

Worcestershire

ISSUE 408 DECEMBER 2019

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inside:

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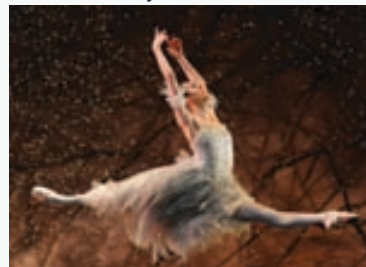
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The Boy In The Dress - world premiere of David Walliams' story at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre - page 30

Club 2B



leave reality behind at the Belgrade this Christmas
feature page 8

Ex Cathedra



perform festive favourites at Coventry Cathedral
page 15

Enchanted Witley



explore an illuminated wonderland this festive season
page 49

the list



Your 16-page week-by-week listings guide
page 51

inside:

| | | | | | | | |
|---------------|----------|----------|------------|-------------|----------|-----------------|------------|
| 4. First Word | 11. Food | 17. Gigs | 19. Comedy | 24. Theatre | 34. Film | 36. Visual Arts | 41. Events |
|---------------|----------|----------|------------|-------------|----------|-----------------|------------|



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What's On

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Hit West Ender heading to the Midlands region next summer

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

Based on the cult 2007 Irish indie movie of the same name, *Once* tells the uplifting story of two lost souls - a Dublin street busker and a Czech musician - who unexpectedly fall in love.

Featuring the Oscar-winning song, *Falling Slowly*, the production has also won a Grammy, eight Tonys and an Olivier Award.

It stops off at Coventry's Belgrade Theatre from Tuesday 10 to Saturday 14 March, and then visits Malvern Theatres from Monday 23 to Saturday 28 March...

Festive Shakespeare...

Visitors to Anne Hathaway's Cottage in Stratford-upon-Avon will be transported back in time to 1615 this Christmas, as costumed actors bring to life the characters of Anne and her brother, Bartholomew.

The living-history performances take place every Friday, Saturday and Sunday throughout December (between 12pm and 4pm), giving an insight into the relationship between Anne and her elder brother.

Visitors will also be able to try traditional Tudor food as they help the siblings decide who should host Christmas Day.



Leamington's 'creative quarter' gets green light

As part of the phased delivery of a 'creative quarter' in Leamington Spa, Warwick District Council has given the go-ahead for a regeneration of the town's Spencer Yard, a space which provides a home for creative businesses and pop-up & community events. The regeneration is taking place ahead of Leamington hosting the lawn bowls and Para bowls during the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.

4 whatsonlive.co.uk

£3million Lottery boost for City of Culture Trust



Plans to ensure that Coventry's year as UK City of Culture in 2021 leaves a lasting and positive legacy have been given a £3million boost by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The funding, awarded to the Coventry City of Culture Trust, will support plans to invest in initiatives that will protect and develop the city's natural environment and promote health & wellbeing. These will include an ambitious programme of events and activities in Coventry's green spaces, urban sites, heritage locations and on its waterways.

Children's Picture Book Prize taking submissions

The Stratford-upon-Avon Literary Festival and the Salariya Book Company are now taking submissions for their Children's Picture Book Prize.

The competition, launched in 2017 and open to unpublished writers and illustrators, has a

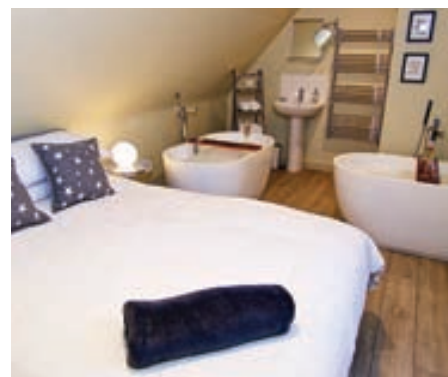
prize value of £1,000. The winner will receive career advice from a leading literary agent, publicity through the Stratford Literary Festival, and may even be lucky enough to be published by Salariya's Scribblers imprint. The final date for entries is 31 January and the winner will be announced in late February... For details about how to submit, visit stratlitfest.co.uk/bookcompetition

Getaway with George...

An enterprising Warwickshire couple have opened a new holiday lodge on the site of their previous business.

Jo Carroll and Steve Taylor have converted part of their former baby day nursery into George's Getaway, the fourth lodge at Winchcombe Farm, their boutique luxury glamping retreat in Upper Tysoe. Nestled in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty on a private estate in the Warwickshire countryside, the destination has become a huge hit with holidaymakers since it opened 18 months ago.

For more information and to make a reservation, visit winchcombefarm.co.uk



Book explores city's milestones

A new book uncovering the immense impact Worcester has had on shaping England's sovereignty and society is published this month.

Worcester Moments: River, Religion And Royalty is the first book of its kind to chart both Worcester's famous and lesser-known milestones over a 2000-year period.

The book is published by History West Midlands on 3 December and retails at £20. For more information, visit historywm.com

Walking In The Air at Coventry 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.



A Question Of Sport celebrates its 50th with a live tour

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

- The new live version of the show features host Sue Barker, resident team captains Matt Dawson and Phil Tufnell, and a number of big-name guests from across the sporting world.
- The tour stops off at Birmingham's Symphony Hall on Monday 27 April.
- Tickets are now available and can be purchased by visiting ticketmaster.co.uk

TEDx returns to Coventry

Coventry is to host its very own TEDx event for the second year running.

TEDxCoventry Revive aims to bring 'new approaches and forward-thinking ideas to a community that has thrived on its innovative and dynamic spirit'. Talks throughout the day will touch on a variety of subjects, including technology, innovation and youth foundations.

The event takes place at the city's Belgrade Theatre on Saturday 29 February.

Winter weekender at Bromsgrove's Artrix

In a break from the tradition of the last few years, Bromsgrove's Christmas festivities will this month be taking place in the warmth of the town's Artrix venue. Festive family events, live music, food and 'good cheer' are promised across the weekend of Saturday 7 & Sunday 8 December. Highlights include screenings of popular seasonal movies - one of which is the new Wham!-inspired rom-com, Last Christmas (pictured) - and live performances by Cara Dillon and popular Midlands folk collective Quill... For full details and the most up-to-date listings, visit artrix.co.uk



The magic of Christmas comes to Touchwood

Visitors to Solihull's Touchwood centre should have no trouble getting into the Christmas spirit this festive season, with the shopping destination's yuletide attractions including the chance to say a big hello to Santa in his grotto. Touchwood is extending its opening hours for Christmas shoppers during December. For a full schedule of events and grotto opening times, visit touchwoodsolihull.co.uk



Meet Stratford's mini-beasts!

Stratford Butterfly Farm is once again holding its popular Meet The Mini-Beast handling sessions this Christmas and New Year. Taking place twice a day from 27 December to 5 January, the sessions provide visitors with the chance to hold creatures including a giant African Millipede, an African land snail and a Madagascan hissing cockroach. The farm will be showcasing its new high bay lighting system, designed to ensure that the Rainforest Flight Area will be drenched in light and colour on even the dullest of days, enabling the tropical butterflies to stay active.

6 whatsonlive.co.uk



Festive family fun returns to Coventry's Warwick Arts Centre

Warwick Arts Centre's Winter Family Day returns on Sunday 1 December, this year taking the theme of 'winter wonderland'.

Featuring a packed programme of activities, the day includes free events for family members of all ages. Children from as young as two can enjoy

- storytelling, face-painting, Christmas craft-making and interactive shows.
- Drumming workshops and hands-on experiments designed to explore the science of winter ensure that there's plenty to keep older visitors busy and entertained too.



Strictly Come Dancing, 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...

Orchestra launches funding campaign

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

The recording will be the first from the orchestra's new label, ROOTS. *Timelapse* will be recorded at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire at the start of 2020 and will feature music from across the centuries, including works by Schubert, The Smiths, Vivaldi and Radiohead. Commenting on the news, David Le Page, the orchestra's artistic director, said: "Although the music we play was written hundreds of years apart, it's striking how much these contrasting works inhabit such similar emotional space. I want the album to be a place where time and style have become irrelevant - good music is good music, however and whenever you look at it."

For more information, visit orchestraoftheswan.org

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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
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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."

So what can audiences expect from Club 2B?

"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.



Look for the ★ to save 20% off the cost of your full price tickets when you book equivalent amounts for two or more participating shows at the same time. See website for further information on ticket prices and other concessions.

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REVIEW: Flamenco

Historic Tudor venue brings the warmth of the Spanish sun to the town of Warwick

Britain's love affair with Spanish tapas has well and truly blossomed this last decade. With high-street chains quick to claim the no-frills finger food as their own, the nation's appetite for novelty shows no sign of abating. And whilst a historic Tudor inn located just a stone's throw from Warwick Castle might not be the first place you think of to sup on a sangria, you'd be hard-pushed to find a more authentic taste of contemporary Spanish cuisine served from the heart!

The brainchild of restaurateur Alex Clayton - owner of Warwick's award-winning Tasca Dali - Flamenco prides itself on its contemporary Mediterranean-inspired dishes, prepared with traditional cooking methods and enjoyed within the historic surroundings of one of the town's most iconic and atmospheric buildings.

For my own part, from the moment I stepped from the cobbled promenade into the warmth of Flamenco's cocktail bar, complete with stunning 17th century Inglenook fireplace, I was transported from the chill of a typical British autumn to the warmth of sunnier climes. Small but perfectly formed, exuding historic atmosphere yet imbued with

Moorish charm, this recently renovated Tudor inn has been lovingly restored to a brief which marries authentic Tudor detail with a fiery kick of neo-gothic Spanish flamboyance. The venue positively abounds with original period features; English oak panels, black-and-white timber frames and dry stone fireplaces sit happily alongside wine-coloured walls and moody, candlelit nooks which just scream rustic charm - all appreciated to the unmistakable notes of an ambient Spanish guitar soundtrack.

In keeping with the restaurant's intimate surroundings, Flamenco's menu is as eclectic as it is intriguing. Bringing together Spanish staples such as Iberian chorizo served with pear aioli Morcilla (traditional Spanish black pudding) and freshly cooked tortilla with pan-European-influenced dishes such as Oriental Calamari, Hummus and Turmeon Mussels served with vermouth sauce, Flamenco's tantalising selection of contemporary 'market tapas' comes jam-packed with authentic ingredients, seasonal produce and - above all - genuine passion for the craft.

Be sure not to leave before sampling one of the restaurant's sig-

nature 'paellas'. The jewel in Head Chef Jose Enrique Peña Lopez's culinary crown, they're available in a choice of chicken, seafood and vegetarian - unrivalled in flavour and just perfect for sharing!

Eurosceptic diners can try a Mediterranean twist on English pub-grub classics. These include fish & chips coated in Estrella beer batter, lamb chops served with Mediterranean vegetables and tzatziki, or - my personal favourite - Iberian secret pork served with mojo picon sauce, pan-seared mushrooms and hand-cut fries.

Taking the advice of our friendly waitress and opting for a glass of Tempranillo Rioja Viña Pomal Reserva 2013, our choice of appetiser was the traditional 'deli board' of mixed cheeses and cured meats, a culinary homage to Spain's rich tradition of regional produce and the perfect opening to any sharing experience. And what tapas platter would be complete without a generous serving of toasted bread and aioli, an intensely flavoured garlic-yoghurt dip infused with olive oil that'll leave you eager for more - even if a kiss goodnight is off the cards.

After a refreshing glass of iced Hendricks Gin & cucumber tonic, it was time to get serious. Cue a generous helping of Pardon peppers, a Galician speciality with a fiery kick that made the experience of eating them not unlike a game of Russian roulette. From the Iberian peninsula, the chorizo in tempura with pear aioli was a delight to eat, served with its own lollipop skewer and infused with smoky hints of paprika, chilli and sweet pear.

The tried-and-tested choice of Spanish croquettes served with potato, chorizo and fresh cheese was everything you could ask for - effortlessly light in texture, easy on the crumb and irresistibly moreish.

For an authentic taste of the sea,

our tapas platter also came complete with a generous helping of Russian salad - a Spanish staple comprising potatoes, carrots, mayonnaise and gherkins infused with the salty flavour of fresh tuna fish. The surprising addition of oriental calamari (squid marinated in ginger, yuzu, soya and coriander) provided a zesty and refreshing contrast to the rich, earthy flavours of the Southern European continent.

Our favourite small plate by far, though, was the Venezuelan 'Tequedos', or Columbian cheese stick. Hand-rolled and fried to perfection in a lightly spiced dough, these melt-in-the-mouth cheesy morsels really are too good to share, so be sure to order a double-portion!

So much more than just great food, tapas is an experience which, above all, is built on sharing, socialising and a sun-drenched desire to escape to foreign shores. Such was the unique ambience of Flamenco that leaving the warmth of the fireplace felt akin to a holiday that was coming to an end all too soon. Warm, welcoming and idiosyncratic in style, Flamenco's abundant charm is matched by a genuine passion for the food culture and a willingness to let fresh produce speak for itself. This was tapas as it's meant to be enjoyed - savoured without pressure, cooked to perfection, packed full of the unmistakable flavours of the Med and served with a quintessentially eccentric English twist! *Katherine Ewing*

| | |
|----------------|---------------------|
| Food: | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ |
| Service: | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ |
| Ambience: | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ |
| Overall value | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ |
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Thai eatery achieves international Royal Seal of Approval

Warwick Thai restaurant Giggling Squid has received the Royal Seal of Approval from the Thai Royal Court. The accolade indicates a degree of excellence meriting five stars and above. Giggling Squid has also won the Ambassador Choice Award, having been selected by the Ambassador as his favourite restaurant out of all the nominees.

Prestigious award for young Kenilworth chef

Nathan Lane, Chef de Partie at The Cross in Kenilworth, has been named British Culinary Federation Young Chef of the Year.

The 21-year-old competed against 14 other young chefs in the final, which took place at University College in Birmingham. The accolade means that Nathan will now automatically be entered into the Young National Chef of the Year competition.

Worcestershire's only Michelin star awarded

A small restaurant in a tiny town in Worcestershire has become the region's only Michelin-star winner.

Pensons, near Tenbury Wells, secured the award at a glittering ceremony. The fine dining restaurant, situated on an agricultural estate near to the Shropshire, Worcestershire and Herefordshire border, is a joint enterprise by owner Peta Darnley and chef Lee Westcott.



Experience 'world-class luxury' at the award-winning Belfry Hotel & Resort this Christmas and New Year

The award-winning Belfry Hotel & Resort in Sutton Coldfield is offering a 'winter wonderland' in which to enjoy opulent dining this festive season.

The venue's calendar is packed with Christmas parties, family breaks and festive dining, with New Year's Eve revellers also being catered for. The hotel's Bel Air Party Nights (Best of Girl Bands on Saturday 7 December and Best of Boy Bands on Friday the 13th) feature a glass of fizz

on arrival, a hot and cold buffet, live tribute acts, DJs and dancing till the early hours. To kick off 2020 with a bang, the popular resort is holding a selection of New Year's Eve celebrations, a highlight among which is The Woodland Family Ball, which includes dinner in the Woodland Suite, a DJ and dancing, fireworks, an overnight stay, a showcase breakfast and use of the facilities. To book, call 01675 238 600 or email enquiries@thebelfry.com

Hairy Bikers to bring their 2020 tour to the Midlands region

Following a major UK tour earlier this year, national treasures Si King and Dave Myers - aka The Hairy Bikers - have announced that they will once again be hitting the road to the Midlands in October 2020.

Offering an entertaining evening of cooking and conversation, the boys' autumn tour stops off at Victoria Hall, Stoke, on 16 October, Symphony Hall, Birmingham, on the 18th of the month, and Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, on the 29th. Si and Dave said: "The audience is a huge part of our show, so no night is the same. There will be music, chat, food, questions, answers, fun and frolics. A perfect bikers' night out!" Tickets for the shows are now on sale.



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Ex Cathedra: Christmas Music By Candlelight

St Peter's Collegiate Church, Wolverhampton, Sat 7 December; St John's Church, Hagley, Birmingham, Tues 10 December; Coventry Cathedral, Mon 16 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

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

Stile Antico: A Spanish Nativity

St Mary's Church, Warwick, Tues 10 December

Innovative vocal ensemble Stile Antico aim to shine new light on Renaissance music. The London-based group has a uniquely collaborative style of working, its members rehearsing and performing as chamber musicians, each contributing artistically to the musical results.

Regular visitors to Warwick, the ensemble here present a collection of works celebrating the Christmas season and featuring 12 a cappella pieces penned during the Spanish Golden Age of the 16th century.



CBSO: Mirga Conducts Brahms

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Thurs 12 December



The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra's Music Director, Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla, takes to the podium to conduct a concert that features not only Brahms' Third Symphony but also music by a man who absolutely adored the work - Edward Elgar. The Worcestershire-born composer's Two Part Songs Op26 is included in the programme. The UK premiere of Jörg Widmann's 'deliciously dark fairytale songs' also features.

The Carice Singers

St Mark's Church, Leamington, Wed 18 December

Acclaimed vocal ensemble The Carice Singers were formed in the Cotswolds eight years ago and named after Edward Elgar's daughter. They here make a welcome return to St Mark's Church to present a concert featuring popular carols and seasonal works by, among others, Byrd, Sibelius, Warlock, Bax, Roderick Williams and Master of the Queen's Music Judith Weir. George Parris conducts.



Armonico Consort: Handel's Messiah

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Thurs 5 December; Malvern Theatres, Sat 21 December

If you've never heard Handel's Messiah, you've missed out on one of music's most uplifting experiences. The oratorio features a series of much-loved classics, including For Unto Us A Child Is Born and the legendary Hallelujah!. Telling the story of Christ's Nativity, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension, the oratorio has been performed somewhere in Britain every year since the mid-18th century.



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Belshazzar's Feast

Huntingdon Hall, Worcester, Wed 18 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.



Emeli Sandé

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Mon 2 December

Multi-platinum award-winning singer-songwriter Emeli Sandé first came to prominence when she featured on rapper Chipmunk's 2009 track, Diamond Rings.

Now established as one of the UK's most revered artists, her debut album, Our Version Of Events, broke the chart record for the most consecutive weeks inside the top 10, beating a 50-year-old record held by The Beatles. She returns to the stage this month in support of her critically acclaimed new album, Real Life.



Primal Scream

The Empire, Coventry, Sun 1 December

Formed in Glasgow in 1982 and fronted by Bobby Gillespie, Primal Scream were key contributors to the mid-1980s indie pop scene. They eventually moved away from their jangly sound, taking on more garage rock and psychedelic influences, before incorporating a dance music element into their output with 1991 album *Screamadelica*, which broke them into the mainstream.

The band visit Coventry in support of their third compilation album, *Maximum Rock'n'Roll: The Singles*.



Childcare

The Tin Music & Arts, Coventry, Sat 7 December

Soft-core psych quartet Childcare released debut album *Wabi-Sabi* back in May. "The term wabi-sabi means 'beauty in imperfection'," explains the group's bass player & vocalist, Emma Topolski. "It's about the grace in ageing and in things that aren't supposed to be beautiful. It's about making sure that those things aren't taken for granted and that you appreciate your flaws. A lot of the songs on the album are about betterment and self-improvement." With numerous festival performances tucked under their belt, the band's vivid and visceral live show goes from strength to strength.

Rick Wakeman

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sat 21 December

Keyboard wizard Rick Wakeman has sold more than 50 million albums across five decades and continues to win new admirers wherever he performs.

He stops off in Coventry this month with his *Grumpy Old Christmas Show*, an evening that brings together music from his new offering, *Christmas Portraits*, with a selection of classics from his extensive repertoire.

Quill

Artrix, Bromsgrove, Sat 7 December

When bass guitarist Ben Brain died suddenly in 2012, his wife and Quill's lead singer, Joy Strachan-Brain, was of a mind to call time on the band's 30-plus years of musicmaking. Eventually, though, she decided it was more important to battle on, in so doing ensuring that the songs Ben had written for a new album would eventually be heard...

Incorporating numerous influences into their sound, including Celtic folk and rock, the popular Tamworth band have developed a unique musical style over the years and perform a repertoire that features a number of time-honoured classics.



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Adam Kay

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

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

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



COBO: Kings Of Comedy

The Glee Club, Birmingham,
Sun 29 December

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



Jim Jefferies

Resorts World Arena, Birmingham, Thurs 5 December

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

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

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

Justin Moorhouse

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

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



Tom Binns

Cornbow Hall, Halesowen, Fri 6 December

BRMB presenter Tom Binns became *former* BRMB presenter Tom Binns on Christmas Day 2009. It was on that day that he stopped the Birmingham radio station's broadcast of the Queen's Speech, declared it to be "Two words: Bor-ring", and played the Wham! song *Last Christmas* instead.

According to Tom, there's plenty more to that story than meets the eye, but the absolute bottom line is that he was subsequently sacked from the station.

Not that the dismissal has weighed too heavily on his career in the years which have followed, thanks in no small measure to his impressive comic talent.

He's best known on the circuit for his alter egos, Ivan Brackenbury - an inept hospital radio DJ - and Ian D Montford - a man whose propensity for getting things wrong belies his belief that he's Britain's top psychic.





MILTON: IMPOSSIBLE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

When do you consider a joke 'finished'?

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

And what makes the perfect joke?

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

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

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

Do you always watch your Mock The Week appearances back?

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

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

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

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

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

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

What was your specialist subject on Celebrity Mastermind?

Potatoes.

Potatoes?!

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

.....

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



Shall We Dance?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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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 McDerry, the ever-popular Matt Slack, Coronation Street's Faye Brookes and Britain's Got Talent finalists Flawless. Andrew Ryan is the man charged with the task of getting all Damed up, while 'lazy cow' Doreen Tipton brings her 'strung' Black Country accent into the very

heartland of Brummie territory...

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

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

Cinderella

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

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



lay claim to being the most popular of all pantomimes. The Lichfield Garrick version stars CBeebies' Rebecca

Keatley as Cinders' Fairy Godmother and sees the much-loved Sam Rabone making a welcome return to the venue to play comedy sidekick Buttons.

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

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



Lichfield Garrick



Audio Described Performance



BSL Interpreted Performance



Captioned Performance



Relaxed Performance

See website for details.

0844 338 5000* birminghamhippodrome.com

*Calls cost 4.5p per min plus access charge.



Until Sat 14 Dec



Sat 21 Dec - Sun 2 Feb



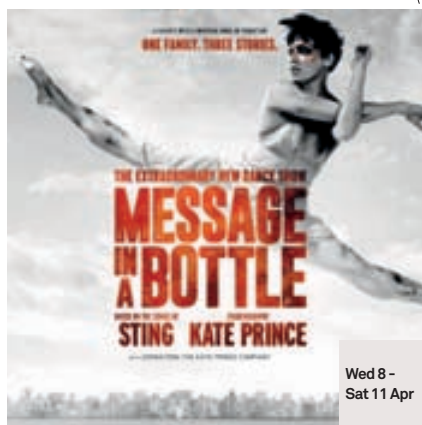
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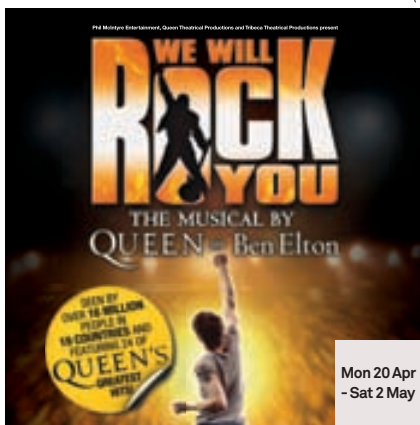
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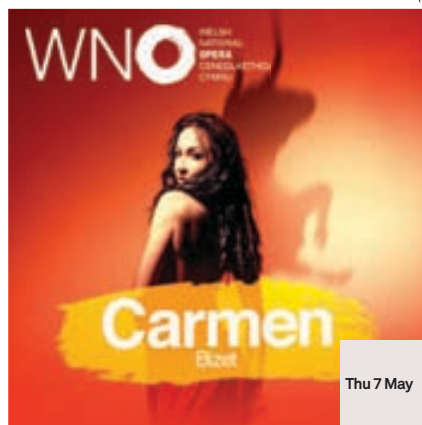
Wed 8 - Sat 11 Apr



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





IF THE SHOE FITTS...

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 out 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 Severn Dwarfs respectively. I've got my allotment as well, so I've grown some very nice asparagus this year. I've kept busy!

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

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, daaaahling!

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 Pitt 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 Pitt 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 on-stage 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'.



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 world 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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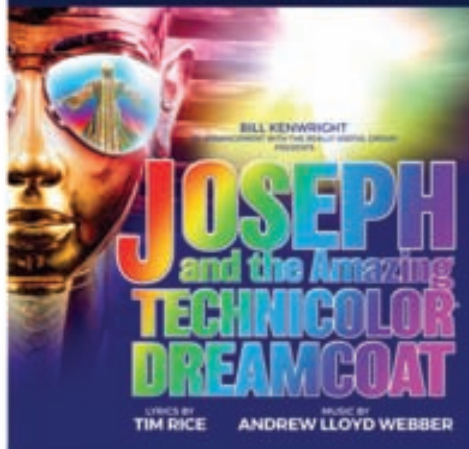
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LET IT SNOW...

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 beasties 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 reformed 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 Phantom 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.



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.

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



The Snow Queen

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

The Snow Queen is ruler of all she surveys. When she kidnaps young Kai, it's left to his friend, Gerda, to save him from a bleak future in the frostbitten wastelands...

This much-loved Hans Christian Andersen story is presented at The Old Rep by the creative team behind the theatre's 2018 production of Pinocchio. The new show comes complete with 'an epic original score, spell-binding storytelling and more than a pinch of Christmas magic'.

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

How The Grinch Stole Christmas!

Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham,
Tues 3 - Sat 7 December

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

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

Charlie And The Christmas Cat

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

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

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

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.



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!"

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

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!"





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DREAMING OF A G4 CHRISTMAS...

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What's different about G4 Christmas?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Do you have a favourite G4 moment?

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

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

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

You also have some very dedicated fans...

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

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

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

.....

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



CRITIC'S CHOICE

Cats CERT tbc

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

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

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

Released Fri 20 December

Honey Boy CERT 15 (94 mins)

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

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

Released Fri 6 December



Lucy In The Sky

CERT 15 (124 mins)

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



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

Released Fri 6 December

Motherless Brooklyn

CERT 15 (144 mins)

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

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

Released Fri 6 December



Ordinary Love CERT 12a (92 mins)

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

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

Released Fri 6 December

Jumanji: The Next Level

CERT 12a

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

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

Released Wed 11 December



Black Christmas CERT tbc

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



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

Released Fri 13 December

The Courier CERT 18 (99 mins)

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

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

Released Fri 20 December

Little Women CERT PG (135 mins)

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



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

Released Thurs 26 December



EDITOR'S CHOICE

Star Wars: The Rise Of Skywalker CERT tbc

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

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

clash between the Resistance and the First Order. The good news is that JJ Abrams returns to the fold, after directing *Episode VII - The Force Awakens* (2015), the highest-grossing *Star Wars* film yet. And by salvaging footage from the last two instalments, Carrie Fisher's Princess Leia will appear in a leading role, thanks to the legerdemain 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...



Christmas Arts Markets

Two weekends

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Sat 7 & Sun 8 Dec

11am - 5pm

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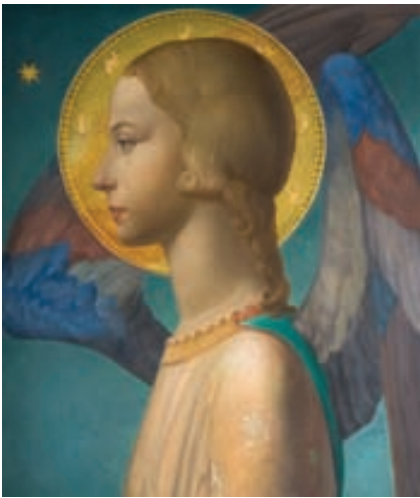
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Image © Katherine Payne



The Bloomsbury Effect

Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Sat 14 December - Sun 16 February

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

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



Changing Times: Humour And Satire

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

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

and the possibilities that it held. Once 'railway mania' had gripped the nation, music, books and games were quick to feature the new wonders of steam, as well as to ridicule the popularity of cheap excursion trains and the overcrowding at train stations and seaside resorts.

Meryl McMaster: As Immense As The Sky

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

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

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



Crafting A Better Future

Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, until Sun 1 March

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

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

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

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

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





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8 REASONS TO VISIT BULLRING & GRAND CENTRAL

THIS CHRISTMAS

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

1 The Bull's Christmas Outfit

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

2 Snow House

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

3 PAW Patrol Trail

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

4 Christmas Movie Screenings

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

Thursday 28 November 6pm: Elf

Sunday 1 December 2pm: The Grinch

Thursday 5 December 6pm: Nativity!

Sunday 8 December 2pm: Home Alone

Thursday 12 December 6pm:
Miracle On 34th Street

Thursday 19 December 6pm: The Holiday

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

5 Once Upon A Time in Birmingham

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

6 Christmas Boogaloo

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

7 Under Wraps Boutique

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

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

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



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

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.



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.





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*On selected dates, limited availability





Ice Skate Birmingham

Centenary Square, Birmingham, until Sun 12 January

Ice Skate Birmingham and the Big Wheel make a welcome return to Centenary Square. While the wheel offers the opportunity to enjoy fantastic views across the city, the ice rink

accommodates up to 300 people per session and is this year weather-proofed thanks to the addition of a roof. Younger or inexperienced skating enthusiasts can keep upright by using special penguin skating aids. And when skaters have finished their Torvill & Dean routine, they can warm themselves up with some festive fare in the nearby Ice Lounge.

Santa At The Valley

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

Sandwell Park Farm this month opens its doors for families to visit Santa in his grotto. Not only can little ones say hello to the cheery bearded one himself, they can also meet and greet his trusty reindeer as they prepare for their Christmas duties. Traditional Punch & Judy shows run throughout each day, with other attractions including circus skills workshops and children's crafts. Hot food & drink outlets ensure visitors young and old can keep up their energy levels as they busy themselves getting into the festive spirit.



Santa Safari

West Midland Safari Park, Bewdley, various dates throughout December

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

Christmas At The Castle

Warwick Castle, until Tues 31 December

If you're looking for places to take the kids for some seasonal fun this Christmas, Warwick Castle should certainly be on your radar. Attractions include 'magical storytelling experiences' with Mr & Mrs Claus and their merry elves, the chance to enjoy breakfast with Santa and his wife, Christmas feasts and medieval banquets, Santa sleepovers, a special carol-singing session and a brand new ice rink.



Candlelit Christmas

Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove, Sat 7 December

Guests are invited to enjoy a traditional English Christmas at Avoncroft this month, as the museum gets into the festive spirit by presenting the sights and sounds of Christmases past. With costumed reenactors occupying the historic buildings, entertainment comes in the form of street performances, star gazing and a selection of festive music performed by, among others, choirs and bell ringers. Younger visitors can enjoy a special reindeer trail and railway rides on the miniature Santa Express. And to top off what promises to be a thoroughly enjoyable day, Father Christmas will be paying a visit to the site too - a site, we should add, that will be splendidly illuminated by candlelight!

Santa's Grotto

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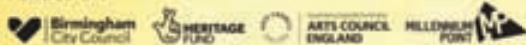
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Festive events previews from around the region



Victorian Christmas

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

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

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

Meet Santa at Sea Life

National Sea Life Centre, Birmingham,
until Mon 23 December



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

Santa's Winter Wonderland

Snowdome, Tamworth, Staffs,
until Tues 31 December

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



Christmas at Shakespeare's Birthplace

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

Throughout December, families can discover the stories behind some of Shakespeare's most famous ousted monarchs, including the likes of Caesar, Cleopatra and Richard III, to name but three... Other attractions at the venue this month include Flowers Of Winter (Sat 14 December - Sun 5 January) - an exhibition of floral displays inspired by traditional winter blooms - and Come A-Was-sailing (Mon 30 December - Wed 1 January) - a chance to participate in the precursor to the modern-day activity of carol singing.

Ebenezer's Christmas Carol

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



Back by popular demand, Ebenezer Crouch's A Christmas Carol tours will be haunting Tudor World in the lead-up to Christmas. Meet Scrooge, Jacob Marley, Mr & Mrs Cratchit and all the little Cratchits, Mr & Mrs Fezziwig and a whole host of other equally memorable characters - including, of course, the ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Yet-To-Come. There's every chance that this will prove to be the very best fun you've ever had while in the company of a grumpy old man!

Meet Santa
23rd Nov - 23rd Dec

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Festive events previews from around the region



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.

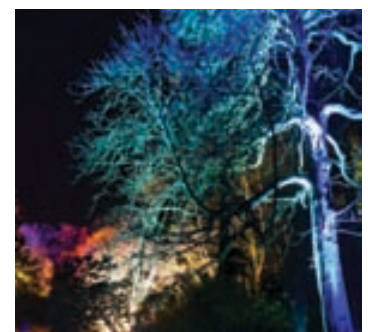
Young visitors to the popular venue are invited to join Mother Christmas as she shares some of her favourite festive stories, while Father Christmas and his reindeer will also be on hand to say a cheery hello. There are Christmas paper crafts to enjoy too, providing families with the chance to make festive 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
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FRI 21 FEB - ROSE THEATRE, TEWESBURY
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Snow House

AT THE BULLRING SHOPPING CENTRE

19/10/2019 - 05/01/2020



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 'enchanting 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 list

Your week-
by-week
listings guide

December 2019



Robin Hood - The Pantomime Adventure at The Core Theatre, Solihull, 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



Vienna Festival Ballet at
Evesham Arts Centre

Sat 7 December

Mon 9 to Sun 15 December



The Mullah Of Downing Street
at Warwick Arts Centre

Tues 10 - Thurs 12 December

Mon 16 to Sun 22 December



Father Christmas at
Croome Park, Worcester

Sat 21 & Sun 22 December

Mon 23 to Tues 31 December



Steam In Lights at Severn
Valley Railway, Bewdley

Tues 24 December

THROUGHOUT DECEMBER

Visual Arts

Artrix, Bromsgrove

KATHLEEN WATSON AND LYNNE SAWYER - INSPIRE BY NATURE Exhibition exploring the natural world in a celebration of texture and colour, until Sun 5 Jan

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

NEW DRESSED TO THE NINES Exhibition about dressing up and going out, from around 1850 to the present day, Sat 7 Dec - Fri 4 Sept

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

Compton Verney Gallery, Warwick

ART IN THE PARK - GREEN DWELLING Installation by Dutch artist Krijn de Koning consisting of a collection of differently sized green blocks ranged across the Old Town Meadow, until Sun 15 Dec

THIS IS US Take on the role of the Magnum photographer by taking a photo which reflects an aspect of your present world and relating it to one of the following themes: individuality, community, society, until Sun 15 Dec

MAGNUM MANIFESTO Featuring some of the most significant and enduring images from the world famous Magnum Photos agency, the exhibition focuses on the history of the second half of the 20th century, as seen through the lenses of 75 leading photographers, until Sun 15 Dec



ARIEL SCHLESINGER Solo exhibition of new work to accompany the Ways To Say Goodbye sculpture in the park, until Sun 15 Dec

Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum

ARTIST ROOMS: DIANE ARBUS Diane Arbus (1923-1971) is considered one of the great figures of American photography. The works in this exhibition are drawn from the Artist Rooms col-

lection, jointly owned by Tate and National Galleries of Scotland, until Sun 1 Dec

Rugby Art Gallery & Museum

RUGBY OPEN until Sat 11 Jan, Rugby Art Gallery & Museum

CURIOUS CURES AND MARVELLOUS MEDICINES Explore medical instruments and packaging dating from the late Victorians to the mid-20th century in a new exhibition about health and medicine, until Sat 14 Mar

The Herbert Art Gallery & Museum

RADICAL DRAWING: WORKS FROM COVENTRY AND THE COURTAULD Unique opportunity to explore a group of remarkable drawings by artists who have pushed the boundaries of what it means to draw, until Sun 19 Jan



COVENTRY BIENNIAL - THE TWIN Exhibition contemplating themes such as ideas and processes while also exploring some of the difficulties presented by globalisation, political inequality and conflict, until Sun 26 Jan

EXPLORING ELIOT'S COVENTRY Exhibition marking the 200th anniversary of the birth of author George Eliot and celebrating her connections with Coventry, until Sun 26 Apr

Other VISUAL ARTS

THE PLAY'S THE THING Display of costumes and props from the archives, until Tues 31 Dec, Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

CRAFTED FOR YOU 2019 Array of jewellery, textiles, ceramics and other handmade items, until Sat 4 Jan, Worcester City Museum & Art Gallery

CIVIL WAR WORCESTERSHIRE New display about featuring objects and documents from the Worcestershire Archive & Archaeology Service collections, until Fri 24 Jan, The Hive, Worcester

FASHIONING PEACE: LIFE AND LIBERTY AFTER THE GREAT WAR EXHIBITION Exhibition exploring how the changes brought about through the Great War were reflected in clothing and fashion from 1918 through to the Roaring 20s, until Mon 12 Oct 2020, Hartlebury Castle, Kidderminster

Gigs

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

ALLMAN BROWN Sun 1 Dec, The Cuban Embassy, Birmingham

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

RIDE Sun 1 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

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

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

SIGRID Mon 2 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

CAVETOWN Mon 2 Dec, O2 Academy, B'ham

EMELI SANDÉ Mon 2 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE MELLSTOCK BAND Tues 3 Dec, Lord Leycester Hospital, Warwick

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

MEMPHIS MAY FIRE Tues 3 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

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

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

WILD FRONT AND POLAR STATES Tues 3 Dec, O2

Academy, Birmingham

ST AGNES FOUNTAIN Tues 3 Dec, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

AMYL AND THE SNIFTERS Tues 3 Dec, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

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

CLAIRO Wed 4 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

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

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

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CHRISTMAS Wed 4 Dec, The Fleece Inn, Bretforton, Nr Evesham

MUNA Wed 4 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

MIDLAND Thurs 5 Dec, O2 Institute, B'ham

SAM FENDER Thurs 5 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

MIKE SANCHEZ Thurs 5 Dec, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

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

THE TROUBLE NOTES Thurs 5 Dec, Cuban Embassy, Birmingham

BLANCK MASS / VIOLET GRACE & FRANS GENDER/ ROSEBUD: SA#80 Thurs 5 Dec, Marr's Bar, Worcester

THE ELVIS YEARS AT CHRISTMAS Thurs 5 Dec, Malvern Theatres

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

VERY SANTANA Fri 6 Dec, Marrs Bar,

Worcester

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

DONAE'0 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

TALON Fri 6 Dec, Malvern Theatres

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

RAT PACK CHRISTMAS SHOW WITH SPECIAL GUESTS DON MACLEAN AND CHARLEY TOULAN Fri 6 Dec, Regal, Tenbury Wells

UK FOO FIGHTERS Sat 7 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

CHILD CARE Sat 7 Dec, Tin Music And arts, Canal Basin, Coventry

HOT CLUB DE SWING WITH ELECTRIC SWING CIRCUS Sat 7 Dec, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

THE FUTUREHEADS Sat 7 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

D BLOCK EUROPE Sat 7 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

V2A NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS PARTY Sat 7 Dec, Marrs Bar, Worcester

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

QUILL CHRISTMAS CONCERT Sat 7 Dec, Artrix, Bromsgrove

THE PETE BODDIS COUNTRY BAND Sat 7 Dec, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

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

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

THE YORK WAITS Sun 8 Dec, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

JOHN SOUTHWORTH & THE SOUTH SEAS Sun 8 Dec, Tin Music And arts, Canal Basin, Coventry

CARA DILLON Sun 8 Dec, Artrix, Bromsgrove



Cara Dillon - Artrix, Bromsgrove

Classical

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK CHAMBER CHOIR: MUSIC FOR TROUBLED TIMES

Programme includes works by Haydn & Shostakovich, Sun 1 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

CANDLELIT ADVENT PROCESSION AND CAROL SERVICE

Sun 1 Dec, Worcester 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

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

BARCLAY'S PENSIONERS CAROL SERVICE

Wed 4 Dec, Birmingham Cathedral

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK CHAMBER CHOIR: FESTIVAL OF LIGHT

Wed 4 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

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

ARMONIC CONSORT: HANDEL'S MESSIAH

Featuring Christopher Monks (director), Thurs 5 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

CITY OF BIRMINGHAM CHOIR: MESSIAH

Fri 6 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

WORCESTER FESTIVAL CHORAL SOCIETY: HANDEL'S MESSIAH

Featuring Susanna Fairbairn (soprano), Joyce Tindsley (mezzo soprano), Nick Pritchard (tenor) & Njabulo Madlala (baritone). Samuel Hudson conducts, Sat 7 Dec, Worcester Cathedral

KARL LOXLEY - THE MAGIC OF CHRISTMAS

Sat 7 Dec, Stratford Playhouse Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

ORCHESTRA OF THE SWAN: SNOW RIDE!

Programme includes works by Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Debussy, Vivaldi, Leroy Anderson, Prokofiev & Grieg, Sat 7 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

WORCESTER FESTIVAL CHORAL SOCIETY: HANDEL'S MESSIAH

Sat 7 Dec, Worcester Cathedral

THE BRITISH POLICE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: PROMS NIGHT SPECTACULAR

Sat 7 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

TEWKESBURY CHORAL SOCIETY: CHRISTMAS ORATORIO

Also featuring Regency Sinfonia, Alex Aldren (tenor), Anne Braley (mezzo soprano) & Thomas Humphreys (baritone), Sat 7 Dec, Tewkesbury Abbey

CAROL SINGING IN CATHEDRAL SQUARE

Sat 7 Dec, Cathedral Square, B'ham

THE YORK WAITS

Music for Christmas & Advent performed on medieval instruments, Sun 8 Dec, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

BIRMINGHAM PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA: SNOWMAN AT CHRISTMAS

Featuring Richard Laing (conductor) and Chris Passey (narrator). Programme includes works by Blake, Rimsky-Korsakov and 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

SUZI RUFFELL

Thurs 5 Dec, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

SUZI RUFFELL

Fri 6 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

JUSTIN MOORHOUSE

Sat 7 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

HAYLEY ELLIS & SALLY-ANNE HAYWARD

Sat 7 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

Theatre

IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE: A LIVE RADIO PLAY

Joe Landry's theatrical version of one of the most popular Hollywood films of all time, until Sat 7 Dec, Criterion Theatre, Coventry

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



My Cousin Rachel - Malvern Theatres

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

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

THE GREATEST SHOW WENCH

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

THE RAILWAY CHILDREN

The Nonentities present an amateur staging of Edith Nesbit's much-loved tale, Mon 2 - Sat 7 Dec, The Rose Theatre, Kidderminster

ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND & THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

Presented by Pershore Operatic & Dramatic Society, Mon 2 - Sat 7 Dec, Number 8, Pershore

MY COUSIN RACHEL

Helen George takes the lead in a new staging of Daphne Du Maurier's psychological thriller, Tues 3 - Sat 7 Dec, Malvern Theatres

SOME EXPLICIT POLAROID

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

OLIVER!

Amateur staging of Charles Dickens' classic story, Thurs 5 & Fri 6 Dec, Bridge House Theatre, Warwick

CRAZY FOR YOU

Amateur staging presented by Rabble Youth Theatre, Thurs 5 - Sat 7 Dec, Abbey Theatre, Nuneaton

MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET: A LIVE MUSI-

CAL RADIO PLAY Featuring live Foley effects and a score of holiday carols, Thurs 5 - Tues 24 Dec, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

GOODNIGHT MR TOM

Amateur staging of Michelle Margorian's wartime tale, Fri 6 - Sat 14 Dec, The Bear Pit Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

THE SOUND OF MUSIC

Rodgers & Hammerstein's heartwarming musical, Fri 6 - Sun 15 Dec, Rugby Theatre

Pantomime

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST until Sat 28 Dec, Bedworth Civic Hall

ALADDIN Festive family show written & directed by Ben Crocker, until Sat 4 Jan, The Roses, Tewkesbury

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

CINDERELLA until Sun 12 Jan, Everyman Theatre, Cheltenham

SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS Featuring Imelda Staunton as the voice of the Magic Mirror, Mon 2 Dec - Sun 5 Jan, Swan Theatre, Worcester

SNOW WHITE Featuring JP McCue, Sean Dodds, Tom Ling & Emma Marsh, Sat 7 Dec - Sun 5 Jan, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

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

Tread the Boards Theatre Company Presents:



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|  | Saturday 7 December THE POLAR EXPRESS £7 adult, £5 Child, £20 Family (4) |
|  | Sunday 8 December CARA DILLON: UPON A WINTER'S NIGHT Main House £23.50 |
|  | Tuesday 17 December LITTLE STAR BABY SHOW Studio £10 Baby & Adult |
|  | Monday 23 & Tuesday 24 December SANTA'S CHRISTMAS COUNTDOWN Main House £11, £40 Family |
|  | 20, 23, 24, 27, 28, 30, & 31 December FROZEN 2 £5 Adult, £3 Child, £14 Family (4) |

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Geoffrey Davis

Date: Wed/Thurs/Fri 11th/12th/13th/18th/19th/20th – and Christmas Eve 2019
Time: 6:00pm & 7:30pm
Price: £7.50pp | £25 family (2A+2C)
Venue: Tudor World, Sheep Street, Stratford upon Avon, CV37 6EE
w: **WWW.TUDORWORLD.COM** t: 01789 298070

Kids Shows

RAYMOND BRIGGS' FATHER CHRISTMAS

Join Santa on the busiest day of his year - Christmas Eve, until Sun 29 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

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

THE BIG SNOWY CHRISTMAS Heart-warming snowy tale about a little bear who helps to save Christmas, Sun 1 Dec, Evesham Arts Centre, Worcestershire

DEAR SANTA Rod Campbell's festive tale for younger audiences, Tues 3 - Wed 4 Dec, Malvern Theatres

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

THE LOST PRESENT Topsy Turvy Theatre present 'a Christmas adventure like no other', Sat 7 Dec, The Hive, Worcester

Dance

THE NUTCRACKER Birmingham Royal Ballet presents its annual staging of Peter Wright's world-famous festive production, until Sat 14 Dec, Birmingham Hippodrome

THE NUTCRACKER The most festive of ballets is here presented by Russian State Ballet & Opera House, Sun 1 Dec, Malvern Theatre

THE NUTCRACKER Presented by Vienna Festival Ballet, Sat 7 Dec, Evesham Arts Centre, Worcestershire

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 Extraordi-

naire Alyssa Edwards, Sun 1 Dec, The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

Film

INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

SORRY WE MISSED YOU (15) Drama. Starring Kris Hitchen, Debbie Honeywood. Malvern Theatres, Fri 29 Nov - Sun 1 Dec, Tues 3 & Thurs 5 Dec; Artrix, Bromsgrove, Mon 2 - Thurs 5 Dec

THE AERONAUTS (PG) Adventure/Biography. Starring Felicity Jones, Eddie Redmayne. Artrix, Bromsgrove, Fri 29 Nov - Thurs 5 Dec; The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Fri 6 - Tues 10 Dec

THE GOOD LIAR (15) Drama. Starring Helen Mirren, Ian McKellen. Malvern Theatres, Sat 30 Nov - Thurs 5 Dec; Artrix, Bromsgrove, Fri 6 - Wed 11 Dec

AFTER THE WEDDING (12a) Drama. Starring Michelle Williams, Julianne Moore. The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Mon 2 - Tues 3 Dec

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

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

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

C'EST LA VIE / LE SENS DE LA FÊTE (15) Comedy/Drama. Starring Olivier Nakache, Éric Toledano. Foreign language, subtitled. Malvern Theatres, 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

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



Vienna Festival Ballet's *The Nutcracker* - Evesham Arts Centre

THE WORCESTER VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS FAYRE Now in its 27th year, Thurs 28 Nov - Sun 1 Dec, Worcester City Centre

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

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS CRAFT FAIR 2019 Featuring a range of stalls selling a variety of items, Sat 30 Nov - Sun 1 Dec, Upton House & Gardens, Nr Banbury

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 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 & Wed 4 - Sun 8 Dec, West Midland Safari and Leisure Park, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS Enjoy a day out that's 'choc-full of festive fun', Sat

30 Nov - Sun 1 Dec & Sat 7 - Sun 8 Dec, Cadbury World, Birmingham

CHRISTMAS AT COALBROOKDALE Say hello to Santa in his woodland grotto, Sat 30 Nov - Sun 1 Dec & Sat 7 - Sun 8 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

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

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

CHRISTMAS AT THE CASTLE Attractions include 'magical storytelling experiences' with Mr & Mrs Claus and their merry elves, the chance to enjoy breakfast with Santa and his wife, Christmas feasts and medieval banquets, Santa sleepovers, a special



Santa Specials - Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

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- 23/1 Boogie Williams & Friends
- 29/1 The Syd Lawrence Orchestra & Singers
- 30-31/1 The Neil Diamond Story
- 1/2 Sing-a Long-a The Greatest Showman (PG)
- 1/2 Sing-a Long-a Bohemian Rhapsody (12A)
- 16/2 California Dreamin'
- 20/2 Dom Joly's Holiday Snaps Tour
- 7/3 Quill
- 17/3 Wanted Drama celebrating 5 amazing women
- 20/3 The Adele Songbook with Katie Markham
- 21/3 Twistin' the Night Away with Si Cranstoun
- 9/4 Woodland Tales with Granddad
- 15/4 The Sooty Show family fun 11am/2.30pm
- 18/4 Karl Loxley - You Raise Me Up
- 22/4 Herman's Hermits
- 23/4 King Pleasure & The Biscuit Boys
- 29/4 George Egg Live A Movable Feast Tour (12+)
- 19/5 An Audience with Lesley Garrett
- 22/5 The Opera Boys
- 23/5 Back to 60s 2 - Brothers in Song
- 5/6 Pam Ayres - Up in the Attic
- 17/9 Eddi Reader Live

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carol-singing session and a brand new ice rink, Sat 30 Nov - Tues 31 Dec, Warwick Castle

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

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

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

CHRISTMAS AT BLENHEIM PALACE A new, 'magical' one-mile glittering trail that winds its way through the parkland, until Wed 1 Jan, Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire

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

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

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

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

WINTER FAMILY DAY Featuring a packed programme of activities for families, including free events for all ages, Sun 1 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

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

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

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

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

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

CHRISTMAS AT COMPTON VERNEY Compton Verney hosts a range of

festive activities, including storytelling, crafts and trails, Sun 1 - Sun 15 Dec, Compton Verney Gallery, Warwickshire

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

VISIT SANTA! VINTAGE SLEIGH RIDE AND WINTER WONDERLAND Wander through a 'magical winter wonderland' of festive activities and snowy scenes before taking a ride on an enchanting vintage sleigh pulled by two trusty reindeer, Mon 2 - Mon 23 Dec, Coventry Transport Museum

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

MINI MUSEUM ENGINEERS - TOOL SKILLS Practise your tool skills and make a beautiful wooden toy to take home, Wed 4 Dec, Coventry Transport Museum

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

LANTERN PARADE Take along your own lanterns or make one in the onsite workshop, Thurs 5 Dec, The Hive, Worcester

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

ENCHANTED WITLEY COURT 'Enchanting experience of light, colour and sound' as the grounds are transformed into an illuminated world, Thurs 5 - Sun 8 Dec, Witley Court, Worcestershire

CHRISTMAS MAKERS MARKET A chance to get your hands on some independent, handcrafted gifts, Fri 6 Dec, FarGo Village, Coventry

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

CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL Glittering avenues of decorated trees celebrating the festive season, Sat 7 Dec, Worcester Cathedral

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

TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS CRAFT ACTIVITY Create the Pomander, an authentic Elizabethan Christmas decoration, Sat 7 Dec, The Hive, Worcester

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



Christmas at Anne Hathaway's Cottage - Stratford-upon-Avon

bridge, Shropshire

CHRISTMAS WASSAIL 2019 Christmas stories and carols from Birmingham Crescent Theatre. Mulled wine, a roaring fire and mince pies are included! Sat 7 - Sun 8 Dec, Coughton Court, Alcester

CHRISTMAS AT THE CASTLE Enjoy some yuletide cheer with the castle jester, indulge in a treat in the tearoom, and hand-deliver your Christmas list to Santa Claus, Sat 7 - Sun 8 Dec, Kenilworth Castle

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

FATHER CHRISTMAS AT CROOME Join Father Christmas and his elves as they make a whistle-stop visit, Sat 7 - Sun 8 Dec, Croome Park, Worcester

MEET FATHER CHRISTMAS AT HALL'S CROFT Each child will receive a present with a personalised name tag and can also join in with Christmas biscuit decorating in the cafe, Sat 7 -

Sun 15 Dec, Hall's Croft, Stratford-upon-Avon

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 DASH Join St Richard's Hospice for a two-mile festive and family-friendly fun-run or walk, Sun 8 Dec, Worcestershire Country Cricket Club, Worcester

CHRISTMAS IN THE COURTYARD Enjoy warm drinks and mince pies, sing along with carols and make Christmas decorations, Sun 8 Dec, Birmingham Back to Backs

CHRISTMAS AT MILLENNIUM POINT Meet Santa, take part in craft workshops, browse stalls and enjoy family entertainment, Sun 8 - Thurs 19 Dec, Millennium Point & Eastside Park, Birmingham



Christmas at Kenilworth Castle



ROYAL
BIRMINGHAM
CONSERVATOIRE

WED 11 DEC

ORCHESTRA OF THE SWAN: UP ON A MIDNIGHT CLEAR

2.30PM THE BRADSHAW HALL

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Join us for a breath-taking musical journey through the heart of winter. Vocal quintet Papagena and Orchestra of the Swan bring you a mesmerising tapestry of ancient carols, popular songs and winter-themed classical favourites, perfect as a pre-Christmas treat.



NADINE BENJAMIN
(SOPRANO)
THU 12 DEC



JOHN FEDCHOCK
THU 16 JAN



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The Blank Tapes - Tin Music & Arts, Coventry

Gigs

BARNEY ARTIST Mon 9 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

TENNIS SYSTEM + SPECIAL GUESTS Mon 9 Dec, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

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

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

HOT SNAKES Tues 10 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

SOPHIELOU + PLEASEPRETTYLEA + PHELEBA + MADISASKIA Wed 11 Dec, The Sunflower Lounge, B'ham

PETE TONG PRESENTS IBIZA CLASSICS Wed 11 Dec, Arena B'ham

HISS GOLDEN MESSENGER Wed 11 Dec, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

DERMOT KENNEDY Wed 11 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE CHATS Wed 11 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

DWEEZIL ZAPPA - HOT RATS LIVE! Wed 11 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

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

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

THE BLANK TAPES Tues

12 Dec, Tin Music And arts, Canal Basin, Coventry

THE UTOPIA STRONG Thurs 12 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

GINGER MINJ'S SUPER SPECTACULAR (LOW BUDGET) HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA Thurs 12 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

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

BUZZCOCKS Thurs 12 Dec, The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton

COUNTERFEIT Thurs 12 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE ALBION CHRISTMAS BAND Thurs 12 Dec, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

T.REXTASY Fri 13 Dec, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

LIMEHOUSE LIZZY Fri 13 Dec, Marrs Bar, Worcester

ROD STEWART Fri 13 Dec, Arena B'ham

ALUNAH Fri 13 Dec, The Flapper, B'ham

KYLE FALCONER Fri 13 Dec, The Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

BIG COUNTRY Fri 13 Dec, The Mill, Digbeth, Birmingham

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

GHETTS Fri 13 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

STRANGLERS & IAN DURY TRIBUTE XMAS SHOW Fri 13 Dec, Route 44, Birmingham

BBMAK Fri 13 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

MOTIONLESS IN WHITE Fri 13 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

DENIS COLEMAN Fri 13 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

SOUL STRIPPER Sat 14 Dec, Marr's Bar, Worcester

SALLY IRONMONGER & BRIAN CARTER Sat 14 Dec, Number 8 Community Arts Centre, Pershore, Worcester

VETIVER + TREETOP FLYERS Sat 14 Dec, The Cuban Embassy, Birmingham

KATE RUSBY AT CHRISTMAS Sat 14 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

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

THE LIBERTINES Sat 14 - Sun 15 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham



RUSS MB Sun 15 Dec, O2 Institute, B'ham

BRONNIE Sun 15 Dec, The Asylum, B'ham

BLACK BOMBERS & DAVE KUSWORTH GROUP Sun 15 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

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

G4 CHRISTMAS Tues 10 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

ORCHESTRA OF THE SWAN: UPON A MIDNIGHT CLEAR Also featuring Papagena vocal quintet, Tues 10 Dec, Stratford Playhouse, Stratford-upon-Avon



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

ORCHESTRA OF THE SWAN: UPON A MIDNIGHT CLEAR Also featuring Papagena vocal quintet, Wed 11 Dec, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

CBSO: MIGRA CONDUCTS BRAHMS Featuring Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla (conductor), Thomas E. Bauer (baritone) & the CBSO Youth Chorus. Programme includes works by Elgar, Jörg Widmann and Brahms, Thurs 12 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

NADINE BENJAMIN IN CONCERT Also featuring Gomez Ferrer (tenor) and Chris Hopkins (piano). Programme includes extracts from Verdi's Otello, Ballo and Il Trovatore, Thurs 12 Dec, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

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

CHRISTMAS BY CANDLELIGHT WITH LINDA TOLCHARD Also featuring Tim Sidford (piano & violin) & Catherine Handley (flute), Sat 14 Dec, Christ Church, Malvern

BIRMINGHAM CATHEDRAL CHOIR: HANDEL'S MESSIAH Featuring David Hardie (conductor), Sat 14 Dec, Birmingham Cathedral

ENGLISH STRING ORCHESTRA Programme includes works by Vaughan Williams, Corelli, Bach & Warlock, Sat 14 Dec, Huntingdon Hall,

Worcester

TIDINGS OF JOY CATHEDRAL CHRISTMAS CONCERT Sat 14 Dec, Worcester Cathedral

BIRMINGHAM BACH CHOIR: SERVICE OF NINE LESSONS & CAROLS Service of bible readings & carols, Sun 15 Dec, St Alban the Martyr, Birmingham

LONDON CONCERT ORCHESTRA Featuring Freddie Tapner (conductor), Laura Tebbutt & Tim Howar (guest singers) & the Jingle Belle Dancers, Sun 15 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

Comedy

GOD SAVE OUR QUEENS - THE TOUR Tues 10 Dec, The Glee Club, B'ham

SOL BERNSTEIN, ALLYSON SMITH, PAUL MCCAFFREY & ANDY ROBINSON Wed 11 - Sun 15 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ADAM BLOOM, LEO KEARSE & PETE OTWAY Thurs 12 Dec, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

BARBARA NICE'S CHRISTMAS CRACKER 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

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

Theatre

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

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

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



THE 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

THE SNOW QUEEN Ceridwen Theatre Company present a new version of Hans Christian Andersen's famous story, Mon 9 - Sat 28 Dec, Albany Theatre, Coventry

THE MULLAH OF DOWNING STREET A timely political comedy set in the living room at 10 Downing Street on the eve of a general election, Tues 10 - Thurs 12 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry



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

RED RIDING HOOD Presented by The Abbey Players, Wed 11 - Sat 14 Dec, The Abbey Theatre, Nuneaton

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

A PICTURE OF 'ELF' Presented by Worcester Repertory Company, Wed 11 - Sat 21 Dec, Swan Theatre, Worcester

CLUB 2B Immersive theatrical experience for the festive season - an event for 'anyone with a thirst for life, an open mind and a sense of adventure.', Wed 11 - Tues 31 Dec, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

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

A CHRISTMAS CAROL Smoking Apples fuse puppetry & visual theatre in a new staging of Charles Dickens' festive classic, Sat 14 - Tues 24 Dec, Bridge House Theatre, Warwick

A CHRISTMAS WASSAIL A festive feast of music, comedy & spoken word, Sun 15 - Tues 17 Dec, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

Pantomime

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

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

CINDERELLA Featuring Emmerdale's Sapphire Elia, X-Factor winner Ben Haenow, Dean Horner & The Man They Call 'G', Mon 9 Dec - Sun 5 Jan, Palace Theatre, Redditch

TINDER-ELLA Adults-only panto, Tues 10 - Sat 14 Dec, The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK Tread The Boards Theatre presents a 'giant' of a pantomime... Thurs 12 Dec - Sun 5 Jan, The Attic Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

ALADDIN Featuring Only Fools & Horses actor John Challis as Abanazar, Thurs 12 Dec - Sun 5 Jan, Malvern Theatres

ROBIN HOOD - THE PANTOMIME ADVENTURE Festive show featuring 'daring duels, stunning sets, outrageous costumes and a very merry man in a dress', Fri 13 Dec - Sun 5 Jan, The Core Theatre, Solihull

SNOW WHITE All & Sundry present a traditional family pantomime 'packed with fun, laughter and plenty of audience participation', Sat 14 - Sun 22 Dec, Artrix, Bromsgrove

Kids Shows

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

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



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

SANTA'S DIZZY DAY 'Fun-packed festive show' featuring interactive songs and audience participation., Thurs 12 - Tues 24 Dec, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

Dance

THE NUTCRACKER Birmingham Royal Ballet presents its annual staging of Peter Wright's world-famous festive production, until Sat 14 Dec, Birmingham Hippodrome



Film

INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

DOWNTON ABBEY (PG) Drama. Starring Matthew Goode, Maggie Smith. Number 8, Pershore, Mon 9 & Wed 11 Dec

THE FAREWELL (PG) Drama/Comedy. Starring Shuzhen Zhao, Awkwafina. Foreign language, subtitled. Number 8, Pershore, Mon 9 & Wed 11 Dec

MONOS (12a) Drama/Thriller. Starring Sofia Buenaventura, Moises Arias. Foreign language, subtitled. The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Wed 11 - Thurs 12 Dec

THE GOOD LIAR (15) Drama. Starring Helen Mirren, Ian McKellen. Number 8, Pershore, Fri 13 & Mon 16 Dec

SORRY WE MISSED YOU (15) Drama. Starring Kris Hitchen, Debbie Honeywood. The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Thurs 12 - Tues 17 Dec

SINGIN' IN THE RAIN (U) Musical/Romance. Starring Gene Kelly, Debbie Reynolds. Artrix, Bromsgrove, Fri 13 Dec

KNIVES OUT (12a) Comedy/Crime. Starring Daniel Craig, Chris Evans. Malvern Theatres, Fri 13 - Sat 14, Mon 16 - Tues 17 & Thurs 19 Dec

HUSTLERS (15) Comedy/Crime. Starring Constance Wu, Jennifer Lopez. Number 8, Pershore, Sat 14 & Wed 18 Dec

LAST CHRISTMAS (12a) Comedy/Romance. Starring Emilia Clarke, Henry Golding. Malvern Theatres, Sat 14 - Sun 15, Tues 17 - Wed 18 Dec

NEW FILMS ON GENERAL RELEASE:

Released from Wed 11 Dec, showing at selected cinemas

JUMANJI: THE NEXT LEVEL (12a)

BLACK CHRISTMAS (tbc)

LUCY IN THE SKY (15)

MOTHERLESS BROOKLYN (15)

Events

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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

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, Nr Kidderminster

MINI MUSEUM ENGINEERS - LIGHTS Discover light and shade through play, Wed 11 Dec, Coventry Transport Museum

EBENEZER'S CHRISTMAS CAROL TOUR

Monday 9 - Sunday 15 December

Ebenezer Crouch is back by popular demand with his unusual recitation of Dickens' A Christmas Carol, Wed 11 - Fri 13 Dec, Tudor World, Stratford-upon-Avon

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

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

ENCHANTED WITLEY COURT Make the most of winter evenings with 'an enchanting experience of light, colour and sound as the grounds are transformed into an illuminated world', Thurs 12 - Sun 15 Dec, Witley Court, Great Witley, Worcestershire

CHRISTMAS MAKERS MARKET A chance to get your hands on some independent, handcrafted gifts, Fri 13 Dec, FarGo Village, Coventry

MAC GIN & JAZZ CLUB: FESTIVE EDITION Step into the festivities with a gin cocktail in hand, listening to 'the best live jazz around', Fri 13 Dec, 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, Ironbridge, Shropshire

CHRISTMAS CAROL TRAINS Sing along or just soak up the festive atmosphere, Sat 14 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

FAMILY SATURDAY: THIS MAKES THAT WITH THESE - STAR STRUCK Explore the star collection with fun family activities and have a go at making a mini model to take home, Sat 14 Dec, Coventry Transport Museum

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



Christmas Celebrations - Cadbury World, Birmingham

FATHER CHRISTMAS AT BLAKESLEY HALL Meet Father Christmas and see Blakesley Hall dressed for Christmas, Sat 14 - Sun 15 Dec, Blakesley Hall, Birmingham

FAIRY TALE CHRISTMAS Explore Aston Hall and encounter a host of favourite fictional characters, Sat 14 - Sun 15 Dec, Aston Hall, Birmingham

FATHER CHRISTMAS AT CROOME Join Father Christmas and his elves as

they make a whistle-stop visit to Croome Park, Worcester

VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS Sat 14 - Sun 15 Dec, Blists Hill Victorian Town, Ironbridge, Shropshire

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS Enjoy a day out that's 'choc-full of festive fun', Sat 14 - Sun 15 Dec, Cadbury World, Birmingham

11-15 DECEMBER 2019
SHAKESPEARE'S NEW PLACE

THE
FESTIVAL
of
LOST & FOUND

DISCOVER the
greatest show
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ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Shakespeare birthplace trust



Alter Bridge - Arena Birmingham

Gigs

A 'NARTHEN' CHRISTMAS : COOPE, CAUSLEY, FREYA AND FRASER Mon 16 Dec, The Fleece Inn, Bretforton, Nr Evesham

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

FUNZING TALKS: MANIPULATION: WHY DO WE ALLOW IT? Mon 16 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

AITCH Tues 17 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

RONNIE SPECTOR & THE RONNETTES: SPECIAL CHRISTMAS SHOW Tues 17 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre

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



COSMOTHEKA Tues 17 Dec, The Fleece Inn, Bretforton, Nr Evesham

JOHNNY AND THE BAPTISTS Wed 18 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST Wed 18 Dec, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

ALTER BRIDGE Wed 18 Dec, Arena B'ham

THE MAD JOCKS AND ENGLISHMEN CHRISTMAS EXTRAVAGANZA Wed 18 Dec, The Red Lion Folk Club, B'ham

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

SWIM DEEP Wed 18 Dec, The Mill, Digbeth

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

SUPER SONIX 16+ XMAS PARTY FT. MR TRAUMATIK Thurs 19 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

HEAVY BEAT CHRISTMAS HOUSE PARTY Thurs 19 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

JANE MCDONALD Fri 20 Dec, Arena B'ham

THE OFFICIAL RECEIVERS Fri 20 Dec, Marr's Bar, Worcester

METZ Fri 20 Dec, Sky By The Water, Resorts World, Birmingham

THAT'LL BE THE DAY - THE CHRISTMAS SHOW Fri 20 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

KNE Fri 20 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

BORN IN THE 80'S Fri 20 Dec, The World Bar, Resorts World

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

SPENCER JAMES AND FRIENDS Fri 20 Dec, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

THE WONDER STUFF Sat 21 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

STRIP SEARCH TRAMP, HIGH KNUCKS, FUTURICHE Sat 21 Dec, Tin Music And Arts, Canal Basin, Coventry

JAMIE KNIGHT AND THE MANUKA BAND Sat 21 Dec, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

THE CLAUSE Sat 21 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

FRED ZEPPELIN Sat 21 Dec, Marrs Bar, Worcester

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

UB40 - CHRISTMAS HOMETOWN SHOW Sat 21 Dec, Arena B'ham

LOST SOCIETY: XMAS PARTY, ROBERT NICKSON & SAM MITCHAM Sat 21 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

THE CRAIG CHARLES FUNK & SOUL CLUB Sun 22 Dec, The Mill, Digbeth, Birmingham

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

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

NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL CHRISTMAS Sun 22 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

SLADE - THE ROCKIN' HOME FOR CHRISTMAS TOUR 2019 Sun 22 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE TWANG Sun 22 - Mon 23 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

Classical Music Comedy

EX CATHEDRA: CHRISTMAS MUSIC BY CANDLELIGHT Popular festive concert featuring Jeffrey Skidmore at the helm, Mon 16 Dec, Coventry Cathedral

SING CAROLS WITH THE CITY ORGANIST AND LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL CHOIR Featuring Thomas Trotter (organ), Mon 16 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

ENGLISH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: HANDEL'S MESSIAH Tues 17 Dec, Great Malvern Priory

REGGAE PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA: FESTIVE EXTRAVAGANZA Wed 18 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

ARMONICO CONSORT: CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring Christopher Monks (director), Adrian Lucas (organist) & Julian Glover (narrator), Wed 18 Dec, Collegiate Church of St Mary, Warwick

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, to bring you an exciting selection of seasonal music both new and old, Thurs 19 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

THE CHASE CAROL SERVICE Thurs 19 Dec, Great Malvern Priory

BBC WM CAROL SERVICE Thurs 19 Dec, Birmingham Cathedral

WORCESTER NEWS CAROL SERVICE Fri 20 Dec, Worcester Cathedral

ARMONICO CONSORT & BAROQUE ORCHESTRA: HANDEL'S MESSIAH Directed by Christopher Monks, Sat 21 Dec, Malvern Theatres

CHRISTMAS CRACKER WITH ALED JONES Also featuring Adrian Lucas (conductor), London Concert Orchestra, City of Birmingham Choir and Jennifer France (soprano), Sat 21 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

TOWN HALL GOSPEL CHOIR CHRISTMAS SPECIAL Sat 21 Dec, The Bradshaw Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

EX CATHEDRA: ANGELS, STARS & KINGS Featuring Ex Cathedra Academy of Vocal Music, Jeffrey Skidmore (conductor) and Alexander Mason (organ), Sat 21 Dec, St Paul's Church, Birmingham

CATHEDRAL CAROL SERVICES Traditional service of Nine Lessons and carols sung by the Cathedral Choir, Sun 22 Dec, Worcester Cathedral

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

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

DAVE LONGLEY, FREDDY QUINN & ALISTAIR BARRIE Thurs 19 Dec, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

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

SAM AVERY, DARIOUS DAVIES, TOM TAYLOR & BARRY DODDS Sat 21 Dec, Abbey Theatre, Nuneaton

Theatre

A PICTURE OF 'ELF Presented by Worcester Repertory Company, until Sat 21 Dec, Swan Theatre, Worcester

A CHRISTMAS CAROL Smoking Apples fuse puppetry & visual theatre in a new staging of Charles Dickens' festive classic, until Tues 24 Dec, Bridge House Theatre, Warwick

THE SNOW QUEEN Ceridwen Theatre Company present a new version of Hans Christian Andersen's famous story, until Sat 28 Dec, Albany Theatre, Coventry

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

CLUB 2B Immersive theatrical experience for the festive season - an event for 'anyone with a thirst for life, an open mind and a sense of adventure.', until Tues 31 Dec, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

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

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

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

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

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

UNFORTUNATE: THE UNTOLD STORY OF

Monday 16 - Sunday 22 December

URSULA THE SEA WITCH Musical parody from the award-winning Fat Rascal Theatre Company, Mon 16 - Sun 22 Dec, Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

CHRISTMAS ENTERTAINMENT Evening of 'mirth, merriment & mayhem', Tues 17 - Fri 20 Dec, The Rose Theatre, Kidderminster

A CHRISTMAS CAROL Nick Wilkes' one-man performance of Charles Dickens' festive classic, Thurs 19 Dec, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

DID WE MENTION THE MINCE PIES? Evening of festive comedy & song, Thurs 19 - Fri 20 Dec, United Reformed Church, Stratford-upon-Avon

THE NUTCRACKER New dramatisation based on ETA Hoffman's festive tale, Thurs 19 - Sat 21 Dec, The Bear Pit Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

BEYOND THE BARRICADE The best of Broadway and the West End, Fri 20 Dec, Malvern Theatres

A CHRISTMAS CAROL One-man show adapted & performed by Nick Wilkes, Fri 20 - Sat 21 Dec, Malvern Theatres

RICK WAKEMAN - THE GRUMPY OLD CHRISTMAS SHOW Featuring 'spell-binding piano music, side-splitting stories and revealing insights into a lengthy and varied career', Sat 21 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

THE SNOWMAN Raymond Briggs' festive story shown on screen and accompanied by a professional orchestra, Sun 22 Dec, Warwick Hall

Pantomime

SNOW WHITE All & Sundry present a traditional family pantomime 'packed with fun, laughter and plenty of audience participation', until Sun 22 Dec, Artrix, Bromsgrove

SNOW WHITE & THE SEVEN DWARVES until Fri 3 Jan, Regal, Tenbury Wells

THE FROG PRINCE Family pantomime based on the Brothers Grimm fairytale, until Sat 4 Jan, Talisman Theatre, Coventry

BABES IN THE WOOD Traditional family pantomime, until Sun 5 Jan, Priory Theatre, Kenilworth

CINDERELLA Featuring Emmerdale's Sapphire Elia, X-Factor winner Ben Haenow, Dean Horner & The Man They Call 'G', until Sun 5 Jan, Palace Theatre, Redditch

ROBIN HOOD - THE PANTOMIME ADVENTURE Festive show featuring 'daring duels, stunning sets, outrageous costumes and a very merry man in a dress', until Sun 5 Jan, The Core Theatre, Solihull

ALADDIN Featuring Only Fools & Horses actor John Challis as Abanazar, until Sun 5 Jan, Malvern Theatres

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK Tread The

Boards Theatre presents a 'giant' of a pantomime... until Sun 5 Jan, The Attic Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

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

ONCE UPON A PANTO 'A magical adventure through pantoland', Sat 21 - Sun 22 Dec, The Rose Theatre, Kidderminster

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

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

SANTA'S DIZZY DAY 'Fun-packed festive show' featuring interactive songs and audience participation, until Tues 24 Dec, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

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

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

LITTLE STAR BABY SHOW Show for little ones aged six to 18 months, fusing puppetry, music & 'captivating' visuals, Tues 17 Dec, Artrix, Bromsgrove

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

SANTA IN LOVE 'Fun-filled family musical complete with games, giggles and all your favourite Christmas songs', Fri 20 - Tues 24 Dec, The Core Theatre, Solihull

Film

INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

THE IRISHMAN (15) Biography/Crime. Starring Robert De Niro, Al Pacino. Artrix, Bromsgrove, Mon 16 - Tues 17 Dec; The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Thurs 19 Dec

THE GOOD LIAR (15) Drama. Starring Helen Mirren, Ian McKellen. The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Mon 16 - Tues 17 Dec

LAST CHRISTMAS (12a) Comedy/Romance. Starring Emilia Clarke, Henry Golding. The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Mon 16 - Thurs 19 Dec; Number 8, Pershore, Fri 20 - Mon 23 Dec

GUYS AND DOLLS (U) Crime/Musical. Starring Marlon Brando, Jean Simmons. Artrix, Bromsgrove, Tues 17 Dec

NON-FICTION (15) Comedy/Drama. Starring Guillaume Canet, Juliette Binoche. Number 8, Pershore, Thurs 19 Dec

STAR WARS: THE RISE OF SKYWALKER (12a) Adventure/Sci-Fi. Starring Billie Lourd, Daisy Ridley. Malvern Theatres, Thurs 19 - Tues 31 Dec

FROZEN 2 (U) Animation/Adventure. With the voices of Idina Menzel, Kristen Bell. The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Fri 20 - Mon 30 Dec; Artrix, Bromsgrove, Fri 20 - Tues 31 Dec; Malvern Theatres, Sun 22 - Tues 24 Dec

Events

MOROCCAN FIRE NIGHTS 'Fusing incredible entertainment with a delicious festive feast and a spectacularly themed environment', until Sun 22 Dec, NEC, Birmingham

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

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

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

CHRISTMAS BRICKTACULAR Seasonal build activities and holiday theming throughout the attraction, until Tues 24 Dec, Legoland Discovery Centre, Birmingham

CHRISTMAS AT THE CASTLE Attractions include 'magical storytelling experiences' with Mr & Mrs Claus and their merry elves, the chance to enjoy breakfast with Santa and his wife, Christmas feasts and medieval banquets, Santa sleepovers, a special carol-singing session and a brand new ice rink, until Tues 31 Dec, Warwick Castle

SANTA'S WINTER WONDERLAND This year's all-new Santa Show sees the white-bearded one preparing for his big festive performance of The Twelve Days Of Christmas, until Tues 31 Dec, The Snowdome, Tamworth

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

THE SNOW HOUSE BAR The bar makes

a welcome return to Birmingham's Bullring, complete with its super-popular VIP igloos, until Sun 5 Jan, The Bullring Shopping Centre, B'ham

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

MINI MOTORISTS Under-fives activity morning, allowing them to discover, through play, the world's largest collection of historic British cars, Mon 16 Dec, British Motor Museum, Gaydon

A FESTIVE CHRISTMAS EVENING Check out Eastnor's Christmas decorations and enjoy some festive entertainment, Wed 18 Dec, Eastnor Castle, Ledbury

MINI MUSEUM ENGINEERS - MARBLE RUNS Wed 18 Dec, Coventry Transport Museum



EBENEZER'S CHRISTMAS CAROL TOUR Ebenezer Crouch presents his unusual recitation of Dickens' A Christmas Carol, Wed 18 - Fri 20 Dec, Tudor World, Stratford-upon-Avon

ENCHANTED WITLEY COURT 'Enchanting experience of light, colour and sound as the grounds are transformed into an illuminated world', Thurs 19 - Sun 22 Dec, Witley Court, Great Witley, Worcestershire

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS Enjoy a day out that's 'choc-full of festive fun', Fri 20 - Mon 23 Dec, Cadbury World, Birmingham

A CHRISTMAS SING-A-LONG Special Makaton Christmas singalong, Sat 21 Dec, Shakespeare's New Place, Stratford-upon-Avon

CHRISTMAS AT COALBROOKDALE Say hello to the man himself in his woodland grotto, Sat 21 - Sun 22 Dec, Coalbrookdale Museum of Iron, Ironbridge, Shropshire

FATHER CHRISTMAS AT CROOME Join Father Christmas and his elves as they make a whistle-stop visit to Croome, Sat 21 - Sun 22 Dec, Croome Park, Worcester



CHRISTMAS at SYMPHONY HALL

Sunday 15 December at 2.30pm

CHRISTMAS SPECTACULAR

MUSIC • SONG • DANCE • SPECTACLE

Rockin' Around The Christmas Tree • Sleigh Ride
Last Christmas • All I Want For Christmas Is You
White Christmas • Winter Wonderland • Santa Baby

Laura Tebbutt & Tim Howar guest singers
The Jingle Belles® dancers Freddie Tapner conductor
Birmingham Voices London Concert Orchestra



Saturday 21 December at 2.30pm

CHRISTMAS CRACKER with ALED JONES



Seasonal classics, festive readings and joyful songs.

Willcocks Jingle Bells Cullen Joy to the World
Blake Walking in the Air Anderson Sleigh Ride
Tchaikovsky Suite from The Nutcracker

PLUS CAROLS FOR ALL

Aled Jones presenter Jennifer France soprano
Adrian Lucas conductor
City of Birmingham Choir
London Concert Orchestra

Sunday 22 December at 2.30pm



All I Want For Christmas Is You Merry Christmas Everyone
Rockin' Around The Christmas Tree
Wonderful Christmas Time
Santa Claus Is Coming To Town and many more...

Kerry Ellis and Tim Howar guest singers
John Rigby conductor
Capital Voices Live 15-Piece Show Band

Monday 23 December at 2.30pm

CHRISTMAS CAROL SINGALONG



A fun-filled jamboree of carols and Christmas hits.

Jingle Bells • Merry Christmas Everybody
Frosty the Snowman • Santa Claus is Coming to Town
PLUS CAROLS FOR ALL

Jonathan Cohen conductor/presenter
Louise Dearman guest singer
London Concert Chorus London Concert Orchestra

Tuesday 24 December at 2.30pm

CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT



Carols and seasonal classics, staged in full 18th Century costume in an evocative candle-lit style setting.

Cullen Joy to the World Ledger Sussex Carol
Handel Christmas Sequence from Messiah
Zadok the Priest
Darke In the Bleak Midwinter
PLUS CAROLS FOR ALL

Susanna Hurrell soprano Steven Devine conductor
Mozart Festival Chorus
Mozart Festival Orchestra in full period costume

Friday 27 December at 7.30pm

LAST NIGHT OF THE CHRISTMAS PROMS



Rousing classics with a grand flag waving British finale!

Strauss Die Fledermaus Overture Elgar Nimrod
Rossini Largo al factotum from The Barber of Seville
Bizet Duet from The Pearl Fishers

And all your Proms favourites...

Robyn Lyn Evans tenor James Cleverton baritone
John Pryce-Jones conductor London Concert Orchestra

Saturday 28 December at 2.30pm

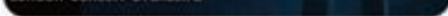
THE GREATEST SHOW TUNES

A show-stopping concert of the greatest show tunes.

The Greatest Showman
Mamma Mia! • Dreamgirls
The Phantom of the Opera
9 to 5 • La La Land

With guest singers
Sophie Evans Ben Forster
Marisha Wallace Ricardo Afonso

Richard Bakombe conductor
Birmingham Voices
London Concert Orchestra



Saturday 28 December at 7.30pm

THE BEST OF JOHN WILLIAMS



Celebrating the iconic film scores of John Williams.

E.T. • Jaws • Hook • Superman • Jurassic Park
Schindler's List • Harry Potter
Born on the Fourth of July
Close Encounters of the Third Kind • Star Wars

including highlights from:

A New Hope • The Empire Strikes Back
and many more...

Anthony Inglis conductor
London Concert Orchestra

Monday 30 December at 7.30pm

BEETHOVEN'S NINTH



An unforgettable all-Beethoven programme.

Piano Concerto No. 5 'Emperor'
Symphony No. 9 'Choral'

Lauren Fagan soprano Kathryn Rudge mezzo-soprano
Oliver Johnston tenor Morgan Pearse baritone
Daniel Lehardt piano Oliver Gooch conductor
Birmingham Choral Union City of Birmingham Choir
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Gigs

UNCOVER XMAS SPECIAL: TIME OF THE MOUTH Mon 23 Dec, Marr's Bar, Worcester

BEATFACTORY Fri 27 Dec, The World Bar, Resorts World, B'ham

BLACK TREE VULTURES Fri 27 Dec, Route 44, Birmingham

JAYME TOVEY Fri 27 Dec, Sky By The Water, Resorts World, Birmingham

GLENN MILLER ORCHESTRA Fri 27 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

NOW! THAT'S WHAT I CALL MANCHESTER 2 Fri 27 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

BRUM PUNKS XMAS BASH Sat 28 Dec, Castle and Falcon, B'ham

THE KILLAZ Sat 28 Dec, Route 44, Birmingham

THE GREATEST SHOW TUNES Sat 28 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE SPECIALZ Sat 28 Dec, The Night Owl, Birmingham

PAUL PETROV Sat 28 Dec, Sky By The Water, Resorts World, Birmingham

'1215' Sat 28 Dec, The World Bar, Resorts World, Birmingham

TAKE THE 5TH Sat 28 Dec, Marr's Bar, Worcester

NIGHTMARE BEFORE NYE Sun 29 Dec, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

NEW YEARS EVE WITH THE CLUE SOCKS
CEILIDH BAND Tues 31 Dec, The Fleece Inn, Bretforton, Nr Evesham

RISKY BUSINESS Tues 31 Dec, The World Bar, Resorts World, Birmingham

NEW YEAR'S EVE CARNIVAL Tues 31 Dec, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

NEW YEARS EVE PARTY' SUBLIME FT GOOD DAY Tues 31 Dec, The Sunflower Lounge, B'ham

NEW YEAR'S EVE - MEGAN REECE Tues 31 Dec, Sky By The Water, Resorts World, Birmingham



Black Tree Vultures - Route 44, Birmingham

Classical

CATHEDRAL CAROL SERVICES Traditional service of Nine Lessons and carols sung by the Cathedral Choir, Mon 23 Dec, Worcester Cathedral

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

MALVERN FESTIVAL CHORUS: CAROLS FOR ALL Sat 28 Dec, Great Malvern Priory

LONDON CONCERT ORCHESTRA: THE MUSIC OF ZIMMER VS. WILLIAMS Featuring Anthony Inglis (conductor). Programme includes scores from Hans Zimmer & John Williams, Sun 29 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA: BEETHOVEN'S NINTH Featuring Lauren Fagan (soprano) & Kathryn Rudge (mezzo-soprano), Mon 30 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

LONDON CONCERT ORCHESTRA: NEW YEAR'S EVE GALA Featuring Ilona Domnich (soprano), Alexander James Edwards (tenor) & Anthony Inglis (conductor). Programme includes works by Grieg, Puccini and Verdi, Tues 31 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

GLEE FAMILY COMEDY SHOW Sun 29 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ROBERT WHITE, MICKEY D, ANDY ROBINSON & COMIC TBC Tues 31 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

CLUB 2B Immersive theatrical experience for the festive season - an event for 'anyone with a thirst for life, an open mind and a sense of adventure.', until Tues 31 Dec, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

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

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

Pantomime

SNOW WHITE All & Sundry present a traditional family pantomime 'packed with fun, laughter and plenty of audience participation', until Sun 22 Dec, Artrix, Bromsgrove

ROBIN HOOD - THE PANTOMIME ADVENTURE Festive show featuring 'daring duels, stunning sets, outrageous costumes and a very merry man in a dress', until Sun 5 Jan, The Core Theatre, Solihull

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

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

SNOW WHITE & THE SEVEN DWARFS Featuring Lesley Joseph, Matt Slack, Joe McElderry, Faye Brookes, Flawless, Doreen Tipton & Andrew Ryan, Sat 21 Dec - Sun 2 Feb, Birmingham Hippodrome

ALADDIN Mon 23 Dec, Dovehouse Theatre, Solihull

Kids Shows

GRANDPA'S GREAT ESCAPE Nigel Planer takes the lead in a brand new staging

Lichfield Arts

Inspiring, Involving, Entertaining

Folk, blues, jazz, roots, rock & more

at historic Lichfield Guildhall unless stated otherwise

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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 Wade St Church 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 262225

Donegal House, Bare Street, Lichfield, Staffordshire, WS13 6LU info@lichfieldarts.org.uk

Comedy

MICKEY D, PAUL THORNE & COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON Fri 27 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

MICKEY D, PAUL THORNE, LOUISE YOUNG & ANDY ROBINSON Sat 28 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

KANE BROWN, SLIM & COMIC TBC Sun 29 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

of David Walliams' bestselling children's book, Mon 23 - Tues 24 Dec & Thurs 26 Dec, Arena Birmingham

WE'RE GOING ON A BEAR HUNT 'Catchy songs, interactive scenes and plenty of hands-on adventure' combine in this adaptation of Michael Rosen & Helen Oxenbury's much-loved picture book, Thurs 26 Dec - Sun 12 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

Dance

SHEN YUN Epic production fusing classical Chinese dance, scenographical effects and original orchestral works, Tues 31 Dec - Thurs 2 Jan, International Convention Centre (ICC), Birmingham

Film

INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

ABOMINABLE (U) Animation/Adventure. With the voiced of Chloe Bennet, Albert Tsai. Number 8, Pershore, Tues 24 Dec

A SHAUN THE SHEEP MOVIE: FARMAGEDDON (U) Animation/Comedy. With the

voices of Andy Nyman, Justin Fletcher. Number 8, Pershore, Fri 27 - Sat 28 & Tues 31 Dec

FROZEN 2 (PG)

Animation/Adventure. With the voices of Idina Menzel, Kristen Bell. Number 8, Pershore, Fri 27 & Mon 30 Dec



KNIVES OUT (12a) Comedy/Crime.

Starring Daniel Craig, Chris Evans. The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Fri 27 - Tues 31 Dec; Artrix, Bromsgrove, Fri 27 - Mon 30 Dec

CALAMITY JANE (U) Comedy/Musical.

Starring Doris Day, Howard Keel. This is a sing-a-long screening. Artrix, Bromsgrove, Sat 28 Dec

NEW FILMS ON GENERAL RELEASE:

Released from Thurs 26 Dec, showing at selected cinemas

LITTLE WOMEN (PG)

PLAYING WITH FIRE (PG)

SPIES IN DISGUISE (PG)

Events

CHRISTMAS AT THE CASTLE Attractions include 'magical storytelling experiences' with Mr & Mrs Claus and their merry elves, the chance to enjoy breakfast with Santa and his wife, Christmas feasts and medieval banquets, Santa sleepovers, a special carol-singing session and a brand new ice rink, until Tues 31 Dec, Warwick Castle

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

EBENEZER'S CHRISTMAS CAROL TOUR Ebenezer Crouch presents his unusual recitation of Dickens' A Christmas Carol, Tues 24 Dec, Tudor World, Stratford-upon-Avon

FESTIVE SEASON SERVICE Leisurely steam train journey along the Severn Valley, Thurs 26 - Sat 28 Dec & Mon 30 Dec - 5 Jan, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

TOY COLLECTORS FAIR 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

BIG FISH LITTLE FISH FAMILY RAVE: CIRCUS Circus-themed show with DJ Chad Jackson, Tues 31 Dec, Coventry Cathedral



BIRMINGHAM
ROYAL BALLET



BIRMINGHAM
HIPPODROME

SIR PETER WRIGHT & GALINA SAMSOVA'S

SWAN LAKE

18 - 29 FEB 2020
brb.org.uk/swanlake

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

Delia Mathews as Odette © Bella Kotak



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BIRMINGHAM
ROYAL BALLET



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HIPPODROME

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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