


Wolverhampton & Black Country

ISSUE 408 DECEMBER 2019

What's On

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

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WOLVERHAMPTON GRAND THEATRE PRESENTS

ALAN BENNETT'S THE HISTORY BOYS

IAN REDFORD JEFFREY HOLLAND VICTORIA CARLING
AND LEE COMLEY
DIRECTED BY
JACK RYDER

#HistoryBoysWLV



WOLVERHAMPTON
GRAND
THEATRE

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inside:

thelist

Your 16-page week
by week listings guide

DREADZONE

electro, dub and reggae at
Newhampton Arts Centre



THE NUTCRACKER

Birmingham Royal Ballet's
family favourite returns



STEP BACK IN TIME

festive activities galore at the
Black Country Living Museum



Tuesday 3rd December at 7.30pm



Drama
**THEATRE SUPPER:
FIVE YEARS**

Tickets £10

Thursday 5th December at 7.30pm



Comedy
THE IMPROLECTUALS

Tickets £14, £12 conc.

Monday 9th December at 6.00pm



Film
IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE

Tickets £6, £5 conc. £3.50 Staff/Student

Tuesday 10th December at 7.30pm



Drama
ACT COLLECTION 2019

Tickets £5

Monday 16th December at 2.00pm and 6.00pm



Film
**THE MUPPET
CHRISTMAS CAROL**

Tickets £6, £5 conc. £3.50 Staff/Student

Thursday 19th December - Saturday 21st
December at 7.30pm



DRAMA
**DARK TALES
IN WINTER**

Tickets £14, £12 conc.

THE LITTLE VENUE WITH BIG IDEAS

Wulfruna Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1SE

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For full programme, visit: arena.wlv.ac.uk

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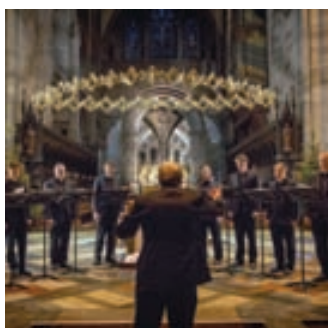
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What's On

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An illuminating Christmas show

Lichfield Cathedral's award-winning Christmas light-and-sound show is making a welcome return for 2019.

Once again facilitated by artistic collaboration Luxmuralis, the show is entitled *The Beginning* and features artwork produced in collaboration with thousands of local school children.

Christmas visitors to the cathedral can enjoy the lights from 16 to 21 December.

Tickets are sold in 15-minute time slots. Entry to the Cathedral Close will be at the allotted ticket time.



Opera production looking for the pawfect pooch...

Has your dog got star quality?

If so, there's a chance they could appear in the Ellen Kent production of Puccini's famous opera, *La Boheme*, when it visits the Wolverhampton Grand on 26 January.

To audition your pooch, send a photograph to angela@ellenkent.co.uk. Include in the email your contact number and address, as well as the breed, height, weight, age and name of your canine companion.

Be sure to state that you wish your dog to be considered for inclusion in the Wolverhampton Grand performance of the production. If your audition is successful, the Ellen Kent company will contact you a week before the show.



Staffordshire theatre wins funding for refurb project

The New Vic Theatre in Newcastle-under-Lyme has been awarded £353,225 by Arts Council England to help upgrade its famous theatre-in-the-round.

The award will enable the venue to start a major fundraising & project plan that will see the most significant investment in the theatre's main auditorium for over 30 years. The work is set to improve customer experience, increase accessibility and enable more people to engage with the New Vic's shows, education and community work.



A tale of young love for Stafford Shakespeare 30th

Stafford Shakespeare Festival has announced that it will be celebrating its 30th anniversary year in 2020 by presenting a production of *Romeo & Juliet*.

The show will be performed outdoors at Stafford Castle from 25 June to 11 July. For more information and to book tickets, visit staffordgatehousetheatre.co.uk

Strictly - live and on tour...

With 2018 winner Stacey Dooley taking on the presenting role, the *Strictly Come Dancing Live* tour is back with a bang next

month.

Waltzing its way into Arena Birmingham from Thursday 16 to Sunday 19 January, the sequin-filled show features TV judges Shirley Ballas, Craig Revel Horwood and Bruno Tonioli. Taking to the dancefloor with their professional dance partners are celebrities Karim Zeroual, Kelvin Fletcher, Saffron Barker, Mike Bushell, Alex Scott, Emma Barton and Catherine Tyldesley.

If you're a fan of the hit BBC TV show, this is definitely an evening out not to be missed...



Cinema showings mark Friends' 25th anniversary

The Showcase cinemas in Dudley and Walsall are this month hosting three special screenings to celebrate the 25th anniversary of hit US comedy series *Friends*.

The cinemas will be showing 12 remastered-in-4K fan-favourite episodes across three nights - Sunday 8, Wednesday 11 and Sunday 15 December.

To book tickets, visit showcasecinemas.co.uk

Walking In The Air at Lichfield Cathedral

Fans of festive family favourite The Snowman have the chance to go Walking In The Air once again this Christmas.

A screening of the much-loved animated version of Raymond Briggs' story is taking place this month at the cathedrals of Coventry and Lichfield - and in both cases will be accompanied by a live orchestra. The event, which also features new animated film A Donkey's Tale, takes place at Coventry Cathedral on Saturday 7 December and then at Lichfield Cathedral on Friday 27 December.



Lionel Richie to tour Hello show

West Midlands fans of international superstar Lionel Richie can enjoy an evening in the singer's company next summer by making a beeline for North Wales.

Lionel will be taking his Hello touring show to Wrexham Racecourse on Thursday 4 June. For tickets, visit [Ticketmaster.co.uk](http://ticketmaster.co.uk)



Chris Ramsey bringing new show to the Midlands

Midlands-based lovers of quality comedy get plenty of opportunity to indulge their interest next year when Chris Ramsey heads out on a UK tour.

As well as being a highly rated stand-up on the UK circuit, Geordie boy Chris has also developed an impressive TV career, appearing on shows including 8 Out Of 10 Cats, Celebrity Juice, South Shields-set sitcom Hebburn and the 2019 series of Strictly Come Dancing.

The critically acclaimed comedian is stopping off at a number of venues in the region, including Shrewsbury's Theatre Severn on 4 April. To check out all of Chris' Midlands gigs, visit his website: chrisramseycomedy.com



Warm your cockles in a festive tipi!

Telford Christmas Market is now open (until Monday 23 December) and features some brand new additions, including a Santa's Grotto - he's there on selected dates - and a double hat tipi, designed to create a warm and welcoming atmosphere in which visitors and shoppers can sit back and enjoy a favourite tippie at Jukes Bar. The market also features its usual selection of unique artisan stalls and food outlets.

A Question Of Sport turns 50



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.

The show will feature host Sue Barker and resident team captains Matt Dawson and Phil Tufnell, along with 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 at ticketmaster.co.uk

Shrewsbury named one of the UK's top 10 Christmas towns

Shrewsbury is one of the top 10 UK towns in which to spend Christmas, according to a list compiled by holiday-cottages booking site Snaptrip.

Describing the town as offering 'an enchanting Christmas in a historical setting', Snaptrip said: "Christmas in Shrewsbury is a special time indeed. The cobblestone streets of this medieval town come alive with fairy lights, lantern parades and groups of carol singers. As well as a jam-packed schedule of Christmas events, the town is also brimming with cosy cafes, traditional pubs and plenty of lovely shops - the perfect setting for a lazy winter's afternoon."



Give a little this festive season

Acorns Children's Hospice is appealing for donations to ensure its network of shops is fully stocked in the run-up to Christmas.

Acorns needs £27,000 per day to provide its care & support services. The charity's network of more than 50 shops across the West Midlands plays a key role in helping to raise the necessary funds.

Anyone who would like to donate toys can take them along to their local Acorns shop.

To find the one nearest to you, visit acorns.org.uk/shop-locator

Join CluedUp's Sneaky Finders

Think you have what it takes to catch a killer? If so, make sure that you're in Shrewsbury on Saturday 18 January to take part in CluedUp's Sneaky Finders Detective Day - an outdoor sleuthing challenge that's just like a giant version of popular boardgame Cluedo.

Transporting participants back to the 1920s, the Peaky Blinders-inspired murder-mystery event will see more than 100 teams compete to catch a killer. CluedUp murder-mysteries unfold virtually via an award-winning app. The game is entirely self-guided. To find out more and book your place, visit cluedup.com



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Santa's Sleepovers at Alton Towers

Midlands families can get into the Christmas spirit by enjoying special Santa's Sleepovers at Alton Towers Resort this month.

Taking place on 1 & 8 December, and then every day from the 14th to the 23rd, the Sleepovers see the popular Staffordshire theme park being transformed into a winter wonderland. Attractions include the chance to enjoy family-friendly rides, a unique visit to Santa, a festive evening meal and a pantomime version of Robin Hood.

Delay for Tamworth Assembly Rooms

The reopening of Tamworth Assembly Rooms following a multi-million pound refurbishment & restoration project has had to be postponed until the New Year.

"The project has not been without its challenges," explains Councillor Rob Pritchard, Deputy Leader of Tamworth Borough Council. "The building has held many secrets of its poor condition right up to the end of the refurbishment programme, and this has resulted in substantial additional works being required."

"All our efforts are focused on getting the venue open as soon as possible, but we need to be 100% reassured that the building is completely ready to welcome our audiences. We want that first experience back to be amazing and memorable for all the right reasons."

John Cleese turns playwright with debut farce that's coming to Wolverhampton

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre is next year staging a brand new farce written by comedy legend John Cleese.

Bang Bang!, starring Tessa Peake-Jones, Tony Gardner & Wendi Peters, will run at the venue from Tuesday 12 to Saturday 16 May.

Marking Cleese's stage writing debut, the play is based on Georges Feydeau's Monsieur Chasse and is being described as a 'delicious blend' of French farce and Fawlty Towers.

Tickets for the show can be purchased at grandtheatre.co.uk or by ringing the venue's box office on 01902 429212.

Up close and personal with Sex Pistols frontman

Sex Pistols and Public Image Ltd star John Lydon is visiting the Midlands next autumn with a Q&A tour.

Coinciding with the publication of his new book, I Could Be Wrong, I Could Be Right, the tour - which bears the same title - will see Lydon reflecting on his controversial career during a series of informal shows comprising conversation and audience questions.

To check out John's numerous Midlands dates and to book tickets, visit johnlydon.com



Light House to host vegan fair

Wolverhampton's Light House venue is hosting a vegan Christmas fair on Saturday 14 December.

Taking place from midday till 8pm, the event will feature vegan stallholders, live music, carol singers and an art exhibit. Entry to the festival is £3, or free for visitors under the age of 11.





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



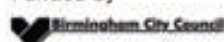
LOVE ACTUALLY WITH ORCHESTRA
 MON 16 DECEMBER, 7:30PM
 SYMPHONY HALL



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

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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'.



REVIEW: The Furnace Kitchen

New family-friendly eatery ticks all the boxes at Ironbridge museum site

Summer 2019 saw HRH Princess Alexandra open new eatery The Furnace Kitchen at the Ironbridge Gorge Museums site in Coalbrookdale.

Offering a new and relaxed dining experience and making use of fresh and locally sourced food, The Furnace Kitchen serves brunch, lunch, main meals, cakes and coffee & tea.

The venue itself is stunning. Located within the former Long Warehouse of the historic Coalbrookdale Company, where railway wagons would once have been loaded, it features open brickwork, exposed concrete & wood and blends the contemporary with the historic. Floor-to-ceiling windows also feature, as do tiles from the nearby Jackfield Tile Museum, filament bulb pendant lights aplenty and a navy-and-gold theme.

The menu showcases a mix of modern British cuisine and European classics, all hand-made in the state-of-the-art kitchen by a talented team overseen by celebrity chef Marcus Bean. Best known for winning Channel Four's Iron Chef UK, as well as for numerous BBC Good

Food Show and TV appearances, Marcus has worked alongside the Ironbridge Trust to create and launch this stylish new eatery.

Daily menu options include brunch (light and fluffy blueberry pancakes with maple syrup, and The Furnace Full English), small plates (pork belly, honey, soy & sesame and smoked ham hock & mustard terrine with house piccalilli), starters (gnocchi, Shropshire coppa, Montano cheese & sage butter), mains (Hobson beer battered hake & chips with tartar sauce) and a range of salads, sandwiches and desserts.

My partner and I visited The Furnace Kitchen on a Friday evening to experience the restaurant's weekly pizza & cocktails night. All the pizzas are cooked fresh to order in the gas-fired Gozney pizza oven.

We kicked off proceedings with a Miners Board, which featured cured meats, two Shropshire cheeses - a blue and a medium - and freshly baked bread and garlic bread. Out of habit I automatically ordered a local beer, so unfortunately can't comment on the cocktail element,

but we were certainly off to a good start. The salty parma ham nicely complemented the creamy cheese, and the bread was well baked. We liked that you could order a single portion, whereas most restaurants only offer sharing boards.

After a short wait, during which we admired the decor, our pizzas arrived. There are six gourmet pizzas to choose from, reasonably priced at between £10 & £12, as well as three children's pizzas, all priced at £6. Gluten-free bases are available on request. We were instantly set on the Strawberry Fields lamb, chimichurri, pomegranate and mint yogurt dressing pizza. However, we struggled to choose between the other three gourmet pizza topping options: slow-cooked pork belly, red onion jam, Appleby smoked cheese and mustard dressing; wild mushroom, Shropshire salami cured pork, garlic & chive butter; and courgette, black pepper chicken curry, fresh coriander, fennel seeds and pickled chilli. They all sounded equally delicious. In the end we opted for the pork.

Both pizzas featured a beautiful medley of high-quality and complementary topping ingredients - but it was the dough that was the real star of the show. It was an absolute triumph. Perfection, in fact. Soft in the middle but crisp on the outside, it couldn't have been cooked any better. Both pizzas showcased just the right amount of topping and were of a decent size. I genuinely couldn't pick a favourite - they were both superb.

Our side order of house chips was thoroughly enjoyable too. Fluffy on the inside but with a satisfying outer-layer crunch, they were perfectly cooked and seasoned. No sauce was required, which in my book is the key to a successful chip.

I applaud Marcus' menu choices. Being a family-friendly establishment, there are options available

for everyone to enjoy, no matter what their age. For example, the dessert menu features more sophisticated options such as lemon posset with ginger nut biscuit, alongside white chocolate cookie ice cream s'mores - an option which one would imagine would be more appealing to the younger generation. We ordered the latter and the house chocolate brownie with salted caramel ice cream. We felt like a couple of big kids - but in a good way, of course! The brownie was exemplary and ticked all the boxes - warm, rich, gooey, moreish and downright delicious. The s'mores were equally as naughty. We left feeling completely satisfied and found ourselves recommending The Furnace Kitchen to everyone in the pub the following evening, as well as to friends and family alike.

Current opening hours are Tuesday to Saturday 8.30am to 5pm and Sunday 9am to 5pm, with the pizza & cocktails night running every Friday evening from 6pm to 9pm. There's a plan to introduce more evening dining in the future. The venue has also announced that it will be launching 'soon-to-be-famous Sunday lunches' - which I for one can't wait to try, if the quality of the pizzas is anything to go by!

Marcus and the Trust have done a fantastic job with The Furnace Kitchen. The decor, the quality of the produce, the ambience, the welcoming and friendly staff, even the toilets, are all of the highest quality. Everything is spot-on. Pay it a visit - you won't be disappointed. *Lauren Foster*

Food:
 Service:
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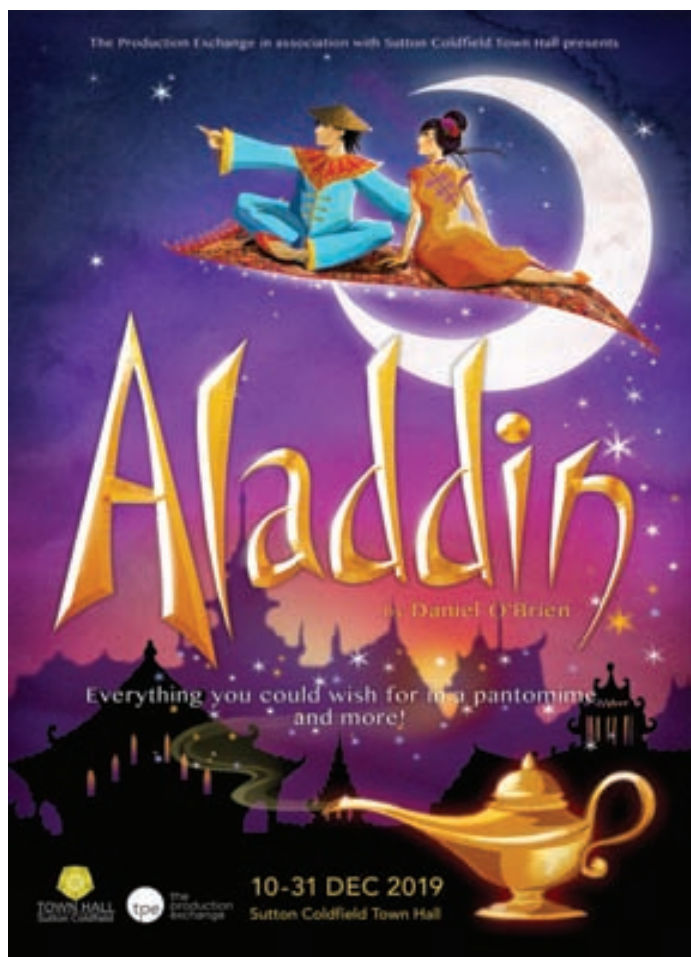
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 **ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND**  **Birmingham City Council**

Hairy Bikers riding into the region in 2020

Following a major UK tour earlier this year, national treasures Si King and Dave Myers - aka The Hairy Bikers - have announced a 2020 tour. Offering an entertaining evening of cooking and conversation, the tour stops off at Victoria Hall, Stoke, on 16 October, Symphony Hall, Birmingham, on 18 October and Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, on 29 October. Tickets for the shows are on sale now.



Smokin! Hickory's opens in Shrewsbury

Hickory's Smokehouse has chosen Shrewsbury to open its 11th restaurant. Located alongside the River Severn and next to The Armoury pub, Hickory's is 'fanatical about flames, silly about smokers and utterly obsessed with the smells, tastes and traditions of the Deep South'.

The eatery's menu - available daily from 9am to 11pm - includes steaks, fajitas, skewers, southern fried chicken, burgers, smokehouse classics such as ribs and Texas-style beef brisket, and (most mouthwateringly of all) 'the ultimate Smokehouse Platter'. Breakfast options, cocktails and milkshakes also feature.



An oat so tasty start to the day as young Shropshire entrepreneur launches breakfast delivery start-up

Shropshire entrepreneur Alex Jenkins has launched a breakfast delivery start-up called Oat Pantry.

With a subscriber base that spans the length and breadth of the UK - and a little bakery in Wem - Oat Pantry is championing local produce and Shropshire's entrepreneurial spirit nationwide.

"Currently, we're focused on porridge and granola," says Alex. "It was a year's-worth of experimenting with flavours to come up with our current selection. We have five core flavours for granola and five for porridge. For granola, there's Cherry Bakewell, Maple & Pecan, Peanut Butter & Chia, Dark Chocolate & Cherry

and Cinnamon & Raisin. For porridge, there's Carrot Cake, Cinnamon & Raisin, Cherry Bakewell, Simply Nutty and Dark Chocolate & Cherry."

All of Oat Pantry's products are free from gluten and dairy, making them suitable for people with a range of dietary requirements. The packaging is 100% plastic-free. You can find Oat Pantry's produce at The Allotment in Shrewsbury, Battlefield 1403 and Moor Farm.

To find out more, visit oatpantry.com. Read our full interview with Alex at whatsonlive.co.uk



Ex Cathedra: Christmas Music By Candlelight

St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury, Fri 6 December; St Peter's Collegiate Church, Wolverhampton, Sat 7 December; St John's Church, Hagley, Birmingham, Tues 10 December; 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 pre-

senting 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).



Handel's Messiah

Abbey Church, Shrewsbury, Sat 21 December



Shrewsbury School Community Choir here take on the challenge of Handel's magnificent choral masterpiece, a work which tells the story of Christ's Nativity, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension. Hugely popular with classical music audiences, the oratorio has been performed in Britain every year since the mid-18th century. Unquestionably the best-known section of the work is the rousing Hallelujah Chorus, one of the most famous pieces of Baroque choral music ever written.

Lichfield Cathedral Chorus: Messa di Gloria

Lichfield Cathedral, Sat 7 December

Lichfield Cathedral Chorus currently comprises around 120 members and has been making music since 1959 - for its first 50 years under the name of Lichfield Cathedral Special Choir.

This latest concert sees the Chorus performing Giacomo Puccini's highly operatic Messa di Gloria and Ralph Vaughan Williams' folksy Fantasia On Christmas Carols...

And speaking of Christmas carols, there'll be a few of those included as well, to ensure the concert audience head for home in a suitably festive frame of mind.



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 sing-along opportunities to savour too, not to mention the added attraction of humorous readings by the delightfully sardonic Hugh Dennis (pictured).



Belshazzar's Feast

Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury,
Sun 1 December

Folk duo Belshazzar's Feast are Paul Sartin (Faustus and Bellowhead) and Paul Hutchinson (Pagoda Project and resident accordion tutor for English Folk Dance & Song Society). Those attending the pair's annual sell-out Christmas shows can look forward to a mix of seasonal songs and tunes, classical music, pop, music hall and traditional folk - all topped off with audience participation and lashings of wry humour.



Fight The Bear

Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury, Fri 13 December

Shropshire's very own Fight The Bear have recorded three albums - Gutter Love (2006), Dead Sea Fruit (2009) and 38 Degrees (2013) - featured on BBC Radio One and 6 Music playlists and completed multiple tours across the UK and Europe.

The four-piece return to Shrewsbury to present a Christmas special. RSVP on the Albert's Shed website for free entry.



Dreadzone

Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton,
Fri 6 December

Presenting an eclectic fusion of dub, reggae, techno, folk and rock music, Dreadzone formed in 1993, during their early years employing backing vocalists who included

Denise van Outen and Alison Goldfrapp. One of the most energetic, exciting and powerful live bands to emerge from the post-rave scene, they're moving forward as a five-piece after parting ways with their guitarist, and are now focusing more on the electronic and dub elements of their stage show.

Buzzcocks

The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton,
Thurs 12 December

Buzzcocks are genuine, 24-carat punk-rock royalty, having formed, along with the Sex Pistols and the Clash, the original holy trinity of British punk. Superstar groups such as REM, Nirvana and Green Day have all been happy to acknowledge the influence which the Bolton-originated band had on their music. Influential in terms of both the independent record movement and the Manchester music scene, the band were once hailed 'The Beatles of punk', their sound being described as a fusion of pop craftsmanship and rapid-fire punk energy.

The Urban Voodoo Machine

The Robin, Bilston, Wed 11 December

"We're not Americana and we're definitely not retro," says Urban Voodoo Machine lead Paul-Ronney Angel. "I write songs about living in London right now - although having a shit time, no money, heartbreak, mental illness, addiction and suppression from the big guy is kinda universal and timeless, I guess..."

Expect blasting guitars, bass & drums, shrieking saxophone, washboard shenanigans and a pure, unadulterated sense of fun...

Beans On Toast

The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent,
Thursday 19 December



Climate emergency, Boris as PM, rail-melting heatwaves, a No-Deal Brexit...

Given all of the above, Beans On Toast decided that the obvious title for his new album of social-commentary songs, released this very month, was The Inevitable Train Wreck!

Emerging from the London folk scene over a decade ago and singing mainly about sex, drugs and politics, the artist otherwise known as Jay McAllister is a surefire bet for an entertaining evening out.

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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...'



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*.

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.



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**

Each of the **22,000 flowers** in the garden were made by hand

Nearly **2 miles of fabric** was used to create the award-winning costumes

Over **250 sq. metres of gold leaf** has been used in the production

It takes **8 trucks** to move the production between theatres

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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...

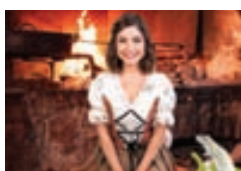
Presumably working on the principle that if she keeps on the principle that if she keeps on the move, the Wicked Queen will never catch her, Snow White is very sensibly taking shelter in a variety of locations across the Midlands this Christmas. She can be seen getting along famously with her seven new-found 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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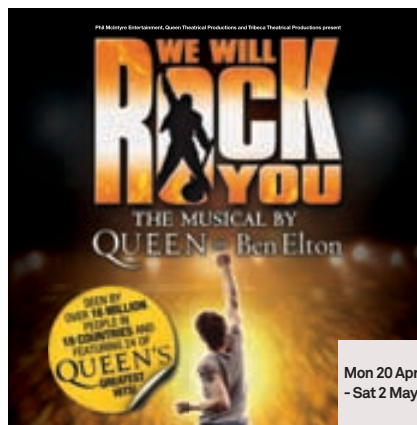
Tue 18 -
Sat 29 Feb



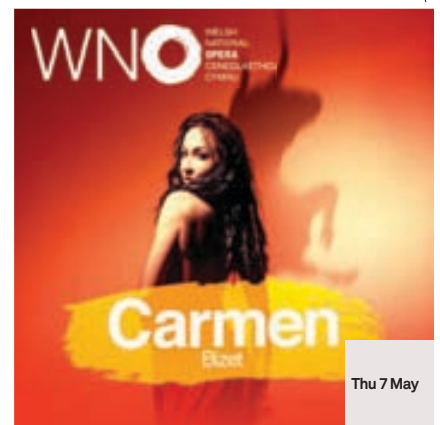
Wed 8 -
Sat 11 Apr



Mon 13 -
Sat 18 Apr



Mon 20 Apr
- Sat 2 May



Thu 7 May



Tue 12 -
Sat 30 May



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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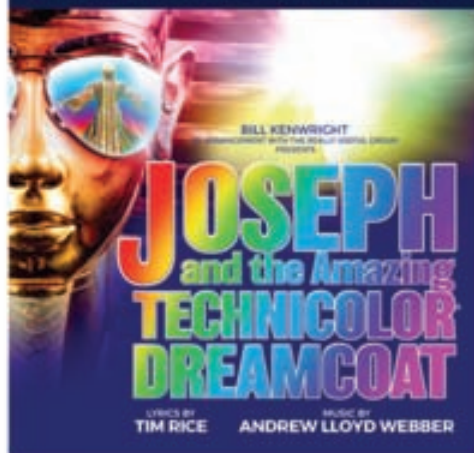
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LET IT SNOW...

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 ransformed 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.



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.

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 tail, sorry, tale, of a fabulous feline who outwits both a king and an ogre to make his master the top, er, dog...

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

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'.



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.

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.

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."

"They can expect a lot of dancing, live music, singing, acting - this is an interdisciplinary performance. We'll have magicians, photo booths...there'll also be some special guests on different days. You'll get the same high-quality main performance, where you sit in cabaret seating and engage with the show, but each fully immersive, improvised after-party will be slightly different. I think being able to leave the theatre thinking, 'Wow, I had a great dance and a good laugh' is amazing. I know that this show will leave people surprised and saying they didn't know theatre could be like this - so exciting, so innovative. Audiences are so passive in the theatre sometimes, and Club 2B is all about getting involved. I'm expecting people to want photos with Zeus and to get up and dance with him. We're definitely breaking convention - especially because there'll be a bar where you can get drinks within the theatre piece itself. Getting a drink is part of the show, and Z is going to give you the opportunity to do that throughout the night. This is an experience like no other..."

And what involvement will the audience have in the storytelling?

"Anyone coming to see Club 2B will have to be ready to become fully involved and throw themselves into the whole experience. We obviously don't expect you to do anything in particular or get up and perform, but we may refer to audience members as specific individuals within the story. Those immersive moments are embedded into the script, and that character will be represented by a different person each day. That's what's so exciting about this show - every single performance will be unique. Then, at each after-event, you can fully place yourself in the world we've created and can continue to enjoy the characters you've seen and made. I would encourage audiences to come as characters they've created - whether that be their own creation or someone from their favourite book or film - and fully get into our nightclub experience."

Club 2B offers a fusion of eras not only in terms of its characters but also its music.

“In the show itself we have near enough all genres of music. We have lyrics coming from very recognisable songs in popular culture, but put over a very 1930s composition. Then we’ve also done the same thing in reverse, where we have poetry that dates back to the 1950s put into contemporary rap by our musi-

cal director. Then, after the show, we're just free-styling. Our band are ready for requests and even karaoke-type singing. As our band takes a break and the night fades, a DJ takes over, and that will more than likely focus on popular culture. But within the show itself, the genre really varies, and I'd say the only thing we don't cover is Heavy Metal. We're focusing on the eras the story comes from - so the Ancient Greek era will have folk music, the 1930s will be Gatsby's era, the 1950s will have a heavy jazz sound - right the way through to the 2019 contemporary space, where we can really experiment."

Corey feels that Christmas through to New Year's Eve is the perfect time of year for an immersive theatre piece: "Around the festive period we have a lot of pantomimes, which are really a phenomenal British art form of their own, but I felt like Coventry needed and deserved something that could bring a diverse group of people together from different cultures, backgrounds and religions. I find that immersive theatre, where you allow yourself to be embedded into the narrative of the very performance you've gone to see, is a really binding experience. There's no better time for something of that nature than the Christmas period. The opportunity to bring a piece like Club 2B into the Belgrade Theatre in this period is all about reconciliation of love. Coventry has reconciled the masses, especially through music, since way back when - think of The Specials, and even before that with its nightclub scene. That's a legacy of Coventry that I want to continue."

Corey certainly boasts impressive credentials, as both a performer and a creative. As well as being artistic director of Strictly Arts Theatre Company, who were behind critically acclaimed Edinburgh Fringe sell-out show *Freeman*, he was also associate & movement director for the recent UK tour of *Noughts And Crosses* - an adaptation of Malorie Blackman's groundbreaking Young Adult novel.

"I was supposed to be stepping back from performing for a little while because I've headed up all of our shows at Strictly Arts and really led from the stage. But when I spoke to my team, they said it'd be a real shame if I didn't perform in this one too. So I'll definitely be making an appearance, along with some of my colleagues from Freeman. It's really exciting because I was going to really miss performing. I was trying not to tell you because it's meant to be a secret, but you've really pulled it out of me - I will be tak-

ing on the role of Zeus in Club 2B.”

So how did the show come about?

“People would always contact me to ask me to bring my energy to their events, in the hope that it would increase their footfall. So what we started to do at Strictly Arts wasn’t necessarily an immersive theatre experience but a clubbing experience. We would have little shows in nightclubs. For example, we had a Peaky Blinders room in a club in Birmingham. They had a secret door in this nightclub via a bookcase, which led to this little smoking area. So Strictly Arts used to occupy that area as Peaky Blinders or all sorts of other themes each week. People started to hear about this club that had a little show in it and it got really popular, so we started to move around to other cities like Manchester. I thought how amazing it would be if we could establish that same feeling, energy and vibe in an actual theatre. Then along came the opportunity to do Club 2B at the Belgrade.”

Given his reputation for theatrical innovation, it's no surprise that Corey will also be co-artistic director of the Belgrade programme for Coventry's year as City of Culture in 2021.

“Strictly Arts is a multi-disciplinary arts company telling the Afro-Caribbean story, which is something that I’m very, very passionate about. That’s obviously something I’ll take forward to the Belgrade, but I’ll also be looking at the stories of other marginalised communities. The Belgrade Theatre should be a home and a hub, where any community can come to express themselves - be it from the stage or as an audience member in dialogue with a performance. I intend to plough that vision right the way through the 2021 City of Culture programme. As an Afro-Caribbean man myself, my attention does tend to lie there, but diversity on the whole should be of the utmost importance in theatre - and not just when it comes to race, but a whole manner of things, from age and economic background to religion. The next shows that I have in mind will be new for Strictly Arts. Even Club 2B is quite new for our style, but we’re really going to start taking more risks. I would really love for Coventry to be behind me as we embark on this journey.”

Club 2B shows at the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, from Wednesday 11 to Tuesday 31 December.



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.

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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

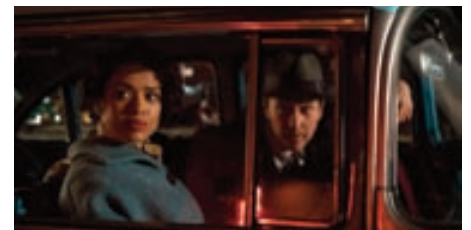
Motherless Brooklyn

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)

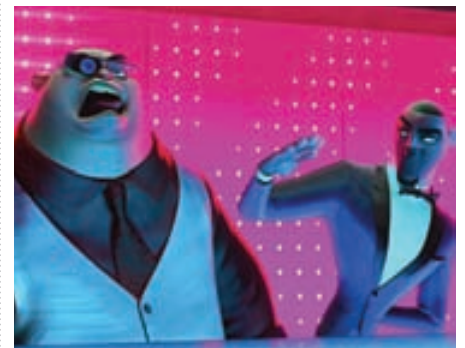
We all know that children are a match for anybody (cf. Kindergarten Cop with Arnold Schwarzenegger). Here, in this family-friendly comedy, a gang of tough firefighters find themselves outclassed by three kids they have rescued.

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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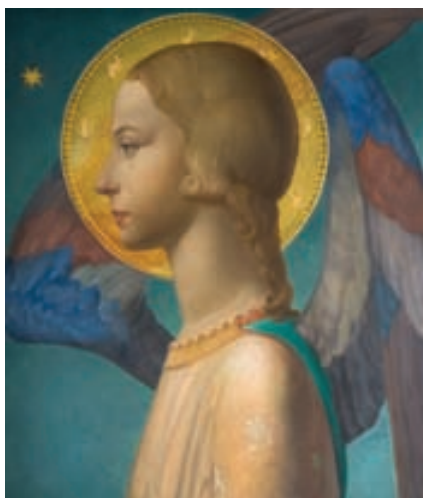
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Meryl McMaster: As Immense As The Sky

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.



credit: @kategreenphotog

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.



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 Sreatery, 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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23rd November - 5th January

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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

A NEW CHRISTMAS EXPERIENCE IN 2019

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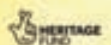
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Victorian Christmas

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, Stafs,
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!

Meet Santa
23rd Nov - 23rd Dec

National
SEA LIFE
Birmingham

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The Ultimate Festive Experience

A festive underwater scene featuring Santa Claus in his red suit and white beard, holding a glowing gift. A young girl in a white dress is reaching for the gift. The background is a vibrant blue with various sea creatures including sharks, dolphins, clownfish, and seahorses. There are also floating Christmas gifts and candy canes.

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A man and a young child are smiling and building with LEGO bricks on a table. The child is wearing a striped shirt and the man is wearing a green shirt. In the background, there are colorful lights and a sign that says "Creative Workshop". A small LEGO Santa Claus figure is in the bottom right corner.

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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

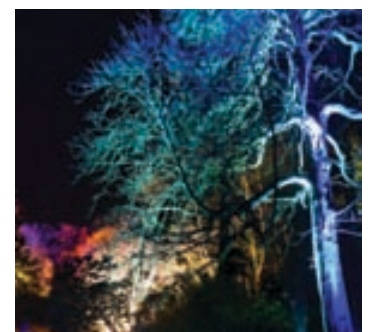
Compton Verney is certainly helping families get into the Christmas spirit this month.

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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FRI 31 JAN - THEATRE SEVERN, SHREWSBURY
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WED 5 FEB - THE ALEXANDRA THEATRE, BIRMINGHAM
0844 871 3011 atgickets.com/birmingham

FRI 21 FEB - ROSE THEATRE, TEWESBURY
01844 295434 rosetheatre.org

From The Producers Of Anything For Love The Meat Loaf Story vampiresrock.com

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.

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

More details can be found on:

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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 'enchanted 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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The logo for AX Arena Cross. It features a large, stylized 'A' in blue with a white star inside, followed by a large white 'X'. Below this, the words 'ARENA CROSS' are written in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The background of the logo is black, and there are some blurred images of people and vehicles on the left side.

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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



Peter Pan at Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Fri 13 December - Sun 5 January

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

What's On

Sun 1 to Sun 8 December



Christmas at Shugborough
Historic Working Estate
until Sun 22 December

Mon 9 to Sun 15 December



Christmas at Coalbrookdale
Museum of Iron
Sat 14 & Sun 15 December

Mon 16 to Sun 22 December



Javier Jarquin at
The George Hotel, Lichfield
Sun 22 December

Mon 23 to Tues 31 December



Christmas Through Time at
Black Country Living Museum
until Tues 24 December

THROUGHOUT DECEMBER

Visual Arts

New Art Gallery - Walsall

NEW SARAH TAYLOR SILVERWOOD - KATHLEEN AND SALLY SERIES Body of drawings based on text and images abstracted from photographs, letters, and documents relating to the two creators and donors of the Garman Ryan Collection, Kathleen Epstein (née Garman) and Sally Ryan, Sat 21 Dec - Sun 7 June

Himley Hall & Park, Dudley

DUDLEY SOCIETY OF ARTISTS EXHIBITION until Fri 20 Dec

CHRISTMAS EXHIBITION until Fri 20 Dec

Newcastle Borough Museum & Art Gallery

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

Potteries Museum & Art Gallery - Stoke-On-Trent

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

THROUGH THE WARDROBE Step through the wardrobe and enter the enchanted forest of Narnia, frozen in perpetual winter, until Sun 22 Dec

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

STAFFORDSHIRE HOSPITALITY: CERAMICS THAT CATER TO THE WORLD Exhibition exploring the 300-year history of North Staffordshire ceramics created for the hospitality industry, until Sun 19 Jan

The Willow Art Gallery, Oswestry

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

Weston Park

NEW HALLS YOUNG ARTIST COMPETITION 2019 All shortlisted artwork will be on show, Sun 1 - Tues 31 Dec

Wolverhampton Art Gallery

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

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

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

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

50 YEARS ON: THE NORTHERN IRELAND COLLECTION REVISITED Exhibition featuring new acquisition Rocket Man, by Northern Irish artist Gerry Gleason, and also including items from the gallery's nationally important collection of art relating to the Troubles, until Sun 29 Mar

NEW WOLVERHAMPTON SOCIETY OF ARTISTS CENTENARY EXHIBITION Exhibition documenting the story of the Society, featuring a selection of works by WSA's alumni, Sat 14 Dec - Sun 16 Feb

Other VISUAL ARTS

NOTES FROM SHROPSHIRE The Year's Paintings by Michelle Anderson, until Fri 6 Dec, Gallery3, Shrewsbury

WILD ABOUT STAFFORDSHIRE - CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF STAFFORDSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST Open art exhibition celebrating the beauty of Staffordshire's wildlife and wild places, until Tues 17 Dec, Museum of Cannock Chase, Staffordshire

ARTS AND CRAFTS EXHIBITION Show featuring locally made arts and crafts, until Mon 23 Dec, Qube Gallery, Oswestry, North Shropshire

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

RURAL SURREALISM AND WINTER EXHIBITION Exhibition exploring the use of dream imagery, folklore and fantasy in the traditions of painting, sculpture and print, until Sun 26 Jan, Twenty Twenty Gallery, Ludlow

WINTER EXHIBITION Broad range of Members' new work for sale, including unique handcrafted cards, jewellery, paintings, photography, ceramics, glass, wood, textiles and mixed-media pieces, until Tues 28 Jan, VAN Gallery, Darwin Shopping Centre, Shrewsbury

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

Gigs

CAROLE - THE MUSIC OF CAROLE KING Sun 1 Dec, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

PROGFATHERS + BLANK MANUSCRIPT Sun 1 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

CHRIS CLEVERLEY Sun 1 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

NIKKI ROUS Sun 1 Dec, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

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

RIDE Sun 1 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

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

THE MIDNIGHT BEAST - 10TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR Sun 1 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE DARKNESS Sun 1 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

GEOFF LAKEMAN Sun 1 Dec, Lichfield Guildhall

BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST Sun 1 Dec, Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury

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

SIGRID Mon 2 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

SOEUR + IN THE CARDS + LYSANDER Mon 2 Dec, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

EMELI SANDÉ Mon 2 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

MEMPHIS MAY FIRE Tues 3 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

BAD MANNERS Tues 3 Dec, The Mill Digbeth, Birmingham

ABSOLUTE ELVIS FEAT JOHNNY LEE MEMPHIS Tues 3 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

WILD FRONT AND POLAR STATES Tues 3 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

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

KIM CYPHER BAND Wed 4 Dec, Lichfield Guildhall

CLAIRO Wed 4 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

MUNA Wed 4 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

LOW ISLAND Wed 4 Dec, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent



GRANDSLAM + HOL-LOWPOINT Wed 4 Dec, Eleven, Sandyford, Stoke-on-Trent

MIDLAND Thurs 5 Dec, O2 Institute, B'ham

JOSEPHINE DAVIS' SATORI Thurs 5 Dec, Newhampton Arts Centre, W'hampton

SAM FENDER Thurs 5 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

CALEB HAWLEY Thurs 5 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

JAKE MARTIN Thurs 5 Dec, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

GENO WASHINGTON AND THE RAM JAM BAND Thurs 5 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

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

THE ILLEGAL EAGLES Fri 6 Dec, Dudley Town Hall

ELO AGAIN Fri 6 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

SPICE FOREVER - SPICE GIRLS TRIBUTE Fri 6 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

REBECCA DOWNES Fri 6 Dec, The Slade Rooms, W'hampton

DREADZONE Fri 6 Dec, Newhampton Arts Centre, W'hampton

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

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

BJORN AGAIN Fri 6 Dec,

O2 Academy, B'ham
WHITESNAKE UK + OLD GLORY AND THE BLACK RIVIERA Fri 6 Dec, Eleven, Sandyford, Stoke-on-Trent

CAPTAIN STINGRAY'S GROOVE MACHINE Fri 6 Dec, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

FREEDOM '19 Fri 6 Dec, Forest Arts Centre, Walsall

SURFS UP Fri 6 - Sat 7 Dec, Theatre On The Steps, Bridgnorth

UK FOO FIGHTERS Sat 7 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

GUNS OR ROSES Sat 7 Dec, Eleven, Sandyford, Stoke-on-Trent

MEMPHIS MAY FIRE + WALKWAYS + SPECIAL GUESTS Sat 7 Dec, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

THE FUTUREHEADS Sat 7 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

BON GIOVI Sat 7 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

WINGWALKERS Sat 7 Dec, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

THE WEEKEND ANTHEMS BY KILLERSTREAM Sat 7 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

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

UNDER A BANNER, THE GIFT AND THIS WINTER Sat 7 Dec, The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton

THE REGULARS Sat 7 Dec, Ludlow Brewery, South Shropshire

BOB FOX Sat 7 Dec, Lichfield Guildhall

NICK HARPER + INCE BABIES + TURNING BLACK + LIKE LIZARDS Sat 7 Dec, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

RICHARD SHINDELL Sun 8 Dec, The Hive, Shrewsbury

MOSTLY AUTUMN Sun 8 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

MICHAELA AND BEN FOLGER Sun 8 Dec, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

THE GET BACK BEATLES Sun 8 Dec, Lichfield Guildhall

Classical

JANE HAMLET (SOPRANO) IN CONCERT
Sun 1 Dec, Shrewsbury Cathedral

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

CITY SONGBIRDS CHRISTMAS CONCERT
Mon 2 Dec, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

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

SHREWSBURY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: OUT OF THIS WORLD Featuring music by Holst & Strauss alongside scores from Star Trek and A Space Odyssey, Wed 4 Dec, Alington Hall, Shrewsbury School

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

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

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

CELTIC CHRISTMAS STRINGS Fri 6 Dec, Silvester Horne Institute, Church Stretton, South Shropshire

CONCERT IN THE ROUND Featuring Sarah Westwood (soprano), David Joyce (violin), Ruth Henley (cello) & Richard Silk (chamber organ), Fri 6 Dec, St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury

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

CELTIC CHRISTMAS STRINGS Sat 7 Dec, Bitterley Village Hall, Ludlow, South Shropshire

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

LUDLOW CHORAL SOCIETY: JOYEUX NOËL Programme includes works by Charpentier & Saint-Saëns, Sat 7 Dec, St Laurence's Church, Ludlow, South Shropshire

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

EX CATHEDRA: CHRISTMAS MUSIC BY CANDLELIGHT Popular festive concert featuring Jeffrey Skidmore at the helm, Sat 7 Dec, St Peter's Church, Wolverhampton

WOMBOURNE & DISTRICT CHORAL SOCIETY: MESSIAH Sat 7 Dec, Church of St John in the Square, Wolverhampton

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

SHREWSBURY YOUTH CHAMBER CHOIR
Sun 8 Dec, Shrewsbury Cathedral

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

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

VINCE ATTA, ANNETTE FAGON, DAN SMITH & COMIC TBC Thurs 5 Dec, Stourbridge Town Hall

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

JUSTIN MOORHOUSE Fri 6 Dec, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

FRANK SKINNER Fri 6 Dec, William Aston Hall, Wrexham

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

TOM BINNS, IVAN BRACKENBURY & WAYNE BEESE Sat 7 Dec, Whitchurch Civic Centre, North Shropshire

COMEDY IN THE MET Sat 7 Dec, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

ROB ROUSE, EDD HEDGES, CHRIS WASHINGTON & DAMION LARKIN Sat 7 Dec, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

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



Curtains - Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

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, Stratford-upon-Avon

CHRISTMAS WASSAIL Fusion of words & music for the festive season, Fri 29 Nov - Sun 1 Dec, Oldbury Rep

ERIC'S CHRISTMAS PANTO Festive favourite packed with '60s music, Mon 2 - Sat 14 Dec, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

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 POLAROID'S 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

RICK WAKEMAN - THE GRUMPY OLD CHRISTMAS SHOW Evening of 'spell-binding piano music and side-splitting stories', Thurs 5 Dec, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

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

MRS PEACHUM'S GUIDE TO LOVE & MARRIAGE (A RADICAL REWORKING OF THE BEGGAR'S OPERA) Mid Wales Opera presents a new one-act opera concerning 'love, loyalty & London gin', Fri 6 Dec, Castle Hall, Bridgnorth, South Shropshire

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<p>music</p>  <p>STEVE STEINMAN'S VAMPIRES ROCK GHOST TRAIN Fri 17 Jan @ 7.30pm</p>	<p>music</p>  <p>YOU WIN AGAIN CELEBRATING THE MUSIC OF THE BEE GEES Sat 18 Jan @ 7.30pm</p>	<p>music</p>  <p>THE GROEGE MICHAEL LEGACY FEATURING WAYNE DILKS Sat 25 Jan @ 7.30pm</p>
<p>dance</p>  <p>DANCE TO THE MUSIC HOSTED BY JAKE QUICKENDEN Sat 25 Jan @ 3.00pm</p>	<p>music</p>  <p>PRINCE TRIBUTE ENDORPHINMACHINE Fri 31 Jan @ 7.30pm</p>	<p>family</p>  <p>THE ADVENTURE OF PINOCCHIO Sat 1 Feb @ 7.30pm</p>
<p>special</p>  <p>PSYCHIC MEDIUM TONY STOCKWELL Tues 4 Feb @ 7.30pm</p>	<p>comedy</p>  <p>COUNT ARTHUR STRONG IS THERE ANYBODY OUT THERE? Wed 5 Feb @ 8.00pm</p>	<p>music</p>  <p>BOOGIE WONDERLAND Thurs 6 Feb @ 7.30pm</p>

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



JACK AND THE BEANSTALK Presented by Stoke Amateur Theatre Society (SATS), until Sun 8 Dec, Mitchell Arts Centre, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent

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

SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS Amateur staging presented by CWAGMS, Wed 4 - Sat 7 Dec, Prince of Wales Centre, Cannock

ALADDIN Fun-filled family pantomime featuring Brad Pitt as Widow Twankey & BBC Radio Shropshire presenter Eric Smith, Wed 4 Dec - Sun 12 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

SLEEPING BEAUTY Thurs 5 - Sun 8 Dec, Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

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

Kids Shows

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:

SORRY WE MISSED YOU (15) Drama. Starring Kris Hitchen, Debbie Honeywood. Stoke Film Theatre, Fri 29 - Sat 30 Nov & Tues 3 Dec

DOCTOR SLEEP (15) Fantasy/Horror. Starring Ewan McGregor, Rebecca Ferguson. Light House Media Centre, Wolverhampton, Fri 29 Nov - Wed 4 Dec

THE REPORT (15) Drama/Thriller. Starring Adam Driver, Annette Bening. Light House Media Centre, Wolverhampton, Fri 29 Nov - Thurs 5 Dec

THE IRISHMAN (15) Biography/Crime. Starring Robert De Niro, Al Pacino. Light House Media Centre, Wolverhampton, Fri 29 Nov - Thurs 5 Dec

OFFICIAL SECRETS (15) Biography/Drama. Starring Keira Knightley, Matthew Goode. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 29 Nov - Thurs 5 Dec; Wem Town Hall, North Shropshire, Wed 4 - Thurs 5 Dec

LOVE ACTUALLY (15) Drama/Romance. Starring Hugh Grant, Martine McCutcheon. Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton, Mon 2 Dec

MEET ME IN ST LOUIS (U) Comedy/Drama. Starring Judy Garland, Margaret O'Brien. Wem Town Hall, North Shropshire, Mon 2 Dec

EXTREMELY WICKED, SHOCKINGLY EVIL AND VILE (15) Biography/Crime. Starring Lily Collins, Zac Efron. Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, Shropshire, Mon 2 Dec

TOP HAT (U) Comedy/Musical. Starring Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers. Old Mar-

ket Hall, Shrewsbury, Mon 2 Dec

TOLKIEN (12a) Biography/Drama. Starring Nicholas Hoult, Lily Collins. Stourbridge Town Hall, Mon 2 Dec

THE CIAMBRA (15) Crime/Drama. Starring Pio Amato, Iolanda Amato. Foreign language, subtitled. The Hive, Shrewsbury, Fri 6 Dec

THE AERONAUTS (PG) Adventure/Biography. Starring Felicity Jones, Eddie Redmayne. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 6 - Thurs 12 Dec

THE WIZARD OF OZ (U) Adventure/Family. Starring Judy Garland, Frank Morgan. Light House Media Centre, Wolverhampton, Sun 8 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

CHRISTMAS WREATH MAKING WORKSHOP Learn a new skill and create a beautiful traditional Christmas wreath to make sure your door is the best dressed in town! until Tues 17 Dec, The British Ironwork Centre, Oswestry, North Shropshire

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

NORTH POLE ADVENTURE Journey

through the magical portal to the North Pole, until Tues 24 Dec, National Forest Adventure Farm, Burton Upon Trent

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

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

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

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

SANTA SAFARI A 'magical adventure' by Land Rover through the illuminated woodland to see Santa in his real hillside grotto, Fri 29 Nov - Mon 23 Dec, Hawkstone Park & Folies, Shrewsbury

MINICHRISTMAS 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 AND STEAM Santa's on board and bearing gifts for youngsters, while there's a glass of sherry for the



Drayton's Magical Christmas - Drayton Manor Park, Tamworth

CHRISTMAS AT THE LICHFIELD GARRICK

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PANTO

CINDERELLA

28 NOV 2019 - 5 JAN 2020



KIDS

CHARLIE & THE CHRISTMAS CAT

6 DEC 2019 - 24 DEC 2019



ADULTS

CHRISTMAS CAROL CASEBOOK

5 DEC 2019 - 4 JAN 2020

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LIVE MUSIC

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Soul Agenda

TUES 31 DEC

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7 December, 10am - 1pm
Festive Family Funday
Tickets: £8 includes a gift from Santa

16 - 18 December,
10am, 12pm & 2.30pm
Hallowe'en: Glisten
Tickets: £12 1 Adult & 1 Child

18 December, 7.30pm
Once Upon A Wednesday:
"Wassail" Sarah Matthews & Doug Eunson
Tickets: £7.50

19 December, 11am & 4pm
Santa's Christmas Countdown
Tickets: £10

20 December, 7.30pm
Festivities With Friends
Tickets: £8

21 December, 7.30pm
Rat Pack Christmas Show
Tickets: £21

Friday 24th January
11am & 1.30pm
The Goose Who Flew
Tickets: £8

Thursday 30th January, 8pm
Mark Watson:
Infinite Show
Tickets: £19

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Staffordshire DE14 1AA

grown-ups, Sat 30 Nov - Sun 1 Dec, Churnet Valley Railway, Froghall, Staffs

SANTA SPECIALS Steam train ride through the Severn Valley with Santa, Sat 30 Nov - Sun 1 Dec & Sat 7 - Sun 8 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

SANTA SAFARI Meet an elf, climb on board a sleigh and head for the North Pole, Sat 30 Nov - Sun 1 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, 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

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, Staffordshire



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

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

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

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, 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

SALOP SANTA DASH & ELF DASH Sun 1 Dec, Love2Stay, Shrewsbury

A FAIRY TALE CHRISTMAS Watch out for the fairies and their special tales, meet Santa and his elves at the North Pole and check out Krazy Kris and his madcap pantomime, Sun 1 Dec, Dudley Canal and Tunnel Trust

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

SANTA'S GROTTO Whether it's their first Christmas or a family tradition, a visit to Santa's Grotto is the perfect way to start the festive season, Sun 1 Dec, Apley Farm Shop, Norton, Nr Shifnal, Shropshire

THINKTANK ELF HUNT Pick up a finder's sheet and record all the elves you find as you explore the museum, Sun 1 - Mon 23 Dec, Thinktank Science Museum, Birmingham

STORY TIME WITH FATHER CHRISTMAS Lively and informal event with Father Christmas and his gnomes, Mon 2 - Thurs 19 Dec, Attingham Park, Shrewsbury

STEAM IN LIGHTS Illuminated adventure along the Severn Valley, complete with 'a dazzling extravaganza of magical creatures, sparkling lights, snowfall and thrills', Tues 3 - Sat 7 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

SANTA SAFARI Families visiting West Midland Safari Park this festive season can meet an elf, climb on board a sleigh and head for the North Pole, Wed 4 - Sun 8 Dec, West Midland Safari and Leisure Park, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

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

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

CAROL EVENING Traditional evening in Shugborough's historic Park Farm Yard, Fri 6 Dec, Shugborough Historic Working Estate, Stafford

WINTER FESTIVAL CRAFT & FOOD FAYRE Featuring local products made by local people, Fri 6 Dec, Wem Town Hall, North Shropshire

CHRISTMAS TILE DECORATING WORKSHOPS Use a fun tube-lining technique to produce your own ceramic masterpiece, Fri 6 - Sat 7 Dec, Jackfield Tile Museum, Ironbridge, Shrops

CHRISTMAS CAROL TRAINS Sing along or just soak up the festive atmosphere, Sat 7 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

FESTIVE FAMILY FUNDAY Host of yuletide activities, including stories around the fireplace and a visit from Santa, Sat 7 Dec, Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent

CHRISTMAS AT WOLVES ART GALLERY Meet Santa and pick up a mini gift. Make a Christmas craft to take home and follow a trail around the galleries, Sat 7 Dec, Wolverhampton Art Gallery

ARTISAN MARKET AT THE WORLD OF WEDGWOOD Featuring over 50 stalls full of fine foods from local producers and hand-crafted products, Sat 7 - Sun 8 Dec, World of Wedgwood, Stoke-on-Trent

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

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS Enjoy a day out that's 'choc-full of festive fun', Sat 7 - Sun 8 Dec, Cadbury World, B'ham

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, Staffs

VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS Sat 7 - Sun 8 Dec, Blists Hill Victorian Town, Ironbridge, Shropshire

CHRISTMAS FOOD & CRAFT FAYRE Comprising over 100 stalls, Sat 7 - Sun 8 Dec, Weston Park, Nr Shifnal

SANTA'S GROTTO Whether it's their first Christmas or a family tradition, a visit

to Santa's grotto is the perfect way to start the festive season, Sat 7 - Sun 8 Dec, Apley Farm Shop, Norton, Nr Shifnal, Shropshire

CHRISTMAS MARKET Featuring street food, live music and over 50 stalls selling festive gifts and treats from local producers and artisans, Sat 7 - Sun 8 Dec, World of Wedgwood, Stoke-on-Trent

CHRISTMAS AT THE CASTLE Browse seasonal gifts & craft stalls. Children's activities include horse & carriage rides, musical performances and the chance to meet Father Christmas, Sat 7 - Sun 8 Dec, Hartlebury Castle, Kidderminster

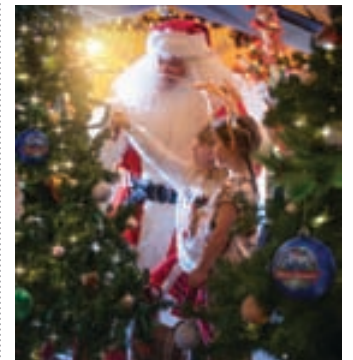
CHRISTMAS MARKET Featuring unique and contemporary gifts, including homemade preserves, jewellery and children's clothing, Sat 7 - Sun 8 Dec, Bantock House & Park, W'hampton

MEET FATHER CHRISTMAS Meet Father Christmas and Mary in a traditional grotto, Sat 7 - Sun 22 Dec, Middleport Pottery, Staffordshire

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

SANTA'S SLEEPOVER Experience 'the most magical Christmas Escape' with Santa's Sleepover, Sun 8 Dec, Alton Towers, Staffordshire



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

CAROLS IN THE CAVERNS Musical tour through the caverns as the choir joins your boat for an intimate and uplifting start to the Christmas season, Sun 8 Dec, Dudley Canal and Tunnel Trust

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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Gigs

GEORGE HINCHLIFFE UKULELE ORCHESTRA OF GREAT BRITAIN Mon 9 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE BIG BAND AT CHRISTMAS - WITH FIVE STAR SWING Tues 10 Dec, Dudley Town Hall

NEW POWER GENERATION - CELEBRATING PRINCE Tues 10 Dec, O2 Institute, B'ham

HOT SNAKES Tues 10 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

TALON Wed 11 Dec, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

BEABADOOBEE + NO ROME + OSCAR LANG Wed 11 Dec, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

THE URBAN VODOO MACHINE Wed 11 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

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, Town Hall, B'ham

MAX & IGGOR CAVALLERA: RETURN BENEAIRISE Thurs 12 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

FASTLOVE - A TRIBUTE TO GEORGE MICHAEL Thurs 12 Dec, Arena Birmingham

FRED ZEPPELIN Thurs 12 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

HOBBO JOHNSON & THE LOVEMAKERS Thurs 12 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

RONALDOS Thurs 12 Dec, Havana Republic, Shrewsbury

BUZZCOCKS Thurs 12 Dec, The Slade Rooms, W'hampton

COUNTERFEIT Thurs 12 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

BARRY STEELE &



The Ronaldos - Havana Republic, Shrewsbury

FRIENDS AS THE ROY ORBISON STORY Fri 13 Dec, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

DRUNKEN DOLLY Fri 13 Dec, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

ROD STEWART Fri 13 Dec, Arena B'ham

CHILDCARE Fri 13 Dec, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

KICK UP THE 80'S Fri 13 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

JOY DIVISION TRIBUTE 'TRANSMISSION' & DEPECHE MODE TRIBUTE 'THE DEVOUT' Fri 13 Dec, The Slade Rooms, W'hampton

THE STONES Fri 13 Dec, Theatre On The Steps, Bridgnorth, Shropshire

BIG COUNTRY Fri 13 Dec, The Mill Digbeth, Birmingham

CATAPULT FT. HIT THE FLOOR Fri 13 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

ARTHUR DOHERTY BAND Fri 13 Dec, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

GHEFFS Fri 13 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

FIGHT THE BEAR Fri 13 Dec, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

KINGS OV LEON Fri 13 Dec, Eleven, Sandyford, Stoke-on-Trent

BBMAK Fri 13 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

MOTIONLESS IN WHITE Fri 13 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

DENIS COLEMAN Fri 13 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

ESSENTIAL 80'S V 90'S Fri 13 - Sat 14 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

THE STONES Fri 13 - Sun 15 Dec, Theatre On The Steps, Bridgnorth, South Shrops

THE MAGIC OF MOTOWN Sat 14 Dec, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

GO WEST FEATURING COX AND RICHARD DRUMMIE Sat 14 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

OF KINGS AND CAPTAINS Sat 14 Dec, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

KATE RUSBY Sat 14 Dec, Town Hall, B'ham

ROY WOOD'S ROCKMAS Sat 14 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

WE LOVE THE 90'S Sat 14 Dec, Arena B'ham

HAPPY MONDAYS Sat 14 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

BROKEN WITT REBELS Sat 14 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

BLONDIED Sat 14 Dec, Eleven, Sandyford, Stoke-on-Trent

QUILL Sun 15 Dec, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

RAYMOND FROGGATT & HIS BAND Sun 15 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

BOTOWN- THE SOULS OF BOLLYWOOD Sun 15 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

IO EARTH CHRISTMAS PARTY Sun 15 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

AN EVENING WITH LEAD SINGER OF SOIL AND FORMERLY DROWNING POOL - RYAN MCCOMBS Sun 15 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

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

CHOIRS AT CHRISTMAS Mon 9 Dec, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

G4 CHRISTMAS Tues 10 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

PABLO FERRÁNDEZ PIANO RECITAL Also featuring Luis Del Valle (piano). Programme includes works by Bruch, Brahms, Shostakovich and Anton Garcia-Abril, Wed 11 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

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

MIDLANDS HOSPITALS CHOIR: CAROLS FOR CLIC Fri 13 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

CBSO: FRIDAY NIGHT CLASSICS: STAR WARS Featuring Stephen Bell (conductor), Fri 13 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

MOZART'S CLARINET QUINTET Featuring Mark Tocknell with the Wenlock Quintet, Fri 13 Dec, St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury

LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL CHOIR: CHRISTMAS BY CANDLELIGHT Sat 14 Dec, Lichfield Cathedral

THE PEOPLE'S ORCHESTRA: SOMETHING MAGICAL Sat 14 Dec, West Bromwich Town Hall

HALESOWEN CHORAL SOCIETY: CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring Steve Davis (conductor) & Sarah Marshall (soloist), Sat 14 Dec, St Margaret's Church, Hasbury, Halesowen

FESTIVAL CHOIR: A NIGHT OF A THOUSAND VOICES Sun 15 Dec, Dudley Town Hall

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

JON BARTON ORGAN RECITAL Sun 15 Dec, Shrewsbury Cathedral

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 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

JOHN ROBERTSON & COMICS TBC Fri 13 Dec, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

ADAM BLOOM, LEO KEARSE & PETE OTWAY Sat 14 Dec, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

ELEANOR TIERNAN, WILSON MILTON, DAVE TWENTYMAN & DAMION LARKIN Sat 14 Dec, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

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 KING & I Tony Award-winning Rodgers & Hammerstein classic. Jose Llana & Annalene Beechey star, Tues 10 Dec - Sat 4 Jan, The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

WHEN WE ARE MARRIED Stoke Rep Players present an amateur staging



Peter Pan - Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

of JB Priestley's provincial comedy, Tues 10 - Sat 14 Dec, Stoke Repertory Theatre

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

BEYOND THE BARRICADE The best of Broadway and the West End, Thurs 12 Dec, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

ANNIE JNR Amateur staging of the smash-hit musical, Sat 14 Dec, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

A CHRISTMAS WASSAIL Festive feast of music, comedy & spoken word, Sat 14 Dec, Hartelbury Castle, Kidderminster

Pantomime

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

DICK WHITTINGTON Starring Su Pollard, Ryan Thomas, Jeffrey Holland, Aaron James & Ian Adams, until Sun 12 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

ALADDIN Fun-filled family pantomime featuring Brad Fitt as Widow Twankey & BBC Radio Shropshire presenter Eric Smith, until Sun 12 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

ALADDIN Mon 9 - Sun 15 Dec, Rugeley Rose Theatre, Rugeley, Staffs

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

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK Starring

Coronation Street actor Oliver Mellor as Fleshcreep & comedy star Carl Dufield as Jack, Wed 11 Dec - Sun 5 Jan, The Place, Telford

MOTHER GOOSE Fun-filled egg-stravaganza for the festive season, Fri 13 - Sun 22 Dec, Forest Arts Centre, Walsall

PETER PAN Starring Coronation Street's Ian Reddington as Captain Hook and Corey Jones as Peter Pan, Fri 13 Dec - Sun 5 Jan, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

SLEEPING BEAUTY Starring Potteries panto royalty Jonathan Wilkes and Christian Patterson, Fri 13 Dec - Sun 5 Jan, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

Kids Shows

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

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

RAPUNZEL Saltmine Theatre Company presents the much-loved Brothers Grimm children's tale, Fri 13 Dec, Stourbridge Town Hall

DEAR SANTA Rod Campbell's festive tale for younger audiences, Fri 13 - Tues 24 Dec, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

MOONBEAM ON A CAT'S EAR Jabuti Theatre present 'a perfect seasonal treat for families & younger children', Sat 14 - Sun 15 Dec, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

SANTA IN LOVE 'Fun-filled family musical complete with games, giggles and all your favourite Christmas songs', Sun 15 Dec, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

Film

INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE (U) Family/Fantasy. Starring James Stewart, Donna Reed. Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton, Mon 9 Dec

ALADDIN (PG) Adventure/Family. Starring Will Smith, Mena Massoud. Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shropshire, Mon 9 Dec

SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER (U) Drama/Music. Starring John Travolta, Karen Lynn Gorney, Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke-on-Trent, Tues 10 Dec

SCROOGE (U) Comedy/Family. Starring Alistair Sim, Kathleen Harrison. Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, Tues 10 Dec

THE GOOD LIAR (15) Drama. Starring Helen Mirren, Ian McKellen. Wem Town Hall, North Shropshire, Tues 10 & Thurs 12 Dec; Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 13 - Thurs 19 Dec

WOMEN IN LOVE (15) Drama/Romance. Starring Alan Bates, Oliver Reed. The Hive, Shrewsbury, Wed 11 Dec

YESTERDAY (12a) Comedy/Fantasy. Starring Himesh Patel, Lily James. Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, Sat 14 Dec

A CHRISTMAS CAROL (U) Drama/Family. Starring George C. Scott, Frank Finlay. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Sat 14 Dec

LAST CHRISTMAS (12a) Comedy/Romance. Starring Emilia Clarke, Henry Golding. Wem Town Hall, North Shropshire, Sat 14, Mon 16 - Tues 17 & Thurs 19 Dec

WEST SIDE STORY (PG) Drama/Musical. Starring Natalie Wood, George Chakiris. Light House Media Centre, Wolverhampton, Sun 15 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 BRICKTACULAR Seasonal build activities and holiday theming throughout the attraction, until Tues 24 Dec, Legoland Discovery 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 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

STEAM IN LIGHTS A 'spectacular' illuminated adventure along the Severn Valley with 'a dazzling extravaganza of magical creatures, sparkling lights, snowfall and thrills', Tues 10 - Sat 14 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley

NO AMPS, NO CHAT, NO CHARGE Monthly acoustic evening featuring some of the Midlands' best songwriters, Wed 11 Dec, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

SANTA SAFARI Meet an elf, climb on board a sleigh and head for the North Pole, Wed 11 - Sun 15 Dec, West Midland Safari and Leisure Park, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

ILLUMINATED ARBORETUM 'Wander through the woodlands washed with colour, listen to the subtle sounds of the landscape and be captivated by the memorials shown in another light', Wed 11 - Fri 20 Dec, National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas, Staffordshire

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

SHUGBOROUGH'S CHRISTMAS SHINDIG Highlights include a drop-in workshop with The Crafty Hen, free mulled wine, music and exclusive discounts in the shop, Thurs 12 Dec, Shugborough Historic Working Estate, Staffordshire

MAC GIN & JAZZ CLUB: FESTIVE EDITION

Monday 9 - Sunday 15 December

Step into the festivities with a gin cocktail in hand, listening to 'the best live jazz around', Fri 13 Dec, Midlands 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, Telford, Shropshire

WINTER LIGHTS AT HIMLEY HALL A 'forest of light' designed to show off the natural beauty of Himley Hall and parkland, Fri 13 - Sun 15 Dec, Himley Hall & Park, Dudley

A FAIRY TALE CHRISTMAS Watch out for the fairies and their special tales, meet Santa and his elves at the North Pole and check out Krazy Kris and his madcap pantomime, Fri 13 - Sun 15 Dec, Dudley Canal and Tunnel Trust

ENCHANTED WESTON Featuring a colourful illuminated winter walk and a pop-up courtyard festival, Fri 13 - Sat 21 Dec, Weston Park, Nr Shifnal

A CHRISTMAS SING-ALONG SPECTACULAR Meet some of your favourite princesses and much-loved characters, Sat 14 Dec, Stourbridge Town Hall

CHRISTMAS CAROL TRAINS Sing along

or just soak up the festive atmosphere, Sat 14 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

THE FESTIVE GIN TRAIN Travel through the Severn Valley in a 1936-built luxurious first-class carriage (once hauled by the Flying Scotsman) whilst sipping gin cocktails, Sat 14 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

CHRISTMAS AT COALBROOKDALE Say hello to the man himself in his woodland grotto, Sat 14 - Sun 15 Dec, Coalbrookdale Museum of Iron, Ironbridge, Shropshire

SANTA SPECIALS Steam train ride through the Severn Valley with Santa, Sat 14 - Sun 15 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

SANTA AND STEAM Santa's on board and bearing gifts for youngsters, while there's a glass of sherry for the grown-ups, Sat 14 - Sun 15 Dec, Churnet Valley Railway, Froghall, Staffs

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



Christmas at Coalbrookdale - Coalbrookdale Museum of Iron, Ironbridge, Shropshire

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

SANTA'S GROTTTO Whether it's their first Christmas or a family tradition, a visit to Santa's grotto is the perfect way to start the festive season, Sat 14 - Sun

15 Dec, Apley Farm Shop, Norton, Nr Shifnal, 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

BOOK ONLINE TODAY

Santa Safari

A magical journey to Santa's Grotto

Be whisked away in a 4x4 through the enchanted forest and under the wishing arch to see Santa and his reindeer at his real hillside Grotto.

29th November - 23rd December 2019
 Shrewsbury, SY4 5JY www.hawkstoneparkfollies.co.uk

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ULTRABEAT

LIVE DJ SET WITH ALL THE HITS

"PRETTY GREEN EYES"
 "FEELIN' FINE"
 "ELYSIUM (I GO CRAZY)"
 "SURE FEEL GOOD"

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MECCA

Gigs

SWEET FEATURING ANDY SCOTT Mon 16 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

STEELEYE SPAN 50TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR 1969 - 2019 Mon 16 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

AITCH Tues 17 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE ALBION BAND Tues 17 Dec, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

THE FRANKI VALLI STORY Tues 17 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

THE BOOTLEG BEATLES Tues 17 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

SLOW READERS CLUB Wed 18 Dec, The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton

CHRISTMAS WITH TENORS UN LIMITED Wed 18 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

ALTER BRIDGE Wed 18 Dec, Arena B'ham

LICHFIELD JAZZ CHRISTMAS SPECIAL Wed 18 Dec, The Cathedral Hotel, Lichfield

HANNAH JOHNSON & THE BROKEN HEARTS Wed 18 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

THE KING IS BACK Thurs 19 Dec, Dudley Town Hall

SONS OF PITCHES Thurs 19 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

MACCA Thurs 19 Dec, Newhampton Arts Centre, W'hampton

NOUGHTY NINETIES Thurs 19 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

BEANS ON TOAST + TENSHEDES Thurs 19 Dec, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

MAETLIVE & THE NEVER NEVERLAND EXPRESS Thurs 19 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

BARRY STEELE & FRIENDS Fri 20 Dec, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

JANE MCDONALD Fri 20 Dec, Arena B'ham

KNE Fri 20 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham



The Bootleg Beatles - Symphony Hall, Birmingham

STEVE HARLEY AND COCKNEY REBEL Fri 20 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

THUNDER - XMAS SHOW Fri 20 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

BON GIOVI CHRISTMAS PARTAY Fri 20 Dec, Eleven, Sandyford, Stoke-on-Trent

CELTIC CHRISTMAS STRINGS Fri 20 Dec, Chelmarsh Parish Hall, Nr Bridgnorth, South Shropshire

LIQUOR & POKER Fri 20 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

THE SPACEHOPPERS Fri 20 Dec, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

VERTIGO BAND Fri 20 Dec, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

JOHNNY CASH ROADSHOW Sat 21 Dec, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

THE WONDER STUFF Sat 21 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

DAVID LIVE - THE DAVID BOWIE TRIBUTE SHOW CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION PARTY Sat 21 Dec, Eleven, Sandyford, Stoke-on-Trent

THE CLAUSE Sat 21 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

FIRES THAT DIVIDE Sat 21 Dec, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

HERITAGE & TIN TINS CHRISTMAS PARTY Sat 21 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

TALON - THE BEST OF THE EAGLES Sat 21 Dec, Birmingham

Town Hall

JEZ LOWE & THE BAD PENNIES Sat 21 Dec, Lichfield Guildhall

THUNDER HAMMER Sat 21 Dec, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

THE JOHNNY CASH ROADSHOW Sat 21 Dec, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

UB40 - CHRISTMAS HOMETOWN SHOW Sat 21 Dec, Arena Birmingham

THE JETS + THE DELRAY ROCKETS Sat 21 Dec, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

SONIC BOOM Sat 21 Dec, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

SHOWADDYADDY - CHRISTMAS PARTY Sat 21 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

RAT PACK CHRISTMAS SHOW WITH SPECIAL GUESTS DON MACLEAN AND CHARLEY TOULAN Sat 21 Dec, The Brewery Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

ICONIC 80'S Sat 21 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

NATHAN DAWE #0121 Sun 22 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

SAVING GRACE FEATURING SUZI DIAN AND ROBERT PLANT Sun 22 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

FLASH - A TRIBUTE TO QUEEN Sun 22 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

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

MARK BEBBINGTON IN RECITAL Thurs 19 Dec, Stoke Repertory Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

CELTIC CHRISTMAS STRINGS Fri 20 Dec, Chelmarsh Parish Hall, Nr Bridgnorth, South Shropshire

CONCERTS IN THE ROUND Seasonal music performed by Gill Styles & Richard Walker, Fri 20 Dec, St Giles Church, Shrewsbury

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

SHREWSBURY SCHOOL COMMUNITY CHOIR: HANDEL'S MESSIAH Sat 21 Dec, Abbey Church, Shrewsbury

THE FRONCYSYLLTE MALE VOICE CHOIR Sat 21 Dec, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

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

Comedy

TOMMY SANDHU, ESHAAN AKBAR, MAUREEN YOUNGER & MARLON DAVIS Tues 17 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ADAM KAY Tues 17 Dec, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

DANA ALEXANDER, DALISO CHAPONDA, ANDY ASKINS & MICKEY D Wed 18 - Sun 22 Dec, The Glee Club, B'ham

DAVE LONGLEY, FREDDY QUINN & ALIS-

TAIR BARRIE Thurs 19 Dec, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

ALISTAIR BARRIE, DAVE LONGLEY & MATT RICHARDSON Fri 20 - Sat 21 Dec, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

BRIAN & KRYSSTAL, SIMON LOMAS, DAVE TWENTYMAN & DAMION LARKIN Sat 21 Dec, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

JAVIER JARQUIN (PICTURED) & IAN STONE, TOM KING & PHILIP SIMON Sun 22 Dec, The George Hotel, Lichfield



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

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-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

Monday 16 - Sunday 22 December

DARK TALES IN WINTER Two classic Victorian ghost stories, each newly adapted for the stage by a contemporary playwright and brought to life by a single performer, Thurs 19 - Sat 21 Dec, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

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

A DICKENSIAN CHRISTMAS Featuring Robert Powell & Susan Jameson, Sun 22 Dec, Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

Pantomime

ALADDIN Traditional family pantomime, until Tues 31 Dec, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

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

PETER PAN Starring Coronation Street's Ian Reddington as Captain Hook and Corey Jones as Peter Pan, until Sun 5 Jan, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK Starring Coronation Street actor Oliver Mellor as Fleshcreep & comedy star Carl Dufield as Jack, until Sun 5 Jan, The Place, Telford, Shropshire

SLEEPING BEAUTY Starring Potteries panto royalty Jonathan Wilkes and Christian Patterson, until Sun 5 Jan, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

ALADDIN Fun-filled family pantomime featuring Brad Pitt as Widow Twankey & BBC Radio Shropshire presenter Eric Smith, until Sun 12 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

DICK WHITTINGTON Starring Su Pollard, Ryan Thomas, Jeffrey Holland, Aaron James & Ian Adams, until Sun 12 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

CINDERELLA A 'magical' family pantomime, Sat 21 - Sun 29 Dec, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

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 purrfect for all the family', until Tues 24 Dec, Lichfield Garrick

DEAR SANTA Rod Campbell's festive tale for younger audiences, until Tues 24 Dec, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

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

GLISTEN Interactive performance for babies and their grown-ups, Mon 16 - Wed 18 Dec, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

SANTA'S CHRISTMAS COUNTDOWN Join Dotty the elf, Dasher the reindeer, Jack Frost and Pom-pom the penguin in a 'fun, festive, musical adventure for younger audiences', Thurs 19 Dec, The Brewhouse, Burton-upon-Trent

Film

INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

ROCKETMAN (15) Biography/Drama. Starring Taron Egerton, Jamie Bell. Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shropshire, Mon 16 Dec

BLINDED BY THE LIGHT (12a) Comedy/Drama. Starring Billy Barratt, Ronak Singh Chadha Berges. Stourbridge Town Hall, Mon 16 Dec

A CHRISTMAS CAROL (U) Drama/Family. Starring George C. Scott, Frank Finlay. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Tues 17 - Tues 24 Dec

THE GOOD LIAR (15) Drama. Starring Helen Mirren, Ian McKellen. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Wed 18 Dec

STAR WARS: THE RISE OF SKYWALKER (12a) Adventure/Sci-Fi. Starring Billie Lourd, Daisy Ridley. Light House Media Centre, Wolverhampton, Thurs 19 - Mon 30 Dec

LOVING VINCENT (12) Animation/Biography. Starring With the voices of Douglas Booth, Jerome Flynn. The Hive, Shrewsbury, Fri 20 Dec

FROZEN 2 (U) Animation/Adventure. With the voices of Idina Menzel, Kristen Bell. Wern Town Hall, North Shropshire, Fri 20 - Tues 24 Dec; Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 20 - Tues 31 Dec

LAST CHRISTMAS (12a) Comedy/Romance. Starring Emilia Clarke, Henry Golding. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 20 - Tues 31 Dec

A SHAUN THE SHEEP MOVIE: FARMAGEDDON (U) Animation/Comedy. With the voices of Andy Nyman, Justin Fletcher. Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire, Sat 21 Dec

OLIVER! (U) Musical/Family. Starring Mark Lester, Ron Moody. Light House Media Centre, Wolverhampton, Sat 21 Dec

WONDERFUL LIFE (U) Family/Fantasy. Starring James Stewart, Donna Reed. Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, Sat 21 Dec

Events

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

CRAFTY CHRISTMAS WORKSHOPS until Mon 23 Dec, Shrewsbury Shopping Centres - Darwin & Pride Hill

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

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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

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STEAM IN LIGHTS A 'spectacular' illuminated adventure along the Severn Valley, with 'a dazzling extravaganza of magical creatures, sparkling lights, snowfall and thrills', Tues 17 - Sat 21 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

FESTIVE FRIVOLITIES 2019 Join the staff, associate artists and partners of

the Arena to celebrate Christmas with live entertainment, crafts, and mince pies, Wed 18 Dec, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

CAROLS IN THE SQUARE Wed 18 Dec, Shrewsbury Town Centre

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



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CHRISTMAS CAROL TRAINS Sing along or just soak up the festive atmosphere, Sat 21 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

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TEA WITH SANTA AT THE FURNACE KITCHEN Sat 21 - Sun 22 Dec, Coalbrookdale Museum of Iron, Ironbridge, Shropshire

SANTA SPECIALS Steam train ride through the Severn Valley with Santa, Sat 21 - Tues 24 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

SANTA'S GROTTTO Whether it's their first Christmas or a family tradition, a visit to Santa's grotto is the perfect way to start the festive season, Sat 21 - Tues 24 Dec, Apley Farm Shop, Norton, Nr Shifnal, Shropshire

DIRTY VEGAN: FESTIVE EDITION Special late-night festive edition, Sun 22 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

ENTERTAINMENT

CANNOCK CHASE

at the PRINCE OF WALES THEATRE

DECEMBER

SANTA IN LOVE

Sunday 15 December
11.30am • £9.50

QUILL

Sunday 15 December
7.30pm • £20



JANUARY

PETER PANTIES!

Friday 10 January
7.30pm • £18

AN EVENING WITH GEOFF HURST

Thursday 30 January
7.30pm • £25 • VIP £55



FEBRUARY

LEGENDS OF AMERICAN COUNTRY

Thursday 6 February
7.30pm • £21.50

MENOPAUSE THE MUSICAL

Sunday 9 February
7.30pm • £30 • 16+

MONEY FOR NOTHING

Friday 21 February
7.30pm • £22

OPERA BOYS

Wednesday 26 February
7.30pm • £19.50



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Christmas
2019

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TENORS UNLIMITED

Featuring
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Ladies
Choir

My
Christmas

WED 18 DEC 2019



SAT 7 DEC 2019
BON GIOVI



FRI 13 DEC 2019
KICK UP THE 80's



SUN 15 DEC 2019
RYAN McCOMBS

MON 16 DEC 2019



SWEET - FT ANDY SCOTT

FRI 20 DEC 2019



STEVE HARLEY

SAT 21 DEC 2019



SHOWADDYWADDY

Christmas Eve Special
TUE 24th DECEMBER

THE UPBEAT BEATLES

If You Missed Them In '63 NOW'S YOUR CHANCE!

Boxing Day
THU 26th DECEMBER

ULTIMATE 40
UB40 TRIBUTE BAND

ULTIMATE 40 UB40

TUE 31st DECEMBER Happy New Year

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Gigs

THE BEST EVER ALL-TIME CHRISTMAS PARTY WITH THE BRIGHT EYES AND THE JAGUARS Mon 23 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

MICHAEL BUBLE EXPERIENCE FEATURING MIKE APPLETON Mon 23 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

THE UPBEAT BEATLES Tues 24 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

THE TEXELS Thurs 26 Dec, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

THE STRAIGHT ACES Thurs 26 Dec, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

DIZZY LIZZY Fri 27 Dec, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

PURE WHITNEY HOUSTON Fri 27 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

DEFINITELY MIGHT BE + ADORED Fri 27 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

THE INDIGO MACHINE Sat 28 Dec, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

FLASH - TRIBUTE TO QUEEN Sat 28 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

DIRTY DC Sat 28 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

BEBE AND THE TROJANS Sat 28 Dec, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

WEST COAST EAGLES WITH SPECIAL GUESTS NASHVILLE HEART Sat 28 Dec, Eleven, Sandyford, Stoke-on-Trent

COZY POWELL BIRTHDAY BASH Sun 29 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

MAINLY MADNESS Sun 29 Dec, Eleven, Sandyford, Stoke-on-Trent

THE SOUL SURVIVORS

FEATURING MEL DAY Mon 30 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

EGO FRIENDLY Tues 31 Dec, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

SOUL AGENDA Tues 31 Dec, Havana Republic, Shrewsbury

MODERN DAY COWBOYS, HAIR TO THE THRONE AND MEANSTREAK Tues 31 Dec, Eleven, Sandyford, Stoke-on-Trent

GIANT AND THE GEORGES PLUS THE LOVELESS Tues 31 Dec, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

ICONIC 80'S V 90'S Tues 31 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

T.REXTASY - GET IT ON Tues 31 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

HOT CLIMATE NEW YEAR PARTY Tues 31 Dec, Ludlow Brewery, South Shropshire

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) & 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). Programmes includes iconic film scores of John Williams, Sat 28 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

LONDON CONCERT ORCHESTRA: THE MUSIC OF ZIMMER VS. WILLIAMS Featuring Anthony Inglis (conductor), Sun 29 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA: BEETHOVEN'S NINTH Featuring Lauren Fagan (soprano), Alexander James Edwards (tenor) & Anthony Inglis (conductor), 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

COMEDY IN THE MET Sat 28 Dec, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

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

LOL COMEDY CLUB Tues 31 Dec, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

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

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-upon-Avon

Pantomime

CINDERELLA A 'magical' family pantomime, until Sun 29 Dec, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

ALADDIN Traditional family pantomime, until Tues 31 Dec, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

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

PETER PAN Starring Coronation Street's Ian Reddington as Captain Hook and Corey Jones as Peter Pan, until Sun 5 Jan, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK Starring Coronation Street actor Oliver Mellor as Fleshcreep & comedy star Carl Dutfield as Jack, until Sun 5 Jan, The Place, Telford, Shropshire

DICK WHITTINGTON Starring Su Pollard, Ryan Thomas, Jeffrey Holland, Aaron James & Ian Adams, until Sun 12 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

ALADDIN Fun-filled family pantomime featuring Brad Pitt as Widow Twankey & BBC Radio Shropshire presenter Eric Smith, until Sun 12 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

SNOW WHITE & THE SEVEN DWARFS Featuring Lesley Joseph, Matt Slack, Joe McElderry, Faye Brookes, Flawless, Doreen Tipton & Andrew Ryan, until Sun 2 Feb, Birmingham Hippodrome

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DECEMBER	Sunday 1st Wednesday 4th Saturday 7th Sunday 8th Wednesday 18th Saturday 21st	Geoff Lakeman Kim Cypher Band Bob Fox The Get Back Beatles Jazz at The Cathedral Hotel Lichfield Jazz Big Band Xmas Special Jez Lowe & The Bad Pennies A Northumbrian Christmas
JANUARY	Friday 10th Saturday 11th Wednesday 15th	Keith Donnelly True Strays Jazz at The Cathedral Hotel Wendy Kirkland Quartet
* Fri 17th - Sat 18th WINTER BEER FESTIVAL *		
FEBRUARY	Sunday 19th Saturday 25th Saturday 8th Wednesday 19th	Keith James - The Songs of Nick Drake Burns Night - Ryan Young + ceilidh Global Reggae Band Jazz at The Cathedral Hotel Iain Ballamy Quartet
MARCH	Saturday 22nd Saturday 7th Saturday 14th Wednesday 15th Saturday 21st Saturday 28th	Fred Zeppelin Fret & Fiddle Wade St Church Hall WS13 6HL Aly Bain & Phil Cunningham Jazz at The Cathedral Hotel Nick Dewhurst Band + Top Local Youth Big Band Chase Mist Wade St Church Hall WS13 6HL Plug & Play Wade St Church Hall WS13 6HL

lichfieldarts.org.uk Box office: 01543 262223

Donagall House, Bone Street, Lichfield, Staffordshire WS13 6LU info@lichfieldarts.org.uk

Kids Shows

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

Film

INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

ABOMINABLE (U) Animation/Adventure. With the voiced of Chloe Bennet, Albert Tsai. Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire, Mon 23 Dec

LAST CHRISTMAS (12a) Comedy/Romance. Starring Emilia Clarke, Henry Golding. Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, Shropshire, Mon 23 Dec; Lichfield Garrick, Fri 27 Dec

FROZEN 2 (PG) Animation/Adventure. With the voices of Idina Menzel, Kris-

ten Bell. Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire, Fri 27 Dec

MALEFICENT: MISTRESS OF EVIL (U) Adventure/Family. Starring Angelina Jolie, Elle Fanning. Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire, Fri 27 Dec

TRAVELS WITH MY AUNT (PG) Adventure/Comedy. Starring Maggie Smith, Alec McCowen. Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire, Fri 27 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

CRAFTY CHRISTMAS WORKSHOPS until Mon 23 Dec, Shrewsbury Shopping Centres - Darwin & Pride Hill

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

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

STEAM IN LIGHTS A 'spectacular illuminated adventure' along the Severn Valley with 'a dazzling extravaganza of magical creatures, sparkling lights, snowfall and thrills', Tues 24 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

TOY COLLECTORS FAIR Explore over 500 stalls packed with all kinds of collectable toys, trains and models for sale, Fri 27 Dec, NEC, Birmingham

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

MUSEUM & ART GALLERY BIRMINGHAM

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18 - 29 FEB 2020
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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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SIR PETER WRIGHT'S

THE NUTCRACKER

22 NOV – 14 DEC

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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