

Birmingham

ISSUE 447 APRIL 2024

# What's On

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### inside:

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Joined by Classical Brit Nominee Soprano **Carly Paoli** & Tenor **Gareth Dafydd Morris**

Conductor: **Anthony Brown**

Photo: Danny Kaan

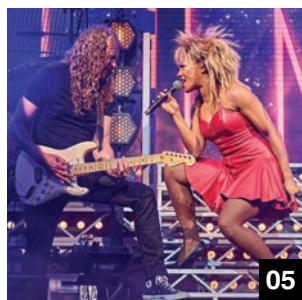
## Dates & Venues:

17 May - Bournemouth Pavilion  
25 May - Birmingham Symphony Hall  
26 May - Basingstoke Anvil  
29 May - Cheltenham Centaur  
30 May - Bath Forum

Tickets:



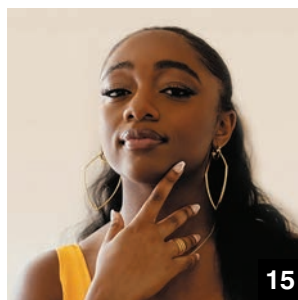




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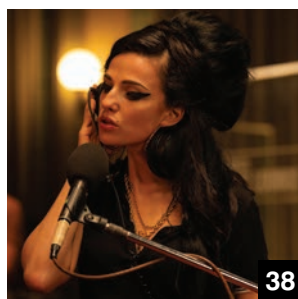
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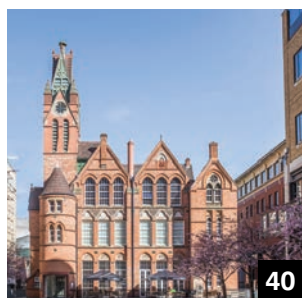
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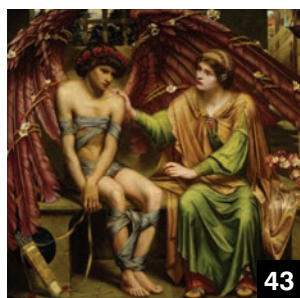
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## What's On

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## Special guests revealed for Birmingham festival

Kurupt FM and Greentea Peng have been announced as special guests at Birmingham's Mostly Jazz Funk & Soul Festival (Moseley Park & Pool, Friday 12 - Sunday 14 July). They will join the event on the opening night alongside the previously announced Leftfield, Dawn Richard, James Lavelle (DJ set), Ryan Hope (Gabriels) and Mr Scruff. The festival's Saturday line-up includes multi-Brit Award nominee Yussef Dayes, US jazz/junk pioneers The Blackbyrds, Thumpasaurus and Luke Un. Sunday features US hitmakers Kool And The Gang, DJ Craig Charles, Mungo's HiFi x Marina P, Nubian Twist and James Hunter. For further information and to book tickets, visit the website: [mostlyjazz.co.uk](http://mostlyjazz.co.uk)

## Kevin & Perry Go Large at Birmingham venue

Midlands-based fans of Kevin & Perry Go Large have the chance to enjoy the movie 'in concert' next month.

Released in the year 2000 and starring Harry Enfield and Kathy Burke, the film is being screened in a big top tent at Birmingham's NEC next month (Monday 6 May and then Friday 17 May) with the soundtrack provided by a live orchestra. For further information and to book tickets, visit [thenec.co.uk](http://thenec.co.uk)



## Popular eatery to open in the Jewellery Quarter

Birmingham eatery The Indian Brewery, which is currently located in Livery Street, is expanding into new premises in the heart of the city's Jewellery Quarter.

Commenting on the news, the company's CEO, Jaspal Purewal, said: "We are excited to be part of such a historic and vibrant community, and we look forward to contributing to the city centre's cultural and culinary tapestry for many years to come." The new premises is expected to open next month.

## Theatre's auditorium set to reopen next year

Solihull Council is hoping to reopen The Core Theatre auditorium next year. The space has been closed as a result of problems with RAAC, a lightweight form of concrete which was in the news last year after it became clear that it was prone to crumble. Commenting on the planned reopening, Council leader Ian Courts said: "It's great news that we're aiming to get the auditorium up and running in 2025. We are, of course, really disappointed and sorry that the main theatre will not be available in 2024, but the team have been working hard to ensure that we find the necessary solutions to dealing with the problem that has affected so many buildings across the country."

## Pub theatre produces its second in-house show

Birmingham's Old Joint Stock Theatre will this summer present its second in-house production - a new version of hit Broadway show *First Date The Musical* (Wednesday 7 - Sunday 25 August). To find out more and book tickets, visit [oldjointstock.co.uk](http://oldjointstock.co.uk)

## Historic pub The Crooked House to be rebuilt

The leader of Dudley Council has welcomed news that local historic pub The Crooked House must be rebuilt. The building suffered substantial damage in a suspected arson attack last year and was then bulldozed days later. Commenting on the news, Councillor Patrick

Harley said: "I am delighted that South Staffordshire Council has taken this decision. The demolition caused a lot of upset and hurt in the local community and resulted in the loss of a historic pub loved by so many."

## Brum Rocks! City to get its very own anthem

Misfits Music Foundation have commissioned Birmingham Poet Laureate Jasmine Gardosi to write a new anthem for the city, to be performed for the first time at summer concert Brum Rocks Live. Backed by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, Jasmine will spend time with Jez Collins from the Birmingham Music Archive to explore and be inspired by the city's rich musical heritage.

Taking place at Forum Birmingham on Sunday 14 July, Brum Rocks Live is an opportunity for amateur musicians, singers and rock-star wannabes to take part in a 'once-in-a-lifetime rock concert'. To find out more and get involved, visit the website: [brumrocks.com](http://brumrocks.com)





## Food and footy in Brum's Bullring

The world's first and only immersive football & dining experience has announced it will be launching its second UK site in Birmingham's Bullring in June. Currently based only in London, TOCA Social combines football-based gaming with a five-star food & drink offer. Guests can book a private playing box for up to 12 players, with prices starting at £12 per person. Sign-ups for first access can be registered at [toca.social](http://toca.social)

## The Barber to reopen in June

Birmingham's Barber Institute of Fine Arts is set to reopen its galleries in June. The galleries have been closed since last autumn while the first phase of a £10million building improvement project is carried out. Visitors to the venue from Saturday 22 June will be able to enjoy an eight-month programme of exhibitions. The Barber will then close for seven months from next February so that phase two of the building improvement project can take place.

## Family rave at The Tunnel Club

The award-winning Big Fish Little Fish is bringing its family rave to Birmingham's Tunnel Club next month. The music and dance party takes place at the venue on Sunday 19 May and will feature a themed craft/play area, a baby chill zone and lots and lots of bubbles, snow-foam, confetti and giant balloons! More information about the afternoon rave is available at [eventbrite.co.uk](http://eventbrite.co.uk), where you can also purchase tickets.



## Acclaimed Tina Turner musical coming to Birmingham

Hit West End production Tina - The Tina Turner Musical will stop off at Birmingham Hippodrome next year as part of its first-ever UK & Ireland tour (Tuesday 17 - Saturday 28 June 2025). Commenting on the news, the show's producer, Tali Pelman, said: "Tina Turner played to

packed-out arenas across the UK and Ireland throughout her extensive career. We're thrilled to now be able to bring her extraordinary story to stages across the UK and Ireland for the first time." To find out more and purchase tickets for the show, visit [birminghamhippodrome.com](http://birminghamhippodrome.com)

## Digbeth Dining Club on tour

Street-food-event specialists Digbeth Dining Club have unveiled their 2024 Summer Tour dates. The tour kickstarts this month, with events booked in until July. Locations include: Sandwell, Solihull, Wolverhampton, Lichfield, Sutton Coldfield, Warwick Castle, Bearwood, Compton Verney, Castle Bromwich, Telford, Shirley, Himley Hall, Walsall, Redditch and Tamworth. For the full schedule and to buy tickets (some events are free), visit the website: [digbethdiningclub.com](http://digbethdiningclub.com)



## Comedian Paul Whitehouse hitting the road with Only Fools And Horses

Comedian Paul Whitehouse will return to the role of Grandad when Only Fools And Horses The Musical visits Wolverhampton Grand Theatre in the autumn (Monday 21 - Saturday 26 October). Paul previously played the Peckham pensioner when the show first opened in the West End five years ago. Featuring 'an ingenious script and 20 hilarious songs', the touring production also stops off at Stoke-on-Trent's Regent Theatre from Monday 2 to Saturday 7 December.



## BRB launches its 2024 Pointe Shoe Appeal

Birmingham Royal Ballet's (BRB) principal dancer, Celine Gittens, has teamed up with the Company's first soloist, Rosanna El, and artist, Regan Hutsell, to help launch the 2024 Pointe Shoe Appeal.

The appeal aims to raise funds to keep dancers on pointe during BRB's forthcoming national and international tours later this year. For further information about how to donate, visit Pointe Shoe Appeal at the website: [brb.org.uk](http://brb.org.uk)



## Birmingham venue to keep its name until 2030

Utilita Energy and NEC Group have agreed an early extension to their existing multi-year partnership, which includes the naming rights for Utilita Arena Birmingham. As part of the seven-figure deal, the Birmingham city centre venue will carry Utilita's name through to 2030.

## Bloody Mary comes to Midlands Arts Centre

One-woman touring show Bloody Mary stops off at Birmingham's MAC venue this month (Saturday 6 April).

Written & performed by Olivia Miller, the production sees the historical character of Mary Tudor 'take to the mic to rehab her so-called "bloody" legacy in a gleefully vicious stand-up comedy special'.

To find out more and book tickets for the show, visit [macbirmingham.co.uk](http://macbirmingham.co.uk)



## Line-up announced for new Centenary Square festival

The Streets, Jungle, Cian Ducrot and Ocean Colour Scene have been confirmed as headliners for Birmingham's brand-new Centenary Square Summer Series.

Taking place over the August Bank Holiday

weekend, the outdoor concert series will transform the area outside Birmingham Repertory Theatre into a hub of live music. To find out more and book tickets, visit [centenarysquaresummerseries.com](http://centenarysquaresummerseries.com)

## BBC Gardeners' World Live back at the NEC

Urban gardens, a 'spectacular' edible show-garden by Adam Frost, orchids from all over the world, and a selection of new stages and workshops will all feature at this year's BBC Gardeners' World Live event, which returns to the NEC Birmingham from Thursday 13 to Sunday 16 June.

For further information about this year's line-up of attractions and to book a ticket - which will also provide entry to the BBC Good Food Show Summer - visit the website: [bbcgardenersworldlive.com](http://bbcgardenersworldlive.com)

## New strategic vision for the Coventry Belgrade

Coventry's Belgrade Theatre has unveiled an ambitious strategic vision focusing on co-creating work with local communities.

Commenting on the development, the theatre's chief executive, Laura Elliot, said: "With our new plan, the Belgrade will be as much a resource for health and wellbeing, education and career development as it is a space for entertainment.

"By 2030, success will be a theatre that is reflective of all Coventrians - a shared space for stories, creativity and civic pride, where diverse voices converge to explore, challenge and celebrate the human experience."

## Springtime tours at Birmingham Cathedral

Springtime visitors to Birmingham Cathedral are being invited to book a guided tour of the building.

The tours - bookable on request - provide participants with the chance to find out more about the cathedral's stunning stained-glass windows, which have recently undergone significant cleaning and repair work.

Regular tours throughout the week are expected to resume in the summer, alongside a 'lively programme' of music and events. Services take place daily, with the cathedral's professional choir performing up to five times a week during school terms.

## Blade Runner Live show to stop off in Birmingham

The 2007 'final cut' of Ridley Scott's 1982 cult classic movie Blade Runner will be presented 'live in concert' at Birmingham's Symphony Hall in the autumn (Saturday 21 September).

While the film shows on a vast HD screen, Vangelis' synthesiser-led score will be performed in-sync with the action by The Avex Ensemble.

For further information about the show and to book tickets, visit [bmusic.co.uk](http://bmusic.co.uk)



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## Paddington: Film with Live Orchestra

05 Apr | Symphony Hall



## There's a Monster in Your Show

06 & 07 Apr | Town Hall



## Champagne for Lulu

15 Apr | Symphony Hall



## Leonkoro Quartet

15 Apr | Town Hall



## Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra

16 Apr | Symphony Hall



## The Queen's Cartoonists

19 Apr | Town Hall



## Daniel Bedingfield

22 Feb | Symphony Hall



## Max Amini

23 Apr | Town Hall



## Lost in Music

26 Apr | Symphony Hall



## Charles Esten

30 Apr | Town Hall



# bmusic.co.uk

There's something for  
everyone this April!



## Finding the humour in a council going broke...

A new 'dark but very funny drama' about a city going broke visits two Birmingham venues this month.

Mike Venables' one-man production, *What Broke Brum-Leigh?!*, shows at the Prince of Wales in Moseley on Thursday 4 April & The Townhouse in Sutton Coldfield on Thursday 11 April.

## Conservatoire students heading 'into the woods'

Students from Royal Birmingham Conservatoire's vocal & operatic studies department will this summer invite audiences to accompany them 'into the woods' with *Hansel & Gretel*. Conducted by Anthony Kraus, the musicians will present the family opera at the Conservatoire's Bradshaw Hall from Friday 7 to Sunday 9 June. For further information and to book tickets, visit [bcu.ac.uk](http://bcu.ac.uk)

## Brand-new airport mural celebrates local heroes

A new mural celebrating local heroes has been unveiled at Birmingham airport. Produced by artist Gent 48 - real name Josh Billingham - the mural features, among others, Ozzy Osbourne, Benjamin Zephaniah, and 11-year-old Ryan Hulance. Ryan (pictured below in front of the mural) turns waste into charitable food donations by collecting empty tin cans and selling the scrap metal to purchase items for food banks. The artwork was commissioned by easyJet and easyJet Holidays to celebrate the opening of its new base at the airport.



## Rosemary added to Shrewsbury Flower Show line-up

Celebrity chef Rosemary Shrager will be one of the special guests at this year's Shrewsbury Flower Show, which returns to the town's Quarry Park on Friday 9 & Saturday 10 August.

The haute cuisine teacher and former reality TV star will appear on both days of the show.

Other celebrities announced for 2024 include BBC Gardeners' World presenter Sue Kent, ITV's *Love Your Weekend* regular Camilla Bassett-Smith, and 'professional eater & drinker' Andy Clarke.

For further information and to purchase tickets, visit [shrewsburyflowershow.org.uk](http://shrewsburyflowershow.org.uk)

## BCMG to perform two new commissions

Birmingham Contemporary Music Group's springtime concert includes two new commissions.

Taking place at the city's CBSO Centre on Sunday 7 April, the performance features the premiere of Hilda Paredes' *Abalorios* - a 21st-century guide to the contemporary music ensemble, inspired by Benjamin Britten's *Young Person's Guide To The Orchestra*...

The second commission featured in the concert is Ondrej Adamek's theatrical new work, *Let Me Tell You A Story*, which uses storytelling traditions from Korea...

The two premieres are complemented by a performance of Sir Harrison Birtwistle's *Cortege*, in which musicians step out from the ensemble to the front of the stage in a series of unique solo performances. To find out more and book tickets for the concert, visit [bcmg.org.uk](http://bcmg.org.uk)

## More performers added to folk festival line-up

Ladysmith Black Mambazo, singer-songwriter Beth Nielsen Chapman and Jacqui McShee's Pentangle are among the

latest performers to sign up for this year's Shrewsbury Folk Festival (Friday 23 - Monday 26 August).

Other artists recently added to the line-up include Grammy-nominated Mary Gauthier, Kathryn Tickell & The Darkening, The Wandering Hearts, The Hello Darlins', The Pleasures, Suntou Susso, Anthony John Clarke and Al O'Kane.

For further information and to book tickets, visit [shrewsburyfolkfestival.co.uk](http://shrewsburyfolkfestival.co.uk)

## Route revealed for the Great Birmingham Run

The 2024 edition of the Great Birmingham Run (Sunday 5 May) will follow the route introduced at last year's event.

The 10k route covers Broad Street, Centenary Square and the Library of Birmingham, St Paul's Square and the Jewellery Quarter, along with city-centre landmarks such as Grand Central and The Mailbox...

The half marathon, meanwhile, takes in the sights of south Birmingham, including Bournville, Cannon Hill Park and Edgbaston Stadium. To find out more and sign up for the event, visit [greatrun.org](http://greatrun.org)



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# 39 STEPS'

Adapted by PATRICK BARLOW

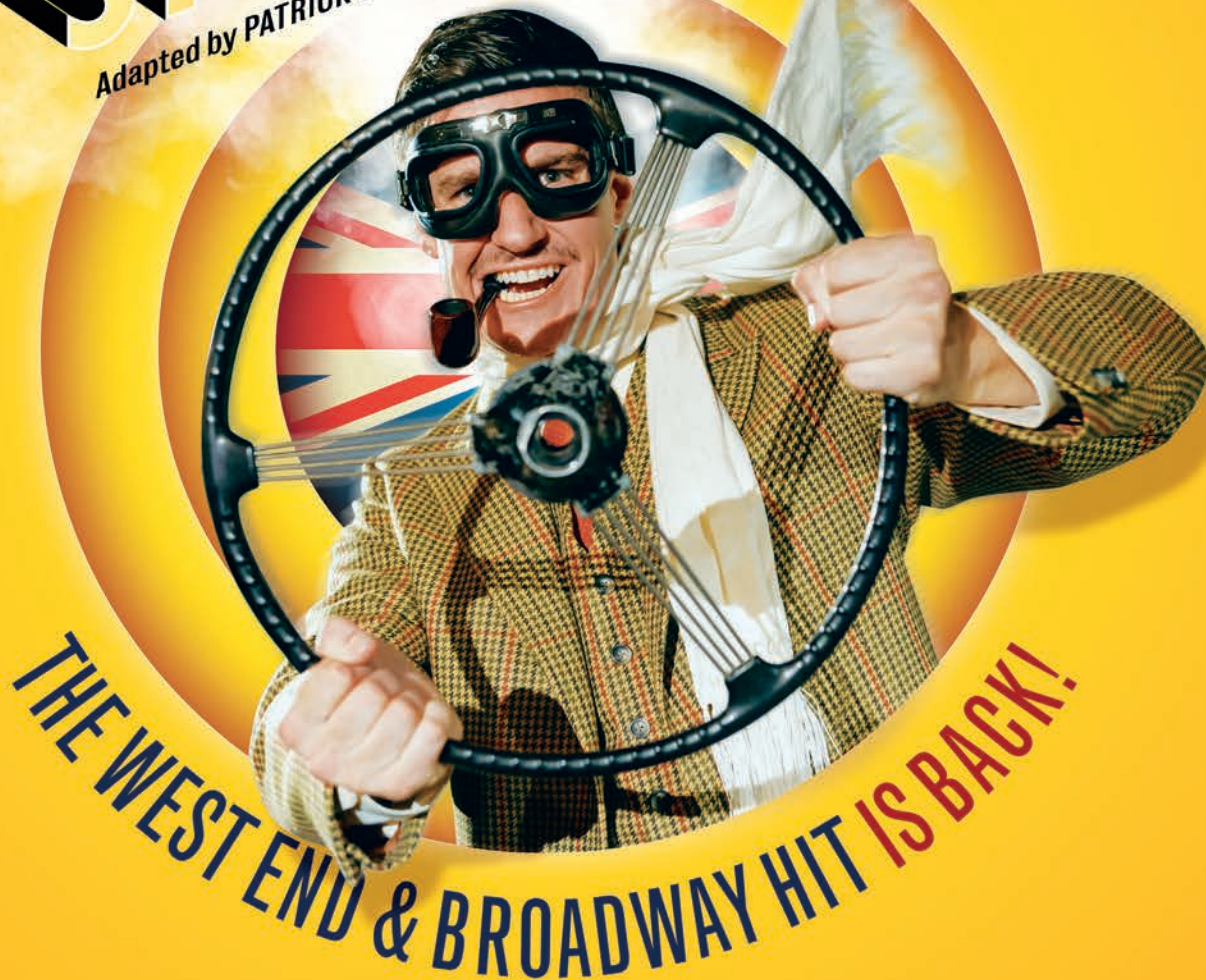
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# THIS MAGIC MOMENT





## Touring the country following a hugely successful West End run, new musical *The Drifters Girl* visits Birmingham this month. The show features the music of legendary doo-wop, soul & R&B group The Drifters and tells the story of Faye Treadwell, the woman who was the driving force behind their success. What's On spoke to two of the show's multi-talented cast to find out more...

The first incarnation of doo-wop quartet The Drifters formed in 1953, singing smooth harmonies and finding success in the US R&B charts. Since then, the group's members have changed countless times, with dozens of singers taking a place in the lineup, but always singing under The Drifters name.

Enjoying hits with songs including *Under The Boardwalk*, *Saturday Night At The Movies*, *Save The Last Dance For Me* and *Sweets For My Sweet*, the group have secured a place in the history books. However, new musical *The Drifters Girl* - although paying homage to them - puts another, lesser-known character front and centre: their manager, Faye Treadwell.

The hit musical features a cast of only six performers on stage, meaning that a great deal of hat swapping - both literal and metaphorical - goes on throughout the show. Carly Mercedes Dyer plays Drifters Girl Faye, while Ashford Campbell plays a staggering 16 all-singing, all-dancing characters.

"She means business," says Carly, in talking about Faye. "She has a quick wit - it's amazing to have that lying underneath - but when she needs to be, she's always switched on and coming up with new, inventive ideas. She's a trailblazer. A pioneer."

Faye resolutely carried the Drifters name forward, in the face of litigation, racism, sexism and wiley managers trying to pinch her singers. Ashford maintains that this legacy still has impact. "I think it's important for her to be recognised as the force that she was. I knew nothing about Faye coming in - it's an eye-opener. I think the music industry would be a lot different had it not been for people like her."

The cast are in the unusual position of having met someone with first-hand experience of the story: Tina Treadwell, Faye's daughter, who is played on stage by Jaydah Bell-Ricketts. Carly explains how valuable Tina's input was. "She gave us so much information and so many little nuggets. She told us about when her mum went to London, and Tina got her first Go-Go Boots in Carnaby Street. I thought, 'You've lived through all that!' Every time you fill in the gaps with things you might not know about the character, you hope that it's reaching the audience in a way that helps them relate to her."

While Carly plays Faye from start to finish, she is surrounded by a whirlwind of

characters: "The boys do such an exceptional job of morphing and being chameleons to become different people, even with just a small hat or glasses - they make my job really easy."

They really do achieve the dreamy Drifters sound, and Ashford knows how much work it took in rehearsal. "Oh god - a lot! We had about four or five weeks rehearsal together before we came on the road. I was actually a cover in the West End production, so I had a bit of past experience, but it's a different company so it's different voices. We still work on it every day but we're in a great place."

Ashford explains how the whole company supports each other, with different actors taking the lead at different points in the narrative. "As much as it's a collective show, everyone has their moments to shine, which is lovely. There's no billing order to who's doing the most or singing the most. I think that's why we all bow together, because we all work so damn hard."

As well as singing, the group perform a huge number of dance routines, choreographed by Karen Bruce and inspired by doo-wop bands of the era. "The Drifters weren't known for dropping to the splits and things like that, like we're doing," says Ashford, "but it's fun. It's very precise; every move has a purpose, and it looks so stunning. She's done a great job."

One of Ashford's favourite roles is young lead singer Rudy Lewis. "He's struggling with addiction, he's been out partying, and he's late to rehearsal and flustered. Then he starts singing *Under The Boardwalk*, and it's a bittersweet moment; he's turned up for work, he sounds beautiful, and he's surprised everyone yet again, but you see him struggling with his demons at the same time. It's hard to play but I love it."

This part of the story also reveals Faye's more nurturing side, in contrast with her usual sternness. This was particularly important to Carly. "One thing that I'm always trying to hone and fine tune is that she is a caring woman. That's what Tina said - Faye would come home, and as much as she was exhausted and would lie down for weeks on end, she was also really caring - not only for her Drifters but her daughter."

Both Carly and Ashford connect their performances back to their own parents. In Carly's case, parts of her role remind her - and her childhood neighbour, on watching

the show - of her own mother. "It's an amazing experience, to know that the strong female character that I had in my life - that role model of my mum - is present in this part. That is so persistent, resistant and amazing."

Meanwhile, Ashford follows in the footsteps of his father. "My dad was a singer - he'd sing at weddings and in clubs. He'd always drag me along and up on stage to sing with him - when I was about seven or eight - and I just loved it."

"My favourite song to perform is probably *Under The Boardwalk*. My dad used to sing it. He sang a lot of soul and Motown, so it feels like a full-circle moment for me. I think the arrangement is quite different from the original, and that's always exciting - to give people a new experience."

*The Drifters Girl* is something more than a 'jukebox musical', with the songs inextricably linked into the group's story. Carly points out that the show also tells a story about the hard work and graft which goes into creating something, which it's easy to take for granted. "There's so much in this world where you're just seeing a finished product, or the people in the front, when there's much more that goes on behind the scenes."

The musical is also a testament to Faye's character and drive, against all odds. "Faye has so much adversity, so much resistance," says Carly. "In this day and age, when we've kind of progressed - and I say 'kind of'; there's so much more to be done - if we can all be a bit more like Faye, I believe we can move mountains and do so much more."

Although the production has its thought-provoking moments, it is undeniably a feelgood and fabulous theatrical experience. Ashford's favourite moment (of many) is the 'mega mix' medley at the end of the show. "It's the point where everyone's up on their feet, singing along and clapping. That's really fun - it's so nostalgic. People know the music and they're just dying to get involved - and here's your opportunity! You've got seven minutes to just sing, dance and scream along."

.....

**The Drifters Girl runs at Birmingham Hippodrome from Tuesday 16 - Saturday 20 April**



With 12 Dance Bands 🌸

**SHREWSBURY FOLK FESTIVAL**  
23-24-25-26 AUG 2024

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- 🌸 Mary Black
- 🌸 Eric Bibb 🌸 Mánran
- 🌸 Ward Thomas
- 🌸 Beth Nielsen Chapman
- 🌸 The Longest Johns 🌸 El Pony Pisador
- 🌸 The Sentimentals & friends
- 🌸 Mary Gauthier 🌸 Le Vent du Nord
- 🌸 Kathryn Tickell & The Darkening
- 🌸 Jacqui McShee's Pentangle
- 🌸 The Wandering Hearts
- 🌸 Dream in Colors 🌸 The Pleasures
- 🌸 Suntou Susso Band 🌸 Ranagri
- 🌸 The Hello Darlins 🌸 The Hunch
- 🌸 Joshua Burnell Band 🌸 NATI

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# The Queen's Cartoonists

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## Dresden Philharmonic

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Tues 16 April

One of the oldest and most respected orchestras in Germany, the Dresden Philharmonic has previously been led by some of the world's best-known conductors - including Kurt Masur and Michael Sanderling - and has also seen legendary composers Brahms, Dvořák, Tchaikovsky and Strauss conducting their own works. Here - with Stanislav Kochanovsky (pictured) guest conducting and Maria

Ioudenitch on violin - the orchestra performs Mussorgsky's *Khovanshchina*, Prelude; Shostakovich's Violin Concerto No1; and Tchaikovsky's Symphony No6, 'Pathétique'. Film fans might be interested to know that it was the Dresden Philharmonic which recently played the on-screen role of the 'Berlin' orchestra in Cate Blanchett's award-winning psychological drama, *Tár*.

## Leonkoro Quartet

Birmingham Town Hall, Mon 15 April

Hats off to the Leonkoro, who visit Birmingham laden with booty after winning a bagful of awards at the 2022 Wigmore Hall International String Quartet Competition. The Berlin-based musicians - Leonkoro means Lionheart in Esperanto, by the way - also came out victorious at the prestigious Bordeaux Competition, claimed the coveted Jürgen Ponto Foundation Music Prize, and became BBC New Generation Artists for a period of two years. In short, they're a terrifically talented ensemble who're well worth an evening of your time. Their mid-month Midlands stop-off sees them getting to grips with compositions by Schubert, Janáček and Beethoven.



## Birmingham Bach Choir: Puccini Messa di Gloria

United Reformed Church at Wyldes Green, Sutton Coldfield, Sat 27 April

One of the city's oldest and most distinguished musical groups, Birmingham Bach Choir is here holding its annual Come & Sing! get-together.



The event sees the choir inviting singers from around the Midlands to meet up for an afternoon of singing (and delicious homemade cakes!). "Puccini's *Messa di Gloria* is a truly glorious sing!" says choir conductor Paul Spicer (pictured). "He wrote it as a graduation exercise, aged only 22, in 1880, when it had its first performance. It then waited until 1952 to be performed again, after which it has rightly become the popular work it deserves to be... It is fun, moving, exciting, and will be a great work for our annual Come & Sing event!"

## Tribute To Studio Ghibli: Piano Performance

St Paul's Church, Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham, Sat 6 April

Monaco-trained Nicolas Horvath - who once gave a 12-hour-long non-stop performance of Philip Glass - is the man at the piano for this celebration of music from the films of Studio Ghibli. The 39-year-old animation studio's movie output has included five of Japan's 10 highest-grossing anime feature films.



## Echo Rising Stars: Júlia Pusker

Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Sun 28 April

Concerto appearances, festival invitations and recital opportunities just keep on coming for rising star Júlia Pusker... Having performed with, among many others, the Belgian National Orchestra and London Mozart Players, the hugely talented Hungarian violinist here presents a programme that includes two of Brahms' Hungarian Dances, a pair of delightful miniatures by Lili Boulanger, and Debussy's violin sonata. A new work by leading French composer Eric Tanguy - which was commissioned by Júlia herself - also features.





# CLOWNING AROUND

**Inimitable circus clown Tweedy  
brings slapstick to Shakespeare...**





## Stopping off at two Midlands theatres this month, a brand-new version of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* sees the comic character of Bottom the Weaver being played by Tweedy the Clown, a vaudeville-style entertainer hailing from Gloucestershire. What's On caught up with him to find out more...

### What sets this production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* apart?

We're aiming very much for a family audience, to try and encourage younger people to come. I've got a large 'young' fanbase, and we've put a lot of slapstick in the play. Shakespeare was famous for his clowns, so we thought, let's have a real, actual clown in the show. There's going to be a lot of physical comedy in there. It's going to be a good, fun version, aimed at the whole family.

### What makes Tweedy the best man to play Bottom?

Oh! I dunno. I'm gonna play it my way. A lot of the time when I've seen Bottom, he's arrogant and not a likeable character, so I'm kind of playing it more as myself - or my character - and he's just really excited to be there. I'd like to think he's a more likeable character... I don't know if that makes me the perfect person for Bottom, but that's my take on it, and that's how I'm going to play it.

### What have you had to consider when bringing clowning into the show?

With *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, I kind of find that the clowns - the 'mechanicals', as Bottom and his compatriots are dubbed in the play - are quite separate from the rest of the story. It almost feels natural to me that you've got the serious bits, and then the clowns come in and do funny bits. It's like in the circus: you watch a daring act, where you might be on the edge of your seat and get a bit nervous, and then the clowns come in as light relief.

### You were also in *Waiting For Godot* with the Cheltenham Everyman. Have you set your sights on any other classic works?

That was the last play I did. Not really. I'd be interested if the right play came up, but nothing's jumping out at me. I'd always wanted to do *Waiting For Godot*, and then they approached me about this. I'd always fancied doing a bit of Shakespeare, because of that Shakespeare clown tradition.

### Are you going to improvise on stage and be spontaneous?

I'll stick to the words but physically improvise all over the place - which I won't

be able not to do. If something happens, I just naturally react to it. Obviously that keeps it fresh and interesting for the audience as well.

### This production is hot on the heels of the RSC's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Stratford-upon-Avon, with Mathew Baynton as Bottom. Have you seen it?

No, I was going to, and then a couple of people - including Mat Baynton - kind of said 'I don't think you should because it might influence you too much' and affect my characterisation. I'd think 'Oh, that's really good, that bit, I'll do it a bit like that...' But he did tell me it's gonna be filmed - I do really want to see it.

### Speaking of Stratford, Tweedy's Massive Circus is premiering there, from Friday 24 May. What can Tweedy fans expect?

Yes, it's a brand-new show - I'm devising it now. It's in a tiny little Big Top. Basically, I'm trying to put on a massive spectacle circus and, as you can imagine, it all goes a bit wrong. It's a very small cast. Essentially it's a clown show. There's a narrative in there, there's circus in there, but it doesn't turn out to be a big spectacular circus. It's opening at Stratford and will also be in Cheltenham, from 4 July.

### They say never work with children or animals, which is a bit of an occupational hazard in the circus... Do you have any experiences which corroborate that?

I had a Shetland pony as a sidekick one time, who just didn't like me. First of all he would rear up and come at me, and then, on the last day in the ring, he got hold of my little finger and wouldn't let go. I'm there going 'He's got my finger!' which the audience were finding hilarious. I tried to open his mouth with my other hand and opened it a bit, but then he clamped down on those fingers as well. That wasn't great, but my fingers are alright now.

### You wouldn't think a Shetland Pony had it in him!

No! 'Little Man' Syndrome...

### How do you make sure you're always at the top of your game?

Practising things, trying to come up with new ideas... But the main thing is just enjoying it

and letting the audience in. If I stopped enjoying it, then I wouldn't be a good clown anymore.

### And how did you get started in clowning?

I was going to go to art school to do animation, and then had a realisation: actually, this is very boring! You're basically sat in an office, drawing. Then I thought 'No, I want to be the cartoon; that's what this is about.' There was no internet then, because I'm quite old... Nowadays it's so easy! You just Google 'How do I become a clown?' and there's all these options. I did a season at Butlins as a red coat, saving up to go to circus school, but it went bust. So I sent a questionnaire out to lots of circuses, just as personal research. I got two back, out of about 50. One was from a clown in Cirque du Soleil - which was some Canadian show that I hadn't heard of! The other one was from Zippos circus, and he said the best way was to learn from other clowns, by being on the road. He offered me a job as a publicity clown, handing out leaflets and doing school and promotional shows - but then the clown got stuck in traffic in my first week. I jumped in and got offered a job off the back of that. A lot of people ask 'Where did you train?' because there are clown schools. Everyone goes on about Gaulier, but I've never been to those places. It's the same with stand-ups - they don't go somewhere to train; they go and try. That's basically what my training was: going in front of an audience. I just learned on the road.

### Have you noticed the demand for your act change over the years?

It took a while to get to this stage. Initially, I'd always have nothing on in January, February or March, and I'd become a delivery driver or something like that. It's been a long, hard slog, but I've loved every minute of it.

.....

**A Midsummer Night's Dream plays Malvern Theatres from Tuesday 2 to Saturday 6 April and Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, from Wednesday 24 to Saturday 27 April**

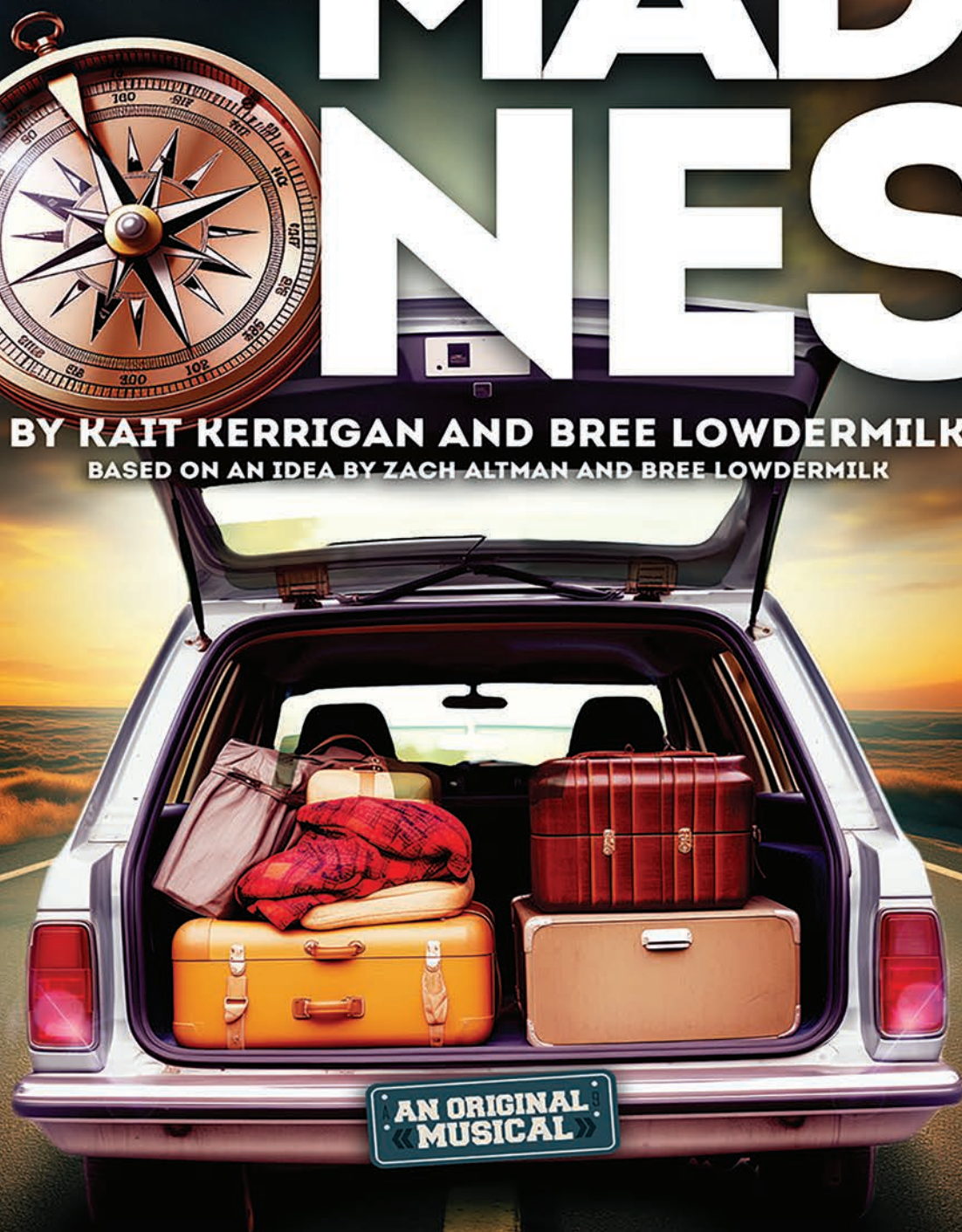


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Live music from across the region...

## The Zutons

O2 Academy, Birmingham, Tues 16 April

With the release this month of *The Big Decider*, Liverpool band The Zutons have brought to an end a 16-year period during which they didn't release a single album. That said, they did spend a considerable amount of that time apart, which goes some considerable way towards explaining so long an absence from the studio. Most recently coming back together in 2018, the talented indie rockers are now busily clocking up the miles in support of their brand-new nine-track release.



## UB40 Featuring Ali Campbell

Utilita Arena Birmingham, Sat 13 April

UB40 Featuring Ali Campbell play Birmingham this month as part of a new UK tour celebrating their hit songs from more than 40 years of musicmaking. Since their inception in 1978, UB40 have transcended their working-class origins to become the world's most successful reggae band, selling more than 70 million records. They've also enjoyed Billboard Hot 100 number ones with *(I Can't Help) Falling In Love With You* and *Red Red Wine*.



## Samara Joy

Birmingham Town Hall, Thurs 25 April

Samara Joy has wasted no time in establishing herself as a dazzlingly bright star in the jazz-music firmament. Indeed, she recorded her first and self-titled album before she'd even graduated from college. She then followed up a year later with *Linger Awhile*, which not only topped the charts but also bagged her the 'best jazz vocal album' award at last year's Grammys (at which she also claimed the 'best new artist' gong).

The Bronx-born singer has picked up further silverware at *this year's* Grammys too, winning the 'best jazz performance' accolade for the single *Tight*.

Her Town Hall performance late this month comes as part of a short UK tour.



## Yowl

Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham, Fri 12 April

It was certainly a long time coming, but Yowl's first album, *Milksick*, was finally released in autumn last year and made an immediate impact. The Peckham-based five-piece have been peddling their musical wares for the better part of a decade now, during which time they've moved beyond the post-punk label with which they were initially saddled and started creating a far more melody-driven sound.

## Fay Hield

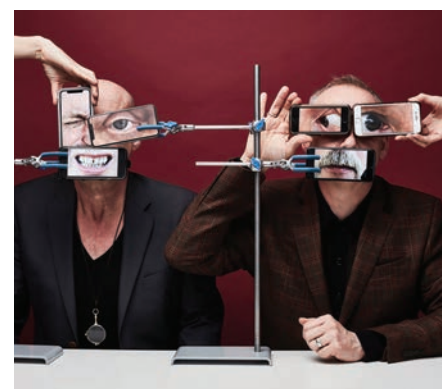
Hare & Hounds, Birmingham, Sun 7 April

When University of Sheffield Professor of Music Fay Hield isn't researching music, she's actually making it. Bringing new arrangements to old songs, folk singer Fay launched debut album *Looking Glass* back in 2010 and has since released a further four records. One of them, *The Full English*, saw her bring together seven of the country's top interpreters of traditional song, including Seth Lakeman, Martin Simpson and Nancy Kerr. Given the sheer quality of the ensemble, it was no surprise to anybody when they were named 'best group' at the coveted BBC Radio Two Folk Awards. They picked up the 'best album' prize too, just for good measure.

## Orbital

O2 Institute, Birmingham, Fri 26 April

Brothers Phil and Paul Hartnoll came to prominence back in the late 1980s, the electronic dance music duo scoring an unexpected hit with rave anthem *Chime*. But it was their 1994 appearance at Glastonbury that really propelled Orbital into orbit. Plenty of high-profile work followed, including contributions to soundtracks for movies such as *The Saint* and *Event Horizon*. The brothers split in 2004 after seven albums, once again pooled their considerable resources in 2009, then went separate ways again in 2014. Three years later they got back together and have since released two albums: *Monsters Exist* and last year's *Optical Delusion*.







# FESTIVAL AT THE HEATH





## Kings Heath gets its very own Literature & Music Festival...

Birmingham suburb Kings Heath welcomes a new festival this month, bringing together top names in literature and music with community and children's events.

Organised by The Heath Bookshop in partnership with the Hare & Hounds pub and How Brave Is The Wren children's bookshop, The Heath Bookshop Literature & Music Festival features activities for all ages and interests.

The line-up includes national names such as Michel Faber and Daniel Rachel, local writers including Mike Gayle and Catherine O'Flynn, and musicians including Pauline Black and Richard Norris. Workshops, live music, panel discussions and a party finale also feature.

"The festival is about us having a love of literature and music and being in Kings Heath, which is a really creative area," explains Catherine Gale, co-owner of The Heath Bookshop along with Claire Dawes. "We're round the corner from children's bookshop How Brave Is The Wren and really close to the Hare & Hounds - which is a really famous music venue - and we want to celebrate this.

"We wanted to create something which brought literature and music together. So, for example, we have musicians talking about their lives and the books they have written, and we have writers talking about music.

"Then we have music in the bookshop and literature events in a music venue, so we're bringing audiences something they might not have seen before. There's a crossover between the two mediums so that they are really integrated."

The festival kicks off at Queensbridge School with local comedian, presenter & author Robin Ince speaking about his broadcasting and writing.

"Robin came into our stall at Moseley Folk Festival," says Catherine. "His recent book, Bibliomaniac, is about bookshops, so he said he would come and do an event for us. We're really excited to have him as part of the festival."

Another highlight will be White Rabbit Books: Too Much Too Young - The 2 Tone Record Story. Taking place at the Hare & Hounds, it will feature writer Daniel Rachel, whose latest book examines the history of two-tone, and musician Pauline Black of The Selecter.

"That should be really interesting," says Catherine. "We are really keen on White Rabbit Books, which publish a lot of music books, and this event brings together a great writer and Pauline Black, who is part of that two-tone story."

Other events include local poet Bradley Taylor setting up his typewriter in New Photo Company, then Seesaw Opticians, to write poetry on demand, and an LGBTQ+ open-mic session, The Big Gay Poetry Night, hosted by Maddie Langham-Walsh.

Also on the programme is DJ General Levy, who will be speaking about his autobiography, Incredible, and playing a set alongside the Leftfoot DJs.

Bringing together music, dance, spoken word and discussion is Black Sound, Song & Soma - Deeping It: A Live Experience. The show has been inspired by local author Adèle Oliver's book Deeping It: Colonialism, Culture & Criminalisation Of UK Drill. Adèle's study examines how drill music is used as evidence in criminal prosecutions even when not relevant to the case. A commission for the festival, Deeping It: A Live Experience is written and curated by Adèle and aims to explore the themes of her book in more depth, with new work created by local poets and spoken-word artists, including Casey Bailey and Ryan Dre Sinclair.

"This is quite a central project to our festival because it does encapsulate everything in it," explains Claire. "There's dancing and music and spoken word and art, so it's a really special event which feels very inclusive and important. It will be bringing together so many people."

The festival aims to cover a wide range of literature. Thriller fans, for instance, will have the chance to put their questions to a panel of crime writers including Jo Callaghan, Mark Edwards, Rachel McLean and Barbara Copperthwaite, who will be discussing their writing processes and talking about how to get a novel published.

And a series of events for children include story times, performances, author events with Nathanael Lessore and Stewart Foster, and a number of workshops focusing on stories, music and costumes - followed by a children's parade in Kings Heath's York Road.

There are also creative-writing workshops with Anna Metcalfe - whose book Chrysalis

gained her a place on the Granta Best of Young British Novelists list - and bestselling writer Michel Faber, whose most recent title, Listen: On Music, Sound And Us, explores how and why we listen to music. Keen to encourage new voices, The Heath Bookshop has provided a bursary for one young writer to attend Faber's workshop, with help from Writing West Midlands.

"We're very much looking to support young and new talent," says Claire. "We've been so well supported here at The Heath Bookshop from the day we opened, and this festival is part of us giving something to the Kings Heath community."

The festival has received National Lottery funding through Arts Council England - and in order to make the events as accessible as possible, many are free to attend or low cost.

"We didn't want one ticket for the whole festival," says Claire. "We want people to be able to dip into what they like because there are so many really different events on offer. We were very keen to include everybody when we were putting the festival together, so we've done that with ticket prices; everything is as accessible as it can be pricewise."

And the festival is aiming to encourage children and adults to experience the written word and music in different ways.

"So many of the events will be something people haven't seen before, and I hope people will be inspired by them," says Catherine. "There is something special about having that really close contact with musicians and authors. Listening to authors talking about their process, or when we've had musicians in the shop, you feel inspired by them. These events bring you into close contact with writers and musicians, and there's usually the chance to speak to them afterwards, as we do question & answers and signings."

.....

**The Heath Bookshop Literature & Music Festival takes place from Thursday 18 to Sunday 21 April.**

**For the full programme, including BSL signed events, and ticket information, visit [linktr.ee/theheathbookshop](http://linktr.ee/theheathbookshop)**

# WHAT BROKE BRUM-LEIGH?!

MIKE VENABLES' DARK COMEDY FOLLOWING THE PLIGHT OF NYE EVE -  
A SENIOR FINANCE AUDITOR OF BRUM-LEIGH CITY COUNCIL  
WHO IS STRUGGLING WITH THE FACT HIS BELOVED CITY IS GOING BROKE



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## Tatiana Wolska Leisure as Resistance

Sat 9 March - Sun 2 June

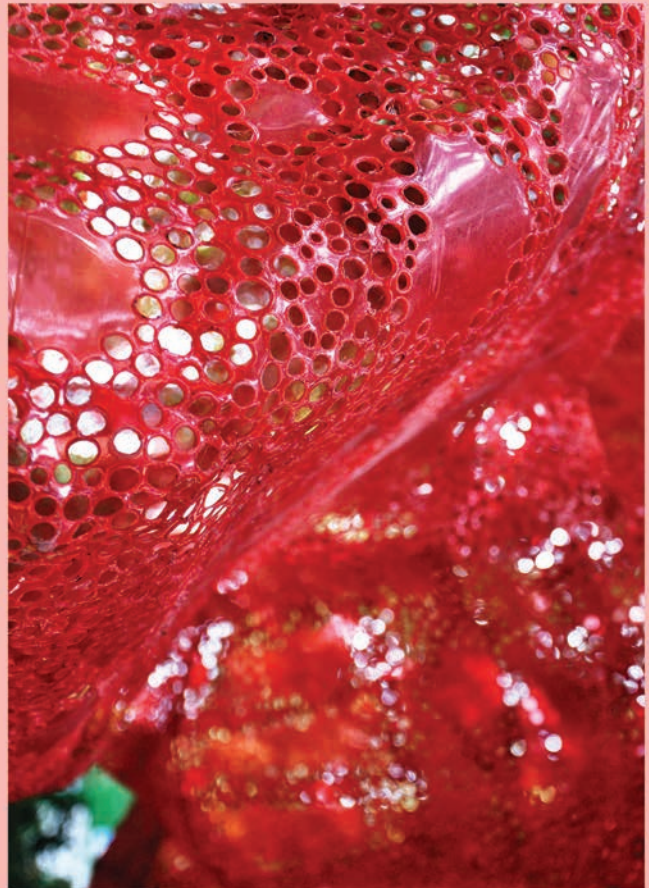
Open Tue - Sun | First Floor Gallery | Free entry

The artist's first solo UK exhibition uses recycled materials, evoking the resourcefulness ingrained in her during her childhood in communist Poland. It showcases her signature recycled bottle works along with new commissions.

[macbirmingham.co.uk](http://macbirmingham.co.uk)

Cannon Hill Park, Birmingham, B12 9QH

Tatiana Wolska, *Untitled (module 2)*, 2019, detail.  
Photo Amélie Bataille, courtesy the artist, Irène Laub gallery and l'étrangère.



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Comedy previews from across the region...

## Peter Kay: Better Late Than Never

Utilita Arena Birmingham, Fri 19 April; Fri 3 May; Fri 9 August; Mon 7 October; Fri 15 November; Fri 6 December; Fri 24 January 2025; Sat 7 June 2025; Fri 5 December 2025

Peter Kay has the magical ability to endear himself to just about everybody. Gregarious in nature and bringing to the stage bucketloads



of northern-style charisma, he peddles a line in comedy which is bold and biting but never cruel.

"It's good to get back to what I love doing best," he says, in talking about his return to stand-up comedy. "And if there's ever a time people need a laugh, it's now."

Returning to the circuit after taking a 12-year break, he's offering tickets to his shows at the same starting price as the previous time he went out on tour, way back in 2010.

## Carl Hutchinson

Stourbridge Town Hall, Sat 13 April; Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Sun 13 October; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Thurs 17 October; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sat 9 November; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Sun 24 November

Observational comedian Carl Hutchinson makes a welcome return with a show that covers all manner of common-or-garden topics. Prior to becoming a full-time stand-up, Carl was a maths teacher. "There are certainly comparisons between the two professions," says the popular Geordie funnyman, "but the definite advantage with comedy is that if you have a bad gig, you can rest assured that you don't have to see the same audience the next day at 10am!" Carl visits the region this month with new show Today Years Old.



## Max Amini

Birmingham Town Hall, Tues 23 April

Iranian-American comedian Max Amini blends eccentric impressions and novel storytelling to deliver strong messages about

family ties, cultural trappings and social topics. No slouch when it comes to improvisation either, he's promising a joyride of a show 'that will have you rolling in the aisles from start to finish'.

## Russell Kane

Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent, Fri 19 April; Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, Sat 20 April; Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Thurs 2 May; Swan Theatre, Worcester, Tues 14 May; Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Sat 14 September; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Sun 15 September; Birmingham Hippodrome, Fri 15 November

Past publicity blurb for this fella said it all: "Strap in for some super-speed sunderings and inconvenient sociology in a show of self-soiling merriment that will leave you with rickets."

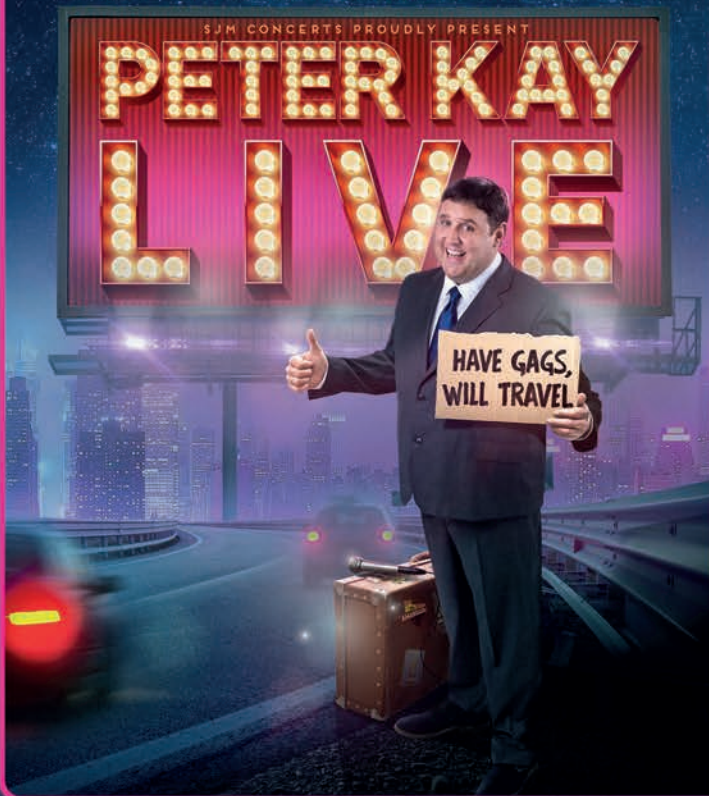
In short, Russell Kane is a very funny man - and it's not just his publicist who thinks so. Russell has been drawing a crowd since bursting onto the scene 20 years ago, serving up liberal doses of humour at a frenetic pace. The London-born comedian visits the Midlands this month with latest touring show HyperActive.





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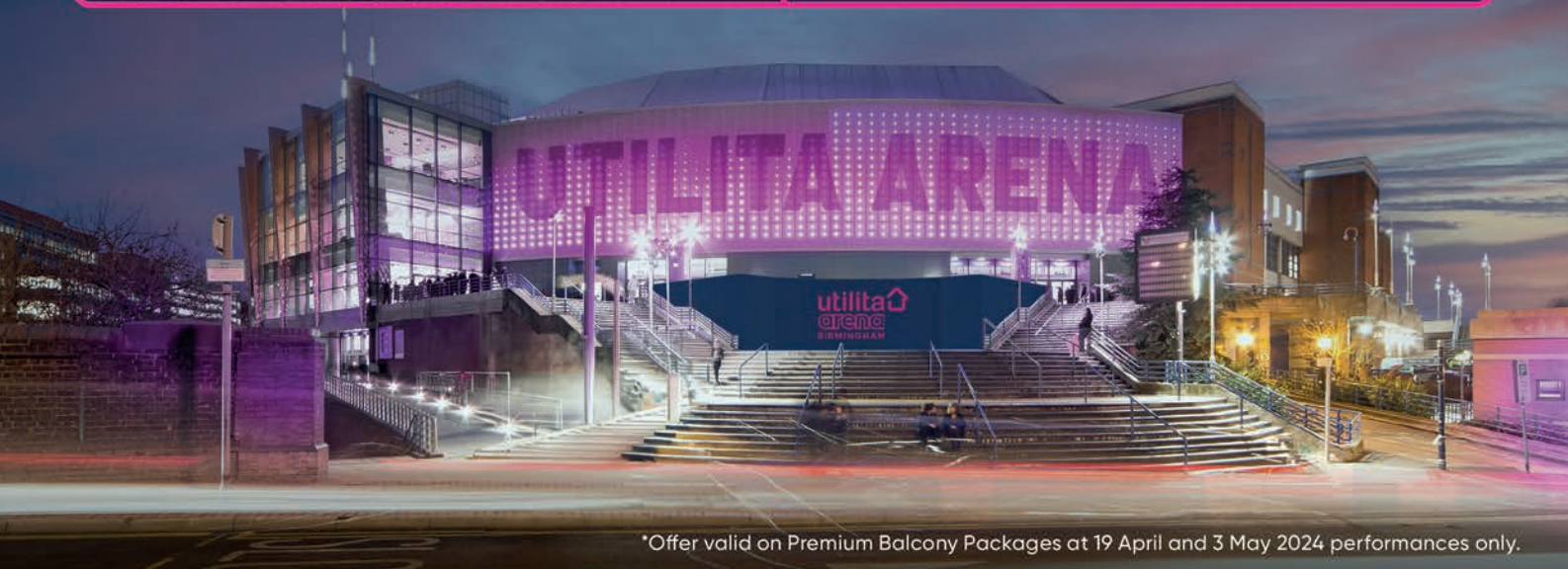
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## Comedy previews from across the region...

## Jackie Fabulous

Stourbridge Town Hall, Sat 20 April; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Tues 23 April; The Glee Club, Birmingham, Tues 30 April

A former lawyer and one-time America's Got Talent semi-finalist, New York-born Jacqueline J Champagnie - aka Jackie Fabulous - is on a mission to entertain, encourage and empower her audiences. She stops off in the Midlands this month as part of her first-ever UK tour.



## Laugh Out Proud!

Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Fri 5 April

This brand-new event is billed as an LGBTQIA+ comedy night featuring 'the best in established and upcoming acts from the community on the UK comedy circuit'. The line-up features: Mark Cram, a man who describes himself as the less-than-grateful winner of the Bedford Comedian of the Year competition; Greggs brand ambassador Joe Sutherland (pictured) and American comic Kate McCabe, who Manchester Wire describes as 'Just a goddamn delight'.



## Julian Clary

Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Fri 19 April; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Thurs 23 & Fri 24 May; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Sun 26 May

Following in the footsteps of comics such as Kenny Everett and Larry Grayson, Julian Clary peddles a line in 'saucy postcard humour' that disguises an intelligent sarcasm which digs fun at both himself and his audience. The world of stand-up is undoubtedly where he's enjoyed most success, seeming to thrive on the close contact with a live audience. By contrast, his forays into television haven't always gone so well; indeed, a long-ago but infamous 'fisting' gag about a Conservative politician saw him blacklisted by TV producers for some considerable time. He's making a welcome return to the Midlands this month with brand-new offering A Fistful Of Clary. "Yes, it has a Western theme," says Julian of the show. "It was only a matter of time before I eased myself into some chaps..."



## Clinton Baptiste

Albany Theatre, Coventry, Fri 5 April; Walsall Arena, Sat 6 April; Huntingdon Hall, Worcester, Thurs 16 May; Crewe Lyceum, Fri 7 June; Birmingham Town Hall, Fri 14 June

Actor Alex Lowe enjoyed big success with comic creation Clinton Baptiste when the character first appeared more than 20 years ago in Peter Kay's award-winning television series, Phoenix Nights.

A tacky and inept clairvoyant, medium & psychic, Baptiste was Kay's brainchild but has since been fleshed-out further by the man who plays him.

Despite the serious amount of work he's put into developing the character, Alex remains appreciative of Clinton's origin: "The fact that he's from Phoenix Nights is great! It's like having a head start, because I already feel four-nil up before I even get on stage, and I know the audience is going to laugh."

## Chris McCausland

Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 26 April; Walsall Arena, Fri 3 May

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

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

A touring comedian since the mid-noughties, Chris has also appeared on a host of television panel games and in series including EastEnders and Moving On. He visits the Midlands this month with latest show Yonks!.







# DEATH IN VENICE

**Welsh National Opera and NoFit State Circus breathe new life  
into Benjamin Britten's famous work...**



## Welsh National Opera (WNO) has joined forces with contemporary circus company NoFit State to present a bold new production of Benjamin Britten's *Death In Venice*. What's On catches up with three key creatives behind the show...

Welsh National Opera's (WNO) *Death In Venice*, which plays Birmingham Hippodrome next month, will use a range of circus skills to re-tell the classic tale of writer Gustav von Aschenbach's descent into a world of fantasy after he becomes infatuated with Tadzio, a young man he meets in Venice.

Based on Thomas Mann's novella and sung in English with English and Welsh surtitles, Benjamin Britten's opera explores creativity, sexuality, ageing, obsession and the tension between reality and imagination.

Directed by Olivia Fuchs and designed by Nicola Turner, both of whom worked on last year's WNO production of *The Makropulos Affair*, the show will explore Aschenbach's search for creativity and his flights of imagination. Aerial work and other circus skills will blend with Britten's evocative music to create an innovative version of the compelling tale.

"*Death In Venice* is a beautiful opera," says Olivia. "On the face of it, the piece charts the inner struggle and the physical, as well as metaphorical, demise of a writer who has suppressed his sexuality in his search for creativity and beauty. His imagination is parched."

And there is a real depth to the work, explains Olivia: "For me, the piece is an exploration of the inner dimensions of our lives - our imagination, dreams and creativity - and how they are manifested, expressed and physicalised.

"It is all about 'seeing'. Aschenbach is inspired by the beauty of a young man - he sees, he observes, he imagines, he begins to feel again. After many years he becomes embodied, his sexual urges and his imagination run away with him, he becomes obsessed.

"I'm curious about the creative process, about the relationship between our inner worlds of the imagination and their physical expression through the body and art - the danger of how imagination can tip into fantasy, leading to objectification and disconnection from others."

Britten had originally conceived the roles of Tadzio and his family as silent characters to be played by ballet dancers, but Olivia was keen to develop this concept and explore

their physicality through another means - circus.

"Tadzio and his family express themselves physically; to Aschenbach they are exotic and otherworldly.

"The idea of Tadzio being an aerialist emerged early in my thinking, which then developed into having a group of five circus artists who can play Tadzio and his family, as well as help move the episodic story from scene to scene in surprising and delightful ways. Having seen NoFit State Circus' (NFS) work, I thought that a collaboration would be perfect."

WNO and NFS are both based in Cardiff and have worked together in the past on community shows, but this is the first time the two have collaborated on a full-scale touring work. The production features opera singers and circus performers, with Aschenbach being sung by tenor Peter Van Hulle in Birmingham and Tadzio being played by circus performer Antony César.

NoFit State's guest artistic director, Firenza Guidi, has plenty of experience of opera - she grew up in Milan, where she was frequently taken to world-renowned theatre La Scala. And she believes the collaboration will bring a new understanding to Britten's work.

"For me, circus is the best way to embody the kind of dichotomy in the story - the contradiction between flight and ground, between ethereal and carnal. All the kind of things that a circus performer can do is carnal but at the same time can be ethereal; it's a vision - something that will evaporate in the next image.

"So the long-buried desires and the inner struggle that go on in Aschenbach is represented not just in the singing but also by the circus performers. I'm very passionate about dramaturgy through the body. My role is to give each individual performer an inner life. So what we see is the outer body, but I'm there to give each performer's character a past, a present, a set of memories and wishes and desires which, although unspoken, are going to inform what they do with their body."

And that physical creativity encourages the audience to engage with those characters in a different way.

"Fundamentally everything relies on tempo," Firenza explains. "That creates that tiny little difference between prowess and gymnastic fireworks or creating someone that I am engaging with because that person produces questions in my head as a spectator. Who is he? Where does he come from? I want to engage in that narrative."

The collaboration is proving to be both innovative and exciting, says NFS Artistic Director Tom Rack.

"Some people might not consider opera to be a natural fit for our organisation, but that's what is interesting about it - seeing how our work can fit inside that context. It's not just about bringing a bit of circus into the background of the show - Olivia wanted to find physical ways of telling the story and bring our signature style, which is visual, anarchic and raucous, to the production."

For Tom, contemporary circus has a unique way of expressing a story.

"When we are creating story, we are painting pictures. We are creating images that are almost cinematic in scale. They have resonance, have theme, have meaning and have undercurrent in terms of the relationship between the characters, the relationship between the music and the movement, and the relationship between the rigs and the character."

Olivia is aiming to explore the opera's possibilities physically and visually, finding ways of expressing and counterpointing the music and giving audiences a new experience of *Death In Venice*.

"I want the audience to leave feeling uplifted, inspired and moved, and for them to question how we can live more fully in the world, embracing both body and mind, ugliness and beauty, imagination and reality. We have such extraordinary potential as human beings to imagine and create new worlds. Let's recognise this."

.....

**WNO perform Benjamin Britten's *Death In Venice* at Birmingham Hippodrome on Saturday 11 May. They also perform Mozart's *Così fan tutte* on Friday 10 May**



## The Buddha Of Suburbia

Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, Thurs 18 April - Sat 1 June

Hanif Kureishi's first foray into the world of novel writing proved to be hugely successful. Published in 1990, *The Buddha Of Suburbia* won the Whitbread Award for best first novel, was later made into a four-part television series by the BBC, and kickstarted for British Pakistani playwright Hanif a career as a novelist which has since seen him listed by *The Times* as one of the 50 greatest post-war British writers. Set in South London in the late 1970s, the book tells the story of Karim

Amir, a 17-year-old mixed-race boy who describes himself as an Englishman born and bred; almost.

Eager to escape the suburbs and convinced that the bright lights of the city can provide him with the excitement he craves, he sets out on an adventure that sees him come face-to-face with all manner of interesting characters...

Dee Ahluwalia takes the lead role in this Emma Rice-directed stage adaptation, the publicity for which describes it as an 'irresistible, heart-breaking and joyful exploration of family, friends, sex, theatre and, ultimately, belonging'.

## Unfortunate: The Untold Story Of Ursula The Sea Witch

Birmingham Hippodrome,  
Thurs 11 - Sat 13 April;  
Wolverhampton Grand Theatre,  
Thurs 11 - Sun 14 July

Marketed as a tell-all tale of sex, sorcery and suckers, *Unfortunate* has a subtitle that makes it pretty clear what the show is all about. Ursula, for those who've never come across the character before, is a villainous sea witch and the main antagonist in the 1989 animated film, *The Little Mermaid*. A Disney Diva par excellence, she's been making waves in her very own stage musical for the past five years and visits Birmingham this month in the form of *Orange Is The New Black's* Shawna Hamic. The show features strong language, partial nudity, scenes of a sexual nature and plenty of trademark filthy humour - so if you're of a decidedly delicate disposition, you may want to go swim in a different sea.



## Shrek The Musical

The Alexandra, Birmingham,  
Tues 9 - Sun 14 April

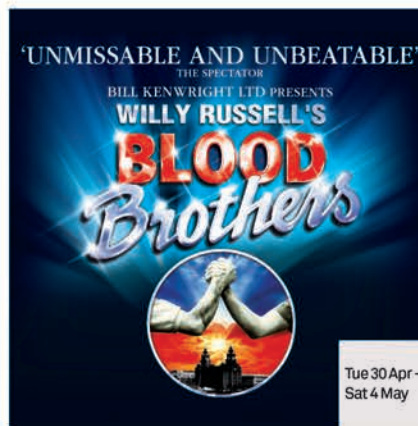
The popularity of this family-friendly West End hit hardly comes as a surprise. After all, Dreamworks' animated *Shrek* movies - inspired by cartoonist William Steig's 1990 book - were absolutely huge. So it was only ever going to be a matter of time before everybody's favourite swamp-residing ogre made a big splash away from the silver screen.

Pretty much retelling the story of the first movie, the show peddles a line in humour that calls to mind both the surrealist Pythons and an evening of festive-season pantomime fare. There are plenty of new songs to enjoy too, presented alongside cult *Shrek* anthem *I'm A Believer*, originally a chart-topping hit for The Monkees way back in the mid-1960s...

One-time *Strictly Come Dancing* favourite Joanne Clifton stars as Princess Fiona.











## Jesus Christ Superstar

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 see him condemned to death...

## Emma Rice's Blue Beard

The Rep, Birmingham, Tues 9 - Sat 20 April

A new play written and directed by Emma Rice, a one-time artistic director of Shakespeare's Globe theatre, Blue Beard tells the tale of a talented and tyrannous magician who meets his match in the form of his young bride...

Described as an exploration of curiosity and consent, violence and vengeance, the show is narrated by a chorus of nuns, has been widely praised as a music-fuelled celebration of female power, and comes complete with its innovative director's signature sleight of hand.

## The Boy At The Back Of The Class

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 16 - Sat 20 April; Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Tues 14 - Sat 18 May

Having fled war-torn Syria, nine-year-old Ahmet now sits on a chair at the back of the classroom, a refugee kid separated from his parents, unable to speak English, and at the mercy of the school bullies.

But salvation is at hand... When one of his classmates learns of his plight, she and her friends determine to reunite the little Syrian boy with his family...

A thought-provoking exploration of the power of friendship and kindness - experienced in a world that doesn't always make sense - Nick Ahad's new play is adapted from Onjali Q Raúf's multi-award-winning children's novel of the same name...

## Houdini's Greatest Escape

Lichfield Garrick, Thurs 25 - Sat 27 April

The award-winning New Old Friends theatre company's previous on-stage successes include the much-loved Falcon's Malteser and the Agatha Christie, Noel Coward & PG Wodehouse-inspired Crimes On The Coast. If you caught either of those critically acclaimed productions - not to mention any of the company's other equally enjoyable theatrical offerings - then you'll no doubt be looking forward with eager anticipation to this fast-paced and farcical thriller.

In a nutshell, the show finds death-defying escapologist Harry Houdini and his wife Bess fighting to clear their names after being framed for murder by a gang of criminals who're in cahoots with the chief of police... The production features four actors - playing multiple roles - and some sure-to-be-impressive magic and illusion by Pete Firman, who's probably best known from BBC One series The Magicians.

## One Man, Two Guvnors

New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme,  
Fri 12 April - Sat 11 May

Brighton, 1963, and having been fired from his skiffle band, Francis Henshall becomes minder to Roscoe Crabbe, a small-time East End hoodlum who's travelled to the coast. But Roscoe is really his twin sister Rachel - posing as her own dead brother, who's been killed by her boyfriend, Stanley Stubbers. And then there's the involvement of Charlie the Duck to take into account...

You keeping up?...

Based on The Servant Of Two Masters - a 1743 Commedia dell'arte-style comedy written by Italian playwright Carlo Goldoni - Richard Bean's One Man, Two Guvnors has scored a big hit wherever it's played since debuting in the West End 13 years ago.

With that in mind, the New Vic is no doubt promising with extremely good reason that this Conrad Nelson-directed production will have you grinning from ear to ear. Well worth a look.

## The Woman In Black

Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Tues 23 - Sat 27 April;  
Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Tues 30 April - Sat 4 May

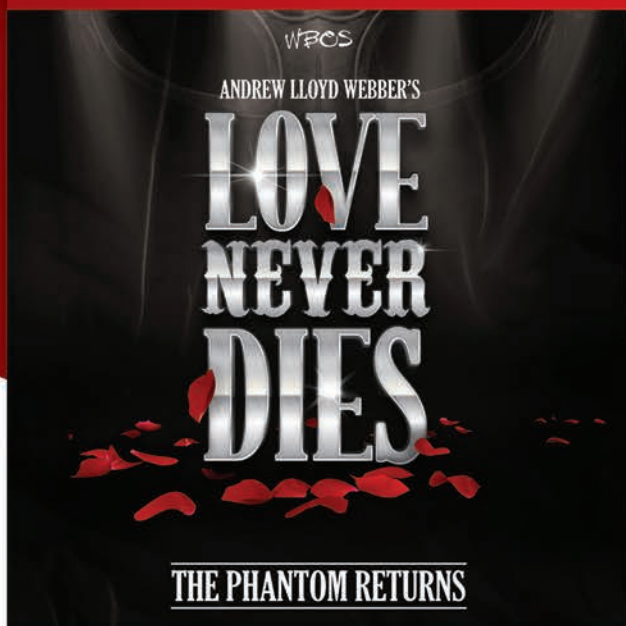
Adapted by Stephen Mallatratt from the same-named Susan Hill novel, The Woman In Black is a classic ghost story first performed in 1989. It has since become one of the West End's most

successful plays, and was memorably made into a film starring Daniel Radcliffe in 2012.

Solicitor Arthur Kipp believes that his family have 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...







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**UNFORTUNATE:  
THE UNTOLD STORY OF URSULA**



# SPRING

# INTO

# APRIL



**Ray Bradshaw: Doppelgänger**  
Wed 3 Apr 7.45pm  
Heart-warming show from the award-winning comedian.



**Charlie Cook's Favourite Book**  
Thu 4 – Sun 7 Apr  
Help Charlie show his sister the joy of reading.



**Ellen Kent: Carmen**  
Wed 24 Apr 7.30pm  
Passion, tragedy and unforgettable arias.



**Ellen Kent: Madama Butterfly**  
Thu 25 Apr 7.30pm  
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**John Smith: 2024 Tour**  
Sat 27 Apr 7.30pm



**Jake Bugg: Your Town Tour**  
Sun 28 Apr 8pm



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## WARWICK

## ARTS

## CENTRE



## Theatre previews from around the region



### Life Of Pi

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 tells the story of teenager Piscine Molitor 'Pi' Patel, 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 Mad Ones

Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, Wed 10 - Sat 20 April

This 'touching and heartfelt' musical - formerly known as The Unauthorised Autobiography Of Samantha Brown - debuted off-Broadway seven years ago and focuses in on the character of 18-year-old Sam as she reaches a crossroads in her young life. "The basis of the story," explains Old Joint Stock Theatre manager James Edge, "is that Sam is making a decision about whether she wants to stay with her overbearing mother, or instead take a risk for the first time in her life, see what the future holds and drive away. It really is a beautiful work of theatre."

### The Importance Of Being... Earnest?

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Thurs 11 - Sat 13 April

Anybody turning up at the Gatehouse expecting to see a conventional version of Oscar Wilde's The Importance Of Being Earnest is in for a bit of a surprise. Sure, the show is based on Wilde's oft-performed Victorian comedy, but the company behind it, the interestingly named Say It Again, Sorry?, have very much put their own interactive spin on events. When a traditional production of Earnest gets under way, everything seems to be going according to plan... until, that is, the lead

actor fails to arrive on cue. His non-appearance sees the situation quickly descend into chaos, with the company desperately needing the audience's assistance as they battle to get the performance back on track...

### Pied Piper

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Wed 17 - Sat 20 April

If you're dubious about the merits of hip-hop and beatbox but are open to the possibility of finding out more, this unique, clever and hugely energetic show is definitely one to check out. A 21st-century gig-theatre classic inspired by a well-known medieval fairytale, the show features beatboxers, musicians and special guest performers from the local community. The production is presented by BAC Beatbox Academy, who previously scored a hit with Frankenstein: How To Make A Monster.



### Rewind

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Tues 30 April

Taking an intimate backward journey into the true and tragic story of a young woman in Latin America who dared to resist authoritarianism and paid the ultimate price,

Rewind is presented by Ephemeral Ensemble, a migrant-led company which specialises in creating theatre from fact-based stories and shining a light on current but hidden social issues.

The inspiration for this latest work of theatre comes from forensic anthropology, the first science in history to investigate human-rights violation.

### Cluedo 2

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Tues 23 - Sat 27 April; Malvern Theatres, Tues 30 April - Sat 4 May; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Tues 23 - Sat 27 July

Inspired by the success of the original Cluedo play, this brand-new comedy whodunnit is based on the famous detective boardgame of the same name.

Heartbeat and Casualty star Jason Durr and Strictly champion Ellie Leach top-bill in a Swinging 60s-set show that features a new house, new suspects, and plenty of dead bodies...





# CELEBRATING FEMALE POWER

Emma Rice brings her own brand of theatrical wonder  
to the ancient tale of Blue Beard





**An ancient folk tale concerning a nobleman and his vanishing wives has been given the Emma Rice treatment. Celebrating female power, the ‘fearless’ director calls on a chorus of nuns to tell the story of Blue Beard in a touring production stopping off at Birmingham Rep this month. Here, Emma shares why she wanted to bring the story to the stage, and why it had to happen now...**

Blue Beard is the fifth show that Emma Rice has made for her company Wise Children, which launched in 2018 after her very public departure from Shakespeare’s Globe. Before that, Emma ran the much-loved, and now closed, Kneehigh Theatre company. Many of Emma’s most successful works for Kneehigh were based on folk tales, like Blue Beard.

The story that took on a new meaning for her following the murder of Sarah Everard by the off-duty Metropolitan police officer Wayne Cousins.

“I’ve actually never liked the story of Blue Beard,” she says. “I love fairytales, but this is one I’ve always avoided.

“I thought it was just about controlling women, telling them off for asking questions and being curious. But something changed a couple of years ago, and the story started to nag at me.

“I have become more and more haunted by the regular chime of women being attacked, murdered and abused. Sarah Everard’s shocking murder and the ensuing chaos of her vigil captured the public’s imagination. However, for me, it was the murder of Zara Aleena that really brought home my anger and made me think about adapting Blue Beard.

“She was just walking home. A week later, her family, friends, and people she would never know, met at the spot where she was killed and walked her memory home. This was the moment that I knew I wanted to walk Blue Beard’s victims’ home. I wanted to use my craft, my platform and my experience to make a small difference.”

Rice says she realised that she wanted to tell this story, not to understand or excuse Blue Beard, but to breathe life into the women he tried to control. She wanted to express not just the rage, grief and heartbreak so many feel at lives cut short, but also to celebrate brilliant living women in all their wild and surprising glory. Her version of Blue Beard is very definitely about the women, about celebrating women.

“It’s about saying enough is enough! We will not be afraid anymore. Blue Beard has the weight and power of a classic drama - almost Shakespearean and most definitely Greek in structure. I hope audiences will feel entertained, moved and transported. We have found the subject matter very powerful in rehearsals, and there has been lots of laughter and tears. I hope audiences will share the joy, the darkness, the fury and the hope. It certainly won’t be boring!”

Music is key to Rice’s shows. As a practitioner of ‘devised theatre’, she always works closely with a composer, who is present throughout the rehearsal process, shaping, refining and reworking the music as the production develops.

“Music is shot through this magical tale. I’m working with my longtime friend and collaborator Stu Barker, who I also worked with on Brief Encounter, Tristan & Yseult, and many, many more.

“Stu is a composing genius who knows just when a song, a sting or an underscore is needed. I’m particularly loving working on this show because almost all my actors are also musicians. This means the music comes straight out of the heart of the show; it is all performed live by this incredibly talented ensemble of actor-musicians. They jump seamlessly between playing and acting, and I marvel at their talent. The songs are dynamite, and I go to sleep with them running through my head and wake up singing them.”

In Rice’s version of the tale, the character of Blue Beard is a magician, and we see part of his magic show onstage.

“My long-term collaborator and dear friend Tristan [Sturrock, who plays Blue Beard] worked with several magicians in preparation for the show. He can now make coins vanish and cards appear, cut ladies in half and throw knives. It has been brilliant fun and creates fantastic ‘old school’ entertainment.

“I decided to make my Blue Beard a magician

because it felt like a funny and surprising way to explore themes of lies, control and violence. The glamour of the magician’s assistant, mixed with the casual misogyny of these enduring acts, creates a heady cocktail which is the perfect match for Blue Beard.”

Although at times the show is challenging to watch, with themes of male violence and control, it is shot through with hope, comedic moments and a great deal of stagecraft that means the dark undertones are never graphic, more thought provoking. The production has been garnering rave reviews since it opened at Bath Theatre Royal.

“The production does not shy away from violence and its devastating effect. But it is also hopeful and empowering. I don’t think audiences will come away thinking everything’s awful and it’s never going to change; instead I want people to look these issues squarely in the eye and think: right, that’s it. The world does not have to be like this, and I feel inspired to do something about it.

“It’s also worth saying that I’m not a ‘naturalistic’ director. We use lots of different storytelling techniques to give the subject layers and nuance. This means a violent act could feature on stage as a dance, or a song. It won’t be graphic and unpleasant. Sometimes violence is suggested, sometimes it is shown in a metaphorical way, and at the end we have a huge, bloody, real-life struggle.

“Although the underlying themes are urgent and dark, the show is not all darkness by any means. Blue Beard pulses with stylish theatricality, gritty reality, and genuine emotion. There’s also comedy. I want the production to seduce with high comedy, tragedy, magic, romance and just a sprinkle of spine-tingling horror. It’s a blockbusting rollercoaster!”

.....

**Blue Beard shows at Birmingham Rep from Tuesday 9 to Saturday 20 April**

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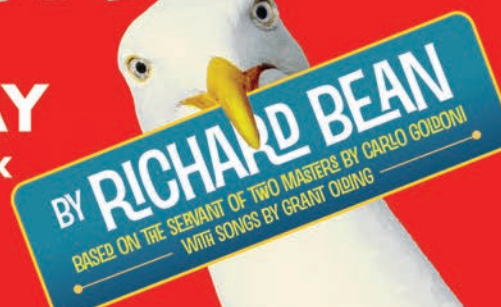
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BY **RICHARD BEAN**  
BASED ON THE SERVANT OF TWO MASTERS BY CARLO GOLDONI  
WITH SONGS BY GRANT OLBING

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## Theatre for younger audiences



### Charlie Cook's Favourite Book

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry,  
Fri 5 - Sun 7 April

Given the success of so many other stage adaptations of Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler's hugely popular stories, it's a real no-brainer to mount a live version of Charlie Cook's Favourite Book.

Presented via the ever-popular combination of clever puppetry and enchanting songs, the show follows Charlie's attempts to get his sister to read. Charlie himself loves reading. For him, there's nothing better than settling down to enjoy a favourite book about a pirate... who also has a favourite book... about Goldilocks... who also has a favourite book... about a knight... who also has a favourite book... You get the idea?... Created for children aged between three and eight, the show has a running time of one hour.

### Little Big Dance: Club Origami

Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham,  
Sat 27 April

This gentle and interactive show from Japanese choreographer & dance therapist Takeshi Matsumoto (presented at MAC



twice on the 27th) invites families to immerse themselves in a world of paper and play. Produced as part of the Little Big Dance project - a pioneering national initiative aimed at creating new dance work for the under-fives - Club Origami presents 40 minutes of thoroughly absorbing paper-based entertainment (plus 10 minutes stay & play). In the process, the show encourages family audiences to create, imagine and explore whole new ways of thinking, playing and moving.

### The Sooty Show

Worcester Swan Theatre, Fri 5 April;  
Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sun 7 April

One of the 20th century's best-loved children's characters makes a welcome return. A simple glove puppet created by Harry Corbett, Sooty continues to go down a storm with generation after generation of youngsters, impressively bucking the trend for far more sophisticated, high-tech entertainment.

Richard Cadell's the fella now operating

Sooty and his longtime companions, Sweep and Soo, and is here joined by 'special guest stars' Butch the bulldog, Ramsbottom the snake and 'circus superstar' Michael Jordan. Expect magic, music, mayhem and audience participation.

### Ministry Of Science Live

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Wed 17 April;  
Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sun 21 July;  
Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sun 22 September

An anarchic approach to science communication is the name of the game when the Ministry Of Science comes to town. As well as taking a look at the inventors and engineers who've shaped and inspired the modern world, the show's presenters will be conducting clever demonstrations aplenty - so expect the occasional loud bang!

### There Was An Old Lady Who Swallowed A Fly

Tamworth Assembly Rooms, Mon 1 April;  
Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sat 27 April;  
Festival Drayton, Market Drayton, North Shropshire, Sat 12 October; Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton, Fri 18 & Sat 19 October

The People's Theatre Company - highly rated creators of the fabulous Don't Dribble On The Dragon - here bring one of the world's best-loved nursery rhymes to life.

Their show comes complete with colourful animal characters and numerous singalong songs, including If You're Happy And You Know It and Incy Wincy Spider...

### There's A Monster In Your Show!

Birmingham Town Hall, Sat 6 & Sun 7 April;  
Worcester Swan Theatre, Tues 30 April & Wed 1 May; Tamworth Assembly Rooms, Fri 3 & Sat 4 May

Children's author Tom Fletcher's critically acclaimed Who's In Your Book? series here makes the leap from page to stage. The brand-new musical sees Little Monster being joined by friends Dragon, Alien and Unicorn for 50 minutes of comedy, chaos and high-energy fun.

### Dear Zoo

Birmingham Hippodrome, Thurs 11 - Tues 16 April; Lichfield Garrick, Sat 20 & Sun 21 April;  
Worcester Swan Theatre, Sat 28 - Sun 29 September

First published in 1982, Dear Zoo - a lift-the-flap book by Rod Campbell - has delighted generations of children and accumulated millions of sales worldwide.

This hugely popular stage version of the story features music, child-friendly puppets and lots of audience participation.







# THE INSIDE SCOOP

Drop The Dead Donkey stage show stops off in the Midlands





**Televised on Channel Four between 1990 and 98, Drop The Dead Donkey was a satirical and topical sitcom set in the offices of GlobeLink News, a fictional TV news broadcaster. Thirty years later, the team has been brought back together in a brand-new play, which visits Birmingham theatre The Alexandra this month. What's On spoke to Jeff Rawle, who plays George Dent, the station's ill-fated editor, to find out more...**

**You've been on the road since January. What's the audience response been like?**

It's been fantastic. We started out at Richmond and we sold every seat in the house, every show, and that's continued to be the case... We've had about six or seven weeks on the road now, and the response has been amazing. I have to say I didn't expect it to be quite so brilliant - there seems to have been an awful lot of love for the show, and people have booked tickets in advance not knowing quite what they were going to come and see. We get the impression that everyone's really liking it, and we're just thrilled to be able to get back together again.

**The play, like the TV programme, is written by Andy Hamilton and Guy Jenkin. How did it feel, seeing the new script?**

It was amazing. I think everyone had a certain amount of trepidation, thinking 'How can this possibly work?' Everyone was thrilled when it really did, and it was also extremely funny. To be rejoined with that wit... we'd kind of got used to it. I looked at a couple of episodes the other night. I haven't seen them since 1990, when we first started the show - I was 40 years old, and I'm now 73. I've always been very fond of the show, of course, but I thought everyone's performances were brilliant... Now we're back together again, it's great to climb back on board. When we had the first read-through, it was really quite moving because we hadn't seen each other for a great deal of time. Once we got that read-through done, they went away and worked on it a bit more, and a bit more... So over a period of a year - and I think it shows - they spent a lot of time and care on the script, and we reap the rewards of that every night.

**Do you think modern politics or society has changed the way it's been written?**

It does seem to me, maybe because I'm older, that the world's got more bonkers. It's the same format: we have a plotline, but within that there are moments where we know there'll be new topical material, and these are updated continually. The problem is that you have to learn it really quickly. These

often fall to Neil Pearson - I don't know why, but he seems to get the topicals. We have a meeting in a toilet at one point during the show, and I think 'Oh god, what's he going to say next?...'. That's really quite exciting - you never know what's going to be in it. The audience seem to love that - they realise that since that news story has only just broken, they're getting the benefit of a gag that's only just been made up half an hour ago, about something that happened half an hour ago. I think that's a unique selling point. The people who knew the TV show will not go away disappointed. They get dealt quite a raft of new topical humour, which could only have been written on that day. You get that injection of fun, within the main plotline.

**When Drop The Dead Donkey ended, GlobeLink was disbanded. Has it been resurrected, or is the team working somewhere completely new?**

We're working somewhere completely new. It's the launch of a new news station, so we're all rather suspicious about why we've been recruited - especially some of us who are in our older age... There's a question-mark hanging, about why they're employing us and why they're paying us so much money. That's where the story starts.

**It's 30 years since the TV programme started. What's changed about news broadcasting during that time?**

GlobeLink News was a pretty cockamamie, crazy place to work. Sir Royston Merchant owned the station... In 1990, the idea that someone owns a news station and they're chasing ratings seemed barmy. Now, when you look at the new stations that are cropping up, you can see that that's absolutely what they're doing. You'd have thought it impossible, back in 1990, that anyone would be so brazen as to go down that route. The news should be the news, and it should be about fact finding, journalism, truth and balanced reporting. That has, to a certain extent, gone out the window.

**Are you enjoying playing George again?**

Yeah, it's been great. I've always loved playing that character. He was so sad, and he

always had such terrible luck. It's so sweet. They've written that his life's turned around and he's got everything to play for - or so he thinks! That's where the play starts. It isn't long before it unravels, like one of his cardigans...

**He's a bit of a hypochondriac. How's his health nowadays?**

George's health is actually good; he's holding up well - but he does give a good rundown of problems he's had in the past. We get quite a lot of graphic medical information...

**You grew up in Birmingham. What's it like revisiting the city?**

I was born in Birmingham, in Handsworth Wood. I went to Cherry Orchard Primary School there, and then I went onto King Edward's Aston grammar school. I left Birmingham when I was about 14, to Sheffield. My dad worked for GEC, and he moved up north. My mum used to go to the Alexandra Theatre every week. I've done plays at the Alex and the Birmingham Rep - I've always liked going back. It's always very tempting to go and see the old house and wander around - but of course it's completely different from when I was a kid. I hardly recognise any of it, but it's always nice to return.

**Do you add in any regional references when travelling around the country with Drop The Dead Donkey?**

Yes - we don't put too many in because it begins to sound a bit like a pantomime if you're not careful, but we do. Especially if there's something that's happened up the road - that's always very tempting to put in. I think everyone will get the feeling that it's a freshly made show, for one night only. No two shows are alike - that's probably true for any show, but with this especially you do feel like you're getting something unique.

.....

**Drop The Dead Donkey: The Reawakening shows at The Alexandra, Birmingham, from Tuesday 16 to Saturday 20 April**



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## Light entertainment from around the region



### Cirque du Soleil: OVO

Utilita Arena Birmingham,  
Thurs 25 - Sun 28 April

Cirque du Soleil (or Circus of the Sun) is without question the ensemble which has done the most to restore people's view of the circus as a valid and desirable form of entertainment.

Founded in Quebec, Canada, 40 years ago, the company has presented a host of groundbreaking theatrical extravaganzas, seamlessly blending circus styles from around the world and proving to be a massive hit wherever it's set up its big-top tent. The troupe is here making its first visit to the UK in six years, stopping off in the Midlands this month with critically acclaimed show OVO. The family-friendly production is described by Cirque as 'a non-stop riot of energy and movement' that makes 'a colourful intrusion into a new day in the life of insects'.

### Closet Confessions Live

Birmingham Town Hall, Fri 26 April

Bestselling author Candice Brathwaite and TikTok comedy star Coco Sarel bring their hit girl-talk podcast to Birmingham, presenting a show that's promising everything from 'laugh-out-loud confessions and hilarious accounts of dating disasters' to 'tales of bad behaviour and celebrity culture'.

### The Noise Next Door

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sat 13 April

Praised for presenting their audiences with 'a superior kind of chaos', The Noise Next Door is a quartet of improvising comedians who've been garnering critical praise for a good few years now.

Big in Edinburgh at festival time, they pride themselves on their originality and quick-wittedness.

Previous on-stage endeavours have included a mini-musical embracing the uncomfortable bedfellows of pantomime, folk music and death-metal, and a surreal adventure in which the Magic Roundabout's Zebedee leads the forces of good against Darth Vader, who's holed up in Worcester Cathedral. They visit Shrewsbury this month with currently touring show Freewheeling.

### The Night Sky Show

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Sun 7 April

To Birmingham city centre - and beyond! Stargazing Midlanders visiting the Alex to see this currently touring show will be taken on a

journey around the constellations, stars and planets by astronomer & author Adrian West - a man better known on social media as VirtualAstro.

Adrian is promising a gloriously visual and thought-provoking experience that's suitable for everyone - meaning there's no 'heavy-going science' or 'boring astronomy talk' to negotiate.

Indeed, according to the show's website, the universe has never been so much fun...

### Rachel Stockdale: Fat Chance

Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham,  
Wed 24 April

As a plus-sized northern female, Rachel Stockdale was told there was fat chance she'd ever fulfill her dream of making a living from acting. "You're northern, you're fat and you're a woman," one casting director kindly pointed out. "You can only be two out of three to make it in this industry."

Fortunately for her rapidly expanding fanbase, Rachel ignored the negative voices. Instead, she followed her dream, creating a show which, having made a significant splash in Edinburgh last summer, is very likely to do exactly the same when she brings it to Birmingham late this month.

As well as exploring the twentysomething Teesider's true-life experience of weight gain, from size eight to size 18, the one-woman



production also sees Rachel talking about her ongoing efforts to make it big in the rough, tough world of showbiz.

### Staying Relevant: Sam Thompson & Pete Wicks

Utilita Arena Birmingham, Sun 14 April

Sam Thompson and Pete Wicks head for Birmingham just a handful of months after Sam won the most recent series of I'm A Celebrity...Get Me Out Of Here!.

The Made In Chelsea star and TOWIE favourite Pete have been big pals since meeting on Celebs Go Dating a few years back. They're here bringing the live version of their hugely popular podcast to the West Midlands as part of a UK tour.

### Box Of Frogs

1000 Trades, Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham,  
Wed 10 April; The Core Theatre, Solihull, Fri 26  
April; 1000 Trades, Jewellery Quarter,  
Birmingham, Wed 8 May; Highbury Theatre,  
Sutton Coldfield, Fri 24 May

A night of 'high-octane improvised comedy nonsense' - based entirely on the audience's suggestions - is the entertainment on offer when Birmingham-based Box Of Frogs head out on tour.

The talented ensemble - who've been steadily building an enviable reputation as quick-witted purveyors of impromptu mirth - are promising improv-loving patrons a pair of hours positively awash with spontaneous songs and spur-of-the-moment sketches and scenes.



# LABOUR OF LOVE

**Former doctor and familiar television face Tony Gardner  
makes his Shakespeare debut at the home of the bard this month**





## The Royal Shakespeare Company's new production of *Love's Labour's Lost* features a number of Stratford debutants. Among them is *Last Tango In Halifax*, *Lead Balloon* and *My Parents Are Aliens* actor Tony Gardner, whose first appearance at the home of Shakespeare is just what the doctor ordered - as he explains to What's On...

It's fair to say that Tony Gardner has taken an unorthodox route to the Royal Shakespeare Theatre stage, where he makes his debut this month at the age of 60.

He'll be familiar to TV viewers for roles in the likes of *Last Tango In Halifax*, *Lead Balloon*, *The Thick Of It*, *Gentleman Jack*, *My Parents Are Aliens* and many more. He's also appeared in a host of plays and films, but got his first taste of the business as one half of a comedy duo that performed five sell-out seasons at the Edinburgh Fringe, earning two Perrier Award nominations in the process.

Both he and his one-time comedy partner Phil Hammond have gone on to bigger things since then, but not in their intended fields - both are qualified doctors, and they met during their early years of training at Bristol's Frenchay Hospital. Each qualified in 1987, and they became GPs in 1991, but neither could find a cure for the showbusiness bug they caught while performing Christmas review shows at their respective hospitals. So much so that when Phil called to say he'd been doing some stand-up routines about medicine and healthcare, Tony instantly suggested they team up and head for Scotland.

"We formed a double act and went up to Edinburgh, which you could do then - it was the place to try stuff out. We were called *Struck Off And Die*, and we worked there from 1990 to 1995. As a result we got an agent and a Radio Four series, and that's how I started falling into acting."

The fall was obviously a significant one career-wise, but Tony had a safety net to hand.

"I was still working as a locum GP between acting jobs. It would have been mad to leave general practice and 100 per cent employment to enter the acting profession."

Eventually he did just that, partly through the support of his wife, a consultant anaesthetist, and partly because of the success of *My Parents Are Aliens*, which gave him regular acting work for eight years.

"It was never, ever my intention - even when we started going to Edinburgh, which was just a bit of a jolly - but it snowballed. Eventually I felt like I wasn't doing enough medicine, and there was more and more acting coming in, so I stopped in 2000 and I've never been back.

"So that's my story, really. I loved being a doctor - it's all I ever wanted to do - but I found something else. All my friends are doctors, my wife's a doctor, my son's a

medical student, so it's very much who I am, and I wouldn't have been an actor if I wasn't a doctor.

"It's a strange journey and one I'm often asked about. I can't recommend it or anything, it's just my journey and I don't know any other way. But I'm very, very happy doing what I'm doing."

His working-class parents clearly made sacrifices to put him through medical school - so had they complained when he packed it in to join the (acting) circus?

"Yeah is the answer! It must have been quite difficult for them because it was an amazing thing for me to go to medical school and become a doctor, the first doctor in the family. My father was a lorry driver from Bristol, so it was always a case of (adopts West Country accent) 'You can always go back to general practice if it doesn't work out.'"

It was his recurring role in BBC comedy-drama *Last Tango In Halifax* and, crucially, being watched by their mates, that finally ended his parents' doubts, says Tony.

"All their friends started saying they'd seen me in it, so they realised this was what I do now."

Mercifully no more tuition fees were required either - for all the years of training it took to become a doctor, Tony's had precisely none to be an actor, having to learn everything 'on the job'.

"I've been very lucky because I've been in quite a few shows that went on for more than one series," he says, citing the five seasons of *Last Tango*, four of *Lead Balloon*, and eight of *My Parents Are Aliens* - which ran for an amazing 106 episodes.

"That meant a lot of screen time. I'm not trained, I didn't go to drama school, so that was my education into television and screen acting."

Stage performance came a little later. After initially failing to get, let alone get through, any auditions, he crossed paths with one of theatre's greatest directors, who also happens to be the founder of the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC).

"I couldn't get seen by anyone for theatre until Peter Hall saw me and cast me. So my first three plays were with [him] over two years, and that was my very steep learning-curve into acting on stage."

That was nearly 20 years ago, and Tony's clearly delighted to have finally made it to his mentor's spiritual home. He'll play

Holofernes in director Emily Burns' contemporary new production of *Love's Labour's Lost*, which stars fellow RSC debutants Luke Thompson (aka Benedict Bridgerton from the popular Netflix drama), Melanie-Joyce Bermudez, Ioanna Kimbook and Rilwan Abiola Owokoniran.

The play is the first to be programmed by the RSC's new co-artistic directors, Daniel Evans and Tamara Harvey - so the stakes are high, admits Tony.

"We all feel very privileged but also nervous as a result because there's gonna be a huge magnifying glass on the production," he says. But his overriding emotion is excitement, and I've come across few actors so genuinely enthusiastic about their latest role.

"When I was offered the part, I was overwhelmed, and I still am. I've just turned 60, so to be offered my first Shakespeare is incredible.

"I just adore acting, and this is obviously a huge big deal for me. I've never done any Shakespeare before, so again I'm on this steep learning curve - and doing it at the RSC!"

It turns out there's quite a bit of learning too, with voice coaches, movement coaches and even lectures about various aspects of the play, both historical *and* contemporary - the production is set at the swanky resort of a tech billionaire on an unnamed Pacific Island.

"I think the vision Emily has will really bring the play out. You'll be able to see it with new eyes, and also see how brilliant the writing is, as there are so many themes within this play.

"We've had lectures on the oceanic islands, migration, language, flora, fauna - it's all going to come into the play. We've all soaked it up and know what problems those islands are having. For example, global warming and the climate-change crisis is gonna hit the Pacific Islands before it hits anyone else.

"It's fascinating to get all this information when you just thought you'd turn up to play a bit of Shakespeare."

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**Love's Labour's Lost shows at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, from Thursday 11 April to Saturday 18 May**

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## Dance previews from across the region

**Mehek**

Birmingham Hippodrome, Tues 9 April

Two internationally renowned kathak choreographers & dancers here come together to present a brand-new work. Birmingham-born Aakash Odedra and New Delhi-based Aditi Mangaldas have joined forces to create and perform Mehek, a work which explores the power of love, memory, desire, attraction and resilience.

The show focuses on the often taboo subject of love between an older woman and a younger man.

"I guess one thing we would like with this piece is to gently remind ourselves that we needn't be judgmental," explains the project's dramaturg, Karthika Nair. "And that we can just let ourselves be happy that others are happy; that who you love is a personal thing. And also that we should be so lucky, whatever our age, to find someone to love us or to find someone to love. Life is short and horribly unpredictable. Love, for all the messiness that it brings, is also salvation."

**Sonia Sabri Company: Roshni**

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Sat 6 April

"We've always tried to create something which is groundbreaking and pioneering," says Sonia Sabri. "I feel proud to say that we've presented something that's very new and very different. We've been at the forefront of creating new ideas, and that's exactly what we intend to continue doing." Sonia's belief in the need to push the boundaries of dance is reflected in Roshni. Bringing together wordless storytelling, eclectic music, percussive dance and upbeat audience interaction, the show comprises three distinctive dance works that explore 'the highs and lows of life today'.

**U.Dance West Midlands**

Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome, Sat 20 April

Providing a regional youth dance platform, the organisers of U.Dance West Midlands are promising an evening 'full of vibrant and exciting dance genres and themes, performed by some of the best young talents from across the West Midlands'... The event forms part of a national programme that annually provides high-quality dance opportunities for young people.

**English Youth Ballet: Sleeping Beauty**

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 12 - Sat 13 April

Founded in 1998, the award-winning English Youth Ballet offers young people who're interested in dance the opportunity to perform classical ballet alongside professional dancers and tutors... This latest production comes complete with 'sparkling new costumes and splendid scenery'.

**Giovanni Pernice: Let Me Entertain You**

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Thurs 4 April; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 5 April

Persistent rumours of a rift between Giovanni Pernice and his 2023 Strictly dance partner, Amanda Abbington - who quit the show mid-

series, citing 'personal reasons' - saw the Bafta-winning Italian take up more than his fair share of column inches over the following few months.

Now, though, Giovanni is out on the road, doing what he does best in a brand-new dance extravaganza. He's joined for the occasion by a talented cast of professional dancers and West End performers.

**Graziano Di Prima - Believe: My Life On Stage**

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Thurs 11 April

Strictly's Graziano Di Prima stops off in the region to present his very first 'solo' show. Promising 'an electrifying evening of Latin and ballroom dancing', the production pays tribute to Graziano's Italian ancestors. It also tells his own Billy Elliot-style story - the inspiring tale of a young boy from Sicily who grew up working in the vineyards with his father and dreaming about one day becoming a professional dancer. Graziano is joined in the show by his wife, Giada Lini.





# A LIFE IN THEIR HANDS

**Twelve Angry Men, Reginald Rose's famous courtroom drama, returns to the Midlands this month**



## Starting life as a teleplay, Reginald Rose's famous courtroom drama, *Twelve Angry Men*, continues to grip audiences wherever it's staged. The latest touring version features a host of familiar names, including former *Emmerdale*, *Waterloo Road* and *Casualty* actor Jason Merrells, who plays the key role of Juror Eight. We recently caught up with Jason to find out more...

In the interests of justice, juries always meet in secret and their deliberations stay behind closed doors. But the classic play *Twelve Angry Men* takes us inside those secret discussions as we watch one jury struggle to reach a verdict on an unnamed suspect.

Ideas are explored, opinions voiced, bigotries exposed, arguments fought and minds changed in a drama which remains as resonant today as when it was first aired as a teleplay and film in the 1950s.

The key role is Juror Eight, who forces his fellow panel members to reconsider a decision which is initially made without any investigation of the facts. And gradually the audience sees that this may not be as cut-and-dried a case as they had at first suspected.

The role of Juror Eight is currently being played by Jason Merrells in a UK tour that includes stop-offs in Wolverhampton and Lichfield. The cast also features Michael Greco, Gray O'Brien and Tristan Gemmill.

Jason is a familiar television face, having played businessman Declan Macey in *Emmerdale*, head teacher Jack Rimmer in *Waterloo Road* and receptionist Matt Hawley in *Casualty*. And this isn't the first time he's portrayed Juror Eight.

"The first time round was in 2015 and it was very much a sort of favour to Bill Kenwright," he recalls. "He needed someone to do a small part of the tour, which was already on its way. I was between filming jobs, so it fitted perfectly, and it was a great part, so I snapped his hand off and said yes. I loved my time doing it and was fascinated by it as a piece."

And so when he was asked to join the current tour, Jason jumped at the chance - and then it took on an additional significance. "When I said yes to it, well, shortly afterwards, Bill died, and I'm really glad that we agreed to work together before that happened."

In 1957 *Twelve Angry Men* was made into an Oscar-nominated film with Henry Fonda as Juror Eight. Jason feels its message is just as important nearly 70 years on.

"The play is a New York cross-section of men; it's men because at that time that's what

juries were made up of. America is going through a serious tipping point of change; the Civil Rights movement is beginning the backlash against the way African Americans are treated in all the major cities of America. That is a background noise to 1957 that you can't ignore when you come to approach New York at that time.

"The kid on trial is Puerto Rican. Although that is never mentioned, that was the intention of the writer. And there is casual racism that's thrown around the room. We all have prejudices inside us - in fact, that's one of Juror Eight's speeches. He says that it's very difficult to get rid of your own prejudice but you have to try because if you don't it stops you seeing anything clearly."

And such prejudice hasn't gone away, says Jason.

"It's a really well-made play, and that is its continuing appeal. It just seems to me to have even more resonance now. It feels more pertinent than it did even in 2015. I'm reading about guys on Death Row in America at the moment. There are very strong cases against them being there because of miscarriages of justice or questions about the way the case was handled, and it's exactly what's happening in the play. No-one ever says and no-one ever knows if the kid at the centre of the play is innocent or not, but the benefit of the doubt is enough to say the state shouldn't be killing someone when there's doubt.

"I think this play has got everything. The essence of drama is conflict, and because it's theatre it's also a word-based medium - this is a conflict in argument, so you couldn't get anything more theatrical than that. It's got 12 very different, very distinct, really well-wrought characters, some of whom are very funny, some of whom are disturbing and some of whom you want to root for."

For Jason, Juror Eight may be unnamed but he has an important backstory. "I knew the film and Henry Fonda, and my memory of his style in the show was very quiet, very rooted, very straightforward and very gentle but with a moral firmness. I kind of remembered that, and I suppose that's how I approached it in 2015.

"What was really interesting, and one of the reasons that I wanted to do it again, is when I read it again, I felt quite differently about Juror Eight. I thought much more about who he was. So this is an architect in 1957 in New York; an academic. He's a progressive - he probably listens to bebop, Charlie Parker. He's probably well aware of the injustices going on across the country, and I would think he is someone who is also an abolitionist.

"I don't believe he would be thinking we should be killing anybody, certainly not frying them in a chair with a sponge on their head. I think he's of the opinion that that's barbaric, as am I. So I approached him much more with that in mind, and I think that makes my interpretation of him this time a bit more politically keen to see this guilty verdict turned over. That doesn't mean that I'm ignoring the massive questions that are still there, but I think he's saying: 'Look, there are these doubts, and therefore I'm really, really sure we shouldn't be burning someone alive in a chair.'"

So has Jason been a juror?

"I've never been asked to be on a jury, but I think I would be very careful to convict. It's very hard to keep emotions out of it. Juror Eight is trying to do that, but there are certain cases that click people's buttons. It's hard to keep personal emotions out of it, but I would do my best. The jury system is problematic, but it's better to have a system that has some moral code to it - which is that you must be sure because the burden of proof is on the prosecution, not on the defence. It's not for the defendant to out-and-out prove that you didn't do something; it's up to the prosecution to prove out-and-out that you did. And this is what is explored so well in the play."

.....

**Twelve Angry Men shows at Lichfield Garrick from Monday 8 to Saturday 13 April and Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Monday 6 to Saturday 11 May**

## Film highlights in April...



### **Back To Black** CERT tbc (122 mins)

Starring **Marisa Abela, Eddie Marsan, Jack O'Connell, Juliet Cowan, Lesley Manville, Ansu Kabia**  
Directed by **Sam Taylor-Johnson**

In dying from alcohol poisoning 13 years ago, Amy Winehouse became a member of the so-called 27 Club - the group of on-the-rise musicians and pop & rock stars who made it past 26 but never lived to celebrate their 28th birthday (think Brian Jones, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison and Kurt Cobain).

In an all-too-short career, Winehouse made a huge impression on the music scene, her brilliance, for the most part, outshining the demons which plagued her throughout her life. *Back To Black* - the film takes the title of her second and final album - tells her extraordinary story, painting a vivid picture of the Camden streets she called home and the challenges she encountered in the face of global stardom.

The biopic comes complete with a strong cast of talented actors but hasn't been universally welcomed by Amy's fans, many of whom fear it will be awash with ghoulish depictions of the late singer's alcoholism and drug addiction.

**Released Fri 12 April**

### **Monkey Man** CERT 18 (113 mins)

Starring **Dev Patel, Sharlto Copley, Sobhita Dhulipala, Sikandar Kher, Pitobash, Brahim Chab** Directed by **Dev Patel**

Night after night, in an underground fight club in a slum in a fictitious Indian city, a young man known as Kid pulls on a gorilla mask and ekes out a meagre living by being beaten to a bloody pulp by other fighters. A victim of childhood trauma and full of suppressed rage, he finally finds a way to exact revenge on those who have done him wrong...

Slumdog Millionaire and Best Exotic Marigold Hotel actor Dev Patel not only takes the title role here but directs and produces a film he's also written. The critical response to *Monkey Man* has been mainly positive, but even the more-admiring reviews come with a caveat. Namely, that this is a graphically violent and unrelentingly grim 'revenge' movie, most likely not for the fainthearted, and certainly not for those fans of Patel who enjoy seeing him in lighthearted *Marigold Hotel* mode.

**Released Fri 5 April**



### **The First Omen** CERT 15 (120 mins)

Starring **Bill Nighy, Charles Dance, Ralph Ineson, Nell Tiger Free, Sonia Braga, Anton Alexander** Directed by **Arkasha Stevenson**

When a young woman is sent to Rome to begin a life of service to the church, she not only encounters a darkness which causes her to question her own faith but also uncovers a terrifying conspiracy to bring about the birth of 'evil incarnate'...

Nearly half a century on from the first film - in which Satan's spawn Damien caused mayhem after being adopted by an American diplomat and his wife - famous horror franchise *The Omen* makes a return with this prequel movie explaining the origin of the antichrist.

Despite the original movie's box-office success, a 2006 remake and 2016 television series have failed to greatly rekindle interest in the *Omen* franchise. With that in mind, 20th Century Studios executives will no doubt be keeping everything firmly crossed that this latest offering achieves a so-far-elusive spark with 21st-century horror-loving cinemagoers.

**Released Fri 5 April**



## The Ministry Of Ungentlemanly Warfare

CERT tbc (120mins)

Starring **Henry Cavill, Freddie Fox, Henry Golding, Alex Pettyfer, Alan Ritchson, Hero Fiennes Tiffin**  
Directed by **Guy Ritchie**

Guy Ritchie has turned to some recently declassified files from the British War Department to find the inspiration for his latest film. An action-comedy, *The Ministry Of Ungentlemanly Warfare* tells the story of the first-ever special forces organisation - a unit formed during World War Two by Prime Minister Winston Churchill and a small group of military officials, including James Bond author Ian Fleming.

Composed of a motley crew of rogues and mavericks - and using entirely unconventional and utterly 'ungentlemanly' fighting techniques - the top-secret combat unit heads out on a daring mission against the Nazis. Their audacious approach to combatting the forces of evil not only changed the course of the war but also laid the foundation for the British SAS and modern Black Ops warfare.

**Released Fri 19 April**



## Civil War

CERT tbc (109 mins)

Starring **Kirsten Dunst, Wagner Moura, Cailee Spaeny, Stephen McKinley Henderson, Sonoya Mizuno, Jefferson White**  
Directed by **Alex Garland**

Set in a fractured, near-future America which is in deep and violent conflict with itself, *Civil War* follows a team of journalists as they head for Washington DC in the hope of interviewing the president before he surrenders to separatist 'western forces' led by Texas and California...

English filmmaker Alex Garland's latest offering has met with waves of critical acclaim. It's also caused its fair share of consternation, however; its depiction of a profoundly polarised America, which has become embroiled in an all-out civil war, has seemed just a little too prescient for some commentators and cinemagoers.

**Released Fri 12 April**



## Challengers

CERT tbc

Starring **Mike Faist, Josh O'Connor, Zendaya, Darnell Appling, Bryan Doo, Shane Harris**  
Directed by **Luca Guadagnino**

Set in the world of professional tennis, visionary filmmaker Luca Guadagnino's *Challengers* stars Zendaya as Tashi Duncan, a one-time tennis prodigy-turned-coach whose husband has to play her former boyfriend in an important match. As past and present collide, and with tensions running high, Tashi must ask herself, what will it cost to win?...

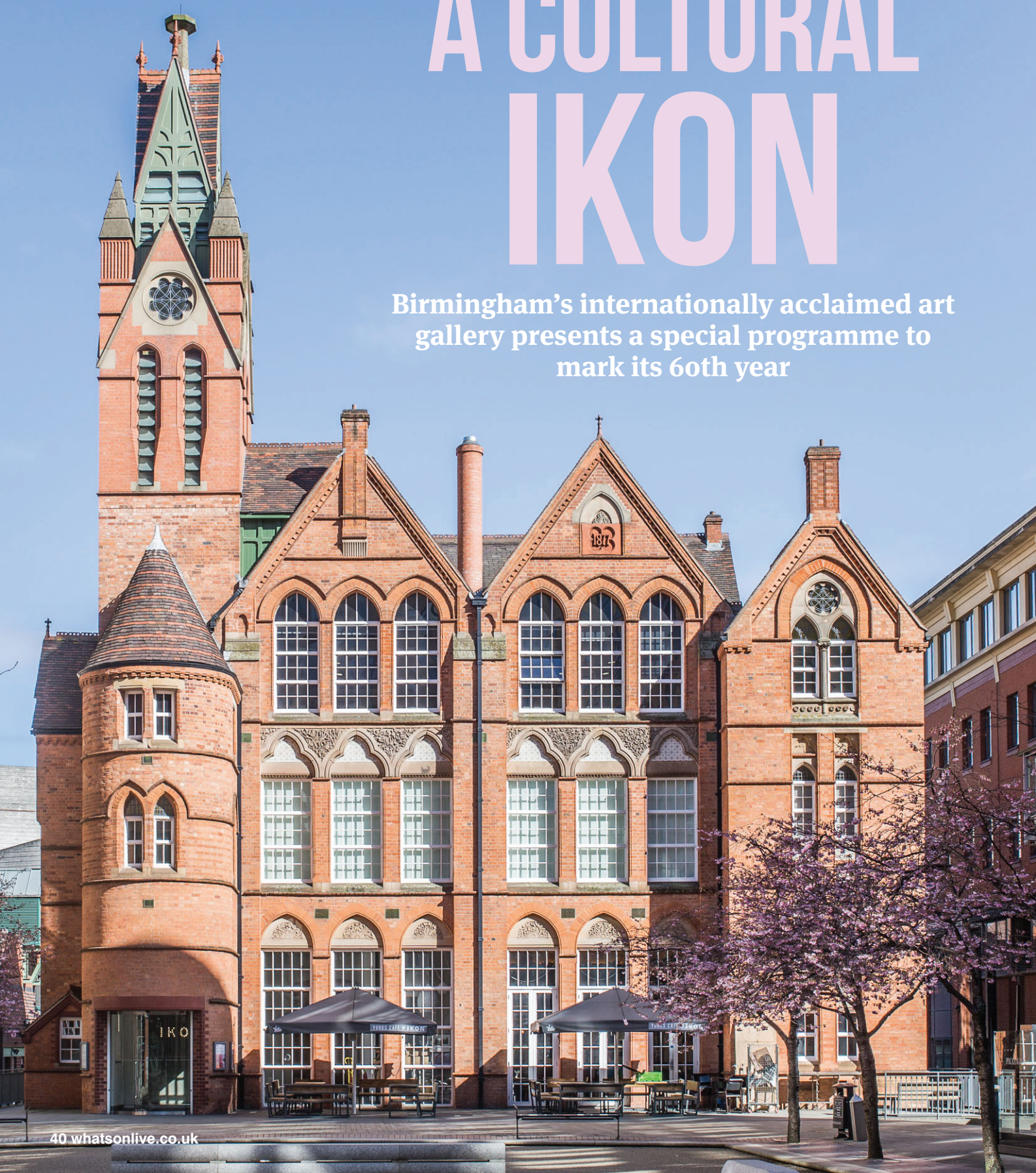
*Challengers* featured in the prestigious opening slot at last year's Venice Film Festival and drew fulsome praise from festival director Alberto Barbera, who said: "With a light hand and sporting self-confidence, Guadagnino sets no limits to his creative energy in this film, as he deals with topics such as love, friendship and male rivalry, and brings to life an enthralling and affecting movie, full of irony, sensuality and good nature. Cinema in its purest form."

**Released Fri 26 April**



# A CULTURAL IKON

Birmingham's internationally acclaimed art  
gallery presents a special programme to  
mark its 60th year





## Birmingham's Ikon Gallery is marking its 60th year in 2024 by celebrating the art of printmaking and inviting collaborations and contributions from Midlands-based artists. The venue will also host a master portrait by Artemisia Gentileschi as part of National Treasures - a National Gallery initiative forming part of its 200th anniversary programme...

Birmingham's Ikon Gallery has launched a programme of exhibitions which celebrate and commemorate its 60th year.

The spring & summer season includes a close look at a master painting, brand-new art literally hot off the press, and exhibitions ranging from personal introspectives to playful celebrations of the everyday.

Ikon is situated in an ex-schoolhouse in Oozells Square. Surrounded by cherry blossom in springtime, the gallery feels light and inviting. It's a breath of fresh air for those working in the many corporate buildings nearby, or travelling into Birmingham city centre by way of the (in)famous Broad Street.

Start The Press! exhibits in the first-floor gallery until Sunday 21 April. Its centrepiece is an antique flatbed printing press - on loan from Wolverhampton School of Art - an impressive piece of mechanical sculpture in its own right. The press is being used by visiting local printmakers to create art in real time, which fills the walls of the gallery space.

In the anterooms adjacent to the press is a more static collection showcasing the art of printmaking and featuring individual works from Lubaina Himid, David Hockney, Yinka Shonibare and Catherine Yass. There's also a series of evocative 1970s prints from Pamela Scott Wilkie, who first exhibited art at Ikon in 1966.

Differing from the hive of activity on the first floor, Exodus Crooks' Epiphany (Temporaire) inhabits the second-floor gallery in contemplative stillness.

The first room feels like another world - a dark, solitary space with a faint atmosphere of incense. The exhibition takes a journey through the artist's inward and outward reflections, ancestry and spirituality.

Start The Press! and Epiphany (Temporaire) kick off Ikon's 60th-year programme and will be followed by more and varied installations. Ikon has been chosen by London's National Gallery for their National Treasures programme, in which 12 iconic and well-loved paintings from the collection are exhibited by galleries around the UK. All 12

displays launch simultaneously on Friday 10 May - the 200th anniversary of the National Gallery opening - at which point 50% of the UK's population will be within an hour's drive of one of the paintings.

The Ikon's visiting painting is an engaging self-portrait by the Italian Baroque painter Artemisia Gentileschi. Dated around 1616, the artist models herself as Saint Catherine of Alexandria. She is pictured with the remains of a spiked execution wheel; the grizzly inspiration behind the 'Catherine Wheel'.

Ikon will present Gentileschi's self-portrait within Mirror Martyr Mirror Moon, a solo exhibition by Dublin-based contemporary artist Jesse Jones which creates a ritualistic environment, preparing visitors for their viewing of Gentileschi's painting.

"What I'm hoping is that it's a staging, rather than an exhibition with a Gentileschi in it," says Jesse.

Conducting research for the exhibition, Jesse discovered that the Christian story of Saint Catherine's martyrdom is based on an earlier historical figure: the mathematician, philosopher & astronomer Hypatia of Alexandria, a pagan killed by Christians. "So what we see in Saint Catherine is a kind of 'through the looking glass' mirror image."

Gentileschi's choice to paint herself as a famous martyr reflects the difficulty and violence of her early life, in spite of which she went on to have a prolific artistic career.

Jesse expands: "At the heart of Mirror Martyr Mirror Moon is this sense of the recurring martyr image through histories of women's experience: through Gentileschi herself and her experience of violence and resistance, through Saint Catherine, the saint who was very famously martyred and was really persecuted for her intellectual rigour, and then the actual origin story, which is Hypatia. There's three female portraits in the one portrait.

"You don't need to know all of this going in, but I hope that people will have an experience of an intimate relationship with the Gentileschi painting looking directly at you, as a viewer."

Jesse's ritualistic surroundings include water

gathered from holy wells in Ireland as an 'eye cure', a curtain that circles as a dancing body in the space, and a 16mm film opening up the stories of the women who inspired the work. In the centre of this is Gentileschi's captivating self-portrait - which is well worth a visit in its own right.

"Whenever we see it in the National Gallery, it's full of people and the room is really bright, and there's a Caravaggio on the other side... She really holds her own in that space, but this framing of her in a more intimate space - it's about having a really intimate encounter with Gentileschi."

In contrast with this reverent installation, Ikon's second-floor gallery will be hosting a major solo exhibition by Dion Kitson: Rue Britannia. Using sculpture, painting, film and found objects, Dion remodels everyday objects to isolate and elevate ubiquitously 'ordinary' sights, such as a burst football or discarded plastic bottle.

The exhibition includes Council House Of Kitson - a new installation featuring a pebble-dashed façade and footage documenting the artist's father.

Outside of the gallery spaces, Ikon boasts a newly renovated shop with a selection of art books, prints and more. Meanwhile, Yorks Café offers scenic, post-gallery refreshment in the form of coffee or brunch looking out over the square.

The gallery is a registered charity, historically supported by funding from Birmingham City Council. At a precarious time for arts venues in the city, Ikon intends to remain free and open to all, maintaining its place as an essential part of Birmingham's cultural landscape.

.....

**Start The Press! and Epiphany (Temporaire) are exhibited at Ikon until Sunday 21 April. Ikon then exhibits National Treasures: Artemisia In Birmingham, Jesse Jones' Mirror Martyr Mirror Moon, and Dion Kitson's Rue Britannia from Friday 10 May until Sunday 8 September**



## New Narratives In Photography

Midlands Arts Centre (MAC),  
Birmingham, until Mon 27 May

A desire to explore narratives of community, public space and diaspora is the motivation behind the work of the four artists whose photos are showcased in this exhibition. The featured creatives - Asad Ali, Hira Noor, Ume Laila and Waleed Zafar - are all based in Pakistan and use photography in new and innovative ways. The exhibition is being presented as part of an international-residency collaboration between two arts organisations, both of which are photography-led: Grain Projects (which is located here in the West Midlands) and Tasweerghar (from Lahore in Pakistan).



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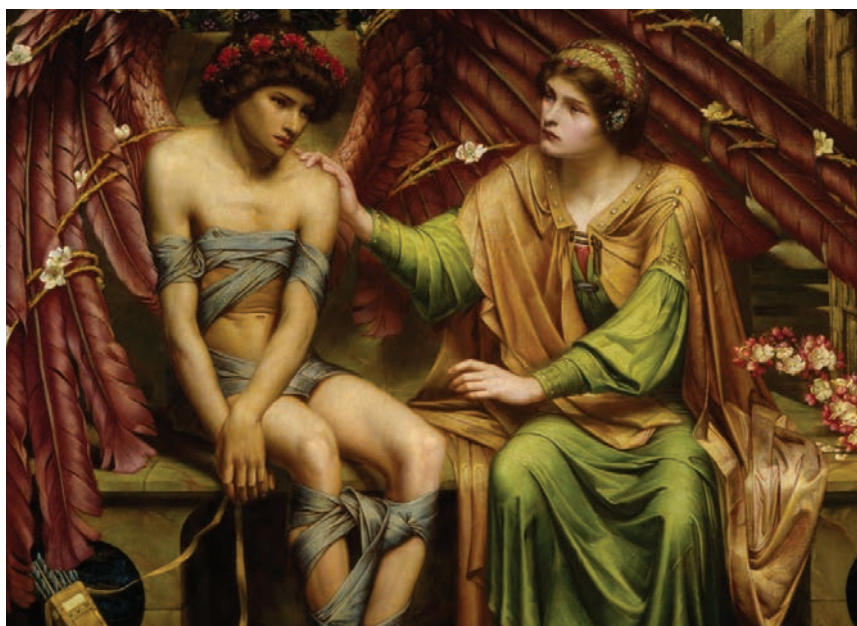
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**IKON/60**    
Ikon is supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England, and Birmingham City Council & Ikon Gallery Limited trading as Ikon. Registered charity no. 528892. Images: Ikon Gallery. Photo by Tod Jones.



Hope Comforting Love in Bondage, 190. Artist: Sidney Harold Meynard



## Victorian Radicals Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, until Thurs 31 October

Birmingham's impressive collection of Pre-Raphaelite art is here being displayed 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.

## Hidden Voices

**Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust, Stratford-upon-Avon, until Sun 3 November**

Fitting in nicely (just as you'd expect!) with the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust's (SBT) multi-year Women Who Made Shakespeare theme, Hidden Voices focuses on the important females in the life of the bard, exploring their impact as mothers, wives, widows, businesswomen and managers of a busy household at New Place, the site of the grandest house in Jacobean Stratford-upon-Avon.

The exhibition also seeks to dispel many of the myths which have persisted across the centuries: that William didn't love wife Anne, because he left her the 'second best bed'; that daughter Susanna was his favourite; that younger daughter Judith was illiterate; and that because Shakespeare's mother Mary was a farmer's daughter, she was less upwardly mobile.

Numerous objects from SBT's collection are featured in the exhibition, including artefacts from the late 16th and early 17th centuries.

## Dame Laura Knight - I Paint Today

**Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum, until Sun 30 June**

The first female artist ever to be welcomed into the Royal Academy, Dame Laura Knight felt a profound love for Worcestershire and the Malvern Hills. Indeed, her emotional connection to the area provided her with a great deal of artistic inspiration during the later years of her life.

Curated by Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum, this new exhibition, titled I Paint Today, pays homage not only to the artist herself but also to her relationship with the local countryside.

The show features works from the Worcester City collection alongside loans from regional and national collections, including Tate.



## A Spirit Inside

**Compton Verney, Warwickshire, until Sun 1 September**

With its themes ranging from mythology and internal contemplation to external and political expression, A Spirit Inside comprises a selection of works produced by women and non-binary artists across a period of 100-plus years. The featured pieces have been drawn from the Women's Art Collection - Europe's biggest collection of work by female artists - and The Ingram Collection, one of the UK's best collections of modern and contemporary British art. Artists whose work is featured in the show include Leonora Carrington, Winifred Nicholson, Bridget Riley, Man Fung Yi and Perminder Kaur.



## After The End Of History: British Working Class Photography 1989 - 2024

**Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry, until Sun 16 June**

The challenges, beauty and diversity of contemporary working-class life - as depicted by working-class artists using the medium of photography - are explored in this fascinating exhibition, curated by acclaimed photographer, writer & broadcaster Johny Pitts.

A Hayward Gallery Touring show, the collection features work from 1989 onwards and marks the 35th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall (which happened on 9 November of that year).







# NEW LIFE IN ART

**Polish artist Tatiana Wolska breathes new life into discarded items by repurposing them into captivating sculptures. Plastic bottles, foam from old mattresses, salvaged timbers and rusty nails are all utilised in her art, as she explains in this recent interview...**

Currently showing at Birmingham's Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Tatiana Wolska's *Leisure As Resistance* marks the artist's first solo exhibition in a UK institution.

In her artistic practice, Tatiana utilises recycled materials, evoking the resourcefulness ingrained in her during her childhood in communist Poland, where recycling became a necessity due to the scarcity of goods. Describing herself as a 'junk collector', she transforms once-polluting materials into captivating sculptures.

Her drawings mirror her sculptural work, and Tatiana reveals enigmatic forms, with ribbed surfaces and folds, through ink, pen, pencil and paint.

The exhibition at MAC will include a monumental hut created from repurposed wood and materials.

Forming a space for audiences to relax, *Leisure As Resistance* invites people to engage in the workshop & talks programme in the exhibition, read books from the on-site library, or bring items for a clothes and seed swap.

**Can you tell us about the emphasis on resourcefulness that underpins the exhibition and the work you are creating?**

I use resourcefulness symbolically. I am inspired by barter systems and the transformation of material. This comes from my childhood in Poland, where everything was transformed. When I arrived in France in 2000, everybody was speaking about ecology. I discovered a new appreciation of recycling and sustainable processes.

**Do you hope to inspire people to consider being more resourceful in their approach to making and creating art?**

Yes, everyone has their own approach. After Frieze in London, I received dozens of messages a day from people reacting to the exhibition. Their amazement at the recycled nature of the work inspired people to think about the potential of waste. This is what I wanted to develop for my exhibition in Birmingham, in particular through the workshops. I want to raise people's

awareness and create a place for community and exchange. There is a real exponential and contagious effect to the project, where new ideas are born through dialogue. By organising workshops, there is the activation of a community already working on these subjects. I offer them a place to meet and exchange ideas, so that their projects can come together.

**You give found objects a second life through your works and sculpture. What is your collection process like? Where do you find your materials?**

I find them everywhere: in the street, in the garbage cans... I collect everything that crosses my path. It also happens that friends mobilise and bring materials directly to my studio. I used to take absolutely everything, but now I need more space in order to create.

**The exhibition also features a number of your drawings. Do you see your drawing process as a form of mindfulness?**

Drawing has a therapeutic aspect for me. What I qualify as 'lazy drawing' is a completely free creative mechanism that is not influenced by any particular thought process. I draw for myself, without the stress of a useful production or obligation. In a society where everything has to make sense in a precise, organised and efficient way, I need this freedom. I think that drawing allows you to release stress and to free creativity. It is a motor that propels ideas. When someone tells me they have no ideas, I advise them to draw.

**A key part of the exhibition will be a makeshift shelter, inviting audiences to engage with a clothes swap, seed swap, and a library. How important is it for you to create a place for leisure and rest within the exhibition?**

This idea goes back to the project of the municipal gallery in Nice, which took the form of a utopian vision of nomadic, democratic and relational architecture. In Birmingham, it was important to create a comfortable, welcoming space where people could relax, let their children play, meet up

and have a cup of tea. In the city, there is a lack of spaces where people can relax for free. The exhibition is also a reaction against this economy of comfort and rest, so it is crucial that visitors can make the space their own.

**What do you hope audiences gain from attending the series of workshops and participatory events, and from visiting the exhibition?**

I hope there will be a collective contamination. Every time I host a workshop, there are interesting exchanges of ideas. A lot of people are working on parallel economies and dreaming of another way of life, far removed from overconsumption and capitalist excess.

**Is the idea of collaborating with local community groups something you will continue in your practice?**

Yes, I like to amplify the collective aspect via my work. Capitalist society separates us from one another, and the lack of solidarity, distrust of others is prevalent. Collective utopias are unfortunately stigmatised, and I want to go against that in my practice.

**Finally, how important is it for you to be showcasing your work in Birmingham?**

My exhibition in Birmingham is the realisation of many projects that I have had in mind for a long time. There were already premises in other projects, but never in such an accomplished and polymorphous way as here. Birmingham also has a special character as an industrial city. Writer Caroline Perez talks about the place of women in England and the breakdown of close ties. A network of mutual aid and support is built up in parallel, and it is precisely in this axis that my artistic practice is articulated.

.....

**Tatiana Wolska: *Leisure as Resistance* shows at Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), until Sunday 2 June.**








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# Spring Festival

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## Events previews from around the region



### Spring In Your Step! Black Country Living Museum, Dudley, until Sun 7 April

The feather dusters are out, as historic characters at the Black Country Living Museum get busy giving their homes and shops a spring clean. Visitors will discover homemade tips, how Edwardian families washed their clothes without a washing machine, 1950s hair-care

methods and how to look after prized musical instruments. There will also be Easter celebrations on site, including choir practice, traditional street games, a family discovery trail and a selection of seasonal treats, from hot cross buns to battered scotch eggs!

### International Living History Festival

Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove, Sat 20 & Sun 21 April

Avoncroft Museum comes to life as 40-plus living-history reenactment groups set up their camps in and around the venue's historic buildings, representing life from the Stone Age, through the Viking era, to the 1940s and beyond.

Visitors can check out lots of hands-on activities, explore the historically themed market and delve into trader stalls selling historically inspired artefacts.



### Spring Steam Gala

Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster, Thurs 18 - Sun 21 April

Severn Valley Railway's four-day festival of steam makes a welcome return this month. The 2024 edition of the show will feature appearances from 72 'Fenchurch', Lambton Tank 29, Stanier Mogul 13268 - in LMS lined black livery and bearing its original number - and the SVR's flagship locomotive, 4930 'Hagley Hall'.

Plus, subject to examination and agreement on testing and commissioning, new-build locomotive 6880 'Betton Grange' will be making its first-ever gala appearance.



### Space, Race and Fly RAF Museum Midlands, Cosford, until Sun 7 April

Family-friendly STEM-based events are all the rage at RAF Museum Midlands this Easter holiday! Attractions include time-travelling science show A Volatile History Of Chemistry

(Tuesday 2 & Wednesday 3 April) and a 3D film about space flight presented in an immersive mobile planetarium (Thursday 4 - Sunday 7 April).



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[britishmotormuseum.co.uk/families](http://britishmotormuseum.co.uk/families)  
J12 M40, Gaydon, Warwickshire, CV35 0BJ



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Explore thrilling displays of aircraft, vintage cars, models, tanks and even life-sized Russian dolls.

The Royal Air Force Museum Midlands offers a fun, entertaining day out for all the family – children love our free aviation themed playground. Entry is free. We're open daily from 10.00am.

[rafmuseum.org/midlands](http://rafmuseum.org/midlands)  
01902 376 200



Lysander Avenue, Cosford,  
Shropshire, TF11 8UP

The Royal Air Force Museum is incorporated by Royal Charter (RC000922) and is a charity registered in England and Wales (1197541)



## Events previews from around the region



### St George's Day Extravaganza Tamworth Castle Grounds, Sat 20 April

Tamworth's ever-popular St George's Day Extravaganza is back for 2024 and as usual will be taking over the castle grounds. The line-up of entertainment features a host of festival favourites, including the Grand Medieval Joust, falconry displays, a living-history camp, Epico the dragon, archery and a selection of fairground rides.

Workshops, displays, a medieval encampment and living-history demonstrations also feature, as do numerous traditional children's games, including post-mills, hobby horses, peg dolls, ball & cup, stilts, quoits and Nine Men's Morris.



### Model World Live NEC, Birmingham, Sat 27 & Sun 28 April

The brainchild of the organisers of the Great Electric Train Show, the brand-new Model World Live event combines modelling disciplines with model railways, scale modelling displays, demonstrations,

presentations, manufacturer support and trade stands. Event highlights include the chance to check out two full-size, restored military vehicles.

### Easter at Thinktank

Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum, until Sun 7 April

As well as enjoying the venue's usual attractions - the 4K Planetarium, MiniBrum, Science Garden and the natural history collections - holiday visitors to Thinktank can also explore the world from space. Every weekday during the Easter fortnight, families can enjoy an interactive show in which they can build the sun, moon and Earth out of people to see how they move in space, discover how rockets take off, recreate the orbits of satellites and learn how they play a big role in wildlife conservation. Thinktank's holiday offer also includes Science Busking, where visitors can find out all about satellites, and sensory stay & play sessions for the under-threes.



### Bike4Life Ride Out & Festival 2024

Weston Park, Weston-under-Lizard, Shropshire, Sun 28 April

Raising funds for Midlands Air Ambulance Charity and attracting more than 6,000 bikers and millions, Bike4Life Ride Out & Festival is one of the UK's most popular and biggest events of its kind. Alongside famous faces Carl Fogarty, James Whitham, Steve Parrish, Ollie Ollerto and Allen Millyard, the bikers will begin their 26-mile convoy in Shrewsbury, eventually arriving at Weston Park for the Bike4Life Festival, which comes complete with bands, trade stands, food and entertainment.





# RHS Malvern Spring Festival

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## Places to visit around the region

### Birmingham Cathedral

Colmore Row, Birmingham B3 2QB.  
Free to visit

Birmingham Cathedral is the oldest building in the city centre still used for its original purpose. The cathedral has four stained-glass windows, designed by Pre-Raphaelite artist Edward Burne-Jones, which were fully conserved and returned to their original glory last year.



### The Black Country Living Museum

Tipton Rd, Dudley, DY1 4SQ.  
Adults £25.95, Children (3-16yrs) £12.95

Get stuck into some good old-fashioned fun at this award-winning venue, as you experience the sights, sounds, smells and tastes of the Black Country through rebuilt, replica or recreated shops, houses and industrial workshops.

### British Motor Museum

Banbury Rd, Gaydon, CV35 0BJ.  
Adults £19, Children £10 (pre-booked online)

The museum features the world's greatest collection of classic, vintage and veteran British cars, with over 400 vehicles on display. Free tours and hands-on family activities provide an opportunity to learn about the stories behind the collection.

### Cotswold Farm Park

Guiting Power, Cheltenham, GL54 5FL.  
Adults £17.50, Children (4-15yrs) £15.50

Cotswold Farm Park is home to more than 50 flocks and herds of farm animals, provides visitors with the chance to learn about farming past and present, and features an adventure playground, a farm safari, a maze, sandpits, jumping pillows and plenty more.



### Roundhouse Birmingham

1 Sheepcote St, Birmingham, B16 8AE.  
Activities range in price

A unique Grade II listed building at the heart of Birmingham's canal network, The Roundhouse is dedicated to sharing stories of the city's industrial heritage in new and imaginative ways. Attractions include walks, cycle tours, boat trips and a range of kayak and paddleboarding tours.



### The Royal Air Force Museum Midlands

RAF Museum Midlands, Lysander Avenue, Cosford, TF11 8UP. Free to visit

Telling the story of aviation history and housing one of the largest collections of its kind in the UK, RAF Museum Midlands is home to more than 70 historic aircraft displayed in three wartime hangars on an active airfield.

### Severn Valley Railway

Station Dr, Kidderminster, DY10 1QX;  
Hollybush Rd, Bridgnorth, WV16 4AX.  
Freedom of the Line ticket - Adults £25,  
Children (4-17yrs) £16.50

Operating mainly steam-hauled passenger trains between Bridgnorth, Bewdley and Kidderminster, this much-loved railway transports visitors on a route of about 16 miles along the beautiful Severn Valley.

### Stratford-upon-Avon Butterfly Farm

Swan's Nest Lane, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 7LS. Adults £8.95, Children (3-16yrs) £7.95

Set in a large greenhouse landscaped with waterfalls, ponds and tropical plants, Stratford-upon-Avon Butterfly Farm is home to hundreds of the world's most spectacular butterflies.



### Sudeley Castle

Winchcombe, Cheltenham, GL54 5JD.  
Adults £22, Children (3-15yrs) £10

Walk in the footsteps of notable characters from the mists of time at Sudeley Castle. Boasting a fascinating history stretching back over 1,000 years, the castle is surrounded by 10 award-winning gardens. There's also an adventure playground and a fun fort for younger visitors to enjoy.



### Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

Millennium Point, Curzon St, Birmingham, B4 7XG. Adults from £15.50, Children (3-15yrs) from £7.50

From steam engines and talking robots to gurgling guts and a chocolate-wrapping machine, Thinktank features more than 200 hands-on science & technology displays.

### West Midlands Police Museum

Steelhouse Lane, Birmingham, B4 6BJ.  
Adults £10, Children (3-15yrs) £6

Located in a Victorian lock-up, the West Midlands Police Museum showcases an unrivalled collection of police artefacts, explores more than 200 years of policing history and offers visitors the chance to enjoy a selection of hands-on activities.

### Weston Park

Weston-under-Lizard, Shifnal, TF11 8LE.  
Adults £8.80, Children £5.20 (pre-booked online)

Weston Park house is set in 1,000 acres of beautiful Capability Brown-landscaped parkland. The venue is home to a nationally important art collection, with other attractions including a restaurant, a woodland adventure playground, a miniature railway, a deer park and holiday cottages.







Shropshire Horticultural Society  
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*Your week-  
by-week  
listings guide*  
**April 2024**

# thelist



Cirque du Soleil OVO - Utilita Arena Birmingham; Thurs 25 - Sun 28 April

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

## What's On

Mon 1 - Sun 7 April



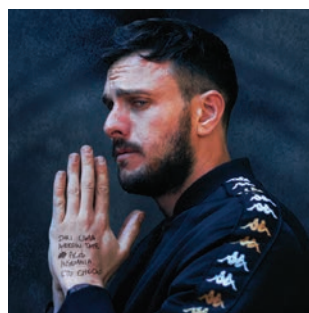
Alice's Adventures In  
Wonderland - MAC  
**Sun 7 April**

Mon 8 - Sun 14 April



Mik Artistik's Ego Trip -  
Kitchen Garden Cafe  
**Sun 14 April**

Mon 15 - Sun 21 April



Mike Rice: Nasty Character  
The Glee Club  
**Wed 17 April**

Mon 22 - Tues 30 April



The Tigerface Show -  
The Old Joint Stock Theatre  
**Tues 30 April - Wed 1 May**



## VISUAL ARTS IN THE MIDLANDS

### Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

**VICTORIAN RADICALS** Exhibition presenting works by 19th-century artists, designers & makers, from the Pre-Raphaelites to the arts & crafts movement, until Thurs 31 Oct

### Midlands Arts Centre, Edgbaston, Birmingham

**MATERIAL EVIDENCE** Exhibition of textile art by current and former members of pan-European group Quilt Art, inspired by the life and work of founder member Mary Fogg, until Mon 27 May

**MADE AT MAC: CELEBRATING CERAMICS** Showcasing the creativity and skill of participants, tutors and artist pass holders who created work at MAC in 2023, until Sun 2 June

**TATIANA WOLSKA: LEISURE AS RESISTANCE** Wolska's first solo exhibition in the UK sees the artist using recycled materials to create captivating sculptures, until Sun 2 June

**PAULINE FARRAR: TALKING POINTS** Farrar returns to MAC with a new installation co-created with members of MAC's Women's Group - Making It Together. Their shared work touches on issues of isolation, disability, and the power of gardening as a rejuvenative tool for wellbeing, Tues 16 Apr - Mon 26 Aug

### Ikon Gallery, Birmingham

**START THE PRESS!** With a vintage, flatbed printing press as a centrepiece, West Midlands printmakers produce original prints to fill the gallery walls, making work in real time. Presented as part of Ikon's 60th anniversary year, until Sun 21 Apr

**EXODUS CROOKS: EPIPHANY (TEMPORAIRE)** Exhibition combining sculpture, film and text in an exploration of memories, histories and traditions transferred through time and shared space, until Sun 21 Apr

### RBSA Gallery, Birmingham

**RBSA PRINT PRIZE** Biennale exhibition celebrating all forms of printmaking. Both contemporary and traditional techniques are on display, until Sat 6 Apr

**BEN PARKER: WONDERFULLY MUNDANE** Winner of the RBSA Photography Prize, Birmingham-based photographer Ben injects humour into seemingly mundane scenes, until Sun 7 Apr

**HELEN GARBETT: LID OF A LIMPET** A glimpse into Garbett's long-term art-

based research venture, The Human Limpet Project, until Sun 7 Apr

**RBSA CANDIDATES EXHIBITION** Exhibition of works by artists who have applied to become members of the RBSA. Throughout the exhibition, existing members and associates will vote on who they would like to see join the Society, Thurs 11 - Sun 28 Apr

### Wolverhampton Art Gallery

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

### Elsewhere:

**PORTRAITS OF BLACK BRITAIN** Photography exhibition by Herbert Walters, until Tues 23 Apr, Medicine Gallery, Birmingham

**HOME GROWN COMMUNITY OPEN EXHIBITION** An exhibition co-produced, created and curated by the communities which visit the gallery, until Sat 27 Apr, Stryx JQ Gallery, Birmingham

**GENDER EQUALITY: 40 YEARS ON!** Exhibition introducing the work and activism of Birmingham-based women in the mid-1980s, until Tues 30 Apr, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**HYBRID LANDSCAPES: APRIL RESIDENCY** Part of a 12-month programme researching and conceptualising the Central and Eastern European identity. April's artist-in-residence is Armenian artist Karen Babayan, until the end of Apr, Centrala, Birmingham

**ALL SEEING EYE** Window residency featuring a fine-art video installation by Katherine Howes, exploring the symbolism of the 'all-seeing eye', until Fri 31 May, Stryx JQ Gallery, Birmingham

**VANESSA CUTLER: JOURNEYS AND HORIZONS** Exhibition of Cutler's glass making, inspired by the sky, the sea and the horizon, and employing both digital technology and traditional casting processes, until Sun 23 June, Stourbridge Glass Museum

**BOTANICAL ARTS & CRAFTS** Exhibition of botanical illustrations, paintings and crafts, celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Birmingham Society of Botanical Artists, until Sun 8 Sept, Winterbourne House & Gardens, Birmingham

**THREADS THROUGH CREATION** A sequence of 12 huge textile panels by Jacqui Parkinson, telling the creation story from the Book of Genesis, Wed 17 Apr - Sun 2 June, Lichfield Cathedral



Overpass - O2 Institute, Digbeth

## Gigs

**RUBII** Tues 2 Apr, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

**LORDI** Tues 2 Apr, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**JOLIE HOLLAND** Tues 2 Apr, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

**ADWAITH** Wed 3 Apr, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**EXORCISM + MAGNATAS COURT + DENIED LEGACY** Wed 3 Apr, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

**SUICIDAL ANGELS + DUST BOLT** Wed 3 Apr, Devil's Dog, Digbeth

**STARSAILOR + ANDREW CUSHIN** Wed 3 Apr, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**NANOWAR OF STEEL + WARLOCK A.D.** Wed 3 Apr, O2 Academy

**INCANTATION + CELESTIAL SANCTUARY** Wed 3 Apr, The Asylum, Hampton St

**AFTER SMOKE CLEARS +**

**MONETOPIA + MELIORA** Wed 3 Apr, Subside Bar, Digbeth

**SPACED + GOING OFF + UNCERTAINTY** Wed 3 Apr, Dead Wax, Digbeth

**RUMOURS OF FLEETWOOD MAC** Wed 3 Apr, Symphony Hall

**HANNAH RARITY** Wed 3 Apr, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

**TAYLORMANIA - TAYLOR SWIFT TRIBUTE** Wed 3 Apr, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

**HAWKWIND** Wed 3 Apr, The Halls, Wolverhampton

**VAN HOUTEN + HULA GIRLS + MICHAEL B THOMAS** Thurs 4 Apr, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**IST IST** Thurs 4 Apr, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**SAD CAFÉ** Thurs 4 Apr, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

**ELEANOR K** Thurs 4 Apr, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

**SOPHIE FAITH** Thurs 4 Apr, Actress & Bishop, Ludgate Hill

**ERIC BELLINGER** Thurs 4 Apr, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**NIKKI YEOH** Thurs 4 Apr, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**THE LILACS + THE CAVS + JACK CATTELL** Thurs 4 Apr, The Rainbow, Digbeth

**PAUL YOUNG** Thurs 4 Apr, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

**AMIKA + HUNTER BAVARO + ANGEL VILE** Fri 5 Apr, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**JUNIPER + FILKINS DRIFT + POTTER** Fri 5 Apr, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

**NO FACE NO CASE + FINAL WORDS + PARJURE + SWARMS UK + SPIRAL DOWN** Fri 5 Apr, Devil's Dog, Digbeth

**THE LEN PRICE 3 + THE HUMDRUM EXPRESS** Fri 5 Apr, The Night Owl, Digbeth



The Ocelots - Kitchen Garden Cafe



**CAITY BASER + BETH MCCARTHY** Fri 5 Apr, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**FLINT FIRE - THE PRODIGY TRIBUTE** Fri 5 Apr, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

**TROPHY EYES** Fri 5 Apr, The Asylum, Hampton Street

**IAIN BALLAMY** Fri 5 Apr, 1000 Trades, Jewellery Quarter

**ROB.GREEN** Fri 5 Apr, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

**THE VERTIGO BAND** Fri 5 Apr, The Rhodhouse, Sutton Coldfield

**THE LIBERTINES** Fri 5 Apr, hmv Empire, Coventry

**MIKA** Fri 5 Apr, The Halls, Wolverhampton

**BOOTLEG BLONDIE** Fri 5 Apr, Lichfield Guildhall

**TRU GROOVE** Fri 5 - Sat 6 Apr, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

**TAT VISION** Sat 6 Apr, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**POST-PARTY + IONA** Sat

6 Apr, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

**LOW RED MOON + MODERN LITERATURE + INTELLIGENCE OF PLANTS + SEAN THOMPSON-DEWOLFE** Sat 6 Apr, The Night Owl, Digbeth

**OVERPASS + PASTEL + THE KITES** Sat 6 Apr, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**BORN ZERO + WITHER + AWAKEN ETERNITY + ERA'S END** Sat 6 Apr, The Flapper

**THE KILKENNYS** Sat 6 Apr, The Core Theatre, Solihull

**OASIS** Sat 6 Apr, The Rhodhouse, Sutton Coldfield

**TERRORVISION + THE HOT DAMN + SHE BURNS RED** Sat 6 Apr, KK's Steel Mill, W'hampton

**WILL PAGE** Sat 6 Apr, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

**BARENAKED LADIES** Sat 6 Apr, The Halls, Wolverhampton

**REMORAE + WILDFORMS** Sat 6 Apr, Sandfields

Pumping Station, Lichfield

**FAY HIELD** Sun 7 Apr, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**FIVIO FOREIGN** Sun 7 Apr, O2 Institute, Digbeth



**GIANT WALKER + TITCHY + INSERO** Sun 7 Apr, Subside Bar, High Street

**SONU NIGAM** Sun 7 Apr, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

**JAMES BLUNT** Sun 7 Apr, Utilita Arena Birmingham

**THE OCELOTS** Sun 7 Apr, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

**JOHNNY MARR + GAZ COOMBS** Sun 7 Apr, The Halls Wolverhampton

## Classical Music

**CONS TEST 2024** Featuring Flowers Band, Fluorescent Brassoescents and The Ambrassadors, Sat 6 Apr, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**TRIBUTE TO STUDIO GHIBLI** Featuring Nicolas Horvath (piano). Programme includes works by Joe Hisaishi, Sat 6 Apr, St Paul's Church, Birmingham

**NATIONAL YOUTH & NATIONAL CHILDREN'S CONCERT BANDS: SPRING CONCERT 2024** Featuring Adam Broughton & Jonathan Parkes (musical directors) & Helen Vollam (trombone). Programme includes works by G Holst, J Williams, S Dodgson & G Kirkhope, Sat 6 Apr, Bridge House Theatre, Warwick

**SPIRES PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA: OPERA'S GREATEST HITS** Featuring Natasha Agarwal (soprano), Gaynor Keeble (mezzo-soprano), Ed Harrison (tenor) & Peter Lidbetter (bass). Programme includes works by Bizet, Borodin, Mascagni, Puccini & more... Sat 6 Apr, Burgess Hall, King Henry VIII School, Coventry

**BIRMINGHAM CONTEMPORARY MUSIC GROUP: LET ME TELL YOU A STORY** Featuring Clement Power (conductor) and Shigeko Hata (soprano). Programme includes new work from Ondrej Adamek, plus works by Hilda Paredes & Sir Harrison Birtwistle, Sun 7 Apr, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

**LUNCHTIME ORGAN CONCERT WITH THOMAS TROTTER** Programme includes works by N Gade, J Gardner, C Frances-Hoad, D Bourgeois & CM Widor, Mon 8 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

## Comedy

**JOE WILKINSON: WORK IN PROGRESS** Tues 2 Apr, The Glee Club, B'ham

**JAMIE HUTCHINSON** Tues 2 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**JOE LYCETT & FRIENDS** Wed 3 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**CLOSEUP COMEDY** Wed 3 Apr, Herbert's Yard, Birmingham

**RAY BRADSHAW** Wed 3 Apr, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry



**COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, MC HAMMERSMITH & SUSIE**

**MCCABE** Thurs 4 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**TOM LAWNRINSON** Fri 5 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**MARK CRAM, JOE SUTHERLAND & KATE MCCABE** Fri 5 Apr, Midlands Art Centre (MAC), Birmingham

**MICK MILLER, JO ENRIGHT, JONNY COLE & WAYNE BEESE** Fri 5 Apr, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

**CLINTON BAPTISTE** Fri 5 Apr, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

**JOHN FOTHERGILL, SPRING DAY, MC HAMMERSMITH & SUSIE MCCABE** Fri 5 - Sat 6 Apr, The Glee Club, B'ham

**JASPER CARROTT** Fri 5 - Sun 7 Apr, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

**BIG DEAL COMEDY** Sat 6 Apr, Old Joint Stock, Birmingham

**GARY DELANEY, JONNY COLE (PICTURED), SOL BERNSTEIN & WAYNE BEESE** Sat 6 Apr, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham



**CLINTON BAPTISTE** Sat 6 Apr, Walsall Arena & Arts Centre

## Theatre

**MINORITY REPORT** Staging of Phillip K Dick's sci-fi thriller, which challenges beliefs about justice and free will in a real-time chase through a London of the future, until Sat 6 Apr, The Rep, Birmingham

**BEN AND IMO** New play exploring the working relationship of two of the 20th century's greatest musical minds: Benjamin Britten & Imogen Holst, until Sat 6 Apr, Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

**DICK WHITTINGTON** Easter pantomime based on the classic tale of Dick and his faithful feline friend, who travel to London to seek their fortune, Fri 29 Mar - Sun 7 Apr, The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

**I SHOULD BE SO LUCKY** World premiere of the official Stock Aitken Waterman musical, featuring a soundtrack of pop hits from Rick Astley, Kylie Minogue, Jason Donovan, Bananarama and more... Mon 1 - Sat 6 Apr, The Alexandra, Birmingham

**WHAT BROKE BRUM-LEIGH?** Mike Venables' dark comedy follows the plight of Nye Eve - a senior finance auditor of Brum-Leigh City Council who is struggling with the fact that



## Johnny Marr

University of Wolverhampton at The Halls, Sun 7 April

Venerable musician, singer and songwriter Johnny Marr is still going strong 30-plus years on from his days as guitarist and co-songwriter in The Smiths.

Having clocked up a decade as a solo artist, he released Spirit Power: The Best Of Johnny Marr last autumn, a major new collection featuring songs from his four top-10 solo albums, a scattering of stand-alone singles and two new cuts, Somewhere and The Answer.

"For me," begins Johnny, "the mission with these records was to make songs that you could listen to on the way to school, on the way to the gym, on the way back from work; you know, in the way that you had with, say, Blondie."





*There's A Monster In Your Show - Birmingham Town Hall*

his beloved city is going broke, Thurs 4 Apr, The Prince Of Wales, Moseley

**ANIMAL FARM** The Young Garrick present an amateur version of George Orwell's novella, Thurs 4 - Sat 6 Apr, Lichfield Garrick

**ANIMAL FARM: A TWISTED MUSICAL TAIL** British Youth Music Theatre in partnership with Birmingham Hippodrome present a new version of George Orwell's novella, Fri 5 - Sun 7 Apr, Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

**PART OF MAIN: BLOODY MARY LIVE!** Theatre, comedy and an interactive set combine as Olivia Miller takes on the role of Mary Tudor and 'tackles the dramas every #queenager deals with: divorced parents, sibling rivalry and religious purges', Sat 6 Apr, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), B'ham

**THE PROMISE** World premiere of Deafinitely Theatre's drama, inspired by the 'extraordinary experiences of deaf people living with dementia', Sat 6 - Sat 13 Apr, The Rep, Birmingham

**KOMEDY OF ERRORS** Chaotic and fun entertainment featuring Gerald the gentleman juggler and Wallace the circus trainee, Sun 7 Apr, Lightwoods House, Bearwood, Smethwick

## Kid's Theatre

**THE LITTLE MERMAID** TaleGate Theatre Productions present a fast-paced Easter pantomime featuring pop songs, magic & puppetry, Tues 2 Apr, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

**THE LOST FOREST** Indigo Moon fuse puppetry and digital projection in a tale of climate change and deforestation for younger audiences, Thurs 4 Apr, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

**CHARLIE COOK'S FAVOURITE BOOK** Puppetry & song come together in a new stage version of Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler's children's book, Fri

5 - Sun 7 Apr, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

**THERE'S A MONSTER IN YOUR SHOW** Brand-new musical stage version of author Tom Fletcher's interactive adventures for big imaginations, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

**THUMBELINA** Speedwell Dance fuse music, dance & song to tell the tale of a miniature girl finding her way in the big wide world, Sat 6 Apr, Thimblewell Library, Smethwick

**KIDZ BOP: NEVER STOP LIVE TOUR** Sing and dance along with the Kidz Bop Kids as they perform today's biggest hits, live on stage, Sat 6 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**THE SOOTY SHOW** Join Sooty, Sweep and Soo for a very special birthday party. Guests include Butch the bulldog, Ramsbottom the snake and circus superstar Michael Jordan, Sun 7 Apr, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

**ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND** Box Tale Soup journey down the rabbit hole into a timeless world of wondrous fantasy, Sun 7 Apr, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), B'ham



**ALICE IN WONDERLAND** Immersion Theatre fuse music, comedy and audience interaction in a family show based on Lewis Carroll's classic tale, Sun 7 Apr, Stourbridge Town Hall

## Dance

**GIOVANNI: LET ME ENTERTAIN YOU** The Strictly favourite is joined by a cast of professional dancers and West End performers for a show of 'non-stop action', Thurs 4 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**ROSHNI** An intimate crafting of dance and live music, made up of three distinctive and engaging dance works: The Call, The Light, and The Wave, Sat 6 Apr, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

## Light Entertainment

**LOOKING FOR ME FRIEND: THE MUSIC OF VICTORIA WOOD** A whistle-stop tour through some of Victoria Wood's best-loved songs, Wed 3 Apr, Albany Theatre, Coventry

**QUEENZ - THE SHOW WITH BALLS** Dazzling divas deliver 'a night of fun and fabulousness' with live vocals and a setlist of party pop anthems, Wed 3 - Fri 5 Apr, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

**PADDINGTON IN CONCERT** Watch the award-winning 2014 film on a giant HD screen, accompanied by the London Concert Orchestra playing Nick Urata's calypso-infused score live, Fri 5 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**TW\*TS - SEND IN THE CLOWNS** Drag revue show celebrating the magic and madness of musical theatre, Sat 6 Apr, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

**CANDLELIGHT: A TRIBUTE TO TAYLOR SWIFT** Experience the music of Taylor Swift while surrounded by the gentle glow of candles, Sat 6 Apr, Birmingham Cathedral

**TEENA'S EASTER TEASE** Variety show hosted by Teena Bizkit. Expect quizzes, stand-up comedy, songs, singalongs, guests, game shows and music bingo, Sat 6 Apr, Palace Theatre, Redditch

**CANDLELIGHT: A TRIBUTE TO ABBA** Experience the music of ABBA surrounded by the gentle glow of candles, Sat 6 Apr, Birmingham Cathedral

**THE NIGHT SKY SHOW** Astronomer and author Adrian West (aka VirtualAstro) presents 'a visual and thought-provoking experience for everyone that looks up and wonders'... Sun 7 Apr, The Alexandra, Birmingham

## Talks & Spoken Word

**JOHN OSBOURNE: THE NEW BLUR ALBUM** The story of John's life, love &

friendship, with the new Blur album as a constant backdrop, Fri 5 Apr, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

**THE MAKINGS OF A MURDERER** Scottish detective David Swindle explores the cases of some of the UK's most notorious serial killers, Sat 6 Apr, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

## Events

**BRUM HIGHLIGHTS PADDLE TOUR** See Birmingham from a different perspective, until Mon 1 Apr, Roundhouse, Birmingham



**INSOMNIA THE GAMING FESTIVAL** Immerse yourself in a world of non-stop gaming, with everything from the latest video games to retro classics, until Mon 1 Apr, NEC, Birmingham

**WORKERS OF THE ROUNDHOUSE TOURS** Pop in for a free drop-in tour and get to know the curious survivor on the canal, until Mon 1 Apr, Roundhouse, Birmingham

**BUSTLING BIRMINGHAM KAYAK TOUR** See Birmingham from a different perspective, until Mon 1 Apr, Roundhouse, Birmingham

**EXPLORE HIDDEN BIRMINGHAM KAYAK TOUR** Discover Birmingham's canals, exploring areas accessible only by water, until Mon 1 Apr, Roundhouse, Birmingham

**ALICE IN EASTER WONDERLAND** Explore the mysterious tunnels and caverns with Alice and her Wonderland pals, until Tues 2 Apr, Dudley Canal & Caverns

**EASTER EGG HUNT** Make your way along the trail and find nature-inspired activities for the whole family to enjoy, until Tues 2 Apr, Wightwick Manor, Wolverhampton

**OUR WORLD FROM SPACE FAMILY SHOW** Build the planets out of people to see how they move in space, discover how rockets take off, recreate the orbits of satellites, and learn how they play a big role in wildlife conservation, until Fri 5 Apr, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

**OUR WORLD FROM SPACE BUSKING** Featuring activities designed to give you the chance to look at the world as satellites do, until Fri 5 Apr, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

**SPRING IN YOUR STEP!** Watch as the



historic characters get busy cleaning their homes and shops, until Sun 7 Apr, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

**SPACE, RACE AND FLY!** A STEM-based event featuring activities, shows and more, until Sun 7 Apr, Royal Air Force Museum Midlands, Cosford

**EASTER AT AVONCROFT** Featuring plenty of Easter activities, including an egg hunt, games and crafts, until Sun 7 Apr, Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove

**EASTER EGGSTRAVAGANZA** Join the egg hunts, meet Bramble Bunny and enjoy a range of themed activities, until Sun 7 Apr, West Midland Safari Park, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

**SPRING SPECTACULAR** Meet and handle baby animals, including piglets, lambs and goat kids, until Sun 7 Apr, Hatton Adventure World, Warwick

**FREDDO'S EASTER EGG-STRAVAGANZA** Join Freddo for an eggs-tra special show filled with chocolatey fun, until Sun 7 Apr, Cadbury World, Bournville

**LAMBING & KIDDING** See live births up close and personal, and enjoy talks from the team of experts about all things lambing, until Sun 14 Apr, Cotswold Farm Park, Cheltenham

**PIRATE TREASURE HUNT** Join Captain Careless on a swashbuckling adventure, until Sun 21 Apr, National SEA LIFE Centre, Birmingham

**PLAY UNSTOPPABLE** Design your own spirit animal, add your creation to the Lego Flower Cart and share your best moves at the Play Unstoppable Dance Party, until Mon 6 May, Legoland Discovery Centre B'ham

**KIDS WARHAMMER CLUB** Free drop-in table-top gaming club, Tues 2 Apr, Weoley Castle, Birmingham

**STAY AND PLAY** Sensory play for little ones, featuring lots of different colours, lights, textures and sounds, Wed 3 Apr, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum



**EASTER ACCESS DAY** Showcasing the range of accessible activities and initiatives on offer at the museum, Wed 3 Apr, British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Warwickshire

**THE BRICK PEOPLE** Series of free-flow workshops, including speed builds and timed towers, Thurs 4 Apr, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), B'ham

**EASTER MEETING** Featuring seven races, food stalls and entertainment for the children, Thurs 4 Apr, Warwick

Racecourse

**CINEMATICA** Digital project that allows you to create 'mind-controlled' art, Thurs 4 - Sat 6 Apr, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

**EASTER AT CHARTERHOUSE** Featuring an Easter hunt in the garden, live music and guided tours, Fri 5 - Sat 6 Apr, The Charterhouse, Coventry

**KIDS WARHAMMER CLUB** Free drop-in table-top gaming club, Sat 6 Apr, Weoley Castle, Birmingham

**COLLECTIONS TOUR** Join gallery assistant Julie Jones for a tour featuring highlights from the Flowers and Still Life Room in the Garman Ryan Collection, Sat 6 Apr, The New Art Gallery Walsall

**JAGUAR BREAKFAST MEET** Open to all Jaguar owners and enthusiasts, Sat 6 Apr, British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Warwickshire

**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 6 Apr, Weoley Castle, Birmingham

**REPAIR CAFÉ** Take along your broken items to be fixed by Balsall Heath Repair Café, Sat 6 Apr, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

**ASTON ARTS CLUB** Free arts club. Make something inspired by Aston Hall and its fascinating history, Sat 6 Apr, Aston Hall, Birmingham

**BRUM HIGHLIGHTS PADDLE TOUR** See Birmingham from a different perspective, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Apr, Roundhouse, Birmingham

**BUSTLING BIRMINGHAM KAYAK TOUR** See Birmingham from a different perspective, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Apr, Roundhouse, Birmingham

**OPEN HOUSE WEEKEND** Go behind the scenes in areas not usually open to visitors, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Apr, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

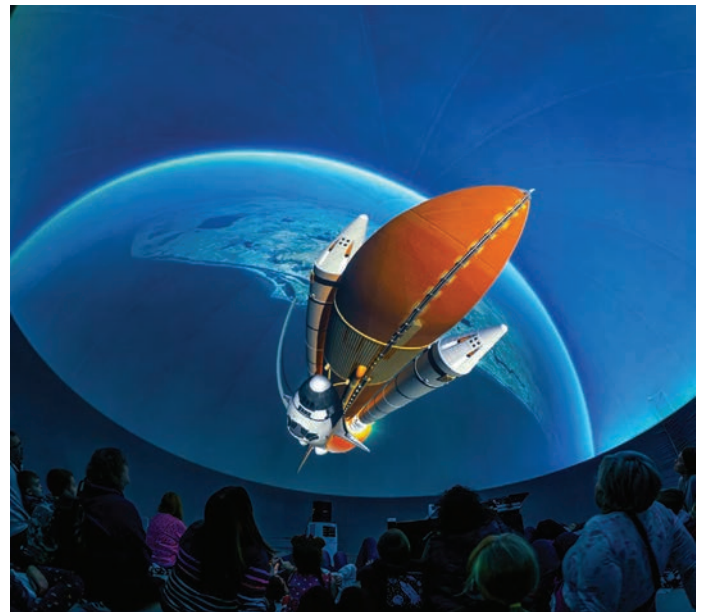
**PUP UP CAFE** Meet up with other dogs and their owners, enjoy photo opportunities and unlimited treats, Sun 7 Apr, The Lost & Found, Birmingham

**ORIGINS OF MIDDLE-EARTH: JRR TOLKIEN AND SAREHOLE GUIDED WALK** Guided walk introducing the scenery that inspired JRR Tolkien when he lived near Sarehole Mill as a child, Sun 7 Apr, Sarehole Mill, Birmingham

**QUIET SESSIONS** Enjoy 'the ultimate indoor Lego playground' with fewer people and no music. An all-round quieter experience! Sun 7 Apr, Legoland Discovery Centre B'ham

**MAC'S ARTS MARKET** Bringing together the best independent maker, Sun 7 Apr, Midlands Arts Centre (mac), Birmingham

**TOY COLLECTORS FAIR** Featuring more than 500 stalls packed with



*Space, Race And Fly! - Royal Air Force Museum Midlands, Cosford*

thousands of new and old collectables for sale, Sun 7 Apr, NEC, Birmingham

**SPORTACCORD WORLD SPORT & BUSINESS SUMMIT** Presidents and

CEOs from global sporting organisations come together for the 18th edition of sport's most influential industry gathering', Sun 7 - Thurs 11 Apr, ICC, Birmingham

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Mik Artistik's Ego Trip - Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

## Gigs

**NITIN SAWHNEY** Mon 8 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall



**UGLY** Tues 9 Apr, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**PAULI THE PSM** Tues 9 Apr, O2 Academy

**KIRSTEN ADAMSON** Tues 9 Apr, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

**DOCTORS OF MADNESS** Wed 10 Apr, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**AN EVENING WITH SINATRA** Wed 10 Apr, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

**VINCE FREEMAN** Wed 10 Apr, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

**PUPIL SLICER + COLIGUNS + GOD ALONE** Wed 10 Apr, Devil's Dog, Digbeth

**KID KAPICHI** Wed 10 Apr, O2 Academy

**JOHN RICHARDS BAND + PAUL O'NEILL** Wed 10 Apr, Red Lion Folk Club

**DECLAN MCKENNA + WUNDERHORSE** Wed 10 Apr, The Halls, Wolverhampton

**TINY DANCER - THE MUSIC OF ELTON JOHN** Wed 10 Apr, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

**ELEANOR CONWAY** Thurs 11 Apr, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**POLICE DOG HOGAN** Thurs

11 Apr, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**TRIONIQ** Thurs 11 Apr, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

**LOUD LIARS** Thurs 11 Apr, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

**ADMT** Thurs 11 Apr, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**SONGER + KILLOWEN** Thurs 11 Apr, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**THE PROFESSIONALS** Thurs 11 Apr, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

**DAGGER THREAT + EGO** Thurs 11 Apr, The Asylum, Hampton Street

**ESOTERICA** Thurs 11 Apr, The Asylum, Hampton Street

**THUNDERF\*\*K AND THE DEADLY ROMANTICS + KONTROL FREAKS** Thurs 11 Apr, Subside Bar, Digbeth

**KAREN SHARP** Thurs 11 Apr, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**EVAN PARKER** Thurs 11 Apr, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

**STEVIE & LUTHER SHOW** Thurs 11 Apr, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham



**SAM CARTER** Thurs 11 Apr, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

**OLI JOBES** Thurs 11 Apr, Bromsgrove Folk Club

**YOWL** Fri 12 Apr, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

**LANDSLIDE - FLEETWOOD MAC TRIBUTE** Fri 12 Apr, Actress & Bishop, Ludgate Hill

**BLACKLIST + THRASHERWOLF + WARGRAVE + EXAUST** Fri 12 Apr, Devil's Dog, Digbeth

**IZUZVO + CHANDNI + KITTY BELLA** Fri 12 Apr, The Night Owl, Digbeth

**O.S.T.R** Fri 12 Apr, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

**DREAM STATE + GRAPHIC NATURE + FANGS OUT** Fri 12 Apr, The Asylum, Hampton Street

**HELL CAN WAIT + DOWNPOUR** Fri 12 Apr, Subside Bar, Digbeth

**JAMES ALLSOPP QUARTET** Fri 12 Apr, 1000 Trades, Jewellery Quarter

**THE URBAN FOLK QUARTET** Fri 12 Apr, St. Saviour's Church, Hagley

**BUTCHER'S BREW** Fri 12 Apr, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall

**KOLOR** Fri 12 Apr, The Crossing, Digbeth

**BRONNIE** Fri 12 Apr, The Rainbow, Digbeth

**HALF MAN HALF BISCUIT** Fri 12 Apr, hmv Empire, Coventry

**CAMENS + THE JACK CATTELL BAND + FLUOXETINE** Fri 12 Apr, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

**THE COOPERS + LOZ RABONE** Sat 13 Apr, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**JERUB** Sat 13 Apr, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

**DEZ DARE + EXOTIC PETS + EMPTY CUT** Sat 13 Apr, The Dark Horse, Moseley

**DONNA KEEN** Sat 13 Apr, The Night Owl, Digbeth

**THE CRYSTAL TEARDROP** Sat 13 Apr, The Night Owl, Digbeth

**LORD APEX** Sat 13 Apr, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**THE K'S + THE CLAUSE + EIGHTY EIGHT MILES** Sat 13 Apr, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**TANKUS THE HENGE** Sat 13 Apr, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**ENDORPHINMACHINE - PRINCE TRIBUTE** Sat 13 Apr, O2 Academy

**BRYSON TILLER** Sat 13 Apr, O2 Academy

**ULTIMATE RNB** Sat 13 Apr, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

**THE NOTEBENDERS** Sat 13 Apr, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall

**THE BILLY JOEL SONGBOOK** Sat 13 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

**UB40 FEATURING ALI CAMPBELL + BITTY MCLEAN** Sat 13 Apr, Utilita Arena Birmingham

**SOUL TRAIN** Sat 13 Apr, The Crossing, Digbeth

**80'S LIVE** Sat 13 Apr, Wulfrun Hall, W'hampton

**THE BLACKHEART ORCHESTRA** Sat 13 Apr, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

**JAGUAR SUN** Sun 14 Apr, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**THE DUNWELLS** Sun 14 Apr, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

**THE REGGULITES** Sun 14 Apr, The Night Owl, Digbeth

**SNUFF** Sun 14 Apr, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

**LEMAR** Sun 14 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

**MIK ARTISTIK'S EGO TRIP** Sun 14 Apr, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

**BACK TO BACHARAC** Sun 14 Apr, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

**RICH PARSONS** Sun 14 Apr, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

## Classical Music

**CBSO: BERLIOZ, SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE** Featuring Kazuki Yamada (conductor) & Benjamin Grosvenor (piano). Programme includes works by Fauré, Prokofiev & Berlioz, Wed 10 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**PAUL LEWIS: SCHUBERT PIANO SONATAS** Programme comprises Schubert's piano sonatas No 19 in C minor, No 20 in A major, & No 21 in B flat major, Thurs 11 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

**RBC LUNCHTIME CONCERT** Featuring Stein de Neef (harp) & Simone Samiani (piano). Programme tbc, Thurs 11 Apr, St Paul's Church, Birmingham

**ORCHESTRA OF THE SWAN: ENTRANCED** Candlelit concert directed by David Le Page. Programme includes works by E Satie, Vivaldi and JS Bach, along with Pink Floyd, Brian Eno & Radiohead, Thurs 11 Apr, Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-Upon-Avon

**ROMANTIC REVIVAL ORCHESTRA: DVORAK & WIENIAWSKI** Featuring Leo Jeffrey (conductor). Programme also includes works by Mason Ma & Juliana Niu, Fri 12 Apr, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

**CBSO: BERLIOZ, THE DAMNATION OF FAUST** Featuring Kazuki Yamada (conductor), Pene Pati (tenor), Grace Durham (mezzo-soprano), Nahuel di Piero (baritone), Jonathan Lemalu (bass), CBSO Choruses & Men from the Hallé Choir, Sat 13 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**THE PEOPLE'S ORCHESTRA: ONCE UPON A TIME** Also featuring The People's Massed Show Choir. Programme comprises works from timeless tales including The Wizard of Oz, Tangled & Bridgerton, Sat 13 Apr, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

**ARMONICO CONSORT** Featuring Christopher Monks (director) & the Baroque Players. Programme includes works by Mozart & JS Bach, Sat 13 Apr, St Mary's Church, Warwick

**A SPRING CONCERT OF GLORIOUS MUSIC** Featuring Birmingham's Phoenix Singers. Raising funds for Northfield Arts Forum, Sat 13 Apr, St George's Church, Edgbaston, Birmingham

**RBC SPRING RECORDER FESTIVAL 2024** Featuring The English Wind Consort, All About the Bass & Festival Jamboree Concert, Sat 13 - Sun 14 Apr, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**ENGLISH TROMBONE CONSORT: BAROQUE AND BOOGIE!** Sun 14 Apr, St John the Baptist Church, Hagley, Birmingham





Daniel O'Reilly - Birmingham Town Hall

## Comedy

**FRANKIE BOYLE** Mon 8 - Tues 9 Apr, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

**JOSH BAULF & FRIENDS** Tues 9 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**RAY BRADSHAW** Wed 10 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**JOE LYCETT & FRIENDS** Wed 10 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**THE ALTER COMEDY CLUB** Wed 10 Apr, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

**COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, CHRISTIAN SCHULTE-LOH & ELEANOR TIERNAN** Thurs 11 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**LAURA SMYTH** Thurs 11 - Fri 12 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**JOHN ROBERTSON, PAUL PIRIE, AARON SIMMONDS & BARRY DODDS** Fri 12 Apr, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

**DANIEL O'REILLY** Fri 12 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

**UPSTAIRS AT CHERRY REDS** Fri 12 Apr, Cherry Reds, Birmingham

**STEPHEN BAILEY, DAN ANTPOLSKI, IAN CRAWFORD & WAYNE BEESE** Fri 12 Apr, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

**ROBIN MORGAN, LEROY BRITO, CHRISTIAN SCHULTE-LOH & ELEANOR TIERNAN** Fri 12 - Sat 13 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**RICH WILSON, ERIC RUSHTON, DIANE SPENCER & JON PEARSON** Sat 13 Apr, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

**CARL HUTCHINSON** Sat 13 Apr, Stourbridge Town Hall

**SORIN PĂRCĂLAB, CRISTI POPESCO & IOANA LUIZA** Sun 14 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**SLIM, AXEL BLAKE, JUNIOR BOOKER, WILSON & KANE BROWN** Sun 14 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**NOREEN KHAN, SUKH OJLA, SAMIRA BANKS & ESTHER MANITO** Sun 14 Apr, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

## Theatre

**TWELVE ANGRY MEN** Touring version of Reginald Rose's famous courtroom drama, starring Jason Merrells (Casualty/Emmerdale), Gray O'Brien (Coronation Street/Peak Practice), Tristan Gemmill (Coronation Street/Casualty), Michael Greco (EastEnders), Ben Nealon (Soldier Soldier) and Gary Webster (Minder/Family Affairs), Mon 8 - Sat 13 Apr, Lichfield Garrick

**AUSTEN'S WOMEN: LADY SUSAN** One-woman show starring Rebecca Vaughan and based on Jane Austen's first full-length work, Tues 9 Apr, Lichfield Garrick

**SHREK THE MUSICAL** Join Shrek and his trusty sidekick Donkey as they set out on a quest to defeat the fearsome dragon and rescue the beautiful Princess Fiona. Based on the much-loved Dreamworks movie, Tues 9 - Sun 14 Apr, The Alexandra, B'ham

**EMMA RICE'S BLUE BEARD** A music-fuelled feminist revenge plot 'infused with high comedy, tragedy, romance, and just a sprinkling of spine-tingling horror', Tues 9 - Sat 20 Apr, The Rep, Birmingham

**TESS** A groundbreaking adaptation of Thomas Hardy's classic novel, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Wed 10 - Fri 12 Apr, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry



**COMMUNITY SERVICE** Stan's Cafe present an emotional and uplifting theatre show inspired by the life of Trevor Prince, one of the Midlands'

first Black police officers, Wed 10 - Sat 13 Apr, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

**LES MISERABLES SCHOOL EDITION** Spa Theatre Juniors present an amateur version of the legendary musical, Wed 10 - Sat 13 Apr, Bridge House Theatre, Warwick

**THE MAD ONES** A brand-new musical based on Kait Kerrigan & Bree Lowdermilk's tale of dreams and expectations, Wed 10 - Sat 20 Apr, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, B'ham

**BEHOLD YE RAMBLERS** Neil Gore's new play about The Clarion newspaper and the organisations formed by its readership... Thurs 11 Apr, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

**WHAT BROKE BRUM-LEIGH?** Mike Venables' dark comedy follows the plight of Nye Eve - a senior finance auditor of Brum-Leigh City Council who is struggling with the fact that his beloved city is going broke, Thurs 11 Apr, The Townhouse, Sutton Coldfield

**UNFORTUNATE: THE UNTOLD STORY OF URSULA THE SEA WITCH** Critically acclaimed smash-hit parody musical starring Shawna Hamic (Orange Is The New Black) as Ursula and River Medway (RuPaul's Drag Race) as Ariel, Thurs 11 - Sat 13 Apr, Birmingham Hippodrome

**LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST** Luke Thompson (Bridgerton) and Tony Gardner (Gentleman Jack/Last Tango In Halifax) make their RSC debuts in a contemporary take on Shakespeare's vibrant comedy, Thurs 11 Apr - Sat 18 May, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

**CARMEN** Ukrainian Opera & Ballet Theatre Kyiv present Bizet's tale of passion and sexual jealousy, Fri 12 Apr, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

**THE MIKADO** Amateur version presented by The Farndale Avenue Housing Estate Townswomen's Guild Operatic Society, Fri 12 - Sun 14 Apr, The Dovehouse Theatre, Solihull

**ONE MAN, TWO GUVNORS** Mayhem, music and fast-paced physical comedy combine in Richard Bean's tale of mistaken identity. Based on Carlo Goldoni's The Servant Of Two Masters, Fri 12 Apr - Sat 11 May, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

**ELLEN KENT: MADAMA BUTTERFLY** Acclaimed production of Puccini's heartbreaking love story. Korean soprano Elena Dee stars. Sung in Italian with English surtitles, Sat 13 Apr, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

**LOVE FROM A STRANGER** The Crescent Theatre Company present an amateur version of Agatha Christie's psychological thriller, which examines the mind of a serial killer, Sat 13 - Sat 20 Apr, The Crescent Theatre, B'ham

## Kids Theatre

**DEAR ZOO LIVE!** Interactive show for younger audiences, based on Rod Campbell's much-loved lift-the-flap book, Thurs 11 - Tues 16 Apr, Birmingham Hippodrome

**KITCHEN ZOO: THE THREE BEARS** Original music and puppetry combine in 'a tale you thought you knew', Sun 14 Apr, Midlands Arts (MAC), Birmingham

## Dance

**MEHEK** Aakash Odedra Company and Aditi Mangaldas Dance Company present a choreographed version of an unspoken and overlooked love story, Tues 9 Apr, Birmingham Hippodrome

**CHARITY DANCE SHOW** Featuring Strictly winner Vito Coppola and Luba Mushtuk. All profits will go to Macmillan Cancer Support, Tues 9 Apr, Dudley Town Hall

**INTO THE NOVACENE** Jack Philp Dance present a fast-paced production about the beginnings of a new age and new world, Thurs 11 Apr, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

## Light Entertainment

**BOB BROLLY & FRIENDS** Midday variety show featuring vocalist Miss Beth Belle, comedian Doug Parker & multi-instrumentalist Andy Eastwood, Mon 8 Apr, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

**MC GRAMMAR LIVE - STOP! IT'S GRAMMAR TIME!** Rap, rhyme and dance along with the National Teacher of the Year Award winner and star of Sky Kids' Wonder Rap & Rap Tales, Tues 9 Apr, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

**BAILEY J MILLS: UNFILTERED & SCUMMY** Comedy, play, gameshow and sketch show combine as audiences are taken on 'a rollercoaster journey through the world of the rising star and social sensation', Wed 10 Apr, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

**FORBIDDEN NIGHTS** Celebrating nine years of muscles, mayhem and over 11,000 shirt rips, Thurs 11 Apr, Palace Theatre, Redditch

**JAMES PHELAN: THE GREATEST MAGICIAN** Magic show which promises to leave you 'aching from laughter and dizzy in disbelief', Sat 13 Apr, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

**CIRQUE: THE GREATEST SHOW** Variety spectacular combining musical theatre & circus performances, Sun 14 Apr, Lichfield Garrick



## Events

**LAMBING & KIDDING** See live births up close and personal, and enjoy talks from the team of experts about all things lambing, until Sun 14 Apr, Cotswold Farm Park, Cheltenham

**PIRATE TREASURE HUNT** Join Captain Careless on a swashbuckling adventure, until Sun 21 Apr, National SEA LIFE Centre, Birmingham

**PLAY UNSTOPPABLE** Design your own spirit animal, add your creation to the Lego Flower Cart and share your best moves at the Play Unstoppable Dance Party, until Mon 6 May, Legoland Discovery Centre B'ham

**MUSEUM TOUR** Join staff and volunteers for a guided tour of the museum, Mon 8 Apr, Lapworth Museum of Geology - Earth Sciences Building, University of Birmingham

**TOO GOOD TO THROW AWAY** Community repurposing event for unwanted household items, Tues 9 April, St Andrews Church, Sedgley

**2024 BETMGM PREMIER LEAGUE DARTS** Night 11 of the Premier League, Thurs 11 Apr, Utilita Arena B'ham

**80'S SILENT DISCO** 'Some of the UK's best 1980s DJs' play all your

favourite tunes in the illuminated surroundings of the cathedral, Fri 12 Apr, Coventry Cathedral

**BUSTLING BIRMINGHAM KAYAK TOUR** See Birmingham from a different perspective, Fri 12 - Sun 14 Apr, Roundhouse, Birmingham

**STEP INTO STORIES** An immersive experience with bestselling author MG Leonard, Sat 13 Apr, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

**THE CRYSTAL MILE FACTORY WALKING TOUR** A walking tour of the Crystal Mile, exploring the history of the iconic glassmaking factories that once lined the canal in Stourbridge, Sat 13 Apr, Stourbridge Glass Museum

**KNITTED BLOSSOM AND POETRY TRAIL** Admire the blossom in the gardens and the knitted blossom displays produced by talented volunteers and local craft groups, Sat 13 Apr - Sun 9 June, Wightwick Manor, W'hampton

**ORIGINS OF MIDDLE-EARTH: JRR TOLKIEN AND SAREHOLE GUIDED WALK** Guided walk introducing the scenery that inspired JRR Tolkien when he lived near Sarehole Mill as a child, Sun 14 Apr, Sarehole Mill, B'ham



Mehek - Birmingham Hippodrome

**THE MACABRE MUSEUM - STORIES OF MURDER AND MAYHEM** Hear tales of the real Peaky Blinders, find out about Birmingham's connection to Jack the Ripper, and check out some of the most notorious items in the archive, Sun 14 Apr, West Midlands Police Museum, Birmingham

**BRUM HIGHLIGHTS PADDLE TOUR** See Birmingham from a different perspective, Sun 14 Apr, Roundhouse, Birmingham

**WEDDING FAIR** Featuring a selection of products and services, Sun 14 Apr, Bantock House, Wolverhampton



## International Living History Festival

Saturday 20 & Sunday 21 April 2024

\*Miniature Train Rides  
\*Free Vintage BUS Rides to & from  
Bromsgrove Train Station



It's time.....to Time Travel!

Experience the best in Living History from the Bronze Age to the Cold War

\*Market Stalls \*Hands on Activities

\*Living History Displays \*Food & Drink



\*Supported by Wythall Transport Museum  
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Book your advanced tickets now ! [www.avoncroft.org.uk](http://www.avoncroft.org.uk)

Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, B60 4JR







The Warning - O2 Institute

## Gigs

**LULU** Mon 15 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

**RBC REPERTORY BIG BAND** Mon 15 Apr, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**FINDLAY NAPIER** Mon 15 Apr, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

**DRY CLEANING** Mon 15 - Tues 16 Apr, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**SLUM VILLAGE** Tues 16 Apr, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**DEAD KIWI + RITEMA** Tues 16 Apr, Subside Bar, Digbeth

**THE ZUTONS** Tues 16 Apr, O2 Academy

**GEORGE BOOMSMA** Tues 16 Apr, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

**MARUJA** Wed 17 Apr, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**THOMAS ATLAS & GUESTS** Wed 17 Apr, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

**MARDUK + ORIGIN + DOODSWENS** Wed 17 Apr, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

**ASOMVEL** Wed 17 Apr, The Asylum, Hampton Street

**BELLA GAFFNEY + SMALL CHANGES** Wed 17 Apr, Red Lion Folk Club

**JIM MORAY + FRANKIE ARCHER** Wed 17 Apr, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

**KAISER CHIEFS** Wed 17 Apr, The Halls, Wolverhampton

**OMNI** Thurs 18 Apr, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**ASWAD** Thurs 18 Apr, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

**VOODOOS** Thurs 18 Apr, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

**ALFIE JUKES** Thurs 18 Apr, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**BAS** Thurs 18 Apr, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**INGESTED + FALLUJAH + VULVODYNIA + MELANCOLIA** Thurs 18 Apr, The Asylum, Hampton Street

**MUST KILL** Thurs 18 Apr, Subside Bar

**TWOMANTING** Thurs 18 Apr, Symphony Hall

**TARREN** Thurs 18 Apr, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

**ERIC CANTONA** Thurs 18 Apr, The Halls, Wolverhampton

**SINATRA: RAW** Thurs 18 Apr, Lichfield Garrick

**VICKI NASH BAND** Fri 19 Apr, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

**THE AVELLES** Fri 19 Apr, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

**FUGUE AND GROOVE TRIO** Fri 19 Apr, St. Saviour's Church, Hagley

**SEB LOWE** Fri 19 Apr, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**CAM COLE** Fri 19 Apr, O2 Academy

**HEARTLAY + ELKAPAT** Fri 19 Apr, Subside Bar, Digbeth

**ORJAN HULTEN WITH ORION** Fri 19 Apr, 1000 Trades, Jewellery Qtr

**ELIZA CATHRY** Fri 19 Apr, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Edgbaston

**PROMISES AND LIES - UB40 TRIBUTE** Fri 19 Apr, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

**DOOM AND GRIND FESTIVAL** Fri 19 - Sat 20

Apr, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

**ELLE-J WALTERS BAND** Sat 20 Apr, The Jam House, Jewellery Qtr

**THE RILLS** Sat 20 Apr, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

**EVERYONE YOU KNOW** Sat 20 Apr, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**JON PARDI + DILLON CARMICHAEL** Sat 20 Apr, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**STANDIN MAN** Sat 20 Apr, The Asylum, Hampton Street

**GASOLINE & MATCHES + EMILIA QUINN + CHLOE CHADWICK + JIMMY STANLEY + RYAN NELSON** Sat 20 Apr, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall

**JETHRO TULL** Sat 20 Apr, Symphony Hall

**FIZZY MILK + SOZIALESSPERRWESEN + SONS OF VILJEMS** Sat 20 Apr, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**THIRTY SECONDS TO MARS** Sat 20 Apr, Utilita Arena Birmingham

**LONDON CALLING - THE CLASH TRIBUTE** Sat 20 Apr, The Crossing, Digbeth

**RIANNE DOWNEY** Sat 20 Apr, The Rainbow, Digbeth

**CASEY MCQUILLEN** Sun 21 Apr, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

**THE WARNING** Sun 21 Apr, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**OKEAN ELZY** Sun 21 Apr, O2 Academy

**JANE WEAVER** Sun 21 Apr, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

**RANAGRI + SANDYMAN AND DAN WALSH + TOM LEADER** Sun 21 Apr, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**EDYTA BARTOSIEWICZ** Sun 21 Apr, The Crossing, Digbeth

**ANNIE DRESSNER** Sun 21 Apr, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

## Classical Music

**LEONKORO QUARTET** Featuring Jonathan Schwarz & Amelie Wallner (violins), Mayu Konoe (viola) & Lukas Schwarz (cello). Programme includes works by Schubert, Janáček & Beethoven, Mon 15 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

**RBC LUNCHTIME MUSIC** Featuring Jodie Lambert-Tandy (soprano) & Jonathan French (piano). Programme includes works by Handel, Dring, Verdi & more... Mon 15 Apr, Recital Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**DRESDEN PHILHARMONIC** Featuring Stanislav Kochanovsky (conductor) & Maria Loudenitch (violin). Programme includes works by Mussorgsky, Shostakovich & Tchaikovsky, Tues 16 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**CBSO: BRITTEN & TCHAIKOVSKY** Featuring Gergely Madaras (conductor - pictured) & Ian Bostridge (tenor). Programme also includes Thorvaldsdottir's Dreaming, Wed 17 Apr, Symphony Hall, B'ham



**CBSO CENTRE STAGE: WOODWIND ENSEMBLE** Programme & musicians tbc, Thurs 18 Apr, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

**CBSO: CLASSIC FM HALL OF FAME** Featuring Michael Seal (conductor), John Suchet (presenter) & Tessa Lark (violin). Programme includes works by Mozart, Tchaikovsky, Vaughan Williams, Debussy & more... Fri 19 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**THE CENTRAL BAND OF THE RAF & RBC WIND ORCHESTRA** Featuring Lt Michael Parsons (director). Programme includes works by Tomlinson & John Williams, Fri 19 Apr, Bradshaw Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**THE RUSTY PLAYERS ORCHESTRA SHOWCASE** Featuring a massed orchestra of ensembles from South Birmingham, the Black Country, Carmarthen & Barry Island, Sat 20 Apr, Halesowen Town Hall

**KING EDWARDS SIXTH FORM COLLEGE CHAMBER CONCERT** Sat 20 Apr, St Saviour's Church, Hagley

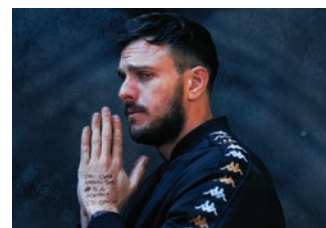
**OLIVER WASS (HARP) & GABRIELA OPACKA-BOCCADORO (VOICE & VIOLIN)**

An evening of classical & cross-genre musical numbers, Sat 20 Apr, Hagley Hall

**COME AND SING: VIVALDI & HANDEL** Presented by Central England Camerata, and featuring Rupert Marshall-Luck (violin). Programme includes a rehearsal & performance of Vivaldi's Gloria, Handel's Zadok the Priest & the world premiere of Andrew Downes' Violin Concerto, Sun 21 Apr, St John the Baptist Church, Hagley

## Comedy

**MIKE RICE** Wed 17 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham



**JOE LYCETT & FRIENDS** Wed 17 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**UNDER THE RAINBOW COMEDY** Wed 17 Apr, The Rainbow, Digbeth, Birmingham

**COUNT ARTHUR STRONG** Wed 17 Apr, Lichfield Garrick

**COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, MARC JENNINGS & TAMER KATTAN** Thurs 18 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**M. MATHIOUDAKIS & V. THEODOROPoulos** Thurs 18 Apr, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

**ALFIE MOORE** Thurs 18 Apr, Palace Theatre, Redditch

**PETER KAY** Fri 19 Apr, Utilita Arena Birmingham

**ANDREW BIRD, LINDSEY SANTORO, ASHLEY FRIEZE & CARL JONES** Fri 19 Apr, South Redditch Sports & Social Club

**MARC JENNINGS, TAMER KATTAN, SIMON WOZNIAK & VICTOR DANIELS** Fri 19 - Sat 20 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**CAREY MARX, ANDREW WHITE, JACK SKIPPER & TOM TOAL** Sat 20 Apr, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

**GARY DELANEY, DARIUS DAVIES, JENNY HART & WAYNE BEESE** Sat 20 Apr, Brierley Hill Civic, Dudley

**JACKIE FABULOUS** Sat 20 Apr, Stourbridge Town Hall

**HAYLEY ELLIS** Sat 20 Apr, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

**THE COMEDY STORE ON THE ROAD** Sat 20 Apr, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

**MC HAMMERSMITH** Sun 21 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham



**FIN TAYLOR & RED RICHARDSON** Sun 21 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

## Theatre

**THE DRIFTERS GIRL** Acclaimed musical telling the story of The Drifters' legendary manager, Faye Treadwell, Tues 16 - Sat 20 Apr, Birmingham Hippodrome

**THE BOY AT THE BACK OF THE CLASS** Onjali Q Raúf's warm-hearted tale highlights the power of friendship and kindness in a world that doesn't always make sense, Tues 16 - Sat 20 Apr, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

**DROP THE DEAD DONKEY** The smash-hit TV series comes to the stage. Featuring original cast members Susannah Doyle, Robert Duncan, Ingrid Lacey, Neil Pearson, Jeff Rawle, Stephen Tonkinson and Victoria Wicks, Tues 16 - Sat 20 Apr, The Alexandra, Birmingham

**RUSH** Telling the story of Reggae music and the Windrush generation, and how their music took the world by storm, Wed 17 Apr, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

**PIED PIPER** The Battersea Arts Centre Beatbox Academy present the world premiere of Conrad Murray's hip-hop musical, which reimagines the Brothers Grimm fairytale, Wed 17 - Sat 20 Apr, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

**THE BUDDHA OF SUBURBIA** Emma Rice stage adaptation of Hanif Kureishi's exploration of family, friends, sex, theatre and belonging, Thurs 18 Apr - Sat 1 June, Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

**IRISH ANNIE'S** Ash Murphy's musical comedy, featuring live music by Shenanigans. Ricky Tomlinson & Catherine Rice star, Fri 19 Apr, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

**CINDERELLA AND THE TWO UGLY S!@S** Adult pantomime, Sat 20 Apr, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

**ELLEN KENT: MADAMA BUTTERFLY** Acclaimed production of Puccini's heartbreaking love story. Korean soprano Elena Dee stars. Sung in Italian with English surtitles, Sun 21 Apr, The Alexandra, Birmingham

## Kids Theatre

**DEAR ZOO LIVE!** Interactive theatre for younger audiences, based on Rod Campbell's much-loved lift-the-flap book, Sat 20 - Sun 21 Apr, Lichfield Garrick

## Dance

**COPPELIA** KVN Dance Company present Kevan Allen's contemporary reimagining of a classic ballet, Tues

16 Apr, Lichfield Garrick

**U DANCE WEST MIDLANDS** A platform for young dancers from across the region to showcase their skills, Sat 20 Apr, Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

## Light Entertainment

**ALED JONES: FULL CIRCLE** One-man show in which Aled shares tales from his remarkable career, Mon 15 Apr, Lichfield Garrick

**THE SENSATIONAL 60S EXPERIENCE** Brand-new show packed with nostalgia and featuring Dozy Beaky Mick & Titch, The Tremes (former members of The Tremeloes), The Fortunes, The Swinging Blue Jeans & Vanity Fare, Tues 16 Apr, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

**THE QUEEN'S CARTOONISTS** Music from over 100 years of animation from around the world, performed live on stage, Fri 19 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

**THE POST OFFICE SCANDAL - THE INSIDE STORY** Journalist & broadcaster Nick Wallis reveals even more shocking details and stories about 'the scandal that has gripped the nation', Fri 19 Apr, Dudley Town Hall

**BOWJANGLES IN DRACULA IN SPACE** Featuring an irreverent, anarchic group of genre-spanners who present music, theatre and comedy 'in a way you've never seen before', Sat 20 Apr, Lichfield Garrick

**NEWLYWEDS: THE HONEYMOON TOUR** Jamie Laing and Sophie Habboo share their 'hilarious experiences navigating married life', Sun 21 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

## Events

**MINI MOTORISTS MONDAYS** Make racing cars from cardboard tubes and craft materials, Mon 15 Apr, British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Warwickshire

**WWE LIVE** See your favourite WWE superstars in action, Wed 17 Apr, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

**SPRING STEAM GALA** Featuring 72 'Fenchurch', Lambton Tank 29 and 6880 'Betton Grange', Thurs 18 - Sun 21 Apr, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

**BUSTLING BIRMINGHAM KAYAK TOUR** See Birmingham from a different perspective, Fri 19 - Sun 21 Apr, Roundhouse, Birmingham

**OKTAGON 56 MMA** A fight card packed with British talent, Sat 20 Apr, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

**RUNWAY 25 PRESENTS OPPOSING SOLO**



*The Boy At The Back Of The Class - Wolverhampton Grand Theatre*

An evening with former United States Navy Blue Angels display pilot Mark 'UTah' Provo, Sat 20 Apr, The Royal Air Force Museum Midlands, Cosford

**TUNNEL TOUR** Opportunity to explore the tunnels beneath the Stourbridge Glass Museum, delving into the rich history of the Stuart Crystal factory that once stood on the site, Sat 20 Apr, Stourbridge Glass Museum

**INTERNATIONAL LIVING HISTORY FESTIVAL** Featuring 40-plus Living History reenactment groups representing life from the Stone Age, through the Viking era, to the 1940s and beyond, Sat 20 - Sun 21 Apr, Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove

**THE INTERNATIONAL CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE SHOW** Featuring trade stands and autajumble plots, club stands and private-entry displays, the Classic Racer GP Paddock and

plenty more, Sat 20 - Sun 21 Apr, Staffordshire County Showground, Stafford

**ST GEORGE'S DAY** Celebrations for all the family in the castle courtyard, Sat 20 - Sun 21 Apr, Dudley Zoo & Castle

**ORIGINS OF MIDDLE-EARTH: JRR TOLKIEN AND SAREHOLE GUIDED WALK** Guided walk introducing the scenery that inspired JRR Tolkien when he lived near Sarehole Mill as a child, Sun 21 Apr, Sarehole Mill, B'ham

**ST GEORGE'S DAY** See the knight in armour and learn about the real St George, Sun 21 Apr, Oak House Museum, West Bromwich

**ANTIQUES AND COLLECTORS FAIR** Featuring traders from across the UK selling a wide range of items from yesteryear, Sun 21 Apr, Himley Hall & Park, Dudley



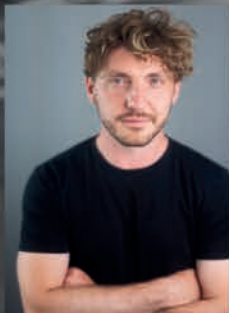
*KVN Dance Company's Coppelia - Lichfield Garrick*





STAFFORD  
Shakespeare

gatehouse theatre



*Seann Walsh*



*Molly Windsor*



*Natalie Anderson*

# TWELFTH NIGHT

*A Cornish Tale.  
June 21 - July 7*

*Directed by: Sean Turner    Sound Design: Hattie North    Musical Director: Stephen Hyde    Lighting Design: Barry Smith*

*Movement Direction: Amy Lawrence    Set & Costume Designer: Alfie Heywood*

*www.gatehousetheatre.co.uk 01785 619080*



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Swim School - The Sunflower Lounge

### Gigs

**DANIEL BEDINGFIELD**  
Mon 22 Apr, Symphony Hall

**ROYAL SOUTH** Tues 23  
Apr, Hare & Hounds,  
Kings Heath

**BARRY STEELE - THE ROY  
ORBISON STORY** Tues 23  
Apr, The Alexandra

**ACOUSTIC SESSIONS**  
Wed 24 Apr, The Jam  
House, Jewellery  
Quarter

**THE MANATEES** Wed 24  
Apr, The Sunflower  
Lounge, Smallbrook  
Queensway

**MICHAEL MARCAGI** Wed  
24 Apr, O2 Institute,  
Digbeth

**THE ACADEMIC** Wed 24  
Apr, O2 Academy

**BOYZ II MEN** Wed 24  
Apr, O2 Academy

**PETE KELLY + EMMA  
LANGFORD** Wed 24 Apr,  
Red Lion Folk Club

**PETER CASE + SID  
GRIFFIN** Wed 24 Apr,  
Kitchen Garden, Kings  
Heath

**NORTHERN SOUL  
ORCHESTRATED** Wed 24  
Apr, The Halls  
Wolverhampton

**FLEETWOOD MAC BY  
CANDLELIGHT** Wed 24 -  
Sat 27 Apr, Lichfield  
Cathedral

**BOOGIE WOOGIE DOUGIE**  
Thurs 25 Apr, Hare &  
Hounds, Kings Heath

**CHIP WICKHAM** Thurs 25  
Apr, Hare & Hounds,  
Kings Heath

**DEL CAMINO** Thurs 25  
Apr, The Jam House,

Jewellery Quarter  
**EVERYTHING WE DO**  
Thurs 25 Apr, The  
Sunflower Lounge,  
Smallbrook Queensway

**ANSON SEABRA + BILLY  
LOCKETT** Thurs 25 Apr,  
O2 Institute, Digbeth

**TOM WALKER** Thurs 25  
Apr, O2 Academy

**SARI SCHORR + MATT  
PEARCE & THE MUTINY**  
Thurs 25 Apr, Castle &  
Falcon, Balsall Heath

**LENNOX & THE FLAWED  
+ INTELLIGENCE OF  
PLANTS** Thurs 25 Apr,  
Subside Bar, Digbeth

**SAMARA JOY** Thurs 25  
Apr, Birmingham Town  
Hall

**BLACK TOP, XHOSA COLE,  
AND SOFIA JERNBERG**  
Thurs 25 Apr, Midlands  
Arts Centre (MAC),  
Edgbaston

**LIZ SIMCOCK** Thurs 25  
Apr, Bromsgrove Folk  
Club

**KULA SHAKER** Thurs 25  
Apr, The Halls,  
Wolverhampton

**PET NEEDS +  
GENERATION FERAL** Fri  
26 Apr, Hare & Hounds,  
Kings Heath

**THE AC30S** Fri 26 Apr,  
The Night Owl, Digbeth

**ORBITAL** Fri 26 Apr, O2  
Institute, Digbeth

**PEARL SCAM + ANGRY  
HAIR** Fri 26 Apr, O2  
Academy

**THE KVB** Fri 26 Apr,  
Castle & Falcon, Balsall  
Heath

**KAREN SHARP QUARTET**  
Fri 26 Apr, 1000 Trades,  
Jewellery Quarter

**SWING YOU SINNERS** Fri  
26 Apr, Jennifer  
Blackwell Performance  
Space, Symphony Hall

**LOST IN MUSIC** Fri 26  
Apr, Symphony Hall

**AFRO-CUBAN JAZZ  
ORCHESTRA** Fri 26 Apr,  
Royal Birmingham  
Conservatoire

**THE GREATEST HITS OF  
MOTOWN** Fri 26 Apr, The  
Alexandra

**LAUREN RUTH WARD** Fri  
26 Apr, Kitchen Garden,  
Kings Heath

**NEW MODEL ARMY** Fri 26  
Apr, Wulfrun Hall,  
Wolverhampton

**TATE MCRAE +  
CHARLIE ON A FRIDAY** Fri  
26 Apr, The Halls  
Wolverhampton

**NANNA RADLEYS** Fri 26 -  
Sat 27 Apr, The Jam  
House, Jewellery  
Quarter

**BLUES CLUB** Sat 27 Apr,  
Hare & Hounds, Kings  
Heath

**LAURIE WRIGHT + THE  
MOLOTOVS** Sat 27 Apr,  
Hare & Hounds, Kings  
Heath

**SWIM SCHOOL** Sat 27  
Apr, The Sunflower  
Lounge, Smallbrook  
Queensway

**DEFINITELY MIGHTBE +  
CHANGING MAN** Sat 27  
Apr, O2 Academy

**AKON** Sat 27 Apr, O2  
Academy

**TRANSGLOBAL  
UNDERGROUND** Sat 27  
Apr, Castle & Falcon,  
Balsall Heath

**KILL THE LIGHTS** Sat 27  
Apr, The Asylum,  
Hampton St

**AVERAGE WHITE BAND**  
Sat 27 Apr, Symphony  
Hall

**JALEN NGONDA** Sat 27  
Apr, The Crossing,  
Digbeth

**THE ELO EXPERIENCE** Sat  
27 Apr, The Alexandra

**FLEETWOOD MAC & TOM  
PETTY - THE LEGACY  
SHOW** Sat 27 Apr, The  
Crescent Theatre

**JOHN BRAMWELL & THE  
FULL HARMONIC TRIO** Sat  
27 Apr, Kitchen Garden,  
Kings Heath

**JOHN SMITH** Sat 27 Apr,  
Warwick Arts Centre,  
Coventry

**THE LONDON AFRICAN  
GOSPEL CHOIR PRESENT  
PAUL SIMON'S  
"GRACELAND"** Sat 27  
Apr, Warwick Arts  
Centre, Coventry

**TRAIN + ILSEY** Sat 27  
Apr, The Halls,  
Wolverhampton

**HOUSE OF ALL** Sun 28  
Apr, Hare & Hounds,  
Kings Heath

**WARRINGTON-RUNCORN  
NEW TOWN  
DEVELOPMENT PLAN +  
FIELD LINES +  
CARTOGRAPHER +  
POLYPORES + APTA +  
SULK ROOMS + LO FIVE**  
Sun 28 Apr, Castle &  
Falcon, Balsall Heath

**THE CRUEL KNIVES** Sun  
28 Apr, The Flapper,  
Cambrian Wharf

**THE STORY OF THE  
DUBLINERS** Sun 28 Apr,  
The Alexandra

**MARY GAUTHIER** Sun 28  
Apr, Kitchen Garden,  
Kings Heath

**THE ULTIMATE  
COMMITMENTS & BLUES  
BROTHERS EXPERIENCE**  
Sun 28 Apr, Sutton  
Coldfield Town Hall

**JAKE BUGG** Sun 28 Apr,  
Warwick Arts Centre,  
Coventry

**CALYPSO MOON** Sun 28  
Apr, The Hub at St  
Mary's, Lichfield

**RICH PARSONS** Sun 28  
Apr, The Feathers Inn,

Lichfield

**ONE DEAD THIEF +  
TOOTH** Mon 29 Apr, The  
Sunflower Lounge,  
Smallbrook Queensway

**OLIVIA DEAN** Mon 29  
Apr, O2 Institute,  
Digbeth



**ARI ABDUL** Mon 29 Apr,  
O2 Institute, Digbeth

**KATHRYN ROBERTS AND  
SEAN LAKEMAN** Mon 29  
Apr, Midlands Arts  
Centre (MAC),  
Edgbaston

**DOMINIE HOOPER** Mon  
29 Apr, Kitchen Garden,  
Kings Heath

**DARIUS RUCKER** Tues 30  
Apr, O2 Academy

**CHARLES ESTEN** Tues 30  
Apr, Birmingham Town  
Hall

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## Classical Music

**LUNCHTIME ORGAN CONCERT** Featuring Peter Holder of Westminster Abbey. Programme includes works by Handel, Byrd, Harris, Elgar, Weir & Walton, Mon 22 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

**RBC LUNCHTIME MUSIC** Featuring Misong Yeo (piano). Programme includes works by Rachmaninoff & Ravel, Mon 22 Apr, Recital Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**CBSO: BRUCKNER, SYMPHONY NO. 7** Featuring Markus Stenz (conductor) & James Ehnes (violin). Programme also includes R Schumann's Violin Concerto, Thurs 25 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**HAGLEY PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH EX CATHEDRA** Showcase featuring students from Hagley primary school post workshops with Ex Cathedra, Thurs 25 Apr, St Saviour's Church Hall, Hagley

**CBSO CENTRE STAGE: MENDELSSOHN STRING OCTET** Programme & musicians tbc, Fri 26 Apr, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

**SINFONIA OF BIRMINGHAM: OSCAR WINNERS** Featuring Michael Seal (conductor & narrator). Programme includes works by Newman, Williams, Powell, Bernstein & more... Sat 27 Apr, Bradshaw Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**VIVA MUSICA** Programme includes a range of classical, contemporary & popular music, Sat 27 Apr, St John the Baptist Church, Hagley

**BIRMINGHAM BACH CHOIR: COME & SING!** Annual day of singing led by Paul Spicer. All singers welcome. Programme comprises Puccini's Messa di Gloria, Sat 27 Apr, Wyldre Green United Reform Church, Sutton Coldfield

**ECHO RISING STARS: JÚLIA PUSKER** Programme includes works by L Boulanger, Debussy, E Tanguy, Brahms & more... Sun 28 Apr, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**CBSO SYMPHONIC SESSIONS: IN C** Programme includes works by Terry Riley & Andy Akiho, as well as a DJ set from Echo Juliet, Sun 28 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**CHORAL EVENSONG** Featuring Worcester Cathedral Choir, Sun 28 Apr, St John the Baptist Church, Hagley

**CANDLELIGHT: A NIGHT AT THE OPERA** Programme includes works by Puccini, Delibes, Mozart, Rossini & more... Sun 28 Apr, Lichfield Cathedral

## Comedy

**TINA BURNER** Mon 22 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Club, Birmingham

**MAX AMINI** Tues 23 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

**ARI ELDJARN** Wed 24 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**JOE LYCETT & FRIENDS** Wed 24 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**TOMMY TIERNAN** Wed 24 Apr, The Alexandra, Birmingham

**RICHARD HERRING** Wed 24 Apr, Station Pub, Sutton Coldfield

**SIMON MUNNERY** Thurs 25 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, JASON SALMON & SLIM** Thurs 25 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**AL MURRAY** Thurs 25 Apr, The Alexandra, Birmingham



**CLOSEUP COMEDY** Thurs 25 Apr, Hockley Social Club, Birmingham

**ED PATRICK** Fri 26 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**AMY MATTHEWS, MATT BRAGG, JASON SALMON, SLIM & LOVELL SMITH** Fri 26 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**PAWEŁ CHAŁUPKA & TOMASZ BORAS** Fri 26 Apr, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**DANIEL O'REILLY** Fri 26 Apr, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

**DARIUS DAVIES, FAIZAN SHAH, EDDY BRIMSON & KAREN BAYLEY** Sat 27 Apr, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

**AMY MATTHEWS, MATT BRAGG, JASON SALMON & SLIM** Sat 27 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**ROUGH WORKS: NEW MATERIAL NIGHT** Sun 28 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**TEZ ILYAS, FAIZAN SHAH, AATIF NAWAZ & NABIL ABDULRASHID** Sun 28 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**HARE OF THE DOG COMEDY** Sun 28 Apr, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

**JACKIE FABULOUS** Tues 30 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

## Theatre

**JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR** New production of Tim Rice & Andrew Lloyd Webber's iconic rock opera, Mon 22 - Sat 27 Apr, Birmingham Hippodrome

**LIFE OF PI** 'Jaw-dropping visuals and world-class puppetry' combine in an award-winning production based on Yann Martel's book, Tues 23 - Sat 27 Apr, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre



**A BUNCH OF AMATEURS** Highbury Players present an amateur version of Ian Hislop & Nick Newman's comedy, Tues 23 Apr - Sat 4 May, Highbury Theatre Centre, Sutton Coldfield

**THE ADDAMS FAMILY** Amateur production presented by Bournville Musical Theatre Company, Tues 23 - Sat 27 Apr, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

**YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN** Studley Operatic Society present an amateur version of the Mel Brooks musical, Tues 23 - Sat 27 Apr, Palace Theatre, Redditch

**THE LAND OF LOST CONTENT** An empowering story about friendship, adolescence, and life not going to plan... Wed 24 Apr, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

**A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM** The Everyman Theatre Company present an all-new production, featuring inimitable clown Tweedy as Bottom, Wed 24 - Sat 27 Apr, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

**THE BALD PRIMA DONNA** Birmingham Newman University Drama Students present an amateur version of Eugene Ionesco's satire concerning the hollowness and banality of societal customs and communication, Thurs 25 - Fri 26 Apr, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

**HOUDINI'S GREATEST ESCAPE** The story of 'the world's greatest entertainer', performed by New Old Friends in association with Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, Thurs 25 - Sat 27 Apr, Lichfield Garrick



**IRISH ANNIE'S** Ash Murphy's musical comedy, featuring live music by Shenanigans. Ricky Tomlinson &

Catherine Rice star, Fri 26 Apr, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

**REVISION ON TOUR: MACBETH** Dickens Theatre Company present a fresh version of the Bard's blood-spattered tragedy, Mon 29 - Tues 30 Apr, The Alexandra, Birmingham

**REWIND** Music, puppetry, movement & projection combine to reveal an intimate backward journey into the life and death of Alicia, a young woman who dared to resist authoritarianism, Tues 30 Apr, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

**BLOOD BROTHERS** Willy Russell's legendary musical tells of two twins who, separated at birth, grow up on opposite sides of the track... Tues 30 Apr - Sat 4 May, Birmingham Hippodrome

**THE WOMAN IN BLACK** Susan Hill's chilling ghost story, Tues 30 Apr - Sat 4 May, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

## Kids Theatre

**CARDBOARD CARNIVAL** Lempen Puppet Theatre Company present an accessible, visual production using cardboard, movement & invention, Fri 26 Apr, Glasshouse Arts Centre, Stourbridge

**THE LITTLE PRINCE** Lyngo Theatre & Norwich Puppet Theatre fuse puppetry and song to tell the story of how the boy who fell to Earth teaches his friend the Aviator about love, life and real happiness, Sat 27 Apr, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

**GOOSE** New interactive musical for younger audiences. Based on the books by Laura Wall, Sat 27 Apr, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

**LITTLE BIG DANCE: CLUB ORIGAMI** Dance, fashion and live music meet the magic of origami in an inspiring adventure which takes place in a land made purely of paper and play, Sat 27 Apr, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

## Dance

**GREAT BIG DANCE OFF - WEST** **MIDLANDS HEAT** Primary and secondary schools from across the region compete against one another, Mon 22 Apr, The Alexandra, Birmingham

**VERVE: TRIPLE BILL** Northern School of Contemporary Dance presents a 'bold' programme of dance, including new commissions from Matteo Marfoggia & Joy Alpuerto Ritter, Thurs 25 Apr, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

**SHOWMAN: AN EVENING WITH ANTON DU BEKE** Song, dance & laughter with special guest Lance Ellington, Mon 29 Apr, Lichfield Garrick



## Light Entertainment

**RACHEL STOCKDALE: FAT CHANCE** Funny, celebratory and politically powerful one-woman play exploring Rachel's true-life experience of weight gain, Wed 24 Apr, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

**FLEETWOOD MAC BY CANDLELIGHT** Featuring a cast of West End singers and a live band, Wed 24 - Sat 27 April, Lichfield Cathedral

**CANDLELIGHT CONCERTS: A TRIBUTE TO QUEEN** Live and multi-sensory musical experience, Thurs 25 Apr, Birmingham Botanical Gardens

**CANDLELIGHT CONCERTS: A TRIBUTE TO PINK FLOYD** Live and multi-sensory musical experience, Thurs 25 Apr, Birmingham Botanical Gardens

**CIRQUE DU SOLEIL OVO** High-energy production providing a colourful intrusion into a day in the life of insects, Thurs 25 - Sun 28 Apr, Utilita Arena Birmingham

**BOTTOMS UP: BURLESQUE & CABARET** Step into a world of glitz and glamour as the creme de la creme of the cabaret world take to the stage, Fri 26 Apr, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

**CANDLELIGHT CONCERTS: VIVALDI** Live and multi-sensory musical experience, Fri 26 Apr, Birmingham Botanical Gardens

**BOX OF FROGS** Join the Birmingham-based improv group for an evening of high-octane comedy nonsense, based entirely on audience suggestions, Fri 26 Apr, The Core Theatre, Solihull



**CLOSET CONFESSIONS LIVE** Candice Brathwaite (author, journalist & TV presenter) and Coco Sarel (actor and TikTok sensation) bring their hit podcast to the stage, Fri 26 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

**CANDLELIGHT CONCERTS: A TRIBUTE TO ADELE** Live and multi-sensory musical experience, Fri 26 Apr, Birmingham Botanical Gardens

**BURNIN' LOVE BINGO** Join award-winning character comedian Tracey Collins (Shell Suit Cher & Audrey Heartburn) as she brings her latest 'ridiculous' act, Elvis Lesley, to the stage, Sat 27 Apr, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

**STAND BY YOUR NAN** Rachel

Sambrooks tells tales that span Quinton, Warley Woods, the 1930s, both World Wars and Attingham Park in the 1960s, Sat 27 Apr, Smethwick Heritage Centre

**HAGS: A MAGICAL EXTRAVAGANZA**

Three fearless females present an evening of magic tricks, physical comedy & live music, Sat 27 Apr, Thimblemill Library, Smethwick

**BEAR GRYLLS: THE NEVER GIVE UP TOUR** Join the global adventurer in a show designed to inspire and captivate audiences of all ages, Sat 27 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**THAT'LL BE THE DAY** Comedy sketches, impersonations and music combine in a popular touring show celebrating iconic moments in pop culture from the 1950s through to the 1980s, Tues 30 Apr - Wed 1 May, Lichfield Garrick

**THE TIGERFACE SHOW** A 'joyful and melancholic' comedy which asks us to rethink what it was we wanted to be when we grew up, in the hope of finding some childlike happiness in adulthood, Tues 30 Apr - Wed 1 May, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham



## Talks & Spoken Word

**HOLLIE MCNISH: THE LOBSTER TOUR**

Join the bestselling writer as she talks about her brand-new book, *Lobster And Other Things I'm Learning To Love*, Sun 28 Apr, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

## Events

**THE RAF IN THE MIDLANDS: HISTORY AND LEGACY WORKSHOP** Event exploring the history and legacy of the RAF in the Midlands, Thurs 25 Apr, The Royal Air Force Museum Midlands, Cosford

**ADULT NIGHT** Enjoy 'the ultimate indoor Lego playground' completely kid-free, Fri 26 Apr, Legoland Discovery Centre Birmingham

**BUSTLING BIRMINGHAM KAYAK TOUR** See Birmingham from a different perspective, Fri 26 - Sun 28 Apr, Roundhouse, Birmingham

**ESL ONE BIRMINGHAM 2024** An offline British tournament organised by ESL Gaming, Fri 26 - Sun 28 Apr, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham



Cirque du Soleil OVO - Utilita Arena Birmingham

**REPAIR CAFE** Take along your broken items to be fixed by Balsall Heath Repair Café, Sat 27 Apr, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

**NATIONAL GARDEN RAILWAY SHOW**

Event bringing together major suppliers, Sat 27 Apr, NAEC Stoneleigh, Warwickshire

**ORIENTAL EXPRESS** Chinese-inspired dining experience, Sat 27 Apr, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

**MODEL WORLD LIVE** Bringing together railway and scale modellers, Sat 27 - Sun 28 Apr, NEC, Birmingham

**STAFFORDSHIRE WELL BEING SHOW**

Event focusing on wellbeing and alternative ways to a better lifestyle, Sat 27 - Sun 28 Apr, Staffordshire County Showground, Stafford

**GIN TRAIN** Learn about the history of gin whilst enjoying a selection of drinks, Sat 27 - Sun 28 Apr, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

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

Guided walk introducing the scenery that inspired JRR Tolkien when he lived near Sarehole Mill as a child, Sun 28 Apr, Sarehole Mill, B'ham

**ITALIAN AUTORAIL** A gathering of over 100 Italian road vehicles from across the decades. Organised in collaboration with the Italian AutoMoto Club, Sun 28 Apr, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

**ULTIMATE BMW MEET** The UK's largest BMW meet returns to the museum for its third year, Sun 28 Apr, British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Warwickshire

**BIKE 4 LIFE** One of the UK's most popular and biggest ride-outs, attracting more than 6,000 bikers and pillioners, Sun 28 Apr, Weston Park, Shropshire

**HAND-MADE PAPER MAKING** Learn how to repurpose paper waste and organic material into handmade paper, Tues 30 Apr, Winterbourne House and Garden, University of Birmingham



Hags: A Magical Extravaganza - Thimblemill Library, Smethwick



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### Win! Two tickets to see 101 Dalmatians: The Musical

Telling the story of fashionista Cruella de Vil's attempts to swipe all the Dalmatian puppies in town to create a fabulous fur coat for herself, this hit musical visits the region direct from London's West End.

We have two tickets to give away for the show when it stops off at The Alexandra, Birmingham on Tuesday 2 July.

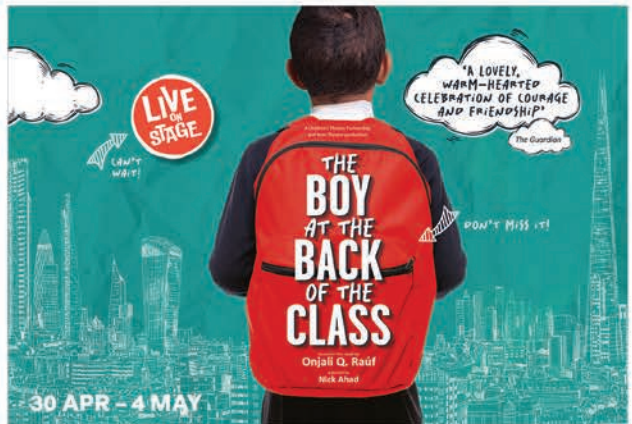
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