

Birmingham

ISSUE 408 DECEMBER 2019

# What's On

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# THE NUTCRACKER

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[brb.org.uk/nutcracker](http://brb.org.uk/nutcracker)

Karla Doorbar as Clara. Photo © Bella Kotak

CHOREOGRAPHY **PETER WRIGHT,**  
**LEV IVANOV & VINCENT REDMON**  
MUSIC **PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY**  
DESIGNS **JOHN F. MACFARLANE**  
LIGHTING **DAVID A. FINN**  
LIVE MUSIC **ROYAL BALLET SINFONIA**



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## Christmas at The Mailbox

Searching for a place to celebrate Christmas this year?

If so, check out Birmingham's Mailbox, a venue that's confident it's offering the very best in entertainment this festive season. Visitors to the popular lifestyle destination can indulge in a hot mulled wine whilst enjoying a screening of a Christmas classic at Everyman Cinema, or maybe raise a glass to the festivities in a cosy canalside igloo. The Mailbox is also hosting a choice of yuletide activities on selected dates throughout December - including a wreathmaking workshop - and in addition will feature a pop-up Christmas market in partnership with Birmingham School of Jewellery. For more information about everything The Mailbox has to offer, visit [mailboxlife.com](http://mailboxlife.com)

## Arts Council funding for Midlands Arts Centre



Arts Council England has awarded Birmingham's Midlands Arts Centre (MAC) £400,000 as part of its National Lottery-funded Small Capital programme.

With support from Arts Council, MAC will repurpose and create new, accessible artist studios, with a focus on environmental sustainability. The new studios will help the venue meet an increasing demand for participation work, allowing it to run more courses and workshops onsite.

Commenting on the news, Peter Knott, Area Director for Arts Council England, said: "This is fantastic news for the West Midlands. Arts & culture play a vital role in making the area a great place to live, and we're pleased to be supporting Midlands Arts Centre as it creates new opportunities for artists to develop and audiences to experience creativity in an environmentally friendly way."

## Games galore in Digbeth

A new arcade bar is opening in Birmingham's Digbeth district next year.

NQ64 is described as an underground drink-

ing den filled with retro arcade games and classic consoles. Featuring a drinks list of specially selected craft beers, themed cocktails and sodas, the venue's selection of games will include Space Invaders, Pac Man, Tekken, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Street Fighter II, Guitar Hero, Mortal Kombat and X-Men... For more information, visit [nq64.co.uk](http://nq64.co.uk)

## Treecycle your Christmas tree for a good cause

Take the hassle out of recycling your Christmas tree this New Year by allowing a local hospice to take it away for you. St Mary's Hospice's Treecycling campaign will see volunteers collect thousands of used Christmas trees from properties across Birmingham, Sandwell and Solihull, in return for a donation to the charity. The initiative takes place on Saturday 11 and Sunday 12 January and will see trees recycled into compost and biomass fuel. All funds raised from Treecycling will go towards the Hospice, which provides vital care to local people who are living with life-limiting illness... For more information, visit [birminghamhospice.org.uk/treecycling](http://birminghamhospice.org.uk/treecycling)

## Orchestra of the Swan campaign launched

The Stratford-upon-Avon-based Orchestra of the Swan has launched a campaign to raise £18,000 to support the recording of its latest album, *Timelapse*.

The recording will be the first from the

orchestra's new label, ROOTS.

*Timelapse* will be recorded at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire at the start of 2020 and will feature music from across the centuries, including works by Schubert, The Smiths, Vivaldi and Radiohead.

Commenting on the news, David Le Page, the orchestra's artistic director, said: "Although the music we play was written hundreds of years apart, it's striking how much these contrasting works inhabit such similar emotional space. I want the album to be a place where time and style have become irrelevant - good music is good music, however and whenever you look at it." For more information about *Timelapse*, visit [orchestraoftheswan.org](http://orchestraoftheswan.org)

## Having a festive craic at Symphony Hall

Brum Craic is back for Christmas, and as always will be celebrating some of the country's most promising up-and-coming acts. This year's line-up of funny-bone ticklers includes Alfie Brown (pictured), Danny Clive and host Hannah

Silvester... The Christmas Special edition takes place at Symphony Hall on Sunday 15 December. For more information, visit [thsh.co.uk](http://thsh.co.uk)







**DEAR SANTA**  
 FRI 6 – SAT 7 DECEMBER,  
 TIMES VARY  
 TOWN HALL



**CHRISTMAS CRACKER WITH ALED JONES**  
 SAT 21 DECEMBER, 2:30PM  
 SYMPHONY HALL



**GEORGE HINCHLIFFE**  
 UKULELE ORCHESTRA  
 OF GREAT BRITAIN  
 MON 9 DECEMBER, 8PM  
 SYMPHONY HALL



**WE'RE GOING ON A BEAR HUNT**  
 THU 26 DEC – SUN 12 JAN  
 TIMES VARY  
 TOWN HALL



**G4 CHRISTMAS**  
 TUE 10 DECEMBER, 7:30PM  
 TOWN HALL



**THE MUSIC OF ZIMMER VS. WILLIAMS**  
 SUN 29 DECEMBER, 2:30PM  
 SYMPHONY HALL



**ROY WOOD'S ROCKMAS 2019**  
 SAT 14 DECEMBER, 7:45PM  
 SYMPHONY HALL



**NEW YEAR'S EVE GALA**  
 TUE 31 DECEMBER, 9:30PM  
 SYMPHONY HALL



**LOVE ACTUALLY WITH ORCHESTRA**  
 MON 16 DECEMBER, 7:30PM  
 SYMPHONY HALL



**MOSCOW CITY BALLET: SWAN LAKE**  
 FRI 17 JANUARY, 7:30PM  
 SYMPHONY HALL

BOOK ONLINE **thsh.co.uk**





## Purpose-built Dance Hub Birmingham studio opens

A new purpose-built dance studio has opened in the city centre.

The Dance Hub Birmingham facility is part of the creative campus housing Birmingham Hippodrome, DanceXchange and Birmingham Royal Ballet.

Commenting on the new venue on behalf of Dance Hub Birmingham partners, Birmingham City University's Dr Polly Hudson said: "At this exciting time for dance in Birmingham, we're delighted to be able to welcome people into the beautiful new studio facility, and to share Dance Hub Birmingham's ambitions for how dance can make a significant and continuing impact in our city and beyond."

## Circus skills on show in city

The circus is coming to town this month... Bringing together talented performers from across the globe, Continental Circus Berlin pitches its big top at Birmingham's NEC from Thursday 19 December to Saturday 4 January. Highlights of the show include performances by the death-defying Berlin stunt riding team and some sure-to-be-breathtaking highwire antics from Columbia's Robles Troupe. For more information, visit [circusberlin.co.uk](http://circusberlin.co.uk)



## A Question Of Sport marks 50th birthday with a live tour

The BBC's A Question Of Sport - the world's longest-running TV sports quiz - is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2020 with a live tour. Since debuting on television in January 1970, more than 1,000 episodes of the programme have been broadcast, with over 2,000 of the biggest names in British and international sport having appeared as panellists.

The new live version of the show features host Sue Barker, resident team captains Matt Dawson and Phil Tufnell, and a number of big-name guests from across the sporting world.

The tour stops off at Birmingham's Symphony Hall on Monday 27 April.

Tickets are now available and can be purchased by visiting [ticketmaster.co.uk](http://ticketmaster.co.uk)



## Pivot and shoot in the Arena!



The Vitality Netball Super-league makes a welcome return for its 15th year at Arena Birmingham on Saturday 22 February.

The season-opening event boasts a brand new format, with the 10 participating teams coming up against their closest league rival to produce five games that organisers promise will be 'full of goals, interceptions, explosive athleticism and exhilarating netball'.

## Brum university singers get new conductor

Internationally renowned conductor, composer and singer Bob Chilcott has taken up a new role at the University of Birmingham as principal conductor of Birmingham University Singers.

Commenting on his appointment, Bob said: 'I feel so honoured to have the opportunity to work with the Birmingham University Singers. In my work as a composer and conductor, I've been fortunate to guest-conduct many choirs all over the world. This will be the first time for me to work with such an excellent group on a regular basis in an institution that shows such great support for choral music.'



## Hit West End heading to Birmingham next summer



A hit West End and Broadway show is visiting the Midlands next year as part of its first ever UK tour.

Based on the cult 2007 Irish indie movie of the same name, *Once* tells the uplifting story of two lost souls - a Dublin street busker and a Czech musician - who unexpectedly fall in love. Featuring the Oscar-winning song, *Falling Slowly*, the production has also won a Grammy, eight Tonys and an Olivier Award.

It stops off at Coventry's Belgrade Theatre from Tues 10 - Sat 14 March and The Alexandra, Birmingham, from Monday 1 to Saturday 6 June.





BIRMINGHAM  
ROYAL BALLET



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SIR PETER WRIGHT & GALINA SAMSOVA'S

# SWAN LAKE

**18 - 29 FEB 2020**  
[brb.org.uk/swanlake](http://brb.org.uk/swanlake)

MUSIC PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY  
CHOREOGRAPHY PETER WRIGHT,  
LEV IVANOV & MARIUS PETIPA  
PRODUCTION PETER WRIGHT &  
GALINA SAMSOVA  
DESIGNS PHILIP PROWSE  
LIGHTING PETER TEIGEN  
LIVE MUSIC ROYAL BALLET SINFONIA

Delia Mathews as Odette © Bella Kotak



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# LET IT SNOW...

**Hans Christian Andersen's Snow Queen is casting her icy spell over Birmingham's Old Rep Theatre this festive season. The show's director, Alec Fellows-Bennett, explains more...**

Hans Christian Andersen's tale of the infamous Snow Queen has had a profound impact on countless other stories, including *The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe*, Disney's *Frozen* and classical ballet *The Nutcracker*. This Christmas sees Birmingham's Old Rep theatre present its own take on *The Snow Queen*, a show that's directed by Alec Fellows-Bennett.

"The Snow Queen has all the elements you'd want from a Christmas period show,"

explains Alec. "The title immediately says winter, and because of films like *Frozen*, which take a very different interpretation of Hans Christian Andersen's story, there's a very particular vision and a widespread popularity surrounding *The Snow Queen*. Its themes are also what I look for in a good festive yarn. Dickens started it off by writing *A Christmas Carol* and injecting morals and the 'Christmas message' into his story. The Snow Queen certainly carries on that idea of coming together. It's a story of isolation, and about

looking after your own interests - the things that lead to people's ruin. Whereas if you're inclusive and look at things from other people's perspectives, then the ice melts and we get to the spring. The Snow Queen has comic characters and lots of goblins, fairies and other beasts and mythical creatures, while also conforming to that tradition of the moral quest, where all the characters get it right in the end."

Alec firmly believes that the changes made to



The Snow Queen by writer Toby Holst have transformed the story: "Hans Christian Andersen's original isn't actually very good! It's bizarre because it has obviously influenced so many other stories. It's iconic, but when you actually sit down and read it, it's almost like a repository for all the short stories that he couldn't work out how to finish or fit elsewhere. This young boy, Kai, gets stolen by the Snow Queen - no one knows why and it's never explained - and his best friend, Gerda, has to rescue him. Gerda goes on loads of adventures on the way to getting to the Snow Queen's palace - none of which have anything to do with getting there. So the story sort of doesn't hang together."

"As a result, other versions of it have picked out other characters to carry the story along. There's a very tiny mention about the sisters in the original story, and that's what Disney picked out and ran with for Frozen. We've done a little prologue to the main story. I suppose it's about how prejudice came into the world. So when Gerda is on her adventures, it's the people who help and hinder her - and why they do so - that we've picked out to focus on. We're hoping that this makes it into one coherent story."

The Old Rep's version of The Snow Queen is more than just a play for the festive season... it's actually a Christmas *musical*!

"Our original score has been written to coincide with our brand spanking new script. The Snow Queen isn't quite like a pantomime. It's Christmas, and I can't have a scene with a goodie creeping up behind a baddie without someone shouting, 'He's behind you!'. I'm not going to stop anyone from doing that, but it's not there as a traditional panto piece. We're doing something different, although it's still very funny."

"Steve Allen-Jones is brilliant at composing, and he's really got to know the Old Rep audience over the last few years. Toby Hurst will go away and write a whole page of dialogue and Steve will come back and say that he's incorporated a song. So I would go as far as to say that what we produce here now are Christmas musicals. They're not Les Mis or Pantomime Of The Opera, where everything is sung all the way through, but I think that now the songs have become so integral to the storytelling, then yes, we do produce Christmas musicals here at the Old Rep. And it's a Christmas musical with puppets, too!"

The Snow Queen's cast combines professional actors and students.

"Our production doesn't change simply be-

cause we've got the Birmingham Ormiston Academy (BOA) students working with us, Part of my responsibility is to run it like any other professional production, to give them that insight. We don't give them any special treatment - they do a professional job on a professional schedule. We put on the same with the BOA students as we would with a professional chorus and dancers.

"When Barry Jackson first thought of the Rep as a professional company, as opposed to a pro-amateur company, the idea was that it would be where young actors came to cut their teeth on new plays, new writing and new interpretations of classics like Shakespeare. George Bernard-Shaw wrote plays to premiere here and be performed by bright young things. Those upcoming actors went on to be Laurence Olivier, Ralph Richardson and Edith Evans - these great names of 20th century theatre. But they all came here to learn their craft. I'm very proud to continue that legacy of the building and establishment."

As well as giving the performers of the future a space to learn, The Snow Queen's run will include relaxed and BSL performances.

"The key word is family. This is a show for everyone. Theatre is a communal activity. We do everything we can to be inclusive. I would never want a person to sit at home and think that, because their child has some sort of disability of any description, the theatre isn't for them. I understand, of course, parents can worry about affecting other people's enjoyment when, for example, they bring their autistic child to the theatre. Therefore, relaxed performances are great, because parent and child can feel absolutely happy that everyone in that room is either in the same boat, or completely understands what they're going through and doesn't mind if they need to get up and move around or shout out. We had a massive uptake on our relaxed performances last year and almost tripled our uptake on previous years. It's wonderful!"

"We're doing the same with the signed performances. It's all about making sure anyone can see our show. Last year we experimented in seeing if we could somehow effectively get sign language into the actual performance, and we're looking to expand that this year. The people who do the signing to accompany the show came into Pinocchio rehearsals last year and helped us incorporate sign language into our choreography. If you don't speak sign, you wouldn't have noticed it in our shows, but if you do, then you can understand sections of the dialogue without having to constantly look over to the side to see the

signer. In fact, one of the dance routines for last year was made up entirely of sign. We didn't know if it would work or not, but we had such positive feedback on last year's efforts that we're getting even more sign language into the movement of the characters. Sign is fantastic for storytelling."

So why has Alec continued to return to the Old Rep throughout his career?


"They keep having me back! I started my professional life in this theatre 20-odd years ago. I started in the youth theatre here, training since I was nine or 10. Back in those days, Birmingham Stage School was based here at the theatre, and they had a pool of young actors and professionals who would get auditions first when the main Rep, Alexandra Theatre or the Hippodrome were casting. Working here feels like going home. This was where I made all those early connections to the theatre world and discovered what it was like to be on stage. If I could only perform or direct for the last ever time in one place, I'd choose the Old Rep. Having gone on to be on stage all over London, the UK and America, this would still be the place I'd come back to. I think what gives a theatre its personality, identity and language is more what it produces itself than what tours to it. I'm so proud to be a part of that."

Alec's focus is firmly on getting The Snow Queen right for Birmingham audiences: "We live in uncertain economic times, and for many, the Christmas period is the only time of year a family might splash out on theatre tickets for everyone - even though we do try to keep our prices as affordable as possible. What I always want my audiences to leave feeling is that they shared a wonderful experience. The 19th century idea of the fourth wall between the actors and the audience is absolute nonsense - the theatre is all about togetherness. We as actors and theatre-makers rely on the audience to lie and tell themselves that what's happening on stage is real, and the audience relies on us to tell a great story and pretend the audience isn't there at the same time. Theatre is a load of people in a room silently agreeing to all tell the most wonderful lie - and that makes anything possible. Theatre is like nothing you can ever experience elsewhere, and if people coming to see The Snow Queen leave believing in the magic of theatre, then we will have done our jobs right."

.....

**The Snow Queen shows at The Old Rep, Birmingham, until Monday 30 December.**





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# CHRISTMAS TREECYCLING

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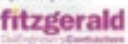
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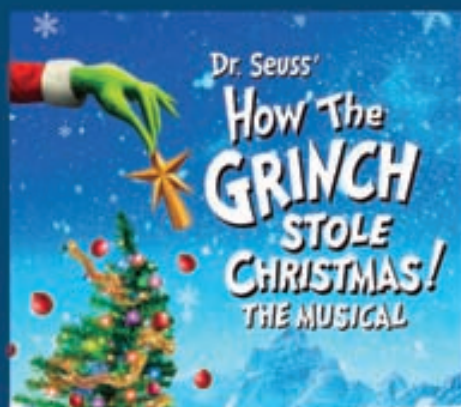
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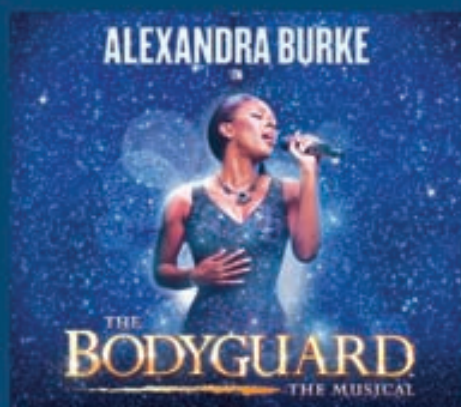
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 CAP WED 18 DEC 7.30PM



TUE 7 – SAT 11 JAN



TUE 21 JAN – SAT 1 FEB  
 CAP THU 23 JAN 2.30PM  
 £7 AD WED 29 JAN 7.30PM



TUE 4 FEB



MON 10 – SAT 15 FEB



TUE 18 – SAT 22 FEB  
 R SAT 22 FEB 2.30PM



WED 26 – SAT 29 FEB  
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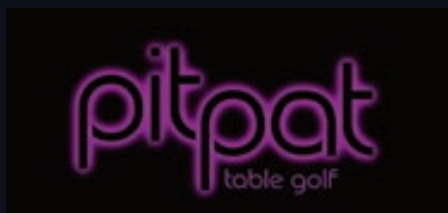
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Advertorial

# Welcome to THE FLOODGATE

The Floodgate offers an experiential night out like no other. Situated in Digbeth, serving up the latest on-trend cocktails, cold craft beer, and tasty street food you will immerse yourself in a world of neon colour and graffiti art. The sporty and adventurous among you will have the opportunity to hit a home run at Bleachers BaseBall, slide your way to victory in CurlClub or hit a hole in one on their 18 hole UV wonderland PitPat course (think crazy golf meets pool). So what are you waiting for...



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## Vietnamese Street Kitchen to open a second restaurant

After opening earlier this year in Birmingham's Brindleyplace, the family-run Vietnamese Street Kitchen is launching another city-centre restaurant, this time at Resorts World Birmingham. The popular eatery's selection of authentic Vietnamese dishes is freshly made in-house and fea-

tures street food-style snacks - including steamed bao buns and summer rolls - and larger meals such as hot bowls of pho and banh mi. Vietnamese Street Kitchen will open for both lunch and dinner service.



## REVIEW: OKO New-look Pan-Asian restaurant relaunches in bustling Brindleyplace

Back with a new look and a new menu, Pan-Asian restaurant OKO has recently relaunched, bringing a contemporary Japanese dining and dancing experience to the heart of Birmingham.

Situated in the bustling Brindleyplace, OKO sits on the ground floor of nightclub Nuvo - which has also undergone a renovation - and boasts a menu that specialises in delicately crafted sushi (prepared by a dedicated Sushi chef) as well as sashimi, uramaki, tempura and chef

specialities.

OKO After Hours is open for those guests who wish to continue their night after dining. Shortly after a warm welcome from our exceptional waitress, my partner and I tucked into our first dish of the evening - a spicy edamame appetiser. You can't really go wrong with edamame, but the ever-so-tasty spicy sauce certainly tickled the tastebuds.

Starters at OKO include much-loved classics like duck spring rolls, chicken dumplings, veg-

etable dumplings and chilli salt crispy squid, to name but a few.

We enjoyed a warming miso soup - extremely welcome given the near-arctic temperatures outside - and perused OKO's extensive cocktail menu. I chose a lychee martini, my partner a Haru-Hana - rhubarb gin, fraise syrup, lemon juice and cherry juice. Both were incredibly sweet but nicely made and very enjoyable.

If you fancy discovering the tricks of the cocktail trade for yourself, Nuvo offer masterclasses which can be tailor-made to suit your taste. Every masterclass has a dedicated mixologist who will talk you through each cocktail step-by-step in a private area of the venue.

Next up, we enjoyed a platter of salmon and tuna sashimi, Tobico Rainbow uramaki and salmon and tuna maki. The fish was beautifully fresh and of a high quality, the rice perfectly cooked and flavoursome.

Our last savoury dishes of the evening came in the form of a generous portion of rock shrimp tempura and beef strips with wasabi, ordered from the specialities & hot dishes section of the menu. The beef was nicely seasoned and cooked medium rare and the creamy sauce it was served alongside boasted a very subtle hint of wasabi. I wouldn't have minded a stronger wasabi flavour, but that's my personal taste. The meaty rock shrimp, which was coated in a light and

crispy batter, was devoured in no time at all.

Sticking with the Japanese theme, we ordered the Mochi Trio from the dessert menu, which featured three balls of sticky rice - chocolate, strawberry and vanilla - coated around an ice cream filling. Served with fruit, it was a pleasant end to our debut OKO experience.

As well as those wanting the traditional starter/main/dessert experience, OKO also caters for the more casual diner - so if you fancy a crisp pint of Estrella and six pieces of eel maki as an after-work snack, this is the place to head for.

Although OKO wasn't the very best Pan-Asian cuisine I've ever tasted, I couldn't find fault with the dishes that we sampled. The presentation of the courses was aesthetically pleasing, the ingredients tasty and fresh, the service friendly - all of which combined to make our first visit to the newly refurbished Brindleyplace venue a thoroughly enjoyable one. *Lauren Foster*

Food:	■ ■ ■ ■ ■
Service:	■ ■ ■ ■ ■
Ambience:	■ ■ ■ ■ ■
Overall value	■ ■ ■ ■ ■
<b>OVERALL</b>	■ ■ ■ ■ ■

**OKO**  
Eleven Brindleyplace  
2 Brunswick Square  
Birmingham  
B1 2LP  
Tel: 0121 631 1600





ROYAL  
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WED 11 DEC

# ORCHESTRA OF THE SWAN: UP ON A MIDNIGHT CLEAR

2.30PM THE BRADSHAW HALL

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## Ex Cathedra: Christmas Music By Candlelight

St Peter's Collegiate Church, Wolverhampton, Sat 7 December; St John's Church, Hagley, Birmingham, Tues 10 December; Coventry Cathedral, Mon 16 Dec; St Paul's Church, Birmingham, Wed 18 - Sat 21 & Mon 23 December

What better way to get into the Christmas spirit than by enjoying an evening in the company of one of the country's finest choral music ensembles.

Under the directorship of its founder, Jeffrey Skidmore, Ex Cathedra is this month

presenting its annual and atmospheric Christmas Music By Candlelight event, an evening that features festive favourites from around the globe and across the ages, interspersed with a variety of seasonal readings.

## Beethoven's Ninth

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Mon 30 December

Beethoven fans will surely take a much-needed break from finishing off the festive turkey in order to enjoy this Royal Philharmonic Orchestra concert, complete with contributions from Birmingham Choral Union and the City of Birmingham Choir. Alongside a performance of the composer's monumental 'Choral' symphony, with its climactic Ode To Joy, the concert also features Beethoven's piano concerto No5, Emperor. Solo contributors to the concert include soprano Lauren Fagan (pictured).



## Nadine Benjamin

Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, Thurs 12 December

"I believe that my voice is here to bring joy into the world, in a frequency that can heal and touch the hearts of humanity while encouraging others to discover and celebrate the power of their own true voice."

So speaks rising star of the classical music world Nadine Benjamin, who gave up her job as a city banker in order to follow her dream of becoming an opera singer.

Her career switch wasn't all plain sailing, though, with the first vocal coach she approached advising her that she'd have better luck singing jazz!

Nadine here gives a recital devoted entirely to Verdi, and along with tenor Gomez Ferrer and pianist Chris Hopkins, will perform extracts from *Otello*, *Un Ballo in maschera* and *Il trovatore*.



## City of Birmingham Choir: Handel's Messiah

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Fri 6 December

The City of Birmingham Choir's December performance of Handel's magnificent choral masterpiece is a well-established element of the Midlands' festive music scene.

In a Christmas nutshell - and as the choir itself describes it - the work 'compresses the Old Testament prophecies of Jesus' life into two-and-a-half hours and sets it to timeless and sublime music'.

As re-tellings of the Christmas story go, this is definitely one worth hearing.



## A Choral Christmas

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Wed 18 - Fri 20 December

This lively evening in the company of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra has become a firm festive family favourite, providing the perfect opportunity to temporarily park the pressures of preparing for Christmas in favour of enjoying a couple of hours of traditional carols and excellent musicianship. There are singalong opportunities to savour too, not to mention the added attraction of humorous readings by the delightfully sardonic Hugh Dennis (pictured).





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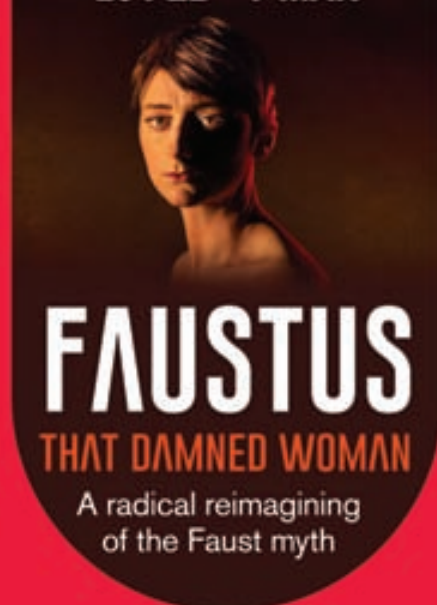
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# December at Mac

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**Jack Lukeman: Northern Lights**

**Fri 6 December | 7.30pm | From £10 | Theatre | 14+**

Platinum-selling Irish singer-songwriter Jack Lukeman evokes the atmosphere of winters and Christmases down the years with a beautiful blend of poetry, stories and music.



**Barbara Nice's Xmas Cracker**

**Thu 12 + Fri 13 December | 8pm | From £10 | Theatre | 14+**

Dig out your best festive jumper, polish your baubles and join Kings Heath's most famous housewife (and star of Britain's Got Talent) for her annual Christmas shindig. Enjoy a comedy selection of seasonal fun and games, including her legendary raffle.



**Jonny & The Baptists: Love Birmingham and Hate B\*stards**

**Wed 18 December | 7.30pm | £15 | Theatre | 15+**

The multi-award nominated musical-activist-comedians are sick of being political and divisive. This show is about how everything is definitely fine. Let's just get along!

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## Craig Charles

The Mill, Birmingham, Sun 22 December

"When BBC6 Music asked me to do a radio show, I only had one condition - it had to be a funk & soul show otherwise I wasn't interested."

The Craig Charles Funk & Soul Show began in 2002 and is broadcast on BBC6 Music and BBC Radio Two on Saturdays.

This month sees Craig bringing his hugely popular Funk & Soul Club to the Midlands, presenting a collection of tracks which have been covered and remixed by current leading bands and DJs.



## Fickle Friends

Castle & Falcon, Birmingham, Mon 2 December

Formed in Brighton in 2013, Fickle Friends is a four-piece specialising in exuberant, sophisticated '80s-style synth pop. The band's 2018 debut album, *You Are Someone Else*, entered the UK album chart at number nine.



## The Libertines

O2 Academy, Birmingham, Sat 14 & Sun 15 December

The Libertines rose to fame in 2002 following the release of debut album *Up The Bracket*. The same year saw them named best new band at the NME Awards and bag support slots with Morrissey and the Sex Pistols. In 2004, the band released follow-up record *The Libertines*. The album topped the

UK chart, but Barât's refusal to continue alongside former best buddy Doherty brought the curtain crashing down on the controversial four-piece. They finally reunited at Reading & Leeds in 2010. As they put the finishing touches to their fourth album, the band visit Birmingham on their first headline tour in over two years. Expect to hear favourites such as *What A Waster*, *Can't Stand Me Now* and *Don't Look Back Into The Sun*.

## UB40

Arena Birmingham, Sat 21 December

After a busy 2019 spent touring the world to mark their 40th anniversary, UB40 are ending the year with a very special Christmas show in their home town of Birmingham. The reggae/pop band have had an impressive 50 records in the UK singles chart since their inception in 1978.

Hit songs include *One In Ten*, *Red Red Wine*, *Kingston Town*, *(I Can't Help) Falling In Love With You* and *I Got You Babe*.

## Happy Mondays

O2 Institute, Birmingham, Sat 14 December

Fronted by Shaun Ryder, Happy Mondays were the pioneers of the Madchester sound back in the late 1980s, combining influences from funk, rock, house and psychedelia with the sounds of the UK's rapidly emerging rave scene.

Best known for singles *Step On*, *Kinky Afro* and *24 Hour Party People*, the legendary Manchester band here perform a variety of hits from across their stellar career.

## Emeli Sandé

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Mon 2 December



Multi-platinum award-winning singer-songwriter Emeli Sandé first came to prominence when she featured on rapper Chipmunk's 2009 track, *Diamond Rings*. Now established as one of the UK's most revered artists, her debut album, *Our Version Of Events*, broke the chart record for the most consecutive weeks inside the top 10, beating a 50-year-old record held by The Beatles.

She returns to the stage this month in support of her critically acclaimed new album, *Real Life*.



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## Adam Kay

Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent,  
Tues 17 December

After watching an Adam Kay performance, Stephen Fry declared, "This made me very, very happy."

Numerous sell-out years at the Edinburgh Fringe and tens of millions of YouTube hits later, former obstetrician and gynaecologist Adam is this month visiting the Midlands with his latest show about the NHS, *Twas The Nightshift Before Christmas* - 'a love letter to all those who spend their festive season on the front line, removing babies and baubles from the various places they get stuck...'



## COBO: Kings Of Comedy

The Glee Club, Birmingham,  
Sun 29 December

Now here's a show that should help keep you in a festive mood post-Christmas and pre-New Year... COBO, standing for Comedy Of Black Origin, makes a welcome return to the Glee Club with this special yuletide edition. Taking to the stage on this occasion are Danny 'Slim' Gray and Kane Brown.



## Jim Jefferies

Resorts World Arena, Birmingham, Thurs 5 December

Boasting a brash confrontational style that goes down a treat in all manner of far-flung destinations around the world, Australian-born Jim Jefferies is one of the fastest-rising stars on the global comedy circuit, delighting and shocking his audiences in equal measure.

His brand of comedy is most definitely not for the faint-hearted, and includes plenty of

observations along the same lines as the following: "The Bible's too wordy. The 10 Commandments are a load of shit. You don't need all these things. The Bible should be one sheet of paper, and on that sheet of paper it should say: 'Try not to be a c\*\*t'." Jim stops off in Birmingham this month with his latest show, *The Night Talker Tour*.

## Justin Moorhouse

Stafford Gatehouse, Fri 6 December; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sat 7 December

Justin Moorhouse is a naturally and seriously funny stand-up - which isn't something that can be said about every comedian who picks up a mic and fires off an evening's worth of material. Audience members catching his act for the first time will find themselves in the company of a seasoned pro who knows exactly how to work a crowd. Although his accent and style of delivery call to mind Peter Kay, Moorhouse is very much his own man, presenting an evening of well-honed, hugely enjoyable, adult-themed entertainment. He visits the Midlands with his Northern Joker tour.



## Tom Binns

Cornbow Hall, Halesowen, Fri 6 December

BRMB presenter Tom Binns became *former* BRMB presenter Tom Binns on Christmas Day 2009. It was on that day that he stopped the Birmingham radio station's broadcast of the Queen's Speech, declared it to be "Two words: Bor-ring", and played the Wham! song *Last Christmas* instead. According to Tom, there's plenty more to that story than meets the eye, but the absolute bottom line is that he was subsequently sacked from the station. Not that the dismissal has weighed too heavily on his career in the years which have followed, thanks in no small measure to his impressive comic talent. He's best known on the circuit for his alter egos, Ivan Brackenbury - an inept hospital radio DJ - and Ian D Montford - a man whose propensity for getting things wrong belies his belief that he's Britain's top psychic.









# MILTON: IMPOSSIBLE

## Comedian Milton Jones chats ahead of his brand new tour...

Forget James Bond, Jason Bourne, Ethan Hunt. There's a new spy in town - and he's not dressed in a neat tuxedo or head-to-toe camouflage. He's wearing a garish Hawaiian shirt!

That's right, Milton Jones - Mock The Week's resident oddball, Radio Four regular and king of the surreal one-liner - is back on tour; and this time he's an international man of mystery.

The wild-haired joke-teller might not be the obvious choice for a secret agent, but in Milton: Impossible, the 55-year-old comic will be taking his audience through an action-packed story via hundreds of his trademark, exquisitely crafted examples of wordplay. What's On caught up with the Live At The Apollo star ahead of his UK tour, to check he's had the proper training...

### **The new tour is called Milton: Impossible. What made you decide on the spy theme?**

Basically I came up with the title before the show! I thought to myself, that sounds good, so I made a rod for my own back by theming it. But sometimes it's easier to write to a theme than have a completely blank page. The show is based on Mission: Impossible, but Mission: Impossible has a huge budget and lots of special effects. My show is just me, some hats and about 250 jokes. It's low-tech instead of high-tech.

### **So just like your last two tours - Milton Jones is Out There and The Temple Of Daft - this show has a narrative element to it?**

If you're going to do a show for over an hour, you can't just tell bits. That's what I do on Mock The Week and Live At The Apollo, which is fine, but you want something with the veneer of satisfaction, otherwise it's too fragmented. This show's got an interrogation scene, a car chase with a swivel chair, and I end up escaping on top of a Vince Cable Car. It's not strictly realistic; it's as daft as ever.

### **Before touring, you perform work-in-progress shows to test your material. How important are those previews?**

They're very important. Even after all these years, I'll think I've written the best joke ever and it turns out to be one of the worst jokes ever. But what I've improvised off the back of

it stays in the show. So I would never have got to point B without going through the dreadful point A.

### **Do you end up with a lot of great jokes that just don't fit into the theme or narrative of the show?**

Yeah, I do. As I said, there are about 250 jokes in the show, but I reckon I end up writing about 350. A lot of them are then used somewhere else - in the next tour, on radio, on Mock The Week - so they're never wasted. And if they're particularly brilliant, then I might go out of my way to include them in the show!

### **When do you consider a joke 'finished'?**

When I've got an idea across in the minimum number of words, then I know it's done.

### **And what makes the perfect joke?**

If a gag works, it makes a cartoon in someone's head - a very brief picture where they think they know where it's going, and then you pull the carpet from under them and it becomes apparent that the joke was all about something else all along. It's reverse engineering from an idea or a phrase.

### **Your last tour played to more than 100,000 people, and you've appeared on Mock The Week over 40 times. What's more fun to do, a live show or a TV appearance?**

They're both good in different ways. Going to a small place on a Saturday night where they're all determined to have a great laugh - in one sense I don't think that can be beaten. With radio or television, you're only as good as the edit, and it's out of your control. That may well work in your favour or it may not. With Mock The Week, when I think I've done a bad show, I'll watch it back and think, Oh, it was all right. But when I think I've done a really good show, I'll watch it back and think, "Oh, it was all right. It all evens out.

### **Do you always watch your Mock The Week appearances back?**

Yes, because I need to know what they used and what they didn't. Doing several episodes, the same subjects may come back, so obviously I don't want to say the same thing that's already been aired. And then, occasionally, I'll be channel-flicking and I'll come across

myself, as the programme is endlessly repeated on Dave. But I watch them from behind a sofa a bit. I'm very grateful to Mock The Week for giving me a wider platform and a slightly different audience. It's a younger audience, and those people will come to a tour show, sometimes even bringing their grandparents or parents. My audiences are a motley selection of people - which I quite like, actually.

### **How do you cater for different generations in the same audience?**

I'm aware that if I make a reference to Instagram or something, I'm going to lose everyone over 50. But that's fine because overall my references are quite general, and even if you didn't get it, the joke's only going to last 20 seconds, so there'll be something else along soon enough.

### **You have another Radio Four series in the works, then there's the tour and more Mock The Week episodes. What's next after all that?**

I don't have anything else planned, but who knows what will turn up? Sometimes the unexpected things that come along are the most interesting - other quiz shows, a corporate event abroad, Celebrity Mastermind.

### **What was your specialist subject on Celebrity Mastermind?**

Potatoes.

### **Potatoes?!**

I mean, if I'd taken it seriously I'd have done something like Arsenal. But when he announced it - "your specialist subject is potatoes" - the audience all laughed and I thought to myself, in a way, I've chalked up! I came last obviously. But I'm employed as a comedian. It's entertainment. If I get to do it again, I'll choose carrots.

.....

**Milton Jones in Milton: Impossible stops off at Dudley Town Hall on 7 February, William Aston Hall, Wrexham, on 20 February and Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, on 21 February.**







# Shall We Dance?

## West End and Broadway smash hit spends Christmas in Brum...

**The King And I follows the flourishing friendship of the mid-19th century King of Siam and Anna, his children's recently widowed British governess. Returning performers Jose Llana and Annalene Beechey explain more about this regal musical...**

Rodgers & Hammerstein are one of the most famous composer-lyricist duos of all time. The release of their musicals, *The King And I*, *The Sound Of Music* and *Oklahoma!*, marked a golden age for the lavish world of musical theatre.

Reprising their roles in *The King And I* are Broadway's Jose Llana and the West End's Annalene Beechey,

Jose's first professional acting role was playing a supporting character in *The King And I* over 20 years ago: "I can only describe the experience as someone inviting me to put on my dad's shoes and walk around the house pretending to be him. My entry into performing was playing the Young Lover in the last Broadway revival in 1996, so I always saw the King as someone played by an older man; men who I looked up to. It's been a complete joy and a profound experience to come back to this show, but this time I'll be putting on the royal robes. Also, to have someone like our director, Bartlett Sher, to guide me through the process has been amazing. This production in particular has meant so much to me that I've stayed with it for the last few years. We did it on Broadway four years ago, toured the US for the last two years, and now I get to tour the UK with the lovely Annalene as Anna. It's a very sentimental show for me in that way."

It isn't lost on Jose that *The King And I* seems to have more resonance today than ever before: "The biggest and most unfortunate similarity that American and British people currently share is that our governments are not really in the best situation right now. To perform in a show about a world leader bringing Anna - a foreigner - in to help him educate his children seems to read differently

in each venue we go to. In America, whether the audience is more conservative or liberal, it's cathartic to see a story that was set 150 years ago still apply today. If our show can be an example of how you can lead with kindness, as opposed to leading with failure, we've done our job. There's a line in the show that I say about the King fearing colonisation, so he wants to build a fence around Siam. This often reminds people about Trump wanting to put up a wall. So that got lots of laughs in the US - sometimes uncomfortable laughs, as it's quite close to home! People thought we'd written that line into the show, but it was actually in the original script from when the show premiered 70 years ago."

*The King* is quite a controversial character in terms of his attitude towards women, which Jose certainly recognises: "I approach his sexism as part of the growth that he makes within the show. I don't defend the misogyny, but I have to remind myself of the way that life was structured in the Siamese monarchy. The polygamy was established so that he had blood ties to every province in Siam. The power of the story is that through Anna's ability to show the King's head wife, Lady Thiang, that a woman's intelligence is not to be taken for granted, nor underestimated, she is able to prove that she's not only equal to the King but actually knows more than he does. We're really proud that *The King And I* is one of many examples in the Rodgers & Hammerstein anthology where there's a strong, outspoken female character at the core. I'm proud to have my niece come to see the show and look up to Anna, Lady Thiang and even Tuptim. All three women test the system in very different ways, speaking their minds and demonstrating enormous strength."

Bart Sher is the Tony Award-winning director behind this particular production of *The King And I*. So what have Sher and the other creatives brought to the table?

"We're bringing the exact same show on tour as was on Broadway," explains Jose. "It's a different company, but still features Catherine Zuber's costumes and Michael Yeargan's sets. Sher went directly to the source at the Rodgers & Hammerstein Foundation and found the original script that they rehearsed with on day one of the original 1951 Broadway production. He went back to that script to revive many of the political lines that had been lost on the way to Broadway, as he wanted to remind the audience of the political climate in 1862. He also wanted to strengthen Anna's and Lady Thiang's characters to a greater extent than had happened in the past."

"We also have to remember that the show was written post-World War Two, when a lot of American and British audiences had never been to Asia. There wasn't a lot of Asian representation back then, so there was a lot of orientalism and otherness on stage. The design was purposely slightly garish in order to be a little shocking. But now most people have at least seen photos or videos of the East. The challenge was to make it as opulent as they could, but also be respectful and authentic to the actual time."

So what does Jose think is the reason behind the continuing popularity of Rodgers & Hammerstein's musicals?

"They define family entertainment, and it's great to be able to go home and talk about something important after a show too. A lot of their musicals - *The King And I*, *The Sound Of Music* and *South Pacific* in particular -



address racism and difficult issues but in a comfortable way so that you can bring your children along. I think the genius of Rodgers & Hammerstein is that they're able to relay these really important life lessons in a package of catchy melodies and beautiful songs. It's so lovely to look out to the audience and see several generations watching together. There's no better way to spend an afternoon with the family!

Annalene Beechey, who returns to the role of Anna Leonowens, agrees: "The King And I has such a connection to family, so it's appropriate that we're playing in Birmingham over the festive season; a time for families to come together and share in something special. This certainly gives the show its longevity.

"There are also some wonderful female characters in Rodgers & Hammerstein's shows, at a time when there generally weren't great roles for women. Occasionally, female roles are just seen as money notes and big songs. We have beautiful musical numbers in this show that involve intimate storytelling, such as during Getting To Know You, but they're so much more than just pleasant tunes. Sometimes when you know a song so well, you have to stop yourself and really listen to the lyrics. They're so relevant to what we're dealing with today in terms of the UK being divided. The lyrics are 'getting to know you, getting to know

all about you, getting to like you, getting to hope you like me'. It speaks volumes."

The King And I is based on Margaret Landon's novel, Anna And The King Of Siam, which was in turn a fictional reimagining of the real Anna Leonowens' memoirs. Anna was governess to King Mongkut of Siam's children in the early 1860s.

"The company and associate director brought some books into rehearsals early on and, with huge respect to Deborah Kerr (who played the part in the film version), they painted a slightly different picture of Anna. This woman was extraordinarily courageous. She was recently widowed and had a 12-year-old son, yet she still moved to a country that wasn't colonised to teach the King of Siam's children. As a mother myself, I don't think I would be brave enough to do that - even today, when everyone is more travelled. Anna is feisty, brave and not afraid to stand up for something she believes in. I wish I had a little bit more of that myself! But at the same time, she is very understanding of the King's values and is accepting of what he's trying to achieve. He's trying to bring knowledge of her world into his, and in doing so, make his court and country more understanding of other cultures. They want the two cultures to progress together, which is extremely admirable."

Such a huge role doesn't come without its challenges, however...

"It's a very physically and vocally demanding part," explains Annalene. "There's a lot of dialogue and long scenes, which are great to get your teeth into as an actor, but then you realise that you have to sing at the end too! Added to this, I'm in a corset for the entire three-hour show and carrying very heavy costumes - including the iconic dress for Shall We Dance?, which weighs three stone!"

And yet Shall We Dance is a stand-out moment for both performers...

"If we've done our jobs properly throughout the show, the audience will have been angry with us or laughed with us," says Annalene. "So when we get to the moment during Shall We Dance? when we come together and the King takes Anna's waist, you can often hear an audible gasp from the auditorium."

"The audience has been waiting for this moment," Jose adds, "and it's a legacy we are happy to continue - if not a responsibility. People are waiting for that dress, and it's a beautiful thing."

.....  
**The King And I shows at The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, from Tuesday 10 December to Saturday 4 January.**



### Did you know...

The King & I has been seen by **1 million people globally**

The show is a winner of multiple awards, including **four prestigious Tony Awards**

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Birmingham Hippodrome



Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa



Swan Theatre, Worcester

## Snow White

Swan Theatre, Worcester, Mon 2 December - Sun 5 January; Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Sat 7 December - Sun 5 January; Artrix, Bromsgrove, Sat 14 - Sun 22 December; The Regal, Tenbury, Wed 18 December - Fri 3 January; Birmingham Hippodrome, Sat 21 December - Sun 2 February

Everybody knows the story - the nasty old queen's less than keen on her younger and more beautiful stepdaughter, who takes refuge from her royal evilness by holing up in the deep, dark forest with a household of vertically challenged miners...

The fact that Snow White is a 24-carat classic of a fairytale means that a pantomime ver-

sion is always a surefire winner. Expect all the usual elements, including rouged-up dames in colourful costumes, plenty of thigh-slapping and slapstick comedy, singalongs aplenty to enjoy, and even a few naughty jokes to make sure the grown-ups don't feel too left out of things.

Lesley Joseph top-bills as the Wicked Queen at Birmingham Hippodrome, where she's joined by X-Factor winner Joe McElderry, the ever-popular Matt Slack, Coronation Street's Faye Brookes and Britain's Got Talent finalists Flawless. Andrew Ryan is the man charged with the task of getting all Damed up, while 'lazy cow' Doreen Tipton brings her 'strung' Black Country accent into the very

heartland of Brummie territory...

Presumably working on the principle that if she keeps on the move, the Wicked Queen will never catch her, Snow White is very sensibly taking shelter in a variety of locations across the Midlands this Christmas. She can be seen getting along famously with her seven new-found chums in all of the above-listed venues.

A notable contributor to one of the shows is Imelda Staunton. The Oscar-nominated actress is the patron of Worcester's Swan Theatre and is giving a voice to the Magic Mirror in the venue's Worcester Repertory Company production.

## Cinderella

Lichfield Garrick, until Sun 5 January; Palace Theatre, Redditch, Mon 9 December - Sun 5 January; Prince of Wales Centre, Cannock, Sat 21 - Sun 29 December

With its comical Ugly Sisters, matchmaking fairy godmother, drop-dead-gorgeous Prince Charming, super-cute mice and fits-one-foot-only glass slipper, Cinderella can justifiably



lay claim to being the most popular of all pantomimes. The 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.

At the Palace Theatre in Redditch, X-Factor winner Ben Haenow will have glass slipper in hand as he searches for his true love, with Emmerdale's Sapphire Elia (pictured left) eventually providing the delightfully dainty foot he's been looking for.

Meanwhile, Prince of Wales Centre patrons who enjoyed last year's adventure with Dick Whittington will be delighted to know that it's the same production team who're presenting this year's pantomime.



Lichfield Garrick





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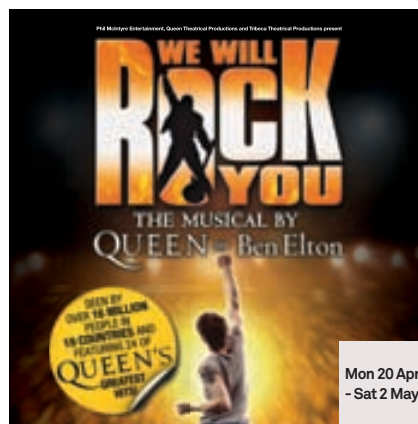
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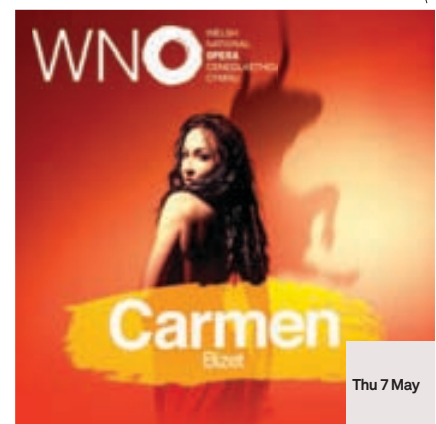
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Sat 18 Apr



Mon 20 Apr  
- Sat 2 May



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Fri 19 -  
Sat 27 Jun



Tue 30 Jun -  
Sat 18 Jul







## Panto favourite Brad Pitt steps back into his high heels as he returns as the dame for Theatre Severn's pantomime...

### Firstly, how does it feel to be a new-found international superstar?

Is this because of Brad Pitt? It's alright, actually. It's actually happened before, when people have misspelt my name in reviews and things like that, but I don't think they've managed to print such a large banner before. The next day, The Sun got in touch, it was on Sky News, the radio in Spain. He's been after this job for years! He wouldn't be able to do it, but then I wouldn't be able to do what he does.

### You're no stranger to the world of pantomime. What is it that attracts you to spending a season in panto?

I love it! I never trained as an actor, I trained as a stage manager. I used to work for Christopher Biggins for years and used to write little bits for him. He did five years at Cambridge

Arts Theatre, where I was the company manager working backstage, and I used to write jokes for him. Then he left and they asked me to write the panto one year, so I fell into writing it. Then they asked me to direct it, so I fell into directing it, and one year they asked me to be in it, and I said, 'That's a stupid idea, I'm not going to do that, I've never been on stage before'. It was Cinderella and eventually I said I'd do it because I love panto. So then I did it and that was it, I've done it ever since. So every Christmas, there I am, putting the tights on. It's always a bit of a shock come the autumn when I have to get everything down from the loft again, and my boobs have gone a bit flat in the suitcase and I need to plump them up a bit, and I get the makeup out. I love it, though. I love panto!

### What keeps drawing you back to Theatre Severn?

This is my ninth year. Paul Hendy, the producer, came to see me in Cambridge when I was there, and I think every year for about three years he kept offering me one of his shows, but I was under contract to Cambridge. One year he phoned me and asked whether I would like to go and do Chatham in Kent, and I said no. Then the next year, he phoned and asked whether I wanted to do Crawley, but I wasn't fussed on going there either. The third year he phoned me, I hadn't signed a contract with Cambridge and he said that he had Shrewsbury available - a new theatre that had just opened. I googled Shrewsbury and I thought, 'That looks nice, I like that', so that was it. So then I came to Shrews-



bury, loved it, and I've had a lovely time here. You have a shorthand with the audience because you come back year after year, so you don't have to do all that 'my name's Widow Twankey' thing. People know what to expect, so I can just come on and shout, 'Hello Shrewsbury' and we're back where we left off. It's like those close friends who you don't speak to for ages but when you phone them up, you just pick up from where you left off. That's what my relationship is with Shrewsbury.

### **What are you looking forward to most about performing in Aladdin?**

Aladdin is a good one. It's magical, it's a lovely story, and it's nice to meet up with old friends like Eric and Victoria, who I've worked with a lot in the past. And then it's nice to have new people join the company too. It's nice to have a bit of familiarity, but Harry and David I've seen before. I know that their work is good, and I'm looking forward to working with them. I've worked with Phil before, but not on stage, so I'm looking forward to that. It's nice. We all live all over the country, and we're all thrown together at Christmas and you have to get on. It's a nice family atmosphere. You bond quickly because you're thrown together over Christmas - you only get one day off - so if you don't like each other, you're stuffed really.

### **Have you played the character of Widow Twankey before?**

She'll be nine years older. She might not slip over as much. I have to think of my hips nowadays because it's very dangerous when you get to my age. I don't think she'll be any different at all. I don't think my Dame is different. You only get one thing with me. I'm not Brad Pitt; I can't do Benjamin Button or Mr & Mrs Smith. With me you get the one character.

### **Why are Midlands audiences the best?**

They come year in, year out. They have the same seats. It's amazing. I'll be here on Boxing Day, and you look out and think 'That family sat there last Boxing Day'. They go out and they pick the same seats. I usually pick on men in the audience, and I keep this little book of their names, and it's amazing how the very same day one year on, you see the same people in the audience. When I see that, I can look in my book and see that his name was Leonard, and low and behold you come out and there he is. They're thrilled because I come out and go, 'Leonard, there you are' and they go, 'Oh my god, he remembers me'. I do remember; there are certain people who I do remember - Leonard's family, for example. There's a postman who comes; his family are always in the same seats and they come year

after year. It's like seeing your friends again. You see the same families at the stage door. I always used to go out and have pictures taken. Now people will show me pictures of me with their kids when they were four, and now their kids are 13 and it's part of their Christmas tradition. I love meeting people. Because I'm dressed as a Dame and have all this makeup on, I go around Shrewsbury and nobody knows who I am. I can slip out and go and buy unhealthy food and stuff like that and nobody's watching me.

### **Panto can be very gruelling. Do you have a fitness routine to get you festive-ready?**

I'm quite an active person in life; I'm always busy. I've got three foster children who keep me busy, I've got an allotment, I do loads of different jobs and I'm always on the go. I do have a gym membership, which I haven't really used for a while, but I do have one. I'm not sat there watching Homes Under The Hammer, eating pot noodles. When I'm doing panto, I do take vitamins and things like that, as you do have to look after yourself. I have my flu injection because you don't want to be ill - that's the worst thing! When I'm doing the show, I make a drink with hot water, chopped-up ginger, apple cider vinegar, Manuka honey, lime juice and fresh rosemary. It's all anti-inflammatory, healthy bacteria, etc. Never use lemon juice! Lemon is acidic and lime is acetic. Lemon juice will strip the lining of your throat whereas lime juice just kills bacteria. There's my tip for today - you shouldn't have hot honey and lemon.

### **What's your earliest memory of panto?**

Going to see the Norwich Theatre Royal panto when I was five or six. I remember coming home from school and my mum saying that we were going to the panto that evening and trying to make me sleep beforehand because it was an evening show. I remember having to lie down on the sofa and my mum closing the curtains and not being able to sleep - I was too excited! I think it was Benny from Crossroads - I'm sure it was Cinderella. I remember an Ugly Sister coming out, and she was quite tall and had ping-pong balls down her tights in front of her knees, which I thought was hilarious. I loved it.

### **What are your favourite and least favourite aspects of appearing in panto?**

I love the families. It's a feelgood thing. It's a wonderful thing to be able to do something that makes a lot of people happy. If you make someone happy or make somebody laugh, it's a nice feeling, isn't it? If you do that twice a day to 700 people, it's a lovely feeling! That's what I like. It's tough being away from your family - I have children and I'm married. It's tough. You get one day really, Christmas Day,

then Boxing Day I'm up at 5am to drive back here for 7am to get ready for a matinee. That's the toughest thing.

### **You've played many a panto role. Which character's your favourite?**

My favourite panto is Dick Whittington; I think because Sarah the Cook is a good character, it's a bit nautical, you get on the ship, and I just like the story. When I did Cinderella here at Theatre Severn and I played Buttons, I didn't think I was going to enjoy it. I assumed I was going to be an Ugly Sister, and Paul said that I couldn't be one because we couldn't have people booing me in Shrewsbury, so I'd have to be either Buttons or Dandini. I'd never been on stage dressed as a man before, but I really enjoyed it - I had a great time! I wasn't getting changed 36 times a day either - I had just two costumes. When you're doing this, you're getting changed 30 times a day. That's what keeps me fit - I don't need the gym!

### **When does your prep for panto begin?**

Before this one is over, Paul Hendy will be talking to me about what the next one is going to be. Once we've got through rehearsals and we're into the run of Aladdin, he'll start talking about next year because they'll want to take pictures and they'll want to get posters up, etc. To be honest with you, it's continuous. You never, ever stop.

### **Do you feel there are any subjects which are out of bounds in terms of making jokes?**

There are pantos that go a bit near the knuckle. I don't think we do, really. I would never tell a joke that was offensive or rude. Sometimes you can use a double entendre - but then that's in your mind, that's not me. I'm just saying whatever it is that I'm saying, and if you start laughing because you think it's dirty, that's your mind, not my mind. You have to blame yourself.

### **Bar prep for Aladdin, what else have you been up to since Mother Goose last year?**

This year I've booked tours of The Woman In Black, An Inspector Calls and I've been associate producer for Toast, which is a show about Nigel Slater. So I've got three shows out on the road. I'm going round the country at the minute with An Inspector Calls. I've written Basildon and Welwyn Garden City panto scripts - Dick Whittington and Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs respectively. I've got my allotment as well, so I've grown some very nice asparagus this year. I've kept busy!

.....

**You can see Brad Pitt at Widow Twankey in Aladdin at Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury from Wed 4 December - Sun 12 January**





## Dick Whittington

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre,  
Sat 7 December - Sun 12 January

With ex-Corrie favourite Ryan Thomas taking the title role and one-time Hi-De-Hi! duo Su Pollard and Jeffrey Holland lending their comic flair, the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre's 2019 pantomime production looks set to be every bit as energised and entertaining as any of its illustrious predecessors. The story of a young man who heads for London in search of fame and fortune is one of the most popular of all pantomimes, not least because of the top adventures in which the happy-go-lucky Dick finds himself involved.

Joining Ryan, Su and Jeffrey in the cast are Ian Adams - taking on the role of the Dame for a fourth consecutive year at the Grand - and comedian and celebrity impressionist Aaron James, who's making his Wolves pantomime debut.

## Aladdin

Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham,  
Wed 4 - Sun 8 December; Theatre Severn,  
Shrewsbury, Wed 4 December - Sun 12  
January; Malvern Theatres, Thurs 12 Decem-  
ber - Sun 5 January



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... One of the Midlands favourite and best-established pantomime Dames, Brad Fitt, is once again being over-enthusiastic with the eye-liner at Shrewsbury's Theatre Severn (pictured above). Malvern's version of the famous tale stars Only Fools And Horses favourite John Challis.

## Robin Hood: The Pantomime Adventure

The Core, Solihull, Selected dates between  
Fri 13 December - Sun 5 January

As if Robin Hood didn't already have enough on his plate dealing with the dastardly Sheriff of Nottingham, wooing the delicious Maid Marion and wondering how to stop the colos-

sal Friar Tuck from eating everything in his path, the festive season also finds Sherwood Forest's most famous resident getting tangled up in all manner of pantomime traditions (custard pie, anyone?).

With King Richard away negotiating a trade deal with Europe - he may be some time! - the sheriff hatches an evil plan. But he's reckoned without our dashing hero, a Santa's Sack-worth of audience participation and more corny gags than you could fit into an oversized Christmas stocking.

## Peter Pan

Stafford Gatehouse,  
Mon 13 December - Sun 5 January

Coronation Street and EastEnders actor Ian Reddington is delighted to be returning to Stafford to play Captain Hook, particularly as the town was the scene of what he considers to be his greatest ever theatrical triumph - Richard III at Stafford Castle back in the 1990s.

Peter Pan's producers are promising 'a high-energy, localised show packed with all the ingredients that make pantomime such an unforgettable experience for the entire family'... What more could a panto-loving theatre-goer possibly want?



## Sleeping Beauty

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent,  
Fri 13 December - Sun 5 January

The tragic tale of a young princess who's tricked by an evil fairy and pricks her finger on a spinning wheel, causing her to sleep for 100 years, offers a great story around which to build a pantomime production of real quality. And judging by its festive offerings in previous years, the Regent's 2019 presentation is likely to be just that.

'Son of the Potteries' Jonathan Wilkes dons the tights to take top billing in the ever-popular pantomime tale.

Homecoming hero Jonathan's a festive fixture at the Regent Theatre nowadays, and is set to play an inevitably significant part in making Sleeping Beauty one of the region's must-see pantos this Christmas.

Jonathan is joined by his faithful panto companion, Christian Patterson, who will be getting all frocked up to star as the Dame.

## A Christmas Carol

Crescent Theatre, Birmingham,  
Tues 3 - Sat 14 December

Of all Charles Dickens' festive stories, A Christmas Carol reigns supreme. The covetous sinning of the miserly Scrooge, the eternal hope offered by Tiny Tim, the eerie visions of redemption - visiting Ebenezer in the shape of his long-deceased partner Jacob Marley and three seasonal ghosts - all combine to give the tale a real olde worlde charm. Indeed, if you want to get yourself into the festive spirit, there can surely be no better way than by revelling in the magic of this most famous of yuletide tales.



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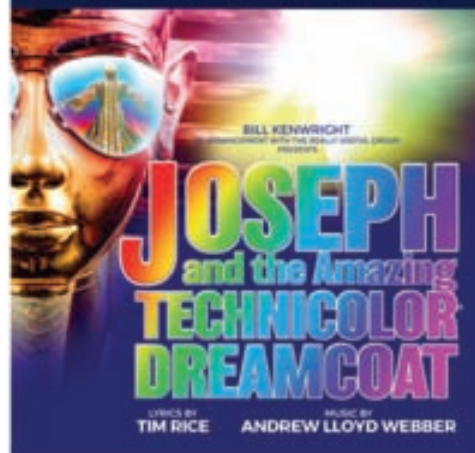
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# THE ELDERLY ESCAPE ARTIST

**David Walliams talks about having his children's book, *Grandpa's Great Escape*, adapted for the stage - and the show is in Birmingham over Christmas!**

David Walliams' much-loved children's book, *Grandpa's Great Escape*, follows a young boy named Jack as he tries to rescue his confused grandfather - a World War Two RAF veteran - from a retirement home...

Almost two years after a BBC film adaptation of the book lit up New Year's Day, *Grandpa's Great Escape* visits Birmingham this month as part of an arena tour.

"*Grandpa's Great Escape* came from a number of ideas for a story," explains David Walliams. "I really wanted to do a great escape from an old people's home, and I wanted to write a story for kids about dementia. I thought that it would be really good to combine the comic idea with the more serious. Stories that have a range of emotions from sad to funny are always very engaging. It was kind of a hark back to all the films I used to watch with my dad or grandad as a kid, like *The Great Escape*, *Reach For The Sky* and *Where Eagles Dare*."

"Sometimes as a writer you're not completely satisfied with your work. You'll walk down the street a couple of months later and think, if only I'd done this or that. But with *Grandpa's Great Escape*, I was really, really pleased with the story and even more delighted with the TV adaptation, which had Tom Courtenay as Grandpa and Jennifer Saunders as the matron of the old people's home. I then hoped that we'd be able to do something else with it, and the idea came up that we could turn it into a spectacular theatre show with a real-life Spitfire in the arena!

"I was really set on getting an amazing team together for it, and we got Sean Foley in to direct. He's an incredible performer, director and writer, especially in comedy, and was part of the amazing company, *The Right Size*. They're particularly famous for *The Play What I Wrote*, about Morecambe & Wise. I was sure that Sean would make it hilarious. Then

we've got Kevin Cecil, who co-wrote the screenplay for *Grandpa's Great Escape* with me, to do the script for the arena tour, and Phil McIntyre Entertainments Ltd is also on board. They're a company that's used to doing massive productions; they do the big tours for popular comedians and things like the *Strictly Come Dancing* UK tour, so they definitely know how to do things on a big scale. Nigel Planer - who's one of my comedy heroes from when I was a teenager, because he was in *The Young Ones* - is a great choice for *Grandpa*. I'm sure he'll get all the comedy and sadness out of the writing."

David believes *Grandpa's Great Escape* is the perfect feelgood family story for the festive season.

"We've always made these little films for the BBC around Christmas, so it seems natural to do the show around this time too. At Christmas, everyone is in the mood for a family thing. I think sometimes it feels like time just stops and everyone's stuck in limbo between the moment they've eaten the last bit of Christmas dinner and given the last presents until after Boxing Day. No one really knows what to do with themselves. That's why so many TV things do so well over Christmas, even if they're not necessarily a Christmas story - as is the case with my adaptations. To go see a show together at the theatre is a welcome distraction. For many, Christmas might be the only time they treat the family to a show all year. There's definitely enough in the story of *Grandpa's Great Escape* for both kids and adults to enjoy."

"There's something special about witnessing a live event. As much as I love going to the cinema, it doesn't quite do it in the same way as the theatre because it's a slightly colder experience. No one claps at the end or laughs out loud as much, but being in the theatre and right there sharing that special moment

is something you really can't find elsewhere."

Writing his next story is continually at the forefront of David's mind...

"I'm always writing a new book. There will be more out by the end of the year. I had a novella in February, a book of short stories over the summer and a novel. As soon as I finish one, I'm starting the next, and the novels especially take a really long time to get right. Plus, now I've got an audience, they're expecting it to be as good as the last one, so I have to work doubly hard to get them as good as I possibly can. Also, I don't tend to write sequels for anything; I always write stories with a new situation and a new set of characters, so I'm always moving forward. That's quite exciting but also difficult. You go through so many emotions writing a book, especially when it's late at night and you're hit by the enormity of the task and you despair and get a little tearful! I'm very, very lucky to have all this variety in my career. I never get stuck in a rut, feeling like I'm doing the same old thing. I always love the fresh challenges and doing something that has a chance of failure."

"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."

.....  
**Grandpa's Great Escape shows at Arena Birmingham on Monday 23, Tuesday 24 & Thursday 26 December.**



# It Takes Two...

It's said that good things come in pairs - think Morecambe & Wise, The Two Ronnies, Ant & Dec, Laurel & Hardy, French & Saunders. The list goes on...

Some pairings are long term, others are just for Christmas.

We asked some of the region's premier panto partnerships what they liked (and disliked) about their festive sidekick...

**Jonathan Wilkes and Christian Patterson star in *Sleeping Beauty* at the Regent Theatre, Stoke**

## **Jonathan Wilkes stars as Muddles**

### **What do you like best about Christian?**

He makes me laugh on a minute-by-minute basis! He's hilarious!

### **What's his star quality?**

Christian's comedy timing is incredible, and his ability to know what I'm about to say before I say it is brilliant.

### **Funniest moment starring together?**

There are so many to choose from over the years, but I think the funniest moment has to be when we were in Dick Whittington and an inflatable sausage got bigger and bigger. So funny!

### **Most irritating thing about Christian?**

Hmm... He never shares food - he's like Joey from Friends!

### **What would be the most apt Christmas gift you could buy Christian?**

It would have to be a vegan hamper because he loves food. I don't know if anyone's noticed, but he loves food!

## **Christian Patterson stars as the Dame**

### **What do you like best about Jonny?**

Jonny is unbelievably kind - he's incredibly generous as a person and a performer. It's almost impossible for me even to imagine not standing next to Jonny at Christmas time! I honestly believe that Jonny is the best frontman in panto...and he's a very good friend too! I love him dearly.

### **What do you consider to be his star quality?**

His energy is beyond compare! He's like the Duracell bunny! Honestly, he's like a big kid! Even Mickey, his son, calls him the 'man-child'! He's also incredibly charming!

When you add those two factors to the fact that he's also incredibly funny, it's the perfect combination!

### **Funniest moment starring together?**

When we did Peter Pan, Jonny ripped his trousers - and I mean *really* ripped his trousers! We couldn't continue for about five minutes because Jonny literally wanted every single audience member to see just how badly he'd ripped his trousers - they were literally hanging off him! I was laughing so much that I had tears in my eyes and pains in my stomach!

### **Most irritating thing about Jonny?**

He has the concentration span of a streak of lightning! I always start the first day of rehearsals by telling the cast that we only have Jonny until 3.30pm every day... he literally can't concentrate or sit still after that! I have to send people to look for him! Most of the time he's watching the ensemble rehearse or bothering his wife... the wonderful, beautiful, kind and long-suffering Nikki Wilkes, the best choreographer in all of Pantoland!

### **What would be the most apt Christmas gift you could buy Jonny?**

Jonny doesn't ask for much, his pleasures are very simple! Two shows every day is incredibly hard work and takes its toll, so after the shows Jonny likes to take a shower and sit in his dressing room with a cold beer. Last year I bought him a box of Corona and put it in his dressing-room fridge. He was over the moon!

**Catch Jonny and Christian in *Sleeping Beauty* at the Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, from Friday 13 December to Sunday 5 January.**





## Su Pollard and Jeffrey Holland star in Dick Whittington at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

### Su Pollard stars as Queen Rat

#### What do you like best about Jeffrey?

Jeffrey is such a warm and welcoming man. He always makes you feel completely at ease, especially because he's such a reliable person to work with.

#### What's his star quality?

He has a winning smile.

#### Funniest moment starring together?

It has to be one of our times together on Hi-de-Hi! One time, Jeffrey was dressed as a fire-place, so he couldn't even go to the toilet and had to move sideways like a crab! That was very funny. Also, one time, our characters were looking at old film reels that went in the projector at the pictures. My character, Peggy, thought it was a wedding or a party, but it turned out to be a rather naughty adult film. Jeffrey and I were in stitches.

#### Most irritating thing about Jeffrey?

I wouldn't say it's irritating, but Jeffrey can be a little over-cautious. That isn't always a bad thing, but I always want him to have as much fun as possible doing his work. We jokingly call him 'the vicar' because sometimes he needs to loosen up a bit - but it's all done in good spirits.

#### What would be the most apt Christmas gift you could buy Jeffrey?

Jeffrey is a massive Laurel & Hardy fan, even

doing his own one-man show based around them, so what I'd like to do is edit a Laurel & Hardy film with *him* superimposed into the scenes. He'd love that!

### Jeffrey Holland stars as Merchant Fitzwarren

#### What do you like best about Su?

Her presence on stage and screen. She's a cut above the rest!

#### What's her star quality?

Her amazing singing voice. There's nothing she couldn't sing.

#### Funniest moment starring together?

Our funniest moment together has to be appearing in an early episode of Hi-de-Hi dressed as a pantomime horse! She was the back end and I was in front!

#### Most irritating thing about Su?

She's always so nice to people. She makes time for everyone, so it's hard to find a fault!

#### What would be the most apt Christmas gift you could buy Su?

A grow bag, so that she could grow her own tomatoes, which she loves.

**Catch Su and Jeffrey in Dick Whittington at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Saturday 7 December to Sunday 12 January.**



## Carl Dutfield and Tim Ames star in Jack And The Beanstalk at The Place, Telford

### Carl Dutfield stars as Jack

#### What do you like best about Tim?

His professionalism and his ability to have a laugh.

#### What's his star quality?

He seems like he's always up for a laugh, which for me is what a Dame needs in order to be great. His star quality would be his give-it-a-go attitude.

#### Funniest moment starring together?

That would be seeing Tim running around the corn field, in the rain, dressed as a Dame.

#### Most irritating thing about Tim?

Being bloody good at what he does, and knowing that I have to step up my game to reach his standard.

#### What would be the most apt Christmas gift you could buy Tim?

A pair of doc martens - the masculine boot that any woman can wear.

### Tim Ames stars as Dame Trott

#### What do you like best about Carl?

His non-stop infectious enthusiasm. He's like a permanent little ray of sunshine.

#### What's his star quality?

The fact that he's so tiny. He takes up very little space in the dressing room. I do like to spread out.

#### Funniest moment starring together?

The moment when neither of us can remember the next line and we just stare at each other with blind panic in our eyes. Although that never actually happens, of course, because we are professionals, daaahling!

#### Most irritating thing about Carl?

His non-stop infectious enthusiasm before I've had my first coffee of the day.

#### What would be the most apt Christmas gift you could buy Carl?

A small step ladder.

**Catch Carl and Tim in Jack And The Beanstalk at The Place, Telford, from Wednesday 11 December to Sunday 5 January.**





## Eric Smith and Brad Fitt star in Aladdin at Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

### Eric Smith stars as Emperor of China

#### What do you like best about Brad?

Brad has infinite patience - and he's no doubt told you that working with me over the years, he certainly needs it! He is kind and has a wicked sense of humour. You learn to watch out when you see that deadpan face, because surely something is coming your way!

#### What do you consider to be his star quality?

A critic once said of Brad that 'he has funny bones' - and indeed he has. He could read the phone book and make it funny! He has that innate sense of comedy timing and does Dame better than anybody else I know - but don't tell him I said that!

#### Funniest moment starring together?

It has to be in last year's Mother Goose. All pantomimes have a party, and Brad's idea was that Matt Dallen (Billy Goose) and I (Squire Squashem) should host the party with a Strictly Come Dancing theme. Brad and I would do a quick change and come back on stage dressed as Tess and Claudia. The audience were crying with laughter! There have been so many funny moments. We laugh our way through the whole run each year!

#### Most irritating thing about Brad?

He's always right! You can deliver a line and think you've got it just about perfect, and then Brad, in his kind way, will take you to one side and suggest it might be better if you did it a slightly different way. And he's right every time.

#### What would be the most apt Christmas gift you could buy Brad?

A Girl's World styling head. Hours of fun!

### Brad Fitt stars as Widow Twankey

#### What do you like best about Eric?

I like the fact that when I'm stood next to him on stage, he makes me look a better actor than I really am! In all seriousness, though, I love his attitude to everything I present him with. Around September, when things start to ramp up for the pantomime season, Eric will get little texts from me saying things like, 'What do you look like in lycra' or 'When did you last shave your legs', and Eric will know that I've got something planned. I've yet to suggest something to him that he's not gone with. Even when he thinks it might not be funny, he trusts me implicitly - which might well be his downfall!

#### What do you consider to be his star quality?

His timing is impeccable - he always manages to leave the bar before it's his round! Eric is wonderful to work with. Over the years, he's grown as the foil or the butt of many of my jokes. It's all done with sincerity, and I'm glad to say that Eric can always laugh at himself - which is great because otherwise he'd be missing out on the joke of the century...

#### Funniest moment starring together?

I've had several funny moments onstage with Eric. During Sleeping Beauty many years ago, I had to put my arm around his shoulder and console him at the funeral of Sleeping Beauty. We had our backs to

the audience, it was a very sombre moment with suitably heart-wrenching music. We were back-lit from above, and the wig I was wearing gave me a shadow that looked like Mickey Mouse. I pointed down to it and whispered, 'Hello Pluto' into Eric's ear. The next thing you could see was the shadow of Eric's shoulders rising and falling like a fiddler's elbow. We both lost it, and thankfully did a lot of upstage acting during that scene. My favourite ever moment, though, I wasn't actually onstage with Eric. It was last year in Mother Goose. Earlier in the year, I'd had an idea that Eric and Matt should come on dressed as Tess Daly and Claudia Winkleman - or Wrinkled Man, as the character became. I hadn't seen Eric in the whole get-up until the first show. When he walked on in hot pink heels and a black trouser suit, I completely lost it. At the time, I was stood in the wings dressed as a flamingo, so I had nothing to laugh about really!

#### Most irritating thing about Eric?

Where do I begin?! To be fair, I can't think of anything irritating about Eric. After nine years together, we know exactly how the other one works and we dovetail very nicely together onstage and off.

#### What would be the most apt Christmas gift you could buy Eric?

He's a man of simple pleasures is Eric. My first thought is a blow-up mattress for his dressing room, but to be honest, Eric Smith could fall asleep on a washing line or a galloping hedgehog. If money were no object, I'd get him a nice cruise or a couple of weeks on a Greek island. Eric values his downtime, and his wife, Linda, values her holidays. Perhaps I'd send him off on a family holiday with his nearest and dearest. Or maybe just socks.

**Catch Eric and Brad in Aladdin at Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, from Wednesday 4 December to Sunday 12 January.**





## Rebecca Keatley and Sam Rabone star in Cinderella at Lichfield Garrick Theatre

### Rebecca Keatley stars as Fairy Godmother

#### What do you like best about Sam?

His voice. You know Sam's in the vicinity even if you can't see him. His beautiful Sutton Coldfield tones fill a room.

#### What do you consider to be Sam's star quality?

His sense of humour. He's always got a joke up his sleeve.

#### Funniest moment starring together?

Probably when I messed up on stage. I mispronounced, in Welsh, the name of the longest train station in Wales. He absolutely ribbed me for that on stage. He completely corpsed me.

#### Most irritating thing about Sam?

His boundless energy. He never, ever tires. It's less irritating and more unbelievable.

#### What would be the most apt Christmas gift you could buy Sam?

Now, I may be way off the mark here, but I reckon a cooking gadget. He's very handy in the kitchen. His lemon drizzle is to die for. If you're reading this, Sam, you know what you can give me as a Christmas gift!

### Sam Rabone stars as Buttons

#### What do you like best about Rebecca?

Her fringe. Anyone who can keep a fringe that well-maintained is a champion in my book! It offers intrigue and mystery. What's under there? Where does the forehead end? Does

she have any eyebrows? All the best people have a good fringe - Miss Keatley, Claudia Winkleman, Dawn French, the fairy in Yeovil! Long live the fringe!

#### What do you consider to be her star quality?

She *is* a star - and like all the best stars, she should only come out at night. Everyone looks better by the light of the moon! She's a gem and gets the comedy of the fairy. She delivers the lines with a twinkle in her eye - try and spot it under the fringe!

#### Funniest moment starring together?

The first time I called her Alex Jones on stage, she wasn't ready for it! I'm not sure who found it funnier, her or the audience! Last time we were on stage together was three years ago, and I've slept a few times since then, so that's the one I can remember. I'm hoping for lots more this year in Cinderella. You'll have to book tickets to enjoy more funny moments!

#### Most irritating thing about Rebecca?

She doesn't like condiments of the saucy variety! Who doesn't like ketchup with their chips! However, annoyingly she's one of those irritatingly lovely people who doesn't get on your nerves at all! She's just too damn nice. She's definitely hiding something under that fringe!

#### What would be the most apt Christmas gift you could buy Rebecca?

I know you shouldn't give dogs as Christmas gifts, but when she visits, she

loves playing with my Frankie - that's my dog! So I think she'd love a puppy! Then a holiday to New Zealand. She works so hard all year round, I think she could do with a break, and going to New Zealand would force her to have some 'me time'. That's what the 24-hour flight is for. Once she's there, she'll be white water rafting and scaring the locals with a haka in no time!

**Catch Rebecca and Sam in Cinderella at Lichfield Garrick Theatre from Thursday 28 November to Sunday 5 January.**



## Other festive shows in the Midlands this Christmas...

### Snow White at Birmingham Hippodrome, Sat 21 Dec - Sun 2 Feb

Lesley Joseph tops the bill as the Wicked Queen and is joined by X-Factor winner Joe McElderry, the ever-popular Matt Slack, Coronation Street's Faye Brookes and Britain's Got Talent finalists Flawless. Andrew Ryan and Doreen Tipton also feature on the bill.

### Peter Pan at Birmingham Repertory Theatre, Sat 30 Nov - Sun 19 Jan

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 at Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, until Sat 11 Jan

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.

### The Boy In The Dress at the RSC, Stratford-upon-Avon, until Sun 8 Mar

David Walliams' critically acclaimed children's story about friendship and the acceptance of others is here being performed on stage for the very first time.

### Peter Pan at Stafford Gatehouse, Mon 13 Dec - Sun 5 Jan

Coronation Street and EastEnders actor Ian Reddington takes on the role of Captain Hook in what the show's producers are promising will be 'a high-energy, localised production'.



more festive favourites from around the region



## Puss In Boots

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry,  
until Sat 11 January

A show which is being referred to as 'the cat's whiskers' by producers Imagine Theatre, Puss In Boots tells the tale, 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.

## Jack And The Beanstalk

The Place, Oakengates, Telford, Wed 11 December - Sun 5 January; Attic Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, Thurs 12 December - Sun 5 January

Jack and his mum are hard-up and have no choice but to take their cow to market to raise some much-needed cash. However, Jack being Jack, he decides to trade her in (the cow, that is, not his mum) for a handful of magic beans, which then grow into a real ogre of a beanstalk. And speaking of ogres... Coronation Street's Oliver Mellor top-bills in Telford as Fleshcreep, while across the region in Stratford, a

brand new version of the popular fairytale is presented by highly rated theatre company Tread The Boards.



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'.



## The Snow Queen

The Old Rep, Birmingham,  
until Mon 30 December; Albany Theatre,  
Coventry, Mon 9 - Sat 28 December

The Snow Queen is ruler of all she surveys. When she kidnaps young Kai, 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 presented at The Old Rep by the creative team behind the theatre's 2018 production of Pinocchio. The new show comes complete with 'an epic original score, spell-binding storytelling and more than a pinch of Christmas magic'.

The Albany's version, meanwhile, sees the critically acclaimed Ceridwen Theatre Company making a welcome return to the Coventry venue.

## How The Grinch Stole Christmas!

Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham,  
Tues 3 - Sat 7 December

In a writing career spanning 60-plus years, American author Theodor Seuss Geisel, better known as Dr Seuss, produced some of the 20th century's best-loved children's stories. Among these was his 1957 rhymed-verse book, How The Grinch Stole Christmas!. The famous festive tale finds the grumpy Mount Crumpit-dwelling creature of the title deciding that it's high time he stole Christmas from the Whos, the endlessly joyful townsfolk at the bottom of the mountain who are positively bursting with annoying holiday cheer...

X-Factor's Matt Terry stars as Young Max in this musical version of the popular story.

## Charlie And The Christmas Cat

Lichfield Garrick, various dates between  
Fri 6 - Tues 24 December

Advertised as 'festive, fun and purrfect for all the family', Charlie And The Christmas Cat is being presented by the Lichfield Garrick Production Company for children aged between two and seven.

It's the most magical night of the year - what better time for Charlie and his feline friend to head off on an unforgettable adventure?...

## The Prince And The Pauper

New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme,  
until 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.



## Peter Pan

The Rep, Birmingham, Sat 30 November - Sun 19 January

Fly away to Neverland with the boy who wouldn't grow up, meet a real fairy, marvelous 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.



## Raymond Briggs' Father Christmas

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, until 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 this festive season. 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.

## Dear Santa

Malvern Theatre, Tues 3 & Wed 4 December; Birmingham Town Hall, Fri 6 & Sat 7 December; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Fri 13 - Tues 24 December

Presented with the intention of giving children aged two to seven both a fun introduction to theatre and a memorable yuletide treat, Dear Santa tells the tale of Father Christmas's backfiring attempts to sort out the most fantastic of festive gifts for a girl named Sarah. With the assistance of his

cheeky Elf, he finally settles on the perfect prezzie...

Youngsters get the chance to enjoy a meet-and-greet with Santa after the show.

## Kipper's Snowy Day

Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, until 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.



## Santa's Christmas Countdown

Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent, Thurs 19 December; Artrix, Bromsgrove, Mon 23 & Tues 24 December

Just when Santa Claus thinks everything's going swimmingly with his Christmas prepa-

rations, disaster strikes.

Intending to begin his countdown to the big day by opening the windows of his giant Christmas calendar, he finds that not only is said enormous item well and truly broken, but all the magical goodies contained inside it have mysteriously disappeared.

With Christmas suddenly under threat, the jolly bearded one needs as much help as he can get, which is where the show's young audience comes in - not to mention Dotty the Elf, Dasher the Reindeer, Jack Frost and Pom-pom the Penguin...

Presented by the company which last year performed Santa's Christmas Party.

## Penguins

The REP, Birmingham, Wed 4 - Sat 14 December

Friendship, fun, identity and the ever-changing meaning of family are among the themes being explored in this returning theatre & dance production for children aged three and older.

Inspired by a true story reported in the New York Times, the show focuses on two male Chinstrap penguins named Roy and Silo. Living alongside other penguin pairs in Central Park Zoo, they determine to try and hatch a rock in place of an egg - a decision that sees them embarking on a most unexpected adventure...









# You'll be Hooked...

## Nia Gwynne stars as Hook in the reimagined production of Peter Pan at Birmingham Repertory Theatre...

### **How did your playing Captain Hook at The Rep come about, Nia?**

Like most actors, it started with a phone call from my agent asking me if I was interested in the role and the project. After replying with a definite yes, I then went for an initial audition. I then had what's called a recall - a further audition - where we read more of the script and had a short sword-fighting session. A few days later, my agent called to say they wanted me to play the part. I said yes. Loudly.

### **What attracted you to the role?**

It's Captain Hook! What's not to love?!

### **How are you hoping to make your interpretation of the character distinctive from others?**

I won't be trying to make it consciously distinctive; it'll just be me trying to make it make sense in our version of the story. I'm a mother, so that may bring a different flavour to Hook's relationship to the children in the play - what it means to be a mother or not. Really I'm just trying to concentrate on making my character make sense. It's great that the part is finally being played by women. JM Barrie wrote it for an actress, but the actor playing Mr Darling had a word and got to play the part instead.

### **What do you think The Rep's version of the show will provide for audiences that's different from any other versions they might have seen?**

Where to start? As far as the staging, the techniques used for the flying scenes are thoroughly acrobatic and haven't been seen at The Rep before. Some of it is like aerial ballet. Breathtaking! We've got street dance, rap, and the most kick-ass Wendy and Tinker Bell you're ever likely to see. They literally kick pirate butt. The design is stunning. In our contemporary version, Neverland is magically created using mundane every-day objects. It

creates a world which is both fantastical and weirdly familiar. The result is spooky and hilarious at times. Our Peter and Wendy are rooted in a contemporary world; they're utterly recognisable as modern children who sound and look like their audience. This gives the story a freshness and vitality that will hopefully resonate with a 2019 Birmingham audience.

### **Why do you think the story of Peter Pan has been so successful over so long a period of time?**

It's ultimate fantasy. People fly, there are pirates, fairies, a battle between innocence and evil and a thoroughly nasty baddie. As an adult, I think there are times when you long for the joy and irresponsibility of youth that Peter and the Lost Ones represent. As a child you delight in seeing that portrayed.

### **Your theatre credits include films like Tolkien and Darkest Hour and stage adaptations of classical works such as Timon Of Athens and Titus Andronicus. If you could perform in only one of those genres for the rest of your acting career, which would you choose and why?**

Theatre. I love the discipline, the camaraderie and knowing it's different every night. Shame the money is terrible.

### **You trained at RADA. Do you believe that training at an academy or other such prestigious school gives you significant advantages as an actor over performers who've entered the profession via a different route?**

It was my only way to get seen and get a foot in the door. I cherish the voice training. I don't think it's necessary to go to drama school, but for me, I didn't know how else to get into the business.

### **Have you noticed any significant changes in British theatre since you entered the profession?**

The most significant change for me is a very recent one. It's the opening up of casting to include more women and BAME actors. It's taken a while but hopefully people will see themselves more diversely represented on stage. I bemoan the lack of stories being told about and by working-class voices. That feels like it's got worse.

### **If you could make a single change to 'how things are' in terms of British theatre, what would it be?**

More money for arts organisations outside London.

### **How will you be spending Christmas Day?**

With my partner and our four-and-a-half-year-old son in front of the fire, eating too much and watching Christmas films.

### **What's the best Christmas gift you've ever received and the one you're proudest of having given?**

My partner always gives me really well-thought-out things - stuff he knows I'll love. Anything that makes my son excited and my partner happy makes me proud. It's usually chocolate. Job done.

### **If you had to spend Christmas Day on a desert island with just one character from Peter Pan, who would you choose and why?**

Tinkerbell. She's lawless; fairies don't have to abide by the rules. And with a sprinkle of her fairy dust she could teach me to fly.

.....  
**Peter Pan: Reimagined shows at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre from Saturday 30 November to Sunday 19 January.**





# LEAVE REALITY BEHIND...

**Director Corey Campbell talks about immersive theatre experience Club 2B, showing at Coventry's Belgrade Theatre this month...**

Club 2B is an intriguing piece of immersive theatre that tackles famous stories of love and revenge throughout the ages - all with an Ancient Greek twist. Presenting a fusion of a 1930s Berlin cabaret club, a Secret Cinema event and an underground prohibition-era nightclub, it's an exclusive event for theatre-lovers, the adventurous and party animals alike.

Eat, drink and party alongside Zeus, the Greek King of all Gods and men (disguised as charismatic club owner 'Z'), his jealous wife

Hera and their reincarnations as iconic figures we all know and love.

"We focus on Zeus and Hera's quite dangerous love for one another," explains the event's director, Corey Campbell. "Zeus is very unfaithful and Hera is very jealous, continually taking her anger out on women he's been unfaithful with. What Club 2B suggests is that Zeus and Hera come back as all kinds of different characters we recognise, such as Marilyn Monroe and Jay Gatsby. We definitely address the themes of reconcilia-

tion, revenge, adultery and the male-written female narrative. Throughout history men have written for women. For example, Lady Godiva was depicted just as a woman who rode a horse naked, rather than the powerful land-owning woman she really was. So what we do with the script is suggest that Zeus had his part to play in twisting her narrative - and the same with figures like Marilyn Monroe. We take Zeus and Hera's relationship right the way through the ages to 2019, where Hera meets Zeus at this nightclub and demands her revenge on him for his treatment of her."









## The Nutcracker

**Birmingham Hippodrome,  
until Sat 14 December**

Sir Peter Wright's enchanting version of this festive family favourite shows at the Hippodrome courtesy of Birmingham Royal Ballet. Created in 1990, Sir Peter'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...

## The Boy In The Dress

**Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, until Sun 7 March**

David Walliams' critically acclaimed children's story about friendship and the acceptance of others is here being performed on stage for the very first time.



"The Boy In The Dress is about what it means to be different," explains David. "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. "It's ultimately a feelgood family show. 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 other ways. I think everyone will feel really uplifted at the end of it!"

Santa who reckons he's the real Kris Kringle (which, like St Nick, is another name for Santa). Not that any of society's serious grown-up types give his claim the time of day, of course. After all, when it comes to believing in a supernatural entity whose traditional visual presentation involves the sporting of a big white beard, the greater number of folk prefer to pin their colours to the mast of that all-powerful fella in the Bible...

## My Cousin Rachel

**Malvern Theatres, Tues 3 - Sat 7 December**

Daphne du Maurier's menacing psychological thriller has twice been made into a film, most recently in 2017 starring Rachel Weisz. This new touring production of the best-selling novel sees the eponymous character being played by Helen George, best known as Trixie Franklin in BBC One's cosy Sunday night drama, *Call The Midwife*. While visiting Italy, wealthy landowner Ambrose Ashley meets and marries distant relation Rachel and then unexpectedly dies. When Rachel disappears, Ashley's young ward, Phillip, can't help but wonder whether his guardian's new wife might have had something to do with his untimely death. But when Phillip then encounters Rachel in Cornwall - and despite his considerable misgivings about her - he soon finds himself falling for her undeniable charms.

## Grandpa's Great Escape

**Arena Birmingham,  
Mon 23 & Tues 24, Thurs 26 December**

It's tough being in an old folk's home when once upon a time you were a World War Two flying ace. Even so, the spirit of adventure continues to burn brightly in Grandpa, who enlists the help of his grandson, Jack, to plot a daring escape from Twilight Towers. But little do they know that the sinister Matron Swine is onto them...

This first-ever staging of David Walliams' hugely popular children's book stars former Young One Nigel Planer in the title role.

"It's a great honour to be asked to play Grandpa in the live version of this amazing and cockle-warming story by David Walliams," says Nigel. "It's set to be such an amazing spectacular, and I can't wait to drive a tank and fly a lifesize Spitfire over Birmingham audiences!"



## Miracle On 34th Street

**Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham,  
Thurs 5 - Thurs 24 December**

Most people who delight in the magic of the festive season will surely have seen at least one of the two movie versions of this splendidly charming story. The more recent film, made in 1994, starred Richard Attenborough as the sleigh-riding Saint Nicholas. The story revolves around a department-store





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# DREAMING OF A G4 CHRISTMAS...

**Classical popera stars G4 were runners-up on series one of The X-Factor. The quartet chat to What's On ahead of their Christmas concert in Birmingham...**

Vocal troupe G4's classical-style delivery of pop songs has seen them enjoying plenty of chart-topping success, with two of their albums going platinum.

There have been a few line-up changes to the group since they finished runners-up on the first-ever series of The X-Factor. Original members Jonathan Ansell (tenor) and Mike Christie (baritone) are nowadays joined by relative newcomers Lewis Raines (second tenor) and Duncan Sandilands (bass).

## **What's the key to G4's continuing success?**

**Lewis:** We always do our medleys and arrangements ourselves - for both Christmas tours and our other tours. We're never short of ideas, and we're always willing to give something a go before deciding whether it's genius

or the worst idea in the world. G4 are 'yes' men! It's also rare to have such a range of voices in one group, so we're able to go to places other acts can't. Particularly with Jon's voice going so high - the sky really is the limit. While a lot of groups have to stick to one key, we can change it up and keep pushing ourselves.

**Jonathan:** Our shows are very much our own takes, interpretations and creations on stage, which is what gets us so excited about singing. We sing our interpretations of what the best parts of popular songs are, which gives us such a unique personal connection to everything we do. I think that's why we're still going 15 years on. If people have got through the Christmas markets to our show without getting delayed eating all the hotdogs, then

we owe it to them to give an honest and emotive performance of our work!

**Mike:** Even if a whacky idea doesn't work out, it always inspires something else totally unique. We don't like playing it safe, and when we've worked with people who want to kind of create us in this image of the typical classical crossover group, it just hasn't worked. When we launched, we were something totally new to the industry, and it's important that we stay true to ourselves.

## **What are the highlights of the Christmas tour for you as performers?**

**Mike:** We get to perform in such amazing venues, particularly a lot of cathedrals and grand buildings, like Birmingham Town Hall. That really sets the tone, and the tour takes



on this really magical feeling. Last year's Christmas tour saw us perform at Blackpool Tower Ballroom for the first time, so that was a particular highlight for us. It's such an iconic building and so beautiful. We were there just a week after Strictly Come Dancing were, so we fed off the buzz from that, too.

**Lewis:** As a local, I've been to Blackpool many, many times, but the ballroom was just incredible to perform at, and we're excited to return this year too. What I love most about touring at this time of year, though, is that there are always amazing Christmas markets right on our doorstep.

**Duncan:** I'm a big kid and always will be. I absolutely love Christmas, and being able to work over this period and sing in some beautiful venues is a real treat. Talking of Blackpool, it's the Pleasure Beach I'm looking forward to - great way to warm up the voice!

#### What's different about G4 Christmas?

**Jonathan:** We do some of the same songs each year because there's such a need for nostalgia around the festive period. We have some great singalong moments. We've created our own version of Mariah Carey's All I Want For Christmas. It's amazing to get that opportunity to play with an entirely different arrangement of something the audience knows. It's nice to see the audience like our version of such a popular festive track. We don't like to sing songs the exact same way the audience expects. We love medleys, particularly at Christmas time because there are so many to get in there.

**Mike:** We also have some really wonderful children's choirs at every date. They're the next generation of singers, and seeing their enthusiasm, funny Christmas hats and smiling faces is just lovely for us. Each choir will choose a soloist to sing the first verse of Once In Royal David's City, which they will perform a capella in front of the audience. That's a particularly special moment because you can see the confidence and joy that that opportunity brings them.

#### What was the inspirational music moment for each of you when you were youngsters?

**Jonathan:** For me, there wasn't really a moment - apparently I was just always loud! One day my shouting just turned into singing, I suppose! I confused everyone at school because I was a prop in the rugby team but also sung 'like a girl' in the choir with my unbroken voice.

**Mike:** I was a chorister from the age of eight to 13, and that really set me up for a music career. I had some really amazing opportuni-

ties to be in films and feature on soundtracks, so I'm actually in the choirs of Four Weddings And A Funeral. Rowan Atkinson was so supportive. And the actress Sarah Crowe we instantly recognised because she was in a certain cream cheese advert with a high, squeaky voice in the clouds. If you're a certain age, you'll know what I'm talking about! It really was an amazing experience that inspired me to keep singing for life. I think it can be really difficult for boys because singing just isn't seen as cool. Bands and pop acts are different because obviously men like Ed Sheeran and Lewis Capaldi are huge icons, but classical singing, and choirs in particular, are seen only as a thing for girls.

**Lewis:** I didn't start singing until I was about 16. I was doing GCSE music because I thought it was one of those subjects where I could just mess around. It got to the summer and I realised I had an exam coming up, but I didn't actually play an instrument, so I ended up singing. I had a lovely school experience, but there's still that stigma around boys singing. If you're not in the sports teams with the lads being a manly man, then you're admitting that you're different. That's really hard, particularly for youngsters.

**Duncan:** I was lucky at my school in that we were encouraged to do sport *and* music. You'd see our headmaster both on the sidelines at the rugby match and in the cathedral, cheering on the chamber choir. I should really pay tribute to my mother, who introduced me to such an eclectic mix of singers - from Gilbert & Sullivan to Bessie Smith. I was unfortunate in my cathedral-choir aspirations, though, because I auditioned a little late and my voice had started to break quite early. That almost killed my singing career and I remember taking a few years out, but it was thanks to school again that I got back into it.

#### Do you have a favourite G4 moment?

**Mike:** I think for me it was when our first album went to number one. We literally just went on The X-Factor for a laugh and didn't really expect to get anywhere. Jennifer Lopez had released an album that same day and we outsold her - it was incredible! We also did the Late Late Show in Ireland, and it was so weird to be recognised by famous people. It didn't help that Andrea from The Corrs was there, so I was a bit of a mess - and Caprice was one of the guests too! We had to fly back to London for an early-morning interview, and she came into our dressing room and invited us on a night out after the show. We were gutted to have to turn her down. It's moments like that where we realised how insane the entire experience was going to be.

**Lewis:** For me, it was when the Red Arrows welcomed us to Jersey when we went to perform there. Obviously we also remember the shows, but it's always those little moments that stand out. For example, Jon has really got me into fishing. All our tours are full of amazing memories, both on and off the stage, that we could sit and talk about for hours.

**Duncan:** The first time we rehearsed together after I joined was a really exciting moment for me. There'd been all this talk about G4's fresh look, but we hadn't sung together yet. When we actually did, it was just the most lovely blend, and you don't always get that straight away with groups - they can take a long time to find their stride. Singing together for that first time in full voice and realising we worked together was amazing - and also a massive relief!

#### You also have some very dedicated fans...

**Lewis:** We're so lucky to have fans who just connect with us and keep coming back to see us perform again and again.

**Jonathan:** We literally do have women who throw their bras onto the stage. There were these two 'bra ladies' in particular - and some bras they were, too... more like UFOs! I was always concerned for the safety of people in their vicinity because they'd lift the bras up and start swinging them around - everybody near them had to duck!

**Mike:** We're using their words, to be fair. They were very open about their hammock-sized bras. We've had knickers thrown at us too, and flowers. All sorts. I think what's so humbling is having so many people supporting us. Our shows are great because we get a good mix of superfans and people who've never seen us live before but remember us from The X-Factor or something similar. We also get a lot of husbands being dragged along by their wives to see us, and then they end up becoming bigger fans than their wives! They come along determined not to enjoy it, but in the end they have a great time. It's really touching. We get so many gifts too, particularly around Christmas, which is very generous of everyone.

.....

**G4 Christmas shows at Birmingham Town Hall on Tuesday 10 December. The boys return to the region next autumn for G4 Live 2020, playing Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, on Sunday 13 September and Forest Arts Centre, Walsall, on Saturday 3 October.**





CRITIC'S CHOICE

## Cats

CERT tbc

Starring **James Corden, Judi Dench, Jason Derulo, Idris Elba, Jennifer Hudson, Ian McKellen, Taylor Swift, Rebel Wilson, Francesca Hayward**  
Directed by **Tom Hooper (UK/USA)**

It's hard to imagine a film version of Andrew Lloyd Webber's feline musical, but then the stage show was no small feat, either. Essentially a musical adaptation of TS Eliot's poetry collection Old Possum's Book Of Practical Cats, the show was a

balletic look at the life of a tribe of cats called the Jellicles. However, a wonderfully diverse cast and a screenplay by Lee Hall and Tom Hooper promises much, once one can come to accept James Corden and Taylor Swift as credible kitties. Tom Hooper previously brought the stage musical Les Misérables to the screen, following his Oscar-winning The King's Speech, so the project is in good paws.

**Released Fri 20 December**

## Honey Boy

CERT 15 (94 mins)

Starring **Shia LaBeouf, Lucas Hedges, Noah Jupe, FKA Twigs, Maika Monroe, Natasha Lyonne**  
Directed by **Alma Har'el (USA)**

Taking the title from his childhood nickname, Shia LaBeouf documents his early years and relationship with his dad. He wrote the film as part of his rehabilitation programme and plays his own father.

**Released Fri 6 December**



## Lucy In The Sky

CERT 15 (124 mins)

Starring **Natalie Portman, Jon Hamm, Zazie Beetz, Dan Stevens, Colman Domingo, Ellen Burstyn**  
Directed by **Noah Hawley (USA)**



Loosely inspired by real events, the character of Lucy is based on the NASA astronaut Lisa Nowak who, following a lengthy period aboard the Space Shuttle Discovery, began to lose touch with reality. It seems that there can be crime after space...

**Released Fri 6 December**

## Motherless Brooklyn

CERT 15 (144 mins)

Starring **Edward Norton, Bruce Willis, Gugu Mbatha-Raw, Alec Baldwin, Willem Dafoe, Bobby Cannavale, Cherry Jones**  
Directed by **Edward Norton (USA)**

Based on the 1999 novel by Jonathan Lethem, this crime drama sees Edward Norton as a 1950s' private investigator with Tourette's syndrome. The actor previously directed the romantic comedy Keeping The Faith (2000).

**Released Fri 6 December**



## Ordinary Love

CERT 12a (92 mins)

Starring **Lesley Manville, Liam Neeson, David Wilmot, Amit Shah**  
Directed by **Lisa Barros D'Sa and Glenn Leyburn (UK/Ireland)**

A middle-aged woman struggles to come to terms with her breast cancer. From a screenplay by the Northern Irish playwright Owen McCafferty.

**Released Fri 6 December**

## Jumanji: The Next Level

CERT 12a

Starring **Dwayne Johnson, Jack Black, Kevin Hart, Karen Gillan, Nick Jonas, Awkwafina, Danny DeVito**  
Directed by **Jake Kasdan (USA)**

The success of Jumanji: Welcome To The Jungle (2017) surprised everyone, not least Sony Pictures. Less surprising is the new sequel (Welcome To The Jungle was, itself, a sequel to the original Jumanji of 1995). Here, Spencer has vanished into the world's most dangerous video game and his friends must team up again to find him. Expect arid deserts and snow-whipped mountains.

**Released Wed 11 December**





## Black Christmas CERT tbc

Starring Imogen Poots, Lily Donoghue, Aleyse Shannon, Brittany O'Grady, Cary Elwes  
Directed by Sophia Takal (USA/New Zealand)



This is unusual. This slasher pic set on a sorority campus happens to be a remake of the remake (2006) of the somewhat unremarkable 1974 original Black Christmas. Filmed in New Zealand (on the South Island).

Released Fri 13 December

## The Courier CERT 18 (99 mins)

Starring Olga Kurylenko, Gary Oldman, Dermot Mulroney, William Moseley, Amit Shah  
Directed by Zackary Adler (USA/UK)

A London-based courier (Kurylenko) finds that a package she's transporting is a bomb. And, back in New York, a heinous Gary Oldman tries out one of his interesting accents. Expect some strong violence and bloody imagery.

Released Fri 20 December

## Little Women CERT PG (135 mins)

Starring Saoirse Ronan, Emma Watson, Florence Pugh, Laura Dern, Timothée Chalamet, Meryl Streep  
Directed by Greta Gerwig (USA)



Following the American Civil War, the four March sisters adapt to a grown-up world. Based on Louisa May Alcott's beloved 1868 novel, this is the eighth time that the story has been put on film. Scripted by the actresses Greta Gerwig and (an uncredited) Sarah Polley.

Released Thurs 26 December



EDITOR'S CHOICE

## Star Wars: The Rise Of Skywalker CERT tbc

Starring Carrie Fisher, Mark Hamill, Adam Driver, Daisy Ridley, John Boyega, Oscar Isaac, Anthony Daniels, Naomi Ackie, Domhnall Gleeson, Richard E Grant, Lupita Nyong'o, Keri Russell, Ian McDiarmid, Billy Dee Williams  
Directed by JJ Abrams (USA)

Are you excited yet? It's been a long time coming, but The Rise Of Skywalker is the final nail, um, segment, in the nine-part space opera that is Star Wars. It will highlight the end of the on-going tiff between the Jedi and the Sith as well as an almighty

clash between the Resistance and the First Order. The good news is that JJ Abrams returns to the fold, after directing Episode VII - The Force Awakens (2015), the highest-grossing Star Wars film yet. And by salvaging footage from the last two instalments, Carrie Fisher's Princess Leia will appear in a leading role, thanks to the leg-erdmain of the various scriptwriters employed on the project. Anthony Daniels, who recreates his turn as the humanoid droid C-3PO, will be the only actor to have appeared in all nine Star Wars films.

Released Thurs 19 December

## Playing With Fire

CERT PG (106 mins)

Starring John Cena, Keegan-Michael Key, John Leguizamo, Brianna Hildebrand, Dennis Haysbert, Judy Greer  
Directed by Andy Fickman (USA)

We all know that children are a match for anybody (cf. Kindergarten Cop with Arnold Schwarzenegger). Here, in this family-friendly comedy, a gang of tough firefighters find themselves outclassed by three kids they have rescued.

Released Thurs 26 December



## Spies In Disguise CERT PG

With the voices of Will Smith, Tom Holland, Rashida Jones, Ben Mendelsohn, Rachel Brosnahan, Karen Gillan  
Directed by Nick Bruno and Troy Quane (USA)



This is the third film this year in which Will Smith has lent his voice to a digital version of himself. Here, he plays Lance Sterling, the world's most awesome spy who is accidentally turned into a pigeon. From the company that brought us Ice Age and Rio. It's for kids, of course.

Released Thurs 26 December



## Dressed To The Nines

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery,  
Sat 7 December - Fri 4 September

Dressed To The Nines is a particularly appropriate exhibition to view at this time of year, with Christmas parties, nights on the town and more formal gatherings in plentiful supply and all requiring a serious amount of thought about what to wear. Taking a look at the subject of dressing up and going out, and covering the period from around 1850 up to the present day, the exhibition highlights some of the changes which have occurred in the types of clothing that are worn for special occasions. Featured in the show are a number of garments, accessories and full outfits from the city's dress collection, included among which are a 1930s beaded evening dress, an embroidered court uniform which belonged to Neville Chamberlain and cocktail dresses by Christian Dior and Norman Hartnell. Oh, and shoes. Lots and lots of shoes...

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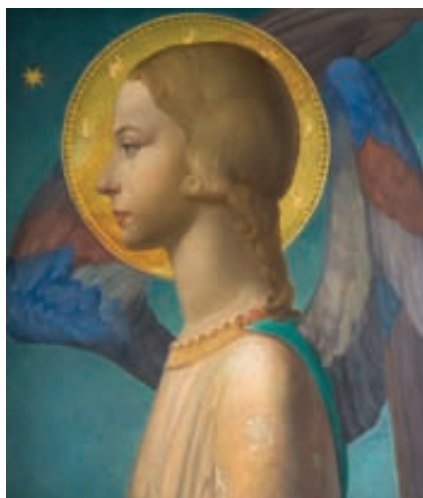
  

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## The Bloomsbury Effect

Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Sat 14 December - Sun 16 February

This new exhibition is part of an ongoing project by the Courtauld Gallery which is designed to reignite links between the collection and its industrial heritage. The initiative sees the Gallery engaging with communities living in areas near to where textile company Courtaulds Ltd once had a significant industrial presence. One such place is Wolverhampton, where

a Courtaulds factory was in operation from 1927 to 1970. The exhibition comprises three prestigious early 20th century British paintings on loan from the Courtauld Gallery. The paintings can be viewed alongside the Wolverhampton Society of Artists Centenary Exhibition.



## Changing Times: Humour And Satire

Enginuity, Coalbrookdale Museum Of Iron, Ironbridge, Shropshire, until Fri 28 February

A free exhibition, Changing Times: Humour And Satire showcases a mix of satirical prints and objects from the museum's Elton Collection, dating from the mid-18th century onwards. The prints and objects on show 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.

## Meryl McMaster: As Immense As The Sky

Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, Wed 4 December - Sun 23 February

"I want to bring specific awareness to the broad consequences of colonisation, and how the mentality of greed and/or lack of foresight is still impacting us today," explains Canadian artist Meryl McMaster, who is here presenting her first UK solo exhibition. "At the same time, my work isn't intended to resolve this dilemma but rather to create an opportunity for introspection and conversation.

"Each of us has a complicated relationship with the past, with gaps and biases. It's important to expose and explore these gaps, so that we may encounter our next moments better prepared."



## Crafting A Better Future

Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, until Sun 1 March

When is an exhibition of scarves more than just an exhibition of scarves?

When it's aiming to raise people's awareness of homelessness, that's when...

The work of the West Midlands Craft Group, the 70-plus on-show creations have been produced as part of a project designed to be supportive of homeless people and those living in unsafe or unsuitable accommodation.

The group elected to focus on the scarf in particular because they considered it to be a symbol of something which many people are able to take for granted, but which the homeless most definitely are not - comfort.

Alongside the display of scarves, the exhibition also features photographs of craft workshops which the group has been running in Birmingham for people who have experienced or are experiencing homelessness.









# 8 REASONS TO VISIT BULLRING & GRAND CENTRAL THIS CHRISTMAS

The countdown to the big day is on, and Christmas has never looked better at Bullring & Grand Central. There are so many reasons to visit the centre - we've picked eight of our favourites below...

## 1 The Bull's Christmas Outfit

Would it even be Christmas if the Bull wasn't all dressed up? He'll be wearing his panto-inspired costume from Friday 29 November - and of course he'll be selfie-ready.

## 2 Snow House

The Snow House is back on St Martin's Balcony, offering great views of the city and a range of beers and wine, mulled wine and hot chocolate. Open daily until late.

## 3 PAW Patrol Trail

Help the pups save Christmas by taking part in the PAW Patrol trail. Maps are available from Bullring & Grand Central's Customer Service Desks, with pups located throughout the centre.

## 4 Christmas Movie Screenings

You can shop and dine, then watch some of your favourite festive classics on the big screen in St Martin's Square on Thursdays and Sundays in December.

**Thursday 28 November 6pm:** Elf

**Sunday 1 December 2pm:** The Grinch

**Thursday 5 December 6pm:** Nativity!

**Sunday 8 December 2pm:** Home Alone

**Thursday 12 December 6pm:**

Miracle On 34th Street

**Thursday 19 December 6pm:** The Holiday

**Sunday 22 December 2pm onwards:** The Muppet Christmas Carol and Polar Express

## 5 Once Upon A Time in Birmingham

Just imagine... 88,000 fairy lights and a whole lot of Christmas, mixed with cocktails and a light refracting jelly dessert... Now you've got Once Upon A Time in Birmingham! Open daily until late in the old Jamie's Italian restaurant.

## 6 Christmas Boogaloo

Bullring & Grand Central have teamed up with Birmingham Hippodrome to throw a Christmas party to rival all Christmas parties. Intrigued? Head to St Martin's Square on Saturday 14 & Sunday 15 December.

## 7 Under Wraps Boutique

If you've ever struggled with those difficult-to-wrap gifts, we have great news - the Bullring & Grand Central Under Wraps Boutique will be open on Thursday 19 & Friday 20 December. With an international wrapping expert-led team, you'll be able to choose from five different disguised options so that the recipient has no idea what's inside.

## 8 And of course, the shops and restaurants...

With lots of new shops and restaurants, including LEGO, H&M HOME, Levi's and Indian Streatery, your options are endless.



Find out more about what's new and what's happening at Bullring & Grand Central by [visiting bullring.co.uk](http://visiting.bullring.co.uk)

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## Marvel Universe LIVE

Arena Birmingham, Thurs 5 - Sun 8 December

Comic book superheroes including Spider-Man, the Avengers and Doctor Strange smash their way into Birmingham this month as Marvel

Universe LIVE! returns to the city with a brand new show. The production features cutting-edge special effects, pyrotechnics, 3D video projection, aerial stunts, martial arts and daring motorcycle displays.



## PAW Patrol Pups Save Christmas Trail

Birmingham city centre, until Fri 3 January

PAW Patrol fans get to meet the canine stars of the hit Nick Jr TV show this Christmas, as a toy brick trail featuring 21 characters and buildings



pops up across Birmingham city centre. Chase, Marshall, Skye and the gang will be in locations including Selfridges, John Lewis and The Mailbox.

Pick up a trail map to take part in a Pups Save Christmas mission and be in with a chance of winning £250-worth of shopping vouchers.

## Toy Collectors Fair

NEC, Birmingham,  
Fri 27 December

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

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

## Wales Comic Con: Telford Takeover

Telford International Centre,  
Shropshire, Sat 7 & Sun 8  
December

Wales Comic Con this month crosses the border to bring 'a bigger and better event' to Telford for the very first time.

A whole host of big names from the world of TV and film will be taking part in the event across the weekend, with Guardians Of The Galaxy's Sean Gunn and Michael Rooker and Harry Potter's David Bradley and Matthew Lewis being joined by former Doctor Whos David Tennant (pictured) and Matt Smith.







# CHRISTMAS AT THE CASTLE



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\*On selected dates, limited availability







## Ice Skate Birmingham

Centenary Square, Birmingham,  
until Sun 12 January

Ice Skate Birmingham and the Big Wheel make a welcome return to Centenary Square. 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.

## Santa At The Valley

Sandwell Park Farm, West Bromwich,  
every Sat and Sun between 7 - 22 December,  
plus Mon 23 December

Sandwell Park Farm this month opens its doors for families to visit Santa in his grotto. Not only can little ones say hello to the cheery bearded one himself, they can also meet and greet his trusty reindeer as they prepare for their Christmas duties.

Traditional Punch & Judy shows run throughout each day, with other attractions including circus skills workshops and children's crafts.

Hot food & drink outlets ensure visitors young and old can keep up their energy levels as they busy themselves getting into the festive spirit.



## Santa Safari

West Midland Safari Park, Bewdley,  
various dates throughout December

Families visiting West Midland Safari Park this festive season can meet an elf, climb on board a sleigh and head for the North Pole.

And that's just for starters! Having arrived at their destination, young visitors can then say hello to Santa Claus, tell him what's on their Christmas wish-list and pose with the great man while a helpful elf takes a picture.

But wait, there's more... After meeting Santa, children can also select their own present in the elves' workshop and sample a special walk-through 'discovery trail'...

## Christmas At The Castle

Warwick Castle,  
until 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.



## Candlelit Christmas

Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove,  
Sat 7 December

Guests are invited to enjoy a traditional English Christmas at Avoncroft this month, as the museum gets into the festive spirit by presenting the sights and sounds of Christmases past. With costumed reenactors occupying the historic buildings, entertainment comes in the form of street performances, star gazing and a selection of festive music performed by, among others, choirs and bell ringers. Younger visitors can enjoy a special reindeer trail and railway rides on the miniature Santa Express.

And to top off what promises to be a thoroughly enjoyable day, Father Christmas will be paying a visit to the site too - a site, we should add, that will be splendidly illuminated by candlelight!



# Santa's Grotto

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# Christmas

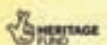
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## Victorian Christmas

Blists Hill Victorian Town, Ironbridge,  
Sat 7 & Sun 8 and Sat 14 & Sun 15 December

Enjoy a traditional Victorian Christmas in the recreated town of Blists Hill at Ironbridge Gorge this festive season. Across two weekends, the site will be decorated with twinkling lights and sparkling snow as choirs and brass

bands fill the streets with festive cheer. Families can enjoy a range of workshops, including candle dipping and Christmas card making, while entertainment in the Big Top comes in the form of circus acts, Punch & Judy shows and pantomime performances. Visitors wanting to meet Santa and his elves can board a train and journey along the woodland to the hillside grotto.

## Meet Santa at Sea Life

National Sea Life Centre, Birmingham,  
until 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.

## Santa's Winter Wonderland

Snowdome, Tamworth, Staffs,  
until 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

Shakespeare's Birthplace,  
Stratford-upon-Avon, various  
dates in December

Throughout December, families can discover the stories behind some of Shakespeare's most famous ousted monarchs, including the likes of Caesar, Cleopatra and Richard III, to name but three...

Other attractions at the venue this month include Flowers Of Winter (Sat 14 December - Sun 5 January) - an exhibition of floral displays inspired by traditional winter blooms - and Come A-Was-sailing (Mon 30 December - Wed 1 January) - a chance to participate in the precursor to the modern-day activity of carol singing.

## Ebenezer's Christmas Carol

Tudor World, Stratford-upon-Avon,  
on selected dates between  
Wed 11 - Tues 24 December



Back by popular demand, Ebenezer Crouch's A Christmas Carol tours will be haunting Tudor World in the lead-up to Christmas.

Meet Scrooge, Jacob Marley, Mr & Mrs Cratchit and all the little Cratchits, Mr & Mrs Fezziwig and a whole host of other equally memorable characters - including, of course, the ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Yet-To-Come.

There's every chance that this will prove to be the very best fun you've ever had while in the company of a grumpy old man!



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## Santa Family Days

Millennium Point, Birmingham,  
Sun 8, Fri 13, Sat 19 December

Millennium Point is transformed into a winter wonderland this month, with Birmingham's

biggest Christmas tree - standing at 39 feet and brought to life by 23,000 LED lights - taking pride of place. Attractions include a host of free activities to keep youngsters entertained, and the chance to have a photo taken with Santa (who'll be handing out a special gift to every child).

## The Polar Express Train Ride

Train departs Birmingham  
Moor Street Station,  
until Sun 22 December

The Polar Express train rides return to Birmingham this Christmas.

The popular motion picture film is being theatrically recreated so that families can immerse themselves in the sights and sounds of a 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.



## Christmas Through Time

Black Country Living Museum, Dudley,  
until Tues 24 December

Visitors to the Black Country Living Museum can take in the sights, sounds and smells of long-ago Christmases this month, thanks to a brand new immersive experience. Christmas Through Time starts way back during Queen Victoria's reign, carries on through to the 1930s, and provides plenty for families to see and do - from making plum puddings and writing Christmas cards to enjoying a selection of classic movies in the venue's 1920s Limelight Cinema.



## Christmas at Compton Verney

Compton Verney Art Gallery & Park,  
Warwickshire, Sun 1 - Sun 15 December

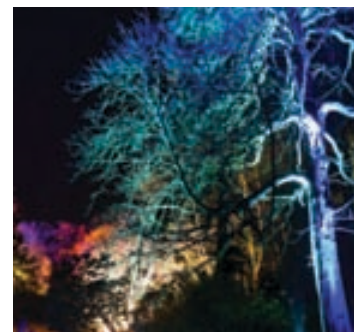
Compton Verney is certainly helping families get into the Christmas spirit this month.

Young visitors to the popular venue are invited to join Mother Christmas as she shares some of her favourite festive stories, while Father Christmas and his reindeer will also be on hand to say a cheery hello. There are Christmas paper crafts to enjoy too, providing families with the chance to make festive garlands, floral wreaths, tree decorations and advent calendars.

## Enchanted Weston

Weston Park, Shifnal, nr Telford,  
Shropshire,  
Fri 13 - Sat 21 December

The Weston Park woods are this month transformed into an illuminated wonderland for a second year running, with towering trees and historic landmarks colourfully lit up along a half-mile route. After completing the enchanted walk, visitors can enjoy street food and cocktails around fire pits in the courtyard, or pick up some last-minute gifts from local producers at the indoor market.





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# Snow House

AT THE BULLRING SHOPPING CENTRE

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

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

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SUN - THUR 11.00 - 20.00  
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19/10/2019 - 05/01/2020



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## Fairy Tale Christmas

Aston Hall, Birmingham,  
Sat 7 & Sun 8, Sat 14 & Sun 15 December

Aston Hall will be displaying its finest festive decor mid-month, as it hosts a family-friendly weekend designed for people of all ages to enjoy

As visitors explore the mansion's many magnificent rooms, they're in for a pleasant surprise or several, with much-loved fairytale characters and pantomime favourites turning up in all manner of places! The chance to warm up by a roaring fire further adds to the weekend's appeal.

## Enchanted Witley Court

Witley Court & Gardens, Worcestershire,  
Thurs 5 - Sun 8 December

The grounds of Witley Court are once again being transformed into an illuminated wonderland this festive season.

An 'enchancing experience of light, colour and sound' sees tunnels and pathways lit with twinkling lights, with glowing canopies and the grand fountain radiating a spectrum of colour. Once guests have made their way around the illuminated world, they can enjoy a selection of festive food & drink, numerous Christmas games and some sure-to-be-fun fairground rides.



## Vintage Sleigh Ride & Winter Wonderland

Coventry Transport Museum,  
Mon 2 - Mon 23 December

Coventry Transport Museum this year includes a brand new walk-through winter wonderland in its line-up of Christmas attractions.

Also featured is a reindeer-pulled vintage sleigh, leading families to Lapland for a meet-and-greet with Santa Claus, who'll be listening to Christmas wishes and pointing youngsters in the direction of the elf's toy shop to pick up a special festive gift.

## Statfold Santa Express

Statfold Barn Railway, nr  
Tamworth, until Sun 22 December

All aboard the Statfold Santa Express!

Taking place every pre-Christmas weekend in December, 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.



## Santa Safari

Hawkstone Park, Weston-under-Redcastle, North Shropshire,  
until 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.



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activation & events

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\*Calls cost 7p per minute plus your phone company's access charge



*Your week-  
by-week  
listings guide*  
**December 2019**

# the list



*Moroccan Fire Nights at NEC, Birmingham - until Sunday 22 December*

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

## What's On

Sun 1 - Sun 8 December



Dear Santa at  
Birmingham Town Hall  
**Fri 6 & Sat 7 December**

Mon 9 to Sun 15 December



Christmas Celebrations at  
Cadbury World  
**Sat 14 - Sun 15 December**

Mon 16 to Sun 22 December



The Bootleg Beatles play  
Symphony Hall  
**Tues 17 December**

Mon 23 to Tues 31 December



Ice Skate Birmingham in  
Centenary Square  
**until Sun 12 January**



## THROUGHOUT DECEMBER

### Visual Arts

**Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery**

**NEW BIRMINGHAM REVOLUTIONS - POWER TO THE PEOPLE** Display exploring Birmingham's vibrant and varied history of protest and activism, Sat 7 Dec - Fri 4 Sept



**Ikon Gallery**

**NEW JOHN WALKER - NEW PAINTINGS** Exhibition of new paintings by Birmingham-born artist John Walker, Wed 4 Dec - Sun 23 Feb

**NEW MERYL MCMASTER - AS IMMENSE AS THE SKY** Using photography to explore identity and its distinct cultural landscapes, the exhibition features new and recent work which sees Meryl drawing on her dual heritage to examine broader questions about being in the world, Wed 4 Dec - Sun 23 Feb

**NEW ZOZOU GROUP - DOOR OPEN** Video installation by two anonymous artists - one Syrian, the other British. The work exposes the constraints and imbalances of working together across the boundary of a war zone, Wed 4 Dec - Sun 23 Feb



**MAC, Birmingham**

**MADE @ MAC: ALL ABOUT TEXTILES** Exhibition of work from courses led by artist tutors Penny Dixon, Helen Lane, Claire Leggett and Rosie Moss, until Sun 19 Apr

**RBSA Gallery**

**RBSA MEMBERS & ASSOCIATES** Annual selling exhibition of original artwork, until Tues 24 Dec

**The Barber Institute**

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

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

**THE MUGHALS: POWER AND BEAUTY AT THE INDIAN COURT** Exhibition exploring courtly life, power and culture in the Indian subcontinent under Mughal rule (1526 - 1858), until Sun 2 Feb

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



**Other VISUAL ARTS**

**PRE-WINDRUSH TO THE PRESENT DAY** Heritage exhibition celebrating the long history of black representation on the Hippodrome stage, until Fri 21 Feb, Birmingham Hippodrome

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

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

**SHORE** Group exhibition by three Quebec-based artists, showing as part of Quebec City Biennial international exchange, until Fri 20 Dec, Stryx Gallery, Digbeth

**GATHER** Small selection from the portfolios of prints for sale from each artist, until Fri 20 Dec, Argentea Gallery, Birmingham

### Gigs

**BEER BLUES SUNDAY FT CATWALK VILLAINS** Sun 1 Dec, The Actress & Bishop, Birmingham

**CHRIS CLEVERLEY** Sun 1 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

**THE XCERTS / SWIM SCHOOL** Sun 1 Dec, The Flapper, B'ham

**ALLMAN BROWN** Sun 1 Dec, The Cuban Embassy, Birmingham

**FRANK TURNER & THE SLEEPING SOULS** Sun 1 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**RIDE** Sun 1 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**QUALITY REGGAE ROOTS** Sun 1 Dec, The Actress & Bishop, B'ham

**THE MAGIC GANG ALL-DAYER** Sun 1 Dec, The Asylum, Birmingham

**ECHOBELLY "STRIPPED BACK"** Sun 1 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**THE MIDNIGHT BEAST** Sun 1 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**THE DARKNESS** Sun 1 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**BILLY BRAGG** Sun 1 - Tues 3 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**SIGRID** Mon 2 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**FICKLE FRIENDS** Mon 2 Dec, The Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

**STRAY FROM THE PATH** Mon 2 Dec, The Asylum, Birmingham

**CAVETOWN** Mon 2 Dec, O2 Academy, B'ham

**EMELI SANDÉ** Mon 2 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**PLANES MISTAKEN FOR STARS, TO THE WALL, FINITE** Tues 3 Dec, The Flapper, Birmingham

**MEMPHIS MAY FIRE** Tues 3 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**BAD MANNERS** Tues 3 Dec, The Mill, Digbeth, Birmingham

**DIZRAELI** Tues 3 Dec, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

**MUNICIPAL WASTE** Tues 3 Dec, The Asylum, Birmingham

**WILD FRONT AND POLAR**

**STATES** Tues 3 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**AMYL AND THE SNIF-FERS** Tues 3 Dec, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

**THE OVERTONES XMAS 2019** Tues 3 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

**JAZZ CANON: ORNETTE COLEMAN** Tues 3 Dec, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**CLAIRO** Wed 4 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**KNOCKED LOOSE** Wed 4 Dec, The Mill, Digbeth, Birmingham

**EMIKA - FALLING IN LOVE WITH SADNESS** Wed 4 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

**OH, SLEEPER** Wed 4 Dec, The Flapper, Birmingham

**UK SUBS XMAS BASH** Wed 4 Dec, The Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

**MUNA** Wed 4 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**A CAUSLEY CHRISTMAS PLUS KATE GEE** Wed 4 Dec, The Red Lion Folk Club, Birmingham

**MIDLAND** Thurs 5 Dec, O2 Institute, B'ham

**SAM FENDER** Thurs 5 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**CALEB HAWLEY** Thurs 5 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

**ARCHSPIRE** Thurs 5 Dec, The Asylum, Birmingham

**KIT DOWNES QUARTET** Thurs 5 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre, B'ham

**ANGEL HAZE** Thurs 5 Dec, The Mill, Digbeth, Birmingham

**THE TROUBLE NOTES** Thurs 5 Dec, Cuban Embassy, Birmingham

**ELVANA: ELVIS FRONTED NIRVANA** Fri 6 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**ROB TAYLOR** Fri 6 Dec, Sky By The Water, Resorts World, B'ham

**FOREVANESCENCE WITH SUPPORT FROM MALLEN** Fri 6 Dec, Route 44, Birmingham

**THE CUREHEADS + SIOUXSIE & THE BUDGIES** Fri 6 Dec, The Night Owl, B'ham

**BLACKBALLED** Fri 6 Dec, Scruffy Murphy's,

Birmingham

**SAER + BLACK KNIGHT SATELLITE** Fri 6 Dec, The Cuban Embassy, Birmingham

**VICE CITY: QUEEN NIGHT** Fri 6 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

**DONAE'O** Fri 6 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**CATAPULT CLUB: THE PUNK MONKEYS** Fri 6 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**THE SMYTHS - 35TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR** Fri 6 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**ENTER THE DRAGON HOUSE CLASSIC CHRISTMAS SPECIAL** Fri 6 Dec, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

**JACK LUKEMAN** Fri 6 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

**THE HIGH CONTRAST BAND** Fri 6 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**BJORN AGAIN** Fri 6 Dec, O2 Academy, B'ham

**UK FOO FIGHTERS** Sat 7 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**THE FUTUREHEADS** Sat 7 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**D BLOCK EUROPE** Sat 7 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**THE FAIM** Sat 7 Dec, O2 Institute, B'ham

**QUILL CHRISTMAS CONCERT** Sat 7 Dec, Artrix, Bromsgrove

**THE TELESCOPES** Sun 8 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

**J.I.D** Sun 8 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**DINOSAUR PILE-UP** Sun 8 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**MELANIE MARTINEZ : THE K-12 TOUR** Sun 8 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**JAYA THE CAT** Sun 8 Dec, The Asylum, Birmingham

**CARA DILLON** Sun 8 Dec, Artrix, Bromsgrove

**SKID ROW, THE QUIRE-BOYS, CRASHDIET, MATT MITCHELL & THE COLD HEARTS** Sun 8 Dec, The Mill, Digbeth, Birmingham



## Classical

**WIND BAND AND STRING ORCHESTRA** An eclectic performance by two of Birmingham University's student lead ensembles, Sun 1 Dec, Elgar Concert Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**EX CATHEDRA: BACH MASS IN B MINOR** Featuring the Ex Cathedra choir & Baroque Orchestra, Jeffrey Skidmore (conductor) and Elizabeth Adams, Katie Trethewey & Amy Wood (sopranos), Sun 1 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

**BIRMINGHAM PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA: SNOW AT CHRISTMAS** Featuring Richard Laing (conductor). Programme includes works by Rimsky-Korsakov, Prokofiev, Tchaikovsky & Silvestri, Sun 1 Dec, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

**PREVIN** Featuring Daisy Hibberd (soprano), Jonathan French (piano) and Lucy Samuels (cello). Programme includes works by André Previn and poetry from Toni Morrison, Mon 2 Dec, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**ASHLEY WAGNER ORGAN RECITAL** Programme includes works by JS Bach, Messiaen & Anderson, Mon 2 Dec, Birmingham Cathedral

**XIZI ZHANG PIANO CONCERT** Programme includes works by Saint-Saëns and Schumann, Tues 3 Dec, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**ZIYU HE & MARIE HAUZEL IN CONCERT** Programme includes works by Stravinsky, Franck, Bartok, Saint-Saëns, Sarasate & Bazzini, Wed 4 Dec, The Barber Institute, B'ham

**FRANÇOIS LELEUX: MENDELSSOHN** Featuring François Leleux (conductor/Oboe) and Hanna Hipp (mezzo soprano). Programme includes works by Mendelssohn & Berlioz, Wed 4 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

**THE CASTALIAN QUARTET** Programme includes works by Janacek & Dvorak, Wed 4 Dec, The Bradshaw Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire



**BARCLAY'S PENSIONERS CAROL SERVICE** Wed 4 Dec, Birmingham Cathedral

**THE LEPROSY MISSION CAROL SERVICE**

Wed 4 Dec, Lichfield Cathedral

**FRANÇOIS LELEUX PLAYS MOZART** Also featuring Emmet Byrne (oboes), Oliver Janes & Joanna Patton (clarinets), Nikolaj Henriques & Margaret Cookhorn (bassoons) and Elspeth Dutch, Martin Wright, Mark Phillips & Jeremy Bushell (horns), Thurs 5 Dec, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

**I FAGIOLINI: LEONARDO DA VINCI - SHAPING THE INVISIBLE** Featuring Robert Hollingworth (conductor) and Professor Martin Kemp. Programme includes works by Tallis, Howells, Cipriano de Rore, Monteverdi & more... Thurs 5 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**GRADUATE DOUBLE BILL: TOM NIBLOCK QUARTET AND THE DAVE FERRIS/ CHRIS YOUNG QUINTET** Thurs 5 Dec, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**COMMUTER CONCERT: CELEBRATING MUSIC FOR VOICE AND GUITAR** Programme includes works of Villa-Lobos and Falla, Thurs 5 Dec, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**A NEW SONG** Featuring Marta Fontanais-Simmons (mezzo soprano) & Christopher Glynn (piano). Programme includes works by Brahms, Debussy, Turina & Martin Suckling, Fri 6 Dec, The Barber Institute, Birmingham

**PETER DONOHUE PLAYS HAYDN** Programme includes works by Haydn, Schubert, Webern and Brahms, Fri 6 Dec, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**CITY OF BIRMINGHAM CHOIR: MESSIAH** Fri 6 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

**CBSO: NOTELETS: CHRISTMAS TREATS** Featuring Jane Wright (presenter), the CBSO String Quartet, Members of the CBSO Chorus & the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Fri 6 - Sat 7 Dec, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

**PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA** Sat 7 Dec, Elgar Concert Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL CHORUS: MESSA DI GLORIA** Sat 7 Dec, Lichfield Cathedral

**JUNIOR CONSERVATOIRE END OF TERM CONCERT** Sat 7 Dec, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**CAROL SINGING IN CATHEDRAL SQUARE** Sat 7 Dec, Cathedral Square, B'ham

**THE BRITISH POLICE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: PROMS NIGHT SPECTACULAR** Sat 7 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

**UNIVERSITY CHORUS** Sun 8 Dec, Elgar Concert Hall, Birmingham

**BIRMINGHAM PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA: SNOWMAN AT CHRISTMAS** Featuring Richard Laing (conductor) and Chris Passey (narrator). Programme includes the works of Blake, Rimsky-Korsakov and Prokofiev, Sun 8 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall



Jack Lukeman - Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

## Comedy

**ELEANOR TIERNAN, CARL DONNELLY, SCOTT GIBSON & COMIC TBC** Wed 4 - Sun 8 Dec, The Glee Club, B'ham

**JIM JEFFERIES** Thurs 5 Dec, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

**IAN BRACKENBURY, CHE BURNLEY & ROB MULLHOLLAND** Thurs 5 Dec, The George Hotel, Lichfield

**NICK PAGE, SEAN PERCIVAL & DAVE LONGLEY** Fri 6 - Sat 7 Dec, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

**HAYLEY ELLIS & SALLY-ANNE HAYWARD** Sat 7 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

**LAUGHING SOLE COMEDY CLUB FOR KIDS** Sun 8 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

## Theatre

**THE SNOW QUEEN** Hans Christian Andersen's family classic follows the adventures of inseparable friends Kai & Gerda, until Mon 30 Dec, The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

**PETER PAN** JM Barrie's swashbuckling creation flies into Birmingham for Christmas, until Sun 19 Jan, The REP, Birmingham

**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

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

**THE BOY IN THE DRESS** World premiere based on David Walliams' bestselling book and featuring songs by Robbie Williams and Guy Chambers, until

Sun 8 Mar, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

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

**THE GREATEST SHOW WENCH** Hollywood has The Greatest Showman, the Black Country has The Greatest Show Wench! Fizzog are back with their latest production... Sun 1 Dec, Artrix, Bromsgrove

**CURTAINS** Jason Manford stars in a 'hilarious' whodunnit packed full of 'catchy songs, unforgettable characters and plot twists', Tues 3 - Sat 7 Dec, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

**A CHRISTMAS CAROL** Presented by The Crescent Theatre Company, Tues 3 - Sat 14 Dec, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

**SOME EXPLICIT POLAROIDS** Royal Birmingham Conservatoire's Theatre Company presents Mark Ravenhill's satirical urban fairytale, Wed 4 - Sat 7 Dec, The Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

**HENRY V** Royal Birmingham Conservatoire Theatre Company presents its version of Shakespeare's epic history play, Wed 4 - Sat 7 Dec, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

**THE IMPROLECTUALS** Improv 'super-group' featuring improvisers from around the Midlands, Thurs 5 Dec, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

**MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET: A LIVE MUSICAL RADIO PLAY** Featuring live Foley effects and a score of holiday carols, Thurs 5 - Tues 24 Dec, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

**CHRISTMAS CAROL CASEBOOK: AWAY IN A DANGER** Festive farce featuring 'murder, mayhem and more Christmas puns than you can wave your conductor's baton at', Thurs 5 Dec - Sat 4 Jan, Lichfield Garrick



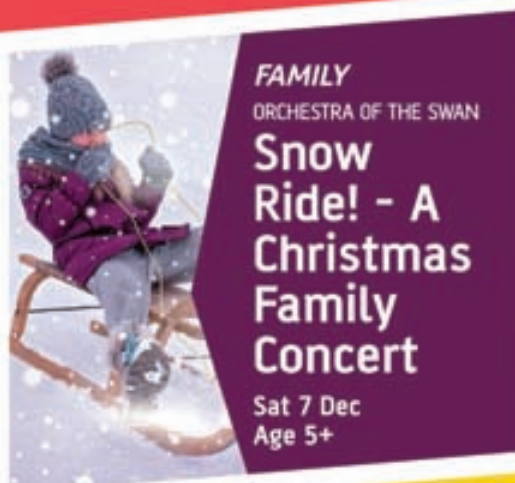
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# HIGHLIGHTS

## 2019-20



**FAMILY**  
LYRIC THEATRE AND PINS  
AND NEEDLES PRESENT  
RAYMOND BRIGGS' **Father Christmas**  
Wed 27 Nov - Fri 29 Dec  
Age 3+



**FAMILY**  
ORCHESTRA OF THE SWAN  
**Snow Ride! - A Christmas Family Concert**  
Sat 7 Dec  
Age 5+



**MUSIC**  
**Ronnie Spector & the Ronettes**  
Special Christmas Show  
Tue 17 Dec



**FAMILY**  
**National Youth Orchestra**  
Rise Up!  
Sat 4 Jan



**COMEDY**  
**Sandi Toksvig**  
National Trevor  
Sat 1 Feb



**MUSIC**  
**Anna Meredith**  
Sun 9 Feb



**COMEDY**  
**Rich Hall's Hoedown Deluxe**  
Wed 12 Feb



**DANCE**  
GERMAN CORNEJO'S  
**Tango Fire**  
Wed 12 Feb



**MUSIC**  
**KODO: Legacy**  
Fri 14 Feb

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### Pantomime

**ALADDIN** X-Factor's Wagner & Britain's Got Talent's Donchez Dacres star alongside TV & radio personality Dee 'White Dee' Kelly, until Sun 1 Dec, Stourbridge Town Hall

**CINDERELLA** Festive family favourite starring Rebecca Keatley (CBeebies) and Sam Rabone, until Sun 5 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

**PUSS IN BOOTS** Festive favourite written by and starring Iain Lauchlan, until Sat 11 Jan, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

**ALADDIN** Festive family show, Wed 4 - Sun 8 Dec, The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

**JACK AND THE BEANSTALK** Family panto, Fri 6 - Sat 14 Dec, Hall Green Little Theatre, Birmingham

**DICK WHITTINGTON** Starring Su Pollard, Ryan Thomas, Jeffrey Holland, Aaron James & Ian Adams, Sat 7 Dec - Sun 12 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

### Kids Shows

**RAYMOND BRIGGS' FATHER CHRISTMAS** Join Santa on the busiest day of his year - Christmas Eve, until Sun 29 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

**KIPPER'S SNOWY DAY** Original songs & music, puppetry and humour combine in a stage version of Mick Inkpen's much-loved book, until Tues 31 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre, B'ham

**HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS** Join in the festive fun with a production which critics have called 'a genius of a show', Tues 3 - Sat 7 Dec, The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

**PENGUINS** Show for children about friendship, fun, identity and the ever-changing meaning of family, Wed 4 - Sat 14 Dec, The REP, Birmingham

**DEAR SANTA** Rod Campbell's festive tale for younger audiences, Fri 6 - Sat 7 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall



**CHARLIE & THE CHRISTMAS CAT** 'Adventure-packed festive show that's just purrrfect for all the family', Fri 6 - Tues 24 Dec, Lichfield Garrick

### Dance

**THE NUTCRACKER** Birmingham Royal Ballet presents its annual staging of

Peter Wright's world-famous festive production, until Sat 14 Dec, Birmingham Hippodrome

### Talks / Spoken Word

**NO SUCH THING AS A FISH: THE BOOK OF THE YEAR 2019** Join the award-winning podcast team as they fill us in on the year we didn't know we'd lived through... Tues 3 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

### Cabaret

**RUPAUL'S DRAG RACE** Live on stage and hosted by Drag Queen Extraordinaire Alyssa Edwards, Sun 1 Dec, The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

### Film

#### INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

**THE GOOD LIAR (15)** Drama. Starring Helen Mirren, Ian McKellen. Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, until Thurs 5 Dec; Artrix, Bromsgrove, Fri 6 - Wed 11 Dec

**THE AERONAUTS (PG)** Adventure/Biography. Starring Felicity Jones, Eddie Redmayne. Artrix, Bromsgrove, Fri 29 Nov - Thurs 5 Dec; Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Fri 6 - Thurs 12 Dec

**MALEFICENT: MISTRESS OF EVIL (PG)** Adventure/Family. Starring Angelina Jolie, Elle Fanning. Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Sat 30 Nov - Sun 1 Dec

**LULLABY (15)** Drama. Starring Karin Viard, Antoine Reinartz. Foreign language, subtitled. Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Sun 1 Dec

**ELLA FITZGERALD: JUST ONE OF THESE THINGS (12a)** Biography. Electric Cinema, Birmingham, Sun 1 & Thurs 5 Dec

**DOCTOR SLEEP (15)** Fantasy/Horror. Starring Ewan McGregor, Rebecca Ferguson. The Mockingbird Cinema, Birmingham, Sun 1 - Thurs 5 Dec

**JAY AND SILENT BOB REBOOT (18)** Comedy. Starring Kevin Smith, Jason Mewes. The Mockingbird Cinema, Birmingham, Sun 1 - Thurs 5 Dec

**SORRY WE MISSED YOU (15)** Drama. Starring Kris Hitchen, Debbie Honeywood. Artrix, Bromsgrove, Mon 2 - Thurs 5 Dec

**WHEN MARGAUX MEETS MARGAUX (15)** Comedy. Starring Sandrine Kiberlain, Agathe Bonitzer. Foreign language, subtitled. Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Wed 4 Dec

**INVASION PLANET EARTH (15)** Adventure/Sci-Fi. Starring Simon



How The Grinch Stole Christmas - The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

Haycock, Lucy Drive. With post film director Q&A. Electric Cinema, Birmingham, Thurs 5 Dec

**SHIRO'S STORY (15)** Drama. Starring Joivan Wade, Percelle Ascott. Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Thurs 5 Dec

**LOVE ACTUALLY (18)** Drama/Romance. Starring Hugh Grant, Martine McCutcheon. With gin tasting. Electric Cinema, Birmingham, Thurs 5 Dec

**GREMLINS (12a)** Comedy/Horror. Starring Zach Galligan, Phoebe Cates. The Mockingbird Cinema, Birmingham, Fri 6 - Sat 7 Dec

**DIE HARD (15)** Action/Thriller. Starring Bruce Willis, Alan Rickman. The Mockingbird Cinema, Birmingham, Fri 6 - Sat 7 Dec

**THE ADDAMS FAMILY (PG)** Animation/Comedy. With the voices of Oscar Isaac, Charlize Theron. Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Fri 6 - Sun 8 Dec

**LAST CHRISTMAS (12a)** Comedy/Romance. Starring Emilia Clarke, Henry Golding. Artrix, Bromsgrove, Fri 6 - Wed 11 Dec

**MEETING GORBACHEV (12a)** Documentary/Biography. Foreign language, subtitled. Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Fri 6 & Thurs 12 Dec

**THE MUPPET CHRISTMAS CAROL (PG)** Comedy/Drama. Starring Michael Caine, Dave Goelz. Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Sat 7 Dec

**MAKING WAVES: THE ART OF CINEMATIC SOUND (12a)** Documentary. Starring Erik Aadahl, Ioan Allen. Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Sat 7 Dec

**THE POLAR EXPRESS (U)** Animation/Adventure. With the voices of Tom Hanks, Chris Coppola. Artrix, Bromsgrove, Sat 7 Dec

**WHITE CHRISTMAS (U)** Musical/Romance. Starring Bing Crosby, Danny Kaye. With wine tasting. Electric Cin-

ema, Birmingham, Sun 8 Dec

**THE BIGGEST LITTLE FARM (PG)** Documentary. Starring John Chester, Molly Chester. Artrix, Bromsgrove, Sun 8 Dec

**THE DIRTY WAR ON THE NHS (15)** Documentary. Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Sun 8 Dec

**TOMMY (15)** Drama/Musical. Starring Roger Daltrey, Ann-Margret. Electric Cinema, Birmingham, Sun 8 & Thurs 12 Dec

#### NEW FILMS ON GENERAL RELEASE:

Released from Fri 6 Dec, showing at selected cinemas

**GREMLINS (12a)**

**HONEY BOY (15)**

**LUCY IN THE SKY (15)**

**MOTHERLESS BROOKLYN (15)**

**ORDINARY LOVE (12a)**

### Events

**THE POLAR EXPRESS TRAIN RIDE** Theatrical recreation of the popular motion picture film, until Sun 22 Dec, Birmingham Moor Street

**MEET SANTA** Visit the Antarctic Ice Cave, meet the man himself and check out a family of cheeky Gentoo penguins, until Mon 23 Dec, National Sea Life Centre, Birmingham

**CHRISTMAS THROUGH TIME** Step back in time to discover a brand new immersive experience, taking in the sights, sounds and smells of Christmases past, until Tues 24 Dec, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

**SANTA'S WINTER WONDERLAND** This year's all-new Santa Show sees the white-bearded one preparing for his



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## Christmas at the museum

**SANTA'S GROTTO**  
SATURDAYS & SUNDAYS  
7 & 8 | 14 & 15 | 21 & 22 DEC  
Pre-booking essential

[BIRMINGHAMMUSEUMS.ORG.UK/WHATS-ON](http://BIRMINGHAMMUSEUMS.ORG.UK/WHATS-ON)

FUNDED BY:



 Birmingham  
Museums



big festive performance of The Twelve Days Of Christmas, until Tues 31 Dec, The Snowdome, Tamworth

**DRAYTON'S MAGICAL CHRISTMAS** Meet Father Christmas in the Castle of Dreams, experience 'magical' character parades, live shows, falling snow and 'spectacular' fireworks, until Tues 31 Dec, Drayton Manor Theme Park, Tamworth

**THE SNOW HOUSE BAR** The bar makes a welcome return to Birmingham's Bullring, complete with its super-popular VIP igloos, until Sun 5 Jan, The Bullring Shopping Centre, B'ham

**CHRISTMAS AT SHAKESPEARE'S BIRTHPLACE** Attractions include floral displays and a glass of Wassail, until Sun 5 Jan, Shakespeare's Birthplace, Stratford Upon Avon

**ICE SKATE BIRMINGHAM** Ice Skate Birmingham and the Big Wheel make a welcome return, until Sun 12 Jan, Centenary Square, Birmingham

**BBC GOOD FOOD SHOW WINTER** Annual show offering plenty of opportunity to purchase tasty food & drink for Christmas, Thurs 28 Nov - Sun 1 Dec, NEC, Birmingham

**ART & ANTIQUES FOR EVERYONE** The largest vetted art, antiques and interiors fair outside London and featuring 180 specialist dealers, Thurs 28 Nov - Sun 1 Dec, NEC, Birmingham

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

**THE BABY TO TODDLER SHOW** Featuring more than 100 brands covering everything from prams and furniture to toys and clothing, Sat 30 Nov - Sun 1 Dec, NEC, Birmingham

**SANTA SAFARI** Meet an elf, climb on board a sleigh and head for the North Pole, Sat 30 Nov - Sun 1 Dec & Wed 4 - Sun 8 Dec, West Midland Safari and Leisure Park, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

**SANTA HUNTS** Help the museum's festive costumed guides look for Santa, Sat 30 Nov - Sun 1 Dec, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

**CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS** Enjoy a day out that's 'choc-full of festive fun', Sat 30 Nov - Sun 1 Dec & Sat 7 - Sun 8 Dec, Cadbury World, Birmingham

**CHRISTMAS AT COALBROOKDALE** Say hello to Santa in his woodland grotto, Sat 30 Nov - Sun 1 Dec, Coalbrookdale Museum of Iron, Ironbridge, Shropshire

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

**STATFOLD SANTA EXPRESS** Climb aboard Santa's magical steam train

and journey to the North Pole, Sat 30 Nov - Sun 22 Dec, Statfold Barn Railway, Tamworth, Staffs

**CHRISTMAS AT SHUGBOROUGH** See the mansion, servants' quarters and Park Farm House decorated for Christmas, Sat 30 Nov - Sun 22 Dec, Shugborough Historic Working Estate, Stafford

**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

**ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS KINGDOM** Visit Father Christmas and receive a golden key to unlock his magical toyshop, where each child can choose their very own present, Sat 30 Nov - Tues 24 Dec, Hatton Adventure World, Warwick

**CHRISTMAS BRICKTACULAR** Seasonal build activities and holiday theming throughout the attraction, Sat 30 Nov - Tues 24 Dec, Legoland Discovery Centre, Birmingham

**CHRISTMAS AT THE CASTLE** 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, Sat 30 Nov - Tues 31 Dec, Warwick Castle

**MORNING EXPLORERS** The museum opens early for those wanting to explore in a quiet and welcoming environment, Sun 1 Dec, Thinktank Science Museum, Birmingham

**SANTA'S SLEEPOVER** Experience 'the most magical Christmas Escape' with Santa's Sleepover, Sun 1 Dec & Sun 8 Dec, Alton Towers, Stoke-on-Trent

**GEORGIAN CHRISTMAS TOURS** See the house decorated with festive greenery and find out how Boulton and his friends would have celebrated the festive season during the 18th century, Sun 1 Dec, Soho House, B'ham

**CHRISTMAS CRAFT FAIR** Featuring a variety of crafts and both vintage and handmade goods, Sun 1 Dec, Sarehole Mill, Birmingham

**CHRISTMAS CRACKER CRAFTING AT SOHO** Get into the Christmas spirit by designing your own cracker, Sun 1 Dec, Soho House, Birmingham

**TALL TALES: BEAUTY AND THE BEAST STORY TOUR** Interactive telling of the traditional story, Sun 1 Dec, Aston Hall, Birmingham

**CHRISTMAS AT COMPTON VERNEY** Compton Verney hosts a range of festive activities, including storytelling, crafts and trails, Sun 1 - Sun 15 Dec, Compton Verney Gallery, Warwick

**THINKTANK ELF HUNT** Pick up a finder's sheet and record all the elves you



Moroccan Fire Nights - NEC, Birmingham

find as you explore the museum, Sun 1 - Mon 23 Dec, Thinktank Science Museum, Birmingham

**I QUITE LIKE MONDAYS** Musical quiz, Mon 2 Dec, The Red Lion, Hockley, Birmingham

**TUDOR CHRISTMAS TOURS** Special guided tours exploring Christmas in the time of the Tudors, Wed 4 - Thurs 12 Dec, Blakesley Hall, Birmingham

**GEORGIAN CHRISTMAS TOURS** See the house decorated with festive greenery and find out how Boulton and his friends would have celebrated the festive season during the 18th century, Wed 4 - Thurs 19 Dec, Soho House, Birmingham

**CHRISTMAS CRACKER CRAFTING AT SOHO** Get into the Christmas spirit by designing your own cracker, Wed 4 - Thurs 19 Dec, Soho House, B'ham

**FESTIVE TOURS** Learn about Christmas in the past, Wed 4 - Thurs 19 Dec, Aston Hall, Birmingham

**BURGER BINGO** Three hours of burgers and bottomless booze with non-stop entertainment, Thurs 5 Dec, The Red Lion, Hockley, Birmingham

**MARVEL UNIVERSE LIVE!** Action-packed battle to defend the universe from evil, Thurs 5 - Sun 8 Dec, Arena Birmingham

**CHRISTMAS AT ANNE HATHAWAY'S COTTAGE** Anne Hathaway's Cottage prepares for Christmas with a feast and a visit from the lady herself, Fri 6 - Mon 30 Dec, Anne Hathaway's Cottage & Gardens, Stratford-upon-Avon

**WHEN YOU WISH UPON A BRUNCH** Walk into a musical whimsy, complete with a singalong to your favourite fairytale film tunes, while eating brunch and drinking bottomless booze, Sat 7 Dec, The Lord Clifden, Birmingham

**CANDLELIT CHRISTMAS** An evening of festive activities, entertainment and refreshments, Sat 7 Dec, Avoncroft

Museum, Bromsgrove

**ADULT CRAFT WORKSHOP: MAKE A CHRISTMAS WREATH** Workshop led by designer maker Gilly Page, Sat 7 Dec, Museum of the Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham

**CHRISTMAS AT COALBROOKDALE** Say hello to the man himself in his woodland grotto, Sat 7 - Sun 8 Dec, Coalbrookdale Museum of Iron, Ironbridge

**SANTA AND STEAM** Santa's on board and bearing gifts for youngsters, while there's a glass of sherry for the grown-ups, Sat 7 - Sun 8 Dec, Churnet Valley Railway, Froghall

**VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS** Sat 7 - Sun 8 Dec, Blists Hill Victorian Town, Ironbridge, Shropshire

**CHRISTMAS AT THE CASTLE** Enjoy some yuletide cheer with the castle jester, indulge in a treat in the tearoom, and hand-deliver your Christmas list to Santa Claus, Sat 7 - Sun 8 Dec, Kenilworth Castle


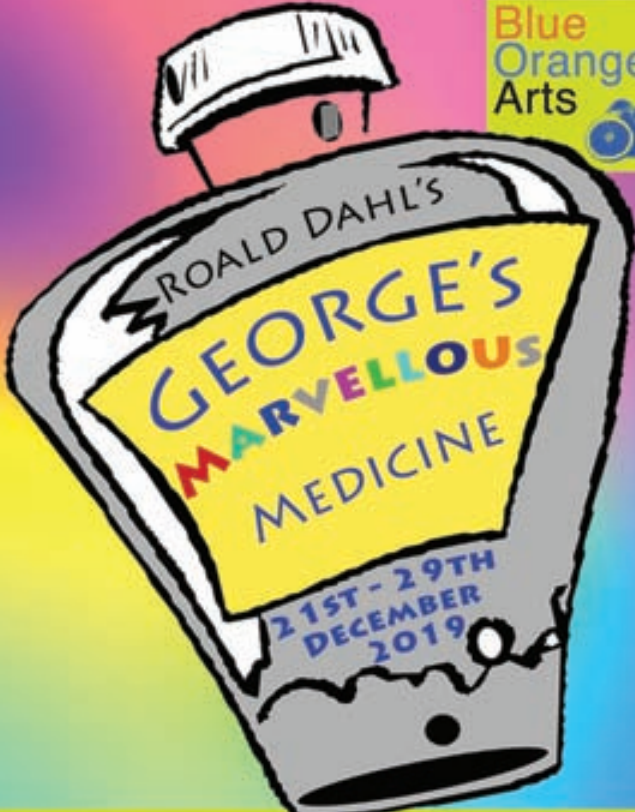
**SANTA'S GROTTO** Make your museum visit extra special by popping along to the festive family grotto, Sat 7 - Sun 22 Dec, Birmingham Museum And Art Gallery

**CHILDREN'S VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS SANTA TRAILS** Meet the Victorian household readying themselves for the annual visit of their very special guest, Sat 7 - Mon 23 Dec, Tamworth Castle

**CHRISTMAS IN THE COURTYARD** Enjoy warm drinks and mince pies, sing along with carols and make Christmas decorations, Sun 8 Dec, Birmingham Back to Backs

**CHRISTMAS AT MILLENNIUM POINT** Meet Santa, take part in craft workshops, browse stalls and enjoy family entertainment, Sun 8 - Thurs 19 Dec, Millennium Point & Eastside Park, Birmingham







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DECEMBER  
2019

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## BOOKING FOR 2020

**MEGASLAM WRESTLING**  
LIVE AND LOADED (UK TOUR)  
Friday 17 January  
Tickets: £15 / £10 7.30pm

**DOWN FOR THE COUNT: SWING THAT MUSIC**  
"ONE HELLLOVA CELEBRATION OF VINTAGE MUSIC"  
Friday 24 January  
Tickets: £20 / £17 7.30pm

**SAD CAFE: EVERY DAY HURTS**  
40TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR  
Friday 31 January  
Tickets: £25 8pm

**OH! WHAT A NIGHT**  
THE MUSIC OF FRANKIE VALLI & THE FOUR SEASONS  
Saturday 1 February  
Tickets: £25 / £23 7.30PM

**SUTTON SOUND CLASH**  
LIVE NORTHERN SOUL, DJ VS SKA BAND  
IN AID OF QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITAL, BIRMINGHAM CHARITY  
Friday 28 February  
Tickets: £10 adv, £15 chd, 7.30PM

**BILLY MEETS CLIFF**  
THE SOUNDS OF BILLY FURY MEET CLIFF RICHARD  
Saturday 29 February  
Tickets: £17.50 / £15 7.30pm

**LUTHER**  
FRONTED BY HARRY CAMBRIDGE  
AND HIS 18 PRIDE BAND  
Thursday 5 March  
Tickets: £26.50 7.30PM



**LIVE AT THE TOWN HALL**  
FT. PAUL SINHA,  
SEAN PERCIVAL, LINDSAY SANTORO  
Wayne Beese (MC)  
FRIDAY 6 MARCH  
Tickets £18 8PM

\*LIVE AT THE TOWN HALL BOOKINGS  
[WWW.FUNNYBUSINESS.CO.UK](http://WWW.FUNNYBUSINESS.CO.UK)



### Gigs

**BARNEY ARTIST** Mon 9 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

**BIRMINGHAM JAZZ ORCHESTRA** Mon 9 Dec, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**TENNIS SYSTEM + SPECIAL GUESTS** Mon 9 Dec, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

**SOLID SOUL** Mon 9 Dec, The Jam House, Birmingham

**GEORGE HINCHLIFFE UKULELE ORCHESTRA OF GREAT BRITAIN** Mon 9 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**NEW POWER GENERATION - CELEBRATING PRINCE** Tues 10 Dec, O2 Institute, B'ham

**TORCHE** Tues 10 Dec, Mama Roux's, B'ham

**HOT SNAKES** Tues 10 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

**SOPHIELOU + PLEASEPRETTYLEA + PHELEBA + MADISASKIA** Wed 11 Dec, The Sunflower Lounge, B'ham

**MERRY HELL PLUS WILL KILLEEN** Wed 11 Dec, The Red Lion Folk Club, Birmingham

**PETE TONG PRESENTS IBIZA CLASSICS** Wed 11 Dec, Arena B'ham

**HISS GOLDEN MESSENGER** Wed 11 Dec, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

**DERMOT KENNEDY** Wed 11 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**THE CHATS** Wed 11 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**DWEEZIL ZAPPA - HOT RATS LIVE!** Wed 11 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

**MAX & IGGOR CAVALLERA: RETURN BE-NEATH ARISE** Thurs 12 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**FASTLOVE - A TRIBUTE TO GEORGE MICHAEL** Thurs 12 Dec, Arena Birmingham

**WONDERLAND** Thurs 12 Dec, The Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

**THE UTOPIA STRONG** Thurs 12 Dec, Hare &

Hounds, Birmingham

**GINGER MINJ'S SUPER SPECTACULAR (LOW BUDGET) HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA** Thurs 12 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**HOB0 JOHNSON & THE LOVEMAKERS** Thurs 12 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**JAZZ DEPARTMENT CHRISTMAS EXTRAVAGANZA** Thurs 12 Dec, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**APOLLO SOUL** Thurs 12 - Sat 14 Dec, The Jam House, Birmingham

**COUNTERFEIT** Thurs 12 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**SENSATERIA WITH THE DC SPECTRES** Fri 13 Dec, The Night Owl, Birmingham

**ROD STEWART** Fri 13 Dec, Arena B'ham

**THIS FEELING - BIRMINGHAM: YOUNG CHASERS, BARRACUDA + MORE** Fri 13 Dec, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

**ALUNAH** Fri 13 Dec, The Flapper, B'ham

**KYLE FALCONER** Fri 13 Dec, The Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

**BIG COUNTRY** Fri 13 Dec, The Mill, Digbeth

**CATAPULT FT. HIT THE FLOOR** Fri 13 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**GHETTS** Fri 13 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**STRANGLERS & IAN DURY TRIBUTE XMAS SHOW** Fri 13 Dec, Route 44, Birmingham

**BBMAK** Fri 13 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**MOTIONLESS IN WHITE** Fri 13 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**DENIS COLEMAN** Fri 13 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**GLOBAL SOUL SHOWCASE** Fri 13 Dec, The Bramall, University Of Birmingham

**PSYCHO DOLLS XMAS PARTY** Sat 14 Dec, Route 44, Birmingham

**VETIVER + TREETOP FLYERS** Sat 14 Dec, The Cuban Embassy, Birmingham

**DJ HYPE & DADDY EARL** Sat 14 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

**CRYSTALLINE, BAD LAMA, WHITE CROW & SEVEY** Sat 14 Dec, Scruffy Murphy's, Birmingham

**KING PLEASURE AND THE BISCUIT BOYS** Sat 14 Dec, Pizza Express Live, Birmingham

**GETTING AWAY WITH IT : XMAS SPECIAL** Sat 14 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

**KATE RUSBY AT CHRISTMAS** Sat 14 Dec, Town Hall, Birmingham



**ROY WOOD'S ROCKMAS** Sat 14 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

**MOTHER POPCORN** Sat 14 Dec, The World Bar, Resorts World

**WE LOVE THE 90'S** Sat 14 Dec, Arena Birmingham

**HAPPY MONDAYS** Sat 14 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**ULTIMATE CHRISTMAS TOUR** Sat 14 Dec, The Asylum, Birmingham

**BROKEN WITT REBELS** Sat 14 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham



**THE LIBERTINES** Sat 14 - Sun 15 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**RUSS MB** Sun 15 Dec, O2 Institute, B'ham

**BRONNIE** Sun 15 Dec, The Asylum, B'ham

**BLACK BOMBERS & DAVE KUSWORTH GROUP** Sun 15 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

**BOTOWN- THE SOULS OF BOLLYWOOD** Sun 15 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**IO EARTH CHRISTMAS PARTY** Sun 15 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

### Classical Music

**WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL CHOIR: LUNCHTIME CHRISTMAS MUSIC** Featuring Andrew Lumsden (conductor) and Thomas Trotter (organ). Programme includes works by Cornelius, JS Bach and aar Wilberg, Mon 9 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

**ORCHESTRA OF THE SWAN CONCERTO COMPETITION** Mon 9 Dec, Recital Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**SAINT LUCIA SERVICE** Mon 9 Dec, Birmingham Cathedral

**LUNCHTIME MUSIC: CHRISTMAS CAROL CONCERT** Mon 9 Dec, The Bradshaw Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**G4 CHRISTMAS** Tues 10 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

**PASCAL PASCALEFF PIANO CONCERT** Programme includes works by Bach, Schumann and Liszt, Tues 10 Dec, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITAL CAROL SERVICE** Tues 10 Dec, Birmingham Cathedral

**PABLO FERRÁNDEZ PIANO RECITAL** Also featuring Luis Del Valle (piano). Programme includes works by Bruch, Brahms, Shostakovich and Anton Garcia-Abrial, Wed 11 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**CAROLINE PETHER VIOLIN CONCERT** Also featuring the RBC Strings Ensemble. Programme includes works by Brahms, Wed 11 Dec, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**ORCHESTRA OF THE SWAN: UPON A MIDNIGHT CLEAR** Also featuring Papagena vocal quintet, Wed 11 Dec, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**CBSO: MIGRA CONDUCTS BRAHMS** Featuring Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla (conductor), Thomas E. Bauer (baritone) & the CBSO Youth Chorus. Programme includes works by Elgar, Jörg Widmann and Brahms, Thurs 12 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

**NADINE BENJAMIN IN CONCERT** Also featuring Gomez Ferrer (tenor) and Chris Hopkins (piano). Programme includes extracts from Verdi's Otello, Ballo and Il Trovatore, Thurs 12 Dec, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**BIRMINGHAM CITY UNIVERSITY CAROL SERVICE** Thurs 12 Dec, Birmingham Cathedral

**CATHEDRAL CHORUS & SALVATION ARMY CAROLS** Thurs 12 Dec, Lichfield Cathedral

**MIDLANDS HOSPITALS CHOIR: CAROLS FOR CLIC** Fri 13 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

**MIDLAND CHAMBER PLAYERS: MAGICAL SPAIN** Programme includes works by

Turina, Monti & Arriaga, Fri 13 Dec, The Birmingham Midland Institute

**RBC REPERTOIRE ORCHESTRA END OF TERM CONCERT: DVORÁK'S EIGHTH** Featuring Daniele Rosina (conductor) and Daniel Lehardt (piano). Programme includes works by Georgia Denham, Mozart and Dvorák, Fri 13 Dec, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**BOXWOOD & BRASS: A GEORGIAN COUNTRY HOUSE CHRISTMAS** Featuring Emily Worthington & Katherine Spencer (clarinets), Richard Bayliss & Kate Goldsmith (horns) & Robert Percival (bassoon). Programme includes works by JC Bach, Attr. Mahon & Brookes, Fri 13 Dec, The Barber Institute, Birmingham

**CBSO: FRIDAY NIGHT CLASSICS: STAR WARS** Featuring Stephen Bell (conductor), Fri 13 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**FRANCAIX TRIO** Fri 13 Dec, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

**LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL CHOIR: CHRISTMAS BY CANDLELIGHT** Sat 14 Dec, Lichfield Cathedral

**BIRMINGHAM CATHEDRAL CHOIR: HANDEL'S MESSIAH** Featuring David Hardie (conductor), Sat 14 Dec, Birmingham Cathedral

**THE PEOPLE'S ORCHESTRA: SOMETHING MAGICAL** Sat 14 Dec, West Bromwich Town Hall

**BIRMINGHAM CITADEL SALVATION ARMY CHURCH CONCERT** Sat 14 Dec, The Bradshall Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**MIGRATING SOUNDS** Four different composers examine our relationship with moving sounds and the role of music in the imaginative reconstructions of place, Sun 15 Dec, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

**EMERGENCY SERVICES CAROL CONCERT** Sun 15 Dec, Lichfield Cathedral

**BIRMINGHAM BACH CHOIR: SERVICE OF NINE LESSONS & CAROLS** Service of bible readings & carols, Sun 15 Dec, St Alban the Martyr, Birmingham

**LONDON CONCERT ORCHESTRA** Featuring Freddie Tapner (conductor), Laura Tebbutt & Tim Howar (guest singers) & the Jingle Belle Dancers, Sun 15 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

### Comedy

**GOD SAVE OUR QUEENS - THE TOUR** Tues 10 Dec, The Glee Club, B'ham

**SOL BERNSTEIN, ALLYSON SMITH, PAUL MCCAFFREY & ANDY ROBINSON** Wed 11 - Sun 15 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**ADAM BLOOM, LEO KEARSE & PETE OTWAY** Thurs 12 Dec, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

**BARBARA NICE'S CHRISTMAS CRACKER**



CONTINENTAL

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Thurs 12 - Fri 13 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

**DANIEL SLOSS** Fri 13 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**ADAM BLOOM, SEAN PERCIVAL & DAVE LONGLEY** Fri 13 Dec, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

**NIGEL NG, RIORDAN PATRICK, JEREMY FLYNN & JESSIE NIXON** Fri 13 Dec, Cherry Reds Cafe-Bar, Birmingham

**ADAM BLOOM, LEO KEARSE & PETE OTWAY** Sat 14 Dec, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

## Theatre

**MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET: A LIVE MUSICAL RADIO PLAY** Featuring live Foley effects and a score of holiday carols, until Tues 24 Dec, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

**THE SNOW QUEEN** Hans Christian Andersen's family classic follows the adventures of inseparable friends Kai & Gerda, until Mon 30 Dec, The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

**PETER PAN** JM Barrie's swashbuckling creation flies into Birmingham for Christmas, until Sun 19 Jan, The REP, Birmingham

**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

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

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

**A CHRISTMAS WASSAIL** A festive feast of music, comedy & spoken word, Mon 9 - Tues 10 Dec, Highbury Hall, Birmingham

**THE KING & I** Tony Award-winning Rodgers & Hammerstein classic. Jose Llana & Annalene Beechey star, Tues 10 Dec - Sat 4 Jan, The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham



**THE GOOD SOUL OF SZECHUAN** Royal Birmingham Conservatoire's Theatre Company presents its version of Bertolt Brecht's exploration of the human soul, Wed 11 - Sat 14 Dec, The Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

**CLUB 2B** Immersive theatrical experience for the festive season - an event for 'anyone with a thirst for life, an open mind and a sense of adventure.', Wed 11 - Tues 31 Dec, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

**A CHRISTMAS WASSAIL** A festive feast of music, comedy & spoken word, Sun 15 - Tues 17 Dec, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

## Pantomime

**CINDERELLA** Festive family favourite starring Rebecca Keatley (CBeebies) and Sam Rabone, until Sun 5 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

**PUSS IN BOOTS** Festive favourite written by and starring Iain Lauchlan, until Sat 11 Jan, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

**DICK WHITTINGTON** Starring Su Pollard, Ryan Thomas, Jeffrey Holland, Aaron James & Ian Adams, until Sun 12 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

**TINDER-ELLA** Adults-only panto, Tues 10 - Sat 14 Dec, The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

**ALADDIN** Traditional family pantomime, Tues 10 - Tues 31 Dec, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

**ROBIN HOOD - THE PANTOMIME ADVENTURE** Festive show featuring 'daring duels, stunning sets, outrageous costumes and a very merry man in a dress', Fri 13 Dec - Sun 5 Jan, The Core Theatre, Solihull

**SNOW WHITE** All & Sundry present a traditional family pantomime 'packed with fun, laughter and plenty of audience participation', Sat 14 - Sun 22 Dec, Artrix, Bromsgrove

## Kids Shows

**CHARLIE & THE CHRISTMAS CAT** 'Adventure-packed festive show that's just purrrfect for all the family', until Tues 24 Dec, Lichfield Garrick

**RAYMOND BRIGGS' FATHER CHRISTMAS** Join Santa on the busiest day of his year - Christmas Eve, until Sun 29 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

**KIPPER'S SNOWY DAY** Original songs & music, puppetry and humour combine in a stage version of Mick Inkpen's much-loved book, until Tues 31 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

## Events

**MOROCCAN FIRE NIGHTS** 'Fusing incredible entertainment with a delicious festive feast and a spectacularly themed environment', until Sun 22 Dec, NEC, Birmingham

**THE POLAR EXPRESS TRAIN RIDE** Theatrical recreation of the popular motion picture film, until Sun 22 Dec, Birmingham Moor Street

**MEET SANTA** Visit the Antarctic Ice Cave, meet the man himself and check out a family of cheeky Gentoo penguins, until Mon 23 Dec, National Sea Life Centre, Birmingham



**CHRISTMAS THROUGH TIME** Step back in time to discover a brand new immersive experience, taking in the sights, sounds and smells of Christmas past, until Tues 24 Dec, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

**CHRISTMAS BRICKTACULAR** Seasonal build activities and holiday theming throughout the attraction, until Tues 24 Dec, Legoland Discovery Centre, Birmingham

**CHRISTMAS AT THE CASTLE** 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, until Tues 31 Dec, Warwick Castle



**SANTA'S WINTER WONDERLAND** This year's all-new Santa Show sees the white-bearded one preparing for his big festive performance of The Twelve Days Of Christmas, until Tues 31 Dec, The Snowdome, Tamworth

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**CHRISTMAS IN THE COURTYARD** Enjoy warm drinks and mince pies, sing along with carols and make Christmas decorations, Thurs 12 Dec, Birmingham Back to Backs

**MAC GIN & JAZZ CLUB: FESTIVE EDITION** Step into the festivities with a gin cocktail in hand, listening to 'the best live jazz around', Fri 13 Dec, Midland Arts Centre, Birmingham

**CHRISTMAS TILE DECORATING WORKSHOPS** Try a fun tube-lining technique to produce your own ceramic masterpiece, Fri 13 - Sat 14 Dec, Jackfield Tile Museum, Ironbridge, Shropshire

**ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS IS BRUNCH** Featuring live music, performances, quizzes, singalongs and giveaways, Sat 14 Dec, The Lord Clifden, B'ham

**CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS** Sat 14 Dec, Museum of the Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham

**CHRISTMAS AT COALBROOKDALE** Say hello to the man himself in his woodland grotto, Sat 14 - Sun 15 Dec, Coalbrookdale Museum of Iron, Ironbridge, Shropshire

**FATHER CHRISTMAS AT BLAKESLEY HALL** Meet Father Christmas and see Blakesley Hall dressed for Christmas, Sat 14 - Sun 15 Dec, Blakesley Hall, Birmingham

**FAIRY TALE CHRISTMAS** Explore Aston Hall and encounter some of your favourite fictional characters, Sat 14 - Sun 15 Dec, Aston Hall, Birmingham

**VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS** Sat 14 - Sun 15 Dec, Blists Hill Victorian Town, Ironbridge, Shropshire

**CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS** Enjoy a day out that's 'choc-full of festive fun', Sat 14 - Sun 15 Dec, Cadbury World, Birmingham



**SANTA'S SLEEPOVER** 'Experience the most magical Christmas Escape' with Santa's Sleepover, Sat 14 - Mon 23 Dec, Alton Towers, Stoke-on-Trent



## Gigs

**STEELEYE SPAN 50TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR 1969 - 2019** Mon 16 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

**FUNZING TALKS: MANIPULATION: WHY DO WE ALLOW IT?** Mon 16 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

**THE BEAT BROTHERS** Mon 16 - Tues 17 Dec, The Jam House, Birmingham

**AITCH** Tues 17 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**THE BOOTLEG BEATLES** Tues 17 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

**AMY LOUISE ELLIS, BRANDON RIVERS, EMILY SAMBROOK & ISOLABELLA MARSON** Wed 18 Dec, The Cuban Embassy, Birmingham

**JOHNNY AND THE BAPTISTS: LOVE BIRMINGHAM AND HATE BASTARDS** Wed 18 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

**ALTER BRIDGE** Wed 18 Dec, Arena B'ham

**THE MAD JOCKS AND ENGLISHMEN CHRISTMAS EXTRAVAGANZA** Wed 18 Dec, The Red Lion Folk Club, Birmingham

**HANNAH JOHNSON & THE BROKEN HEARTS** Wed 18 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

**SWIM DEEP** Wed 18 Dec, The Mill, Digbeth, Birmingham

**SONS OF PITCHES** Thurs 19 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham



**SUPER SONIX 16+ XMAS PARTY FT. MR TRAUMATIK** Thurs 19 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**HEAVY BEAT CHRISTMAS HOUSE PARTY** Thurs 19 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

**MYRIAM ADAM** Thurs 19 Dec, The Flapper, Birmingham



*The Bootleg Beatles - Symphony Hall, Birmingham*

**JANE MCDONALD** Fri 20 Dec, Arena B'ham

**METZ** Fri 20 Dec, Sky By The Water, Resorts World, Birmingham

**THAT'LL BE THE DAY - THE CHRISTMAS SHOW** Fri 20 Dec, Town Hall, Birmingham

**THE SIX ON FIRE'S OFFICIAL CHRISTMAS PARTY** Fri 20 Dec, Route 44, Birmingham

**KNE** Fri 20 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**BORN IN THE 80'S** Fri 20 Dec, The World Bar, Resorts World

**THUNDER - XMAS SHOW** Fri 20 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**SWAMPMEAT FAMILY BAND XMAS PARTY** Fri 20 Dec, The Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

**TOMMY BLAIZE TRIO** Fri 20 Dec, Pizza Express Live, Birmingham

**THE SIX ON FIRE** Fri 20 Dec, Route 44, B'ham

**LE FREAK: SOUL TRAIN SPECIAL** Fri 20 Dec, Night Owl, B'ham

**THE WONDER STUFF** Sat 21 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**CHRISTMAS CRACKER WITH ALED JONES** Sat 21 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**THEN JERICO ACOUSTIC CHRISTMAS SPECIAL** Sat 21 Dec, Pizza Express Live, B'ham

**THE LITTLE EASY BAND / BLUE NATION / SLEEP PATTERNS + MORE** Sat 21 Dec, The Flapper, Birmingham

**GRAFTON ASH** Sat 21 Dec, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

**THE CLAUSE** Sat 21 Dec, O2 Academy,

Birmingham

**HERITAGE & TIN TINS CHRISTMAS PARTY** Sat 21 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

**ROCK BOTTOM** Sat 21 Dec, Route 44, B'ham

**TALON - THE BEST OF THE EAGLES** Sat 21 Dec, Town Hall, Birmingham

**GRAFTON ASH** Sat 21 Dec, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

**UB40 - CHRISTMAS HOMETOWN SHOW** Sat 21 Dec, Arena B'ham



**LOST SOCIETY: XMAS PARTY, ROBERT NICKSON & SAM MITCHAM** Sat 21 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

**THE CRAIG CHARLES FUNK & SOUL CLUB** Sun 22 Dec, The Mill, Digbeth, Birmingham

**NATHAN DAWE #0121** Sun 22 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**SAVING GRACE FEATURING SUZI DIAN AND ROBERT PLANT** Sun 22 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

**NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL CHRISTMAS** Sun 22 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**SLADE - THE ROCKIN' HOME FOR CHRISTMAS TOUR 2019** Sun 22 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**THE TWANG** Sun 22 - Mon 23 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

## Classical Music

**SING CAROLS WITH THE CITY ORGANIST AND LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL CHOIR** Featuring Thomas Trotter (organ), Mon 16 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

**REGGAE PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA: FESTIVE EXTRAVAGANZA** Wed 18 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

**CBSO: A CHORAL CHRISTMAS** Featuring Simon Halsey (conductor) & the CBSO Chorus. Hugh Dennis presents, Wed 18 - Fri 20 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**EX CATHEDRA: CHRISTMAS MUSIC BY CANDLELIGHT** Popular festive concert featuring Jeffrey Skidmore at the helm, Wed 18 - Sat 21 Dec, St Paul's Church, Birmingham

**BIRMINGHAM CANOLDIR MALE CHOIR & PHOENIX SINGERS** Two local choirs combine, under the leadership of James Llewelyn Jones, Thurs 19 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

**BBC WM CAROL SERVICE** Thurs 19 Dec, Birmingham Cathedral

**CHRISTMAS CRACKER WITH ALED JONES** Also featuring Adrian Lucas (conductor), London Concert Orchestra, City of Birmingham Choir and Jennifer France (soprano), Sat 21 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**TOWN HALL GOSPEL CHOIR CHRISTMAS SPECIAL** Sat 21 Dec, The Bradshaw Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**EX CATHEDRA: ANGELS, STARS & KINGS** Featuring Ex Cathedra Academy of Vocal Music, Jeffrey Skidmore (conductor) and Alexander Mason (organ), Sat 21 Dec, St Paul's Church, Birmingham

**SHOPPERS' CAROL SERVICES** Sat 21 Dec, Lichfield Cathedral

## Comedy

**TOMMY SANDHU, ESHAAN AKBAR, MAUREEN YOUNGER & MARLON DAVIS** Tues 17 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**DANA ALEXANDER, DALISO CHAPONDA, ANDY ASKINS & MICKEY D** Wed 18 - Sun 22 Dec, The Glee Club, B'ham

**DAVE LONGLEY, FREDDY QUINN & ALISTAIR BARRIE** Thurs 19 Dec, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

**ALISTAIR BARRIE, DAVE LONGLEY & MATT RICHARDSON** Fri 20 - Sat 21 Dec, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

**JAVIER JARQUIN & IAN STONE, TOM KING & PHILIP SIMON** Sun 22 Dec, The George Hotel, Lichfield

## Theatre

**MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET: A LIVE MUSICAL RADIO PLAY** Featuring live Foley effects and a score of holiday carols,

until Tues 24 Dec, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

**THE SNOW QUEEN** Hans Christian Andersen's family classic follows the adventures of inseparable friends Kai & Gerda, until Mon 30 Dec, The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

**CLUB 2B** Immersive theatrical experience for the festive season - an event for 'anyone with a thirst for life, an open mind and a sense of adventure.', until Tues 31 Dec, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

**THE KING & I** Tony Award-winning Rodgers & Hammerstein classic. Jose Llana & Annalene Beechey star, until Sat 4 Jan, The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

**PETER PAN** JM Barrie's swashbuckling creation flies into Birmingham for Christmas, until Sun 19 Jan, The REP, Birmingham

**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

**THE BOY IN THE DRESS** World premiere based on David Walliams' bestselling book and featuring songs by Robbie Williams and Guy Chambers, until Sun 8 Mar, Royal Shakespeare 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

**UNFORTUNATE: THE UNTOLD STORY OF URSULA THE SEA WITCH** Musical parody from the award-winning Fat Rascal Theatre Company, Mon 16 - Sun 22 Dec, Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

**SEARCH FOR THE SECOND STAR** Immersive theatre experience to coincide with the venue's Christmas production of Peter Pan, Thurs 19 - Sat 21 Dec, The REP, Birmingham

**JOURNEY OF THE MAGI - A SPECTACULAR CHRISTMAS TREAT** Festive feast for families, fusing dance, theatre, song & poetry, Sat 21 Dec, The Church of Carrs Lane, Birmingham

**GEORGE'S MARVELLOUS MEDICINE** Blue Orange Arts presents its version of the Roald Dahl classic, Sat 21 - Sun 29 Dec, The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

## Pantomime

**SNOW WHITE** All & Sundry present a traditional family pantomime 'packed with fun, laughter and plenty of audience participation', until Sun 22 Dec, Artrix, Bromsgrove

**ALADDIN** Traditional family pantomime, until Tues 31 Dec, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

**CINDERELLA** Festive family favourite starring Rebecca Keatley (CBeebies)



# Monday 16 - Sunday 22 December

and Sam Rabone, until Sun 5 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

**ROBIN HOOD - THE PANTOMIME ADVENTURE** Festive show featuring 'daring duels, stunning sets, outrageous costumes and a very merry man in a dress', until Sun 5 Jan, The Core Theatre, Solihull

**PUSS IN BOOTS** Festive favourite written by and starring Iain Lauchlan, until Sat 11 Jan, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

**DICK WHITTINGTON** Starring Su Pollard, Ryan Thomas, Jeffrey Holland, Aaron James & Ian Adams, until Sun 12 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

**SNOW WHITE & THE SEVEN DWARFS** Featuring Lesley Joseph, Matt Slack, Joe McElderry, Faye Brookes, Flawless, Doreen Tipton & Andrew Ryan, Sat 21 Dec - Sun 2 Feb, Birmingham Hippodrome

## Kids Shows

**CHARLIE & THE CHRISTMAS CAT** 'Adventure-packed festive show that's just purrrfect for all the family', until Tues 24 Dec, Lichfield Garrick

**RAYMOND BRIGGS' FATHER CHRISTMAS** Join Santa on the busiest day of his year - Christmas Eve, until Sun 29 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

**KIPPER'S SNOWY DAY** Original songs & music, puppetry and humour combine in a stage version of Mick Inkpen's much-loved book, until Tues 31 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre, B'ham

**LITTLE STAR BABY SHOW** Show for little ones aged six to 18 months, fusing puppetry, music & 'captivating' visuals, Tues 17 Dec, Artrix, Bromsgrove

**SANTA IN LOVE** 'Fun-filled family musical complete with games, giggles and all your favourite Christmas songs', Fri 20 - Tues 24 Dec, The Core Theatre, Solihull

## Dance

**BALLET TRIPLE BILL** Lisayne Ballet School present three classic works: Peter And The Wolf, Ameliaranne And The Green Umbrella and Christmas Extravaganza, Fri 20 - Sun 22 Dec, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

## Film

### INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

**THE MUPPET CHRISTMAS CAROL (PG)** Comedy/Drama. Starring Michael Caine, Dave Goelz. Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton, Mon 16 Dec; Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Sun 22 Dec

**WHITE CHRISTMAS (U)** Musical/Ro-

mance. Starring Bing Crosby, Danny Kaye. Electric Cinema, Birmingham, from Tues 17 Dec

**GUYS AND DOLLS (U)** Crime/Musical. Starring Marlon Brando, Jean Simmons. Artrix, Bromsgrove, Tues 17 Dec

**STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS (12a)** Adventure/Sci-Fi. Starring Daisy Ridley, John Boyega. Electric Cinema, Birmingham, Wed 18 Dec

**STAR WARS: TRIPLE BILL SCREENING (12a)** Action/Sci-Fi. The Mockingbird Cinema, Birmingham, Wed 18 Dec

**STAR WARS: THE LAST JEDI (12a)** Adventure/Sci-Fi. Starring Daisy Ridley, John Boyega. Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Wed 18, Thurs 19, Sat 21 & Tues 24 Dec

**STAR WARS: THE RISE OF SKYWALKER (12a)** Adventure/Sci-Fi. Starring Billie Lourd, Daisy Ridley. Electric Cinema, Birmingham, from Thurs 19 Dec; The Mockingbird Cinema, Thurs 19 - Tues 24 & Thurs 26 - Tues 31 Dec

**JUDY & PUNCH (PG)** Comedy/Crime. Starring Mia Wasikowska, Damon Herriman. Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Fri 20 - Mon 23 & Thurs 26 Dec

**FROZEN 2 (PG)** Animation/Adventure. With the voices of Idina Menzel, Kristen Bell. Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Fri 20 - Tues 24, Thurs 26 - Tues 31 Dec; Artrix, Bromsgrove, Fri 20 - Tues 31 Dec

**THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS (PG)** Animation/Family. With the voices of Danny Elfman, Catherine O'Hara. Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Sat 21 Dec

## Events

**MOROCCAN FIRE NIGHTS** 'Fusing incredible entertainment with a delicious festive feast and a spectacularly themed environment', until Sun 22 Dec, NEC, Birmingham

**THE POLAR EXPRESS TRAIN RIDE** Theatrical recreation of the popular motion picture film, until Sun 22 Dec, Birmingham Moor Street

**MEET SANTA** Visit the Antarctic Ice Cave, meet the man himself and check out a family of cheeky Gentoo penguins, until Mon 23 Dec, National Sea Life Centre, Birmingham

**CHRISTMAS THROUGH TIME** Step back in time to discover a brand new immersive experience, taking in the sights, sounds and smells of Christmases past, until Tues 24 Dec, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

**CHRISTMAS BRICKTACULAR** Seasonal build activities and holiday theming throughout the attraction, until Tues 24 Dec, Legoland Discovery Centre, Birmingham

**CHRISTMAS AT THE CASTLE** 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, until Tues 31 Dec, Warwick Castle

**SANTA'S WINTER WONDERLAND** This year's all-new Santa Show sees the white-bearded one preparing for his big festive performance of The Twelve Days Of Christmas, until Tues 31 Dec, The Snowdome, Tamworth

**DRAYTON'S MAGICAL CHRISTMAS** Meet Father Christmas in the Castle of Dreams, experience 'magical' character parades, live shows, falling snow and 'spectacular' fireworks, until Tues 31 Dec, Drayton Manor Theme Park, Tamworth



**THE SNOW HOUSE BAR** The bar makes a welcome return to Birmingham's Bullring, complete with its super-popular VIP igloos, until Sun 5 Jan, The Bullring Shopping Centre, B'ham

**ICE SKATE BIRMINGHAM** Ice Skate Birmingham and the Big Wheel make a welcome return, until Sun 12 Jan, Centenary Square, Birmingham

**SANTA SAFARI** Meet an elf, climb on board a sleigh and head for the North Pole, Wed 18 - Tues 24 Dec, West Midland Safari and Leisure Park, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

**CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS** Enjoy a day out that's 'choc-full of festive fun', Fri 20 - Mon 23 Dec, Cadbury World, Birmingham

**THE GREATEST BRUNCH** Featuring 'sensational singers, amazing aerial artists and fearless fire-breathers', Sat 21 Dec, The Lord Clifden, Birmingham

**CHRISTMAS AT COALBROOKDALE** Say hello to the man himself in his woodland grotto, Sat 21 - Sun 22 Dec, Coalbrookdale Museum of Iron, Ironbridge, Shropshire

**DIRTY VEGAN: FESTIVE EDITION** Special late-night festive edition, Sun 22 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

**Ebenezer's**

*"Get in the Christmas spirit this December with a haunting telling of Dickens' tale about Ebenezer Scrooge on a 10 minute journey - A journey through a unique haunted house and experience the change story to its most awe-inspiring world!"*

**CHRISTMAS CAROL Tour**

*"You'll believe the winter story as you walk who really brought the story to life with no props at all!"*

*"A brilliant performance in the most haunted house in the country! Cannot recommend highly enough!"*

**Date:** Wed/Thurs/Fri 11th/12th/13th/18th/19th/20th - and Christmas Eve 2019  
**Time:** 6:00pm & 7:30pm  
**Price:** £7.50pp | £25 family (2A+2C)  
**Venue:** Tudor World, Sheep Street, Stratford upon Avon, CV37 6EE  
**w: WWW.TUDORWORLD.COM t: 01789 298070**



# CHRISTMAS at SYMPHONY HALL

Sunday 15 December at 2.30pm

## CHRISTMAS SPECTACULAR

MUSIC • SONG • DANCE • SPECTACLE

Rockin' Around The Christmas Tree • Sleigh Ride  
Last Christmas • All I Want For Christmas Is You  
White Christmas • Winter Wonderland • Santa Baby

Laura Tebbutt & Tim Howar guest singers  
The Jingle Belles® dancers Freddie Tappner conductor  
Birmingham Voices London Concert Orchestra



Saturday 21 December at 2.30pm

## CHRISTMAS CRACKER with ALED JONES



Seasonal classics, festive readings and joyful songs.

Willcocks Jingle Bells Cullen Joy to the World  
Blake Walking in the Air Anderson Sleigh Ride  
Tchaikovsky Suite from The Nutcracker  
PLUS CAROLS FOR ALL

Aled Jones presenter Jennifer France soprano  
Adrian Lucas conductor  
City of Birmingham Choir  
London Concert Orchestra

Sunday 22 December at 2.30pm



All I Want For Christmas Is You Merry Christmas Everyone  
Rockin' Around The Christmas Tree  
Wonderful Christmas Time  
Santa Claus Is Coming To Town and many more...

Kerry Ellis and Tim Howar guest singers  
John Rigby conductor  
Capital Voices Live 15-Piece Show Band

Monday 23 December at 2.30pm

## CHRISTMAS CAROL SINGALONG



A fun-filled jamboree of carols and Christmas hits.

Jingle Bells • Merry Christmas Everybody  
Frosty the Snowman • Santa Claus is Coming to Town  
PLUS CAROLS FOR ALL

Jonathan Cohen conductor/presenter  
Louise Dearman guest singer  
London Concert Chorus London Concert Orchestra

Tuesday 24 December at 2.30pm

## CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT



Carols and seasonal classics, staged in full 18th Century costume in an evocative candle-lit style setting.

Cullen Joy to the World Ledger Sussex Carol  
Handel Christmas Sequence from Messiah  
Zadok the Priest  
Darke In the Bleak Midwinter  
PLUS CAROLS FOR ALL

Susanna Hurrell soprano Steven Devine conductor  
Mozart Festival Chorus  
Mozart Festival Orchestra in full period costume

Friday 27 December at 7.30pm

## LAST NIGHT OF THE CHRISTMAS PROMS



Rousing classics with a grand flag waving British finale!

Strauss Die Fledermaus Overture Elgar Nimrod  
Rossini Largo al factotum from The Barber of Seville  
Bizet Duet from The Pearl Fishers

And all your Proms favourites...

Robyn Lyn Evans tenor James Cleverton baritone  
John Pryce-Jones conductor London Concert Orchestra

Saturday 28 December at 2.30pm

## THE GREATEST SHOW TUNES

A show-stopping concert of the greatest show tunes.

The Greatest Showman  
Mamma Mia! • Dreamgirls  
The Phantom of the Opera  
9 to 5 • La La Land

With guest singers  
Sophie Evans Ben Forster  
Marisha Wallace Ricardo Alfonso

Richard Balcombe conductor  
Birmingham Voices  
London Concert Orchestra

Saturday 28 December at 7.30pm

## THE BEST OF JOHN WILLIAMS



Celebrating the iconic film scores of John Williams.

E.T. • Jaws • Hook • Superman • Jurassic Park  
Schindler's List • Harry Potter  
Born on the Fourth of July  
Close Encounters of the Third Kind • Star Wars

including highlights from:

A New Hope • The Empire Strikes Back  
and many more...

Anthony Inglis conductor  
London Concert Orchestra

Monday 30 December at 7.30pm

## BEETHOVEN'S NINTH



An unforgettable all-Beethoven programme.

Piano Concerto No. 5 'Emperor'  
Symphony No. 9 'Choral'

Lauren Fagan soprano Kathryn Rudge mezzo-soprano  
Oliver Johnston tenor Morgan Pearce baritone  
Daniel Lebbardt piano Oliver Gooch conductor  
Birmingham Choral Union City of Birmingham Choir  
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra





Black Tree Vultures - Route 44, Birmingham

## Gigs

**MATT TAYLOR** Mon 23 Dec, Night Owl, B'ham

**THE UPBEAT BEATLES** Tues 24 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

**BEATFACTORY** Fri 27 Dec, The World Bar, Resorts World, B'ham

**BLACK TREE VULTURES** Fri 27 Dec, Route 44, Birmingham

**JAYME TOVEY** Fri 27 Dec, Sky By The Water, Resorts World, Birmingham

**GLENN MILLER ORCHESTRA** Fri 27 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**NOW! THAT'S WHAT I CALL MANCHESTER 2** Fri 27 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

**NANNA RADLEYS** Fri 27 - Sat 28 Dec, The Jam House, Birmingham

**BRUM PUNKS XMAS**

**BASH** Sat 28 Dec, Castle and Falcon, B'ham

**THE KILLAZ** Sat 28 Dec, Route 44, Birmingham

**THE SPECIALZ** Sat 28 Dec, The Night Owl, Birmingham

**PAUL PETROV** Sat 28 Dec, Sky By The Water, Resorts World, Birmingham

**DIRTY DC** Sat 28 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

**'1215'** Sat 28 Dec, The World Bar, Resorts World

**NIGHTMARE BEFORE NYE** Sun 29 Dec, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

**COZY POWELL BIRTHDAY BASH** Sun 29 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

**RISKY BUSINESS** Tues 31 Dec, The World Bar, Resorts World, Birmingham

**NEW YEAR'S EVE CARNIVAL** Tues 31 Dec, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

**NEW YEAR'S EVE WITH TRU GROOVE** Tues 31 Dec, The Jam House, Birmingham

**T.REXTASY - GET IT ON** Tues 31 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

**NEW YEARS EVE PARTY' SUBLIME FT GOOD DAY** Tues 31 Dec, The Sunflower Lounge, B'ham

**NEW YEAR'S EVE - MEGAN REECE** Tues 31 Dec, Sky By The Water, Resorts World, Birmingham

**NEW YEAR'S EVE SHINDIG** Tues 31 Dec, The Night Owl, B'ham

**RAWRING 20S!** Tues 31 Dec, The Asylum, Birmingham

**TWISTED CIRCUS NYE** Tues 31 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**THE CASTLE & FALCON NYE PARTY** Tues 31 Dec, Castle and Falcon, Birmingham

## Classical

**EX CATHEDRA: CHRISTMAS MUSIC BY CANDLELIGHT** Popular festive concert featuring Jeffrey Skidmore at the helm, Mon 23 Dec, St Paul's Church, Birmingham

**LONDON CONCERT ORCHESTRA: CHRISTMAS CAROL SING ALONG** Featuring Jonathan Cohen (conductor/ presenter), Louise Dearman (guest singer) & the London Concert Chorus, Mon 23 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**MOZART FESTIVAL CHORUS: CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT** Featuring Susanna Hurrell (soprano - pictured) & Steven Devine (conductor). Programme includes works by Cullen, Handel and Bach, Tues 24 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham



**LONDON CONCERT ORCHESTRA: LAST NIGHT OF THE CHRISTMAS PROMS** Featuring Robin Lyn Evans (tenor), James Cleverton (baritone) & John Pryce-Jones (conductor). Programme includes works by Strauss, Rossini and Rimsky-Korsakov, Fri 27 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**LONDON CONCERT ORCHESTRA: THE BEST OF JOHN WILLIAMS** Featuring Anthony Inglis (conductor), Sat 28 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**LONDON CONCERT ORCHESTRA: THE MUSIC OF ZIMMER VS. WILLIAMS** Featuring Anthony Inglis (conductor). Programme includes scores from Hans Zimmer & John Williams, Sun 29 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA: BEETHOVEN'S NINTH** Featuring Lauren Fagan (soprano) & Kathryn Rudge (mezzo-soprano), Mon 30 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**LONDON CONCERT ORCHESTRA: NEW YEAR'S EVE GALA** Featuring Ilona Domnich (soprano), Alexander James Edwards (tenor) & Anthony Inglis (conductor). Programme includes works by Grieg, Puccini and Verdi, Tues 31 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

## Comedy

**MICKEY D, PAUL THORNE & COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON** Fri 27 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**MICKEY D, PAUL THORNE, LOUISE YOUNG & ANDY ROBINSON** Sat 28 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**KANE BROWN, SLIM & COMIC TBC** Sun 29 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**GLEE FAMILY COMEDY SHOW** Sun 29 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**ROBERT WHITE, MICKEY D, ANDY ROBINSON & COMIC TBC** Tues 31 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

## Theatre

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## Pantomime

**SNOW WHITE** All & Sundry present a traditional family pantomime 'packed with fun, laughter and plenty of audience participation', until Sun 22 Dec, Artrix, Bromsgrove

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**ROBIN HOOD - THE PANTOMIME ADVENTURE** Festive show featuring 'daring duels, stunning sets, outrageous costumes and a very merry man in a dress', until Sun 5 Jan, The Core Theatre, Solihull

**ALADDIN** Traditional family pantomime,



Nanna Radleys - The Jam House, Birmingham



Tues 10 - Tues 31 Dec, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

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**RAYMOND BRIGGS' FATHER CHRISTMAS** Join Santa on the busiest day of his year - Christmas Eve, until Sun 29 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

**KIPPER'S SNOWY DAY** Original songs & music, puppetry and humour combine in a stage version of Mick Inkpen's much-loved book, until Tues 31 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

**SANTA'S CHRISTMAS COUNTDOWN** Join Doty the elf, Dasher the reindeer, Jack Frost and Pom-pom the penguin in a 'fun, festive, musical adventure for younger audiences', Mon 23 - Tues 24 Dec, Artrix, Bromsgrove

**GRANDPA'S GREAT ESCAPE** Nigel Planer takes the lead in a brand new staging of David Walliams' bestselling children's book, Mon 23 - Tues 24 Dec & Thurs 26 Dec, Arena Birmingham

**WE'RE GOING ON A BEAR HUNT** 'Catchy songs, interactive scenes and plenty of hands-on adventure' combine in this adaptation of Michael Rosen & Helen Oxenbury's much-loved picture book, Thurs 26 Dec - Sun 12 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

## Dance

**SHEN YUN** Epic production fusing classical Chinese dance, scenographical effects and original orchestral works, Tues 31 Dec - Thurs 2 Jan,

International Convention Centre (ICC), Birmingham

## Events

**CHRISTMAS AT THE CASTLE** 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, until Tues 31 Dec, Warwick Castle

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ular VIP igloos, until Sun 5 Jan, The Bullring Shopping Centre, B'ham

**ICE SKATE BIRMINGHAM** Ice Skate Birmingham and the Big Wheel make a welcome return, until Sun 12 Jan, Centenary Square, Birmingham



**TOY COLLECTORS FAIR** Explore over 500 stalls packed with all kinds of collectable toys, trains and models for sale, Fri 27 Dec, NEC, Birmingham

**ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS IS BRUNCH** Featuring live music, performances, quizzes, singalongs and giveaways, Sat 28 Dec, The Lord Clifden, B'ham

**SANTA SAFARI** Meet an elf, climb on board a sleigh and head for the North Pole, Sat 28 - Sun 29 Dec, West Midlands Safari and Leisure Park, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster



# ULTRABEAT

LIVE DJ SET WITH ALL THE HITS  
 "PRETTY GREEN EYES"  
 "FEELIN' FINE"  
 "ELYSIUM (I GO CRAZY)"  
 "SURE FEEL GOOD"

**FRIDAY 27<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2019 9:30PM - LATE**

KICKING OFF WITH

## Bonkers Bingo!

**£10**  
REDEMPTION

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# Lichfield Arts

Registered Charity no. 1155211  
 INSPIRING, INVOLVING, ENTERTAINING

## Folk, blues, jazz, roots, rock & more

at historic Lichfield Guildhall unless stated otherwise

<b>DECEMBER</b>	Sunday 1st	Geoff Lakeman
	Wednesday 4th	Kim Cypher Band
	Saturday 7th	Bob Fox
	Sunday 8th	The Get Back Beatles
	Wednesday 18th	Jazz at The Cathedral Hotel
		Lichfield Jazz Big Band Xmas Special
	Saturday 21st	Jez Lowe & The Bad Pennies
		A Northumbrian Christmas
<b>JANUARY</b>	Friday 10th	Keith Donnelly
	Saturday 11th	True Strays
	Wednesday 15th	Jazz at The Cathedral Hotel
		Wendy Kirkland Quartet
	<b>* Fri 17th - Sat 18th</b>	<b>WINTER BEER FESTIVAL *</b>
	Sunday 19th	Keith James - The Songs of Nick Drake
	Saturday 25th	Burns Night - Ryan Young + ceilidh
<b>FEBRUARY</b>	Saturday 8th	Global Reggae Band
	Wednesday 19th	Jazz at The Cathedral Hotel
		Iain Ballamy Quartet
	Saturday 22nd	Fred Zeppelin
<b>MARCH</b>	Saturday 7th	Fret & Fiddle Wade St Church Hall, WS13 6HL
	Saturday 14th	Aly Bain & Phil Cunningham Wade St Church
	Wednesday 15th	Jazz at The Cathedral Hotel
		Nick Dewhurst Band
		+ Top Local Youth Big Band
	Saturday 21st	Chase Mist Wade St Church Hall, WS13 6HL
	Saturday 28th	Plug & Play Wade St Church Hall, WS13 6HL

[lichfieldarts.org.uk](http://lichfieldarts.org.uk) Box office: 01543 262223

Donagall House, Bone Street, Lichfield, Staffordshire, WS13 6LU, info@lichfieldarts.org.uk








27 Nov – 11 Jan

from £15\*



12 – 24 Dec

kids £13.25\*



11 – 31 Dec

from £29\* ★



18 – 25 Jan

from £10\* ★



28 Jan – 1 Feb

from £15\* ★



8 – 22 Feb

from £10\*

Look for the ★ to save 20% off the cost of your full price tickets when you book equivalent amounts for two or more participating shows at the same time. See website for further information on ticket prices and other concessions.

**BOOK NOW 024 7655 3055 [www.belgrade.co.uk](http://www.belgrade.co.uk)**

\*Ticket prices include a £1.50 booking fee. No booking fee applies if booked online.





## Christmas at Millennium Point

Saturday 7 <sup>th</sup>	Acorns Santa Run	10am - 2pm
Sunday 8 <sup>th</sup>	Santa Family Day*	11am - 5pm
Monday 9 <sup>th</sup>	Christmas Carol Concert	12pm - 2pm
Tuesday 10 <sup>th</sup>	G4 Christmas: Live Preview	12pm - 2pm
Wednesday 11 <sup>th</sup>	Craft Activities & Stalls	10am - 4pm
Thursday 12 <sup>th</sup>	Craft Activities & Stalls	10am - 4pm
Friday 13 <sup>th</sup>	Santa Family Day*	9.30am - 3pm
Tuesday 17 <sup>th</sup>	Santa Family Day*	1pm - 5pm
Thursday 19 <sup>th</sup>	Santa Family Day*	1pm - 7pm



\*THESE EVENTS ARE NOW SOLD OUT, FOR MORE DETAILS ON OUR CHRISTMAS PROGRAMME PLEASE VISIT [WWW.MILLENNIUMPOINT.ORG.UK/CHRISTMAS](http://WWW.MILLENNIUMPOINT.ORG.UK/CHRISTMAS)