

Coventry & Warwickshire

ISSUE 424 MAY 2022

What's On

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NOTHELLO

Shakespeare's classic tragedy reimagined at the Belgrade



FLO & JOAN

sisters bring Sweet Release to Royal Spa Centre Leamington



POOCHES GALORE...

canine capers aplenty when Dog Fest visits Ragley Hall



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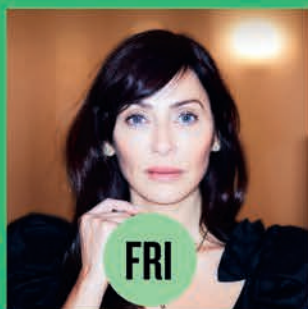
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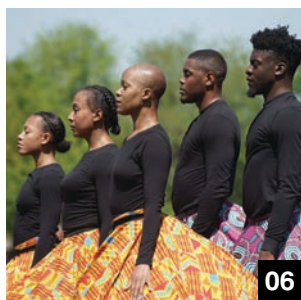


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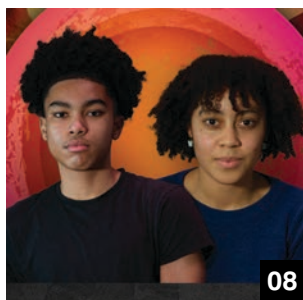
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What's On
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Belgrade announces new season of shows

Smash-hit West Enders *The Rocky Horror Show*, *SIX* and *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* are among the highlights of Coventry Belgrade Theatre's recently announced autumn/winter season.

Classic dramas *An Inspector Calls* and *The Mousetrap*, and the world premiere of a brand-new musical titled *Bombay Superstar*, also feature in a programme of entertainment that promises something for everyone. Family fun comes in the form of David Walliams' *Demon Dentist* and this year's ogre of a pantomime, *Jack And The Beanstalk*. Evenings of comedy are delivered by the incomparable Stewart Lee, and fans of Shakespeare can get their fix of the bard by checking out Malorie Blackman's *Noughts & Crosses* - a gripping version of *Romeo & Juliet*.

An Olivier Award-winning retelling of Jane Austen's *Pride And Prejudice* is stopping off at the venue too, as are much-loved one-nighters *Vampires Rock* and *Magic Of Motown*.

Alice In Wonderland gets a steampunk twist!

Stratford-upon-Avon visitor attraction Magic Alley is offering summertime visitors the chance to fall down the rabbit



hole and immerse themselves in an Alice In Wonderland world - one that comes complete with a distinct steampunk twist!

Commenting on the new attraction, Magic Alley's head of events, Sam Jenkins, said: "Our Wonderland attraction involves solving riddles, ciphers and puzzles as you move through all the different themed rooms. Throughout the May half term and most days during the summer holidays there will be characters making an appearance to assist our visitors with their quest, and we have no doubt that this will make the experience even more magical!"

Wonderland opens on Saturday 28 May and will run throughout the summer. For more information, visit magicalleystratford.com

Jim Broadbent in Ukraine fundraiser at the RST

The Royal Shakespeare Company is this

month joining forces with Stratford Music Festival to present a special fundraising event to support people affected by the war in Ukraine.

Taking place on Sunday 8 May at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, the evening of readings and music features the Orchestra of the Swan and numerous special guests, including actors Jim Broadbent and Samuel West. All proceeds will be donated to the Disasters Emergency Committee's Ukraine humanitarian relief effort.

For more information and to book tickets for the fundraiser, visit rsc.org.uk



Innervation at Coventry's War Memorial Park

Coventry's War Memorial Park is this month playing host to an immersive multi-faceted sound art installation.

Launched as part of Coventry City of

Culture's Wildlife Gathering (Friday 20 to Sunday 22 May) - an initiative celebrating the city's parks and green spaces - Innervation includes an original sound piece created by Midlands-based performer & composer Rosie Tee and a multifunctional public structure by producer & creator Bryony Rose.

Watercolour Masters in the West Midlands

Shropshire's Lilleshall Hall is hosting a prestigious exhibition celebrating the work of some of the world's greatest watercolour painters.

International Watercolour Masters sees 42 artists displaying their work from Monday 16 to Sunday 29 May.

Practical demonstrations by the Masters will take place on most days of the exhibition.

To find out more about the show, visit internationalwatercolourmasters.com

Chris Moyles to bring '90s Hangover to Worcester

One-time BBC Radio One DJ Chris Moyles is bringing his '90s Hangover event to Worcestershire County Cricket Club.

Moyles, who now presents on RadioX, will visit the venue on Friday 5 August to present a celebration of hit music from the 1990s.

Commonwealth batonbearers selected

The Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games has revealed the identities of the people who will take on the role of batonbearers in the Queen's Baton Relay this summer.

The Queen's Baton will reach the West Midlands on 18 July and will then be carried through local communities, arriving at Birmingham's Alexander Stadium on 28 July for the Games' Opening Ceremony.

To find out more, visit birmingham2022.com/qbr.

Classic line-up at Leamington Music Festival

The 150th anniversary of the birth of Ralph Vaughan Williams is being celebrated at this year's Leamington Music Festival, with more than a dozen works by the legendary composer being included in the five-day programme of concerts.

Contributors to this year's festival include singer Roderick Williams, organists Rachel Mahon and Christopher Cromar, oboist Nicholas Daniel, cellist Raphael Wallfisch, clarinettist Emma Johnson (pictured) and pianist Andrey Gugnin. Andrey's performance of Mussorgsky's Pictures At An Exhibition brings the 2022 programme to a close on the evening of 2 May. You can check out the full festival line-up by visiting leamingtonmusic.org



Grown Up In Britain exhibition to show at Coventry gallery

The everyday experiences and cultural impact of young people will be celebrated in a forthcoming exhibition at Coventry's Herbert Art Gallery & Museum.

Featuring photographs, objects and stories, Grown Up In Britain (1 July - 30 October) has been curated by and drawn from the extensive

photographic collections of the Museum of Youth Culture, an emerging organisation dedicated to the styles, sounds and social movements innovated by young people over the last 100 years.

For more information about the exhibition, visit theherbert.org

Will's European journey told in words and music

A Warwickshire folk musician is this month presenting a show celebrating the traditional music and song of the states of the European Union. Performed at Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, on Wednesday 11 May, A Day Will Come sees Will Pound sharing with his audience 'the joyous sounds of the traditions of a continent' and 'the stories and hopes of those affected by the politics of division'. For more information, visit warwickartscentre.co.uk



A new home and bumper line-up for Stratford Literary Festival 2022

Stratford Literary Festival is celebrating its 15th anniversary in a brand-new home.

Running from 3 to 8 May, the popular event takes place at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Bridgefoot.

Fringe events are being held at venues around the town. Contributors to the 2022 festival include actor Sir Derek Jacobi, comedian Julian Clary, Booker Prize winner Howard Jacobson, Yorkshire shepherdess Amanda Owen and Women's Prize For Fiction winner Maggie O'Farrell.

To check out the festival's full line-up, visit stratlitfest.co.uk



Cameras at the ready for Cathedral competition

Worcester Cathedral's popular photographic competition is back for 2022. Photographers are invited to take pictures which capture life in and around the cathedral. The competition offers participants the chance to win cash prizes and be part of a special exhibition in the autumn. To find out more and enter, visit worcestercathedral.co.uk

Mediaeval treasure trove still on show in Coventry

There's still time to check out a treasure trove of precious mediaeval documents charting the 900-year history of Coventry's Caludon Castle.

The documents, which include papers bearing the royal seals of King Edward I and Queen Elizabeth I, are currently on show to the public - for the very first time - at the city's Herbert Art Gallery & Museum.

The free-to-view exhibition runs until 21 May.

Warwick Folk Festival returns at new venue

Warwick Folk Festival will return for its 42nd year this summer.

Taking place at the new location of Castle Park from Thursday 21 to Sunday 24 July, the festival will feature appearances by Will Pound, Show Of Hands, The Young'uns, Nancy Kerr (pictured), Seth Lakeman and John Spiers & Jon Boden. For more information and to book tickets, visit warwickfolkfestival.co.uk



Step back in time at the British Motor Museum

The British Motor Museum is inviting visitors to step back in time next month when it hosts the Classic & Vintage Commercial Show on 11 & 12 June. The show offers visitors

a rare opportunity to reminisce about days gone by and check out hundreds of pre-2002 commercial vehicles. For more information, visit britishmotormuseum.co.uk



Photo credit: Ash Mills

Big festival promising to turn city into a dancefloor!

Birmingham International Dance Festival returns next month with three weeks of show-stopping performances presented in a variety of venues and locations.

Produced by FABRIC (DanceXchange and Dance4) and taking place from 17 June to 3 July, the country's largest dance festival will

feature 11 UK premieres and nine world premieres.

With the event partnering with Birmingham 2022 Festival, work from acclaimed Commonwealth artists will also feature.

For more information and up-to-the-minute programme announcements, visit bidf.co.uk

City to host mass-participation tap dance



A mass-participation tap-dancing and storytelling 'extravaganza' is taking place in Brindleyplace next month (18 June) as part of Birmingham 2022 Festival and Birmingham International Dance Festival. 'Celebrating the stories of the West Midlands and the people who call it home', Tappin' In aims to bring people together 'to get the region tap dancing and chatting about themselves whilst having a good time'. To find out more, including how to access instructional videos, visit tappinin2022.com

Community groups to benefit from Jubilee fund

Heart of England Community Foundation is awarding 47 grants - totalling £330,787 - to voluntary and community organisations in the West Midlands and Warwickshire. The money is being donated from Arts Council England's Let's Create Jubilee Fund, an initiative which ensures that thousands of people from communities across England will have the opportunity to take part in creative events celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.



There's something for everyone at **Symphony Hall** and **Town Hall**



Strictly Come Dancing: The Professionals 2022

Sun 8 May
Symphony Hall



Beyond the Bricks of Brum
feat. BBC Symphony Orchestra,
Black Voices,
Casey Bailey, Sanity

Fri 17 Jun
Symphony Hall

Peter Doherty
Sat 14 May
Town Hall



Wilko Johnson & Special Guest John Otway

Fri 22 Jul
Town Hall



An Evening with The Hollies – 60th Anniversary Tour 2022

Sun 22 May
Symphony Hall

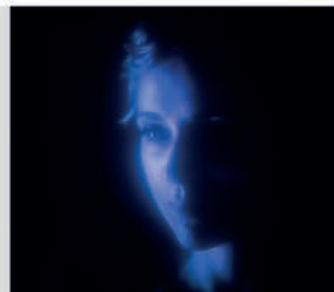


John Cale
Mon 25 Jul
Town Hall

An Evening with Simon and Oscar from Ocean Colour Scene:
Special Guests Si Connolly & Pete Williams
Sun 29 May
Town Hall



Agnes Obel
Mon 12 Sep
Symphony Hall



The High Kings
Fri 10 Jun
Town Hall



The Billy Joel Songbook
Sun 18 Sep
Town Hall

Book Online: **bmusic.co.uk**



NO LIMITS

The Coventry Belgrade's all-new production is a clever reimagining of Shakespeare's classic tragedy, Othello...

The Belgrade's outgoing co-artistic director, Justine Themen, talks to What's On about Nothello, her ambitious final project at the venue. The production is also the theatre's last contribution to Coventry's UK City of Culture programme...

"It's really sharp in terms of the deconstruction of the cultural icon that is the play Othello, which kids knew at school even from a very early age, but the narrative that Othello puts into our heads and has become part of our cultural narrative - it really disrupts it and challenges it."

I've asked the Coventry Belgrade's co-artistic director, Justine Themen, to give me the sales pitch for Nothello, her final show at the theatre, and she's rising to the task. The all-new production reimagines the Shakespeare classic from the perspective of the unborn children of Desdemona and Othello - spoiler: the mixed-race couple both die in the original - and is designed to examine the play's legacy as well as highlight what it means to be mixed heritage. The show also challenges the way Shakespeare's tragedy created negative stereotypes of black men, made Desdemona a fairly shallow character, and showed how difficult it was for her parents to accept her relationship with a man of colour. And that's just the start, according to Justine.

"It also engages with all the issues that were highlighted by the death of George Floyd, but deals with them close to home and asks questions about them," she says, before pointing out that the show is still designed to entertain, and won't be turning the Belgrade into a lecture theatre.

"It's very sharp, it's very clever and it's very funny. It's not an evening in the theatre where you've got to think about serious stuff - or not *just that* anyway. It deals with it with wit and humour, and it's quite absurd too, so I think it will be a good night in the theatre as well as an opportunity to engage with that narrative as audience members."

Written by Alfred Fagon Award-winning playwright Mojisola Adebayo, the ambitious production has been inspired by interviews with mixed-heritage couples and individuals who live in and around Coventry, and also features a mixed-heritage community chorus drawn from across the city.

"The idea for the project came way back in 2017 when I was part of the team that was putting together the bid for the City of Culture. As we were throwing around ideas, one of the things that was particularly resonant for me was diversity, but also that 2-Tone narrative of the coming together of

black and white.

"That was a story that resonated with me personally. I've been telling stories in the city through theatre and film for the past 18 years, and working with communities and under-represented artists to bear witness to their stories. It felt quite exciting to be able to link my own story as a person of mixed heritage with the story of the city that I'd lived in and brought my daughter up in.

"So that's where the idea of making the narrative about the mixed-race experience came from, and the starting point for me was to go out and interview interracial couples and people with experience of being mixed heritage."

Initially the idea was to do a two-part piece covering those two elements, but they merged into one as part of the Belgrade's contribution to the City of Culture.

Adebayo was then brought on board - and brought the Bard with her.

"She responded to the material I gave her with the proposal of Nothello, which is a disruption of the Shakespearean story of Othello, which we're all largely familiar with. Othello is a black man who marries a white woman and is lied to by a character called Iago, and made to believe that Desdemona is unfaithful to him, and as a result he kills her.

"Our reimagining is: what would happen if Desdemona's father had been open to her having a relationship with a black man? If Iago hadn't felt compelled to pull Desdemona and Othello apart? What would have happened if the world had allowed them to stay together and have children?"

Justine says the play was also inspired by Ira Aldridge, whose story has cropped up throughout the City of Culture programme. Widely regarded as the first black actor to play Othello, he also ran and programmed the Coventry Theatre in the early 1800s, making him the first black theatre manager in the country.

"That was a narrative that we celebrated in the City of Culture year, particularly at the Belgrade, and there was something about it that clicked with the writer.

"It feels really exciting the way it's woven in. I think I initially anticipated a piece of work that was more explicitly inspired by the

stories of the people I interviewed, but she's done an amazing job of bedding in their experiences without it looking like their explicit stories.

"We've also been working with a group of young people with mixed-heritage experience, trying to weave something of their stories into the story that we're telling on the stage. That's been really exciting, bringing together people who don't usually get to talk about their experiences, and I think that's been quite empowering for them."

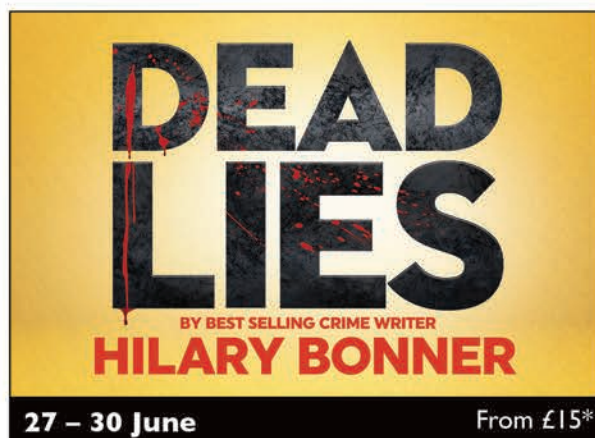
The production brings Justine's work at the Belgrade, as well as Coventry's year as the City of Culture, full circle in a number of ways. She directed Coventry Moves, the opening event of the year, and is leaving the theatre after 18 years to take up a new role at the RSC in Stratford. She hopes Nothello reflects the legacy of both.

"My drive all the way through has been about 'how does this building, how does the Belgrade, belong to all communities of the city?' That ethos was at the heart of our City of Culture bid, because often these big city projects are quite focused on bringing in tourists and don't engage deeply enough with communities. They may engage with people in the city but not in a deep or lasting way.

"So it felt really important to be pushing for something in our vision for the City of Culture that was about genuine collaboration and co-creation with communities, and I think the year has seen some extraordinary models for that, which I hope will shake up the way the city continues to make theatre. It's about the partnership between artists and communities as we move forward, and this is another model for that.

"The show really feels like the culmination of everything I know and have absorbed from working with geographically diverse communities in the city, ethnically diverse communities, disabled communities... the whole range. The opening event felt like it did that, and this feels like something with a bit more of a personal connection as well as a goodbye."

.....
Nothello shows at Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, from Sat 7 to Sat 21 May



BOOK NOW www.belgrade.co.uk

*Ticket price includes a £1.50 booking fee. No fee applies if booking online.

Food news from across the region...

ChilliFest set to sizzle at Eastnor Castle

After a two-year hiatus, Eastnor ChilliFest makes a welcome return at Herefordshire's Eastnor Castle on Sunday 1 & Monday 2 May. Celebrating all things chilli, the event offers visitors the chance to 'try and buy' a variety of scorching products - and to cool things down with cocktails, beer and local cider!

ChilliFest also features cookery demonstrations by Great British Bake Off star Howard Middleton, Italian celebrity chef Felice Tocchini and Herefordshire's very own The Beefy Boys. Live music is provided by Los Squideros and The Breaks.

Gin Festival back at Billesley Manor in July

Shakespeare Distillery and Billesley Manor Hotel are to co-host the popular Gin Festival on Sunday 17 July.

Visitors can sample a variety of craft gins - from a selection of distilleries - and a range of locally sourced food, all against a backdrop of live music...

Tickets for the event can be booked at shakespearedistillery.com/stratford-gin-festival



Michelin-star chef Rob opens Solihull eatery

Michelin-star chef Rob Palmer has opened a new restaurant at Solihull's Mell Square.

Fine-dining eatery Toffs offers a tasting menu of up to seven courses and features modern British cuisine guided by the seasons to ensure the freshest produce.

Toffs, which features classy, industrial-chic decor, is open for lunch Thursday to Saturday and dinner Tuesday to Saturday.



Pub In The Park returning to Warwick venue next month

Tom Kerridge's Pub In The Park - 'the UK's biggest celebration of food and music' - returns to St Nicholas Park in Warwick from Friday 10 to Sunday 12 June.

Celebrity chef James Martin and pastry chef and Junior Bake Off judge Ravneet Gill will be hosting the event, while participating venues include Cryrus Todiwala's Café Spice Namaste and Mike Bullard & Dan Androne's The Butcher's Social.

Fan favourites making a welcome return at this

year's get-together include: Kerridge's The Hand And Flowers; Atul Kochhar Restaurants; one-time Great British Menu contestant Andrew Pern's The Star Inn; Stephen Terry's The Hardwick; and Warwick's The Rose & Crown. The music line-up features Australian songstress Natalie Imbruglia (Friday evening), British boyband royalty McFly (Saturday evening) and the queen of the kitchen disco, Sophie Ellis-Bextor (Lazy Sunday session).

KIBOU Japanese Kitchen & Bar set to open in Solihull

Premium casual dining operator KIBOU Japanese Kitchen & Bar is now open and taking bookings.

Located at Grade 2 listed 134 High Street, the eatery offers a menu which centres around the company's signature sushi rolls. Options include the famous volcano roll - salmon, avocado and tobiko futomaki, tempura fried and served with KIBOU house sauce - alongside more traditional favourites such as hand-pressed nigiri and sashimi.

Other classic Japanese dishes, including ramen, tempura, steamed bao buns and handmade gyoza, are also available.

The new venue features a stand-alone bar serving signature Japanese-inspired cocktails, no-and-low options, an ambitious selection of Japanese whisky, sake and umeshu, Japanese brewed beers and authentic high-balls.

For further information, and to book, visit: kibou.co.uk/solihull



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Food, Glorious Food

Greedy Gourmet founder Michelle Minnaar talks about how her childhood passion for food inspired a successful career as an award-winning blogger...

"I started blogging before it was cool," explains Michelle Minnaar, the founder of the award-winning Greedy Gourmet food blog.

Greedy Gourmet was born in 2007 and has since blossomed into an extensive food site enjoyed by users across the world.

Having launched after Michelle made a life-changing move from South Africa to the UK, the blog has since scored success after success, with Food Blogger of the Year and Best Entertainment Blog in Essex among the various awards it's hoovered up.

It has also been named one of the UK's top 10 food blogs.

"I used to eat out a lot in South Africa, and there was a big difference in the quality and the price tag of the food," says Michelle. "I soon came to realise that the food here, especially in Essex, wasn't that great. I'd eat out in restaurants and think 'you're paying all this money for mediocre food'. I couldn't cook, so when I came across the blogging scene, I thought it was a good way to document my experiences but also to 'learn as I go'."

Greedy Gourmet features more than 1,000 recipes, ranging from international cuisine and comfort food, to family favourites and sweet treats. There's also a dedicated 'special diets' section, which is home to vegan, vegetarian, gluten-free, dairy-free, pescatarian and keto recipes.

From alcoholic butterbeer and elderberry gin, to braised short ribs and monkfish curry, there are plenty of options to tantalise the tastebuds, no matter what your preference. Each published recipe article is loaded with useful information on its history, as well as suggestions on how to customise dishes to suit your taste.

But Greedy Gourmet isn't just a recipe site. It features restaurant reviews and recommendations too, a 'places to visit' section and an ingredient substitute section. There's even a 'my first weight loss retreat' blog, as well as a section on the dos and don'ts of reheating specific foods. With her 15 years of experience, Michelle really has got all bases covered.

"I like to explore new dishes. I grow my own vegetables too, so I know what you can do with all those courgettes you have left over, for example. Greedy Gourmet is a mix-match of recipes - I don't want to loophole myself into anything specific. I do look into search-

engine optimisation, so sometimes I'm very much cooking by numbers. It's not always up my street, but if there's demand, then I do it. I do always try to make my best version of the dish, though."

Michelle also takes her own photographs for the blog.

"I get really irked by the fact that some recipes in cookbooks aren't accompanied by a photo! I didn't used to have a great camera so had to work my way up. I'm currently in the process of updating a lot of my old content that I published back in 2007. To look at what I created then compared to what I can create now... what a journey!"

Michelle's passion for food developed when she was growing up.

"My father was quite a foodie. We used to go on holiday and look at all the restaurant menus to see which looked the best and try as many as we could. Wherever we'd travel we'd always check out the supermarkets, the green grocers etc. He had a big influence on me - we ate out multiple times a week."

Fast forward to 2022, and it's no secret that the possibility of enjoying some free grub is the main incentive for many bloggers. So it's refreshing indeed to talk to someone whose motivation comes from an entirely different place. Even so, attending press events - both in the UK and abroad - is part and parcel of running an award-winning food blog for Michelle.

"Travel wise, the trip that stuck out for me was Norway. I was lucky enough to be invited on a press trip. It was a big novelty going to the Fjords and actually catching some king crab. They took us to the shore and prepared it - they boiled it in salt water. It was amazing. So fresh. It's a favourite memory of mine, even though it was absolutely freezing! The other trip I really enjoyed was the Isles of Scilly. We ate fresh seafood in this old cowshed. Very rustic!"

With the blogging market now saturated (we can blame Instagram for that), what advice does Michelle have for budding bloggers?

"Make sure you know what your aim is. I know a lot of people who have stopped blogging because it's just got too much and they ended up falling out of love with it. If you want to start food blogging, your heart has to be in it - it's a rollercoaster ride. Just keep asking yourself what your goals are. One thing to remember is, if you're going to be a hobby blogger, then do what you like

and see what happens. Just don't have much in the way of expectation."

Michelle has recently launched her second food venture - eatmycheesecake.com - with ex-chef husband Edward. Although it's not been an overnight success, her experience in the blogger field has proved invaluable.

"It's only a few months in and the traffic isn't there yet, but if you know something is good, you have to have faith that it will work out."

"We started making cheesecakes and posting them on Greedy Gourmet, and they went wild. You know all these ready meals you get these days? There's such a wide variety of them, but I feel the dessert section is still very limited, and people like making their own desserts. It seemed like a good idea to experiment and see what happened, as they're quite simple recipes. Hopefully it'll work out because a lot of countries love cheesecake!"

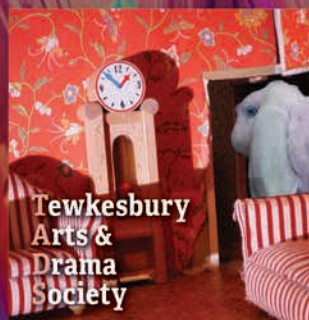
Check out Michelle's blog, Greedy Gourmet, at greedygourmet.com



THE ROSES

Tewkesbury's Theatre

More online: www.rosestheatre.org



Tewkesbury Arts & Drama Society

Harvey

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Walk Right Back

Sat 14 May



Five Star Swing

Thu 19 May 7.30pm



Soul Sisters

Fri 20 May 7.30pm



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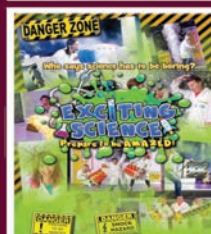
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Classical music from across the region...



City Of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sat 7 May

The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra make another visit to Warwick Arts Centre, this time to present a programme featuring two works with a Romantic leaning: Max Bruch's Violin Concerto No1 and Felix Mendelssohn's Symphony No3.

The concert begins with Prokofiev's first symphony, a work which, despite being

described by the composer himself as "a symphony in the classical style", is actually an impressively *modern* homage to the music of Haydn and Mozart...

Much-in-demand violinist Daishin Kashimoto joins the CBSO for a concert which is helmed by the orchestra's principal guest conductor, Kazuki Yamada (pictured).

Orchestra of the Swan: The Infernal Machine

Drapers Hall, Coventry, Thurs 26 May;
Stratford Play House, Stratford-upon-Avon,
Tues 21 June

A performance featuring baroque specialist, jazz musician and composer David Gordon here shines a light on the important role of the harpsichord in the history of music. The programme comprises De Falla's Concerto For Harpsichord, Biber's Sonata Representativa, Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No4, Scarlatti's Sonata and The Beatles' Within You Without You.



CBSO: Gabriela Montero - Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto

Symphony Hall, Birmingham,
Wed 11 & Thurs 12 May

"The piano is my voice and my confidante," says Venezuelan pianist Gabriela Montero. "It enables the continuation of beauty and one of the most noble of human endeavours - to speak about who we are through art." Gabriela first played the piano - albeit a toy one - at the tender age of seven months, made her concerto debut (with the National Youth Orchestra of Venezuela) at the age of eight, and as an adult has established herself as one of the world's most talented and visionary classical pianists. Her performance here of Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto kickstarts a programme that also includes Anton Bruckner's sixth symphony and Brahms' third. The concert is conducted by Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla, whose tenure as CBSO music director concludes at the end of this season.

Miloš Karadaglic: Homage to Segovia

Malvern Theatres, Worcestershire, Wed 25 May; Birmingham Town Hall, Sat 28 May

Miloš Karadaglic left his home country of Montenegro as a teenager to pursue his passion for classical guitar.

After studying at the prestigious Royal Academy of Music in London, he secured an exclusive contract with Deutsche Grammophon in 2010.

Solo performances with international orchestras followed, as did five studio albums.

These concerts sees him paying tribute to a man he greatly admires. "This programme is in tribute to one of my heroes," says Miloš. "Andrés Segovia was a true pioneer of the instrument, and we guitarists of today owe him a lot because he put us on the map."



ESO: The Great Caruso

Swan Theatre, Worcester, Wed 4 May

When Enrico Caruso died - aged just 48 - 101 years ago, there was a global outpouring of grief.

Caruso was the world's first singing superstar, not only loved and admired by an army of fans but also the inspiration for countless singers who followed in his footsteps.

One of them was Mario Lanza...

Born in the year of Caruso's death, Lanza's remarkable voice and matinee-idol looks propelled him to mid-20th century celebrity. Just like Caruso, he was destined to die young, but not before he had become a world-famous movie star and sold millions of records...

This latest English Symphony Orchestra (ESO) concert sees the highly regarded Mark Milhofer paying glowing tribute to both men. It also features Arnold Schoenberg's arrangement of Luigi Denza's Funiculì, Funiculà and Erwin Schulhoff's Suite for Chamber Orchestra. Kenneth Woods, the artistic director of the Worcester-based ESO, is the man with the baton.



City of Birmingham
Symphony Orchestra

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Live music from across the region...

The Wave Pictures

FarGo Village, Coventry, Thurs 26 May

Blending pop, garage rock and psychedelic sounds with more than a touch of whimsy, The Wave Pictures started life back in 1998 in the rural Leicestershire village of Wymeswold. They have been prolific musicmakers ever since.

"We record very quickly," explains guitarist & vocalist Dave Tattersall. "We write songs very quickly and then spend a long time arguing about what to release. That's The Wave Pictures' way!"

The band visit Coventry as part of a promotional tour for their 19th album, *When The Purple Emperor Spreads His Wings*.



Jools Holland

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sun 22 May

As the UK's most popular pianist and bandleader, Jools Holland continues to dazzle in the company of his brilliantly talented Rhythm & Blues Orchestra.

The 20-piece ensemble, featuring former Squeeze drummer Gilson Lavis, is here joined by show-stopping vocalists Ruby Turner and Louise Marshall.



Blair Dunlop

Huntingdon Hall, Worcester, Thurs 26 May

Offering an insight into both traditional and contemporary folk music, award-winning British singer-songwriter & guitarist Blair Dunlop visits the Midlands this month off

the back of his new live album, *Trails - Queensland*, which documents his 2019/20 Australian tour.

Blair's Worcester show will include songs from his back catalogue as well as tales from his time on the road.

The Monochrome Set

The Tin Music & Arts, Coventry, Sat 28 May

Heavily influential on the post-punk scene, The Monochrome Set originally formed in London in 1978.

Their early persona was defined by shadowy stage images, the projections often being described as the band's 'fifth member'. After a hiatus of more than a decade, they reformed in 2010 and have since toured all over the UK, Europe, Japan and the US, releasing seven critically acclaimed studio albums into the bargain.

Now in their 44th year and having survived multiple line-up changes, they're busily promoting their latest album, *Allhallowtide*, and playing songs both old and new.

Cara Dillon

Drapers' Hall, Coventry, Fri 13 May

Extraordinary Irish singer Cara Dillon has been captivating audiences for over 20 years. Alongside a selection of favourites from her previous releases, she here performs material from new album *Wanderer*, a collection of beautiful and moving songs recorded with her husband and musical partner, Sam Lakeman.

Declan McKenna

hmv Empire, Coventry, Sat 7 May

Winner of Glastonbury's emerging talent competition in 2015, British indie-pop favourite Declan McKenna has so far released two critically acclaimed albums: *What Do You Think About The Car* (2017) and *Zeros* (2020).

Citing David Bowie and Crosby, Stills & Nash as influences, Declan describes his most-recent offering as a step forward in his ever-evolving sound.





Tempest on tour

Ahead of a Birmingham Town Hall gig, spoken-word artist, musician & playwright Kae Tempest talks about new album *The Line Is A Curve*...

Did you have any idea about what you wanted to achieve with new album *The Line Is A Curve* before you started it, Kae?

There's never a plan to start with, it just evolves naturally. I get into the studio with Dan Carey and we don't know what's going to happen; we just want to get together and write. The ideas lead the way. Usually we spend a couple of days and see what we come up with; then, when we have a bunch of songs, we know we have something. Then we'll take a few days away to reflect on them and go back in with a more precise focus on where it's going.

This time around you decided to record your vocals with three takes in front of three generations of people. What was your thinking there?

I always want to do the whole album as one take, as it gives a feeling of movement and makes me excited. This time I was thinking of how to get the most truthful performance with the most live delivery, and felt I had to be speaking to someone - an audience of one. I thought, 'What if I do three takes in one day, to three different people? Someone younger, someone older and someone of my generation. What would happen to my delivery?' It was an incredible experience and showed me how much language changes depending on who is listening. I'd recommend it to everyone to try for themselves. It's a really nerve-wracking thing to do, but really exciting too.

Your last album, *The Book Of Traps And Lessons*, was very internal and personal, but this new one has a much more outward perspective, while still coming across as a deeply personal affair. What was behind this different approach?

I wasn't very well making the last one. I was in some trouble, really. What I was going through in my life was challenging and it culminated in some pretty heavy mental-health stuff. This album is like me getting out of that, to be honest. It's about looking for people and connections. *Traps And Lessons* was about how can we see the traps in our lives before we fall into them? How can we change? This album is about the line being a curve - life is circular and we will repeat, so accept it. Pick yourself up and keep fighting.

The album features a collaboration with Fontaines DC frontman Grian Chatten. How did that come about?

It was amazing to work with Grian. He's a

stunning writer and a fantastic artist. His lyrics give this impression of simplicity, where he says these things that just feel so true, as if it's just come straight out of his heart with no filter. What he's doing as a writer, though, is so skilful at the same time; he's just a really fantastic poet. I believe him and I believe in him. That soul of his, that person he is, when I hear him sing, he takes me. It feels real to me. I've been a big fan for years, and I've known him for a long time, as Fontaines DC recorded with Dan, so we've hung out before. There's a lot of respect from me to the whole band, so when it came to making the album, it was an obvious thing to ask him to be involved.

Lianne La Havas also features on the record. How was it working with her?

It's the same thing with Lianne. I've known her a long time and have so much respect and love for her. Her guitar playing is just wicked; she's brilliant. Again, I know her from Dan's studio and parties, so there's a lot of mutual respect and love there. So I really wanted to use those feelings to see if we could make something out of it - take that energy we have together and create. She absolutely killed it when she came down, too. I was blown away.

The album is produced, as always, by Dan. What does he bring to the table for you?

Our connection is really profound. I have a true partner in Dan Carey. He understands my ideas, he knows how to create an environment where my ideas can be unlike how they would be anywhere else. I don't have the same ideas without Dan being there. There's something about everything we've been through over the last 10 years of working together that's just unique. The experiences we've shared, nobody will ever know so much of it or understand it. Like flying over to Malibu to make demos in Bob Dylan's old tour bus for Rick Rubin! It's like playtime for adults when we hang out. I feel understood by him, and I feel cared for. He makes me feel that anything is possible. It's deep. That's not to say I don't love collaborating with other musicians; there's just something we have that is pretty special.

Like every other artist, you've not been able to play live during the pandemic and lockdowns. What was that like for you?

Like everybody, we had to change our perspectives on our lives, as it all stopped. The misery of people losing livelihoods, the illness and deaths that so many people had

to endure, that was heavy. Personally, though, privately and in my own space, I actually found the time completely revelatory. My relationship broke down, so I was just in the yard on my own. So I went deep. It was profound. I didn't have the headspace to do that when I was on tour, but during lockdown I did. I came out the other side so much stronger. Also, I'm a writer, so I could still work. I wrote songs, I worked on a play and did some poetry too. I still had that, but other musician friends of mine weren't so lucky. I feel fortunate for that.

You finally have a tour coming up, though. You must be excited...

I can't wait. We have new crew and a whole new feeling to it. I think what we're creating is going to be a beautiful experience, not just for us but everyone in the room. It'll be a very deep thing to be in front of audiences again after so long and after everything we've all gone through, so I'm going to give it everything I've got. It's the most beautiful and incredible thing to stand up in front of people and play your music. These last couple of years have given me time to really focus on that - on what I want from a performance and what I can bring to it for people.

After everything that's gone on, and having had such a long layoff from playing live, are there any nerves about getting back to it?

I'm definitely a little nervous about the whole thing. Well, I'm a *lot* nervous actually, but I feel ready. I just can't wait to get out there and see what happens. You'd be mad if you weren't nervous, to be honest. It's a crazy thing to do, when you think about it, isn't it? I just really want to be able to experience it all again. I hope people will feel curious enough to come out, so we want to make sure that we put enough value in the experience for them to buy tickets and come out and be a part of it. That's the dream, isn't it? To have a room full of people and something to deliver. Hopefully it'll be a beautiful night.

.....
Kae Tempest plays Birmingham Town Hall on Tuesday 10 May, with tickets available at bmusic.co.uk

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Carlos Núñez
The Unthanks
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Festivals coming to the region in May and June...

Wychwood

Cheltenham Racecourse, Fri 3 - Sun 5 June

Renowned for its decade-spanning line-up, family favourite Wychwood takes place annually at Cheltenham's famous racecourse. As well as music, the popular festival features workshops for all ages, comedy, a kids' literature festival, a headphone disco, healing gardens and idyllic camping beneath the Prestbury Hills.

2022 line-up includes: Sophie Ellis-Bextor (pictured), Levellers, Deacon Blue, Boney M, The Selecter, The Undertones, Peter Hook & The Light, The South, The Real Thing, Dreadzone, Skerryvore, Doctor & The Medics, Lottery Winners, Craig Charles Funk And Soul Club, Tankus The Henge, Folk On and Merry Hell



Rock And Bowl

Picnic Area, Market Drayton, Shropshire, Thurs 2 - Sat 4 June

Described as a small festival with a big heart, not-for-profit community event Rock And Bowl boasts a wide variety of acts, including indie, rock and ska bands plus some of the UK's best tribute performers. The event has a number of weekend camping tickets available for a friendly, family-run campsite just a short walk from the festival grounds.

2022 line-up includes: Fight The Bear (pictured), The Droogs, The Wayne Martin Band, The Clause, Good To Go, Secret Elephant, Hipster and The Superskas



Download Festival

Donington Park, Leicestershire, Fri 10 - Sun 12 June



With top billing consistently taken by some of the biggest names in rock and metal, it's not hard to see why Download is one of the most popular and well-attended festivals in the UK.

Conceived as a follow-up to the Monsters Of Rock Festival, Download partly owes its name to the pioneering way in which it uses technology to connect with audiences and build a community.

2022 line-up includes: Iron Maiden, KISS, Biffy Clyro, Korn, A Day To Remember, Skindred (pictured), Deftones, Megadeth, Steel Panther, Shinedown, Volbeat, Funeral For A Friend, The Darkness, Airbourne, Mastodon and The Ghost Inside

Beardy Folk Festival

Hopton Court, nr Cleobury Mortimer, Shropshire, Thurs 16 - Sun 19 June

Beardy Folk Festival is a beautifully crafted midsummer weekend boasting a line-up of folk, roots and acoustic music.

There are plenty of workshops to sample too, including group singing, French dancing, ceilidh, yoga, morris dancing, mini melodeons, Bodhran, spoken word, comedy, storytelling, circus skills and woodland craft making.

Under-13s go free, and four camping zones are available with the purchase of a day or weekend ticket.

2022 line-up includes: The Young'uns, Edward II, Hope & Social, Martin Simpson, The Magpie Arc, Ross Ainslie & Tim Edey, Gaz Brookfield, The Trials Of Cato (pictured), Will Pound & Jenn Butterworth, Bar Steward Sons Of Val Doonican, Rachael McShane & The Cartographers, Rachel Newton and Bonfire Radicals



Bearded Theory

Catton Hall, Derbyshire, Thurs 26 - Sun 29 May

Having started life as a birthday party in the garden of a pub in Derbyshire, Bearded Theory has evolved into one of the country's best-loved and most critically acclaimed festivals, winning a host of awards including best small festival and best family festival at the UK Festival Awards.

2022 line-up includes: Placebo, Patti Smith & Band, Frank Carter & The Rattlesnakes, The Hives, Frank Turner & The Sleeping Souls, Amy Macdonald (pictured), Fat White Family, The Selecter and Ferocious Dog





Russell Peters

Utilita Arena, Birmingham, Tues 17 May

"I was supposed to start this tour in 2020," says Canadian comedian Russell Peters, "but then, I'm not sure if you guys heard, but something happened..."

A little later than intended, then, Russell is visiting the Midlands with Act Your Age, a show in which he contemplates cancel

culture and the current state of the world. "Act Your Age is a bit different from the rest of my shows," Russell informed the National News. "It's a little bit more mature... trying to reason with the immature me. I'm going to be 52 this year, so I'm not a young kid anymore who can get away with 'why do people do this?'. Now, I have to take responsibility for why things are the way they are."

Lou Sanders

Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Thurs 19 May

A huge and regular success at the Edinburgh Fringe, Lou Sanders has appeared on all manner of television comedy series, co-hosted an improvised podcast entitled Why Is Your Bottom So Dirty? and won series eight of Taskmaster. She's here returning to the stage with brand-new stand-up offering One Word: Wow - a show in which she promises to 'tell all' about 'the time I gave this horse a boner'. Jokes include: "I waited an hour for my starter, so I complained: 'It's not rocket salad,'" and "I was the prettiest, cleverest girl in my class. I was home-schooled."



Milton Jones

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Fri 20 May; Birmingham Town Hall, Wed 19 October; The Swan Theatre, Worcester, Sat 5 November

With a style of humour that's mainly based around puns and one-liners, Milton Jones has established himself as one of Britain's most in-demand funnymen.

"If my comedy's working well, I put a cartoon in people's heads that surprises them," explains Milton. "So you start off and they're thinking one thing, then you surprise them by changing the ending as you go along. It's not political or particularly edgy, it's just daft. It's a sort of verbal practical joke, but some people really hate that. I think the better the comic you are, the stronger the flavour you are. I think if you're bland and everyone quite likes you, you're probably just not very good."

Milton's gags include: "Recently on a flight to America, all the way across my wife was going, 'Why don't you get an upgrade, why don't you get an upgrade?' It took a bit of time, but in the end I got a better wife."

Chris Rock

Utilita Arena, Birmingham, Fri 13 May

The Will Smith 'slapgate' incident at this year's Oscars ceremony isn't the first time Chris Rock has been at the centre of controversy during a career spanning almost 40 years.

At the 2007 London Live Earth concert, his decision to call the crowd 'mother*****s' led to the BBC immediately terminating its live broadcast of the event.

He's also been slammed for his willingness to use the 'n' word and his view that high-profile celebrities shouldn't be under extra pressure to behave as role models.

Chris' jokes include: "I had a cop pull me over the other day - scared me so bad, made me think I stole my own car. 'Get out of the car,' he said, 'get out of the f***** car! You stole this car!' I was like, 'Damn, maybe I did!'"

And also... "We got so much food in America that we're allergic to food. Allergic to food! Hungry people ain't allergic to s****. You think anyone in Rwanda's got a f***** lactose intolerance?"

Chris stops off in Birmingham with his latest touring show, Ego Death.



Tony Law

Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton, Fri 20 May

If you like your comedians to be touched with genius while at the same time prone to meander off-topic with gag-laden dialogues, Tony Law is definitely the laughter merchant for you.

Zany alternative comedy is Canadian Tony's stock-in-trade - a fact which means his audience is always guaranteed an evening of off-the-wall, boundary-defying standup. He visits the Midlands this month with his latest touring show, A Now Begin In Again.

Patrick Kielty

The Old Rep, Birmingham, Sun 22 May;
Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sun 19 June

Northern Irish purveyor of mirth Patrick Kielty here returns to his satirical roots with a personal take on borders, national identity and the future of the Union in a post-Brexit landscape.

Patrick is this year celebrating a decade of marriage to Midlands-born television presenter Cat Deeley, and is happy to share his strategy for a contented life: "First find a woman who's out of your league," he advises, "and then convince her that she isn't..."



Sam Avery

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Fri 20 May

Can you be a role model on four hours' sleep? Can you mentor someone who thinks you're a moron? And how do you change the world if you can't even clean your kitchen? Sam Avery is aiming to find answers to these questions and many more when he visits Shrewsbury with Role Model, a show in which he contemplates the challenge of helping his kids find their moral compass without losing sight of his own. Sam's hoping this latest gig will win him a whole new audience, and is encouraging fans to bring along their friends: "I'll win them over with my cheeky northern charm," he says. "And if that fails, I'll hit them with some high-quality knob gags."



Russell Brand

Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, Wed 25 May

Blending a memorable look with a penchant for courting controversy, it's fair to say that Russell Brand has very much ploughed his own furrow in the world of light entertainment.

Bursting onto the scene via Big Brother's 'Big Mouth' spin-off show, Russell had no trouble finding a spotlight in which to stand during the years that followed. His more high-profile moments included an ill-starred marriage to Katy Perry and an offensive voicemail call to Fawlty Towers actor Andrew Sachs.

In more recent times he's developed a reputation as a public activist and

campaigner, with climate change and corporate capitalism among the issues he's tackled.

He's also been described as a freethinking contrarian, using his hugely popular podcasts and YouTube channel to espouse theories around topics including the Covid vaccine and Russia's war with Ukraine. Russell stops off in the Potteries with brand-new live show 33, in which he contemplates the strangeness of the last two years and asks the question: how do you 'get back to normal' if you've never been normal?

Jo Enright

The Glee Club, Birmingham,
Thurs 26 - Sat 28 May

Birmingham-born actor and comedian Jo Enright admits she's happiest when she's hiding behind a character. "I like anonymity," says Jo. "That's the great thing about being an actor; you can be in things without anybody recognising you."

Jo's career so far has seen her taking refuge behind one character or another in some of the UK's most successful comedy series, including Peter Kay's Phoenix Nights, Steve Coogan's I'm Alan Partridge, and Ricky Gervais & Stephen Merchant's Life's Too Short.

"Growing up, I didn't actually know anyone who performed comedy for a living, although I knew plenty of really funny people," she recalls. "When I started playing the circuit, there were only a handful of women working at it full-time. That said, the handful did include Hattie Hayridge, Jo Brand and Linda Smith - so the bar was set very high!"

Flo & Joan

Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Fri 6 May;
Stourbridge Town Hall, Wed 25 May



"Our latest show, Sweet Release, is a collection of new songs that cover loads of different stuff," explain siblings Nicola & Rosie Dempsey, better known as musical comedy duo Flo & Joan. "But it also touches on what you want to keep hold of in life and what you choose to let go of, which is where the title Sweet Release came from."

"Someone asked us if a 'sweet release' is a fart. That's not what the show is about, but if you want to view it through that lens then all power to you."

MAGIC, MISCHIEF AND MAYHEM

as a West End winner visits the Midlands



Legendary magicians Penn & Teller explain how they found themselves working with The Play That Goes Wrong producers Mischief Theatre on hit show Magic Goes Wrong, which is stopping off in Birmingham this month as part of a UK tour...

Legendary magicians Penn & Teller have been sawing the magic rulebook in half since the mid-1970s.

Presenting shows that combine bamboozling illusions and dark comedy with magic that often seems to go horribly wrong, they are notorious for revealing to the audience exactly how their tricks are done - a habit which has long prevented them from being members of the Magic Circle.

Not that they mind.

In fact, they revel in the illusion of chaos. So when they announced in 2019 that they were getting together with Mischief Theatre - the team behind smash-hit shows The Play That Goes Wrong, Peter Pan Goes Wrong and The Comedy About A Bank Robbery, as well as BBC One TV series The Goes Wrong Show - it seemed like a perfect match.

The result of the collaboration - Magic Goes Wrong - opened in the West End to rave reviews and is now casting its spell on audiences across the UK.

The team-up with Mischief came about when Penn & Teller were performing in London, and Penn Jillette's family decided they wanted to see a show in the West End...

"I don't go to comedy theatre at all," says Penn. "I like theatre to be deadly dull, slow and depressing. But my wife and children picked The Play That Goes Wrong. I realised that not only was my family laughing harder than I've ever seen them, but I was too!"

He immediately told Teller (that one word is now the magician's legal name) to book a ticket.

Despite being known for his onstage silence, it was Teller who started discussions with Mischief's artistic directors, Jonathan Sayer, Henry Shields and Henry Lewis.

"I'm more shy than Teller, so it never crossed my mind to go backstage," says Penn, "but Teller took himself backstage and said, 'Hey, I'm a star!'"

Teller insists it wasn't quite like that: "As I was sitting in my seat, someone tapped me

on the shoulder and said, 'You're Teller, aren't you? The cast wants to give you free ice cream'. So afterwards I went backstage to thank the cast and compliment them, because it really was one of the finest shows I've ever seen."

A few months later, the two magicians and all three of Mischief's artistic directors were eating homemade pancakes at Teller's Las Vegas house and plotting a brand-new show.

Working on a stage production with unfamiliar people was a new experience for Penn & Teller, who rarely collaborate with anyone else.

"Teller and I have a dynamic that we've built over 47 years, so this was a huge leap of faith," says Penn. "We couldn't go out to dinner with these guys, we had to jump straight into bed. We were told: they are going to be here at 10am on Wednesday and you'll start writing your show. You won't even know which one is Jonathan and which ones are Henry. But it took only about 20 minutes before I felt like I was around my closest friends."

Shields, Sayer and Lewis spent a week and a half putting together the bones of the show in a small side room off the stage of The Rio hotel, where Penn & Teller are the longest-running headline act in Vegas history.

"There was one moment when Henry (Lewis) and Jonathan said, 'It could kind of go like this'," Penn explains. "And then the two of them did a five-minute improvisation. Now, I have sat in a room with Lou Reed playing Sweet Jane four feet from me. I've talked to Richard Feynman about physics. I've spoken to Bob Dylan. But I said, 'This is a moment I will bookmark for the rest of my life'. I felt like I was watching the Pythons at their peak, and I thought, 'This is why I'm in showbiz: to be this near to that level of talent and skill'. And when I'm on my deathbed listing the 100 artistic events of my life, that moment will be there."

After a few more sessions, the show had come together. But, by adding the trademark

Goes Wrong approach, all the tricks in the production had to work on not just one level but two: there had to be the trick that goes wrong, and then the trick that actually dazzles the audience.

So how did they devise the illusions? "You get an idea, which is usually quite a grand one," explains Teller, "and then you find that it's impossible, so you revise it over and over again until it works."

"There's a trick in the show where one of the cast members gets accidentally sawed in half by a buzzsaw. That was more than a year of work. Part of the trick involves blood, but if you just show the blood on stage, it looks boring; it has no impact at all. So a big part of the buzzsaw trick for us was developing it in such a way that when the blood came, it would be sprayed up against a huge backdrop where you could truly enjoy the bright red colour."

Speaking of blood and buzzsaws, Magic Goes Wrong - which takes the form of a disastrous fundraising benefit - is definitely more comically gory than Mischief's previous work. Was that Penn & Teller's influence?

"I'm afraid it might have something to do with us," Teller admits. "We think that gore is essentially funny. It's really hard to pull off serious gore in the theatre because people tend to want to laugh. They know that it's fake, but they see that it looks real. And that's very much like a magic trick."

Despite the fact that Penn & Teller have built their career on making it look like everything is going horrifically wrong, the magicians insist that mishaps are incredibly rare in real life. "While we're rehearsing we might get a minor cut or bruise," Teller says, "but we don't ever allow the possibility of something going seriously wrong. If we did, we wouldn't have been working successfully for 47 years."

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Magic Goes Wrong shows at Birmingham Hippodrome from Tues 24 - Sun 29 May



Mamma Mia!

Birmingham Hippodrome, Tues 3 May - Sat 14 May; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Tues 17 - Sat 21 May; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 17 - Sat 28 January

This legendary show is of course a nicely contrived vehicle for the chart-topping music of 1970s Super Troupers Abba. Back in the day, the Swedish Fab Four scored mega-hit after mega-hit with catchy numbers including Waterloo, Dancing Queen, The Name Of The Game, The Winner Takes It All and Take A Chance On Me (all of which are present and correct in this blockbuster offering). Set in a Greek-island paradise, Mamma Mia! tells the story of single mum Donna and her 20-year-old daughter, Sophie, who's soon to get married.

Formerly the lead singer of a three-piece girl group called The Dynamos, Donna led something of a crazy, carefree existence when she was a younger woman. As a result, Sophie's never known who her father is... and if truth be told, Donna's not entirely sure either. After stealing a sly glimpse at her mum's old diary, sneaky Sophie identifies three possible candidates. Masquerading as Donna, she sends messages inviting each of the men to attend her wedding. Hijinks, chaos and confusion inevitably ensue, all of which are best experienced to a pulsating Abba soundtrack, of course...



We Will Rock You

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Mon 23 - Sat 28 May; Birmingham Hippodrome, Mon 4 - Sat 30 July

A joyous homage to the music of Queen, We Will Rock You is short on storyline but boasts bags of energy and just about as brilliant a soundtrack as any musical's ever likely to feature. The show's frontline performers give it their all to excellent effect, while the sets and choreography ensure a visual spectacle to remember. For those who care about the plot, the story is set in a future where originality has been quashed, musical instruments banned, and a hero is needed to bring back rock music... Yes, it's all a bit contrived, but then how else are you going to glue together all of Queen's greatest hits in a single show?...

Frankenstein: How To Make A Monster

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Wed 25 - Sat 28 May

If you're dubious about the merits of hip-hop and beatbox but are open to the possibility of finding out more, this unique, clever and hugely energetic show is definitely one to check out.

A 21st-century gig-theatre classic created from a 204-year-old gothic horror novel, the show sees six performers with six microphones taking apart Mary Shelley's original story in order to reimagine a world of modern monsters.

The production is presented by BAC Beatbox Academy, who bagged an Off-West End Award for the show when it premiered four years ago at Battersea Arts Centre.







The Play That Goes Wrong

The Alexandra, Birmingham,
Mon 16 - Sat 21 May

Mischief Theatre's hit production makes a welcome return to the region. Written by Henry Lewis, Jonathan Sayer and Henry Shields, the award-winning comedy is liberally peppered with perfectly timed killer dialogue and positively awash with all manner of bumbling buffoonery.

A play within a play (in the style of Michael Frayn's *Noises Off*), the show's premise sees the entirely fictitious, utterly incompetent and seriously accident-prone Cornley Polytechnic Drama Society doing their very best to stage a 1920s' murder-mystery entitled *Murder At Haversham Manor*.

Cue all manner of laugh-out-loud disasters - from missed cues and misplaced props, to repeated dialogue and collapsing scenery...

Waitress

Birmingham Hippodrome, Mon 16 - Sat 21 May; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 28 June - Sat 2 July

"Waitress is one of my favourite shows and definitely my favourite soundtrack," reveals Chelsea Halfpenny, who takes the lead role of Jenna in this touring version of the hit musical. "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." Waitress' storyline sees expert pie-maker Jenna accidentally fall pregnant while trapped in a loveless marriage.

After developing romantic feelings for her new doctor, she decides to search for the recipe for happiness. She is helped in her endeavour by fellow waitresses and close confidantes Becky and Dawn...

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

"Every night is brilliant, the audience reaction has been incredible, and everyone goes away feeling full of love."



Jane Eyre

New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme,
Wed 4 - Sat 28 May



This 'witty and fleet-footed' new version of Charlotte Bronte's classic novel features actor-musicians, playful multi-roling, and 'a host of 19th-century pop hits'.

For those not up to speed with the story, it follows the orphaned Jane as she's sent by her cruel Aunt Reed to the bleak Lowood School. Later, on securing a position as governess at Thornfield Hall, Jane finds herself falling for the charms of the enigmatic Edward Rochester, unaware that the new object of her affection harbours a dark and terrible secret...

A Double Bill Of William Shakespeare

The Old Rep, Birmingham, Thurs 26 May

"Performing in spaces great and small, our work is playful but never lacks focus," explain talented theatricals 440 Theatre, the ensemble behind this double bill of the bard. "We formed to provide live-action Shakespeare that educates and entertains in

as little as 40 minutes!

"Stripping the narrative to its core, we keep the essence of Shakespeare's words alive, to help his magnificent stories shine at the heart of our shows. Anarchy is equally balanced with a safe and family-friendly environment, which keeps our audiences relaxed and engaged, secure in the knowledge they're in good hands!"

This Old Rep show sees the 440 Theatre team presenting 'a side-splitting' *Macbeth* and 'an even more outrageous' *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Private Peaceful

Malvern Theatre, Tues 10 - Sun 14 May;
Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Tues 17 - Sat 21 May

Based on the same-named book by War Horse author Michael Morpurgo and perfectly pitched for the audience at which it's primarily aimed (children aged nine and older), *Private Peaceful* packs a real punch. The story focuses on two brothers who, having been brought up in rural Devon, find themselves on the muddy and brutal battlefields of World War One as shells explode, comrades fall and a fearful countdown begins...



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Theatre previews from around the region



Dead Lies

Lichfield Garrick, Tues 24 - Sun 29 May;
Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Mon 27 - Thurs 30 June

Bestselling crime writer Hilary Bonner's fast-moving thriller focuses on the character of politician Peter George, a man admired by the British people for his determination to restore trust in a political system badly damaged by an era of sleaze and spin. But Peter has a shocking secret in his past - one that threatens to derail him during a fiercely fought election campaign... Holby City's Jeremy Edwards stars.

Where Is Mrs Christie?

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Fri 20 May

In 1926, bestselling whodunnit writer Agatha Christie was at the centre of a mystery of her very own. Her crashed car was discovered in Surrey, with Agatha nowhere to be found. It was 11 long and baffling days before the legendary author resurfaced, eventually popping up at a luxury hotel half the country away in Harrogate...

Actor Liz Grand here presents a one-woman show speculating about what happened to the Queen of Crime during the period she was missing.

Liz returns to the Gatehouse stage on the 21st in *The Second Best Bed*, a tell-all tale in which she plays Shakespeare's widow, Ann Hathaway, on the night of the bard's funeral.



Would You Bet Against Us?

The Rep, Birmingham,
Thurs 19 May - Sat 4 June

Forty years ago this month, Aston Villa achieved something which, to this day, only a handful of English football clubs have managed: they became the Champions of Europe. To do so, they had to beat not only Bayern Munich but also the odds. Pundits assessing the likelihood of the team causing an upset against the hugely experienced German giants really didn't think they stood much of a chance.

Meanwhile, a Geography teacher didn't think 16-year-old student Paul stood much of a chance either. At anything!...

Created by the Rep - in collaboration with skilled storytellers Told By An Idiot - and written by lifetime Villa supporter Paul Hunter, *Would You Bet Against Us?* is a play about challenging expectations and proving people wrong. The 20th May performance of the show is followed by a Q&A with two players from that all-conquering Villa team - Tony Morley and captain Dennis Mortimer.



A Matter Of Law

Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham,
Thurs 12 - Sat 14 May

If you've always fancied doing a spot of jury service but have never received the call, here's the chance to make that particular dream come true.

TwoJens&Me is the highly rated company behind this award-winning show, tasking the audience with the challenge of deciding the outcome of a make-believe trial.

Trevor Frankfield has injuries that can't simply be explained as accidental, and the prosecution is determined to show that Trevor's wife, Edwina, has inflicted them. The defence counters with the claim that Mr Frankfield has serious mental-health issues, and that it is *he*, rather than his spouse, who is the abuser in the marriage. Hear the evidence, decide for yourself which story holds water, and then deliver your verdict on defendant Edwina...

Rebellion/Wars Of The Roses

Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, until Sat 28 May and Sat 4 June respectively

The Royal Shakespeare Company's long-delayed productions of *Henry VI Parts Two* and *Three* have finally reached the Stratford-upon-Avon stage.

The two shows - in this instance titled *Rebellion* (showing until Saturday 28 May) and *Wars Of The Roses* (until Saturday 4 June) respectively - follow on from *Part One* of the epic history cycle, which was screened online while the theatre was closed in the pandemic.

"Every time the RSC mounts Shakespeare's early history plays, they strike a powerful chord," says RSC Artistic Director Gregory Doran. "This ferociously vivid account of the brutal struggle for the English crown will, without doubt, strike different resonances deep in its audience's consciousness today. 'I'm thrilled to be working alongside (Director) Owen Horsley once more, to bring this dynamic story of power and corruption, saints and psychopaths, of then and now, to life afresh in the Royal Shakespeare Theatre.'"



Enjoy great music



WILL POUND'S A DAY WILL COME

Wed 11 May 7.30pm

The acclaimed harmonica and melodeon player embarks on a musical journey across the European Union.



JUSTIN ADAMS & MAURO DURANTE

Sun 15 May 7.45pm

Adams and Durante's mesmerising collaboration calls on their passions for Arabic and African trance/blues, Italian folk songs, and Americana.



ELLIE GOWERS

Sat 21 May 7.45pm

Contemporary song writing meets folklore in this project created by this Warwickshire musician.



THE RHEINGANS SISTERS

Sat 4 Jun 7.45pm

The BBC Radio 2 award nominated duo are a truly unique and unmissable act.



ABEL SELAOCOE

Fri 17 Jun 7.45pm

Combining improvisation, singing and body percussion to bring classical music to a wider audience.

And now for something a little different...



Outside The Box: The Story Of Squash

University of Birmingham Squash Courts,
University of Birmingham,
Sat 21 & Sun 22 and Sat 28 & Sun 29 May

This family-friendly Birmingham 2022 Festival 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.

Trixie Mattel: Grown Up

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Thurs 5 May;

The latest RuPaul's Drag Race star to grace a Birmingham stage is Brian Michael Firkus, an American singer, actor, stand-up comedian and musician who's better known in his drag-queen persona of Trixie Mattel. Back in 2018, Trixie won the third season of RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars, having originally competed in Drag Race series seven. In the years which have followed, pretty much everything she's touched has turned to gold, from a comedy web show with fellow Drag Race competitor Katya Zamolodchikova, to chart-topping country records and her own line in cosmetics. Trixie visits the Midlands with a show that's been described as 'an exciting electro-folk reinvention'. Audiences, she says, should expect to feel like they've "landed in a PeeWee Herman video, complete with some surf rock and a love for '60s country music". You have been warned...



The Guilty Feminist Live

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Fri 27 May

Deborah Frances-White reckons her regular podcasts are a worthwhile listen for anybody who's ever felt like they should be better at feminism. And given the show's popularity, it would certainly seem there are plenty of people



who've felt exactly that way - in a six-year period, The Guilty Feminist has racked up a staggering 95 million downloads! This latest installment sees Deborah and guests examining 'our noble goals as 21st-century feminists - and our hypocrisies and insecurities that undermine those goals'.

Paul Merton Impro Chums

Birmingham Town Hall, Fri 20 May; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sat 21 May; Albany Theatre, Coventry, Fri 27 May

In his time, Paul Merton has been considered by many to be the UK's funniest comedian, if not the funniest man alive. His heyday was back in the late '80s and the 1990s, when he shot to stardom on television improv show Whose Line Is It Anyway. Although he's slipped from the nation's collective consciousness a little bit over the last few years, he remains an all-action purveyor of mirth, not least when he's out on the road with his fellow manic improvisers. He's joined on this latest tour by Richard Vranck, Suki Webster, Mike McShane and accompanist Kirsty Newton.



Two Mr Ps In A Podcast

The Old Rep, Birmingham, Mon 30 May

Given how overworked teachers are, it's a wonder that Manchester primary school educator Lee Parkinson (nowadays better known to the world as Mr P) found the time to become an internet sensation - but legions of fans across the country are certainly thankful that he did. Lee's amusing videos about classroom life

have seen him become one of the UK's most-followed teachers on social media - and particularly since he teamed up with his younger brother, Adam, to create the award-winning Two Mr Ps In A Podcast. With the show having amassed over three million listens, the siblings are now hitting the road to present a live version. Expect an evening of lighthearted chat, funny anecdotes and interesting discussions on a wide range of educational topics.



Showstopper: The Improvised Musical

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Sat 7 May

If ever there was a show worth seeing more than once, this is it - and not only because it's an Olivier Award winner. Showstopper! is exactly what it says on the tin: a musical that's improvised (meaning that no two nights are ever the same).

The rotating cast of quick-witted performers take audience suggestions and then spin a brand-new comedy musical out of thin air, complete with tunes, lyrics, dances and harmonies.

It's clever stuff performed by clever people - and if audience reaction so far is anything to go by, you can expect to be well and truly gobsmacked.





Theatre

- 5/5 Matt Ford's Sing, Sing, Sing
- 16-17/5 All Our Yesterdays *nostalgia show*
- 19/5 The Manfreds
- 20/5 Johnny Cash Roadshow
- 21/5 The Muslims are Coming! *comedy*
- 25/5 The Simon & Garfunkel Story
- 27/5 Johnny McEvoy
- 9/6 Talon - The Acoustic Collection

Film

- 3/5 Last Night in Soho (18)
- 26/5 In the Heights (12A)
- 1/6 Clifford the Big Red Dog (PG)
- 1/6 Locked Down (15)
- 22/6 King Richard (12A)
- 29/6 Our Ladies (15)
- 6/7 Belfast (12A)
- 13/7 Nightmare Alley (15)

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SUNDAY 29 MAY



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Theatre for younger audiences...



The Gruffalo

Brierley Hill Civic Hall, Sun 1 & Mon 2 May;
Swan Theatre, Worcester, Tues 24 & Wed 25
May; Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Fri 1 & Sat 2
July

With millions of copies of the book having been sold, it's fair to say that Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler's award-winning *Gruffalo* has captured the hearts and minds of children everywhere.

Presenting songs, laughs and 'monstrous' fun for children aged three and upwards, this much-loved stage version of the terrific tale follows Mouse as he heads out on a journey through the deep dark wood, scaring away hungry animals with tall stories of the terrifying Gruffalo. Imagine his surprise, then, when he suddenly finds himself coming face-to-face with the very creature he's imagined!

Billionaire Boy

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Thurs 5 - Sun 8
May; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Wed 1 -
Sun 5 June

The always excellent Birmingham Stage Company make a welcome return with this clever and lively production. For those unfamiliar with David Walliams' original book, *Billionaire Boy* tells the tale of how Mr Spud made and lost his money, and how his son, Joe, became the richest boy in the world.



I Spy With My Little Eye

Tamworth Assembly Rooms, Sat 28 May;
Stourport Civic Hall, Sun 5 June

If you're familiar with Steven Lee's previous work - including *Don't Dribble On The Dragon* and *How The Koala Learnt To Hug* - you'll surely want to take your little ones to see this brand-new stage version of his latest picture book.

Presented by The People's Theatre Company, *I Spy With My Little Eye* sees Molly and Bingo the Puppy-Dog inviting youngsters and their

families to Molly's sixth birthday party. The celebration comes complete with 'a terrific treasure hunt, all your favourite singalong songs and lots of fantastic games to play'.



Oi Frog & Friends

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Fri 13 & Sat 14
May; Birmingham Hippodrome,
Sat 21 - Sun 29 May

Fifty-five minutes of frog-focused fun is the name of the game when this award-winning stage adaptation of Kes Gray & Jim Field's bestselling series of picture books stops off in the Midlands. Expect 'songs, puppets, laughs and more rhymes than you can shake a chime at', as a new day at Sittingbottom school begins...



Zog And The Flying Doctors

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury,
Wed 25 & Thurs 26 May; Birmingham Town
Hall, Tues 23 - Sun 28 August

With previous shows having included *Tiddler And Other Terrific Tales*, *Tabby McTat* and the first *Zog* story, it's fair to say that Freckle



Productions know a thing or two about presenting stage adaptations of Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler stories...

This brand-new show finds Zog providing an air-ambulance service with the assistance of his 'flying doctor' crew, Princess Pearl and Sir Gadabout. But Pearl's uncle, the king, doesn't believe that princesses should be doctors, and before too long she finds herself locked up in the castle and once again forced to wear a crown and a 'silly frilly dress'. Needless to say, help is soon at hand...

Twirlywoos

Albany Theatre, Coventry, Sat 14 May; Brierley
Hill Civic Hall, Sun 15 May; Malvern Theatres,
Tues 17 & Wed 18 May

This theatrical adventure for younger audiences comes from the producers of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar Show* and *Sarah And Duck Live*. Expect mischief, music and delightful puppets.



Here we go again...

Mamma Mia! producer Judy Cramer looks back at 23 years of the smash-hit musical

It's the mother of all contemporary musicals, a global, record-breaking super trouper of a show that's been seen by over 65 million people worldwide, in 50 productions and 16 different languages.

Mamma Mia!, the feelgood musical with a score of irresistible ABBA songs, has given birth to two smash-hit films: the first, released in 2008, sank even the mighty Titanic at the box office; the second, 2018's Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again, is the most successful musical movie sequel of all time. Now, with theatres open again, the show embarks on a new UK tour. It's likely to prove just the pick-me-up that audiences crave.

Now 23 years old, Mamma Mia! has established its place in theatre history - so it's hard to believe that right up until its very first opening night - on 6 April 1999, at the Prince Edward Theatre in London's West End - many theatre pundits were anticipating a flop. Looking back, Judy Craymer - the visionary producer and creative dynamo who dreamt up the idea for the show and powered it tirelessly to spectacular success - chuckles at the nail-biting uncertainty that surrounded that world premiere. "A lot of people doubted us. The Lion King opened about the same time, and we were very modest by comparison."

Many were expecting a kind of ABBA tribute show about the band. "They just couldn't get their heads around it. They were constantly asking me who was going to play Frida and Agnetha."

Even ABBA songsmiths Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus had their doubts: "They said, okay, Judy, it'll be a small show, just in London, and if it doesn't work it'll close." They needn't have worried. Together with writer Catherine Johnson and director Phyllida Lloyd, Craymer achieved a landmark theatrical triumph. Boasting blockbuster, cross-generational appeal, the show delighted ABBA's loyal fans and won them legions of new ones.

This was, though, no overnight feat - Mamma Mia! had a long gestation. Craymer, who trained at London's Guildhall School of Music & Drama in stage management, was working in the production office of musical-theatre royalty Tim Rice in the early 1980s when she first conceived of the idea. Rice was in the throes of writing Chess, his collaboration with Andersson and Ulvaeus. One of Craymer's first tasks was to collect Ulvaeus from the airport, and the pair quickly struck up a friendship. "It was huge fun. Chess was a big project, and then there

was the cast album, so I was flying to Stockholm with Tim Rice every week, working in Benny and Björn's studio. Then we did a crazy tour of Europe with about 5,000 people - the whole of the London Symphony Orchestra and the Ambrosian Choir, and all the artists. It was very exciting, and I got lots of experience."

Crucially, she also had access to the ABBA pair, "which was very fortunate, because otherwise I'm not sure they would have taken this on. I had to pester them for a long time!"

Spending so much time in their company, she rediscovered their music. "I listened to their songs with a whole different ear, having met the guys. I'd play them over and over again on my cassette player, and I was fascinated that Björn had written these lyrics. They meant so much, and they were about strong women. They take you on a journey. And that was the beginning of me falling in love with those songs."

Craymer began to see the dramatic potential in ABBA's infectious pop. "They spoke to me as theatre songs. You'd be lucky to have two like that in a musical, let alone 20. So I started thinking about how to turn them into narrative."

At first, she wasn't sure what form this dramatisation would take - she considered a film, or a children's show. But she felt sure that, because the music was held in such affection, it should be "weddings, holidays, something celebratory, because everyone listens to ABBA in a happy moment".

She had a meeting with Catherine Johnson, who at the time was working on TV's Band Of Gold. Johnson suggested focusing the story on a mother and daughter. Craymer knew at once she'd found the right formula. "We were both penniless. Catherine was a single mum. I only had about £1,000, so I said, I'll pay you £500 now, and £500 when you've written it."

The next step was a meeting at Ulvaeus' home in Henley-on-Thames. "We couldn't afford the train fare! It was all very hairy, but somehow we did it. I introduced Björn to Catherine, and she was too shy to pitch the idea, so I had to - and then I had to stop her stealing the soap from his bathroom as a souvenir. We had nothing to lose. It's so difficult to get a project going, but we just got on with it."

Phyllida Lloyd, who came on board as director, shared their passion, and together, "living on sandwiches", the trio created a female-led show full of joyous romance and fierce mother-daughter affection: an exuberant matrimonial comedy set on an

idyllic Greek island, with a playful nod to the family dramas of classical tragedy. It's the strength of that narrative, Craymer believes, that sets Mamma Mia! apart from other jukebox shows. "It's an original story, and there's a structure and properly developed characters and themes. I do like to think that Mamma Mia! raised the bar."

That universal appeal has seen the show play to packed houses around the world. In New York, it helped revitalise Broadway after 9/11, its warmth proving an unexpected balm for theatre-goers in the traumatised city. In 2011 it became the first Mandarin-speaking production of a Western musical in China. And Craymer has particularly fond memories of the opening of the Japanese production: "Because of theatre etiquette there, the cast can't leave the stage until the audience stop clapping. I thought they'd be there all night!"

Hollywood quickly wanted in on the act, and Craymer found herself fielding eager calls from several studios. There was some pressure to consider a younger star for the leading role of mum Donna, but Craymer held out for the team's original vision, and for her ambitious dream casting of Meryl Streep, who leapt at the chance.

It was a coup Craymer repeated with the film's sequel, in which Cher delivers a magnificent diva turn as Donna's mother. The icon had, according to Craymer, already been to see the show twice in London, where she danced in the aisle; after making the film, she went on to record her own album of ABBA covers.

"Over the last 20 years, there have been so many white-knuckle rides. As a producer, you need enormous powers of persuasion, and a lot of tenacity."

And she's still up for more: even during the 2020 lockdown, she was busily planning for a third Mamma Mia! movie. "I wanted something to cheer us all up! It's something I have in my sights. I think there's a trilogy there. There are lots of wonderful ABBA songs that we haven't yet mined, and Björn and Benny have written a couple of new ones. They're keeping them under wraps for now, but they should prove very useful!"

Whatever comes next for this sunniest of shows, there's sure to be an audience for it. To misquote those famous, singalong lyrics: how can we resist it?

.....

Mamma Mia! is at Birmingham Hippodrome from 4 to 14 May. Book your tickets at birminghamhippodrome.com

by Sam Marlowe



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BloodWaterEarth - Photo: Erik Zennstrom

Dance previews from across the region

**Dracula** Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Thurs 19 May

Bram Stoker's legendary gothic horror story about the undead Prince of Darkness provides a solid launchpad from which this critically acclaimed production takes bat-like flight.

Produced by Portugal's Vortice Dance Company - an ensemble renowned for the intense physicality of their performances - and

bringing together music by composers as varied as Philip Glass, Sergei Rachmaninoff and Lou Reed, the show blurs the boundaries of contemporary ballet and performance art to excellent effect, in the process stylishly living up to its promise to provide a mouthwatering feast for the senses.

Confessions Of A Cockney Temple Dancer

Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome, Wed 18 & Thurs 19 May

Taking a journey from the temple rituals of India to the bad-boy streets of London, Shane Shambhu's bilingual solo work is a contemplation on both his own life and the experience of performing Indian dance in the UK. "I draw on my experience from differing artistic roles and practices," explains Shane. "In doing so, I unearth new creative pathways that challenge perceptions of performance and cultural identities..." Confessions Of A Cockney Temple Dancer is being presented as part of the Birmingham 2022 Festival.

**Strictly Come Dancing: The Professionals 2022**

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Sun 8 May

Helmed by Strictly's creative director of choreography, Jason Gilkison, this production features the TV series' professional dancers strutting their stuff to a fabulous soundtrack, along the way revealing plenty about themselves to their sure-to-be-enthralled audience.

Previous incarnations of this show have gone down a treat with Strictly fans, and there's every reason to suppose the 2022 edition will prove equally popular. Line-up includes Dianne Buswell, Nadiya Bychkova, Graziano Di Prima, Karen Hauer, Katya Jones, Neil Jones, Cameron Lombard, Gorka Marquez, Luba Mushtuk and Kai Widdrington.



On Your Marks...

Get set... Go! Birmingham Royal Ballet are up and running post-lockdowns with a bumper season of shows. Director Carlos Acosta speaks exclusively to What's On about what audiences can expect from the company this year.

Carlos Acosta is a busy man. After two years of leading Birmingham Royal Ballet (BRB) through the Covid pandemic, he and the company are making up for lost time with a packed schedule promising greatly loved classics and a host of new works.

With a series of interactive and family events at Birmingham Rep this month, a Commonwealth Games-inspired triple bill at the Hippodrome in June, a further triple bill of new works alongside Delibes' *Coppélia* in October and then the launch of the refurbished *Nutcracker* before Christmas, Carlos has a lot on his hands.

But he is keen to use this year to showcase the talents of the company.

"So much of what we wanted to do has been suppressed for two years, and now we can go out and deliver it," he says. "It is a really ambitious programme, but I have always said I want to develop the dancers and the company. BRB is one of the crown jewels of Birmingham, it's a company people can be proud of, and now we're delivering new

works, new talent and a new repertoire. BRB is fresh and exciting - and it's quality."

After successfully touring Carlos' *Don Quixote* in February, the company have been working on two programmes for the spring. From 8 to 14 May, a residency at Birmingham Rep features *Dance Track 25*, a celebration with more than 200 former and current students of the company's *Dance Track* programme, which offers free teaching to Birmingham children. The season also includes a family concert with a new 23-minute *Cinderella*, and two performances of *An Evening Of Music And Dance*, featuring excerpts from classics including *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Winter Dreams* and *Agon*. In addition Carlos will lead an open masterclass in *Studio To Stage*, which sees him joined by Assistant Director Dominic Antonucci to share backstage secrets about creating new ballets.

"These are chances for people to see BRB on another level," Carlos explains. "We are celebrating what we have done in the past with *Dance Track* but also looking forward.

It's a great awakening after this pandemic nightmare and allows us to show people what is coming from the company. It is part of our ongoing relationship with Birmingham Rep, a relationship in which we produced *City Of A Thousand Trades* and where we hope to produce more works in the future."

In June the company move back to the Hippodrome stage for triple bill *On Your Marks*, inspired by the Commonwealth Games. Forming part of Birmingham International Dance Festival and Birmingham 2022 Festival, the triple bill is the first time BRB will perform with dancers from Carlos' other company, Cuba-based Acosta Danza.

"Acosta Danza have for a long time performed a really popular work called *Twelve* by Jorge Crecis, with music by Vincenzo Lamagna. Now Jorge has upgraded this work so it has 12 dancers from Acosta Danza and 12 dancers from BRB in this new version, 24. It's all about celebrating sports and mathematics and is a really fun crowd-pleaser."



Receiving its world premiere as part of the triple bill is *Interlinked*, a new commission from Brazilian choreographer Juliano Nunes. Will Tuckett's *Lazuli Sky* - which the company premiered in October 2020 to reduced audiences because of Covid - also features.

"Juliano is a brilliant choreographer and is working with the Australian composer Luke Howard on this piece, which has the Commonwealth Games in mind. And this is also a chance for everyone who couldn't see *Lazuli Sky* before to come and experience it now. It's a great piece by Will, who is from Birmingham, and uses augmented reality in a really amazing way."

October sees BRB presenting one of its most challenging triple bills ever. Into *The Music* features three works new to the company: Uwe Scholz's *Seventh Symphony*, set to Beethoven, and Jiří Kylián's *Forgotten Land* - neither of which have been performed in the UK before - plus Morgann Runacre-Temple's *Hotel*, which will be receiving its world premiere.

"This is a very ambitious triple bill that includes three ballets which have never been performed here, and one is a new creation as well. There is a lot of work learning them and getting to the right level technically to perform them. I keep giving dancers works which help their development. You need to stimulate them artistically and give them the opportunity to have access to the work of these amazing choreographers from across the world.

"Kylián is a genius, and *Forgotten Land* has

never been done in the UK. It's one of Kylián's classics, with eight couples, 16 dancers, and music by Benjamin Britten. *Seventh Symphony* is a piece for the whole company - there are about 40 dancers on stage - and it's also a gift for the Royal Ballet Sinfonia to be playing Beethoven's symphony."

Runacre-Temple's Hotel is a journey into the secrets and lies that are hidden behind closed doors. Set to music by Swedish composer Mikael Karlsson, the piece is the latest commission from BRB's Ballet Now programme, which fosters new talent by commissioning work from emerging choreographers.

Alongside the triple bill, BRB will perform Delibes' ever-popular full-length ballet, *Coppélia*, for the first time in five years. The story of toymaker Dr Coppélius and his lifelike doll is a charming comedy classic.

"It's the ultimate family ballet - apart from *The Nutcracker*. People like *Coppélia* a lot, and so it starts the new annual season on a high. It's a feelgood ballet."

The year ends with a grand finale when the refurbished *Nutcracker* is unveiled at Birmingham Hippodrome in November. First staged in 1990, the production's sets have undergone a £1million refresh, and Carlos is promising an eye-popping treat.

"The effect is going to be great. You are going to see that red room with the red coming at you very vividly, like when it was first created 30 years ago. It will be like it was created for the first time."

Now Carlos is urging Birmingham audiences to return to the theatre after Covid and experience live BRB performance.

"I want this company to be unpredictable and eclectic and fresh, performing world-class dance in Birmingham, and the programmes for this year are part of this. There are so many exciting things happening in the company, and I really want Birmingham people to come and see these amazing shows. This year is the time to come and see BRB."

Diary dates for 2022 and beyond...

Dance Track 25 takes place at Birmingham Rep on Sun 8 May

An Evening Of Music And Dance shows at Birmingham Rep from Fri 13 to Sat 14 May

On Your Marks! (three works which form part of Birmingham 2022 Festival) shows at Birmingham Hippodrome from Thurs 23 to Sat 25 June

Into The Music - a triple bill celebrating the marriage of music and movement - shows at Birmingham Hippodrome on Fri 21 & Sat 22 October

Sir Peter Wright's world-famous production of *The Nutcracker* returns to Birmingham Hippodrome from Sat 19 November until Sat 10 December.

BRB's much-loved staging of *Swan Lake* is back in the Midlands in 2023, playing Birmingham Hippodrome from Wed 15 to Sat 25 February

Doctor Strange In The Multiverse Of Madness

CERT 12a (126 mins)

Starring **Benedict Cumberbatch, Rachel McAdams, Elizabeth Olsen, Patrick Stewart, Michael Stuhlbarg, Xochitl Gomez** Directed by **Sam Raimi**

Benedict Cumberbatch once again re-enters the Marvel Universe to make his sixth appearance as Master of the Mystic Arts Dr Stephen Strange. In this latest adventure - and with the help of mystical allies both old and new - the good doctor traverses the mindbending and dangerous alternate realities of the Multiverse to confront a mysterious new adversary...

The sequel to 2016's Dr Strange, the movie is the 28th film of the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU).

Released Thurs 5 May



This Much I Know To Be True

CERT tbc (105 mins)

Starring **Earl Cave, Nick Cave, Andrew Dominik, Warren Ellis, Marianne Faithfull** Directed by **Andrew Dominik**

Andrew Dominik's new feature film was shot during the 2021 lockdown and explores the remarkable creative partnership between Nick Cave and Warren Ellis. Accompanied by singers and a string quartet, the pair make their way through songs from the albums *Ghastly* (2019) and *Carnage* (2021). They are joined for part of the journey by Mick Jagger's one-time girlfriend and muse, Marianne Faithfull (complete with oxygen tube following a challenging encounter with Covid-19). Dominik's movie is the companion piece to his 2016 film, *One More Time With Feeling*.

Released Wed 11 May



Firestarter

CERT tbc

Starring **Zac Efron, Gloria Reuben, Kurtwood Smith, Ryan Kiera Armstrong, Michael Greyeyes, Sydney Lemmon** Directed by **Keith Thomas**



This new adaptation of Stephen King's classic thriller follows the story of a girl with extraordinary pyrokinetic powers. For more than a decade, Charlie's parents, Andy and Vicky, have been desperately trying to hide their daughter from a secret government agency that wants to harness her gift for creating fire into a weapon of mass destruction.

Andy has taught Charlie how to defuse her power, which is triggered by anger or pain. But as the youngster grows up, the fire becomes harder and harder to control... This is the second time King's 1980 novel has been adapted for the big screen; a 1984 version starred Drew Barrymore, George C Scott, Heather Locklear and Martin Sheen.

Released Fri 13 May

The Quiet Girl

CERT 12a (95 mins)

Starring **Catherine Clinch, Carrie Crowley, Andrew Bennett, Michael Patric, Kate Nic Chonaonaigh** Directed by **Colm Bairéad**

Based on Claire Keegan's acclaimed novella, *Foster*, and already a major award winner - it took the grand prize in the Generation Kplus strand of the Berlin International Film Festival - *The Quiet Girl* is a complex and delicate coming-of-age drama that explores the subjects of family, neglect and loss through the eyes of its young protagonist. When nine-year-old Cáit is sent away from her dysfunctional family to spend the summer with relatives she has never met, she unexpectedly blossoms within their care. But in a home where there are meant to be no secrets, the young girl soon realises that not every subject is readily spoken about...

Released Fri 13 May





Top Gun: Maverick

CERT 12a (131 mins)

Starring **Tom Cruise**, **Jennifer Connelly**, **Val Kilmer**, **Miles Teller**, **Ed Harris**, **Jon Hamm**
Directed by **Joseph Kosinski**

It's certainly been a long time coming, but fans of Top Gun have finally got the sequel they've been wanting for the last 36 years. There's no Kelly McGillis this time, but Val Kilmer does return, as of course does the main man himself, Tom Cruise, as hotshot test pilot and flight instructor Captain Pete 'Maverick' Mitchell. After more than 30 years of service, Maverick is where he belongs, determinedly dodging the advancement in rank that would see him grounded.

When he finds himself training a detachment of Top Gun graduates for a special mission, he comes into contact not only with the son of his late friend, Lt Nick 'Goose' Bradshaw, but also with his own deepest fears...

Expect breathtaking flight sequences aplenty.

Released Fri 27 May

The Road Dance

CERT 15 (116 mins)

Starring **David Brooks**, **Felicity Keenan**, **Hermione Corfield**, **Morven Christie**, **Ali Fumiko Whitney**, **Tom Byrne** Directed by **Richie Adams**



Director Richie Adams' critically acclaimed grim-slice-of-life period drama is a World War One love story based on the book of the same name by author John MacKay. Telling a story of triumph over tragedy and the realisation of dreams against all odds, the story unfolds on the remote Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides, where the young and beautiful Kirsty dreams of a life in America with a local lad named Murdo, who she's secretly courting.

When Murdo and other young men in the rural community are conscripted, the town holds a road dance to bid them farewell. But as the event progresses, something happens to Kirsty that will change her life forever...

Released Fri 20 May

Bob's Burgers: The Movie

CERT tbc (100 mins)

With the voices of **Stephanie Beatriz**, **Kristen Schaal**, **Gary Cole**, **Zach Galifianakis**, **Kevin Kline**, **H Jon Benjamin**, **Aziz Ansari** Directed by **Loren Bouchard** and **Bernard Derriman**

When a ruptured water main creates an enormous sinkhole right in front of Bob's Burgers - blocking the entrance indefinitely and ruining the Belchers' plans for a successful summer - Bob and Linda battle to keep the business afloat.

The kids, meanwhile, do their level best to solve a mystery that could well save the family's restaurant...

Bob's Burgers is the big-screen version of the animated TV sitcom of the same title.

Debuting on Fox back in 2011, the Emmy-winning show has been named one of the greatest television cartoon series of all time.

Released Fri 27 May



Men

CERT tbc

Starring **Jessie Buckley**, **Rory Kinnear**, **Gayle Rankin**, **Paapa Essiedu**
Directed by **Alex Garland**



Fresh from her Academy Award nomination for The Lost Daughter, Jessie Buckley stars as a woman named Harper who's on the run from a personal tragedy.

Retreating to a holiday house in the beautiful English countryside, in the hope of emotionally healing, she soon realises that someone or something from the surrounding woods appears to be stalking her...

This feverish, shape-shifting new horror movie is helmed by visionary English filmmaker Alex Garland, who has previously directed Annihilation and the Bafta-nominated Ex Machina.

Released Fri 3 June



Blood & Fire

Photographer Vanley Burke is renowned for producing evocative images of the community around him. Many of these will this month go on display in a major exhibition as part of the Birmingham 2022 Festival. Diane Parkes recently caught up with Vanley to find out more...

From this month until the autumn, visitors to Handsworth's Soho House can experience the lives of local people over the past 50 years through a collection of pictures and archive materials from internationally renowned photographer Vanley Burke.

Known as 'the Godfather of Black British history', Birmingham-based Vanley has spent his life documenting the experiences of his community through the lens of his camera, while also collecting items relating to their lives.

Many of these photos and items are this month being brought together in the free-to-view exhibition, *Blood & Fire: Our Journey Through Vanley Burke's History*, which shows at Soho House from 25 May until 30 October.

Born in Jamaica in 1951, Vanley's love of photography began when his mother gave him a Kodak Brownie box camera at the age of 10. Arriving in Birmingham when he was 15, he set about capturing the lives of the people around him - from their everyday experiences to dramatic social events including demonstrations and riots.

"I have been taking photographs and collecting ephemera relating to the African-Caribbean community for a number of years now," says Vanley. "Many of these are in an archive at Birmingham Library, but I also have a number of materials still in my possession.

"I've drawn on that body of work for this exhibition to be representative of the people of my history. And so we have curated a space in which people can engage with the ideas of history, migration, settlement, and all of those issues which are about our lives. They are junctions or individual moments and events of cultural continuity."

The archive includes many personal items which have never been exhibited before - but for Vanley, the emphasis is on how other people will relate to them.

"The objects all have stories connected to them, and it's about extracting these stories for a conversation. There's a paraffin lamp, for example, and there are so many stories associated with that because each person

comes with a different story. I've heard quite a few of these stories - someone liked it because it made a pattern on the ceiling, and another hated it because it caused a fire which killed her sister.

"It's about asking the questions - how do we get those stories, how do we interrogate the past, how do we tell our children of the experiences we endured? It's also for me to show the people back to themselves after they've been shown in a negative light for so long. It's important for other communities who are going there to realise how dignified we are in poverty.

"I think the resilience of us as a people shouldn't really go unnoticed. We have had bad press over the years, and I think we weren't always able to represent the pain at the time. We have been extremely creative in the arts, science and education; we are playing our part. Those stories and experiences, all that building, was achieved despite the fact that the background noise was very much one of abuse."

And the story continues.

"Our heritage will change over the years, but it's important that a lot of this heritage is passed on. As individuals we need more than ourselves to hold onto, and some of this is cultural. So, for example, you do certain things at Easter, at Christmas, and within the family structure. Those things will happen, and there will be changes along the way. But in terms of some of the culture, it remains. I mean, come on, you can't really change ackee and saltfish that much, can you? We have to hold on to some of these cultural things and talk about them - which is, for me, why the archive is an essential part of that conversation."

Blood & Fire forms part of the Birmingham 2022 Festival, an event which is taking place to coincide with the Commonwealth Games being staged in the city. Vanley believes this is the ideal time to reach new audiences.

"All these people will be travelling to Birmingham because of the Games. We have one of the largest Jamaican communities in the country and one of the largest African-Caribbean communities in the country, and I

think there will be a lot of people from the Commonwealth countries and other countries who would like to see themselves - or their cousins, let's say - reflected in these lives."

The exhibition's title, *Fire & Blood*, has interesting origins. In the 1990s Vanley lost part of his collection in a shed fire at home. The 'blood' element of the title, meanwhile, refers to his lifeblood and the lifeblood of his community.

"The blood is everything I do, the blood is signifying us and the struggle. I do a libation for the ancestors. I ask their permission to enter their business. But it's not a libation of blood - it's a libation of a little bit of rum!"

Vanley was keen for *Fire & Blood* to be staged in Handsworth, the home of the community from whom he takes his inspiration and at whose heart he works.

"I said to myself one day many years ago, how have I assumed this role of photographer of the community? Who appointed me and what community is it that I'm photographing? Who is it for, and do they even know that I'm collecting these photographs? I thought one way to test it would be to put an advert in the paper to say that I was going to be burning my negatives in Handsworth Park on such-and-such a date and time. I was playing around with this idea, not that I would actually do it, but I was walking through Handsworth Park and saw this young man. I was telling him the story, and he said 'they're not yours to burn'. Somehow that answered the question. It showed me that my photography serves its purpose, which is about its relation to people whose history has been tarnished and for them to repair themselves."

Blood & Fire: Our Journey Through Vanley Burke's History shows at Soho House, Birmingham, from 25 May to 30 October. Entrance to the exhibition is free, but to enter Soho House Museum for a guided tour, normal admission charges apply.



Prophecy

Mead Gallery, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sat 7 May - Sun 26 June

Coventry artist Laura Nyahuye has co-curated this exhibition of work, which takes its inspiration from Nuneaton-born author George Eliot's famous novel, *Middlemarch*.

Focusing on some of the 150-year-old story's still-relevant themes - including the coming of outsiders with different ideas, the fear of a potentially fatal epidemic, and proposals for a new political system that would ensure more people had a voice - the show brings together the work of 14 contemporary artists.

Visitors, local groups and communities are also being invited to make a contribution, by creating pieces or leaving comments that respond to the works on display.

Black Country Beats

Sat 7 May - Sun 4 Sep 2022

Wolverhampton Art Gallery

Celebrating popular music in the Black Country between the 1970s and 2000s.

Free admission

Slade • Aisha • Robert Plant • **Goldie**
Beverley Knight • **Babylon Zoo**
Macka B • **Capital Letters** • Azaad
Ned's Atomic Dustbin
Weapon of Peace • **Skippy & Lippy**
Cornershop • **The Wonder Stuff**
Pop Will Eat Itself • The Sahotas
The Mighty Lemon Drops
and others





John Akomfrah: The Unfinished Conversation

Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Sat 7 May - Sun 26 June

Visitor discretion is recommended for this show, with the artwork on display containing 'strong and sometimes challenging imagery', including historic depictions of violence and suffering.

The presentation showcases the talent of pioneering filmmaker John Akomfrah CBE, an award-winning artist who has spent the last 40 years producing moving-image works reflecting on the culture of black diaspora around the world. MAC is here presenting Akomfrah's The

Unfinished Conversation (2012), a moving portrait of the life and work of cultural theorist Stuart Hall, who led the Cultural Studies department at the University of Birmingham from 1964.

Featuring Hall's personal home videos and photographs, the film also includes footage of him talking about his discovery of his personal and ethnic identity. Presented as part of the Birmingham 2022 Festival.

Britta Marakatt-Labba: Under The Vast Sky

Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, until Sun 29 May

Britta Marakatt-Labba here presents, among other art forms, embroidered panoramas chronicling the history, culture and cosmology of the Sámi, the indigenous population of the northernmost parts of Scandinavia. Britt, who is herself Sámi, is renowned for her ability to tell captivating stories via her artwork, which balances a contemplation of the domestic and the intimacy of daily life, with a focus on urgent issues impacting the modern world such as climate change and terrorism.



Black Country Beats

Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Sat 7 May - Sun 4 September



The Black Country music scene falls under the spotlight in this brand-new exhibition, running across the summer to coincide with the cultural activities taking place around the Birmingham Commonwealth Games.

From glam rock giants Slade through to the rise of bhangra in Wolverhampton, the display explores the way in which the region's music has been shaped and influenced by social and political change since the mid-20th century.

The show also celebrates the imminent reopening of Wolverhampton's Civic Hall, one of the UK's best-known live-music venues.

Found Cities, Lost Objects: Women In The City

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, Sat 14 May - Wed 4 September

"Found Cities, Lost Objects challenges the status quo by encouraging viewers to discover the city through the eyes of female artists," explains cultural activist and Turner Prize winner Lubaina Himid CBE, who has curated this national touring exhibition of more than 60 artworks. "Women generally inhabit cities via retail and healthcare venues - but how can we expand our presence beyond this for everyone's benefit, now that these spaces are under pressure to perform differently? "The exhibition explores the contradictory experiences of women across the city; free to roam the streets, while always considering the boundaries within which that freedom is contained."



Portraits From The National Portrait Gallery

Compton Verney, Warwickshire, Sat 28 May - Sun 4 September

Which people might we choose to immortalise in a contemporary portraiture collection?

That's the question being posed by this thought-provoking exhibition, which aims to explore the role of modern Britain via 10 loans from the National Portrait Gallery and numerous artworks from Compton's own historic collection.

The pieces on show include portraits of dub poet & writer Benjamin Zephaniah, Turner Prize-winning artist Gillian Wearing, the late former politician Mo Mowlam, Olympian Denise Lewis and artist Sonia Boyce, all of whom have connections of one sort or another to the Midlands region.



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Müller Birmingham Diamond League

Alexander Stadium, Birmingham, Sat 21 May
Taking place in the new-look Alexander Stadium, the Müller Birmingham Diamond League is the second event in the prestigious

Wanda Diamond League calendar and sees the world's greatest track & field athletes competing for glory. Star names taking part include world champion sprinter Dina Asher-Smith, British record-holding pole vaulter Holly Bradshaw and Olympic high jump champion Gianmarco Tamberi.

Spring Diesel Festival

Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster, Thurs 19 - Sun 22 May

A variety of classes and traction types will be roaring through the Shropshire and Worcestershire countryside this month in the Spring Diesel Festival.

Attendees can ride behind the best of the diesel home fleet alongside a number of special guests, including guest traction Class 44 'Great Gable' 44004 (D4) and Class 46 46046 (D182).

Visitors can swap trains as they wish and stop off at a variety of stations at their leisure.



The Big Bark

Trentham Estate, Staffordshire, Sat 21 & Sun 22 May

The Big Bark offers two 'fun-packed days of adventure and excitement' for you, your dog and all the family to enjoy.

Whether on two legs or four, there's plenty to see and do.

Activities and attractions include have-a-go agility, canine Olympics, Paws Got Talent, a seminar zone and a doggy photo booth.

An array of dog-centric small business traders, from whom you can purchase products and services, further adds to the show's appeal.



The Baby Show

NEC, Birmingham, Fri 13 - Sun 15 May

This three-day show is the UK's largest one-stop shop for all things baby. Visitors can compare, try, buy - and enjoy exclusive deals on - hundreds of brands from a wide range of show exhibitors, including boutiques,

online stores and well-known names such as Maxi-Cosi, Cybex, MAM, Tommee Tippee, BabyBjörn and Mamas & Papas.

There's also the opportunity to pick up handy hints and tips from the UK's leading baby & parenting experts, on everything from preparing for birth and weaning, to breastfeeding and first aid.

Ludlow Spring Festival

Ludlow Castle, South Shropshire, Fri 13 - Sun 15 May

One of Ludlow's biggest events of the year, the Spring Festival features more than 60 food & drink providers, 200 real ales, tons of free talks & demonstrations by local producers and live music across the weekend.

The Marches Transport Festival, running at the same time, showcases in excess of 100 vintage and classic vehicles, including tractors, small commercials and motorcycles.



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to engage, educate and inspire’**



West Midlands Police Museum tells the story of policing history of all areas of the West Midlands, from the early days of policing right through to today.

Book tickets at museum.west-midlands.police.uk

Events previews from around the region



Photo credit: LazPix@gmail.com

Shrewsbury Krazy Races

The Quarry Park, Shrewsbury, Sun 29 May

Shrewsbury Krazy Races makes a welcome return to the town's Quarry Park this month, with participants launching their carefully

hand-crafted karts down a 300m track that comes complete with chicanes and obstacles.

Competitors will work their way through a knockout-style competition, with the fastest 10 cars making it through to the final.

Vintage And Handmade Festival

RAF Museum, Cosford, Sat 7 & Sun 8 May

Celebrating music, fashion, design and style through the decades, the Vintage And Handmade Festival brings together retailers and craft stalls with a programme of live music and entertainment.

Visitors can get their hands on a wide range of vintage products, check out local craft exhibitors in the Handmade Marquee, get glammed up in the beauty parlour and marvel at a selection of classic vehicles. Performers representing numerous eras take to the festival stage, while reenactment groups across the site bring history to life.



Dog Fest

Ragley Hall, Warwickshire, Sat 28 & Sun 29 May

Created by dog lovers for dog lovers, Dog Fest provides families and their beloved pooches with the opportunity to try their hand/paw at a variety of have-a-go activities.

Highlights include the Fun Dog Show - offering visitors the chance to win Best In Show - and the Big Dog Walk, a fundraiser for Dogs Trust.

Dog displays take place all day in the main arena, animal experts provide advice on the Live Stage, and there's a special Dog School offering a host of top training tips.

All in all, then, a show with plenty to bark about...



The Open Arms Weekender

Warwick Castle, Fri 27 - Sun 29 May

Warwick Castle has once again joined forces with Digbeth Dining Club (DDC) to bring The Open Arms beer garden back to life. And this month sees the debut of a festival-

style edition of the event on the castle's historic courtyard...

The Open Arms Weekender features live music from House Gospel Choir (on the Friday), Symphony Ibiza (Saturday) and Norman Jay MBE (Sunday). There's entertainment for all the family to enjoy at the Dungeon Disco, as well as a top-notch DDC street-food menu to sample.



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Events previews from around the region



Lifestyle Show

Telford International Centre, Fri 6 - Sun 8 May

The Lifestyle Show is packed with inspiration for visitors wanting to make the most of the great outdoors.

Exhibits cover a diverse range of products - from holiday homes, motorhomes, caravans

and camping, to garden & outdoor accessories and lifestyle activities. Celebrities and industry experts - including gardener David Domoney, chef Rosemary Shrager and interior designer Linda Barker - will be sharing their knowledge and expertise throughout the weekend.

Shropshire County Show

West Mid Showground, Shrewsbury, Sat 28 May

The Shropshire County Show is back with its first full programme since 2019.

Main-arena entertainment includes mountain bikers, falconry, the ever-popular Shropshire Young Farmers float parade, and medieval jousting with the Knights of Nottingham.

Livestock classes, children's pony fancy dress and a shire horses qualifier for this year's Horse of the Year Show also feature.

Other highlights include a kids' zone, a parade of agricultural machinery, a vintage rally and a Hurricane flypast by the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight.



RHS Malvern Spring Festival

Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Thurs 5 - Sun 8 May

Launching the 2022 RHS flower show season, this year's spring festival celebrates the positive physical and mental benefits that gardening provided during the lockdown period.

The event will also mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee with giant eye-catching installations, school gardens to honour her reign and a new permanent feature garden - the Jubilee Garden.

Visitors can check out the reimagined Floral Green, which covers all things floristry and comes complete with demonstrations and unique photo opportunities.

Some of the UK's finest nurseries make an appearance in the Floral Marquee and Plant Arcades, while the new Nourish Area features some of the best food & drink in the region and sure-to-be-enlightening demonstrations by TV chefs.

Malvern's Festival Theatre offers plenty for the green-fingered enthusiast to enjoy too, presenting a timetable that's jam-packed with special guests and inspirational speakers. The venue also plays host to Gardeners' Question Time.



Flatpack Festival

Various venues in Birmingham, Tues 17 - Sun 22 May

The much-loved BAFTA-qualifying short film festival returns with 40 movies from 17 countries and numerous live audiovisual performances.

Based in Digbeth, Flatpack Festival is known for its eclectic and surprising programming of live performances alongside archive shorts and feature films.

This year's highlights include Japanese one-man-band ICHI's Anime show, Joe Lycett & Shaun Keaveny discussing short filmmaking, a Some Like It Hot cocktails night and new interactive film/rave show Tattered Earth.

Gaydon Land Rover Show

British Motor Museum, Warwickshire, Sat 7 & Sun 8 May

The two-day celebration of all things Land Rover is back...

Highlights of the show include the Jaguar Land Rover Experience, which sees the participating vehicles showcasing their impressive technology and capabilities as they negotiate a selection of daunting obstacles.

The show also features numerous trade stands, workshop talks by Land Rover journalist Emrys Kirby, and a display of Land Rovers that includes the 'HUE 166' aka Huey, the first Land Rover ever produced.



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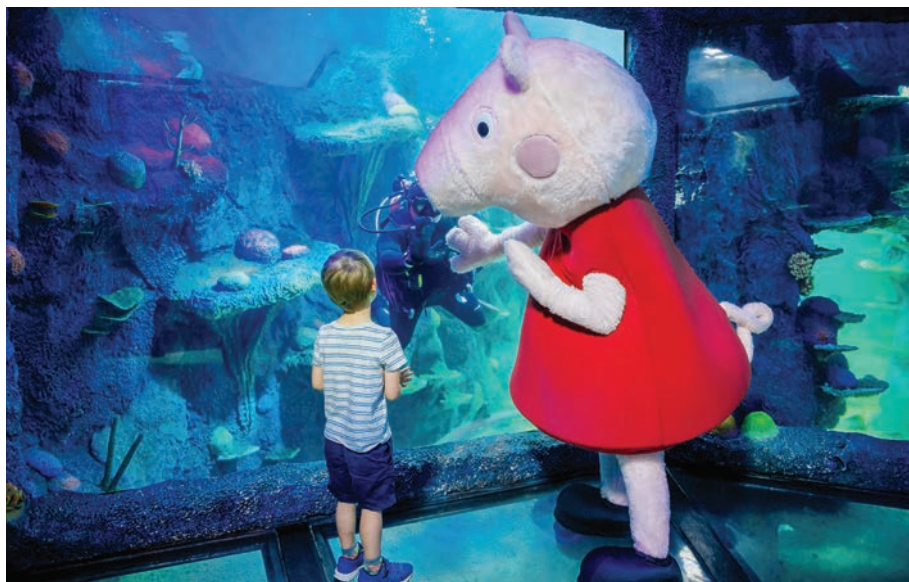
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Events previews from around the region



Peppa Pig At SEA LIFE

National SEA LIFE Birmingham,
until Sun 3 July

Peppa Pig now has her very own Aquarium Adventure - and you and your family are cordially invited to join in the fun! Youngsters can meet Peppa as she 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.

Weston's Spring Fling

Weston Park, Staffordshire,
Sat 28 & Sun 29 May

Grab your picnic baskets and blankets for Weston Park's popular Spring Fling. The whole estate is open across the weekend for visitors to explore and enjoy, from taking long walks around the parkland and relaxing in the formal gardens, to running wild in the Woodland Adventure Playground and journeying around Temple Wood on the miniature railway. The event's line-up of attractions also features local artisan food producers, unique crafts, street food and fairground rides. Live music comes from the Dirty Rockin Scoundrels.

The Betfred British Masters

The Belfry, Sutton Coldfield,
Thurs 5 - Sun 8 May

The Belfry Hotel & Resort, renowned for its spectacular golf courses, has once again been chosen as the venue for the Betfred British Masters. The popular tournament, hosted by former Masters champion Danny Willett, takes place on the world-class Brabazon, an 18-hole, Par 72 course which has previously played host to the Ryder Cup.



Funtopia

Arrow Valley Country Park, Redditch, Sun 1 May; Ellesmere Rangers FC, Shropshire, Sun 22 May; Tamworth Castle, Staffordshire, Sun 29 May; Coombe Abbey Park, Coventry, Wed 1 June

Hailed as 'the ultimate travelling children's festival', Funtopia stops off at several Midlands venues this month. Specially designed for youngsters up to the age of 10, the jam-packed event features inflatable slides, bouncy castles, nerf wars, circus skills, obstacle courses, a driving school, a bungee run, human wrecking ball, space hopper races and a 'crafty' corner. A dedicated area for the under-fives includes soft play, ride-ons and giant piano mats.



Adult Night

LEGOLAND Discovery Centre, Birmingham,
Sat 20 May

Ever fancied visiting Legoland Discovery Centre but didn't have any little ones to take along? Well, not to worry, because now you can justifiably 'go it alone', courtesy of the venue's once-a-month adults-only event. Experience the 4D cinema, challenge your crew on the Kingdom Quest ride, and have some fun in Lego brick pits. There are speed build challenges to enjoy too, while the Miniland scavenger hunt offers participants the chance to bag themselves an 'awesome' prize to take away. Being a grown-up has never been so much fun!

Mardi Gras At Alton Towers

Alton Towers Resort, Staffordshire,
Sat 21 May - Sun 19 June

It's time to get into the carnival spirit as Mardi Gras returns for a second year at Alton Towers Resort.

Every day will see the park host a big street party, complete with music, street performers and themed food from the Deep South and around the world.

Visitors can also enjoy the venue's numerous family attractions and white-knuckle-ride rollercoasters.



A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER...

With Coventry's year as UK City of Culture drawing to a close, Laura McMillan, the event's director of audience strategy, looks back on an incredible (as well as incredibly challenging) year and also picks out some highlights from the bumper May schedule...



When Coventry was announced as UK City of Culture 2021 back in December 2017, no one could have predicted the world would change so dramatically soon after.

The initial excitement turned to despair when the Covid pandemic hit, sending organisers into panic mode and ultimately delaying the start of the City of Culture programme by five months, as well as having an impact on visitor numbers and the scope and scale of events throughout the following year.

The fact that City of Culture has been such a success despite - and in many ways because of - these challenges is testament to the hard work of the team and artists involved, as well as the fortitude of the city's residents and event audiences. That's the view of Director of Audience Strategy Laura McMillan, who has worked on the project from the outset, having signed up as "employee number one" in October 2016.

"Looking back," reflects Laura, "no, it's not been what I thought it would be at all, but in some respects it's been better. We've been able to do some incredible work with our communities, to hold these huge events and have these moments of joy and celebration at a time when a lot of other cities and a lot of other organisations were cancelling events.

"Given the circumstances, I think we've achieved extraordinary things, and I genuinely believe there's not another city in the world that could have done it like Coventry has."

As well as energising the city's established arts audience, Laura feels that the City of Culture year crucially also helped to create an interest among residents who weren't

previously engaged with the arts. She's especially proud of the fact that more than 40 per cent of people who booked tickets to events came from areas of the city which had the lowest engagement with the arts - something partly aided by taking a number of shows out into those communities.

"We've not been a city centre City of Culture, which is something we always committed to, but given Covid we've done even more of that. We've been completely committed to removing as many barriers as we can, whether that's cost in terms of ticket pricing, location - so that people don't have to travel into the city centre - and even how the art is described. Sometimes just saying the word 'culture' can be a bit scary to some people."

The concept of legacy is always a key factor in these types of undertakings, and there's a genuine sense that the past year has increased residents' engagement with the arts and can be built upon. A critical factor is that even though many events were free to attend, it was rarely a case of just turning up - tickets had to be booked and contact details were required, partly due to Covid regulations.

"That's really important for legacy, because it means we are able to talk to the people that booked and to share things that we think they'll like going forward.

"The fact that so many events were ticketed was partly down to Covid - we needed to be able to contact people - but we now have a bank of thousands and thousands of people who attended events in Coventry that we can continue to talk to, and that other artists and arts organisations can have access to as well."

A fabulously tangible legacy of the year is the

Reel Store, a permanent new digital art gallery that officially opened in the city last month.

"I cannot tell you how incredible it is that we're opening the UK's first immersive digital art gallery in Coventry. Most people, even the ones I work with, still can't believe it's happening. I think the first time an audience can stand in the Reel Store and experience Refik Anadol's incredible exhibition, they'll feel like they've been transported to London or Tokyo or Paris... it's so 'not Cov'!"

The gallery opening is one of a number of events taking place during a hectic finale to the year (see below). But even when the curtain comes down on the City of Culture adventure, there will still be work to do in making Coventry a more attractive tourist destination - not least because Covid ensured the city's year in the spotlight was a more community-focused affair, rather than something to draw visitors from further afield.

Laura's enthusiasm for the task is infectious. "The events that we've got coming up in May are *huge* - we are not 'going quietly' in any shape or form! We're finally able to draw crowds and have big international spectacle events. It's going to be so busy!

"After that there's still lots to get done, and I really believe Coventry should be an internationally significant visitor destination. People should have been coming from all over the world, but because we've had most of our year with restrictions of some kind - as well as people not feeling comfortable travelling - we've got some unfinished business to do in terms of being able to draw visitors. So that's something we'll look at as the next stage."

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FINAL MONTH

Coventry Opens (5 - 8 May)

A celebration of the venues that play host to all forms of culture across the city, giving people unique access to a wide variety of buildings and art spaces.

Laura says: "We are going to be offering a behind-the-scenes look at some of Coventry's top cultural locations, including places like the Belgrade Theatre and new venues like Drapers' Hall. All will be opening their doors and running fun workshops and opportunities for people to come and see areas they wouldn't normally be able to access."

The Awakening by Gratte Ciel (13 & 14 May)

Live music, acrobats and aerialists are all part of this spectacular show that looks set to be one of the standout events of the

entire year.

Laura: "I can't even describe this show in words. It's going to be absolutely incredible. It's going to be taking over Broadgate, and we're going to be welcoming thousands of audience members to experience it. We've never had anything to this scale in Coventry before."

This Is The City (14 May)

A celebration of the diverse communities and audiences that have played a part during the City of Culture schedule, with a giant parade featuring many of the stars of the past year.

Laura: "It's a bit like a City of Culture Greatest Hits, with many participants and events from the last 12 months parading round the city centre. It's going to be so joyful and so fun, and you'll also be able to see things from Coventry Moves, our opening event that people were encouraged

to watch online. Now we can say 'come out and watch it in person'."

Our Wilder Family (15 May)

The skies above War Memorial Park will host this dazzling 16-minute drone show, featuring stunning visuals inspired by the movements of flocks of birds and created by Celestial in partnership with Coventry schools.

Laura: "This will be the UK's longest-ever drone show, and we've never had one in Coventry before, so it's going to be really exciting. If you live within 2.5km, you don't even need to go anywhere; you can watch it from your garden or bedroom window."

For more details about all events, visit coventry2021.co.uk

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Jubilee events happening across the region in June



Queen's Platinum Ju-bee-lee Family Fun Days

Compton Vernery, Warwickshire,
Tues 31 May - Wed 1 June

Presented in collaboration with the British Bee Keepers Association, Compton Vernery's family fun days provide visitors with an opportunity to enjoy an array of pollinator-themed events and activities. Highlights include an interactive and sensory bee hive experience, open-air beekeeping demonstrations and the chance for children of all ages to roll a simple beeswax candle.



Fabulous Fifties

Worcestershire County Museum at Hartlebury Castle, Thurs 2 June

Hartlebury Castle is putting up the bunting in celebration of the decade in which Her Majesty The Queen came to the throne. Visitors are encouraged to attend in their finest '50s gear and then further get into the spirit of the decade in the company of the Bluebird Belles, who will be performing songs from the era in the castle's carriage circle.

Meanwhile, inside Worcestershire County Museum, guests can check out two exhibitions recalling the 1950s: Captivating Costumes features beautiful dresses from the decade, while Lavish Living explores what Worcestershire was like in the post-war years. Entertainment for younger visitors to the castle comes in the form of a jubilee family trail and the chance to get hands-on with coronation crafts.



Midlands Air Festival Ragley Hall, Warwickshire, Thurs 2 - Sat 4 June

Back for a fourth year, the Midlands Air Festival sees over 100 hot-air balloons take to the skies above Ragley Hall for twice-daily mass ascents at dawn and dusk.

The show also features flying displays from World War Two Warbirds, World War One air

displays, fast jets, helicopters, gyroplanes, high-energy aerobatic displays, aerial ballet & flying circus acts and parachute and formation display teams.

A musical firework grand finale rounds off the fun.



Queen's Platinum Jubilee

Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Kidderminster, Thurs 2 - Sun 5 June

The Severn Valley Railway is putting on a celebration fit for a Queen to mark Her Majesty's platinum jubilee. Crowning the first day of the event will be the unveiling of locomotive 34027, complete with its new name - Elizabeth II - new number - 70 - and purple livery, specially commissioned to mark the jubilee.

In a nod to the 1953 coronation, there will be 1950s-themed entertainment at each station, including a pop-up milk bar and juke box at The Engine House, a vintage fairground ride at Bridgnorth and live music at

Kidderminster.

The Engine House will also be hosting a hand-built Paddington-themed exhibition, presented courtesy of BrickLive, and a display of work by photographer Jack Boskett, showcased under the title From Railways To Royalty.

Across the railway's six stations, the SVR's gardeners will work their magic to produce floral displays in honour of the historic occasion, with each visitor receiving a special-edition 'seeded' ticket to take home and plant for their own celebratory display.

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*Your week-
by-week
listings guide*
May 2022

the list

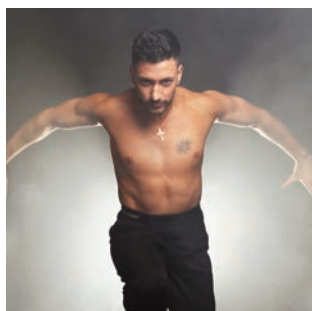


Footloose The Musical at Malvern Theatres - Mon 16 - Sat 21 May

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

What's On

Sun 1 to Sun 8 May



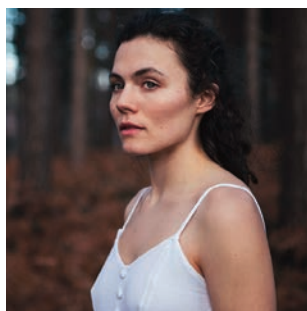
Giovanni Pernice at Royal Spa
Centre, Leamington Spa
Sat 7 May

Mon 9 - Sun 15 May



Gregory Porter at Resorts
World Arena, Birmingham
Wed 11 May

Mon 16 - Sun 22 May



Ellie Gowers at
Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry
Sat 21 May

Mon 23 - Tues 31 May



Belshazzar's Feast at
The Fleece Inn, nr Evesham
Mon 30 May

THROUGHOUT MAY

Visual Arts

Compton Verney, Warwickshire

THROUGH THE LENS OF MASTERJI Taken over the course of more than 50 years, the photographs of the late Maganbhai Patel - more widely known as Masterji - provide a unique and evocative record of the people who migrated to the Midlands and made the region their home. Masterji arrived in Coventry in 1951 and became known as the city's first Indian photographer, until Sun 22 May

PORTRAIT ARTIST OF THE YEAR Curated by one of Sky Arts' Portrait Artist Of The Year judges, Kathleen Soriano, this display features a selection of artwork produced across the years by professional and amateur painters who've taken part in the series, until Sun 5 June

Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry

CREATIVE CONNECTION COVENTRY Portraits of well-known people associated with Coventry sit alongside award-winning artist Maryam Wahid's series of images of students from Barr's Hill School, until Mon 30 May



DANIEL LISMORE: BE YOURSELF, EVERYONE ELSE IS ALREADY TAKEN Dubbed 'England's most eccentric dresser' by Vogue, Coventry-born Daniel Lismore is a walking, talking sculpture. From haute couture to thrifted finds and vintage fabrics, body adornment using fashion and all kinds of curiosities are at the heart of his art. This impressive exhibition includes a major installation of 50 3D sculptures inspired by the Terracotta Army, as well as archives and other personal items which fully explore Daniel's journey from budding child artist to living as his true self today, until Sun 26 June

Mead Gallery, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

PROPHECY Exhibition inspired by George Eliot's novel, Middlesmarch, Sat 7 May - Sun 26 June

Nuneaton Museum & Art Gallery

TSUBA, FROM SAMURAI WARRIOR TO STATUS SYMBOL Exhibition of Samurai artefacts with a focus on Japanese sword guards, until Sun 22 May

Rugby Art Gallery & Museum

THE IPCRESS STYLE Showcasing the original costumes worn by characters Harry Palmer, Jean Courtney and cast in the recent hit ITV spy drama *The Ipcress File*, Sat 14 May - Sat 9 July

Worcester City Art Gallery

HOKUSAI'S GREAT WAVE: REFLECTIONS OF JAPAN Major exhibition exploring the extraordinary influence of Japanese art & culture in the West. Exhibits include Japanese prints and Samurai armour as well as pieces from Tate and Museum of Royal Worcester, until 2 July

Elsewhere:

REFORM THE NORM: MOTHERLAND Mixed-heritage artist Ayesha Jones explores how natural spaces can be a constant and reliable source of support while trying to access a sense of belonging 'when you are neither one nor the other', until Mon 2 May, Stivichall Common, Coventry

EPSTEIN: STORIES IN STONE Celebrating sculptor Jacob Epstein, this exhibition brings together masterpieces from national collections, including Tate Britain's *Jacob And The Angel*, until 31 May, Coventry Cathedral

WOMEN IN MOTORSPORT Exhibition that delves into the personal stories of women while profiling diversity in the automotive industry, until Tues 31 May, Coventry Transport Museum

THREADS THROUGH CREATION EXHIBITION Inspired by the first pages of the Bible, textile artist Jacqui Parkinson reimagines an amazing story in brilliant silks, dazzling metallic leathers, gold leaf - and more than eight million stitches! until Sun 5 June, Worcester Cathedral

PIONEERING COVENTRY: THE POST-WAR PHOTOGRAPHY OF RICHARD SADLER A focus on the life and work of Coventry's pre-eminent post-war photographer, Richard Sadler. Featuring prints, projections, talks and guided visits, until Thurs 30 June, The Old Grammar School, Hales Street, Coventry

YOUNG VOICES NEW VISIONS EXHIBITION Annual exhibition showcasing visual art works created by children and young people, Sun 22 May - Sun 26 June, Worcester Cathedral



Blondie - Utilita Arena, Birmingham

Gigs

LEWIS WATSON + SUNFLOWER THIEVES Sun 1 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

ARIJIT SINGH Sun 1 May, Utilita Arena, Birmingham

JAMES BAY Sun 1 May, hmv Empire, Coventry

GARY NUMAN Mon 2 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

SPIRITUALIZED Mon 2 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

GNOSS Mon 2 May, The Fleece Inn, Bretforton, Nr Evesham

AARON SMITH Tues 3 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

LEIF VOLLEBEKK + WINNIE RAEDER Tues 3 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

TINY MOVING PARTS Tues 3 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

STONER TICKETS + PATRON + SLOMOSA Tues 3 May, The Mill, Digbeth, Birmingham

SEVEN DRUNKEN NIGHTS Tues 3 May, Malvern Theatres

DUTTY MOONSHINE BIG BAND + FUNKE AND THE TWO TONE BABY Wed 4 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

OMAH LAY Wed 4 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

BONONO Wed 4 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

MORCHEEBA Wed 4 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

TOOL Wed 4 May, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

THE FUREYS Wed 4 May, The Core Theatre, Solihull

JONATHAN FASHOLE-LUKE Wed 4 May, Drapers' Hall, Coventry

SOUTHERN AVENUE + MATTIEL + LA REN Thurs 5 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

FEEDER Thurs 5 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

KAMAL Thurs 5 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

SIOBHAN MILLER Thurs 5 May, The Fleece Inn, Bretforton, Nr Evesham

OLD SEA LEGS Thurs 5 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

JAMES ANDREW + LOUIS A M + TRANSPORT RESIDENTS Fri 6 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

BRETT ELDREDGE + LUCA FOGALE Fri 6 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

TWO YEAR BREAK Fri 6 May, The Asylum, Birmingham

THE ILLEGAL EAGLES Fri 6 May, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

LIMEHOUSE LIZZY Fri 6 May, hmv Empire, Coventry

LOS PACAMINOS Fri 6

May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

THE AMERICAN FOUR TOPS Fri 6 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

TOM MEIGHAN Sat 7 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

FIT FOR AN AUTOPSY Sat 7 May, The Mill, Digbeth, Birmingham

MAITHILI THAKUR Sat 7 May, Birmingham Town Hall

BLONDIE Sat 7 May, Utilita Arena, Birmingham

BIG IMAGE Sat 7 May, Forum, Birmingham

THE ULTIMATE BOY BAND PARTY SHOW Sat 7 May, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

STATE OF QUO Sat 7 May, Arches Venue, Coventry

DECLAN MCKENNA Sat 7 May, hmv Empire, Coventry

THE LANCASHIRE HOTPOTS Sat 7 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

SIGNING OFF - UB40 TRIBUTE Sat 7 May, Marris Bar, Worcester

DARK SIDE OF THE WALL Sat 7 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

BROTHERS OSBORNE + STEPHEN WILSON JR. Sun 8 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

RUMER Sun 8 May, Birmingham Town Hall

THE SARAH WARREN BAND Sun 8 May, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourport

Classical Music

LYNN ARNOLD & CHARLES MATTHEWS: FOUR HANDS ONE PIANO Programme includes works by Vaughan Williams, Maconchy, Ravel, Tovey, Bliss, Howard Skempton & Benjamin, Sun 1 May, Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington Spa

EMMA JOHNSON (CLARINET), RAPHAEL WALLFISCH (CELLO) & JOHN LENEHAN (PIANO) Programme includes works by Beethoven, Vaughan Williams & Simpson, Sun 1 May, Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington Spa

EX CATHEDRA: UNENDING LOVE - THE TRAVELLER Programme comprises Roxanna Panufnik's Child of Heaven and Unending Love plus Alec Roth's Earth and Sky and The Traveller, Sun 1 May, Birmingham Town Hall

RACHEL MAHON ORGAN RECITAL Programme includes works by Rachel Laurin, Parry, Bach, Whitlock, Vaughan Williams, Bales & Widor, Mon 2 May, All Saint's Church, Leamington Spa

AUDREY GUGNIN PIANO CONCERT Programme includes works by Scarlatti, Debussy, Stravinsky and Mussorgsky, Mon 2 May, Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington Spa

RODERICK WILLIAMS (BARITONE) & PAUL CIBIS (PIANO) Programme includes works by Chopin, Schubert and Schumann, Mon 2 May, Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington Spa



CBSO: MENDELSSOHN'S SCOTTISH SYMPHONY Featuring Kazuki Yamada (conductor) & Daishin Kashimoto (violin). Programme includes works by Prokofiev, Bruch & Mendelssohn, Wed 4 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

ENGLISH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA Featuring Mark Milhofer (tenor) & Kenneth Woods (conductor). Programme includes Luigi Denza arr. Arnold Schoenberg's Funiculi, Funiculà and Erwin Schulhoff's Suite for Chamber Orchestra, Wed 4 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

OZ & ARMONICO DRINK TO MUSIC: GIN & PHONIC! Featuring Christopher Monks (director), William Towers (countertenor), Eloise Irving (soprano) & Oz Clarke (narrator), Thurs 5 May, Draper's Hall, Coventry

ALESSANDRO BIANCHI ORGAN RECITAL Fri 6 May, St Mary's Church, Warwick

OPERA BOYS Fri 6 May, The Core Theatre, Solihull

COVENTRY PHILHARMONIC CHOIR

Featuring Victoria Adams & Andrew Randall (soloists), Kevin Gill (organist) & David Wynne (musical director). Programme includes Fauré Requiem & Duruflé Requiem, Sat 7 May, St Mary's Church, Warwick

CITY OF BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA Featuring Kazuki Yamada (conductor) & Daishin Kashimoto (violin). Programme includes works by Bruch, Mendelssohn and Prokofiev, Sat 7 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Comedy

MARK SIMMONS & STEPHEN BAILEY Tues 3 May, The Bear Pitt Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

JOHN SHUTTLEWORTH Wed 4 May, Birmingham Town Hall

ISABELLE FARAH & AARON SIMMONDS Wed 4 May, The Bear Pitt Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

DOM JOLY Thurs 5 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch

JOSH BERRY & RAFE HUBRIS Thurs 5 May, The Bear Pitt Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

FLO & JOAN Fri 6 May, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

JASON MANFORD Fri 6 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

GARY DELANEY Fri 6 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

SIMON BRODKIN Fri 6 May, The Rialto, Coventry

COUNT ARTHUR STRONG Sat 7 May, Malvern Theatres

CLINTON BAPTISTE, AURIE STYLA, KATE BARRON & WILL DUGGAN Sat 7 May, The Assembly, Leamington Spa

Theatre

HENRY VI: REBELLION Owen Horsley directs the RSC's new take on Henry VI: Part Two, until Sat 28 May, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

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

CLUEDO Michelle Collins (EastEnders/Coronation Street) stars as Miss Scarlett in a new comedy-thriller based on the hit 1985 film, Clue, Mon 2 - Sat 7 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

MAMMA MIA! Much-acclaimed feelgood musical which transports audiences to an idyllic Greek island where a romantic story unfolds against a backdrop of ABBA's greatest hits, Tues 3 - Sat 14 May,

Birmingham Hippodrome

YOG BARNUM Coventry's Youth Operetta Group present a portrait of PT Barnum, the 19th-century 'showbiz legend', Wed 4 - Sat 7 May, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF Amateur staging of Edward Albee's masterpiece, Wed 4 - Sat 14 May, The Loft Theatre, Leamington Spa

JABS Three-actor show blending 'affectionate laughs, a few gentle moments of poignancy, a smattering of songs and a touch of audience participation', Sat 7 May, Vesta Tilley Studio, Worcester

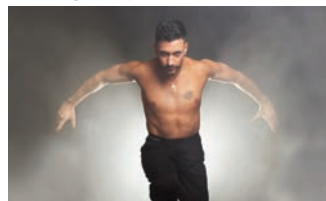
NOTHELLO An 'absurdist, anarchic, insightful and witty new play' exploring the legacy of Shakespeare's Othello, and what it means to be of mixed heritage, Sat 7 - Sat 21 May, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

Kids Shows

THE LITTLE MERMAID Spa Theatre Company Juniors present an amateur staging of the Disney classic, Thurs 5 - Sat 7 May, Bridge House Theatre, Warwick

Dance

GIOVANNI PERNICE: THIS IS ME Show paying homage to the music and dances that have inspired Giovanni's career, Sat 7 May, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa



BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET: DANCE TRACK 25 A 25th anniversary celebration of BRB's landmark talent development programme. Highlights include new works created by Ruth Brill & Kit Holder, Sun 8 May, Birmingham Rep

STRICTLY COME DANCING: THE PROFESSIONALS 2022 Featuring a line-up of ten dancers and Strictly favourites performing choreographed Ballroom and Latin routines, Sun 8 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Light Entertainment

PAUL ZERDIN Wed 4 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch

FUNNY TURNS Dave Moylan's one-man variety show, featuring comedy, magic and daft songs, Sun 8 May, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

A FRIGHT IN THE MUSEUM Comedy routines, magic, mayhem, slapstick and speciality acts combine as CBBC comedy stars Danny & Mick - and their dad, Clive - take on nightwatchman jobs in the museum to make ends meet... Sun 8 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

Talks & Spoken Word

TABLE MANNERS WITH JESSIE & LENNIE WARE Expect special guests, food and laughter as the smash hit podcast takes to the stage, Thurs 5 May, Birmingham Town Hall



Events

DONINGTON HISTORIC FESTIVAL One of Europe's premier celebrations of classic motor racing, Sat 30 Apr - Sun 1 May, Donington Park Racing Circuit

PCA BODYBUILDING AND FITNESS SHOW Regional qualifier for first-time competitors, Sat 30 Apr - Sun 1 May, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

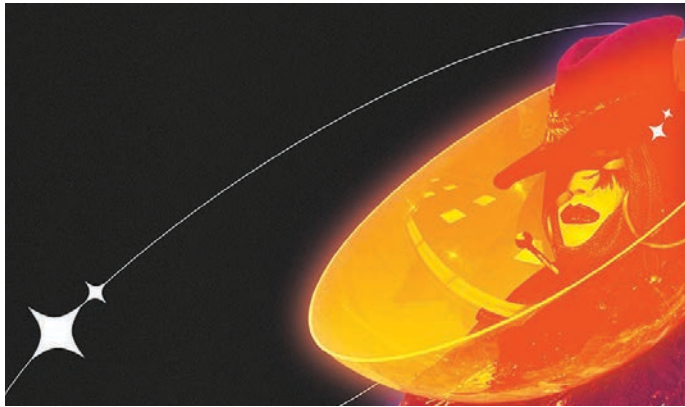
MAKERS CENTRAL Bringing together makers, creators, hobbyists and artists from all over the world, Sat 30 Apr - Sun 1 May, NEC, Birmingham

THE GIN TRAIN Gin-tasting session along the Severn Valley Railway, Sat 30 Apr - Sun 1 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

MEDIEVAL KENILWORTH CASTLE Step back in time to medieval England, meet characters from the past and hear tales from centuries ago, Sat 30 Apr - Mon 2 May, Kenilworth Castle

PEPPA PIG Meet Peppa as she dives into an adventure and makes friends with some of the ocean's most incredible animals, until 3 July, National SEA LIFE Centre, Birmingham

FREDDO'S FESTIVAL OF FUN The famous frog goes on a musical journey with his very own festival, until Sun 9 Oct, Cadbury World, Bournville, Birmingham



The Lismorian Ball - Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry

THE LISMORIAN BALL DJs, art and performances come together under the Herbert's dynamic covered court, Sun 1 May, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry

ORIGINS OF MIDDLE-EARTH: JRR TOLKIEN AND SAREHOLE GUIDED WALK

A guided walk introducing the scenery that inspired JRR Tolkien when he lived near Sarehole Mill as a child, Sun 1 May, Sarehole Mill, Birmingham

TUCKED Showcasing a collection of

some of the UK & Europe's best car builds and highly modified show cars, Mon 2 May, British Motor Museum, Gaydon

CELEBRATE EID Visitors can explore Aston Hall for free, as part of Eid celebrations in Aston Park, Mon 2 May, Aston Hall, Birmingham

GUIDED TOUR OF SAREHOLE MILL Enjoy the sights and sounds of a traditional 18th-century water mill, learn about the life of a miller and check out the scenes that inspired writer JRR

Tolkien, Fri 6 May, Sarehole Mill, Birmingham

THE LIFESTYLE SHOW Featuring an array of exhibits covering the many aspects of the leisure lifestyle, Fri 6 - Sun 8 May, Telford International Centre, Shropshire

EXPLORE SAREHOLE MILL Explore Sarehole Mill at your leisure, without the need for a guided tour, Sat 7 May, Sarehole Mill, Birmingham

FAMILY MUSEUM ENGINEERS - SATURDAY PLAY DAYS Open-ended play environment using unique resources with a STEM-based approach, Sat 7 May, Coventry Transport Museum

GUIDED TOUR OF WEOLEY CASTLE Explore Weoley Castle with experienced guides, Sat 7 May, Weoley Castle, Birmingham

PUBLIC TOUR Opportunity to explore the stage, backstage areas, dressing rooms and front-of-house whilst learning about some of the theatre's history, Sat 7 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

VINTAGE AND HANDMADE FESTIVAL Celebrating music, fashion, design and style through the decades, Sat 7 - Sun 8 May, RAF Museum Cosford

GAYDON LAND ROVER SHOW One of the biggest events in the calendar for Land Rover fans and families, Sat 7 - Sun 8 May, British Motor Museum, Gaydon



SPRING MODEL RAILWAY WEEKEND Showing the very best of locally built dioramas in a variety of gauges, Sat 7 - Sun 8 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

TOY COLLECTORS FAIR Sun 8 May, NEC, Birmingham

FAMILY SUNDAYS Creative, hands-on activities led by the artists-in-residence and inspired by the exhibitions and family theatre programme, Sun 8 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

'True Identikit Brilliance' - THE STAGE

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- *THE PHILHARMONIC ALBUMS
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MUSEUMS WORCESTERSHIRE

Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849). The Great Wave off Kanagawa, 1831, from the series 'Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji'. Courtesy of British Library, British Museum & Art Gallery.

Gigs

ILLUMINATI HOTTIES + DUCK LTD. + MAL Mon 9 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

GRACE PETRIE Mon 9 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

CHIP Mon 9 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE BACKSEAT LOVERS Mon 9 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

PVRIS + K.FLAY Mon 9 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

SCOTT BRADLEE'S POSTMODERN JUKEBOX Mon 9 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

GEOFF TATE Mon 9 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

IIORA + TBC + GABY KETTLE Tues 10 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

KAE TEMPEST + SHUNGUDZO Tues 10 May, Birmingham Town Hall


AMBER RUN UNPLUGGED Tues 10 May, The Assembly, Leamington Spa

LAUNDRY DAY Wed 11 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

TOM ROBINSON BAND Wed 11 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

FLETCHER + UPSAHL Wed 11 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

GREGORY PORTER Wed 11 May, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham



ISLANDMAN Wed 11 May, The Rainbow, Digbeth, Birmingham

RED SNAPPER + UP + BUSTLE & OUT Wed 11 May, The Assembly, Leamington Spa

BOYZLIFE Wed 11 May, hmv Empire, Coventry

WILL POUND Wed 11

May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

CRABBI Thurs 12 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

HALF•ALIVE Thurs 12 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

RED SNAPPER + THE NATURE CENTRE Thurs 12 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

RADIO GAGA + QUEEN TRIBUTE Thurs 12 May, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

THE SNUTS Thurs 12 May, hmv Empire, Coventry

NASHVILLE PUSSY Thurs 12 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

STEVE HARLEY ACOUSTIC BAND Thurs 12 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch

LUNAR VACATION Fri 13 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

MADAM X + PLURALIST + FRESHTA + KOJAY + JAY CARDER + TRIESTE + EARFUL OF WAX Fri 13 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

JOJO + LINDSEY LOMIS Fri 13 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

WILL VARLEY + GUISE + JACK VALERO Fri 13 May, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

AIDAN MCGUIRE Fri 13 May, The Rainbow, Digbeth, Birmingham

THE GREY GOOSE BLUES BAND Fri 13 May, The Core Theatre, Solihull

STEELEYE SPAN Fri 13 May, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

CARA DILLON Fri 13 May, Drapers' Hall, Coventry

WIRED THC + DJINOVA + CHAPLAIN Fri 13 May, hmv Empire, Coventry

MALTLOAF - A TRIBUTE TO MEATLOAF Fri 13 May, Arches Venue, Coventry

FLOOK Fri 13 May, The Fleece Inn, Bretforton, Nr Evesham

THE BRACKISH Fri 13 May, Marrs Bar, Worcester

THE CELINE DION

SONGBOOK Fri 13 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

THE FUREYS Fri 13 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch

MODERN NATURE Sat 14 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

STEEL PULSE Sat 14 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

JOSEF + THEO BLEAK Sat 14 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

TRIDENT WATERS + WHITE RAVEN DOWN Sat 14 May, The Asylum, Birmingham

BRYAN ADAMS Sat 14 May, Utilita Arena, Birmingham

WALK RIGHT BACK - THE EVERLY BROTHERS STORY Sat 14 May, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

THE BOWIE EXPERIENCE Sat 14 May, hmv Empire, Coventry

AC/DC EXPERIENCE Sat 14 May, Arches Venue, Coventry

THE SOUTH Sat 14 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

ABBA FOREVER Sat 14 May, The Benn Hall, Rugby

GENESIS VISIBLE TOUCH Sat 14 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch

THE CIRCLES Sat 14 May, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourport

MADISON CUNNINGHAM + ROSIE FRATER-TAYLOR Sun 15 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

GRACIE ABRAMS Sun 15 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

CHAINSKA BRASSIKA Sun 15 May, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

TRAVIS Sun 15 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

JUSTIN ADAMS AND MAURO DURANTE Sun 15 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

THE JULIE JULY BAND Sun 15 May, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

NEARLY ELTON Sun 15 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

Classical Music

ARMONICO CONSORT: STABAT MATER
Also featuring Armonico Baroque Players and Christopher Monks (director), Tues 10 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry



GABRIELLA MONTERO: TCHAIKOVSKY'S PIANO CONCERTO Featuring Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla (conductor) & Gabriela Montero (piano), Wed 11 - Thurs 12 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE DARACH ENSEMBLE Featuring Grace Tushingham (oboe), Lewis Sinclair (cor anglais/oboe) Hugo Maughan (clarinets), Fri 13 May, St Mary's Church, Warwick

ANDREW CASKIE ORGAN RECITAL
Programme includes works by Walton, Saint-Saëns, Dick Koomans, Bach, Lemmens, Lemare and Alfred Hollins, Sat 14 May, Malvern Priory

Comedy

NICK PAGE, JENNY COLLIER, ANDY WHITE & JON WAGSTAFFE Thurs 12 May, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

JEFF DUNHAM Fri 13 May, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham



AMY MATTHEWS, JACK CARROLL, JACOB HAWLEY, JOSH WELLER & COMIC TBC Fri 13 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

CHRIS ROCK Fri 13 May, Utilita Arena, Birmingham

PHIL CHAPMAN, KAREN BAYLEY & GERRY K Fri 13 May, Aston Villa Football Club, Birmingham

RICH HALL Fri 13 May, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

IGNACIO LOPEZ, DIANE SPENCER, ERIC RUSHTON & TIM FITZHUGHAM Fri 13 May, The Abbey Theatre, Nuneaton

AMY MATTHEWS, JACK CARROLL, JACOB HAWLEY & SCOTT BENNETT Sat 14 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

CARL HUTCHINSON Sat 14 May, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

CHRIS MCCAUSLAND Sat 14 May, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

FAMILY COMEDY SHOW WITH GARY TRO, ADA CAMPE & JONNY AWSUM Sun 15 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

KAE KURD, NABIL ABDULRASHID, ESHANN AKBAR & AATIF NAWAZ Sun 15 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

SIMON AMSTELL Sun 15 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Theatre

AS BRITISH AS A WATERMELON 'Messy, sensory experience' which questions what it means to belong... Tues 10 - Wed 11 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

PRISCILLA QUEEN OF THE DESERT
Amateur staging presented by Solihull Theatre Company, Tues 10 - Sat 14 May, The Core, Solihull

PRIVATE PEACEFUL Based on Michael Morpurgo's book of the same name, Tues 10 - Sat 14 May, Malvern Theatres

RIOT ACT Solo verbatim show created entirely out of interviews with three key players in the history of the LGBTQ+ rights movement, Thurs 12 May, Birmingham Rep

MURDERED TO DEATH Agatha Christie whodunnit presented by Phoenix Players, Thurs 12 - Sat 14 May, Bear Pitt Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

THE THREE MUSKETEERS Award-winning Le Navet Bete present a comedy adventure that promises to have audiences 'rolling with laughter', Thurs 12 - Sat 14 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

HOUSEWIVES ON HOLIDAY Join the ladies as they move between holiday heaven and holiday hell, Fri 13 May, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

LAVA James Fritz's funny, tender and moving story about friendship and reconnection in the aftermath of catastrophe, Fri 13 - Sat 14 May, Birmingham Rep

MARY STUART Friedrich Schiller's verse play depicting the last days of Mary, Queen of Scots, Sat 14 - Sat 21 May, Criterion Theatre, Coventry

Kids Shows

OI FROG & FRIENDS! Join Frog, Cat and Dog in this action-packed stage adaptation of Kes Gray & Jim Field's bestselling children's books, Fri 13 - Sat 14 May, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

TWIRLYWOOS Join Great BigHoo, Toodloo, Chickedy, Chick and their friends as they discover the wonderful world around them, Sat 14 May, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

Dance

BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET: FAMILY MUSIC AND DANCE Family-friendly performance featuring highlights from Sleeping Beauty and other classic ballets, Fri 13 - Sat 14 May, Birmingham Rep

BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET: AN EVENING OF MUSIC & DANCE World-class dancers join BRB's Royal Ballet Sinfonia for a gala night of classics, Fri 13 - Sat 14 May, Birmingham Rep

Light Entertainment

FASCINATING AIDA An evening of song and humour with Dillie Keane, Adèle Anderson & Liza Pulman, Wed 11 May, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

THE BARRICADE BOYS BRING HIM HOME TOUR Featuring music from West End and Broadway classics, Thurs 12 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

REMEMBERING LIVE VARIETY Featuring comedian Billy Pearce, singer Phil

Harrison, vocalist Shelley Wormald and theatre regular, Phil Hoyles, Thurs 12 May, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

HYPROV: IMPROV UNDER HYPNOSIS Two art forms unite for a unique comedy experience, Sun 15 May, Birmingham Town Hall

Talks & Spoken Word

DIVORCED, BEHEADED, DIED: AN AUDIENCE WITH KING HENRY VIII His Majesty invites his 'loyal subjects' to petition him or question him on any related subject - be ready for some lively answers, Thurs 12 May, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

Events

GUIDED TOUR OF SAREHOLE MILL Enjoy the sights and sounds of a traditional 18th-century water mill, learn about the life of a miller and check out the scenes that inspired writer JRR Tolkien, Fri 13 - Sat 14 May, Sarehole



Classic Motor Show - Ragley Hall

Mill, Birmingham

THE BABY SHOW The UK's leading pregnancy, baby and parenting event, providing everything for bump, baby, and you, Fri 13 - Sun 15 May, NEC, Birmingham

BODYPOWER EXPO Featuring 300-plus exhibitors selling fitness-focused brands and products, Fri 13 - Sun 15 May, NEC, Birmingham

ORIGINS OF MIDDLE-EARTH: JRR TOLKIEN AND SAREHOLE GUIDED WALK A guided walk introducing the

scenery that inspired JRR Tolkien when he lived near Sarehole Mill as a child, Sun 15 May, Sarehole Mill, Birmingham

FAMILY SUNDAYS Creative, hands-on activities led by the artists-in-residence and inspired by the exhibitions and family theatre programme, Sun 15 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

CLASSIC MOTOR SHOW An interactive arena with parades during the day, and live vintage music, Sun 15 - Mon 16 May, Ragley Hall, Warwickshire

2022 TOUR
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BALLET CENTRAL

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Cathy Marston
Mithuzel November
Mikaela Polley

Artistic Director Kate Coyne
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KEANE

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Gigs

MAN ON MAN Mon 16 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

AVIVA Mon 16 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

DAISY BRAIN Tues 17 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

JO HARROP Tues 17 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

THE SHIRES Tues 17 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham



THE QUEERS Tues 17 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

FRANKIE & THE WITCH FINGERS Wed 18 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

STATE CHAMPS Wed 18 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

CHARLIE SIMPSON Wed 18 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

CHARLI XCX + YEULE Wed 18 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE ROBERT CRAY BAND Wed 18 May, Birmingham Town Hall

BALMING TIGER Thurs 19 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

MGLA + IN TWILIGHT'S EMBRACE Thurs 19 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

TWIN ATLANTIC + DECLAN WELSH & THE DECADENT WEST + DEAD PONY Thurs 19 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

EMELI SANDÉ Thurs 19 May, The Mill, Digbeth, Birmingham

THE MANFREDS Thurs 19 May, The Core Theatre, Solihull

FIVE STAR SWING: GREATEST SONGS FROM THE MOVIES Thurs 19 May, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

OXYGEN THIEF & NON

CANON (ACOUSTIC) Thurs 19 May, The Tin Music and Arts, The Canal Basin, Coventry

CLOUDBUSTING - THE MUSIC OF KATE BUSH Thurs 19 May, Albany Theatre, Coventry

ANDY IRVINE Thurs 19 May, The Fleece Inn, Bretforton, Nr Evesham

PHON Thurs 19 May, Marrs Bar, Worcester

SHOW OF HANDS + TRACK DOGS Thurs 19 May, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

ZEO + GENESIS ELIJAH + STANZA DIVAN + LEKKY + WORDSMIFF FLIP Fri 20 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

TROMBONE SHORTY & ORLEANS AVENUE Fri 20 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

JOHNNY CASH ROADSHOW Fri 20 May, The Core Theatre, Solihull

THE MATT MONRO STORY (FEATURING MATT MONRO JNR) Fri 20 May, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

KENNEY JONES + SECRET AFFAIR + PURPLE HEARTS II + THE TRUTH + THE CHORDS UK + SQUIRE Fri 20 May, The Assembly, Leamington Spa

OLD TIME SAILORS Fri 20 May, The Rialto, Coventry

ELVANA - ELVIS FRONTED NIRVANA Fri 20 May, hmv Empire, Coventry

MOTORHEADACHE - MOTORHEAD TRIBUTE Fri 20 May, Arches Venue, Coventry

VICKY JACKSON AS PINK Fri 20 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

INWARDS Fri 20 May, Marrs Bar, Worcester

THE STORY OF SOUL Fri 20 May, Malvern Theatres

KARNIVOOL + THE OCEAN Sat 21 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

MYRIAM ADAMS Sat 21 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

BOB VYLAN Sat 21 May,

O2 Institute, B'ham

TONY MATTERHORN Sat 21 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE SMYTHS Sat 21 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

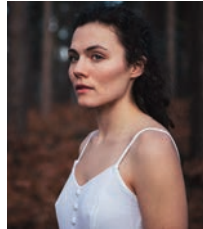
TODRICK HALL Sat 21 May, Birmingham Town Hall

YEARS & YEARS Sat 21 May, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

BOOTLEG BLONDIE Sat 21 May, hmv Empire, Coventry

THE BRYAN ADAMS EXPERIENCE Sat 21 May, Arches Venue, Coventry

ELLIE GOWERS Sat 21 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry



RICKY WARWICK AND THE FIGHTING HEARTS + THE DUST CODA Sat 21 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

DHIDALAH Sun 22 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

THE LAZY EYES Sun 22 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

THE WANDERING HEARTS Sun 22 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE LUKA STATE Sun 22 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

TONY CHRISTIE Sun 22 May, Birmingham Town Hall

THE HOLLIES Sun 22 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

WHITESNAKE + FOREIGNER + EUROPE Sun 22 May, Utilita Arena, Birmingham

WEMA + MINTAKAA Sun 22 May, The Tin Music and Arts, The Canal Basin, Coventry

JOOLS HOLLAND AND HIS RHYTHM & BLUES ORCHESTRA Sun 22 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry



Footloose The Musical - Malvern Theatres

Classical Music

ST JAMES'S SINGERS: THE MUSIC OF THE CORONATION Programme includes works by Handel, Parry, Stanford, Walton, Gibbons, Byrd & Vaughan Williams, Sat 21 May, St Mary's Church, Warwick

Comedy

GUZ KHAN Mon 16 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

RUSSELL PETERS Tues 17 May, Utilita Arena, Birmingham

PAUL CHOWDHRY Wed 18 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

SANDI TOKSVIG LIVE! Thurs 19 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, CATHERINE BOHART & CHRISTIAN SCHULTE-LOH Thurs 19 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

LOU SANDERS Thurs 19 May, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

ROBIN MORGAN, SIMON WOZNIAC, CATHERINE BOHART, CHRISTIAN SCHULTE-LOH & JESSIE NIXON Fri 20 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

MILTON JONES Fri 20 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

ROBIN MORGAN, SIMON WOZNIAC, CATHERINE BOHART & CHRISTIAN SCHULTE-LOH Sat 21 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

OMID DJALILI Sat 21 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE MUSLIMS ARE COMING Sat 21 May, The Core Theatre, Solihull

SANDI TOKSVIG Sat 21 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Theatre

WAITRESS Hit West End musical starring Chelsea Halfpenny as a waitress and expert pie-maker in search of happiness. Matt Willis also stars, Mon 16 - Sat 21 May,

Birmingham Hippodrome

FOOTLOOSE THE MUSICAL Jake Quickenden stars alongside Darren Day in this foot-tapping musical based on the hit 1980s' movie, Mon 16 - Sat 21 May, Malvern Theatres

THE PLAY THAT GOES WRONG Mischief's multi-award-winning international smash-hit comedy, Mon 16 - Sat 21 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

MILL ON THE FLOSS Amateur production based on George Eliot's famous novel, Mon 16 - Sat 21 May, Talisman Theatre, Kenilworth

ANIMAL FARM Contemporary take on George Orwell's famous fable, Tues 17 - Sat 21 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

PRIVATE PEACEFUL Based on Michael Morpurgo's book of the same name, Tues 17 - Sat 21 May, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

WOULD YOU BET AGAINST US? Brummie and lifelong Aston Villa fan Paul Hunter's funny, poignant and uplifting show marks the 40th anniversary of the club's famous European Cup triumph, Thurs 19 - May - Sat 4 June, Birmingham Rep

SLEEPING WITH BEAUTY: AN ADULT PANTO Starring Ben-Ryan Davies as the Prince, TV comic Liam Mellor as Jangles and Jimmy Burton-iles as Queen Lusious Le-Coq, Fri 20 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

TWINKLE Amateur staging of Phillip Meaks' one-man revengers comedy, Sun 22 May, Talisman Theatre, Kenilworth

Kids Shows

TWIRLYWOOS Join Great BigHoo, Toodloo, Chickedy, Chick and their friends as they discover the wonderful world around them, Tues 17 - Wed 18 May, Malvern Theatres

OI FROG & FRIENDS! Join Frog, Cat and Dog in this action-packed stage adaptation of Kes Gray & Jim Field's bestselling children's books, Sat 21 - Sun 29 May, Birmingham Hippodrome

FIREMAN SAM Join Sam, Penny, Elvis, Station Officer Steele and Norman in an all-singing, all-dancing, action-packed show, Sun 22 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

Dance

CONFESSIONS OF A COCKNEY TEMPLE DANCER Solo show in which Shane Shambhu reveals the secret life he kept from his school friends, growing up in the cultural melting pot of East London, Wed 18 - Thurs 19 May, Birmingham Hippodrome



Light Entertainment

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS Music & choreography combine in this musical journey through the '50s, '60s and '70s, Mon 16 - Tues 17 May, The Core, Solihull

JASPER CARROTT'S STAND UP AND ROCK Fusion of comedy and music featuring Jasper, the Bev Bevan Band and special guest Andy Bennett, Tues 17 - Sat 21 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch



THE NAVY LARK A cast of three bring to life a trio of classic episodes from the much-loved radio series, Thurs 19 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

PAUL MERTON: IMPRO CHUMS Paul Merton, Richard Vranich, Suki Webster, Mike McShane and accompanist Kirsty Newton are back with another evening of mind-blowing improvisation, Fri 20 May, Birmingham Town Hall

Talks & Spoken Word

JOE LYCETT'S CURIOSITIES WITH SHAUN KEAVENY This Flatpack Festival event sees Brummie comedian Joe joined by radio DJ Shaun for an evening of chat about filmmaking, music, classic adverts & comedy, Tues 17 May, Birmingham Town Hall

GILL SIMS: TITS, GITS AND LITTLE SH*TS LIVE TOUR Gill Sims, author of bestselling book *Why Mummy*, takes a humorous look at the changing face of motherhood, Sat 21 May, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

Events

SPRING DIESEL FESTIVAL 2022 Ride behind the best of the diesel home fleet alongside VIP special guests, Thurs 19 - Sun 22 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

GUIDED TOUR OF SAREHOLE MILL Enjoy the sights and sounds of a traditional 18th-century water mill, learn about the life of a miller and check out the

scenes that inspired writer JRR Tolkien, Fri 20 - Sat 21 May, Sarehole Mill, Birmingham

SHROPSHIRE PARTY AT THE QUARRY PARK Featuring local beers, ales & ciders, a gin den, a wine bar, street food and a live music stage, Fri 20 - Sat 21 May, The Quarry Park, Shrewsbury

BENNETTS BRITISH SUPERBIKE CHAMPIONSHIP Returning to Donington for 2022, Fri 20 - Sun 22 May, Donington Park

MARDI GRAS Carnival-inspired takeover featuring 'an explosion of colours, sounds, entertainment, and themed food from the Deep South and around the world', Sat 21 May - Sun 19 June, Alton Towers, Staffordshire

FREE GUIDED TOUR Visitors can join a free guided tour and view some amazing collections, Sat 21 May, Tamworth Castle

FAMILY SUNDAYS Creative, hands-on activities led by the artists-in-residence and inspired by the exhibitions and family theatre programme, Sun 22 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

PANDA SPOTTIN'

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DISCOVER IT ALL

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Gigs

MIDLAND Mon 23 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

NATHANIEL RATELIFF & THE NIGHT SWEATS Mon 23 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

TOPS Mon 23 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

ABSTRACT ORCHESTRA Tues 24 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

PEANESS Tues 24 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

MILES KANE + BROOKE COMBE Tues 24 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

JP COOPER + WORRYWORRY Tues 24 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

KING PROMISE Tues 24 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE OVERTONES Tues 24 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

DECO Tues 24 May, The Rainbow, Digbeth, Birmingham

KUUNATIC Wed 25 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

THE RAMONAS Wed 25 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

STONE + ELI SMART Wed 25 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

MEN WITHOUT HATS Wed 25 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE SIMON AND GARFUNKEL STORY Wed 25 May, The Core Theatre, Solihull

THE JERSEY BEATS Wed 25 May, Albany Theatre, Coventry

CELINE DION Wed 25 - Thurs 26 May, Utilita Arena, Birmingham

TRIATHALON Thurs 26 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

BEAR'S DEN Thurs 26 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

BLOC PARTY Thurs 26 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

DAVID GRAY Thurs 26 May, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

HARSH + VENDETTA LOVE + SPIDERWAYNE Thurs 26 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

BLAIR DUNLOP Thurs 26 May, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

SPACE Fri 27 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

TOM OLLENDORFF TRIO Fri 27 May, Pizza Express Live, Birmingham

BRIAN FALLON & THE HOWLING WEATHER + CHRIS FARREN + JESSE MALIN Fri 27 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

ALT-J Fri 27 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

EARL SLICK Fri 27 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE UNTHANKS Fri 27 May, Birmingham Town Hall

THUNDER Fri 27 May, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

JOHNNY MCEVOY Fri 27 May, The Core Theatre, Solihull

A CELEBRATION OF SIMPLY RED Fri 27 May, The Rialto, Coventry

THE ROYSTON CLUB + UNDERCLASS + LLOYD BALLARD + MVNICK + SILVERLINES Fri 27 May, hmv Empire, Coventry

THE POWER BALLAD SHOW Fri 27 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

ONE NIGHT IN TEXAS Fri 27 May, Malvern Theatres

SINFUL MAGGIE + ALCOHOL LICKS + SONS OF CLOGGER Fri 27 May, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourport

THE LUNAR YEAR Sat 28 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

PET SHOP BOYS Sat 28 May, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

A-HA Sat 28 May, Utilita Arena, Birmingham

THE CRAZY WORLD OF ARTHUR BROWN Sat 28 May, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

THE MONOCHROME SET + THE PRISTINES Sat 28 May, The Tin Music and Arts, The Canal

Basin, Coventry

THE ELO SHOW Sat 28 May, Albany Theatre, Coventry

FAUX FIGHTERS Sat 28 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

INKUBUS SUKKUBUS + THE ARBORETUM Sat 28 May, Marrs Bar, Worcester

BOTH SIDES NOW A TRIBUTE TO JONI MITCHELL Sat 28 May, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

NAVI AS MICHAEL JACKSON Sat 28 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

DEEP TAN Sun 29 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

ROLLING BLACKOUTS COASTAL FEVER + PIP BLOM Sun 29 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

KNUCKLE PUCK Sun 29 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

SIMON AND OSCAR FROM OCEAN COLOUR SCENE Sun 29 May, Birmingham Town Hall

THE NEW BUSHBURY MOUNTAIN DAREDEVILS Sun 29 May, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourport

ASHE + SAM FISCHER Mon 30 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

LORDE Mon 30 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

EMELI SANDÉ Mon 30 May, Birmingham Town Hall

ALICE COOPER + THE CULT Mon 30 May, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST Mon 30 May, The Fleece Inn, Bretforton, Nr Evesham



DIONNE WARWICK Tues 31 May, Birmingham Town Hall

SEVEN DRUNKEN NIGHTS Tues 31 May, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

Classical Music

LUNCHTIME CONCERT WITH THOMAS TROTTER Programme includes works by MA Charpentier, Handel, Mozart, Haydn, Gershwin & L Anderson, Mon 23 May, Birmingham Town Hall

MILOŠ: HOMAGE TO SEGOVIA Featuring classical pianist Miloš Karadaglic. Programme includes works by Sor, Bach, Albeniz & Villa-Lobos, Wed 25 May, Malvern Theatres

ORCHESTRA OF THE SWAN Featuring David Gordon (harpichord). Programme includes works by De Falla, Biber, Bach, Scarlatti & The Beatles, Thurs 26 May, Drapers' Hall, Coventry

ORCHESTRA OF THE SWAN: PASTORAL Featuring Jason Lai (conductor) & Thomas Gould (violin). Programme includes Beethoven's Violin Concerto and Symphony No.6 'Pastoral', Fri 27 May, The Courtyard, Hereford

MILOŠ: HOMAGE TO SEGOVIA Featuring classical pianist Miloš Karadaglic. Programme includes works by Sor, Bach, Albeniz & Villa-Lobos, Sat 28 May, Birmingham Town Hall

THE LONDON CONCERTANTE: VIVALDI'S FOUR SEASONS Sat 28 May, Birmingham Cathedral

BIRMINGHAM CONTEMPORARY MUSIC GROUP: ACOUSMATIC CONCERT W/BEAST Programme comprises Iannis Xenakis La Legende d'Eer (1978) 45' and Sergio Luque World Premiere, Sun 29 May (7pm), The Exchange, Birmingham

Comedy

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, JO ENRIGHT & IAN COPPINGER Thurs 26 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

CHLOE PETTS Fri 27 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

PAUL TONKINSON, MICHAEL AKADIRI, JO ENRIGHT & IAN COPPINGER Fri 27 - Sat 28 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

WORLD COMEDY CLASH 2022 Sun 29 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

STEVE BUGEJA Sun 29 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

WE WILL ROCK YOU Smash-hit musical by Queen & Ben Elton, Mon 23 - Sat 28 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

MAGIC GOES WRONG Co-production by award-winning Mischief Theatre and magic legends Penn & Teller which promises to raise the bar with 'daredevil stunts, jaw-dropping feats and

irresistible comedy genius', Tues 24 - Sun 29 May, Birmingham Hippodrome

LADIES OF LETTERS Only Fools And Horses favourites Tessa Peak-Jones and Gwyneth Strong star as two women in their 60s battling the big issues of the 21st century... Tues 24 - Sat 28 May, Malvern Theatres

FRANKENSTEIN: HOW TO MAKE A MONSTER Award-winning gig theatre production, inspired by Mary Shelley's classic gothic horror novel, Wed 25 - Sat 28 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

PETER PAN: A MUSICAL ADVENTURE Amateur staging presented by Coventry Musical Theatre Society, Thurs 26 - Sun 29 May, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

Kids Shows

THE GRUFFALO Join Mouse on a daring adventure through the deep, dark wood in Tall Stories' magical, musical adaptation of the classic picture book by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler, Tues 24 - Wed 25 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

EXCITING SCIENCE Fun & fact-filled entertainment featuring experiments from the world of science, Sun 29 May, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

WRIGGLE DANCE COMPANY: SQUIDGE A fun interactive dance performance for younger audiences and featuring live music and digital projection, Sun 29 - Tues 31 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

THE ANIMAL GUYZ: ANIMAL ANTICS Entertaining and educational show for younger audiences featuring puppetry and special effects, Mon 30 May, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

Dance

OTI: I AM HERE Expect mesmerising Jives, pumping Sambas and much more in what promises to be an 'explosive night of dance and music that will set your heart racing.' Sun 29 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre



Light Entertainment

PAUL MERTON: IMPRO CHUMS Paul Merton, Richard Vranich, Suki Webster, Mike McShane and accompanist Kirsty Newton are back with another evening of mind-blowing improvisation, Fri 27 May, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

Talks & Spoken Word

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE RUGBY LIVE England heroes James Haskell and Mike Tindall take to the road with the world's most popular rugby podcast. Sky Sports' rugby presenter Alex Payne and special guest, Chris Ashton, also feature, Mon 23 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

TALKSPORT TOURS Featuring the radio show's Alan Brazil & Ray Parlour, Tues 24 May, The Alexandra, 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, Thurs 26 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

THE GUILTY FEMINIST: LIVE Deborah Frances-White will be joined by an array of guests to explore our 'noble goals as 21st century feminists - and our hypocrisies and insecurities that undermine those goals, Fri 27 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

TWO MR P'S IN A PODCAST Sharing funny stories from the front line of teaching, this live show will see the Two Mr Ps reminiscing on their own school days and looking at the wonderful and hilarious world of education, Mon 30 May, The Old Rep, Birmingham

Events

GUIDED TOUR OF SAREHOLE MILL Enjoy the sights and sounds of a traditional 18th-century water mill, learn about the life of a miller and check out the scenes that inspired writer JRR Tolkien, Fri 27 - Sat 28 May, Sarehole Mill, Birmingham

VAPER EXPO Featuring exhibitors from around the world showcasing their products and innovations, Fri 27 - Sun 29 May, NEC, Birmingham

FAMILY MUSEUM ENGINEERS - HOLIDAY SPECIALS Open-ended play environment using unique resources with a STEM-based approach, Sat 28 May, Coventry Transport Museum

UK SLOT CAR FESTIVAL A must-attend event for slot car enthusiasts, Sat 28 - Sun 29 May, British Motor Museum, Gaydon



BRITISH GT & GB3 CHAMPIONSHIPS Supercars from many of the world's greatest prestige marques, including Aston Martin, McLaren, Porsche, Bentley and Mercedes-AMG, are expected to star, Sat 28 - Sun 29 May, Donington Park

DOGFEST Try your paw at a variety of have-a-go activities, watch dog displays and pick up training tips, Sat 28 - Sun 29 May, Ragley Hall,

Warwickshire

MAY HALF-TERM FAMILY ACTIVITIES Fuel their imagination with a range of activities, Sat 28 May - Sun 5 June, British Motor Museum, Gaydon

KIDS RULE! Celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee with historic performers, hands-on activities and fresh-air family fun, Sat 28 May - Sun 5 June, Kenilworth Castle

FAMILY SUNDAYS Creative, hands-on activities led by the artists-in-residence and inspired by the exhibitions and family theatre programme, Sun 29 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

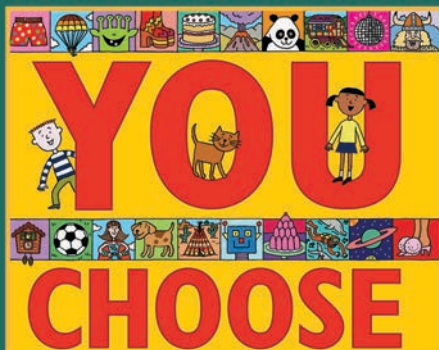
THIS MAKES THAT WITH THESE Take apart gadgets and appliances to find out how they work, Mon 30 May, Coventry Transport Museum

MAKE & PLAY ENGINEERS - CRAZY COLOURFUL EXPERIMENTS Experiment with spray bottles, pumps, wheels and more to figure out the best way to paint a car, Tues 31 May, Coventry Transport Museum

QUEEN'S PLATINUM JU-BEE-LEE FAMILY FUN DAYS Series of pollinator-themed events and activities, Tues 31 May - Wed 1 June, Compton Verney, Warwickshire

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FRIDAY 9 SEPTEMBER

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FRIDAY 16 SEPTEMBER

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