

Birmingham

ISSUE 416 SEPTEMBER 2021

What's On

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inside:

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circus show Passagers
premieres at the Hippodrome



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hook up your fishnets as cult
stage show makes a return



BIRMINGHAM PRIDE

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festival is back with a bang



BIRMINGHAM



Director Carlos Acosta

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Hippodrome - we can't wait to
welcome you back*

Sir Kenneth MacMillan's

Romeo and Juliet

6 – 9 October

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Radio and Juliet, danced to the music of
Radiohead*

14 – 16 October

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ROYAL BALLET

Céline Gittens and Brandon Lawrence
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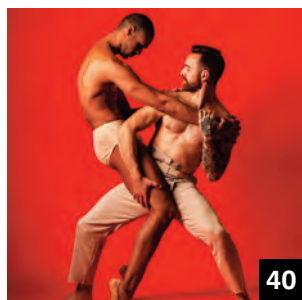
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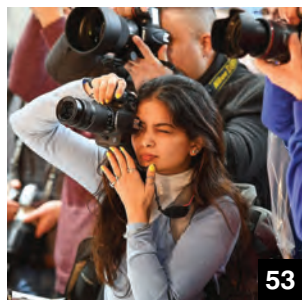
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What's On

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Go go go Jo! Joseph is back in Birmingham

The new London Palladium version of Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat has been added to Birmingham Hippodrome's autumn season of shows. The hit Andrew Lloyd Webber/Tim Rice musical will be joined in the theatre's line-up of entertainment by Jimmy Carr's Terribly Funny Book Tour and children's festive favourite, Dear Santa.

The new productions join the previously announced The Cher Show, The Play That Goes Wrong, What The Ladybird Heard and the National Theatre's Curious Incident Of The Dog In The Night-Time.

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

Thinking outside the fox

West Midlands Railway's Wylde Green Station has welcomed a new art installation by Birmingham-based artist Annatomix. The brand-new piece, named Urban Fox, was commissioned by the Friends of Wylde Green Station, a group of local people who work as volunteers to bring local character and inspirational arts and landscaping to the station. The fox was selected to be the main feature of the artwork as part of the Friends' ongoing mission to make the station more ecologically friendly.



Photo credit: Claire Rumble

Soundtrack released for film version of hit musical

The original soundtrack of Prime Video's new film version of hit West End musical Everybody's Talking About Jamie will be released a week before the movie itself becomes available to view.

The soundtrack is released by Island Records on 10 September. Mostly written by The Feeling's Dan Gillespie Sells, it features stand-out songs from the stage show, as well

as an exclusive new song performed by Frankie Goes To Hollywood legend Holly Johnson. Chaka Khan, Richard E Grant, Sophie Ellis-Bextor and Becky Hill are among others making a contribution... For more info, visit everybodystalkingaboutjamie.co.uk

Folk At The Farm opens Lichfield Arts' L2F Festival

Lichfield Arts' L2F Festival 2021 will host its opening event in the leafy surrounds of the city's Woodhouse Farm on 5 September. Folk On The Farm will feature live music, Morris dancers and the shortlisted songs from the L2F songwriting competition.

A barbecue or picnic is also included in the ticket price.

The main L2F Festival takes place on 22, 23 & 24 October. For further details and to book tickets, visit lichfieldarts.org.uk

City council unveils first of 20 new hydrogen buses

Birmingham City Council has unveiled the first of its 20 new hydrogen buses.

The buses have been purchased as part of the council's Clean Air Hydrogen Bus Pilot, which is looking to kickstart the hydrogen market as a viable zero-emission fuel.

The buses are being hailed not only as another way of tackling the city's poor air quality, but also as a key step towards achieving the council's net zero carbon target. Made by Wrightbus, the buses are the world's first zero-emission hydrogen fuel-cell double deckers. They will be operated in Birmingham by National Express.

Cuban dance magic at Birmingham Town Hall

Cuba's award-winning music & dance show, Pasión de Buena Vista, will stop off at two Midlands venues when it tours the UK next spring.

The hit production, which features celebrated dance troupe El Grupo de Bailar and 12-piece ensemble The Buena Vista Band, will visit Birmingham Town Hall on Saturday 12 February. It then returns to the region four days later (Wednesday the 16th) at Shrewsbury's Theatre Severn.

For more information, visit pasion-de-buena-vista.co.uk



Open studios open to all

Birmingham Open Studios is making a welcome return.

The popular event allows artists of all standards to display their craft from their own homes or working studios.

Eighty artists have signed up for the 2021 event. For more information, visit birminghamopenstudios.co.uk

Birmingham Comedy Festival back in the room

After last year taking place online, Birmingham Comedy Festival is back in the room for 2021.

Running from Friday 1 to Sunday 10 October, the popular event features over 40 shows.

Highlights include the return of Russell Brand (pictured) and appearances from Strictly semi-finalist Chris Ramsey and the Tailenders crew.

For more information, visit bhamcomfest.co.uk



Safari park submits plans for new lodges

West Midlands Safari Park has submitted proposed plans to Wyre Forest District Council for the second phase of its Safari Lodges accommodation.

The opulent two-storey accommodation will be authentically integrated into newly updated giraffe and white rhino habitats, giving guests 'an immersive and unforgettable overnight wildlife encounter like no other'.



Disney On Ice makes a return with Find Your Hero show

The ever-popular Disney On Ice returns to Birmingham next month with its show, Find Your Hero.

Featuring more than 50 Disney characters, the

production includes both modern tales and timeless classics. It shows at the city's Resorts World Arena from 28 to 31 October.

For more information, visit disneyonice.co.uk

Historic embroideries back on display after 10 years



A set of 350-year-old embroideries has finally gone back on display at Birmingham's Aston Hall after 10 years of painstaking restoration. The embroidered bed hangings adorn the 17th century bed in the room where King Charles I stayed in 1642. The hangings were carefully restored by a team of conservators and volunteers at Birmingham Museums.

Ex Cathedra set to launch new autumn season

Birmingham early music ensemble Ex Cathedra kickstarts its brand-new season next month with a concert that features rarely heard music from Beethoven's Funeral procession (Symphony Hall, 17 October).

"Appropriately we begin with an act of remembrance, with Mozart's profoundly moving Requiem Mass, unfinished at his death and completed by a pupil," says Ex Cathedra founder & conductor Jeffrey Skidmore. "It is preceded by a unique reconstruction of Beethoven's Funeral Procession. In 1827, over 20,000 Viennese music lovers adoringly followed their hero to his graveside, led by four trombones and a male chorus."

Ex Cathedra is joined for the occasion by the Concert Trombone Quartette.



Inaugural Dragon Boat Race at the Mailbox

Birmingham Women's & Children's Hospital Charity is hosting its inaugural Dragon Boat Race at the Mailbox this month. The event will be raising money for the two hospitals. Taking place on Saturday 25 September, the race will see 23 boats competing against one another, with several of Birmingham's biggest businesses set to take part.

Treetop Adventure Golf announces quiet sessions

Birmingham's Treetop Adventure Golf is now offering 'quiet sessions' for guests who prefer a calmer environment. The inclusive sessions will take place on the second Sunday of each month, from 9am to 11am, and are suitable for all ages. During the sessions, Treetop will turn off all sound effects and music across the venue. It will also reduce its background noise, interactive effects and strobe lighting across its two indoor 18-hole mini golf courses.

MiniBum gets new mayor

Birmingham Science Museum Thinktank's interactive mini city, MiniBum, has a new mayor. Alicia Adeyanju - aged seven, from Birmingham - was crowned Mayor of MiniBum 2021/22 after winning a competition which was launched at the start of the school summer holidays. A collaboration with What's On Media Group, the competition asked children what they would do to make a difference if they were mayor for the day. Alicia said that she would make one rule: be kind to everyone, including yourself. Our warmest congratulations go to Alicia, and we very much hope she enjoys her year as the mayor of MiniBum!



Julie Walters to narrate local railway's festive offering

Dame Julie Walters is narrating Severn Valley Railway's brand-new Enchanted Express Christmas services. The voice of the BAFTA-winning actress will be heard as passengers arrive at Bridgnorth station, where they will receive complimentary sweet treats before setting off on a heritage steam-train adventure. As part of the festive experience, passengers will be encouraged to dress in their pyjamas, to add to the special magic of the occasion. Once everyone has settled into their private compartment, the fun continues, with Julie's evocative voice narrating an 'enchanted

Christmas tale', based on the classic poem, 'Twas The Night Before Christmas. As the steam-hauled train makes its way to Highley station through a winter wonderland, there will be appearances by characters from the festive poem, including the Sugarplum Fairy. A chance to meet Santa Claus also features. He will be visiting every compartment for photo opportunities and to present a gift to each child. Tickets for Severn Valley Railway's Enchanted Express are now on sale at svr.co.uk

Flatpack Festival back for an autumn edition

Well-established Birmingham festival Flatpack is venturing back into cinemas, venues and gardens from 23 to 26 September. Flatpack Festival: Autumn Edition will feature 'other-worldly audio-visual performance, live improvised jazz paired with classic family shorts, and extraordinary films in beautiful surroundings'. For more information, visit flatpackfestival.org.uk

Little Amal to pass through Birmingham

A 3.5-metre-tall puppet, which is travelling 8,000km in order to focus awareness on the refugee crisis, will be making its way through Birmingham on 28 October.

Little Amal will travel through eight countries and be welcomed by hundreds of cultural events in cities, towns and villages along the route. For more information about her journey, visit walkwithamal.org



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Welcome back



Sofie Hagen: The Bumswing

★★★★★ The Mirror

4th September
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Tickets £16.50

Only Fools & Boycie

*'A television legend
and national treasure'*

5th September
(7.30pm)



Tickets £20.50



The Mersey Beatles

*A splendid time
guaranteed for all*

11th September
(7.30pm)

Tickets £24.50

La Voix: UK's Funniest Redhead

★★★★★ West End Wilma

12th September
(7.30pm)



Tickets £22.50/£20.50



Seann Walsh: Back From The Bed

*'Best observational
comic of his generation'*

18th September
(8pm)

Tickets £16.50

Simon Brodwin: Troublemaker

★★★★★ The Telegraph

19th September
(8pm)



Tickets £21.50



The Navy Lark

*An evening of nostalgic
belly laughs*

25th September
(7.30pm)

Tickets £19.50/£17.50

One Night In Dublin

*'Multi-award-winning
band The Wild Murphys'*

26th September
(7.30pm)



Tickets £23.50

News from around the region

BCU partners with NASA for global hackathon

Birmingham City University is to partner with NASA and a host of international space agencies on a global 'hackathon' event, which will see data from the US space programme being used to develop solutions to some of the world's biggest challenges. The Space Apps Challenge, taking place in Birmingham and around the world on Saturday 2 & Sunday 3 October, will see teams using NASA's open data projects and platforms - as well as information from other space agencies - to address real-world problems faced both on Earth and in space.

Line-up revealed for Sandwell Park festival

'The world's craziest party' rolls into Sandwell Valley Country Park for its biggest-ever Midlands event on 25 & 26 September. The two-day festival of 'house music, surreal theatre, incredible production and colourful clubbing' boasts a line-up that includes Joris Voorn, Detlef B2B Latmun, Eli Brown, Groove Armada, Franky Rizardo, Alisha, and Hott Like Detroit. For more information, visit elrow-midlands.co.uk

CBSO announces line-up for the autumn season

The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra has announced its autumn programme.

From large-scale symphonies at Symphony Hall to unplugged gigs in Hockley Social Club and workshops in local schools, the orchestra is aiming to provide West Midlands communities with the opportunity to re-engage with live music and culture. For full listings for the autumn season, visit cbso.co.uk



Hippodrome announces female-led associate artists

Three female-led musical theatre companies have joined Birmingham Hippodrome's Associates programme.

Burnt Lemon Theatre, The Good Enough Mums Club and Fat Rascal are the latest theatre makers to join the programme, which is designed to support artistic ambitions and develop work to reach new and wider audiences.

Popular returning festival celebrates street art in Digbeth district

A festival celebrating all things street culture is being held in Birmingham's Digbeth district late this month. Featuring everything from street art to street food, graffiti to graphic novels, skateboarding to breakdancing, High Vis Street Art is a free-to-attend family-friendly event taking place from Friday 25 to Sunday 27 September.

Get ready to Party In The Park at Chillington Hall

Chillington Hall's annual Party In The Park is this year being held from 24 to 26 September.

The ever-popular event takes place in the grounds of the Wolverhampton venue and celebrates music from across numerous decades and genres.

To check on this year's line-up of talent, visit partyintheparkfest.com

'Striking' painting loaned to the Barber Institute

A striking painting by one of the 18th century's leading portraitists, Allan Ramsay, will be available to view at Birmingham's Barber Institute of Fine Arts this autumn. Ramsay's portrait of Rosamund Sargent, painted in 1749, is being loaned by Bath's Holburne Museum and will be on display from 7 September until 9 January. The Barber's iconic The Blue Bower, by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, is heading in the opposite direction.



Flying High

Boasting death-defying feats, awe-inspiring acrobatics and breathtaking physicality, Passagers premieres in Birmingham this month



Canadian contemporary circus company The 7 Fingers this month presents the UK premiere of its hit show, *Passagers*, as part of Birmingham International Dance Festival. What's On caught up with company co-founder & co-artistic director Shana Carroll to find out what audiences can expect...

The seven founders of Canadian contemporary circus The 7 Fingers set up the company in 2002. Their aim was to redefine circus - stripping down the spectacle to its thrilling essence. In the action-packed years since, the internationally acclaimed company has gained a global reputation for shows like *Passagers*, which features an exhilarating mix of dance, acrobatics, circus skills and original music, interspersed with 'humour and feeling'.

Passagers is directed by Shana Carroll, one of the company's founders and now its co-artistic director. Shana has enjoyed a 30-year career in circus (including 20 glorious years in the air), performing and directing for a host of international organisations. Cirque du Soleil and the Sochi Winter Olympics feature among her many credits.

"When we started the company, we wanted to make work that was a hybrid experience," Shana explains. "It's circus, it's dance, it's theatre. *Passagers* is pretty dancey, but circus is our language. Our specialist numbers - trapeze, highwire, aerial silks and hula-hooping - are like the monologues of traditional theatre; they're continuing the story. And, of course, we have spoken word and song as well. The show is a mash-up of imagery, themes and emotions."

Set on a train, *Passagers* is all about travel and people's endless fascination with it. But after nearly two years of a global pandemic, ideas about travelling are markedly different to when Shana first created the work in 2018. Suddenly the stories in the show have a new resonance, evoking both nostalgia and future promise.

"There are two extremes of reaction. On the one hand, there's this crazy excitement; on the other, there's the fear of getting into a moving vehicle with strangers again. But we

yearn for travel. We have all these memories of places that we've been that we want to revisit, and so it's a symbol of a dynamic future."

Passagers has always been a personal show for Shana. She first created it after the death of a close friend and colleague: "It's a celebration of life's journey rather than anything sad. In some ways it's autobiographical. I spend most of my life touring, travelling and on trains. This show became a metaphor for all those journeys. It's infused with all the beauty, all the intimacy, all the connections, all the excitement, all the sadness, all the melancholy."

The 7 Fingers is based in purpose-built studios in Montreal, a hotbed for contemporary circus, which is a very different beast from the traditional art form. "For someone who hasn't seen one of our shows, it's always good to point out that we don't have outrageous make-up and costumes. With our shows, we're trying to tell stories and show pockets of life."

Born and raised in California, Shana fell in love with circus as an 18-year-old, watching a rehearsal by the innovative Pickle Family Circus, where her father was working.

"One day I was watching the trapeze artist up close. She was in sweatpants with messy hair, hanging from one foot and flying through the air. She looked like a normal human-being but was so brave and taking such risks. It was really powerful. She was someone I could identify with, and I could see myself in her."

Shana went on to join the company as a trapeze artist, kickstarting her life in the circus: "The reason I do circus is because I had that emotional reaction. I want other people to be able to have that too. To look at the performers and think 'this could be my friend, my sister, my son, my daughter'."

Passagers is presented in the UK by Dance

Consortium, an 18-strong group of large-scale theatres which is committed to touring the very best of international dance throughout the UK. The show's nine performers are all skilled dancers but each has a different approach to movement, depending on their specialist circus skill.

"Because they're expressing themselves through their bodies in their acts and disciplines, the performers have found their own physical vocabulary and style. When they're in their element, they move beautifully, and as a director and choreographer, it's a matter of tapping into that."

Passagers' cast of nine includes five of the artists who originally created the show with Shana before the pandemic. Following a month of rehearsals, the new version will premiere in the UK, visiting six cities up and down England before heading on to France and Switzerland.

Inevitably the global crisis has affected the company, not only logistically but also emotionally: "It's scary to dedicate months of your life to something, feeling we're on such fragile ground. But, on the other hand, everyone's so excited to have an audience again, and to go back to doing what we do. And to travelling! Of course, there have been pros and cons to the year we've just had, but I think there's this notion that if we can finally leave our country or our city or our continent, maybe life can continue to move forward."

.....

The UK premiere of The 7 Fingers' *Passagers* shows at Birmingham Hippodrome on Tuesday 21 & Wednesday 22 September

DUBS
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PRESENTS

24-26TH SEPTEMBER 2021

Chillington Hall, Brewood, Wolverhampton

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FRIDAY 24TH SEP

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JILTED GENERATION

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THE NEVILLE STAPLE BAND

KELLY LLORENNA (FROM N-TRANCE)

THE ORIGINAL DIVAS OF

LIVIN JOY

JANICE ROBINSON & TAMEKO STAR

TPAU

HAZELL DEAN

THE OUTHERE BROTHERS

SONIQUE

THE OUT OF SPACE LIVE BAND

KYM SIMS

ALISON LIMERICK

SHENA WINCHESTER (JX)

SLIPPERS THE SPLIT

JENNIE BELLESTAR

URBAN COOKIE COLLECTIVE

SUNDAY 26TH SEPTEMBER

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THE CHRISTIANS

THE DUALERS

EURASURED

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EBAN BROWN

SLIPPERS THE SPLIT

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2 STAGES
3 DAYS
3 DECADES
OF MUSIC

Food news from across the region...

Damascena donates £8k to Acorns Children's Hospice

The team at Damascena coffee house in Birmingham has raised £8k for local charity Acorns Children's Hospice. Back in June, Damascena pledged to donate 10% of total sales during its seventh birthday week to Acorns. The charity provides respite and end-of-life care for life-limited children.

Hanbao set to open in Birmingham

Burger and cocktail specialist Hanbao has announced that it will be opening at 46 Floodgate Street in Digbeth later this year.

The Hanbao menu features beef patty, American cheese, Bourbon bacon jam, maple streaky bacon, fresh chilli and baconnase, all in a glazed donut bun.



Dishoom launches Home Feast meal kit

Popular Indian restaurant Dishoom has launched a brand-new meal kit containing a selection of its best-loved dishes.

Home Feast, which has a balance of veg and non-veg dishes, comes complete with all the ingredients and know-how required to prepare 'a bountiful spread' of grills, curries, breads, sides and pudding in little more than half an hour.

Kits are priced at £60 and are available for nominated day delivery to most addresses nationwide.



Award-winning American eatery opens in Bullring

Wingstop, an American chain of nostalgic, aviation-themed restaurants specialising in chicken wings, has opened in Birmingham's Bullring.

Customers can choose from 10 bold flavours: Lemon Pepper, Atomic, Mango Habanero, Hawaiian, Louisiana Rub, Original Hot, Spicy Korean Q, Hickory Smoked BBQ, Brazilian

Citrus Pepper and Garlic Parmesan.

Classic wings, boneless wings and tenders are all available, as are sweet potato, regular and loaded fries and churros, with a choice of Oreo or Biscoff crumble and sweet milk or caramel dip for dessert.

The restaurant is open between 11am and midnight seven days a week.

Albert's Schloss coming to Birmingham this winter

Albert's Schloss bier palace and cook haus is to open at Paradise, Birmingham, in November. The venue - which is known for its Bavarian-Alpine food (think fondue and pork knuckle) and its Munich lagers, Czech Pilsner and carefully curated cocktails - will operate over two floors with three bars, the largest of which will be over 100 feet long.

A huge outside terrace area will come complete with a restored Citroen Van bier bar. Schloss will also be home to over 100 freelance artists serving up 'fun and flamboyant performances' every night of the week. Commenting on the opening, Roy Ellis, CEO of Mission Mars - the award-winning group that operates not only Albert's Schloss but also Rudy's Neapolitan Pizza and Zumhof Biergarten in Digbeth - said: "We're creating a retreat from the modern world, where we invite guests to discover new things, celebrate one another and enjoy the pleasures and wonder of our decadent Schloss. Influenced by our travels across Bavaria, Bohemia and Alpine European

retreats, expect roaring fires, raucous musical performances, tankards of Europe's finest beers and robust Bavarian food in our wonderful Paradise surroundings."





Photography: Adam Fradgley

Tribute to a legend

Birmingham Opera Company founder Graham Vick sadly passed away earlier this year. BOC Music Director Alpesh Chauhan talks about how the company intends to make its future projects a fitting tribute to the man who started it all...

Birmingham Opera Company (BOC) is renowned for its unconventional and innovative performances, staging opera in unusual venues such as warehouses, aircraft hangars and shopping centres.

The Company was founded by international opera director Graham Vick. A strong believer in making opera accessible to everyone, Graham was committed to creating productions that reflected the diversity of Birmingham communities.

Graham sadly passed away in July, following complications arising from Covid-19. He was a pioneer in the opera world, leading BOC to numerous awards during his time as artistic director. Most recently, the Company won the Education & Outreach Award at the 2021 International Opera Awards, while their music director, Alpesh Chauhan, has been recognised as Newcomer of the Year.

Birmingham-born Alpesh was appointed to his current BOC post in July 2020, making him the first minority ethnic music director in Britain. Just like Graham, Alpesh is passionate about making opera for everyone: "I know that many communities are still quite closed. For example, when I took the cello home to my parents, they didn't know anything about it. In the Indian community, the feedback I got was not a matter of feeling that classical music was not for them, it was just that they didn't know anything of it.

"I really believe in going to children at a school-age level and having them be able to talk to each other about music. That's what did it for me - being able to listen to different types of music and talk about it, and also being able to play an instrument without it costing loads of money."

Alpesh realised his passion for music at just six years of age, and his own experiences solidified his commitment to making classical music accessible to all: "One of the most special projects I've done was BBC Ten Pieces, where the BBC selected 10 pieces of music across different genres within classical music and made them available across all schools. When I went to the premiere of the one I was involved in, there were teenagers and school children walking out saying that they hadn't realised that classical music could be so exciting. I was left wondering why. There's something about the connection of music with human beings that is good for all of us, and that project cemented that for me. I think BBC Ten Pieces is an example of the most important kind of work that we do as artists, and it's not by a very long extension that Birmingham Opera Company comes off that. BBC Ten Pieces was just going to children, but

the Company goes to the whole community and gets them involved."

Alpesh first worked with BOC in 2019, as the conductor for Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth Of Mtsensk*. It was during this time that he met Graham Vick. "All the decisions Graham made came from the music and what the composer wrote. Everything was to service the art. It was about making the art connect with people. It was so inspiring to work with him, and to be on that journey together.

"It was always his passion to make the end result true to the composer, while at the same time making it visceral and relevant for the public. And that's something that most directors don't often get right - they just go one way or the other - but Graham somehow managed to always hit that balance perfectly. The audience would go away knowing the opera, while also having seen something incredibly politically relevant to them, and I think that's just mastery."

Graham forged himself an illustrious career as an international director, but he always maintained that even opera of the highest quality could and should speak to everyone.

"Graham democratised opera. He made sure everybody was on the same level, including himself. He was never hiding away in a royal box. He would be there before the concerts, ushering people in and saying hello, and also with a hand on their back as they left at the end."

Judging by BOC's reputation both in the opera world and with non-traditional opera audiences, its mission to bring opera to the masses has been a resounding success. But Alpesh's desire to reach new audiences was ignited long before he joined the Company, fostered by his own journey in the music world and the support he received.

"Although my parents didn't know anything about the cello, I was very lucky that they supported me and allowed me to go on this big journey with it. And the Birmingham system is one of the best for youth music in the UK, so I worked my way through that.

"Every time I work with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, there are people there who've done so much for me, from when I was a kid onwards. My cello teacher from my undergraduate course at the Royal Northern, Eduardo Vassallo, is principal cello for the CBSO. And there are other people in the orchestra who have been chamber-music coaches for me, or who've coached youth orchestras that I played in many years ago.

"Birmingham is responsible for me being able

to do what I do, and for the success I enjoy now. All of it is because I was given that opportunity in Birmingham."

Although Alpesh's talent has allowed him to perform all over the UK and Europe, staying connected to his Birmingham roots remains a priority: "For me, the audience in Birmingham is like family. They really support the orchestra, and, equally, we support the community. With Birmingham Opera Company, I have this connection to people from all backgrounds because we're able to touch so many people through our cultural output."

BOC's most recent production - Wagner's *RhineGold* - was eagerly awaited by the Company's devoted audience, having been two years in the planning. The production was intended to mark the 30th anniversary of Graham Vick staging the full Ring Cycle in Birmingham. Graham died while the Company was still in the rehearsal stages. The decision was made to go ahead with the show, as a tribute to him.

"It's a difficult time for the whole of the opera world - let alone Birmingham - and we had to put a lot of our personal feelings aside to finish *RhineGold*. But there was some positivity there, in that whenever we felt something wasn't working, we would all ask each other what Graham would do. So he was always on our shoulder. Not many people can have that kind of impact on those around them."

Though an incredibly difficult time for Birmingham Opera Company, Alpesh stresses the importance of continuing Graham's legacy: "Conversations about the future haven't even begun, because Graham touched so many people and was ingrained in so many of our lives. However, what must happen is that the message of Birmingham Opera Company and the message of Graham Vick continues. Music is for everyone, and that mantra cannot die with Graham; it must be his legacy. However we decide to do it, and however it takes shape in the future, that will continue."

The passion and dedication of its members leaves no room for doubt that Birmingham Opera Company will continue to thrive, and continue to bring world-class opera to communities all around Birmingham. But for now, BOC's focus is very much on remembering the life and work of its founder, Graham Vick - a real revolutionary in the world of opera.

For further information, visit:
birminghamopera.org.uk



City of Birmingham
Symphony Orchestra

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Classical music from across the region...



CBSO: Tchaikovsky's Sixth

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Wed 22 & Thurs 23 September

Guest conductor Gustavo Gimeno (pictured) takes the helm for a concert that sees the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra sink its teeth into three works of music first performed in the year 1893.

The programme begins with Engelbert Humperdinck's *Hansel And Gretel*, a piece which the composer himself described as a fairytale opera.

Second on the bill is Ernest Chausson's

Poème de l'amour et de la mer (Poem Of Love And The Sea), a song cycle for voice and orchestra which sees soloist Dame Sarah Connolly joining forces with the CBSO.

The evening is rounded off with Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's *Sixth*, the *Pathétique*. The composer's final completed symphony, its first performance was led by Tchaikovsky himself, just nine days before his death.

Organ Concert with Thomas Trotter

Birmingham Town Hall, Mon 27 September

Organist Thomas Trotter has performed with a host of revered conductors, including Simon Rattle, Sir Charles Mackerras and Riccardo Chailly. He's also appeared alongside many of the world's leading orchestras.

A former pupil at Malvern College, Trotter was appointed Birmingham City Organist in 1983, and almost 40 years later remains one of Britain's most acclaimed musicians.

The programme of music being performed by Thomas in this lunchtime concert includes works by Bach, Lemare, Gardner, Hollins and Richard Wagner.



Brahms' String Sextet

CBSO Centre, Birmingham, Thurs 23 September

This is the latest in a series of short, informal concerts programmed and introduced by City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra musicians. Consisting of four movements performed by pairs of violins, violas and cellos, Brahms' String Sextet No2 is widely appreciated for its intense emotional range. It is also well known for containing a personal message from Brahms to his unrequited love, Agathe von Siebold.

The work's biggest modern-day claim to fame is that it featured in the darkly humorous movie, *Buffet froid* - a French crime thriller starring Gerard Depardieu in his pre-Hollywood days.

Leamington Music Festival Weekend

various locations in and around Leamington Spa, Thurs 23 to Sun 26 September

After being cancelled both last year and this spring, Leamington Music Festival makes a welcome return, albeit in shortened form. On this occasion the festival is marking the centenary of locally born composer Robert Simpson.

Greatly admired for his outstanding compositions for brass, Simpson is equally known for, among other works, his 11 symphonies, numerous concertos and 15 string quartets.

Performers at this year's event include festival opener the Coull Quartet (pictured), who will be playing the composer's String Quintet No1, and the Dante String Quartet, bringing the weekend's proceedings to a close with a performance of Simpson's Quartet No8.



Armonico Consort

Collegiate Church Of St Mary, Warwick, Sat 25 September; Malvern Theatres, Fri 1 October

Baroque consort Armonico - one of the largest organisations of its kind in the UK - uses authentic period instruments, regularly performs with some of the best solo musicians in the world, and is this year celebrating its 20th anniversary. To mark the occasion, Armonico is going on tour with its most epic concert to date, presenting a unique programme of multi-part polyphonic works from the 16th century.

The programme line-up features Tallis' *Spem in Alium*, Striggio's 60-part *Missa sopra Ecco si Beato Giorno*, and Heinrich Biber's *Missa Salisburgensis*. The works will be interspersed with the 'timeless simplicity and beauty' of Hildegard of Bingen's plainchants.



Lilla Vargen

The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham,
Wed 29 September

Originally from Ballymena in Northern Ireland, singer-songwriter Lilla Vargen left home for London to pursue her dream career in music.

Boasting a soft, soulful and evocative voice - and an impressive 30 million streams - she successfully builds a connection with audiences who have suffered or survived the issues that she explores.

Lilla has recently been selected for the Virgin Money Emerging Stars Programme. She will use the bursary to expand her production equipment in preparation for releasing her highly anticipated debut album.

Paloma Faith

Symphony Hall, Birmingham,
Fri 24 & Sat 25 September

Paloma plays Birmingham in support of fifth studio album *Infinite Things*. She wrote the majority of the record's songs pre-pandemic. Then, when the country went

into lockdown, she ripped them up and started again. Considered to be her most confident album to date, the record is being promoted as "a rumination on sickness and loss. It's about finding your way back to romance within a long-term relationship."



Tim Burgess

Hare & Hounds, Birmingham,
Friday 24 September

Last year saw Charlatans frontman Tim release his fifth solo record to date. Described as featuring "wonderfully connective songs of everyday minutiae and universal experience", *I Love The New Sky* proved to be a massive hit, further enhancing the reputation of a performer who's long been admired for his enthusiasm and positivity. He appears at the Hare & Hounds with a live ensemble featuring Daniel O'Sullivan, Thighpaulsandra, Keel Her, and renowned avant-jazz violinist Peter Broderick.



The Subways

O2 Institute, Birmingham, Fri 24 September

English rock band The Subways have recently undergone a line-up change, after drummer and founding member Josh Morgan announced he was leaving for family reasons.

Billy Lunn and Charlotte Cooper, along with a new drummer, visit Birmingham this month in celebration of the 16th anniversary of debut album *Young For Eternity*. The band will play the much-loved record in its entirety.

Genesis

Utilita Arena Birmingham,
Mon 20 - Wed 22 September

Genesis are among the biggest-selling recording artists of all time. The *Last Domino?* Tour 2021 sees Tony Banks, Phil Collins and Mike Rutherford making their first live outing together since 2007. They will be joined on stage by Nic Collins, on drums, and their long-time lead guitar & bass player, Daryl Stuermer.

Blossoms

O2 Academy, Birmingham, Sat 4 September

Blossoms burst onto the UK music scene following the release of their self-titled debut album in 2016. First single *Charlemagne* - arguably their most popular song to date - was named BBC Radio One's track of the day and featured on Spotify's *Spotlight On 2016* list. The commercial success extended through to the end of that year, when the single topped the Christmas vinyl chart. After some further topping of charts with 2020 album *Foolish Loving Spaces*, the boys are out on an autumn tour; hence this O2 Academy stop-off.



Symphony Hall and Town Hall re-open for audiences



Grayson Perry: A Show for Normal People

Thu 2 September
7:30pm
Symphony Hall

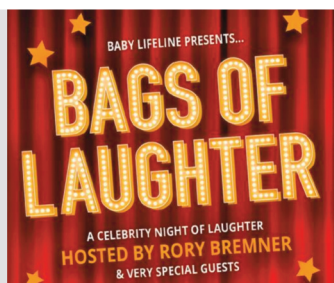


Simon Amstell: Spirit Hole

Fri 29 October
8pm
Town Hall

Bags of Laughter Hosted by Rory Bremner

Thu 23 September
8pm
Town Hall



Marti Pellow: The Greatest Hits Tour

Sun 28 November
7:30pm
Symphony Hall



The Billy Joel Songbook

Fri 24 September
7:30pm
Town Hall

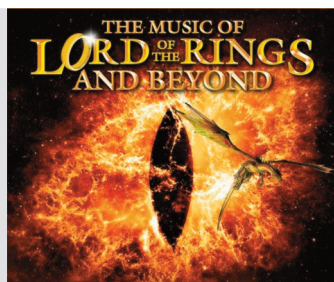


Adventures of the Yorkshire Shepherdess – Amanda Owen

Tue 30 November
7:30pm
Town Hall

The Music of Lord of The Rings, Game of Thrones And Beyond

Sun 10 October
3pm
Symphony Hall



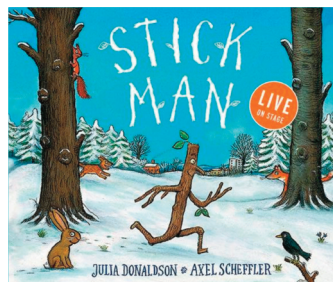
The Bootleg Beatles

Mon 13 December
7:30pm
Symphony Hall



Joker in Concert – Film with Live Orchestra

Tue 19 October
7:30pm
Symphony Hall



Stick Man: Live on Stage

Sun 26 Dec 2021 –
Sun 9 Jan 2022
Town Hall

A portrait of Ed Byrne, a man with dark, wavy hair and black-rimmed glasses. He is wearing a brown leather jacket with a thick white shearling collar. He is holding a small, green, leafy plant stem in his right hand, near his face. The background is a blurred, scenic view of a valley with green hills and a river, under a cloudy sky. The lighting is warm and golden, suggesting late afternoon or early morning.

If I'm Honest...

Ed Byrne back on the road with his latest tour

A household name teetering on the brink of national-treasure status, award-winning comedian Ed Byrne enjoys worldwide acclaim for his stand-up. With 25 years under his belt, Ed has parlayed his on-stage success into a variety of notable television appearances. A regular on *Mock The Week* and *The Graham Norton Show*, Ed has recently co-presented *Dara & Ed's Big Adventure* and its follow-up, *Dara & Ed's Road To Mandalay*, and managed not to disgrace himself on *Top Gear* or whilst tackling one of *The World's Most Dangerous Roads*. As a semi-professional hill-walker himself and a fully paid-up humanist, he also brought a refreshing warmth and honesty to BBC Two's recent hit, *The Pilgrimage*.

But the Irishman is still best known and best appreciated for his stand-up performances. A quarter of a century at the comedic coal-face has equipped Ed with a highly evolved story-telling ability and a silky mastery of his craft. Yet his wit, charm and self-deprecatory observational humour is often underpinned by a consistently hilarious vitriol and sense of injustice at a world that seems to be spinning ever more rapidly out of control.

Having recently hit a new peak with shows such as the sublime *Spoiler Alert* and reflective *Outside, Looking In*, which explored the minefield that is modern parenting and a generational sense of entitlement, Ed's new show, *If I'm Honest*, digs ever deeper into a father's sense of responsibility, what it means to be a man in 2021, and whether he possesses any qualities whatsoever worth passing on to his two sons. Occasionally accused of whimsy, *If I'm Honest* is a show with a seriously steely core.

Gender politics, for example, is something Ed readily engages with - deploying his customary comedic zeal. "I'll admit that there are things where men get a raw deal," he says. "We have higher suicide rates, and we tend not to do well in divorces, but representation in action movies is not something we have an issue with. It was *Mad Max: Fury Road* that kicked it all off, even though nobody complained about Ripley in *Alien* or Sarah Connor in *Terminator 2*. Of course, social media means this stuff gets broadcast far and wide in an instant, which emboldens people.

"The problem with men's rights activists is that it's not about speaking up for men's

rights, it's about hating women. If you're a men's rights activist, you're not going to care about the fact that there's an all-female *Ghostbusters* remake. That's nothing to do with men's rights or female entitlement. That's everything to do with being, well, a whiny baby."

As ever, Ed manages to provoke without being overly polemical, a balancing act that only someone of his huge experience can really pull off.

"I did stuff about Trump and the Pizzagate right wing conspiracy, and a couple of the reviewers said, 'Oh, I would have liked to have watched a whole show of this'. And I think, 'well you might have, but the average person who comes to see me would not like to see that'. I like to make a point or get something off my chest, or perhaps I'm talking about something that's been on my mind, but the majority of stuff is just to get laughs.

"People who come to see me are not political activists necessarily, they're regular folk. If you can make a point to them, in between talking about your struggles with aging, or discussing your hernia operation or whatever it is, you can toss in something that does give people pause as regards to how men should share the household chores.

"When a joke makes a good point, I think people enjoy it. It's the difference between having a steak and eating a chocolate bar."

Ed, who broke through in the mid-1990s when the *New Lad* became a genuine cultural phenomenon, doesn't want to submit to any unnecessary revisionism, but admits that if the times have changed, he has changed with them. He reflects a little ruefully on one of his most famous jokes: "There's an attitude towards Alanis Morissette in the opening of that routine that I'm no longer comfortable with, where I call her a moaning cow and a whiny bint. Slagging off the lyrics of the song is fine, but there's a tone in the preamble that I wouldn't write today."

The new show also takes his natural tendency towards self-deprecation to unexpected extremes: "I do genuinely annoy myself. But the thing of your children being a reflection of you, gives you an opportunity to build something out of the best of yourself, only for you to then see flashes of the worst of yourself

in them. It's a wake-up call about your own behaviour."

When I challenge him over the degree of self-loathing he displays, he disagrees. "Self-aggrandising humour is a lot harder to pull off than self-deprecating humour. A lot of people get really annoyed when Ricky Gervais is self-congratulatory. I always find it very funny when he accepts awards and does so in the most big-headed way possible. I think it's a trickier type of humour to pull off, talking yourself up in that way.

"So no, I don't think I'm being massively hard on myself. The fact is, when you're the bloke who is standing on the stage with the microphone, commanding an audience's attention, you're in a very elevated position anyway."

That said, *If I'm Honest* brilliantly elucidates the frustration that arrives in middle age - and lives up to its title. "I'm bored looking for things. I'm bored of trying to find stuff, because I can never find it, and it's entirely my fault. Nobody's hiding my stuff from me. Although my wife did actually move my passport on one occasion."

Since the pandemic hit and live comedy as we know it temporarily ceased to be, Ed has done a few socially distanced gigs, as well as some on Zoom. He can't wait to get back on the road properly. It will have been 18 months since he last performed a tour date.

"I'll have to see what still works and what doesn't. I've missed doing stand-up the most during this lockdown. No-one told me 'you're not going to be touring for 18 months' or I would have planned it better."

.....

Ed Byrne's *If I'm Honest* tour stops off at Redditch Palace Theatre, Wed 8 September; Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Sat 11 September; Crewe Lyceum, Fri 24 September; Huntingdon Hall, Worcester, Wed 10 November; Birmingham Town Hall Wed 24 November; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sun 30 January; Leamington Spa Pavilion, Thurs 10 February; Dudley Town Hall, Sat 12 February; Walsall Arena, Wed 16 February; The Core, Solihull, Wed 23 February and The Place, Telford, Wed 15 June



Sindhu Vee

The Core, Solihull, Fri 17 September; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sat 9 October; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sun 17 October; Birmingham Town Hall, Tues 2 November; William Aston Hall, Wrexham, Thurs 9 December

Former bonds tradeswoman Sindhu Vee makes a welcome return to the Midlands this autumn with a brand-new show. Although her previous career in the City no doubt offers plenty of material for an evening of stand-up comedy, on this occasion Sindhu's decided to let the subject of finance gain some extra interest in the comedy bank. Instead, she's turning the spotlight on the subjects of hair, friends, and 'living the vast difference between virus and viral'.

Sindhu stumbled across a career in comedy by chance. Having quit her job as a banker in order to look after her children, she then found out that one of the least funny people she knew was doing stand-up.

"If she could do it, then so could I," says Sindhu. "And my career as a comedian has gone very well. Comedy is like a fire in my belly, and I feel incredibly lucky to have found it. It's hard work, for sure, but it's also my calling."

Seann Walsh

The Old Rep, Birmingham, Sat 18 September; Rose Theatre, Tewkesbury, Thurs 28 October

Even though Seann Walsh is a hugely popular comedian, he still has to write his own blurb - which, as he points out, is something that he finds 'absolutely insane': "What am I meant to say? 'I'm fantastic, come and look at me talk'? I don't know. It's me. I do stand-up. "I guess I can start with the fact I renamed the tour. Sticking with Same

Again? felt a bit triggering after the year we've had. So it's now called Back From The Bed. Some of the material will be the same as I'd always planned, but some of it will be new, because it will be difficult to avoid mentioning the last year, in which millions of decent people tragically lost their lives to TikTok. "The previous leg of this tour got a lot of standing ovations, which was pleasing. Either that, or they were leaving early. Come along if you like me. I'd be confident enough to say come along if you're on the fence. Cheers - Sean."

Jenny Eclair

Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Fri 10 September; The Old Rep, Birmingham, Sun 10 October; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sun 7 November

Compared to some of her peers, Jenny Eclair's ascent up the comedy pole to celebrity status was relatively slow. "I think I've made more public mistakes than most people, and suffered for them," she observes. "Like being crap on stage. I was 22 when I started, and there are still producers working now who saw me then and wrote me off. It took years to change their minds."

As Jenny matured, she developed an appreciation of her womanhood that's since proved to be of real benefit to her comedy routine: "I think women get dirtier as they get older. The more your body lets you down, the more you have to find it funny. I just think bumholes and fannies are hilarious. The first joke my father told me was a fart joke, and I still find it funny."

Kerry Godliman

Evesham Town Hall, Sat 18 September; Glee Club, Birmingham, Wed 29 September

Comedian and actress Kerry Godliman's new touring show, Bosh, covers all manner of subjects, from needy cats and disappointing camper vans to ever-raging feelings of 'mum guilt' and her ongoing bewilderment at the phasing-out of thimbles...

You may remember Kerry from such TV shows as Miranda, Our Girl and Ricky Gervais' Extras, Derek and After Life. She's also had her own show on Radio Four. But it's live stand-up that's closest to her heart. "It's such a creative opportunity to say all the stuff I want to say about things like politics and parenting," she explains. "And that's amazing. There aren't many jobs where you can just say exactly what you like."



Bags Of Laughter

Birmingham Town Hall, Thurs 23 September

Ed Byrne, Reginald D Hunter (pictured) and Bobby Davro are among the star names making a contribution to this special fundraiser.

The event is a 40th-anniversary celebration of Baby Lifeline, a unique charity that supports the care of pregnant women and their unborn and newborn babies.

Hosted by Rory Bremner, the show also features, among others, Freya McGhee, Alan Francis, John Thomson, Gabby Killick, Geoff Whiting and Charlie Hopkinson.



Gary Meikle

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Thurs 23 September; The Old Rep, Birmingham, Tues 26 October; Rialto, Coventry, Sat 15 January

Evolution, social media, single mums, bee sex, small-man syndrome and how to deal with burglars are among the topics under consideration in Glasgow-born Gary Meikle's currently touring stand-up show. Gary's fast-paced delivery and playfully dark style of humour has seen him score a massive hit with audiences - most significantly online, where numerous viral video rants about subjects including eyebrows, hair extensions and 'dick pics' have accumulated over 150 million views and counting.

Gary gets much of the inspiration for his comedy from his own life, particularly from his experience of being a lone parent and now a grandparent. He lives with his daughter and granddaughter. "I've been stuck in lockdown with two generations of formidable Meikle women," he says. "Believe me, they're just as glad to see me hitting the road for this tour as I am!"



Rob Newman

Huntingdon Hall, Worcester, Thurs 2 September; Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Thurs 30 September

Rob Newman came to prominence in the late 1980s - in The Mary Whitehouse Experience and via his comedy double-act with David Baddiel, a partnership which was allegedly fraught with significant tension.

Since going solo, Rob's work has been characterised by a strong political element which has seen him likened to Mark Thomas. With a downbeat style of delivery, he's not to

everybody's taste as a stand-up comedian - generating belly laughs doesn't seem to rate all that highly on his list of priorities - but he's always an interesting and thought-provoking experience.

This latest show 'weaves together Nietzsche's sunglasses, James Bond in Toxteth, electric spiders and singing Neanderthals'.

Simon Brodtkin

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Sat 18 September; The Old Rep, Birmingham, Sun 19 September; Rialto, Coventry, Tues 2 November

Former medical doctor Simon Brodtkin is perhaps best known as the creator of comedy character Lee Nelson, a bling-wearing Stella-swigging South London geezer.

Simon has also hit the headlines for his unwavering commitment to the business of being a top-quality prankster: he famously handed Prime Minister Theresa May her P45 at the Conservative Party Conference.

This latest tour sees him taking on perhaps his trickiest task yet - going on stage *as himself*. Previously billed as '100% Simon Brodtkin' but now called Troublemaker, the show reveals what it's like to be chased by Donald Trump's bodyguards, how to make the police laugh while they're arresting you, and what to do when you're outed as a Jew by the Ku Klux Klan.



What's New Pussycat?

Brand-new Tom Jones musical brings the Swinging '60s to The REP



What's On recently caught up with Dame Arlene Phillips, the choreographer behind brand-new '60s-set comedy musical What's New Pussycat?, which receives its world premiere at Birmingham Repertory Theatre next month...

Take the hit songs of one of the most famous singers ever to come out of Wales, combine them with one of the earliest English novels, and the result is a brand-new musical called What's New Pussycat?, which receives its world premiere at Birmingham Repertory Theatre next month.

Songs made famous by Sir Tom Jones form the basis for an adaptation of Henry Fielding's influential novel from 1749, *The History Of Tom Jones: The Foundling*.

Swinging London of the 1960s provides a backdrop to the show's unfolding storyline. It's 1965, and although Tom Jones has rocked up in London with a broken heart, he's full of ambition and boasts a booming voice. He soon encounters an exciting world of dancing, mods, miniskirts and great music. And while the audience revels in the romantic adventure that plays out on stage, one burning question remains unanswered: will the eponymous hero and ladies' man ever be reunited with his true love, who seems way too preoccupied with designing for Carnaby Street to contemplate taking a walk down the aisle?

While numbers such as *It's Not Unusual*, *Delilah* and, of course, *What's New Pussycat?* whisk the audience right back to Swinging London in the 1960s, the show's choreography promises to be something to behold, with none other than Dame Arlene Phillips having taken the reins.

Dame Arlene has been involved in the project for quite some time: "It goes back to the beginning of last year, when my agent called me and said that the producers were interested in me choreographing the show. I absolutely love the music of Tom Jones, the incredible, amazing songs, the richness of the musical arrangements and, of course, 1960s' style, so I said I'd love to be a part of it."

Arlene's only encounter with the man they call *The Voice* actually took place back in the '60s: "When I was in my 20s, there was an American choreographer called Claude Thompson, who was in England searching for dancers for Tom's new TV show, *This Is Tom Jones*. He was looking for a dancer to feature in a solo spot. Juliet Prowse was the star dancer and there was a dance battle. She had to win by out-dancing me on a table - I eventually jump off - and I got picked for that part. It was so exciting!

"There was Tom, singing away, and my gosh, being so close to such a megastar was absolutely incredible. And that's my only experience of Tom - but what an experience to have!"

While the sprawling source material for *What's New Pussycat?* is unlikely to be found on many bookshelves outside a university English Literature faculty, Arlene has been familiar with Henry Fielding's story for most of her life: "I started reading it when I was younger, so I was aware of the novel. There's no way that, in a musical lasting two hours, you could even begin to really tell a story that's a very complex series from a long, long book. *What's New Pussycat?* is set in the '60s but definitely based on that story, without question. The way that it's been written, and the way that our brilliant director, Luke Sheppard, has used and developed what the audience are going to see, is very clever."

While people of a certain vintage will no doubt recall Arlene's 1970s dance troupe, *Hot Gossip*, Arlene herself only really came to widespread public attention in 2004, when she featured on the original judging panel of *Strictly Come Dancing*.

"We knew from the start that *Strictly* was really attracting people to dance, without

question. At the time, there were dance-shoe manufacturers going out of business because they couldn't sell enough shoes. Strictly really changed that. It changed things for a lot of people - for schools that teach, for costume makers. The series always brings more and more people to dance."

As theatrical productions reopen post-lockdown, Arlene has noticed how invested audiences seem to be in the shows they're now watching: "Audiences have missed the feeling that theatre gives them; watching something and taking something away to talk about. Theatre is life-enhancing, and when you lose that, you lose a little bit of yourself and a little bit of life. Covid has been incredibly damaging. I opened a show two weeks ago - *Grease The Musical* - which had been postponed four times. The roar, the response from the audience, was massive. There was a real outpouring of every kind of feeling - laughing, crying, cheering, clapping - and that's before the show's even started!"

So what can audiences expect when they settle down to watch *What's New Pussycat?*?

"So many songs that are heavy with big brass arrangements. You hear the music and it's triumphant and rhythmical. There's so much there to use as a choreographer! Also, a phenomenal visual design - a real feast for the eyes - and they're going to love the story, too; there's a lot of comedy in there. When people walk out of the theatre at the end of the show, they're going to have a real spring in their step!"

.....
What's New Pussycat? shows at The REP, Birmingham, from Friday 8 October to Sunday 14 November





School Of Rock

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 21 - Sun 25 September; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Tues 19 - Sat 23 October; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Mon 31 January - Sat 5 February

There's a school of thought that School Of Rock would've been even better without Jack Black.

And the great thing about Andrew Lloyd Webber's stage version of the hit 2003 movie is that you actually get to find out if that's true!

Alongside its lack of Black, the show has plenty else to recommend it, including no fewer than 14 new songs from Lord Lloyd Webber. All the original numbers from the movie also feature.

For those not in the know, School Of Rock tells the story of wannabe rock star Dewey Finn. Posing as a substitute teacher at an elite prep school, Dewey not only introduces the students to 'his kind of music' but also helps the uptight headmistress to rediscover her inner wild child...

SIX The Musical

Birmingham Hippodrome, Tues 14 - Sat 18 September; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 1 - Sat 5 February

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. The one-act production, which premiered at the Edinburgh Fringe in 2017, was enjoying a runaway success until Covid put the brakes on, but a show that sits somewhere between a Girls Aloud gig and a traditional musical should have no trouble whatsoever refinding its momentum.

A loud and colourful celebration of girl power, the production sees the cast being ably supported by all-female band The Ladies In Waiting.



Everybody's Talking About Jamie

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Tues 14 - Sat 18 September; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 5 - Sat 9 October

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 - which follows a young man's quest for acceptance on his journey to becoming a drag queen - has enjoyed blockbusting success, with numerous Olivier nominations, an extensive UK tour and a feature film, released this very month, testifying to its incredible popularity.

"Jamie is a production that tries to tell people to stay true to who they are," explains Layton Williams, who plays the title character. "It tells people 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."

Heathers The Musical

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Tues 21 - Sat 25 September

Although far from being an unqualified success with the critics, Heathers The Musical did great business in the West End, and is equally likely to pack them in during its first ever UK tour.

Based on the cult 1989 movie starring Winona Ryder and Christian Slater, the show follows the character of Veronica Sawyer, a high school student who's tired of being part of a feared and popular clique with three girls named Heather. Eager to opt out, she finds herself drawn to new student Jason 'JD' Dean, a rebellious young man with murder in mind...





Audio Described
Performance



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Performance



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Performance



Relaxed
Performance

See website
for details.

0844 338 5000* birminghamhippodrome.com

*Calls cost 4.5p per min plus access charge.



Mon 30 Aug
- Sat 4 Sep



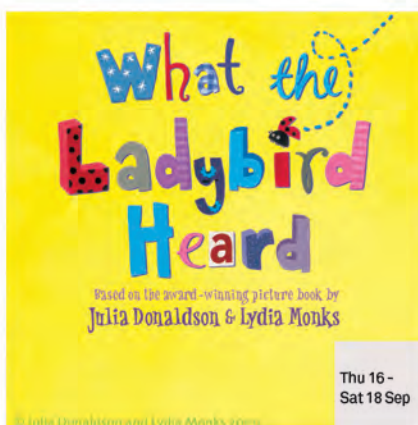
Wed 8 Sep



Sat 11 Sep



Tue 14 -
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Thu 16 -
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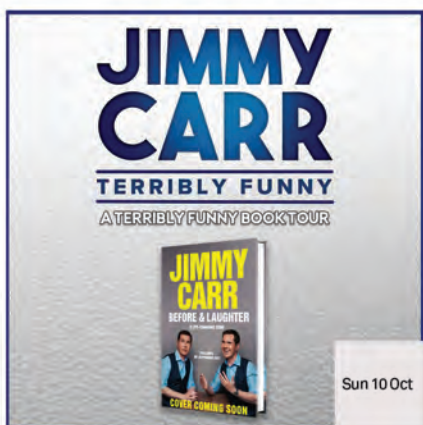
Tue 21 &
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Fri 24 Sep



Mon 27 Sep
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Sun 10 Oct



Thu 14 -
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The Rocky Horror Show

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Mon 27 September - Sat 2 October; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Mon 13 - Sat 18 June

Hook up your fishnets, tighten your corsets and prepare to 'do The Time Warp again' - The Rocky Horror Show is returning to the Midlands!

Richard O'Brien's cult production tells the tale of the straight-laced Brad and the deliciously corruptible Janet, who arrive at the castle of the alien transvestite Frank N Furter and witness the birth of the monster, Rocky.

Along the way, they take the audience through a selection of love-'em-or-loathe-'em musical numbers, including Sweet Transvestite, Damn It Janet and The Time Warp. Great fun's a guarantee - particularly if you get into the spirit of things and attend the show dressed in your very best stockings and suspenders (as many patrons do)!

The Navy Lark

The Old Rep, Birmingham, Sat 25 September

If you're old enough to remember enjoying long-running radio comedy series The Navy Lark, then be sure to drop anchor at the Old Rep for this slice of nostalgia from the mid-20th century. Presented in the style of a radio performance, the production comprises three classic episodes from the hit show, which ran from 1959 to 1977.

The Little Shop Of Horrors

The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, Wed 1 - Sun 26 September

One of the longest-running off-Broadway shows of all time, The Little Shop Of Horrors is an affectionate spoof of 1950s' sci-fi movies. Despite various productions quite regularly turning up at theatres across the country, it remains perhaps best known from its 1980s film version, which featured a hilarious turn from Steve Martin as the splendidly sadistic dentist.

East Is East

The REP, Birmingham, Fri 3 - Sat 25 September

Although best known from its 1999 film version, East Is East was originally produced for the stage, world-premiering at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre in 1996. Written by Ayub Khan Din, the critically acclaimed play presents a semi-

autobiographical account of British Asian life in early-1970s' Salford.

Pakistani chip-shop owner George may be determined to give his children a strict Muslim upbringing, but the kids themselves have other ideas. Born and brought up in Britain, they increasingly see themselves as British. Their rejection of Pakistani customs leads to plenty of household tensions and no small number of genuinely funny moments.



Seven Ages

Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton, Thurs 2 September

Going to school, falling in love, finding a job, having a child and growing old disgracefully are among the subjects covered in Kevin Tomlinson's well-reviewed comedy, a show which focuses on the idea that life's journey is separated into seven different stages. The production is supported by Black Country Touring, an initiative which uses theatre as a way to shine a light on the region's stories, personalities and diverse communities.

NOT Lady Chatterley's Lover

Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Sat 18 & Sun 19 September; The Core Theatre, Solihull, Tues 28 September; The Swan Theatre, Worcester, Thurs 14 October; Albany Theatre, Coventry, Fri 15 October; Brierley Civic Hall, Sun 14 November; Civic, Stourport, Sun 21 November

When the unexpurgated version of DH Lawrence's most famous novel finally saw the light of day, some 30-plus years after the book had first been published, its explicit descriptions of sex - and use of words which were at the time unprintable - made it the subject of a watershed obscenity trial. In stark contrast, nobody will be getting their knickers in any kind of a twist about this Mel Brooks-style parody of the Midlands-born author's most notorious work.

Presented by well-regarded theatre company Happy Idiots and hailed for its Carry On-esque reworking of the novel, the show comes complete with 'high drama, high comedy and highly raised eyebrows'.





Razzle Dazzle!

Faye Brookes talks about her dream job - starring as Roxie Hart in a new tour of hit musical Chicago, which comes to the Midlands next month...

Complete with formation dancing, vaudeville influence and a healthy dose of fishnets, Tony and Olivier Award-winning Broadway and West End hit *Chicago* delves into the underbelly of the Windy City during the Jazz Age.

Based on real-life events in the Roaring '20s, the show centres on the character of Roxie Hart, a nightclub singer who shoots her lover. Together with her cell-block rival, double-murderess Velma Kelly, Roxie fights to stay off Death Row with the help of smooth-talking lawyer Billy Flynn...

Kander & Ebb's musical builds on many of the themes of their earlier hit, *Cabaret*, 'the corrupting hand of celebrity' and 'audience complicity in amorality' being the two most prominent ones.

"You see murder, corruption, adultery and all sorts of scandalous things," explains Faye Brookes, who plays Roxie. "But at the end of the day, it's that razzle dazzle that truly grips the audience. It's been so worth the wait to get this show on the road. I'm so happy to be a part of it! The role is really iconic too, so I'm absolutely thrilled.

"Roxie is so ambitious. She can be manipulative to get her own way, but it's because she dreams big and has a big heart. She loves her husband, Amos, but always retreats back to being like a child when she's around him. She doesn't stop until she gets her own way. In that sense she's very stubborn. There are many, many layers to Roxie, and she can say some very mean things. It's a very fine line between the things Roxie says and the journey we want the audience to go on with her. Part of it is having everyone on 'Team Roxie', regardless of her flaws. But I'm still discovering her - and I love her! She's feisty!"

Chicago originally opened on Broadway in 1996, since which time it's boasted plenty of

star names in its cast, including Patrick Swayze and Liza Minnelli. Faye is now catapulted into this hall of fame, joining the cast after starring in *Legally Blonde*, *Shrek The Musical* and ITV's *Coronation Street*.

"As a child, I definitely looked up to Ruthie Henshall, who took on this role. But now that I'm creating this character myself, I don't want to compare myself to other people's versions. It's all about putting your own heart and soul into the character. These are real characters based on a true story that we need to do justice to. As much as I greatly admire all these other women for paving the way - and now I'm incredibly excited to stand amongst these legends! - I'm finding my own Roxie! This is the first time I've been given this kind of creative freedom with a character, and I'm really relishing it.

"Every little detail of this show counts, right down to anyone who plays the music or grabs my hand at some point in the choreography. Just like everyone else brings a little piece of themselves to the stage and the performance, I have to do so as well. But it's also something that you do together, and with the audience too. The rest of the cast bring out something in me, and this group of people is incredibly special."

Darren Day, Sinitta, Djalenga Scott, Joel Montague and Davina De Campo are also appearing in the UK touring version.

And alongside such a star cast is a stellar score. With an opening number like *All That Jazz*, it's hardly surprising that the show boasts a Grammy Award-winning album.

But what's Faye's favourite moment in *Chicago*?

"Roxie (The Name On Everyone's Lips) is a huge moment in the show for my character. It's the time when Roxie finds out that she's becoming famous. I'm definitely enjoying this bit the most in rehearsals! But it's also the

most challenging because it's the most popular and the most well-known number from her.

"This is absolutely a dream role. I never thought it would be possible for me to play Roxie Hart. It's the most perfect timing for me in my career. I'm enjoying every single moment of it. Every day I'm discovering something new about the show and about Roxie. Moment by moment, minute by minute, I'm just falling more and more in love with her. And I hope the audience does too."

Although her focus right now is firmly on *Chicago*, Faye is also very much looking forward to the future: "I'm very open with my career. I think after the last two years we've all put our guard down and are willing and ready for anything. I definitely know that my bread & butter is musical theatre, though. It's what I've been trained to do, and there's nothing like it. I'm playing Roxie for at least the next year, but I would love to pursue this role for even longer because I've dreamed about this. I would love to further Roxie. I'm dreaming of the West End and Broadway for her! Theatre is definitely up there for me, but it doesn't mean I'm closing the door on TV at all. My options are wide open, and I'm taking each role as it comes."

So does Faye have some final words for anyone who hasn't yet snagged their ticket to this month's hottest musical?

"Don't think twice! We're going to blow your socks off! The talent in this cast is like nothing I've ever worked with before. From every angle of this show, you're going to be completely blown away."

Chicago shows at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Mon 25 to Saturday 30 October; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Mon 24 - Sat 29 January; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Mon 14 - Sat 19 March

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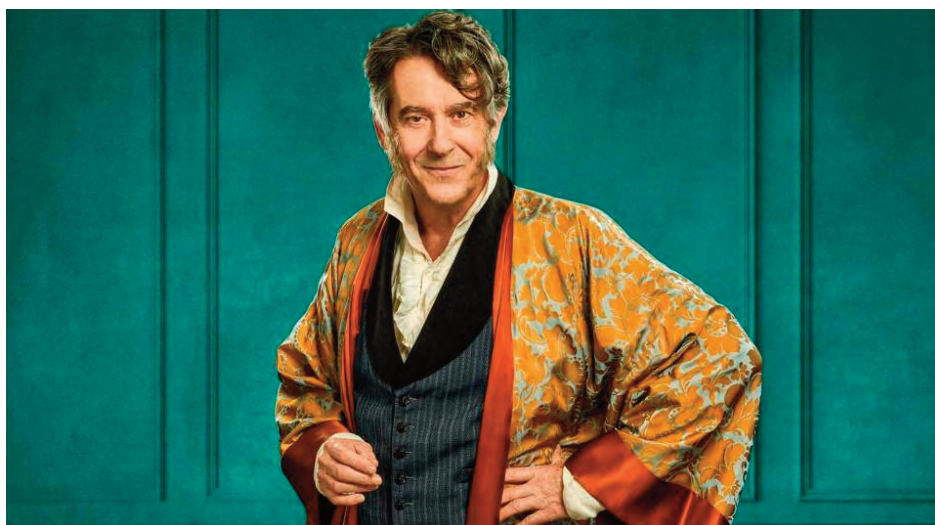
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Being Mr Wickham

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry,
Thurs 30 September - Sat 2 October

Jane Austen's roguish George Wickham here gets the opportunity to redeem himself. Set some 30 years after Austen's *Pride And Prejudice* ended, this one-man show stars Adrian Lukis, who memorably played Wickham in BBC TV's unforgettable adaptation of the novel. The production finds Wickham on the brink of hitting 60, still married to Lydia but with his looks on the wane and harbouring a great disdain for the "sanctimonious age of Victoria" in which he now finds himself living...

A must for any Austen fan, this well-reviewed hour of theatre has been co-written by its star.

The 39 Steps

Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham,
Thurs 9 - Sat 18 September

Anybody who remembers the various film versions of John Buchan's classic spy thriller would be hard-pressed to call any of them 'humorous'. So it's a bit weird, to say the least, to imagine an adaptation of the story that majors in belly laughs. Nonetheless, that's exactly what Blue Orange Theatre is here serving up as part of its 10th anniversary celebrations.

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. Four fearless actors take on all the roles in a show that promises plenty of fun.

Crimes In Egypt

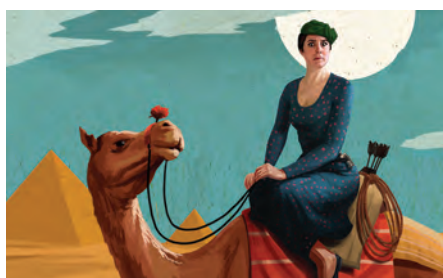
Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Tues 7
September; Royal Spa Centre, Leamington
Spa, Thurs 16 September

The award-winning New Old Friends theatre company's previous on-stage successes include the much-loved Falcon's *Malteser* and the Agatha Christie, Noel Coward & PG Wodehouse-inspired *Crimes On The Coast*. So if you caught either of those critically acclaimed productions, you'll no doubt be looking forward with eager anticipation to *Crimes In Egypt*.

This latest comedy adventure features Belgian 'detective extraordinaire' Artemis Arinae, who finds himself investigating a gruesome murder or several while taking a holiday cruise on the river Nile. Along the

way, a versatile cast of four brings to life all manner of quirky and curious characters, from lascivious lawyers and crooked captains to fastidious physicians and feuding femme fatales.

Expect a fast-paced and funny evening of absorbing theatre and dastardly crime.



Quentin Crisp: A Naked Hope

Swan Theatre, Worcester, Thurs 30 September

This one-man show debuted to rave reviews at the Edinburgh Festival and depicts the legendary Quentin Crisp in two distinct phases of his extraordinary life: firstly in the late 1960s, in his filthy Chelsea flat, where he surveys a lifetime of degradation and rejection; and then in New York in the 1990s, where, finally embraced by society, he regales the audience with his hard-earned philosophy on how to make the most of one's time on earth. "Life will be more difficult if you try to become yourself," he advises. "But avoiding this difficulty renders life meaningless. So discover who you are. And be it. Like mad!" The production is written and performed by Mark Farrelly.

Petticoat Council

Malvern Theatres, Fri 24 September

Storytelling and dance combine with a playlist of timeless folk arrangements and dancehall classics in this fascinating new offering from local writer Frankie Meredith. Telling a true tale, it focuses on a group of women from Bishop's Itchington in rural Warwickshire, who, in the post-Second World War years, became the first female-majority council in Britain, aiming to bring about hope and change on a local level whilst also inspiring a nation.

Dial M For Murder

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Mon 6 - Sat 11
September; Malvern Theatres, Mon 29
November - Sat 4 December

Tom Chambers stars in Frederick Knott's erotic tale of betrayal, passion and murder - best known, of course, from its 1954 Alfred Hitchcock-directed film version starring Ray Milland and Grace Kelly.

When Tony becomes convinced that wife Margot is having an affair, he devises a means of having her murdered while at the same time ensuring he has a watertight alibi. But not everything goes according to plan...



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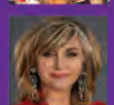
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This is not a full list - see website for full programme.



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The Play That Goes Wrong

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Mon 13 - Sat 18 September; Birmingham Hippodrome, Tues 26 - Sat 30 October; Malvern Theatres, Tues 9 - Sat 13 November

Mischief Theatre Company's *The Play That Goes Wrong* visits the region on the back of a fantastic reputation and hugely successful runs in the West End.

For those new to the show, it focuses on the Cornley Polytechnic Drama Society's attempt to put on a 1920s-set murder-mystery. The only trouble is, the bumbling thespians are more than a little accident-prone. So much so, in fact, that they're not even sure they'll manage to reach the curtain call...

All Above Board

The Albany Theatre, Coventry, Tues 7 & Wed 8 September; Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Thurs 9 September

All Above Board has been written 'in the best traditions of British farce' by Nigel Planer - best known for playing hippie Neil in the hit 1980s alternative comedy series, *The Young Ones*. The play focuses on an unlikely bunch of modern-day do-gooders, whose attempts to make the world a better place see them not only losing the plot but also compromising their morals and even being divested of their clothing!

Ticket holders for any of the three Albany Theatre performances are welcome to attend a pre-show Q&A with Nigel on the 7th.



The Stolen Year

Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Thurs 23 - Tues 28 September

MAC's associate company, Little Earthquake, here presents a theatrical installation which aims to share the lockdown experiences and perspectives of older Birmingham residents. From making banana bread, through watching *Tiger King*, to Clapping For Carers, the show examines the ways in which people's spiritual and political perspectives have been reshaped by the events, challenges and traumas of the Covid era. The show forms part of MAC's autumn 2021 Celebrating Age season.

The Girl Next Door

New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Tues 7 - Sat 18 September

Modern-day narcissism lives next door to wartime sacrifice in this 85th full-length play by the prolific and ever-brilliant Alan Ayckbourn.

Veteran actor Rob is suffering a case of the 2020 lockdown blues when he spies a 1940s housewife putting out the washing on the other side of the garden hedge. What follows is a bringing together of national crises past and present, as Rob finds that his understanding of himself - along with his perception of the world in which he lives - becomes seriously challenged...



The Canterbury Tales

Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton, Wed 15 September

One of English literature's most famous works, Geoffrey Chaucer's legendary epic - written at the end of the 14th century - presents a series of cautionary tales. The stories are supposedly recounted by a group of pilgrims as they travel together to the shrine of Saint Thomas Beckett at Canterbury Cathedral.

The work is best known to modern audiences for its spectacularly bawdy charms, featuring, as it does, more than its fair share of references to willies, bottoms and bodily functions.

This particular presentation has been deemed suitable for adults and older children aged 12-plus - although audiences are being warned to expect Middle Ages 'naughtiness and nonsense', tights and codpieces, and even some medieval swearing!

Judy & Liza

Lichfield Garrick, Fri 24 September; Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Tues 27 October

In 1964 Liza Minnelli performed on stage with her mother, Judy Garland, for the one and only time. Minnelli was on the threshold of great things, including winning a Tony Award a few months later and, a handful of years afterwards, the 'best actress' Academy Award for her performance in *Cabaret*. Garland, in stark contrast, was on an addiction-strewn pathway towards self-destruction that would ultimately lead to her untimely death before the decade was out...

Now celebrating its 10th anniversary, *Judy & Liza* showcases one of Hollywood's most famous and turbulent mother-daughter relationships, along the way boasting a playlist of memorable numbers including *Cabaret*, *Maybe This Time*, *The Trolley Song* and *The Man That Got Away*.





LIFE'S A DRAG...

Shane Richie reprises his West End role of Hugo/Loco Chanelle in the touring version of smash-hit musical Everybody's Talking About Jamie...

You first played Hugo/Loco Chanelle in 2019 and have recently returned to the role for the reopening of the show in the West End, prior to this UK & Ireland tour. How did playing the part come about?

I'd just come out of EastEnders, and I was kind of happy just to have a break because I knew I was going to be busy from April/May onwards. But then Nica Burns, the show's producer, got in touch with my manager. I'd heard a couple of tracks from the show, and I really liked them, but when you're in EastEnders, you're in a bit of a bubble, so I hadn't had the time to go and see it. So I went to see it with my manager, Phil Dale, and was like, 'Oh my God, I just love this show!' They said, 'We'd like you to play a Sheffield drag queen', and because it was so different to the next character I was lined up to play on stage - Archie Rice in The Entertainer - I thought, 'I need to do this'. I was in panto at the time, so I didn't get as much rehearsal time as I thought I would. It was seven weeks, then 'Bam!', me and Layton Williams, who plays Jamie, both started at the same time.

How has the past 18 months been for you with theatres closed?

When the Jamie tour got cancelled, I thought it would only be for a few weeks, but then we got to realise just how serious it was. There was no light at the end of the tunnel, although I always knew I was going into the castle for I'm A Celebrity, so I had that to look forward to. Before I went into I'm A Celebrity, I was asked to go back into the West End production in January, so when I was in the castle I was thinking, 'I need to lose a bit of weight so that I can fit back into the dress', knowing full well there was going to be no panto. Then, two days before I was due to go into rehearsal, the show had to be pulled. There were all these false starts, and it was so disheartening. I was alright at first, but when there was no light at the end of the tunnel for theatres, I started panicking.

What are you most looking forward to about going back out on the road again?

We started off in Sheffield and played to 24,000 people in three weeks. Then we got to do Northampton and Edinburgh before we reached Birmingham and were forced to cancel the tour. I thought, 'That's alright', because I thought it was only temporary and I was pretty tired. Then I went home and was wiped out for four days, not realising I'd got

Covid myself. As for starting up the tour again, I can't wait to see everyone in the cast and crew. There's a different buzz when you're on the road compared to being in the West End. It feels like we're bringing the circus to people, and they're so excited when we arrive.

How did you prepare to play Hugo's drag queen alter-ego, Loco Chanelle?

My dad used to run clubs in London, so from the age of 10 I was used to seeing men in drag. Then, on one of my very first tours, when I was 17 or 18, there were three drag queens and two strippers in the show. I knew drag queens, I grew up with them, and I knew Danny La Rue. It's funny now - if you'd have said to me 30-odd years ago that drag would be mainstream, I'd have said, 'Don't be stupid' - but drag *is* mainstream now and quite rightly so.

Did it take long for you to master the high heels?

I had a nightmare. With my left calf muscle, even when I just talk about putting on the heels, I can feel it twingeing. It's one thing standing in five-inch heels, it's another thing to walk in them and another thing entirely to dance in them. Layton and the other drag queens in the show helped me. I'd do the school run, then come home, put the heels on and walk around the kitchen. My wife was like 'Seriously, if the Tesco delivery man comes, you're not answering the door in high heels!'. I walked everywhere in them. When the show reopened, though, I struggled at first because my calves didn't have muscle memory. When I put the heels back on, I thought I'd only need a day to get used to them again. The producer said, 'Shane, you might want to practise', but I was like, 'Shut up', but then I put them on at home one day and I was a wreck. I couldn't walk in them. People say it's like riding a bike, but once you've not worn heels for a long time, it's so hard. The first couple of shows, I had a few little stumbles, but now I'm twirling again and I know what I'm doing.

What kind of feedback about your performance did you get from fans?

Those who've followed my career for years loved it, but there's a whole generation who would only have seen me as Alfie Moon. There'd be these young girls whose mums wanted to come see the show because they're going, 'What, Alfie's playing a drag queen? I'll

come see that with you, darling'. At the stage door, boys and girls and teenagers were there *with their parents!* If I can bring another generation to come see Jamie - the 40-plus-year-olds who wouldn't normally come see a show like this - and then they love it, then I'm happy. From the outside looking in, they might be like, 'Oh, it's about a gay boy who wants to wear a dress', but it's not about that at all. Right at the beginning, he's going, 'I'm gay, get over it'. It's not about someone being gay, it's about someone who dares to be different.

How important do you think that message is nowadays?

It's so relevant. We're in a country where there are so many social, political and cultural changes going on, and people are being divided. We're getting angry with each other; there's the Far Left and the Far Right, and then there's this show that goes, 'Be who you want to be, let others be who they want to be and celebrate diversity'.

What's your favourite musical number in Jamie?

For me, it's Over The Top at the end of act one. Lyrically it's all there and it sets everything up for act two, where Loco passes the baton to Jamie and goes, 'Right, your turn now'.

What couldn't you be on the road without?

I bring my guitar, a lot of books and my back-roller for the physical warm-up. I try to make my dressing room like a home-from-home, so I've got my iPad, my guitar, my music and my pictures of my family.

The tour calls at The Alexandra in Birmingham. Does the venue have any particular significance for you?

I did Scrooge there, among many other things, and every time I go to Birmingham I see so many changes. Culture is seeping out of the walls. They've got fantastic museums and fantastic shopping, and I'm really looking forward to going back.

.....

Everybody's Talking About Jamie shows at The Alexandra, Birmingham, from Tues 14 to Sat 18 September. The show then visits Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Tues 5 to Sat 9 October.



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What The Ladybird Heard

Birmingham Hippodrome, Thurs 16 - Sat 18 September

This stage version of the award-winning picture book by Julia Donaldson and Lydia Monks continues to delight its target audience of

children aged two and older.

When Hefty Hugh and Lanky Len set out to steal the farmer's prize cow, they soon find that the best-laid plans of mice and crafty robbers can sometimes be undone by the tiniest and quietest of creatures - namely, one very small ladybird...

Justin Live: The Big Tour

The Alexandra, Sun 12 September;
Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sun 13 March;
Malvern Theatre, Sun 24 - Mon 25 October

'Well-known songs, lots of dancing, hilarious comedy and plenty of slapstick fun' is the order of the day when CBeebies favourite Justin Fletcher MBE hits town with his very own show.

Justin's previous children's entertainment endeavours have included hit programmes Justin's House, Gigglebizz and Giggleguiz, as well as voiceover work as Harold from Thomas The Tank Engine, and numerous Christmas seasons spent in pantoland. One of his most successful undertakings is Something Special, a children's television show specifically aimed at youngsters with delayed learning and communication difficulties.



In The Night Garden

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury,
Fri 17 & Sat 18 September

If your little ones are big fans of the top-rated CBeebies television series, they're certain to enjoy this live version as well.

And it's not only the kids who're in love with the production - audience surveys and parents' reviews reveal that, for nine out of 10 adults, it's a 4.8-out-of-five theatrical experience!

Featuring full-size costumes and 'magical' puppets, the show is now in its 11th year, with this latest adventure going under the title of Igglepiggle's Busy Day.



Fireman Sam Live: Saves The Circus

The Prince of Wales Centre, Cannock,
Sat 25 September



Now an impressive 34 years into his firefighting career, Fireman Sam is still putting out blazes in Pontypandy and lighting up children's eyes the length and breadth of the UK.

In this latest adventure, perpetual troublemaker Norman Price decides to become the star of the circus. But with a tiger on the loose and faulty lights threatening everybody's safety, it's soon time for Fireman Sam to reach for his trusty hose and come to the rescue.



Back in Motion

Motionhouse dance company is back, promising to push the boundaries of performance further than ever before. What's On caught up with founder & artistic director Kevin Finnan MBE to find out what audiences can expect from brand-new show Nobody...

Leamington-based company Motionhouse exists to break new ground in the world of dance, its spectacular productions combining circus-dance with digital imagery in ambitious settings.

For co-founder Kevin Finnan MBE, inspiring as diverse an audience as possible is of the utmost importance: "What we at Motionhouse are focused on is producing work that's interesting and thought-provoking but also entertaining and engaging. The proof of that is in our outdoor tours. Everybody comes along - including people who wouldn't usually go to the theatre. And if you can create a show that makes them stand in the street, then you're on the right track because, for us, it's always about reaching the widest possible audience."

Motionhouse was co-founded by Kevin and Executive Director Louise Richards. The pair built up the company by earning money from teaching, and are committed to supporting those pursuing a career in dance and the arts.

Although it started small, Motionhouse now produces world-class shows which have toured globally, along the way building strong working relationships with numerous Midlands venues.

"We started a relationship with Birmingham Hippodrome back in 2008, and over the years the theatre has included our outdoor work as part of their programme. In 2012 they were our production partner for *The Voyage*, which was a huge spectacle in the centre of Birmingham where we built a full-scale ship for the London 2012 Festival, celebrating the Olympic and Paralympic games.

"It was a really exciting thing to do and saw us moving into that level of large-scale outdoor production. The Hippodrome was a fantastic support to us, and that developed into us performing some of our smaller outdoor shows outside the theatre, finally building up to the associate artist programme in 2018 and performing on the main stage."

Motionhouse also has a longstanding relationship with Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, collaborating on numerous projects, and with Warwick Arts Centre, considered by the company to be its home venue: "We always want to make connections, and we're very proud to be associated with these fine venues."

Although Motionhouse has been flying high for some time, Kevin is quick to point out that, just like everybody else, the company was left grounded by the pandemic: "Frankly, it was a really difficult time. I had young dancers who'd just joined us, and it was like you're seeing their career go by. I've also got dancers from Spain, who were living in Leamington and were locked in their accommodation, in a foreign country, knowing very few people. Motionhouse is a company that tours all year round, and we were on a hectic schedule. Then Covid came along and took it all away."

The pandemic may have brought to a halt the company's busy schedule, but the past 18-month period has been vital in terms of Kevin's brand-new production, *Nobody*: "I started out to make this show thinking about identity and who we are in the world. When the pandemic hit, I was really focused on this notion that we'd all been talking only to the people around us and to ourselves, because lockdown was quite a lonely time. I re-thought what I wanted to make a show about, and became really interested in the voice in our heads. Everybody talks to themselves, and everybody has a voice in their head, but it was during lockdown that it became clear to me that this is something we all go through.

"So when we were finally able to go back to work, I threw most of my original ideas away and started again. The show is really about the relationship with ourselves, and what the voice in our head means. I've created two sets of characters in *Nobody*. There are the everyday characters - ourselves in the normal world - and then there are the crows, who are the voices in our head."

Motionhouse's most ambitious show to date, *Nobody* will be like nothing the company has ever produced before: "This show is a real use of spectacle, combining dynamic and thrilling dancing with digital film. And we're engaging with the digital in a different way in performance now, so it's going to be a really exciting show."

Interestingly, it's also the first-ever Motionhouse show to have an interval: "I always generate momentum in our shows, so initially I wasn't keen on the prospect of an interval. But I've suddenly realised that having one allows us to do things we've never done before, like changing the environment.

"The break we had over lockdown has given us the chance to rethink and develop something new. We're coming back on a different level with this show in terms of what we can achieve with the dancing, the circus vocabulary, and the integration with digital.

"What's thrilling to all of us at Motionhouse is that we really seem to be moving forwards. Every show that we're bringing out has more people wanting it and more people going to it, and virtually every person that booked us prior to lockdown has kept their booking and pushed it back. So when *Nobody* comes out, it's got three full tours to do and loads of European dates because everyone has stayed with us."

Emerging on the other side of the pandemic, Kevin is keen to ensure that Motionhouse continues to thrive: "Over the last 10 years, the company has been going through a revolution of growing and developing. In the period just before the pandemic, we'd got to a level where there was one Saturday when we did four different shows in four different cities in four different countries, because we'd built the company up to that point.

"We want to get Motionhouse back to the level where we're running multiple companies and developing global touring, so that we can bring the absolute best to the whole of the UK and beyond."

Right now, however, Kevin's primary focus is the current production: "It's really strange when you've spent a lot of time with a show in your head, and then it's finally there before you, out on the stage. That's the thing about working on a performance - until you see it, it doesn't really exist. I'm proud of *Nobody*, and I'm really looking forward to seeing people's reactions to it and getting that buzz from the audience. At the moment, it feels like we're pregnant with it and we're waiting for that moment when it pops out!"

.....

Motionhouse presents *Nobody* at Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham, Friday 22 - Monday 25 October; Malvern Theatres, Tuesday 2 November; Birmingham Hippodrome, Friday 4 February and Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Wednesday 27 - Sat 30 April

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Message In A Bottle Birmingham Hippodrome, Fri 24 September

Acclaimed choreographer Kate Prince's creations are always worth an evening of any dance enthusiast's time - but even more so when they're accompanied by a soundtrack of brilliant music.

Given the piece's title, it's no surprise that the featured music on this particular occasion is Sting's, with 1979 track Message In A Bottle featuring alongside numerous other memorable tunes, including Roxanne and Every Breath You Take.

The show hasn't met with universal praise, being criticised in some quarters for being a by-numbers exercise, but

there's certainly plenty to recommend the production. Not least among its many highlights is the performance of the exuberant cast, who bring high energy and real commitment to everything they do.

All in all, Message In A Bottle is a worthy addition to Kate Prince's CV, which already features urban fairytale Into The Hoods and hit musical Everybody's Talking About Jamie.

The show is being presented at the Hippodrome in association with 2021's Birmingham International Dance Festival.



English Youth Theatre: The Nutcracker

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Fri 3 - Sat 4 September

Presenting full-length versions of classical ballets such as Giselle, Coppelia, The Sleeping Beauty and Swan Lake, English Youth Ballet (EYB) utilises professional principal dancers in its productions' leading roles.

The company performs in regional theatres across the UK, providing young dancers outside London with the opportunity to develop their talents within a professional setting.

This latest presentation sees EYB taking on Tchaikovsky's The Nutcracker, complete with its numerous much-loved classics, including the stirring Waltz Of The Flowers and the magical Dance Of The Sugar Plum Fairy.



The Ballroom Boys Act Two

The Albany Theatre, Coventry, Sun 26 September

The Ballroom Boys are very much 'back by popular demand', their previous tour, in 2019, having garnered some seriously complimentary reviews.

Strictly stars Ian Waite and Vincent Simone are here presenting a brand-new show, complete with dance routines aplenty - from the Viennese waltz and the foxtrot, to the rhumba and the Argentine tango.

The boys are joined by their 'stunning dance partners and a world-class singer'.



Get Dancing!



Mariposa

The world premiere of DeNada Dance Theatre's queer tragedy, inspired by Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*, shows at The Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome.

Birmingham International Dance Festival is back with a thrilling live programme of performances and events...

Birmingham International Dance Festival (BIDF) is back - and it's live too, both outdoors and in venues.

The city's signature festival, produced by Hippodrome-based DanceXchange, showcases some of the best contemporary outdoor performances and new commissions.

A theatrical world premiere also features, as do innovative collaborations with visual and performance artists.

This autumn edition follows on from a hugely successful online festival in June. Taking place at various locations across the city from 21 September until 3 October, the event boasts an imaginative and entertaining live programme,

shining a light on the region's amazing dance offer while at the same time engaging communities and celebrating diversity and inclusivity.

Also featured in the festival is a programme of dance workshops in schools and free public dance classes showcasing hip-hop, circus and flamenco. There's an augmented reality (AR) experience too, where people can connect via tablet devices to explore and interact with a series of imaginary digital dances.

Locations in which the BIDF programme will be taking place include Centenary Square, Digbeth, North Birmingham, Cannon Hill Park and the on-site Midlands Arts Centre.

Commenting on the festival, Lucie Mirkova, Head of Artistic Programmes at DanceXchange and Curator at BIDF, said: "We can't wait to be back outdoors presenting thrilling dance performances, and to finally return to venues after so long. The programme is really exciting, showcasing the amazing creativity of both UK and international artists. We are delighted to be taking the festival to communities across the city, so that you can experience amazing dance on your doorstep. Make sure you've got the dates in your diary and look out for more announcements in the coming weeks."

Check out our festival highlights below...



Frock

Stop Gap Theatre presents an uplifting dance riot set to a new art rock soundtrack - the result is a punkish celebration of individuality and difference.



Out Of The Deep Blue

Autin Dance Theatre uses dance, movement and masterful puppetry to tell a story about the climate emergency.



The Bull And The Moon

DeNada Dance Theatre's heart-warming, family-friendly tale blends contemporary dance, flamenco and theatre.



Beyond Borders

Witness the power of nature as the landscape changes around you in this live dance sequel to Beyond Borders, a film co-created with over 130 young dancers in the West Midlands.



Born To Protest

Working with young people from North West Birmingham, Just Us Dance Theatre challenges presumptions about black male and female figures to reveal vulnerability, fragility and the battle to prove oneself.



IRMÃ-sister

Damaedance explores the beauty and challenges of women's relationships - their strength, power and vulnerability - in an exhilarating and cutting-edge performance.

Birmingham International Dance Festival takes place from 21 September to 3 October
Visit: bidf.co.uk for full programme

WELCOME BACK!

As Warwick Arts Centre gets ready to reopen following a major transformation, What's On talks to its director, Doreen Foster, about the venue's bright future...

WARWICK ARTS CENTRE

With three cinema screens, a gallery upgrade, a new public performance space, three new hospitality venues and a redesigned building, Coventry's Warwick Arts Centre is reborn.

"We're upgrading from one cinema screen to three," says Director Doreen Foster (pictured below). "What's great about this expansion is that we will now show new releases as well as our popular independent and foreign films. We will develop a much deeper programme too, such as talks and 'in conversation with' sessions with directors. The important thing about having an independent cinema is to diversify the sector; not just the audience and films showing, but those who are involved generally. We hope to develop ways for new people to find their way into the film world, whether as makers or in any other capacity.

"Next up to mention is the Mead Gallery, which has moved from its previously hidden-away spot on the first floor to right off the ground floor foyer. We've recreated the same footprint but have also added the Fourth Gallery - a space in front of the main gallery and foyer. We'll use this for performances, public programming and workshops. Programming in these immediate public spaces will make the whole centre feel more alive."

Giving the building an open and welcoming feel is just as important as the upgrades themselves.

"We'll have three new places to eat and drink. The restaurant at the new main entrance, which now overlooks the central university plaza, is one that I hope people will see as truly special for Coventry. We're hoping people will travel into the city just to eat with us. There are just so many changes that improve Warwick Arts Centre's overall offering to the city. A new section of the building has also created this really lovely open foyer space. The idea was to really flood the space with light and give people more space to relax on busy evenings - and just to provide the general feeling of the venue being open and welcoming. If you can see what's happening inside, then you're more inclined to walk through the doors to have a look - so that's how the building has been designed. We're hoping that as we gradually increase our programming upon reopening, more people will come to see the arts centre as a

destination for so many different needs."

As well as drawing people in, Warwick Arts Centre will be going right into the heart of local communities.

"What you really need to do to develop audiences is go to them. So we will also have some specific programmes for getting people involved in co-commissioned and curated projects. We have this big Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games project called Playing Out, which is based in Canley, an area that sits next to the arts centre. It's designed to develop activities with communities there by collaborating with artists and then delivering it in their locality. Then some of those activities will be brought into the arts centre. They will all be new people who've never visited us before, even though they live next door. Getting the people of Coventry into the arts centre is really what this whole redesign has been about.

"Both ourselves and the City of Culture team have deliberately designed projects that create a sense of community and place. Absolutely, the appetite is there, but we're the ones who have to do the work to make sure that carries on. A building is just an empty vessel. Just like how a house isn't a home until you fill it with memories, an arts centre is just the same. My main agenda over the coming years is to locate us more strongly in Coventry. While a lot of our audiences come from places like Warwick and Kenilworth, it's really important that the people of Coventry understand that this is their arts centre. We're using City of Culture as the opportunity to raise our profile within the city through the projects that are funded, but we're also just grabbing that scope for promotion and visibility around the region and beyond."

Being fully embedded in the University of Warwick has an equal part to play in Warwick Arts Centre's outreach.

"We must have more than 200 come into the arts centre within a year for our creative learning programme. We also work with schools to produce their own summer festivals, including choosing their artists. We also host and provide space for a lot of the music and drama societies at the University of Warwick, so that they have a regular programme of performances in our main venues. We have the Music Centre within the

building too, which is used by over 2,000 students each year for free tuition. We are starting to collaborate with Coventry University on a number of City of Culture projects as well - so we're also making those new connections."

The venue will be looking to maintain its profile both nationally and internationally.

"People travel to other cities for culture, and I very much see people travelling to Coventry for that; both for the City of Culture and beyond. As an arts centre, we already see visitors coming from well outside the region - even from as far away as Glasgow. As a venue, we already have a reputation for presenting international work. We're part of that international circuit where we're visible beyond the region, and I very much see that continuing. The hope is that people will discover there's even more to Coventry than they thought. The reason we're City of Culture is that it was recognised how much untapped potential there is in Coventry. There's plenty of opportunity out there, and we just have to nurture it. We want artists and audiences to know that this city is home to the arts - and that Warwick Arts Centre is a vital piece of that jigsaw.

For information about future programming, visit:
warwickartscentre.co.uk



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Doreen's Top Eight

Warwick Arts Centre Director Doreen Foster selects some of her personal highlights from the venue's forthcoming autumn season of shows and festivals...



Coral Avenue 1-4 October

Air Giants present their joyful, interactive, inflatable robots, inspired by undersea life.



Write To Rave 2 October

Algoraves invite people to dance to music made using algorithms, often through live coding. Since first being coined in 2011 in London, the Algorave movement has gone global. Join poet, academic and social activist Debris Stevenson for a night of immersive electronic beats.



From The Source Festival 29-31 October

The festival features contemporary artists who draw their inspiration from jazz but reinterpret it for today. Contributors include:

Sarathy Korwar (29 October), who draws on Indian classical as well as jazz traditions; Birmingham rapper Kofi Stone (30 October), whose debut LP, *Nobody Cares Till Everybody Does*, featured collaborations with Loyle Carner, Maverick Sabre and Ady Suleiman; and MOBO-nominated saxophonist Camilla George and her Quartet (31 October).



Change Festival 5-7 November

A weekend of uplifting theatre, cabaret, discussions, music and craft, inviting us to rise up and create a better future. Highlights include The Coca Butter Club and Meet Me A Tree, HurleyBurley's opera for children under the age of two.



Cuckoo by Jaha Koo 10-13 November

A journey through 20 years of Korean history. Told by 'a bunch of talkative rice cookers', Cuckoo combines personal experience with political events and reflections on happiness.



The Midnight Bell 10-13 November

Another premiere, this time from New Adventures and Matthew Bourne, who delve into the pubs and bars of 1930s London for a tale inspired by the work of novelist Patrick Hamilton (Hangover Square, Twenty Thousand Streets Under The Sky).

Jack Dee: Off The Telly 3 December

The latest show from the veteran comic, who offers a ray of sunshine in these difficult times!



Beckett's Room 4-7 December

UK premiere by Dublin-based Dead Centre (whose *Hamnet* was a huge hit at Warwick Arts Centre in 2018). Beckett's Room tells the story of the Parisian apartment where playwright Samuel Beckett lived during World War Two. Told without performers, characters are heard through headphones as objects miraculously move and the story unfolds.



For information on all future programming, visit: warwickartscentre.co.uk

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Films released in September...

No Time To Die

CERT 12a (183 mins)

Starring **Daniel Craig, Ana de Armas, Rami Malek, Léa Seydoux, Ralph Fiennes, Naomie Harris**
Directed by **Cary Joji Fukunaga**

After many a pandemic postponement, Daniel Craig finally gets to pick up his Licence To Kill for the fifth and final time. This latest adventure sees everybody's favourite British secret service agent pitting his now-fiftysomething wits against a mysterious villain armed with dangerous new technology.

Actually, in this one, Bond has become everybody's favourite *former* British secret service agent, having retired to an idyllic life of peace and tranquility in sun-kissed Jamaica. But what's a highly trained ex-Double-O operative meant to do but put down his vodka martini (shaken, not stirred) and spring into action when CIA pal Felix Leiter turns up asking for help...

Craig has been a massive hit as Ian Fleming's famous super-spy, and is surely making the right decision by handing in his Walther PPK at the age of 53. Roger Moore played the role until he was nearly 60, a decision that did neither him nor the Bond legend any favours.

Released Fri 30 September



Annette

CERT 15 (141 mins)

Starring **Adam Driver, Marion Cotillard, Simon Helberg, Rila Fukushima, Natalie Mendoza, Ron Mael** Directed by **Leos Carax**

World-famous

soprano Anna and controversial comedian Henry fall in love and have a baby girl, who they call Annette.

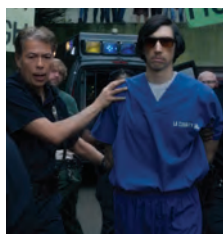
But all is not well for Henry, whose career suddenly hits skid row.

While the couple are on a yacht during a storm, a tragic accident leads to Anna falling overboard and losing her life.

In the aftermath of her death, infant Annette begins to sing in her mother's voice - and a now financially compromised Henry suddenly sees the chance to make some much-needed moolah...

The opening movie at Cannes this year, Annette has garnered plenty of positive reviews, with the much-respected Rotten Tomatoes website describing it as 'a magnificently ludicrous rock opera'.

Released Fri 3 September



Shang-Chi And The Legend Of The Ten Rings

CERT 12a

Starring **Simu Liu, Awkwafina, Tony Chiu-Wai Leung, Michelle Yeoh, Tim Roth, Benedict Wong** Directed by **Destin Daniel Cretton**

For those unfamiliar with Shang-Chi, he's one of Marvel's lesser-known superheroes. The character first appeared in comic books in the early 1970s, at the height

of the martial-arts craze that saw actor Bruce Lee catapulted to global superstardom.

The film's storyline sees Shang-Chi encounter the mysterious Ten Rings organisation, the international terrorist group responsible for kidnapping Tony Stark in the first Iron Man movie...

Marvel is promising a film boasting 'stunning visuals, mind-blowing action and a relatable story'. They have a pretty good track record at delivering all three of the above, so hopes are high for this latest entry in the company's Cinematic Universe.

Released Fri 3 September



Here Today

CERT 12 (93 mins)

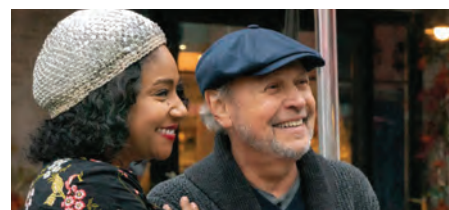
Starring **Billy Crystal, Tiffany Haddish, Dierdre Friel, Alex Brightman, Matthew Broussard, Max Gordon Moore** Directed by **Billy Crystal**

Billy Crystal's first outing as a director in 20 years sees him wisecracking his way through a sometimes-poignant story about the benefits of living in the moment and savouring meaningful relationships.

Crystal's Charlie Burnz, an aging comedy writer, is in the early stages of dementia when he meets aspiring singer Emma Payge (Haddish) and embarks on a platonic and life-affirming friendship...

There's plenty to enjoy here - not least the performance of the always-watchable Crystal - but ultimately the film fails to decide which particular chords it's mainly hoping to strike with its audience.

Released Fri 3 September



Films released in September...

Respect CERT tbc (145 mins)

Starring **Jennifer Hudson, Forest Whitaker, Audra McDonald, Saycon Sengbloh, Hailey Kilgore, Brenda Nicole Moorier**
Directed by **Liesl Tommy**

This two hour-plus memorial to Aretha Franklin, who died three years ago, finds Jennifer Hudson showing all due respect to the legendary Queen of Soul. The performance of Academy Award-winning Hudson - whom Franklin handpicked to portray her in the biopic - is the most impressive aspect of a movie that tries hard to give a real sense of Aretha, both on-stage and off.

Plenty of key elements of Franklin's life receive coverage, including her involvement in the civil rights movement and her friendship with Martin Luther King Jr. Unfortunately, though, the film never really settles anywhere for long enough to gain the kind of traction achieved by other music-legend biopics like *Bohemian Rhapsody* and *Judy*.

Released Fri 10 September



Copshop CERT 12a

Starring **Frank Grillo, Gerard Butler, Toby Huss, Ryan O'Nan, Tait Fletcher, Alexis Louder**
Directed by **Joe Carnahan**



Fans of action movies will surely be salivating at the prospect of Joe Carnahan directing Frank Grillo and Gerard Butler in what promises to be a no-holds-barred explosion of violence and mayhem. Finding himself on the hit list of hired gun Bob Viddick, wily con artist Teddy Murreto hatches a plan to save his sorry ass - by getting himself arrested. Problem is, Viddick is an assassin who's committed to leaving no hit unmurdered, meaning that he soon comes up with a plan of his own.

When a competing assassin arrives on the scene, the stage is suddenly set for some serious carnage...

Released Fri 10 September

48 whatsonlive.co.uk

Malignant CERT tbc (111 mins)

Starring **Annabelle Wallis, Maddie Hasson, George Young, Michole Briana White, Jacqueline McKenzie, Jon Lee Brody**
Directed by **James Wan**

Madison Mitchell (Wallis) is having visions of brutal murders - killings which, she comes to realise, are actually taking place in real life... Categorised as a 'horror thriller' movie, *Malignant* has got plenty going for it, including the man in the director's chair: James Wan. Wan is a past master at films in this genre, having co-created the *Saw* and *Insidious* franchises and realised *The Conjuring Universe*. Expect spine-tingling scenes and mindbending moments aplenty.

Released Fri 10 September



Herself CERT 15 (97 mins)

Starring **Clare Dunne, Molly McCann, Ruby Rose O'Hara, Ian Loyd Anderson, Harriet Walter, Cathy Belton**
Directed by **Phyllida Lloyd**



This Dublin-set movie follows the story of a battered wife who, escaping the tyranny of her abusive husband, ends up building a house for herself and her two daughters... A standout film at last year's Sundance Festival, *Herself* is helmed by Phyllida Lloyd, who made her big-screen directorial debut with the altogether frothier *Mamma Mia!*. Since that pop-cornball film-career opener, Lloyd has ably demonstrated that she's equally at home with far more serious material. She looks set to garner plenty of accolades for this latest addition to her increasingly impressive CV.

Released Fri 10 September



Cinderella

CERT PG (113 mins)

Starring **Camila Cabello, Billy Porter, Idina Menzel, Nicholas Galitzine, Pierce Brosnan, Minnie Driver**
Directed by **Kay Cannon**

With its comical Ugly Sisters, matchmaking fairy godmother, drop-dead-gorgeous Prince Charming and fits-one-foot-only glass slipper, Cinderella can justifiably lay claim to being the most popular of all fairytales - so this live-action version of the truly terrific tale should have no trouble whatsoever

finding its audience.

With Camila Cabello in the titular role and old hands Pierce Brosnan and Minnie Driver bringing a wealth of movie-making experience to proceedings, Prime Video may well be on to a real winner here - particularly with Billy Porter starring as a genderless fairy godmother. "Magic has no gender," says Porter. "This is a classic fairytale for a new generation, and I think that the new generation is really ready for it."

Released Fri 3 September (Prime Video)



Venom: Let There Be Carnage

CERT tbc

Starring **Tom Hardy, Woody Harrelson, Michelle Williams, Stephen Graham, Naomie Harris, Reid Scott** Directed by **Andy Serkis**

Despite almost universally being described as a train wreck of a movie, Venom was the seventh highest-grossing film of 2018. Hence this sequel.

Tom Hardy's performance in the first film didn't exactly pull up any trees but was

nevertheless considered to be one of the movie's saving graces. The usually excellent Hardy will no doubt be aspiring to better things in this second outing as the Marvel Comics character.

He's joined by Woody Harrelson as Cletus Kasady, a psychotic serial killer who becomes the host of an alien symbiote known as - yep, you guessed it - Carnage.

NEW DATE: Fri 15 October

Gunpowder Milkshake

CERT 15 (114 mins)

Starring **Karen Gillan, Lena Headey, Carla Gugino, Michelle Yeoh, Joanna Bobin, Freya Allan** Directed by **Navot Papushado**

A female assassin goes rogue in order to save the life of eight-year-old Emily, whose father, unbeknown to the youngster, has been killed by the very assassin who's now trying to keep her safe... Navot Papushado goes for style over substance in this colourful over-the-top actioner that puts its female characters very much front and centre. If you avoid the mistake of expecting too much from the movie, there's every chance you might actually find something to enjoy about it.

Released Fri 17 September



The Many Saints Of Newark

CERT tbc

Starring **Alessandro Nivola, Leslie Odom Jr, Jon Bernthal, Vera Farmiga, Michael Gandolfini, Billy Magnussen**
Directed by **Alan Taylor**

The 1967 race riots in Newark, New Jersey, provide the backdrop to this eagerly anticipated movie, a cinematic prequel to hit gangster television series The Sopranos. Twenty-two-year-old Michael Gandolfini steps into the formidable shoes of his late father, James, to play a young version of future mob boss Tony Soprano. Michael hadn't seen even so much as a single episode of The Sopranos before he became involved in the Many Saints Of Newark project. To prepare for the challenge of playing the character his dad made famous, he ended up watching all six seasons of the show in as many weeks, as well as listening to hours of his father's monologues. The film's support cast includes Goodfellas' star Ray Liotta.

Released Fri 24 September



DIAL M FOR MURDER

The touring production of Frederick Knott's famous thriller is now back on the road after lockdown...

As he restarts the lockdown-halted tour of the classic Frederick Knott thriller, *Dial M For Murder*, show director Anthony Banks is excited that live theatre is up and running again: "You can't beat it; that shared experience is so much better if it's live because it's much more visceral, whether it's through suspense and tension or the collective release that comes from the production's comedic moments."

Whilst saddened that the tour, which started in January 2020, had to be cut short, Anthony kept himself busy making a short film - *The Gap*, written by Jim Cartwright and starring Sue Johnston and Matthew Kelly - and directing a revival of the drama, *Herdin' Cats*, for the reopening of the Soho Theatre last May. He's pleased to be back on the road with *Dial M For Murder*: "In a way, it's like doing a

revival. It gives us the chance to make it even better.

"The show is the opposite of a whodunnit because we know who's going to do it from the beginning," says the director, who also had audiences on the edge of their seats with his critically acclaimed touring production of *The Girl On The Train* in 2018.

"This is not a play where you can hear the characters thinking. They have the thought and they do it, and that's really quite modern. Given the success of Tarantino's films and *Killing Eve* on television, I think there's a real appetite for this kind of storytelling."

The instigator of the crime here is Tony Wendice, a former tennis pro. When he discovers that his socialite wife, Margot, is having an affair, he blackmails an old

university pal into committing her murder for him.

No stranger to the genre (his other credits include *Gaslight* and *Strangers On A Train*), Anthony notes that Frederick Knott's masterpiece combines traditional thriller tropes - such as a story that hooks people so that all they can focus on is 'I wonder what happens next' - with an exploration of social class: "They really are rare, these plays, because what you usually get is political history, socio-economic observation or your standard whodunnit. This play takes elements from all of those and combines them in a unique way."

Cambridge-educated Knott was a wannabe screenwriter who penned the stage play as a stepping stone into the movies - except that nobody would produce it. Instead *Dial M For*

Murder was originally put on in 1952 by the BBC as a live broadcast. It was such a hit with viewers that West End impresarios were suddenly knocking on Knott's agent's door, eager to stage it.

The play ran in London for a year, went to Broadway, and was then translated and performed around the world. Then, in 1954, it was filmed by Alfred Hitchcock. Ray Milland and Grace Kelly starred as Wendice and Margot, with Knott himself supplying the script.

Hitchcock shot it in 3-D, but the process was technically glitchy and cinemagoers had grown tired of the format. So after a few half-empty screenings, it was released in 2-D and became a big box-office success.

More than six decades later, and with the three dimensions of the stage at his disposal, Anthony sees it as a timeless story with a juicy premise: "It's a bit like Macbeth in that this guy has a sniff of something that might be possible and two hours later he's become a complete sociopath. It's about tumbling into the darkest place you could possibly imagine."

Another draw for the director is the way in which Knott's play presents a vivid picture of social class in London through its main characters: the wealthy heroine, her charming husband who has married into her money, a struggling writer who has become her lover, a working-class Northern detective, and the hired killer, who is a member of 'the old boy network' of former male-only school chums. The 1950s-penned text doesn't state a specific time frame, so Anthony has chosen to root his production in 1963.

"It feels contemporary because furniture shops now are full of Sputnik lamps with balls shooting out of them, L-shaped sofas and '60s-style patterns on curtains and upholstery. Plus, suits and dresses have a very '60s cut."

The play also deals with very contemporary themes: the North-South divide, imbalances between men and women, and disparities between haves and have-nots, with one character remarking 'People with capital don't realise how lucky they are'.

Leading man Tom Chambers, who came to fame as Sam Strachan on *Holby City* and was crowned *Strictly Come Dancing* champion in 2008, likes exploring Wendice's complexities:

"We're not going down the obvious 'cad' root. Our take on Tony is as a friendly, warm person who's caring and honest, but behind the scenes he's working a whole load of stuff out."

During lockdown Tom was in an online production of *Apollo 13: The Dark Side Of The Moon*, a show about the US's thwarted mission to the moon in 1970. He appeared alongside his *Dial M* co-stars, Michael Salami and Christopher Harper.

"I was so grateful to have a project to occupy my mind that wasn't about homeschooling or anxiety and uncertainty."

And he's thrilled to be going back on the road: "You can feel the energy in the air, and it now feels more exciting and poignant than ever. Absence makes the heart grow fonder, and it's been such a long absence."

Taking over from Sally Bretton (who did the tour last year and is now busy filming *Not Going Out*) is Diana Vickers: "I'm a massive fan of the genre, so saying yes was a no-brainer for me. It's a bit daunting, though. I'm excited but terrified at the same time!"

The *X-Factor* semi-finalist turned actress and writer has done some comedy stand-up recently, as well as writing a TV series. The last time she toured with a play was in 2019, when she appeared in an acclaimed version of John Osborne's *The Entertainer*.

Diana sees her character of Margot as "smart and a bit of a risk-taker": "She feels very trapped in her situation with Tony, constantly running around after him. Then she meets novelist Max Halliday and he's new and fresh and makes her feel alive. I think she quite likes the danger of having an affair under her husband's nose."

Margot is very much a woman of her time as far as Diana is concerned: "She doesn't really have a voice. The way the inspector speaks to her is almost like, 'Shush, woman, the boys will deal with this'."

Diana is happy to note that times are changing: "There's definitely been progress, especially in this industry. There are a lot of female-generated or female-dominated projects now. Women are speaking out, whereas in Margot's time, they couldn't."

The object of Margot's affection, Max Halliday, is played by Michael Salami, an America-born, London-raised actor whose CV includes *Just A Couple* and *Hollyoaks*.

"Max is deeply in love with Margot and wants to be with her," explains Michael, "but in societal terms it just wouldn't work - this young, penniless black guy who is in love with a gorgeous white aristocrat."

The character's ethnicity isn't stated in the script. "At first, when I was approached to play him, I thought, 'But he's white'. But there's nowhere in the text that refers to his race, and I think it's very brave and clever of Anthony to do it this way. It raises interesting questions."

Since the tour was put on hold, Michael has mostly been doing voiceover work and spending time with his six-year-old son. He enjoyed the *Apollo 13* experience but is keen to get back to live theatre. "I miss the crowds. I miss hearing a pin drop, I miss the laughter and the applause. Stage work is something you can't beat. You have to ride every mistake and every beat."

Fellow cast member Christopher Harper agrees. Best known for playing Nathan Curtis in *Coronation Street*, and with a long line of theatre credits to his name, Christopher is on double duty here. In act one he's Captain Lesgate - aka Charles Swann - the old acquaintance whom Tony tracks down and manipulates into becoming a murderer. "He's a wonderful, slimy, dark character," grins Christopher, who, in act two, plays Inspector Hubbard. "Hubbard's not your normal comes-in-and-solves-it kind of guy. There's something odd or rotten going on there as well."

Christopher feels there's now a renewed appetite for live productions: "I'm regularly reading stories to my little boy - and being carried away by a tale is something that's more and more appetising, whether it's on television or being read to you at bedtime."

"But being told a story live - in an auditorium, with a group of people and the suspension of disbelief that floats in the air - is something else again. I think audiences are feeling that anew, and it's something I'm proud to be a part of."

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Dial M For Murder shows at Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, from Mon 6 to Sat 11 September, and at Malvern Festival Theatre from Mon 29 November to Sat 4 December

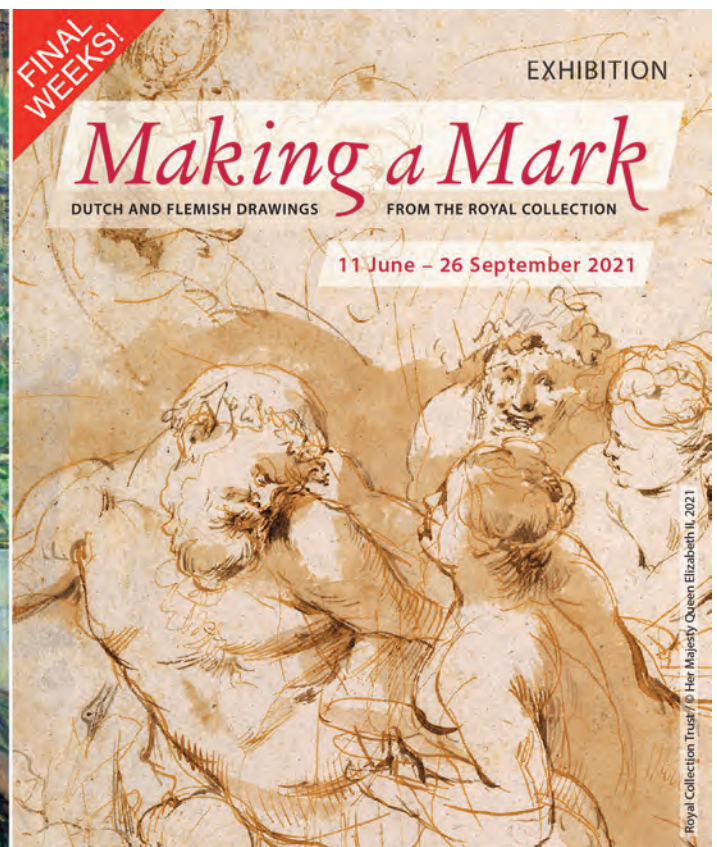
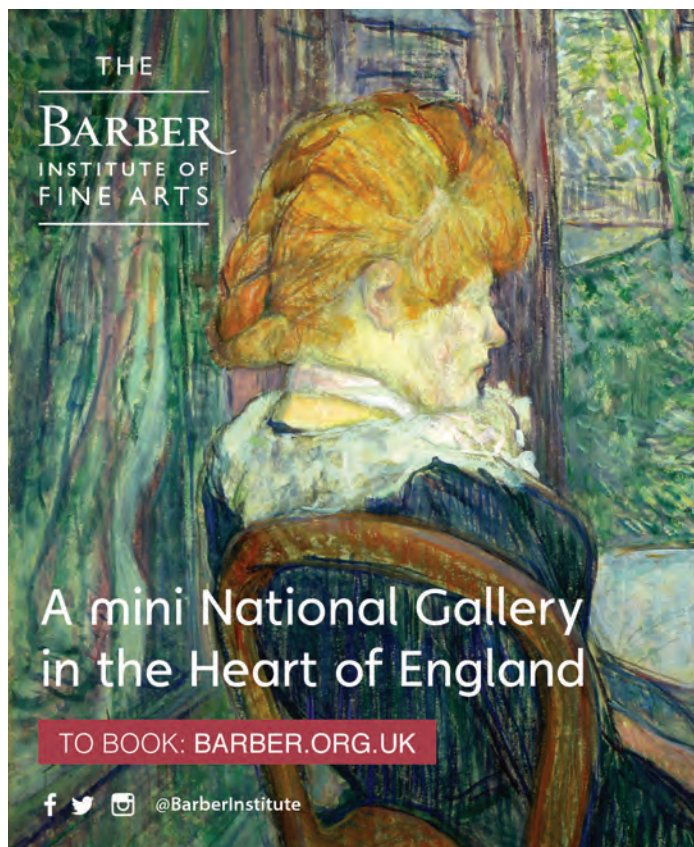


Grinling Gibbons: Centuries In The Making

Compton Verney Art Gallery & Park,
Warwickshire, Sat 25 September -
Sun 30 January

Seventeenth century British woodcarver Grinling Gibbons is often referred to as 'the Michelangelo of Wood'.

Praise indeed for a man whose level of talent was profound, but who nowadays rarely receives the wider acclaim that his brilliance undoubtedly deserves. Created in partnership with the Grinling Gibbons Society, Centuries In The Making explores the life, genius and legacy of Gibbons through sculpture and carving in wood and stone, drawings and sketches, portraits, still-life paintings and documents. Also showcased is the work of the 11 finalists in the Grinling Gibbons Tercentenary Award. The pieces will be displayed throughout Compton Verney's Collections galleries.



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The Butterfly Effect

Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham, Sun 25 September - Wed 17 November

An exhibition inviting viewers to think about how artists represent change in an often complex world, and how opportunities for social and cultural renewal can emerge from the Covid crisis, The Butterfly Effect features work by a wide selection of practitioners, including LS Lowry, Barbara Hepworth and Gabriel

Rossetti.

The exhibition, co-curated by seniors from MAC's Culture Club, reflects on what has been an era of rapid transformation, encouraging the viewer to reconsider the featured artworks through a newly acquired pandemic-created lens.

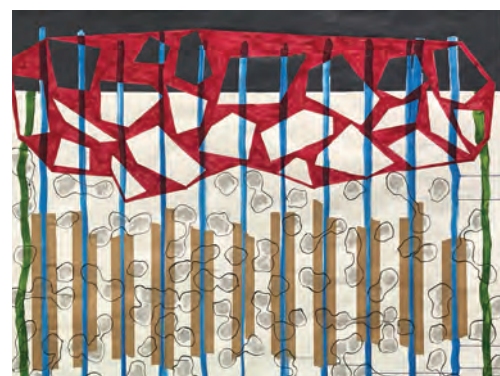
We Thought About It A Lot...

Ikon Gallery, Birmingham,
Wed 15 September - Sun 21 November

British artists Bill Woodrow and Richard Deacon have been collaborating for more than 30 years. For this exhibition of their 'shared drawings', they agreed that they wouldn't reveal the authorship of the individual contributions...

"We agreed not to say which bits had been made by which person," explains Bill. "People are very adamant that they know, but by and large, they're wrong. Richard is predominantly an artist who works in the abstract. My work is generally figurative in some form or other."

"What's been interesting is the way that the figurative and abstract, without saying who does what, have come together and produced this sort of third area."



Making A Mark

Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Birmingham,
until Sun 26 September

The Royal Collection Dutch and Flemish Old Master drawings here presented alongside some of the Barber's own masterworks on paper, have been selected for display by students from the University of Birmingham.

The exhibited artworks were chosen from more than 700 drawings, among which are pieces by Golden Age 17th-century artists such as Rubens, Van Dyck, Rembrandt and Brueghel.

The collection also includes work from the 16th, 18th and 19th centuries by talented artists whose names are nowadays less familiar.

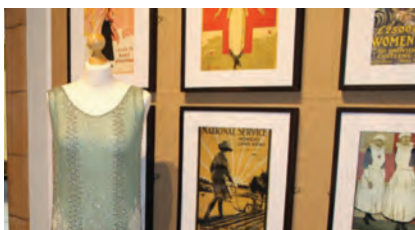


Fashioning Peace

County Museum at Hartlebury Castle,
Worcestershire, until December

This fascinating temporary exhibition explores how the changes brought about through the Great War were reflected in clothing and fashion from 1918 through to the Roaring '20s.

"Post-war fashion spoke of a new and liberated mood," explains Rachel Robinson, manager of the County Museum. "Fashioning Peace is about surviving and thriving after the Great War, an aspiration which is reflected in the functionality and fun of the costumes on display."



Fantasy Pop

Wolverhampton Art Gallery,
until 5 December

Paintings, works on paper and sculptures all feature in this latest exhibition to be drawn from Wolverhampton Art Gallery's renowned Pop Art collection.

While some of the pieces examine and celebrate the obsessive nature of popular culture, celebrity and technological advancements in the 1960s, others are inspired by the space race of the mid-20th century, depicting elements of the impossible and unexplained, as well as ethereal and futuristic utopias powered by other-worldly technology.



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Events previews from around the region



The Photography Show & The Video Show

NEC, Birmingham, Sat 18 - Tues 21 September

As Europe's biggest photography and moving-image event, The Photography Show & The Video Show caters for everyone, from budding beginners to seasoned pros.

Canon, Olympus, Nikon, Sony and Fujifilm are just some of the big brands exhibiting at the show, which features plenty of talks and demos for visitors to get involved in. Among these is The Studio which offers an insight into how to produce engaging video content. Shutter Street features sessions on street photography and all things urban while Analogue Spotlight is packed with talks, tips, tricks and expert insights from film photographers.

Guest speakers announced so far include British photographer & director Rankin, fine art photographer Brooke Shaden, award-winning blogger & food photographer Donna Crous, smartphone photography guru Mike Kus, and celebrity photographer Rory Lewis.

Adult Nights

Legoland Discovery Centre, Birmingham, Fri 24 September; Fri 22 October & Fri 26 November

Ever fancied visiting Legoland Discovery Centre but didn't have any little ones in your life to take along? Well not to worry, because now you can justifiably 'go it alone',

courtesy of the venue's once-a-month adults-only event.

Featuring workshop classes held by master model builders, Legoland enthusiasts will be able to 'get constructing' in special creative play sessions, with plenty of prizes up for grabs throughout the night.



Malvern Autumn Show

Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Worcestershire, Fri 24 - Sun 26 September



Celebrating the change in seasons, Malvern Autumn Show returns with its first-ever three-day-long event.

The show includes plenty of seasonal family fun, with world records being broken in the CANNA UK National Giant Vegetables Championship, animals of all shapes and sizes on the Family Green, and the chance to take a step back in time at the Vintage Village. An open-air RHS flower show offers green-fingered visitors the opportunity to check out displays and pick up some top tips and tricks, while the show's Autumn Potager Theatre hosts a line-up of guests and celebrities sharing seasonal gardening tips and trends for 2022.

Foodies can browse the brand-new Food & Drink Village - featuring the hugely popular Malvern Gin Show - and replenish their energy with an array of artisan treats.

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Events previews from around the region



Saxon Weekender

Tamworth Castle, Sat 18 & Sun 19 September

Travel back in time to experience Tamworth during the Saxon period, courtesy of a jam-packed weekend of activities - including pottery making, wattle & daub construction, cooking and purse making.

Demonstrations of Saxon burial rites and battle reenactments take place in the castle's grounds across the weekend.

Visitors can also check out the brand-new Battle & Tribute exhibition, providing an in-depth exploration of Tamworth's Saxon history and featuring a number of pieces from the famous Staffordshire Hoard.



International Model Air Show

Weston Park, Shropshire, Fri 3 - Sun 5 September

Now in its 25th year, the International Model Air Show showcases a variety of model and full-sized aircraft displays, off-road and circuit model car racing, model boats and helicopters.

As well as featuring a craft fair and a host of trader and food & drink stalls, the show also boasts live music in the evenings and a family-friendly funfair.

On the Saturday night, a firework and pyro spectacular will feature 'stunning' displays from Glider FX - with computer-controlled pyrotechnics and lights - and a firework finale.

Medieval Experience

Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove, Sat 25 & Sun 26 September

Step back in time to the middle ages as re-enactment group the Beaufort Company take over Avoncroft. As well as learning about the history of the period, visitors can also enjoy numerous staged battles taking place across the weekend. Meanwhile, under the 14th century Guesten Hall roof, demonstrations of dancing and music provide a relaxing change of pace from the clash of sword and bang of cannon.



Oktoberfest

Alton Towers, Staffordshire, Sat 11 September - Sun 3 October

Alton Towers is this month set to 'go Bavarian' with its very own Oktoberfest. Attractions include themed entertainment for visitors of all ages, a line-up of food & drink outlets, and the chance to experience a selection of rollercoasters and family rides.



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Events previews from around the region



Peaky Blinders Nights

Black Country Living Museum, Fri 10 & Sat 11, Fri 17 & Sat 18 and Fri 25 & Sat 26 September

Ahead of the sixth and final series of the hit television show, Peaky Blinders fans can don their flat caps and flapper dresses and walk in the footsteps of the show's iconic characters. The Black Country Living Museum's immersive experience brings to life the popular BBC series with the help of 1920s-themed cocktails, live music, street theatre and plenty more.

Many of the series' scenes have been filmed at the museum, with the Canal Arm acting as Charlie Strong's Yard - the location in which numerous deals and disagreements have taken place, as well as the famous tea party scene.

Other museum locations featured in the show include the canal bridge - a popular place for illicit meetings - and St James's School, which has been used as the backdrop to a grisly murder.

Autumn Steam Gala

Severn Valley Railway,
Thurs 16 - Sun 19 September

Train fanatics this month have the chance to ride behind the best of the Severn Valley Railway's home fleet (plus up to two very special VIP guest locomotives). Starting your journey in Bewdley, Kidderminster or Bridgnorth, discover the wonders of the Severn Valley, with 96 miles of haulage available during the day, and another 128 overnight.

Refreshment rooms and pubs will be open throughout the event, which will also include a daytime stop-off at The Engine House.



Spudfest

National Forest Adventure Farm,
Staffordshire, Sat 4 - Sun 26 September

Every weekend throughout September, visitors to NFAF can get their hands dirty by digging up their own spuds from the farm's potato field - for free!

Hop on board the Spud Shuttle tractor and ride around the animal paddocks before being dropped off for some potato-picking fun.

Other areas of the farm, including the outdoor adventure play, the animal barn and soft play, will also be open.



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SUSTAINABLE MAC

EcoFest returns to Midlands Arts Centre this month, providing an insight into how we can work towards a more sustainable lifestyle



Birmingham's Midlands Art Centre (MAC) is this month hosting its fifth annual EcoFest. Taking place on Sunday 19 September as part of Great Big Green Week - a national initiative celebrating action on climate change - the festival will showcase a programme of green events, including exhibitions, talks, creative workshops and screenings.

Together with other local eco-friendly organisations, MAC will look at how people can work together to make a positive impact on the environment.

Featured events include talks by Extinction Rebellion, Climate Action Network West Midlands, Plastic Free Moseley, ecobirmingham, Councillor Waseem Zaffar and artist Aiden Moseby. EcoFest's celebrity guest, horticulturalist and journalist Alys Fowler, will also be hosting a talk.

A workshop presented by one of MAC's artist tutors will encourage families to get creative and learn how to re-use recyclable materials.

As well as creative workshops and artist installations - including an accessible event held by d/Deaf artist Olivier Jamin - there will be a number of stalls hosted by environmental groups (including Animal Rebellion, Incredible Surplus and Birmingham Trees For Life), where visitors can find out more about green living.

A screening of *Escape From Extinction* will show in MAC's cinema at 3pm. Narrated by Helen Mirren, the film examines the work of major zoological organisations as they race against the clock to preserve the millions of species disappearing in today's Sixth Mass Extinction. Tickets are now available to purchase online.

Music by MAC Makes Music students - created as part of inclusive songwriting celebration the Eco Music Project - also features, while the venue's new Café KILN will be more environmentally friendly, whether that be through the food cooked or its plastic usage. KILN is actively encouraging visitors to buy and use its reusable cups - or to take along their own to

use time and time again.

A range of vegetarian and vegan options is always available on KILN's menu - both to keep MAC's catering inclusive and to push its sustainability goals even further. The restaurant also offers alternatives to dairy, with oat and coconut milk available.

Carl Finn, Head of Catering & Hospitality, said of KILN's involvement at EcoFest: "We at KILN are excited to be involved in EcoFest 2021 - it's an event that we have close to our hearts. Although we strive to be as sustainable as we can, we are all still learning, and this event will help us to become better. For EcoFest 2021, we will be making our express grab & go 100% vegan, and will also be hosting a Dirty Vegan street food tent. Can't wait to see you there."

.....
EcoFest takes place at MAC Birmingham on Sunday 19 September. Check out the venue's website for updates on programming and timings - macbirmingham.co.uk/event/ecofest

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Fun things to do, whatever the weather...

Bear Grylls Adventure

National Exhibition Centre, Marston Green, Birmingham, B40 1NT
Website: beargryllsadventure.com

Celebrity adventurer Bear Grylls has certainly pulled out all the stops with this popular visitor attraction.

Activities include high ropes, indoor archery, indoor climbing, escape rooms and a Royal Marines-inspired assault course.

For the 'more courageous' (as if some of the above didn't require courage!), The Fear Zone challenges you to 'sharpen your mind and find your inner strength' by taking on the challenge of navigating the area in complete darkness.

Alternatively, try venturing to the depths of the deep blue sea with Shark Drive (pictured). The site's tropical tank allows adventurers to get 'up close and personal' with black tip reef sharks and cownose rays.

Fancy experiencing the thrill of free-falling at 12,000ft without having to jump out of a plane? Then iFly is for you. This weightless adventure takes place in a wind tunnel and comprises two one-minute flights to get the adrenaline pumping.



Treetop Adventure Golf

Bullring Shopping Centre, Birmingham, B5 4BA
Website: adventuregolf.com/birmingham

This brand-new mini golf experience opened its doors at Birmingham's Bullring Shopping Centre earlier this year.

Set within 'a mighty rainforest', Treetop Adventure Golf features two 18-hole indoor courses.

Participants can choose to tackle the Tropical Trail's Mystic Wood or the ruins of the Ancient Explorer. There's also a bonus 19th hole that gives players the chance to win a free round should they achieve a hole-in-one.

The attraction recently announced brand-new inclusive 'quiet sessions', which will take place on the second Sunday of each month from 9am to 11am.



The Floodgate

104-108 Floodgate St, Birmingham, B5 5SR
Website: thefloodgate.co.uk

An 'experiential night out like no other', The Floodgate offers its visitors the chance to immerse themselves in a world of neon colour and graffiti art. And with the venue also serving up the latest on-trend cocktails, cold craft beer and tasty street food, what's not to like? Making The Floodgate unique is its immersive and competitive offer, with three games from which to choose...

Bleachers Baseball Cage is a fast-paced experience where pitching machines deliver balls at up to 90kmph... Curl Club UV Curling allows players to test their sliding skills on one of three neon-lit lanes... Pit Pat Table-Top Golf - an 18-hole course - combines mini golf and billiards. Let the fun begin...

Escape Live

18 - 24 Constitution Hill, Birmingham, B29 3LY
Website: escapelive.co.uk

Sixty minutes is all you have to escape from a locked room before it's too late. With the clock ticking, there's no time to argue. Everyone must work together to find the clues and solve the puzzles so that you all make your way out in time...

Escape Live has venues across the UK, with three here in the Midlands. The Birmingham venue features two Peaky Blinders-themed escape rooms.



Flight Club

13 Temple Street, Birmingham, B2 5BN
Website: flightclubdarts.com

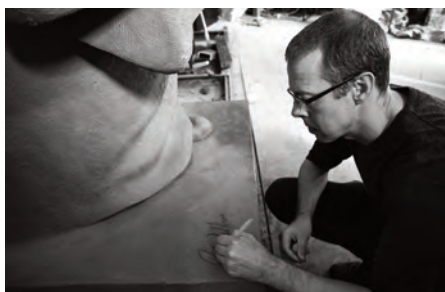
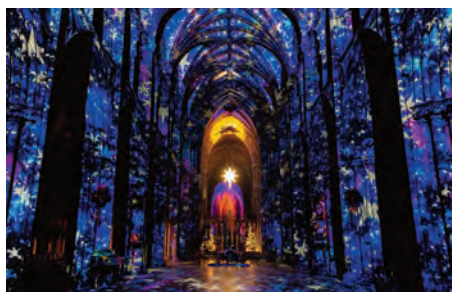
The Flight Club is seen as a key player in the experimental nightlife scene. The world's first 'social darts' venue uses patented dart-tracking technology to present a supercharged version of the sport. Each oche allows 12 people to play at once, with instant scoring reimagining matches into fast-paced social experiences.

The venue also offers an extensive food & beverage selection, including craft beers, wines and cocktails.



Let there be light!





Midlands artist and sculptor Peter Walker talks about the many strings to his bow, including being artistic director at Lichfield Cathedral and Luxmuralis, a collaborative team of artists from different backgrounds and disciplines...

From bronze sculpture to painting and spellbinding light & sound shows, Peter Walker's career as an artist has been nothing short of prestigious. Talking about everything from fine art to state-of-the-art projection, Peter fills us in on his artistic journey...

How would you describe your career path?

Since my late teenage years, I've always been involved in the arts in one way or another: first through music, then poetry, and eventually becoming a sculptor in my early 20s. After years of working with sculpture, especially bronze and statuary, my work eventually evolved into large-scale installation, fine artwork in terms of painting and works on canvas, and creating huge son et lumières with my colleague David Harper (as artistic director at Luxmuralis). There's always been an increasing evolution of different art forms. I can approach each and every subject in a totally unique way and use the most appropriate materials or style of work to do that. For example, my fine artwork is usually more personal and can relate more to myself and my emotions. The sculptural is perhaps a little more intellectual, in terms of being more gallery-orientated work. Then, my public work is more approachable and accessible. The big light shows that we do at Luxmuralis, for instance, often approach larger subject matter that has more universal appeal, such as 24-hours on earth, space journeys or festive themes.

What makes Luxmuralis' shows different?

The type of projection work we produce at Luxmuralis is probably nothing like any other out there. Even though it's using light, it's still pretty sculptural and fine-art-orientated. One of the reasons we do so much work in cathedrals is because we're almost creating an entire new artform using light. We don't just project on walls to tell stories, we use the walls

and facades themselves as part of the story. We like viewers to actually be bathed in the light of the installation too, so that it feels like they're within the artwork and the story itself. It's an incredible and emotional experience to be standing in a 36m projection within a knave, where you can walk through the light and just look around these all-encompassing visuals. It's also always accompanied by beautiful music written by David, so it's almost an overwhelming experience to be carried through this light & sound journey. Even though there's quite a lot of it around now, I feel like we have quite an individual approach to using these mediums.

How do you think the landscape for, and response to, art has changed during your career?

I think there's an ever-increasing appetite from all kinds of people for engaging with the arts. I think one thing that we try to do at Luxmuralis is remove the invisible barriers that have restricted people's access to art. For example, a lot of the work I do is outside of the major European cities - and we're always overwhelmed by the response. The desire to experience the arts is certainly there. But also towns, cities and venues have realised that offering a multiplicity of arts to their communities does encourage open engagement. A bronze sculpture in a museum, for instance, is more expensive than seeing a light & sound installation, which may be free or have a low ticket price. An audience can be from any background, any age, and feel like they own, and are part of, this piece of art for the time they're there.

What's coming up next at Lichfield Cathedral?

It's approaching my six-year anniversary at Lichfield Cathedral, and the formal relationship ends at the close of this year.

There will be a retrospective exhibition, to look back over the many projects from that period. People will be able to revisit a number of artworks or see videos of some of our iconic light shows, including Cathedral Illuminated - our iconic Christmas show that's almost become part of the yearly festive traditions in the city. It's really a great chance to invite the people back who've been involved previously, whether as an audience member, participant or contributor. The exhibition is a big thank-you from me as an artist, both to the cathedral and the audience. It's also definitely an opportunity to reminisce about how we've managed to pull off programmes each year that are very unique as far as cathedrals in modern times go. My latest installation, The Laboratory, will be in the cathedral at the same time as the retrospective. At the centre, it mimics Einstein's desk, and surrounding it is the story of science built from objects, sound and projection. It's about having a space for oneself to think and consider in this cluttered and noisy world, whatever your field of exploration.

And what about later in the year?

We aim to bring back two of our most popular light shows to Lichfield Cathedral. So in November, we're planning the return of our Remembrance piece, Poppy Fields, which features sound recordings from Eddie Redmayne. Then we hope our What's On Readers' Award-winning Cathedral Illuminated will also be back for one more time this Christmas! That would be a beautiful end to this six-year period.

Peter Walker's exhibition, Retrospective, shows at Lichfield Cathedral from Thursday 2 September until Monday 1 November. For further information, visit: lichfield-cathedral.org

Birmingham Heritage Week

Hundreds of Birmingham's buildings and spaces - many of which are usually closed to the public - will this month be opening their doors as part of Birmingham Heritage Week 2021. The annual festival returns from 9 to 19 September, revealing the city's hidden stories and historical secrets.

Birmingham Heritage Week is an opportunity to discover parts of the city hidden from everyday life, and to rediscover popular places from a new perspective. Residents and visitors to the city will be invited on hard-hat tours of gasholders and catacombs, and welcomed through the doors of magnificent mansions, churches and Victorian swimming baths. As well as visiting places in person, there will also be virtual tours and talks to enjoy.

Bustling Birmingham by Night

Roundhouse Birmingham, 1 Sheepcote Street, B16 8AE

A first-look nighttime tour of Brum's famous canals. Kayaking through Birmingham at night is a completely different experience to doing so in the daytime. Buildings illuminated by the sun are transformed by streetlights and signs, and the canal takes on a very dark, inky colour as the kayaks cut through the comparative quiet.

You will spend approximately 90 minutes on the water, paddling through Oozells loop, past the Utilita Arena and along Brindleyplace, visiting Cambrian Wharf on the way, ending at the Mailbox before making your way back to the Roundhouse.

Mon 13 and Thurs 16 Sept, 8-10pm
- £30 (£25 conc) - booking required.



Secret Birmingham Led Bike Ride

Various starting points depending on chosen route

Discover some of Birmingham's hidden history and heritage by bike.

On Tuesday the 14th, follow in the footsteps

of JRR Tolkien, the author of The Lord Of The Rings. The 14-mile Tolkien Route explores the 18th-century mill that inspired the writer's epic novels, some of South Birmingham's only remaining prefabs, and some of the city's beautiful green spaces and canals.

On Wednesday the 15th, learn about Birmingham's former mayor, Joseph Chamberlain, and his legacy, explore the city's historic Jewellery Quarter and the Roman occupation of Birmingham, as well as the city's lesser-known model village, Moor Pool, on a 12-mile circular route.

On Sunday the 19th, the seven-mile Cadbury route will explore thousands of years of history - including ice age stones, Bournville Village and the Suffragettes of Northfield and Kings Norton, as well as the more recent history of Longbridge town centre and Austin Village.

Tues 14 Sept 10am-1pm (Tolkien), Wed 15 Sept 10am-1pm (Chamberlain) and Sun 19 Sept 10am-1pm (Cadbury) - Free - booking required.



Admire the Arch

**Northfield Shopping Centre (near Iceland).
Bristol Road South, Northfield, B31 2JU**

Inspired by the 850-year-old arched doorway at St Laurence Church, Northfield, almost 200 tapestry bricks were stitched by 162 local people to create a new arch artwork for the village. An archive of community history has also been created, to remember 2020 for future generations. This community heritage and stitch project is part of the Northfield Revealed initiative run by St Laurence Church. During Birmingham Heritage Week, the artwork and accompanying publication

will be on public display for the first time. Pop by to admire everyone's stitches!

**Sat 11 Sept, 9am-2pm -
Free - booking not required.**



Street Art Running Tour

**The Eagle & Ball Pub, 12 Penn Street,
B4 7RJD**

Uncover Birmingham's beautiful, inspiring and unknown street art on this running tour. Taking a secret route along the decorated canals of Digbeth - the epicentre of Brum's street art scene - you'll stop to admire, photograph and learn all about the city's graffiti and the home-grown artists behind it. This run is for everyone - running newbies can join in the 5km, whilst more experienced runners can take up the 9km option.

Wed 15 Sept, 6pm onwards - £20 - booking required.



Woodcock Street Baths: Guided Tour & Swim

**The Sir Doug Ellis Woodcock Sports Centre,
Woodcock Street, B7 4BN**

Woodcock Street Baths - now known as the Sir Doug Ellis Woodcock Sports Centre - is the oldest operational swimming pool in

Birmingham. This guided tour will show how Aston University, which took over this grade 2 listed building in 1980, has refurbished and redeveloped the space into a modern sports centre for university staff and students, as well as for the local community. The tour lasts approximately 30 minutes, after which there will be an opportunity to enjoy a free swim.

Fri 10, Sat 11, Mon 13, Fri 17, Sun 19 Sept - Free - booking required.



Co-op Heritage Weekend at Wythall Transport Museum

Wythall Transport Museum, Chapel Lane, Wythall, B47 6JA

One hundred-and-forty years ago, a group of Midland Railway workers formed the Birmingham Industrial Co-operative Society to supply themselves with good food at fair prices. Today, that business forms part of Central England Co-op, the largest independent co-operative society in the UK - and one that is proud of its deep roots in local communities.

This event will use the collection of historic Co-op vehicles at Wythall Transport Museum - together with archive film screenings, a photographic exhibition and stalls - to explore how the Co-op's impact on economic, social and cultural life has touched almost every household in the city.

Sat 11 - Sun 12 Sept, 11am-4.30pm - Adults £5, Children £2.50 - booking not required.



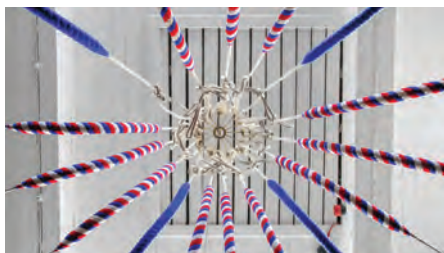
Bell Ringing Chamber at St Martin in the Bull Ring

Entrance of Church St Martin in the Bull Ring, Edgbaston Street, B5 5BB

This visit to the Bell Ringing Chamber includes an explanation of the ringing

tradition, the history of bell ringing at St Martin's, a demonstration of ringing, and an opportunity to participate with handbells.

Thurs 16, Fri 17, Sat 18 Sept, 11am-3pm. Free - booking not required.



Birmingham's Artsy Bits

Start at Grand Central Station, on the Concourse by the Platform 5 sign. Finish at Library of Birmingham.

Birmingham has a huge artistic and architectural heritage, with public art all around you as you walk through the city's streets and squares. This walking tour sets off from the modernistic Grand Central concourse and references public art and architecture to tell the story of the city.

The tour looks at the significant initiatives to install art on Birmingham's streets in the last decades of the 20th century. It also goes back to the 1960s - to the decade's brutalist concrete architectural and artistic influences - as well as looking at art deco features from the period between the wars. Also featured is Victorian art and architecture that's managed to avoid demolition.

Sat 11 and Sat 18 Sept, 10.30am-12.15pm. £9 - booking required.



Unburied Treasure

Key Hill and Warstone Lane Cemeteries Tour will begin at Key Hill Cemetery, Key Hill, Jewellery Quarter, B18 5AH

Working in conjunction with the Bone Ensemble, this unique performance-tour experience will uncover stories from the Jewellery Quarter cemeteries. Meet figures from Birmingham's past beside their resting places in Warstone Lane and Key Hill Cemeteries, brought to life by costumed volunteers, storytelling and live music. There are also opportunities for the audience

to become part of the story, to learn more about Birmingham residents from the past, and to find out about the rich history of the cemetery landscapes.

Sun 12 Sept, 1.30-3pm and 4.30-6pm. £3 - booking required.

Birmingham's Honey Show

Winterbourne House & Garden, 58 Edgbaston Park Road, B15 2RT

A weekend 'buzzing' with all things bees and honey! Although Winterbourne has seven acres of stunning botanical garden to explore, this particular weekend is all about the venue's resident honey bees. See the bees in glass observation hives, attend live bee demonstrations (weather permitting) and meet local beekeepers. There are also stalls, activities and plant sales to enjoy.

Sat 11 and Sun 12 Sept, 10.30am-5pm. Free - booking not required.



Taking and displaying the photograph

Library of Birmingham, Level 4, Heritage Learning Space Centenary Square, B1 2ND

A hundred years of cameras made in Birmingham, and how the city manufactured ways to show and display the resulting images, is covered in this special event. Check out mahogany wood, brass plate and cheap plastic snapshot cameras, as well as magic lanterns, projectors, photograph albums, frames, and the images which the cameras would have taken.

Thurs 16 - Sat 18 Sept, 11am-5pm. Free - booking not required.



The full Birmingham Heritage Week programme can be found at birminghamheritageweek.co.uk

STRONGERTOGETHER

One of the UK's biggest LGBTQ+ festivals, Birmingham Pride returns this month...



Birmingham Pride took place for the first time in 1997. Since then, the event has blossomed into one of the most important LGBTQ+ festivals in the UK. As well as attracting in excess of 40,000 people to the festival site itself during the course of its two days, Pride also sees 75,000 people either participating in or watching the annual parade through the streets of the city.

This year, as a result of the Covid pandemic, Pride is being held over the final weekend of September, rather than its usual May bank holiday slot.

The theme for this year is Stronger Together, demonstrating Pride's commitment to standing in unity with all members of the LGBTQ+ community as it battles against transphobia, biphobia and homophobia.

For the first time ever, the festival will be split into two: the Street Party and Smithfield Live.

Previously the home of Birmingham's wholesale markets, the Smithfield site is spread across 12 acres, allowing Pride to safely and securely accommodate 20,000 attendees.

The site will play host to the event's biggest-ever main stage, as well as the cabaret stage, the dance arena and the additional attractions of the funfair, street food stalls and community stalls.

This year's main-stage line-up includes Cheryl, Bree Runway, Riton, Katy B, Sophie Ellis-Bextor and Ms Banks.

Over in the dance arena, Jodie Harsh, Melé, Barely Legal and House Mother are just some of the performers on the bill.

Meanwhile, popular drag acts Sandra, Black Peppa, Miss Penny and The Saturnos will take to the cabaret stage.

The area around Hurst Street, just down from the Birmingham Hippodrome, Bromsgrove Street and the surrounding roads, will be the home of Pride 2021's Street Party.

The Street Party includes LGBTQ+ bars & clubs, among which are Equator, The Fox, The Loft, Missing Bar, the Nightingale Club and Sidewalk Bar, as well as LGBTQ+ venues located beyond the perimeter of the Pride map. These include The Fountain, Glamorous

and Chic. Each bar and club will host individual Pride events across the weekend.

This year's Pride welcomes the return of the Community Village Green, providing a quieter, family-friendly and accessible area within the heart of the Pride Village.

On Friday 24 September, from 7pm, there will be a Free Community Pride event, including live entertainment, community-focused stalls, street food, a bar, acoustic music, LGBTQ+ performers & speakers, and a candlelit vigil. The event is free to everyone. People wishing to attend can reserve their ticket on the Birmingham Pride website. The Community Village Green area will host events throughout the festival weekend, programmed and scheduled by members of the Birmingham LGBTQ+ community.

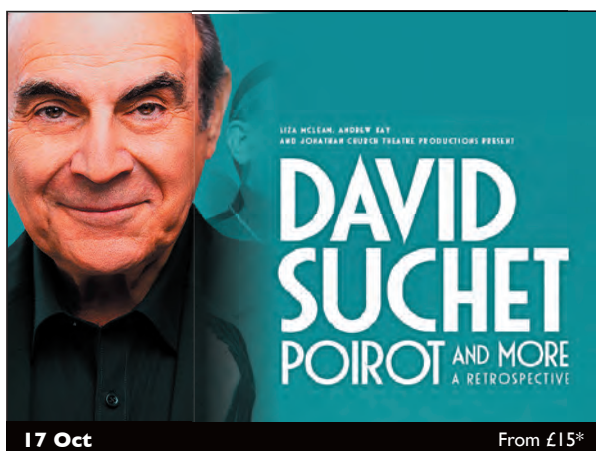
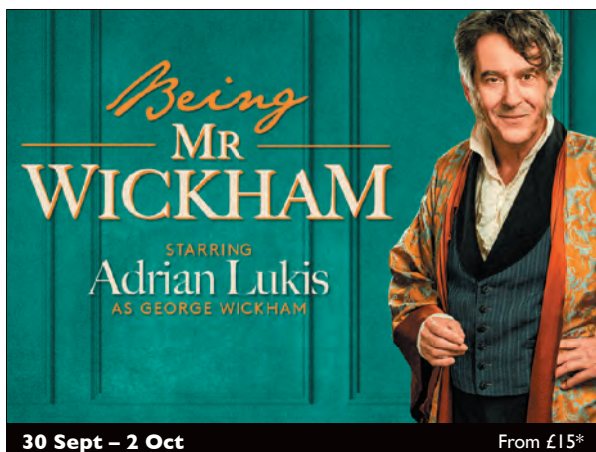
Birmingham Pride 2021 takes place on Saturday 25 & Sunday 26 September. For tickets and further information, visit: birminghampride.com





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