

Shropshire

ISSUE 445 FEBRUARY 2024

# What's On

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## inside:

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Museums

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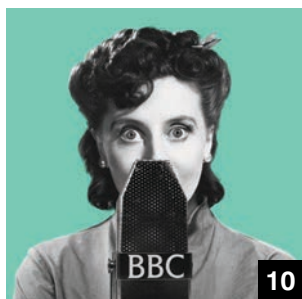
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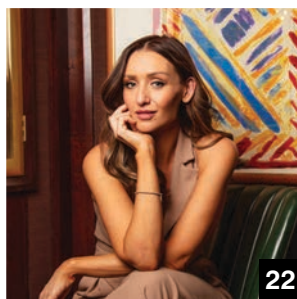
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# What's On

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## Literature festival makes a return in Wolverhampton

Wolverhampton Literature Festival returns early this month.

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.

Sathnam Sanghera, Louise Minchin (pictured left), Raphael Rowe, Lou Sanders (pictured right) 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](http://wolvesliteraturefestival.co.uk)



## Black Country Festival 2024 to be the biggest yet

This year's Black Country Festival will benefit from a major funding boost of £365,000. The cash comes from West Midlands Combined Authority, via the Commonwealth Games Legacy Fund, and will be used to support events running throughout the festival in July.

Commenting on the news, Councillor Patrick Harley, leader of the council, said: "This money will allow us, in difficult financial times, to continue to put on popular events like the Black Country Musicom, which celebrate who we are and where we come from. There will be further exciting announcements in due course - but it should mean that this year will be the biggest and best Black Country Festival yet."

## Lego looking for a new Mini Master Model Builder

Legoland Discovery Centre Birmingham is on the lookout for its new Mini Master Model Builder.

Young Lego lovers are being urged to enter the bricktastic competition, with the winner having their creation displayed in the centre's Miniland. For more information, visit [legolanddiscoverycentre.com](http://legolanddiscoverycentre.com)



## Laughs aplenty with return of comedy festival

Shrewsbury International Comedy Festival returns in the summer, complete with its flagship Gala Show at the town's Theatre Severn.

The event will run at various venues from Thursday 11 to Sunday 14 July, with the gala taking place on the final evening. Comedians Josh Pugh and Scott Bennett (pictured) have already been announced for the show, with further acts soon to be added. To find out more and book tickets, visit [theatresevern.co.uk](http://theatresevern.co.uk)



## Hawkstone Park to host new weekend festival

Hawkstone Park near Shrewsbury will play host to three consecutive nights of live music this spring.

The popular venue's Hawkstone Park Live 2024 event will take place from Friday 24 to Sunday 26 May, with full details of the headline acts for each night expected to be released shortly. Boyband Blue have already been confirmed for the Friday night.

Further information about the festival is available at [ashcott.international](http://ashcott.international)

## Sequel to War Horse to show at Lichfield Garrick

A Lichfield Garrick stage adaptation of Farm Boy, Michael Morpurgo's compelling sequel to War Horse, opens at the venue at the end of the month.

The family-friendly production, which

combines drama, storytelling and original music - shows at the Garrick from Thursday 29 February to Sunday 10 March. For more information and to book tickets, visit [lichfieldgarrick.com](http://lichfieldgarrick.com)

## Monster Jam Ramped Up heads for the Midlands

Adrenaline-charged motorsport event Monster Jam Ramped Up is heading for Birmingham.

Taking place at the city's Utilita Arena from Friday 29 to Sunday 31 March, the show features the Monstertron, a multi-sided metal ramp that launches 12,000lb Monster Jam trucks as they attempt a selection of fan-favourite stunts. For more information and to book tickets, visit [theticketfactory.com](http://theticketfactory.com)



## Snowdrop walk returns to Shropshire's Winsley Hall

An annual snowdrop walk which fundraises for local cancer charity Lingen Davies will once again be held at the private Shropshire estate of Winsley Hall in Westbury this month (Saturday 17 & Sunday 18 February). The walk is in memory of the property's owner, Mrs June Whitaker, who died from cancer last summer.



## Choral music at the cathedral

The City of Birmingham Choir will make its first visit to Lichfield Cathedral early next month, to perform a programme of choral music for Lent.

The Saturday 2 March concert will see the choir joined by four soloists and the orchestra of the Musical & Amicable Society. The programme will feature Haydn's Stabat Mater, JS Bach's Cantata no12 and Albinoni's Adagio for strings and organ... To find out more, visit [citychoir.org.uk](http://citychoir.org.uk)

## Into The Melting Pot at the Arena

Theatre-goers are being invited to step back in time to 15th-century Seville at Wolverhampton's Arena Theatre this month, courtesy of a concertplay directed by the BAFTA-nominated Nicholas Renton.

Played out to a soundtrack of plaintive Sephardic songs and lively medieval music - performed live by critically acclaimed early music group The Telling - Into The Melting Pot recounts women's stories of 'integration, love, the rich cultural heritage of the Spanish peninsula and racial intolerance'. To find out more about the production, which shows at the Arena on Friday 2 February, visit [thetelling.co.uk](http://thetelling.co.uk)

## New podcast for Midlands theatre

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre has launched a podcast.

Aiming to lift the curtain on life at the venue, Spotlight will feature a variety of guests, including the stars of the shows and the people who work backstage. The episodes will be available to watch on YouTube and Grand Theatre social-media channels.



## First wave of acts announced for Shrewsbury Folk Festival

Irish folk legend Mary Black, American blues singer-songwriter Eric Bibb (pictured) and chart-topping UK band Ward Thomas are among the first wave of artists announced for this year's Shrewsbury Folk Festival.

Taking place from Friday 23 to Monday 26 August, the popular event will also feature contributions from, among many others, Mànran, El Pony Pisador and The Sentimentals, the latter of whom will be celebrating 20 years of playing together with two special shows

Commenting on this year's folk festival, its director, Sandra Surtees, said: "Shrewsbury has a long-established reputation for its eclectic line-up, allowing people to sample the best of British folk, Americana, blues and world music, along with one of the most friendly and welcoming atmospheres on the festival circuit. We're delighted with how this year is shaping up, with many, many more exciting UK and international acts to be revealed." For further information, visit [shrewsburyfolkfestival.co.uk](http://shrewsburyfolkfestival.co.uk)

## Autumn date for popular marathon

Stoke-on-Trent's Potters 'Arf Marathon will return for a 19th year in the autumn.

The popular event, which raises thousands of pounds for local charities and welcomes participants of all abilities, is scheduled to take place on the final Sunday of September (the 29th).

Organisers say that details about how to register for the half marathon will be made available 'over the coming weeks'.

## Grand Theatre awarded expansion-plan grant

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre has been awarded a grant by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities to implement the first phase of its city-centre expansion plans. The theatre recently signed a 12-month exclusivity agreement with the owners of Amar House, which formally incorporated The Slade Rooms. Now, thanks to the grant, it can move forward with plans to acquire the building in totality. The Grand intends to transform the site into a multi-disciplinary arts venue, including a 250-seat studio theatre, a further smaller scale performance space, rehearsal rooms, exhibition facilities, an office and a creative business space.



## New scheme to support aspiring screenwriters

An eight-week scheme to support new writing talent from across Birmingham and the Black Country will be launched in the summer.

Running from June to September, the new initiative will provide up to 12 aspiring writers with a crucial insight into writing for television.

The scheme sees BBC Writers - which works to support scriptwriting talent - and Create Central - which aims to turbo-charge the creative content sector in the region - join forces with Birmingham Rep, Script Sirens, Dudley Creates, Creative Black Country and Black Country Touring.

To find out more, including how to apply to take part, visit [bbc.co.uk/writers](http://bbc.co.uk/writers)

## Summer dates for Battle of Shrewsbury Weekend

Families and historians will get the chance to travel back in time to medieval Shropshire this summer, courtesy of a special Battle of Shrewsbury Medieval Weekend (Battlefield 1403, Saturday 27 & Sunday 28 July).

Featuring more than 250 reenactors, the event will include jousting matches, a market area and a selection of hands-on historical activities. Both days of the festival will end with a reenactment of the Battle of Shrewsbury itself, where visitors can choose to support either the King or the rebel army.

## AGBO Rally back at Weston Park next month

Fancy a family-friendly day of full-throttle action? If so, then be sure to get along to Weston Park on Sunday 17 March for the ever-popular AGBO Rally.

The event will see 80 cars from numerous eras taking on the stages at Weston Park - including the famous watersplash! To find out more, visit [weston-park.com/agbo-rally](http://weston-park.com/agbo-rally)



## Smethwick to host its first-ever festival of puppetry

Black Country Touring (BCT) - an organisation dedicated to bringing the best in theatre, dance and cinema to the region - is this month presenting Smethwick's first-ever puppetry festival.

Taking place across seven community venues during February half term (from Sunday the 11th to Sunday the 18th), the event features family-friendly puppet shows, puppetry workshops and exhibitions, and

performances for adults.

BCT is also presenting two other shows this month: Oskar's Amazing Adventure, performed by Theatre Fideri Fidera at Blackheath Library on Saturday the 10th, and Mr Shadow (Great Barr Library, Saturday the 17th).

For further information about these shows and all of BCT's productions, visit its website at [bctouring.org.uk](http://bctouring.org.uk)

## Get snapping! Popular show returns to the NEC

The Photography & Video Show returns to Birmingham's NEC next month (Saturday 16 - Tuesday 19 March).

Visitors to the event will be able to test cutting-edge equipment from 250-plus brands, check out live demos and tutorials, access stage and theatre programmes and visit interactive areas and galleries.

For further information about the event, visit [photographyshow.com](http://photographyshow.com)

## Call-out for artists to exhibit at Biennale 2024

Artists, designers, craftspeople and students have until midnight on Sunday 25 February to submit for consideration up to three works of art to the British Glass Biennale. The flagship exhibition within the International Festival of Glass, the Biennale takes place at The Glasshouse in Stourbridge from Friday 23 August to Saturday 28 September. To find out more about how to apply, visit [glassbiennale.org](http://glassbiennale.org)

## Famous son Darwin to be celebrated in home town

An event celebrating Shrewsbury's most famous son, Charles Darwin, returns to the town this month.

DarwiN Shrewsbury Festival runs at various venues and features a programme of exhibitions, lectures, workshops, illustrated talks and guided tours.

To find out more about what's going on, check out [darwin.originalshrewsbury.co.uk](http://darwin.originalshrewsbury.co.uk)





# B:Music

Town Hall & Symphony Hall



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0121 7803333

## On I Bang: Miles Jupp

08 Feb | Town Hall



## Transatlantic Sessions

10 Feb | Symphony Hall



## Mischief & Mystery

In Moominvalley | 10 Feb | Symphony Hall



## Candace Bushnell:

True Tales of Sex, Success & Sex and the City | 11 Feb | Symphony Hall



## Armonico Consort & Rachel Podger: The Forgotten Scarlatti | 12 Feb | Town Hall



## Strasbourg Philharmonic Orchestra: Fairytale & Legends | 15 Feb | Symphony Hall



## The World According To Kaleb

19 Feb | Symphony Hall



## Rhiannon Giddens

22 Feb | Town Hall



## Ross Noble: Jibber Jabber Jamboree

24 Feb | Symphony Hall



## Alice Roberts: Crypt

26 Feb | Town Hall



# bmusic.co.uk

There's something for everyone this February!



## Funding boost for local sports and culture events

Nine cultural and sporting events, set to take place in the West Midlands this year and next, have shared £3million of Commonwealth Games legacy funding to help bring hundreds of thousands of people together.

Giving an estimated £11.5million boost to the local economy, the events will celebrate the region's rich and diverse sporting, music and cultural heritage.

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and the UK Government are supporting the organisers with money from the £70million Games underspend which is being reinvested back into the region.

## Ruby Wax is not as well as she thought she was...

After a sold-out run in 2023, Ruby Wax is once again hitting the road with acclaimed stage show *I'm Not As Well As I Thought I Was*. The much-loved comedian, writer & presenter will stop off at four Midlands venues with the touring production: Shrewsbury's Theatre Severn on Thursday 2 May; The Courtyard, Hereford, Friday 3 May; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Saturday 29 June; and the Royal Spa Centre, Leamington, on Saturday 28 September.

For more information and to book tickets, visit [rubywax.seetickets.com](http://rubywax.seetickets.com)



## National Youth Theatre auditions in Birmingham

The National Youth Theatre (NYT) is this month hosting free community auditions at Birmingham BOA Stage & Screen Academy (Saturday 10 February).

Open to all young people aged from 14 to 25, and disabled young people up to the age of 30, the auditions provide participants with a sense of what it's like to be part of the NYT community. For further information and to register, visit [nyt.org.uk/auditions](http://nyt.org.uk/auditions)



## RSC's new co-artistic directors hit the ground running

Daniel Evans and Tamara Harvey are certainly hitting the ground running as the newly appointed co-artistic directors of the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC). The pair's inaugural season will feature eight Shakespeare plays, three world premieres, a European premiere, a UK premiere, two major revivals and two visiting productions. Commenting on the programme, Daniel and Tamara said: "We begin our chapter at the RSC by announcing a whole year's worth of

shows - 17 in total, across four stages. With this, our first season, we want to throw open the doors in every sense, collaborating with artists from across the globe on all of our stages, and ensuring we can welcome as many people as possible with a brand-new ticket initiative of 25,000 tickets across the season at £25 or less."

To check out the Company's complete programme of shows in 2024, visit [rsc.org.uk](http://rsc.org.uk)

## Wolverhampton secures £390,000 to host major urban sports event

Wolverhampton is set to play host to a major urban sports international event this year, after the council secured £390,000 from the West Midlands Combined Authority and HM Government's Commonwealth Games Legacy Fund.

The Urban Sports FISE Xperience will be staged in the city's Old Market Square and newly created Victoria Street events space from Friday 6 - Sunday 8 September. Further details about the event will be announced later in the year.



## Ming de Nasty LGBT+ photography exhibition on show in Shrewsbury

Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery and the town's Theatre Severn venue are currently hosting exhibitions celebrating older LGBT+ residents of Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin. The displays feature images taken by local photographer Ming de Nasty and also showcase archive photographs provided by older LGBTs during workshops exploring their memories and stories of the past 70 years. As part of the project, which is supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Arts Council England, further exhibitions - at Shrewsbury Library and the town's creative venue, The Hive - will be mounted later in the year.



# WORLD CLASS ENTERTAINMENT



EXPERIENCE THE REGION'S  
BIGGEST CELEBRATION OF DANCE!  
**024 DANCE –  
THROUGH THE DECADES**

SAT 3 – WED 14 FEB 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



LEIGH FRANCIS' FIRST EVER  
LIVE TOUR  
**LEIGH FRANCIS –  
MY FIRST TIME TOUR**

FRI 1 MAR 2024

REGENT THEATRE



OPERA INTERNATIONAL'S  
AWARD-WINNING PRODUCTION  
**ELLEN KENT:  
MADAMA BUTTERFLY**

SAT 2 MAR 2024

REGENT THEATRE



CALLING ALL TEACHERS, STUDENTS  
AND LITERATURE LOVERS!  
**REVISION ON TOUR**

MON 4 – THU 7 MAR 2024

REGENT THEATRE



PAY HOMAGE TO THE ONE AND  
ONLY QUEEN OF THE NIGHT  
**WHITNEY – QUEEN  
OF THE NIGHT**

FRI 22 MAR 2024

REGENT THEATRE



THE ULTIMATE TRIBUTE TO  
TINA TURNER  
**WHAT'S LOVE GOT  
TO DO WITH IT?**

SAT 23 MAR 2024

REGENT THEATRE

**MERCURY – THE ULTIMATE QUEEN TRIBUTE**  
SAT 3 FEB 2024 | VICTORIA HALL

**JIVE TALKIN'**  
THU 8 FEB 2024 | VICTORIA HALL

**CHAKA – THE MUSIC OF CHAKA KHAN**  
FRI 16 FEB 2024 | VICTORIA HALL

**BELIEVE – THE CHER SONGBOOK**  
FRI 1 MAR 2024 | VICTORIA HALL

**TOM DAVIS: UNDERDOG**  
SAT 2 MAR 2024 | VICTORIA HALL

**QUEENZ: THE SHOW WITH BALLS!**  
FRI 8 MAR 2024 | VICTORIA HALL

**CIRCUS OF HORRORS**  
SAT 9 MAR 2024 | VICTORIA HALL

**BUFFY REVAMPED**  
SUN 10 MAR 2024 | VICTORIA HALL



# THE SPIRIT OF RADIO

New theatre production A Leap In The Dark celebrates  
the 100th anniversary of the UK's first-ever radio play





## Staffordshire's New Vic Theatre is this month presenting *A Leap In The Dark*, a new stage production celebrating the 100th anniversary of the UK's first-ever radio play. The show has been written by US-based playwright, screenwriter and one-time Coventry resident Ron Hutchinson, who here talks to What's On about the play, his life - and heading north of Coventry for the first time ever!

Writer and dramatist Ron Hutchinson has led a life punctuated by fascinating experiences and fortunate coincidences. Born in County Antrim, he ended up being raised in Coventry because, on a journey back from RAF duty during the Second World War, his bricklayer father "looked out the window and saw nothing higher than your knee due to the bombing - he jumped off the train and never left."

I know what you're thinking - what was lucky about being sent to Coventry? But with similarly auspicious timing, Ron spent his teenage years rubbing shoulders with the likes of Trevor Nunn and Leonard Rossiter at the city's newly built Belgrade Theatre. "For three and sixpence you could be a young stager," he recalls. "I used to have a Saturday job gutting fish at Mac Fisheries, and every chance I got I scarpered off for these sessions with some of the greatest people in British theatre."

His love for the medium confirmed, a variety of serendipitous connections, stories and experiences - including a stint as a fraud investigator and working alongside a future artistic director of the RSC - fuelled his imagination and led to a long and celebrated career writing for radio, stage and screen.

The latter saw him spend 30 years as a jobbing screenwriter in Hollywood (he now lives in Brooklyn, New York), taking him to exotic TV and film locations all over the world. But never, it turns out, to Newcastle-under-Lyme.

"I've never been north of Coventry - I had a day trip to Nuneaton once," laughs the genial 77-year-old, who sounds genuinely delighted to be making his first visit to Staffordshire.

"It's been amazing to come up here and see this extraordinary place perched on the edge of the Moors," he says. "Somebody explained to me the difference between Stoke and Stoke-on-Trent until my head span... it's been an education!"

"I've done a lot of movies and been on location in Namibia, Mexico, China, Australia... all over the place for a few weeks or months at a time, and I'm regarding this trip the same way. This isn't coming to another English town; this is coming to a world that is interesting in its own way as Swakopmund in Namibia or the sand dunes of the Kalahari desert. Just walking up the

hills here - there's so much to see... it's fascinating for me to be here."

As well as maintaining a sense of childlike wonder at what's around him, the softly spoken writer relates it all with a gentle Irish lilt to his voice, an accent retained even though he left the Emerald Isle at the age of 13 and has spent the best part of the last 40 years in the US.

"When we lived in Coventry we were really in an Irish community; all my friends were Irish, we stuck together, and I guess that's how the rhythm stayed. Maybe being a dialogue writer makes me much more sensitive to hanging on to what works in the tone of voice too."

Dialogue is obviously crucial when writing for radio, something he's done regularly and which prompted former colleague Eoin O'Callaghan to commission him to write a radio play to celebrate the 100th anniversary of radio drama. The premise was to tell the story of how the first-ever play for the wireless came into being - but Ron admits it wasn't something that particularly appealed.

"I thought it was one of those very worthy things about the BBC and the glorious tradition of British drama, blah blah blah," he says. "I dug around a little and found out that a guy called Nigel Playfair, who became Sir Nigel Playfair, was basically responsible for coming up with the way to do it."

"He had a huge career as an actor and director... he was a big cheese. He ran the Lyric Theatre in Hammersmith and made a success of it - but so what? Where's the drama in that?"

Cue another of those lucky coincidences...

"I was in Fortnum & Masons one day looking for some tea when I spotted something called Sir Nigel's Marmalade, and I thought no, it couldn't possibly be... but yes, it was invented by the same guy! He had an obsession with marmalade! I thought, this is it - I'll write a play about a man obsessed with marmalade who incidentally invents radio drama. Once I had that, I had real life and it all took off."

The resulting comedy, which aired on Radio Four last year, was heard and loved by the New Vic Theatre's artistic director, Theresa Heskins, who then asked Ron if he'd adapt it for the stage - hence his arrival in

Staffordshire. So had taking it from a one to three-dimensional production been a big challenge?

"I initially thought it was a great chance to expand it, make it funnier, deepen the characters a bit and just have some fun with it. But what really helped was being shown the space. The theatre in the round is fantastic - it's like a three-ring circus. There are so many entrances that actors can make, so it made me write it in a very fluid way - as fluid as if writing for a movie or television. You can do so many more things without bringing people on centre left or centre right - I've been like a kid in a sandbox!"

Now that he's in the venue, Ron admits the 'sandbox' approach has led to some tinkering with the original script, but that's all part of the creative process.

"You always find there are things that you didn't see or hear when you were at the computer - opportunities, corners that you can't turn as sharply as you thought, and just making sure that the comedy remains."

But while cutting through any stuffiness and grandeur to find humour was always his primary focus, he's at pains to point out that the show isn't designed to mock the BBC - and not just because they paid for the original script.

"You can't work for the BBC for as long as I have without having a sense of humour, and I have a great affection for the BBC. There are certain things - the class thing, especially in this period, 1924 - that you can't ignore, so there are a few sharp edges in the play, but I always remind myself that it's a comedy."

"As a writer, I'm long since wanting to change the world or make people leave in a tizzy. There's so much the theatre can do, but it should be good-natured, and if there are some satirical points to be made or issues to be raised - because it's an extremely powerful medium - then you should do it with a light touch and let people find it in the comedy, character and development of the narrative. It should be a good night out - and I really think this will be."

**A Leap In The Dark shows at the New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme, from Friday 9 February to Saturday 2 March**





Image: Nikolai Foster - photography by Ellie Kurtz



# LOVE IN THE 80S

## Theatre maker Nikolai Foster talks about bringing a musical version of hit 1980s film *An Officer And A Gentleman* to the stage

Although it's been more than 40 years since *An Officer And A Gentleman* hit the big screen, the film has remained hugely popular - not least because of its famous finale, in which Richard Gere sweeps Debra Winger off her feet.

It is a classic moment in what has become a classic film - and this year fans can enjoy the story on stage, thanks to the UK tour of *An Officer And A Gentleman - The Musical*.

Created at Leicester Curve and helmed by the venue's artistic director, Nikolai Foster, the show, which premiered in 2018, aims to be as true to the movie as possible.

The film's original screenplay was written by Douglas Day Stewart, who based the story of the love affair between trainee navy pilot Zack Mayo and factory worker Paula Pokrifki on his own experiences training as a naval officer. And Nikolai was keen to ensure Douglas' gritty story remained at the heart of the musical.

"I really love the film," says Nikolai. "It's the quiet simplicity of it, the complexity of the relationships, and the quite desolate world that it presents which is really beautiful. I think Douglas did an incredible job - along with the film's director, Hackford Taylor - of depicting that world with real integrity and heart and humility.

"With the musical, we wanted to make really good theatre that inspires people and moves people, but also it had to be realistic about the source material and not pull it so far away from where it started that it's unrecognisable to audiences. The whole point is people are coming for the nostalgia, the enjoyment and the love they felt towards that film and those characters when they first saw it, so you don't want to disappoint them."

To develop the show as a musical, the team turned to much-loved songs from the 1980s, including Bon Jovi's *Blaze Of Glory* and *Livin' On A Prayer*, Blondie's *Heart Of Glass*, Madonna's *Material Girl* and Cyndi Lauper's *Girls Just Want To Have Fun*, along with the theme tune to the film, *Up Where We Belong*. The choice of song was very important to the ethos of the musical, says Nikolai.

"The only way I could see it working was if you take the original film script and you use songs of the period - the type of music that

those characters would have been listening to at pivotal moments of their lives, whether it was funerals or weddings or birthday parties.

"So it's not using those songs in the traditional musical theatre way, of songs carrying the story forward. That's not going to work with a load of random pop songs. It was about choosing songs which would reflect the poetry and the souls and the inner lives of those characters and hopefully give them an expression."

Nikolai worked closely with Douglas Day Stewart on the musical, and despite it being set in 1980s' America, they saw that the story resounded with British audiences of today.

"It's about working-class lives and working-class culture. When my family first came to this country, we were welcomed into working-class communities in the north of England. So my stepfather worked in a textile mill as an engineer and my mum worked in a shop. These weren't careers that would necessarily take you anywhere, they were very much nine-to-five standard jobs, and I could see the similarity in the lives Douglas had portrayed.

"I'm very moved and inspired by the beauty and the courage of the working-class experience, and I think that is what I could see in Douglas' writing. It's very hard-hitting, it's very true to the complexity of real life, and it's done with real heart and grace."

Plans for a second UK tour had to be delayed because of Covid-19.

"Had it not been for the pandemic, we would have brought the show back sooner. It only did 16 weeks in the UK, and we could have carried on, as theatres were crying out for it - those that didn't get it and those that did get it, it sold very well, so they were immediately asking to get it back."

The delay has also given the team time to make a few small changes to the show.

"We've worked on the design for this new version, and the joy of doing a second version is that you can re-write some things; you can have another go at it. We've put a new song in for Paula's mum in Act Two and a few other bits of tinkering, but there are no massive re-writes - what's the point when it works and it's good?"

Nikolai is looking forward to the show being back on tour.

"I'm very excited about it - it's been something I'm very proud of. I think there is something for audiences about your own life being reflected on stage. Working-class culture is a massive part of who we are in this country, but it's often derided or mocked or the source of comedy. Seeing a part of your experience, albeit removed and on another continent but still similar, is important to people.

"There's a nostalgia to the show, and you can experience the piece on different levels. You can see the politics of '80s Reaganism and the destruction as it was here with Thatcher and the coal mines and industry and how that marginalised those communities. You can see how women in society were ostracised through misogyny and sexism. You can take some of those themes from it if you like, or you can just have a really good night out, listening to some great songs, following a great love story and enjoying the romance."

Whatever levels people choose to see in the musical, Nikolai believes the show will lift their spirits.

"I hope they will feel really inspired and a little bit lighter. We all walk around with heavy hearts at the moment, with so much going on in the world and our own personal stuff. I hope they'll just be taken away from that and genuinely feel uplifted and inspired by having been transported to another place and time for a couple of hours.

"What people love about this story is the optimism, and of course the iconography of the piece. I mean, that ending - it's just iconic. Who doesn't want Richard Gere to come in and sweep you off your feet and take you off from your life? I mean, if he walked in now the way he looked in the '80s, I'd be 'Pick me up, Richard, I'm out the door with you!'"

.....

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## Halle Orchestra: Romeo And Juliet

Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 23 February

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

This latest Victoria Hall appearance sees Maxime Pascale (pictured) picking up the

baton to conduct the orchestra in a concert featuring excerpts from Prokofiev's *Romeo And Juliet*, Brahms' *Tragic Overture* and Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No3*. The latter is performed by pianist Tom Borrow, who is here making his Stoke-on-Trent debut.

## Strasbourg Philharmonic Orchestra

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Thurs 15 February

The Strasbourg Philharmonic transform Symphony Hall into a land of fairytale and legend with their programme for this mid-month concert.

Highlights include Franck's symphonic poem, *The Accursed Huntsman* - in which the title character gets his comeuppance for skipping church to go hunting and is condemned to be pursued by devils - and Ravel's *Mother Goose* suite - featuring some of the composer's most exquisite music in scenes of *Sleeping Beauty*, *Tom Thumb* and *The Fairy Garden*.

Marko Letonja is the conductor for a concert that also sees celebrated pianist Nikolai Lugansky (pictured) performing Rachmaninov's *Second Concerto*, the work that propelled the composer to stardom and which remains one of his most popular pieces.



## Armonico Consort: The Forgotten Scarlatti Tour

Birmingham Town Hall, Mon 12 February

Founded by organist & conductor Christopher Monks in 2001, Armonico are one of the largest organisations of their kind in the UK. Using authentic period instruments, the baroque consort regularly perform with some of the best solo musicians in the world.

This latest concert sees them presenting a programme of Francesco Scarlatti's rarely performed masterpieces in exclusive brand-new editions by Dr Geoffrey Webber. The works are complemented by Bach and Vivaldi violin concertos performed by international violinist Rachel Podger.



## Paul Lewis Piano Recital

Stoke Repertory Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Thurs 29 February

Widely considered to be one of the finest interpreters of Franz Schubert's music, Paul Lewis here presents three works by the short-lived but

prolific composer: *Sonata for Piano No4* in A minor; *Sonata for Piano No9* in B major; and *Sonata for Piano No18* in G major.

"I love the vulnerability of Schubert," Paul recently explained to *Interlude*. "I love the fragility. I love the lack of resolution. In a way, it's the most real and human music. He is what he is, with all his worries, vulnerabilities and neuroses, and that comes through in his music... That's why I love it so much."



## A Viennese Strauss Gala

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Thurs 8 February; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Wed 21 February

The European Baroque Ensemble join forces with four soloists to recreate the romance of a bygone age of glamorous soirees, glittering ballrooms, jaunty polkas and wondrous waltzes... Featured works include *Die Fledermaus*, *Gypsy Baron*, *The Merry Widow*, *Blue Danube Waltz*, and a rousing finale of the *Radetsky March*.

## Ex Cathedra: Baroque Passion

Birmingham Town Hall, Sun 11 February

Long enjoying an international reputation as one of the UK's leading choral and early music ensembles, Town Hall associate artists Ex Cathedra here present a concert of 'heart-rending music that tells of sacrifice and healing'.

"Birmingham, perhaps surprisingly, has a proud and distinguished history in the field of Baroque music," says Ex Cathedra founder & conductor Jeffrey Skidmore, "and we here continue our exploration of Birmingham Baroque. [The concert] includes pieces from the full 150 years which define the period, from Monteverdi through Purcell, Charpentier and Carissimi to the great Johann Sebastian Bach."

# DOCTORS IN THE HOUSE





## Husband & wife Dr Michael Mosley and Dr Clare Bailey are taking to the road with a new live theatre show in which they aim to help us Eat (Well), Sleep (Better) Live (Longer!). Here, the couple talk about what audiences can expect from the show. And with this month's Valentine's Day in mind, they also tell us a bit about how they met - and Michael's romantic proposal!

### **Clare, how do you view the prospect of performing live for the first time in Britain with Eat (Well), Sleep (Better), Live (Longer!)?**

**Clare:** In some ways it's quite daunting, as I'm not experienced doing live shows, where anything can happen, but I'm also really looking forward to it. I think the audiences will be very warm, and I think it will be fun.

**Michael:** I first met Clare at medical school 43 years ago, and we've been married for 36 years, so I'm obviously biased, but Clare's written a lot of wonderful recipe books that people love; she is one of the UK's best-selling cookery writers, but I suspect most people don't know that her books have sold in the millions. She hasn't done live shows in the UK before, so this is a rare opportunity to meet Clare and have a chat. We did a few shows in Australia in 2013, and they were very popular - particularly the cooking demos. People bought lots of books to be signed, and they clearly loved chatting to Clare after the shows. They wanted to tell her about how much they love her recipes.

### **Will you be cooking some of your recipes on stage, Clare?**

**Clare:** Yes, I'm really looking forward to demonstrating a couple of easy, tasty and healthy recipes. The other thing I would love, for those who are not yet fermenting foods, is to show how tasty and affordable it is to do! It's basic kimchi or sauerkraut. It's easy and becomes almost addictive. You slash and chop it all together with a bit of salt, give it a massage, put it in a bowl, stuff it in a jar with a few spices and seal it. Hey presto - sauerkraut! It does need gas releasing every day for about a week, as the microbes leap into action. We will also share some of the health benefits you get from fermented food.

**Michael:** The idea is that Clare will be doing the demos, and I will be chatting through some of the science and interrupting. We will basically be doing it as a kind of double act. We will be like a medical version of The Hairys Bikers...

### **What do you enjoy about the live experience?**

**Michael:** I love the audience interaction because when you're doing a podcast, or

you're doing a TV show, you don't get any live response. Plenty of people stop me in the street to chat about my books, TV programmes or podcasts, but normally long after the event. I like telling stories. I also love the fact that you get to meet the audience. We have a Q&A section in the show, when you hear from the audience and get their reaction to the stories you tell. And afterwards, we always hang around for an hour or so to take questions and do selfies. A lot of people come along because they want to share their stories. A lot of people have questions, but many of them just want to say "Look, you changed my life in this way..." And that's lovely and very heartwarming.

### **You're running parenting courses, Clare. Is parenting going to be part of Eat (Well), Sleep (Better), Live (Longer!) as well?**

**Clare:** We would like to incorporate it, because if you get children early, you can set their appetites and bring them up with a much healthier diet. Michael grew up being allowed to drink fizzy drinks and eat sweets, and for him it's been a bit of a struggle at times. Whereas if you can try and set up good things like meals together as a family, you tend to eat better.

### **What else will you be discussing during Eat (Well), Sleep (Better), Live (Longer!)?**

**Michael:** I'm going to be doing quite a big section on sleep. I've got a book on sleep coming out - 4 Weeks To Better Sleep - and I've just made a three-part TV series on sleep. It's an obsession of mine. There is a big audience out there who are curious about sleep, what goes on during sleep, and how you can improve it. You really can make big changes and drastically improve your health... There are four pillars to health. One of them is losing weight and then maintaining it, which is the area we're best known for. The second is obviously eating well, the third is sleeping well, and the fourth is being active. So we're going to touch on the different ways you can do these things.

### **And you will also be addressing the subject of ageing...**

**Michael:** Yes. I've just made a series called Secrets Of The Superagers, and I'll be showing some exclusive clips from that. In

that series, I went around the world looking at people who are in their 70s, 80s, 90s. It's the science of ageing. What is the latest science of ageing? If you want to hold back the clock, what should you do? How good is the science, where is it? It will be practical tips on staying young.

### **Clare, do you remember when you and Michael first met at medical school?**

**Clare:** I have to say, my first memory of Michael was of him baring his torso in the anatomy lab. They used him to draw where the liver is and where the heart is, and where the other organs are. I wouldn't say it was love at first sight! We didn't get together for a while after that. It wasn't the most romantic of settings!

**Michael:** We had a mutual group of friends. One of the things we did at medical school were very silly live comedy shows. I'd really got interested in writing and performing in revues when I was at Oxford University - I was a contemporary of Rowan Atkinson. And so I introduced some of those sketches at medical school. We used to sing some appalling songs, like 'Save All Your Kidneys For Me', and entertain our fellow medical students. And that's where Clare and I got together, I suppose, because we have a mutual interest in being ludicrous.

### **Tell us about how Michael proposed to you, Clare?**

**Clare:** I was in the jungle in deepest, darkest Peru. I was doing my elective as a student with Save The Children's Fund, giving vaccinations in the jungle. Michael managed to trace me. We'd gone way upriver, and there was no access to the town that we were in. Michael managed to find somebody to paddle him up the Amazon in a canoe. He asked, "Where are the gringo doctors?" When he arrived, it was a total surprise!

.....

**Michael and Clare take Eat (Well), Sleep (Better), Live (Longer!) to Stafford Gatehouse Theatre on Monday 12 February and Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, on Wednesday 14 February**



# ENTERTAINMENT

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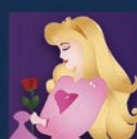
23 February, 8pm  
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3 February, 2pm  
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Bunch**  
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**David Eagle -  
Flying Solo**  
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13 - 17 February, 7pm,  
6.30pm Wed & 2pm  
Thurs & Sat matinee  
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Sleeping Beauty**  
Tickets: £13.50-£14.50



2 March, 8pm  
**Mark Watson**  
Tickets: £20



23 February, 7.30pm  
**Superstars of  
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Tickets: From £5



6 - 9 March, 7.30pm,  
2.30pm Sat matinee  
**Cabaret Theatre  
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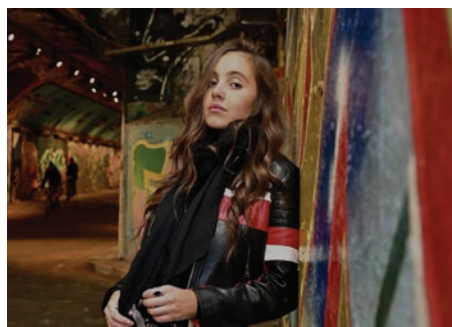


Live music from across the region...

## Isabella Coulstock

Fulford Village Hall, Stoke-on-Trent,  
Sun 11 February

The future certainly looks bright for Isabella Coulstock, a young singer-songwriter who's currently making a big name for herself in the music industry. From being the youngest artist to play a live Under The Apple Tree session for Bob Harris - at the tender age of 13 - the talented acoustic guitar player and pianist has gone on to perform at some of the country's most iconic music venues. She's also opened for The Who, toured with Jools Holland, supported Nell Bryden and played numerous high-profile festivals, including Black Deer and Cornbury. Support on the night comes from Midlands-based singer-songwriter Wes Finch.



## Charlie Dore

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Fri 9 February

Former Shrewsbury Folk Festival performer Charlie Dore makes a welcome return to the town as part of her latest tour.

Charlie is perhaps best known as a songwriter, an artform at which she undeniably excels; her songs have been covered by, among others, George Harrison, Tina Turner, Lisa Stansfield, Sheena Easton, Celine Dion, UB40, Status Quo, Paul Carrack and Jimmy Nail.

She stops off at Theatre Severn in the company of her long-time collaborator (and Steeleye Span lead guitarist) Julian Littman.



## Róisín Murphy

The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton,  
Sat 10 February

One-time frontwoman of electronic music duo Moloko, Róisín Murphy officially stepped out on her own 20 years ago and has since released a series of acclaimed solo albums. Possessing a haunting but beautiful voice and performing songs which manage to be both funk-up and chilled-out, she sings across genres and seamlessly combines influences as diverse as disco and hot jazz.

The 50-year-old singer found herself sailing

in choppy waters last summer when she took to Facebook to criticise the use of puberty blockers by transgender children. An online apology - and accompanying declaration that she would, in future, focus her energies solely on music - seemed to steady the ship. Indeed, fears that she might become a new victim of cancel culture proved unfounded when her sixth solo album, *Hit Parade*, was released just days after the online controversy and quickly became her highest-charting record... Well-established electronic music group Crazy P also feature on the Civic bill.

## Phil Bates

The Robin, Bilston, Thurs 29 February

Phil Bates has played for a lot of bands since joining his first - Wolverhampton heavy rockers JUG - way back in 1970. Also featuring on the Tamworth-born guitarist's hugely impressive CV are stints in Enigma, Trickster, Quill, Atlantic, Don't Panic, The Eleanor Rigby Experience, The Bev Bevan Band, ELO Part II and The Orchestra... His Bilston stop-off sees him 'celebrating the timeless music of ELO'.

## Ferocious Dog

Katie Fitzgeralds, Stourbridge,  
Wed 28 February

A favourite on the festival scene, Ferocious Dog have been entertaining Celtic folk and punk fans since their inception in 1988, but didn't release their debut album until 2013. "My politics are my politics," explains lead Ken Bonsall. "We'll sing those songs about what we believe, but whatever side of the political divide you're from, we want you to

feel welcome at an FD show. We always say, you're never alone at one of our gigs - and that is the most important thing to us."

## Rhiannon Giddens

Birmingham Town Hall, Thurs 22 February

Boasting an opera-trained voice which confidently embraces the challenges of numerous genres, Rhiannon Giddens' focus on the past is providing a

success-filled present and promising an even more exciting future. The North Carolina-born musician has made it her career-long mission to cast light on the work of artists whose contribution to American musical history has been either unceremoniously erased or simply lost in the dark corners of history... She plays Birmingham the day after her 47th birthday.





# BANGING ON

**Actor & comedian Miles Jupp talks about how a major life event has helped him put things into perspective**





**A lot has happened to Miles Jupp since his last tour finished at the London Palladium in 2017... As well as acting in series including *The Full Monty*, *Trigger Point* and *The Durrells*, in comedy mode he's appeared on shows such as Frankie Boyle's *New World Order* and *Have I Got News For You*. Most notably, though, he suffered a brain seizure in August 2021 and had major neurosurgery. The seizure is the subject of his new touring show, *On I Bang*, which focuses on the funnier side of the experience. What's On caught up with him to find out more...**

**Your major life event in 2021 forms the basis of your new show, *On I Bang*. Without any spoilers, what happened?**

Well, the big spoiler is... I survived. I had a brain seizure, which was actually quite lucky. It meant I was taken to hospital, where they ran tests. So having the seizure was an element of fortune because it's like a big helpful sign that something is up. And that something was a brain tumour the size of a cherry tomato, which had to be removed.

**What were you doing when it happened?**

I was filming the ITV series *Trigger Point*. I'd just finished my scene. Ludicrously, my character, a radio host, is speaking and then a bomb goes off roughly when it felt like a bomb had gone off in my own head. Luckily I was in a work environment, which meant there was a medic on the set, so they wrestled me into the appropriate position. It was only a day's work, but taking that job might have saved my life.

**Was it completely unexpected?**

The tumour was there, but I was totally unaware of it. They can't date it. It's not like trees or fossils. The swelling of the tumour causes the pressure. And it's the pressure that eventually causes a seizure. It could have happened at any time, but until about five minutes before, there was nothing. I just started feeling very dizzy very quickly, and there was some flashing of lights. I remember falling forward and then some people holding me down, and then it's just like a series of moments of consciousness. Next time, I was in an ambulance, and then I was in A&E at West Middlesex Hospital.

**Has it changed your outlook on life?**

It's very good for putting things in perspective. Not that I don't moan about all the pathetic things other people moan about as well, but after a while, you can go "Oh, I've got the freedom to moan about it!" You just think about things in a different way.

**It must have been very worrying for your family...**

I could be lying in a hospital bed plugged into stuff and actually feeling fine, whereas from their point of view it's "Oh no, he's lying in a hospital bed with lots of stuff plugged into him!" And they got the call from the programme's line producer to say I was on my way to hospital. So that's quite a shocking thing to get when you're on the bus! The luxury for me was that you go, "Well, all I can do is trust these people." In a way it's sort of freeing. It's all the unknowns that are stressful. Even dealing with being lucky is stressful, because you think, why? Why me?

**You had surgery after three weeks to remove the tumour...**

It was accessible but not totally straightforward. I found being in hospital very uplifting, actually - partly because you're just surrounded by people who are very caring. There must have been about five other people on that ward all in the same boat. So you don't feel alone in that sense. It is scary, and I've not experienced a thing like that. I can't pretend that it isn't.

**So *On I Bang* is all about this event, before, during and after?**

This is the show. It's a story told in a stand-up style. I promise you there are lots of jokes. It's not me moaning about unsatisfactory customer experience or something I've noticed about luggage. Hopefully it's a pure piece of storytelling, with a beginning, a middle and an end. I got a letter from a guy who saw a work-in-progress gig, and he's been through the same thing. He was saying people around him were worried, but it was very cathartic for him.

**You started out as a stand-up, but many people will know you as an actor. You've done so much, from *Balamory* and *Harry Potter* to *Rev* and *The Thick Of It*...**

I think filming my part in *Harry Potter* And

*The Order Of The Phoenix* took 20 minutes! My costume fitting took longer! I'm a sucker for a straight offer without an audition. There's a difference between working hard and working a lot. And I think if you're creating the work yourself, that counts as working hard. If you're just accepting the work that you're given, that's not the same. Working on my own has its pleasures in terms of control and being able to fix something quickly or make adjustments, but I really like the bit when you're making something in a team. The rehearsals are the best bits.

**With acting, you don't know what's next...**

I got a nice part in a thing in Antwerp, and then a week later I did one audition for Disney+'s *The Full Monty* on a Friday, got the part on the Tuesday, the next Friday had a costume fitting, then started filming on the following Monday for six months.

**You clearly enjoy performing, but stand-up seems to be your first love.**

I like walking out onto a stage somewhere. I think the best view of a theatre is nearly always from the stage. I find there's a sort of romance about touring. I remember with my show *Fibber In The Heat* appearing in Swindon on a Monday night. I turned up and there were 170 people there. I don't know Swindon; I didn't know anyone in Swindon. And I remember thinking "It's great that 170 people have come here to watch this thing." I just love touring for that. So I really look forward to walking on stage again and telling a story. And hopefully, you know, we'll have fun.

.....

**Miles Jupp takes his *On I Bang* tour to The Roses, Tewkesbury, on Thursday 1 February, and then to Birmingham Town Hall on Thursday 8 February**

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## Comedy previews from across the region...

## Viggo Venn

The Old Rep, Birmingham, Sat 24 February;  
Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Wed 26 June

Viggo Venn hit the big time last summer when he became the 2023 winner of ITV's Britain's Got Talent, since which time he's been basking in the glory of finally achieving his long-desired transformation from Norwegian clown to British comedian. The BGT judges were certainly effusive in their praise for the talented 34-year-old, with Bruno Toniolo hailing him one of the most memorable characters since Mr Bean and Simon Cowell declaring his act to be like nothing he'd ever seen before. Viggo visits the Old Rep this month as part of his first-ever national tour.



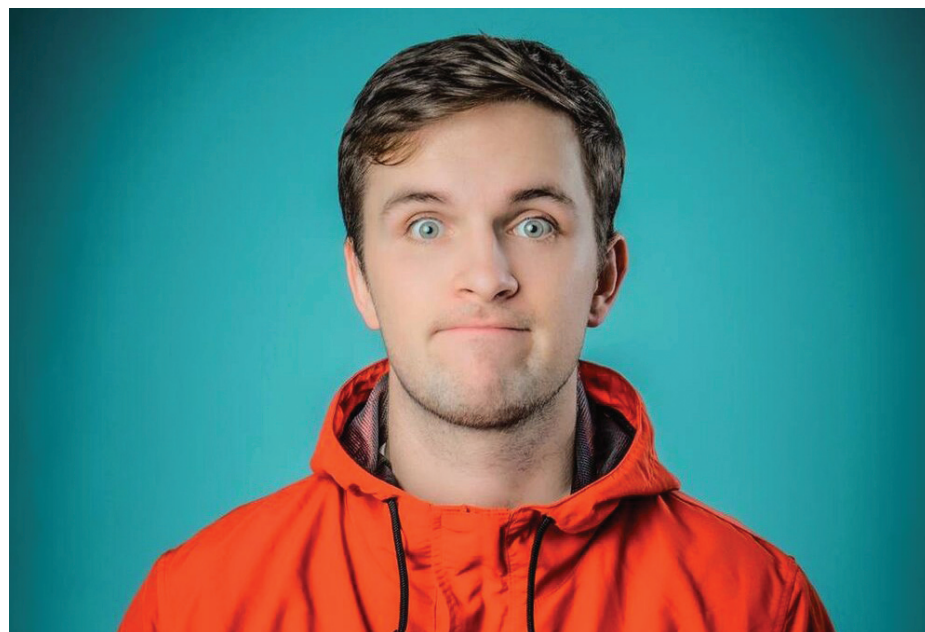
## Tim Key

Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham,  
Wed 21 February

Tim Key's tour comes in support of his recently published anthology of poetry. Titled Chapters, it's a thin volume featuring worthy words on such subjects as canoodling with a rose and men getting stuck in webs!

Away from the challenges of writing verse, Tim is a regular Edinburgh Fringe performer and a familiar television face; he's probably best known for playing Alan Partridge's sidekick, Simon, in Mid Morning Matters, This Time and the film Alpha Papa. He also starred in the 2022 BBC Two comedy series The Witchfinder.

Tim's Birmingham stop-off this month will see him reading some of his poems, signing copies of the anthology and enjoying a chat with a guest interviewer.



## Vittorio Angelone

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sun 11  
February; The Glee Club, Birmingham,  
Tues 19 March

Providing tour support at various points for well-established comedians including Russell Howard, Jason Manford, Adam Rowe, and Dan Nightingale, Italian-Irish funnyman

Vittorio Angelone here steps out on his own and 'looks inward to find out who exactly he thinks he is'.

Kickstarting his comedy career back in 2018 and enjoying a sold-out debut run at Edinburgh in 2022, Vittorio boasts a huge online following and is widely considered to be one of the UK's fastest-rising comedy stars.



## Ross Noble

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Thurs 1 - Fri 2  
February; Symphony Hall, Birmingham,  
Sat 24 February

Geordie laughter merchant Ross Noble may not have hit the heights once expected of him, but he's a hugely talented comedian nonetheless. Peddling a nice line in surreal and quirky stream-of-consciousness humour, he's heading for the Midlands this month with his 21st touring show, Jibber Jabber Jamboree. Examples of his comedy include "How come Miss Universe is only won by people from Earth?" and "I had to take the batteries out of the carbon monoxide detector. It was beeping all night."

## Geoff Norcott

Artrix, Bromsgrove, Fri 16 February; The  
Roses, Tewkesbury, Thurs 29 February;  
Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Fri 15 March;  
Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Fri 22 March; Theatre  
Severn, Shrewsbury, Sat 23 March; Palace  
Theatre, Redditch, Sat 13 April

One of the sharpest tools in the comedy shed, Geoff Norcott is visiting the Midlands this month with Basic Bloke, 'a kindly and funny stock-take of both himself and his fellow man'.

Geoff will be taking a deep-dive into the business of being a fella, to try and find out what makes them tick. After all, there's got to be more to being a man than watching football, enjoying sheds, reading sporting autobiographies, wearing socks at all times and strategically burying your feelings whenever necessary. Hasn't there?...





THE OLD JOINT STOCK PRESENTS



# BOTTOMS UP

BURLESQUE & CABARET

SAT 26TH APRIL - 7:30PM - £25.00

NEW ACTS MONTHLY



Comedy previews from across the region...

## Adam Rowe

Dudley Town Hall, Fri 9 February; Albany Theatre, Coventry, Thurs 16 May

Adam Rowe well remembers the day he died in Stockport (only on stage, of course).

"It was the day I got my A-Level results and realised I wasn't going to university for another year," recalls the Liverpool-born comedian. "I decided to rant about my day and not do my material. I died on my arse and got gonged off. Awful."

Fortunately for Adam, most of his gigs bear no resemblance to that one. Blending an affable persona with a quick wit and clever material, he's now well established on the UK comedy circuit and is definitely worth a look.

## Frankie Boyle

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Tues 6 February; Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Mon 26 February; Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Tues 27 February; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Fri 29 March; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Mon 8 - Tues 9 April

Scottish funnyman Frankie has managed to make it big on the telly despite his reputation for peddling material which can often be spectacularly tasteless and incredibly insulting.

He managed to cause uproar in the build-up to London 2012, for example, by claiming that Olympic star Rebecca Adlington reminded him of "someone who's looking at themselves in the back of a spoon". He's also had a pop at, among other victims, Katie Price's disabled son Harvey, and leaves no stone unturned in his efforts to amuse, disgust and shock.

## Andy Parsons

Lichfield Garrick, Thurs 29 February; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Thurs 21 March; Palace Theatre, Redditch, Wed 1 May; Evesham Town Hall, Thurs 23 May; The Regal, Tenbury Wells, Thurs 2 May

With complimentary reviews including such observations as "What he lacks in hair, he more than makes up for in originality," Andy

Parsons is a sharp and topical comedian who's well known from TV shows *Mock The Week* and *Live At The Apollo*.

Andy's big bag of jokes includes: "If you've been affected by any of the issues raised in tonight's episode of *EastEnders*, they must have been acting better than they usually do."



## Bill Bailey

Resorts World Arena, Birmingham, Tues 13 February

Bill Bailey presents an act that nicely mixes displays of his musical virtuosity with straight-down-the-line standup.

He visits Birmingham this month with *Thoughtifier*, a show in which he promises to take his audience on a jaunt through the 'error-strewn, distracted, crumb-festooned, sometimes magnificent history of human thought'.



## Dom Joly

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Wed 21 February; The Old Rep, Birmingham, Thurs 22 February; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Wed 13 March; Swan Theatre, Worcester, Sat 16 March; Lichfield Garrick, Tues 26 March

From a launchpad provided by *Trigger Happy TV*, Dom Joly has led an intriguing and extraordinary life. Some of his more memorable experiences include world drinking, skiing down volcanoes, holidaying in Chernobyl, and trying to fly across the Grand Canyon strapped to an eight-foot rocket...

...Oh, and he's also eaten from the pants of Dr Gillian McKeith (remember her?) while imprisoned in the Australian jungle during a series of *I'm A Celebrity*, *Get Me Out Of Here!*... Some guys have all the luck.

## Harriet Dyer

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Sat 10 February

Fascinating facts about Harriet Dyer include the revelation that she once asked her flatmate to use a mallet to try to break her arm for her - on account of the fact that she didn't fancy going into work that day...

At the time, Harriet thought such behaviour was simply representative of an eccentric personality. It was only years later that she was diagnosed as bipolar, with anxiety and depression thrown in for good measure...

Away from the issue of her mental health, Harriet names her favourite heckle as the sound generated by an electric wheelchair as its unhappy owner headed for the exit after deciding she'd had enough of the comedian's show.









# GANGSTER'S MOLL

**A critically acclaimed musical telling the story of notorious gangster duo Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow is heading to the Midlands next month. Former Coronation Street star Catherine Tyldesley, who plays Clyde's sister-in-law, Blanche, chats to What's On about the show...**

Catherine Tyldesley may be best known to most readers as Eva Price in Coronation Street, but the actress is also an accomplished singer and will be taking to the stage this spring in the UK tour of critically acclaimed musical Bonnie & Clyde.

Catherine plays Blanche Barrow, whose husband Buck is brother to Clyde. Together with Clyde's girlfriend, Bonnie, the foursome cause merry hell as they blast their way across Depression-era America.

Based on a true story, the show - with music by Frank Wildhorn, lyrics by Don Black and book by Ivan Menchell - premiered in the US in 2009 and was a huge hit on Broadway and in the West End. This spring sees its first UK tour, with EastEnders actor Danny Hatchard as Clyde, Katie Tonkinson as Bonnie and Sam Ferriday as Buck.

For Catherine, the chance to appear in the show proved to be irresistible.

"I've been approached about doing tours before for musical theatre, and for me to be away from home and the children for that amount of time, I'd have to really love it," she says. "The right thing just hadn't come along - and then Bonnie And Clyde came in.

"I wasn't familiar with the musical, and my husband Tom and I listened to my character's first song, and after the first verse Tom looked at me and said 'You have to do this show.' I looked at the script, I listened to the songs and I totally fell in love with it. I always thought 'When the right thing comes along, I'll know' - and I did."

Catherine likes the complexity of Blanche, who was the only survivor of the group of four who became known as the Barrow Gang.

"For me to explore the love story of Bonnie and Clyde and of Blanche and Buck in a world which was so dark, with so many horrendous adrenaline-spiking happenings throughout the show, is utterly gorgeous. I love Blanche. Hers is a great love story; she is willing to do anything for her man.

"She has a pure heart and actually wants a simple life. She would be more than happy to grow old with Buck - sat out on the porch, watching the grandchildren - and she tries really hard to get Buck to see that. She tries with Bonnie and Clyde as well.

"She is the show's moral compass, and I love the strength that gives to her. She wears the trousers in the relationship that she has with Buck, which I'm also a big fan of. Blanche is also very funny; she is the comic relief in the show."

While Bonnie, Clyde and Buck were all killed by police, Blanche went on to live into her 70s and wrote about her time with the Barrow Gang - a fact which gives Catherine plenty of source material to help with her portrayal.

"I've been reading her diaries. Obviously, there's creative leeway with the show, and there are differences between the real person and the character, but I would say that, on the whole, they've done an incredible job in being historically accurate. There are so many of her lines in the diaries that are similar to what she says in the show, so they have really honoured them as real people.

"Throughout the diaries, you see the love that she's got for Buck - it almost borders on an obsession. And the relationship between Bonnie and Clyde is also like an obsession - they can't be without each other. That's a really strong theme throughout the show, which is wonderful for an actress to delve into.

"If you want to go on a real emotional adrenaline high, this is the show for you. I think you would come out having been on a real journey with the highs and lows of the characters. And you'll learn a lot, and you'll surprise yourself in terms of judgement of the characters as well."

The tour includes visits to Birmingham and Wolverhampton, two cities Catherine has fond memories of from her time as a student at Birmingham School of Acting, where she graduated in 2005.

"I have so much love for Birmingham School of Acting - it's magical. The tuition was absolutely incredible, and it was really life-changing. I had a wonderful time in the city; the people are so friendly and welcoming. It was an awesome three years of my life.

"When I was at university, I worked at Superdrug in New Street in Birmingham, and I remember them saying Wolverhampton were a bit short at Christmas so did I want to

go there. So I did two or three months at Wolverhampton Superdrug.

"I saw shows at Birmingham Hippodrome as a student, but I've not been to the Grand Theatre, so I'm so excited to be going to those theatres. This tour is like a bucket list for me!"

Catherine has made a career out of stage, screen and singing performances, releasing studio album Rise in 2016. Now she is looking forward to a role where she can show her musical talent.

"I love singing and I've really missed it, so I'm chomping at the bit for this musical. Singing has always been a big part of my life, and I've always kept it bubbling away in the background. I'm very grateful for being so busy in television and film, but it's nice to have some singing to look forward to now."

Catherine also tried her hand at tripping the light fantastic in 2019, in the 17th series of Strictly Come Dancing and on its subsequent UK tour. Partnered with professional dancer Johannes Radebe, she says the competition really boosted her confidence.

"For me, the dance side of things I saw as my weak spot. I knew I could sing, I knew I could act, but I'd always avoided dance, so doing it for Strictly was very new to me. I've taken so much away from it - my confidence levels for dance are so much higher now. But if I could go back, I would try to worry less and enjoy the TV show more because when I got on tour it felt so much more chilled. You were doing the same dance every night, and I just rolled with it and in turn became a much better dancer.

"I'm still obsessed with the show, and I took Jojo (Johannes Radebe) away with me. He's one of my best friends, and I think he was the reason for me to do that show, to have him in my life. Dancing was something I felt so nervous about before, and my [newfound] confidence is thanks to Jojo, really."

**Bonnie & Clyde shows at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Tuesday 5 to Saturday 9 March and at Birmingham Hippodrome from Tuesday 3 to Saturday 7 September**



## Life Of Pi

Birmingham Hippodrome, Mon 12 - Sat 17 February; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 23 - Sat 27 April; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Tues 7 - Sat 11 May

Lolita Chakrabarti's innovative stage adaptation of Yann Martel's award-winning novel, *Life Of Pi*, was an immediate hit when it premiered at Sheffield's Crucible Theatre in 2019. A West End transfer followed in 2021, as did a handful of Olivier Awards - including for best new play.

The show tells the story of Pi, whose parents run a zoo in India but decide to sell up and emigrate to Canada. After a storm wrecks the ship on which they're travelling, Pi is cast adrift on a lifeboat, which he shares with some of the creatures from the zoo - most notably a

Bengal tiger named Richard Parker...

A menagerie of exotic creatures is at the heart of the show, all brought to life through the magic of puppetry.

"We're always improvising on stage, so it feels really live," reveals puppeteer Romina Hytten, who helps work the tiger. "That's part of making the animals feel as alive and as realistic as possible. We don't want it to be too choreographed or too set in stone. So there's room to play every night, and you get to feel that exciting buzz of not being quite sure what the tiger is going to do next."

## The Rocky Horror Show

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 6 - Sat 10 February

Hook up your fishnets, tighten your corsets and prepare to 'do The Time Warp again' - The Rocky Horror Show is returning to the Midlands! Richard O'Brien's cult classic tells the tale of the straight-laced Brad and the deliciously corruptible Janet, who arrive at the castle of the alien transvestite Frank N Furter and witness the birth of the monster, Rocky. Along the way, they take the audience through a selection of love-'em-or-loathe-'em musical numbers, including Sweet Transvestite, Damn It Janet and The Time Warp. Great fun's a guarantee - particularly if you get into the spirit of things and attend the show dressed in your very best stockings & suspenders (as many patrons do)!



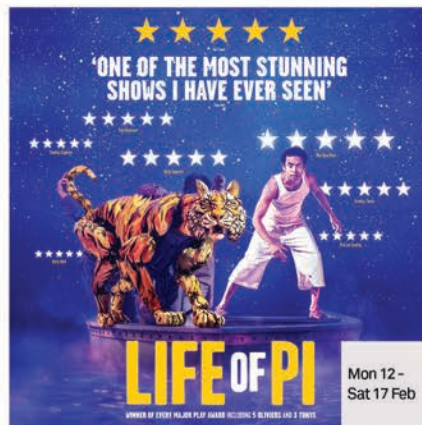
## Blood Brothers

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Tues 13 - Sat 17 February; Birmingham Hippodrome, Tues 30 April - Sat 4 May

Although it's effectively a class-driven 'scouse melodrama', to describe *Blood Brothers* as such is to greatly underestimate the emotional response it produces within its audience. The show features adult actors playing children, a narrator who wanders through the scenes with warnings of impending doom, a good helping of sharp social awareness to counteract the sticky sentimentality, and a raft of much-loved musical numbers, including *Bright New Day*, *Marilyn Monroe* and the emotionally charged *Tell Me It's Not True*. One-time X-Factor semi-finalist Niki Colwell Evans takes the iconic role of Mrs Johnstone.











## Jesus Christ Superstar

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Mon 19 - Sat 24 February; Birmingham Hippodrome, Mon 22 - Sat 27 April

Spreading the Gospel according to Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber, the phenomenal rock opera Jesus Christ Superstar makes a welcome return to the Midlands. And the show really does rock...

This gritty, reimagined production was originally staged by London's Regent's Park Open Air Theatre in 2016 and won the Olivier Award for best musical revival a few months later.

With hits like I Don't Know How To Love Him, Gethsemane, Hosanna, and of course the title song itself to recommend it, the show tells the story of the final few days in the life of Jesus, as his teaching and preaching, performing of miracles and ruffling of the establishment's feathers eventually sees him condemned to death...

## Karen

Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, Thurs 15 - Fri 16 February

Break-ups, breakdowns and bust-ups are very much the name of the game in Sarah Cameron-West's one-woman show, a clever work of theatre that's been described as the love child of Fleabag and The Office. Telling the tale of a woman whose former boyfriend starts dating her workplace nemesis - the Karen of the title - the show garnered plenty of praise when it debuted at last year's Edinburgh Fringe.

## A Leap In The Dark

New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Fri 9 February - Sat 2 March

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the UK's first-ever radio play - and to celebrate the occasion, the New Vic Theatre is presenting this stage premiere of a BBC Radio Four commission.

Described by its publicity as a hilarious comedy caper, the show tells the story of man-with-a-plan Cedric Maud, who firmly believes that a play made specially for the wireless could be just the thing to entertain listeners and put the newly formed BBC on the map.

But the venture is no walk in the park - as soon becomes apparent...

Eight actors take on a whole host of characters in this fast-paced homage to one of the most beloved artforms of the 20th century. Gwenda Hughes directs.

## Oh What A Lovely War

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Mon 5 - Wed 7 February; Lichfield Garrick, Tues 20 - Wed 21 February; Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton, Thurs 2 - Sat 4 May

Joan Littlewood's brilliant satire on the folly of war resonates just as profoundly in the 21st century as ever it did way back in the 1960s, when it was originally produced.

Blending performance and documentation from the First World War, the show is here revived for a 60th anniversary tour and features a host of songs from the era, including Long Way To Tipperary, Pack Up Your Troubles In Your Old Kit-Bag, Goodbye and Keep The Home Fires Burning.



## King Arthur

Lichfield Garrick, Fri 9 - Sat 10 February

The highly regarded Le Navet Bete previously had Midlands theatre-goers laughing their socks off with hit comedy Dracula: The Bloody Truth. Now they're back with what they promise will be 'a hilarious retelling of the Arthurian legends'.

The show finds King Arthur worrying about his reputation, concerned that if he doesn't do something soon to make a splash, his court of Camelot risks being known as nothing more than a rather dull period in British history. But when three hapless squires approach him about changing his legacy, a legend is born...



## Bhangra Nation

The Rep, Birmingham, Sat 17 February - Sat 16 March

Premiering at The Rep and set in the challenging world of American inter-college Bhangra competitions, Bhangra Nation tells the story of two students who love the dance form but want to take it in very different directions.

"It's a contemporary feelgood musical," explains the show's director, Stafford Arima. "We've had some great musicals that have had South Asian characters or stories, like Bend It Like Beckham and Bombay Dreams, but there is something unique about this piece. I have strong faith that, whether or not you're even a musical theatre fan, there's something here for everyone..."



# What will you see next?

DANCE CONSORTIUM presents

## SÃO PAULO DANCE COMPANY

UK PREMIERE TOUR



FRI 15 - SAT 16 MAR '24  
SÃO PAULO DANCE COMPANY

## I'M SORRY I HAVEN'T A CLUE



TUE 26 MAR '24  
I'M SORRY I HAVEN'T A CLUE



## BIZET CARMEN



## PUCCINI MADAMA BUTTERFLY

FRI 12 & SAT 13 APR '24  
ELLEN KENT OPERAS PRESENTS  
CARMEN & MADAMA BUTTERFLY



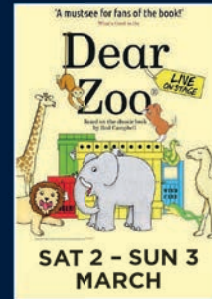
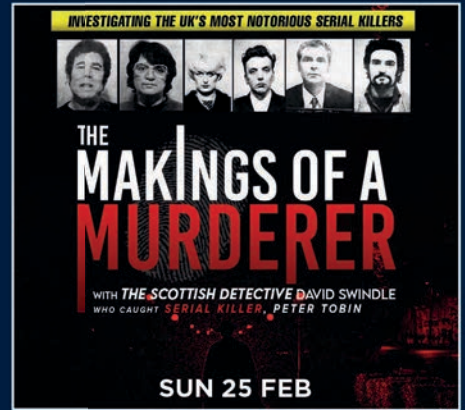
## LIFE OF PI

WINNER OF EVERY MAJOR PLAY AWARD INCLUDING 5 OLIVIER AND 3 TONY

TUE 23 - SAT 27 APR '24  
LIFE OF PI



# WHAT'S ON IN FEBRUARY



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# Theatre previews from around the region



## The Woman In Black

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Tues 6 - Sat 10 February; Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Tues 23 - Sat 27 April; Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Tues 30 April - Sat 4 May

Adapted by Stephen Mallatratt from the same-named Susan Hill novel, *The Woman In Black* is a classic ghost story first performed on stage in 1989 - since which time it has become one of the West End's most successful plays. Solicitor Arthur Kipp believes that his family has somehow been cursed by a mysterious woman in black. In an attempt to tell his story - and to exorcise the evil curse which he's convinced hangs over him - he hires a young actor to assist him in recounting his experiences...

## Spring Opera: Cinderella

Gas Street Central, Birmingham, Thurs 29 February - Sat 2 March

Royal Birmingham Conservatoire's Vocal & Operatic Studies Department here transforms an old gasworks into a fairytale world to present Jules Massenet's four-act *Cendrillon*, an opera based on Charles Perrault's 1698 version of the Cinderella fairytale. This family-friendly production is sung in French with English surtitles.

## Ben And Imo

Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, Wed 21 February - Sat 6 April

Legendary composer Benjamin Britten's struggle to write an opera in time for the 1953 coronation of Queen Elizabeth II provides the subject matter for *Ben And Imo*. Receiving its premiere in Stratford this month, the play focuses on the timely arrival in Britten's life of the inspirational Imogen Holst, the daughter of composer Gustav and an accomplished musician in her own right... Originally written by Mark Ravenhill for radio, the new production is directed by Erica Whyman.

## 2:22 - A Ghost Story

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 20 - Sat 24 February

Husband & wife Jenny and Sam are divided. Jenny believes their new home is haunted; Sam isn't having any of it. Something certainly feels strange and frightening. Determined to find out the truth once and for all, they decide to stay up until 2:22 - at which time, all will be revealed. Or not... "We're beyond excited to be taking 2:22 - A Ghost Story around the UK," says Danny

Robins, the creator of popular BBC podcast *The Battersea Poltergeist* and the writer of this smash-hit supernatural thriller. "It's a play that will make you laugh, scream, cry, think, and jump out of your seat - a proper spooky night out!" Premiering in the West End back in 2021, the show has not only become a major hit but also provided singers Lily Allen and, more recently, Cheryl with an opportunity to tread the boards. This touring production features George Rainsford as Sam and Fiona Wade as Jenny. Vera Chok and *The Wanted*'s Jay McGuinness also star.



## As SHE Likes It

Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Fri 16 February; Swan Theatre, Worcester, Wed 28 February; Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Sat 16 March

Eighty or so years before the emergence of the #MeToo movement, dancer and sometime movie extra Patricia Douglas made front-page news when she claimed to have been raped at a party by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer salesman David Ross.



The studio subsequently coordinated a smear campaign against her in order to minimise the damage caused to its reputation by the scandal.

Buried in the annals of history for the rest of the 20th century, Patricia's story was finally retold in the noughties, courtesy of a documentary titled *Girl 27*. Now, this new play - a fusion of live theatre and filmed footage - turns the spotlight on her traumatic experience once again, in the process posing the question: to what extent is the Hollywood of today different from the Hollywood of Patricia's day?

The show's UK tour is supported by Solace, a London organisation supporting women and children 'to build safe and strong lives'.

## The Circle

Malvern Theatres, Tues 13 - Sat 17 February

Somerset Maugham's comedy of manners may be 103 years old but it still has plenty to say to a modern-day audience.

This latest revival of the play stars Jane Asher as Lady Kitty, a society beauty who notoriously abandoned stuffy husband Clive to elope with the handsome Lord Porteous. Thirty years later, with the couple's once-passionate love for one another having descended into non-stop squabbling, history looks set to repeat itself when Arnold - the son of Lady Kitty and Clive - finds himself faced with the prospect of seeing his wife Elizabeth elope with the dashing Teddie Luton...

Clive Francis and Nicholas Le Prevost co-star.





# HALF TERM FUN



**We're Going On A Bear Hunt**  
Sat 10 – Tue 13 Feb  
Catchy songs, adventures and  
a few surprises along the way.



**Peppa Pig's  
Cinema Party**  
Wed 14 – Sun 18 Feb



**My First Concert**  
Thu 15 Feb 1pm



**Luna Loves Library  
Day: The Musical**  
Sun 18 Feb 11am



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Musical Picnic – Sun 11 Feb

Family Sunday – Sun 11 Feb

Mini Creatives – Tue 13 Feb

Workshop Wednesday – Wed 14 Feb

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## Theatre for younger audiences



### We're Going On A Bear Hunt

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry,  
Sat 10 - Tues 13 February

Suitable for children aged three-plus, this 'vivid and noisy' adaptation of Michael Rosen & Helen Oxenbury's popular picture book follows the exciting adventures of a family as they head out on an intrepid quest to find a bear...

Catchy songs and interactive scenes are combined with no shortage of swishy swashy grass and oozy, squelchy mud in a show that seems certain to keep its young audience well and truly entertained.

### Dear Zoo

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Thurs 1 - Sun 4 February; Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Sat 2 - Sun 3 March; Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Thurs 14 - Fri 15 March; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Fri 29 - Sat 30 March; Birmingham Hippodrome, Thurs 11 - Tues 16 April; Lichfield Garrick, Sat 20 - Sun 21 April

First published in 1982, Rod Campbell's lift-the-flap book, *Dear Zoo*, has delighted generations of children and accumulated millions of sales worldwide. This hugely popular stage version of the story features child-friendly puppets, music and lots of audience participation.



### Fireman Sam

Telford Theatre, Shropshire, Wed 14 February; Birmingham Town Hall, Sat 17 February; Brierley Hill Civic, Tues 26 March; Albany Theatre, Coventry, Thurs 4 April; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Thurs 25 July; William Aston Hall, Wrexham, Sat 3 August; Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Sat 24 August

Now an impressive 37 years into his firefighting career, Fireman Sam is still putting out blazes in Pontypandy and lighting up children's eyes with delight.

In this brand-new adventure, perpetual troublemaker Norman Price follows two famous animal explorers into the mountains and ends up stranded in a cave. As ever, it falls to Fireman Sam to come to the rescue and save the day...



### The Gruffalo's Child

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry,  
Fri 16 - Sun 18 February

Tall Stories' delightful adaptation of the much-loved Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler book finds the Gruffalo and his youngster caught up in an exciting adventure...

Despite her dad's warning to stay away from the deep, dark wood, the Gruffalo's Child decides it's time to go and explore, unworried by the legend of The Big Bad Mouse...



### The Little Prince

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre,  
Tues 13 - Sat 17 February

Kids' theatre company Lyngo here turn their attention to Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's bestselling children's book, recounting the story of a young boy who lives on an asteroid and decides to visit Earth, courtesy of a passing flock of space-birds...

### Exciting Science

Stourbridge Town Hall, Fri 16 February; Sutton Coldfield Town Hall, Tues 26 March; Swan Theatre, Worcester, Wed 27 March

Designed to enlighten, educate and entertain children aged four and older, Exciting Science promises plenty of 'wiz, bang, pop and splurt', as the show's scientists carry out all manner of fun and fact-filled live experiments.

So if you think your kids would enjoy seeing some boffins create a volcanic eruption, turn a vacuum cleaner into a missile launcher and take careful aim with a smoke blaster, then this is definitely the show to check out.

### Cartoon Circus Live

Brierley Hill Civic Hall, Mon 12 February;  
Sutton Coldfield Town Hall, Tues 13 February

The circus is coming to town this half-term holiday... Marketed as 'a laughter-packed stage show', this hour-long lunchtime performance features 'some of Britain's funniest clowns', traditional slapstick comedy, the amazing girl in the spinning bottle, a giant dancing bear, cartoon characters, an acrobatic human slinky, puppets, prizes and surprises.

### Science Museum Live

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Tues 20 February; Albany Theatre, Coventry, Sat 12 October

This brand-new family-friendly stage production - touring to Shrewsbury courtesy of London's world-renowned Science Museum - aims to 'ignite your curiosity, fuel your imagination, and inspire you in new and exciting ways'.

### The Very Hungry Caterpillar

Lichfield Garrick, Mon 12 - Wed 14 February

In a career stretching back to the mid-1960s, the late Eric Carle illustrated more than 70 books - most of which he also wrote. None were more famous or successful, though, than his 1969 story of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, a picture book which has since been translated into more than 60 languages and sold in excess of 52 million copies. This stage version of Carle's much-loved tale is presented alongside three other popular children's stories by the same author. The show features no fewer than 75 'lovable puppets'.





# FEBRUARY



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SCAN TO BOOK



JARLATH REGAN  
FRI 9 FEB



THE THREE LITTLE PIGS  
MON 12 FEB



VENUE TOUR  
THU 15 FEB



SAM AVERY  
SAT 17 FEB



NASHVILLE AT HEART  
MON 19 FEB



DOM JOLY  
THU 22 FEB



VIGGO VENN  
SAT 24 FEB



ROSIE JONES  
SUN 25 FEB

THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY PRODUCTION OF  
JOAN LITTLEWOOD'S MUSICAL ENTERTAINMENT

## OH WHAT A LOVELY WAR

BY THEATRE WORKSHOP, CHARLES CHILTON, GERRY RAFFLES  
AND MEMBERS OF THE ORIGINAL CAST

"AN OUTSTANDING PRODUCTION"  
FRINGE REVIEW



### MON 19 - WED 21 FEB

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Light entertainment from around the region



## Candace Bushnell: True Tales Of Sex, Success, And Sex And The City

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Sun 11 February

The woman whose newspaper column provided the inspiration for hit TV comedy-drama *Sex And The City* here makes her only West Midlands stop-off on a UK tour of her hugely successful stage show.

"It's about how I created *Sex And The City*," explains Candace Bushnell. "It's about my journey as, really, a single woman through the decades. And because this is a one-woman show, naturally I have to talk about some of the things I wouldn't normally talk about, including the failures, because the ups and downs are what make you human - and that's what makes you strong."

## Saving Grace

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Sat 17 February

An evening of surprise guests, outrageous stories and the juiciest of gossip is promised when the live version of famously unfiltered podcast *Saving Grace* comes to town this month.

The show is presented by podcast originator Grace Keeling, aka GK Barry. Grace shot to fame by posting funny and relatable videos on TikTok, an endeavour which has seen her amassing more than 3.2 million followers on the platform in the last couple of years.



## Reverend Richard Coles

Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham, Sun 25 February

Having last year concluded that the BBC's decision to move its production of *Radio Four's Saturday Live* to Cardiff meant that it was no longer viable for him to co-host the show, the Reverend Richard Coles has now cut loose and hit the road with this brand-new offering.

And the former *Communards* star and one-time *Strictly Come Dancing* contestant certainly has plenty to chat about in the amusingly titled *Borderline National Trinket* -

from sex and drugs, to pop stardom and religious epiphany...

Expect an evening of engaging storytelling from a witty and talented raconteur.



## Richard Jones: Soldier Of Illusion

Artrix, Bromsgrove, Sat 17 February; Stourbridge Town Hall, Fri 1 March

Lance Corporal Richard Jones has followed up 10 years' service in Her Majesty's Royal Household Cavalry with a hugely successful career as a magician. The only prestidigitator ever to win *Britain's Got Talent*, Richard has also headlined a sell-out show in the London West End and will no doubt be packing out theatres across the country on this latest tour.



## The World According To Kaleb

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sat 3 February; Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, Sat 10 February; Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Mon 19 February; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Wed 21 February

Amusingly opinionated farmer Kaleb Cooper unexpectedly found fame when he appeared in Prime Video series

*Clarkson's Farm*, in which he attempted to teach Jeremy Clarkson a thing or two about farming.

Now, he's pointed his tractor in the direction of the world beyond Chipping Norton and embarked on a first-ever theatre tour.

Expect to hear Kaleb's views on all manner of subjects, from sheep ('stupid') and Clarkson ('f\*\*\*ing idiot'), to New York ('if it's like London, where there are no tractors, that's no good').



## Cirque Du Hilarious

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sunday 18 February

CBBC favourites Danny & Mick here head out on a brand-new adventure in a faraway land of mystery and magic.

Subtitled *Temple Of Delusion*, and taking inspiration from the *Indiana Jones* film franchise, the show is promising oodles of slapstick family fun as the hapless heroes uncover the ancient treasures of a forgotten civilisation...





# A BEAUTY OF A BALLET





## Birmingham Royal Ballet's largest production, Sir Peter Wright's version of *The Sleeping Beauty*, is ready to enchant Midlands audiences with a sprinkling of fairytale magic and a wardrobe of recently restored sumptuous costumes, as *What's On* recently found out...

Birmingham Royal Ballet's (BRB) production of the critically acclaimed Sir Peter Wright version of *The Sleeping Beauty* returns to the stage this spring - and after a major fundraising appeal, its elaborate costumes will be looking better than ever.

With the ballet this year celebrating its 40th anniversary, many of the costumes have been used repeatedly across the decades so were in urgent need of repair, restoration and even remake.

BRB reached its goal of £60,000 to restore the outfits ahead of its 2024 tour, which includes performances at Birmingham Hippodrome late this month. The money was raised through the Big Give Christmas Challenge, a match-funding campaign to help charities.

*The Sleeping Beauty* is BRB's largest production. Work on repairing the costumes began last spring, with staff cutting, sewing and dyeing for hundreds of different pieces - from princess tiaras to sumptuous ballgowns, and braided courtier jackets through to dramatic fairy costumes.

These alterations are needed not just because of wear and tear but also because dancers' bodies have changed over the last 40 years.

"We always go through the process to see what we can and can't use," says Head of Costume Elaine Garlick. "The vast majority of the work comes out of costume fitting with the cast, and that's to do with sizing.

"Many of the dancers now are much taller than they used to be. We have to fit and alter to make sure the costume fits the builds we have today, but we also need to refurbish the costumes. There may be rips, or we may be replacing sleeves or side panels. And this year we're doing all of this on a much bigger scale."

The process includes minute details like re-stitching a pearl onto a dress, as well as more large-scale updates such as new tutus. And every pearl, every inch of braid and every sequin matters.

"This show uses very traditional ballet costumes with lots of wigs, headdresses and footwear," says Elaine. "One costume can have up to 50 different sections. Many of the costumes are very heavily decorated, and they have several layers of petticoats and underdressing to create the silhouettes.

"And everything has to be the best it can be, as the effect is to do with depth and lighting. You won't see every pearl or diamante, but we tend to facet them because light bounces off them.

"We don't tend to use anything that's flat. Even our sequins are faceted so they have all these different angles to sparkle through. One little sequin can do a lot of work because of the angles and the lighting. You might not think you notice this, but you would definitely notice if it wasn't there."

Because of the age of the costumes, it can sometimes be difficult to find the perfect match, but the team are adept at creative thinking.

"Some fabrics are completely different from 40 years ago," says Elaine, "but the way we make dance costumes that work in rep is that we tend to work from a lot of base fabrics which are easily available and then we use braid and sequins, we dye and we pleat. The craft techniques are still available, and even if we can't find that specific pink taffeta, what we *can* find is a taffeta that we can make pink and we have a costume to match it to."

The team aim to be as sustainable as possible.

"It's like an eco-system. Things have been replaced in sections bit by bit over the years," says Elaine. "There is a lifespan of a tutu, but we strip down the pearls and stones and re-use them as much as we can."

And the work doesn't stop for the team when the show opens - they are behind the scenes, dressing the dancers, cleaning and checking the costumes and making continuous repairs.

"It requires total teamwork. And it needs constant work during the tour, as dance costumes take a huge amount of wear. They are lifted, they are pushed, they are dragged across the floor - there are few artforms which will destroy costumes as quickly as dance."

The team will be taking 44 rails of costumes, 11 headdress baskets and five shoe baskets on the tour of *The Sleeping Beauty* - ensuring the full company are lavishly dressed from head to foot for every performance. And the show's sets and costumes are one of the reasons Sir Peter Wright's production remains popular 40 years after it was first performed.

"*The Sleeping Beauty* is a calling card and an absolute classic staple of any ballet company's rep," says Elaine. "Visually, this production is unique to BRB. And if you're going to work at any level in the costume team in the ballet world, you've got to have worked on *Sleeping Beauty*."

Footwear supervisor Michael Clifford has also been busy, refurbishing hundreds of shoes - from knee-high cavalier boots to pink pointe shoes.

"We try to recycle as much as possible, and the only time I need to buy something is because we don't have the size. The last time we did *Sleeping Beauty* was 2018, and that means many of the company haven't done it before and we've needed new shoes. I've got lots of smaller sizes, but over the years they are gradually not being used because the sizes which the dancers need are larger."

And a well-fitted shoe makes all the difference to a performer on stage - so much so that the dancer preparing for Princess Aurora's famously difficult *Rose Adagio* will carefully select her footwear.

"Some of the girls will have spent ages just finding the right shoe for the one leg for the *Rose Adagio* because that leg needs to be rock solid," Michael says. "Once they've done that piece, they might change their pointe shoes and then they won't wear the same shoes in Act Three as Act One."

Michael says watching the show in all its glory makes the preparations worthwhile.

"When you see it on stage - and particularly if you see it here at Birmingham Hippodrome, which has such a big stage - it looks so good. When I see it at the dress rehearsals, I know it's worth all the work."

And costume technician Beth Pirie says the audiences will also see the results of the refresh.

"As the costumes get older, it would be very easy just to let them deteriorate and decline and think that nobody at the back is ever going to see that, but over time it's about maintaining that standard for as long as possible.

"The costumes in *Sleeping Beauty* are really special because you've got a 100-year span in the space of one show, so the amount of different periods and silhouettes you can cover in that time... it's so interesting. There's so much going on in the costumes. They are spectacular - they don't make them like this anymore."

**BRB's *The Sleeping Beauty* shows at Birmingham Hippodrome from Wednesday 21 February to Saturday 2 March**



# BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET

Photo © Manvir Rai

Director Carlos Acosta

Sir Peter Wright's

## The Sleeping Beauty

21 February – 2 March

“Stunning”

The Telegraph

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## Dance previews from across the region



## Edward Scissorhands

Birmingham Hippodrome, Tuesday 6 - Saturday 10 February

Since its debut in 2005, Sir Matthew Bourne and New Adventures' magical production of Edward Scissorhands has delighted thousands of people across the globe. Based on the classic Tim Burton movie starring Johnny Depp and Winona Ryder, the show presents a

touching and witty love story about 'the ultimate outsider'.

"Never has the story of Edward Scissorhands been more timely," says Sir Matthew. "In an era when uniqueness and identity is both celebrated and reviled, its story of how we treat anyone who appears to be different in our communities is as poignant and relevant as when my dear friend Caroline Thompson wrote the screenplay for Tim Burton's legendary movie fable some 34 years ago."

## Northern Ballet: The Tortoise And The Hare

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent,  
Wed 28 February; Crewe Lyceum Theatre,  
Sun 24 March

Leeds-based Northern Ballet has developed a reputation for producing work which focuses not only on dancing but also on storytelling - a fact very much in evidence in its latest production for little ones.

The Tortoise And The Hare has been specially designed to provide an enjoyable and absorbing experience for young children who are sampling live ballet, music and theatre for the very first time.



## One/Bird

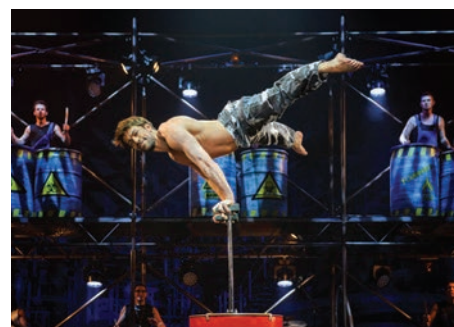
Patrick Centre, Birmingham Hippodrome,  
Wed 28 - Thurs 29 February

"Since the ice age," begins Amina Khayyam, in talking about her solo show, One, "our pre-historic ancestors have been crossing continents to find better habitual climates so that we, homo sapiens, got the chance to evolve to what we are now. Today we are doing no different - displaced by climate change, war, political extortion and many other reasons, many of us are following that same human trait: cross continents to survive or better ourselves."

"Yet 'migrants', 'foreigners', 'refugees' are words tarnished 'dirty' and 'negative' by the media, and harboured by politicians for political gain."

"[In One] I delve into the wealth and power of Kathak to portray the journey of migrants and refugees within that cyclic phenomenon all of us are all journeying."

The production is accompanied by Bird, a show which poses a question that crosses the minds of many women stuck in abusive relationships: "Where will I go?"



## Tap Factory

Lichfield Garrick, Fri 16 February

A rhythm-based production described as 'Tap Dogs meets Stomp', Tap Factory has enjoyed huge success around the world.

The show sees eight internationally renowned male exponents of dance, gymnastics and acrobatics creating live music and choreography from all manner of everyday objects, including oil barrels, brooms and wood mallets.

The production stops off in Lichfield as part of its 10th-anniversary tour.



# MORE THAN JUST LUCK

Midlands-born Debbie Isitt talks about bringing new musical  
*I Should Be So Lucky* to the stage





**No stranger to crafting hits for stage and screen, Birmingham-born BAFTA and Emmy award-winning writer & director Debbie Isitt - best known for the Nativity! films - is bringing the iconic songbook of Stock Aitken Waterman to life in new musical I Should Be So Lucky, which comes to Birmingham theatre The Alexandra in April. We recently caught up with Debbie to chat about the brand-new production, its generation-defining soundtrack, and the experience of working with the legendary Kylie Minogue...**

**What was the inspiration behind the musical, Debbie?**

The songs! Stock Aitken Waterman songs were the soundtrack to my youth, and being asked to create a musical featuring all the hits was a very exciting proposition. The songs are about love, and that was my starting point for the story and the show! The songs spoke to me, the lyrics and the melodies, and I wanted to create a show about love in all its forms - romantic love, thwarted love, love of family, love of self - to create an experience that is emotional and fun and feelgood, just like their music makes me feel.

**Without major spoilers, can you tell us the story of I Should Be So Lucky?**

The story starts with a wedding that goes wrong. I guess that is a spoiler - sorry! But the bride Ella's family and her two best friends are not prepared to let her disappear in a puddle of grief and insecurity, so they accompany her on her honeymoon to Turkey to try and help her heal her broken heart. However, on the honeymoon they each have a transformative experience that changes their loves and lives forever. Meanwhile, Ella wrestles with a new love - the local tour guide - just as her old love turns up to try and win her back. With the help of her inner confidence [represented by a filmed contribution from Kylie Minogue], she begins to piece her life and broken heart back together and embarks on a journey of self-discovery.

**I Should Be So Lucky features endless hits from the Stock Aitken Waterman catalogue, including Never Gonna Give You Up, Especially For You and the title track itself. Why do you think these songs make the perfect soundtrack for a musical?**

Because they are absolute bangers! As soon as they start up, you can't help but feel engaged with the brilliant hooks and catchy choruses. But they also take some of us back to times when we were young and having fun. And the songs are stories too - stories that we can all relate to - about unrequited

love, yearning, and heartfelt human emotions. Lots of people know and love the songs, but younger audiences are discovering some of them for the first time, and it's so fantastic to watch that. Everyone - young or old - is up and dancing at the end.

**Do you have a favourite song used within the show?**

I love so many of them, but a lesser-known song, If You Were With Me Now, is a stand-out moment. The song is so beautiful and has such a lush arrangement by George Dyer, our music supervisor - matched only by Jason Gilkison's dream-like choreography - that it really transports me to another world. I also love the massive Sonia hit, Never Stop Me From Loving You, as our amazing Kayla Carter gives a dazzling performance of this beautiful song. And I adore the Kylie mega-hit, Better The Devil You Know, for the sheer euphoria it creates on stage and in the audience! But I genuinely love them all! In fact, I can't not mention Respectable - it's a brilliant moment in the show, and the audience absolutely love this song! And, of course, the iconic Never Gonna Give You Up, which has the audience up on its feet every single performance!

**Kylie Minogue scored her first UK number one with I Should Be So Lucky, and she's also got a starring role in this musical. What has it been like to work with her?**

Kylie was a real pleasure to work with. Our first meeting was via zoom - Kylie was in Melbourne and I was in London, casting the show. She was so enthusiastic about the musical, having watched the workshop where all the ideas were developed. Of course, she already had a great relationship with Stock Aitken and Waterman, but now it was time to create a story especially for her within the show. A few weeks later, when she was in London, I presented her with her character and storyline and script, and we worked together to hone down the scenes. The concept was Kylie being bride Ella's reflection in the mirror, playing her inner diva - her inner confidence, if you like. I wanted Kylie to play a version of herself but also to be properly integrated into the

story. Kylie later came into rehearsal and worked with the cast - which we were all very excited about - and then we were ready to film her sequences. Each sequence had to be filmed in single takes, with no edits, and had to be timed to perfection to allow interaction and dialogue with the brilliant Lucie-Mae Sumner, who plays Ella. It was a fabulous experience, as Kylie and Lucie worked so well together, and Kylie was so emotionally connected to both the story and the songs. Kylie is a genuine triple threat - a brilliant singer, actor and dancer. More than that, she is an inspirational icon, so we felt very 'lucky lucky lucky' to have her play such a big on-screen role in the musical production!

**What do you hope audiences will take away from the show?**

I've been so inspired by the audience reaction. Sitting amongst them and hearing huge belly laughs and gasps of recognition, and sensing their engagement with the story, and hearing them sing along to the songs, and watching them dance on their feet has been truly exhilarating. I want audiences to keep enjoying, keep escaping, keep feeling the utter joy that this musical has to offer. I want them to enjoy feeling the love and warmth that's created with every performance. I want audiences to leave the show feeling happier and stronger for having seen it, with the songs in their hearts.

**What's the most important piece of advice you'd give to anyone thinking of stepping into the industry?**

Whatever it is you have to offer the industry, do it to the best of your ability, with passion and integrity, and keep pushing to serve audiences - keep them in your heart and mind. Theatre is about coming together to experience emotions and share truths. Always be honest, always be emotional, always be true.

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**I Should Be So Lucky shows at The Alexandra, Birmingham, from Monday 1 to Saturday 6 April**



## Film highlights in February...

### Argylle CERT tbc (135 mins)

Starring **Henry Cavill, Bryce Dallas Howard, Dua Lipa, Sam Rockwell, Brian Cranston, Ariana DeBose** Directed by **Matthew Vaughn**

A reclusive author of bestselling espionage novels, Elly Conway enjoys nothing better than a quiet night at home with her computer and her cat, Alfie. But when the plots of her fictional books - which centre on secret agent Argylle's mission to unravel a global spy syndicate - begin to mirror the covert actions of a real-life spy organisation, Ellie finds herself (and Alfie, and a cat-allergic spy named Aidan!) racing across the world to stay one step ahead of the bad guys...

Described by its publicity as a razor-witted, reality-bending, globe-encircling spy thriller, Argylle is directed by Matthew Vaughn, whose previous films include Kick-Ass and the Kingsman franchise.

**Released Fri 2 February**



### American Fiction CERT tbc (117 mins)

Starring **Jeffrey Wright, Tracee Ellis Ross, Erika Alexander, Issa Rae, Sterling K Brown** Directed by **Cord Jefferson**

The cultural obsession with reducing people to outrageous stereotypes is the subject that's placed front and centre of Cord Jefferson's well-reviewed directorial debut. Frustrated novelist Monk is fed up with the establishment profiting from 'Black' entertainment that relies on tired and

offensive tropes. To prove his point, he uses a pen name to write an outlandish 'Black' book of his own - an undertaking that sees him propelled into the heart of the very madness he claims to loathe.

**Released Fri 2 February**

### Migration CERT 12a (124 mins)

With the voices of **Kumail Nanjiani, Elizabeth Banks, Isabela Merced, Danny DeVito, Carol Kane, Awkwafina** Directed by **Benjamin Renner** and **Guylo Homsy**



The Mallard family is in a bit of a rut. While dad Mack is content to have his family safely paddling around their New England pond forever, mom Pam is eager to shake things up and show their kids - teen son Dax and duckling daughter Gwen - the whole wide world. After a migrating duck family alights on their pond with thrilling tales of far-flung places, Pam persuades Mack to embark on a family trip, via New York City, to tropical Jamaica... Focusing on multiple themes, including the importance of family and finding the courage to step out of your comfort zone, Migration is the latest film from Illumination, creators of the blockbuster Minions, Despicable Me, Sing and The Secret Life Of Pets. Although it's reviewed okay, an absolute, er, quacker of a movie it most definitely is not.

**Released Fri 2 February**





## Madame Web CERT tbc

Starring **Dakota Johnson, Sydney Sweeney, Isabela Merced, Emma Roberts, Adam Scott, Zosia Mamet**  
Directed by **SJ Clarkson**

When Manhattan paramedic Cassandra Webb, who may have clairvoyant abilities, is forced to confront revelations about her past, she forges a relationship with three young women destined for powerful futures - providing, that is, they can all manage to survive a deadly present-day danger...

Fifty Shades Of Grey star Dakota Johnson takes the lead role in this latest and somewhat different from usual superhero movie - a suspense-driven offering telling the stand-alone origin story of one of Marvel publishing's most enigmatic heroines.

Recent superhero films have failed to make a meaningful splash financially - raising increasingly loud questions in Hollywood about whether fan fatigue has finally kicked in - so it will be interesting to see how this latest addition to the genre fairs at the global box office...

**Released Fri 16 February**

## Bob Marley: One Love

CERT tbc

Starring **Kingsley Ben-Adir, James Norton, Lashana Lynch, Michael Gandolfini, Anthony Welsh, Sam Palladio** Directed by **Reinaldo Marcus Green**

Celebrating the life and music of the reggae star who inspired generations, this eagerly awaited biopic chronicles Bob Marley's rise to fame and focuses on his historic performance at the One Love Peace Concert in Kingston, Jamaica, in April 1978.

Kingsley Ben-Adir, who stars as the legendary musician in the movie, is no stranger to the challenge of playing iconic historical figures, having previously appeared on film as Malcolm X and Barack Obama.

**Released Fri 16 February**



## Wicked Little Letters CERT 15 (100 mins)

Starring **Olivia Colman, Jessie Buckley, Anjana Vasan, Malachi Kirby, Timothy Spall**  
Directed by **Thea Sharrock**

Based on a true scandal that stunned 1920s England, Wicked Little Letters centres on Edith Swan and Rose Gooding, neighbours in the seaside town of Littlehampton. One day, a series of obscene letters begin to target Edith and others, with suspicion falling on Rose. As the outrageous missives continue to land, Rose risks losing both her freedom and the custody of her daughter. Police Officer Gladys Moss is determined to find the real culprit, and along with a group

of other women, seeks to solve the perplexing mystery...

After the success of 2021's Oscar-nominated The Lost Daughter, filmmakers decided it would be a good idea to cast Olivia Colman and Jessie Buckley together for a second time. On this occasion, however, the result has been met with a somewhat more mixed reaction from the critics.

**Released Fri 23 February**



# WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF BHANGRA

A new musical celebrating the competitive world of  
the popular dance form opens at The Rep





**A new musical about finding your true self opens at Birmingham Rep this month. Described as a 'brash, intoxicating and joyous musical comedy for today', Bhangra Nation is also providing a platform for local artists to showcase their talent. One such performer is Ajay Sahota, from Great Barr, who will be making his professional stage debut in the show. What's On recently caught up with the talented 22-year-old to find out more...**

The joyful musical Bhangra Nation is offering local performers the chance to be involved in a large-scale professional theatre production on their doorstep.

Making its UK premiere at Birmingham Rep this month, the uplifting dance show has brought together an international team of creatives with local artists. And for some, including 22-year-old Ajay Sahota from Great Barr, this will be their first time on a professional stage.

Ajay, who recently completed a BSc in Medical Sciences at Leeds University, had never dreamed he would be on stage at The Rep, and is loving the experience.

"I saw on The Rep's Instagram that they had open auditions for South Asian males and females who could sing, act and dance, and I thought 'Well, this is my ideal moment.' I sent a video of me singing and then went through all the stages, and they cast me. I was super lucky."

Ajay had been an enthusiast in both dance and theatre but had never dreamed he could step into the limelight.

"When I was about eight or nine to when I was about 12, I had done bhangra dancing with my cousins. It was very much that our parents thought it would be a good idea to get us dancing, so we went to a class a week, in the back room of a pub.

"I've only done amateur musicals at university and at school, but I've always loved musical theatre and performing, and this show is a combination of dancing, singing and the cultural part of being a South Asian in the UK. It's my first professional show, and it's the perfect opportunity."

Bhangra Nation originally premiered at the La Jolla Playhouse in California under the name of Bangin' It in 2022. Directed by Stafford Arima, the show is set in the world of collegiate bhangra contests. When students with new ideas come up against those with a more traditional outlook, the competition becomes about much more than just the dancing.

Ajay plays Gobind, one of the students.

"Gobind is a really fun and joyous character to play," he says. "He begins the story with a zest for life and especially for bhangra and

his own South Asian culture, but he isn't the most coordinated dancer, and he's not born with the natural ability to dance. During the show, he learns a lot more about the people around him, and he becomes a lot more confident. And he becomes a pretty good bhangra dancer - if I say so myself!

"I think the bhangra dancing is my favourite part of the show. It's the part that comes most naturally to me. It's like the rhythm - once you've learnt it, along with the way to move and the way to understand the music, that's coming back to me from when I was a kid. And it's nice to be surrounded by so many other dancers who are amazing at what they do. It might be their first time doing bhangra dancing, so we're all in the same boat, learning what we can."

But bhangra does pose its challenges.

"The most difficult part is that bhangra dancing is very energetic, and a lot of stamina is required to put on the amazing dance routines that we're doing," Ajay says. "And we have to make sure we're still singing the right notes and sound lovely whilst we are making sure that each dance move is clean and crisp."

Now that Ajay has the musical theatre bug, he is hoping to perform in other productions in the future.

"Being part of this show is a dream. Having a show which is so ethnically diverse, and having people of so many different heritages and backgrounds, is all I could dream of. All I've ever wanted is to be part of something that could make young boys and their families believe that it is possible for people of South Asian heritage to be part of musical theatre and to be on stage rather than just viewing it. I want to show people to just go for it if it's something you love.

"I'm hoping this is the start - a springboard into a career with more musical theatre, more singing and acting, because this is my true passion in life: performing and telling a story to an audience."

Ensuring Ajay and the other performers are convincing dancers is bhangra consultant Parambeer Samrai of Walsall-based Ultimate Bhangra.

"I am teaching bhangra to these amazing

cast members," he says. "No-one really had specific bhangra experience, and my role is not just to teach the movements but also to help them understand why each move is important in our culture. It's like telling the story through the dance, feeling the music and having fun with bhangra."

For Parambeer, who grew up in Smethwick and now lives in Halesowen, bhangra has always been a part of life. And he is now enjoying seeing the dance form being appreciated across different cultures.

"This show is fostering an understanding of cultural appreciation whether you're South Asian, black or white. We're creating a memorable performance for all ages, and we want this show to be accessible to anybody and everybody. It's not just for South Asians - the show is about bringing everyone together.

"Bhangra is a super-cool dance and music tradition that lots of people in Birmingham enjoy, but it's not just about dancing. It's about bringing people together and having fun. In any workshop that I've done, whether the audience is South Asian or not, you hear that dhol drum and your shoulders start bouncing. The dhol beat is so infectious, and when people leave, everyone is beaming from ear to ear."

And he says the cast, many of whom were bhangra beginners, have also caught that enthusiasm.

"What is exciting is that I'm able to share the authentic cultural traditions of bhangra with all these cast members. They are excellent in their current dance forms and whatever they have learnt previously - and now they are learning bhangra. They are amazing dancers, so it's like mixing all these ingredients to create a special dance which is new and exciting and joyful.

"I'm so lucky to be part of this team. A big thank you to The Rep for bringing this to Birmingham. We can't wait to show these amazing performances and this show to Birmingham and to the whole of the UK."

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**Bhangra Nation shows at Birmingham Rep from Saturday 17 February to Saturday 16 March**



## Visual Arts previews from around the region



### Victorian Radicals

The Gas Hall, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, from Sat 10 February

Birmingham's impressive collection of Pre-Raphaelite art here goes on display in the city for the first time in more than five years.

Taking the subtitle 'From The Pre-Raphaelites To The Arts & Crafts Movement', Victorian Radicals features vibrant paintings and exquisite drawings presented alongside jewellery, glass, textiles and metalwork. The show provides visitors with the chance to discover the story of the Pre-Raphaelites - Britain's first modern art movement - and learn about their influence on artists and makers well into the 20th century.



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Charmaine Watkiss (born 1964), *Double Consciousness: Be Aware of One's Intentions*, pencil, water-soluble graphite, watercolour and ink, 2021. Acquired with Art Fund and Rootstein Hopkins Foundation support. © 2023 The Trustees of the British Museum. Reproduced by permission of the artist.

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## Incarcerated: Contemporary Arts From The Victorian Prison

Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham, until Sun 18 February

Aiming to prompt conversations about living and working conditions in historical institutions, Incarcerated brings together photography by Andy Aitchison with drawing, sculpture, crafts and writing by inmates of prisons which were built nearly 200 years ago.

The exhibition is being presented by the Universities of Birmingham and Bath, in partnership with the Howard League for Penal Reform.

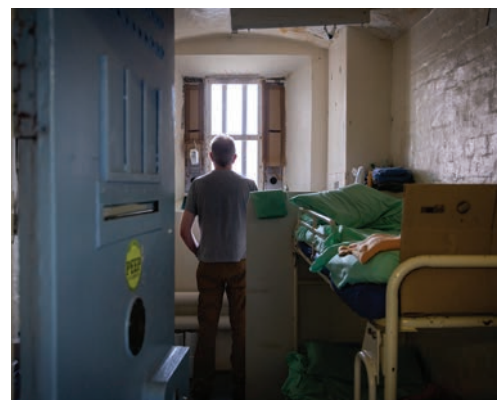


Image credit: Andy Aitchison, UK Justice HMP Liverpool

## Exodus Crooks: Epiphany (Temporaire)

Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, Fri 9 February - Sun 21 April

Exodus Crooks' art practice centres on the relationship with self and contemplates the role that religion and spirituality play in a journey to enlightenment.

The Midlands-based British-Jamaican artist's Ikon exhibition features sculpture, film, text and sculptural installation.

## Carboniferous Monsters: 100 Million Years Before The Dinosaurs

The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, Sat 3 February - Sun 2 June

This sure-to-be-popular exhibition is being promoted as 'a must-see for prehistoric monster fans of all ages'. Visitors to the show will get to meet a host of bizarre and ferocious monsters, some of which had even larger teeth than the Tyrannosaurus Rex!



Image credit: Juan Jesus Gonzalez Ahumada

## Wildlife Photographer Of The Year

Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery, until Sun 18 February; 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 prestigious show - visiting Coventry and Shrewsbury as part of an extensive tour - features a host of awe-inspiring images capturing fascinating animal behaviour and breathtaking landscapes.

## Drawing Attention

Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Sat 10 February - Thurs 16 May

This thought-provoking British Museum touring exhibition features artwork produced by some of the most promising up-and-coming names in the field of contemporary drawing, displayed alongside a selection of works by celebrated artists including Mary Delany, Edouard Manet, Barbara Hepworth, Andy Warhol and Yinka Shonibare.

The exhibition showcases a wide range of techniques and practices, with artists showing how drawing - often considered a quiet or private medium - can be used to challenge social norms, explore identity and protest injustice.



Image: Sin Wai Kin - what have you gained along the way 2017



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# Authors, storytelling and more...

In the early days of February, Wolverhampton venues are opening their doors to the city's annual Literature Festival. Featuring talks by authors, storytelling for all ages, poetry and workshops, the 2024 edition of the event includes shows to suit every lit-lover - and a lot more besides. We've taken a look at six of this year's headliners, to provide a glimpse of what the festival has in store...

## Pauline Black OBE

Thurs 1 Feb, Newhampton Arts Centre

Spanning over 40 years, Pauline Black's music career began in Coventry in 1979 as founder member and lead singer of 2 Tone ska band The Selecter. Pauline continues to perform live, and her critically acclaimed memoir, *Black By Design*, was published in 2011. In an exclusive event kicking off this year's festival, she shares her story of 'music, race, family and roots'. The evening also provides the audience with an opportunity to put their questions to her.



## Ghost Huns

Fri 2 Feb, Newhampton Arts Centre

Join 'comedians, basic huns and horror stans' Hannah Byczkowski and Suzie Preece for a live manifestation of their podcast, *Ghost Huns*. Having regularly spooked their listeners - and themselves - since 2022, Hannah and Suzie promise plenty of laughter to go along with the screams, as they tell 'the world's creepiest ghost stories'. Depending how the night goes, they might even crack out the Ouija board... 'They get haunted, so you don't have to.'



## Raphael Rowe

Fri 2 Feb, Wolverhampton Art Gallery

A familiar face of BBC journalism - and host of Netflix's *Inside The World's Toughest Prisons* - Raphael Rowe's career has taken him on adventures around the world. The journey that brought him here is even more remarkable, however: before being acquitted and released in 2000, Raphael served 12 years in a maximum security prison, after being falsely accused and tried. This latest show sees him telling his incredible story in person.



## Louise Minchin

Sat 3 Feb, Wolverhampton Art Gallery

After 20 years presenting BBC Breakfast, Louise has turned her hand to writing, with her latest offering inspired by the people she met on the breakfast sofa. Fearless: *Adventures With Extraordinary Women* brings female adventurers into a spotlight primarily held by men. At the festival, she will be recounting these women's exhilarating, moving and inspirational stories, and her own first-hand adventures as she joined them along the way.



## Sohan Kailey

Sat 3 Feb, Whitmore Reans Library

Children under 10 - and their grown-ups - are invited to join Wolverhampton artist, actor, dancer & storyteller Sohan on a 'breathtaking journey'. The *Maharajas' Express* is a multi-sensory adventure full of puppets, music and dancing. Travel with Sohan through a magical book to meet dinosaurs and Bhangra pirates, venture into the jungle and to outer space, and discover the power of imagination together, singing and dancing as you go.



## Lou Sanders

Sat 3 Feb, Wolverhampton Art Gallery

Idiosyncratic comedian Lou Sanders ponders life's twists and turns during an evening of 'laughter and candid conversation'. In support of her latest book, *What's That Lady Doing?*, Lou will share her unique perspective through tales of dead dads, bizarre encounters at the osteopath's and unexpected run-ins with the law. Expect an evening of 'side-splitting humour, profound insights, and relatable anecdotes that will leave you in stitches'.

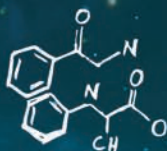


Check out the full 2024 Festival programme at [wolvesliteraturefestival.co.uk](https://wolvesliteraturefestival.co.uk)





**thinktank**  
Birmingham science museum



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## Events previews from around the region



### Chinese New Year Trail

Biddulph Grange Garden, Staffordshire,  
Sat 10 - Sat 24 February

Given that it's known for its stunning Chinese garden, it comes as no surprise that Biddulph Grange Garden is getting involved with New Year celebrations. The family-friendly trail runs throughout February half term, during which visitors can go on a hunt for their zodiac animal, which will be hidden somewhere in the garden.



### Lunar New Year Southside, Birmingham, Sun 11 February

Produced by Birmingham Hippodrome, Birmingham Chinese Festival Committee and Birmingham Chinatown Business Association, the Lunar New Year celebrations have become a staple event in the city's calendar. Taking place in and

around the Hippodrome and throughout the Southside District, attractions include a selection of family activities, a range of craft market stalls around which to browse and a spectacular firework finale to welcome in the Year of the Dragon.



### Celebrate the Chinese New Year of the Dragon

Worcestershire County Museum at Hartlebury Castle, nr Kidderminster,  
Sat 10 - Sun 18 February

Visitors to Hartlebury Castle this half term can welcome in the Year of the Dragon by taking part in a special lantern trail around the museum and learning about the Chinese zodiac.

To further add to the fun, from Tuesday the 13th to Friday the 16th the venue is hosting crafting workshops, offering families the chance to make their very own Chinese lantern and create dragon crafts to take home.



### Chinese New Year Of The Dragon

The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, Sun 11 February

The Potteries Museum is once again hosting its annual Chinese New Year celebration. Visitors to the venue can expect plenty of lively and colourful entertainment, from

traditional music and dance - including dragon and lion dance performances - to firecracker displays, acrobatics and Chinese craft workshops.



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## Events previews from around the region



## The 2024 Birmingham International Tattoo

Resorts World Arena, Birmingham, Sat 10 & Sun 11 February

One of the first events to mark the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings, the 2024 Birmingham International Tattoo serves up more than three hours of pageantry and spectacle, the culmination of which is a grand finale that features a staggering 1,200

performers.

Displays include the Inter-Service Field Gun competition and the British Flyball Association competition. Land Of Hope And Glory and The Evening Hymn also feature in the show's programme of entertainment.

## Arenacross British Championship

Resorts World Arena, Birmingham, Sat 3 February

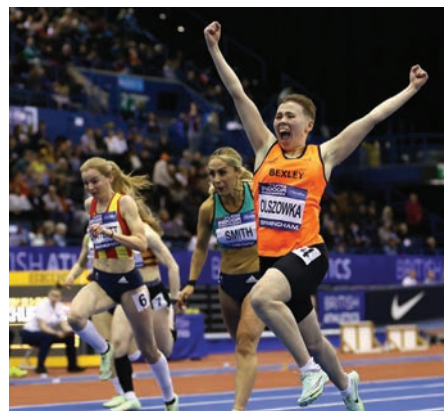
Europe's leading indoor freestyle motocross & race show returns to Birmingham this month as part of a seven-round tour of the UK.

The show sees some of the world's fastest professional motocross racers competing for the Arenacross title, whilst freestyle motocross (FMX) riders will be showing off their mind-blowing skills with a variety of tricks and jumps (up to 60ft in the air!).



## UK Athletics Indoor Championships 2024

Utilita Arena Birmingham, Sat 17 & Sun 18 February



Top-class British athletics makes a welcome return to Birmingham this month. With prestigious national titles on the line, the Championships will also serve as the official trial event for the World Athletics Indoor Championships in Glasgow. Expect a hugely entertaining weekend of high-quality action to kick-start this Olympic and Paralympic year.

## Spectacle of Light

Compton Verney, Warwickshire, until Sun 18 February

Midlanders are being invited to discover the nighttime wonder of Compton Verney via a spectacle of light and sound this month. The team at Squid Soup are back with a whole host of brand-new installations, while visitors can also enjoy a range of street food from Digbeth Dining Club and grab a drink from the fully stocked bar inside the venue.



## The Classic Dirt Bike Show

Telford International Centre, Sat 10 & Sun 11 February

The UK's biggest classic off-road show is back in Telford.

As well as hundreds of off-road bikes, the show features the UK's biggest collection of off-road trade & autojumble stands selling dirt biking gear - from spares, parts and accessories to riding kit.

The biggest clubs in the country will also be in attendance, as will multiple world champions Kelvin Tatum, Neil Hudson and Yrjo 'Vesty' Vesterinen.







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## Places to visit across the Midlands



### British Motor Museum

Banbury Road, Gaydon, Warwickshire  
CV35 0BJ [britishmotormuseum.co.uk](http://britishmotormuseum.co.uk)

Home to the world's largest collection of historic British vehicles, the British Motor Museum tells the stories of the people and places behind the cars.

Themed trails, touch-screen exhibits, an interactive zone, costumed guided tours, and a varied programme of themed activities make for an inspiring day out.

**THIS HALF TERM:** From Saturday the 10th to Sunday the 25th, the museum will host its Enthralling Energy event, giving visitors a fun and fascinating glimpse at the future of energy through a variety of activities.



### Blists Hill Victorian Town

Legges Way, Telford TF7 5UD  
[ironbridge.org.uk](http://ironbridge.org.uk)

One of 10 award-winning museums that make up the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust, Blists Hill Victorian Town offers visitors the chance to step back in time to the days of Queen Victoria.

Set over 52 acres, the museum is very much an interactive experience. Attractions include Victorian shops and cottages, authentic food & sweets and the chance to see craftspeople demonstrating their trades.

**THIS HALF TERM:** From Saturday the 10th to Sunday the 18th, visitors can step back in time to the world of silent movies and enjoy Georges Méliès' 1902 film, A Trip To The Moon. Fans of the film will also be able to create a personalised poster at the town's Printer's Shop.



### Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

Millennium Point, Curzon Street Birmingham, B4 7XG [birminghammuseums.org.uk/thinktank](http://birminghammuseums.org.uk/thinktank)

Thinktank features more than 200 interactive exhibits on science and discovery, a programme of workshops, shows and demonstrations, and a digital planetarium. It also boasts its very own mini city: MiniBum - a child-sized world created for youngsters under the age of eight. Meanwhile, outside, the Science Garden provides fun activities and surprises for the whole family to enjoy.

**THIS HALF TERM:** The museum is holding an International Women And Girls In Science Day on Sunday the 11th, celebrating women in STEM with activities and workshops to inspire those who are looking to join the field. Plus, the museum's planetarium will host matinee showings of Pink Floyd's The Dark Side Of The Moon - a full-dome experience featuring 10 tracks from the iconic album set to stunning 360° visuals.



### West Midlands Police Museum

Steelhouse Lane, Birmingham, B4 6BJ [museum.west-midlands.police.uk](http://museum.west-midlands.police.uk)

Set in a Victorian lock-up, the West Midlands Police Museum showcases more than 200 years of policing history. The lock-up was built in 1891, and during its time housed more than one million prisoners, with the cell doors closing for the final time in 2016.

As well as bringing together an unrivalled

collection of police artefacts, the museum also offers a range of hands-on activities, providing visitors with the opportunity to play the role of detective at a crime scene, examine evidence in a forensics lab, take their own police 'mugshot' and dress up in police uniforms from years gone by.



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Birmingham, B4 6BJ



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## The Bear Grylls Adventure

Exhibition Way, Marston Green, B40 1NT [beargryllsadventure.com](http://beargryllsadventure.com)

Celebrity adventurer Bear Grylls has certainly pulled out all the stops with this popular visitor attraction. Activities include high ropes, indoor archery, indoor climbing, axe throwing, escape rooms and a Royal Marines-inspired assault course.

For the 'more courageous' visitor, there's the Shark Dive, which involves getting 'up close and personal' with black tip reef sharks and cownose rays...

...Or, if you fancy experiencing the thrill of free-falling at 12,000ft, check out iFly.

## Coventry Transport Museum

Millennium Place, Coventry, CV1 1JD  
[transport-museum.com](http://transport-museum.com)

This popular museum not only houses the largest publicly owned collection of British vehicles on the planet, it also tells the story of a city which changed the world through transport.

There are 14 galleries to enjoy at the venue, featuring (among other attractions) pioneering bicycles, transport champions, innovative, memorable and luxurious vehicles from the last 200 years, and last but certainly not least, the world's fastest vehicle.

**THIS HALF TERM:** The museum's 'tinker, make & play' interactive drop-in sessions provide little ones with the chance to make brick cars to play with on a map of Coventry.



## Severn Valley Railway

Kidderminster: Station Dr, DY10 1QX  
Bridgnorth: 2 Hollybush Rd, WV16 4AX  
[svr.co.uk](http://svr.co.uk)

Operating mainly steam-hauled passenger trains between Bridgnorth, Bewdley and Kidderminster, this much-loved railway transports visitors on a journey of about 16 miles along the beautiful Severn Valley. The journey includes a stop-off at The Engine House Visitor Centre at Highley, where passengers can check out some special locomotives.

Those starting their journey at Bridgnorth will also have the option of stop-offs at Bewdley and Kidderminster, the latter of which boasts a railway museum.

**THIS HALF TERM:** From Tuesday the 13th to Thursday the 15th, an iconic character from children's literature will be making an appearance at Highley's Engine House for meet & greets.



## National SEA LIFE Centre Birmingham

The Water's Edge, Brindleyplace, Birmingham, B1 2HL [visitsealife.com/birmingham](http://visitsealife.com/birmingham)

Housing more than 2,000 creatures - including a colony of gentoo penguins, black-tip reef sharks and a giant green sea turtle - National SEA LIFE Centre features a world-class rescue Marine Mammal facility, which houses the UK's first-ever sea otters, Ozzy and Ola.

Other highlights include a 4D cinema, the zebra shark in Shark Lagoon and the Clownfish Kingdom tunnel. The venue also boasts the UK's only 360° Ocean Tunnel, providing visitors with the truly unique experience of 'walking through the sea'.







# A ROYAL OCCASION

**Erica Whyman talks to What's On about directing Ben And Imo, Mark Ravenhill's new play about the often tumultuous creative relationship between composer Benjamin Britten and Imogen Holst, the daughter of Gustav, whilst writing the opera Gloriana for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II...**

## **What is the story of Ben and Imo, Erica?**

In the autumn of 1952, Imogen Holst came to work alongside Benjamin Britten as he wrote his third opera, *Gloriana*, for a gala performance to celebrate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in June 1953. They worked closely and at breakneck speed, and Mark's play tells the story of an intimate friendship between a gay man - brilliant, troubled, sometimes ferociously cruel - and an equally brilliant woman, who loves music above all else and finds herself enchanted by and embroiled in Britten's struggle to make a work of art fit for a queen.

## **Many people will have heard of Benjamin Britten, but they might not have heard of Imogen Holst. Can you tell us a bit about her?**

She was quite wonderful, and I wish I had had the chance to meet her! The daughter of [composer] Gustav Holst, famous for *The Planets* [a work of classical music], she was determined to make her own way in the world. A composer herself, she also conducted and arranged music, and all of her life she taught music, often to amateurs and children. In the Second World War she toured the South West, working for the very beginnings of the Arts Council, with a suitcase on the back of her bicycle, bringing music and dance, forming choirs, unearthing folk traditions in every tiny village. After *Gloriana* she continued to work with Britten and became deeply involved in the Aldeburgh Festival, making it her home until she died in 1984. She was a restless spirit, warm, exacting and passionate. She brought so much joy - through music - to thousands of people.

## **And why do you think we haven't heard of her?**

I suspect being a woman had something to do with it! Her compositions are not perhaps as groundbreaking as her father's or Britten's, although interest in them continues to grow and they are very beautiful. Her contribution to our understanding of English folk and other early music is immense, as is her influence on the programming in

Aldeburgh over two decades, and she changed fundamentally how we think about teaching music in schools; I think we still have a tendency now only to remember the lead artist, the singular star, and not to value fully the key collaborators without whom their work would not have been possible.

## **A version of the play was originally broadcast on BBC Radio Three in 2013, but this is the first time a stage production has been mounted. How did you come across the play?**

Mark sent me a draft of the new script - for theatre - in early 2021. He had picked it up in the early months of the pandemic and begun to revisit it, as he liked the characters so much - and their time-sensitive task of making an opera was a little like a lockdown! It appealed to me immediately because it asks big questions about why art matters, and in those dark days when the theatres were shut, I found it a real tonic. Their clarity about the role of artists in turbulent times is very bracing.

## **Have you worked with Mark before?**

I've known him for more than a decade, but this is the first time I have directed his writing. He was writer-in-residence at the RSC when I started and helped me commission work for the new *Other Place* that we opened in 2016. He is a delight to collaborate with - he really understands the roles of actor and director, so he is helpful without getting in anyone's way. He has such a clear grip on how theatre comes alive in a space.

## **The play is a two-hander, with Samuel Barnett and Victoria Yeates taking the titular roles. What do you think these actors will bring to the parts of Ben and Imo?**

Samuel is perfect for Ben; he is funny and razor-sharp and unafraid to go to the dark places Ben frequently lives in when he is composing. Victoria brings a delicious vibrancy to Imo and is going to bring to vivid life her wit, her steely resolve and her courage in speaking the truth.

## **You've said the play is about "love, music and, importantly, power". Can you elaborate?**

It is a very fresh take on the 'gay best friend', as it is about the love between two people who are not going to have a sexual relationship but find themselves entangled because of a shared endeavour - the music - which forces them to really share the depths of themselves. Ben has enormous power over Imo, because he is a man, an increasingly famous composer, and he is employing her. And sometimes he abuses that power, and sometimes she is more powerful than him because she is not afraid of some painful truths.

## **The play portrays Britten as often a very cruel but highly talented man. Do you think bad behaviour is ever justifiable in the pursuit of artistic excellence?**

Justifiable, no, but is it something we can and should try to understand? I think so. Too many artists have been given a free pass to be abusive, to exploit their status at the expense of other people's confidence and safety. So no, I don't think that is ever acceptable, but I do think we must try to discover why someone behaves like that, what is it that is torturing them - very often they are ashamed or afraid or both - and we can feel compassion for that and do what is needed to help them change their behaviour.

## **Your acclaimed and award-nominated production of *Hamnet* enjoyed a successful run in Stratford, and is currently playing in London. What's next for you after *Ben And Imo*?**

I'm starting a really interesting piece of work in Oxford looking at how communities can use stories to influence research, and I'm working with some colleagues in France on how to make Shakespeare more relevant there!

.....

**Ben And Imo shows at The Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, from Wednesday 21 February to Saturday 6 April**



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*Your week-  
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listings guide*  
**February 2024**

# the list



*The Rocky Horror Show at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre - Tues 6 - Sat 10 February*

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

## What's On

Thurs 1 - Sun 4 February



Most Haunted Live -  
Crewe Lyceum Theatre  
**Sun 4 February**

Mon 5 - Sun 11 February



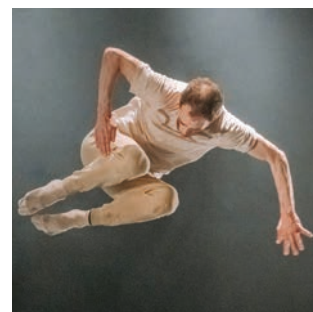
Róisín Murphy - The Civic at The  
Halls Wolverhampton  
**Sat 10 February**

Mon 12 - Sun 18 February



Campbell Jensen -  
Morris Hall, Shrewsbury  
**Sun 18 February**

Mon 19 - Thurs 29 February



James Wilton Dance -  
Lichfield Garrick  
**Tues 27 February**



## VISUAL ARTS ACROSS THE REGION

### Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

**VICTORIAN RADICALS** Exhibition presenting works by 19th-century artists, designers & makers, from the Pre-Raphaelites to the arts & crafts movement, opens Sat 10 Feb

### The Exchange, Centenary Square, Birmingham

**AI FUTURES** Programme of exhibitions and events exploring Artificial Intelligence through the lens of university research, launching Feb 2024

### New Art Gallery, Walsall

**WALSALL SOCIETY OF ARTISTS** Annual exhibition of works by the society's members, produced using a wide range of media, until Sun 18 Feb

**PRIDE & PRIVILEGE AT THE CLASS ACT** Temporary exhibition exploring class and identity, until Sun 26 May

**THE WORLD THAT BELONGS TO US** Featuring works of intergenerational artists from the South Asian diasporas of the UK, US and Canada, the exhibition explores community, belonging, migrant storytelling and queer world-making, until Sun 9 June

**...AS WE GATHERED ON THE SHARDS OF A FALLEN MIRROR BALL** Exhibition of new work by Sophia-Layla Afsar (based in Karachi, Pakistan) and Alex Billingham (based in the West Midlands), following the artists' back-to-back residences in both Karachi and Walsall, until Sun 30 June

### Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery

**WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR** Renowned exhibition on loan from the Natural History Museum, until Sun 18 Feb, Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery

### 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 Sun 5 May

### Wolverhampton Art Gallery

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

### ED ISAACS: DRAWING PLACES

Exhibition of intricate, large-scale pencil drawings. Wolverhampton-based artist Isaacs primarily focuses on capturing the 'spirit of an

environment', until Sun 24 March  
**FRIENDS IN FOCUS** Exhibition bringing together a selection of artworks from the gallery's permanent collection, acquired with support from the Friends of Wolverhampton Art Gallery & Museums, until March

### Elsewhere:

**WINTER EXHIBITION** Selection of works from artists James Millichamp, Rosie Lavis, Dave Gunning, Sam Davis and Mark Lord. Exhibition includes photography, lino prints, and works inspired by the Shropshire landscape, until Wed 28 Feb, Ironbridge Fine Arts, Shropshire

**JANE KEAY: THE LIGHT CHANGES** Exhibition of ink drawings and watercolours, until Sat 16 Mar, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South 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 Mar, Stourbridge Glass Museum  
**HARLEQUINADE: A GREAT BRITISH PANTO!** Exhibition that uses puppets and Toy Theatre to explore Harlequinade: a clown-led, slapstick adaptation of commedia dell'arte, until Sun 31 Mar, Bantock House, Wolverhampton

**SEE ME** Exhibition by photographer Ming de Nasty featuring 14 new portraits of older LGBT+ residents of Shropshire. The portraits are part of a wider project across multiple Shrewsbury venues, until Sun 14 Apr, Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery and Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**CONTEMPORARY PÂTE DE VERRE: THE MATERIAL OF TIME** Unique exhibition of internationally acclaimed Pâte de Verre glass artists, until Sun 23 Jun, Stourbridge Glass Museum

**DARWIN & THE MOUNT** Small exhibition of documents relating to Charles Darwin and his family home at The Mount, Shrewsbury, Sat 3 Feb, Shropshire Archives, Shrewsbury

**YOUNG DARWIN EXHIBITION** Celebrating the life and discoveries of Charles Darwin, Wed 7 Feb - Sat 17 Feb, The Bear Steps Gallery, Shrewsbury

**SHREWSBURY STREETSCAPE PROJECT: THE FIRST FIVE YEARS** Exhibition by local artist & architect James St Clair Wade, presenting a series of unique architectural perspectives of buildings around Shrewsbury, Fri 16 Feb - Tues 12 Mar, The Hive, Shrewsbury



Bombay Bicycle Club - O2 Academy, Birmingham

## Gigs

**BAT SABBATH + MARGARITA** Thurs 1 Feb, Castle & Falcon, B'ham

**WE THREE KINGS OF ROCK N ROLL - BUDDY HOLLY, ROY ORBISON & ELVIS** Thurs 1 Feb, Brierley Hill Civic, Dudley

**WHITNEY - QUEEN OF THE NIGHT** Thurs 1 Feb, Dudley Town Hall

**MADDIE MORRIS** Thurs 1 Feb, Ludlow Distillery, South Shropshire

**QUO CONNECTION** Thurs 1 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

**SERIOUSLY COLLINS** Thurs 1 Feb, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

**THE FREDDIE & QUEEN EXPERIENCE** Thurs 1 Feb, Telford Theatre, Oakengates, Shrops

**ANDI** Fri 2 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**THERAPY?** Fri 2 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**BOMBAY BICYCLE CLUB** Fri 2 Feb, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**80'S LIVE** Fri 2 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

**BOOTLEG ABBA** Fri 2 Feb, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

**OASIS** Fri 2 Feb, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

**WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT? - TINA TURNER TRIBUTE** Fri 2 Feb, Walsall Arena & Arts Centre

**DEFINITELY MIGHTBE + ADORED** Fri 2 Feb, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

**DESPERADOS - A**

**CELEBRATION OF THE EAGLES** Fri 2 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

**MALEVOLENCE + PAIN OF TRUTH + ROUGH JUSTICE** Fri 2 Feb, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

**ANTARCTIC MONKEYS** Fri 2 Feb, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

**ABBA SENSATION** Fri 2 Feb, Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent

**ION MAIDEN + CRAIG S SIMCOX** Fri 2 Feb, The Station, Cannock

**THE RONNIE SCOTT'S STORY** Fri 2 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

**YOUNG ELTON** Fri 2 Feb, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

**REND COLLECTIVE + CHRIS RENZEMA** Sat 3 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**AFTERTHOUGHT + WOODEN DOG + SHOFTALK + EVER + BLINDEYE** Sat 3 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**NIRVANA UK + THE SUNSET LIMITED** Sat 3 Feb, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**MADDIE MORRIS** Sat 3 Feb, Violets Tea Room, Bridgnorth, South Shropshire

**THANK YOU FOR THE MUSIC - ABBA TRIBUTE** Sat 3 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

**JOHNNY2BAD + BIG SHIP ALLIANCE** Sat 3 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

**BUCKCHERRY + THE TREATMENT + RUBIKON** Sat 3 Feb, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

**SUPREME QUEEN** Sat 3

Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

**KAZABIAN VS ARCTIC MONKEYZ** Sat 3 Feb, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

**MERCURY - QUEEN TRIBUTE** Sat 3 Feb, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

**SPOUKY KIDS + NIN UK** Sat 3 Feb, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

**MIK ARTISTIK'S EGO TRIP** Sat 3 Feb, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

**LAST DAYS OF DISCO** Sat 3 Feb, Prince Of Wales Theatre, Cannock

**KILLAZ UK** Sat 3 Feb, The Station, Cannock

**LANDSLIDE - THE MUSIC OF FLEETWOOD MAC** Sat 3 Feb, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

**THE ELVIS YEARS** Sat 3 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**UNIT 47** Sat 3 Feb, The Firefly, Oakengates, Shropshire

**PETER KNIGHT AND JOHN SPIERS** Sat 3 Feb, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shrops

**ULTIMATE CLASSIC ROCK SHOW** Sat 3 Feb, Crewe Lyceum

**EMILIO SANTORO AS ELVIS** Sun 4 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**RICH PARSONS** Sun 4 Feb, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

**THE GEORGE HARRISON STORY** Sun 4 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**LEWIS CAPALDISH** Sun 4 Feb, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury



## Classical Music

**BBC PHILHARMONIC: TCHAIKOVSKY'S VIOLIN CONCERTO** Featuring Karen Gomyo (soloist) and John Storgårds (conductor). Programme includes works by Shostakovich, Tchaikovsky and Sibelius, Fri 2 Feb, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

**CONCERTS IN THE ROUND** Lunchtime concert featuring Anthony Pinel (organ), Fri 2 Feb, St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury

**ORGAN CONCERT WITH CALLUM ALGER** Sat 3 Feb, Shrewsbury Abbey

**ECHO RISING STARS: SEBASTIAN HEINDL - CHARLIE CHAPLIN'S THE GOLD RUSH** Featuring Sebastian Heindl (organ) improvising a soundtrack to Chaplain's classic silent comedy, Sun 4 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

**PRIMROSE PIANO QUARTET** Featuring Susanne Stanzeleit (violin), Dorothea Vogel (viola), Andrew Fuller (cello) and John Thwaites (piano). Programme includes works by Brahms and Chausson, Sun 4 Feb, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**BIRMINGHAM PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA: SHOWTIME!** Featuring Richard Laing (conductor). Programme includes works by Gershwin, Porter, Rodgers, Sondheim and more, Sun 4 Feb, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

## Comedy

**JANINE HAROUNI** Thurs 1 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH HATTY PRESTON, PAUL THORNE & COMICS TBC** Thurs 1 Feb, The Glee Club, B'ham

**IGNACIO LOPEZ, ROB ROUSE, DAWN BAILEY, EDD MIDGLEY & DAVE TWENTYMAN** Thurs 1 Feb, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

**MICHAEL MCINTYRE** Thurs 1 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

**KUM-N-AVALOFF COMEDY NIGHT** Thurs 1 Feb, Stourbridge Town Hall

**JOSH PUGH** Thurs 1 Feb, Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

**JEFF INNOCENT** Thurs 1 - Fri 2 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), B'ham

**JONATHAN PIE** Fri 2 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**ANIA MAGLIANO** Fri 2 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**CHRISTOPHER MACARTHUR-BOYD, HATTY PRESTON, PAUL THORNE, BLANK PENG & COMIC TBC** Fri 2 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**AL MURRAY** Fri 2 Feb, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

**GUZ KHAN** Fri 2 - Sat 3 Feb, Birmingham Hippodrome

**STEWART LEE** Sat 3 Feb, Symphony

Hall, Birmingham

**CHRISTOPHER MACARTHUR-BOYD, HATTY PRESTON, PAUL THORNE & COMIC TBC** Sat 3 Feb, The Glee Club, B'ham

**UROOJ ASHFAQ** Sat 3 Feb, The Rep, Birmingham

**BOBBY DAVRO, DANNY POSTHILL & WAYNE BEESE** Sat 3 Feb, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

**SAM AVERY** Sat 3 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury



**TOM HOUGHTON** Sun 4 Feb, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

**STEWART LEE** Sun 4 Feb, Aston Hall, Wrexham

## Theatre

**THE FULL MONTY** New production celebrating the 25th anniversary of the film of the same name. Starring Danny Hatchard (EastEnders), Jake Quickenden (Footloose, Hair & X Factor), Bill Ward (Coronation Street/Emmerdale), Neil Hurst (Fat Friends The Musical), Ben Onwukwe (The Shawshank Redemption) & Nicholas Prasad (Around The World In 80 Days), until Sat 3 Feb, The Alexandra, Birmingham



**DO I LOVE YOU?** John Godber comedy concerning twentysomethings Sally, Nat and Kyle, who develop a love for Northern Soul, until Sat 3 Feb, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

**THE MERCHANT OF VENICE 1936** Tracy-Ann Oberman stars as Shylock in a reimagining of Shakespeare's play. The production is back at the RSC following a sell-out run in 2023, until Sat 10 Feb, Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

**A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM** Mathew Baynton (Horrible Histories/Ghosts) stars as Bottom in Shakespeare's captivating comedy, until Sat 30 Mar, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

**THIS IS A LOVE STORY** Workshop

performances of a brand-new pop musical, telling the 200,000-year love story of Earth and Humanity, Thurs 1 - Fri 2 Feb, Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

**MOTHER GOOSE** Presented by Startime Variety, Thurs 1 - Sun 4 Feb, Halesowen Town Hall

**INTO THE MELTING POT** Clare Norburn's concertplay tells of love, community and racial intolerance experienced by Jewish, Christian and Muslim women in 1490s Spain. Presented by The Telling, Fri 2 Feb, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

**JACK AND THE BEANSTALK P\*SSSED UP PANTO** Featuring adult themes and strong language, Fri 2 Feb, Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke-on-Trent

**BEAUTY AND THE BIG BEAST** Adult panto in which three actors present their very own version of the classic fairytale. Expect fast-moving farcical fun and bawdy sexual innuendo, Fri 2 Feb, Prince of Wales Theatre, Cannock

**THREE SISTERS** Central Youth Theatre bring Chekhov's classic characters into the modern day, Sat 3 - Sun 4 Feb, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

## Kids Theatre

**BLUEY'S BIG PLAY** Brand-new theatrical adaptation of the Emmy award-winning children's television series, Thurs 1 - Sun 4 Feb, Birmingham Hippodrome

**DEAR ZOO** Interactive show for children, based on Rod Campbell's popular lift-the-flap book, Fri 2 - Sun 4 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**THE MAHARAJA'S EXPRESS** Sohan Kailey presents a multi-sensory storytelling and up-close theatrical experience with colourful puppetry and enchanting music. Part of Wolverhampton Literature Festival, Sat 3 Feb, Whitmore Reans Library, Wolverhampton

## DRAG QUEEN STORY HOUR UK

Entertaining and interactive children's shows conveying the message that embracing differences is a positive experience. Presented by Aida H Dee as part of Wolverhampton Literature Festival, Sat 3 Feb, Wolverhampton Art Gallery

**YOU ARE THE SUN** An opera for babies and grown-ups that explores the magic of nature, Sun 4 Feb, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

## Light Entertainment

### QUEENZ - THE SHOW WITH BALLS

Dazzling divas deliver a night of fun and fabulousness with live vocals and a set list of party pop anthems, Fri 2 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre



**GHOST HUNS PODCAST LIVE** Join comedians Hannah Byczkowski and Suzie Preece as they present the 'world's creepiest ghost stories'. Part of Wolverhampton Literature Festival, Fri 2 Feb, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

**WOLVES, WONDER AND WORDSMITHS A** storytelling event exploring the love of a father for his son and showing how life can be not just endured but enjoyed - even in the most difficult of circumstances. A Wolverhampton Literature Festival event, Fri 2 Feb, Bantock House, Wolverhampton

**TALES OF THE WINDRUSH CHILDREN** The stories of the descendants of



Bluey's Big Play - Birmingham Hippodrome





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Windrush pioneers, born into Caribbean homes in the UK, and the Caribbean in the 1940s, 50s, 60s & 70s. Hosted by Marcia M Spence and delivered through book readings, song and dance. A Wolverhampton Literature Festival event, Fri 2 Feb, Wolverhampton Art Gallery

**LINE DANCING WITH THE DOUBLE DOLLY'S** An evening of comedy, Dolly Parton songs sung live and line dancing... Sat 3 Feb, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

**THE BLUE BADGE BUNCH** Innovative production where each of the show's interactive games represents a different disability, providing kids and grown-ups with an open and fun environment in which to learn about autism, cerebral palsy and more... Sat 3 Feb, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent



**DAZZLING DIAMONDS** Brand-new comedy variety show packed with dance routines, live vocals and 'side-splitting' comedy sketches, Sun 4 Feb, Prince of Wales Theatre, Cannock

**MOST HAUNTED LIVE** Yvette Fielding presents a whole new theatrical experience in which audience members are taken back to the Victorian age of seances and Ouija boards to conduct their own ghostly investigation, Sun 4 Feb, Crewe Lyceum Theatre



## Talks & Spoken Word

**IN CONVERSATION WITH PAULINE BLACK OBE** Exclusive event in which the Coventry-born singer-songwriter shares her story of music, race, family and roots - as chronicled in her critically acclaimed memoir, *Black By Design*, Thurs 1 Feb, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

**CONFESSIONS OF A TELETUBBY** Join Nikky Smedley (the original LaaLaa)

as she spills the beans on the iconic children's TV show, Thurs 1 - Fri 2 Feb, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

**EMMA KENNY'S KILLER CULTS** Psychology expert Emma Kenny continues her journey into true crime and explores the mysterious and manipulative world of cults, Fri 2 Feb, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

**JAMES O'BRIEN IN CONVERSATION** One of the UK's most popular talk radio hosts will discuss how a select few have conspired - sometimes by incompetence, sometimes by design - to bring Britain to its knees. Part of Wolverhampton Literature Festival, Fri 2 Feb, The Halls, Wolverhampton

**NOTORIOUS: IN CONVERSATION WITH RAPHAEL ROWE** An evening with the celebrated investigative reporter and host of Netflix's *Inside The World's Toughest Prisons*. A Wolverhampton Literature Festival event, Fri 2 Feb, Wolverhampton Art Gallery

**FRED KARNO - THE LEGEND BEHIND THE LAUGHTER** David Crump talks about his new book, which sheds fresh light on the early careers of Charlie Chaplin and Stan Laurel. Part of Wolverhampton Literature Festival, Fri 2 Feb, Georgian Gallery, Wolverhampton Art Gallery

**ENTER** Poets and artists unite in a creative exploration of our shared world. Part of Wolverhampton Literature Festival, Sat 3 Feb, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

**FEARLESS: IN CONVERSATION WITH LOUISE MINCHIN** Louise shares a host of exhilarating adventures - from freediving under the ice in the dark in Finland, to cycling across Argentina - and recounts the compelling stories of some of the women she met along the way. Part of Wolverhampton Literature Festival, Sat 3 Feb, Wolverhampton Art Gallery

**MANZ DEM** Join Edgbaston-born musician Derrick Wallace as he discusses his book, *Manz Dem* - a musical project carried out by 15 of the most important African/Caribbean/Caribbean dual heritage guitarists. Part of Wolverhampton Literature Festival, Sat 3 Feb, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

**VOICES BEHIND CLOSED DOORS** An evening of storytelling, spoken word, drama and dance that breaks the silence surrounding domestic abuse. Part of Wolverhampton Literature Festival, Sat 3 Feb, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

**TALES UNFINISHED** A semi-improvised live storytelling experience using Green Ronin's Fantasy AGE RPG system. Part of Wolverhampton Literary Festival, Sat 3 Feb, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

**DANCING BAREFOOT - IN CONVERSATION WITH GLYN BROWN** A Wolverhampton Literature Festival event, Sat 3 Feb,



Arenacross British Championship - Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

**WHAT'S THE LADY DOING? IN CONVERSATION WITH LOU SANDERS** An evening of 'side-splitting humour, profound insights, and relatable anecdotes that will leave you in stitches and make you reflect on your own journey through life'. Part of Wolverhampton Literature Festival, Sat 3 Feb, Wolverhampton Art Gallery

**ROBIN INCE: WEAPONS OF EMPATHY** Expect 'a chaos of words and ideas, love and delight. And also a very long reading list'. Part of Wolverhampton Literature Festival, Sun 4 Feb, Wolverhampton Art Gallery



**BECAUSE I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN AND WHAT YOU DON'T: IN CONVERSATION WITH JOSIE LONG** Join award-winning comedian Josie Long as she discusses her fiction debut collection with Book Shambles colleague Robin Ince. Part of Wolverhampton Literature Festival, Sun 4 Feb, Wolverhampton Art Gallery

## Events

**SEED LIGHTS** A light & sound event, with animations, poetry, music and live performance inspired by artist Saranjit Birdi, until Thurs 29 Feb, Birmingham Botanical Gardens

**WOLVERHAMPTON LITERATURE FESTIVAL** Celebrating arts and culture in the city with Sathnam Sanghera, Louise Minchin, Raphael Rowe, Lou Sanders, James O'Brien and many more, Fri 2 - Sun 4 Feb, various

venues in Wolverhampton

**GUIDED TOUR OF WEOLEY CASTLE** Explore Weoley Castle with experienced guides and see real finds from the site on display in the visitor centre, Sat 3 Feb, Weoley Castle, Birmingham

**EXPLORE SAREHOLE MILL** Enjoy the sights and sounds of a traditional 18th-century water mill at your own pace, Sat 3 Feb, Sarehole Mill, B'ham

**2023/24 ARENACROSS BRITISH CHAMPIONSHIP** A high-octane mix of indoor motocross racing, Sat 3 Feb, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

**RAKU WORKSHOP** Have a go at making a unique raku fired pot, Sat 3 Feb, Gladstone Pottery Museum, Stoke-on-Trent

**BEYOND THE MASK** Look at some 18th & 19th-century arsenic poisoning cases with a retired Coventry West Midlands police officer, Sat 3 Feb, West Midlands Police Museum, Birmingham

**MOTORSPORT WITH ATTITUDE** A show aimed at drivers and fans of all types of motorsport, Sat 3 - Sun 4 Feb, Staffordshire County Showground, Stafford

**TATTOO FREEZE 2024** Hundreds of tattoo artists all under one roof, Sat 3 - Sun 4 Feb, Telford International Centre, Shropshire

**LAMBING WEEKENDS** Meet new-born lambs and expectant mums, Sat 3 - Sun 4 Feb, Forge Mill Farm, West Bromwich

**ORIGINS OF MIDDLE-EARTH: JRR TOLKIEN AND SAREHOLE GUIDED WALK** A guided walk introducing the scenery that inspired JRR Tolkien when he lived near Sarehole Mill as a child, Sun 4 Feb, Sarehole Mill, Birmingham

**CAMPER MART 2024** Shop and chat all things VW Camper, Sun 4 Feb, Telford International Centre, Shropshire





Róisín Murphy - *The Civic at The Halls, Wolverhampton*

## Gigs

**THE VACCINES** Mon 5 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**THE CHISEL + RIFLE** Mon 5 Feb, The Flapper, Birmingham

**MALEVOLENCE + PAIN OF TRUTH + ROUGH JUSTICE** Mon 5 Feb, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

**THE MENZINGERS** Tues 6 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**THEA GILMORE + LIAM FROST** Tues 6 Feb, The Glee Club, B'ham

**BELINDA O'HOOLEY + THE CHERRY STONES** Wed 7 Feb, Red Lion Folk Club, Birmingham

**KEITH JAMES - THE MUSIC OF CAT STEVENS** Wed 7 Feb, Newhampton Arts Centre, W'hampton

**HILLBILLY VEGAS** Wed 7 Feb, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

**KOSHEEN** Thurs 8 Feb, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

**MICHAEL STARRING BEN** Thurs 8 Feb, Dudley Town Hall

**PIGFOOT PLAY ELLINGTON** Thurs 8 Feb, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

**THE CARPENTERS - VOICE OF THE HEART** Thurs 8 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

**SOMEONE LIKE YOU - THE ADELE SONGBOOK** Thurs 8 Feb, Theatre

Severn, Shrewsbury

**SHARON SHANNON** Fri 9 Feb, Nortons, Digbeth, Birmingham

**KRYPTIC + UNDERGROUNDRIOT + VERLOREN + CREEDITE + ROOTED** Fri 9 Feb, O2 Institute, B'ham

**THE FOOZ FIGHTERS** Fri 9 Feb, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

**RATS IN THE KITCHEN - UB40 TRIBUTE** Fri 9 Feb, Brierley Hill Civic, Dudley

**FLASH - A TRIBUTE TO QUEEN** Fri 9 Feb, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

**TRANSMISSION - JOY DIVISION TRIBUTE + THE VELVETS + FUNERAL PLANS** Fri 9 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

**YOU ME AT SIX + DEAF HAVANA** Fri 9 Feb, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

**KOSHEEN** Fri 9 Feb, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

**ULITIMATE MADNEZZ** Fri 9 Feb, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

**KINGS OF LEIGHON** Fri 9 Feb, The Quarter at Potbank, Stoke-on-Trent

**JACQUELYN HYNES** Fri 9 Feb, Potteries Folk Club, Stoke-on-Trent

**SOUND TRADITION** Fri 9 Feb, The Albion, Burton on Trent

**THE TAKE THAT EXPERIENCE** Fri 9 Feb, Stafford Gatehouse

Theatre

**ULTIMATE COLDPLAY** Fri 9 Feb, The Station, Cannock

**ED SHEERAN TRIBUTE SHOW** Fri 9 Feb, Lichfield Guildhall

**KD AND THE DOGS** Fri 9 Feb, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

**THE 80S SHOW** Fri 9 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**CHARLIE DORE** Fri 9 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**ABBA REVIVAL** Fri 9 Feb, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

**TAPESTRY: AN EVENING IN LAUREL CANYON** Fri 9 Feb, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shrops

**SEA POWER** Sat 10 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

**TRANSATLANTIC SESSIONS** Sat 10 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**THE MUSIC OF LIONEL RICHIE** Sat 10 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

**MAN THE LIFEBOATS** Sat 10 Feb, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

**RÓISÍN MURPHY** Sat 10 Feb, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

**WHO'S NEXT** Sat 10 Feb, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

**THE U2 EXPERIENCE** Sat 10 Feb, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

**THE UPBEAT BEATLES** Sat 10 Feb, Telford Theatre, Oakengates, Shropshire

**MAJID JORDAN** Sun 11 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**SIMPLE PLAN** Sun 11 Feb, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**DIRTY HONEY** Sun 11 Feb, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**THE SONGS OF JONI MITCHELL** Sun 11 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

**TOPLOADER** Sun 11 Feb, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

**THE MUSIC OF LIONEL RICHIE** Sun 11 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

## Classical Music

**LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATION** Featuring Di Xiao (piano), Jennie Zhan (pipa), Pinyan Lin (guzheng) & the University Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Daniele Rosina. Programme includes Xian's Yellow River Piano Concerto, Thurs 8 Feb, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, University of Birmingham

**A VIENNESE STRAUSS GALA** Presented by Theatre Productions Europe Ltd, Thurs 8 Feb, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

**CONCERTS IN THE ROUND: KELL WIND TRIO** Lunchtime concert featuring Alastair Roberts (flute), Geoffrey Smith (clarinet) & Ian Harvey (bassoon), Fri 9 Feb, St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury

**EX CATHEDRA: BAROQUE PASSION, MUSIC OF HEARTBREAK & HEALING** Featuring Jeffrey Skidmore (conductor), Andrew Skidmore (cello) and the Ex Cathedra Consort & Continuo. Programme includes works by JS Bach, Purcell, Lotti, D Scarlatti, Monteverdi and Carissimi, Sun 11 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

**BIRMINGHAM PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA: SHOWTIME!** Featuring Richard Laing (conductor). Programme includes works by Gershwin, Porter, Rodgers, Sondheim and more... Sun 11 Feb, Walsall Arena

## Comedy

**ALISON SPITTLE** Wed 7 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**THE ALTER COMEDY CLUB** Wed 7 Feb, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

**MILES JUPP** Thurs 8 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

**BARRY DODDS, HARRIET DYER, KEVIN FINN & STEPHEN BAILEY** Thurs 8 Feb, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

**ED BYRNE** Fri 9 Feb, B'ham Town Hall

**JIMEOIN** Fri 9 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**SHAZIA MIRZA, JACOB HAWLEY, MIKE RICE, CHRIS YATES & BELLA HULL** Fri 9 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**MATT GREEN** Fri 9 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**JARLATH REGAN** Fri 9 Feb, The Old Rep, Birmingham

**COMEDY IN THE MET** Fri 9 Feb, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

**NICK HELM, LOU CONRAN, HARVEY HAWKINS & WAYNE BEESE** Fri 9 Feb, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

**ADAM ROWE** Fri 9 Feb, Dudley Town Hall

**COMEDY IN THE ATTIC** Fri 9 Feb, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

**SHAZIA MIRZA, JACOB HAWLEY, MIKE RICE & COMIC TBC** Sat 10 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**BIG DEAL COMEDY** Sat 10 Feb, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

**HARRIET DYER** Sat 10 Feb, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

**RUSSELL KANE, TERRY ALDERTON, LOU CONRAN & WAYNE BEESE** Sat 10 Feb, Brierley Hill Civic, Dudley

**TOM HOUGHTON** Sun 11 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**EL BALDINIHO, DEAN COUGHLIN, SAM SERRANO & JENNY COLLIER** Sun 11 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**VICTOR PĂTRĂȘCAN & COMICS TBC** Sun 11 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

## Theatre

**OH WHAT A LOVELY WAR** Joan Littlewood's epic musical offers an amusing yet heart-breaking snapshot of the life lived by those caught in the crossfire of conflict, Mon 5 - Wed 7 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**THE WOMAN IN BLACK** Stage adaptation of Susan Hill's chilling ghost story, Tues 6 - Sat 10 Feb, The Alexandra, Birmingham

**THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW** The return of Richard O'Brien's legendary rock & roll musical, Tues 6 - Sat 10 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

**GOD OF CARNAGE** Stoke Rep Players present an amateur version of Yasmina Reza's comedy of manners, Tues 6 - Sat 10 Feb, Stoke Repertory Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

**CINDERELLA** Presented by The Mary Stevens Hospice Pantomime Company and starring Coronation Street's Bruce Jones as Baron Hardup, Britain's Got Talent finalist Amy-Lou as the Fairy Godmother, Will Phipps as Buttons and Wally Wombat as the evil stepmother, Tues 6 - Wed 14 Feb, Stourbridge Town Hall

**MADAMA BUTTERFLY** The Ukrainian National Opera presents its version of Puccini's tale of unrequited love, Wed 7 Feb, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

**THE IT** Grand Arena Youth Theatre Seniors group present an amateur version of Vivienne Franzmann's darkly comic state-of-the-nation play, 'exploring adolescent mental health and the rage within', Wed 7 - Thurs 8 Feb, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

**BOY ON THE ROOF** Fully masked theatre company Vamos present their latest production - the story of an unlikely friendship in which acceptance, understanding and love find their way to centre stage, Wed 7



# Monday 5 - Sunday 11 February

- Thurs 8 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**ALADDIN** Cloc Musical Theatre Company present a fun-filled pantomime adventure featuring toe-tapping tunes, puppetry and audience participation, Wed 7 - Sat 10 Feb, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

**CONFETTI** A queer rom-com following unlucky-in-love event planner Felix in the lead-up to his best friend's wedding, Fri 9 Feb, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

**P\*\*\*ED UP PANTO: JACK AND THE BEANSTALK** Featuring adult themes and strong language, Fri 9 Feb, Telford Theatre

**KING ARTHUR** Le Navet Bete present a brand-new comedy retelling of the Arthur legends, Fri 9 - Sat 10 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

**CINDERELLA & THE PANTOMIME THIEF** Presented by The Castle Players, Fri 9 - Sat 10 Feb, SpArC, Bishops Castle, South Shropshire

**A LEAP IN THE DARK** Ron Hutchinson's fast-paced comedy caper sees eight actors take on a whole host of characters to pay homage to the BBC and the invention of radio plays, Fri 9 Feb - Sat 2 Mar, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

## Kids Theatre

**MISCHIEF & MYSTERY IN MOOMINVALLEY** Heart-warming children's show based on the much-loved novels of Tove Jansson, Sat 10 Feb, Justham Family Room & Jane How Room, Symphony Hall, B'ham

**OSKAR'S AMAZING ADVENTURE** Theatre Fideri Fidera fuse storytelling, physical theatre, clowning, puppetry & music to tell the tale of a puppy's search for friendship in the wilderness of the Alps, Sat 10 Feb, Blackheath Library, Rowley Regis

## Dance

**EDWARD SCISSORHANDS** Sir Matthew Bourne's acclaimed production, based on Tim Burton's iconic movie, Tues 6 - Sat 10 Feb, Birmingham Hippodrome

## Light Entertainment

**FRIEND (THE ONE WITH GUNTHER)** The entire 236 episodes of hit 1990s TV show Friends, retold through the eyes of Gunther, Central Perk's very own 'seventh friend', Thurs 8 Feb, Prince of Wales Theatre, Cannock

**DAVE BIBBY: BABY DINOSAUR** Songs, characters and stand-up combine in

a show about parenthood and dinosaurs, Thurs 8 - Fri 9 Feb, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

**THE BLUE BADGE BUNCH** Innovative production where each of the show's interactive games represents a different disability, providing kids and grown-ups with an open and fun environment in which to learn about autism, cerebral palsy and more... Sat 10 Feb, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

**TRÈS TRÈS CABARET** The promise of a 'saucy night to remember', with a unique line-up at every show, Sat 10 Feb, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

**THE WORLD ACCORDING TO KALEB** Join the celebrity farmer as he presents his views on everything from farm animals to Jeremy Clarkson, Sat 10 Feb, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

**POP DIVAS LIVE!** Pop concert experience with family-friendly choreography and hit songs from the likes of Little Mix, Taylor Swift, Katy Perry, Ariana Grande, Billie Eilish, Olivia Rodrigo, Dua Lipa, JoJo Siwa and many more... Sat 10 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**CANDACE BUSHNELL: TRUE TALES OF SEX, SUCCESS, AND SEX AND THE CITY!** Acclaimed one-woman show from the creator of TV's Sex And The City. Age guidance is 18-plus, Sun 11 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

## Events

**THE BEATLES BY CANDLELIGHT** Featuring a cast of West End singers and a live band performing the best-loved songs of The Beatles, Wed 7 - Fri 9 Feb, Lichfield Cathedral

**ADULTS NIGHTS** Visit the ultimate Indoor Lego playground completely kid-free - and this month with a Valentine's theme, Fri 9 Feb, Legoland Discovery Centre, B'ham

**GHOSTS AT THE LOCK UP** A night of ghost stories and spooky tales, Fri 9 Feb, West Midlands Police Museum, Birmingham

**PINK FLOYD'S THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON** New, full-dome experience featuring 10 tracks from The Dark Side Of The Moon set to stunning 360° visuals, Sat 10 Feb, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

**MORNING EXPLORERS** Autism-friendly visiting times and activities, Sat 10 Feb, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

**ELVIS BY CANDLELIGHT** Featuring a live band, backing vocalists and one of the UK's leading Elvis tributes, Sat 10 Feb, Lichfield Cathedral

**THE 2024 BIRMINGHAM INTERNATIONAL TATTOO** Bringing together massed marching bands, pipes and drums, and displays including the Inter-Service Field Gun Competition,



Stephen Bailey - The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

dog-racing during the British Flyball Association competition, plus massed dancers, Sat 10 - Sun 11 Feb, Resorts World Arena, B'ham



**CLASSIC DIRT BIKE SHOW 2024** The UK's biggest classic off-road show, Sat 10 - Sun 11 Feb, Telford International Centre, Shropshire

**BRITISH FLY FAIR INTERNATIONAL** Premier fly fishing show, Sat 10 - Sun 11 Feb, Staffordshire County Showground, Stafford

**FEBRUARY HALF TERM SERVICE** Enjoy a journey on the Severn Valley Railway, with both steam and heritage diesel locomotives hauling trains the full length of the line, Sat 10 - Sun 11 Feb, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

**COSMIC CLAY WORKSHOPS** Series of drop-in workshops for kids, during which they will be able to make clay stars and planets using air dry clay, Sat 10 - Sun 18 Feb, Coalport China Museum, Ironbridge, Shropshire

**A TRIP TO THE MOON** Step back in time to the world of silent movies with Georges Méliès' 1902 film, A Trip To The Moon, Sat 10 - Sun 18 Feb, Blists Hill Victorian Town, Ironbridge

**COMETS AND CONSTELLATIONS** Family-friendly immersive adventure uncovering the marvels of the universe with VR and AR experiences, Sat 10 - Sun 18 Feb, Enginuity, Ironbridge

**LAMBING LIVE** Families can visit the lambs in the huge indoor barn. You might even get to see a live birth! Sat 10 - Sun 18 Feb, Park Hall Farm, Oswestry, North Shropshire

**SKY'S THE LIMIT** RAF thrills & spills courtesy of theatre shows and

storytelling sessions, Sat 10 - Sun 18 Feb, Royal Air Force Museum Midlands, Cosford

**DINOSAUR BREAKOUT** Step into the dino-verse to enjoy a pre-historic expedition, Sat 10 - Tues 20 Feb, Drayton Manor Resort, Staffordshire

**CHINESE NEW YEAR TRAIL** Use your birth year to discover your Zodiac animal and see if you can find it hiding in the garden, Sat 10 - Sat 24 Feb, Biddulph Grange Garden, Staffordshire

**THE PIRATE TAKEOVER** Set sail and discover buried treasure! Sat 10 - Sun 25 Feb, Alton Towers Resort, Staffordshire

**NEW LIFE ON THE FARM** Say hello to the cute new arrivals at the farm, Sat 10 - Sun 25 Feb, National Forest Adventure Farm, Burton upon Trent

**ORIGINS OF MIDDLE-EARTH: JRR TOLKIEN AND SAREHOLE GUIDED WALK** A guided walk introducing the scenery that inspired JRR Tolkien when he lived near Sarehole Mill as a child, Sun 11 Feb, Sarehole Mill, Birmingham

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SCIENCE DAY** Visitors can explore the museum at their leisure using the 'Women in STEM'-focused map, Sun 11 Feb, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

**CHINESE NEW YEAR OF THE DRAGON** Welcome in the Lunar New Year of the Dragon with traditional music and dance, including dragon and lion dance performances, Sun 11 Feb, The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent

**STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY WEDDING SHOW** Event featuring more than 70 exhibitors, Sun 11 Feb, Staffordshire County Showground, Stafford

**LUNAR NEW YEAR 2024** One of the largest Lunar New Year celebrations in the UK, produced by Birmingham Hippodrome and Birmingham Chinese Festival Committee, Sun 11 Feb, Southside, Birmingham



# Homebuilding & Renovating Show

OFFICIAL  
SPONSOR

express  
bi-folding doors

21 - 24 March 2024 | NEC, Birmingham

30  
YEARS  
1994-2024

Get 2  
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worth £36\*

## The UK's best show for anyone looking to create their dream home.

**Browse, touch and compare the products and services** from well-known leading brands. From doors & windows to flooring to heating, structural systems, home technology, and much more, we've got it covered.

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Whether it's an extension, conversion, full renovation or self build - take a seat in one of our four Theatres to hear industry experts sharing their knowledge.



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[homebuildingshow.co.uk/pr-whats-midlands](https://homebuildingshow.co.uk/pr-whats-midlands)



\*Ticket Offer expires 3pm 20 March. Saving based on one day full price tickets for two people. Children 16 and under go free.

#### SPONSORS AND PARTNERS







Campbell Jensen - Morris Hall, Shrewsbury

### Gigs

**NIEVE ELLA** Mon 12 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**ABC** Mon 12 Feb, Symphony Hall, B'ham

**TAMERA** Tues 13 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**J.I.** Tues 13 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**KIM PETRAS + GEORGIA + ALEX CHAPMAN** Tues 13 Feb, O2 Academy, B'ham

**KEZIA GILL, JADE HELLIWELL, DEMI MARRINER AND JESS THRISTAN** Tues 13 Feb, Symphony Hall, B'ham

**NIEVE ELLA** Wed 14 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**THE GILMOUR PROJECT** Wed 14 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

**FRANK CARTER AND THE RATTLESNAKES + THE MYSTERINES + HOTWAX** Wed 14 Feb, Wulfrun at The Halls Wolverhampton

**FAIRPORT CONVENTION** Wed 14 Feb, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

**HERE AT LAST** Thurs 15 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**TOLLEF OSTVANG, TREVOR WATTS AND JOHN EDWARDS** Thurs 15 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), B'ham

**MARQUEE SQUARE HEROES - MARILLION** Thurs 15 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

**THE LEGEND OF BARRY WHITE** Thurs 15 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

**ROCK FOR HEROES** Thurs 15 Feb, Stafford Gatehouse

**THIS IS THE POLICE** Thurs 15 Feb, Theatre On The Steps, Bridgnorth, South Shropshire

**SOLAR EYES** Fri 16 Feb, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

**JORDAN MACKAMPA** Fri 16 Feb, O2 Institute, B'ham

**JORDAN DAVIS + ASHLEY COOKE** Fri 16 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**THE LUKA STATE** Fri 16 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**EXAMPLE** Fri 16 Feb, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**THE LEGEND OF MEATLOAF** Fri 16 Feb, Walsall Arena & Arts Centre

**THE SPECIALS + THE BEAT GB** Fri 16 Feb, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

**HITS OF MOTOWN** Fri 16 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

**PHIL ODGERS** Fri 16 Feb, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

**BAD TOUCH + THE KARMA EFFECT + ELECTRIC BLACK** Fri 16 Feb, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

**BOWLING FOR SOUP + LESS THAN JAKE + VANDOLIER** Fri 16 Feb, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

**LAID - JAMES TRIBUTE** Fri 16 Feb, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

**CHAKA - THE MUSIC OF CHAKA KHAN** Fri 16 Feb, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

**TOM CLARKE** Fri 16 Feb, Keele University, Stoke-on-Trent

**DIZZY LIZZY** Fri 16 Feb, The

Station, Cannock

**CLOUDBUSTING - THE MUSIC OF KATE BUSH** Fri 16 Feb, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

**NORTHERN LIVE** Fri 16 Feb, Telford Theatre, Oakengates, Shropshire

**RANT** Fri 16 Feb, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

**THE ATLANTIC PLAYERS + CATWALK VILLAINS + FALLEN HORSE** Sat 17 Feb, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

**MARIAH THE SCIENTIST** Sat 17 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**PLASTIC FICTION + THE JETTYS + KALEIDOSCOPE + THE ACCENTS + CERY'S CURTIS** Sat 17 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**GLACK + SPINALL + SADBOL** Sat 17 Feb, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**THE PHONICS + A BAND CALLED MALICE** Sat 17 Feb, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**SHOWADDYWADDY** Sat 17 Feb, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

**THE QUAD ROX** Sat 17 Feb, The Rhodhouse, Sutton Coldfield

**THE LITTLE MIX SHOW** Sat 17 Feb, Walsall Arena & Arts Centre

**THE FLEETWOOD MAC LEGACY** Sat 17 Feb, Dudley Town Hall

**SWEDEN DREAMZ - ABBA TRIBUTE** Sat 17 Feb, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

**ESSENTIALLY CHER** Sat 17 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

**THE ENDINGS + MATT JOHNSON & THE REPROBATES + JOE SOLO + JESS SILK TRIO** Sat 17 Feb, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

**EMF** Sat 17 Feb, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

**PYGMY TWYLYTE - THE MUSIC OF FRANK ZAPPA** Sat 17 Feb, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

**PROMISES AND LIES - THE UB40 YEARS** Sat 17 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

**CIEL** Sat 17 Feb, The Sugar Mill, Stoke-on-Trent

**NEARLY DAN** Sat 17 Feb, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

**MATRIX CLUB MATRIX** Sat 17 Feb, The Quarter at Potbank, Stoke-on-Trent

**THE SPONTANES** Sat 17 Feb, The Underground, Stoke-on-Trent

**CHANTEL MCGREGOR** Sat 17 Feb, Lichfield Guildhall

**INTO THE SHADOWS** Sat 17 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**GORDON HENDRICKS AS ELVIS** Sat 17 Feb, Telford Theatre, Oakengates, Shropshire

**SLOWDIVE + WHITELANDS** Sun 18 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**MATT MALTESE** Sun 18 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

**ZARA LARSSON** Sun 18 Feb, O2 Academy, Birmingham



**DEAD BOYS + DESPERATE MEASURES + THEE ACID TONGUE** Sun 18 Feb, The Asylum, Birmingham

**ESPRIT D'AIR** Sun 18 Feb, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

**COLLAPSER + MERCURY + FLESHOLD** Sun 18 Feb, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

**A CELEBRATION OF CELINE DION** Sun 18 Feb, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

**RICH PARSONS** Sun 18 Feb, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

**CAMPBELL JENSEN** Sun 18 Feb, Morris Hall, Shrewsbury

### Classical Music

#### THOMAS TROTTER ORGAN CONCERT

Programme includes works by JS Bach, J Stanley, J Dove, G Fauré and L Boellmann, Mon 12 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

#### ARMONICO CONSORT: THE FORGOTTEN

**SCARLATTI** Featuring Rachel Podger (violin) and the Armonico Consort, directed by Christopher Monks. Programme includes works by Francesco Scarlatti, Bach and Vivaldi, Mon 12 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

#### CLIO DUO

Featuring Inis Asano (viola) and Alexis Eleftheriadou (piano), Tues 13 Feb, St Alkmund's Church, Shrewsbury

#### AQUARELLE GUITAR QUARTET BY

**CANDLELIGHT** Featuring Mike Baker, Vasilis Bessas, James Jervis and Craig Ogden (guitars), Wed 14 Feb, Keele University, Staffordshire



#### CBSO: VALENTINE'S DAY CONCERT

Featuring the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Vassily Sinaisky (conductor) & Natalya Romanow (soprano). Programme includes works by Beethoven & Tchaikovsky, Wed 14 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

#### STRASBOURG PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA: FAIRYTALES AND LEGENDS

Featuring Marko Letonja (conductor) and Nikolai Lugansky (piano - pictured). Programme includes works by Berlioz, Rachmaninov, Franck and Ravel, Thurs 15 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham



#### CONCERTS IN THE ROUND: PIANO DUETS

Lunchtime concert featuring Stephenie & Lloyd Buck (piano), Fri 16 Feb, St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury

#### MIDDAY MANTRA: INDIAN CLASSICAL

Presented by Sampad South Asian Arts and Heritage, Sat 17 Feb, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall, Birmingham



**CBSO YOUTH ORCHESTRA** Featuring Jordan Ashman (percussion) and Jac van Steen (conductor). Programme includes Mahler's Symphony No. 5, and Honstein's Juvenalia, Sun 18 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**BAROQUE-CLASSICAL ORCHESTRA** Featuring Andrew Kirkman (director). Programme includes works by Purcell and Blow, Sun 18 Feb, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, University of Birmingham

## Comedy

**BASKETMOUTH** Tues 13 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**GAURI B** Tues 13 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**BILL BAILEY** Tues 13 Feb, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

**FREDDIE FARRELL & COMICS TBC** Tues 13 Feb, Crown Inn, Oakengates, Telford, Shropshire

**FIONA ALLEN** Wed 14 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**JOSH PUGH** Wed 14 Feb, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

**COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH IGNACIO LOPEZ, MARJOLEIN ROBERTSON & COMICS TBC** Thurs 15 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**MATT FORDE** Thurs 15 Feb, The Old Rep, Birmingham

**ANDY ROBINSON, MICHAEL AKADIRI, IGNACIO LOPEZ, MARJOLEIN ROBERTSON & ALEX STRINGER** Fri 16 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**STEVE HALL & STEVE WILLIAMS** Fri 16 - Sat 17 Feb, The Glee Club, B'ham

**PAUL MCCAFFREY, KATE MARTIN, THE NOISE NEXT DOOR & DAVE LONGLEY** Sat 17 Feb, Rosies Nightclub, B'ham

**ANDY ROBINSON, MICHAEL AKADIRI, IGNACIO LOPEZ & MARJOLEIN ROBERTSON** Sat 17 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**SAM AVERY** Sat 17 Feb, The Old Rep, Birmingham

**NINA GILLIGAN, ANDY WOOLSTON, DEAN COUGHLIN & DAMION LARKIN** Sat 17 Feb, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

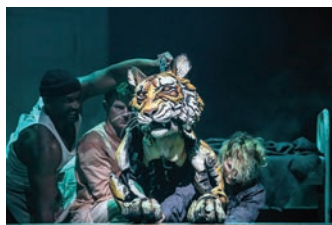
**SAM CAMPBELL** Sun 18 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**MARK WATSON** Sun 18 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury



## Theatre

**LIFE OF PI** 'Jaw-dropping visuals and world-class puppetry' combine in this multi-award-winning production based on Yann Martel's book, Mon 12 - Sat 17 Feb, Birmingham Hippodrome



**CARTOON CIRCUS LIVE!** Featuring traditional slapstick comedy, illusions, a giant dancing bear, cartoon characters, an acrobatic human slinky, prizes and surprises, Tues 13 Feb, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

**BLOOD BROTHERS** Willy Russell's iconic musical, set in his home city of Liverpool. Niki Colwell Evans stars as Mrs Johnstone, Tues 13 - Sat 17 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**SQUIRREL** A story of new growth and new beginnings, with a sprinkling of magic and puppetry to charm audiences of every age, Tues 13 - Sun 18 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

**CARMEN** Opera International's award-winning Ellen Kent production of Bizet's tale of passion, sexual jealousy and death, Wed 14 Feb, The Alexandra, Birmingham



**KAREN** A comic emotional rollercoaster as the show's heroine faces office hell when her ex starts dating her arch-nemesis: Karen, Thurs 15 - Fri 16 Feb, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

**WEST SIDE STORY** Amateur version presented by Starcross Youth Theatre, Thurs 15 - Sat 17 Feb, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

**STRANGER SINGS** Smash-hit parody musical that gives a wild, irreverent twist to hit Netflix series Stranger Things, Sat 17 Feb, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

**BHANGRA NATION** A 'brash, intoxicating and joyous musical comedy' celebrating 'traditions we inherit and those we create', Sat 17 Feb - Sat 16 Mar, The Rep, Birmingham

## Kids Theatre

**THE THREE LITTLE PIGS: THE OINK-TASTIC MUSICAL** Lost The Plot Theatrical present a family classic concerning three piglets - Poppy, Penny & Pat - who leave the family sty in search of adventure, Mon 12 Feb, The Old Rep, Birmingham

**THE VERY HUNGRY CATERPILLAR SHOW** Four of Eric Carle's stories, brought to life using puppetry & music, Mon 12 - Wed 14 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

**DINOSAUR ADVENTURE LIVE - TROUBLE ON VOLCANO ISLAND** An immersive and interactive show for the whole family, Tues 13 Feb, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

**THE LITTLE PRINCE** Puppetry and storytelling combine in Lyngo Theatre's stage version of the much-loved children's book, Tues 13 - Sat 17 Feb, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

**SLEEPING BEAUTY** Tues 13 - Sat 17 Feb, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent

**LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD** The Birmingham Rep's re-telling of this much-loved fairytale takes to the road, showing in libraries and community venues across the region, Wed 14 Feb, Jubilee Park, Tipton Muslim Community Group (11am)



**FIREMAN SAM LIVE! THE GREAT CAMPING ADVENTURE** Brand-new show for younger audiences, Wed 14 Feb, Telford Theatre, Shropshire

**PUSS IN BOOTS** Presented by Market Drayton Amateur Operatic & Dramatic Society, Wed 14 - Sat 17 Feb, Festival Drayton, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

**LUNA LOVES LIBRARY DAY THE MUSICAL** New production for younger audiences based on the critically acclaimed book by Waterstones Children's Laureate, Joseph Coelho, Fri 16 Feb, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

**EXCITING SCIENCE** Educational show packed with fun and fact-filled experiments, Fri 16 Feb, Stourbridge Town Hall



**FIREMAN SAM LIVE! THE GREAT CAMPING ADVENTURE** Brand-new show for younger audiences, Sat 17 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

**MY SHADOW AND ME** One person (and his shadow) meet and go on an incredible, imaginative, shadowy journey where creatures emerge, engage and transform beautifully. Suitable for audience members aged four-plus, Sat 17 Feb, Great Barr Library, Birmingham

**LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD** The Birmingham Rep's re-telling of this much-loved fairytale takes to the road, showing in libraries and community venues across the region, Sat 17 Feb, The Dorothy Parkes Centre, Smethwick (3pm)

## Dance

**TAP FACTORY** Eight male performers present an evening of dance, acrobats, music and comedy in a show for all ages, Fri 16 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

## Light Entertainment

**SING-A-LONG-A MATILDA THE MUSICAL** Fancy-dress is strongly encouraged and full audience participation essential, Tues 13 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

**THE OPERA BOYS - A NIGHT AT THE MUSICALS** Thurs 15 Feb, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

**SAVING GRACE: THE SIZE MATTERS TOUR** Based on the chart-topping podcast and promising surprise guests, belly laughs and outrageous stories, Sat 17 Feb, The Alexandra, Birmingham

**BINGO AT TIFFANY'S** Join award-winning character comedian Tracey Collins (Tina Turner Tea Lady) as she hosts an evening of hilarious bingo games, raucous singalongs and glamorous dancing, Fri 16 - Sat 17 Feb, Old Joint Stock Theatre, B'ham

**OPERA BOYS - A NIGHT AT THE MUSICALS** Sat 17 Feb, Stourbridge Town Hall

**CIRQUE DU HILARIOUS: TEMPLE OF DELUSION** Family entertainment in which CBBC stars Danny & Mick embark on another adventure full of mistakes, pitfalls and danger, Sun 18 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

## Talks & Spoken Word

**DR MICHAEL MOSLEY & DR CLARE BAILEY: EAT (WELL), SLEEP (BETTER), LIVE (LONGER)** The husband & wife



# Monday 12 - Sunday 18 February

team reveal how simple changes can transform your life, Mon 12 Feb, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

**PETE WHITTAKER: FINE LINES** Join the world's top big wall solo climber as he inspires and motivates his audience to explore challenging environments, overcome obstacles and achieve goals... Fri 16 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**AN AUDIENCE WITH LUCY WORSLEY ON AGATHA CHRISTIE** Join the historian as she uncovers the real Agatha - a person who, despite obstacles of class and gender, became a successful working woman, Sat 17 Feb, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent



**BRIAN BILSTON & HENRY NORMAL** An evening of poems 'to be enjoyed, not endured', Sat 17 Feb, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffordshire

## Events

**LEGO EXPLORER** Find out about the life of Charles Darwin and build a Lego model inspired by him, Mon 12 Feb, Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery

**PINK FLOYD'S THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON** A new, full-dome experience featuring 10 tracks from The Dark Side Of The Moon set to stunning 360° visuals, Mon 12 - Fri 16 Feb, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

**MARY ANNING AND THE DINOSAURS - FEBRUARY HALF TERM ACTIVITY** Take part in a virtual dig, become a palaeontologist, and uncover some ancient reptile bones, Mon 12 - Fri 16 Feb, Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, Craven Arms, South Shrops

**BLUEY & BINGO** Meet and interact with children's favourites Bluey & Bingo, Mon 12 - Fri 16 Feb, West Midland Safari Park, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

**CHINESE NEW YEAR** Embrace the spirit of the dragon with a range of activities from CultureKind Chinese Community, Mon 12 - Sun 18 Feb, Weston Park, Shropshire

**MULAN DANCE & DRAMA WORKSHOP** Explore dance and drama with a professional practitioner, Tues 13 Feb, Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke-on-Trent

**SHROVE TUESDAY** Blists Hill hosts its annual pancake-tossing competition, to see who can flip their pancake the most times before the whistle blows, Tues 13 Feb, Blists Hill Victorian

Town, Ironbridge, Shropshire

**FABLES, FEATHERS AND FUR** Join a local storyteller in a special story, movement & song session, Tues 13 Feb, Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery

**FEBRUARY HALF TERM SERVICE** Enjoy a journey on the Severn Valley Railway, with both steam and heritage diesel locomotives hauling trains the full length of the line, Tues 13 - Thurs 15 Feb, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

**HUNT FOR THE LOST TIME MACHINE** Brand-new project in which children aged nine to 12 get to help an intrepid team of time travellers, Tues 13 - Fri 16 Feb, Aston Hall and The Rep, Birmingham

**CARAVAN, CAMPING AND MOTORHOME SHOW** The UK's largest start-of-year showcase for motorhomes, camper vans, caravans, tents and trailer tents, Tues 13 - Sun 18 Feb, NEC, Birmingham

**VICTORIAN VALENTINES** Celebrate the day of love the Victorian way, Wed 14 Feb, Aston Hall, Birmingham

**HMS BEAGLE - DROP-IN CRAFT ACTIVITY** Have a go at making your own Beagle ship in this fun Darwin-inspired craft session, Wed 14 Feb, Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery

**SUPERHERO DANCE & DRAMA WORKSHOP** Explore dance and drama with a professional practitioner, Wed 14 Feb, Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke-on-Trent

**ALL STAR SUPERSLAM WRESTLING** Featuring 'some of the best wrestlers from all over the world', Thurs 15 Feb, Dudley Town Hall

**BOATLIFE 2024** Featuring over 200 boats, well-known faces on the live stage, family activities, an indoor pool, a range of demonstrations and plenty more besides, Thurs 15 - Sun 18 Feb, NEC, Birmingham

**BONGO'S BINGO** The original bingo rave sensation, Sat 17 Feb, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

**MIDNIGHT IN PARIS WITH WINE** Valentine's showing of Midnight In Paris presented alongside a fun wine tasting, Sat 17 Feb, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

**GATEHOUSE THEATRE TOUR** Expert guides tell the story of the Gatehouse Theatre, from its beginnings as the historic Borough Hall right up to the modern day, Sat 17 Feb, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

**UK ATHLETICS INDOOR CHAMPIONSHIPS 2024** The very best of British athletics, Sat 17 - Sun 18 Feb, Utilita Arena Birmingham

**FEBRUARY HALF TERM SERVICE** Enjoy a journey on the Severn Valley Railway, with both steam and heritage diesel locomotives hauling trains the full length of the line, Sat 17 - Sun 18



Stranger Sings - Crewe Lyceum Theatre

Feb, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

**ORIGINS OF MIDDLE-EARTH: JRR TOLKIEN AND SAREHOLE GUIDED WALK** A guided walk introducing the scenery that inspired JRR Tolkien when he lived near Sarehole Mill as a child, Sun 18 Feb, Sarehole Mill, Birmingham

**ANTIQUES AND COLLECTORS FAIR** Filled

with traders from across the UK selling a wide range of items from yesteryear, Sun 18 Feb, Himley Hall, Dudley

**QUIET SESSIONS** Enjoy the ultimate indoor Lego playground with fewer people and no music - an all-round quieter experience! Sun 18 Feb, Legoland Discovery Centre, B'ham

# What's On

MEDIA GROUP



## STAY IN THE LOOP!

**SIGN UP TO OUR FORTNIGHTLY E-NEWSLETTER TO RECEIVE THE LATEST ENTERTAINMENT NEWS FROM ACROSS THE REGION - AS WELL AS COMPETITIONS AND OFFERS FOR THEATRES, GIGS, DINING OUT AND MORE...**



**SIMPLY SCAN THE QR TO SIGN UP TODAY**



## Gigs

### POPPY + WARGASM

Mon 19 Feb, O2 Academy, Birmingham

### GIRLSCHOOL +

### ALCATRAZZ + RAVEN

Mon 19 Feb, The Asylum, Birmingham

### SOUL BROTHERS

### SYNDICATE WITH FRIDA

### TOURAY AND DARRELL

SMITH Mon 19 Feb, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

### WARP & WEFT

Mon 19 Feb, Bill's Kitchen, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shrops

### KINGFISHER

Tues 20 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

### NOTHING MORE + SIM +

SIAMESE Tues 20 Feb, O2 Institute, B'ham

### WASIA PROJECT

Tues 20 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

### BARBARA DICKSON

Tues 20 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

### TESSERACTION +

### UNPROCESSED + THE

### CALLOUS DAOBOYS

Wed 21 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

### SOUTHALL + WIGHT

LIGHTERS Wed 21 Feb, O2 Academy, B'ham

### PSYCHEDELIC PORN

### CRUMPS

Wed 21 Feb, O2 Academy, Birmingham

### THE 1975

Wed 21 Feb, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

### RAYE

Thurs 22 Feb, O2 Academy, Birmingham

### RHIANNON GIDDENS

Thurs 22 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

### COLLATERAL + ZAC AND

THE NEW MEN Thurs 22 Feb, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

### ABSOLUTE BOWIE

Thurs 22 Feb, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

### UB40

THE LEGACY Thurs 22 Feb, Aston Hall, Wrexham

### POP WILL EAT ITSELF

Fri 23 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

### JET BLACK ORANGE +

### VIBRANT DUCKS +

### STONE COLD BEAUTY +

### THE GROVE DAISY ROAD

### + DOWN N OUT

Fri 23 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

### THE BLACKOUT

Fri 23 Feb, O2 Academy, Birmingham

### RICK WAKEMAN

Fri 23 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

### FRED ZEPELIN

Fri 23 Feb, 45Live, Kidderminster

### GENESIS CONNECTED

Fri 23 Feb, Walsall Arena & Arts Centre

### T.REXTASY

Fri 23 Feb, Brierley Hill Civic, Dudley

### THE MUSIC OF CHAKA

KHAN Fri 23 Feb, Dudley Town Hall

### NOASIS

Fri 23 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

### FOZZY + THE HOT

DAMN! + PISTOLS AT DAWN Fri 23 Feb, KK's Steel Mill, W'hampton

### CLAVIS 7EVEN

Fri 23 Feb, Newhampton Arts Centre, W'hampton

### JOANNE SHAW TAYLOR

Fri 23 Feb, The Wulfrun at The Halls Wolverhampton



### LOUIS DUNFORD

Fri 23 Feb, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

### ULTIMATE RNB

Fri 23 Feb, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

### DIVINE HATRED + EGO +

NELSON ST Fri 23 Feb, The Underground, Stoke-on-Trent

### SHERBURN BARTLEY

SANDERS Fri 23 Feb, The Albion, Burton on Trent

### KEITH JAMES: THE

MUSIC OF YUSUF - CAT STEVENS Fri 23 Feb, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

### WATERLOO - A TRIBUTE

TO ABBA Fri 23 Feb, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

### SARAH GILLESPIE

Fri 23 Feb, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

### THE DRIFTERS

Fri 23 Feb, Telford Theatre, Oakengates, Shrops

### THE ELO SHOW

Sat 24 Feb, Dudley Town Hall

### METAL MILITIA +

STONELOAD + SOUTHERN DISCOMFORT Sat 24 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

### LIVE BOLLYWOOD MUSIC

WITH ROHINI Sat 24 Feb, Newhampton Arts Centre, W'hampton

### A COUNTRY NIGHT IN

NASHVILLE Sat 24 Feb, The Wulfrun at The Halls Wolverhampton

### THE HISTORY OF ROCK

Sat 24 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

### BEX BURCH + JOHN

BIDDULPH Sat 24 Feb, Unitarian Church, Shrewsbury

### BOOTLEG BLONDIE

Sat 24 Feb, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

### ARRIVAL: THE HITS OF

ABBA Sat 24 Feb, Telford Theatre, Oakengates, Shropshire

### SOUL MANIFESTO

Sat 24 Feb, Theatre On The Steps, Bridgnorth, Shropshire

### WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO

WITH IT? - TINA TURNER TRIBUTE Sat 24 Feb, Aston Hall, Wrexham

### JOHN J. PRESLEY

Sun 25 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

### YUNG GRAVY

Sun 25 Feb, O2 Institute, Birmingham

### QUEEN EXTRAVAGANZA

Sun 25 Feb, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

### MUSICAL YOUTH

Sun 25 Feb, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

### BEN THOMPSON AS

ELVIS Sun 25 Feb, Prince Of Wales Theatre, Cannock

### COUNTRY LEGENDS

SHOW Sun 25 Feb, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury



### CONCERTS IN THE ROUND

Lunchtime concert featuring John Hosking (organ), Fri 23 Feb, St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury

### FAMILY CONCERT: THE YOUNG PERSON'S

GUIDE TO THE ORCHESTRA Presented by Catherine Arlidge MBE. Featuring the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra & Bertie Baigent (conductor). Programme includes works by Britten, John Williams, Dukas, Brahms and more... Sun 25 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

## Classical Music

### PIANO RECITAL AT ST ALKMUND'S

CHURCH Featuring Simon Watterton (piano). Programme includes works by Beethoven, Mozart and R Schumann, Tues 20 Feb, St Alkmund's Church, Shrewsbury

### KAZUKI CONDUCTS ELGAR &

BEETHOVEN PART 1 Featuring Kazuki Yamada (conductor), Alice Sara Ott (piano) and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Programme also includes Walton's Spitfire Prelude and Fugue, Wed 21 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

### ROYAL NORTHERN SINFONIA WITH

JULIAN BLISS Conducted by Dinis Sousa and featuring Julian Bliss (clarinet). Programme includes works by Prokofiev, Mozart and Beethoven, Wed 21 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

### BRODSKY QUARTET WITH DANNY

DRIVER Featuring Kryisia Osostowicz & Ian Belton (violins), Paul Cassidy (viola), Jacqueline Thomas (cello) and Danny Driver (piano), Programme includes works by Shostakovich and Eleanor Alberga, Wed 21 Feb, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

### DOM JOLY

Wed 21 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

### CELYA AB

Wed 21 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

### TIM KEY

Wed 21 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

### DOM JOLY

Wed 21 Feb, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

### COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY

ROBINSON, RACHEL FAIRBURN & IAN COPPINGER Thurs 22 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

### DOM JOLY

Thurs 22 Feb, The Old Rep, Birmingham

### DANIEL SLOSS

Fri 23 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

### AARON SIMMONDS

Fri 23 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

### CONNOR BURNS

Fri 23 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

### PATRICK MONAHAN

Fri 23 Feb, Theatre On The Steps, Bridgnorth, South Shropshire

### BREW-HA-HA-HOUSE COMEDY

Fri 23 Feb, Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent

### PHIL ELLIS, MARLON DAVIS, RACHEL

FAIRBURN & IAN COPPINGER Fri 23 - Sat 24 Feb, The Glee Club, B'ham

### ROSS NOBLE

Sat 24 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

### LINDSEY SANTORO, AARON WOOD,

NJAMBI MCGRATH & JON PEARSON Sat 24 Feb, Rosies Nightclub, B'ham

### VIGGO VENN

Sat 24 Feb, The Old Rep, Birmingham

### WAYNE BEESE

Sat 24 Feb, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

### CHLOE PETTS

Sun 25 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

### ROSIE JONES

Sun 25 Feb, The Old Rep, Birmingham

### ECHO RISING STARS: AXELLE FANYO

Featuring Axelle Fanyo (soprano) and Kunal Lahiry (piano).

Programme includes works by Weill, Schoenberg, Sofia Avramidou, Gershwin and more, Sun 25 Feb, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

### CMS NATRIO TRIO

Featuring Will Thomas, Joe Skypala and Nick Budd (modern & natural trumpets).

Programme includes works by Tomasi, Britten, Bach, Debussy and Ellington, Sun 25 Feb, Festival Drayton Centre, Shropshire

### JOHN KEARNS

Wed 21 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

### CELYA AB

Wed 21 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

### TIM KEY

Wed 21 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

### DOM JOLY

Wed 21 Feb, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

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Fri 23 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

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Sat 24 Feb, The Old Rep, Birmingham

### WAYNE BEESE

Sat 24 Feb, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

### CHLOE PETTS

Sun 25 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

### ROSIE JONES

Sun 25 Feb, The Old Rep, Birmingham

### OMID DJALLILI

Sun 25 Feb, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

## Theatre

### OH WHAT A LOVELY WAR

Joan Littlewood's epic musical offers an



# Monday 19 - Sunday 25 February

amusing yet heart-breaking snapshot of the life lived by those caught in the crossfire of conflict, Mon 19 - Wed 21 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

**JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR A** reimagined production of Tim Rice & Andrew Lloyd Webber's iconic rock musical, Mon 19 - Sat 24 Feb, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

**BI-TOPIA** A coming-of-age story exploring the highs and lows of the bisexual experience, Tues 20 Feb, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

**2:22 A GHOST STORY** Award-winning supernatural thriller starring Jay McGuinness (The Wanted), Fiona Wade (Emmerdale & Silent Witness), George Rainsford (Call The Midwife & Casualty) and Vera Chok (Hollyoaks & Cobra), Tues 20 - Sat 24 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

**LES MISÉRABLES SCHOOL EDITION** Amateur version presented by Sutton Coldfield Musical Youth Theatre, Tues 20 - Sat 24 Feb, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

**LORD ARTHUR SAVILE'S CRIME** The Lichfield Players present an amateur version of Oscar Wilde's comedy thriller, Tues 20 - Sat 24 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

**BEN AND IMO** New play exploring the working relationship of two of the 20th-century's greatest musical minds: Benjamin Britten & Imogen Holst, Wed 21 Feb - Sat 6 Apr, Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

**DESERT ISLAND FLICKS** Two leading ladies reimagine, remake and spoof 90 of the most memorable movie moments of all time - in just 90 minutes! Thurs 22 Feb, Alveyn Parish Memorial Hall, South Shropshire

**MY LIFE WITH THE WAVES** Interplay Theatre present a story of friendship that takes audiences on a journey beneath the waves, Thurs 22 - Fri 23 Feb, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

**STRANGER SINGS** Smash-hit parody musical that gives a wild, irreverent twist to hit Netflix series Stranger Things, Thurs 22 - Fri 23 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**HAIRSPRAY** Split Mask Theatre Company present an amateur version of the hit Broadway musical, Thurs 22 - Sat 24 Feb, Prince of Wales Theatre, Cannock

**GOOSE** TaleGate Theatre Productions present a new interactive musical for the under-fives, Fri 23 Feb, Stourbridge Town Hall

**THREE MEN IN A BOAT** Jerome K Jerome's comic masterpiece telling a tale of men behaving badly whilst messing about in boats, Fri 23 Feb, The Talbot Theatre, Whitchurch, North Shropshire

**DESERT ISLAND FLICKS** Two leading ladies reimagine, remake and spoof 90 of the most memorable movie

moments of all time - in just 90 minutes! Fri 23 Feb, SpArC Theatre, Bishops Castle, South Shropshire

**AN OFFICER AND A GENTLEMAN THE MUSICAL** Timeless story of love, courage and redemption, based on the award-winning 1980s movie of the same name, Fri 23 Feb - Sat 2 Mar, The Alexandra, Birmingham

**THREE MEN IN A BOAT** Jerome K Jerome's comic masterpiece, telling a tale of men behaving badly whilst messing about in boats, Sat 24 Feb, Farlow and Oretton Village Hall, South Shropshire

**BOXED IN** A largely non-verbal story about being made to feel naughty just because the rules don't make sense. Presented by Daryl & Co and Half Moon Theatre Company, Sun 25 Feb, Wem Town Hall, North Shropshire

## Kids Theatre

**SCIENCE MUSEUM LIVE** London's Science Museum presents a brand-new stage production aimed at 'igniting curiosity, fuelling imagination and inspiring young audiences in new and exciting ways', Tues 20 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**CIRCUS SPECTACULAR** Featuring international circus acts, 'amazing' magic and plenty of laughs, Thurs 22 Feb, Telford Theatre, Shropshire

**MORGAN & WEST'S MASSIVE MAGIC SHOW FOR KIDS** Enjoy family-friendly conjuring capers, mysterious magic tricks and 'larger-than-life laughs', Sat 24 Feb, Arena Theatre, W'hampton

**SPOT'S BIRTHDAY PARTY** New interactive production based on Eric Hill's children's book, Sat 24 - Sun 25 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

## Dance

**THE SLEEPING BEAUTY** Birmingham Royal Ballet present Sir Peter Wright's production of the much-loved fairytale, with Tchaikovsky's magical score played live by the Royal Ballet Sinfonia, Wed 21 Feb - Sat 2 Mar, Birmingham Hippodrome

## Light Entertainment

**THE WORLD ACCORDING TO KALEB** Join the celebrity farmer as he presents his views on everything from farm animals to Jeremy Clarkson, Mon 19 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**PSYCHIC SALLY** Evening of mediumship, Wed 21 Feb, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

**THE WORLD ACCORDING TO KALEB** Join

the celebrity farmer as he presents his views on everything from farm animals to Jeremy Clarkson, Wed 21 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**RAVE ON** Nostalgic journey through music's most revolutionary decades, Thurs 22 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

**OPERA BOYS - A NIGHT AT THE MUSICALS** Thurs 22 Feb, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

**PSYCHIC SALLY** Evening of mediumship, Thurs 22 Feb, Dudley Town Hall

**LOCOMOTIVE FOR MURDER: THE IMPROVISED WHODUNNIT** Totally improvised murder-mystery in which killing the cast and cracking the case is in your hands. Expect dubious accents and shaky alibis, together with thrills, spills, and good old-fashioned kills, Thurs 22 Feb, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

**SING-A-LONG-A MATILDA THE MUSICAL** Fancy-dress is strongly encouraged and full audience participation essential, Sat 24 Feb, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

**RIA JONES & CERI DUPREE: MISS-LEADING LADIES** Celebration of some of the greatest grand dames of stage and screen, Sun 25 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

**REVEREND RICHARD COLES: BORDERLINE NATIONAL TRINKET** Intimate evening in which the former vicar, pop star and Strictly contestant lifts the lid on a life truly and truthfully lived, Sun 25 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

## Talks & Spoken Word

**P.A.S.T.A (POETS AND STORY TELLERS ENSEMBLE)** Monthly open-mic night with a difference, during which participants perform a piece they've written on a theme chosen at the previous event, Tues 20 Feb, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

**VERVE POETRY FESTIVAL 2024** Featuring performance poetry, workshops, collaborative work and open-mic poetry, Wed 21 - Sun 25 Feb, Birmingham Hippodrome

**THE MAKINGS OF A MURDERER** Join Scottish detective David Swindle to find out what makes a serial killer tick, Sun 25 Feb, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

**BOB HARRIS & COLIN HALL: THE SONGS THE BEATLES GAVE AWAY** The BBC's Bob Harris and author/music journalist Colin Hall present a show based around their mutual love and appreciation of The Beatles, Sun 25 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

## Events

**THE PLAYERS CHAMPIONSHIP SNOOKER 2024** Telford International Centre's first World Snooker Tour tournament for 14 years, Mon 19 - Sun 25 Feb, Telford International Centre, Shrops

**AN EVENING WITH JIMMY WHITE AND JOHN VIRGO** Jimmy and John play a few frames and chat about their illustrious careers, Wed 21 Feb, Stourbridge Town Hall

**BANFF MOUNTAIN FILM FESTIVAL WORLD TOUR** Brand-new collection of short films featuring extreme journeys, untamed characters and captivating cinematography, Wed 21 Feb, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

**VICTORIAN PRINTERS EXPERIENCE DAY** Learn the art of printmaking and discover the intricacies of a traditional letterpress as you design and typeset your very own poster in the historic setting of John Edmund's Print Shop, Wed 21 - Thurs 22 Feb, Blists Hill Victorian Town, Ironbridge

**VICTORIAN BLACKSMITH EXPERIENCE DAY** Under the watchful eye of an expert, learn the fundamentals of the blacksmith's craft, including how to prepare and light a coke-fired forge, Fri 23 Feb, Blists Hill Victorian Town, Ironbridge

**BONGO'S BINGO - 90S SPECIAL** The original bingo rave sensation, Fri 23 Feb, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

**SUPERSTARS OF WRESTLING** Live-action family entertainment as wrestlers from across the world take on the UK's best, Fri 23 Feb, Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent

**PINK FLOYD'S THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON** A new, full-dome experience featuring 10 tracks from The Dark Side Of The Moon set to stunning 360° visuals, Sat 24 Feb, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

**MAGIC UNZIPPED THEMED BRUNCH** Brunch event with live performances featuring 'the UK's number-one tribute to the most famous male dance film of all time', Sat 24 Feb, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

**CONNOISSEUR GUIDED TOUR AT GLADSTONE** Guided tour of the unique 19th-century pottery factory, Sat 24 Feb, Gladstone Pottery Museum, Stoke-on-Trent

**ORIGINS OF MIDDLE-EARTH: JRR TOLKIEN AND SAREHOLE GUIDED WALK** A guided walk introducing the scenery that inspired JRR Tolkien when he lived near Sarehole Mill as a child, Sun 25 Feb, Sarehole Mill, Birmingham

**4X4 EXPO** The biggest indoor 4x4 show in the UK, Sun 25 Feb, Staffordshire County Showground, Stafford



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Alison Goldfrapp - O2 Academy, Birmingham

### Gigs

**WALDO'S GIFT** Tues 27 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

**ALISON GOLDFRAPP** Tues 27 Feb, O2 Academy, Birmingham

**NIALL HORAN** Tues 27 Feb, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

**THE SIMON & GARFUNKEL STORY** Tues 27 Feb, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

**RENEÉ RAPP + SEKOU + TOWA BIRD** Wed 28 Feb, O2 Academy, B'ham

**SETH LAKEMAN** Wed 28 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

**FEROCIOUS DOG** Wed 28 Feb, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

**CATFISH** Wed 28 Feb, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

**WARD THOMAS + KEZIA GILL** Wed 28 Feb, The Wulfrun at The Halls Wolverhampton



**BUDDY HOLLY & THE CRICKETERS** Wed 28 Feb, Telford Theatre, Oakengates, Shropshire

**BEANS ON TOAST** Thurs 29 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

**THE SILHOUETTES +**

**SURRGE + ROOTED** Thurs 29 Feb, Subside Bar, Birmingham

**TAYLORMANIA - TAYLOR SWIFT ERAS TRIBUTE** Thurs 29 Feb, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

**PHIL BATES** Thurs 29 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

**DAN DONNELLY + JOHN SEVINK** Thurs 29 Feb, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

**JOHNNY CASH ROADSHOW** Thurs 29 Feb, Prince Of Wales Theatre, Cannock

**FINLEY QUAYE** Thurs 29 Feb, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

**TINA LIVE - THE TINA TURNER EXPERIENCE** Thurs 29 Feb, Telford Theatre, Oakengates, Shropshire



Seth Lakeman - Birmingham Town Hall

### Classical Music

**THOMAS TROTTER ORGAN CONCERT** Programme includes works by JS Bach, F Danksagmüller, R Vaughan Williams, Patterson, D Wirén and CM Widor, Mon 26 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

**SHREWSBURY SCHOOL AT ST ALKMUND'S CHURCH** Featuring Shrewsbury School Ensembles, Tues 27 Feb, St Alkmund's Church, Shrewsbury

**SAKARI CONDUCTS SIBELIUS & STRAUSS** Featuring Sakari Oramo (conductor), Anu Komsu (soprano) and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Programme includes works by Sibelius, Strauss and Merikanto, Wed 28 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**CBSO BENEVOLENT FUND CONCERT** Featuring Sakari Oramo (conductor), Daishin Kashimoto (violin) and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Programme includes works by Elgar, Mozart and Sibelius, Thurs 29 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**PAUL LEWIS PIANO CONCERT** Programme includes works by Schubert, Thurs 29 Feb, Stoke-on-Trent Repertory Theatre

### Comedy

**MIZ CRACKER** Mon 26 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**FRANKIE BOYLE** Mon 26 Feb, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

**COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, KATE BARRON & PAUL MCCAFFREY** Thurs 29 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**ANDY PARSONS** Thurs 29 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

**CATHERINE BOHART** Thurs 29 Feb, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield



**RUSSELL KANE** Thurs 29 Feb, Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

**JONATHAN PIE** Thurs 29 Feb, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

**DAVID EAGLE** Thurs 29 Feb, Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent

### Theatre

**LETTICE & LOVAGE** The Nonentities present an amateur version of Peter Shaffer's satirical play concerning a tour guide who loves to embellish history... Mon 26 Feb - Sat 2 Mar, The Rose Theatre, Kidderminster

**BLACK IS THE COLOR OF MY VOICE** Apphia Campbell's acclaimed play, inspired by the life of Nina Simone, follows a successful singer and civil rights activist as she seeks redemption after the untimely death of her father, Tues 27 Feb - Sat 2 Mar, The Rep, Birmingham

**SIX THE MUSICAL** Smash-hit musical in which the six wives of Henry VIII take to the stage to tell their stories by fusing historical heartbreak and 21st-century girl power, Tues 27 Feb - Sun 3 Mar, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre



**PRISCILLA QUEEN OF THE DESERT** Get Your Wiggle On present an amateur version of the award-winning musical featuring dancefloor classics including Hot Stuff, Its Raining Men, I Will Survive, Girls Just Wanna Have Fun, Finally and many more... Wed 28 Feb - Sat 2 Mar, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**THE BAR BY THE EDGE OF TIME** Frozen Light present a multi-sensory spectacular for audiences with profound and multiple learning disabilities, Thurs 29 Feb - Fri 1 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), B'ham

**FARM BOY** A Lichfield Garrick production of Michael Morpurgo's compelling sequel to War Horse, Thurs 29 Feb - Sun 10 Mar, Lichfield Garrick

### Kids Theatre

**STARCHITECTS** Dance, circus and visual projections combine in Motionhouse's magical family adventure for younger audiences and their grown-ups, Wed 28 Feb, Walsall Arena







### James Wilton Dance: The Four Seasons

Lichfield Garrick, Tues 27 February

The award-winning James Wilton's choreography is always distinctive, his productions powered by an energy the audience can almost reach out and touch.

James' in-demand company previously scored a massive hit with *Leviathan* - a retelling of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* - which is widely considered to be the ensemble's best and most finely tuned work to date.

They here make a welcome return with *The Four Seasons*, a show which, using Max Richter's recomposed version of Vivaldi's seminal work, features the company's signature blend of capoeira, acrobatics, martial arts and classical dance.

**THE THREE BILLY PIGS** Noisy Oyster blend two classic fairytales using puppetry, light-hearted storytelling, live music and 'a little bit of eco-awareness', Thurs 29 Feb, SpArC, Bishops Castle, South Shropshire

**SPOT'S BIRTHDAY PARTY** New interactive production based on Eric Hill's children's book, Thurs 29 Feb - Fri 1 Mar, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

### Dance

**ONE/BIRD** Amina Khayyam's solo performance tells contemporary stories of migrants tarnished by media and politicians, spreading fear for those risking their lives to make a better future, Wed 28 - Thurs 29 Feb, Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

### Light Entertainment

**PROFESSOR ALICE ROBERTS: CRYPT** Alice Roberts presents the final instalment of her acclaimed trilogy which delves into life, death and

disease in the Middle Ages and beyond, Mon 26 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

**LA VOIX - THE RED AMBITION TOUR** 'Britain's funniest red head' presents a brand-new show blending live vocals and comedy, Tues 27 Feb, Tamworth Assembly Rooms



**ATTENTION ALL SHIPPING: A CELEBRATION OF THE SHIPPING**

**FORECAST** One-man show in which bestselling author Charlie Connelly brings the famous broadcast vividly to life as never before, Wed 28 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

**FLANDERS & SWANN** British tenor Kim Begley and composer David Gaukroger recreate the work of the iconic duo, who mastered social observation through the medium of music, Thurs 29 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

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The Music of  
**Kate Bush**  
FRI 16 FEB

**Blondie** BOOTLEG  
THE OFFICIAL BLONDIE TRIBUTE  
SAT 24 FEB

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**KENNY ROGERS**  
STARRING  
PETER WHITE  
SUN 25 FEB

FRI 1 MARCH  
**Whitesnake**

THE MUSIC OF  
**Prince**  
NEW  
**PURPLE CELEBRATION**  
SAT 2 MARCH

**FROZEN PARTY**  
WITH ELSA & ANNA  
FUN FOR ALL THE FAMILY  
SUN 3 MARCH - 11.30AM & 2.15PM

**HEARTBREAK**  
THE TOM PETTY SHOW  
THURS 7 MARCH

**COLDPLACE**  
The World's Leading Tribute to Coldplay  
"Thanks for trying the Coldplay flag  
Coldplace are pure quality"  
Phil Harvey (Coldplay)  
FRI 8 MARCH

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**LAS VEGAS LIVE**  
WITH  
**RAT PACK**  
25th ANNIVERSARY TOUR  
The Original & Longest Running Rat Pack Show!  
MOTHER'S DAY - SUN 10 MARCH

The **Rolling Clones**  
THURS 14 MARCH

**WRESTLING**  
SUNDAY 17 MARCH

THURS 21 MARCH  
**UK PINK FLOYD**  
EXPERIENCE  
THE AUTHENTIC TRIBUTE TO THE FLOYD

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Original  
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FRI 29 MAR  
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ultimate  
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SAT 6 APRIL

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Celebrate the music  
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Joan Littlewood's Musical Entertainment

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5 - 7 Feb

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# WILLY RUSSELL'S BLOOD Brothers

THEIR LIVES WERE WORLDS APART... ...THEIR DESTINY JOINED THEM TOGETHER

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20 Feb

# STRANGER SINGS!

22 - 23 Feb

UKRAINIAN NATIONAL OPERA® PRESENTS

# LA BOHÈME

PERFORMED BY DNYPRO OPERA

3 Mar

# THE Sooty SHOW

75th BIRTHDAY SPECTACULAR!

10 Mar

# JURASSIC LIVE

WORLD TOUR

24 - 26 Mar

Motionhouse

# NOBODY

A DANCE-CIRCUS ADVENTURE

★★★★★  
"It's impossible to look away"  
The Guardian

2 Apr

From the director of Cluedo and The Play That Goes Wrong

JASON DURR as Colonel Mustard and HELEN FLANAGAN as Miss Scarlett

# CLUEDO 2

THE NEXT CHAPTER

Written by Laurence Marks and Maurice Gran  
Directed by Mark Bell

23 - 27 Apr

★★★★★

# LIFE OF PI

WINNER OF EVERY MAJOR PLAY AWARD INCLUDING 5 BELFRIES AND 3 TONYS

7 - 11 May

HAVE YOU DUNNIT?

# 70

AGATHA CHRISTIE'S *The Mousetrap*

70th ANNIVERSARY TOUR

3 - 8 Jun

KAY MELLOR'S

# THE SYNDICATE

A NEW PLAY DIRECTED BY GAYNOR FAYE

18 - 22 Jun

# theatresevern

SHREWSBURY  
theatresevern.co.uk