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ISSUE 447 APRIL 2024

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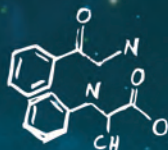
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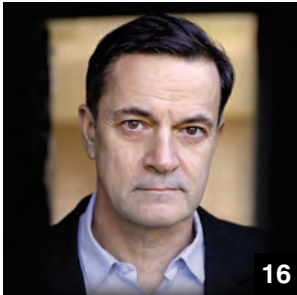
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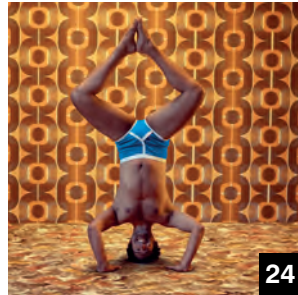
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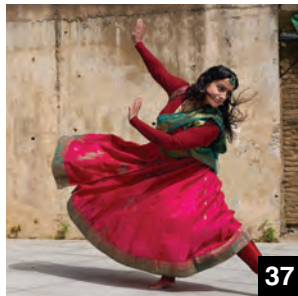
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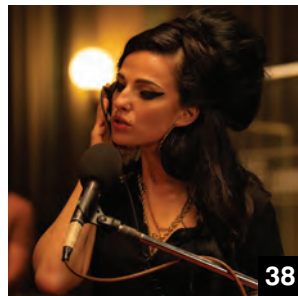
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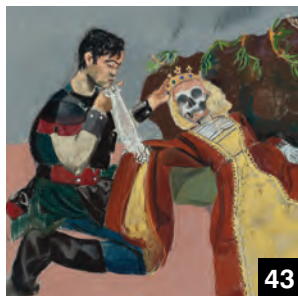
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What's On

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New strategic vision for the Coventry Belgrade

Coventry's Belgrade Theatre has unveiled an ambitious strategic vision focusing on co-creating work with local communities. Commenting on the development, the theatre's chief executive, Laura Elliot (pictured with Creative Director Corey Campbell, left), said: "With our new plan, the Belgrade will be as much a resource for health and wellbeing, education and career development as it is a space for entertainment."

"By 2030, success will be a theatre that is reflective of all Coventrians - a shared space for stories, creativity and civic pride, where diverse voices converge to explore, challenge and celebrate the human experience."



Worcester to host Three Choirs Festival 2024

The Three Choirs Festival will return to Worcester this summer (Saturday 27 July - Saturday 3 August).

Thought to be the longest-standing classical music festival in the world - it celebrated its 300th anniversary in 2015 - Three Choirs is a week-long programme of world-class musicmaking which also features talks, cathedral services, theatre, exhibitions and walks. The popular event rotates each summer between the cathedral cities of Gloucester, Hereford and Worcester. To find out more, visit 3choirs.org



BRB launches its 2024 Pointe Shoe Appeal

Birmingham Royal Ballet's (BRB) principal dancer, Celine Gittens, has teamed up with the Company's first soloist, Rosanna El, and artist, Regan Hutsell, to help launch the 2024 Pointe Shoe Appeal.

The appeal aims to raise funds to keep dancers on pointe during BRB's forthcoming national and international tours later this

year. For further information about how to donate, visit Pointe Shoe Appeal at the website: brb.org.uk

Theatre's auditorium set to reopen next year

Solihull Council is hoping to reopen The Core Theatre auditorium next year. The space has been closed as a result of problems with RAAC, a lightweight form of concrete which was in the news last year after it became clear that it was prone to crumble. Commenting on the planned reopening, Council leader Ian Courts said: "It's great news that we're aiming to get the auditorium up and running in 2025. We are, of course, really disappointed and sorry that the main theatre will not be available in 2024, but the team have been working hard to ensure that we find the necessary solutions to dealing with the problem that has affected so many buildings across the country."

Fancy becoming a heritage train driver?

The Severn Valley Railway (SVR) will run an enhanced programme of steam and diesel footplate experiences this summer and early autumn. Available from June to October, the experiences provide visitors with the chance to drive and fire one of the SVR's locomotives. For more information about the programme and to purchase a package, visit svr.co.uk



Alan Titchmarsh at RHS Malvern Spring Festival

Popular gardener & television presenter Alan Titchmarsh will be among the special guests contributing to this year's RHS Malvern Spring Festival (Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Thursday 9 - Sunday 12 May).

The much-loved event, which is this year taking the theme of Gardening For Change, will be celebrating 'evolution in the world of horticulture, and embracing the positive impact that this has on planting, people and wellbeing'.

To find out more about the show, visit the website at rhsmalvern.co.uk



Kevin & Perry Go Large at Birmingham venue

Midlands-based fans of Kevin & Perry Go Large have the chance to enjoy the movie 'in concert' next month.

Released in the year 2000 and starring Harry Enfield and Kathy Burke, the film is being screened in a big top tent at Birmingham's NEC next month (Monday 6 May and then Friday 17 May) with the soundtrack provided by a live orchestra. For further information and to book tickets, visit thenec.co.uk



Utilita to retain name until 2030

Utilita Energy and NEC Group have agreed an early extension to their existing multi-year partnership, which includes the naming rights for Utilita Arena Birmingham. As part of the seven-figure deal, the Birmingham city centre venue will carry Utilita's name through to 2030.

Circus back at Sudeley Castle

A village-green circus that tours England 'from the first days of spring to the first glimpse of winter' will make its annual stop-off at Sudeley Castle next month (Friday 10 - Monday 20 May). The Cotswolds-based Giffords Circus is visiting the venue with Avalon, a new show combining poetry, music and performing arts. For further information and to book tickets, visit the website: sudeleycastle.co.uk

TV's The Fonz sent to Coventry

The Fonz is coming to the Midlands! Henry Winkler, the actor who played the iconic character of the super-cool Arthur Fonzarelli in long-running American TV sitcom Happy Days, is visiting Coventry's Warwick Arts Centre on Thursday 20 June to share stories of his life. To find out more and book tickets, visit warwickartscentre.co.uk



Acclaimed Tina Turner musical coming to the Midlands

Hit West End production Tina - The Tina Turner Musical will stop off at Birmingham Hippodrome next year as part of its first-ever UK & Ireland tour (Tuesday 17 - Saturday 28 June 2025). Commenting on the news, the show's producer, Tali Pelman, said: "Tina Turner played to

packed-out arenas across the UK and Ireland throughout her extensive career. We're thrilled to now be able to bring her extraordinary story to stages across the UK and Ireland for the first time." To find out more and purchase tickets for the show, visit birminghamhippodrome.com

Digbeth Dining Club on tour

Street-food-event specialists Digbeth Dining Club have unveiled their 2024 Summer Tour dates. The tour kickstarts this month, with events booked in until July. Locations include: Sandwell, Solihull, Wolverhampton, Lichfield, Sutton Coldfield, Warwick Castle, Bearwood, Compton Verney, Castle Bromwich, Telford, Shirley, Himley Hall, Walsall, Redditch and Tamworth. For the full schedule and to buy tickets (some events are free), visit the website: digbethdiningclub.com



Comedian Paul Whitehouse hitting the road with Only Fools And Horses

Comedian Paul Whitehouse will return to the role of Grandad when Only Fools And Horses The Musical visits the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre in the autumn (Monday 21 - Saturday 26 October). Paul previously played the Peckham pensioner when the show first opened in the West End five years ago. Featuring 'an ingenious script and 20 hilarious songs', the touring production also stops off at Stoke-on-Trent's Regent Theatre from Monday 2 to Saturday 7 December.

More performers added to folk festival line-up

Ladysmith Black Mambazo, singer-songwriter Beth Nielsen Chapman and Jacqui McShee's Pentangle are among the latest performers to sign up for this year's Shrewsbury Folk Festival (Friday 23 - Monday 26 August).

Other artists recently added to the line-up include Grammy-nominated Mary Gauthier, Kathryn Tickell & The Darkening, The Wandering Hearts, The Hello Darlins', The Pleasures (pictured), Suntou Susso, Anthony John Clarke and Al O'Kane.

For further information and to book tickets, visit shrewsburyfolkfestival.co.uk



Route revealed for the Great Birmingham Run

The 2024 edition of the Great Birmingham Run (Sunday 5 May) will follow the route introduced at last year's event.

The 10k route covers Broad Street, Centenary Square and the Library of Birmingham, St Paul's Square and the Jewellery Quarter, along with city-centre landmarks such as Grand Central and The Mailbox...

The half marathon, meanwhile, takes in the sights of south Birmingham, including Bournville, Cannon Hill Park and Edgbaston Stadium. To find out more and sign up for the event, visit greatrun.org



Exhibition of young people's work returns

The annual Young Voices New Visions exhibition will return to Worcester Cathedral next month.

Showcasing visual artworks created by children and young people, the exhibition will show from Sunday 26 May to Sunday 23 June.



RSC celebrates Shakespeare's birthday in Stratford...

The Royal Shakespeare Company is presenting a range of activities for Stratford-upon-Avon visitors to enjoy as part of the town's annual celebration of Shakespeare's birthday.

Free events on Saturday 20 April (three days before the bard's birthday) include performances of *Parade: The Giant Wheel* - a

choreographed procession, created by Autin Dance Theatre, featuring a 12-foot-tall wheel and members of the local community. Family-friendly workshops - including storytelling sessions based on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* - also feature in the line-up of attractions... To find out more about the birthday celebrations, visit rsc.org.uk

BBC Gardeners' World Live back at the NEC

Urban gardens, a 'spectacular' edible show-garden by Adam Frost, orchids from all over the world, and a selection of new stages and workshops will all feature at this year's BBC Gardeners' World Live event, which returns to the NEC Birmingham from Thursday 13 to Sunday 16 June.

For further information about this year's line-up of attractions and to book a ticket - which will also provide entry to the BBC Good Food Show Summer - visit the website: bbcgardensworldlive.com



Saturday 13 April.

For more information and to book tickets, visit bridgehousetheatre.co.uk

Leamington Music Festival returns in May

The Leamington Music Festival returns next month (Thursday 2 - Monday 6 May) and is this year celebrating the bicentenary of the birth of composer Bedrich Smetana and the 50th anniversary of The Dvorák Society.

Ben Goldscheider (pictured), Martinu String Quartet, Guarneri Piano Trio and Martin Kasík all feature in the 2024 line-up.

For more information about the festival, visit the website: leamingtonmusic.org



Spa Juniors take on Les Mis at Warwick theatre

Warwick's Bridge House Theatre is this month presenting a stage version of *Les Misérables* which has been specially adapted for high school performers. Performed by Spa Theatre Juniors, the show runs at the venue from Wednesday 10 to

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**There's a Monster in
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Champagne for Lulu
15 Apr | Symphony Hall



Leonkoro Quartet
15 Apr | Town Hall



**Dresden Philharmonic
Orchestra** 16 Apr | Symphony Hall



The **Queen's Cartoonists**
19 Apr | Town Hall



Daniel Bedingfield
22 Feb | Symphony Hall



Max Amini
23 Apr | Town Hall



Lost in Music
26 Apr | Symphony Hall



Charles Esten
30 Apr | Town Hall



bmusic.co.uk

There's something for
everyone this April!

Blade Runner Live show to stop off in the Midlands

The 2007 'final cut' of Ridley Scott's 1982 cult classic movie Blade Runner will be presented 'live in concert' at Birmingham's Symphony Hall in the autumn (Saturday 21 September).

While the film shows on a vast HD screen, Vangelis' synthesiser-led score will be performed in-sync with the action by The Avex Ensemble.

For further information about the show and to book tickets, visit bmusic.co.uk

Joe Pasquale brings new tour to Midlands venues

Comedian Joe Pasquale will be making stop-offs at a number of Midlands venues over the next few months.

Joe's latest show, titled The New Normal: 40 Years Of Cack - Continued!, finds the former I'm A Celebrity winner pondering such questions as, why don't chicken breasts have nipples? and, if an eskimo has a house-warming party, will his igloo melt?

To find out where in the region Joe is appearing, visit joepasquale.com, where you can also purchase tickets.



Malvern Water & Well Dressing Festival returns

The Malvern Water & Well Dressing Festival is this year taking the theme of 'Trees' and will run from Friday 3 to Sunday 12 May. The annual event celebrates the history of the Malvern Hills, from its iconic spring water to the area's ancient Pagan traditions. To find out what's happening across the festival's ten days, visit Malvern Well Dressing on Facebook or malvernspa.org



Paloma Faith to headline Coventry's Godiva Festival

Pop favourite Paloma Faith, former Verve frontman Richard Ashcroft, and the West Midlands' very own Beverley Knight will headline this year's Godiva Festival.

The popular event takes place at Coventry's War Memorial Park from Friday 5 to Sunday 7 July. For further information and to purchase tickets, visit godivafestival.com

New offices exhibition at British Motor Museum

The offices of Herbert Austin & William Morris - two historically significant figures in the world of British motor manufacturing - are being exhibited side by side at the British Motor Museum in Gaydon, Warwickshire.

Austin's Office is a new acquisition by the museum and has been positioned alongside Morris', which has been on view at the venue for 30 years.

For more information about the display, visit britishmotormuseum.co.uk

Park & Leisure Homes Show visits Stoneleigh

The annual World Of Park & Leisure Homes show will visit Warwickshire's NAEC Stoneleigh at the end of June.

Open to the public from Friday the 28th to Sunday the 30th, the event's highlights include a display of more than 50 homes designed by leading UK manufacturers.

To find out more, visit naecstoneleigh.co.uk

Rosemary heading to the Shrewsbury Flower Show

Celebrity chef Rosemary Shrager will be one of the special guests at this year's Shrewsbury Flower Show, which returns to the town's Quarry Park on Friday 9 & Saturday 10 August.

The haute cuisine teacher and former reality TV star will appear on both days of the show. Other celebrities announced for 2024 include BBC Gardeners' World presenter Sue Kent, ITV's Love Your Weekend regular Camilla Bassett-Smith, and 'professional eater & drinker' Andy Clarke.

For further information and to purchase tickets, visit shrewsburyflowershow.org.uk



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HEADS AND TALES

A one-woman show, telling the epic story of the Trojan War, stops off at Coventry's Warwick Arts Centre next month



A critically acclaimed one-woman play that offers a fascinating new take on the Trojan War comes to the region next month. Performer & co-creator Deborah Pugh talks to What's On about Beautiful Evil Things and explains what audiences can expect from the show...

Beautiful Evil Things, a critically acclaimed take on the Trojan War that views the epic tale through the eyes of decapitated gorgon Medusa, comes to Coventry's Warwick Arts Centre next month.

But how do you distil a lengthy Greek tragedy, with a cast of thousands, into a one-woman show that tells the story from the perspective of a severed head?...

And, more importantly, why?

"There's something incredibly appealing about condensing those huge, epic Greek tales and hundreds of characters down to one performer," says Deborah ("Deb's fine") Pugh, the production's effervescent performer and co-creator. "It makes it really, really rich and really, really exciting. You can just rip through these stories at a fantastic pace."

Deb witnessed something similar a decade ago when Ad Infinitum, the theatre company she's been a member of since 2007, put on a one-man version of The Odyssey performed by George Mann and directed by Nir Paldi, the company's co-artistic directors.

"It was a fantastic, rich show to watch. And it felt like a really appealing world to delve back into, so we thought: Okay, George has done the boys, let's have a look at what the girls have been up to."

At first glance it appeared the answer was not very much beyond "a lot of weeping and wailing" according to Deb.

"What I loved about The Odyssey was that it was an adventure. He was fighting in a war, but you wanted to be him. It's exciting! I just wanted to do something like that."

Further research came to her aid in the form of Pandora's Jar, a book by Natalie Haynes. Going back to the original Greek text, it viewed the females as characters with personalities, rather than foils to support their male counterparts. All roads also led back to Medusa, someone Deborah had initially dismissed as a snake-haired monster but who she came to realise was so very much more. After all, she was decapitated in her sleep - while pregnant - by a man she'd never met.

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

It ought to be a moot point, what with Medusa having been decapitated, but that

particular issue was overcome by creative interpretation of historical fact.

"Once her head has been chopped off, it's helpfully gifted to Athena, who mounts it in the centre of a shield - so we realised that Medusa's head would have been present throughout the Trojan War," chuckles Deb. "She's watching everything at Athena and seeing what the Greeks and Trojans are getting up to, so she's very well-placed to retell these stories."

Medusa's eyes witness the entire epic battle, but also pick out the women who might offer her some hope. Deb is happy to admit that her interpretation of the story is sympathetic to the supposedly wicked gorgon, as well as the previously one-dimensional female characters she came across during her research.

"Medusa was always interpreted by Victorian men as evil, when realistically she was just a woman who didn't behave the way she was supposed to.

"My retelling is no less biased - this is how I wish to see myself positioned in the world. None of the paper-thin women I read about were recognisable as any of the women I know, so we've fleshed them out using the original texts, really lit a fire under them and made them human."

Deb's repeated use of the word "we" refers to co-creator George Mann. And she's not always alone on stage in her one-woman show either, being regularly joined there by British Sign Language interpreter Kyra Pollitt, who is an integral part of proceedings on the nights she's involved.

"It's 100 per cent a performing role. She's doing about five jobs all at once - she's remarkable," gushes Deb, who says having Kyra centre stage means hearing-impaired audience members can focus on the show rather than having to keep looking away to monitor the sign language.

"The company has a long history of working with deaf performers and creatives, and because our shows are so visually rich, and our first language is physical, it's not a big leap to make it completely accessible for a deaf audience."

The 'physical language' she refers to - which is very much Ad Infinitum's calling card - is what brought her into the company's orbit in the first place. Having trained at renowned physical theatre school École Internationale de Théâtre Jacques Lecoq in Paris, she has

carved out an impressive career as both performer and movement director.

Condensing the decade-long war and fall of Troy into a 75-minute play inevitably requires all the tools of her trade, as well as learning some new skills. She says plotting where to breathe has become crucial, as she's required to speak before, after, and occasionally during bouts of leaping around.

"You need to get lung-fit and good at re-routing where your breath goes. I've been doing a lot of walking up and down stairs with heavy boxes [she's just moved house], so that's helped."

The frantic pace of Beautiful Evil Things means it's constantly driving to the next point in the narrative, with little time for detours - something that has led to some judicious editing of the original.

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

Deb likens the journey to a relay, with the baton being passed from woman to woman. This makes it potentially more palatable than trying to identify the numerous characters that come and go ("there's about 12 that all begin with the letter P for a start"). However, she's also devised a clever way to distinguish between them.

"This is where the physical language really supports everything. We work with gestural language - which is a friendly cousin of mime, but don't let that put you off! In classic Greek text, each character would be introduced with an epithet - Achilles would be the fleet-footed one and so on - so we've created physical epithets. Every time a character pitches up, there's a gesture that accompanies him. So even if you're not picking up on the names, you'll absolutely know who you're dealing with. There's no point trying to tell a story if people can't understand it."

.....

Beautiful Evil Things shows at Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, on Tuesday 14 & Wednesday 15 May

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Mozart 'Great Mass in C Minor'/ JS Bach Magnificat in D BWV 243

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Generously supported by Roger Medwell DL MBE, President of Armonico Consort



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**2 - 6 May
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**Royal Pump Rooms
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**YEAR OF
 ((CZECH))
 MUSIC
 2024**

Classical music from across the region...



Armonico Consort

Malvern Theatres, Fri 12 April; Collegiate Church of St Mary, Warwick, Sat 13 April

Founded by organist & conductor Christopher Monks in 2001, Armonico are one of the largest organisations of their kind in the UK. Making excellent use of authentic period instruments, the baroque consort regularly perform with some of the best solo musicians in the world.

This latest concert, presented in different

venues on consecutive nights, sees them performing two masterpieces... Mozart's Great Mass in C minor reflects the pomp and solemnity characteristic in Salzburg at the time of the composition's world premiere there... JS Bach's Magnificat, meanwhile, is widely considered by admirers of his choral music to be his finest creation.

The People's Orchestra: Once Upon A Time

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sat 13 April

Pro-am ensemble The People's Orchestra - here joined by The People's Massed Show Choir - are visiting Warwick Arts Centre this month to perform a concert of music connected to literature.

"From The Wizard Of Oz to Harry Potter, and from Tangled to Bridgerton," explain the orchestra, "our talented musicians will transport you into the heart of timeless tales. Breathing new life into literature, this evening will be one to remember."



Dresden Philharmonic

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Tues 16 April

One of the oldest and most respected orchestras in Germany, the Dresden Philharmonic has previously



been led by some of the world's best-known conductors - including Kurt Masur and Michael Sanderling - and has also seen legendary composers Brahms, Dvořák, Tchaikovsky and Strauss conducting their own works. Here - with Stanislav Kochanovsky guest conducting and Maria Ioudenitch (pictured) on violin - the orchestra performs Mussorgsky's Khovanshchina, Prelude; Shostakovich's Violin Concerto No1; and Tchaikovsky's Symphony No6, 'Pathétique'.

Film fans might be interested to know that it was the Dresden Philharmonic which recently played the on-screen role of the 'Berlin' orchestra in Cate Blanchett's award-winning psychological drama, Tár.

Orchestra Of The Swan

Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon, Thurs 11 April

Stratford-based Orchestra Of The Swan (OOTS) are here promising a concert featuring 'stunning arrangements of music that will take you on a mesmerising journey out of your mind and to the furthest corners of your imagination...' It's an attractive promise, and one on which the hugely talented and always-value-for-money OOTS are sure to deliver. Performed by candlelight in the iconic surroundings of Holy Trinity Church - William Shakespeare's resting place - the concert includes ambient classics such as Radiohead's Pyramid Song, Pink Floyd's Great Gig In The Sky, and Brian Eno's An Ending (Ascent).



Spires Philharmonic Orchestra & Chorus

Burgess Hall, King Henry VIII School, Warwick Rd, Coventry, Sat 6 April

"We love to uncover pieces of music that have lain untouched - waiting for us to breathe new life into them," explain Spires Philharmonic Orchestra & Chorus, a community of ambitious musicmakers from Coventry. "We are acoustic adventurers, seeking out unheard gems and then programming them alongside classics we know and love, crafting concerts that are not only outstanding to listen to but that we love to perform too." The choir and pro-am orchestra's latest outing sees them presenting some of opera's finest music, including works by, among other composers, Bizet, Mozart, Puccini, Verdi and Wagner.



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Live music from across the region...

True Strays

Drummonds Bar, Worcester, Sat 20 April

Neil Young, Muddy Waters and Fleetwood Mac are among the artists who have influenced the music of Joseph James and James Cameron - aka True Strays - a pair of Bristol-based pals whose first encounter with one another was in the sandpit at playgroup. Their friendship then blossomed in secondary school and has since taken flight to excellent effect, with the boys busily carving out a niche for themselves on the UK Americana scene.



John Smith

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sat 27 April

Seven albums and more than 100 million Spotify streams bear testament to the talent and popularity of John Smith, a man who, across the better part of two decades of musicmaking, has evolved and pioneered a transatlantic blend of guitar techniques. A career which began with him opening for folk giants including John Martyn, Davy Graham and John Renbourn has also seen him guest with Martin Carthy, Roseanne Cash and Jarvis Cocker. He's played sideman to David Gray and Joan Baez, too. John visits Coventry in support of latest album *The Living Kind*, released last month.



Kathryn Tickell & The Darkening

Huntingdon Hall, Worcester, Tues 23 April

Growing up in Northumbria, with a father who was an acclaimed performer of the songs of the area and many members of her family playing its traditional music, Kathryn

Tickell's musical path was more or less chosen for her.

Nowadays a folk-scene veteran, she here joins forces with three other North-East England-based musicians to present a concert that explores the connecting threads of music, landscape and people over a period of almost 2000 years.

The Chase

hmv Empire, Coventry, Fri 26 April

Playing together since their school days, Nottingham band The Chase serve up a menu of '60s rock & '90s Britpop-inspired music which pays tribute to their council-estate roots. The talented indie rockers visit Coventry as part of their spring tour.



Kathryn Joseph

The Tin Music & Arts, Coventry, Wed 24 April

Scottish folk singer Kathryn Joseph was plying her trade for 17 years before she became an 'overnight success' as middle-age loomed. After many years spent playing small gigs in small venues in Aberdeen - while earning her corn as a waitress and lacking any real confidence in either herself or her music - she finally released debut album *Bones You Have Thrown Me And Blood I've Spilled* at the age of 40 - and promptly won the 2015 Scottish Album of the Year award. The ensuing period has seen her release two further albums and showcase her talent to excellent effect the length and breadth of the country. She visits the Midlands on the back of a new EP which features fresh remixes from 2022 album *For You Who Are The Wronged* (plus a brand-new song).

The Overtones

Leamington Assembly, Sat 13 April

Vocal harmony group The Overtones were working together as painters & decorators when they were discovered by a Warner Brothers scout, who heard them singing during their tea break. A multi-album deal was subsequently secured with the record label. Blending '50s harmonies with modern pop, their debut offering featured a number of original tracks which the boys themselves had written (including first single *Gambling Man* and title track *Good Ol' Fashioned Love*). Numerous TV appearances followed, with slots on shows such as *Dancing On Ice* and *Britain's Got More Talent* ensuring they remained very much in the public eye.

LABOUR OF LOVE

**Former doctor and familiar television face Tony Gardner
makes his Shakespeare debut at the home of the bard this month**



The Royal Shakespeare Company's new production of *Love's Labour's Lost* features a number of Stratford debutants. Among them is *Last Tango In Halifax*, *Lead Balloon* and *My Parents Are Aliens* actor Tony Gardner, whose first appearance at the home of Shakespeare is just what the doctor ordered - as he explains to What's On...

It's fair to say that Tony Gardner has taken an unorthodox route to the Royal Shakespeare Theatre stage, where he makes his debut this month at the age of 60.

He'll be familiar to TV viewers for roles in the likes of *Last Tango In Halifax*, *Lead Balloon*, *The Thick Of It*, *Gentleman Jack*, *My Parents Are Aliens* and many more. He's also appeared in a host of plays and films, but got his first taste of the business as one half of a comedy duo that performed five sell-out seasons at the Edinburgh Fringe, earning two Perrier Award nominations in the process.

Both he and his one-time comedy partner Phil Hammond have gone on to bigger things since then, but not in their intended fields - both are qualified doctors, and they met during their early years of training at Bristol's Frenchay Hospital. Each qualified in 1987, and they became GPs in 1991, but neither could find a cure for the showbusiness bug they caught while performing Christmas review shows at their respective hospitals. So much so that when Phil called to say he'd been doing some stand-up routines about medicine and healthcare, Tony instantly suggested they team up and head for Scotland.

"We formed a double act and went up to Edinburgh, which you could do then - it was the place to try stuff out. We were called *Struck Off And Die*, and we worked there from 1990 to 1995. As a result we got an agent and a Radio Four series, and that's how I started falling into acting."

The fall was obviously a significant one career-wise, but Tony had a safety net to hand.

"I was still working as a locum GP between acting jobs. It would have been mad to leave general practice and 100 per cent employment to enter the acting profession."

Eventually he did just that, partly through the support of his wife, a consultant anaesthetist, and partly because of the success of *My Parents Are Aliens*, which gave him regular acting work for eight years.

"It was never, ever my intention - even when we started going to Edinburgh, which was just a bit of a jolly - but it snowballed. Eventually I felt like I wasn't doing enough medicine, and there was more and more acting coming in, so I stopped in 2000 and I've never been back.

"So that's my story, really. I loved being a doctor - it's all I ever wanted to do - but I found something else. All my friends are doctors, my wife's a doctor, my son's a

medical student, so it's very much who I am, and I wouldn't have been an actor if I wasn't a doctor.

"It's a strange journey and one I'm often asked about. I can't recommend it or anything, it's just my journey and I don't know any other way. But I'm very, very happy doing what I'm doing."

His working-class parents clearly made sacrifices to put him through medical school - so had they complained when he packed it in to join the (acting) circus?

"Yeah is the answer! It must have been quite difficult for them because it was an amazing thing for me to go to medical school and become a doctor, the first doctor in the family. My father was a lorry driver from Bristol, so it was always a case of (adopts West Country accent) 'You can always go back to general practice if it doesn't work out.'"

It was his recurring role in BBC comedy-drama *Last Tango In Halifax* and, crucially, being watched by their mates, that finally ended his parents' doubts, says Tony.

"All their friends started saying they'd seen me in it, so they realised this was what I do now."

Mercifully no more tuition fees were required either - for all the years of training it took to become a doctor, Tony's had precisely none to be an actor, having to learn everything 'on the job'.

"I've been very lucky because I've been in quite a few shows that went on for more than one series," he says, citing the five seasons of *Last Tango*, four of *Lead Balloon*, and eight of *My Parents Are Aliens* - which ran for an amazing 106 episodes.

"That meant a lot of screen time. I'm not trained, I didn't go to drama school, so that was my education into television and screen acting."

Stage performance came a little later. After initially failing to get, let alone get through, any auditions, he crossed paths with one of theatre's greatest directors, who also happens to be the founder of the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC).

"I couldn't get seen by anyone for theatre until Peter Hall saw me and cast me. So my first three plays were with [him] over two years, and that was my very steep learning-curve into acting on stage."

That was nearly 20 years ago, and Tony's clearly delighted to have finally made it to his mentor's spiritual home. He'll play

Holofernes in director Emily Burns' contemporary new production of *Love's Labour's Lost*, which stars fellow RSC debutants Luke Thompson (aka Benedict Bridgerton from the popular Netflix drama), Melanie-Joyce Bermudez, Ioanna Kimbook and Rilwan Abiola Owokoniran.

The play is the first to be programmed by the RSC's new co-artistic directors, Daniel Evans and Tamara Harvey - so the stakes are high, admits Tony.

"We all feel very privileged but also nervous as a result because there's gonna be a huge magnifying glass on the production," he says. But his overriding emotion is excitement, and I've come across few actors so genuinely enthusiastic about their latest role.

"When I was offered the part, I was overwhelmed, and I still am. I've just turned 60, so to be offered my first Shakespeare is incredible.

"I just adore acting, and this is obviously a huge big deal for me. I've never done any Shakespeare before, so again I'm on this steep learning curve - and doing it at the RSC!"

It turns out there's quite a bit of learning too, with voice coaches, movement coaches and even lectures about various aspects of the play, both historical *and* contemporary - the production is set at the swanky resort of a tech billionaire on an unnamed Pacific Island.

"I think the vision Emily has will really bring the play out. You'll be able to see it with new eyes, and also see how brilliant the writing is, as there are so many themes within this play.

"We've had lectures on the oceanic islands, migration, language, flora, fauna - it's all going to come into the play. We've all soaked it up and know what problems those islands are having. For example, global warming and the climate-change crisis is gonna hit the Pacific Islands before it hits anyone else.

"It's fascinating to get all this information when you just thought you'd turn up to play a bit of Shakespeare."

.....
Love's Labour's Lost shows at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, from Thursday 11 April to Saturday 18 May



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Comedy previews from across the region...

Peter Kay: Better Late Than Never

Utilita Arena Birmingham, Fri 19 April; Fri 3 May; Fri 9 August; Mon 7 October; Fri 15 November; Fri 6 December; Fri 24 January 2025; Sat 7 June 2025; Fri 5 December 2025

Peter Kay has the magical ability to endear himself to just about everybody. Gregarious in nature and bringing to the stage bucketloads



of northern-style charisma, he peddles a line in comedy which is bold and biting but never cruel.

"It's good to get back to what I love doing best," he says, in talking about his return to stand-up comedy. "And if there's ever a time people need a laugh, it's now."

Returning to the circuit after taking a 12-year break, he's offering tickets to his shows at the same starting price as the previous time he went out on tour, way back in 2010.

Carl Hutchinson

Stourbridge Town Hall, Sat 13 April; Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Sun 13 October; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Thurs 17 October; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sat 9 November; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Sun 24 November

Observational comedian Carl Hutchinson makes a welcome return with a show that covers all manner of common-or-garden topics. Prior to becoming a full-time stand-up, Carl was a maths teacher. "There are certainly comparisons between the two professions," says the popular Geordie funnyman, "but the definite advantage with comedy is that if you have a bad gig, you can rest assured that you don't have to see the same audience the next day at 10am!" Carl visits the region this month with new show Today Years Old.



Max Amini

Birmingham Town Hall, Tues 23 April

Iranian-American comedian Max Amini blends eccentric impressions and novel storytelling to deliver strong messages about

family ties, cultural trappings and social topics. No slouch when it comes to improvisation either, he's promising a joyride of a show 'that will have you rolling in the aisles from start to finish'.

Russell Kane

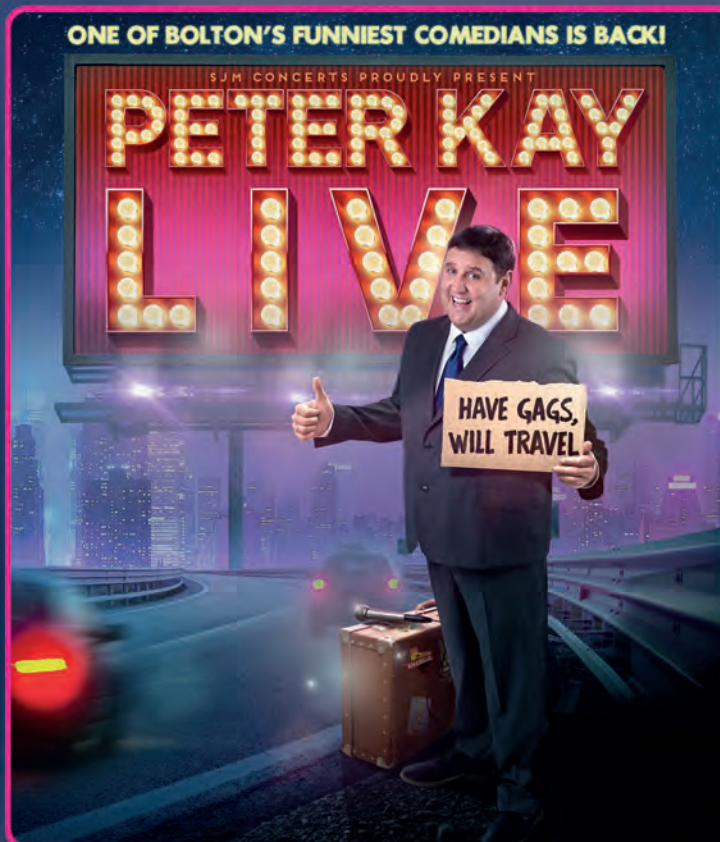
Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent, Fri 19 April; Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, Sat 20 April; Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Thurs 2 May; Swan Theatre, Worcester, Tues 14 May; Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Sat 14 September; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Sun 15 September; Birmingham Hippodrome, Fri 15 November

Past publicity blurb for this fella said it all: "Strap in for some super-speed sunderings and inconvenient sociology in a show of self-soiling merriment that will leave you with rickets."

In short, Russell Kane is a very funny man - and it's not just his publicist who thinks so. Russell has been drawing a crowd since bursting onto the scene 20 years ago, serving up liberal doses of humour at a frenetic pace. The London-born comedian visits the Midlands this month with latest touring show HyperActive.







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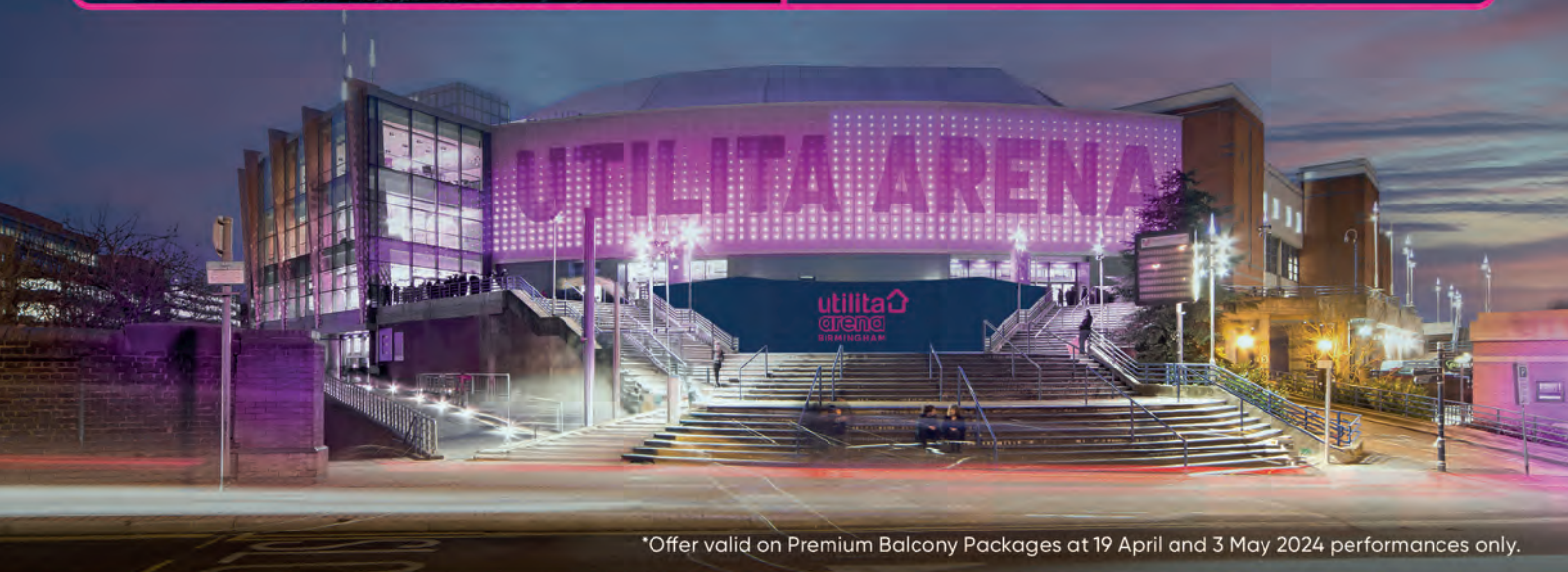
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Comedy previews from across the region...

Jackie Fabulous

Stourbridge Town Hall, Sat 20 April; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Tues 23 April; The Glee Club, Birmingham, Tues 30 April

A former lawyer and one-time America's Got Talent semi-finalist, New York-born Jacqueline J Champagnie - aka Jackie Fabulous - is on a mission to entertain, encourage and empower her audiences. She stops off in the Midlands this month as part of her first-ever UK tour.



Laugh Out Proud!

Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Fri 5 April

This brand-new event is billed as an LGBTQIA+ comedy night featuring 'the best in established and upcoming acts from the community on the UK comedy circuit'. The line-up features: Mark Cram, a man who describes himself as the less-than-grateful winner of the Bedford Comedian of the Year competition; Greggs brand ambassador Joe Sutherland (pictured) and American comic Kate McCabe, who Manchester Wire describes as 'just a goddamn delight'.



Julian Clary

Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Fri 19 April; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Thurs 23 & Fri 24 May; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Sun 26 May

Following in the footsteps of comics such as Kenny Everett and Larry Grayson, Julian Clary peddles a line in 'saucy postcard humour' that disguises an intelligent sarcasm which digs fun at both himself and his audience. The world of stand-up is undoubtedly where he's enjoyed most success, seeming to thrive on the close contact with a live audience. By contrast, his forays into television haven't always gone so well; indeed, a long-ago but infamous 'fisting' gag about a Conservative politician saw him blacklisted by TV producers for some considerable time. He's making a welcome return to the Midlands this month with brand-new offering A Fistful Of Clary. "Yes, it has a Western theme," says Julian of the show. "It was only a matter of time before I eased myself into some chaps..."



Clinton Baptiste

Albany Theatre, Coventry, Fri 5 April; Walsall Arena, Sat 6 April; Huntingdon Hall, Worcester, Thurs 16 May; Crewe Lyceum, Fri 7 June; Birmingham Town Hall, Fri 14 June

Actor Alex Lowe enjoyed big success with comic creation Clinton Baptiste when the character first appeared more than 20 years ago in Peter Kay's award-winning television series, Phoenix Nights.

A tacky and inept clairvoyant, medium & psychic, Baptiste was Kay's brainchild but has since been fleshed-out further by the man who plays him.

Despite the serious amount of work he's put into developing the character, Alex remains appreciative of Clinton's origin: "The fact that he's from Phoenix Nights is great! It's like having a head start, because I already feel four-nil up before I even get on stage, and I know the audience is going to laugh."

Chris McCausland

Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 26 April; Walsall Arena, Fri 3 May

"A long time ago, when I'd only just started out as a comedian," recalls scouse funnyman Chris McCausland, "I walked out on stage and was telling a joke to break the ice about being blind, when somebody in the audience shouted out, pantomime style, 'We're behind you!' It was very funny!"

Chris has the eye condition retinitis pigmentosa. "It's been referred to in different ways across the years," he says, "from the rather dull and generic-sounding macular degeneration to the cool and groovy inverse cone-rod dystrophy!"

A touring comedian since the mid-noughties, Chris has also appeared on a host of television panel games and in series including EastEnders and Moving On. He visits the Midlands this month with latest show Yonks!.





DEATH IN VENICE

**Welsh National Opera and NoFit State Circus breathe new life
into Benjamin Britten's famous work...**

Welsh National Opera (WNO) has joined forces with contemporary circus company NoFit State to present a bold new production of Benjamin Britten's *Death In Venice*. What's On catches up with three key creatives behind the show...

Welsh National Opera's (WNO) *Death In Venice*, which plays Birmingham Hippodrome next month, will use a range of circus skills to re-tell the classic tale of writer Gustav von Aschenbach's descent into a world of fantasy after he becomes infatuated with Tadzio, a young man he meets in Venice.

Based on Thomas Mann's novella and sung in English with English and Welsh surtitles, Benjamin Britten's opera explores creativity, sexuality, ageing, obsession and the tension between reality and imagination.

Directed by Olivia Fuchs and designed by Nicola Turner, both of whom worked on last year's WNO production of *The Makropulos Affair*, the show will explore Aschenbach's search for creativity and his flights of imagination. Aerial work and other circus skills will blend with Britten's evocative music to create an innovative version of the compelling tale.

"*Death In Venice* is a beautiful opera," says Olivia. "On the face of it, the piece charts the inner struggle and the physical, as well as metaphorical, demise of a writer who has suppressed his sexuality in his search for creativity and beauty. His imagination is parched."

And there is a real depth to the work, explains Olivia: "For me, the piece is an exploration of the inner dimensions of our lives - our imagination, dreams and creativity - and how they are manifested, expressed and physicalised.

"It is all about 'seeing'. Aschenbach is inspired by the beauty of a young man - he sees, he observes, he imagines, he begins to feel again. After many years he becomes embodied, his sexual urges and his imagination run away with him, he becomes obsessed.

"I'm curious about the creative process, about the relationship between our inner worlds of the imagination and their physical expression through the body and art - the danger of how imagination can tip into fantasy, leading to objectification and disconnection from others."

Britten had originally conceived the roles of Tadzio and his family as silent characters to be played by ballet dancers, but Olivia was keen to develop this concept and explore

their physicality through another means - circus.

"Tadzio and his family express themselves physically; to Aschenbach they are exotic and otherworldly.

"The idea of Tadzio being an aerialist emerged early in my thinking, which then developed into having a group of five circus artists who can play Tadzio and his family, as well as help move the episodic story from scene to scene in surprising and delightful ways. Having seen NoFit State Circus' (NFS) work, I thought that a collaboration would be perfect."

WNO and NFS are both based in Cardiff and have worked together in the past on community shows, but this is the first time the two have collaborated on a full-scale touring work. The production features opera singers and circus performers, with Aschenbach being sung by tenor Peter Van Hulle in Birmingham and Tadzio being played by circus performer Antony César.

NoFit State's guest artistic director, Firenza Guidi, has plenty of experience of opera - she grew up in Milan, where she was frequently taken to world-renowned theatre La Scala. And she believes the collaboration will bring a new understanding to Britten's work.

"For me, circus is the best way to embody the kind of dichotomy in the story - the contradiction between flight and ground, between ethereal and carnal. All the kind of things that a circus performer can do is carnal but at the same time can be ethereal; it's a vision - something that will evaporate in the next image.

"So the long-buried desires and the inner struggle that go on in Aschenbach is represented not just in the singing but also by the circus performers. I'm very passionate about dramaturgy through the body. My role is to give each individual performer an inner life. So what we see is the outer body, but I'm there to give each performer's character a past, a present, a set of memories and wishes and desires which, although unspoken, are going to inform what they do with their body."

And that physical creativity encourages the audience to engage with those characters in a different way.

"Fundamentally everything relies on tempo," Firenza explains. "That creates that tiny little difference between prowess and gymnastic fireworks or creating someone that I am engaging with because that person produces questions in my head as a spectator. Who is he? Where does he come from? I want to engage in that narrative."

The collaboration is proving to be both innovative and exciting, says NFS Artistic Director Tom Rack.

"Some people might not consider opera to be a natural fit for our organisation, but that's what is interesting about it - seeing how our work can fit inside that context. It's not just about bringing a bit of circus into the background of the show - Olivia wanted to find physical ways of telling the story and bring our signature style, which is visual, anarchic and raucous, to the production."

For Tom, contemporary circus has a unique way of expressing a story.

"When we are creating story, we are painting pictures. We are creating images that are almost cinematic in scale. They have resonance, have theme, have meaning and have undercurrent in terms of the relationship between the characters, the relationship between the music and the movement, and the relationship between the rigs and the character."

Olivia is aiming to explore the opera's possibilities physically and visually, finding ways of expressing and counterpointing the music and giving audiences a new experience of *Death In Venice*.

"I want the audience to leave feeling uplifted, inspired and moved, and for them to question how we can live more fully in the world, embracing both body and mind, ugliness and beauty, imagination and reality. We have such extraordinary potential as human beings to imagine and create new worlds. Let's recognise this."

.....

WNO perform Benjamin Britten's *Death In Venice* at Birmingham Hippodrome on Saturday 11 May. They also perform Mozart's *Così fan tutte* on Friday 10 May



The Buddha Of Suburbia

Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, Thurs 18 April - Sat 1 June

Hanif Kureishi's first foray into the world of novel writing proved to be hugely successful. Published in 1990, *The Buddha Of Suburbia* won the Whitbread Award for best first novel, was later made into a four-part television series by the BBC, and kickstarted for British Pakistani playwright Hanif a career as a novelist which has since seen him listed by *The Times* as one of the 50 greatest post-war British writers. Set in South London in the late 1970s, the book tells the story of Karim

Amir, a 17-year-old mixed-race boy who describes himself as an Englishman born and bred; almost.

Eager to escape the suburbs and convinced that the bright lights of the city can provide him with the excitement he craves, he sets out on an adventure that sees him come face-to-face with all manner of interesting characters...

Dee Ahluwalia takes the lead role in this Emma Rice-directed stage adaptation, the publicity for which describes it as an 'irresistible, heart-breaking and joyful exploration of family, friends, sex, theatre and, ultimately, belonging'.

Unfortunate: The Untold Story Of Ursula The Sea Witch

Birmingham Hippodrome,
Thurs 11 - Sat 13 April;
Wolverhampton Grand Theatre,
Thurs 11 - Sun 14 July

Marketed as a tell-all tale of sex, sorcery and suckers, *Unfortunate* has a subtitle that makes it pretty clear what the show is all about. Ursula, for those who've never come across the character before, is a villainous sea witch and the main antagonist in the 1989 animated film, *The Little Mermaid*. A Disney Diva par excellence, she's been making waves in her very own stage musical for the past five years and visits Birmingham this month in the form of Orange Is The New Black's Shawna Hamic. The show features strong language, partial nudity, scenes of a sexual nature and plenty of trademark filthy humour - so if you're of a decidedly delicate disposition, you may want to go swim in a different sea.



Shrek The Musical

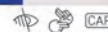
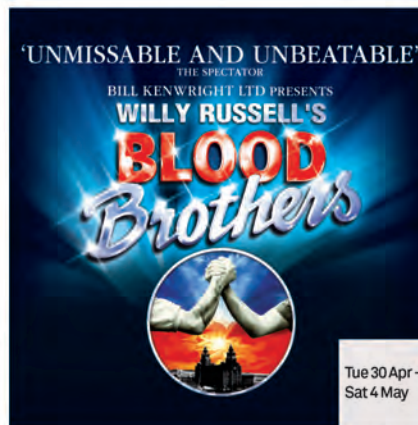
The Alexandra, Birmingham,
Tues 9 - Sun 14 April

The popularity of this family-friendly West End hardly comes as a surprise. After all, Dreamworks' animated *Shrek* movies - inspired by cartoonist William Steig's 1990 book - were absolutely huge. So it was only ever going to be a matter of time before everybody's favourite swamp-residing ogre made a big splash away from the silver screen.

Pretty much retelling the story of the first movie, the show peddles a line in humour that calls to mind both the surrealist Pythons and an evening of festive-season pantomime fare. There are plenty of new songs to enjoy too, presented alongside cult *Shrek* anthem *I'm A Believer*, originally a chart-topping hit for The Monkees way back in the mid-1960s...

One-time *Strictly Come Dancing* favourite Joanne Clifton stars as Princess Fiona.







Jesus Christ Superstar

Birmingham Hippodrome,
Mon 22 - Sat 27 April

Spreading the gospel according to Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber, the phenomenal rock opera Jesus Christ Superstar makes a welcome return to the Midlands.

And the show really does rock...

This gritty, reimagined production was originally staged by London's Regent's Park Open Air Theatre in 2016 and won the Olivier Award for best musical revival a few months later.

With hits like I Don't Know How To Love Him, Gethsemane, Hosanna, and of course the title song itself to recommend it, the show tells the story of the final few days in the life of Jesus, as his teaching and preaching, performing of miracles and ruffling of the establishment's feathers eventually see him condemned to death...

Emma Rice's Blue Beard

The Rep, Birmingham, Tues 9 - Sat 20 April

A new play written and directed by Emma Rice, a one-time artistic director of Shakespeare's Globe theatre, Blue Beard tells the tale of a talented and tyrannous magician who meets his match in the form of his young bride...

Described as an exploration of curiosity and consent, violence and vengeance, the show is narrated by a chorus of nuns, has been widely praised as a music-fuelled celebration of female power, and comes complete with its innovative director's signature sleight of hand.

The Boy At The Back Of The Class

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 16 - Sat 20 April; Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Tues 14 - Sat 18 May

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

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

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

Houdini's Greatest Escape

Lichfield Garrick, Thurs 25 - Sat 27 April

The award-winning New Old Friends theatre company's previous on-stage successes include the much-loved Falcon's Malteser and the Agatha Christie, Noel Coward & PG Wodehouse-inspired Crimes On The Coast. If you caught either of those critically acclaimed productions - not to mention any of the company's other equally enjoyable theatrical offerings - then you'll no doubt be looking forward with eager anticipation to this fast-paced and farcical thriller.

In a nutshell, the show finds death-defying escapologist Harry Houdini and his wife Bess fighting to clear their names after being framed for murder by a gang of criminals who're in cahoots with the chief of police...

The production features four actors - playing multiple roles - and some sure-to-be-impressive magic and illusion by Pete Firman, who's probably best known from BBC One series The Magicians.

One Man, Two Guvnors

New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme,
Fri 12 April - Sat 11 May

Brighton, 1963, and having been fired from his skiffle band, Francis Henshall becomes minder to Roscoe Crabbe, a small-time East End hoodlum who's travelled to the coast. But Roscoe is really his twin sister Rachel - posing as her own dead brother, who's been killed by her boyfriend, Stanley Stubbers. And then there's the involvement of Charlie the Duck to take into account...

You keeping up?...

Based on The Servant Of Two Masters - a 1743 Commedia dell'arte-style comedy written by Italian playwright Carlo Goldoni - Richard Bean's One Man, Two Guvnors has scored a big hit wherever it's played since debuting in the West End 13 years ago.

With that in mind, the New Vic is no doubt promising with extremely good reason that this Conrad Nelson-directed production will have you grinning from ear to ear. Well worth a look.

The Woman In Black

Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Tues 23 - Sat 27 April;
Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Tues 30 April - Sat 4 May

Adapted by Stephen Mallatratt from the same-named Susan Hill novel, The Woman In Black is a classic ghost story first performed in 1989. It has since become one of the West End's most

successful plays, and was memorably made into a film starring Daniel Radcliffe in 2012.

Solicitor Arthur Kipp believes that his family have somehow been cursed by a mysterious woman in black. In an attempt to tell his story, and to exorcise the evil curse which he's convinced hangs over him, he hires a young actor to assist him in recounting his experiences...





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Theatre previews from around the region



Life Of Pi

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 23 - Sat 27 April; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Tues 7 - Sat 11 May

Lolita Chakrabarti's innovative stage adaptation of Yann Martel's award-winning novel tells the story of teenager Piscine Molitor 'Pi' Patel, whose parents run a zoo in India but decide to sell up and emigrate to Canada. After a storm wrecks the ship on which they're travelling, Pi is cast adrift on a lifeboat, which he shares with some of the creatures from the zoo - most notably a Bengal tiger named Richard Parker...

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

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

The Mad Ones

Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, Wed 10 - Sat 20 April

This 'touching and heartfelt' musical - formerly known as The Unauthorised Autobiography Of Samantha Brown - debuted off-Broadway seven years ago and focuses in on the character of 18-year-old Sam as she reaches a crossroads in her young life.

"The basis of the story," explains Old Joint Stock Theatre manager James Edge, "is that Sam is making a decision about whether she wants to stay with her overbearing mother, or instead take a risk for the first time in her life, see what the future holds and drive away. It really is a beautiful work of theatre."

The Importance Of Being... Earnest?

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Thurs 11 - Sat 13 April

Anybody turning up at the Gatehouse expecting to see a conventional version of Oscar Wilde's The Importance Of Being Earnest is in for a bit of a surprise. Sure, the show is based on Wilde's oft-performed Victorian comedy, but the company behind it, the interestingly named Say It Again, Sorry?, have very much put their own interactive spin on events.

When a traditional production of Earnest gets under way, everything seems to be going according to plan... until, that is, the lead

actor fails to arrive on cue. His non-appearance sees the situation quickly descend into chaos, with the company desperately needing the audience's assistance as they battle to get the performance back on track...

Pied Piper

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Wed 17 - Sat 20 April

If you're dubious about the merits of hip-hop and beatbox but are open to the possibility of finding out more, this unique, clever and hugely energetic show is definitely one to check out. A 21st-century gig-theatre classic inspired by a well-known medieval fairytale, the show features beatboxers, musicians and special guest performers from the local community. The production is presented by BAC Beatbox Academy, who previously scored a hit with Frankenstein: How To Make A Monster.



Rewind

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Tues 30 April

Taking an intimate backward journey into the true and tragic story of a young woman in Latin America who dared to resist authoritarianism and paid the ultimate price,

Rewind is presented by Ephemeral Ensemble, a migrant-led company which specialises in creating theatre from fact-based stories and shining a light on current but hidden social issues.

The inspiration for this latest work of theatre comes from forensic anthropology, the first science in history to investigate human-rights violation.

Cluedo 2

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Tues 23 - Sat 27 April; Malvern Theatres, Tues 30 April - Sat 4 May; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Tues 23 - Sat 27 July

Inspired by the success of the original Cluedo play, this brand-new comedy whodunnit is based on the famous detective boardgame of the same name.

Heartbeat and Casualty star Jason Durr and Strictly champion Ellie Leach top-bill in a Swinging 60s-set show that features a new house, new suspects, and plenty of dead bodies...



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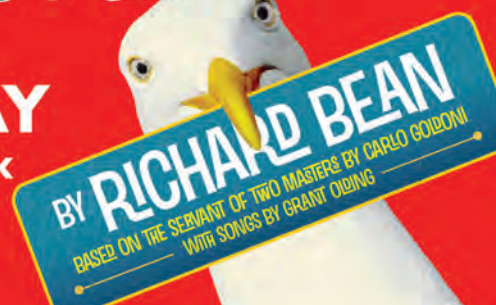
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Theatre for younger audiences



Charlie Cook's Favourite Book

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry,
Fri 5 - Sun 7 April

Given the success of so many other stage adaptations of Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler's hugely popular stories, it's a real no-brainer to mount a live version of Charlie Cook's Favourite Book.

Presented via the ever-popular combination of clever puppetry and enchanting songs, the show follows Charlie's attempts to get his sister to read. Charlie himself loves reading. For him, there's nothing better than settling down to enjoy a favourite book about a pirate... who also has a favourite book... about Goldilocks... who also has a favourite book... about a knight... who also has a favourite book... You get the idea?... Created for children aged between three and eight, the show has a running time of one hour.

Little Big Dance: Club Origami

Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham,
Sat 27 April

This gentle and interactive show from Japanese choreographer & dance therapist Takeshi Matsumoto (presented at MAC



twice on the 27th) invites families to immerse themselves in a world of paper and play. Produced as part of the Little Big Dance project - a pioneering national initiative aimed at creating new dance work for the under-fives - Club Origami presents 40 minutes of thoroughly absorbing paper-based entertainment (plus 10 minutes stay & play). In the process, the show encourages family audiences to create, imagine and explore whole new ways of thinking, playing and moving.

The Sooty Show

Worcester Swan Theatre, Fri 5 April;
Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sun 7 April

One of the 20th century's best-loved children's characters makes a welcome return. A simple glove puppet created by Harry Corbett, Sooty continues to go down a storm with generation after generation of youngsters, impressively bucking the trend for far more sophisticated, high-tech entertainment.

Richard Cadell's the fella now operating

Sooty and his longtime companions, Sweep and Soo, and is here joined by 'special guest stars' Butch the bulldog, Ramsbottom the snake and 'circus superstar' Michael Jordan. Expect magic, music, mayhem and audience participation.

Ministry Of Science Live

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Wed 17 April;
Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sun 21 July;
Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sun 22 September

An anarchic approach to science communication is the name of the game when the Ministry Of Science comes to town. As well as taking a look at the inventors and engineers who've shaped and inspired the modern world, the show's presenters will be conducting clever demonstrations aplenty - so expect the occasional loud bang!

There Was An Old Lady Who Swallowed A Fly

Tamworth Assembly Rooms, Mon 1 April;
Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sat 27 April;
Festival Drayton, Market Drayton, North Shropshire, Sat 12 October; Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton, Fri 18 & Sat 19 October

The People's Theatre Company - highly rated creators of the fabulous Don't Dribble On The Dragon - here bring one of the world's best-loved nursery rhymes to life.

Their show comes complete with colourful animal characters and numerous singalong songs, including If You're Happy And You Know It and Incy Wincy Spider...

There's A Monster In Your Show!

Birmingham Town Hall, Sat 6 & Sun 7 April;
Worcester Swan Theatre, Tues 30 April & Wed 1 May; Tamworth Assembly Rooms, Fri 3 & Sat 4 May

Children's author Tom Fletcher's critically acclaimed Who's In Your Book? series here makes the leap from page to stage.

The brand-new musical sees Little Monster being joined by friends Dragon, Alien and Unicorn for 50 minutes of comedy, chaos and high-energy fun.

Dear Zoo

Birmingham Hippodrome, Thurs 11 - Tues 16 April; Lichfield Garrick, Sat 20 & Sun 21 April; Worcester Swan Theatre, Sat 28 - Sun 29 September

First published in 1982, Dear Zoo - a lift-the-flap book by Rod Campbell - has delighted generations of children and accumulated millions of sales worldwide.

This hugely popular stage version of the story features music, child-friendly puppets and lots of audience participation.





THE INSIDE SCOOP

Drop The Dead Donkey stage show stops off in the Midlands



Televised on Channel Four between 1990 and 98, Drop The Dead Donkey was a satirical and topical sitcom set in the offices of GlobeLink News, a fictional TV news broadcaster. Thirty years later, the team has been brought back together in a brand-new play, which visits Birmingham theatre The Alexandra this month. What's On spoke to Jeff Rawle, who plays George Dent, the station's ill-fated editor, to find out more...

You've been on the road since January. What's the audience response been like?

It's been fantastic. We started out at Richmond and we sold every seat in the house, every show, and that's continued to be the case... We've had about six or seven weeks on the road now, and the response has been amazing. I have to say I didn't expect it to be quite so brilliant - there seems to have been an awful lot of love for the show, and people have booked tickets in advance not knowing quite what they were going to come and see. We get the impression that everyone's really liking it, and we're just thrilled to be able to get back together again.

The play, like the TV programme, is written by Andy Hamilton and Guy Jenkin. How did it feel, seeing the new script?

It was amazing. I think everyone had a certain amount of trepidation, thinking 'How can this possibly work?' Everyone was thrilled when it really did, and it was also extremely funny. To be rejoined with that wit... we'd kind of got used to it. I looked at a couple of episodes the other night. I haven't seen them since 1990, when we first started the show - I was 40 years old, and I'm now 73. I've always been very fond of the show, of course, but I thought everyone's performances were brilliant... Now we're back together again, it's great to climb back on board. When we had the first read-through, it was really quite moving because we hadn't seen each other for a great deal of time. Once we got that read-through done, they went away and worked on it a bit more, and a bit more... So over a period of a year - and I think it shows - they spent a lot of time and care on the script, and we reap the rewards of that every night.

Do you think modern politics or society has changed the way it's been written?

It does seem to me, maybe because I'm older, that the world's got more bonkers. It's the same format: we have a plotline, but within that there are moments where we know there'll be new topical material, and these are updated continually. The problem is that you have to learn it really quickly. These

often fall to Neil Pearson - I don't know why, but he seems to get the topicals. We have a meeting in a toilet at one point during the show, and I think 'Oh god, what's he going to say next?...'. That's really quite exciting - you never know what's going to be in it. The audience seem to love that - they realise that since that news story has only just broken, they're getting the benefit of a gag that's only just been made up half an hour ago, about something that happened half an hour ago. I think that's a unique selling point. The people who knew the TV show will not go away disappointed. They get dealt quite a raft of new topical humour, which could only have been written on that day. You get that injection of fun, within the main plotline.

When Drop The Dead Donkey ended, GlobeLink was disbanded. Has it been resurrected, or is the team working somewhere completely new?

We're working somewhere completely new. It's the launch of a new news station, so we're all rather suspicious about why we've been recruited - especially some of us who are in our older age... There's a question-mark hanging, about why they're employing us and why they're paying us so much money. That's where the story starts.

It's 30 years since the TV programme started. What's changed about news broadcasting during that time?

GlobeLink News was a pretty cockamamie, crazy place to work. Sir Royston Merchant owned the station... In 1990, the idea that someone owns a news station and they're chasing ratings seemed barmy. Now, when you look at the new stations that are cropping up, you can see that that's absolutely what they're doing. You'd have thought it impossible, back in 1990, that anyone would be so brazen as to go down that route. The news should be the news, and it should be about fact finding, journalism, truth and balanced reporting. That has, to a certain extent, gone out the window.

Are you enjoying playing George again?

Yeah, it's been great. I've always loved playing that character. He was so sad, and he

always had such terrible luck. It's so sweet. They've written that his life's turned around and he's got everything to play for - or so he thinks! That's where the play starts. It isn't long before it unravels, like one of his cardigans...

He's a bit of a hypochondriac. How's his health nowadays?

George's health is actually good; he's holding up well - but he does give a good rundown of problems he's had in the past. We get quite a lot of graphic medical information...

You grew up in Birmingham. What's it like revisiting the city?

I was born in Birmingham, in Handsworth Wood. I went to Cherry Orchard Primary School there, and then I went onto King Edward's Aston grammar school. I left Birmingham when I was about 14, to Sheffield. My dad worked for GEC, and he moved up north. My mum used to go to the Alexandra Theatre every week. I've done plays at the Alex and the Birmingham Rep - I've always liked going back. It's always very tempting to go and see the old house and wander around - but of course it's completely different from when I was a kid. I hardly recognise any of it, but it's always nice to return.

Do you add in any regional references when travelling around the country with Drop The Dead Donkey?

Yes - we don't put too many in because it begins to sound a bit like a pantomime if you're not careful, but we do. Especially if there's something that's happened up the road - that's always very tempting to put in. I think everyone will get the feeling that it's a freshly made show, for one night only. No two shows are alike - that's probably true for any show, but with this especially you do feel like you're getting something unique.

.....

Drop The Dead Donkey: The Reawakening shows at The Alexandra, Birmingham, from Tuesday 16 to Saturday 20 April



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Light entertainment from around the region



Cirque du Soleil: OVO

Utilita Arena Birmingham,
Thurs 25 - Sun 28 April

Cirque du Soleil (or Circus of the Sun) is without question the ensemble which has done the most to restore people's view of the circus as a valid and desirable form of entertainment.

Founded in Quebec, Canada, 40 years ago, the company has presented a host of groundbreaking theatrical extravaganzas, seamlessly blending circus styles from around the world and proving to be a massive hit wherever it's set up its big-top tent. The troupe is here making its first visit to the UK in six years, stopping off in the Midlands this month with critically acclaimed show OVO. The family-friendly production is described by Cirque as 'a non-stop riot of energy and movement' that makes 'a colourful intrusion into a new day in the life of insects'.

Closet Confessions Live

Birmingham Town Hall, Fri 26 April

Bestselling author Candice Brathwaite and TikTok comedy star Coco Sarel bring their hit girl-talk podcast to Birmingham, presenting a show that's promising everything from 'laugh-out-loud confessions and hilarious accounts of dating disasters' to 'tales of bad behaviour and celebrity culture'.

The Noise Next Door

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sat 13 April

Praised for presenting their audiences with 'a superior kind of chaos', The Noise Next Door is a quartet of improvising comedians who've been garnering critical praise for a good few years now.

Big in Edinburgh at festival time, they pride themselves on their originality and quick-wittedness.

Previous on-stage endeavours have included a mini-musical embracing the uncomfortable bedfellows of pantomime, folk music and death-metal, and a surreal adventure in which the Magic Roundabout's Zebedee leads the forces of good against Darth Vader, who's holed up in Worcester Cathedral. They visit Shrewsbury this month with currently touring show Freewheeling.

The Night Sky Show

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Sun 7 April

To Birmingham city centre - and beyond! Stargazing Midlanders visiting the Alex to see this currently touring show will be taken on a

journey around the constellations, stars and planets by astronomer & author Adrian West - a man better known on social media as VirtualAstro.

Adrian is promising a gloriously visual and thought-provoking experience that's suitable for everyone - meaning there's no 'heavy-going science' or 'boring astronomy talk' to negotiate.

Indeed, according to the show's website, the universe has never been so much fun...

Rachel Stockdale: Fat Chance

Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham,
Wed 24 April

As a plus-sized northern female, Rachel Stockdale was told there was fat chance she'd ever fulfill her dream of making a living from acting. "You're northern, you're fat and you're a woman," one casting director kindly pointed out. "You can only be two out of three to make it in this industry."

Fortunately for her rapidly expanding fanbase, Rachel ignored the negative voices. Instead, she followed her dream, creating a show which, having made a significant splash in Edinburgh last summer, is very likely to do exactly the same when she brings it to Birmingham late this month.

As well as exploring the twentysomething Teesider's true-life experience of weight gain, from size eight to size 18, the one-woman

production also sees Rachel talking about her ongoing efforts to make it big in the rough, tough world of showbiz.

Staying Relevant: Sam Thompson & Pete Wicks

Utilita Arena Birmingham, Sun 14 April

Sam Thompson and Pete Wicks head for Birmingham just a handful of months after Sam won the most recent series of I'm A Celebrity...Get Me Out Of Here!.

The Made In Chelsea star and TOWIE favourite Pete have been big pals since meeting on Celebs Go Dating a few years back. They're here bringing the live version of their hugely popular podcast to the West Midlands as part of a UK tour.

Box Of Frogs

1000 Trades, Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham, Wed 10 April; The Core Theatre, Solihull, Fri 26 April; 1000 Trades, Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham, Wed 8 May; Highbury Theatre, Sutton Coldfield, Fri 24 May

A night of 'high-octane improvised comedy nonsense' - based entirely on the audience's suggestions - is the entertainment on offer when Birmingham-based Box Of Frogs head out on tour.

The talented ensemble - who've been steadily building an enviable reputation as quick-witted purveyors of impromptu mirth - are promising improv-loving patrons a pair of hours positively awash with spontaneous songs and spur-of-the-moment sketches and scenes.



CELEBRATING FEMALE POWER

**Emma Rice brings her own brand of theatrical wonder
to the ancient tale of Blue Beard**



An ancient folk tale concerning a nobleman and his vanishing wives has been given the Emma Rice treatment. Celebrating female power, the 'fearless' director calls on a chorus of nuns to tell the story of Blue Beard in a touring production stopping off at Birmingham Rep this month. Here, Emma shares why she wanted to bring the story to the stage, and why it had to happen now...

Blue Beard is the fifth show that Emma Rice has made for her company Wise Children, which launched in 2018 after her very public departure from Shakespeare's Globe. Before that, Emma ran the much-loved, and now closed, Kneehigh Theatre company. Many of Emma's most successful works for Kneehigh were based on folk tales, like Blue Beard.

The story that took on a new meaning for her following the murder of Sarah Everard by the off-duty Metropolitan police officer Wayne Cousins.

"I've actually never liked the story of Blue Beard," she says. "I love fairytales, but this is one I've always avoided.

"I thought it was just about controlling women, telling them off for asking questions and being curious. But something changed a couple of years ago, and the story started to nag at me.

"I have become more and more haunted by the regular chime of women being attacked, murdered and abused. Sarah Everard's shocking murder and the ensuing chaos of her vigil captured the public's imagination. However, for me, it was the murder of Zara Aleena that really brought home my anger and made me think about adapting Blue Beard.

"She was just walking home. A week later, her family, friends, and people she would never know, met at the spot where she was killed and walked her memory home. This was the moment that I knew I wanted to walk Blue Beard's victims' home. I wanted to use my craft, my platform and my experience to make a small difference."

Rice says she realised that she wanted to tell this story, not to understand or excuse Blue Beard, but to breathe life into the women he tried to control. She wanted to express not just the rage, grief and heartbreak so many feel at lives cut short, but also to celebrate brilliant living women in all their wild and surprising glory. Her version of Blue Beard is very definitely about the women, about celebrating women.

"It's about saying enough is enough! We will not be afraid anymore. Blue Beard has the weight and power of a classic drama - almost Shakespearean and most definitely Greek in structure. I hope audiences will feel entertained, moved and transported. We have found the subject matter very powerful in rehearsals, and there has been lots of laughter and tears. I hope audiences will share the joy, the darkness, the fury and the hope. It certainly won't be boring!"

Music is key to Rice's shows. As a practitioner of 'devised theatre', she always works closely with a composer, who is present throughout the rehearsal process, shaping, refining and reworking the music as the production develops.

"Music is shot through this magical tale. I'm working with my longtime friend and collaborator Stu Barker, who I also worked with on Brief Encounter, Tristan & Yseult, and many, many more.

"Stu is a composing genius who knows just when a song, a sting or an underscore is needed. I'm particularly loving working on this show because almost all my actors are also musicians. This means the music comes straight out of the heart of the show; it is all performed live by this incredibly talented ensemble of actor-musicians. They jump seamlessly between playing and acting, and I marvel at their talent. The songs are dynamite, and I go to sleep with them running through my head and wake up singing them."

In Rice's version of the tale, the character of Blue Beard is a magician, and we see part of his magic show onstage.

"My long-term collaborator and dear friend Tristan [Sturrock, who plays Blue Beard] worked with several magicians in preparation for the show. He can now make coins vanish and cards appear, cut ladies in half and throw knives. It has been brilliant fun and creates fantastic 'old school' entertainment.

"I decided to make my Blue Beard a magician

because it felt like a funny and surprising way to explore themes of lies, control and violence. The glamour of the magician's assistant, mixed with the casual misogyny of these enduring acts, creates a heady cocktail which is the perfect match for Blue Beard."

Although at times the show is challenging to watch, with themes of male violence and control, it is shot through with hope, comedic moments and a great deal of stagecraft that means the dark undertones are never graphic, more thought provoking. The production has been garnering rave reviews since it opened at Bath Theatre Royal.

"The production does not shy away from violence and its devastating effect. But it is also hopeful and empowering. I don't think audiences will come away thinking everything's awful and it's never going to change; instead I want people to look these issues squarely in the eye and think: right, that's it. The world does not have to be like this, and I feel inspired to do something about it.

"It's also worth saying that I'm not a 'naturalistic' director. We use lots of different storytelling techniques to give the subject layers and nuance. This means a violent act could feature on stage as a dance, or a song. It won't be graphic and unpleasant. Sometimes violence is suggested, sometimes it is shown in a metaphorical way, and at the end we have a huge, bloody, real-life struggle.

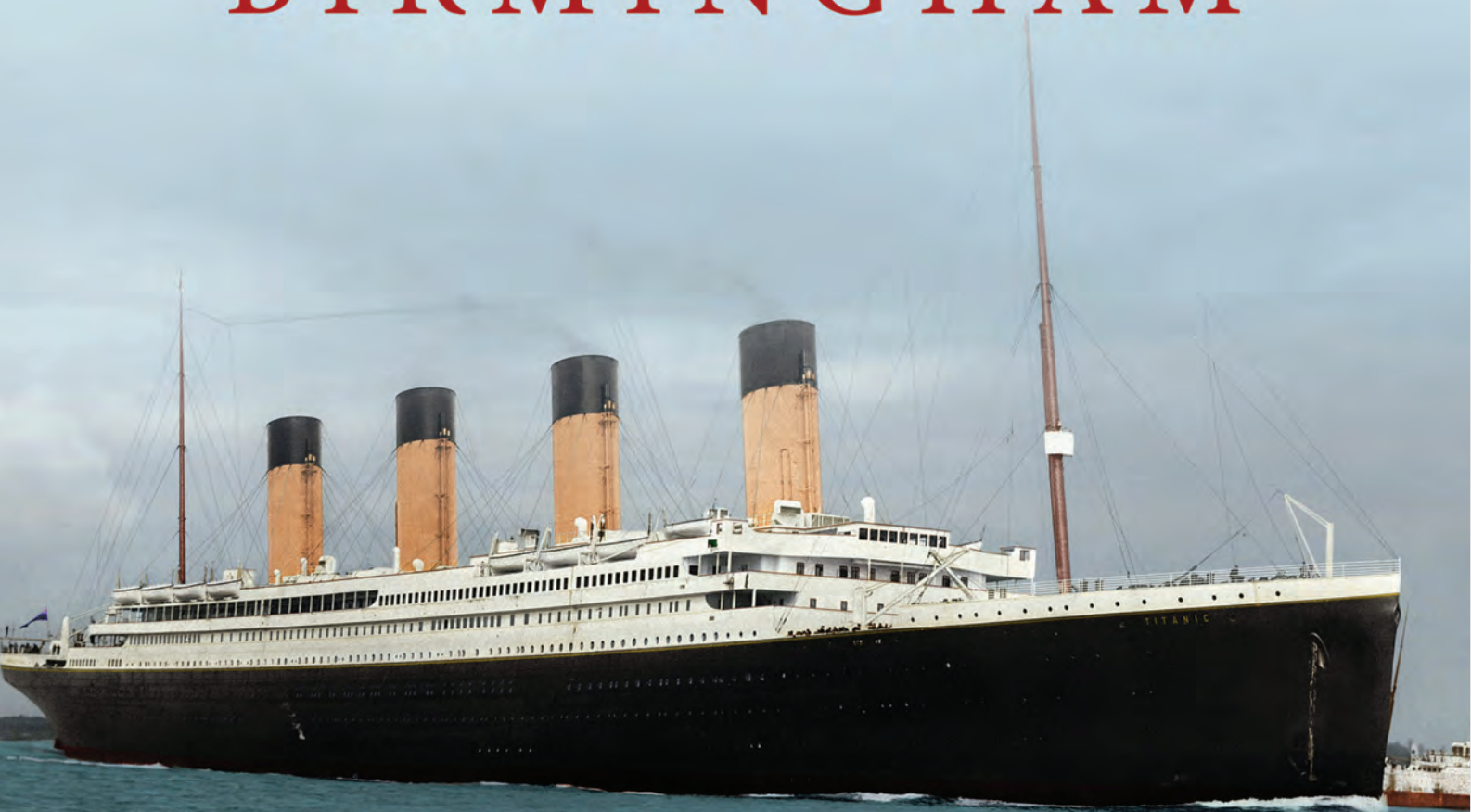
"Although the underlying themes are urgent and dark, the show is not all darkness by any means. Blue Beard pulses with stylish theatricality, gritty reality, and genuine emotion. There's also comedy. I want the production to seduce with high comedy, tragedy, magic, romance and just a sprinkle of spine-tingling horror. It's a blockbusting rollercoaster!"

Blue Beard shows at Birmingham Rep from Tuesday 9 to Saturday 20 April

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Dance previews from across the region

**Mehek**

Birmingham Hippodrome, Tues 9 April

Two internationally renowned kathak choreographers & dancers here come together to present a brand-new work. Birmingham-born Aakash Odedra and New Delhi-based Aditi Mangaldas have joined forces to create and perform Mehek, a work which explores the power of love, memory, desire, attraction and resilience.

The show focuses on the often taboo subject of love between an older woman and a younger man.

"I guess one thing we would like with this piece is to gently remind ourselves that we needn't be judgmental," explains the project's dramaturg, Karthika Nair. "And that we can just let ourselves be happy that others are happy; that who you love is a personal thing. And also that we should be so lucky, whatever our age, to find someone to love us or to find someone to love. Life is short and horribly unpredictable. Love, for all the messiness that it brings, is also salvation."

Sonia Sabri Company: Roshni

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Sat 6 April

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

**U.Dance West Midlands**

Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome, Sat 20 April

Providing a regional youth dance platform, the organisers of U.Dance West Midlands are promising an evening 'full of vibrant and exciting dance genres and themes, performed by some of the best young talents from across the West Midlands'... The event forms part of a national programme that annually provides high-quality dance opportunities for young people.

English Youth Ballet: Sleeping Beauty

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 12 - Sat 13 April

Founded in 1998, the award-winning English Youth Ballet offers young people who're interested in dance the opportunity to perform classical ballet alongside professional dancers and tutors... This latest production comes complete with 'sparkling new costumes and splendid scenery'.

Giovanni Pernice: Let Me Entertain You

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Thurs 4 April; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 5 April

Persistent rumours of a rift between Giovanni Pernice and his 2023 Strictly dance partner, Amanda Abbington - who quit the show mid-

series, citing 'personal reasons' - saw the Bafta-winning Italian take up more than his fair share of column inches over the following few months.

Now, though, Giovanni is out on the road, doing what he does best in a brand-new dance extravaganza. He's joined for the occasion by a talented cast of professional dancers and West End performers.

Graziano Di Prima - Believe: My Life On Stage

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Thurs 11 April

Strictly's Graziano Di Prima stops off in the region to present his very first 'solo' show. Promising 'an electrifying evening of Latin and ballroom dancing', the production pays tribute to Graziano's Italian ancestors. It also tells his own Billy Elliot-style story - the inspiring tale of a young boy from Sicily who grew up working in the vineyards with his father and dreaming about one day becoming a professional dancer. Graziano is joined in the show by his wife, Giada Lini.





CLOWNING AROUND

**Inimitable circus clown Tweedy
brings slapstick to Shakespeare...**

Stopping off at two Midlands theatres this month, a brand-new version of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* sees the comic character of Bottom the Weaver being played by Tweedy the Clown, a vaudeville-style entertainer hailing from Gloucestershire. What's On caught up with him to find out more...

What sets this production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* apart?

We're aiming very much for a family audience, to try and encourage younger people to come. I've got a large 'young' fanbase, and we've put a lot of slapstick in the play. Shakespeare was famous for his clowns, so we thought, let's have a real, actual clown in the show. There's going to be a lot of physical comedy in there. It's going to be a good, fun version, aimed at the whole family.

What makes Tweedy the best man to play Bottom?

Oh! I dunno. I'm gonna play it my way. A lot of the time when I've seen Bottom, he's arrogant and not a likeable character, so I'm kind of playing it more as myself - or my character - and he's just really excited to be there. I'd like to think he's a more likeable character... I don't know if that makes me the perfect person for Bottom, but that's my take on it, and that's how I'm going to play it.

What have you had to consider when bringing clowning into the show?

With *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, I kind of find that the clowns - the 'mechanicals', as Bottom and his compatriots are dubbed in the play - are quite separate from the rest of the story. It almost feels natural to me that you've got the serious bits, and then the clowns come in and do funny bits. It's like in the circus: you watch a daring act, where you might be on the edge of your seat and get a bit nervous, and then the clowns come in as light relief.

You were also in *Waiting For Godot* with the Cheltenham Everyman. Have you set your sights on any other classic works?

That was the last play I did. Not really. I'd be interested if the right play came up, but nothing's jumping out at me. I'd always wanted to do *Waiting For Godot*, and then they approached me about this. I'd always fancied doing a bit of Shakespeare, because of that Shakespeare clown tradition.

Are you going to improvise on stage and be spontaneous?

I'll stick to the words but physically improvise all over the place - which I won't

be able not to do. If something happens, I just naturally react to it. Obviously that keeps it fresh and interesting for the audience as well.

This production is hot on the heels of the RSC's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Stratford-upon-Avon, with Mathew Baynton as Bottom. Have you seen it?

No, I was going to, and then a couple of people - including Mat Baynton - kind of said 'I don't think you should because it might influence you too much' and affect my characterisation. I'd think 'Oh, that's really good, that bit, I'll do it a bit like that...' But he did tell me it's gonna be filmed - I do really want to see it.

Speaking of Stratford, Tweedy's Massive Circus is premiering there, from Friday 24 May. What can Tweedy fans expect?

Yes, it's a brand-new show - I'm devising it now. It's in a tiny little Big Top. Basically, I'm trying to put on a massive spectacle circus and, as you can imagine, it all goes a bit wrong. It's a very small cast. Essentially it's a clown show. There's a narrative in there, there's circus in there, but it doesn't turn out to be a big spectacular circus. It's opening at Stratford and will also be in Cheltenham, from 4 July.

They say never work with children or animals, which is a bit of an occupational hazard in the circus... Do you have any experiences which corroborate that?

I had a Shetland pony as a sidekick one time, who just didn't like me. First of all he would rear up and come at me, and then, on the last day in the ring, he got hold of my little finger and wouldn't let go. I'm there going 'He's got my finger!' which the audience were finding hilarious. I tried to open his mouth with my other hand and opened it a bit, but then he clamped down on those fingers as well. That wasn't great, but my fingers are alright now.

You wouldn't think a Shetland Pony had it in him!

No! 'Little Man' Syndrome...

How do you make sure you're always at the top of your game?

Practising things, trying to come up with new ideas... But the main thing is just enjoying it

and letting the audience in. If I stopped enjoying it, then I wouldn't be a good clown anymore.

And how did you get started in clowning?

I was going to go to art school to do animation, and then had a realisation: actually, this is very boring! You're basically sat in an office, drawing. Then I thought 'No, I want to be the cartoon; that's what this is about.' There was no internet then, because I'm quite old... Nowadays it's so easy! You just Google 'How do I become a clown?' and there's all these options. I did a season at Butlins as a red coat, saving up to go to circus school, but it went bust. So I sent a questionnaire out to lots of circuses, just as personal research. I got two back, out of about 50. One was from a clown in Cirque du Soleil - which was some Canadian show that I hadn't heard of! The other one was from Zippos circus, and he said the best way was to learn from other clowns, by being on the road. He offered me a job as a publicity clown, handing out leaflets and doing school and promotional shows - but then the clown got stuck in traffic in my first week. I jumped in and got offered a job off the back of that. A lot of people ask 'Where did you train?' because there are clown schools. Everyone goes on about Gaulier, but I've never been to those places. It's the same with stand-ups - they don't go somewhere to train; they go and try. That's basically what my training was: going in front of an audience. I just learned on the road.

Have you noticed the demand for your act change over the years?

It took a while to get to this stage. Initially, I'd always have nothing on in January, February or March, and I'd become a delivery driver or something like that. It's been a long, hard slog, but I've loved every minute of it.

.....

A Midsummer Night's Dream plays Malvern Theatres from Tuesday 2 to Saturday 6 April and Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, from Wednesday 24 to Saturday 27 April

Film highlights in April...



Back To Black CERT tbc (122 mins)

Starring **Marisa Abela, Eddie Marsan, Jack O'Connell, Juliet Cowan, Lesley Manville, Ansu Kabia**
Directed by **Sam Taylor-Johnson**

In dying from alcohol poisoning 13 years ago, Amy Winehouse became a member of the so-called 27 Club - the group of on-the-rise musicians and pop & rock stars who made it past 26 but never lived to celebrate their 28th birthday (think Brian Jones, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison and Kurt Cobain).

In an all-too-short career, Winehouse made a huge impression on the music scene, her brilliance, for the most part, outshining the demons which plagued her throughout her life. *Back To Black* - the film takes the title of her second and final album - tells her extraordinary story, painting a vivid picture of the Camden streets she called home and the challenges she encountered in the face of global stardom.

The biopic comes complete with a strong cast of talented actors but hasn't been universally welcomed by Amy's fans, many of whom fear it will be awash with ghoulish depictions of the late singer's alcoholism and drug addiction.

Released Fri 12 April

Monkey Man CERT 18 (113 mins)

Starring **Dev Patel, Sharlto Copley, Sobhita Dhulipala, Sikandar Kher, Pitobash, Brahim Chab** Directed by **Dev Patel**

Night after night, in an underground fight club in a slum in a fictitious Indian city, a young man known as Kid pulls on a gorilla mask and ekes out a meagre living by being beaten to a bloody pulp by other fighters. A victim of childhood trauma and full of suppressed rage, he finally finds a way to exact revenge on those who have done him wrong...

Slumdog Millionaire and Best Exotic Marigold Hotel actor Dev Patel not only takes the title role here but directs and produces a film he's also written. The critical response to *Monkey Man* has been mainly positive, but even the more-admiring reviews come with a caveat. Namely, that this is a graphically violent and unremittingly grim 'revenge' movie, most likely not for the fainthearted, and certainly not for those fans of Patel who enjoy seeing him in lighthearted *Marigold Hotel* mode.

Released Fri 5 April



The First Omen CERT 15 (120 mins)

Starring **Bill Nighy, Charles Dance, Ralph Ineson, Nell Tiger Free, Sonia Braga, Anton Alexander** Directed by **Arkasha Stevenson**

When a young woman is sent to Rome to begin a life of service to the church, she not only encounters a darkness which causes her to question her own faith but also uncovers a terrifying conspiracy to bring about the birth of 'evil incarnate'...

Nearly half a century on from the first film - in which Satan's spawn Damien caused mayhem after being adopted by an American diplomat and his wife - famous horror franchise *The Omen* makes a return with this prequel movie explaining the origin of the antichrist.

Despite the original movie's box-office success, a 2006 remake and 2016 television series have failed to greatly rekindle interest in the *Omen* franchise. With that in mind, 20th Century Studios executives will no doubt be keeping everything firmly crossed that this latest offering achieves a so-far-elusive spark with 21st-century horror-loving cinemagoers.

Released Fri 5 April



The Ministry Of Ungentlemanly Warfare

CERT tbc (120mins)

Starring **Henry Cavill, Freddie Fox, Henry Golding, Alex Pettyfer, Alan Ritchson, Hero Fiennes Tiffin**
Directed by **Guy Ritchie**

Guy Ritchie has turned to some recently declassified files from the British War Department to find the inspiration for his latest film. An action-comedy, *The Ministry Of Ungentlemanly Warfare* tells the story of the first-ever special forces organisation - a unit formed during World War Two by Prime Minister Winston Churchill and a small group of military officials, including James Bond author Ian Fleming.

Composed of a motley crew of rogues and mavericks - and using entirely unconventional and utterly 'ungentlemanly' fighting techniques - the top-secret combat unit heads out on a daring mission against the Nazis. Their audacious approach to combatting the forces of evil not only changed the course of the war but also laid the foundation for the British SAS and modern Black Ops warfare.

Released Fri 19 April



Civil War

CERT tbc (109 mins)

Starring **Kirsten Dunst, Wagner Moura, Callee Spaeny, Stephen McKinley Henderson, Sonoya Mizuno, Jefferson White**
Directed by **Alex Garland**

Set in a fractured, near-future America which is in deep and violent conflict with itself, *Civil War* follows a team of journalists as they head for Washington DC in the hope of interviewing the president before he surrenders to separatist 'western forces' led by Texas and California...

English filmmaker Alex Garland's latest offering has met with waves of critical acclaim. It's also caused its fair share of consternation, however; its depiction of a profoundly polarised America, which has become embroiled in an all-out civil war, has seemed just a little too prescient for some commentators and cinemagoers.

Released Fri 12 April



Challengers

CERT tbc

Starring **Mike Faist, Josh O'Connor, Zendaya, Darnell Appling, Bryan Doo, Shane Harris**
Directed by **Luca Guadagnino**

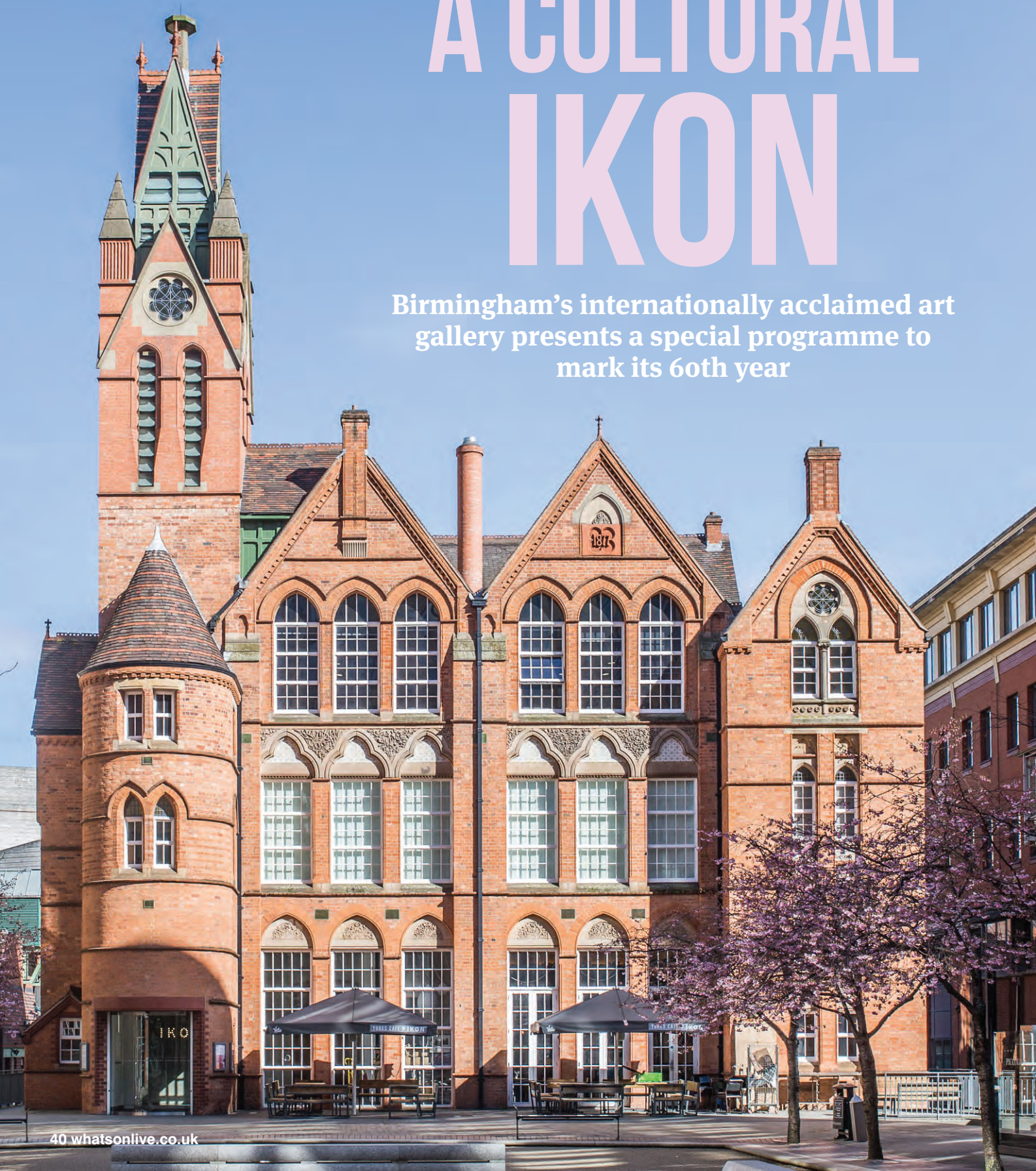
Set in the world of professional tennis, visionary filmmaker Luca Guadagnino's *Challengers* stars Zendaya as Tashi Duncan, a one-time tennis prodigy-turned-coach whose husband has to play her former boyfriend in an important match. As past and present collide, and with tensions running high, Tashi must ask herself, what will it cost to win...

Challengers featured in the prestigious opening slot at last year's Venice Film Festival and drew fulsome praise from festival director Alberto Barbera, who said: "With a light hand and sporting self-confidence, Guadagnino sets no limits to his creative energy in this film, as he deals with topics such as love, friendship and male rivalry, and brings to life an enthralling and affecting movie, full of irony, sensuality and good nature. Cinema in its purest form."

Released Fri 26 April

A CULTURAL IKON

Birmingham's internationally acclaimed art
gallery presents a special programme to
mark its 60th year



Birmingham's Ikon Gallery is marking its 60th year in 2024 by celebrating the art of printmaking and inviting collaborations and contributions from Midlands-based artists. The venue will also host a master portrait by Artemisia Gentileschi as part of National Treasures - a National Gallery initiative forming part of its 200th anniversary programme...

Birmingham's Ikon Gallery has launched a programme of exhibitions which celebrate and commemorate its 60th year.

The spring & summer season includes a close look at a master painting, brand-new art literally hot off the press, and exhibitions ranging from personal introspectives to playful celebrations of the everyday.

Ikon is situated in an ex-schoolhouse in Oozells Square. Surrounded by cherry blossom in springtime, the gallery feels light and inviting. It's a breath of fresh air for those working in the many corporate buildings nearby, or travelling into Birmingham city centre by way of the (in)famous Broad Street.

Start The Press! exhibits in the first-floor gallery until Sunday 21 April. Its centrepiece is an antique flatbed printing press - on loan from Wolverhampton School of Art - an impressive piece of mechanical sculpture in its own right. The press is being used by visiting local printmakers to create art in real time, which fills the walls of the gallery space.

In the anterooms adjacent to the press is a more static collection showcasing the art of printmaking and featuring individual works from Lubaina Himid, David Hockney, Yinka Shonibare and Catherine Yass. There's also a series of evocative 1970s prints from Pamela Scott Wilkie, who first exhibited art at Ikon in 1966.

Differing from the hive of activity on the first floor, Exodus Crooks' Epiphany (Temporaire) inhabits the second-floor gallery in contemplative stillness.

The first room feels like another world - a dark, solitary space with a faint atmosphere of incense. The exhibition takes a journey through the artist's inward and outward reflections, ancestry and spirituality.

Start The Press! and Epiphany (Temporaire) kick off Ikon's 60th-year programme and will be followed by more and varied installations. Ikon has been chosen by London's National Gallery for their National Treasures programme, in which 12 iconic and well-loved paintings from the collection are exhibited by galleries around the UK. All 12

displays launch simultaneously on Friday 10 May - the 200th anniversary of the National Gallery opening - at which point 50% of the UK's population will be within an hour's drive of one of the paintings.

The Ikon's visiting painting is an engaging self-portrait by the Italian Baroque painter Artemisia Gentileschi. Dated around 1616, the artist models herself as Saint Catherine of Alexandria. She is pictured with the remains of a spiked execution wheel; the grizzly inspiration behind the 'Catherine Wheel'.

Ikon will present Gentileschi's self-portrait within Mirror Martyr Mirror Moon, a solo exhibition by Dublin-based contemporary artist Jesse Jones which creates a ritualistic environment, preparing visitors for their viewing of Gentileschi's painting.

"What I'm hoping is that it's a staging, rather than an exhibition with a Gentileschi in it," says Jesse.

Conducting research for the exhibition, Jesse discovered that the Christian story of Saint Catherine's martyrdom is based on an earlier historical figure: the mathematician, philosopher & astronomer Hypatia of Alexandria, a pagan killed by Christians. "So what we see in Saint Catherine is a kind of 'through the looking glass' mirror image." Gentileschi's choice to paint herself as a famous martyr reflects the difficulty and violence of her early life, in spite of which she went on to have a prolific artistic career.

Jesse expands: "At the heart of Mirror Martyr Mirror Moon is this sense of the recurring martyr image through histories of women's experience: through Gentileschi herself and her experience of violence and resistance, through Saint Catherine, the saint who was very famously martyred and was really persecuted for her intellectual rigour, and then the actual origin story, which is Hypatia. There's three female portraits in the one portrait.

"You don't need to know all of this going in, but I hope that people will have an experience of an intimate relationship with the Gentileschi painting looking directly at you, as a viewer."

Jesse's ritualistic surroundings include water

gathered from holy wells in Ireland as an 'eye cure', a curtain that circles as a dancing body in the space, and a 16mm film opening up the stories of the women who inspired the work. In the centre of this is Gentileschi's captivating self-portrait - which is well worth a visit in its own right.

"Whenever we see it in the National Gallery, it's full of people and the room is really bright, and there's a Caravaggio on the other side... She really holds her own in that space, but this framing of her in a more intimate space - it's about having a really intimate encounter with Gentileschi."

In contrast with this reverent installation, Ikon's second-floor gallery will be hosting a major solo exhibition by Dion Kitson: Rue Britannia. Using sculpture, painting, film and found objects, Dion remodels everyday objects to isolate and elevate ubiquitously 'ordinary' sights, such as a burst football or discarded plastic bottle.

The exhibition includes Council House Of Kitson - a new installation featuring a pebble-dashed façade and footage documenting the artist's father.

Outside of the gallery spaces, Ikon boasts a newly renovated shop with a selection of art books, prints and more. Meanwhile, Yorks Café offers scenic, post-gallery refreshment in the form of coffee or brunch looking out over the square.

The gallery is a registered charity, historically supported by funding from Birmingham City Council. At a precarious time for arts venues in the city, Ikon intends to remain free and open to all, maintaining its place as an essential part of Birmingham's cultural landscape.

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Start The Press! and Epiphany (Temporaire) are exhibited at Ikon until Sunday 21 April. Ikon then exhibits National Treasures: Artemisia In Birmingham, Jesse Jones' Mirror Martyr Mirror Moon, and Dion Kitson's Rue Britannia from Friday 10 May until Sunday 8 September



New Narratives In Photography

Midlands Arts Centre (MAC),
Birmingham, until Mon 27 May

A desire to explore narratives of community, public space and diaspora is the motivation behind the work of the four artists whose photos are showcased in this exhibition. The featured creatives - Asad Ali, Hira Noor, Ume Laila and Waleed Zafar - are all based in Pakistan and use photography in new and innovative ways. The exhibition is being presented as part of an international-residency collaboration between two arts organisations, both of which are photography-led: Grain Projects (which is located here in the West Midlands) and Tasweerghar (from Lahore in Pakistan).



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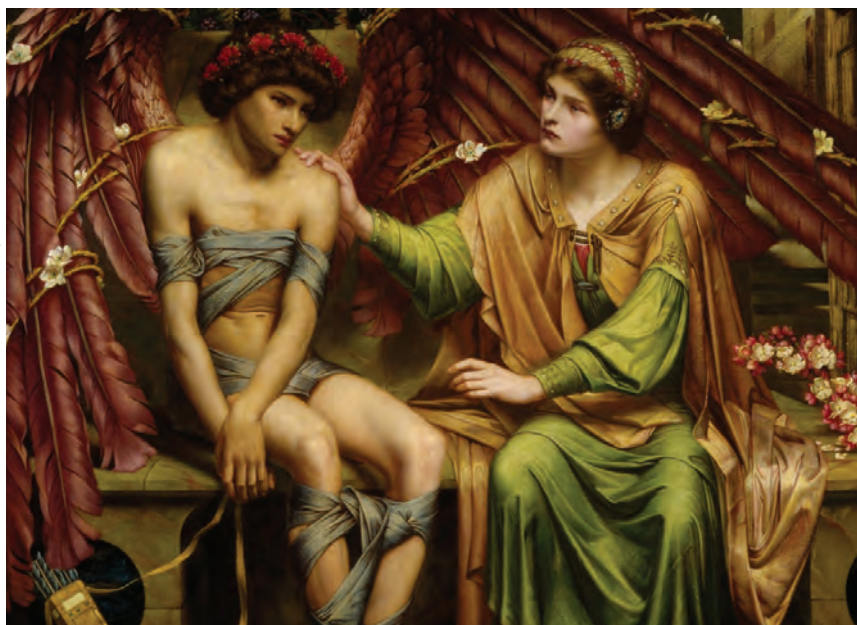
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IKON/60

Ikon is supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England and Birmingham City Council. Ikon Gallery is a limited liability company. Registered charity no. 528888. Images: Ikon Gallery. Photo by Tom Jones.

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Victorian Radicals Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, until Thurs 31 October

Birmingham's impressive collection of Pre-Raphaelite art is here being displayed in the city for the first time in more than five years.

Taking the subtitle 'From The Pre-Raphaelites To The Arts & Crafts Movement', Victorian Radicals features vibrant paintings and exquisite drawings

presented alongside jewellery, glass, textiles and metalwork.

The show provides visitors with the chance to discover the story of the Pre-Raphaelites - Britain's first modern art movement - and learn about their influence on artists and makers well into the 20th century.

Hidden Voices

Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust, Stratford-upon-Avon, until Sun 3 November

Fitting in nicely (just as you'd expect!) with the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust's (SBT) multi-year Women Who Made Shakespeare theme, Hidden Voices focuses on the important females in the life of the bard, exploring their impact as mothers, wives, widows, businesswomen and managers of a busy household at New Place, the site of the grandest house in Jacobean Stratford-upon-Avon. The exhibition also seeks to dispel many of the myths which have persisted across the centuries: that William didn't love wife Anne, because he left her the 'second best bed'; that daughter Susanna was his favourite; that younger daughter Judith was illiterate; and that because Shakespeare's mother Mary was a farmer's daughter, she was less upwardly mobile.

Numerous objects from SBT's collection are featured in the exhibition, including artefacts from the late 16th and early 17th centuries.

Dame Laura Knight - I Paint Today

Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum, until Sun 30 June

The first female artist ever to be welcomed into the Royal Academy, Dame Laura Knight felt a

profound love for Worcestershire and the Malvern Hills. Indeed, her emotional connection to the area provided her with a great deal of artistic inspiration during the later years of her life.

Curated by Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum, this new exhibition, titled I Paint Today, pays homage not only to the artist herself but also to her relationship with the local countryside.

The show features works from the Worcester City collection alongside loans from regional and national collections, including Tate.



A Spirit Inside

Compton Verney, Warwickshire, until Sun 1 September

With its themes ranging from mythology and internal contemplation to external and political expression, A Spirit Inside comprises a selection of works produced by women and non-binary artists across a period of 100-plus years. The featured pieces have been drawn from the Women's Art Collection - Europe's biggest collection of work by female artists - and The Ingram Collection, one of the UK's best collections of modern and contemporary British art. Artists whose work is featured in the show include Leonora Carrington, Winifred Nicholson, Bridget Riley, Man Fung Yi and Perminder Kaur.



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

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

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

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





NEW LIFE IN ART

Polish artist Tatiana Wolska breathes new life into discarded items by repurposing them into captivating sculptures. Plastic bottles, foam from old mattresses, salvaged timbers and rusty nails are all utilised in her art, as she explains in this recent interview...

Currently showing at Birmingham's Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Tatiana Wolska's *Leisure As Resistance* marks the artist's first solo exhibition in a UK institution.

In her artistic practice, Tatiana utilises recycled materials, evoking the resourcefulness ingrained in her during her childhood in communist Poland, where recycling became a necessity due to the scarcity of goods. Describing herself as a 'junk collector', she transforms once-polluting materials into captivating sculptures.

Her drawings mirror her sculptural work, and Tatiana reveals enigmatic forms, with ribbed surfaces and folds, through ink, pen, pencil and paint.

The exhibition at MAC will include a monumental hut created from repurposed wood and materials.

Forming a space for audiences to relax, *Leisure As Resistance* invites people to engage in the workshop & talks programme in the exhibition, read books from the on-site library, or bring items for a clothes and seed swap.

Can you tell us about the emphasis on resourcefulness that underpins the exhibition and the work you are creating?

I use resourcefulness symbolically. I am inspired by barter systems and the transformation of material. This comes from my childhood in Poland, where everything was transformed. When I arrived in France in 2000, everybody was speaking about ecology. I discovered a new appreciation of recycling and sustainable processes.

Do you hope to inspire people to consider being more resourceful in their approach to making and creating art?

Yes, everyone has their own approach. After *Frieze* in London, I received dozens of messages a day from people reacting to the exhibition. Their amazement at the recycled nature of the work inspired people to think about the potential of waste. This is what I wanted to develop for my exhibition in Birmingham, in particular through the workshops. I want to raise people's

awareness and create a place for community and exchange. There is a real exponential and contagious effect to the project, where new ideas are born through dialogue. By organising workshops, there is the activation of a community already working on these subjects. I offer them a place to meet and exchange ideas, so that their projects can come together.

You give found objects a second life through your works and sculpture. What is your collection process like? Where do you find your materials?

I find them everywhere: in the street, in the garbage cans... I collect everything that crosses my path. It also happens that friends mobilise and bring materials directly to my studio. I used to take absolutely everything, but now I need more space in order to create.

The exhibition also features a number of your drawings. Do you see your drawing process as a form of mindfulness?

Drawing has a therapeutic aspect for me. What I qualify as 'lazy drawing' is a completely free creative mechanism that is not influenced by any particular thought process. I draw for myself, without the stress of a useful production or obligation. In a society where everything has to make sense in a precise, organised and efficient way, I need this freedom. I think that drawing allows you to release stress and to free creativity. It is a motor that propels ideas. When someone tells me they have no ideas, I advise them to draw.

A key part of the exhibition will be a makeshift shelter, inviting audiences to engage with a clothes swap, seed swap, and a library. How important is it for you to create a place for leisure and rest within the exhibition?

This idea goes back to the project of the municipal gallery in Nice, which took the form of a utopian vision of nomadic, democratic and relational architecture. In Birmingham, it was important to create a comfortable, welcoming space where people could relax, let their children play, meet up

and have a cup of tea. In the city, there is a lack of spaces where people can relax for free. The exhibition is also a reaction against this economy of comfort and rest, so it is crucial that visitors can make the space their own.

What do you hope audiences gain from attending the series of workshops and participatory events, and from visiting the exhibition?

I hope there will be a collective contamination. Every time I host a workshop, there are interesting exchanges of ideas. A lot of people are working on parallel economies and dreaming of another way of life, far removed from overconsumption and capitalist excess.

Is the idea of collaborating with local community groups something you will continue in your practice?

Yes, I like to amplify the collective aspect via my work. Capitalist society separates us from one another, and the lack of solidarity, distrust of others is prevalent. Collective utopias are unfortunately stigmatised, and I want to go against that in my practice.

Finally, how important is it for you to be showcasing your work in Birmingham?

My exhibition in Birmingham is the realisation of many projects that I have had in mind for a long time. There were already premises in other projects, but never in such an accomplished and polymorphous way as here. Birmingham also has a special character as an industrial city. Writer Caroline Perez talks about the place of women in England and the breakdown of close ties. A network of mutual aid and support is built up in parallel, and it is precisely in this axis that my artistic practice is articulated.

.....

Tatiana Wolska: *Leisure as Resistance* shows at Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), until Sunday 2 June.

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Spring In Your Step! Black Country Living Museum, Dudley, until Sun 7 April

The feather dusters are out, as historic characters at the Black Country Living Museum get busy giving their homes and shops a spring clean.

Visitors will discover homemade tips, how Edwardian families washed their clothes without a washing machine, 1950s hair-care

methods and how to look after prized musical instruments. There will also be Easter celebrations on site, including choir practice, traditional street games, a family discovery trail and a selection of seasonal treats, from hot cross buns to battered scotch eggs!

International Living History Festival

Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove, Sat 20 & Sun 21 April

Avoncroft Museum comes to life as 40-plus living-history reenactment groups set up their camps in and around the venue's historic buildings, representing life from the Stone Age, through the Viking era, to the 1940s and beyond.

Visitors can check out lots of hands-on activities, explore the historically themed market and delve into trader stalls selling historically inspired artefacts.



Spring Steam Gala

Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster, Thurs 18 - Sun 21 April

Severn Valley Railway's four-day festival of steam makes a welcome return this month. The 2024 edition of the show will feature appearances from 72 'Fenchurch', Lambton Tank 29, Stanier Mogul 13268 - in LMS lined black livery and bearing its original number - and the SVR's flagship locomotive, 4930 'Hagley Hall'.

Plus, subject to examination and agreement on testing and commissioning, new-build locomotive 6880 'Betton Grange' will be making its first-ever gala appearance.



Space, Race and Fly RAF Museum Midlands, Cosford, until Sun 7 April

Family-friendly STEM-based events are all the rage at RAF Museum Midlands this Easter holiday!

Attractions include time-travelling science show A Volatile History Of Chemistry

(Tuesday 2 & Wednesday 3 April) and a 3D film about space flight presented in an immersive mobile planetarium (Thursday 4 - Sunday 7 April).

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The Royal Air Force Museum Midlands offers a fun, entertaining day out for all the family – children love our free aviation themed playground. Entry is free. We're open daily from 10.00am.

rafmuseum.org/midlands
01902 376 200



Lysander Avenue, Cosford,
Shropshire, TF11 8UP

The Royal Air Force Museum is incorporated by Royal Charter (RC000922) and is a charity registered in England and Wales (1197541)

Events previews from around the region



St George's Day Extravaganza Tamworth Castle Grounds, Sat 20 April

Tamworth's ever-popular St George's Day Extravaganza is back for 2024 and as usual will be taking over the castle grounds. The line-up of entertainment features a host of festival favourites, including the Grand Medieval Joust, falconry displays, a living-history camp, Epico the dragon, archery and a selection of fairground rides.

Workshops, displays, a medieval encampment and living-history demonstrations also feature, as do numerous traditional children's games, including post-mills, hobby horses, peg dolls, ball & cup, stilts, quoits and Nine Men's Morris.



Model World Live NEC, Birmingham, Sat 27 & Sun 28 April

The brainchild of the organisers of the Great Electric Train Show, the brand-new Model World Live event combines modelling disciplines with model railways, scale modelling displays, demonstrations,

presentations, manufacturer support and trade stands. Event highlights include the chance to check out two full-size, restored military vehicles.

Easter at Thinktank

Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum, until Sun 7 April

As well as enjoying the venue's usual attractions - the 4K Planetarium, MiniBrum, Science Garden and the natural history collections - holiday visitors to Thinktank can also explore the world from space. Every weekday during the Easter fortnight, families can enjoy an interactive show in which they can build the sun, moon and Earth out of people to see how they move in space, discover how rockets take off, recreate the orbits of satellites and learn how they play a big role in wildlife conservation. Thinktank's holiday offer also includes Science Busking, where visitors can find out all about satellites, and sensory stay & play sessions for the under-threes.



Bike4Life Ride Out & Festival 2024

Weston Park, Weston-under-Lizard, Shropshire, Sun 28 April

Raising funds for Midlands Air Ambulance Charity and attracting more than 6,000 bikers and pillioners, Bike4Life Ride Out & Festival is one of the UK's most popular and biggest events of its kind. Alongside famous faces Carl Fogarty, James Whitham, Steve Parrish, Ollie Ollerto and Allen Millyard, the bikers will begin their 26-mile convoy in Shrewsbury, eventually arriving at Weston Park for the Bike4Life Festival, which comes complete with bands, trade stands, food and entertainment.



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Places to visit around the region

Birmingham Cathedral

Colmore Row, Birmingham B3 2QB.
Free to visit

Birmingham Cathedral is the oldest building in the city centre still used for its original purpose. The cathedral has four stained-glass windows, designed by Pre-Raphaelite artist Edward Burne-Jones, which were fully conserved and returned to their original glory last year.



The Black Country Living Museum

Tipton Rd, Dudley, DY1 4SQ.
Adults £25.95, Children (3-16yrs) £12.95

Get stuck into some good old-fashioned fun at this award-winning venue, as you experience the sights, sounds, smells and tastes of the Black Country through rebuilt, replica or recreated shops, houses and industrial workshops.

British Motor Museum

Banbury Rd, Gaydon, CV35 0BJ.
Adults £19, Children £10 (pre-booked online)

The museum features the world's greatest collection of classic, vintage and veteran British cars, with over 400 vehicles on display. Free tours and hands-on family activities provide an opportunity to learn about the stories behind the collection.

Cotswold Farm Park

Guiting Power, Cheltenham, GL54 5FL.
Adults £17.50, Children (4-15yrs) £15.50

Cotswold Farm Park is home to more than 50 flocks and herds of farm animals, provides visitors with the chance to learn about farming past and present, and features an adventure playground, a farm safari, a maze, sandpits, jumping pillows and plenty more.



Roundhouse Birmingham

1 Sheepcote St, Birmingham, B16 8AE.
Activities range in price

A unique Grade II listed building at the heart of Birmingham's canal network, The Roundhouse is dedicated to sharing stories of the city's industrial heritage in new and imaginative ways. Attractions include walks, cycle tours, boat trips and a range of kayak and paddleboarding tours.



The Royal Air Force Museum Midlands

RAF Museum Midlands, Lysander Avenue, Cosford, TF11 8UP. Free to visit

Telling the story of aviation history and housing one of the largest collections of its kind in the UK, RAF Museum Midlands is home to more than 70 historic aircraft displayed in three wartime hangars on an active airfield.

Severn Valley Railway

Station Dr, Kidderminster, DY10 1QX;
Hollybush Rd, Bridgnorth, WV16 4AX.
Freedom of the Line ticket - Adults £25,
Children (4-17yrs) £16.50

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.

Stratford-upon-Avon Butterfly Farm

Swan's Nest Lane, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 7LS. Adults £8.95, Children (3-16yrs) £7.95

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



Sudeley Castle

Winchcombe, Cheltenham, GL54 5JD.
Adults £22, Children (3-15yrs) £10

Walk in the footsteps of notable characters from the mists of time at Sudeley Castle. Boasting a fascinating history stretching back over 1,000 years, the castle is surrounded by 10 award-winning gardens. There's also an adventure playground and a fun fort for younger visitors to enjoy.



Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

Millennium Point, Curzon St, Birmingham, B4 7XG. Adults from £15.50, Children (3-15yrs) from £7.50

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

West Midlands Police Museum

Steelhouse Lane, Birmingham, B4 6BJ.
Adults £10, Children (3-15yrs) £6

Located in a Victorian lock-up, the West Midlands Police Museum showcases an unrivalled collection of police artefacts, explores more than 200 years of policing history and offers visitors the chance to enjoy a selection of hands-on activities.

Weston Park

Weston-under-Lizard, Shifnal, TF11 8LE.
Adults £8.80, Children £5.20 (pre-booked online)

Weston Park house is set in 1,000 acres of beautiful Capability Brown-landscaped parkland. The venue is home to a nationally important art collection, with other attractions including a restaurant, a woodland adventure playground, a miniature railway, a deer park and holiday cottages.



A man with short dark hair, wearing a white blazer over a light blue shirt and a red patterned tie, stands in a dark wooden doorway. He is holding the brass door handle with his right hand. The door behind him has the words "JURY ROOM" faintly visible. To his right, a wooden chair is partially visible. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows.

A LIFE IN THEIR HANDS

**Twelve Angry Men, Reginald Rose's famous courtroom drama,
returns to the Midlands this month**

Starting life as a teleplay, Reginald Rose's famous courtroom drama, *Twelve Angry Men*, continues to grip audiences wherever it's staged. The latest touring version features a host of familiar names, including former *Emmerdale*, *Waterloo Road* and *Casualty* actor Jason Merrells, who plays the key role of Juror Eight. We recently caught up with Jason to find out more...

In the interests of justice, juries always meet in secret and their deliberations stay behind closed doors. But the classic play *Twelve Angry Men* takes us inside those secret discussions as we watch one jury struggle to reach a verdict on an unnamed suspect.

Ideas are explored, opinions voiced, bigotries exposed, arguments fought and minds changed in a drama which remains as resonant today as when it was first aired as a teleplay and film in the 1950s.

The key role is Juror Eight, who forces his fellow panel members to reconsider a decision which is initially made without any investigation of the facts. And gradually the audience sees that this may not be as cut-and-dried a case as they had at first suspected.

The role of Juror Eight is currently being played by Jason Merrells in a UK tour that includes stop-offs in Wolverhampton and Lichfield. The cast also features Michael Greco, Gray O'Brien and Tristan Gemmill.

Jason is a familiar television face, having played businessman Declan Macey in *Emmerdale*, head teacher Jack Rimmer in *Waterloo Road* and receptionist Matt Hawley in *Casualty*. And this isn't the first time he's portrayed Juror Eight.

"The first time round was in 2015 and it was very much a sort of favour to Bill Kenwright," he recalls. "He needed someone to do a small part of the tour, which was already on its way. I was between filming jobs, so it fitted perfectly, and it was a great part, so I snapped his hand off and said yes. I loved my time doing it and was fascinated by it as a piece."

And so when he was asked to join the current tour, Jason jumped at the chance - and then it took on an additional significance. "When I said yes to it, well, shortly afterwards, Bill died, and I'm really glad that we agreed to work together before that happened."

In 1957 *Twelve Angry Men* was made into an Oscar-nominated film with Henry Fonda as Juror Eight. Jason feels its message is just as important nearly 70 years on.

"The play is a New York cross-section of men; it's men because at that time that's what

juries were made up of. America is going through a serious tipping point of change; the Civil Rights movement is beginning the backlash against the way African Americans are treated in all the major cities of America. That is a background noise to 1957 that you can't ignore when you come to approach New York at that time.

"The kid on trial is Puerto Rican. Although that is never mentioned, that was the intention of the writer. And there is casual racism that's thrown around the room. We all have prejudices inside us - in fact, that's one of Juror Eight's speeches. He says that it's very difficult to get rid of your own prejudice but you have to try because if you don't it stops you seeing anything clearly."

And such prejudice hasn't gone away, says Jason.

"It's a really well-made play, and that is its continuing appeal. It just seems to me to have even more resonance now. It feels more pertinent than it did even in 2015. I'm reading about guys on Death Row in America at the moment. There are very strong cases against them being there because of miscarriages of justice or questions about the way the case was handled, and it's exactly what's happening in the play. No-one ever says and no-one ever knows if the kid at the centre of the play is innocent or not, but the benefit of the doubt is enough to say the state shouldn't be killing someone when there's doubt.

"I think this play has got everything. The essence of drama is conflict, and because it's theatre it's also a word-based medium - this is a conflict in argument, so you couldn't get anything more theatrical than that. It's got 12 very different, very distinct, really well-wrought characters, some of whom are very funny, some of whom are disturbing and some of whom you want to root for."

For Jason, Juror Eight may be unnamed but he has an important backstory. "I knew the film and Henry Fonda, and my memory of his style in the show was very quiet, very rooted, very straightforward and very gentle but with a moral firmness. I kind of remembered that, and I suppose that's how I approached it in 2015.

"What was really interesting, and one of the reasons that I wanted to do it again, is when I read it again, I felt quite differently about Juror Eight. I thought much more about who he was. So this is an architect in 1957 in New York; an academic. He's a progressive - he probably listens to bebop, Charlie Parker. He's probably well aware of the injustices going on across the country, and I would think he is someone who is also an abolitionist.

"I don't believe he would be thinking we should be killing anybody, certainly not frying them in a chair with a sponge on their head. I think he's of the opinion that that's barbaric, as am I. So I approached him much more with that in mind, and I think that makes my interpretation of him this time a bit more politically keen to see this guilty verdict turned over. That doesn't mean that I'm ignoring the massive questions that are still there, but I think he's saying: 'Look, there are these doubts, and therefore I'm really, really sure we shouldn't be burning someone alive in a chair.'"

So has Jason been a juror?

"I've never been asked to be on a jury, but I think I would be very careful to convict. It's very hard to keep emotions out of it. Juror Eight is trying to do that, but there are certain cases that click people's buttons. It's hard to keep personal emotions out of it, but I would do my best. The jury system is problematic, but it's better to have a system that has some moral code to it - which is that you must be sure because the burden of proof is on the prosecution, not on the defence. It's not for the defendant to out-and-out prove that you didn't do something; it's up to the prosecution to prove out-and-out that you did. And this is what is explored so well in the play."

.....

Twelve Angry Men shows at Lichfield Garrick from Monday 8 to Saturday 13 April and Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Monday 6 to Saturday 11 May



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Your week-
by-week
listings guide
April 2024

the list

A Midsummer Night's Dream - Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Wed 24 - Sat 27 April

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

What's On

Mon 1 - Sun 7 April



Looking For Me Friend -
Albany Theatre, Coventry
Wed 3 April

Mon 8 - Sun 14 April



Tess - Belgrade Theatre,
Coventry
Wed 10 - Fri 12 April

Mon 15 - Sun 21 April



Aoife Scott - Temperance,
Leamington Spa
Wed 17 April

Mon 22 - Tues 30 April



Cirque du Soleil OVO -
Utilita Arena Birmingham
Thurs 25 - Sun 28 April

VISUAL ARTS IN THE MIDLANDS

Compton Verney, Warwickshire

SENSING VESUVIUS Featuring a range of creative works from students at Kineton High School, in response to the collection's evocative painting, Vesuvius Erupting At Night, until Tues 30 Apr

LANDSCAPE AND IMAGINATION: FROM GARDENS TO LAND ART Exhibition, guest-curated by Professor Christina Payne, using a range of loaned paintings by major artists to investigate the relationship between art, gardens and landscape, until Sun 16 June

REUNITED: THE LAMENTATION ALTERPIECE After 30 years of its central panel being housed in the National Gallery of Scotland's collection, this is the chance to see a rare masterpiece, reunited, until Fri 28 Feb 2025

SCULPTURE IN THE PARK Major new sculpture park, featuring works by eight contemporary artists in response to the grounds and landscape at Compton Verney, until Sun 2 May 2027

Herbert Museum & Art Gallery, Coventry

COVENTRY'S JEWISH COMMUNITY Exhibition exploring a community history that dates back to the 12th century, until Mon 30 Sept 2024

WARWICKSHIRE'S JURASSIC SEA Discover the amazing creatures that lived in Coventry & Warwickshire during the time of the dinosaurs, until Sat 21 Feb 2026

DIPPY IN COVENTRY: THE NATION'S FAVOURITE DINOSAUR Dippy the diplodocus is in Coventry on a three-year loan from the Natural History Museum

Rugby Art Gallery

A HISTORY OF RUGBY IN 50 OBJECTS Exhibition featuring 50 objects from the museum's collection which represent a moment, person or event that helped shape the town, from Sat 7 Oct

QUENTIN BLAKE: BOOK COVERS Exhibition showcasing 60 of Quentin's book covers, from the 1960s to the present day, and featuring first editions alongside reproductions of his original artwork, until Sat 11 May

DOMESTIC FANTASTIC: PRINTS AND PAINTINGS BY CHRIS ORR Exhibition of work by the Royal Academician 'which will challenge and amuse', until Sat 8 June

RUGBY COLLECTION: SELECTED BY CHRIS ORR Exhibition of works from the gallery's own collection, selected

by Orr in conjunction with his visiting exhibition, until Sat 8 June

HINTS FOR BRITISH TOURISTS Re-staging and fictional expansion by Denise Startin of a found pamphlet containing instructions for travel, Tues 9 - Sat 20 Apr

PICTURING RUGBY Paintings, etchings and sketches of Rugby over the years, selected from the museum's collection, Wed 10 Apr - Sat 5 Oct

Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum

OPEN 2024 Showcase for artists living and working in the West Midlands. The Hug, by Laura Adkins, has been announced as the winner - a sculptural celebration of welcome hugs, following social distancing, until Sun 12 May

Nuneaton Museum & Art Gallery

WIV LUV LARRY Celebratory exhibition about local comedian Larry Grayson, featuring letters he wrote, alongside images and ephemera, including his big red book from This Is Your Life, until Sun 2 June

50 YEARS OF CHANGE Exhibition commemorating 50 years since the formation of Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough, until Sun 19 May

Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum

AOTEAROA: MĀORI MYTHS AND LEGENDS OF NEW ZEALAND Spotlight exhibition exploring the vibrant, resilient culture of the Māori people, the myths and legends originating in their country, and the impact of colonialism, until Sun 9 June

Elsewhere:

POP ART AND POETRY A kaleidoscope of Pop ceramics by key artists from around the world, until Sun 7 Apr, Wolverhampton Art Gallery

GENDER EQUALITY: 40 YEARS ON! Exhibition introducing the work and activism of Birmingham-based women in the mid-1980s, until Tues 30 Apr, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

TRANSITIONS: THE IMPACT OF INNOVATION Exhibition exploring the technologies that are bringing cars into the future, until summer 2024, British Motor Museum, Gaydon

NATURAL ELEMENTS Featuring works by Jonny Barrett, conveying moments of interaction between the natural and man-made environment observed during his travels in Granada, Thurs 11 April - Wed 1 May, Number 8, Pershore, Worcs



Big Wolf Band - Temperance, Leamington Spa

Gigs

RUBII Tues 2 Apr, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

LORDI Tues 2 Apr, O2 Institute, Birmingham

JOLIE HOLLAND Tues 2 Apr, Kitchen Garden, Birmingham

BANTER Tues 2 Apr, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

SUNN Tues 2 Apr, hmv Empire, Coventry

ADWAITH Wed 3 Apr, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

EXORCISM + MAGNATAS COURT + DENIED LEGACY Wed 3 Apr, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

SUICIDAL ANGELS + DUST BOLT Wed 3 Apr, Devil's Dog, B'ham

STARSAILOR + ANDREW CUSHIN Wed 3 Apr, O2 Institute, Birmingham

NANOWAR OF STEEL + WARLOCK A.D. Wed 3 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

INCANTATION + CELESTIAL SANCTUARY Wed 3 Apr, The Asylum, Birmingham

AFTER SMOKE CLEARS + MONETOPIA + MELIORA Wed 3 Apr, Subside Bar, Birmingham

SPACED + GOING OFF + UNCERTAINTY Wed 3 Apr, Dead Wax, Birmingham

RUMOURS OF FLEETWOOD MAC Wed 3 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

HANNAH RARITY Wed 3 Apr, Kitchen Garden, Birmingham

TALON Wed 3 Apr, Regal, Tenbury Wells

HAWKWIND Wed 3 Apr, The Halls, Wolverhampton

VAN HOUTEN + HULA GIRLS + MICHAEL B THOMAS Thurs 4 Apr, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

IST IST Thurs 4 Apr, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

SAD CAFÉ Thurs 4 Apr, The Jam House, Birmingham

ELEANOR K Thurs 4 Apr,

The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

SOPHIE FAITH Thurs 4 Apr, Actress & Bishop, Birmingham

ERIC BELLINGER Thurs 4 Apr, O2 Institute, B'ham

NIKKI YEOH Thurs 4 Apr, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

THE LILACS + THE CAVS + JACK CATELL Thurs 4 Apr, The Rainbow, Digbeth, Birmingham

SIMON & OSCAR FROM OCEAN COLOUR SCENE Thurs 4 Apr, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

UK PINK FLOYD EXPERIENCE Thurs 4 Apr, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

THE DUNWELLS Thurs 4 Apr, Temperance, Leamington Spa

CLEARWATER CREEDENCE REVIVAL Thurs 4 Apr, hmv Empire, Coventry

IAN BALLAMY'S IBQT Thurs 4 Apr, Marrs Bar, Worcester

SHOW OF HANDS Thurs 4 Apr, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester



The Libertines - hmv Empire, Coventry

COLDPLACE - COLDPLAY TRIBUTE Thurs 4 Apr, Palace Theatre, Redditch

ELO AGAIN Thurs 4 Apr, Malvern Theatres

THE TYSMS + HIFIDELICA Thurs 4 Apr, 45Live, Kidderminster

AMIKA + HUNTER BAVARO + ANGEL VILE Fri 5 Apr, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

JUNIPER + FILKINS DRIFT + POTTER Fri 5 Apr, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

NO FACE NO CASE + FINAL WORDS + PARJURE + SWARMS UK + SPIRAL DOWN Fri 5 Apr, Devil's Dog, B'ham

THE LEN PRICE 3 + THE HUMDRUM EXPRESS Fri 5 Apr, The Night Owl, Birmingham

CAITY BASER + BETH MCCARTHY Fri 5 Apr, O2 Institute, Birmingham

FLINT FIRE - THE PRODIGY TRIBUTE Fri 5 Apr, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

TROPHY EYES Fri 5 Apr, The Asylum, B'ham

IAIN BALLAMY Fri 5 Apr, 1000 Trades, B'ham

THE RESIDENTS Fri 5 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

ROB.GREEN Fri 5 Apr, Kitchen Garden, Birmingham

BIG WOLF BAND Fri 5 Apr, Temperance, Leamington Spa

SIMPLY RED BY CANDLELIGHT Fri 5 Apr, The Rialto, Coventry

THE LIBERTINES Fri 5 Apr, hmv Empire, Coventry

MAGE + GRUNK + FACE OF A STRANGER + BOURBON HITCHER + TOOTH & DAGGER Fri 5 Apr, Arches Venue, Coventry

THE KILKENNYS Fri 5 Apr, The Henrician, Evesham

ZZ TOPPD Fri 5 Apr, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

AWAKE MY SOUL - THE MUMFORD & SONS STORY Fri 5 Apr, Regal, Tenbury Wells

DUB CATALYST + SUBLINGUAL + BAD TRAFFIC Fri 5 Apr, Marrs



Show Of Hands - Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

Bar, Worcester

GUNS N YORKSHIRE ROSES Fri 5 Apr, 45Live, Kidderminster

MIKA Fri 5 Apr, The Halls Wolverhampton

TAT VISION Sat 6 Apr, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

POST-PARTY + IONA Sat 6 Apr, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

LOW RED MOON + MODERN LITERATURE + INTELLIGENCE OF PLANTS + SEAN THOMPSON-DEWOLFE Sat 6 Apr, The Night Owl, Birmingham

OVERPASS + PASTEL + THE KITES Sat 6 Apr, O2 Institute, Birmingham

BORN ZERO + WITHER + AWAKEN ETERNITY + ERA'S END Sat 6 Apr, The Flapper, Birmingham

THE KILKENNYS Sat 6 Apr, The Core Theatre, Solihull

BACK TO BACHARACH Sat 6 Apr, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

LONDON CALLING PLAY THE CLASH Sat 6 Apr, The Assembly, Leamington Spa

FRASER ANDERSON AND JOHN PARKER Sat 6 Apr, Temperance, Leamington Spa

ABBA REUNION Sat 6 Apr, The Rialto, Coventry

FLINT FIRE - THE PRODIGY TRIBUTE Sat 6 Apr, Arches Venue, Coventry

IFFY CLYRO + KYLE BOSWELL Sat 6 Apr, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

STEADY EDD TRIO Sat 6 Apr, The Market Theatre, Ledbury

BLIND LEMONS Sat 6 Apr, 45Live, Kidderminster

FAY HIELD Sun 7 Apr, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

FIVIO FOREIGN Sun 7 Apr, O2 Institute, Birmingham

GIANT WALKER + TITCHY + INSERO Sun 7 Apr, Subside Bar, Birmingham

SONU NIGAM Sun 7 Apr, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

JAMES BLUNT Sun 7 Apr, Utilita Arena B'ham

THE OCELOTS Sun 7 Apr, Kitchen Garden, Birmingham

SKA TRAIN Sun 7 Apr, Temperance, Leamington Spa

EMPATHY TEST + BLACK NAIL CABARET Sun 7 Apr, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

SNAKE DAVIS Sun 7 Apr, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

THE KING OF POP - MICHAEL JACKSON TRIBUTE Sun 7 Apr, Swan Theatre, Worcester

JOHNNY MARR + GAZ COOMBES Sun 7 Apr, The Halls Wolverhampton

Classical Music

PETER DYKE ORGAN RECITAL Mon 1 Apr, Hereford Cathedral

CONS TEST 2024 Featuring Flowers Band, Fluorescent Brassoescents & The Ambrassadors, Sat 6 Apr, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

TRIBUTE TO STUDIO GHIBLI Featuring Nicolas Horvath (piano). Programme includes works by Joe Hisaishi, Sat 6 Apr, St Paul's Church, Birmingham

NATIONAL YOUTH & NATIONAL CHILDREN'S CONCERT BANDS: SPRING CONCERT 2024 Featuring Adam Broughton & Jonathan Parkes (musical directors) alongside Helen Vollam (trombone). Programme includes works by G Holst, J Williams, S Dodgson & G Kirkhope, Sat 6 Apr, Bridge House Theatre, Warwick

SPIRES PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA: OPERA'S GREATEST HITS Featuring Natasha Agarwal (soprano), Gaynor Keeble (mezzo-soprano), Ed Harrison (tenor) & Peter Lidbetter (bass). Programme includes works by Bizet, Borodin, Mascagni, Puccini & more..., Sat 6 Apr, Burgess Hall, King Henry VIII School, Coventry

Comedy

JOE WILKINSON: WORK IN PROGRESS Tues 2 Apr, The Glee Club, B'ham

JAMIE HUTCHINSON Tues 2 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JOE LYCETT & FRIENDS Wed 3 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

CLOSEUP COMEDY Wed 3 Apr, Herberts Yard, Birmingham

RAY BRADSHAW Wed 3 Apr, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry



COMEDY CLUB 4 KIDS Wed 3 Apr, Macready Theatre, Rugby

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, MC HAMMERSMITH & SUSIE MCCABE Thurs 4 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

TOM LAWNRINSON Fri 5 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

MARK CRAM, JOE SUTHERLAND & KATE MCCABE Fri 5 Apr, Midlands Art Centre (MAC), Birmingham

CLINTON BAPTISTE Fri 5 Apr, The

Albany Theatre, Coventry

JOHN FOTHERGILL, SPRING DAY, MC HAMMERSMITH & SUSIE MCCABE Fri 5 - Sat 6 Apr, The Glee Club, B'ham

JASPER CARROTT Fri 5 - Sun 7 Apr, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

Theatre

MINORITY REPORT Staging of Phillip K Dick's sci-fi thriller, which challenges beliefs about justice and free will in a real-time chase through a London of the future, until Sat 6 Apr, The Rep, Birmingham

BEN AND IMO New play exploring the working relationship of two of the 20th century's greatest musical minds: Benjamin Britten & Imogen Holst, until Sat 6 Apr, Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon



UNDER MILK WOOD: A RADIO PLAY Recreation of the 1954 BBC broadcast of Dylan Thomas' literary classic, Sat 30 Mar - Sat 6 Apr, The Loft Theatre, Leamington Spa

I SHOULD BE SO LUCKY World premiere of the official Stock Aitken Waterman musical, featuring a soundtrack of pop hits from Rick Astley, Kylie Minogue, Jason Donovan, Bananarama and more... Mon 1 - Sat 6 Apr, The Alexandra, Birmingham



A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM The Everyman Theatre Company present an all-new production, featuring inimitable clown Tweedy as Bottom, Tues 2 - Sat 6 Apr, Malvern Theatres

ARTISTE Mr Bean meets the Mona Lisa in this high-energy, paint-splattered comedy, Thurs 4 Apr, Macready Theatre, Rugby

ANIMAL FARM: A TWISTED MUSICAL TAIL British Youth Music Theatre in partnership with Birmingham Hippodrome present a new version of George Orwell's novella, Fri 5 - Sun 7 Apr, Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

ROBIN HOOD Easter panto starring Britain's Got Talent winners Ashleigh



Charlie Cook's Favourite Book - Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

and Sully alongside show finalists Jamie and Chuck. Dancer and choreographer Louie Spence and Easter panto tour favourites Ryan Greaves and Kate Salmon also star, Sat 6 Apr, Palace Theatre, Redditch

PART OF MAIN: BLOODY MARY LIVE!

Theatre, comedy and an interactive set combine as Olivia Miller takes on the role of Mary Tudor and 'tackles the dramas every #queenager deals with: divorced parents, sibling rivalry and religious purges', Sat 6 Apr, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), B'ham

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

Flabbergast Theatre brings a 'rambunctious' approach to Shakespeare's much-loved comedy, Sat 6 Apr, Macready Theatre, Rugby

THE PROMISE World premiere of Deafinitely Theatre's drama, inspired by the 'extraordinary experiences of deaf people living with dementia', Sat 6 - Sat 13 Apr, The Rep, Birmingham

Kid's Theatre

ALICE IN WONDERLAND New staging of Lewis Carroll's much-loved tale, told using live music & puppetry, Tues 2 Apr, Albany Theatre, Coventry

THE LOST FOREST Indigo Moon fuse puppetry and digital projection in a tale of climate change and deforestation for younger audiences, Thurs 4 Apr, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

FIREMAN SAM: THE GREAT CAMPING

ADVENTURE Brand-new show for younger audiences, Thurs 4 Apr, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

THE SOOTY SHOW Join Sooty, Sweep and Soo for a very special birthday party. Guests include Butch the bulldog, Ramsbottom the snake and circus superstar Michael Jordan, Fri 5 Apr, Swan Theatre, Worcester

THE MUSEUM OF MARVELLOUS THINGS Giant puppets, magical effects and

interactive storytelling combine in a production for younger audiences based on Kristina Stephenson's picture book, Fri 5 Apr, Number 8, Pershore

CHARLIE COOK'S FAVOURITE BOOK

Puppetry & song come together in a new stage version of Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler's children's book, Fri 5 - Sun 7 Apr, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

THERE'S A MONSTER IN YOUR SHOW

Brand-new musical stage version of author Tom Fletcher's interactive adventures for big imaginations, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

THE SOOTY SHOW Join Sooty, Sweep and Soo for a very special birthday party. Guests include Butch the bulldog, Ramsbottom the snake and circus superstar Michael Jordan, Sun 7 Apr, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

Dance

GIOVANNI: LET ME ENTERTAIN YOU The Strictly favourite is joined by a cast of professional dancers and West End performers for a show of 'non-stop action', Thurs 4 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham



ROSHNI An intimate crafting of dance and live music, made up of three distinctive and engaging dance works: The Call, The Light, and The Wave, Sat 6 Apr, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

Light Entertainment

LOOKING FOR ME FRIEND: THE MUSIC OF VICTORIA WOOD A whistle-stop tour through some of Victoria Wood's best-loved songs, Wed 3 Apr, Albany Theatre, Coventry

QUEENZ - THE SHOW WITH BALLS

Dazzling divas deliver 'a night of fun and fabulousness' with live vocals and a setlist of party pop anthems, Wed 3 - Fri 5 Apr, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

PADDINGTON IN CONCERT Watch the award-winning 2014 film on a giant HD screen, accompanied by the London Concert Orchestra playing Nick Urata's calypso-infused score live, Fri 5 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

BOB HARRIS & COLIN HALL Join the BBC presenter and author/music journalist for an intimate evening in which they share their mutual love and appreciation for The Beatles, Fri 5 Apr, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

KIDZ BOP: NEVER STOP LIVE TOUR Sing and dance along with the Kidz Bop Kids as they perform today's biggest hits, live on stage, Sat 6 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

TEENA'S EASTER TEASE Variety show hosted by Teena Bizkit. Expect quizzes, stand-up comedy, songs, singalongs, guests, game shows and music bingo, Sat 6 Apr, Palace Theatre, Redditch

DREAMCOAT STARS Keith Jack and stars of Joseph sing a hand-picked selection of hits, Sat 6 Apr, Swan Theatre, Worcester

JERRY SADOWITZ An evening with the 'comedian, magician & psychopath', Sat 6 Apr, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

CANDLELIGHT: A TRIBUTE TO TAYLOR SWIFT

Experience the music of Taylor Swift while surrounded by the gentle glow of candles, Sat 6 Apr, Birmingham Cathedral

CANDLELIGHT: A TRIBUTE TO ABBA

Experience the music of ABBA surrounded by the gentle glow of candles, Sat 6 Apr, Birmingham Cathedral

THE NIGHT SKY SHOW Astronomer and author Adrian West (aka VirtualAstro) presents 'a visual and thought-provoking experience for everyone that looks up and wonders'... Sun 7 Apr, The Alexandra, Birmingham

Events

BRUM HIGHLIGHTS PADDLE TOUR See Birmingham from a different perspective, until Mon 1 Apr, Roundhouse, Birmingham

INSOMNIA THE GAMING FESTIVAL

Immerse yourself in a world of non-stop gaming, with everything from the latest video games to retro classics, until Mon 1 Apr, NEC, B'ham

WORKERS OF THE ROUNDHOUSE TOURS

Pop in for a free drop-in tour and get to know the curious survivor on the canal, until Mon 1 Apr, Roundhouse, Birmingham

BUSTLING BIRMINGHAM KAYAK TOUR

See Birmingham from a different perspective, until Mon 1 Apr, Roundhouse, Birmingham

EXPLORE HIDDEN BIRMINGHAM KAYAK TOUR

Discover Birmingham's canals, exploring areas accessible only by water, until Mon 1 Apr, Roundhouse, Birmingham

EASTER FAMILY FUN ON SAFARI

Safari-themed crafts, until Thurs 4 Apr, Worcestershire County Museum at Hartlebury Castle, Kidderminster

MEGGASTARS EASTER TREASURE HUNT

Find clues around the castle and grounds, and hand in your entry for a chocolate treat at the end, until Thurs 4 Apr, Eastnor Castle, Herefordshire

OUR WORLD FROM SPACE FAMILY SHOW

Build the planets out of people to see how they move in space, discover how rockets take off, recreate the orbits of satellites, and learn how they play a big role in wildlife conservation, until Fri 5 Apr, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

OUR WORLD FROM SPACE BUSKING

Featuring activities designed to give you the chance to look at the world as satellites do, until Fri 5 Apr, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

CRAFTING STREETS OF COVENTRY

Explore Coventry through creative arts and immersive experiences, taking inspiration from the museum's permanent exhibitions, until Sat 6 Apr, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry

EASTER AT THE BUTTERFLY FARM The popular Meet the Mini-Beast, Butterfly Life Cycle and Beetle demonstrations will take place daily with the Education Team, until Sat 6 Apr, Stratford Butterfly Farm, Stratford-upon-Avon

FREE EASTER ACTIVITY - DECORATE AN EASTER EGG

Free cutting & sticking activity for little ones, until Sat 6 Apr, Tudor House Museum, Worcester

BAGS OF FUN - WONDROUS WILDLIFE

Make a prickly hedgehog, flapping butterfly and spiral snake, until Sun 7 Apr, Worcester City Art Gallery and Museum

FAMILY ACTIVITIES - EASTER BUNNY DOOR HUNT

Arrive dressed in your best Easter costume and follow the trail to see if you can find all the bunny doors, until Sun 7 Apr, The Commandery, Worcester

EASTER EGG HUNT Make your way along the trail and find 10 fun activities for the whole family to enjoy, until Sun 7 Apr, Charlecote Park, Warwick

EASTER HALF TERM - FAIRY FOLK AND FEARLESS KNIGHTS Join the fairy-door trail and have a go at knight school, until Sun 7 Apr, St Mary's Guildhall, Coventry

SPACE, RACE AND FLY! A STEM-based event featuring activities, shows and more, until Sun 7 Apr, Royal Air Force Museum Midlands, Cosford



EASTER ADVENTURES Make your way along the trail and find nature-inspired activities for the whole family to enjoy, until Sun 7 Apr, Croome Park, Worcester

EASTER AT AVONCROFT Featuring plenty of Easter activities, including an egg hunt, games and crafts, until Sun 7 Apr, Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove

EASTER ADVENTURES Make your way along the trail and find nature-inspired activities for the whole family to enjoy, until Sun 7 Apr, Hanbury Hall, Droitwich Spa

SPRING SPECTACULAR Meet and handle baby animals, including piglets, lambs and goat kids, until Sun 7 Apr, Hatton Adventure World, Warwick

LAMBING & KIDDING See live births up close and personal, and enjoy talks from the team of experts about all things lambing, until Sun 14 Apr, Cotswold Farm Park, Cheltenham



EASTER ADVENTURE QUEST Hunt for clues in the castle grounds, track down the Easter eggs and get rewarded with a tasty chocolate treat, until Sun 14 Apr, Witley Court, Worcestershire

EASTER EGG HUNT Make your way along the trail and find nature-inspired activities for the whole family to enjoy, until Sun 14 Apr, Upton

House and Gardens, nr Banbury, Warwickshire

STAY AND PLAY Sensory play for little ones, featuring lots of different colours, lights, textures and sounds, Wed 3 Apr, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

EASTER ACCESS DAY Showcasing the range of accessible activities and initiatives on offer at the museum, Wed 3 Apr, British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Warwickshire

FAMILY SESSIONS: WONDROUS WILDLIFE AND ANIMAL HABITATS Use art materials to create the perfect home for your chosen animal, Thurs 4 Apr, Worcester City Art Gallery and Museum

PARTY ANIMALS WITH CORNER EXOTICS Experience 'the captivating world' of animal enthusiast Simon Airey, with over 35 'incredible creatures', Thurs 4 Apr, Regal, Tenbury Wells

EASTER MEETING Featuring seven races, food stalls and entertainment for the children, Thurs 4 Apr, Warwick Racecourse

CINEMATICA Digital project that allows you to create 'mind-controlled' art, Thurs 4 - Sat 6 Apr, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

EASTER AT CHARTERHOUSE Featuring an Easter hunt in the garden, live music and guided tours, Fri 5 - Sat 6 Apr, The Charterhouse, Coventry

KIDS WARHAMMER CLUB Free drop-in table-top gaming club, Sat 6 Apr, Weoley Castle, Birmingham

JAGUAR BREAKFAST MEET Open to all Jaguar owners and enthusiasts, Sat 6 Apr, British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Warwickshire

GUIDED TOUR OF WEOLEY CASTLE Explore Weoley Castle with experienced guides and see real finds from the site on display in the visitor centre, Sat 6 Apr, Weoley Castle, Birmingham

BRUM HIGHLIGHTS PADDLE TOUR See Birmingham from a different perspective, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Apr, Roundhouse, Birmingham

BUSTLING BIRMINGHAM KAYAK TOUR See Birmingham from a different perspective, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Apr, Roundhouse, Birmingham

SPRING MAKERS MARKET Featuring independent makers, artists and designers, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Apr, FarGo Village, Coventry

OPEN HOUSE WEEKEND Go behind the scenes in areas not usually open to visitors, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Apr, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

PUP UP CAFE Meet up with other dogs and their owners, enjoy photo opportunities and unlimited treats, Sun 7 April, The Lost & Found Birmingham

ORIGINS OF MIDDLE-EARTH: JRR



Looking For Me Friend: The Music Of Victoria Wood - The Albany Theatre, Coventry

TOLKIEN AND SAREHOLE GUIDED WALK Guided walk introducing the scenery that inspired JRR Tolkien when he lived near Sarehole Mill as a child, Sun 7 Apr, Sarehole Mill, Birmingham

TOY COLLECTORS FAIR Featuring more than 500 stalls packed with thousands of new and old collectables for sale, Sun 7 Apr, NEC,

Birmingham

SPORTACCORD WORLD SPORT & BUSINESS SUMMIT Presidents and CEOs from global sporting organisations come together for the 18th edition of 'sport's most influential industry gathering', Sun 7 - Thurs 11 Apr, ICC, Birmingham

THE COVENTRY MUSIC MUSEUM

OPENING TIMES

THURSDAY - SATURDAY - 10.00am to 4.00pm
last entry at 3.30pm.

SUNDAYS - 10.00am to 3.00pm
last entry 2.30pm.

ADMISSION

£5.00 - ADULT
£3.00 - CONCESSION
(STUDENTS AND SENIOR CITIZENS)
£3.00 - PEOPLE OF DETERMINATION
FREE FOR CHILDREN UNDER 15*

*CHILDREN MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN ADULT

80 WALSGRAVE ROAD COVENTRY CV2 4ED

Les Misérables

SCHOOL EDITION



10 - 13 April 2024

Bridgehouse Theatre, Warwick

Book tickets



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Jack Blackman - Temperance, Leamington Spa

Gigs

NITIN SAWHNEY Mon 8 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall



BELLA GAFFNEY Mon 8 Apr, Temperance, Leamington Spa

UGLY Tues 9 Apr, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

PAULI THE PSM Tues 9 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

KIRSTEN ADAMSON Tues 9 Apr, Kitchen Garden, Birmingham

FEAST OF FIDDLES Tues 9 Apr, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

DOCTORS OF MADNESS Wed 10 Apr, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

AN EVENING WITH SINATRA Wed 10 Apr, The Jam House, Birmingham

VINCE FREEMAN Wed 10 Apr, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

PUPIL SLICER + COLIGUNS + GOD ALONE Wed 10 Apr, Devil's Dog, Birmingham

KID KAPICHI Wed 10 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

JOHN RICHARDS BAND + PAUL O'NEILL Wed 10 Apr, Red Lion Folk Club, Birmingham

FRANK SINATRA: THE RETIREMENT CONCERT Wed 10 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

THE CARPENTERS EXPERIENCE Wed 10 Apr, Swan Theatre, Worcester

DECLAN MCKENNA + WUNDERHORSE Wed 10 Apr, The Halls, Wolverhampton

TINY DANCER - THE MUSIC OF ELTON JOHN Wed 10 Apr, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

ELEANOR CONWAY Thurs 11 Apr, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

POLICE DOG HOGAN Thurs 11 Apr, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

LOUD LIARS Thurs 11 Apr, The Sunflower Lounge, B'ham

ADMT Thurs 11 Apr, O2 Institute, Birmingham

SONGER + KILLOWEN Thurs 11 Apr, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE PROFESSIONALS Thurs 11 Apr, Castle & Falcon, B'ham

DAGGER THREAT + EGO Thurs 11 Apr, The Asylum, B'ham

ESOTERICA Thurs 11 Apr, The Asylum, Birmingham

THUNDERFK AND THE DEADLY ROMANTICS + KONTROL FREAKS** Thurs 11 Apr, The Asylum, B'ham

KAREN SHARP Thurs 11 Apr, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

EVAN PARKER Thurs 11 Apr, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

SAM CARTER Thurs 11 Apr, Kitchen Garden, Birmingham

OLI JOBES Thurs 11 Apr, Bromsgrove Folk Club

BLACKCOAST + FORAGER + SPANKBOX Thurs 11 Apr, Paradiddles Cafe, Worcester

MARTIN STEPHENSON AND THE DAINTIES Thurs 11 Apr, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

EYES + THE PEOPLES TEMPLE Thurs 11 Apr, 45Live, Kidderminster

YOWL Fri 12 Apr, The Sunflower Lounge, B'ham

LANDSLIDE - FLEETWOOD MAC TRIBUTE Fri 12 Apr, Actress &

Bishop, Birmingham

BLACKLIST + THRASHERWOLF + WARGRAVE + EXAUST Fri 12 Apr, Devil's Dog, Birmingham

IZUZVO + CHANDNI + KITTY BELLA Fri 12 Apr, The Night Owl, Birmingham

O.S.T.R Fri 12 Apr, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

DREAM STATE + GRAPHIC NATURE + FANGS OUT Fri 12 Apr, The Asylum, B'ham

HELL CAN WAIT + DOWNPOUR Fri 12 Apr, Subside Bar, Birmingham

JAMES ALLSOPP QUARTET Fri 12 Apr, 1000 Trades, B'ham

KOLOR Fri 12 Apr, The Crossing, Digbeth, B'ham

BRONNIE Fri 12 Apr, The Rainbow, Digbeth, B'ham

THE BLACKHEART ORCHESTRA Fri 12 Apr, Temperance, Leamington Spa

DEZ DARE + HULA GIRLS Fri 12 Apr, The Tin at The Coal Vaults, Coventry

COLDPLACE Fri 12 Apr, The Rialto, Coventry

HALF MAN HALF BISCUIT Fri 12 Apr, hmv Empire, Coventry

NAMELESS + MONASTERY + ARROW VALLEY + LEAVE NO WITNESS + PUSH Fri 12 Apr, Arches Venue, Coventry

THUNDER HAMMER Fri 12 Apr, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

MADE IN TENNESSEE Fri 12 Apr, The Benn Hall, Rugby

THE DUSTY SHOW Fri 12 Apr, Swan Theatre, Worcester

THE COOPERS + LOZ RABONE Sat 13 Apr, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

JERUB Sat 13 Apr, The Sunflower Lounge, B'ham

DEZ DARE + EXOTIC PETS + EMPTY CUT Sat 13 Apr, The Dark Horse, Moseley

DONNA KEEN Sat 13 Apr, The Night Owl, Birmingham

THE CRYSTAL TEARDROP Sat 13 Apr, The Night Owl, Birmingham

LORD APEX Sat 13 Apr, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE K'S + THE CLAUSE + EIGHTY EIGHT MILES Sat 13 Apr, O2 Institute, Birmingham

TANKUS THE HENGE Sat 13 Apr, O2 Institute, Birmingham

ENDORPHINMACHINE - PRINCE TRIBUTE Sat 13 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

BRYSON TILLER Sat 13 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

ULTIMATE RNB Sat 13 Apr,



Bare Jams - Marrs Bar, Worcester

Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

THE BILLY JOEL SONGBOOK Sat 13 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

UB40 FEATURING ALI CAMPBELL + BITTY MCLEAN Sat 13 Apr, Utilita Arena Birmingham

SOUL TRAIN Sat 13 Apr, The Crossing, Digbeth, B'ham

THE SONGS OF JONI MITCHELL Sat 13 Apr, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

THE OVERTONES Sat 13 Apr, The Assembly, Leamington Spa

THE TERRAPLANES BLUES BAND Sat 13 Apr, Temperance, Leamington Spa

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER - MOTOWN SHOW Sat 13 Apr, Stratford Playhouse

THE BOWIE EXPERIENCE Sat 13 Apr, hmv Empire, Coventry

21ST CENTURY ABBA Sat 13 Apr, The Henrician, Evesham

LONDON CALLING PLAY THE CLASH Sat 13 Apr, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

LOBSTER + WHO KILLED THE BEAR + THE SEVERN COLLECTIVE Sat 13 Apr, Marrs Bar, Worcester

TALON Sat 13 Apr, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

TASHA LEAPER AS MADONNA Sat 13 Apr, Swan Theatre, Worcester

JAGUAR SUN Sun 14 Apr, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

THE DUNWELLS Sun 14 Apr, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

THE REGGULITES Sun 14 Apr, The Night Owl, Birmingham

SNUFF Sun 14 Apr, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

LEMAR Sun 14 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

MIK ARTISTIK'S EGO TRIP Sun 14 Apr, Kitchen Garden, Birmingham

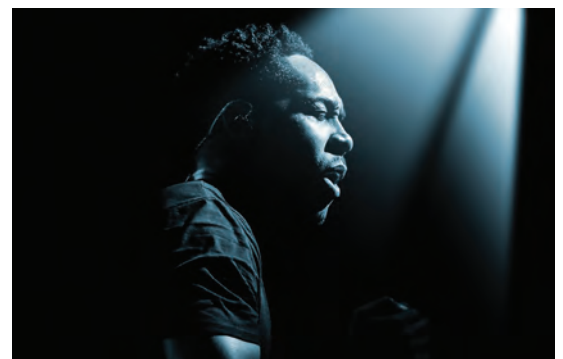
JACK BLACKMAN Sun 14 Apr, Temperance, Leamington Spa

DAOIRI FARRELL Sun 14 Apr, Temperance, Leamington Spa

LAUREN SOUTH AND FRIENDS Sun 14 Apr, Albany Theatre, Coventry

BARE JAMS Sun 14 Apr, Marrs Bar, Worcester

BACK TO BACHARACH Sun 14 Apr, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre



Lemar - Birmingham Town Hall



Tess - Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

Classical Music

LUNCHTIME ORGAN CONCERT WITH THOMAS TROTTER Programme includes works by N Gade, J Gardner, C Frances-Hoad, D Bourgeois & CM Widor, Mon 8 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CBSO: BERLIOZ, SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE Featuring Kazuki Yamada (conductor) & Benjamin Grosvenor (piano). Programme includes works by Fauré, Prokofiev & Berlioz, Wed 10 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

PAUL LEWIS: SCHUBERT PIANO SONATAS Programme comprises Schubert's piano sonatas No 19 in C minor, No 20 in A major & No 21 in B flat major, Thurs 11 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

ORCHESTRA OF THE SWAN: ENTRANCED Candlelit concert directed by David Le Page. Programme includes works by E Satie, Vivaldi & JS Bach - together with works by Pink Floyd, Brian Eno & Radiohead, Thurs 11 Apr, Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon

DUDOK QUARTET AMSTERDAM Featuring Judith van Driel & Marleen Wester (violins), Marie-Louise de Jong (viola) & David Faber (cello). Programme includes works by Mozart, J Roukens & Tchaikovsky, Thurs 11 Apr, Malvern Theatres

ARMONICO CONSORT & BAROQUE PLAYERS Featuring Christopher Monks (director). Programme includes works by Mozart & Bach, Fri 12 Apr, Malvern Theatres

CBSO: BERLIOZ, THE DAMNATION OF FAUST Featuring Kazuki Yamada (conductor), Pene Pati (tenor), Grace Durham (mezzo-soprano), Nahuel di Pierro (baritone), Jonathan Lemalu (bass), CBSO Choruses & Men from the Hallé Choir, Sat 13 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE PEOPLE'S ORCHESTRA: ONCE UPON A TIME Also featuring The People's

Massed Show Choir. Programme includes popular scores from 'timeless tales', including The Wizard of Oz, Tangled, Harry Potter, Bridgerton & more... Sat 13 Apr, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

ARMONICO CONSORT & BAROQUE PLAYERS Featuring Christopher Monks (director) & Baroque Players. Programme includes works by Mozart & JS Bach, Sat 13 Apr, St Mary's Church, Warwick

Comedy

FRANKIE BOYLE Mon 8 - Tues 9 Apr, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

JOSH BAULF & FRIENDS Tues 9 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

RAY BRADSHAW Wed 10 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JOE LYCETT & FRIENDS Wed 10 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, CHRISTIAN SCHULTE-LOH & ELEANOR TIERNAN Thurs 11 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

LAURA SMYTH Thurs 11 - Fri 12 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

DANIEL O'REILLY Fri 12 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

DAVE WILDER, GEORGE EVERITT & COMICS TBC Fri 12 Apr, Ecgwins Club, Evesham

MIKE GUNN, COLE PARKER, DAVID EAGLE & JON PEARSON Fri 12 Apr, Abbey Theatre, Nuneaton

ROBIN MORGAN, LEROY BRITO, CHRISTIAN SCHULTE-LOH & ELEANOR TIERNAN Fri 12 - Sat 13 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

GEOFF NORCOTT Sat 13 Apr, Palace Theatre, Redditch

SORIN PÂRCĂLAB, CRISTI POPESCO & IOANA LUIZA Sun 14 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

SLIM, AXEL BLAKE, JUNIOR BOOKER, WILSON & KANE BROWN Sun 14 Apr,

The Glee Club, Birmingham

STAND UP COMEDY EVENING Sun 14 Apr, BCM Craft Ale Bar, Evesham

Theatre

TWELVE ANGRY MEN Touring version of Reginald Rose's famous courtroom drama, starring Jason Merrells (Casualty/Emmerdale), Gray O'Brien (Coronation Street/Peak Practice), Tristan Gemmill (Coronation Street/Casualty), Michael Greco (EastEnders), Ben Nealon (Soldier Soldier) and Gary Webster (Minder/Family Affairs), Mon 8 - Sat 13 Apr, Lichfield Garrick

WAITING FOR... WAITING FOR GODOT The Nonentities present Dave Hanson's tale of two hapless understudies who occupy their time backstage trying to understand art, life, theatre and their own precarious existence, Mon 8 - Sat 13 Apr, The Rose Theatre, Kidderminster

SLEUTH Todd Boyce (Coronation Street) & Neil McDermott (EastEnders) star in a new version of Anthony Shaffer's dark psychological thriller, Mon 8 - Sat 13 Apr, Malvern Theatres

AUSTEN'S WOMEN: LADY SUSAN One-woman show starring Rebecca Vaughan and based on Jane Austen's first full-length work, Tues 9 Apr, Lichfield Garrick

SHREK THE MUSICAL Join Shrek and his trusty sidekick Donkey as they set out on a quest to defeat the fearsome dragon and rescue the beautiful Princess Fiona. Based on the much-loved Dreamworks movie, Tues 9 - Sun 14 Apr, The Alexandra, B'ham

EMMA RICE'S BLUE BEARD A music-fuelled feminist revenge plot 'infused with high comedy, tragedy, romance, and just a sprinkling of spine-tingling horror', Tues 9 - Sat 20 Apr, The Rep, Birmingham

TESS A groundbreaking adaptation of Thomas Hardy's classic novel, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Wed 10 - Fri 12

Apr, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

COMMUNITY SERVICE Stan's Cafe present an emotional and uplifting theatre show inspired by the life of Trevor Prince, one of the Midlands' first Black police officers, Wed 10 - Sat 13 Apr, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

LES MISERABLES SCHOOL EDITION Spa Theatre Juniors present an amateur version of the legendary musical, Wed 10 - Sat 13 Apr, Bridge House Theatre, Warwick

THE MAD ONES A brand-new musical based on Kait Kerrigan & Bree Lowdermilk's tale of dreams and expectations, Wed 10 - Sat 20 Apr, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

UNFORTUNATE: THE UNTOLD STORY OF URSULA THE SEA WITCH Critically acclaimed smash-hit parody musical starring Shawna Hamic (Orange Is The New Black) as Ursula and River Medway (RuPaul's Drag Race) as Ariel, Thurs 11 - Sat 13 Apr, Birmingham Hippodrome

LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST Luke Thompson (Bridgerton) and Tony Gardner (Gentleman Jack/Last Tango In Halifax) make their RSC debuts in a contemporary take on Shakespeare's vibrant comedy, Thurs 11 Apr - Sat 18 May, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

CARMEN Ukrainian Opera & Ballet Theatre Kyiv present Bizet's tale of passion and sexual jealousy, Fri 12 Apr, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

THE MIKADO Amateur version presented by The Farndale Avenue Housing Estate Townswomen's Guild Operatic Society, Fri 12 - Sun 14 Apr, The Dovehouse Theatre, Solihull

ON GOLDEN POND Amateur version of John Evans' touching and funny study of a spirited couple facing their twilight years, Fri 12 - Sat 20 Apr, Priory Theatre, Kenilworth

ELLEN KENT: MADAMA BUTTERFLY Acclaimed production of Puccini's heartbreaking love story. Korean



Carmen - Wolverhampton Grand Theatre & Malvern Theatres

Monday 8 - Sunday 14 April

soprano Elena Dee stars. Sung in Italian with English surtitles, Sat 13 Apr, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

LOVE FROM A STRANGER The Crescent Theatre Company present an amateur version of Agatha Christie's psychological thriller, which examines the mind of a serial killer, Sat 13 - Sat 20 Apr, The Crescent Theatre, B'ham

CARMEN Ukrainian Opera & Ballet Theatre Kyiv present Bizet's tale of passion and sexual jealousy, Sun 14 Apr, Malvern Theatres

Kids Theatre

DEAR ZOO LIVE! Interactive show for younger audiences, based on Rod Campbell's much-loved lift-the-flap book, Thurs 11 - Tues 16 Apr, Birmingham Hippodrome

Dance

MEHEK Aakash Odedra Company and Aditi Mangaldas Dance Company present a choreographed version of an unspoken and overlooked love story, Tues 9 Apr, Birmingham Hippodrome

Light Entertainment

BOB BROLLY & FRIENDS Midday variety show featuring vocalist Miss Beth Belle, comedian Doug Parker & multi-instrumentalist Andy Eastwood, Mon 8 Apr, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

BAILEY J MILLS: UNFILTERED & SCUMMY Comedy, play, gameshow and sketch show combine as audiences are taken on 'a rollercoaster journey through the world of the rising star and social sensation', Wed 10 Apr, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

ANTIQUES AND A LITTLE BIT OF NONSENSE Starring Philip Serrell, Charlie Ross & Christina Trevanion - three TV personalities from the world of antiques, Thurs 11 Apr, Swan Theatre, Worcester

FORBIDDEN NIGHTS Celebrating nine years of muscles, mayhem and over 11,000 shirt rips, Thurs 11 Apr, Palace Theatre, Redditch

THAT'LL BE THE DAY Comedy sketches, impersonations and music combine in this popular touring show celebrating iconic moments in pop culture from the 1950s through to the

1980s, Thurs 11 - Fri 12 Apr, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

WEST END CAMP: THE GREATEST SHOW Featuring songs and performances from musical theatre, presented by Coventry's 'premier performing arts school', Fri 12 - Sat 13 Apr, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

ALED JONES: FULL CIRCLE One-man show in which Aled shares stories from his remarkable career, Sat 13 Apr, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

Events

MINI MAKERS: MESSY PLAY Discover the fun of rain-based activities with the theme April Showers, Thurs 11 Apr, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry

2024 BETMGM PREMIER LEAGUE DARTS Night 11 of the Premier League, Thurs 11 Apr, Utilita Arena B'ham

80'S SILENT DISCO 'Some of the UK's best 1980s DJs' play all your favourite tunes in the illuminated surroundings of the cathedral, Fri 12 Apr, Coventry Cathedral

BUSTLING BIRMINGHAM KAYAK TOUR See Birmingham from a different

perspective, Fri 12 - Sun 14 Apr, Roundhouse, Birmingham

STEP INTO STORIES An immersive experience with bestselling author MG Leonard, Sat 13 Apr, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

TALK AND TOUR - MEET THE RESIDENTS Join volunteers for talks on some of the residents of London Road Cemetery, Sat 13 Apr, Anglican Chapel, London Road Cemetery, Coventry

ORIGINS OF MIDDLE-EARTH: JRR TOLKIEN AND SAREHOLE GUIDED WALK Guided walk introducing the scenery that inspired JRR Tolkien when he lived near Sarehole Mill as a child, Sun 14 Apr, Sarehole Mill, B'ham

THE MACABRE MUSEUM - STORIES OF MURDER AND MAYHEM Hear tales of the real Peaky Blinders, find out about Birmingham's connection to Jack the Ripper, and check out some of the most notorious items in the archive, Sun 14 Apr, West Midlands Police Museum, Birmingham

BRUM HIGHLIGHTS PADDLE TOUR See Birmingham from a different perspective, Sun 14 Apr, Roundhouse, Birmingham



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Aoife Scott - Temperance, Leamington Spa

Gigs

LULU Mon 15 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall
FLATS AND SHARPS Mon 15 Apr, Temperance, Leamington Spa
SLUM VILLAGE Tues 16 Apr, O2 Institute, Birmingham
ALEX HART Tues 16 Apr, Temperance, Leamington Spa
FEAST OF FIDDLES Tues 16 Apr, Stratford Playhouse
DAOIRÍ FARRELL Tues 16 Apr, Regal, Tenbury Wells
AOIFE SCOTT Wed 17 Apr, Temperance, Leamington Spa
KAISER CHIEFS Wed 17 Apr, The Halls, Wolverhampton
OMNI Thurs 18 Apr, Hare & Hounds, B'ham
ALFIE JUKES Thurs 18 Apr, O2 Institute, Birmingham
BAS Thurs 18 Apr, O2 Institute, Birmingham
TWOMANTING Thurs 18 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham
CALYPSO MOON Thurs 18 Apr, Temperance, Leamington Spa
GEORGE BOOMSMA + DAN WILLIAMS Thurs 18 Apr, Regal, Tenbury Wells
CLOUDBASE + AUDIOGENIKA Thurs 18 Apr, 45Live, Kidderminster
TALON Thurs 18 Apr, Rose Theatre, Kidderminster
ERIC CANTONA Thurs 18 Apr, Wulfrun Hall, Wolverhampton

SEB LOWE Fri 19 Apr, O2 Institute, B'ham
CAM COLE Fri 19 Apr, O2 Academy, B'ham
ELIZA CARTHY Fri 19 Apr, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), B'ham
EDUARDO MARTIN & AHMED DICKINSON Fri 19 Apr, Temperance, Leamington Spa
ROBIN ADAMS + NOWHERE CLUB + KEIRON FARROW Fri 19 Apr, The Tin at The Coal Vaults, Coventry
AMBRIUS + CHAPLAIN + MEGALOCEROS + SERMON + KUBLA KHAN Fri 19 Apr, Arches Venue, Coventry
RADIO GAGA - QUEEN TRIBUTE Fri 19 Apr, Albany Theatre, Coventry
A BAND CALLED MALICE Fri 19 Apr, Queens Hall, Nuneaton
GREY WOLF Fri 19 Apr, Regal, Tenbury Wells
MOVING PICTURES - RUSH TRIBUTE Fri 19 Apr, Marris Bar, Worcester
MOMENTS OF PLEASURE - KATE BUSH TRIBUTE Fri 19 Apr, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester
THE ELO EXPERIENCE Fri 19 Apr, Palace Theatre, Redditch
SOUNDS OF SEATTLE Fri 19 Apr, 45Live, Kidderminster
EVERYONE YOU KNOW Sat 20 Apr, O2 Institute, Birmingham
JON PARDI + DILLON CARMICHAEL Sat 20 Apr, O2 Institute, Birmingham
STANDIN MAN Sat 20

Apr, The Asylum, Birmingham
JETHRO TULL Sat 20 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham
THIRTY SECONDS TO MARS Sat 20 Apr, Utilita Arena Birmingham
FROM THE JAM + PURPLE HEARTS Sat 20 Apr, The Assembly, Leamington Spa
GREG COULSON BAND Sat 20 Apr, Temperance, Leamington Spa
TOM HINGLEY + MARQUIS DRIVE + DANNY ANSELL Sat 20 Apr, hmv Empire, Coventry
THE TIME OF OUR LIVES Sat 20 Apr, The Henrician, Evesham
QUO CONNECTION Sat 20 Apr, Queens Hall, Nuneaton
THE 4 OF US + SMITH & BREWER Sat 20 Apr, Regal, Tenbury Wells
STIPE - R.E.M. TRIBUTE Sat 20 Apr, Marris Bar, Worcester
TRUE STRAYS Sat 20 Apr, Drummonds, Worcester
SLEEP IN MOTION Sat 20 Apr, Paradiddles Cafe, Worcester
LOGICALTRAMP Sat 20 Apr, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester
FOREVER ELTON Sat 20 Apr, Palace Theatre, Redditch
ANTARCTIC MONKEYS Sat 20 Apr, The Halls, Wolverhampton
ROB LAMBERTI: PERFECTLY GEORGE Sat 20 Apr, The Halls Wolverhampton
THE WARNING Sun 21 Apr, O2 Institute, Birmingham
OKEAN ELZY Sun 21 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham
JANE WEAVER Sun 21 Apr, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham
TANI'S JAZZ QUARTET Sun 21 Apr, Temperance, Leamington Spa
LEGENDS: THE DIVAS Sun 21 Apr, Albany Theatre, Coventry

Classical Music

LEONKORO QUARTET Featuring Jonathan Schwarz & Amelie Wallner (violins), Mayu Konoe (viola) & Lukas Schwarz (cello). Programme includes works by Schubert, Janáček and Beethoven, Mon 15 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall
DRESDEN PHILHARMONIC Featuring Stanislav Kochanovsky (conductor) and Maria Loudenitch (violin). Programme includes works by Mussorgsky, Shostakovich & Tchaikovsky, Tues 16 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham
CBSO: BRITTEN & TCHAIKOVSKY Featuring Gergely Madaras (conductor) & Ian Bostridge (tenor). Programme also includes Thorvaldsdottir's Dreaming, Wed 17 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham
CBSO: CLASSIC FM HALL OF FAME Featuring Michael Seal (conductor), John Suchet (presenter) & Tessa Lark (violin). Programme includes works by Mozart, Tchaikovsky, Vaughan Williams, Debussy & more... Fri 19 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE CENTRAL BAND OF THE RAF & RBC WIND ORCHESTRA Featuring Lt Michael Parsons (Director). Programme includes works by Tomlinson & John Williams, Fri 19 Apr, Bradshaw Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire
ORCHESTRA OF THE SWAN: SAFETY LAST Screening of Harold Lloyd's 1923 comedy, accompanied by a new live score by artistic director, David Le Page, Fri 19 Apr, Number 8, Pershore, Worcestershire

LUNCHTIME RECITAL Featuring Taya Ashley-Timms (voice), Ema Jasper (piano) & Tom Lindsay (piano), Fri 19 Apr, St Mary's Church, Warwick
MATTHEW COLERIDGE: REQUIEM Featuring Matthew Coleridge (composer & conductor), Piers Maxim (organ), Austin Thomas (cello), Sara Jane Griffiths (soprano) & Wolverhampton Grammar School Chamber Choir, Sat 20 Apr, Great Malvern Priory
ORGAN SPECTACULAR CONCERT Raising funds for Worcester Cathedral Choristers Association, Sat 20 Apr, Worcester Cathedral

Comedy

MIKE RICE Wed 17 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham
JOE LYCETT & FRIENDS Wed 17 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham
COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, MARC JENNINGS & TAMER

KATTAN Thurs 18 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham
ALFIE MOORE Thurs 18 Apr, Palace Theatre, Redditch
PETER KAY Fri 19 Apr, Utilita Arena Birmingham
JULIAN CLARY Fri 19 Apr, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa
FRANKIE ALLEN Fri 19 Apr, The Rialto, Coventry
ANDREW BIRD, LINDSEY SANTORO, ASHLEY FRIEZE & CARL JONES Fri 19 Apr, South Redditch Sports & Social Club
MARC JENNINGS, TAMER KATTAN, SIMON WOZNIAK & VICTOR DANIELS Fri 19 - Sat 20 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham
THE COMEDY STORE ON THE ROAD Sat 20 Apr, The Albany Theatre, Coventry
MC HAMMERSMITH Sun 21 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham
FIN TAYLOR & RED RICHARDSON Sun 21 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

PRESSURE Amateur version of David Haig's drama, which follows the high-stakes decisions of a weather forecaster during World War Two, Mon 15 - Sat 20 Apr, Talisman Theatre, Kenilworth
THE DRIFTERS GIRL Acclaimed musical telling the story of The Drifters' legendary manager, Faye Treadwell, Tues 16 - Sat 20 Apr, Birmingham Hippodrome
THE BOY AT THE BACK OF THE CLASS Onjali Q Raúf's warm-hearted tale highlights the power of friendship and kindness in a world that doesn't always make sense, Tues 16 - Sat 20 Apr, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre
DROP THE DEAD DONKEY The smash-hit TV series comes to the stage. Featuring original cast members Susannah Doyle, Robert Duncan, Ingrid Lacey, Neil Pearson, Jeff Rawle, Stephen Tonkinson and Victoria Wicks, Tues 16 - Sat 20 Apr, The Alexandra, Birmingham
ME AND MY GIRL Worcester Operatic & Dramatic Society present an amateur version of Noel Gay's musical comedy, with dialogue rewritten by Stephen Fry, Tues 16 - Sat 20 Apr, Swan Theatre, Worcester
SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL Fresh Prince Of Bel-Air actor Joseph Marcell stars in a new production of Richard Sheridan's fast-paced comedy, Tues 16 - Sat 20 Apr, Malvern Theatres
RUSH Telling the story of Reggae music and the Windrush generation, and how their music took the world by storm, Wed 17 Apr, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

PIED PIPER The Battersea Arts Centre Beatbox Academy present the world premiere of Conrad Murray's hip-hop musical, which reimagines the Brothers Grimm fairytale, Wed 17 - Sat 20 Apr, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

THE BUDDHA OF SUBURBIA Emma Rice stage adaptation of Hanif Kureishi's exploration of family, friends, sex, theatre and belonging, Thurs 18 Apr - Sat 1 June, Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

THE METAMORPHOSIS Amateur version of Franz Kafka's classic story, Fri 19 Apr, The Civic Hall, Stourport

VENUS AND ADONIS Playbox Theatre's Shakespeare Young Company present a cabaret evening featuring poetry, dance & music, Sat 20 - Sun 21 Apr, The Dream Factory, Warwick

DEATHTRAP Amateur version of Ira Levin's classic comedy thriller, Sat 20 - Sat 27 Apr, Rugby Theatre

ELLEN KENT: MADAMA BUTTERFLY Acclaimed production of Puccini's heartbreaking love story. Korean soprano Elena Dee stars. Sung in Italian with English surtitles, Sun 21 Apr, The Alexandra, Birmingham

Dance

PHOENIX DANCE: BELONGING: LOSS. LEGACY. LOVE. A 'powerfully visceral and thought-provoking' new triple bill exploring the nuances of human experience. Programme includes Dane Hurst's Requiem, Miguel Altunaga's Cloudburst and Marcus Jarrell Willis' Terms Of Agreement, Fri 19 Apr, Malvern Theatres

U DANCE WEST MIDLANDS A platform for young dancers from across the region to showcase their skills, Sat 20 Apr, Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

Light Entertainment

THE POST OFFICE SCANDAL - THE INSIDE STORY Journalist & broadcaster Nick Wallis reveals even more shocking details and stories about 'the scandal that has gripped the nation', Mon 15 Apr, The Civic Hall, Stourport

THE SENSATIONAL 60S EXPERIENCE Brand-new show packed with nostalgia and featuring Dozy Beaky Mick & Titch, The Tremes (former members of The Tremeloes), The Fortunes, The Swinging Blue Jeans & Vanity Fare, Tues 16 Apr, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

THAT'LL BE THE DAY Comedy sketches, impersonations and music combine in this popular touring show celebrating iconic moments in pop

culture from the 1950s through to the 1980s, Thurs 18 Apr, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

THE QUEEN'S CARTOONISTS Music from over 100 years of animation from around the world, performed live on stage, Fri 19 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

NEWLYWEDS: THE HONEYMOON TOUR Jamie Laing and Sophie Habboo share their 'hilarious experiences navigating married life', Sun 21 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Talks & Spoken Word

JOHN ROBB: DO YOU BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF ROCK 'N' ROLL? Join the bestselling author & music journalist as he talks about a life in music - including inventing the word Britpop, and his adventures on the post-punk frontline, Thurs 18 Apr, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

Events

MINI MOTORISTS MONDAYS Make racing cars from cardboard tubes and craft materials, Mon 15 Apr, British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Warwickshire

BLOSSOM BATHING Help yourself to a mat and relax beneath the beautiful apple blossom, Mon 15 - Sun 28 Apr, Hanbury Hall, Droitwich Spa

TEA DANCE SESSION Featuring three hours of music, dancing and screened images of bygone times, Tues 16 Apr, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry

WWE LIVE See your favourite WWE superstars in action, Wed 17 Apr, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

SPRING STEAM GALA Featuring 72 'Fenchurch', Lambton Tank 29 and 6880 'Betton Grange', Thurs 18 - Sun 21 Apr, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

BUSTLING BIRMINGHAM KAYAK TOUR See Birmingham from a different perspective, Fri 19 - Sun 21 Apr, Roundhouse, Birmingham

LET'S WATCH AND MAKE: FINDING NEMO Free guided craft activity followed by a screening of the popular Pixar film, Sat 20 Apr, Coventry Cathedral

OKTAGON 56 MMA A fight card packed with British talent, Sat 20 Apr, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

RUNWAY 25 PRESENTS OPPOSING SOLO An evening with former United States Navy Blue Angels display pilot Mark 'Utah' Provo, Sat 20 Apr, The Royal Air Force Museum Midlands, Cosford

PINHOLE CAMERA MAKING WITH CREATIVE IN NATURE Make your own



Phoenix Dance: Belonging: Loss. Legacy. Love - Malvern Theatres

pinhole camera and process your own images from them, Sat 20 Apr, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry

INTERNATIONAL LIVING HISTORY FESTIVAL Featuring 40-plus Living History reenactment groups representing life from the Stone Age, through the Viking era, to the 1940s and beyond, Sat 20 - Sun 21 Apr, Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove

BLOSSOM AT BADDESLEY CLINTON Take a stroll through the orchard and enjoy seeing the trees in bloom, Sat 20 - Sat 27 Apr, Baddesley Clinton, Warwickshire

ORIGINS OF MIDDLE-EARTH: JRR TOLKIEN AND SAREHOLE GUIDED WALK Guided walk introducing the scenery that inspired JRR Tolkien when he lived near Sarehole Mill as a child, Sun 21 Apr, Sarehole Mill, B'ham

Adam Henson's
COTSWOLD FARM PARK

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THIS SPRING

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Rammlied - Arches Venue, Coventry

Gigs

DANIEL BEDINGFIELD
Mon 22 Apr, Symphony
Hall, Birmingham



ROYAL SOUTH Tues 23
Apr, Hare & Hounds,
Birmingham

**BARRY STEELE - THE ROY
ORBISON STORY** Tues 23
Apr, The Alexandra,
Birmingham

FINDLAY NAPIER Tues 23
Apr, Temperance,
Leamington Spa

**KATHRYN TICKELL AND
THE DARKENING** Tues 23
Apr, Huntingdon Hall,
Worcester

MICHAEL MARCAGI Wed
24 Apr, O2 Institute,
Birmingham

THE ACADEMIC Wed 24
Apr, O2 Academy,
Birmingham

BOYZ II MEN Wed 24
Apr, O2 Academy,
Birmingham

**PETE KELLY + EMMA
LANGFORD** Wed 24 Apr,
Red Lion Folk Club,
Birmingham

**BEAUX GRIS GRIS AND
THE APOCALYPSE** Wed
24 Apr, Temperance,
Leamington Spa

ALASTAIR ANDERSON
Wed 24 Apr, Stratford
Playhouse

KATHRYN JOSEPH Wed

24 Apr, The Tin at The
Coal Vaults, Coventry

**THE SOUNDS OF ROD
STEWART** Wed 24 Apr,
Swan Theatre,
Worcester

**NORTHERN SOUL
ORCHESTRATED** Wed 24
Apr, The Halls,
Wolverhampton

CHIP WICKHAM Thurs 25
Apr, Hare & Hounds,
Birmingham

**ANSON SEABRA + BILLY
LOCKETT** Thurs 25 Apr,
O2 Institute, B'ham

TOM WALKER Thurs 25
Apr, O2 Academy,
Birmingham

SAMARA JOY Thurs 25
Apr, Birmingham Town
Hall

LIZ SIMCOCK Thurs 25
Apr, Bromsgrove Folk
Club

THE SEARCHERS Thurs
25 Apr, Royal Spa
Centre, Leamington
Spa

BLAIR DUNLOP Thurs 25
Apr, Temperance,
Leamington Spa



**THE CLARK TRACEY
QUINTET** Thurs 25 Apr,
The Tin at The Coal
Vaults, Coventry

WILD BOYS Thurs 25
Apr, Albany Theatre,
Coventry

EDGAR BROUGHTON
Thurs 25 Apr, Queens

Hall, Nuneaton

KULA SHAKER Thurs 25
Apr, The Halls,
Wolverhampton

ORBITAL Fri 26 Apr, O2
Institute, Birmingham

**PEARL SCAM + ANGRY
HAIR** Fri 26 Apr, O2
Academy, Birmingham

LOST IN MUSIC Fri 26
Apr, Symphony Hall,
Birmingham

**THE GREATEST HITS OF
MOTOWN** Fri 26 Apr, The
Alexandra, Birmingham

**THE ULTIMATE CLASSIC
ROCK SHOW** Fri 26 Apr,
The Roses Theatre,
Tewkesbury

SEAN TAYLOR TRIO Fri 26
Apr, Temperance,
Leamington Spa

THE CHASE Fri 26 Apr,
hmv Empire, Coventry

**THE AARON MOLONEY
TRIO** Fri 26 Apr,
Warwick Arts Centre,
Coventry

THE ELTON JOHN SHOW
Fri 26 Apr, Abbey
Theatre, Nuneaton

UNION GAP Fri 26 Apr,
Regal, Tenbury Wells

**THE BLACK CHARADE &
FELL OUT BOY** Fri 26 Apr,
Queens Hall, Nuneaton

**NOT RADIOHEAD + THE
DMDB PROJECT** Fri 26
Apr, Marrs Bar,
Worcester

**GO YOUR OWN WAY - THE
FLEETWOOD MAC LEGACY**
Fri 26 Apr, Swan
Theatre, Worcester

**ROY ORBISON AND THE
TRAVELING WILBURYS
EXPERIENCE** Fri 26 Apr,
Malvern Theatres

NEW MODEL ARMY Fri 26

Apr, The Halls,
Wolverhampton

**TATE MCRAE +
CHARLIE ON A FRIDAY** Fri
26 Apr, The Halls,
Wolverhampton

**DEFINITELY MIGHTBE +
CHANGING MAN** Sat 27
Apr, O2 Academy,
Birmingham

AKON Sat 27 Apr, O2
Academy, Birmingham

AVERAGE WHITE BAND
Sat 27 Apr, Symphony
Hall, Birmingham

JALEN NGONDA Sat 27
Apr, The Crossing,
Digbeth, Birmingham

THE ELO EXPERIENCE Sat
27 Apr, The Alexandra,
Birmingham

**JOHN BRAMWELL & THE
FULL HARMONIC TRIO** Sat
27 Apr, Kitchen Garden,
Birmingham

FEAST OF FIDDLES Sat
27 Apr, The Roses
Theatre, Tewkesbury

SIMON & OSCAR Sat 27
Apr, hmv Empire,
Coventry

RAMMLIED Sat 27 Apr,
Arches Venue,
Coventry

JOHN SMITH Sat 27 Apr,
Warwick Arts Centre,
Coventry

**THE LONDON AFRICAN
GOSPEL CHOIR PRESENT
PAUL SIMON'S
"GRACELAND"** Sat 27
Apr, Warwick Arts
Centre, Coventry

**MIKE NOWLAND STRING
QUARTET - AN EVENING
OF RADIOHEAD** Sat 27
Apr, Coventry Cathedral

CYDONIA KNIGHTS Sat 27
Apr, Queens Hall,
Nuneaton

**THANK ABBA FOR THE
MUSIC** Sat 27 Apr, The
Benn Hall, Rugby

**THE SHAKIN' STEVENS
STORY** Sat 27 Apr,
Regal, Tenbury Wells

FAUX FIGHTERS Sat 27
Apr, Marrs Bar,
Worcester

ZOE SCHWARZ & FRIENDS
Sat 27 Apr, Huntingdon
Hall, Worcester

**STRONG ENOUGH: CHER
TRIBUTE** Sat 27 Apr,
Swan Theatre,
Worcester

**JOE HUNT + TOM
SHORTERZ** Sat 27 Apr,
45Live, Kidderminster

**MALVERN BIG BAND +
THE JAY CEE BIG BAND**
Sat 27 Apr, Malvern
Cube

TRAIN + ILSEY Sat 27
Apr, The Halls,
Wolverhampton

BRAVE RIVAL Sat 27 -
Sun 28 Apr,
Temperance,
Leamington Spa

HOUSE OF ALL Sun 28
Apr, Hare & Hounds,
Birmingham

**WARRINGTON-RUNCORN
NEW TOWN
DEVELOPMENT PLAN +
FIELD LINES +
CARTOGRAPHER +
POLYPORES + APTA +
SULK ROOMS + LO FIVE**
Sun 28 Apr, Castle &
Falcon, Birmingham

THE CRUEL KNIVES Sun
28 Apr, The Flapper,
Birmingham

**THE STORY OF THE
DUBLINERS** Sun 28 Apr,
The Alexandra, B'ham

MARY GAUTHIER Sun 28
Apr, Kitchen Garden,
Birmingham

JAKE BUGG Sun 28 Apr,
Warwick Arts Centre,
Coventry

GRACE SMITH TRIO Sun
28 Apr, The Fleece Inn,
Bretforton, Nr Evesham

KINGS OF SWING Sun 28
Apr, Civic, Stourport

OLIVIA DEAN Mon 29
Apr, O2 Institute, B'ham



ARI ABDUL Mon 29 Apr,
O2 Institute, B'ham

**KATHRYN ROBERTS AND
SEAN LAKEMAN** Mon 29
Apr, Midlands Arts
Centre (MAC), B'ham

DOMINIE HOOPER Mon
29 Apr, Kitchen Garden,
Birmingham

DARIUS RUCKER Tues 30
Apr, O2 Academy,
Birmingham

CHARLES ESTEN Tues 30
Apr, Birmingham Town
Hall

**THE LEGENDS OF
AMERICAN COUNTRY
SHOW** Tues 30 Apr,
Palace Theatre,
Redditch



Samara Joy - Birmingham Town Hall



A Midsummer Night's Dream - Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

Classical Music

LUNCHTIME ORGAN CONCERT Featuring Peter Holder of Westminster Abbey. Programme includes works by Handel, Byrd, Harris, Elgar, Weir & Walton, Mon 22 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

CBSO: BRUCKNER, SYMPHONY NO. 7 Featuring Markus Stenz (conductor) & James Ehnes (violin). Programme also includes R Schumann's Violin Concerto, Thurs 25 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

BROMYARD CHORAL SOCIETY AND CRADLEY SINGERS Featuring Kate Cheetham (conductor) & Piers Maxim (organ). Programme includes Duruflé's Requiem, plus works by Ireland, Howells & Fauré, Sat 27 Apr, Great Malvern Priory

MASS IN BLUE Featuring Neil Ferris (conductor), Lorna James (soprano), Youth Choral Worcs & the Millennium Youth Choir. Programme includes works by Will Todd, John Harle & Barbara Thompson, Sat 27 Apr, Worcester Cathedral

ECHO RISING STARS: JÚLIA PUSKER Programme includes works by L Boulanger, Debussy, E Tanguy, Brahms & more... Sun 28 Apr, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CBSO SYMPHONIC SESSIONS: IN C Programme includes works by Terry Riley & Andy Akiho alongside a DJ set from Echo Juliet, Sun 28 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

RBC LUNCHTIME CONCERT Featuring students of Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. Programme tbc, Tues 30 Apr, Great Malvern Priory

Comedy

TINA BURNER Mon 22 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

MAX AMINI Tues 23 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

ARI ELDJARN Wed 24 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JOE LYCETT & FRIENDS Wed 24 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

TOMMY TIERNAN Wed 24 Apr, The Alexandra, Birmingham

SIMON MUNNERY Thurs 25 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, JASON SALMON & SLIM Thurs 25 Apr, The Glee Club, B'ham

AL MURRAY Thurs 25 Apr, The Alexandra, Birmingham

COMEDY CLUB Thurs 25 Apr, Stratford Playhouse

ED PATRICK Fri 26 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

AMY MATTHEWS, MATT BRAGG, JASON SALMON, SLIM & LOVELL SMITH Fri 26 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

PAWEŁ CHAŁUPKA & TOMASZ BORAS Fri 26 Apr, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

DANIEL O'REILLY Fri 26 Apr, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

DARIUS DAVIES, FAIZAN SHAH, EDDY BRIMSON & KAREN BAYLEY Sat 27 Apr, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

AMY MATTHEWS, MATT BRAGG, JASON SALMON & SLIM Sat 27 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

TEZ ILYAS, FAIZAN SHAH, AATIF NAWAZ & NABIL ABDULRASHID Sun 28 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JACKIE FABULOUS Tues 30 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR New production of Tim Rice & Andrew Lloyd Webber's iconic rock opera, Mon 22 - Sat 27 Apr, Birmingham Hippodrome

LIFE OF PI 'Jaw-dropping visuals and world-class puppetry' combine in an award-winning production based on Yann Martel's book, Tues 23 - Sat 27

Apr, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

ART Amateur version of Yasmina Reza's award-winning play, Tues 23 - Sat 27 Apr, The Bear Pitt Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN Studley Operatic Society present an amateur version of the Mel Brooks musical, Tues 23 - Sat 27 Apr, Palace Theatre, Redditch

PYGMALION Malvern Theatre Stage Company present an amateur version of George Bernard Shaw's play, Tues 23 Apr - Sun 5 May, Malvern Theatres

THE LAND OF LOST CONTENT An empowering story about friendship, adolescence, and life not going to plan... Wed 24 Apr, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM The Everyman Theatre Company present an all-new production, featuring inimitable clown Tweedy as Bottom, Wed 24 - Sat 27 Apr, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

THE BALD PRIMA DONNA Birmingham Newman University Drama Students present an amateur version of Eugene Ionesco's satire concerning the hollowness and banality of societal customs and communication, Thurs 25 - Fri 26 Apr, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

IRISH ANNIE'S Ash Murphy's musical comedy, featuring live music by Shenanigans. Ricky Tomlinson & Catherine Rice star, Fri 26 Apr, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

DIARY OF A BADMINTON PLAYER A show about the difficulties of ageing and finding things to do while trying to remain a local hero, Fri 26 Apr, Number, Pershore

MAYBE DICK Comedic retelling of Herman Melville's classic tale of revenge and retribution, Sat 27 Apr, Swan Theatre, Worcester

TRUTH & LIES SHOWCASE Featuring freshly penned work by emerging writers from across the Midlands, Sat 27 Apr, Number 8, Pershore

REVISION ON TOUR: MACBETH Dickens Theatre Company present a fresh version of the Bard's blood-spattered tragedy, Mon 29 - Tues 30 Apr, The Alexandra, Birmingham

REWIND Music, puppetry, movement & projection combine to reveal an intimate backward journey into the life and death of Alicia, a young woman who dared to resist authoritarianism, Tues 30 Apr, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry



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



CLUEDO 2 Casualty's Jason Durr & Strictly champion Ellie Leach star in a new whodunnit packed with murder, mystery and secret passageways, Tues 30 Apr - Sat 4 May, Malvern Theatres

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

Kids Theatre

GOOSE New interactive musical for younger audiences. Based on the books by Laura Wall, Sat 27 Apr, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

THERE'S A MONSTER IN YOUR SHOW Brand-new musical stage version of author Tom Fletcher's interactive adventures for big imaginations, Tues 30 Apr, Swan Theatre, Worcester



Dance

GREAT BIG DANCE OFF - WEST MIDLANDS HEAT Primary and secondary schools from across the region compete against one another, Mon 22 Apr, The Alexandra, Birmingham

Light Entertainment

RACHEL STOCKDALE: FAT CHANCE Funny, celebratory and politically powerful one-woman play exploring Rachel's true-life experience of weight gain, Wed 24 Apr, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

FROM THE HEART: PAUL POTTS THE UK TOUR 2024 Thurs 25 Apr, Malvern Theatres

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL OVO High-energy production providing a colourful intrusion into a day in the life of

insects, Thurs 25 - Sun 28 Apr, Utilita Arena Birmingham

BOWJANGLES IN DRACULA IN SPACE

Featuring an irreverent, anarchic group of genre-spanners who present music, theatre and comedy 'in a way you've never seen before', Thurs 25 Apr, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

BOTTOMS UP: BURLESQUE & CABARET

Step into a world of glitz and glamour as the creme de la creme of the cabaret world take to the stage, Fri 26 Apr, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

BOX OF FROGS Join the Birmingham-based improv group for an evening of high-octane comedy nonsense, based entirely on audience suggestions, Fri 26 Apr, The Core, Solihull



CLOSET CONFESSIONS LIVE Candice Brathwaite (author, journalist & TV presenter) and Coco Sarel (actor and TikTok sensation) bring their hit podcast to the stage, Fri 26 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

BURNIN' LOVE BINGO Join award-winning character comedian Tracey Collins (Shell Suit Cher & Audrey Heartburn) as she brings her latest 'ridiculous' act, Elvis Lesley, to the stage, Sat 27 Apr, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham



STAND BY YOUR NAN Rachel Sambrooks tells tales that span Quinton, Warley Woods, the 1930s, both World Wars and Attingham Park in the 1960s, Sat 27 Apr, Smethwick Heritage Centre

AN EVENING OF RADIOHEAD A full live band, complete with the Mike Nowland String Quartet, play numbers from Radiohead's back catalogue, Sat 27 Apr, Coventry Cathedral

HAGS: A MAGICAL EXTRAVAGANZA

Three fearless females present an evening of magic tricks, physical comedy & live music, Sat 27 Apr, Thimblemill Library, Smethwick

BEAR GRYLLS: THE NEVER GIVE UP TOUR

Join the global adventurer in a show designed to inspire and captivate audiences of all ages, Sat 27 Apr,

Symphony Hall, Birmingham

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

Talks & Spoken Word

HOLLIE MCNISH: THE LOBSTER TOUR

Join the bestselling writer as she talks about her brand-new book, *Lobster And Other Things I'm Learning To Love*, Sun 28 Apr, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Events

THE RAF IN THE MIDLANDS: HISTORY AND LEGACY WORKSHOP

Event exploring the history and legacy of the RAF in the Midlands, Thurs 25 Apr, The Royal Air Force Museum Midlands, Cosford

QUAFF AND FOSS Use various tools and artefacts to mould clay into the bones and imprints of dinosaurs, Fri 26 Apr, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry

BUSTLING BIRMINGHAM KAYAK TOUR

See Birmingham from a different perspective, Fri 26 - Sun 28 Apr, Roundhouse, Birmingham

ESL ONE BIRMINGHAM 2024 An offline British tournament organised by ESL Gaming, Fri 26 - Sun 28 Apr, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

INTRODUCTION TO PAPER MARBLING

WITH THE HANDCRAFTED HEN Learn the technique of paper marbling and create a mini notebook covered with your own design, Sat 27 Apr, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry

FAMILY-FRIENDLY ART TALKS

Explore the artworks on display in the galleries through animated talks using child-friendly language, Sat 27 Apr, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry

NATIONAL GARDEN RAILWAY SHOW

Event bringing together major suppliers, Sat 27 Apr, NAEC Stoneleigh, Warwickshire

ORIENTAL EXPRESS

Chinese-inspired dining experience, Sat 27 Apr, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

MODEL WORLD LIVE

Bringing together railway and scale modellers, Sat 27 - Sun 28 Apr, NEC, Birmingham

GIN TRAIN

Learn about the history of gin whilst enjoying a selection of drinks, Sat 27 - Sun 28 Apr, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster



Cirque Du Soleil OVO - Utilita Arena Birmingham

ORIGINS OF MIDDLE-EARTH: JRR

TOLKIEN AND SAREHOLE GUIDED WALK

Guided walk introducing the scenery that inspired JRR Tolkien when he lived near Sarehole Mill as a child, Sun 28 Apr, Sarehole Mill, B'ham

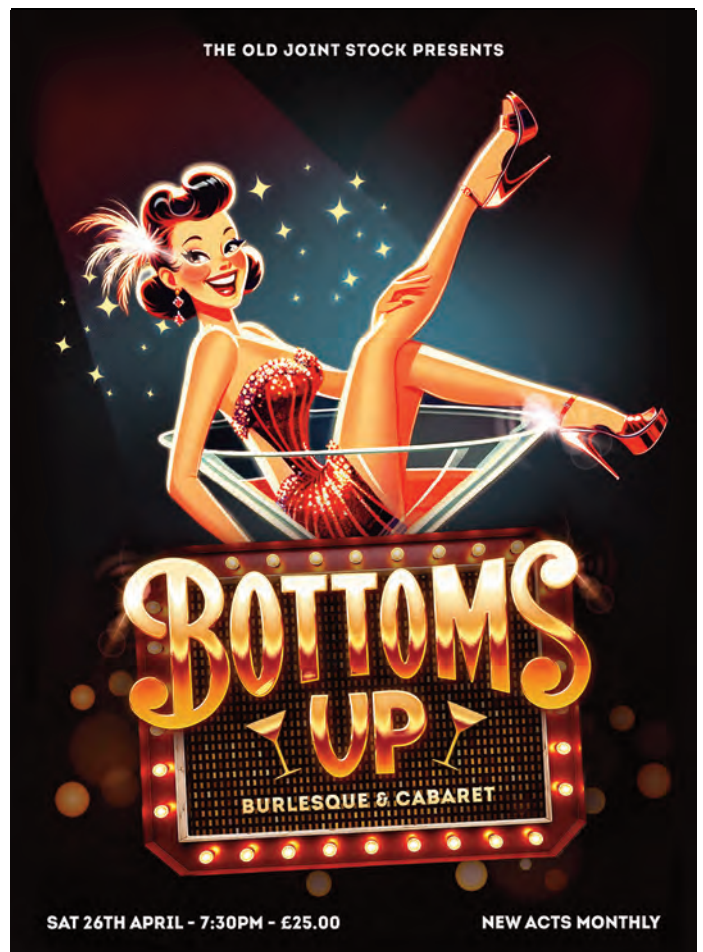
ITALIAN AUTORAIL

A gathering of over 100 Italian road vehicles from across the decades. Organised in collaboration with the Italian AutoMoto Club, Sun 28 Apr, Severn

Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

ULTIMATE BMW MEET The UK's largest BMW meet returns to the museum for its third year, Sun 28 Apr, British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Warwickshire

SPECIALIST PLANT FAIR Featuring 20-plus specialist nurseries, Sun 28 Apr, Spetchley Park Estate, Worcester



WIN! with What's On...

Enter now at whatsonlive.co.uk to be in with a chance of bagging one of these fabulous prizes!



Win! A meal and drinks for two at We Love Pizza

Leamington's award-winning pizzeria We Love Pizza has reopened its doors following a refurb across its two floors. To celebrate, we are offering one lucky reader the chance to win a meal for two plus drinks.

Competition closes Monday 15 April



Win! A family ticket to Brick Fest Live

The world's largest hands-on LEGO® event, Brick Fest Live, is set to make its UK debut at the NEC this spring. A roaring success across the pond, the event will showcase in Birmingham from 25 to 27 May, with over a million LEGO® bricks on display and ready for play.

Competition closes Friday 10 May



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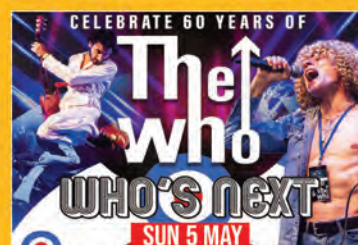
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