essential entertainment guide for the Midlands

Worcestershire ISSUE 467 FEBRUARY 2025

What's On

PLAY | COMEDY | THEATRE | DANCE | VISUAL ARTS | EVENTS

Room on the Broom
Based on the best-selling book by Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler

HAVING A BALL
The comedy's back in the Midlands

BOY ON THE ROOF
The musical's return to the Midlands

HAVING A BALL
The comedy's back in the Midlands

WEREWOLF...
The Lure brings new shanties to the Midlands

YEAR OF THE SNAKE
Chinese New Year celebrations

WT TUESDAY 11 & WEDNESDAY 12 MARCH
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WHAT'S ON SUBSCRIPTION HOTLINE - 01743 281714 OR EMAIL SUBSCRIPTIONS@WHATSONLIVE.CO.UK

Gigs v

ANNA B SAVAGE Mon 17 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

MAN/WOMAN/CHAINS AW Mon 17 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

OLIVER ANTHONY Mon 17 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

TOTAL POP PARTY Mon 17 Feb, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

LUVCAT Tues 18 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

MAQUINA Tues 18 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

THE BRIAN JONESTOWN MASSACRE + LES BIG BYRD Tues 18 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

MOTIONLESS IN WHITE + FIT FOR A KING + BRAND OF SACRIFICE Tues 18 Feb, O2 Academy

HINDS Tues 18 Feb, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

NAI BARGHOUTI Tues 18 Feb, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

BLANCO Tues 18 Feb, Mama Roux's, Digbeth

THE JIM WHITE TRIO + TREY BLAKE Tues 18 Feb, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

FRANK TURNER AND THE SLEEPING SOULS Tues 18 Feb, The Wulfrun at The Halls Wolverhampton

IN-FUSION Wed 19 Feb, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

HAMISH HAWK Wed 19 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

JAZ KARIS Wed 19 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

STONESTHROW + ADAM COONEY Wed 19 Feb, Red Lion Folk Club, Vicarage Road

URIAH HEPP Wed 19 Feb, Symphony Hall

HIGH VIS + NARROW HEAD Wed 19 Feb, XOYO, Digbeth

DUTCH CRIMINAL RECORD Thurs 20 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

BARS AND MELODY Thurs 20 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

BLACK FOXES Thurs 20 Feb, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

WILLIE DOWLING Thurs 20 Feb, The Asylum, Hampton St

JENN BOSTIC Thurs 20 Feb, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall

STEVIE & LUTHER SHOW Thurs 20 Feb, The Crescent Theatre, Sheepcote Street

CAHALEN MORRISON Thurs 20 Feb, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

COUNTRY ROADS Thurs 20 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand

CHILDREN OF ZEUS Fri 21 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

ADWAITH Fri 21 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

OSLO TWINS Fri 21 Feb, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

CUT GLASS KINGS Fri 21 Feb, Actress & Bishop, Ludgate Hill

ADRIAN COX Fri 21 Feb, 1000 Trades, Jewellery Quarter

THE UK STROKES Fri 21 Feb, The Night Owl, Digbeth

THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA Fri 21 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

FOUR YEAR STRONG Fri 21 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

BILK Fri 21 Feb, O2 Academy

THE LIQUID ENGINEERS Fri 21 Feb, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

TRIBULATION Fri 21 Feb, The Asylum, Hampton Street

DRACONIAN REIGN + VEILED + PERPETUAL PARADOX Fri 21 Feb, The Flapper, Kingston Row

BETTY Fri 21 Feb, The



Luvcat - Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

Victoria, John Bright Street

80S LIVE! Fri 21 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

FAT DOG Fri 21 Feb, XOYO, Digbeth

OLIE BRICE, RACHEL MUSSON, ALEX HAWKINS AND MARK SANDERS Fri 21 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Edgbaston

DEREK AND THE CHECKMATES Fri 21 Feb, Tower Of Song, Pershore Road

THE CONSORTIUM Fri 21 Feb, Joe Joe Jims, Cofton Hackett

SOLARS + MILLION MOONS + CIVIL SERVICE Fri 21 Feb, The Rainbow, Digbeth

ROCK BALLADS Fri 21 Feb, Artrix, Bromsgrove

BOOTLEG BEE GEES Fri 21 Feb, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

LITTLE JUKE Fri 21 Feb, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

CLASSIC ROCK AMERICAN HIGHWAY SHOW Fri 21 Feb, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

THANK YOU FOR THE MUSIC - ABBA TRIBUTE Fri 21 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

PET SHOP BOYS, ACTUALLY Fri 21 Feb, Lichfield Guildhall

DIRTY MONKEYS Fri 21 Feb, The Feathers

Inn, Lichfield

URBAN INTRO Fri 21 - Sat 22 Feb, The Jam House, Jewellery Qtr

COLDPLAY BY CANDLELIGHT Fri 21 - Sat 22 Feb, Lichfield Cathedral

HUNNY BUZZ Sat 22 Feb, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

MAANU Sat 22 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

EDDIE KADI Sat 22 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

SANTALUM + THE SPOILS + THE GROVE DAISY ROAD + SAM SWANCOTT + COLUMBIA Sat 22 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

CARLY PEARCE Sat 22 Feb, O2 Academy

THE PHONICS + A BAND CALLED MALICE Sat 22 Feb, O2 Academy

COLDPLAY IT AGAIN + STEREOCONICS Sat 22 Feb, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

TOUCHÉ AMORÉ Sat 22 Feb, The Asylum, Hampton Street

HIDDEN MOTHERS + NYLON + RITEMAKER + BLOOD CHURCH Sat 22 Feb, The Asylum, Hampton Street

LUCY SHAW Sat 22 Feb, Joe Joe Jims, Cofton Hackett

CODA - LED ZEPPELIN TRIBUTE Sat 22 Feb, Artrix, Bromsgrove

THE OLIVIA RODRIGO EXPERIENCE Sat 22 Feb, Sutton Coldfield

Town Hall

KILLERSTREAM Sat 22 Feb, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

BETH HART Sat 22 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

HANNAH READ, VERA VAN HEERINGEN & MICHAEL STARKEY Sat 22 Feb, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

FISH Sat 22 Feb, The Wulfrun at The Halls Wolverhampton

ELECTRIC SWING CIRCUS Sat 22 Feb, Lichfield Guildhall

THE WILDFIRES Sat 22 Feb, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

HEARTWORMS Sun 23 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

BERLIOZ Sun 23 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

JAYO Sun 23 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

PERSONAL TRAINER Sun 23 Feb, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

PANTERA + POWER TRIP + KING PARROT Sun 23 Feb, bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham

BUDDY HOLLY EXPERIENCE Sun 23 Feb, Joe Joe Jims, Cofton Hackett

FAELAND Sun 23 Feb, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

MAD MANNERS Sun 23 Feb, Artrix, Bromsgrove

Classical Music

RBC: BEST OF BRITISH A two-day celebration of home-grown piano music, performed by RBC pianists and internationally-renowned artists, Mon 17 - Tues 18 Feb, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

MAX BAILLIE: BACH TO BEYOND Programme includes works by Bach, Ysaye & more..., Thurs 20 Feb, The Old Rep Theatre, B'ham

CSBO: STRAVINSKYS FIREBIRD Featuring Alexander Shelley (conductor) & Hyeyoon Park (violin). Programme also includes works by Gershwin, Price & Ravel, Thurs 20 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

RBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA WITH KAREN NÍ BHROIN Programme includes works by Beyer, Satie, Ravel & Bonis, Thurs 20 Feb, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

CSBO: THE BEST OF JOHN WILLIAMS Featuring Stephen Bell (conductor), Fri 21 Feb, Symphony Hall, B'ham

RBC: BOULEZ'S SUR INCISES Featuring Daniele Rosina (conductor), Fri 21 Feb, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

MIDLAND CHAMBER ORCHESTRA: THE BACH FAMILY & FRIENDS Programme includes works by Quantz, CPE Bach & JS Bach, Fri 21 Feb, Shirley Methodist Church, Birmingham

BARBER LUNCHTIME CONCERT Featuring Frederick Long (bass-baritone) & Sholto Kynoch (piano). Programme comprises Shostakovich's Six Romances on Verses by English Poets, Fri 21 Feb, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, Birmingham

NEW MUSIC ENSEMBLE Featuring Daniele Rosina (conductor) & Suzie Purkis (voice). Programme includes works by Walton, S Caneva, I Gibbs & more..., Sat 22 Feb, The Dome, Bramall Music Building, Birmingham

BAROQUE-CLASSICAL ORCHESTRA Featuring Andrew Kirkman (conductor). Programme includes works by C.P.E. Bach, W.F. Bach & J.S. Bach, Sun 23 Feb, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, Birmingham

Comedy

ESHAAN AKBAR Wed 19 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

BARBARA NICE, ADAM HOPKINS, HASAN AL-HABIB, KAYLEIGH JONES & COMIC TBC Wed 19 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JASPREET SINGH Thurs 20 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY

ROBINSON, MICK FERRY & THE NOISE NEXT DOOR Thurs 20 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ALEXANDRA HADDOW Fri 21 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

THE NOISE NEXT DOOR, MICK FERRY, SHABBZ KARIEM, HARRY JENKINS & ANDREA HUBERT Fri 21 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

PETER KAY Fri 21 Feb, bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham

ZOE LYONS Fri 21 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

BIG DEAL COMEDY Fri 21 Feb, Old Joint Stock, Birmingham

OMID DJALILI Fri 21 Feb, Dudley Town Hall

NABIL ABDULRASHID Fri 21 Feb, The Core Theatre, Solihull

MELANIE BRACEWELL Sat 22 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

THE NOISE NEXT DOOR, MICK FERRY, PREET SINGH & ANDREA HUBERT Sat 22 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JENNY COLLIER, TREVOR BICKLES, DANA ALEXANDER & JON PEARSON Sat 22 Feb, Rosies Nightclub, B'ham

ESHAAN AKBAR Sat 22 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

CHLOE PETTS Sun 23 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ERIC RUSHTON Sun 23 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

HARE OF THE DOG COMEDY Sun 23 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

MICK FERRY Sun 23 Feb, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

HASAN AL-HABIB Sun 23 Feb, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

MAISIE ADAM Sun 23 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Theatre

COMING TO ENGLAND Baroness Floella Benjamin's inspirational story of hope, determination and triumph, featuring music, storytelling and song, Wed 19 - Sat 22 Feb, The Rep, Birmingham



GOOD FOR A GIRL Groundbreaking theatre that both celebrates and exposes the real-life experiences of women in football, Wed 19 - Sat 22 Feb, The Rep, Birmingham

FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD Conn Artists Theatre Company present a new version of Thomas Hardy's rural tale of love, class and gender roles,

Thurs 20 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

BETRAYAL Jars Of Clay present a 'fresh new look' at the greatest story ever told - imagined through the eyes of Judas, his whimsical lover and a scheming dignitary, Thurs 20 - Sat 22 Feb, The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

ZOMBIE PROM SOSage Factory present an off-Broadway musical staged in an American high school in the 1950s and featuring original songs, Thurs 20 - Sat 22 Feb, The Core, Solihull

THE STUFF OF LIFE 'Breathless exploration' of the day-to-day angst-ridden experiences of loving, living, lying and dying - told entirely using household objects! Part of Smethwick Puppetry Festival, Fri 21 Feb, Thimblemill Library, Bearwood

HONEST LIES Domestic story celebrating the resilience of women everywhere. Written by Jenny Stokes & Dawn Butler and directed by Alison Belbin, Fri 21 - Sat 22 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

ROMEO AND JULIET The world's greatest love story gets the rap and R&B treatment, with lyrics by That's A Rap and music by A Class. Corey Campbell directs, Fri 21 Feb - Sat 8 Mar, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

EDWARD II Double Olivier Award winner and RSC Co-Artistic Director Daniel Evans takes the lead in Christopher Marlowe's famous play, Fri 21 Feb - Sat 5 Apr, Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

...EARNEST? 'A spoof performance based on Oscar Wilde's iconic play, The Importance Of Being Earnest', Sat 22 - Sun 23 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

LABOUR OF LOVE The Crescent Theatre Company present an amateur version of James Graham's Olivier Award-winning political comedy, Sat 22 Feb - Sat 1 Mar, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

Kid's Theatre

PIRATES LOVE UNDERPANTS A swashbuckling story of pirates searching for the fabled Pants of Gold for the captain's treasure chest. Music and puppetry combine in this stage adaptation of the popular picture book by Claire Freedman, Mon 17 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

THE GIANT WHO SLEPT FOR A 10,000 YEARS A storytelling puppet show in a suitcase, focusing on the subjects of friendship, our relationship to nature, and the places we call home. Part of Smethwick Puppetry Festival, Mon 17 Feb, St Hilda's Church, Bearwood

ANANSI AND THE LOST SUN Swallow's Wings Puppetry present a funny, inspiring and entertaining tale that

mixes puppetry and traditional West African music. An informal puppetry workshop follows the performance. Part of Smethwick Puppetry Festival, Tues 18 Feb, Smethwick Library

BREATHE Three storytellers take audiences on 'an extraordinary journey' through a busy forest in this celebration of trees, nature, and the experience of finding space in a buzzing community, Tues 18 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

SCIENCE MUSEUM LIVE A family show devised 'to ignite curiosity, fuel imagination and inspire in new and exciting ways', Tues 18 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

THE TALE OF NOBODY NOSE Join clowns Boz, Yolo and Flo on an epic adventure across land, sea and the skies to help a lone puppet looking for their very own red nose. Part of Smethwick Poetry Festival, Wed 19 Feb, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

NUTRACKER IN SPRING Lori Hopkins brings together storytelling and intricate puppetry in this new interpretation of a well-loved festive tale, reimagined for spring and summertime. Part of Smethwick Puppetry Festival, Wed 19 Feb, Lightwoods House, Bearwood

THE TALE OF NOBODY NOSE Join clowns Boz, Yolo and Flo on an epic adventure across land, sea and the skies to help a lone puppet looking for their very own red nose. Part of Smethwick Poetry Festival, Thurs 20 Feb, Brushstrokes Community Project, Smethwick

RUDE SCIENCE! Described as the 'naughtiest, funniest, most revolting science show in the world', Thurs 20 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

AN AFTERNOON AT THE OPERA: MY FIRST CONCERT Relaxed and interactive concert designed especially for babies and children, Thurs 20 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

THE OLD GREEN TIME MACHINE Coalesce Dance Theatre tell the story of two intrepid and quirky time travellers as they race to save the world. Suitable for audiences aged three-plus, Fri 21 Feb, Tipton Library

FIREMAN SAM - THE GREAT CAMPING ADVENTURE Theatrical adventure for younger audiences, Fri 21 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

TINY CLOWN'S BIG ADVENTURE Grandly Strange Puppet Theatre presents the story of a tiny clown who loves teetering on a wire high above a cage of ferocious kiwi fruit... Part of Smethwick Puppetry Festival, Sat 22 Feb, Dorothy Parkes Centre, Smethwick

Dance

CINDERELLA Birmingham Royal Ballet

present David Bintley's much-loved version of the classic story, Wed 19 Feb - Sat 1 Mar, Birmingham Hippodrome



GIOVANNI: THE LAST DANCE The Strictly champion and BAFTA winner returns to the stage with a company of world-class performers, Sat 22 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Light Entertainment

ALICE FRASER: A PASSION FOR PASSION Comedy show about writing a book about romance, Mon 17 Feb, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

AN EVENING SHARED WITH JASPER CARROTT & ALISTAIR MCGOWAN Midlands masters of comedy Jasper and Alistair come together to present an evening of stand-up and impressions, Mon 17 - Wed 19 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

AN EVENING OF CLAIRVOYANCE WITH CRAIG MORRIS Tues 18 Feb, Halesowen Town Hall

BBC BIG BAND - THE MUSIC OF JAMES BOND Wed 19 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

NERINE SKINNER: THE EXORCISM OF LIZ TRUSS Hit Edinburgh 2024 show in which Nerine - best known for her parodies of former PM Liz Truss - showcases 'hilarious oddball characters, political impressions and heartfelt storytelling in a bid to "let go"', Thurs 20 Feb, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

BOTTOMS UP: BURLESQUE & CABARET Birmingham's bawdy burlesque show, featuring the creme de la creme of the cabaret world, Sat 22 Feb, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

FLAT & THE CURVES Evening of music and comedy exploring female liberation, sex, sisterhood and scandalous behaviour, Sat 22 Feb, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

TEASE Burlesque and cabaret experience hosted by West End burlesque stars Lady Lust and Miss Temptation, Sat 22 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

NINA CONTI: WHOSE FACE IS IT ANYWAY? Brand-new show from the virtuoso ventriloquist and British Comedy Award winner, Sun 23 Feb, The Alexandra, Birmingham

Talks & Spoken Word

AN EVENING WITH THE LEGENDS

Memories, magic and stories from former Aston Villa favourites Dean Saunders, Steve Staunton, Tony Daley and Ray Houghton, Thurs 20 Feb, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

Events

TOY PUPPET THEATRE MAKING WORKSHOP

Join Hopeful Monster Theatre for a drop-in workshop and create a cardboard toy theatre, Tues 18 Feb, Bearwood Community Hub at Bearwood Baptist Church Hall

PADDINGTON VISIT Take a heritage train ride out into the countryside to see Paddington, Tues 18 - Thurs 20 Feb, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, nr Kidderminster

MAKERS LAB Create your own special moving automata, Tues 18 - Fri 21 Feb, Compton Verney, Warwickshire

THE BIG BRICK BUILD Help build an imaginary world using thousands of Lego bricks, Tues 18 - Sun 23 Feb,

Compton Verney, Warwickshire

CALLING ALL YOUNG ORNITHOLOGISTS

Free drop-in crafts, creating cages and colourful, endangered birds, Tues 18 - Sun 23 Feb, The New Art Gallery Walsall

THE CARAVAN, CAMPING AND MOTORHOME SHOW

The UK's largest start-of-year showcase of new motorhomes, campervans, caravans, tents and camping accessories, Tues 18 - Sun 23 Feb, NEC, Birmingham

MICLAB HOLIDAY CLUB

Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) activities for 11 to 16 year olds, Wed 19 Feb, Coventry Transport Museum

BRINGING THE LIGHT Evening parade along the canalside, starting at the Roundhouse and finishing at the CBSO Centre, Wed 19 Feb, Roundhouse Birmingham

NO PLACE LIKE HOME - ANIMATED FILM

NIGHT Selection of family-friendly short films themed around stop-motion and puppetry, Wed 19 Feb, Brushstrokes Community Project, Smethwick

BIRMINGHAM LIGHT FESTIVAL Featuring installations and artworks that show the city in a different light, Wed 19 -

Sat 22 Feb, across Birmingham City Centre

BEYOND BLOCKS Build and programme your very own robotic Lego bee, Thurs 20 - Fri 21 Feb, Compton Verney, Warwickshire

FAMILY BACKSTAGE TOUR Introduce children to theatre, get involved in fun activities and explore the venue, Fri 21 Feb, The Rep, Birmingham

RACE RETRO 2025 A celebration of historic motorsport, Fri 21 - Sun 23 Feb, NAEC Stoneleigh, Warwickshire

DAZZLING ADORNMENTS: STERLING SILVER RING, PENDANT AND BROOCH MAKING WORKSHOP Make your own unique sterling silver ring, pendant or brooch in this 'relaxed and fun session', suitable for beginners, Sat 22 Feb, Compton Verney, Warwickshire

FANCY FISH PUPPET WORKSHOP WITH JUDITH HOPE Have lots of fun creating your very own jointed Fancy Fish puppet, Sat 22 Feb, Smethwick Library

NICK SHARRATT'S PICTURE BOOK DRAWALONG Join much-loved children's writer & illustrator Nick Sharratt in a family-friendly, fun-filled drawalong for all ages, Sat 22 Feb,

Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

LATE OPENING: WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR Special late opening, in partnership with Birmingham Light Festival, Sat 22 Feb, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

UK ATHLETICS INDOOR CHAMPIONSHIPS 2025 Places on the Great Britain & Northern Ireland team are up for grabs ahead of the European Athletics Indoor Championships, Sat 22 - Sun 23 Feb, Utilita Arena Birmingham

TRACTOR WORLD Traditional tractor show season opener, Sat 22 - Sun 23 Feb, Three Counties Showground, Malvern

SUPERSTAR WRESTLING The stars of wrestling fight it out to become king of the ring, Sun 23 Feb, Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

WEDDING SHOWCASE Meet with expert wedding and events managers & suppliers and tour the venue, Sun 23 Feb, Ragley Hall, Warwickshire

KB WEDDING SHOW Featuring over 50 exhibitors, Sun 23 Feb, Wolverhampton Racecourse

BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET

© Manvir Rai

Director Carlos Acosta



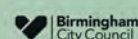
Ashton Classics

Birmingham Royal Ballet and the Royal Ballet Sinfonia celebrate the music of BRB's founder choreographer, the legendary Sir Frederick Ashton

Saturday 15 February

B:Music
Symphony Hall

bmusic.co.uk



Department for Culture, Media and Sport
ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND

Gigs

MATTIEL Mon 24 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

DARREN KIELY Mon 24 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

MYLES SMITH + KAMAL Mon 24 Feb, O2 Academy

SPIRIT OF THE BEEHIVE Tues 25 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

ONEDA Tues 25 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

SET IT OFF + POINT NORTH + THE SUNDAY SADNESS + CALL ME ARMOUR Tues 25 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

PALEFACE SWISS + THE ACACIA STRAIN + DESOLATED Tues 25 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

THE LOST NOTES Tues 25 Feb, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall

STATE CHAMPS + THE HOME TEAM Wed 26 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

JOHN RICHARDS BAND Wed 26 Feb, Red Lion Folk Club, Vicarage Rd

JAKOB Wed 26 Feb, Mama Roux's, Digbeth

SETH LAKEMAN Wed 26 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

NATTY Thurs 27 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

DAVE HAUSE + TIM HAUSE Thurs 27 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

MOM TUDIE Thurs 27 Feb, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway



Darren Kieley - O2 Institute

FRACTURED INSANITY + ABSOLUTION + 1000 SCARS + BORN HOSTILE Thurs 27 Feb, The Dark Horse, Moseley

LOLA YOUNG + BUG EYED Thurs 27 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

SHE DREW THE GUN Thurs 27 Feb, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

STREET SOLDIER Thurs 27 Feb, The Flapper, Cambrian Wharf

ALISON MOYET Thurs 27 Feb, Symphony Hall

BRANDON ALLEN Thurs 27 Feb, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

FJORD FANTASIA: NORWEGIAN MUSIC FOR SAXOPHONE Thurs 27 Feb, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

LUKE SITAL-SINGH Thurs 27 Feb, The Rainbow, Digbeth

COHEN BRAITHWAITE-KILCOYNE Thurs 27 Feb, Bromsgrove Folk Club

EMMA BLACKERY Fri 28 Feb, Hare & Hounds,

Kings Heath

ELLE-J WALTERS Fri 28 Feb, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

CHLOE SLATER Fri 28 Feb, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

SATORI Fri 28 Feb, 1000 Trades, Jewellery Quarter

TEETH OF THE SEA + TVAM + BUNKR Fri 28 Feb, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

KEZIA ABUOMA Fri 28 Feb, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall

OPETH Fri 28 Feb, Symphony Hall

ELKIE BROOKS Fri 28 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

THE MELVIN HANCOX BAND Fri 28 Feb, Tower Of Song, Pershore Rd

THE SEVERN Fri 28 Feb, Joe Joe Jims, Cofton Hackett

BLONDISH Fri 28 Feb, Artrix, Bromsgrove

ROCK FOR HEROES Fri 28 Feb, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

GLAM45 Fri 28 Feb, The Rhodhouse, Sutton Coldfield

MARILYN MANSON Fri 28 Feb, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

FOO FIGHTERS GB Fri 28 Feb, Lichfield Guildhall

JAMES WALSH Fri 28 Feb, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

SIGHT N SOUND Fri 28 Feb, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

Classical Music

THOMAS TROTTER ORGAN CONCERT: HOMAGE TO HANDEL Programme also includes works by Guilment, Karg-Elert & Grainger, Mon 24 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

RBC LUNCHTIME ORGAN CONCERT Featuring Jonas Schauer (organ). Programme includes works by Bach, Karg-Elert & Whitlock, Mon 24 Feb, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

RBC: QUATUOR AGATE WITH JONATHAN LEIBOVITZ Featuring Adrien Jurkovic & Thomas Descamps (violins), Raphaël Pagnon (viola), Simon Lachemet (cello) & Jonathan Leibovitz (clarinet). Programme includes works by S Black, Korngold & Mozart, Tues 25 Feb, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

CBSO: KAZUKI CONDUCTS HAYDN'S CREATION Featuring Kazuki Yamada (conductor), Carolyn Sampson, (soprano), James Way (tenor), Ashley Riches (bass) & CBSO Chorus, Wed 26 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

RBC BIRMINGHAM NEW MUSIC: NEW AIRS Programme comprises premiers by RBC's Composition Department, Wed 26 Feb, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

CBSO CENTRE STAGE: BRAHMS SEXTET Featuring Eugene Tzinkidelean & Lowri Porter (violins), Chris Yates & Catherine Bower (violins), Arthur Boutillier & Miguel Fernandes (cellos). Programme also includes Bruckner's Intermezzo in D minor, Thurs 27 Feb, CBSO Centre, B'ham

RBC FJORD FANTASIA: NORWEGIAN MUSIC FOR SAXOPHONE Featuring Andrey Fjeldstad (saxophone). Thurs 27 Feb, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

LUNCHTIME RECITAL Fri 28 Feb, St Philip's Cathedral, Birmingham

BARBER LUNCHTIME CONCERT: THE WELL GARDENED MIND Featuring Annie Yim (piano) & Christopher Good (actor). Programme includes works by J.S. Bach, Frances-Hoad, Boulanger & more..., Fri 28 Feb, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, Birmingham

ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA Featuring Johan Dalene (violins) & South Korean conductor Shiyeon Sung. Programme includes works by Sibelius, Tchaikovsky & Rimsky Korsakov, Fri 28 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Comedy

MARJOLEIN ROBERTSON Tues 25 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

LOU SANDERS Thurs 27 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

PAUL TAYLOR Thurs 27 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, LINDSEY SANTORO & MARK NELSON Thurs 27 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

THE LATE NIGHT SWEET SHOP Thurs 27 Feb, Cherry Reds, Birmingham

NABIL ABDULRASHID Thurs 27 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), B'ham

PHIL WALKER Thurs 27 Feb, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

TONY LAW Fri 28 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

LINDSEY SANTORO (PICTURED), WILL DUGGAN, DARREN HARRIOTT & MARK NELSON Fri 28 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham



PADDY MCGUINNESS Fri 28 Feb, The Alexandra, Birmingham

Theatre

ANNIE Amateur version presented by Sutton Coldfield Musical Theatre Company, Tues 25 Feb - Sat 1 Mar, Lichfield Garrick

THE FATHER Highbury Players present an amateur version of Florian Zeller's award-winning play about dementia, Tues 25 Feb - Sat 8 Mar, Highbury Theatre Centre, Solihull

(THE) WOMAN Jane Upton's Bruntwood Prize-shortlisted play shatters the glossy veneer of motherhood, exposing its raw, messy truth while daring to question the definition of (her)self, Thurs 27 - Fri 28 Feb, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry



HANDBAGGED Moira Buffini's clever comedy provides a fly-on-the-wall look at what might have happened when Queen Elizabeth II and Margaret Thatcher came face-to-face in the privacy of the palace, Thurs 27 Feb - Sat 1 Mar, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

BOY ON THE ROOF Vamos Theatre present a masked performance



Marilyn Manson - The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

Monday 24 - Friday 28 February

exploring loneliness, ageing and the importance of community, Fri 28 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

SILENT, BUT DEADLY Amateur version of Don Zolidis' spoof comedy/murder-mystery, set in the silent-film era, Fri 28 Feb - Sun 2 Mar, The Core, Solihull



Light Entertainment

MASSAOKE: SING THE MUSICALS Featuring a live band, character singers and a giant screen with lyrics so that audience members can sing along, Wed 26 Feb, The Alexandra, Birmingham

JOE SUTHERLAND: MISS WORLD (WIP) Join the much-loved comedian as he bravely talks about something that, until recently, he's suffered in silence: the experience of being a total hunk, Thurs 27 Feb, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

STEVIE HOOK: THE WHEEL OF NOUNS 'Entertaining and thought-provoking' cabaret exploring questions around queerness and gender. Audience interaction and cabaret-style games also feature, Fri 28 Feb, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

WONDERIN' Y: HOW SLADE'S DRUMMER SURVIVED Ian Pearce's one-man show explores how Don Powell courageously rebuilt his life and career following a devastating car accident which killed his girlfriend and left him with lasting memory loss, Fri 28 Feb, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

Events

THE NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP SHOW FT. UNIVERSITY FEST 2025 Discover more about apprenticeships across the West & East Midlands, Tues 25 - Wed 26 Feb, Coventry Building



Joe Sutherland: Miss World (WIP) - Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

Society Arena, Coventry

WHAT UNIVERSITY? & WHAT CAREER?

LIVE Event for 15 to 19 year olds who are considering their options after leaving school or college, Fri 28 Feb - Sat 1 Mar, NEC, Birmingham

BOOGIE LIGHTS EXPRESS Celebrate SVR's 60 years in style with a sound & light show on board a steam train,

Fri 28 Feb - Sat 1 Mar, Severn Valley Railway, nr Kidderminster



FRIENDS IN LOVE AND WAR L'ÉLOGE DES MEILLEUR-ES ENNEMI-ES

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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! Two tickets to Yonex All England Open Badminton Championships!

Hosting the world's very best badminton players across six days, the Yonex All England Badminton Championships returns to Utilita Arena Birmingham from Tuesday 11 to Sunday 16 March.

We are offering one lucky reader the chance to win two tickets to a day of their choice at this year's event.

Competition closes Friday 28 February



Win! A family ticket to Alderfest!

Firm family favourite AlderFest is returning to popular visitor attraction Alderford Lake on Friday 4 & Saturday 5 July.

Artists announced for this year's festival include Ella Henderson, Pixie Lott, Vengaboys and Toploader, with more to be added.

We are offering one lucky reader the chance to win a family ticket (admits four people) to this year's event.

Competition closes Friday 20 June



Win! Four tickets to CountryTastic!

CountryTastic returns to Malvern's Three Counties Showground this Easter with a fun-filled day of activities designed for primary-aged children. The show gives kids the opportunity to explore the world of farming through interactive play and engaging activities.

We have four tickets to give away for Thursday 17 April.

Competition closes Friday 4 April



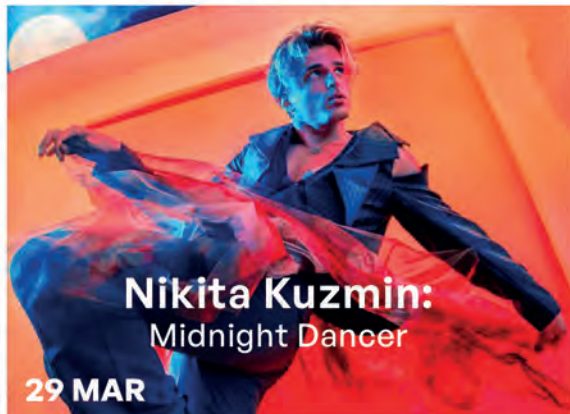
Win! Two tickets to see Chitty Chitty Bang Bang!

A brand-new production of Chitty Chitty Bang Bang visits Birmingham Hippodrome from Tuesday 4 to Sunday 9 March, with Ore Oduba starring as Caractacus Potts and Liam Fox as Grandpa Potts. We have two tickets to give away to the 7pm performance of the show on Tuesday 4 March.

Competition closes Friday 21 February

For your chance to WIN! with What's On, visit:
whatsonlive.co.uk

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