

Staffordshire

ISSUE 407 NOVEMBER 2019

What's On

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thelist

Your 16-page week
by week listings guide

SHYLOCK

Shakespeare's famous Jew
visits Stafford Gatehouse



JO HARMAN

showcases her second album
at Lichfield Guildhall



FESTIVE FUN!

Santa's Winter Wonderland
returns to Snowdome





TAMWORTH ASSEMBLY ROOMS



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Strictly Sherlock
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Friday 31 January



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Thursday 13 February



The Westenders
Saturday 15 February



**Dad's Army
Radio Show**
Thursday 5 March



Oh! Carol
Friday 28 February



La Voix
Friday 6 March

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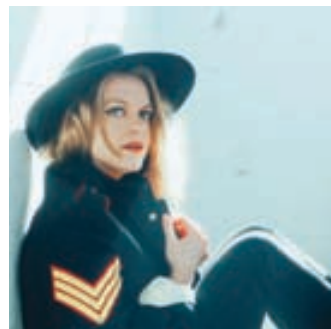
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Greased lightnin' to return to the Regent

Dust off your leather jackets and pull on your bobby-socks - Grease The Musical is returning to the Potteries late next year!

Featuring all the unforgettable songs from the cult 1978 movie - including You're The One That I Want, Grease Is The Word, Summer Nights, Hopelessly Devoted To You, Sandy and Greased Lightnin' - the hit show stops off at the Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, from Monday 23 to Saturday 28 November 2020.

The production is choreographed by Arlene Phillips and will feature musical-theatre veteran Dan Partridge in the role of Danny Zuko.

Adam Ant set to headline Let's Rock 2020 concert

Retro festival Let's Rock Shrewsbury will next summer be headlined by '80s New Romantic legend Adam Ant.

The Prince Charming star will be joined at the Saturday 11 July event by, among others, OMD, ABC, Howard Jones, Tony Hadley and Nik Kershaw.

Commenting on Let's Rock, ABC's Martin Fry said: "We're really looking forward to performing. Last time round was incredible, from the audience through to every act involved. See you there!"

For more information and to book tickets, visit letsrockshrewsbury.com



The art of retro gaming...

A retro gaming night is being held at Wolverhampton Art Gallery this month.

Taking place on Friday 29 November, the event features more than 1,000 retro games and provides attendees with the chance to play classics including Street Fighter, Mortal

Kombat, Mario Kart and Sonic The Hedgehog. The evening also includes music, live art and the opportunity to explore Keith Piper's exhibition of video art.

Lichfield Cathedral date for Spandau Ballet star

Tony Hadley will next month give a special one-off performance in Lichfield Cathedral to help raise much-needed funds to support the charity Lichfield Festival (Thursday 3 December).

The former Spandau Ballet frontman has been a Patron of the festival since 2007. He is donating his fee for the performance to St Giles' Hospice, which cares for local people and families living with potentially terminal illness.

Commenting on the news, Chair of Lichfield Festival Helen Wiser said: "It's been a delight to have Tony on board as a Patron, and we're thrilled that he's agreed to support the Festival and St Giles' Hospice in such a generous way. The concert will be a brilliant and very special start to the festive season."



Michael Ball and Alfie Boe together again on tour

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.



Howzat! Former cricket star at literature festival

Shrewsbury Festival of Literature makes a welcome return this month (22 - 24 November), complete with appearances by, among others, cricket correspondent Vic Marks and author Catrina Davies.

The popular event, which was this year named Best Shropshire Arts Festival in our What's On Readers' Awards, also includes a poetry slam, an exploration of 'research and the historical novel', a mindful-writing workshop and a poetry café.

Full details about the festival are available at shrewsburylitfest.co.uk

Arabella Weir brings debut tour to Shrewsbury

Comedian Arabella Weir has added new dates to her touring schedule, including one in Shrewsbury.

The Fast Show star will be bringing her first solo presentation, *Does My Mum Loom Big In This?*, to Theatre Severn on 22 April.

Tickets and further information are available at ArabellaWeir.co.uk



Wolves names Poet Laureate

Wolverhampton's first ever Poet Laureate has been announced.

Emma Purshouse will act as a champion of poetry for the city, raising its profile and working on events during the fourth Wolverhampton Literature Festival, which takes place early next year.

Commenting on her new role, Emma said: "I love Wolverhampton, and indeed the wider Black Country region. Our landscapes, stories, history, humour and people have always featured in my work, and I'm keen to continue to use poetry to promote the often-overlooked beauty that's to be found here."

The fourth Wolverhampton Literature Festival takes place from Friday 31 January to Sunday 2 February.



Smash-hit musical heading for the Midlands in 2021

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. On sale date for tickets is yet to be confirmed.

Strictly stars set to cha-cha in Brum

After scoring a major hit earlier this year, *Strictly Come Dancing-The Professionals* will once again visit venues across the country in 2020.

Cha-cha-ing their way around the UK will be no fewer than 10 dancers from the BBC's 2019 *Strictly Come Dancing* television series.

The show stops off at Birmingham's Symphony Hall on 17 May and will be performed at the venue at both 2.30pm & 7.30pm.

For more information and to book tickets, visit strictlytheprofessionals.com

Tony Award winner *The Book Of Mormon* heading to the Midlands 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



First Word

RuPaul's Drag Race - Live!

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 (pictured). The production stops off at the Alexandra Theatre on Sunday 1 December. For more information and to book tickets, visit atgtickets.com



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



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 canalside 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.

A medieval-style Christmas in Ludlow

Ludlow's hugely popular Medieval Christmas Fayre is this year marking its 21st birthday.

The event sees more than 100 stalls fill the castle grounds, selling seasonal wares and historical goods & crafts throughout the weekend. Visitors can also enjoy a wide range of medieval games and entertainment, including performances by jesters, interactive theatre and mass carol-singing and wassailing sessions. The event is being held at Ludlow Castle on Saturday 23 & Sunday 24 November.

Humour and satire at Coalbrookdale

A free exhibition at Ironbridge Gorge's Coalbrookdale Gallery is showcasing a mix of satirical prints and objects from the museum's Elton Collection, dating from the mid-18th century onwards.

Changing Times: Humour And Satire features prints and objects that made fun of new technology such as steam power and the possibilities that it held. Once 'railway mania' had gripped the nation, music, books and games were quick to feature the new wonders of steam, as well as to ridicule the popularity of cheap excursion trains and the overcrowding at train stations and seaside resorts.

Changing Times shows at Coalbrookdale until Friday 28 February.

Fab-u-lous in Wolverhampton!

BBC One's Strictly Come Dancing star, Craig Revel Horwood, will visit the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre in the spring with his debut solo tour, All Balls And Glitter (Sunday 24 May).

The show will see Craig talking about his life, revealing a wealth of backstage gossip and performing some of the music that's been the soundtrack to his career. For more information and to book tickets, visit grandtheatre.co.uk



Cathedral hosts first poetry festival

Lichfield Cathedral is this month hosting its first ever poetry festival.

The five-day event, entitled The Word and exploring the themes of 'awe & wonder' and 'light in our darkness', includes performances by poets Benjamin Zephaniah and Michael Symmons Roberts. The festival also features numerous workshops by local poets, including current Staffordshire Poet Laureate Emily Rose Gavin.

The Word takes place at the Cathedral from Sunday 24 to Thursday 28 November.

Visit lichfield-cathedral.org for more details.

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BIRMINGHAM

SYMPHONY
HALL
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SPECTACULAR CLASSICS

SAT 9 NOVEMBER
2:30PM & 7:30PM
SYMPHONY HALL



DEAR SANTA

FRI 6 – SAT 7 DECEMBER
TIMES VARY
TOWN HALL



NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL THE 80S LIVE

SAT 16 NOVEMBER
7:30PM
SYMPHONY HALL



GEORGE HINCHLIFFE UKULELE ORCHESTRA OF GREAT BRITAIN

MON 9 DECEMBER
8PM
SYMPHONY HALL



SIXTIES GOLD 2019

SUN 24 NOVEMBER
7:30PM
SYMPHONY HALL



ROY WOOD'S ROCKMAS 2019

SAT 14 DECEMBER
7:45PM
SYMPHONY HALL



RONNIE WOOD

MON 25 NOVEMBER
7:30PM
SYMPHONY HALL



NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL CHRISTMAS

SUN 22 DECEMBER
2:30PM
SYMPHONY HALL



JOOLS HOLLAND AND HIS RHYTHM AND BLUES ORCHESTRA

FRI 29 – SAT 30 NOVEMBER
7:30PM
SYMPHONY HALL

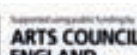


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It's Curtains for Jason Manford!

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

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."

.....

***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.**

WORLD CLASS ENTERTAINMENT



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 LIVE ON STAGE**
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FOLLOWING 30 YEARS
 IN THE WEST END
THE WOMAN IN BLACK
 TUE 5 – SAT 9 NOV
 REGENT THEATRE



LESLEY JOSEPH AS
 MISS HANNIGAN IN
ANNIE
 MON 18 – SAT 23 NOV
 REGENT THEATRE



THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY
 SPECIAL OF
**THE AUSTRALIAN
 PINK FLOYD**
 WED 27 NOV
 REGENT THEATRE



CELEBRATE THE MUSIC OF THE
 ELECTRIC LIGHT ORCHESTRA IN
THE ELO EXPERIENCE
 THU 28 NOV
 REGENT THEATRE



AN EVENING WITH
LENNY HENRY
 FRI 29 NOV
 REGENT THEATRE



SPEND ONE NIGHT AT THE DISCO
 WITH
LOST IN MUSIC
 SAT 30 NOV
 REGENT THEATRE



JASON MANFORD STARS
 IN THE MUSICAL COMEDY
**WHODUNNIT
 CURTAINS**
 TUE 3 – SAT 7 DEC
 REGENT THEATRE



THE PANTOMIME
 OF YOUR DREAMS
SLEEPING BEAUTY
 FRI 13 DEC – SUN 5 JAN
 REGENT THEATRE



COME AND CELEBRATE
 THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY
 OF **SHOWADDYWADDY**
 FRI 10 JAN
 REGENT THEATRE

RUSSELL KANE – THE FAST AND THE CURIOUS
 THU 24 OCT **VH**

**EMILY ATACK
 TALK THIRTY TO ME**
 WED 30 OCT **VH**

ULTIMATE BUBLE
 SAT 2 NOV **VH**

AN AUDIENCE WITH SIMON REEVE
 SUN 3 NOV **VH**

**JOOLS HOLLAND – RHYTHM & BLUES
 ORCHESTRA**
 WED 6 NOV **VH**

JONATHAN PIE – FAKE NEWS
 FRI 8 NOV **VH**

THE CARPENTERS STORY
 FRI 15 NOV **VH**

MICHAEL – THE MAGIC OF MICHAEL JACKSON
 SAT 16 NOV **VH**

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Tango Ice Blast kiosk opens at intu Merry Hill

Frozen Brothers, one of the UK's fastest-growing frozen-beverage kiosks, has opened at intu Merry Hill, bringing fan favourites including Tango Ice Blast, Frozen Fanta, Slush Puppie, Chozen and Coca-Cola Frozen to the popular Black Country shopping destination. The kiosk is situated on the upper mall near Eat Central.

New cocktail bar opens in the Potteries

A brand new cocktail bar & kitchen has opened in the heart of Stoke-on-Trent's cultural quarter.

Located just yards away from the Regent Theatre, Bloom showcases 'the finest cocktails, fantastic food and an amazing array of live music, entertainment and DJs across the week'. The new venue is open from midday to 11pm Sunday to Thursday and from midday to midnight on Fridays and Saturdays.

Refurb for Shrewsbury food scene favourite Number Four

Popular Shrewsbury bistro Number Four has undergone a refurbishment. The refit has seen the downstairs area of the premises turned into a cosy tapas bar.

The venue's owner, Toby, said: "We must emphasise that all of the old Number Four favourites are staying - we just wanted to give things a refresh."



Shrewsbury's Parade welcomes award-winning cafe

The owner of award-winning Telford cafe Crystal's Cupcakes says she's delighted to have finally opened a premises at The Parade in Shrewsbury.

"We've been searching for some time for the perfect place to introduce Crystal's to the Shrewsbury area," says Crystal Owen. "Many of the customers at our flagship shop in Dawley travel from far afield to buy our cakes, so we

wanted to open up a new base to cover this part of the county. When we heard about the opportunity to take on a unit at The Parade, we jumped at the chance.

"We have a huge selection of cupcakes, tray-bakes, luxury ice creams and milkshakes on offer on a take-out basis. We hope the people of Shrewsbury will come by and try our treats!"

Third Shropshire Oktoberfest hailed a huge success

The third Shropshire Oktoberfest has been hailed a huge success by its organiser, Shropshire Festivals, with an estimated 12,000 people having attended the event in Shrewsbury's Quarry Park across its two days. The festival brought together brewers from around the region to serve up their beers alongside a wine bar, a rum shack, a prosecco parlour and a gin bar.

The launch of reusable beer cups at the festival saw a reduction in single-use plastic by 83% compared to the first Oktoberfest event back in 2017... Next year's get-together takes place on Friday 2 & Saturday 3 October, with tickets due to go on sale soon.





EDITOR'S CHOICE

Frozen II

CERT PG

With the voices of **Idina Menzel, Kristen Bell, Jonathan Groff, Josh Gad, Santino Fontana, Evan Rachel Wood, Alfred Molina, Sterling K. Brown, Martha Plimpton** Directed by **Chris Buck and Jennifer Lee** (USA)

They just won't let it go. Here, once again, we have Princess Elsa of Arendelle and her younger sister Anna. Elsa, of course, is endowed with the ability to create a perfectly white Christmas wherever she goes by turning everything into snow and ice. But being young and curious, she de-

rides to find out where her powers come from and so with Anna, Anna's handsome squeeze Kristoff and the funny snowman Olaf, she sets off to find a strange and enchanted land. There's also the slight issue of saving the future of their kingdom... Until this year's *The Lion King* shattered box-office records, the original *Frozen* (2013) was the highest-grossing animated film in history and Disney has decided to build on that success. It took five writers to pen the new story, so it better be good.

Released Fri 22 November

After The Wedding

CERT 12a (112 mins)

Starring **Julianne Moore, Michelle Williams, Billy Crudup, Abby Quinn** Directed by **Bart Freundlich** (USA)

Bart Freundlich, the husband of Julianne Moore, directs his wife in an American remake of the 2006 Danish melodrama of the same name. Let's hope he manages to bring a more credible note to the proceedings, in which Michelle Williams plays the co-founder of an Indian orphanage who is forced to confront her real principles on a trip to New York.

Released Fri 1 November



The Aeronauts

CERT PG (100 mins)

Starring **Felicity Jones, Eddie Redmayne, Phoebe Fox, Himesh Patel, Vincent Perez, Anne Reid, Tom Courtenay** Directed by **Tom Harper** (UK/USA)



Amelia Wren (Felicity Jones) was a balloonist and something of a daredevil and teams up with the meteorologist and astronomer James Glaisher (Eddie Redmayne) in an attempt to soar higher than anyone else in the history of aviation. Tom Harper previously directed *The Scouting Book for Boys* (2010) and the sublime *Wild Rose* (2018).

Released Mon 4 November

The Good Liar

CERT 15 (119 mins)

Starring **Helen Mirren, Ian McKellen, Russell Tovey, Jim Carter, Mark Lewis Jones** Directed by **Bill Condon** (USA)

Based on the eponymous novel by Nicholas Searle, this dramatic thriller is already receiving Oscar buzz. Sir Ian plays a conman who lures a wealthy widow (Dame Helen) into his net, only to find that, for the first time, he is troubled by moral misgivings.

Released Fri 8 November

Luce

CERT 15 (119 mins)

Starring **Naomi Watts, Octavia Spencer, Kelvin Harrison Jr, Tim Roth, Norbert Leo Butz** Directed by **Julius Onah** (USA)



An all-star high school athlete, Luce Edgar (Harrison Jr) is loved and admired by all, not least by his doting parents (Watts and Roth), who adopted him from war-torn Eritrea. But Luce harbours a secret that is going to change all that...

Released Fri 8 November

Last Christmas

CERT 12a (102 mins)

Starring **Emilia Clarke, Henry Golding, Michelle Yeoh, Emma Thompson, Rebecca Root, Lydia Leonard** Directed by **Paul Feig** (UK/USA)

A romcom set in London sees Kate (Emilia Clarke) working as a Santa's elf in a department store. Things have got that desperate. Then she keeps on bumping into the same handsome man (Henry Golding, from *Crazy Rich Asians*). Might her luck be about to change?

Released Fri 15 November

Le Mans '66

CERT tbc (152 mins)

Starring **Matt Damon, Christian Bale, Caitriona Balfe, Jon Bernthal, Tracy Letts, Josh Lucas, Noah Jupe** Directed by **James Mangold** (USA)

Known by the better title of *Ford v Ferrari* in the US, this is the story of the car designer Carroll Shelby (Damon) and the British driver Ken Miles (Bale) as they challenge the might of Ferrari to dominate the Grand Prix. Not untypically, Bale apparently lost 70 pounds to prepare for his role.

Released Fri 15 November

The Report CERT 15 (119 mins)

Starring **Adam Driver, Annette Bening, Ted Levine, Michael C Hall, Tim Blake Nelson, Corey Stoll** Directed by **Scott Z Burns (USA)**



The delicate theme of ‘enhanced interrogation techniques’ is explored in this topical thriller from Scott Z Burns, the writer of *The Informant!*, *Contagion* and *Side Effects*. Adam Driver plays the investigator probing the CIA’s ethically dubious methods of extracting information from their terrorist suspects.

Released Fri 15 November

Them That Follow CERT tbc

Starring **Olivia Colman, Kaitlyn Dever, Alice Englert, Jim Gaffigan, Walton Goggins, Thomas Mann** Directed by **Britt Poulton and Dan Madison Savage (USA)**

In a remote community in the Appalachians, a sect of Pentecostals interacts with venomous snakes to prove their God-like infallibility. But there’s a secret that is about to be exposed that will really set the cat among the pigeons. Olivia Colman plays the sect’s hesitant matriarch.

Released Fri 22 November



21 Bridges CERT 15 (109 mins)

Starring **Chadwick Boseman, Sienna Miller, Stephan James, Keith David, Taylor Kitsch, JK Simmons** Directed by **Brian Kirk (USA)**

A highly competent, veteran officer of the NYPD (Boseman - aka Black Panther) finds himself on the run while he scours the city for a cop killer. Soon, his only recourse is to shut down the entire city, blocking off all 21 bridges.

Released Fri 22 November



CRITIC'S CHOICE

Harriet CERT tbc (125 mins)

Starring **Cynthia Erivo, Leslie Odom Jr, Joe Alwyn, Janelle Monáe, Jennifer Nettles, Vanessa Bell Calloway, Clarke Peters** Directed by **Kasi Lemmons (USA)**

One of the great pioneers of American history, Harriet Tubman was born into slavery in Maryland and was routinely beaten and whipped as a child. But when she escaped her shackles at the age of 27, she returned to her enslaved family and gradually began to free one relative at a time, before eventually helping hundreds

of her fellow sufferers. When it was proposed that Tubman be pictured on the American 20-dollar bill, Donald Trump vetoed the action, dismissing it as "pure political correctness". However, the Treasury Department is currently investigating the rejection of the plan. As Harriet, the London-born Cynthia Erivo (*Widows*, *Bad Times At The El Royale*) has long been a shoo-in to nab an Oscar nomination.

Released Fri 22 November

Charlie's Angels CERT tbc

Starring **Kristen Stewart, Naomi Scott, Ella Balinska, Elizabeth Banks, Djimon Hounsou, Sam Claflin, Patrick Stewart** Directed by **Elizabeth Banks (USA)**

This is getting confusing. Although it shares a title with the 2000 action-comedy spin-off of the TV series, this is a whole new instalment in which there are multiple teams of Angels plucked from around the globe. The new toothsome trio - two of whom are played by Brits - must use their techno know-how to help save the human race.

Released Fri 29 November



Knives Out CERT 12a (130 mins)

Starring **Daniel Craig, Chris Evans, Ana de Armas, Jamie Lee Curtis, Michael Shannon, Don Johnson, Toni Collette, Christopher Plummer** Directed by **Rian Johnson (USA)**



Agatha Christie meets *Gosford Park* in this starry whodunit featuring Daniel Craig as a detective with an entertaining Southern accent. The critics have loved it, though.

Released Fri 29 November

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Birmingham Bach Choir Lichfield Cathedral, Sat 16 November

One of the city's oldest and most distinguished musical groups (it's currently celebrating its centenary), Birmingham Bach Choir here gets its teeth into the composer's virtuoso motet, Singet den Herrn.

The programme also features Haydn's Nelson Mass and Handel's Dixit Dominus. The choir is joined by period instrument orchestra The Musical And Amicable Society. Paul Spicer (pictured) conducts.

The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra: Capriccio Espagnol

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Wed 13 November

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.

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 Symphonia Verbum Orchestra

Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, Thurs 14 November

The Symphonia Verbum Orchestra was established little over a year ago by students of the University of Manchester and the Royal Northern College of Music. They here present the first concert in their Discover series - a collection of performances in which they'll combine well-known classical works with new or overlooked pieces of music. Their Victoria Hall concert programme features four compositions, included among which is a world premiere by Alex Dakin, the recent winner of the Royal Northern Sinfonia's Young Composers' Competition. The evening is rounded off with a performance of Tchaikovsky's much-loved fifth symphony.

English String Orchestra

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Fri 29 November

Hailing, as they do, from 'Elgar country' - the county of Worcestershire - it's no surprise that English Symphony Orchestra's Gatehouse concert features two works by the Broadheath-born composer. Alongside Elgar's youthful Serenade for Strings and an acclaimed arrangement of his Songs for Strings by Donald Fraser, the orchestra also performs Tchaikovsky's Souvenir de Florence and Vaughan Williams' The Lark Ascending. The latter was recently voted Britain's favourite piece of classical music.



The Mozartists: Cosí 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 Cosi 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, the production is sung in Italian with English surtitles.





Jools Holland

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 Selector. 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 thing 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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Lady Maisery

Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton,
Sun 22 November

Bringing together Hannah James (Kerfuffle), Hazel Askew (The Askew Sisters and The Artisans) and Rowan Rheingans (Fidola), Lady Maisery present fresh interpretations of songs and ballads that explore vocal harmony to breathtaking effect.

With their unique approach to harmony singing and their intelligent and thoughtful arrangements of both traditional repertoire and original compositions, the three-piece have spent the last five years performing sell-out shows across the UK and Europe, releasing a trio of critically acclaimed albums along the way.



The Undercover Hippy

Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury, Fri 1 November

If Steel Pulse, Kate Tempest and The Sleaford Mods were to have a love child, muses Tom Robinson, it would surely turn out to be drum & bass MC turned singer-songwriter Billy Rowan, aka The Undercover Hippy. Billy produces music that brings together powerful, often political and humorous messages with infectious reggae rhythms and intelligent lyrics.

This month's gig in Shrewsbury is one of many that he and his band are performing in 2019. The four-piece annually present an impressive 80-plus shows.



Jo Harman

Lichfield Guildhall, Sat 30 November

Bluesy chanteuse Jo Harman and her multi-talented band here present what will likely prove to be a hugely memorable evening of dynamic live music.

Described in some quarters as the UK's

finest female soul blues singer, Jo has scored hits with debut offering *Dirt On My Tongue*, the BBC-recorded *Jo Harman And Company - Live At The Royal Albert Hall*, and her much-anticipated second studio album, *People We Become* - a modern classic rooted in the timeless music of past generations.

Nine Below Zero

The Robin, Bilston, Fri 8 November

Forty years after first offering a rhythm & blues alternative to the punk-pop of the mainstream, south Londoners Nine Below Zero bring their *Are We There Yet?* tour to the Midlands.

Founding members Dennis Greaves (guitar & vocals) and Mark Feltham (harmonica & vocals) are joined by female vocalist Charlie Austen, Ben Willis on bass, Tom Monks on keys, and Dennis' son, Sonny, on drums.

Gentlemen's Dub Club

The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent, 28 November

Founded in Leeds in 2006, Gentleman's Dub Club's new album, *Lost In Space*, features a new dimension to their sound, which blends influences from genres such as dub, reggae, ska, bass culture and jazz.

Having built a reputation for delivering explosive high-energy live shows, the band have played at plenty of UK festivals, including Glastonbury, Bestival and Boomtown, and also wowed appreciative audiences in India, Morocco, the US and Iceland.

Dan Owen

St Mary's Church, Shrewsbury,
Thurs 28 - Sat 30 November

Shrewsbury-born singer-songwriter Dan Owen has gone from performing for politicians at Westminster to partying in Nashville with the legendary Willie Nelson. Dan's debut album, 2018's *Stay Awake With Me*, made a significant splash with its songs about male domestic abuse, his friends getting caught up in drugs and the traumatic workshop accident that left him blind in one eye... Join Dan as he performs on three consecutive nights in a truly atmospheric hometown venue.





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 though.

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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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.



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.

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.



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."





HEALING THE NATION

Comedian Andy Parsons is back out on tour...

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 comics Josh Widdicombe and Angela Barnes, politicians David Lammy and Peter Hain, and commentators Suzanne Moore and Miranda Sawyer.

"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.

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Andy Parsons: *Healing The Nation* visits Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, on Thursday 31 October, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester, on Friday 8 November, William Aston Hall, Wrexham, on Saturday 9 November and Birmingham Repertory Theatre on Saturday 23 November.



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 schooldays 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."

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!"



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.

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.



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."



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.



Count Arthur Strong

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Thurs 21 November; William Aston Hall, Wrexham, Fri 22 November; Malvern Theatres, Sat 23 November; Palace Theatre, Redditch, Fri 29 November

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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DRESS TO IMPRESS!

David Walliams talks about having his children's book, *The Boy In The Dress*, transformed into a spectacular stage production by the Royal Shakespeare Company...

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*.

At that point, *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 things that they themselves don't find that interesting, but then adults still rushed to get tickets for the new *Toy Story* film. I think it's about creating that balance. Even though it's a story with children at its centre and is super-fun for a young audience, it's very grown up in many other ways. I think everyone will feel really uplifted at the end of it!"

So why was this a story that David wanted to tell in the first place?

"It's a story about what it means to be differ-

ent. I thought a boy going to school dressed as a girl would speak to the wider implications of being different, which is something most people probably feel at some point in their lives. When writing stories, you just follow your instincts, so the story wasn't contrived in a way that was trying to say anything in particular at the time. I guess it was a relatively risky subject for a children's book, but I decided to tell it anyway."

David first got the idea for the book from Little Britain fan mail: "A 12-year-old boy sent me a picture of him going to school as Emily Howard, one of the Little Britain characters. It was a really great outfit, with the wig and parasol. I thought he was very cool for doing that and also quite brave because kids sometimes give each other a bit of stick for that kind of stuff. Even though it was a very different set of circumstances - someone doing it for fancy dress is very different to someone doing it purely because they like it - it did make me wonder if there was maybe a story there to be told."

It was David's work in comedy that led him to first discover his passion for storytelling: "I really only started to write because I wanted to perform. I really wanted to be a comedian, 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.



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.





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.





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A CHANGE IS GONNA COME

Mercury-nominated soul singer and goddaughter of the legendary James Brown, Carleen Anderson talks political protest, human rights and innovative jazz ahead of her From The Source Festival appearance in Coventry...

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 experi-

ence. 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."

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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.



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."

Loop

Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton,
Fri 29 November

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...



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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 that 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.



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 changed, 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.



Annie

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent,
Mon 18 - Sat 23 November

Lesley Joseph is the latest high-profile performer to take on the coveted role of Miss Hannigan in *Annie*, the oft-touring Broadway musical that's once again hitting the road this month.

A heart-warming rags-to-riches story of a little girl who finds herself transported from a New York orphanage to the luxurious world of millionaire Oliver Warbucks, the show features plenty of memorable songs, including *It's A Hard Knock Life*, *I Don't Need Anything But You*, *Easy Street* and, of course, the legendary *Tomorrow*.

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 misogyny, the play is accompanied by Travis Alabanza's *Burgerz* (15 & 16 November), a 'powerful performance' exploring how trans bodies survive.



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 archaeologist 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."



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.



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!



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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 couple of examples of the production's jaw-dropping set designs, while lighting by David Finn moves from subtle to dramatic as the story unfolds.

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 pliés 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.

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Festive shows and attractions opening in November



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...



Peter Pan

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

Fly away to Neverland with the boy who wouldn't grow up, meet a real fairy, marvellous mermaids, wonderful Wendy and the down-on-their-luck lost boys. Oh, and beware the ever-so-wicked Captain Hook and a very hungry crocodile who goes tick-tock (he swallowed a clock!).

This 'thrillingly reimagined' version of the JM Barrie classic (the show is set in the 21st century and located in Birmingham) is helmed by Liam Steel, who last Christmas directed The REP's acclaimed production of The Wizard Of Oz.

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 Cinders' 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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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'.

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...



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.



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**

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Book now, visit:
www.sandwell.gov.uk/santaatthevalley

 Sandwell
Metropolitan Borough Council

Festive attractions opening in November



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.

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.



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 jocular 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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Festive attractions opening in November



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'...

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.



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 carol-singing session and a brand new ice rink.



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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West
Midlands
Railway

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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."

Claudia Losi: Being There

Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, until Sun 24 November

Claudia Losi's latest work, Poli Antartctici Constitutio, is an intricately embroidered woollen cloth featuring a depiction of the Antarctic as represented by Athana-

sus Kircher in his 17th-century book, Mundus Subterraneus. Kircher's visionary work contains his speculations on the existence of a hidden, subterranean world. Losi's cloth was fabricated over a period of two years by 12 of her female friends and acquaintances, each of whom regularly visited her studio to dedicate a few hours of work to the project.

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.



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.



Image credit: Study for a demonic spirit (from Henry VI, Part II, Act I, Scene II), George Romney (1734 - 1802) © The Samuel Courtauld Trust, The Courtauld Gallery, London

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.



Mary Queen of Heaven, 1920 - 1929
© Wolverhampton Art Gallery

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 Courtaulds textile company.



John Maynard Keynes, 1920 - 1929
© The Courtauld Gallery, London

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Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Lichfield Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1DU.
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Bonfire events from around the region



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.



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.

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

23rd Nov - 23rd Dec

National SEA LIFE Birmingham



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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!

Check out interactive features, stroll around the Comic Village and meet the people behind your favourite movie and television characters. Celebrities taking part in this month's event include Stranger Things and Lord Of The Rings star Sean Astin.

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 a silent disco, visit a wellbeing spa and shop for everything from organic food to healing crystals.



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.

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 Rangereettes, 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.



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.



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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

BEWDLEY 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

OKANGATES Sat 30 November



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.

The image features a large monster truck with a skull on its front and 'HOT WHEELS' written on its side, performing a wheelie in a large arena. The arena is filled with spectators and has bright stage lights. The Hot Wheels logo is at the top, followed by 'MONSTER TRUCKS LIVE' in large, stylized letters.

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Your week-
by-week
listings guide
November 2019

the list



Diwali Utsav: Sitaron Ke Sang at Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton - Saturday 9 November

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

What's On

Fri 1 to Sun 10 November



BBC Philharmonic
at Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent
Fri 1 November

Mon 11 to Sun 17 November



Private Peaceful
at The Place, Telford
Tues 12 November

Mon 18 to Sun 24 November



The Entertainer
at Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury
Mon 18 - Sat 23 November

Mon 25 to Sat 30 November



Miles Kane at
The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent
Wed 27 November

THROUGHOUT NOVEMBER

Visual Arts

New Art Gallery - Walsall

NEW ARPITA SHAH, MARYAM WAHID, NILUPA YASMIN Exhibition by three photographers presenting new work focused around portraiture, culture and female identity, Fri 15 Nov - Sun 19 Apr

NEW WALSALL SOCIETY OF ARTISTS - 70TH ANNUAL EXHIBITION Range of work by local artists, including portraits, still lifes and urban & rural scenes, Fri 22 Nov - Sun 5 Jan

Himley Hall & Park, Dudley

NEW CHRISTMAS EXHIBITION Sat 23 Nov - Fri 20 Dec

Newcastle Borough Museum & Art Gallery

NEW B(U)Y ME FOR CHRISTMAS! Exhibition where visitors can buy exclusive hand-made gifts and featuring work by 30 artists, Sat 16 Nov - Sun 5 Jan

Potteries Museum & Art Gallery - Stoke-On-Trent

APOLLO 50: COMMEMORATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST MANNED LUNAR LANDING Multimedia exhibition featuring models and memorabilia telling the epic story of the Apollo programme, until Sun 3 Nov

BRITISH CERAMICS BIENNIAL - CULTURAL ICONS Exhibition of work by figurative ceramicists responding to the historic flat-back portrait figures in the gallery's collections, until Sun 17 Nov

POTTERS LANE Visit a world inspired by JK Rowling's famous characters, until Sun 22 Dec

NEW ARRIVALS: 2018 Display of flora and fauna never before seen in the county, until Wed 1 Jan

Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery

DRAWN OF THE DEAD Selection of Charlie Adlard's original works from the Walking Dead comic series, presented alongside immersive, set piece installations created by sculptor Andrew Bryden, until Sun 3 Nov

The Willow Art Gallery, Oswestry

ART & CRAFT 2019 Including works by Nefelibata Photography -four photographic artists based in Anglesey - Shropshire Guild of Contemporary Craft and Borderland Visual Arts, until Sat 11 Jan

Weston Park

NEW IMAGINE....Exhibition of abstract work inspired by material sourced from nature, Fri 1 - Thurs 28 Nov

Wolverhampton Art Gallery

150TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF MAHATMA GANDHI Small display of works related to Gandhi, until Sun 3 Nov

KEITH PIPER: BODY POLITICS. WORK FROM 1982 - 2007 Exhibition bringing together key works from across the first three decades of Keith's career, until Sun 1 Dec

REFRAMING THE WILD: HUMANS, ANIMALS AND ART 1750-1950 Exhibition exploring the relationships between humans, animals and artworks from 1750 to 1950, until Sun 5 Jan

TIM MARA: NOT POP? Exhibition bringing together a selection of works by the late Irish printmaker, Tim Mara, until Sun 29 Mar

ARTS AWARD EXHIBITION Exhibition by students from Wolverhampton Schools showcasing artwork created by utilising recycled materials provided by SCARF, Fri 29 Nov - Sun 19 Jan

Other VISUAL ARTS

MUSEUM OF THE MOON Immersive lunar experience celebrating 50 years since man first walked on the moon, until Sun 10 Nov, Ingenuity Museum, Ironbridge

VAN AT 20 Exhibition celebrating 20 years of the Visual Arts Network, until Sat 23 Nov, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

MIGRATION. RÉCITS. MOUVEMENTS Video and photographic exhibition. Part of the Arts For Advocacy project, until Wed 18 Dec, Keele University, Staffordshire

THE GRAND AT 125 Exhibition celebrates 125 years of the Grand Theatre, until Sat 28 Dec, Wolverhampton City Archives

CHANGING TIMES: HUMOUR AND SATIRE Exhibition exploring the prints and objects that poked fun at new technology such as steam power and the possibilities it held, Mon 28 Oct - Fri 28 Feb, Ingenuity Museum, Ironbridge

NEW SUE CAMPION RBA Showcase of a body of new work, Sat 2 - Sat 30 Nov, Twenty Twenty Gallery, Ludlow

NEW ARTS AND CRAFTS EXHIBITION Show featuring locally made arts and crafts, Tues 5 Nov - Mon 23 Dec, Qube Gallery, Oswestry

NEW NOTES FROM SHROPSHIRE The Year's Paintings by Michelle Anderson, Fri 8 Nov - Fri 6 Dec, Gallery3, Shrewsbury

Gigs

FRIENDLY FIRES Fri 1 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

Y&T Fri 1 Nov, The Robin Bilston

SKERRYVORE Fri 1 Nov, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

SCOPYONS Fri 1 Nov, Eleven, Sandyford, Stoke-on-Trent

THE UNDERCOVER HIPPIE Fri 1 Nov, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

SHOWADDYWADDY Fri 1 Nov, Forest Arts Centre, Walsall

BARBARA DICKSON WITH NICK HOLLAND Fri 1 Nov, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

BON JOVI FOREVER Fri 1 Nov, Lichfield Garrick

THE BON JOVI EXPERIENCE Fri 1 Nov, Dudley Town Hall

GORDON GILTRAP Fri 1 Nov, Lichfield Guildhall

PAUL SIMON'S GRACELAND Fri 1 Nov, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

80S MANIA Sat 2 Nov, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

DAN OMARI 2.0 Sat 2 Nov, The Slade Rooms, W'hampton

LOTUS MOTION Sat 2 Nov, Havana Republic, Shrewsbury

5 O'CLOCK HERO Sat 2 Nov, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

E3UK LIVE Sat 2 Nov, Arena Birmingham

ERASER Sat 2 Nov, The Robin, Bilston

ULTIMATE BUBLE Sat 2 Nov, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

FIRE RED EMPRESS Sat 2 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

DR HOOK Sat 2 Nov, Symphony Hall, B'ham

THE BOOTLEG SHADOWS Sat 2 Nov, The Place, Telford

GORDON HASKELL Sun 3 Nov, Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury

BARS AND MELODY Sun 3 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

MIKE PETERS Sun 3

Nov, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

NICK HARPER Sun 3 Nov, The Robin, Bilston

RAHAT FATEH ALI KHAN Sun 3 Nov, Arena Birmingham

CHRIS GREVE Sun 3 Nov, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

THE D-DAY DARLINGS Sun 3 Nov, Dudley Town Hall

CATFISH AND THE BOTTLEMEN Mon 4 Nov, Arena Birmingham

BEAR'S DEN Mon 4 Nov, O2 Institute, B'ham

JAMES MORRISON Mon 4 Nov, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

JOOLS HOLLAND AND HIS RHYTHM & BLUES ORCHESTRA Wed 6 Nov, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

JAMIE LENMAN Wed 6 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

CHARTREUSE Wed 6 Nov, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

HAZEL O'CONNOR Wed 6 Nov, The Robin Bilston

LAGWAGON Wed 6 Nov, O2 Academy, B'ham

MARILLION WITH FRIENDS FROM THE ORCHESTRA Wed 6 Nov, Symphony Hall, B'ham

HALF MAN HALF BISCUIT Thurs 7 Nov, The Robin, Bilston

WILDWOOD KIN Thurs 7 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

SHE DREW THE GUN Thurs 7 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

ROCK FOR HEROES Thurs 7 Nov, The Place, Telford

JOHNNY LLOYD + JOHN DHALI + GREG POOLE Thurs 7 Nov, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

THE MAGIC OF MOTOWN Fri 8 Nov, Arena Birmingham

LITTLE MIX EXPERIENCE Fri 8 Nov, Lichfield Garrick

INFINITE SAUCE Fri 8 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

NINE BELOW ZERO Fri 8 Nov, The Robin Bilston

TORI FREESTONE TRIO

Fri 8 Nov, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

SEAN MCGOWEN Fri 8 Nov, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

THE AMAZONS Fri 8 Nov, O2 Academy, B'ham

ARCADIA ROOTS Fri 8 Nov, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

THE UPBEAT BEATLES Fri 8 Nov, The Place, Telford

LUTHER: A CELEBRATION OF LUTHER VANDROSS Sat 9 Nov, The Place, Telford

EDDIE AND THE MURPHYS Sat 9 Nov, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

BUCKCHERRY Sat 9 Nov, The Robin, Bilston

ALAN BARNES' OCTET Sat 9 Nov, The Hive, Shrewsbury

THE RIFLES Sat 9 Nov, O2 Institute, B'ham

THE REGRETTES Sat 9 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE ICICLE WORKS Sat 9 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

KODALINE Sat 9 Nov, O2 Academy, B'ham

IAN PARKER Sat 9 Nov, Lichfield Guildhall

THE AUSTRALIAN PINK FLOYD SHOW Sat 9 Nov, Arena Birmingham

NEIL SAUNDERS Sun 10 Nov, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

THE GIFT WITH SPECIAL GUESTS ENCIRCLED Sun 10 Nov, The Robin, Bilston

JOE BROWN - 60TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR Sun 10 Nov, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

BARBERAMA'S 10TH ANNIVERSARY CONCERT Sun 10 Nov, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

BUDDY HOLLY & THE CRICKETERS Sun 10 Nov, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

CHRONIXX AND KOFFEE Sun 10 Nov, Arena Birmingham

BURNA BOY Sun 10 Nov, O2 Academy, B'ham

Classical

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

BBC PHILHARMONIC Featuring Ben Gernon (guest conductor) & Carolin Widmann (violin - pictured). Programme includes works by Rossini, Mozart & Tchaikovsky, Fri 1 Nov, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent



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

HALESOWEN CHORAL SOCIETY Featuring Stephen Davis (conductor), Elizabeth Adams, Matthew Reeve, Nick Drew & Paul Mocroft (soloists) & Charlotte Moseley (HCS Sinfonia leader). Programme includes works by Purcell & JS Bach, Sat 2 Nov, St Margaret's Church, Hasbury, B63 4QD

CBSO: MENDELSSOHN'S ELIJAH Featuring Kazuki Yamada (conductor), Keri Fuge (soprano), Karen Cargill (mezzo soprano), Robert Murray (tenor) and Matthew Brook (baritone), Thurs 7 Nov, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

COSÌ FAN TUTTE Featuring Ana Maria Labin (Fiordiligi), Emily Edmonds (Dorabella), Rebecca Bottone (Despina), Benjamin Appl (Guiglielmo), Matthew Swensen (Ferrando), Fri 8 Nov, Birmingham Town Hall

CITY OF BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: SPECTACULAR CLASSICS Featuring Anthony Inglis (conductor), Lauren Fagan (soprano) & Timothy Richards (tenor). Programme includes works by Strauss, Rossini, Pachelbel, Tchaikovsky, Verdi, Mascagni, Puccini & more... Sat 9 Nov, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

BIRMINGHAM CATHEDRAL CHOIR DURU-FLE'S REQUIEM Sat 9 Nov, Birmingham Cathedral

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

LOST VOICE GUY Fri 1 Nov, The Chancellor's Hall, Wolverhampton

DESIREE BURCH Fri 1 Nov, The Glee Club, Birmingham

DALISO CHAPONDA Fri 1 Nov, The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton

THE RANDOLPH TEMPEST EXPERIENCE Fri 1 Nov, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

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

LOST VOICE GUY Sat 2 Nov, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

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

TEZ ILYAS, KANE BROWN, AATIF & KIRAN MORJARIA Sat 2 Nov, The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton

COMEDY IN THE MET Sat 2 Nov, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

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

AURIE STYLA Sun 3 Nov, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ANDREW O'NEILL Sun 3 Nov, The Giffard Arms, Wolverhampton

GLENN MOORE Wed 6 Nov, The Glee Club, Birmingham

FREDDY QUINNE & NJAMBI MCGRATH Thurs 7 Nov, Stourbridge Town Hall

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

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

FRANK SKINNER Fri 8 Nov, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

GORDON SOUTHERN & PAUL PIRIE Fri 8 Nov, Molineux Stadium, Wolverhampton

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

LAUGH OUT LOUD COMEDY NIGHTS Sat 9 Nov, The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton

ROB BECKETT Sat 9 Nov, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

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

MAISIE ADAM Sun 10 Nov, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

CHRIS STOKES, RAHUL KOHLI & TOM WRIGGLESWORTH Sun 10 Nov, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

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, Tues 5 Nov, Birmingham Hippodrome

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

THE CUNNING 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

RIGOLETTO 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

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

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

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

KING JOHN Shakespeare's rarely performed tale of a nation in turmoil, until Sat 21 Mar, The Swan Theatre Stratford, Stratford-upon-Avon

TOM GATES LIVE ON STAGE! Liz Pichon's popular characters, brought to life by the producers of Horrible Histories

and Gangsta Granny, Wed 30 Oct - Sat 2 Nov, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

THE IMMIGRANT Visual comedian Chris Michael presents a slapstick comedy inspired by Charlie Chaplin's original film, Fri 1 Nov, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

STAR Nick Barber takes a canter through the life, times, achievements and foibles of the world's first superstar actor, David Garrick, Fri 1 Nov, Lichfield Garrick

GETTING THE THIRD DEGREE The deeply moving story of Laurie Cunningham, 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 podcast 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

THE RANDOLPH TEMPEST EXPERIENCE Join 'the world's greatest actor' in his quest to find the next great actor for his new project, Fri 1 Nov, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

BOUNCERS Starcross Youth Theatre present an amateur staging of John Godber's acclaimed play, Fri 1 - Sat 2 Nov, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

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

THE DISAPPEARING ACT A 'dark, delirious, magical cabaret' telling the story of magician's assistant Edie Rose at different stages of her career... Sat 2 Nov, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

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

MY BEAUTIFUL LAUNDRETTE 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

GYM & TONIC John Godber comedy about trying to find a moment of calm in challenging times, Tues 5 - Sat 9 Nov, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

THE WOMAN IN BLACK Stage version of Susan Hill's supernatural tale, Tues 5 - Sat 9 Nov, Regent Theatre, Stoke-

on-Trent

THE VICAR OF DIBLEY The Stafford Players present an amateur stage version of the popular TV series, Wed 6 - Sat 9 Nov, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

ROUND AND ROUND THE GARDEN Shropshire Drama Company present an amateur staging of Alan Ayckbourn's celebrated Norman Conquests play, Wed 6 - Sat 9 Nov, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

A WORLD OF MUSICALS Presented by Brownhills Musical Theatre Company, Wed 6 - Sat 9 Nov, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

HOW TO BE AMAZINGLY HAPPY Story-telling & physical comedy combine in a one-woman show, Thurs 7 Nov, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

OKLAHOMA! Get Your Wigle On presents its version of Rodgers & Hammerstein's romantic musical, Thurs 7 - Sat 9 Nov, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

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

BOAR Action-packed one-man comedy of swords, sorcery & swill, Fri 8 Nov, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

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 BARN 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

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

THE BOY IN THE DRESS World premiere based on David Walliams' bestselling book and featuring songs by Robbie Williams and Guy Chambers, Fri 8 Nov - Sun 8 Mar, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

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

DUMTEEDUM LIVE Immersive Archers experience offering fans of the show a chance to listen to Emerald O'Hanrahan (Emma Grundy) talk about her character and the programme, Sat 9 Nov, Birmingham Town Hall

ALGORITHMS Sadie Clarke's one-

woman show offers frank observations about bisexuality while highlighting the pitfalls of modern dating, Sun 10 Nov, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

ON THE EDGE A Kew Theatre Company exploration of falling in love, leaving home and getting a job, Sun 10 Nov, Snailbeach Village Hall, Pontesbury, Shropshire

Kids Shows

WE'RE 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

PEDLAR'S TALES Pop-up children's theatre fusing puppetry, live music & bite-size stories, Sat 2 Nov, Church Stretton Library, South Shropshire

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

PEDLAR'S TALES Pop-up children's theatre fusing puppetry, live music & bite-size stories, Fri 8 Nov, Qube, Oswestry, North Shropshire

Dance

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

BEING SEEN Contact Dance Company - an ensemble with and without disabilities - explore equality, difference & togetherness, Thurs 7 Nov, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

THE RITE OF SPRING & LEFT UNSEEN Phoenix Dance Theatre present a double-bill - Jeanguy Saintous' reworking 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

DIWALI UTSAV: SITARON KE SANG Jaivant Patel Dance promise a vibrant evening of South Asian dance in celebration of Diwali, Sat 9 Nov, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

Talks / Spoken Word

AN EVENING WITH SIMON REEVE An evening with the world's leading adventure traveller, Sun 3 Nov, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

BEN FOGLE - TALES FROM THE WILDERNESS Join the modern-day explorer as he shares stories about crossing



Candy & Cobwebs - Blists Hill, Ironbridge, Shropshire

Antarctica and conquering Everest, Tues 5 Nov, Birmingham Town Hall

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

Events

HAUNTED CASTLE A week of ghostly goings-on at Tamworth Castle's haunted spooktacular, until Fri 1 Nov, Tamworth Castle

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

HALLOWEEN SPOOK-TACULAR All the fun of the farm plus a day packed with spooky Halloween fun, until Fri 1 Nov, National Forest Adventure Farm, Burton-upon-Trent

HALLOWEEN TILE DECORATING Create your own Halloween or lunar-themed designs at family drop-in tile decorating workshops on weekdays over the half-term break, until Fri 1 Nov, Jackfield Tile Museum, Telford

LITTLE SKIPPERS - HALLOWEEN FUN A 45-minute boat trip through the themed caverns followed by a 'things to make and do' session, until Fri 1 Nov, Dudley Canal and Tunnel Trust

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

HAWKSTONE TRAIL AND TERRIBLE TALES Follow the Halloween Trail to find hidden storytellers throughout the Follies, until Sun 3 Nov, Hawkstone Park & Follies, Newcaste-under-Redcastle, North Shropshire

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

SPOOKY STOKESAY CASTLE Featuring 'wicked' crafts and a 'spooktacular' Halloween quest around the castle, until Sun 3 Nov, Stokesay Castle, Nr Craven Arms, South Shropshire

THE WIZARD EXPRESS The Wizard Express is steaming back to the Severn Valley Railway to take young witches and wizards on a magical journey to Wizard School, until Sun 3 Nov, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

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

SCAREFEST Scarefest returns with 'spooks, frights and thrills for everyone'. Open until late so that visitors can enjoy their favourite rides in the dark, until Sun 3 Nov, Alton Towers, Stoke-on-Trent

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

SPOOKY SPECTACULAR Featuring Halloween decorations with illuminated, themed scarecrows and hundreds of pumpkins, until Sun 3 Nov, West Midlands Safari and Leisure Park, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

FIENDISH FELONS - HALF TERM Discover the dastardly deeds of criminals in the past and the putrid punishments they faced, until Sun 3 Nov, Black Country Living Museum,

Friday 1 - Sunday 10 November

Dudley

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

FIREWORKS SPECTACULAR Celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 Moon landing, Fri 1 - Sat 2 Nov, Drayton Manor Theme Park, Tamworth

MIND BODY SPIRIT FESTIVAL Three-day event offering 'spiritual seekers' a safe place in which to commune and share their ideas, beliefs and philosophies, Fri 1 - Sun 3 Nov, NEC, B'ham

CAKE INTERNATIONAL Featuring 'the biggest and most groundbreaking displays, the wildest competition entries and the most famous cake stars from around the world', Fri 1 - Sun 3 Nov, NEC, Birmingham

PRINCESS + PRINCE PARTY Join Fairy Tink and Captain Treasure for a party packed with fun, games, dancing and singalong songs, Sat 2 Nov, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

FAMILY STARGAZING AND MOONWATCH Join Shropshire Astronomical Society for an evening of stargazing and moonwatching. Suitable for children aged five-plus, Sat 2 Nov, Attingham

Park, Shrewsbury

FIREWORKS NIGHT As well as the spectacular family fireworks display, see molten iron being poured into moulds during a dramatic iron casting demonstration, Sat 2 Nov, Blists Hill Victorian Town, Ironbridge

HIMLEY BONFIRE AND FIREWORKS Marking 50 years since man first set foot on the moon, the 2019 Himley Bonfire 'is going to be out of this world', Sat 2 Nov, Himley Hall & Park, Dudley

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON BONFIRE EVENT Enjoy 'some of the best fireworks in the West Midlands', along with a huge bonfire, Sat 2 Nov, Wolverhampton Racecourse

FROST FAIR Featuring a wide selection of handmade crafts and Christmas gifts from talented Shropshire crafts people, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Nov, Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, Craven Arms, South Shropshire

SPECTACULAR BONFIRE NIGHT Featuring a firework display in the castle grounds, Sat 2 Nov, Tamworth Castle

THE NATIONAL PET SHOW 'The perfect place to experience everything pet-related', Sat 2 - Sun 3 Nov, NEC, Birmingham

BONFIRE & FIREWORKS One of the region's largest bonfire celebrations, with entertainment for all the family, Sun 3 Nov, Weston Park, Nr Shifnal

FIREWORKS EXTRAVAGANZA Back for a third year with 'more fireworks, more food, more entertainment and more fun for the family', Sun 3 Nov, County Showground, Stafford

MODEL RAILEX Mix of scales and exhibits from the UK's steam and diesel eras, Sun 3 Nov, National Brewery Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

WWE LIVE 'Bursting with all the drama and energy of a rock concert', Wed 6 Nov, Arena Birmingham

THE LANCASTER INSURANCE CLASSIC MOTOR SHOW The world's largest gathering of car and motorcycle clubs, Fri 8 - Sun 10 Nov, NEC, Birmingham

ULTIMATE FIREWORKS Last chance to experience Alton Towers' rides and attractions before the 2019 season comes to an end, Fri 8 - Sun 10 Nov, Alton Towers, Stoke-on-Trent

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

FAMILY TALKS: 30 YEARS ON, THE FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL Three family-friendly talks to commemorate 30 years since the fall of the Berlin Wall, Sat 9 Nov, RAF Cosford, Shifnal

SCALE MODEL WORLD 2019 The largest fine-scale model show in the world, with over 160 traders and more than 190 club & special-interest-group displays, Sat 9 - Sun 10 Nov, Telford International Centre

FIREWORK FESTIVAL 'Spectacular fireworks, a roaring bonfire, late-night rides and music to bring the party alive', Sat 9 - Sun 10 Nov, West Midland Safari and Leisure Park, Bewdley

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

ARTISAN MARKET AT THE WORLD OF WEDGWOOD Featuring more than 50 stalls of locally produced foods and hand-crafted products, Sun 10 Nov, World of Wedgwood, Stoke-on-Trent

MARKET DRAYTON WINTER FAIR Sun 10 Nov, Festival Drayton, Market Drayton, North Shropshire



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 THU 7 NOV	 FRI 15 NOV	 WED 27 NOV
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LEGENDS OF AMERICAN COUNTRY

Thursday 6 February
7.30pm • £32

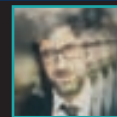


THE AMERICAN FOUR TOPS

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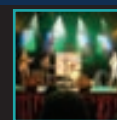
2 November, 8pm
Mark Watson:
The Infinite Show

Tickets: £19



13 November, 7.30pm
**The P Word: Sophie
Sparham & Roy Marshall**

Tickets: £7



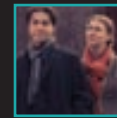
15 November, 7.30pm
**Into the Shadows -
Recreate the unique
sound of The Shadows**

Tickets: £14



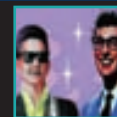
20 November, 7.30pm
**Once Upon A Wednesday:
Dark Tales from India
with Peter Chand**

Tickets: £7.50



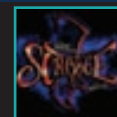
21 November, 7.30pm
**Green Matthews:
A Brief History of Music**

Tickets: £12 / £10



22 November, 7.30pm
**Through the Decades
with Roy Orbison &
Buddy Holly**

Tickets: £17.50



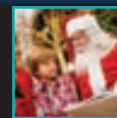
26 - 30 November, 7.30pm
2.30pm Matinee
**Little Theatre Company:
Scrooge The Musical**

Tickets: £12, £11 conc.



4 December, 7.30pm
**The P Word:
Roy McFarlane &
Liz Lefroy**

Tickets: £7



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Gigs

VAMPIRE WEEKEND Mon 11 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

BOSTON MANOR + MODERN ERROR + GENDER ROLES Mon 11 Nov, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

FEEDER Mon 11 Nov, O2 Institute, B'ham

RAINBREAKERS Tues 12 Nov, The Robin, Bilston

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 SAVORETTI Tues 12 Nov, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CHINA CRISIS Tues 12 & Wed 13 Nov, Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury

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

HALF•ALIVE Wed 13 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

ELIANA CARGNELUTTI Wed 13 Nov, The Robin, Bilston

SHOW OF HANDS Wed 13 Nov, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

LARKINS Wed 13 Nov, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

SINCERELY YOURS Wed 13 Nov, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

RAT PACK CHRISTMAS SHOW WITH SPECIAL GUESTS DON MACLEAN AND CHARLEY TOULAN Wed 13 Nov, The Place, Telford

TOM WALKER Thurs 14 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

BOOTLEG ABBA Thurs 14 Nov, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

JOHN ILLSLEY Thurs 14 Nov, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

HEAVY LUNGS Thurs 14 Nov, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

GOLDLINK Thurs 14

Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE STYLISTICS Thurs 14 Nov, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE SPANDAU BALLET STORY Thurs 14 Nov, The Robin, Bilston

MOUNTAIN MUSIC Thurs 14 Nov, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

GORDON HENDRICKS IS ELVIS Fri 15 Nov, The Place, Telford

JADIS Fri 15 Nov, The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton

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

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

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

DR FEELGOOD Fri 15 Nov, The Robin, Bilston

BRUNO MARS TRIBUTE Fri 15 Nov, Dudley Town Hall

PEARL JAM UK Fri 15 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

MR EAZI Fri 15 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

DARK SPARKS Fri 15 Nov, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

WHITNEY Fri 15 Nov, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

THE CARPENTERS STORY Fri 15 Nov, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

INTO THE SHADOWS Fri 15 Nov, The Brewery Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

YONAKA Fri 15 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

GLAM 45 + SWEET 45 Fri 15 Nov, Eleven, Sandyford, Stoke-on-Trent

EMELI SANDÉ Fri 15 Nov, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

STRICTLY ABBA Fri 15 - Sat 16 Nov, Theatre On The Steps, Bridgnorth, South Shrops

BELLA HARDY Sat 16 Nov, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

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

KICK UP THE 80'S Sat 16 Nov, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

MICHAEL STARRING BEN Sat 16 Nov, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

THE SCRIBES Sat 16 Nov, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

KINGDOM OF MADNESS Sat 16 Nov, Newhampton Arts Centre, W'hampton

THE DOORS ALIVE Sat 16 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

ANYTHING FOR LOVE: THE MEAT LOAF STORY Sat 16 Nov, The Place, Telford

THE DUALERS Sat 16 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

HARBINGER Sat 16 Nov, The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton

THE CLONE ROSES + KAZABIAN 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 HOOTEN HALLERS Sat 16 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

LIMEHOUSE LIZZY Sat 16 Nov, The Robin, Bilston

FOY VANCE Sat 16 Nov, Birmingham Town Hall

REUBEN JAMES Sun 17 Nov, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

BLACKWATER CONSPIRACY Sun 17 Nov, The Asylum, Birmingham

CHINA CRISIS Sun 17 Nov, The Robin Bilston

THE YOUNG PERSON'S GUIDE TO THE ORCHESTRA Sun 17 Nov, Symphony Hall, B'ham

FREYA RIDINGS Sun 17 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

JAKI GRAHAM Sun 17 Nov, Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury

ANNA SILVERS Sun 17 Nov, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

Classical Music

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

CBSO: CAPRICCIO ESPAGNOL Featuring Jaume Santonja Espinós (conductor) & Clara Mouriz (mezzo soprano). Programme includes works by Rimsky-Korsakov, Montsalvatge, Falla & Prokofiev, Wed 13 Nov, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE SYMPHONIA VERBUM ORCHESTRA Programme comprises Tchaikovsky's Symphony No.5, Thurs 14 Nov, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

THALLEIN 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 Bradshaw Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

WIHAN QUARTET Programme includes works by Haydn, Suk & Janacek, Fri 15 Nov, The Lion Hotel, Shrewsbury

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

BIRMINGHAM FESTIVAL CHORAL SOCIETY: HANDEL'S MESSIAH Featuring The Musical & Amicable Society Baroque Orchestra, David Wynne (conductor), Penny Appleyard (soprano), Philippa Thomas (mezzo), Xavier Hetherington (tenor) & James Williams (baritone), Sat 16 Nov, Church of St Alban the Martyr, Birmingham

CBSO FAMILY CONCERT Featuring Jaume Santonja Espinós (conductor) & Catherine Arlidge (presenter). Programme includes works by Britten, John Williams, Piazzolla, Tchaikovsky, Arban, Beethoven & Brahms, Sun 17 Nov, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Comedy

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

ROY CHUBBY BROWN Wed 13 Nov, Dudley Town Hall

BEN ELTON Thurs 14 Nov, Birmingham Hippodrome

ROBERT WHITE, JO ENRIGHT & COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON Thurs 14 Nov, The Glee Club, B'ham

ROY 'CHUBBY' BROWN Fri 15 Nov, Willemhall Social Club

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

MATT PARKER Fri 15 Nov, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

DARREN HARRIOTT Fri 15 Nov, The Glee Club, Birmingham

TIM MINCHIN Fri 15 & Sat 16 Nov, Birmingham Hippodrome

IAN STONE, IAN SMITH, ROBERT WHITE & JO ENRIGHT Fri 15 & Sat 16 Nov, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JACK WHITEHALL Fri 15 - Sun 17 Nov, Arena Birmingham

TOM STADE, CHRISTIAN REILLY FEATURING JOHNNY SORROW & WAYNE BEESE Sat 16 Nov, Brierley Hill Civic Hall, Dudley

LADIES NIGHT FEAT. NOREEN KHAN, VIBS BHATIA & DJ AK BEATS Sat 16 Nov, The Glee Club, Birmingham

QUINCY, RADU ISAC FEATURING BETHANY BLACK & DAMION LARKIN Sat 16 Nov, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

JIM DAVIDSON Sun 17 Nov, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

IMPROV COMEDY WITH BOX OF FROGS Sun 17 Nov, The Glee Club, B'ham

MICKEY SHARMA, ANUVAB PAL, SUKH OJLA & OMID SINGH Sun 17 Nov, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

LAYILA Siana Bangura's drama concerning a 15-year-old Sierra-Leonean British girl whose life is turned upside-down when her grandma suddenly dies, Mon 11 Nov, The REP, Birmingham

THE MOUSETRAP Susan Penhaligon stars in Agatha Christie's legendary thriller, Mon 11 - Sat 16 Nov, The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

SHYLOCK Guy Masterson's one-man show, exploring the conflicts and contradictions surrounding Shakespeare's infamous Jew, Tues 12 Nov, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

PRIVATE PEACEFUL The National Production Company presents Michael Morpurgo's wartime tale, Tues 12 Nov, The Place, Telford



Christmas IN BURTON

24 NOV	Christmas Lights Switch On Burton Market Place	8 DEC	Food & Drink Festival Burton Market Hall & Place
24 NOV	Christmas Lights Market Burton Market Hall	16-18 DEC	Glisten The Brewhouse
7 DEC	Festive Family Fun Day The Brewhouse	19 DEC	Santa's Christmas Countdown The Brewhouse
7 DEC	Makers Market Burton Market Hall & Place	21 DEC	Rat Pack Live The Brewhouse

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NEW VIC

A tale full of heart, swashbuckling adventure and festive magic!

THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER

BY MARK TWAIN ADAPTED BY THERESA HESKINS

SAT 16 NOVEMBER - SAT 25 JANUARY

newvictheatre.org.uk

HORMONAL HOUSEWIVES Join Suzanne Shaw & crew as they blast their way through a catalogue of women's bits, Tues 12 Nov, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

BRIGHT PLACES Unapologetically honest and sometimes comical exploration of one woman's unique take on life with multiple sclerosis, Tues 12 - Fri 15 Nov, The REP, Birmingham

MY FAIR LADY Amateur staging presented by Bilston Operatic Company, Tues 12 - Sat 16 Nov, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR Five Towns Theatre present an amateur staging of Andrew Lloyd Webber & Tim Rice's classic rock opera, Tues 12 - Sat 16 Nov, Stoke Repertory Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

EVITA Cradley Heath Amateur Operatic Society present Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber's iconic musical, Tues 12 - Sat 16 Nov, Stourbridge Town Hall

AN INSPECTOR CALLS The National Theatre's landmark production of JB Priestley's classic thriller, Tues 12 - Sat 16 Nov, The REP, Birmingham

SINCERELY YOURS - THE VERA LYNN STORY The story of the forces' sweetheart who provided light in the gloom of the Second World War, Wed 13 Nov, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

FATHERS, FAMILIES & F*CKBOYS One woman's journey to reconnect with her father in order to connect with herself, Wed 13 Nov, The REP, B'ham

SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DAVE'S Presented by Masque Theatre, Wed 13 - Fri 15 Nov, Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke-on-Trent

RUBY WAX: HOW TO BE HUMAN Ruby is joined by Buddhist monk Gelong Thubten & neuroscientist Ash Ranpura, Thurs 14 Nov, The Place, Telford

CHEETAH SISTERS Autobiographical piece exploring the conflict of national and personal identity involved in interracial adoption. Part of Foundry Festival, Thurs 14 Nov, The REP, Birmingham

ONCE UPON A TIME Gonzo Moose return with a humorous fairytale adventure, Thurs 14 Nov, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

STRANGERS ON A TRAIN SET Lipservice take audiences on a whistle-stop journey, Thurs 14 - Fri 15 Nov, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

BLITHE SPIRIT St Luke's Drama Society presents Noel Coward's timeless comedy about love, death and the intervention of an amateur psychic, Thurs 14 - Sat 16 Nov, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

UNEXPLODED ORDNANCES Split Britches combine a Dr Strangelove-inspired performance with a 'daring forum for public conversation' that explores ageing, anxiety, hidden de-

sires and how to look forward when the future is uncertain, Sat 16 Nov, The REP, Birmingham

LAYILA Siana Bangura's drama concerning a 15-year-old Sierra-Leonean British kid whose life is turned upside down when her grandma suddenly dies, Sat 16 Nov, The REP, B'ham

CLIMB THAT TREE Join award-winning songwriter and musician David Gibb on a musical journey through his often-surreal imagination, Sat 16 Nov, Stoke St Milborough Village Hall, Ludlow, South Shropshire

PEPPER & HONEY 'Poignant, subtle and timely play' about the journey of change, cultural differences and the conflict between upholding the traditions of the 'old country' and embracing those of the new, Sat 16 Nov, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

THE SNOW QUEEN Hans Christian Andersen's family classic following the adventures of inseparable friends Kai & Gerda, Sat 16 Nov - Mon 30 Dec, The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER Featuring imaginative storytelling, live music, humour, puppetry and festive magic, Sat 16 Nov - Sat 25 Jan, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

BURGERZ Performance artist Travis Alabanza presents a show that's 'timely, unsettling and powerful', Sun 17 Nov, Midlands Arts Centre, B'ham

OTHELLO The Pantaloons relocate Shakespeare's classic tragedy to a jazz-age setting, Sun 17 Nov, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

DOWN THE PUB WITH LUKE WRIGHT Luke creates inventive poems with loads of heart, Sun 17 Nov, The Black Bear, Whitchurch

Kids Shows

PEDLAR'S TALES Pop-up children's theatre fusing puppetry, live music & bite-size stories, Fri 15 Nov, Wem Town Hall, North Shropshire

Dance

ACOSTA DANZA Programme of new & existing works from ballet superstar Carlos Acosta, Mon 11 - Tues 12 Nov, Birmingham Hippodrome

YAATRA Jaivant Patel presents an evening of 'captivating' solo kathak and contemporary dance, Wed 13 Nov, Midlands Arts Centre, B'ham

SAME SAME... BUT DIFFERENT Sonia Sabri's new family show mixes Kathak and contemporary dance with live music and physical storytelling to create 'a playful and colourful world exploring our curiosities and fears', Fri 15 Nov, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

SHOUT VOGUE BALL Club culture meets high art as Vogue Houses come together from across the UK (including Birmingham's very own House of Bab) to compete for dance supremacy in a catwalk spectacular pulled straight from New York City's iconic ballroom culture, Fri 15 Nov, Birmingham Hippodrome

MUSIC AND DANCE FROM AROUND THE WORLD Presented by students from Concord College, Sat 16 Nov, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

AN EVENING WITH NAHID SIDDIQUI Exclusive Midlands performance from one of Europe's leading Kathak dancers, Sun 17 Nov, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

Cabaret

THE CIRCUS OF HORRORS Twenty-fifth anniversary show featuring an amalgamation of acts and a rock'n'roll soundscape, Mon 11 Nov, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

THAT'LL BE THE DAY CHRISTMAS SHOW Popular rock'n'roll variety show, featuring festive classics from the '50s, '60s & '70s, Sun 17 Nov, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

Talks / Spoken Word

DOUG ALLAN Join the award-winning cameraman for an evening of behind-the-scenes stories... Tues 12 Nov, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

SIR RANULPH FIENNES: LIVING DANGEROUSLY Join 'the world's greatest living explorer' as he recounts his personal journey, Wed 13 Nov, Birmingham Town Hall

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

THE P WORD Poetry with Sophie Sparham & Roy Marshall, Wed 13 Nov, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

AN EVENING WITH JOHN ILLSLEY Founder member of legendary band Dire Straits, Thurs 14 Nov, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

MY MOUNTAIN LIFE BY SIMON YATES An evening with one of the most accomplished exploratory mountaineers of all time, Thurs 14 Nov, Lichfield Garrick

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

Events

CONSERVATION CENTRE OPEN WEEK Go behind the scenes to check out conservation work on a range of aircraft, Mon 11 - Sat 16 Nov, RAF Cosford, Shifnal

PLANETARIUM LATES: AMAUROSIS Intriguing 3D 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

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

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

MARSTON'S BEER FESTIVAL RACEDAY Returning for the ninth year with 'great-quality horse racing and fantastic tasting beers', Sat 16 Nov, Uttoxeter Racecourse, Staffordshire

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

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

SPECTRA PRESENT EAT THE STARS A game of 'extraordinary imagination, whimsy and fun', Sat 16 - Sun 17 Nov, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

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

CHRISTMAS GIFT FAYRE Explore festive stalls 'overflowing' with hundreds of unusual gift ideas, decorations, festive food & drink, Sat 16 - Sun 17 Nov, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley

SANTA SAFARI Featuring a four-mile self-drive safari and a visit to Santa, Sat 16 - Sun 17 Nov, West Midland Safari and Leisure Park, Bewdley

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

DRAYTON'S MAGICAL CHRISTMAS Sat 16 Nov - Tues 31 Dec, Drayton Manor Theme Park, Tamworth

'MORRIS GANG' DANCING The Blists Hill Morris Gang entertain the crowds with traditional dances at 11.15am, 2pm & 3pm, Sun 17 Nov, Blists Hill Victorian Town, Ironbridge

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

SHAKESPEARS SISTER Tues 19 Nov, Symphony Hall, B'ham

FOREVER ELTON Wed 20 Nov, The Place, Telford

SEVEN DRUNKEN NIGHTS - THE STORY OF THE DUBLINERS Wed 20 Nov, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

D BLOCK EUROPE Wed 20 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

LANKUM Wed 20 Nov, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

NOBLE JACKS Wed 20 Nov, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

CLARE TEAL & HER JAZZ TRIO Wed 20 Nov, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme



OCEAN WISDOM Thurs 21 Nov, The Mill, Birmingham

SHED SEVEN Thurs 21 Nov, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

MARTIN STEPHENSON & THE DAINTYES 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

SONS OF LIBERTY + COLLATERAL Thurs 21 Nov, The Robin, Bilston

GREENMATTHEWS Thurs 21 Nov, The Brew-

house Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

BAT FOR LASHES Thurs 21 Nov, Birmingham Town Hall

YUNGBLUD Fri 22 Nov, O2 Institute, B'ham

THANK ABBA FOR THE MUSIC Fri 22 Nov, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

SHED SEVEN Fri 22 Nov, O2 Academy, B'ham

DAVEY MALONE Fri 22 Nov, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

DEFINITELY MAYBE & ADORED Fri 22 Nov, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

THROUGH THE DECADES WITH ROY ORBISON & BUDDY HOLLY Fri 22 Nov, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

BLAZIN' FIDDLES Fri 22 Nov, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

OASIS VS STONE ROSES Fri 22 Nov, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

SCARLXRD Fri 22 Nov, O2 Institute, B'ham

GLASS CEILINGS Fri 22 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

WATERMARK Fri 22 Nov, The Slade Rooms, W'hampton

THE LOTTERY WINNERS Fri 22 Nov, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

WHITNEY - QUEEN OF THE NIGHT Fri 22 Nov, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

LADY MAISERY Fri 22 Nov, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

DEMON + IZENGARD Fri 22 Nov, Eleven, Sandyford, Stoke-on-Trent

NUCLEAR WEASELS Fri 22 Nov, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

THE COMMANDMENTS Sat 23 Nov, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

LUCY SPRAGGAN Sat 23 Nov, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

MAD DOG MCREA Sat 23 Nov, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

HAWKWIND 50TH AN-

NIVERSARY TOUR Sat 23 Nov, Birmingham Town Hall

MICHAEL STARRING BEN Sat 23 Nov, Dudley Town Hall

GREEN DATE Sat 23 Nov, Eleven, Sandyford, Stoke-on-Trent

RAINBREAKERS Sat 23 Nov, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

ONE TREE CANYON Sat 23 Nov, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

SCOUTING FOR GIRLS Sat 23 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

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

THE DESTROYERS Sat 23 Nov, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

THE BEAUTIFUL WAYS Sat 23 Nov, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

PUP Sat 23 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

NEW MODEL ARMY Sat 23 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

DONCHEZ DACRES: SWITCH Sat 23 Nov, The Robin, Bilston

RHYS LEWIS Sat 23 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

KIRVANA & PEARL SCAM Sat 23 Nov, The Slade Rooms, W'hampton

TOKYO MYERS Sun 24 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

MAHALIA - LOVE & COMPROMISE TOUR Sun 24 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

SIXTIES GOLD Sun 24 Nov, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

YUSUF - CAT STEVENS TRIBUTE BY KEITH JAM Sun 24 Nov, The Robin, Bilston

PRATEEK KUHAD Sun 24 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

JARROD DICKENSON Sun 24 Nov, Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury



Classical Music

CBSO: BEETHOVEN & STRAVINSKY Featuring Gustavo Gimeno (conductor) & Jeremy Denk (piano), Wed 20 Nov (2.15pm), Symphony Hall, B'ham



CBSO: FRIDAY NIGHT CLASSICS 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, B'ham

ORGAN PROM WITH CATHY LAMB Sat 23 Nov, Lichfield Cathedral

GOULD PIANO TRIO Featuring Lucy Gould (violin), Richard Lester (cello) & Benjamin Frith (piano). Programme includes works by Haydn, Rebecca Clarke & Schubert, Sat 23 Nov, Henderson Hall, Moor Park, Ludlow, South Shropshire

MUSIC SOCIETY GALA CONCERT Featuring Chamber Choirs, Clarinet Choir & Flute Choir. Programme includes works by Morley, Gjeilo, Pitoni, Joubert & Bob Chilcott, Sat 23 Nov, Elgar Concert Hall, The Bramall, University of Birmingham

GALA CHARITY CONCERT Featuring Robyn Lyn Evans & Dafydd Wyn Jones (tenors), Aneira Evans (soprano) & Galin Ganchev (piano), Sat 23 Nov, Maidment Auditorium, Shrewsbury School

TELFORD ORCHESTRA AUTUMN CONCERT Programme includes works by Mendelssohn & Haydn, Sat 23 Nov, St Michaels Church, Madeley, Shropshire

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

PIETRO FRESA PIANO CONCERT Programme includes works by Mozart, Chopin & Schumann, Sun 24 Nov, Festival Drayton, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

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

COUNT ARTHUR STRONG Thurs 21 Nov, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

FRANK SKINNER Thurs 21 Nov, Dudley Town Hall, Dudley

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

VIR DAS Fri 22 Nov, Birmingham Town Hall

COUNT ARTHUR STRONG Fri 22 Nov, William Aston Hall, Wrexham

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

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

ANDY PARSONS Sat 23 Nov, The REP, Birmingham

SEAN PERCIVAL, JOEY PAGE, EMMANUEL SONUBI & DARIUS DAVIES Sat 23 Nov, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

HAL CRUTTENDEN Sat 23 Nov, Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire



TORI SCOTT Sat 23 Nov, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

MARK WATSON Sun 24 Nov, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

BRITAIN'S GOT TALENT SPECIAL FEAT. LOST VOICE GUY, ROBERT WHITE & MICKY P KERR Sun 24 Nov, Kidderminster Town Hall, Kidderminster

Theatre

THE LION, THE WITCH & THE WARDROBE Amateur staging of CS Lewis' fantastical tale, Mon 18 - Tues 19 Nov, Stoke Repertory Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

ANNIE Lesley Joseph stars as Miss Hannigan in a new touring version of the much-loved rags-to-riches tale, Mon 18 - Sat 23 Nov, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

THE ENTERTAINER Shane Richie takes the lead in John Osborne's classic, Mon 18 - Sat 23 Nov, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

THE RAGGED TROUSERED PHILANTHROPISTS Neil Gore presents a one-man show featuring projected animation, political conjuring tricks and live music & song, Tues 19 Nov, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

THEATRE SUPPER: BROKEN SHELLS Daisy Black brings to life Chaucer's Man of Law's Tale - a story of love, fear, violence and the queer, cold seas, Tues 19 Nov, Arena Theatre,

Wolverhampton

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

MUGENKYO TAIKO DRUMMERS: TRIBE 25 Brand new show featuring 'skill, stamina and red-hot rhythms to stir your soul!', Wed 20 Nov, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre



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

TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES Hotbuckle Theatre present a new version of Thomas Hardy's haunting tale, Thurs 21 Nov, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

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

FIRST TIME HIV+ 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

THE SNOW QUEEN Stourbridge Theatre Company present an amateur staging of Hans Christian Andersen's icy tale, Thurs 21 - Sat 23 Nov, Stourbridge Town Hall

INSPECTOR DRAKE AND THE BLACK WIDOW Gill 'Doreen Tipton' Jordan stars in a 'comedy whodunnit like you've never seen before', Thurs 21 - Sat 23 Nov, Theatre On The Steps, Bridgnorth, South Shropshire

AN EVENING WITH LENNY HENRY: WHO AM I, AGAIN? Fri 22 Nov, Dudley Town Hall

MOTHERLAND 'Visceral full-bodied

dragged-up queertastic howl of a show' exploring nationalism, identity and our ability to speak out, Fri 22 Nov, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

KING LEAR Oddbodies' one-man show based on Shakespeare's famous tragedy, Sat 23 Nov, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

CAR PARK KING An original comedy about one of the most controversial kings of England, Richard III... Sat 23 Nov, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

MRS PEACHUM'S GUIDE TO LOVE AND MARRIAGE Mid Wales Opera present a radical reworking of John Gay's The Beggar's Opera, Sat 23 Nov, SpArC Theatre, Bishops Castle, Shropshire

A MYTHICAL CHRISTMAS Students from the Oakengates and Childs Ercall academies perform their latest show numbers, Sat 23 Nov, The Place, Telford

THE DISAPPEARING ACT Open Sky blend new writing and visual physical theatre to tell the story of magician's assistant Edie Rose, Sat 23 Nov, Wem Town Hall, North Shropshire

TORI SCOTT IS PICKLED Join the New 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

MAGICAL MYSTERIES RSM Stage Academy return with their Early Years annual showcase featuring an array of young stars from the academy, Sun 24 Nov, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

Kids Shows

BILLIONAIRE BOY New staging of David Walliams' bestselling story, Wed 20 - Sat 23 Nov, The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

PEDLAR'S TALES Pop-up children's theatre fusing puppetry, live music & bite-size stories, Fri 22 Nov, The Talbot Theatre, Whitchurch, North Shropshire

Cabaret

FLANDERS AND SWANN Award-winning comedian Tim FitzHigham and musical maestro Duncan Walsh Atkins present the wit and wordplay of famous comedy songsmiths, Michael Flanders and Donald Swann, Sun 24 Nov, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Stafford

Dance

THE NUTCRACKER Presented by Russian State Ballet, Mon 18 Nov, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre



The Entertainer

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Mon 18 - Sat 23 November

Written by John Osborne in the 1950s, *The Entertainer* tells the story of washed-up music hall star Archie Rice. A performer long past his expiry date, Archie is struggling to negotiate the changing sociopolitical landscape of the mid-20th century...

Heading out on tour for the first time ever, *The Entertainer* has been updated somewhat - to the 1980s - and unfolds against the backdrop of the Falklands War and Margaret Thatcher. The production stars Shane Richie - best known as *EastEnders'* Alfie Moon - in the title role.

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

SKIN REIMAGINED ACE Dance double-bill looking at the subject of 'what binds us together' and also exploring what it means to be individual, Thurs 21 Nov, Arena Theatre, W'hampton

THE NUTCRACKER Birmingham Royal Ballet perform Sir Peter Wright's world-famous festive production, Fri 22 Nov - Sat 14 Dec, Birmingham Hippodrome

YAATRA Jaivant Patel presents an evening of 'captivating' solo kathak and contemporary dance, Sat 23 Nov, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

mentary-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

DARK TALES FROM INDIA Peter Chand presents a collection of truly dark, erotic and disturbing stories from India, Wed 20 Nov, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

BENJAMIN ZEPHANIAH Zephaniah shares a selection of favourite stories and poems, Fri 22 Nov, Albany Theatre, Coventry

Talks / Spoken Word

ALEXANDER ARMSTRONG Brand new and 'deliciously irreverent' account of a career that has taken Alexander from comedy to presenting to docu-

Events

MARKET DRAYTON WINTER FAIR Showcasing a range of gifts, homeware, crafts, food and more, Mon 18 Nov, Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

FROM 15th NOV-31st DEC



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Lego Engineers - Thinktank Science Museum, Birmingham

CONSERVATION STUDIO TOURS: BIRMINGHAM MUSEUM & ART GALLERY Behind-the-scenes tour, Tues 19 Nov, Birmingham Museum And Art Gallery

CANDLELIT TOURS OF THE BACK TO BACKS Thurs 21 Nov, Birmingham Back to Backs

BLAKESLEY BY NIGHT An atmospheric

costumed evening tour and a rare chance to see Blakesley Hall by moonlight, Fri 22 Nov, Blakesley Hall, Birmingham

SPICE UP YOUR BRUNCH Featuring prizes, lip sync battles, games and musical numbers, Sat 23 Nov, The Lord Clifden, Birmingham

WARLEY NATIONAL MODEL RAILWAY EXHIBITION Featuring more than 90 layouts from the UK and abroad, Sat 23 - Sun 24 Nov, NEC, Birmingham

SANTA HUNTS Help the museum's festive costumed guides find the man himself, Sat 23 - Sun 24 Nov, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

LEGO ENGINEERS Can you and your family design and build great engineering solutions using only LEGO blocks? Sat 23 - Sun 24 Nov, Thinktank Science Museum, Birmingham

CHRISTMAS 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 NOISE 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

LUDLOW MEDIEVAL CHRISTMAS FAYRE Kick off the festive season at the 21st

annual fayre, Sat 23 - Sun 24 Nov, Ludlow Castle, South Shropshire

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

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

NORTH POLE ADVENTURE Journey through a magical portal to the North Pole, Sat 23 Nov - Tues 24 Dec, National Forest Adventure Farm, Burton-upon-Trent

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

TORNADO! The world famous locomotive makes a welcome return, Sun 24 Nov, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

TAMWORTH CHRISTMAS LIGHTS FESTIVAL 'Jam packed day of festive fun for the whole family', Sun 24 Nov, Tamworth Town Centre

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DAVE GORMAN

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Thu 31 Oct



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'The Songs That Won The War' Musical
Sun 3 Nov



TINA TURNER TRIBUTE

'What's Love Got To Do With It?'
Fri 8 Nov



MICHAEL STARRING BEN

'The Magic of Michael Jackson'
Sat 23 Nov



THE ILLEGAL EAGLES

The World's No.1 Eagles Tribute
Fri 6 Dec



BIG BAND AT CHRISTMAS

Festive Matinee Variety Show
Tue 10 Dec



THE KING IS BACK

Starring Elvis Tribute Artist Ben Portsmouth
Thu 19 Dec



JIMMY CARR

'Terribly Funny' Comedy Tour Show
Fri 31 Jan



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'Milton: Impossible' Comedy Tour Show
Fri 7 Feb



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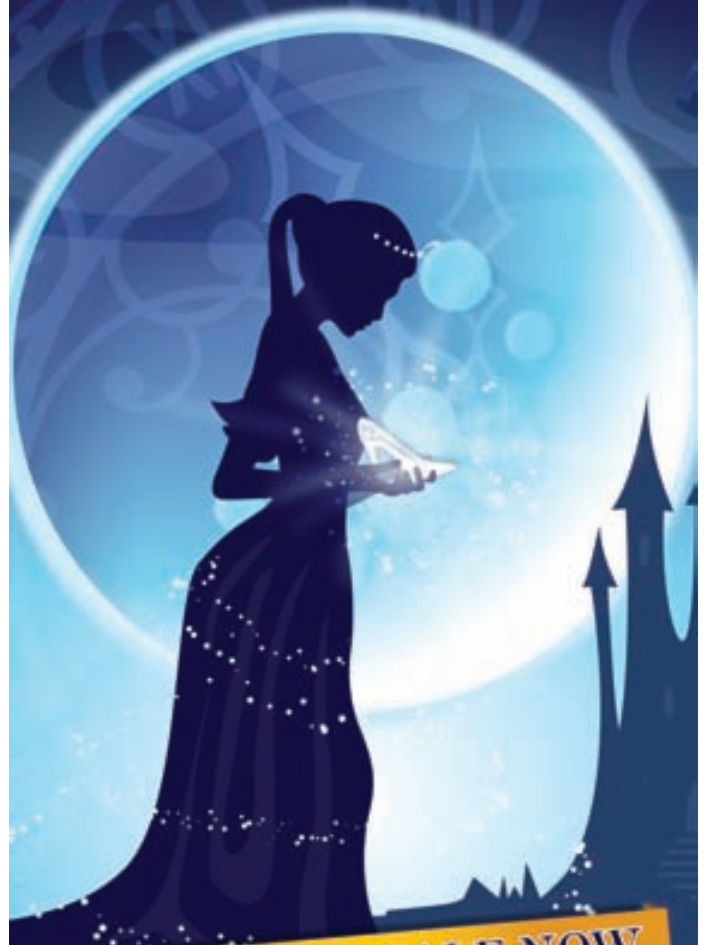
Cinderella

a magical family pantomime

written & directed by: GEORGE CRITCHLEY

musical supervision by: ANDREW MORRISON

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Gigs

LEWIS CAPALDI Mon 25 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

RONNIE WOOD Mon 25 Nov, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

TCTC GROUP BRASS BAND Mon 25 Nov, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

ULI JON ROTH Mon 25 Nov, The Robin, Bilston

RUEL Tues 26 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

ADAM ANT Tues 26 Nov, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

A COUNTRY NIGHT IN NASHVILLE Wed 27 Nov, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

ELVIS PRESLEY Wed 27 Nov, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

MILES KANE + BUZZARD BUZZARD BUZZARD Wed 27 Nov, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

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

THE AUSTRALIAN PINK FLOYD SHOW Wed 27 Nov, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

SWARMZ Wed 27 Nov, O2 Academy, B'ham

ELO EXPERIENCE Thurs 28 Nov, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

SIXTIES GOLD Thurs 28 Nov, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

PETE WAY BAND + ICONIC EYE Thurs 28 Nov, Eleven, Sandford, Stoke-on-Trent

RED HOT CHILLI PIPERS Thurs 28 Nov, Symphony Hall, B'ham

DIDO Thurs 28 Nov, Arena Birmingham

FAT WHITE FAMILY Thurs 28 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

JESSICA BOSWELL Thurs 28 Nov, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

GENTLEMAN'S DUB CLUB



Miles Kane - The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

Thurs 28 Nov, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

DAN OWEN Thurs 28 - Sat 30 Nov, St Mary's Church, Shrewsbury

THE CHEMICAL BROTHERS Fri 29 Nov, Arena Birmingham

UB40 - LABOUR OF LOVE Fri 29 Nov, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

HUGH CORNWELL Fri 29 Nov, The Robin, Bilston

GIGGS Fri 29 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

ALDOUS HARDING Fri 29 Nov, O2 Institute, B'ham Birmingham

MAGNETIC JELLYFISH Fri 29 Nov, Eleven, Sandford, Stoke-on-Trent

GLENN HUGHES Fri 29 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

JUNIOR BILL Fri 29 Nov, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

OASIS VS KAZABIAN Fri 29 Nov, The Slade Rooms, W'hampton

JOOLS HOLLAND AND HIS RHYTHM & BLUES ORCHESTRA Fri 29 - Sat 30 Nov, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

TOTALLY TINA Sat 30 Nov, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

YOUNG DOLPH & KEY GLOCK Sat 30 Nov, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE STYLE COUNCIL-LORS Sat 30 Nov, The Buttermarket, Shrews-

bury

SARAH COLLINS & KEEP THE FAITH Sat 30 Nov, The Place, Telford

DIRTY DC Sat 30 Nov, Eleven, Sandford, Stoke-on-Trent

NORTHLANE Sat 30 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

XILLA Sat 30 Nov, O2 Academy, Birmingham

LOST IN MUSIC Sat 30 Nov, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

CUSTARD CONNECTION Sat 30 Nov, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

JO HARMAN Sat 30 Nov, Lichfield Guildhall

BLACKWATER COUNTY Sat 30 Nov, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

ULTRA 90'S Sat 30 Nov, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

THE SMALL GLORIES Sat 30 Nov, The Hive, Shrewsbury



THE COUNTERFEIT STONES Sat 30 Nov, The Robin, Bilston

FREEDOM 19 - GEORGE MICHAEL CELEBRATION Sat 30 Nov, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

Classical

LUNCHTIME ORGAN CONCERT WITH THOMAS TROTTER Programme includes works by JS Bach, Balfe, Stanford, Prokofiev & Widor, Mon 25 Nov, Birmingham Town Hall

LUNCHTIME MUSIC: PROKOFIEV & BRAHMS Featuring Grace Duthie (flute), Joanne Sealey (piano), Olga Eckert (violin) & John Thwaites (piano), 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

CBSO: HAYDN & MOZART Featuring Riccardo Minasi (conductor), Oliver Janes (clarinet) & Nikolaj Henriques (bassoon). Programme includes works by Haydn, Strauss, Beethoven & Mozart, Wed 27 Nov (7.30pm), Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CBSO: HAYDN & MOZART Featuring Riccardo Minasi (conductor), Oliver Janes (clarinet) & Nikolaj Henriques (bassoon). Programme includes works by Haydn, Strauss, Beethoven & Mozart, Thurs 28 Nov (2.15pm), Symphony Hall, Birmingham

BINCHOIS CONSORT Featuring Andrew Kirkman (director). Programme comprises music from Antwerp in the time of Jan de Beer, Fri 29 Nov, The Barber Institute, Birmingham

ENGLISH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: THE LARK ASCENDING Featuring Zoe Byers (violin) & Kenneth Woods (conductor). Programme includes works by Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Elgar (arr. Fraser) & Tchaikovsky, Fri 29 Nov, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

THE HALLE Featuring Courtney Lewis (conductor) & Nicholas Trygstad (cello). Programme includes works by Ravel, Elgar & Sibelius, Fri 29 Nov, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA Featuring Daniele Rosina (conductor). Programme comprises Dvorak's Symphony No.8 in G major, Op.88, Sat 30 Nov, Elgar Concert Hall, Birmingham

Comedy

BEN ELTON Tues 26 Nov, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

JACK DEE Wed 27 Nov, The Place, Telford



JETHRO Wed 27 & Thurs 28 Nov, Castle Hall, Bridgnorth, South Shropshire

ROY CHUBBY BROWN Thurs 28 Nov, The Place, Telford

MIKE WILMOT PLUS COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON Thurs 28 Nov, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ROY CHUBBY BROWN Fri 29 Nov, William Aston Hall, Wrexham

MIKE WILMOT, JONNY AWSUM, SUSIE MCCABE & COMIC TBC Fri 29 - Sat 30 Nov, The Glee Club, Birmingham

CARL HUTCHINSON Sat 30 Nov, The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton

JOHN ROBINS Sat 30 Nov, Birmingham Town Hall



ROB JAMES, SARAH KEYWORTH, NOEL JAMES & HAYLEY ELLIS Sat 30 Nov, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

JUDI LOVE Sat 30 Nov, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

Opera

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

Theatre

CHRISTMAS MEMORIES Neil Sands and cast are back to present 'an unforgettable afternoon of festive nostalgia', Mon 25 Nov, The Place, Telford

CHRISTMAS WITH STEPTOE & 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

SCROOGE THE MUSICAL Presented by Little Theatre Company, Tues 26 - Sat 30 Nov, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

SISTER ACT Amateur staging presented by Stoke Musical Theatre Company, Tues 26 - Sat 30th Nov, Stoke Repertory Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

AN EVENING WITH LENNY HENRY: WHO AM I, AGAIN? Wed 27 Nov, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

ALADDIN X-Factor's Wagner & Britain's Got Talent's Donchez Dacres star alongside TV & radio personality Dee 'White Dee' Kelly, Wed 27 Nov - Sun 1

Dec, Stourbridge Town Hall

THE TURN OF THE SCREW Box Tale Soup presents a new adaptation of Henry James' disturbing story, Thurs 28 Nov, The Talbot Theatre, Whitchurch, North Shropshire

THE MAGIC OF MENKEN Aldridge Musical Comedy Society present a 'fun-filled family show', Thurs 28 - Sat 30 Nov, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

THE GREATEST SHOWENCH Hollywood has The Greatest Showman, the Black Country has The Greatest Showench! Fizzog are back with their latest production, Thurs 28 - Sat 30 Nov, Theatre On The Steps, Bridgnorth, South Shropshire

JACK & THE BEANSTALK Stoke Amateur Theatre Society (SATS) promise a pantomime of 'gigantic proportions', Thurs 28 Nov - Sun 8 Dec, Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke-on-Trent

CINDERELLA Festive family favourite starring Rebecca Keatley (CBeebies) and Sam Rabone, Thurs 28 Nov - Sun 5 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

AN EVENING WITH LENNY HENRY: WHO AM I, AGAIN? Fri 29 Nov, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

LOOP Innovative combination of new writing, contemporary performance, and live looping audio, Fri 29 Nov, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

TREASURE ISLAND THE PANTO Amateur staging presented by Pride & Joy Theatre, Fri 29 - Sat 30 Nov, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

THE TALE OF LITTLE BEVAN Pentabus take audiences on a darkly comic journey through 24 hours in the life of a peaceful Norfolk village, Sat 30 Nov, Oscars, Ludlow, South Shropshire

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

Dance

JAMES WILTON DANCE: LEVIATHAN Choreographed reimagining of Herman Melville's seminal novel, Moby Dick, Thurs 28 Nov, Wem Town Hall, North Shropshire

THE WIZARD OF OZ Presented by Ballet Theatre UK, Fri 29 Nov, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

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

STEPPING IN STYLE RSM Stage Academy return to the Arena Theatre after their sell-out shows, Footlights & Curtain Calls and Centre Stage, Sat 30 Nov - Sun 1 Dec, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

Talks / Spoken Word

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 25 Nov, Birmingham Town Hall

POETS, PRATTLERS & PANDEMONIALISTS Open mic night with a difference, Tues 26 Nov, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

MICHAEL PORTILLO - LIFE: A GAME OF TWO HALVES Tues 26 Nov, Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

SIR CHRIS BONINGTON - LIFE & TIMES Join the intrepid adventurer as he recounts stories of his 60 years spent in the mountains, Wed 27 Nov, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

Events

FESTIVE AFTERNOON TEA AT THE ENGINE HOUSE Travel on a heritage steam train before settling down for Afternoon Tea served to your table, Tues 26 - Thurs 28 Nov, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, nr Kidderminster

SOUNDS OF THE 60S LIVE WITH TONY BLACKBURN Legendary DJ Tony hosts an evening of classics performed by the Sounds Of The 60s All Star Band & Singers, Thurs 28 Nov, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

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, Thurs 28 Nov - Sun 1 Dec, NEC, Birmingham

ART & ANTIQUES FOR EVERYONE Featuring 180 specialist dealers exhibiting a wide range of pieces, from classic to contemporary, Thurs 28 Nov - Sun 1 Dec, NEC, Birmingham

CHRISTMAS TILE DECORATING WORKSHOPS Try a tube-lining technique to produce your own ceramic masterpiece, Fri 29 Nov, Jackfield Tile Museum, Telford

STEAM IN LIGHTS A 'spectacular illuminated adventure along an enchanting



Moroccan Fire Nights - NEC, Birmingham

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, Nr Kidderminster

SANTA SAFARI Featuring a four-mile self-drive safari and a visit to Santa, Fri 29 Nov - Mon 23 Dec, Hawkstone Park & Follies, Shrewsbury

BEOWULF Costumed performance of the legendary story, Sat 30 Nov, Aston Hall, Birmingham

CELEBRATION TALK & TOUR: WOMEN'S WORK IN THE JEWELLERY QUARTER Find out about the work undertaken by women from the late 1800s until the 1980s, Sat 30 Nov, Museum of the Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham

EDWARDIAN TEAROOMS LATE: SILENT NOISE PRESENTS THE SILENT DISCO The Silent Disco returns to BMAG's Edwardian Tearooms for a third year, Sat 30 Nov, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

CHRISTMAS CAROL TRAINS Sing along or just soak up the festive atmosphere as you get Christmas off to a traditional start with an evening of carols and festive songs, Sat 30 Nov, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley

MINICHISTMAS Activities include tree decorating, paper-chain making and snowflake cutting, Sat 30 Nov - Sun 1 Dec, Thinktank Science Museum, Birmingham

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS Enjoy a 'scrumptious day out that's choc-full of festive fun this Christmas at Cadbury World', Sat 30 Nov - Sun 1 Dec, Cadbury World, Birmingham

CHRISTMAS AT COALBROOKDALE Meet Santa in this all-new experience, Sat 30 Nov - Sun 1 Dec, Coalbrookdale Museum of Iron, Ironbridge

SANTA AND STEAM Featuring on-train visits from Santa and the chance to

enjoy a mince pie and glass of sherry, Sat 30 Nov - Sun 1 Dec, Churnet Valley Railway, Froghall, Staffs

SANTA SAFARI Featuring a four-mile self-drive safari and a visit to Santa, Sat 30 Nov - Sun 1 Dec, West Midlands Safari and Leisure Park, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

SANTA SPECIALS Experience the magic of Christmas on a steam train ride through the Severn Valley with Santa, Sat 30 Nov - Sun 1 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley

MOROCCAN FIRE NIGHTS Evening fusing 'incredible entertainment with a delicious festive feast and a spectacularly themed environment', Sat 30 Nov - Sun 22 Dec, NEC, Birmingham

CHRISTMAS AT SHUGBOROUGH Chance to see the property decorated for Christmas, Sat 30 Nov - Sun 22 Dec, Shugborough Historic Working Estate, Stafford

STAFOLD SANTA EXPRESS Climb aboard Santa's steam train and be transported to the North Pole, Sat 30 Nov - Sun 22 Dec, Staffold Barn Railway, Tamworth

ATTINGHAM CHRISTMAS: INSPIRED BY NATURE Visit the mansion's individually themed rooms, imaginatively decorated to represent nature, both local and exotic, Sat 30 Nov - Mon 23 Dec, Attingham Park, Shrewsbury

SANTA'S GROTTO Meet Santa and his team of elves, Sat 30 Nov - Mon 23 Dec, The British Ironwork Centre, Oswestry, North Shropshire

CHRISTMAS BRICKTACULAR Enjoy seasonal building activities, Sat 30 Nov - Tues 24 Dec, Legoland Discovery Centre, Birmingham

SANTA'S GROTTO After receiving a special gift from Santa, it's off to see his reindeer, as they prepare for their busiest night of the year, Sat 30 Nov - Tues 24 Dec, Dudley Zoological Gardens



BIRMINGHAM
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SIR PETER WRIGHT'S

THE NUTCRACKER

22 NOV – 14 DEC

brb.org.uk/nutcracker

Karla Doorbar as Clara. Photo © Bella Kotak

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MUSIC **PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY**
DESIGNS **JOHN F. MACFARLANE**
LIGHTING **DAVID A. FINN**
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