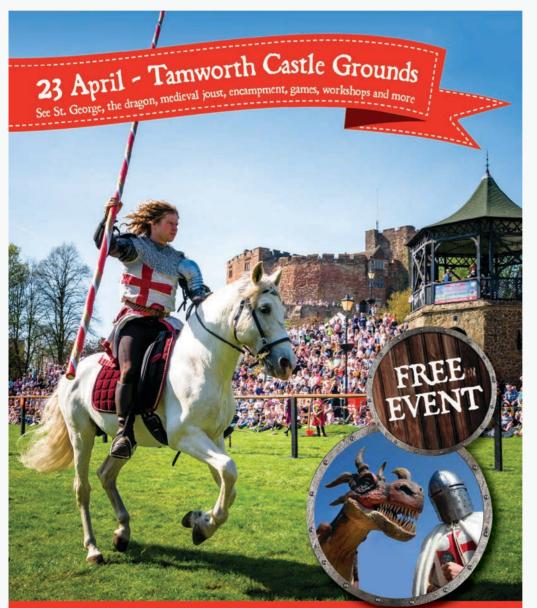
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Staffordshire

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ISSUE 423 APRIL 2022

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Breaking The Mould for female sculptors

A major new touring exhibition which challenges the male-dominated narratives of post-war British sculpture is visiting Walsall's New Art Gallery in the autumn. Breaking The Mould presents a diverse and

significant range of ambitious work by more than 40 female sculptors.

The exhibition shows at the venue from 20 October to 12 March 2023.

A Grand journey to The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel



A touring stage version of The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel is stopping off at the Grand Theatre in Wolverhampton next spring. The new production is based on Deborah Moggach's bestselling novel and arrives on stage a decade after the release of the hit film version.

The cast for the show - which runs at the Grand from 28 March to 1 April 2023 - will be announced at a later date. For more information, visit grandtheatre.co.uk

Wanted: new generation of political playwrights

A competition to find the next generation of political playwrights has been launched. Taking the title Unmute and 'celebrating fresh talent that is writing socially engaged and political theatre', the monologue writing competition is aimed at young people aged between 11 and 18.

Anybody interested in entering must submit a monologue of no more than 500 words by Sunday 8 May. To find out more about what's required, visit lungtheatre.co.uk/Unmute

Paul Sinha joins comedy gala show line-up

Stand-up comedian and TV & radio quiz specialist Paul 'The Sinnerman' Sinha will join fellow laughter merchants Steve Royle, Gary Delaney, Seann Walsh and comedy duo Flo & Joan in Shrewsbury International Comedy Festival's (SICF) flagship Gala Show this summer.

Commenting on the news, Festival Director Kevin Bland said: "This is a great coup for Shrewsbury. Paul has been a top headliner on the circuit for years, and I've been trying for years to secure his appearance at the festival."

The highlight of SICF, the Gala Show takes place at the town's Theatre Severn on Sunday 17 July. For ticket information, visit theatresevern.co.uk

Festival on the lookout for new folk

Shrewsbury Folk Festival has kicked off a search to find the folk stars of the future. Bands, duos or singer-songwriters aged 16 to 26 who live in Shropshire, Mid Wales or the West Midlands are being urged to pitch for one of three available places on the Midlands What's On-sponsored Launchpad - a showcase for up-and-coming talent presented on the festival's Village Stage. Each successful candidate will perform two 30-minute sets at this year's four-day event, which takes place at Shrewsbury's West Mid Showground from 26 to 29 August. To apply, send a short biography - including location and age(s) - links to performances (Soundcloud, YouTube etc) and your contact details to jo@shrewsburyfolkfestival.co.uk before 27 May. Only the selected performers will be contacted.

The Vikings are coming to Drayton Manor Resort!

Staffordshire's Drayton Manor Resort is soon to launch a brand-new themed attraction. Set to open this spring, Vikings 'will propel guests into the centre of the action with exhilarating rides inspired by ancient gods and legends, and unforgettable experiences designed to transport adventurers of all ages back to a bygone era'.

To find out more, visit draytonmanor.co.uk

The Human League to play Uttoxeter Racecourse

Iconic synthpop pioneers The Human League will headline a 'live after racing' show at Uttoxeter Racecourse next month. The Sheffield three-piece, who scored numerous hits in the 1980s, including the chart-busting Don't You Want Me, appear at the venue on Saturday 14 May. For more information, visit uttoxeter-racecourse.co.uk



Kinky Boots at Lichfield theatre

Brownhills Musical Theatre Company will present their production of hit musical Kinky Boots next month. Featuring music by Cyndi Lauper, the show runs at Lichfield Garrick Theatre from 10 to 14 May. For more information and to book tickets, visit lichfieldgarrick.com

Walsall to host a festival of words

Walsall will host its first 'festival of words' this summer.

Described as 'a celebration of all things written, spoken and sung', the event takes place at venues across the town on Wednesday 8 & Thursday 9 June.

Highlights include an appearance by Doctors, Emmerdale and Coronation Street actor Tom Roberts. To find out more, follow the festival on Facebook.

West Midlands Police Museum opens its doors

Fascinating stories about some of the Midlands' most notorious criminals including the real Peaky Blinders - will come to life when the new West Midlands Police Museum opens its doors this month. Visitors to the museum, which is housed at the former Lock-Up at Steelhouse Lane, will experience a journey spanning over 200 years of policing history. The museum will open Tuesday to Sunday from 10am to 4pm. It also has a gift shop, where you can purchase your very own 'Lock-Up Mouse' along with police-themed goodies and history books.



Birmingham Hippodrome announces new concert musical

A new concert musical created by Birmingham Hippodrome in association with independent theatre studio China Plate will be performed at parks across the West Midlands this August as part of the Birmingham 2022 Festival. To The Streets! has been inspired by the 1963 Bristol Bus Boycott, a pivotal moment in the UK's civil rights history. The concert performances - presented within a day-long festival - will give audiences an opportunity to hear all the songs from the show ahead of a proposed national tour of the full stage musical, premiering at Birmingham Hippodrome in 2024. Find out more at birminghamhippodrome.com

Lichfield comedy club launches



A new comedy night has launched at The Hub At St Mary's in Lichfield.

The Alter Comedy Club opened last month with a line-up that featured Tez Iylas, Callum Oakley and Jessica Fostekew. Highly rated double act SHELF and comedian/presenter Stephen Bailey are among the performers confirmed for future shows. To stay informed about who's appearing at Alter, visit thehubstmarys.co.uk

Secret Symphony added to Trentham line-up

Trentham Gardens' summertime lakeside line-up will include a Secret Symphony experiential show on Thursday 1 September.

Greatly admired for their fusing of traditional and contemporary soundtracks in a variety of productions, Secret Symphony will present a celebration of house music in symphonic form.

For more information about the 2022 Trentham Live line-up and to book tickets, head to ticketmaster.co.uk/trentham-live



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News from around the region

First Word

Severn Hospice Dragon Boat Festival returns

Severn Hospice's Dragon Boat Festival makes a return this summer (23 & 24 July). Hosted at Shrewsbury School Boat Club, the event features teams of between 11 and 20 members racing against one another along the River Severn in 40ft dragon boats. For more information, visit severnhospice.org.uk



John Godber's first play Happy Jack is back

Staffordshire's New Vic Theatre continues its 60th anniversary celebrations this month by presenting a new production of John Godber's very first play.

Written by Godber when he was only 25 years old, Happy Jack tells the story of a workingclass couple as they struggle to make ends meet. The show runs at the New Vic from Thursday 21 to Saturday 30 April. For more information, visit newvictheatre.org.uk

Moseley music festival announces 2022 line-up

Birmingham's Mostly Jazz Funk & Soul Festival returns in July with a line-up of 'world-class artists and hot new talent'. Performers include Midlands two-tone heroes The Specials, legendary American funk outfit The Fatback Band, and The Earth Wind And Fire Experience, featuring Grammy Award-winning guitarist & songwriter Al McKay. For more information and tickets, visit mostlyiazz.co.uk





Michelangelo exhibition heading to the Midlands

Not literally, of course, but in the form of a touring exhibition which uses highdefinition photos of the originals and a special printing technique to reproduce the famous ceiling paintings. True to size and allowing visitors to see every detail, brush stroke and colour of the artist's famous

Sutton Coldfield festival to feature original Shakespeare First Folio

Sutton Coldfield is this month hosting a special Shakespeare celebration. Featuring more than 20 different events and activities across the town, FOLIO's Shakespeare Festival includes street theatre, spoken word, talks and walks about Sutton in the time of Shakespeare, films and plays made by community groups, photography and writing competitions celebrating Sutton's creativity, and Elizabethan dance workshops and music performances. The event also includes the chance to see an original Shakespeare First Folio at the town's library on Saturday 23 April -Shakespeare's birthday... To find out more, visit @FOLIOSuttonColdfield on Facebook.

Birmingham Rep unveils a £2.87 million new look

Birmingham Repertory Theatre has unveiled a £2.87million new look.

Brand-new elements of the 'makeover' include a fully accessible front entrance and terrace - which connects directly to the city's frescoes, the exhibition is being presented this month at a location in Birmingham which, at the time of going to print, remains undisclosed. To find out more and purchase tickets, visit sistinechapelexhibit.com/ birmingham

Centenary Square - new cafe, bar & restaurant spaces and 10 foot signage to welcome visitors from across the square. Commenting on the new look, Rep Artistic Director Sean Foley, said; "Birmingham Rep is the longest-established of Britain's building-based theatre companies - it is simply one of Birmingham's crown jewels. Now, 50 years since The Rep moved to its

iconic 'new' home on Centenary Square, we are thrilled once again to renew the Company by remodelling this beautiful building."



New festival aiming to inspire the over-55s

People over the age of 55 are being invited to try out an 'inspiring' new one-day event. The Keep On Moving Shropshire festival - a partnership between Shropshire Council, Energize, Taking Part, Age UK and the NHS will take place on Sunday 8 May at Shrewsbury Sports Village. To find out more, visit shropshire.gov.uk

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Wed 18 May

Symphony Hall



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Seth Mulder & Midnight Run Sun 22 May Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space

The National Youth Brass Band of Great Britain & The Band of Her Majesty's Royal Marines, Collingwood Thu 28 Apr Town Hall



EBBF Gala Concert with the Louis Dowdeswell Big Band and the Cory Band Sun 1 May Symphony Hall

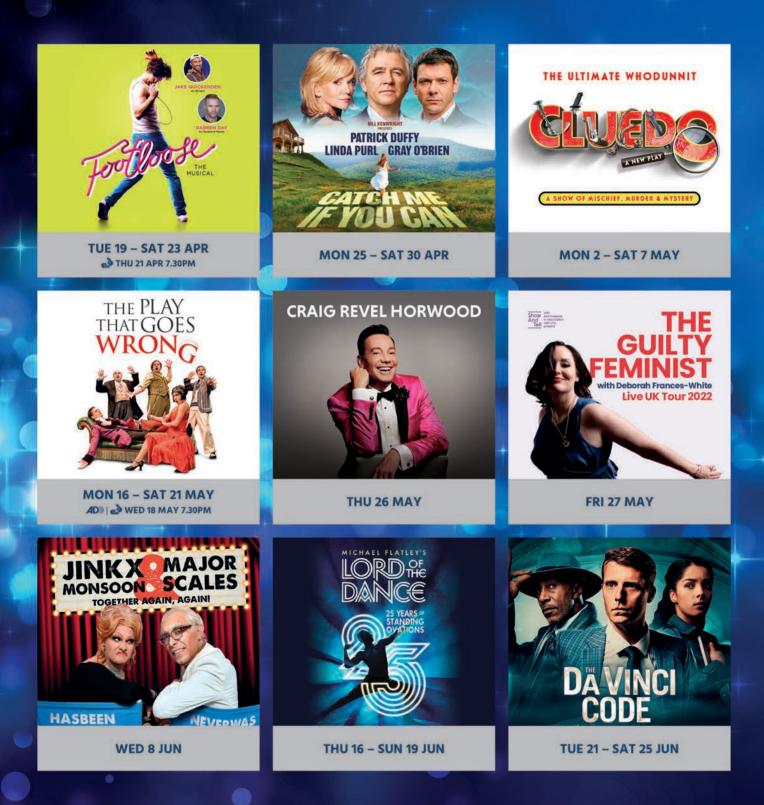
Miloš Karadaglić: Homage to Segovia Sat 28 May Town Hall



Sheku & Isata Kanneh-Mason Sun 10 Jul Symphony Hall

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Cathedral visitors hit new heights

Midlands mountaineers and rock climbers can enjoy a brand-new experience this month - by climbing Lichfield Cathedral!

Taking place on Saturday 23 April, the Climbing At Your Cathedral event provides participants with the opportunity to make their way up the building's great west front and enjoy some spectacular views. A DigiWall climbing event inside the cathedral takes place the following Saturday. For more information, visit thelittleboxoffice.com



Birmingham Music Archive presents On Record project

Twenty-two conversations with music-industry figures connected to Birmingham will this month be released as podcasts.

The conversations have been recorded as part of On Record, a Birmingham Music Archive project which will also see an album of new songs about the city being released on 18 June. The album will be available on a limited vinyl release and across all streaming platforms.

For more information, visit birminghammusicarchive.com





Roaring '20s-inspired festival Swingamajig returns

Birmingham's urban festival of 'all things vintage', Swingamajig, returns this month with a line-up that celebrates 'the best of the 1920s and beyond'.

Taking place at the city's Botanical Gardens on Saturday 30 April, the popular event features an eclectic blend of music, dance and cabaret.

Massaoke musicals in May

Shrewsbury's Buttermarket venue will host 'the ultimate singalong live' next month. Visiting the town for the very first time, Massaoke (Friday 6 May) features a live band, giant singalong lyrics and hits from, among other shows, Mamma Mia!, Grease, Dirty Dancing, Les Miserables, Frozen and We Will Rock You. To find out more about the show, visit thebuttermarket.co.uk

Music festival's 10th anniversary

International tenor Mark Padmore will sing Schubert and Vaughan Williams to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Whittington Music Festival (Thursday 19 to Sunday 22 May). This year's programme also includes jazz from MOBO award-winning pianist Zoe Rahman, a family concert featuring the story of Ferdinand The Bull, a new work by composer-in-residence Jeremy Sams and chamber music by Brahms, Debussy, Ravel and de Falla. For more information and to book festival tickets, visit whittingtonmusicfestival.org.uk

Celebrating 70 years of The Mousetrap at The Alexandra

Headlining this year is DJ Yoda - playing a

special 1930s big band/swing set - alongside live

acts including Sam And The Womp, Mista Trick,

The Jim Wynn Swing Orchestra, The Hawkmen,

Circus... To find out more about the event, visit

and Swingamajig's very own Electric Swing

swingamajig.co.uk

The longest-running play in the world - Agatha Christie's The Mousetrap - will visit Birmingham theatre The Alexandra in the autumn as part of a 70th anniversary tour.

The genre-defining murder-mystery - which opened in Nottingham on 6 October 1952 and took up residence in the London West End the following month - will stop off at The Alex (which it visited on its original tour) from Monday 31 October to Saturday 5 November. For more information, visit atgtickets.com



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Farm fable

What's On chats to puppeteer Toby Olié about the brand-new stage version of George Orwell's Animal Farm, coming to Wolverhampton Grand Theatre in May

Toby Olié started making puppets when he was six years old. Now aged 37, he's a professional puppeteer, director and designer. He's also co-founder of theatre company Gyre & Gimble, which specialises in puppetry.

And it all started with a library book.

"In my school's library, there was a book about how to make puppets," he recalls. "I remember it had a dinosaur made out of an egg box on the cover. I took the book home and it ignited a passion in me.

"As a child, I was constantly making things out of toilet rolls and cereal packets. Throughout all my school years, I used puppetry as a meeting point for art and drama. I was very fortunate to have a patient and supportive family who would sit through my puppet theatres."

Toby's family are still sitting through his puppet theatres today - only on a much grander scale. Going on to train in puppetry at the Royal Central School of Speech & Drama, he then showcased his talent in the Olivier Award-winning stage production of War Horse.

War Horse was something of a watershed moment for puppetry in theatre. Director Tom Morris was inspired to adapt the Michael Morpurgo novel for the stage after discovering the work of South Africa's Handspring Puppet Company. The result is a show which has been seen by more than eight million people in 11 countries, along the way winning numerous awards.

"We were all very aware that War Horse was unusual in having a puppet as the protagonist for an entire show, let alone the fact that the character doesn't talk," Toby explains. "The audience has to believe that the puppet is real, and I think that erupted into puppets and actors sharing the stage together and telling the story as equals."

Now Toby is taking on an even bigger challenge, as puppetry designer & director for a show with a cast full of puppets - a stage adaptation of George Orwell's classic novel, Animal Farm.

Having previously worked with the show's production company, Fiery Angel, on Goodnight Mr Tom and Running Wild, Toby was brought on board by Animal Farm's director, Robert Icke, who has also adapted the novel for the stage.

"Rob has been amazingly trusting and enthusiastic. He told me he wanted to write the script in response to what the puppets do well - and as a puppeteer, that's just a dream to hear!

"Often in rehearsals I'll have to explain that the animal puppets don't always need to say something, because they can show it with their body language. With Animal Farm, it's been really exciting to see Rob combine his world and my world and start to see the strengths of the puppets."

Orwell's satirical novel tells the story of a group of animals who take over the farm they live on. A political allegory about the Russian Revolution, the story remains relevant almost 80 years after it was published.

Toby is keen for the stage adaptation to be similarly relevant to the modern world: "It's an emotional workout, watching this show. The animals go through so much, and they go through things that humans are going through right now in terms of leaders having one rule for themselves and another for everyone else.

"My parents have seen it, and they said it felt as if they'd been through an emotional wringer. That's a good thing, though, because I want people to connect with the puppets. If this show packs an emotional punch, then we're doing it right."

Encouraging the audience to invest in characters which, when off stage, are inanimate objects, is no mean feat. But Toby's years of experience mean that he's well-versed in the art of grabbing people's attention with his puppets.

"The biggest challenge as a director is making it clear where we want the audience's focus to be. In Animal Farm, some scenes have 10 puppets on stage at once, all talking over each other. So if they're all moving at the same time, the audience's focus is going to be stretched too thin.

"A big part of my job is making sure the other animals in the scene are casting the spotlight on whichever one is talking at the time. And with two or three people operating each animal, adjusting one small moment is the equivalent of working with six or eight actors, so there's a lot of coordination required."

Despite the challenges in adapting a show with a cast full of puppeteers, Toby promises that audiences can look forward to a largely faithful retelling of Orwell's novel - even down to the size of the animals.

"Almost all the puppets in Animal Farm are to scale. The pigeons and chickens are a little bit bigger - just so people sitting in the back row can see them - and we've been playful with the colouring of the animals, to make sure the audience can tell them all apart.

"Other changes we made were to make one of the pigs, Squealer, female, because it's a very male-dominated story. And Clover - who's a cart horse in the book - is a dairy cow in our version, so we have a bit more variation in the animals. But the sequence of events is very much the same as in the novel."

Toby has gone from looking after one principal puppet in War Horse to a whole cast of them in Animal Farm, but perhaps his biggest-ever undertaking comes this summer: designing and directing 101 Dalmatians at Regent Park's Open Air Theatre.

With puppetry becoming increasingly commonplace in mainstream theatre, the talent it requires has not gone unrecognised. Just last month the seven puppeteers who play and operate the tiger puppet in the stage adaptation of Life Of Pi were nominated for an Olivier Award for Best Supporting Actor. Toby is pleased to see members of his profession being recognised for their skills and accomplishments.

"Life Of Pi's nomination is such an important acknowledgement of the art form, and I'm excited to see how puppetry can keep exceeding people's expectations in the future.

"There are so many shows I'd like to do with puppets, and it's wonderful to see people becoming more accustomed to puppetry in the theatre."

Animal Farm shows at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Tuesday 17 to Saturday 21 May

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Dining in the dark returns to Swinfen Hall

Following the success of its pop-up last month, 'dining in the dark' event Dans Le Noir? will return to Lichfield's Swinfen Hall in November. Described as 'a new and wholly unique dining experience', Dans Le Noir? sees diners sampling gourmet, creative and

seasonal cuisine in complete darkness, accompanied and served by unexpected guides.



Walk Against Waste event in Shrewsbury

Shrewsbury Food Hub will host this year's Bridges Walk Against Waste event on Sunday 24 April. The fundraising 6km walk, which follows a route that incorporates six bridges around Shrewsbury, aims to highlight the benefits of reducing food waste in terms of protecting the environment...

To find out more and make a donation, check out shrewsburyfoodhub.org.uk

Tim Hortons to open in Oldbury later this year

Iconic Canadian fast food chain Tim Hortons is to open a restaurant and drive-thru in Oldbury later this year. The new venue, the company's third in the West Midlands, will provide customers with 'Canada's favourite coffee' and freshly baked donuts and Timbits around the clock. Breakfast, lunch and evening meal options will also feature on the menu.





Late-night events return to Shrewsbury Market Hall

Late nights at Shrewsbury Market Hall are back for 2022, with the first one taking place on Saturday 16 April, during the Easter weekend. The award-winning market's eateries and bars offering a wide range of cuisine including Thai, Mediterranean, Tex-Mex, artisan pizza and Chinese dumplings - will be open up to 10pm. Wine bar/café Petitglou and artisan gin parlour Gindifferent will be open for cocktails, specialist wines and craft beers, while Tom's Table café and The Market Café will also

become cocktail bars for the evening. Located between Shoplatch and Claremont Street, the Market Hall will transition for the evening from 5pm. Last food orders will be taken 8pm to 8.30pm, with cafes closing at 9pm and bars closing at 10pm. Last entry to the building will be at 9.30pm. Further late-night dates for the rest of the year have yet to be confirmed. For more information, visit shrewsburymarkethall.co.uk

The Manor House of Whittington launches new menu

The Manor House of Whittington has unveiled its new spring menu.

Featuring seasonal plates alongside the pub's signature steaks and hand-stretched pizzas. the menu has been created by Executive Chefs Paul Jarvest and Jon Mahoney. New starters include seared wild caught scallops served with minty mushy peas and chorizo jam, and beef & mozzarella arancini with truffle and Madeira mayonnaise. The mains menu includes maple glazed pork belly with chorizo jam, paprika roasted butternut squash and lime salsa, and black truffle pappardelle topped with mascarpone cheese and white wine sauce ... To book, visit themanorhouseofwhittington.com.



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Food

JOSEPHIS BACKLIS

...and so is multi-award-winning singer-songwriter Alexandra Burke, who returns to the role of the Narrator in Tim Rice & Andrew Lloyd Webber's iconic musical...

Former X Factor winner Alexandra Burke has played the Narrator in Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat before - and she enjoyed the experience so much that she's returned to the role for the latest tour of the show.

What's On recently caught up with her to find out why she loves the coat of many colours...

What can audiences expect when they come to see the show, Alexandra?

They're in for a massive treat. It's such a vibrant, colourful and exciting show. You can't help wanting to join in with the songs, clap along or get up and dance at the end. It's a feelgood show, and that's why I love it. We've all been through so much in the past couple of years, we need shows like this out on the road that bring people so much love and joy.

You're returning to the role of the Narrator, having played her at the London Palladium last summer. What do you most enjoy about the part?

The Narrator is such fun. It's an important role because she's telling the story, along with Joseph and Pharaoh and the rest of the cast, but I'm quite giddy when I play her. It's the only role I've done so far where I've felt I can just be myself. What people are seeing on stage is really just me - my personality shining through because I'm quite a goofy person, and I play her in quite a goofy way. What you see is me having a laugh on stage, telling a beautiful story and singing some lovely tunes.

How is it working with the kids in the show?

I had a really special connection with the kids at the Palladium, and I have another special connection with the kids on this tour. I sit and talk with them because I want them to feel like they're my friends and we've all bonded. It's funny because unlike a lot of people, I didn't grow up knowing Joseph at school, but I wish I had. My mum worked very hard to keep a roof over our heads and food on the table, and theatre was not something that we had the opportunity to enjoy. I get quite sad because all these kids know the musical word for word, and it's so beautiful to see that, but I was the only one who walked into the theatre going, 'I'm new to this musical' because I'd never learnt it at school. It's been an insight for me to see how many people love it, across the audience as well as the cast. They also know it word for word, so you can't muck up on this show because the audience are so familiar with it.

So you hadn't seen the show as an adult either?

No, I hadn't, and when they offered to show me some of the archive footage, I chose not to watch it because I wanted to learn it from scratch and bring my own interpretation to it. I decided not to watch what Sheridan Smith had done in the role, or anyone previously, simply because I wanted to put my own spin on it all.

The West End production was one of the first to open to full capacity after Covid restrictions. What was the atmosphere like?

It was such a special feeling. Speaking on behalf of everyone who was part of the production, to not be doing what you love for a long time, and then suddenly being able to perform to a full audience again, is a feeling money can't buy. It was a special moment for us to see all those faces - even though, of course, they were wearing masks. To feel the energy from the audience and know that they were enjoying it made it such an incredible experience. I don't think any of us will ever take a moment of performing for granted again.

The Andrew Lloyd Webber/Tim Rice score is full of great songs. Do you have a favourite to perform?

The opening number, Prologue (Some Folks Dream), is one of my favourites, simply because of the message behind it. It's telling kids to find their dreams and just go for it, and it's just me and the kids performing it. It's an important message to put out there, not just for the kids but for adults as well.

How is it working with Jason Donovan as Pharaoh and Jac Yarrow as Joseph?

Jason is one of the most amazing performers I've ever met. He's so down-to-earth and such a gentleman, with a really good energy that's great to be around. He has such an infectious personality, and I absolutely adore him. He's a very special man. And we love Jac! If anyone asked me if there's a perfect Joseph out there, I'd say, 'Yes there is - and it's Jac Yarrow'. He's a beautiful human being with a great spirit - a great singer and a wonderful performer. He's a very talented young man who is going to go very far.

Joseph is a big contrast to The Bodyguard, a show in which you toured a couple of years ago. Was that part of the appeal?

Yes, it was - then I found out there hadn't been many black Narrators, and that was the selling point for me. I thought, 'I want to be that representation for young black girls to be able to see themselves in that role'. One of the kids in the show last year said, 'So I can be the Narrator one day when I grow up, too?' She was a young black girl, and it blew my mind that she'd gotten some inspiration from me doing the role. That was the key thing for me - being part of an iconic show and representing people of colour.

What have been your other favourite roles on stage?

I'm sorry, but there hasn't been one I haven't liked! I've been lucky enough to do Sister Act, Chess, Chicago, The Bodyguard - and all of them have been the most amazing experience. I'm not a trained actor or theatre performer, yet I've been blessed to have been given such fantastic opportunities. And I've loved every director I've worked with. I've learned so much from them - I'm like a little sponge who soaks up everything.

You came to fame on The X Factor, but was theatre always part of the plan?

It's been more of a nice, happy accident, if I'm honest with you. I never, ever thought about doing theatre after X Factor because my mind was so set on music. I was only meant to do three months in The Bodyguard at the Adelphi Theatre, and that turned into five years of non-stop theatre work. And gosh, it's been wonderful! Music will always be my number one, but it's been amazing to be able to train my voice in a different way and build up my stamina. While recording what will be my fourth studio album, I've realised that I'm more confident with my singing than ever before, and I put that down to all the incredible roles I've played over the last seven years. You don't know hard work until vou've done 10 shows a week. I take my hat off to ensemble members as well. because they do so much work - sometimes across multiple roles - whereas I've just got one role to concentrate on.

What are you most looking forward to about taking Joseph around the country?

When you tour, you get to meet so many new people and to visit places you don't usually go to. It opens up your mind and your heart. I'm also going back to lots of cities and theatres I've been to before, and it'll be lovely to see all the people I already know who work there backstage and front-of-house, and to shout for joy, 'We are back!'.

Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat shows at Birmingham Hippodrome from Tues 5 to Sat 16 April.



APRIL

THE WIZARD OF OZ Friday 22 April • 3pm & 7pm • £16.50

THAT'LL BE THE DAY Saturday 30 April • 7.30pm • £28.00

MAY

SIR GEOFFREY BOYCOTT Thursday 26 May • 7.30pm • £25.00

LOST IN MUSIC Friday 27 May • 7.30pm • £27.50

PINK FLOYDIAN Saturday 28 May • 7.30pm • £18.00

SEVEN DRUNKEN NIGHTS Sunday 29 May • 7.30pm • £26.00

MILKSHAKE! LIVE Monday 30 May • 12pm & 3.30pm • £16.50

A RIGHT ROYAL KNEES UP Tuesday 31 May • 2pm • £16.00

JUNE

THE MERSEY BEATLES Friday 3 June • 7.30pm • £22.00

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Comedy Club

10 - 14 May, 7.30pm

The Full Monty

16 May, 7.30pm Sam Sweeney

Tickets: £11-13

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Tickets: £18

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& Sat 2.30pm Mellow Dramatics:

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10 April, 2pm Comedy Club 4 Kids Tickets: £5-10



HUNCHBA

comedy

19 - 23 April, 7.30pm









Giant In Town Tickets: £14



ionic



Tickets: £20





East











Halle Orchestra Victoria Hall, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 8 April

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

This Victoria Hall concert sees the orchestra performing works by three much-loved composers: Berlioz (Roman Carnival); Schumann (Cello Concerto); and Beethoven (Symphony No₃). The concert is directed by Kristiina Poska (pictured), chief conductor of the Flanders Symphony Orchestra, who is here taking the helm of the Hallé for the very first time. She is joined for the concert by the orchestra's principal cello, Nicholas Trygstad.

Zagreb Philharmonic Orchestra

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Tues 12 April

Although they've been making music for 150 years, this is the first time that Zagreb Philharmonic Orchestra have performed at Symphony Hall. Their stop-off in



Birmingham comes as a result of the China Symphony Orchestra of Shenzhen being unable to appear, due to the UK's Covid quarantine rules.

Conducted by Jan Latham-Koenig and joined for the occasion by violinist Tamsin Waley-Cohen (pictured), the Zagreb Phil will present the same three works as the China Symphony Orchestra of Shenzhen were intending to perform: Dora Pejačević's Overture for large orchestra; Sibelius' Violin Concerto; and Mahler's Symphony No1.

The Carice Singers

St Laurence's Church, Ludlow, South Shropshire, Sat 9 April

North Cotswolds ensemble The Carice Singers celebrated their 10th anniversary in 2021 and continue to develop both their unique sound and imaginative choice of repertoire.

Named after Elgar's daughter, who founded the Elgar Birthplace Museum near Worcester, The Singers visit Ludlow this month to pay homage to Ralph Vaughan Williams' critical role in encouraging a new and emboldened generation of composers. Their concert, Flight Of The Turtle Dove, forms part of The Ludlow English Song Weekend, a popular annual event boasting a carefully curated mix of concerts, panel discussions and talks.



Lizzie Ball & Miloš Milivojevic?

Prestfelde Theatre, Prestfelde School, Shrewsbury, Sat 23 April

Well-versed in the business of performing together, violinist Lizzie and accordionist Miloš are a powerhouse pairing. Boasting a refreshing and unique approach to musicmaking, Lizzie has collaborated with, among other major names, Nigel Kennedy, Jeff Beck, Brian Wilson, Liam Gallagher and Ariana Grande.

Miloš, meanwhile, has forged a stellar international career thanks to an impressive versatility which has seen him perform across numerous genres, including classical, tango, opera and world music.

Ex Cathedra: St Matthew Passion

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Fri 15 April



"St Matthew Passion brings together Bach's many fine musical qualities," explains Jeffrey Skidmore, the founder and director of Birmingham choir and early music ensemble Ex Cathedra, which is performing the work on Good Friday. "It is a musical icon for the Christian world but at the same time expresses feelings common to the whole of humanity.

"The work portrays an extraordinary range of feelings: love, treachery, anger, injustice, sacrifice, betrayal, suffering, remorse, cruelty, helplessness and shame. All are consistently sustained and expressed in the most sublime and emotionally charged music imaginable."

A favourite at Eastertide, Bach's moving retelling of Christ's betrayal and death continues to be one of classical music's most profound experiences.

The concert will recreate elements of the Good Friday liturgy from Leipzig as Bach knew it.

Baritone, Themba Mvula (pictured), takes on the role of Jesus.

DUDLEY BOROUGH HALLS



SOOTY'S MAGIC SHOW

A spectacular treat for the whole family **Thursday 14 April**



IAN WAITE & VINCENT SIMONE New show from The Ballroom Boys double act Saturday 16 April



RAPUNZEL

A fun and exciting tangled musical adventure Wednesday 20 April



THINK YOU KNOW DINOS...?! Hit stage show starring Professor Ben Garrod Saturday 23 April



GRAEME HALL - THE DOGFATHER Star of Channel 5's 'Dogs Behaving (Very) Badly' Saturday 23 April



EUROPHORIA Jukebox musical celebrating 65 years of Eurovision **Friday 29 April**

PAUL CHOWDHRY 'Family-Friendly Comedian' comedy tour show Sunday 8 May



THE NICK ROSS ORCHESTRA An afternoon of Glenn Miller and Rat Pack era hits Sunday 15 May



FLO & JOAN 'Sweet Release' comedy tour show Wednesday 25 May



CARL HUTCHINSON Top stand-up, as seen on tour with Chris Ramsey Thursday 26 May



DOMINIC KIRWAN 'Through The Eyes Of An Irishman' tour Friday 27 May

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Rosie Tee

Sandfields Pumping Station, Lichfield, Sat 30 April

Composer and performer Rosie Tee forges an innovative, atmospheric blend of electronica, psych and avant-pop.

Since graduating population of the population of the population of the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire in 2019 - where she was awarded the RBC Composition Prize - she's been touring the UK (Covid measures permitting) with her quartet.

Rosie's concert will be the first Lichfield Arts gig to be held in Sandfields Pumping Station, one of Britain's finest industrial heritage sites.



Zervas & Pepper

Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury, Sun 10 April

Singer-songwriters Zervas & Pepper have captured imaginations with critically acclaimed albums Lifebringer, Abstract Heart, Wilderland and Endless Road, Restless Nomad.

Majoring in luminous harmonies and a laidback sound, the duo are back in the studio working on their as-yet-untitled forthcoming album. Live dates penned in for 2022 include Glastonbury, BBC Radio Two Live In Hyde Park and Moseley Folk & Arts Festival.





The Antidote

The Hive, Shrewsbury, Sat 9 April

The Antidote is led by bassist Matt Ridley, who began his musical journey on piano aged six. By his mid-teens, Matt had gravitated towards bass guitar; he was gigging professionally by the time he

Wille & The Bandits

The Robin, Bilston, Thurs 7 April

When the pandemic stopped them touring, boundary-pushing four-piece Wille And The Bandits got stuck into songwriting and produced a new album: When The World Stood Still. Widely considered to be one of their best yet, the record features a collection of powerful, anthemic songs, the melodies and lyrics of which have been described as 'resonating with the emotions of a time that none of us expected'.

The Manfreds

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Wed 6 April

Formed in 1991 and featuring Manfred Mann founder members Paul Jones, Mike Hugg and Tom McGuinness, The Manfreds present shows that provide a trip down memory lane for fans who remember the original band's 1960s' heyday.

Alongside hits like Do Wah Diddy Diddy, Pretty Flamingo and Mighty Quinn, the boys also perform a mix of jazz & blues covers and tracks from their individual solo albums. reached 20.

Also featuring Alex Hitchcock (saxophones), Ant Law (guitar), Tom Hewson (keyboards) and Marc Michel (drums), the band perform jazz with a focus on melody, in the process drawing on a rich history of influential rock, folk and classical music.

Ian Prowse & Amsterdam

Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton, Sat 23 April

Previously the frontman of indie cult band Pele, guitarist and singer-songwriter Ian Prowse formed Liverpool band Amsterdam back in 1999.

Creating a sound that's been described as 'rock & roll with a dash of celtic soul', the acclaimed six-piece will here be playing songs from their new LP, One Hand On The Starry Plough, as well as a selection of Pele, Amsterdam and Prowse classics.



Gigs





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Kiri Pritchard-McLean

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Fri 8 April; The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham, Fri 15 April

Although Kiri Pritchard-McLean did, on her own admission, struggle with the challenges of lockdown, she's since returned to the UK comedy circuit with all guns blazing. "In my new show, Home Truths, there are jokes about skinny jeans, learning Welsh and white supremacy." she says. "So something for everyone, really." Hailed for her dynamic stand-up and admirable commitment to chiselling out high-quality humour from even the thorniest of subjects, she hits the road having recently moved back to her home island of Anglesey and got herself some rescue chickens.



Matt Forde

Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Thurs 28 April; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Fri 29 April

A one-time advisor to New Labour (he gave up his membership of the party when Jeremy Corbyn became leader and now considers himself politically homeless), Nottingham-born Matt Forde is this month returning to the Midlands with Clowns To The Left Of Me, Jokers To The Right. And it will come as no surprise to any of his fans that he's focusing on the subject of politics in his new show.

"There are wallies everywhere," says Matt. "Half of them are running the country and the other half are trying to." The satire will be interspersed with impersonations of the political great and good.

Away from the spotlight of live stand-up, Matt has written gags for shows like Russell Howard's Good News, 8 Out Of 10 Cats and Stand-Up For The Week. He also contributes voices to the new Spitting Image series and co-hosts satirical podcast British Scandal.



Paul Chowdhry

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sat 16 April; Walsall Arena, Wed 27 & Thurs 28 April

One of the most talented and popular Asian comedians on the UK comedy circuit, Paul Chowdhry's stand-up act taps into the multicultural diversity of contemporary

Britain.

His visits to the Midlands this month see him presenting his latest touring show, Family Friendly Comedian - an evening of comedy covering all manner of topical subjects, from the UK's handling of the pandemic to Tom Cruise landing his helicopter in a Warwickshire garden.

Simon Brodkin

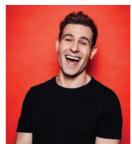
Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Wed 20 & Thurs 21 April

Former medical doctor Simon Brodkin is 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: perhaps most famously he once handed Prime Minister Theresa May her P45 at the Conservative Party Conference.

This latest tour sees him taking on maybe his trickiest task yet - going on stage *as himself*. Previously billed as '100% Simon Brodkin' 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.



Catherine Bohart

The Glee Club, Birmingham, Wed 20 April

"I'm the OCD, bisexual offspring of a Catholic deacon," says Catherine Bohart. "So as I'm sure you can imagine, finding material for my shows isn't easy!"



Catherine's natural enthusiasm for life and laughter ensures she enjoys an excellent rapport with her audience, for whom the Irish comedian seems to have a genuine affection.

"I talk a lot about Ireland in my show," she says, "but a lot has happened there since I started out, including the legalising of abortion and gay marriage. I'm happy for Ireland, really I am, but I've got to honest, the rewrites are killing me!"

Catherine's jokes include: "Lesbian sex is like cricket: it goes on forever and there's a lot of men watching it at home, alone, on the internet."



LET'S GO OUT A CELEBRATION OF CREATIVITY IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

ARTWORK: GAZ BURNS







Nish Kumar

Birmingham Town Hall, Fri 15 April

"Once you get established as a comedian," says Nish Kumar, "you have to start taking comedy seriously, which is obviously an oxymoron. When you're a nobody, you can just go up to the Edinburgh Fringe, get drunk and have fun."

Nish's days of anonymity - inebriated or otherwise - are now behind him. The Croyden-born comedian has emphatically hit the big time and, even more impressively, has done so simply by being his usual affable self.

"For years, I thought comedians had to be confrontational or awkward," he recently admitted. "But then I realised, if people basically like you and think you're an okay guy, they'll listen to you talk about absolutely anything."

Chris McCausland

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sat 9 April; The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham, Sun 10 April

"A long time ago, when I'd only just started out as a comedian," recalls scouse funnyman Chris McCausland, " I walked out on stage and was telling a joke to break the ice about being blind, when somebody in the audience shouted out pantomime style, 'We're behind you!' It was very funny!"

Chris has the eye condition retinitis pigmentosa. "It's been referred to in different ways across the years," he says, "from the rather dull and generic-sounding macular degeneration to the cool and groovy inverse cone-rod dystrophy!"

A touring comedian since the mid-noughties, Chris has also appeared on a host of television panel games and in TV series including EastEnders and Moving On. He's perhaps best known, though, for playing Rudi in the CBeebies programme, Me Too!. He visits the Midlands this month with his latest touring show, Speaky Blinder.



Romesh Ranganathan

Birmingham Hippodrome, Sun 24 - Wed 27 April

With his support slots having included one for Ricky Gervais, it's fair to say former maths teacher Romesh Ranganathan has made a significant impact since bursting onto the comedy circuit in 2010.

It's all a far cry from his previous career in a Crawley classroom. "In the early days, I would be performing to eight people in a pub, and my sixth formers would turn up," Romesh recalls in an interview with Crawley News. "I couldn't help but think, 'Oh God, this isn't going to end well'. It undermined my authority to tell the students off the next day, because it must've been hilarious for them to see me die on stage and think, 'I'm just going to heckle him now'!" Romesh's latest show, The Cynic's Mixtape,



is a carefully curated selection of all the things he's found unacceptable since his last tour. These include why trying to save the environment is a scam, why nobody is truly free, and his suspicion that his wife is using gluten intolerance to avoid sleeping with him.

Alan Partridge: Live

Utilita Arena, Birmingham, Thurs 28 & Fri 29 April

Alan Partridge can number Steve Coogan among his legion of passionate fans. Coogan co-created inept broadcaster Partridge back in the 1990s, maturing the character across numerous television series, including The Day Today, Knowing Me, Knowing You and I'm Alan Partridge. And Steve is happy to admit that he finds himself laughing at Alan's antics whenever he sees them on screen for the first time. "I feel the same delight as the audience would," he told the Guardian. "I see Alan as Alan. I don't see him as me."

Since debuting Partridge in 1991 on BBC Radio Four comedy programme On The Hour, Coogan has established him as one of the UK's greatest-ever comedy creations. There's little wonder, then, that even in a super-busy and impressively diverse career, he's always found opportunities to return to the character.

His latest endeavour is this live-on-stage touring show. Entitled Strategem, it sees Alan bringing a message of hope to a country riven with discord and disease - and doing so while wearing 'a head-mic favoured by TED talkers, market hawkers, TV evangelists, backing singers and carnival barkers'...



FESTIVAL FEVER

Birmingham 2022 Festival's executive producer, Raidene Carter, explains why the event is not only a brilliant celebration of the arts & culture sector but also a wonderful opportunity to show off the region's creativity...

With a six-month cultural programme taking place across Birmingham and the West Midlands, the Birmingham 2022 Festival has been hailed as the biggest celebration of creativity ever seen in the region.

The £12million festival kicked off in March and coincides with the city's hosting of the Commonwealth Games, wrapping around the 11-day sporting extravaganza and offering an array of shows and activities that aim to entertain and engage more than 2.5 million people in person and online.

It's an absurdly ambitious project, with over 200 events set to take place in Birmingham and across the region, featuring art, photography, dance, theatre, music and more. Better yet, virtually everything is free to attend and most of the projects are community-based, according to Executive Producer Raidene Carter.

"The festival will throw a spotlight on the wonderful creativity of the region across many communities," says Raidene. "The breadth of open, free and accessible work in the programme is so inspiring and exciting. I think the festival is going to bring so much joy and entertainment to audiences and participants alike."

Headline highlights of the festival include spectacular open-air events, a Birminghaminspired music album, immersive 3D artworks on public transport and a mass tapdancing extravaganza.

Raidene is keen to point out that the programme has been designed to embrace local culture and generate lasting change and a creative legacy beyond the Games.

"People want to know about the legacy before you've even started, and for a long time we resisted saying precisely what that will be, but we came up with the theory of change. You can see it happening already with the projects that have started up. Things like Critical Mass, which is our massinclusive dance project that features 300 young people, with and without disabilities, coming together to feel confident and to learn to dance. They'll be part of every major moment of the Games, including the opening and closing ceremonies, and they literally dance their way through the festival.

"The positive outcomes that we're witnessing - you can literally see it in the people. So some of the legacy stuff is already happening. Some of it is structural, but the majority of it is in the experience that people have when they take part in the festival."

Hundreds of people will be doing just that,

and Raidene says the rationale behind the programming of the festival has been to celebrate the region's creativity and culture, which she claims is "everywhere".

"Our mandate is to show that off and make a statement. Brummies and West Midlanders are incredibly quiet when it comes to showing off about what's here, so our job wasn't so much to reinvent or make things new happen, it was to bring people together - all the right artists and creative organisations, all the right funding partners - and to lay out the vision of that. Then we just let the ideas come to the table - and they came in bags and bags and bags."

Raidene says there was never a struggle for content, but organisers were also keen to highlight the diversity of the region, primarily in terms of the work produced rather than meeting any perceived quotas regarding inclusivity.

"When you look at the art & culture that comes out of the city, the thing that Birmingham does particularly well is crossing the lines between art forms - it blends and mixes art forms really well, and without making a big deal out of it. So there's a lot of that in the festival, where we try not to pin something down artistically. We take our lead instead by looking at diversity in its broadest sense, about art forms, thoughts and ideas, and not just a tick-box exercise about what audiences should look like."

Speaking of audiences, giving the arts & culture crowd something to enjoy during a sporting event is almost certainly a clandestine part of the festival's remit, but Raidene is keen to stress that although sports-arts links had to be made, the organisers had largely shied away from simply commissioning sport-inspired art. It turns out they didn't have to.

"When we started talking to the sector, without prompting, we found artists coming to the table saying, 'Oh my God, I've wanted for so long to make a piece of work about my childhood hero Jahangir Khan, who's one of the world's most famous squash players'.

"All of that came out without us having to do much prodding - artists were looking for something else to make work about.

"Some brilliant stuff came out of that - we've got the squash project (Out Of The Box), one about basketball and John Amaechi [the sport's first openly gay star], another where gymnastics meets jazz and even a table tennis-playing robot from Australia... some really interesting projects that look at sport but then look at it again from all sorts of different angles."

Some of the shows will even take place in sporting venues, to further cement the links. Out Of The Box will be performed on the same court as the rackets get swung, and Come Bowl With Me, a humorous look at crown green bowling, will be presented in parks in Coventry and Leamington.

Raidene says the aim is to attract as wide and diverse - an audience as possible, especially arts fans who don't typically attend sporting events, and vice versa.

"We know they're out there, and we don't want to be patronising - that was a really big issue for us - but we do want to mix and blend, and we're hoping we'll get arts audiences that will also be inspired to come and watch the Games. If they can't get a ticket, they can come to the festival sites and watch it on telly."

Raidene is also aware that the event's timing, as the country emerges from the Covid pandemic only to face the black cloud of the conflict in Ukraine, is something that can't, and shouldn't, be ignored.

"If anything it has bolstered our bigger message, which is that art & culture brings people together. It also has a lot to say about freedom of speech and democracy - if you're putting on a programme where the Commonwealth comes into the frame, you obviously end up having some really hot conversations about what that means now, and where the Commonwealth comes from.

"There are a lot of nations that still criminalise homosexuality, and where people don't have the freedom that we have in the UK, and a lot of that comes through in the festival programme.

"We don't want to make any specific alignments in that way, but when you look at the vast amount of the work, it's mainly about not censoring what artists want to say about the times that we're in.

"I'm hoping it will feel joyous, and I'm hoping those who didn't engage with their local community art space before the pandemic will see its importance and want to do so, because it's all about audiences - all of it."

For details on all Birmingham 2022 Festival events, visit: birmingham2022.com/festival/events

BIRMINGHAM 2022 FESTIVAL

With the biggest celebration of creativity ever seen in the region now under way, we take a look at some of the highlights of Birmingham 2022 Festival...



People, Place And Sport

This celebration of local communities in the West Midlands sees artist Jaskirt Boora exploring the role of gender and ethnicity in sport via a series of portraits and recorded conversations. The work also shines a light on sporting hubs 'tucked away in our landscape, away from the large stadia', where grassroots sport takes place on a weekly basis.

Where: Wednesbury Leisure Centre, West Bromwich Leisure Centre and Hadley Stadium Smethwick, Sandwell, St Paul's Jewellery Quarter, Digbeth Coach Station and Moseley Road Baths, Birmingham

When: 4 April - 31 August

4600 Gifts

Devised as a project to welcome 4,600-plus athletes from the Commonwealth commemorating their visit to the region and reflecting Birmingham as a city of diverse skills, cultures and stories - 4600 Gifts invites residents to take part in a series of community crafting events. The project will see a personalised gift and message of welcome - made by the people of Birmingham - placed into the hands of every athlete. To join in, sign up at craftspace.co.uk/4600gifts.

Where: Birmingham. Mass-makes: Selfridges, The Bullring, on 9 & 10 April; Cathedral Square, Birmingham, 14 & 15 May

When: until 9 July



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On Record Live!

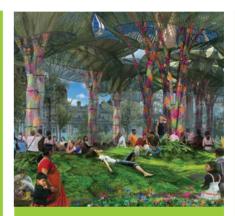
Dapz On The Map here discusses a career that has seen him steadily rise up the ranks on the urban UK music scene, from national radio play to supporting Kano and Skepta on tour.

The conversation with the Birminghamborn singer and rapper is part of the On Record project. Presented in partnership with B:Music, On Record features a range of music-industry figures talking about their connection to the city and how it has influenced or inspired their work. The conversations are being released as podcasts this month.

An On Record concept album, featuring 11 new songs about Birmingham, will be released on 18 June.

Where: Symphony Hall, Birmingham

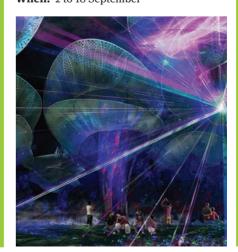
When: 8, 10*, 19 & 27 April; 5, 10, 15*, 18 & 26 May; 3, 8 12*, 21 June; 8, 16, 21 & 31* July; 10, 14* & 16 August. 7.30pm except * which take place on Sundays at 3pm and feature a free live performance from artists appearing on the On Record album.



PoliNations

Birmingham city centre will become a forest garden of 'magical proportions' in the early autumn, as Trigger Collective convert Victoria Square into an oasis of colour and nature. Giant architectural trees will take root, and the ground will be awash with vibrant plants and flowers - all planted by the city's residents. The 'supernatural wonderland' will host a free events programme, including music from around the world, evening light shows and a grande finale 'like no other'.

Where: Victoria Square, Birmingham When: 2 to 18 September



Key To The City



What if anyone could decide who has the freedom of the city? What if everyone, not just the chosen few, could be recognised with the Key to Birmingham?

Paul Ramírez Jonas and Fierce here turn these and other 'what ifs' into reality via a project that provides people with the chance to enjoy and experience places and locations they wouldn't normally be able to access. Visit wearefierce.org for location announcements and information about how to get involved. The project forms part of Fierce's 25th anniversary celebrations.

Where: Locations across Birmingham & Solihull

When: 28 May - 7 August

Outside The Box: The Story Of Squash

Untied Artists and the Playhouse's familyfriendly production sees a cast of professional players, actors and school children presenting a celebration of the sport of squash on three glass-back courts. Highlighting the way in which squash's story mirrors the evolution of the Commonwealth, Outside The Box features a special appearance by current Commonwealth Games Gold medal holder James Willstrop.

Where: University of Birmingham squash courts, University of Birmingham

When: 21 & 22 May - 11.30am & 2.30pm; 28 & 29 May - 11.30am & 2.30pm



Time Travel Tram



Step back in time onboard the West Midlands Metro with an immersive experience that launches living history into the 21st century. Time Travel Tram transforms the view from the tram's window into 'a 3D visual extravaganza' of people and places from the region's past.

The trip is accompanied by a contemporary soundtrack created by musicians and performers from the West Midlands.

Where: West Midlands Metro route. Both directions between Birmingham city centre and Wolverhampton

When: until 30 September



one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World - The Healing Gardens Of Bab sees Fierce transforming a number of locations in Birmingham city centre with unique installations, art and events for everybody.

The Healing Gardens are described by Fierce as "a paradise that uplifts alternative expressions of gender, sexuality and family. The gardens are a space to reflect on the violent erasure enforced by British Empire and to celebrate the many sexual identities that are not translatable into English." The project provides numerous ways to get involved. These include costume workshops, performance opportunities, crafting and talks & discussions.

Where: Chamberlain Square, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, Symphony Hall and other city locations. When: 27 June to 17 July



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Theatre

Theatre previews from around the region



Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat Birmingham Hippodrome, Tues 5 - Sat 16 April

A one-time wearer of the technicolour dreamcoat himself, Jason Donovan here makes a welcome return to Tim Rice & Andrew Lloyd Webber's ever-glorious musical, this time in the role of Pharoah. He's joined in the show by Alexander Burke as the narrator and Jac Yarrow as the title character.

Joseph marked Rice & Lloyd Webber's first foray into the world of musical theatre, paving the way for later offerings Jesus Christ Superstar and Evita. Fabulously fun and frothy, the show offers great entertainment for anybody who fancies the kind of night out that lets you leave your brain at home.

For those not in the know about the biblical story which inspired the musical, young Joseph sees the future in dreams, and tells his 11 brothers that he's had a vision in which he's seen them all bowing down to him. Not surprisingly, the lads are a tad annoyed with their boastful little bro about this - and they feel even more aggrieved when their dad sees fit to give him a coat of many colours...

Bat Out Of Hell

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Tues 26 - Sat 30 April

A jukebox musical set in a dystopian future and positively awash with greatest hits from an impressive backcatalogue, Jim Steinman/Meat Loaf extravaganza Bat Out Of Hell is heavy



on rock music and light on plot. The story, such as it is, unfolds in a Manhattan of the future - one which has been turned into a desolate wasteland and is lorded over by a ruthless dictator named Falco. The evil tyrant is determined to rebuild the city and will stop at nothing to get his way. But a group of kids whose DNA is permanently frozen - meaning they will be 18 years of age forever - are equally determined to thwart his dastardly plans...

Footloose

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Tues 19 - Sat 23 April; Malvern Theatres, Mon 16 - Sat 21 May; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Mon 4 - Sat 9 July

Hit Broadway and West End musical Footloose tells the story of city boy Ren's arrival in Bomont, and the impact which his dancing has on a town held back by the memory of a tragedy. Featuring classic numbers such as Holding Out For A Hero, Almost Paradise, Let's Hear It For The Boy and of course the title track itself, the show stars Dancing On Ice winner Jake Quickenden and West End veteran Darren Day.



The Osmonds Musical

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Tues 5 - Sat 9 April; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Tues 25 -Sat 29 October

"I wrote it from the heart," says Jay Osmond of this new touring stage show. "It was hard. I had to play my drums



a lot to get my emotions out, but it all boiled down to this: why did we do what we did? It was because we wanted to help people." For those who are neither pop-music aficionados nor of a certain vintage... The Osmonds were Mormon brothers who started out as a barbershop quartet. They went on to become one of the most famous pop groups in history, winning dozens of awards and selling millions of albums worldwide. Put simply, this show tells their story... BIRMINGHAM HIPPODROME

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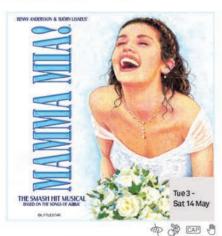


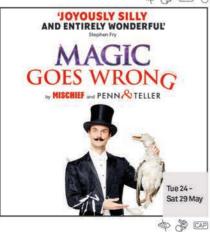
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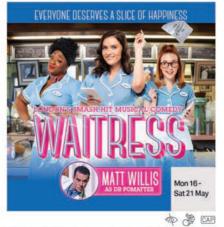


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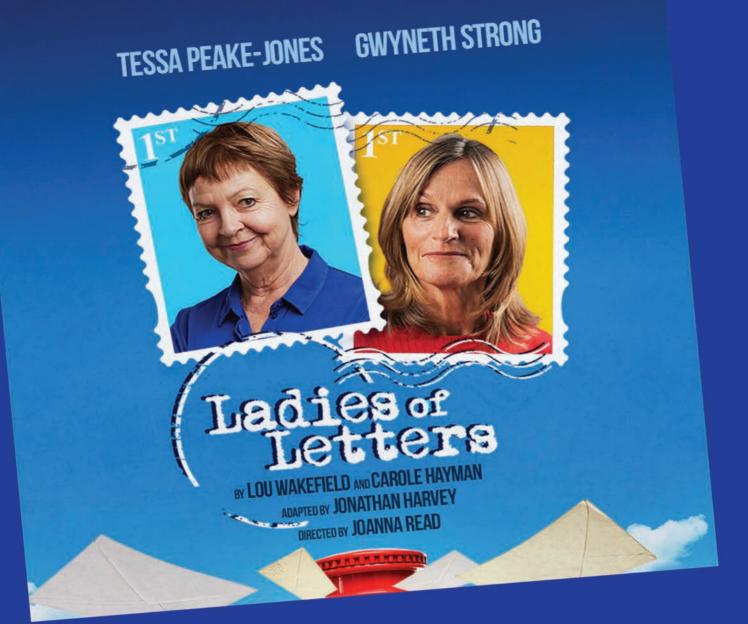








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Theatre previews from around the region

Theatre



Bedknobs And Broomsticks

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 5 - Sat 9 April

Based on the 1971 Disney kids' film of the same name and set in the darkest days of the Second World War, Bedknobs And Broomsticks tells the story of the Rawlins siblings, three children who've been evacuated from London.

Finding themselves in the fictional Dorset town of Pepperinge Eye, they are put in the care of the eccentric Miss Eglantine Price - a woman who's far more interested in completing her studies in magic than in

taking care of a trio of young evacuees.

Before the children know it, she's casting spells on their bed and sending them skywards on a magical adventure...

"Using fantasy to bring respite from trauma is really timely," says the show's co-producer, Candice Edmunds. "It feels more than ever that we want something to lift us out of the situation caused by the pandemic. In the story, the war means that the Rawlins children are in the depths of a traumatic upheaval; fantasy offers some relief from the dark forces closing in around them. It's very cleverly written to show the way a small child would imagine solutions to problems."

Grimeboy

The Rep, Birmingham, Thurs 14 - Sat 30 April

Nechells-born Casey Bailey is the current Birmingham poet laureate and the talented playwright behind this hardhitting new drama. Commissioned by



Birmingham Rep and exploring the impact which environment can have on the aspirations of individuals, Grimeboy tells the story of an inner-city teenager whose most heart-felt desire is to become the greatestever grime MC.

Same Time, Next Year

New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Tues 12 - Sat 16 April

Bernard Slade's bitter-sweet comedy, premiered on Broadway in 1975, proved so popular that it not only ran for 1,453 performances but was also made into a film in 1978 starring Alan Alda and Ellen Burstyn. Burstyn had three years earlier won a Tony Award for her performance in the stage version. Steeped in nostalgia - and along the way charting the ups and downs of parenthood, career highs and lows and the shifting fashions and morals of the passing decades the story follows the characters of Doris and George. While both married to other people, they share a passionate one-night stand in a California hotel and decide that they'll meet up again 12 months later. Unwilling to risk their respective marriages but feeling profoundly connected to one another, they then continue to come together once a year for more than two decades...

Hailed by the New York Times as 'the funniest comedy about love and adultery to come Broadway's way in years', the play is here being presented by London Classic Theatre.



The Rise And Fall Of Little Voice

Malvern Theatres, Mon 11 - Sat 16 April

Jim Cartwright's hit musical, featuring songs from some of the world's most iconic divas, tells the story of a timid young girl with an incredible talent for vocal



impersonations who suddenly finds herself catapulted into the limelight by a local talent scout.

The introverted Elvie lives with her relentlessly awful mother, Mari, a woman who's leading a car-crash existence. Life is grim - and it could be about to get a whole lot worse, with the arrival on the scene of the blagging and bragging Ray, a selfstyled impresario who sees Elvie as his ticket to fame and fortune and her mother as a stepping stone to a better life... Shobna Gulati (Coronation Street, Dinnerladies, Everybody's Talking About Jamie) and Ian Kelsey (Emmerdale, Casualty) take top billing, with Christina Bianco (pictured) starring as Elvie.

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Theatre previews from around the region



Becoming Marvellous

Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham, Fri 29 April

"The complexities in all of us and the connections that exist between us are the things that I write about," explains cancer nurse, counsellor and spoken-word performer Cathy Carson. "Although everyone's journey is unique, the internal struggles that people face are similar. It's these that form the subject matter for much of my writing. I try to use my own experiences to show that hope and healing are possible."

Cathy's new touring play is set on the streets of 1990s Belfast and focuses on the character of a young woman named Danielle as she struggles to navigate the world around her.

The Bobby Kennedy Experience

Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, Sat 23 & Sun 24 April

After scoring hits with Julie Madly Deeply and An Evening Without Kate Bush, writer & performer Russell Lucas and director Sarah-Louise Young make a welcome return with a show about the second most



famous member of America's most famous family.

The younger brother of the assassinated President John F Kennedy, one-time US Attorney General Robert Kennedy had designs on the top job himself - until he too fell victim to an assassin's bullet...

Cluedo

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Mon 11 - Sat 16 April; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Mon 2 - Sat 7 May; Malvern Festival Theatre, Mon 20 - Sat 25 June; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Mon 11 - Sat 16 July

This new stage play is based on the famous detective board game of the same name, and the hit 1985 movie, Clue.

Featuring all of the game's famous characters - Miss Scarlett, Professor Plum, Mrs Peacock, Reverend Green, Mrs White and Colonel Mustard - the show is being helmed by Mark Bell, director of the award-winning The Play That Goes Wrong and A Comedy About A Bank Robbery.

Coronation Street and EastEnders favourite Michelle Collins stars as Miss Scarlett, with Daniel Casey - who played Detective Sergeant Gavin Troy in Midsomer Murders - taking on the role of Professor Plum.

Present Laughter

Prince Of Wales Theatre, Cannock, Wed 13 & Thurs 14 April

Womaniser, idol and suavely sophisticated theatrical Gary Essendine lives in a world of hopeful actors, star-struck teenagers and adoring fans. His antics and casual love affairs require the most delicate handling by his manager and secretary - and although he pretends to be harassed to the brink of a nervous breakdown, he secretly welcomes the adulation...

Ambient Night Productions make a welcome return with a brand-new production of Noel Coward's classic play.

Private Peaceful

The Rep, Birmingham, Tues 19 - Sat 23 April; Malvern Theatres, Tues 10 - Sat 14 May; Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Tues 17 - Sat 21 May

Private Peaceful is a short play that packs a real punch. Based on the book by War Horse author Michael Morpurgo and perfectly pitched for the young audience at which it's aimed, the stage production has been praised for being "as moving as the poetry of Wilfred Owen and as painfully memorable as whitehot shrapnel".

First World War soldier Private Tommo Peaceful is awaiting the firing squad at dawn. With his young life about to be cut tragically short, he recalls an all too brief but joyful past spent growing up in rural Devon, his mind wandering to thoughts of his schooldays, his father, and the love of his life: a girl named Molly...

Fighting Irish

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Sat 2 - Sat 16 April

When Coventrybased boxer Jarlath McGough returned to Dublin to defend his Irish lightheavyweight title in 1979, he ended up with more than just a boxing adversary to



overcome, as prejudice, corrupt officials and warring factions in Ireland combined to create a tinder-box atmosphere both inside and outside the ring.

The fight and the circumstances which surrounded it provide the basis for this promising debut play from Jarlath's very own nephew, Coventry writer Jamie McGough (pictured).

The Glee Club

Lichfield Garrick, Thurs 21 - Sat 23 April

Likened to Brassed Off but featuring barbershop harmonies, this raucous 2002 comedy visits the Midlands with a stunning success in the West End to recommend it. Richard Cameron's musical drama follows the fortunes of a colliery glee club whose director, a mining engineer named Phil, harbours a long-held secret. When the truth is finally revealed, the group's sense of solidarity is suddenly and seriously challenged...



AT THE HELM What's On chats to Ion Gilchrist. Birmingham Hippodrome's new artistic

What's On chats to Jon Gilchrist, Birmingham Hippodrome's new artistic director, about his vision for the Midlands venue

Birmingham Hippodrome's new artistic director & chief executive, Jon Gilchrist, is hitting the ground running as he takes over the city's largest theatre in the same year the eyes of the world are on Birmingham.

With Birmingham 2022 Festival now under way and the Commonwealth Games taking place in the summer, the Hippodrome is perfectly placed to be part of that story and to reach out to new audiences.

Jon, who has been executive director of multi-arts venue HOME in Manchester since 2018 and takes over the helm at the Hippodrome on 11 April, sees a clear comparison with Manchester, which held the Games 20 years ago.

"That was a moment in time in Manchester which was part of that city's cultural revolution. The Commonwealth Games in 2002 had a real legacy for that city. Birmingham is now seeing 2022 as a moment, and it's a moment which can be used to bring cultural organisations of all shapes and scales closer together and to see what the cultural life of this city will be in the future.

"Birmingham has the richest and most exciting creative ecology in the country in terms of the range of artists reflecting the different communities and the types of work that are happening. What makes Birmingham so incredible is that there aren't particularly dominant culture groups. It feels like there are so many different cultural voices here. Also it's a very young city and I love that.

"I'm very interested in how culture can, not be the solution to all the world's problems, but can be part of the solution. And Birmingham as a city, which is already an incredible place but now has so much potential to build on that, has the chance to build that legacy."

Jon's first roles in theatre were in marketing at venues including The Lowry in Manchester, Octagon Theatre Bolton and The Dukes in Lancaster before he became executive director at the Bush Theatre in London in 2014. And he says the chance to head up the team at the Hippodrome, on the departure of former artistic director & chief executive Fiona Allan to Opera Australia, was too good to miss.

"I can't tell you the amount of producers who tell me that Birmingham Hippodrome is the best theatre in the country. And they're talking in terms of performing in the city as well as the shape and the scale of the theatre. This is a theatre which is incredibly loved."

Jon also has a personal connection to the city, as his father was born in Birmingham, grew up in Malvern, and met Jon's mum at Birmingham University, where they were both studying English.

"My parents have just celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary and they met in Birmingham, so I have always considered it to be the most romantic city in the country. We always came back a lot, and I've had friends who lived here, so it's funny driving round the city now and little memories of things like playing in Cannon Hill Park or taking part in outdoor activities with Midlands Arts Centre come back. There isn't any other city I would have wanted to come to."

Jon is keen for the Hippodrome to be at the heart of Birmingham's communities.

"I think my vision for the venue is, to quote Shakespeare, 'what is the city but the people'. My vision is that the Hippodrome becomes even more open to the community, even more connected to the city, and more reflective of the values of the city. And that's not a tokenistic approach or a generic diversity statement - Birmingham is about quality, it's about internationalism, it's about rich cultures.

"I feel that Birmingham is the most exciting city in the country at the moment. There's a hell of a lot of artistic talent that operates within the city, and I think the Hippodrome is already doing so much to amplify that and to provide opportunities. I'd love to explore that further.

"I want to reach out into communities and do different things and look for ways that we can, not replicate things that are already there, but help and support them. "You want the people inside your theatre and at your events to look like the people who are walking past your theatre every day, and you want those people on your stages, in your workforce, on your board and in your audience. How you achieve that is multifaceted. It's not just marketing, or the actors you have or the programme or the building it's all of these things and more."

Last year Jon was elected joint president of UK Theatre, a post he takes up later this year. He says we should never forget that a theatre is first and foremost about entertainment.

"Theatre can provide a sense of belonging and give people joy. Different people will have different definitions of what brings joy. It might be attending a festival in your community, it might be going to a panto, it might be doing a Q&A with Carlos Acosta at the ballet, it might be attending a class we put on. It could be any number of things. We need to assess what the city is and how we bring joy, and if we can do that, we make for a healthier and happier city. Increasingly people are seeing theatre's capacity to do that."

There are undoubtedly challenges for Jon and the Hippodrome, not least in recovering from two years of pandemic and multiple lockdowns.

"We certainly can't underestimate the challenges that are coming, and we're not out of the woods yet. A lot of the things that we did before have changed, and I do think there's a process that needs to be embarked on now in listening and learning about what people want.

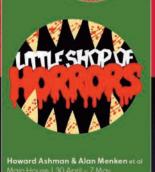
"It may not all be change. I went to see the panto at the Hippodrome and it was notable that there was something incredibly familiar and reassuring about doing that annual thing with people you know. Part of what we need the theatre to be is continuity - that idea that this is the way the world was before and it can be again."

For full details about shows coming up at Birmingham Hippodrome, visit: birminghamhippodrome.com

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Theatre for younger audiences...



Fireman Sam

The Place, Telford, Thurs 14 April; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sun 22 May; Swan Theatre, Worcester, Tues 26 July; Brierley Hill Civic, Thurs 4 August; Prince of Wales Centre, Cannock, Sat 6 August; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Tues 25 October

Now an impressive 35 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.



Shark In The Park

Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Wed 13 April

Nick Sharratt has illustrated over 250 books, around one-sixth of which have been his own. One of these is the hugely successful Shark In The Park!, a children's story about a young lad named Timothy who goes to his local park to try out his new telescope. While there, he thinks he spots a shark - and not just on one occasion either, but several times in several places!

The popularity of the book prompted Sharratt to write and illustrate two follow-ups - Shark In The Dark! and Shark In The Park On A Windy Day!.

All three stories are featured in this popular stage show, which is here being performed twice in the same afternoon (at 1.30pm and 3.30pm).



Dinosaur Adventure Live

Walsall Arena & Arts Centre, Wed 13 April; The Albany Theatre, Coventry, Thurs 14 April; Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Wed 20 April; Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Tues 23 -Wed 24 August; Prince of Wales Centre, Cannock, Sun 28 August

Dinosaur Adventure Live is being advertised as 'the greatest prehistoric show on Earth', providing audiences with a '65 million years in the making' hour of 'roarsome' fun that's 'totally T-rex-iffic'...

If the show itself proves to be anywhere near as confident and slick as its pun-filled publicity, then the above-listed venues could well have a 'monster' of a hit on their hands! Boasting 'living, breathing, life-like dinosaurs', the interactive experience allows families to take a walk through the Jurassic

The Smeds And The Smoos

Birmingham Town Hall, Sun 17 - Wed 20 April

Another Tall Stories adaptation of a picture book by award-winning collaborators Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler, The Smeds And The Smoos tells the intergalactic tale of a young Smed and a young Smoo who fall hopelessly in love.

There's a problem, though... the red-coloured Smeds and the blue-coloured Smoos never mix, causing Romeo & Juliet-style complications for the star-crossed lovers... Created for children aged three-plus, this theatrical presentation of Donaldson and Scheffler's delightful space romance comes complete with a powerful but gently conveyed message about difference and tolerance.

era, meet dinos face-to-face and check out the impossible-to-ignore roar of a terrorinducing tyrannosaurus.

Exciting Science

The Core Theatre, Solihull, Sat 16 April

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

Dear Zoo

Birmingham Hippodrome, Wed 6 - Sun 10 April; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Wed 13 April

First published in 1982, Rod Campbell's liftthe-flap book, Dear Zoo, has delighted generations of children and accumulated in excess of eight million sales worldwide. This well-reviewed stage version of the story features child-friendly puppets, original music and lots of audience participation.



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Image credit: Krankpod Workshops





Sooty's Magic Show

Stourbridge Town Hall, Thurs 14 April; The Core Theatre, Solihull, Fri 22 April

A glove puppet who's not averse to dabbling in the ancient art of magic (casting spells to his catchphrase of 'Izzy wizzy, let's get bizzy'), Sooty has been around for 74 years, during which time he's entertained generations of youngsters with all manner of laugh-out-loud capers in the company of sidekicks Sweep and Soo.

He's nowadays accompanied on tour by entertainment entrepreneur Richard Cadell, who's been looking after him since Matthew Corbett retired in the mid-1990s.

So if you think your youngsters would enjoy Sooty's flying car, Soo's singing unicorn and Sweep's levitating sausage, then Izzy wizzy, it's time to get bizzy and grab yourself some tickets for this well-reviewed show.



Milkshake! Live

Brierley Hill Civic Hall, Wed 13 April; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Thurs 21 April; Prince of Wales Centre, Cannock, Mon 30 May; Theatre Severn, Sun 26 June; Birmingham Town Hall, Sun 30 October

Milkshake Monkey's putting on a musical - and he's inviting little ones to come along and

join in the fun with Paddington, Daisy & Ollie, Milo, Noddy, Pip & Posy and Blue's Clues...

If you've watched the TV series and/or been to a previous live production, you'll already know what to expect from a Milkshake! show. If not, get ready for an event that promises lots of laughter, bucketloads of family fun, bags of audience participation and plenty of singing and dancing.



Rapunzel: A Tangled Musical Adventure

The Albany Theatre, Coventry, Sat 16 April; Lichfield Garrick, Tues 19 April; Stourbridge Town Hall, Wed 20 April

Midlands audiences are being invited to let down their hair and enjoy this brand-new adaptation of a



popular fairytale. Based on the story of a princess who's locked in a tower and whose saviour - a handsome prince, as you'd expect - accesses her by climbing up her incredibly long hair, this two-hour show features a wicked witch, a feisty heroine, a tap-dancing horse and (we're reliably informed) more songs, dance routines and jokes than you could shake the proverbial stick at.

In The Night Garden

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Thurs 21 - Sun 24 April; Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Fri 10 - Sat 11 June

If your little ones are big fans of top-rated CBeebies television series In The Night Garden, they're certain to enjoy this liveaction 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, the show is a 4.8-out-of-five theatrical experience!

Featuring full-size costumes and 'magical' puppets, In The Night Garden Live is now in its 13th year, with this latest adventure going under the title of Igglepiggle's Busy Day.

The Smartest Giant In Town

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Thurs 7 - Sat 9 April; Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent, Mon 11 - Wed 13 April

Julia Donaldson's giant, George, decides his scruffy days are a thing of the past and buys himself some oversized clothes. But when he encounters various



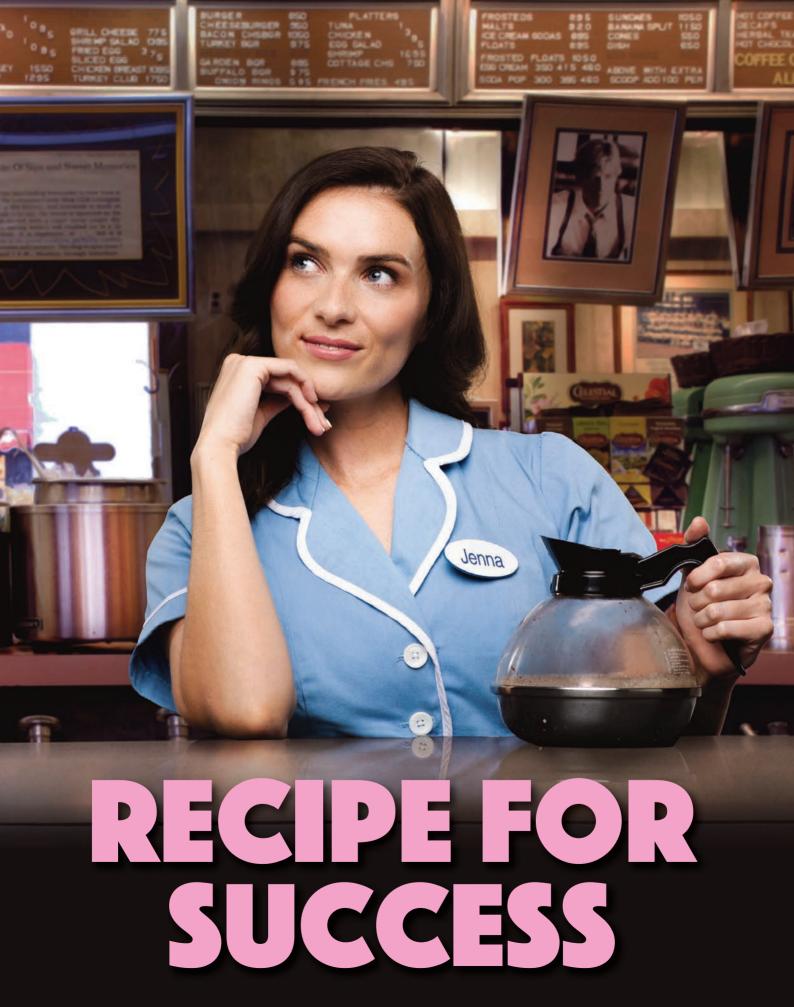
animals needing his assistance - and, more particularly, his newly purchased attire -George soon realises that it isn't clothes that maketh the giant but rather a gargantuan sense of generosity and a colossal, warm heart... Presented by Fierylight and Little Angel Theatre.

Oh No, George!

Swan Theatre, Worcester, Tues 19 April; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sat 23 & Sun 24 April

Acrobatics, slapstick comedy and live music come together to tell the tale of a dog named George who's desperate to be good. But anyone who imagines George is always wellbehaved is definitely, er, *barking* up the wrong tree...

Adapted from the award-winning picture book by Chris Haughton and featuring signsupported English, this brand-new show for children aged three-plus is presented by Can't Sit Still, a Gloucestershire-based arts organisation that 'tells stories and starts conversations which have the power to change the world'.



Waitress The Musical is serving up a slice of happiness this spring and summer. What's On caught up with leading lady Chelsea Halfpenny to talk about taking on her dream role...

"Starring in a musical was something I'd always wanted to do," says Chelsea Halfpenny. "It's funny because when you get into one side of the industry, in my case TV, sometimes you just don't get seen for auditions for stuff on the other side, even though people can often do both. So when I got cast in 9 To 5 The Musical a couple of years ago, that was a total dream come true."

Chelsea is the niece of Coronation Street, EastEnders and Waterloo Road actress Jill Halfpenny. And, just like her aunt, she started her acting career at a young age, starring in children's television series Byker Grove - as well as appearing in an episode of Casualty - back in 2004. She has since appeared in Emmerdale (as runaway teenager Amy Wyatt) and made a return to Casualty - she played the part of Alicia Munroe, a year one foundation officer doctor, from 2015 to 2019. It was post-Casualty that she appeared in 9 To 5, the first musical in which she had ever starred.

Now she's top-billing in romantic musical comedy Waitress - and is determined to bring everything she learned in 9 To 5 to the new role: "9 To 5 was definitely a learning curve. Although theatre hours are normally only five to 10.30, you spend the whole day gearing up for it and checking in with yourself to make sure you're feeling fit, both physically and vocally. I've always had singing lessons, but I'd never sung in a show before, so learning how to look after my voice was very new to me.

"Waitress feels less physically demanding than 9 To 5 in some ways because even though I'm in the show more, my character is much more chilled out. But it's more demanding in terms of the energy you need to bring, so I've learnt a lot about how much I can do outside of work. I have to preserve my energy so that I can give the audience the best show possible."

Waitress first opened in the West End in 2019, but owing to Covid cancellations, the UK tour has been long awaited - both by audiences and by Chelsea herself.

"Waitress is one of my favourite shows and

definitely my favourite soundtrack. I saw it in the West End and loved it. It felt very real, so it differs to your typical musical, which can sometimes be over the top or unrealistic.

"The songs are different too, because they're more like pop songs - although I do love musical theatre songs. So I feel like Waitress meets in the middle with my TV background, because I get to do some great acting and then sing a beautiful song."

Chelsea is taking on the role of protagonist Jenna, an expert pie-maker who accidentally falls pregnant while trapped in a loveless marriage. After developing romantic feelings for her new doctor, Jenna decides to search for the recipe for happiness, helped along the way by her fellow waitresses and closest confidantes, Becky and Dawn.

Waitress has a female-led creative team at the helm, including Grammy Award winner Sara Bareilles, Tony Award winner Diane Paulus and acclaimed screenwriter Jessie Nelson. After opening on Broadway in 2016, the show was nominated for four Tony Awards.

So what is it that makes Waitress such a roaring success?

"You can't help but love the characters. And it's so funny. I don't think people expect it to be funny, but it really is.

"Also, it tackles some really hard-hitting topics in a way that some musicals don't, and I think that strikes a chord. It shows that humans are flawed and that we all make mistakes, which really resonates with people."

Perhaps it's this sense of realness and honesty that allows Chelsea to see herself in the character of Jenna.

"I'm similar to her in some ways. I can sometimes avoid problems like she does, and that's something I'm trying to work on. She's quite grounded too, and I think I'm like that as a person. And she's sarcastic - I can definitely be a bit sarcastic!"

One way in which Chelsea and Jenna definitely *do* differ, though, is regarding their taste in pies: "The thing is, I don't really like sweet pies, but Jenna doesn't bake any savoury pies! When I was younger, I used to love a mince & gravy pie because my gran would cook them all the time. I don't eat meat anymore, but I'd have to say that my favourite pie would be one of Granny's mince pies!"

Chelsea might not be a fan of the pies in the show, but she makes no secret of her love for the Waitress soundtrack. Although she confesses it's hard to choose, her favourite song from the show is A Soft Place To Land a slow number in which Jenna, Dawn and Becky sing about their dreams for a better life.

"But my favourite songs to be on stage for are the ones where everyone's on stage. So I love the opening number, which is called Opening Up, as well as the finale."

Chelsea makes it clear that playing Jenna in Waitress is her dream role, but that hasn't stopped her from thinking about what she'd like to do next. And it sounds as though another musical may be on the cards.

"I'd love to play another empowering female character, like Elle Woods in Legally Blonde The Musical. She's funny as well, so I'd definitely enjoy playing her. I also love Mean Girls The Musical; that's another show I'd love to do."

But with the Waitress tour continuing until August, for now Chelsea is focusing on the job in hand. "I feel like I've only just got started with this show, so I'm really throwing my everything into it. But it's going really quickly, and I'm already willing it to slow down! Every night is brilliant, the audience reaction has been incredible, and everyone goes away feeling full of love."

Chelsea Halfpenny stars as Jenna in Waitress The Musical at Birmingham Hippodrome from Monday 16 to Saturday 21 May, and at Wolverhampton Grand

Theatre from Tuesday 28 June to Saturday 2 July



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Film: Dear Evan Hansen 🐵 👑 Ben Platt, Kaitlyn Dever, Amy Adams A Black Country Night Out Henry's Blueshouse: Roy Forbes' Texas Rumble Solihull Symphony Orchestra 14/4 Tits, Gits and Little Sh*ts: An Evening With Gill Sime 16/4 **Exciting Science** Film: Encanto 🛕 🎬 20/4 Walt Disney's enchanting new musical Film: Spider-Man No Way Home 🚳 📟 20/4 Tom Holland, Zendaya Magical Bones - Black Magic Film: Last Night in Soho 🔞 🛗 Anya Taylor-Joy, Matt Smith Sing, Sing, Swing with Matt Ford The Opera Boys 13/5 Henry's Blueshouse: The Grey Goose Blues Band 16-17/5 All Our Yesterdays Johnny Cash Roadshow The Muslims are Coming! 25/5 The Simon and Garfunkel Story 26/5 Film: In the Heights @ Anthony Ramos, Leslie Grace, Stephanie Beatriz Johnny McEvoy Blokes of a Feather - Marks & Gran







This is not a full list - see website for full listings

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Dance previews from across the region

Dance



Akram Khan's Jungle Book: Reimagined Birmingham Hippodrome, Fri 29 & Sat 30 April

"We are now living in unprecedented and uncertain times," says choreographer Akram Khan, "not only for our species but for all species on this planet. And the root cause of this conundrum is because we have forgotten our connection to our home, our planet. We all inhabit it, we all take from it, and we all build on it, but we have forgotten to return our respect for it. And so I feel compelled to share the story - lovingly known as The Jungle Book - with children and adults from all cultures, in order to re-learn what we, as a species, have so conveniently forgotten. And I believe that the strongest and deepest way to tell this story is through the magic of dance, music and theatre."

All About The Fight: Going The Distance

Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton, Thurs 7 - Fri 8 April

Dance and boxing are here combined in what promises to be a dynamic and refreshingly unique evening of entertainment. Choreographed by Katy Sterran and featuring dancers from her Wolverhampton-based youth ensemble, the piece aims to draw attention to the psychological 'fights' in which young people find themselves participating, as they struggle to cope with the pressures of living in the modern world.





Motionhouse: Nobody

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Wed 27 - Sat 30 April

Combining dynamic dancing with digital film, Leamington-based dance-circus practitioners Motionhouse here present a show which follows the journey of self-discovery made by seven characters as they attempt to find strength and support in each other. "The show is about the relationship with ourselves, and what the voice in our head means," says Motionhouse Artistic Director Kevin Finnan. "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."

Sampad Asian Spring

Birmingham Town Hall, Sun 10 April Some of the Midlands' most highly regarded South Asian contemporary and classical dance groups come together to present an evening of entertainment showcasing an eclectic mix of styles - from kathak and bharatanatyam to Bollywood and raas garba. The event has been organised by Sampad South Asian Arts & Heritage, a Birmingham charity which works to promote British Asian arts 'so that they progress, break new ground and enrich mainstream culture in the UK'.



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STRICTLY JOHANNES

Everyone's favourite Strictly Come Dancing sweetheart, Johannes Radebe, talks to What's On about Freedom!, his first UK touring show...

"I couldn't wait to begin the tour!" exclaims Strictly star Johannes Radebe, in talking about hitting the road recently with his brand-new show, Freedom!.

"I have danced in groups, on ships, in bars, on the street - I have always wanted to be a performer. But since a young age, I have aspired to perform in theatre. That's where my roots are. The desire to have my own show, to tell my own story through dance, is wonderful.

"Freedom! is a story about where I come from. I'm hoping people find it beautiful and inspiring. It tells people that you can dare to dream big. It's going to be a journey."

It really is - both literally and emotionally. Bringing together African fusion, fiery Latin, classic dance arrangements and huge party anthems, Freedom! travels from Johannes' early dance life in South Africa - where he stormed the competition circuit and was scouted for Dancing With The Stars - to competing internationally, winning titles and performing in Burn The Floor and Strictly. "Freedom is my story, and it is full of love and passion. I wanted to incorporate everything I know and everything I am, using my world to showcase some of those stories of South Africa. There, they have their own way of dancing, but there are also party anthems. It's a show for everyone to be a part of if they want to.

"And I definitely want a party at the end! I want people who are passionate to come and enjoy it. It's an extravaganza that I have created using my mind, body and soul. I want everyone up on their feet and in the aisles. It's the freedom to do what you want and to be who you want in the world."



A quick chat and a two-step with Johannes

What's your favourite dance to perform?

I love contemporary. But when I dance, I just do me!

What's your top tip to a Strictly partner?

Lose your inhibitions and dance like nobody is watching.

Who inspires you most?

My auntie. She was the iron we all sharpened ourselves against. She was so wise, and she held our family together. I lost her recently. Always celebrate and treasure the people who inspire you. **What's your philosophy for life?** Always have faith.

What's been your most magical moment? Getting the phone call to say I was finally relocating to the United Kingdom. I left South Africa to go and pursue my dream on 27 April 2018, which is my birthday!

In the movie Billy Elliot, Billy is asked what he feels when he dances. What do you feel when you dance?

It's an inexpressible feeling. You can't explain it. You are present in the moment; you live for it.

What do you love most about Strictly Come Dancing?

It's a sparkling world! But seriously, it is the army that makes that show; the people you don't see when you watch - they are just fantastic. The work that goes into it is incredible. There is someone in charge of absolutely every detail. The appreciation that the British public has for the show makes our job so easy.

Johannes Radebe: Freedom plays The Alexandra, Birmingham on Sun 10 April, tickets are now on sale at atgtickets.com Films released in April...



Fantastic Beasts: The Secrets Of Dumbledore

CERT tbc

Starring Jude Law, Mads Mikkelsen, Valerie Pachner, Katherine Waterston, Ezra Miller, Alison Sudol, Eddie Redmayne Directed by David Yates

The latest adventure in JK Rowling's Fantastic Beasts series finds Professor Albus Dumbledore doing his level best to thwart powerful dark wizard Gellert Grindelwald in his efforts to seize control of the wizarding

The Bad Guys CERT U (100 mins)

With the voices of Sam Rockwell, Awkwafina, Anthony Ramos, Marc Maron, Craig Robinson, Zazie Beetz Directed by Pierre Perifel

The Bad Guys of the title are a crackerjack criminal crew of animal outlaws, led by dashing pickpocket Mr Wolf, who find themselves needing to broker a deal with the authorities to stay out of jail. So Mr Wolf lies and promises that the team will 'go good'. But then he unexpectedly realises that being the Good Guys may have a lot more to recommend it than he'd previously imagined... This new action comedy from DreamWorks Animation is based on the bestselling book series by Aaron Blabey.

Released Fri 1 April



world.

Unable to stop him on his own, the professor entrusts Magizoologist Newt Scamander with the task of leading an intrepid team of wizards and witches on a dangerous mission, during which they encounter old and new beasts and clash with Grindelwald's growing legion of followers.

But with the stakes so high, how long can Dumbledore himself remain on the sidelines?

Released Fri 8 April

Sonic The Hedgehog 2 CERT tbc

With the voices of Ben Schwartz, Idris Elba, Colleen O'Shaughnessey and starring Jim Carrey, James Marsden, Tike Sumpter and Natasha Rothwell Directed by Jeff Fowler



The team behind The Fast And The Furious franchise and the Deadpool films here turn their attention to this sequel movie to the 2020 box-office blockbuster. Having last year celebrated the 30th anniversary of his first-ever appearance, everybody's favourite blue-coloured highspeed hedgehog hits the ground running in a film which once again pits him against Dr Ivo Robotnik - a mustachioed evil-doer who is determined to track down a special emerald that has the power to destroy civilisations.

Released Fri 1 April

The Outfit CERT 15 (105 mins)

Starring Mark Rylance, Zoey Deutch, Dylan O'Brien, Johnny Flynn Directed by Graham Moore

Seven years after picking up an Oscar for penning The Imitation Game, co-writer Graham Moore directs fellow Academy Award winner Mark Rylance in this gripping and stylish thriller. Rylance is master tailor Leonard, an Englishman operating a Chicago shop in which he makes expensive clothes for a family of vicious gangsters. But when two killers knock on his door in search of a favour, Leonard finds himself catapulted into a deadly game of deception and murder...

Released Fri 8 April



The Lost City CERT tbc

Starring Channing Tatum, Sandra Bullock, Daniel Radcliffe, Brad Pitt, Patti Harrison, Oscar Nuñez

Directed by Aaron Nee and Adam Nee

Sandra Bullock's career is liberally peppered with action-comedies, so she should certainly feel right at home in this eagerly anticipated movie from sibling directors Aaron and Adam Nee.

The story follows brilliant but reclusive author Loretta Sage as she promotes her latest bestselling romance-adventure novel in the company of Alan, the model who appears on the covers of her books. When Loretta is kidnapped by an eccentric billionaire who hopes that she can lead him to the treasure of the ancient lost city that features in her latest story, Alan sets out to rescue her. And in doing so, he's determined to prove he's every inch as courageous as the hero who appears in Loretta's novels...

Released Wed 13 April



Film

The Northman CERT tbc

Starring Alexander Skarsgård, Nicole Kidman, Claes Bang, Ethan Hawke, Willem Dafoe, Anya-Taylor-Joy, Gustav Lindh Directed by Roger Eggers

Having scored two significant hits with The Witch and The Lighthouse, visionary director Robert Eggers returns with an epic Viking actioner in which gigantic warrior Amleth seeks revenge for the death of his father. Co-written by Eggers with Icelandic poet Sjón - who recently also co-wrote the disquieting horror-fantasy, Lamb - The Northman features a cast of familiar stars, including Björk as a medieval Viking witch...

Released Fri 15 April



Operation Mincemeat CERT 12a

Starring Colin Firth, Matthew Macfadyen, Kelly Macdonald, Penelope Wilton, Johnny Flynn, Jason Isaacs Directed by John Madden

In 1943, determined to break Hitler's grip on occupied Europe, the Allies plan an all-out assault on Sicily. But they face an impossible challenge - how to protect a massive invasion force from potential massacre. It falls to two remarkable intelligence officers, Ewen Montagu (Firth) and Charles Cholmondeley (Macfadyen), to dream up the most inspired and improbable disinformation strategy of the war, one which is centred on the most unlikely of secret agents - a dead man ... Based on the bestselling book by Ben MacIntyre, Operation Mincemeat tells the extraordinary and true story of the most successful wartime deception ever attempted - one that changed the course of the Second World War.

Released Fri 15 April





Downton Abbey: A New Era CERT PG (125 mins)

Starring Hugh Bonneville, Elizabeth McGovern, Maggie Smith, Michelle Dockery, Laura Carmichael, Joanne Froggatt, Jim Carter, Phyllis Logan Directed by Simon Curtis

The cast of characters inhabiting everybody's favourite English stately home and its confines make a welcome return in this second big-screen offering. All the usual suspects are present and correct - along with a number of newcomers - in a story which sees Violet Crawley (Dame Maggie Smith) revealing that a man who she knew in her younger days has given her a villa in a sun-kissed corner of the South of France.

Meanwhile, in the grounds of Downton, a film crew is shooting a state-of-the-art talkie...

With A New Era's release having been Coviddelayed on several occasions, Downton enthusiasts will by now be excited beyond measure at the prospect of finally getting to enjoy this latest adventure.

By and large the first movie met with a favourable response, and there's every reason to imagine that this follow-up entry will inspire a similarly positive reaction from film critics and dedicated fans alike.

Released Fri 29 April



The Unbearable Weight Of Massive Talent CERT tbc

Starring Nicolas Cage, Pedro Pascal, Ike Barinholtz, Sharon Horgan, Tiffany Haddish, Neil Patrick Harris Directed by Tom Gormican

Nicolas Cage here takes on maybe his most challenging role ever: playing Nick Cage. In yet another movie in which Cage advisedly avoids taking himself too seriously, the star of numerous hit films and no shortage of reprehensible shockers accepts a \$1million offer to attend the birthday of a dangerous superfan. But when the fictionalised version of Cage is recruited by a CIA operative and forced to live up to his own legend, he finds himself having to channel his most iconic and beloved on-screen characters in order to save not only himself but also his loved ones.

Released Fri 22 April

BNAG IS BACK! BUT NOT AS WE KNOW IT...

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery is marking its partial reopening (Thursday 28 April) with an array of exhibitions from some of the city's leading arts organisations. Curatorial & Exhibitions Manager Rebecca Bridgman reveals how the new displays will put the people of Birmingham at the heart of the museum...

After being forced to close by first the pandemic and then essential electrical works, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery (BMAG) is finally ready to open its doors again - albeit not fully.

While the rest of the museum remains shut for the time being, the Round Room and Industrial Gallery will be brought to life by some of Birmingham's most exciting creatives.

The closure has been a difficult time for BMAG, not least because it meant moving over 36,000 items from the museum's collections into storage. But with co-CEOs Sara Wajid and Zak Mensah- who stepped into their roles in November 2020 - finally able to showcase their vision for the museum, the future is looking bright.

Rebecca Bridgman, Curatorial & Exhibitions Manager at Birmingham Museums Trust, says that the closure has presented BMAG with the perfect opportunity to bring something different to the people of Birmingham.

"It's given us a real opportunity to take stock and look at the direction we want to go in. We're working with some of the most exciting creatives in the city to put on a show that's basically going to be like a pop-up version of the museum. This is not BMAG as we know it; it's going to be something quite different."

With the Birmingham 2022 Festival in full swing and the Commonwealth Games on the horizon, it's certainly an exciting time for the city. BMAG has seized the opportunity to put previously untold stories front and centre in its new exhibitions.

Among the partners working with the venue as part of the Birmingham 2022 Festival are intersectional performance & live art festival Fierce, and mobile arts organisation Flatpack. Fierce Festival will be presenting its project, The Healing Gardens Of Bab, at various locations across Birmingham. The Gardens, developed in collaboration with LGBTQIA+ communities in the West Midlands, will provide a space in which to celebrate the many sexual identities that are not translatable into English.

For BMAG, Fierce is working with New Zealand-based artist Sistar S'pacific to create a unique installation co-curated with a collective from the city.

Flatpack's display, meanwhile, is part of citywide project Wonderland Festival. The event will map the 100-plus cinemas in Birmingham - from fairgrounds and multiplexes to South Asian extravaganzas and pop-ups. Visitors can join in by sharing their own memories of cinema, watching film screenings or participating in drop-in activities.

Flatpack's exhibition will look at the history of cinema and its importance to the people of Birmingham.

Other projects that visitors can check out when the museum reopens include a sensory exhibition, curated by Birmingham Music Archive, which celebrates iconic dance & rave venue the Que Club. Titled In The Que, the exhibition features photos by critically acclaimed photographer Terence Donovan, as well as personal artefacts, archive film footage, flyers and posters.

Kalaboration Arts will be presenting Blacklash. The project draws on the work of co-director Mukhtar Dar, an artist and cultural activist who has documented the struggles against racism of Asian and African Caribbean communities across a period of two decades. An additional exhibition, Unprecedented Times, invites visitors to reflect on the past two years spent living with Covid, the virus' effect on Birmingham, and the survival of the human spirit during a period of crisis. The project has been developed in partnership with Birmingham City Council's Public Health Division and Birmingham Museums' Community Action Panel.

Casting light on the shared experiences of Birmingham people is a theme that runs through BMAG's upcoming events and exhibitions. The museum's commitment to the people it serves is perhaps what makes the venue so important to the city.

"BMAG was founded in 1885, so it has a massive historical presence in the city," says Rachel, "but we want it to become more relevant and interesting to people going forward. We want to better reflect the people of Birmingham and highlight the stories that haven't been told before, to give a voice to people who might not have been represented. BMAG is evolving, and we want the people of Birmingham to know that it's *their* museum and *their* collection.

"Displaying Birmingham's people's collection is BMAG's raison d'etre, and those of us who work in museums do it because we want to tell people about art and history and culture. It'll be a pleasure to see people walk through the doors again and look at the displays we've been working so hard on."

For full details of all upcoming exhibitions and events, visit: birminghammuseums.org.uk



In The Que: Celebrating The Que Club

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Visual Arts previews from around the region



Mixed Rage Collective: Unapologetically Other

Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham, Fri 15 April - Sun 26 June

The effect of 'othering', lack of representation, daily micro-aggressions and the sense of displacement felt by people of mixed heritage, are among the subjects being explored in this thoughtprovoking exhibition by Mixed Rage Collective. The recently formed group produce artwork that 'interweaves the highly political and colonial backdrop into which the artists were born, as well as celebrating their mixed cultures and heritage'. Members of the collective include multidisciplinary visual artist Sherrie Edgar, whose innovative films focus not only on mixed heritage but also youth culture, feminism and loneliness & isolation.

Sherrie is joined by, among others, Niall Singh - a mixed-media artist specialising in poetry and song - and multimedia & textile artist Jane Thakoordin. Jane is also known as the founder of Artivistas, a collective of women artists who create social justice artwork.



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TIVE IECTIONS



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Portrait Artist Of The Year

Compton Verney, Warwickshire, until Sun 5 June

Fans of Sky Arts' long-running television series, Portrait Artist Of The Year, will surely want to check out this new exhibition.

Curated by one of the programme's guest judges, Kathleen Soriano, the display features a selection of artwork produced across the years by professional and amateur painters who've taken part in the series. As well as providing a showcase for more than 120 portraits, the exhibition also highlights the many and varied approaches taken by the artists to the programme's broad range of celebrity sitters, included among whom have been Kim Cattrell, Stanley Tucci, Rick Wakeman, Melvyn Bragg and Graham Norton.

We Are Birmingham

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, Thurs 28 April onwards

Opening alongside the relaunch of BMAG's iconic Round Room, We Are Birmingham aims not only to reflect and celebrate the city as it is today but also investigate its aspirations for the future. The exhibition has been co-curated by Birmingham Museums and six members of Don't Settle - an initiative empowering young people of colour from Birmingham and the Black Country 'to change the voice of heritage through the arts, research and governance'.



Creative Connections Coventry

Herbert Art Gallery, Coventry, until Mon 30 May



Celebrating the people of the city, Creative Connections Coventry features a series of portraits by award-winning artist Maryam Wahid of students from Barr's Hill School.

The portraits are presented alongside images of well-known people associated with Coventry.

Artworks recently acquired for the National Portrait Gallery's permanent collection are included in the exhibition.

From City Of Empire To City Of Diversity

Library of Birmingham, until Sat 18 June

This major new exhibition, featuring thousands of images of Birmingham residents, has been created from the collection of photographs taken by Ernest Dyche and his son, Malcolm.

Ernest and Malcolm had two photographic studios in the city and took portraits of post-1945 migrants who arrived in Birmingham from Africa, the

Caribbean and Indian subcontinent. In doing so, the photographers were inadvertently capturing the story of Commonwealth migration and recording an important phase in Birmingham's history.



Hokusai's Great Wave: Reflections of Japan

Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum, Sat 2 April - Sat 2 July

An exploration of the extraordinary influence of Japanese art & culture, Hokusai's Great Wave: Reflections Of Japan brings together newly researched Japanese ukiyo-e prints and Samurai armour from the Worcester City and Worcestershire County collections.

Also included in the significant new exhibition are a number of 19th-century Japanese illustrated books and ceramics from the Museum of Royal Worcester, Hokusai's Great Wave from Bristol Museum & Art Gallery and contemporary woodcuts from Tate.

For art lovers eager to learn more about the exhibition, there's a bite-size talk on 10 May and an introductory tour the following week, on the 20th.





Rebellion talks very intelligently about division, and that is a huge part of what we're living through at the moment...

Regarding Henry

Director Owen Horsley tells Steve Adams why Shakespeare's three-part history play, Henry VI, written over 400 years ago, is still relevant in 2022, and how a dynamic young cast, drawn from all walks of life, is bringing his ambitious new RSC production to life...

The Royal Shakespeare Company's longdelayed production of Henry VI finally reaches the stage in Stratford-upon-Avon this month, and could hardly have arrived at a more poignant time. The play's second and third parts - named Rebellion and Wars Of The Roses in their latest incarnations - cover a turbulent time in England's history, as civil war escalates into brutal conflict on the battlefield.

It's hard not to draw comparisons with the very real war currently raging in Eastern Europe - not least because Rebellion questions whether people can ever truly decide their own fate, and Wars Of The Roses features Young Clifford's prophetic line "in cruelty will I seek out my fame" - but the plays also reflect an overall theme of division in society, according to director Owen Horsley, who I spoke to just days before the Ukrainian conflict began.

"Everything is cyclical, and they're called history cycles for a reason," says Owen. "We're not devoid of the same power struggles and shifts in the world that we live in, and we're going through a period of history which actually seems to be about acute division within communities, whether it be political or generational.

"There's a keen sense of division, and Henry VI is about that and has some really great observations about what our world is like when it's stuck in civil war, with families and loyalties divided. So again Shakespeare's plays find, without even trying, a relevancy that you can't really get in the way of, as a director or as an actor. You don't even need to try to make them relevant - you'd do them a disservice to try and force some relevancy on them because it feels like they're a magnet to the world we live in anyway."

The plays draw particular parallels with the angst and division felt by society during, and in the wake of, Brexit and the Covid pandemic, believes Owen.

"Rebellion talks very intelligently about division, and that is a huge part of what we're living through at the moment, with opinions divided a lot of the time.

"It's also about power, and that's a theme which never ever goes out of fashion because we're constantly being shown in the news, and in every walk of life, how power is being used and abused, and how people in power are still the focus of our attention." The two new productions will run in tandem at the RSC, and follow the innovative behindthe-scenes open rehearsal project and run-through performance of Henry VI: Part One that was screened online while the theatre was closed during the pandemic.

Putting on the remaining parts simultaneously is a major undertaking with a gruelling rehearsal schedule, but Owen acknowledges how working on both plays at the same time is enabling the actors to grasp their character's full story arc in a fairly complex narrative.

"In one rehearsal we were talking about a scene that's in the middle of Wars Of The Roses having a knock-on effect for a character that has gone through both plays. Realising that 'my journey starts here and ends here' is great for the actors and gives them a sense of how it all sticks together. It's a bit of a tapestry of a play, so it's great to start stitching it together."

Parts Two and Three have quite different dynamics, with a marked contrast between words (Rebellion) and actions (Wars Of The Roses) that make them perfect complements.

"They're not plays that are performed a lot, and I don't know why because they're really good!

"The first is more about politics and people conspiring really - it's like a game of chess. In the second play they throw the chess pieces away and get the swords out."

That sword-swinging creates some of the bloodiest battle scenes of any Shakespeare play, and Owen admits the actors needed "a bit of a dance" to shake off the torment after one particularly harrowing rehearsal session.

The other big deal, with the accent very much on 'big', of the new productions is their sheer scale. Rebellion has more characters (85) than any other Shakespeare play ("that might explain why the plays are rarely done," laughs Owen), and the number of actors required to portray the people of England interacting with the royal family also prompted a bold post-pandemic approach to performing it.

"This gave us an idea - for many years the RSC has built incredible relationships across the UK with partner theatres through Shakespeare Nation and our youth programme, Next Generation Act. After 18 months of developing these links online, this production seemed the perfect opportunity to be ambitious. So for 'the people of England' we've cast the people of England!"

Those people come from all over the country, with the professional cast joined by 74 adults from Blackpool, Bradford, Canterbury, Cornwall, Norwich and Nottingham, all part of Shakespeare Nation, a community programme designed to engage with people who have little or no experience of Shakespeare.

The productions also feature nine actors who have graduated from drama school during the past two years, and 21 youngsters, all aged between 13 and 17, from the RSC's young acting company, Next Generation Act.

Rehearsals have been taking place all over the country, and Owen can't wait to get the actors on to the RSC's main stage in Stratford - particularly during the finale of Rebellion, which will feature the vast majority of performers.

"Six different groups are involved in one particular scene, and they'll circulate during our run. The Next Generation actors are in another scene, and then we put them all together for our big finale, when nearly 50 people will swarm the stage as part of the rebellion.

"It'll feel like quite a populated stage, which is a bold statement coming out of the period we've all been going through. It'll be very epic."

Owen also believes having a young cast has helped bring even greater vitality to the epic saga being performed: "It's been great working with them and seeing their energy and how they approach the plays. Shakespeare was only 27 when he wrote them and a bit of an angry young man himself, so there's something quite immediate about these plays that young actors just get. You usually think of history plays as being quite stuffy and containing so much information, but these plays cut through to the action, which everyone in the company connects to, but especially the young actors."

Henry VI: Rebellion and Wars Of The Roses run in repertory at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre from Friday 1 April to Saturday 4 June.



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Birmingham Auseums

Events previews from around the region



Insomnia Gaming Festival

NEC, Birmingham, Thurs 15 - Mon 18 April

Over 40,000 gamers are set to descend on the NEC this month when Insomnia Gaming Festival makes a welcome return. This latest edition of the popular event features two new zones: the Community VS Zone - a free-to-play area where anyone can sit down and play games with the rest of the community - and The NewGen Zone providing visitors with the chance to get their hands on latest consoles PlayStation5 and Xbox Series One X. The festival's Expo Stage, meanwhile,

features daily competitions, special guests and industry-expert panels.



St George's Day Fun

Tamworth Caste, Sat 23 April Tamworth's popular St George's Day celebrations make a welcome return to the castle grounds for the first time since 2019. The free programme of entertainment includes the Grand Medieval Joust, a living history camp, walkabout medieval grave diggers comedy, archery, stalls, fairground rides and children's activities.

New for 2022 is St George himself and his seven-foot animatronic dragon, who will be roaring and roaming throughout the day.

Alice In Easter Wonderland

Dudley Canal & Caverns, Fri 15 - Sun 18 April

Characters from Lewis Carroll's Alice In Wonderland will be offering visitors a warm welcome at Dudley Canal & Caverns this Easter.

A themed boat trip takes families on a magical journey through tunnels and caverns, with youngsters challenged to spot hidden Easter eggs en route and win themselves a prize.

There's also the option to attend the Mad Hatter's Tea Party at the site's Goongoozler Restaurant at an additional cost.



Art & Antiques For Everyone

NEC, Birmingham, Thurs 7 - Sun 10 April

The UK's largest vetted antiques & fine art fair is back at the NEC this month. The show sees specialist dealers offering a huge variety of items at prices ranging from £10 to £100,000. Victorian kitchenalia, art deco lamps, vintage fashion, fine art, silverware, jewellery and glass all feature.

Vitality Netball Superleague Spring Showdown

Resorts World Arena, Birmingham, Sat 16 & Sun 17 April

This top-level, elite netball competition features 11 teams from England, Wales and Scotland, all of whom will be aiming to finish in the top four and reach the Grand Final, which takes place on Sunday 5 June.



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Peppa Pig at SEA LIFE

National SEA LIFE Birmingham, Sat 30 April - Sun 3 July

Peppa Pig is heading out on her very own Aquarium Adventure - and you and your family are cordially invited to join in the fun! Youngsters can meet Peppa as she dives into her adventure and makes friends with some of the ocean's most incredible animals. An interactive trail - on which kids can spot seahorses, count starfish and discover how fast sharks can swim - also features, as does a variety of hands-on activities, from bracelet making to making jigsaws.



Makers Central

NEC, Birmingham, Sat 30 April & Sun 1 May An event for the maker community, Makers Central brings together crafters, inventors, hobbyists and artists. In attendance at the show will be maker stars from YouTube and social media, while visitors can watch some top-class demonstrations, purchase tools & equipment, check out a range of beautifully handcrafted goods and try their hand at making.

Other attractions include the Robot Warsstyle Robots Live show, Podpad Studios' futuristic VR vehicle, Fly.VR, and touring mobile creative space The Creator Van.

Red By Night

Black Country Living Museum, Dudley, Sat 30 April

The Black Country's industrial heritage is here celebrated in an event that combines live entertainment with living history. Hammers clang and sparks fly as re-enactors use centuries-old techniques to skilfully craft chains and nails. In the process they offer visitors an insight into what it was like to live and work in one of Britain's most heavily industrialised regions.

Fire-breathers, live music and an array of large and miniature road-based steam engines further add to the event's appeal.1



Firework Champions

Weston Park, Shropshire, Sat 23 April

This sparkling spectacular sees three of the UK's best firework companies competing against each other to win the coveted title of Firework Champion.



Each company will present a 10-minute firework show, choreographed to music, after which there will be a special finale display. The audience will also be treated to a drone light show by AeroSparx.

The event is the only one of its kind in the UK, with attendees able to text-vote for the display they like the most.

Pilot Training

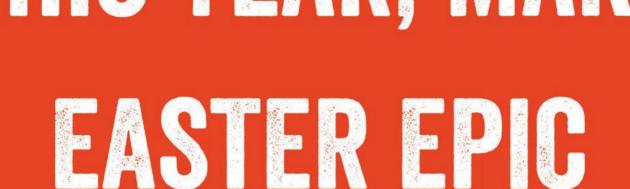
RAF Museum, Cosford, Fri 15 - Mon 18 April

Youngsters can join the RAF Museum's pilot training programme this Easter and see if they'd have made it as a World War Two pilot. Participants will take on five different missions, receiving a stamp in their Pilot Passport for each completed task. A pin badge awaits them at the end of the training programme.

BOOK YOUR NEXT DAY OUT NOW AT WWW.BEARGRYLLSADVENTURE.COM

The Bear Grylls ABYENTERE INDOOR/OUTDOOR ACTIVITY CENTRE







Events previews from around the region



Bennetts British Superbike Championship

Silverstone, Northamptonshire, Fri 15 - Sun 17 April

Showcasing some impressive biking talent, Bennetts British Superbikes returns this Easter weekend to kick off the new season. The competition's 2021 winner, Tarran Mackenzie, will be defending his championship title against a host of other talented riders, including 2013 Superbike World Champion Tom Sykes and 2018 British Champion Leon Haslam. Away from the track, attractions include BMX and FMX stunt shows, live music, the Racing Bug challenge, a climbing wall and an Easter egg hunt.



Spring Steam Gala

Severn Valley Railway, Thurs 21 - Sun 24 April The first Severn Valley Railway steam event of the year comes in the form of the Spring Steam Gala, showcasing some of the homefleet's best steam engines and also featuring some very special guests.

A stop-off at Highley's Engine House Visitor Centre provides passengers with the opportunity to check out a wide variety of ages and classes of locomotive.

Festival Of Thrills

Alton Towers, Staffordshire, Mon 4 April - Fri 6 May

Brand-new in '22, Festival Of Thrills celebrates the spring reopening of Alton Towers' 'big seven' rollercoasters; Wicker Man, Nemesis, The Smiler, Oblivion, Galactica, TH13TEEN and Rita. To enhance the experience, each of the rides will have its own live music playing out.



CountryTastic

Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Thurs 14 April

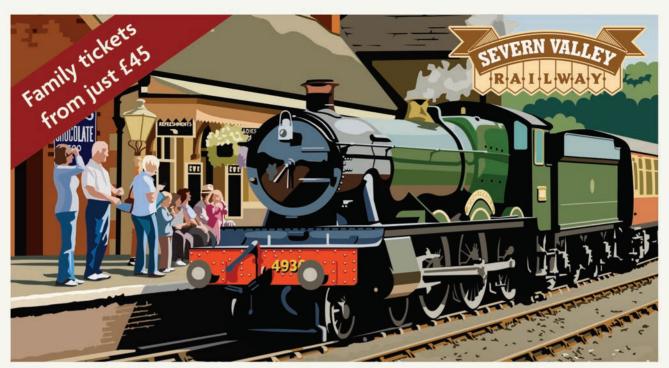
Jam-packed with interactive learning experiences, farmyard friends and countryside fun, CountryTastic is an immersive day out aimed at children aged between five and 11.

Youngsters can watch demonstrations in the Ask The Farmer classroom with TV farmer Adam Henson, meet farmyard friends in the livestock ring, and get involved in activities such as den making and natural painting in the Really Rural zone.

Cooking and pottery workshops also feature.



whatsonlive.co.uk 51



YOUR ADVENTURE AWAITS Book your tickets now: SVR.CO.UK | 01562 757 900

Tamworth

EGG

Dragon Egg Hunt & Dragon Charming

www.tamworthcastle.co.uk

TAMWORTH CASTLE, HOLLOWAY, TAMWORTH, STAFFORDSHIRE, B79 7NA

Castle

Explore 1,000 years of history

Tamworth Castle is a stunning example of an intact Norman motte and bailey castle, surrounded by beautiful grounds which now hosts a brand new playground too. Come inside and explore our history. We have lots of interactive displays for young and old alike.

> We even have a smartphone app - Tamworth AR Explorer - which really brings our history to life!

New state-of-the-art interactive exhibition

The top floor of Tamworth Castle has been transformed into a new exhibition which brings our fascinating Anglo-Saxon history to life, including the role of our famous warrior queen, Aethelflaed, and themes of battle, kingship and warrior culture in Anglo-Saxon Mercia.

See the Staffordshire Hoard

Our new exhibition also includes a mead hall where you can see items from the famous Staffordshire Hoard - the largest hoard of Anglo-Saxon gold ever found.



Battle and Tribute is supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, as well as Tamworth Borough Council, the Friends of Tamworth Castle and the Arts Council. Staffordshire Hoard photo credit: Birmingham Museums Trust on behalf of Birmingham City Council and The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Soke-on-Trent.

A HERITAGE TOMOTT

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Freddo's Easter Egg-Stravaganza!

Cadbury World, Bournville, Sat 2 - Sun 24 April Everyone's favourite chocolate frog brings a brand-new live show to Cadbury World this

month.

Join Freddo for plenty of dancing, singing and laughter as he goes on a sure-to-be-eggciting Easter adventure, along the way completing challenges set by another Cadbury favourite, the Caramel Bunny.



Kids Jewellery Workshop

Museum of the Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham, Tues 12 & Tues 19 April

Children can have a go at making their very own piece of jewellery this Easter holiday. Suitable for youngsters aged eight and older - and with the help of the museum's learning officers - the workshops provide the opportunity to design and create either a bracelet or pendant using real jewellers' techniques... Pre-booking is recommended as places are limited.

Easter at Warwick Castle

Warwick Castle, Sat 9 - Sun 24 April

There's plenty to enjoy at Warwick Castle this Easter.

Families can journey back in time via the Horrible Histories Maze, explore the castle towers and ramparts, or catch the critically acclaimed Falconer's Quest bird show. Fans of Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler's playful dragon, Zog, can check out the Zogthemed Quest For The Golden Star interactive trail and sample the brand-new Playland attraction, which comes complete with zip wires, towers & tunnels, slides & swings and market stalls.

Easter Egg Hunts at National Trust properties

National Trust properties across the region are hosting their ever-popular Easter Egg Hunts this month.

The trails feature 10 nature-inspired activities, including hopping like the Easter Bunny and making a home for wildlife. Once the 'terrific 10' have been completed, children can collect their prize - a Rainforest Alliance chocolate egg.



ATTINGHAM PARK, ATCHAM, SHROPSHIRE, SY4 4TP Sat 2 April - Sun 24 April, 8am - 5pm BENTHALL HALL, BROSELEY, SHROPSHIRE, TF12 5RX Fri 15 - Mon 18 April, 12:30pm - 5pm DUDMASTON, NEAR BRIDGNORTH, SHROPSHIRE, WV15 6QN Sun 10 - Sun 24 April (closed Fridays and Saturdays, 10.30am - 3.30pm MOSELEY OLD HALL, WOLVERHAMPTON, WV10 7HY Sat 9 - Sun 24 April, 10am - 5pm WIGHTWICK MANOR AND GARDENS,

WOLVERHAMPTON, WV6 8EE Sat 9 - Mon 18 April, 10am - 4pm

For details of all properties taking part, visit: nationaltrust.org.uk

From Dallas to Interview of the Catalog

whatsonlive.co.uk

Patrick Duffy - who's probably best known for playing the character of Bobby Ewing in the hit US TV series, Dallas - talks about finding his rhythm in Catch Me If You Can, an edge-of-the-seat whodunnit visiting The Alexandra in Birmingham this month.

What can audiences expect when they come to see Catch Me If You Can?

It's different from the type of plays I did in school, in college and during my theatrical training. I did all the traditional things. We went through medieval morality plays, Shakespeare and the classics, but I've never done one of these wonderful Agatha Christietype whodunnits before, where the plot isn't solved almost until the curtain comes down. It's a great new rhythm for me to be in. It's very similar, interestingly enough, to the sitcom world that I was in for seven years. when I did Step By Step with Suzanne Somers, because everyone is telling one level of lie to the other person and the plot gets reconciled in the last few minutes. And it's great fun playing both sides of the character the villain and the hero - until the audience finds out which side is the real one. I've never done something like this in front of an audience, especially a British audience, in my life before.

How would you sum up the character you play - Daniel Corban?

He's one of the Mad Men. He's from that era of advertising executives in the '6os, a womaniser, very good at what he does but at the expense of probably every relationship he's ever been in. He's Bobby Ewing with no morals.

Does the play present any specific challenges for you?

First of all it's the rigours of it. I never leave the stage for the entire play, and it's exhausting but in an interesting way. Physically I'm not as exhausted as I am mentally and vocally. So I have to marshal my forces and live like a monk for the duration of the run, but that's okay because it all serves the play.

The play premiered on Broadway in the 1960s, but does it feel timely now?

I'd say it's more timeless, the way that a lot of great plots are. I don't want to sound pompous, but there are only about 10 plots in the theatrical world and Shakespeare did all of them. It's all about nuance; you put it in a different suit of clothes and set it in a different time period. The play is dated because we're doing it a la the '6os, but it's not dated in terms of the content and thrust at all. It's a timeless tale of duplicity and intrigue, and in the midst of it all there's a comedy element which makes it extremely enjoyable.

Your co-star is also your partner, Linda Purl [who plays Margaret Corban]. Have you worked together before?

We did a TV movie together last year [Doomsday Mom], which was after we'd fallen in love and were living with each other. But this is the first time I've been on stage with her, and it's frightening because she is such a consummate stage actress. She has such an amazing work ethic and such professionalism, so when we got this job together I got cold feet at first. It's daunting but also inspiring.

You became a couple after chatting on Zoom during lockdown. Do you think it would have happened under other circumstances?

I would tend to say, based on the almost two years we've been together now, that yes it would have, because of the attraction, the pull and compatibility that we have for each other. All of those elements dictate to me that yes, under any circumstances, we'd be together, but I don't know how long it might have taken. This was a great hands-off getting to know each other. There was never a time during the four-plus months we were communicating that I ever had to think, 'Gosh, it's our third dinner. Do I kiss her and say goodnight?' None of that played into it. I didn't even know what her hand felt like. But we got to know each other on such a deep level that when we did meet in person, we'd covered all of that territory and were ready for this relationship. I think we'd have been ready at any point, but this way is perfect. We're two old ponies in the show now, and we blend together extremely well.

You've done so much high-profile TV work, including Dallas and Man From Atlantis, but what have been your personal favourites over the years?

This sounds so trite, but every one has been my favourite because they happened in sequence and always at the perfect time in my life. My first big job was Man From Atlantis when I was 25 years old; I was in good shape, so I played a superhero. Then, when I started Dallas, it was much more what I had been trained to do on stage, playing the hero and the young leading man. Not only that but I worked with a person who on the first day of the read-through became the best friend I think I've ever had, namely Larry Hagman. Doing that show was 16 years of nothing but frivolity and fun. I loved doing Step By Step with Suzanne because, again, we were best friends. So each job in sequence has been the perfect next building block.

You appeared in the West End in Art. How do British audiences compare to those in your American homeland?

I'm gonna get killed in America for saying this, but British audiences are dedicated theatregoers. People in America tend to go to see plays and shows in places like New York, Los Angeles and maybe Chicago, but it seems like everybody in the UK knows theatre. They know ballet, they know opera, they know dramatic theatre, musicals and panto, so they're well-tuned to the theatre experience. They're not going in on a learning curve, and I find that really wonderful. British audiences to me are the quintessential audience to play to - or to play with, I should say.

Is this your first time touring the UK? And what are you most looking forward to about it?

Yes, this will be the first time. I'm looking forward to travelling around the country, although this play is all time-consuming and, as I say, I'll be living like a monk for 22 weeks. I'll go to the theatre, spend every ounce of juice I've got, then recuperate until it's time to go to the theatre again. I won't get to do as much sightseeing as I'd like, but the beauty is that we're in a new town every week and we're driving ourselves, so we'll get to see a lot of the countryside.

What's the one thing you couldn't be on the road without?

Linda! Also, I've been a Buddhist for 50 years now and practise every day, so I carry a small altar with me. Wherever I am, I set up my little Buddhist altar and I do my morning and evening prayers. That's something I do no matter where I am, whether I'm in England, the States, anywhere. And I'm a minimalist when I travel. Give me a couple of pairs of jeans and a couple of shirts; if I don't have to go to formal dinners or do interviews, I could live out of a small suitcase.

Catch Me If You Can runs at The Alexandra, Birmingham, from Mon 25 to Sat 30 April. Tickets are now on sale at atgtickets.com









LIVE 22

Orchard LIVE



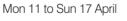
Music I Comedy I Theatre I Dance I Film I Events I Visual Arts I and more!

What's On

Fri 1 to Sun 10 April



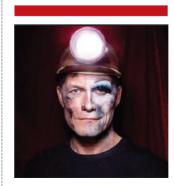
Kiri Prichard-McLean at Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury **Fri 8 April**





An Evening with Amy Dowden at Stoubridge Town Hall **Tues 12 April**

Mon 18 to Sun 24 April



The Glee Club at Lichfield Garrick Theatre Thurs 21 - Sat 23 April

Mon 25 to Sat 30 April



The Shires at Victoria Hall, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent Sat 30 April

thelist

THROUGHOUT APRIL

Visual Arts

Birmingham

BLACKLASH: RACISM AND THE STRUGGLE FOR SELF-DEFENCE Mukhtar

Dar's extensive archive of photographic, video and political ephemera showcases the street & state racism faced by Asian and African Caribbean communities, from 28 Apr, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

CARLO CRIVELLI : SHADOWS ON THE SKY Showcasing the work of Renaissance artist Carlo Crivelli and his experimental use of perspective, optical illusion and sculptural relief, until 29 May, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham

EPIPHANIA VISUALS: WHEN SPEECH IS FORCED DOWN, ART MUST SPEAK The

topical subject of gender identities is explored in this group exhibition by artists and activists from Bangladesh. The show also contemplates queer experiences through art, film, painting and craft. It is curated by Dipa Mahbuba Yasmin, the founder of Epiphania Visuals Gallery & Archive, Bangladesh's first-ever queer art gallery, until Sun 3 Apr, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

THE FIRST DICTATORS Exhibition exploring how coins were used for propaganda purposes during the dying days of the Roman Republic in the first century BCE, until 26 June, The Barber Institute of Fine Art, University of Birmingham

IN THE QUE: CELEBRATING THE QUE CLUB Sensory celebration of one of the UK's greatest music venues, featuring personal artefacts, photographs, film footage, flyers, posters and more... from 18 Apr, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

MARYAM WAHID: ZAIBUNNISA

Birmingham-raised artist Maryam Wahid here presents a new work telling the story of her mother as a young woman who moved to England in the 1980s. The exhibition also documents Maryam's first-ever visit to Pakistan, until Mon 18 Apr, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

MIXED RAGE COLLECTIVE: UNAPOLOGETICALLY OTHER The effect

of 'othering', lack of representation, daily micro-aggressions and the sense of displacement felt by people of mixed heritage, are among the subjects being explored in this thought-provoking exhibition by Mixed Rage Collective, Fri 15 Apr -Sun 26 June, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

SHARON WALTERS: SEEING OURSELVES Sharon Walter's first solo exhibition features intricate paper cut pieces which 'unapologetically celebrate and uplift' Black women beyond the monolith, Fri 15 Apr - Sun 26 June, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birminoham

Shropshire

ARTIST COLLECTIVE Featuring a wide range of subject matter from artists working in a mix of mediums, until 28 Apr, The Granary Art Gallery, Weston Park, Staffordshire

THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF THE LADYBIRD BOOK ARTISTS Curated by Shropshire-born Helen Day, this colourful and nostalgic exhibition pays homage to the group of talented artists who drew the hugely popular Ladybird books in the mid-20th century, until Sun 5 June, Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery

Gigs

NAVI - MICHAEL

Robin, Bilston

Trent

on-Trent

JACKSON Fri 1 Apr, The

HIGH VIZ JACKIT THEORY

FAN CLUB Fri 1 Apr, The

THE ROLLIN STONED Fri

1 Apr, Eleven, Stoke-

CAPTAIN STINGRAY'S

Apr, Albert's Shed,

Apr, Albert's Shed,

Southwater, Telford

DEFINITELY MIGHTBE +

ADORED Fri 1 Apr, The

GORDON HENDRICKS Fri

SOME GUYS HAVE ALL

THE LUCK - THE ROD

Apr, Victoria Hall,

Stoke-on-Trent

Theatre Severn,

Shrewsbury

Apr, Tamworth

Assembly Rooms

STEWART STORY Fri 1

CHINA CRISIS Fri 1 Apr.

BEE GEES FEVER Fri 1

THE GAKK + ROOTS TO

NOWHERE Fri 1 Apr,

Percy's Cafe Bar,

Whitchurch, North

Academy, B'ham

NEWDAD Fri 1 Apr, O2

AGAINST THE CURRENT

Fri 1 Apr, O2 Academy,

CURTIS STIGERS Fri 1

Shropshire

Birmingham

1 Apr, The Place,

Shrewsbury

River Rooms.

Stourbridge

Telford

GROOVE MACHINE Fri 1

WOUNDED SPIRIT Fri 1

+ THE BYKER GROVE

Sugarmill, Stoke-on-

Staffordshire

TITANIC: HONOUR AND GLORY Visitors to this national touring exhibition will find themselves coming face-to-face with one of the most famous and tragic events in 20th-century British history. As well as a diverse range of very rare artefacts from the Titanic, the exhibition includes examples of the liner's luxurious interior fittings alongside props and costumes from the 1997 film, until Sun 1 May, The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent

Wolverhampton & Black Country

THE BRITISH ART SHOW 9

Wolverhampton's rich and varied community provides the narrative for this major exhibition, which sees artists explore identities based around class, ethnicity, gender and sexuality. The artists also investigate the way in which the city's cultural history has been shaped by the postwar arrival of Commonwealth migrants, until Sat 10 Apr, Wolverhampton Art Gallery

olverhampton Art Gallery



KAREN MCLEAN: AR'N'T I A WOMAN! Birmingham-based Trinidadian artist Karen McLean focuses on and reflects her interest in the roles of women in the folklore and material cultures of Caribbean colonial history and its close relationship with slavery, until Sun 5 June, New Art Gallery, Walsall



Hotrod 55 - Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

THE ROUGH KUTZ Sat 2 Apr, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

THE BAREBACKS Sat 2 Apr, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

H0TR0D 55 Sat 2 Apr, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

DURAN DURAN V SPANDAU BALLET -TRIBUTE Sat 2 Apr, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

THE KILKENNYS Sat 2 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

HEALTHY JUNKIES + YUR MUM + JELLLY Sat 2 Apr, Percy's Cafe Bar, Whitchurch, North Shrops

MADE IN TENNESSEE Sat 2 Apr, Lichfield Garrick

WHALEBONE Sat 2 Apr, Birchmeadow Centre, Broseley

FLATS & SHARPS Sat 2 Apr, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

HISTORY OF SOUL Sat 2 Apr, Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke-on-Trent

THE SOUTHMARTINS Sat 2 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

CHINA CRISIS Sat 2 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall STEREOPHONICS Sat 2

Apr, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

YES PLEASE - EVENING OF CLASSIC YES Sun 3 Apr, The Robin, Bilston

KIKI DEE & CARMELO LUGGERI Sun 3 Apr, Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury BARBARA DICKSON Sun

3 Apr, B'ham Town Hall CHRIS DIFFORD Mon 4 Apr, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme DECAPITATED + BLACK TONGUE + HEART OF A COWARD + INFERI Mon 4 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

IMELDA MAY Mon 4 Apr, Symphony Hall, B'ham



THE BOOTLEG BEATLES Tues 5 Apr, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

10CC Tues 5 Apr, Symphony Hall, B'ham

THE MANFREDS Wed 6 Apr, Stafford

Gatehouse Theatre

RACHAEL MCSHANE & THE CARTOGRAPHERS Wed 6 Apr, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shrops

THE FRATELLIS Wed 6 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

MAX & HARVEY + CAPRI Wed 6 Apr, O2 Academy, B'ham

WILLE & THE BANDITS + MIKE WEST Thurs 7 Apr, The Robin, Bilston

THE ULTIMATE BOY BAND PARTY SHOW Thurs 7 Apr, Lichfield Garrick

MARC ALMOND Thurs 7 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham SIMPLE MINDS Thurs 7 Apr, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

THE OFFSPIN + GREEN HAZE Fri 8 Apr, The Robin, Bilston

NINE BELOW ZERO Fri 8 Apr, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent



WHITESNAKE UK Fri 8 Apr, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

THE ORIGINAL WANTED Fri 8 Apr, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

UPFRONT Fri 8 Apr, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

KICK UP THE 80S Fri 8 Apr, Brierley Hill Civic, Dudley

LABOUR OF LOVE - UB40 TRIBUTE Fri 8 Apr, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

THE QUO EXPERIENCE Fri 8 Apr, The Place, Telford

TAKE THAT EXPERIENCE Fri 8 Apr, The Prince Of Wales, Cannock

THE RETROMANTICS Fri 8 Apr, Percy's Cafe Bar, Whitchurch, North Shropshire

RODNEY BRANIGAN Fri 8 Apr, Foxlowe Arts

Centre, Leek, Staffs GROOVE ARMADA Fri 8 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham HEATHER SMALL Fri 8 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

SUPREME QUEEN Sat 9 Apr, Walsall Arena & Arts Centre

PISTON + VOODOO SIOUX + GORILLA RIOT Sat 9 Apr, The Robin, Bilston

THE JAMES TAYLOR QUARTET Sat 9 Apr, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

ELO ENCOUNTER Sat 9 Apr, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

GOOD TO GO Sat 9 Apr, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

THOMAS ATLAS Sat 9 Apr, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

ENDLESS LOVE - DIANA ROSS & LIONEL RICHIE TRIBUTE Sat 9 Apr, Brierley Hill Civic, Dudley

KING PLEASURE & THE BISCUIT BOYS Sat 9 Apr, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre



THE ANIMALS Sat 9 Apr, Dudley Town Hall THE KILKENNYS Sat 9 Apr, Cornbow Hall, Halesowen

JUKEBOX AND BOBBYSOX Sat 9 Apr, The Place, Telford

THE CARPENTERS STORY

Sat 9 Apr, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent PHOENIX LAKE + LAND

CAPTAINS Sat 9 Apr, Percy's Cafe Bar, Whitchurch, North Shrops

MATT RIDLEY - THE ANTIDOTE Sat 9 Apr, The Hive, Shrewsbury

IZZIE WALSH + THE AUTUMN SAINTS Sat 9 Apr, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

REJJIE SNOW Sat 9 Apr, O2 Institute, B'ham

GORDON GILTRAP Sat 9 Apr, Guildhall, Lichfield



BAKAR Sat 9 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham EVERYTHING EVERYTHING Sat 9 Apr, O2 Academy, B'ham GUY CHAMBERS Sat 9 Apr, B'ham Town Hall

LIFESIGNS Sun 10 Apr, The Robin, Bilston

THE ROCKET MAN -ELTON JOHN TRIBUTE Sun 10 Apr, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

BARBARA DIXON Sun 10 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

ZERVAS & PEPPER Sun 10 Apr, Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury

CRAIG DAVID Sun 10 Apr, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham



The Kilkennys - Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury & Cornbow Hall, Halesowen

Classical Music

SHREWSBURY CANTATA CHOIR Programme comprises Karl Jenkins' The Peacemaker, Sat 2 Apr, St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury

SHREWSBURY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA Featuring John Moore (conductor), Gareth John (baritone) & Alex Postlethwaite (leader). Programme includes works by Boulanger, Mahler & Sibelius, Wed 6 Apr, Alington Hall, Shrewsbury School

HALLE ORCHESTRA Featuring Nicholas Trygstad (cello) & Kristiina Poska (conductor). Programme includes works by Berlioz, Schumann & Beethoven, Fri 8 Apr, Victoria Hall, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent

HALESOWEN CHORAL SOCIETY EASTER CONCERT Featuring Peter Mitchell (leader), Katie Leaver, Rebecca Mitchell-Farmer & Paul Mocroft (soloists). Programme includes works by Vivaldi & Faure, Sat 9 Apr, St Margaret's Church, Halesowen

LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL CHORUS: HANDEL'S MESSIAH Sat 9 Apr, Lichfield Cathedral

Comedy

JO ENRIGHT, SHAZIA MIRZA, JOSH PUGH & COMICS TBC Fri 1 Apr, The Rep, Birmingham

JONNY PELHAM Fri 1 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

STEVE ROYLE, JACK CAMPBELL, TEZ ILYAS & STEVE HARRIS Fri 1 Apr, Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

KANE BROWN, RICHARD BLACKWOOD, NABIL ABDULRASHID & KAZEEM JAMAL Fri 1 Apr, Bilston Town Hall

ED BYRNE Fri 1 Apr, Dudley Town Hall CHRIS RAMSEY Fri 1 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

TOM WARD, CHRIS WASHINGTON, DANA ALEXANDER & PHIL ELLIS Fri 1 - Sat 2 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JOHN BISHOP Fri 1 - Sat 2 Apr, Utilita Arena, Birmingham

COUNT ARTHUR STRONG Sat 2 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

CRAIG DEELEY, JO ENRIGHT, BARBARA NICE Sat 2 Apr, Light House, Wolverhampton

MICK MILLER Tues 5 Apr, The Robin, Bilston

ANDY ROBINSON, JULIAN DEANE, DANE BAPTISTE & DAVID EAGLE Thurs 7 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ROB ROUSE, MATT BRAGG, ERIC RUSHTON & CERYS NELMES Thurs 7 Apr, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

LAURA LEXX, DOMINIC HOLLAND, RAJ POOJARA, BARRY DODDS Thurs 7 Apr, The George Hotel, Lichfield STEVE WILLIAMS & STEVE HALL Fri 8 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham KIRI PRITCHARD-MCLEAN Fri 8 Apr,



LOU CONRAN, JULIAN DEANE, DANE BAPTISTE & DAVID EAGLE Fri 8 - Sat 9 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

RHOD GILBERT Sat 9 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CHRIS MCCAUSLAND Sat 9 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

LOU SANDERS Sun 10 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

COMEDY CLUB 4 KIDS! Sun 10 Apr, Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

Theatre

THE ADDAMS FAMILY Joanne Clifton and Andrew Lippa star in this 'frightfully funny' feelgood family show, until Sat 2 Apr, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHT-TIME The National

Theatre's award-winning production, based on Mark Haddon's bestselling novel, until Sat 2 Apr, Birmingham Hippodrome

SHEN YUN Epic production that takes audiences on 'a multi-dimensional, inspiring journey through five millennia of traditional Chinese culture', Thurs until Sat 3 Apr, ICC, Birmingham

MARVELLOUS Brand-new play celebrating the life and adventures of Staffordshire hero Neil Baldwin, until Sat 9 Apr, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme



COMING TO ENGLAND Music & storytelling combine in a world premiere based on Floella Benjamin's award-winning book of the same name, until Sat 16 Apr, The Rep, Birmingham

Friday 1 - Sunday 10 April

thelist

SHOWSTOPPER! THE IMPROVISED

MUSICAL Spontaneous musical comedy created from scratch at each performance, Fri 1 Apr, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

SOUL SISTERS THE MUSICAL Former Sugababe Amelle Berrabah is joined by Nicola Faraday (Bad Girls) and Wendi Harriott (The Voice) in a story of three old friends for whom a reunion proves to be a revelatory experience... Fri 1 Apr, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall



PATIENCE Amateur staging of Gilbert & Sullivan's comic opera. Fri 1 - Sat 2 Apr, Walsall Arena & Arts Centre

GUYS & DOLLS Backstreet Theatre Company present an amateur staging of Frank Loesser's musical, Fri 1 - Sat 2 Apr, Prince of Wales Theatre, Cannock

I, ELIZABETH Rebecca Vaughan explores the queen's struggle to reconcile the desires of womanhood with the duties of sovereignty, Sat 2 Apr. Stafford Gatehouse Theatre



CHATEAU GHOUL LipService Theatre, aka Maggie Fox and Sue Ryding, take audiences on a journey to Yorkshire's most haunted country house - the setting for a summer festival with a difference... Tues 5 Apr. New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lvme

THE OSMONDS MUSICAL The official true story of the five brothers from Utah who were pushed into the spotlight as children and went on to become a global pop sensation, Tues 5 - Sat 9 Apr, Regent Theatre, Stokeon-Trent

BEDKNOBS & BROOMSTICKS New musical based on the hit 1971 Disney film and featuring a fusion of magic & fantasy, Tues 5 - Sat 9 Apr,

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT Brand-new production starring Alexandra Burke,

Jason Donovan and Jac Yarrow, Tues 5 - Sat 16 Apr, Birmingham Hippodrome

SOUL SISTERS THE MUSICAL Former Sugababe Amelle Berrabah is joined by Nicola Faraday (Bad Girls) and Wendi Harriott (The Voice) in a story of three old friends for whom a reunion proves to be a revelatory experience... Wed 6 Apr, The Place, Telford

THE TEMPEST Shropshire Youth Theatre (SYT) present a contemporary staging of Shakespeare's tale of redemption, Wed 6 - Thurs 7 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

FRIENDS! THE MUSICAL PARODY Goodhearted romp through memorable moments from the hit TV series, Thurs 7 Apr, The Place, Telford

BILSTON KATE Stourbridge Theatre Company present the dramatic story of Jack the Ripper victim Kate Eddows, Thurs 7 - Sat 9 Apr, Stourbridge Town Hall

JARMAN Mark Farrelly's solo play

shines the light on influential filmmaker, painter, activist and writer Derek Jarman, Thurs 7 - Sun 10 Apr, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

SAVING BRITNEY 'Hilarious and heartbreaking' look at celebrity obsession, sexuality and growing up in the early noughties, Fri 8 Apr, Lichfield Garrick



MARY ROSE JM Barrie's 'spellbinding' ghost story about time, love and hope... Fri 8 - Sat 9 Apr, Lichfield Garrick

SILAS MARNER Gatehouse Youth Theatre present an amateur staging of George Elliot's story of redemption and friendship, Fri 8 - Sat 9 Apr, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

FRIENDS! THE MUSICAL PARODY Goodhearted romp through memorable moments from the hit TV series, Sun 10 Apr. Prince of Wales Theatre. Cannock

Unending love Calcutta

ENSEMBLE TEMPUS FUGIT Katie de la Matter director Debipriya Sircar Indian classical vocalist Jonathan Mayer sitar

Sun 24 Apr, 7pm Town Hall

Ensemble Tempus Fugit melds this unusual combination of period music and Indian song with shadow puppetry, dance and drama to tell a story of a traveller making his way to the musical heart of the City of Palaces.

Unending love The **Traveller**

EX CATHEDRA Choir & Academy of Vocal Music BRITTEN SINFONIA, MILAPFEST

Jeffrey Skidmore, Mark Padmore, Philippe Honoré, Vayu Naidu

Our exploration of Indian classical and choral music culminates with The Traveller - a meditation on the cycle of life by Vikram Seth and Alec Roth and two works by Roxanna Panufnik that brilliantly fuse both sound worlds.

Sun 1 May, 4pm

Town Hall

0121 289 6333 www.excathedra.co.uk

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Birmingham City Council

Part of the **Commonwealth Games** cultural programme

Friday 1 - Sunday 10 April

Kids Shows

DEAR ZOO LIVE! Rod Campbell's children's book is brought to life on stage, Wed 6 - Sun 10 Apr, Birmingham Hippodrome

THE SMARTEST GIANT IN TOWN Musical adaptation of the bestselling children's book by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler, Thurs 7 - Sat 9 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

Dance

NATIONAL DANCE COMPANY WALES: ONE ANOTHER Featuring three dance works that take you from a wild, fantastical playground to a Welsh mining community, Tues 5 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury



2FACED DANCE COMPANY: EVERYTHING BUT THE GIRL A triple-bill of emotionally charged, lung-busting physicality, featuring Fleur Darkin's The Qualies and two works by Tamsin Fitzgerald: Hollow In A World Too Full and Reduxed, Wed 6 Apr, Walsall Arena

ALL ABOUT THE FIGHT; GOING THE DISTANCE Dance and boxing combine in what promises to be a dynamic evening of entertainment, Thurs 7 Apr, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

SAMPAD ASIAN SPRING Evening of entertainment showcasing an eclectic mix of styles - from kathak and bharatanatyam to Bollywood and raas garba, Sun 10 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

Light Entertainment

PAUL ZERDIN: HANDS FREE Join the America's Got Talent-winning comedian & ventriloquist and a cast of popular puppets, including Sam, Albert, Baby, Roger the bodyguard and an urban fox, Fri 8 Apr, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre



A BLACK COUNTRY NIGHT OUT Variety show starring Dandy, Ollie Spencer, Rumour, Joe Thomas, and Emma Rollason as Dolly Allen, Fri 8 Apr, Dudley Town Hall

JUKEBOX AND BOBBY SOX Musical journey through the most influential decades in the history of popular music, Sat 9 Apr, The Place, Telford

THE GREATEST SHOWCASE Kat B hosts an evening of comedy, dance and music. Comedy acts include Richard Blackwood, Spuddz and Shabz Kariem, Sat 9 Apr, The Alexandra, Birmingham

SING-A-LONG-A THE GREATEST SHOWMAN Sat 9 Apr, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

Talks & Spoken Word

AN AUDIENCE WITH HARRY REDKNAPP Enjoy stories from Harry's football and TV career alongside tales of his time in the jungle, Fri 1 Apr, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

CHRIS PACKHAM: PICTURES FROM EDGE OF THE WORLD Join Chris as he challenges conventional ideas about beauty, photography and art, Tues 5 Apr, Dudley Town Hall

TWO PINTS PODCAST LIVE! WITH WILL MELLOR & RALF LITTLE Join the stars of cult British sitcom Two Pints Of Lager And A Packet Of Crisps as they bring their smash-hit podcast to the Midlands, Wed 6 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

AN EVENING WITH KATE HUMBLE Join the Springwatch presenter for an 'uplifting, inspiring, funny and emotional rollercoaster of a journey, full of warmth and passion for the natural world', Wed 6 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

POETRY JAM: LIVE! Monthly open-mic platform to jam, perform and click with a community of creatives, Thurs 7 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE LIFE OF AN MP: AN EVENING WITH JESS PHILLIPS Join the bestselling author and MP for Birmingham Yardley as she talks about her latest book, Sat 9 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CRAIG REVEL HORWOOD: THE ALL BALLS AND GLITTER TOUR Join Craig as he talks about his life, from Australia to the West End to Strictly... Sun 10 Apr, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

Events

GUIDED TOUR OF WEOLEY CASTLE Explore Weoley Castle with experienced guides, Sat 2 Apr, Weoley Castle, Birmingham **OPEN HOUSE WEEKEND** Go behind the scenes to see how the Severn Valley Railway works, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Apr, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

WALES COMIC CON Featuring special guest signings, exclusive panels, photo opportunities, cosplay masquerades, gaming tournaments and much more, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Apr, Telford International Centre

FREDDO'S EASTER EGG-STRAVAGANZA Expect plenty of audience participation, dancing, song and laughter as Freddo takes on his latest chocolatey challenge, Sat 2 - Sun 24 Apr, Cadbury World, Bournville, Birmingham

FESTIVAL OF THRILLS Celebrate the Resort's awesome rollercoasters as they reawaken this spring, Mon 4 Apr - Fri 6 May, Alton Towers, Staffordshire

ART & ANTIQUES FOR EVERYONE The UK's largest vetted antiques & fine art fair, Thurs 7 - Sun 10 Apr, NEC, Birmingham

JURASSIC EASTER Activities include a dinosaur egg hunt in the hay, a dino egg trail and a rabbit run, Sat 9 - Sun 24 Apr, Park Hall Farm, Shropshire

EASTER EGG QUEST Follow the

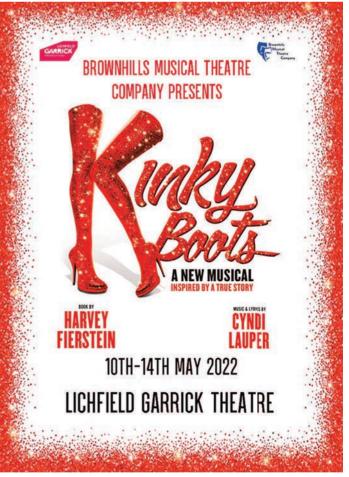
woodland trail to meet the Easter Bunny. Also featuring lamb feeding, lambing live and the brand-new Easter Live Show, Sat 9 - Sun 24 Apr, National Forest Adventure Farm, Staffordshire



EASTER EGGSTRAVAGANZA Explore caves, find dragons & trolls, cross bridges, climb towers and let off some steam, Sat 9 - Sun 24 Apr, Hawkstone Park Follies, Shropshire

EASTER AT WEST MIDLAND SAFARI PARK Meet Bramble, the park's resident Easter Bunny, who has built his burrow in the Discovery Trail, Sat 9 -Sun 24 Apr, West Midland Safari Park, Bewdley

LITTLE SKIPPERS HOLIDAY FUN Funfilled crafts,storytelling and a wildlife trail, Sun 10 - Tues 19 Apr, Dudley Canal & Caverns



thelist



Gigs

THE WAR ON DRUGS Mon 11 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

NICK LOWE Mon 11 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

GILBERT O'SULLIVAN Tues 12 Apr,

Birmingham Town Hall SARI SCHORR + BLUE NATION Tues 12 Apr. The Robin, Bilston

GOLDFRAPP Wed 13 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

GRETCHEN PETERS Wed 13 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

BURNING WITCHES + NERVOSA + SYSTEMHOUSE 33 Wed 13 Apr, The Robin, Bilston

YOURYTHMICS Wed 13 Apr, The Place, Telford

POP PRINCESSES Wed 13 Apr, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

THE ILLICITS Thurs 14 Apr, The Robin, Bilston

FVFRYTHING EVERYTHING + LIZ LAWRENCE Thurs 14 Apr, Keele University, Stoke-on-Trent

UK PINK FLOYD **EXPERIENCE** Thurs 14 Apr, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

YOURYTHMICS Thurs 14 Apr, Lichfield Garrick

JOHN OTWAY & WILD WILLY BARRETT Thurs 14 Apr, Foxlowe Arts

QUEEN NIGHT - QUEEN

BASTILLE Thurs 14 - Fri 15 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

KENNY THOMAS + ACANTHA LANG Fri 15 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

LUIS MORRISON AND THE DREAM TEAM + **KWALIA + KING ATOMIC** FLARES Fri 15 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

SAINT AGNES + MIMI BARKS Fri 15 Apr, KK Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

T'PAU Fri 15 Apr, The Robin, Bilston **HYBRID THEORY** -

LINKIN PARK TRIBUTE Fri 15 Apr, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

PACKET RACKET Fri 15 Apr. Albert's Shed. Shrewsbury

Apr, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

THE SKA45S Fri 15 Apr. The River Rooms, Stourbridge

Stoke-on-Trent

THE DARKER MY HORIZON + DAM.G Fri 15 Apr, Percy's Cafe Bar, Whitchurch, North Shropshire

LIONEL: THE MUSIC OF LIONEL RICHIE Fri 15 Apr, Lichfield Garrick

The Cureheads - Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

Buttermarket,

Shrewsbury

Shrewsburv

Birmingham

TRIBUTE Fri 15 Apr, The

INTO THE SHADOWS Fri

The Steps, Bridgnorth,

Centre, Stoke-on-Trent

BOWLING FOR SOUP Sat

KICK UP THE 80S Sat 16

Apr, The Robin, Bilston

STONE FOUNDATION Sat

16 Apr, The Sugarmill,

THE CUREHEADS Sat 16

Apr, Eleven, Stoke-on-

SOLAR MOHICANS Sat

16 Apr, Albert's Shed,

Stoke-on-Trent

Shrewsbury

THE ENDINGS, THE

SILK Sat 16 Apr.

Albert's Shed,

WHIPJACKS + JESS

Southwater, Telford

TINA TURNER BY NIOI

Sat 16 Apr, The River

Rooms, Stourbridge

RULED BY RAPTORS Sat

Bar, Whitchurch, North

16 Apr, Percy's Cafe

MARTIN TURNER EX

The Robin, Bilston

Whitchurch, North

Shropshire

RUMOUR Sun 17 Apr.

PORCELAIN HILL Sun 17

Apr, Percy's Cafe Bar,

WISHBONE ASH +

STORMBRINGER +

Shropshire

Trent

16 Apr, O2 Academy,

15 Apr, Theatre On

JERSEY BEATS - OH

WHAT A NITE! Fri 15

Apr, Mitchell Arts

Centre, Leek, Staffs

+ JOSH POWELL + THE

THE JB CONSPIRACY +

MIDNITE JOHNNY Fri 15

THE SIMON & **GARFUNKEL STORY** Fri 15 Apr. Victoria Hall.

Classical Music

LUNCHTIME ORGAN CONCERT WITH THOMAS TROTTER: MUSIC FOR EASTER Programme includes works by Bach/Widor, A Ridout, Handel,

Brahms & Dupre, Mon 11 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall MUSIC ON MONDAY WITH BOYAL

BIRMINGHAM CONSERVATOIRE: PERANO DUO Mon 11 Apr, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

ZAGREB PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Featuring Jan Latham-Koeing (conductor) & Tamsin Waley-Cohen (soloist). Programme includes works by Dora Pejačević, Sibelius & Mahler, Tues 12 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

LEIA ZHU VIOLIN CONCERT Wed 13 Apr, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, Ludlow, South Shropshire

EX CATHEDRA: ST MATTHEW PASSION

Featuring Bradley Smith (Evangelist), Themba Mvula (Jesus) and Lawrence White (Pilate), Fri 15 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Comedv

SARAH MILLICAN'S PLAYGROUND Mon 11 Apr, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre KOJO ANIM Wed 13 Apr, The Glee

Club, Birmingham COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY **ROBINSON, ALLYSON SMITH & GARY** LITTLE Thurs 14 Apr, The Glee Club,

Birmingham ALLYSON SMITH, GARY LITTLE, DAVE LONGLEY & COMIC TBC Fri 15 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

BOBBY MAIR Fri 15 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

NISH KUMAR Fri 15 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

COMEDY IN THE MET Fri 15 Apr. Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

ALLYSON SMITH, GARY LITTLE, DAVE LONGLEY & JAMIE HUTCHINSON Sat 16 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ANDY ASKINS, SID SINGH, SAM AVERY & DAMION LARKIN Sat 16 Apr, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

DOM JOLY Sat 16 Apr, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre



PAUL CHOWDHRY Sat 16 Apr. Wolverhampton Grand Theatre **ROUGH WORKS: NEW MATERIAL NIGHT** Sun 17 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JIMMY CARR Sun 17 Apr. Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

Theatre

MATILDA THE MUSICAL Amateur staging presented by Get Your Wigle On, Mon 11 - Tues 12 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

CLUEDO Michelle Collins (EastEnders/Coronation Street) stars as Miss Scarlett in a new comedythriller based on the hit 1985 film, Clue, Mon 11 - Sat 16 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury



WARS OF THE ROSES The climax to Shakespeare's three-part Henry VI saga of nationhood and power. Owen Horsley directs, Mon 11 Apr -Sat 4 June, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

SAME TIME. NEXT YEAR London Classic Theatre present Bernard Slade's funny portrait of two likeable protagonists who find themselves in the most unusual of long-term relationships, Tues 12 - Sat 16 Apr, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lvme

PRESENT LAUGHTER Ambient Night Productions presents its version of Noel Coward's reflection on fame, desire and loneliness, Wed 13 Thurs 14 Apr. Prince of Wales Theatre, Cannock

JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING

TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT Amateur staging presented by Get Your Wigle On, Thurs 14 - Sat 16 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

GRIMEBOY Hard-hitting new drama from playwright and current Birmingham Poet Laureate Casey Bailey, Thurs 14 - Sat 30 Apr, The Rep, Birmingham

SHEILA'S MENTAL HEALTH SHOW 'COVID-

19' 'Musical numbers, laugh-out-loud anecdotes, mental-health education and stand-up comedy' combine as Sheila explores emotional rollercoasters galore, Sat 16 Apr, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

Kids Shows

THE SMARTEST GIANT IN TOWN Musical adaptation of the bestselling children's book by Julia Donaldson

Monday 11 - Sunday 17 April

and Axel Scheffler, Mon 11 - Wed 13 Apr, Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burtonupon-Trent

ERNIE'S JOURNEY Featuring

storytelling, physical theatre, circus, illusion, puppetry and a live concert harp score, Tues 12 Apr, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton



TERRY DEARY'S TWISTED TALES Original comedy in which three actors perform over 100 roles in as many minutes, Tues 12 Apr, The Place, Telford

DINOSAUR ADVENTURE LIVE Interactive immersive theatre experience for younger audiences, Wed 13 Apr, Walsall Arena & Arts Centre

DEAR ZOO LIVE! Rod Campbell's children's book is brought to life on stage, Wed 13 Apr, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

SHARK IN THE PARK A fin-tastic theatre adventure for children, as three of Nick Sharratt's Shark In The Park books are performed lived on stage, Wed 13 Apr, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

SOOTY'S MAGIC SHOW Be astounded at Sooty's flying car, Soo's singing unicorn and Sweep's levitating sausage!, Thurs 14 Apr, Stourbridge Town Hall

THE HOGMOOR TROLL Music and puppetry combine in this new production featuring forgetful trolls, short-sighted bats and heartwarming friendship, Thurs 14 Apr, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

FIREMAN SAM Join Sam, Penny, Elvis, Station Officer Steele and Norman in an all-singing, all-dancing, actionpacked show, Thurs 14 Apr, The Place, Telford

MORGAN AND WEST: UNBELIEVABLE

SCIENCE Family entertainment featuring 'captivating chemistry, phenomenal physics and bonkers biology', Sat 16 Apr, Arena



Theatre, Wolverhampton

THE SMEDS AND THE SMOOS Music,

laughs and interplanetary adventures aplenty combine in Tall Stories' production of Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler's award-winning book, Sun 17 - Wed 20 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

Dance

DIVERSITY: CONNECTED 2022 The former Britain's Got Talent winners

present a new show which centres on the digital era in which we live, Thurs 14 - Sat 16 Apr, The Alexandra, Birmingham

IAN AND VINCENT: THE BALLROOM BOYS Old-fashioned variety featuring dance, comedy and song, Sat 16 Apr, Stourbridge Town Hall

Light Entertainment

CHAMPIONS OF MAGIC Evening of 'impossible illusions and spectacular special effects', Mon 11 Apr, The Alexandra, Birmingham



THAT'LL BE THE DAY Nostalgic

entertainment taking audiences on a rollercoaster ride through the golden age of rock'n'roll and pop, Tues 12 Apr, The Alexandra, Birmingham

JASPER CARROTT'S STAND UP AND ROCK Fusion of comedy and music featuring Jasper, the Bev Bevan Band and special guest Andy Bennett, Thurs 14 Apr, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

Talks & Spoken Word

AN EVENING WITH AMY DOWDEN: STAR OF STRICTLY COME DANCING Join Amy as she tells her story and performs some of the dances that have meant the most to her during her career, Tues 12 Apr, Stourbridge Town Hall



STEVE BACKSHALL - OCEAN Using stunts, experiments, props, cuttingedge science and big-screen footage from his two decades in TV, Steve brings the icons of the Big Blue to life, Sun 17 Apr, Birmingham Hippodrome



Diversity: Connected 2022 - The Alexandra, Birmingham

BAKER & HARRIS: BACK STAGE PASS Two of the nation's finest broadcasters share their experiences, Sun 17 Apr, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

Events

EASTER TILE DECORATING WORKSHOPS

Learn and use the Victorian tubelining technique to outline your design, then fill the gaps with a selection of coloured glazes, Tues 12 Apr, Jackfield Tile Museum, Ironbridge, Shropshire

MAKER'S CLUB - HANDS ON HERITAGE Designed for children and young people aged between eight and 15 who are excited about making things and solving problems, Tues 12 Apr, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

DRAGON EGG HUNT Learn about the craft of 'dragon charming' and the 'care of dragons'. Techniques include how to track and identify a dragon from its footprints and dragon healthcare, Tues 12 - Sun 24 Apr, Tamworth Castle

YOUNG ARCHAEOLOGISTS AND CURATORS CLUB - HANDS-ON HERITAGE

Range of themed activities exploring the past, including undertaking research, taking part in traditional crafts, object handling and living history interpretations, Wed 13 Apr, Black Country Living Museum, Dudlev

TALL TALES: GOLDILOCKS AND THE THREE BEARS Interactive telling of the famous story, Wed 13 Apr, Blakesley Hall, Birmingham

SMETHWICK ENGINE STEAMING DAY See the power of the oldest working steam engine in the world, Wed 13 Apr, Thinktank Science Museum, Birmingham

NATURE EXPLORERS AT SAREHOLE MILL Get hands-on with nature, Wed 13 Apr, Sarehole Mill, Birmingham

EASTER EGG HUNT TRAIL Find all the

eggs in the garden and claim your

prize, Wed 13 - Sun 17 Apr, Blakesley Hall, Birmingham EASTER TILE DECORATING WORKSHOPS

Learn and use the Victorian tubelining technique to outline your design, then fill the gaps with a selection of coloured glazes, Thurs 14 Apr, Jackfield Tile Museum, Ironbridge

CRAFTY THURSDAY: EASTER EGG DECORATION Create your own decorative Easter egg using craft materials, Thurs 14 Apr, Blakesley Hall, Birmingham

TALL TALES FROM AROUND THE WORLD: THE MAGIC BED Interactive telling of a fairytale from India about a young prince who uses a magic bed to travel to faraway kingdoms, Thurs 14 Apr, Aston Hall, Birmingham

TUDOR DAY AT BLAKESLEY HALL Meet the Tudors at Blakesley, Fri 15 Apr, Blakesley Hall, Birmingham

MASTERS FORMULA ONE WEEKEND Retro Grand Prix cars return to Donington Park, Fri 15 - Sat 16 Apr, Donington Park Racing Circuit

ALICE IN EASTER WONDERLAND Themed boat trip on a journey through the tunnels and caverns. Can you spot the hidden Easter eggs and win a prize? Fri 15 - Mon 18 Apr, Dudley Canal Trust

INSOMNIA GAMING FESTIVAL Weekend of non-stop, 24-hour gaming, Fri 15 -Mon 18 Apr, NEC, Birmingham

PILOT TRAINING Train like a Second World War RAF pilot this Easter, Fri 15 - Mon 18 Apr, RAF Museum, Cosford

ASTON IN WONDERLAND: A FAIRY TALE TAKEOVER Explore the grand old mansion and find fairytale characters who've escaped from their stories, Sun 17 Apr, Aston Hall, Birmingham

WESTON PARK MOTOR SHOW Featuring in excess of 500 vintage, classic and modern classic cars and motorcycles per day, Sun 17 - Mon 18 Apr, Weston Park, Shropshire

thelist

Gigs

ERIC STECKEL Mon 18 Apr, The Robin, Bilston

THE VACCINES Tues 19 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE LITTLE MIX SHOW Tues 19 Apr, Brierley Hill Civic, Dudley

RUMOURS OF FLEETWOOD MAC Tues 19 Apr, Theatre

Severn, Shrewsbury THE MISSION + THE ROSE OF AVALANCHE Wed 20 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

JAMES BOURNE Wed 20 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

INDIGO MARSHALL Wed 20 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THUNDERMOTHER + BETH BLADE AND THE BEAUTIFUL DISASTERS + HAXAN Wed 20 Apr, KK Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

CARL PALMER'S ELP LEGACY Wed 20 Apr, The Robin, Bilston

POM POKO + MUMBLE TIDE Wed 20 Apr, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

LEX AMOR Thurs 21 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

REBECCA NASH Thurs 21 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

UK SUBS + DISHY TANGENT + THE SCUMBAGS Thurs 21 Apr, The Robin, Bilston

THE TREATMENT + PISTON + SOUTH OF SALEM Thurs 21 Apr, The Sugarmill, Stokeon-Trent

WYTCHES + SIT DOWN Thurs 21 Apr, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

GO NOW! THE MUSIC OF THE MOODY BLUES Thurs 21 Apr, The Place, Telford

LITTLE MIX Thurs 21 -Sat 23 Apr, Resorts World Arena, B'ham

NIWEL TSUMBU Fri 22 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE HARA Fri 22 Apr, O2 Academy, B'ham

SKUNK ANANSIE + Never not nothing Fri 22 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

NICK MASON'S SAUCERFUL OF SECRETS Fri 22 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CORINNE BAILEY RAE Fri 22 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

BATESY AS EMINEM + LIAM HOLMES AS ED SHEERAN Fri 22 Apr, The Robin, Bilston

MOMENTS OF PLEASURE - THE MUSIC OF KATE BUSH Fri 22 Apr, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

JOHN E VISTIC ROCK N' ROLL SOUNDSYSTEM Fri 22 Apr, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

THE DUPPYBUSTERS Fri 22 Apr, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

JIVE TALKIN' - BEE GEES TRIBUTE Fri 22 Apr, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

DAVE O'HIGGINS & ROB LUFT QUARTET Fri 22 Apr, Newhampton Arts Centre, W'hampton

THE FOO FIGHTERS UK Fri 22 Apr, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

LIVE/WIRE: THE AC/DC SHOW Fri 22 Apr, The Place, Telford

SEVEN DRUNKEN NIGHTS Fri 22 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

ABSOLUTE BOWIE Fri 22 Apr, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

WILLIAM CRIGHTON Fri 22 Apr, Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury

THE KINGCROWS + THE MELBIES + FLY-52 Fri 22 Apr, Percy's Cafe Bar, Whitchurch, North Shrops

DUB FX Sat 23 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham T.REXTASY Sat 23 Apr, The Robin, Bilston MOTLEY CRUDE + SHEF LEPPARD + POIZON Sat 23 Apr, Eleven, Stokeon-Trent

THE TRANSPORTERS Sat 23 Apr, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

BREAK THE RECORD Sat 23 Apr, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

DETROIT MAGIC Sat 23 Apr, Brierley Hill Civic, Dudley IAN PROWSE &

AMSTERDAM Sat 23 Apr, Newhampton Arts Centre, W'hampton

THROUGH THE DECADES Sat 23 Apr, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

FOREVER ELTON Sat 23 Apr, The Place, Telford

THE CHICAGO BLUES BROTHERS Sat 23 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

ANDY FAIRWEATHER LOW AND THE LOW RIDERS Sat 23 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

THE SCRIBES + MARX Sat 23 Apr, Percy's Cafe Bar, Whitchurch, North Shrops

GREENMATTHEWS: A BRIEF HISTORY OF MUSIC Sat 23 Apr, Wem Town Hall, North Shropshire

LEGENDS OF SWING Sat 23 Apr, Ludlow Assembly Rooms,

South Shropshire CHARM OF FINCHES Sun 24 Apr, The Hive,

Shrewsbury

BAD BOY CHILLER CREW Sun 24 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

CYAN + OMEGA POINT Sun 24 Apr, The Robin, Bilston

THE SENSATIONAL 60'S EXPERIENCE Sun 24 Apr, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre



Charm of Finches - The Hive, Shrewsbury

Classical Music

CBSO: MAHLER'S FIFTH SYMPHONY Featuring Christoph Koenig

(conductor) and Paul Lewis (piano). Programme includes works by Mozart & Mahler, Thurs 21 - Sat 23 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

LIZZIE BALL & MILOS MILIVOJEVIC? Programme includes arrangements by Stravinsky of The Firebird and Suite Italienne, Sat 23 Apr, Prestfelde Theatre, Prestfelde School, Shrewsbury

G4 LIVE Sun 24 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury



EX CATHEDRA: CALCUTTA Featuring Ensemble Tempus Fugit, Katie de la Matter (director), Debipriya Sircar (Indian classical vocalist) & Jonathan Mayer (sitar), Sun 24 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

WE'LL TO THE WOODS NO MORE A concert to celebrate the centenary of

the publication of AE Housman's Last Poems. Featuring Alex Pratley (baritone) and Jon French (accompanist). Programme includes works by John Ireland, Arnold Bax, Ivor Gurney, George Butterworth & EJ Moeran, Sun 24 Apr, St Laurence's Church, Ludlow, South Shronsbire

Comedy

CATHERINE BOHART Wed 20 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JOEL DOMMETT Wed 20 Apr, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

SIMON BRODKIN Wed 20 - Thurs 21 Apr, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, ANDREW RYAN & JOSH PUGH Thurs 21 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ROY CHUBBY BROWN Thurs 21 Apr, The Prince Of Wales, Cannock

JULIAN CLARY Thurs 21 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

ESTHER MANITO Fri 22 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

SIMON BRODKIN Fri 22 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

ANDREW RYAN, JOSH PUGH, ROB DEERING & YURIKO KOTANI Fri 22 - Sat 23 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

KANE BROWN, NABIL ABDULRASHID, ANNETTE FAGON & LUKE CRAIG Sun 24 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham MATT WINNING Sun 24 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ROMESH RANGANATHAN Sun 24 - Wed 27 Apr, Birmingham Hippodrome

Theatre

TERRY DEARY'S TWISTED TALES Original comedy in which three actors perform over 100 roles in as many minutes of fact-based, fastpaced fun, Mon 18 Apr, The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

ALL SHOOK UP Curtain Call Theatre Company present an amateur staging of the Elvis Presley musical, Tues 19 - Wed 20 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

F00TL00SE THE MUSICAL Jake Quickenden stars alongside Darren Day in this foot-tapping musical based on the hit 1980s' movie, Tues 19 - Sat 23 Apr, The Alexandra, Birmingham

PRIVATE PEACEFUL Based on Michael Morpurgo's book, this short play is perfectly pitched for the young audiences at which it's aimed, Tues 19 - Sat 23 Apr, The Rep, Birmingham

THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME Little Theatre Company present a retelling of Victor Hugo's epic novel of love, acceptance and what it means to be a hero, Tues 19 - Sat 23 Apr, Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-on-Trent

JENUFA Welsh National Opera present Katie Mitchell's heart-wrenching tale of hope, love and despair. Sung in Czech with English surtitles, Wed 20 Apr, Birmingham Hippodrome

DEAR BROTHER, LIEBE SCHWESTER Brand-new play set in 1930s Berlin where 'ideological battles are waged across the kitchen table, friends can be lost, values can be sacrificed, and kindness seems to come from impossible places', Wed 20 - Sat 23 Apr, Lichfield Garrick

DON GIOVANNI Welsh National Opera transport opera's ultimate seducer to the Spanish Golden Age. Sung in Italian with English surtitles, Thurs 21 - Fri 22 Apr, Birmingham Hippodrome

THE GLEE CLUB Comedy concerning five hard-working, hard-drinking miners and a church organist rehearsing for the local gala, Thurs 21 - Sat 23 Apr, Lichfield Garrick



HAPPY JACK John Godber's first play, charting the ups and downs of family life, Thurs 21 - Sat 30 Apr, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

THE WIZARD OF OZ Kerry Katona, Lauren Platt, Ryan Greaves and Barney Harwood journey along the Yellow Brick Road in this all-singing, all-dancing Easter panto, Fri 22 Apr, Prince of Wales Theatre, Cannock

MADAM BUTTERFLY Welsh National Opera present Puccini's powerful story of unrequited love. Sung in Italian with English surtitles, Sat 23 Apr, Birmingham Hippodrome



LOOKING FOR WOLVERHAMPTON'S LATIN QUARTER Radio Four playwright Ian Pearce presents a funny, touching and self-deprecating account of growing up in 1970s Wolverhampton, Sat 23 Apr, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

BOX OF FROGS IMPROV COMEDY A night of 'high-octane improvised comedy', based entirely on audience suggestions, Sat 23 Apr, Chapel Lawn Village Hall, Shropshire

PETER & THE WOLF Toscana Strings & Newhampton Arts Centre present a fundraising concert for Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal. Birmingham Royal Ballet soloist Laura Tye stars, Sun 24 Apr, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

MENOPAUSE THE MUSICAL 2 Rebecca Wheatley, Nicki French & Susie Fenwick star in a musical focusing on the 'joys' of the menopause, Sun 24 Apr, The Alexandra, Birmingham

Kids Shows

JURASSIC LIVE Fun, educational and interactive stage show that guides audiences through the Jurassic zoo on the hunt for a missing dinosaur, Mon 18 Apr, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

RAPUNZEL: A TANGLED MUSICAL ADVENTURE Fun theatrical adventure based on the popular fairytale, Tues 19 Apr, Lichfield Garrick

THE HIGHLAND JOKER: THE BUBBLE SHOW A unique blend of magic, storytelling, and bubble art! Wed 20 Apr, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

RAPUNZEL: A TANGLED MUSICAL ADVENTURE Fun theatrical adventure based on the popular fairytale, Wed 20 Apr, Stourbridge Town Hall

MILKSHAKE LIVE There's laughter and

audience participation in abundance in this brand-new stage show featuring children's favourites from the Channel Five programme, Thurs 21 Apr, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

IN THE NIGHT GARDEN LIVE Igglepiggle, Upsy Daisy, Makka Pakka and friends are back in their fun-filled live show, Igglepiggle's Busy Day! Thurs 21 -Sat 23 Apr, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

JUSTIN LIVE All-singing, all-dancing, slapstick-filled extravaganza for children, hosted by Cbeebies star Justin Fletcher, Sat 23 Apr, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

DINOSAURS SHOW Interactive, informative and entertaining show in which Professor Ben Garrod explores the biggest, deadliest and weirdest predators that ever roamed the planet, Sat 23 Apr, Stourbridge Town Hall

THE AMAZING BUBBLE MAN Children's show exploring the art, magic, science and fun of bubbles, Sun 24 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

Light Entertainment

THE LADYBOYS OF BANGKOK Officially the largest and longest-running cabaret show in the UK... Tues 19 Apr, The Place, Telford

THAT'LL BE THE DAY Nostalgic entertainment taking audiences on a rollercoaster ride through the golden age of rock'n'roll and pop, Wed 20 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

Talks & Spoken Word

TALKSPORT LIVE ON STAGE Alan Brazil & Ray Parlour recount tales from the dressing room and studio... Tues 19 Apr, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent GRAEME HALL: THE DOGFATHER LIVE Specially crafted show presented by the dog-training star of TV's Dogs Behaving (Very) Badly, Sat 23 Apr,

Dance

Dudley Town Hall

JASMIN VARDIMON COMPANY: JV2

Comprising premiere works by Mafalda Deville and Sabrina Gargano, plus JV2's acclaimed Tomorrow, Thurs 21 Apr, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

REMEMBERING THE OSCARS New dance spectacular featuring Strictly's Alijaz and Janette, Sun 24 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Events

NATURE EXPLORERS AT SAREHOLE MILL Get hands-on with nature in the grounds of the Mill, Mon 18 Apr, Sarehole Mill, Birmingham

EASTER TILE DECORATING WORKSHOPS Learn and use the Victorian tubelining technique to outline your design, then fill the gaps with a selection of coloured glazes, Tues 19 Apr, Jackfield Tile Museum, Ironbridge

KIDS JEWELLERY WORKSHOP Have a go at making your own piece of jewellery with the help of the friendly learning officers, Tues 19 Apr, Museum of the Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham

MAKER'S CLUB - HANDS ON HERITAGE Designed for children and young people aged between eight and 15 who are excited about making things and solving problems, Tues 19 Apr, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

TALL TALES: GOLDILOCKS AND THE THREE BEARS Interactive telling of the famous story, Wed 20 Apr, Blakesley Hall, Birmingham

YOUNG ARCHAEOLOGISTS AND CURATORS CLUB - HANDS-ON HERITAGE Take part in a range of themed activities exploring the past, Wed 20 Apr, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

EASTER EGG HUNT TRAIL Find all the eggs in the garden, complete the hunt and claim a prize, Wed 20 - Sun 24 Apr, Blakesley Hall, Birmingham

EXPLORE BLAKESLEY Chance to explore the Tudor house and its beautiful gardens, Wed 20 - Sun 24 Apr, Blakesley Hall, Birmingham

CRAFTY THURSDAYS: SPRING ANIMALS MASKS Choose an animal mask or create your own, then colour and decorate it with a heap of craft materials, Thurs 21 Apr, Blakesley Hall, Birmingham

EASTER TILE DECORATING WORKSHOPS

Learn and use the Victorian tubelining technique to outline your design, then fill the gaps with a selection of coloured glazes, Thurs 21 Apr, Jackfield Tile Museum, Ironbridge

TALL TALES FROM AROUND THE WORLD: THE MAGIC BED Interactive telling of a fairytale from India about a young prince who uses a magic bed to travel to faraway kingdoms,Thurs 21 Apr, Aston Hall, Birmingham

SPRING STEAM GALA Festival of the best home-fleet steam engines - plus very special guest, Thurs 21 - Sun 24 Apr, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

URBAN NATURE DAY Explore Blakesley Hall's gardens and find as many species as you can, Sat 23 Apr, Blakesley Hall, Birmingham

ST GEORGE'S DAY EXTRAVAGANZA Featuring jousting, archery, living history camp, walk-about medieval grave diggers comedy, stalls, fairground rides, children's activities and much more... Sat 23 Apr, Tamworth Castle

FIREWORK CHAMPIONS Be dazzled by four firework displays in the Weston Park grounds, Sat 23 Apr, Weston Park, Shropshire

KWIK FIT BRITISH TOURING CAR

CHAMPIONSHIP Featuring machinery from Toyota, BMW, Honda and other manufacturers, with many of the country's leading drivers behind the wheel, Sat 23 - Sun 24 Apr, Donington Park Racing Circuit

ST GEORGE'S DAY Featuring medieval reenactment, children's entertainers, face painting, crafts and a walkabout with Smoked! The Dragon, Sun 24 Apr, Dudley Castle

ANTIQUES AND COLLECTORS FAIR View and purchase antiques and collectables from a wide variety of stallholders, Sun 24 Apr, Himley Hall, Dudley



Jasmin Vardimon Company: JV2 - Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton



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thelist

Monday 25 - Saturday 30 April

Gigs

DIVINE COMEDY Mon 25 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

RUMOURS OF FLEETWOOD MAC Mon 25 Apr, Volverhampton Grand

Theatre ALLDAY Tues 26 Apr, O2 Institute, B'ham

THE PROTOMEN Tues 26 Apr, KK Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

DAVID SCHEEL Tues 26 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

THE GIGSPANNER BIG BAND Tues 26 Apr, Theatre On The Steps, Bridgnorth

WILLIAM DUVALL Wed 27 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

MARTI PELLOW Wed 27 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham



SKINNY MOLLY Wed 27 Apr, The Robin, Bilston

STAND BY YOUR MAN -THE TAMMY WYNETTE STORY Wed 27 Apr, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

KEITH URBAN Thurs 28 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

HUNTSMEN + WOLFTOOTH Thurs 28 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

MAE MULLER + CAT BURNS Thurs 28 Apr, O2 Academy, B'ham

THE NATIONAL YOUTH BRASS BAND OF GREAT BRITAIN AND THE BAND OF HER MAJESTY'S ROYAL MARINES, COLLINGWOOD Thurs 28 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

COLLATERAL + EMPYRE Thurs 28 Apr, KK Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

TANKUS THE HENGE + DAVE YOUNG AND THE MIDNIGHT CHORUS + THE VONICS Thurs 28 Apr, The Robin, Bilston



The Shires - Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

Shropshire

29 Apr,

Theatre

HOUSE Fri 29 Apr,

Percy's Cafe Bar,

Whitchurch, North

THE STORY OF SOUL Fri

Wolverhampton Grand

STRICTLY ABBA Fri 29

Apr, Theatre On The

Steps, Bridgnorth

METRONOMY Sat 30

Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

Apr, O2 Academy,

THE UPBEAT BEATLES

Sat 30 Apr, Walsall

Arena & Arts Centre

THE ANIMALS AND

Robin, Bilston

Stoke-on-Trent

Shrewsbury

FRIENDS + MAGGIE

BELL Sat 30 Apr, The

ANTARCTIC MONKEYS

Sat 30 Apr, Eleven,

EGO FRIENDLY Sat 30

EMMA LINNEY BAND Sat

30 Apr. Albert's Shed.

THE SHIRES Sat 30 Apr.

Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-

BARRY STEELE - THE

ROY ORBISON STORY

Sat 30 Apr, Theatre

Severn, Shrewsbury

ROSIE TEE Sat 30 Apr.

Guildhall, Lichfield

Trent

Southwater, Telford

Apr, Albert's Shed,

Birmingham

NIGHTINGALES Sat 30

KINGDOM OF MADNESS Thurs 28 Apr, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

THE STORY OF GUITAR HEROES Thus 28 Apr, Brierley Hill Civic, Dudley

ELO EXPERIENCE Thurs 28 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

DEAN FRIEDMAN Thurs 28 Apr, Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury

PETER HOOK AND THE LIGHT Fri 29 Apr, O2 Academy, B'ham

STONE FOUNDATION Fri 29 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

ALTERED IMAGES Fri 29 Apr, The Robin, Bilston

DRESSED TO KILL Fri 29 Apr, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent PIGDAZE + DON'T FEED

THE GOAT Fri 29 Apr, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

THE USUAL SUSPECTS UK Fri 29 Apr, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

THE FUREYS Fri 29 Apr, Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

GENE LOVES JEZEBEL Fri 29 Apr, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

KAISER MONKEY KILLERS Fri 29 Apr, The River Rooms,

Stourbridge WILKO JOHNSON + JOHN OTWAY Fri 29 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury BIG BLACK EYE +

FIGHTING IN SOMEONES

Volans, R Laurin & H Willan, Mon 25 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall CENTRE STAGE WITH CBSO WIND Brogramme includes works by

Programme includes works by Krommer, Gipps & Mozart, Wed 27 Apr, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

Classical Music

LUNCHTIME ORGAN CONCERT:

CELEBRATING THE COMMONWEALTH

GAMES Programme includes works

by P Grainger, R Ampt, F Sowande, K

MAHAN ESFAHANI: A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME Featuring Ludovic Morlot (conductor) & Mahan Esfahani (harpsichord). Programme includes works by Ravel, Sørensen, CPE Bach & Stravinsky, Thurs 28 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CBS0: OPERA'S GREATEST HITS Featuring Matthew Kofi Waldren (conductor), Nadine Benjamin (soprano), Heather Lowe (mezzo soprano), Thomas Atkins (tenor), Nicholas Lester (bass) and the CBSO Chorus. Programme includes works by Bizet, Verdi, Mozart, Puccini, Rossini, Delibes & Mascagni, Fri 29 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

A MUSICAL MISCELLANY Featuring Sally Bradshaw (mezzo soprano), Sebastian Comberti (cello) & Igor Kennaway (piano). Programme includes works by Haydn, Frankel, Michel Damase, Debussy, Brahms, Grieg & Beethoven, Sat 30 Apr, St Laurence's Church, Ludlow, South Shropshire

ANDRÉ RIEU Sat 30 Apr - Sun 1 May, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

Comedy

THOSE CONSPIRACY GUYS Tues 26 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

MARIA BAMFORD Wed 27 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JOHN SHUTTLEWORTH'S BACK AGAIN! Wed 27 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

PAUL CHOWDHRY Wed 27 - Thurs 28 Apr, Walsall Arena & Arts Centre

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, MC HAMMERSMITH & BILLY KIRKWOOD Thurs 28 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ALAN PARTRIDGE LIVE Thurs 28 - Fri 29 Apr, Utilita Arena, Birmingham MATT FORDE Fri 29 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury



ADAM ROWE Fri 29 - Sat 30 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

MC HAMMERSMITH, BILLY KIRKWOOD & COMICS TBC Fri 29 - Sat 30 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

PAULINE DANIELS Sat 30 Apr, Bilston Town Hall



ALFIE MOORE Sat 30 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

Theatre

CATCH ME IF YOU CAN Patrick Duffy (Dallas), Linda Purl (Homeland) & Gray O'Brien (Coronation Street) star in a new psychological thriller adapted from Robert Thomas' play, Trap For A Lonely Man, Mon 25 - Sat 30 Apr, The Alexandra, Birmingham

BAT OUT OF HELL Critically acclaimed production bringing to life the legendary anthems of Jim Steinman & Meat Loaf, Tues 26 - Sat 30 Apr, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

JABS Three-actor show blending 'affectionate laughs, a few gentle moments of poignancy, a smattering of songs and a touch of audience participation', Wed 27 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury



MURDERED TO DEATH Tower Players present Peter Gordon's spoof of the best Agatha Christie traditions, Wed 27 - Fri 29 Apr, Prince of Wales Theatre, Cannock

THE SWEET SCIENCE OF BRUISING

Passion, politics and pugilism collide as four very different women are drawn into the dark underground world of female boxing in 19thcentury London. Presented by Birmingham Ormiston Academy Year 13 Acting students, Wed 27 - Thurs 28 Apr, The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

THE SOUND OF MUSIC Manor Musical Theatre present an amateur staging of Rodgers & Hammerstein's iconic musical, Wed 27 Apr - Sun 1 May, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

thelist

Monday 25 - Saturday 30 April

GUYS AND DOLLS Telford And District Light Operatic Players present an amateur staging of Frank Loesser's musical, Thurs 28 - Sat 30 Apr, The Place, Telford

Kids Shows

THE HOGMOOR TROLL Music and puppetry combine in this new production featuring forgetful trolls, short-sighted bats and heartwarming friendship, Sat 30 Apr, Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

THE BUBBLE SHOW A unique blend of magic, storytelling, and bubble art!, Sat 30 Apr, Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-on-Trent



Dance

REMEMBERING THE OSCARS New dance spectacular featuring Strictly's Alijaz and Janette, Tues 26 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

VERVE: TRIPLE BILL Comprising Akram Khan's Vertical Road alongside two new commissions from acclaimed international artists Sita Ostheimer and Alesandra Seutin, Thurs 28 Apr, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

JUNGLE BOOK: REIMAGINED Akram Khan Dance Company presents a choreographed retelling of Kipling's family classic, Fri 29 - Sat 30 Apr, Birmingham Hippodrome

Light Entertainment

JASPER CARROTT'S STAND UP AND ROCK Fusion of comedy and music featuring Jasper, the Bev Bevan Band and special guest Andy Bennett, Wed 27 - Sat 30 Apr, Lichfield Garrick

AN EVENING OF BURLESQUE Expect fun, feathers, fan dancing, speciality artistes, comedians and cabaret &

circus performers, Sat 30 Apr, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre THAT'LL BE THE DAY Nostalgic

entertainment taking audiences on a rollercoaster ride through the golden age of rock'n'roll and pop, Sat 30 Apr, Prince of Wales Theatre, Cannock

Talks/Spoken Word

AN EVENING WITH ALICE ROBERTS Join Alice for a tour of the most fascinating burials in Britain, complete with behind-the-scenes insights from digs and filming, Mon 25 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

TEST MATCH SPECIAL An evening in the company of cricket favourites Phil Tufnell & Jonathan Agnew, Tues 26 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CRAIG REVEL HORWOOD: THE ALL BALLS AND GLITTER TOUR Join Craig as he talks about his life, from Australia to the West End to Strictly... Fri 29 Apr, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

Events

RED BY NIGHT Family-friendly celebration of the Black Country's industrial heritage, Sat 30 Apr, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

DONINGTON HISTORIC FESTIVAL One of Europe's premier celebrations of classic motor racing, Sat 30 Apr -Sun 1 May, Donington Park Racing Circuit

MAKERS CENTRAL Bringing together makers, creators, hobbyists and artists from all over the world, Sat 30 Apr - Sun 1 May, NEC, Birmingham

THE GIN TRAIN Gin-tasting session along the Severn Valley Railway, Sat 30 Apr - Sun 1 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

PEPPA PIG Meet Peppa as she dives into her adventure and makes friends with some of the ocean's most incredible animals, Sat 30 Apr - Sun 3 July, National SEALIFE Centre Birmingham

FREDDO'S FESTIVAL OF FUN The famous frog goes on a musical journey with his very own festival, Sat 30 Apr - Sun 9 Oct, Cadbury World, Bournville, Birmingham



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