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Karla Doorbar as Clara. Photo © Belia Kotak
November 2019

Festive Magic! - Birmingham Royal Ballet’s The Nutcracker returns feature on page 32

It’s a dog’s life!  Bat For Lashes  Peter Pan flies in...  the list

What’s On chats to Kipper the dog’s creator, Mick Inkpen
Natasha Khan brings Lost Girls to Birmingham Town Hall
JM Barrie’s famous story, retold at The Rep for Christmas
Your 16-page week-by-week listings guide

inside:

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Tony Award winner heading to Birmingham next spring

Tony Award-winning satirical comedy The Book Of Mormon is heading for Birmingham. Devised by South Park creators Trey Parker and Matt Stone and Avenue Q co-creator Robert Lopez, the show follows a mismatched pair of Mormon boys who are sent on a mission to deliver the news of the Latter Day saints to the people of a Ugandan village - a place where war, famine, poverty and AIDS are far more of a concern than religion. Featuring songs Spooky Mormon Hell Dream, I Am Africa, Baptize Me, All American Prophet and Tomorrow Is A Latter Day, The Book Of Mormon visits Birmingham Hippodrome from Wednesday 4 to Saturday 28 March.
For more information and to book tickets, visit birminghamhippodrome.com

Michael and Alfie together again in Birmingham

Musical duo Michael Ball and Alfie Boe are heading out on tour together next year, stopping off at Arena Birmingham on Sunday 1 March. The tour announcement follows the success of their first two duet albums, Together and Together Again. A third album, Back Together, is released on the 1st of this month, tracks from which will be featured in their touring show.

Smash-hit stage musical heading for the Midlands

The smash-hit stage musical version of Roddy Doyle’s bestselling novel, The Commitments, is heading to the Midlands in 2021 as part of a UK & Ireland tour. Featuring more than 20 soul classics performed live on stage, including Night Train, Papa Was A Rolling Stone, Mustang Sally and I Heard It Through The Grapevine, the show stops off at Birmingham Hippodrome from 15 to 20 March and Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from 14 to 19 June 2021.

Congrats to Celya AB...

Comedian Celya AB has been announced as the winner of the prestigious Birmingham Comedy Festival Breaking Talent Award. Celya last month delighted a sell-out audience at The Glee Club, where she was presented with the region’s biggest comedy prize by BBC WM presenter Lisa Smith. Originally from Paris, Celya’s win came exactly five years to the day after she swapped the French capital for Birmingham. Picking up her award, she said: “It means a lot for me to be considered a Birmingham talent; it was huge just to have been nominated!”

Being Human at Bramall

TV broadcaster Professor Alice Roberts will debate ‘evolving beauty demands and body agency’ with an interdisciplinary panel of fellow University of Birmingham researchers at the venue’s Bramall Hall on Thursday 21 November. The discussion, 21st Century Body, takes place as part of Being Human, the UK’s national festival of the humanities. The event is free to attend and tickets can be booked at eventbrite.co.uk

An exhibition with bite!

Birmingham Dental Hospital and the University of Birmingham School of Dentistry is currently hosting an exhibition (until 17 January) investigating the link between teeth and the city’s historic Jewellery Quarter. Created by internationally renowned artist Anna Dumitriu in collaboration with Dr Melissa Grant - a senior lecturer in biological sciences at the School of Dentistry - the exhibition also looks at ‘the strange histories and emerging futures of dentistry’, from teeth worms, false teeth and the development of anaesthetics to 3D printing and the DNA of dental microbes. A free-to-attend drop-in workshop exploring the techniques used in the exhibition and showing how to make your own artwork takes place on Wednesday 20 November.
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STYLe | HOME & INTERIORS | DINING
First Word Birmingham November.qxp_Layout 1  21/10/2019  18:12  Page 3

Birmingham’s lifestyle destination aiming to impress
Looking for head-turning fashion, unique interiors inspiration or a quality restaurant for a special celebration?
If so, check out Birmingham’s Mailbox, a venue that’s confident it’s offering the very best in shopping and entertainment this autumn.
Visitors to the popular lifestyle destination can shop for the latest trends at Harvey Nichols, enjoy some head-to-toe pampering at Malmaison Spa, indulge in retail therapy at Emporio Armani and James Lakeland, and explore luxurious lighting and impressive interiors at Home At Mailbox - the largest selection of home furnishing brands in the Midlands.
There are fine dining restaurants, independent eateries and canal side bars to enjoy too, while film buffs can stop off at Everyman Cinema to catch up on the latest releases.
For more information about everything the Mailbox has to offer, visit mailboxlife.com.

Foundry Festival returns to The Rep
Birmingham Repertory Theatre’s REP Foundry Festival returns for a second year this month.
Offering ‘a vibrant and inspiring snapshot of theatre’ created by West Midlands emerging writers and theatre makers, the 10-day event runs from 7 to 16 November and features eight new plays.
All performances are free to attend. For more information and to book a ticket, visit birmingham-rep.co.uk.

Diary date for Disney ice magic
Get your skates on - a new Disney On Ice show is coming to Birmingham in the spring!
Magical Ice Festival is described as ‘highlighting the stories of Disney’s most beloved heroines with energetic choreography that will have audiences singing, dancing and cheering’. The production stops off at Resorts World Arena from 29 April to 3 May. For more information and to book tickets, visit resortsworldarena.co.uk

Brum Vogue
Birmingham is this month hosting its first ever Vogue Ball.
First danced by black drag queens in New York’s Harlem, Vogue was part of a 1960s’ underground scene, its Balls giving the QTIPoC+ (Queer, Transgender & Intersex People Of Colour) community a safe space in which to thrive and develop.
Here in the UK, the Vogue scene has grown significantly in recent years, with popular houses opening up across the country.
Now it’s Birmingham’s turn to welcome the scene, with the city’s first ever house, House of Bab, and first Vogue Ball featuring as part of this month’s SHOUT Festival.
The event takes place at Birmingham Hippodrome on Friday 15 November.
For more information, visit shoutfestival.co.uk

Vive le cinema!
The 27th edition of the French Film Festival UK opens on 1 November and takes place in venues across 35 towns and cities, including Midlands Arts Centre in Birmingham.
Commenting on the event, Festival Director & Co-Founder Richard Mowe said: “We’re thrilled this year to have one of the most varied and vibrant programmes ever seen at the French Film Festival UK.
“The festival’s work illustrates the fact that culture, human understanding and cooperation ignores current political vagaries and knows no boundaries.” For the full programme, venues and booking information, visit frenchfilmfestival.org.uk.
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UKULELE ORCHESTRA OF GREAT BRITAIN
MON 9 DECEMBER
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SYMPHONY HALL

SIXTIES GOLD 2019
SUN 24 NOVEMBER
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ROY WOOD’S ROCKMAS 2019
SAT 14 DECEMBER
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RONNIE WOOD
MON 25 NOVEMBER
7:30PM
SYMPHONY HALL

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SUN 22 DECEMBER
2:30PM
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FRI 29 – SAT 30 NOVEMBER
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Something to SHOUT about as queer arts festival returns

SHOUT, Birmingham’s festival of queer arts and culture, this month returns for its 10th anniversary edition. The popular event made its debut in 2009 with the aim of promoting the diversity of the city’s lesbian, gay, bisexual and transcultural community. The festival has since grown to become a highlight on the Midlands LGBT+ calendar. For 13 days this month, from the 5th to the 17th, SHOUT is delivering a programme of ‘the very best in queer and LGBT theatre, visual arts, comedy, music, film and live performance’ at various locations across Birmingham.

For more information and to book tickets, visit shoutfestival.co.uk
Above image is of queer icon John Waters who’ll be bringing his one-man show to Birmingham Hippodrome on Wed 13 November.

Luxury Christmas at Marco Pierre White

Marco Pierre White restaurant in Birmingham’s Cube is inviting diners to ‘celebrate Christmas in the height of luxury’. As well as serving festive lunches, dinners and afternoon teas throughout December, the eatery will also transform into a magical winter wonderland, complete with snowy Christmas trees, heaters, lanterns, cosy cushions & blankets, skis and twinkling lights. Tables can be reserved by emailing: events@hibirminghamcube.com

MoRunning for men’s health

National running event series MoRunning arrives in Birmingham this month. Designed to raise money to tackle four of the biggest health issues faced by men - prostate cancer, testicular cancer, mental health and suicide - MoRunning is a series of 1.5km, 5km and 10km runs taking place at 25 different locations across the UK & Ireland. The run takes place in Sutton Park on Saturday 16 November. To sign up to participate, visit morunning.com/locations

Immortal Running for men’s health

A live-show version of RuPaul’s Drag Race UK is coming to Birmingham. The first UK TV series of the hugely popular US talent contest is running for eight episodes on BBC Three. The series’ queens will then hit the road to present a live-on-stage extravaganza hosted by drag queen extraordinaire Alyssa Edwards. The production stops off at the Alexandra Theatre on Sunday 1 December. For more information and to book tickets, visit atgtickets.com

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Immortal Running for men’s health

The operators of Solihull gastropub Tap & Tandoor are to work with the town’s Mell Square Shopping Centre to develop a brand new immersive eating experience. Taste Collective will provide a range of experience-led offerings, four pop-up-style street-food kiosks and a covered outdoor pergola-style seating area.

Commenting on the project, Ajay Kenth, director of Tap & Tandoor, said: “It’s a fantastic opportunity to broaden the offering in the town centre and bring our own individual style to Taste Collective, developing a new destination & eating experience which I know visitors to Solihull will embrace.” For more information about the project, visit tastecollectiveinmellsquare.com

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**RuPaul’s Drag Race UK Season 1 Tour**
- SUN 1 DEC

**Dr. Seuss’ How the Grinch Stole Christmas! The Musical**
- TUE 3 – SAT 7 DEC

**The King and I**
- TUE 10 DEC – SAT 4 JAN
- THU 12 DEC 2.30PM
- CAP WED 18 DEC 7.30PM

**Alexandra Burke**
- TUE 21 JAN – SAT 1 FEB
- CAP THU 23 JAN 2.30PM
- WED 29 JAN 7.30PM

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IT’S A DOG’S LIFE!
One of children’s literature’s most popular canine characters takes to the stage this month. What’s On caught up with the writer & illustrator of the Kipper series, Mick Inkpen, to find out about a new theatrical production that’s bringing together two of his stories...

Slot Machine Theatre’s Christmas production, Kipper’s Snowy Day - showing at MAC Birmingham from late this month till the end of the year - is based on not one but two of Mick Inkpen’s award-winning books about Kipper the dog. The show follows the escapades of Kipper and his friends, whose Arctic adventures take a turn for the worse when their pal, Arnold, goes missing in a storm...

“The production is very faithful to the spirit of the books and the character of Kipper,” says writer & illustrator Mick, “but I urged Slot Machine not to be too worried about being absolutely faithful to the storyline. So we agreed that they’d make an amalgam of the two main books: Kipper’s Snowy Day and Kipper’s Christmas Eve. They’ve also introduced their own things, like the storm, which doesn’t appear in either book. The fact that they had that freedom meant that they could really play with what they were doing, rather than slavishly putting one of my books on stage.

“It’s a very multifaceted show. There are graphics, songs, puppets and a wonderful plot - it’s visually interesting and completely original. Whether you’ve read the Kipper books or not, you’ll be delighted by the surprises along the way. This little production really deserves lots of exposure because it is truly wonderful.”

Kipper the dog first appeared 30 years ago in Mick’s book, The Blue Balloon.

“That was the book which really put me on the map and made me think of myself as a proper, successful children’s author. In it, Kipper wasn’t quite the Kipper that we see in the later stories and in this show because he was on all-fours and just a boy’s companion. The Blue Balloon was a very singular kind of book, so a sequel didn’t really seem to have any legs. What the publisher and I wanted was to base a series of books around a character. Developing the character of Kipper from The Blue Balloon more than fitted the bill.”

Mick fell in love with all things creative at an early age: “My favourite subjects at school were English and Art. My favourite part of English itself was the creative essays and writing. I can’t really remember when my passion for storytelling and illustration started exactly, but it was definitely around that time. I cut my teeth in the world of work, and on illustration in particular, by doing greetings cards for Gordon Fraser. Once I’d developed a style, I thought it would perhaps be possible to go into children’s books. It seemed like a very good medium for the kind of drawing I liked doing the most.”

The stage version of Kipper’s Snowy Day overflows with original music and songs, bespoke puppets and humour.

“Music is a very strong feature. There’s lots of fun, comedy and word play in the lyrics of the songs, and they’ve been written specifically for the production. And it has the same kind of puppetry as in War Horse. You’ve got that marvellous thing where the audience suspends disbelief. They’re complicit in ignoring the puppeteers and allowing the story to unfold. That in itself adds a certain level of magic to the production because the audience feels so involved in the story. I’ve always loved puppet work on stage; I think it’s a really powerful medium.”

So what else does Mick think makes this show unique?

“The set is a great example of the theatre company thinking creatively about how to really bring a book to life. With the Kipper books, I’ve always tried to avoid placing him somewhere in particular. While, for example, Postman Pat is in a particular landscape in a particular place, Kipper exists in this white world of the page, which means I can do with him what I like - I can even send him to the moon! Slot Machine wanted to capture that white-world look, even more so with Kipper’s Snowy Day being set in a snowscape. So the back of the stage is an entirely open book with blank pages, which allows them to use it as a screen upon which they project things. For example, the violent storm is expressed by just an animated scribble rushing about all over this book backdrop.

“Another part of the white world is that the entire action takes place on Big Hill, which features in the Kipper books. Big Hill is covered in snow, so the set has this white double-page with a big, sloping snowy hill. This allows Slot Machine to play with perspective, so at certain points there are tiny puppets at the top of the hill to make the characters look very distant. It’s a very simple set, but one that really allows the action to spring off the stage in the same way that my characters spring off the page. Slot Machine had a very playful approach to making this piece of theatre, and I was so pleased about that. Playfulness is one of the main things that characterises what I do, and that’s something I think both kids and parents will engage with.”

It was these similarities in creative vision and style that encouraged Mick to work with Slot Machine in the first place. He had been approached about stage adaptations of Kipper previously, even before the BAFTA-winning animation of the series, but only when Slot Machine came along did he feel he’d found the right match: “I think the team at Slot Machine are really invested in theatre for children and what you might call ‘pure theatre’, rather than celebrity-based theatre. I was very at home with the way they thought about my books and about their vision for Kipper’s Snowy Day. Creatively I found it very easy to work with them and readily trusted them to have a very free hand in terms of what they wanted to do.”

MAC Birmingham is holding a special Kipper’s Snowy Day drawing competition, which will see one lucky youngster and their family win tickets to see the show. The competition will be judged by Mick himself: “You never know what you’re going to get when children are set loose on a page. I’m really looking forward to seeing their efforts and finding a worthy winner.”

Getting children interested in the arts is very important as far as Mick is concerned: “The tick-box attitude to learning in schools now is so boring. I think it’s hugely important that children are encouraged to use their imaginations and play around with ideas, rather than having such a constrained focus on just getting things right. School should be a place where you can openly discuss and explore things - even get things wrong - without being judged. I don’t think society can expand very far beyond what’s fairly utilitarian without imagination and without playing with what world which children hold so dear. It’s hugely important to support art, reading, theatre and just generally being creative, so that our children can grow and learn.”

Kipper’s Snowy Day runs at Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham from Tuesday 26 November to Tuesday 31 December.

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THE SNOW QUEEN

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**Handel Messiah**

City of Birmingham Choir
City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra
Friday 6th December 2019 7pm
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The Mozartists: Così Fan Tutte

Birmingham Town Hall, Fri 8 November

Specialising in historically informed performances of music by Mozart, The Mozartists here turn their attention to the composer’s Così Fan Tutte, an insightful comedy widely considered to be one of the truly great works of art. Like two of Mozart’s other compositions, The Marriage Of Figaro and Don Giovanni, the opera is a mirror into which audiences are invited to look and see themselves. Conducted by Ian Page (pictured), the production is sung in Italian with English surtitles.

CBSO: Capriccio Espagnol

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Wed 13 November

As well as the title work - Rimsky-Korsakov’s Capriccio Espagnol - the line-up also features Montsalvatge’s 5 Canciones negras, Falla’s The Three-Cornered Hat: Suites 1 & 2, and Prokofiev’s seventh symphony. Clara Mouriz (pictured) performs the mezzo soprano duties.

The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra’s Assistant Conductor, Jaume Santonja Espinós, takes to the podium for this concert having selected its programme himself - a fact which should further enhance his already admirable level of enthusiasm for the music he conducts.

City of Birmingham Choir: Mass In Blue

Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, Birmingham, Sun 17 November

The ever-impressive City of Birmingham Choir presents two works of modern choral music, both of which boast a jazz & blues vibe. Adrian Lucas is the man with the baton as the choir performs Will Todd’s Mass In Blue - a setting of the liturgical Mass in jazz and 12-bar blues - and Freedom! The Power Of Song, the fifth in a series of choral works by Alexander and Joanna Forbes L’Estrange. The latter is the concert’s soprano vocalist.

Earthrise

Bradshaw Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, Sat 9 November

Commemorating the iconic 1968 photograph - taken by the crew of Apollo 8 - of the earth rising out of the lunar landscape, Earthrise was a symphonic concept album recorded in 1985 by Electric Light Orchestra musicians Richard Tandy and Dave Scott-Morgan. This Daniele Rosina-conducted concert premières an orchestral presentation of the album and is performed by the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire Orchestra.
is out on tour with his Rhythm & Blues Orchestra this autumn. What’s
On caught up with him ahead of his Birmingham gigs next month...
Being on the road with a band you've known for a long time must make it quite a social thing, mustn't it?

There are a lot of us, so you're never alone. There used to be that advert for a cigarette called Strand, and the advert was, ‘You’re never alone with a Strand’. And it was such a disaster because everybody thought, ‘Well, I don't want to be alone’. So they went out of business. But it's a bit like, 'You're never alone with a big band because wherever you are, there's always... When I arrive in a town, I see Bammi - because, like me, he studies the horses - going into a bookmaker's on the high street. There'll be somebody else coming out. It's like we're alien spores who've been dropped into whatever town it is, and I recognise us as I'm coming into the town. In the hotel afterwards, there'll be a couple of people having a drink. We often - at the show, because it's easy - have a big curry for all of us; that's quite jolly. One of the things that's great is that everybody in the band's got a great sense of humour - they're funny as well as being good players. So that's a good part of it. Also, in the daytime, I'm a keen tourist. I like looking at stuff, so I look at gardens, I look at old buildings or whatever. There's always something to look at, always something new to discover, so I think the world of touring isn't bad. If you have to do endless hours of flying a day, then it can wear you out a bit, but that's a small price to pay.

For people who come to see you often, there's always a new element because of your special guests...

This year, we're having somebody who's worked with us before, but they bring out this great element of us, which is Selecter. Specifically, it's Pauline Black, the singer, and 'Gaps' Hendrickson, who works with Pauline. They're perfect for us because they represent the British take on ska music, the 2 Tone thing. Although I wasn't part of the 2 Tone thing, I was part of British ska music. That's part of my heritage and part of the thing my orchestra have been doing for the past 25 years, so we've always been playing that music. So it's perfect for us, and the effect they have on the audience, it's like everybody jumps up straight away, as soon as they hear them doing Train To Skaville. It's just such great music, and they do it so fantastically and with a particular British take on it, which is great. It's really electric to hear them doing it. They're the originators of that British take on ska music, like Eric Clapton and The Rolling Stones were the originators of British blues. So it's great having them there, and they like being with the orchestra because being with a whole big band magnifies it, makes it even bigger and has a fantastic jump-up effect.

How do you go about adapting your guests' big hits for a big band?

I wouldn't want to force things into a big-band style, so sometimes you have to play things in a different way. Most things you can take back to the piano because a lot of songs were written on the piano or the keyboard or a guitar - one instrument - so they're not written with a big arrangement. So if you strip it back to that and then build it up again, you can normally make something work. If there's something that sounds like it's not naturally going to go with a big band, you bring it down to just the piano and the big band can creep in.

Your nan's piano was crucial to your musical upbringing, wasn't it?

Yes, my nan's piano was really an essential thing. It was a gift to her from her mother in 1937, and I would hear them at Christmas, when I was very small, all singing songs. Everybody had their own song that they'd sing at the piano. It was also a pianola, so you would pedal the pedals and Fats Waller playing Red Sails In The Sunset would come out of it, which was great. So I got to learn those songs early on. But also it was great because my uncle, who was a teenager when I was small, would play boogie-woogie piano on it, and that really got me fired up and made me learn by ear what he was doing.

Did you have records in the house at home?

We couldn't afford a piano but we had a record player and a radio, and my parents liked classical music and jazz music. So I would hear a lot of that, and I think it opened my mind to a lot of that, so I still like it very much. Then at my grandmother's house there was a record player as well, so I would get records and play them to death. The first record player I had was a 78 record player with a great big wind-up needle, which is the worst thing ever to play 78s on. Eventually my dad got me an Alba record player, and we could have a good listen to whatever records were out at the time. I think I had a Glenn Miller one, which got worn out, but the first proper LP I had was For Once In My Life by Stevie Wonder. I liked that, and I think I had Lady Madonna by The Beatles.

You're not one for looking back, but do you ever stop to think about the life you've led in music?

I do think sometimes that it's time to look in the rear-view mirror and take stock, because there are some fantastic moments. I've been very lucky. I can't believe it sometimes, all this stuff that's happened. Then sometimes when we play on Later or on the Hootenanny and people play with us, you get some amazing things happen and the atmosphere is just great. If you get a great live performance and somebody's filmed it, maybe millions of people will watch that on YouTube. Then sometimes it's just about being in the dressing room doing a warm-up with somebody at the piano. I remember being in the dressing room with Amy Winehouse and her just singing something at the piano. And you're thinking, 'Wow, that's amazing'. So it doesn't really matter whether it's live on the television, on a record, in a dressing room, at home or at a gig, you're plugging into the same thing and it's an amazing thing. I'm so fortunate to have plugged into it and been very moved by it. The more you listen to stuff and the more you play, the more you can play and listen to stuff, yet the more mysterious it all becomes. That's the great thing about it - you can never figure it out.

Jools Holland And His Rhythm & Blues Orchestra return to Symphony Hall, Birmingham, on 29 & 30 November.
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**Gigs**

**Fatherson**  
The Castle & Falcon, Birmingham, Fri 8 November  
Scottish three-piece Fatherson have made plenty of waves on the music scene since their inception in 2010, along the way releasing debut album *I Am An Island* in 2013 and playing support slots for Frightened Rabbit, Biffy Clyro and Enter Shikari. The boys released second album *Open Book* to great critical acclaim in summer 2016, while 2019 has seen them produce their most assured record to date, *Sum Of All Your Parts* - an album which has been described as “melodic rock that’s good for the mind, body and soul.”

**Catfish And The Bottlemen**  
Arena Birmingham, Mon 4 November  
Brit Award-winning Welsh rock band Catfish And The Bottlemen have been on the rise for a number of years now, particularly since their 2014 single, Kathleen, was ranked number one on MTV’s hottest-tracks list. Two years later they released their second album and first number one, *The Ride*, and have since been garnering plaudits like they’re going out of fashion. They return to Birmingham this month fresh from releasing third studio album *The Balance*.

**Mac DeMarco**  
O2 Academy, Birmingham, Wed 27 November  
Canadian singer-songwriter, multi-instrumentalist and producer Mac DeMarco makes a welcome return to Birmingham this month to perform a show in support of fourth studio album, *Here Comes The Cowboy*, released earlier this year and widely hailed as a masterpiece. DeMarco’s band accompanies him on his journey through the record’s collection of brave and bold compositions.

**Liam Gallagher**  
Arena Birmingham, Tues 12 November  
Liam Gallagher’s return to the global music scene was nothing short of spectacular, with all 100,000 tickets for his first solo UK arena tour selling out on the morning they went on sale. The release of his debut solo album, *As You Were* - perfectly complemented by explosive performances at both Glastonbury and Finsbury Park - firmly reestablished his rock-star status. This second tour - in support of follow-up album *Why Me? Why Not.* - looks set to cement his place as a key solo contributor to the UK’s 21st-century music scene. Commenting on the new album, Liam says: “It’s a better record than *As You Were*, which is saying something, as that was epic, wasn’t it?”

**Geowulf**  
Hare & Hounds, Birmingham, Tues 26 November  
“You’ll probably find us sipping lattes whilst eating kale for breakfast in a sunny place called the Sunshine Coast,” reads this Australian duo’s Facebook biography. Since releasing their first track, *Saltwater*, in 2016, Star Kendrick and Toma Banjanin have been spreading their infectious beach pop sound around the globe. Taking inspiration from the likes of Mazzy Star, BJM, the Beach Boys and the Bee Gees, they head to Birmingham in support of new album *My Resignation*, released last month.

**Bat For Lashes**  
Town Hall, Birmingham, Thurs 21 November  
Natasha Khan, aka Bat For Lashes, is back with her fifth album, *Lost Girls*, which has been described as a dazzling cinematic masterpiece and her best record yet. Join her for what promises to be an intimate, euphoric and atmospheric night of vocal, electronic synth and piano sets, featuring not only songs from the new album but also some sure-to-be-interesting never-before-performed material.

**Geowulf**  
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Jess Reid

Singer-songwriter Jess Reid appeared on What’s On’s Launchpad stage at this summer’s Shrewsbury Folk Festival. Here, she chats about her inspirations and the Shropshire music scene ahead of supporting Dan Owen on tour...

What’s your first musical memory?
I must have been around four or five. My parents were in a band together and they were playing some gigs in France. I remember picking up a harmonica and getting up on stage with them. I was unable to play, so it was my first experience of miming!

So you come from a musical family, then?
My dad has been a songwriter and performer from a young age. He’s been in a number of bands. My mum is musical too and played bass and backing vocals in bands with my dad. They play gigs around Shropshire now and my dad runs an open mic in town. My sister is a singer, and we’ve always been in bands together. Our first band was called Jia Jinx, and we used to play in Shrewsbury a lot. I’ve been living in London and Birmingham and she’s had a baby, so we play and write together less now. She’s a great singer and songwriter, so she’s always the one I go to first with song ideas!

Who are your inspirations?
Growing up, I was always inspired most deeply by the musicians around me. I’d go to a lot of open-mic nights and jam sessions in pubs and met some amazing musicians. Having people around you who you can see week to week is great, as it makes everything seem more achievable. Being able to hear a new song that someone you know has put together enables you to see a rawness and vulnerability that you can rarely see from a famous artist on a big stage. I play in a percussive guitar style and I first saw a local musician play in this way. That inspired me profoundly. In terms of inspirations now, I love a Swedish artist called Susanne Sundfor - she has the best voice. I would love to be able to sing in any way similar to the way she does. Ben Howard, Lucy Rose, The Staves and Damien Rice are my favourite artists currently.

You’re predominantly a solo performer, but who would be your ideal collaborator?
I’ve been playing with a cellist recently, which has been amazing! Cello is my favourite instrument, so I’d always like to have cello alongside me. I love vocal harmonies, so some backing singers would be great. I’ve been exploring different instruments whilst recording my new EP. The EP features a full drum kit and bass guitar, so it’s given it a more radio-friendly sound - live drums and bass would be nice too. It’s the cello and backing vocals that touch my heart the most.

What would be your dream performance?
I usually go to Green Man Festival every year. It’s a perfect size of festival and the main stage is at the bottom of a hill, so everyone enjoys the music while lying on the grass. I would love an afternoon slot in the sunshine with a full band and some beers!

What’s your favourite performance to date and why?
I played a Sofar Sounds show in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil in 2017. It was on a rooftop overlooking all the big sights, like the Christ the Redeemer statue and Copacabana beach. Everyone was ridiculously friendly and kind. That was a great experience. I always love playing in big spaces like cathedrals or churches, as the acoustics are the best. Last year around Christmas time I played at Hull Minster, which is a large church in Hull. It’s great to feel the sounds you’re creating naturally reverberating around such a large space.

Where do you get the inspiration for your songs?
I find writing quite cathartic. I think the songs come from the subconscious. I’ll often write a song without really realising what I’m singing. A couple of days, weeks or months later, I’ll think about the lyrics I’ve written and they often reveal an insight into my thoughts and feelings at the time of writing. It helps me understand my thoughts and emotions, so it’s quite therapeutic in some ways - free therapy! In terms of the music, seeing other people play live inspires me the most. I love going to small, intimate shows.

You played on our Launchpad stage at Shrewsbury Folk Festival in the summer. How was the experience?
I loved it! I’ve been to Shrewsbury Folk Festival loads of times, and this was the most enjoyable experience. I had my sister singing with me, which was great, and it was good to play in front of family and friends and to meet some new audiences. I really liked being able to play three sets over the course of the weekend, as it enabled more people to come and watch. It’s always a great festival and I loved being able to play. The other artists playing on the stage were brilliant, so it was nice to meet them too - lots of talent!

You’re supporting Dan Owen at St Mary’s Church in Shrewsbury. How did that come about and what can audiences expect from your performance?
I’ve known Dan for over 10 years. We both used to play at the open-mic nights at The Bridges in Ratlinghope when we were about 15. I supported him in Birmingham last year at his show there. He’s doing an acoustic tour at the end of November, so I’m joining him for some of his dates as his support act. We’re heading up north to York first, then ending in Shrewsbury. He’s an amazing performer and songwriter, so it’ll be good to spend more time with him again.

What are your views on the live-music scene in Shropshire and the wider West Midlands? Is it in a healthy state?
As I said, I’ve met some of the most amazing musicians in Shropshire - most of them undiscovered. There are some brilliant venues, and it’s nice because it’s not as competitive as places like London, so you can meet people who’ll help and support you. Obviously the folk festival is big and ensures Shrewsbury is on the folk-world map. My EP, which I recorded with help from the Alan Surtees Trust, is currently being mastered, so it will be released in the next couple of months. I’m looking forward to releasing it and finding out what people think, as it’s a different sound.

What else have you got lined up in the next 12 months?
I’m off to New York for some shows, and then it’s the Dan Owen tour. Then I’ll be busy with single launches and an EP launch in 2020. Lots to do!

Jess Reid supports Dan Owen at Shrewsbury’s St Mary’s Church from Thursday 28 to Saturday 30 November.
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Dance previews from around the region

**Anjali Dance Company: Genius**

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Thurs 7 November; Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome, Tues 19 & Wed 20 November

Providing a platform for the creative abilities and artistic potential of people with learning disabilities lies at the heart of Anjali Dance Company’s mission statement. Their Coventry show sees them presenting two dramatic explorations of genius: Gary Clarke’s Beethoven takes ‘a touching and darkly humorous look’ at the personal life and musical works of Ludwig van Beethoven; Lea Anderson’s Bloodsucker, meanwhile, is a ‘stylised and gently humorous exploration’ of the legend of the vampire Nosferatu and his depiction in film.

**Sonia Sabri Company: Same Same...But Different**

Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton, Fri 15 November

“We’ve always tried to create something which is groundbreaking and pioneering,” says Sonia Sabri. “I feel proud to say that we present work which is very new and very different. We’ve been at the forefront of creating new ideas, and that’s exactly what we intend to continue doing.” Sabri’s belief in the need to push the boundaries of dance is reflected in this new family show, mixing Kathak and contemporary dance, live music and physical storytelling. The piece has been produced in collaboration with a number of primary schools in Birmingham and London.

**Acosta Danza**

Birmingham Hippodrome, Mon 11 & Tues 12 November

Just two months before succeeding David Bintley as artistic director of Birmingham Royal Ballet, Carlos Acosta visits BRB’s Birmingham Hippodrome home with his critically acclaimed Cuban company. Included in their programme is Rooster, a work choreographed to music from the Rolling Stones and in which Acosta himself makes an appearance. New works Paysage, Soudain, la nuit and Satori are also included. The bill is completed by Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui’s masterpiece, Faun, a work set to Debussy’s original score and featuring additional music from Nitin Sawhney.

**Luca Silvestrini’s Protein: The Little Prince**

DanceXchange, Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome, Fri 29 & Sat 30 November

Award-winning dance company Protein brings its trademark physical and verbal wit to Birmingham this month when it presents pioneering aviator Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s classic 1943 story. Leaving behind his tiny asteroid, The Little Prince journeys through the universe and finds himself suddenly needing to navigate the baffling world of grown-ups.

“The idea of Protein Dance is to get away from the stereotype of dance being purist and high-brow, and to connect better with audiences,” says the company’s Artistic Director, Luca Silvestrini. “We combine dance with words, singing, acting and audience participation. I think all this helps better connect with the subject matter - it’s more fluid.”
Andy Parsons is on a mission with his new stand-up tour. In one simple nutshell, he’s looking to heal this divided nation. The man who for years was a fixture on Mock The Week, worked on Spitting Image, brought us sell-out tours and unit-shifting DVDs such as Britain’s Got Idiots and Gruntled, and has been in a very successful double act with playwright Henry Naylor, is calling time on the negativity that reverberates around our green and pleasant land.

“On my Twitter feed currently it says, ‘Initially upbeat. Often disappointed’, ” says Andy. “The general thrust of everything I’ve ever done has an optimistic note to it, and there’s always something in the glass rather than there being something missing from it. Life can get extremely frustrating and your optimism can fade, but I retain the faith and I’m looking forward to getting out there and meeting people in some nice theatres.”

Happy to be known as a political comedian, Andy has never shirked from putting the opinions he expresses on stage into full practice. He’s hosted People’s Votes rallies, including one in Parliament Square to over 100,000 people, and fronted the Independent Age’s most recent Campaign Against Loneliness. Plus he created the Slacktivist Action Group podcast, in which he chatted to the likes of comedians who are trying to take a show across the country over the course of several months.

“I think we’re a nation desperate to be healed, in the sense that people would rather come together than diverge. In the current media analysis, everyone is in the centre of their own social-media bubble, and everything is kicking off left, right and centre. So the idea for the tour was that rather than being incredibly one-sided and partisan and throwing stuff at the opposition, it’s nice to see both sides of the argument. I’ll be taking on viewpoints that wouldn’t normally find a natural home in one of my stand-up sets and trying to genuinely see the other side of that argument.”

As he prepares to take his show - which he’s called Healing The Nation - out on tour, Andy is clear that while the country seems utterly divided, with individuals permanently lodged on their own side of the debate, he believes that there are always more issues that unite us than separate us: “The idea in the show is that everything is proving divisive at the moment, and that no one is talking to each other or seeing issues from both sides. Essentially, people have the same concerns whether it’s health or education or jobs, and I want to narrow down the focus of what people actually want and bring them together. The blurb of the show says that, if nothing else, we can be proud of some form of tolerance and freedom of speech throughout our history. It’ll be interesting to see where those concepts are going in the next few years.”

It was former Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson who was credited with first saying that a week is a long time in politics. In the febrile and often toxic terrain of modern British politics and society, events seem to alter dramatically on an almost hourly basis. While this might be ideal for political correspondents, it can prove something of a challenge for topical comedians who are trying to take a show across the country over the course of several months.

Andy, however, is confident about accepting the challenge of updating his material to suit the prevailing circumstances: “When your show is topical, then inevitably it will be very different when the tour finishes from when it started. This is mainly because of current events, but also it’s good to keep it fresh anyway, not just for the audience but for myself. If you’re performing over 100 shows and just doing the same set every single night, it becomes a job rather than a pleasure.”

When you watch Andy in full flow, it’s clear that you’re witnessing a performer who is not only having a great time, but who’s enjoying the pleasure he’s passing on to others. Partly, this might come down to a realisation that it’s a good time to be in the topical-comedy game.

“It goes in cycles, and for a while political comedy was dead. If you suggested to a TV company that you wanted to have some sort of a political comedy vehicle, they’d say, ‘Why would you want to do that? No one is interested’. But now, there’s a whole slew of them. The reasons for that are various, but the bottom line is that people are more interested in politics now simply because it’s affecting more of their lives. And now that more people are talking about it, there are comics you wouldn’t associate with politics who will still address it in some way because every aspect of life is somehow influenced by it. That was less true 10 years ago.”

Whatever the future holds in terms of politics in Britain, Europe, the US and across the wider global landscape, it’s comforting healing, almost to know that comedians such as Andy Parsons will be around to poke fun at those who claim to lead or speak for us.
Comedy November

Judi Love Presents
Love2Laugh Birmingham
Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Sat 30 November
Up-and-coming London comedian Judi Love here headlines more than two hours of entertainment from ‘some of the funniest comedians around’. A presenter on BBC Radio London, Judi’s appearances on television shows including 8 Out Of 10 Cats and This Morning have brought her to the wider public attention. Boasting a natural charisma, sharp wit and animated communication style, her ‘tell it like it is’ YouTube videos have won her a dedicated online following.

Jack Whitehall
Arena Birmingham, Fri 15 - Sun 17 November
A fella who’s had no trouble whatsoever getting his face on the telly, Jack Whitehall’s highly animated style of delivery is developing all the time, as is his repertoire of material. Subject matter has included his father’s shameless attempts to get quoted in his show, his comical school days and the experience of being caught snorting coke by the News Of The World. Jokes include: “I’m sure wherever my dad is now, he’ll be looking down on us. He’s not dead, just very condescending.”

Geoff Norcott
The Core, Solihull, Sat 16 November
Geoff Norcott is one of the sharpest tools in the comedy shed, presenting shows which feature observational humour, satire, and even the odd impression or two. Being a former teacher, plenty of Geoff’s gags relate to school experiences and the education system. He’s also made something of a name for himself in the field of sports-related humour, a niche that’s yielded him plenty of work both on television and radio... Geoff’s Solihull appearance sees him performing his latest touring show, Taking Liberties.

Carl Hutchinson
The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton, Sat 30 November
Observational comedian Carl Hutchinson makes a welcome return with a show that covers all manner of common-or-garden topics, from the challenges of buying a house to the experience of having kids. Prior to becoming a full-time standup, Carl spent some time as a maths teacher. “There are certainly comparisons between the two professions,” says the popular Geordie comedian, “but the definite advantage with comedy is that if you have a bad gig, you can rest assured that you don’t have to see the same audience the next day at 10am!”

Jason Byrne
Birmingham Town Hall, Sat 9 November
Watching Jason Byrne on stage has been likened by one reviewer to watching footballer Lionel Messi play for Barcelona: it’s not a matter of ‘if’ the magic will come, but ‘when’ and ‘how often’. Byrne comes to the Midlands with brand new offering Wrecked But Ready, a show which he promises will hotwire his audience’s funnybones big time. “Everyone’s welcome,” says Jason, “unless you’re under 14, in which case come back when you’re older.”

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Mark Watson
Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sun 24 November; Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent, Thurs 30 January
Well established on the UK comedy circuit, Mark Watson was born in Bristol to Welsh parents and initially delivered his act with a Welsh accent, claiming he felt “more comfortable talking in a voice that I didn’t quite recognise as my own”.
A regular contributor to the Edinburgh Fringe, Mark has the curious distinction of having performed stand-up shows which have lasted for a period in excess of 24 hours. “Comedy is certainly a time-consuming element of my life,” he admits, “but then while I’m out touring and on stage, there are people at home doing far less glamorous things. There have certainly been times when I’ve been very happy to say, ‘Of course I’d like to stay and help out with that plumbing crisis, but the Midlands awaits!’”

Stephen K Amos
Old Rep, Birmingham, Sun 3 November
Stephen K Amos’ popularity both here and abroad are suitable reward for a comedian who sometimes wondered whether his big break would ever come. “I used to do a joke where I said I’d have to wait for Lenny Henry to die before I could get on television,” he says, referring to his belief that opportunities for black comedians are few and far between. Whatever the truth, there’s little question that Stephen’s very much basking in the comedy limelight these days. His success is no surprise, mind, given the quality of his material and his effortless ability to strike all the right chords with his ever-appreciative audience.

Doncaster-born doyen of light entertainment Count Arthur Strong makes a welcome return to the region with a brand new show. “With each live show I’ve done, I’ve found out a little bit more about Arthur,” explains Steve Delaney in talking about the character he created. “If I watch footage from the early days, he looks like the bones of something, but he’s definitely continued to develop, and that’s very important. Simply reproducing what I’ve done before would neither be as much fun nor as interesting.”

Lenny Henry
Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sun 17 November; Dudley Town Hall, Fri 22 November; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Wed 27 November; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 29 November
Despite sometimes having risked undermining his own popularity by trying too hard to prove that he’s a multi-talented artist, Lenny Henry has never strayed too far from his comedy roots. Early-career success on Midlands kids’ show Tiswas, where he did wonders for the popularity of condensed milk sandwiches, led on to national stardom, while his key role in setting up Comic Relief proved that his heart was every bit as big as his joke-bag.
His UK tour comes in support of his recently published memoir, Who Am I, Again?.

Shazia Mirza
Artrix, Bromsgrove, Fri 15 November; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sun 17 November
Shazia Mirza is one of the UK’s most creative female comedians - and she’s a Brummie too! Muslim Shazia’s not averse to treading a delicate line when it comes to her material. Her post-9/11 joke, “My name’s Shazia Mirza - at least, that’s what it says on my pilot’s licence”, marked her out as a comedian happy to balance on the very precipice of acceptable humour. Other examples of her style and content include: “My parents really want me to get married. But Muslim men don’t want to marry me because... I speak”, and “My dad said if I went out with a black man, he’d burn me. Which would be good, because then I’d be black too”.

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BULLRING & GRAND CENTRAL
BIRMINGHAM
Comedian David Walliams turned his hand to writing children’s books over a decade ago, making his debut with The Boy In The Dress. The heart-warming tale of friendship and the acceptance of others is this Christmas being presented as a musical by the Royal Shakespeare Company. The RSC’s show marks the first time the story has been presented on the stage.

“For me, it’s just magical to see a story and characters that I’ve created brought to life through singing and dancing,” says David. “The idea of it being a musical was something I’d never even considered, and it truly transforms the story. Music adds a whole new dimension that I can’t really do. I’m not a singer and I can’t play a musical instrument, so creating a musical out of The Boy In The Dress had never even crossed my mind.”

So if this new production wasn’t David’s idea, whose was it? “I was first approached by Mark Ravenhill, who’s the writer-in-residence for the Royal Shakespeare Company. I thought it was brilliant to be approached by a playwright of such calibre. Plus, the RSC has had a lot of success with similar things, like Matilda.”
David Walliams The Boy in the Dress wasn’t really being talked about as a musical. Suddenly, Mark and the artistic director at the RSC, Gregory Doran, told me about their plan to approach Robbie Williams and Guy Chambers to turn it into a musical! At first I was sceptical and thought it was very unlikely they’d get on board, as they must’ve been busy with other projects. I wasn’t quite cracking out the champagne, but it turns out that they said yes! I came to a workshop and they’d written 18 amazing songs.”

It’s safe to say that David is thrilled with what the RSC, Ravenhill, Chambers and Williams have created: “Guy and Robbie have captured the story very well, and seeing as they’ve written so many pop hits, they know how to make a song that people will like. The songs really feel very memorable, which I think is really important for a musical. It’s always good when the audience comes out still humming along. Guy and Robbie are so used to writing songs that grab you immediately, so that’s exactly what they’ve done here. Singing adds such an emotional dimension, so the story is richer now than it’s ever been. The lyrics don’t follow the lines I’ve written in the book; there are these new, fresh ideas in the musical that even those who’ve read the book won’t have experienced before. It’s a very exciting piece that feels new in many ways!”

Just like the original book, The Boy In The Dress musical is aimed not only at children but also their families.

“It’s ultimately a feelgood family show. It’s funny and moving, with kids at the centre of the story. Dennis wants to dress as a girl, and then there’s a slightly older girl called Lisa, who’s the popular, fashionable kid and who encourages him to dress how he wants and to read Vogue. I think a good family show has appeal across the board – so the grown-ups have got something to enjoy too. I get the feeling that parents often bring their kids to see a story, and to achieve that ambition I had to create something that was funny. I started writing comedy sketches. Then I started to feel like there was more to write. Comedy sketches are only two or three minutes long, but I felt like there were much longer stories in me that I wanted to tell. It’s hard to get into people’s emotional life with a short comedy sketch because it’s mainly about telling the joke. So I had that yearning to do something different. I knew that I could write a few jokes, some dialogue and create some characters, but I didn’t know whether I could do the most important part - sustain a story. The story is always the hardest bit to get right, and they’re mostly instinctive; they’re something you grasp from your own reading rather than by trying to work to some kind of formula.”

David is incredibly passionate about encouraging children to read and thinks the future is bright, despite there still being plenty of work needing to be done: “There’s great pleasure in books, and it’s a great shame if young people don’t get to experience that. I don’t think it’s a good idea to be snobby about books, especially when it comes to kids because they should read what they want for pleasure or they’ll never get into it. Some really reluctant readers want something palatable - they want to read Wimpy Kid, not Dickens. I go into schools and talk to kids to find out what they want. I always ask them who hates reading, and there are always some who put up their hands. I feel like I want to inspire them and reach out to them. That’s why I created The World’s Worst Children. It’s a little series of short stories that’s just meant to be funny and short - kind of like the equivalent of reading The Beano. A kid who won’t read a book might actually like something that’s full of silly jokes and funny illustrations in a short, surreal piece of writing.

“I think that because so many kids have TV, tablets and computer games, a lot of people think books are a dying art for kids, but they’re absolutely not. We have a lot to thank JK Rowling for because she made kids queue outside a bookshop from midnight to get their hands on a copy of the latest Harry Potter. I’d never, ever heard of that happening before, and I don’t think books have ever been anticipated in the way that hers were. The Harry Potter books got very long and complicated, so for a writer to engage kids in such a long story, and to be met with such incredible enthusiasm each time a new release was due, is inspired. I don’t think things are in a bad place in terms of kids engaging with books. There are obviously still some people who can’t access books. I did a book for World Book Day, and primary school kids each got their £1 book token to get it. For many children, that’s the first one they’ll ever own, so there’s still a lot more that needs to be done. I think children’s books are taken a lot more seriously now, which is great for everyone.”

Although David is always busy writing something new, The Boy In The Dress remains very much on his mind: “I don’t think I’ve ever been prouder of anything. Just going into rehearsals and seeing what they’re doing in this production is amazing. If my whole career was leading up to this moment and then that was it, I think I’d remain happy for a long time. If you wanted to judge me and my achievements on just one thing, then I’d say come and see this musical because it’s really special.”

The Boy In The Dress shows at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, from Friday 8 November to Sunday 8 March.

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Caught in a trap

Agatha Christie’s record-breaking thriller, The Mousetrap, is out on tour and visiting Birmingham. Cast member and star of stage and screen Susan Penhaligon explains why she thinks the show continues to be so popular...

Not surprisingly, having celebrated its 60th birthday - a theatrical Diamond Jubilee - seven years ago, The Mousetrap is a record-breaking play. Agatha Christie’s much-loved thriller has entertained audiences across the globe, without ever shutting, for as long as HRH Queen Elizabeth II has reigned. The play is out on tour this autumn and heading for Birmingham this very month.

“I never thought I’d be in The Mousetrap,” says Susan Penhaligon, who takes on the role of Mrs Boyle in the production. “I’ve been in two of Agatha Christie’s other plays - And Then There Were None and a little-known one called Verdict - but I’d never seen The Mousetrap or read it. When the part came up, I read the play and thought, ‘Wow’. It’s funny, tense, has great characters, a brilliant plot, and what really struck me was that it was based on a real event - chilling, really. Agatha Christie is so clever - there’s always truthful emotion in her plays. She’s the second most read English writer after Shakespeare, so she must have done something right!”

The Mousetrap is the longest-running play in the world - and Susan has her own theory about why audiences keep returning to see it: “I’m definitely an Agatha Christie fan. I’ve read most of her books and I’ve read her biography. I think she’s fascinating. The Mousetrap is a great story. It’s a guessing game of whodunnit - and a brilliant one at that. It’s a perfect plot; it’s vintage, with very recognisable period characters, and it’s spooky. It’s quality entertainment. I think it’s interesting to see an original play of hers on the stage rather than on TV, particularly as it was written for the theatre. It’s a different animal. But I think nowadays, because of the many TV Agathas, audiences are familiar with the world they’re entering. The pact between actors and audience is made the moment the curtain goes up. I’m sure they think, ‘Ah, we know where we are with this one’ and they relax. And the great thing is, no one knows who the murderer is. Unless they’ve been before, of course!”

Susan even admires her character in The Mousetrap: “I like Mrs Boyle because she says it as it is - she doesn’t hold back. She’s the type of woman who’s used to being in control of situations, probably to make herself feel safe. I don’t think she feels safe in The Mousetrap! She’s funny, too.”

Being well known TV series such as Bouquet Of Barbed Wire, A Fine Romance and Emmerdale, Susan is in the perfect position to compare the stage and screen strands of her career: “I’ve done a lot of theatre: touring, West End and fringe. I started in rep in Worthing as an acting assistant stage manager when I was 21. There isn’t a better way to understand and learn about the theatre. Also, I was trained for the theatre. In the late ‘60s at drama school, we all hoped we would go to the RSC or the National Theatre - the Old Vic in those days. That was our aspiration - not TV, certainly not commercials, and films seemed out of our grasp unless we went to Hollywood. But for some reason, all through the ‘70s and ‘80s I landed lots of TV and film roles. I just went with the flow. But I always tried to do a play once a year if I could. You have to keep practising to get good at anything.”

While perhaps being better known for her television roles, Susan has toured extensively in numerous stage productions, including Cabaret, Rehearsal For Murder and, most recently, Handbagged.

“I don’t mind touring, but I also like being at home. I’m quite pragmatic about work. It’s a job; it’s how I earn my living. Like many actors, I’m sometimes out of work. I don’t think I’m special because I’ve been on TV or in a film. I find the celebrity culture these days slightly alarming. Fame for fame’s sake. Actually, I think being an actor or an entertainer is an important job in society, and there’s nothing like live theatre.”

The Mousetrap shows at the Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, from Monday 11 to Saturday 16 November.

by Lauren Cole
Theatre previews from around the region

Fame
Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 19 - Sat 23 November
Any Dream Will Do star Keith Jack and Hollyoaks and Dancing On Ice favourite Jorgie Porter head up the cast in this 30th-anniversary production of the ever-popular musical.

The original mega-hit film and its spin-off TV series are now both so old that their once-nimble dancers might soon be reaching for zimmer frames. By contrast, Fame The Musical continues to get up a sweat on a regular basis. And as high-octane, choreographed-to-the-rafters stage musicals go, it hits the Midlands this month with a reputation second to none.

Set in New York’s legendary High School For The Performing Arts, the show focuses on the highs and lows of the students who’re desperately seeking success, and offers a dazzling evening of foot-tapping music and breathtaking dance into the bargain.

The Mousetrap
The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, Mon 11 - Sat 16 November
Not only has everybody heard of Agatha Christie’s The Mousetrap, everybody’s seen the show as well - haven’t they? Okay, maybe not, but as the production is fast approaching its 70th consecutive year in the West End, it’s fair to say its capacity to put bums on seats is absolutely beyond question. Not surprisingly it’s the world’s longest-running show, and has been performed well in excess of a staggering 25,000 times. Its touring version is here making a welcome return to the Midlands.

Algorithms
The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, Sun 10 November

“Sadie Clark’s brilliant solo play hit us with big belly laughs and had us reaching for the tissues,” is how Algorithms is assessed by SHOUT Festival, of which the show’s Old Joint Stock stop-off forms a part. A bisexual Bridget Jones for the online generation, this tragicomic one-woman presentation is ideal for anyone who’s wondered why they feel so lonely at a point in time when connecting with others is meant to be easier than ever.

Shylock
Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Tues 12 November
Gareth Armstrong’s solo play is a sometimes moving, often humorous and always fascinating exploration not only of Shakespeare’s Shylock but also of Jewish stereotypes in general. Along the way, all manner of characters are presented to the audience, ‘from Portia to Pontius Pilate, Romeo to Max Reinhardt, and Barabbas to Richard Burbage’.

Described as ‘a dazzling dissection of The Merchant Of Venice’, the production is no stranger to four and five-star reviews.
This month’s From The Source Festival at Coventry’s Warwick Arts Centre includes a performance by Mercury-nominated soul singer Carleen Anderson. Carleen will appear as part of a sextet fusing soul, jazz and rap. Their gig, A Change Is Gonna Come: Music For Human Rights, explores a selection of political protest songs - from the mid-20th century American civil rights movement right through to the present day.

As an African-American woman born in the 1950s, Carleen’s life experience has been firmly rooted in the fight for racial equality. “I didn’t find out about my own family’s connections to the civil rights movement until very recent years,” she explains. “Involvement was always kept quiet because it’s still considered quite a dangerous thing to have been a part of, so the family were protecting each other. But even though I only found out relatively recently, being an American and growing up during that time made revolutionary art such an important thing to me. It makes sense that it became part of what inspires me and the work I create as an artist.”

Carleen is a firm believer in the power of music: “Music itself has such an immediate
effect. It can calm people, make them jump for joy and sometimes make them cry. If you can add to that lyrics which might mean something to them, then they feel a real connection to the song itself. From there, it can generate an effect on others. That person is also then inspired and passes that inspiration on to someone else. Two people might disagree on everything else possible, but they both might like that one song. There’s evidence throughout time that music has always had that impact - it brings people from entirely different backgrounds together.”

And A Change Is Gonna Come’s set list certainly reflects Carleen’s beliefs: “This was a collaboration between myself, one of the Sound UK directors, Polly Eldridge, and the co-music director, Nikki Yeoh. The focus is on where equality was back then, where we are now, how they’re still similar in some ways, and how we all need to change moving forward. Of course, it would then make sense for the art to change with time too, whether that be a new interpretation of a song or a new version of an old tune, as well as new tunes that have been inspired by those times - all with a 21st century vibe to them because that’s where we are now. The younger generations aren’t interested in singing Kumbaya anymore, and at one time that was the song that brought everyone together.”

The gig also brings in the perspectives of the five musicians performing alongside Carleen. “Nikki Yeoh, who worked alongside me in creating, will be performing with us too. She’s an award-winning jazz pianist who’s part Chinese. Her son’s father is Afro-Caribbean. So she’s definitely been in those situations herself and with her son, where people will judge you by your culture, background, features and so forth. Nikki is also younger than me - she’s in her 40s - so her experiences will differ somewhat there too, because times had already progressed in some ways between my date of birth and hers. But in many ways she also relates to my own experience. We’ll be alongside Camilla George, a newly emerged jazz saxophonist who grew up in Nigeria. She’s still in her 20s so will have a new perspective to bring - as will Lady Sanity, who’s the same age. Lady Sanity is a rapper from Birmingham. She’s a very intelligent wordsmith and very astute and aware of the times that we’re in. She sees it from the philosophical consideration of why we’re still in these same situations of inequality.

“We four women will be joined by bassist Renell Shaw, who’s toured with artists like Rudimental and Skepta. Rod Youngs will be our drummer, and he’s played with Gil Scott Heron, among others. There’s definitely a common connection which we all have to human rights in general, beyond the specifics of the civil rights movement. A Change Is Gonna Come is bigger than that. It addresses homelessness and all other sorts of human atrocities which have always been there and which we haven’t quite yet learnt to fix. I feel very privileged to work with these people because they’re all great musicians in their own right, but it’s even better to be getting together for this marvellous cause.”

Not surprisingly in a sextet of predominantly female musicians from ethnic minorities, a narrative of gender equality will run through A Change Is Gonna Come.

“Gender is certainly part of it because some of the songs refer to that too. It’s definitely a given, seeing as the four leads are women. Discussion of gender is definitely implied by the fact that we’ve been given this front platform, but also that we have these strong men in the group who aren’t threatened by women being centre stage. I think that says a lot about how gender unity can happen. It doesn’t have to be the end of the world if the women are up front!”

Also appearing at From The Source Festival is emerging jazz vocalist Judi Jackson, who Carleen worked with just this summer: “I worked with her as part of Soul Women Unite, which was curated by Yolanda Brown. It was a really wonderful line-up, with Judi, Yolanda, Terri Walker, Ayanna Whittaker and myself. Everyone always talks about people already in the industry supporting the up-and-coming artists, but I definitely think it’s a two-way street. Just as the seasoned artist would support the emerging artist, the same would be said for the reverse. That symbiotic relationship is essential for everyone from different generations to learn from each other. That way, we can continue to push culture and the arts forward, rather than feeling like it’s run its course.”

It’s certainly been a busy few months for Carleen, who featured in the BBC Proms back in September.

“The Proms was the most amazing experience. I was the choral director for the BBC singers and this group of top vocalists I’d selected in the UK called the UK Vocalists Assembly. Bringing together these two very different choirs - one from a very formal world, the other from a more contemporary one - to sing Duke Ellington’s Sacred Music - a work of art of strictly spiritual music blending classical, gospel and jazz - was incredible. It was a lot of work too! But they were great singers, and it’s an experience that will stay with me forever. To be in the midst of such amazing musicians and in the Royal Albert Hall was one of the highlights of my career.”

And does Carleen have any other stand-out moments?

“I think one that stands out for me was when I unexpectedly appeared on the stage with my godfather, James Brown, at the Royal Albert Hall in the early 2000s. In my mind, no one went on stage with James Brown!”

“Last year was a highlight in terms of my solo career, when my ‘tribal opera’, Cage Street Memorial, was produced by the Barbican. It just shows that there are so many different aspects to the arts that bring people together.”

So how would Carleen advise somebody who was wishing to make a human-rights statement on a small, everyday scale?

“Even if something you do is very minor, it still builds up. Small acts of courtesy matter because then that spins off into how that person then treats the next person they encounter. We can always do things like making sure you vote and write to those representing you in politics, but so much comes from us as individuals. Politicians take the lead from us. A lot depends on how we treat people - strangers, our neighbours, people who are different-looking from us, or who go about their daily life in a different manner but aren’t actually hurting anyone. If you can take those little moments to smile at people who are different, then it builds up and politicians will follow the lead of the people. Indiscriminate gestures of kindness are so important.”

From The Source Festival runs at Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, from Friday 8 to Sunday 10 November, with A Change Is Gonna Come scheduled for Sunday the 10th.
Ali might be alone but that doesn't mean she's lonely; not as long as she fills her time with roleplays and soundscapes summoned from her own memories and voice... The cycle of loneliness is explored and challenged in this second production from Theatre In Black, a new process-focused ensemble dedicated to the task of providing a platform for new writing and fresh creative talents.

Trojan Horse
Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Tues 19 - Thurs 21 November
This critically acclaimed docu-drama 'uncovers the truth' behind the controversial 2014 UK government inquiry into alleged extremism in Birmingham schools. Drawing on more than 200 hours of interviews conducted with teachers, students, parents and governors, Trojan Horse is written by Helen Monks and Matt Woodhead. “When we first started researching the subject,” says Helen, “we thought we were going to be writing about an event that had happened in the past. But it soon became clear that the trauma Trojan Horse caused has not left the city. So much is still left unresolved for the people it most affected.”

An Inspector Calls
Malvern Theatres, 5 - 9 November; The REP, Birmingham, Tues 12 - Sat 16 November
Anybody who's been fortunate enough to catch a production of JB Priestley's classic work will have no trouble understanding why it's been such a worldwide hit. When Inspector Goole calls unexpectedly on the prosperous Birling family, his startling revelations not only shatter the foundations of their lives but also challenge them to examine their consciences...

Gym & Tonic
New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Tues 5 - Sat 9 November
John Godber’s talent for taking pertinent themes and presenting them in an accessible down-to-earth manner has seen him become one of the UK’s most successful playwrights. He’s at it again in Gym & Tonic, a ‘laugh out loud’ comedy focusing on the highly topical subject of how to find a moment of calm in these challenging times. The action takes place at a health farm, where Don and Shirley’s efforts to fix their failing marriage leave even the therapists’ sanity well and truly on the rocks...

Strangers On A Train Set
Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Thurs 14 & Fri 15 November
The well-established Lip Service - aka Maggie Fox and Sue Ryding - return to Shrewsbury to present their latest comic offering. Maggie and Sue have been working together for more than three decades, producing shows such as Withering Looks - 'an authentic insight into the lives and works of those three Bronte sisters' - and Inspector Norse - 'a self-assembly Swedish crime thriller'. Their latest show sees them 'going off the rails' when a passenger is found dead as a train emerges from a tunnel...

Audience members who are also crime aficionados or narrow gauge railway enthusiasts should find plenty to stimulate their interest...

My Beautiful Laundrette
The REP Birmingham, Tues 5 - Sat 9 November
Hanif Kureishi’s original movie version of My Beautiful Laundrette, released in 1985, focused on an interracial love story between a young Pakistani man and his old school friend, a white working-class guy who’d lost his way. A clever, funny and powerful reflection of life in Thatcher’s Britain, the film has now been adapted for the stage, with Leicester Curve Artistic Director Nikolai Foster the man at the helm.

“I think this is a play about love, hope and young people moving the world forward,” says Nikolai. “It has a really powerful message, and I hope its vibrancy will be celebrated beyond coming to see the production. I very much hope that audiences take the experience forward with them.”
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It’s Curtains for Jason Manford!
When the star of a musical that’s tipped to be a Broadway hit is murdered on the show’s opening night, detective and musical-theatre fan Frank Cioffi is called in to investigate...

Tony Award-winning mystery-comedy musical Curtains is a John Kander & Fred Ebb show. But unlike the legendary songwriting duo’s better-known offerings, Cabaret and Chicago, it has never toured the UK. Until now, that is...

Taking on the lead role of Frank is Jason Manford.

“Curtains is an unashamedly showy Broadway-style musical,” says Jason. “It’s a comedy whodunnit. Without trying to put it down, it’s sort of like Cluedo as a musical. It’s a brilliant story, but it’s also got these fantastically funny characters from the musical’s book and Kander & Ebb behind the music and lyrics. Curtains has never been to the UK before, so I suppose in that way it’s like finding an album you didn’t know your favourite artist had recorded. Kander & Ebb really are legends in this industry. Every single song is a winner!”

Jason is well aware that performing in a show written by such a highly respected pair brings with it extra pressure: “There’s always pressure on performers, regardless. I’m very aware that people have paid good money and given up their valuable time to see something I’m in. We put months and months of time and effort into making sure a show is worth seeing; worth buying tickets for, worth getting a babysitter and maybe even a taxi and a hotel room, too. I would hate for anyone to be disappointed. Sure, there’s an added pressure with it being Kander & Ebb, but there have been lots of other instances where I’ve worked with high-profile people - like Mel Brooks, for instance - or in high-profile shows, such as Chitty Chitty Bang Bang. I try to make sure that the shows I’m in are ones that I would go and see myself. Curtains is definitely that. In fact, it’s something that I’d probably go and see a couple of times, especially because of the whodunnit aspect.”

Speaking of whodunnits, why does Jason think the genre is so popular?

“I don’t think our love of crime and mystery stories has ever gone away, especially in Britain. We’ve had the likes of Agatha Christie and Arthur Conan Doyle. Then we’ve had the American imports of Murder She Wrote and Columbo. Now you can’t put on the TV without seeing a crime drama. We just love trying to work it out! We feel clever and a little smug when we get it right - and we’re really good at creating them, too.

“What’s great about Curtains is that it really plays to the cast’s strengths. We’ve taken the Tony Award-winning Broadway show and added British sensibilities to it. Obviously it’s still set in 1959 Boston, but it’s not going to be something that’s from a completely different world as far as the audience is concerned.”

Alongside its whodunnit element, Curtains’ other great attraction is its humour...

“Frank is a very funny character. I guess the main thing is that he’s actually funny without realising it. He doesn’t really do any one-liners or gags, but he’s funny because he’s a bit naive. He definitely says a lot of funny things without wanting to. He’s a lot of fun. But it’s also a challenge for me as a comedian to play his funny lines down, rather than being like, ‘Tah-dah, there’s my big joke’.

“There are so many other funny characters and actors in Curtains, too. I just think people will have such a fun time coming to see it. Every day when you pick up the paper or scroll through Twitter, there’s misery and disaster to read about, so it’s nice to have a show coming to your town that allows you just to switch off and forget about the world.”

So when did Jason first realise he had a knack for comedy and performance?

“My family on my mum’s side were performers, so I was brought up around people singing and entertaining others. I used to get up on stage and do bits and bobs too. At school I was involved in all the plays, either off or on stage, so that’s what I ended up being interested in. English and Drama were my favourite subjects at school - I struggled to find anything else that I felt the same way about, really. I think part of that was down to the teachers. Having teachers who inspire you is the most valuable thing you can have.”

There were also a number of high-profile comedians who had a huge influence on Jason: “I liked a lot of the comedians that my dad liked: Billy Connolly, Jo Brand, Dave Allen. Then, seeing someone like Peter Kay live made me sit up and realise that stand-up was amazing. He’s an absolute genius. I think because I then got to know him a little bit, I got to see how hard he’d worked and how much effort he put into everything he did. Being a stand-up comedian works very much the same way as many other aspects of life - you get out of it what you put into it. Peter Kay is an incredibly hard worker, and I definitely learnt a lot from him.”

Given that Jason can sing and act as well as be funny, it’s not surprising that he’s had a varied career: “I really love the mix. It means I never get bored of anything I do. I’m excited about going on tour with Curtains because we’re bringing what is essentially a West End-quality show to people’s towns and local theatres, which I think is so, so important. If I’d not seen theatre from an early age, I wouldn’t be where I am today. So I hope this show inspires people, and that the tour is accessible for all.

“Beyond Curtains, I guess my main aim is to write something that other people will perform. I’ve done stand-up, meaning I’ve written shows and performed them myself, and I’ve been in musical-theatre productions and on TV, performing other people’s words, so the next place to go will be to have other people performing my words.”

Stand-up comedian, actor and singer Jason Manford talks about starring in Curtains - legendary songwriting duo Kander & Ebb’s lesser-known musical...

Curtains shows at The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, from Tuesday 5 - Saturday 9 November; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, from Tuesday 3 - Saturday 7 December; and Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Tuesday 31 March - Saturday 4 April.
The truth will out...

The largely unreported story behind the Birmingham schools Trojan Horse scandal is being told in a touring play which last year won the coveted Amnesty International Freedom of Expression Award at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Its co-writer, Birmingham-born actor Helen Monks - whose TV credits include playing Susanna Shakespeare, William’s daughter, in the hit BBC comedy, Upstart Crow - talks to What’s On about the scandal that rocked the city...

Reports in 2014 of teachers and governors plotting to Islamise Birmingham schools sent shockwaves through the city and the nation, with the local council launching an inquiry into the allegations and central government following up with their own investigation shortly afterwards.

LUNG Theatre’s critically acclaimed docu-drama adopts the same title as the inquiry - Trojan Horse - and tells the largely unreported story of how and why those accused were neither convicted nor ‘not guilty’ in court.

Adapted from the accounts of pupils from the schools involved and the teachers and governors’ testimony in court, Trojan Horse is a ground-breaking account of institutionalised Islamophobia and government prejudice.

“I’m from Birmingham,” says Helen Monks, who co-wrote the play with Matt Woodhead,
“so I knew about the news when it broke but didn’t know anymore than the news pieces I read. Matt and I went into this not knowing we were going to make a play about it; we were just interested in what the real story was. It’s taken about four years for this project to come to its conclusion, and the reason for that is that we just couldn’t get our heads around it. Every single person has a different experience of what the Trojan Horse inquiry actually meant, and it’s through that interview process with people who were directly involved that the truth started to unravel. We decided we definitely had to make a play because there’s widespread misunderstanding of what actually happened. It’s very scandalous. It’s particularly interesting because no reporters actually went to hear the defence, or the cross-examination of the prosecution, and it feels like there was a real shift in the reporting on Trojan Horse once evidence exonerated the teachers and governors. The newspapers just stopped reporting on it, so the narrative has been completely set in stone since those initial allegations of institutionalised extremism. Theatre is all about narrative, so if there’s a narrative that needs to be challenged, then theatre is the way to do it. We hope this play helps with that.”

So how did Birmingham schools make the national news in the first place?

“The title of Peter Clarke’s report, Trojan Horse, was taken from a letter that was supposedly sent from one Muslim governor in Birmingham to another in Bradford about this operation called Trojan Horse, explaining how to take over Birmingham schools. Trojan Horse, however, appeared much before this was ever a news story, in Michael Gove’s book Celsius 7/7. There’s a chapter called Trojan Horse, in which he warns of the Islamic plot. So in our play, people theorise that the title Trojan Horse is not one that was invented by the Muslim communities of Alum Rock in Birmingham, but was actually created by Michael Gove. That Trojan Horse letter between Muslim governors is now widely known to be a forgery. People believe that whoever wrote that letter was appealing to Michael Gove’s bias and the conspiracy theory that he already believed in - that any Muslim person who’s in a position of influence is there because they want to have complete control. The fact that Trojan Horse is this very traditional Ancient Greek historical symbol feels very white Western - so again, in my mind, it’s not very believable that that’s what followers of extreme Islam would’ve entitled this supposed plot.”

Creating Trojan Horse was a long process, but one that Helen and her dedicated team were determined to complete: “We met the teachers, governors, parents and pupils who were connected to the schools that were a part of the scandal. Over the course of the two years of writing, we did multiple extensive interviews with these individuals, and then they were also able to feed back on drafts of the script later on. We even took a first private reading of the play to Alum Rock for those affected by Trojan Horse and heavily involved in our storytelling, so that they could listen to the final script before the play even went to rehearsals. We also had to wade through a lot of other material, like the recordings of the Parliamentary Select Committees for Trojan Horse, and we read pretty much all the transcripts of the teachers’ trials. Everything in the play has come from something that a real person has told us, so the 200 hours of interviews formed into the narrative of the play. The show is set over two years: from the beginning of the 2014 academic year until when the teachers’ trials collapsed years later. So it started with meeting Tahir Alam - the man accused of being the main orchestrator of Trojan Horse - for the first time and it snowballed from there.”

With so many people’s lives affected by the allegations, how does the play approach the momentous task of sympathetically putting their stories on stage?

“There are five central characters: a teacher accused of Islamising his school, who is put on trial and gets given a lifetime ban from teaching; Tahir Alam himself is a character - the only one not anonymised in the script; there’s the character of a headteacher who feels pushed out by the governors at her school; Farrah is a schoolgirl who experiences everything first hand, from the press at her school gates to the inspectors in her classroom; and then, finally, there’s the character of the councillor, who shows how the scandal was viewed from that angle. So all the anonymised characters are an amalgamation of different people who we met, and all their stories feed into creating this one voice. Because of the way the events unfolded in the Trojan Horse inquiry, we can’t take too much credit for the narrative of the play, as it was already there for us to uncover.”

As a local, Helen is very aware that the impact of Trojan Horse on Birmingham is ongoing: “We want the play to be about opening up a conversation. Being from Birmingham, the main thing that I feel about Trojan Horse is that this isn’t a story that’s now been confined to history. It’s been left unresolved. It’s not about tearing open old wounds, it’s about trying to discuss something that continues to be prevalent in Birmingham. I also think that we would like the play to be reaching all the right people, which is why we have Urdu translation headsets available for those who need it. We’re trying to make sure the theatre is a space that’s neutral and for everybody. The main thing we’ve been so happy with about this tour is that people from all different walks of life are coming to see the show. We’re very proud that we’ve created this genuinely neutral space for everybody because I think sometimes the theatre can feel like an elite, white space. It’s exciting for these places to be reclaimed by people from such a wide array of backgrounds.”

Trojan Horse also aims to make a much broader statement...

“Alongside the play, we’ve launched a petition calling for the government to define Islamophobia because we don’t yet have a definition in law. Baroness Sayeeda Warsi is supporting the tour, has written the foreword for our play text and is very hot on the fact that there’s a huge amount of Islamophobia in politics, particularly in the Conservative Party. I think the thing about Trojan Horse is that it was a symptom of something much wider. Although we’re really keen that the play is about shining light on the injustice of Trojan Horse, it’s also about questioning how it was even allowed to happen in the first place. We’ll also be taking the play to the Houses of Parliament on the 7th of January, and we’re hoping that as many MPs as possible turn up. In particular, I hope Michael Gove RSVPs to my personal invitation!

“There was a huge amount of incompetence within the government surrounding what happened with Trojan Horse, and they want to just bury it under the carpet. We want to use the play to tell them we haven’t forgotten, and that the people of Birmingham know the truth now. If you look at those who are most complicit in the corruption surrounding Trojan Horse, they’re now in very senior positions in the Cabinet or are advisors to the new prime minister. They’ve completely got away with it, while people in Birmingham have had their lives destroyed by the story. There are people who haven’t recovered from this. Not just in terms of the city still being divided over it, but the personal health of those involved who’ve lost their livelihoods and reputation over fabricated information. It’s absolutely scandalous that people’s lives have been used as political footballs, and that those in positions of power can continue not to be held to account for their part in that.”

Trojan Horse shows at Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, from Tuesday 19 to Thursday 21 November. All performances will be followed by a Q&A with Professor John Holmwood - expert witness for the defence at the Trojan Horse trials.
Queens Of Sheba
Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Wed 13 - Sat 16 November

Queens Of Sheba is one of two productions being presented at Warwick Arts Centre this month which explore identity, power, race, gender, sexuality, society and politics. Focusing on four black women battling everyday misogynoir, the play is accompanied by Travis Alabanza’s Burgerz (15 & 16 November), a ‘powerful performance’ exploring how trans bodies survive.

A Taste Of Honey
Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 5 - Sat 9 November

Shelagh Delaney’s play, A Taste Of Honey, was published in 1958 and is a career-defining British classic. Depicting working-class life in post-industrial Salford and tackling numerous taboos of the time - including homosexuality, inter-racial relationships and single mothers - it earned its teenage writer comparisons with Look Back In Anger author John Osborne.

This new National Theatre touring production stars Jodie Prenger.

A Museum In Baghdad
Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, until Sat 25 January

Hannah Khalil’s brand new play focuses on a museum which was founded in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad in 1926 by British archeologist Gertrude Bell. “The play questions what were essentially colonial instincts about the need for the British in Iraq,” explains director Erica Whyman. “It considers whether the British as a whole actually believed in Arab independence, or whether they were motivated by oil, having a power base between India and Turkey and a profound belief that British civilising forces were good in the world. In our creation of Iraq, we certainly had something in common with the American idealisation of invasion. These are attitudes that we should find very uncomfortable now.”

Billionaire Boy
The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, Wed 20 - Sat 23 November

The producers of this hit touring show, Birmingham Stage Company, have impressive credentials when it comes to David Walliams’ work, having also presented critically acclaimed versions of Gangsta Granny and Awful Auntie.

For those unfamiliar with the book, it tells the tale of how Mr Spud made and lost his billions, and how his son, Joe, became the richest boy in the world.

The Gruffalo
The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Mon 11 & Tues 12 November

With millions of copies of the book having been sold, it’s fair to say that Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler’s award-winning Gruffalo has captured the hearts and minds of children everywhere. Presenting songs, laughs and ‘monstrous’ fun for children aged three and upwards, this much-loved stage version of the terrific tale follows Mouse as he heads out on a journey through the deep dark wood, scaring away hungry animals with tall stories of the terrifying Gruffalo. Imagine his surprise, then, when he suddenly finds himself coming face-to-face with the very creature he’s imagined!
LESLEY JOSEPH  MATT SLACK  JOE McELDERRY  FAYE BROOKES

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs
THE FAIREST PANTO IN ALL THE LAND
FLAWLESS

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Sweet dreams are made of this

Birmingham Royal Ballet’s festive favourite returns...
Continuing to enthral and delight Midlands audiences 29 years after making its debut, Sir Peter Wright’s The Nutcracker is the most festive of ballets and the perfect way to kick off the Christmas season at Birmingham Hippodrome.

With its exquisite designs, impressive live orchestra and magnificent performances from 60 highly skilled Birmingham Royal Ballet (BRB) dancers, Sir Peter’s version of the story is widely considered to be one of the best in the world.

For those not in the know, the narrative takes place on Christmas Eve and follows the adventures of a young girl named Clara. When given a wooden nutcracker as a gift, she finds herself swept into an enchanting winter wonderland of dancing snowflakes, where she meets the most beautiful of beings - the Sugar Plum Fairy.

And her magical journey features plenty more besides - an army of toy soldiers, a kingdom of sweets, battles with fierce human-sized rats and wondrous displays of traditional dances from far-flung places.

A magical Christmas tree that miraculously grows from four to 15 metres and a fireplace that expands to fill most of the stage are just a few of the spectacular worlds that unfold. The sumptuous 200-plus costumes that contribute to the magic and appeal of The Nutcracker are the work of internationally acclaimed set and costume designer John McFarlane. John’s original designs remain at the forefront of the production and provide a constant reference point behind the scenes – as we recently found out during a visit to BRB’s costume department.

Although some of the work required to produce The Nutcracker is outsourced, much of it is dealt with in-house - and as Elaine Garlick, the company’s head of costume, pointed out, The Nutcracker isn’t just for Christmas... it gets all-year-round attention because ‘we know it will return every winter’.

“We never put Nutcracker 100% away,” explains Elaine. “With a production of this scale, there’ll always be work that needs doing. Costumes take a hammering due to the physicality of the dancers, and there’ll always be rips, tears, deterioration or maybe a Sugar Plum outfit in need of re-beading.”

The latter really is an intricate process, as witnessed during our visit. It’s only close up that you fully appreciate the dexterity involved in bringing the Sugar Plum bodice to life. Everything has to be just as John intended - from the delicate beading through to the subtle expansion of colour on the tips of the individual petals. An exquisite copy of one of John’s paintings, envisaging how the Sugar Plum Fairy should look, takes pride of place on a studio wall. A work of art in itself, it acts as a constant reminder of the designer’s vision.

Sugar Plum aside, the magnitude of this production becomes evident upon entering the costume warehouse. Row upon row of beautifully crafted outfits displayed on rails are sectioned off according to scene - flowing, lyrical dresses for the snowflakes, cadet costumes for the toy soldiers, authentic Victorian attire for the opening scenes, rats’ tails as tall as a person and a fully lined King Rat costume which is so heavy that I could barely lift it into the air. Flamenco dresses, Russian culottes, Oriental silks, sweet costumes, shoes, boots, tights - and even Sloggi knickers! - also feature in what is unquestionably the biggest dressing-up box I’ve ever seen.

My new-found knowledge of The Nutcracker’s creative back story has certainly ignited my excitement at the prospect of seeing the show again when it opens late this month. And it will undoubtedly be with the greatest respect and admiration that I will watch King Rat as he plies across the stage to do battle with the Nutcracker... while simultaneously swishing a humongously heavy coat & tail and balancing a proportionately weighty headdress!

Birmingham Royal Ballet’s The Nutcracker shows at Birmingham Hippodrome on various dates from Friday 22 November until Saturday 14 December

Nutcracker facts

1. By the end of its 2016 season, Sir Peter’s production had been performed a total of 519 times - 454 times at Birmingham Hippodrome. The 500th performance took place on Tuesday 29 November 2016.

2. Before the curtain goes up on the first performance, hours of work have been undertaken behind the scenes. The sets, props and lights for the show will travel to the Hippodrome in five articulated trucks from the Birmingham Royal Ballet stores in Dudley. When the sets arrive, work will begin on the get-in and fit-up. This process takes approximately three days. Another two days are usually required for technical and stage rehearsals.

3. The production has a flying goose that transports Clara to a magical land - it travels 20 metres across the stage at every performance. This means that the goose has travelled over 6.4 miles at Birmingham Hippodrome since 1990.

4. A crew of around 50 people work backstage on the production.

5. 75kg of flame retardant artificial snow is used in the production. It’s imported from a specialist company in New York.

6. Since The Nutcracker’s first performance back in 1990, dancers playing the role of snowflakes in the show have made their way through over 720 cans of silver-sparkle body paint.

7. The wigs department and BRB company members use around 500 hairpins per show - that’s a staggering 259,500 hairpins since 1990!

8. The Nutcracker features over 45 wigs and pieces of facial hair.

by Patsy Moss
THE CATHEDRAL ILLUMINATED 2019

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CREATED AND PRODUCED BY LUXMURALIS ARTISTIC COLLABORATION
There are plenty of opportunities for Midlanders to get into the festive spirit over the next few weeks. The region is hosting some of the best pantos and Christmas shows in the land, not to mention a wide range of other activities to enjoy - from getting your skates on for some fabulous ice-rink fun to searching for Santa and jumping aboard the Polar Express. You name it, the marvellous Midlands has got it covered...

**Puss In Boots**  
Belgrade Theatre, Coventry,  
Wed 27 November - Sat 11 January

A show which is being referred to as ‘the cat’s whiskers’ by producers Imagine Theatre, Puss In Boots tells the tail, sorry, tale, of a fabulous feline who outwits both a king and an ogre to make his master the top, er, dog...

Having not been performed at the Belgrade for many a year, this new production of Puss has been left in the capable hands of the ever-magnificent Iain Lauchlan, a man who’s been writing and starring in the venue’s festive shows for more years than he probably cares to remember. Having written the script, Iain will once again be donning the comedy wig and applying far too much blusher to star as the show’s pantomime Dame, a role which he’s very much made his own in recent times. Expect an evening of purr-fectly splendid family entertainment.

**Cinderella**  
Lichfield Garrick,  
Thurs 28 November - Sun 5 January

With its comical Ugly Sisters, matchmaking fairy godmother, drop-dead-gorgeous Prince Charming, super-cute mice and fits-one-foot-only glass slipper, Cinderella can justifiably lay claim to being the most popular of all pantomimes.

This Lichfield Garrick version stars CBeebies’ Rebecca Keatley as Cinderella’s Fairy Godmother and sees the much-loved Sam Rabone making a welcome return to the venue to play comedy sidekick Buttons. And given that he usually rouges-up to star as the pantomime Dame, we’re imagining Sam might well be looking forward to a festive season spent slipping into something a little more comfortable than an oversized frock and gargantuan wig!

**The Prince And The Pauper**  
New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme,  
Sat 16 November - Sat 25 January

An interesting and imaginative choice for a Christmas show, Mark Twain’s famous story is here being produced by the creative team behind the New Vic’s adaptations of The Borrowers, Treasure Island and the UK Theatre Award-winning The Snow Queen.

Adapted and helmed by the venue’s Artistic Director, Theresa Heskins, the production features ‘imaginative storytelling, live music, humour, puppetry and plenty of festive magic’.

**Scrooge The Musical**  
Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent,  
Tues 26 - Sat 30 November

The wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner is back, in one of the country’s bestselling and most-loved family shows. Leslie Bricusse’s Scrooge The Musical broke all box office records when it premiered in Birmingham nearly 30 years ago. The show is based, of course, on Charles Dickens’ A Christmas Carol, in which grumpy old misanthrope Ebenezer is finally taught how to love his fellow man - by means of a late-night festive haunting or four...

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CHRISTMAS AT
BLACK COUNTRY
LIVING MUSEUM
Festive shows and attractions opening in November

The Snow Queen
The Old Rep, Birmingham, Sat 16 November - Mon 30 December
The Snow Queen is ruler of all she surveys. When she kidnaps young Kay, it’s left to his friend Gerda to save him from a bleak future in the frostbitten wastelands...
This much-loved Hans Christian Andersen story is here presented by the creative team behind The Old Rep’s Christmas 2018 production of Pinocchio. The new show comes complete with ‘an epic original score, spellbinding storytelling and more than a pinch of Christmas magic’.

Father Christmas
Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Wed 27 November - Sun 29 December
Raymond Briggs is best known for his story about a little boy who makes friends with a snowman - but talented theatre company Pins And Needles are doing plenty to promote one of the author’s slightly less-famous tales. Suitable for children aged three and older, Father Christmas features songs, live music, playful puppetry, secret doors, hidden hatches and plenty of trademark Briggs humour. Expect your children to be suitably impressed.

The Nutcracker
Birmingham Hippodrome, Fri 22 November - Sat 14 December
Sir Peter Wright’s enchanting version of this firm festive family favourite returns to the Hippodrome courtesy of Birmingham Royal Ballet. Created in 1990, Wright’s production is seen by many as the finest interpretation of Tchaikovsky’s magnificent and mesmerising score.
In true Christmas spirit, the story follows a young girl named Clara as she’s swept up in a fantasy of soldiers, giant rats, snow fairies, magic and mystery, before finally being transformed into a beautiful ballerina.
This is a magical must-see show for little princesses everywhere...

Kipper’s Snowy Day
Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Tues 26 November - Tues 31 December
Slot Machine Theatre present a show that’s actually an amalgamation of two books by award-winning children’s author Mick Inkpen: Kipper’s Snowy Day and Kipper’s Christmas Eve.
For those not in the know, Kipper is a dog who’s been delighting generations of young readers for the past 30 years. This is Slot Machine’s first-ever stage adaptation of the much-loved books and sees Kipper and his friends, Tiger and Arnold, going on an adventure in the snow.

Aladdin
Stourbridge Town Hall, Wed 27 November - Sun 1 December
Flying carpets at the ready, boys and girls...
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...
All profits raised from the performances will be donated to patient care at Mary Stevens Hospice.
visit Santa at the Valley

The magic of Christmas returns to Sandwell Valley

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 visita Reindeer
Children’s activities
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Book now, visit:
www.sandwell.gov.uk/santaatthevalley
Festive attractions opening in November

Meet Santa at Sea Life
National Sea Life Centre, Birmingham, Sat 23 November - Mon 23 December
The National Sea Life Centre is bringing the North Pole to Birmingham’s Brindleyplace this Christmas.
Visit the Antarctic Ice Cave, take your little ones to meet Santa (and receive a free gift from him) and check out a family of cheeky Gentoo Penguins in the exclusive setting of the Ice Adventure area.
Families can also pay a visit to the 4D cinema to enjoy a screening of classic festive favourite The Polar Express.

Ice Skate Birmingham
Centenary Square, Birmingham, Thurs 7 November - Sun 12 January
Ice Skate Birmingham and the Big Wheel make a welcome return to Centenary Square this month. While the wheel offers the opportunity to enjoy fantastic views across the city, the ice rink accommodates up to 300 people per session and is this year weather-proofed thanks to the addition of a roof. Younger or inexperienced skating enthusiasts can keep upright by using special penguin skating aids. And when skaters have finished their Torvill & Dean routine, they can warm themselves up with some festive fare in the nearby Ice Lounge.

Christmas at Coalbrookdale
Coalbrookdale Museum of Iron, Enginuity, Ironbridge, weekends from Sat 30 November - Sun 22 December
Santa really does get everywhere at Christmastime - including museums of iron! Coalbrookdale’s all-new Santa experience offers youngsters the chance to say hello to the man himself in his woodland grotto. And as well as providing an opportunity to meet the jovial St Nick, the event also features a selection of fun family activities. Visitors who work up an appetite can sample some splendid festive fare at Coalbrookdale’s brand new Furnace Kitchen.

Santa’s Winter Wonderland
Snowdome, Tamworth, Staffs, Fri 15 November - Tues 31 December
This year’s all-new Santa Show sees the white-bearded one preparing for his big festive performance of The Twelve Days Of Christmas - but finding his efforts somewhat hampered by two elves, who have a decidedly different perspective on how to present a yuletide showstopper...
Suitable for all age groups, the show is just one element of the festive fun on offer at Tamworth’s snowy indoor attraction. Visitors can also explore Santa’s Christmas snow trail, take a walk through an enchanted forest, enjoy a game of snowballs, hitch a ride on a sledge, meet Santa’s furry friends and check out the brand new traditional children’s carousel.

Christmas at Shakespeare’s Birthplace
Stratford-upon-Avon, various dates in November and December
Christmas at Shakespeare’s Birthplace kicks off with Mary Arden: Town And Country - Preparing For Christmas (Mon 25 & Sat 30 November). Shakespeare’s mother was a country girl who, upon her marriage to the bard’s dad, John, had to acclimatise to life in the town. But how did preparations for the festive season differ between town and country? House stewards from Shakespeare’s Birthplace and Mary Arden’s Farm offer an insight into Mary’s changing yuletide traditions...
December attractions at the venue, meanwhile, include Flowers Of Winter (Sat 14 December - Sun 5 January) - an exhibition of floral displays inspired by traditional winter blooms - and Come A-Wassailing (Mon 30 December - Wed 1 January) - a chance to participate in the precursor to the modern-day activity of carol singing.

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Centenary Square, Birmingham, Thurs 7 November - Sun 12 January

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Families can also pay a visit to the 4D cinema to enjoy a screening of classic festive favourite The Polar Express.
Ice Skate Birmingham

Let's Go Skating

Open from 10am - 10pm daily
Thurs 07 Nov 2019 - Sun 12 Jan 2020
Centenary Square - B1 2EA

Book online now for discounts!
www.iceskatebirmingham.co.uk
Festive attractions opening in November

The Snow House Bar
Bullring, Birmingham, until Sun 5 January
After enjoying a Christmas cracker of a festive season last year, Snow House Bar is making a welcome return to Birmingham’s Bullring this winter, complete with its super-popular VIP igloos. Providing an impressive selection of beers and wines, mulled wine and hot chocolate, the venue is also serving German sausages and churros from early this month onwards.

Santa Safari
West Midland Safari Park, Bewdley, nr Kidderminster, Sat 16 - Sun 17, Sat 23 - Sun 24, Sat 30 November plus various dates throughout December
Families visiting West Midland Safari Park this festive season can meet an elf, climb on board a sleigh and head for the North Pole. And that’s just for starters! Having arrived at their destination, young visitors can then say hello to Santa Claus, tell him what’s on their Christmas wish list and pose with the great man while a helpful elf takes a picture. But wait, there’s more... After meeting Santa, children can also select their own present in the elves’ workshop and sample a special walk-through ‘discovery trail’...

Christmas At The Castle
Warwick Castle, Sat 30 November - Tues 31 December
If you’re looking for places to take the kids for some seasonal fun this Christmas, Warwick Castle should certainly be on your radar. Attractions include ‘magical storytelling experiences’ with Mr & Mrs Claus and their merry elves, the chance to enjoy breakfast with Santa and his wife, Christmas feasts and medieval banquets, Santa sleepovers, a special walk-through ‘discovery trail’...

Statfold Santa Express
Statfold Barn Railway, nr Tamworth, Sat 30 November - Sun 22 December
All aboard the Statfold Santa Express! Taking place every pre-Christmas weekend from the end of this month onwards, this family-friendly event sees visitors climb aboard Santa’s magical steam train and journey to the North Pole. Once arrived, there’s plenty for youngsters to see and do, including paying a visit to Santa’s reindeer, decorating cookies with Mrs Claus and selecting their very own special gift on a visit to the toy shop.

The Polar Express Train Ride
Train departs Birmingham Moor Street Station, Fri 22 November - Sun 22 December
The Polar Express train rides return to Birmingham this month. The popular motion picture film is being theatrically recreated so that families can immerse themselves in the sights and sounds of the classic children’s story. Youngsters are invited to join in the fun with the movie’s characters, while the event also features carol singing and a visit from Santa.

Santa Safari
Hawkstone Park, Weston-under-Redcastle, North Shropshire, Fri 29 November - Mon 23 December
Little ones can enjoy a magical adventure and meet Santa at Hawkstone Park Follies this Christmas. Jump into one of the park’s Land Rovers to enjoy a journey through the illuminated woodland to Santa’s spectacular network of caves.
Hawkstone’s friendly elves will keep you entertained as you wander around the fairy-lit caverns and tunnels, finally arriving at your ultimate destination - the magical grotto itself, where every child will receive a special gift from Santa. The chance to meet the big man’s trusty reindeer and enjoy an ‘illuminated woodland fantasy’ also feature.

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Magnum Manifesto
Compton Verney, Warwickshire, until Sun 15 December
If you haven’t yet checked out Magnum Manifesto, be sure to get along this month or next. Featuring some of the most significant and enduring images from the world-famous Magnum Photos agency, the exhibition focuses on the history of the second half of the 20th century, as seen through the lenses of 75 leading photographers.

We are the only UK destination for this unmissable exhibition,” says Compton Verney Director Julie Finch. “Magnum Manifesto provides a snapshot of society, politics, cultures and changing economies crossing time and continents, a reference point in our turbulent times, a discussion piece and a mirror to the world - all captured through photography.”

Truly Bright And Memorable: Jan De Beer’s Renaissance Altarpieces
Barber Institute, Birmingham, until Sun 19 January
This latest in the Barber’s Masterpiece In Focus series showcases the venue’s very own double-sided altarpiece featuring The Nativity and the ‘apocryphal tale of Joseph and the suitors’. The altarpiece is one of many created by 16th-century Flemish artist Jan de Beer, a man whose star shone brightly for centuries after his death but whose relevance has been somewhat downgraded in recent times.
The exhibition also brings together for the first time all of de Beer’s paintings and drawings from public and private collections in Britain.

Radical Drawing: Works From Coventry And The Courtauld
Herbert Art Gallery, Coventry, until Sun 19 January
The radical and creative potential of drawn marks and lines is explored in an exhibition featuring not only artwork from the Herbert but also pieces both from The Courtauld Gallery in London and the University of Warwick.
The display offers viewers the opportunity to contemplate work by a number of artists who have pushed the boundaries of what it means to draw.
Also on display are objects linked to the Courtaulds factory in Coventry and a specially produced film about Courtaulds Ltd. The long-established manufacturer of fabric, clothing, artificial fibres and chemicals set up shop in the city in 1905.

Arpita Shah, Maryam Wahid, Nilupa Yasmin Exhibition
New Art Gallery, Walsall, Fri 15 November - Sun 19 April
The complexity and diversity of modern women’ is the theme which runs through the work of the three talented female photographers contributing to this exhibition. Arpita Shah, Maryam Wahid and Nilupa Yasmin have all created images about and in collaboration with their families and communities - both in the UK and Pakistan in order to present work focused around portraiture, culture and female identity. Among the topics explored in their images are women’s contribution to the economy and society, the tradition of head covering or veiling, and open femininity and cultural identity.
Wolverhampton Art Gallery

Wolverhampton Society of Artists Centenary Exhibition
Sat 14 Dec 2019 – Sun 16 Feb 2020

Wolverhampton Society of Artists (WSA) has been exhibiting at Wolverhampton Art Gallery since the Society was formed in 1919. Each year, the Society presents a careful selection of members’ work chosen via an open submission process. This exhibition celebrates the centenary of Wolverhampton Society of Artists and the continuous partnership of both institutions.

The exhibition documents the story of the Society featuring a selection of works by WSA’s alumni including paintings, drawings and sculptures, alongside some archival material.

It also showcases contextual works highlighting the history and achievements of the WSA against the wider development of British art in the period 1919-1929. The final section showcases works by current members of the Society.

The Bloomsbury Effect
Sat 14 Dec – Sun 16 Feb 2020

Visitors to the Wolverhampton Society of Artists Centenary Exhibition can also enjoy a display of three prestigious early 20th century British paintings on loan from the Courtauld Gallery, London. This is part of an ongoing collaboration which celebrates the links between Wolverhampton and the Courtauld Collection through the Courtauld Textile company.

Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Lichfield Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1DU.
www.wolverhamptonart.org.uk.

Candy & Cobwebs
31 Oct and 1 Nov 2019
Blists Hill Victorian Town
Especially for under 8s and their grownups

Buy tickets online now IRONBRIDGE.ORG.UK

Fireworks Night
2 Nov 2019
Blists Hill Victorian Town
A spectacular display over the Victorian town

Festive, fun & fabulous

The biggest and most lively Christmas Shopping Fair in the Midlands is back!... With so much choice, great bargains, fabulous live music and festive entertainers.

Adult Tickets from just £6.00

www.festivegiftfair.co.uk
Bonfire & Fireworks
Weston Park, Shropshire, Sun 3 November
Set within 1,000 acres of Capability Brown-designed parkland, Weston Park plays host to a wide selection of popular events throughout the year, among which is this annual bonfire & fireworks display - one of the largest in the whole of the West Midlands region.
As well as a giant bonfire, attractions on the night include a funfair, food stalls and two ‘spectacular’ firework displays (at 6pm and 7.30pm).

Himley Bonfire 2019: To The Moon And Back
Himley Hall & Park, Dudley, Sat 2 November
Celebrating 50 years since the Apollo 11 moon landing, this year’s Himley bonfire event features a pyrotechnic display set to inspirational music.
Other attractions include a night market, a giant funfair, live entertainment, seasonal refreshments, and a number of large screens to make sure that you don’t miss any of the unfolding action.

Family Fireworks Night
Blists Hill Victorian Town, Ironbridge, Sat 2 November
Blists Hill Victorian Town stays open late on the second of the month for a special fireworks night. Visitors can walk the Victorian streets, explore the period buildings, watch a dramatic iron-casting demonstration in the foundry and chat to the townsfolk in their cottages, shops and other places of work. The undoubted highlight of the evening, though, is the venue’s sky-illuminating fireworks extravaganza, which comes complete with accompanying music.

Firework Festival
West Midland Safari Park, Bewdley, Worcestershire, Sat 9 & Sun 10 November
Even the mighty roars of the resident lions may be drowned out at West Midland Safari Park on the second weekend of the month, as music fills the air and fireworks whistle & explode in the nighttime sky.
Visitors can explore the venue’s walk-through areas - including Ice Age and Land of the Living Dinosaurs - enjoy a selection of late-night rides and keep the autumn chill at bay by cosying up to their loved ones around a giant bonfire.

Ultimate Fireworks
Alton Towers, Staffordshire, Fri 8 - Sun 10 November
Alton Towers’ season draws to a close with a great big bang this month.
Visitors to the Ultimate Fireworks event will surely make the most of this final opportunity to experience their favourite rides and attractions before the venue shuts down for winter.
An end-of-the-night fireworks display should ensure that the curtain falls on the 2019 season in suitably spectacular style.

Edgbaston Fireworks Spectacular
Edgbaston Stadium, Birmingham, Sat 2 November
One of the biggest events of its kind in Birmingham, Edgbaston Fireworks Spectacular makes a welcome return on the first Saturday of the month and this year takes a superhero theme.
As well as providing youngsters with the chance to say hello to some of the world’s greatest cape, cowl and spandex-wearing fictional characters, the event also features plenty of family-friendly entertainment, included among which is a funfair, an LED light show and, as the event’s name suggests, a sure-to-be-impressive fireworks display.

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Meet Santa
National SEA LiFE
Birmingham
23rd Nov - 23rd Dec

visitsealife.com/birmingham

The Ultimate Festive Experience
Mind Body Spirit Festival
NEC, Birmingham, Fri 1 - Sun 3 November
The Mind Body Spirit Festival is back in Birmingham with a three-day programme of events and activities that includes contributions by motivational speakers, musicians and performers from across the globe. There’s a whole host of free workshops to take part in too, as well as the opportunity to enjoy silent discos, visit a wellbeing spa and shop for everything from organic food to healing crystals.

Birmingham International Tattoo
Arena Birmingham, Sat 23 & Sun 24 November
Featuring in excess of 1,200 performers, this well-established event is the UK’s biggest indoor international tattoo. The three-hour spectacle is led by the world famous Band of Her Majesty’s Royal Marines, with international marching bands from France, Poland and the Netherlands also participating. Hailing from Texas and taking part in the show for the very first time are the Kilgore College Rangerettes, the world’s best-known collegiate drill team. Other attractions include a range of ‘spectacular’ displays, performances by talented vocal soloists and the not-to-be-missed Parade of Massed Standards.

MCM Comic Con
NEC, Birmingham, Sat 16 & Sun 17 November
Fans of comics, movies, TV shows, cosplay and gaming can rejoice - ‘the ultimate pop-culture experience’ is back at the NEC!

Underwater Superheroes
National Sealife Centre, B’ham, Sat 9 - Fri 22 November
This brand new event offers visitors the chance to put their strength and intelligence to the test against speedy sharks and stinging starfish (in an entirely safe way, of course!). Photo opportunities and an activity trail further add to the fun, with all youngsters receiving a special pop-badge as a memento of their visit.

Festive Gift Fair
NEC, Birmingham, Thurs 14 - Sun 17 November
Now in its 24th year, the Festive Gift Fair is a cracking place to pick up a Christmas gift or several for your nearest and dearest. And with more than 300 stallholders in attendance, there’s certainly no shortage of items to peruse and maybe purchase! Away from the shopping, the show’s programme of attractions includes musical performances, the UK’s largest snowman, appearances by Father Christmas himself and an impressive selection of artisan food & drink.
Baby to Toddler
The Shopping Event for Every Parent
23-24 Nov 2019 | ExCel London
30 Nov - 1 Dec 2019 | NEC Birmingham

Shopping Extravaganza | Baby's First Christmas | 100's of Leading & Boutique Brands | Toys & Gifts
Black Friday Deals | Baby & Kids Fashion | The Catwalk | Experimental Festive Fun | Soft Play | FREE Expert Advice

Two Tickets & a Goodie Bag for Only £5.90!* Quote: WOT19 Babytotoddlerevents.co.uk

*Advance Box Office closes midnight 22/11/2019 for ExCel, and 29/11/2019 for NEC. To book by phone call 0844 995 9674. Calls cost 7p per minute plus standard network access charge. Transaction fee or booking fee applies depending on ticket package. Goody bag ticket offer is limited to one purchase per person. Correct at time of print.

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AEG Presents & Nordic Beats Proudly Present
The Baby To Toddler Show

NEC, Birmingham, Sat 30 November & Sun 1 December

Dubbed 'the ultimate shopping experience for every parent', the Baby To Toddler Show is the sister event of the equally popular Baby Show and features more than 100 brands covering everything from prams and furniture to toys and clothing... The show will also feature a whole host of Black Friday deals - so be sure to get along and grab yourself a bargain or two!

The Classic Motor Show

NEC, Birmingham, Fri 8 - Sun 10 November

Celebrating its 35th anniversary, the Classic Motor Show spans seven halls, boasts the world’s largest gathering of car and motorcycle clubs, and features a display of more than 3,000 classic and vintage cars & motorcycles. Motor fanatics can enjoy shopping at the UK’s largest indoor autojumble, with specialist traders on hand to help source parts and tools. Live auctions, talks by a number of motoring celebrities and fascinating restoration demonstrations are just some of the show’s other highlights.

BBC Good Food Show

NEC, Birmingham, Thurs 28 November - Sun 1 December

Eat, drink and be merry, as the BBC Good Food Show brings its winter edition to the NEC. Visitors can see their favourite celebrity chefs in action on the show’s Big Kitchen stage, check out brand new festive workshops such as gingerbread decorating and how to make your own Christmas gin, and pick up some tasty festive treats from hundreds of hand-picked producers.

Christmas Light Switch-ons

It’s that time of year once again, when cities, towns and villages across the Midlands are lit up in readiness for the festive season. Find your local Christmas light switch-on event(s) below.

BIRMINGHAM

JEWELLERY QUARTER, BIRMINGHAM
Fri 15 November
EDGBASTON
Fri 22 November

STAFFORDSHIRE

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME
Sat 16 November
STONE
Thurs 21 November
LICHFIELD
Sun 24 November
TAMWORTH
Sun 24 November

WORCESTERSHIRE

Worcester
Thurs 21 November
BROMSGROVE
Sat 23 November
BEWOLEY
Sat 30 November

WARWICKSHIRE

LEAMINGTON
Sun 17 November
COVENTRY
Wed 20 November
WARWICK
Thurs 28 November
KENILWORTH
Sun 1 December

BLACK COUNTRY

WEDNESBURY
Fri 22 November
WOLVERHAMPTON
Sat 23 November
BANTOCK HOUSE
Sun 24 November
WEDNESFIELD
Thurs 28 November
BILSTON
Fri 29 November
TIPTON
Fri 29 November
TETTENHALL
Sat 30 November

SHROPSHIRE

MARKET DRAYTON
Sat 16 November
SHREWSBURY
Wed 20 November
OSWESTRY
Thurs 21 November
BRIDGNORTH
Fri 22 November
LUDLOW
Sat 23 November
DONNINGTON
Sun 24 November
OAKENGATES
Sat 30 November

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UK TOUR 2020

ARENA BIRMINGHAM

FRI 31 JANUARY: 6.30PM  SAT 1 FEBRUARY: 11.30AM & 6.30PM  SUN 2 FEBRUARY: 6.30PM

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TICKETS FROM £30 + FEES

GO BIG!
GO HOT WHEELS!
Your week-by-week listings guide
November 2019

Curtains - Tuesday 5 - Saturday 9 November at The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

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

What’s On

Fri 1 to Sun 10 November

Freddy Kempf at The Barber Institute, Birmingham
Wed 6 November

Mon 11 to Sun 17 November

Burgerz at Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham
Sun 17 November

Mon 18 to Sun 24 November

Shakespears Sister at Symphony Hall, Birmingham
Tues 19 November

Mon 25 to Sat 30 November

The Little Prince at DanceXchange, Birmingham
Fri 29 - Sat 30 November
The Barber Institute

THE MUGHALS: POWER AND BEAUTY AT THE INDIAN COURT
Exhibition exploring courtly life, power and culture in the Indian subcontinent under Mughal rule (16th - 18th), until Sun 2 Feb

TRULY BRIGHT AND MEMORABLE: JAN DE BEER'S RENAISSANCE ALTARPIECES
Exhibition focusing on the Barber’s own double-sided altarpiece featuring the Nativity and the apocryphal tale of Joseph and the suitors, until Sun 19 Jan

THE PRINTED WORD: IMAGE, TEXT AND MEANING
Exhibition focusing on European prints from the 16th to the 20th century, until after artists as diverse as Samuel Palmer, Goya, Grosz and Miró, until Sun 26 Jan

A TALE OF TWO EMPIRES: ROME AND PERSIA
Exhibition exploring how the ancient superpowers of Rome and Persia spun humiliating defeats and promoted their bloody victories on the small pieces of art circulating in the pockets of the masses, until Sun 15 Mar

Other VISUAL ARTS

PERISHING SHRINES - LISA ROSS
Exhibition drawing on Ross’s extensive body of work, Living Shrines, until Sat 2 Nov, Argentea Gallery, Birmingham

AND WHAT IT BECAME IS NOT WHAT IT IS NOW
Exhibition, publication and public programme curated by Louise Hobson, until Sat 9 Nov, Grand Union, Fazeley Street

IF MEMORY SERVES
Research project about the Nightingale Club’s previous venue on Thorp Street, which in 1994 was acquired for the Birmingham Hippodrome’s expansion, until Thurs 14 Nov, Birmingham Hippodrome

PRE-WINDRUSH TO THE PRESENT DAY
Heritage exhibition celebrating the long history of black representation on the Hippodrome stage, until Thurs 14 Nov, Birmingham Hippodrome

HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM
Display of photographs from the University Heritage Archive Collection of the Cadbury Research Library, until Fri 31 Jan, Birmingham City University

NEW YARDSLEY SOCIETY OF ARTISTS - AUTUMN EXHIBITION
Collection of paintings by members of the society, Wed 6 - Mon 19 Nov, The Core Theatre, Solihull

NEW TAKE 13 - A ROOM OF OUR OWN
Exhibition by a group of local female artists who’ve met monthly for the past 10 years and exhibited regularly, sharing contemporary and often diverse artwork, Wed 20 Nov - Tues 17 Dec, The Core Theatre, Solihull

Gigs

FRIENDLY FIRES Fri 1 Nov, O2 Institute, B’ham

FEVER 333 Sat 2 Nov, O2 Institute, B’ham

LAZYBONES / ECHO GECCO Sat 2 Nov, The Flapper, Birmingham

THREE TIMES SCARLETT Sat 2 Nov, The World Bar, Resorts World, Birmingham

GLASS CAVES + DAME + LA DHARMA Sat 2 Nov, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

A1 Sat 2 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

EJUK LIVE Sat 2 Nov, Arena Birmingham

MICHELLE JOHN SINGS THE DIVA CLASSICS Sat 2 Nov, Pizza Express Live, Birmingham

O2 - DEFINITIVE GENESIS Sat 2 Nov, Assert, Bromsgrove

THE STYLE COUNCILORS Sat 2 Nov, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

FIRE RED EMPRESS Sat 2 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

NEFFEX Sat 2 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

DR HOOK FT. DENNIS LO-CORRIERE Sat 2 Nov, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE TALLEST MAN ON EARTH Sat 2 Nov, Birmingham Town Hall

BARS AND METEOLY Sun 3 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

RAHAT FRESH ALI KHAN Sun 3 Nov, Arena Birmingham

CALUM LINTOTT Sun 3 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

ZOE GREEN BAND Sun 3 Nov, The Actress & Bishop, Birmingham

WARMDUSHER Sun 3 Nov, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

THE HEAVY Sun 3 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE SHERLOCKS Sun 3 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

CATFISH AND THE BOTTLEMEN Mon 4 Nov, Arena Birmingham

BEARS DEN Mon 4 Nov, O2 Institute, B’ham

WELSEY ARMS & THE GLORIOUS SONG Mon 4 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

MICHAEL MONROE Mon 4 Nov, The Mill, Digbeth, Birmingham

JAMES MORRISON Mon 4 Nov, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

EVERYONE YOU KNOW Mon 4 Nov, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

PRIESTS Tues 5 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

BANKS: THE III TOUR Tues 5 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

GREG KOCH Tues 5 Nov, The Jam House, Birmingham

DRAGONFORCE Wed 6 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

JULIE JULY TRIO + PAUL O’NEIL Wed 6 Nov, The Red Lion Folk Club, Birmingham

JAMIE LENNAN Wed 6 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

CHARTRUSE Wed 6 Nov, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

JOHNNY LLOYD Wed 6 Nov, The Cuban Embassy, Birmingham

LAGWAGON Wed 6 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

MARILLION Wed 6 Nov, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE THREE DEGREES Thurs 7 Nov, The Jam House, Birmingham

WILDWOOD KIN Thurs 7 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

SLEEPING WITH SIRENS Thurs 7 Nov, The Core Theatre, Solihull

THE BLUETONES Thurs 7 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

LITTLE MIX Thurs 7 - Sat 9 Nov, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

THE MAGIC OF MOTOWN Fri 8 Nov, Arena Birmingham

INFINITE SAUCE Fri 8 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE MACC LADS Fri 8 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

ABSOLUTE BOWIE - LEGACY TOUR Fri 8 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE AMAZONS Fri 8 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

JAKI GRAHAM Fri 8 Nov, Pizza Express Live, Birmingham

RANDOLPH MATTHEWS Sat 9 Nov, Pizza Express Live, Birmingham

LOYAL CARNER Sat 9 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE RIFLES Sat 9 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE REGRETTS Sat 9 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE CIRCLE WORKS Sat 9 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

KODALINE Sat 9 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE AUSTRALIAN PINK FLOYD SHOW Sat 9 Nov, Arena Birmingham

STEPBACK 90S VS 00S Sun 10 Nov, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

AURORA Sun 10 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

MEMORIAM Sun 10 Nov, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

MARIANAS TRENCH Sun 10 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

JOSEFIN OHRN + THE LIBERATION Sun 10 Nov, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

CHRONIXX AND KOIFFEE Sun 10 Nov, Arena Birmingham

BURNA BOY - AFRICAN GIANT TOUR Sun 10 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

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**Friday 1 - Sunday 10 November**

**Classical**

CBSO: FRIDAY NIGHT CLASSICS Featuring Andrew Cottée (conductor). Programme includes scores from some of Andrew Lloyd Webber’s iconic musicals, Fri 1 Nov, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

BENJAMIN FRITH & LIANG SHAN PIANO CONCERT Programme comprises Messiaen’s Visions de l’Amen, Fri 1 Nov, The Barber Institute, Birmingham

LUNCHTIME ORGAN CONCERT WITH RACHEL MAHON Mon 4 Nov, Birmingham Cathedral

LUNCHTIME CONCERT Featuring Yu-Han Yang (euphonium), Joanne Sealey (piano), Sebastian Wyss (violin) & Tanya Avchinnikova (piano). Programme includes works by John Reeman, Steve Verhelst, Philip Sparke, Poulenc & Saint-Saëns, Mon 4 Nov, Recital Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

FREDDY KEMP IN CONCERT Programme includes a selection of works by Chopin, Wed 6 Nov, The Barber Institute, Birmingham

ROYAL BIRMINGHAM CONSERVATOIRE: EARTHRISE Featuring Daniele Rosina (conductor) & arrangements by Peter May, Emily Abdy & Rob Roberts, Sat 9 Nov, The Bradshaw Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

LONDON CONCERT ORCHESTRA: THE MUSIC OF BOND Featuring John Rigby (conductor), Sun 10 Nov, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**Comedy**

JUST THE TONIC FEAT. REGINALD D HUNTER, SIMON WOZNIAK, THOMAS GREEN & SPECIAL GUEST Fri 1 Nov, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

DESIRE BURCH Fri 1 Nov, The Glee Club, Birmingham

CRAG MURRAY, TOM TAYLOR & JAMES SHERWOOD Sat 2 Nov, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JAMES SHERWOOD, TOM TAYLOR & CRAIG MURRAY Sat 2 Nov, The Glee Club, Birmingham

BOBBY MAIR, HAYLEY ELLIS, IGNACIO LOPEZ & GUEST Sat 2 Nov, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

STEPHEN K AMOS Sun 3 Nov, The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

AURE STYLA Sun 3 Nov, The Glee Club, Birmingham

GLENN MOORE Wed 6 Nov, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ANDY ROBINSON & MAISIE ADAM Thurs 7 Nov, The Glee Club, Birmingham

KEITH FARNAN, BARRY CASTAGNOLA, PETE TECKMAN & ANDY WHITE Thurs 7 Nov, The George Hotel, Lichfield

FRANK SKINNER Fri 8 Nov, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

IMPROV COMEDY WITH BOX OF FROGS Fri 8 Nov, The Core Theatre, Solihull

MAISIE ADAM, JOE BOR, STEVE GRIBBIN & TOM DEACON Fri 8 - Sat 9 Nov, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JASON BYRNE Sat 9 Nov, Birmingham Town Hall

FREDDY QUINNE, JULIAN DEANE FEATURING SIMON LOMAS & SIMON WOZNIAK Sat 9 Nov, The Comedy Loft, B’ham

DATING AND RELATIONSHIP THERAPY DIZZLE, AXEL BLAKE, JUDI LOVE, SMASH ENTERTAIN & MISS MO REAL Sun 10 Nov, The Glee Club, Birmingham

MAISIE ADAM Sun 10 Nov, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

**Opera**

THE INTELLIGENCE PARK Music Theatre Wales present the Birmingham debut of Gerald Barry’s opera, Mon 4 Nov, The REP Birmingham

WNO - CARMEN Jo Davies’ new production, set in the recent past. Sung in French with English surtitles, Fri 8 Nov, Birmingham Hippodrome

RIGOLETO Welsh National Opera present a timely revival of Verdi’s dramatic opera. Sung in Italian with English surtitles, Wed 6 Nov, Birmingham Hippodrome

THE CURIOUS LITTLE VIXEN Welsh National Opera present a colourful production of Janacek’s playful tale, Thurs 7 Nov, Birmingham Hippodrome

WNO - CARMEN Jo Davies’ new production, set in the recent past. Sung in French with English surtitles, Fri 8 Nov, Birmingham Hippodrome

COSI FAN TUTTE Welsh National Opera production featuring Ana Maria Labin (Fiordiligi), Emily Edmonds (Dorabella), Rebecca Bottone (Despina), Benjami Inn (Guiigelmo), Matthew Swensen (Ferrando), Fri 8 Nov, Birmingham Town Hall

RIGOLETO Welsh National Opera present a timely revival of Verdi’s dramatic opera. Sung in Italian with English surtitles, Sat 9 Nov, Birmingham Hippodrome

**Theatre**

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE* (+SORT OF) Men, money and microphones are fought over in a loving and irreverent all-female adaptation of Jane Austen’s literary classic, until Sat 2 Nov, The REP Birmingham

CIRCUS 1903 Unique show featuring life-sized elephants created by puppeteers from War Horse and ‘jaw-dropping’ acts from across the globe, until Sat 2 Nov, Birmingham Hippodrome

JACK THE RIPPER: THE VICTIMS An all-female cast focus on the stories of the five canonical victims of Jack the Ripper, until Sat 2 Nov, The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

NATIVITY! THE MUSICAL Hit yuletide musical adapted for the stage by the film’s creator, Debbie Isitt, until Sat 2 Nov, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR BITA Musical Theatre present an amateur staging of Andrew Lloyd Webber & Tim Rice’s classic rock musical, until Sat 2 Nov, The Old Rep Theatre, B’ham

A MUSEUM IN BAGHDAD A story of treasured history, desperate choices and the remarkable Gertrude Bell, until Sat 25 Jan, The Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

GETTING THE THIRD DEGREE The deeply moving story of Laurie Cun-

ningham, who came to prominence with West Bromwich Albion in the late 1970s, Fri 1 Nov, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

THE FOOTBALL RAMBLE Join the gang as they bring their chart-topping pod-

cast to life in ‘a multimedia extravaganza’, Fri 1 Nov, Birmingham Town Hall

RUTH COCKBURN Comedy-theatre show fusing spoken word, poetry, songs & storytelling, Fri 1 Nov, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

DO YOU THINK THAT’S WISE - THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOHN LE MESURIER Moving celebration of one of the most popular comic actors of the late 20th century, Sat 2 Nov, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

BERRY, Amateur staging of Maxine Peake’s ‘warm & wity celebration of the life of unsung sporting legend Beryl Burton, Sat 2 - Sat 9 Nov, Oldbury Rep

WITTY DITIES WITH GREEN & MATTHEWS Chris Green & Sophie Matthews present four centuries of comic opera, ranging from ‘bawdy Restoration ballads to sting- ing 60s satire’, Tues 5 Nov, The Core Theatre, Solihull

A TASTE OF HONEY Jodie Prenger stars in Shelagh Delaney’s taboo-breaking play, Tues 5 - Sat 9 Nov, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

CURTAINS Jason Manford stars in a ‘hilarious’ whodunnit packed full of ‘catchy songs, unforgettable characters and plot twists’, Tues 5 - Sat 9 Nov, The Alexandra Theatre, B’ham
ENJOY
Christmas in the Jewellery Quarter

SAVE THE DATE
Christmas Lights Switch On
Friday 15th November, 5pm-7pm
The Golden Square, Birmingham, B18 6NF

Kick-off the festive season in style! Enjoy a spectacular firework display at 6pm. Plus live music from Birmingham’s Voice of the Town Choir and The Bombshell Belles, as well as delicious street food by Wafl and Kowaca.

Selina
BIRMINGHAM

Kindly sponsored by Selina Birmingham. An elegantly designed boutique hotel and hidden gem in the heart of the JQ.
MY BEAUTIFUL LAUNDERETTE Bold new staging of Hanif Kureishi's iconic screenplay, presented against a 'funky' backdrop of '80s music & culture, Tues 5 - Sat 9 Nov, The REP. Birmingham

SEVEN BRIDES FOR SEVEN BROTHERS S.T.A.M.P.S present an amateur staging of Rodgers & Hammerstein's famous musical, Tues 5 - Sat 9 Nov, The Core Theatre, Solihull

HOW TO BE AMAZINGLY HAPPY Storytelling & physical comedy combine in a one-woman show, Thurs 7 - Sun 10 Nov, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

POPPYFIELDS THE MUSICAL 'Poignant and respectful' story focusing on the young people who gave their lives for their country at war's end, Thurs 7 - Sun 10 Nov, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

INVISIBLE LINES 'Innovative, highly physical & thought-provoking' work exploring the invisible divides and connections between races, languages & cultural expectations, Thurs 7 - Wed 13 Nov, The REP. Birmingham

SQUID HEART Two woman improvised show inspired by a single word from the audience. Part of Foundry Festival, Fri 8 Nov, The REP. Birmingham

THE BURN ULTIMATUM Brand new comedy from Tom Allsopp, Fri 8 Nov, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

BROKE & SOBER Play exploring mental health problems, including PTSD & clinical depression. Part of Foundry Festival 2019, Fri 8 - Sat 9 Nov, The REP. Birmingham

BRAVE NEW WORDS VI Annual event showcasing new written work, Fri 8 - Sat 9 Nov, Hall Green Little Theatre, Birmingham

RAZZLE DAZZLE: THE MUSICAL COMEDY MURDER MYSTERY DINNER SHOW West End singers travel back in time to the Roaring 20s in Chicago, Fri 8 - Sat 9 Nov, Lichfield Garrick

QUEER AND NOW Whirlwind showcase of short work-in-progress performances from the next generation of queer Midlands theatre-makers. Part of SHOUT Festival, Sat 9 Nov, The REP. Birmingham

DIVERSITY - BORN READY Featuring ‘dance, illusions, mind-blowing stunts and inspiring stories’, Fri 1 - Sun 3 Nov, The Alexandra Theatre, B’ham

DEEPAVALLI, THE FESTIVAL OF LIGHT Jaivant Patel Dance present an evening of Indian classical dance, Sun 3 Nov, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

THE RITE OF SPRING & LEFT UNSEEN Phoenix Dance Theatre present a double-bill - 'Jean Guy Saintus' re-working of The Rite Of Spring, and an emotive exploration of inclusion & isolation in Left Unseen, Fri 8 - Sat 9 Nov, Midlands Arts Centre, B’ham

TALKS / SPOKEN WORD

BEN FOGLE - TALES FROM THE WILDERNESS Join the modern-day explorer as he shares stories about crossing Antarctica and conquering Everest, Tues 5 Nov, Birmingham Town Hall

PRE-CONCERT CONVERSATION WITH JAN PAGÉ Free pre-concert conversation with the founder, conductor and artistic director of Classical Opera and The Mozartists, Fri 8 Nov, Birmingham Town Hall

HIT THE ODE Unique performance poetry night featuring talented spoken-word artists, Fri 8 Nov, The Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

KIDS SHOWS

WERE GOING ON A BEAR HUNT Little Angel Theatre’s acclaimed adaptation returns to celebrate the 30th anniversary of Michael Rosen’s beloved book, until Sun 3 Nov, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

THE SCARECROW’S WEDDING Stage version of Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler’s best-selling book, Fri 1 - Sat 2 Nov, The Core Theatre, Solihull

MR MEN & LITTLE MISS SHOW Join your favourite Mr Men and Little Miss characters as they leap off the page and onto the stage, Sat 2 Nov, Lichfield Garrick

DANCE

DIWALI FESTIVAL OF LIGHT Activities

DEEPAVALLI, THE FESTIVAL OF LIGHT Jaivant Patel Dance present an evening of Indian classical dance, Sun 3 Nov, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

THE RITE OF SPRING & LEFT UNSEEN Phoenix Dance Theatre present a double-bill – Jean Guy Saintus’ re-working of The Rite Of Spring, and an emotive exploration of inclusion & isolation in Left Unseen, Fri 8 - Sat 9 Nov, Midlands Arts Centre, B’ham

GARGOYLE MASKS AND GRUESOME TOUR Make your own terrifying gargoyles and create your own terrifying masks, Fri 1 Nov, Weoley Castle, Birmingham

FESTIVAL OF THE DEAD The hugely popular ‘deathly fiesta’ returns for its fourth year with a production combining carnival, circus, theatre and clubbing, Fri 1 Nov, O2 Academy, B’ham

Events

CANDY & COBWEBZ Halloween trick-or-treat event for under-eights and their grown-ups, until Fri 1 Nov, Blits Hill Victorian Town, Ironbridge, Shrops

BRICK OR TREAT ‘The most spook-tacular event of the year’, until Sat 2 Nov, Legoland Discovery Centre, Birmingham

A-SCARIUM Discover the spooky creatures that lurk beneath the waves, until Sun 3 Nov, National Sea Life Centre, Birmingham

SIMPLY CHRISTMAS - THE CRAFTY CHRISTMAS SHOW ‘An extravaganza of exclusive ranges of bespoke and unusual gifts, including glass, jewellery, art, candles, ceramics and clothing’, until Sun 3 Nov, NEC, Birmingham

BRICKLIVE Opportunity for children aged 12 & under to play, create and discover with Lego bricks, until Sun 3 Nov, NEC, Birmingham

THE CREATIVE CRAFT SHOW Featuring supplies, innovations, new product launches, demonstrations and workshops, until Sun 3 Nov, NEC, B’ham

WHERE'S WALLY? THE BIG MUSEUM HUNT Join the search for Wally this half term, until Sun 3 Nov, Thinktank Science Museum, Birmingham

FREDDO'S HALLOWEEN SPOOKTACULAR Arrive dressed up and join in the fun as Freddy creates his very own Halloween monster, until Sun 3 Nov, Cadbury World, Birmingham

FESTIVAL OF THE DEAD The hugely popular ‘deathly fiesta’ returns for its fourth year with a production combining carnival, circus, theatre and clubbing, Fri 1 Nov, O2 Academy, B’ham

GAMES & GAMES TOUR Make your own terrifying gargoyle mask, Fri 1 Nov, Weoley Castle, Birmingham

FESTIVAL OF THE DEAD The hugely popular ‘deathly fiesta’ returns for its fourth year with a production combining carnival, circus, theatre and clubbing, Fri 1 Nov, O2 Academy, B’ham

CANDY & COBWEBZ Halloween trick-or-treat event for under-eights and their grown-ups, until Fri 1 Nov, Blits Hill Victorian Town, Ironbridge, Shrops

BURGER BINGO Three hours of burgers and bottomless booze with non-stop entertainment, Wed 6 Nov, Arena Birmingham

MAC GIN AND JAZZ CLUB Start your weekend off the right way - with a gin cocktail in hand and listening to live jazz, Fri 8 Nov, Midlands Arts Centre, B’ham

MAC GIN AND JAZZ CLUB Start your weekend off the right way - with a gin cocktail in hand and listening to live jazz, Fri 8 Nov, Midlands Arts Centre, B’ham

THE LANCASTER INSURANCE CLASSIC MOTOR SHOW Fri 8 - Sun 10 Nov, NEC, Birmingham

THE CLASSIC MOTORBIKE SHOW Featuring a host of outstanding two-wheeled classics, Fri 8 - Sun 10 Nov, NEC, Birmingham

SAVED BY THE BINGO Featuring live performances of top tunes, Sat 9 Nov, The Lord Clifden, Birmingham

UNDERWATER SUPERHEROES Find your ultimate ocean superpower as you test yourself against some powerful sea creatures, Sat 9 - Fri 22 Nov, National Sea Life Centre, Birmingham

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**Miracle on 34th Street**

A Live Musical Radio Play
Based on the 1947 Lux Radio Hour Broadcast
Presented by Special Arrangement with Stage Rights (www.stagherights.com)
5th - 24th December 2019
Tickets £20 - £25
oldjointstock.co.uk

**The Barber Institute of Fine Arts**

Truly Bright and Memorable
JAN DE BEER’S Renaissance Altarpieces
25 October 2019 – 19 January 2020
Admission Free
www.barber.org.uk

**Snow House**

At the Bullring Shopping Centre

Outside the Bullring Shopping Centre overlooking St. Martin’s Square, the SNOW HOUSE BAR is again the destination to visit this season. A variety of premium beers, mulled ciders & wine will be served. Or you can choose a delicious marshmallow-topped hot chocolate.

For some added festive fun, VIP SNOW HOUSE IGLOOS are available to rent for 90 minutes at a time.

Opening hours:
SUN - THUR 11.00 - 20.00
FRI - SAT 11.00 - 22.00

More details can be found on:
/snowhousebar
@snowhousebar

56 whatsonlive.co.uk
Gigs

VAMPIRE WEEKEND Mon 11 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

FEEDER Mon 11 Nov, O2 Institute, B’ham

JOSEPH Mon 11 Nov, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

QUAKER CITY NIGHT HAWKS Tues 12 Nov, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

LIAM GALLAGHER Tues 12 Nov, Arena B’ham

REEL BIG FISH Tues 12 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

LOVELYTHEBAND Tues 12 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

JACK SAVONETTI Tues 12 Nov, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

REX ORANGE COUNTY: THE PONY TOUR Tues 12 & Wed 13 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

HALF+ALIVE Wed 13 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

JIM MORAY + CHRIS FOX Wed 13 Nov, The Red Lion Folk Club, Birmingham

THE MEN THEY COULD-N’T HANG 35TH ANNIVERSARY Wed 13 Nov, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

CHRISTINA AGUILERA Thurs 14 Nov, Resorts World Arena, B’ham

BIG JOANIE Thurs 14 Nov, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

TOM WALKER Thurs 14 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE STYLISTICS Thurs 14 Nov, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Hall, Birmingham

STEVE MASON Thurs 14 Nov, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

TYLER BRYANT & THE SHAKEDOWN Fri 15 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

HARD GRAFT Fri 15 Nov, The World Bar, Resorts World, B’ham

ROMA COVE & KROOKED TONGUE Fri 15 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

CAROLE: THE MUSIC OF CAROLE KING Fri 15 Nov, Lichfield Garrick

SOULIN’ WITH ANY, PAUL WHITTE & MARK MAGDOL Fri 15 Nov, The Night Owl, B’ham

PEARL JAM UK Fri 15 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE ROTANAS + MODERN COMFORTS + THE SILVER LINES Fri 15 Nov, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

SODOMIZED CADAVER, ABSOLUTION, PEMPHEGODI & VIOLATED FLESH Fri 15 Nov, Scruffy Murphys, Birmingham

MR EAZI Fri 15 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE WHITE ROOM - ALBUM LAUNCH SPE- CULAR Fri 15 Nov, Route 44, Birmingham

THE ROOM PLUS SPECIAL GUESTS THE PARADOX TWIN Fri 15 Nov, The Flapper, B’ham

YONAKA Fri 15 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

TWIST & SHOUT Fri 15 Nov, The Core Theatre, Solihull

CARMEN SOUZA Fri 15 Nov, Pizza Express Live, Birmingham


BELLA HARDY Sat 16 Nov, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

NOW THAT’S WHAT I CALL ’80S LIVE Sat 16 Nov, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

PARTNERS IN CRIME Sat 16 Nov, The World Bar, Resorts World, B’ham

THE DOORS ALIVE Sat 16 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

BIRMINGHAM WILLE J HEALEY Sat 16 Nov, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

THE DUALERS Sat 16 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

TOOL SHED + GUESTS: SCARUSN & SYMMETRY OF SOULS Sat 16 Nov, Scruffy Murphys, Birmingham

THE CROSSES ROSES & KAZABAN Sat 16 Nov, O2 Academy, B’ham

FREE RADIO HITS LIVE 2019 Sat 16 Nov, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

METRONOMY Sat 16 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE HOTTEN HALLERS Sat 16 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

PETER WHITE Sat 16 Nov, Pizza Express Live, Birmingham

RAINBOW RISING Sat 16 Nov, Route 44, B’ham

IVORY WAVE Sat 16 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

FOY VANCE Sat 16 Nov, Birmingham Town Hall

A TRIP TO THE OLD SKOOL Sat 16 - Sun 17 Nov, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

CELTIC WOMAN - ANCIENT LAND Sun 17 Nov, The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

REUBEN JAMES Sun 17 Nov, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

FREYA RIDINGS Sun 17 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

Classical Music

LUNCHTIME ORGAN CONCERT WITH THOMAS TROTTER Programme includes works by Bach (arr. Widor), Guilmant, G. Thalben-Ball, Parry, Sibelius, Durufle, Mon 11 Nov, Birmingham Town Hall

ROYAL BIRMINGHAM CONSERVATOIRE CHAMBER CHOIR & BAROQUE ORCHESTRA: GENTLE FLAME Featuring Jeffrey Skidmore (conductor). Programme includes works by JS Bach & Liz Johnson (Gentle Flame). Tues 12 Nov, The Bradshaw Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire


TALHAINE ENSEMBLE Featuring Daniele Rosina (conductor). Programme includes works by Luc Ferrari & new pieces by RBS composition students, George West & Oliver Mack, Fri 15 Nov, The Barber Institute, Birmingham

CBSO: SAPPHIRE Featuring Luciano Berio’s Notturno, JS Bach arr. Powell Hall in Birmingham

CHAMBER ORCHESTRA: MUSIC AND THE HANSEATIC LEAGUE Featuring Andrew Kirkman (director). Programme includes works by Buxtehude, Mathe- son, Keiser & Handel. Sat 16 Nov, The Barber Institute, Birmingham

BIRMINGHAM BACH CHOIR GALA CONCERT Featuring Paul Spicer (conduc- tor) & The Musical and Amicable Society Orchestra. Programme includes works by JS Bach, Handel & Haydn, Sat 16 Nov, Lichfield Cathedral

BIRMINGHAM FESTIVAL CHORAL SOCIETY: HANDEL BETHLEHEM Featuring The Musical & Amicable Society Baroque Orchestra, David Wynn (conduc- tor), Penny Appleyard (soprano), Philippa Thomas (mezzo), Xavier Hetherington (tenor) & James Williams (baritone). Sat 16 Nov, Church of St Alban the Martyr, Birmingham


CITY OF BIRMINGHAM CHOIR: MASS IN BLUE Also featuring Lichfield Cathedrals Young Voices & The Young Phoenix Singers, Sun 17 Nov, Elgar Concert Hall, The Bramall, University of Birmingham

Comedy

FLO & JOAN Tues 12 Nov, The Glee Club, Birmingham

CROFT & PEARCE - DOUBLE TAKE Thurs 14 Nov, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

BEN ELTON Thurs 14 Nov, Birmingham Hippodrome

ROBERT WHITE, JO ENLIGHT & COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON Thurs 14 Nov, The Glee Club, Birmingham

TOM STADE, CHRISTIAN REILLY, JOHNNY SORROW & WAYNE BEECE (MC) Fri 15 Nov, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

JOSH PUGH & BEN POPE Fri 15 Nov, Cherry Reds Cafe-Bar, Birmingham

SHAZIA MIRZA Fri 15 Nov, Atrix, Bromsgrove

DARREN HARROTT Fri 15 Nov, The Glee Club, Birmingham

TIM MINCHIN Fri 15 & Sat 16 Nov, Birmingham Hippodrome

RUDI LICKWOOD, MATT BRAGG, TUDUR OWEN & HAYLEY ELLIS Sat 16 Nov, The Comedy Loft, B’ham

GEOFF NORCOTT Sat 16 Nov, The Core Theatre, Solihull

LADIES NIGHT FEAT. NORREEN KHAN (PIC- TURED), VIBS BHATIA & DJ AK BEATS Sat 16 Nov, The Glee Club, B’ham

IMPROV COMEDY WITH BOX OF FROGS Sun 17 Nov, The Glee Club, B’ham
CHRISTMAS at SYMPHONY HALL

Sunday 15 December at 2.30pm
CHRISTMAS SPECTACULAR
MUSIC • SONG • DANCE • SPECTACLE
Rockin’ Around The Christmas Tree • Sleigh Ride
Last Christmas • All I Want For Christmas Is You
White Christmas • Winter Wonderland • Santa Baby
Laura Ibbett & Tim Howar guest singers
The Jingle Bells Dancers • Freddie Spotter conductor
Birmingham Voices • London Concert Orchestra

Tuesday 24 December at 2.30pm
CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT
Carols and seasonal classics, staged in full 18th Century costume in an evocative candlelight style setting.
Cullen Joy to the World • Sleigh Ride
Elgar Christmas Festival Chorus • Messiah
Handel Christmas Sequence from Messiah • Zadok the Priest
Darke In The Bleak Midwinter • PLUS CAROLS FOR ALL
Susanna Hurrell soprano • Steven Devine conductor
Mozart Festival Chorus • Mozart Festival Orchestra in full period costume

Saturday 28 December at 7.30pm
THE BEST OF JOHN WILLIAMS
Celebrating the iconic film scores of John Williams.
E.T. • jaws • Hook • Superman • Jurassic Park
Schindler’s List • Harry Potter • Born on the Fourth of July
Close Encounters of the Third Kind • Star Wars...
including highlights from:
A New Hope • The Empire Strikes Back • and many more...
Anthony Ingham conductor • London Concert Orchestra

Saturday 21 December at 2.30pm
CHRISTMAS CRACKER with ALED JONES
Seasonal classics, festive readings and joyful songs.
Wilko’s Jingle Bells • Cullen Joy to the World
Blake Walking in the Air • Anderson Sleigh Ride
Tchaikovsky: Suite from The Nutcracker
PLUS CAROLS FOR ALL
Aled Jones presenter • Jennifer France soprano
Adrian Lucas conductor • City of Birmingham Choir • London Concert Orchestra

Sunday 22 December at 2.30pm
NOW • CHRISTMAS LIVES
All I Want For Christmas Is You • Merry Christmas Everyone
Rockin’ Around The Christmas Tree • Wonderful Christmas Time
Santa Claus Is Coming To Town and many more...
Kerry Ellis and Tim Howar guest singers • John Rigby conductor
Capital Voices • Live 15-Piece Show Band

Friday 27 December at 2.30pm
GLENN MILLER ORCHESTRA
Favourite wartime chart toppers and hits from the forties,
directed by legendary band leader Ray McVay.
The Dam Busters March • In The Mood • Rhapsody In Blue
Chattanooga Choo Choo • Moonlight Serenade
Tuxedo Junction • Little Brown Jug • Pennsylvania 6-5000
With special guests The Swing Time Jivers
and guest vocalists Mark Porter & Catherine Sykes
The orchestra will perform the second half of the concert
in the World War II uniforms of the US Army Air Force.

Friday 27 December at 7.30pm
LAST NIGHT OF THE CHRISTMAS PROMS
Rousing classics with a grand flag waving British finale!
Programme:
\begin{itemize}
\item Strauss: Die Fledermaus Overture
\item Tchaikovsky: 1812 Overture
\item Rossini: La Jong De Bacchus From The Barber Of Seville
\item Bizet: Dueto From The Pearl Fishers
\end{itemize}
And all your Proms favourites...

Saturday 28 December at 2.30pm
THE GREATEST SHOW TUNES
A show-stopping concert of the greatest show tunes:
The Greatest Showman
Mamma Mia • Dreamgirls
The Phantom of the Opera
9 to 5 • La La Land
With guest singers:
Sophie Evans • Ben Forster
Mariehla Wallace • Ricardo Alfonso
Richard Bartram conductor • Birmingham Voices
London Concert Orchestra

Monday 30 December at 7.30pm
BEETHOVEN’S NINTH
An unforgettable all-Beethoven programme.
Programme:
Piano Concerto No. 5 'Emperor' • Symphony No. 9 'Choral'
Lauren Fagan soprano • Kathryn Rudge mezzo-soprano
Oliver Johnson tenor • Morgan Pearce baritone
Daniel Lebhardt piano • Oliver Gooch conductor
Birmingham Choral Union • City of Birmingham Choir
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Wednesday 1 January at 2.30pm
THE JOHANN STRAUSS GALA
A wonderful selection of your favourite waltzes and polkas.

\begin{itemize}
\item Blue Danube Waltz
\item Radetzky March
\item Tritsch Tratsch Polka
\item The Laughing Song From Die Fledermaus
\item Schlau Schulz Polka
\end{itemize}
Johann Strauss Dancers in glorious costumes of the period
Johann Strauss Orchestra • John Rigby conductor
Lizzie Holmes soprano • Alexandra Warrell director/choreographer

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THE MOUSETRAP
Mon 11 Nov, The REP, Birmingham

worry if certain behaviours are passed down through generations. But will they overcome their generational cycles in time? Part of Foundry Festival, Mon 11 Nov, The REP Birmingham

BLUEPRINTS
Before starting a family together, Adam and Faith have to examine if certain behaviours are passed down through generations. But will they overcome their generational cycles in time? Part of Foundry Festival, Tues 12 Nov, The REP Birmingham

REPEAT AFTER ME
Three sisters invite their absent father round for dinner, after not having seen him for many years. Molly has prepared a speech, Tara is more concerned by her own secrets, while Faye has devised a plan after not having seen him for many years. Molly has prepared a speech, Tara is more concerned by her own secrets, while Faye has devised a plan

THE SNOW QUEEN
Mon 11 Nov – Sat 16 Nov, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

GISELS BRANDRETH: DANCING WITH THE LIGHT OF THE MOON
Celebration of the best-loved poems in the English language, Sat 16 Nov, Lichfield Garrick

Theatrical adventure fusing the world of musical theatre with the mystery of circus... Fri 15 - Sat 16 Nov, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

THIS FILthy WORLD: JOHN WATERS
One-man show celebrating the film career and obsessional tastes of the man once referred to as ‘the pope of trash’, Wed 13 Nov, Birmingham Hippodrome

BURLESQUE’D – A STAGE SPECTACULAR
Theatrical adventure fusing the world of musical theatre with the mystery of circus... Fri 15 - Sat 16 Nov, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

CHILDREN’S MUSICAL MADNESS Singalong featuring music from hit movies including Grease, The Greatest Showman, Chicago, Chitty Chitty Bang Bang and Oliver!, Mon 11 Nov, The Red Lion, Hockley

WONDERLAND LATEs: AMAUROSIS
Irresistibly alluring performance, partly in the dark, that investigates what happens when music becomes your emotional guide. Thurs 14 Nov, Thinktank Science Museum, Birmingham

FESTIVE GIFT FAIR
The biggest indoor Christmas shopping fair in the Midlands is back, Thurs 14 - Sun 17 Nov, NEC, Birmingham

AUDIENCE TOURS OF THE BACK TO BACKS
Fri 15 Nov, Birmingham Back to Backs

SANTA’S WINTER WONDERLAND
Santa’s back at the Snowdome for the 15th fantastic year, Fri 15 Nov - Tues 31 Dec, The Snowdome, Tamworth

POWER BALLAD BRUNCH
Big up your hair and bang on the shoulder pads! Sat 16 Nov, The Lord Clifden, Birmingham

GHOST DINNER
Evening ghost tour of one of Britain’s most haunted buildings followed by dinner in the Stable Yard Cafe, Sat 16 Nov, Aston Hall, Birmingham

BIRMINGHAM INTERFAITH MUSIC FESTIVAL
Celebrate Interfaith week with music, dance and art, Sat 16 Nov, Birmingham Museum And Art Gallery

AVONCROFT FEST-O-ALÉ
Featuring hand-picked ales, ciders and perryes, plus a selection of breads and cheeses, Sat 16 Nov, Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove

MCM BIRMINGHAM COMIC CON
The UK’s biggest modern-pop-culture event returns to Birmingham, Sat 16 - Sun 17 Nov, NEC, Birmingham

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS
Enjoy a ‘scrumptious day out that’s choc-full of festive fun this Christmas at Cadbury World’, Sat 16 - Sun 17 Nov, Cadbury World, Birmingham

MOTORCYCLE LIVE
The UK’s largest motorcycle show, Sat 16 - Sun 24 Nov, NEC, Birmingham

DRAYTON’S MAGICAL CHRISTMAS
Meet Father Christmas in the Castle of Dreams, and experience ‘magical character parades, live Christmas spectacular fireworks’, Sat 16 Nov - Tues 31 Dec, Drayton Manor Theme Park, Tamworth

THE YOUNG PERSON’S GUIDE TO THE ORCHESTRA
‘Fun-filled concert for all the family’, Sun 17 Nov, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

F-A-B! THE FABULOUS KIDS PARTY
Family party with music, DIY costume-making, fun, games and a disco, Sun 17 Nov, Midlands Arts Centre, B’ham

THE LIST Birmingham 11-17 November.qxp_Layout 1 21/10/2019 16:11 Page 4

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Gigs

STEVE HACKETT: GENESIS REVISITED Mon 18 Nov, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

MAVERICK SABRE Tues 19 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

JOHN MAYALL Tues 19 Nov, Birmingham Town Hall

PENELope ISLES Tues 19 Nov, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

AGNOSTIC FRONT - 35 YEARS OF 'VICTIM IN PAIN' Tues 19 Nov, Mama Roux’s, B’ham

SHAKESPEARS SISTER Wed 20 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

DECO + THE NU Tues 19 Nov, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

D BLOCK EUROPE Wed 20 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

LANKUM Wed 20 Nov, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

NOBLE JACKS Wed 20 Nov, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

THE TRIALS OF CATO + KATY ROSE BENNETT Wed 20 Nov, The Red Lion Folk Club, B’ham

KENNY THOMAS Thurs 21 Nov, The Jam house, Birmingham

OCEAN WISDOM Thurs 21 Nov, The Mill, Birmingham

MARTIN STEPHENSON & THE DAINTIES Thurs 21 Nov, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

AN EVENING WITH THE STEVE HILLAGE BAND Thurs 21 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

PROFESSOR GREEN Thurs 21 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

DEL CAMINO Thurs 21 Nov, The Jam house, Birmingham

BAT FOR LASHES Thurs 21 Nov, Birmingham Town Hall

YOUNGBLUD Fri 22 Nov, O2 Institute, B’ham

HOLLY & THE HOTRODS Fri 22 Nov, The World Bar, Resorts World, Birmingham

TOO MANY T’S & GRIEVES Fri 22 Nov, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

SHELD SEVEN Fri 22 Nov, O2 Academy, B’ham

Meggie Brown Fri 22 Nov, The Flapper, Birmingham

Davey Malone Fri 22 Nov, Katie Fitzgerald’s, Stourbridge

QUEEN UNDER COVER Fri 22 Nov, Route 44, Birmingham

My Life Story Fri 22 Nov, Pizza Express Live, Birmingham

SCARLXRD Fri 22 Nov, O2 Institute, B’ham

Glass Ceilings Fri 22 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

BRASS BAND AND SAXOPHONE CHOIR Fri 22 Nov, Elgar Concert Hall, Birmingham

TRU GROOVE Fri 22 Nov - Sat 23 Nov, The Jam house, Birmingham

GERRY COLVIN BAND Sat 23 Nov, The Core, Solihull

HAWKINd 50th ANNIVERSARY TOUR Sat 23 Nov, Birmingham Town Hall

TOYAH ACOUSTIC, UP CLOSE & PERSONAL Sat 23 Nov, Pizza Express Live, Birmingham

DECades Sat 23 Nov, The World Bar, Resorts World, B’ham

ELIZA AND THE BEAR Sat 23 Nov, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

Avalanche Sat 23 Nov, The Actress & Bishop, Birmingham

SCOUTING FOR GIRLS Sat 23 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE FOUR ROSSIS Sat 23 Nov, Route 44, Birmingham

SONIC YOUTH Sat 23 Nov, Scruffy Murphy’s, Birmingham

JADE BIRD Sat 23 Nov, O2 Institute, B’ham

THE DESTROYERS Sat 23 Nov, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

FELIX SHEPHERD Sat 23 Nov, The Cuban Embassy, Birmingham

PUP Sat 23 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

NEW MODEL ARMY Sat 23 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

Rhys Lewis Sat 23 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

SICK LOVE + IDLE NOISE Sat 23 Nov, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

Tokyo Myers Sun 24 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

Mahalia - Love & Compromise Tour Sun 24 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

Seamus Begley Trio Sun 24 Nov, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

Sixties Gold Sun 24 Nov, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

PRAITEK KHAD Sun 24 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

Seamus Bagley Trio Sun 24 Nov, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

Sir Was Sun 24 Nov, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham
**Classical Music**

**LUNCHTIME CONCERT WITH TIMOTHY EMBERSON**
Programme includes works by Schubert, Dowland & Ravel, Mon 18 Nov, Birmingham Cathedral

**EVE EGOYAN PIANO CONCERT**
Programme includes works by Nicole Lizée, Chiyoko Szlavnics & Ann Southam, Mon 18 Nov, Recital Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**CBSO: BEETHOVEN & STRAVINSKY**
Featuring Gustav Gimeno (conductor) & Jeremy Denk (piano), Wed 20 Nov (2.15pm), Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**CBSO CENTRE STAGE: BRAHMS & SCHUMANN**
Featuring Kate Suthers & Moritz Pfister (violins), Adam Römer (viola), Eduardo Vassallo (cello) & Robert Markham (piano), Thurs 21 Nov, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

**MARK BEBBINGTON PIANO CONCERT**
Programme includes works by Fauré, Poulenc, Franck & Chopin, Fri 22 Nov, Artrix, Bromsgrove

**CBSO: FRIDAY NIGHT CLASICS**
Featuring Stephen Bell (conductor) & John Suchet (presenter). Programme includes works by Coates, Satie, Mendelssohn, Saint-Saëns, Grainger, Sibelius, Walton, Grieg, Mahler, Chabrier, Elgar, Stravinsky & Ravel, Fri 22 Nov, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**CBSO: BEETHOVEN & STRAVINSKY**
Featuring Gustav Gimeno (conductor) & Jeremy Denk (piano), Sat 23 Nov (7pm), Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY SINGERS AND UNIVERSITY WOMEN’S CHOIR**
Featuring Bob Chilcott & Jack Appleby (conductors), Sun 24 Nov, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

**Comedy**

**THE DOLLOP - LIVE PODCAST**
Tues 19 Nov, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**SUZI RUFFELL**
Wed 20 Nov, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**ARDAL O’HANLON**
Thurs 21 Nov, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**ALFIE MOORE**
Thurs 21 Nov, Artrix, Bromsgrove

**JANE GOOLEY, SEAN COLLINS & COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON**
Thurs 21 Nov, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**VIR AS**
Fri 22 Nov, B’ham Town Hall

**SAJEEVA KERSHI & GUESTS**
Fri 22 Nov, Artrix, Bromsgrove

**TAT VISION LIVE**
Fri 22 Nov, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**SIMON LOMAS, VINCE ATTA, JANE GOOLEY & SEAN COLLINS**
Fri 22 & Sat 23 Nov, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**ANDY PARSONS**
Sat 23 Nov, The REP, Birmingham

**VIR AS**
Fri 22 Nov, B’ham Town Hall

**SEJEEA KERSHI & GUESTS**
Fri 22 Nov, Artrix, Bromsgrove

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Fri 22 & Sat 23 Nov, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**ANDY PARSONS**
Sat 23 Nov, The REP, Birmingham

**THE GREATEST SHOWENCH**
Hollywood has The Greatest Showman, the Black Country has The Greatest Showench! Fizzog are back with their latest production... Thurs 21 Nov, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

**FIRST TIME**
HIV-plus theatre-maker Nathaniel Hall presents a ‘funny and frank’ autobiographical solo show about staying positive in a negative world, Thurs 21 - Fri 22 Nov, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

**TORI SCOTT IS PICKLED**
Join the New

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**Monday 18 - Sunday 24 November**

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**Theatre**

**TROJAN HORSE**
A very local story about a community torn apart by racial division, ‘British values’ and the culture of the government’s Prevent strategy, Tues 19 - Thurs 21 Nov, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

**FAME**
Keith Jack & Jorgie Porter star in a new stage adaptation of the hit 1980s film, Tues 19 - Sat 23 Nov, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

**ONE UNDER**
Winsome Pinnock’s evocative play about the power of guilt and the quest for atonement, Tues 19 - Sat 23 Nov, The REP, Birmingham

**THE PRODUCERS**
St Augustine’s MTC present an amateur staging of the Mel Brooks musical, Tues 19 - Sun 24 Nov, The Core Theatre, Solihull

**THE MILLER’S STORY**
Physical comedy, music & song combine in Clown Noir’s adaptation of Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales story, Thurs 21 Nov, Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

**THE GREATEST SHOWENCH**
Hollywood has The Greatest Showman, the Black Country has The Greatest Showench! Fizzog are back with their latest production... Thurs 21 Nov, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

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**HIGHLIGHTS 2019**

**MUSIC**
**FROM THE SOURCE**
- Nitin Sawhney: Fri 8 Nov
- Calexico and Iron & Wine + Lisa O’Neill: Thu 21 Nov

**THEATRE**
- Nouveau Riché and Omnibus Theatre: Queens of Sheba
  - Thu 14 - Sat 16 Nov

**COMEDY**
- Shazia Mirza: Sun 17 Nov

**DANCE**
- Richard Alston Dance Company: The Final Edition
  - Thu 21 & Fri 22 Nov
- Tom Dale Company: Step Sonic
  - Tue 26 & Wed 27 Nov
- Raymond Briggs: Father Christmas
  - Wed 27 Nov – Sun 29 Dec

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**Box Office** 024 7652 4524  warwickartscentre.co.uk
Warwick Arts Centre, The University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL

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Warwick Arts Centre – The region’s biggest arts and entertainment venue.
York-based cabaret star as she celebrates her poor life choices and unconditional love of vodka, Sat 23 Nov, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, B’ham

THE RECEIPTS UNCUT Sun 24 Nov, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Kids Shows

PETER PAN Festive version of JM Barrie’s classic tale, Wed 20 - Sat 23 Nov, Erdington United Reformed Church, Birmingham

BILLIONAIRE BOY New staging of David Walliams’ bestselling story, Wed 20 - Sat 23 Nov, The Alexandra Theatre, B’ham

Dance

GENIUS Six dancers perform two ‘dramatic explorations of genius’, Tues 19 - Wed 20 Nov, The Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

Events

SKILL BY MOUTH Spoken-word night, Mon 18 Nov, The Red Lion, Hockley

Talks / Spoken Word

ALEXANDER ARMSTRONG Brand new and ‘deliciously irreverent’ account of a career that has taken Alexander from comedy to presenting to documentary-making to singing to becoming the voice of Toilet Duck, Mon 18 Nov, The Alexandra Theatre, B’ham

GORDON BUCHANAN: ANIMAL FAMILIES & ME Join the acclaimed television wildlife cameraman as he shares stories of his experiences with some of the world’s most fearsome and majestic animals, Mon 18 Nov, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Mon 25 Nov, Birmingham Town Hall

THINGS THROUGH TIME Take in the sights, sounds and smells of Christmas across the years, Sat 23 Nov - Tues 24 Dec, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

EDWARDIAN TEAROOMS LATE: SILENT NOIZE PRESENTS THE SILENT DISCO The Silent Disco returns for a third year after enjoying huge success in 2017 & 18, Sat 23 Nov, Birmingham Museum And Art Gallery

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS Enjoy a ‘scrumptious day out that’s choc-full of festive fun this Christmas at Cadbury World’, Sat 23 - Sun 24 Nov, Cadbury World, Birmingham

SANTA SAFARI Featuring a four-mile self-drive safari and a visit to Santa, Sat 23 - Sun 24 Nov, West Midland Safari and Leisure Park, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

MEET SANTA Say hello to the man himself by visiting the Antarctic Ice Cave, Sat 23 Nov - Mon 23 Dec, National Sea Life Centre, Birmingham

SANTA’S SLEEPOVER Experience ‘the most magical Christmas escape’, Sun 24 Nov, Alton Towers, Stoke-on-Trent

FESTIVE MARKET Discover some unique gift ideas at a variety of stalls, Sun 24 Nov, Aston Hall, Birmingham
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Gigs

LEWIS CAPALDI Mon 25 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham
BLANCK MASS Mon 25 Nov, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham
RONNIE WOOD Mon 25 Nov, Symphony Hall, Birmingham
FOUNTAINES D.C Mon 25 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham
ELECTRIC SIX Tues 26 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham
SKEPTA Tues 26 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham
NAAZ Tues 26 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham
RUEL Tues 26 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham
ADAM ANT Tues 26 Nov, Symphony Hall, Birmingham
GEOWOLF Tues 26 Nov, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham
ELVIS PRESLEY Wed 27 Nov, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham
SHOW OF HANDS Wed 27 Nov, Symphony Hall, Birmingham
SUNSET SONS Wed 27 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham
MAC DEMARCO Wed 27 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham
SWARMZ Wed 27 Nov, O2 Academy, B’ham
BELSHAZAR’S FEAST + FRAGILE HEARTS Wed 27 Nov, The Red Lion Folk Club, B’ham
RED HOT CHILLI PIPERS Thurs 28 Nov, Symphony Hall, B’ham
GRAHAM PARKER Thurs 28 Nov, Artix, Bromsgrove
CHINA CRISIS Thurs 28 Nov, Pizza Express Live, Birmingham
DIDO Thurs 28 Nov, Arena Birmingham
AMON AMARTH: THE REAL PEOPLE PLUS KARLOSA & ANTHONY PRICE Fri 29 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham
JESSICA BOSWELL Fri 29 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham
JOOLS HOLLAND & HIS RHYTHM & BLUES ORCHESTRA Fri 29 Nov, Symphony Hall, Birmingham
THE FEMALE METAL VOICES TOUR Fri 29 Nov, The Asylum, Birmingham
BIGGOS Fri 29 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham
ALDOUS HARDING Fri 29 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham
MYO CHRISTMAS CONCERT Fri 29 Nov, The Core Theatre, Solihull
GLEN HUGHES Fri 29 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham
BRAHMS Featuring Grace Dutrie (flute), Joanne Sealey (piano), Olga Eckert (violin) & John Thwaites (piano), Mon 25 Nov, Recital Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire
LUNCHTIME MUSIC: PROKOFIEV & BRAHMS Featuring Grace Dutrie (flute), Joanne Sealey (piano), Olga Eckert (violin) & John Thwaites (piano), Mon 25 Nov, Recital Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire
LUNCHTIME ORGAN CONCERT WITH THOMAS TROTTER Programme includes works by JS Bach, Balle, Stanford, Prokofiev & Widor, Mon 25 Nov, Birmingham Town Hall
NAPOLITAN DISCOVERIES Sonatas, concerti & cantatas for recorder, Mon 25 Nov, Recital Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire
PIANO SHOWCASE FEAT. SALOMÉ CHITAIA & YICHENG PAN Programme includes works by Haydn, Tchaikovsky & Balakirev, Wed 27 Nov, Symphony Hall, Birmingham
Cфизическіе работы по НАП И МОЗАРТ Featuring Riccardo Minasi (conductor), Oliver Janes (clarinet) & Nikolai Henries (bassoon). Programme includes works by Haydn, Strauss, Beethoven & Mozart, Wed 27 Nov (7.30pm), Symphony Hall, Birmingham
Cognito Consort Featuring Andrew Kirkman (director). Programme comprises music from Antwerp in the time of Jan de Beer, Fri 29 Nov, The Barber Institute, Birmingham
ROYAL BIRMINGHAM CONSERVATOIRE SYMPHONIC BRASS & BRASS BAND Featuring Amos Miller & Ian Porthouse (conductors), Fri 29 Nov, The Bradshaw Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire
CBSITE CENTRE STAGE: SCHUBERT Featuring Jonathan Martindale & Jane Wright (violin), Christopher Yates (viola) & Helen Edgar (cello), Fri 29 Nov, CBSO Centre, Birmingham
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA Featuring Daniele Rosina (conductor). Programme comprises Dvorak’s Symphony No.7 in D major, Op. 70, Sat 30 Nov, Elgar Concert Hall, Birmingham
DUANE QUARTET Featuring Hiroto Dune & Mae Edwards (violin), Eleanor Chapman (viola) & Alice Cheer (cello). Programme includes works by Beethoven & Grieg, Sat 30 Nov, Library of Birmingham

Classical

UNCERTAIN FEET Featuring Daniel Nardini (pianoforte), Thurs 28 Nov, Symphony Hall, Birmingham
UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM JAZZ ORCHESTRA Thurs 28 Nov, CBSO Centre, Birmingham
DEVIL’S PLAYGROUND WITH RECALL THE REMAINS & WARDROD Fri 29 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham
DUB PISTOLS Fri 29 - Sat 30 Nov, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham
THE CHEMICAL BROTHERS - SKYBOY Fri 29 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham
THE FLOW Sat 30 Nov, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham
XILLA Sat 30 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham
REBEL REBEL Sat 30 Nov, Route 44, Birmingham

Comedy

MIKE WILMOT PLUS COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON Thurs 28 Nov, The Glee Club, Birmingham
MIKE WILMOT, JONNY ASWUN, SUSIE MCCABE & COMIC TBC Fri 29 - Sat 30 Nov, The Glee Club, Birmingham
JOHN ROBINS Sat 30 Nov, Birmingham Town Hall

Opera

GILBERT & SULLIVAN A LA CARTE Miscellaneous of musical numbers, Tues 26 Nov, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

Theatre

MALCOLM STENT’S SONGS OF PRAISE CHRISTMAS SPECTACULAR Hymns, carols & songs with a comedy sparkle, Tues 26 Nov - Sat 11 Jan, Belgrade Theatre, Solihull
CHRISTMAS WITH STEPDIE & SON Festive misadventures with the nation’s favourite rag-and-bone men, Tues 26 - Thurs 28 Nov, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham
A CHRISTMAS CAROL Presented by the award-winning BMOS Musical Theatre Company, Tues 26 - Sat 30 Nov, The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham
AN EVENING WITH Lenny Henry: Who Am I, Again? Wed 27 Nov, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre
PUSS IN BOOTS Festive favourite written by and starring Iain Lauchlan, Wed 27 Nov - Sat 11 Jan, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

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Monday 25 - Saturday 30 November

THE LOCK IN CHRISTMAS CAROL ‘Half gig, half dance show and half panto’, Thurs 28 Nov, The Core Theatre, Solihull
CINDERELLA Festive family favourite starring Rebecca Keatley (Cbeebies) and Sam Rabone, Thurs 28 Nov - Sun 5 Jan, Lichfield Garrick
PETER PAN JM Barrie’s swashbuckling creation flies into Birmingham for Christmas, Sat 30 Nov - Sun 19 Jan, The REP, Birmingham

Kids Shows
KIPPER’S SNOWY DAY Original songs & music, puppetry and humour combine in a stage version of Mick Inkpen’s much-loved book, Tues 26 Nov - Tues 31 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham
RAYMOND BRIGGS’ FATHER CHRISTMAS Join Santa on the busiest day of his year - Christmas Eve, Wed 27 Nov - Sun 29 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Events
OG SINGER-SONGWRITER An event for budding, established or wannabe singer-songwriters, Mon 25 Nov, The Red Lion, Hockley
SH*T IS GETTING REEL TV & film quiz, Wed 27 Nov, The Red Lion, Hockley
BBC GOOD FOOD SHOW WINTER It’s never too early to start thinking about Christmas! Start planning a food-filled day out with friends and family.

THE LITTLE PRINCE Luca Silvestrini’s Protein re-imagine the classic tale, Fri 29 - Sat 30 Nov, DanceXchange, Birmingham Hippodrome

STEAM IN LIGHTS A ‘spectacular illuminated adventure along an enchanting Severn Valley with a dazzling extravaganza of magical creatures, sparkling lights, snowfall and thrills’, all enjoyed from the warmth and comfort of a historic carriage, Fri 29 - Sat 30 Nov, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley
BEOWULF Costumed performance of the legendary story, Sat 30 Nov, Aston Hall, Birmingham
EDWARDIAN TEARROOMS LATE: SILENT NOIZE PRESENTS THE SILENT DISCO The Silent Disco returns to BMAG’s Edwardian Tearooms for a third year, Sat 30 Nov, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery
SANTA HUNTS Help the museum’s festive costumed guides find the man himself, Sat 30 Nov - Sun 1 Dec, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley
MINICHRISTMAS Activities include tree decorating, paper-chain making and snowflake cutting, Sat 30 Nov - Sun 1 Dec, Thinktank Science Museum, Birmingham

THE LIST Birmingham 25-30 November.qxp_Layout 1  21/10/2019  16:36  Page 3
Belgrade Theatre Coventry

Swan Lake
Don Quixote
The Nutcracker

14 – 16 Nov
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Puss in Boots

27 Nov – 11 Jan
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Santa’s Dizzy Day!

12 – 24 Dec
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11 – 31 Dec
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Kipper’s Snowy Day was originally produced by Norden Farm Centre for The Arts, Maidenhead.