

Shropshire

ISSUE 443 DECEMBER 2023

What's On

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TOMMY J ROLLASON **BRAD FITT** **LUCAS RUSH**

LAURA-DENE PERRYMAN **REECE DUNCAN**

Jack And The Beanstalk

Written by Paul Hendy

29 NOV 2023 - 7 JAN 2024
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 **theatresevern** SHREWSBURY

inside:

THE BODYGUARD

Hit musical back in the region
feature inside...



WINTER FUNLAND

check out the UK's largest
indoor Christmas funfair...



STEP BACK IN TIME

Victorian Christmas weekends
return to Blists Hill



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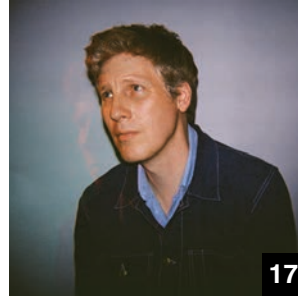
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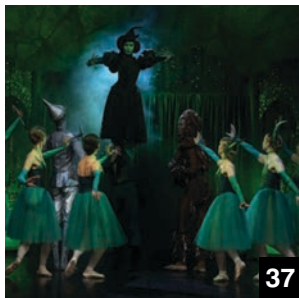
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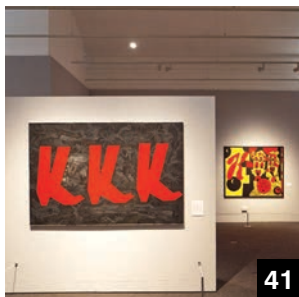
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What's On

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A Shrewsbury return for hit retro festival Let's Rock

Iconic retro festival Let's Rock is to return to Shrewsbury's Quarry Park next summer. Taking place on Saturday 13 July, the show will feature, among other artists, Go West, From The Jam, Nik Kershaw, a DJ set by Martin Kemp and headline acts Squeeze and Bananarama. Commenting on the news, the organisers & founders of Let's Rock, Nick Billingham & Matt Smith, said: "We think Let's Rock offers the best value of any festival. Where else could you see so many huge stars performing live for the price of a meal out?! See you in 2024!" For further information about the event and to purchase tickets, visit letsrock80s.com

Busted to play Trentham Live event next summer

Pop-punk band Busted will appear at Trentham Live next summer. Taking place at Trentham Estate in Staffordshire on Sunday 18 August, the trio's show will round off the four-day festival. To check ticket availability, visit trentham.co.uk



Deck The Halls with the CBSO in Wolverhampton

The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra are heading up the road to Wolverhampton this Christmas, to present 'a magical night of carols', complete with a festive singalong 'for the whole family to enjoy'.

The orchestra will be accompanied by the Wolverhampton Chamber Choir and guest singer Tommy Blaize (Strictly Come Dancing - pictured). They perform at Wolverhampton Civic Hall on Friday 22 December. To find out more and book tickets, head to cbso.co.uk



Midlands stop-offs for Only Fools And Horses

The stage musical version of long-running BBC TV comedy series Only Fools And Horses will visit the Midlands next year. Stopping off at two of the region's theatres as part of a UK tour, the show features material from the television series, 'an ingenious script and 20 hilarious songs'. Only Fools And Horses The Musical shows at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Monday 21 to Saturday 26 October, and then at the Regent Theatre in Stoke-on-Trent from Monday 2 to Saturday 7 December. For further information and to book tickets, go to: onlyfoolsonstage.com

Tamworth Castle hosts its first open-air ice rink

Families are being invited to get their skates on pre-Christmas and pay a visit to an open-air, eco-friendly, synthetic ice rink in the grounds of Tamworth Castle. Sessions on the rink - which is available to enjoy from Monday 18 to Sunday 24 December - last for one hour. To find out more, visit tamworthartsandevents.co.uk

Lord Of The Dance heads back to the Midlands

The world-renowned Lord Of The Dance returns to the Midlands next autumn. Michael Flatley's high-kicking extravaganza, which has been seen by more than 60 million people in 60 countries, stops off at Birmingham theatre The Alexandra from Monday 30 September to Sunday 6 October as part of a brand-new tour. For more information and tickets, visit atgtickets.com/birmingham

Tickets for Cosford Air Show 2024 now on sale

The RAF Cosford Air Show will return next year on Sunday 9 June.

With a capacity crowd of 55,000 people having attended the event this summer, organisers are promising 'the same excitement in the air and on the ground for 2024'. Next year's show will be based around the theme of Take Flight.

Commenting on the news, RAF Cosford Air Show Chair, Wing Commander Justin Blackie, said: "The Air Show remains a great way for us to engage with the public, to showcase the Royal Air Force's capabilities and to celebrate the Service's history while looking forward to the next generation of its people and technology."

Watercolour Masters show returns to Lilleshall

Shropshire's Lilleshall Hall will next spring host a historic exhibition featuring a selection of paintings by some of the world's most talented watercolour artists.

International Watercolour Masters will be available to view at the venue from Wednesday 15 to Friday 24 May.

To find out more, visit; internationalwatercolourmasters.com



Image: KellyEddington_USA_X-Woman

Nadiya and Kai on the road again

After success with debut tour *Once Upon A Time*, dance stars Nadiya Bychkova and Kai Widdrington are heading out on the road again in 2024. The dynamic duo will stop off at two Midlands venues: Malvern Theatres (Thursday 13 June) and Birmingham's Symphony Hall (Monday 24 June). For further information and to purchase tickets, visit either ticketmaster.co.uk or nadiyaandkai.com



Rock band Elbow make spring visit

Rock band Elbow will visit Birmingham's Resorts World Arena next spring as part of a UK tour (Friday 10 May). Commenting on the news, lead singer Guy Garvey said: "We love the intimacy of theatres, but we have some very big songs, and the electricity of 20,000 people singing along cannot be denied. So, the big rooms it is, and big shows they will be. Can't wait to see everybody again."

Further information and tickets are available at resortsworldarena.co.uk



Dear Evan Hansen coming to the Wolverhampton Grand

A new production of Olivier, Tony and Grammy award-winning musical *Dear Evan Hansen* will stop off in Wolverhampton as part of its first-ever UK tour.

The show focuses on title character Evan, a

high-school senior with social anxiety whose desire to fit in sees him telling a terrible lie that eventually catches him out.

The hit show visits Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Tuesday 1 to Saturday 5 April 2025.

Fun run in aid of Air Ambulance

Midlands Air Ambulance Charity is calling on festive runners to take part in the Telford Town Park Fun Run this month.

Taking place on Sunday 3 December and raising vital funds for the charity, the event sees Midlanders dressing up as Santa and other seasonal characters. To register your interest or find out more, visit midlandsairambulance.com



Cirque du Soleil set to dazzle again

Cirque du Soleil will return to the UK for the first time in six years next spring, with their new tour including a stop-off at Utilita Arena Birmingham (Thursday 25 - Sunday 28 April). The world-renowned company will be performing the critically acclaimed *OVO*, which they describe as 'a colourful intrusion into a new day in the life of insects; a non-stop riot of energy and movement'. For further information and to book tickets, visit utilitaarenabham.co.uk

Bear Grylls announces his Never Give Up tour

Television adventurer Bear Grylls is hitting the road again next spring with brand-new show Never Give Up.

Featuring 'unseen, hair-raising images and remarkable behind-the-scenes videos', the show stops off at Birmingham's Symphony Hall on Saturday 27 April.

For more information and to book tickets, visit bmusic.co.uk

A Cabaret of Curiosities at the Garrick theatre!

A brand-new show from one-time Britain's Got Talent finalists The Circus of Horrors is coming to Lichfield Garrick in the new year as part of a UK tour.

Titled Cabaret Of Curiosities, the production stops off at the venue on Wednesday 24 January.

Featured acts include 'sword swallowers, whirlwind jugglers, twisted contortionists, voodoo acrobats, pickled people and hula-hooping sideshow showgirls' - all presented against the soundscape of an original rock score. To find out more and book tickets for the show, visit lichfieldgarrick.com



From TV's The Voice to Shrewsbury's abbey...

Classical crossover favourite Nadia Eide is visiting Shrewsbury Abbey on Saturday 23 December to present a special Christmas concert. A finalist on television's The Voice,

Scandinavian-born Nadia will perform a wide selection of festive favourites, including O Holy Night, Panis Angelicus, Carol Of The Bells and Do You Want To Build A Snowman. For more information about the concert, visit the Abbey's website.



High-octane fun as Arenacross returns to the region

Motocross and off-road racing fans can look forward to a Second City showdown in the new year, as Arenacross makes a welcome return at Birmingham's Resorts World Arena on Saturday 3 February.

Featuring a high-octane mix of indoor motocross racing and freestyle motocross

(FMX) derring-do, the series has been thrilling crowds the length and breadth of the UK for over a decade now, during which time it's entertained 300,000-plus action-hungry fans.

For further information and to book tickets, visit the website resortsworldarena.co.uk

Live Advent calendar co-created in Leek

Community groups, organisations, schools, artists and businesses are co-creating a Live Advent Calendar in Leek this year.

Every morning in December on the run-up to Christmas Day, a clue will be made available to help participants find a door in the town. Those who find the door, and open it between 4pm and 7pm, will be treated to 'a surprising festive moment'.

To find out more about how to take part, visit enjoystaffordshire.com

Carols by Candlelight at Wolverhampton church

Critically acclaimed early music group The Telling will perform a candlelit Christmas concert at St Peter's Church in Wolverhampton on Saturday 16 December. The ensemble's Carols Through Time programme brings together intimate medieval English carols with traditional carols from across Europe.

Warm mulled wine will be available for audience members to enjoy during the interval. For further information and to book tickets to the concert, visit thetelling.co.uk

From Jane with love...

Jane McDonald will be making a stop-off in Birmingham next autumn as part of her With All My Love tour. Promising a show 'filled with love, glamour and warm

Yorkshire wit', Jane will perform at Birmingham Hippodrome on Saturday 16 November. To check ticket availability for the show, visit cuffeandtaylor.com



RAF Museum awarded VisitEngland accolade

The RAF Museum Midlands has been awarded a VisitEngland Best Told Story accolade.

The accolade is awarded to attractions that convey a compelling narrative to visitors, whether through technical innovation or enthusiastic staff and volunteers.

To find out more about the venue, check out its website at rafmuseum.org/midlands

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07 Dec | TH
**Black Voices:
Christmas
Extravaganza**



15-16 Dec | SH
**Jools Holland & His
Rhythm & Blues
Orchestra**



17 Dec | SH
Candlelit Carols



19 Dec | TH
**The Lock In
'Christmas Carol' ft
The Demon Barbers**



20 Dec | TH
**The King's Singers:
When You Wish
Upon A Star**



21 Dec | TH
**The Amy Winehouse
Band: Celebrating
20 Years of Frank**



23 Dec | SH
**Christmas Carol
Singalong**



27-31 Dec | TH
**Oh No! Shark in the
Snow!**



2.30pm 31 Dec | SH
New Year's Eve Gala



DJ Gary Davies & special
guests Toyah Willcox,
Deniece Pearson & Carol
Decker!

9pm 31 Dec | SH
**New Year's Eve Special
BBC Radio 2 Sounds
of the 80s: Live**

Whether you're looking for a great night out with your bestie, a music experience to make lasting family memories, or gift vouchers for last minute pressies: there's something for everyone at **Town Hall & Symphony Hall** this festive season.

**From our stages to your homes:
We wish you a Merry Christmas
and a B:rrilliant 2024!**

bmusic.co.uk

Lantern Parade returns to Newcastle-under-Lyme

The Newcastle Lantern Parade returns to Newcastle-under-Lyme on Saturday 2 December.

This year taking the theme of 'peace', the annual event will be accompanied by live music and a night market 'offering a unique shopping experience, street food and musical entertainment'. To find out more, visit the website newcastleunderlyme.org

JLS to play Shrewsbury's Quarry Park next summer

Mega boy band JLS will play a special one-off outdoor show at Shrewsbury's Quarry Park next summer (Sunday 14 July).

Commenting on the news, singer Marvin Humes said: "Every live performance is special to us, but coming to the Quarry to sing and dance out in the open air, in front of all our supporters, it doesn't get better than that for us. So we're gonna make this the show of a lifetime. Come down and party with us. We can't wait!"

To purchase tickets for the show, visit the website myticket.co.uk/artists/JLS



Lichfield Garrick to host new creative-writing night

Lichfield Garrick Theatre is next month hosting its very first creative writing open-mic night... Aiming to offer a platform for both established and emerging writers to showcase their art, the event is being held on Tuesday 9 January.

To find out more, visit lichfieldgarrick.com

David Essex back on tour

David Essex will stop off at The Halls in Wolverhampton next autumn as part of a UK tour.

The 76-year-old one-time pop idol visits the venue on Saturday 14 September... To buy tickets for the show, visit ticketmaster.co.uk



Read all about it - literature festival makes a return

Wolverhampton Literature Festival will return early next year.

The popular annual event - which is being hosted by the city's council, with funding support from Arts Council England - takes place at various venues from Friday 2 to Sunday 4 February.

Aiming to 'amplify and celebrate' the voices of authors, poets, writers, storytellers and publishers from across the UK, the festival

features a line-up of well-known authors and speakers alongside local writers, artists and creatives.

Sathnam Sanghera, Louise Minchin, Raphael Rowe, Lou Sanders and James O'Brien are among the celebrity contributors to the 2024 festival.

For further information about the event and who's taking part, check out the website at wolvesliteraturefestival.co.uk

Camp Bestival back in Shropshire next summer

Camp Bestival Shropshire is returning to Weston Park next summer (Thursday 15 - Sunday 18 August).

The 2024 edition of the event is taking a Time Travel theme and will be 'jam-packed with entertainment and cultural delights', including 'comedy and theatre shows, wellbeing workshops, circus spectacles, sideshow commotions and lashings of incredibly delicious food & drink'. To find out more, visit the website: campbestival.net



The design proposals have been developed with sustainability, inclusivity and community in mind...

To find out more about the project, visit the website at telfordtownsfund.co.uk

Severn Valley Railway launches early-bird offers

The Severn Valley Railway has launched an early-bird offer for a number of its special events in 2024.

Tickets for next year's spring and autumn galas and the summertime Step Back To The 1940s weekends are currently available at 2023 prices... The special ticket offer applies to purchases made until Sunday 7 January.



Drop in to check out new plans for Telford Theatre

Members of the general public are this month being given the opportunity to check out plans to rejuvenate Telford Theatre in Oakengates. A two-day drop-in event is being held on Monday 4 (2pm - 7.30pm) & Tuesday 5 December (9am - 1pm).



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TUE 5 – SAT 9 DEC
REGENT THEATRE



FE-FI-FO-FUM, A GIANT
OF A PANTO FULL OF FUN!
**JACK AND THE
BEANSTALK**

FRI 15 DEC 2023 – SUN 7 JAN 2024
REGENT THEATRE



COME AND BE A LITTLE
A BIT NAUGHTY
**SING-A-LONG-A
MATILDA**

SUN 14 JAN 2024
REGENT THEATRE



A PHENOMENAL SOUNDTRACK
PACKED FULL OF ICONIC
DRIFTERS HITS
THE DRIFTERS GIRL

TUE 16 – SAT 20 JAN 2024
REGENT THEATRE



PERFORMING THE ICONIC ALBUM
'LEXICON OF LOVE' IN IT'S ENTIRETY
ABC

TUE 30 JAN 2024
REGENT THEATRE



A UNIQUE, LIVE ILLUSTRATED TALK
ON AGATHA CHRISTIE
**AN AUDIENCE WITH
LUCY WORSLEY**

SAT 17 FEB 2024
REGENT THEATRE



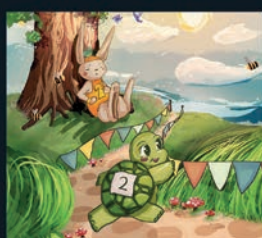
THE ICONIC GLOBAL PHENOMENON
**JESUS CHRIST
SUPERSTAR**

MON 19 – SAT 24 FEB 2024
REGENT THEATRE



A MUST-SEE INTERNATIONAL
SENSATION
**THE SIMON &
GARFUNKEL STORY**

TUE 27 FEB 2024
REGENT THEATRE



THE RACE IS ON!
**NORTHERN BALLET'S
TORTOISE & THE HARE**

WED 28 FEB 2024
REGENT THEATRE



A JOURNEY AROUND OUR
MAGNIFICENT UNIVERSE
**PROFESSOR BRIAN COX
– HORIZONS**

THU 29 FEB 2024
REGENT THEATRE

ADAM ROWE

FRI 1 DEC | VICTORIA HALL

THAT'LL BE THE DAY CHRISTMAS SHOW

THU 7 DEC | VICTORIA HALL

FAIRYTALE OF NEW YORK

THU 14 DEC | VICTORIA HALL

CALLING PLANET EARTH

FRI 15 DEC | VICTORIA HALL

MASSAOKE – CHRISTMAS SPECIAL

FRI 22 DEC | VICTORIA HALL

**GO YOUR OWN WAY – THE FLEETWOOD MAC
LEGACY**

FRI 26 JAN 2024 | VICTORIA HALL

MERCURY – THE ULTIMATE QUEEN TRIBUTE

SAT 3 FEB 2024 | VICTORIA HALL

JIVE TALKIN'

THU 8 FEB 2024 | VICTORIA HALL

A SPRINKLING OF MAGIC...

There's nothing like a sprinkling of panto magic to round off the year! Across the region, dazzling performers will be shaking fairy dust from their wings and warming up their magic wands in preparation for the festive season. We thought we'd take a peek at who will be casting spells and charming audiences in the Midlands this Christmas...

Alison Hammond

Spirit of the Beans in Jack And The Beanstalk at Birmingham Hippodrome

With a career that includes Big Brother, This Morning and The Great British Bake Off, Alison Hammond has been a well-known TV personality for over 20 years. Jack And The Beanstalk won't be the first time she's waved a magic wand - she made regular appearances in panto until 2018 - but it *will* be her first-ever panto in her home town of Birmingham.

We asked Alison for the low-down on this year's show: "You've got giants, you've got beanstalks, you've got the comedy, the dancing element, the singing... You've got me! What more do you need?!"

Jack And The Beanstalk shows at Birmingham Hippodrome from Saturday 16 December to Sunday 28 January



Kéllé Bryan

Good Fairy Elementa in Snow White at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

As well as being a familiar television face in shows like Hollyoaks and Loose Women, former Eternal star Kéllé Bryan is no stranger to performing in panto, having played Cinderella four times between 2006 and 2011. She's now been given a magical upgrade and is excited to be appearing in Wolverhampton this Christmas... "It's an all-round great family show," says Kéllé, "and I get to play the good fairy. I've never done that before... I don't know if evil would go down very well in my household!" Kéllé doesn't want to give too much away but assured us that there will be plenty of magical moments in this year's not-to-be-missed extravaganza!

Snow White shows at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Saturday 2 December to Sunday 7 January



Wendy & Theo the Mouse Enchantress in Beauty And The Beast at Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

Panto favourite Wendy Abrahams is returning to Stafford Gatehouse Theatre this Christmas to play the magical Enchantress. And she will be helped (or hindered!) by her pal, Theo the Mouse.

Theo and Wendy are a multi-talented double act, bringing magic, hijinx and laughter to stages all around the UK. This year Wendy's got hold of a wand - which might help keep Theo under control! Commenting on her upcoming festive stint, Wendy said: "There's something for everybody, regardless of whether you're five or 105. There's lots of dancing and singing - and of course, romance! And beautiful, spectacular costumes too!"

Beauty And The Beast shows at Stafford Gatehouse Theatre from Friday 8 to Sunday 31 December



Natalie Pilkington

Fairy in Beauty And The Beast at Lichfield Garrick Theatre

Natalie is taking a well-earned break from touring with hit musical Six, having played not just one but all half-dozen of Henry VIII's wives since 2019! Picking up a magic wand - and decked out in gold from crown to sparkly sneakers - she's sure to bring plenty of glitz and glamour to proceedings at the Garrick. This year's panto is promising music, magic and mayhem - let's just hope that Natalie can help untangle the evil Enchantress' spell and secure for Beauty her Happily Ever After...

Beauty And The Beast shows at Lichfield Garrick Theatre from Friday 24 November to Sunday 7 January



Rio Maye

Spirit of the Beans in Jack And The Beanstalk at Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

Up-and-coming actor, singer & dancer Rio Maye has recently graduated from the Wilkes Academy of Performing Arts. She joined the ensemble company for Stoke-on-Trent's panto last year and is returning to The Potteries this Christmas in Jack And The Beanstalk - a show that's promising audiences 'spectacular special effects, stunning song & dance, and bundles of audience participation'.

Expect a giant adventure that will see Jack win riches beyond his wildest dreams!

Jack And The Beanstalk shows at Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, from Friday 15 December to Sunday 7 January



Malcolm Lord

Fairy Godmother in Cinderella at Crewe Lyceum Theatre

Crewe Lyceum is once again turning to its treasured dame, Malcolm Lord, to bring some magic to the Christmas season.

Malcolm played Bungle in much-loved children's TV series Rainbow and has graced the stage in many a panto. Indeed, this year he's appearing at the Lyceum for a seventh consecutive pantomime season!

Taking the role of the Fairy Godmother, Malcolm will be casting a spell or two to make sure that Cinders can attend Prince Charming's royal ball.

Best keep an eye on the time, though - anything could happen at the stroke of midnight...

Cinderella shows at Crewe Lyceum Theatre from Friday 8 to Sunday 31 December



Shelley Ann Rivers

The Magical Mermaid in Treasure Island at Telford Theatre, Oakengates

Taking to the seven seas with Treasure Island, Telford Theatre's panto is more swashbuckling adventure than fabulous fairytale!

Shelly Ann Rivers will be making a splash as the island's Magical Mermaid. As an opera singer and star of many musical theatre productions, Shelly will be using her powerful voice to its fullest effect. In a show that offers 'a delicious blend of beautiful scenery, colourful costumes, a live band, dazzling dance routines, great songs and plenty of laughter', young Jim Hawkins and his pirate crew will be following a long-lost treasure map to seek out hidden riches - assisted along the way, no doubt, by Shelley's Magical Mermaid powers!

Treasure Island shows at Telford Theatre, Oakengates, from Friday 8 December to Saturday 6 January



CHRISTMAS WITH THE CBSO



CHORAL CHRISTMAS

Tue 19 & Wed 20 Dec, 7:30pm
Symphony Hall, Birmingham

The CBSO's annual Choral Christmas concerts are like the market and the panto: a real Birmingham tradition!



CHRISTMAS AT THE MOVIES

Thu 21 Dec, 7:30pm
Symphony Hall, Birmingham

We've packed a stocking full of the greatest music from the best-loved seasonal films of all time!



VIENNESE NEW YEAR

Sun 7 Jan, 3pm
Symphony Hall, Birmingham

It simply wouldn't be New Year without the music of Johann Strauss and friends!

CBSO

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Birmingham
Symphony
Orchestra

Book online at cbsoco.uk or call
B:Music Box Office on 0121 780 3333
Tickets start from £26

CBSO.CO.UK

Classical music from across the region...



BBC Philharmonic

Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 8 December

Residing at the Corporation's Manchester home of Media City in Salford Quays, the BBC Philharmonic are no strangers to Stoke-on-Trent, regularly presenting Victoria Hall concert-goers with works from their impressive repertoire.

This latest presentation sees conductor Ben Gernon (pictured) presiding over performances of Haydn's Oxford Symphony, Mozart's Piano Concerto No21 and Prokofiev's Cinderella Suite. Martin Roscoe is the soloist.

The King's Singers

Birmingham Town Hall, Wed 20 December

Founded in the late 1960s by six Cambridge University choral scholars, a cappella vocal ensemble The King's Singers have routinely performed a wide range of music, covering everything from jazz standards to pop-chart hits and taking in medieval motets, spiritual songs, folk favourites and Renaissance madrigals along the way. Given such versatility, it's perhaps not surprising that they're here choosing to present a delightfully varied programme of music, in the process marking the 400th anniversary of Renaissance composer William Byrd and 100 years of Disney magic... A stockingful of Christmas crackers - including arrangements of traditional and modern carols - also features.



CBSO Choral Christmas with Anna Lapwood

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Tues 19 - Wed 20 December

This firm festive family favourite - experienced in the company of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra - provides the perfect opportunity to park the pressures of preparing for Christmas in favour of enjoying a couple of hours of traditional carols and excellent musicianship.

The concert comes complete with singalong opportunities and the added attraction of one of the world's greatest organists: Anna Lapwood... Simon Halsey is the man with the festive baton.

Lichfield Cathedral Choir: Christmas By Candlelight

Lichfield Cathedral, Thurs 21 December

From ancient plainsong to brand-new commissions, the ever-excellent Lichfield Cathedral Choir is much admired for its wide-ranging repertoire, including of course its selection of Christmas music. This latest candlelit offering begins with a performance of Ceremony Of Carols - Benjamin Britten's 11-movement work featuring a mix of poems and anonymous medieval texts - and brings together music and readings old and new 'to reflect on the meaning of Christmas and fill you with festive cheer'.



Birmingham Bach Choir

St Paul's Church, Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham, Sun 17 December

A concert presenting both popular and lesser-known festive music, Birmingham Bach Choir's annual carol service is the perfect way to kickstart your Christmas celebrations. O Come All Ye Faithful, Once In Royal David's City and Hark The Herald Angels Sing are among the featured carols, which will be interspersed with nine readings.

Halesowen Orchestra: A Christmas Concert

Halesowen Town Hall, Sat 9 December

The Halesowen Orchestra has been described by James Morris MP as "one of the town's hidden jewels", a description with which the ensemble's many supporters would no doubt wholeheartedly agree.

Founded in 1986, the amateur group of musicians meet once a week to practise a wide and varied repertoire of works by some of the world's greatest classical composers.

This month's Christmas concert features Brahms' Academic Festival Overture, Smetana's Ma Vlast and Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Suite.

A choir of men and women in formal attire is performing in a grand cathedral. They are holding lit candles, which provide the primary light source, creating a warm, intimate atmosphere. The background shows the ornate architecture of the cathedral, including arches and statues.

CANDLELIT CHRISTMAS

Festive magic with Ex Cathedra



Birmingham's Ex Cathedra have been performing Christmas Music By Candlelight since 1970, and do so again this month in various venues across the region. Chris Morley chats to the critically acclaimed ensemble's founder & conductor, Jeffrey Skidmore...

Ex Cathedra chamber choir's renowned Christmas Music By Candlelight concerts were launched in St Francis' Church, Bournville, in 1970 - a year after the ensemble's founding - and moved to St Paul's, in Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter, the following year.

"One concert became two, then three, and now five," explains Ex Cathedra's founder & conductor, Jeffrey Skidmore. "Later we expanded to concerts throughout the region, and now in London, in Trafalgar Square's St Martin in the Fields."

Jeffrey is busy thinking about 'Candlelight' all year long. "I am constantly, throughout the year, looking for new works and new composers. I listen to other musicians' recommendations and have a pile of music sent to me over the years that I visit every now and then."

This Christmas, Ex Cathedra adds another string to its bow, giving the annual Symphony Hall performance of Handel's Messiah, which has long been the province of much larger choral societies.

"There are obvious differences - period instruments, smaller forces," Jeffrey continues. "But it's Ex Cathedra's infrastructure of students, amateurs and professional singers that creates the sound, the precision and the freshness associated with the group."

"Having a company of very special professional singers who are not only choristers and consort singers but also skilled soloists who have grown up with Ex Cathedra, this produces the all-important stylistic consistency. There is a team of 12 soloists for Messiah, and they all sing regularly with the group and know me and the group."

And this hints at the ethos of Ex Cathedra, as Jeffrey explains in talking about the ensemble's origin.

"It was formed in 1969. I was at school in Bournville, had been a chorister at St Francis'

Church and sang as an alto Lay Clerk at Birmingham Cathedral with Roy Massey. Ex Cathedra brought these three elements (school, church and professional) together to sing music I loved and which no-one else seemed to be doing in Birmingham, particularly Renaissance and Medieval repertoire.

"I continued to develop Ex Cathedra from Oxford (1970-73), where I was an Academical Clerk at Magdalen with Bernard Rose and David Wulstan (Clerkes of Oxenford), two giants of the burgeoning choral scene in the 1970s, and I introduced Oxbridge singers to the Ex Cathedra mix."

As someone who has reviewed the work of Ex Cathedra almost since its founding, I have always been struck by the way soloists in whatever piece, even in something as mighty as Bach's St Matthew Passion, emerge from the choral ranks, returning into them after delivering their contributions. Many of these have subsequently gained international stardom, such as Carolyn Sampson, Roderick Williams and Nigel Short.

How much of the original philosophy behind the founding of Ex Cathedra is still maintained today, and how have other things developed?

"I still perform music I love with musicians I like and admire," is Jeffrey's smiling answer.

"Much of Ex Cathedra's repertoire is still music relatively untouched by other ensembles - Latin American, French Baroque and commissions from local composers, and often composers at the beginning of their careers."

"I have always looked to develop local talent and talent from around the country - our pros and travelling amateurs often comment on this. Nurturing young talent has also been crucially important, and the recent Scholars Ensembles schemes are a massively important formalisation of what's been going on since the beginning."

Now into his 70s, Jeffrey is planning for his

eventual retirement, and is making sure his beloved Ex Cathedra will be left in a safe pair of hands.

"We've been nurturing five talented young associate conductors and are now asking for applications for the 'job' to widen the net, but also including the associate conductors in the mix."

The Ex Cathedra story continues to develop. The ensemble recently presented their first-ever programme (titled Byrd To Bacharach And Bach) in Royal Birmingham Conservatoire's Bradshaw Hall.

"As a small tribute to the great songwriter Burt Bacharach, who died earlier this year, I arranged Anyone Who Had A Heart, one of his many great hits and a number one for Cilla Black in 1963. It was followed by a 'Swingle' arrangement of one of Bach's most popular Chorale Preludes - Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring."

The same mixture of new and old bubbles along in this year's Christmas Music By Candlelight programme - and we are also promised Summer Music By Candlelight next June. Before that, though, Ex Cathedra's season reaches its climax in Symphony Hall with a Good Friday performance of Bach's powerful St John Passion, 300 years after it was first performed in Leipzig.

.....

Ex Cathedra perform Christmas Music by Candlelight at St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury, Fri 1 December; St John's Church, Hagley, Tues 5 December; Hereford Cathedral, Wed 6 December; Lichfield Cathedral, Thurs 7 December; St Peter's Collegiate Church, Wolverhampton, Sat 9 December; Coventry Cathedral, Thurs 14 December; St Paul's Church, Birmingham, Fri 15 - Wed 20 December. Ex Cathedra also presents Angels, Stars & Kings - family Christmas concert at St Paul's Church, Birmingham on Sat 16 December.

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Live music from across the region...

Beans On Toast

Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury, Sun 3 December

Self-confessed drunkard Beans On Toast selected his name because he wanted to be called something basic and simple - to reflect his music!

"I'm not the greatest guitarist in the world," he once admitted to Listen Up Manchester. "I play simple three-chord folk songs, but if I see something that interests me, something that intrigues or angers me, I pick up my guitar and I write a song."

Emerging from the London folk scene over a decade ago and mainly singing about sex, drugs and politics, Beans On Toast is a surefire bet for an entertaining evening out.



Scott Matthews

Shrewsbury Abbey, Thurs 7 December

Described by Total Entertainment as 'the man who specialises in conveying the emotional complexities of love and loss in sparse, warm-hearted acoustic songs', Wolverhampton singer-songwriter Scott Matthews' ground-breaking debut album, *Passing Stranger*, earned serious critical acclaim, with his first single, *Elusive*, winning the Ivor Novello for best song musically & lyrically.

He's since gone on to produce a further eight albums, the latest of which, *Restless Lullabies*, he is here touring to Shrewsbury.



The Twang

The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton, Fri 15 December; O2 Institute, Birmingham, Fri 22 & Sat 23 December

The Twang were signed back in the mid-noughties and lauded by NME as Britain's best new band.

Hailing from Quinton in Birmingham, founders Phil Etheridge and Jon Watkin came together musically after meeting at Kidderminster College. Originally called Neon Twang, the band enjoyed great

success with debut album *Love It When I Feel Like This*, reaching number three in the charts.

They followed up with *Jewellery Quarter* (2009), *10:20* (2012) and *Neontwang* (2014) but have since released material at a slower pace.

Recent times have seen them play numerous festivals and headline shows, support Shed Seven on a mammoth tour and perform alongside the likes of Doves, Johnny Marr, The Coral and the Kaiser Chiefs.

Jah Wobble & The Invaders Of The Heart

Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Fri 8 December

John Wardle began his music career at the age of 18 as a founder member of Public Image Limited (PiL), performing alongside John Lydon, John Grey and Sid Vicious. His distinctive 'low end' bass became the backbone of PiL's pioneering sound. Following his split from the band, he formed Jah Wobble's *Invaders Of The Heart*, receiving a Mercury Music Prize nomination in 1991 for the *Rising Above Bedlam* album. Wardle's heavy, hypnotic bass lines defined the post-punk era and have influenced a significant number of musicians across the last 30-odd years... Expect a gig that brings together dub, world, ambient and avant-rock music to excellent effect.

Go West

The Robin, Bilston, Sat 16 December

English pop duo Go West took the 1980s music scene by storm. Within four short years of forming, lead vocalist Peter Cox and rhythm guitarist & backing vocalist Richard Drummie had bagged a coveted Brit Award

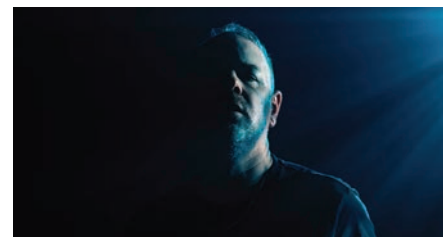
for best British breakthrough act...

Still going strong 41 years after coming together, the boys will no doubt use their Bilston gig to revisit some of their greatest releases, including *We Close Our Eyes*, *Call Me*, *Faithful* and *King Of Wishful Thinking*.

Steve Mason

Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton, Thurs 14 December

To me, this record is a massive 'F**k you' to Brexit," says Steve Mason, in talking about latest album *Brothers & Sisters*. "And a giant 'F**k you' to anyone that's terrified of immigration, because there is nothing that immigration has brought to this country that isn't to be applauded. Can you imagine what this place would be like without that? I mean, what would it be like? Cornish pasties and morris dancing?!"



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GEDDY WITH ANTICIPATION...

...is how Midlands-based fans of prog-rock band Rush feel at the prospect of the trio's singer, Geddy Lee, bringing his spoken-word tour to Wolverhampton this month...



Geddy Lee, the legendary singer & bass player of Canadian prog rock band Rush, is bringing his highly anticipated spoken-word tour to Wolverhampton this month.

The show, taking place to promote his long-awaited memoir, *My Effin' Life* - named after the singer's penchant for dropping 'F-bombs' in conversation - will see the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Famer, born Gershon Eliezer Weinrib, offer an insight into his near-50-year career with the iconic rock trio, as well as his early family life and his parents' background as Holocaust survivors.

During the evening, Geddy will be joined on stage by a special guest interviewer - Hollywood star Paul Rudd took on the role at the opening show in New York City - before reading key passages from his memoir and taking questions from the audience.

The show is set to be a unique opportunity for Rush fans to hear the 70-year-old singer reflect on his family and childhood, as well as the history of his multi-platinum-selling band, from their determined pursuit of music - surviving and ultimately thriving against the odds - to personal memories of his life-long friends and bandmates Alex Lifeson and Neil Peart.

Much-lauded drummer Peart retired from the band after their last tour in 2015 and passed away in 2020 after a three-year battle with brain cancer, a pivotal event that Geddy

struggled to deal with, acknowledging that "the funk" he entered after losing his friend partly inspired him to write the book.

"I took that particularly hard," he said in a recent interview. "Around the same time, I watched my mother descend into dementia. She was losing her memory, and that was really disturbing for me. It made me realise how tenuous our grip on the past really is in some ways."

Geddy's mother subsequently died in 2021, aged 96. A period the singer terms "a fiesta of grief" was completed when guitarist Lifeson was hospitalised with potentially fatal Covid. Mercifully, the man who Geddy calls his "BFF" survived - but the traumatic events triggered thoughts of the past, while the ongoing Covid lockdown in Toronto meant he was twiddling his thumbs and looking for something to do. That combination, allied to the encouragement of the editor who'd worked on Geddy's *Big Beautiful Book Of Bass* book, eventually forced the musician's hand.

"I've never lived my life looking anywhere but forward, which is why I resisted doing this kind of thing for so long," he says. "Being in a band all those years was reassuring because it was an ongoing thing - it felt like it was forever. There was always unfinished business - the next record, the next set design, the next tour. It's been the

theme of my life.

"But you need a lot more determination to proceed in the world of music without the comfort of your bandmates, and I can only hope that finishing this book will release me to return to what I do and love best."

What he does and loves best is playing music - and although Rush is never 'effin' likely to reunite without Peart, Geddy admits there could be "a show that paid tribute to the songs of Rush". He says performing with Lifeson at last year's Taylor Hawkins tribute concerts - alongside drummers including Dave Grohl, Chad Smith and Omar Hakim - was a massive step for the pair.

Geddy has been too busy finalising the book, its audio version, tour, and even filming his own TV series (*Geddy Lee Asks: Are Bass Players Human Too?*) to repeat the jam session the best friends enjoyed last year, but he admits they're both keen to pick it up again. What that might mean in terms of future music and live performance is one of the topics sure to be discussed at what should prove to be a fascinating evening.

Geddy Lee In Conversation takes place at The Civic at The Halls in Wolverhampton on Sunday 10 December. Every ticket purchased for the show includes a copy of the book.

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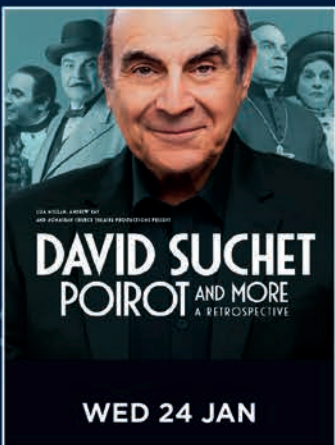
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Comedy previews from across the region...

Mo Gilligan

Utilita Arena Birmingham, Thurs 7 December 2023 & Sat 30 November 2024

London standup Mo Gilligan has enjoyed a meteoric rise to fame and fortune since first coming to wider public attention just a handful of years ago. It was back in December 2016 that Mo uploaded a video about grime MCs - since which time he's found himself catapulted to celebrity status. Hired by Channel Four to front The Lateish Show and rewarded for his television work with a coveted Bafta gong, Mo admits that his life has started to feel just a little bit crazy. "I wake up in the morning and think, 'This is nuts!'" admits the 35-year-old. "It's what I'd always dreamt about, and now that it's happened, I'm determined to make the most of it."

Mo visits Birmingham this month with the Black British Takeover Tour, a show that includes 'the very best in headline names and emerging artists from the Black British comedy circuit'.



Kojo Anim

The Glee Club, Birmingham, Sun 10 December

Currently riding the crest of a wave, Kojo Anim's noteworthy success is long overdue. Kojo had been supporting other comics for the better part of two decades before an appearance on Britain's Got Talent gave his career an exciting new impetus.

The Hackney-born comedian is certainly making the most of his big break - he's been living in Los Angeles and is aiming to take Hollywood by storm!

This month's Birmingham stop-off sees him presenting brand-new show Man On Fire.



Live At Christmas

Birmingham Town Hall, Wed 13 December;
Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Thurs 14 December

As she attempted to establish herself on the circuit back in the early noughties, Jen Brister received a much-needed boost from a comedy legend. The occasion was the BBC New Act semi-finals in Brighton. The legend

in question, Spike Milligan, who was one of the judges. Although Jen didn't get through to the final, she did find out from the show's producer that Spike had voted for her. "He'd also remarked that I had 'a great pair of Bristols'," she recalls. "So clearly he had great taste in comedy and, er, tits!"

Jen here shares the festive-season limelight with David O'Doherty, Fern Brady, Josh Pugh and fast-rising newcomer Kyrach Gray.

Sophie Duker

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Thurs 7 December

Familiar television face Sophie Duker's favourite things include breaking hearts and telling jokes 'with the confidence of a cis straight middle-class white man'.

Nominated for best newcomer at Edinburgh in 2019, she returned there last year with Hag, the show she's bringing to Coventry this month and in which she waxes lyrical on subjects such as horoscopes, lesbian cruises and crystal witches. The set went down well with audiences at the Fringe but wasn't universally adored by critics, some of whom felt it was fragmented and incoherent. Why not buy a ticket and check it out for yourself?...



Gary Pownland

Dudley Town Hall, Fri 22 December

"Life was tough growing up," says online sensation Gary Pownland, the alter-ego of Wolverhampton laughter merchant Jack Kirwan. "My mom and dad popped out for a loaf when I was younger, which is quite an ordinary thing, but I realised as they were leaving that they were carrying suitcases. Straight away I thought to myself, 'How much bread do they think we can eat?'"

Jack is very much enjoying his creation Gary's moment (or several) in the sun, but his own career in comedy hasn't always been plain sailing. "I've done my share of driving up to Newcastle for a 20 quid gig, getting back at 1am and needing to be up for work at five," says Jack. "And then there was the time I played Edinburgh and basically died on my arse every night for a month!"





QUEEN OF THE NIGHT

**Award-winning musical The Bodyguard is coming to
Birmingham theatre The Alexandra for the festive season...**

The stage musical version of hit Whitney Houston and Kevin Costner movie The Bodyguard is stopping off in Birmingham for Christmas. Playing the part of Rachel Marron - the character made famous by Houston in the 1992 film - is Australian singer Emily Williams, who first played the role six years ago. What's On recently caught up with her to find out more...

This Christmas, singer & actress Emily Williams takes on the role of Rachel Marron in blockbuster musical The Bodyguard at Birmingham theatre The Alexandra.

It's the second time the New Zealand-born performer has played the lead part in the show, which is based on the famous 1992 movie starring Whitney Houston and Kevin Costner.

Rachel Marron is a superstar singer at the height of her fame. But when she begins receiving death threats from a sinister stalker, her manager hires former secret-service agent Frank Farmer as a bodyguard to keep her and her young son safe.

The story provides an insight into the sometimes scary world of stardom, and Emily, who shot to fame as runner-up on television talent show Australian Idol, says she can very much relate to that fear. Having been part of successful Australian all-girl group Young Divas, and then building a solo career, she knows only too well what it's like to be in the spotlight.

"I've gone through similar experiences and situations as Rachel in the show," says Emily, who first played the part back in 2017. "So I can now identify why she acts the way she does, how these scenarios would come up, and why she gets so frustrated all the time.

"I think there's more understanding of the character than I had seven years ago. I now understand the idea of having so many security guards around. And the idea that you've had some obsessed fans that have sent you some really interesting things - you have to open up that fan mail.

"There have been shows when it's actually been a bit scary on stage because you know there are some really strange people out there who love you to the point of no return. I've been through all of that, and I understand a bit about it."

While Emily is quick to point out that she has never received death threats like those sent to her character, she *has* sometimes needed bodyguards.

"I do now understand the idea of singing at big shows and having all that security and having people beside you 24/7. As soon as you get onsite, these security guards won't let you out of their sight. Even when you're in the dressing room, there are two or three standing outside.

"So I do understand that side of it, and I can understand the frustration of Rachel, where she thinks she knows what's going on but she actually doesn't safety-wise. So to know and to have experienced some of the things she's gone through has helped me understand her more.

"I think the UK has got the best version of me playing Rachel. Back in 2017 when I played her, I was so excited to sing those songs that I hadn't really connected with the character as much as I do today."

But, says Emily, being in the public eye is part of the experience of being a performer.

"When I found my own fame, I realised this is something you can't escape from, so either you learn to deal with it or you drown. You sink or you swim.

"Rachel is very sharp but yet very vulnerable in certain parts of the show. When you first meet her, you don't realise that - but then, as you watch, you begin to see these vulnerable parts of her. My favourite part of playing her is showing people how vulnerable she really is. She's this absolute goddess of a superstar, but there's more to her than just that."

The part of bodyguard Frank is played by Ayden Callaghan, who's best known for playing Miles De Souza in Emmerdale and Joe Roscoe in Hollyoaks.

Emily says Rachel's behaviour towards Frank is probably her least attractive quality.

"What I don't like about her is probably the way she treats Frank in the beginning; it's pretty full-on."

Emily first discovered the film as a teenager but was a fan of Whitney Houston long before that.

"I started singing at a young age and was

listening to Whitney's songs. The music from this film is timeless."

And she loves being able to perform hits such as I Will Always Love You, Queen Of The Night, I Have Nothing, The Greatest Love Of All and How Will I Know.

"Probably the biggest challenge of the role is having to sing those difficult high-pitched songs every night - but at the same time, I'm so grateful to be singing those songs because not everybody can pull that off. You need a lot of sleep. You have to have the eight hours - a lot of rest, honey! - and don't talk when you don't need to.

"There are so many highlights of the show, but mine would probably be the end, when I sing I Will Always Love You. That's always a moment, and I feel like if I don't get that moment right, then I definitely haven't done my job. The audience have been waiting for that moment, so I have to nail it."

The Alexandra performances will be the first time Emily has visited Birmingham - and she is particularly looking forward to seeing it under the Christmas lights.

"It excites me to perform around Christmas. I know absolutely nothing about Birmingham, so I'm really looking forward to going there. I think a lot of the cast and crew members are really excited to show me around; they say it's a beautiful place."

And she is understandably keen for Birmingham theatre-goers to take a night off from pantomime and check out The Bodyguard.

"I hope everyone just really enjoys themselves. I want them to understand the story and what it's all about. It's such an incredible show. I feel like everyone will walk away either crying or blown away by how great it is."

.....
The Bodyguard shows at The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, from Monday 4 to Saturday 30 December



The Fair Maid Of The West

Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, Sat 2 December - Sun 14 January

A play which featured in the opening programme of the Royal Shakespeare Company's Swan Theatre back in 1986, *The Fair Maid Of The West* this month makes a welcome return to the Stratford-upon-Avon venue for a short Christmas and New Year run.

The Thomas Heywood-written romp, first published in 1631, will certainly be in safe hands during its time at the RSC - the play is being directed by Isobel McArthur, whose West End show, *Pride &*

*Prejudice** (*sort of), last year won the Olivier Award for best comedy. This much-anticipated revival finds Amber James taking the lead role of Liz Bridges, a low-born tavern girl whose impressive skill at breaking up bar-room brawls comes in handy when - after receiving an inheritance - she purchases a ship, heads out on the storm-tossed seas, and finds herself unexpectedly engaging in the tricky business of international diplomacy...

Oil

Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome, Thurs 7 - Sat 9 December

Described as a play that blends 'family drama with riveting history, bringing the past vividly to life while shining a light on the future', Ella Hickson's explosive and critically acclaimed *Oil* focuses on the character of May, a woman who time-travels across more than 150 years. In so doing, she throws into sharp focus Britain's fraught relationship with its imperial past and its fossil-fuel dependence...

The production is being presented by Royal Birmingham Conservatoire.



Saved

Crescent Theatre, Birmingham, Thurs 7 - Sat 9 December

Controversial in its day, rarely revived in the decades since, and set in working-class South London in the 1960s, Edward Bond's *Saved* explores the way in which brutal and abhorrent behaviour can rear its ugly head when people exist in a dehumanising and morally bereft environment. When the play was originally staged in the mid-'60s, it outraged critics and caused alarm among audience members. Particularly shocking was a scene in which an illegitimate baby is stoned to death by a group of yobs... This new production is presented by Royal Birmingham Conservatoire.

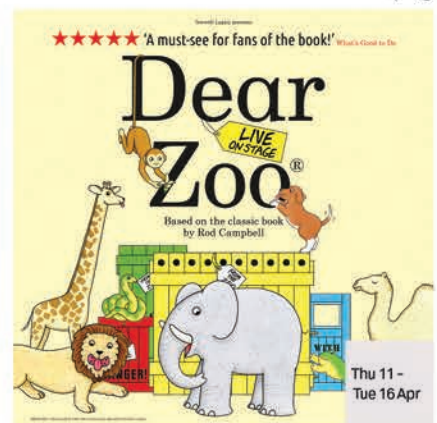
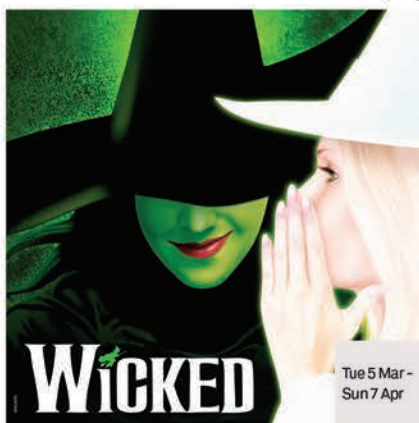
Six The Musical

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Tues 5 - Sat 9 December; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 27 February - Sun 3 March; Birmingham Hippodrome, Tues 18 - Sat 22 June

From Tudor queens to battling boss-women, the 2022 Tony Award-winning *Six The Musical* sees the wives of Henry VIII take to the stage 'to remix 500 years of historical heartbreak' and tell their own versions of their lives. In the process, the six aim to decide which of them was most badly treated by the notorious ex they all have in common...

A colourful show that sits somewhere between a Girls Aloud gig and a traditional musical, the one-act production - premiered at the Edinburgh Fringe in 2017, where it was performed by a group of Cambridge University students - is a loud and proud 80-minute celebration of 21st-century girl power. The show sees the cast being ably supported by all-female band The Ladies In Waiting.







The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe

The Rep, Birmingham, until Sun 28 January

This much-loved story from the pen of CS Lewis is rightly regarded as an all-time classic of children's literature. It sees the lion-god Aslan coming to the aid of four youngsters who've accidentally stumbled into his mystical world of Narnia... Visiting Birmingham direct from the West End, the show features 'magical storytelling, bewitching stagecraft and incredible puppets'. "We have this epic stage and fantastic imagery," says the production's director, Michael Fentiman, "but there's not a lot of literal depiction of location of the show. Instead, we're asking the audience to take a leap with us. We work with an illusionist to try and do things that seem impossible. So the way we use magic and lighting and shift-of-focus achieves the possible from the seemingly impossible."

The Box Of Delights

Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, until Sun 7 January

The Box Of Delights, the Royal Shakespeare Company's (RSC) festive family treat, is based on Poet Laureate John Masefield's fantasy novel of the same name, first published in 1935. Returning home for Christmas, schoolboy Kay Harker finds himself unexpectedly entrusted with a small wooden box that has magical powers beyond his wildest dreams. But a ne'er-do-well wizard is after the box and will stop at nothing to get it, even threatening to cancel Christmas... The RSC is promising theatre-goers a 'fantastically festive' production, with Justin Audibert taking the director's chair. Justin's previous work for the Company includes a critically acclaimed version of The Taming Of The Shrew back in 2019. The Box Of Delights is suitable for children aged seven-plus.



Nativity! The Musical

Bridge House Theatre, Warwick, Fri 8 - Thurs 28 December

Debbie Isitt's 2009 movie, Nativity!, proved so popular that it spawned three further films. It also inspired the Birmingham-born writer & director to create a musical stage adaptation. For those unfamiliar with the plot, it concerns the children of St Bernadette's primary school and their ambition to present a musical version of the nativity. An already big challenge for the kids is made all the trickier by false promises, a complicated love interest and a rival school vying with St Bernadette's for the critics' award... Not surprisingly, chaos ensues! "I always believed that Nativity! would make a fantastic stage musical," says Debbie. "It's so full of joy, the children are so sweet and the songs so catchy - it really does lend itself to being the perfect Christmas musical." This brand-new production features a cast of professionals performing alongside local young people and is suitable for audience members aged four and older.

Our Christmas Carol - A Musical

Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, Wed 6 December - Sun 24 December

When Harold is widowed and his life comes to a grinding halt, daughter Sylvia is determined to put a spring back in his step. To do so, she hatches a plan to revive one of

her parents' special festive-season traditions - a performance of Dickens' A Christmas Carol, which they would routinely present for appreciative audiences in local venues. Now, with her mother having passed away, it falls to Sylvia to team up with Harold and perform the Dickens classic - albeit 'virtually'! 'Catchy songs, spontaneously created costumes and some very questionable props' all feature in this brand-new musical, which is here receiving its world premiere.

Rumpelstiltskin

Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire, Thurs 30 November - Sun 3 December

Now here's a fairytale that's rarely afforded the pantomime treatment. For those not familiar with the original story... A miller's daughter can spin pure gold from straw, and the nasty king expects her to do just that. But there's too much straw to spin in the time she's been allocated by the impatient monarch. Enter, Rumpelstiltskin, a curious little imp with supernatural powers, who is more than happy to save the young girl's bacon... as long as she agrees to his truly shocking demand...



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Snow White

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sat 2 December - Sun 7 January; Palace Theatre, Redditch, Fri 8 December - Wed 3 January; Prince of Wales, Cannock, Sat 23 - Sat 30 December

There's no guarantee nowadays that a pantomime version of Snow White will include her 'magnificent seven' mining pals - but even if the fellas are missing in action, there's still plenty about the much-loved fairytale to enjoy.

Versions of the story are being presented at three major Midlands venues this Christmas...

The Wolverhampton Grand's panto is always a high-energy and fun-filled extravaganza, and this year's production will be no exception, with ex-Eternal star Kéllé Bryan starring as Good Fairy Elementa.

Kéllé is joined in the show by CBeebies' Gyasi Shepp and Evie Pickerill, X Factor favourite Niki Colwell Evans, Tam Ryan and Ian Adams... Meanwhile, in Redditch, the stars of the Palace Theatre's production are Steps' Lee Latchford-Evans and Britain's Got Talent finalist Andrew Fleming...

Snow White's wicked stepmother will also be asking "who's the fairest one of all?" - and not enjoying the answer she receives! - over in Cannock, where Maureen Nolan top-bills.

Cinderella

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, until Sat 13 January; Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Fri 8 - Sun 31 December; Walsall Arena, Sat 9 - Sat 23 December; Malvern Theatres, Thurs 14 December - Sun 7 January

With its comical Ugly Sisters, matchmaking fairy godmother, drop-dead-gorgeous Prince Charming, super-cute mice, and fits-one-foot-only glass slipper, Cinderella can justifiably lay claim to being the most popular of all pantomimes (not this year, mind, where beanstalks are popping up all over the place!)...

As is usual with the Belgrade's main-stage Christmas show, this year's production of Cinders has been written & directed by the multi-talented Iain Lauchlan...

But Cinderella isn't going to the ball only in

Coventry this year. She's pulling on her bestest frock in Malvern and Walsall too - and also in Crewe, where you'll find X Factor winner Matt Terry joined by Malcolm Lord, Ste Johnson and Eve Parsons (pictured).



Peter Pan The Musical

The Old Rep, Birmingham, Tues 5 - Sun 31 December

Second star to the right and straight on till morning - that's the way to Neverland... This new theatrical production offers sure-to-be-awestruck young audiences the chance to fly away with the boy who wouldn't grow up to a magical island filled with adventure. The 'swashbuckling' production comes complete with 'captivating costumes, spectacular songs, creative choreography and fantastic flying sequences'.

The Nutcracker

New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme, until Sat 27 January

"The ambition to do a stage play of The Nutcracker is one I've treasured for some time," says New Vic Artistic Director Theresa Heskins. "I want to bring together ETA Hoffman's original story, the adaptation by Alexandre Dumas and Tchaikovsky's music to tell the story of the enchanted Nutcracker, who takes a journey up the Christmas tree to the Kingdom of Sweets to settle a score with the ferocious Mouse Queen.

"It's going to be a gripping story that's absolutely jam-packed with magic, beautiful music and Christmas sparkle!"



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Peter Pan

Resorts World Arena, Birmingham,
Fri 22 & Sat 23 December

The producers behind last year's arena-filling pantomime *Elf The Musical* are at it again this festive season. A new production of *Peter Pan*, which they're proclaiming a 'supersize spectacle', comes complete with special effects, aerial stunts, immersive digital sets and even a huge floating galleon. Oh, and there's a cast of 50 as well, including a dozen cirque performers, a troupe of Irish and Highland dancers, rising comedy star Jordan Conway, and pop icon Boy George (another Boy who never grew up?) as the villainous Captain Hook. "Although the show has traditional pantomime elements," says George, "it is so much more, being a mix of cirque and 'spectacular event'. And what's more, I get the chance to fight a giant animatronic crocodile! What's not to like?!"

Beauty And The Beast

Lichfield Garrick, until Sun 7 January; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Fri 8 - Sun 31 December; Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Sat 2 December - Sat 6 January

When a young woman is captured by a hideous beast, she finds herself facing a life of isolation in his mysterious palace. The Beast, too, is trapped - seemingly forever - inside the grotesquery of his physical appearance, the consequence of a spell cast

upon him by an evil witch. Only Beauty's ability to look beyond his ugliness and see the person within can save him...

So that's the storyline, but what about the panto element?

Well, it's fair to assume that all the traditional aspects of pantomime will be present and correct in the three above-listed productions; we're thinking custard pies, double entendres, slapstick comedy and hilariously costumed Dames...

And speaking of the latter... Sam Rabone will yet again be donning a nice frock or several at the Garrick, where this year he's returning to star as Madame Bellie Fillop.

Stafford Gatehouse's production, meanwhile, sees CBBC star and one-time Pop Idol contestant Mark Rhodes headlining...

As for the Roses production, although it doesn't boast a 'star name', we're confident it will nevertheless prove to be a real, er, Beauty of a family show...



Mark Rhodes



Lichfield Garrick



Roses Theatre Tewkesbury

Treasure Island

Telford Theatre, Oakengates, Shropshire,
Fri 8 December - Sat 6 January

Robert Louis Stevenson's high-seas caper here gets the pantomime treatment, as young Jim Hawkins heads off on the adventure of a lifetime - one which will see him not only setting sail in search of buried treasure, but also spending time in the company of a one-legged pirate with murder in mind...

Boasting 'beautiful scenery, colourful costumes, a live band, dazzling dance routines, great songs and plenty of

laughter', this brand-new show stars *Strictly Come Dancing*'s Katya Jones, *West End* favourite Shelley Anne Rivers and *Coronation Street* actor Tom Roberts.



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bluestone

Jack And The Beanstalk is popping up all over the region...



Birmingham Hippodrome



Artrix, Bromsgrove



Swan Theatre, Worcester

Jack's back!

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, until Sun 7 January; Swan Theatre, Worcester, Mon 4 December - Sun 7 January; Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Sat 9 December - Sun 7 January; Sutton Coldfield Town Hall, Sat 9 - Sun 31 December; Artrix, Bromsgrove, Fri 15 December - Sun 7 January; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 15 December - Sun 7 January; Birmingham Hippodrome, Sat 16 December - Sun 28 January

Big and beautiful beanstalks are bustin' out all over the Midlands this festive season! No fewer than seven of the region's theatres are presenting pantomime versions of much-loved fairytale Jack And The Beanstalk - a story which sees a young lad named, yep, you guessed it, Jack, selling the family cow in return for a handful of beans...

But these are no ordinary beans, of course. These are magic beans. Beans from which a mighty beanstalk grows! And when Jack climbs to the top of it, he finds himself face-to-face with a decidedly unfriendly money-counting ogre...

The story of Jack And The Beanstalk is thought by some to be a staggering five millennia old. It was presented in print form

for the first time, so far as anyone knows, in 1734, under the title The Story Of Jack Spriggins And The Enchanted Bean. Its history as a pantomime, meanwhile, stretches back to the early 19th century, since which time it's been a popular choice with theatres across the land at Christmastime... And clearly never more so than this year, given the number of productions available for Midlandsers to enjoy!...

Birmingham Hippodrome's pantomime is routinely considered to be the region's biggest, and 2023 sees the venue once again mounting a sure-to-be-spectacular show. Alison Hammond, Samantha Womack and Hippodrome favourite Matt Slack top-bill in the company of Doreen Tipton and 'panto dame extraordinaire' Andrew Ryan... If you fancy seeing Jack climbing a beanstalk in the north of the Midlands, then check out the Regent Theatre in Stoke-on-Trent, where Jonathan Wilkes is headlining as usual. Johnny is this year joined by one-time Hear'Say star Noel Sullivan and Hollyoaks and Torchwood actor Kai Owen... Over in Shrewsbury, the inimitable Brad Fitt is both pulling on the frocks and sitting in

the director's chair for Theatre Severn's offering, which opened late last month... Heading to the south of the region, the ever-fabulous JP McCue is starring as Dame Dolly in the Royal Spa Centre Leamington's version of the popular fairytale...

There's also some beanstalk-climbing, ogre-slaying action unfolding at the Swan Theatre Worcester and Artrix in Bromsgrove, the latter of which is this year hosting The Core Solihull's pantomime...

Last but certainly not least, Jack is also biting off more than he can comfortably chew at Sutton Coldfield Town Hall, in a show being presented by pantomime specialists TaleGate Theatre Productions.

To discover more about these various versions of Jack And The Beanstalk, check out the venues' websites. Then buy yourself a ticket or several and get ready for some no-holds-barred festive-season family fun!



Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury



Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent



Sutton Coldfield Town Hall



FULL OF BEANS!

Much-loved television personality Alison Hammond makes her home-city panto debut this festive season, taking on the role of Spirit of the Beans in Birmingham Hippodrome's production of Jack And The Beanstalk. What's On caught up with the Great British Bake Off star as she prepared to bring some added sparkle to the second city's giant of a pantomime...

You're playing Spirit of the Beans - can you talk a little bit about the character?

She brings the magic, she brings the nature, she brings the lols, she brings the vibes. That's what the Spirit of the Beans is gonna be doing in this panto. I'm gonna bring it, babes, I'm gonna be bringing the vibes!

And this is obviously your debut Brum panto...

I've done panto before, but yes, this is my first Brum panto, which I've wanted to do all my life. I'm really excited!

What initially drew you to panto?

Well, my mum brought us up on panto. Every year we'd go and see panto on Boxing Day. Boxing Day is a bit of a pants day anyway, a bit dry, so we always went to panto. I went into pantos after Big Brother, and then I stopped for, like, 10 years. This is my first panto back. I might be a little bit rusty, but I can't wait.

What are you most looking forward to about the production itself?

Working with Matt Slack because he's so funny. I find him hilarious! I've seen and met him before but never worked with him, so I'm looking forward to that, and to seeing what his creativity is like. Meeting the cast, going out for drinks. You become a kid again! I'm also really looking forward to going home to my own bed every single night! I've never had that. Every panto I've done I've been away from home, so this is lovely! It's a six-week run and it's going to be so much fun.

What makes the story of Jack And The Beanstalk suitable for the panto treatment?

You've got giants, you've got beanstalks, you've got the comedy, the dancing element, the singing. You've got me! What more do you need?!

Did you have a favourite pantomime growing up?

Cinderella is my favourite, if I'm honest with you. One day I will be Cinderella. I know it's gonna happen. It's always been my favourite. I

don't know why; it's just a story I've always loved. I've never done Jack And The Beanstalk, though, so I can't wait!

Do you have any Christmas traditions that you're determined to fit in, despite the heavy workload?

It's lovely because I will be at home. I'll be able to do all the decorations! It's going to be lovely not having to drive into London all the time. Traditions? I've definitely got to do the German market because I'll be in town. We always go if we can. Always buy a new tree! I'll get a nice, fresh turkey ordered, a nice table setting; all of that.

And what would your perfect Christmas Day look like?

It looks like the typical Christmas Day. Wake up early. I put the turkey in early, 5am. I know that sounds really early! All the veg is prepared the night before. Get that food on, so that by 12 we're eating dinner. I'm an early-dinner person! King's speech, chill out, fall asleep, games in the evening, goodnight. More turkey sandwiches before I go to bed too.

What was your best Christmas present, or something that was really memorable to you?

So, you know I love Chinese? I asked Mum if Santa could bring me a Chinese for Christmas - and low and behold, Santa is amazing and brought me spare ribs and fried rice. I had it for breakfast, and it was one of the best Christmases ever! I loved it. Santa is the best. It's true!

Obviously Birmingham has changed a lot since you were younger. In what ways is the city different?

I used to know Birmingham like the back of my hand! I go in now and get lost and end up with a ticket because I've gone down a bus lane or a taxi lane. I never know where to park, so I just try and get the train now into Moor Street and go and do my shopping and stuff. I just don't know it as well. Then there's the clean-air charge too.

Do you still love it?

Yeah! I still go to the same shops - I'm quite boring. Same old shops, do my threading, get my hair done, go to the wig shop, get some colour for my hair. Go to McDonald's. I do all the same things.

You're often referred to as the Queen of Birmingham. How does it feel to have that title?

Well, it's pretty silly really because I'm not royalty, first of all! I do quite like it, though. I do secretly like the title, but in my heart I'm just me.

How was the Bake Off experience for you?

It was one of the most wonderful experiences I've ever had. Think about it, your work place is outside, sunny weather, cake everywhere! You can eat as much as you want; there's no restriction. Lovely clothes. Lovely bakers! The nicest bakers! Honestly, I fell in love with them. There were tears from me too.

Is this series one of the best to date?

Obviously - I'm in it! It's never had me in it before, so of course!

And finally, if you could change one thing about the world in 2024, what would it be and why?

I'd stop social media and go back to life without it. I think it would solve a lot of issues and help a lot of teenagers and a lot of people.

Alison stars as Spirit of the Beans in Jack And The Beanstalk at Birmingham Hippodrome from Saturday 16 December to Sunday 28 January.

For further information and bookings, visit: [.birminghamhippodrome.com](https://www.birminghamhippodrome.com)



Oh No! Shark In The Snow

Birmingham Town Hall,
Wed 27 December - Sun 31 December

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

The popularity of the book prompted Nick to write and illustrate two follow-ups - *Shark In The Dark!* and *Shark In The Park On A Windy Day!*... Now, this fun new production brings together the original story (plus *Shark In The Dark!*) with *Oh No! Shark In The Snow* - 'an enchanting winter tale' that puts a fresh and festive twist on the original.

Motionhouse: Starchitects Save Santa!

Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham,
until Sat 30 December

After scoring a stellar success with *Starchitects*, Motionhouse dance company now returns with a family-friendly sequel-show - and not a moment too soon, by the look of it! Why? Because it's Christmas Eve, Santa's gone missing, and the festive season is in serious danger of being cancelled. Cue, the *Starchitects* - a group of adventurous friends who blast off into the galaxy to rescue the gift-dispensing Mr Claus.

Featuring 'gravity-defying choreography and amazing digital projections', this brand-new production is being hailed by Motionhouse as 'a visual spectacle like no other'.

If the company's first *Starchitects* show is anything to go by, you won't be disappointed.



Dear Santa

Octagon Stafford, Sat 2 - Mon 4 December;
Birmingham Hippodrome, Mon 11 - Sun 24
December; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Tues
12 - Sun 24 December

Presented with the intention of giving children aged two to seven both a fun introduction to theatre and a memorable yuletide treat, Rod Campbell's *Dear Santa* tells the tale of Father Christmas' backfiring attempts to sort out the most fantastic of festive gifts for a girl named Sarah. With the assistance of his cheeky Elf, he finally settles on the perfect prezzie...

Snow Play

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre,
Tues 12 - Sun 24 December

There's no curbing Lyngo Theatre's enthusiasm when it comes to entertaining young audiences. Not only are they touring with *Little Red Riding Hood* (see opposite page), they're also out and about with *Snow Play*, a production that's described as a showdown between Winter and Spring over 'who gets to stay and who has to go away'. Audiences can join in the fun by making a snowman and getting stuck into a massive snowball fight. Seriously, what's not to like?...

Santa's Sparkly Surprise

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry,
Thurs 7 - Sun 24 December

Quite where Iain Lauchlan gets his energy and enthusiasm come the festive season is a mystery. But no matter what the answer is to

that particular yuletide conundrum, there's no denying his impact on 'Christmas at the Belgrade'. Not only is he directing this year's pantomime production of *Cinderella*, he also wrote the show *and* managed to find time to scribe this sure-to-be-magical production for pre-school audiences.

The 35-minute presentation catches up with Rudolph and Mouse at the North Pole, as they realise that everybody's been so busy getting presents ready for children around the world that they've completely forgotten to prepare for Christmas themselves.

With no decorations, no Christmas tree and no prezziess, they're going to need the help of all the children in the audience to make sure that Christmas is every bit as special as it should be...

Little Red Riding Hood

The Rep, Birmingham,
Thurs 7 December - Sat 6 January

Inspired by the spectacular success of last year's *Jack And The Magic Beanstalk*, The Rep has once again created a show to delight audience members aged three to six.

This year's offering takes families into the darkness of the woods for an adventure with *Little Red Riding Hood*, a young girl who's not only good at looking after her grandma but also knows a thing or two about outwitting big hairy wolves who'd like to make a meal of her...





The Gruffalo

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sat 2 - Sun 31 December

With millions of copies of the book having been sold, it's fair to say that Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler's award-winning *Gruffalo* has captured the hearts and minds of children everywhere. Tall Stories' stage adaptation follows Mouse as he heads out on a journey through the deep dark wood, scaring away hungry animals with tales of the terrifying Gruffalo...



Imagine his surprise, then, when he suddenly finds himself coming face-to-face with the very creature he's imagined! Tall Stories' delicate yet playful approach to their material - and their ability to let whatever story they're telling speak for itself, without flashy gimmicks or over-the-top costumes - places them at the very forefront of family theatre. An imaginative and engaging musical that comes complete with some good old-fashioned audience participation, *The Gruffalo* offers truly 'monstrous' fun for children aged three and older.

Horrible Histories: Horrible Christmas

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Thurs 28 December

The Horrible Histories team visits Birmingham in the dying days of 2023 to present 'the terrific tale of Christmas'. Charles Dickens, Oliver Cromwell, King Henry VIII and St Nicholas himself are among the characters who turn up in *Horrible Histories: Horrible Christmas* - a show that features everything from 'Victorian villains and medieval monks, to puritan parties and Tudor treats'.



the Peak District-based Vagabonds. "We believe that stories have the power to connect us, inspire us, and teach us about ourselves and the world around us. We create stories that are both entertaining and thought-provoking, and we hope that our work will leave a lasting impression on our audiences." There's every chance that this festive-season offering will do just that, as main character Lucy engages in a wild turkey chase of epic proportions, hoping against hope that she can somehow manage to recover her bothersome brother's beloved bear from the mysterious Christmas Toyshop...



whom think they've got the answer... Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer, Jingle Bells, When Santa Got Stuck Up The Chimney, The Twelve Days Of Christmas and We Wish You A Merry Christmas are among the songs featured in this 45-minute show. Created for kids aged two to eight, the production also includes a meet-and-greet with Father Christmas, who'll be handing out a gift to every youngster.

Little Red Riding Hood

Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton, Sat 9 - Sun 10 December

Hailed for their exceptional visual style and imaginative use of props, children's theatre company Lyngo here turn their attention to the famous fairytale in which a little girl discovers that there's way more to Granny than initially meets the eye...



The Christmas Toyshop Mystery

Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent, Sat 16 - Sat 23 December

Those Babbling Vagabonds make a welcome return with a show that's set to delight family audiences this Christmas. "Our work is rooted in storytelling," explain

Santa's Christmas Wish

The Civic, Stourport-on-Severn, Fri 1 December; Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke-on-Trent, Sat 9 - Sun 10 December; Benn Hall, Rugby, Sat 9 December; Prince of Wales Theatre, Cannock, Sun 10 December

Dotty the Elf is wondering what Santa wants for Christmas and needs help to find out. Enter, Dasher the Reindeer, Pompom the Penguin and Snowy the Snowman, all of

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Light entertainment from around the region



Sh**ged, Married, Annoyed

Utilita Arena Birmingham, Wed 13 December

With their Sh**ged Married Annoyed podcast boasting more than 100 million downloads, it's no surprise that amiable husband & wife team Chris & Rosie Ramsey decided to take the show out of the studio and onto the road. The first leg of the tour met with a lukewarm response from the critics, with many feeling that the sense of intimacy generated in the podcast was somewhat lacking in the cavernous spaces of the UK's biggest arenas. With all of that in mind, and lessons probably learned, Chris & Rosie are now out on the road again. The show deserves to succeed, so fingers crossed it ticks the boxes.

Fairytale Of New York

Victoria Hall, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, Thurs 14 December

With a West End run and two sell-out tours under its belt, Fairytale Of New York visits the Midlands in fine fettle and with an enviable reputation in tow.

The high-energy production - described by its publicity as 'the ultimate feelgood Irish-inspired Christmas show' - features a cast of singers, musicians & dancers performing a selection of much-loved yuletide songs - from chart-toppers such as White Christmas to traditional carols like Silent Night. Throw in some of 'the greatest Irish singalong songs of all time' and you've got the kind of show that should well and truly put you in the Christmas spirit.

Ladbaby: Live, Laugh, Love - Live

Birmingham Town Hall, Sun 17 December

LadBaby's history makes for quite the story. The fella behind the name is Mark Hoyle, who found fame on YouTube back in 2016 when he used the platform to document his own journey from 'lad to dad'.

Joined in his humorous endeavours by wife Roxanne, LadBaby has since released a number of Christmas songs (to raise money for food-bank charity The Trussell Trust), published bestselling children's books, launched sell-out clothing lines and a podcast, and is now hitting the road with this 'Christmas extravaganza'.

Mark and Roxanne are promising plenty of singing, dancing and audience participation - and even some 'on-stage head-to-head live couples battles'!

Favourite podcast features, such as Date

Night Diaries, Living With A Southerner, Dial A Dilemma and Guess That Sound, are also included.

Home Alone In Concert

Utilita Arena Birmingham, Wed 20 December

The experience of watching hit 1990 festive family film Home Alone on a giant HD screen, while a live orchestra and choir perform its John Williams-composed score, has been bringing pleasure to Christmas audiences for a decade now.

For those who've never seen the movie but would appreciate a heads-up, it tells the story of eight-year-old Kevin McCallister (played by Macaulay Culkin in his breakthrough role), who is accidentally left behind when his family leaves for a Christmas vacation. To make matters worse, Kevin finds himself having to defend the family home against two bungling burglars, brilliantly played by Daniel Stern and, at the height of his Goodfellas-inspired fame, the inimitable Joe Pesci...

The Rat Pack: Christmas In Vegas

Crescent Theatre, Birmingham, Tues 26 - Thurs 28 December

The warm and authentic friendship between Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and Sammy Davis Jr - particularly during its heyday in the late 1950s and early 1960s - continues to be the stuff of legend.

The three superstar singers, affectionately known as The Rat Pack, were fun-loving guys who brought entertainment to millions with a nice'n'easy style it was hard to dislike...

This seriously impressive touring show, paying loving tribute to Frank, Dean and

Sammy, is packed to its yuletide rafters with memorable tunes - from Frank's My Way, through Dean's Amore, to Sammy's Mr Bojangles. It also features a host of festive favourites, including Winter Wonderland, Let It Snow and White Christmas.

The D-Day Darlings: A Christmas To Remember

Halesowen Town Hall, Fri 22 December

With their appearance on Britain's Got Talent having worked wonders for their profile and record sales, The D-Day Darlings usually specialise in nostalgic songs from the wartime era but are here extending their repertoire to include a selection of much-loved festive favourites.

Featuring The D-Day Darlings Voices Choir, young trailblazers The D-Day Juniors, 'dazzling costumes and eye-catching choreography', the show includes such classics as Jingle Bells, Santa Clause is Comin' To Town and When A Child Is Born. The ensemble's much-loved duet of White Christmas with the late Dame Vera Lynn also features.

An Evening Of Burlesque

Birmingham Town Hall, Tues 12 December

Fun, feathers and fabulous costumes abound when the UK's longest-running burlesque show brings some wintertime cheer to Birmingham Town Hall this month.

Alongside the obligatory champagne showgirls, there's cabaret, comedy, music and circus to enjoy. The entertainment is all brought together in a manner that means the evening is best attended only by audience members who're 18 years of age or older.



JOLY GOOD FUN

Probably best known from hit Channel Four series Trigger Happy TV, Dom Joly is heading out on the road with brand-new offering The Conspiracy Tour... What's On chats to him about the show, his life, and what makes him angry...

You're hitting the road with new show The Conspiracy Tour in February. What can we expect?

It's a companion to my latest travel book, The Conspiracy Tourist, in which I travelled the globe looking into the strange world of the Conspiracy theorist. I will take the audience through some of the wackiest conspiracy theories out there and explain what I think of them. I'm pretty much a sceptic, and so, for balance, I'll be joined by an eminent conspiracy theorist: Dr Julian Northcote (author of the book COWS! Britain's Secret Killers). Expect fireworks.

What sort of conspiracy theories did you look at?

I took my long-suffering wife to Finland for a holiday in order to prove that it exists. There's a theory that it doesn't. I also went on a massive road trip across America, popping into Denver International Airport - rumoured to be the assembly point for the Illuminati come the Rapture. I investigated UFOs with a visit to Roswell, New Mexico. I looked into the JFK assassination in Dallas. I chased Alex Jones, the Info Wars grifter, around Austin, Texas. I also took a flat-earther to one of the four corners of the square flat earth - an island called Fogo, off Newfoundland. It didn't go well...

Why the interest in conspiracy theories?

Conspiracies used to be fun. Did we land on the moon, Bigfoot, was Paul McCartney cloned? Nowadays they've gone batshit insane. They've infected the body politic, with the actual President of the United States supporting Q Anon and urging people to inject themselves with bleach. It's dangerous and being used by a series of grifters to terrify gullible people and fleece them for money. It makes me angry, but it's also often very funny.

This isn't your first travel book...

No, it's my fifth. Over the last 15 years or so, I've travelled to more than 100 countries and written about some pretty strange stuff. I went on a coach trip around North Korea, an assassination vacation across America, skiing in Iran, walking the length of Lebanon, monster-hunting in the Congo, and joined an illegal crossing of the US/Mexican border. I even spent a night in Swindon! I seem to be attracted to dark destinations...

You grew up in Lebanon. Is this why you like this sort of travel?

Possibly. I grew up in the middle of a vicious civil war, and yet I had an unusual but wonderful childhood. Lebanon is an exciting, beautiful place, and I always try to find the

same in other places that maybe have a bad public image. My favourite fact about growing up in Lebanon was that I went to school with Osama Bin Laden for a year. I was six, he was 18, so we weren't friends, but I long to get a school photo. The weirdest part is that it was a Quaker school - Quakers being famous for pacifism.

You first shot to fame in Trigger Happy TV. How did that happen?

I did my life the wrong way round... most people do silly stuff when they're young and then knuckle down. I did the opposite. I was a diplomat in Prague and a producer for ITN in parliament. Then I started making satirical comedy but fell into just trying to be as funny as possible when Channel Four spotted my stuff and asked me to make Trigger Happy TV. I am immensely proud of it; I put blood, sweat and tears into every episode. We sold the show to 80 countries and it opened so many doors for me.

What were your favourite moments making the show?

Often they were the behind-the-scenes, private jokes. We used to work next to the office where Tony Blackburn worked, and we got his autograph every morning, at exactly the same time for seven months, and he never noticed. Also, while dressed as a traffic warden, I once gave a fire engine a ticket while they were putting out a small fire, only to find that I'd lost my cameraman and nobody was filming! My favourite Trigger Happy sketch was probably the large snail crossing the road, because only in Britain would the traffic stop and wait so patiently as I crawled across excruciatingly slowly.

What makes you laugh?

If I had to sum it up, it would be 'travelling vast distances and making an enormous effort to do something totally pointless'. My favourite sketch of all time was actually in a sequel to Trigger Happy TV called World Shut Your Mouth, in which we flew all the way to Northern Canada to 'frighten an Eskimo' by sneaking up behind him and crashing a large pair of cymbals together before running away and flying back home in triumph.

What makes you happy?

My dogs. All dogs, actually - except for little ones. No dog should be smaller than a cat.

What makes you angry?

How much time do you have? Jacob Rees Mogg, trains, bigotry, bullies, injustice, poor grammar, Boris Johnson, tax dodgers, people failing upwards, grifters, Covid deniers, bureaucracy, traffic wardens, people who

stand up the moment the plane lands, people who say eXpresso, automated customer services, Elon Musk, religious zealots, scammers, Q&As, Swindon...

What have been the highlights of your career so far?

Learning to fly a hot-air balloon. Getting the BBC to pay for me to visit all Seven Wonders of the World in one trip, just to stand in front of each one and say, "That...is shit..." Making a show called Dom Joly's Happy Hour for Sky One, in which I travelled the world getting drunk with my best friend; the Sky lawyers got nervous and asked me not to say that I was 'getting drunk' - would I instead mind saying that I was 'investigating cultural attitudes towards alcohol'. Surviving for three weeks on The Island With Bear Grylls; I lost three stone and nearly my leg. Getting my Alexa to turn on all the lights in my sitting room when I tell it to.

What do your family think about your life?

A strange mix of pride, confusion and disappointment. My wife, Stacey, is Canadian, much nicer than me, and is often very embarrassed by my behaviour. My daughter, Parker, just graduated from Oxford Uni and is now working at the university looking into a cure for Alzheimer's. My son, Jackson, has just started at Durham and has exceptional music taste, which I like to think I had a part in. We are a very argumentative family. We once drove across the Canadian Rockies in a motor home. If we'd recorded the trip, I'm convinced that we'd have had the best reality show in history... except for Below Deck.

What does the future hold?

Who bloody knows? I'm developing a Trigger Happy movie. I'm working on a TV series of The Conspiracy Tourist for the US. I've only just really discovered radio, and it's something that I really want to explore further. I also have a list of places I've yet to go to. Algeria is currently top of my list. I'm obsessed with the place. My son and I want to go storm-chasing in America. I want to walk the Cotswold Way with my dogs.

.....
Dom Joly: The Conspiracy Tour visits Stafford Gatehouse Theatre on Wednesday 21 February; The Old Rep, Birmingham, on Thursday 22 February; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, on Wednesday 13 March; Swan Theatre, Worcester, on Saturday 16 March and Lichfield Garrick Theatre on Tuesday 26 March



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Dance previews from across the region



Birmingham Royal Ballet: The Nutcracker

Birmingham Hippodrome, Fri 17 November - Sat 9 December

Sir Peter Wright's version of this firm festive favourite returns to the Hippodrome courtesy (of course) of Birmingham Royal Ballet. Created in 1990 as a thank-you to the city for its support of the company following its move to the Midlands from London's Sadler Wells, Sir Peter's production is seen by many as the finest interpretation of Tchaikovsky's magnificent and mesmerising score.

In true Christmas spirit, the story follows the young Clara as she's swept up in a fantasy of soldiers, giant rats, snow fairies, magic and mystery, before finally being transformed into a beautiful ballerina. A magical, must-see show for theatre-going dance lovers everywhere, the production was last year enhanced by a £1million makeover.

Dancing In A Winter Wonderland With Aljaz And Janette

Symphony Hall, Birmingham,
Sun 10 December

Janette Manrara and Aljaz Skorjanec take to the stage in a production that sees them combining 'world-class choreography, fabulous costumes and amazing sets' with the greatest hits of Christmas. The Strictly Come Dancing favourites are joined in the show by a supporting cast of dancers and singers.



Wizard Of Oz

Prince of Wales Theatre, Cannock,
Wed 13 December

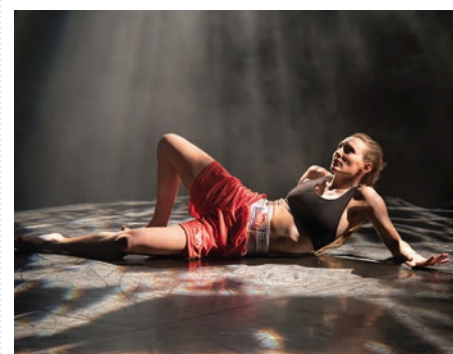
Ballet Theatre UK are inviting audiences to join them on the Yellow Brick Road this Christmas, as they visit Cannock with their two-act full-length ballet adaptation of L Frank Baum's iconic story. First performed by the company in 2019 and set to a classical score, the production is presented with 'beautiful backdrops, stunning theatrical sets' and costumes evoking the iconic sketches by WW Denslow that featured in the original book, published in 1900.

All About The Fight: Going The Distance!

Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton,
Tues 19 December

Sterran Dance Theatre have partnered with Bright Star Boxing Academy to develop this cross-discipline presentation, exchanging skills and 'exploring the creative possibilities between dance and boxing'.

Drawing on the personal experiences of members of the company, the highly physical piece explores the emotional fight which people can face for approval, survival, recognition and success.





NASTY NIK

Niki Colwell Evans made a name for herself when she reached the semi-final of The X Factor in 2007. Since then, she's become a musical theatre powerhouse, starring in Blood Brothers, Kinky Boots and Legally Blonde. She's returning to Wolverhampton's Grand Theatre this Christmas to play the ever-so-evil Queen Dragonella. What's On caught up with her for a pre-panto chat...

You've often played 'goodie' characters. Do you enjoy playing the 'baddie'?

I've been the baddie - this will be my fourth time. I think everybody likes playing the baddie, but today I forgot that I was - and what I looked like! I was on the back of a train in Dudley Zoo. I thought, "Ooh, yeah - I've got horns on my head, I'm the evil one!" It's fun!

Are you modelling your panto character of Dragonella on any real-life baddies?

I don't really know any real-life baddies. Well, I do - but they'd have to be male! I'm channelling some nasty man. My voice might go down...

What makes the Grand so special to you personally?

The Grand is my go-to theatre. If I'm going to watch anything, I'll go to the Grand. It's just the most stunningly beautiful theatre; it's got so much history, and it's nostalgic. I played my very first panto there - 2008, I think it was; Cinderella - and I played the Fairy Godmother. It's just like coming home, and it always feels like Christmas. I get that 'Christmassy butterflies' feeling at the Grand, whether I'm doing Kinky Boots, playing Mrs Johnstone in Blood Brothers or doing Legally Blonde... And today I've caught up with everybody's kids!

Obviously you're not on stage on Christmas Day. What have you got planned for the day itself?

I normally cook Christmas dinner, running back and forth from panto. This year I'm at home. I live in a small village, and I normally go to Midnight Mass. I can't wait not to have to rush to get to Midnight Mass, to rush home, to get the kids, to do this, to do that... I've booked a meal at 3 o'clock. It's going to be really weird - it's just me and my husband this year. Instead of fretting about cooking dinner - I'm a vegetarian, so he has to eat a

lot of turkey! - I thought we'd just go and have a nice meal out this Christmas.

You're used to long theatre runs and tours. What do you do differently for panto?

The difference with panto is it's a short, sharp shock to the system. Your body gets used to doing the same thing every day. With panto it's so quick, you've got to be on it - there's a whole story to do in half the time of a musical, and you've got to entertain the kids, and they want to scream at you, which is completely different to being on tour. You get different audiences. You get the kids in the daytime, who just want to scream and go 'Booo!' - I can't wait to be booed; I love it! - and then the adults of an evening, who get the 'older' humour. Sometimes you wait for a laugh that doesn't come - which can be quite embarrassing. It's something new every day. And the cast! Because I've been away, it's kind of the first time I've met them all today. I do a lot of shows with Tam Ryan [who's playing Muddles], and that's going to go badly, because I just can't stop laughing at him. I'll be playing a baddie that just wants to laugh all the time!

Do you have a pre-show routine?

I've got one of the biggest voices you've probably ever heard, and I have to use it all the time - I don't want my voice to decline. You tend to get into a routine - not knowing that you're doing the same routine - and if it slightly changes, you start to panic... I'll come in quite early, then I'll do a half an hour of vocal warm-up, and then - I don't know how I got into this because I'm not very healthy! - I always have to have fresh ginger and lemon; I have to have that before I go on stage. And I like to chill a little bit.

You're an experienced panto performer - you must have some stories to tell! What's your biggest mishap?

Somebody last night who came to see Blood Brothers in Brighton said, "I remember you

in the Grand doing Cinderella. It was the night you broke your leg!" That was pain. I came down the stairs to do my lovely curtsy, and I thought something had gone wrong, but I was in shock. I curtsied and I just went over like a Weeble... And I thought, "Ooooh that really hurts!" Jeanette Crankie jumped over me to do her bow and then one of the dancers, Peter Houston, who was just lovely, dragged me off. And then the company manager just went "Ugh!" cos my foot was swinging. I couldn't see because of the dress! Two days after that, I was back on, with my cast, flying through the air! Once I'd got the cast on, it was fine, so I finished the run in the cast. There were a lot of jokes about that. The worst thing is, I had to speak to the kids over the airwaves because they were so upset that the Fairy Godmother had hurt herself. How sweet is that?!

People come back to see panto year after year. What do you think is the appeal?

I think it's a release, it's a family thing, and it's hopefully a chance for people to get away from their normal lives and have a laugh for an hour and a half; to get with like-minded people who love Christmas and love to have a giggle. You get the kids in the morning, who are so excited; it's going to be really hard for me not to get excited with them this year. Christmas for a lot of people is a scary time. I've had Christmases in the past, when the kids were little, thinking: "Where am I gonna get it from? What am I going to do?" Hopefully it gives a bit of respite for the adults, watching their kids' faces, seeing something that's live rather than on a tablet. There's nothing that compares to it. That's what really gets me: watching the youngsters and seeing how excited they get.

.....
Niki stars as Queen Dragonella in Snow White at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Saturday 2 December to Sunday 7 January

Film highlights in December...

Wonka CERT tbc (116 mins)

Starring **Timothée Chalamet, Olivia Colman, Hugh Grant, Sally Hawkins, Rowan Atkinson, Matt Lucas**
Directed by **Paul King**

It's certainly proving to be a sweet end to 2023 for Midlands fans of *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*. Not only did the touring stage musical make an autumn stop-off in the region, but now there's this intriguing new film to enjoy.

In a story that's set a quarter of a century before the events of Roald Dahl's classic children's book, Timothée Chalamet stars as Willy Wonka, a young man who's chockful of ideas and determined to change the world one delectable bite at a time... The character was first brought to life by Gene Wilder in a 1971 big-screen adaptation - and it's that much-loved film which proved to be the inspiration for Wonka director Paul King.

"What I wanted this movie to be was like a companion piece to that movie," Paul told EW. "If you imagine those people in that world 25 years earlier, that was my starting process. Eventually, he would grow into that person and that factory."

Released Fri 8 December



Renaissance: A Film By Beyoncé (170 mins)

Starring **Beyoncé, Blue Ivy Carter**

If you love Beyonce but weren't able to get a ticket to see her on her record-busting Renaissance world tour earlier this year, fear not - you can now catch up with your idol and her critically acclaimed production on a cinema screen instead!

As well as featuring footage of the show itself, the film follows Queen Bey's creative journey in producing the concert, reflecting her involvement in every aspect of the process.

Renaissance isn't the first time Beyonce has released a film about herself. Most notable among previous such endeavours was the Netflix documentary *Homecoming*, which focused on a set she played at Coachella in 2018.

Released Fri 1 December



Eileen CERT 15 (97 mins)

Starring **Thomasin McKenzie, Anne Hathaway, Shea Whigham, Sam Nivola, Siobhan Fallon Hogan, Tonye Patano**
Directed by **William Oldroyd**



This film version of Ottessa Moshfegh's debut novel made a big impression at the 2023 Sundance Film Festival and looks set to score a hit with the cinema-going public when it's released this month.

The title character works in a youth prison in 1960s Massachusetts and longs for some excitement in her life. Enter, glamorous and enigmatic prison psychologist Dr Rebecca St John, who captivates Eileen from the off. But as the two women grow closer, Eileen's life takes a dark and sinister twist, as she becomes unwittingly entangled in Rebecca's mysterious past.

Released Fri 1 December

Aquaman And The Lost Kingdom CERT tbc (115 mins)

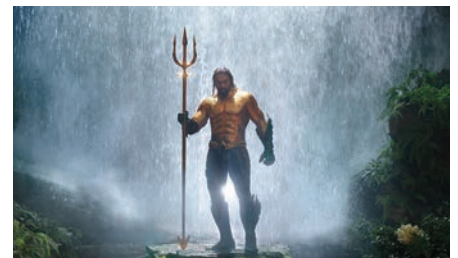
Starring **Jason Momoa, Ben Affleck, Patrick Wilson, Yahya Abdul-Mateen II, Dolph Lundgren, Nicole Kidman**
Directed by **James Wan**

Having failed once before to defeat Aquaman, Black Manta - still driven by the need to avenge his father's death - will stop at nothing to take down the King of Atlantis once and for all.

But defeating Aquaman is no paddle in the sea, particularly when our underwater hero forms an unlikely alliance with his imprisoned brother, Orm...

DC Comics continues to trail arch rivals Marvel when it comes to making movies that chime with superhero-loving cinema-goers, so the company will surely be hoping against hope that this sequel Aquaman movie goes at least some way towards shifting that long-term-stubborn dial.

Released Wed 20 December



The Iron Claw CERT tbc (130 mins)

Starring **Zac Efron, Holt McCallany, Harris Dickinson, Jeremy Allen White, Michael Harney, Lily James**
Directed by **Sean Durkin**

Driven to succeed by their domineering father, the inseparable Von Erich brothers made history in the intensely competitive world of professional wrestling during the early 1980s.

But for all their success, tragedy held them in a headlock from which they just couldn't seem to escape, leading to rumours that a curse had been placed on the family.

"They put these walls up to the outside world in order to stay strong enough to persevere through everything they had to do," Iron Claw star Zac Efron told Entertainment Weekly. "They had to be perfect all the time..."

"It just doesn't seem like this could all happen to one family. There's a huge element of the movie that is, of course, about wrestling and the showmanship aspect. But really, at its core, this movie's an incredible story about family, love, loss, and ultimately the triumph of a man who tries to break the cycle of a crazy curse."

Released Fri 22 December



Anyone But You CERT tbc

Starring **Sydney Sweeney, Glen Powell, Alexandra Shipp, Darren Barnet, Bryan Brown, Joe Davidson** Directed by **Will Gluck**

Bea and Ben look like the perfect couple and have an amazing first date. But then something happens that turns their fiery hot attraction ice cold.

The next time they meet is at a destination wedding in Australia; at which point they do what any two sensibly minded adults would surely do - they pretend to be a couple!... Featuring a familiar enough storyline that sees two people who ostensibly don't like one another finally finding themselves falling in love, *Anyone But You* is released on Boxing Day. If you're a romcom fan, it might therefore offer a perfect - albeit temporary - distraction from the serious business of eating and drinking yourself into a festive-season stupor.

Released Tues 26 December



Ferrari CERT tbc (130 mins)

Starring **Adam Driver, Shailene Woodley, Sarah Gadon, Patrick Dempsey, Penélope Cruz, Jack O'Connell**
Directed by **Michael Mann**

Behind the spectacle and danger of Formula One, ex-racer Enzo Ferrari is in crisis: bankruptcy stalks the company he and his wife built from nothing a decade earlier, he's torn between his marriage and his mistress, and his drivers' passion to win pushes them to the edge.

In 1957, all their fates converge in a single race - an iconic but treacherous 1,000-mile endurance slog across Italy known as Mille Miglia...

Although it never really puts its pedal to the metal, there's nevertheless plenty to enjoy in Michael Mann's new movie, which performed impressively at the recent Venice Film Festival. The appropriately named Adam Driver gives a solid performance as petrolhead turned automotive mogul Enzo, while the race scenes themselves are something to behold.

Released Fri 29 December



Next Goal Wins CERT tbc (103 mins)

Starring **Michael Fassbender, Oscar Kightley, Will Arnett, Elisabeth Moss, David Fenech, Rachel House** Directed by **Taika Waititi**

Helmed by Jojo Rabbit and Thor: Ragnarok director Taika Waititi, *Next Goal Wins* follows the story of the infamously terrible American Samoa soccer team, best known for once losing a game 31-0.

With the 2014 World Cup Qualifiers approaching, the team hires maverick but down-on-his-luck coach Thomas Rongen (Fassbender), hoping against hope that he can somehow manage to turn around the fortunes of the world's worst soccer team... There have been plenty of seriously impressive sports movies down the years - think *The Wrestler*, *Million Dollar Baby*, *I, Tonya*, *Moneyball*; the list goes on and on and on - but this misfiring comedy is not one of them.

Released Fri 29 December



THE 12 FILMS OF CHRISTMAS

Chestnuts roasting on an open fire, Jack Frost nipping at your nose... and a fabulous festive film on the telly to warm the cockles of your heart! Yes, Christmas is a-coming - but which magnificent yuletide movies should you choose for your holiday viewing? Here are 12 much-loved classics to consider...

It's A Wonderful Life

For many people, Frank Capra's *It's A Wonderful Life* (1946) is *the* festive film of all festive films. Although it was shot during a summer heatwave, its heart and soul is pure Christmas!

James Stewart stars as George Bailey, a man whose sense of duty sees him forsaking his own dreams and aspirations for the good of his family and community. Weighed down by his heavy responsibilities and no small amount of ill fortune, George decides he'd be better off dead - until, that is, his guardian angel, Clarence, makes him see the error of his ways...



Home Alone

The film that made a child star of Macaulay Culkin, *Home Alone* (1990) also features Joe Pesci - fresh from his time spent whacking fellow mobsters in Martin Scorsese's *Goodfellas* - and Daniel Stern as a pair of incompetent house-breakers. When the bumbling burglars attempt to rob a suburban Chicago home, they get plenty more than they bargained for: Kevin McCallister's family

has gone on vacation and accidentally left him behind. Home alone, he's determined to keep the property safe and sound...



Love Actually

Riding on the back of his successes with *Four Weddings And A Funeral* and *Notting Hill*, Richard Curtis sent this film out into the festive ether back in 2003 and scored a giant Christmas hit. Sickly sweet and cringeworthy though it may be in many places (*many, many* places!), the film also features some truly touching and genuinely poignant scenes - not to mention stand-out moments to remember forever, such as Hugh Grant as the prime minister dancing around Number 10 to the Pointer Sisters' *Jump* (For My Love).



Elf

There are those for whom no Christmas is complete without watching *Elf*. The now-cult movie - a stage-musical version of which is visiting the Midlands this month - finds Will Ferrell in fine form as Buddy, a man-child who, having been raised at the North Pole by Santa's elves, determines to head to New York in search of his biological father, played by Godfather actor James Caan... Celebrating its 20th anniversary next year, *Elf* is a movie that's positively overflowing with yuletide cheer. It also comes complete with many a visual gag to keep the kids happy.



The Muppet Christmas Carol

What do you get if you combine a much-loved story by the Victorian era's most famous writer, with an ensemble cast of puppets and an Academy Award-winning actor? *The Muppet Christmas Carol*, of course! Charles Dickens' 1843 short story about a grumpy old sinner who's taught the error of his miserly ways by a trio of festive phantoms provides plenty of opportunity for

the Muppets to peddle their absurdist style of comedy. Michael Caine, the Oscar-winning actor mentioned above, stays rock-steady as Ebenezer Scrooge amid the puppet-powered pandemonium.



How The Grinch Stole Christmas

Jim Carrey's career was very much firing on all cylinders when he took the starring role in this Year 2000 big-screen adaptation of Dr Seuss's classic story. The mean-minded, green-skinned Grinch lives at the top of a mountain overlooking Whoville, a town that certainly knows how to keep Christmas in style. Favouring isolation over living in the town - where he'd been brought up but bullied - the Grinch decides it's high time he took his revenge on the citizens of Whoville - by stealing all of their presents, decorations and food while they're asleep...



Miracle On 34th Street

New York's 34th Street has seen more than its fair share of Miracles down the years, but there's no question that the two most popular ones happened in 1947 and 1994. Both versions have become perennial festive family favourites, with the original released just one year after that other classic Christmas cracker, It's A Wonderful Life... When New York's biggest department store finds itself short of a Santa, an old fella named Kris Kringle steps in to help out. So far, so good. But the store soon finds itself at

the centre of controversy when the benign senior citizen claims that he is, in fact, the real Santa Claus...

The Holiday

Bolstered by an all-star cast, Nancy Meyers' 2006 romantic comedy has established itself as a modern-day Christmas classic and is considered by many to be essential yuletide viewing. The wafer-thin but effective storyline sees two thirtysomething singletons who've never met deciding to swap homes for Christmas, with Kate Winslet's Iris Simpkins heading for LA and Cameron Diaz's Amanda Woods travelling in the opposite direction to a cottage in the English countryside. Both women are recovering from heartbreak, but it isn't long before each of them finds the gift of a new romance in their festive stocking...



Nativity!

You've seen the musical (or if you haven't, book yourself a ticket at the Birmingham Rep, where it's running across the festive season), now check out the original film! Midlands writer Debbie Isitt's movie was the surprise Christmas hit of 2009, bringing together an impressive cast of big-name performers and, in due course of time, spawning three sequels. Set in Coventry and partially improvised, the film follows the attempts of St Bernadette's Catholic primary school to pick up the prize for the best nativity play. But things threaten to spiral out of control when the teacher in charge of the production tells a big fat festive lie...

The Polar Express

Listed in the 2006 Guinness Book of Records as the world's 'first all-digital capture' film, The Polar Express stars Tom Hanks in a variety of roles and follows the story of a young boy who's starting to wonder whether Santa Claus really exists. On Christmas Eve he sees a mysterious steam locomotive

outside his bedroom window. But this is no ordinary train; this one is transporting its passengers to the North Pole for a meeting with the man himself. The boy is invited on board the locomotive and the adventure begins...



Scrooge

Of all the versions of A Christmas Carol to grace our cinema screens in the post-war years, this 1951 British offering is widely considered to be the greatest - not least because of a show-stopping portrayal of the title character by legendary English actor Alastair Sim.

Sim went on to voice Scrooge in an animated version of the Carol some 20 years later. His interpretation of the character on both occasions was so memorable that Jim Carrey decided to mimic him when he himself lent his voice to old Ebenezer (in another animated version of the story, released in 2009).

The Snowman

This wordless, half-hour, made-for-television animated film was first screened in 1982, four years after the publication of the Raymond Briggs book on which it's based. It's a simple tale about a snowman who comes to life and takes a small boy on an adventure through the starry night sky. The film is routinely screened every Christmas (often alongside its sequel, The Snowman And The Snowdog) and is undoubtedly best known for the central song of its Howard Blake-composed score: Walking In The Air.



Visual Arts previews from around the region



Coventry Biennial

various locations across Coventry,
until Sun 14 January

The fourth Coventry Biennial investigates 'humankind's complex relationship with the world' and features the work of 15 artists displayed across five venues. Included in the programme is an immersive installation by Turkish artist Can Altay which draws inspiration from the rich traditions of public water fountains in Ottoman cities, most notably Istanbul. Also featuring in the Biennial is a site-responsive installation from A History Of Frogs, Vietnamese American artist Dinh Q Lê's powerful multi-screen installation The Colony, and local artist Janet Tryner's installation and sculpture examining the impact of housing developments on rural ecosystems. For further information, visit: coventrybiennial.com

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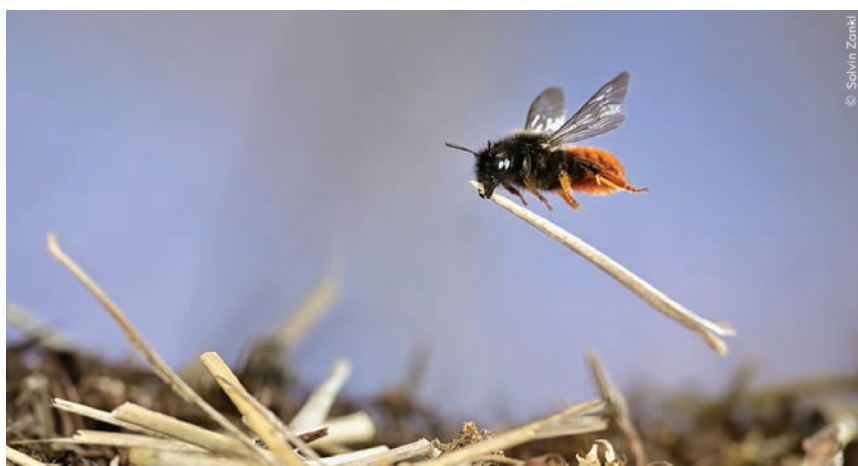


Derek Boshier: Image Revolt

Wolverhampton Art Gallery, until Sun 21 January

Derek Boshier's lifelong fascination with the power, use and function of images is much in evidence in this celebration of his 60 years as a restlessly inventive artist.

Taking a rare overview of his career, the exhibition features examples of his artwork from the post-war period, right through to the digital age. His more-recent work includes expressive paintings and drawings confronting gender, technology and war at the height of the #MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements.



Wildlife Photographer Of The Year

Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry, until Mon 1 April

"We are facing urgent biodiversity and climate crises, and photography is a powerful catalyst for change." So says Dr Doug Gurr, director of the Natural History Museum, which has developed and produced this year's Wildlife Photographer Of The Year

competition. "The exhibition reveals some of nature's most wondrous sights," adds Dr Gurr, "whilst also offering hope and achievable actions that visitors can take to help protect the natural world." The hugely prestigious show - visiting the Herbert as part of an extensive tour - features a host of awe-inspiring images capturing fascinating animal behaviour and breathtaking landscapes.

Mali Morris: Calling

Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, until Fri 22 December

Visual arenas in which colour moves through space and space moves through colour are a signature aspect of recent work by British artist Mali Morris.

Mali has been exploring the possibilities of abstract painting for more than half a century; she first mounted a solo exhibition at Ikon way back in 1979.

This latest show, featuring paintings produced during the past 25 years, illustrates the way in which she has rethought the role of gesture within abstract painting, using layers of colour to create luminous spaces which, although visually clear, are full of precisely judged ambiguities.



The World That Belongs To Us

New Art Gallery, Walsall, until Sun 9 June

Autobiography and activism come together in this multimedia exhibition showcasing painting, photography, film, animation, wall drawing and site-specific installation.

Featuring work by intergenerational artists from the South Asian diasporas of the UK, US and Canada, the show aims to stimulate conversations around a wide range of subjects, from community and belonging, to migrant and diasporic storytelling and queer & feminist world-building.

Fresh Air For The Potteries

The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, until Sun 5 May

Fresh Air For The Potteries marks the 150th anniversary of the birth of William Blake, whose reputation as a photographer is mainly built around the popularity of his 'Smokies' - photos that depicted the Potteries' industrial landscape of bottle ovens and chimneys.

Blake also travelled throughout the region, taking photographs of the towns and villages he visited. In so doing, he built up a visual record of north Staffordshire during the early 20th century.

EYES TO THE SKY

**new light show takes audiences on
a journey through the story of evolution...**



Flying into Wolverhampton this month is Evolution, a new aerial spectacle that sees hundreds of drones not only illuminate the skies but also take viewers on a journey through time and space. Dominic Mills, the founder of the company organising the event, explains what audiences can expect...

Wolverhampton is in for a unique treat this month when it hosts the world premiere of Evolution, a brand-new drone light show from award-winning storytellers Celestial.

One of the top drone-show operators in the world, the company has put on displays at an array of high-profile events, including New Year's Eve celebrations in London, the Eurovision Song Contest in Liverpool and the City of Culture celebrations in Coventry.

Celestial's production team, which includes animators, filmmakers and tech specialists, creates shows using hundreds of illuminated drones that fly in formation in a spectacular display of light and colour.

Evolution - which will also be performed at Bristol's Seat Unique Stadium - pushes the creative collective's boundaries even further, as it's the first show they've devised as a standalone production.

Dominic Mills, founder & CEO of Yuup, a three-year-old Bristol-based local experiences company that puts on events by partnering with creative and venue partners, saw the potential for creating a unique show - as opposed to fulfilling an external commission or brief - after meeting Celestial's founder, Tony Martin, last year.

"We talked about what they do," he says, "which is typically drone light shows that are part of some other event such as London's New Year's Eve, the launch of Eurovision, brand campaigns and so on.

"But a lot of people haven't seen a drone light show - or if they have, they've seen it in the background on the TV - so we said, wouldn't it be great to create a standalone production that the general public could attend? That's where the idea came from."

Dominic explains that Evolution will take audiences on a journey through time and space, telling the story of life on Earth, from the beginning of creation, through the reign of the dinosaurs, and eventually to life as we know it today.

"It's a narrated story that starts with the Big Bang and inception of the universe, and then journeys through the emergence of the sun, the solar system and the planets within it. It will take the audience on a voyage,

accompanied by narration and a cinematic soundtrack."

The latter elements, both new territory for Celestial, will take the show to a whole new level, according to Dominic.

"Even people who have seen them before are in for something exciting and new," he says, explaining that Evolution has been put together in similar fashion to a Hollywood movie.

"If you imagine you're making a short, animated film, you'd have a brief and a script and a storyboard, which animators use to create a 3D show using software. Once that process is complete, it's then programmed and uploaded to the drones.

"Accredited drone pilots are responsible for their operation, but the show itself is pre-programmed. As you can imagine, if you're flying hundreds and hundreds of drones, it needs to be tightly controlled - so the flightpaths, formation changes and light effects are all pre-programmed."

Flightpaths are, of course, an important consideration - drone shows obviously can't interfere with other aircraft and need to be licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). With this in mind, Dominic thinks the venue of Wolverhampton Racecourse is ideal.

"As you can imagine, there are a lot of constraints and you need CAA approval. Delivering a safe show from everyone's perspective is obviously very important to us. The racecourse is a perfect space because there's a big open area to put on a fantastic show and maintain the required distance between the humans and the drones. Everyone should have a fantastic view, as there's obviously a great line of sight when it takes place in the sky."

Another reason the show is being performed in the West Midlands is that Yuup expanded its operation to Birmingham earlier this year and has already recruited around 100 'experience hosts' in the region.

Going forward, Dominic believes that drone shows could well play a big part in his company's offering. He very much sees them as the future of entertainment, partly because rapidly developing technology is

enabling bigger and better spectacles to be created, but also because the format's green credentials make it environmentally friendly.

"It's an incredible new form of entertainment - like nothing people will have seen before. It's storytelling in the sky, and the sky is a huge canvas on which to tell stories.

"If you think about an equivalent type of show, pre-drones it was fireworks, and obviously there are environmental concerns in terms of the waste and the effect they can have on animals and so on. One of the things about a drone show is that you can put on a spectacular event in a way that is very friendly to the environment."

Celestial's green credentials also include charging the drones using renewable energy sources. But if that, and the fact that the shows are performed by pre-programmed machines, all sounds a little mechanical, then Dominic is quick to point out that audiences typically make a human, and often visceral, connection to what they are seeing.

"When you watch people watching these shows, the emotional reaction is often quite strong, which I think is partly because they don't perhaps expect the scale of it in the sky. And the storytelling element is really quite compelling."

The Evolution show tells its story in just 16 minutes, but Dominic says there's much more to the evening's family entertainment in Wolverhampton. As well as a 15-minute 'pre-show' - featuring lights and music - there's also a large funfair in the middle of the racecourse and a food village selling a variety of festive cuisine.

"People can come along and have a great evening with family and friends, get some food and enjoy the fairground. The combination of the sheer size of the display and the number of drones, coupled with the soundtrack and the narration, and what is arguably the greatest story of all time - the story of evolution - should make for a pretty special evening."

Evolution takes place at Wolverhampton Racecourse, Dunstall Park, on Thursday 14 December



LEGO
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25th NOV
- 24th DEC

**CHRISTMAS
BRICKTACULAR**

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BOOK ONLINE AT [LEGOLANDDISCOVERYCENTRE.COM/BIRMINGHAM](https://legolanddiscoverycentre.com/birmingham)

This poster features a central LEGO minifigure of Santa Claus with a yellow head, white beard, and red suit, set against a green circular background. The background is red with white snowflakes and two white-outlined Christmas trees. A yellow circle in the top right corner contains the dates '25th NOV - 24th DEC'. The title 'CHRISTMAS BRICKTACULAR' is written in large, bold, red letters with a white outline. At the bottom, a yellow banner contains the text 'BOOK ONLINE AT LEGOLANDDISCOVERYCENTRE.COM/BIRMINGHAM'.



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NICE LIST!
25th Nov -
24th Dec

LIMITED TIME ONLY! Book online now @ visitsealife.com/christmas

This poster has a winter theme with a blue and white background. It features a Santa Claus sleigh pulled by reindeer on the left, a snowman on the right, and three children in the foreground. The title 'JOIN SNOWY'S CONSERVATION CREW' is in large, blue, icy letters. Below it, the text 'Discover more about this amazing place and its marine animals!' is written. A red circular badge in the bottom right corner contains the text 'GET ON THE NICE LIST! 25th Nov - 24th Dec'. At the bottom, a green banner contains the text 'LIMITED TIME ONLY! Book online now @ visitsealife.com/christmas'. The SEA LIFE Birmingham logo is at the top.

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas...



Winter Funland

NEC, Birmingham, Sat 9 December - Mon 1 January

Described as a 'full-on festive extravaganza', Winter Funland is home to the UK's largest indoor Christmas funfair. Attractions include an ice rink, a 1,200-seater circus and the chance to enjoy unlimited rides. As an added treat, youngsters can visit a

special festive grotto (pre-booking is essential), where Santa will be checking out who's been naughty or nice while his mischievous elves make themselves available for some not-to-be-missed photo opportunities.



Christmas at Aston Hall

Aston Hall, Birmingham

With Christmas trees and twinkling flameless candles much in evidence, Aston Hall is dressed for the season and ready to welcome visitors!

On Sunday 10 December, the magnificent 17th-century mansion will host Aston Alive: Christmases Past, an event that will see a

cast of historical characters share stories about how they used to celebrate Christmas. Then, on Sunday the 17th, visitors can enjoy a day of action, humour and adventure courtesy of two cracking Christmas tales from the Court of King Arthur.

Winter Glow

Three Counties Showground, Malvern, until Sat 6 January

The 2023 edition of Winter Glow features a number of new activities, including elf circus-skills workshops and pet experiences (on selected dates).

One of the event's key features, the outdoor light trail, is 'bigger than ever' this year and takes visitors on a journey around the North Pole.

Other highlights include personalised 'Santa experiences', an indoor ice rink, a food quarter, a fairground and a Christmas market (which is available to visit without a ticket).



Christmas at Compton Verney

Compton Verney, Warwickshire

Compton Verney is a hive of yuletide activity this month, with attractions at the venue including festive lunches (7 - 15 December), a Winter Wassail (on the 9th) and numerous Christmas concerts.

Those visiting on the weekend of the 16th & 17th will be greeted by the Christmas camel and his donkey friends, with opportunities available to stroke the animals and take a photo with them.

The following week sees Santa stopping off at the venue (from the 22nd to the 24th) and hiding out in the grounds and galleries, waiting for visitors to find him and share their festive plans and Christmas wishes.





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winterfunland.com



It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas...



Victorian Christmas Weekends

Blists Hill Victorian Town, Ironbridge, Shropshire, Sat 9 - Sun 10 and Sat 16 - Sun 17 December

Take a step back in time this month and sample a Blists Hill Christmas Weekend (or two!). As well as enjoying the popular Victorian town's usual exhibits - decorated for the season - kids will also be able to whirl down the helter skelter, check out Punch & Judy shows and meet Santa in his grotto.

Candle dipping and Victorian Christmas card-making also feature, and there's a Christmas Emporium too, providing shoppers with the chance to purchase some unique gifts. A choir, brass band, reindeer and snow further add to the festive feel.

Santa's Grotto Experience

National SEA LIFE Centre, Birmingham, until Sat 24 December

Get ready to dive into the ultimate, er, *fish*-mas adventure at the National SEA LIFE Centre in Birmingham, as Santa and his elves set about the business of spreading some serious Christmas cheer!

Sea explorers can check out more than 2,000 incredible creatures - including a colony of Gentoo penguins, jaw-some sharks and the UK's only sea otters - before heading to Santa's spectacularly snowy grotto, where every child will receive a special gift to take home with them.



Christmas Bricktacular

Legoland Discovery Centre Birmingham, until Sat 24 December

Have yourself a brick-tastic little Christmas at Legoland Discovery Centre.

Get into the festive spirit by joining in with a selection of magical activities, including a scavenger hunt in the winter wonderland-themed Miniland. There's also the chance to build a Christmas tree out of Lego and meet Lego Santa in his brick grotto.

Fun rides, build & play zones and a 4D cinema further add to the popular visitor attraction's festive offer.



Ice Skate Birmingham

Centenary Square, Birmingham, until Sun 7 January

Ice Skate Birmingham and the Big Wheel is back at Centenary Square for the festive season.

While the wheel offers the opportunity to enjoy fantastic views across the city, the weather-proofed ice rink accommodates up to 300 people per session.

Younger or inexperienced skating enthusiasts can keep upright by using special penguin aids. And when skaters have finished their Torvill & Dean routine, they can warm themselves up with some festive fare in the nearby Ice Lounge and double deck rooftop bar.

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CHRISTMAS WEEKENDS



2, 3, 9, 10, 16 & 17 December

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BLISTS HILL VICTORIAN TOWN

CHRISTMAS LATES



2, 3, 9, 10, 16 & 17 December

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Santa Claws

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fun this Christmas

A Santa Claws Show & a Raptor
training session run by elves
Saturday 9th December



Herbert

Art Gallery & Museum

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dippyincoventry.co.uk

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas...



The Enchanted Express

Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, nr Kidderminster, every weekend from Sat 2 - Sun 24 December

Severn Valley Railway's ever-popular Enchanted Express will return to its Bridgnorth station each weekend until Christmas.

The voice of Dame Julie Walters will guide passengers aboard the train, where they will meet train driver Luna Loco, Pip the Christmas Mouse, Brigadier Dimple the Toy Soldier, Violet the Sugarplum Fairy, Mama Lumi the Post Elf and Father Christmas himself.

Once everyone has settled into their very own private compartment, an enchanting Christmas tale and festive music will play as the train steams through a winter wonderland. As the journey progresses, characters will appear to personally sign guests' hardback books, with each child receiving a gift from Father Christmas. And to top it all off, the experience includes a free 2024 return ticket for each child.



Christmas Light Show

Lichfield Cathedral, Staffordshire, Sat 16 - Wed 20 and Fri 22 December

Acclaimed animation team Illuminos return to Lichfield Cathedral this month with another festive light spectacular.

The audio-visual shows will be displayed outside against the cathedral's Bishop's Palace and West Front, using the popular carol In The Bleak Midwinter to tell the

Christmas story. Visitors will be introduced to a kind and generous fox, who gives gifts to other animals he meets as he makes his way to see the newborn baby Jesus. The festive experience will then continue inside the cathedral, where visitors can check out the Christmas Tree Festival.

Visit Santa: Vintage Sleigh Experience

Coventry Transport Museum, until Sat 23 December

The Vintage Sleigh Ride experience returns to Coventry Transport Museum for Christmas. Wander through a magical winter wonderland of festive activities and snowy scenes before taking a ride on an enchanting vintage sleigh pulled by two trusty reindeer. Your next stop? Lapland. Meet Santa, tell him your Christmas wishes and collect a special gift!... The Vintage Sleigh Ride experience includes museum admission tickets for the day of your visit.



Step into Christmas at Cadbury World

Cadbury World, Birmingham, weekends until Sat 23 December, and also Thurs 21 - Fri 22 December

Festive celebrations are in full swing at Cadbury World this month. The popular venue is presenting a whole host of seasonal activities for families to enjoy, all of which come complete with that ever-important chocolate twist.

Visitors can catch one of the 17 daily performances of the Santa Show (included in the ticket price), where the super-helpful elves will be handing out gifts to young audience members.

Before heading for home, be sure to swing by the world's biggest Cadbury shop to pick up some handmade Christmas chocolates.



SAVING SANTA!



Dance company Motionhouse's
Starchitects return, this time
to save Christmas...

Motionhouse is offering young theatre-goers the chance to enjoy a cosmic Christmas treat at Birmingham's Midlands Arts Centre this month. A follow-up to the Leamington-based dance company's critically acclaimed Starchitects, brand-new production Starchitects Save Santa! finds the same group of intrepid children engaging in a fun-filled space adventure...

Dance-circus company Motionhouse have teamed up with Birmingham's Midlands Arts Centre (MAC) to present a new festive show which promises to be an absolute Christmas cracker.

Featuring high-flying choreography and dramatic digital projection, Starchitects Save Santa! tells the story of a group of children who are blasted into space to find Santa Claus after he disappears on Christmas Eve. Racing against time to ensure youngsters everywhere receive their presents, the kids soon find themselves caught up in an intergalactic adventure like no other.

The production follows on from the huge success of Motionhouse's Starchitects show, which first introduced audiences to these intrepid children and their fun-filled space missions.

Both shows have been created and choreographed by Motionhouse's founder & artistic director, Kevin Finnan, who says the new production will appeal to children and adults alike.

"To make a really good Christmas show and a really good children's show, what you do is try and make it fun for everyone. So we're performing with a high level of skill, and there are a lot of things to watch and admire for adults and children together.

"We've been really pleased with the success of Starchitects. It's the same characters this time too; so a bit like the Famous Five, I think the Starchitects are going to have lots of different adventures.

"The new story is easy to follow. This time the Starchitects are all excited, it's nearly Christmas and everyone is waiting. But then something happens to Santa in space, so the Starchitects take it upon themselves to rescue him and save Christmas."

The Leamington Spa-based company has built up a worldwide reputation for its dramatic combinations of circus, dance and projection, and Kevin says the new show very much builds on that.

"It's always been Motionhouse's ambition to make really exciting, immersive shows, so we interact with projections, we use dance-

circus, we use aerial work and we include a lot of fun.

"This works really well in children's shows, as they're built around a sense of play, so we combine all these elements as dynamically as we can. So the dancers interact with the films to create an exciting explosion of action."

Starchitects Save Santa! is the first time Motionhouse has created a production for the festive season.

"I've never done a Christmas show in my life, and it's been tremendous fun," says Kevin. "We've really enjoyed creating the show and have been looking forward to bringing it to children.

"MAC has been there for us for years and years and has been a great supporter, so it's a real pleasure to be working with the venue to bring this new commission to the audience there."

MAC's chief executive & artistic director, Deborah Kermode, first discovered the Starchitects four years ago - and was immediately eager to bring their adventures to the Cannon Hill Park-located arts centre.

"I saw Starchitects at the Motionhouse studio space in Leamington, and it was really cheeky," she says. "Like all their work, it was really high quality, but it had a real playfulness about it. I thought it would be interesting to invite them to present it as a Christmas show.

"It's really unusual because most Christmas shows tend to have a much more familiar storyline or a more traditional approach to Christmas - even things like panto or some very well-known children's books. What excited me about the work was that it's more universal, in terms of our international community that we serve and what the festive season means to them. For some of these communities, the festive season doesn't always mean a traditional Christmas, but it is a chance to be with their families, have time off, and come to MAC to see a show."

For Deborah and the team, Christmas is a key part of their annual programme.

"We are absolutely committed to doing a high-quality family show at Christmas every

year, and it tends to be for younger children rather than for older teens. We really want young ones to feel at the heart of that Christmas presentation and feel the joy and the buzz about it.

"Christmas is the only show where we make a commitment to so many performances - more than 60 this year - so it's our commitment to doing a long run."

Although MAC aims to put itself at the heart of the community all year round, this is especially true at Christmas. Audience members are offered the chance to 'gift a ticket' - providing an opportunity for a child to enjoy a show which they might not otherwise have been able to see - and there are relaxed and British Sign Language performances available throughout the run.

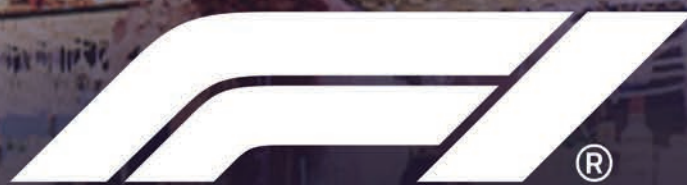
"More and more people are visiting our relaxed performances," says Deborah. "Relaxed isn't just about children; it could be a family member with dementia, or someone who has considerations of their own. It's about making theatre open to as many people as possible."

MAC has a long relationship with Motionhouse, having showcased many of the company's works in the past. Deborah is proud the arts centre is premiering Starchitects Save Santa!

"It's fantastic to be thinking that organisations such as MAC can pioneer in this relationship with this work and send it on its way. We want to have a generous relationship with the sector; it's really important that we keep making new work or adapting work.

"I think audiences will be excited about the physicality of Starchitects Save Santa!. There are lots of fantastic visuals, and the chemistry between the dancers is really beautiful. It's very daredevil and I'm sure all of our audiences will be impressed."

.....
Starchitects Save Santa! shows at Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham, until Saturday 30 December



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*Your week-
by-week
listings guide*
December 2023

thelist



Evolution Drone Light Show - Wolverhampton Racecourse, Thurs 14 December

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

What's On

Fri 1 - Sun 10 December



The Polar Express™ Train Ride -
Telford Steam Railway
until Sat 23 December

Mon 11 - Sun 17 December



Snow Play at Stafford
Gatehouse Theatre
Tues 12 - Sun 24 December

Mon 18 - Sun 24 December



Winter Funland at NEC
Birmingham
until Mon 1 January

Mon 25 - Sun 31 December



Richard Blackwood
at Bilston Town Hall
Sat 30 December

VISUAL ARTS IN THE MIDLANDS

Ikon Gallery, Birmingham

ASHOKKUMAR D MISTRY: DON'T STARE

New photography and moving-image show from an Ikon Youth Programme artist, using portraits to explore how our perception of ourselves fails to match that of others, until Sun 3 Dec, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham

Midlands Arts Centre, Edgbaston, Birmingham

DIGITAL ZINES Exhibition of work created by seven Birmingham secondary schools during summer 2023 as part of Reframe, a new digital-skills project sponsored by Apple, until Sun 7 Jan

MARLEY STARSKEY BUTLER: THIRTY-SIX

First solo exhibition exploring Starskey Butler's lived experience of social work. Photography, video, audio & text all feature, until Sun 28 Jan

New Art Gallery, Walsall

ANNETTE PUGH: HAPPENSTANCE

Featuring newly commissioned oil paintings that explore traces of human presence in the landscape, until Sun 7 Jan

PRIDE & PRIVILEGE AT THE CLASS ACT Temporary exhibition exploring class and identity, until Sun 9 June

Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery

ASHES UNDER URICON An exhibition on the balcony, exploring works inspired by the Roman City at Wroxeter, until Sun 17 Dec

The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent

FRESH AIR FOR THE POTTERIES

Exhibition celebrating the 150th anniversary of local photographer William Blake's birth, until Tues 5 May

Wolverhampton Art Gallery

SOFT POWER Su Richardson's humorous and subversive crocheted sculptures confront notions of femininity and domesticity, until Sun 10 Dec

POP PARADE Showcasing the gallery's most iconic pop artworks by leading British and American artists, until Sun 31 Dec

POP ART AND POETRY A kaleidoscope of Pop ceramics by key artists from around the world, until Sun 7 April

Elsewhere:

CHAPTERS OF OUR LIVES Interactive tactile textile project, capturing

generational stories 'with a difference', until Sat 2 Dec, The National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire

THE STORY CONTINUES Interactive multimedia experience following the story of Icylin Douglas, a central figure in the neighbouring gallery exhibition, until Sat 2 Dec, The National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire

HIDING: GRACE CURRIE Thought-provoking exhibition by local emerging artist Grace, until Thu 21 Dec, The Gateway, Shrewsbury

GALLERY, BALCONY & LINK ROOM EXHIBITIONS Featuring works by Gill Stokes, Sun 10 Dec - Sat 23 Dec, Bear Steps Art Gallery, Shrewsbury

LEEK SCHOOL OF ART SHOWCASE

Exhibition showcasing works by students of the Creative Art & Design Practice Degree, until Sat 30 Dec, The Nicholson Museum & Art Gallery, Staffordshire

SHADOW PUPPETS: LIGHT AND ILLUSION

A range of exhibits presenting original shadow puppets from around the world, until Sun 31 Dec, Bantock House Museum, Wolverhampton

[ROUNDAABOUT]: DAVID CHECKLEY

RESIDENCY A progression from the previous project in which resident artists regenerate a public underpass into a community space, until Sun 14 Jan, Asylum Art Gallery, Wolverhampton

HALLS YOUNG ARTIST COMPETITION An exhibition of shortlisted entries, inspired by the coronation of Charles III, until Jan 2024, The Rose Paterson Art Gallery, Shropshire

GEORGIA REDPATH: NATURE | ARCHITECTURE

New works by Georgia Redpath, using a limited palette of geometric building blocks to craft a sculptural world, until Tues 26 March, Stourbridge Glass Museum



Geddy Lee - The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

Gigs

SISTERS OF MURPHY Fri 1 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

HALOCENE + LAUREN BABIC Fri 1 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

BILLY LOCKETT Fri 1 Dec, O2 Academy, B'ham

KEVIN JAMES THORNTON Fri 1 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

KUMAR SANU, UDIT NARAYAN AND ABHIJEET BHATTACHARYA Fri 1 Dec, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

NIRVANA UK Fri 1 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

ROB LAMBERTI PRESENTS PERFECTLY GEORGE Fri 1 Dec, Dudley Town Hall

LONDON CALLING: THE CLASH TRIBUTE Fri 1 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

BLACK BOMBERS + TURNING BLACK LIKE LIZARDS + DIABLO FURS + YEAR ZERO Fri 1 Dec, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

EXTREME + LIVING COLOUR Fri 1 Dec, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

MICHAEL SCHENKER + NIGHT DEMON Fri 1 Dec, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

THE BITES Fri 1 Dec, The Giffard Arms, Wolverhampton

VICKY JACKSON AS PINK Fri 1 Dec, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

UNIVERSITY Fri 1 Dec, The Underground, Stoke-on-Trent

PETE COE Fri 1 Dec, The Albion, Burton upon Trent

MAET LIVE AND THE NEVER NEVERLAND EXPRESS Fri 1 Dec, The Station, Cannock

NO LIMIT Fri 1 Dec, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

COCKNEY REJECTS + PACKET RACKET + THE RED BASTARDS Fri 1 Dec, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

TJ JOHNSON Fri 1 Dec, The Abbey, Shrewsbury

BREAK THE RECORD Fri 1 Dec, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

FITKINWALL Fri 1 Dec, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shrops

RICK WILSON & JO JUKES Fri 1 Dec, Hermon Arts, Oswestry, North Shropshire

EBB + JEANICELEE + KOALA Fri 1 Dec, Percy's Cafe Bar, Whitchurch, North Shropshire

TOM SEALS Fri 1 Dec, Crewe Lyceum

SWEET Fri 1 Dec, Aston Hall, Wrexham

UK FOO FIGHTERS Fri 1 - Sat 2 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

AGAINST THE CURRENT Sat 2 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

PHIL CAMPBELL AND THE BASTARD SONS + THE CARDS + SWEET ELECTRIC Sat 2 Dec, O2

Institute, Birmingham

COROOK + BLAIR Sat 2 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

BLOOD COMMAND Sat 2 Dec, The Flapper, Birmingham

ERASURED Sat 2 Dec, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

THE DRIFTERS Sat 2 Dec, Dudley Town Hall

SWEDE DREAMZ - ABBA TRIBUTE Sat 2 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

THANK YOU FOR THE MUSIC - ABBA TRIBUTE Sat 2 Dec, The Civic at The Halls W'hampton

THE JAM'D Sat 2 Dec, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

THE 900 Sat 2 Dec, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

BON GIOVI Sat 2 Dec, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

DEFINITELY MIGHTBE + ADORED Sat 2 Dec, The Station, Cannock

ASH COOPER Sat 2 Dec, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

SONS OF TOWN HALL Sat 2 Dec, The Hive, Shrewsbury

THE FABULOUS BORDELLOS Sat 2 Dec, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

BEVERLEY CRAVEN & JUDIE TZUKE Sat 2 Dec, The Abbey, Shrewsbury

THE INDIGO MACHINE Sat 2 Dec, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

MATT DEIGHTON Sat 2 Dec, The Firefly, Oakengates, Shropshire

ROUGH KUTZ Sat 2 Dec, Percy's Cafe Bar, Whitchurch, North Shropshire

JAH WOBBLE Sun 3 Dec, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

ASHNIKKO + HEMLOCKE SPRINGS Sun 3 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

MOSTLY AUTUMN Sun 3 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

THE DRIFTERS Sun 3 Dec, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

JASON ALLAN Sun 3 Dec, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

BEANS ON TOAST Sun 3 Dec, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

LIL YACHTY + JEAN DAWSON Mon 4 Dec, O2 Academy, B'ham

ROACHFORD Mon 4 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

RAYE Tues 5 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

OF MICE & MEN + CASKETS + DEFECTS Tues 5 Dec, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

OF MICE & MEN + CASKETS + DEFECTS Wed 6 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

ELECTRIC SIX + US Wed 6 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

ICE CUBE + CYPRESS HILL + THE GAME Wed 6 Dec, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

KIRA MAC Wed 6 Dec, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

MIST Thurs 7 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

ERIC PASLAY Thurs 7 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE BOOTLEG BEATLES Thurs 7 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

SCOTT MATTHEWS Thurs 7 Dec, The Abbey, Shrewsbury

GOGOL BORDELLO + PEAT + DIESEL + PUZZLED PANTHER Fri 8 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

TEN TONNES Fri 8 Dec, O2 Institute, B'ham

THE OVERTONES Fri 8 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

OASIS + THE ABSOLUTE STONE ROSES Fri 8 Dec, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

LUTHER STARRING HARRY CAMBRIDGE Fri 8 Dec, Dudley Town Hall

DON'T STOP - FLEETWOOD MAC TRIBUTE Fri 8 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

THE ELTON JOHN SHOW Fri 8 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

HEADSHRINKERS Fri 8 Dec, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

THE CHARLATANS Fri 8 Dec, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

MAET LIVE & THE NEVERLAND EXPRESS Fri 8 Dec, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

KEITH DONNELLY AND LAUREN SOUTH Fri 8 Dec, The Potteries Folk Club, Stoke-on-Trent

JAH WOBBLE & THE INVADERS OF THE HEART Fri 8 Dec, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

TALON Fri 8 Dec, The Prince Of Wales Theatre, Cannock

DURAN Fri 8 Dec, The Station, Cannock

FUNERALCARE + IDLE NOISE Fri 8 Dec, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

THE TRIALS OF CATO Fri 8 Dec, The Abbey, Shrewsbury

SONS OF YODA Fri 8 Dec, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

TURIN BRAKES Sat 9 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

GROW YOUR OWN STUPID + ECHO THEORY + THE WESTLANDS + MAN MADE MOON + SUPERSEEDERS Sat 9 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

FUN LOVIN' CRIMINALS Sat 9 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE USED + THE HOME TEAM + HONEY REVENGE Sat 9 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

DECADENCE FT ALISON LIMERICK LIVE Sat 9

Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

DONNY OSMOND Sat 9 Dec, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

THE KING'S VOICE STARRING GORDON HENDRICKS Sat 9 Dec, Dudley Town Hall

LEVELLERS + NED'S ATOMIC DUSTBIN + STEVE LAMACQ Sat 9 Dec, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

GET IT ON! Sat 9 Dec, The Wulfrun at The Halls Wolverhampton

SACK SABBATH Sat 9 Dec, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

PAUL WALKER & KAREN PFEIFFER Sat 9 Dec, Rode Heath Village Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

THE WATTINGERS Sat 9 Dec, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

AVA ROSE Sat 9 Dec, Two Gates Club, Tamworth

BARRY STEELE AS ROY ORBISON Sat 9 Dec, The Prince Of Wales Theatre, Cannock

THE STEREOSONICS Sat 9 Dec, The Station, Cannock

SCOTT MATTHEWS Sat 9 Dec, Lichfield Guildhall

VALLEY UPRISING Sat 9 Dec, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

THE BAREBACKS Sat 9 Dec, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

THE RNB & SLOW JAMS EXPERIENCE Sun 10 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE FATHER TEDS Sun 10 Dec, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

KIM WILDE Sun 10 Dec, The Wulfrun at The Halls Wolverhampton

GEDDY LEE Sun 10 Dec, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

DMA'S Sun 10 Dec, Keele University, Stoke-on-Trent

STEVE GIBBONS BAND Sun 10 Dec, Lichfield Guildhall

LUKE COMBS UK Sun 10 Dec, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford



The Piccadilly Sinfonietta - Lichfield Cathedral

Classical Music

RUTH WALL (HARP) & GRAHAM FITKIN (COMPOSER/PIANIST) IN CONCERT Fri 1 Dec, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

EX CATHEDRA: CHRISTMAS MUSIC BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring Jeffrey Skidmore (conductor), Fri 1 Dec, St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury

SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA OF INDIA WITH ZAKIR HUSSAIN Featuring Alpesh Chauhan (conductor), Zakir Hussain (tabla), Niladri Kumar (sitar) & Rakesh Chaurasia (bansuri). Programme includes Strauss Rosenkavalier Suite, Hussain Triple Concerto & Stravinsky Petrushka (1947), Fri 1 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

LUDLOW CHORAL SOCIETY Featuring Philippa Lay (soprano), Charlotte Sleet (mezzo), James Micklethwaite (tenor), Samuel Oram (baritone), Marion Bettsworth (organ) & Nicola Starkie (director). Programme includes choral music by Antonio Salieri and three of his pupils, Sat 2 Dec, St Laurence's Church, Ludlow, South Shropshire

PROMS NIGHT SPECTACULAR! - AN ENCHANTED EVENING Programme includes works by Suppé, Ravel, Walton, Elgar, Howard Blake, John Williams & Rodgers & Hammerstein, Sat 2 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

BIRMINGHAM GAY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: A CHRISTMAS CRACKER Programme to include works by Tchaikovsky, Anderson, Custer, Wiffin and more... Sat 2 Dec, St Paul's Church, Jewellery Quarter, B'ham

MATHIS STIER BASSOON CONCERT Programme includes works by Philipp Bödercker, Paula Matthusen, Saint-Saëns, Maria Sigfúsdóttir, Clara Schumann, Alain Bernaud & Daniel Schnyder, Sun 3 Dec, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

EX CATHEDRA: HANDEL'S MESSIAH

Featuring Jeffrey Skidmore (conductor), Margaret Lingas, Imogen Russell & Katie Trethewey (soprano); Gabriella Liandu, Martha McLorinan & Anna Semple (alto); Sebastian Hill, James Robinson & Bradley Smith (tenor); Thomas Lowen, Themba Mvula & Lawrence White (bass), Sun 3 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

LICHFIELD SINFONIA Featuring James Gilbert (clarinet). Programme includes works by Mozart, Dvorak & Berlioz, Sun 3 Dec, Lichfield Guildhall

SING CAROLS WITH THE CITY ORGANIST Featuring Birmingham Conservatoire Chamber Choir, Julian Wilkins (conductor), Jeremy Nicholas (compere) & Thomas Trotter (organ), Mon 4 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

THE PICCADILLY SINFONIETTA: THE FOUR SEASONS AT CHRISTMAS Featuring Harriet Mackenzie (violin) & Warren Mailley-Smith (piano). Programme includes works by Corelli, Mozart & Vivaldi, Mon 4 Dec, Lichfield Cathedral

PAUL LEWIS: SCHUBERT PIANO SONATAS 3 Programme comprises Sonata for Piano No 4 in A minor, D537, Sonata for Piano No 9 in B major, D575 & Sonata for Piano No 18 in G major, D894, Tues 5 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

EX CATHEDRA: CHRISTMAS MUSIC BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring Jeffrey Skidmore (conductor), Tues 5 Dec, St John's Church, Hagley

MIRGA GRAŽINYTĖ-TYLA & THE CBSO Also featuring Eugene Tzikindelean (violin), Oliver Janes (clarinet), Marie-Christine Zupancic (flute), Adam Römer (viola) & Onutė Gražinytė (piano). Programme includes works by Čiurlionis, Weinberg, Loboda & Kakhidze, Wed 6 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

EX CATHEDRA: CHRISTMAS MUSIC BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring Jeffrey

Skidmore (conductor), Thurs 7 Dec, Lichfield Cathedral

CITY OF BIRMINGHAM CHOIR WITH THE CITY OF BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: HANDEL'S MESSIAH

Featuring Adrian Lucas (conductor), Kathie Trethewey (soprano), Kate Symonds-Joy (alto), Nicholas Mulroy (tenor), Jamie Woollard (bass), Thomas Trotter (harpsichord) & Martin Perkins (organ), Fri 8 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

BBC PHILHARMONIC Featuring Ben Gernon (conductor) & Martin Roscoe (soloist). Programme includes works by Haydn, Mozart & Prokofiev, Fri 8 Dec, Victoria Hall, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent

EX CATHEDRA: CHRISTMAS MUSIC BY CANDELIGHT Featuring Jeffrey Skidmore (conductor), Sat 9 Dec, St Peter's Collegiate Church, Wolverhampton

HALESOWEN ORCHESTRA: A CHRISTMAS CONCERT Programme includes works by Brahms, Smetna & Tchaikovsky, Sat 9 Dec, Halesowen Town Hall

STAFFORD SINFONIA CHRISTMAS CONCERT Sat 9 Dec, St John the Baptist Church, Stafford

BIRMINGHAM CATHEDRAL CHOIR: HANDEL'S MESSIAH Featuring Tim Burton (tenor), Hope Pugh (alto) & David Hardie (conductor), Sat 9 Dec, St Philip's Cathedral, Colmore Row, Birmingham

WOMBOURNE & DISTRICT CHORAL SOCIETY: ON CHRISTMAS NIGHT Featuring Edward Caine (conductor), Russell Painter (soloist) & Jonathan Clarke (organ), Sat 9 Dec, St Benedict Biscop Church, Wombourne

PHOENIX SINGERS & MIDLANDS HOSPITALS' CHOIR: CHRISTMAS JOY Featuring James Llewelyn Jones (leader), Gemini Brass, Joanna Cooke (soprano), Charles Matthews (organist), Charis Tai (pianist) & the Bournville Village Primary School Choir, Sun 10 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

BIRMINGHAM PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA Featuring James Ham (conductor) & Cordelia Williams Charlton (piano). Programme includes works by Rimsky-Korsakov & Rachmaninoff, Sun 10 Dec, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

THE HIGHLY STRUNG QUARTET A festive evening of Christmas music, carols & songs, Sun 10 Dec, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

Comedy

JO CAULFIELD Fri 1 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

BARRY DODDS, SCOTT BENNETT, ELEANOR TIERNAN & MARK NELSON Fri 1 - Sat 2 Dec, The Glee Club, B'ham

ADAM ROWE Fri 1 Dec, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent



CHRIS MCCAUSLAND, BEN NORRIS, PRESIDENT OBONJO & WAYNE BEESE Sat 2 Dec, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

NABIL ABDULRASHID Tues 5 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

CHRISTMAS COMEDY SPECIAL Wed 6 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

THE ALTER COMEDY CLUB Wed 6 Dec, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

MO GILLIGAN Thurs 7 Dec, Utilita Arena Birmingham

CHRIS WASHINGTON, FINLAY CHRISTIE, JAKE BAKER, PHIL JERKY & DAVE TWENTYMAN Thurs 7 Dec, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

WAYNE BEESE Thurs 7 Dec, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

ROGER MONKHOUSE, DAN SMITH & COMICS TBC Thurs 7 Dec, Stourbridge Town Hall

PIERRE NOVELLIE, CARL HUTCHINSON, LAURA SMYTH & DAVE FULTON Thurs 7 - Sat 9 Dec, The Glee Club, B'ham

SEANN WALSH Fri 8 Dec, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

JONNY COLE, NIPPER THOMAS, JAMES COOK & WAYNE BEESE Fri 8 Dec, Stourbridge Football Club

BETHANY BLACK, DAVID TSONOS, LIAM PICKFORD & MAD RON Fri 8 Dec, Crewe Lyceum

BARBARA NICE'S CHRISTMAS CRACKER Sat 9 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

TROY HAWKE, MARK NELSON, JENNY HART & WAYNE BEESE Sat 9 Dec, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

GARY DELANEY Sun 10 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

KOJO ANIM Sun 10 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

CHITTY CHITTY BANG BANG Little Theatre Company present their version of the fantasmagorical musical classic, until Sat 2 Dec, Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent

THE GHOST TRAIN Stourbridge Theatre Company present an amateur version of Arnold Ridley's classic comedy thriller, until Sat 2 Dec, Stourbridge Town Hall

OLIVER! The Cannock Wood & Gentleshaw Music Society present an

amateur version of Lionel Bart's much-loved musical, until Sat 2 Dec, Prince of Wales Theatre, Cannock

RUMPELSTILTSKIN Join The Big Tiny as they present a new lederhosen-filled pantomime based on the Brothers Grimm fairytale, until Sun 3 Dec, Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

ERIC'S PRIDE AND PREJUDICE New Vic favourite Eric offers a unique take on Jane Austen's romantic classic - complete with '1960s songs, dancing, laughter and lots of fun', until Sat 9 Dec, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

A CHRISTMAS CAROL Amateur comedy presented by The Farndale Avenue Housing Estate Townswomen's Guild Dramatic Society, until Sat 9 Dec, Highbury Hall, Sutton Coldfield

THE BOX OF DELIGHTS The RSC's festive family show follows an orphaned schoolboy who finds himself the guardian of a small wooden box with powers beyond his wildest dreams, until Sun 7 Jan, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon



BEAUTY AND THE BEAST Festive family favourite starring Sam Rabone as Madame Bellie Fillop, Ben Thornton as Phillipe, Kat Chatterton as Belle, Melad Hamidi as the Prince and the Beast, Natalie Pilkington as the Fairy and Sarah Annakin as the Enchantress, until Sun 7 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK A giant of a pantomime, starring Brad Fitt, Lucas Rush, Reece Duncan, Tommy J Rollason & Laura-Dene Perryman, until Sun 7 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

THE NUTCRACKER: A CHRISTMAS FAIRYTALE Popular festive tale packed with magic, music and enchanting characters, until Sat 27 Jan, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE Step through the wardrobe into the kingdom of Narnia, in this magical adventure based on C.S. Lewis' classic children's book, until Sun 28 Jan, The Rep, B'ham

SNOW WHITE Panto favourite starring Kelle Bryan as Good Fairy Elementa, Gyasi Sheppy as the prince, Niki Colwell Evans as the wicked queen, Evie Pickerill as Snow White, Tam Ryan as Muddles and Ian Adams as Nanny Nolly, Sat 2 Dec - Sun 7 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

THE FAIR MAID OF THE WEST Isobel McArthur presents an 'open-armed' adaptation of Thomas Heywood's Elizabethan romp, Sat 2 Dec - Sun 14 Jan, Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

THE BODYGUARD Acclaimed musical based on the iconic film starring Whitney Houston & Kevin Costner. Australian Idol runner-up Emily Williams stars as Rachel Marron (evenings only) alongside Ayden Callaghan (Emmerdale, Hollyoaks), as Frank Farmer, Mon 4 - Sat 30 Dec, The Alexandra, Birmingham

SIX THE MUSICAL Award-winning show in which the six wives of Henry VIII take to the mic to tell their tales, remixing 500 years of historical heartbreak into an 80-minute celebration of 21st century girl power, Tues 5 - Sat 9 Dec, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

BUT ONCE A YEAR The Stoke Rep players present an amateur staging of Falkland L. Cary's festive comedy-drama, Tues 5 - Sat 9 Dec, Stoke Repertory Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

PETER PAN THE MUSICAL Swashbuckling production complete with 'spectacular songs, creative choreography and fantastic flying sequences', Tues 5 - Sun 31 Dec, Old Rep, Birmingham

OUR CHRISTMAS CAROL - A MUSICAL UK premiere of a brand-new musical Christmas story about upholding family traditions, Wed 6 - Sun 24 Dec, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

GHOULS GALLERY Don't Go Into The Cellar present an anthology stage show based on a selection of tales of terror, Thurs 7 Dec, Lapworth Museum, University of Birmingham

OIL Ella Hickson's explosive play exploring Britain's fraught relationship with its imperial past, Thurs 7 - Sat 9 Dec, Birmingham Hippodrome

SAVED Royal Birmingham Conservatoire present a production of Edward Bond's landmark drama, Thurs 7 - Sat 9 Dec, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

A CHRISTMAS CAROL Two Score Theatre Company presents a one-off radio play version of Charles Dickens' classic tale, adapted by Giles Emerson, Fri 8 Dec, St Laurence's Church, Ludlow, South Shropshire

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST Starring CBBC's Mark Rhodes, Theo The Mouse & Wendy, The Sooty Show's Wink Taylor and renowned Dame, David Phipps-Davis, Fri 8 - Sun 31 Dec, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

A CHRISTMAS GETAWAY New Old Friends present a fast-paced farce inspired by PG Wodehouse, Noel Coward and classic British comedy, Fri 8 - Sun 31 Dec, Lichfield Garrick

Friday 1 - Sunday 10 December

CINDERELLA Family pantomime starring X Factor winner Matt Terry as Prince Charming, Eve Parsons as Cinderella, Malcolm Lord as the Fairy Godmother and Ste Johnston as Buttons, Fri 8 - Sun 31 Dec, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

TREASURE ISLAND Featuring Strictly Come Dancing star Katya Jones as the Island Chief, X Factor's Sean Smith as Jim Hawkins, West End star Shelley Anne Rivers as the Magical Mermaid, Coronation Street actor Tom Roberts as Long John Silver, Ian Smith as Captain Smollett and Carl Dufield as Silly Billy Jones, Fri 8 Dec - Sat 6 Jan, Telford Theatre

CINDERELLA Fun-filled family pantomime telling a much-loved rags-to-riches story, Sat 9 - Sat 23 Dec, Walsall Arena

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK TaleGate Theatre Productions promise songs, slapstick and audience participation aplenty in a traditional pantomime packed with fairytale magic, Sat 9 - Sun 31 Dec, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

Kids Theatre

MOTIONHOUSE: STARCHITECTS SAVE SANTA! New festive show for families, fusing gravity-defying choreography, digital projections and magical characters, until Sat 30 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

WOW! SAID THE OWL Little Angel Theatre combine storytelling, puppetry & music in a production for younger audiences. Based on Tim Hopgood's acclaimed children's book, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton



THE SNOW QUEEN Heartwarming winter tale based on Hans Christian Andersen's children's classic, Sat 2 - Sun 3 & Tues 5 - Sat 9 Dec, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD The Rep presents a fresh look at the classic fairytale, in a new production for children aged three to six, Thurs 7 Dec - Sat 6 Jan, The Rep, B'ham

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD Lyngo Theatre fuse puppetry, song and music in a snowy version of the classic fairytale, Sat 9 Dec, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

SANTA'S CHRISTMAS WISH Song-filled interactive musical adventure - perfect for two to eight year olds. The show lasts 45 minutes and is followed by a special greet & treat with Father Christmas, Sat 9 - Sun 10 Dec, Mitchell Arts Centre, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent

SANTA'S CHRISTMAS WISH Song-filled interactive musical adventure - perfect for two to eight year olds. The show lasts 45 minutes and is followed by a special greet & treat with Father Christmas, Sun 10 Dec, Prince of Wales Theatre, Cannock

Dance

THE NUTCRACKER Birmingham Royal Ballet's sumptuous festive production. Expect magic, falling snow and a spectacular 30ft Christmas tree, until Sat 9 Dec, Birmingham Hippodrome

DANCING IN A WINTER WONDERLAND WITH ALJAZ AND JANETTE The Strictly couple are joined by a supporting cast featuring some of the UK's very best dancers and singers, Sun 10 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Light Entertainment

FATT BUTCHER'S CHRISTMAS SPECIAL Join the cabaret superstar for 'an unmissable evening', Thurs 30 Nov - Fri 1 Dec, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

KEVIN JAMES THORNTON Rising TikTok/IG star Kevin has built a vast following by posting 'hilarious and heartfelt' moments of self-reflection, Fri 1 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

TOM SEALS CHRISTMAS SPECTACULAR Expect the finest in jazz, blues and boogie woogie when Crewe's very own 'piano man' is joined by celebrity guest Noddy Holder, Fri 1 Dec, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

REVEREND RICHARD COLES: BORDERLINE NATIONAL TRINKET An intimate evening with the only British vicar to have had a number-one hit single, Sat 2 Dec, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

GREENMATTHEWS: A CHRISTMAS CAROL IN CONCERT A unique retelling of Dickens' much-loved tale, brought to life with an array of traditional and modern instruments and authentic musical arrangements, Sat 2 Dec, Wern Town Hall, North Shropshire

THE MUPPET CHRISTMAS CAROL: FILM WITH LIVE ORCHESTRA Screening of Disney's 1992 musical comedy, accompanied by a live score, Mon 4 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

LOVE ACTUALLY IN CONCERT: FILM WITH



The Christmas Getaway - Lichfield Garrick

LIVE ORCHESTRA Screening of Richard Curtis' festive romantic comedy accompanied by a live score, Tues 5 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

A CHRISTMAS CAROL IN CONCERT A retelling of Charles Dickens' festive tale, accompanied by a blend of Victorian carols and midwinter folk songs, Thurs 7 Dec, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

A CLASSIC CHRISTMAS BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring a cast of West End performers and a live band, performing classic Christmas hits 'like you've never heard them before', Fri 8 Dec, Lichfield Cathedral

HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS: THE FILM WITH LIVE ORCHESTRA Large-screen showing of the festive favourite, accompanied by a full orchestra performing the film's soundtrack live to screen, Sat 9 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

BUBLÉ CHRISTMAS BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring a live band and 'the UK's top Michael Bublé tribute act', Sat 9 Dec, Lichfield Cathedral

Events

CHRISTMAS IN CATHEDRAL SQUARE Featuring Midlands-based crafts, gifts and food & drink traders, until Sun 17 Dec, Cathedral Square, Birmingham

THE POLAR EXPRESS™ 2023 TRAIN RIDE Father Christmas spreads festive cheer in his tree-mendous stage show, until Fri 22 Dec, Churnet Valley Railway, Staffordshire

ALDERFORD'S SANTA ISLAND EXPERIENCE Discover the story of Santa and his elves, until Fri 22 Dec, Alderford Lake, Shropshire

A SNOW PRINCESS CHRISTMAS Help Mrs Claus and the elves make some sand art before travelling through a winter wonderland to meet Santa, until Sat 23 Dec, Hoo Zoo & Dinosaur World, Telford

THE POLAR EXPRESS™ TRAIN RIDE Meet

all the characters from the film as you journey to the North Pole, until Sat 23 Dec, Telford Steam Railway, Shrops



CHRISTMAS PARTY WORLD 2023 A night of 'high-octane' entertainment, food & drink, all presented within the themed venue, until Sat 23 Dec, NEC, Birmingham

ELF TRAIL Spot the cheeky elves around the museum on this festive trail, until Sat 23 Dec, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

BIRMINGHAM FRANKFURT CHRISTMAS MARKET Offering a large range of traditional gifts and a selection of tempting food & drink, until Sun 24 Dec, Birmingham City Centre

CHRISTMAS BRICKTACULAR Get into the festive spirit with Christmas activities in the Lego playground, until Sun 24 Dec, Legoland Discovery Centre Birmingham

NORTH POLE ADVENTURE Experience the wonder of Christmas on your adventure to the North Pole with plenty of festive activities along the way, until Sun 24 Dec, National Forest Adventure Farm, Burton upon Trent, Staffordshire

SANTA'S GROTTO Visit Santa in his grotto, set within the walls of 11th-century Dudley Castle, until Sun 24 Dec, Dudley Zoo

SNOWY'S CONSERVATION CREW Join Snowy on an arctic adventure to learn about the North Pole and the animals which live there, until Sun 24 Dec, National SEA LIFE Centre, Birmingham

SANTA'S GROTTO Get ready to dive into

Santa Trains

depart Kidderminster on selected dates from 25 November



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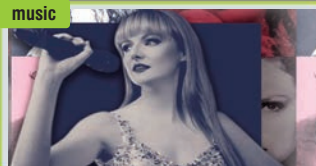


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music



TAYLOR MANIA
Sat 13 Jan @ 7.30pm

music



OH WHAT A NIGHT
Sat 20 Jan @ 7.30pm

comedy



**JONATHAN PIE: HEROES &
VILLAINS WORK IN PROGRESS**
Mon 22 Jan @ 7.30pm

music



**THE FREDDIE & QUEEN
EXPERIENCE**
Thurs 1 Feb @ 7.30pm

comedy



P*ED UP PANTO: JACK
AND THE BEANSTALK**
Fri 9 Feb @ 7.30pm

music



THE UPBEAT BEATLES
Sat 10 Feb @ 7.30pm

family



**FIREMAN SAM: THE GREAT
CAMPING ADVENTURE**
Wed 14 Feb @ 3.30pm

music



NORTHERN LIVE
Fri 16 Feb @ 7.30pm

music



**GORDON HENDRICKS AS ELVIS:
THE KING'S VOICE**
Sat 17 Feb @ 7.30pm

the ultimate underwater fish-massy adventure with Santa and his elves, until Sun 24 Dec, National SEA LIFE Centre, Birmingham

SNOWDOGS DISCOVER BIRMINGHAM Enjoy a festive sculpture trail inspired by the animated sequel to the late Raymond Briggs' timeless picture book *The Snowman*™, until Thurs 4 Jan, across Birmingham City Centre

WINTER GLOW Immerse yourself in all things seasonal with a line-up of festive activities, until Sat 6 Jan, Three Counties Showground, Malvern

ICE SKATE BIRMINGHAM Birmingham's largest, all-inclusive undercover ice rink is back! until Sun 7 Jan, Centenary Square, Birmingham

SANTA'S WINTER WONDERLAND Featuring real snow, real animals and the all-new winter wonderland show, until Sun 7 Jan, SnowDome, Tamworth

MASSAOKE CHRISTMAS LIVE Expect Christmas anthems, a live band of spandex-clad rockstars and giant video lyrics to help you sing your heart out, Fri 1 Dec, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

MCM BIRMINGHAM COMIC CON Three-day weekend celebrating all the fandoms, from gaming and anime, to collectibles and memorabilia, Fri 1 - Sun 3 Dec, NEC, Birmingham



CLASSIC ANTIQUE FAIRS Over 100 specialist dealers offer a wide variety of high-quality pieces, Fri 1 - Sun 3 Dec, NEC, Birmingham

FOLLIES SAFARI Be whisked away in a Land Rover across the park, where you will wander the fairy-lit caverns before reaching Santa's grotto, Fri 1 - Sat 23 Dec, Hawkstone Park & Follies, Shropshire

MEET FATHER CHRISTMAS Reveal your Christmas dreams and wishes, and receive an early gift, Fri 1 - Sat 23 Dec, Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery

LUMINATE SHUGBOROUGH Experience a 'spectacular illuminated trail, full of wonder and intrigue', Fri 1 - Sun 24 Dec, Shugborough Estate, Staffs

EXPLORE SAREHOLE MILL Enjoy the sights and sounds of a traditional 18th-century water mill at your own pace, Sat 2 Dec, Sarehole Mill, Birmingham

BEWDLEY LIGHTS SPECIAL TRAIN SERVICE Travel in style to see the Christmas lights switch-on event at Bewdley, Sat 2 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

THE FIZZOGS BIG FAT CHRISTMAS QUIZ Quiz night with the popular comedy trio, Sat 2 Dec, Himley Hall, Dudley

CHAMPIONSHIP BOXING EVENT PRESENTED BY DBP A night of top-quality boxing presented by Doran Boxing Promotions, Sat 2 Dec, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

SANTA'S TOY WORKSHOP Help Santa and his elves make wooden reindeer in this special workshop, Sat 2 Dec, World of Wedgwood, Stoke-on-Trent

LATE NIGHT AT THE MARKET HALL Enjoy the market hall by night, with bars, eateries and a selection of stalls open late, Sat 2 Dec, Shrewsbury Market Hall, Shropshire

CHRISTMAS MAKERS' MARKET A large selection of stalls from local artists and makers, Sat 2 Dec, The New Art Gallery Walsall

SINGING SANTA Santa entertains the children with a session of songs and lots of child-friendly interactions, Sat 2 Dec, Castle Bromwich Historic Gardens, Birmingham

SANTA TRAINS Travel on a steam train to see Santa in a pantomime, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

THE ENCHANTED EXPRESS Inspired by the classic poem 'Twas The Night Before Christmas, journey through a winter wonderland, meeting fun characters along the way, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

ELF CADET TRAINING Learn how to load the sleigh, pick the right aircraft for the job and map a route for Santa, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, RAF Museum Midlands, Cosford

SANTA AT THE VALLEY Visit Santa and his elves in his cosy grotto, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre, West Bromwich

CHRISTMAS BY CANDLELIGHT Enjoy historic music and dancing, accompanied by a glass of mulled wine and a seasonal mince pie, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, Tamworth Castle, Staffordshire

JINGLE VILLE - A MAGICAL CHRISTMAS ADVENTURE Explore Jingle Ville and enjoy festive entertainment and activities, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, Lower Drayton Farm, Stafford

MADE ON THE BORDERS HOMEMADE CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL Supporting local crafters and makers, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, British Ironwork Centre, Oswestry, North Shropshire

SANTA'S SCIENCE SPECTACULAR SHOW From the science behind Rudolph's glowing nose to rocket-powered sleighs, this show is sure to get

everyone in the festive spirit, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

CHRISTMAS AT CADBURY WORLD Discover the chocolatey zones and see Santa in his very own stage show, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, Cadbury World, Bournville, Birmingham

FESTIVE NIGHTS AT BIDDULPH GRANGE GARDEN Explore the garden after hours, beautifully lit with Christmas lights, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, Biddulph Grange Garden, Staffordshire

THE SANTA EXPERIENCE Festive fun with Santa and his elves, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, Park Hall Countryside Experience, Shropshire

CHRISTMAS IN COMER WOODS Wander through the woodland and look out for trees decorated by local community groups, Sat 2 - Sun 24 Dec, Dudmaston Estate, Bridgnorth, Shropshire

SKATE ATTINGHAM: FESTIVE ECO RINK Enjoy a skate on the eco-friendly synthetic acrylic ice, Sat 2 Dec - Sun 7 Jan, Attingham Park, Shropshire

THE CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL An array of real Christmas trees decorated by local businesses, schools and charities, Sat 2 Dec - Sun 7 Jan, Lichfield Cathedral

TELFORD CHRISTMAS FUN RUN Start the seasonal celebrations with a 2km or 5km run, raising funds for Midlands Air Ambulance Charity, Sun 3 Dec, Telford Town Park, Shropshire

THE POLAR EXPRESS (2004) AND SANTA VISIT The festive favourite presented on Birmingham's biggest screen - plus a visit from Santa himself, Sun 3 Dec, Millennium Point, Birmingham

STORYTIME IN SANTA'S GROTTTO Enjoy a warming hot chocolate, a biscuit, and a selection of stories read by Santa and his excitable elves, Sun 3 Dec, World of Wedgwood, Stoke-on-Trent

ILLUMINATED ARBORETUM Visit the Arboretum after hours and begin the festive season by enjoying a kaleidoscope of colour, Thurs 7 - Sat 23 Dec, National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire

THE FIZZOGS MURDER MYSTERY A dastardly show that involves the Fizzog's most popular characters, Fri 8 Dec, Himley Hall, Dudley

FESTIVE NIGHTS AT BIDDULPH GRANGE GARDEN Explore the garden after hours, beautifully lit with Christmas lights, Fri 8 - Sun 10 Dec, Biddulph Grange Garden, Staffordshire

ELVENTOWN Join the Apley elves in Elventown for festive fun, Fri 8 - Sun 24 Dec, Apley Farm Shop, Shrops

WINTER FUNLAND The UK's biggest indoor funfair, with all festive activities included in the ticket price, Fri 8 Dec - Mon 1 Jan, NEC, Birmingham

CHRISTMAS LUNCHES WITH A SWING Featuring a welcome drink, three-

course Christmas lunch and live entertainment and music, Sat 9 Dec, National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire

SANTA'S TOY WORKSHOP Help Santa and his elves make wooden reindeer in this special workshop, Sat 9 Dec, World of Wedgwood, Stoke-on-Trent

VISIT FATHER CHRISTMAS Father Christmas is making his annual appearance in his magical sitting-room in the manor, Sat 9 - Sun 10 Dec, Wightwick Manor, W'hampton

THE ENCHANTED EXPRESS Inspired by the classic poem 'Twas The Night Before Christmas, journey through a winter wonderland, meeting fun characters along the way, Sat 9 - Sun 10 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

SANTA TRAINS Travel on a steam train to see Santa in a pantomime, Sat 9 - Sun 10 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

THE SANTA EXPERIENCE Festive fun with Santa and his elves, Sat 9 - Sun 10 Dec, Park Hall Countryside Experience, Shropshire

CHRISTMAS AT CADBURY WORLD Discover the chocolatey zones and see Santa in his very own stage show, Sat 9 - Sun 10 Dec, Cadbury World, Bournville, Birmingham

SANTA AT THE VALLEY Visit Santa and his elves in his cosy grotto, Sat 9 - Sun 10 Dec, Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre, West Bromwich

SANTA'S SCIENCE SPECTACULAR SHOW From the science behind Rudolph's glowing nose to rocket-powered sleighs, this show is sure to get everyone in the festive spirit, Sat 9 - Sun 10 Dec, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

A CHRISTMAS CAROL TOUR A tour around the historic town of Shrewsbury, re-visiting some of the stunning film locations featured in the iconic 1984 film adaptation of Dickens' festive ghost story, Sat 9 - Sun 10 Dec, Shrewsbury Art Gallery & Museum

JINGLE VILLE - A MAGICAL CHRISTMAS ADVENTURE Explore Jingle Ville and enjoy festive entertainment and activities, Sat 9 - Sun 10 Dec, Lower Drayton Farm, Stafford

MEET FATHER CHRISTMAS Children can meet the man himself in his grotto, accompanied by his elves, Sat 9 - Sun 10 Dec, Ludlow Castle, South Shropshire

CHRISTMAS IN THE COURTYARD Featuring an evening of carols, Christmas crafts and a special tour of the houses, Sun 10 Dec, Birmingham Back to Backs

MENTAL ELF RUN North Staffs Mind's first-ever Mental Elf 5km event, Sun 10 Dec, Trentham Gardens, Staffordshire



Kate Rusby - Birmingham Town Hall

Gigs

SUNBIRDS Mon 11 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

URNE + MOUNTAIN CALLER + TRIBE OF GHOSTS Tues 12 Dec, O2 Institute, B'ham

MILLIONZ Wed 13 Dec, O2 Institute, B'ham

THE BIG MOON Wed 13 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

HOZIER + THE LAST DINNER PARTY Wed 13 Dec, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

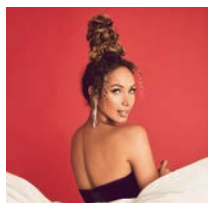
SUEDE + DESPERATE JOURNALIST Wed 13 Dec, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

THE ALBION CHRISTMAS BAND Wed 13 Dec, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

STEELEYE SPAN Thurs 14 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

SOPHIE ELLIS-BEXTOR Thurs 14 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

LEONA LEWIS Thurs 14 Dec, Utilita Arena Birmingham



STEVE MASON Thurs 14 Dec, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

MAGIC OF MOTOWN Thurs 14 Dec, The Prince Of Wales Theatre, Cannock

FIT FOR A KING + EMMURE + THROWN +

GLOOM IN THE CORNER Fri 15 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

JOE + 112 + NEXT + BOBBY V + J HOLIDAY Fri 15 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

NOEL GALLAGHER'S HIGH FLYING BIRDS + TOM MEIGHAN Fri 15 Dec, Utilita Arena Birmingham

THE INTERPRETERS Fri 15 Dec, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

ESSENTIAL 80S Fri 15 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

T.REXTASY Fri 15 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

SPACEHOPPERS Fri 15 Dec, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

OCEAN COLOUR SCENE Fri 15 Dec, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

THE TWANG + PASTEL Fri 15 Dec, The Wulfrun at The Halls Wolverhampton

DON BROCO + TRASH BOAT + OCEAN GROVE Fri 15 Dec, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

GUNS N ROSES EXPERIENCE Fri 15 Dec, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

CALLING PLANET EARTH Fri 15 Dec, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

AZIZ IBRAHIM Fri 15 Dec, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

VICTORIAN PARENTS + MEMBERS OF ARTFUL DODGER + VIRGIL SPLINT Fri 15 Dec, Lichfield Guildhall

THE BEATLES SOUND Fri 15 Dec, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

THOMAS ATLAS Fri 15 Dec, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

THE STONES Fri 15 Dec, Theatre On The Steps, Bridgnorth, South Shropshire

JOOLS HOLLAND AND HIS RHYTHM AND BLUES ORCHESTRA Fri 15 - Sat 16 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THERAPY? + BOKASSA Sat 16 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE FRONT BOTTOMS + WE WERE PROMISED Sat 16 Dec, O2 Institute, B'ham

SHORTWAVE + RIVERBUD + PARADISO + LEX + JESS BRETT Sat 16 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

BOB MARLEY REVIVAL Sat 16 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE WONDER STUFF + IAN PROWSE Sat 16 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

KATE RUSBY Sat 16 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

TOM JONES + GERMEIN Sat 16 Dec, Resorts World Arena, B'ham

MADNESS + LIGHTNING SEEDS Sat 16 Dec, Utilita Arena B'ham

GO WEST Sat 16 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

THE DARKNESS Sat 16 Dec, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

JACKIE OATES + JOHN SPIERS Sat 16 Dec, Newhampton Arts Centre, W'hampton

LIVE/WIRE Sat 16 Dec, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

THE KILLERZ Sat 16 Dec, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

THE GUNS & ROSES EXPERIENCE Sat 16 Dec, The Station, Cannock

UNFORGIVEN Sat 16 Dec, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

THE WEEKENDERS Sat 16 Dec, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

THE LEGENDS OF MOTOWN Sat 17 Dec, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

Classical Music

THE PICCADILLY SINFONIETTA: THE FOUR SEASONS AT CHRISTMAS

Featuring Harriet Mackenzie (violin) & Warren Mailley-Smith (piano). Programme includes works by Corelli, Mozart & Vivaldi, Tues 12 Dec, The Abbey Church, Shrewsbury

BEETHOVEN'S EROICA WITH KAZUKI YAMADA + THE CBSO Featuring Kazuki Yamada (conductor), Eduardo Vassallo (cello) & Chris Yates (viola). Programme includes works by Strauss & Beethoven, Wed 13 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

MARCHES CHOIR: A BIG CHRISTMAS SING! Wed 13 Dec, St John's Church, Bishops Castle, South Shropshire

CHRISTMAS WITH THE INSPIRE CHOIR Led by Ruairi Edwards, Thurs 14 - Fri 15 Dec, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

PHOENIX SINGERS: O WONDROUS MYSTERY Featuring pupils from Myddle Primary School & Coleham Primary School. Programme includes settings of O magnum mysterium by several composers interspersed with popular carols, Fri 15 Dec, St Alkmund's Church, Shrewsbury

EX CATHEDRA: CHRISTMAS MUSIC BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring Jeffrey Skidmore (conductor), Rupert Jeffcoat & Nicholas Wearne (organ), Fri 15 - Wed 20 Dec, St Paul's Church, Birmingham

EX CATHEDRA: ANGELS, STARS & KINGS - FAMILY CHRISTMAS CONCERT Featuring Ex Cathedra Choir & Academy of Vocal Music, Rebecca Ledgard & George Parris (conductor) & Nicholas Wearne (organ), Sat 16 Dec, St Paul's Church, Birmingham

WOMBOURNE & DISTRICT CHORAL SOCIETY: ON CHRISTMAS NIGHT Featuring Edward Caine (conductor), Sat 16 Dec, Beckminster Methodist Church, Penn Fields, Wolverhampton

SHREWSBURY SCHOOL COMMUNITY CHOIR: HANDEL'S MESSIAH Featuring Richard Robbins (conductor), Sat 16 Dec, Shrewsbury Abbey

BREWOD SINGERS: CHRISTMAS CONCERT Sat 16 Dec, St Mary's Church, Willenhall, Walsall

CANDLELIT CAROLS Programme includes works by Cullen, Willcocks, Handel & Bach - alongside a selection of well known carols, Sun 17 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

SHREWSBURY CANTATA CHOIR Programme includes Poulenc's Motets alongside a selection of carols, Sun 17 Dec, URC, Coleham

Head, Shrewsbury

BIRMINGHAM BACH CHOIR: NINE LESSONS & CAROLS SERVICE Sun 17 Dec, St Paul's Church, Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham

THE JOHN RUTTER QUARTET CHRISTMAS CONCERT Featuring Lydia Rae (soprano), Nick Allen (tenor), Deb Allen (alto) & Chris Allen (bass). Ian Stephenson accompanies on piano, Sun 17 Dec, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield



Comedy

DAVID O'DOHERTY, FERN BRADY, JEN BRISTER, JOSH PUGH & KYRAH GRAY Wed 13 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

ESTHER MANITO, SCOTT BENNETT, GARRETT MILLERICK & ROB ROUSE Wed 13 - Sat 16 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

TEZ ILYAS, ROB MULHOLLAND, ADAM BEARDSMORE & MIKE NEWALL Thurs 14 Dec, Red Brick, Wellington, Shropshire

DANNY MCLOUGHLIN, HARVEY HAWKINS, ADAM STAUNTON & DAMION LARKIN Sat 16 Dec, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

ANDREW BIRD Sun 17 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

CHRISTMAS COMEDY SPECIAL Sun 17 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

CINDERELLA Fun-filled family pantomime telling a much-loved rags-to-riches story, until Sat 23 Dec, Walsall Arena

OUR CHRISTMAS CAROL - A MUSICAL UK premiere of a brand-new musical Christmas story about upholding family traditions, until Sun 24 Dec, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

THE BODYGUARD Acclaimed musical based on the iconic film starring Whitney Houston & Kevin Costner. Australian Idol runner-up Emily Williams stars as Rachel Marron (evenings only) alongside Ayden Callaghan (Emmerdale, Hollyoaks), as Frank Farmer, until Sat 30 Dec, The Alexandra, Birmingham

PETER PAN THE MUSICAL Swashbuckling production complete with 'spectacular songs, creative choreography and fantastic flying sequences', until Sun 31 Dec, Old Rep, Birmingham

CINDERELLA Family pantomime starring X Factor winner Matt Terry as Prince Charming, Eve Parsons as Cinderella, Malcolm Lord as the Fairy Godmother and Ste Johnston as Buttons, until Sun 31 Dec, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK TaleGate Theatre Productions promise songs, slapstick and audience participation aplenty in a traditional pantomime packed with fairytale magic, until Sun 31 Dec, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST Starring CBBC's Mark Rhodes, Theo The Mouse & Wendy, The Sooty Show's Wink Taylor and renowned Dame, David Phipps-Davis, until Sun 31 Dec, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

A CHRISTMAS GETAWAY New Old Friends present a fast-paced farce inspired by PG Wodehouse, Noel Coward and classic British comedy, until Sun 31 Dec, Lichfield Garrick

TREASURE ISLAND Featuring Strictly Come Dancing star Katya Jones as the Island Chief, X Factor's Sean Smith as Jim Hawkins, West End star Shelley Anne Rivers as the Magical Mermaid, Coronation Street actor Tom Roberts as Long John Silver, Ian Smith as Captain Smollett and Carl Duffield as Silly Billy Jones, until Sat 6 Jan, Telford Theatre

THE BOX OF DELIGHTS The RSC's festive family show follows an orphaned schoolboy who finds himself the guardian of a small wooden box with powers beyond his wildest dreams, until Sun 7 Jan, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

SNOW WHITE Panto favourite starring Kelle Bryan as Good Fairy Elementa, Gyasi Sheppy as the prince, Niki Colwell Evans as the wicked queen, Evie Pickerill as Snow White, Tam Ryan as Muddles and Ian Adams as Nanny Nolly, until Sun 7 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre



BEAUTY AND THE BEAST Festive family favourite starring Sam Rabone as Madame Belle Fillop, Ben Thornton as Philippe, Kat Chatterton as Belle, Melad Hamidi as the Prince and the Beast, Natalie Pilkington as the Fairy and Sarah Annakin as the Enchantress, until Sun 7 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK A giant of a pantomime, starring Brad Fitt, Lucas Rush, Reece Duncan, Tommy J Rollason & Laura-Dene Perryman, until Sun 7 Jan, Theatre Severn,

Shrewsbury

THE FAIR MAID OF THE WEST Isobel McArthur presents an 'open-armed' adaptation of Thomas Heywood's Elizabethan romp, until Sun 14 Jan, Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

THE NUTCRACKER: A CHRISTMAS FAIRYTALE Popular festive tale packed with magic, music and enchanting characters, until Sat 27 Jan, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE Step through the wardrobe into the kingdom of Narnia, in this magical adventure based on C.S. Lewis' classic children's book, until Sun 28 Jan, The Rep, B'ham

A CHRISTMAS CAROL - A RADIO PLAY LIVE ON STAGE Colin Baker (Doctor Who) and Peter Purves (Blue Peter) lead the cast in a new adaptation of Charles Dickens' Christmas classic, Tues 12 Dec, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

DICK WHITTINGTON Amateur version presented by From The Top Theatre Company, Tues 12 - Sat 16 Dec, Highbury Theatre, Sutton Coldfield

SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS Tues 12 - Fri 30 Dec, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

DARK TALES IN WINTER Two classic tales - Lucy H. Hooper's Carnivore and Robert Louis Stevenson's The Body Snatcher - adapted for the stage by contemporary playwright Hannah Torrance, Wed 13 - Fri 15 Dec, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

A CHRISTMAS CAROL Scarlet Theatre presents an immersive production of Charles Dickens' classic story, Wed 13 - Fri 15 Dec, Stoke Repertory Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

LIOLA Royal Birmingham Conservatoire presents its version of Pirandello's pastoral comedy, Thurs 14 - Sat 16 Dec, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK A giant festive adventure starring Potteries' favourite Jonathan Wilkes as Jack, Hear'Say star Noel Sullivan as Fleshcreep, Torchwood actor Kai Owen as Farmer Trott and Rio Maye as Spirit of the Beans. Michelle Andrews stars as Princess Jill, Fri 15 Dec - Sun 7 Jan, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK Award-winning Little Wolf Entertainment promise 'giant jokes and marvellous moo-sic' in a festive show for all the family, Fri 15 Dec - Sun 7 Jan, Artrix, Bromsgrove (Booking via The Core, Solihull)

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK Alison Hammond, Matt Slack, Samantha Womack, Doreen Tipton, Andrew Ryan & Alexandra O'Reilly star in a 'giant panto full of fun', Sat 16 Dec - Sun 28 Jan, Birmingham Hippodrome



Snow Play - Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

Kids Theatre

MOTIONHOUSE: STARCHITECTS SAVE SANTA! New festive show for families, fusing gravity-defying choreography, digital projections and magical characters, until Sat 30 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD The Rep presents a fresh look at the classic fairytale, in a new production for children aged three to six, until Sat 6 Jan, The Rep, Birmingham

THE SPONGEBOB MUSICAL Theatre Cats present an amateur version of the popular underwater adventure, Mon 11 - Tues 12 Dec, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent

DEAR SANTA A festive introduction to theatre, based on Rod Campbell's much-loved children's book, Mon 11 - Sun 24 Dec, Birmingham Hippodrome

SNOW PLAY Interactive live-action story during which little ones get to build a snowman, decorate a Christmas tree and take part in a snowball battle, Tues 12 - Sun 24 Dec, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

DEAR SANTA A festive introduction to theatre based on Rod Campbell's much-loved children's book, Tues 12 - Sun 24 Dec, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

THE CHRISTMAS TOYSHOP MYSTERY 'Magical adventure' with inventive storytelling, puppets and original music, Sat 16 - Thurs 21 & Sat 23 Dec, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent, Staffs

Light Entertainment

THE MAGIC OF CHRISTMAS FEAT. AMBLECOTE PRIMARY SCHOOL CHOIR Seasonal song, new carols & festive favourites, Mon 11 Dec, Stourbridge Town Hall

A CHRISTMAS WASSAIL Popular festive show featuring choral music, solo songs, spoken word and comedy, Mon 11 - Tues 12 Dec, Highbury Hall, Birmingham

AN EVENING OF BURLESQUE Fusion of cabaret, comedy, music, circus and burlesque, Tues 12 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

NEIL SANDS: CHRISTMAS MEMORIES A nostalgic festive show featuring more than 60 Christmas songs and carols, Wed 13 Dec, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent

A CHRISTMAS WASSAIL Popular festive show featuring choral music, solo songs, spoken word and comedy, Sat 16 Dec, Hartlebury Castle, Nr Kidderminster

TRES TRES CABARET A 'silly & saucy night to remember', with a unique line-up at each show, Fri 16 Dec, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

THE CBSO: MY CHRISTMAS ORCHESTRAL ADVENTURE Father Christmas has lost his map on a practice run of his delivery route! Thankfully, the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and Wolverhampton Youth Choir has found it - but they need your help to return it to him ahead of the big day, Sun 17 Dec, The Halls at The Civic, Wolverhampton

The CHRISTMAS TOY SHOP MYSTERY



the
brewhouse
arts centre & café bar

16th to 23rd December

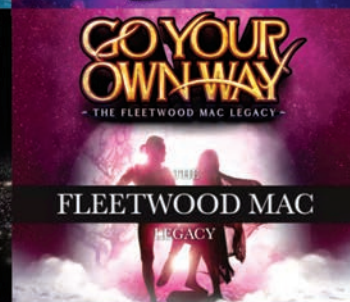
Weekdays 10am & 1pm Weekends 11am & 2pm

The Christmas Toyshop Mystery

Capture the heart of the whole family this Christmas and enjoy a magical adventure with inventive storytelling, puppets and original music, as The Christmas Toy Shop Mystery comes to The Brewhouse.

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LADBABY: LIVE, LAUGH, LOVE - LIVE An insight into the crazy world of the popular podcasting duo, Sun 17 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

THE D-DAY DARLINGS: A CHRISTMAS TO REMEMBER Featuring a programme of heartfelt harmonies and festive favourites, Sun 17 Dec, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

Events

THE POLAR EXPRESS™ 2023 TRAIN RIDE Father Christmas spreads festive cheer in his tree-mendous stage show, until Fri 22 Dec, Churnet Valley Railway, Staffordshire

ALDERFORD'S SANTA ISLAND EXPERIENCE Discover the story of Santa and his elves, until Fri 22 Dec, Alderford Lake, Shropshire

A SNOW PRINCESS CHRISTMAS Help Mrs Claus and the elves make some sand art before travelling through a winter wonderland to meet Santa, until Sat 23 Dec, Hoo Zoo & Dinosaur World, Telford



THE POLAR EXPRESS™ TRAIN RIDE Meet all the characters from the film as you journey to the North Pole, until Sat 23 Dec, Telford Steam Railway, Shrops

CHRISTMAS PARTY WORLD 2023 A night of 'high-octane' entertainment, food & drink, all presented within the themed venue, until Sat 23 Dec, NEC, Birmingham

ELF TRAIL Spot the cheeky elves around the museum on this festive trail, until Sat 23 Dec, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

BIRMINGHAM FRANKFURT CHRISTMAS MARKET Offering a large range of traditional gifts and a selection of tempting food & drink, until Sun 24 Dec, Birmingham City Centre

CHRISTMAS BRICKTACULAR Get into the festive spirit with Christmas activities in the Lego playground, until Sun 24 Dec, Legoland Discovery Centre Birmingham

NORTH POLE ADVENTURE Experience the wonder of Christmas on your adventure to the North Pole with plenty of festive activities along the way, until Sun 24 Dec, National Forest Adventure Farm, Burton upon Trent, Staffordshire

SANTA'S GROTTO Visit Santa in his grotto, set within the walls of 11th-century Dudley Castle, until Sun 24 Dec, Dudley Zoo

SNOWY'S CONSERVATION CREW Join Snowy on an arctic adventure to learn about the North Pole and the animals which live there, until Sun 24 Dec, National SEA LIFE Centre, Birmingham

SANTA'S GROTTO Get ready to dive into the ultimate underwater fish-massy adventure with Santa and his elves, until Sun 24 Dec, National SEA LIFE Centre, Birmingham

WINTER FUNLAND The UK's biggest indoor funfair, with all festive activities included in the ticket price, until Mon 1 Jan, NEC, Birmingham

SNOWDOGS DISCOVER BIRMINGHAM Enjoy a festive sculpture trail inspired by the animated sequel to the late Raymond Briggs' timeless picture book *The Snowman*™, until Thurs 4 Jan, across Birmingham City Centre

WINTER GLOW Immerse yourself in all things seasonal with a line-up of festive activities, until Sat 6 Jan, Three Counties Showground, Malvern

ICE SKATE BIRMINGHAM Birmingham's largest, all-inclusive undercover ice rink is back! until Sun 7 Jan, Centenary Square, Birmingham

SANTA'S WINTER WONDERLAND Featuring real snow, real animals and the all-new winter wonderland show, until Sun 7 Jan, SnowDome, Tamworth

CHRISTMAS LUNCHES WITH A SWING Featuring a welcome drink, a three-course Christmas lunch and live entertainment and music, Tues 12 Dec, National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire

MY NAME IS ALFRED HITCHCOCK - WITH SPECIAL GUEST ALISTAIR MCGOWAN A special showing of the film before a guest talk from Alistair McGowan, Tues 12 Dec, Kinokulture, Oswestry, Shropshire

EVOLUTION Epic drone light show taking audiences on a mesmerising journey through time and space, Thurs 14 Dec, Wolverhampton Racecourse

FESTIVE NIGHTS AT BIDDULPH GRANGE GARDEN Explore the garden after hours, beautifully lit with Christmas lights, Fri 15 - Sun 17 Dec, Biddulph Grange Garden, Staffordshire

WINTER NIGHTS BY CHRISTMAS LIGHTS Climb on board and journey through the festive tunnels, Fri 15 - Sun 17 Dec, Dudley Canal & Caverns

JINGLE VILLE - A MAGICAL CHRISTMAS ADVENTURE Explore Jingle Ville and enjoy festive entertainment and activities, Fri 15 - Sun 24 Dec, Lower Drayton Farm, Stafford

SHREWSBURY CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL Annual festival featuring beautifully decorated and illuminated Christmas trees, Fri 15 Dec - Tues 2 Jan, St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury



Evolution Drone Light Show - Wolverhampton Racecourse

FESTIVE MUSICAL AFTERNOON TEA Festive afternoon tea, with The Lavender Girls singing Christmas favourites, Sat 16 Dec, Himley Hall, Dudley

NAUGHTY ELVES IN THE GROTTO The naughty elves in the grotto will be getting themselves tangled up in a fun festive display, Sat 16 Dec, The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent

THE FIZZOGS MURDER MYSTERY A dastardly show that involves the Fizzog's most popular characters, Sat 16 Dec, Himley Hall, Dudley

SANTA'S TOY WORKSHOP Help Santa and his elves make wooden reindeer in this special workshop, Sat 16 Dec, World of Wedgwood, Stoke-on-Trent



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A CHRISTMAS CAROL TOUR A tour around the historic town of Shrewsbury, re-visiting some of the stunning film locations featured in the iconic 1984 film adaptation of Dickens' festive ghost story, Sat 16 - Sun 17 Dec, Shrewsbury Art Gallery & Museum

TRENTHAM CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL Featuring a brand-new ice-sculpture trail, live festive music, food and markets, Sat 16 - Sun 17 Dec, Trentham Gardens, Staffordshire

CHRISTMAS AT CADBURY WORLD Discover the chocolatey zones and see Santa in his very own stage show, Sat 16 - Sun 17 Dec, Cadbury World, Bournville, Birmingham

SANTA TRAINS Travel on a steam train to see Santa in a pantomime, Sat 16 - Sun 17 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

CHRISTMAS LIGHT SHOW: A LIGHT SPECTACULAR BY ILLUMINOS Enjoy a light show and listen to popular carols, Sat 16 - Wed 20 Dec, Lichfield Cathedral



IMMATURE RAVERS Family rave with a Christmas theme, Sun 17 Dec, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury



Showaddywaddy - The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

Gigs

JOHNNY FOREIGNER

Wed 20 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

FRANKIE VALLI STORY

Wed 20 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

TALON

Wed 20 Dec, Stoke Repertory Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

THE AMY WINEHOUSE

BAND Thurs 21 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

GLAM 45 Thurs 21 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

THE MAGIC OF MOTOWN

Thurs 21 Dec, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

TIM GARLAND AND

JASON REBELLO Thurs 21 Dec, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

ROB LAMBERTI

PRESENTS PERFECTLY GEORGE MICHAEL Thurs 21 Dec, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

THE TWANG + THE

DREAM MACHINE Fri 22

Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

ISSA + WOODEN DOG + JET BLACK ORANGE

+ MOLLY GONE MAD + LIAM HAYES Fri 22 Dec, O2 Institute, B'ham

NATHAN DAWE

Fri 22 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

TALON

Fri 22 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

THE SUPERSKAS

Fri 22 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

THE JACK FLETCHER

BAND Fri 22 Dec, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

RED HOT CHILI POTTERS

Fri 22 Dec, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

DISCHARGE

Fri 22 Dec, The Underground, Stoke-on-Trent

RUBY BRIDGE

Fri 22 Dec, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

SHOWADDYWADDY

Fri 22 Dec, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

DAVE BUSBY - THE

MUSIC OF ED SHEERAN

Fri 22 Dec, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

CALL OF THE KRAKEN

Fri 22 Dec, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

LILITHS ARMY +

CHASING THE FALL Fri 22 Dec, Percy's Cafe Bar, Whitchurch, North Shropshire

THE TWANG + THE HEADSHRINKERS

Sat 23 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

SLADE + SONS OF THE SEVENTIES

Sat 23 Dec, O2 Academy, B'ham

DISCHARGE + ROTUNDA + FACE UP! + BIG

BLACK EYE + FATAL DOSE + ASYLUM Sat 23

Dec, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

GINGER WILDHEART

PLAYS THE WILDHEARTS Sat 23 Dec, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

THE ROUGH KUTZ + THE SKAPONES

Sat 23 Dec, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

FLASH - QUEEN TRIBUTE

Sat 23 Dec, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

DIRTY ROCKIN' SCOUNDRELS

Sat 23 Dec, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

RUFFNECKS

Sat 23 Dec, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

EAST 17

Sat 23 Dec, Aston Hall, Wrexham

THE JOHNNY CASH EXPERIENCE

Sun 24 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

Classical Music

SYMPHONY HALL CAROLS Featuring the Salisbury Cathedral Choir, David Halls (conductor) & Thomas Trotter (organ), Mon 18 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CBSO CHORAL CHRISTMAS WITH ANNA LAPWOOD

Also featuring Simon Halsey CBE (conductor), CBSO Chorus, CBSO Youth Chorus, CBSO Children's Chorus & SO Vocal, Tues 19 - Wed 20 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE KING'S SINGERS: WHEN YOU WISH UPON A STAR

Programme includes works by Grieg, Byrd & Saint-Saëns, Wed 20 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

CHRISTMAS AT THE MOVIES WITH THE CBSO

Featuring Michael England (conductor), Gary Williams & Louise Dearman (singers). Programme includes scores from Home Alone, Love Actually, The Holiday, Elf, Gremlins, Miracle on 34th Street, The Polar Express, The Snowman and more... Thurs 21 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL CHOIR: CHRISTMAS BY CANDLELIGHT

Thurs 21 Dec, Lichfield Cathedral

BREWOD SINGERS: HAPPY CHRISTMAS

Featuring the Jackfield Brass Band as special guests, Thurs 21 Dec, St Mary & St Chad Church, Brewood

THE CBSO: DECK THE HALLS

An evening of seasonal favourites performed by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO), accompanied by the Wolverhampton Chamber Choir and guest singer Tommy Blaize (Strictly Come Dancing), Fri 22 Dec, The Civic at The Halls, Wolverhampton

MATT GLOSSOP AND THE BLOOMSBURY SOLOISTS

Programme includes works by Tchaikovsky, Corelli, John Williams, Howard Blake, Franz Lehár, Vivaldi and more... Sat 23 Dec, St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury



NADIA EIDE CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Sat 23 Dec, The Abbey Church, Shrewsbury

Comedy

ANDY ROBINSON, MATT BRAGG, PAUL

MCCAFFREY & LINDSEY SANTORO Wed 20 - Sat 23 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

GARY POWNDLAND & FRIENDS Thurs 21 Dec, Dudley Town Hall

Theatre

CINDERELLA Fun-filled family pantomime telling a much-loved rags-to-riches story, until Sat 23 Dec, Walsall Arena

OUR CHRISTMAS CAROL - A MUSICAL

UK premiere of a brand-new musical Christmas story about upholding family traditions, until Sun 24 Dec, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

THE BODYGUARD

Acclaimed musical based on the iconic film starring Whitney Houston & Kevin Costner. Australian Idol runner-up Emily Williams stars as Rachel Marron (evenings only) alongside Ayden Callaghan (Emmerdale, Hollyoaks), as Frank Farmer, until Sat 30 Dec, The Alexandra, Birmingham

SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS

until Fri 30 Dec, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

PETER PAN THE MUSICAL

Swashbuckling production complete with 'spectacular songs, creative choreography and fantastic flying sequences', until Sun 31 Dec, Old Rep, Birmingham

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Starring CBBC's Mark Rhodes, Theo The Mouse & Wendy, The Sooty Show's Wink Taylor and renowned Dame, David Phipps-Davis, until Sun 31 Dec, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

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THE BOX OF DELIGHTS The RSC's



Nathan Dawe - O2 Academy, Birmingham

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THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE Step through the wardrobe into the kingdom of Narnia, in this magical adventure based on C.S. Lewis' classic children's book, until Sun 28 Jan, The Rep, B'ham

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SNOW WHITE A 'fast-paced fun-filled family panto', Thurs 21 - Sat 31 Dec, Mitchell Arts Centre, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent

PETER PAN: THE WORLD'S BIGGEST PANTO ARENA TOUR Boy George stars as Captain Hook and Jordan Conway as Peter Pan in a big-budget version of JM Barrie's much-loved story, Fri 22 - Sat 23 Dec, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham



SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS Festive family pantomime, Sat 23 - Sat 30 Dec, Prince of Wales Theatre, Cannock

Kids Theatre

THE CHRISTMAS TOYSHOP MYSTERY 'Magical adventure' with inventive storytelling, puppets and original music, until Thurs 21 & Sat 23 Dec, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent, Staffs

DEAR SANTA A festive introduction to theatre based on Rod Campbell's much-loved children's book, until Sun 24 Dec, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury



DEAR SANTA A festive introduction to theatre, based on Rod Campbell's much-loved children's book, until Sun 24 Dec, Birmingham Hippodrome

SNOW PLAY Interactive live-action story during which little ones get to build a snowman, decorate a Christmas tree and take part in a snowball battle, until Sun 24 Dec, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

MOTIONHOUSE: STARCHITECTS SAVE SANTA! New festive show for families, fusing gravity-defying choreography, digital projections and magical characters, until Sat 30 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), B'ham

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD The Rep presents a fresh look at the classic

fairytale, in a new production for children aged three to six, until Sat 6 Jan, The Rep, Birmingham

THE FATHER CHRISTMAS SHOW Join Father Christmas and his chief elves in the North Pole as they make preparations ahead of Christmas Eve, Mon 18 - Wed 20 Dec, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

RED RIDING HOOD Saltmine Theatre Company give a modern-day twist to a much-loved family favourite, Thurs 21 Dec, Stourbridge Town Hall

Light Entertainment

THE D-DAY DARLINGS: A CHRISTMAS TO REMEMBER Featuring a programme of heartfelt harmonies and festive favourites, Fri 22 Dec, Halesowen Town Hall

KARL LOXLEY: THE SONGS OF CHRISTMAS Festive celebration including White Christmas, O Holy Night, Happy Christmas (War Is Over) and many more... Fri 22 Dec, Stourbridge Town Hall

THE SNOWMAN FILM WITH ORCHESTRA Also including Wallace & Gromit: The Wrong Trousers, Sat 23 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

#BINGOHUN A night of 90s girl group singalongs and dance routines interspersed with three full games of prize bingo, Sat 23 Dec, The Hub at St Mary's Lichfield

Events

THE POLAR EXPRESS™ 2023 TRAIN RIDE Father Christmas spreads festive cheer in his tree-mendous stage show, until Fri 22 Dec, Churnet Valley Railway, Staffordshire

ALDERFORD'S SANTA ISLAND EXPERIENCE Discover the story of Santa and his elves, until Fri 22 Dec, Alderford Lake, Shropshire

A SNOW PRINCESS CHRISTMAS Help Mrs Claus and the elves make some sand art before travelling through a winter wonderland to meet Santa, until Sat 23 Dec, Hoo Zoo & Dinosaur World, Telford

THE POLAR EXPRESS™ TRAIN RIDE Meet all the characters from the film as you journey to the North Pole, until Sat 23 Dec, Telford Steam Railway, Shrops

CHRISTMAS PARTY WORLD 2023 A night of 'high-octane' entertainment, food & drink, all presented within the themed venue, until Sat 23 Dec, NEC, Birmingham

ELF TRAIL Spot the cheeky elves around the museum on this festive trail, until Sat 23 Dec, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

BIRMINGHAM FRANKFURT CHRISTMAS MARKET Offering a large range of traditional gifts and a selection of tempting food & drink, until Sun 24 Dec, Birmingham City Centre

JINGLE VILLE - A MAGICAL CHRISTMAS ADVENTURE Explore Jingle Ville and enjoy festive entertainment and activities, until Sun 24 Dec, Lower Drayton Farm, Stafford

CHRISTMAS BRICKTACULAR Get into the festive spirit with Christmas activities in the Lego playground, until Sun 24 Dec, Legoland Discovery Centre Birmingham

NORTH POLE ADVENTURE Experience the wonder of Christmas on your adventure to the North Pole with plenty of festive activities along the way, until Sun 24 Dec, National Forest Adventure Farm, Burton upon Trent, Staffordshire

SANTA'S GROTTO Visit Santa in his grotto, set within the walls of 11th-century Dudley Castle, until Sun 24 Dec, Dudley Zoo

SNOWY'S CONSERVATION CREW Join Snowy on an arctic adventure to learn about the North Pole and the animals which live there, until Sun 24 Dec, National SEA LIFE Centre, Birmingham

SANTA'S GROTTO Get ready to dive into the ultimate underwater fish-massy adventure with Santa and his elves, until Sun 24 Dec, National SEA LIFE Centre, Birmingham

WINTER FUNLAND The UK's biggest indoor funfair, with all festive activities included in the ticket price, until Mon 1 Jan, NEC, Birmingham



SHREWSBURY CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL Annual festival featuring beautifully decorated and illuminated Christmas trees, until Tues 2 Jan, St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury

WINTER GLOW Immerse yourself in all things seasonal with a line-up of festive activities, until Sat 6 Jan, Three Counties Showground, Malvern

ICE SKATE BIRMINGHAM Birmingham's largest, all-inclusive undercover ice rink is back! until Sun 7 Jan, Centenary Square, Birmingham

SANTA'S WINTER WONDERLAND Featuring real snow, real animals and the all-new winter wonderland show, until Sun 7 Jan, SnowDome, Tamworth



Motorheadache - O2 Academy, Birmingham

Gigs

TRANSMISSION - THE SOUND OF JOY DIVISION Wed 27 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

THE GLENN MILLER ORCHESTRA Wed 27 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

FLASH - QUEEN TRIBUTE Wed 27 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

BAD MANNERS + MAX SPODGE + THE RIFFS Wed 27 Dec, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

WHITESNAKES JOURNEY Wed 27 Dec, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

MOSH TALIA Thurs 28 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

DIRTY DC + SEX PISSED DOLLS + THE FAUX FIGHTERS + MOTORKILL + PRIEST UNLEASHED + TRACTION Thurs 28 Dec, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

THE FREDDIE & QUEEN EXPERIENCE Thurs 28 Dec, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

BON GIOVI Thurs 28 Dec, The Station, Cannock

ABSOLUTE BOWIE Thurs 28 Dec, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

REVOLUTION Thurs 28 Dec, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

SIGNING OFF - UB40

TRIBUTE Fri 29 Dec, The Rhodhouse, Sutton Coldfield

FLASH - QUEEN TRIBUTE Fri 29 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

THE JONESES (THE SMITHS) + SUPERNova (OASIS) + THE ABSOLUTE (STONE ROSES) Fri 29 Dec, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

STRAIGHTEN OUT - THE STRANGLERS TRIBUTE + STIG AND THE FIRE PILOTS Fri 29 Dec, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

INNER EMPIRE Fri 29 Dec, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

STAYIN' ALIVE - BEE GEES TRIBUTE Fri 29 Dec, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

FAMOUS MONSTERS - MISFITS TRIBUTE Fri 29 Dec, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

GUTTERSNIPE Fri 29 Dec, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

THE GERRY CINNAMON EXPERIENCE Sat 30 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

MOTORHEADACHE Sat 30 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

NOUGHTY NINETIES Sat 30 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

COZY POWELL BIRTHDAY BASH III Sat 30 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

RESTLESS DOG Sat 30

Dec, Two Gates Club, Tamworth

THIRSTY WORK Sat 30 Dec, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

ERASURED Sat 30 Dec, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

SKABURST Sat 30 Dec, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

RADIO RUMOURS Sat 30 Dec, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

BORN IN THE 80S Sun 31 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

MATT JOHNSON AND THE REPROBATES + BROKEN WIRES + SHOTGUN MARAMLADE + JESS SILK TRIO + SAM DRAISEY + BRIAN STONE & THE MASTERS OF NONE Sun 31 Dec, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

MAET LIVE AND THE NEVERLAND EXPRESS Sun 31 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

THUNDER HAMMER Sun 31 Dec, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

UNDERCOVER HEROES Sun 31 Dec, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

THE ENDINGS Sun 31 Dec, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

THE HAGLEY WOOD VAMPIRES Sun 31 Dec, Percy's Cafe Bar, Whitchurch, North Shropshire

Classical Music

LONDON CONCERT ORCHESTRA: NEW YEAR'S EVE GALA Featuring Anthony Inglis (conductor). Programme includes works by Mendelssohn, Sibelius, Rossini, Elgar, Grieg & Verdi, plus classics *Nessun Dorma* & *Land Of Hope And Glory*, Sun 31 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham



Comedy

RICHARD BLACKWOOD, SLIM, NABIL ABDULRASHID & DALISO CHAPONDA Wed 27 Dec, The Glee Club, B'ham

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, LINDSEY SANTORO & COMIC TBC Thurs 28 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ANDY ROBINSON, LINDSEY SANTORO, KARL PORTER & COMIC TBC Fri 29 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

SUKH OJLA (PICTURED), TOMMY SANDHU, FAIZAN SHAH & NABIL ABDULRASHID Fri 29 Dec, The Rep, Birmingham



STEVE HARRIS, VINCE ATTA, MAT TAYLOR & HARVEY HAWKINS Fri 29 Dec, Two Gates Club, Tamworth

ANDY ROBINSON, LINDSEY SANTORO, KYRAH GRAY & MATT BRAGG Sat 30 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

RICHARD BLACKWOOD, NABIL ABDULRASHID, CURTIS WALKER & SLIM Sat 30 Dec, The Rep, Birmingham

RICHARD BLACKWOOD (PICTURED), NABIL ABDULRASHID, CURTIS WALKER & DALISO CHAPONDA Sat 30 Dec, Bilston Town Hall



ANDY ROBINSON, KYRAH GRAY, MATT BRAGG & GARRETT MILLERICK Sun 31 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

DAMION LARKIN & COMICS TBC Sun 31 Dec, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

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THE TWELVE DATES OF CHRISTMAS A one-woman play offering 'a hilarious and modern alternative to the old standards of the holiday season', Wed 27 - Sat 30 Dec, Old Joint Stock

Theatre, Birmingham

BEWDLEY AND THE BEAST: THE REVENGE OF THE GILGAL Beauty And The Beast-inspired panto for grown-ups featuring a brand-new story, Thurs 28 - Fri 29 Dec, The Civic, Stourport

DICK WHITTINGTON Traditional family panto, written by Alan Frayn, Fri 29 - Sat 30 Dec, Stoke Repertory Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

Kids Theatre

MOTIONHOUSE: STARCHITECTS SAVE SANTA! New festive show for families, fusing gravity-defying choreography, digital projections and magical characters, until Sat 30 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), B'ham

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OH NO! SHARK IN THE SNOW! A 'fantastic family musical combining three exciting adventures', Wed 27 - Sun 31 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

HORRIBLE HISTORIES: HORRIBLE CHRISTMAS 'Hair-raising adventure' in which Charles Dickens, Oliver Cromwell, King Henry VIII and St Nicholas join forces to save the festive season, Thurs 28 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Light Entertainment

THE MUSIC OF LORD OF THE RINGS, GAME OF THRONES & BEYOND Featuring music from Lord Of The Rings, The Hobbit, The Witcher, Game Of Thrones, The Chronicles Of Narnia, How To Train Your Dragon & Pirates Of The Caribbean, Fri 29 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE MUSIC OF ZIMMER VS WILLIAMS Presented by the London Concert Orchestra. Programme features scores from E.T., Star Wars, Batman Begins, Harry Potter, Jurassic Park, Pirates Of The Caribbean, The Dark Knight Rises and many more... Sat 30 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Events

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FREDDO'S MAGIC SHOW Everyone's favourite chocolate frog brings his

magic show to Cadbury World, Wed 27 - Sat 30 Dec, Cadbury World, Bournville, Birmingham

SANTA'S SCIENCE SPECTACULAR SHOW From the science behind Rudolph's glowing nose to rocket-powered sleighs, this show is sure to get everyone in the festive spirit, Wed 27 - Sun 31 Dec, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

FESTIVE NIGHTS AT BIDDULPH GRANGE GARDEN Explore the garden after hours, beautifully lit with Christmas lights, Thurs 28 - Fri 29 Dec, Biddulph Grange Garden, Staffordshire

WINTER DIESEL DAY A festive-season diesel day, with 40106 and D182 both providing steam-heat, as well as Pannier Tank 7714 double-heading with D9551 or D8568, Fri 29 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

SANTA AT BLAKESLEY HALL Meet Santa in the Little Parlour and see Blakesley Hall dressed for Christmas, Sat 30 Dec, Blakesley Hall, Birmingham

NEW YEAR'S FOOD FROM AROUND THE WORLD Learn about the traditions of different cultures, Sat 30 Dec, Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, Craven Arms, South Shropshire

THE GIANT PANTOMIME SPECTACULAR!

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK
by Morgan Brind

15 Dec '23 - 7 Jan '24

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ENTERTAINMENT

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Win! A family ticket to see The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe!

Direct from the West End, The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe shows at Birmingham Rep until Sunday 28 January. We have a family ticket to give away for the evening performance on Friday 19 January.

Competition closes Monday 8 January



Win! Four tickets to see Horrible Histories: Horrible Christmas!

Join Charles Dickens, Oliver Cromwell, King Henry VIII and St Nicholas himself as they team up to save the festive season! We have four tickets to give away as one prize for the Thursday 28 December performance at Birmingham's Symphony Hall.

Competition closes Monday 18 December



Win! Four tickets to see Peter Pan!

Starring Boy George as Captain Hook, this big-budget adaptation of JM Barrie's much-loved tale flies into Resorts World Arena Birmingham this month. We have four tickets to give away as one prize for the Saturday 23 December performance.

Competition closes Friday 15 December



Win! A family ticket to see Evolution drone light show!

Witness an epic-scale theatrical presentation of the story of evolution, told via a swarm of mesmerising drones flying in unison. We have a family ticket to give away for the show at Wolverhampton Racecourse on Thursday 14 December.

Competition closes Monday 4 December

For your chance to WIN! with What's On, visit:
whatsonlive.co.uk

THE BUTTERMARKET
SHREWSBURY





EVOLUTION

A SPECTACULAR DRONE LIGHT SHOW

Enjoy an evening to thrill the whole family
with magic in the sky, all the fun of the fair,
festive food stalls and music.

14 DECEMBER
Wolverhampton Racecourse,
West Midlands

FINAL TICKETS ON SALE

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