

Staffordshire

ISSUE 397 JANUARY 2019

What's On

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

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Your 16-page week
by week listings guide

DIRTY DUSTING

The Telephone Belles clean up
at Lichfield Garrick



THE CIRCUS OF HORRORS

returns to The Potteries



STRICTLY COME DANCING LIVE!

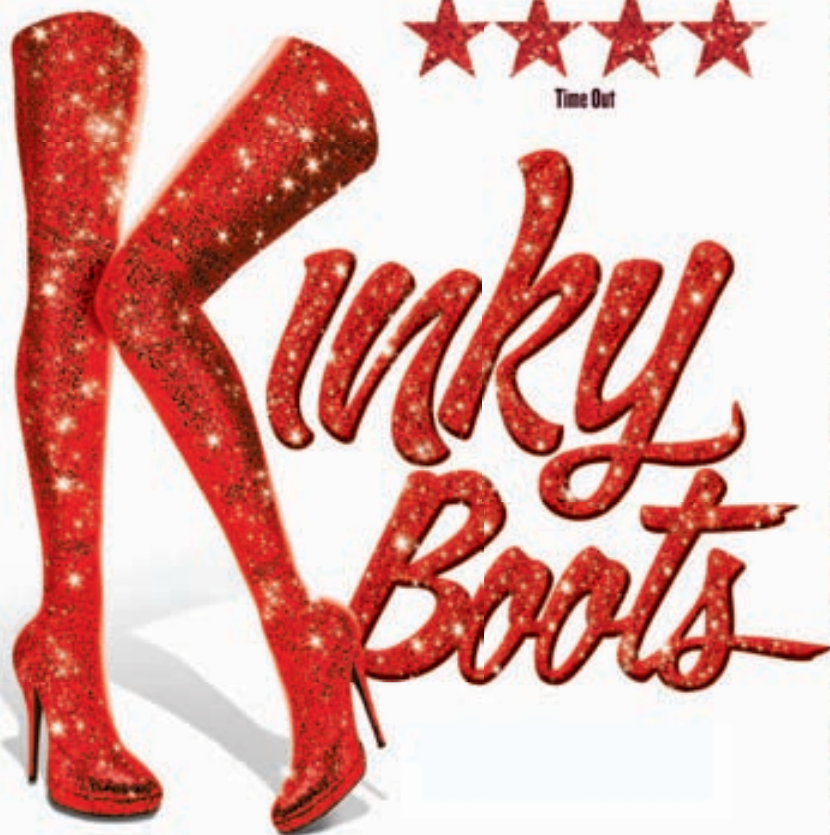
waltzes back into the Midlands



"DAZZLING, FABULOUSLY SASSY"



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A Wolverhampton stop-off for Dick and Rita...

Even as *Sleeping Beauty* continues to catch some panto-season shut-eye at the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, the venue has announced its pantomime production for next Christmas.

The Grand is celebrating its 125th anniversary in 2019 (see item at the top of the page) and will bring the year to a close with a sure-to-be-star-studded version of *Dick Whittington*. Running at the theatre from Saturday 7 December to Sunday 12 January 2020, the show is one of the highlights of a year-long programme that also sees productions of *Nativity! The Musical*, *Educating Rita*, *Cabaret* and *Hair* stopping off at the Grand.

Enginuity to host pop-up planetarium for half term

A pop-up planetarium at Ironbridge Gorge's Enginuity museum will next month provide half-term visitors with the chance to discover more about the solar system, distant stars and outer space.

Budding astronomers can also join in with an evening of sky-gazing, as well as designing and making their own space-themed model from craft materials.

Enginuity's Planets And Space events take place from Saturday 16 to Sunday 24 February. For more information about what's on at the venue, visit ironbridge.org.uk.



Lichfield Arts announces new season of shows

Productions recalling and celebrating the sounds of Ricky Nelson, Joni Mitchell and The Eagles are among the highlights of Lichfield Arts' wide-ranging programme of spring-season entertainment. The tribute shows take their place in a lineup that also includes appearances by Fair-

port Convention's Ashley Hutchings and the Midlands' very own Ricky Cool & The In-Crowd (pictured) and King Pleasure & The Biscuit Boys. For more information and to book tickets, visit lichfieldarts.org.uk.



£8.1million events space to benefit Mids economy

The National Memorial Arboretum's new £8.1million events building, Aspects, is expected to generate £21.4million across the West Midlands region over a 10-year period. The building provides up to seven separate event spaces and offers 'stunning and inspirational views across the Arboretum's landscape'.

"The opening of Aspects is another landmark moment for the Arboretum," says Sarah Oakden, the Staffordshire venue's head of marketing. "Aspects blends the latest technology incorporated in the building with access to the living memorials within the Arboretum's 150-acre grounds, providing a unique experience for event attendees."

Peaky Blinders-themed bar opens in the Black Country

A bar inspired by Birmingham-based BBC drama *Peaky Blinders* has opened in the Black Country.

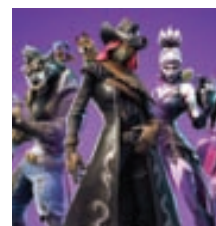
The Garrison Saloon Bar at The Waterfront, near Merry Hill, features 1920s decor and serves locally sourced real ales, gin and rum, as well as a selection of on-tap beers.

The Garrison is the brainchild of Jason Montgomery and Spida Prince, who both come from Brierley Hill. They hope to open three similar outlets in the wider Black Country region in the not-too-distant future.

Wolves' Molineux to host Fortnite tournament

A new EStars Fortnite grassroots esports tournament will take place at Wolverhampton Wanderers Football Club's Molineux stadium next month. The event is being held at the venue from 22 to 24 February and is open to anyone aged 12 and older.

Commenting on the tournament, EStars' Maeve Finnegan said: "We are delighted to bring the most popular game in the world to life across the UK and Ireland. EStars featuring Fortnite is for fans of Fortnite to play together. It promises to be an engrossing extravaganza that will provide a spectacular experience for the gamers."



Shropshire festival launches stand-up comedy course

Organisers of the Shrewsbury International Comedy Festival are running a special course for wannabe stand-up comedians who fancy learning the tricks of the trade - and then performing at the festival! The course, which will be taught by professional comedian James Cook, will be two full days in length and take place on the two weekends prior to the comedy festival, which this year runs from 18 to 21 July.

If you would like to take part in the course, contact laughtertlines@gmail.com and you'll be put on the list. There are 12 places available, which will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

Ben Elton hits the road with a new comedy tour

Blackadder and Upstart Crow writer Ben Elton is this year making a long-overdue return to the world of stand-up comedy, heading out on an autumn tour that sees him visiting various Midlands venues.

Commenting on the news, Ben said: "The last time I toured, I was still smarter than my phone. Things have definitely taken a funny turn." To find out where he's appearing in the region and to book tickets for the show, visit Ticketmaster.co.uk



Scouting For Girls to headline Shrewsbury Flower Show

English pop-rock band Scouting For Girls will be among the performers at this year's Shrewsbury Flower Show. Taking place in the town's Quarry Park on Friday 9 & Saturday 10 August, the 2019 edition of the show will be the 132nd in the event's long and distinguished history. Regular features include guest appearances by celebrity chefs and gardeners, arena acts, competitions, numerous workshops, a children's area and a host of impressive floral displays. Both days are brought to a close by a magnificent fireworks display.

Midlands kids go back in time...



A group of local children will sample a taste of fame when they appear in a new BBC TV series to be aired this month.

Back In Time For School will feature 15 teenagers from Birmingham and the surrounding area. Together with three teachers, the youngsters will be fast-forwarded through 100 years of education, in the process exploring what schools taught and the way they taught it. The programme airs on BBC Two on 3 January at 8pm.

First headliners announced for award-winning Shropshire folk festival

The first headliners for the 2019 Shrewsbury Folk Festival have been announced.

The four-day event, taking place at the West Mid Showground from 23 to 26 August, will see Kate Rusby (pictured) and Martyn Joseph topping the bill, with other acts so far confirmed to appear including Oysterband, Scottish folk rockers Skerryvore and female supergroup Daphne's Flight.

The festival features four main music stages, a dance tent, children and youth festivals, workshops, crafts, a food village and real ale, cocktail and gin bars. Weekend and day tickets are now available and can be booked at shrewsburyfolk-festival.co.uk/booktickets.



Telford gets new 'pub in the park' event

The company behind Shrewsbury's Oktoberfest is launching a brand new beer festival for people who fancy combining a drink or several with the chance to get themselves a suntan.

Taking place at Telford Town Park's Southwater on Saturday 7 & Sunday 8 June, Shropshire Festival's Pub In The Park event will feature live music, comedy, food stalls and plenty of alcohol, including a selection of quirky artisan offerings.



Do you have any Grand memories to share?

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre is asking the general public to help out with a new year-long project that aims to share 125 memories of the venue in time for its 125th anniversary on 10 December.

People are encouraged to email their memories, stories and photographs to 125@grandtheatre.co.uk, with any video submissions needing to be 45 seconds or less in length.

You can also submit memories by writing to 125 Memories Campaign, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Lichfield Street WV1 1DE, giving consent for the content to be used as part of the project.

The memories will be shared throughout the anniversary year across the Grand Theatre's Facebook, Twitter and Instagram channels. Some memories may also feature in an exhibition at the theatre.

Light Night Stoke-on-Trent event

Burslem in Staffordshire will be 'spectacularly' lit up at the end of the month, as a programme of light artworks, projections and illuminated performances take over the town centre's buildings and streets.

The event, Light Night Stoke-on-Trent, has been created by a host of local, national and international artists.

It takes place from Thursday 31 January to Saturday 2 February.

Enjoy Extraordinary Times with James

Manchester rock band James are visiting The Potteries as part of their Living In Extraordinary Times UK tour. Appearing at Stoke-on-Trent's Victoria Hall on Friday 15 March, the popular seven-piece will be 'supporting themselves' on the night, performing a special 30-minute acoustic set before presenting their main show. For more information, visit atgtickets.com

Weston Park hosts Classic Ibiza concert



A family-friendly concert is set to bring a heady blend of Balearic beats to Staffordshire's Weston Park this summer. Classic Ibiza takes place at the venue on 13 July and features chill-out and dance sets, a light & laser show and music from DJ Goldierocks and the Urban Soul Orchestra. For more information about the event, visit weston-park.com

Council unveils new city cycle scheme

Wolverhampton council has unveiled a new scheme which will allow people to hire a bike for as little as 50p at various locations throughout the city centre. The new project will see 2,000 bikes being made available 24 hours a day. Annual membership of the scheme costs £30 per year, meaning that riders can access bikes for just 8p per day. For more information, visit nextbike.co.uk/westmidlands.

New Year celebrations - Chinese style!

If you just can't get enough of new year celebrations, check out the show visiting the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre on Sunday 27 January.

Touring across the country to celebrate the biggest festive event on the Chinese calendar, Chinese New Year Extravaganza comprises a host of performing arts presentations, the highlight among which is surely a 'magnificent' 18-metre-long Dragon Dance.

Previous touring versions of the show have featured displays of contortion, lion dancing, daring stunts, energetic kung fu displays and the ancient magic of Face Changing.

To find out more, visit grandtheatre.co.uk



Jess Glynne to play Forest Live

Jess Glynne has joined the line-up of artists taking part in the 2019 edition of Forest Live, a major outdoor music series held every summer by Forestry Commission England in seven beautiful forests. Over 1.75 million people have attended a forest gig in the last 18 years, with the money raised from ticket sales being used to help look after the forests and encourage wildlife to thrive. Jess will perform in Cannock Chase Forest, Staffordshire, on Friday 5 July. For more information, visit forestryengland.uk/music



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THE SLEEPING BEAUTY
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SYMPHONY HALL



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SYMPHONY HALL



BEN HOWARD
 MON 21 JANUARY
 7:30PM
SYMPHONY HALL



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TOWN HALL



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SYMPHONY HALL



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Talking to the animals...

Midlands-born actor Mark Williams will be chatting to some splendidly exotic furred and feathered friends when he takes the title role in Leslie Bricusse's Doctor Dolittle The Musical at the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre this month. We recently caught up with Mark to find out what audiences can expect...

Do you ever wish that you could talk to the animals? Well, there's a certain gentleman stopping off in Wolverhampton late this month who can do just that.

His name is Dr John Dolittle - an English physician from the West Country village of Puddleby-on-the-Marsh and the title character in family-friendly stage show Doctor Dolittle The Musical. Created in the World War One trenches by author Hugh Lofting - appearing in the serviceman's illustrated letters home to his children - Doctor Dolittle is this month being brought to life on the Grand Theatre stage by Bromsgrove-born actor Mark Williams, making his musical theatre debut.

Best known of late as television's Father Brown, Mark's CV also features 1980s sketch phenomenon The Fast Show, the 1996 film version of 101 Dalmatians, and the hugely popular Harry Potter series of movies, in which he played the character of Mr Weasley.

Promising song, dance, 'stunning' puppetry and fun for all the family, the current tour of Leslie Bricusse's Doctor Dolittle is celebrating the 50th anniversary of the much-loved film version starring Rex Harrison.

"I've always wanted to do a musical, but the timing has never worked out," explains Mark, who has previously been offered the role of Miss Trunchbull in Matilda. "I nearly did My Fair Lady recently. I got so close to it, but there were problems with American Equity and it fell through. So when Doctor Dolittle came along, I said yes, definitely yes!"

Alongside his desire to do a musical and the fact that it's a milestone tour, another attrac-

tion of the show for Mark was its use of puppets: "Using puppets that can dance, sing and move in a completely different way adds a whole other layer that fascinates me. In the film, it was real animals, and then on stage it was animatronics - but this time around, it's completely different.

"It also seemed like the right time to do the show again. With all due respect to other productions, I don't think Doctor Dolittle has been done justice to, and I think it's the right time to talk about taking care of animals.

"Leslie Bricusse was really interested in looking again at a new adaptation, and we now have the chance to interact in a much more dramatic way. And that superhero skill of talking to the animals really interested me because it opens up a whole other universe."

For those not familiar with the show, it recounts the story of Doctor Dolittle's journey to find the Giant Pink Sea Snail, a magical creature that holds the secret of life and how to make the world a happier place. The good doctor is accompanied on his quest by a menagerie of exotic animals, including the Pushmi-Pullyu and his trusty sidekick, Polynesia the Parrot.

"There are lots of things in the show that kids especially will find hilarious," says Mark. "After all, what's not funny about a naughty monkey? And the great thing is that it's all *live!* For kids, going to the theatre for the first time is like having only watched football on the telly and then going to a match. It happens right there in front of you. This is the real deal - and with all the puppetry, it will be really exciting."

The prospect of touring is also something that appeals to Mark. "I was touring way back and have toured all my life, so it's normal for me. Besides, it makes home all the sweeter."

Joining Mark on tour is Vicky Entwistle, familiar to soap fans as Coronation Street's loud and lairy Janice Battersby. Donning feathers and a beak to play Polly the Parrot, who teaches Doctor Dolittle the language of the animal kingdom, Vicky is no stranger to musical theatre, having played Madame Thénardier in the West End production of Les Misérables.

"Polly is very old, very wise and extremely funny," she explains. "She's also quite cheeky and is the only animal that can speak human and all the animal languages. Doctor Dolittle is taken aback when he first realises. He thinks *he's* the clever one, but really Polly is always giving him clues and leading him in the right direction."

Vicky is delighted to be playing Polly, and any initial fears about taking on the role were quickly allayed by the fact that she would be in the company of two old friends: "I worked with Mark on Father Brown, and with Brian Capron (who plays the vivacious Albert Blossom and the mighty Straight Arrow) on Coronation Street, so that's really helped. I have my two pals to keep me company."

.....
Doctor Dolittle The Musical shows at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Tuesday 29 January to Saturday 9 February



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REVIEW: The Coach House

Solo star Harry cooks up a sensational experience at 18th century Shropshire inn

Nestled in the Upper Only Valley between the Stiperstones ridge and the Long Mynd - an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty that's hugely popular with walkers, cyclists, mountain-bikers and photographers - The Coach House has been providing travellers with hospitality, warmth and comfort since the early 1700s.

The unique country inn features seven bed & breakfast rooms and an AA rosette restaurant serving modern British food. Full of character and boasting numerous period features, its decor is modern rustic.

The restaurant is open from Wednesday to Saturday and serves full a la carte and bar menus, with a lunch menu available on Fridays and Saturdays between noon and 2.30pm. My partner and I were lucky enough to be choosing from the Christmas menu on the evening we visited.

The kitchen is run singlehandedly by young chef Harry Bullock, who started working in the

Michelin-starred La Becasse at just 12 years of age. He then went on to The Pound and Ludlow's award-winning Fishmore Hall, where he was running a section before he'd even left school.

My partner and I started our debut Coach House experience with an appetiser of parsnip crisps and homemade cumin houmous. I'm not usually wowed by houmous, but this particular example was absolutely outstanding. Creamy, smooth and flavoursome, it was easily the tastiest I'd ever experienced.

Next up, an amuse bouche of game terrine with golden raisins and pickled carrot. Intricate in its presentation and bursting with complementary festive flavours, it was another delicious dish. Things were certainly off to an excellent start.

We were conveniently sat near one of the restaurant's two wood burning stoves. A combination of that, the low lighting and the rustic surroundings helped to create the perfect Christmas atmosphere.

Choosing from a menu of three starters, three mains and four desserts, I began with the Irish scallop cerviche. Served in its shell and comprising delicately cut pieces of orange accompanied by scallop, fennel and a dill dressing, the dish was light and fresh, bursting with colour and boasting some truly magnificent flavour combinations.

My partner's choice was equally good - cider-glazed pig cheek atop a wholegrain mustard pomme puree and a rich apple & pork sauce. It was the perfect dish with which to whet our appetite for the courses to follow.

The Coach House uses seasonal ingredients, focusing where possible on local artisanal products. Everything is homemade - even the irresistible sourdough, of which we had two portions.

I chose the local venison for my main dish; my partner, the thyme gnocchi. Beautifully presented, my dish featured pieces of soft and perfectly cooked venison and salsify fondant atop circles of parsnip puree and venison sauce, finished with cavolo nero and hazelnut pieces. It was wonderful. Harry the chef is a formidable talent. His culinary flair, technical excellence and immense passion for his trade really does come across in the beautiful plates of food he produces. And the fact that he's doing it all on his own is seriously impressive!

Similar in its presentation, the gnocchi, as with the houmous, was by far the nicest I'd ever tasted. Roasted in butter, both the flavour and texture were outstanding. It was served alongside textures of Jerusalem artichoke and winter purple sprouting broccoli.

For dessert, we opted for the Christmas pudding and the Paris Brest - a traditional French dish made of choux pastry and a caramelised almond-flavoured cream. The decadent pastry -

similar to a giant profiterole - was topped with 33% chocolate ganache. Yet another fantastic dish, both in its presentation and its flavour.

It's tricky to choose a favourite dish because everything was so good, but I think Harry's take on a Christmas pudding just about stole the show on the evening we visited. Imaginative and creative, this certainly wasn't your traditional Christmas pudding. Encased in a chocolate-topped spiced tuille was Christmas pudding ice cream and parfait. The cylinder of creamy heaven was sat on a quenelle of chocolate ganache and served with Hine ice cream. Simply divine.

"Can I tempt you with some petits fours?" our exemplary waiter asked. Due to the fact that we'd practically licked every plate spotless, I think he already knew what our answer was going to be. The incredibly tasty homemade milk chocolate fudge and hazelnut and chocolate macaroons provided the perfect end to a memorable evening.

Dining at The Coach House is a truly stunning experience. From the beautiful flavours and impeccable presentation of the food, to the kind and welcoming service and warm, unpretentious atmosphere, it's well worth the drive out into the sticks. It was definitely one of my restaurant highlights of 2018.

Please note: The Coach House is closed throughout January but will open again next month.

Lauren Foster

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

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MON 18 – SAT 23 FEB

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TWIRLYWOOS LIVE

TUE 26 FEB

REGENT THEATRE

SOMEONE LIKE YOU – THE ADELE SONGBOOK

SAT 12 JAN **VH**

CIRCUS OF HORRORS

THU 17 JAN **VH**

WOS WRESTLING

FRI 25 JAN **VH**

THE SIMON & GARFUNKEL STORY

SAT 26 JAN **VH**

THE ROLLING STONES STORY

SAT 16 FEB **VH**

CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REIMAGINED

MON 18 FEB **VH**

YAMATO DRUMMERS

WED 20 FEB **VH**

AN EVENING WITH THE HAIRY BIKERS

FRI 22 FEB **VH**



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The 1975

Arena Birmingham, Wed 23 January

Fronted by lead vocalist and rhythm guitarist Matthew Healy, pop rock band The 1975 achieved chart-topping success with both their self-titled debut album and their follow-up offering, *I Like It When You Sleep, For You Are So Beautiful Yet So Unaware Of It*. Following a stint in rehab for heroin addiction, Healy has rejoined the band for this short tour in support of their third album, *A Brief Inquiry Into Online Relationships*.



Martin Barre Band

The Robin, Bilston, Wed 23 January

Martin Barre has been the guitarist of Jethro Tull for 40-plus years, during which time the band have racked up more than 60 million album sales. The Birmingham-born 72-year-old's phenomenal guitar playing has been a major factor in their stellar success. Alongside his work with Tull, Martin has also performed with A-list artists including Paul McCartney and Phil Collins, and shared a stage with the likes of Jimi Hendrix, Fleetwood Mac, Pink Floyd and Led Zeppelin... He visits Bilston, alongside his handcrafted band, to play classic music from the Jethro Tull catalogue.



Bastille

O2 Academy, Birmingham, Tues 29 & Wed 30 January

To say indie-pop four-piece Bastille have had a whirlwind few years would be an understatement. Their debut album, *Bad Blood*, was twice number one, certified double-platinum and named the biggest-selling digital album of 2013. The band have since

won British Breakthrough Act at the 2014 BRIT Awards and scored a second number one with their follow-up album, *Wild World*, in 2016.

Ahead of the release of their hugely anticipated third album, they're heading out on an intimate headline tour to give fans an exclusive first listen to some of their new music.

Ben Howard

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Mon 21 January

Ben Howard's music has been described as 'a blissful blend of electronics, psychedelic pop, subtle strings and dreamily delivered lyrics'.

With all that going for him, it's hardly surprising he's basking in the glory of album success, following up the chart-topping *I Forget Where We Were* with the highly acclaimed *Noonday Dream*, released last year. All profits from Ben's Birmingham show will be donated to the Koestler Trust - a charity which helps ex-offenders, secure patients and detainees in the UK to express themselves creatively.

Cancer Bats

The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent, Tues 29 January

Cancer Bats take elements from numerous heavy metal subgenres and fuse them together into hardcore and punk rock. The Canadian four-piece have released six studio albums since forming in 2004, and visit Stoke in support of their latest offering, *The Spark That Moves*.

Martyn Joseph

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Thurs 24 January

"Really what I do is to try and write songs that might step up and make some sense of a moment in time," explains modern folk artist Martyn Joseph. "A good song makes you feel like you're not alone in the world." Often compared to the likes of Bruce Springsteen, John Mayer, Bruce Cockburn and Dave Matthews, Martyn is a unique performer who's driven by passion, social awareness and an abiding love for his trade. He visits Shrewsbury in support of his 33rd album, *Here Come The Young*, produced by Gerry Diver.





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Halle Viennese Concert

Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 4 January

One of the UK's top symphonic ensembles, the Manchester-based Halle is admired around the world for its extensive orchestral repertoire.

This Victoria Hall concert sees Jamie Phillips taking the helm for a New Year celebration of Vienna. Austria's capital city attracted many great classical composers during the 19th century and was home to the famous Strauss family, whose works make up the concert's programme. Soprano Joanne Lunn (pictured) also contributes to what will surely be an evening of exceptional musicmaking.

Innovation Ensemble

The Lion Hotel, Shrewsbury, Sun 20 January

Innovation Ensemble comprises five highly respected chamber musicians drawn from the circle of colleagues and friends of the late Peter Cropper. Repeatedly hailed for his creativity and fearlessness, and often lauded for an undoubted streak of genius, violinist Peter was the leader of the Lindsay Quartet for almost four decades. He died suddenly in late May 2014 at the age of 69. Among the musicians performing this latest concert is his son, Martin.

The programme features works by Mozart, Brahms and Vaughan Williams.

Richard Jenkins (pictured) features on cello.



CBSO: Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Wed 16 & Sat 19 January

Benjamin Beilman first picked up the violin at the tender age of five. Although his talent was much in evidence in the years that followed, it always seemed there were children whose violin playing was just that little bit more advanced. Not that Benjamin was complaining - the prominence of other young violinists allowed him to develop his craft from a position a little under the radar. He may have blossomed at a later age, but blossom he most certainly did, and is now considered one of the finest musicians of his generation. Benjamin's Birmingham performance of Mendelssohn's violin concerto is sandwiched between two works by Dvorak - his life-enhancing eighth symphony and his playful Wind Serenade. Andrew Gourlay conducts.



New Year Viennese Strauss Gala

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sun 20 January

The 33-piece British Philharmonic Concert Orchestra kickstart 2019 in style with a show that recalls the glories of Johann Strauss, Franz Lehar and Viennese operetta.

Featured works include Strauss' By The Beautiful Blue Danube, The Thunder And Lightning Polka and his masterful Die Fledermaus. Highlights from Lehar's Merry Widow also feature, along with a wealth of operetta favourites from, among other works, The Student Prince, The New Moon, The Gypsy Baron and The White Horse Inn.

Rafał Blechacz In Recital

Birmingham Town Hall, Wed 23 January

By the time the 20-year-old Rafał Blechacz entered the Frederic Chopin International Piano Competition in 2005, he'd been playing piano for 15 years and had bagged a few awards. The Chopin competition, however, saw him reach a new level of excellence, becoming the only musician ever to win all five first prizes. Indeed, one of the judges said that Blechacz had 'so outclassed the remaining finalists' that no second prize could actually be awarded. Having made his Birmingham debut in 2017, Rafał returns to the city this month with a programme featuring Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann and 'a very personal interpretation' of Chopin's Mazurkas.





JODIE PRENGER

talks about the challenge of playing
Beverly in Mike Leigh's *Abigail's Party*

No stranger to playing iconic contemporary roles, Jodie Prenger this month returns to the Midlands to star as big and blousy Beverly in *Abigail's Party*, Mike Leigh's voyeuristic look at suburban life in 1970s Britain. We caught up with Jodie to find out how she plans to tackle the role made famous by Alison Steadman...

Will this new staging of *Abigail's Party* be true to Mike Leigh's original, or will it have a contemporary slant?

It'll be very true to Mike's vision, and in fact he's very, very much on board with this production. I'm a huge fan of his, and of Sarah Esdaile, the producer, who's just fantastic. Her vision for the play is to keep it true. Moving away from that could result in losing some of the little gems that are in this piece. Keeping it in that era makes it jump off the page, it really does. Why change it when it's so perfect - the text is rich, the era's rich, the dynamics are there. It's just fantastic, and I don't believe there's any way to take it other than to keep it true to its actual form.

What does *Abigail's Party* tell us about Britain in the mid-1970s?

It was a very aspirational, materialistic time; a time when many questioned their role in society. It was all about what you knew, how you knew it, what you did, how you looked. It was very pre-Thatcher and all about the economic climb - this is what we've made ourselves. All of that I find really fascinating.

You were born in the late '70s, so how much of the play can you relate to?

As a child coming out of the '70s, the music and the materialistic things I was surrounded by are vividly clear, and being part of this brings back so many memories. My nan and my grandad had just moved from Manchester. Both they and my mum & dad had hotels and did really well for themselves. It was a time of new money and all of the things that Beverly surrounds herself with - the marble table, the marble lighter. I'm like, Oh gosh, my nan had one of them! For me, it's something I can totally connect with, and I totally understand why Beverly wants these things. They are the showpieces of her life. The great thing about Mike Leigh's work is that there are always characters who you can relate to, whether it's yourself or someone you know. After all, there's a social climber in everyone - sad but true. Some scenes are

awkward to watch because they're so true. Mike's writing manages to bring to the forefront the darkest parts of people's souls.

Is the play relevant to a modern audience?

It's still very relevant, as it brings to the forefront the dynamics of relationships: the manipulation in couples and the masks that people put on when you first meet them; the wanting to have a good time, and when it doesn't work out, the unravelling of relationships. We've all gone to parties and put on a face when really we just can't be arsed. The play has a realness that hasn't changed and won't change. It's something that will go on for centuries. If it was set today, you'd have that whole social media thing to contend with. If Beverly had an Instagram account, she'd be there taking pictures of the cheese and pineapple and putting about 10 filters on it. She'd be making out her life was perfect when in reality it was full of cracks.

You're playing an iconic role made famous by Alison Steadman. How have you approached playing the part?

Alison created Beverly, because it was all done from improvisation. There are elements that you can't differ that much from because it's set in script. Every single one of the characters are so different, and of course there's going to be a bit of yourself that you bring into the role. I just hope that I do her proud because I really love her. Even when I played Shirley Valentine, it was a role personified by Alison. I don't mind following her around. I'm having a lovely time. I did actually meet her at the press night of *Fat Friends The Musical*, and I was very nervous because she's such an icon.

So what's your starting point when preparing to play Beverly?

There's quite a lot of history research that I've done. I've gone into House of Fraser and watched people working behind the counter. I've talked to quite a few of my friends who are stay-at-home 'ladies of the manor', as I

like to call them. I've also done a lot of research into the era, the dynamics of the family and the area where she came from. All of that has been really interesting to do. And Sarah has given us a whole backlog of research homework to do, which I love her for because it's made both the characters and the text a lot richer.

When you step back out of character, do you ever feel envious of Beverly?

I'm actually quite scared by how much of Beverly is in me. I haven't admitted that to the director yet, but I do recognise that we have huge amounts in common.

What would you say is the greatest strength of Mike Leigh's writing, both in general and in *Abigail's Party*?

I think it's the sense of truth. It's the uneasiness he creates because it's so raw, and that's what it is with *Abigail's Party*. It resonates. It's the gritty action scenes of life behind closed doors that you can present to the nation.

You've said the play is true to the original, so will we have the pleasure of Demis Roussos?

The music is great and very nostalgic for me. It's a great soundtrack, much of which I already have on my Spotify.

Beverly is on your bucket list of roles to play. If you could play any other Mike Leigh character, who would you choose?

Vera Drake. Age-wise, it's a bit of a way off, but that's what I'd lean towards. Then again, if Mike saw me at six o'clock in the morning, he'd probably have me in for an audition!

.....

***Abigail's Party* shows at The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, from Mon 21 to Sat 26 January and then at the Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, from Mon 18 to Sat 23 February.**



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WORCESTER Swan	07 Feb	worcesterlive.co.uk	
TELFORD Oakengates Theatre @ The Limes	12 Feb	theplacetelford.com	
WOLVERHAMPTON Grand	15 Feb	grandtheatre.co.uk	†
CREWE Lyceum	19 Feb	crewe.lyceum.co.uk	

† = tickets also available to purchase from ticketmaster.co.uk

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Festivals



When it comes to music, regardless of your preference - be it jazz, indie, folk, classical, world or pop - you're almost certain to find a festival in the Midlands to suit your taste. And 2019 looks set to be another bumper year for the region's festival-goers. Get your diary out and get booking!...

APRIL

NANTWICH JAZZ, BLUES & MUSIC FESTIVAL Line-up includes Martin Turner, Bernie Marsden and Big Wolf Band. Thurs 18 - Mon 22 April, various venues in Nantwich. More information at nantwichjazz.com

DUBS IN WONDERLAND Line-up includes The SKA 45's, Rattlesnake Jake and Marquis Drive. Fri 19 - Mon 22 April, Himley Hall, Dudley. More information at dubscollective.com

MAY

CHELTENHAM JAZZ FESTIVAL Line-up includes Gregory Porter, Sergio Mendes and Joshua Redman. Wed 1 - Mon 6 May, Montpellier Gardens, Cheltenham. More information at cheltenhamfestivals.com/jazz

UPTON UPON SEVERN FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up includes Melrose Quartet, Alice Jones and The Pigeon Swing. Fri 3 - Mon 6 May, various venues, Upton upon Severn, Worcestershire. More information at uptonfolk.org

LEAMINGTON MUSIC FESTIVAL Line-up includes Tasmin Little, Ensemble 360 and Raphael Wallfisch. Fri 3 - Fri 10 May, Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington Spa. More information at leamingtonmusic.org

HANDMADE FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Sat 4 - Sun 5 May, O2 Academy, Leicester. More information at handmadefestival.co.uk

FORBIDDEN FOREST Line-up to be announced. Sun 5 May, Wymeswold Aerodrome, Leicestershire. More information at forbidden-forest.co.uk

SWINGAMAJIG Line-up to be announced. Sun 5 May, Venue to be announced, Birmingham. More information at swingamajig.co.uk

FOCUS WALES Line-up includes Boy Azooga, The Lovely Eggs and BC Camplight. Thurs 16 - Sat 18 May, various venues in Wrexham, Wales. More information at focuswales.com

BEARDED THEORY Line-up includes Suede, The Wildhearts and Reef. Thurs 23 - Sun 26 May, Catton Hall, South Derbyshire. More information at beardedtheory.co.uk

BREAKING BANDS Line-up includes Falling Red, Witch Tripper and Trucker Diablo. Thurs 23 - Mon 27 May, Stoke Prior Sports & Country Club, Bromsgrove. More information at breakingbandsfestival.com

MELLO Line-up includes Incognito, Brand New Heavies, The Wonder Stuff, and Stereo MC's. Fri 24 - Sun 26 May, Seven End Country Estate, Hanley Castle, Worcestershire. More information at mellofestival.co.uk

LECHLADE MUSIC FESTIVAL Line-up includes The Feeling, The Marley Experience and That 80s Rock Show. Fri 24 -

Sun 26 May, Riverside Park, Lechlade, Gloucestershire. More information at lechladefestival.co.uk

GLASTONBUDGET Line-up to be announced. Fri 24 - Sun 26 May, Turnpost Farm, Leicestershire. More information at glastonbudget.org

STAFFS FEST Line-up to be announced. Fri 24 - Sun 26 May, Lower Drayton Farm, Penkridge, Staffs. More information at staffsfest.co.uk

HOWTHELIGHTGETSIN The world's largest philosophy and music festival. Line-up to be announced. Fri 24 - Mon 27 May, Hay on Wye, Hereford. More information at howthelightgetsin.org

CHESTER FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up includes Blackbeard's Tea Party, The Askew Sisters and Belshazzar's Feast. Fri 24 - Mon 27 May, Kelsall Village. More information at chesterfolk.org.uk

NEIGHBOURHOOD WEEKENDER Line-up includes George Ezra, Richard Ashcroft and Primal Scream. Sat 25 - Sun 26 May, Victoria Park, Warrington. More information at nbhdweekender.com

BIRMINGHAM PRIDE Line-up to be announced. Sat 25 - Sun 26 May, Birmingham Gay Village. More information at birminghampride.com

ROCK AND BOWL Line-up to be announced. Sat 25 - Mon 27 May, Picnic Area, Market Drayton. More information at rockandbowlfestival.com

DOT TO DOT FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Sun 26 May, various venues

in Nottingham. More information at dottodotfestival.co.uk

LICHFIELD BLUES AND JAZZ FESTIVAL Line-up includes Soft Machine and Remi Harris. Thurs 30 May - Sun 2 June, various venues around Lichfield. More information at lichfield-jazz.co.uk

WIRRAL FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up includes Chris While & Julie Matthews, The Wilsons and Tom McConville Band. Thurs 30 May - Sun 2 June, The Whitby Club, Ellesmere Port. More information at wirralfolkonthecoast.com

THE ACOUSTIC FESTIVAL OF BRITAIN Line-up includes Big Country, Eagle Eye Cherry, and Ian Prowse & Amsterdam. Fri 31 May - Sun 2 June, Uttoxeter Racecourse. More information at acousticfestival.co.uk

WYCHWOOD MUSIC FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Fri 31 May - Sun 2 June, Cheltenham Racecourse. More information at wychwoodfestival.com

JUNE

GATE TO SOUTHWELL FOLK Line-up includes Skipinnish, Sam Kelly & The Lost Boys and Blue Rose Code. Thurs 6 - Sun 9 June, Southwell Racecourse, Nottinghamshire. More information at southwellfolkfestival.org.uk

DOWNLOAD FESTIVAL Line-up includes Def Leppard, Slipknot and Tool. Fri 14 - Sun 16 June, Donington Park, Derby. More information at

downloadfestival.co.uk

FOXTON LOCKS FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Sat 15 - Sun 16 June, Foxton Locks, Leicestershire. More information at foxtonlocksfestival.co.uk

SOUNDSCAPE Line-up includes David Guetta, Anne Marie and Years & Years. Sat 15 - Sun 16 June, Ricoh Arena, Coventry. More information at soundscapeweekender.co.uk

NOCTURNE LIVE AT BLENHEIM PALACE Line-up includes Tears For Fears, Kylie and Sophie Ellis-Bextor. Thurs 20 - Sun 23 June, Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire. More information at nocturnelive.com

SONIC ROCK SOLSTICE 2019 Line-up includes Hawklords and Oresund Space Collective. Thurs 20 - Sun 24 June, Stoke Prior Sports and Country Club, Worcester. More information at sonicrocksolstice.com

BEARDY FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up includes 3 Daft Monkeys, Martyn Joseph and Urban Folk Quartet. Fri 21 - Sun 23 June, Hopton Court, Cleobury Mortimer, Shropshire. More information at beardyfolkfestival.co.uk

UPTON JAZZ FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Thurs 27 - Sun 30 June, Various venues in Upton-upon-Severn, Worcestershire. More information at uptonjazz.co.uk

JULY

NAPTON MUSIC FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Fri 5 - Sat 6 July, Village Centre, Napton On The Hill, Warwickshire. More information at naptonfestival.co.uk

CAMPERJAM Line-up to be announced. Fri 5 - Sun 7 July, Weston Park, Shropshire. More information at camperjam.com

ALSO FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Fri 5 - Sun 7 July, Park Farm, Warwickshire. More information and tickets at also-festival.com

TIMBER FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Fri 5 - Sun 7 July, Feanedock, The National Forest. More information and tickets at timberfestival.org.uk

THE ROCK AND BIKE FEST Line-up includes The Quireboys, ACDC UK and Dr. Feelgood. Thurs 11 - Sat 13 July, Carnfield Hall, Derbyshire. More information at rockandbikefest.co.uk

2000TREES FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Thurs 11 - Sat 13 July, Upcote Farm, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire. More information at

twohousandtreesfestival.co.uk

BROMSGROVE FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up includes Richard Digance, Churchfitters and The Bad Pennies. Thurs 11 - Sun 14 July, various venues across Bromsgrove. More information at bromsgrovefolkclub.co.uk

NOISILY FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Thurs 11 - Mon 15 July, Coney Woods at Noseley Hall, Leicestershire. More information and tickets at noisilyfestival.com

THE MOSTLY JAZZ FUNK AND SOUL FESTIVAL Line-up includes Burt Bacharach. Fri 12 - Sun 14 July, Moseley Park, Birmingham. More information at mostlyjazz.co.uk

LICHFIELD ARTS PRESENTS FUSE Line-up to be announced. Fri 12 - Sun 14 July, Beacon Park, Lichfield, Staffordshire. More information at fuselichfield.org.uk

LET'S ROCK SHREWSBURY Line-up includes The Human League, Sister Sledge and Belinda Carlisle. Sat 13 July, The Quarry, Shrewsbury. More information at letsrockshrewsbury.com

NOZSTOCK Line-up to be announced. Thurs 18 - Sun 21 July, Rowden Paddocks, Bromyard, Herefordshire. More information at nozstock.com

UPTON BLUES FESTIVAL Line-up includes Dave Ferra Allstars, Dino Baptiste & Night Train and The Achievers. Thurs 18 - Sun 21 July, various venues around Upton upon Severn, Worcestershire. More information at uptonbluesfestival.com

SUPERSONIC FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Fri 19 - Sun 21 July, various venues around Birmingham, Solihull and Sandwell. More information at super-sonicfestival.com

THE BIRMINGHAM, SOLIHULL & SANDWELL JAZZ FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Fri 19 - Sun 28 July, The Crossing + Boxxed + Wilde Building in Floodgate Street, Birmingham. More information at birminghamjazzfestival.com

WARWICK FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Thurs 25 - Sun 28 July, Warwick School and Warwick Town Centre. More information at warwickfolkfestival.co.uk

DEERSTOCK Line-up to be announced. Fri 26 - Sun 28 July, Newton Cross Country Course, Nottinghamshire. More information at deerstock.co.uk

BAREFOOT FESTIVAL Line-up includes The Social Ignition, Moscow Drug Club and Strizzy Strauss. Fri 26 - Sun 28 July,

Prestwold Hall, Leicestershire. More information at barefootfestival.com

CARFEST NORTH Line-up includes Clean Bandit, The Jacksons and All Saints. Fri 26 - Sun 28 July, Bolesworth Castle, Chester. More information at carfest.org

INDIE TRACKS Line-up to be announced. Fri 26 - Sun 28 July, Butterley Station, Derbyshire. More information at indietracks.co.uk

MADE BIRMINGHAM Line-up to be announced. Sat 27 July, Perry Park, Birmingham. More information at madebirmingham.com

AUGUST

110 ABOVE FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Fri 2 - Sun 4 Aug, Gopsall Hall Farm, Leicestershire. More information at 110above.com

BOARDMASTERS Line-up to be announced. Wed 7 - Sun 11 Aug, Watergate Bay, Newquay, Cornwall. More information at boardmasters.com

BLOODSTOCK OPEN AIR Line-up includes Sabaton, Code Orange and Scorpions. Thurs 8 - Sun 11 Aug, Catton Hall, Derbyshire. More information at bloodstock.uk.com

LAKEFEST Line-up includes Happy Mondays, Bluetones and Red Hot Chili Pipers. Thurs 8 - Sun 11 Aug, Eastnor Castle, Herefordshire. More information at lakefest.co.uk

ROCK THE PARK WREXHAM 2019 Line-up includes Basshunter, Metallica Reloaded and Just Floyd. Fri 9 - Sun 11 Aug, Borrass Hall Lane, Wrexham. More information at rockthepark.co.uk

FARMER PHIL'S FESTIVAL The first act confirmed are Lindisfarne. Fri 9 - Sun 11 Aug, near Gatten Farm, Shropshire. More information at farmerphilsfestival.com

THE MOIRA FURNACE FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up includes Blackbeard's Tea Party, Anthony John Clarke Band and ALAW. Fri 16 - Sun 18 Aug, Moira Furnace Museum and Monument Site, Derbyshire. More information at moirafurnacefolkfestival.co.uk

OLD BUSH BLUES FESTIVAL Line-up includes Northsyde, The Achievers and Will Wilde. Fri 16 - Sun 18 Aug, The Old Bush, Callow End Worcester. More information at oldbushblues.co.uk

THE JUST SO FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Fri 16 - Sun 18 Aug, Rode Hall Parkland, Cheshire. More infor-

mation at justsofestival.org.uk

SHAMBALA Line-up to be announced. Thurs 22 - Sun 25 Aug. A secret location in Northampton. More information at shambalafestival.org

CREAMFIELDS Line-up to be announced. Thurs 22 - Sun 25 Aug, Daresbury, Halton, Cheshire. More information at creamfields.com

BEERMAGEDDON FESTIVAL Line-up includes Face Up!, The Face Of Ruin and Frozen In Shadows. Fri 23 - Sun 25 Aug, Stoke Prior Sports & Country Club, Bromsgrove, Worcester. More information at beermageddon.co.uk

SUNSHINE FESTIVAL Line-up includes 10CC, Peter Andre and The Osmonds. Fri 23 - Sun 25 Aug, Fish Meadow, Upton upon Severn, Worcestershire. More information at uptonfestival.co.uk

CAMPER CALLING Line-up includes Scouting For Girls, Melanie C, Feeder & The Coral. Fri 23 - Sun 25 Aug, Ragley Hall, Warwickshire. More information at campercalling.com

THE BIG FEASTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Fri 23 - Sun 25 Aug, Kingham, Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire. More information at thebigfeastival.co.uk

SHREWSBURY FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up includes Kate Rusby, Martyn Joseph, Skerryvore, Grace Petrie & the Phil Beer Band. Fri 23 - Mon 26 Aug, Greenhouse West Mid Showground, Shrewsbury. More information at shrewsburyfolkfestival.co.uk

OFF THE TRACKS Line-up to be announced. Fri 30 Aug - Sun 1 Sept, Donington Park Farmhouse, Derbyshire. More information at offthetracks.co.uk

MOSELEY FOLK FESTIVAL Don McLean announced as Sunday headliner. Fri 30 Aug - Sun 1 Sept, Moseley Park, Birmingham. More information at moseleyfolk.co.uk

SEPTEMBER

BROMYARD FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Thurs 5 - Sun 8 Sept, Bromyard, Herefordshire. More information at bromyardfolkfestival.co.uk

OCTOBER

LICHFIELD FESTIVAL OF FOLK Line-up includes Home Service and John Tams. Fri 18 - Sun 20 Oct, venues around Lichfield, Staffordshire. More information at lichfieldarts.org.uk



STEPHEN K AMOS

A combination of quality material and an effortless ability to strike all the right notes with his audience has made Stephen K Amos one of the UK's best-loved comedians. His current success is a far cry from his early years in the business, when opportunities for black comics were few and far between and Stephen would joke that his only chance of working on TV would be if Lenny Henry died. What's On caught up with the London-born comedian ahead of his late-month appearance in Coventry...

There's good reason why Stephen K Amos is considered a seriously feelgood comedian. His years of touring the nation with crowd-pleasing shows have seen him build up a loyal fanbase who know that he'll provide them with an evening of non-stop laughter.

With his new show, Bouquets And Brickbats, Stephen is promising the usual quota of gags and funny stories, but on this occasion he's also being contemplative about the universe.

"I picked that title because the last 18 months have been awful, both personally and for the world at large. Some things are so joyful on one hand, and on the other, so devastating. So I was trying to find a way of saying that some days are rosy and other days are downright shitty."

Across 2017 and '18, Stephen has lost both his mother and his twin sister, and working through this sadness has given his comedy a different perspective. "I never thought I could do something like this, as my whole thing has been to keep them laughing and not to hold the silence. But I've now found out that it's more powerful to hold the silence. That whole thing about losing people and death is a bit in the show where there's a silence in the room and you can hear a penny drop. For me, that's a bit weird."

Not only is Stephen a highly popular stand-up, he's also a potent social commentator, a fact he's proved across the years with touring shows like The Spokesman and World Famous, his award-winning Channel Four documentary Batty Man, and radio programmes such as What Does The K Stand For? You can rest assured that he will be looking to tap into the issues of the day during this latest tour, albeit in his own distinctive style. "I don't want people to sigh when I mention the likes of Trump and

Brexit, but I try to tackle them by using another example of something just as ridiculous. But I don't mention any names and will try to do it in a subtle way. At the beginning of a tour, I start off with a script, but it changes depending on world events and my own mood. Things are constantly happening."

One thing that Stephen most certainly won't be doing is shouting down the opinions of anyone in his audience. He knows full well that there will be people coming to his shows from both sides of the EU referendum debate, and he's more than willing to hear their viewpoints. Not all current comedians are of the same mindset, though.

"I was doing a late-night show in Edinburgh with a mixed line-up, and a very well-respected comic slammed down a woman who admitted that she'd voted for Brexit. I thought that wasn't very fair because people are entitled to their own opinions - and instead of tackling this in a creative way, he'd just slagged her off and probably made sure that she'd never admit to anything like that again in any situation. I think we should be able to sit down and discuss things in an adult way. When it descends into abuse, you've lost the argument."

In this fractured world, how does Stephen stay positive? "I get my positivity from human beings. Something good happens on a daily basis: a text from someone, a stranger doing something nice for you on the street, or someone just saying something positive. We all have a story to tell; you might see a façade, but you never know what's going on inside a person. Sometimes people have come up to me after this show with tears in their eyes or wearing a badge for breast cancer or something, and it's about being touched by other people's stories. I haven't

really had time to stop, take stock and think. It's all about going out there and listening to people's laughter or their reactions to what I'm saying. At one show, one lad felt confident about being out and proud at the age of 15 - something I couldn't have done. Those moments make it all worthwhile."

As well as making people laugh in the live arena, Stephen also has his own podcast, The Stephen K Amos Talk Show, the first series of which came out on Audible in August and reached number one in Australia. A second series should be available sometime during the tour. Meanwhile, he has plans to spend a few months working in the US during 2019. "I think this is the right time to go to America, as Brits are doing very well out there - the likes of James Corden, John Oliver, Gina Yashere and Idris Elba."

For now, though, Stephen is very much looking forward to getting out and about in the UK and meeting his fans. "I love touring, and I'm very grateful that people still want to come out and see me because I don't do that much on TV these days. I try to mix it up and go to venues and cities and towns that I haven't been to before, or I'll go back to places and play bigger venues. Travelling around does give you an idea of the mood of the nation. Live comedy is thriving, and people are coming out to see lots of different kinds of comedy. It's great that people are prepared to listen to a person on stage saying whatever they like. That's one of the beautiful things about this job. Unlike television, radio or newspaper print, I can literally say whatever I want."

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Stephen K Amos plays Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, on Saturday 26 January



Sam Avery The Old Rep, Birmingham, Sat 19 January

As his new show is all about the perils of being a hapless learner-parent to toddlers, Sam Avery often finds himself being asked whether his twins will be putting in an appearance on the night. "No chance," he says. "They're way funnier than me. I'll look crap in comparison." Sam's hoping the show will win him a whole new audience, and is encouraging fans to bring along their friends: "I'll win them over with my cheeky northern charm," he says. "And if that fails, I'll hit them with some high-quality knob gags."

Gary Delaney

The Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shropshire, Fri 18 January; The Old Rep, Birmingham, Sat 26 January; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sun 24 February; Artrix, Bromsgrove, Thurs 28 February

"The hardest part of running competitively in Wales must be keeping up with the Joneses," quips the Solihull-born Gary Delaney.

And Gary's certainly no one-gag pony: "It turns out that one of my ancestors was Arabian, lived in a lamp, and granted people three wishes. It's amazing what you can find out from a genieology test."

Or how about: "Tom Cruise could have made a lot more films if he wasn't

constantly getting caricatures of his face done in Leicester Square."



Aatif Nawaz

The Glee Club, Birmingham, Sat 26 January



"There shouldn't be this abstract idea of 'making it'," explains Aatif Nawaz. "You do comedy for the joy of doing it. I love eliciting the raw response of a laugh, and I enjoy being energetic on stage too. That said, I do know stand-ups who're more deadpan than me and do equally as well." Presenting a storytelling style of comedy that sees him combining puns with a deeper message, Aatif visits Birmingham with a brand new show that's being described as 'a hilarious assault on the impatience and entitlement of the 21st century'.

Daisy Earl

Comedy Loft, Birmingham, Sat 19 January

Late-blooming and fast-rising comedian Daisy Earl finds humour in the everyday events and experiences of life, her subjects ranging from incompetence on the dating scene to her struggle to focus on important political issues despite her low boredom threshold. Daisy appears at The Comedy Loft this month in a line-up that also features Rudi Lickwood and Hayley Ellis.



Jason Manford

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Tues 22 January; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Fri 15 February

Becoming successful in comedy is no walk in the park, as Jason Manford knows. And the former One Show presenter has some sage advice for wannabe comedians: "Don't take any of my work! I would also say to people, compare yourself to yourself. Don't think, 'Why has that guy got that?' or 'Why is Michael McIntyre doing so well?' or 'I'm really funny, so why is so-and-so doing that gig, not me?' You know what, just don't worry about it. If you're doing better now than you were six months ago, then you're doing well."



Nish Kumar

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Fri 25 January; Dudley Town Hall, Fri 15 February; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sunday 17 February; Oakengates Theatre at The Place, Telford, Shropshire, Fri 22 February

"Once you get established as a comedian," says Nish Kumar, "you have to start taking comedy seriously, which is obviously an oxymoron. When you're a nobody, you can just go up to the Edinburgh Fringe, get drunk and have fun."

Nish's days of anonymity, inebriated or otherwise, are now behind him. The Croyden-born comedian has hit the big time - and even more impressively, he's done so simply by being his usual affable self.



Mandy Muden

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Fri 25 January; Artrix, Bromsgrove, Fri 15 February

Magic and comedy combine when former Britain's Got Talent contestant Mandy Muden takes to the stage. A member of London's famous Inner Magic Circle, Mandy is visiting the Midlands as part of her first ever solo tour, presenting a show that brings together 'amazing tricks, razor-sharp wit and lots of audience participation'.



Touring later in 2019

Eddie Izzard

Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, Tues 17 - Sat 21 September

Not many comedians make it to god-like status through stand-up alone. Jerry Seinfeld had a TV show, while Saturday Night Live alumni like Steve Martin and Bill Murray used the movies to make it big. Only performers like Bill Hicks, Jackie Mason and Lenny Bruce managed it through stage work alone - but you can definitely add Eddie Izzard to that list.

Eddie's worked a live crowd for more years than he probably cares to remember,

building his reputation with material based around skewed logic and surreal tangents.

For his autumn 2019 visit to Birmingham, he's presenting Wunderbar, a brand new show "about everything from humans over the last 100,000 years to talking dogs and animal superheroes". Following the tour, Eddie intends to step away from the comedy scene in order to concentrate on becoming mayor of London.

Josh Widdicombe

Birmingham Hippodrome, Sun 13 October; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Mon 14 October; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Thurs 7 November

Peddling a nice line in exasperated, self-deprecating humour, Devon-raised funnyman Josh Widdicombe pumps out cleverly crafted gags at a brisk pace, hitting the mark with the vast majority of his material. Widdicombe's jokes include: "Hotdogs cause bum cancer - that was the original slogan for McDonald's before 'I'm loving it'."

There's also: "I've no idea what the storyline of Monopoly is. Seemingly I'm a tiny dog who repeatedly wins beauty contests, on his birthday demands £10 from everybody he can see, and then bankrupts himself to stay in a hotel when he owns four houses on the next street!"



Touring later in 2019



NATIONAL TREVOR

Sandi Toksvig brings her new tour to the Hippodrome

Sandi Toksvig is remembering a terrific occasion at the Festival Hall in London 4 years ago. "My wife and I renewed our wedding vows on the stage. It was a small gathering, a few family – and a thousand of my close friends. It was held on the day that same sex marriages were made legal.

"It was astonishing, you know. I invited 150 family and friends, and let it be known to the general public that if anybody wanted to come, they were most welcome. The hall was full. There were literally thousands of people. It was every kind of person you could possibly imagine. It was very jolly. The only drawback was that there wasn't enough cake!"

This story tells you everything about the presenter's popularity. She's the sort of approachable, lovable figure everyone considers their friend. You will not find anyone who doesn't like Sandi Toksvig. She is a national treasure.

Which brings us to her latest UK tour, which is entitled "National Trevor." In person, Sandi is every bit as delightful as you would hope. Offscreen, she is just as warm, witty, welcoming and generally wonderful as she is on screen. She is marvellous company, and an hour with her simply flies by.

Over a burger in a central London hotel, Sandi is brimming with excitement about the forthcoming tour, which kicks off at The Lowry in Salford on Wednesday 9 January.

After a spell making such hugely popular TV shows as The Great British Bake Off and QI, Sandi can't wait to come face-to-face with her audience again in a show that will feature a Q&A and lots and lots of excellent jokes.

In addition, Sandi will be regaling audiences with a raft of funny facts. "I'm endlessly interested in things," confirms the 60-year-old. "I think detail is terribly funny. Did you know that the glue on Israeli postage stamps is Kosher?"

"National Trevor" also showcases a general knowledge quiz. "I don't know if you want to win it," Sandi smiles, "because then you have to come up on stage and talk to me all about your life!"

During the show, Sandi invites the audience to help her conduct a piece of music, too. "I get them to conduct Beethoven's Ode to Joy. I chose that piece because Beethoven was deaf by the time he completed it.

"It's remarkable to want to create music when you can't hear it. On the night of the premiere, he was seen running through the streets shouting, 'Grab life by the throat!' That's what I'm saying in this show."

Sandi adds that, "Whenever I see people wearing a T-shirt that says, 'Living the Dream,' I think, 'You're totally not.' I want to tell them, 'If you had to buy a T-shirt saying that, it's not working'."

The aspect of the tour Sandi is most looking forward to is the audience interaction. She adores the spontaneity of it all. "I can't wait to get out there. The best bit is not me talking to them - it's them talking to me. Me talking? Not so interesting. Them talking? Very interesting!"

"You never quite know what is going to happen. The unexpected stuff is always the most enjoyable part. The most unexpected thing that ever happened in a show took place during a Q and A in Bradford. A woman asked me what my bra size was. I couldn't remember, so she had to come up on stage and have a look!"

Sandi, who was a very popular host of Radio 4's News Quiz for a decade, proceeds to underscore her love of live performance. "The other reason to do a live show is that there is still something magical about sharing an evening out at the theatre.

"When actors stand backstage before a performance, we listen to the sound of the audience. We say, 'They're a bit Monday night' or 'They're a bit Saturday matinee'. A distinct personality overtakes an entire group of people."

The theatre also demands a focus that we sometimes lack in other parts of our life. "It's about getting people to put their phones away, have an engagement with the show and listen to other people laughing - hopefully - or weeping!"

"For a brief moment we can forget about Brexit or whatever it is we're worrying about and lose ourselves in the show. That's good for us. We feel better."

One of the main themes of "National Trevor" is our current fixation with celebrity. Sandi explains that, "The thing I'm slightly obsessed with is our whole attitude to fame. There is a new trend of calling people a 'National Treasure'.

"I don't know where it's come from, but I heartily disapprove. I think everybody has something to commend them. Everyone has a story where you go, 'Really?' We don't get to hear their stories of extraordinary endeavours."

Sandi proceeds to outline where the show's title comes from. "One day, a friend of mine was being extremely rude to me. A lot of my friends are - I encourage it! So in the middle of this argument, I said to her, 'Don't you know I'm a National Treasure?'

"And she replied, 'You're a National Trevor?' Then her husband said, 'Who's been calling her Trevor?' Now they call me Trevor. So that's why I gave the show this title. I'm going round the country looking for all the National Treasures. I'm celebrating people."

Sandi muses on what she hopes audiences will take away from "National Trevor." "I hope they think that they have had a really good evening, that they're had a great laugh and that I'm much younger, taller and thinner in the flesh!"

Before she has to go off to another gig, Sandi decides to order an alcohol-free cocktail to clear her throat. It's called, "Endless Joy."

Quick as a flash, Sandi jokes: "That should be the title of my next live show."

Well, I'd go and see that, wouldn't you?

.....

Sandi Toksvig brings her National Trevor tour to Birmingham Hippodrome Fri 1 Feb & Sat 2 Feb 2019



Ghost The Musical

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 22 - Sat 26 January

This ever-popular stage version of the award-winning film starring Patrick Swayzee, Demi Moore and Whoopi Goldberg makes a welcome return to the Midlands. For those not in the know, the production tells the story of a ghost named Sam who, caught between this world and

the next, desperately attempts to communicate with his girlfriend, Molly, and warn her that she's in mortal danger from his murderer. A timeless tale about the power of love that beautifully blends the genres of romance and comedy, Ghost features The Righteous Brothers' Unchained Melody and numerous songs co-written by Eurythmics' Dave Stewart.

Living With The Lights On

The REP, Birmingham, Tues 22 - Sat 26 January

Mark Lockyear's confessional solo show has been widely praised since making its debut in 2016. The production sees the actor taking his audience back to the mid-1990s and a time when he was appearing for the RSC in Stratford-upon-Avon; a time, too, when his undiagnosed bipolar disorder led to him thinking he was possessed by the devil...



The Tale Of Robin Hood

Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham, Wed 2 - Sat 5 January

The always-exceptional Jars Of Clay Theatre Company are the ensemble behind this brand new telling of an age-old story. The show is firmly aimed at family audiences and comes complete with 'action, adventure, music and romance'.

The Singular Exploits Of Sherlock Holmes

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Wed 16 January

This one-man homage to the world's greatest fictional detective finds Holmes recalling some of his most memorable cases and dastardly adversaries.

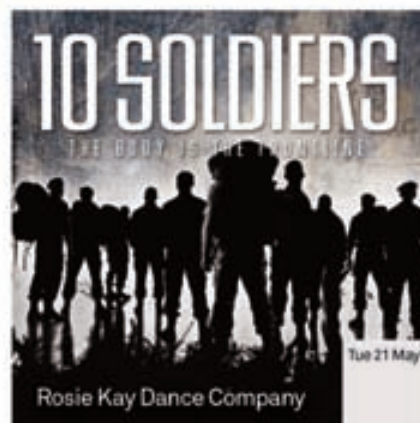
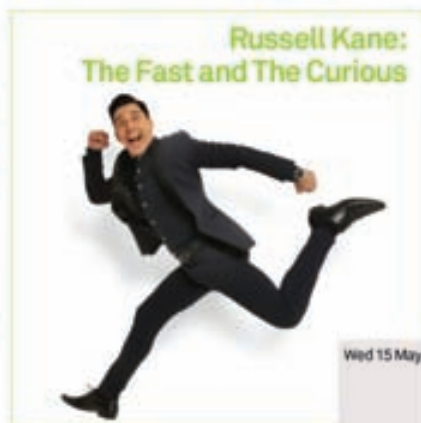
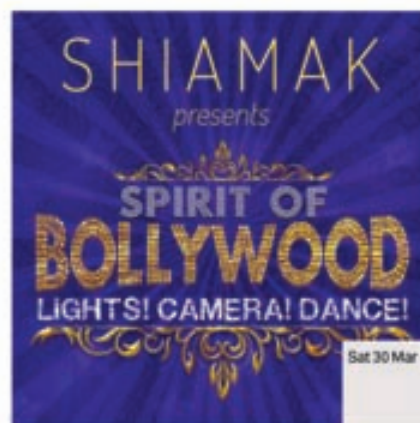
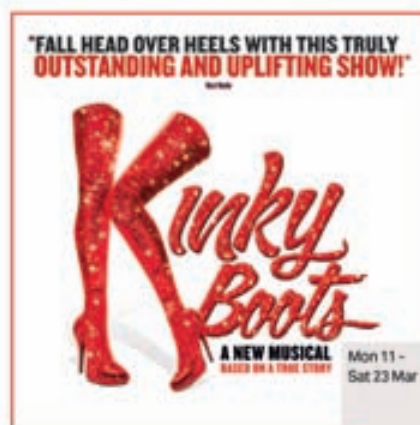
The production is being presented by highly rated Midlands company Don't Go Into The Cellar, who describe themselves as the UK's 'finest practitioners of theatrical Victoriana in a macabre vein'.

An Indian Abroad

Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, Fri 18 & Sat 19 January

Writer and performer Pariah Khan's debut one-man show takes the familiar concept of white adventurers exploring foreign lands and spins it on its head, recounting the experiences of a middle-class Indian who pays a visit to 'the exotic island of Great Britain'. Rising-star Khan (real name Hari Ramakrishnan) is an exceptional talent who aims to challenge his audience's way of thinking while at the same time making them laugh.





A full-page photograph of actor Nick Hancock. He is seated in a dark wooden armchair with a green upholstered seat. He is wearing a dark blue suit, a white shirt, and a blue and white patterned tie. His mouth is wide open in a shocked or surprised expression, and his hands are raised with palms facing up. The background is a plain, dark grey wall, and the floor is made of light-colored wooden planks.

OCTOPUS SOUP!

Midlander Nick Hancock chats about starring in a brand new play at Coventry's Belgrade Theatre



Best known for presenting television sports quiz *They Think It's All Over* and long-running comedy show *Room 101*, Midlands-born Nick Hancock next month makes a return to the limelight at Coventry's Belgrade Theatre, starring in brand new comedy *Octopus Soup!*. What's On recently caught up with Nick to find out more...

When TV presenter and stand-up comedian Nick Hancock took a 2005 sabbatical from showbusiness to work as a mortgage broker, little did he know that the experience would prove to be the ideal preparation for a starring role in *Octopus Soup!*, a new comedy which shows at the Coventry Belgrade Theatre next month.

"My character in the play is a slightly down-on-his-luck insurance broker," explains Nick, who's best remembered as the 1990s host of TV shows *They Think It's All Over* and *Room 101*. "The fact that I've actually done some work in insurance is one of the interesting things about playing the role."

The Stoke-born actor has been treading the boards since joining the Cambridge University Footlights more than 30 years ago, and is certainly looking forward to getting back on stage with *Octopus Soup!*: "The thing that really struck me was the play's farcical element. It's very difficult with a new play to have any real idea what it's going to be like until you start rehearsal, so it's quite nice to take that risk every now and again."

The recent Coventry Belgrade success of Nigel Planer's *The Game Of Love And Chai* is testament to the popularity of farce in modern theatre, and Nick is confident that this resurgence is not about to stop: "Maybe with farce, its time has come again. The classic Whitehall farces and the Georges Feydeau plays were pretty much one person going out of rooms as one person was coming in, so I think the show will be stage-direction-heavy.

"Quite often what happens in farce is that ridiculous events are forced upon an unready stooge, which I think is going to be me, to tell you the truth!"

The plot of *Octopus Soup!* revolves around Nick's character of Seymour, who, as one might expect from a man who makes risk assessments for a living, personifies the phrase 'belt and braces'. Seymour is preparing for a life-changing conference call when bungling burglar Marvin (played by Paul Bradley of *EastEnders* and *Holby City* fame) enters the stage and puts a spanner in the works.

Nick is looking forward to working with an ensemble cast: "I've seen them all before, they've all done lots of stage work, they're all far more experienced than me, and it's completely terrifying for me to work with them. All of their biographies are about 17 pages long, whereas mine's two paragraphs - but hopefully I'll learn something off them."

While 56-year-old Nick's experience of the insurance industry provided him with an insight into the world of underwriting, there are other traits of Seymour's character that also appeal to him: "Seymour is very straight-laced and probably quite sheltered in his outlook, so it's a case of 'the innocent in the middle of the madness'. The more important thing about the character is that he's a man of a certain age, who feels he may be in the last-chance saloon to make any sort of impact in his field of expertise. So that's very easy for me to understand and very fitting to my age.

"The show's central idea is of being swept up into some sort of white-collar criminal enterprise without really knowing how it happened. I liked the fact that it was quite complex; all to do with algorithms and stuff that I would never be able to understand in a million years. But, of course, that's exactly what insurance is all about - odds and critical mass."

As for the title of the play, Nick is careful to offer an explanation without giving away any spoilers: "The octopus soup is part of the sub-plot and is to do with cookery and animal husbandry."

So what can audiences expect when they see the show?

"It's not Bertolt Brecht, put it that way, but I'm hoping that it's going to be a slick, funny farce and an enjoyable evening of nonsense and fun. There are four brilliant actors, and me, in it, so that'll be quite good. And do you know what? If I'm terrible, that'll make it even more entertaining, and if I'm any good, then I think it should be good."

"*Octopus Soup!* can be an escape from whatever ails you, to tell you the honest truth. Well, unless your biggest problem is looking after your octopus, in which case I'm afraid it's going to be a little bit of a busman's holiday!"

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Nick Hancock stars in *Octopus Soup!* at Coventry's Belgrade Theatre from Sat 2 to Sat 16 February



Fame The Musical

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Mon 28 January - Sat 2 February; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Mon 15 - Sat 20 April; Malvern Theatres, Mon 8 - Sat 13 July

One of the world's best-loved shows, Fame The Musical explores the tumultuous teenage years of students at New York's High School for the Performing Arts.

This 30th anniversary touring production stars former Hollyoaks favourite Jorgie Porter as spoilt and stuck-up rich girl Iris.

Jorgie is a firm believer in Fame's universal qualities. Its storylines focus on numerous subjects that are close to the hearts of young people today, including prejudice, identity, sexuality and first love.

"Adolescents are more involved in tackling these issues head-on nowadays," says Jorgie, "and it's definitely interesting to see how a musical that originally came from a film made in the 1980s can still be so relevant now."

Steaming

MAC, Birmingham, Thurs 17 & Fri 18 January

Nell Dunn's wickedly witty comedy, set in the forbidden world of an all-female steamroom, sees four women coming together to expose themselves on pretty much every level imaginable. The show is being presented by a cast and crew of young people.

Dirty Dusting

Lichfield Garrick, Fri 25 January

When overzealous office manager Dave decides to put his cleaners, Gladys, Elsie and Olive, out to pasture, the three women wonder how they're ever going to make ends meet. Until, that is, they have the brilliant idea of setting up The Telephone Belles - 'a dirty sex chatline that really cleans up'!



A Christmas Carol

Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, until Sun 20 January



Of all Charles 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 seasonal ghosts - all combine to give this classic cautionary tale a real olde worlde charm. The RSC production has been penned by David Edgar, whose previous work for the Company includes an award-winning adaptation of Dickens' Nicholas Nickleby.

Commonism

The REP, Birmingham, Tues 8 - Fri 11 January

Two award-winning theatre-makers - the UK's Andy Smith and Norway's Amund Sjølie Sveen - discuss the state of the world. Taking part in a performed conversation, they hope

to find some common ground regarding how best to move forward in terms of nationality and internationality, theatre and politics.



Robin Hood And The Revolving Peasants

The Place, Oakengates Theatre, Telford, Fri 11 January; Artrix, Bromsgrove, Sun 13 January

Zany funsters Oddsocks put their own unique spin on the legend of Robin Hood when they visit the region this month. The long-established company most often present high-jinx versions of Shakespeare plays, so it's nice to see them taking their repertoire of men-in-tights productions in an altogether different direction.



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125 MEMORIES FOR 125 YEARS

On 10 December 2019 the Grand Theatre celebrates its 125th Anniversary. Over the next 12 months the Grand will share 125 selected memories from famous faces, theatre staff and patrons. The first memory will be posted on the theatre's 124th Anniversary this year and the last will be posted on its 125th Anniversary next year. If you would like to contribute to this project your Grand memories can be provided in writing, as a short video (maximum of 45 seconds) or a photograph with a memory attached.

Memories should be submitted by email to 125@grandtheatre.co.uk or in writing to 125 Memories Project, c/o Stage Door, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Lichfield Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1DE.

Memories will be posted on the Grand's social media accounts or you can follow the entire story by visiting

grandtheatre.co.uk/125Memories



Kinky Boots

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent,
Mon 28 January - Sat 9 February;
Birmingham Hippodrome, Mon 11 -
Sat 23 March

The newly appointed manager of his late father's shoe factory in Northampton, Charlie Price has got some tough decisions to make as he attempts to save the struggling business. After a chance meeting with drag queen Lola, Charlie identifies a potentially lucrative niche market - creating footwear to cater for men who dress as women...

A topical story about diversity and acceptance, Kinky Boots is based on the 2005 film of the same name and features music & lyrics by '80s pop star Cyndi Lauper. Expect a feelgood evening of catchy tunes, fierce anthems and warm-hearted humour.

The Verdict

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry,
Wed 30 January - Sat 2 February

Barry Reed's 1980 novel is best known from the Oscar-nominated film adaptation starring Paul Newman and James Mason.

When washed-up lawyer Frank Galvin takes on a medical malpractice case that no one thinks he can win, he finds unexpected salvation from his addiction to drink...

Presented by the much-admired Middle Ground Theatre Company, the production stars former Emmerdale actor Ian Kelsey.



Trial By Laughter

Malvern Theatres, Mon 21 - Sat 26 January

Ian Hislop and Nick Newman follow up their success with The Wipers Time with this story of a David-versus-Goliath-style battle set in the early 19th century. At the centre of their tale is satirist William Hone, 'the forgotten hero of free speech', who finds himself charged with 'impious blasphemy and sedi-

tious libel' when he dares to parody religious texts, the government and the monarchy. If the reviews are anything to go by, this is an evening of theatre that's well worth catching.

The Circus Of Horrors

The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, Thurs 10 January; Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Tues 15 January; Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, Thurs 17 January

An off-kilter affair that bears more resemblance to a freak show than any modern definition of a circus, the one-time Britain's Got Talent finalists here present a world beyond political correctness and taste. With the performers dressed in a manner reminiscent of The Rocky Horror Show, there's no denying the ensemble's sheer 'wow' factor. Giving a nod to one of Circus Of Horror's previous and most popular productions - The Asylum - this latest offering takes place in the dubious company of the deranged serial killers inhabiting the Psycho Ward...



Timon Of Athens

Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon,
until Fri 22 February

This new RSC production provides a not-to-be-missed opportunity to check out one of Shakespeare's least-performed plays. A dark satire questioning whether anything can be considered of true value in a world of unfettered greed, the production stars Kathryn Hunter as Timon, a woman who finds herself alone and without influence when her wealth runs out and her friends desert her.



Hoppers

Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham,
Tues 29 & Wed 30 January

When Sal's husband dies, she finds herself embarking on an adventure that sees her hopping from one football ground to another, eager to fulfill her late spouse's non-league legacy...

Hoppers is presented by the Birmingham-based Gritty Theatre, an ensemble who produce plays which fly the flag for their home city. In the process, they endeavour to engage with people who might not ordinarily be tempted to watch a live theatrical production.

The Snowman

The REP, Birmingham,
Wed 16 - Sat 26 January

Making a welcome return to The Rep in its traditional New Year slot, Raymond Briggs' *The Snowman* is best known, of course, for Howard Blake's classic song, *Walking In The Air*... When a young boy's snowman comes to life on Christmas Eve, the two set off on a nighttime quest for excitement. On their travels they meet reindeer, dancing penguins and some of the Snowman's many and varied friends. The adventure's not without its anxieties, however, with the wicked Jack Frost eager to get his icy mits on the pair of unlikely chums...



The Tiger Who Came To Tea

Symphony Hall, Birmingham,
until Sun 13 January



The tea-guzzling tiger is back in town, dropping in on Sophie and her mum just as they're settling down for an afternoon cuppa... Adapted by David Wood from Judith Kerr's 1968 book, this 55-minute show features some splendid singalong songs and boasts plenty of magic - not to mention a big, stripey tiger, of course! Suitable for youngsters aged three and older.

Emily Brown And The Thing

The Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome,
until Sun 6 January

When young Emily Brown and her best pal - toy rabbit Stanley - discover a Thing crying outside their bedroom window, they can't help but try to assist him... Adapted from the book of the same name by Cressida Cowell, the author behind the famous *How To Train Your Dragon* series, this witty and heartwarming children's show is presented by the ever-magical Tall Stories theatre company.



Pantos in January

Aladdin

Palace Theatre, Redditch, until Sun 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 endeavours by the mystical genie of the lamp...

Cinderella

The Place, Oakengates Theatre, Telford,
until Sun 6 January

Oakengates Theatre's panto version of *Cinderella* features CBeebies star Joe Chambers and '90s pop singer Anna Kumble. *EastEnders* actor Tony Discipline plays Prince Charming.

Dick Whittington

Lichfield Garrick, until Sat 5 January;
The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury,
until Sat 5 January

Dick Whittington undertakes his legendary journey to London - but not before stopping off at a couple of Midlands theatre venues. Both shows come complete with all the usual panto trimmings.

Dick Whittington: The Rock And Roll Panto

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre,
until Sun 6 January

As usual, Stafford Gatehouse's Christmas show features all manner of familiar pantomime elements and a high-energy soundtrack of chart-busting hits.

Mother Goose

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury,
until Sun 6 January

Theatre Severn's favourite panto dame, Brad Fitt, takes the title role in a show that boasts 3D effects, singing & dancing galore and plenty of family-friendly humour.

Peter Pan

Birmingham Hippodrome,
until Sun 27 January

Jimmy Osmond takes top billing as wicked pirate Captain Hook in a show that also features Meera Syal, making her pantomime debut as the Magical Mermaid, and Union J star Jaymi Hensley - another panto first-timer - in the role of Peter Pan. Hippodrome favourite Matt Slack makes a welcome return to star as Smee.

Robin Hood

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent,
until Sun 6 January

'Son of the Potteries' Jonathan Wilkes dons the tights to star as Sherwood Forest's most famous outlaw. Fellow Regent pantomime regular Christian Patterson takes on the role of Friar Tuck.

Sleeping Beauty

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, until Sat 5 January; The Core, Solihull, until Sun 6 January; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, until Sun 13 January

Sleeping Beauty's taking a nap at venues across the Midlands, including the Coventry Belgrade, whose show is written and directed by Iain Lauchlan, and the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, where *Strictly Come Dancing*'s Debbie McGee stars alongside Sooty and Doreen 'Lazy Cow' Tipton.

Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs

Malvern Theatres, until Sun 6 January

Heigh ho, heigh ho, it's off to Malvern we go! Su Pollard heads the cast as the ever-so-nasty Wicked Queen. Hi-de-hi!



Swanning about

Matthew Bourne gives his iconic masterpiece a new lease of life

First staged in 1995 and the longest-running ballet in the West End and on Broadway, Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake* is best known for the fact of having an all-male cast. Twenty-four years after the show's premiere, Bourne has decided to restage what is widely considered to be his most-admired work.

"It's always exciting to bring back *Swan Lake*," says Matthew. "So many people love it, and you know they're going to want to come and see it again and bring along friends and family who didn't see it last time. That's what accounts for the growth of the show over the years, I think - the fact that people want other people to come and see it.

"There's also a whole new generation of young people who won't have seen it. We know, even from discussions with the cast we have at the moment, how it can inspire young people to pursue a career in theatre and, particularly, dance. Many of the men in the show, and in fact the women too, first came to the artform of dance through this piece, and now they're in it themselves.

"It still seems to move and inspire people, and therefore we get excited about doing it because that's what we're here for. We're here to entertain."

So will the changes to this much-loved work be obvious ones?

"I wouldn't say we're changing it enormously but refreshing it for this next period of time. It may change again in the future, who knows, but I think whilst we're still excited about the piece and we feel we've got this opportunity, it seems a great chance to do it. Everything we've done to the piece has been mindful of the fact that people already love it.

"Many people seeing the new version of *Swan Lake* probably won't recognise a lot of the changes we've made, and I think they will feel that they're still seeing the same piece. We will know, however, that we've made hundreds of little changes. The changes won't be so big that people will think, 'Oh, what did you do that for?' or 'Why did you lose that great idea?' Maybe there will be one or two things that big fans of the show will feel the loss of, but generally speaking, I think we're celebrating the piece that already exists.

"We have a new lighting designer, Paule Con-

stable, as one of our associates for the show. Paule has never seen our *Swan Lake* before - not on film or on stage - so we'll get a completely fresh approach from her, and I don't know what it will look like yet. It's definitely going to look different, as Paule's a different kind of designer, so that will be a big change.

"We've got a completely new cast as well. There are lots of new dancers who will bring their own interpretations to the piece - as they do with all of our shows - and that keeps the work fresh and alive. I certainly don't think audiences who already love our *Swan Lake* will be in any way disappointed."

Taking the lead role in the 2019 production is Will Bozier. A graduate of Tring Park School for the Performing Arts, Will has been with Matthew's New Adventures company since 2014, since which time he's performed in productions of *The Red Shoes*, *Sleeping Beauty* and *Edward Scissorhands*.

Will's inspiration for becoming a professional dancer was Adam Cooper's performance as the Swan/Stranger in the original production of *Swan Lake*. Could Bourne ever have envisaged the impact his show would have on young male dancers?

"Obviously when we made *Swan Lake* we didn't know that it would have the impact it's had, but over the years I've come to realise that it's been the trigger for a lot of boys and young men going into dance. I think it felt like something very cool and very masculine, yet it also required a lot of artistry and sensitivity. So it was that mixture of things, I think, that really inspired a lot of young men to want to get into dance and to be a swan - and that's a view which is borne out by virtually every member of our cast who grew up with this piece.

"A lovely aspect of the show now is how meaningful it is for the people who're actually in it. They really want to be in it and it's been their ambition to be in it. There aren't many shows where you can say that you've got an entire cast of people whose burning ambition has been to be in the piece, so you get a wonderful connection with the dancers and a wonderful sense of community."

Various described as thrilling, audacious, witty and emotional, Bourne's *Swan Lake* is like no other production of the show. So what made him take a different approach to an all-

time classic?

"We're a contemporary dance theatre company, so we had to tell a story through movement in a different way, and it needed a big idea to make people see it in a different way as well. So the male swans were the big idea, and a secondary big idea was modern royal scandal. This was in the news all the time while we were making the piece, with Diana & Charles, and Sarah Ferguson, and Camilla Parker-Bowles, and Princess Margaret. All of these stories were daily news during the making of the show. And so it was a very topical thing to have a prince who couldn't be the person he really was, or couldn't be with the person he wanted to be with. It was all very relevant to contemporary Britain and contemporary royalty. So we're still telling the same story - it's still about a royal family, but a modern royal family.

"I thought that would be picked up on quite a lot when the show was first seen, but actually the attention was much more on the use of the male swans. It was such an iconic image for people to have a male dancing swan. It was very unexpected, and people couldn't imagine what it was going to look like. They all thought it was going to be a send-up, and that it was going to be a humorous piece. There's a bit of humour in it, but the main bulk of it isn't humorous. We needed an idea that could wipe away everyone's existing perceptions of *Swan Lake*, and the male swans did that very well.

"It got dubbed 'the gay *Swan Lake*', which wasn't what the aim was, but there was certainly a story within it that was very meaningful for gay audiences, and I celebrate that. I did then, and I do now. It's a bit more wide-ranging than that, however, and it can really be interpreted in many ways.

"It's accepted now by a much wider audience, who come to see the show and, rather than be shocked by any element of it, find it uplifting that this is a story being told about a young man who's confused about his future and his sexuality. I think that's something which is very meaningful for young people in the audience as well."

.....
Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake* shows at Birmingham Hippodrome from Tuesday 5 to Saturday 16 February



Sam Avery:
The Learner Parent
Sat 19 Jan, 8pm

Stand-up comedian, viral blogger and bestselling author Sam Avery shares all the lows, highs and hilarious in-betweens of his experiences of first-time parenthood.

"Painfully funny" Metro

Tickets £18



Gary Delaney:
Gagster's Paradise
Sat 26 Jan, 7.30pm

One of Britain's leading one-liner comics returns to the road with another onslaught of lean, expertly crafted gagery.

**** Chortle
**** Guardian

Tickets £18



Ed Gamble:
Blizzard
Fri 1 Feb, 8pm

After a sellout national tour in 2017, Ed Gamble is back with another bracing flurry of idiocy.

"A comic who may be about to become a force in the game" Chortle

Tickets £16



Hal Cruttenden:
Clubster
Sat 2 Feb, 8pm

Hal's literally filled our screens recently on *Have I Got News For You* and *Live At The Apollo*. His daughters chose the title of his new stand-up show. He's now on a diet.

***** Daily Record

Tickets £19



NYT:
The Hole
Wed 20 & Thu 21 Feb, 7.30pm

The world leading National Youth Theatre present a exclusive first look at a new play written by award-winning playwright and screenwriter Rachel De-la-hay.

Tickets £6



Robert White:
The Tank Top Tour
Fri 22 Feb, 7.30pm

Robert White wowed the judges and viewers alike with his fast-paced comedy routines when he made the finals on this year's *Britain's Got Talent*.

Tickets £20.50



My Generation:
The Who Story
Sat 23 Feb, 7pm

The ultimate celebration of one of the most iconic bands of our time. Taking you on a journey that begins with the Kings of Mod, through their major milestones and the years that saw them change the face of music.

Tickets £18 - £21



Beyond The Horizon:
Metamorphosis
Tue 26 Feb - Sat 2 Mar

Based on the novella by Franz Kafka, this terrifying tale will transfix and chill audiences to their core.

Tickets £13 - £16

Echoes And I Imagine

The Patrick Studio, Birmingham
Hippodrome, Thurs 31 January

Aakash Odedra has made a real name for himself in a relatively short period of time. In the process, he's worked alongside a number of high-profile choreographers - including Akram Khan, Sidi Larbi and Russel Maliphant - and produced a collection of critically acclaimed danceworks - two of which are presented here...

Echoes is a high-octane experience which explores our relationships with our ancestors and adds a contemporary twist to the Kathak form of dance...

I Imagine, meanwhile, sees Aakash combining beautiful choreography with powerful spoken word as he contemplates 'the imagined future and the confines of skin'.



Anton & Erin: Dance Those Magic Musicals

Symphony Hall,
Birmingham, Sat 26 January

Celebrity dancing duo Anton du Beke and Erin Boeg return to Birmingham's Symphony Hall this month with their brand new show. Blending smart choreography, sassy tunes and sparkly costumes, Dance Those Magic Musicals sees the popular pair doing exactly what it says on the tin - performing routines to a musical-theatre soundtrack that includes favourites from The Phantom Of The Opera, Mary Poppins, 42nd Street, Hairspray, Cabaret, Wicked, Top Hat and Jersey Boys. The duo are joined by singer Lance Ellington and the London Concert Orchestra conducted by Richard Balcombe.

Spirit Of The Dance

Malvern Theatres, Tues 22 January

This lively and colourful show, following in the footsteps of Riverdance and Lord Of The Dance, highlights traditions of dance and music from around the world. The winner of nine global awards, the production showcases the talents of world champion dancers and the pounding rhythms of tango, flamenco and salsa.

"Spirit Of The Dance has been seen by 30 million people worldwide," says its creator and producer, David King. "Every year, I update the show to include the latest and most fashionable dance style - and that's why audiences keep coming back time and time again."



The Sleeping Beauty

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Sun 13 January

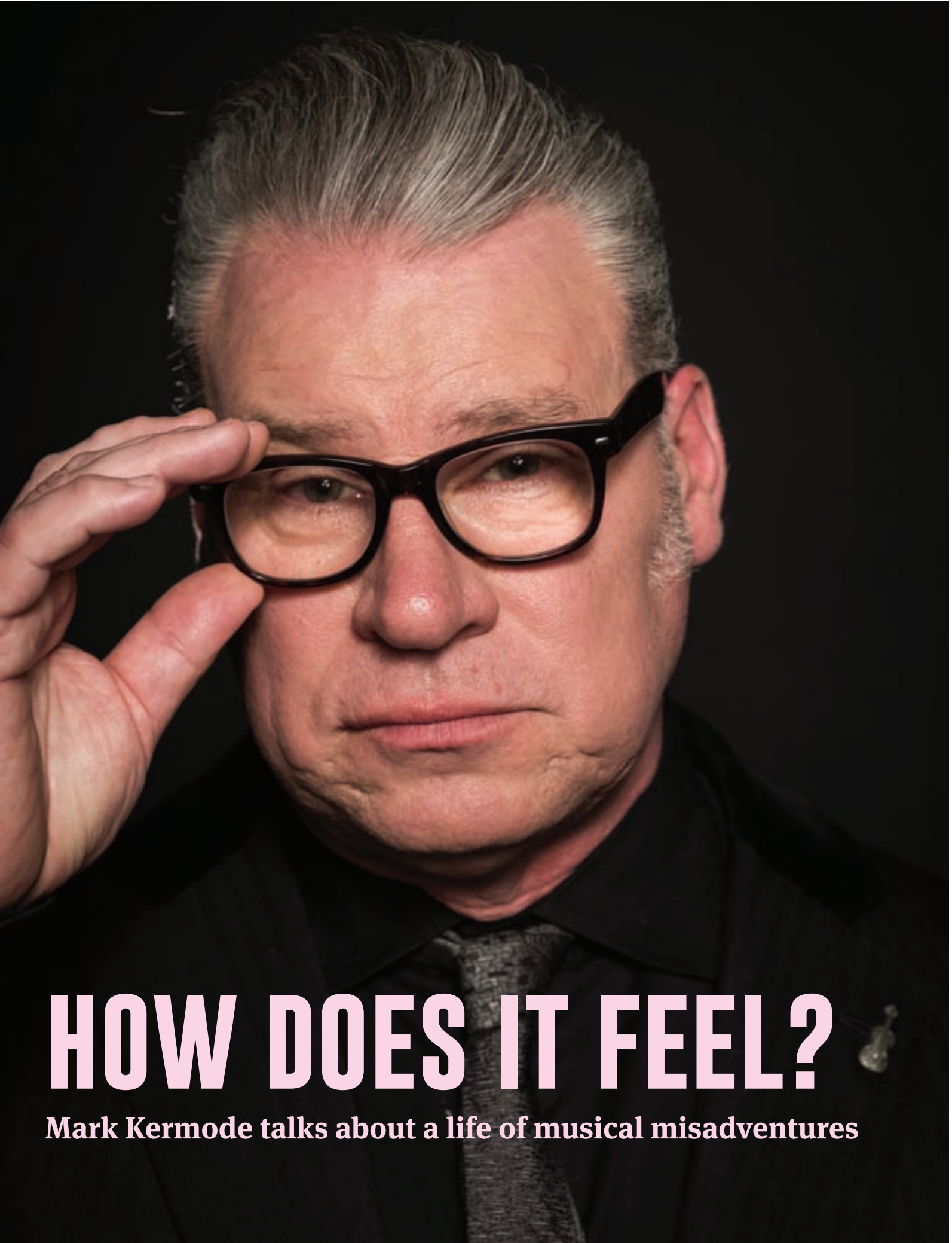
The highly regarded Saint Petersburg Classic Ballet here present their production of a timeless favourite set to Tchaikovsky's enchanting score.

Telling the story of the Princess Aurora and the evil spell that sees her falling asleep for 100 years instead of marrying her prince, The Sleeping Beauty is a fairytale which has always sparkled whenever it's been in the safe and secure hands of the Saint Petersburg company, who as usual are performing under the expert direction of Marina Med-

vetskaya.

Outstanding soloists and full orchestral accompaniment also play their part in a production that promises to provide a memorable evening of top-quality ballet.





HOW DOES IT FEEL?

Mark Kermode talks about a life of musical misadventures

A well-respected film critic, journalist and musician, Mark Kermode this month takes to the stage at Birmingham Repertory Theatre to talk about his 'foolhardy' attempts to become a pop star - and the inspiration he took from some of music's finest...

It takes some nerve to walk on stage at one of London's most prestigious venues and play the theme from a critically acclaimed European movie on an instrument that you've never played before.

But for film critic, broadcaster, author and musician Mark Kermode, this is just one example of his undying faith in the concept of simply 'having a go' - a faith he'll be talking about in Mark Kermode: How Does It Feel? when he visits the Birmingham Rep this month. The new show has been inspired by his book of the same title.

"My whole ethos to do with music is, how hard can it be?" explains Mark. "The book starts with me on stage with the BBC Concert Orchestra at the Royal Festival Hall in London, about to play the theme from the film *Touchez Pas au Grisbi* on the chromatic harmonica, an instrument which I could not play,

"It was a concert that was being broadcast live on BBC Radio Three to a packed Hall, and the book starts with me on stage, thinking, 'How on earth did I get here?'"

Kermode's show focuses on a musical journey that began at school with a passion for an iconic Midlands rock group: "I saw *Slade In Flame*, which is a film that I absolutely love - and that's where the title of my book and tour, *How Does It Feel?*, comes from; it's a song that Slade do in the film. Slade guitarist Dave Hill had these weird-shaped guitars - one of them was shaped like a machine gun and one had the words *Super Yob* written on it."

The teenage Kermode, inspired by Hill to get his hands around a fretboard, quickly realised that his meagre pocket money was unlikely to stretch to a trip to his local music store to belt out *Smoke On The Water*.

"I wanted an electric guitar, but I couldn't afford one, so I got a copy of a magazine called *Everyday Electronics*, which was 20p,

and there was a plan in it of how you could build an electric guitar for £12. It said that you could do it with really simple things and it would take two months to build. Well, it actually took two years, but I did it. I built an electric guitar completely from scratch, but by the time I'd finished building it, glam rock had gone out of fashion and everybody was into punk, so the guitar was already outmoded by the time I started playing it."

The guitar was modelled on the Gibson Flying V - the weapon of choice for axe heroes like UFOs Michael Schenker and Wishbone Ash's Andy Powell at a time when the punk movement saw rock music as anathema.

Mark's homemade instrument may have been unfashionable, but that wasn't about to stifle his musical ambitions: "I played that guitar in a couple of school bands - the first band was with David Baddiel - and it made me realise that you should never be scared of musical instruments. Once you've built a guitar, you go, 'Okay, well, it's not magic, it's literally just bits of glue and string'.

"I kept hold of that guitar, which was worth nothing at all, and years later my flat got broken into. I also had a Fender Stratocaster which was worth about £2,000. They stole the guitar that I'd built and left the Stratocaster behind!"

Kermode was inspired to build his guitar by the guitarist who's most associated with playing a homemade instrument - Queen's Brian May.

"I thought, well, if Brian May can do it, anyone can. I was always encouraged by the story of May's father taking the top of the fireplace off to give his son a piece of wood to build the guitar out of. Brian May ended up making an instrument that's become a classic, and I ended up making an instrument that's probably currently being used as a cricket bat by somebody who stole

it because it just looked a funny shape!"

So three years after Kermode's last stage show, *The Movie Doctors* - in which he was joined by Simon Mayo, his presenting partner on BBC Radio Five Live's weekly film review programme - what can audiences expect from his latest theatrical offering?

"It's me on stage for 90 minutes. I take questions from the audience and I attempt to demonstrate that anybody at all can play a musical instrument, as long as they're enthusiastic about it. You don't need to be technically proficient, you just need to have a lot of front and not be scared of failure.

"We've been getting people out of the audience to play blues harmonica and theremins. It's a really good, fun show about the fact that nobody should be frightened of musical instruments, and that if you've got enough chutzpah and a following wind, anyone can play anything. You may not be brilliant at it, but it's easier than you think to be adequate."

Are there any instruments that Kermode would like to tackle in the future?

"The theremin was the thing for ages. I've now got two theremins and still can't play either of them, but it doesn't stop me from trying.

"I have this rule of trying to learn a new instrument every year, at least to be able to play one song decently on a new instrument every year, and the saxophone is down for next year. I look at those old pictures of Little Richard, when he had the three saxophones, and I've always thought it was an incredibly cool instrument, so I'd like to be able to play that."

.....

Mark Kermode: *How Does It Feel?* shows at The REP, Birmingham, on Monday 21 January

Saturday 26 January at 2.30pm & 7.30pm

ANTON AND ERIN



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Sunday 10 March 3.00pm

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Kathryn Rudge mezzo soprano
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Canzonetta choir Manchester Concert Orchestra

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Vice CERT 15 (132 mins)

Starring **Christian Bale, Amy Adams, Steve Carell, Sam Rockwell, Alison Pill, Jesse Plemons, Eddie Marsan**
Directed by **Adam McKay (USA)**

Writer-director Adam McKay examined the financial crisis in his smart and stylish *The Big Short* (2015) and secured an Oscar nomination for Christian Bale as the unorthodox investment maven Michael Burry. Now McKay has cast Bale as the formidable vice president Dick Cheney and has surrounded him with another mouth-watering cast, including Steve Carell as Donald Rumsfeld, Sam Rockwell as George W Bush and Bill Pullman as Nelson Rockefeller. Bale is already a favourite to win the Oscar, but he'll have to battle it out with Bradley Cooper and Ethan Hawke. Again, McKay directs from his own original screenplay.

Released Fri 25 Jan

EDITOR'S CHOICE

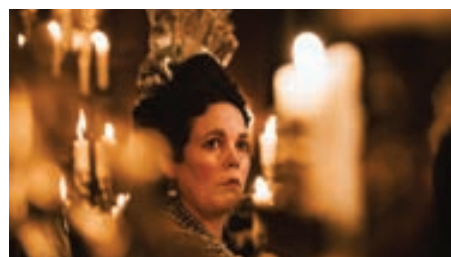
Film highlights released in January...

The Favourite CERT 15 (119 mins)

Starring **Olivia Colman, Emma Stone, Rachel Weisz, Nicholas Hoult, Joe Alwyn, Mark Gatiss**
Directed by **Yorgos Lanthimos (Ireland/UK/USA)**

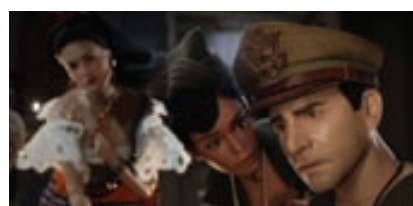
Our very own Olivia Colman is storming America with her extraordinary performance as Queen Anne in this historical comedy, supported by the Oscar-winners Emma Stone and Rachel Weisz. Word is that Ms Colman will secure herself a nomination, at least, under the direction of the wildly unpredictable and controversial Greek filmmaker Yorgos Lanthimos (*The Lobster*, *The Killing Of A Sacred Deer*).

Released Tues 1 Jan



Welcome To Marwen

CERT 12a (116 mins)



Starring **Steve Carell, Leslie Mann, Diane Kruger, Merritt Wever, Janelle Monáe, Eiza González, Gwendoline Christie**
Directed by **Robert Zemeckis (USA)**

Inspired by the documentary *Marwencol* (2010), this is the remarkable story of a man who was so severely assaulted that he suffered from major amnesia. As a form of self-therapy, he then started to build a model town in his yard, populated by miniature figures, vehicles and other furnishings from the Second World War. From the director of *Forrest Gump* and *Cast Away*.

Released Tues 1 Jan

Life Itself CERT 15 (117 mins)

Starring **Oscar Isaac, Olivia Wilde, Mandy Patinkin, Olivia Cooke, Annette Bening, Antonio Banderas** Directed by **Dan Fogelman (USA)**

The writer of *Crazy, Stupid, Love* (2011) turns to, well, life itself, for his directorial follow-up to *Danny Collins* (2015). Here, his drama follows a number of couples as they navigate the vicissitudes of, well, life itself, before a single event unites them all.

Released Fri 4 Jan



The Front Runner

CERT 15 (113 mins)

Starring **Hugh Jackman, Vera Farmiga, JK Simmons, Alfred Molina, Sara Paxton**
Directed by **Jason Reitman (USA)**

It's quite a month for American political shenanigans (see *Vice*), and here we have Hugh Jackman as Senator Gary Hart on the campaign trail. And then he dallies with that woman Donna Rice (Ms Paxton).

Released Fri 11 Jan



Love Sonia

CERT 18

Starring **Mrunal Thakur, Richa Chadha, Freida Pinto, Demi Moore, Mark Duplass**
Directed by **Tabrez Noorani (India)**

Set in the world of sex trafficking, this is the true story of a woman who tries to rescue her sister. Filmed in Mumbai, Jaipur, Hong Kong and Los Angeles.

Released Fri 11 Jan



Stan And Ollie

PG

Starring **Steve Coogan, John C Reilly, Shirley Henderson, Danny Huston**
Directed by **Jon S Baird (UK/USA/Canada)**

Laurel and Hardy remain the world's most beloved comic duo, but it was not all wine and roses. With their film career in decline, the pair embark on a stage tour in post-war Britain that truly tests the performers' bond.

Released Fri 11 Jan



Glass

CERT 12a (100 mins)

Starring **James McAvoy, Bruce Willis, Samuel L Jackson, Anya Taylor-Joy, Sarah Paulson**
Directed by **M. Night Shyamalan (USA)**

The schizophrenic that James McAvoy played so brilliantly in M Night Shyamalan's sly and suspenseful *Split* (2016) would seem to have started something. He's now become a central cog in a new franchise (known as the *Eastrail 177* trilogy), which merges Shyamalan's *Unbreakable* (2000) with the former, with Bruce Willis reprising his role as the security guard with supernatural powers.

Released Fri 18 Jan

The Upside

CERT 12a (126 mins)

Starring **Kevin Hart, Bryan Cranston, Nicole Kidman, Genevieve Angelon, Julianna Margulies** Directed by **Neil Burger (USA)**

Phillip Lacasse (Bryan Cranston) is a cultured, obscenely wealthy paraplegic who needs an assistant. Petty criminal Dell Scott (Kevin Hart) is on parole and needs a job. It's a perfect match, although it really shouldn't be. A remake of the French film

Untouchable (2011), itself based on a true story.

Released Fri 11 Jan



Beautiful Boy

CERT 15 (120 mins)

Starring **Steve Carell, Timothée Chalamet, Maura Tierney, Amy Ryan, Jack Dylan Grazer, Timothy Hutton**
Directed by **Felix Van Groeningen (USA)**

Based on the dual memoirs of father and son, this is the story of their strained relationship as the latter deals with his addiction to crystal meth. From the Belgian director of the Oscar-nominated *The Broken Circle Breakdown* (2012).

Released Fri 18 Jan

Mary, Queen Of Scots

CERT 15 (124 mins)

Starring **Saoirse Ronan, Margot Robbie, Jack Lowden, Joe Alwyn, David Tennant, Guy Pearce** Directed by **Josie Rourke (UK/USA)**

Two of the best actresses around play the royal cousins Mary Stuart and Elizabeth I, who compete for power and love in a man's world. Expect thespian fireworks. Based on the biography *My Heart Is My Own* by John Guy.

Released Fri 18 Jan



Monsters And Men CERT tbc

Starring John David Washington, Anthony Ramos, Kelvin Harrison Jr, Rob Morgan, Cara Buono
Directed by Reinaldo Marcus Green (USA)

Three witnesses to the killing of a black man by police reveal their versions of the event. John David Washington (son of Denzel) plays the black cop who is caught between his sense of duty and community.

Released Fri 18 Jan



One Nation, One King CERT tbc

Starring Gaspard Ulliel, Adèle Haenel, Olivier Gourmet, Louis Garrel Directed by Pierre Schoeller (France/Belgium)

The French are revolting again in this historical drama about the French Revolution.

Released Fri 25 Jan



Destroyer

CERT 15 (121 mins)

Starring Nicole Kidman, Toby Kebbell, Tatiana Maslany, Scoot McNairy, Sebastian Stan
Directed by Karyn Kusama (USA)

Nicole Kidman lets her hair down as an alcoholic, prematurely aged LA cop whose past as an undercover operative comes back to haunt her. Under Karyn Kusama's direction, the film feels no more special than an episode of NCIS. And, like Kidman, Kusama tries too hard to impress.

Released Fri 25 Jan



Colette CERT 15 (114 mins)

Starring Keira Knightley, Dominic West, Denise Gough, Fiona Shaw, Robert Pugh, Eleanor Tomlinson Directed by Wash Westmoreland (UK/USA)

It's hard today to envisage just how influential Colette was in France during the early part of the 20th century. She drew on her childhood, her personality and above all her ability as a writer to create a literary sensation, Claudine, her alter ego. Yet because she was a woman, she was denied the rewards of her success. This biography focuses on Colette's early life and influence and in particular her marriage to the writer and entrepreneur Henry Gauthier-Villars, a man

intoxicated by the beau monde of Paris. It's been five years since Keira Knightley has had the central role in a film and, if anything, she has grown as an actress in the interim. She not only conveys the passion and intelligence of Colette, but also a new stillness and poise. Thankfully, the director Wash Westmoreland services his screenplay with due focus, presenting a refreshingly old-fashioned film addressing very modern issues, not least female empowerment, gender fluidity and sexual diversity, making for an eloquent, highly relevant and deeply moving drama.

Released Fri 11 Jan

Second Act CERT 12a (104 mins)

Starring Jennifer Lopez, Leah Remini, Vanessa Hudgens, Treat Williams, Milo Ventimiglia
Directed by Peter Segal (USA)

While stuck in a low-paying job, Maya (Lopez) gets herself mistaken for a top-tier consultant by a private finance firm in Manhattan. All she needs now is for her street smarts to kick in...

Released Fri 25 Jan



The Mule CERT tbc

Starring Clint Eastwood, Bradley Cooper, Laurence Fishburne, Michael Peña, Dianne Wiest, Andy García Directed by Clint Eastwood (USA)



Based on an article in The New York Times, this is the true story of a man who becomes a drug trafficker for an international crime syndicate. Nothing odd about that, but this guy happens to be 90 years old. Clint Eastwood, a mere 88, plays him and also directs and produces.

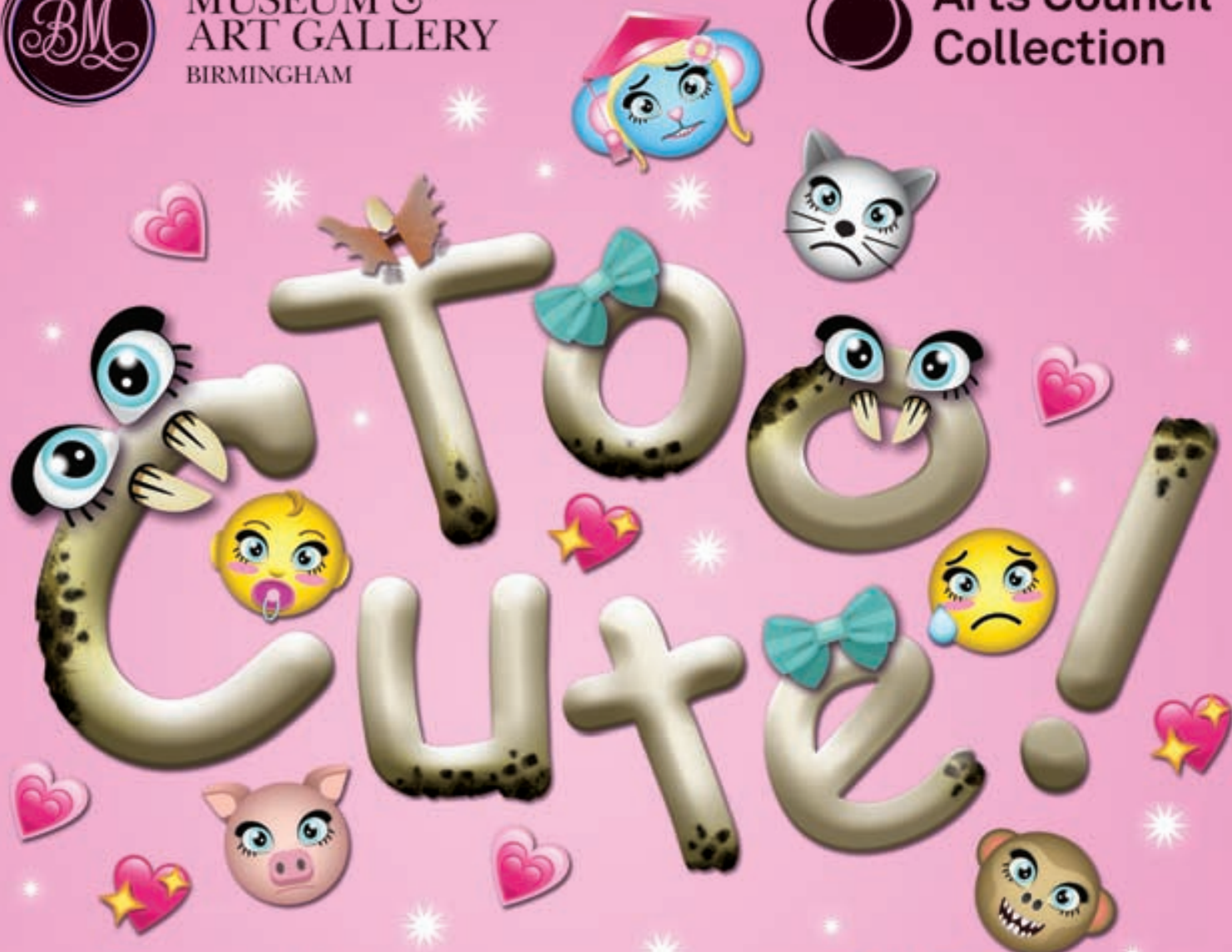
Released Fri 25 Jan



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ENGLAND**



City of Birmingham
Museums & Art Gallery
Development Trust



Sweet gets sinister

at Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

Known for her distinctive satirical films, Scottish artist Rachel Maclean is examining the world of cuteness by curating works from both the Arts Council Collection and the Birmingham Museum collection.

Too Cute! - which opens at Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery this month - reveals how objects and images can have the unique ability to be both sweet and sinister.

Via the exhibition, which is presented in a gallery reflecting the artist's signature colourful style, Maclean asks why we feel the need to share and reproduce cute things. She also questions the fine line between cuteness and creepiness.

Showcasing multiple manifestations of sinister cuteness - the pieces on display range from 19th century oil paintings to internet-inspired installations - *Too Cute!* includes works by John Isaacs, Gillian Wearing, Ana Maria Pacheco, Helen Chadwick, Paula Rego, Peter Blake and Hermann Sondermann.

The exhibition is accompanied by an interpretative video with a twist. *Dr Cute* - a grotesque Care Bear-like creature played by Rachel Maclean - presents a short lecture on the themes explored in the show, whilst repeatedly being distracted by its contents. As the doctor attempts to put forward an

academic account of cuteness and its effects, she is constantly hindered by sudden emotional responses, as artworks incite reflexes of love, repulsion and fear.

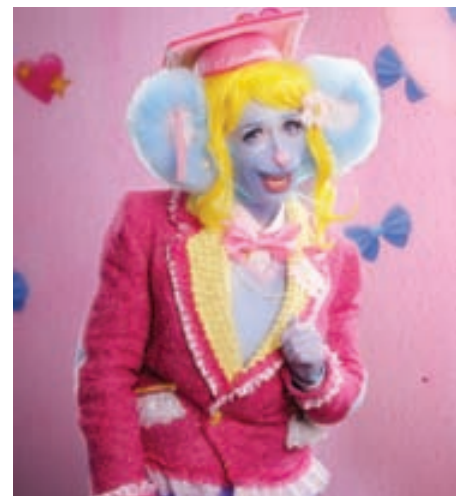
Maclean is no stranger to Birmingham, having spent August 2017 as the Bullring's artist-in-residence for Channel Four's *The Shopping Centre*. Sleeping, eating and working there, she explored the question of whether shopping can ever make people happy. Her findings resulted in a film in which she played a character called the Satisfaction Bunny and asked, 'r u satisfied?', bombarding dissatisfied shoppers with advertising.

Commenting on *Too Cute!*, Rachel says: "I've had a fantastic time exploring Birmingham's collection and the Arts Council Collection. It's been an honour to be able to bring together a show that includes so many artists who I admire. I've been fascinated by cuteness for a long time and think that, despite it being an area which so many artists investigate, it can often be overlooked as being too silly, shallow or feminine a subject for debate.

"I think cuteness is fundamental to our experience of consumer capitalism, and it's important that we take it seriously in order to understand what we use cute objects for and

the effect they have on us. Something which has come to the fore in curating the show has been the number of artists who toe the line between cuteness and creepiness. There's something fascinatingly complex about this, and for me, it's the fundamental mystery of the cute object - how can things that look sweet be simultaneously sinister?"

Too Cute! Sweet is about to get Sinister shows at Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery from Sat 26 January to Sunday 12 May





Amy Sharrocks

Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum,
until Sun 24 February

Live pieces and sonic artworks exploring Leamington Spa as a site of water are the focal point of this first major survey of Amy Sharrocks' artistic output.

The Camden-born, Sorbonne-educated sculptor, photographer and artist creates works which investigate the architecture of a moment; ephemeral and intangible pieces that evaporate or are 'just barely there'.

The exhibition brings together photographs of Amy's numerous live works with her own photos of water. It also includes a number of previously unseen drawings and prints, a series of works looking at the making of clouds and the movement of air, and a number of pieces exploring, among other subjects, risk, daring and shame.



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In the Wings: New Perspective
Moments captured by two Birmingham Royal Ballet dancers turned photographers.
© Tyrone Singleton.
Until 31 Jan

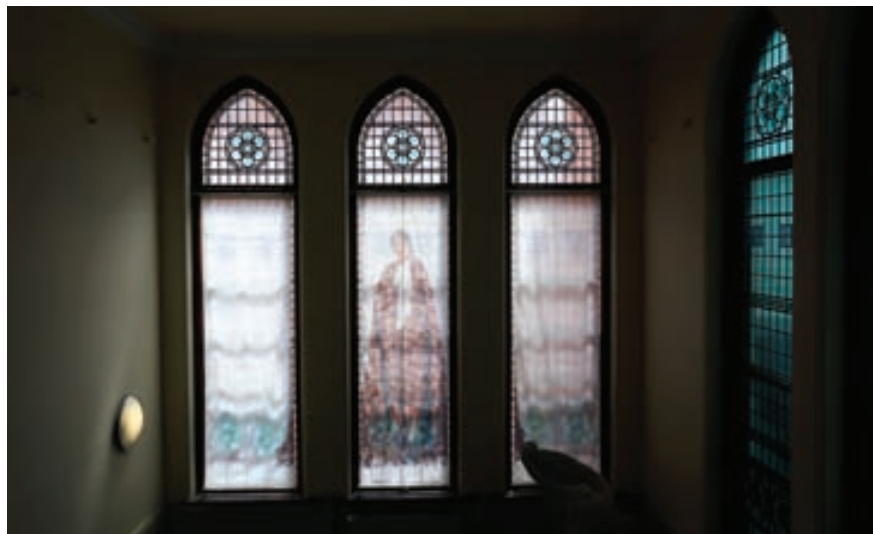


The Face of Suffrage
Photographs from the suffrage movement. Complementing an installation at New St.
Co-produced by GRAM: Maud Arncliffe-Seneval c.1908. From the LSE Library.
Until 31 Jan



Once Upon A Time - A Visual History of Pantomime
Artists Craig Earp and Danny Lloyd respond to and rework the pantomime archive.
Credit: Craig Earp, Danny Lloyd @ArtHub.
Until 5 Feb

birminghamhippodrome.com/visualarts
Birmingham Hippodrome, Hurst St, Southside, B5 4TB



Ways Of Belonging

Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Sat 19 January - Sun 17 March

Work by four young Birmingham-based female artists is brought together in Ways Of Belonging. The show is a collaboration between Midlands Arts Centre and Ort Gallery, a local artist-led exhibition space which seeks to 'represent the underrepresented' and facilitate dialogue in the community. The exhibition aims to redefine the narrative around what it means to be 'local' and to belong somewhere, in the process subverting media-generated stereotypes about certain community groups and individuals. The four artists contributing to the show are Sabiieh Awanzai Mahmoud, FreeHand-Fanatic, Farwa Moledina and Anisa Fazal.



Fertile Ground

Argentea Gallery, Birmingham, Thurs 10 January - Sat 9 February

An exhibition of new work by artists Barbara Gibson and Mark Murphy, Fertile Ground is dedicated to promoting the best artistic talent in the region. Both Barbara and Mark are highly respected artists in the field of collage photography. The exhibition marks the first time their work has been shown together. All pieces on display are available to purchase.

StART Exhibition

RBSA Gallery, until Sat 9 February

A must-attend exhibition for budding art collectors, StART features original artwork by members of the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists, all of which is priced at £300 and under.

To accompany the show, the RBSA will once again be hosting a 'studio sale' (Saturday 26 January). One of the Society's most popular annual events, the sale provides visitors with an opportunity to snap up original artworks by members and associates from as little as £20.



The Sun Never Sets

Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Sat 12 January - Sun 10 March

"I want the viewer to sense the complications," says Matthew Krishanu in talking about The Sun Never Sets, an exhibition in which he explores his childhood years spent living in Bangladesh. "The scenes depicted are not always ones of innocence. There are historical and cultural currents at play, and the childhood world is easily punctured by adult constructions and beliefs." An associated exhibition - Matthew Krishanu: A Murder Of Crows - shows at Birmingham's Ikon Gallery at the same time as The Sun Never Sets.



“ I’ve learned how to deal with fear - and that it’s okay. Just keep going towards it, don’t run from it, reach out and hold someone’s hand when you need it ”



Bear essentials

Escape the ordinary, test your limits by trying some of the world's most incredible mental and physical challenges, and achieve something epic at Birmingham's Bear Grylls Adventure...

A former SAS serviceman, a survival instructor, an honorary lieutenant-colonel, an adventurer, writer, television presenter and businessman; Bear Grylls is indeed a man of many talents. He's also the inspiration behind one of the Midlands' newest visitor attractions - The Bear Grylls Adventure park.

Part of Merlin Entertainments - the company that owns, among other venues, Alton Towers, the National Sea Life Centre, Legoland and Thorpe Park - the first-of-its-kind attraction opened at Birmingham's NEC last autumn and is suitable for visitors aged 11 and older.

"I wanted to create a large-scale attraction so that you don't have to travel the world to get a real taste of adventure," explains Bear. "We found out that 18% of Brits rarely get to do anything outside of their comfort zone. We're here to help change that. The adventure park is based on experiences that have shaped my life, pushed me to my limits and taken me far out of my comfort zone."

The park tests the skills, strength and nerve of the most intrepid thrill-seeker. Those brave enough can zip wire out of a chinook helicopter several floors up and then take on a Royal Marines-inspired high-ropes course - the most extreme in Europe. The challenge offers the 54% of Brits who're scared of heights and flying the chance to conquer both fears at the same time.

The hub of the attraction, the Basecamp, comprises a collection of mental and physical group and individual challenges designed to help visitors develop the core skills needed for adventure. As well as a maze, an assault course and target archery, the Basecamp also features escape rooms, where visitors have to race against time to

crack codes, solve puzzles and find their way to freedom using logic and resourcefulness.

Visitors can also try their hand at swimming with aquatic creatures, including fish, Black Tip Reef Sharks and Cow-nose Rays. Accompanied by a professional diving team and armed with a full snorkel and scuba kit, participants don't need any previous experience and can choose between snorkelling or full scuba diving, depending on which they feel most comfortable with.

Ever fancied skydiving? Then Bear Grylls Adventure is the place to head for. The park features a hair-raising indoor skydiving activity, where guests can experience a freefall that's almost three times longer than an average skydive. The indoor wind tunnel is operated by experienced skydiving experts, who will put intermediate visitors through their paces.

The Extreme Climb section of the park boasts replicas of El Capitan and Fontainebleau: "The attraction features some of the toughest climbs out there," says Bear, "all designed to help you test yourself to the max. It's all about helping you find the courage and tenacity to conquer your fears."

Bear will be opening similar parks in both China and the US in 2020. He then hopes to expand the brand further and build more around the world. So why did he choose Birmingham as his first destination?

"We wanted to start somewhere that had a good international feel, and I felt that Birmingham was that place. It's the UK's second city, Birmingham International station is right next door and 14,000 young people walk past the park every night going to events at the arena. Everyone has been so lovely and welcoming to us here."

Despite Bear's wealth of experience when it comes to adventuring, things don't always go according to plan for him: "I've had parachute failures, been pinned in rapids, got bitten by snakes, had close encounters with crocodiles - you name it, I've experienced it. All those things have taught me to be very grateful for life, and to be smart and safe."

So which daredevil activity does he find most challenging?

"Skydiving is definitely something that's hard for me after breaking my back in a free-fall accident whilst I was in the military, but I still have to jump and deal with heights every day in my job."

"I've learned how to deal with fear - and that it's okay. Just keep going towards it, don't run from it, reach out and hold someone's hand when you need it. It's so exciting to see people's faces when they confront some real fears. Whether they're close up with a shark or they're six storeys up, balancing on a little ledge. I love watching people leave the park; it's my favourite part. You see the smiles on their faces, and they have a real sense of pride that they've done something difficult."

"The thing I get most excited about in life is bringing adventure to people who never normally get it. The world is an incredible place that's full of adventure and opportunity, and that's what's so exciting about the park - there's lots of adventure and opportunity all under one roof."

Bear Grylls Adventure is open seven days a week and is located at the NEC, Marston Green, Birmingham. For more information, visit beargryllsadventure.com



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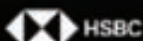
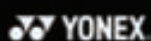


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Autosport International

NEC, Birmingham, Thurs 10 - Sun 13 January

Described as 'the world's greatest four-wheel indoor extravaganza', Autosport International caters for industry professionals and motor-

sport fans alike. Featuring every level of motor racing - from karting through to Formula One - the event offers visitors the chance to check out the latest performance road cars, chat to club members and watch precision-driving displays in the Live Action Arena.

Strictly Come Dancing Live

Arena Birmingham, Fri 18 - Mon 21 January



Strictly Come Dancing Live waltzes back onto the road this month with a supersized and sequin-filled show.

Strictly favourite and 2016 winner Ore Oduba hosts the tour for a second time, with all four Strictly TV judges - Craig Revel Horwood, Bruno Tonioli, Darcey Bussell and Shirley Ballas - adding to the glitz and glamour.

This year's star-studded line-up includes Stacey Dooley, Ashley Roberts, Dr Ranj Singh, Lauren Steadman, Joe Sugg, Graeme Swann and Faye Tozer.

Ice Skate Birmingham

Eastside City Park, Birmingham, until Sun 6 January

Ice, ice, baby! Ice Skate Birmingham is back. Voted one of the best outdoor facilities of its kind in the UK, the ice rink attracts thousands of skaters across the festive period. Visitors will be able to skate whatever the weather, as the rink is covered with a weatherproof roof.

For those who aren't so keen to take to the ice, the nearby Ice Lounge offers a wide selection of food & drink to enjoy.

Also on site is the Birmingham Big Wheel and a children's four-storey fun factory to keep the whole family entertained.



British Basketball Cup Finals

Arena Birmingham, Sun 27 January



One of the most eagerly anticipated dates on the British Basketball League (BBL) calendar, this well-established annual event sees stars of the national game go head-to-head in pursuit of coveted silverware. The get-together also features some of Europe's top slam dunkers giving it their all in a bid to become the BBL Slam Dunk Champion.

Arrows Of Time: A Tribute To Dr Who

Thinktank Science Museum, Birmingham, Fri 11 January



This brand new show celebrates the 55th anniversary of the first episode of Dr Who.

Presented in association with Immersive Experiences, Arrows Of Time sees not one but 10 Doctors battle it out with 'their darkest enemy ever' in a 35-minute full-dome planetarium presentation. The show features animated biometric talking avatars, 'stunning' visuals, and the voice of Colin Baker, the sixth Doctor, as The Narrator.



WHAT'S UP, DOC?

Dr Ranj talks about his Strictly experience

Why Strictly, and why now?

I can answer that one straight away. It's because it's the first time they said yes! I've been a massive fan of the show for years, and it's always been my pipe dream, so when anyone has ever asked me which is the one show I would like to do, it was always Strictly. It's been my dream, and this year it just so happens to have come true. I was a little overwhelmed and shocked when it did.

You saw it through to week seven. What did the experience teach you about yourself?

It taught me that I'm far more resilient than I give myself credit for. Strictly has been the hardest thing I've ever done, both physically and mentally. I've got two degrees and work in children's A&E, but I found it to be physically very demanding. You have to train so hard, and it's taught me that I can do that. I can train for six hours a day and kind of get through it, but mentally you have to be really resilient. It's very stressful, and you take on a lot of pressure. It's about coping with the anxiety which comes with being in the competition. It's made me realise that just when you think you can't do any more, you can actually dig deeper and find something. Janette [Manrara, his Strictly dance partner] taught me that, which is why I think we got on so well. She was able to support me through not only the amazing bits, but also the times when I thought I couldn't do it anymore.

Which was your favourite moment?

Oh, there were so many, and it's all such a blur now. I guess one of my most memorable moments was the first dance we did. It was to a Whitney song, and I'm a massive Whitney fan. It was one of my favourite Whitney songs, and we did the Cha Cha. That was the first time I'd ever done a formal dance of any sort. It went really well, and I absolutely loved it. I remember right at the end being completely knackered, as it was a full-on routine, but it was such an incredible buzz. It was so great, and Janette was jumping up

and down because it was the first time I'd done that routine without any mistakes. It was a really special feeling that I'll never forget.

What appeals to you most about touring with the rest of the Strictly crew?

I miss dancing so much, and I think I've become weirdly addicted. I've also missed seeing everybody because you become so close, both to the pros and the other celebs. I had kind of been thinking to myself that if I didn't get on the tour, then I would definitely take up some dance lessons, so when news came through about the tour, I was absolutely blown away. It's fun. We get to do our dances again with our partners. We get to share all that time with our friends again, and we get to go on the road and meet people who are fans of the show. It's going to be one big party. It's all the good things about the show without the stress of learning new routines every week. And because it's the same show over and over again, you just get better and better and really enjoy it. With the TV show, you have such a short space of time to learn your routine. You learn a brand new style and a brand new routine in a maximum of four days. I was also trying to do all of my other jobs, so I never really got to a point where I could do the dance and just enjoy it. I'm hoping that once I'm on the tour and the dance is in my head, I can just have fun and be myself. That's what I'm really looking forward to - being able to just enjoy the dancing instead of worrying about which step comes after which.

Has your Strictly experience fuelled your desire to do more reality TV, or is that it now?

I would never say never. This has been the first reality show that I've ever been part of, and it's been a pretty special one because there's nothing like it. Probably nothing else will give me as much of a buzz, but we'll have to see what happens.

Regarding your personal life, how old were you when you realised you were gay?

I came out later in life. I was about 30. I first had to realise who I really was, and then have the confidence to be myself before I could tell everybody else. It wasn't the easiest process. Obviously some people come out earlier than that and some people a lot later, but no matter when it is or who it is, it's not easy for people, and that's why I'm a massive champion of helping people become who they are and be happy.

Was the coming-out experience easier or harder than you anticipated?

I didn't really have any expectation of what it would be like. Growing up, I really didn't have any friends from the LGBTQ+ community, or any role models. That came later, when I was older. I did then meet and make a lot of friends who were gay. Up until then, I didn't have any expectations about the community or gay life because I really hadn't known it. My own experience was quite difficult and quite painful, but I really didn't have anything to compare it to. It was just what it was.

What advice would you give to gay Asians who are on the brink of coming out?

Firstly, don't be afraid to be who you are, because you have just as much right as everybody else to be happy. Secondly, if you need help, there are lots of people around who will help you and catch you afterwards. Finally, no matter how difficult it is, how painful it may be and what you might have to go through to get there, it always gets better. You will be happier for it in the end. For a lot of Gaysian people, it's a very difficult experience. There are many of us here who've been through it, have come out the other side and are much happier as a result.

.....

Dr Ranj joins the Strictly crew when it stops off at Arena Birmingham from Fri 18 to Mon 21 January



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JANUARY 18

Your week-
by-week
listings guide
January 2019

the list



Ghost The Musical at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre - Tues 22 - Sat 26 January

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

What's On

Tues 1 to Sun 6 January



Crimes Of The Christmas
Pudding at Lichfield Guildhall
until Sat 5 January

Mon 7 to Sun 13 January



Asomvel at The Robin, Bilston
Thurs 10 January

Mon 14 to Sun 20 January



Ramin Karimloo at
Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury
Sat 19 January

Mon 21 to Thurs 31 January



Swan Lake at the Regent
Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent
Thurs 24 - Sat 26 January

THROUGHOUT JANUARY

Visual Arts

New Art Gallery - Walsall

NEW GRADUATE RESIDENCY AWARD Bethany Dugmore develops new work which address the impact of technology, Mon 7 Jan - Sun 31 Mar

NEW SARAH TAYLOR SILVERWOOD - DAPHNE Sarah uses drawing and language as material to produce publications, animation and installation works. Her exhibition considers the relationship between women and language, taking the ancient Greek myth of Daphne & Apollo as a focus, Sat 19 Jan - Sun 12 May

Newcastle Borough Museum & Art Gallery

RONNIE CRUWYS - DRAWING THE STREET Ronnie's fascination with old buildings developed while working in Staffordshire as a conservation architect on the repair of many local listed buildings and churches. Her drawings record how the streets looked at the time and will provide a historic reference for years to come, until Tues 8 Jan

FOUR WAYS Exhibition by Ann Roach, Jacqueline Saxton, Penny Beutiman and Vicky Christmas. Working in a variety of media, the artists like to travel together to paint and sketch their surroundings and produce work which reflects their own individual styles, until Sun 13 Jan

Potteries Museum & Art Gallery - Stoke-On-Trent

A WINTER WONDERLAND Display of ceramics, the shape, decoration and design of which has been inspired by winter, until Sun 17 Feb

SEASONS Exhibition by Staffordshire Artists referencing the four season of the year and showcasing work produced by the group within the last two years, until Sun 24 Feb

VISIONS IN STONE: GILBERT LEDWARD RA - SCULPTURE AND DRAWINGS As part of the 250th anniversary celebrations of the Royal Academy, Visions In Stone explores the work of sculptor Gilbert Ledward RA (1888-1960), until Sun 31 Mar

V&A DESIGNLAB LOANS Display of six ceramic objects from the V&A Museum, presented as part of their educational initiative, DesignLab Nation, until Sun 28 July

NEW THE COLLECTION OF TED WATKIN Ted Watkin was an active member and chairman of both the North Staffordshire Group of the Geologists' Association and the North Staffordshire Field Club. His vast collecting interests included minerals

and fossils, Fri 25 Jan - Mon 1 July

Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery

OPEN ART EXHIBITION Shropshire-based artists' responses to the themes of Wilfred Owen's poems, using a variety of media, until Fri 4 Jan

FRACTURE Exhibition celebrating the story of Sir Robert Jones, Dame Agnes Hunt and the pioneering practices which they used to save the lives and minds of thousands of people during the First World War, until Sat 19 Jan

STRANGE MEETING Visual interpretations of quotes from 14 different Wilfred Owen poems, until Fri 25 Jan

The Willow Art Gallery, Oswestry

WINTER OPEN EXHIBITION The Shropshire Guild of Contemporary Craft exhibits a wide range of work, including stained glass, ceramics, furniture, jewellery, weaving and textiles, until Sat 12 Jan

NEW NEW YEAR OPEN 2019 Showcasing work by established and emerging artists, Sat 19 Jan - Sat 9 Mar

Wolverhampton Art Gallery

JANE & LOUISE WILSON: UNDEAD SUN Large-scale video installation inspired by archive photographs, artefacts and diary entries. It explores the impact of the First World War and the technological forces that it unleashed, until Sun 20 Jan

HAND DRAWN ACTION PACKED New exhibition bringing together the work of 10 international artists, until Sun 3 Mar

WE ARE THIRTY Exhibition showcasing 30 years-worth of graduate work from the Illustration degree course at the School of Art, University of Wolverhampton, until Sun 3 Mar

THE DRAWINGS OF JOHN FULLWOOD Display of work by the acclaimed 19th century artist, who exhibited at the Royal Academy, The Grosvenor Gallery and the Paris Salon, until Sun 24 Mar

Other VISUAL ARTS

WINTER FESTIVE EXHIBITION Featuring a selection of work by local artists, including paintings, ceramics, wood, glass and textiles, until Sat 26 Jan, VAN Gallery, Shrewsbury

NEW JOURNEY, PILGRIMAGES AND SKIRMISHES A collection of recent landscapes by Nigel Glaze, Wed 9 Jan - Tues 26 Feb, Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, Craven Arms



Citylightz - O2 Academy, Birmingham

Gigs

FLARES SINGLE LAUNCH Thurs 3 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

GUNS 2 ROSES Thurs 3 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

DINO BAPTISTE Thurs 3 Jan, The Jam House, Birmingham



CATAPULT CLUB FEAT (SKETCH) Fri 4 Jan, O2 Academy, Birmingham

HI ON MAIDEN Fri 4 Jan, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

NEARLY DAN Fri 4 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

ROD & THE FACEZ Fri 4 Jan, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

THE SEARCHERS - FAREWELL CONCERT Fri 4 Jan, Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

CITYLIGHTZ Sat 5 Jan, O2 Academy, B'ham

JEAN GENIE Sat 5 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

THE ESSENTIAL PARTY BAND Sat 5 Jan, The

River Rooms, Stourbridge

ELO ENCOUNTER Sat 5 Jan, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

THE RICKY NELSON ROCK & ROLL SHOW Sun 6 Jan, Lichfield Guildhall

NIK TURNERS NEW SPACE RITUAL Sun 6 Jan, The Robin, Bilston



Nearly Dan - The Robin, Bilston

Classical Music

THE JOHANN STRAUSS GALA Featuring the Johann Strauss Orchestra, John Rigby (conductor), Corinne Cowling (soprano) & William Morgan (tenor). Programme includes Blue Danube Waltz, Cinderella Waltz, Radetzky March & the Thunder and Lightning Polka, Tues 1 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

HALLE VIENNESE CONCERT Featuring Jamie Phillips (conductor) & Joanne Lunn (soprano), Fri 4 Jan, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

VIENNESE NEW YEAR Featuring Stephen Bell (conductor), Jennifer France (soprano) & the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Programme includes works by J. Strauss II, Waldteufel, Lehár & E. Strauss, Sun 6 Jan, Symphony Hall, B'ham

Laidlaw stars as the Wizard/Professor alongside Chisara Agor (Dorothy Gale) in a new staging of L Frank Baum's classic story, until Sun 13 Jan, The REP, Birmingham

A CHRISTMAS CAROL David Edgar's acclaimed staging of Dickens' festive classic, showing at the RSC for a second year, until Sun 20 Jan, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS Brand new staging of Kenneth Grahame's enchanting riverside tale, until Sat 26 Jan, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

TARTUFFE New updated version of Moliere's provocative French classic, until Sat 23 Feb, The Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

THE TALE OF ROBIN HOOD Presented by Jars Of Clay Theatre Co, Wed 2 - Sat 5 Jan, Blue Orange Theatre, B'ham

Comedy

LAURA LEXX, BRENNAN REECE, MARK ROW & TOM GLOVER Thurs 3 Jan, The George Hotel, Lichfield

KUM-N-AVALOFF COMEDY NIGHT Thurs 3 Jan, Stourbridge Town Hall

GARRY POWNDLAND & FRIENDS Fri 4 - Sat 5 Jan, The Glee Club, B'ham

Theatre

CRIMES OF THE CHRISTMAS PUDDING The award-winning New Old Friends present a 'fast-paced, gig-filled romp of a show', until Sat 5 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

THE WIZARD OF OZ Doctors star Lorna

Kids Shows

EMILY BROWN AND THE THING Tall Stories present a magical adventure for the whole family to enjoy, until Sun 6 Jan, The Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

THE TIGER WHO CAME TO TEA Stage adaptation of Judith Kerr's much-loved picture book for children, Wed 26 Dec - Sun 13 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

Pantomime

MOTHER GOOSE Festive fun aplenty, with the ever-popular Brad Pitt in the lead role, until Sun 6 Jan, Theatre



Crimes Of The Christmas Pudding

Lichfield Guildhall, until Sat 5 January

An alternative festive-season comedy for adults, Crimes Of The Christmas Pudding takes its inspiration from sources as diverse as Agatha Christie and the Jason Bourne movies. The show features a talented cast of four who between them play an impressively wide range of thoroughly quirky characters.

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.

Severn, Shrewsbury

CINDERELLA Festive family favourite starring Isabel Gamble, Tony Discipline, Anna Kumble, Joe Chambers & Carl Dufield, until Sun 6 Jan, The Place, Oakengates Theatre, Telford

ROBIN HOOD Jonathan Wilkes & Christian Patterson star in a 'Sheriff-busting pantomime extravaganza', until Sun 6 Jan, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

SLEEPING BEAUTY Brand new spin on an old yarn, starring Eva Crawford as Princess Rose & Nic Lamont as Carabosse, until Sun 6 Jan, The Core Theatre, Solihull

SLEEPING BEAUTY Starring Debbie McGee, Richard Cadell & Sooty, Doreen Tipton and Ian Adams, until Sun 13 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

PETER PAN Jimmy Osmond, Meera Syal, Jaymi Hensley and Matt Slack star in a swashbuckling pantomime adventure featuring 'barrels of laughter, amazing flying effects and a trip to Neverland', until Sun 27 Jan, Birmingham Hippodrome

ALADDIN Presented by DE Caversmill Theatre Company, Sat 29 Dec - Sun

6 Jan, Stoke Repertory Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

ALADDIN Family pantomime, Sat 5 - Sat 26 Jan, Theatre On The Steps, Bridgnorth, Shropshire

Film

INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

RALPH BREAKS THE INTERNET (PG) Animation/Adventure. With the voices of John C. Reilly, Sarah Silverman. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 28 Dec - Thurs 3 Jan

WILDLIFE (12A) Drama. Starring Jake Gyllenhaal, Carey Mulligan. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 28 Dec - Thurs 3 Jan

SMALLFOOT (U) Animation/Adventure. With the voices of Channing Tatum, James Corden. Wern Town Hall, North Shropshire, Mon Dec 31, Wed 2 - Thurs 3 Jan

THE NUTCRACKER AND THE FOUR REALMS (PG) Adventure/Family. Starring Mackenzie Foy, Keira Knightley. Malvern Theatres, Wed 2 - Thurs 3 Jan; Festival Drayton Centre, Market



Mother Goose - Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

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Saturday 1 - Sunday 6 January

Drayton, North Shropshire, Thurs 3 Jan

BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY (12a) Biography/Drama. Starring Rami Malek, Joseph Mazzello. Light House Media Centre, Wolverhampton, Wed 2 - Thurs 10 Jan

PETERLOO (12a) Drama/History. Starring Rory Kinnear, Maxine Peake. Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire, Thurs 3 Jan

IN BETWEEN (15) Drama. Starring Mouna Hawa, Sana Jammeli. Foreign language, subtitled. The Hive, Shrewsbury, Fri 4 Jan

THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT (18) Drama/Horror. Starring Matt Dillon, Bruno Ganz. Light House Media Centre, Wolverhampton, Fri 4, Sun 6 - Thurs 10 Jan

MARY POPPINS RETURNS (U) Adventure/Family. Starring Emily Blunt, Emily Mortimer. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 4 - Thurs 10 Jan

NEW FILMS ON GENERAL RELEASE:

Released from Tues 1 Jan, showing at selected cinemas

THE FAVOURITE (15)

WELCOME TO MARWEN (12a)

Events

TWIXMAS WALKS Walk off those Christmas indulgences and escape from the washing-up and wrapping paper with a walk around the park, until Tues 1 Jan, Weston Park, Nr Shifnal

MAGICAL LANTERN FESTIVAL 2018 The festival is back at the Gardens with all-new lanterns, until Tues 1 Jan, Birmingham Botanical Gardens

LICHFIELD WINTER WONDERLAND Featuring a Christmas market, ice rink, fair rides and lots of family entertainment. Party nights for grown-ups only are also available, until Fri 4 Jan, Beacon Park, Lichfield

CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL Display of 40 trees illuminating St Chad's circular nave, until Fri 4 Jan, St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury

MOSCOW STATE CIRCUS 'MIRACLES' until Sat 5 Jan, NEC, Birmingham

WINTER WONDERLAND STOKE-ON-TRENT A festive haven featuring all things Christmas, until Sun 6 Jan, Birch Ter-

race car park, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent
ICE SKATE BIRMINGHAM Skate whatever the weather on the weatherproof rink, until Sun 6 Jan, Eastside Park, Birmingham

FESTIVE SEASON SERVICE Take a leisurely steam-train journey along the beautiful Severn Valley, hopefully with a sprinkling of snow in evidence, until Sun 6 Jan, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley

NEW YEAR CRAFTS: CREATE A CALENDAR Use a variety of craft materials to design and create a unique calendar for the year ahead, Wed 2 Jan, Blakesley Hall, Birmingham

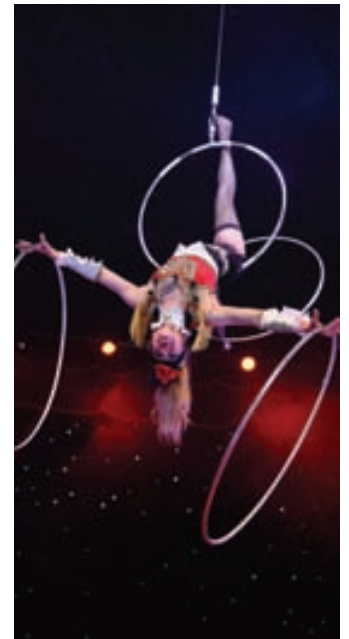
MANSION WINTER TOURS The Mansion is only open for exclusive tours on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, Fri 4 - Sun 6 Jan, Attingham Park, Shrewsbury

BACKSTAGE TOUR: GENERAL Journey behind the scenes at one of Britain's premier producing theatres, Sat 5 Jan, The REP, Birmingham

OPEN ASTON Enjoy a wander around the grand old mansion, Sun 6 Jan, Aston Hall, Birmingham

SUNDAY LOCAL HISTORY TALK Julie Schroder presents 'Birmingham's

story told in stone - from the depths of time to the present day', Sun 6 Jan, Blakesley Hall, Birmingham



Moscow State Circus - NEC, Birmingham



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Gigs

CUPCAKKE Mon 7 Jan, The Asylum, B'ham

ELLA MAI Thurs 8 Jan, O2 Institute, B'ham



WOLF & MOON Wed 9 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

BECKY MILLS & RUTH ANGELL PLUS DAVID FISHER Wed 9 Jan, The Red Lion Folk Club, Birmingham

PASADENA ROOF ORCHESTRA Wed 9 Jan, New Vic Theatre, New-castle-upon-Tyne

ASOMVEL Thurs 10 Jan, The Robin, Bilston



CATAPULT CLUB FEAT OPOLLO Fri 11 Jan, O2 Academy, Birmingham

JUST FLOYD Fri 11 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

BROKEN MINDS & DUB-GASM - 4 DA CAUSE Fri 11 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

UK GUNS 'N' ROSES Fri 11 Jan, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

BLACK ELVIS Fri 11 Jan, The Night Owl, B'ham

BAREFOOTIN' WITH ED EDWARDS AND FRIENDS Fri 11 Jan, The Night Owl, Birmingham

RICKY COOL AND THE IN CROWD Fri 11 Jan, Lichfield Guildhall

ELO AGAIN Fri 11 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

WHITESNAKE UK + TOTAL THUNDER Fri 11 Jan, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

FLAMINGO Fri 11 Jan, Lichfield Guildhall

THE DIME NOTES Fri 11 Jan, Pizza Express Live, Birmingham

CATAPULT CLUB FEAT THE SUNSET BEACH HUT Sat 12 Jan, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE MODFATHERS Sat 12 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

MIKE HOLLOWAY Sat 12 Jan, Pizza Express Live, Birmingham

EMAROSA Sat 12 Jan, The Asylum, B'ham

LET ME ENTERTAIN YOU Sat 12 Jan, The Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

METAL MILITIA Sat 12 Jan, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

KICK UP THE 80'S Sat 12 Jan, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

THE MIDNIGHT SOUL BAND Sat 12 Jan, The Night Owl, B'ham

KOJO FUNDS Sat 12 Jan, O2 Institute, Birmingham



SOMEONE LIKE YOU - THE ADELE SONGBOOK Sat 12 Jan, The Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

GORDON HENDRICKS AS ELVIS Sat 12 Jan, The Stoke Repertory Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

WHOLE LOTTA DC & MENTALICA Sat 12 Jan, The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton

BABY JOOLS & THE JAZZAHOLICS Sat 12 Jan, Lichfield Guildhall

A BOWIE CELEBRATION Sun 13 Jan, O2 Institute, Birmingham

BAD SUNS Sun 13 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

BRAVADO Sun 13 Jan, The Robin, Bilston



Wolf & Moon - Hare & Hounds, Birmingham



Circus Of Horrors - The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

Classical Music

CITY OF BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: HAYDN TO BEETHOVEN Featuring Piotr Anderszewski (conductor/piano). Programme includes works by Haydn, Mozart & Beethoven, Wed 9 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham



CBSO CENTRE STAGE: THE JANE AUSTEN SONG BOOK Featuring Alexandra Gibson (soprano), Martin Perkins (square piano), Julia Åberg & Kelly McCusker (baroque violins) & Jackie Tyler (baroque cello), Thurs 10 Jan, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

Comedy

ANDY ROBINSON Thurs 10 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON FEATURING COMIC TBC Thurs 10 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ANDREW BIRD, SARAH KEYWORTH, AL-ISTAIR WILLIAMS & FREDDY QUINNE Sat 12 Jan, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

SPONTANEOUS POTTER Sun 13 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

COMMONISM A performed conversation piece exploring nationality, internationality, theatre & politics, Tues 8 - Fri 11 Jan, The REP, Birmingham

CIRCUS OF HORRORS: PSYCHO ASYLUM An amalgamation of bizarre and fantastic circus acts, all woven into a 'sensational shock-horror story', Thurs 10 Jan, The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

JUST LIKE THAT! THE TOMMY COOPER SHOW Celebration of one of Britain's favourite comedians - complete with misfiring magic, trademark fez and quickfire gags, Fri 11 - Sat 12 Jan, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, B'ham

Pantomime

SLEEPING BEAUTY Starring Debbie McGee, Richard Cadell & Sooty, Doreen Tipton and Ian Adams, until Sun 13 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

PETER PAN Jimmy Osmond, Meera Syal, Jaymi Hensley and Matt Slack star in a swashbuckling pantomime adventure which promises 'barrels of laughter, amazing flying effects and a trip to Neverland', until Sun 27 Jan, Birmingham Hippodrome

SNOW WHITE Birmingham Youth Theatre presents its version of the classic tale, complete with twists, turns, dancing, singing and laughs aplenty, Thurs 10 - Sat 12 Jan, The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

SNOW WHITE Birmingham Youth Theatre presents its version of the classic tale, complete with twists, turns, dancing, singing and laughs aplenty, Thurs 10 - Sat 12 Jan, The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

ROBIN HOOD AND THE REVOLTING PEASANTS Oddsocks bring their trade-

What's on...



Friday 25 January, 7.30pm

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Thursday 31 January, 7.30pm

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Friday 15 February, 7.30pm

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Saturday 16 February, 7.30pm

LEGENDS OF AMERICAN COUNTRY SHOW



Wednesday 20 February, 7.30pm

FAST LOVE

A TRIBUTE TO GEORGE MICHAEL



Thursday 21 February, 7.30pm

BLACK MAGIC: THE LITTLE MIX SHOW



Wednesday 27 February, 7.30pm

AN EVENING WITH STEVE BULL

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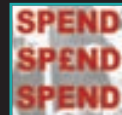
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SAT 16 FEB

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15th - 19th Jan, 7.30pm

(2.30pm Sat Mat)

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Tickets: £12, £10 Tue & Sat Mat



23rd Jan, 7pm

Once Upon A Wednesday

Lilly and Billy

Tickets: £7adv, £8.50 otd

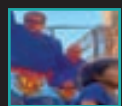


24th Jan, 7pm

Film

Lady Macbeth (15)

Tickets: £6



31st Jan, 1.30pm & 7.30pm

Dadman

Tickets: £10 adults £8 conc.

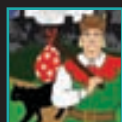


14th Feb, 7pm

Film

Romeo and Juliet (12)

Tickets: £6

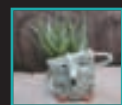


19th - 23rd Feb, 7.30pm

(2.30pm Sat Mat)

Dick Whittington

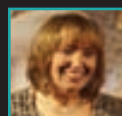
Tickets: £12, £11 Conc, Family £40



21st Feb, 10am - 3.30pm

Children's Holiday Workshop

Tickets: £15

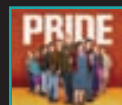


27th Feb, 7pm

Once Upon A Wednesday

Christine McMahon

Tickets: £7adv, £8.50 otd



28th Feb, 7pm

Film

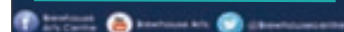
Pride (15)

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ROBIN HOOD Join Robin and his Merry Men as they take on the evil Sheriff, Fri 11 - Sat 19 Jan, Oldbury Rep

Talks

OUT-SPOKEN Hosted by Joelle Taylor and featuring work from two of the UK's best-known poets, Anthony Anaxagorou and Malika Booker, Sat 12 Jan, The REP, Birmingham

AN EVENING WITH ALICE ROBERTS The anthropologist, author & broadcaster shares insights, anecdotes and behind-the-scenes stories from her exploration of Britain's past, Sat 12 Jan, Lichfield Garrick



Film

INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

MAMMA MIA 2 (PG) Comedy/Musical. Starring Amanda Seyfried, Meryl Streep. Stourbridge Town Hall, Mon 7 Jan

ON CHESIL BEACH (15) Drama/Music. Starring Billy Howle, Saoirse Ronan. Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shropshire, Mon 7 Jan

THE LAVENDER HILL MOB (U) Comedy/Crime. Starring Alec Guinness, Stanley Holloway. Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, Tues 8 Jan

MARY POPPINS RETURNS (U) Adventure/Family. Starring Emily Blunt, Emily Mortimer. Light House Media Centre, Wolverhampton, Mon 7 - Thurs 17 Jan

SUSPIRIA (18) Fantasy/Horror. Starring Dakota Johnson, Tilda Swinton. Stoke Film Theatre, Tues 8 Jan

NAE PASARAN! (12a) Documentary. MAC, Birmingham, Tues 8 - Thurs 10 Jan; Stoke Film Theatre, Thurs 10 Jan

SWIMMING WITH MEN (12a)

Comedy/Drama. Starring Rob Brydon, Rupert Graves. Wem Town Hall, North Shropshire, Tues 8 & Thurs 10 Jan

CUSTODY (15) Drama. Starring Léa Drucker, Denis Ménochet. Foreign language, subtitled. The Hive, Shrewsbury, Wed 9 Jan

A SUNDAY IN HELL (U) Documentary/Sport. Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, Thurs 10 Jan

BLACKKKLANSMAN (15) Biography/Crime. Starring John David Washington, Adam Driver. Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, Fri 11 Jan

THE OLD MAN AND THE GUN (12A) Comedy/Crime. Starring Robert Redford, Sissy Spacek. Stoke Film Theatre, Fri 11 - Sat 12 Jan

STAN & OLLIE (15) Biography/Comedy. Starring John C. Reilly, Shirley Henderson. Light House Media Centre, Wolverhampton, Fri 11 - Wed 16, Sun 20 Jan; Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 11 - Thurs 24 Jan

LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL (PG) Comedy/Drama. Starring Roberto Benigni, Nicoletta Braschi. Foreign lan-

guage, subtitled. Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire, Sat 12 Jan

Events

AUTOSPORT INTERNATIONAL Featuring every level of motor racing - from karting through to Formula One, Thurs 10 - Sun 13 Jan, NEC, B'ham

PERFORMANCE AND TUNING CAR SHOW Thurs 10 - Sun 13 Jan, NEC, B'ham

GHOST THEATRE TOUR Journey into the depths of one of the UK's most haunted theatres, Fri 11 Jan, The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

ARROWS OF TIME Celebration of the 55th anniversary of the first broadcast of Dr Who, Fri 11 Jan, Thinktank Science Museum, Birmingham

BACKSTAGE TOUR: GENERAL Journey behind the scenes at one of Britain's premier producing theatres, Sat 12 Jan, The REP, Birmingham

GHOST TOURS Experience a spooky evening in one of Britain's most haunted buildings, Sat 12 Jan, Aston Hall, Birmingham

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FRI 11 JAN NEARLY DAN IN CONCERT 22nd ANNIVERSARY TOUR 2019	FRI 11 JAN ONE NIGHT OF ELVIS WITH LEE 'MEMPHIS' KING
SAT 16 JAN JEAN GENIE THE WORLD'S NO.1 TRIBUTE TO DAVID BOWIE FEAT JOHN MAJNWARING	TUE 23 JAN LISA MILLS FROM MISSISSIPPI, THE INCREDIBLE SOUL / GOSPEL / BLUES SENSATION
SUN 6 JAN NIK TURNER'S NEW SPACE RITUAL SPACE ROCK PIONEERS	WED 23 JAN MARTIN BARRE BAND CLASSIC 'TRILL' MUSIC FROM HIS DISTINGUISHED SOLO CAREER
THUR 10 JAN ASOMVEL "A BAND LOUDER THAN MOTORHEAD"	THUR 24 JAN CLEM BURKE & BOOTLEG BLONDIE PLAY 'PARALLEL LINES'
FRI 11 JAN JUST FLOYD THE UK'S MOST AUTHENTIC LIVE PINK FLOYD TRIBUTE	FRI 11 JAN JOHNNY 2 BAD THE ULTIMATE TRIBUTE TO UB40
SAT 12 JAN THE MODFATHERS THE UK'S NO.1 PAUL WELLEN TRIBUTE	SAT 12 JAN ABBA THE ULTIMATE 70's NIGHT OUT!
SUN 13 JAN BRAVADO THE TRIBUTE TO RUSH	WED 30 JAN KEITH JAMES IN CONCERT THE SONGS OF LEONARD COHEN
THUR 17 JAN AYNSLEY LISTER BAND AWESOME BRITISH ROCK BLUES	THUR 24 JAN MORÉTALLICA THE HARDEST HITTING, MOST EXCITING METALLICA TRIBUTE! + SUPPORTS DEVILS DICE + TBA

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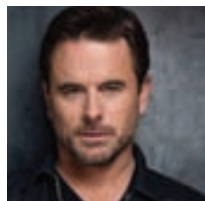
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Neil & Liam Finn - Birmingham Town Hall

Gigs

CHARLES ESTEN Tues 15 Jan, Town Hall, Birmingham



CAMERONAZI + MUPPY + SUBJECTZ + DJ JACKY P Tues 15 Jan, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

THE WEDDING CRASHERS Tues 15 Jan, The Jam House, B'ham

CARL SINCLAIR TRIO Tues 15 Jan, The Jam House, Birmingham

NINEBARROW Wed 16 Jan, The Red Lion Folk Club, B'ham

THE STREETS Wed 16 Jan, O2 Academy, Birmingham

AYNSLEY LISTER BAND Thurs 17 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

AVATAR Thurs 17 Jan, O2 Institute, B'ham

LIMEHOUSE LIZZY Thurs 17 Jan, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Staffordshire

RAVE GROOVE PROJECT Thurs 17 Jan, The Jam House, Birmingham

SOUL LEGENDS FEAT LEMAR Thurs 17 Jan,

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

OASISH Fri 18 Jan, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

ROYAL REPUBLIC Fri 18 Jan, O2 Academy, Birmingham

DAN + SHAY Fri 18 Jan, O2 Institute, B'ham

CRAIG CHARLES Fri 18 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

THE BEE GEES STORY Fri 18 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

THE ONCE Fri 18 Jan, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

THE SUPERSKAS Fri 18 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

THE FESTIVALS EXPERIENCE Fri 18 Jan, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

FRANCIS DUNNERY - THE BIG LAD IN THE WINDMILL Fri 18 Jan, The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton

SUBTERRANEANS Fri 18 - Sat 19 Jan, The Jam House, Birmingham

ULTRA 90'S Sat 19 Jan, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

DIG Sat 19 Jan, The Night Owl, B'ham

NEIL & LIAM FINN Sat 19 Jan, Town Hall, Birmingham

ONE NIGHT OF ELVIS WITH LEE MEMPHIS KING Sat 19 Jan, The

Robin, Bilston

WE ARE NOT DEVO Sat 19 Jan, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

JESSOP, JESSOP, JESSOP Sat 19 Jan, Pizza Express Live, B'ham

QUADROPHENIA Sat 19 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

MARQUIS DRIVE Sat 19 Jan, The Night Owl, Birmingham

STEREOTONICS Sat 19 Jan, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

SOUNDS OF GLENN MILLER ERA Sat 19 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

TOTAL VIBRACTION Sat 19 Jan, The Hive, Shrewsbury

RAMIN KARIMLOO Sat 19 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury



ALL VINYL PROMOTIONS PRESENTS: WAX ON - THE FREE PARTY Sat 19 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

MARTYN JOSEPH Sun 20 Jan, MAC, B'ham

HITS OF MOTOWN Sun 20 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

Classical Music

LUNCHTIME ORGAN CONCERT WITH THOMAS TROTTER Mon 14 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

MENDELSSOHN'S VIOLIN CONCERTO Featuring the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Benjamin Beilman (violin) & Andrew Gourlay (conductor)/ Programme includes works by Dvorak & Mendelssohn, Wed 16 - Sat 19 Jan, Symphony Hall, B'ham

MATTHEW WADSWORTH & JULIA DOYLE - AN INTIMATE RECITAL Programme includes works by Britten, Purcell, John Dowland & Laura Snowden, Thurs 17 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

QUINTETS AT DUSK: INNOVATION ENSEMBLE Featuring Ben Nabarro & Martin Cropper (violins), Robin Ireland (viola), Sarah-Jane Bradley (viola) & Richard Jenkinson (cello). Programme includes works by Bruckner & Mozart, Sun 20 Jan, The Lion Hotel, Shrewsbury

grounds who meet every week at their local baths, Thurs 17 - Fri 18 Jan, Midlands Arts Centre, B'ham

STOLEN The Devil's Violin Company present a tale of lost loves, bravery and, above all, hope, Fri 18 Jan, The Talbot Theatre, Whitchurch, North Shropshire

AN INDIAN ABROAD Pariah Khan's new solo show follows the character of Krishnan on a journey from middle-class India to the 'exotic island of Great Britain', Fri 18 - Sat 19 Jan, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, B'ham

BRAVE NEW WORDS V Showcase of 'new written works, dramatic scripts, funny plays and exciting excerpts', Fri 18 - Sat 19 Jan, Hall Green Little Theatre, Birmingham

THE ADULT PANTO: HANSEL AND GRETEL GO DOWN IN THE WOODS The Market Theatre Company present a 'corrupt' version of the traditional fairytale, Sat 19 Jan, Prince of Wales Centre, Cannock

Kids Shows

THE SNOWMAN Stage show based on Raymond Briggs' popular children's book, Wed 16 - Sat 26 Jan, The REP, Birmingham

UNCLE'S STORY SHOP Unique interactive theatre experience for children aged four to seven, Sat 19 Jan, The REP, Birmingham

Comedy

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON FEATURING COMIC TBC Thurs 17 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JIM DAVIDSON Sat 19 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

SAM AVERY Sat 19 Jan, The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

RUDI LICKWOOD, DAISY EARL, HAYLEY ELLIS & COMIC TBC Sat 19 Jan, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

DAMION LARKIN FEATURING THREE COMICS TBC Sat 19 Jan, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

Pantomime

PETER PAN Jimmy Osmond, Meera Syal, Jaymi Hensley and Matt Slack star in a swashbuckling pantomime adventure featuring 'barrels of laughter, amazing flying effects and a trip to Neverland', until Sun 27 Jan, Birmingham Hippodrome

Theatre

SPEND SPEND SPEND The Mellow Dramatics present a new musical telling the story of Pools winner Viv Nicholson, Tues 15 - Sat 19 Jan, Brew-house Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

SHERLOCK HOLMES One-man homage to the world's greatest detective, Wed 16 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

CIRCUS OF HORRORS: PSYCHO ASYLUM An amalgamation of bizarre and fantastic circus acts, all woven into a 'sensational shock-horror story', Thurs 17 Jan, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

STEAMING The story of four women from completely different back-

Events

MANSION WINTER TOURS Fri 18 - Sun 20 Jan, Attingham Park, Shrewsbury

NATIONAL RUNNING SHOW The UK's biggest independent running exhibition, with all the kit, tech, nutrition advice and inspiration you need to plan your running season, Fri 19 - Sun 20 Jan, NEC, Birmingham



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Friday 18th

Saturday 19th

Friday 25th

Sunday 27th

FEBRUARY

Sunday 3rd

Friday 8th

Saturday 16th

MARCH

Saturday 23rd

Sunday 31st

APRIL

Friday 19th

Saturday 20th

Sunday 21st

The Joni Mitchell Songbook

The Urban Voodoo Machine

I.O.T.A.

The Sleaze Brothers

Ashley Hutchings

The West Coast Eagles

Gigspanner

King Pleasure & the Biscuit Boys

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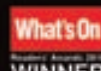
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Gigs

JAKE HILL & JOSH A
Mon 21 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

BEN HOWARD Mon 21 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

JAZZ ORCHESTRA: CONTEMPORARY BRITS Mon 21 Jan, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

MASTODON Tues 22 Jan, O2 Academy, Birmingham

FRANK TURNER Tues 22 Jan, Arena B'ham

LISA MILLS Tues 22 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

ASHLEY ALLEN QUINTET Tues 22 Jan, The Jam House, Birmingham

UNCLE ACID & THE DEADBEATS Wed 23 Jan, O2 Institute, Birmingham

SUCH GOLD Wed 23 Jan, The Asylum, Birmingham

JEZ LOWE Wed 23 Jan, The Red Lion Folk Club, Birmingham

MARTIN BARRE BAND Wed 23 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

BLACK MIDI Wed 23 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

THE 1975 Wed 23 Jan, Arena Birmingham

STEVE SAUNDERS PRESENTS THE JAZZ CLUB Wed 23 Jan, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

OMYO Thurs 24 Jan, O2 Academy, B'ham

WAYWARD SONS + DOOMSDAY OUTLAW

Thurs 24 Jan, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

GARETH WILLIAMS, CLARK TRACEY, ARNIE SOMOGYI TRIO Thurs 24 Jan, Eastside Jazz Club, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

CLEM BURKE & BOOTLEG BLONDIE Thurs 24 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

ROCKFORD Thurs 24 Jan, The Jam House, Birmingham

GENESIS VISIBLE TOUCH Thurs 24 Jan, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

CLEVELAND WATKISS ALLSTARS Thurs 24 Jan, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

PAMA INTERNATIONAL LIVE Thurs 24 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

AMY G Thurs 24 Jan, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

MARTYN JOSEPH Thurs 24 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

THE HUNNA Thurs 24 - Sat 26 Jan, O2 Institute, Birmingham

CATAPULT CLUB FEAT ALI GILBERT EP LAUNCH Fri 25 Jan, O2 Academy, Birmingham

JOHNNY 2 BAD Fri 25 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

THE LOST PROJECTS Fri 25 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

AFRO-CUBAN JAZZ ORCHESTRA Fri 25 Jan, Eastside Jazz Club, Royal Birmingham

Conservatoire

999 + SUPPORT Fri 25 Jan, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

ARETHA: RESPECT Fri 25 Jan, The Place, Oakengates Theatre, Telford, Shropshire

SNOW PATROL Fri 25 Jan, Arena B'ham

CHRIS CONNOR: THE WORLD FAMOUS ELVIS Fri 25 Jan, Forest Arts Centre, Walsall

ULTIMATE COLDPLAY Fri 25 Jan, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

THE JERSEY BEATS: OH WHAT A NITE! Fri 25 Jan, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

THE STUMBLE Fri 25 Jan, Lichfield Guildhall

SHAKATAK Fri 25 Jan, Pizza Express Live, Birmingham

SOME GUYS HAVE ALL THE LUCK Fri 25 Jan, Stafford Gatehouse

PAUL CARRACK Fri 25 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE SIMON AND GARFUNKEL STORY Sat 26 Jan, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

SLOTHRUST + ACTIVE BIRD COMMUNITY Sat 26 Jan, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

DIG Sat 26 Jan, The Night Owl, B'ham

KILLERSTREAM Sat 26 Jan, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

BOOTLEG ABBA + BEE GEES FEVER Sat 26 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

NICKELBACK'D Sat 26 Jan, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

GAVIN JAMES Sat 26 Jan, O2 Institute, Birmingham

GIN ANNIE - ALBUM LAUNCH Sat 26 Jan, The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton

MUSED Sat 26 Jan, O2 Academy, Birmingham

BRONNIE - GEEKS & FREAKS TOUR Sun 27 Jan, O2 Academy, Birmingham

RIC SANDERS TRIO Sun 27 Jan, Lichfield Guildhall



Kerry Ellis - Birmingham Town Hall

Classical Music

RAFAŁ BLECHACZ (PIANO) IN RECITAL Programme includes works by Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann & Chopin, Wed 23 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

TETZLAFF PLAYS SIBELIUS Featuring City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Karl-Heinz Steffens (conductor) & Christian Tetzlaff (violin). Programme includes works by Sibelius & Brahms, Wed 23 - Thurs 24 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CBSO: GLINKA AND BRAHMS TRIOS Featuring Oliver Janes (clarinet), David Powell (cello) & Robert Markham (piano). Programme includes works by Glinka & Brahms, Fri 25 Jan, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

PRO YOUTH PHILHARMONIA: BEACON OF HOPE TOUR Featuring Wissam Boustany (conductor) & Matthew Barley (cello). Programme includes works by Bushra El-Turk, Dvorak, Amelia Clarkson & Beethoven, Sat 26 Jan, The Bramall, University of Birmingham

A NIGHT IN THE WEST END WITH KERRY ELLIS Sun 27 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

TASMIN LITTLE IN CONJUNCTION WITH KEELE CONCERTS Programme includes works by Telemann, Albeniz, Bach & Panufnik, Wed 28 Jan, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme



Comedy

TOADALLY FREE COMEDY Mon 21 Jan, The Blue Orange Theatre, B'ham

JASON MANFORD Tues 22 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

DALISO CHAPONDA, JONNY AWSUM & IAN SMITH Thurs 24 Jan, The Bramall, Birmingham

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON FEATURING COMIC TBC Thurs 24 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

BRING YOUR OWN BABY COMEDY Thurs 24 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

OMID DJALILI, STEPHEN BAILEY, ROSIE JONES & WAYNE BEESE Fri 25 Jan, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall, B'ham

AATIF NAWAZ Sat 26 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

DANIEL SLOSS Sat 26 Jan, O2 Academy, Birmingham

TEZ ILYAS, HOWARD READ, ANDY ASKINS & FREDDY QUINNE Sat 26 Jan, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

BARNSTORMERS COMEDY NIGHT Sat 26 Jan, Artrix, Bromsgrove

COMEDY IN THE MET Sat 26 Jan, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

DAVE GORMAN Sun 27 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CHRIS WASHINGTON, STEFF TODD, NOEL JAMES & DAN NIGHTINGALE (PICTURED) Sun 27 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury



Lisa Mills - The Robin, Bilston

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Theatre

ENRON The story of the rise and fall of Texan energy company Enron, told through a mix of political satire, modern morality, physical theatre and multimedia spectacle. Presented by BOA Year 13 Acting Students, Mon 21 - Tues 22 Jan, The Old Rep, Birmingham

ABIGAIL'S PARTY Jodie Prenger leads the cast, Mon 21 - Sat 26 Jan, The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

THE LAST 5 YEARS Emotionally powerful musical telling the story of Jamie and Cathy, two New Yorkers in their 20s who fall in and out of love over the course of five years, Tues 22 - Wed 23 Jan, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

LIVING WITH THE LIGHTS ON The 'gripping story of a life lived on the edge', Tues 22 - Sat 26 Jan, The REP, Birmingham

GHOST THE MUSICAL Hit stage show based on the much-loved movie, Tues 22 - Sat 26 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE SIGN OF FOUR Blackeyed Theatre presents its version of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's fa-

mous story, Wed 23 - Fri 25 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

SINATRA: RAW Warts-and-all portrait of Frank Sinatra's last intimate show in Palm Springs in 1971, Wed 23 - Sat 26 Jan, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

CABARET & COMEDY Featuring Eternity duo and Carl Brent, Thurs 24 Jan, Forest Arts Centre, Walsall

A HUNDRED DIFFERENT WORDS FOR LOVE Heart-lifting story of romance, despair & friendship, Thurs 24 Jan, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

NELL GWYNN Presented by BOA Year 13 Acting Students, Thurs 24 - Fri 25 Jan, The Old Rep, Birmingham

GRAHAM FELLOWS: COMPLETELY OUT OF CHARACTERS The man behind John Shuttleworth shares his

quirky take on everyday life, Sat 26 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

CHINESE NEW YEAR EXTRAVAGANZA Showcase of Chinese performing arts, including contortion and lion dancing, Sun 27 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre



Ghost The Musical - Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

Kids Shows

THE SNOWMAN Stage show based on Raymond Briggs' popular children's book, until Sat 26 Jan, The REP, Birmingham

Dance

SWAN LAKE Presented by Moscow State Ballet, Thurs 24 - Sat 26 Jan, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

ANTON & ERIN: DANCE THOSE MAGICAL MUSICALS 'The nation's favourite ballroom couple' present their new dance production. Also featuring TV favourite Lance Ellington and the London Concert Orchestra conducted by Richard Balcombe, Sat 26 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Pantomime

PETER PAN Jimmy Osmond, Meera Syal, Jaymi Hensley and Matt Slack star in a swashbuckling pantomime adventure which promises 'barrels of laughter, amazing flying effects and a trip to Neverland', until Sun 27 Jan, Birmingham Hippodrome

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK Thurs 24 - Sun 27 Jan, Prince of Wales Centre, Cannock

Talks

MARK KERMODE: HOW DOES IT FEEL? Film critic Mark Kermode recounts his utterly foolhardy attempts to fulfill his dreams of becoming a pop star, Mon 21 Jan, The REP, Birmingham

AN EVENING WITH KATE HUMBLE Join Kate as she talks about her latest book and her life working with wildlife, Thurs 24 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

Film

INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

KING OF THIEVES (PG) Crime/Drama. Starring Charlie Cox, Michael Caine. Stourbridge Town Hall, Mon 21 Jan

THE BREADWINNER (12a) Animation/Drama. With the voices of Saara Chaudry, Soma Chhaya. Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shropshire, Mon 21 Jan

THE WILD PEAR TREE (15) Drama. Starring Dogu Demirkol, Murat Cemcir. Foreign language, subtitled. Stoke Film Theatre, Tues 22 Jan

THE SHAPE OF WATER (15) Drama/Fantasy. Starring Sally Hawkins, Octavia Spencer. Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Tues 22 Jan

DUCK SOUP (U) Comedy/Musical. Starring Groucho Marx, Harpo Marx, Chico Marx. The Hive, Shrewsbury, Wed 23 Jan

THE MARVELLOUS MABEL NORMAND (15) Starring Mabel Normand. Stoke Film Theatre, Thurs 24 Jan

THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT (18) Comedy/Horror. Starring Matt Dillon, Bruno Ganz. Stoke Film Theatre, Fri 25 Jan

COLETTE (15) Biography/Drama. Starring Keira Knightley, Eleanor Tomlinson. Light House Media Centre, Wolverhampton, Fri 25 - Thurs 31 Jan; Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 25 - Thurs 31 Jan

Events

CELEBRATE BURNS NIGHT WITH CHIVAS REGAL A 'meet the distiller' evening that sees traditional food paired with samples of whisky, Fri 25 Jan, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

MANSION WINTER TOURS The Mansion is only open for exclusive tours on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, Fri 25 - Sun 27 Jan, Attingham Park, Shrewsbury

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Gigs

THE MESSTHETICS Mon 28 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

BEN OTTEWELL Mon 28 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

AMY SHARK Tues 29 Jan, O2 Institute, Birmingham

JUDY COLLINS Tues 29 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

THE WILD LIFE + WILLIAM RAY KEY Tues 29 Jan, O2 Institute, B'ham

JAZZ CANON: THE MUSIC OF HORACE SILVER Tues 29 Jan, Eastside Jazz Club, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

DILLY DALLY Tues 29 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

SJM CONCERTS PRESENTS SILENT RIVAL Tues 29 Jan, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

THE DANDY WHARHOLS Tues 29 Jan, O2 Institute, Birmingham

CANCER BATS + BLEED FROM WITHIN + UNDERSIDE Tues 29 Jan, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

BASTILLE Tues 29 - Wed 30 Jan, O2 Academy, Birmingham

ISRAEL NASH Wed 30 Jan, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE WAVE PICTURES Wed 30 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

ALEXANDER O'NEAL Wed 30 Jan, The Jam House, Birmingham

TYLER MASSEY'S A&E Wed 30 Jan, The Red Lion Folk Club, Birmingham

THE SONGS OF LEONARD COHEN Wed 30 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

LOW Wed 30 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

THE WOMBATS Thurs 31 Jan, O2 Academy, Birmingham

MARTIN SIMPSON Thurs 31 Jan, New Vic Theatre, Staffordshire

LEDISI Thurs 31 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

CARPENTERS GOLD Thurs 31 Jan, The

Place, Oakengates Theatre, Telford, Shropshire

MORETALLICA Thurs 31 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

A + SPECIAL GUESTS Thurs 31 Jan, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

MIKE WILLIAMS QUARTET Thurs 31 Jan, Eastside Jazz Club, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

Classical Music

LUNCHTIME ORGAN CONCERT Mon 28 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

BEETHOVEN'S VIOLIN CONCERTO Featuring Cristian Măcelaru (conductor), Augustin Hadelich (violin) & the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Programme includes works by Prokofiev, Beethoven & Vaughan Williams, Wed 30 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

ST PETERSBURG PHILHARMONIC Featuring Yuri Temirkanov (conductor), Freddy Kempf (piano) & Nadine Koutcher (soprano). Programme includes works by Prokofiev, Rachmaninoff & Mahler, Thurs 31 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Comedy

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON FEATURING COMIC TBC Thurs 31 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

The Nonentities present an amateur staging of Oscar Wilde's 'trivial comedy for serious people', Mon 28 Jan - Sat 2 Feb, The Rose Theatre, Kidderminster



Doctor Dolittle The Musical - Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

FAME Jorgie Porter, Mica Paris & Keith Jack star in the hit musical, Mon 28 Jan - Fri 2 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

KINKY BOOTS Acclaimed West End musical that takes audiences from a Northampton factory floor to the glamorous catwalks of Milan, Mon 28 Jan - Sat 9 Feb, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

HOPPERS Birmingham-based Gritty Theatre present a football-themed play, Tues 29 - Wed 30 Jan, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

ROAD BOA Year 13 Acting Students present an amateur staging of Jim Cartwright's play, Tues 29 - Wed 30 Jan, The Old Rep, Birmingham

DOCTOR DOLITTLE THE MUSICAL Mark Williams, Vicky Entwistle & Brian Capron star in a new staging of Leslie Bricusse's acclaimed family musical, Tues 29 Jan - Sat 9 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL JR Face2Face Performance Academy presents its version of the much-loved musical, Wed 30 - Thurs 31 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

ONE MAN TWO GUVNORS Fast-paced farce - an English adaptation of Servant Of Two Masters, Wed 30 Jan - Sat 2 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

Dance

ECHOES & I IMAGINE Featuring Aakash Odedra and choreographed by contemporary Kathak icon Aditi Mangaldas, Thurs 31 Jan, The Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome



Film

NEW FILMS ON GENERAL RELEASE:

Released from Fri 25 Jan, showing at selected cinemas

A DOG'S WAY HOME (tbc)

DESTROYER (15)

SECOND ACT (12a)

VICE (15)



Fame The Musical - Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury



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