

Shropshire

ISSUE 384 DECEMBER 2017

What's On

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inside:

thelist

Your 16-page week
by week listings guide

BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST

festive folk at
Henry Tudor House



SEASONAL FUN

travel back in time at
Blists Hill Victorian Town...



PETER PAN

swashbuckling fun at
The Place in Oakengates



Shropshire Charity Concerts present
their 29th Anniversary performance of

MESSIAH

A Sacred Oratorio by George Frederic Handel

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Conductor: John Moore

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folk duo visit the Midlands with Christmas-themed show

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What's On

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Pull on your Kinky Boots!

Hit musical Kinky Boots is heading to the Midlands next year.

Featuring songs by award-winning pop icon Cyndi Lauper, the show stops off at the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Tuesday 16 to Saturday 27 October. It then returns to the region early in 2019, running at the Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, from Monday 28 January to Saturday 9 February. Commenting on the production, Cyndi Lauper said: "It's been a wonderful adventure and a privilege for me to play a part in creating Kinky Boots. Everyone can relate to this universal story, and I'm overwhelmed that people in the UK have embraced it with open arms. I'm thrilled that this fabulous show will be touring the country!"

For more information, visit kinkybootsthemusical.co.uk

UK gets set to celebrate 250 years of circus magic

The 250th anniversary of the world's very first circus - which took place on an abandoned patch of land near London's Waterloo - is being marked across the UK in 2018. Circus250 will see museums, filmmakers, designers, theatres, orchestras, schools, libraries and (of course) circuses joining in the celebrations. The year-long event aims to 'enable pioneering work, forge new partnerships, build new audiences and embed circus at the heart of modern-day culture'.

For more information, visit circus250.com

Stoke-on-Trent to appoint its first Poet Laureate

Stoke-on-Trent is set to get its very first Poet Laureate.

The honorary post is for an initial two-year period. Interested parties must be aged 18 or older and live, work regularly or study in Stoke.

Anybody interested in applying for the post needs to submit the following: Three original poems of no more than 30 lines each (one poem must be about Stoke-on-Trent); A statement of up to 500 words explaining why they would like to be Stoke-on-Trent Poet Laureate, what they would bring to the role, and ideas for what they might do during their tenure; A writing CV (maximum length, one page) detailing relevant experience. Entry to the competition closes at midnight

on Wednesday 31 January.

Selection day is Saturday 24 March - candidates should be available for this date.

Applications for the post must be submitted to: emma.george@stoke.gov.uk

Shakespeare's Scottish play bringing dark deeds to Stafford next summer

Shakespeare's Scottish play is coming to Stafford.

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre management, together with Freedom Leisure, have announced that the 2018 Stafford Festival Shakespeare production at the town's castle will be a new version of Macbeth.

Commenting on the news, producer Derrick Gask said: "I'm incredibly excited about next year's production. It's been a few years since the last time we performed the play at the castle, back in 2003, and following feedback from audiences for The Tempest this summer, myself and the rest of the creative team felt that Macbeth was the perfect choice for 2018." Macbeth will show at the castle from Thursday 28 June until Saturday 14 July.



archive image

X Factor favourite Amelia Lily to join the cast of Shrek

X Factor favourite Amelia Lily is to share the role of Princess Fiona with Call The Midwife star Laura Main when Shrek The Musical heads out on a national tour.

Directed by ex-EastEnders Nigel Harman, the production visits Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Stoke-on-Trent next year. Commenting on the news, Lily said: "I had my first taste of performing as Princess Fiona back in 2012 when I donned the famous green dress for a Children In Need special. It was an incredible experience, so when the opportunity came up to reprise the role, I jumped at the chance. I can't wait to set out on a road trip across the country with all my fairytale friends." For more information about the show, visit shrekthemusical.co.uk



Drinks app helps beat the queues at Wolves venue

Visitors to Wolverhampton Civic Halls events can now pre-order their food and drinks - or order direct from their seats - thanks to a brand new app.

The 'Wolves Civic' combined mobile app, powered by Preoday, is available to download from Google Play and the App Store.

Arena Theatre announces first associate artist

A Wolverhampton-based independent dance artist, choreographer and cultural producer has become the first associate artist of the city's Arena Theatre venue.

Jaivant Patel is the artistic director of his own company, which exists to communicate his British-Asian identity and challenge inherited notions, perceptions and stereotypes. He is also artist-in-residence at MAC Birmingham and a member of the board of directors for Dance4.

Commenting on his new role, Jaivant said: "My partnership with the venue has been significant in my professional growth as a dance artist, producer and cultural leader. I now look forward to further developing and strengthening both my professional and artistic relationship with the Arena Theatre."

Burlesque returns to Lichfield

Lichfield's first and only burlesque and cabaret show is back for one night only. Kiss Kiss Bang Bang Presents... Baby It's Cold Outside offers 'a night of saucy decadence' featuring striptease, singing and 'sights you've never seen before!'. The show takes place at the city's George Hotel on Friday 22 December.



In the Spirit as Shrewsbury venue gets a refurb

Popular Shropshire entertainment venue C:21 has undergone a refurbishment and will now be known as Spirit In Shrewsbury. The Abbey Foregate venue, adjacent to The Peach Tree restaurant, Havana Republic, Momo's and the soon-to-open Treat Yourself, features new staging, bar area, dance floor and state-of-the-art video screens. Available for private hire, Spirit In Shrewsbury also hosts regular club nights, live jazz, comedy, and host of other events. For further information visit [FB.com/shrewsburyspirit](https://www.facebook.com/shrewsburyspirit)

Handel's Messiah at the Abbey

Shrewsbury School Community Choir is presenting its annual charity performance of Handel's Messiah in Shrewsbury Abbey on Saturday 23 December. The choir has been in existence for over 30 years, with its activities and membership also registered as Shropshire Charity Concerts. It currently has 120 active members. Shrewsbury School's Music Director, John Moore, conducts the performance.

Cut the cost with an annual pass to five of Shropshire's most popular festivals

The company behind five of Shropshire's most popular events has launched a cost-cutting annual pass. Shropshire Festivals organises Oktoberfest, Telford Feastival, Shrewsbury Winter Festival and kids' festivals in both Shrewsbury and Telford. The company's new pass can be purchased for between £20 and £25 and provides entry to all five events during 2018. For more information, visit [shropshirefestivals.digitickets.co.uk](https://www.shropshirefestivals.digitickets.co.uk)





Charity CD raises funds in memory of Shrewsbury Folk Festival founder

A CD released in tribute to the late co-founder of Shrewsbury Folk Festival has raised more than £4,000 for a charity set up in his name.

The profits from Resound, a 15-track recording featuring songs from artists including Oysterband, Jon Boden, Grace Petrie and Karine Polwart, will be ploughed into the Alan Surtees Trust, an initiative aiming to support young and emerging musicians. Alan died from cancer earlier this year.

For more information about the trust and the CD, visit shrewsburyfolkfestival.co.uk. To buy a CD, go to fishrecords.co.uk.

Gallery's new-look Georgian room reopens

Wolverhampton Art Gallery's newly refurbished Georgian Room is now open to the public. The room has undergone a transformation as part of the ongoing improvement works to the city's popular Lichfield Street gallery.

The improvements include new carpet, wallpaper, lighting and furnishings, kept within the Georgian theme. The PA system and Wi-Fi connectivity has also been improved.

Crowdfunding appeal for Iron Bridge repairs

English Heritage has launched a crowdfunding appeal to raise money towards conservation work on Shropshire's famous Iron Bridge.

The restoration project will take 19 months to complete and cost £3.6million.

The work is being done in a way that will allow the bridge to remain open to pedestrians. To contribute towards the appeal, visit crowdfunder.co.uk/project-iron-bridge

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World record bid as Peter Pan and Wendy head for pantomime fun in Neverland!

Arena Birmingham is this month hosting a festive family show that's bidding to enter the record books.

The company behind Peter Pan: Christmas In Neverland is hoping the production will be confirmed by Guinness World Records as the biggest-ever Christmas show.

Starring Bradley Walsh and Martin Kemp, the production features numerous 'stunning' special effects, including a lifesize Jolly Roger galleon which will 'sail' around the arena in front of a 10,000-gallon water wall.

The show also includes a team of BMX stunt riders, six aerial mermaids, a 'crazy collection' of trapeze and trampoline stuntmen and 'the biggest, scariest animatronic crocodile you've ever seen'... Peter Pan: Christmas In Neverland runs at Arena Birmingham from 20 to 24 December.



Staffordshire gallery chosen to showcase exciting new works from emerging artists

Stoke-on-Trent's AirSpace Gallery has been chosen as one of three venues to exhibit work by emerging artists taking part in the 2018 New Art West Midlands initiative. Celebrating and showcasing work by some of the region's most promising emerging artists, the competition includes large-scale installations, sculpture, photography, video, animation, paintings and digital artworks. Alongside AirSpace Gallery, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery and the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum in Coventry will also be displaying the New Art West Midlands 2018 artwork.

Dinosaurs return to roam the NEC



Global sensation Walking With Dinosaurs is returning to the Midlands next summer. The hit production, based on the award-winning BBC television series, has been enjoyed by more than nine million people in 250-plus cities around the world. Popular TV presenter Michaela Strachan will star in the show as 'Huxley' the paleontologist.

Walking With Dinosaurs - Arena Spectacular shows at Arena Birmingham from 26 to 28 July.

Welsh rockers to play outdoor gig

Stereophonics' massive Shropshire and Staffordshire fanbase will be delighted to hear that the band are set to play a huge homecoming gig at Wrexham's Racecourse Ground next year.

The mega-selling Welsh band will play the venue on Saturday 2 June. Commenting on the news, lead singer Kelly Jones said: "The fans have stuck with us and believed in us no matter what path we've tried. I can't wait to play in front of the crowd that made us."



GUESS WHO'S BACK IN TOWN!



THE TIMES



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DELIGHTFUL DAMES!

There ain't nothin' like a Dame - particularly the type you find in pantomimes at this most magical time of year! Here in the Midlands we're lucky to have some of the UK's funniest and most colourful Dames treading the boards of our finest theatres. We caught up with a few of them to find out more about the joys and challenges of playing pantoland's most outrageously glammed-up character...

Visit whatsonlive.co.uk to read the full interviews...

Ian Adams

Seasoned pro Ian started his panto career starring alongside the late Jack Wild as an Ugly Sister. He then branched out on his own as Dame Trot in Jack & The Beanstalk, a role to which he's returning this very festive season. Despite his panto CV also including appearances as Captain Hook and the Mad Hatter, there ain't nothin' like a Dame as far as Ian's concerned.

What makes Christmas magical for you?

I love the buzz in the theatre. For a lot of children it's their first panto, and it's so important that we make their Christmas magical. I'm a great believer in the importance of the story. All the other elements - song, dance, comedy etc - all have their part to play, but it shouldn't be at the expense of the story. The children have to believe it's real.

Do you have a routine to ensure you're 'panto ready'?

Not really. I always think of my Dame as a lady in hibernation - and when the clocks go back, it's time to wake her up and get the heels on!

What's the worst gift anyone could ever give you?

Meringue!

New Year resolution?

Never look back.

Ian plays Dame Trot in Jack And The Beanstalk at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Sat 9 December to Sun 14 January



Steve Boyce

Steve's new to the Dame game but has wanted to play the role for pretty much as long as he can remember. With the opportunity to do so failing to present itself, he took matters into his own hands by writing and starring in his own Edinburgh Fringe show, a delightful little number entitled *The Dame Dolly Donut Show*.



If you weren't a Dame, what other panto character would you like to play?

Before I became a Dame, I mainly used to play baddies - the Sheriff of Nottingham was one of my favourites - so I'd probably venture back to Sherwood Forest.

What's your all-time favourite panto?

It's fallen somewhat out of favour in recent years, but I love a good production of *Mother Goose*. She really is the Dame's Dame - all of the usual comedy nonsense, plus the story is all about her too!

Favourite festive tippie?

As retro as it is, I'm partial to a snowball at Christmas.

Do you ever get post-panto blues?

Always. Panto casts start to feel like family, so it's hard when that family has to dissolve again.

Steve plays Mrs Smee in Peter Pan, which shows at The Place, Oakengates, from Wed 6 to Sun 31 December



Christian Patterson

One of pantoland's best known Dames, Christian Patterson has carved out a fantastic career for himself at Stoke-on-Trent's Regent Theatre, where he's 'rouged up' most years since 2006. He's big pals with Jonathan Wilkes, another fella who's very much part of the furniture when it comes to the business of Potteries pantos.

What makes Christmas magical for you?

As far as I'm concerned, panto is Christmas! Well, panto... and mince pies! No panto, no mince pies... NO CHRISTMAS!

Have you ever had any costume malfunctions?

Loads! It's part and parcel of being a Dame! I'm a big lad, and I've got to get in and out of those heavy costumes twice a day, every day - so yes, I've seen my fair share of costume fails! Not to mention the time when Jonny (Wilkes) fell off a chair and ripped his trousers from zip to rear belt loop! Of course, Jonny being Jonny, he just quietly carried on... Not!

Never work with children or animals. Comment...

Ha! Well I would add, "Never work with children... unless they're from the Wilkes Academy!" Can someone tell Jonny I said that and make sure the cheque is in the post! But in all honesty, they're the best! I work with an animal every year... Jonny! It's like working with a trained chimp!

Christian plays Widow Twankey in Aladdin, which shows at the Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, from Fri 15 December to Sun 7 January

Brad Fitt

Brad is a familiar festive face at Shrewsbury's Theatre Severn. For the past six years, with one exception, he's starred at the venue as the pantomime Dame - first in Aladdin in 2011 and now in Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs. He's been described by the Telegraph as one of the UK's top Dames, and once upon a time earned his corn writing panto gags for Christopher Biggins.

If you weren't a Dame, what other panto character would you like to play?

I didn't think I'd enjoy playing Buttons last year, but it was actually a really rewarding experience and quite different being onstage with no funny costumes or make up. I do think that I'd like to play a baddie one day. Abanazar in Aladdin would be my first choice, but perhaps I'll save that for when I'm too old and tired for all the quick changes..

Who's your scariest villain?

I'd have to say Abanazar, which is partly why I'd like to play him one day. While he can be an evil character, he also has to try and trick the Twankeys into believing he's on their side. It's certainly a part you could get your teeth into. I once did Aladdin with Victor Spinetti, who was a wonderful Abanazar and such a generous and talented performer.

Brad plays Nurse Nellie in Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs, which shows at Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, from Wed 29 November to Sun 7 January



Sam Rabone

Sam first donned the giant wig and slapped on way too much makeup at the tender age of 19, to star as the Dame for Sutton Coldfield am-dram group the Vesey Players. He's since made quite a splash on the professional circuit, both here in the UK and over in the United Arab Emirates - where, he reveals, he's even been known to use that old festive favourite the Brussel sprout as a pizza topping!

What was your first ever experience as a Dame?

I was cast as Sarah the Cook in Dick Whittington for Pantoni Pantomimes down in Yeovil. I'd been working in entertainment for a few years, but it was my first professional job in a theatre and my first working as a Dame.

What's your all-time favourite panto?

Dick Whittington! I love the story, I love the fact we get to travel from London to Morocco, so the scenes are always so different, and in between we go on a boat and under the water. So there's something for everyone in there. I also think it lends itself to some of the best slosh scenes. There's the chance to play either on the boat or in the kitchen. I think it's a great traditional pantomime.

What's the worst gift anyone could ever give you?

Turkish Delight. I can't stand it. It looks so nice and tasty, but then I pop it in and can't stand it!

Sam plays Dame Widow Twankey in Aladdin, which shows at Lichfield Garrick from Thurs 30 November to Sat 6 January

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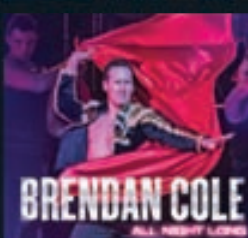
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SAT 13 JAN

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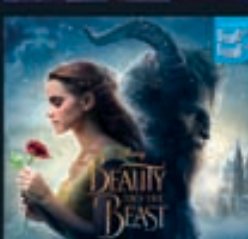
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REVIEW Ego: Lichfield

Combining excellent food and great service with an engaging atmosphere

On recommendation of a friend, I recently made a 60-mile round trip from Stoke to Lichfield, in order to try out a restaurant that by all accounts is impressing diners with a diverse Mediterranean menu and a vibrant, feel-good atmosphere. I can tell you now; it was well worth the trip! Ego Restaurant, situated on the banks of the river in the centre of town and overlooking the beautiful cathedral, is a bright, stylish and welcoming eatery with a cosmopolitan food offering and attentive service. On arrival at the venue, my companion and I were warmly greeted and escorted to our table, from which we enjoyed a good view of our surroundings, including the spacious dining area and open-plan kitchen. My first impression of Ego was that it oozed vibrancy; the atmosphere was lively, fun and very hospitable. Our waitress, Laura, took our drinks order. I opted for a glass of gently sparkling Prosecco Frizzante with a lovely floral and fruity bouquet; fitting for a venue with an emphasis on Southern European dining. My

companion enjoyed a fresh, crisp Estrella lager, brewed in Barcelona and something just a little different from the usual beer offering. The menus at Ego are extensive, so Laura suggested some appetisers whilst we were studying them. On her recommendation we chose some marinated Nocelara and Kalamata olives. Nutty, buttery and deliciously salty, they were a perfect accompaniment to the drinks - and some warm pitta and dips, including hummus, salsa and tzatziki, all of which were tasty, moreish and a great way to whet the appetite. After a lot of deliberation, I decided on the Gambas al Pil Pil as my starter. Consisting of succulent king prawns cooked in olive oil with herbs, garlic and guindilla chillies, they arrived at the table sizzling and smelling divine. Presented with a side of toasted tomato rustic bread, the dish was meaty, flavoursome and spicy, and the bread provided a subtle sweetness to offset the heat of the chillies. My companion ordered the Lamb Kofta served with rainbow slaw,

minted yogurt and a hazelnut dukkah dip. The kebab meat was well seasoned and richly spiced, which balanced well with the raw, crunchy vegetable side, nutty dip and cool herby sauce. For the mains, instead of going for the considerable array of pasta, pizza and risottos, all of which sounded authentically Mediterranean, we decided on dishes from the main course & specials section of the menu. I went for the Sea Bass, beautifully seared with a rocket and dried sunblush tomato salad, carrot puree and courgette frittata. The fish was delightful, with a white, soft, flaky, melt-in-the-mouth consistency and a fresh, buttery taste. This contrasted well with the earthy courgettes in the frittata and the sharp acidity of the sunblush salad. I also ordered a side dish of Gratin Dauphinoise - sliced potato cooked in a rich cheese and cream sauce - which proved an excellent choice against the delicateness of the fish and the slight acidity of the purée. My companion opted for the 8oz chargrilled Fillet Steak cooked

medium/well and served with skin-on fries, confit vine plum tomato and rocket - a traditional dish which is both indulgent and satisfying. The steak was tender, full of flavour and cooked to perfection. His verdict - excellent! For dessert, I opted for the traditional Tiramisu, indulgently made with a strong coffee-soaked sponge, creamy mascarpone layers and served with a rich chocolate sauce. It had a powerful caffeine hit yet also provided a shot of sweetness on the palate - much needed after such a savoury and fulsome meal. My companion indulged his sweet tooth too, enjoying a warm Chocolate Brownie full of walnuts, pecans and sultanas, laced with chocolate fudge sauce and served with ice-cold vanilla ice cream. Delicious!

Throughout the meal, our waitress Laura was absolutely lovely - so attentive and accommodating, with suggestions for accompaniments and drinks, and information, when asked, about other menus. She also told us how very child-friendly the venue was at weekends, with entertainment provided - interesting for me, as I'm often sourcing places that are both good for children yet still smart and stylish for adults.

Overall, Ego is a place I would definitely visit again. Offering excellent food, great service and a thoroughly engaging atmosphere, it really is a thoroughly enjoyable all-round experience.

Carol Lovatt

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

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Wolverhampton butcher named UK Champion of Champions - again!

Codsall-based butchers Allan Bennett Ltd have won top prize in 2017's Champion of Champions awards.

Allan's Sunshine Sausage, a Mediterranean-inspired sausage made with tomato, oregano and garlic, beat off its competitors at County Hall in London, where the top sausages in the land were assessed in both raw and cooked forms by a panel of expert judges. The success marks a record fourth time that Allan Bennett has won the award.

Gin festival makes a return to Shrewsbury

Popular Shrewsbury restaurant The Boathouse is this month hosting its second gin festival (22 & 23 December). The event is being held under a new marquee and comes complete with fire pits, heaters, blankets, chestnuts, live music - and, of course, plenty of gin!

Lola's Cupcakes arrive at Selfridges

Cupcake-loving visitors to Selfridges Birmingham should prepare themselves for a real treat, thanks to the recent arrival in the store of Lola's Cupcakes.

New to the city, Lola's handcrafts a wide range of themed cakes and cheesecakes for customers to enjoy, either in-store or at home.

With more than 30 flavours from which to choose, including vegan pistachio, gluten-free chocolate and tiramisu - there's a cupcake to suit every taste.



Popular independent restaurant undergoes rebrand

Shrewsbury's independent ramen noodle restaurant, Momo.No.Ki, has undergone a rebrand.

The much-loved eatery, located near the town's abbey, now boasts an impressive refurbishment and goes by the name of Momo's.

Featuring new comfortable chairs and benches - and a new menu - Momo's is now open every day from 12 noon through to 10pm, providing

both eat-in and take-out food.

The new menu features a variety of light bites, including fried or steamed pork and Chinese leaf dumplings and takoyaki (steamed octopus balls), a variety of rice bowls, ramen soup bowls and omakase special noodle bowls. The menu also features a kids' option and a 'pimp my own noodle' concept, allowing diners to create their own dish.

New pizza and bagel restaurant opens in Shrewsbury

A new eatery selling sourdough pizzas, fresh bagels and independent craft beer and wines has opened in Shrewsbury.

Served from 7am to 3pm, Dough And Oil's bagel menu features, amongst other options: The Rocky - sausage patty, roasted mushroom, egg, avocado, bacon jam and pea shoots; The Reuben - pastrami, swiss cheese, sauerkraut, gherkins, rocket and Russian dressing; and a vegetarian and vegan option, The Adrian - butternut squash, roasted mushroom, avocado, wild broccoli, chilli and lime.

The pizza menu, served from 3pm to 10.30pm, features: The Otto - lamb, aubergine, mint yoghurt, pomegranate and dukkah; The Morris - fennel sausage and friarielli; and The Phillipo - 'nduja (spicy, spreadable pork salumi), sweet peppers and rocket.

Craft beers include table beer from Kernel Brewery and pale ales from Crate in London. A range of wines is also available.



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Belshazzar's Feast

Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury,
Sun 3 December

One-time BBC Folk Awards nominees Paul Sartin (of Bellowhead and Faustus) and Paul Hutchinson (of Hoover The Dog) are back on tour with a Christmas-themed show that mixes traditional folk, seasonal music, jazz, classical and more. The pair are good value humour-wise too, so expect their display of fine musicianship to be served up with a healthy side order of spoken, physical, musical and even slapstick comedy.



Pulled Apart By Horses

The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent,
Mon 11 December

Indie rock band Pulled Apart By Horses came to prominence with their self-titled debut album in 2010.

The four-piece have since released a further three albums, supported the likes of Biffy Clyro, Foals and Muse, and recorded a Takeover for Annie Mac and Radio One. Fourth album *The Haze* reached number 12 in the charts when it was released back in March of this year.



The Prodigy

Civic Hall, Wolverhampton,
Thurs 19 December

The Prodigy came to prominence on the underground rave scene of the early 1990s, being hailed as 'the premiere dance act for the alternative masses'.

Since that time they've dropped six era-

defining studio albums, sold an estimated 30 million records and bagged numerous coveted music awards, including two Brits. Comprising Liam Howlett, Keith Flint and Maxim, the band are famed for the quality of their live shows, delivering performances that have taken electronic beats into hitherto uncharted territory.

John Kirkpatrick

Lichfield Guildhall, Sun 3 December

Folk legend John Kirkpatrick's *Carolling And Crumpets* show looks at the timeless rituals found in the folklore and folk music of England at midwinter. Expect original songs and a sprinkling of carols both familiar and unfamiliar.

Bad Manners

The Robin, Bilston, Wed 27 December

Long in the tooth they may be, but English 2 Tone ska wizards Bad Manners still command a significant following around the globe. Very much a novelty act - courtesy in the main of the onstage antics of bald-headed frontman Buster Bloodvessel - they spent the early 1980s vying for chart positions with fellow ska revival bands Madness, The Specials and The Selecter. Hit albums include *Gosh It's... Bad Manners*, *Loonee Tunes!* and *Ska'n'B*.

Calan

The Hive, Shrewsbury, Sat 9 December

Calan have certainly found their musical niche, showcasing a unique instrumental blend of accordion, fiddle, guitar, Welsh pipes, Welsh harp and the percussive sound of the Welsh clogs.

Taking a contemporary approach, they breathe new life into old traditions.

This latest show includes many of the band's favourite seasonal tunes and Plygain carols - songs sung at a traditional Welsh church service on Christmas morning.



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Ex Cathedra: Christmas Music By Candlelight

St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury, Fri 1 December; St Peter's Church, Wolverhampton, Sat 2 December; St John's Church, Hagley, Birmingham, Tues 5 December; St Paul's Church, Birmingham, Tues 19 - Sat 23 December

What better way to get into the Christmas spirit than by enjoying an evening in the company of one of the country's finest choral music ensembles? Under the directorship of its founder, Jeffrey Skidmore, Ex Cathedra is this month presenting its annual and atmospheric Christmas Music By Candlelight event, an evening that features festive favourites from across the ages interspersed with a variety of seasonal readings.

The Froncysyllte Male Voice Choir

New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Sat 16 December

Regular patrons of the New Vic Theatre will no doubt be familiar with the Froncysyllte Male Voice Choir. The 'Fron', as they're affectionately known, have been visiting the venue to perform a Christmas concert for more than 30 years. Formed in 1947 to compete in that year's Llangollen Eisteddfod, the choir are currently celebrating their 70th anniversary, and are here making their second appearance of the year at the New Vic.



The BBC Philharmonic Orchestra

Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 15 December



Residing at the Corporation's Manchester home of Media City in Salford Quays, the BBC Philharmonic is no stranger to Stoke-on-Trent, regularly presenting Victoria Hall concert-goers with works from its impressive repertoire. This latest visit sees conductor Clemens Schuldt being joined by soloist Martin Roscoe for a programme that features the following: Grieg's Peer Gynt Suite, Beethoven's Piano Concerto No1 and Sibelius's 'confession of the soul', his Symphony No2.

The Sixteen: Glory To The Christ Child

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Mon 11 December

Conductor Harry Christophers and The Sixteen present Christmas choral music spanning nations and centuries, from Renaissance Italy to 21st century Britain. The programme begins with Alan Bullard's Glory To The Christ Child, a work which the composer himself describes as a sprightly refrain full of seasonal cheer.



G4: Christmas By Candlelight

St Paul's Church, Birmingham, Thurs 7 December

After scoring a hit on X Factor in 2004, G4 became one of the country's biggest crossover classical groups. Their debut album went straight to number one and sold more than 245,000 copies, making it the fastest-selling record of that year. Although they disbanded three years and three albums later - citing as the reason their need to pursue individual interests - they reunited in 2014 for their 10th anniversary.

The boys are performing a series of festive shows in beautiful churches and cathedrals nationwide this month, one of which is this candlelit Birmingham gig. Expect Christmas classics and carols aplenty.





THE RETURN OF THE

JERSEY BOYS

The award-winning jukebox musical telling the story of Frankie Valli And The Four Seasons is returning to Birmingham's New Alexandra Theatre this month. Heather Kincaid caught up with Jersey Boys stalwart Michael Watson to find out more...

After three years playing Frankie Valli at London's Piccadilly Theatre, as well as a stint understudying the role at the Prince Edward Theatre, actor Michael Watson has spent a considerable amount of time trying to get inside the head of the 1960s music icon.

But it seems he's not quite finished with the character yet. With the smash-hit musical Jersey Boys kicking off a UK tour at the New Alex this month, Watson is now helping to bring the magic from the West End to the West Midlands. We caught up with him to find out more about the man behind the music, and the Four Seasons' enduring appeal.

"All of us playing the members of the Four Seasons have been in the show before, three of us in the West End," he explains. "With this production, they've really taken their time and thought about who they wanted to be in it, since it's going to be the only one in the UK when we take it out. Also, because the show hasn't been running for a little while, I think it's going to come back very fresh and with a really strong energy, kicking down the door of musical theatre."

Watson isn't the only one to have stuck with the show for a long time. His West End predecessor, Ryan Molloy, played the role for an impressive total of six years.

"I think for a male in the West End - especially of a certain height - it's the ultimate role. Not only do you get to do a marathon sing, as an actor it's hugely challenging because you never leave the stage, and you have to go from age 15 to 45 in the space of two-and-a-half hours. It's like the musical theatre equivalent of Hamlet - it's a true arc of someone's life you have to go through."

The extensive period of time the story covers is a crucial part of what holds its actors' interest. As they themselves grow older, their understanding of the characters' journey deepens.

"Now that I'm 30, I'm right in the middle of that age range, and starting a family of my own, so I do feel a deeper connection to the scenes where Frankie interacts with his wife and children. I think I play it more honestly because I know how I'd feel if something like that happened to me."

The need for this emotional range and maturity might go some way to explaining why Watson was unsuccessful in his first audition for the part at the tender age of 21.

"At the time I felt like they were just starting to get excited about me, but then I did another round and the audition just suddenly stopped. It was a couple of years later when the next opportunity came up, but instead of being put off, the knock had actually made me more determined. I thought, if I could get them interested two years ago, I'm definitely ready for it now!"

It's a unique and doubtless strange experience to perform the life story of a person who's not only real, but still alive and taking an interest in the show.

"I was actually lucky enough to meet Frankie - he came and watched me in the show, and fortunately he shook my hand and gave me his seal of approval. But I think for me, it was more about developing the character that's in the script, because as much as I might try to emulate the legend that is Frankie Valli, I don't want to do an impression."

Indeed, inaccuracies - or at least differences of opinion - are at the very heart of this story. Jersey Boys is famous for its 'Rashomon effect' - that is, presenting differing accounts of events from a variety of perspectives. Inspired by the lack of information available about the band members outside their glittering pop career, scriptwriters Marshall Brickman and Rick Elice based the novel format on interviews they conducted with the surviving members, complete with contradictions.

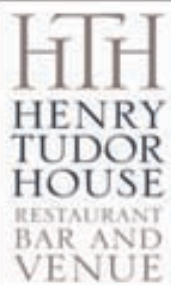
"Everyone remembers it differently, as they say. I think there's an overarching story that's true, but the way each character tells it in their monologues might stretch the truth a bit. But it's more complex than that because you're getting different age perspectives as well. I think that's the best thing about the show - it takes you through the four seasons. So when you're with Tommy at the beginning in spring, everything has this kind of wide-eyed quality about it because they're all very young. Then in summer, it's all bright and fun and the band is very successful, and in autumn, we have this crash where everything starts to go wrong. Eventually, you get to winter, where it's much darker, with Frankie trudging along doing all these gigs to pay off debts."

Much has been said about the Four Seasons as a 'blue collar' band, speaking to the experiences of America's urban working-class. Yet at the same time, their appeal clearly reaches beyond national borders, and even across generations.

"Sometimes after a show, you'll have someone who's about 15 come up to you and say how much they loved it, but then you'll also meet someone who's 65 or 70, who's excited to have relived the songs from their childhood. I think if you asked Frankie or Bob Gaudio, they'd tell you that this show has brought their music to the masses again, and made it bigger than they ever expected it to be at this point. But a big part of the appeal is just that the songs are so beautifully simple and elegant. If you look at Sherry, for example, it's about asking someone out, which is something anyone can relate to. And they're so catchy! Start singing Sherry to anyone, and they'll sing the repeat back to you."

.....

Jersey Boys shows at Birmingham's New Alexandra Theatre from Saturday 16 December until Saturday 6 January



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Christmas with The Twang

Voted best Midlands band by What's On readers in 2016, The Twang this month return to Birmingham's O2 Academy for their annual festive shindig. We caught up with frontman Phil Etheridge to talk Christmas, collaborations and career highlights...

This year marks the 10th anniversary of The Twang's debut album, *Love It When I Feel Like This*. Describe how life's been from then to now.

We've just been doing lots of the same, really - trying to have as much fun as possible. We're fortunate that the band has been the biggest part of our lives for going on 10 years now, and long may that blag continue...

I guess the biggest difference is we've all since had kids and stopped the partying to a degree. You don't wanna be that 40-year-old drunk in the corner of a room full of cool 20-year-olds, telling them how your band once played Glastonbury...

We've also just released our 'best of' - *Either Way, It's The Best Of The Twang* - which was a big moment for all of us.

And you're going to be playing the debut record in its entirety at Birmingham's O2 Academy this month...

Yeah, we're super-excited about it and are currently in the studio trying to remember how to play the songs. A number of those tracks we haven't played since 2007, so it's been great listening to them again.

The Twang tend to tour around Christmas. Is there a reason for this?

It's become a bit of a tradition. I think a lot of folk treat it as their Christmas party, so the atmosphere's pretty incredible. The Christmas gigs have been some of my favourite ever. I've noticed a few bands have started doing it now as well. It's 'party season', so it makes sense.

How will you be spending Christmas Day?

Recovering, I guess. The Brum gig's on the 23rd, so the wife's gonna have to bear with me till at least Boxing Day.

What's on the top of your Christmas list?

To be happy and healthy and never have to get a proper job.

The Twang are a Brummie band. What's it like playing to a home crowd? Do the shows feel more special?

I used to find them difficult, as I'd put too much pressure on it being the best night of the year, but now I've kinda realised it's all about the crowd. We've just gotta do what we do and it'll all be grand.

What's your favourite thing about the city?

My mom.

What's your favourite hobby outside of music?

I run quite a bit to clear the head. Most of the friends I've made through the band aren't musicians. Instead they work within fashion or design, or are artists or whatever... I guess that's where my interest lies outside of the band.

What would your dream collaboration or project be?

I'd love to write an album and then have someone completely remix it on a dance tip, but everyone wants to write that *Screamadelica*, don't they? So maybe if I could just get Calvin Harris to do a tune with us, I could get that swimming pool built...

Who were your musical influences growing up?

I liked listening to whatever was on the skate videos. I really liked Op Ivy because of this H street video where Matt Hensley skated to bad town. I also liked bands like Carter, Ned's, The Wonder Stuff and PWEI because my older brother was bang into all that 'weirdo' scene. Then, after skating it was dance, rave, house, whatever you wanna call it. I always kinda listened to the music that was happening at the time. I was never really one for going back and finding records from the '60s etc.. not enough time in the day for that.

You're well known on the festival circuit. Do you have a favourite festival?

We've just done *Beyond The Tracks*, which was a really great show for us. It was great to be on the same bill as The Coral again, so I'm gonna say that one. Gerv and the rest of the Moseley Folk lot are top. They deserve all the success they get.

What's your career highlight?

I think definitely just getting a record deal and handing in my notice at work. I think that's the best feeling I've ever had.

What does the future hold for The Twang?

I honestly have no idea, so we'll just keep on keeping on.

The Twang play the O2 Academy, Birmingham, on Saturday 23 December.



Jollyboat The Bramall, Birmingham, Fri 8 December

Musical double act Ed and Tommy Croft are a gift from heaven if you're an out'n'proud geek with a nerdy love of Dungeons & Dragons, Game Of Thrones, Star Wars and the like. If you're not, there's the definite possibility that your attention may drift at certain points during the boys' show. Thankfully the amiable siblings churn out sufficient quality material to ensure you're back in the room in two shakes of a dragon's tail. Often compared in style to Flight Of The Conchords, the brothers trade well off their near-psycho connection with one another, and are well worth an evening of your time. Twenty pre-show minutes on Wikipedia, genning up on all things nerdy, may further enhance your appreciation of their comedy endeavours.

Barbara Nice's Christmas Cracker

Artrix, Bromsgrove, Tues 12 December; MAC, Birmingham, Fri 15 - Sat 16 December

Everybody's favourite Kings Heath housewife makes a welcome return to light up the festive season. As well as containing more jokes than you'd find in an oversized yuletide gag-bag (does such a thing actually exist?), Barbara's festive shows usually feature a tombola and raffle, no shortage of mince pies, and even the odd special guest or two.



Omid Djalili

Stratford Arts House, Fri 1 December; Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Thurs 14 December

Award-winning funnyman Omid Djalili is probably one of the most subversive comedians currently doing the rounds on the UK comedy circuit. An actor as well as a standup, Omid has appeared in numerous box office blockbusters, including *Gladiator*, *The Mummy*, *Sex And The City 2* and the James Bond movie *The World Is Not Enough*.

He's visiting the Midlands with his current stand-up show, *Schmuck For A Night...* "I like the word schmuck," says Omid. "It means 'fool' or buffoon. You have to be a schmuck to do comedy in today's climate. I'm embracing the schmuck in me to take on the big issues of our day. Plus, it's a word that ends with 'uck', which can only be a good thing..."



The Harry & Chris Show

Artrix, Bromsgrove, Fri 15 December; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Sat 30 December

Family-friendly fellas Harry Baker and Chris Read combine 'comedy, melody, poetry and best-matery' to excellent effect. Presenting what they refer to as comedy-jazz-rap, their songs' subject matter ranges from panda repopulation to television's *Robot Wars*, all presented via a winning blend of catchy tunes and clever wordplay.



Reginald D Hunter

The Comedy Loft, Birmingham,
Fri 15 & Thurs 19 December

American funnyman Reginald D Hunter is one of the UK's most popular comedians. His no-nonsense style and hugely amusing perspectives on the differences between the US and Britain have struck a real chord with his audiences, earning him an impressive legion of admirers. And with regular gigs on TV shows keeping him in the public eye, it's fair to assume his loyal fanbase is just going to keep on growing...



Jessica Fostekew

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry,
Mon 18 December

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



Crisis At Christmas

The Glee Club, Birmingham, Mon 18 December

Enjoy an evening of quality comedy and help the homeless while you're at it.

Crisis At Christmas is a unique volunteer effort that provides immediate assistance for homeless people at a critical time of year. And by attending this special event, you'll be helping to raise much-needed funds for na-



tional charity Crisis, to provide food, warmth and vital services for people who're having to live on the streets.

Birmingham-born Joe Lycett is host for the evening, with comedy contributions coming from Harry Hill, Joe Pasquale, Tom Ward, Darren Harriot and Kiri Pritchard McLean.

Greg Davies

Civic Hall, Wolverhampton,
Fri 8 - Sat 9 December

If you recognise Welsh funnyman Greg Davies from the telly but can't quite recall from which programme, it's The Inbetweeners you're likely to be thinking of. Greg played psychotic Head of Sixth Form Mr Gilbert.

As well as being funny, Greg's other claim to fame is his height - he's six feet eight inches tall in his stockinged feet. Feet, by the way, which are a whopping size 13!

A big man, then, with an ever-growing reputation on the comedy circuit, he's currently touring his latest show, You Magnificent Beast.

Greg thinks it's important to be absolutely honest about what punters can expect from one of his gigs. "My shows are funny," he says, "but to be clear, if you're looking for insight into the human condition, you'd be better off eating a bun or picking up a stick..."





Joe Lycett

Birmingham comedian Joe Lycett is hosting Crisis At Christmas, a charity fundraiser in aid of the homeless, at the city's Glee Club this month. He will then be returning to Brum next year with his brand new touring show. What's On caught up with him to find out what audiences can expect...

The phrase 'bigger and better' might have been coined specifically for Joe Lycett's new touring show. Hitting the road with I'm About To Lose Control And I Think Joe Lycett (more on that punning title later), the Birmingham comedian is taking a brand new set of observations, setpieces and gags to larger venues than he's previously appeared in on his solo tours. Not that he's especially fazed by any of it.

"I certainly have some big nights planned on this tour. I said to Sarah Millican that I felt I had to write a show that was big enough for those venues and, in her infinite wisdom, she said, 'No, the show should be good enough for 100 people'. So it's intimidating in terms of the scale of it and the sense that there'll be a lot of eyes on me, but I always try and do the best possible show I can. There's no point otherwise."

Joe's comedy career started off at Manchester University (he won the Chortle Student Award in 2009). He then took several acclaimed shows to the Edinburgh Fringe and supported the likes of Jack Whitehall and the aforementioned Millican in some of the nation's enormo-domes. Given that he's played in rooms of all shapes and sizes, he's in a strong position to know exactly what works for him.

"The beauty of stand-up is that generally it does scale up, and it's about your ability to connect with an audience. I think arenas might be too big for the type of shows I want to do, but the theatres are great. I'll be using PowerPoint again, which gives the crowd something to focus on, and that can scale up as big as you like."

And so to those pun-based show titles. Having brought us Some Lycett Hot in 2012 (the show for which he was nominated as best newcomer at the Edinburgh Fringe), he's since come up with If Joe Lycett Then You Should Have Put A Ring On It and That's The Way, A-Ha A-Ha, Joe Lycett. It's clear, then, that his new show's title, I'm About To Lose Control And I Think Joe Lycett, is simply the latest in a well-established tradition.

"You can't go too far wrong with the Pointer Sisters," Joe insists. "James Acaster suggested that I went the whole hog and went for I'm So Joe Lycett, And I Just Joe Lycett, I'm About To Lose Control And I Think Joe Lycett. There was another long one that was a strong

contender, but then I listened to the Pointer Sisters' song and thought, 'Can I walk on feeling confident to this music?' And yes, I probably can, so let's name the whole tour after that.

"Any time I meet a musician, I request that they write a song with 'I like it' in the title. The thing I love about all this is that there are now proper discussions about the title. I'll be sitting down with my agent, who also represents Frankie Boyle and Jimmy Carr, and the main question is, 'Which Lycett-based pun shall we go for this time?'"

In terms of the actual content of his show, Joe has once more rejected the notion of a fixed theme and instead is riffing on bizarre and funny stuff that's happened to him in the last couple of years. "I'm not the sort of writer who can restrict himself to a theme, just in case nothing good comes of it. I prefer to get annoyed about stuff, and then maybe you can spot loose themes that you can tie together. This one won't necessarily be about losing control. Or if it is, it'll be by pure chance."

Famed for online spats which often become huge viral hits before making their way into his stage act (a local council and an email spammer have previously been put through the Lycett wringer), Joe has a new set of subjects about which to vent his spleen when he hits the road. These include a curious pickle he got himself into involving the head office of a financial establishment which took exception to an on-the-spot jape featuring a friend who worked in a bank's building, a security pass and a ridiculous made-up name. "It's fascinating because this bank went back through all my tweets and Instagram posts to check if I'd done something similar in the past. Whoever could've known that a massive bank would have a sense-of-humour failure? So I want to make a point about banks and power and the way they mould us into what they want us to be."

Taking a broader view on the world, Joe may even be having his say on the divisive man in the White House. "I've been writing about him and trolling him a little bit, but haven't we all? It's like shouting into the void. I haven't really done much political stuff in my stand-up, but I feel that at this point, as many of us as possible have to say, 'We're not

cool with this'. Even if he's impeached and leaves, he's opened so many doors we'll never be able to close in terms of how we expect politicians to behave. People saying appalling things might not seem that appalling because it's already normalised."

Still, in moments of crisis (and the US going head-to-head with North Korea over nuclear weapons certainly has a 1960s Cuban Missile-style vibe to it), the world of comedy is always able to thrive. "It's a good time to be an artist because there's lots to talk about, so weirdly all that stuff helps. Unless things go to a complete state of emergency, there's always scope for people to hear someone talk about the state of things in an intelligent way. To be honest, though, I don't know whether I'm the person to do that. Sure, I can sit here and talk about it at length, but to actually construct something that can change people's minds is quite another thing."

So instead, Joe will be taking his own particular brand of storytelling comedy to his loyal fanbase.

"You should trust that if you find something funny, other people will too. The whole thing about building up an audience is about taking people with you who will be on the same page - but some things that I think are hilarious might die a death, so you then try to reconstruct it. There's one routine in the new show that I really care about and really hope works. It's not quite there yet in terms of working for an audience, but I believe in that routine, so I will keep developing it to make it work. But then there are others that I like but don't quite believe in enough to fight for. You have to pick your battles in writing stand-up comedy. Do you want to make that point or not? If you do, then you always find a way of doing it."

.....
Joe Lycett hosts Crisis At Christmas at Birmingham's Glee Club on Monday 18 December.

He returns to the city with his new tour next year, playing the New Alexandra Theatre May and Symphony Hall in November.

Joe will also be stopping off at various other venues across the Midlands. Full details of his new tour can be found at joelycettcomedy.co.uk

Cinderella

Birmingham Hippodrome, Tues 19 December - Sun 28 January
Midlands-born soul diva Beverley Knight takes her bow in pantoland this Christmas, starring as the fairy godmother in this spectacular festive production.

She's joined for a show not to be missed by the hunky Danny Mac and the always delightful Suzanne Shaw. Comedy comes courtesy of Hippodrome panto regular Matt Slack and the still-going-strong Grumbleweeds. Ceri Dupree and Phil Randall don the giant wigs and altogether unpleasant manner to play the not-very-nice Ugly Sisters.

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, until Sat 13 January

This year's Belgrade Theatre version of the famous fairytale features all the usual panto elements, including slapstick comedy, audience participation, stunning sets, breathtaking costumes and plenty of singing and dancing. And also very much as usual, the show has been written and directed by Mr Coventry Panto himself, the inimitable Iain Lauchlan.

Malvern Theatre, Thurs 14 December - Sun 7 January

Former Strictly Come Dancing contestant and This Morning regular Alison Hammond tops the bill this year, as Malvern's ever-faithful panto audience is invited to attend Prince Charming's spectacular ball. Alison is joined by Gemma Naylor from Nick Jr's Go! Go! Go! show and Paul Hawkyard from CBeebies' Old Jack's Boat. Highly rated funnyman Mark James keeps the laughter coming.

Artrix, Bromsgrove, Sat 16 - Sat 23 December

With its comical Ugly Sisters, matchmaking fairy godmother, drop-dead-gorgeous Prince Charming, super-cute mice and fits-one-foot-only glass slipper, Cinderella can justifiably lay claim to being the most popular of all pantomimes. This brand new version is being presented by Artrix regulars All & Sundry.



Birmingham Hippodrome's Cinderella



Cinderella at Coventry's Belgrade Theatre



Cinderella at Malvern Theatre

Robin Hood & The Babes In The Wood

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Thurs 7 December - Sun 7 January



They've done it before and now they're doing it again. Yep, Stafford Gatehouse's oft-used strategy of imbuing their annual pantomime with a real rock'n'roll flavour has proved so popular in previous years that the venue is

giving the exact same treatment to its 2017 production.

So... they've taken the story of Robin Hood, added a Babe In The Wood or two, stirred in a few time-honoured pantomime favourites and then seasoned liberally with all manner of rock'n'roll hits.

A recipe for success if ever there was one - so brace yourself for a fabulous festive feast of fun and frivolity.

Sleeping Beauty

Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Sat 2 - Sun 31 December; Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham, Tues 5 - Fri 8 December; Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Sat 2 - Sun 31 December; Swan Theatre, Worcester, Mon 4 December - Sun 7 January

The tragic tale of a young princess who's tricked by an evil fairy and pricks her finger on a spinning-wheel, causing her to fall asleep for 100 years, offers a great story

around which to build a pantomime production of real quality.

And if previous panto offerings at each of the above-listed venues are anything to go by, Sleeping Beauty 2017 is likely to be just that. Indeed, we're so confident you'll be wide-eyed with excitement that we'll even bet our best antique spinning-wheel that any snoring you might hear in the auditorium will only be coming from the title character herself!



Sleeping Beauty at the Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa



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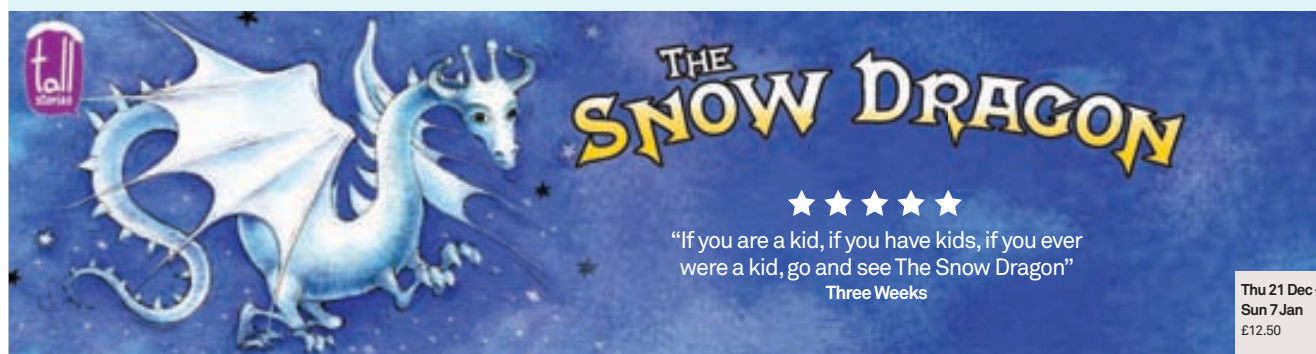


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- Sat 3 Feb
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Jack And The Beanstalk

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre,
Sat 9 December - Sun 14 January

The Wolverhampton Grand is certainly on a roll when it comes to providing high-quality festive fare, with its 2016 panto production having been voted the Midlands' best Christmas show in the 2016 What's On Readers' Awards.

And the venue's Christmas 2017 offering looks set to be every bit as energised and entertaining as its illustrious predecessor.

Gareth Gates stars as Jack, with Lisa Riley returning to the venue to take the role of Spirit of the Beans.

Also getting back in the Grand Theatre panto saddle is 'queen of the Black Country' Doreen Tipton, taking on the role of Dame Trott's lazy neighbour.

And speaking of the Dame, pantomime favourite Ian Adams will once again be slapping on the rouge to play her, and no doubt giving his usual outrageous performance. Adam C Booth, meanwhile, is two potatoes short of a Christmas dinner as Simple Simon, while familiar television face Graham Cole offers precious little by way of yuletide goodwill as the oh-so-evil Fleshcreep.

The Core, Solihull, Fri 8 - Sun 31 December

The fee-fi-fo-fumming ogre isn't the only pantomime giant for whom the curtain will be coming down at the end of this brand new show...

The inimitable Malcom Stent is bidding a fond farewell to pantoland come the 31st of December, waving adieu after 27 years of writing, directing and starring in Solihull's favourite yuletide production.

Alongside all the traditional fun and frivolity, Malc's usual festive sackload of local references will ensure the show has a real 'made in the Midlands' feel about it.



Peter Pan

Arena Birmingham, Wed 20 - Sun 24 December;
The Place, Oakengates Theatre, Telford,
Wed 6 - Sun 31 December

Midlands pantomime audiences this year get two chances to fly away with the boy who wouldn't grow up to a magical island filled with adventure.

Meet a real fairy, marvellous mermaids, wonderful Wendy and the down-on-their-luck lost boys. Oh, and beware the ever-so-wicked Captain Hook and a very hungry crocodile who goes tick-tock (he swallowed a clock)...

Martin Kemp and Bradley Walsh star in the Arena Birmingham production, about which you can read more in the First Word section of this issue (see page four).



Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury,
Wed 29 November - Sun 7 January



The fact that Snow White is a 24-carat classic of a fairytale means that a pantomime version is always a surefire winner. Expect all the usual panto elements in this brand new Theatre Severn offering, including a rouged-up Dame in colourful costumes, oodles of hearty thigh-slapping, singalongs aplenty, slapstick comedy and even a few naughty jokes to make sure the grown-ups don't feel too left out of things. Shropshire's 'favourite Dame', Brad Fitt, once more dons the dress (and probably steals the show!).

Palace Theatre, Redditch,
Wed 6 - Sun 31 December

Everybody knows the story. The nasty old queen is less than keen on her younger and more beautiful stepdaughter, who takes refuge from her royal evilness by holing up in the deep, dark forest with a household of small but splendidly friendly miners... Britain's Got Talent winner Jai McDowall takes top billing as Snow White's handsome prince in this sure-to-be-lively Palace Theatre version... Dave Benson Phillips and Nicole Faraday (Bad Girls) lend strong support.





Aladdin

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent,
Fri 15 December - Sun 7 January

'Son of the Potteries' Jonathan Wilkes dons the tights to star as the lad himself in this ever-popular pantomime tale. Homecoming hero Jonathan's a festive fixture at the Regent Theatre nowadays, and is set to play an inevitably significant part in making Aladdin one of the region's must-see pantomimes this Christmas. He's joined by big pal and fellow Regent panto regular Christian Patterson, who'll be giving his usual larger-than-life performance as the Dame, on this occasion Widow Twankey.

Lichfield Garrick, until Sat 6 January

A perfect story for an evening of family entertainment finds street youth Aladdin trying against all odds to win the hand of the beautiful princess - and being helped in his efforts by the mystical genie of the lamp... CBeebies Cat Sandion stars in this latest version of the classic Arabian Nights tale. She's joined in the show by Sam Rabone (as Widow Twankey) and Ben Thornton (as Wishy Washy), both of whom scored a massive festive hit in the Garrick's Christmas 2016 adaptation of Sleeping Beauty.



A Christmas Carol

Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, Mon 27 November - Sun 4 February;
Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham, Sat 16 - Sat 30 December

Of all Dickens' festive stories, A Christmas Carol reigns supreme. The covetous sinning of the miserly Scrooge, the eternal hope offered by Tiny Tim, and the eerie visions of redemption - visiting Ebenezer in the shape of three yuletide ghosts (four if you count the chain-clanking Marley) - all combine to give the tale a real olde worlde charm. The RSC version of the show has been penned by David Edgar, whose previous work for the Company includes his award-winning adaptation of Dickens' Nicholas Nickleby.



Treasure Island

New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme,
until Sat 27 January



When salty old seadog Billy Bones brings his papers to the Admiral Benbow Inn, he draws young Gem into the adventure of a lifetime, one which will see her not only setting sail in search of buried treasure, but also spending time in the company of a one-legged pirate with murder in mind...

Boasting live music, puppetry and swash-buckling sword fights, this brand new stage version of Robert Louis Stevenson's high-seas adventure is helmed by New Vic Artistic Director Theresa Heskins.

Crimes On The Christmas Express

Lichfield Garrick,
Fri 8 December - Sat 6 January

An alternative festive-season comedy for adults, Crimes On The Christmas Express takes its inspiration from sources as diverse as Agatha Christie novels and the Jason Bourne movies. The show features a talented cast of four who between them play an impressively wide range of quirky characters, from jewel thieves and circus performers to lovelorn porters and sleazy Americans. Award-winning theatre company New Old Friends present the production, making a welcome return to the Garrick following a sell-out success at the venue last Christmas.



The Hundred And One Dalmatians

The REP, Birmingham, Thurs 30 November - Sat 13 January

Birmingham Rep is going dotty for dogs this Christmas, courtesy of its brand new stage version of The Hundred And One Dalmatians.

The REP's Associate Director, Tessa Walker, takes the helm for the festive-season family show, having previously directed the venue's yuletide productions of A Christmas Carol and The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe.

Dodie Smith's delightful tale has been transformed for the stage by Debbie Isitt, writer and director of the hugely popular Nativity! films. Isitt's stage show, Nativity! The Musical, began its national tour at The REP in October.

Commenting on the venue's 2017 Christmas offering, Tessa Walker said: "I'm delighted to be bringing to life the magic of The Hundred And One Dalmatians in our unforgettable production, which features wonderful puppets and new music. Debbie's adaptation is packed with enchantment and humour, and brings a thrilling new sense of adventure to the story, making it fun for families and friends of all ages."



Flashdance

New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, Mon 4 - Fri 9 December

Based on the popular '80s movie of the same name, Flashdance features hit numbers Maniac, Manhunt, Gloria, I Love Rock And Roll and the Academy Award-winning What A Feeling. The show tells the story of 18-year-old Alex, a welder by day and 'flashdancer' by night, who dreams of winning a place at the prestigious Shipley Dance Academy. But will she get to achieve her ambition against all the odds?... Strictly Come Dancing champion Joanne Clifton (pictured) and A1 heartthrob Ben Adams star



Skellig

Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, Wed 20 - Sat 30 December

David Almond's eerie and magical story tells the tale of a young boy who discovers a strange creature and nourishes him back to health. Meanwhile, the boy's baby sister is gravely ill in hospital... The critically acclaimed Tin Robot Theatre are the company behind this stage adaptation of Almond's 1998 Carnegie Medal award winner.

The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe

Crescent Theatre, Birmingham, Sun 3 - Sat 16 December

This much-loved tale from the pen of CS Lewis is rightly regarded as an all-time classic of children's literature. The story sees the lion-god Aslan coming to the aid of three youngsters who've accidentally stumbled into his mystical world of Narnia.

Alice In Wonderland

The Old Rep, Birmingham, until Sat 30 December

A timeless classic telling the magical and decidedly topsy-turvy story of a little girl who falls down a rabbit hole and discovers a weird world, Alice's Adventures In Wonderland first made its way onto the stage during its author Lewis Carroll's lifetime; in 1886, to be precise. It's since been adapted for the

theatre countless times and in all manner of ways, including as a ballet, a musical, an opera and a traditional pantomime. With its cast of nonsensical and amusing characters, including the White Rabbit, the Mad Hatter and the March Hare, it invariably makes for a great Christmas show. Read our feature on page 32.

Birmingham Royal Ballet: The Nutcracker

Birmingham Hippodrome, until Wed 13 December

Sir Peter Wright's enchanting version of this firm festive favourite returns to the Hippodrome this month, courtesy of Birmingham Royal Ballet.

Created in 1990 as a thank you to Birmingham for its support of the company following its move to the Midlands from London's Sadler Wells, Wright's production is seen by many as the finest interpretation of Tchaikovsky's magnificent and mesmerising score.

In true Christmas spirit, the story follows the young Clara as she's swept up in a fantasy of soldiers, giant rats, snow fairies, magic and mystery, before finally being transformed into a beautiful ballerina. A magical, must-see show for little princesses everywhere...



GREAT SHOWS COMING UP AT WOLVERHAMPTON GRAND THEATRE

THU 18 – SAT 20 JAN

GALLOWGLASS



RUTH RENDELL
GALLOWGLASS

SUN 21 JAN

A VIENNESE
STRAUSS GALA

VIENNESE
STRAUSS
GALA



TUE 23 – SAT 27 JAN

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HEDDA
GABLER

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THE SIBERIAN BALLET

RAYMOND GUBBAY PRESENTS
THE RUSSIAN STATE
BALLET & ORCHESTRA
OF SIBERIA

THE NUTCRACKER
ROMEO & JULIET
SWAN LAKE

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SERGEI BOBROV
MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CHIEF
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NATOLY TCHEPURNOI



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**MAMMA
MIA!**

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MON 26 FEB – SAT 3 MAR

HAIRSPRAY

THE WEST END & BROADWAY HIT MUSICAL

hairspray

★★★★★

SO LIGHT
AND BOUNCY
AS A
PILLOW OF CLOUDS



THU 8 MAR

JOE BROWN

FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER... *Just Joe*



TUE 16 – SAT 27 OCT

KINKY BOOTS

WINNER OF EVERY MAJOR BEST MUSICAL AWARD

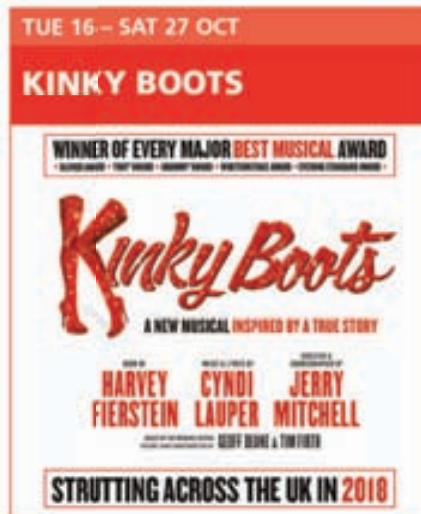
Kinky Boots

A NEW MUSICAL INSPIRED BY A TRUE STORY

WRITTEN BY
HARVEY FIERSTEIN
MUSIC BY
CYNDI LAUPER
BOOKED BY
JERRY MITCHELL

BOOKED BY
SCOTT BEANE & TIM FORT

STRUTTING ACROSS THE UK IN 2018



Stick Man

Birmingham Town Hall,
Tues 26 December - Fri 12 January

"Scamp Theatre send shivers down my spine," reveals Julia Donaldson, the co-creator (along with Alex Scheffler) of the hugely popular children's book on which this show is based.

"They're so lively and innovative. I love their production of Stick Man, and so do the audiences."

Julia's not wrong - audiences most definitely do love the show, as a smash-hit season in the West End ably demonstrated.

Featuring a trio of talented performers, the production brings together puppetry, songs, live music and 'funky moves' to tell the story of Stick Man's attempts to get back to the family tree. Suitable for children aged three and older.



Snow Mouse

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry,
Fri 1 - Sun 31 December



A magical forest full of play, puppetry and music is the delightful setting for this 'enchanting winter's tale for the very young'. A child's wintry-woodland discovery of a sleeping mouse buried under the snow kick-starts a friendship that soon sees the warm-hearted pair engaging in all manner of fun-filled frolics... Presented by Travelling Light and The Egg, the production is suitable for children aged between three months and four years.

Santa In Love

Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton, Fri 1 December;
Artrix, Bromsgrove, Sat 2 December

Youngsters always have plenty of questions to ask about Christmas, and the People's Theatre Company is here setting out to provide an answer to perhaps the biggest one of all - what's the one thing that Santa secretly loves best?

"You'll never guess," advise the talented en-

semble, "so if you want to find out, then join Santa and his friends in this fun-filled family musical, complete with games, giggles and all your favourite Christmas songs." Sounds good to us...

Santa's Christmas Wish

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Fri 15 to Sun 24 December;
Artrix, Bromsgrove, Sun 24 December

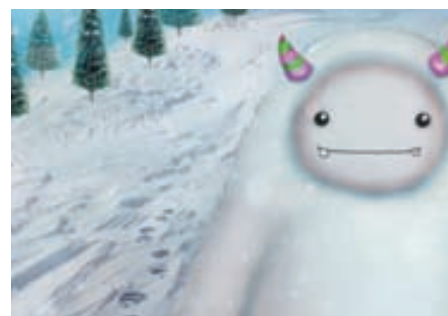
Mrs Claus is wondering what Santa wants for Christmas, and needs all the help she can get to find out. Enter, Dasher the Reindeer, Pom-pom the Penguin and Snowy the Snowman, all of whom think they've got the answer... Festive favourites Jingle Bells, When Santa Got Stuck Up The Chimney, The Twelve Days Of Christmas, Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer and We Wish You A Merry Christmas are among the songs featured in this 40-minute show. Created for kids aged from two to seven, the production also includes a meet-and-greet with Father Christmas, who'll be handing out a gift to every youngster.



The Abominable Snowman

Artrix, Bromsgrove, Wed 27 December

The highly rated Moon On A Stick are the ensemble behind this 'very silly, very snowy adventure'. Blending puppetry, live music and pitch-perfect storytelling for youngsters aged three-plus, the 50-minute production sets out to show that not everything is always quite as it seems. And that includes the legendary Abominable Snowman, who, it turns out, is actually quite adorable!



Home For Christmas

Lichfield Garrick, Tues 12 - Sun 31 December

Wobbling under the weight of an enormous Christmas tree, a mother is struggling to make her way through a to-do list that's longer than her arm. Her festive-season stress levels are then sent through the yuletide roof thanks to encounters with a host of quirky characters, including clumsy sheep, lost birds, stranded farmers and mayors in a pickle... This gentle rhyming story has been widely praised for its generous helpings of wit, warmth and joy.

Father Christmas

MAC, Birmingham,
Thurs 30 November - Sat 30 December

Raymond Briggs is best known for his story about a little boy who makes friends with a snowman. But talented theatre company Pins And Needles are doing plenty to promote two of the author's other less-famous tales. Having last Christmas presented an adaptation of his picture book, *The Bear*, they're this year returning to MAC with an equally well-received version of another of his stories. Suitable for children aged three and older, *Father Christmas* features songs, live music, playful puppetry, secret doors, hidden hatches and plenty of trademark Briggs humour. Expect your children to be suitably enchanted.



Lily And The Little Snow Bear

The Core, Solihull, Wed 20 - Sun 24 December

A heartwarming tale of friendship, *Lily And The Little Snow Bear* takes place 'two sleeps before Christmas'. The story sees Lily heading out into the snowy countryside after discovering a mysterious trail of footprints... 'Exquisite puppets, enchanting music and a magical snowy setting' are here combined to create a feelgood family show for children aged three-plus.



The Wind In The Willows

Albany Theatre, Coventry,
Thurs 7 December - Sat 6 January

A firm festive favourite, Kenneth Grahame's classic story ably demonstrates the way in which one life can command the full attention of three others!

Mole, Badger and Ratty simply don't have time for any of their own interests - they're way too busy having to look after their reckless and irrepressible friend, Toad...



Santa's Mixed Up Martian

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry,
Thurs 7 - Sun 24 December

Coventry panto stalwart Iain Lauchlan is the talented scribe behind this Imagine Theatre show, the fourth in the series. When a space-scooter-riding, multicoloured, mixed-up Martian with a liking for Mars Bars is blown off course by a solar wind, he's forced to make an emergency landing on earth, where he finds himself coming face-to-face with Santa, Ellie and Rudolph... Singalong songs, a Santa meet-and-greet and a gift for every child add to the fun.

The Snow Dragon

Birmingham Hippodrome, Thurs 21 December - Sun 7 January; Bridge House Theatre, Warwick, Thurs 14 - Fri 15 December

Tall Stories have previously presented hit shows *The Gruffalo* and *Room On The Broom*. The company here return with the enchanting story of a young goat named Billy and his encounter with the legendary Snow Dragon (and some very hungry wolves!).



We're Going On A Bear Hunt

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry,
Wed 29 November - Sun 7 January

Suitable for children aged two-plus, this new adaptation of Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenbury's popular picture book follows the exciting adventures of a family as they head out on an intrepid quest to find a bear. Catchy songs and interactive scenes are combined with no shortage of swishy swashy grass and oozy, squelchy mud, in a show that seems certain to keep youngsters well and truly entertained.



The Witches

Malvern Theatre, Sat 16 - Sun 31 December

When you take a Roald Dahl book and have it adapted for the stage by hugely respected children's playwright David Wood OBE, you can expect the outcome to be something worth beholding. And that's certainly the case with *The Witches*. Dahl's delightful story sees a young boy and his grandmother take on some rather unpleasant ladies - the witches of the title - who'd like nothing more than to squish and squelch all the wretched children they despise. Presented by the Malvern Theatre Players.



Beverley Knight

The Midlands-born Queen of Soul is this month making her panto debut and working her magic in Cinderella at Birmingham Hippodrome...

With her MOBO Award-winning voice, West Midlands singing sensation Beverley Knight certainly has plenty of experience of casting a spell over her audiences. But this Christmas, the Wolverhampton-born wonder will be exercising magic powers of a very different sort in the guise of Cinderella's Fairy Godmother.

Following more than 20 years' experience as a recording artist, and critically acclaimed stage performances in *The Bodyguard* and *Memphis*, Knight now returns to her regional roots, making her pantomime debut at Birmingham Hippodrome. Flawlessly kitted out in sparkly dress and wings, she's positively glowing with enthusiasm about the task ahead when she meets us for the panto launch - and with good reason.

"I'm really looking forward to it!" she gushes. "This isn't just any panto, it's the biggest one in the world, and to have that as my first - I don't think it gets any better. Often when you're in theatre over Christmas, you kind of feel a bit removed from it all. But panto is Christmas, so this year I'll be the one helping people to get into the Christmas spirit, which will be brilliant."

It's not only the unparalleled reputation of Hippodrome pantos that persuaded her to take up the part. Having previously worked with Qdos' Michael Harrison on *The Bodyguard*, she was initially asked by the producer if she'd consider appearing in the show. That pre-existing relationship was certainly a draw, but perhaps even more important was the location, enabling her to spend the festive season at home surrounded by her family. And if the crowds of fans who flocked to meet her at the stage door during *The Bodyguard*'s Birmingham run are anything to judge by, she can certainly expect a warm welcome back.

"The thing about performing here is that people actually know me - a lot of them are people who've grown up with me or hung out with me, which gives it a whole different energy. There's a sense of ownership, I think, because I'm very much part of the fabric here in the West Midlands. So I can imagine that trying to get home every night after the show will be a process!"

As one might expect, Christmas in her family household has always been very much a musical occasion.

"I come from a massive musical family and we do all like to sing, so we do a lot of singing together. I don't know what we're doing this year, but we always end up singing something at Christmas - usually a cappella at the dinner table. I love Christmas songs. I think it's a beautiful time of year for inclusivity and getting together with the people you love. Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas I absolutely adore - I've sung that a few times myself."

A rendition of that song is part of a major new recording project for Knight, undertaken together with fellow musical theatre stars Amber Riley and Cassidy Janson. Under the banner *Leading Ladies*, the trio recently released their first joint album, *Songs From The Stage*.

"I'd been in talks with a record label about the possibility of recording an album to reflect the work I've been doing in theatre recently, but I wasn't too sure about it. But soon after that, when I was watching *Graham Norton*, Amber Riley came on to promote *Dream Girls*. She's an amazing singer, and suddenly I had this thought that maybe I could do something with her. And then, when I saw Cassidy in *Beautiful*, it just seemed to me that if the three of us did something together, it would be much more

interesting than me doing an album on my own. It would be unprecedented. Thankfully the label were all over it, and both Amber and Cassidy said yes, so here we are, a new vocal supergroup, and I'm really excited!

"We've got a mix of old classics like *Memory* and *Wind Beneath My Wings* from *Cats* and *Beaches*, and future classics like *Helpless* from *Hamilton*. There are songs that feature in each of our respective shows too - so I'll be doing songs from *The Bodyguard* and *Memphis*. And then there are some that have all of us singing together as an ensemble."

At the time of writing, details of the script and songs for *Cinderella* remain tightly under wraps, from the cast as well as the public. But fans can rest assured that there'll be ample opportunity to hear Beverley sing, including in a duet with *Hear'Say*'s Suzanne Shaw, who takes the title role.

Suzanne's *Cinderella* is certainly blessed in this choice of Fairy Godmother - it's hard to imagine anyone looking more at home in the part. But while it might be Beverley who's ensuring happy endings both for Cinders and her audience, if roles were reversed, what Christmas wishes might she be hoping to have granted?

"Well, number one, my Fairy Godmother would get *Wolves* into the Premiership," she laughs. "But I think the main thing for me would be to make all my endeavours really successful. If I could be sure that I'll still be doing this when I'm really old, I'd be happy. I love what I do and I want to do it for as long as I can."

.....

Beverley Knight stars as the Fairy Godmother in *Cinderella* at Birmingham Hippodrome from Tuesday 19 December until Sunday 28 January.



WINTER WONDERLAND

Alice comes to the Old Rep Theatre for Christmas...



Piles of pantos, never-ending Nutcrackers and an abundance of Dickens adaptations: 'tis the season for Theatreland to fall back on tried and tested family favourites. But if you've had your fill of more familiar festive fare, there's still plenty for you and the kids to enjoy around Birmingham, including at the city's Old Rep Theatre, where Birmingham Ormiston Academy (BOA) is putting on a brand new version of *Alice In Wonderland*.

"Our vision here at the Old Rep is to provide Christmas entertainment using traditional stories for young children, primarily those aged four to 10," explains producer Suzanne Priest. "There's something about fairytales and traditional stories that open up imaginative possibilities in theatre for young people, as well as giving our creative team the opportunity to explore fantasy worlds and characters that really come to life on stage. Then to leave that question at the end as to whether it was real or just a dream - I think that really excites children's curiosity."

Emphasising the traditional aspect, this is a largely faithful staging of the novel, a choice made partly with school visits in mind. Alongside the show, the company has been running workshops with classes also studying the book. This approach to the text can be seen right down to the design, which takes its cues from John Tenniel's original illustrations.

"If you go back to the original books, there are lots of really lovely patterns, especially in the costumes," says designer Libby Todd. "If you look at a character like the Queen of Hearts, for example, a lot of versions now just show her with quite a plain, big red dress, but the illustrations are actually very detailed - a bit like the designs on a pack of cards."

That said, there has been some 'artistic licence'. One key element is the inclusion of Tweedledee and Tweedledum (whose first appearance is in the sequel story, *Through The Looking Glass*), since it was felt the comic duo brought something important to the show's dynamic. Then, there's the matter of Alice herself.

"Sometimes with productions of *Alice In Wonderland*, Alice can feel slightly on the edge of the show, like an observer rather than an active participant," says director Scott Le Crass. "I think our version is much more feisty, with lots of get up and go. She's an adventurer who's inquisitive and excited and intrigued by everything."

Digital projection and puppetry are among the elements used to develop a fresh and unique landscape for *Wonderland*. Rather than a sharp transition, strange, slightly

unreal elements are present from the beginning, creating a more natural progression from the 'normal' world into a *Wonderland* that becomes more weird and wacky as the story progresses.

There's also been room for invention in the score, which combines settings of songs and poems from the book with original numbers imitating Carroll's distinctive style. The Caucus Race, for example, is full of nonsense lyrics, while *Off With His Head* delights in grisly detail.

"The score has all sorts of strange noises in it," says composer Steve Allan Jones. "It's taken me seven months to put it together, and it's unbelievably complicated. I thought it would work really well to bring in toy instruments - things like little pianos and flutes, and whatever I could find really. Some of them are even out of crackers!"

But what really makes this production special is the collaboration between professional and student cast and crew. Six lead actors work alongside an ensemble of post-16 BOA students, while BOA and BSA apprentices are partnered with the in-house team in areas like technical theatre, front of house, marketing and stage management. Acting BTEC student Caleb Clarke is excited about the skills the show has helped them all to develop.

"It's an amazing experience, and so different to anything I've done at school," says Caleb. "This is actually the first musical I've been involved in, so I was a little bit intimidated by it at first. When the audition came along, I thought I'd go for it, because if nothing else it would be good audition experience. So when I found out I'd been cast, I was over the moon, because I'd never thought of myself as a singer or dancer before."

As well as having their own specific animal characters to work on, the students also understudy lead roles, are responsible for scene changes, and get to operate a star attraction of the show: the Cheshire Cat puppet, which has been cleverly designed to appear and disappear in stages.

"It takes seven of us to operate the puppet," explains Caleb. "It's all in different sections - so there's one for the head, four legs, a body and a tail. It's really interesting trying to fit everyone in when you're making the full image - you've got to keep a lot in your head to make it work."

As well as puppetry workshops, rehearsals have also involved learning how to fully engage

young audiences. But perhaps as important as any individual skill they've picked up has been the chance to play around and enjoy the process.

"You've got to have a lot of energy," says Caleb's fellow Acting BTEC student, Ava Ralph. "It's important to really bring out the character in your movements and facial expressions, much more than you would for an adult audience."

"I've got young family coming to see it," adds Caleb, "so I already know how full-on you have to be to keep them entertained for two hours, but it's so much fun! In *Wonderland*, you get to say and do the most ridiculous things - it's really liberating being able to bring out your inner child and stomp around on stage!"

Alice In Wonderland shows at the Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham, until Saturday 30 December.





Double Trouble...

Dames Iain Lauchlan and Greg Powrie certainly make a gruesome twosome in Coventry Belgrade Theatre's pantomime production of Cinderella!

With Cinderella being this year's Belgrade Theatre pantomime, Coventry is in for twice the fun as the stage is graced by not just one, but two veteran Scottish panto dames.

But audiences might not be the only ones seeing double this Christmas. Fresh from gallivanting around Glasgow, holidaying in the Highlands and drinking distilleries dry, Cinderella's Ugly Sisters Dyspepsia and Listeria head for the Midlands loaded up on whisky and pizza crunch (that's battered, deep-fried pizza to the uninitiated).

Joining local legend Iain Lauchlan for his Coventry debut is Pitlochry's own Greg Powrie. The pair play sisters Pepsi and Lizzie respectively.

"As people here will know, I always play my dames as Scottish anyway," says Iain, who in 2017 is taking part in his 23rd Belgrade panto, juggling the roles of writer, director and dame once more. "This year we've definitely got a strong Scottish theme, particularly at the beginning."

"I think it's fair to say a lot of English people have certain preconceptions about Scotland," adds Greg, "some of which are apocryphal and some of which are true. But that's something that we play on quite a lot - getting drunk and things like that. I'm actually really intrigued to see how it's going to work because I've never done a panto in England before. I think it'll be weird - at least initially - because Iain and Craig (Hollingsworth, who plays Buttons) know the audience so well, and then you've got this Scottish upstart coming in!"

That 'Scottish theme' will also be reflected in the design: the sisters' top style tips this season involve lots of tropical fruit as well as tartan, which, according to Greg, "never goes out of fashion". Take note, Coventry fashionistas.

"It's always a real treat doing panto here because we get a completely new set, props and costumes every year," says Iain. "The Belgrade is really lucky to have its own wardrobe and workshop."

Despite Iain's extensive dame experience, it's the first time in over 20 years he's played an Ugly Sister. For Powrie it's the second year on the trot - he was an Ugly Sister in a Lauchlan-penned Imagine Theatre panto at Kirkcaldy's Adam Smith Theatre in 2016.

"It's quite odd to be doing Cinderella two years running because, like Iain, I've been doing Dame for the last however many years and usually there's an autonomy about that. So if you choose to go off-piste, you can. Whereas with Ugliers, it's a double-act, so you've got to take a bit of a gamble on who the other half is. That's why you get a lot of comedy double-acts doing it, and duos who just do Ugly Sisters and never play dames independently."

"I'm actually not a great lover of doing Cinderella," Iain admits. "I usually much prefer to be a dame than an Ugly Sister. The last time I did it must've been in the early '90s, although I've directed it here since then. The problem is that sometimes it can become a bit of a competition. It wasn't until I first played it alongside Greg that I felt like this was how it should be done, where you're helping each other out rather than competing."

It might be Greg's first time in Coventry, but the Caledonian co-stars still have history, from Iain's days as creative director of Belgrade panto co-producers Imagine Theatre. Cinderella was the third pantomime he performed in at Inverness' Eden Court Theatre, recruiting Greg as his comedy partner following auditions in Edinburgh.

"I didn't know him before that," says Iain,

"but Greg is just so generous to work with, as well as being a really good performer. So when it was decided that we'd be doing Cinderella this year, I asked him to come down because I needed someone that I really liked and could trust."

With the sisters serving a dual function as both baddies and comic relief, Cinderella often has a different dynamic to other pantos.

"Quite often with Cinderella, you don't have a Stepmother," explains Iain, "or she's just a voice off-stage, so the Ugliers are the out-and-out baddies. But in this show, by bringing the Stepmother in, you've got a figure for the kids to really dislike, which helps to soften their feelings towards the sisters."

"I think that makes it more fun," adds Greg. "You want to be able to laugh at the Ugliers, but if they're the only ones making Cinderella's life a misery, it's more difficult to do that."

Unusually, Maggie Robson will be taking on two very different maternal guises here, doubling up as Cinderella's Stepmother and her Fairy Godmother. Meanwhile, as Buttons, comic Craig Hollingsworth will move away from his usual on-stage camaraderie with the dame, with his and Iain's characters this time at loggerheads.

"Craig is definitely going to be getting some payback this year," says Iain, "because he pretty much always ends up getting the worst of it in the slosh scenes, whereas this year that'll be Greg."

"I've only known him for two days and I can already sense he's going to enjoy that," adds Greg.

.....
Cinderella shows at Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, until Saturday 13 January

Going for Gold

Check out our top picks of golden gifts on offer at
The Mailbox in Birmingham this Christmas...

1



2



3



4



5



1. Lexon Fine Speaker **£50.00** from Heal's 2. Drop tealight holder **£16.00** from BoConcept 3. Sophie Hulme Whistle ochré velvet box clutch **£575.00** from Harvey Nichols 4. Sophia Webster Chiara rose gold winged leather sandals **£525.00** from Harvey Nichols 5. Christmas tree sculptures **From £39.00** from BoConcept 6. Olivia Burton Hackney rose gold-plated watch **£95.00** from Harvey Nichols



12



7. Newbury Cutlery Set **£129.00** from made.com 8. Estée Lauder x Victoria Beckham Highlighter **£55.00** from Harvey Nichols
 9. MEMO Irish Leather Eau De Parfum **£195.00** from Harvey Nichols 10. Drop tealight holder **£16.00** from BoConcept
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Star Wars: The Last Jedi

CERT tbc

Starring **Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher, Adam Driver, Daisy Ridley, John Boyega, Oscar Isaac, Andy Serkis, Lupita Nyong'o, Domhnall Gleeson, Laura Dern, Benicio del Toro** Directed by **Rian Johnson (USA)**

There are still mysteries to be discovered about the Force, so Rey (Daisy Ridley) teams up with Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) to uncover them. Harrison Ford will be sadly missed, but at least Princess Leia (Carrie Fisher) is still in on the action, along with handsome new Resistance fighter Finn (John Boyega). The last Star Wars movie, *The Force Awakens*, expunged the nasty taste left by the previous three, so let's hope this eighth edition is just as good. According to Boyega, Princes William and Harry play a couple of stormtroopers, which really does give the film some royal approval. May the force be with them.

Released Thurs 14 December



EDITOR'S CHOICE

Film highlights released in December...



Happy End CERT 15 (108 mins)

Starring **Isabelle Huppert, Jean-Louis Trintignant, Mathieu Kassovitz, Fantine Harduin, Franz Rogowski, Laura Verlinden, Toby Jones** Directed by **Michael Haneke (Austria/ France/ Germany)**

Selected to represent Austria in next year's Oscars, this is a caustic drama that uses the refugee crisis in Calais for its backdrop. For the most part, though, the film focuses on a family involved in the construction industry and preoccupied with their own predicaments. The director, Michael Haneke, is not to be ignored.

Released Fri 1 December

Wonder CERT PG (113 mins)

Starring **Julia Roberts, Owen Wilson, Jacob Tremblay, Noah Jupe, Izabela Vidovic, Mandy Patinkin** Directed by **Stephen Chbosky (USA)**

Auggie Pullman is not like other boys. He was born with horrendous facial birth defects and has undergone extensive surgery over the years while being home-schooled by his mother. Now, aged 10, he's going to attend a real school for the first time... Based on the children's novel by RJ Palacio.

Released Fri 1 December



Love, Cecil CERT 12a (99 mins)

Directed by **Lisa Immordino Vreeland (USA)**

Documentary on the celebrated fashion photographer and Oscar-winning costume designer Sir Cecil Beaton, with archive interviews of those who knew him and more modern footage with those who have felt his artistic influence. The man's own words - written in his extensive diaries - are read by Rupert Everett.

Released Fri 1 December

Film highlights released in December...

Molly's Game CERT 15 (140 mins)

Starring **Jessica Chastain, Idris Elba, Kevin Costner, Michael Cera, Jeremy Strong, Chris O'Dowd** Directed by **Aaron Sorkin (USA)**

Molly's game is poker and she runs a high-powered poker empire for Hollywood A-listers, top athletes, Wall Street billionaires and the Russian mob. It's all highly illegal and so Molly Bloom finds herself under investigation by the FBI. Based on the unyieldingly entitled Molly's Game: From

Hollywood's Elite To Wall Street's Billionaire Boys Club, My High-Stakes Adventure In The World Of Underground Poker by Molly Bloom herself, the film marks the directorial debut of the Oscar-winning screenwriter Aaron Sorkin (The Social Network, A Few Good Men, Steve Jobs, The West Wing). And it's the latter's incomparable dialogue that should guarantee Jessica Chastain an Oscar nomination for best actress.

Released Wed 20 December



CRITIC'S CHOICE

The Man Who Invented Christmas

CERT PG (104 mins)

Starring **Dan Stevens, Christopher Plummer, Jonathan Pryce, Miriam Margolyes, Simon Callow, Ian McNeice** Directed by **Bharat Nalluri (Ireland/Canada)**

Following the story of the creation of Winnie-the-Pooh, we now have the story of the creation of A Christmas Carol. Apparently, Charles Dickens (Dan Stevens) was in dire straits at the time and almost went mad in the confection of his novella, but still managed to change how we now view the festive season.

Released Fri 1 December



The Disaster Artist

CERT 15 (104 mins)

Starring **James Franco, Dave Franco, Seth Rogen, Alison Brie, Ari Graynor, Josh Hutcherson, Zac Efron** Directed by **James Franco (USA)**

Not to be confused with Lenny Abrahamson's gripping and moving film Room (2015), Tommy Wiseau's The Room (2003) has been frequently cited as one of "the worst films ever made." This biographical comedy-drama charts the making of the latter, based on the 2013 book of the same name. James Franco is said to deliver a career-high performance as Wiseau.

Released Wed 6 December



Brigsby Bear CERT 15 (97 mins)

Starring **Kyle Mooney, Claire Danes, Mark Hamill, Greg Kinnear, Matt Walsh, Michaela Watkins** Directed by **Dave McCary (USA)**

James lives underground and is obsessed with the children's TV show Brigsby Bear Adventures. Then one day his parents are arrested and he's told that they aren't his real parents and that the show isn't real either. James's life is about to take a dramatic turn... You certainly can't fault the film for originality and it was well received by the American press.

Released Fri 8 December



Better Watch Out

CERT 15 (89 mins)

Starring **Levi Miller, Olivia DeJonge, Ed Oxenbould, Patrick Warburton, Virginia Madsen** Directed by **Chris Peckover (Australia/USA)**

There are easy babysitting gigs and then there are harder ones. Seventeen-year-old Ashley (DeJonge) thinks she's in for a straightforward, uncomplicated evening, when her 12-year-old ward, Luke (Miller), tries to seduce her. She really shouldn't have refused him...

Released Fri 8 December

Menashe CERT U (82 mins)

Starring **Menashe Lustig, Ruben Niborski, Yoel Weissshaus, Meyer Schwartz**
Directed by **Joshua Z. Weinstein (USA)**

Menashe works at a grocery store in the Hasidic community of Borough Park in Brooklyn, New York. After his wife died a year ago, Menashe had just his 10-year-old son Rieven to fill his life. But because of Hasidic law, Rieven is taken away from him because a single father is not deemed suitable for a young lad's upbringing. So Menashe sets about regaining custody of his only child... Filmed entirely in Yiddish.

Released Fri 8 December



Stronger CERT 15 (119 mins)

Starring **Jake Gyllenhaal, Tatiana Maslany, Miranda Richardson, Clancy Brown, Richard Lane Jr** Directed by **David Gordon Green (USA)**

Jeff Bauman (Gyllenhaal) always wanted to make it up to his ex-girlfriend, Erin (Maslany). So, when she competed in the 2013 Boston Marathon he was determined to be at the finishing line with an outsize hand-made placard. He made it, but was blown up just as she completed the course. Based on a true story, the film is drawing major Oscar buzz for Gyllenhaal's performance.

Released Fri 8 December



The Dinner CERT tbc

Starring **Richard Gere, Laura Linney, Steve Coogan, Rebecca Hall, Adepero Oduye, Chloë Sevigny** Directed by **Oren Moverman (USA)**

Two sets of wealthy parents meet at a fancy restaurant to decide what to do about a crime

their sons have committed. Based on the 2009 novel by Herman Koch, the drama is the fourth directed by Oren Moverman, whose films are invariably well met by the critics.

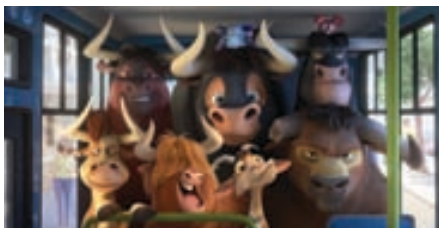
Released Fri 8 December

Ferdinand CERT PG

With the voices of **John Cena, Kate McKinnon, Anthony Anderson, Bobby Cannavale, David Tennant** Directed by **Carlos Saldanha (USA)**

Ferdinand is not your typical fighting bull. He would rather smell the flowers. However, when he's stung by a bee and starts kicking up a storm, he is rounded up and dragged off to Madrid to compete in the ring... Based on the 1936 children's book by Munro Leaf. Appropriately, David Tennant voices a bull called Angus.

Released Thurs 16 December



Pitch Perfect 3 CERT tbc

Starring **Anna Kendrick, Rebel Wilson, Hailee Steinfeld, Brittany Snow, Anna Camp, John Lithgow** Directed by **Trish Sie (USA)**

The Barden Bellas are back and have one last chance to perform on tour in Europe. This, we are promised, is the last instalment in what is now a trilogy. Yeh, well, the last film made \$287million.

Released Wed 20 December

Jumanji: Welcome To The Jungle CERT 12a

Starring **Dwayne Johnson, Jack Black, Kevin Hart, Karen Gillan, Bobby Cannavale** Directed by **Jake Kasdan (USA)**

A sort-of sequel to Jumanji, the 1995 fantasy-adventure starring Robin Williams, this looks more like a companion piece to Dwayne Johnson's Journey 2: The Mysterious Island (2012). Anyway, four teenage friends end up on a jungle island when they start playing the video game Jumanji - and, more bizarrely, they are transformed into the game's adult avatars! In 3D.

Released Wed 20 December





COMING OUT!

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery's latest exhibition explores sexuality, gender and identity in art

As the UK celebrates 50 years since the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1967, a new exhibition at Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery (BMAG) explores how shifting attitudes towards the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) experience have influenced visual art.

Part of a three-year national partnership between the Arts Council Collection and four UK galleries, *Coming Out: Sexuality, Gender And Identity* comes to BMAG fresh from its opening at Liverpool's Walker Art Gallery, but it's not simply been a case of transferring the exhibition wholesale. The show has been 'reimagined' for Birmingham audiences, featuring new items and with an extensive engagement programme and gallery trail running alongside.

Among the pieces joining the exhibition here will be Grayson Perry's *Claire's Coming Out Dress*, which he designed and wore to mark his entry into the art world as a transvestite, shown alongside his 1996 ceramic *Who Am I?*, marking stages in the artist's personal journey.

Local artists also get a look in, notably with three prints by Birmingham photographer Vanley Burke, capturing scenes from a Pride demonstration called in protest against the infamous 1988 Section 28 Act.

To help make the show more representative of Birmingham's diverse communities, changes have been brought about in consultation with local LGBT groups, notably over-50s support group Ageing Better, and Unmuted, a group for BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnic) LGBT people. Members of both groups visited Liverpool to give their feedback on the original show.

"What's interesting is that there were slightly contrasting views from the people who could remember pre-1967 and those who couldn't," explains curator Lisa Beauchamp. "The Ageing Better group felt that we needed to explain the context for 1967 more fully, because you can't expect everyone to know what that is any more."

Nevertheless, there was a shared sense by all involved that despite its difficult subject

matter, the show should ultimately be celebratory in tone. To this end, Beauchamp has aimed to create a lively, relaxed and welcoming space, filled with ambient sound and vibrant splashes of colour inspired by Gilbert Baker's original 1978 Pride flag. There'll also be an exciting programme of shows and activities to enjoy, beginning with an action-packed launch developed with SHOUT Festival.

Specially commissioned drag performances, workshops and rainbow crafts for kids are among the things to look forward to on opening day. Later in the run, there'll also be opportunities to take part in a Polari workshop, as well as a Drag And Draw session - a twist on the gallery's popular Drink And Draw series - that will see drag queens posing for sketches.

.....
Coming Out shows at Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery from Saturday 2 December until Sunday 15 April





The Past Is Now: Birmingham And The British Empire

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery,
until Mon 12 March

A little less than a century ago, the British Empire covered a quarter of the world and ruled over 458 million people.

But its creation and retention had come at a price, with many lives having been lost along the way.

The Past Is Now takes a look at the history of the Empire and, more specifically, Birmingham's connection to it. Six artists, researchers and activists have co-curated the display, which features numerous objects from BMAG's collection. As well as examining the museum's own bias in telling difficult narratives, the exhibition also explores other perspectives which have been historically misrepresented.

The Past Is Now is located in the museum's new gallery, Story Lab, a space in which visitors are encouraged to interact, feed back and engage in conversation.





The Lost Words

Compton Verney, Warwickshire,
until Sun 17 December

"I want The Lost Words to delight the mind and the eye, and send children to sleep dreaming of wild things," says Jackie Morris. Jackie's watercolour paintings are here juxtaposed with writer Robert Macfarlane's spell-poems to celebrate the relationship between language and the living

world.

Jackie and Robert's exhibition - created in response to the gradual disappearance of nature from children's stories and imaginations - includes a series of immersive floor-to-ceiling graphics. Family interpretation areas and recordings of the duo reading poems also feature.

The Lost Words experience extends beyond the gallery into the Compton Verney grounds via an interactive discovery trail.

Thomas Bock

Ikon Gallery, Birmingham,
Wed 6 December - Sun 11 March

Ikon's celebration of Thomas Bock marks the first ever time an exhibition dedicated to the acclaimed artist has been presented here in the UK.

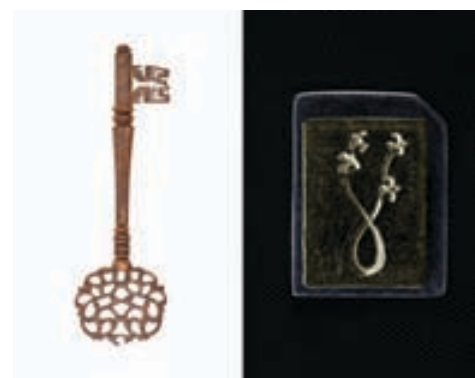
Having been apprenticed in Birmingham, Bock was convicted of 'administering concoctions of certain herbs... with the intent to cause miscarriage'. He was sentenced in 1823 to transportation to Australia, where he went on to become one of the country's most important 19th century artists. Best known for his watercolours and his use of pencil, chalk and pastel - although he also used oils and experimented with photography - Bock painted everything around him, with Tasmanian Aborigines, criminals, free settlers and landscapes all featuring in his work.



Sacred Things

Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry, Fri 1
December - Sun 11 February

This thought-provoking exhibition has been created with the intention of introducing recently arrived Syrians to the people of Coventry. Showcasing the work of photographer and anthropologist Liz Hingley, Sacred Things questions the importance and impact of ownership, personal experience and cultural concepts of beauty. The Syrians featured in Hingley's display have come to Coventry as part of a unique United Nations programme.



Walsall Society Of Artists 68th Annual Exhibition

The New Art Gallery, Walsall, Fri 1 December -
Sun 21 January

Paintings, drawings, prints, watercolours, sculptures and craftwork are all present and correct in this celebration of local artistic talent, with many of the pieces being available for sale. Members of the society will be on hand to demonstrate their skills every Saturday during the exhibition's seven-week run at the gallery.

Tales From History

The Barber Institute, Birmingham,
until Sun 18 February

Tales From History features rarely shown prints and drawings by the great Dutch master Rembrandt and his pupils.

Presented to complement the Barber's Pride And Persecution exhibition, the show includes paintings inspired by stories from the Bible and classical mythology. Among the featured works are the humorous Latoria And The Lycian Peasants, the gravely serious Death Of the Virgin and the hugely dramatic Fall Of Icarus.



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Events previews from around the region



Ice Skate Birmingham

Eastside Green, Birmingham, until Sun 7 January

Birmingham's ice rink and big wheel have made a somewhat unexpected but welcome return.

It was widely thought that the refurbishment of Centenary Square would mean there was no place for the popular attractions in the city's 2017 lineup of Christmas entertainment. But with the clock ticking down to the festive season, the council's events team identified an alternative site at Eastside Green, meaning normal yuletide service could be resumed.

While the wheel offers the opportunity to enjoy fantastic views across the city, the ice rink - complete with a brand new roof - can hold up to 300 people per session. Younger or inexperienced skating enthusiasts can keep upright by using special penguin skating aids, which can be booked online and in advance. And when skaters have finished their Torvill & Dean routine, they can warm themselves up with some festive fare in the nearby Ice Lounge.

Toy Collectors Fair

NEC, Birmingham, Wed 27 December

Britain's biggest toy fair makes its way to Birmingham this month to showcase a huge array of collectables. From diecast models by Corgi and Dinky through to numerous TV and film-related items, this one-day event offers plenty of interest for enthusiasts.

Expert toy valuers are on hand to assess visitors' items for free. So if you have a particular piece that you'd like to know more about - or that you're maybe intending to sell - why not take it along and get it valued? Who knows, you may be pleasantly surprised...



Magic Lantern Festival

Kings Heath Park, Birmingham, until Mon 1 January

As 'illuminating' Christmas experiences go, this one scored a major hit when it debuted last year.

The lakes, woodlands, gardens and pathways of Kings Heath Park provide the perfect backdrop against which to enjoy a trail of life-sized and larger-than-life lanterns, including a giant recreation of Birmingham's iconic library. A food & drink area, a bar, Santa's Grotto and a handful of fair-ground rides also feature.



Santa's Winter Wonderland

SnowDome, Tamworth, until Sun 31 December

This year's all-new Santa Show sees Mrs Claus, Francine the Foxtrotting Fairy, Elvis the Penguin and Santa's very own Jingle Belles Band looking to spread festive cheer by creating 'the best Christmas song ever'. Suitable for all age groups, the show is just one element of the festive fun on offer at Tamworth's snowy indoor attraction. Visitors can also explore Santa's Christmas snow trail, take a walk through the enchanted forest, enjoy a game of snowballs and hitch a ride on a sledge. The less adventurous will be able to observe all the action as they amble along the promenade walkway. There's even an animal village to visit, where you can meet Santa's reindeer and say hi to some of his furry friends.

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Events previews from around the region



12 Crafts For Christmas

Coventry Transport Museum,
Sat 25 November - Sat 23 December

With not one, not two, but 12 yuletide craft activities to enjoy at Coventry Transport Museum, it's fair to say the popular venue is a Christmas cracker of a place to visit if you're looking to keep your little ones entertained.

Youngsters can get hands-on making original ornaments, festive boxes and gorgeous gifts for family and friends.

Sessions include how to make rustic reindeer, design a new sleigh for Santa and send a secret 'happy holidays' message. Not only all this, but Mr Claus himself is also in residence, complete with a gift for every child, and can be visited via a ride on an enchanting vintage sleigh...

Victorian Christmas Markets

Worcester - Thurs 30 November - Sun 3 December; Stratford-upon-Avon - Fri 8 - Sun 10 December; Wolverhampton - Fri 15 - Sun 17 December

This year marks the 25th anniversary of Worcester's hugely popular Victorian Christmas Market.

In addition to the 200 stalls which grace the city's historic streets - selling crafts, gifts and speciality foods - the ever-popular fair also features an array of period entertainment, from choirs and stilt-walkers to an old-style carousel and barrel organ music...

In contrast to Worcestershire's well-established market, Stratford's is debuting this very year. Attractions include choirs, instrumental performances, dance displays, Victorian-themed stilt walkers and approximately 150 stalls...

And also making its first appearance in 2017 is Wolverhampton's three-day event, featuring more than 100 stalls, street artists and a Victorian funfair.

Commenting on the city's new arrival, Councillor Steve Evans said: "We anticipate this will be the largest festive market Wolverhampton has seen. There will be a variety of stalls offering festive goodies, plenty of food and drink, and fun activities for families to enjoy at this special time of year."

Victorian Christmas

Blists Hill Victorian Town, Ironbridge, Shropshire, Sat 9 - Sun 10 & Sat 16 - Sun 17 December

Plenty of Victorian festive cheer is on offer at Shropshire's Blists Hill museum this month, as residents busy themselves with preparations for Christmas.

Visitors to the award-winning site can enjoy seasonal music from bands and choirs, experience some festive-style entertainment - including a singalong with carol singers - and partake in a spot of Christmas shopping in the museum's retail outlet.

And just in case all of the above isn't quite enough to ensure your kids are happily entertained, Father Christmas himself - together with his reindeer - will be on hand to hear younger visitors' last-minute gift requests.



Merry Minecraft And A Happy New Robot

RAF Cosford Museum,
Sat 9 December

This one-off technology workshop offers kids the chance to tackle a number of Christmas-themed activities, including advanced features in Minecraft and Christmas coding (with a touch of cyber security and codebreaking on the side).

The workshop is led by qualified teachers from Tablet Academy and supported by the experienced learning team at the museum.

Santa Hunts

Black Country Living Museum, Dudley,
Sat 25 November - Sun 24 December

The rumour that's flying like a magic reindeer around the region is that Santa has been spotted at the Black Country Living Museum. He seems to be a little limelight-shy, mind - which is why young visitors to the venue are being invited to join festive costumed guides in a search to find him. Along the way, kids can solve magical clues, sprinkle dust on reindeer shoes and even send letters up the chimney to Santa's workshop. A surprise gift awaits anybody who succeeds in finding the jolly-faced bearded one...



BLACK COUNTRY
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Christmas Season



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Avoncroft at Christmas

Festive events this Christmas

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(Tue 5th – Fri 23rd Dec)
- Carol Service
(Sat 16th Dec – 5pm)
- Visit Father Christmas
(Sat 16th, Fri 22nd, Sat 23rd)

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for further details.
www.avoncroft.org.uk

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Events previews from around the region

Winter Wonderland

Stoke-on-Trent, until Mon 2 January

Free to enter and returning to the city for a second year, Stoke-on-Trent's Winter Wonderland provides visitors with plenty of opportunity to get into the spirit of the season. Attractions include an ice rink, Santa's grotto, a host of Christmas characters, a Christmas market, theme park-style rides including a full-size rollercoaster and a 60m-tall sky swing ride, a ghost train and Santa's train - the latter of which will be running around the site's huge Christmas tree...

In short, it's a one-stop shop for festive family fun, and a welcome addition to the Potteries' lineup of Christmas entertainment.



A Festive Evening At BMAG

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, Wed 6 December

Complimentary mince pies and mulled wine kickstart an evening that offers the chance to make some late-night festive purchases in the gift shop. A chance to exercise the vocal chords is also on the festive menu for those who fancy a Christmas carol singalong. A 'make your own wreath' workshop features too, although spaces are limited and only available on a first come, first served basis.



European Christmas Market

Southwater, Telford, Shropshire, until Sat 23 December

Now in its second year, Telford's European Christmas Market has returned bigger and better than in 2016. Featuring wooden chalets decked with garlands and lights and selling festive gifts from around Europe, the market also includes a funfair for youngsters to enjoy and showcases local choirs, acoustic bands and plenty of seasonal music.

Commenting on the attraction, Councillor Shaun Davies, Leader of Telford & Wrekin Council, said: "The market not only showcases food, drink and products from authentic European stallholders, it also gives a number of local businesses the opportunity to have a stall of their own at an event which is likely to attract thousands of visitors. "We've been putting Telford on the map with our astonishing growth over recent years, and this market shows our intention to make the borough a destination of choice."



Christmas at Birmingham's Botanical Gardens

Birmingham Botanical Gardens, until Mon 1 January

Birmingham Botanical Gardens has been transformed into a 'winter wonderland', thanks to an impressive Christmas light trail. Glittering trees, giant crystals, a carol-singing cedar coppice and a flickering fire garden all feature on a jewel-coloured trail set to seasonal music. Other festive attractions for visitors to enjoy at the Gardens include vintage fairground rides, a larger-than-life Christmas tree and a chance to meet Santa and his elves. The trail is designed to appeal to visitors of all ages.



Victorian Christmas Santa Trail

Tamworth Castle, Sat 9 - Sun 10 & Sat 16 - Tues 19 December

Youngsters might do well to sink a big bowl of energy-boosting porridge before heading along to this fun-filled event, because there's certainly no shortage of activities for them to join in with!

After meeting the Victorian household as they busy themselves making ready for Santa's annual visit, it'll be time to head off round the building in search of St Nick himself. Then they can help the cook make the Christmas pudding, join the butler in preparing for Santa's midnight feast and assist the housemaid with the business of decorating the castle.

And if they have any energy left after *that* little lot, they can visit Santa in his grotto and receive a well-earned surprise gift!



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- Soho By Moonlight
- Georgian Christmas Tours



BLAKESLEY HALL

- Meet Santa
- Tudor Christmas Tours



SAREHOLE MILL

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Birmingham
Museums

Your week-
by-week
listings guide
December 2017

the list



Shrewsbury Winter Festival at the Quarry Park, Shrewsbury - Sat 9 to Sun 10 December

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

What's On

Fri 1 to Sun 10 December



Marilyn Manson at
Wolverhampton Civic Hall
Wed 6 December

Mon 11 to Sun 17 December



Traditional Christmas Evenings
at Black Country Living Museum
Fri 15 - Sun 17 December

Mon 18 to Sun 24 December



Jools Holland and His Rhythm
& Blues Orchestra at Victoria
Hall, Stoke-on-Trent
Wed 20 December

Mon 25 to Sun 31 December



Magical Christmas at Drayton
Manor Theme Park, Tamworth
until Sun 31 December

THROUGHOUT DECEMBER

Visual Arts

Bilston Craft Gallery

FOSSIL FUELLED Exhibition featuring objects from many of the town's industries, including cut steel jewellery, bicycles and the world famous Bilston Enamels, until Sun 31 Dec

New Art Gallery - Walsall

LEGACIES: JMW TURNER AND CONTEMPORARY ART PRACTICE Exhibition considering the ongoing legacy of JMW Turner through the lens of contemporary art, highlighting the enduring relevance of his work for artists practising today, until Sun 14 Jan

PEOPLE'S CHOICE Featuring the voting public's favourite works from the Permanent Collection, until Sun 25 Feb 2018

NEW WALSALL SOCIETY OF ARTISTS 68TH ANNUAL EXHIBITION Featuring paintings, drawings, prints, water-colours, sculpture and craft, Fri 1 Dec - Sun 21 Jan

Newcastle Borough Museum & Art Gallery

ANTHONY HAMMOND Exhibition of work by the North Staffordshire-based artist, sculptor and craftsman, who works predominantly on large-scale public art projects and is skilled in a number of green wood disciplines, until Mon 8 Jan

B(U)Y ME! FOR CHRISTMAS Christmas craft exhibition, until Mon 8 Jan,

Potteries Museum & Art Gallery - Stoke-On-Trent

ANGLO-SAXON KINGDOM OF MERCA Exhibition of pieces from the world-famous Staffordshire Hoard, until Sun 31 Dec

FIRST WORLD WAR REPLICA TRENCH until Sun 11 Nov 2018.

Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery

SAMURAI: WARRIORS OF JAPAN An exhibition that graphically brings to life the story of the Samurai and their fall from power, as Japan opened up to the West, until Sun 21 Jan

The Willow Art Gallery, Oswestry

WINTER OPEN EXHIBITION Exhibition of work by both established and emerging artists, until Sat 6 Jan

BIJOUX Affordable, original pieces of art by members of Borderland Visual Arts (BVA). Featuring prints, ceramics, paintings, tapestry, jewellery and sculpture, until Sat 6 Jan

Wolverhampton Art Gallery

YANG FUDONG: THE NIGHTMAN COMETH Yang is one of the leading figures in China's contemporary art world and independent cinema, until Sun 3 Dec

NEW STILL LIFE AND THE SACRED Exhibition exploring 'the secret beauty and hidden stories' behind the spiritual and sacred messages that the included works convey, Sat 2 Dec - Sun 4 Feb

Other VISUAL ARTS

SHROPSHIRE ART SOCIETY EXHIBITION Showcasing the work of Frank Hilton and Margaret Rowson, until Fri 1 Dec, St Mary's Church, Shrewsbury

PICTURE THIS EXHIBITION Combined arts project integrating photography and life-writing, empowering young people to consider how they might achieve their ambitions in the future, until Thurs 14 Dec, Keele University, Staffordshire

ARGAZKI MAC - 'NATURAL STAFFORDSHIRE' Argazki Mac, aka Neal McIntosh, has produced a breathtaking portfolio of wildlife photography, with all photos having been taken in Cannock Chase, Stafford and Hednesford Hills, until Fri 15 Dec, Museum of Cannock Chase, Staffordshire

DOCUMENTS, ALTERNATIVES (#1) An experimental group exhibition exploring temporality, fixed-ness, transience and changeability, until Sat 16 Dec, AirSpace Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent

ART OF THE COMMUNITY EXHIBITION Exhibition forming part of a celebration to mark the Trust's 50th anniversary, until Tues 2 Jan, Coalbrookdale Gallery, Ironbridge

WINTER FEST EXHIBITION VAN members' festive exhibition of paintings, textiles, ceramics, jewellery, sculpture and cards, until Tues 16 Jan, VAN Gallery, Shrewsbury

SCENTS AND SENSIBILITY Exploration of the history of perfumery and the use of glass as a product to contain and preserve scent, until Sat 27 Jan, Red House Glass Cone, Wordsley, Stourbridge

NEW HALLS YOUNG ARTIST COMPETITION Display of work by entrants to the annual Junior Open Competition, Fri 1 - Sun 31 Dec, Weston Park, Nr Shifnal

NEW STAFFORDSHIRE CONTEMPORARY ARTIST & DESIGNER FAIR 2017 Showcase of contemporary art, craft & design work, including ceramics, jewellery, textiles, printmaking, fine art and photography. The ideal place to purchase unique work direct from the artist, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Staffordshire

Gigs

STEPS Fri 1 Dec, Arena Birmingham

THE CHARLATANS Fri 1 Dec, Civic Hall, Wolverhampton

DREADZONE Fri 1 Dec, Actress & Bishop, Birmingham

BENJAMIN CLEMENTINE Fri 1 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

FRED ZEPPELIN Fri 1 Dec, Lichfield Guildhall

STICK TO YOUR GUNS Fri 1 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

GOOD CHARLOTTE Fri 1 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

DAN + SHAY Fri 1 Dec, O2 Academy, B'ham

JAWS Fri 1 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

LEWIS CAPALDI Fri 1 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

TYLER BRYANT & THE SHAKEDOWN Sat 2 Dec, The Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

ONE STOP BOOGIE Sat 2 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

STRAIGHT ACES Sat 2 Dec, Katie Fitzgeralds, Stourbridge

GORILLAZ Sat 2 Dec, Arena Birmingham

RAY BLK Sat 2 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

HERMITAGE GREEN Sat 2 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

KING PLEASURE AND THE BISCUIT BOYS Sat 2 Dec, Lichfield Guildhall

MICHAEL MONROE Sat 2 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

SCOUTING FOR GIRLS Sat 2 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

GO WEST FEATURING PETER COX & RICHARD DRUMMIE Sat 2 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

HAZEL O'CONNOR Sat 2 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

STATUS QUO Sun 3 Dec, Civic Hall, Wolverhampton

PHIL COLLINS Sun 3 Dec, Genting Arena, Birmingham

JOHN KIRKPATRICK CAROLLING AND CRUMPETS Sun 3 Dec, Lichfield Guildhall

CHASE RICE Mon 4 Dec, O2 Institute, B'ham

PICTISH TRAIL: WINTER REWIND ACID REFLUX TOUR Mon 4 Dec, Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury

MASTODON Mon 4 Dec, Civic Hall, Wolverhampton

MARTYN JOSEPH Mon 4 Dec, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

LOVE ACTUALLY WITH LIVE ORCHESTRA Mon 4 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

'THE THEATRE OF FEAR!' STARRING CREEPER Mon 4 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

SHED SEVEN Tues 5 Dec, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

MICK WALL - WALL OF SOUND Tues 5 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

MICHAEL BALL & ALFIE BOE Tues 5 Dec, Genting Arena, B'ham

MARILYN MANSON Wed 6 Dec, Civic Hall, Wolverhampton



HAPPY MONDAYS Wed 6 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

JOHNNY HATES JAZZ PLUS SPECIAL GUESTS Wed 6 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

JIVE TALKIN' Thurs 7 Dec, Wulfrun Hall, Wolverhampton

THE UNTHANKS Thurs 7 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

DIAMOND HEAD Thurs 7 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

UKELELE ORCHESTRA OF GREAT BRITAIN Thurs 7 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

DYNAMICS Fri 8 Dec, Dudley Town Hall

NOTHING MORE Fri 8 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

URBAN FOLK QUARTET Fri 8 Dec, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

MEMORIAM Fri 8 Dec, The Asylum, B'ham

HELLS BELLS Fri 8 Dec, The Roadhouse, Birmingham

JP COOPER Fri 8 Dec, O2 Institute, B'ham

JOY ELLIS Fri 8 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

ULTIMATE 40 Fri 8 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

BLACK PARADE - 00'S EMO ANTHEMS Fri 8 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

KASABIAN Fri 8 - Sat 9 Dec, Arena, B'ham

STEPS Sat 9 Dec, Genting Arena, B'ham

CALAN Sat 9 Dec, The Hive, Shrewsbury

SWEDE DREAMS Sat 9 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

ALBION BAND Sat 9 Dec, MAC, Birmingham

VEGA PLUS THEIA & GIN ANNIE Sat 9 Dec, The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton

CIRCUS JUNKIE REBELS & THE FREAKSHOW Sat 9 Dec, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

THE DARKNESS Sat 9 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE LUKA STATE Sat 9 Dec, The Actress & Bishop, Birmingham

THE SENSATIONAL 60'S EXPERIENCE Sat 9 Dec, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

BAYSIDE Sat 9 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

ABBA FOREVER Sat 9 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

PICTURE THIS Sat 9 Dec, O2 Institute, B'ham

CHRISTMAS WITH THE OVERTONES Sat 9 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

DARKSIDE Sat 9 Dec, Civic Hall, W'hampton

THAT'LL BE THE DAY CHRISTMAS SHOW Sun 10 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

Classical Music

CBSO CENTRE STAGE Featuring Marie-Christine Zupanec (flute), Katherine Thomas (harp), Amanda Lake (violin), Michael Jenkinson (viola), David Powell (cello). Programme includes works by Mozart & Villa-Lobos, Fri 1 Dec, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

ASHLEY FRIPP LUNCHTIME PIANO CONCERT Programme includes works by J S Bach, Thomas Adès & Chopin, Fri 1 Dec, The Barber Institute, B'ham

EX CATHEDRA: CHRISTMAS MUSIC BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring Jeffrey Skidmore (conductor), Fri 1 Dec, St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury

EX CATHEDRA: CHRISTMAS MUSIC BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring the Ex Cathedra Consort & Jeffrey Skidmore (conductor), Sat 2 Dec, St Peter's Church, Sutton Coldfield

THE BRITISH POLICE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA - PROMS NIGHT SPECTACULAR Sat 2 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

EX CATHEDRA: MONTEVERDI VESPERS (1610) Featuring His Majesty's Sagbutts & Cornetts & Jeffrey Skidmore (conductor), Sun 3 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

NATIONAL CHILDREN'S ORCHESTRAS OF GREAT BRITAIN WINTER CONCERT Programme includes works by Gershwin, De Falla, Strauss, Ravel & Anderson, Sun 3 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

SING CAROLS WITH THE CITY ORGANIST AND BIRMINGHAM CATHEDRAL CHOIR Featuring Thomas Trotter (organ), David Hardie (conductor) & Jeremy Nicholas (compere), Mon 4 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

EX CATHEDRA: CHRISTMAS MUSIC BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring Ex Cathedra Consort & Jeffrey Skidmore (conductor), Tues 5 Dec, St John's Church, Hagley, Birmingham

SIR WILLARD WHITE Also featuring Eugene Asti (piano), Wed 6 Dec, The Barber Institute, Birmingham

DANIEL LEBHARDT PIANO CONCERT Programme includes works by Chopin & Rachmaninov, Wed 6 Dec, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

THE LIGETI QUARTET Programme includes Harrison Birtwistle's Bach arrangements alongside works by Stravinsky, Sofia Gubaidulina & new works from Stef Connor, Wed 6 Dec, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

CBSO: PROKOFIEV'S CINDERELLA Featuring Alexander Vedernikov (conductor) & Martin Helmchen (piano). Programme includes works by Brahms & Prokofiev, Wed 6 - Thurs 7 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

G4 CHRISTMAS BY CANDLELIGHT 2017 Thurs 7 Dec, St Paul's Church, Birmingham

CITY OF BIRMINGHAM CHOIR: HANDEL'S MESSIAH Featuring the City of Birmingham

Choir, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Adrian Lucas (conductor), Rowan Pierce (soprano), Anna Huntley (alto), Bradley Smith (tenor), James Cleverton (bass), Christopher Allsop (organ) & Thomas Trotter (harpsichord), Fri 8 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

FOLIA: TELEMANN IN PARIS, 1737-38 Join Follia as they celebrate the 250th anniversary of the death of Georg Philipp Telemann with a musical journey through two of his groundbreaking 'Paris Quartets', together with chamber music by his French contemporaries Jean-Philippe Rameau, Jean-Baptiste Forqueray and Jean-Claude Balbastre, Fri 8 Dec, The Barber Institute, B'ham

HALESOWEN ORCHESTRA Programme includes works by Mozart, Grieg & Sibelius, Sat 8 Dec, Cornbow Hall, Halesowen

CBSO NOTELETS: CHRISTMAS CRACKERS Featuring Catherine Arlidge (presenter) & the CBSO Brass Ensemble, Fri 8 - Sat 9 Dec, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL CHORUS: HANDEL'S MESSIAH Sat 9 Dec, Lichfield Cathedral

BIRMINGHAM PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA - RUSSIAN DANCE Featuring Michael Lloyd (conductor). Programme includes works by Stravinsky & Prokofiev, Sun 10 Dec, Elgar Concert Hall, Birmingham

CHRISTMAS WITH THE SALVATION ARMY Featuring guest soloist Abigail Johnson, Sun 10 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Comedy

PHIL JERROD, DYLAN GOTT & COMICS TBC Fri 1 Dec, Cherry Reds Cafe-Bar, Birmingham

TOM WRIGGLESWORTH, ADAM ROWE & ALF Fri 1 Dec, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

SOL BERNSTEIN, BEC HILL, JARLATH REGAN & KEVIN MCCARTHY Fri 1 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

SCOTT BENNETT, ADAM BLOOM, NICK PAGE & COMIC TBC Fri 1 Dec, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

STAND UP COMEDY SHOWCASE Fri 1 Dec, MAC, Birmingham

JERRY SADOWITZ Fri 1 Dec, Wulfrun Hall, Wolverhampton

LEE NELSON Fri 1 Dec, Dudley Town Hall

UPFRONT COMEDY Sat 2 Dec, MAC, Birmingham

BEC HILL, HOWARD READ & TIERNAN DOUIEB Sat 2 Dec, The REP, B'ham

JAMES DOWDESWELL, ELEANOR TIERNAN, RICK RIGHT & DAMION LARKIN Sat



Justin Moorhouse - Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek

2 Dec, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

THE JUMPROV CHRISTMAS SPECIAL Sat 2 Dec, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

SOL BERNSTEIN, BEC HILL, JARLATH REGAN & KEVIN MCCARTHY Sat 2 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

FREDDIE QUINN, ADAM BLOOM, NICK PAGE & COMIC TBC Sat 2 Dec, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

STAND UP COMEDY SHOWCASE 2 Dec, MAC, Birmingham

ROFL! COMEDY CLUB Sat 2 Dec, The Old Post Office, Stoke-On-Trent

PAUL FOOT Sat 2 Dec, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

JEWELLERY QUARTER COMEDY CLUB Tues 5 Dec, The Rose Villa Tavern, Birmingham

ROB ROUSE, BRENNAN REECE, PAUL PIRIE & DAVE BRYON Wed 6 Dec, Tower Brewery, Burton upon Trent

JOHN HASTINGS, CRAIG MURRAY, ANDRE VINCENT & STUART MITCHELL Wed 6 - Thurs 7 Dec, The Glee Club, B'ham

DUNCAN OAKLEY, PAUL SINHA, HANNAH SILVESTER & BEN VAN DER VELDE Thurs 7 Dec, The George Hotel, Lichfield

JUSTIN MOORHOUSE, JAKE LAMBERT, FREDDIE FARRELL, MARK WOODROW & BARRY DODDS Thurs 7 Dec, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffordshire

MIKE NEWALL, MANDY KNIGHT, SEAN PERCIVAL & COMIC TBC Thurs 7 Dec, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

KUM-N-AVALOFF COMEDY NIGHT Thurs 7 Dec, Stourbridge Town Hall

JETHRO THURS 7 Dec, Dudley Town Hall

JASON MANFORD Fri 8 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

ROB ROUSE, JOLLYBOAT & GEORGE ZACH Fri 8 Dec, The Bramall, Birmingham

JOHN HASTINGS, CRAIG MURRAY, ANDRE VINCENT & DANA ALEXANDER Fri 8 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

MIKE NEWALL, MANDY KNIGHT, SEAN

PERCIVAL & COMIC TBC Fri 8 Dec, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

GREG DAVIES Fri 8 - Sat 9 Dec, Civic Hall, Wolverhampton

DAMIAN CLARK, JONNY PELHAM, HENRICK ELMER & DAMION LARKIN Sat 9 Dec, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent



MIKE NEWALL, MANDY KNIGHT, SEAN PERCIVAL & COMIC TBC Sat 9 Dec, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

COMEDY IN THE MET LINE UP TBC Sat 9 Dec, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

ROFL! COMEDY CLUB Sat 9 Dec, The Old Post Office, Stoke-On-Trent

JOHN HASTINGS, CRAIG MURRAY, SEAN COLLINS & DANA ALEXANDER Sat 9 - Sun 10 Dec, The Glee Club, B'ham

THE KEN DODD HAPPINESS SHOW Sun 10 Dec, Wulfrun Hall, Wolverhampton

Theatre

THE LION IN WINTER The Nonentities present an amateur staging of James Goldman's historical drama, until Sat 2 Dec, The Rose Theatre, Kidderminster

GREASE The original high school musical, starring Danielle Hope as Sandy, Tom Parker as Danny and Louisa Lytton as Rizzo, until Sat 2 Dec, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

ERIC OF DOCK GREEN IN MIDWINTER MURDERS A murder, a Christmas

party, a comedy, Eric and 20 fantastic Swinging 60s hits, until Sat 9 Dec, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

ALICE IN WONDERLAND Modern adaptation of Lewis Carroll's classic tale, until Sat 30 Dec, The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

TREASURE ISLAND A journey across the high seas, filled with larger-than-life characters and swashbuckling sword fights, until Sat 27 Jan, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

A CHRISTMAS CAROL David Edgar's adaptation of Charles Dickens' festive classic. Phil Davies stars, until Sun 4 Feb, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

IMPERIUM PART 1: CONSPIRATOR Mike Poulton's adaptation of Robert Harris' bestselling Cicero trilogy. Gregory Doran directs, until Sat 10 Feb, The Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

IMPERIUM: PART II DICTATOR Mike Poulton's adaptation of Robert Harris' bestselling Cicero trilogy. Gregory Doran directs, until Sat 10 Feb, The Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

TWELFTH NIGHT Ade Edmondson & Kara Tointon star in Shakespeare's tale of unrequited love, until Sat 24 Feb, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

THE HIRED MAN Classic musical taking audiences on an early-20th century journey from the hard farmlands of the north to the war-torn trenches of the Great War, Tues 28th Nov - Sat 2 Dec, The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

THE BAND: TAKE THAT'S NEW MUSICAL Tim Firth's hit boyband musical, Tues 28 Nov - Sat 9 Dec, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS Brad Pitt returns as the Dame in this festive family favourite, Wed 29 Nov - Sun 7 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

ONE MAN, TWO GUVNORS Richard Bean's adaptation of Carlo Goldoni's comedy, Servant Of Two Masters, Wed 29 Nov - Sat 16 Dec, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

PLAY ON! Luke Players present Rick Abbot's story about an amateur theatre group trying to put on a play despite interference from a haughty author, Thurs 30 Nov - Sat 2 Dec, MAC, Birmingham

RAYMOND BRIGGS' FATHER CHRISTMAS Pins & Needles present Raymond Briggs' classic festive tale, Thurs 30 Nov - Sat 30 Dec, MAC, B'ham

ALADDIN Fun-filled family panto starring CBeebies favourite Cat Sandion as Princess Jasmine, Sam Rabone as Widow Twankey and Ben Thornton as Wishee Washee, Thurs 30 Nov - Sat 6 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

THE HUNDRED AND ONE DALMATIANS Dodie Smith's delightful tale, adapted for the stage by Nativity! writer Debbie Isitt, Thurs 30 Nov - Sat 13 Jan, The REP, Birmingham

SANTA IN LOVE People's Theatre Company present a 'fun-filled' family musical complete with games, giggles and all your favourite Christmas songs, Fri 1 Dec, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

PAUL O'DONNELL: WE'VE GOT EACH OTHER Tragic tale following the story of a docker, a waitress and their forbidden love for one another, Sat 2 Dec, MAC, Birmingham

THE JUMPROV CHRISTMAS SPECIAL Festive-themed 100%-improvised sketch show for over-18s only, Sat 2 Dec, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

ALICE IN WONDERLAND PMA Productions bring to life George Crichtley's staging of CS Lewis' famous tale, Sat 2 Dec, Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE Little Arden Theatre Company presents its adaptation of the CS Lewis classic, Sun 3 - Sat 16 Dec, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

CUTTING EDGE Grand Arena Youth Theatre investigate young people's 'need' to carry knives and the implications of doing so, Mon 4 Dec, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

FLASHDANCE Strictly champion Joanne Clifton and A1 heartthrob Ben Adams star in a new staging of the hit musical, Mon 4 - Sat 9 Dec, New Alexandra Theatre, B'ham

SLEEPING BEAUTY Tues 5 - Fri 8 Dec, The Blue Orange Theatre, B'ham

BREEZEBLOCK PARK Stoke Repertory Players present an amateur staging of Willy Russell's 'laugh-out-loud' play, Wed 5 - Sat 9 Dec, Stoke Repertory Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

ROBIN HOOD & BABES IN THE WOOD Traditional panto, Tues 5 - Sun 10 Dec, Mitchell Arts Centre, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent

SLEEPING BEAUTY Amateur staging presented by Cannock Wood & Gentleshaw Music Society, Wed 6 - Sat 9 Dec, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

PETER PAN Starring Collaboro's Thomas J Redgrave as Peter Pan, Jonas Cemm as Captain Hook and Georgina Newton as Tinkerbell, Wed 6 - Sun 31 Dec, The Place, Oakengates Theatre, Telford

ROBIN HOOD AND THE BABES IN THE WOOD Innovative rock'n'roll staging of the traditional adventure story, Thurs 7 Dec - Sun 7 Jan, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD Dave Pitt's one-act play exploring radicalism in today's society, Fri 8 - Sat 9 Dec, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

CINDERELLA Traditional family pantomime, Fri 8 - Sat 16 Dec, Hall Green Little Theatre, Birmingham

FAULTY TOWERS: THE CHRISTMAS DINING EXPERIENCE Fully immersive theatre experience where audience members become diners in the infamous 'Faulty' restaurant, Fri 8 - Thurs 21 Dec, The REP, B'ham

CRIMES ON THE CHRISTMAS EXPRESS Inspired by Agatha Christie, The 39 Steps and Jason Bourne, and featuring a cast of four bringing to life a host of characters, Fri 8 Dec - Sat 6 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

THREE BILLY GOATS GRUFF AND OTHER FURRY TAILS Widdershins Theatre fuse puppetry and music to tell their version of the classic Brothers Grimm tale, Sat 9 Dec, The Hive,

Worcester

MRS BEETON, MY SISTER Award-winning playwright Alison Neil explores the relationship between Bessie Mayson and her famous big sister, Sat 9 Dec, SpArC, Bishops Castle, South Shropshire

SING-A-LONG-A BEAUTY AND THE BEAST Sing along to the lyrics on screen and meet the characters after the film, Sat 9 Dec, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

A HOLLY JOLLY CHRISTMAS Festive celebration of the Golden Era of Hollywood, Sat 9 - Sun 10 Dec, The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

MR SILLY PANCAKE AND THE LAND OF CAKE AND BISCUITS Interactive show featuring original music, puppetry and a 'stunning' set, Sat 9 - Sun 10 Dec, The REP, Birmingham

TALE TRAIL TO TREASURE ISLAND Immersive theatre experience featuring storytelling actors, Sat 9 - Sat 30 Dec, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK Starring Gareth Gates, Lisa Riley, Ian Adams and Doreen Tipton, Sat 9 Dec - Sun 14 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST Presented by Working Theatre, Sun 10 Dec, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

MRS BEETON, MY SISTER Award-winning playwright Alison Neil explores the relationship between Bessie Mayson and her famous big sister, Sun 10 Dec, Chelmarsh Parish Hall, Bridgnorth, Shropshire

Dance

THE NUTCRACKER Birmingham Royal Ballet presents its world famous production, which transports audiences into an enchanting winter wonderland of dancing snowflakes and the Sugar Plum Fairy, until Wed 13 Dec, Birmingham Hippodrome



The Band, Take That's New Musical - Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent



Friday 1 - Sunday 10 December

WHAT THE MOON SAW 2Face Dance present an interactive reimagining of Hans Christian Andersen's classic tale, Fri 1 - Sat 2 Dec, The Patrick Centre, Birmingham Hippodrome

THE LIGHT PRINCESS Ballet Cymru present a new full-length ballet which draws on elements of circus and features a new score by acclaimed Welsh harpist Catrin Finch, Sat 9 Dec, Stourbridge Town Hall

Film

INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

LION (12a) Biography/Drama. Starring Dev Patel, Nicole Kidman. Brew-house Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent, Fri 1 Dec

INCENDIES (15) Drama/Mystery. Starring Lubna Azabal, Mélissa Désormeaux-Poulin. Foreign language, subtitled. The Hive, Shrewsbury, Fri 1 Dec

THE DISASTER ARTIST (15) Biography/Comedy. Starring James Franco, Seth Rogen. Electric Cinema, Birmingham, from Fri 1 Dec

BATTLE OF THE SEXES (12a) Biography/Drama. Starring Emma Stone, Steve Carell. The Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 1 - Thurs 7 Dec

MOULIN ROUGE (12a) Drama/Musical. Starring Nicole Kidman, Ewan McGregor. Electric Cinema, Birmingham, Sun 3 Dec

THE SENSE OF AN ENDING (15) Drama/Mystery. Starring Jim Broad-bent, Charlotte Rampling. Stour-bridge Town Hall, Mon 4 Dec; Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shropshire, Mon 4 Dec

A CHRISTMAS CAROL (U) Drama/Family. Starring George C. Scott, Frank Finlay. Wem Town Hall, Mon 4 Dec; Lud-low Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, Tues 5 Dec

MY COUSIN RACHEL (12a) Drama/Mystery. Starring Rachel Weisz, Sam Claflin. Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Tues 5 Dec

OLDBOY (18) Action/Drama. Starring Min-sik Choi, Ji-tae Yu. Foreign language, subtitled. Electric Cinema, Birmingham, Wed 6 Dec

GREMLINS (12a) Comedy/Fantasy. Starring Zach Galligan, Phoebe Cates. Followed by Q&A with Zach Galligan. Electric Cinema, Birmingham, Thu 7 Dec

MOONLIGHT (15) Drama. Starring Alex Hibbert, Ashton Sanders. Electric Cinema, Birmingham, Thu 7 Dec

THE GRADUATE (15) Drama/Romance. Starring Dustin Hoffman, Anne Bancroft. Electric Cinema, Birmingham, Fri 8 Dec

LA LA LAND (15) Comedy/Drama. Starring Ryan Gosling, Emma Stone. Electric Cinema, Birmingham, Fri 8 - Mon 11 Dec

THE MAN WHO INVENTED CHRISTMAS (PG) Biography/Comedy. Starring Dan Stevens, Christopher Plummer. The Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 8 - Thurs 14 Dec

BABY DRIVER (PG) Action/Crime. Starring Ansel Elgort, Jon Bernthal. Elec-tric Cinema, Birmingham, Sat 9 Dec

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST (PG) Family/Fantasy. Starring Emma Wat-son, Dan Stevens. Electric Cinema, Birmingham, Sat 9 - Tues 12 Dec

THE JUNGLE BOOK (U) Animation/Ad-venture. Starring Phil Harris, Sebas-tian Cabot. The Hive, Shrewsbury, Sun 10 Dec

THE GHOST (12a) Drama/Fantasy. Starring Rooney Mara, Casey Affleck. Electric Cinema, Birmingham, Sun 10 - Mon 11 Dec

THE RED TURTLE (PG) Animation/Fan-tasy. Electric Cinema, Birmingham, Sun 10 - Wed 13 Dec

Events

BBC GOOD FOOD SHOW Featuring top UK chefs cooking live, and a huge range of independent producers & big bands, until Sun 3 Dec, NEC, Birmingham

TELFORD EUROPEAN CHRISTMAS MAR-KET until Sat 23 Dec, Southwater De-velopment, Telford

MEET SANTA In an experience unique to Birmingham this festive season, visitors are invited to go the North Pole of the city in the Antarctic Grotto, meet the man himself and enjoy the cheeky Gentoo penguins in the ex-clusive setting of the ever-so-ever-so chilly Ice Adventure area, until Sat 23 Dec, National Sea Life Centre, Birm-ingham

SANTA SAFARI until Sun 24 Dec, West Midland Safari and Leisure Park, Bewdley

BIRMINGHAM FRANKFURT CHRISTMAS MARKET until Sun 24 Dec, Birming-ham City Centre

SANTA'S WINTER WONDERLAND Explore Santa's Christmas snow trail, take a walk through the enchanted forest, enjoy a game of snowballs and hitch a ride on a sledge, until Sun 31 Dec, The Snowdome, Tamworth

DRAYTON'S MAGICAL CHRISTMAS Live shows, carols, presents plus much more until Sun 31 Dec, Drayton Manor Theme Park, Tamworth

CHRISTMAS AT BIRMINGHAM BOTANICAL GARDENS Featuring illuminated trail, Scented Fire Garden, Tunnel of Light, Mistletoe Moment, Singing Trees &



Santa Steam Specials - Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley

Santa & his Elves, until Mon 1 Jan, Birmingham Botanical Gardens

MAGICAL LANTERN FESTIVAL Christ-mas-themed event featuring artistic sculptures, until Mon 1 Jan, Kings Heath Park, Birmingham

ICE SKATE BIRMINGHAM Enjoy this win-ter sport in beautiful city surround-ings until Sun 7 Jan, Eastside City Park, Birmingham

CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL Raising money for Dudley Mind, The YMCA and Dudley Alzheimer's Society, until Sun 7 Jan, Red House Glass Cone, Stourbridge

THE SECRET CHRISTMAS GIN FESTIVAL Fri 1 - Sat 2 Dec, The Grain Store, Wolverhampton

ILLUMINATED GARDENS Fri 1 - Sun 3 Dec, Powis Castle and Garden, Welshpool, Powys

SANTA'S GROTTO Fri 1 - Fri 15 Dec, Dudley Zoological Gardens, Dudley

SANTA SAFARI A magical adventure by Land Rover to see Santa, Fri 1 - Sat 23 Dec, Hawkstone Park & Follies, Shrewsbury

THE FANTASTICAL WINTER TOYBOX Dis-cover the toys which have been scat-tered around the grounds, Fri 1 Dec - Fri 9 Feb, Erddig Hall, Wrexham

CHRISTMAS CAROL TRAINS Sing along or just soak up the festive atmo-sphere, Sat 2 Dec, Severn Valley Rail-way, Bewdley

COILED POT MAKING WORKSHOP Sat 2 Dec, Gladstone Pottery Museum, Stoke-on-Trent

ACORNS SANTA RUN Charity event in support of local children's hospice, Sat 2 Dec, Cannon Hill Park, B'ham

CHRISTMAS FOOD & CRAFT FAYRE With over 80 indoor and outdoor stalls, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, Weston Park, Nr Shif-nal

ELF ADVENTURE CHALLENGE Interactive indoor experience, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, Trentham Gardens, Trentham, Stoke

on Trent

VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS FAYRE Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, The Parade Shopping Centre, Shrewsbury

SANTA BOAT TRIPS Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec Dudley Canal and Tunnel Trust, Dud-ley

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION WEEKEND See Santa star in his very own stage show, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, Cadbury World, Birmingham

SANTA EXPERIENCE Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, Park Hall Farm, Oswestry

FATHER CHRISTMAS AT ATTINGHAM Park See Father Christmas and re-ceive a traditional teddy bear me-mento, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, Attingham Park, Shrewsbury

CHRISTMAS IN THE HOME Step back in time and take part in some seasonal activities, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

SANTA HUNTS Search for Santa along-side the museum's festive costumed guides, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

FATHER CHRISTMAS IN HIS GROTTO Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, Powis Castle and Gar-den, Welshpool, Powys

WESTON PARK CHRISTMAS FOOD & CRAFT FAYRE Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, We-ston Park, Nr Shifnal

SANTA STEAM SPECIALS Travel by steam train from Kidderminster to Arley, where you can meet Father Christmas in his grotto, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley

POP-UP CHRISTMAS SHOPPING EXTRAV-AGANZA Sat 2 - Fri 22 Dec, Wolver-hampton Art Gallery

A 1940S CHRISTMAS AT ATTINGHAM Un-cover Christmas traditions from the 1940s, Sat 2 - Sat 23 Dec, Attingham Park, Shrewsbury

SHUGBOROUGH AT CHRISTMAS Sat 2 - Sat 23 Dec, Shugborough Historic Working Estate, Stafford

CAROLS IN THE CAVERNS With a live

The Midlands Spectacular Christmas destination



& CHRISTMAS MARKET

Winter Wonderland

Stoke-on-Trent

FREE ENTRY!



**BIRCH TERRACE CAR PARK
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- Crazy Mouse Roller Coaster
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NEW YEAR'S EVE
FIREWORKS
AND LIVE
FAMILY
ENTERTAINMENT**



Please visit **www.winterwonderlandstoke.com**

*for more information - Opening Times - Special Offers and Advanced Tickets

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Winter Wonderland Stoke on Trent

on-board choir, Sun 3 Dec, Dudley Canal and Tunnel Trust, Dudley

ACORNS SANTA RUN Help raise funds for local life-limited or life-threatened children and their families, Sun 3 Dec, Walsall Arboretum, Walsall

ETSY MADE LOCAL CHRISTMAS MARKET Hosted by Made In The Black Country, Sun 3 Dec, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

SANTA'S SLEEPOVERS Festive sleep-over at one of Alton Tower's themed hotels, Sun 3 Dec, Alton Towers, Staffs

ANTIQUÉ FAIR Sun 3 Dec, Bantock House & Park, Wolverhampton

AN EVENING OF CHRISTMAS CAROLS Voices of Tantallon sing a wide variety of festive music, Mon 4 - Tues 5 Dec, Wightwick Manor, Wolverhampton

AN EVENING OF CHRISTMAS FESTIVITIES Tues 5 Dec, Carding Mill Valley & The Shropshire Hills, Church Stretton, South Shropshire

TINY TOTS TRAIL OF TREATS Join Mrs Claus at the fireside for milk, cookies and a festive story, Wed 6 - Thurs 7 Dec, Blists Hill, Ironbridge, Shrops

THE MANOR BY MOONLIGHT Join the Pakingtons and their friends in the candlelit hall, and discover the dangers that await them, Wed 6 - Thurs 7 Dec, Harvington Hall, Kidderminster

GEORGIAN CHRISTMAS TOUR Find out how Boulton and his friends would have celebrated the festive season during the 18th century, Wed 6 - Thurs 21 Dec, Soho House, B'ham

TUDOR CHRISTMAS TOURS Featuring pomander making and wassailing, Wed 6 - Thurs 21 Dec, Blakesley Hall, Birmingham

CHRISTMAS MARKET Thurs 7 - Sun 10 Dec, World of Wedgwood, Stoke-on-Trent

CAROL EVENING Fri 8 Dec, Shugborough Historic Working Estate, Stafford

TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS EVENINGS Stroll through the museum's beautifully decorated gas-lit streets and take in the sights, sounds and smells of a magical Christmas past, Fri 8 - Sat 9 Dec, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

SANTA BOAT TRIPS Visit Santa by boat in his underground grotto, deep in the Dudley Caverns, Fri 8 - Sun 10 Dec, Dudley Canal and Tunnel Trust, Dudley

BOWMAN ANTIQUES Fri 8 - Sun 10 Dec, Staffordshire County Showground, Stafford

ILLUMINATED GARDENS Fri 8 - Sun 10 Dec, Powis Castle and Garden, Welshpool, Powys

THE BEAST - THE WORLD'S BIGGEST BOUNCY CASTLE Unleash your beast as the world's largest inflatable ob-

stacle course visits Birmingham, Fri 8 - Sun 17 Dec, NEC, Birmingham

CHRISTMAS CAROL TRAINS Sing along or just soak up the festive atmosphere, Sat 9 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley

CHRISTMAS THROUGH THE AGES Guided tours, with pomander-making sessions and wassailing, Sat 9 Dec, Blakesley Hall, Birmingham

MERRY MINECRAFT AND A HAPPY NEW ROBOT CHRISTMAS Themed activities, including advanced features in Minecraft, Christmas coding and a touch of cyber security, Sat 9 Dec, RAF Cosford, Shifnal, Shropshire

VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS FUN DAY Enjoy festive stories told by characters from Dickens' A Christmas Carol, join the naughty elves in a snowball fight and see the stilt-walking Christmas fairy, Sat 9 Dec, Gladstone Pottery Museum, Stoke-on-Trent

FESTIVE FAMILY FUNDAY Sat 9 Dec, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

CAROLLING AT THE CASTLE Sat 9 Dec, Stokesay Castle, Nr Craven Arms, South Shropshire

BIG BIERKELLER BAVARIAN BASH Sat 9 Dec, The Grain Store, Wolverhampton

ROARING 20S HOUSE PARTY Enjoy the decadence of the 1920s, Sat 9 Dec, Weston Park, Nr Shifnal, Staffs

GIN TASTING Sat 9 Dec, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS (see page 47 for details), Sat 9 - Sun 10 Dec, Blists Hill, Ironbridge

LADIES KENNEL ASSOCIATION The largest dog show in the UK after Crufts, Sat 9 - Sun 10 Dec, NEC, Birmingham

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION WEEKEND See Santa star in his very own stage show, Sat 9 - Sun 10 Dec, Cadbury World, Birmingham

SANTA EXPERIENCE Sat 9 - Sun 10 Dec, Park Hall Farm, Oswestry, North Shropshire

FATHER CHRISTMAS AT ATTINGHAM PARK See Father Christmas and receive a traditional teddy bear memento, Sat 9 - Sun 10 Dec, Attingham Park, Shrewsbury

CHRISTMAS GIFT AND CRAFT FAIR Sat 9 - Sun 10 Dec, Bantock House & Park, Wolverhampton

CHRISTMAS IN THE HOME Step back in time and take part in some seasonal activities, Sat 9 - Sun 10 Dec, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

SANTA HUNTS Search for Santa alongside the museum's festive costumed guides, Sat 9 - Sun 10 Dec, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

FATHER CHRISTMAS IN HIS GROTTO Sat 9 - Sun 10 Dec, Powis Castle and Garden, Welshpool, Powys



Acorns Santa Run - Walsall Arboretum

AN ELIZABETHAN CHRISTMAS Festive greenery, log fires, carols and merriment! Sat 9 - Sun 10 Dec, Harvington Hall, Kidderminster

17TH CENTURY CHRISTMAS Taste traditional Christmas recipes, see the house decorated with traditional greenery, toast bread over an open fire, enjoy live music from Merrie Noyse and play games from the past, Sat 9 - Sun 10 Dec, Moseley Old Hall, Wolverhampton

SANTA STEAM SPECIALS Travel by steam train from Kidderminster to Arley, where you will meet Father Christmas in his grotto, Sat 9 - Sun 10 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley

CHILDREN'S VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS **SANTA TRAILS** Meet the Victorian household as they ready themselves for the annual visit of their very special guest, Sat 9 - Sun 10 Dec, Tamworth Castle, Tamworth

ELF ADVENTURE CHALLENGE Festive activities and action for children and adults, Sat 9 - Sun 10 Dec, Trentham Gardens, Stoke on Trent

FATHER CHRISTMAS AT WIGHTWICK MANOR Sat 9 - Sun 10 Dec, Wightwick Manor, Wolverhampton

HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS High definition screening while a live orchestra performs John Williams' score, Sun 10 Dec, Genting Arena, Birmingham

CAROLS IN THE CAVERNS With a live on-board choir, Sun 10 Dec, Dudley Canal and Tunnel Trust, Dudley

SANTA'S SLEEPOVERS A festive sleep-over at one of Alton Tower's themed hotels, Sun 10 Dec, Alton Towers, Staffs

CHRISTMAS ON THE FARM Christmas crafty activities and seasonal fun, Sun 10 Dec, Fordhall Organic Farm, Market Drayton, North Shropshire



Santa Hunts at Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

Gigs

PULLED APART BY HORSES Mon 11 Dec, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

ULI JON ROTH Mon 11 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

NORMANDIE & WILLIAM RYAN KEY (YELLOW-CARD) Mon 11 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

ROBERT PLANT Tues 12 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

ROY WOOD ROCK & ROLL BAND Tues 12 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

LIAM GALLAGHER Tues 12 Dec, Arena B'ham

DIRTY THRILLS Tues 12 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

SWING TIME: CHRISTMAS SPECIAL Tues 12 Dec, Dudley Town Hall

WRETCH 32 Tues 12 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE URBAN VOOODOO MACHINE Wed 13 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

THE MOULETTES Wed 13 Dec, Lichfield Guildhall

JOOLS HOLLAND & HIS RHYTHM & BLUES ORCHESTRA Wed 13 - Thurs 14 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

PETER HOOK & THE LIGHT Thurs 14 Dec, The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton

THE ALBION BAND Thurs 14 Dec, New Vic Theatre, Staffordshire

MAGIC OF MOTOWN Thurs 14 Dec, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

ELO AGAIN Thurs 14 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

IAN SIEGAL Thurs 14 Dec, Katie Fitzgeralds, Stourbridge

THE CHICAGO BLUES BROTHERS Thurs 14 Dec, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

THUNDER CHRISTMAS SHOW Fri 15 Dec, Civic Hall, Wolverhampton

JAYKAE Fri 15 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

ROY ORBISON STORY Fri 15 Dec, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

THE COOPERS & FRIENDS Fri 15 Dec, The Roadhouse, Birmingham

RED SUIT APARATUS Fri 15 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

TV SMITH Fri 15 Dec, Katie Fitzgeralds, Stourbridge

UB40 Fri 15 Dec, Genting Arena, B'ham

SHED SEVEN Fri 15 Dec, O2 Academy, B'ham

GOGOL BORDELLO PLUS LUCKY CHOPS Fri 15 Dec, Wulfrun Hall, Wolverhampton

RELATIVELY CHRISTMAS Fri 15 Dec, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

THE BOOTLEG BEATLES Fri 15 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

BORN IN THE EIGHTIES Fri 15 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

THE STONES Fri 15 - Sun 17 Dec, Theatre On The Steps, Bridgnorth, South Shrops

BONEY M Sat 16 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

MARTIN CARTHAY Sat 16 Dec, Newhampton

Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

QUEEN + ADAM LAMBERT Sat 16 Dec, Arena Birmingham

KICK UP THE 80'S Sat



16 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

THE FAMILY SILVER Sat 16 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

HAPPY SNKA-MAS WITH THE SKA 45'S Sat 16 Dec, The Night Owl, Birmingham

I LOVE REGGAE Sat 16 Dec, Genting Arena, Birmingham

THUNDER CHRISTMAS SHOW Sat 16 Dec, Civic Hall, W'hampton

HOODIE ALLEN Sat 16 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

SLADE Sat 16 Dec, William Aston Hall, Wrexham

MERSEY BEATLES Sat 16 Dec, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

STARVING RASCALS Sat 16 Dec, Katie Fitzgeralds, Stourbridge

ABBA MANIA Sat 16 Dec, Wulfrun Hall, Wolverhampton

KATE RUSBY AT CHRISTMAS Sat 16 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

(SPUNGE) Sat 16 Dec, O2 Academy, B'ham

ROY WOOD'S ROCKMAS 2017 Sat 16 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

FIVE FINGER DEATH PUNCH & IN FLAMES Sun 17 Dec, Arena Birmingham

EXTREME Sun 17 Dec, O2 Academy, B'ham

THE DYLAN PROJECT Sun 17 Dec, Lichfield Guildhall

DAN WHITEHOUSE Sun 17 Dec, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

Classical Music

THE SIXTEEN - GLORY TO THE CHRIST CHILD Featuring Harry Christophers (conductor), Mon 11 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

LUNCHTIME CHRISTMAS MUSIC WITH THE CHOIR OF ST JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE Featuring Andrew Nethsingha (music director) & Thomas Trotter (organ), Mon 11 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE BIRMINGHAM CANOLDIR CHRISTMAS SPECTACULAR Featuring James Llewelyn Jones (conductor), Gemini Brass & Denise Leigh (soprano), Thurs 14 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

MIDLANDS HOSPITAL CHOIR: SING NOEL! Festive concert conducted by James Llewelyn Jones, Fri 15 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

BBC PHILHARMONIC FEATURING MARTIN ROSCOE Programme includes works by Sibelius, Grieg & Beethoven, Fri 15 Dec, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL CHOIR: CHRISTMAS BY CANDLELIGHT Sat 16 Dec, Lichfield Cathedral

WOMBOURNE & DISTRICT CHORAL SOCIETY A concert of seasonal words & music, Sat 16 Dec, Beckminster Methodist Church, Wolverhampton

THE FRONCYSYLTE CHOIR CHRISTMAS CONCERT Sat 16 Dec, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

CHRISTMAS WITH KATHERINE JENKINS Featuring the London Concert Orchestra, Anthony Inglis (conductor) & special guest Mark Vincent, Sun 17 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

Comedy

JASON MANFORD Mon 11 Dec, Wulfrun Hall, Wolverhampton

ZOE LYONS, ED GAMBLE, ANDY ROBINSON & MIKE WILMOT Wed 13 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ZOE LYONS, ED GAMBLE, ANDY ROBINSON & CHARLIE BAKER Thurs 14 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ROB ROUSE, KANE BROWN, MARK SIMMONS & COMIC TBC Thurs 14 Dec, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

ROB ROUSE, KANE BROWN, REGINALD D HUNTER & MARK SIMMONS Fri 15 Dec, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

BARBARA NICE'S CHRISTMAS CRACKER Fri 15 - Sat 16 Dec, MAC, B'ham

ZOE LYONS, ED GAMBLE, ANDY ROBIN-

SON & MIKE WILMOT Fri 15 - Sat 16 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

GLENN WOOL, MICKY P KERR, ROGER MONKHOUSE & DAMION LARKIN Sat 16 Dec, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

ROB ROUSE, FREDDIE QUINN, MARK SIMMONS & COMIC TBC Sat 16 Dec, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

KEN DODD Sat 16 Dec, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

ROFL! COMEDY CLUB Sat 16 Dec, The Old Post Office, Burton-On-Trent

GLENN WOOL, CHRIS WASHINGTON, RAYMOND MEARNES & SIMON LOMAS Sat 16 Dec, Wolverhampton Art Gallery

THE LAUGHING SOLE COMEDY FOR KIDS Sun 17 Dec, MAC, Birmingham

ROB ROUSE, MIKE GUNN, ADAM RILEY & CATHERINE BOHART Sun 17 Dec, The George Hotel, Lichfield

ED GAMBLE, JO ENRIGHT, ANDY ROBINSON & MIKE WILMOT Sun 17 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

CHRISTMAS GOTHIC Enter into the Christmas spirit as a dark and spectral woman tells haunting tales of the festive season, Tues 12 - Wed 13 Dec, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

CHRISTMAS ENTERTAINMENT The Nonentities present an evening of song and dramatic merriment, Tues 12 - Fri 15 Dec, The Rose Theatre, Kidderminster

HOME FOR CHRISTMAS 'Fun-filled' adventure for younger audiences... Tues 12 - Sun 31 Dec, Lichfield Garrick

SARAH MATTHEWS AND MARIA WHATTON - WINTER AND WASSAIL Story-telling night for grown-ups, Wed 13 Dec, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

CLOSER Presented by Birmingham School Of Acting, Wed 13 - Sat 16 Dec, Crescent Theatre, B'ham

A CHRISTMAS CAROL Amateur staging by Scarlet Theatre, Wed 13 - Sat 16 Dec, Stoke Repertory Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

RENÉ AND EDITH - LE COMEDY DINNER SHOW Inspired by much-loved BBC sitcom 'Allo 'Allo, Wed 13 - Sat 16 Dec, The REP, Birmingham

CINDERELLA Pantomime presented by Rooftop Theatre, Wed 13 - Sun 17 Dec, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK Wed 13 - Fri 29 Dec, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall



The Moulettes - Lichfield Guildhall

SANTA'S CHRISTMAS WISH Join in the adventure to grant Santa his secret wish, then meet the man himself afterwards and receive a special present, Fri 15 - Sun 24 Dec, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

ALADDIN Starring Jonathan Wilkes and Christian Patterson, Fri 15 Dec - Sun 7 Jan, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

THE SNOW QUEEN Amateur staging presented by Kidderminster Rose Young People's Theatre, Sat 16 - Sun 17 Dec, The Rose Theatre, Kidderminster

JERSEY BOYS The story of Frankie Valli & The Four Seasons, Sat 16 Dec - Sat 6 Jan, New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

DEAR SANTA Featuring music, laughter and plenty of audience participation, Sun 17 - Sun 24 Dec, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

Dance

THE NUTCRACKER Vienna Festival Ballet bring to life the story of Clara and her adventures on Christmas Eve, Wed 13 Dec, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

Film

INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

A QUIET PASSION (12A) Biography/Drama. Starring Emma Bell, Sara Vertongen. Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shropshire, Mon 11 Dec

THE OTHER SIDE OF HOPE (12A) Comedy/Drama. Starring Ville Virtanen, Dome Karukoski. Foreign language, subtitled. Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Tues 12 Dec

THE CHRISTMAS CANDLE (U) Drama/Family. Starring Hans Matheson, Samantha Barks. Forest Arts Centre, Walsall, Thurs 14 Dec

STAR WARS: THE LAST JEDI (12A) Adventure/Fantasy. Starring Mark Hamill, Adam Driver. Light House Media Centre, Wolverhampton, Thurs 14 - Sat 23 Dec

MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS (12A) Crime/Drama. Starring Kenneth Branagh, Johnny Depp. Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, South Shropshire, Fri 15 Dec

A CHRISTMAS CAROL (U) Drama/Family. Starring George C. Scott, Frank Finlay. The Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 15 - Sun 24 Dec

PADDINGTON 2 (U) Adventure/Comedy.

Starring Sally Hawkins, Brendan Gleeson. Wem Town Hall, Shropshire, Fri 15 - Sat 23 Dec; The Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 15 - Sun 23, Wed 27 - Sun 31 Dec

Events

AN EVENING OF CHRISTMAS CAROLS

With Voices of Tantallon, Mon 11 - Tues 12 Dec, Wightwick Manor, Wolverhampton

TWILIGHT FATHER CHRISTMAS 2017 See Father Christmas and receive a traditional teddy bear memento, Mon 11 - Fri 15 Dec, Attingham Park, Shrewsbury

TINY TOTS TRAIL OF TREATS Join Mrs Claus at the fireside for milk, cookies and a festive story, Wed 13 - Thurs 14 Dec, Blists Hill, Ironbridge

FESTIVITIES WITH FRIENDS An evening of Christmas songs and carols, Thurs 14 Dec, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

CHRISTMAS CAROLS EVENING A rare chance to see the preserved factory workshops and cobbled courtyard after dark, with a finale of outdoor Christmas carols, accompanied by a brass band, Fri 15 Dec, Gladstone Pottery Museum, Stoke-on-Trent

ILLUMINATED GARDENS Fri 15 - Sun 17 Dec, Powis Castle and Garden, Welshpool, Powys

SHUGBOROUGH LANTERN PARADE Fri 15 - Sun 17 Dec, Shugborough Historic Working Estate, Stafford

VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS MARKET Fri 15 - Sun 17 Dec, Wulfruna Street, Wolverhampton

SANTA BOAT TRIPS Visit Santa by boat in his underground grotto, Fri 15 - Sun 17 Dec, Dudley Canal and Tunnel Trust, Dudley

TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS EVENINGS Stroll through the museum's decorated gas-lit streets and take in the sights, sounds and smells of a magical Christmas past, Fri 15 - Sun 17 Dec, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

SANTA'S SLEEPOVERS A festive sleepover at one of Alton Tower's themed hotels, Fri 15 - Sat 23 Dec, Alton Towers

CHRISTMAS CAROL TRAINS Sing along or just soak up the festive atmosphere, Sat 16 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley

FROST FAIR Brand new indoor Christmas market with decoration and card-making activities, seasonal food and drink, pop-up performances by local musicians, choirs and more, Sat 16 Dec, Birmingham Hippodrome

A VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS Learn about

Wicked Wizard Of Fizzog

Netherton Arts Centre, Dudley, Thurs 14 - Sat 16 December

This brand new production, a sure-to-be-chuckleworthy parody of Wicked and The Wizard Of Oz, finds Lizzie Cotterill putting pen to paper to create her latest masterpiece, a tale of two witches whose friendship turns sour. And their situation isn't helped any by the sudden arrival of a young girl named Dorothy... Black Country-based Fizzog are suitably proud of their Midlands roots and urge anybody who enjoys a good laugh to get along to this latest production. "Our shows are riotous, poignant and nostalgic," say Fizzog, "but most of all, hysterically funny."

the Victorian revival of hawking and hear tales about a falconer's exploits at Christmas time, Sat 16 Dec, The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Hanley

GIN TASTING Sat 16 Dec, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT Traditional Christmas carols in the farmyard, complete with Nativity scene, Sat 16 Dec, Bodenhall Arboretum, Kidderminster

FATHER CHRISTMAS AT WIGHTWICK MANOR Sat 16 - Sun 17 Dec, Wightwick Manor, Wolverhampton

VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS Sat 16 - Sun 17 Dec, Blists Hill, Ironbridge, Shrops

SANTA STEAM SPECIALS Travel by steam train from Kidderminster to Arley, where you will meet Father Christmas in his grotto, Sat 16 - Sun 17 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley

ELF ADVENTURE CHALLENGE Festive activities and action for children and adults, Sat 16 - Sun 17 Dec, Trentham Gardens

CHRISTMAS GIFT AND CRAFT FAIR Sat 16 - Sun 17 Dec, Bantock House & Park, Wolverhampton

17TH CENTURY CHRISTMAS See the house decorated with traditional greenery, toast bread over an open fire and enjoy live music, Sat 16 - Sun 17 Dec, Moseley Old Hall, Wolverhampton

VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS SANTA TRAIL Meet the Victorian household as they

ready themselves for the annual visit of their very special guest, Sat 16 - Tues 19 Dec, Tamworth Castle

SANTA'S GROTTTO After receiving a special gift from Santa, it's off to see his reindeer, Sat 16 - Sat 23 Dec, Dudley Zoological Gardens, Dudley

FATHER CHRISTMAS AT ATTINGHAM PARK See Father Christmas and receive a traditional teddy bear memento, Sat 16 - Sat 23 Dec, Attingham Park, Shrewsbury

SANTA EXPERIENCE A visit to Santa for a generous present, Sat 16 - Sun 24 Dec, Park Hall Farm, Oswestry

CHRISTMAS IN THE HOME Step back in time and take part in some seasonal activities, Sat 16 - Sun 24 Dec, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

SANTA HUNTS Search for Santa alongside the museum's festive costumed guides, Sat 16 - Sun 24 Dec, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

GINGERBREAD TRAIL Follow the clues round the trail and claim your prize, Sat 16 Dec - Mon 1 Jan, Croome Park, Worcester

CAROLS IN THE CAVERNS With a live on-board choir, Sun 17 Dec, Dudley Canal and Tunnel Trust, Dudley

A VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS Meet the Victorian potters and get your last-minute gifts, Sun 17 Dec, Middleport Pottery, Burslem, Stoke

A CHRISTMAS WASSAIL 2017 Mulled wine and mince pies are served from 7pm, Sun 17 - Tues 19 Dec, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham



Traditional Christmas Evenings - Black Country Living Museum

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Saturday 16 December 10.30am-12.30pm & 1-3pm
Monday 18 December 11am-1pm
Tuesday 19 December 11am-1pm
Wednesday 20 December 11am-1pm
Thursday 21 December 11am-1pm
Friday 22 December 11am-1pm
Saturday 23 December 10.30am-12.30pm & 1-3pm

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9th Dec, 10am - 1pm
At The Brewhouse
Festive Family Funday
Tickets: £7.50 per child or 2 children for £10

13th Dec, 7pm
At The Brewhouse
Once Upon A Wednesday
Tickets: £6 adv, £8 otd

14th Dec, 7.30pm
At The Brewhouse
Festivities with Friends
Tickets: £8

15th - 16th Dec, 7.30pm
At Burton Town Hall
Town Hall Christmas Party Nights
Tickets: £45 per person

19th Dec, 7pm
At The Brewhouse
Solid Gold 70's Christmas Show
Tickets: £22, £19 conc

20th Dec, 11am & 1pm
At The Brewhouse
Santa's Christmas Wish
Tickets: £10 including present, £36 family of 4 (2 presents)

21st Dec, 7.30pm
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Tickets: £12, £10 conc

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Gigs

ELIZA CARTHY & THE WAYWARD BAND Mon 18 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

WHITE TRASH Mon 18 Dec, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

SOLID GOLD CHRISTMAS SHOW Tues 19 Dec, The Brewhouse, Burton Upon Trent

THE SHADES Tues 19 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE PRODIGY Tues 19 Dec, Civic Hall, Wolverhampton

CHRISTMAS NO. 1 POP SINGALONG Tues 19 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

A CHORAL CHRISTMAS WITH ORE ODUBA Tues 19 - Thurs 21 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

JOOLS HOLLAND & HIS RHYTHM & BLUES ORCHESTRA Wed 20 Dec, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

VIOLET Wed 20 Dec, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

FLASH - A TRIBUTE TO QUEEN Wed 20 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

MICHAEL BUBLE - KAI MCKENZIE Wed 20 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

MAD JOCKS & ENGLISHMEN Wed 20 Dec, The Red Lion Folk Club, Birmingham

GREEN MATTHEWS: A CHRISTMAS CAROL A FOLK OPERA Thurs 21

Dec, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

THE ED SHEERAN EXPERIENCE Thurs 21 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

FRED ZEPPELIN XMAS BASH Thurs 21 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

NATHAN DAWE 0121 LIVE Thurs 21 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

BURNSIDE LIVE JUKEBOX CHRISTMAS PARTY Fri 22 Dec, The Night Owl, Birmingham

THE ALAMO CHRISTMAS PARTY Fri 22 Dec, The Night Owl, Birmingham

A FAMILY CHRISTMAS WITH THE TOWN HALL GOSPEL CHOIR Fri 22 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

KICK UP THE 80'S Fri 22 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

THE SPACEHOPPERS Fri 22 Dec, Katie Fitzgeralds, Stourbridge

THE BORN AGAIN BEAT-

LES Fri 22 Dec, The Roadhouse, B'ham

BARRY STEELE & FRIENDS THE CHRISTMAS SPECIAL Sat 23 Dec, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

CHAS & DAVE Sat 23 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

CRACKER 88'S Sat 23 Dec, Katie Fitzgeralds, Stourbridge

ARIANA GRANDE EXPERIENCE Sat 23 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

IVOR & LYN'S CLASSIC ROCK NIGHT Sat 23 Dec, Route 44, Birmingham

THE SLEAZE BROTHERS Sat 23 Dec, Lichfield Guildhall

THE MOTHERS EARTH EXPERIMENT Sat 23 Dec, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

THE TWANG Sat 23 Dec, O2 Academy, B'ham

THE STRAIGHT ACES Sun 24 Dec, Katie Fitzgeralds, Stourbridge



Jools Holland - Victoria Hall, Hanley

Classical Music

LONDON CONCERT ORCHESTRA: CHRISTMAS CAROL SINGALONG Featuring Adrian Lucas (conductor), the London Concert Orchestra, City of Birmingham Choir, Nicky Spence (tenor) & Crispian Steele Perkins (trumpet), Mon 18 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

LONDON CONCERT ORCHESTRA: CLASSIC CAROLS Featuring Adrian Lucas (conductor), Nicky Spence (tenor) & Crispian Steele Perkins (trumpet), Mon 18 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

THE SNOWMAN Watch the film on screen whilst a professional 26-piece orchestra, featuring some of the country's top musicians, perform the film's iconic score, Mon 18 Dec, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

A CHORAL CHRISTMAS Featuring Strictly winner and One Show host Ore Oduba as presenter. Simon Halsey conducts, Tues 19 - Thurs 21 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

EX CATHEDRA: CHRISTMAS MUSIC BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring Jeffrey Skidmore (conductor), Tues 19 - Sat 23 Dec, St Paul's Church, Birmingham

ANDRE RIEU & THE JOHANN STRAUSS ORCHESTRA Thurs 21 Dec, Genting Arena, Birmingham



THE SNOWMAN Watch the film on screen whilst a professional 26-piece orchestra, featuring some of the country's top musicians, perform the film's iconic score, Thurs 21 Dec, Lichfield Cathedral

CBSO: CHRISTMAS AT THE MOVIES Featuring Anthony Weeden (conductor), Gary Williams & Jo Gibb (vocalists), Fri 22 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

CHRISTMAS SPECTACULAR Featuring the London Concert Orchestra. John Rigby (conductor), the Canzonetta Choir, The Jingle Belles, Laura Tebbutt (guest singer), Anna Patalong (soprano) & Nico Darmanin (tenor), Sat 23 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

HANDEL'S MESSIAH Featuring the Shropshire Charity Concerts Choir, Shropshire Charity Concerts Orchestra & John Moore (conductor), Sat 23 Dec, Shrewsbury Abbey

GEM RECITALS - A CLASSICAL CHRISTMAS Featuring Georgia Gardiner (soprano), Edward Robinson (baritone) & Hayley Parkes (pianist), Sat 23 Dec, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

EX CATHEDRA - ANGELS, STARS & KINGS Featuring Jeffrey Skidmore (conductor), Alexander Mason (organ) & Lucy Wakeford (harp), Sat 23 Dec, St Paul's Church, Birmingham

CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring the Canzonetta Choir, Mozart Festival Orchestra in full period costume, Nika Gori (soprano) & Michael Bawtree (conductor). Programme includes works by Handel, Gruber, Cullen, Corelli, Mozart & Bach, Sun 24 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Comedy

CRISIS AT CHRISTMAS 2017 Mon 18 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

TOADALLY FREE COMEDY! Mon 18 Dec, The Blue Orange Theatre, B'ham

JEN BRISTER, PAUL MCCAFFERY, MICKEY D & SCOTT GIBSON Wed 20 - Sat 23 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JULIAN DEANE, QUINCY, ROGER MONKHOUSE Thurs 21 - Fri 22 Dec, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

THE STORYBEAST, JONATHAN PELHAM & CHRIS PURCHASE Fri 22 Dec, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

MARKUS BIRDMAN, JAY HANDLEY, BARRY DODDS & DAMION LARKIN Sat 23 Dec, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

ROFL! COMEDY CLUB Sat 23 Dec, The Old Post Office, Burton upon Trent

Theatre

THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS Drama-Link present Alan Bennett's adaptation of Kenneth Grahame's much-loved book, Tues 19 - Fri 22 Dec, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

CINDERELLA Soul-diva Beverley Knight makes her pantomime debut alongside Strictly Come Dancing finalist Danny Mac, Hippodrome panto favourite Matt Slack, Suzanne Shaw, The Grumbleweeds and Ugly Sisters Ceri Dupree and Phil Randall, Tues 19 Dec - Sun 28 Jan, Birmingham Hippodrome

PETER PAN - THE WORLD'S BIGGEST PANTO Starring Bradley Walsh and Martin Kemp, Wed 20 - Sun 24 Dec, Arena Birmingham



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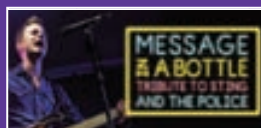
What's on...



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THE WIZARD OF OZ



Friday 19 January, 7.30pm
THE WICKED WIZARD OF FIZZOG



Saturday 20 January, 7.30pm
MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE



Wednesday 7 February, 7.30pm
GERMAINE GREER



Thursday 8 February, 7.30pm
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Saturday 10 February, 7.30pm
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SANTA'S CHRISTMAS WISH Join in the adventure to grant Santa his secret wish, then meet the man himself afterwards and receive a special present, Wed 20 Dec, Mitchell Arts Centre, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent

SANTA'S CHRISTMAS WISH Join in the adventure to grant Santa his secret wish, then meet Santa after and receive a special present! Wed 20 Dec, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

SKELLIG Haunting story of mystery, imagination and childhood, Wed 20 - Sat 30 Dec, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

SING-A-LONG-A-FROZEN Sing along to Disney's hit movie, Thurs 21 Dec, Stourbridge Town Hall

SANTA'S CHRISTMAS WISH Join in the adventure to grant Santa his secret wish, then meet the man himself afterwards and receive a special present, Thurs 21 Dec, The Hafren Theatre, Newtown, Powys

TALL STORIES: THE SNOW DRAGON Toe-tapping songs and 'lots of laughs' for everyone aged three and older, Thurs 21 Dec - Sun 7 Jan, The Patrick Centre, Birmingham Hippodrome

BABY IT'S COLD OUTSIDE... Kiss Kiss Bang Bang presents Lichfield's first and only burlesque cabaret show, Fri 22 Dec, The George Hotel, Lichfield

SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS Starring Ann Nolan of Nolan Sisters fame as the evil queen, Fri 22 - Sat 30 Dec, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

A CHRISTMAS CAROL Staging of Charles Dickens' supernatural tale of redemption, Sat 23 - Sat 30 Dec, The Blue Orange Theatre, B'ham

Film

INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

WHISKY GALORE (15) Comedy/Romance. Starring James Cosmo, Eddie Izzard. Stourbridge Town Hall, Mon 18 Dec

THE LEGO NINJA MOVIE (U) Animation/Action. With the voices of Jackie Chan, Dave Franco. Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, Mon 18 - Tues 19 Dec

THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS (PG) Animation/Family. With the voices of Danny Elfman, Chris Sarandon. Electric Cinema, Birmingham, Mon 18 & Wed 20 Dec

THE PARTY (15) Comedy/Drama. Starring Kristin Scott Thomas, Timothy Spall. Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, Mon 18 & Wed 20 Dec

CALL ME BY YOUR NAME (15) Drama/Romance. Starring Armie Hammer, Timothée Chalamet. Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, Mon 18 & Thurs 21 Dec

HOME ALONE 2: LOST IN NEW YORK (PG) Animation/Family. Starring Macaulay Culkin, Tim Curry. Electric Cinema, Birmingham, Tues 19 Dec

MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS (12a) Crime/Drama. Starring Kenneth Branagh, Johnny Depp. Wern Town Hall, North Shropshire, Tues 19 & Thurs 21 Dec; Ludlow Assembly rooms, South Shropshire, Wed 27 - Fri 29 Dec

ON GOLDEN POND (U) Comedy. Starring Katharine Hepburn, Henry Fonda. The Hive, Shrewsbury, Wed 20 Dec

HOLIDAY INN (U) Comedy/Musical. Starring Bing Crosby, Fred Astaire.



Santa Boat Trips - Dudley Canal & Tunnel Trust

Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke, Tues 19 Dec

BROADWAY DANNY ROSE (PG) Drama. Starring Woody Allen, Mia Farrow. The Hive, Shrewsbury, Tues 19 Dec

BREATHE (PG) Biography/Drama. Starring Andrew Garfield, Claire Foy. Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, Tues 19 - Thurs 21 Dec

THE MAGIC FLUTE (U) Fantasy/Music. Starring Josef Köstlinger. Electric Cinema, Birmingham, Thurs 21 Dec

THE MUPPET CHRISTMAS CAROL (U) Comedy/Drama. Starring Michael Caine, The Muppets. Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke, Thurs 21 Dec

DIE HARD (15) Action/Thriller. Starring Bruce Willis, Alan Rickman. Electric Cinema, Birmingham, Fri 22 Dec

THE STAR (U) Animation/Adventure. With the voices of Steven Yeun, Kristin Chenoweth. Ludlow Assembly rooms, South Shropshire, Fri 22 - Sat 23, Wed 27 - Fri 29 Dec

PADDINGTON 2 (U) Adventure/Comedy. Starring Sally Hawkins, Brendan Gleeson. Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire, Fri 22 Dec; Electric Cinema, Birmingham, Fri 22 - Thurs 28 Dec

NEW FILMS ON GENERAL RELEASE:

Released from Wed 20 Dec, showing at selected cinemas

JUMANJI: WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE (tbc)

PITCH PERFECT 3 (tbc)

Events

THE REAL FATHER CHRISTMAS Meet Father Christmas and Mary in a traditional grotto, Mon 18 - Sat 23 Dec, Middleport Pottery, Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent

CHRISTMAS QUEST Sing a carol by the

Nativity scene, try hot chocolate by the fire and enjoy a delicious seasonal treat in the house, Tues 19 - Wed 20 Dec, Moseley Old Hall, Wolverhampton

SANTA SLEIGH EXPRESS Join the steam train at Kidderminster Station for your evening journey with Father Christmas to Highley, Tues 19 - Fri 22 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley

TINY TOTS TRAIL OF TREATS Join Mrs Claus at the fireside for milk, cookies and a festive story, Wed 20 - Thurs 21 Dec, Blists Hill, Ironbridge, Shrops

KIDS CHRISTMAS TRAIL Christmas-themed purpose-made trail, Thurs 21 Dec, Himley Hall & Park, Dudley

SANTA BOAT TRIPS Visit Santa by boat in his underground grotto, deep in the Dudley Caverns, Thurs 21 - Sat 23 Dec, Dudley Canal and Tunnel Trust, Dudley

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION WEEKEND Thurs 21 - Sat 23 Dec, Cadbury World, Birmingham

THE HOLLY AND THE IVY Historical Christmas music with the Waites of Gloucester, Fri 22 Dec, Harvington Hall, Kidderminster

BLAST OFF! 'The world's most successful club night' hosts its annual Christmas party, Sat 23 Dec, Civic Hall, Wolverhampton

CHRISTMAS CAROL TRAINS Sing along or just soak up the festive atmosphere, Sat 23 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley

SANTA STEAM SPECIALS Travel by steam train from Kidderminster to Arley, where you meet Father Christmas in his grotto, Sat 23 - Sun 24 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley

ELF ADVENTURE CHALLENGE Festive activities and action for children and adults, Sat 23 - Sun 24 Dec, Trentham Gardens, Stoke on Trent

SANTA'S GROTTO After receiving a special gift from Santa, it's off to see his reindeer, Sun 24 Dec, Dudley Zoological Gardens, Dudley



The Muppet Christmas Carol - Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke-on-Trent



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Gigs

BON GIOVI Tues 26 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

THE BON JOVI EXPERIENCE Tues 26 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

BAD MANNERS Wed 27 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

GOSPEL CENTRAL Wed 27 Dec, The Jam House, Birmingham

ROXY MAGIC Wed 27 Dec, The Roadhouse, Birmingham

THE SEX P*SSSED DOLLS Wed 27 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

RAGE CAVE Thurs 28 Dec, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

DIRTY DC Thurs 28 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

FAITH - THE GEORGE MICHAEL LEGACY Thurs 28 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

RELEASE Fri 29 Dec, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

DEFINITELY MIGHT BE Fri 29 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

SEX PISTOLS EXPERIENCE Fri 29 Dec, The Roadhouse, Birmingham

SIGNING OFF (UB40 TRIBUTE) Fri 29 Dec, The Night Owl, Birmingham

LETS HAVE A ROCK 'N' ROLL PARTY Fri 29 Dec, Genting Arena, B'ham

GENERATIONS Sat 30 Dec, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

SOUL SURVIVORS & THE AMEN CORNER Sat 30 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

SKABUCKS Sat 30 Dec, The Roadhouse, B'ham

WHITE TYGER + MOOSE JAW Sat 30 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

T.REXTASY Sun 31 Dec, The Robin, Bilston



Classical Music

LAST NIGHT OF THE CHRISTMAS PROMS Featuring the London Concert Orchestra, John Pryce-Jones (conductor), Joo Yeon Sir (violin), James Cleverton (baritone) & Samuel Sakker (tenor), Wed 27 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

MUSICALS IN CONCERT: LEADING LADIES Featuring the London Concert Orchestra, Richard Balcombe (conductor), Louise Dearman, Kerry Ellis, Linzi Hatley & Victoria Hamilton-Barritt, Thurs 28 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE LONDON CONCERT ORCHESTRA: THE BEST OF JOHN WILLIAMS Featuring Anthony Inglis (conductor), Fri 29 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

GLENN MILLER ORCHESTRA Also featuring Mark Porter and Catherine Sykes (guest vocalists), Fri 29 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE LONDON CONCERT ORCHESTRA: THE MAGIC MOMENTS OF BURT BACHARACH Featuring Richard Balcombe (conductor), Graham Bickley, Mary Carewe, Alison Jiear & Abbie Osma (special guest singers), Sat 30 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE FOUR SEASONS BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring the Mozart Festival Orchestra in full 18th Century costume, David Juritz (director/violin), Rowan Pierce (soprano) & Crispian Steele Perkins (trumpet). Programme includes works by Vivaldi, Stanley, Mozart, Handel, Bach & Clarke, Sat 30 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

NEW YEAR'S EVE GALA Featuring the London Concert Orchestra, Sky Ingram (soprano), Alexander James Edwards (tenor) & Anthony Inglis (conductor). Programme includes works by Rossini, Holst, Verdi, Sibelius, Puccini, Strauss, Brahms & Elgar, Sun 31 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Comedy

REAL DEAL COMEDY JAM XMAS SPECIAL Tues 26 Dec, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

ANDREW BIRD, STEVE SHANYASKI & COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON Thurs 28 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

COMEDY IN THE MET Fri 29 Dec, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

HARRY & CHRIS Sat 30 Dec, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

BEN NORRIS, STEPHEN BAILEY & DAN NIGHTINGALE Sun 31 Dec, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

LAUGH OUT LOUD COMEDY CLUB Sun 31

Dec, Wolverhampton Art Gallery
IAN COGNITO, MIKE NEWALL, DAVE LONGLEY & NICK PAGE Sun 31 Dec, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

DANA ALEXANDER, PAUL MCCAFFERY, MICKEY D & ANDY ROBINSON Sun 31 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

STICK MAN Scamp Theatre adaptation of Julia Donaldson & Alex Scheffler's popular children's book of the same name, Tues 26 Dec - Fri 12 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

TRES TRES CABARET CHRISTMAS An evening of cheeky decadence... Thurs 28 Dec, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

CINDERELLA DE Caversmill Theatre Company presents its version of the festive family favourite, Thurs 28 - Sat 30 Dec, Stoke Repertory Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

Events

SANTA'S WINTER WONDERLAND Explore Santa's Christmas snow trail, take a walk through the enchanted forest, enjoy a game of snowballs and hitch a ride on a sledge, until Sun 31 Dec, The Snowdome, Tamworth

DRAYTON'S MAGICAL CHRISTMAS Live shows, carols, presents plus much more until Sun 31 Dec, Drayton Manor Theme Park, Tamworth, Staffs



CHRISTMAS AT BIRMINGHAM BOTANICAL GARDENS Featuring illuminated trail, Scented Fire Garden, Tunnel of Light, Mistletoe Moment, Singing Trees & Santa & his Elves, until Mon 1 Jan, Birmingham Botanical Gardens

MAGICAL LANTERN FESTIVAL Christmas-themed event featuring artistic sculptures, until Mon 1 Jan, Kings Heath Park, Birmingham

ICE SKATE BIRMINGHAM Enjoy this winter sport in beautiful city surroundings, until Sun 7 Jan, Eastside City Park, Birmingham

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