

Your FREE essential entertainment guide for the Midlands

THIS IS ME...  
GIOVANNI ON TOUR

Staffordshire

ISSUE 410 FEBRUARY 2020

# What's On

FILM | COMEDY | THEATRE | GIGS | VISUAL ARTS | EVENTS | FOOD [staffordshirewhatson.co.uk](http://staffordshirewhatson.co.uk)



**THE SHIRES**  
WEDNESDAY 29 APRIL

**RV** REGENT THEATRE  
VICTORIA HALL  
STOKE-ON-TRENT

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\*Phone supply. Calls cost 1p per minute plus your phone company's service charge.

inside:

## thelist

Your 16-page week  
by week listings guide

### FIRST TIME

Nathaniel Hall's funny and  
frank solo show at the Garrick



### JIMEOIN

a straightforward night of  
comedy at Stafford Gatehouse



### ROOM ON THE BROOM

Tall Stories visit the Regent



# gatehouse theatre



SWEENEY ENTERTAINMENTS PRESENTS

## WE LOVE LITTLE MIX

THURSDAY 6 FEBRUARY  
@ 6.00PM

## BELIEVE THE CHER SONGBOOK

FRIDAY 7 FEBRUARY  
@ 7.30PM



## THE TINA TURNER EXPERIENCE LIVE ENERGETIC SHOW

FRIDAY 14 FEBRUARY  
@ 7.30PM

## HELLO AGAIN THE SORY OF NEIL DIAMOND

THURSDAY 20 FEBRUARY  
@ 7.30PM

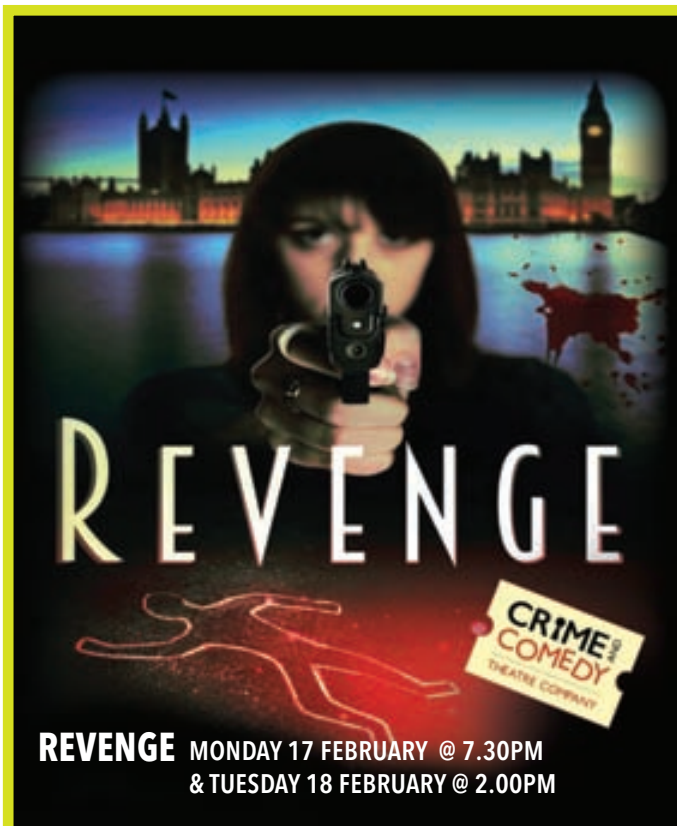


## HERMANS HERMITS 55TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR

FRIDAY 21 FEBRUARY  
@ 7.30PM

## COUNTERFEIT SEVENTIES

SATURDAY 29 FEBRUARY  
@ 7.30PM



**REVENGE** MONDAY 17 FEBRUARY @ 7.30PM  
& TUESDAY 18 FEBRUARY @ 2.00PM



**CLARE TEAL AND HER BIG MINI BIG BAND**  
THURSDAY 12 MARCH @ 7.30PM

CHECK THE WEBSITE FOR FULL LISTINGS





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## Theatre company offset their carbon emissions

The UK's leading mask theatre company has collaborated with conservation charity Trees For Life to set up a tree grove in the Scottish Highlands.

Worcester-based Vamos' aim is to offset the carbon emissions from the 23-venue tour of its new theatre production, *Dead Good*.

The trees will help to re-wild the Caledonian Forest.

Commenting on the initiative, Vamos' Artistic Director, Rachael Savage, said: "This particular project is something we are doing whilst we work on more long-term sustainability for the company. This isn't a quick solution; we are fully aware trees take up to 20 years to mature, but this is a positive springboard for us. This interim move invests in a better future and supports invaluable reforestation in the Scottish Highlands."

## Woolly Mammoth to show at The Ironworks

The Ironworks in Shropshire is aiming to highlight and encourage conversation about climate change by creating a life-size woolly mammoth sculpture.

Specifically designed to raise better awareness of the importance and critical need for change in order to protect the environment, the artwork will also highlight how intensely the earth's flora and fauna suffer as a result of neglect.

The woolly mammoth is believed to have become extinct as a result of human hunting, habitat interference and climate change.



## Exciting times ahead for Walsall Arena

Comedians Milton Jones, Ed Byrne, Henning Wehn, Gyles Brandreth and Clinton Baptiste are among the high-profile performers who'll be stopping off at Walsall Arena during 2020.

The state-of-the-art venue, which last year changed its name from Forest Arts Centre, will also host The UK Monsters Of Rock Show, Arrival-The Hits Of Abba, and The World Famous Elvis Show.

## Search on for mini pop stars to perform in Brum



A popular children's music brand is searching for new dance talent to take part in the UK leg of a world tour.

The Kidz Bop youngsters kick off their first-ever UK headline tour this Easter and are looking for seven virtual support acts whose videos will be premiered on a big screen at the live shows. Dance groups simply have to select their favourite Kidz Bop song and send in a film of their own choreographed routine/music video performance. For more information, visit [cuffeandtaylor.com](http://cuffeandtaylor.com). The Kidz Bop live show visits Birmingham Symphony Hall on Saturday 11 April.

## Flowers and flour at Shrewsbury show

Celebrity chef Phil Vickery will be bringing his culinary expertise to this year's Shrewsbury Flower Show.

One of the UK's favourite 'kitchen-maestros', Phil joins a line-up at the show which includes arena entertainment, a children's area, a spectacular fireworks display on both nights of the event and, of course, an impressive selection of floral displays.

The 2020 show takes place on Friday 14 & Saturday 15 August.

For more information, visit [shrewsburyflowershow.org.uk](http://shrewsburyflowershow.org.uk)





## Staffs Fest introducing...

Popular annual music event Staffs Fest is this year introducing an 'introducing' stage! The Erndor50 Introducing Stage, providing a platform for musicians to 'go global', is open both to up-and-coming and more experienced musicians and bands. To be part of the selection process, call 07775 714280. The competition will take place within the festival on Sunday 24 May.



## Meera Syal comes home...

A portrait by photographer Jason Bell of Wolverhampton-born actor and novelist Meera Syal is currently on show at the city's art gallery (until 5 April).

Bell's stylish image is on loan to the venue as part of the National Portrait Gallery's Coming Home project, which sees portraits of famous sitters being loaned out to places with which they have a strong connection.



## Samantha Womack and Tom Chambers set to thrill

EastEnders favourite Samantha Womack and Strictly Come Dancing's Tom Chambers are to star in a brand new production of Dial M For Murder.

The genre-defining thriller, made famous by Alfred Hitchcock's 1950 movie version, visits

Shrewsbury's Theatre Severn from 9 to 13 June. It then returns to the Midlands a month later, stopping off at the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from 14 to 18 July.

For more information and to book tickets, visit the respective theatres' websites.

## Kinky Boots to walk from stage to screen

Hit stage show Kinky Boots The Musical is to be screened in more than 600 cinemas across the UK and Ireland on Tuesday 4 and Sunday 9 February. The stage production was filmed live for the cinema at the Adelphi Theatre, London, in November 2018 by BroadwayHD, the US-based streaming service for live theatre.

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



## Prepare for battle at historic event...

A weekend of family-friendly activities and entertainment marking the anniversary of the Battle of Shrewsbury will take place in the Shropshire town on 25 & 26 July.

Attractions include knights in armour preparing for battle, living-history events - including traditional crafts and cookery - the chance to have a go at firing an arrow, and a historical market area selling a wide selection of wares. Both days end with the reenactment of the Battle of Shrewsbury.



## Krazy Race fun coming to Sandwell Valley Park

Sandwell Valley Country Park will host its first ever Soapbox Derby in the autumn (4 October).

Birmingham & Sandwell Krazy Races is a free-entry event that will see 'weird, wacky and wonderful carefully crafted carts' hurtle down a track consisting of chicanes, obstacles and water features. The event will feature between 40 and 50 teams, with participants encouraged to raise as much money as possible for Birmingham Children's Hospital Charity or a charity close to their heart. For more information about how to apply to take part, visit [krazyraces.co.uk](http://krazyraces.co.uk)

## Swanning around in Burton...

There'll be no shortage of swanning around going on in Burton this summer... The Staffordshire town will be hosting a trail of 25 1.5-metre-tall swan sculptures which have been created by talented artists and sponsored by local businesses and organisations. For more information about the project, visit [burtonswans.co.uk](http://burtonswans.co.uk)

## New Art Gallery Walsall celebrates 20 glorious years

The New Art Gallery Walsall is celebrating its 20th birthday this month.

To mark the occasion, the venue is bringing together works of contemporary art collected over the last two decades, many by artists who have featured in the gallery's exhibitions programme. As a further celebration, the gallery is hosting a free-to-attend Arty Party - including music, workshops and games for all the family to enjoy - on Saturday 22 February.

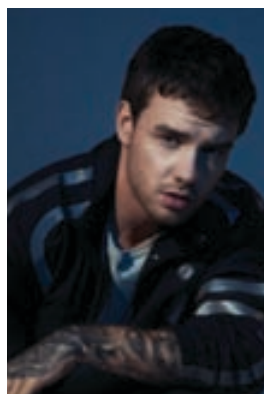


## New name for iconic Midlands venue

Arena Birmingham is set to be renamed Utilita Arena Birmingham as part of a major new partnership with 'Britain's leading Smart Pay As You Go (PAYG) Energy provider'. The iconic city centre venue will take up its new name on 15 April. Utilita has a growing presence in the UK live events industry, having partnered with a number of major music festivals in recent years.

## One Direction star at Wolves Racecourse

One Direction star Liam Payne will play to a hometown crowd at Wolverhampton Racecourse on Saturday 22 August. The locally born singer will perform a full and exclusive live set in the evening. His concert will follow on from a full day of racing. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit [ticketmaster.co.uk](http://ticketmaster.co.uk)



## Folk-ing about in Wolverhampton

Wolverhampton's Newhampton Arts Centre (NAC) is hosting a season of folk-music nights this spring. Folk At The NAC kicks off on Saturday 29 February with Chris Wood. Later-season performers include Greg Russell & Ciaran Algar, five-piece band Calan (pictured) and Steve Tilston & Jez Lowe. For more information and to buy tickets, visit [ticket-source.co.uk/newhamptonartscentre](http://ticket-source.co.uk/newhamptonartscentre)



## Mining the laughter

A historical Shropshire venue is set to play host to a season of comedy nights.

The Anstice in Madeley, which was once a working men's club for the local mining community, reopens this month and kickstarts its new comedy event with an appearance by Simon Brodtkin (aka Lee Nelson) on Saturday 29 February. Other performers already booked for the season include Jen Brister and Gary Delaney.





**TRANSATLANTIC SESSIONS 2020**  
 FRI 7 FEBRUARY, 7:30PM  
 SYMPHONY HALL



**BRUM CRAIC - FIRST BIRTHDAY**  
 THU 20 FEBRUARY, 8PM  
 SYMPHONY HALL



**LUNCHTIME ORGAN CONCERT: THOMAS TROTTER 800TH RECITAL**  
 MON 10 FEBRUARY, 1PM  
 SYMPHONY HALL



**THE AMAZING BUBBLEMAN**  
 SUN 23 FEBRUARY, 11AM  
 TOWN HALL



**A VALENTINE'S CELEBRATION OF MUSIC AND DANCE WITH BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET & THE ROYAL BALLET SINFONIA**  
 FRI 14 FEBRUARY, 7:30PM  
 SYMPHONY HALL



**REBECCA FERGUSON**  
 TUE 25 FEBRUARY, 7:30PM  
 TOWN HALL



**QUEEN SYMPHONIC**  
 SAT 15 FEBRUARY, 7:30PM  
 SYMPHONY HALL



**BRENDAN COLE SHOW MAN**  
 MON 2 MARCH, 7:30PM  
 SYMPHONY HALL



**THE CLASSIC ROCK SHOW 2020**  
 WED 19 FEBRUARY, 7:30PM  
 TOWN HALL



**A NIGHT AT THE SYMPHONY HALL WITH THE ROYAL AIR FORCE AND FRIENDS**  
 MON 30 MARCH 2020  
 7:30PM  
 SYMPHONY HALL

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# THE QUEENDOM IS COMING...

**Divorced. Beheaded. Died... Divorced. Beheaded. LIVE! West End musical SIX is hitting the road...**

From Tudor queens to battling boss-women, SIX sees the wives of Henry VIII take to the stage to tell their own versions of their lives. This celebration of 21st century girl power sees the cast backed by the show's all-female band, The Ladies In Waiting.

SIX's runaway success has shown no signs of abating since it premiered as a student production at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2017. The musical was nominated for five 2019 Olivier Awards, continued to sell every available seat in London's West End and will soon

transfer to Broadway - with tours also planned for Australia, China, Japan, South Korea and Canada.

"This definitely isn't a normal musical," says Jodie Steele, whose character's historical counterpart is Catherine Howard. "It has only one act and is definitely more like a concert than usual - take a Girls Aloud gig and a musical and SIX is right in the middle! The running storyline is that we're competing as Henry VIII's wives, fighting over who had it worse. It's all about the competition until

near the end, where the queens realise competing is ridiculous and come together instead. There's so much historical information to get across that there isn't room for different side-stories - we're all on the same path. It's a very unique concept, for sure! "The woman who I play, Catherine Howard, is widely known as the queen who nobody cares about - and she's Katherine with a 'K' in SIX. The two most famous queens, Catherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn, refer to her in the musical as the most forgettable of the three



Catherines. People talk about Henry VIII's six wives, and when they get to Catherine Howard, they characterise her simply as 'the slut' and move on. What SIX does really cleverly, though, is play on the fact that Katherine is the youngest queen - she was only 19 when beheaded - and makes her into a true pop princess: bright, bubbly, beautiful, covered in pink and enticing to everyone. She didn't come from as good an educational background as the others, but she was just as smart. In Katherine's section in SIX, she starts by insulting all the others with such wit that it shows she shouldn't be underestimated. When her song begins, it's quite sultry, but then it slowly starts to go downhill...

"Katherine tells us about the various men who treated her badly, so you get more of an idea of the true tone of the song beneath the glamour. She was abused and raped. In the choreography, the other five queens have their hands all over me while I desperately try to pull them off, so it becomes very uncomfortable for the audience to watch. It's an odd atmosphere at the end of the song because of the uncomfortable turn it takes. The audience don't quite know what to do because we've shocked them so much. I get the impression that some people feel very guilty that they didn't know about what had happened to Catherine Howard. Henry VIII and his male contemporaries - and male historians since - just passed her off as a promiscuous young woman, and we believed it. We're told she's the one who slept her way to the top - and that's just not how it was at all because she really didn't have a choice."

As with Katherine, each of the other queens has her own very distinct personality. Each is assigned a colour and emulates a well-known music-industry female.

"Catherine of Aragon is the first queen and married to Henry for the longest, so in the show she wears gold and is very arrogant about that. She's the most outspoken, competitive and sassy. Music-wise she's based on Beyonce.

"Anne Boleyn is the queen who came in whilst Catherine of Aragon was still there - and the character seems the hot favourite with the youngsters. Boleyn has that Avril Lavigne rock-chick vibe, and her colour is green. Her and Aragon argue throughout the musical because they were the overlapping queens who met and clearly didn't like each other! Bobo [Boleyn] is very outspoken, confident, quirky and has plenty of cheeky one-liners. I'd say she's my favourite queen in the show.

Jane Seymour is the total opposite of the first two: she's reserved and quiet, just like Seymour was in real life. She's the queen who gave Henry his son, Edward, and then died.

Henry really did love her and she really did love him. So her song is a ballad like those from Adele, and she wears white in her costume to signify innocence. But then obviously our show is pulling history into the future, so Jane still has more of an edge to her than a Tudor queen would've been allowed.

"The latter queens aren't as talkative and feisty as the first three. Anna of Cleves (Anne of Cleves in history) is laid-back and doesn't argue - but she's also the biggest, badass boss-woman out of all six. Cleves can't win the contest of who had the worst time from Henry and she knows that. Henry decided Anne was really ugly and didn't want to be married to her, so she managed to play that to her advantage, twist his arm and get loads of money and a palace out of him. Her song is rap, like Lil' Kim, and she wears red.

"Then comes me as Katherine at number five - channelling pretty-in-pink Ariana Grande. The survivor, Catherine Parr, dons blue and is very quiet throughout the show, sitting back to watch the situation very much like Parr did in real life. She was an incredibly intelligent woman who knew that to outlive Henry and not end up like the previous five queens, she just needed to sit on the sideline and hold her tongue. Even though Parr was Catholic and fought against the new religion Henry created to divorce Aragon, she very much had to keep her opinions to herself after he took a liking to her. She's the calmest and sternest out of the six, biding her time until her solo - an absolutely huge Alicia Keys-esque song that unites all the queens.

"Then we do the last three numbers as a group, flipping history on its head and saying how it would've been if these six very different but equally amazing women had lived nowadays."

In the end, SIX is all about female empowerment.

"The queens finally come to realise that they're all equal and there's no need to fight each other, which I think is so relevant to now. Neither our obsession with social media and comparing ourselves to others, nor the online trolling that comes out of it, are healthy things. SIX is really fighting against that. I think that SIX really is right up there in the women's movement that's happening at the moment, showing that women can have a say while supporting one another. Women having to sit on their opinions or do things they don't want has no place in our society.

"There are plenty of boys and men who're fans of SIX too, which is so, so important. In this movement of empowering women, we absolutely have to get males involved too, or we'll never get where we want to go. We will never be able to change what happened to

Henry's wives, but somehow we've changed their fate for the youngsters and used their tragic stories for something good. Teachers message me thrilled with what we're doing with SIX, as their pupils come to school after seeing it brimming with excitement for history and wanting to know more about female historical figures overlooked in a man's world. Seeing history from a woman's point of view is so different. SIX is all over the world. It's really unstoppable and doesn't seem to be tiring!"

The SIX cast album is the second highest-streaming cast recording in the world. Why does Jodie think this is?

"The music is so current and plays on lots of young people's idioms while also using social-media slang. I think sometimes pop doesn't want to be too cheesy so doesn't play on that, but SIX really has fun with that idea in the lyrics. It's just so current, catchy and cheeky! And it builds to this massive rock chorus at the end. People of all ages can't help connecting with the show. Adults have a little laugh to themselves when they recognise how their teenagers speak, and the kids, teenagers and young adults themselves find it relatable. In terms of the score as a whole and the success of the album, because every song is so different, it's like going to an ice cream parlour and being able to get all the flavours: pop, rock, ballads, house. In that way, it's like the album is a compilation of strong women in music.

"It's funny and ironic, though, that in a show where it's all about being equal, it's so easy for people to pick their favourites. People come away loving the queen who 'spoke' to them the most, and that's fine. You can identify with one person more than another, but that doesn't mean you have to try and bring down the women you don't relate to as much.

The musical's ethos even impacts on the cast members' off-stage relationships with one another: "I've been so lucky in my career; I've done so much in my seven years as a professional. I've covered, I've been an alternate standby and I've been a leading lady, but SIX is so special because every single person is so equal. All shows say that it's a 'team effort', but I think with the manner in which the musical's message makes its way into the very dynamics of the cast, it's even more the case with SIX. We're so supportive of each other, so I love living in and sharing SIX's message. If we just pick each other up rather than bring each other down, then wow, the world will be a better place to live in."

SIX shows at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Tuesday 10 to Saturday 14 March and Birmingham Hippodrome from Tuesday 21 - Saturday 25 July.

# WORLD CLASS ENTERTAINMENT



CELEBRATING THE  
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**O2O DANCE**  
SAT 25 JAN – SAT 1 FEB  
REGENT THEATRE



THE BEST-SELLING BOOK  
FLIES ONTO THE STAGE  
**ROOM ON THE BROOM**  
MON 3 – TUE 4 FEB  
REGENT THEATRE



CELEBRATING THE MUSIC OF  
THE BEE GEES  
**YOU WIN AGAIN**  
THU 6 FEB  
REGENT THEATRE



ELLEN KENT'S  
**MADAMA BUTTERFLY**  
SAT 8 FEB  
REGENT THEATRE



THE MULTI AWARD-  
WINNING WEST END HIT  
**BUDDY – THE BUDDY  
HOLLY STORY**  
TUE 18 – SAT 22 FEB  
REGENT THEATRE



ELLEN KENT'S  
**LA BOHEME**  
FRIDAY 13 MAR  
REGENT THEATRE



AJ AND CURTIS PRITCHARD IN  
**AJ LIVE 2020**  
SAT 14 MAR  
REGENT THEATRE



THE INTERNATIONAL  
AWARD-WINNING MUSICAL  
**ONCE**  
TUE 17 - SAT 21 MAR  
REGENT THEATRE



THE HYSTERICAL SEQUEL  
TO THE HIT SHOW  
**MENOPAUSE THE  
MUSICAL 2**  
WED 25 MAR  
REGENT THEATRE



DIRECT FROM THE WEST-END  
**THRILLER LIVE**  
THU 26 MAR - SAT 28 MAR  
REGENT THEATRE

**THE ROCKET MAN – A TRIBUTE TO  
SIR ELTON JOHN**  
FRI 24 JAN **VH**

**THAT'LL BE THE DAY**  
THU 30 JAN **VH**

**THE ILLEGAL EAGLES**  
FRI 31 JAN **VH**

**ED BYRNE – IF I'M HONEST**  
SAT 1 FEB **VH**

**JOE BROWN – IN CONCERT**  
SAT 8 FEB **VH**

**MILTON JONES IN MILTON: IMPOSSIBLE**  
FRI 21 FEB **VH**

**THE JOHNNY CASH ROADSHOW**  
WED 26 FEB **VH**

**RE-TAKE THAT: TAKE THAT THE GREATEST  
HITS THE SING-A-LONG**  
SAT 29 FEB **VH**



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## REVIEW: Exo Poli

### A taste of Greece in the Town of Flowers

Inspired by their time living on the island of Crete, partners Jackie and Dan launched Mediterranean restaurant Exo Poli last year.

Located on Longden Road, just outside Shrewsbury's town centre, this new kid on the block serves meze-style dishes reminiscent of those you would experience in Greece.

On our arrival, the marriage of smells, decor and music instantly transported me and my partner from a dark and gloomy winter evening to what could easily have been a restaurant situated in a warm and sunny Greek town.

A lot of effort has gone into the aesthetics - bright, multicoloured tiles line the walls, and lanterns

hang from the ceiling. It's hard to believe these selfsame premises once housed a dark and dingy post office!

Throughout January, Exo Poli is offering a meze feast, with vegetarian & meat options and half a litre of Cretan natural wine costing £25 for two people. We swapped the wine for two bottles of Mythos, a tasty Greek lager, and sat back to admire our surroundings for the evening.

The restaurant boasts two main indoor seating areas as well as one outdoor area (soon to be joined by a second). The menu changes regularly, with a focus on seasonal and locally sourced produce. The kitchen is open and situated at the back of the front dining area, a set-up which

makes for an intimate and personal dining experience.

It didn't take long for our food to arrive. The platter featured classics such as black & green olives, sun-dried tomatoes, peppers, a creamy, homemade houmous and a fresh Greek salad (complete with a very generous helping of feta!). There was also a portion of perfectly cooked chips, some toasted bread and three homemade hot dishes. The first of these was simple yet tasty, comprising roasted vegetables - aubergine, peppers, onion and courgette - in a tomato sauce.

Next up were two meat dishes - a spiced pork & chestnut dish, and chicken in a preserved lemon & thyme cream sauce.

The latter was absolutely delicious! The notes of lemon and thyme that ran throughout the rich and creamy sauce were impressively subtle, while the chicken was perfectly cooked. I thoroughly recommend ordering this dish if you see it on the menu.

The pork & chestnut dish wasn't far behind. Featuring nicely cooked chunks of meat, earthy chestnuts and a subtle cinnamon taste, it was an enjoyable and certainly a seasonal dish with which to end our first ever visit to Exo Poli.

For Mamma Mia! fans, the restaurant has started running themed evenings complete with entertainment. Tickets have to be booked in advance, cost £30 per person and include a glass of prosecco on arrival plus food and singing. The next events are scheduled for Friday 6 & Saturday 7 March.

Jackie and Dan are fantastic hosts who welcomed us into their restaurant with open arms. I'm certainly looking forward to visiting them for a second time, in the summer, when the back terrace is complete.

Next time we stop by, we'll sample some options from the main menu - and there are certainly some delightful dishes from which to choose: belly pork and chicken steeped in honey & thyme; bell peppers stuffed with rice and mint; prawn saganaki; chicken souvlaki...

*Lauren Foster*

Food:       
Service:       
Ambience:       
Overall value:       
**OVERALL**

**Exo Poli**  
92 Longden Road  
Shrewsbury  
Shropshire  
SY3 7HW  
Tel: 01743 600479



**FRI 14 FEB**

# Valentine's Day

**2 COURSE DINNER £28.50pp**

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## Baking fun for kids at Shropshire venue

If your youngsters love to get involved in the kitchen and whip up a storm, they're sure to enjoy a visit to The British Ironwork Centre - the venue is this half term hosting special 60-minute workshops on the best of British baking and cooking. The Little British Bake Off classes run from 17 to 21 February and include pizza, cookies, cheesecake and even edible slime. Each child will have their own set of ingredients and cooking station. To book your place, visit [britishironworkcentre.co.uk](http://britishironworkcentre.co.uk).

## Michelin success for Whitchurch eatery

An entry in the Michelin Guide is coveted by every good eatery across the land - and now Shropshire's very own Docket No 33 in Whitchurch has bagged one! To be more accurate, the venue has been recognised with The Plate Michelin - an award introduced in the 2016 edition of the Paris guide to recognise restaurants that 'simply serve good food'.

## Beer company opens its doors to the public

A Shrewsbury craft brewing company and tap room which is well known and much admired for its unique and funky offerings, has opened its doors to the public.

The Evolution Beer Company is hosting fully personalised tours of its brewery, allowing visitors to learn all about imaginatively named beers such as Update Your Smile and Descent Of Man.



## Another successful year for Wolverhampton restaurant

Wolverhampton's favourite Indian restaurant has made it into the Michelin Guide for the 19th year running. The 35-year-old family-run Bilash is greatly admired for its modern and innovative Bangladeshi and Indian food. Constantly striving to provide culinary experiences which satisfy the modern, discerning diner, the restaurant is situated opposite the Civic, just a short walk away from Wolverhampton's train station.

## Mytton & Mermaid to serve up eight-course vegan feast

Shropshire hotel & restaurant Mytton & Mermaid is hosting its first vegan taster night this month.

Taking place on Saturday 1 February in the venue's Drawing Room, the event will serve up an eight-course vegan feast at a price of £45 per person.

Menu options include: Facon Sarnie - black treacle facon, sourdough and kimichi ketchup; Seoul Mates - Korean BBQ noodle salad, scallions, cucumber steak, gotcha and toasted ramen crush; and Granja Luker - a tasting of single origin and ethical Colombian chocolate. To reserve your place, call 01743 761220.



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## BBC Philharmonic: Best Of Beethoven

Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 28 February

Residing at the Corporation's Manchester home of Media City in Salford Quays, the BBC Philharmonic is no stranger to the Potteries, regularly presenting the region's music-lovers with works from its impressive repertoire.

This latest concert, performed as part of the Stoke-on-Trent Festival, sees Clemens

Schuldt (pictured) conducting a programme of Beethoven music that concludes with the composer's revolutionary Symphony No3, Eroica - a work regularly voted the greatest symphony of all time. The concert also features one of the UK's best-known pianists, Martin Roscoe, who will be performing the serene Piano Concerto No4.

## Hallé Orchestra: Espana!

Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 7 February

One of the UK's top symphonic ensembles, the Manchester-based Hallé is admired around the world for its extensive orchestral repertoire.

This Victoria Hall concert sees the orchestra performing under the guidance of conductor Stephen Bell and alongside soloist Craig Ogden (pictured), presenting a show which, the Hallé promises, will sweep the audience away to a world of sensuous excess: 'From the Spanish perfumes of Manuel de Falla's Three Cornered Hat to the Spanish rhythms of the famous Rodrigo Guitar concerto'. Chabrier's España and Ravel's Bolero are among the other works featured in the concert programme.

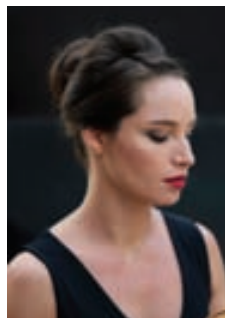


## CBSO: Walton's Viola Concerto

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Tues 27 February

French violist Lise Berthaud (pictured) is on a mission to find the dark heart of Walton's smouldering Viola Concerto in this latest evening of exceptional musicmaking from the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.

A part of the prestigious BBC Radio Three New Generation Artists Scheme, which allowed her to perform with all BBC orchestras and record a significant amount of repertoire both live and in the studio, Lise has gone on to become a truly outstanding figure on the international music scene. The concert's programme also features John Foulds' April - England and Ralph Vaughan Williams' A London Symphony. Associate Conductor Michael Seal takes the helm.



## Mahan Esfahani In-The-Round

Birmingham Town Hall, Sat 22 February

The only harpsichordist ever to be a BBC New Generation Artist, Mahan Esfahani is eager to raise the profile and appeal of his genteel and often-derided instrument of choice.

But the Iranian musician is under no illusions about how difficult a task it's going to be: "The harpsichord is like the posh, pretty boy in prison," he told the Guardian recently. "He's gonna get beaten on."

Esfahani's Birmingham concert sees him performing in the round, presenting a programme that features works by, among others, Johann Sebastian Bach.

## Ensemble Hesperii

Maidment Hall, Shrewsbury School, Fri 21 February

"Award-winning period instrumental group Ensemble Hesperii's unique project showcases the infectious charm and dazzling virtuosity of Scottish Baroque music linked to its roots in Highland dance," says Shropshire Music's Kate Hogwood. "Bringing the dance elements to life, the ensemble is here joined by international Highland dancer Kathleen Gilbert with special new choreography."

## Goldmund Quartet

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Tues 4 February

Now considered to be one of the most exciting young string quartets in Europe, German group Goldmund here present works by Mendelssohn, Debussy and Haydn alongside a brand-new commission from Birmingham favourite Dobrinka Tabakova.

The quartet are performing in the city as part of the ECHO initiative - a unique and forward-looking partnership between 21 of the continent's leading concert venues, all of which belong to the European Concert Hall Organisation.





# February 2020

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**DAVID BADDIEL**  
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**SOUNDS OF THE 60s LIVE**  
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Saturday 14 March

**JOSH WIDDICOMBE**  
'Bit Much...' Comedy Tour Show  
Thursday 19 March

**RUSSELL KANE**  
'The Fast and the Curious' Comedy Tour Show  
Friday 17 April

**THE NICK ROSS ORCHESTRA**  
The Glenn Miller and Rat Pack Era  
Sunday 3 May

**DOREEN'S REVOLUTION**  
The Queen of the Black Country  
Saturday 9 May

**THE DUBLIN LEGENDS**  
Formerly of iconic folk group The Dubliners  
Tuesday 19 May

**PSYCHIC SALLY MORGAN**  
'10 Years and Counting' Tour  
Friday 22 May

**SOUNDS OF THE 70s LIVE**  
Hosted by legendary DJ Johnnie Walker  
Friday 5 June

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Saturday 6 June

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'If I'm Honest...' Comedy Tour Show  
Thursday 18 June

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## Zion Train

The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury, Fri 28 February

Having collaborated with the likes of UB40, Gentleman, Gregory Isaacs, Beenie Man and Tippa Irie, Zion Train are one of the most unique dub acts around.

Boasting dynamic mixing and exceptional vocals, they have consistently released music and toured since 1992. Their mix of reggae and dance was a notable innovation in the early '90s, with co-founder Neil Perch citing his influences as Jah Shaka, King Tubby, Ravi Shankar and Jimi Hendrix.



## Macka B & The Roots Ragga Band

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Fri 7 February

As a practising Rastafari, British-born Jamaican reggae artist, performer and activist Macka B bases his music around the political and spiritual message of the religion. He's been performing around the world - both solo and with acts including The Wailers, Lee Perry and U-Roy - for more than 30 years. The Root Regga Band join him for this Shrewsbury appearance, with The Social Ignition providing support.



## Ben Poole

The Robin, Bilston, Wed 12 February

Twenty-eight-year-old Ben Poole is considered to be one of the most exciting young rock, blues and soul artists to come out of the UK in a very long time. To date, he's

released four critically acclaimed albums: Live At The Royal Albert Hall (recorded by the BBC in 2014), Time Has Come (2016), Anytime You Need Me (2018) and his most recent offering, Trio - a brand new double CD live album which was recorded across three shows in July 2019.

## Strange Bones

The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent, Sat 8 February

In 2014, Bob, Jack and Will Benthams teamed up with lifelong friend Stuart Newburn to form punk-rock band Strange Bones. The four-piece have a sold-out 'Jack Daniels' residency in their home town of Blackpool and have played at all manner of festivals, including Download UK, Live At Leeds, The Great Escape and Reading & Leeds.

## Arcadia Roots

Albert's Shed Southwater, Telford, Fri 21 February

Worcestershire-based four-piece Arcadia Roots deliver a hypnotic blend of trance, dance, roots and reggae music, their unique and captivating sound often being described as earthy, psychedelic and infectious. The band's live shows include guest performances from tribal dancers and percussionists, along with a hypnotic light show designed to ensure complete immersion.

## Turin Brakes

Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton, Sat 1 February



Turin Brakes sees former primary school friends Olly Knights and Gale Paridjanian teaming up with longtime bandmates Rob Allum and Eddie Myer. With seven top-40 singles, six top-40 albums and more than one million worldwide sales to their name, the London indie four-piece this month visit Wolverhampton to perform their first full stripped-back acoustic show since 2002.

# Award FINALISTS in each category announced! **VOTE** for your **WINNER!**

## What's On

## Readers' Awards

Yes, you VOTED in your thousands in the first round of nominations in the **What's On Readers' Awards - over 15,000 votes across the West Midlands region!** Now it's time for you to VOTE once more to choose your ultimate WINNER in each category! Here are the award shortlist finalists:

### Midlands Large Theatre

- Birmingham Hippodrome
- Belgrade Theatre, Coventry
- Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford
- The Alexandra, Birmingham
- The REP, Birmingham
- Wolverhampton Grand Theatre
- Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

### Best Touring Musical

- Les Misérables
- Kinky Boots
- The Rocky Horror Show
- Blood Brothers
- Dirty Dancing

### Best Home-Produced Show

- Billionaire Boy - Belgrade Theatre
- The Boy In The Dress - RSC
- Brassed Off - New Vic Theatre
- The Snow Queen - The Old Rep
- The 39 Steps - New Vic Theatre

### Best Dance Production

- Birmingham Royal Ballet: Beauty And The Beast
- Birmingham Royal Ballet: The Nutcracker

- Burn The Floor
- Matthew Bourne: Romeo And Juliet
- Matthew Bourne: Swan Lake

### Best Orchestra/Choir

- Birmingham Cathedral Choir
- Birmingham Gay Symphony Orchestra
- Birmingham Philharmonic Orchestra
- CBSO
- North Staffs Symphony Orchestra

### Best Classical/Operatic Production

- Birmingham Festival of Early Music
- Birmingham Philharmonic: Movie Music
- CBSO: Viennese New Year
- Royal Philharmonic Orchestra: The Planets
- Welsh National Opera (WNO) Autumn Season

### Best Touring Theatre Play/Show

- Abigail's Party
- An Inspector Calls
- Educating Rita
- The Girl On The Train
- The Mousetrap

### Best Pantomime in The Midlands 2019/20

- Aladdin - Stourbridge Town Hall
- Aladdin - Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury
- Cinderella - Lichfield Garrick
- Dick Whittington - Wolves Grand
- Sleeping Beauty - Regent Theatre
- Snow White - Hippodrome

### Best Pantomime Dame 2019/20

- Andrew Ryan - Snow White, Birmingham Hippodrome
- Ben Humphrey - Snow White, Swan Theatre, Worcester
- Brad Fitt - Aladdin, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury
- Christian Patterson - Sleeping Beauty, Regent Theatre
- Ian Adams - Dick Whittington, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre
- Wally Wombat - Aladdin, Stourbridge Town Hall

### Best Kids Show

- Dear Zoo Live!
- Horrible Histories
- The Tiger Who Came To Tea

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- The Snowman
- The Worst Witch

## Best Arts/Cultural Festival

- Birmingham Comedy Festival
- Birmingham Weekender
- Lichfield Arts' Fuse Festival
- Shrewsbury International Comedy Festival
- The Big Feast, Newcastle-under-Lyme
- Worcester Arts Festival

## Best Exhibition

- Apollo 50 - The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent
- Dressed To The Nines - Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery
- Home Of Metal Presents Black Sabbath: 50 Years - Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery
- Leonardo da Vinci: A Life In Drawing - Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery
- Wildlife Photographer Of The Year - Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry & Wolverhampton Art Gallery

## Best Amateur Dramatic/Operatic Group Production

- BMOS: Chitty Chitty Bang Bang
- Birmingham Ormiston Academy: Lord Of The Flies
- Coventry Musical Theatre Society: Annie
- Get Your Wiggle On: Grease
- Lichfield Operatic Society: Avenue Q

## Best Comedy Night

- Comedy Carousel at The Glee Club, Birmingham
- Comedy at Henry Tudor House
- Funhouse Comedy - various
- Just The Tonic, Birmingham
- Laugh Out Loud Comedy - various

## Best Midlands Music Venue

- Arena Birmingham
- Birmingham Town Hall
- O2 Academy, Birmingham
- Resorts World Arena, Birmingham
- Symphony Hall, Birmingham
- The Empire, Coventry

## Best Midlands Music Festival

- Birmingham Pride
- Download Festival
- Godiva Festival
- Shrewsbury Folk Festival
- Worcester Music Festival
- Let's Rock, Shrewsbury

## Best Midlands Food Festival

- Colmore Food Festival, Birmingham
- Foodies Festival, Birmingham
- Lichfield Food Festival
- Ludlow Food Festival
- Shrewsbury Food Festival

## Best Street Food Vendor

- Bournville Waffle Co
- Buddha Belly
- Dick's Smokehouse
- Patty Freaks
- Urban Cheesecake

## Best Midlands Market

- Beckett's Farm, Birmingham
- Bullring Indoor Market, Birmingham
- FarGo Village, Birmingham
- The Market Hall, Shrewsbury
- Moseley Arts Market, Birmingham

## What's On

## FINALISTS in each REGION

### BIRMINGHAM

#### Best Arts/Theatre Venue

- Blue Orange Theatre
- The Crescent Theatre
- Midlands Arts Centre
- The Old Joint Stock
- The Old Rep Theatre

#### Best Music Venue

- The Actress & Bishop
- The Glee Club
- Hare & Hounds
- The Jam House
- The Night Owl

#### Best Music Festival

- Birmingham Pride
- Birmingham & Solihull Jazz & Blues Festival
- Moseley Folk & Arts Festival
- Mostly Jazz, Funk & Soul
- Solihull Summer Fest

#### Best Arts Festival

- Arts & Science Fest (University of B'ham)
- Birmingham Comedy Festival
- Birmingham Int Dance Festival

- Birmingham Lit Fest
- Birmingham Weekender

#### Best Food Festival/Event

- BBC Good Food Show
- Birmingham Cocktail Weekend
- Colmore Food Festival
- Digbeth Dining Club
- Foodies Festival at Cannon Hill Park

#### Best Visitor Attraction

- Birmingham Back to Backs

- Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery
- Cadbury World
- National Sealife Centre
- Thinktank

#### Best Outdoor Event

- Birmingham Frankfurt Christmas Market
- Ice Skate Birmingham
- Great Birmingham Run
- Peaky Blinders Festival - Digbeth
- Summer In Southside

#### Best Indoor Event

- BBC Good Food Show
- British Athletics Indoor Championships
- Crufts
- MCM Birmingham Comic Con
- Strictly Come Dancing Live

#### Best Gallery/Exhibition Venue

- The Barber Institute
- Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery
- Coffin Works
- IKON Gallery
- Midlands Arts Centre

#### Best Independent Restaurant

- Adams
- Harborne Kitchen
- Original Patty Men
- Purnell's
- Wing Wah

#### Best Independent Coffee Shop

- 3 Three's Coffee
- Cherry Reds Cafe Bar
- Damascena Coffee House
- The Edwardian Tearooms at BMAG
- Java Lounge

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## Best Independent Bar/Pub

- 1000 Trades
- The Old Crown, Digbeth
- The Jekyll and Hyde
- The Plough, Harborne
- The Prince Of Wales, Moseley

## BLACK COUNTRY

## Best Arts/Theatre Venue

- Arena Theatre
- Dudley Town Hall
- Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton
- Light House Media Centre, W'hampton
- Stourbridge Town Hall

## Best Music Venue

- Brierley Civic Hall
- Dudley Town Hall
- Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolves
- The Robin, Bilston
- The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton

## Best Visitor Attraction

- Black Country Living Museum
- Dudley Canal & Tunnel Trust
- Dudley Zoo
- RAF Cosford Museum
- Wightwick Manor

## Best Event

- 1940s Evening - BCLM
- Black Country Boating Festival
- Cosford Air Show
- Peaky Blinders Nights at BCLM
- Wolverhampton Literature Festival

## Best Gallery/Exhibition Venue

- Bilston Craft Gallery
- Dudley Museum at The Archives
- Light House Media Centre, Wolverhampton
- New Art Gallery, Walsall
- Wolverhampton Museum & Art Gallery

## Best Independent Restaurant

- Bella, Wolverhampton
- The Cowshed
- The Old Glasshouse, Dudley

- Penn Tandoori
- The Summerhouse, Dudley

## WARWICKSHIRE

## Best Arts/Theatre Venue

- Albany Theatre, Coventry
- Belgrade Theatre, Coventry
- Criterion Theatre, Coventry
- Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford
- Warwick Arts Centre

## Best Music Venue

- The Assembly, Leamington Spa
- The Empire, Coventry
- The Kasbah, Coventry
- Shakespeare Street, Stratford-Upon-Avon
- Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

## Best Festival

- Art In The Park, Leamington
- Godiva Festival
- Leamington Food and Drink Festival
- Stratford River Festival
- Stratford-upon-Avon Music Festival

## Best Visitor Attraction

- Coventry Music Museum
- Coventry Transport Museum
- Kenilworth Castle
- Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust
- Warwick Castle

## Best Event

- The Dragon Slayer - Warwick Castle
- HSBC Let's Ride Coventry
- Monster Jam - Ricoh Arena
- The Motor Show - Ragley Hall
- Stratford Literary Festival

## Best Food Festival/Event

- Coventry Food And Drink Festival
- Digbeth Dining at Coventry Cathedral
- Fargo's Vegan Festival, Coventry
- Royal Leamington Food & Drink Festival
- Warwick Food Festival

## Best Gallery/Exhibition Venue

- Compton Verney
- Coventry Music Museum
- Herbert Art Gallery
- Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum
- Mead Gallery at Warwick Art Centre

## Best Independent Restaurant

- Café Vin Cinq, Rugby
- Cheals of Henley, Henley-in-Arden
- Dough And Brew, Warwick
- My Dhabba, Coventry
- The Cross, Kenilworth

## WORCESTERSHIRE

## Best Arts/Theatre Venue

- Artrix, Bromsgrove
- Huntingdon Hall, Worcester
- Malvern Theatres
- Norbury Theatre, Droitwich
- Swan Theatre, Worcester

## Best Music Venue

- Drummonds Bar, Worcester
- Huntingdon Hall, Worcester
- The Marr's Bar, Worcester
- Paradiddles Music Cafe Bar, Worcester
- The Queen's Head, Bromsgrove

## Best Music Festival

- Bromsgrove Folk Festival
- Sunshine Festival
- Upton Blues Festival
- Upton Jazz Festival
- Worcester Music Festival

## Best Event

- Droitwich Spa Food Festival
- Eastmore Chilli Festival
- Enchanted Witley - Witley Court
- Worcester Festival
- Worcester Food Festival

## Best Visitor Attraction

- Avoncroft, Bromsgrove
- Hanbury Hall and Gardens
- Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley
- West Mid Safari Park
- Witley Court, Worcester

## Best Independent Restaurant

- Bolero Bar & Kitchen, Worcester
- Dine India, Bromsgrove
- The Old Rectifying House, Worcester
- The Olive Branch Mediterranean Bistro & Wine Bar, Worcs
- Ostlers at No.1, Worcester

## STAFFORDSHIRE

## Best Arts/Theatre Venue

- Brewhouse Arts Centre
- Lichfield Garrick
- New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme
- Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent
- Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

## Best Music Venue

- Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent
- Lichfield Guildhall
- The Sugarmill, Stoke
- The Underground, Stoke
- Victoria Hall, Hanley

## Best Music Festival

- Lichfield Arts' Fuse Festival
- Lichfield Blues & Jazz Festival
- Lichfield Festival
- Lichfield Festival Of Folk
- Staffs Fest

## Best Arts Festival

- Big Feast, Stoke-on-Trent
- Lichfield Festival
- Lichfield Literature Festival
- Stafford Arts Festival
- Stoke Literary Festival

## Best Food Festival

- Great British Food Festival
- Lichfield Food Festival
- Stafford Cheese & Ale Festival
- Stone Food & Drink Festival
- Tamworth Food Gusto Festival

## Best Visitor Attraction

- Alton Towers
- Drayton Manor Theme Park
- Lichfield Cathedral
- Monkey Forest

- National Memorial Arboretum

## Best Event

- Bonfire and Fireworks at Trentham Estate
- Cathedral Illuminated at Lichfield Cathedral
- Lichfield Proms in Beacon Park
- Scarefest at Alton Towers
- Staffordshire County Show

## Best Independent Restaurant

- 1709, The Brasserie
- The Boat Inn, Lichfield
- Hard Days Night, Newcastle under Lyme
- Mackenzies, Lichfield
- NOM Restaurant, Hanley

## SHROPSHIRE

## Best Arts/Theatre Venue

- The Hive, Shrewsbury
- Ludlow Assembly Rooms
- The Place, Telford
- Theatre On The Steps
- Theatre Severn

## Best Music Venue

- Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury
- Albert's Shed, Southwater
- The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury
- Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury
- The Hive, Shrewsbury

## Best Music Festival

- Farmer Phil's Festival
- Let's Rock Shrewsbury
- Rock & Bowl Festival
- Shrewsbury Folk Festival
- Shropfest

## Best Food Festival

- Field to Fork
- Festival, Shropshire
- Ludlow Food Festival
- Oswestry Food & Drink Festival
- Shrewsbury Food Festival

## Best Arts Festival

- Church Stretton Arts Festival
- Ludlow Fringe Festival
- Oswestry Literary Festival
- Shrewsbury Literary Festival

- Wellington Arts Festival

## Best Visitor Attraction

- Attingham Park
- British Ironworks Centre, Oswestry
- Ironbridge Museums
- Park Hall Farm
- Severn Valley Railway, Bridgnorth

## Best Event

- Chocolate Festival, Shrewsbury
- Shrewsbury Flower Show
- Shrewsbury Wacky Races
- Shropshire Oktoberfest
- Telford Balloon and Kite Fiesta

## Best Gallery/Exhibition Venue

- Bear Steps Art Gallery, Shrewsbury
- Coalbrookdale Gallery, Ironbridge
- Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery
- Qube, Oswestry
- Twenty Twenty Gallery, Much Wenlock

## Best Independent Restaurant

- CSONS, Shrewsbury
- Dough and Oil, Shrewsbury
- Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury
- Hundred House, Telford
- Huntsman of Little Wenlock, Telford

## Best Independent Café

- The Bird's Nest Cafe, Shrewsbury
- Crystal's Cupcakes, Telford
- The Furnace Kitchen, Coalbrookdale
- Ginger & Co. Shrewsbury
- House Coffee Co.

# VOTE NOW!

# THE SOUNDS OF THE ROARING 20S

**Max Raabe and the Palast Orchester head to Birmingham on their first ever UK tour...**





Million-selling German crooner Max Raabe is the debonair, white-tie-and-tails-wearing front man of the critically acclaimed Palast Orchester, who'll be coming to Birmingham this spring.

Formed in Berlin in 1986, the orchestra perform music of the 1920s and '30s to audiences across the globe, along the way garnering rave reviews and scooping glittering gongs like they're going out of fashion.

Fifty-seven-year-old Max has received numerous awards for his commitment to the music of the era, including an ECHO Classic award for his interpretation of Mack The Knife.

In November, the ensemble's new MTV Unplugged album went straight into the Top 10 in the German pop charts.

What's On caught up with Max ahead of the Palast Orchester's Birmingham stop-off next month...

**The orchestra has been together for more than 30 years, Max - so why has it taken so long to tour to the UK?**

We have played some concerts, at the Cadogan Hall in London and Shepherd's Bush Empire, and had invitations to festivals like Twinwood and the Secret Garden Party. We had wonderful concerts and they were always very successful. In spring, I have my second solo concert at Wigmore Hall in London - which is a wonderful concert hall - but it's not so easy for artists from Europe to go to your island. I think you have incredible artists and musicians - maybe that's the reason why.

**How would you describe Max Raabe And The Palast Orchester?**

We're a 13-piece orchestra playing the music of the 1920s and 1930s. We have four saxophones, two trumpets, one trombone, rhythm section with sousaphone, double bass, drums, guitar, banjo and a violin player - she's the only lady in the orchestra. This is by chance. Our first violin was played by the girlfriend of one of our saxophone players. And when he left, we asked a student of ours to play for a concert and he said, 'For one concert I will do that, but I have no time to come with you to play concerts and stay in your band'. But then we realised how wonderful it is to have a woman in the orchestra. Our current violinist, Cecilia Crisafulli, has been with us for 13 years.

**How many musicians have played in the orchestra since it was founded in the mid-1980s?**

There are still eight people from that time. But

since the mid-'90s we've had the same lineup. We're a student band - an old one!

**What was it that first interested you in the particular style of music which the orchestra play?**

The music was always there when I was a child. Each Sunday there were black-and-white films on TV - not only German and Austrian films from the 1920s and 1930s but also movies from the United States, with Fred Astaire. There was always a scene where somebody was singing and a band was playing in a big hotel.

In my father's record collection there was an instrumental song called Crazy About Hilde. It was funny and fast, but there was a melancholy sub-note in there by the saxophones and the vibrato of the trumpet. It was like listening through a pipe into another room, another era. So I went to flea markets in the next big town, Münster, and bought some of these 78 records - not only German but also sometimes English songs.

**You started performing the songs as a teenager. What was the reaction from friends and family?**

My parents were shocked. My friends, they loved it. We had a very active church, and every family and friend went there. Once a year there was a big party and they asked us to do some sketches or play some music - and that was the first time I put on my father's top hat and sang these songs. It was wonderful. They loved it, and it was fun for me. I never thought I'd one day become a musician.

**You went on to study classical singing at college in Berlin, where you and your friends formed the orchestra...**

I financed my study with that music but told nobody about it. One of my teachers came to me and said, 'Another professor told me that you sing songs from the '20s and '30s. Take care; it may ruin your voice and can be dangerous or difficult. I don't like this idea that you sing other material.'

He was then at a concert we did and said, "You do it well, you don't stress your voice, you have a wonderful technique and I see you don't mix it up. You have this classical way to sing and you have this '20s light crooning style of singing. Don't do it too much, but it's okay with me." So I didn't have to be a waiter or a taxi driver during my studies; I could just earn money with music.

**When did you know the Palast Orchester was going to be more than just a hobby?**

After a year, we were invited to perform at a ball, playing in the foyer. People stood in front of our stage and asked us to play again and again. It was then that we realised we were on the right track. Then we did our first concert, got some TV jobs and said to ourselves, let's continue for as long as people want to hear us, and for as long as we want to do it. And we're still doing it!

**Where do you find all the original arrangements from the '20s & '30s?**

The first ones we found in flea markets, then we found a big old publishing company in Berlin.

A few years ago, we did a tour of the States, including a concert in Chicago. A couple of weeks beforehand, somebody said, 'Do you know there's a big library in Chicago with original stock arrangements from the '20s & '30s?' We went and found around 30 arrangements and just had to pay the copy for them. It felt like Christmas! Incredible!

**How do you decide which material to perform for each concert?**

We have more than 600 songs in our repertoire. We mix it up with songs I compose and play songs of the countries we're travelling through. When we have a tour through somewhere like Scandinavia, we do one programme, then when we go to Japan, we sing some Japanese songs. Recently we had a concert in Milan and the programme had five Italian songs.

One of the songs we'll play in the United Kingdom is I Won't Dance, a wonderful arrangement from 1935 which we found in Chicago. We have Noel Coward songs and some by Al Bowlly. We play it in the way it was played in the early 1930s, in the pre-swing era.

**How do you feel when you stand at the front of the orchestra singing these songs?**

It makes me feel lucky because I always discover new colours and variations. My aim is to entertain the audience and transport them out of reality. The music was written to take its audience away from their everyday problems, and I'm pleased to say that it still works today.

.....  
**Max Raabe And The Palast Orchester perform at Symphony Hall, Birmingham, on Thursday 5 March.**



## Alexei Sayle Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Fri 28 & Sat 29 February

Having long ago been in the vanguard of the alternative-comedy movement, Alexei Sayle certainly knows how to work a crowd - particularly as most members of his audience have been diehard fans of his stand-up for 40 long years.

Sayle shot to stardom in the late 1970s/early '80s, presenting a brash, loud and hugely political act at the legendary Comedy Store.

His regular appearances in cult BBC sitcom *The Young Ones* then brought him to wider public attention.

He's branched out considerably in more recent times, trying his hand at kids TV, documentaries and even a bit of Shakespeare. A big-screen appearance in the execrable *Carry On Columbus* is probably one element of his CV best forgotten, though...

## Dom Joly

Albany Theatre, Coventry, Thurs 13 February; The Place, Telford, Tues 18 February; The Core Theatre, Solihull, Thurs 20 February; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Mon 2 March; Huntingdon Hall, Worcester, Tues 3 March; Tamworth Assembly Rooms, Sat 15 March; Stourbridge Town Hall, Wed 8 April; The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham, Thurs 9 April

From a launch-pad provided by Trigger Happy TV, Dom Joly has led an intriguing and extraordinary life. Some of the highlights - well, *highlights* according to Dom anyway -

include world drinking, skiing down volcanoes, holidaying in Chernobyl, trying to fly across the Grand Canyon strapped to an eight-foot rocket, and eating from Gillian McKeith's pants while imprisoned in the Australian jungle...

...Some guys have all the luck.



## Simon Brodtkin

Palace Theatre, Redditch, Wed 26 February; The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham, Sun 5 April

Former medical doctor Simon Brodtkin is perhaps best known as the creator of comedy character Lee Nelson, a bling-wearing Stella-swiggering South London geezer. Simon has also hit the headlines for his unwavering commitment to the business of being a top-quality prankster: he famously handed Prime Minister Theresa May her P45 at the Conservative Party Conference. This latest tour sees him taking on perhaps his trickiest task yet - going on stage as *himself*. It's a challenge he's very much looking forward to meeting, though: "There's no bigger buzz in the world than turning up in a new city, making 2,000 people laugh and then sleeping with about five of them afterwards. The only downside is chlamydia."



## Sarah Keyworth

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sat 22 February; The Glee Club, Birmingham, Fri 6 March

Sarah Keyworth's original premise for her new show, *Pacific*, was that she was turning into her dad. But then things moved on a bit. "It ended up being about how I, as a woman who likes to perceive herself as being slightly masculine, almost resents the feminine parts of herself. It's about learning that I don't have to be the biggest, strongest woman in the room. It's like learning how to become a modern man."

Sarah is in a relationship with fellow comic Catherine Bohart. "In a misogynistic way, I like the idea of looking after my girlfriend," she says, "but in reality, if my girlfriend left me for long, I'd starve!"



## John Shuttleworth

Birmingham Town Hall, Wed 5 Feb; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Thurs 13 Feb; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Thurs 5 March; Artrix, Bromsgrove, Wed 11 March; The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Thurs 12 March; Huntingdon Hall, Worcester, Sat 18 April; Stratford Playhouse, Stratford-upon-Avon, Fri 24 April; New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Sat 25 April

Midlands-based lovers of light comedy and understated but up-to-the-minute fashions here get the chance to enjoy another laughter-filled evening in the company of Sheffield's raconteur par excellence.

The creation of actor Graham Fellows - a one-time chartbuster with 1970s' hit, *Jilted John* - Shuttleworth has been making his presence felt on the UK comedy circuit for more than 30 years.

This latest show finds John a pale shadow of his former self. Years of strenuous DIY - not to mention playing his organ while perched on a multi-pack of Diet Sprite with no lumber support - has taken its toll... Expect classic songs, new stories, and the unmistakable pungent whiff of Deep Heat ointment...



## Dane Baptiste

Artrix, Bromsgrove, Sat 29 February; Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Fri 20 March; Glee Club, Birmingham, Sun 29 March

It's certainly been a whirlwind few years for London-born funnyman Dane Baptiste. In 2014, he became the first ever black comedian to be nominated for the 'best new-comer' award at the Edinburgh Fringe, a success he achieved with debut solo show *Citizen Dane*. In the ensuing years he's established himself on the UK comedy circuit to excellent effect, his constant and industrious honing of his act earning him a loyal and ever-expanding fanbase. Jokes include: "Dubai is what would happen if you gave a 12-year-old a trillion dollars to redecorate his bedroom."



## Brum Craic

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Thurs 20 February

Making a welcome return for this second Brum Craic, James Cook (pictured) will once again be hosting a show that's designed to provide a high-profile platform for some of the comedy world's most promising new acts. Callum Oakley and Lindsey Santoro are among those who will be strutting their hopefully laughter-worthy stuff on this particular occasion.



## Phil Wang

The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham, Sun 9 February; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sun 16 February; Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, Sun 5 April

Phil Wang's first ever five minutes behind the mic as a standup comedian were spent telling other people's gags. "I thought standup was like karaoke with jokes," he recalls. "Most of the material I used was stolen, but I learned fast and immediately started writing my own material." Inspired to become a comedian by his desire to avoid hav-

ing to get up in the mornings, Phil is one of the newer kids on the comedy block and describes his style of humour as smart, cheeky and always changing.

Jokes include, "Dying is a lot like camping. I don't want to do it," and "I'm white and Chinese. I'm both majorities, bitch. I'm Pepsi and Coke."

## Jonny Awsum

The Glee Club, Birmingham, Mon 3 February; Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury, Fri 21 February

'If you can't beat them, join them' seems to have been the perspective taken by musical comic Jonny Awsum.

Having served as a barman at London's Chuckle Club for eight long years, Jonny decided it was high time he put down the pint glasses and picked up the microphone himself. Fame then came his way courtesy of Britain's Got Talent, in which he performed *This Is A Musical* with Ant & Dec and *The Triangle Song* with David Walliams. Five-star reviews at Edinburgh and a starring role in panto followed, with Jonny now ticking off another first by heading out on his debut solo tour.



## Jimeoin

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Sun 9 February; Artrix, Bromsgrove, Wed 19 February

Fancy a straightforward comedy night with a straight-talking - well, actually, a rambling - master of mirth? If so, then the sublime Jimeoin is the fella for you.

A gimmick-free one-man comedy machine, Jimeoin's proved he's got what it takes on all manner of top TV programmes, including Michael McIntyre's *Comedy Roadshow* and Jason Manford's *Comedy Rocks*.

He visits Stafford with his new touring show, the appropriately titled *Ramble On*.



# A law unto himself

## Comedian Tony Law is back with a brand new show...

Don't be fooled by the title of Tony Law's new touring show - Identifies - because it has very little to do with the on-trend topic of identity!

"I tried to do a show that was really nothing about identity as best I could," says Tony, "cos that's just how I work, to be contrarian!"

The Canadian-born Law came to London in the 1990s and established himself as an inventive and idiosyncratic comedian. Part of a lineage that includes Spike Milligan, Monty Python and Eddie Izzard, Tony presents shows that are perhaps best described as flights of surreal and absurd fancy. Freewheeling but well-structured, they are peppered with grand ideas, stories about everyday incidents, contemplations on time travel, occasional props and even the odd song.

In fact, Identifies concludes with a brand new composition written solely by the comedian.

"I trained myself to make sounds on a guitar and have written my very first song! I've done music before, but I've always got real musicians involved. They've made the music after I've hummed the song and then tried to make it into a thing. With this one, I forced myself to learn enough strumming sounds to be able to accom-

pany myself. So I have a closing song!"

As well as a musical finale, Identifies also sees Tony addressing politics for the first time.

"My closing also features a bit of Brexit. I wouldn't say it was pro-Brexit, but it's pro people who voted Brexit, which is a little twist for me. It's not saying one way or another, it's saying something nice about all of the people, whichever way they voted. It sounds quite naff but it comes across quite good. It's just a way of acknowledging our brothers and sisters who have different opinions. That was the idea behind it."

Tackling a thorny subject without offending either side required Tony to look deeper into the reasons why people made their decisions.

"That was hard to do because I had to learn about all the reasons why someone wanted to do Brexit - because I didn't know. But I needed to find out all of their reasons, not do it half-arsed like most people do - patronisingly looking down their nose and saying, 'they're idiots, they don't really know!' I didn't want to go from that angle, so I dived into it and really got my head around it.

"That's a bit of a departure for me. It's a

little bit political, but it's not preaching."

As with all of Tony's shows, Identifies has changed since it debuted last year. The content is pretty much the same, but the delivery and the pacing are different - something which he attributes to a change in musical taste.

"The shows never seem to get too locked down. If you hear a recording of this material when I first did it, it will sound the same, the words won't be that different for most of it, but there'll be different inflections and a different pace to it. It slowly morphs.

"This show was written while listening to Toto, Supertramp and Steely Dan. It has a bit of a vibe like that - a 1970s vibe. But since I've been touring it, [US alt-rock pre-grunge heroes] Pixies have taken over. Pixies seems about right because of the urgency with which I deliver the material. It's like a fricking train... ch-ch-ch-ch... but then slow, and then fast and loud.

"Almost every show of mine seems to have a life of its own."

.....  
**Tony Law: Identifies is at The Glee Club Birmingham, on Friday 14 February. For tickets and more details, visit [glee.co.uk](http://glee.co.uk)**









# URBAN FAIRYTALE

Runaway West End and Broadway hit *Once The Musical* focuses on the passionate love experienced by two musicians, not only for their craft but also for one another. A new touring production will next month be casting its spell over Midlands theatre-goers. What's On met up with the stars of the show...



Based on the 2006 cult feature film of the same name, *Once* is about two lost souls - a Dublin street busker and a Czech musician - who unexpectedly fall in love. The musical follows the pair's lives over a period of five days.

*Once*'s Celtic folk music and lyrics - written by the stars of the film, Glen Hansard and Markéta Irglová - have won Grammy, Academy and Olivier awards. Complete with a book by award-winning Irish playwright and screenwriter Enda Walsh, *Once* also took home the coveted Tony Award for best musical in 2012.

So what has made this heartwarming show such a resounding success?

"I think it's a combination," says Emma Lucia, one of the stars of the touring production that's next month visiting the Midlands. "The storyline itself is so naturalistic - so much so that it appeals to all kinds of people of all ages and backgrounds. But also it's the fact that all of the music is played by the actors on stage. It's very unique in that sense."

"The story itself is definitely something everyone can connect to," adds Emma's co-star, Daniel Healy. "We've all had those crossroads moments in life, those real chances or decisions that people often look back on and wish they'd dealt with differently. *Once* is about that kind of moment. It's a real urban fairytale: it's got great music with an Irish connection, a genuine story about love and loss, and a narrative about dreams coming true."

Dan has been involved with the show for many years and feels a real affinity with his character, Guy: "I might have picked up a few tips being in the West End cast! I understudied the lead in that, so I've seen many different incarnations. But I can honestly say that this is the best cast there's been out of all of the versions I've seen or been involved with - and that's not including myself, by the way! This cast is so bloody talented! Everyone involved in *Once* is a joy to be around, and I think the audience will feel that reflected in the show.

"Guy is a really great part that everyone can bring their own take to because he is so relatable. I would say that he's really the closest character to myself that I've ever played. I'm a singer-songwriter who busked for years when I was young, so there are elements of Guy that I'm so connected to. Just like Emma, I saw the show and realised that was the part I was meant to play. But at the time in my life I first

auditioned for the Broadway show and was then an understudy in the West End, I do think I was too young. So it was the right decision to wait until now to take the lead. The cool thing about Guy is that he is the 'any man' or 'everyman' - and now I've seen so many different versions of him, I can really make the part my own. The character in himself is almost nondescript, as it's the pain and the journey in *Once* that's perhaps more important. He's like a blank canvas."

With a background both as an actor and a musician (but very separately), Dan doesn't consider himself the typical musical theatre performer: "I come from my acting and my singer-songwriter background above anything else, so I've had a real dual career in that way. I've managed to play music at quite a high level and be in West End plays, so I'm very lucky in that sense. What I think is great about *Once* is that it attracts people on both sides of the coin: whether you're a massive musical theatre fan or prefer plays, *Once* is a show you'll want to see. Moderate and hardcore theatre-goers and musical theatre lovers alike will be captivated by it. Guy is literally my dream role. The part could've been written for me in a sense, because of my Celtic upbringing and being an actor/musician."

Dan's background in music includes a close working relationship with Ronan Keating.

"I became good friends with Ronan when he played Guy in the West End and I was his understudy. I just saw him as this hugely successful fella who was following a similar path to me, and we became great mates. He heard one of my songs online and asked me if I'd do some writing for him. I ended up doing six songs on one of his albums, and then a slot opened up in his band about four-and-a-half years ago. So I've played with him ever since then, touring the world and everything. It's been really great! I'm still writing songs with him now, including one for Netflix's *Galapagos*. But over and above all that, he's a good pal, and hopefully he'll come down to see the show."

And what about Dan's own music?

"I'm absolutely still working on that, too. It has crossed my mind that, as soon as *Once* has settled down a bit and we've got into the rhythm of touring, I might slowly start putting something together. I hope to have a new album finished by the time we stop touring!"

Emma is returning to the role of Girl.

"It's great to revisit the part because, in our

line of work, you can always dig deeper into a role, get more out of it and give more to it. I definitely relate to Girl's personality more than her circumstances. For example, I don't have a child and I'm not Eastern European, but I think I do relate to her optimistic outlook. She's very positive and tries to be quite uplifting for others, even if she's not feeling great herself - and that's definitely something I try to do and the type of person I continue to aspire to be.

"With *Once*, I'm playing a lead role as opposed to covering it, like I did with *Beautiful: Carole King The Musical*. I'm actually really glad that I did that first, as being in the ensemble and being a swing or understudy is a real rite of passage. You learn what it feels like to be a part of the show but not front-and-centre. Then I think you are even more appreciative both of your big break and your other cast members too. It's a big step up in terms of pressure, but I feel so excited and lucky to be playing a lead role at my age."

So why should Midlands theatre-goers go to see *Once*? Emma continues: "Markéta Irglová, who co-wrote the music, said that you can be a complete stranger to someone but once you start making music together, it's like your souls merge. There's something about that unspoken connection - the way music brings people together regardless of background - that *Once* captures in the best possible way."

"There are a lot of people out there who are genuinely inspired to chase their dream, whatever that may be," says Dan. "*Once* has a lasting effect, which I also felt when I watched it myself. It really does encourage people to make sure they're doing what they love. Art should be all about getting right outside your own headspace and being taken on an incredible journey - and, of course, for you then to reflect it onto your own life and experiences. It's so humbling to see people so moved by this musical, especially when you're just going out there to do a job you love and giving absolutely everything you can. *Once* is a beautiful piece, besides being multi-award-winning, and this is your opportunity to see it in its best form yet!"

.....  
***Once The Musical* shows at the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, from Tuesday 10 to Saturday 14 March; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, from Tuesday 17 to Saturday 21 March; Malvern Theatres from Monday 23 to Saturday 28 March, and the Alexandra, Birmingham, from Monday 1 to Saturday 6 June.**



## Peter Pan Goes Wrong

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Tues 18 - Sat 22 February; Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Tues 25 - Sat 29 February

A play about a play that goes wrong isn't a new idea by any means, but it's certainly a winning one, as the plaudits garnered by this cheeky hit ably illustrate. One reviewer laughed so much he feared he was going to hyperventilate, another admitted his funny bone had been well and truly struck by the piece, while a third laughed and laughed until 'the tears ran down'.

Having first introduced audiences to the Cornley Polytechnic Drama

Society in the Olivier Award-winning *The Play That Goes Wrong*, Mischief Theatre Company here let loose those selfsame comic creations on a production of JM Barrie's children's classic. The only trouble is, the bumbling thespians are more than a little accident-prone. So much so, in fact, that they're not even sure they'll manage to reach the curtain call, let alone Neverland...

## Asking For It

The REP, Birmingham, until Sat 15 February



This critically acclaimed stage adaptation of Irish author Louise O'Neill's novel focuses on the experiences of fictional main character and sexual-assault victim Emma O'Donovan.

"I'm incredibly proud of the book and its message," says Louise, "which is why I was so excited by the prospect of a stage adaptation. The prospect of this message getting as far and wide as possible is incredible. Sexual violence is such an epidemic in our culture, an important and devastating issue that needs to be addressed and eradicated; and we're not going to do that unless we face the issue head-on."

## Ten Times Table

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Mon 17 - Sat 22 February

Mention of Alan Ayckbourn and a list of brilliant observational comedies springs readily to mind. *Ten Times Table*, first performed in early 1977, is one of them.

A cast of high-profile television actors here star in a story revolving around the Pendon Folk Festival committee, a calamitous ensemble led by the over-excitable Ray and coming complete with Marxist schoolteacher, military dog-breeder and octogenarian secretary. Robert Daws, best known as the team captain in ITV's gentle 1990s' cricket comedy, *Outside Edge*, takes top billing.



## Home Of The Wriggler

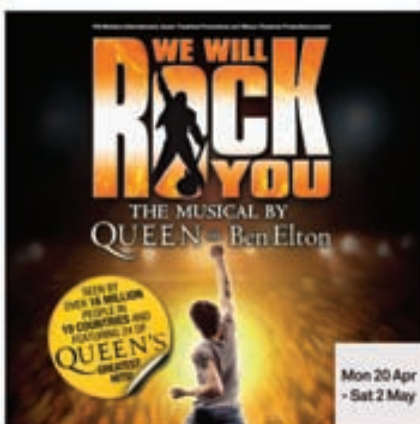
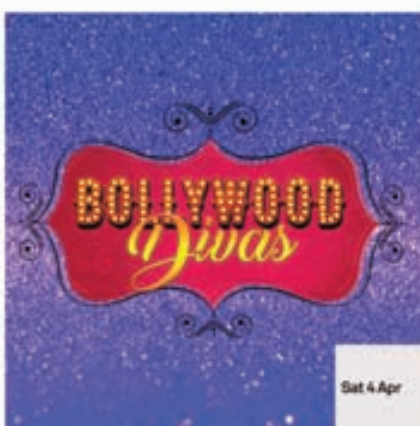
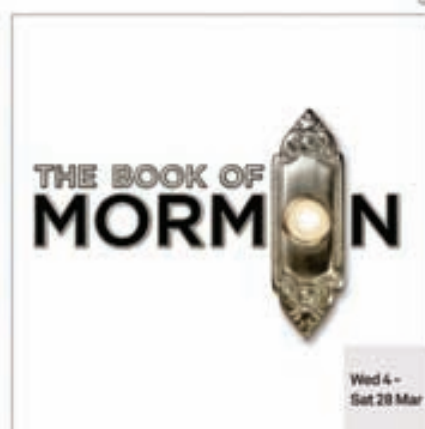
The REP, Birmingham, Thurs 20 - Sat 22 February; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Wed 26 February; Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton, Thurs 27 February



Birmingham's ever-impressive Stan's Cafe here make a welcome return with a story they describe as a playful, kaleidoscopic soap-opera. The production is set in a far-distant post-oil future and finds four investigators piecing together the interwoven stories of families who once lived in the shadow of the Longbridge car plant.

Built from true stories and industrial history, the show sees its industrious performers turning dynamos to light the stage with car headlights, bringing to life dozens of hum-drum fragments of everyday moments.







# BAND OF GOLD

Kay Mellor has adapted her hit 1990s television series for the stage...



Bringing *Band Of Gold* to the stage for the first time, writer-director Kay Mellor is promising fans that they're in for a treat: "They'll get all the joy and the suspense they had from the television version," says the creator of one of the most-watched shows in British TV history. "But it's live theatre, so it has that excitement to it because it's unfolding in front of their very eyes."

Kay has revised the plot of the first series for the stage version, adding in a few twists to keep it fresh and surprising: "It's funny and it's sad," she says, "and audiences are going to be told a big story not over six weeks but across two hours, with a beginning, middle and end."

Set in the early 1990s, just as the TV series was, the stage version brings back the iconic char-

acters and moments that made *Band Of Gold* such a sensation when it premiered on ITV. But the killer of young mother turned sex worker Gina won't be the same, with Mellor teasing: "I think people will be more satisfied than they were with the TV revelation."

Leeds-born Kay was originally inspired to write the hard-hitting drama when, on the way to a party, she and her husband drove through Lumb Lane in Bradford - a notorious hangout for sex workers - and were approached in their car by a young woman. "It was like someone had hit me in the solar plexus," Kay recalls, "because she was so young - 14 or 15 - and my daughters weren't much older than that."

Haunted by the encounter, Kay left the party early to track down the girl but was told by an-

other sex worker that the teenager had 'pimp problems'. "I never saw her again, but I started thinking, 'What is it that drives a woman onto the Lane to sell her body?'"

It took eight years for her to get *Band Of Gold* onto TV, "fighting everybody and literally begging people to read the script. I was an unknown writer writing about sex workers in the north of England, and who's gonna put that on television?"

The fight paid off. The show wasn't just a gripping crime drama, it was a phenomenon. More than 15 million viewers tuned in each week, fans held *Band Of Gold* parties where they'd catch the latest episode over wine and pizza, and bookies took bets on the identity of Gina's killer before the big reveal at the end of the first series.



Kay would go on to become one of the UK's most successful and revered dramatists, penning television shows including *Playing The Field*, *The Syndicate* and *Girlfriends*. She also turned her much loved TV series, *Fat Friends* (which aired from 2000 to 2005), into a hugely successful stage musical, which she also directed.

*Band Of Gold* remains a firm favourite with Mellor fans. She smiles about people in the street still yelling, 'What's happened to Carol?' in reference to Cathy Tyson's feisty prostitute, who takes Gina (Ruth Gemmell) under her wing. "And I get in taxis and the driver goes, 'I love that *Band Of Gold*. Why don't you write some more of it?'"

Twenty two years on from the series finale, Kay has done just that - opting for a stage version of the classic story with a brand new cast, rather than trying to bring back original stars Tyson, Geraldine James, Barbara Dickson and Samantha Morton for a sequel.

"There's nothing like sitting in an auditorium listening to your play and hearing people laughing and applauding. It's absolutely magical. It's like a drug."

After reworking *Band Of Gold*, she workshopped it twice and made big changes, but the anonymous feedback from the second workshop was that everyone would pay to see it and everyone would recommend it to a friend. "That's when I thought, 'Okay, let's take this to the next stage'."

"I decided to set it in its original time period because actually nothing much has changed since then. If anything, things have become harder with austerity and Universal Credit. People just can't get to the end of the week. There are more sex workers than there were 20 years ago - people selling their bodies basically to feed their kids or make ends meet. It's more relevant to today than ever before."

"We've assembled this brilliant new cast of great actors and some well-known faces, and it allows me to reinvent *Band Of Gold* for both its long-term fans and those coming to it for the first time."

Gaynor Faye, who recently left *Emmerdale* to be able to star in the play, takes over from Geraldine James as Rose and agrees the *Band Of Gold* revival couldn't be more timely: "It's

more than two decades on and I think we're in a worse position than we were then," she says. "There's as much if not more poverty now. People are really struggling and more people are visiting food banks."

Rose is like the mother hen, ruling the Lane where the younger girls work.

"She's very territorial and nobody is stepping on her patch," explains Gaynor, "but she's a good friend and the kind of person everyone would hope would have their back because she's tough."

Laurie Brett plays Anita, "a working class survivor who'll do whatever it takes to get through life". She rents out a room to the girls for a cut of their earnings. "She's very multi layered and a really interesting person," says Laurie, who's best known from *EastEnders* and *Waterloo Road*. She was a fan of the TV show when it premiered: "It was extremely gritty and it still is. Plus, it was an honest portrayal of women who weren't victims. Yes, they were victims of circumstance but not in terms of their everyday lives."

Coronation Street and dinnerladies star Andrew Dunn is Ian, a counsellor and client with all sorts of flaws. "He has this front as a pillar of the community, but in the background there's a lot of other stuff going on," Ian explains. "That's really interesting to play."

The role marks a reunion for Ian and Kay Mellor, who starred as husband and wife in the play *A Passionate Woman* at Hull Truck Theatre in 2010. "Kay was fantastic to work with, so I'm really looking forward to working with her again. *Band Of Gold* was one of the first dramas to have so many female characters at its centre, and the story is still relevant. Prostitution may have diversified but it's still happening."

Fellow Coronation Street star and *X-Factor* winner Shayne Ward is relishing the role of DCI Newall, the detective tasked with finding Gina's killer. Newall was played by David Schofield in the TV original. Schofield was in his 40s at the time, whereas Ward is in his mid 30s. His take on the DCI is as a younger man keen to make his mark: "He wants to be taken seriously, and although he's a nice guy, he's also now in charge of the investigation so wants to assert his authority."

After three years on *Corrie*, Shayne is excited about going out on his first ever tour in a play. "I'm looking forward to how much I can learn from working with so many great actors - and of course with Kay. I used to watch *The Syndicate* on TV and think, 'I'd love to be in something like that', never imagining I'd even get to meet Kay let alone work with her. It's a massive privilege."

To research the role of Carol, Emma Osman has delved into documentaries about sex workers: "It's interesting to see how, even though they have to be tough, they're also very vulnerable - just everyday girls in extraordinary circumstances," notes the actress whose credits include *Doctors* and *Snatch*. "They're so resilient. Carol constantly talks about not wanting to be controlled, to be independent and her own woman. She's so scared of being abandoned. I really appreciate being given the opportunity to do something so powerful, and to play a character who's so strong and feisty."

Sacha Parkinson is equally thrilled to be playing Gina, who is driven to prostitution after splitting from her abusive husband, Steve. Sacha was only three when *Band Of Gold* started and has made the decision not to watch the series. "That kind of mirrors Gina's own experience of going into a world she doesn't know anything about," says the former *Corrie* star, whose CV also includes *The Mill* and *Mr Selfridge*. "Getting to work with Kay is an amazing opportunity. *Band Of Gold* has been her baby for years, so to be a part of her exploring it again is really special."

Hollyoaks regular and *Dancing On Ice* finalist Kieron Richardson is making his professional stage debut as bad boy Steve, who becomes a prime suspect in Gina's murder. Kieron has a strong connection to *Band Of Gold* - his father was an on set security guard for the TV show.

As a youngster, Kieran would go along to the set, where he would hang out in Carol's house and ride around in the blue police van.

"Watching them all work is one of the reasons I got into acting in the first place," he explains, "so it's kind of come full circle."

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**Kay Mellor's *Band Of Gold* shows at the Alexandra, Birmingham, from Monday 10 to Saturday 15 February.**

# DEAD GOOD

Worcester's Vamos Theatre tour their new show around the Midlands...



Vamos Theatre's new show, *Dead Good*, tells the story of a friendship between two men who are staring death in the face. Both Bob and Bernard have been told that they're dying - but the pair are determined to live life to the full while they still can.

Embarking on one last adventure, the two men discover that coming close to death actually makes life, love and friendship more precious.

Vamos Theatre has an impressive reputation for tackling difficult subjects and creating shows which audiences love. The Worcester-based company uses full masks to tell its stories without words - and having turned the spotlight on dementia, the health service and post-traumatic stress in the past, Artistic Director Rachael Savage felt the time was right to investigate society's attitudes towards life and death.

"The main reason we're telling this story is to ask how the dying teach us to live, and how do we live fully?" she says. "I never thought I'd do a show about death because I'm terrified by it, but it's been really good for me to tackle this subject because I'll talk about it now. And across all of the research I've done, I've laughed more than I've cried."

The original inspiration for *Dead Good* came from an audience member who also hap-



pened to be a GP with a specialist interest in end-of-life care.

"She emailed me to say she had an idea for the next show. When I first met her, I was thinking, 'Death is the last thing I want to make a show about. But then I found out that we were completely on the same page about encouraging people to talk about the subject, planning for a good death, asking if there *can* be such a thing as a 'good death', and getting families to find out each other's wishes."

As part of her 18 months of research, Rachael visited hospices where she talked to staff caring for patients with terminal diagnoses.

"At Mary Stevens Hospice in Stourbridge, I met Dave, a patient living with prostate cancer. He told me about how being terminally ill had changed him, changed his relationships and changed his capacity to love. He's just like a bottomless pit now in terms of his capacity to love.

"Then I went to St Richard's Hospice in Worcester, which has a Men's Space Group. The men who attend it have the kind of friendships that you make when there's nobody else who can really understand what you're going through. There, I met two chaps named Nick and Pete, who are phenomenally good friends, and that friendship is based not only on care and compassion for each other but also humour. They giggle and laugh and rib each other and take the mick all the time." Medical staff and patients helped Rachael develop the story to ensure it remained authentic.

"We've invited Pete and Nick into the rehearsal room, and their double act has informed the whole piece. I've shared every script and rehearsal video with Nick, and he's fed back on them.

"The way in which we see death portrayed on television or by Hollywood is often dramatised, and what I've really tried to do is to tell it as accurately as possible. We want to demystify death and take the fear out of it. We're a death-denying society, and the show is trying to change that."

Rachael is sure *Dead Good* will build on the success of previous *Vamos*' productions *Finding Joy*, *A Brave Face*, *Nursing Lives* and *Much Ado About Wenlock*.

"I think people expect to go away from one of our shows having laughed and cried and with something to think about. I give a voice to people who often don't have one, so our shows have to be about things that I'm passionate about, and that I want to make people think differently about."

Rachael believes these messages reach the au-

dience all the more effectively because *Vamos*' characters are masked: "Full mask theatre draws people in. The actors have detailed scripts, objectives, the same things as other actors, but when there's the full mask on top, there's a real clarity of thought. We pull the audience in to us so that we're connecting with them intellectually. They're working out what's going on, and through that we also have a really close connection to their heart, where we can make them feel. What I hope is that the feeling then bounces back to the brain so that we can make them think.

"My belief is that *Dead Good* is an important story to tell. I hope audiences will take away the message that life is precious and that their family and friends are precious. Love and laughter are wonderful things and, without making it into a cliché, it's important to get out there, live life and learn what's important."

Taking the part of Bob in *Dead Good* is Aron De Casmaker, who's worked with *Vamos* in the past. The Canadian clown performer has honed his skills in *Cirque du Soleil's Alegria* and the hit international touring production, *Slava's Snow Show*.

"Bob is one of the two men who go on this great adventure soon after they both find out they're terminally ill," explains Aron about his character. "He's somebody who's had a very simple and joyful journey through life - until recently, that is, when he's been diagnosed with cancer of the prostate.

"That really put him into a position of questioning his existence, so he moved from being with his wife and being a retired auto-mechanic to deciding he's going to die alone. He left his wife to seek solitude, but then he meets this other man, Bernard, who doesn't let him have that solitude and forces him to find joy in these fleeting moments.

"I'm really excited about this project. The idea of finding the lightness in dark material really attracts me to the theatre. In this production we're hitting head-on a very realistic view of death, and then finding the joy and the lightness that comes from that. We want the audience to come out of the show with a sense of extreme elation and joy that will resonate far beyond the walls of the theatre."

Aron is a big fan of masked acting, which he believes helps to create a special link with *Vamos*' audiences: "You have to be conscious of the simplicity that you're bringing to every moment, but at the same time it's a very common language. It's non-verbal, but often we will have an audience member after a show saying they're convinced the mask moved and

that they heard what the character was saying!"

The show uses eight masks in total, all of which have been carefully crafted by Russell Dean of *Strangeface Masks* to ensure the characters can progress through the story.

"With a mask, you're playing with people's perceptions," Russell explains. "If the character is going on a long journey in the show, you need to put into the mask maybe three, four or five different expressions. With the masks for the two lead characters, I've put in sadness, regret, optimism, grim determination and melancholy. It's not the full expression. It's the photo you throw away when people are between crying and laughing; that's what you play around with.

"When a mask first comes on stage, by having the suggestion of a smile or the suggestion of tears, we embrace all of those possibilities. Then we start to project back onto it what we think is appropriate at that moment. The mask isn't changing, we're projecting onto it. It's the audience who're doing the work."

Russell discusses the characters with Rachael before making small maquettes for each one. He then makes a video of the maquettes, which he sends to Rachael before agreeing the final masks. With Bob and Bernard, he needed to ensure they had distinct personalities: "The two men have an age gap between them, and you really do need to accentuate that. With masks you are playing on stereotypes because that's the way our perception works. So if it's an older guy, you have to put them into an older-person stereotype, with grey hair and bags under their eyes.

"With stereotyping, you're playing into something which isn't really acceptable, but it's the way the mask and the character is played which makes the difference. Often the most subtle and brilliant mask performances are the ones where the mask sets out who the character is expected to be, but then the character is developed into this extraordinary individual."

And the results certainly create some memorable theatrical moments: "Mask theatre tends to shoot straight to the heart. It's a very emotional experience which tends to go very deep and stay with you. People will think about the show for a long time afterwards."

.....  
**Dead Good shows at Malvern Theatres on Wednesday 5 February, The Bridge House Theatre, Warwick, on Thursday 6 February, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, on Wednesday 26 & Thursday 27 February, and the Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton, Thursday 5 & Friday 6 March.**



## The History Boys

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Fri 7 - Sat 22 February

"I think I'd always wanted to write something about a charismatic schoolmaster, and that went back quite a long way," says playwright Alan Bennett in talking about his award-winning *The History Boys*. The story unfolds in a boys' school in northern England in the 1980s. A young teacher named Irwin has been brought in to coach the pupils for the Oxbridge exam - but fellow teacher Hector believes instead in learning for its own sake.

"Realistically the person who parents would want teaching their child would be Irwin, as Irwin would get you into university," says Bennett. "However, sentimentally their hearts would be with Hector because he's the type of teacher everyone wants. Everybody always wishes they'd learned more poetry at school and had someone who would inspire them like that. And it's the fact that, in a way, I couldn't resolve this conflict in my head which made me write the play."

Coronation Street and *EastEnders* actor Ian Redford and one-time *Hi-De-Hi* star Jeffrey Holland - fresh from a panto season at the Grand - take top billing.

## In PurSUet

The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham, Mon 10 - Sat 15 February

Substance misuse and celebrity stalking are the name of the game in Eleanor Higgins' short-but-satisfying production, which picked up plenty of plaudits at last year's Edinburgh Fringe.

Described as an LGBT 'Fleabag meets Miranda', the play features Higgins in the role of 'Woman', a self-proclaimed "really hot lesbian" who's initially in denial about her alcoholism. Instead, she rationalises that life would be so very much better if only she could date her idol, television's Sue Perkins. But one brief glimpse of her heroine in a bookshop and one daring foray backstage at a TV studio later, Woman starts to realise that maybe the source of her trouble isn't her undeclared love for an already-partnered television star but rather the potent liquid sitting at the bottom of her glass...

cancer becoming the strangest and most dysfunctional of 'families'.

Cornish company Pipeline have described their production as a love letter to the NHS. It's certainly that alright, but it's plenty more besides, not least a provocative study of an organisation creaking under the strain of a reprehensible rise in racism and bigotry...



## Jekyll & Hyde

The Old Rep, Birmingham, Wed 26 - Fri 28 February

Henry Jekyll is not himself, not by a long chalk, in this updated version of Robert Louis Stevenson's classic novella. Forget all about the familiar version of the Victorian-era London-located gruesome gothic drama, in which Jekyll's alter-ego, the malevolent Mr Hyde, conducts his reign of murderous mayhem in the prevailing darkness of a thick pea-souper or several... In this

new version, Henry Jekyll is a young, bold, liberal and ambitious American senator who's poised to run for the most powerful office in the land - the Presidency of the United States. What could possibly go wrong?...

## Voldemort And The Teenage Hogwarts Musical Parody

Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, Tues 18 February - Sun 1 March

Lessons in love and proper snake maintenance were among those learned by the evil Voldemort back in the days when he was just plain old Hogwarts teenager Tom Riddle... This Harry Potter musical parody reveals young Tom's fascinating story, from his time in a rock band to the experience of learning how to kiss from a snake. It even reveals that he once had a Hufflepuff girlfriend...



## Drip Drip Drip

Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Thurs 27 February

The tiny but taboo-busting Pipeline Theatre here present a thought-provoking play that sees a trainee nurse from Eritrea, a second-generation immigrant Muslim doctor and a discredited academic who's being treated for



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SUN 3 MAY

**RUMOURS OF  
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MON 4 MAY

**NORTHERN BALLET PRESENT  
LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD**



TUE 5 – SAT 9 MAY

**THE MOUSETRAP**



MON 11 MAY

**THE ELVIS TRIBUTE  
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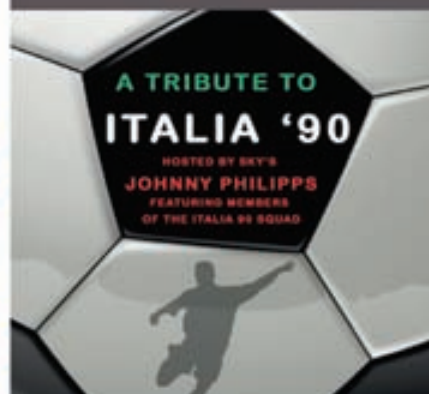
SUN 17 MAY

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MON 18 MAY

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# JUST KEEP DIGGING

Louis Sachar's 1998 young-adult novel, *Holes*, is a staple of the national curriculum and much loved by children and adults alike. Nottingham Playhouse's new stage version is coming to a theatre near you...

"The play, like Louis Sachar's award-winning novel, is about a teenager, Stanley Yelnats, who gets falsely accused of stealing an old pair of sneakers," explains Adam Penford, Artistic Director of Nottingham Playhouse, the theatre behind a brand new stage adaptation of the book. "Stanley is sent to Camp Green Lake, which certainly isn't green and no longer has a lake. It's a dried-up lake-bed and now very much like a desert. Every day he has

to dig a hole, five foot deep and five foot wide, as a reforming character-building exercise. Stanley quickly discovers that the warden who runs the camp is hunting for something, so he starts investigating. *Holes* is an epic mystery adventure story!

"The novel was written in the late '90s and has been studied by schools ever since. I think people really engage with *Holes* for a

number of reasons. Firstly, as Louis Sachar himself said, everyone as a child has an obsession with digging a huge hole to see how far they can get into the earth, maybe even out the other side! So just that starting premise is one that grabs people's imaginations.

"Secondly, it's a really gripping story, the book is certainly a page-turner - and on stage



you really can't wait to see how it moves step-by-step through the adventure. By final-curtain, all of the loose ends of the mystery wrap up neatly into a really satisfying conclusion.

"Then, the other big appeal is the characters. Everyone is drawn to them; this motley crew of very different, characterful, flawed and real people.

"Finally, the reason it works so well on the page - and this is something we've tried to translate onto the stage - is that it has a consistent sense of danger and suspense. Sachar doesn't patronise the reader. These boys are being forced to do manual labour in the baking heat, and the adults who are supposed to be looking after them are ruthless and only out for themselves. Even the environment itself and the creatures surrounding them are deadly. There's a real sense of jeopardy, of life and death, and I think that's something children respond to because they're very aware they're not being talked down to.

"Underneath it all, *Holes* really is a story of friendship. Stanley makes friends with Zero, who's the boy in the camp who never speaks. Everyone else presumes he's either mute or stupid, but he turns out to probably be the brightest of them all. Watching their friendship develop is really beautiful. It's also about the love between Stanley and his parents.

"The other underlying narrative is this question of destiny, and whether you have control over the way your life turns out or not. What's very clever about it is that Louis doesn't really answer that question by the end, so while the storyline itself is tied up neatly, it still leaves a lot of questions for the reader. Stanley is kind of an anti-hero in the beginning; things happen to him and he blames bad luck and his 'family curse'. Then, as the play goes on, he starts to take control of his own destiny and becomes much more empowered. In the end, Sachar does almost hint that there are some things out of our control and there's definitely some sort of magic in the world we live in."

Sachar adapted *Holes* for the stage himself, but the Nottingham Playhouse production has been a long time in the making - as Adam explains: "I read the novel quite a few years ago from a list of 100 that everyone should read in their lifetime. Of course, I got through about three, but one I did read was *Holes*. So I read it as an adult rather than a child and fell in love with it very quickly. I thought how much of an amazing play it would make. When I looked into it, I saw that Sachar had

already adapted it himself, but at that point it had only ever been staged in America. I managed to get hold of his agent in New York, but one of the big questions was how to actually stage this: how can you dig holes on stage?

We did a series of several workshops over 10 years ago, followed by a small version at the Wimbledon Theatre Studio, and that went down really well. I was trying to sell *Holes* as an idea to theatres and there was a lot of interest. But I never quite managed to land it as a full-scale production. So of course, when I was appointed artistic director at Nottingham Playhouse, I finally got to programme *Holes* myself! We've been working on it for over 10 years, and the version we put on at Nottingham was so successful that Fiery Angel, our producers, picked it up and decided to tour the Playhouse production around the UK."

The popular film adaptation of *Holes*, starring Shia LeBeouf and Sigourney Weaver, was released back in 2003. What can fans expect from the stage version?

"Lots of people are *huge* fans of that film, or have only seen the film and never read the book. There's a lot to admire about the movie, especially the cast, but theatre definitely requires the audience to use their imagination a little more. The geographical location is one of the most important parts of the story because it's so evocative, but we can't create that naturalistically on stage. We have to use signifiers in the set, props and costume to transport people to the desert location or to the top of the mountain, God's Thumb, and back in time to the 1890s, when Green Lake was a flourishing community with an actual lake. The power of imagination is the power of theatre. That's the major difference.

"Also, there are quite a large number of characters, so in our production you'll see an actor taking on five, six, seven or more different roles. There's a huge pleasure in seeing the same person transform from a 40-year-old camp warden to an 85-year-old Latvian pig breeder! I think asking the audience to invest in this journey and take a very active part in creating it very much fits *Holes* anyway. Sachar's story is very much about believing in yourself, others and the world - and we ask our audience to believe in the production."

Other creatives who've worked on the show include Simon Kelly, who designed for the acclaimed adaptation of *Noughts And Crosses*. The puppetry, meanwhile, is the brainchild of War Horse's Matthew Forbes.

"Undoubtedly our creative team is why we

were so successful in Nottingham. Family shows do often require a large creative team, to use as many different theatrical elements as possible in a collaborative way to create an engaging story. So we knew there'd have to be puppetry because the dangerous yellow-spotted lizard is a huge part of *Holes*. All the characters are terrified of the lizard, which can kill with a single bite, so the audience really needs to believe in that or the stakes of the story fall short. We needed a really good puppetry designer and director to achieve that, so Matt was the absolutely perfect person. Likewise, with the set design from Simon, the story takes place in so many different locations and so many different timelines that a really skilled designer was essential. In the play, there's 1860s Latvia, Greenlake in the 1890s and Stanley's present day, which is mid-'90s for us. We needed a very fluid set design that could cross between the different timelines in an imaginative way. It's a real collaborative team effort. *Holes* also has plenty of music and choreography working alongside the other disciplines."

Adam is most proud of the intense emotional response of audiences to the Nottingham Playhouse production: "The audience really buy into the world we've created on stage and really care about our characters. For example, when Stanley and Zero are under threat at the end, the audience are gasping out loud and shouting out against the baddie - and are even moved to tears by the positive ending. So even though this is a very stripped-back production that asks the audience to really work hard with their imaginations, it feels like we've really been able to get to the heart of Sachar's story, to the point where they feel like they're actually in the middle of it themselves."

Adam admits that he's envious of people who have yet to discover the delights of *Holes*: "If you know the book or the film, then our production is a real joy to relive. If you're new to the story, then you're in a really privileged position because it's a truly gripping tale, with so many twists and turns. I'm really envious of anyone encountering this story for the first time!"

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**Holes runs at the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, from Tuesday 18 to Saturday 22 February, Malvern Festival Theatre from Wednesday 4 to Saturday 7 March and Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Tuesday 19 to Saturday 23 May.**





# When the cat prowls, the flock takes fright...

**Former Coronation Street star Tracy Shaw talks about her spooky role in a new touring production of The Cat And The Canary...**

## **What's The Cat And The Canary about, Tracy?**

Mr West was a millionaire who died quite some time ago. His solicitors have collected his whole family together 20 years later to announce who he named as his heir. They all arrive in the middle of nowhere in Devon, at the creepy old house where he used to live. His housekeeper still lives there, keeping the property just as it was when Mr West was alive. There's obviously a lot of tension between the family members about who is going to inherit his money. Right at the beginning of the play, the heir is announced, but then the plot thickens as people start disappearing.

## **Who do you play?**

My character is Annabelle West. She's a successful writer who left the country a few years ago but has now come back. She also spent some time in the house with her grandfather years and years ago. The psychological complexity of this piece really is quite huge, especially for my character.

## **The show has an impressive cast, too. What are they like to work with?**

They're so talented. Britt Ekland is our 'housekeeper' - she's just marvellous... And I grew up listening to Marti Webb's fantastic voice. Ben Nealon from Soldier Soldier is brilliant, and so is Gary Webster from Minder. Mark Jordon, who played my husband in Casualty a few years ago, is a pleasure to work with again. It's an absolute honour to be working on such a stimulating project with a

company of lovely actors who I really admire.

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

I don't think I've ever before had the chance to work on a piece that's been updated because of the reality of how we watch theatre and TV nowadays. Things are faster and not so obvious now. To do that work tastefully to a play written in the 1920s, and not just to produce your average whodunnit, is quite difficult. We want people to come along, watch the show and be enthralled. We have the most amazing set. The action takes place in the big old house, so it's got these fabulously eerie paintings with staring eyes! As an actor, getting this job makes me feel like I'm the cat who got the cream.

## **People might think that because you're a well-known television face, you don't have to audition...**

There are periods where I think, "Maybe my time's up". But the truth is that it's absolutely right that I find myself sitting there with another hundred people who look similar to me. It keeps me really grounded, and I never take anything for granted. Then, when I get that part and end up back on stage or TV, I feel like the luckiest person alive because I'm doing a job that I love. That's what this business is like. There are a lot of knocks, but you occasionally get a job that's as stimulating as this one. I'm really grateful.

## **How do you feel about taking The Cat And The Canary on tour around the UK?**

I love going on tour. I miss my children,

obviously, but I get to visit these lovely places around England, work in these gorgeous theatres and entertain people. That makes me feel alive. I'm such a theatre geek in the sense that I just get excited about the history and the way they're built and the tiles backstage.

## **Audiences know you best for your television work...**

I sort of fell into TV, but I still adore it. Because I did Corrie for so long, I feel that television is second nature to me, but there's something about theatre that just makes me feel alive. That's why I took on this job - you have to work your brain so much harder. I have to be so alive every night; it really keeps me on my toes.

## **What was it like to be part of Coronation Street?**

It was magic. Growing up, I used to spend a lot of time with my great grandma watching the show. I learned TV in Corrie. I love working with people I can learn from - admiring them and constantly learning - and I worked with the most amazing people on that show. I'd only just come out of drama school and was suddenly catapulted into a world I was unfamiliar with. I rolled with it and never regretted it for a minute. It's the most prestigious programme I've ever worked on, and I'm thoroughly proud to have been a part of it.

**The Cat And The Canary shows at Malvern Theatres from Monday 17 to Saturday 22 February.**



## The Boy In The Dress

Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, until Sun 8 March

David Walliams' *The Boy In The Dress* - helmed by RSC Artistic Director Gregory Doran - ticks all the boxes of the feelgood family musical: young protagonists, splendidly choreographed scenes (including football playing and disco dancing), a lightweight but thoroughly engaging storyline, a timely message (about embracing difference) and a fantastically memorable score (by one of the world's hottest songwriting partnerships - Robbie Williams and Guy Chambers). The show is fun, fast, lively, colourful, clever and utterly absorbing, with an energetic and confident cast who've evidently got the greatest of faith in their material and more than enough talent to maximise the magic.

## The Strange Tale Of Charlie Chaplin And Stan Laurel

The REP, Birmingham,  
Tues 25 - Sat 29 February

A little known fact about silent-era Hollywood movie star Charlie Chaplin and his fellow Englishman, Stan Laurel - who, of course, found fame as part of a double-act with Oliver Hardy - is that they were both members of the famous Fred Karno music-hall troupe that set sail for New York in 1910. Stan, who understudied Charlie on arrival in the US, returned home shortly afterwards. His big break lay several years ahead of him... Chaplin, by contrast, had become a global name within five years of setting foot on American shores.

In a show which, on its producers' own admission, plays somewhat fast and loose with the truth, these two early-20th-century funnymen are rightly celebrated for their immense contribution to cinematic comedy. A post-show discussion will take place after the performance on the 26th.

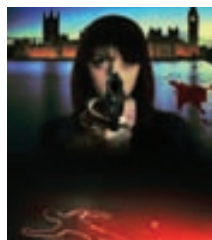


## Revenge

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Thurs 13 - Sat 15 February; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Mon 17 & Tues 18 February

An MP with a charmed life, a journalist with an axe to grind, and a dead body that brings the two protagonists into close and incendiary contact with one another...

Louise Jameson, best known to oldies who remember 1980s television as the long-time love interest of Jersey-based copper Jim Bergerac, is the woman at the helm of this well-reviewed touring show.



## The Ballad Of Maria Marten

New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme,  
Wed 26 - Sat 29 February

In Suffolk in the summer of 1827, Maria Marten was the victim of what would become known as The Red Barn Murder. Not only did news of the killing send immediate shockwaves throughout the nation, but in the near-two centuries which have followed, the story of Maria's tragic demise has provided inspiration for playwrights and filmmakers across the globe. But what about the woman at the centre of the tragedy? What was her story? This 'spinetling' new appraisal of events in the red barn aims to find out...

## First Time

Lichfield Garrick, Fri 7 February

Edinburgh Fringe star Nathaniel Hall here presents a funny and frank autobiographical solo show about 'staying positive in a negative world'.

Nathaniel contracted HIV during his first ever sexual encounter, aged 16.

"At a time when I was trying to make sense of my sexuality," he recalls, "I was getting this message that gay men just get AIDS and die anyway, so what was the point."

"The show is very funny. I think there's humour hidden in even the darkest places, and you're never too far from a laugh in First Time. It also has fabulous storytelling, some bad drag, audience participation and moments of quiet reflection, but it ends in a really hopeful place."



## The Cat And The Canary

Malvern Theatres, Mon 17 - Sat 22 February

Erstwhile sex symbol, former Mrs Peter Sellers and one-time 'Bond girl' Britt Ekland heads the cast of this famous murder-mystery, a story that's been adapted for the cinema on three separate occasions, most famously with Bob Hope taking top billing. When the descendants of the late Mr West gather at a remote mansion to find out who will inherit his fortune, events take an unexpected and deadly turn... Presented by the Classic Theatre Company.





## Room On The Broom

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent,  
Mon 3 & Tues 4 February

Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler, the creators of *The Gruffalo* and *We're Going On A Bear Hunt*, are the team behind this 'spell-binding' tale of a witch who makes the mistake of thinking she can fit a daft dog, a beautiful bird and a friendly frog - as well as her own cat - on her broomstick without it snapping in two.

And when a hungry dragon appears, things really start to hot up...

Tall Stories is the highly rated company presenting this Olivier Award-nominated show for children aged three and older.

## Puss In Boots

The REP, Birmingham, Fri 14 & Sat 15 February

Smoke, mirrors, hidden trapdoors, a host of puppets, a working windmill and an avalanche of fruit & nuts - oh, and a talking cat - ensure that this latest presentation of the ever-enchanted tale - of *Puss In Boots* will keep children well and truly entertained. CBeebies' Patrick Lynch is the man coordinating the fur-filled fun for moggie-loving youngsters to enjoy.



## Milkshake! LIVE

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Sun 16 February;  
The Place, Telford, Shropshire, Sat 22 February;  
Lichfield Garrick, Sat 7 March

Milkshake Monkey's desire to put on a new musical has hit the skids due to a nasty bout of rampant stage fright - so thank heaven that Fireman Sam, Noddy, Shimmer & Shine and all their friends are on hand to help out... If you've watched the TV series and/or been to a previous live production, you'll already know what to expect from this particular Milkshake! show. If not, get ready for an event that promises lots of laughter, bucketloads of family fun, bags of audience participation and plenty of singing and dancing.

## The Three Billy Goats Gruff

The Core Theatre, Solihull, Wed 19 February

Wondering what to do with your three-to-seven-year-olds during the half-term break? Well, if you take them along to this 'trip-trapping musical adventure', then not only will one of the holiday afternoons be beautifully taken care of, there's also every chance that they'll have a thoroughly smashing time. With songs and dances to clap along to and not one but three billy goats gruff taking perilous journeys across a rickety bridge in search of greener pastures, what's not to enjoy?...



## Exciting Science

Stourbridge Town Hall, Wed 19 February

Designed to enlighten, educate and entertain children aged four and older, *Exciting Science* promises plenty of 'wiz, bang, pop and splurt', as the show's scientists carry out all manner of fun and fact-filled live experiments. So if you think your kids would enjoy seeing some boffins create a volcanic eruption, turn a vacuum cleaner into a missile

launcher and take aim with a smoke blaster, then this is definitely the show to check out.



## What A Wonderful World

Artrix, Bromsgrove, Sun 16 & Mon 17 February

"Before anything new is made, it must first be dreamed," say Lyngo Theatre in explaining their new show. "From our moon-base in the Sea of Tranquility, we get a great view of the earth, and it's time to make a new one just like we do every night! What shall we put in tomorrow's world? Snowballs and flamingos, of course! So all aboard the sleeper train as it takes us on our dream voyage.

"We start with putting the stars in the sky and move through history, discovering fire all over again and finally arriving at the one-world tree, where we celebrate the new world that we made all together.

"This is a truly amazing romp through the universe, where you can get your hands on the stuff of creation!"





# The Red Shoes

**Matthew Bourne's award-winning smash-hit returns to the Midlands...**





Three years after its original much-heralded run at Birmingham Hippodrome, Matthew Bourne's *The Red Shoes* is making a highly anticipated return to the venue.

The production takes many of its cues from the 1948 film of the same title, which found its own inspiration in Hans Christian Andersen's fairytale about a pair of enchanted shoes that force their wearer to dance until she dies. The movie reworks Andersen's warning against vanity into a tale of all-consuming, almost Faustian ambition.

Widely regarded as the greatest dance film ever made, *The Red Shoes* centres on young ballerina and star in the making Vicky Page. When Vicky falls for the company's charismatic composer, Julian Craster, the jealous Lermontov forces her to choose between love and her career, knowing full well that for Vicky, dancing is as important as life itself.

Bourne's stunning adaptation reinvents the story live on stage, brilliantly capturing a



**“It's such a powerful story and Matthew tells it really beautifully. It transports you. It's sensational. It really is sensational.”**

David Walliams



sense of the film's strange, unsettling atmosphere and delving deep into the complex psychology of the characters.

Producing a stage version of the movie had been on Matthew's to-do list for quite some time. On rewatching the film, he was surprised to find himself feeling more sympathetic towards the manipulative instructor than he had been in the past.

**“Every duet, every group number, you know exactly what's going on from the movement. It's like watching dialogue.”**

Zizi Strallen

In Bourne's take on the story, Vicky has even more reason to be ambitious. A wartime orphan living with an increasingly distant aunt, the on-stage Vicky is far less privileged than the film Vicky. Like Matthew himself, she begins as something of an outsider, taking nothing for granted and being under no illusion about how hard she must work for every success. To have come so far perhaps makes the prospect of hanging up her ballet shoes all the more difficult to accept.



In another nod to the movie, the whole score for the production has been pieced together from works by legendary film composer Bernard Hermann - best known for his iconic soundtracks to *The Twilight Zone* and Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*.

Celebrities across the globe have been lavish in their praise of Bourne's sumptuous production, with Liza Minnelli declaring: "I've never seen anything like this. I'm in love!"

Emmerdale actor and *Strictly Come Dancing* 2019 winner Kelvin Fletcher has also heaped praise on *The Red Shoes*. A novice when it comes to watching live ballet, Kelvin said of the production: "It just blew me away, it really did. The first thing I did when the show finished, I texted Oti (Mabuse) and said, you have to come and see this; it's amazing!"

**The Red Shoes shows at Birmingham Hippodrome from Tuesday 11 to Saturday 15 February.**



**“The genius about Matthew's work is that you could watch it a hundred times and every time you'd discover a different layer.”**

Bruno Tonioli



# REANIMATING HISTORY

**Journalist and dramatist Juliet Gilkes Romero talks about *The Whip*, her provocative new play about the British abolition of slavery...**

New play *The Whip* captures the 'moment' when people of many different political persuasions collide in 1830s London. This Royal Shakespeare Company production explores the concerns of different people in Britain in the lead-up to the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833. What's the price of the slaves' freedom? Who should shoulder that cost?

And why not focus on moral conundrums much closer to home?

"Abolition was delivered in Britain in 1834, following an Act of Parliament in 1833," says dramatist Juliet Gilkes Romero, the woman behind the play. "Some 800,000 Caribbean slaves were freed following a compensation

award to the slave owners in the Abolition Act. But actually, afterwards, the slaves were required to work an apprenticeship of up to seven years because it was considered that they needed to prepare for their freedom. That meant they continued working for their former owners for no pay, but the owners no longer felt responsible for their care because



the slaves were no longer their property.

“Following wide-scale protests across the Caribbean, the apprenticeship scheme had to be abolished, and in 1838 slaves were finally free. I think it’s relatively unknown that the act which passed in 1833 wasn’t quite the abolition of slavery it claimed to be.

“The other thing that people will probably find surprising is the slavery compensation act itself. Money was borrowed - 40% of the government’s national budget - to pay off already-wealthy slave owners. It was £20million at the time, which equates to between £20billion and £23billion in today’s terms! Slave owners became fantastically rich. The loan for this pay-off ended in 2015, so if you were working in and before that year, then that’s where some of your taxes were going. For me, as a descendant of the slave trade, I was astonished to find that out. I got access to the actual Abolition Act from 1833 and the transcripts from the actual debates from the House of Commons. I’ve transferred a lot of the language that was used there and channelled people’s real concerns into the play. What really excites me as a journalist and as a dramatist is handing these untold stories over to the public. I wouldn’t say my writing is didactic; I’m exploring the handprint of the past on the present day, but through very human stories. I don’t want to be preachy, and *The Whip* certainly isn’t like that at all. I want my writing to pose lots of questions to the audience, rather than just telling them what to think.”

Juliet was spurred on to write the play by the general lack of knowledge Brits have regarding all aspects of slavery...

“On reflection I’m surprised that schools weren’t required to cover the Slave Trade more - it was the largest mass deportation of people in history and Britain played a huge part. For me, this has always been a burning issue. As a writer, I like to approach my work from an unusual point of view, so when I came across this idea of weighing up the worth of hundreds of thousands of people’s freedom against what Britain could afford in monetary terms, it really caught my attention. Britain had seen that the trade was both becoming unworkable and obviously morally wrong. They’d seen what had happened to the French in Haiti when their slaves rebelled, and they could see across the pond that America wasn’t coming to a compromise - a lack of compromise that eventually led to civil war, as the south was fantastically wealthy from the Slave Trade, while the industrial north wasn’t. The Abolition Bill was neces-

sary, and although it was certainly flawed, Britain achieved it. That really should be admired in the context of the politics of the time. Britain was truly leading the way. The Whip really focuses on this fraught, intense battle Britain has between morality and economy. Britain really was leaping off a cliff not knowing the financial repercussions, and essentially mortgaged the future of generations to come - a debt we only finished paying five years ago.

“While *The Whip* is a really important part of Black British history, it’s definitely a multi-faceted story. What fascinated me about 1833 was that so much else was going on in Britain besides Abolition. In 1832, the Reform Act came about that meant men who weren’t landed gentry could vote. MPs didn’t get a salary, so it just wasn’t an option for working men who weren’t part of the elite. The general public really weren’t being represented in the House of Commons. The 1830s is where all of this starts to collide, and that’s what *The Whip* is all about. What happened in these years is really revolutionary. The Factory Act stopped children of a certain age working for more than 10 hours, as back then children as young as five were working in British cotton mills. So the piece isn’t just about the emancipation of slaves in the Caribbean, but also the emancipation of working children and the working-class in general.”

Very individual, human stories are central to *The Whip*. Many of its characters are based on real-life figures.

“The majority of the action takes place either in the House of Commons itself, or in the house of one of the politicians - the chief whip, Boyd, whose job it is to drum up support and deliver the Abolition Act through the Commons. He has a huge battle trying to deliver this, as many of the house have their own interests in cotton and the Slave Trade. We also meet Lord Melbourne - loosely based on Lord Melbourne, the then home secretary - and explore his machinations on either side of the debate. We also encounter opposition MPs led by a back-bencher who has slaves and has been made head of the West India Committee, which was a pressure group making sure slave owners were properly compensated for what they would get per head of slave. Many MPs in the Commons were either slave owners or had cotton factories in Britain.

“Another character, Mercy, is based on Mary Prince, a runaway slave who came to Britain and became the first black woman to deliver a petition to parliament. She spoke about her

own experience of the dreadful, inhumane abuses on the plantations. In the play, Mercy is working very closely with the chief whip to try and deliver this act.

“Another prominent woman is Horatia, who has fled working in the north and lost her child from being crushed to death in a cotton mill. She represents that side of the British story. She ends up working in the home of the chief whip, and her interest is in the state of Britain’s factories and getting children out of those working conditions, rather than being concerned with the fate of slaves in a far-off colony. So when these two women meet, they’re rivals in some way and have different political agendas, but they slowly begin to realise the commonality in their causes.

“Horatia and Mercy are examples of the early seeds of women’s suffrage. There’s a very clear narrative when we think of the suffragettes paving the way for women to vote, but their battle started way, way before then. While men certainly had the political voice in the 1830s, women have a very strong voice in *The Whip*. So the piece is certainly also about the emancipation of women, and that definitely resonates today. I don’t think enough has changed, particularly if you look at the proportion of women in modern slavery, or the gender pay gap. Mercy and Horatia are both very strong, intelligent women who go about politics in different ways.

“*The Whip* is all about how important it is to be heard. Another character is Edmund, a young, escaped slave who Boyd has taken in and raised to be an English gentleman. So we also have *his* story, about what it means to completely lose who you are; how it feels to be plucked from your home, your family, and suddenly have an English home instead. So the play explores many different identities that Britons can relate to.”

Juliet is certain *The Whip* has universal resonance: “This play speaks to so many different aspects of British society, regardless of background. *The Whip* has a full 360-degree view of 1830s Britain that resonates today and tells a powerful story that I hope opens up many discussions. When I see theatre, I want to be set alight with passion and continue to debate well beyond the curtain falling - and I think *The Whip* will do that.”

**The Whip shows at the Swan Theatre, Stratford-Upon-Avon, from Saturday 1 February to Saturday 21 March.**

## Dance previews from around the region

### Richard Alston Dance

Malvern Theatres,  
Tues 11 & Wed 12 February

A choreographer who's very much at the forefront of contemporary dance in the UK, Richard Alston takes inspiration directly from the music he uses. This month sees Alston's highly rated company perform in Malvern for the 22nd and, sadly, last ever time; the ensemble is calling it a day after 25 years of impressive performances.

The decision to shut up shop has been made as a result of the way in which the Arts Council funds its clients.

"When you reapply [for a grant],"

Richard explains, "you have to present a business plan and make changes to what you're doing. I felt that there was a lot of pressure on The Place, our London home, to make some kind of change with the company, and instead to give money to younger choreographers, who would then be touring."



### Gary Clarke Company: Wasteland

Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome, Thurs 27 & Fri 28 February

Following on from Coal, his show about the 1984/85 Miners Strike, Gary Clarke here turns his attention to the early 1990s, a time when the coal industry was in terminal decline. It was also a period when Britain's illegal rave scene was flourishing. A raver himself, Gary has brought together the two at-first-glance-

unconnected subjects in this sequel to Coal. "Rave was a subculture that came out of oppression," explains the Barnsley-born choreographer. "The factories, warehouses and mills were now home to new communities. But rather than working, those communities were dancing and playing music."



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## Giovanni Pernice: This Is Me

Albany Theatre, Coventry, Thurs 27 February;  
Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sat 21 March;  
Birmingham Town Hall, Fri 27 March; Stafford  
Gatehouse Theatre, Sun 7 June; The Place,  
Telford, Thurs 25 June

There's no Strictly Live tour for Giovanni Pernice this year - the hugely popular dancer has been way too busy getting ready to hit the road with this brand new show of his own. A homage to the music and dances which have inspired him on his journey from competition dancer to one of Strictly's biggest stars, This Is Me sees Giovanni bringing together his natural Italian charm with 'beautiful choreography and a fabulous soundtrack'. He's joined by a cast of professional dancers for what will be his fourth touring show.



## Autin Dance Theatre: Square One

Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham,  
Wed 12 February

Project-based professional company Autin Dance Theatre make a welcome return with a show that delves into its founder & choreographer Johnny Autin's own personal journeys through mental, physical and spiritual changes. Presented as a 'work in progress', the 30-minute solo production, combining digital media and dance theatre, is followed by a Q&A with Autin. "We draw on contemporary social issues and events to make work which is beautifully crafted, accessible and relevant," says Johnny. "The company is gaining a reputation for creating powerful performances, catapulting audiences into intense dance-worlds which we hope will resonate with them long after they leave the auditorium."



## Birmingham Royal Ballet: Swan Lake

Birmingham Hippodrome, Tues 18 - Sat 29 February

Birmingham Royal Ballet here presents a spectacular production of a timeless classic. Set to Tchaikovsky's mesmerising score, Swan Lake tells the story of Odette, a beautiful princess who, caught under the wicked spell of the evil Von Rothbart, must

spend the daytime hours as a swan, returning to human form only when night falls... A sumptuous visual feast, BRB's show presents an evening of ballet which is ideal not only for the seasoned dance-goer but also the first-time trier.

## BLKDOG

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry,  
Tues 11 February

"I feel like I'm speaking on behalf of young people who are angry," says choreographer Botis Seva in talking about his critically acclaimed show. "I don't believe it's just me. I'm saying it for them, too." Co-produced by Sadler's Wells London and Seva's powerhouse company, Far From The Norm, BLKDOG blends hip-hop dance with free-form antics to present a bleak, vital and haunting commentary on the challenges of being a childlike adult and an untamed artist.



## Joss Arnott Dance

Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton,  
Fri 14 February

Joss Arnott's shows are highly charged, visually stunning and technically brilliant - and this latest production promises more of the same. When Worlds Collide has been described as a powerful, exhilarating masterclass featuring an original, cinematic music score and impressive lighting. The bill also features Fuel - a work inspired by the young company's seemingly boundless energy - and An Event - a piece exploring how people feel in that moment between everything being fine and everything falling apart.





# Twenty years in dance...

**2 Faced Dance Artistic Director Tamsin Fitzgerald talks about the company's latest triple bill featuring an exciting new piece by choreographer Fleur Darkin...**

**Tell us about the title of the programme - Everything [But The Girl]. What's its significance, Tamsin?**

We sat down as a team to all throw our suggestions for names into the hat. We had a long chat about perceptions of the company, the type of work we do and the fact that often audiences think that the work is created by a man or the company is run by a man. As someone growing up in the '90s, I often listened to the group Everything But The Girl, and although the band was named after a shop in Hull, something about the phrase resonated for me. It's our 20th anniversary, so we're bringing *Everything* together to celebrate this and [But The Girl] is a play on the fact that I founded the company and have created 90% of the work to date. So really it's all about the girl/woman...you just never physically see her.

**Have you and Fleur Darkin worked together before, and what is it about her work that inspired you to commission her to make a piece for 2Faced Dance's 20th anniversary?**

I've never worked with Fleur before, but I've seen some of the work that she did for Scottish Dance Theatre. We commissioned Fleur because she's someone who works very differently from me. Her work is incredibly theatrical and she's someone who has challenged the status quo. She's bright, talented and an incredibly generous person who is also willing to work collaboratively. These are rare attributes but they appeal to me. She's bold, and we like bold at 2Faced Dance.

**In '70' are any of the original dancers performing? How did you cast both your pieces?**

None of the original '70' dancers are performing in the work, but all the original

dancers are still performing or have gone on to build their own companies. I cast it based on the original choreography and have tried to pair up the skill level, individuality and style of each dancer. It's a tricky one when you create work on the individuality of a dancer rather than create movement that any dancer could do. It's harder work to then recreate or reimagine a work on a new company, but it's worked and I'd forgotten what an incredible piece it is. We've made some small changes and tweaks to the choreographic work. The main change is that at certain tour dates we will have live musicians accompanying the work. Alex Baranowski has re-scored the work so that it can be accompanied by some incredible musicians. We're working with Birmingham Contemporary Music Group on this element, and I think it's going to be pretty special.

**How does it feel to be celebrating 20 years in the dance industry?**

I think about all the other dance companies which are either still running or have folded, the companies that inspired me to start dancing or who I yearned to be a part of, and I think, 'Wow, 20 years... that really is some bloody brilliant achievement!' From having no funding to becoming an NPO, to employing a team, to travelling round the world, to changing lives and to making all of that work based in a place that has little cultural landscape - it's phenomenal, really. It's really about the people who've been part of that journey, without whom I couldn't have made it work.

**What are the highlights of the company's 20th anniversary?**

The trip to Haiti just after the earthquake, which inspired '70', is one of my most vivid

memories. Seeing the small difference that dance made to children who had nothing was very moving. I felt very emotional throughout the trip. It was totally inspiring.

The company's international reputation is very important, and I know I'm extremely fortunate to have the opportunity to travel and tour to different countries. Last year I was commissioned to create a new work and dance film for UCCA Dune Art Museum in China. I have never seen a building like it - it's completely space-age! It's an incredible collection of curved white buildings carved into a dune on a beach in the coastal city of Qinhuangdao in China. We had a great time there and met some wonderful people. We performed at the MTV Europe Awards in Lisbon and were subsequently invited to audition for Madonna! At the time, I was thinking, "But we're just a little youth dance group from nowhere, so why does Madonna want to work with us?" We didn't get the gig, but boy, was I proud!

And I'm particularly proud of creating and running our all-female choreography programme, The Bench, which was designed to encourage women to develop the necessary shift in mindset to push past the glass ceiling and create new work. We may not have changed the world, but I think we made a difference.

.....

**2Faced Dance's Everything (But The Girl) is performed in the Patrick Studio at Birmingham Hippodrome on Thursday 6 & Friday 7 February.**

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## Birds Of Prey: And The Fantabulous Emancipation Of One Harley Quinn CERT 15

Starring **Margot Robbie, Mary Elizabeth Winstead, Jurnee Smollett-Bell, Rosie Perez, Chris Messina, Ella Jay Basco, Ali Wong, Ewan McGregor**  
Directed by **Cathy Yan (USA)**

Margot Robbie as Harley Quinn was the best thing about the critically derided *Suicide Squad* (2016) and now, rightly, she gets a movie all to herself. Here, Harley has split up with her boyfriend the Joker (who could really do with his own movie) and teams up with the superheroes Black Canary and Huntress to help save a young girl with a price on her head, targeted by the awful, iron-fisted Black Mask (Ewan McGregor). In keeping with this new brand of female heroism, *Birds Of Prey* is directed by a woman, the Chinese-American Cathy Yan. And with Margot Robbie on board as producer, one hopes that this will do every bit as well as *Wonder Woman* and *Captain Marvel*, although the film's restrictive certificate will limit its demographic reach. Still, there's already talk of a sequel, dubbed *Gotham City Sirens*.

**Released Fri 7 February**



**EDITOR'S CHOICE**

### Film highlights released in February...

#### Dolittle CERT PG (106 mins)

Starring **Robert Downey Jr, Antonio Banderas, Michael Sheen, Jessie Buckley**, and the voices of **Emma Thompson, Rami Malek, Tom Holland, Ralph Fiennes**  
Directed by **Stephen Gaghan (USA)**

Hugh Lofting's immortal children's novel about the veterinarian who can talk to animals is back in a new live-action adaptation. Robert Downey Jr follows in the footsteps of Rex Harrison and Eddie Murphy as the eccentric hermit with a gift for zoological linguistics. The reported re-shoots don't bode well, though.

**Released Fri 7 February**



#### Underwater CERT 15 (95 mins)

Starring **Kristen Stewart, Vincent Cassel, Jessica Henwick, John Gallagher Jr, Mamoudou Athie, TJ Miller**  
Directed by **William Eubank (USA)**



When an earthquake wrecks their subterranean laboratory, a crew of underwater researchers find themselves prey to creatures of the deep. No doubt the critters are furious about the plastic waste they've been exposed to...

**Released Fri 7 February**

#### Fantasy Island CERT tbc

Starring **Michael Peña, Maggie Q, Lucy Hale, Austin Stowell, Portia Doubleday, Michael Rooker**  
Directed by **Jeff Wadlow (USA)**

Based on the cult TV series of 1977, this big-screen version adds a decided note of horror. Here, the enigmatic Mr Roarke (Peña) facilitates his clients' wildest dreams on his remote tropical island, when those fantasies suddenly turn pear-shaped.

**Released Fri 14 February**



## Film highlights released in February...

### Emma CERT tbc

Starring **Anya Taylor-Joy, Johnny Flynn, Bill Nighy, Mia Goth, Miranda Hart, Josh O'Connor**  
Directed by **Autumn de Wilde (UK/USA)**



It's been four years since we've seen a big-screen Jane Austen adaptation and 24 years since Gwyneth Paltrow played the rich, conniving and fanciful Emma Woodhouse on film. Here, Anya Taylor-Joy (The Witch, Split, Glass) dons the bustles and bonnets in a production directed by the New York photographer Autumn de Wilde.

**Released Fri 14 February**

### The Public CERT 15 (119 mins)

Starring **Alec Baldwin, Emilio Estevez, Jena Malone, Taylor Schilling, Christian Slater, Gabrielle Union, Michael K. Williams, Jeffrey Wright** Directed by **Emilio Estevez (USA)**

When a bitter cold front descends on Cincinnati, a group of homeless people occupy the public library. But in no time the sit-in becomes an opportunity for police aggression and political ascendancy.

**Released Fri 14 February**

### Sonic The Hedgehog CERT tbc

Starring **James Marsden, Jim Carrey, Ben Schwartz** (as the voice of Sonic), **Tika Sumpter, Neal McDonough**  
Directed by **Jeff Fowler (USA)**



Sonic is not a real hedgehog, of course, but a super-fast extraterrestrial who arrives on Earth to escape intergalactic profiteers. But then he's hunted by a maniacal roboticist (Jim Carrey), who also wants to exploit his powers. Based on the Sega video game. Older readers may remember Jim Carrey from such films as Dumb And Dumber and The Truman Show.

**Released Fri 14 February**

38 [whatsonlive.co.uk](http://whatsonlive.co.uk)

### Brahms: The Boy II CERT tbc

Starring **Katie Holmes, Ralph Ineson, Owain Yeoman, Christopher Convery**  
Directed by **William Brent Bell (USA)**

Not surprisingly, this is a sequel to The Boy (2016), in which a nanny was expected to babysit a porcelain doll called Brahms. Now a new family moves into the creepy Heelshire Mansion, where the youngest son discovers that Brahms is still resident. You can't keep a good doll down...

**Released Fri 21 February**

### The Call Of The Wild CERT tbc

Starring **Harrison Ford, Dan Stevens, Omar Sy, Karen Gillan, Bradley Whitford**  
Directed by **Chris Sanders (USA)**



Another familiar American tale is brought back to the big screen - again - with Harrison Ford as the outdoorsman who befriends Buck, the St Bernard/Scotch collie sold to freight haulers in the Yukon. Based on the 1935 adaptation of the Jack London novel (which starred Clark Gable and Loretta Young).

**Released Fri 21 February**

### Greed CERT 15 (104 mins)

Starring **Steve Coogan, David Mitchell, Isla Fisher, Ollie Locke, Sophie Cookson, Asa Butterfield**  
Directed by **Michael Winterbottom (UK)**

Filmed on the Greek island of Mykonos, Michael Winterbottom's latest satire focuses on a high street fashion mogul with more money than sense. But as Sir Richard McCreadie (Coogan) begins to celebrate his 50th birthday, things start to go awry...

**Released Fri 21 February**



### Like A Boss CERT 15 (83 mins)

Starring **Tiffany Haddish, Rose Byrne, Salma Hayek, Jennifer Coolidge, Natasha Rothwell, Billy Porter**  
Directed by **Miguel Arteta (USA)**

Two friends as different as chalk and cheddar set up a cosmetics firm together and immediately get into financial trouble... Expect the comedy to be on the broad side.

**Released Fri 21 February**

### Little Joe CERT 12a (105 mins)

Starring **Emily Beecham, Ben Whishaw, Kerry Fox, Kit Connor, David Wilmot, Lindsay Duncan**  
Directed by **Jessica Hausner (UK/Germany/Austria)**

Joe is the recipient of a special plant designed to bring pleasure, created by his mother, Alice, a corporate plant breeder. But the flower has other ideas... Emily Beecham won the best actress award at Cannes last year for her part as Alice.

**Released Fri 21 February**



### Dark Waters CERT 12a (126 mins)

Starring **Mark Ruffalo, Anne Hathaway, Tim Robbins, Bill Camp, Victor Garber, Bill Pullman**  
Directed by **Todd Haynes (USA)**



Partly based on an article in The New York Times Magazine, this legal thriller stars Mark Ruffalo as a corporate lawyer who defends chemical companies against allegations of pollution. But when he visits an affected farm in West Virginia - close to where his grandmother lives - he can no longer turn a blind eye...

**Released Fri 28 February**



## Parasite CERT 15 (132 mins)

Starring **Song Kang-ho, Lee Sun-kyun, Cho Yeo-jeong, Choi Woo-shik, Park So-dam**  
Directed by **Bong Joon-ho (South Korea)**

Parasite is an odd beast, a black comedy that wants to be Yorgos Lanthimos by way of Park Chan-wook. It's perhaps best that you know no more than that as the film's impact rests on its ability to surprise. It is, though, deliciously crafted and is as deadpan as a black skillet. A Seoul family struggles to make ends meet by constructing pizza boxes, a humiliating task as they're not very good at it.

Then a school friend of Ki-woo's suggests that he could make a little money in the holidays by tutoring the teenage daughter of a wealthy family he knows. It's certainly a start and soon Ki-woo has got his sister a job as an art therapist in the same household... It's an artful conceit dexterously unfolded by the Korean director Bong Joon-ho, winning the Palme d'Or at Cannes last year on a unanimous vote. It also snared the Golden Globe award for best foreign-language film and has six Oscar nominations under its sash.

**Released Fri 7 February**



**CRITIC'S CHOICE**

## Downhill CERT tbc

Starring **Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Will Ferrell, Miranda Otto, Zoë Chao, Zach Woods, Alex Macqueen**  
Directed by **Nat Faxon and Jim Rash (USA)**

A remake of the Swedish masterpiece Force Majeure (2014), Downhill is the story of a family involved in an avalanche and of the emotional consequences. While the original was not without its streaks of black humour, the humour would seem to be more at the forefront here, which could be interesting.

**Released Fri 28 February**



## The Invisible Man CERT tbc

Starring **Elisabeth Moss, Oliver Jackson-Cohen, Aldis Hodge, Storm Reid, Harriet Dyer**  
Directed by **Leigh Whannell (Australia/USA)**



When an abused wife inherits her late husband's fortune, she suspects there is more to the set-up than the eye can see... In spite of the numerous adaptations of HG Wells' 1897 classic, this is actually a reboot of James Whales' 1933 film version. However, with the advances in CGI, this man should look genuinely invisible.

**Released Fri 28 February**

## True History Of The Kelly Gang CERT 18 (124mins)

Starring **George MacKay, Essie Davis, Nicholas Hoult, Thomasin McKenzie, Charlie Hunnam, Russell Crowe**  
Directed by **Justin Kurzel (Australia/UK)**

The legendary outlaw and bushranger Ned Kelly goes on the run from the authorities in 1870s' Australia. Based on the Booker Prize-winning novel by Peter Carey.

**Released Fri 28 February**





## Lindsey Mendick: The Yellow Wallpaper

Eastside Projects, Birmingham, until Sat 11 April

Ghostly ceramics crawling and sprawling into the gallery space tell Lindsey Mendick's highly unusual story. Dropping out of art school and taking to her bed at her parents' house following a nervous breakdown, she one night found herself wondering why there were six men dressed in black pacing the cul-de-sac on walkie talkies.

When she told her mother what she had seen, her mum found the story impossible to believe, due to her daughter's mental state at the time.

Not long afterwards, the media broke the story about the poisoning of Russian spy Alexander Litvinenko, who, it turned out, had been Lindsey's neighbour... As well as responding to her experience that terrifying night, Lindsey's new exhibition also references an 1892 gothic novella by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. *The Yellow Wallpaper* tells the story of a young mother with postnatal depression who is haunted by the garish wallpaper that appears to mutate from the walls of the room in which she is convalescing.



Jason Bell, *Meera Syal (Detail)*, 2003. Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London

## Meera Syal: COMING HOME Sat 11 Jan – Sun 5 Apr

*Meera Syal: COMING HOME* presents a portrait of Wolverhampton-born author, actor and comedian Meera Syal by photographer Jason Bell, on loan from the National Portrait Gallery, London. Bell's stylish image is the result of a collaboration between artist and sitter, and pokes fun at Bollywood stereotypes, a longstanding theme in Syal's work.

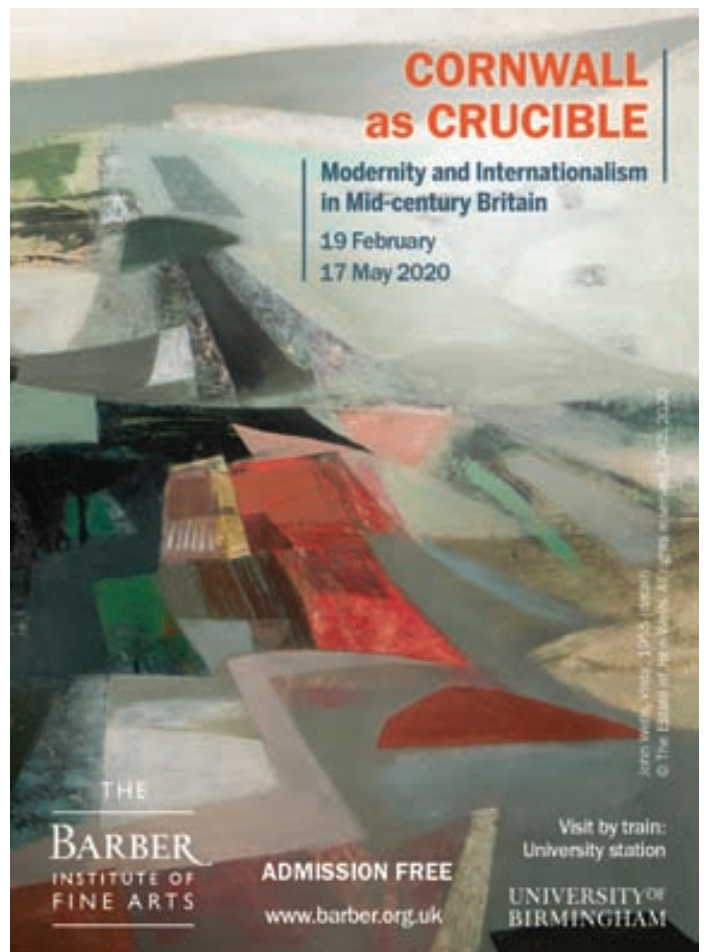
The portrait is on loan as part of the National Portrait Gallery's *COMING HOME* project, which sees portraits of famous sitters going to places with which they have a strong connection.

**Free admission**

CITY OF  
WOLVERHAMPTON  
COUNCIL

ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND

National Portrait  
Gallery







## Cornwall As Crucible: Modernity And Internationalism in Mid-Century Britain

The Barber Institute, University of Birmingham, Wed 19 February - Sun 17 May

Taking as its inspiration the Barber's recently acquired Constructivist sculpture - Russian artist Naum Gabo's Linear Construction In Space No1 - Cornwall As Crucible considers the relationships and networks that existed between artists who lived and worked in the county (and most particularly in St Ives) during the mid-20th century.

Featuring works by, among others,

Barbara Hepworth, Ben Nicholson, Peter Lanyon and Sandra Blow, the exhibition examines the artists' development of a visual language that explored the boundary between representation and abstraction.

The installation also investigates the impact which the distinctive Cornish landscape had on the work of the artists residing in the region.

## Mayflower 400 Exhibition

Worcester Art Gallery & Museum, until Sat 21 November

Given that one of the Pilgrim Fathers who sailed on the Mayflower from Plymouth in the UK to Plymouth, Massachusetts, was born and educated in Worcestershire, it's hardly surprising that the county is here taking the opportunity to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the historic transatlantic voyage.

Edward Winslow was born in Droitwich and educated at Worcester's Kings School. He would go on to serve as governor at Plymouth Colony... Drawing on 17th century archaeology & costume and featuring a collection of indigenous American and Canadian objects, the exhibition shines a spotlight on stories of colonialism, taking a look at the European occupation of the Alaskan shores and seas in the years which followed the Mayflower's voyage.

Worcestershire is one of 11 locations in England which is this year working with local, national and international partners to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower.

## Kapow!

The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, Sat 8 February - Sun 27 February

The influence on art & design of cartoon and comic-book superheroes, super heroines and super villains is explored in this brand new exhibition. The show brings together painting, fashion, photography, costume design, ceramics and illustration. Work by artists Duggie Fields, Jason Atomic & Emma Rodgers features.



(Copyright Lottie Davies [www.lottedavies.com](http://www.lottedavies.com) | [www.whquinn.com](http://www.whquinn.com))

## Quinn: A Journey

Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry, Fri 14 February - Sun 31 May

This thought-provoking multi-dimensional experience is a meditation on grief, loss, loneliness, the human search for meaning and the possibility of redemption through time and landscape.

Comprising large-format photographs, moving-image pieces, ephemera and text vignettes, the work focuses on the character of William Henry Quinn, a young man who walks from the south west of England to the far north of Scotland during the period after the Second World War. Although presenting a fictional account, photographer, artist and writer Lottie Davies uses her installation to reference the real-world experiences of young men and women after they have been exposed to extreme trauma.







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**PJ MASKS**

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**NEW  
EVENT**  
Feb 1 - March 1

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## Race Retro

Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire  
Fri 21 - Sun 23 February

Twenty-four thousand motorsport fans are set to descend on Stoneleigh Park this month for the

2020 edition of Race Retro.

The event covers every discipline, from formula racing to motorcycling, and includes two live rally stages across the weekend.

World-class cars, motorsport legends and 250 specialist exhibitors also feature.

## Adults Night: Valentine's Special

Legoland Discovery Centre, Birmingham,  
Wed 12 February



Ever fancied visiting Legoland Discovery Centre but didn't have any little ones in your life to take along? Well, not to worry, because now you can justifiably 'go it alone', courtesy of the venue's once-a-month adults-only event.

This month's Valentine's Special sees plenty of prizes being put up for grabs throughout the night. It also features workshop classes held by the venue's Master Model Builders, providing Legoland enthusiasts with all manner of sure-to-be-useful tips and tricks.

## Medieval Festival of Archery

Warwick Castle, Sat 15 - Sun 23 February

The UK's only Medieval Festival of Archery sees professional archers demonstrating their skills in daily shows and competitions. And for those who fancy getting interactive, a have-a-go archery option is also available.



## Get Hands On With History

Kenilworth Castle,  
Sat 15 - Sun 23 February

Young visitors to Kenilworth this half term can discover what it was like to live, work and fight in a real-life castle.

Little lords and ladies will have their skills put to the test with plenty of hands-on activities, including the challenges of sword fighting and shooting with a bow & arrow.



## Make And Play Engineers: Pixel Art

Coventry Transport Museum,  
Wed 19 and Wed 26 February



Kids aged between two and eight can here explore the patterns, contrasts and colours of pixel art, a process which is used to make characters for computer games. The sessions also provide youngsters with the chance to make their very own extraordinary-looking creatures, the kind that could well have escaped from a computer game!



# FEBRUARY HALF TERM



Wrap up warm and join us this February Half Term for some winter fun in the Gardens.

**17 - 21 February 2020**

There will be lots of fun activities for all weathers such as; Arts & Crafts, Bug Hunting and Story Trails!

For more information please contact reception or visit us at;  
[birminghambotanicalgardens.org.uk/whatson](http://birminghambotanicalgardens.org.uk/whatson)

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# Fuel their imagination

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Inspire your family with our FUTURE themed activities.

\*See website for details



**Mollie, 7. Future Fuel Technician**

[britishmotormuseum.co.uk/families](http://britishmotormuseum.co.uk/families)  
 J12 M40, Gaydon, Warwickshire, CV35 0BJ

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\*Savings is against on-the-door ticket prices and is already applied when booking online. The code is used for marketing purposes only. Advance tickets are available until midnight Thursday 26 March 2020. To book over the phone please call 0844 858 6758 (calls cost 7p per minute plus network extras).



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## Caravan, Camping & Motorhome Show

NEC, Birmingham, Tues 18 - Sun 23 February

With over 400 exhibitors all under one roof, the Caravan, Camping & Motorhome Show is a must-

visit event for anybody who loves exploring the great outdoors.

Visitors to the show can check out new leisure vehicles and caravan holiday homes, browse tents of all shapes and sizes, and pick up a wide range of accessories and gadgets for their next big adventure.

## The Classic Dirt Bike Show

Telford International Centre, Shropshire,  
Sat 15 & Sun 16 February

This annual off-road and road-racing show here makes a welcome return and comes complete with an outdoor autojumble.

Star guests confirmed for the 2020 get-together include American World Trials 1979 champion Bernie Schreiber and 1970 British 500cc motocross champion Bryan Goss.



## Discover The Pride

West Midland Safari Park, Bewdley,  
Sat 15 - Sun 23 February

West Midland Safari Park debuts its latest additions to the pack this month, as seven new lion cubs make their first appearance on the safari drive-through.

Visitors can also book an exclusive behind-the-scenes tour of the African Lion house and meet the pride of lions, including its youngest members.

## Dragon Hunt

Tamworth Castle, Staffordshire,  
Sat 15 - Fri 21 February



Tamworth Castle's resident dragon, Ruby, and her brother, Hafgrim, have gone missing while playing a game of hide & seek. And they're probably going to stay horribly lost too, unless some young and enthusiastic half-term-holiday visitors are willing to put in the hard yards to help find them!... The hunt is just one of numerous dragon-based activities taking place at the castle this month. Kids can also learn how to decorate the dragon's den, identify dragon eggs and have a go at a dragon-related craft activity.

## Half-term activities at the RSC

Royal Shakespeare Company venues, Stratford-upon-Avon,  
Mon 17 - Fri 21 February, check [rsc.org.uk](http://rsc.org.uk) for individual venues

The RSC is taking inspiration from its current production of David Walliams' *The Boy In The Dress* this half term.

From free craft workshops exploring the themes of the book, to learning the dances and songs from the show in special performance workshops, there's plenty for visitors to enjoy.

Other highlights include back-stage theatre tours, playing dress-up in the RSC's dressing-up cabinet, and the chance to check out a free *The Boy In The Dress*-inspired exhibition.





# The Big Bang Fair

The NEC, Birmingham,  
11-14 March 2020



**The Big Bang**  
UK Young Scientists & Engineers Fair

*Book your **free** tickets and join the fun at the largest celebration of STEM for young people in the UK!*

The Big Bang Fair inspires and engages children with:

- 100+ hands-on activity stands and interactive workshops
- Exciting theatre shows
- Excellent careers information and the opportunity to talk to thousands of scientists and engineers.

**Family Day is on Saturday, 14 March 2020** - book online via our website: [www.thebigbangfair.co.uk](http://www.thebigbangfair.co.uk)

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★ FEBRUARY HALF TERM FUN ★



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Birmingham science museum

- ★ DESTINATION SPACE LIVE SHOW
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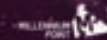
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## Become A Codebreaker

Enginuity, Ironbridge, Shropshire,  
Sat 15 - Sun 23 February

Codebreaking-themed activities are the order of the day at Enginuity this half term, with visitors

able to learn about cracking codes by making their very own codebreaking devices. Drop-in activities include making a cipher wheel to send & receive secret messages and having a go on an Enigma-style machine to uncover a classified message.

## The National Wedding Show

NEC, Birmingham,  
Fri 28 Feb - Sun 1 March

For couples currently planning their big day, the National Wedding Show is a must-visit event. Boasting over 250 wedding specialists from across the country - covering everything from photography and suit-making to jewellery and floral displays - there's plenty of opportunity to tick off some of the items on your hefty planning list!

Brides-to-be can also check out the latest bridal trends at the weekend's catwalk shows, pick up useful hints & tips from numerous experts, and even try on a wedding dress or several, with some exhibitors offering exclusive at-show discounts.



## Pirate And Princess Takeover

Alton Towers, Staffordshire,  
Fri 14 - Sun 23 February

Well shiver those timbers and straighten that tiara - Alton Towers Resort is certainly the place to take your little pirates and princesses this half-term holiday!

The popular visitor attraction is hosting a range of family-focused themed activities this month, including an action-packed production, a fancy-dress parade and an interactive game show - after which there's a 'fabulous' party to enjoy! Away from the princess & pirate theme, visitors can check out Sharkbait Reef to see a variety of amazing fish, splash around in the tropical surroundings of the Alton Towers Waterpark, and enjoy a round of what's being termed 'extraordinary' golf.

## February FUTURES Half Term

British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Warks  
Sat 15 February - Sun 1 March



Themed around the exhibition The Car. The Future. Me., FUTURES features activities aimed at encouraging children to investigate what the cars of their future might look like. Little ones can make their very own futuristic vehicle using recycled materials, and then light it up with LEDs. There's a special family trail to enjoy too, challenging visitors to find the missing parts needed to fix the car.

## Days Of Gore

Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove,  
Tues 18 - Thurs 20 February

Daily presentations about 'the gooey, gory and gruesome realities of yesteryear' promise to keep youngsters well and truly entertained at Avoncroft Museum this half-term holiday.

As well as providing fascinating insights into the history of medieval medicine, hygiene, execution and torture, the venue is also laying on plenty of craft-based activities, including gooey feel boxes and the chance to make your very own slime.

# Come rain or shine...

Check out some of the Midlands' best attractions this half-term



## Thinktank Science Museum

Millennium Point, Birmingham, B4 7XG

Birmingham's award-winning science museum offers a fun-packed day out for all the family to enjoy. From steam engines and talking robots to gurgling guts and a chocolate-wrapping machine, Thinktank features more than 200 hands-on science & technology displays and numerous historical collections. Highlights include MiniBum, a new interactive gallery for under-eights, a new 4k planetarium and a science garden. There's also an extensive programme of events and activities to enjoy throughout the year.

**You can also:** Get building at a weekend of Lego family workshops, taking place 8 & 9 February.

## National Sea Life Centre Birmingham

Brindleyplace, Birmingham, B1 2HL

The National Sea Life Centre is home to more than 2,000 creatures (including black-tip reef sharks, a giant green sea turtle and a colony of gentoo penguins), many of which have been rescued or successfully bred as part of the global Sea Life breeding initiative. The venue also features the UK's only 360-degree ocean tunnel, providing visitors with the opportunity to get up close and personal with the underwater residents. And in a UK first, 2020 will see two rescued Alaskan sea otters become resident in the attraction's new multi-million-pound marine rescue facility.

**You can also:** Help PJ Masks defeat the nighttime baddies this half-term holiday!



## Ironbridge Gorge Museums

Ironbridge, nr Telford, Shropshire

The World Heritage Site of Ironbridge Gorge is home to 10 award-winning attractions. These include the recreated Victorian town of Blists Hill, fun science museum Enginuity, and the Jackfield Tile Museum, a venue that brings to life 'the artistry of ceramic art'. An Annual Passport ticket allows visitors to enjoy daytime admission to all 10 attractions for 12 months.

**You can also:** Try your hand at the Victorian tube lining technique at Jackfield Tile Museum's tile-decorating workshops on 17, 19 & 21 February.



## World of Wedgwood

Barlaston, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST12 9ER

Find out all about the Wedgwood brand and its rich 250-year heritage at World of Wedgwood.

Featuring a V&A Museum collection, a factory tour, a contemporary tearoom, a restaurant and the Wedgwood Flagship retail store, the venue boasts a wide range of things to see and do. Explore the 240-acre Wedgwood Estate - with its open, landscaped grounds, canals and beautiful woodlands - or maybe try your hand at the potter's wheel in the Master Craft Studio. Or how about creating your very own piece of Wedgwood bone china tableware in the Decorating Studio...

**You can also:** Make a Mother's Day gift at hand & footprinting workshops during the half-term holiday.



## Cadbury World

Bournville, Birmingham, B30 1JR

Cadbury World is a wonder of chocolate delights and activities. Start your exploration of the venue in Aztec Jungle, travelling back over 1,000 years to the tropical rainforest of the Mayan Indians to discover the origin of the cocoa tree. Then visit Europe and find out about the arrival of cocoa in England, before moving on to Birmingham's Bull Street, where John Cadbury opened his first shop. There's lots more to see and do on the Cadbury World adventure, including Purple Planet and the world's biggest Cadbury shop! **You can also: Enjoy either breakfast or afternoon tea with Cadbury characters during weekends and school holidays.**



## Shakespeare's Family Homes

Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire

Discover the people and places behind the world's greatest storyteller by visiting his five family homes in Stratford-upon-Avon. These include: Shakespeare's Birthplace, the home in which he was born and grew up; the family home of his mother, Mary Arden; and the cottage in which his wife, Anne Hathaway, spent her childhood. The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust also offers The Full Story tickets, which allow 12 months of unlimited visits to all five properties. You can find out more at [shakespeare.org.uk](http://shakespeare.org.uk) **You can also: Check out a brand new Shakespeare XR experience at the Shakespeare's New Place site.**



## Birmingham Botanical Gardens

Westbourne Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 3TR

Nestled away behind steel, concrete and roaring traffic in the busy heart of Birmingham is a lush oasis of calm that you may never have noticed. Featuring four large glasshouses boasting an air of Victorian grandeur, lively animal inhabitants and interactive children's areas set in 15 acres of landscaped greenery, Birmingham Botanical Gardens is the perfect place to escape the hustle and bustle of the city. **You can also: Hire Gardens' Explorer family backpacks from the reception desk every day during opening hours. Each backpack is bursting with creative activities and suitable for all ages.**

## Warwick Castle

Warwick, Warwickshire, CV34 6AH

Boasting more than 1,100 years of history, Warwick Castle has plenty to see and do. History buffs can explore the castle's Great Hall, battlements, towers and turrets, while family-friendly entertainment comes in the form of a Horrible Histories maze, the Castle Dungeon experience and a number of daily shows and activities. **Top tip - if you purchase your tickets online and it rains for one hour or more during your time at the castle, the venue will guarantee you a free return visit.** **You can also: Attend the UK's only Medieval Festival of Archery, taking place at the castle this month. Check page 43 for information.**





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**BIRMINGHAM**  
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*Your week-  
by-week  
listings guide*  
**February 2020**

# the list



*First Time at Lichfield Garrick Theatre on Friday 7 February*

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

## What's On

Sat 1 - Sun 9 February



5 Soldiers: The Body Is The  
Front Line at Walsall Arena

**Fri 7 February**

Mon 10 to Sun 16 February



Ye Vagabonds - Henry Tudor  
House, Shrewsbury

**Sun 16 February**

Mon 17 to Sun 23 February



Milkshake Live!  
at The Place, Telford

**Sat 22 February**

Mon 24 to Sat 29 February



Opera Boys at Prince of  
Wales Centre, Cannock

**Wed 26 February**

## THROUGHOUT FEBRUARY

### Visual Arts

#### The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

**LEONARD CHESHIRE - LIFE THROUGH THE EYES OF A FLEET STREET PHOTOGRAPHER** Celebration of photojournalism during the golden era of Fleet Street, until Sat 29 Feb

**NEW HMP DOVEGATE: ART AND CERAMICS EXHIBITION** Showcase of art by the residents of HMP Dovegate, Mon 24 - Fri 28 Feb

#### New Art Gallery - Walsall

**TOO RICH A SOIL** Exhibition by three photographers presenting new work focused around portraiture, culture and female identity, until Sun 19 Apr

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

#### Newcastle Borough Museum & Art Gallery

**50 FORTY** Exhibition of paintings and sculpture from the last 50 years, presented alongside a collection of new work, until Wed 25 Mar

#### Potteries Museum & Art Gallery - Stoke-On-Trent

**NEW PSDA DICKIN MEDAL: EXTRAORDINARY ANIMALS IN ACTION** Celebration of the animal heroes who displayed outstanding devotion and heroism in times of difficulty and conflict, Sat 1 Feb - Sun 19 Apr

#### Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, Craven Arms

**ZACH BARBER - SHROPSHIRE HILLS AND BEYOND, A SALOPIANS VIEW** A view of nature, Shropshire Hills and farming people, until Tues 3 March

**CAROL BOWEN AND GORDON BAILEY** Exhibition bringing together Gordon's photography and Carol's pastel and watercolour paintings, until Tues 3 March

#### Weston Park

**GRAHAM COLLING** New exhibition including some of Graham's previous works, together with new images created since the last exhibition, until Thurs 27 Feb

**NEW BORROWED LAND** Collaboration of

work connected to the land by three artists who met at and graduated from university with fine art degrees, Fri 28 Feb - Tues 31 Mar

#### The Willow Art Gallery, Oswestry

**NEW YEAR OPEN 2020** until Sat 7 Mar

#### Wolverhampton Art Gallery

**THE BLOOMSBURY EFFECT** Visitors to the Wolverhampton Society of Artists Centenary Exhibition can also enjoy a display of three prestigious early 20th century British paintings on loan from the Courtauld Gallery, London, until Sun 16 Feb

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

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

**MEERA SYAL: COMING HOME** Meera Syal by photographer Jason Bell - on loan from the National Portrait Gallery, London, until Sun 5 Apr

**WOLVERHAMPTON AND ME** Installation using the story of the Mayor of Wolverhampton's family history to reflect on the wider history of the city and its people, until Sun 5 Apr

#### Other VISUAL ARTS

**QUBE CREATIVE GROUPS** Display of recent works by members of Qube art classes, until Tues 4 Feb, Qube Gallery, Oswestry

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

**DI PURSER - THE NEW WORKS** Local artist Di Purser displays more than 10 'stunning new paintings', until Sat 29 Feb, Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery

**ELLIE CLIFTLANDS** Shropshire-based wood engraver and illustrator Ellie Clifflands demonstrates that wood engraving can both be powerfully graphic and gently lyrical, until Sat 28 Mar, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**NEW PAINTER PRINTMAKERS** Mixed show featuring work by Louise Davies with Mychael Barratt and other artists still to be announced, Sat 1 - Sat 29 Feb, Twenty Twenty Gallery, Much Wenlock

### Gigs

**CARAVAN PALACE** Sat 1 Feb, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**TOM BAXTER PLUS GUEST ANNE-MARIE ALLEN** Sat 1 Feb, The Wakes, Theatre Square, Oakengates

**DEEP PURPLE FAMILY** Sat 1 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

**STUART WOOLFENDEN** Sat 1 Feb, Dead Wax, Digbeth, Birmingham

**THE SKA 45S** Sat 1 Feb, Brierley Hill Civic

**COUNTERFEIT BEATLES** Sat 1 Feb, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

**OH! WHAT A NIGHT** Sat 1 Feb, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

**HERITAGE IS 4: JEREMY HEALY, TOMISLAV, ANDY BAXTER & PHIL GIFFORD** Sat 1 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

**THE PEAS** Sat 1 Feb, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

**TURIN BRAKES** Sat 1 Feb, Newhampton Arts Centre, W'hampton

**BOWIE EXPERIENCE** Sat 1 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

**STEREOTONICS** Sat 1 Feb, Eleven, Sandyford, Stoke-on-Trent

**HOUSEJAMMERZ** Sat 1 Feb, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

**BRETT ELDREDGE** Sat 1 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**ETHER E** Sat 1 Feb, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford, Shropshire

**ASHANTI** Sun 2 Feb, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**THE DAVE FOSTER BAND** Sun 2 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

**BEN THOMPSON: ELVIS** Sun 2 Feb, Prince Of Wales, Cannock

**XHOSA COLE** Sun 2 Feb, Newhampton Arts Centre, W'hampton

**THE GAME** Sun 2 Feb, O2 Institute, B'ham

**THE WILDHEARTS | IRISH SESSION** Wed 5 Feb, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

**MIRANDA SYKES PLUS SEAN & HARRY** Wed 5

Feb, The Red Lion Folk Club, Birmingham

**THE BAND CAMINO** Wed 5 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**BLACKWATERS** Wed 5 Feb, The Sugarmill, Stoke-On-Trent

**FAIRPORT CONVENTION** Wed 5 Feb, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

**WE LOVE LITTLE MIX** Thurs 6 Feb, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

**DELAIN** Thurs 6 Feb, O2 Institute, B'ham

**DAVE SHARP** Thurs 6 Feb, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

**GIRLSCHOOL WITH SPECIAL GUESTS EVLYTYDE** Thurs 6 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

**YOU WIN AGAIN - CELEBRATING THE MUSIC OF THE BEE GEES** Thurs 6 Feb, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

**LEGENDS OF AMERICAN COUNTRY** Thurs 6 Feb, Prince Of Wales, Cannock

**KIM PETRAS** Fri 7 Feb, O2 Academy, B'ham

**LISA O'NEILL** Fri 7 Feb, The Glee Club, B'ham

**BELIEVE - THE CHER SONGBOOK** Fri 7 Feb, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

**PAPER JAM** Fri 7 Feb, Wem Town Hall, North Shropshire

**ENTER THE DRAGON** Fri 7 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

**FLOODHOUNDS + WAX FUTURES** Fri 7 Feb, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

**RONI SIZE + LTJ BUKEM** Fri 7 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**MACKA B & THE ROOTS** Fri 7 Feb, Theatre, Severn, Shrewsbury

**PEARL JAMN** Fri 7 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

**THE ZOOTS, SOUNDS OF THE SIXTIES** Fri 7 Feb, Brierley Hill Civic

**COUNTRY SUPERSTARS EXPERIENCE** Fri 7 Feb, The Place, Telford

**CHASING AUGUST + TONY STANTON** Fri 7 Feb, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

**TRANSATLANTIC SESSIONS 2020** Fri 7 Feb, Symphony Hall, B'ham

**SOME GUYS HAVE ALL THE LUCK - THE ROD STEWART STORY** Sat 8 Feb, The Place, Telford

**BIG GIRLS DON'T CRY** Sat 8 Feb, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

**STRANGE BONES** Sat 8 Feb, The Sugarmill, Stoke-On-Trent

**JOE BROWN IN CONCERT** Sat 8 Feb, Victoria Hall, Stoke-On-Trent

**STEEL PANTHER** Sat 8 Feb, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**GLOBAL REGGAE BAND** Sat 8 Feb, Lichfield Guildhall

**DUSKY** Sat 8 Feb, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

**THOSE DAMN CROWS** Sat 8 Feb, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

**POUYA** Sat 8 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**SURINDER SHINDA** Sat 8 Feb, Birmingham Hippodrome

**MACKA B LIVE AT RISING STAR REVISITED 4** Sat 8 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

**BEANS ON TOAST + TENSHEDES** Sat 8 Feb, Castle & Falcon, B'ham

**THE TRANSPORTERS** Sat 8 Feb, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

**MARTIN KEMP - BACK TO THE 80S DJ TOUR** Sat 8 Feb, The Hanger, Wolverhampton

**HEADSTICKS** Sat 8 Feb, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

**LIL DURK** Sat 8 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**DESPERADO - EAGLES GREATEST HITS** Sat 8 Feb, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

**THE BLOCK PARTY** Sat 8 Feb, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

**THE COUNTERFEIT STONES** Sat 8 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

**KELE** Sun 9 Feb, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

**BETH HART** Sun 9 Feb, Symphony Hall, B'ham

**GIANTS OF AMERICANA** Sun 9 Feb, The Robin, Bilston



## Classical

**CATHERINE ENNIS RECITAL** Sat 1 Feb, Shrewsbury Abbey

**GOLDMUND QUARTET** Featuring Florian Schötz (violin), Pinchas Adt (violin), Christoph Vandory (viola) and Raphael Paratore (cello). Programme includes works by Haydn, Mendelssohn, Dobrinka Tabakova and Debussy, Tues 4 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**CITY OF BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: NICOLA BENEDETTI** Also featuring Klaus Mäkelä (conductor). Programme includes works by Tchaikovsky & Berlioz, Thurs 6 - Sat 8 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**HALLE ORCHESTRA** Featuring Stephen Bell (conductor) & Craig Ogden (guitar). Programme includes works by De Falla, Rodrigo, Marquez, Chabrier, Bizet, Granados, Ravel & De Falla, Fri 7 Feb, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

**CONCERT IN THE ROUND** Featuring Catherine Rooney (soprano), Wendy Jones (trumpet) & Richard Walker (continuo). Programme includes Bach's cantata: Jauchzet Gott, Fri 7 Feb, St Chad's Cathedral, Shrewsbury

**STRAVINSKY'S CLARINET AND STRING QUARTET** Featuring Peter Campbell-Kelly & Bryony Morrison (violins), Christopher Yates (viola), Helen Edgar (cello) & Oliver Janes (clarinet). Programme includes works by Howells, Ravel & Stravinsky, Fri 7 Feb, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

**PETER DONOHOE IN RECITAL** Sat 8 Feb, Alington Hall, Shrewsbury School

## Comedy

**ELEANOR TIERNAN, ADAM HESS, ROSIE JONES & COMIC TBC** Sat 1 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**ED BYRNE** Sat 1 Feb, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

**ADAM HILLS** Sun 2 Feb, The Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shropshire

**JOHN SHUTTLEWORTH** Wed 5 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

**COUNT ARTHUR STRONG** Wed 5 Feb, The Place, Telford



**KOJO ANIM** Thurs 6 Feb, The Alexandra, Birmingham

**PHIL NICHOL PLUS COMEDY CAROUSEL**

**WITH ANDY ROBINSON** Thurs 6 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**MERYL O'ROURKE, FREDDIE FARRELL, DAN SMITH & COMIC TBC** Thurs 6 Feb, Stourbridge Town Hall

**REGINALD D HUNTER, ROGER MONKHOUSE, NIGE & WAYNE BEESE** Fri 7 Feb, Whitchurch Civic Centre

**MILTON JONES** Fri 7 Feb, Dudley Town Hall

**HARRIET DYER** Sat 8 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

**HENNING WEHN, ROGER MONKHOUSE, NIGE & WAYNE BEESE** Sat 8 Feb, Brierley Hill Civic Hall, Dudley

**JIMEOIN** Sun 9 Feb, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

**JAYDE ADAMS** Sun 9 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

**PAUL MCCAFFREY** Sun 9 Feb, The Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shropshire

## Theatre

**THE BODYGUARD** Alexandra Burke stars as Rachel Marron in the much-acclaimed romantic thriller, until Sat 1 Feb, The Alexandra, Birmingham

**CHASE ME UP FARNDALE AVENUE** French farce presented by The Nonentities, until Sat 1 Feb, The Rose Theatre, Kidderminster

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

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

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

**HOUSE GUEST** Francis Durbridge's thriller, Tues 28 Jan - Sat 1 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

**THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF SMACK AND CRACK** An 'angry, funny, love song to a lost generation, inspired by the playwright's own experience of jail & rehab', Wed 29 Jan - Sat 1 Feb, The REP, Birmingham

**BECKET** Two Score Theatre Company present Jean Anouilh's 'masterpiece', which explores the events leading to the murder of St Thomas Becket, Wed 29 Jan - Sat 1 Feb, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

**ASKING FOR IT** UK stage premiere of Louise O'Neill's devastating novel about sexual consent, Wed 29 Jan - Sat 15 Feb, The REP, Birmingham

**ANNIE** Amateur staging presented by

Walsall Youth Theatre, Thurs 30 Jan - Sat 1 Feb, Walsall Arena

**TWO** Jim Cartwright's sharp and touching slice of English life, set in a northern pub owned by a savagely bickering husband & wife, Fri 31 Jan - Sat 22 Feb, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

**BEYOND THE BARRICADE** Concert format show paying homage to the best of musical theatre, Sat 1 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**PINOCCHIO** Oddsocks present a brand new adaptation of the classic story, Sat 1 Feb, The Place, Telford

**THE WHIP** Provocative new play set in London at the dawn of the 19th century. Politicians gather to abolish the slave trade once and for all - but at what cost?... Sat 1 Feb - Sat 21 Mar, The Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

**THE GHOST LIGHT** Birmingham Ormiston Academy & The Old Rep come together to tell the story of one family through the generations, Sun 2 Feb, The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

**AN EVENING WITH TONY STOCKWELL** Tues 4 Feb, The Place, Telford, Shropshire

**MADAMA BUTTERFLY** Ellen Kent Opera present a new production of Puccini's heartbreaking tale. Sung in Italian with English surtitles, Tues 4 Feb, The Alexandra, Birmingham

**UTE LEMPER: RENDEZVOUS WITH MARLENE** One-woman show in which Ute tells the story of Marlene Dietrich, singing songs from all chapters of the German performer's Berlin cabaret years through to her Bacharach collaborations, Tues 4 Feb, The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

**VAMPIRE'S ROCK: GHOST TRAIN** Musical sensation featuring 'some of the greatest classic rock anthems of all time', Wed 5 Feb, The Alexandra, Birmingham

**MACBETH** Fast-paced adaptation of Shakespeare's tale of ambition, power and revenge, Wed 5 - Fri 7 Feb, The Old Rep Theatre, B'ham

**SHREK THE MUSICAL** Get Your Wiggle On present an amateur show based on the hit Dreamworks film, Wed 5 - Sun 9 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**JANE EYRE** Blackeyed Theatre present a new adaptation of Charlotte Brontë's gothic masterpiece, Thurs 6 - Sat 8 Feb, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

**MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL** TS Eliot's verse drama portraying the assassination of Archbishop Thomas Becket in Canterbury Cathedral, Thurs 6 - Sat 8 Feb, Shrewsbury School Chapel

**ANNIE** Cabaret Theatre Company presents its version of the much-loved family musical, Thurs 6 - Sat 8 Feb,

The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

**FAT, FUNNY & FEARLESS** Mother, blogger and self-confessed cake addict Jessica Jones, also known as @thefatfunnyone, performs her very first one-woman show... Fri 7 Feb, The Blue Orange Theatre, B'ham

**YOURS SINCERELY** Storytelling & lip-sync cabaret collide in a queer coming-of-age comedy about the complications of 21st-century communication, Fri 7 Feb, Farlow & Oretton Village Hall, Oretton, Shropshire, DY14 0TP

**FIRST TIME** Award-winning HIV-plus theatre maker Nathaniel Hall presents his autobiographical solo show about growing up positive in a negative world, Fri 7 Feb, Lichfield Garrick



**THE LITTLE MERMAID** A 'fun-packed rollicking, nautical pantomime full of song, dance and romance', Fri 7 - Sat 8 Feb, The Belfry Theatre, Wellington, Shropshire

**THE HISTORY BOYS** In-house production of Alan Bennett's classroom comedy, Fri 7 - Sat 22 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

**MADAMA BUTTERFLY** Ellen Kent Opera present a new production of Puccini's heartbreaking tale. Sung in Italian with English surtitles, Sat 8 Feb, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

**YOURS SINCERELY** Storytelling & lip-sync cabaret collide in a queer coming-of-age comedy about the complications of 21st-century communication, Sat 8 Feb, Quatt Village Hall, Nr Bridgnorth, South Shropshire, WV15 6QN

**MEMORIES OF A SNOW SCENE** One-man show fusing old tech, funny stories and genuine interactions to explore the fine line between dwelling on the past and cherishing happy memories, Sat 8 Feb, The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

**THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS** Rain Or Shine Theatre present a fast-paced re-telling of Kenneth Grahame's classic tale, Sat 8 - Sun 9 Feb, Theatre On The Steps, Bridgnorth, South Shropshire

**MENOPAUSE THE MUSICAL 2: CRUISING THROUGH MENOPAUSE!** Starring Cheryl Ferguson, Nicole Barber-Lane, Rebecca Wheatley & Nicki French, Sun 9 Feb, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock



Forthcoming  
Shows 2020



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music



### HELLO AGAIN...THE STORY OF NEIL DIAMOND

Thurs 13 Feb @ 7.30pm

music



### THE MUSIC OF JUDY GARLAND STARRING DENISE NOLAN

Fri 14 Feb @ 7.30pm

comedy



### DOM JOLY'S HOLIDAY SNAPS

Tues 18 Feb @ 7.30pm

family



### MILKSHAKE! LIVE MILKSHAKE MONKEY'S MUSICAL

Sat 22 Feb @ 12.00pm & 3.30pm

comedy



### TANYALEE DAVIS 3 FOOT 6 INCH STANDUP COMEDIAN

Wed 26 Feb @ 7.30pm

music



### THE BON JOVI EXPERIENCE

Fri 28 Feb @ 7.30pm

music



### THAT'S AMORE TENORS UN LIMITED

Wed 4 Mar @ 7.30pm

family



### ALL STAR SUPERSLAM WRESTLING SPRING 2020

Fri 6 Mar @ 7.30pm

music



### ONE NIGHT IN DUBLIN AN EVENING OF GREAT IRISH MUSIC

Wed 11 Mar @ 7.30pm

# TAMWORTH LITFEST

MONDAY 2 - SATURDAY 7 MARCH 2020



STORYTELLING TALKS POETRY WRITING WORKSHOPS PANELS AND Q&As

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### Kids Shows

**ROOM ON THE BROOM** Tall Stories' magical, musical adaptation of Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler's much-loved picture book, Mon 3 - Tues 4 Feb, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

**THE NAUGHTY FOX** Immersive, multi-sensory journey of friendship and play for little ones and their grown-ups, Fri 7 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

**LUNA: A PLAY ABOUT THE MOON** Storytelling, music, history and science combine in a tale for younger audiences, Sat 8 Feb, The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

### Dance

**SWAN LAKE** Presented by the Russian State Ballet of Siberia, Sat 1 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

**SPIRIT OF THE DANCE** Twenty-first anniversary show fusing Irish dance, Flamenco & Salsa, Sun 2 Feb, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

**EVERYTHING (BUT THE GIRL)** New triple bill from choreographers Tamsin Fitzgerald & Fleur Deakin, Thurs 6 - Fri 7 Feb, DanceXchange, Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

**5 SOLDIERS: THE BODY IS THE FRONT LINE** Rosie Kay Dance Company presents its acclaimed portrait of army life, telling the stories of men and women serving on the front line, Fri 7 Feb, Walsall Arena

**BIRMINGHAM SWING FESTIVAL'S GRAND BALL** Evening of social swing dancing, performance & competitions, Sat 8 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

### Film

#### INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

**THE PERSONAL HISTORY OF DAVID COPPERFIELD (PG)** Comedy/Drama. Starring Dev Patel, Hugh Laurie. Light House Media Centre, Wolverhampton, Fri 24 Jan - Thurs 6 Feb

**LITTLE WOMEN (U)** Drama. Starring Saoirse Ronan, Emma Watson. Wem Town Hall, North Shropshire, Fri 31 Jan, Tues 4 & Thurs 6 Feb; Stoke Film Theatre, Sat 1 & Tues 4 Feb; Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 31 Jan - Fri 14 Feb

**HARRIET (12a)** Biography/Drama. Starring Cynthia Erivo, Leslie Odom Jr. Light House Media Centre, Wolverhampton, Fri 31 Jan - Thurs 6 Feb

**THE NIGHTINGALE (18)** Drama/Thriller. Starring Aisling Franciosi, Sam Claflin. Light House Media Centre, Wolverhampton, Fri 31 Jan - Thurs 6 Feb

**PAIN AND GLORY (15)** Drama. Starring Antonio Banderas, Asier Etzeandia. Foreign language, subtitled. Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, Sat 1 Feb

**ARE YOU PROUD? (15)** Documentary. Starring Michael Cashman, Lisa Power. The Hive, Shrewsbury, Sat 1 Feb

**PLAYING WITH FIRE (PG)** Comedy/Family. Starring John Cena, Keegan-Michael Key. Wellington Orbit, Telford, Sat 1 - Sun 2 Feb

**THE GENTLEMEN (18)** Action/Crime. Starring Matthew McConaughey, Charlie Hunnam. Wellington Orbit, Telford, Sat 1 - Sun 2, Wed 5 - Thurs 6 Feb

**HARRY POTTER AND THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX (12)** Action/Adventure. Starring Daniel Radcliffe, Emma Watson. Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke-on-Trent, Sun 2 Feb

**KNIVES OUT (12a)** Comedy/Crime. Starring Daniel Craig, Chris Evans. Stourbridge Town Hall, Mon 3 Feb

**ON MOONLIGHT BAY (U)** Comedy/Family. Starring Doris Day, Gordon MacRae. Wem Town Hall, North Shropshire, Mon 3 Feb

**THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD (U)** Action/Adventure. Starring Errol Flynn, Olivia de Havilland. Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke-on-Trent, Tues 4 Feb

**BIRDS OF PASSAGE (15)** Crime/Drama. Starring Carmiña Martínez, José Acosta. Foreign language, subtitled. Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Tues 4 Feb

**STAN AND OLLIE (PG)** Biography/Comedy. Starring Steve Coogan, John C. Reilly. Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke-on-Trent, Wed 5 Feb

**CAPERNAUM (15)** Drama. Starring Zain Al Rafea, Yordanos Shiferaw. Foreign language, subtitled. The Hive, Shrewsbury, Fri 7 Feb

**BOMBSHELL (15)** Biography/Drama. Starring Charlize Theron, Nicole Kidman. Wellington Orbit, Telford, Fri 7 - Sun 9 & Wed 12 - Thurs 13 Feb

**JOJO RABBIT (12a)** Comedy/Drama. Starring Roman Griffin Davis, Thomasin McKenzie. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 7 - Thurs 13 Feb

**THE PERSONAL HISTORY OF DAVID COPPERFIELD (PG)** Comedy/Drama. Starring Dev Patel, Hugh Laurie. Wellington Orbit, Telford, Fri 7 - Thurs 13 Feb

**CATS (U)** Comedy/Drama. Starring Jennifer Hudson, Judi Dench. Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire, Sat 8 Feb

**HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE (12)** Action/Adventure. Starring Daniel Radcliffe, Emma Watson. Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke-on-Trent, Sun 9 Feb



Rosie Kay's 5 Soldiers: The Body Is The Front Line - Walsall Arena

### Events

**HOT WHEELS MONSTER TRUCKS LIVE** Show combining Hot Wheels' iconic jumps and stunts with epic crashing and smashing, until Sun 2 Feb, Arena Birmingham

**LEGO CITY: REPORT FOR DUTY** Complete the build challenges and become a LEGO City hero, until Sun 1 Mar, Legoland Discovery Centre, Birmingham

**THE ARENACROSS TOUR 2020** 'Seat-grabbing' entertainment from some of the world's best indoor Motocross racers and Freestyle MX stars, Fri 31 Jan - Sat 1 Feb, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

**MANSION WINTER TOURS** Guided tour providing visitors with an off-season chance to see inside the mansion, Fri 31 Jan - Sun 2 Feb, Attingham Park, Shrewsbury

**TATTOO FREEZE** Event hosting 200-plus tattoo artists, Sat 1 - Sun 2 Feb, Telford International Centre, Shropshire

**PJ MASKS** Help PJ Masks defeat the nighttime baddies and restore the venue to its peaceful state, Sat 1 Feb - Sun 1 Mar, National Sea Life Centre, Birmingham

**TRAIL FOR DOGS: BRING YOUR DOG TO BLAKESLEY HALL** Explore the grounds on this special dog-inspired trail around the gardens, with treats for your dog along the way, Sun 2 Feb, Blakesley Hall, Birmingham

**CAMPER MART** Browse accessories and find services for your VW van, or pick up essentials for that long-awaited project in the garage, Sun 2 Feb, Telford International Centre, Shropshire

**GREAT BRITISH BEER FESTIVAL WINTER** Celebrating the West Midlands' industry, diversity and creativity throughout time, Tues 4 - Sat 8 Feb,

New Bingley Hall, Birmingham

**DRESSING UP, COMING OUT: FASHION IN THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY** Evening discussion around the role and importance of dressing up within the LGBTQ+ community, Thurs 6 Feb, Birmingham Museum And Art Gallery

**HARRY POTTER BOOK NIGHT** A 'magical' evening of things to make and do inspired by Harry Potter, Thurs 6 Feb, Dudley Canal and Tunnel Trust

**MANSION WINTER TOURS** Guided tour providing visitors with an off-season chance to see inside the mansion, Fri 7 - Sun 9 Feb, Attingham Park, Shrewsbury

**BIRMINGHAM SWING FESTIVAL'S GRAND BALL** Grab a seat in the circle to witness a night of social swing dancing, performances and competitions, Sat 8 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

**RAG RUG VALENTINES HEART** Have a go at crafting a traditional handmade decoration with a romantic twist, Sat 8 Feb, Birmingham Back to Backs

**THOMAS & FRIENDS FEBRUARY HALF TERM** Meet Thomas & Friends at Europe's only Thomas Land, Sat 8 - Sun 9 Feb, Drayton Manor Theme Park, Tamworth

**LEGO WEEKEND WORKSHOPS** Take part in a range of LEGO-themed activities in the museum's bespoke LEGO classroom, Sat 8 - Sun 9 Feb, Think-tank Science Museum, Birmingham

**MR CADBURY'S PARROT MINI-EGG SHOW** Help the lovable Mr Cadbury's Parrot find the clues to discover who's been after his precious treats, Sat 8 Feb - Sun 29 Mar, Cadbury World, B'ham

**WHAT THE TORTOISE TAUGHT US** Walk side by side with the world's oldest reptile; help to feed her, stroke her enormous shell and be inspired by a close-up encounter, Sat 8 Feb, The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent

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18 - 22 February 7.30pm  
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**BASE: Beauty of the Beast**  
The family fun pantomime  
Tickets: £13, £12

26 February 7.30pm  
**Once Upon A Wednesday:**  
**Sal Tonge - Tales from**  
**Here, There.... and the**  
**Places in Between**  
Tickets: £7.50

29 February, 8pm  
**Simon Evans:**  
**The Work of the Devil**  
Tickets: £15, £13

5 March, 7.30pm  
**Green Matthews:**  
**Canterbury Tales**  
Tickets: £13, £10

12 March, 7pm  
**In Good Company:**  
**Scratch That Itch, Spring**  
**Surprise**  
Tickets: £5

13 March, 8pm. Age 14+  
**Josie Long:**  
**Tender**  
Tickets: £16

18 March, 7pm  
**Not Now Collective:**  
**Pepper & Honey**  
Tickets: £10

25 March, 7.30pm  
**Once Upon A Wednesday:**  
**Jan Blake - Life and Death**  
**and All the Bits in Between**  
Tickets: £7.50

28 March, 7pm  
**Floyd In The Flesh**  
9 piece fully live tribute band  
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### Gigs

**KATYA AND THE COMEDY QUEENS** Mon 10 Feb, O2 Academy, B'ham

**AMIGO THE DEVIL** Mon 10 Feb, The Cuban Embassy, Birmingham

**EMILIA MÅRTENSSON** Mon 10 Feb, Symphony Hall, B'ham

**MABEL** Tues 11 Feb, O2 Academy, B'ham

**BRU-C** Tues 11 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**FRED DEAKIN PRESENTS THE LASTERS** Tues 11 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

**BOWLING FOR SOUP** Wed 12 Feb, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**MAE MULLER** Wed 12 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**FLATS AND SHARPS** Wed 12 Feb, Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury

**DUBIOZA KOLEKTIV** Wed 12 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**GRANNY'S ATTIC** Wed 12 Feb, The Red Lion Folk Club, B'ham

**BEN POOLE** Wed 12 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

**INHALER** Thurs 13 Feb, O2 Academy, B'ham

**IAN BELLAMY** Thurs 13 Feb, The Wakes, Theatre Square, Oaken-gates

**GIRLSSCHOOL + EYVLYTYDE** Thurs 13 Feb, Eleven, Sandyford, Stoke-on-Trent

**POLYPHIA** Thurs 13 Feb, The Mill, Digbeth, Birmingham

**HYPNOSE** Thurs 13 Feb, The Asylum, B'ham

**ZAKK SABBATH** Thurs 13 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**CALIFORNIA DREAMIN** Thurs 13 Feb, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

**JADE IMAGINE** Thurs 13 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

**HELLO AGAIN - THE STORY OF NEIL DIAMOND** Thurs 13 Feb, The Place, Telford

**SWEET CRISIS** Thurs 13



*Ye Vagabonds - Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury*

Feb, The Robin, Bilston

**KANO** Fri 14 Feb, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**FLASH - A TRIBUTE TO QUEEN** Fri 14 Feb, Theatre, Severn, Shrewsbury

**FISHERMAN'S FRIENDS** Fri 14 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

**MOTORHEADACHE** Fri 14 Feb, Eleven, Sandyford, Stoke-on-Trent

**BC ALLSKAS** Fri 14 Feb, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

**THE CALLING FT ALEX BAND** Fri 14 Feb, KK's Steel Mill, W'hampton

**MANRAN** Fri 14 Feb, Theatre, Severn, Shrewsbury

**A DATE WITH GEMIMA & TONY** Fri 14 Feb, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

**PINK - BEAUTIFUL TRAUMA** Fri 14 Feb, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

**THE TINA TURNER EXPERIENCE** Fri 14 Feb, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

**ARRIVAL - THE HITS OF ABBA** Fri 14 Feb, Walsall Arena and Arts Centre

**THE MUSIC OF JUDY GARLAND FEATURING DENISE NOLAN** Fri 14 Feb, The Place, Telford

**JAMES BLUNT** Fri 14 Feb, Arena B'ham

**JAH WOBBLE & THE INVADERS OF THE HEART** Fri 14 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

**VIBE ROULETTE** Fri 14 Feb, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

**GREEN HAZE / PARAMORE** Fri 14 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

**HARRY WILLS** Fri 14 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

**QUEEN SYMPHONIC** Sat 15 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**5 O'CLOCK HERO** Sat 15 Feb, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

**G2 DEFINITIVE GENESIS** Sat 15 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

**UK BJORN** Sat 15 Feb, Brierley Hill Civic Hall

**SHOWADDYWADDY** Sat 15 Feb, The Place, Telford

**PINK FLOYDIAN** Sat 15 Feb, Eleven, Sandyford, Stoke-on-Trent

**MJM BAND** Sat 15 Feb, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

**THE ELVIS YEARS** Sat 15 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**BRANDY THIEVES** Sat 15 Feb, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

**MICROBABY** Sat 15 Feb, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

**JUNIOR JUNGLE** Sat 15 Feb, Albert Shed, Southwater, Telford

**REMI HARRIS & THE ELECTRIC BEAT COMBO** Sat 15 Feb, Ludlow Brewery, South Shropshire

**HRH METAL (WEEKEND EVENT)** Sat 15 - Sun 16 Feb, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**PROBABLY BOY** Sun 16 Feb, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

**YE VAGABONDS** Sun 16 Feb, Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury

**INTO THE SHADOWS** Sun 16 Feb, Theatre, Severn, Shrewsbury

**HUE & CRY** Sun 16 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

### Classical Music

**LUNCHTIME ORGAN CONCERT WITH THOMAS TROTTER** Programme includes works by J.S Bach, Schumann, Rachel Laurin, Ad Wammes & Paul Dukas (arr. T. Trotter), Mon 10 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**ENSEMBLE 360: BEETHOVEN 250** Programme includes works by Beethoven & Shostakovich, Mon 10 Feb, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

**TAMWORTH VOICES IN CONCERT** Tues 11 Feb, Tamworth Assembly Rooms, Staffordshire

**ICELAND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: SIBELIUS NO 1** Featuring Yan Pascal Tortelier (conductor) and Jean-Efflam Bavouzet (piano). Programme includes works by Bizet, Ravel, Anna Thorvaldsdottir and Sibelius, Tues 11 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**CBSO: SCHUBERT'S GREAT** Featuring the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Juango Mena (conductor) & Leila Jوسفowicz (violin). Programme includes works by Berg & Schubert, Thurs 13 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

### Comedy

**ADAM HILLS** Mon 10 Feb, Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

**DALISO CHAPONDA** Tues 11 Feb, The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

**DALISO CHAPONDA** Wed 12 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**SAM AVERY** Wed 12 - Thurs 13 Feb, The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

**JOHN SHUTTLEWORTH** Thurs 13 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**JIMMY CARR** Thurs 13 Feb, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

**MORTIFIED COMEDY NIGHT** Fri 14 Feb, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

**COMEDY NIGHT** Fri 14 Feb, Ludlow Brewery, South Shropshire

**NATHAN CATON, ELLIOT STEEL, TOM WRIGGLESWORTH & COMIC TBC** Fri 14 - Sat 15 Feb, The Glee Club, B'ham

**PAUL SINHA** Sat 15 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

**TOM STADE** Sat 15 Feb, Bilston Town Hall

**STEVE SHANYASKI, JACK CAMPBELL, EMMANUEL SONUBI & BARRY DODDS** Sat 15 Feb, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

**TOM BINNS** Sat 15 Feb, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffordshire

**EMMANUEL SONUBI, JACK CAMPBELL, MICHAEL LEGGE & DAMION LARKIN** Sat

15 Feb, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

**PHIL WANG** Sun 16 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**JACK TUCKER** Sun 16 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**TOM STADE** Sun 16 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**JANEY GODLEY** Sun 16 Feb, Bilston Town Hall

### Theatre

**JANE EYRE** Blackeyed Theatre present a new adaptation of Charlotte Bronte's gothic masterpiece, Mon 10 - Wed 12 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**IN PURSUET** New LGBT comedy/drama described as 'Fleabag meets Miranda', Mon 10 - Sat 15 Feb, The Blue Orange Theatre, B'ham

**BAND OF GOLD** World premiere based on Kay Mellor's award-winning TV series of the same name, Mon 10 - Sat 15 Feb, The Alexandra, Birmingham

**PILOT NIGHTS** Work-in-progress presentations by 'some of the UK's most exciting theatre makers'... Tues 11 Feb, The REP, Birmingham

**PERSUASION** Stafford Players present an amateur version of Jane Austen's classic novel, Tues 11 - Sat 15 Feb, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

**DON'T DRESS FOR DINNER** Stoke Rep Players present an amateur version of Marc Camoletti's 'boulevard comedy', Tues 11 - Sat 15 Feb, Stoke Repertory Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

**TO MOVE IN TIME** Tyrone Huggins' one-man show walks a thin line between comic absurdity and melancholia, Wed 12 & Thurs 13 Feb, The REP, Birmingham

**THE TWISTED TALE OF HANSEL AND GRETEL** New slant on the much-loved Brothers Grimm favourite, Wed 12 - Sat 15 Feb, Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

**LOOKING FOR WOLVERHAMPTON'S LATIN QUARTER** 'Funny, touching and self-deprecating account of growing up in 1970s Wolverhampton', Thurs 13 Feb, Arena Theatre, W'hampton

**FAME THE MUSICAL** Split Mask Theatre presents its first ever musical production, Thurs 13 - Sat 15 Feb, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

**JANE EYRE** Blackeyed Theatre present a new adaptation of Charlotte Bronte's gothic masterpiece, Thurs 13 - Sat 15 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

**THE ORIGIN OF THE SPECIES: A MUSICAL COMEDY ABOUT CHARLES DARWIN** Presented by Tangram Theatre Company, Fri 14 Feb, Fownhope New Memorial Hall, Nr Hereford

**YOURS SINCERELY** Storytelling & lip-



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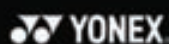


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## WITNESS LEGENDS BEGIN

11 - 15 MARCH  
ARENA BIRMINGHAM





sync cabaret collide in a queer coming-of-age comedy about the complications of 21st-century communication, Sat 15 Feb, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

**THE WESTENDERS** Concert-style production showcasing iconic tunes from West End musicals, Sat 15 Feb, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

**THE ORIGIN OF THE SPECIES: A MUSICAL COMEDY ABOUT CHARLES DARWIN** Presented by Tangram Theatre Company, Sat 15 Feb, Harley Village Hall, Harley, Nr Shrewsbury

**GUY: A NEW MUSICAL** Uplifting electronic-pop musical about modern masculinity, body image and the hook-ups and downs of dating in the 21st century, Sun 16 Feb, The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

**THE ORIGIN OF THE SPECIES: A MUSICAL COMEDY ABOUT CHARLES DARWIN** Presented by Tangram Theatre Company, Sun 16 Feb, Wem Town Hall, North Shropshire

## Kids Shows

**FIRST STAGES: PUSS IN BOOTS** CBeebies presenter Patrick Lynch brings the classic tale to life using puppetry, smoke & mirrors, and a hidden trapdoor... Fri 14 - Sat 15 Feb, The REP, Birmingham

**BEASTLY BELLE** Puppetry, film projections and an original musical score collide to bring a new twist to an old tale, Sat 15 - Sun 16 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

**MILKSHAKE! LIVE** Starring Fireman Sam, Noddy, Shimmer & Shine, Digby Dragon, Wissper, Nella the Princess Knight and the Floogals, alongside two Milkshake presenters, Sun 16 Feb, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

## Cabaret

**TINA T'URNER TEA LADY'S STEAMY BINGO** Laugh, dance and play to win as Tina spins her cage of balls to a high-energy '80s soundtrack, Thurs 13 Feb, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

**BIG BAND BROADWAY** Featuring Martin & Shirlie Kemp, guest singers Rachel Tucker & Matt Ford, Larry Blank (conductor) and London Concert Orchestra. Includes music from West Side Story, Cabaret and A Chorus Line, Sun 16 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

## Dance

**WINTER DANCE** Shrewsbury High School & SHS Dance present a showcase of different styles and genres, Mon 10 - Tues 11 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**THE RED SHOES** Matthew Bourne's triumphant adaptation of the classic film returns to Birmingham Hippodrome, having won two Olivier Awards and dazzled audiences and critics across the UK and the US, Tues 11 - Sat 15 Feb, Birmingham Hippodrome

**EMERGENCE TRIPLE BILL** Josh Arnott Dance presents two new works - FUEL and An Event - plus a reimagining of one of Arnott's most acclaimed productions, When World's Collide, Fri 14 Feb, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

**A VALENTINE'S CELEBRATION OF MUSIC AND DANCE** Featuring BRB's orchestra, the Royal Ballet Sinfonia, and classical extracts from Swan Lake, Giselle & Don Quixote, Fri 14 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

## Talks

**TESS RIDGE - CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCE OF INJUSTICE** Join Professor Tess Ridge as she discusses how poverty effects children materially, socially and on a very deep personal level, Wed 12 Feb, The Hive, Shrewsbury

**CONVERSATIONS WITH STACEY DOOLEY** Join Stacey as she talks about her remarkable career so far, where she's headed next and how news and investigative journalism are evolving, Thurs 13 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**ANN WIDDECOMBE IN CONVERSATION** Spend the evening with one of the most outspoken politicians of recent times... Thurs 13 Feb, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

**ANN WIDDECOMBE IN CONVERSATION** Spend the evening with one of the most outspoken politicians of recent times... Fri 14 Feb, Festival Drayton, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

**DARWIN MEMORIAL LECTURE: SOCIAL DARWIN: HOPE, FEAR AND MODERNITY** Dr Carolyn Burdett investigates the role Darwin's ideas played in debates on the nature of humans and their political and social organisation in the modern world, Sun 16 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

## Film

### INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

**APOLLO 11 (U)** Documentary/History. Starring Neil Armstrong, Michael Collins. Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, North Shropshire, Mon 10 Feb

**OFFICIAL SECRETS (15)** Biography/Crime. Starring Keira Knightley, John Heffernan. Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Tues 11 Feb

**PAL JOEY (PG)** Drama/Musical. Starring Rita Hayworth, Frank Sinatra. Ludlow Assembly Rooms, North Shropshire, Tues 11 Feb

**JOJO RABBIT (12a)** Comedy/Drama. Starring Roman Griffin Davis, Thomasin McKenzie. Wem Town Hall, North Shropshire, Tues 11 & Thurs 13 Feb

**ZAMA (15)** Drama. Starring Daniel Giménez Cacho, Lola Dueñas. Foreign language, subtitled. The Hive, Shrewsbury, Wed 12 Feb

**ROCKETMAN (15)** Biography/Drama. Starring Taron Egerton, Jamie Bell. Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke-on-Trent, Wed 12 Feb

**GONE WITH THE WIND (PG)** Drama/History. Starring Clark Gable, Vivien Leigh. Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke-on-Trent, Thurs 13 Feb

**THE PERSONAL HISTORY OF DAVID COPPERFIELD (PG)** Comedy/Drama. Starring Dev Patel, Hugh Laurie. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 14 - Thurs 20 Feb

**CATS (U)** Comedy/Drama. Starring Jennifer Hudson, Judi Dench. Lichfield Garrick, Sat 15 Feb

**THE WIFE (15)** Comedy/Drama. Starring Glenn Close, Jonathan Pryce. Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire, Sat 15 Feb

**SOMETIMES ALWAYS NEVER (12a)** Comedy/Drama. Starring Bill Nighy, Sam Riley. Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, Sat 15 Feb

**PAW PATROL: READY, RACE, RESCUE (U)** Animation/Family. With the voices of Anya Cooke, Cathal J. Dodd. Wem Town Hall, North Shropshire, Sat 15, Mon 17 - Wed 19 Feb

**SHORTS FILM PROGRAMME** Exploring the diverse experiences of older LGBTQ folk from an array of backgrounds and cultures. The Hive, Shrewsbury, Sun 16 Feb

**HARRY POTTER AND THE DEATHLY HALLOWS - PART I (12)** Adventure/Family. Starring Daniel Radcliffe, Emma Watson. Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke-on-Trent, Sun 16 Feb

### NEW FILMS ON GENERAL RELEASE:

Released from Fri 14 Feb, showing at selected cinemas

**BLUMHOUSE FANTASY ISLAND HORROR (tbc)**

**EMMA (tbc)**

**SONIC THE HEDGEHOG (tbc)**

**THE PUBLIC (tbc)**

## Events

**ADULT NIGHT** Special event for adult fans of LEGO - use the Centre's facilities and enjoy some creative play sessions, Wed 12 Feb, Legoland Discovery Centre, Birmingham

covery Centre, Birmingham

**LEGO LATES AT THINKTANK** Late event combining the Museum at Night initiative with LEGO activities and challenges. Ages 18+ only, Fri 14 Feb, Thinktank Science Museum, B'ham

**GREAT BRITISH SHOOTING SHOW** Featuring the largest and most varied choice of shooting-related products anywhere in Europe, Fri 14 - Sun 16 Feb, NEC, Birmingham

**PIRATE AND PRINCESS TAKEOVER** Pirate and princess-themed activities for all the family, exclusively available to short-break guests, Fri 14 - Sun 23 Feb, Alton Towers, Stoke-on-Trent

**NICK SHARRATT'S RIGHT ROYAL DRAW-ALONG** A family-friendly fun-filled draw-along for all ages, Sat 15 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**GHOST TOURS** Exclusive opportunity to venture into the Hall at night. Best prepare for a scare! Sat 15 Feb, Aston Hall, Birmingham

**THE GREAT GATSBY 2020** 1920s inspired charity event featuring Gatsby dancers, casino & silent auction, Sat 15 Feb, Molineux Stadium, Wolverhampton

**THE CLASSIC DIRT BIKE SHOW** Dig out classic dirt bike machinery galore, see fascinating club and private off-road machines, bag a bargain at the autojumble and see off-road legends interviewed on stage, Sat 15 - Sun 16 Feb, Telford International Centre

**DRAGON HUNT** Tamworth Castle's resident dragon, Ruby, and her brother, Hafgrim, have gone missing while playing a game of hide & seek. Help find them in the castle's grounds, Sat 15 - Fri 21 Feb, Tamworth Castle

**NEW LIFE ON THE FARM & HELP THE FARMER** Welcome new life to the farm and enjoy 'help the farmer' activities, Sat 15 - Sun 23 Feb, National Forest Adventure Farm, Burton-upon-Trent

**LIVING DANGEROUSLY** Join in an activity trail, take on the role of a journalist, and even test your own toy rocket car to its limits, Sat 15 - Sun 23 Feb, Black Country Living Museum

**FEBRUARY HALF-TERM** Immerse yourself in the sights, sounds and smells of the golden age of steam, as SVR reopens for 2020, Sat 15 - Sun 23 Feb, Severn Valley Railway, Kidderminster

**DISCOVER THE PRIDE** Meet the gorgeous lion cubs, who will be going out onto the safari drive-through for the very first time, Sat 15 - Sun 23 Feb, West Midland Safari and Leisure Park, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

**LAMB FEEDING WEEK** As well as getting up close to the lambs, families can enjoy a fun yet informative farm trailer ride, Sat 15 - Sun 23 Feb, Lower Drayton Farm, Penkridge, Staffs

# ENTERTAINMENT

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#### MENOPAUSE THE MUSICAL 2

Sunday 9 February  
4pm & 7.30pm • £30 • 16+

#### DIRE STRAITS TRIBUTE - MONEY FOR NOTHING

Friday 21 February  
7.30pm • £22

#### OPERA BOYS

Wednesday 26 February  
7.30pm • £19.50

#### AMERICAN FOUR TOPS

Friday 28 February  
7.30pm • £25

#### JUKEBOX AND BOBBY SOX

Saturday 29 February  
7.30pm • £19



### MARCH

#### SOUNDS OF THE 60S

Saturday 7 March  
7.30pm • £30 • VIP £40

#### SEVEN DRUNKEN NIGHTS

Sunday 8 March  
2.30pm & 7.30pm • £25

#### A NIGHT AT THE MOULIN ROUGE

Thursday 12 March  
7.30pm • £27.50



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*The Atlantics - The Robin, Bilston*

## Gigs

**MAX & HARVEY** Mon 17 Feb, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**PETE KENT** Wed 19 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

**THE CLASSIC ROCK SHOW 2020** Wed 19 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**JOHN KIRKPATRICK** Wed 19 Feb, The Red Lion Folk Club, B'ham

**CAGE THE ELEPHANT** Thurs 20 Feb, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**NAPALM DEATH** Thurs 20 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**THE LITTLE MIX SHOW** Thurs 20 Feb, The Place, Telford

**ROXY MAGIC** Thurs 20 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

**HELLO AGAIN - THE STORY OF NEIL DIAMOND** Thurs 20 Feb, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

**X AMBASSADORS** Fri 21 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**TWIN PEAKS** Fri 21 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

**ARCADIA ROOTS** Fri 21 Feb, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

**DIRE STRAITS - MONEY FOR NOTHING** Fri 21 Feb, Prince Of Wales, Cannock

**SMILING IVY + PACKET RACKET** Fri 21 Feb, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

**GENESIS CONNECTED** Fri 21 Feb, The Place,

Telford

**QUADROPHENIA NIGHT** Fri 21 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

**THE PINK FLOYD SHOW** Fri 21 Feb, Theatre On The Steps, Bridgnorth

**GLORY DAYS A TRIBUTE TO BRUCE SPRINGSTEIN & THE E STREET BAND** Fri 21 Feb, Eleven, Sandyford, Stoke-on-Trent

**MAX & HARVEY** Fri 21 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**BRUNO MARS TRIBUTE** Fri 21 Feb, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

**THE ATLANTICS** Fri 21 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

**MIDGE URE** Fri 21 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

**HERMANS HERMITS** Fri 21 Feb, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

**PSYCHO DOLLZ** Sat 22 Feb, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**WORKING MEN'S CLUB** Sat 22 Feb, The Sugarmill, Stoke-On-Trent

**THE CLONE ROSES, OASIS AND THE SMITHS LTD** Sat 22 Feb, The Slade Rooms, W'hampton

**MYKE GRAY FT KIM JENNETT** Sat 22 Feb, KK's Steel Mill, W'hampton

**THE MAINE** Sat 22 Feb, O2 Institute, B'ham

**THE CAPITAL + VILLAGE BULLY** Sat 22 Feb, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

**THE FLOW - SINGLE LAUNCH PARTY!** Sat 22 Feb, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

**PIGDAZE** Sat 22 Feb,

Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

**THE WEEKEND ANTHEMS FEATURING KILLER-STREAM** Sat 22 Feb, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

**ROMEO'S DAUGHTER + READ OUT LOUD** Sat 22 Feb, Eleven, Sandyford, Stoke-on-Trent

**NEW RULES** Sat 22 Feb, O2 Academy, B'ham

**FRED ZEPPELIN** Sat 22 Feb, Lichfield Guildhall

**SANCHEZ & BARRINGTON LEVY** Sat 22 Feb, O2 Academy, B'ham

**THE REYTONS** Sat 22 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**BROOKS WILLIAMS** Sat 22 Feb, Birchmeadow Centre, Broseley, Shropshire

**PALAYE ROYALE: THE B\*STARDS WORLD TOUR** Sun 23 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**THE SENSATIONAL 60S EXPERIENCE TOUR** Sun 23 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

**ATIF ASLAM** Sun 23 Feb, Arena B'ham

**CLIFF & THE SHADZ** Sun 23 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

**THE SHERLOCKS** Sun 23 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**SAM LEWIS** Sun 23 Feb, Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury

**BEN POOLE BAND AND HOWIE G BAND** Sun 23 Feb, Eleven, Sandyford, Stoke-on-Trent

**ALDEN PATTERSON AND DASHWOOD** Sun 23 Feb, The Hive, Shrewsbury

## Classical Music

### CBSO: RESPIGHI'S ROMAN TRILOGY

Featuring the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Kazuki Yamada (conductor) & Vilde Frang (violin). Programme includes works by Shostakovich & Respighi, Wed 19 - Thurs 20 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**ENSEMBLE HESPERI** Programme includes works by James Oswald, Fri 21 Feb, Maidment Hall, Shrewsbury School

**RICHARD WALKER ORGAN RECITAL** Fri 21 Feb, St Chad's Cathedral, Shrewsbury

**MAHAN ESFAHANI IN-THE-ROUND** Harpsichord concert. Programme includes works by Orlando Gibbons, Miroslav Srnka, W.F Bach, Elizabeth Maconchy & J.S Bach, Sat 22 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

**BLONDEL MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE BAND: OF ALL THE BIRDS** Programme reflects on the perfection of nature and the artistry of humans in imitating it, Sat 22 Feb, Recital Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**CBSO YOUTH ORCHESTRA: ELGAR'S SYMPHONY NO.1** Featuring Kazuki Yamada (conductor). Programme includes works by Takemitsu, R. Strauss and Elgar, Sun 23 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

## Comedy

**AN EVENING WITH VIC & BOB** Mon 17 Feb, The Alexandra, Birmingham

**JAMALI MADDIX** Mon 17 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**JORDAN BROOKES** Tues 18 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**JESSICA FOSTEKW** Wed 19 Feb, Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury

**LOU SANDERS** Thurs 20 Feb, The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton

**MILTON JONES** Thurs 20 Feb, William Aston Hall, Wrexham

**TOM WARD & COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON** Thurs 20 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**BAGS OF LAUGHTER** Featuring Shappi Khorsandi (pictured), Hugh Dennis, Count Arthur Smith, Hardeep Singh Kohli, Simon Brodwin, Jo Enright, Geoff Whiting & Becky Brunning, Fri 21 Feb, Crescent Theatre, B'ham

**JOHN KEARNS** Fri 21 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

**MILTON JONES** Fri 21 Feb, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

**PAUL MCCAFFREY** Fri 21 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**JONNY AWSUM** Fri 21 Feb, Henry

Tudor House, Shrewsbury

**TOM WARD, ANDY ROBINSON, THE RAYMOND & MR TIMPKINS REVUE & LAURA LEXX** Fri 21 - Sat 22 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**ROY CHUBBY BROWN** Sat 22 Feb, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

**COMEDY IN THE MET** Sat 22 Feb, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

**JARRED CHRISTMAS, DAISY EARL, JAY HANDLEY & DANNY MCLOUGHLIN** Sun 23 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

## Theatre

**ROUND THE HORNE** Radio comedy classic live on stage, Mon 17 Feb, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

**REVENGE** Robin Hawdon's 'taut thriller, full of twists & turns', Mon 17 - Tues 18 Feb, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

**TEN TIMES TABLE** Robert Daws leads an all-star cast in Alan Ayckbourn's classic comedy, Mon 17 - Sat 22 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**HISTORIES OF THE UNEXPECTED A** multi-period show demonstrating how everything has a history - even the most unexpected of subjects, Tues 18 Feb, The Roses Theatre, Kidderminster

**BUDDY** 'Drama, passion and excitement' combine as actors and musicians tell Buddy's story, Tues 18 - Sat 22 Feb, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

**PETER PAN GOES WRONG** Mischief Theatre present a 'riotous' spin on a timeless classic, Tues 18 - Sat 22 Feb, The Alexandra, B'ham

**BEAUTY AND THE BEAST** Pantomime fun for all the family, Tues 18 - Sat 22 Feb, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

**CIRQUE BERSERK** Combining contemporary cirque-style artistry with adrenaline-fuelled stunt action and featuring an international troupe of over 30 jugglers, acrobats, aerialists, dancers, drummers and daredevil stuntmen, Tues 18 - Sun 23 Feb, The REP, Birmingham

**VOLDEMORT AND THE TEENAGE HOGWARTS MUSICAL PARODY** Brand new musical parody packed with 'magic, hormones and more than a few murders', Tues 18 - Sun 1 March, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

**JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR** The Garrick Young REP Musical Group present an amateur version of Tim Rice & Andrew Lloyd Webber's iconic musical, Wed 19 - Sat 22 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

**BUBBLE SCHMEISIS** Nick Cassenbaum's one-man show about identity, home, and getting schmeised (washed) by old men, Thurs 20 Feb,

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## SHREWSBURY UPCOMING DATES

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SpArC Theatre, Bishops Castle, Shropshire

**SPRING AWAKENING** Staffs Uni level 6 drama students present an amateur version of Steven Sater's award-winning musical, Thurs 20 - Fri 21 Feb, Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke-on-Trent

**HOME OF THE WRIGGLER** Kaleidoscopic soap opera from Birmingham-based Stan's Cafe, Thurs 20 - Sat 22 Feb, The REP, Birmingham

**BUBBLE SCHMEISIS** Nick Cassenbaum's one-man show about identity, home, and getting schmeised (washed) by old men, Fri 21 Feb, Bit-terley Village Hall, Ludlow, South Shropshire

**ME AND MY GIRL** Amateur production presented by The Viv Kelly School of Dance & Theatre Youth Theatre Group, Fri 21 - Sat 22 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**FOOTLOOSE** Amateur production presented by Starcross Youth Theatre, Fri 21 - Sun 23 Feb, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

**BUBBLE SCHMEISIS** Nick Cassenbaum's one-man show about identity, home, and getting schmeised (washed) by old men, Sat 22 Feb, Brilley Village Hall, Nr Kington, Herefordshire

**YOURS SINCERELY** Storytelling & lip-sync cabaret collide in a queer coming-of-age comedy about the complications of 21st-century communication, Sat 22 Feb, The Hive, Shrewsbury



**SPLIT SECOND WITH X TRA TIME** Sharon Rose Amateur Dramatics present an original play about the journey of a breast cancer survivor, Sat 22 Feb, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

## Kids Shows

**YOUR TOYS** Slot Machine Theatre present a heartwarming story about friends pulling together, Wed 19 Feb, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

**EXCITING SCIENCE SHOW** Entertainment for younger audiences, featuring 'silly, fun and factual science experiments', Wed 19 Feb, Stourbridge

Town Hall

**SOOTY MAGIC SHOW** Laugh-out-loud magic show, complete with the chance to meet Richard Cadell & Sooty afterwards, Fri 21 Feb, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

**CLIMB THAT TREE** Join David Gibb on a musical journey to where bears live in cupboards under the stairs, wolves roam the corridors at school, and trips to the moon are a regular occurrence, Fri 21 Feb, Chelmarsh Parish Hall, Nr Bridgnorth, South Shropshire

**ROALD DAHL & THE IMAGINATION SEEKERS** Family show inspired by the works of Roald Dahl, Fri 21 - Sat 22 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre, B'ham

**MILKSHAKE! LIVE** Starring Fireman Sam, Noddy, Shimmer & Shine, Digby Dragon, Wissper, Nella the Princess Knight and the Floogals, alongside two Milkshake presenters, Sat 22 Feb, The Place, Telford

**HENRY MOON AND THE GREASY SPOON** Rhubarb Theatre fuse puppetry, theatrical play, mask, dance, song and laughter in a fantasy tale for younger audiences, Sat 22 Feb, SpArC Theatre, Bishops Castle, Shropshire

**HENRY MOON AND THE GREASY SPOON** Rhubarb Theatre fuse puppetry, theatrical play, mask, dance, song and laughter in a fantasy tale for younger audiences, Sun 23 Feb, Radbrook Community Centre, Shrewsbury

## Dance

**SWAN LAKE** Birmingham Royal Ballet's version of the classic romantic fable, set to Tchaikovsky's legendary score, Tues 18 - Tues 25 Feb, Birmingham Hippodrome

**TWIST AND PULSE** The Britain's Got Talent Champion of Champions dance duo embark on their first ever UK tour, Wed 19 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

## Talks

**AMANDA OWEN - ADVENTURES OF A YORKSHIRE SHEPHERDESS** Heart-warming tales and honest anecdotes from Amanda's life in North Yorkshire, Sun 23 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

## Film

### INDEPENDENT LISTINGS

**THE GOOD LIAR (15)** Crime/Drama. Starring Helen Mirren, Ian McKellen. Stourbridge Town Hall, Mon 17 Feb

**DIEGO MARADONA (12a)** Documentary/Biography. Starring Pelé, Diego Armando Maradona. Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, North Shropshire, Mon 17 Feb



Milkshake! Live - The Place, Telford

**ABOMINABLE (U)** Animation/Adventure. With the voices of Chloe Bennet, Albert Tsai. Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, Craven Arms, South Shropshire, Mon 17 Feb

**SPIES IN DISGUISE (PG)** Animation/Action. With the voices of Rachel Brosnahan, Jarrett Bruno. Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire, Mon 17 Feb

**THE SEVEN YEAR ITCH (PG)** Comedy/Romance. Starring Marilyn Monroe, Tom Ewell. Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke-on-Trent, Tues 18 Feb

**PAIN AND GLORY (15)** Drama. Starring Antonio Banderas, Asier Etxeandia. Foreign language, subtitled. Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Tues 18 Feb

**THE LION KING (PG)** Animation/Adventure. With the voices of Donald Glover, Seth Rogen. Stourbridge Town Hall, Fri 21 Feb

**COLD WAR (15)** Drama/History. Starring Joanna Kulig, Tomasz Kot. Foreign language, subtitled. The Hive, Shrewsbury, Fri 21 Feb

**THE LIGHTHOUSE (15)** Drama/Fantasy. Starring Robert Pattinson, Willem Dafoe. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 21 - Thurs 27 Feb

**1917 (15)** Drama/War. Starring Dean-Charles Chapman, George MacKay. Lichfield Garrick, Sat 22 Feb

**CLIMBING BLIND** Documentary. Starring Jesse Dufton. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Sun 23 Feb

### NEW FILMS ON GENERAL RELEASE:

Released from Fri 21 Feb, showing at selected cinemas

**BRAHMS: THE BOY II (tbc)**

**GREED (15)**

**LIKE A BOSS (15)**

**LITTLE JOE (12a)**

## Events

**CAVE BABY AND LIVING THE STONE AGE** Inspired by Julia Donaldson's book, experiment with how cave baby and his parents would have painted, and also try out some other stone-age activities, Mon 17 - Fri 21 Feb, Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, Craven Arms, South Shropshire

**THE LITTLE BRITISH BAKE-OFF** Chance for mini chefs to learn a whole new culinary skill, Mon 17 - Fri 28 Feb, The British Ironworks Centre, Oswestry, North Shropshire

**LITTLE SKIPPER - LET'S BUILD!** Get hands-on with some classic Little Skippers activities, Tues 18 - Sat 22 Feb, Dudley Canal and Tunnel Trust

**THE CARAVAN, CAMPING AND MOTORHOME SHOW 2020** The UK's largest display of leisure vehicles, static holiday homes, lodges and tents, Tues 18 - Sun 23 Feb, NEC, Birmingham

**SMETHWICK ENGINE STEAMING DAY** See the world's oldest working steam engine in all its glory, Wed 19 Feb, Thinktank Science Museum, B'ham

**ANIMALMANIA** Come face to face with lizards, snakes, chinchillas, hedgehogs, giant bunnies, tortoises and creepy crawlies, Wed 19 Feb, Blakesley Hall, Birmingham

**VERVE POETRY FESTIVAL** Now in its fourth year, Verve is synonymous with a lively and celebratory approach to programming poetry of every kind, Thurs 20 - Sun 23 Feb, Birmingham Hippodrome

**RACE RETRO** Bringing together over 24,000 motorsport fans, Fri 21 - Sun 23 Feb, Stoneleigh Park, Kenilworth

**THE AMAZING BUBBLE MAN** Louis Pearl presents the art, magic, science and fun of bubbles, Sun 23 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall



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### Gigs

**BOY & BEAR** Mon 24 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**THE MURDER CAPITAL** Mon 24 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**NEW YEARS DAY** Tues 25 Feb, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**JARED JAMES NICHOLAS** Tues 25 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

**GOO GOO DOLLS** Tues 25 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**THE 1975** Tues 25 Feb, Arena Birmingham

**REBECCA FERGUSON** Tues 25 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

**HOTEL LUX** Tues 25 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

**THE BOYS ARE BACK! 5IVE, A1, DAMAGE, 911** Tues 25 Feb, Symphony Hall, B'ham

**THE DEAD SOUTH** Tues 25 Feb, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**ROVING CROWS** Wed 26 Feb, The Red Lion Folk Club, B'ham

**THE JOHNNY CASH ROADSHOW** Wed 26 Feb, Victoria Hall, Stoke-On-Trent

**THE DAME** Wed 26 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

**CAVETOWN** Thurs 27 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**THE ORIELLES** Thurs 27 Feb, The Sugarmill, Stoke-On-Trent

**NOVATINES** Thurs 27 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**EDITORS** Thurs 27 Feb, Arena Birmingham

**LENNON STELLA** Fri 28 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**HALLOUMINATI** Fri 28 Feb, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

**THE ORIGINAL** Fri 28 Feb, Route 44, B'ham

**MARK KINGSWOOD** Fri 28 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

**THE SCRIPT** Fri 28 Feb, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

**THE AMERICAN FOUR TOPS** Fri 28 Feb, Prince Of Wales, Cannock

**MJ LEGACY STARRING CJ** Fri 28 Feb, Eleven, Sandyford, Stoke-on-Trent

**ZION TRAIN** Fri 28 Feb, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

**THE BON JOVI EXPERIENCE** Fri 28 Feb, The Place, Telford

**THE FOO FIGHTERS** Fri 28 Feb, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

**JOHN COGHAN** Fri 28 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

**TERRORVISION** Fri 28 Feb, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

**HERMAN'S HERMITS** Fri 28 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**EXAMPLE** Sat 29 Feb, O2 Academy, B'ham

**JPEGMAFIA** Sat 29 Feb, O2 Academy, B'ham

**STEREOPHONICS** Sat 29 Feb, Arena B'ham

**LANA DEL REY** Sat 29 Feb, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

**EGO FRIENDLY** Sat 29 Feb, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

**THE DUPPYBUSTERS** Sat 29 Feb, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

**GHETTO FUNKULAR** Sat 29 Feb, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

**MOTOWN & NORTHERN SOUL NIGHT** Sat 29 Feb, Birchmeadow Centre, Broseley, Shropshire

**THUNDERHAMMER** Sat 29 Feb, Eleven, Sandyford, Stoke-on-Trent

**HEAVY DISCO SPECTACULAR** Sat 29 Feb, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

**FROM FAIRLY VOCAL TO VARIFOCAL** Sat 29 Feb, The Hive, Shrewsbury

**CHRIS WOOD** Sat 29 Feb, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

**SOUL & MOTOWN NIGHT WITH THE RUMBLES** Sat 29 Feb, The Place, Telford

**JUKEBOX & BOBBBOX 2020** Sat 29 Feb, Prince Of Wales, Cannock

**COUNTERFEIT SEVENTIES** Sat 29 Feb, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

**REACH OUT TO MOTOWN** Sat 29 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

**BILLY MEETS CLIFF: TRIBUTE SHOW** Sat 29 Feb, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

**RE-TAKE THAT - THE GREATEST HITS** Sat 29 Feb, Victoria Hall, Stoke-On-Trent

**INDOOR OLDSCHOOL GARAGE FESTIVAL** Sat 29 Feb, The Hanger, Wolverhampton



Opera Boys - Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

### Classical

**LUNCHTIME ORGAN CONCERT WITH THOMAS TROTTER** Programme includes works by J.S Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Franz Lehár & Maurice Duruflé, Mon 24 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

**OPERA BOYS** Wed 26 Feb, Prince of Wales Centre, Cannock

**CBSO: WALTON'S VIOLA CONCERTO** Featuring the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Michael Seal (conductor) & Lise Berthaud (viola). Programme includes works by Foulds, Walton & Vaughan Williams, Thurs 27 Feb, Symphony Hall, B'ham

**CBSO: A NIGHT ON BROADWAY** Featuring Michael England (conductor) and Alice Fearn, Scott Davies, Ashley Day & Sophie Evans (vocalists). Programme includes scores from Chicago, Cabaret, West Side Story, Wicked and more... Fri 28 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**STUDENTS FROM CHETHAM'S SCHOOL OF MUSIC** Fri 28 Feb, St Chad's Cathedral, Shrewsbury

**RHOS MALE VOICE CHOIR** Fri 28 Feb, Maidment Auditorium, Shrewsbury School

**CBSO: A LONDON SYMPHONY** Featuring the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, the CBSO Youth Chorus, the CBSO Children's Chorus & Michael Seal (conductor). Programme includes works by Foulds, Gary Carpenter & Vaughan Williams, Sat 29 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**DANIEL SHAO (FLUTE) & JOSEPH HAVLAT (PIANO)** Programme includes works by Bach, Pierre, Ravel & Poulenc, Sat 29 Feb, Henderson Hall, Moor Park, Ludlow, South Shropshire

**ST DAVID'S DAY CONCERT** Featuring Trelawnd Male Voice Choir, Flint Male Voice Choir, Xander Croft & Dilwyn Morgan, Sat 29 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

### Comedy

**KOJO ANIM** Tues 25 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**JOSIE LONG** Tues 25 Feb, The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

**JAMALI MADDIX** Tues 25 Feb, Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury

**TANYALEE DAVIS** Wed 26 Feb, The Place, Telford

**ALEX EDELMAN** Wed 26 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**SPENCER JONES PLUS COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON** Thurs 27 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**ADAM ROWE** Fri 28 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**ROSIE JONES, WAYNE BEESE & COMICS TBC** Fri 28 Feb, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

**GARY DELANEY** Fri 28 Feb, Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

**JAMALI MADDIX** Fri 28 Feb, The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton

**ALEXEI SAYLE** Fri 28 - Sat 29 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

**SPENCER JONES, TEZ ILYAS & DAVE JOHNS** Fri 28 - Sat 29 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**SIMON EVANS** Sat 29 Feb, The Brew-house Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

**DAVID BADDIEL** Sat 29 Feb, Dudley Town Hall

**HENNING WEHN (PICTURED), ROGER MONKHOUSE, NIGE & WAYNE BEESE** Sat 29 Feb, Forest Arts Centre, Walsall



Xion Train - The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

### Theatre

**THE CHANGING ROOM** New Vic Youth Theatre present a lyrical piece about existing on the cusp of growing up, Tues 25 Feb, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

**SPAMALOT** Amateur staging presented by the Lichfield Operatic Society, Tues 25 - Sat 29 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

**JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT** Starring Britain's Got Talent 2019 finalist Mark McMullan as Joseph, Tues 25 - Sat 29 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

**THE STRANGE TALE OF CHARLIE CHAPLIN & STAN LAUREL** Nostalgic bio drama paying homage to two men who changed the world of comedy forever, Tues 25 - Sat 29 Feb, The REP, B'ham

**SAL TONGE - TALES FROM HERE, THERE... AND THE PLACES IN BETWEEN** Join Twaddle monger Sal as she shares stories from her home in Shropshire and beyond, Wed 26 Feb, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

**STRICTLY SHERLOCK** Don't Go Into The Cellar present an intimate stage show featuring three Sherlock Holmes cases, Wed 26 Feb, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

**FAUSTUS: THE DAMNED WOMAN** Radical reimagining of Christopher Marlowe's provocative tale, told from a female perspective... Wed 26 Feb - Sat 7 March, The REP, Birmingham

**DEAD GOOD** Vamos Theatre's highly acclaimed production, 'funny and poignant in equal measure', Wed 26 - Thurs 27 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**JEKYLL & HYDE** Arrows & Traps Theatre give Robert Louis Stevenson's gothic classic a modern twist, Wed 26 - Fri 28 Feb, The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

**THE BALLAD OF MARIA MARTEN** Retelling of a real-life murder-mystery... Wed 26 - Sat 29 Feb, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

**DICK & ANGEL DARE TO DO IT** The stars of hit Channel Four show *Escape To The Chateau* on their first ever tour, Thurs 27 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**DRIP DRIP DRIP** Pipeline Theatre tackles the rise of racism and bigotry in the NHS, Thurs 27 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

**HOME OF THE WRIGGLER** Kaleidoscopic soap opera from Birmingham-based Stan's Cafe, Thurs 27 Feb, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

**THE SORCERER** Presented by Walsall Gilbert & Sullivan Society, Fri 28 - Sat 29 Feb, Walsall Arena

**THE THINKING DRINKERS: HEROES OF**

**HOOCH** 'Hilarious and intoxicating' look at history's greatest drinkers, Fri 28 - Sat 29 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**MY MOTHER NEVER SAID I SHOULD** Fingersmiths present a 'moving and funny exploration' of the lives of four generations of women in one family, Fri 28 - Sat 29 Feb, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

**RAPUNZEL** Immersion Theatre present a tongue-in-cheek retelling of the Brothers Grimm family favourite, Sat 29 Feb, Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke-on-Trent

**FROM FAIRLY VOCAL TO VARIFOCAL** Clare Summerskill presents a celebratory evening of songs and comedy, Sat 29 Feb, The Hive, Shrewsbury

**HAMLET** The Crescent Theatre Company present a 'carefully cut version' of Shakespeare's searing tragedy, Sat 29 Feb - Thurs 7 March, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

### Cabaret

**FASCINATING AIDA** Evening of cabaret with Dillie Keane, Adèle Anderson & Liza Pulman, Sat 29 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

### Dance

**WASTELAND** Gary Clarke's rave-inspired story of northern life with the coal industry in terminal decline, Thurs 27 - Fri 28 Feb, Birmingham Hippodrome

### Film

**NEW FILMS ON GENERAL RELEASE:**

**RED JOAN (PG)** Biography/Drama. Starring Judi Dench, Sophie Cookson. Walsall Arena, Tues 25 Feb

**SORRY WE MISSED YOU (15)** Drama. Starring Kris Hitchen, Debbie Honeywood. Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Tues 25 Feb

**1917 (15)** Drama/War. Starring Dean-Charles Chapman, George MacKay. Wem Town Hall, North Shropshire, Tues 25 & Thurs 27 Feb

**A STAR IS BORN (15)** Drama/Music. Starring Lady Gaga, Bradley Cooper. Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke-on-Trent, Wed 26 Feb

**FOXTROT (15)** Drama/History. Starring Lior Ashkenazi, Sarah Adler. Foreign language, subtitled. The Hive, Shrewsbury, Wed 26 Feb

**THE PEANUT BUTTER FALCON (12a)** Adventure/Comedy. Starring Zack Gottsagen, Ann Owens. Ludlow As-



### Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 25 - Sat 29 February

Joseph marked Tim Rice & Andrew Lloyd Webber's first foray into the world of musical theatre, paving the way for later offerings *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Evita*.

Fabulously fun and frothy, the show offers great entertainment for anybody who fancies the kind of night out that lets you leave your brain at home.

Joseph sees the future in dreams, and tells his 11 brothers that he's had a vision in which he's seen them all bowing down to him.

Not surprisingly, the lads are a tad annoyed with him about this - and feel even less enamoured towards their sibling when their dad gives him a coat of many colours...

Mark McMullan stars as Joseph.

sembly Rooms, South Shropshire, Fri 28 Feb

**BOMBSHELL (15)** Biography/Drama. Starring Charlize Theron, Nicole Kidman. Lichfield Garrick, Fri 28 Feb

**EMMA (tbc)** Comedy/Drama. Starring Anya Taylor-Joy, Josh O'Connor. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 28 - Sat 29 Feb

**PHOTOGRAPH (15)** Drama. Starring Nawazuddin Siddiqui, Sanya Malhotra. Foreign language, subtitled. Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, Sat 29 Feb

**THE PERSONAL HISTORY OF DAVID COPPERFIELD (PG)** Comedy/Drama. Starring Dev Patel, Hugh Laurie. Lichfield Garrick, Sat 29 Feb

### Talks

**AN EVENING WITH FRANK BRUNO MBE** Thurs 27 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

### Events


**WHAT CAREER LIVE? & WHAT UNIVERSITY LIVE?** For students aged between 15 and 19, Fri 28 - Sat 29 Feb, NEC, Birmingham

**THE NATIONAL WEDDING SHOW** Meet with 200-plus wedding specialists, including venue coordinators and award-winning photographers, Fri 28 Feb - Sun 1 Mar, NEC, Birmingham

**NIGHT RUN - EXPERIENCE ATTINGHAM IN A NEW LIGHT 2020** Raise funds for ongoing conservation work by exploring Attingham after dark on a night run, Sat 29 Feb, Attingham Park, Shrewsbury


**SUTTON COLDFIELD BOOKFEST** Meet your favourite authors, discover astonishing books and enjoy some interactive storytelling fun, Sat 29 Feb, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall and Sutton Coldfield Library, Birmingham





WARWICK  
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& KNIGHT'S VILLAGE



A medieval archer in a red tunic and chainmail is shown in a low-angle shot, aiming a longbow. In the background is the massive stone wall of Warwick Castle. A small shield with a red and white design is visible on the ground near the archer.

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

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

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Delia Mathews as Odile © Bella Kotak

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