

Coventry & Warwickshire

ISSUE 411 MARCH 2020

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Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry

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29 February – 19 April 2020

This is the eleventh **Coventry Open**, an inspiring exhibition showcasing a range of talent from the West Midlands and Warwickshire. The work on display is selected by a panel of judges and produced in a variety of media, from painting and drawing, to sculpture and textiles.

#CoventryOpen2020

Find out more theherbert.org

Free Admission



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What's On

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Marc Teiler and Nancy Harris in a workshop for The Magician's Elephant



The Magician's Elephant in Stratford

The Royal Shakespeare Company will this Christmas build on its successful tradition of presenting its own shows for family audiences.

The Company's festive-season offering is a new musical adaptation of *The Magician's Elephant*, based on the novel by international bestselling author Kate DiCamillo.

The Magician's Elephant tells the story of orphan Peter Augustus Duchenne, who lives a frugal life in the lonely town of Baltese. Then, one day, a magician conjures an elephant from the sky. The animal's appearance sets off a chain of remarkable events that changes Baltese forever.

The Magician's Elephant shows at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon from 29 October to 17 January 2021.

Other highlights of the RSC winter season include *The Wars Of The Roses*, an epic event staging *Henry VI Parts 1, 2 and 3* in two performances, and new productions of *The Comedy Of Errors*, *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale*. For more details, visit rsc.org.uk

Community day set to remember the Mayflower



A free community event commemorating the 400th anniversary of locally born Pilgrim Edward Winslow's transatlantic voyage on the *Mayflower* will take place during the day-time of 4 July across Droitwich Spa Town Centre and Lido Park.

Born in the town in 1595 and baptised in St Peter's Church, Winslow sailed to America on the *Mayflower* in 1620.

The event is part of a national commemoration remembering the lives of the *Mayflower* Pilgrims, the Native American people they encountered and their legacy.

A Big Month Of Music in the region...

March sees the West Midlands Music collective - comprising all 14 of the region's music services - promoting a unique and ambitious project called Big Month Of Music. The initia-

tive has been designed to celebrate the musical achievements of children across the region and to invest in their musical learning in the long-term. It's anticipated that more than 140,000 children and young people will participate in the project.

For more information, visit westmidlandsmusic.org.uk

Scriptwriters Enter Stage Write in the Midlands

The grand final of annual West Midlands scriptwriting competition Enter Stage Write takes place at Birmingham



Hippodrome on Wednesday 11 March. Competitors have been required to submit a 10-minute script, which will be performed live on stage during the final.

The top three scripts will be made into short films as well as performed as a stage play, and there will also be a cash prize of £1,000. Tickets for the grand final are now on sale at birminghamhippodrome.com

Best of BE Festival showcased in Coventry

Coventry's Warwick Arts Centre is this month hosting a production comprising three 30-minute shows from Birmingham's annual BE Festival.

Taking place every summer, BE Festival brings together some of Europe's best and brightest performers in the disciplines of theatre, dance, visual arts, circus and live music.

The organisers then package up three of their favourite shows and send them on a tour of the UK. To find out which three are showing in Coventry this month (Thursday 12 March), visit warwickartscentre.co.uk

Mr Boombastic to play Solihull Summer Festival

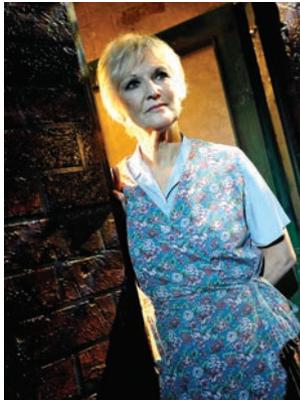
Shaggy has joined the line-up for this year's Solihull Summer festival. Best known for hit singles *Oh Carolina*, *Boombastic*, *It Wasn't Me* and *Angel*, the reggae and dancehall star joins *Kool & The Gang*, *Shalamar*, *The Brand New Heavies*, *Snap!* and *The Blow Monkeys* at Solihull's Tudor Grange Park on Saturday 25 July. Watch this space for news of the festival's Sunday line-up. Tickets to the event are available at solihullsummerfest.co.uk



Lyn Paul back in iconic stage role

Lyn Paul returns to the role of Mrs Johnstone when Willy Russell's 'play with music', Blood Brothers, stops off at the Coventry Belgrade Theatre this month (Tuesday 17 to Saturday 21 March).

Paul rose to fame in the early 1970s as a member of the New Seekers. She was the group's featured vocalist on their 1972 Eurovision Song Contest entry, Beg, Steal Or Borrow, and lead vocalist on their 1974 number-one hit, You Won't Find Another Fool Like Me... For further information about the show or to book tickets, visit belgrade.co.uk



Celebrating VE Day in Warwick

Warwick Racecourse will be hosting a huge Victory in Europe Day (VE Day) celebration to open this year's May Racing Carnival.

The special event is being held to commemorate 75 years since World War Two fighting ended on the continent.

The mammoth community occasion on Friday 8 May will feature a street party for up to 1,500 people in the centre of the course. Other attractions include a parachute display team, a Vera Lynn tribute act and on-display replicas of more than 20 World War Two planes.



Cooking up a treat as Waitress heads to the Midlands...

Smash-hit Broadway and West End musical Waitress will stop off at Birmingham Hippodrome next year (Monday 29 March - Saturday 3 April 2021) as part of its first ever UK & Ireland tour.

Based on the 2007 movie, Waitress tells the story of Jenna, an expert pie maker in a small town

who dreams of a way out of her loveless marriage. A baking contest in a nearby county and the town's new doctor may offer her a chance at a new life, while her fellow waitresses offer their own recipes for happiness...

For more information about the show and booking tickets, visit birminghamhippodrome.com

Bigfoot at Ragley Hall

Warwickshire's Ragley Hall is hosting a brand new festival this summer.

Taking place from 19 to 21 June, Bigfoot will feature more than 60 music acts across five stages, a stellar roster of 15 restaurants and eight chefs, and a hand-picked line-up of over 50 craft breweries, natural wine-makers and artisanal spirit producers. For more information about the festival and its line-up of attractions, visit bigfootfestival.co.uk



Severn Valley Railway marking two momentous occasions this summer

The Severn Valley Railway's popular Step Back To The 1940s weekends will this year mark two momentous events - the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Britain and the 75th anniversary of VE Day.

The entire railway will be transformed into a snapshot of wartime Britain on 27 & 28 June and 4 & 5 July, with attractions including a Hellcat tank, a battle re-enactment and a recreation of a wartime wedding. A VE Day-themed big band concert takes place on both Saturday evenings.



Zog hits the trail at Warwick Castle

Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler's lovable dragon, Zog, is starring in a brand new 3D interactive trail at Warwick Castle this Easter.

The trail will keep kids busy with a whole host of 'Zogtastic tasks', including the chance to learn a new set of skills - just like Zog did at Dragon School.

Commenting on the new attraction, Liam Bartlett, Operations Director for Warwick Castle, said: "We're thrilled that Zog is flying in to Warwick Castle. The interactive trail is great for kids of all ages and supports the key messaging from the storybook itself around tenacity, persistence and rising to the challenge."

Walking boots at the ready...

The 16th Malvern Walking Festival will take place in and around the Malvern Hills in May. The festival has grown from four walks over a long weekend in October 2005, to a nine-day event (Saturday 23 to Sunday 31 May) offering in excess of 50 walks. During the 2019 festival, more than 1,200 walks were booked by 600-plus walkers, making it one of the largest festivals of its type in the country. For more information, visit malvernwalking.uk

An invitation to sing in Worcester Cathedral nave...

Amateur singers of all kinds can join a special one-day 'come and sing' workshop in Worcester Cathedral nave on Saturday 4 April. The event, hosted by Worcester Festival Choral Society, will give singers an opportunity to learn Worcestershire-born Sir Edward Elgar's impressive choral work, The Music Makers. Around 150 amateur singers are expected to take part in the annual workshop. For more information, visit wfcs.online.

Taking flight at the Transport Museum

A new interactive experience - created to inspire visitors to discover, dream and design - has landed at Coventry Transport Museum. Taking Flight provides immersive science and engineering-based experiences for all ages and will teach visitors about the history and mechanics of aviation. The exhibition is now open and can be enjoyed at the venue until Sunday 14 June. For more information, visit transport-museum.com



Mothers go free at Avoncroft Museum

Mums get to enjoy a free stroll through 700 years of history at Avoncroft Museum this Mother's Day. The popular Worcestershire visitor attraction is giving all mothers accompanied by a paying child or adult free admission to the property this Sunday 22 March. And what's more, if you pre-book an Afternoon Tea in the venue's Edwardian Tea Room, mums can enjoy a free glass of Prosecco! Call 01527 889768 to book your place.



Hilary Mantel to headline Stratford Literary Festival



Acclaimed novelist Dame Hilary Mantel and leading impressionist Rory Bremner will headline this year's Stratford Literary Festival, which runs from 9 to 17 May. They will be joined by leading playwright Michael Frayn, former Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, writer Maggie O'Farrell and performance poet Lemn Sissay. Bestselling crime author Peter James will share his latest thriller, while Miles Jupp takes a break from appearing in the RSC's A Comedy Of Errors to reflect on his career so far. For more information, visit stratlitfest.co.uk

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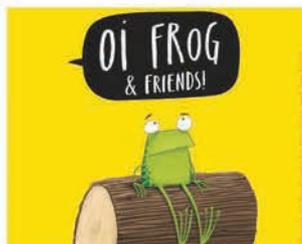
**BLADE RUNNER
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 THU 26 MARCH, 7:30PM
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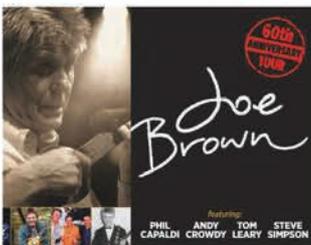
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 THE OSCARS
 2020**
 THU 9 APRIL, 7:30PM
SYMPHONY HALL



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 FORCE AND
 FRIENDS**
 MON 30 MARCH, 7:30PM
SYMPHONY HALL



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**AN EVENING WITH
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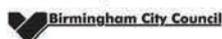
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You're having a laugh!

We chat to Darrell Martin, founder of Just The Tonic comedy club, a new branch of which opens in Leamington Spa venue The Assembly this month...

Tell us about your decision to open your next Just The Tonic (JTT) club in Leamington, Darrell...

I'll be honest... I got a phone call from the man who's reopened The Assembly. Once I asked a few questions, I realised what a stunning place it was, and that it could make for an amazing night out.

What made you decide to open your first club, in Nottingham, 26 years ago?

A love of comedy, being an unemployable graduate of philosophy & cultural studies and a recession that would not help me. I was also probably a dreamer and unrealistic.

What was the UK comedy scene like when you opened that first club?

There were a number of clubs in London, with the leading one being, obviously, the Comedy Store. Then there were two Jongleurs clubs, in Battersea and Camden - that was before they went national and then imploded - then a load of smaller clubs. Outside London, as I remember it, there was very little. Manchester had a small scene, with The Buzz Club on a Thursday being the best known, and there was, strangely, a great club in Hull called The Legged Dog. I think Newcastle had a weekend club, but really there was very little. Also, it wasn't really seen as a possible career. Comedians didn't see other comedians selling out arenas. It was a world full of misfits and characters who were all just happy that they weren't having to do day jobs. Well, it probably wasn't as simple as that, but to a 24-year-old it seemed that way... Big business was involved, but it wasn't as organised as now.

How do you decide who gets to appear at one of your venues? Do you have criteria that a comedian needs to meet - other than the obvious one of needing to be funny - in order to get the chance to perform?

We book loads of acts who we already know are great. We try and get comperes who are a bit different and really engaging with the audience. I can't stand comperes who just break up their routine into sections and talk at a crowd. A good compere needs to be a bridge between the audience and the show, not just 'tell jokes'. We also bring in newer acts that we find ourselves or that we get

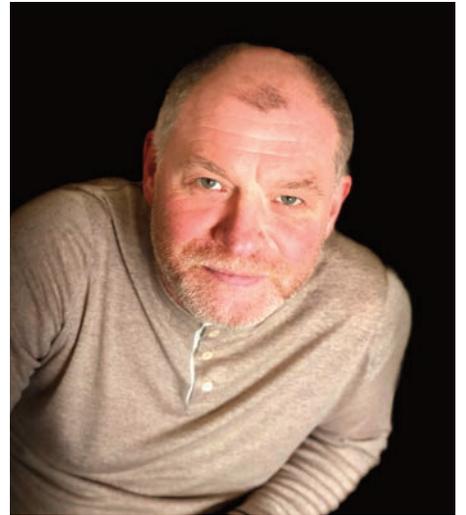
recommended to us. We take eight new comedians to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe each year as part of The Big Value Comedy Shows, and when researching for that, we find new people. Also, every two or three months, I have a few days doing 'fantasy booking', where I trawl through the phone book/email list/agents' numbers and see if any of those bigger comedians who are now off the circuit would like to come back. It's often three days wasted, but when it works, it's very exciting to be putting arena-filling acts back into the small venues.

How does Just The Tonic differ from other established UK comedy clubs?

I think it's the effort we put into booking, and the fact that it's run by a performer. So we do our best to attract an audience that actually wants to see comedy, and we make sure that if there are people in there who are being a distraction to others, they are politely asked to leave. I think we have quite a maverick ethos. We're not rigid in what we want from performers. Often, there are people we book who others don't. Because I see something in them. When you're a performer, sometimes you only need one person to believe in what you're trying to do, and that one person can allow you the freedom to grow without worry. We book a comedian called Eric Lampaert to compere. After a gig in Nottingham to about 400 people, he apologised because it hadn't been great. I said, 'Don't worry, I know you're funny'. I think he thought I was going to moan and groan. But all great comics have had duff nights. If they hadn't, then they would be bland and crowd-pleasing, and nothing new would ever happen.

Can you recall any particularly memorable sets - performances which were real stand-out ones for whatever reason?

Doug Stanhope. I was talking to him backstage and then someone said, 'We're starting'. He just walked out and just seemed to carry on talking... for 120 minutes! It was astounding. The first time I saw Johnny Vegas. I was at the Frog & Bucket in Manchester, having done a 10-minute open spot. He came up to me and said he'd seen me before supporting Rich Hall on tour and liked what I did. He'd actually



Darrell Martin, founder of Just The Tonic

heckled me on that night, asking me to do more... which is rare. He told me his name was Johnny Vegas - or he might have introduced himself as Michael Pennington - and that he was headlining. I thought, 'I bet you're shit' because I was booking really well-known acts at my club and hadn't heard of him. But when he went on, it was the most amazing performance I'd ever seen. I was absolutely stunned at how he managed to get the whole room laughing and singing. The bloke was totally crazy and fearless. When Johnny is on form, he's unrivalled. Also Phil Kay in 1995. Sean Lock in 1996/'97... I could go on, but no one would keep reading.

What would be your perfect Just The Tonic line-up, if you could bring together, say, four comedians for a single evening?

That's tricky because it would have to be four comedians from different stages in their career. I might have to stretch it out a bit. I'll name a couple of definite ones and then name a few others to choose from. Definite compere: Ross Noble. Pure, joyful silliness, with the skill of making magic happen from the audience input and crafting it all into a wealth of material in his strange mind. Headliner: Johnny Vegas 1996 - 1999 - and I reckon what's around the corner as he gets back into stand-up. He's got some of the best



scripted material, audience put-downs, audience interactions, live pottery, mayhem and off-the-cuff events to make each night unique, ended by rousing singalongs. Johnny is the most perfect and crowd-pleasing entertainer this country has known.

Others in the mix: Jenny Eclair - in-your-face-funny and no punches pulled; Jo Brand - brilliantly funny and one of the nicest people in comedy; Tim Vine - the best one-liners and silliness; Spencer Jones - the funniest man on the circuit at the moment; Daniel Kitson - if you know, you know; Sean Lock - the best scripted stand-up there is; Rich Hall - a great stand-up and musician. There are loads. This is impossible, to be honest.

Is there a type of comedian who you simply won't book for JTT - or does anything and everything go, as far as you're concerned?

We don't book comedians who are rude to our staff. We have a strict no-dickhead policy. There are two people on that list. There's also the odd comedian who's tried to do 'controversial' stuff who we don't book. Not because we don't book controversial comedians, but because the ones I'm thinking of weren't actually funny and were just doing lowest-common-denominator jokes and trying to shock. It's okay to shock, but it must actually be funny. I often think, 'Who are you trying to impress? Your mum and dad aren't

here and we can all swear and be sick if we want to'.

I can't really say we have any rules about who we don't book. It's all very subjective.

What would you say about UK audiences - are the reactions your comedians receive pretty similar across the country or have you noticed any regional differences in terms of how audiences respond to JTT shows?

I can't really say that there are massive differences across the UK at our clubs. But I do know from personal experience that there are some regional clubs where the audiences really take convincing if you're not 'one of them'. I'm thinking in particular of myself dying on stages in Liverpool and Newcastle. I have a fairly strong southern accent and it definitely made the crowd difficult. 'Taxi' was the politest of the words shouted. At the one in Newcastle, I was tour support for Johnny Vegas, and we arrived really late. The room was heaving and everyone was shouting 'Johnny Johnny Johnny'. His voice came over the PA to a massive cheer, then he introduced his support act - me - and out came this southerner. It was 15 minutes I would like to be able to forget. After the interval, I was in the dressing room - behind the stage, too embarrassed to walk out through the crowd - surrounded by empty glasses and fags, sitting under the light of a single bulb listening to

300 people cheering the mighty Johnny Vegas. That was another 90 minutes I wish I could forget. Great fun, to be honest.

What's your favourite joke?

What's 'ET' short for? He has little legs.

Who's your own personal hero of comedy and why?

I think from the history of comedy, possibly Tommy Cooper, because he just looked and acted really daft. Not sure if 'hero' is the right word. I loved The Young Ones and Monty Python when growing up. Then there's Spike Milligan - reading his books and poems as a kid and his Q series.

What's the hardest thing about the life and profession of the stand-up comedian?

I think it can be quite lonely. There *is* camaraderie on the circuit, but the reality is that on those Friday and Saturday nights when most normal people are out socialising and spending time with family and friends, comedians are driving around the country entertaining half-drunk strangers they will never see again. I've missed friends' weddings, family events and things that are unrepeatable. It can be rubbish like that.



To find out more about Just The Tonic comedy nights, head to justthetonic.com



Some of the comedians heading to Just The Tonic in Leamington Spa - (L-R) Hal Cruttenden, Diane Spencer, Gary Delaney, Lou Conran, Tom Binns and Paul Foot.

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REVIEW: Café Vin Cinq

Pint-sized Parisian bistro still capturing punters' hearts 10 years after opening

Located on its own cosy corner off the nearby high street, just a stone's throw from the world-renowned Rugby school, Café Vin Cinq is a handsomely furnished bistro. The venue absolutely oozes Parisian charm, from its imposing baby-blue exterior to its gleaming Georgian interiors, complete with signature spiral staircase spread across three adjoining floors, statement chandeliers, ornamental coverings, bistro-style chalkboards and impressionist artworks that fill the walls throughout.

There was something altogether enchanting about the place. Stepping from the nearby high street into Café Vin Cinq's warm embrace resembled meeting an old friend from years gone by. This feeling was only strengthened by the warmth of the welcome we received from the staff, who left no stone (menu, plate or glass!) unturned in ensuring our every need was catered for.

Taking inspiration from classical French cuisine yet drawing on Mediterranean, Moroccan, pan-Asian and Portuguese influences, the Café Vin Cinq menu

offered an eclectic choice of dishes, each featuring its own unique twist on a continental classic, from tried-and-tested favourites such as the charcuterie board, caramelised red onion tart and braised beef rib served with rosemary & garlic mash, to seasonal specials such as pan-seared scallops, red pepper, sweet potato and chickpea tagine and lamb canon stuffed with apricots.

And, of course, no Francophile worth their salt could pass up the chance to sample Café Vin Cinq's signature 'Chateaubriand fillet steak for two', served fresh from the grill to order - a firm favourite with locals and, though a tad pricey at £65, the perfect excuse (if excuse were needed) to spoil a loved one!

Opting for a starter of gin-cured loch sea trout with watercress, lime creme fraiche, rhubarb & ginger chutney (on the recommendation of our charismatic waiter), my expectations were quickly satisfied. Beautifully fresh, subtle in flavour with a texture that melted in the mouth, the marriage of cured sea trout and crème fraiche was impeccable, as was the picante

and slightly sour hit of the rhubarb & ginger chutney served with fresh watercress.

Surprising, intriguing, delicious!

A creature of habit, my partner chose the soup du jour, a tad unadventurous given the array of options on offer but by no means disappointing - quite the contrary, in fact. Served with freshly baked bread & butter, this tomato, red pepper and chilli soup exceeded all expectations. Intensely rich in flavour with an undercurrent of sweetness and a healthy kick of fresh chilli, this was an exceptional dish in every sense and a fine example of a classic continental starter delivered with aplomb.

Deliberating long and hard over a glass or two of the excellent Tierra Del Ray Sauvignon Blanc (a refreshing white wine complete with notes of gooseberry), it was almost inevitable that my perusal of the mains would eventually lead me to one of Café Vin Cinq's signature 12 oz sirloin steaks, served with twice-cooked chips, mushrooms, baby tomatoes and a choice of one of seven sauces. Once again taking the lead from our fantastic waiter - who now felt like a firm friend - I took a punt and strayed from my failsafe choice of 'peppercorn sauce', opting instead for the chermoula, a Tunisian mustard relish that exploded with the fresh flavours of coriander, garlic, paprika and peppercorns. The steak, too, was exceptional. Full-bodied in flavour, cooked medium-rare over a charcoal grill with an expert eye for presentation, the intense, earthy notes of the chermoula marinade couldn't have asked for a better partner.

Likewise, my partner's choice of pan-fried salmon was an utter delight from start to finish. Served with a light flake on a bed of sautéed potatoes (cooked to perfection, I might add), the quality of the fillet was second to none, as was the veloute sauce, a

feather-light fusion of butter and flour and champagne. C'est magnifique!

Bringing our evening to a triumphant close, we tucked into a dessert of coconut macaroon with passion fruit parfait. Presented with theatrical flare and glazed with a zesty pomegranate sauce, the sweetness of the meringue contrasted perfectly with the sharpness of the pomegranate. The zesty kick of passion fruit offered an ideal palate cleanser after so indulgent an offering. So too did my partner's choice of dark chocolate & raspberry tart served with mint syrup and raspberry sorbet, the bitterness of which was offset beautifully by the cooling notes of raspberry sorbet and mint.

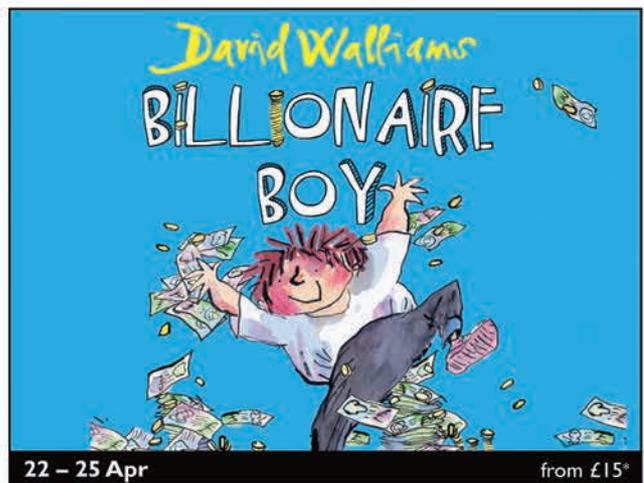
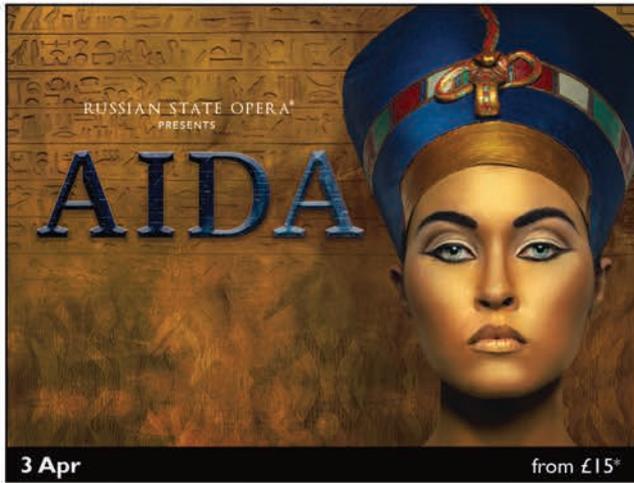
Since bursting onto the Warwickshire dining scene in 2010, this pint-sized Parisian bistro has charmed the hearts of punters with its unique ambience, unrivalled service and unmistakable passion for its ingredients. Ten years on and several prestigious award wins later - including a coveted place in the national Trip Advisor Hall of Fame - Rugby's love affair with Café Vin Cinq shows no sign of abating.

Proudly independent, refreshingly unpretentious and uncommonly inventive in approach, the restaurant's joie de vivre shines through in every aspect of its delivery - from the humble soup du jour to the show-stopping chateaubriand.

Bon Appetit! *Katherine Ewing*

Food:	■■■■■
Service:	■■■■■
Ambience:	■■■■■
Overall value	■■■■■
OVERALL	■■■■■

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Parisian-style brasserie set to open in Solihull town centre

Côte Restaurants are set to open a Parisian-style brasserie in the former Royal Bank of Scotland building in Solihull town centre.

The local council has approved the application to change the use of the ground floor and create an outdoor seating area.

It's not yet known when the new Solihull restaurant is likely to open.

Celebrate midsummer with an outdoor feast and live entertainment

Celebrate midsummer by enjoying a special outdoor feast at Talton Mill in Stratford-upon-Avon on 19 June.

Along with a meal, the evening will also feature a live band and a quirky converted horsebox bar serving alcoholic drinks.

The Hatton Arms pub undergoes a full refurb

The Hatton Arms in Warwick has reopened following a full refurbishment.

Boasting sweeping views of the idyllic Hatton Locks, the country pub has established a reputation among locals for authentic dining and classic British cuisine.

A new, lighter, brighter and contemporary interior now greets visitors, while the new lunch and dinner menu reflects the pub's provenance, with ingredients sourced directly from the Hatton Estate.

Eco-friendly snacks on sale at Rugby Theatre

The sweets on sale at Rugby Theatre are now eco-friendly and rustle-free - thanks to the brainchild of longtime theatre member Michele Goode.

To replace standard confectionary, Michele has created Goodiboxes - plastic-free boxes of sweets that won't rustle when audience members dip their fingers in.



London vegetarian street food eatery to open in Solihull

London vegetarian street food outlet SKVP is set to open premises in Solihull.

The popular eatery wraps together all the vibrant flavours of Mumbai street food to create 'an easy-to-eat quick-service format'.

Co-founders Subodh Joshi and Sujay Sohani will open the new restaurant next to Fiesta Del Asado on the Stratford Road.

Talking about the venture, Sohani said: "We have lots of existing customers in the Midlands,

and we've received many messages from them asking us to open a restaurant in Birmingham. We're thrilled that we're finally able to give back to these customers, who have been extremely loyal to us over the years."

Joshi added: "SKVP focuses on freshly prepared, healthy, quick and easy vegetarian food for a very reasonable price. Without compromising on quality, you can get your entire lunch for £2!"

Midlands business wins coveted 'best street food' award

Local Birmingham business The Flying Cows has been awarded the Best Street Food gong at the Food & Drink Awards.

The Flying Cows is not your usual burger van. Owner Dan Batchelor worked as a chef for 16 years at Michelin-starred restaurants in Birmingham and London before deciding to get out of the kitchen and kickstart his own operation in 2013.

Using only the highest-quality locally sourced beef to make its burgers, The Flying Cows is a regular feature of Birmingham's multi-award-winning Digbeth Dining Club street food event. It also pops up at festivals and events around the country.



Thursday 5 March 7.30pm

DONT PANIC!

Variety show based on Dad's Army TV series



Sunday 15 March 7pm

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Tuesday 17 March 7.30pm

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Celebrating International Women's Week - drama by Gazebo Theatre



Tuesday 24 March 7.30pm

10CC'S GRAHAM GOULDMAN - HEART FULL OF SONGS

Acoustic set with his 4 piece band



Wednesday 25 March 7.30pm

JIMMY BUCKLEY

Irish singer with his daughter Claudia



Friday 27 March 7.30pm

THE MAN WHO LEFT IS NOT THE MAN WHO CAME HOME

Drama & discussion about the Armed Forces



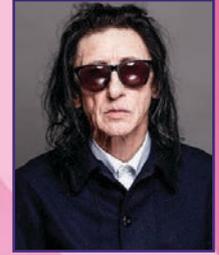
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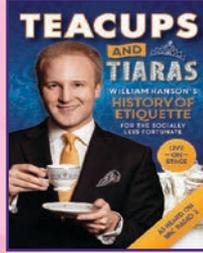
Roger McGough with Little Machine
6 March £20



Ceilidh with live music from Brimstone
14 March £8



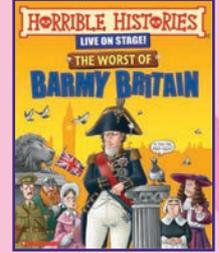
John Cooper Clarke - The Luckiest Guy Alive
4 April £27.50 - £18.50



WILLIAM HANSON'S HISTORY OF ETIQUETTE
17 April £24 - £18



JOHN SHUTTLEWORTH'S BACK!
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Horrible Histories Live - The Worst of Barmy Britain
26 April £15

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City Of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Fri 6 March

Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla (pictured) takes her orchestra 20 miles down the road to perform a concert that brings together the white-knuckle ride of Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto - here performed by free-spirited Venezuelan virtuoso Gabriela Montero - with Brahms' evocative and romantic third symphony. Gražinytė-Tyla completes

the programme with Šerkšnytė's De Profundis, an impressive modern masterpiece from her native Lithuania... Now in her fourth year in charge of the CBSO, Gražinytė-Tyla made history in 2019 when she became the first female conductor to be signed by the prestigious Deutsche Grammophon.

Pražák String Quartet

Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington Spa, Fri 20 March

Having gone down a storm not once but twice when they played the 2018 Leamington Music Festival, the Pražák Quartet here make a welcome return to the town to present a concert featuring two compositions by Dvorak. They also perform Haydn, and then salute the work of Karel Janovický in his 90th year, performing the UK première of his latest quartet. The concert is the last in the International String Quartet Season.



Orchestra of the Swan

Stratford Playhouse, Stratford-upon-Avon, Tues 24 March



As well as being much admired for their performances of works by legendary composers, the Stratford-based Orchestra of the Swan are also held in high regard for their championing of new music, having presented more than 70 world premieres. They are here joined by violinist Thomas Bates, who will be performing Django Bates' Umpteenth Violin Concerto. The programme also features Beethoven's Overture, from The Creatures Of Prometheus, and his Concerto For Violin And Orchestra, with cadenzas by Django Bates.

Fitzwilliam String Quartet

Artrix, Bromsgrove, Fri 20 March

Fitzwilliam is an ensemble with a long and illustrious history. The four Cambridge undergraduates who founded it in 1968 were befriended by Dmitri Shostakovich, who entrusted them with the Western premières of his last three quartets.

The ensemble then became the first group to perform and record all 15.

Inevitably the quartet's line-up has changed numerous times down the years, but the commitment to high-quality work remains very much intact.

This latest concert sees them presenting a programme that includes work not only by Shostakovich but also Beethoven and Hugo Wolf.



Academy Of Ancient Music

Malvern Theatres, Sat 21 March

The Academy of Ancient Music's concerts have been described as 'transmitting the kick of an energy drink' - an assessment of their work with which the ensemble are entirely happy. The internationally acclaimed orchestra's stated aim is 'to energise baroque and classical music' - and to do so, they get back to the style and spirit in which the music was first performed.

This latest Academy offering sees them presenting a programme that 'roams through Handel's best-loved operas and oratorios'.



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Martin Turner

Artrix, Bromsgrove, Thurs 12 March

Celebrating the 50th anniversary of the formation of the original Wishbone Ash, Martin Turner and his band here perform classic 1971 album *Pilgrimage* in its entirety. Formed in 1969, Wishbone Ash were long admired for their unique blend of blues, jazz and English folk - but it was the way the guitars played melodic leads together that became their trademark, inspiring bands including Thin Lizzy and Iron Maiden. Classic album releases such as *Argus*, *There's The Rub*, *New England* and *Live Dates* defined the band's sound and have touched the hearts of several generations of music fans.



FUNK: A Music Revolution

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Mon 2 March

This celebration of funk's influence is led by James Brown's musical director - renowned saxophonist Pee Wee Ellis - and co-curated with singer China Moses.

The nine-piece band features some of the UK's best funk and soul artists, including Omar (vocals), Dennis Rollins (trombone) and Neville Malcolm (bass).

Commenting on the show, Pee Wee (pictured) said: "From 1967, when Mr Brown and I wrote *Cold Sweat*, right through until today, funk has been woven into the DNA of popular music. We want to tell that story."



Roddy Woomble

The Tin Music & Arts, Coventry, Tues 31 March

Known for his enigmatic lyrics, warm baritone voice and consummate gift for a tune, Roddy Woomble has been the frontman of Scottish alternative rock band Idlewild for

the past two decades.

Alongside his work with the band - which has seen him tour worldwide as a headline act and in support of Pearl Jam and R.E.M. - he's also released five solo albums, including *My Secret Is My Silence*, *Listen To Keep* and *The Deluder*.

From The Jam

The Assembly, Leamington Spa, Sat 14 March

From The Jam are celebrating the 40th anniversary of The Jam's fourth studio album, *Setting Sons*.

"We can't wait to perform all of it live," says vocalist and guitarist Russell Hastings. "The album has been noted as one of The Jam's best, along with *All Mod Cons*. It seems that even the more obscure tracks, like *Little Boy Soldiers* and *Thick As Thieves*, are just as popular when we play them live as the hit singles."

Candid

Coventry Empire, Sat 28 March

Candid's infectious indie rock is inspired by the likes of Catfish And The Bottlemen, Arctic Monkeys and Kings Of Leon. Hailing from Coventry, the talented fourpiece has performed support slots for Scouting For Girls, The Hoosiers and The Pale White.

Vinny Peculiar

The Marr's Bar, Worcester, Thurs 5 March

Described as 'a warm-hearted Morrissey' by Q Magazine, singer-songwriter and poet Vinny Peculiar grew up in Worcestershire and trained as a nurse before signing to Manchester cult label Ugly Man Records 20 years ago.

He's since put out 12 albums of literate, autobiographical pop music and toured both band and solo shows.

Vinny visits the Midlands this month in support of new album *While You Still Can*, a work which has been described as a 'politicised hard rock affair'.





Stewart Lee

Midlands-born comedian brings his new touring show to the region...

Last year, after three decades in the business, Stewart Lee was hailed by the Times as 'the world's greatest living stand-up'. His current tourer is entitled Snowflake/Tornado, a show which sees him, in his own words, "negotiating the thin line between has-been and legend".

What can audiences expect from your latest show, Stewart?

It's two one-hour shows back to back. Tornado is a story show about me sharing a venue with a famous American comedian and getting chased off by his private security team. Snowflake is a more discursive, idea-driven hour, about how some people think political correctness has supposedly imposed on people's freedoms. I'm a 1980s snowflake liberal and very much a product of political correctness, but fans of shock and awe will find enough in both shows to flip their wigs. Every new tour, I tie myself in gut-wrenching knots worrying that time will finally be called on my career, but this show has got better reviews than ever, so I am cursed to continue.

You're in the strange position of having won every award going, being able to shift a quarter of a million tickets on tour without needing to advertise, but by no means being a household name. Does that bother you?

Not really. To some extent I engineered it, by never going on panel shows or Live At The Apollo - it was easy to do this as I was never asked. Celebrity gets in the way of the art of being a stand-up, and it's a massive pain in the backside being even a bit famous. Me being recognised is embarrassing for the kids, and we've had to take legal advice on people threatening and harassing us. The last stand-up special, Content Provider, played to two million people on the iPlayer in 2018 and there was stuff about Brexit in it, so before it went out I grew a massive beard and let

myself go a bit so that I didn't get attacked in the street. The problem is, I can't seem to find my way back to normal now, so I look like a furry bin bag.

You mentioned the dreaded B word there. Is talking about Brexit a problem? Do you change what you say in different parts of the country?

I don't really change what I say. The on-stage Stewart Lee is an artist imposing his arrogant vision on audiences. He's not there to entertain people. He just does what he does, and if they're entertained it's an accidental by-product of the performance! But in April 2017 the Daily Telegraph, the Daily Express, Shortlist, the Daily Mail, Breitbart and Spiked Online all ran versions of the same largely made-up story, saying I was having mass walk-outs because of doing jokes about Brexit, which was entirely untrue. In the end, the Daily Telegraph and the Daily Express made minor corrections online, but it does show you how they run fake stuff up to fit their agendas. I'm a graduate who works in the arts from a 78% remain-voting constituency, so obviously my attitude to Brexit reflects that. I wouldn't be as aggressive about it now as I was last time I toured, because I don't think anyone has got what they wanted, so it just seems like a massive tragedy. But I'm not going to change who I am or what I think, even if it did lead to losing audiences, which it doesn't seem to have done. They've gone up if anything! I didn't get into this to get big crowds. I got into it to be free to do what I want. People can come and see me if they want, but it doesn't make any difference to the work I produce. I'd do it anyway, to no-one."

Who were your comedy influences?

Well, when I was a kid, I liked The Two Ronnies, Monty Python and The Young Ones on TV. But I think it was Dave Allen who

really went in, when I come to break down what it is I do now. I realised I wanted to be a stand-up when I was 16, watching this weird punk-comedian Ted Chippington supporting The Fall in Birmingham in 1986. He didn't have any proper jokes and just liked annoying everyone, and I thought it was the best thing I ever saw. At the Edinburgh Fringe in the late '80s, I was exposed to the Scottish shock-comic Jerry Sadowitz, the dry Jewish comic Arnold Brown, the surrealist Norman Lovett, the 'performance art'-driven Oscar McLennan, and the brilliant Irish storyteller Kevin McAleer, and they all remained cornerstones of what I was doing until I finally found my voice.

What about now? Who do you rate today?

I was very lucky to start out when the old 'alternative comedy' values were still in place, as I think modern stand-up is bland, market-driven and unpleasant. I still love the work of my contemporaries, like Harry Hill and Simon Munnery. I think Daniel Kitson is the greatest living stand-up, and I would like my wife Bridget Christie's act even more than I do if I wasn't married to her and knew what she was really like. Paul Sinha from The Chase is a great stand-up. From the newer comics, I really like Rosie Jones - and Ghosts, by the Horrible Histories lot, is my favourite comedy TV show since Detectorists and This Country. I saw the husband from Ghosts in a tile warehouse and was quite star-struck. And of course, he didn't know who I was, so it was all very awkward.

.....

Stewart Lee plays Malvern Theatres on Tuesday 3 March; Symphony Hall, Birmingham, on Thursday 12 & Friday 13 March; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre on Sunday 31 May; and Lichfield Garrick on Thursday 9 July



Adam Kay Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sun 22 March

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

Numerous sell-out years at the Edinburgh Fringe and tens of millions of YouTube hits later, former obstetrician and gynaecologist

Adam is this month visiting the Midlands with his popular touring show, *This Is Going To Hurt: Secret Diaries Of A Junior Doctor*. Expect splendidly silly spoof songs and some seriously shocking stories from the NHS frontline...

Rob Auton

The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton, Thurs 19 March; The REP, Birmingham, Fri 20 March

Although Rob Auton recognises he's been lucky in life, he nonetheless finds day-to-day living a bit of a struggle. "I find it really hard to look at the news because it has such a bad effect on me," he explains. "That's why my shows tend to be about topics where my judgment hasn't been clouded."

The topics he's chosen have been 'yellow', 'the sky', 'faces', 'water', 'sleep', and now, 'time'. This focus on just the one subject per show distinguishes Auton from other stand-ups, many of whom tend to prefer a more scattergun strategy when it comes to the business of being funny.

One-liners include the winner of the 2013 Edinburgh Festival funniest joke award: "I heard a rumour that Cadbury is bringing out an oriental chocolate bar. Could be a Chinese Wispa."

Josie Long

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Thurs 12 March; Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent, Fri 13 March

Josie Long's comedian pal, Nish Kumar, has referred to her as 'the David Bowie of stand-up' - a description he's used on account of the 37-year-old comic's impressive capacity for reinventing herself. London-born Long admits she likes to change her way of doing things every now and again. An example of this came post-Referendum, when despite being an enthusiastic but of course losing Remainer, she decided that her touring show would focus on the *positives* as Britain prepared itself for Brexit. Her latest on-stage offering is a tad more personal in nature, as Josie contemplates what she refers to as "the mind-bending intensity of new motherhood". Jokes include: "When I was a kid, I asked my mum what a 'couple' was and she said, 'Oh, two or three'. And she wonders why her marriage didn't work out..."

Geoff Norcott

Artrix, Bromsgrove, Wed 4 March; The Civic, Stourport-on-Severn, Fri 6 March; William Aston Hall, Wrexham, Sat 7 March; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Wed 25 March; Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Fri 27 March

Geoff Norcott is one of the sharpest tools in the comedy shed, presenting shows which feature observational humour, satire, and even the odd impression or two.

Being a former teacher, plenty of Geoff's gags relate to school experiences and the education system. He's also made something of a name for himself in the field of sports-related humour, a niche that's yielded him plenty of work both on television and radio... Geoff's Midlands appearances see him performing his latest touring show, *Taking Liberties*.



Josh Widdicombe

Dudley Town Hall, Thurs 19 March; The Place, Telford, Tues 31 March; Malvern Theatres, Fri 3 April; William Aston Hall, Wrexham, Sun 17 May

Peddling a nice line in exasperated, self-deprecating humour, Devon-raised funnyman Josh Widdicombe pumps out cleverly crafted gags at a brisk pace, hitting the mark with the vast majority of his material.



Widdicombe's jokes include: "Hotdogs cause bum cancer - that was the original slogan for McDonald's before 'I'm loving it'."

There's also: "I've no idea what the storyline of Monopoly is. Seemingly I'm a tiny dog who repeatedly wins beauty contests, on his birthday demands £10 from everybody he can see, and then bankrupts himself to stay in a hotel when he owns four houses on the next street!"

Ed Byrne

The Place, Telford, Thurs 12 March; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sat 14 March; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Tues 17 March; Walsall Arena, Tues 24 March

A highly regarded master of observational comedy, Ed Byrne admits to being a little uncomfortable about some of the 'more laddish' material he used in the early days of his stand-up career.

"My comedy reflected my life at that time - single and enjoying myself. Most of it was fairly harmless, but some of the stuff about an ex-girlfriend I can see was a bit angry, and I wouldn't do it now."

So 20-plus years after first dipping his toes into the decidedly dangerous waters of stand-up, does Ed still enjoy touring?

"Apart from the travel involved, which no comic likes, I love it. You have people responding to something that you've written alone in your office, and the work comes alive in a roomful of people. I like the TV things I do, but nothing can beat a live comedy audience."

Richard Herring

Birmingham Town Hall, Sat 28 March

Richard Herring has developed a reputation as one of the UK's most inventive and original comedians, cleverly using his real-life trials and tribulations to inform his high-quality line in comic patter.

And he's certainly not a man to shirk big or controversial subjects when it comes to his live shows; previous tours have seen him ponder religion (Christ On A Bike), politics (Hitler Moustache) and penises (Talking Cock).

Richard is appearing in Birmingham this month as part of the city's two-day Podfest event.



Njambi McGrath

Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Fri 20 March

At age 13, Njambi McGrath was beaten up, knocked unconscious and left to die by her father. When she awoke, she walked for miles through the Kenyan countryside in her blood-covered nightdress in search of her mother, who had left the family home previously in fear of her life...

It goes without saying that life for London resident Njambi has improved immeasurably since that dark and dreadful day. Having travelled to the UK to 'lose herself', she

instead found herself embarking on a career as a stand-up comedian.

Her Birmingham stop-off sees her scrutinising not only her own history but that of the UK. "I think the country is traumatised," she said in a recent interview with the London Evening Standard. "You didn't conquer three-quarters of the world with pleases and thank-yous. It caused so much pain around the world, and now this country is going through a search for identity."

Paul Tonkinson

Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury, Wed 11 March

Time Out Comedy Award winner Paul has been a regular on the UK laughter circuit since the 1990s and is perhaps best known from The Big Breakfast and The Sunday Show. Regularly booked by the UK Armed Forces, he was the first comic to perform in Iraq after the war officially ended and has used his experiences there as an inspiration for his comedy. "When I told my wife I'd spent much of the time lying on the floor," he says, "all I got in response was 'well we all like a lie down, don't we?'"





MAXINE WALKER: UNTITLED

representations of black womanhood showcased at Midlands Arts Centre...

From April to June 2020, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC) presents UNTITLED – an exhibition displaying the works of Birmingham-born artist Maxine Walker.

Reintroducing a pioneering artist whose practice focused on representations of black womanhood, UNTITLED is a poignant exploration of identity by a young artist at the height of her career, using photography to interrogate the intricacies of skin, blackness and being.

Active between 1985–1997, this will be Walker’s first solo exhibition in her home city

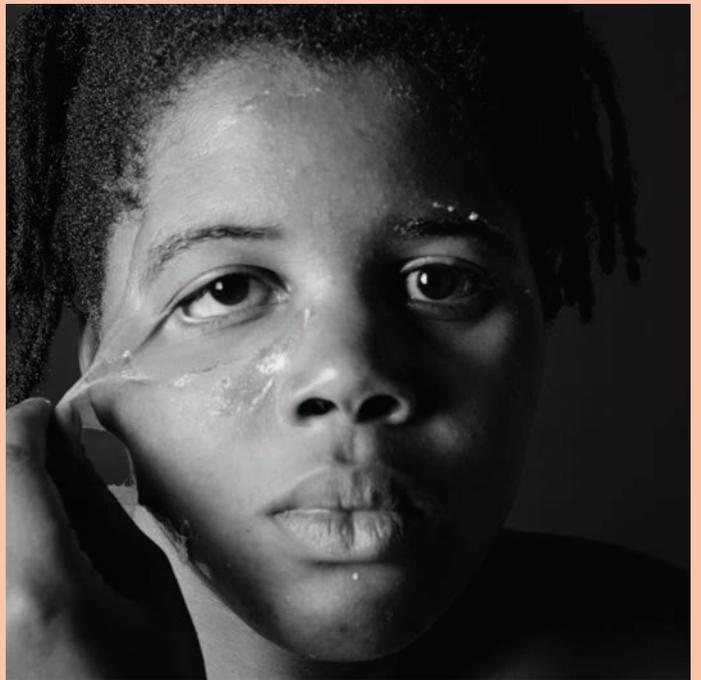
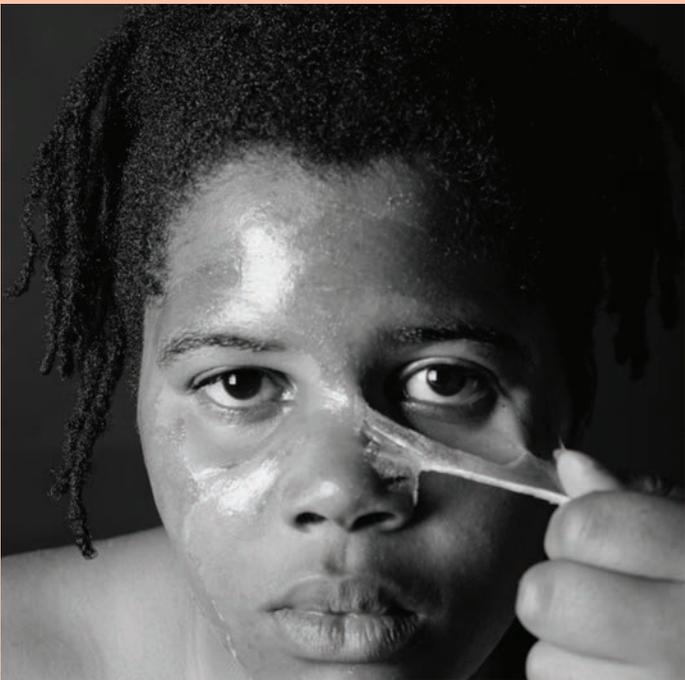
of Birmingham. The exhibition at MAC has been organised by Autograph, London curated by Renée Mussai and Bindi Vora, with additional loans from the Victoria and Albert Museum, London and The Photographers’ Gallery, London.

Deeply invested in creating dialogues that advocated black art practices in Britain, Walker was an influential artist and instrumental in co-founding platforms to give expression to black female photographers – including Monochrome Women’s Photography Collective, Women + Photography and Polareyes.

During this time, Walker regularly reviewed exhibitions and wrote features highlighting the work of her peers: international artists like Joy Gregory, Adrian Piper and Ingrid Pollard.

The exhibition at MAC will feature a selection of prints from the series Untitled (1997), framed prints from the series Black Beauty (1991), vintage photographs from The Bride (1989), plus eight framed photographs from the series Untitled (1995) on loan from the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

“These works raise important questions



Images: Maxine Walker, Untitled, 1997. Courtesy of the artist and Autograph, London © Maxine Walker

about the nature of identity and challenge stereotypes. The artist explores the fabricated format of photo-booth photography, and depicts herself through a series of guises.

“In contemporary society, the rise in ‘selfies’ and the growth in the need to capture the ‘perfect image’ offers a new context in which these works can be revisited, which we at MAC feel is particularly relevant and timely for our audiences.” – Deborah Kermode, Chief Executive and Artistic Director, MAC.

Walker’s self-portraits invite viewers to explore complex notions of beauty, masquer-

ade and vulnerability. In her seminal series of self-portraits *Untitled* (1997), the artist draws our attention to the features of her face in closely-cropped black and white photographs.

By magnifying the delicacy of her skin, Walker’s performative works conjure a narrative that is more sinister than playful, intimating that her blackness cannot – must not – be stripped away.

These works were first published in a rare series of artists’ monographs dedicated to black photographic practice, published by

Autograph in the 1990s. Walker’s monograph also featured her photo-booth-style self-portraits in colour, which appeared in this exhibition as original contact sheets. In this series, commissioned by Autograph and Ikon Gallery for the exhibition *Self-Evident* in 1995, curated by Mark Sealy, Walker transforms herself into myriad characters.

Maxine Walker: UNTITLED shows at Midlands Arts Centre’s Arena Gallery from Saturday 4 April – Sunday 21 June



Talking about Jamie

Former Coronation Street regular Shobna Gulati and the man playing title character Jamie - Layton Williams - chat about the touring version of hit musical Everybody's Talking About Jamie, which visits Birmingham this month and returns to the Midlands in the summer...

Everybody's Talking About Jamie may have come from humble beginnings - it was inspired by a television documentary and premiered in Sheffield - but after only a matter of months it had transferred to the West End. Since then, the musical has enjoyed blockbusting success, with five Olivier nominations, an extensive UK tour and a forthcoming feature film version testifying to its incredible popularity.

The show follows Jamie New's quest for acceptance on his journey to becoming a drag queen...

"Jamie is a 16-year-old boy who wants to go to his school prom in drag," explains ex-Coronation Street star Shobna Gulati, who is touring with the hit musical having previously appeared in the West End version. "The musical follows the ramifications of that; on himself, his family and his small community in Sheffield."

Shobna's character, Ray, has a very important part to play in Jamie's upbringing: "Jamie is the product of an essentially single-parent household. Ray is the best friend of Jamie's mum, Margaret, and has been around to watch Jamie grow up; everybody thinks of her as the aunty or surrogate father figure. You always have to have that good cop, bad cop thing going on, and I think Ray and Margaret have often swapped those roles in bringing up Jamie. Ray doesn't go backwards to go forwards and she's very much into tough love, but she also spoils him rotten. I think every character's relationship to Jamie changes throughout the musical because Jamie himself evolves. From Ray's perspective, she's worried about Jamie's dream of being a drag queen because that's just the nature of family. She definitely supports him, but she also wants to protect him."

What does Shobna think has made Everybody's Talking About Jamie such a roaring success?

"I think the world as it stands likes to put people into boxes and divide us all up. The more you can gaslight somebody into believing they don't belong, the easier it is to control the masses. Considering these polemic times, Everybody's Talking About Jamie exists at exactly the right moment. The story is so popular because it gives everyone a chance to recognise that they can be a part of

something. Everybody can be recognised in their own individual right, which is really important for anyone who feels like they're different or just on the periphery.

"Everybody's Talking About Jamie is about creating a space in which everyone can be who they want to be. I really love being in Jamie because of what it represents, the different people it represents and how it does that. The inclusivity of the show is incredible. Jamie is so out there and so inclusive as a piece, which hasn't always been my experience over the course of my career."

As well as relating to the show's ethos, Shobna can also connect with one of its musical numbers: "My favourite song has to be Wall In My Head, which comes at the beginning of the show, where Jamie is considering his life, how to get over certain obstacles that crop up and move past some personal demons. I think I relate to that song on a personal level because it's all about getting over that next wall, which is a true situation for every single one of us; I don't think anyone has hurdles they haven't had to overcome in life."

Not only has Shobna played Ray on stage, she will also appear as the character in the film version, scheduled for release in October.

"I feel so lucky to have worked with all the different Margarets that I have - each one has been absolutely astounding in their own right. The same with each Jamie. I think a lot of my joy at doing Everybody's Talking About Jamie is because of the extraordinary opportunities I've had to work with people. I've been lucky enough to tag along!

"The production has certainly given me an insight into myself. I've been in so many different renditions of the story, and what it brings to me is a sense of belonging."

Joining Shobna on tour is Layton Williams, who played Jamie in the West End. "Things are changing," he says. "People are waking up and realising that stories like Everybody's Talking About Jamie is what we want to see. We want to see everyone represented. This is a moment in history - a movement. I'm so proud to be a part of that! I'm a prime example that yes, we are absolutely moving in the right direction in terms of representation. I'm a non-white gay actor playing a part that was

once white - and now another mixed-race man has been cast in the West End version too.

"This musical tries to tell people to stay true to who they are, to be proud of themselves, and that if they're different or feel like they don't fit in, then there's a place for them in the world anyway. It's all about having hope. "When we're young, we doubt ourselves, but it's just about knowing that things will get better. It's about surrounding yourself with your friends, family and people who you love. It also sends the message that people can change their minds! People's minds can definitely be opened. I hope that people think about all these things when they come to see the show."

Everybody's Talking About Jamie visits The Alexandra, Birmingham, from Monday 16 to Saturday 21 March and Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Tuesday 23 to Saturday 27 June.





The Book Of Mormon Birmingham Hippodrome, Wed 4 - Sat 28 March

Devised by South Park creators Trey Parker & Matt Stone and Avenue Q co-creator Robert Lopez, The Book Of Mormon follows a mismatched pair of Mormon boys who are sent on a mission to deliver the news of the Latter Day saints to the people of a Ugandan village - a place where war, famine, poverty and AIDS are of far more concern than religion...

Featuring songs Spooky Mormon Hell Dream, I Am Africa, Baptize Me, All American Prophet and Tomorrow Is A Latter Day, the show has proved to be a massive hit on both sides of the Atlantic, albeit a

controversial one.

“We weren’t trying to get protesters,” explains Robert. “We were trying to make a show that was about the way we felt about the best parts of religion. We were writing a show about it that was sort of for atheists and believers at the same time, because it summed up how we felt about it - that whether or not the stories are true, they do something that’s good. Believing in something impossible makes you do impossible things.”

The Woman In Black

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Tues 31 March - Sat 4 April; Malvern Theatres, Mon 11 - Sat 16 May



Adapted by Stephen Mallatrat from the Susan Hill novel, The Woman In Black is a classic ghost story first performed in 1989. It has since become one of the West End’s most successful plays.

Solicitor Arthur Kipp believes that his family have somehow been cursed by a mysterious woman in black. In an attempt to tell his story, and to exorcise the evil curse which he’s convinced hangs over him, he hires a young actor to assist him in recounting his experiences...

The Sound Of Music

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 3 - Sat 7 March

One of the most popular family musicals of all time, Rodgers & Hammerstein’s The Sound Of Music is best known from its mid-1960s film version starring Julie Andrews. The show tells the story of the Von Trapp family’s World War Two flight across the mountains of Austria. Along the way, it features hit songs including: Edelweiss; My Favourite Things; Do-Re-Mi; Climb Ev’ry Mountain; The Lonely Goatherd; So Long, Farewell; and, of course, the title track itself.



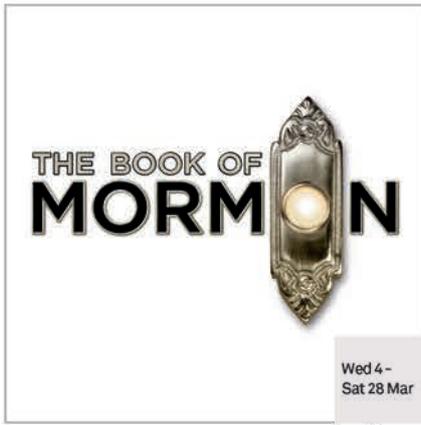
Cabaret

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Tues 31 March - Sat 4 April

When a show visits the region which, between its stage and screen versions, boasts multiple Oscars, Baftas and Tony awards, it makes sense to get along and check it out. Cabaret is one such show.



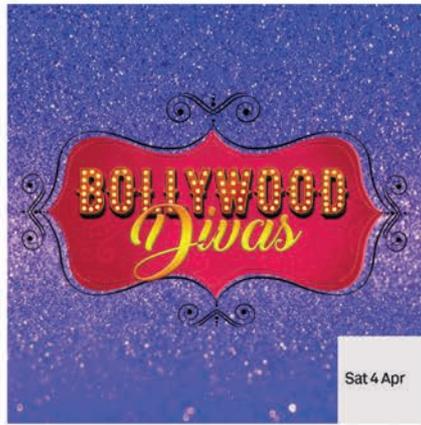
John Partridge here takes on the role of Emcee, with Kara Lily Hayworth stepping into the lead part of the legendary Sally Bowles, a nightly performer at the infamous Kit Kat Klub in early-1930s Berlin. Featuring ‘show-stopping choreography, dazzling costumes and some of the most iconic songs in musical theatre’ - including, of course, the famous title number - Cabaret is helmed by National Theatre Artistic Director Rufus Norris and choreographed by the Olivier Award-winning Javier de Frutos. Veteran song & dance star Anita Harris also features.



THE BOOK OF MORMON

Wed 4 - Sat 28 Mar

Icons: CAP, Relaxed Performance



BOLLYWOOD Divas

Sat 4 Apr

Icons: CAP, Relaxed Performance



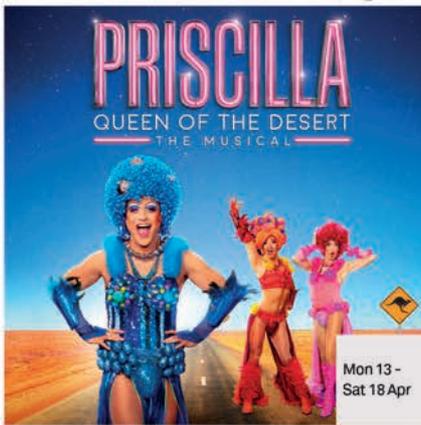
MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

THE EXTRAORDINARY NEW DANCE SHOW

BASED ON THE SONGS BY STING KATE PRINCE

Wed 8 & Thu 9 Apr

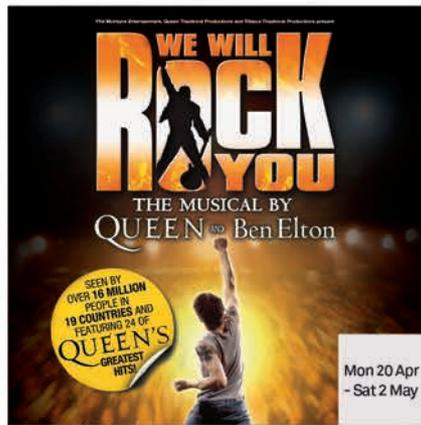
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PRISCILLA QUEEN OF THE DESERT THE MUSICAL

Mon 13 - Sat 18 Apr

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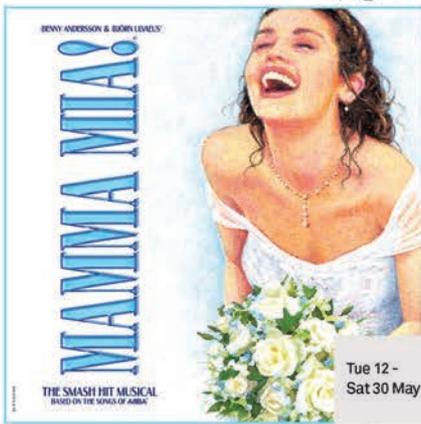
WNO WELSH NATIONAL OPERA

The Marriage of Figaro

Mozart

Wed 6 May

Icons: CAP, Relaxed Performance

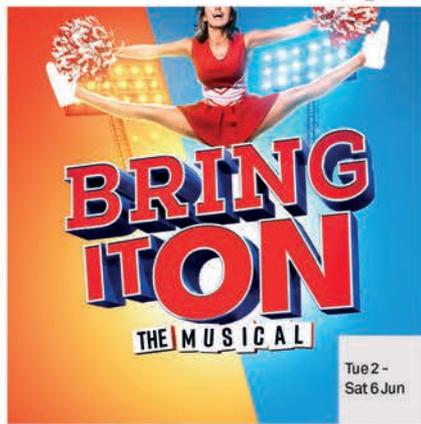


MAMMA MIA!

THE SMASH HIT MUSICAL BASED ON THE SONGS OF ABBA

Tue 12 - Sat 30 May

Icons: CAP, Relaxed Performance



BRING IT ON THE MUSICAL

Tue 2 - Sat 6 Jun

Icons: CAP, Relaxed Performance

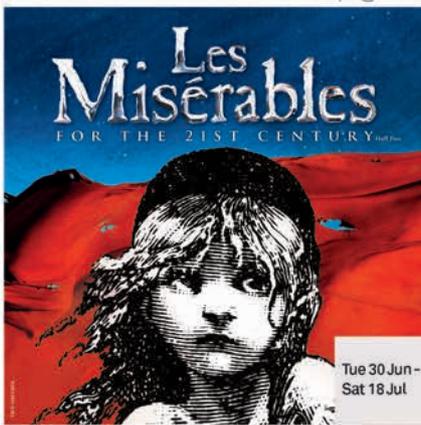


BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET

DON QUIXOTE

Fri 19 - Sat 27 Jun

Icons: CAP, Relaxed Performance



Les Misérables

FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Tue 30 Jun - Sat 18 Jul

Icons: CAP, Relaxed Performance



SIX

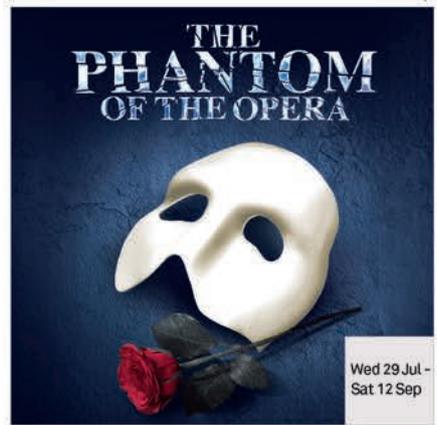
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THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

Wed 29 Jul - Sat 12 Sep

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An Icon Uncovered

One-woman show *The Unremarkable Death Of Marilyn Monroe* catches up with the blonde bombshell in the hour before her untimely death. The play's writer & director, Elton Townend-Jones, chats about a production that puts one of the 20th century's greatest icons centre stage...

From factory worker to pin-up model and onwards to Hollywood stardom, Marilyn Monroe was one of the 20th century's most iconic sex symbols.

Although Monroe's 1962 death by barbiturate overdose was ruled a suicide, many conspiracy theories continue to circulate.

Dyad Productions' *The Unremarkable Death Of Marilyn Monroe* aims to delve into the story of the film star's mysterious demise at the age of 36. The company specialises in work that relies on solo performer Rebecca Vaughan - who founded Dyad in 2009 - creating and taking centre stage in one-woman shows. These have included *Austen's Women* and *I, Elizabeth*.

Rebecca was joined by fellow writer, producer and actor Elton Townend-Jones shortly after she'd started the company.

"At Dyad we try to reveal new things about characters or famous figures, particularly women - strong women," explains Elton. "In the case of *The Unremarkable Death Of Mari-*

lyn Monroe, it's an extremely intimate show. The play is a 90-minute monologue set in the room in which she dies. She reminisces, traveling back to unravel and peel away the layers of her life and display to us all her actual thoughts. It's really all about love. Not just amorous love, but love for relations and friends. That intimacy creates a kind of trust and authority that means you come to rely on what she says being true - at least to the character I've created in that moment.

"Marilyn really had very little agency. When men and women were signed up to certain film studios in the 1940s, '50s and '60s, they really had no control over their careers - nor even their personal lives to some extent. They were groomed by the studio to turn up at particular events and behave a certain way, or play a particular type of part in their movies. This show definitely aims to give Marilyn her voice back. I was really aware that I didn't want to make her look foolish or like a clown, which was the case with a lot of the media at the time she was alive."

Elton was inspired by Marilyn from an early age and has taken her influence with him throughout much of his personal and professional life: "When I was 12, I saw *Some Like It Hot* for the first time. I was really taken in by the film and by Marilyn. I then got it into my head that I wanted to do a stage production of *Some Like It Hot*, which never came to anything. But years later I became an actor, on the back of which I became a director and subsequently a writer too. I'd always identified with the vulnerabilities of Marilyn and always suspected there was more under the surface than we were being told. So when I came to Dyad Productions, I already knew that I wanted to explore her more.

"There are all kinds of conspiracy theories surrounding Marilyn herself and her death: her connection with the Kennedys, her miscarriages, her drug & drink problems, her succession of marriages. As I was in my 30s when Dyad Productions was founded, I'd had a lot more life experience than I'd had when I was a lot younger - I'd been around the block a bit, so to speak. I began to sympathise and empathise with things that were clear to me about Marilyn's personality. I researched to find out more

about her, then gradually brought together this idea of being alone with her in the final hour of her life. The more I found out about her, the more I became concerned that she was being overwhelmed by her public persona and by all the negativity that surrounded her. I wanted to find out about the person underneath and how she actually felt about her life."

Elton believes *The Unremarkable Death Of Marilyn Monroe* gives a unique and heartfelt insight into the woman who started life as Norma Jeane Mortenson: "Marilyn went through a lot. She had a very difficult childhood because she was abused. She lived away from her mother because her mother was a single parent who had to work full-time. So she was left in the interesting system of foster parenting in America, where the foster children still saw their actual parents at weekends. I spent a lot of time looking at press photos of Marilyn at different moments in her life and got ideas for my dialogue through a combination of what I thought about that moment of Marilyn's life and what I imagined she might be thinking. I got the actress who plays Marilyn, Lizzie Wort, to do a similar thing when I came to direct the show. But what I wanted to do, having done so much research, was fill in the gaps with my writing. I was able to draw out different bits of information and connect the dots in a way that I don't think anyone has done before. Whether or not they're true connections is another matter entirely - it's up to the audience to decide! Effectively what I'm writing is a work of fiction, so I do have artistic licence, but everything is based on true events, things she said and things she did. For example, Hollywood talked about how she was always late for work. It turns out she had really bad colitis, so it's unsurprising to me that she wasn't always able to be where she should've been. There were plenty of other people saying that she was a truly professional, underrated woman with a keen mind and a love of reading - a far more intelligent woman than her persona suggested. However, in my research I was able to connect all the negative stuff people said about her to genuine reasons why that might've been the case."

Elton is often asked how he's able to 'write like a woman': "With *The Unremarkable Death Of*

Marilyn Monroe, I wanted to be honest and true to both her voice and my own. I related to her also because my mother had several marriages, so I had several 'dads', and I've been an actor. I felt like I could write about Marilyn in such a way that revealed the true person behind the icon, but also make it a very personal work. I wanted to be able to say things that a lot of men don't write about when it comes to relationships, love and sex. I was able to do that in this show. A lot of people, particularly women, have come up to me after the show and asked how I've managed to really get into a woman's head and present her in an authentic way. For me, it's the same as getting into anyone's head, and that's just my job as a writer. I don't see different thoughts and responses to moments in life as only being attributed to a certain gender. I was brought up to be a feminist by my mother. I think that's often seen as a dirty word, but it's definitely stood me in good stead."

So how does Elton hope the audience responds to his play?

"I hope the immediate, surface response people have is to consider how complex and interesting Marilyn really was. I hope the piece reveals something the audience didn't know before, and that they feel empathy and sympathy for her. On a broader level, I hope that anyone watching acknowledges that people are going through their own difficulties and problems. Also, that even if you do feel like you're struggling in your own life, you should continue to be yourself and not let anyone grind you down.

"Forget the conspiracy theories, ignore what you think you know. Come along and see the truth behind the myth. Meet the woman behind the icon, and be there at the moment of her death, in an award-winning performance from a great, great actor. But bring a hankie, just in case..."



The Unremarkable Death Of Marilyn Monroe shows at Stafford Gatehouse Theatre on Wednesday 18 & Thursday 19 March, and then at Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, on Friday 20 March.



SIX

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 10 - Sat 14 March; Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Tues 2 - Sun 7 June; Birmingham Hippodrome, Tues 21 - Sat 25 July

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 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.

"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 White Plague

The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, Tues 17 - Sat 21 March

This well-reviewed work of immersive theatre sees its audience deprived of the sense of sight by virtue of pairs of whiteout goggles distributed prior to the show. The premise of the production is that a contagious virus which causes people to go blind has panicked the government into placing all affected individuals in unprepared quarantine facilities. But as the crisis becomes ever more extreme, so too does the behaviour of the people involved, with discrimination and exploitation twin evils that will seemingly have their day...

Queer Lady M

Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton, Fri 20 March

As interpretations of Lady Macbeth go, this one is pretty 'out there'.

Gender-fluid artist Shane Gabriel presents his version of the scheming Lady M in a show that combines 'outrageous lip-syncing, cheeky dancing and sassy conversation' with drag, Shakespeare and devised performance. Derby theatre company 1623 are the power

behind Gabriel's throne. They describe their production as 'a funny and moving exploration of a unique relationship between a fierce drag queen and her anxious alter-ego, who join forces to fight tragedy and celebrate queerness.'

Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Tues 10 - Sat 14 March; The Alexandra, Tues 3 - Sat 7 March

Seen by tens of millions of people across the globe, Buddy is an enormously enduring and touchingly affectionate portrayal of one of rock'n'roll's earliest and brightest stars. Charting the singer's meteoric rise to fame and fortune, and following his career through to his very last performance, the show features timeless Buddy classics such as That'll Be The Day, Peggy Sue, Oh Boy, Rave On and Everyday.

The Vicar Of Dibley

Artrix, Bromsgrove, Tues 24 - Sat 28 March

The Richard Curtis-penned Vicar Of Dibley is another in a now-significant line of television

sitcoms to be adapted for the stage, following in the laughter trail of other top-rated telly favourites such as Birds Of A Feather, Dad's Army and Porridge. The theatrical version is here presented by the highly rated All And Sundry and features three of the BBC TV series' most popular episodes: Engagement, Dibley Live and Love And Marriage.

Circus Of Horrors

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Wed 4 March; The Place, Telford, Shropshire, Thurs 19 March; KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton, Fri 20 March

An off-kilter affair that bears more resemblance to a freak show than any modern definition of a circus, the one-time Britain's Got Talent act here presents a world beyond political correctness and taste. With the performers dressed in a manner reminiscent of The Rocky Horror Show, there's no denying the skill of those participating - or indeed the ensemble's sheer 'wow' factor.

As the production's title makes clear, Circus Of Horrors' latest offering is a celebration of a quarter century spent entertaining the masses.



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HOLES

by Louis Sachar

Directed by Adam Penford

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LUTHER

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CHALLENGING PERCEPTIONS

British-Nigerian family drama *The High Table* plays out between the heavens and earth while exploring queerness and tradition through humour. What's On caught up with the show's writer, Temi Wilkey, ahead of the production's run at The REP, Birmingham...

Tara and Leah are two women madly in love. Their perfect Nigerian wedding in London is fast approaching, but there's a spanner in the works: Tara's parents are refusing to attend. Watching over the unfolding drama from way above are three of Tara's ancestors, roused from their eternal rest to keep the family together...

The *High Table* charts the conflict between queerness and heteronormative expectations, showing how it affects the same-sex couple and Nigerian family at the play's centre.

"The main thing that doesn't match up to Tara's family's expectations is that she's marrying a woman," says *The High Table*'s writer, Temi Wilkey. "I think Tara's parents have very much been in denial about her relationship, as it doesn't fit with what they hoped for her. They're hoping that this relationship will go away and that eventually she'll settle down with a man. I can definitely relate to the feeling of worrying that your relationship doesn't quite marry up with your family.

"A lot of *The High Table* explores queerness and tradition through humour. I want to unpack prejudices with a laugh and a bit of love! *The High Table* also explores how dangerous homophobia can be, especially when we go to scenes in Nigeria, as homosexuality isn't legal there, but also by exploring pre-colonial attitudes to queerness in Nigeria through the presence of Tara's ancestors in the play. That also gives it an element of magical realism that can be fun for me as a writer and for the audience."

What Temi and other artists firmly believe to be systemic bias in the world of theatre and wider storytelling threatened to derail *The High Table* even before it was written.

"Grayson Perry talks about *The Default Man* - a theory of sorts that explains what kinds of stories ourselves and the media see as important ones to tell. Theatre buys into that idea of appealing to the 'norm': the white, straight, male audience. That's why there are so rarely stories about anything outside that. Often, women's stories are quite difficult to get on stage anyway - let alone a story about a black

queer woman like in *The High Table*. *The Default Man* really is about systemic bias, how that happens and how it affects the arts and other parts of society.

"I think non-straight writers and those from ethnic minorities do hold back from topics they really want to write about because of this bias, as they believe it won't get staged. Playwrights also don't seem even to notice that they don't feel empowered to write certain stories. I was part of the Royal Court's Introductory Writers Group in 2017 and we had the brilliant Darren Chetty come and speak to us - he was one of the contributors to the best-selling book, *The Good Immigrant*. It was really useful to hear him speak. Something like 97% of children's books depict only white children. So even from a really young age, you're seeing stories about white boys and hardly any ethnic minorities, let alone as you get older and want to see something on stage. I think people feel discouraged from telling these stories, but don't even recognise that they do. It's something we need to unlearn, and recognise that our stories are just as important as anyone else's."

How did we get to this point, then: from believing *The High Table* would never be staged to having it programmed in two different cities?

"We had a rehearsed reading of *The High Table* this time last year, which was with a brilliant playwright called Tom Wright, who had a play running at Park Theatre in London. He was giving opportunities for queer writers to have a rehearsed reading of their play. Tom mentioned the play to Bush Theatre when he came in for a meeting. He really championed it! I was also rehearsing here around that time for an acting role. Things went from there. I think when I fully realised it was programmed and it got closer to the play opening, I wanted to make sure that I did all the different identities within my writing justice. But I think the most important thing is that I'm writing something that feels true to myself."

As such, bringing *The High Table* to the stage means a great deal to Temi. And even some of her initial worries have been dispelled.

"You don't often see Black British stories on stage. Often, if you do see Black theatre in London, it's African-American - and I think it's really important that a Black British person can see themselves reflected on stage. We exist and we matter. That's the really rewarding aspect of staging *The High Table*. I think the challenges are that certain things could be lost. For example, the characters speak in Nigerian Pidgin English, and that was something I was worried about because I obviously want my audience to understand what I'm trying to say. But I think because the actors play their parts so well and audiences are always cleverer than you think, it has worked out."

Having trained with the National Youth Theatre REP company and boasting impressive acting credits, including BBC & HBO British drama *Years And Years* and multiple productions at the Royal Shakespeare Company, does Temi think acting has influenced her writing?

"Being an actor is such a huge part of myself that it's hard to unpick where personal influence ends and professional influence starts in my writing. When people have said very nice things about my writing, they say that they can tell someone who acts has written it because the dialogue is quite fun to say. Being an actor, there are characters in *The High Table* that I could definitely play. I want to write stories that I would want to act in, so I think that informs how and what I write."

Most of all, Temi hopes her play has an immediate and lasting impact: "I hope *The High Table* makes people laugh! I also hope it'll make people think and change their perspective on queerness and Africa. Queerness in Africa was around long before colonialism arrived, and it was colonialism that brought homophobia to the continent. I want *The High Table* to feel like a gift to queer people, especially queer people of colour."

The High Table shows at The REP, Birmingham from Wednesday 25 March to Thursday 9 April.

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Tartuffe

The REP, Birmingham,
Fri 20 March - Sat 4 April

Transferring the action of Moliere's famous comedy from the 17th century to 21st-century Birmingham, Anil Gupta and Richard Pinto - the writing team who've updated the play - have made the title character a Muslim cleric and turned the full glare of their spotlight on the contemporary British Muslim experience. Consistently funny and blessed with a vitality that wouldn't have been possible without the modern-day makeover, Tartuffe is alive with contemporary references, hugely and joyously accessible, cleverly punctuated by humorous interaction with the audience and chock-a-block with engaging performances. A Birmingham Repertory Theatre and Royal Shakespeare Company co-production, the show picked up plenty of plaudits during its Stratford run a couple of years back.

The High Table

The REP, Birmingham,
Wed 25 March - Thurs 9 April

Temi Wilkey's *The High Table* features hilarity, heartbreak, celestial beings and characters who speak in Nigerian Pidgin English - an interesting set of ingredients for a debut play! When Tara's excitement about her forthcoming marriage to girlfriend Leah is tempered by her homophobic parents' decision not to attend the ceremony, high up in the heavens, three of her ancestors are jolted from their eternal rest. But can they keep the family together?... "A lot of *The High Table* explores queerness and tradition through humour," explains Temi. "I want to unpack prejudices with a laugh and a bit of love!"

Man On The Moon

Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham,
Fri 20 March

"I hope the show resonates," says writer & performer Keisha Thompson in talking about her play, *Man On The Moon*. "It's a Manchester story with a lot of Manchester references, so hopefully I can bring the audience into my world. I just want to connect on an emotional level, have fun, tell a story, take my audience on a journey - hopefully to somewhere they've never been before."

Telling the true-life tale of her efforts to connect with her reclusive father, Keisha's award-winning show uses poetry, looped sounds and storytelling to examine a wide

range of checkpoints; from cultural displacement and religious confusions, to political paranoia and misplaced masculinity.

"The audience doesn't always need to know which bits are true and which bits aren't," continues Keisha. "It always starts with truth. What's important isn't the veracity of small details but the core message of the story."



The 39 Steps

New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme,
Thurs 5 - Sat 28 March

Anybody who remembers the various film versions of John Buchan's classic spy thriller will be hard-pressed to call any of them 'humorous'. So it's a bit weird, to say the least, to think of Patrick Barlow's stage version of the story having bagged the Olivier Award for best new comedy. Nonetheless, that's exactly what it managed to do back in 2007, courtesy of some imaginative thinking on the part of its creative team.

So why not catch up with handsome hero Richard Hannay as he battles to remain

impressively stiff-upper-lipped in the face of dastardly murders and life-threatening encounters with double-crossing secret agents.

Oh, and there are some beautiful and mysterious women involved too, so it's not all bad news for our intrepid hero! Four fearless actors play no fewer than 120 roles in this real gem of a show.

A Monster Calls

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Tues 3 - Sat 7
March; Malvern Theatres, Wed 15 - Sat 18
March

Siobhan Dowd had a great idea for a kids' book but was dying. So fellow author Patrick Ness wrote the story for her. The result, *A Monster Calls*, came to widespread public attention when it was made into a film in 2016 starring Sigourney Weaver.

A dark fantasy, it tells the story of 13-year-old Conor, whose life has been turned upside-down by his mother's illness. But one night, things begin to change for the troubled teenager, when a yew tree outside his home transforms into a gnarled monster and pays him a visit...





TO BE FRANK

Joe Pasquale chats about 'round two' of playing Frank Spencer in the stage adaptation of hit '70s TV show, *Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em*...

Before *Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em* embarked on its inaugural tour, the producers were adamant: the stage manager must be equipped with a well-stocked first-aid kit.

"Oh blimey, yes!" says the effervescent Joe Pasquale, who's once again taking on the role of Frank Spencer, the character made famous on TV in the 1970s by Michael Crawford, complete with the catchphrase, 'Ooh, Betty!'

"I do it all - hanging by my ankles and all sorts. During rehearsals the bloke choreographing the stunts fell down the stairs of the set and caught his knackers on the banister. All he could suggest by way of reassurance was that I'd better wear a box. I mean, he was a professional stuntman and I had to do it every night!"

And now Joe's doing it all over again. Rave reviews and public support have led to Frank's return to the stage, but Joe wants to make something clear: "I don't do it as Michael's Frank Spencer; that would be an insult to Michael. I'm putting my personality into it.

"Frank isn't childish; he believes in what he's doing. The relationship between him and his wife, Betty, is a love story. He might always mess up, but she loves him anyway. For it to work, she has to; otherwise he'd just be an idiot."

Based on an original story about Frank trying to get on a TV talent show ("it's still set in the '70s, so you get the mustard wallpaper, tank-tops and all the trimmings"), Joe loves that it's a family-friendly show. He nods his agreement when I suggest that with the *Goes Wrong* plays doing great business and successful recent revivals of comedies such as *Noises Off*, there seems to be renewed enthusiasm for family comedy.

"*Some Mothers* is two hours of surgically tight performance. It's a show without malice or aggression and is sweet, touching and very funny. It has real heart."

And Joe believes giving people a good laugh is also timely: "People want comedy during times of uncertainty. Every single day of the first tour was a joy and a blessing. To get the audience laughing as much as they did was just wonderful."

The show's director and writer is Guy Unsworth. Joe freely admits that on meeting "this very well-spoken young lad who looked like an American football player", he questioned what Unsworth could possibly teach him about comedy.

"I soon realised that he's a natural. He suggests the smallest change - a tiny nuance to get the comedy out of a line - and he's always right. This kid is a classic comedy anorak who really knows his stuff. He's rewritten the script, ready for this new tour, and peppered it with even more jokes. And most of the original cast are back for the new tour too, which says a lot."

Joe is joined in the show by Susie Blake as Mrs Fisher - Frank's disapproving mother-in-law. Spamalot co-star Sarah Earnshaw plays the long-suffering Betty.

"Susie is an experienced comic actress and she's brilliant in the show. Sarah's role is more difficult. She has to be softer and likable."

Joe confesses that, never having trained as an actor, he needed Guy's help: "He told me to do it as an absolutely proper role; no asides or ad-libbing. Putting me with really good actors also makes me raise my game. Sarah is a linchpin, and the relationship we have on and off stage is built on trust and affection."

Knowing her chum Joe so well that she can stop him deviating from the script almost before he thinks of doing so, Sarah can put the mockers on any Pasquale nonsense with nothing more than an imperceptible movement: "She'll give a tiny head shake that nobody else notices. It means 'I know you're about to do something, but *don't!*' She calls

me the Unstoppable Moron!"

Unstoppable is right. As well as *Some Mothers*, Joe constantly works on new comedy material, writes horror stories and is a talented artist - a skill he's been known to incorporate into his stand-up act.

"I'm really aware of my mortality, so you might as well live while you can," he says, waving aside any suggestion that the general schlepping of a long tour might be tiring.

"Touring in *Some Mothers* is a lot easier than my stand-up show. Then I usually do 40 one-nighters. A week in one place is a holiday."

Joe is particularly looking forward to returning to Stoke-on-Trent with the show next month: "The theatre is welcoming and the audiences are great. I like to get out and about when I'm touring. I don't just sit there watching the telly; I get the local pamphlets from the hotel and go see whatever there is to see. I know Stoke fairly well, but there's always something new to learn about a place."

As for playing Frank, Joe knows he's likely to collect a few bumps and bruises along the way. But then he's used to 'industrial injuries,' having previously got himself stuck inside a bingo machine, broken his toe while tap dancing and dislocated a shoulder in pantomime.

"It's got danger written all over it for me. I wouldn't want to be my understudy!"

As for the future, there are hopes that *Some Mothers* may continue to delight audiences, both at home and abroad. Watch this space. But for now, go and see the show. I promise you won't regret it.

.....

***Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em* shows at the Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, from Tuesday 14 to Saturday 18 April and The Alexandra, Birmingham, from Tuesday 19 to Saturday 23 May.**



Once The Musical

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Tues 10 - Sat 14 March; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Tues 17 - Sat 21 March; Malvern Theatres, Mon 23 - Sat 28 March

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

"The story itself is definitely something everyone can connect to," says Daniel Healy, who stars as Guy. "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 a 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."

Seeds

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Mon 9 & Tues 10 March

With knife-crime offences in England & Wales having reached a record high, hate crimes having more than doubled over a seven-year period and racial hate crimes making up more than three-quarters of offences, Mel Pennant's sensitively written story of motherhood, loss, and what's left behind after the worst has happened, has much to say about modern British society. Judith Jacob (*Dark Heart*) and Penny Layden (*Belgravia*) star.



I felt there was stigma and prejudice attached to cochlear implantation, and I wanted to overturn that narrative. It's actually quite hard to find positive stories about cochlear implants."

Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf?

Malvern Theatres, Tues 10 - Sat 14 March

Edward Albee's 1962 play is best remembered from its film version, which starred Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor. The play focuses on a middle-aged couple named Martha and George and examines the spectacular decline of their marriage. As the couple wage war against one another - in the process drawing their young house-party guests into a series of all-or-nothing 'games' - it becomes increasingly hard for them to distinguish the line between fact and fiction... Presented by Melting Pot Theatre Company.

The Glee Club

Lichfield Garrick, Tues 24 - Sat 28 March; Malvern Theatres, Tues 7 - Sat 11 April

Likened to *Brassed Off* but featuring barbershop harmonies, this raucous 2002 comedy visits the Midlands with a stunning success in the West End to recommend it. Richard Cameron's musical drama follows the fortunes of a colliery glee club whose

director, a mining engineer named Phil, harbours a long-held secret. When the truth is finally revealed, the group's sense of solidarity is suddenly and seriously challenged...

The Winter's Tale

Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, Sat 28 March - Fri 2 October

One of Shakespeare's later and lesser-known works, *The Winter's Tale* recounts the story of Perdita, who, after being lost at sea as a baby, is rescued and brought up by an old shepherd.

When she meets the king's son, Florizel, love blossoms amid the rustic revelry...

The production is being presented across the Royal Shakespeare Company's summer season, alongside new versions of *The Comedy Of Errors* and *Pericles*.

"The sea divides families in all of our plays this summer," says RSC Artistic Director Gregory Doran. "Themes of separation & loss and the restorative power of time connect all three

of them. Each play is wonderfully different, yet at the same time they share a fascination with identity, the challenges of leaving your native land and the deep bonds of family."



Augmented

The REP, Birmingham, Mon 9 - Wed 11 March

Actress Sophie Woolley's new play, which she also performs, recounts and reflects on her own personal journey - from going deaf in her 20s to receiving cochlear implants and living, as she describes it, as a real-life 'cyborg'. "The play is about the impact on my closest relationships which my bionic hearing has had," explains Sophie. "And it's also about what this scientific, high-tech, biomedical miracle means for the future of humanity. I wanted to write the play because

theatre for kids from around the region

Roald Dahl & The Imagination Seekers

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sun 15 March

Get Lost & Found theatre company have dared to imagine something terrible: a world in which the words of legendary kids' author Roald Dahl are disappearing.

And not only from the pages of books but also from the minds of children...

Hats off, then, to an organisation known as the Ancient Guild of Tale Tenders, which thinks it's got what it takes to save the day by saving Dahl's stories - but only with the help of your sure-to-be-enthusiastic little ones! A theatrical and interactive experience featuring performance, games and creative play, the production has been designed to explore a number of Dahl's extraordinary stories, including Charlie And The Chocolate Factory, The BFG and The Twits.



Milkshake! Live

Lichfield Garrick, Sat 7 March; Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock, Thurs 9 April; Malvern Theatres, Sat 16 May; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sun 6 September



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 a 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.

There Was An Old Lady Who Swallowed A Fly

Albany Theatre, Coventry, Sun 22 March; Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton, Tues 7 - Wed 8 April

The People's Theatre Company - highly rated creators of the fabulous Don't Dribble On The Dragon - here bring one of the world's best-

loved nursery rhymes to life. Their show comes complete with colourful animal characters and numerous singalong songs, including If You're Happy And You Know It and Incy Wincy Spider... People's Theatre Co advise that their production is suitable for audience members aged two to 102!



Zog

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Wed 18 & Thurs 19 March; Birmingham Town Hall, Sat 26 December - Sun 10 January



With previous shows including Tiddler And Other Terrific Tales and Tabby McTat, it's fair to say that Freckle Productions know a thing or two about presenting stage adaptations of

Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler stories... Zog is at Madam Dragon's school and is determined to win himself a gold star. He's so determined, in fact, that he tries a little bit too hard and finds himself bumping, burning and roaring his way through years one, two and three...

Sarah And Duck's Big Top Birthday

Swan Theatre, Worcester, Sun 8 March; Brierley Hill Civic Hall, Dudley, Thurs 12 March; Tamworth Assembly Rooms, Thurs 24 March; Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Sat 4 - Mon 6 April



Sarah and Duck are hitting the road this spring with a stage show that's sure to delight young fans of the Bafta-winning CBeebies series.

And the intrepid pair are not alone on their travels either. Favourite friends including The Ribbon Sisters, The Shallots, Flamingo & John and Umbrella are also all present and correct for this brand new production, getting together with Sarah and Duck to help arrange a special birthday party for Scarf Lady.



WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT?

Elesha Paul Moses brings her Tina Turner tribute tour to Birmingham...

Elesha Paul Moses has paid her dues in the entertainment world. She's been striving for success in the music business for 20 years, via traditional grafting and TV talent shows.

She's now taken her singing career to a new level by starring in the mammoth tribute-show tour, *What's Love Got To Do With It?*, celebrating the music and life of rock & soul legend Tina Turner.

Elesha, 39, who lives in Hampshire and grew

up in Surrey, appeared on *The X-Factor* in 2010 alongside One Direction and winner Matt Cardle. She was in the same category as big-haired bongo-playing wild-card contestant Wagner.

She then reached the battle rounds - twice - on *The Voice*, first with will.i.am in a duo in 2013 and then with Tom Jones as a solo act a year later.

She had previously been mentored by

Mathew Knowles - Beyoncé's dad - on a Channel Four talent show.

Elesha is also touring the UK as the late, great Whitney Houston in *Whitney: Queen Of The Night*. The tour has included five sell-out shows at the Savoy Theatre in London's West End.

We spoke to Elesha about her love of performing - and about the challenges of playing two of music's most iconic stars...

You've been on the road with What's Love Got To Do With It? for a year now. How has it been, paying homage to a rock & soul legend like Tina Turner?

It's been incredible. Heading into the start of the show, I'd been pretty full-on with Whitney: Queen Of The Night, so didn't have too much time to think about it... Then it was full-on into touring mode for What's Love Got To Do With It? and we've been up and down the country ever since.

There's been so much love for the show from audiences and on social media; it's been amazing. I've been working hard on the vocals, and the band, backing singers and costumes are fantastic. We love being on the road and meeting all the fantastic fans. That's made preparing for the 2020 tour even more exciting, as we know what the reactions will be.

Fans have loved the show. What does it feel like to see such brilliant responses from the audience, and to receive the amazing reviews online?

It's surreal, especially for someone like me, as I'm really self-critical; I'm always thinking, 'What could I do better?', even when people are saying the show is fantastic. The comments we get are actually a little overwhelming, and we're so very grateful for each and every one of them. Seeing people in the audience having a brilliant night out, dancing and singing along, is what it's all about.

Whitney Houston and Tina Turner are very different artists. What's it like recreating these iconic performers live on stage?

Doing Whitney as well as Tina, you need a huge amount of stamina - vocally, physically and mentally - but in such different ways for each performance. Tina is much more the physical challenge, Whitney is the vocal challenge. But working hard to be at my best in both areas pays off on both shows. They are such different-sounding performers. Each role strengthens my voice in such different ways, but that only helps make me better in each show.

Tina's not got a growl as such. People think it's shouting but it's not; it's a very particular tone that she has, and she's so free with her performance.

Then, when I'm on stage as Whitney, it's almost the opposite. You're so exposed and there's nowhere to hide, as it's a much slower,

more mellow pace of show.

Compare that to Tina and What's Love Got To Do With It?... Once you're on stage, there's no letting up from the moment you start. I love that very strong contrast between the two.

You have such a busy schedule, with the shows running alongside each other. With two young children, how do you manage that touring commitment with family life?

Mark, my husband, is amazing; I have the best man in the world. I definitely couldn't do it without him. My eldest daughter, Kookie, is turning eight soon, and she's only ever known me be a singer. So in some ways, she's used to it, but occasionally she'll say something. My little one, Teddy, doesn't know any different to the schedule we now have. I'm lucky she's so young.

For me, I'm able to shut it off to an extent, as I know this is all about building for their future. Whatever job you have, you have to balance family life. I also think we're so lucky to have things like Facetime now, so you can catch up easily and see them if you're away for a few days at a time.

What's your favourite song to perform as Tina Turner?

There are so many I love. Proud Mary is obviously so much fun, but I also love Typical Male and I Can't Stand The Rain. But for my absolute favourite, I'll go for Proud Mary. It always used to be Simply The Best, which people really loved and went mad for, but these days it's definitely Proud Mary.

Tina Turner is still such a huge name in music. Why do you think she's still so popular?

She's just such a great all-rounder, and she appeals to men as well as women. She's a great rock & roll artist. Her songs have never gone away. Even youngsters now, they know tracks like Proud Mary. You do those songs and they're all over it.

Tina's had difficult times too over the years, but she came through it. I think people like that side of her story too, as well as the brilliant music.

How did you get into singing and performing as a tribute artist?

When I first realised I could properly sing, I was about 13. I was always mimicking others, and that's how I taught myself. But that really big, belting voice wouldn't necessarily come out. Listening to people like Whitney Houston

and Mariah Carey, that kind of artist, was when it really came to me. Funnily, I didn't really listen to Tina Turner when I was younger. My parents played her music in the car, but it wasn't what I took to at the time.

I was singing in a club and a friend said, 'We should do something different'. I said, 'Shall we try Whitney or something?'. I went home, put down a couple of lines of Whitney and thought, 'Oh, I can sound like her'. It went from there - and a similar thing happened when I started with Tina.

You've been working in the music industry for a long time - you started writing with a record company aged just 17 and have been on TV talent shows. Can you tell us about the switch to the world of tributes?

I never used to do tributes. I was striving to do my own stuff and put out my own music. Things happened in my life. I was in-between things, not really knowing what to do. I didn't know how to get into the tribute business. At the same time, I felt that, by doing that, I would miss doing my own thing too.

But I'd done my album and did lots of 'trying to make it' before doing the TV shows. I'd tried the traditional, old-fashioned methods to get signed. It was just never meant to be. So I decided it was time to take it away from being me and into being someone else.

How was your time on The X-Factor and The Voice, and what did you learn from the experiences?

When I did The X-Factor, I was in the same year as One Direction, Cher Lloyd and Wagner. Wagner was in Louis Walsh's Overs category with me, but I went home after the judges' houses round.

I was asked to audition for The Voice, and I first went when I was pregnant with Kookie - but I then realised the live shows would be on when I was due with her so had to back out. I auditioned again in 2013 as part of a duo, and again in 2014.

Doing both of those did give me a boost at the time, even though I ultimately wasn't successful. I don't know what people think of me as an artist having done those two shows, but I'm so grateful and glad to have moved on to what I'm doing now.

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What's Love Got To Do With It? shows at Arena Birmingham on Thursday 19 March.



Ballet Royalty in Birmingham

Cuban dancer extraordinaire and former principle at the Royal Ballet, Carlos Acosta talks about taking over as Director of Birmingham Royal Ballet...

Carlos Acosta is one of the world’s most iconic ballet dancers. As well as working with both the Cuban and English national ballets, he was also a permanent member of the Royal Ballet, based at London’s Royal Opera House, for 17 years.

The youngest son of a truck driver and a housewife, and raised in the slums of Havana, he represents an array of different cultures, all of which have heavily influenced both his life and his career.

And just as these influences came into play during Carlos’ time as a dancer, so too will they impact as he takes on the challenges of a brand new role... the 46-year-old was recently appointed Director of Birmingham Royal Ballet, replacing the long-serving David Bintley.

“The artist is a storyteller, always recollecting experiences,” says Carlos, “and that’s no different whether you’re a dancer or a painter. I’m a human being with a past, and I’ll bring all of that to the stage because everyone has different experiences of each emotion. I might have a distinctive interpretation of love, for example. My roots are very eclectic too, containing many different cultures from opposite sides of the globe: African, French, Chinese, Cuban. I feel like being from Cuba meant I was always in constant dialogue with the sun, and I think people there walk almost with a dancing step because of it. It’s certainly a very colourful place! I think I bring the Cuban joy and happiness to the stage. I’ve also been very passionate and fearless in everything I do. For me, dancing was almost a way to survive because of my background; my life certainly could’ve gone a very different way. Dance became my refuge, my shelter and my best friend. That’s what motivated me to go for this job with Birmingham Royal Ballet. I’ve always been one for breaking things and re-forming them into something new. I don’t play it safe!”

Despite being classically trained himself, Carlos’ company, Acosta Danza, has focused on a more contemporary style of dance.

“My name was mentioned for the Director post at Birmingham Royal Ballet and I was approached to interview for it. I thought it was crazy because I was already really, really busy. But I spoke to my wife and she encouraged me to go for it. She saw that this was an opportunity to take what I’d already achieved to a

different level and to go back to my roots as a ballet dancer. Since I retired from the Royal Ballet, I’ve been dancing more contemporary roles with Acosta Danza. After doing that, it’s lovely to give back what I know about classical dance. I’ve been blessed by dancing with so many companies from around the world, and I really want to pass on that knowledge and passion so that it doesn’t die with me. This is a noble opportunity for me to dance through others and positively affect both the individual dancers and the company as a whole.

“I want to present the Birmingham Royal Ballet brand as fresh, energetic and new. I want to do new things, be unpredictable and connect more with the mainstream ideas of dance and culture, whilst also preserving and performing the classics like Swan Lake at the highest possible level. I want the company to really tell the city’s stories and to open up to its community more. I’m happy to do anything that’s crazy!

“I also want Birmingham Royal Ballet to work with the very best creatives, institutions and companies from across the world, not only so that we can improve by comparing ourselves to them, but also so that they can act as ambassadors for us, going out and spreading the word that Birmingham is a leader in dance and the arts. We have all the elements in Birmingham to become a world leader, so that others look to us for inspiration. We just need to find a way of bringing it all together.

“I want Birmingham to have its own voice, rather than just riding the same vehicles that everyone else has for years. I hope for an entirely new ballet - new composition, choreography and story - to come from Birmingham Royal Ballet.

“Touring the UK is also fantastic and important, to get Birmingham’s voice out there. I want us to continue to do that, but I want to do more in the Royal Opera House and abroad. We need to create a legacy.”

So what excites Carlos about Birmingham Royal Ballet’s programme for the upcoming year?

“Bringing choreographers who have never before been seen in Birmingham, or even the UK, is very important to me - whether that be through classical or more contemporary work. Our summer festival at Birmingham Hippo-

drome, Curated By Carlos, will be just like that. It will also bring together many more artists than just dancers. It’ll be much more than you’d ever expect from a ballet company! There’ll be robots, movies, literature and world premieres of dance.

“The festival will also feature my own production of Don Quixote, a ballet which has never been seen here before. It’s a really vibrant, family ballet where nobody dies - which is rare, given the sometimes-gloomy themes of ballet! Don Quixote is a really uplifting, funny tale, and we hope to tour it in the future.

“My goal of getting the company back into the Royal Opera House will happen in the summer of 2021. It will be like a homecoming for myself and Birmingham Royal Ballet, and marks the end of the company’s 30th anniversary year of moving up to Birmingham. Everything coming up at Birmingham Royal Ballet is about reaching out and connecting with different levels of our audience, whether they be local, national or international.”

Carlos believes that 2020 could well be the start of something extraordinary from a personal point of view too: “I’m a firm believer that no one should be afraid of failure, because there’s no such thing, really - everything is just an opportunity for learning. Sometimes you don’t get it right - but with persistence, you will. I live my life seeing positives and opportunities to grow through my passion and enthusiasm, which I think is very much rooted in my past. There are obviously moments of sorrow in my life, but they’re just as important to my overall journey. I’m very happy with the person I turned out to be because at one point I was definitely in danger of going off the rails, but I learnt from that as well.

“Life is never a linear journey: it has its twists and turns, ups and downs, but as long as you generally keep moving forward, you’re doing great! I can’t wait to embrace the opportunities that being Director of Birmingham Royal Ballet will present.”

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To find out more about what’s coming up for Birmingham Royal Ballet in 2020/21, visit brb.org.uk

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Burn The Floor

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Thurs 26 & Fri 27 March; Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Wed 8 April; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Wed 6 May

“Burn The Floor is the show that ignited a spark in me and changed me forever as a performer,” says Kevin Clifton, who’s starring in the hit production with his sister, Joanne. “Through Broadway, West End and touring all over the world, this show

has ripped apart the rule book, revolutionised our genre and inspired and shaped me as the dancer I am today. “In 2020, I’m delighted to say that I’m coming ‘home’ to Burn The Floor.”

Ballet Theatre UK: Giselle

Swan Theatre, Worcester, Sat 7 March; Palace Theatre, Redditch, Thurs 19 March; Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock, Wed 1 April; Tamworth Assembly Rooms, Thurs 16 April; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sun 26 April

A surreal ballet first performed in 1841, Giselle tells the story of a girl who kills herself when she finds out that her suitor has kept his real identity concealed from her - pretending to be a peasant when actually he’s a member of the aristocracy. When he and another suitor visit Giselle’s unconsecrated grave, they find themselves in all manner of trouble due to the presence of the Wilis - ghosts of girls jilted by their lovers. It falls to the spirit of Giselle to save her suitors from beyond the grave...



Sonia Sabri: Akaar Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Sun 29 March

“We’ve always tried to create something which is groundbreaking and pioneering,” says Sonia Sabri. “I feel proud to say that we’ve presented something that’s very new and very different. We’ve long been at the forefront of creating new ideas, and that’s exactly what we intend to continue doing.” Sonia’s belief in the need to push the boundaries of dance is reflected in this

special performance event. “It aims to celebrate emerging and undiscovered talent,” she explains, “and to support the interest and breadth of South Asian Arts being created across the Midlands.” Featuring both individuals and groups, the show has previously included non-South Asian artists and performers presenting work with a South Asian flavour.

U.Dance WM 2020

Birmingham Hippodrome, Sun 29 March

Providing a regional youth dance platform, the organisers of U.Dance WM are promising an evening ‘full of vibrant and exciting dance genres and themes, performed by some of the best young talents from across the West Midlands’. One of the groups who perform on the night will progress to One Dance UK’s national U.Dance festival, which is being held in Glasgow this summer.





Madame Butterfly reborn

DeNada Dance Theatre's *Mariposa* receives its world premiere at Birmingham's DanceXchange this month. A dance opera reimagining Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*, the work transports the action to the port of Havana...



The director of DeNada Dance Theatre, Carlos Pons Guerra, is one of contemporary ballet's most highly rated emerging queer voices. His latest project, a dance opera entitled *Mariposa* (meaning 'butterfly' in Spanish), which he's choreographed, is a transgender tragedy brimming with magical realism and drama.

Set to an original score by award-winning Spanish composer Luis Miguel Cobo, with libretto by French-Indian writer Karthika Nair, the production takes its inspiration not only from Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* but also from the sounds of the Caribbean.

Mariposa poses a question: in the turbulence of post-revolution Cuba - a world of neon

lights, cigar-smoke clouds, santería (voodoo-esque) spirits and economic uncertainty - will a young male sex worker sacrifice his gender in exchange for a better life with the foreign sailor he loves?

This brand new production is an exploration of what we are willing to give up to be loved and accepted.

"*Mariposa* is all about representing ethnically diverse LGBTQ+ narratives onstage," says Carlos. "It's therefore fantastic that it is opening its wings in a city as multicultural and diverse as Birmingham. We are very thankful for the generous and ongoing support of Birmingham-based arts organisations such as

DanceXchange, Dance Hub Birmingham and Birmingham Hippodrome, which continue to support me and DeNada Dance Theatre - and especially now, in the creation of this latest production. We really hope audiences from across the Midlands and further afield will be touched by this very special show - a dance version of one of the most iconic operas ever written."

.....
DeNada Dance Theatre's *Mariposa* shows at Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome, on Friday 27 & Saturday 28 March.

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Mulan

CERT tbc
Starring Liu Yifei, Donnie Yen, Jason Scott Lee, Yoson An, Gong Li, Jet Li
Directed by Niki Caro (USA)

As Disney continues to wave the flag for feminism and diversity, this live-action remake of their 1998 cartoon ticks all the right boxes. Based on an old Chinese folk tale, Mulan is the story of a young woman who dresses as a man in order to enlist in the Imperial Chinese army, so that her ailing father can be spared. Filmed in China and New Zealand on a reported \$300 million budget, the new Mulan is directed by the Kiwi filmmaker Niki Caro, who received international acclaim for her first film, Whale Rider (2002). But be warned: Niki Caro's more realistically realised version has ditched all the songs. The Wuhan-born actress-singer-model Liu Yifei plays the title role.

Released Fri 27 March



EDITOR'S CHOICE

Film highlights released in March...

Blumhouse's Fantasy Island

CERT 15 (109 mins)
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 6 March

Military Wives

CERT 12a (113 mins)
Starring Kristin Scott Thomas, Sharon Horgan, Jason Flemyng, Emma Lowndes
Directed by Peter Cattaneo (UK)

When the wives of those fighting in Afghanistan form a choir, they become a media sensation... While inspired by a true-life phenomenon, this is a fictitious interpretation from the director of The Full Monty.

Released Fri 6 March



Onward

CERT tbc
With the voices of Tom Holland, Chris Pratt, Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Octavia Spencer, Lena Waithe
Directed by Dan Scanlon (USA)



Set in a world of elves, this Pixar cartoon centres on two teenage brothers who never knew their father, a wizard in a lost time of magic. But when they are entrusted with a magic staff, there's a chance to be reunited with their dad, if only the spell would work... From the director of Monsters University (2013).

Released Fri 6 March

Film highlights released in March...

The Photograph CERT 12a

Starring **Issa Rae, Lakeith Stanfield, Chelsea Peretti, Lil Rel Howery, Courtney B Vance, Kelvin Harrison Jr, Rob Morgan**
Directed by **Stella Meghie (USA)**

Following her mother's death, a young woman finds a photograph in a safe deposit box that leads, unexpectedly, to answers about the past and a new romantic alliance. From the Canadian director of *Everything, Everything* (2017).

Released Fri 6 March



Sulphur And White

CERT 15 (121 mins)
Starring **Mark Stanley, Emily Beecham, Anna Friel, Dougray Scott**
Directed by **Julian Jarrold (UK)**

David Tait (Mark Stanley) is a mountaineer and City trader who seems to be going places fast. But a secret from his past is eating away at him, a secret he even keeps from the woman he believes could save him... Based on a true story.

Released Fri 6 March



Bloodshot CERT tbc

Starring **Vin Diesel, Eiza González, Sam Heughan, Toby Kebbell, Guy Pearce, Talulah Riley**
Directed by **David Wilson (USA)**

After a marine is assassinated, he is resurrected by a team of scientists with superhuman powers. Based on the superhero series published by Valiant Comics.

Released Fri 13 March

Calm With Horses

CERT 15 (100 mins)
Starring **Cosmo Jarvis, Barry Keoghan, Ned Dennehy, Niamh Algar, Anthony Welsh, David Wilmot**
Directed by **Nick Rowland (UK)**

A former boxer and father to an autistic son, Douglas 'Arm' Armstrong (Cosmo Jarvis) is forced to weigh up his options when he is asked to kill a man for the shady people for whom he works... Adapted from Colin Barrett's short story collection *Young Skins*.

Released Fri 13 March



Misbehaviour CERT 12a (106 mins)

Starring **Keira Knightley, Gugu Mbatha-Raw, Jessie Buckley, Keeley Hawes, Lesley Manville, Rhys Ifans, Greg Kinnear**
Directed by **Philippa Lowthorpe (UK)**



The Miss World pageant of 1970 was an event that shifted a number of goal posts. Held in London, it witnessed the birth of the Women's Liberation Movement as they stormed the stage of the Royal Albert Hall and disrupted the broadcast, claiming that the competition demeaned the fairer sex. Greg Kinnear plays the MC Bob Hope. Expect swimsuits.

Released Fri 13 March

My Spy CERT 12a (99 mins)

Starring **Dave Bautista, Chloe Coleman, Kristen Schaal, Parisa Fitz-Henley, Ken Jeong**
Directed by **Peter Segal (USA)**

A hardened CIA agent (Dave Bautista) finds his status quo upended when he's assigned to safeguard a precocious nine-year-old girl. It's hoped to be the first in a series.

Released Fri 13 March



Fire Will Come CERT tbc (90 mins)

Starring **Amador Arias Mon, Benedicta Sánchez, Inazio Brao, Nuria Sotelo**
Directed by **Oliver Laxe (Spain/France/Luxembourg)**

When an arsonist is released from prison, he returns to his rural village in Galicia, north-west Spain, where he tries to fit in with his troubled past. Winner of the Jury Prize at last year's Cannes festival.

Released Fri 20 March

Radioactive CERT 12a (110 mins)

Starring **Rosamund Pike, Sam Riley, Anya Taylor-Joy, Aneurin Barnard, Simon Russell Beale**
Directed by **Marjane Satrapi (UK)**



In spite of the serious nature of her films, Marjane Satrapi draws her material from unexpected sources. Both *Persepolis* (2007) and *Chicken With Plums* (2011), about the Iranian Revolution and suicide, collectively, were adapted from graphic novels. As is her latest, a biographical drama about Marie Curie (Pike), the pioneering physicist and chemist - and the only woman to win the Nobel prize twice.

Released Fri 20 March

The Truth CERT PG (107 mins)

Starring **Catherine Deneuve, Juliette Binoche, Ethan Hawke, Ludivine Sagnier, Clémentine Grenier**
Directed by **Hirokazu Kore-eda (France/Japan)**



The stormy relationship between a mother and her daughter, a legendary French icon and a screenwriter, respectively, comes to a head when the former publishes her autobiography. From the director of the Palme d'Or-winning *Shoplifters*.

Released Fri 20 March

A Quiet Place Part II

CERT tbc

Starring **Emily Blunt, Cillian Murphy, Millicent Simmonds, Noah Jupe, Djimon Hounsou**
 Directed by **John Krasinski (USA)**

The first film was an ingenious, unrelentingly suspenseful modern horror classic.

In a future dominated by alien creatures with a supernatural sense of hearing, a family of four had armed itself for a life of complete silence. In the sequel, the Abbott family are not what they were and are forced to find survival further afield and discover new terrors beyond their protected farm - terrors that are not even extraterrestrial...

The writer-director John Krasinski returns to the fold, which should guarantee some quality control. His real-life wife Emily Blunt repeats her role as Evelyn Abbott.

Released Fri 20 March



CRITIC'S CHOICE

The Painted Bird

CERT 18 (170 mins)

Starring **Petr Kotlár, Nina Šunevič, Stellan Skarsgård, Udo Kier, Harvey Keitel, Barry Pepper**

Directed by **Václav Marhouf (Czech Republic/Slovakia/Ukraine)**

When during the Second World War a young Jewish boy is sent to stay with relatives to avoid anti-Semitism, he finds himself having to fend for himself.

Based on the 1965 novel by Jerzy Kosiński, the film is shot in black-and-white and features scenes that many might find upsetting.

Released Fri 27 March



Peter Rabbit 2: The Runaway

CERT PG

Starring **Rose Byrne, Domhnall Gleeson, David Oyelowo**, with the voices of **James Corden, Elizabeth Debicki, Daisy Ridley, Margot Robbie**
 Directed by **Will Gluck (Australia/USA/India)**



A rough approximation of Beatrix Potter's beloved bunny is back with more outrageous shenanigans when he, Peter, runs away from home. Expect lashings of risqué humour.

Released Fri 27 March

Vivarium

CERT 15 (97 mins)

Starring **Imogen Poots, Jesse Eisenberg, Jonathan Aris, Danielle Ryan**
 Directed by **Lorcan Finnegan (Ireland/USA/Belgium/Denmark)**

When a young couple sets off to find their perfect home they find themselves trapped in an endless housing estate of identikit buildings. Filmed in Liege, in Belgium.

Released Fri 27 March





Fabric: Touch And Identity

Compton Verney Art Gallery & Park, Warwickshire, Sat 14 March - Sun 14 June

The ways in which clothes and textiles conceal, reveal and seduce through the lenses of art, design, fashion, film and dance is explored in this 'playful and provocative' exhibition.

Boasting works by Vivienne Westwood, Raisa Kabir and Cathy de Monchaux, the display also features a new, immersive installation by Reiko Sudo.

Subjects explored in the show include the role of fabric in shaping and communicating identity, and the part it plays in expressing sensuality and sexuality in a variety of different cultures.



Cherry Blossom Concert

Sunday 29 March 2020, 3pm - 4pm

Outside Ikon Gallery, Oozells Square, Brindley Place, B1 2HS

Raked gravel, a gurgling stream and an elegant stone arch framed by delicate cherry trees in the heart of Birmingham - it's Brindleyplace's Cherry Blossom Garden, a place for reflection and contemplation. It awakens memories of the zen gardens of Japanese temples like Ryoanji in Kyoto, which inspired John Cage to compose music that evokes the soothing shapes of gravel, water, trees and stones. So escape and find a little calm as the cherry blossoms open in our own temple of zen while we perform *Ryoanji*, for flute with electronic sound projections and percussion, to coincide with John Newling's *Dear Nature* exhibition at Ikon.

Book at bcmg.org.uk



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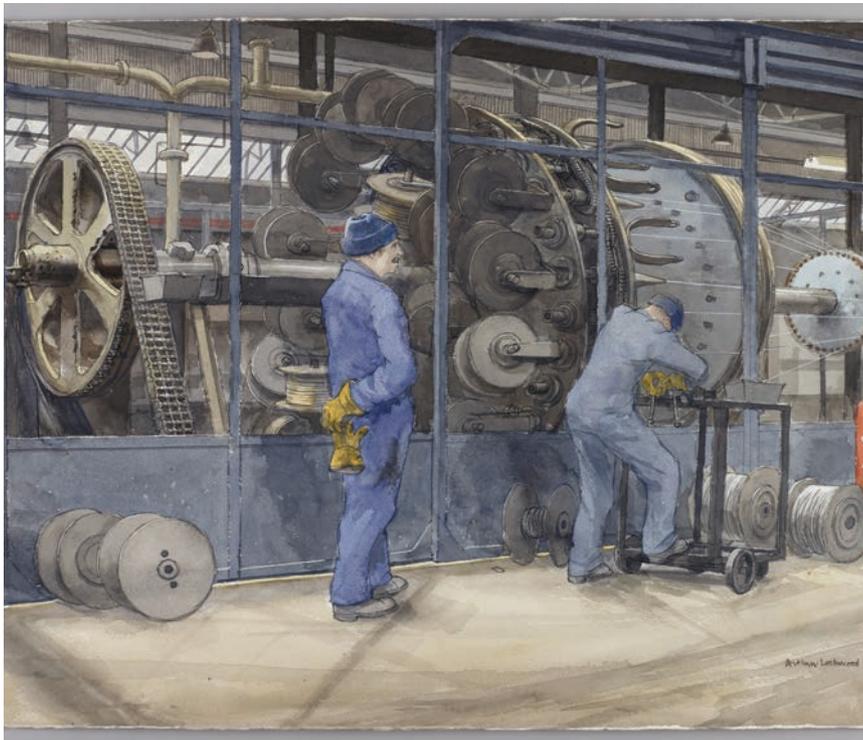
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Webster And Horsfall: 300 Years Of Innovation

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, until Sun 4 October

Archive material, watercolour paintings, and objects from the museum's Science & Industry collection are here combined to tell the story of Webster & Horsfall, a company which has been at the heart of steel wire and rope manufacturing in Birmingham since 1720. The watercolours on display are the work

of Arthur Lockwood, an artist renowned for his industrial paintings of Birmingham and the Black Country. Birmingham Museums acquired over 700 watercolours and sketches by the artist as part of the Lottery-funded Collecting Birmingham project. Lockwood died last year at the age of 85.

Phoebe Cummings: This Was Now

Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Sat 7 Mar – Sun 31 May

Ceramics as a time-based medium is the subject under consideration in Phoebe Cummings' new exhibition. One of the UK's most well-regarded ceramic artists, Phoebe is using her show to investigate the multiple ways in which transient sculpture might be recorded, both individually and collectively. A new work in raw clay will evolve during the course of the exhibition, while the gallery space itself will operate as a site of live production and research, the public being invited to participate in the process of recording the changing work. The sculpture will then be recycled and the clay used in future works.



20 For 2020

The New Art Gallery, Walsall, until Sun 5 July

A novel idea for an exhibition, 20 For 2020 features work by 20 artists from the New Art Gallery's collections - one to represent every year since the venue opened. They will each tell individual stories about particular moments in the history of the Gallery.



Maternal Bonds: Images Of Motherhood

The Barber Institute, Birmingham, until Sun 24 May

Countless images of Mary and Christ - the best-known mother & child of them all - and a wide range of allegorical and symbolic paintings & drawings bear testimony to the interest which artists across the centuries have shown in exploring issues connected to 'motherhood'. This Barber exhibition takes a look back at 500 years'-worth of artwork based around the subject. The show includes drawings by Dutch Golden Age artists Nicolaes Maes and Adriaen van Ostade.

Journey To Justice

Library of Birmingham, until Mon 27 April

Human rights education charity Journey To Justice is the organisation behind this multimedia multi-arts civil rights travelling exhibition. As well as telling little-known stories of people who fought for freedom during the US civil rights movement, the presentation also explores the West Midlands' long history of action for social justice.

Janice Kelsey, who was involved with the Children's March in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963, and whose story is told in the exhibition, will visit in April.

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The National Homebuilding & Renovating Show

NEC, Birmingham, Thurs 26 - Sun 29 March

If you're hoping to renovate your home this year, The National Homebuilding & Renovating Show could well help bring that dream to life. With 500-plus exhibitors showcasing thousands of products and services, visitors can gain plenty of inspiration for their DIY plans.

The show also includes daily seminars and 50 specialist masterclasses. There's an advice centre too, where visitors can have free and impartial one-to-one chats with a wide selection of experts, including architects, builders, finance specialists and insurance advisors.



Yonex All England Open Badminton Championships 2020

Arena Birmingham, Wed 11 - Sun 15 March

Returning to Birmingham for its 110th edition, Yonex All England Open Badminton Championships brings together some of the best badminton players from England and across the

world for five days of top-quality action. This year's championship also has the added attraction of being the last Super 1000 Olympic qualifying event.

Jawsome Sharks

National Sea Life Centre, Birmingham, Sat 28 March - Sun 10 May

The National Sea Life Centre is looking for some brave adventurers for a brand new quest with the venue's Professor Finn. The mad professor is hoping to recruit a new team of Jawsome Rangers to help him in his mission to locate all of his missing Top Trumps cards and place them in the correct order. Along the way, guests will learn fun facts about the sharks and other amazing creatures that live in the aquarium. Once qualified, the new rangers will receive a very special reward to take home.



Miniatura

NEC, Birmingham, Sat 21 - Sun 22 March

Some of the finest craftspeople in the world of miniatures this month grace the NEC for the springtime edition of Miniatura. The show features an impressive selection of stalls selling a whole host of miniatures at a wide range of prices. Workshops and demonstrations also feature.





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MCM Comic Con Birmingham

NEC, Birmingham, Sat 21 - Sun 22 March

Thousands of sci-fi fans, gamers, comic collectors, movie buffs and anime enthusiasts will once again descend on the NEC this month. Among the well-known actors taking part in vari-

ous panel discussions, Q&As and meet-and-greets are Sherlock and Fleabag's Andrew Scott and Rob Wiethoff from Red Dead Redemption 2. New for 2020 is Pop Asia, available outside London for the first time and offering visitors all manner of Korean and Japanese fashion, food, and merchandise.



The Big Bang Fair

NEC, Birmingham, Wed 11 - Sat 14 March

From sport and fashion to medicine and space, The Big Bang Fair helps young people explore the opportunities available to them in science,

technology, engineering & maths (STEM). The event also features theatre shows, hands-on activities, interactive workshops, in-depth careers information and the opportunity to talk to scientists and engineers from leading companies across the UK.

Shakespeare Week Super Saturday

Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust family homes, Stratford-upon-Avon, Sat 21 & Sun 22 March

Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust is putting a creative spin on this year's Shakespeare Week celebrations.

Little ones can visit the Trust's family homes to learn new art skills and produce beautiful finished creations to take home. All participants will receive a certificate and sticker and have the opportunity to dress up for a graduation selfie.

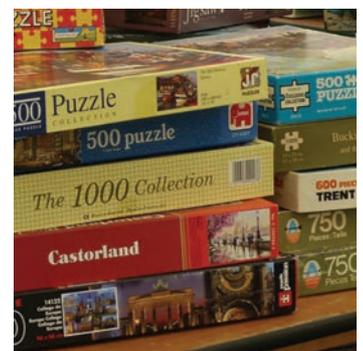
The Shakespeare Centre plays host to Super Saturday on the 21st, a free family fun day featuring Horrible Histories illustrator Martin Brown, Ricky Martin from CBBC's Art Ninja, and author and illustrator Marcia Williams.

Jigsaw Festival

Coughton Court, Alcester, Warwickshire, Sat 7 - Sun 15 March

Coughton Court's popular Jigsaw Festival makes a welcome return this month.

Now in its seventh year, the event sees hundreds of donated jigsaw puzzles being put up for sale to raise vital funds for conservation work at the National Trust site. Past festivals have raised a total of £32,000. This year's funds will go towards Coughton Court's Secret & Sacred project, which takes a look at the unusual collection of objects gathered, kept and treasured by the Throckmorton family during their 600-year history in the property.



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Practical Classics Car & Restoration Show

NEC, Birmingham, Fri 27 - Sun 29 March

Practical Classics Car & Restoration Show comes complete with a brand new interactive feature this month.

Classic World is designed to bring together all the elements of owning a classic vehicle - including the actual driving - and allows visitors to take a journey of discovery across four

key areas - Work In Progress, Staff Car Sagas, Barn Finds Revisited and the Classic World Stage.

Special guests at the show include TV motoring restorers Ant Anstead from Wheeler Dealers, Car SOS' Fuzz Townshend, and Jimmy De Ville from Goblin Works Garage and Fifth Gear.

Meet the Octonauts

Thinktank Science Museum, Birmingham, Sat 7 & Sun 8 March

To celebrate British Science & Engineering Week at Thinktank, Captain Barnacles and Kwazii from CBeebies show Octonauts will be meeting little ones across the weekend.

Elsewhere in the museum, families can take part in sealife object-handling sessions, watch a water science demo in the outdoor Science Garden, and get hands-on with Imagination Playground and some very special under-the-sea challenges!

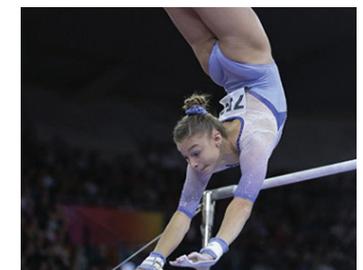


Gymnastics World Cup 2020

Arena Birmingham, Sat 28 March

Top international gymnasts from all over the world are battling it out in Birmingham this month for a spot at the Tokyo Olympics. Twelve male and a dozen female gymnasts - included among whom are 12 world medallists and an Olympic champion - go head-to-head in a series of events to gain vital qualification points for their country.

As the only Olympic qualification event in Britain, and with more gymnasts taking part than ever before, this is a must-attend event for all gymnastics and Olympic Games fans.



Troll-tastic Adventure

Legoland Discovery Centre, Birmingham, Sat 14 March - Sun 10 May

Celebrating the release of the new Dreamworks movie, Trolls World Tour, Legoland Discovery Centre Birmingham is providing visitors with a

'Troll-tastic adventure' this spring. Families can expect 'a glittery, rainbow-infused party like no other', with a host of activities including photo opportunities with favourite Trolls friends, brand new dance parties and numerous construction challenges.

AND NOW FOR SOMETHING

Variety, so the old saying goes, is the spice of life - and when it comes to offering people something a bit different to try out, the West Midlands is a region that's definitely not lacking in options! Here are just a few of the maybe-more-unusual activities which are available to sample not too far away from your very own doorstep...



DropShot Digbeth

DropShot Digbeth is a multi-use activity destination which features a full cocktail bar, an array of craft beers, six Olympic-grade table-tennis tables, two shuffleboards, wood-fired pizzas and a sound system playing a mix of music to suit every taste.

The licensed entertainment venue is situated 50 yards from The Custard Factory, in the heart of redeveloped Digbeth.

GREAT FOR groups of friends.
Prices start at £15 for two hours.

60 Heath Mill Lane, Deritend, Birmingham, B9 4AR



Escape Live

Working in a team of between two and six people, you have 60 minutes to escape from a locked room. Everyone must work together to find the clues and solve the puzzles to make sure you get out in time. The escape rooms on offer include Peaky Blinders (Birmingham only), Room 13, The Lab and Time Machine.

GREAT FOR family days out, adult birthday parties and stag & hen dos.
Prices start at £17.50 per person.

18 - 24 Constitution Hill, Birmingham, B19 3LY; Fargo Studios, 54 Grafton Street, Coventry, CV1 2HW; 31 Greenhill Street, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 6LE



The Bear Grylls Adventure

The world's first adventure activity centre inspired by Bear Grylls himself.

Choose your challenge: high ropes, iFLY, shark dive, indoor archery, indoor climb, escape rooms, fear zone, indoor shooting, cage snorkel and a Royal Marines-inspired assault course.

Most activities are suitable for guests aged eight-plus.

GREAT FOR families, groups, schools and team-building exercises.

Prices start at £12.50.

NEC, National Exhibition Centre, Marston Green, Birmingham, B40 1NT

Flight Club

Flight Club is the world's first 'social darts' venue, presenting a supercharged version of the game that involves multiple players, patented dart-tracking technology and instant scoring, reimagining matches into fast-paced social experiences.

The feature bar serves a selection of craft beers and cocktails, alongside a seasonally inspired food menu.

GREAT FOR groups of friends. Prices are per booking, not per person. Each oche is £30 (peak) and £15 (off-peak) per 60 minutes.

13 Temple Street, Birmingham, B2 5BN

Roxy Ball Room

Roxy Ball Room features its own brand of pool, ping-pong, shuffleboard, beer-pong and 10 full-sized bowling lanes.

Keeping the action flowing from the afternoon until late into the night, the social gaming concept has already proved popular at venues in Liverpool, Leeds, Manchester and Nottingham.

The venue serves a selection of craft beers, signature cocktails and liquor, as well as a full pizza & nibble menu - all set to the very best rock and indie soundtracks.

Roxy Ball Room is an 18-plus venue.

GREAT FOR adult parties.
Prices start at £6 per person.

58 - 60 Heath Mill Lane, Deritend, Birmingham, B9 4AR

Chance & Counters

Chance & Counters is a new boardgame bar & cafe located in the popular Custard Factory. Boasting a bright and industrial space which fits over 100 people, this quirky venue has nearly 500 games to choose from, a varied selection of new and popular boardgames to buy, 10 draught beer & cider lines, and food options including brunch, burgers, tacos and more.

GREAT FOR groups of friends or even a solo visit. Pricing is £5 per person for a four-hour session.

The Custard Factory, Birmingham, B9 4AA

COMPLETELY DIFFERENT..



Love2Stay

Set within 22 acres of stunning landscape, Love2Stay features a caravan park, a selection of safari lodges and a wide range of activities.

The resort boasts plenty to see and do, including a natural swimming pool, an army-style assault course, paddle boarding and woodland den building. Whether you're visiting for a mini break or a longer period of time, Love2Stay is a great base from which to explore Shrewsbury and the surrounding area.

GREAT FOR family breaks and days out with friends. Activity prices start from £5 per person.

Emstrey Bank, Shrewsbury, SY5 6QS



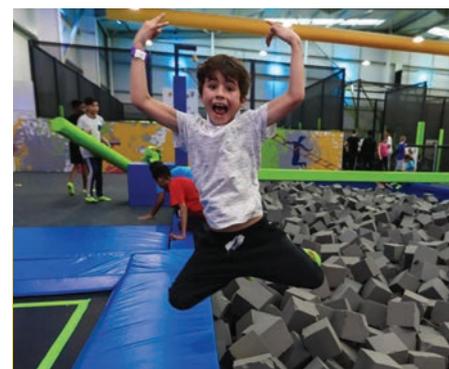
The Floodgate

The Floodgate offers 'an experiential night out like no other'. Situated in Digbeth and serving up the latest on-trend cocktails, cold craft beers and tasty street food, the venue offers a world of neon colour and graffiti art. Sporty types can hit a home run at Bleachers BaseBall, slide their way to victory in CurlClub, or maybe even hit a hole-in-one on the 18-hole UV wonderland PitPat course (think crazy-golf meets pool!).

GREAT FOR hen & stag dos and adult birthday parties.

Prices start from £10 per person.

104-108 Floodgate Street, Birmingham, B5 5SR



Jump In

While trampolines are the name of the game here, there's so much more to put a spring in your step. Why not start with the basketball court, where sports stars can reach for a slam dunk? If teamwork is more your thing, then the dodgeball court is a great place to dip and dive. There's even a toddler area for tiny tots to join in the fun, a twist ladder (Shrewsbury only), a balance beam (Warwick only), and great award-winning party packages.

**1 Henley Way, Shrewsbury, SY1 4YQ;
Tachbrook Park, Hermes Cl, Royal Leamington Spa, Warwick CV34 6NW**

Timberjacks

Ever fancied trying your hand at one of history's oldest lumberjack sports? Well now you can! Timberjacks, which has sites in both Shrewsbury and Kidderminster, is the ultimate axe-throwing venue. Whether you're making a solo visit or attending as part of a team, grab an axe and have a go at hurling it at the target. Players also have the option of adding in-game extras, including apple smashing, target posters and the scoreboard challenge, where there's a cash prize to be won.

GREAT FOR hen & stag dos and adult birthday parties. Prices from £15 per person.

**Flexspace, Unit 49, Shrewsbury SY1 3FE;
Unit E Green Street, Kidderminster DY10 1RD**

Ninja Warrior UK

Inspired by ITV's hit programme, Ninja Warrior UK, this indoor obstacle course welcomes visitors of all abilities aged four-plus.

Challenge your inner ninja by climbing, balancing, jumping and swinging across different obstacles.

The course features a number of levels of difficulty, meaning participants can gauge their progress en route to becoming a ninja warrior.

GREAT FOR kids and adult birthday parties. Prices start from £10 per person.

Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 4NB

NQ64

Gaming venue NQ64 is a recent addition to Birmingham's buzzing creative & digital district. Combining a strong drink offering with retro gaming, it's the perfect place to unleash your inner child and get lost in a world of nostalgia.

Attractions include games such as Pac-Man, Donkey Kong, Track & Field, Street Fighter 2 and Space Invaders, as well as classic consoles like the N64, Megadrive and SNES.

GREAT FOR groups of friends or even a solo visit. There's no entrance fee and 15 tokens cost £6.

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ROCKIN' ALL OVER THE WORLD

Smash-hit West End musical Buddy - The Buddy Holly Story is visiting the Midlands this month on a 30th anniversary tour. We spoke to the two actor/musicians - AJ Jenks and Christopher Weeks - who are keeping the legend and music of Buddy Holly alive on stage...

Seen by tens of millions of people across the globe, Buddy - The Buddy Holly Story is an enormously enduring and touchingly affectionate portrayal of one of rock & roll's earliest and brightest stars.

Charting the singer's meteoric rise to fame and fortune, and following his career through to his very last performance at the Surf Ballroom in Clear Lake, Iowa, the show features timeless Buddy classics such as That'll Be The Day, Peggy Sue, Oh Boy and Rave On.

AJ Jenks and Christopher Weeks are the two actors sharing the part of Buddy in the 30th anniversary touring production of the show, alternating between the physically demanding lead role and the job of playing The Crickets' rhythm guitarist, Niki Sullivan.

"It's a massive musical phenomenon and it will probably be the biggest part of my career," says AJ. "Getting into the role of Buddy Holly is like Clark Kent but in reverse. The glasses go on and I'm Buddy!"

It was on the London stage that Buddy's legend took on a new life back in 1989. The first of the big 'jukebox' musicals, Buddy - The Buddy Holly Story proved to be a smash-hit in the West End. Touring across the world for the past 30 years, the show has introduced Buddy's music to subsequent generations.

"My dad is a massive Buddy addict," says AJ. "His music was always on in the car when I was growing up, so it didn't take a lot to draw me to the show. So many other bands and

artists have been influenced by the music of Buddy Holly - from the Stones to The Beatles. I was screaming to get this part. I'd been working on getting it for the best part of a year.

"It's amazing to play such a musical legend. I still can't get over the thought of 'AJ Jenks playing Buddy Holly'. It's overwhelming. It feels like I've lucked out and won the lottery to get the part.

"Recalling the opening night of this tour last autumn still gets to me. In my final speech at the end, after the announcement of Buddy's death, I felt so emotional, I had to take a moment not to shed a tear. It dawned on me that this isn't just a normal show. It's a massive celebration of 30 years. It's scary, but I feel massively proud and honoured to be a part of it."

AJ is no newcomer to the show; he played the role of Ritchie Valens in a semi-professional production in 2018. But the 24-year-old is loving donning the trademark Buddy glasses and taking to the stage.

"It really takes a lot of energy. I do around four performances as Buddy a week. It's great to have a few days playing Niki while Chris does his thing. You have to be very careful. In the first show I really let rip on the night and afterwards felt a couple of croaks in the voice. I felt I'd gone too strong on it. I'm being quite a boring person at the moment; I'm protecting the voice, looking after myself.

"You've got to stay in shape for the role; you need endurance. You're throwing yourself around on stage with the guitar every five seconds, so you've got to be fit. Your body really aches in the morning. The best thing to do is get out and stretch, otherwise you seize up. I had a personal trainer for a while because I was starting to get a bit of a belly. I do a couple of 5km runs a week now to keep in shape."

Christopher Weeks plays Buddy for half of the performances. The 29-year-old actor/musician has previously played the role of Johnny

Gustafson in two touring productions of Cilla The Musical.

"It's amazing being involved in the show - Buddy has always been on my bucket list," says Christopher. "The response has been huge; audiences dancing, going mad, both for matinees and in the evenings.

"As an audience member you want to feel like you're there; there watching Buddy Holly; there at The Surf Ballroom, Clear Lake. That feeling of live music is like nothing else, and the crowd keeps you in the moment, keeps it exciting and fresh. You try not to think too much about the enormity of playing a legend because that could drown you. You're not *playing* a huge legend of the rock & roll world, you *are* that person, feeling what he feels. It's hugely exciting and wonderful to do."

Christopher first saw the show as a young child in the 1990s. He knew the original cast album inside-out, but Musical Director Dean Elliott has taken the songs back to the original Buddy Holly.

"We're so lucky with Dean, who played Buddy for five years," Christopher explains. "He's being very authentic with the music, which is very, very cool - from Buddy's rockabilly roots to the orchestral elements he incorporated later on."

Buddy's single-minded determination to push musical boundaries is clear for all to see in the show. He was considered a rebel in his time. So do the actors see anything of themselves in the role?

"I've always been a driven person in terms of my aims and goals, and Buddy was always driving himself forward," says AJ. "I wouldn't say I'm a rebel as Buddy was. I've always cared about my hair and he loves a good suit. I identify a lot with the character in the first act - going into the studio, being cheeky; I get that. The second act is a lot harder for me because he's grown up and is more stable - and as a person, I haven't grown up.

"Buddy fell in love with Maria Elena, proposing within five hours. I don't believe in love at

the moment - I've literally just split up with my girlfriend!"

Christopher adds: "As far as similarities with Buddy go - well, I feel like I'm rediscovering my youth in act one. I also remember the feeling of going off on tour while your wife is pregnant, as I have a baby.

"For me, you give yourself over to the script, which gets easier the more you rehearse. You know who Buddy Holly is, how he stands, how he holds his guitar. Then you let go and let whatever is happening affect you."

So what would the two Buddys like their audiences to take away from the show?

"It's a great education on Buddy Holly's life, music and a period of musical history that was so dramatic," says Christopher. "I'd like the audience to find out about how he lived his life, his relationship with his wife, Maria, and how brightly his star shone for that short amount of time. There's a feeling of loss and a feeling of awe at what he achieved. The feeling of warmth you get from seeing love. Take those three things away please."

"I just want them to have the best night they have ever had in the theatre," says AJ. "I've had some crap nights at the theatre, where I've walked out. I want to give everyone a show where they come out and feel a real buzz. In 18 months Buddy Holly blasted out 200 songs. It wouldn't happen now, and I don't think anyone else has done that.

"What I would love to happen is that there would be a kid in the audience thinking, 'I would love to do that'. Something clicks. If it inspires them to take up an instrument, get into theatre, get up on the stage, that would be fantastic."

.....

Buddy - The Buddy Holly Story shows at The Alexandra, Birmingham, from Tuesday 3 to Saturday 7 March and Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, from Tuesday 10 to Saturday 14 March.

the list

Your week-
by-week
listings guide
March 2020



The Whip at the Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, until Sat 21 March

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

What's On

Sun 1 - Sun 8 March



Quinn - A Journey at
Herbert Art Gallery, Coventry
until Sun 31 May

Mon 9 to Sun 15 March



The Trials Of Cato at
Huntingdon Hall, Worcester
Wed 11 March

Mon 16 to Sun 22 March



Sukh Ojla at the
Belgrade Theatre, Coventry
Mon 16 March

Mon 23 to Tues 31 March



Everything (But The Girl) at
Malvern Theatres
Wed 25 March

THROUGHOUT MARCH

Artrix, Bromsgrove

INTO SPRING 2020 WITH 5 CUBED ART Showcase of work produced in a variety of paint and collage to create colour and form that reflects nature, people and atmosphere, until Sun 1 Mar

NEW SPACE ART Exhibition of work in multiple mediums from national artists and local amateur astronomy societies, Tues 3 Mar - Sun 5 Apr

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

WHITWORTH WALLIS ARTIST IN RESIDENCE: LEANNE O'CONNOR Leanne's work responds to the stained-glass and metalwork collection held within the Industrial gallery, the Museum Collections Centre and Community History & Archives Service in Smethwick, until Mon 1 June

DRESSED TO THE NINES Exhibition about dressing up and going out, from around 1850 to the present day, until Fri 4 Sept

Compton Verney Gallery, Warwick

ARIEL SCHLESINGER: WAYS TO SAY GOODBYE Newly commissioned sculpture in the park by Ariel Schlesinger that seeks to highlight the relationship between people and nature, until Wed 30 Sept

NEW CRANACH: ARTIST AND INNOVATOR Featuring some of the artist's most beguiling paintings and illustrations, Sat 14 Mar - Sun 14 June

Rugby Art Gallery & Museum

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

NEW FALSE MEMORY Exhibition challenging our perception of being able to accurately remember moments from the past, Sat 28 Mar - Sat 30 May

NEW IT'S A SMALL WORLD Social history exhibition featuring a collection of miscellaneous small-scale items, Sat 28 Mar - Sat 5 Sept

The Herbert Art Gallery & Museum

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS Installation by Catherine Howard featuring more than 100 embellished textile moths, until Sun 1 Mar

COVENTRY OPEN 2020 Exhibition showcasing a wide range of talent from the West Midlands and Warwickshire,

until Sun 19 Apr

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

QUINN - A JOURNEY An installation by photographer, artist and writer Lottie Davies, until Sun 31 May



Worcester City Museum & Art Gallery

GEORGIANS: THE PRIDE AND THE PREJUDICE Delve into the age of the Georgians, explore the characters and stories of the age, see rarely displayed Georgian artwork and beautiful pieces of Georgian costume, plus a first edition of Jane Austen's *Pride And Prejudice*, until Sat 28 Mar

MAYFLOWER400 Exhibition featuring indigenous American and Canadian objects from the World Cultures Collection, presented in celebration of the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower's historic transatlantic voyage, until Sat 21 Nov

Other VISUAL ARTS

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

NEW PLANES In his sophomore solo exhibition, Thomas Rooney explores creating narrative through abstract 35mm photography, Wed 4 - Mon 16 Mar, The Core Theatre, Solihull

NEW 2020 WOMEN OF VISION Showcase of portraits by Worcestershire-based photographer Angela Fitch celebrating the achievements of women in the workplace, Thurs 5 - Thurs 19 Mar, The Hive, Worcester

Gigs

MICHAEL KIWANUKA Sun 1 Mar, O2 Academy, Birmingham

PAUL CARRACK Sun 1 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

JULIAN COPE Sun 1 Mar, The Mill, Digbeth, Birmingham

NASTY CHERRY Sun 1 Mar, O2 Academy, Birmingham

LOVE FAME TRAGEDY Mon 2 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

ARCHIE FAULKS Mon 2 Mar, Deadwax, Digbeth, Birmingham

FUNK - A MUSIC REVOLUTION Mon 2 Mar, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

SUPERGRASS Tues 3 Mar, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE FORTUNATE SONS: TRIBUTE TO CREEDANCE CLEARWATER REVIVED Tues 3 Mar, The Core Theatre, Solihull

CLAUDE BOURBON Tues 3 Mar, Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

IAMDDB Tues 3 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE JACQUES Tues 3 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

MARIKA HACKMAN Tues 3 Mar, O2 Academy, Birmingham

AN EVENING WITH WHITNEY Wed 4 Mar, Arena Birmingham

THE MAGIC OF MOTOWN Thurs 5 Mar, Palace Theatre, Redditch

T.REXTASY Thurs 5 Mar, Artrix, Bromsgrove

SUCKERPUNCH Thurs 5 Mar, Deadwax, Digbeth, Birmingham

THE PICTUREBOOKS Thurs 5 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

GO NOW! THE MUSIC OF THE MOODY BLUES Thurs 5 Mar, Albany Theatre, Coventry

JADU HEART Thurs 5 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

CLIVE CARROLL Thurs 5 Mar, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

VINNY PECULIAR +

ROBERT ROTIFER + WES DANCE Thurs 5 Mar, Marr's Bar, Worcester

GALA DISCO POLO Fri 6 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

GUY CHAMBERS Fri 6 Mar, Pizza Express Live, Birmingham

AN EVENING WITH PETER ANDRE Fri 6 Mar, The Assembly, Leamington Spa

ONE NIGHT IN DUBLIN Fri 6 Mar, Palace Theatre, Redditch

WOMEN IN ROCK Fri 6 Mar, Artrix, Bromsgrove

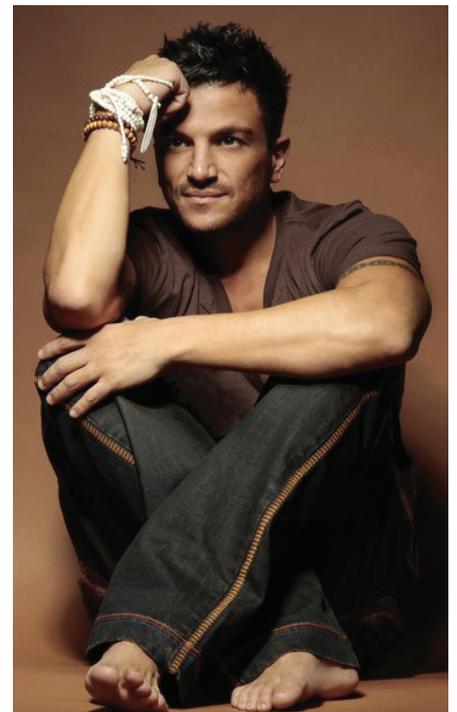
THE LEYLINES Fri 6 Mar, Marr's Bar, Worcester



ROWAN GODEL TRIO Fri 6 Mar, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

SOLID SILVER 70S SHOW Fri 6 Mar, Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

CLAUDE BOURBON, MEDITERRANEAN SPANISH BLUES Fri 6 Mar, Palace Theatre, Redditch



Peter Andre - The Assembly, Leamington Spa

LIONEL - THE MUSIC OF LIONEL RICHIE Fri 6 Mar, Swan Theatre, Worcester

THE ORIELLES Fri 6 Mar, O2 Institute, B'ham

MARK HARRISON Fri 6 Mar, Albany Theatre, Coventry

CATAPULT CLUB FEAT. SOUTHERN SMOKE Fri 6 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

BULSARA AND HIS QUEENIES Sat 7 Mar, O2 Academy, Birmingham

BATTLE OF THE BANDS Sat 7 Mar, Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

BLACK VOICES: ARETHA - THE QUEEN NEXT DOOR Sat 7 Mar, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

OH WONDER Sat 7 Mar, O2 Institute, B'ham

QUILL Sat 7 Mar, The Core Theatre, Solihull

ROBINSON-STONE Sat 7 Mar, Artrix, Bromsgrove

JAMES ARTHUR Sat 7 Mar, Arena B'ham

BLEACH Sat 7 Mar, The Asylum, Birmingham

MAGIC LANTERN RAVE Sat 7 Mar, O2 Academy, Birmingham

U2 Sun 8 Mar, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

Classical & Easy Listening

MICHAEL BALL & ALFIE BOE Sun 1 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

DANIELA ROSSI IN CONCERT Programme includes works by Tchaikovsky arr. Dyens, Regondi, Jeffrey McFadden & J.S Bach Arr. Eduardo Isaac, Tues 3 Mar, Recital Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

THE BERYL CHEMPIN MEMORIAL MASTERCLASS WITH GABRIELA MONTERO Wed 4 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

CBSO: A GERMAN REQUIEM Featuring Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla (conductor), Camilla Tilling (soprano), Florian Boesch (baritone) & CBSO Chorus. Programme includes works by Mozart & Brahms, Wed 4 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CBSO: JANACEK & BRAHMS Featuring Philip Brett & Kate Oswin (violins), Catherine Bower & Amy Thomas (violins) & Eduardo Vassallo (cello), Wed 4 Mar, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

TIMOTHY RIDOUT (VIOLA) IN CONCERT Also featuring Yue Yu (viola), Samantha Oxborough (mezzo-soprano) & RBC musicians, Wed 4 Mar, The Bradshaw Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

MAX RAABE & PALAST ORCHESTER Thurs 5 Mar, Symphony Hall, B'ham

STEPHEN HOUGH PIANO RECITAL Programme includes works by Bach, Busoni, Chopin, Hough & Liszt, Thurs 5 Mar, Malvern Theatres

CITY OF BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA Featuring Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla (conductor) & Gabriela Montero (piano). Programme includes works by Šerkšnyte, Tchaikovsky & Brahms, Fri 6 Mar, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

AN AUDIENCE WITH CRAIG OGDEN Programme includes works by Albéniz, Tárrega, Scarlatti, Gary Ryan & George Harrison, Sat 7 Mar, St Laurence Church, Alvechurch, Worcestershire

THE ORIEL SINGERS Featuring Worcester Early Music Band & Ben Sawyer (conductor). Programme includes works by Monteverdi, Gabrieli, Schütz, Gesualdo & Juan Gutiérrez de Padilla, Sat 7 Mar, Church of St Martin and St Peter, Worcester

GABRIELA MONTERO PIANO RECITAL Programme includes works by Schumann, Chick Corea, Shostakovich & Montero, Sun 8 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA & CHORUS: SEA PICTURES Also featuring the Coull Quartet. Programme includes works by Elgar & Coleridge-Taylor, Sun 8 Mar, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Comedy

AHIR SHAH Sun 1 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

LUCY PORTER Sun 1 Mar, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

SUKH OJLA Sun 1 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

STEWART LEE Tues 3 Mar, Malvern Theatres

TOMMY TIERNAN Tues 3 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

RHYS JAMES Wed 4 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

NINA CONTI, IVO GRAHAM, LOU SANDERS & ROSIE JONES Wed 4 Mar, Palace Theatre, Redditch

GEOFF NORCOTT Wed 4 Mar, Artrix, Bromsgrove

TANYALEE DAVIS, LOUISE YOUNG & COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON Thurs 5 Mar, The Glee Club, B'ham

FREDDY QUINNE, EMMANUEL SONUBI, ANT DEWSON & BARRY DODDS Fri 6 Mar, Abbey Theatre, Nuneaton

STEPHEN BAILEY Fri 6 Mar, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

GEOFF NORCOTT Fri 6 Mar, The Civic, Stourport

TANYALEE DAVIS, LOUISE YOUNG, JOHN FOTHERGILL & PAT CAHILL Fri 6 - Sat 7 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

SLIM, QUINCY, JUNIOR BOOKER, KAYLEIGH LOUDMOUTH, SMASH & KAT Sat 7 Mar, The Mill, Digbeth, B'ham

FREDDY QUINNE, ELLIOT STEEL, RUDI LICKWOOD & MICKY P KERR Sat 7 Mar, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

PAUL FOOT, PHIL NICHOL, SIMON WOZNIAK & TOM TOAL Sat 7 Mar, The Assembly Leamington, Leamington Spa

DANA ALEXANDER, KAT BOYCE, GLENDA JAXSON, CASSANDRA MARIA & AURIE STYLA Sun 8 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

NOREEN KHAN, SHAZIA MIRZA, SUKH OJLA & GLENDA JAXSON Sun 8 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

VOLDEMORT AND THE TEENAGE HOGWARTS MUSICAL PARODY Brand new Harry Potter-inspired show packed with 'magic, hormones & more than a few murders', until Sun 1 Mar, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

THE CARETAKER Amateur staging of Harold Pinter's comic masterpiece, until Sat 7 Mar, The Loft Theatre Company, Leamington Spa

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



The Whip - The Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

THE NORMAN CONQUESTS Amateur staging of Alan Ayckbourn's comic masterpiece, until Sat 14 Mar, The Bear Pit Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

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

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?... until Sat 21 Mar, The Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

MENOPAUSE THE MUSICAL 2 Cheryl Ferguson, Nicole Barber-Lane, Rebecca Wheatley & Nicki French star in a 'heartfelt, reassuring and unflinching' look at the joys of menopause and friendship, Sun 1 Mar, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

FIRES OUR SHOES HAVE MADE Explosive piece of original gig theatre which gives a voice to underestimated and misrepresented youth, Tues 3 Mar, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

THE SOUND OF MUSIC One of the greatest musicals of all time, featuring one of musical theatre's most iconic scores, Tues 3 - Sat 7 Mar, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

BUDDY Award-winning West End show which tells the story of the legendary Buddy Holly, Tues 3 - Sat 7 Mar, The Alexandra, Birmingham

A MONSTER CALLS Olivier Award-winning show based on Patrick Ness's piercing novel, Tues 3 - Sat 7 Mar, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

THE THREE MUSKETEERS: A COMEDY ADVENTURE Le Navet Bete and Exeter Northcott Theatre return to Worcester with their smash-hit version of the

classic tale, Wed 4 - Thurs 5 Mar, Swan Theatre, Worcester

ADOLF One-man show in which Pip Utton, looking uncomfortably like the Führer, stands before a huge Nazi banner and addresses his party faithful, Wed 4 - Fri 6 Mar, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

MARY POPPINS JR. Amateur staging presented by Warwick School & King's High School, Wed 4 - Fri 6 Mar, Bridge House Theatre, Warwick

A PROFOUNDLY AFFECTIONATE PASSIONATE DEVOTION TO SOMEONE (-NOUN) Debbie Tucker's play explores how two people create a stable, consistent relationship without perfecting how to communicate either with each other or with themselves, Wed 4 - Sat 7 Mar, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

HOLES New stage show based on the award-winning comedy adventure, Wed 4 - Sat 7 Mar, Malvern Theatres

THE BOOK OF MORMON Outrageous musical comedy which follows the misadventures of a mismatched pair of missionaries, sent on a mission to a place that's about as far from Salt Lake City as you can get, Weds 4 - Sat 28 Mar, Birmingham Hippodrome

DON'T PANIC! The UK's only tribute to Dad's Army, Thurs 5 Mar, The Core Theatre, Solihull

THAT'LL BE THE DAY Rock'n'roll variety production featuring music, impressions and comic sketches, Thurs 5 Mar, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

OH! WHAT A NIGHT Musical journey through the career of Frankie Valli & The Four Seasons, Fri 6 Mar, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

MY FRIEND MR LAUREL Hi-De-Hi star Jeffrey Holland pays homage to his longtime hero, Stan Laurel... Sat 7

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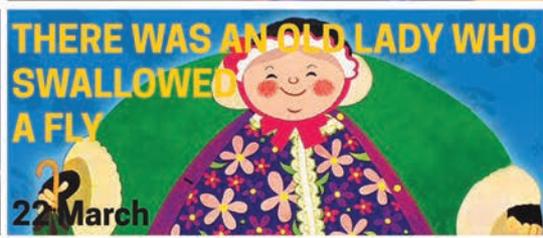
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Mar, Stratford Playhouse, Stratford-upon-Avon

THE COUNTRY DIARY IN SONG New musical show celebrating Solihull author Edith Holden, the woman behind *The Country Diary Of An Edwardian Lady*, Sat 7 Mar, The Core Theatre, Solihull

ROUND THE HORNE Radio comedy classic, live on stage, Sun 8 Mar, The Loft Theatre Company, Leamington Spa

THE MISEDUCATION OF LUNA KHAN Satirical performance questioning what identity and belonging mean in an increasingly globalised world, Sun 8 Mar, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Kids Shows

LITTLE MERMAID JR. Elevate Theatre present one of Hans Christian Andersen's best-known tales, Sat 7 Mar, Albany Theatre, Coventry

BEASTLY BELLE Puppetry, film projections and an original musical score combine in a journey of discovery which explores perceptions of physical beauty, Sat 7 Mar, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

SARAH & DUCK Puppetry, storytelling & music combine in a production based on the BAFTA award-winning CBeebies show, Sun 8 Mar, Swan Theatre, Worcester



Cabaret

SASHA VELOUR - SMOKE & MIRRORS Drag, visual art & magic combine in Sasha's first one-queen theatre tour, Mon 2 Mar, The Alexandra, B'ham

Dance

SAMPAD ASIAN SPRING Annual South Asian dance extravaganza, Sun 1 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

TANGO FIRE Award-winning show where six couples demonstrate some of the speediest footwork in the business... Sun 1 Mar, Malvern Theatres

BRENDAN COLE: SHOW MAN Music & dance extravaganza from the former Strictly star and his hand-picked championship dancers, Mon 2 Mar,

Symphony Hall, Birmingham

GISELLE Ballet Theatre UK presents its version of one of the greatest ballets of all time, Sat 7 Mar, Swan Theatre, Worcester

AKADEMY DANCE COMPANY: CHAPTER 2 Showcasing 28 routines featuring a variety of dance styles, Sat 7 Mar, Warwick Hall

Talks

POETRY READING WITH LUKE KENNARD & ISABEL GALLEYMORE Tues 3 Mar, The Hive, Worcester

NICHOLAS CRANE - THE MAKING OF THE BRITISH LANDSCAPE Amusing tales and observations from 10 years of presenting over 80 BBC programmes, Wed 4 Mar, The Core Theatre, Solihull

TOM WATSON: DOWNSIZING The former deputy leader of the Labour Party shares his honest and inspiring account of how he radically changed the way he ate, lost eight stone and reversed his type 2 diabetes, Wed 4 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

HIT THE ODE Unique performance poetry night, Fri 6 Mar, Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

JOINEDUPWRITING - ROGER MCGOUGH WITH LITTLE MACHINE Selection of poems set to music, Fri 6 Mar, Stratford Playhouse, Stratford-upon-Avon

UNISLAM GRAND FINALS Culmination of the UK's premier student and young people's poetry event, Sun 8 Mar, Birmingham Hippodrome

Film

INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

EMMA (PG) Drama/Comedy. Starring Anya Taylor-Joy, Bill Nighy. Malvern Theatres, Fri 28 Feb - Thurs 6 Mar

THE BIGGEST LITTLE FARM (PG) Documentary. Starring John Chester, Molly Chester. The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Sun 1 - Tues 3 Mar

A HIDDEN LIFE (12a) Biography/Drama. Starring August Diehl, Valerie Pachner. Malvern Theatres, Sun 1 - Tues 3 Mar; Artrix, Bromsgrove, Mon 2 Mar; Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Sun 8 - Mon 9 Mar

A BEAUTIFUL DAY IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD (PG) Biography/Drama. Starring Tom Hanks, Matthew Rhys. The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Sun 1 - Thurs 5 Mar

JUST MERCY (15) Drama. Starring Michael B. Jordan, Jamie Foxx. The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Tues 3 - Thurs 5 Mar

FISHERMAN'S FRIENDS (12a) Comedy/Drama. Starring James Purefoy, Meadow Nobrega. Abbey Theatre, Nuneaton, Thurs 5 Mar

GRACE JONES: BLOODLIGHT AND BAM! (15) Documentary/Biography. Starring Grace Jones, Lowell 'Sly' Dunbar. Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Thurs 5 Mar

THE PERSONAL HISTORY OF DAVID COPPERFIELD (PG) Comedy/Drama. Starring Dev Patel, Hugh Laurie. Artrix, Bromsgrove, Fri 6, Sun 8 - Mon 9 Mar

1917 (15) Drama/War. Starring Dean-Charles Chapman, George MacKay. Rugby Theatre, Fri 6 - Sat 7 Mar

PARASITE (15) Comedy/Crime. Starring Kang-ho Song, Sun-kyun Lee. Foreign language, subtitled. Malvern Theatres, Fri 6, Sun 8 - Wed 11 Mar; The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Sun 8 - Thurs 12 Mar

PAW PATROL: READY RACE RESCUE (U) Animation/Family. With the voices of Anya Cooke, Cathal J. Dodd. Artrix, Bromsgrove, Sat 7 Mar

BOMBSHELL (15) Biography/Drama. Starring Charlize Theron, Nicole Kidman. Number 8, Pershore, Sat 7 Mar

RICHARD JEWELL (15) Drama. Starring Paul Walter Hauser, Kathy Bates. The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Sun 8 - Tues 10 Mar

Events

LEGO CITY: REPORT FOR DUTY

Complete the build challenges and become a LEGO City hero, until Sun 1 Mar, Legoland Discovery Centre, Birmingham

PJ MASKS Use all your creative skills and creature knowledge to help the PJ Masks avert disaster in the deep, until Sun 1 Mar, National Sea Life Centre, Birmingham

FEBRUARY FUTURES HALF TERM Activities aimed at encouraging children to investigate what the cars of their future might look like, until Sun 1 Mar, British Motor Museum, Gaydon

THE NATIONAL WEDDING SHOW Meet with 200-plus wedding specialists, until Sun 1 Mar, NEC, Birmingham

MR CADBURY'S PARROT MINI-EGG SHOW Help Mr Cadbury's Parrot find out who's been after his precious treats, until Sun 29 Mar, Cadbury World, Bournville, Birmingham

CINEMA POSTER SALE Seize the chance to own a piece of MAC cinema history, with hundreds of posters available to purchase, Sun 1 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

THE ORIGINAL HARLEM GLOBETROTTERS The world's most famous basketball team is back, Mon 2 Mar, Arena Birmingham

HAWK WALK Enjoy a private ramble through historic woodland, formal gardens and footpaths, while trained hawks fly overhead, Tues 3 Mar, Witley Court, Worcestershire

MINI MUSEUM ENGINEERS | CHAIN RE-

ACTIONS Investigate open-ended play stations while playing with and learning about STEM concepts (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths), Wed 4 Mar, Coventry Transport Museum

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY: A WOMAN'S WORK TOUR Special tour focusing on the women at Aston Hall. In celebration of International Women's Day, Wed 4 - Thurs 5 Mar, Aston Hall, Birmingham

WORLD BOOK DAY | MINI MUSEUM ENGINEERS ON TOUR The British Motor Museum's Mini Museum Engineers travel to the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Thurs 5 Mar, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry

MINI MAKERS Babies and toddlers can explore a number of materials across the sessions, including paint, glitter, paste, sand, clay, slimy spaghetti and chalk, Thurs 5 Mar, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry

WORLD BOOK DAY Celebrate World Book Day with a retelling of Eric Carle's classic children's story, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, Thurs 5 Mar, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry

CRUFTS & BEST IN SHOW 2020 Organised by the Kennel Club, the show celebrates the role dogs play in their owners' lives, Thurs 5 - Sun 8 Mar, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

ENGINUITY EXPLORERS New monthly activity club for children aged two to fives, Fri 6 Mar, Enginuity Museum, Ironbridge, Shropshire

FAMILY SATURDAYS: THIS MAKES THAT WITH THESE | OBJECT STORIES: STOP MOTION ANIMATION Explore teamwork and storytelling skills to recount the tale of a group of broken gadgets, Sat 7 Mar, Coventry Transport Museum

TREASURED TALES: THE HERBERT WIVES Join Victoria Northridge as she explores the lives of the three women who married Alfred Herbert, Sat 7 Mar, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry

GHOST TOURS Exclusive opportunity to venture into the Hall at night - so prepare for a scare, Sat 7 Mar, Aston Hall, Birmingham

BRITISH SCIENCE WEEK CELEBRATION: MEET THE OCTONAUTS! Kids' TV favourites Captain Barnacles and Kwazii pay a visit, Sat 7 - Sun 8 Mar, Thinktank Science Museum, B'ham

JIGSAW FESTIVAL 2020 Featuring hundreds of for-sale jigsaws, with all money raised going to vital conservation work at Coughton, Sat 7 - Sun 15 Mar, Coughton Court, Alcester

WEDDING FAYRE Meet suppliers, book a viewing, pick up your goody bag and discuss your big day with the experts, Sun 8 Mar, Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove

V O S S E V E N T S P R E S E N T S



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Gigs

DECLAN J DONOVAN Mon 9 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

JAZZ CONNECTIVE: ASHLEY ALLEN, ROSIE TEE AND ANNE QUILLER Tues 10 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

GAFFA TAPE SANDY + BEACH RIOT Tues 10 Mar, Dead Wax, Birmingham

TURNOVER Wed 11 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

CLANNAD Wed 11 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE TRIALS OF CATO Wed 11 Mar, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

ABBA FOREVER Wed 11 Mar - Thurs 12 Mar, Swan Theatre, Worcester

PHIL X & THE DRILLS Thurs 12 Mar, O2 Academy, Birmingham

A ROCK N ROLL SUICIDE! STILL ALIVE? Thurs 12 Mar, Marr's Bar, Worcester

JAX JONES Thurs 12 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

AN EVENING WITH JOHN ILLSLEY ABOUT THE LIFE AND TIMES OF DIRE STRAITS Thurs 12 Mar, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

SWAMPMEAT FAMILY BAND SXS Thurs 12 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

FUNDRAISER Thurs 12 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

KISSSTORY PRESENTS THE BLAST OFF! TOUR Thurs 12 Mar, Resorts

World Arena, B'ham

MARTIN TURNER: WISH-BONE GOLD Thurs 12 Mar, Artrix, Bromsgrove

GHETTS Fri 13 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

SHAWN JAMES Fri 13 Mar, Deadwax, Digbeth, Birmingham

TORI KELLY Fri 13 Mar, O2 Institute, B'ham

NORTHERN LIVE DO I LOVE YOU Fri 13 Mar, Bedworth Civic Hall

CLARK TRACEY Fri 13 Mar, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

MOTORHEADACHE - THE ULTIMATE TRIBUTE TO MOTORHEAD AND LEMMY Fri 13 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

CATAPULT CLUB FEAT. THE MOOD Fri 13 Mar, O2 Academy, B'ham

UNCOVER: THE EARNEST SPEARS 1ST BIRTHDAY Fri 13 Mar, Marr's Bar, Worcester

GRAND MAGUS Fri 13 Mar, The Asylum, Birmingham

RICHARD DIGANCE Fri 13 Mar, Palace Theatre, Redditch

KEITH TIPPETT & MATTHEW BOURNE Fri 13 Mar, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

CRAIG CHARLES (DJ SET) Fri 13 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

STIFF LITTLE FINGERS Sat 14 Mar, O2 Academy, Birmingham

LICE Sat 14 Mar, Deadwax, Digbeth, B'ham

SEVERN ARTS YOUNG

MUSICIANS PLATFORM Sat 14 Mar, Palace Theatre, Redditch

LONDON CALLING: SANDINISTA 40TH ANNIVERSARY Sat 14 Mar, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

THE SOUTHMARTINS Sat 14 Mar, O2 Academy, Birmingham

RAYMOND FROGGATT ACOUSTIC Sat 14 Mar, The Core Theatre, Solihull

THE UPBEAT BEATLES Sat 14 Mar, Bedworth Civic Hall

NORTHERN SOUL Sat 14 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

SEVEN DRUNKEN NIGHTS Sat 14 Mar, Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

IZZIE DERRY Sat 14 Mar, The Tin Music And Arts, Canal Basin, Coventry

90S LEGENDS Sat 14 Mar, Artrix, Bromsgrove

UPROAR: THE LASER SPECTACULAR 2 Sat 14 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

FROM THE JAM Sat 14 Mar, The Assembly, Leamington Spa

LES BARKER Sat 14 Mar, The Fleece Inn, Bretforton, Nr Evesham

THE MACHINE RAGES ON / LIBERTY ARTILLERY Sat 14 Mar, Marr's Bar, Worcester

JAMIE CULLUM Sun 15 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE DUBLIN LEGENDS Sun 15 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

Classical & Easy Listening

LUNCHTIME ORGAN CONCERT WITH THOMAS TROTTER Programme includes works by Mathias, Vaughan-Williams, W.T. Best & Stanford, Mon 9 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

SWIFT TRIO Featuring Eleanor Tomlinson, Helen Herbert & Kate Allsop (recorders). Programme includes works by Maarten Benschop, Christopher Tye, Fang Fang, Telemann & Nachum Heym arr. Michael Wolpe, Mon 9 Mar, Recital Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

PRE-CBSO CONCERT SHOWCASE Featuring Olga Eckert & Malfalda Galante (violins), Maria João Antunes (viola), Griffith Wadkin (cello) & Beth Haughan (piano). Programme comprises Dvorak's Piano Quintet in A, Tues 10 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CBSO: BARTOK & BRUCKNER Featuring Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla (conductor) & Piotr Anderszewski (piano), Tues 10 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

COULL QUARTET: NEW WORLDS FROM OLD Featuring Roger Coull & Philip Galloway (violins), Jonathan Barritt (viola) & Nick Roberts (cello). Programme includes works by Beethoven, Tippett & Mendelssohn, Thurs 12 Mar, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

JESS GILLAM SAXOPHONE RECITAL Also featuring Zeynep Özsuca (piano). Programme includes works by Graham Fitkin, John Harle and Gavina Bryars, Thurs 12 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

WORBEY & FARRELL Performance by two internationally acclaimed concert pianists. Arrangements include Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue, Queen's Bohemian Rhapsody, an hilarious take on Prokofiev's Peter and the Wolf and Addinsell's iconic Warsaw Concerto, Fri 13 Mar, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

BACH'S ST MATTHEW PASSION Presented by Malvern Festival Chorus, Sat 14 Mar, Worcester Cathedral

LONDON CONCERT ORCHESTRA: CARMINA BURANA Featuring Adrian Lucas (conductor), Ailish Tynan (soprano), Oliver Johnston (tenor), William Dazeley (baritone), City of Birmingham Choir & Winchester College Quiristers Children's chorus, Sat 14 Mar, Symphony Hall, B'ham

WARWICKSHIRE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA Featuring Richard Coull (conductor) & Zoë Beyers (violin). Programme includes works by Khachaturian & Shostakovich, Sat 14 Mar, All Saints' Church, Leamington Spa

ENGLISH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA Featuring Maja Bogdanovic (cello) &

Kenneth Woods (conductor). Programme includes works by Adrian Williams, Haydn, Beethoven, Sat 14 Mar, Great Malvern Priory, Malvern

ENSEMBLE 360 Programme comprises Mozart's Horn Quintet in E flat K407; String Quintet in C K515 & Clarinet Quintet in A K581, Sun 15 Mar, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

CHANDOS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA Featuring Michael Lloyd (conductor) & Alison Roddy (soloist). Programme includes works by Brahms, Britten & Mahler, Sun 15 Mar, Malvern Theatres

Comedy

IVO GRAHAM Tues 10 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

SIMON EVANS Wed 11 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JOHN SHUTTLEWORTH Wed 11 Mar, Artrix, Bromsgrove

GARRETT MILLERICK Thurs 12 Mar, The REP, Birmingham

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON & COMIC TBC Thurs 12 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JOHN SHUTTLEWORTH Thurs 12 Mar, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

STEWART LEE Thurs 12 - Fri 13 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

RACHEL FAIRBURN Fri 13 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

DANNY MCLOUGHLIN, PHIL JERROD, ANGELOS EPITHEMIU & COMIC TBC Fri 13 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

FOIL, ARMS & HOG Fri 13 Mar, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

GEOFF BOYZ, STEVE HALL, AARON SIMMONS & DAVE LONGLEY Sat 14 Mar, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

ED BYRNE Sat 14 Mar, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

THE NOISE NEXT DOOR Sat 14 Mar, Bridge House Theatre, Warwick

JESSICA FOSTEKUW Sun 15 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

Theatre

SEEDS The story of two mothers united in sorrow and sharing the hardship of protecting their sons - one in life, one in death, Mon 9 - Tues 10 Mar, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

AUGMENTED Sophie Woolley's brand new play is a personal story about the joy and conflict of being able to hear again after years of total deafness, Mon 9 - Wed 11 Mar, The REP, Birmingham

LIKE THERE'S NO TOMORROW Production giving voice to young people's



The Trials Of Cato - Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

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concerns about the climate, Mon 9 - Sat 14 Mar, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

OUR HOUSE Amateur production by Kidderminster Operatic & Dramatic Society, Mon 9 - Sat 14 Mar, The Rose Theatre, Kidderminster

THE MAN WHO LEFT IS NOT THE MAN WHO CAME HOME Kevin Dyer's new play explores the impact of war on the wives and families of members of the armed forces, Tues 10 Mar, Swan Theatre, Worcester

LOUDER IS NOT ALWAYS CLEARER Humorous and moving story about one man's attempt to cope, fit in and be accepted, Tues 10 - Wed 11 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

MOVING BODIES One-man show combining storytelling with old wartime songs and an original soundscape to tell a darkly comic, heart-wrenching story, Tues 10 - Wed 11 Mar, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

ANNIE THE MUSICAL Amateur staging presented by Knowle Musical Society, Tues 10 - Sat 14 Mar, The Core Theatre, Solihull

ONCE Hit musical described as 'a ravishing love story with a bittersweet difference', Tues 10 - Sat 14 Mar, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

POET IN DA CORNER Coming-of-age story inspired by Dizzee Rascal's seminal album, Tues 10 - Sat 14 Mar, Birmingham Repertory Theatre

SIX Acclaimed new musical in which the six wives of Henry VIII tell their stories... Tues 10 - Sat 14 Mar, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF? Melting Pot Theatre Company present Edward Albee's American classic, Tues 10 - Sat 14 Mar, Malvern Theatres

ENTER STAGE WRITE Transition Stage Company celebrate new writing, Wed 11 Mar, Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

WHAT'S IN A NAME? Egos, childish resentment and unspoken feelings rise to the surface in Jeremy Sams' comedy, Wed 11 - Sat 14 Mar, The Alexandra, Birmingham

ORPHEUS IN THE UNDERWORLD Offenbach's romp through Greek mythology, Wed 11 - Sat 14 Mar, Palace Theatre, Redditch

TOM N ROB: BREAK FREE A 'captivating' duet of comedic dance theatre and choice songs... Thurs 12 Mar, Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

BEST OF BE FESTIVAL Companies from Belgium, Switzerland and Hungary showcase snapshots of storytelling, dance and physical theatre in three 30-minute shows, Thurs 12 Mar, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

ALI BABA AND THE BONGO BANDITS Amateur staging presented by Warwick Academy Primary, Thurs 12 - Fri 13

Mar, Bridge House Theatre, Warwick
ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY Qweerdog Theatre's debut play explores the relationship between two brothers and their friend, Thurs 12 - Sat 14 Mar, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

MY NIGHT WITH REG Kevin Elyot's award-winning exploration of friendship, happiness and love in the shadow of the 1980s' AIDS crisis, Thurs 12 - Sat 14 Mar, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

ANNIE JR Abridged version of the much-loved family musical, Thurs 12 - Sat 14 Mar, Talisman Theatre & Arts Centre, Kenilworth

3 HAIL MARY'S Comedy featuring 'rousing sing-songs, twists and a few major surprises', Fri 13 Mar, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

CLIVE ANDERSON: ME, MACBETH & I One-man show promising to be 'funnier than Shakespeare's greatest tragedy', Fri 13 Mar, Artrix, Bromsgrove

IDOL - JAMAL GERALD A 'daring and unapologetic' examination of religion, pop culture and Black representation, Fri 13 - Sat 14 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

BRASSED OFF Amateur version by Evesham Operatic Dramatic Society, Fri 13 - Sat 14 Mar, Evesham Arts Centre

JAMBOREE Oily Cart present a vibrant piece of gig-theatre made for and with teenagers who have profound and multiple disabilities, Sat 14 Mar, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

THE MARISHA WALLACE TOUR An evening with one of the West End and Broadway's most highly acclaimed leading ladies, Sat 14 Mar, Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

TUESDAY Alison Carr's story of an ordinary Tuesday that turns very strange when a tear rips the sky over a schoolyard, Sat 14 Mar, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

WESTENDERS: THE WORLD'S GREATEST MUSICALS Featuring iconic numbers from The Phantom Of The Opera, Mamma Mia!, The Lion King, Chicago, Blood Brothers, Hamilton and more... Sat 14 Mar, Swan Theatre, Worcester

LOVESONG Amateur staging of Abi Morgan's haunting and beautiful tale of togetherness, Sat 14 - Sat 21 Mar, Criterion Theatre, Coventry

Cabaret

A BLACK COUNTRY NIGHT OUT Variety show featuring vocal & comedy duo Dandy, comedian Ollie Spencer, musician Joe Thomas, and original Fitzog Emma Rollason paying tribute to Black Country comedienne Dolly Allen, Fri 13 Mar, Swan Theatre, Worcester

Dance

HAVANA NIGHTS Mix of Latin dances, with individual performances from Graziano Di Prima and Giada Lini, as well as group numbers alongside a cast of supporting dancers, Fri 13 Mar, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa



AKADEMY DANCE COMPANY: CHAPTER 2 Showcasing 28 routines using a variety of dance styles, Sat 14 Mar, Warwick Hall

Talks

AN EVENING WITH FRANKIE BRIDGE: OPEN Join the ex-member of The Saturdays as she talks about her battle with mental illness... Mon 9 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

SLAUGHTERING THE SACRED COWS Dynamic event examining current issues relating to the challenges and opportunities of Disability Arts, Wed 11 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

AN EVENING WITH SARAH J MASS Special event celebrating the launch of House Of Earth And Blood - the first book in Sarah's first-ever adult series, Crescent City, Fri 13 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

TCHAIKOVSKY: THE MAN REVEALED John Suchet explores the complexity of Tchaikovsky's emotional life and how it plays out in his music, Fri 13 Mar, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

PETE WHITTAKER: SOLO & FREE Join Pete as he talks about the subculture of underground crack climbing... Sat 14 Mar, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

A STRANGE BIT OF HISTORY Comedian Omid Djalili returns to one of his earliest stage creations, a rich and entertaining storytelling piece recounting mystical experiences, astonishing claims, adventures and tragedies, Sun 15 Mar, The Core Theatre, Solihull

Events

LIBRARY STEM LABORATORY - REVEALING FINGERPRINTS Learn how every person's fingerprints are different and how they can be used to identify individuals, in particular those who've left fingerprints behind at the scene of a crime, Tues 10 Mar, The Hive,

Worcester

BRINGING SCIENCE TO LIFE - FAMILY SHOW Featuring 'surprising experiments, shocking science facts and some big demonstrations', Tues 10 Mar, The Hive, Worcester

ADULT NIGHT Use the facilities of Legoland and enjoy some creative play sessions, Wed 11 Mar, Legoland Discovery Centre, Birmingham

GUIDED TOUR: HERITAGE AND HISTORY OF THE BIRMINGHAM BOTANICAL GARDENS Learn more about how the Gardens were designed, the history of the Victorian glasshouses and how the visitor attraction has evolved over time, Wed 11 Mar, Birmingham Botanical Gardens

MINI MUSEUM ENGINEERS | GEARS GEARS GEARS Play with and explore gears and cogs as you figure out how to get things moving, Wed 11 Mar, Coventry Transport Museum

THE BIG BANG FAIR 2020 Featuring theatre shows, interactive workshops & exhibits, and careers information from STEM professionals, Wed 11 - Sat 14 Mar, NEC, Birmingham

YONEX ALL ENGLAND OPEN BADMINTON CHAMPIONSHIPS 2020 Showcasing the best of badminton, the championship returns for the 110th time, Wed 11 - Sun 15 Mar, Arena Birmingham

THE UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM'S ARTS & SCIENCE FESTIVAL Week-long celebration of research, culture and collaboration, Wed 11 - Tues 17 Mar, The University of Birmingham

PAINT POTS AND SPARKLES Chance to explore colours and textures using paint, clay and collage materials, Thurs 12 Mar, Worcester City Museum & Art Gallery

UPTON UPON SEVERN SPRING FLING New festival covering a wide variety of music, from solo acoustic acts to five-piece bands, Fri 13 - Sun 15 Mar, Upton-upon-Severn, Worcestershire

LEGO WEEKEND WORKSHOP Take part in a range of Lego-themed activities, Sat 14 - Sun 15 Mar, Thinktank Science Museum, Birmingham

THE PHOTOGRAPHY & THE VIDEO SHOW Try out the latest kit and listen to talks by legendary photographers and filmmakers, Sat 14 - Tues 17 Mar, NEC, Birmingham

TROLL-TASTIC ADVENTURE Whether you're a pop diva or a rock god, prepare for the Discovery Centre's Troll-tastic Adventure, Sat 14 Mar - Sun 10 May, Legoland Discovery Centre, Birmingham

VIP RECORD FAIR Buy or sell your vinyl record - from punk rock and hard rock to hip hop and Brit Pop, Sun 15 Mar, FarGo Village, Coventry

DONINGTON STAGE RALLY The rally launches the 2020 motorsport season at Donington Park, Sun 15 Mar, Donington Park, Castle Donnington

Gigs

LOUISE REDKNAPP Mon 16 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

JON WILKS: MIDLIFE Mon 16 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre, B'ham

PALACE Tues 17 Mar, O2 Institute, B'ham

JIM MORAY Tues 17 Mar, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

HAK BAKER Tues 17 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

WARMDUSCHER + DUF Tues 17 Mar, The Tin Music And Arts, Canal Basin, Coventry

THE REGRETTES Wed 18 Mar, O2 Academy, Birmingham

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS Wed 18 Mar, Palace Theatre, Redditch

ELVIS COSTELLO & THE IMPOSTERS Wed 18 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

NF - THE SEARCH TOUR Wed 18 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

KIDA KUDZ Wed 18 Mar, O2 Institute, B'ham

HOME FREE - DIVE BAR SAINTS WORLD TOUR Thurs 19 Mar, O2 Academy, Birmingham

TWINNIE Thurs 19 Mar, O2 Academy, B'ham

MERRILL OSMOND Thurs 19 Mar, Pizza Express Live, B'ham

THE HYPNOTICS / BLACK BOMBERS Thurs 19 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

CIGARETTE SOCIAL CLUB Thurs 19 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT Thurs 19 Mar, Arena Birmingham

HIGHLY SUSPECT Thurs 19 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

CATAPULT CLUB FEAT. THE LAST ROGUES Fri 20 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

CARPENTERS GOLD Fri 20 Mar, Palace Theatre, Redditch

DIO - A TRIBUTE TO RONNIE JAMES DIO Fri 20 Mar, Marr's Bar, Worcester



Iona Lane - Artrix, Bromsgrove

HOLY YOUTH MOVEMENT Fri 20 Mar, Dead Wax, Birmingham

BOILER ROOM PRES, BASS & PERCS: BIRMINGHAM Fri 20 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

BOOTLEG BEATLES Fri 20 Mar, Malvern Theatres

SOMEONE LIKE YOU - THE ADELE SONGBOOK Fri 20 Mar, The Core Theatre, Solihull

IN THE MOMENT PRESENTS: JOE O'DONNELL'S SHKAYLA Fri 20 Mar, The Tin Music And Arts, Canal Basin, Coventry

THE TRAVELLING WILBURYS SONGBOOK Fri 20 Mar, Bedworth Civic Hall

IONA LANE Fri 20 Mar, Artrix, Bromsgrove

SKULL FOX Sat 21 Mar, O2 Academy, B'ham

LEE SCRATCH PERRY Sat 21 Mar, O2 Academy, Birmingham

80'S MANIA Sat 21 Mar, Palace Theatre, Redditch

TWISTIN' THE NIGHT AWAY WITH SI CRANSTOUN Sat 21 Mar, The Core Theatre, Solihull

UK PINK FLOYD EXPERIENCE Sat 21 Mar, Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

WHOLE LOTTA LED Sat 21 Mar, Swan Theatre, Worcester

THE DARK SIDE OF PINK FLOYD Sat 21 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

lands Arts Centre, Birmingham

POUT! Sat 21 Mar, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

LEE SCRATCH PERRY Sat 21 Mar, O2 Academy, Birmingham

MARTIN KEMP: THE ULTIMATE BACK TO THE 80S Sat 21 Mar, The Assembly, Leamington Spa

JIVE TALKIN Sat 21 Mar, Albany Theatre, Coventry

YELAWOLF Sat 21 Mar, O2 Institute, B'ham

SOUL MANIFESTO Sat 21 Mar, Artrix, Bromsgrove

DANNY WORSNOP Sat 21 Mar, The Asylum, Birmingham

REWS Sat 21 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

JAMES TAYLOR QUARTET Sat 21 Mar, Marr's Bar, Worcester

GRACE CARTER Sun 22 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

FLEECEY FOLK: RAY COOPER Sun 22 Mar, The Fleece Inn, Bretforton, Nr Evesham

NORDIC GIANTS Sun 22 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

SHREYA GHOSHAL LIVE 2020 Sun 22 Mar, Arena Birmingham

BUDDY HOLLY & THE CRICKETERS Sun 22 Mar, Evesham Arts Centre

REAL LIES Sun 22 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

Classical & Easy Listening

MALVERN CONCERT CLUB: ENGLAND'S ORPHEUS Featuring Lestyn Davies & Thomas Dunford (soloists). Programme includes works by Dowland, Purcell, Bach & Handel, Wed 19 Mar, Malvern Theatres

OPERA NORTH: ARYA SITAR CONCERTO A unique evening of Sitar, orchestral & choral music, Thurs 19 Mar, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

FOSTER & ALLEN Thurs 19 Mar, The Core Theatre, Solihull

PRAŽAK STRING QUARTET Programme includes works by Haydn, Dvorak & Karel Janovicky, Fri 20 Mar, Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington Spa

FITZWILLIAM STRING QUARTET Featuring Lucy Russell & Andrew Roberts (violins), Alan George (viola) & Sally Pendelbury (cello). Programme includes works by Wolf, Shostakovich & Beethoven, Fri 20 Mar, Artrix, Bromsgrove

ORCHESTRA OF THE SWAN: PETITE SYMPHONIE Featuring works by Schubert, Gounod & Mozart, Fri 20 Mar, Number 8, Pershore

ACADEMY OF ANCIENT MUSIC: HANDEL'S HEROINES Featuring Mary Bevan & Jennifer France (sopranos) & Laurence Cummings (director/harpsichord), Sat 21 Mar, Malvern Theatres

BOURNEMOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: ELEKTRA Featuring Kirill Karabits (conductor) & Catherine Foster (Elektra) Sat 21 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

WORCESTER FESTIVAL CHORAL SOCIETY: A SEA SYMPHONY Featuring Sarah Fox (soprano), Jullien Van Mellaerts (baritone) & Samuel Hudson (conductor). Programme includes works by Britten & Mendelssohn, Sat 21 Mar, Worcester Cathedral

BIRMINGHAM PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA CONCERTO PRIZE Featuring Michael Lloyd (conductor). Programme includes works by Rachmaninov, Shostakovich & Krommer, Sun 22 Mar, The Bradshaw Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM MUSIC SOCIETY: VERDI'S MESSA DA REQUIEM Featuring Philharmonic Orchestra and University Chorus, Daniele Rosina (conductor), Julian Wilkins (chorus master) & Gweneth Ann Rand (soprano), Sun 22 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

Comedy

TEO, VIO & COSTEL Mon 16 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

SUKH OJLA Mon 16 Mar, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry



GARY DELANEY Wed 18 Mar, Artrix, Bromsgrove

LLOYD GRIFFITH Wed 18 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

MIKE BUBBINS, KEITH FARNAN & COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON Thurs 19 Mar, The Glee Club, B'ham

ALFIE BROWN Fri 20 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

NJAMBI MCGRATH Fri 20 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

ROB AUTON Fri 20 Mar, The REP, Birmingham

MIKE BUBBINS, KEITH FARNAN, JOSH BAULF & COMIC TBC Fri 20 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

CHRISTIAN REILLY, PETER BUSH, STEFANO PAOLINI & PETE OTWAY Sat 21 Mar, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

BARNSTORMERS COMEDY NIGHT FEAT. MC KEVIN SHEPHERD Sat 21 Mar, Artrix, Bromsgrove

MIKE BUBBINS, KEITH FARNAN & COMICS TBC Sat 21 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ROUGH WORKS Sun 22 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

FAMILY COMEDY SHOW Sun 22 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

SHAZIA MIRZA, MAUREEN YOUNGER & ANNETTE FAGON Sun 22 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ADAM KAY Sun 22 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

EVERYBODY'S TALKING ABOUT JAMIE Layton Williams, Shobna Gulati & Shane Richie star in this 'funny, fabulous and feelgood' musical sensation, Mon 16 - Sat 21 Mar, The Alexandra, Birmingham

MY MOTHER SAID I NEVER SHOULD A moving and funny exploration of the lives of four generations of women in one family, Mon 16 - Wed 18 Mar, Birmingham Repertory Theatre

THE CHILDREN Lucy Kirkwood's thought-provoking play, Mon 16 - Sat 21 Mar, The Loft Theatre Company, Leamington Spa

WANTED Gazebo Theatre explores

the stories of five ordinary yet extraordinary women who share a passion for standing up for what they feel is right, Tues 17 Mar, The Core Theatre, Solihull

THE TWISTED TALE OF HANSEL & GRETEL Imaginative version of the Brothers Grimm classic, Tues 17 - Thurs 19 Mar, The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

ON YOUR FEET! Smash-hit musical inspired by the true love story of Emilio and Gloria Estefan... Tues 17 - Sat 21 Mar, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

BLOOD BROTHERS Lyn Paul stars as Mrs Johnstone in Willy Russell's iconic play, Tues 17 - Sat 21 Mar, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

SIX DEAD QUEENS AND AN INFLATABLE HENRY History & comedy combine in a tale of three Catherine's, two Annes and one Jane - the ill fated wives of Henry VIII, Tues 17 - Sat 21 Mar, Rugby Theatre

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS 2020 Choreographed musical journey through the '50s, '60s & '70s, Wed 18 Mar, Palace Theatre, Redditch

THREE PIECE SWEET Teatro present a triple-bill of 'hilarious, fascinating and thought-provoking plays', Wed 18 Mar, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

VOLPONE Tangled Theatre present Ben Jonson's classic satire of cunning and greed, Wed 18 - Sat 21 Mar, The Bear Pitt Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

MEDEA The Young Rep presents its version of Euripides' ancient Greek tragedy, Wed 18 - Sat 21 Mar, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

ANNIE THE MUSICAL Stratford Musical Theatre Company present an amateur version of the much-loved family musical, Wed 18 - Sun 22 Mar, Stratford Playhouse, Stratford-upon-Avon

MURDER WITH GHOSTS A play which sends up, and adds a new ghostly twist to, the popular Agatha Christie-style stage whodunnit, Thurs 19 - Sat 21 Mar, The Dovehouse Theatre, Solihull

A BUNCH OF AMATEURS Presented by The Norbury Players, Thurs 19 - Sat 21 Mar, Norbury Theatre, Droitwich

MAN ON THE MOON - KEISHA THOMPSON A journey through space and time, fuelled by love, fear and Afro-futurism, Fri 20 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

GRIMM TALES Priory Youth Theatre presents its version of Philip Pullman's classic fairytales, Fri 20 - Sun 22 Mar, Priory Theatre, Kenilworth

TARTUFFE Brummie comedy of faith, family & #fakingit, Fri 20 Mar - Sat 4 Apr, The REP, Birmingham

THE NAVY LARK A cast of three bring to life the classic days of radio comedy, Sat 21 Mar, Palace Theatre, Redditch

IMAGINATION A performance by KRYPT's Junior Group in two halves, featuring Ernie's Incredible Illusions by Alan Ayckbourn and a devised piece exploring the way the world looks through the eyes of imagination, Sat 21 - Sun 22 Mar, The Rose Theatre, Kidderminster

BESIDE THE SEA Planet Dance present a dance & musical theatre show for all the family, Sun 22 Mar, The Core Theatre, Solihull

LAST OF THE SUMMER WINE Impressionist Julian Dutton brings three episodes of the classic sitcom to life, Sun 22 Mar, The Bear Pitt Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

Kids Shows

THERE WAS AN OLD LADY WHO SWALLOWED A FLY The People's Theatre Company bring one of the world's best-loved nursery rhymes to life, Sun 22 Mar, Albany Theatre, Coventry



Dance

HAVANA NIGHTS Mix of Latin dances, with individual performances from Graziano Di Prima and Giada Lini, as well as group numbers alongside a cast of supporting dancers, Tues 17 Mar, Cheltenham Town Hall

BOTIS SEVA: BLKDOG Genre-defying blend of hip-hop dance and free-form antics, Thurs 19 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

GISELLE Ballet Theatre UK presents its version of one of the greatest ballets of all time, Thurs 19 Mar, Palace Theatre, Redditch

BALLROOM BOYS Brand new show featuring Strictly Come Dancing stars Ian Waite & Vincent Simone, Thurs 19 - Fri 20 Mar, Swan Theatre, Worcester

Talks

ALEXIS CHABALA AND LORAYNE CRAWFORD: ARTIST CURATOR TALK AND TOUR Join Alexis & Lorayne as they share their experiences of working with some of music's most influential

artists, Wed 18 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

BATTLE OF THE BALTIC A vivid account of the Royal Navy's battle to secure the freedom of the Baltic states and save the region from Bolshevik terror and German hegemony, Wed 18 Mar, The Hive, Worcester

Film

INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

THE TWO POPES (12a) Biography/Comedy. Starring Anthony Hopkins, Jonathan Pryce. Number 8, Pershore, Mon 16 Mar

AIRPLANE! (12a) Comedy. Starring Robert Hays, Leslie Nielsen. Abbey Theatre, Nuneaton, Tues 17 Mar

GHOST (12a) Fantasy/Romance. Starring Patrick Swayze, Demi Moore. Abbey Theatre, Nuneaton, Wed 18 Mar

THE LIGHTHOUSE (15) Fantasy/Horror. Starring Robert Pattinson, Willem Dafoe. The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Wed 18 - Thurs 19 Mar

GLADIATOR (12a) Action/Adventure. Starring Russell Crowe, Joaquin Phoenix. Abbey Theatre, Nuneaton, Thurs 19 Mar

JOJO RABBIT (12a) Comedy/Drama. Starring Roman Griffin Davis, Thomasin McKenzie. Number 8, Pershore, Thurs 19 Mar

LITTLE JOE (12a) Drama/Sci-Fi. Starring Emily Beecham, Ben Whishaw. The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Fri 20 & Tues 24 Mar

THE CALL OF THE WILD (PG) Adventure/Drama. Starring Karen Gillan, Harrison Ford. The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Fri 20, Sun 22 & Thurs 26 Mar; Number 8, Pershore, Mon 30 - Tues 31 Mar

Events

MINI MOTORISTS MONDAYS Be musical in the museum and join in the first ever Mini Motorists singalong, Mon 16 Mar, British Motor Museum, Gaydon

THE SECRET LIVES OF EARLY PRINTED BOOKS Discover the unique features of early printed books and how previous owners marked their ownership, Mon 16 Mar, The Shakespeare Centre, Stratford-upon-Avon

MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM STORY-WALK Part of Shakespeare Week events in Worcester, Mon 16 - Sun 22 Mar, The Hive, Worcester

MAGICAL MAKE AND TAKE Make a wish and create a Midsummer Night's Dream in a jar. Part of Shakespeare Week events in Worcester, Mon 16 - Sun 22 Mar, The Hive, Worcester

CURATOR'S CHOICE: DRESSED TO THE

NINES Join Dr Rebecca Unsworth, Research Assistant (Decorative Art) and curator of the Dressed To The Nines exhibition, for an informal gallery talk, Wed 18 Mar, Birmingham Museum And Art Gallery

MINI MUSEUM ENGINEERS | TRAVELLING THE WORLD How would you travel the world - by ship, on a bicycle or in a car? Play with maps and transport, Wed 18 Mar, Coventry Transport Museum

SEWING FOR PLEASURE INCLUDING FASHION & EMBROIDERY Featuring all the latest supplies and ideas, including fabrics, yarns, patterns and threads, Thurs 19 - Sun 22 Mar, NEC, Birmingham

THE CREATIVE CRAFT SHOW Whatever your passion, be it knitting, cross stitch, paper crafting, jewellery, dress-making, felting or new craft trends, there's sure to be something to your liking, Thurs 19 - Sun 22 Mar, NEC, Birmingham

INDEPENDENT GIN FESTIVAL Get 'up close and personal' with your favourite independent gin companies, Fri 20 - Sat 21 Mar, FarGo Village, Coventry

DYSLEXIA SHOW The UK's biggest national exhibition for dyslexia, Fri 20 - Sat 21 Mar, NEC, Birmingham

SHAKESPEARE WEEK SUPER SATURDAY Featuring Horrible Histories illustrator Martin Brown, Ricky Martin from BBC's Art Ninja, and author and illustrator Marcia Williams, Sat 21 Mar, Shakespeare's Birthplace, Stratford-upon-Avon

BANFF MOUNTAIN FILM FESTIVAL WORLD TOUR 2020 New collection of short films, Sat 21 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

MINIATURA - THE DOLLS HOUSE SHOW Specialist modelling show dedicated to model houses and all that goes in them, Sat 21 - Sun 22 Mar, NEC, Birmingham

SHAKESPEARE WEEK ART SCHOOL Try your hand at arts & crafts at Shakespeare's Family Homes, Sat 21 - Sun 22 Mar, Shakespeare's Birthplace, Stratford-upon-Avon

MCM COMIC CON Whether you're a fan of comic books, cosplay, video games, anime, movies or books, MCM Birmingham 'has it all', Sat 21 - Sun 22 Mar, NEC, Birmingham

LIGHTS, CAMERA, CARS - PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP SPRING Transform your car photography with this workshop dedicated to developing your lighting skills, Sun 22 Mar, British Motor Museum, Gaydon

COVENTRY FESTIVAL OF RUNNING The Coventry Half Marathon returns as part of a week-long festival of running, Sun 22 Mar - Sun 5 Apr, Coventry City Centre



YONEX 2020 All England Open Badminton Championships

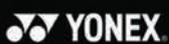


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Blossoms - O2 Academy, Birmingham

Gigs

I PREVAIL Tues 24 Mar, O2 Institute, B'ham

DIGDAT Tues 24 Mar, O2 Institute, B'ham

GRAHAM GOULDMAN - HEART FULL OF SONGS Tues 24 Mar, The Core Theatre, Solihull

PICTISH TRAIL Tues 24 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

NIMMO Tues 24 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

CIGARETTES AFTER SEX Wed 25 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

JIM BUCKLEY Wed 25 Mar, The Core Theatre, Solihull

HAGGARD CAT Wed 25 Mar, Deadwax, Digbeth, Birmingham

FEAST OF FIDDLES Wed 25 Mar, Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

COLIN THACKERY Wed 25 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

RAT BOY Thurs 26 Mar, O2 Academy, B'ham

THE SUBWAYS - YOUNG FOR ETERNITY Thurs 26 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

SLOTFACE Thurs 26 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

CLARK TRACEY Thurs 26 Mar, The Tin Music And Arts, Canal Basin, Coventry

JOHN ILLSLEY: THE LIFE & TIMES OF DIRE

STRAITS Thurs 26 Mar, Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

MR SAM & THE DED-NUTZ Thurs 26 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

DARCY OAKE Fri 27 Mar, O2 Academy, B'ham

DRINK YOUR MILK PRESENTS: CORTO.ALTO W/ DUKE KEATS Fri 27 Mar, The Tin Music And Arts, Canal Basin, Coventry

LUCY WAINWRIGHT ROCHE Fri 27 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

THE SOUNDS OF SIMON Fri 27 Mar, Evesham Arts Centre

THE ALARM Fri 27 Mar, O2 Institute, B'ham

BLOSSOMS Fri 27 Mar, O2 Academy, B'ham

STEVIE MAC Fri 27 Mar, Marr's Bar, Worcester

someone like you - THE ADELE SONGBOOK Fri 27 Mar, Palace Theatre, Redditch

LIGHTNING SEEDS Fri 27 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE SLOW READERS CLUB Sat 28 Mar, O2 Academy, Birmingham

JAMIE KNIGHT & THE BIG SWING BAND Sat 28 Mar, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

SATINDER SARTAAJ Sat 28 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

MUSED Sat 28 Mar, Marr's Bar, Worcester

THE SIXTIES INVASION

Sat 28 Mar, Palace Theatre, Redditch

KOJAY RADICAL Sat 28 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

DAVID GRAY Sat 28 Mar, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

someone like you - THE ADELE SONGBOOK Sat 28 Mar, Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

MIDLAND Sat 28 Mar, O2 Institute, B'ham

KEITH SWEAT AND MONTELL JORDAN Sun 29 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

GREENTEA PENG Sun 29 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

M HUNCHO Mon 30 Mar, O2 Academy, Birmingham

MAGNUM Mon 30 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

GZA - 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF LIQUID SWORDS Mon 30 Mar, O2 Institute, B'ham

WILLIAM DUVAL (OF ALICE IN CHAINS) Tues 31 Mar, O2 Academy, Birmingham

BARENAKED LADIES Tues 31 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

RODDY WOOMBLE Tues 31 Mar, The Tin Music And Arts, Canal Basin, Coventry

GOLDFRAPP Tues 31 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

NEON WALTZ Tues 31 Mar, Deadwax, Digbeth, Birmingham

Classical & Easy Listening

SIMON HÖFELE TRUMPET RECITAL Programme includes a new commission from Miroslav Srnka, Mon 23 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THOMAS TROTTER ORGAN RECITAL Also featuring Royal Birmingham Conservatoire Chamber Choir & Paul Spicer (conductor). Programme includes works by Howells, Elgar & Zoltan Kodály, Mon 23 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE ORLANDO CONSORT Featuring Matthew Venner (alto), Mark Dobell & Angus Smith (tenors) & Daniel Greig (baritone), Tues 24 Mar, St Mary's Church, Warwick

ORCHESTRA OF THE SWAN: UMPTEENTH VIOLIN CONCERTO Featuring Thomas Gould (violin) & Eckehard Stier (conductor). Programme includes works by Beethoven & Django Bates, Tues 24 Mar, Stratford Playhouse, Stratford-upon-Avon

TRIO VOLANT: A FRENCH FANCY Programme includes works by Francaix, Canteloube, Pierne, Milhaud & Mozart, Wed 25 Mar, Evesham Arts Centre

THE AVEX ENSEMBLE: BLADE RUNNER Thurs 26 Mar, Symphony Hall, B'ham

CBSO: 100 YEARS OF MOVIE MAGIC Featuring Michael Seal (conductor), Tommy Pearson (presenter) & Jonathan Martindale (violin). Programme includes works by Newman, Bliss, Steiner, Barry, Shore, Bernstein, Coates, Zimmer & more... Fri 27 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

ENGLISH STRING ORCHESTRA Featuring Zoë Beyers (violin) & Kenneth Woods (conductor). Programme includes works by Mozart, Weinberg, Doreen Carwithen (arr.Woods) & Tchaikovsky (arr.Woods), Fri 27 Mar, Routh Hall, Bromsgrove School, Bromsgrove

FINAL PROJECTS ORCHESTRA Featuring Daniel Rosina (conductor), Tom Gant (clarinet), Oliver Lin (piano), Charlotte Sleet (mezzo-soprano). Programme includes works by Nielsen, Ravel & Berio, Fri 27 Mar, The Bradshaw Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

ELGAR CHORALE: SPRING'S SWEET VOICE Also featuring Euodia Jordan & Piers Maxim (conductors). Programme includes works by Elgar, Fauré, Howard Blake & Herbert Sumsion, Sat 28 Mar, Lansdowne Crescent Methodist Church, Malvern

BIRMINGHAM GAY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: OTHER WORLDS Featuring Jack Lovell (conductor) & special guest mezzo-soprano. Programme includes works by Dvorak & Elgar, Sat 28 Mar, St Paul's Church, Birmingham

CHELTHENHAM BACH CHOIR: RACHMANINOV'S VESPER Also featuring David

Crown (conductor), Sat 28 Mar, Tewkesbury Abbey

SINGALONG WITH CBSO: VERDI'S REQUIEM Featuring Simon Halsey (conductor) Sat 28 - Sun 29 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE & FRIENDS Mon 30 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Comedy

MARK THOMAS Tues 24 Mar, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

MALCOLM STENT Tues 24 Mar, The Core Theatre, Solihull

ADAM ROWE, SIMON LOMAS, ANDREW BIRD & DAMION LARKIN Wed 25 Mar, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

ANDREW BIRD, JOHN MOLONEY & COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON Thurs 26 Mar, The Glee Club, B'ham

CATHERINE BOHART Fri 27 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

STEPHEN BAILEY Fri 27 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

TOM BINNS - THE PSYCHIC COMEDIUM FEATURING IVAN BRACKENBURY Fri 27 Mar, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

GEOFF NORCOTT Fri 27 Mar, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

ANDREW BIRD, JOHN MOLONEY, CHARLIE BAKER & COMIC TBC Fri 27 - Sat 28 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JACK DEE Sat 28 Mar, Malvern Theatres

SCOTT BENNETT, JOSH PUGH, JENNY COLLIER & DAVE LONGLEY Sat 28 Mar, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

STAND UP COMEDY SHOWCASE Sat 28 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre, B'ham

ROB NEWMAN Sat 28 Mar, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

Theatre

ONCE 'Ravishing love story with a bitersweet difference'. Mon 23 - Sat 28 Mar, Malvern Theatres

CRAZY FOR YOU LWMS present an amateur staging of Ira & George Gershwin's romantic musical, Tues 24 Mar, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

THE VICAR OF DIBLEY All & Sundry return to the nation's 'favourite village' to recreate three episodes of the popular TV series live on stage, Tues 24 - Sat 28 Mar, Artrix, Bromsgrove

BLOOD BROTHERS Willy Russell's story of twins who, separated at birth, grow up on opposite sides of the tracks, only to meet again with fateful consequences, Tues 24 - Sat 28 Mar, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

DUETS St John's Players present Peter Quilter's examination of the chaotic world of love, relationships and why the grass is never greener, Wed 25 - Sat 28 Mar, Swan Theatre, Worcester

BOUNCERS Take 5 Productions present an amateur staging of John Godber's parody of the nightclub scene, Wed 25 - Sat 28 Mar, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

THE HIGH TABLE Temi Wilkey's debut play - 'a heartbreaking family drama played out between the heavens and earth', Wed 25 Mar - Thurs 9 Apr, The REP, Birmingham

MENOPAUSE THE MUSICAL 2 Cheryl Ferguson, Nicole Barber-Lane, Rebecca Wheatley & Nicki French star in a 'heartfelt, reassuring and unflinching' look at the joys of menopause and friendship, Thurs 26 Mar, Malvern Theatres

BOTTOM Story about bums, Beyoncé and burnt fish fingers, Thurs 26 - Sat 28 Mar, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

URINETOWN Amateur staging by Birmingham Ormiston Academy Year 13 Musical Theatre, Thurs 26 - Sat 28 Mar, The Old Rep, Birmingham

THE MAN WHO LEFT IS NOT THE MAN WHO CAME HOME Kevin Dyer's new play exploring the impact of war on the wives and families of the armed forces, Fri 27 Mar, The Core Theatre, Solihull

AIDA The Russian State Opera present a new production of Verdi's classic work. Sung in Italian with English surtitles, Fri 27 Mar, Malvern Theatres

LA VOIX Expect 'side-splitting comedy, huge vocals, mesmerising impressions of the world's biggest divas and bucketfuls of energy', Fri 27 Mar, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

LORD OF THE FLIES The Young REP seniors present an amateur staging of William Golding's classic tale of isolation, power, identity and violence, Fri 27 Mar - Sat 28 Mar, The REP, Birmingham

FRIENDS! THE MUSICAL PARODY Good-hearted romp through favourite moments from the hit TV show, Sat 28 March, The Alexandra, Birmingham

THE WINTER'S TALE A moving new production which imagines 'a world where the ghosts of fascist Europe collide with the horrors of The Handmaid's Tale, before washing up on a joyful seashore', Sat 28 Mar - Fri 2 Oct, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

SARTAAJ LIVE An evening with songwriter, singer, composer, poet and actor Satinder Sartaaj, Sun 29 Mar, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

HEROES The Nonentities present Gerald Sibleyras' French comedy, Mon 30 Mar - Sat 4 Apr, The Rose Theatre, Kidderminster

BARNUM Peterbrook Players present their production about Phineus T Barnum - 'the world's greatest showman', Mon 30 Mar - Sat 4 Apr, The Core Theatre, Solihull

THE NAVY LARK A cast of three bring to life the classic days of radio comedy, Tues 31 Mar, The Old Rep, Birmingham

JEEVES AND WOOSTER IN PERFECT NON-SENSE Three actors race to tell the story of Bertie Wooster's farcical adventures, Tues 31 Mar, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

LADYKILLER Blood-soaked morality tale about victimhood... Tues 31 Mar - Thurs 2 Apr, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

CURTAINS Jason Manford stars in a 'hilarious whodunnit packed full of catchy songs, unforgettable characters and plot twists', Tues 31 Mar - Sat 4 Apr, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

THE WOMAN IN BLACK Stage adaptation of one of the world's most chilling tales, Tues 31 Mar - Sat 4 Apr, The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

MURDER, MARGARET AND ME 'Humour, thrills, sleuthing and pathos' combine in a unique play for lovers of crime fiction, Tues 31 Mar - Sat 4 Apr, The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

Variety

COVENTRY GANG SHOW Wed 25 - Sat 28 Mar, The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

MIDDAY VARIETY: A BIG AFTERNOON OUT Featuring Bob Brolly, Jimmy Cricket and singers May Marion & Mark Andrews, Tues 31 Mar, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

Dance

EVERYTHING (BUT THE GIRL) New triple bill from choreographers Tamsin Fitzgerald & Fleur Deakin, Wed 25 Mar, Malvern Theatres



GIOVANNI PERNICE: THIS IS ME New show paying homage to the music and dances that have inspired the Strictly star's career to date, Fri 27 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

MARIPOSA Carlos Pons Guerra's reimagining of Puccini's seminal opera, Madame Butterfly, Fri 27 - Sat 28 Mar, Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

AKAAR Evening of 'wonder & passion' from Midlands-based Sonia Sabri Company, Sun 29 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

Talks

PETE WHITTAKER: SOLO & FREE Join Pete as he talks about the subculture of underground crack climbing... Tues 24 Mar, Malvern Theatres

FRANCIS ROSSI: I TALK TOO MUCH The legendary Status Quo frontman shares secrets from his 50-plus years in the business, Wed 25 Mar, Palace Theatre, Redditch

ADVENTURES OF THE YORKSHIRE SHEPHERDESS Shepherdess Amanda Owen shares heartwarming tales and honest anecdotes from her remarkable farming and family life in North Yorkshire, Thurs 26 Mar, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

Podcasts

TABLE MANNER WITH JESSIE WARE Jessie and her chef extraordinaire mum, Lennie, chat with a guest from the world of music, culture and politics over a three-course meal, Sat 28 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

RICHARD HERRING'S LEICESTER SQUARE THEATRE PODCAST 'The Podfather' (The Guardian) brings his award-winning podcast to Birmingham, chatting with a surprise guest from the city, Sat 28 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

DRUNK WOMEN SOLVING CRIME Join Hannah George, Catie Wilkins and Taylor Glenn as they welcome guests to test out their drunk detective skills, Sat 28 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

STANDARD ISSUE Comedian Sarah Millican joins the Standard Issue team as they bring their regular gigcast to Birmingham, Sun 29 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

THE TWO SHOT PODCAST Heart-breaking, hard-hitting and honest podcast about people's stories. Hosted by actor Craig Parkinson (Line Of Duty), Sun 29 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

FILMS TO BE BURIED WITH WITH BRETT GOLDSTEIN Join comedian, actor, writer and swimmer Brett Goldstein and an extra-special guest as they talk life & death by way of the movies, Sun 29 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

Events

MINI MUSEUM ENGINEERS | LIGHTS Play with light to create shadows and build towers that light up, Wed 25 Mar, Coventry Transport Museum



PAINT POTS AND SPARKLES Chance to explore colours and textures using paint, clay and collage materials, Thurs 26 Mar, Worcester City Museum & Art Gallery

THE NATIONAL HOMEBUILDING & RENOVATING SHOW Featuring practical tips, inspiring advice and the latest products for renovating your home, Thurs 26 - Sun 29 Mar, NEC, Birmingham

PRACTICAL CLASSICS CLASSIC CAR & RESTORATION SHOW Kickstart your classic restoration, Fri 27 - Sun 29 Mar, NEC, Birmingham

EXPLORING THE COSMOS A day of lectures from local & national astrophysicists, Sat 28 Mar, Artrix, Bromsgrove

GYMNASTICS WORLD CUP 2020 Top international gymnasts battle it out for a spot at the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo, Sat 28 Mar, Arena Birmingham

BIRMINGHAM VEGAN FESTIVAL Featuring hot food stalls, cooking demos, talks, a puppet show and a yoga class, Sat 28 Mar, Edgbaston Stadium, Birmingham

AUTISM CODE CLUB Designed for children aged nine to 13 with autism, Sat 28 Mar, Coventry Transport Museum

AUTISM EARLY BIRD Special early opening at Enginuity for families with children who would enjoy the museum at a quieter time, Sat 28 Mar, Enginuity Museum, Ironbridge, Shropshire

SPRING MAKERS MARKET Showcasing 'some of the best makers, artists and designers around', Sat 28 - Sun 29 Mar, FarGo Village, Coventry

KWIK FIT BRITISH TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP Some of the finest racing drivers in the UK chase the biggest prize in British car racing, Sat 28 - Sun 29 Mar, Donington Park, Castle Donington

JAWSOME SHARKS... AND FRIENDS Find the missing Top Trumps cards to become a Jawsome Ranger, Sat 28 Mar - Sun 10 May, National Sea Life Centre, Birmingham

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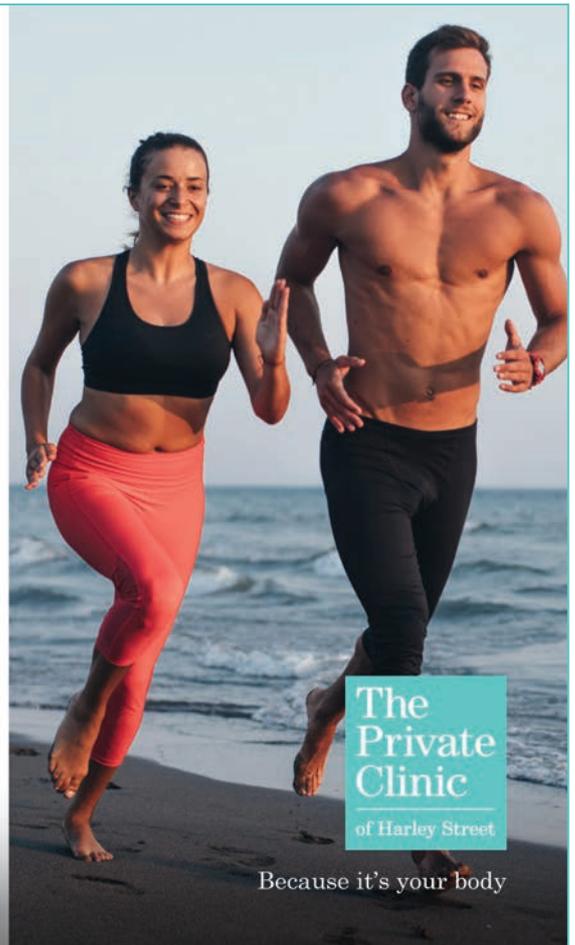
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16 – 25 APRIL



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