

Coventry & Warwickshire

ISSUE 448 MAY 2024

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inside:

THE MEDUSA TOUCH

new spin on the Trojan War at Warwick Arts Centre



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hit musical Come From Away lands in the Midlands



COVENTRY CUPPA

tea-guzzling tiger visits the Albany Theatre



PRESENTS

A night of stunning classical music and favourites inspired by

Classic Hall of Fame



Presented by: **Aled Jones**

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

Conductor: **Anthony Brown**

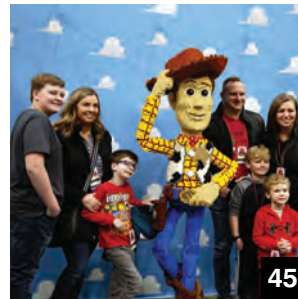
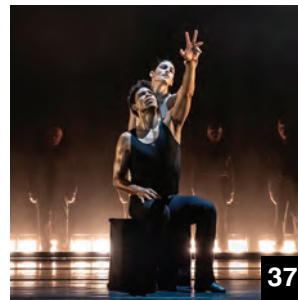
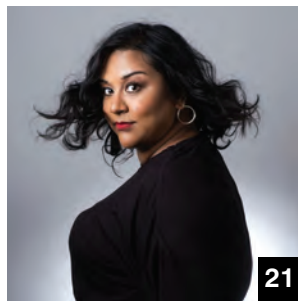
Photo: Danny Kaan

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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What's On

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Chicago back on tour

Hit musical Chicago is to visit three Midlands venues as part of a new UK & Ireland tour. The much-loved show will stop off at the Regent Theatre in Stoke-on-Trent in the autumn (Monday 25 - Saturday 30 November) before returning to the region in 2025, first at Birmingham's The Alexandra (Monday 14 - Saturday 19 April) and then at the Grand Theatre in Wolverhampton (Monday 23 - Saturday 28 June)... To find out more and book tickets, visit chicagothemusical.com

Elizabethan espionage in Stratford-upon-Avon...

Critically acclaimed music & theatre company The Telling are returning to the region next month with a new 'concert-play'.



Recounting the story of renaissance composer/lutenist John Dowland's brush with the Secret Service, and how he manages to foil an Italian plot on the life of Queen Elizabeth I, I, Spie visits Stratford Play House, Stratford-upon-Avon, on Tuesday 18 June. Tickets can be purchased via the website at ticketsource.co.uk

New Our Town exhibition opens at Music Museum

Coventry Music Museum has opened a new exhibition inspired by the BBC drama series This Town.

Taking the title Our Town, the exhibition opened last month, with stars of the critically acclaimed TV show in attendance at the launch. The series was created and written by Stephen Knight, the man behind Peaky Blinders.



Comedy and clay in The Core's Studio space

Although Solihull theatre The Core's main auditorium is currently closed, the venue's Studio space is set to host a number of shows across the coming weeks. Highlights include stand-up offering The Muslims Are Coming (Sunday 12 May), interactive children's production Claytime (Saturday 1 June) and an evening with local improv group Box Of Frogs (pictured, Friday 7 June). To check out the whole line-up of Studio shows, visit thecoretheatresolihull.co.uk



New three-day fashion event heading for the NEC

Tickets are now on sale for The Good Clothes Show - a first-of-its-kind three-day shopping event taking place at Birmingham's NEC in the autumn. Featuring brands, artisan makers, sustainable boutiques, vintage treasures, celebrity contributors and industry heavyweights, the show runs from Friday 20 to Sunday 22 September. Further information and tickets are available by visiting thegoodclothesshow.com

Worcester Cathedral's tower reopens for visitors

After being closed to the public for almost four years, Worcester Cathedral's tower has now reopened.

Climbing the tower involves ascending 255 steps up a steep, narrow and winding staircase. For further information, visit worcestercathedral.org.uk

Hippodrome announces festive family musical

Birmingham Hippodrome's new musical theatre department has announced its first full production - a festive family musical called The Jingleclaw which has been created with three- to seven-year-olds in mind. Set in a cosy village in the snowy mountains, the show tells the story of a young musician named Astrid and the mischievous forest creature of the title. The production will show in the Hippodrome's Patrick Studio from Thursday 12 December to Saturday 4 January. Further information and tickets are available at birminghamhippodrome.com

James Martin to cook up a treat in the Midlands

Celebrity chef James Martin will bring his all-new live tour to Birmingham's Symphony Hall next spring (Saturday 1 March). Commenting on the news, James said: "Be prepared for a laugh-out-loud, high-energy night out filled with tantalising flavours that will leave your tastebuds craving!" Tickets for the show are available by visiting ticketmaster.co.uk



Stratford summer for Windsor wives

A new production of one of Shakespeare's best-loved comedies opens at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon next month.

Directed by Blanche McIntyre and starring Sex Education's Samantha Spiro (pictured), *The Merry Wives Of Windsor* runs in repertoire at the venue from Wednesday 5 June to Saturday 7 September.

For further information and to book tickets, visit rsc.org.uk

Sir Ian at the Alex

A new play adapted from Shakespeare's *Henry IV Parts I & II* - and starring Sir Ian McKellen - is coming to the Midlands.

Stopping off at Birmingham theatre *The Alexandra* in the summer (Wednesday 10 - Saturday 13 July), *Player Kings* will see Sir Ian taking on the role of Sir John Falstaff.

For further information and to book tickets, visit the website atgtickets.com



Viral sensation at the Glee Club

Comedian and viral sensation Christopher Hall is visiting Birmingham in the autumn as part of his live stand-up tour, *A Girl For All Seasons*.

Social-media star Chris makes a stop-off at the city's Glee Club on Wednesday 25 September. To find out more and book tickets, visit the website at glee.co.uk



Belgrade Theatre announces its autumn season of shows

Well-established shows including *The History Boys*, *Ghost The Musical* and *Art* will take their place alongside a programme of in-house-produced work at Coventry's Belgrade Theatre later in the year.

The venue's autumn season will be kick-started by *Please Do Not Touch* (Wednesday 11 - Saturday 21 September), a Belgrade and China Plate co-production written by former Birmingham Poet Laureate Casey Bailey. This will swiftly be followed by *Play On!* (Monday 23 September - Saturday 5 October), a new jazz musical produced by the theatre, in association with Talawa, which retells the story of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*...

Theatre-goers don't have to wait until the autumn to enjoy an evening of drama at the Belgrade, however. The venue is hosting a number of productions across the summer too, including *My Mother's Funeral: The Show* (pictured). The play is a collaborative venture with Paines Plough, a company whose 50th anniversary has coincided with them announcing a move to the Belgrade. The production will show at the theatre from Thursday 25 to Saturday 27 July. To find out more about these shows and to check out the rest of the venue's 2024 line-up of entertainment, visit belgrade.co.uk

Out Loud at The Hive

Worcester library, history & customer centre The Hive is this spring exploring 'all things sound' via a programme of special events and experiences. Presented under the umbrella title of *Out Loud*, the season of shows delves into the worlds of music, sound, communication, spoken word, oral history, voices and expression. To check out what's happening and when, visit the venue's website at thehiveworcester.org



War Horse gallops back to the region

The National Theatre's smash-hit production of *War Horse* is returning to the region next year. The critically acclaimed show, based on Michael Morpurgo's celebrated novel, will visit the Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, from Tuesday 4 to Saturday 8 March, and the Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton, the following week (Tuesday 11 - Saturday 22 March). To find out more and book tickets, visit the theatres' websites.

Squash championships return to the region

The British Open Squash Championship is returning to Birmingham next month (Sunday 2 - Sunday 9 June).

The action will be split between Edgbaston Priory Club, for the first two rounds, and Birmingham Repertory Theatre, from the third round onwards.

For further information and to book tickets, visit birmingham-rep.co.uk

Howzat! Enjoy cricket in style this summer

There's plenty of cricket to enjoy at Birmingham's Edgbaston Stadium this summer.

As well as Warwickshire County Cricket Club's home matches, the venue will also play host to an England versus West Indies Test match and the adrenaline-pumping T20 Finals Day.

If you fancy enjoying a day out at Edgbaston in real style, there's a range of VIP packages available from which to choose.

Visit keithprose.co.uk to find out more.



Party games, comedy and chaos in brand-new play

With a general election on the not-too-distant horizon, what better time to check out a brand-new play about 'the chaos of government'?

An acerbic comedy starring Matthew Cottle, Debra Stephenson and Ryan Early, Party Games! stops off at Malvern Theatres from Tuesday 25 to Saturday 29 June. Tickets can be booked by visiting malvern-theatres.co.uk



06 whatsonlive.co.uk



Satisfy your curiosity at Resonate's arts festival

Coventry & Warwickshire's Resonate initiative, a year-round programme of events which aims to 'spark ideas, curiosity and creativity', is hosting its first-ever arts & culture festival next month.

Taking place on Sunday 2 June at Warwick Arts Centre and in the University of

Warwick's Faculty of Arts building, the event will explore world culture and feature workshops and activities connected to music, dance, theatre, poetry, food, history, circus skills, textiles, art and languages.

To find out more about the event, visit the website at resonatefestival.co.uk

Dark tales of true crime at the Albany Theatre

Dark tales from Coventry's past provide the subject matter for a new show being presented at the city's Albany Theatre late this month.

Coventry's True Crime Tales is hosted by crime historian Adam Wood and shows at the venue on Sunday 26 May.

To find out more and purchase a ticket, visit albanytheatre.co.uk

Brand-new festival visits Stratford and Warwick

A brand-new and free-to-attend community festival is coming to the towns of Stratford-upon-Avon and Warwick.

Focusing on history, literature, music, dance, theatre, art, sports and wellbeing, Pursuits Festival takes place at Stratford's Recreation Grounds on Saturday 11 & Sunday 12 May, and then visits Warwick's St Nicholas Park on Saturday 22 & Sunday 23 June. The event will feature street food, entertainment, workshops, demonstrations and a host of sellers.

To find out more, visit pursuitsfestival.co.uk

An evening of classical favourites with Aled

Aled Jones (pictured) returns to Birmingham late this month (Symphony Hall, Saturday 25 May) to present a concert of classical favourites and cinema scores performed by 'the majestically large' Fulltone Orchestra. Led by Anthony Brown, the orchestra will perform alongside Classical Brit Awards nominee Carly Paoli and Welsh National Opera's Gareth Dafydd Morris.

For further information and to purchase tickets, visit bmusic.co.uk



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11 May | Symphony Hall



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13 May | Symphony Hall



Lee John of Imagination

15 May | Town Hall



Wild Isles Live

17 May | Town Hall



Richard Marx

19 May | Symphony Hall



The Fulltone Orchestra, Carly Paoli & Aled Jones

25 May | Symphony Hall



The Lion Inside

25 & 26 May | Town Hall



The Zombies

28 May | Town Hall



bmusic.co.uk

There's something for everyone this May!

A masterclass from local theatre stars Heartbreak

Local theatre company Heartbreak Productions is hosting a series of workshops & masterclasses at Leamington Spa's North Hall. The one-off sessions are designed to provide a fun and supportive space to explore creative ideas and hone theatrical skills in different disciplines. For more information about the classes, visit heartbreakproductions.co.uk

Another Big Local Night Out at Warwick venue

Warwick's Bridge House Theatre is hosting another Big Local Night Out this month. Taking place on Friday the 24th, the show brings together local talent with guest artists 'from the top of the UK's performing-arts scene'. To find out more about the event, visit bridgehousetheatre.co.uk

Opera company bringing double bill to the region

Welsh National Opera return to Birmingham Hippodrome this month with a mouthwatering double bill. Taking up residence at the Hurst Street venue mid-month, the Cardiff-based company will present Mozart's *Così fan tutte* on Friday 10 May and Benjamin Britten's *Death In Venice* on Saturday the 11th. To find out more and book tickets, visit birminghamhippodrome.com

Collecting Coventry show opens at the Herbert

Seventy-five years of collecting is being celebrated in a new exhibition opening at Coventry's Herbert Art Gallery & Museum this month. Featuring a selection of objects dating from the founding of the venue in 1949 through to the present day - and also including contributions from the Coventry Transport Museum - *Collecting Coventry* is being presented across four rooms and opens on Saturday 11 May. The exhibition will be available to view until next spring.



Johannes getting ready to pull on his Kinky Boots!

Strictly Come Dancing favourite Johannes Radebe will star as Lola when a new touring production of hit musical *Kinky Boots* visits Birmingham Hippodrome next year. The

show stops off at the venue from Tuesday 15 to Saturday 19 April. For further information about the production and to purchase tickets, visit birminghamhippodrome.com

Midlands welcomes new Ska & Reggae Festival

The first-ever Birmingham International Ska & Reggae Festival takes place at the end of the month.

The three-day event - which runs from Friday 31 May to Sunday 2 June at Thornborough Farm in the city's Kings Norton district - will feature, among many others, The Pioneers, Stranger Cole, Symarip and Basil Gabbidon (Steel Pulse).

Alongside the music, the festival also features market traders, vintage stalls and a 'tempting array' of street food.

For further information about the event and to book tickets, visit skiddle.com

Vaudeville-style clowning around in Stratford

The Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) is offering families an imaginative selection of entertainment to enjoy over the May half-term holiday, including a show starring a vaudeville-style clown named Tweedy. Suitable for children aged three and older, Tweedy's Massive Circus will transform the town's Avonbank Gardens from Friday 24 May to Sunday 2 June.

The RSC's holiday line-up of entertainment also includes award-winning actor & director Tim Crouch in *I, Malvolio*, and a selection of family-friendly events, 'from storytelling through to circus skills'.

Worcester arts venue gets the green light

Planning permission has been given to create a new multi-purpose arts venue within two historic buildings in the heart of Worcester.

Worcester City Council's Planning Committee has unanimously granted permission for the full redesign and internal refurbishment of the Scala and Corn Exchange buildings in Angel Street. Once completed, the new venue will be home to three multi-use spaces and a café.

Stratford Literary Festival back for a 17th year

Crime writer Val McDermid, children's author Michael Rosen (pictured) and actor David Troughton are among the well-known names



contributing to the spring edition of the Stratford Literary Festival.

Now in its 17th year and featuring talks, workshops and performances, the event takes place in Stratford-upon-Avon from Wednesday 1 to Sunday 5 May.

To check out the complete festival line-up, visit stratfordliteraryfestival.co.uk

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MAKING A SPLASH

Anni Domingo talks about starring in Siana Bangura's *Swim, Aunty, Swim!* - a profound and poetic story about friendship, loss, sisterhood, motherhood and ageing...



Swim, Aunty, Swim! tells the heartwarming tale of three West African women and how swimming helps them overcome their personal problems. Anni Domingo says lead character Fatu is a wonderful role for an older actress - but only if the water is warm...

West Africa meets the West Midlands in a brand-new play premiering in Coventry this month. Written by Siana Bangura and directed by Madeleine Kludje, *Swim, Aunty, Swim!* explores the relationships between three West African women as they navigate the changes, challenges and tragedies in their lives.

Set in Coventry, the tale begins with the arrival of Fatu, an elderly lady who has moved to the city from London in search of a fresh start following the death of her son. Joining a new church, she becomes friends with fellow worshippers Aunty Blessing and Aunty Ama, and the trio end up following the latter's lead to take up swimming as a distraction from their mundane lives.

"Ama finds the swimming very helpful," explains actor Anni Domingo, who's also a director, author, lecturer and theatre practitioner in her own right. "She persuades Blessing to go, and now they're trying to persuade Fatu, my character, to join them. She resists for a while, but we eventually see why these women are drawn to water and to swimming. They then sign up for an open water swim, and the play is about whether they can do it and how they will survive it."

Water and swimming are clearly crucial elements of the play, but Anni's giving little away about how that will manifest itself on the Belgrade's B2 stage.

"You'll have to come and see!" she laughs. "I did say that if there is going to be water, I want it to be warm - I'm not going to swim in cold water!"

Given her many other skills and achievements - she's got five degrees, a doctorate and is currently studying for a PhD while simultaneously writing her second novel, at the age of 74 - I wouldn't be surprised if she jumped right in anyway, but we both know swimming isn't what the story is really about. The relationship between the three women and how they help each other deal with their problems and issues - universal concerns that go beyond swimming caps and water temperature - are what we're dealing with here.

"As the play goes along, you find out the tragedies and things that are holding them back. Each one has something different. For Fatu, it's the death of her son and the way he died - she doesn't want to talk about it, but it's pulled out of her. [The play] is about learning how to let go of some of these

tragedies - not disrespect them but be able to move on and continue to live."

And of course it could be about any three women, not just ones who hail from Sierra Leone (where writer Siana was born, and Anni's parents hail from), Ghana and Nigeria.

"It doesn't matter what colour or creed, it's about people. It could be three women from Coventry, Birmingham and Scotland or wherever. What I love about it is, yes, these three women are from West Africa and they talk about that and have jokes about the jollof rice wars [Nigerians tease Ghanaians about the outcry that was sparked in the country when supplies ran low], but intrinsically it's about female friendship and how we support each other."

She's also at pains to point out that all characters in the play are actually British.

"One of the things we have to start understanding is that there are black people in the UK who have been here for generations, and older black people who were born here - they've not all come from the West Indies on Windrush. I was born here, and I'm in my 70s, so there you go!" The play is set in Coventry - does the city itself have a significant role?

"It does inasmuch as the other women have lived there for years and they talk about it. Siana has lived in Coventry, so she knows it quite well."

Do you?

"No, I've been to the Belgrade on tour several times but not done a play there until now. I came up for the photo shoot and got lost!"

The play is actually a big deal for the Coventry-based theatre, which is planning to create more in-house work and unveiled a new producing team last September. Developed in collaboration with leading British African heritage theatre company tiata fahodzi, the show is one of the Belgrade's flagship in-house productions, as well as part of its creative vision to incorporate people from Coventry and the wider region.

If the actors and team involved in the production are feeling any additional pressure as a result of the surrounding hoo-ha, they're hiding it well.

"There is a kind of pressure but not really, because wherever we do the play we have to do it to the best of our ability. I'm just really happy that we are going to be one of the first

shows under the Belgrade's new regime, and I'm very much in favour of diversity."

Working with a number of organisations helps her further that agenda ("you can't make a difference unless you have a seat at the table"). She is Chair of the board of Trustees at Theatre Peckham and on the board at Sheffield Theatres Trust, among others.

"I work with several different theatres where we believe in diversity, working with young people and bringing local people into the theatre. The whole purpose of diversity is bringing in different styles of plays but also bringing different people into the theatre to see what's there. So this show fits in exactly with my ethos, which is one of the reasons I'm doing it. It's also a fantastic role for an older actress, which is rare."

Anni's also passionate about theatres being all things to all people, not just venues to watch plays - not least because diversifying their offering and appeal will help them stay economically viable.

"For theatres to survive we have to make the space almost like a library but without them telling you to shush! You should be able to walk in to have a coffee, use it as a venue to meet up with friends... not just to come and see a show. It's also important to bring children so they grow up knowing that it's a space for them, and that continues into adulthood, because that's the only way we're going to survive."

Putting on shows that attract a variety of audiences - particularly minority groups - is also key, and the West End success of the likes of *For Black Boys* shows the demand is there, she says.

"I think for a long time, people of certain ethnicities didn't go to the theatre, but we're finding out now that if you put on the right plays, then they will come - and come back again. We're seeing that in the West End at the moment - shows that started outside the West End, at the Bush Theatre or Stratford or wherever, are coming back. Not that the West End is everything, but it shows that if you put on the right plays, people will come."

.....

Swim, Aunty, Swim! shows at The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, from Monday 20 May to Saturday 1 June

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- 🌸 **Bella Hardy** 🌸 **The Pleasures** 🌸 **HEISK**
- 🌸 **Suntou Susso Band** 🌸 **Ranagri**
- 🌸 **The Hello Darlins** 🌸 **The Magpies**
- 🌸 **Joshua Burnell Band** 🌸 **NATI**
- 🌸 **The Hunch** 🌸 **Sidiki Jobarteh Trio**
- 🌸 **James Delarre & Saul Rose**
- 🌸 **Rosie Hood Band** 🌸 **Joli Blon**
- 🌸 **Lady Nade** 🌸 **Winter Wilson**

See website for full line up

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ROTTEN TO THE CORE

John Lydon - aka the Sex Pistols' Johnny Rotten - is out on tour and heading for the Midlands...



John Lydon first took to the stage as Johnny Rotten, frontman of the Sex Pistols, almost 50 years ago - but his upcoming appearance at Coventry's Warwick Arts Centre is something a bit different. His UK touring show, I Could Be Wrong, I Could Be Right, offers an honest and uncensored glimpse into the life of a legend. Here, Lydon not only explains what the audience can expect from the evening but also talks about his loves and his losses - and last year's surprise Eurovision bid...

John Lydon is not a man who appreciates being censored. The legendary frontman and lyricist of the Sex Pistols and Public Image Ltd has caused his fair share of political earthquakes during a unique and extraordinary career.

The man they call Johnny Rotten has been dubbed many things. A revolutionary, an icon, a provocateur and an immortal, he became a poster boy for the cultural revolution which transformed music for good. And he's not finished yet. This year he's heading back out on the road for a fresh leg of his acclaimed spoken-word show, *I Could Be Wrong, I Could Be Right*.

Promising to 'tell it how it is' during the audience Q&A sessions, absolutely nothing will be off limits. This is John Lydon, live and untamed.

"This is a format which suits me down to the ground, to be honest," he says, "because if there's one thing you can guarantee, it's that I'm never gonna run out of words! I've basically spent my whole life being censored. So this is me; honest and unscripted. It's *my* thoughts, in *my* lingo, right or wrong, straight from the horse's mouth."

A lot of incredibly turbulent water has passed under the bridge since the last leg of Lydon's spoken-word tour.

He's lost two of the most important people in his life; his beloved wife of more than 40 years, Nora, and his long-time tour manager, Johnny 'Rambo' Stevens. He also had a crack at Eurovision.

"I just can't get over the loss of Nora; I don't think I ever will," says Lydon, who cared full-time for his wife in her later years as she battled Alzheimer's.

"It's hard at night, and I don't want to throw myself into creating more music right now which would just be a series of 'woe is me' misery songs. That's not the right thing to do."

The reason he threw his hat into the Eurovision ring last year, in a failed bid to represent Ireland, was entirely down to Nora. The poignant and personal song, *Hawaii*, was inspired by one of the couple's favourite holidays and was, in his words, 'as close to accurately portraying the situation' as he could get.

"I'm very glad I was able to perform the song on Irish TV so I could show it to Nora before she died. It might not have been chosen, but it did put a big smile on her face, and she was very proud of me.

"But I'll never sing that song again, because

it's just too heartbreaking. I just can't go there; it was so deeply personal."

"And then I lost Rambo, my all-time best mate and manager. There never has been, and never will be, anyone remotely like him. He lived life to the full and enriched the lives of so many."

Life has thrown its fair share of curve balls in Lydon's direction over the years.

The son of working-class emigrants from Ireland and the eldest of four brothers, he grew up in the shadow of Arsenal FC's Highbury stadium, regularly having to care for his siblings due to his mother's ill health.

At the age of seven, Lydon contracted spinal meningitis and spent a year in hospital. He suffered from hallucinations and severe memory loss that lasted several years. It was the first step towards the birth of Johnny Rotten.

He was kicked out of school at 15 for dying his hair green, and was soon on the London nightclub scene with the likes of Sid Vicious and Jah Wobble.

By 1975, he was hanging around SEX, the fetish clothing shop launched by Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood, meeting the people who would go on to form the Sex Pistols.

His scintillating vocal delivery and forthright lyrics - matched with the band's power and energy - soon saw the Pistols build up a word-of-mouth following.

Lydon looks back on those times with great fondness, but admits that the rift with his 'sneaky rat' former Pistols bandmates, which ended up in court in a bitter dispute over licensing of the back catalogue, can never be healed.

Relishing the opportunity to challenge and thrive, John Lydon remains a mischievous maverick who continues pushing back the boundaries.

"I make music because I love it. I've got an enormous record collection and every now and then recognise a gap in something I'd really like to hear - that will then be the seed for the next album I'll make.

"When I lose interest in music, I will stop. I don't force it. We're well known for taking long intervals between projects, but I think that benefits the work itself."

As a writer, Lydon has published two best-selling volumes of memoir: the excoriating *Rotten: No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs*, and the ridiculously entertaining and uncompromising *Anger Is An Energy: My Life*

Uncensored. But he credits his 2004 appearance on *I'm A Celebrity, Get Me Out Of Here!* as the moment the majority of people got the chance to discover what he was really like. Which is why he's relishing the chance to get back on stage for a show he describes as 'unlike anything else I've done'.

"I like to think I've always been able to converse fluently in a down-to-earth way; not waxing lyrical with a load of toff talk. Once the ice is broken, it paves the way for a bloody good chat, and a good time to be had by all.

"The thing I love about this show is that I don't know exactly what I'm going to be doing from one venue to the next. I like that 'in at the deep end' approach; that's how to learn to swim. That's what the Sex Pistols was. There was no game plan, no greedy ambitions, which is why it was so excellent - ahead of its time, or maybe miles behind, depending on your point of view.

"This show's the same. I'll go on, on a wing and a prayer, and see what happens; do what feels right. And whatever questions I'm asked, I will give an honest answer.

"That's usually the recipe for a fantastic evening - it's like going into an atmospheric old pub for the first time and discovering that everyone in there is a mate."

So this show is all speech and no music, then?

"Well, not completely. I've been known to break out into a bit of karaoke on occasion and start an Abba singalong, and no two nights turn out the same way.

"This time I'm thinking I might go down the Alvin Stardust route - I think some of his classics need dusting off, don't you? Who doesn't love a bit of My Coo-Ca-Choo?"

He smiles. "This is what life should be, throwing point and purpose out the window and just enjoying it. Do what you feel.

"Everything is a gift. It's just that sometimes it can take time to find that out."

.....
John Lydon: I Could Be Wrong, I Could Be Right visits Palace Theatre, Redditch, Wednesday 8 May; Huntingdon Hall, Worcester, Thursday 9 May; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, on Friday 10 May; Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-trent, Saturday 11 May; Tamworth Assembly Rooms, Sunday 12 May & Walsall Arts Centre, Saturday 25 May; Birmingham Town Hall, Sunday 9 June

Live music from across the region...

Jasmine Myra

The Tin Music & Arts, Coventry, Fri 10 May

Originally a leading light of Leeds' cross-genre music scene, saxophonist, composer & band leader Jasmine Myra produces original instrumental music that boasts a euphoric, uplifting and emotive sound.

Her visit to Coventry comes in support of sophomore album *Rising*, released on 3 May.



Kenny Thomas

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Thurs 16 May

"Live gigs are one of the most enjoyable aspects of being a musician," says British soul star and multi-platinum singer-songwriter Kenny Thomas. "It's where my fans come together for a night of soul music and serious partying... It's an opportunity for us to play songs from my third album, *Him*, which was never commercially released. Over three decades on from when I first started out, this tour demonstrates that soul music is here to stay."



Bryan Adams

Coventry Building Society Arena, Fri 17 May

To say Bryan Adams has done well for himself over a near half century of musicmaking would be a spectacular understatement. With worldwide record

sales in excess of 75 million, he's long been established as one of the world's greatest-ever rock performers.

The 64-year-old Canadian is this month bringing his *So Happy It Hurts* tour to Coventry Building Society Arena - a venue which he last played 19 years ago.

Fluff

Paradiddles Music Cafe Bar, Worcester, Sat 11 May

South West-based one-man-band punk project Fluff boasts a full-band sound and a level of popularity that saw him play Glastonbury last time round and receive an invitation to return this summer.

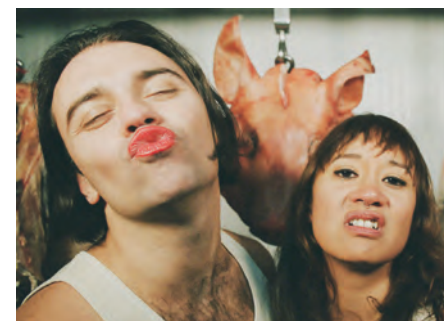
"I'm fully independent, DIY, and keen to keep it that way," he explains. "High energy and high octane - just good all-round party-punk fun!"

Fluff is joined on the night by local four-piece punk outfit *Kick The Clown* and three-piece West Midlands punk band *The Human Error*.

Granny's Attic

Huntingdon Hall, Worcester, Fri 17 May

Granny's Attic comprises a trio of young folk musicians who started performing together at Bishop Perowne College in Worcester in 2009. Taking a lively and vibrant approach to traditional English, Irish and Scottish folk music, all three performers are accomplished vocalists who between them also play an impressive array of instruments, including melodeon, concertina, guitar, fiddle and mandolin.



DVTR

Drummonds Bar, Worcester, Sun 5 May

Dynamic duo DVTR - otherwise known as Demi Lune and Jean Divorce, who are otherwise known as Laurence Giroux-Do and JC Tellier of Quebec indie outfit *le Couleur's* - have been causing a significant stir in recent times with their enticing combination of hard-hitting lyrics, surprising soundscapes and unpredictable stage antics.

"We don't reflect on anything or consider the results very much," Divorce explained to *cultmtl.com*, in talking about their output. "We avoid the long, drawn-out and annoying process that a lot of bands put themselves through, and keep the rawness."



A LIFE IN MUSIC

The director and founder of Leamington Music Festival,
Richard Phillips MBE, recalls the highlights of his extensive career...



Since 1982, Midlands-born Richard Phillips has been the driving force behind a multitude of music & arts events across Warwickshire and beyond. As director of the prestigious Leamington Music Festival, he is responsible for bringing some of classical music's finest artists to the region. This year's event, taking place early this month, will be Richard's last, as he's decided it's time to take a well-earned retirement. Here, he reflects on his involvement with the festival across the decades and shares his hopes for its future...

You've had a particularly wide-ranging career, Richard. How did you become involved in Leamington Music Festival?

I taught in Lausanne for a nice summer in 1959, and then, after I went to Oxford, I went to Italy for two years and taught in the Milan area. I went to La Scala Milan 88 times, so I got to know quite a bit about opera.

I worked at Sadler's Wells Opera for four years ahead of getting a job in Yorkshire, where I stayed for 10 years before returning to live in Warwick in 1980, living in the house where I was born. My plan was to start a wine business - that was one of the other reasons for me being in Italy. The wine business didn't get going, but the telephone did, and people started phoning me up saying 'would I do this, would I do that...' I have been freelancing for fortysomething years.

I worked with Warwick Arts Society for 25 years and then started accumulating other festivals. In 2005 the board found that they'd got bored with festivals.

I was 65 at the time and thought 'No, no, we're not going to finish.' We started Leamington Music the next year... Now, here I am 18 years later, playing my part in the 2024 festival, after which I'll be retiring.

Are you going to find it difficult to step away?

It's probably the right moment to go. The house in which I live is a grade two star building. It was bought by the family in the 1930s and there's probably bits of it which have never been unpacked. I just want to make sure that it's in order, for when I'm carried out in my coffin... There's plenty to do!

You have quite a legacy of music festivals - early music, contemporary music, opera...

...And literary, too - we also set up Warwick Words. We called it the Warwick Literary Weekend to begin with, but it's become the Warwick Words & History Festival.

From that breadth of experience, what are you most proud of creating?

I think probably what I've achieved in the Warwick area. When we moved back here in 1980 it was pretty grey. I always refer to 'the Rattle Effect': Sir Simon Rattle suddenly got people talking about

music. I've always seen him as a big boulder in the middle of a pond, with ripples coming out. We benefitted from these ripples by the time it got out to Warwick, 20 miles to the south. It was fantastic to take hold and make it into something really big. Some years I was programming at least 200 concerts in one place or another.

This year's Leamington Festival has a Czech theme. What's the connection?

The Czech Free Army was actually stationed in the Leamington area for two years during the war. By 1968 the Czechs had been underneath the Russians and communists for 20 years and suddenly they got this man, Dubček, who gave people great hope - that period is known as the Prague Spring.

I thought it would be a great place to go for a summer holiday, so off I went to Prague and it was fantastic. After firstly being under the Nazis during the war, and then the Communists - the spirit of people feeling liberation was terrific... I've now been back 20 times to Czechoslovakia, as it was, and I've been very fond of the place. Because of this connection, we've run a series of Czech music festivals since 1995.

What are you most looking forward to this year?

Well, I'm particularly looking forward to having a Czech composer, Sylvia Bodorova, back here. I commissioned five works from her when I was with Warwick Art Society, one of which became really quite famous. She's writing a new work for oboe and string quartet, which will be premiered on the 4th of May. There's a quartet of hers in a morning concert on the same day, and then on the final day - which will be my final concert - there's another performance of Terezín Ghetto Requiem, the work that I commissioned in 1998. To hear that again will be amazing.

Do you think the festival has a wide reach, or is it more for local people?

Particularly with our Czech festivals we have people coming from all over the country - and some people from the continent as well. There's always a core local audience, but we do get people travelling. Funnily enough, one of the other main loves in my life has been

Early Music. At St Mary's Church in Warwick, which is a wonderful venue, we've set up a series of concerts every winter, which has been going since 1996, and many of the top musicians in the Early Music field have performed there. They've all loved coming to the church because it's just right for the music.

We once did a festival in Warwick in which every concert was of the period of the building, or connected in some way. In the Lord Leicester Hospital, we had music from 1617, when King James I came and had dinner there. That goes back to how important it is for festivals to have a local significance and a local connection.

What are your hopes for the future of the festival?

In a way the future isn't in my hands, but I'm hoping that Helen Beecroft, who has been working with me, will not only continue what I've set up but also produce some new ideas. Inevitably one does get set in one's ways, and keeps asking the same musicians to come and play because we know they're fun and they communicate. We do need some new blood, so I would be fascinated to see in what direction things go; which composers will be championed. I want some surprises.

What piece of advice would you give Helen, or anyone else who might follow in your footsteps?

It's a big question, and of course so much of it depends on the financial element these days. I was very lucky in that the expansion of the festival happened in the 1980s, when sponsorship was an absolute doddle and businesses would fall over themselves to be engaged and give you money. Sadly that no longer happens.

You must have a vision and just go for it. Don't put on music that you wouldn't want to hear yourself. It's an ego trip, I admit that, but I think that it's very important. You need leadership... Just have a vision and follow it, is my advice.

.....
Leamington Music Festival runs from 2 to 6 May, with concerts taking place in the town's Royal Pump Rooms, All Saints Church & Holy Trinity Church

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Classical music from across the region...



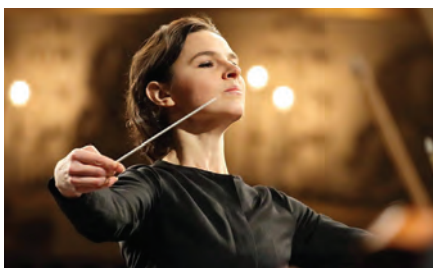
Halle Orchestra Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Fri 10 May

One of the UK's top symphonic ensembles, the Manchester-based Halle are admired around the world for their extensive orchestral repertoire. This Coventry appearance sees Sir Mark Elder (pictured) - whose tenure as music director is drawing to a close after nearly a quarter of a century - lead the orchestra in a programme that includes two compositions with Midlands connections.

A Shropshire Lad: Rhapsody For Orchestra, by George Butterworth, is based on the poetry of AE Housman, who was born in Worcestershire. Enigma Variations, meanwhile, is the work of another famous Worcestershire creative: Sir Edward Elgar. Completing the Halle's Warwick Arts Centre programme is Brahms' monumental First Piano Concerto, here played by Sir Stephen Hough.

Old World Symphony with the CBSO & Oksana Lyniv

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Wed 29 May
Ukrainian conductor Oksana Lyniv (pictured) takes the helm for a concert which is promising 'dark passions from the soul of Eastern Europe'. Oksana's fellow Ukrainian, Bohdana Frolyak, is one of three composers whose music (her adagio) features on the programme. The other two are Tchaikovsky - his Violin Concerto is performed by Andrii Murza - and Antonín Dvořák, whose Seventh Symphony completes the two-hour concert.



Coventry Cathedral Chorus

Coventry Cathedral, Sat 11 May
Fresh from celebrating their 60th anniversary, Coventry Cathedral Chorus are here joined by Coventry & Warwickshire Youth Orchestra to present a mixed programme of popular classical and light music. Featured works include Handel's Zadok The Priest, Elgar's Land Of Hope And Glory, Gershwin's I Got Rhythm, and two compositions by Lennon & McCartney: Hey Jude and Penny Lane. Conductors are Rachel Mahon (pictured) and Joe Davies.

Martinů String Quartet

Holy Trinity Church, Leamington Spa, Mon 6 May

Formed in 1976 by students of the Prague Conservatoire, and here performing the final concert of this year's



Leamington Music Festival, the Martinů String Quartet present programmes of work which combine music by legendary composers with neglected compositions and world premieres.

This latest concert sees them performing pieces by Krása, Sylvie Bodorová and Schubert. Vilém Tauský's Coventry - a meditation on the horrors of war - also features. The work was composed by Tauský after his Leamington-based Czech Free Army unit had been mobilised to search for survivors in the ruins of Coventry, following the Blitz of 14 November 1940.

Elgar Festival

various venues, Worcestershire, Mon 27 May - Sun 2 June

This annual celebration of the life and music of Worcestershire's most famous composer brings together orchestral, chamber, vocal, choral and relaxed concerts with exhibitions, talks and a number of first-time events. "Our aim is to bring the music of Elgar to everyone," explains the festival's artistic director, Kenneth Woods. "And what better way to do this than by continuing to introduce extra added-value initiatives. We are delighted to announce new additions and look forward to welcoming you all to what looks set to be our best festival yet!" Violinist Esther Abrami (pictured) will perform twice during the festival. To check out what else is happening across the event's seven days, visit elgarfestival.org





MONEY TALKS

Gaynor Faye, Brooke Vincent, Samantha Giles and Oliver Anthony chat about starring in Kay Mellor's *The Syndicate*, which comes to the Midlands in June...

The *Syndicate* was a family affair long before it arrived on television in 2012, complete with a cast of famous faces.

Written and produced by 'titan of TV' Kay Mellor, her daughter, actress Gaynor Faye, was the series' script editor.

"I just knew that it was going to be a hit," Gaynor recalls. "She captured the brothers, the family, the whole arena of what winning the lottery and such a substantial amount of money brings people - both the good and the not so good!"

The first series was adapted for the stage by Kay in what proved to be her final venture into theatre before her death in 2022. She had already asked Gaynor to co-direct the project with her, and now the actress is 'going it alone' in a move that she confesses has been rather daunting.

"Mum's shoes are big ones to fill, but I understand what her vision was for this production because I had been by her side from the very beginning. I'm excited for everyone to see it."

The play tells the story of five supermarket workers whose lottery syndicate numbers come in just as their jobs and livelihoods are under threat.

Will a share of the jackpot make their dreams come true or their nightmares a reality? One thing is for certain: the win of a lifetime will change their lives, loves and relationships forever...

Adding to the family feel of *The Syndicate* is Gaynor's son, Oliver Anthony, who will play the part of Jamie.

Oliver believes that having three generations of one family involved in the production brings a unique experience to audiences: "There's real heart to this show and a lot of love for it; it just feels special. Kay had been mentoring me for the last four years. She knew how hard the industry can be and said she saw potential in me. She took me under her wing and really helped me learn the business, both in front of the camera and behind.

"To now be involved with the stage show, and Gaynor, my mum, directing it too, it just feels special. I have so many wonderful memories of my grandmother - every day beside her was a dream."

While he's no stranger to the *Syndicate* story - having starred in series four of the BBC drama - Oliver is making his theatre debut as Jamie.

"I've been a part of this story since Kay

adapted it into a theatre script. I played the role of Jamie in the development workshops of the play and actually read the part in the auditions for many of these other amazing actors. So to then be on the other side of the auditioning process as an actor, and get the part, is incredible. Now I really want to prove I deserve my place in the show and give it my best shot. I'm grabbing this opportunity with both hands."

After so much time playing Jamie during casting, what is it about the character that appeals to Oliver so much?

"He's so electric and brings this energy to the stage that I just absolutely love. He's very three dimensional - he's got a switch in him which can make him villainous - and that's always amazing to play as an actor - but then he's also got this real sense of love and connection with his brother, which I totally understand."

For actresses Brooke Vincent and Samantha Giles, the chance to work on a Kay Mellor production was too good an opportunity to miss.

Brooke, who became a household name playing Sophie Webster in ITV soap *Coronation Street* from 2004 to 2019, says landing the role of Amy was a real thrill: "I've kind of taken a step back to have my two boys, so this is my return to acting and I'm so excited. I love Kay's work; it's so real and there's such a sense of warm northern humour that I just adore."

Samantha, meanwhile, was looking for a new challenge after recently leaving the role of *Emmerdale's* Bernice Blackstock, a part she'd played on and off for 26 years.

"A lot of people are only used to seeing me as Bernice, who is this glamorous person. My *Syndicate* character of Denise is the polar opposite!

"She's a bit on the frumpy side and life hasn't been so good to her. She's just totally different to Bernice, which is so lovely to play. I think Kay's writing is so good. She's able to create real stories and wonderful characters that people can relate to and who reflect how ordinary people live."

As veterans of TV drama, having navigated the fast pace of Soapland for so many years, Samantha and Brooke will surely find taking to the stage in front of a live audience a walk in the park... won't they?

Brooke laughs: "No, of course I'll be nervous! But the way I deal with it is just to think there's no point worrying now - I need to just wait until I'm on stage and then be nervous

and face the fear!

"It's that sense that you're in a team - you all have a part to play to bring the show to life, and you just need to feed off that."

Samantha agrees: "It's been 14 years since I've done a play, so I *am* feeling nervous, but I think if you weren't nervous you might not care. Nerves are good, and I think the more we do it, the more confident we get. I just think you can't beat live theatre. Just to hear the reaction from the audience and have that shared experience - there's nothing like it."

For Brooke, taking on the role of Amy has been a delight: "She's more Rosie Webster than Sophie Webster! I've never played a dolly bird before. She even comes out with hair extensions!

"I'm such a tomboy in real life, so the part has been great to take on, because usually when you read a role you can see yourself in the character. I love that Amy is so different to me."

Samantha is just as enthusiastic about the character *she* plays: "Denise is quite mumsy at the start, always putting everybody else before herself, and it's interesting to see the change that happens during the course of the play - especially when she gets her hands on the money!"

Part of the appeal of *The Syndicate* is that there won't be a theatregoer anywhere in the UK who hasn't dreamt of winning the lottery. So how would Brooke and Samantha react if their numbers came up?

Brooke dreams of "buying a giant house with my girlfriends and moving everyone in. But now, with all the kids, I'm not sure that would be a great idea!"

Samantha is more philosophical: "I know this might sound really glib, but I have everything I need. I've got a roof over my head, food on the table, and everyone is healthy. I'm not into designer clothes and things like that. But I suppose if I won the lottery I'd buy a place abroad.

"But this play is a reminder to be careful what you wish for. With money comes greed, and then a sense of desperation about what you're willing to do to keep it."

.....

The *Syndicate* shows at Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, from Tuesday 18 to Saturday 22 June, and then at The Alexandra, Birmingham, from Tuesday 25 to Saturday 29 June

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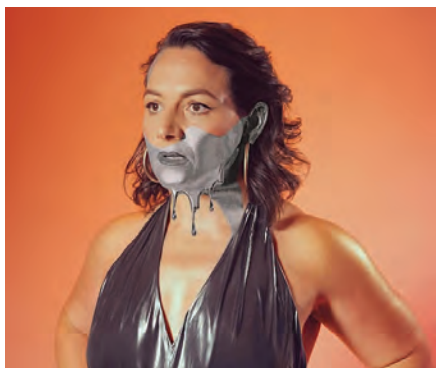
nicOLL

Comedy previews from across the region...

Jessica Fostekew

Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton,
Thurs 16 May

"I exist in real life but am also a comedian, actor and writer," says Jessica Fostekew. "Since 2008 I've been throwing this job around like you would a walnut in a sock." Realising herself to be a feminist "the very first time somebody said: You're really funny for a woman", Jessica gets her comedy inspiration from her life, her family and, er, witchcraft - although reassuringly reveals that the latter source provides only around one per cent of her material.



Nick Helm

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Thurs 9 May;
Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton,
Fri 10 May; The Glee Club, Birmingham, Sat
11 May

British Comedy Award winner Nick Helm once again hits the road with another audience-pleasing mash-up of gags, stories, poems and songs.

Nick's jokes include: "I needed a password eight characters long, so I picked Snow White And The Seven Dwarves."

The gag won the Edinburgh Fringe award for best joke way back in 2011 - since which time Nick has come up with numerous other crackers!



Tom Davis

Birmingham Town Hall, Sat 11 May

"I've always thought of myself as an underdog," reveals Murder In Successville's Tom Davis to beyondthejoke.com, "though not necessarily in a negative way. I think that's what has made me. The bulk of my humour comes from constantly feeling like someone who's had a little bit of a kicking."

Having left school with no qualifications, Tom's road to comedy success proved to be a long and winding one: "I'd been working on building sites for 20-odd years. I just wanted to do something for myself. I tried stand-up, and straight away I just thought 'Wow! I feel like I'm actually quite good at something: making other people laugh.'"



Horatio Gould

The Glee Club, Birmingham, Fri 24 May

Having enjoyed a sell-out success with his debut offering, Sweet Prince, at the Edinburgh Fringe, Horatio Gould is now taking the show to comedy venues across the country, including the Glee.

Running at a few minutes short of an hour, the set has been widely praised as a highly promising opening gambit from the 27-year-old comedian. Presenting himself as a beleaguered but defiant wannabe-alpha-but-sadly-beta male, Horatio has been described by UK comedy guide Chortle as 'basically a white Romesh Ranganathan'.

Rich Hall

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Wed 22 May

With much of his comedy focusing on making fun of life across the pond in his homeland, Rich Hall is best known for his creation of Otis Lee Crenshaw, a bourbon-swilling redneck jailbird from Tennessee whose many wives have all been named Brenda.

Publicity for this latest touring show, Shot From Cannons - a combination of 'new rants, knife-edge observations and thrilling musical interludes' - advises that although you'll pay for the whole seat, you'll only need the edge of it.



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Comedy previews from across the region...

Ashley Blaker

Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham,
Thurs 16 May

Comedian and dad-of-six Ashley Blaker's touring show, *Normal Schmormal*, sees him focusing on a topic close to his heart.

The star of BBC Radio Four's hit comedy, *6.5 Children*, Ashley is presenting a show about the joys of being father to three youngsters with special needs.

"Between endless meetings, countless therapists, public humiliations, failed playdates, surreal monologues and occasional violence," says the show's publicity, "it's certainly not what anyone would call a 'normal' household - but would Ashley want it any other way?"

**Lou Conran**

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Sat 11 May

"I trained at the Oxford School of Speech & Drama many years ago," reveals comedian Lou Conran, in providing readers with a flavour of who she is, "but I was told off for not taking acting too seriously; hence, me, now and this! I do TV warm-up, I do acting when I'm allowed, and I'm addicted to chillies, cheese and various other things beginning with the letter C.

"Oh, and I'm also one half of the award-nominated podcast *Spit Or Swallow*, which is flipping marvellous and you should listen to it immediately!"

**Sukh Ojla**

Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton,
Fri 3 May; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry,
Sat 18 May; The Glee Club, Birmingham,
Sun 19 May; The Rep, Birmingham, Sat
25 May; Newhampton Arts Centre,
Wolverhampton, Thurs 6 June

With her life experiences including a teenage suicide attempt, a Spanish-retreat encounter with the psychoactive brew ayahuasca, and a train-station breakdown involving a cheese & onion pasty, Sukh Ojla has plenty of fantastic raw material around which to build a show.

She also has experience of being a thirtysomething living at home with her mom & dad, another situation that's provided her with plenty of comedy gold: "Living at home with my parents is essentially like living in the most passive-aggressive Air B&B of all time," she says, "except that you can't even leave them a bad review!"

Sukh visits the Midlands this month and next with *The Aunty Years*, a show in which she's set herself the challenge of 'figuring out middle age, pretending to be a grown-up and the joy of a Tupperware set'.

**Ria Lina**

The Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South
Shropshire, Sat 4 May; Warwick Arts Centre,
Coventry, Wed 29 May; Huntingdon Hall,
Worcester, Thurs 30 May

The challenge of emerging from a global pandemic, the new normal, divorce, dating in a new digital world, motherhood, and what it really means to be a woman today are among the subjects that comedian and scientist Ria Lina puts under her microscope in debut touring show *Riawakening*.

Jokes include: "I wanted to do a show about feminism. But my husband wouldn't let me."

Jake Lambert

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Wed 8 May;
Glee Club, Birmingham, Wed 11 September

Hailed a 'joke machine' by one national newspaper, Jake Lambert is a relatively new kid on the comedy block who's made a big splash online (his videos have gained more than 150 million views).

Although visiting Shrewsbury and Birmingham as part of his first-ever national tour, the 33-year-old funnyman already has plenty of on-the-road experience under his

belt - he's previously been the support act for some of the UK's best-loved comedians, including Jack Dee, Alan Carr and Romesh Ranganathan...

Indeed, Jake is touring this debut show - titled *The Sunshine Kid* - while also fitting in arena dates supporting Michael McIntyre.

Ed Gamble

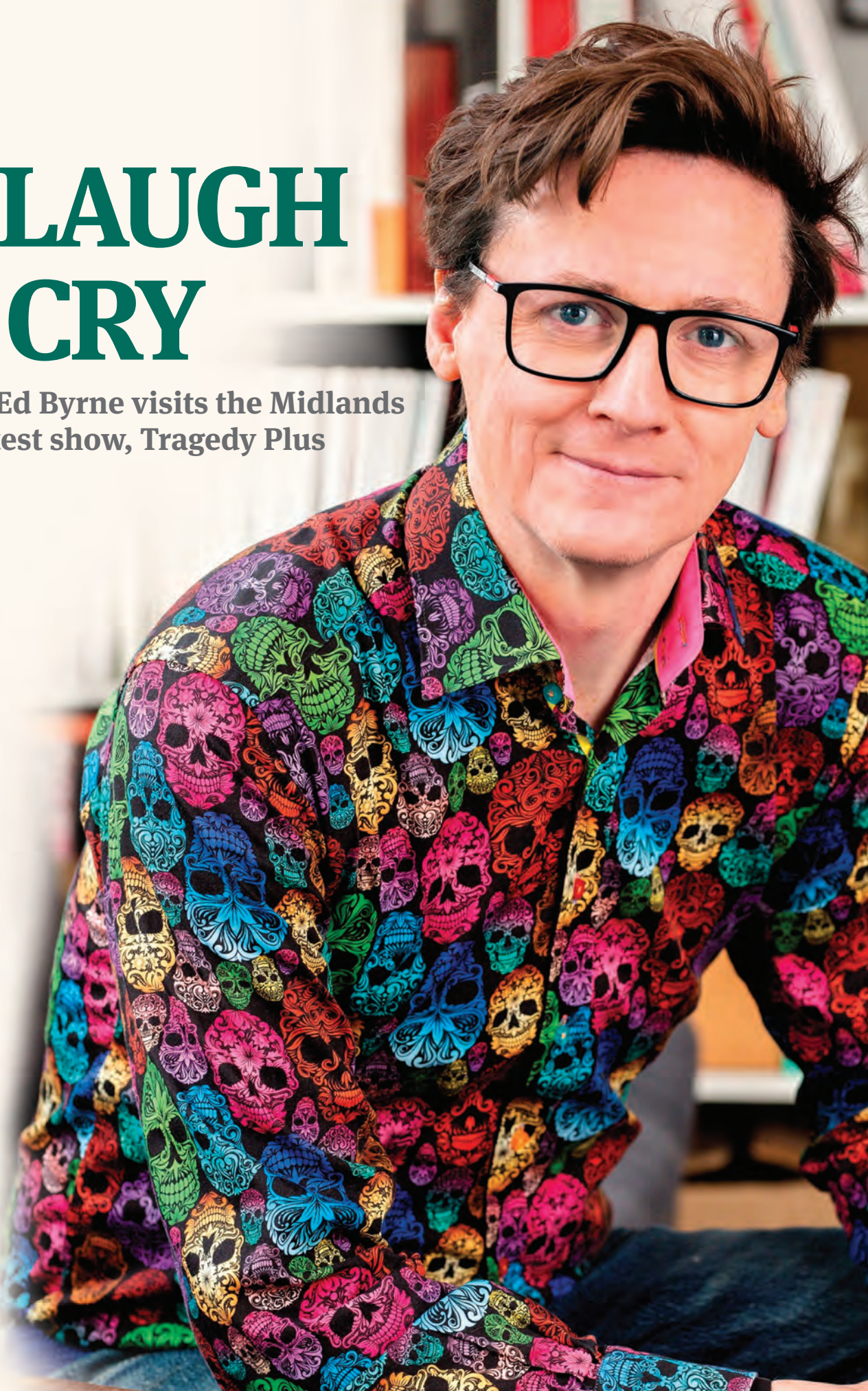
Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sun 26 May;
The Alexandra, Birmingham, Sat 1 June;
Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, Thurs 6 June

"I'm essentially a great guy delivering humour through your classic microphone/speaker combo," says a tongue-in-cheek Ed Gamble in describing himself. "As well as being a stand-up comedian, I'm an actor and a writer - although, to be honest, I very rarely act, and 'writing' is a very lofty term for the absolute filth I've committed to paper in the past."

Co-host (with James Acaster) of award-winning podcast *Off Menu*, a judge on *Great British Menu*, *Taskmaster* champion and host of *Taskmaster The Podcast*, Ed stops off in the Midlands this month with his brand-new touring show, *Hot Diggity Dog*.

TO LAUGH OR CRY

Comedian Ed Byrne visits the Midlands
with his latest show, Tragedy Plus
Time...



With an impressive 30-plus years on the comedy circuit behind him, Ed Byrne is a familiar face in the world of stand-up. However, his latest touring show, Tragedy Plus Time, offers something a bit different from usual, exploring the sensitive subject of grief and loss. Here, the County Dublin-born comedian explains how he has combined sadness and laughter for the show and talks about what prompted him to bring the bittersweet topic to the stage...

Is there no end to the man's talents? A staple of revered panel show *Mock The Week*, Ed Byrne has also sledded down the side of a volcano for *Dara And Ed's Great Big Adventure*, upstaged Martin Sheen and Robert Downey Jr on *The Graham Norton Show*, and demonstrated his driving skills on *Top Gear* and *The World's Most Dangerous Road*. He's also proven himself to be quiz-show dynamite on programmes including *The Chase: Celebrity Special*, *The Hit List*, *Pointless Celebrities* and *All-Star Family Fortunes*.

But for all his dalliances with the world of television light entertainment, Ed remains at heart a truly great stand-up comedian. He's honed his craft for a remarkable 30 years now, garnering a hatful of awards and a constant, borderline bewildering stream of five-star reviews along the way.

His 14th touring show, *Tragedy Plus Time*, which he's bringing to the Midlands this month, sees him heading into emotional new territory.

"It's something of a departure, and I'm slightly worried about that," he concedes. "I've never really had the desire to write a show that had an overly serious element to it. I got a lot of five-star reviews on the last show [2019's *If I'm Honest*], but some four-star ones that opined, 'Well it's funny, but that's all it is...' As if that's not enough these days. Frankly, just being funny is a furrow I've been happy to occupy. But this new show features some heart-wrenching, soul-bearing stuff."

That much is indisputable. For *Tragedy Plus Time*, Ed bravely ventures into the world of grief and loss, a decision prompted by the passing of his younger brother Paul, aged just 44, in February 2022. Comedy that takes death as its cue is not unprecedented, but it takes creative courage to explore.

"I was in two minds about whether to do a show of this nature. Then I decided this was the subject I was going to tackle, but I wasn't quite sure how to go about it. But once I started down that road, that was it... Then my main worry was, how funny is it going to be and is it going to work?"

These were legitimate concerns. This isn't gallows humour; it's something else entirely. "The first time I performed it, it lasted more than an hour. That surprised me, but it was too long, so I had to decide whether to cut funny jokes or material that's meaningful. That kind of decision was new to me, and

what's really annoying is that the one person I would have asked for advice on that is the guy the show's about. It's like when you get dumped by someone and you're heartbroken. The one person you'd usually want to talk to about it is the very person who dumped you. I've spoken to people who worked with Paul, who was a comedy director, and they've said that his thing was, 'You can be as emotional as you like and as serious as you like, but there has to be a joke.' So the idea of saying something purely for the emotional gut-punch was off the table."

Nor is *Tragedy Plus Time* unrelenting - the genius of it is that it takes the most difficult of subject matter and encourages the audience to laugh in its face in a way they would otherwise simply never do.

"Obviously I don't want the whole thing to be an onslaught. That's partly because of the digressions, and that's why they're there. But they also illustrate how grief works, in that you can still have a good time, you can still be happy, you can still have a laugh about other things and be frivolous. But grief is always there, waiting for you when you're done with being silly.

"The show does elicit a very pure emotional response in the audience. There's something about the fact that when somebody dies, everyone else carries on like nothing's happened. Because nothing has happened to them. So there's an anger in grief, too... how can everyone else carry on as though nothing has happened?"

Ed candidly admits that mining his family's bereavement for comedic effect challenges his performing skills - and emotional bandwidth - in a unique way. Is this a nightly catharsis for the Irish comedian? To an extent, yes.

"Death is universal. We will all lose someone. So the best thing to do is laugh at it... although I was aware, when I was first writing and performing this new show, that there was a danger I might, you know, lose it onstage. I did a work-in-progress at the Museum of Comedy and there was an audible crack in my voice. On the third performance, I did actually cry on stage, and I'm sure for anyone who was there [assumes a very theatrical voice] 'it was a very powerful experience.' But I don't want it to be the sort of thing where I rip my heart out and stamp on it for the audience's delectation. I've been able to throttle back my emotions and keep them in check."

What of the origins of the concept that 'comedy is tragedy plus time'? It's widely credited to American writer, humourist and quote machine Mark Twain, as many of these things are. Having researched it, Ed says there's no conclusive proof that he coined it.

Twain's contribution to the arts might have benefitted from an audio/visual dimension, if such a thing had existed in the 1880s, but it's something Ed has avoided. Until now.

"There are WhatsApp messages from Paul that I wanted to share, and I could have just read them out. But that wouldn't have the same resonance, and you have to see them to fully appreciate the context. Then there's a video of a weird guy who produces celebrity obituaries... To be honest, I'm still tinkering with the audio/visual aspect, so there may well be more of that in the show. It's a supplementary element, though; it's not integral. I don't want anyone to worry unduly about the introduction of technology to the proceedings."

Tragedy Plus Time isn't Ed Byrne deconstructing comedy or going meta. That's not what he does. Nonetheless, this is a satisfyingly left-field move from one of the undeniable masters of comedy. It's every bit as moving as it is funny, and vice versa.

"Is it okay to talk about this stuff? I'd say this. Every night, hundreds of people who didn't know who Paul Byrne was will leave the theatre knowing who Paul Byrne was. I'm happy with that, and I think I give a good account of him on stage. I wouldn't say he's up there with me every night, but he's there every time I think about the show, and I've got to make sure I do right by him. I briefly entertained a notion of writing a one-man play, with me sitting and talking to him towards the end of his life. But you know, I'm a stand-up comic. It's what I do. I said to the audience in one of the early previews, 'Yes, it is sad - but don't worry because the show is funny. Because, believe it or not, I'm actually quite good at this.'"

.....

Tragedy Plus Time shows at Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Thursday 9 May; Dudley Town Hall, Saturday 11 May; Coventry's Albany Theatre, Thursday 23 May; Tamworth Assembly Rooms, Thursday 26 September; Huntingdon Hall, Worcester, Friday 11 October; Regal, Evesham, Thursday 5 December

GREAT ENTERTAINMENT AMPLIFIED

Making once-in-a-lifetime events even more spectacular!

Birmingham's Utilita Arena hosts jaw-dropping events and the biggest names in music and comedy. Before the summer is out, everyone from Take That to Megan Thee Stallion are scheduled on stage. The venue offers a premium service - Amplify - which does what it says on the tin: it enhances,

elevates and amplifies your experience. Booking through Amplify promises to make any show unforgettable. Live entertainment has changed over the last five years, and audiences appreciate just how special seeing your icon on stage can be. Amplify gives everyone the opportunity to

invest in their night and make sure they have the most incredible, memorable experience. Whether you want to party in style and luxury, relax in a spacious lounge with stunning views, or simply spend less time in the queue and more time with your friends, Amplify might just have something to offer.



GET AN UPGRADE

For anyone who loves the atmosphere of a thousands-strong arena but hates standing in the inevitable queue, Amplify offers Bar and Hospitality packages. The price includes premium arena seating and access to a separate bar area (with its own toilet facilities) where you can be away from the crowds before the show and during the interval. Pete Tong presents Ibiza Classics at the arena on Thursday 12 December. The Premium Bar Package grants access through a private entrance to the VIP Bar itself - so you can really enjoy your night and minimise time in the queue. The package also includes onsite parking and two complimentary drinks vouchers, for an extra budget bonus.

DINE IN STYLE

You can even make a night of it and order a meal with Amplify's bespoke pre-show dining. Catering for everything from casual bar snacks to classy four-course dining, Amplify will provide the perfect food to complement your night, maybe even with a themed snack (garlic bread before seeing Peter Kay, anyone?).

Funnyman Mo Gilligan visits Utilita on Saturday 30 November as part of his world tour, In The Moment. Amplify provides a Tapas 'Soul in a Bowl' package for £180, which includes everything from the VIP Bar package and much more. For two hours before the show, you have access to an exclusive bar - with inclusive drinks - and Amplify's informal tapas menu. You also have the option to order interval drinks in advance.



A TASTE OF LUXURY

If you want a truly special experience, try the very best Amplify has to offer, by splashing out on an all-inclusive private balcony. Private balcony Show Cubes accommodate up to 14 guests. Included in the price is your own cosy en-suite lounge, food & drink from your own bartender, and of course panoramic views of the arena. It's sure to make your evening really special - and might just be the perfect location for an extravagant birthday bash or anniversary celebration.

If you're more of a foodie, you might consider Amplify's Club Hospitality Packages. Pet Shop Boys will be appearing at Utilita on Saturday 8 June, with Club Hospitality Packages starting at £385. You'll get the best seats in the arena, a champagne reception, a bar with complimentary drinks, and table service in the private restaurant beforehand, in the interval, and even after the show is over.

The package includes a sumptuous four-course dining experience to make your evening elite and unique.



MEMBERSHIPS

For big fans of big shows, you might also want to consider an Amplify Membership, beginning at £250, with a dedicated account manager to ensure that you're always getting the best service.

Membership offers priority access to events and guarantees the chance to purchase from two to 10 hospitality packages per show - depending on membership level - with a healthy discount. Reducing the cost of many hospitality packages ensures that members can continue to enjoy the best entertainment Utilita has to offer, in style.

SPACES TO ENJOY

If you fancy some elbow room and an incredible view, then a seat on the balcony will suit you down to the ground - or perhaps up to the ceiling! Amplify has three balcony lounges, each with a private bar, toilets and extra space to get up and dance if the mood takes you. You won't miss out on the atmosphere either, with a spectacular view of the whole arena. Take That will be performing in six epic shows at Utilita between Tuesday 14 and Monday 20 May. Balcony Packages start from £130, with amazing seats and a private lounge & bar area making for a much more relaxed experience.

The crème de la crème is the Amplify Premier Lounge: seats cost £200, which includes a 'welcome' drinks reception and access to the private bar for 30 minutes after the event - meaning that you can keep the party going while you wait for the crowds to disperse.

TAKE YOUR PICK

TAKE THAT - 14 & 15, 17 - 20 May 2024

Private Balcony Package (from £130 pp)
Amplify Premium Bar Access (£195 pp)
Amplify VIP Bar & Nibbles (£260 pp)
Amplify Freestyle Two Hospitality (£295 pp)
Amplify Club Hospitality (£425 pp)

PET SHOP BOYS - 8 June 2024

Private Balcony Package (from £125 pp)
Amplify Premium Bar Access (£170pp)
Amplify Freestyle Two Hospitality (£235 pp)
Amplify Club Hospitality (£385 pp)

TEXAS - 13 September 2024

Private Balcony Package (from £115 pp)
Amplify Bar & Nibbles Hospitality (£180 pp)
Amplify Freestyle Hospitality (£225 pp)

MO GILLIGAN - 30 November 2024

Private Balcony Package (£80 pp)
Amplify Premium Bar Access (£100 pp)
Amplify Tapas Soul in a Bowl Hospitality (£180 pp)

PETE TONG PRESENTS IBIZA CLASSICS 12 December 2024

Private Balcony Package (from £90pp)
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You can reach Amplify's helpful team, who will talk you through all the options available, by calling 0344 338 0333 or emailing info@amplify.co.uk. Whether you want to up the party atmosphere or have a more intimate show experience, it's worth considering Amplify to upgrade your night. For all upcoming shows, visit amplify.co.uk





Sister Act The Musical

Birmingham Hippodrome, Mon 13 - Sat 18 May

After seeing her gangster boyfriend kill an employee, Reno lounge singer Deloris Van Cartier is placed on a witness protection programme and hidden in a convent, where she proceeds to take over the rehearsals of the in-house choir of nuns. Thanks to her musical expertise, the choir becomes a huge success

and church attendances go through the roof. But in giving the church a new lease of life, Deloris may inadvertently have jeopardised her own safety...

Based on the hit Whoopi Goldberg movie of the same name, this fun-filled spectacular stars Sue Cleaver - who's best known for playing the character of Eileen Grimshaw in Coronation Street - as Mother Superior.

An Officer And A Gentleman

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Mon 6 - Sat 11 May;
Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Mon 23 - Sat 28 September

If you're a nostalgia buff with a soft spot for the 1980s, this is a night out at the theatre not to be missed. Based on the same-named Academy Award-winning film starring Richard Gere and Debra Winger, Leicester Curve's well-reviewed show tracks the heady romance that develops between Zack Mayo - a United States Navy Aviation Officer Candidate - and a young, captivating and seriously fiery woman named Paula Pokrifki.

The story unfolds against a backdrop of classic 1980s pop songs from the likes of Blondie, Bon Jovi, Cyndi Lauper and Madonna. It also features the Oscar-bagging hit, Up Where We Belong, which was recorded by Joe Cocker and Jennifer Warnes.



Life Of Pi

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."



CARLOS ACOSTA
ON BEFORE

Mon 6 & Tue 7 May

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Wed 8 - Sat 11 May

WNO Welsh National Opera

Così fan tutte
Mozart

Fri 10 May

WNO Welsh National Opera

Death in Venice
Britten

Sat 11 May

Sister Act
A DIVINE MUSICAL COMEDY

STARRING
SUE CLEAVER
LANDI OSHINOWO

Mon 13 - Sat 18 May

Sonia Sabri Company presents
Roshni

Thu 16 May

COME FROM AWAY

THE AWARD-WINNING MUSICAL THAT WELCOMES THE WORLD

Tue 21 May - Sat 1 Jun

UNCANNY

WITH DANNY ROBINS

THE TERRIFYING LIVE TOUR

Sun 2 Jun

CRAIG REVEL HORWOOD THE WICKED WITCH OF THE WEST
ASTON MERRYGOLD THE TRUMAN MAN

THE WIZARD OF OZ

Tue 11 - Sun 16 Jun

HAMILTON

Tue 25 Jun - Sat 31 Aug

DIRECT FROM THE WEST END

BONNIE & CLYDE

MUSIC BY FRED WELLSER, LYRICS BY DON BLACK, BOOK BY JOHN PERKINS

WINNER! BEST NEW MUSICAL
WHATSONSTAGE AWARDS 2023

Tue 3 - Sat 7 Sep

A CHORUS LINE

Tue 10 - Sat 14 Sep

WITHNAIL & SHEEHAN

Actor Robert Sheehan prepares to bring
an iconic character to the stage...



Photo credit: Manuel Harlan

The first-ever stage version of *Withnail & I* premieres at Birmingham Rep this month. The original 1987 film quickly became cult and launched the screen career of Richard E Grant, who played *Withnail*. Now it's Robert Sheehan who's taking on the role of the flamboyant out-of-work actor. Here, he talks about the challenge of playing the part and explains why he thinks the film is so widely adored...

When Robert Sheehan was offered the part of the garrulous dipsomaniac *Withnail* in the new stage adaptation of the hit 1987 film *Withnail And I*, he jumped at the chance. "It's a feast of a role to play," says the BAFTA-nominated actor. "It would have been a very difficult part to pass up because *Withnail And I* is just an incredibly well-written movie and play.

"It's such a rare piece because all the moves of the story come from these odd decisions and dynamics between the characters - and as a result of that, you have no idea how it's going to turn out."

Frequently included in 'best film ever' lists, *Withnail And I* features two out-of-work actors - *Withnail* and *Marwood* - who take a holiday in the Lake District in a cottage owned by *Withnail's* Uncle Monty, who then comes to visit - and mayhem ensues.

Written by Bruce Robinson, who has adapted the script for the Birmingham Rep stage show, it is loosely based on his experiences as a young, unemployed actor.

The film catapulted Richard E Grant's *Withnail*, Paul McGann's *Marwood* and Richard Griffiths' Uncle Monty into cinematic history.

"Since as far back as I can remember," says Robert, "I've been aware of the movie and its unique status as a movie that is much adored and much quoted by everyone, and the reverence that surrounds it.

"It was very much one of those formative films, and since this job has come along, a lot of friends of mine, mainly male, have told me they got into acting because of this movie. I think it's a movie that showcases some wonderful acting, and that's why it lends itself so well to the stage.

"It's very much pushing the focus onto the wonderful, dynamic performances going on and through the brilliantly bizarre and eccentric characters who make strange decisions, and those decisions become the movie. So it's a very character-driven piece." Showing at Birmingham Rep this month, *Withnail And I* is a Rep production helmed by the theatre's artistic director, Sean Foley. Alongside Robert, Adonis Siddique plays *Marwood* and Malcolm Sinclair is Uncle Monty. So what are Robert's thoughts on

stepping into Richard E Grant's *Withnail*-sized boots?

"A lot of people have said to me it's a lot of pressure - but why is it? It's certainly pressure if you don't trust in your own ability, but if you work hard and everyone else is working hard, then you'll make something very interesting.

"The play obviously has the meat of the film because it's a very similar script, but I think it's being told quite differently. The physical universe of the stage and the changing of the scenes and the reality of trying to blend one scene with the next one all kind of accumulates to create something quite different."

For Robert, it is important to create his own *Withnail*.

"People are always going to bring a sense of the movie into the playhouse, but it's our job to tell the story and find our own way to do that. There's really no point in bringing the movie into the rehearsal room; you've got to step back from it and allow the intuitions in the room to take the story forward."

Robert first trod the boards at the age of 12, playing *Oliver* in *Oliver With A Twist* at his school in Ireland. As a teenager he appeared in Aisling Walsh's 2003 film, *Song For A Raggy Boy*.

He has since built up a successful career in a host of stage productions, including *The Playboy Of The Western World* at the Old Vic, *Endgame* at Dublin's Gate Theatre and Trevor Nunn's *Richard III* at the Rose Theatre.

That's alongside numerous television series, including playing his BAFTA-nominated *Nathan Young* in the sci-fi comedy series *Misfits*, *Klaus Hargreeves* in *The Umbrella Academy* and *Darren Treacy* in *Love/Hate*. Films have included *Mortal Engines*, *Season Of The Witch* and *The Mortal Instruments: City Of Bones*.

Despite Robert clearly having had plenty of acting jobs over the past two decades, it has to be asked - what does it feel like to be playing an out-of-work actor?

"Well, we've all been there," he laughs ruefully before pausing to think. "What is it like playing an out-of-work actor? I'm probably playing an out-of-work actor who is desperate not to be out of work, but at the

same time there's a huge hypocrisy going on with *Withnail*.

"At one point, a job is floated to him, but he thinks the job is beneath him, so the audience suspects he doesn't really want to be an actor.

"He wants to be a failed actor; he wants to be a guy who can go around, attend parties and say things and essentially perform his own life, but actually I don't think he can cope with the idea of getting up every morning and working hard and taking direction. Essentially he has completely the wrong attitude going into the world of acting." Robert believes the play taps into much within human nature.

"It says a lot about British personal identity and friendship. It demonstrates a friendship which is probably toxic. It's not the healthiest friendship in the world, but it's two people who allow for one another 100 per cent because *Withnail* has found in *Marwood* a friend who can tolerate him and enjoys him for all his flaws.

"The show is an embellishment of life, but it does have something very truthful at its core - that real friendship allows for warts and all." And he hopes audiences enjoy this new way of seeing the classic story and its characters. "I would love people to go away and think it was great; it was like re-living the film, but there were aspects that were completely different. I hope they have a good laugh, because when you get an entire audience laughing, you get the most wonderful feeling. The rehearsal period has been hard work, but it's worth saying I haven't laughed this much in a long time. Kudos to Bruce Robinson's writing - you could come and see this show two or three times and not consciously absorb all the hilarious, bonkers images that Bruce is throwing at you. So don't just come see the show once - come and see it four or five times minimum."

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Withnail And I shows at The Rep, Birmingham from Friday 3 - Saturday 25 May



Twelve Angry Men

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre,
Tues 7 - Sat 11 May

Familiar television face Jason Merrells (Emmerdale/Casualty/Waterloo Road) heads the cast in this brand-new touring version of Reginald Rose's gripping courtroom drama. Best known from the 1957 film starring Henry Fonda, Twelve Angry Men tells the story of one juror's battle to save the life of a man on trial for the murder of his father. Initially a lone voice in the wilderness, Juror Eight is faced with the monumental challenge of persuading his 11 fellow jurors to spare the defendant's life - a task made all the more difficult by the other men's prejudices and preconceptions about the trial...

The production also stars Gray O'Brien (Coronation Street), Tristan Gemmill (Casualty/Coronation Street), Michael Greco (EastEnders), Ben Nealon (Soldier Soldier) and Gary Webster (Minder).

Withnail And I

The Rep, Birmingham, Fri 3 - Sat 25 May

During the bohemian days of the late 1960s, two out-of-work thespians - Withnail and Marwood - leave behind them the bright lights of London in favour of what they hope will be a cathartic holiday in the countryside. But will their stay at the country home of Withnail's flamboyantly gay uncle help reinvigorate their booze- and drug-addled brains - and in so doing inspire them to kickstart their flagging acting careers?... Nearly 40 years after its release, the film of Withnail And I is widely considered to be one of the greatest British movies ever made - so the arrival of this brand-new and first-ever stage version will no doubt delight its legion of fans. The play has been written by Bruce Robinson - who wrote and directed the film - and is helmed by The Rep's artistic director, Sean Foley.

The Kite Runner

Malvern Theatres, Tues 28 May - Sat 1 June

Matthew Spangler's stage version of Khaled Hosseini's bestselling novel takes its audience on a journey across time and continents. At its heartland is the story of a friendship that exists between two young boys: Amir, a well-to-do Pashtun, and Hassan, a Hazara who's the son of Amir's father's servant.

The youngsters spend their days together, flying kites and blissfully happy in one another's company - until, that is, their

friendship is devastated and their lives shattered by a display of shameful cowardice on Amir's part

Charles Dickens' The Haunting

New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme,
Fri 24 May - Sat 15 June

Charles Dickens' ghost stories are the inspiration for this spine-chiller of a play from Hugh Janes.

Employed by a former associate of his uncle to catalogue a private library, book dealer David Filde encounters more than he bargained for when he visits a crumbling mansion on a desolate moorland...

You're Bard!

Halesowen Town Hall, Fri 3 May; Albany Theatre, Coventry, Sat 4 May

Joining the likes of the Reduced Shakespeare

Company and zany funsters Oddsocks in searching for ways to make the works of the bard a

wee bit funnier than they might otherwise be, IK Productions here presents a show in which the audience decides just about everything - from which play is to be performed (out of a possible four), to the style in which the performance is to be presented. A quartet of experienced actors take on all the required roles.



The Rotting Hart: A New Queer Horror

Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham,
Thurs 23 & Fri 24 May

Theatre, choreography and storytelling are the vehicles via which The Crested Fools deliver their 'new queer horror' - a production which, while tackling the history of homophobia in Spain, also takes a look at 'the enduring hate that persists inside ourselves'.

The show visits the Old Joint Stock having made a big impression at the Edinburgh Fringe, where it was nominated for the highly regarded OffFest Award.

English

The Other Place, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, Thurs 9 May - Sat 1 June

Iranian American playwright Sanaz Toossi's humorous, poignant and Pulitzer Prize-winning drama is here making its European debut.

Set in a classroom in Iran, the play focuses on four adult students for whom learning to speak English is vital.

As the story unfolds and they attempt to perfect their accents, pronunciation and vocabulary, the classmates come to realise that there is far more to their lives than can ever be uttered through language...

This Diyan Zora-directed production is being presented by the Royal Shakespeare Company in association with London's Kiln Theatre, to where it will transfer next month.

LEA SALONGA



FRI 21 JUN '24

LEA SALONGA: STAGE, SCREEN
& EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN

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LEGEND

◆ THE MUSIC OF ◆
BOB MARLEY



THU 25 JUL '24

LEGEND: THE MUSIC
OF BOB MARLEY



101 DALMATIANS THE MUSICAL

TUE 20 - SAT 24 AUG '24

101 DALMATIANS THE MUSICAL

LOFFE & TALLOR IN ASSOCIATION WITH PAUL BARRETT PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS

WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT?

THE ULTIMATE TRIBUTE TO TINA TURNER



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Theatre previews from around the region



Love's Labour's Lost

Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, until Sat 18 May

Eager to pursue loftier pastimes, four young lads decide to boot their wenching ways into touch for a whole year. But then, as luck would have it, four young beauties unexpectedly arrive on the scene, putting the boys' resolve well and truly to the test!... One of Shakespeare's lesser performed works, *Love's Labour's Lost* gained in popularity for a while courtesy of Kenneth Branagh's film version. Taking as its theme men's preoccupation with the opposite sex, it's a work which has much to offer in the way of chuckleworthy entertainment - a claim which can't necessarily be made for *all* of the bard's comedies...

Nasty

Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham, Fri 24 & Sat 25 May

"We are an autobiographical, confessional, queer theatre company comprised of three emerging artists," explain Succulent Theatre, the trio of talented women behind this thought-provoking new show. "We make work based on our own lived experiences and perform this through a variety of story-telling, music and movement.



"[Our new play] *Nasty* guides the audience through the experiences of two 'big' women and showcases the battles they've had with body image, eating habits, bodily functions and their compulsive need for self-pleasure! Some stories are funny, some stories are strange, some might make you shed a tear. What connects them all is that every one single person can relate to at least one of them. Not holding back from the truth of what it is to be a human, we want to teach everyone that it's completely okay to be unapologetically you - as long as you are always kind."

The Olive Boy

Swan Theatre, Worcester, Sat 18 May; Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, Tues 21 & Wed 22 May; Lichfield Garrick, Sat 25 May

When his mother dies unexpectedly, a grieving teen decides that the only way to move forward is to try and get a girlfriend. But some things in life are easier said than done... A month-long sell-out at the Edinburgh Fringe speaks volumes for the

quality of this coming-of-age comedy, a show which its producers are publicising as 'crude and compelling'.



The production has been deemed suitable for audience members aged 16-plus.

The Boy At The Back Of The Class

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 Rauf's multi-award-winning children's novel of the same name...

Beautiful Evil Things

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Tues 14 & Wed 15 May

A one-woman play from critically acclaimed theatre company Ad Infinitum, *Beautiful Evil*

Things views the epic tale of the Trojan War through the eyes of decapitated gorgon Medusa.

"We figured hers is the most infamous of female gazes," explains the production's performer and co-creator, Deborah Pugh. "So what if we could see some of these well-trodden stories through Medusa's eyes? What would be her take on it, and who would she focus on?"

"These stories are called epics for a reason - every thread you pull can go off in 15 different directions. Even in the moment Medusa is decapitated, she gives birth from her neck to a winged horse and a golden giant. We need the audience to ignore that because we need the story to go in another direction. It's still the Trojan War as you know it; we just follow a different thread."



Operation Julie: A Rock Musical

Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Wed 22 - Sat 25 May

Telling the true story of Wales' biggest-ever drugs bust, *Operation Julie* is described by its producers as 'Breaking Bad collides with *The Good Life*' and is presented against a 1970s prog-rock soundscape...

If you're looking to experience a refreshingly original night out at the theatre, we would humbly suggest that this might well be the show for you...

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Madagascar The Musical

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Thurs 16 - Sun 19 May; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Thurs 30 May - Sun 2 June

The smell of the greasepaint and roar of the crowd has tempted the furry cast of Madagascar the movie to forsake New York's Central Park Zoo in favour of treading the boards on a UK theatre tour. Alex the Lion, Marty the Zebra, Melman the Giraffe and Gloria the Hippo are all present and correct in a show that producers promise will send your kids home positively wild (which may or may not be a good thing!). CBBC and Strictly Come Dancing favourite Karim Zeroual stars.

Morgan & West's Massive Magic Show For Kids

Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Sun 19 May

Time-travelling magicians Morgan & West here make a welcome return with a show that combines 'conjuring capers, mysterious magic tricks, larger-than-life laughs, and fantastic facial furniture'. All of which the dynamic duo intend to cram into one single solitary hour of non-stop family fun! Although the production has been designed with youngsters aged five-plus in mind, the fellas are confident that younger children will also enjoy the show.

The Tiger Who Came To Tea

Lichfield Garrick, Tues 28 - Thurs 30 May; The Albany Theatre, Coventry, Fri 31 May - Sun 2 June; Worcester Swan Theatre, Wed 17 & Thurs 18 July

Everybody's favourite tea-guzzling tiger is back in town, dropping in on Sophie and her mum just as they're settling down for an afternoon cuppa... Adapted by David Wood from the late Judith Kerr's 1968 book of the same name, this 55-minute show features singalong songs and plenty of magic - not to mention a big, stripey tiger, of course!



The Lion Inside

Birmingham Town Hall, Sat 25 & Sun 26 May

Rachel Bright & Jim Field's bestselling story is here given the theatrical treatment by Nicoll Entertainment, whose children's shows are tailored specifically to youngsters aged three and older.

With a running time of 55 minutes, the show tells the tale of a tiny little mouse who decides he'd like to roar like the lion who lives on top of the rock under which he (the mouse) resides.

Maybe the lion would teach him how to?... Or maybe he'd just gobble him up instead!... Playfully exploring themes including facing up to deeply held fears, dealing with the experience of change, and celebrating people's differences, the production brings together the ever-popular kids'-show ingredients of puppetry, music and song.

Dinosaur Adventure Live: Trouble On Volcano Island

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Tues 28 May; Palace Theatre, Redditch, Wed 29 May

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

If this brand-new offering proves to be anywhere near as fun-filled and slick as the producers' pun-packed publicity, then the above-listed venues could well have a 'monster' hit on their hands!

This latest adventure provides sure-to-be-awestruck youngsters with the chance to meet a selection of magnificent monsters from the mists of time - including, of course, the gigantic (but presumably in this instance not gigantically terrifying!) Tyrannosaurus Rex.

The Little Prince

Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent, Mon 27 May

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

Peppa Pig's Fun Day Out

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sat 25 & Sun 26 May; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Wed 31 July & Thurs 1 August; Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Wed 28 & Thurs 29 August; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Wed 18 & Thurs 19 September; Palace Theatre, Redditch, Wed 25 & Thurs 26 September

If you've taken your little ones to any of the previous Peppa Pig stage shows - and enjoyed the experience of watching them having a fantastic time - you'll be in no doubt that this latest production is well worth catching.

The show sees Peppa, along with her family and friends, enjoying a fun-packed day at the zoo and the beach.

Parents are advised to prepare their children for all manner of cracking capers, including singing and dancing with colourful scarecrows, feeding penguins, building big sandcastles, and swimming in the sea!...

Looks like an oinktastic time is going to be had by all!



FOREVER FRIENDS

Award-winning musical *Come From Away* celebrates the human spirit
- and visits Birmingham this month...



Award-winning musical *Come From Away* is a joyous tale about people who are brought together in the most traumatic of circumstances. The real-life story of 7,000 air passengers grounded in Canada after 9/11, the smash-hit show is stopping off in the Midlands as part of its first-ever UK tour. What's On recently caught up with two of the show's creatives to find out more...

The musical *Come From Away* is an international blockbuster seen by audiences in the Americas, Europe, Australia and Asia. And yet when music & writing team Irene Sankoff and David Hein were asked if they were interested in the project, they discovered a number of people had already turned it down.

Perhaps the others felt it would be too difficult to re-tell the true story of how the people of one small town in Newfoundland came together to help 7,000 airline passengers stranded in the wake of the September the 11th terror attacks in 2001. But Irene and David took on the challenge, and *Come From Away* premiered in the United States in 2015 to huge acclaim. It transferred to Broadway two years later and then opened in the London West End in 2019.

Now, the musical - which won four Olivier Awards - is on tour, coming to Birmingham Hippodrome this month and the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre in November.

Of course, in other hands the musical may not have been as beautifully told or as wonderfully successful, but Irene says the story had a special resonance for her and husband David, which is why they said yes. "We were living in Manhattan on September the 11th, uptown in a student residence with people from different countries around the world," she recalls. "A lot of them were working downtown. Mercifully everyone came back, and our community really came together. There were people at that residence from all over, refugees and Americans, and we helped each other get through that time." And so when Irene and David learned about how the Canadian community of Gander had pulled together, they were determined to pay tribute to the townspeople's generosity in the musical. The couple received a grant from the Canadian government to visit Gander on the 10th anniversary of 9/11, when the town was welcoming back friends they had made a decade before.

"It was amazing," recalls David. "It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to interview the Newfoundlanders and the 'Come From Aways', which is what the Newfoundlanders call anyone who's not from there. They were all returning to commemorate the incredible friendships they had made, practically becoming family members; they got adopted out there - and we got similarly adopted!

"We talked to everyone we possibly could, and everyone had hundreds of stories from that time. So we returned with thousands of stories that we wanted to fit into a 100-minute musical."

The couple were keen to ensure the musical was a true reflection of the experiences they had heard - but condensing all the tales into one show was no easy task.

"The very first draft, we were working with students, and we had about four hours and were about 100 pages in and the people still weren't off the planes!" recalls Irene. "So it was just a constant peeling away to get to the spine of the story, the truth of the story. There are some amalgamated characters, and some things happened to different people than we portrayed in the musical, but that was in an effort to get it into a succinct story."

And it was essential that the show reflected the experiences of both the townspeople of Gander and those passengers who had been helped.

"We tried to keep everything possible in there," David explains. "There was one story we were told about the local drugstore supplying medication to everyone around there, calling round the world trying to fill people's prescriptions and trying to speak whatever language was needed. Originally that was three scenes, and now it's one line in the show, but it's important to us because when that pharmacist came to see the show, they were like 'You got it right - that was the experience.'"

Irene and David wanted *Come From Away* to be a positive story about how people can come together to support each other, rather than a show about the horror of the attacks.

"In some ways we wrote the show because we were here over 9/11, but we didn't want anyone to be traumatised by it," David explains. "We say the word 'terrorist' in it once, and the World Trade Center once, because this is really a 9/12 story. It's a story about how a small town responded to strangers coming to their town, and how they opened their hearts and their homes and gave everything. It's about the potential that we all have to do good and to help in response to darkness. And after the pandemic it's become a show about how do you help, how do you open yourself to people you don't know but who might, after spending five days together, become lifelong friends?"

Come From Away has been popular in diverse cultures, and Irene and David believe its success is because its message is ultimately universal.

"I think it's a little bit of every person's story; you've all been in a position when you've needed help or you've been able to help," says Irene. "When we were in Japan for the show, I remember saying to the company manager 'I don't understand why you like this show' because 9/11 isn't really in their psyche the same as it is in America. And she said 'We've had our earthquakes, our tsunamis, our disasters, and it's just seeing people come together in a tragedy and help each other. That's really what speaks to us.'"

The show's international success has made the town of Gander famous worldwide - and yet many of the townspeople can't fathom what all the fuss is about; they simply did what they believe anyone would do.

"There is something about Newfoundlanders," says Irene. "I forget until I go back just how welcoming and helpful they are. It's just unbelievable. Maybe it's the cold winters, it's the being there for your neighbours, and you never know if you're going to be the next one who needs help. "I think it took them a while to be proud of what they did. They don't understand why this is such a big deal. I think some people like the attention and some people are like 'We did what we did and we would do it again, but we're not looking for any attention for it.'"

Come From Away has also made Gander a surprising tourist destination.

"The show is playing out there each summer now," David says. "And the joy of that is that when we've been out to celebrate that, every hotel is booked, every cab company is booked, the restaurants are all full. So it's been wonderful for us to give back to the people who shared their stories with us and trusted us."

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***Come From Away* shows at Birmingham Hippodrome from Tuesday 21 May to Saturday 1 June, and then at the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Tuesday 5 to Saturday 9 November**

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Light entertainment from around the region



JaackMaate's Happy Hour

Birmingham Town Hall, Mon 13 May

Comedy podcast series JaackMaate's Happy Hour has hit the road again, and will no doubt be packing them in wherever it stops off.

The JaackMaate of the title is actually comedian Jack Carl Dean, who's been hosting the hugely successful online show since 2018. Joined on stage by podcast co-hosts Stevie White, Robbie Knox and Alfie Indra, Jack is promising 'incredible special effects, unbelievable costumes and an insanely creative plot'. That said, he does also point out that 'the incredibility of the special effects, unbeliability of the costumes and insane creativity of the plot are subject to personal perspective and do not constitute a legally binding contract'! You have been warned...

Polly & Esther

Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, Sat 25 & Sun 26 May

This work-in-progress production, here being presented in preparation for a summertime run at the Edinburgh Fringe, blends drag performance, musical theatre and cabaret to tell a tale about 'finding family in unlikely places'. The show is written and performed by Cardiff-based mother & daughter drag duo Polly Amorous and Esther Parade.



Mugenkyo Taiko Drummers

Malvern Theatres, Fri 10 May; Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Thurs 16 May

Europe's longest-established taiko group, Mugenkyo fuse thundering rhythms on huge drums with layers of percussive soundscapes and the delicate sound of the shinobue bamboo flute. Since forming in 1994, the group have become widely admired for their energetic performances and impressive theatrical style, along the way making critically acclaimed appearances at numerous high-profile events, including the Brit Awards and the BBC's Last Night of the Proms. They've even performed in a Bollywood movie!



Mugenkyo visit the region this month as part of their 30th anniversary tour.

Dad's Army Radio Show

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sun 5 May; Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Thurs 30 May

You've seen the TV show, now listen to the radio broadcast! And what a highly acclaimed one it is too, with a pair of talented actors taking up position behind their microphones to play more than 25 characters between them.



The show comprises three Dad's Army episodes which have been adapted for radio for the very first time, complete with sound effects and vintage music. The featured episodes are: The Love Of Three Oranges, The Miser's Hoard and The Making Of Private Pike.

Kevin & Perry Go Large In Concert

Outdoors at the NEC, Birmingham, Mon 6 & Fri 17 May

Midlands-based fans of Kevin & Perry Go Large have the chance to enjoy the movie 'in concert' this month. Released in the year 2000 and starring Harry Enfield and Kathy Burke, the film is being screened in a big top tent, with the soundtrack provided live by the Silver Screen Symphony Orchestra. Kevin & Perry impersonators will be in

attendance at the show, there are free glow sticks with every ticket, and 1990s fancy dress is positively encouraged.

Mind Mangler: Member Of The Tragic Circle

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Mon 27 - Wed 29 May

Alongside their better-established theatrical endeavours, The Play That Goes Wrong and Peter Pan Goes Wrong, the ever-resourceful Mischief Theatre have enjoyed enormous success with a more-recent show called Magic Goes Wrong, from which this touring production is a spin-off.

The Mind Mangler of the title - played by Henry Lewis, here joined on stage by fellow Mischief maker Jonathan Sayer - is a staggeringly inept stage mentalist whose voice is deeper than his well of talent, and whose life collapses around him as he bumbles his way through far-from-successful attempts at mind-reading and hypnotism... With a running time in excess of two hours, the show for the main part is a bit of a one-trick pony, but fans of Mischief will no doubt find plenty to keep them amused.



ALL AT SEA

The award-winning stage production of *Life Of Pi*
visits Shrewsbury in May...



Lolita Chakrabarti's innovative stage adaptation of Yann Martel's award-winning novel, *Life Of Pi*, stops off at Shrewsbury's Theatre Severn in May as part of its first-ever UK tour. The story centres around Pi, a teenager who becomes stranded in the Pacific Ocean with a collection of zoo animals, including a tiger named Richard Parker - brought to life on stage through puppetry.

What's On recently caught up with actors Divesh Subaskaran and Adwitha Arumugam, who will alternate the role of Pi...

What are your backgrounds?

Divesh: I was born in Malaysia and grew up in Singapore. I came to London after I did two years of military service in Singapore. I've only lived in the UK for the last four years, and I've never been to most of the places we're touring to. It's so funny because unlike the character of Pi, I'm not a very adventurous person. It took this job for me to see the country, and I'm loving it!

Adwitha: I come from Chennai, which is a couple of hours away from Pondicherry, where the play is set, and I spent a lot of my childhood there. Playing Pi, I've been able to draw on real experiences, real people I know and real images I have in my head. I came to London about four years ago for drama school. I'm really looking forward to going on tour because it's a great opportunity to see the UK. In Sheffield, for example, we went for breakfast in this quaint café that we wouldn't ever have gone to if we weren't in the show - and I had the best iced chai of my life!

With its five Oliviers and three Tonys, the show is a proven success. Have you been able to discover the part of Pi for yourself?

Divesh: I definitely feel I've found my own way into it. The creative team of Max Webster, Finn Caldwell, Scarlet Wilderink and Lolita Chakrabarti have all worked on the show for so long and have an understanding of what the story is all about and the best way to tell it. But I've not felt any pressure to be like another performer. They've been extremely gracious to me in letting me figure out this character for myself. You would think they had a formula, but I don't feel I'm filling the shoes of somebody else. It's super-exciting to come at it from my own point of view.

Adwitha: There's no space in the play to robotically go through the moves. Yann's words and Lolita's words are so beautiful, and it's such an emotionally moving play that it can't be copied and pasted.

What do you bring to the part?

Divesh: As well as reading the novel and the script, I travelled to Pondicherry a month before rehearsals. I spent time living in the French quarter. Obviously, the fact that Pi is out at sea for a year is hard for anyone to match, but I've experimented with some things - for example, trying to fast and seeing

what hunger feels like. I fasted for a week. The very first bite I had to eat - it was a croissant - was like ecstasy. Every bite after that was kind of average!
Being in India was great; the environment, the people. It's completely different from where I live in London. There's a certain freedom of expression. I felt what it was like to be in hot weather, to drink chai every day. Pi is very philosophical and spiritual, so I went to the temple, mosque and church. Whenever I would walk past a temple, I would just go and sit in it for a bit and try to surround myself with what the character did. It gives you the confidence that you've been to that place and you've seen what it's like. Your sweat is different. The way you experience heat is different.

Adwitha: Obviously, I'm playing Pi as female, and that in itself changes a lot of things. It's the 1970s in India, and gender roles were quite defined at that point. Relationships change, the way Pi sees the world changes, the perspective on things changes. I'm playing Pi very differently from Divesh, but we have a very collaborative relationship: when I'm doing my run-through, he watches it and tells me things he thought worked and things he might apply to his own performance. And similarly, when he's performing, I'm sat there in the front, giving him notes when he needs it because I've been through the process. Nobody else knows what it's like to be in these shows, so we've got each other's backs.

Why do you think *Life Of Pi* has proved so successful?

Divesh: A plethora of reasons. It's a story about survival, human nature and the animalistic side of human beings. To me, reading Yann Martel's book as someone who grew up in a Hindu household, I'm thinking this guy knows his stuff when it comes to all the religious texts. But ultimately it's a story about survival and how we have this dual nature that comes into conflict sometimes. We are not just one thing; we are multifaceted. And a story about being on a boat with a tiger for a year - what's not exciting about that?

Adwitha: It's such a human story. It's the story of life. It's what every one of us goes through. Every one of us has a Richard Parker, every one of us has a lifeboat, every one of us has been stranded in the middle of the Pacific Ocean and somehow found a way

to a magic island and finally ashore. All of us have been through it, all of us relate to it, because it's a story of family, hope, survival love, belief, faith. These are things that are fundamental to human society.

Is it important for you to know what's real in the story and what's not?

Divesh: For me as an actor, it's important. Pi truly believes he was on the boat with the animals. There's no other version for him. There are discussions in the play about what actually happened on the boat, but they end up believing his story and writing it in the report. I feel that Pi truly believes this story; it's not fiction to him. He needs Tomohiro Okamoto and Lulu Chen from the embassy to validate his existence. That's why those scenes are so powerful - Okamoto is asking about facts and wants to know what happened to the ship and how he survived, and he's telling a story about orangutans floating on a rock with bananas and saving a tiger, but he really believes it.

What's it like working with puppets?

Divesh: The puppeteers do such an amazing job that it's sometimes pretty scary being up there. They do these intense animal studies, and a lot of the sounds you hear on stage are coming from the puppeteers. At the beginning it was difficult to know what that relationship was going to be like, but the more you go through the movement patterns, the more you understand the relationship; if I take a step closer, this killing machine will eat me alive! It's about maintaining that level of tension between myself and the animal. The tiger has been built to look like a real thing, and it has a mind of its own. The puppeteers dictate where it goes, and it's not the same every time. We're playing this game - one night the tiger might actually kill me!

Adwitha: It's so much fun. It's almost better than working with human beings. With the tiger puppet, it's so much more alive because there are three human beings bringing it to life. The power and presence of the puppet is so much bigger. Irrespective of how many times you've seen the puppet, when the tiger is coming at you, trying to kill you, you run!

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Life Of Pi shows at Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, from Tues 7 to Sat 11 May.

MAKING SOUNDWAVES

The RSC's *The Buddha Of Suburbia* features music by Niraj Chag, who here talks about his creative process



Musician Niraj Chag has composed music for everything from documentary soundtracks to West End musicals. His recent credits include the Royal Shakespeare Company's new production of *The Buddha Of Suburbia* - adapted by Emma Rice and Hanif Kureishi from the latter's 1990 novel - and Rifco Theatre Company's musical, *Frankie Goes To Bollywood*. Niraj stepped out of the recording studio to tell *What's On* about his creative practice and his journey to success...

How did you get involved in the RSC's *The Buddha Of Suburbia*, Niraj?

Emma Rice contacted me - I worked with her on a musical called *Wah! Wah! Girls*. I remember *The Buddha Of Suburbia* on TV growing up, so I was really excited about the project.

You've worked across multimedia: film, TV, radio and dance... Do you have a favourite medium to work in?

Every medium gives me something different, but I think if I were to choose, I really like documentary films. In things like natural history programmes for the BBC, your music is basically telling the story... The music is also mixed much louder than in any other medium, which is always quite nice!

How do you approach composing for theatre, in contrast with your other work?

It's interesting - I'm taking more from film and TV composition into how I work in theatre and dance. What I'm doing more and more in the early stages is, if I have early rehearsal video or footage, I can actually score it like a film. Directors love it as well, because they can watch the scene and the music in situ.

When you're in rehearsals, things come out - it's a more dynamic, changing beast. Instead of being a scene, it could turn into a dance segment or become a song, so it's a lot more changeable. I find if I have early rehearsal footage or some sort of visual - especially in things like dance - I can score it in time with the movement, and that really helps.

Rifco Theatre Company's *Frankie Goes To Bollywood* is coming to the Midlands in June and July - how do you park one project and move on to the next?

That's what I'm recording now - I'm doing some of the backing tracks. It's a case of time management and having a clear schedule in terms of what you're doing, when and how you're working... Time and space management - such a boring answer, isn't it!

What's the most challenging project you've worked on?

They're all so different... *Wah! Wah! Girls* was interesting because we were using a very unique technology which hadn't been used before. We were working in a totally new way, using stems and dynamic vamping - basically trying to have a live band without the live

band! It was quite an interesting challenge. When I first started in the early to mid-90s, I had a sampler which could only record 10 seconds of audio. It's what you do with that - amazing forms of music have come out of those limitations. Drum and bass came out of limited sampling, and that crunchy sound was because they had to reduce the quality, to get a longer sample time.

For me, limitation has become a part of my process as well, because now there's so much power - just having a laptop enables you to have power, which is so different to the power that was available in the 80s and 90s, or even the noughties. When you have a million sounds at your disposal, a part of the art becomes distilling that to what you want to use. The world's your oyster - limitation is a massive part of my process now.

What's your musical background?

I have no musical training - I'm self-taught. I was lucky enough to get into technology very early. I got kicked out of A-level music because I couldn't read and write music. I applied for four music degrees, and all four rejected me. I grew up in Southampton, and I moved to London just to get a record deal. That was my only mission - I got into any old course, just to get to London. That was the dream. Within a year, I had a record deal, and that gave me a little bit of confidence. That's my story in a nutshell.

You clearly had the drive and knew what you wanted to be...

That was the only thing that I had. Growing up, I knew that I wanted to be a musician. My dad was passionate about music, but it was never thought of as a career path for us. My dad came from East Africa in the early 70s. My parents didn't have any education, and my dad worked on the buses and then in a factory. Those are the two jobs he had, so it was unfathomable. The idea of the arts as a career was so esoteric to my family - but there was also this dichotomy that they both loved music.

What were your musical influences?

My brother was a big influence. It's probably because of my brother that I got into music, because he had a band. His band would do Bollywood covers. Growing up in the 80s, I had a lot of Bollywood influences, because my dad was an old-school Bollywood-head. My mum was into very devotional music, so

that was a big influence. Devotional music has this visceral power which strikes you, so it's one of the things that always resonated with me. Then 80s pop, growing up with Prince, Michael Jackson, Jean-Michel Jarre - because that was the cutting edge of technology - to early hip-hop as well.

You've earned many accolades throughout your career - which one means the most?

I wanted to be a musician, but I didn't have any training. I didn't have the opportunity to take piano lessons; I just had to learn through osmosis how to play piano. I had to learn music theory from books in my own time. I had to learn how synthesisers work, just through reading manuals for keyboards. For me, the greatest accolade is that I'm able to work in this industry.

I'm so happy and grateful that I get to do what I love every day, despite not having any technical qualifications - and probably massive imposter syndrome...

Sadly my father passed away a couple of years ago, and he loved 1940s and 50s Bollywood music - that was his thing. I never got to write anything like that for him. Doing *Buddha*, one of the themes is a 1940s piece of Bollywood. I got to compose what he would have been the proudest of. Part of me feels really gutted that I can't play this for him. It was emotional, but there's a bitter-sweet quality, because it's such an upbeat, happy track. A lot of that 1940s stuff was quite optimistic and joyful, and that's what my dad liked - he liked happy music.

What music do you turn to, when you have to unwind and get away from work?

The problem is, because I'm self-taught, I've learned through listening to music, and then deconstructing it, distilling it down. What's the harmonic component? What's the mix doing? What's the dynamic range? What's the mastering? So now if I listen to something, it's either nothing musical, or something so simple and innocuous that it doesn't trigger that response from me... It's like if you're a doctor, the last thing you want to do after eight joyful hours in the office is write prescriptions or do some diagnoses!

.....
The Buddha Of Suburbia shows at the Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, until Saturday 1 June

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Dance previews from across the region

Carlos Acosta: On Before

Birmingham Hippodrome,
Mon 6 & Tues 7 May

Given that he nowadays spends his time *behind the scenes* - as director of Birmingham Royal Ballet - it's nice to see legendary Cuban dancer Carlos Acosta back in the spotlight himself, presenting a show that he conceived 14 years ago as a homage to his late mother.

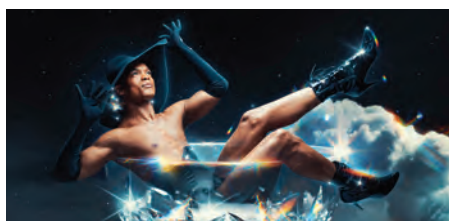
Telling the powerful story of a doomed relationship, the production boasts a diverse musical repertoire - ranging from Handel to Cuban contemporary composer Omar Puente - and features Carlos' own choreography alongside contributions from Russell Maliphant, Kim Brandstrup and Will Tuckett. Carlos is joined in the show - which he's performing in celebration of his 50th birthday - by Laura Rodríguez, a founding member of his Cuban dance company, Acosta Danza.



Johannes Radebe: House Of JoJo

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Thurs 23 & Fri 24 May; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Sun 26 May

Strictly Come Dancing favourite Johannes Radebe made a major splash with his sell-out debut tour a couple of years ago and has firmly established himself on the UK dance-show circuit. He now returns with what's being described as 'a theatrical celebration jam-packed with roof-raising music, dazzling costumes, and of course, world-class dance'. Commenting on his new production, Johannes said: "Give the people what they want and need. Swirl, sip and knock it back. It's palatable, rich in taste and flavour. Served by yours truly... you're all invited down glamour street. Kindly RSVP to LOVE. Leave all your expectations at the door and welcome to the House Of JoJo!"



Strictly The Professionals

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Thurs 2 & Fri 3 May; The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton, Fri 31 May

Helmed by Strictly's creative director of choreography, Jason Gilkison, this annual extravaganza features the TV series' professional dancers strutting their stuff to a fabulous soundtrack.

Previous incarnations of the show have gone down a treat with Strictly fans, and there's every reason to suppose the 2024 edition will prove equally popular.

The 10 participating dancers are Dianne Buswell, Vito Coppola, Carlos Gu, Karen Hauer, Neil Jones, Nikita Kuzmin, Gorka Marquez, Luba Mushtuk, Graziano di Prima, Jowita Przystal, Michelle Tsiakkas and Nancy Xu.

Roshni: Sonia Sabri Company

Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome,
Thurs 16 May

"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'.



Film highlights in May...



The Fall Guy CERT 12a (126 mins)

Starring **Ryan Gosling, Emily Blunt, Aaron Taylor-Johnson, Hannah Waddingham, Teresa Palmer, Stephanie Hsu** Directed by **David Leitch**

If you're old enough to remember cult 1970s sci-fi series *The Six Million Dollar Man*, you'll likely also recall that its star, Lee Majors, followed up his stint as bionic astronaut Steve Austin by playing a stuntman named Colt Seavers in a show titled *The Fall Guy*. Well, some 43 years after debuting on US television network ABC, the long-running series has now inspired a movie.

Recent Oscar nominee Ryan Gosling here takes the title role as the working-class hero who has plenty on his plate - tracking down a missing movie star, solving a conspiracy, and trying to win back the love of his life - and all whilst engaging in the bone-crunching business of body-bruising stuntwork... *Bullet Train* and *Deadpool 2* director David Leitch is the man at the helm of this hugely entertaining action-comedy.

Released Thurs 2 May

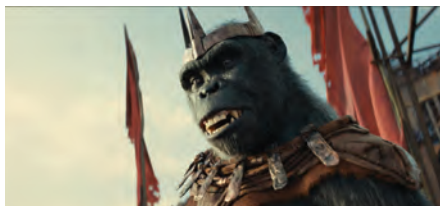
Kingdom Of The Planet Of The Apes CERT tbc (145 mins)

Starring **Freya Allan, Kevin Durand, William H Macy, Dichen Lachman, Owen Teague, Peter Macon** Directed by **Wes Ball**

More monkey business from the franchise that just keeps on giving!

It's over half a century since the original *Planet Of The Apes* film hit cinema screens, with astronaut Charlton Heston crash-landing on a future Earth ruled by simians and uttering the immortal line "Take your stinking paws off me, you damn dirty ape!" In the decades which have followed that first film's release, there have been a further nine movies, a television series and numerous novels and comic books. This latest film is set several generations in the future, in a world in which apes are the dominant species, living harmoniously, and humans have been reduced to existing in the shadows. As a new tyrannical leader builds his empire, one young ape undertakes a harrowing journey that will cause him to question all that he has known about the past - and to make choices that will define a future for apes and humans alike...

Released Thurs 9 May



Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga

CERT tbc

Starring **Anya Taylor-Joy, Chris Hemsworth, Charlee Fraser, Nathan Jones, Tom Burke, Angus Sampson** Directed by **George Miller**

Planet Of The Apes (see left) and *Garfield* (see right) aren't the only film franchises being revived this month...

The first *Mad Max* movie caused a significant stir way back in 1979, with Mel Gibson starring as a police officer seeking revenge for the biker-gang murder of his wife and child. Three films followed, including 2015's *Fury Road*, which went on to win six of its 10 Academy Award nominations.

Mad Max creator George Miller now returns with this all-new and original standalone action adventure that reveals the origins of *Imperator Furiosa*, a powerhouse character from *Fury Road*.

As the world falls, young *Furiosa* is snatched from the Green Place of Many Mothers and falls into the hands of a great Biker Horde led by the Warlord *Dementus*.

Sweeping through the Wasteland, they come across the citadel presided over by the Immortan Joe.

As the two tyrants battle for dominance, *Furiosa* must survive numerous trials as she plots a way back home...

Released Fri 24 May

IF CERT tbc

Starring **Ryan Reynolds, John Krasinski, Cailey Fleming**, with the voices of **Steve Carell, Phoebe Waller-Bridge, Maya Rudolph** Directed by **John Krasinski**

Post-trauma, Bea finds that she can actually see other people's imaginary friends (the IFs of the title)...
 ...Or rather, she can see the imaginary friends that other people *used to have*, before they grew up and discarded them.
 And Bea isn't the only one with the extraordinary superpower either - the fella who lives upstairs (played by Ryan Reynolds) can see them too. Blessed - or should that perhaps read *cursed* - with such a remarkable ability, what's a girl to do but try to help the rejected IFs find a new purpose in life?...

Jack Ryan and The Office actor John Krasinski directs and appears in this family-friendly offering, which he also wrote. He's joined by an all-star cast of both live-action and voice actors.
 "Imaginary friends are adorable and all those things," Krasinski told Collider, "but they're also time capsules of your hopes, dreams and ambitions when you were the most fertile of a brain, and it never goes away. I think we're told that we're adults, instead of, what if you realise that you never stopped being a kid..."

Released Fri 17 May



The Garfield Movie CERT tbc

With the voices of **Chris Pratt, Samuel L Jackson, Hannah Waddingham, Ving Rhames, Nicholas Hoult, Cecily Strong** Directed by **Mark Dindal**

Lasagna-loving indoor cat Garfield is about to have a wild *outdoor* adventure...
 After an unexpected reunion with his long-lost father - scruffy street cat Vic - Garfield and his canine friend Odie find themselves catapulted from their perfectly pampered life into a somewhat more challenging situation - joining Vic in a 'hilarious, high-stakes

heist'...
 Garfield started out as a Jim Davis cartoon-strip in the 1970s. He became such a massive hit that he's since been the star of numerous television series and a couple of live-action/CGI feature films in which Bill Murray voiced the character. Neither movie went down particularly well with the critics. Dedicated fans of the fabulous feline will no doubt be hoping that this first-ever theatrically released *animated* movie fares rather better...

Released Fri 24 May



Young Woman And The Sea CERT tbc (100 mnins)

Starring **Daisy Ridley, Tilda Cobham-Hervey, Stephen Graham, Kim Bodina, Jeanette Hain, Ethan Rouse** Directed by **Mark Dindal**

Star Wars' Daisy Ridley here takes on the role of Gertrude 'Trudy' Ederle, the first woman to swim across the English Channel. A gold-medal winner at the 1924 Olympics, Gertrude determined to join the roll call of swimmers who had previously swum the 21-mile stretch.

Designing a two-piece swimsuit and sealing her goggles with candle wax, the 20-year-old New Yorker duly made history on the 6th of August 1926, taking 14 hours and 34 minutes to swim from Cape Gris-Nez in France to Kingsdown in Kent.

Although her Channel crossing was enthusiastically celebrated at the time, it is now largely forgotten, so this new film will provide some richly deserved publicity for what was a truly magnificent achievement.

Released Fri 31 May



Hermione Wiltshire, Nicola Preparing for Birth, 2008, Courtesy the artist

MUM'S THE WORD

MAC Birmingham is set to host a new exhibition which will put the hidden history of artist mothers in the spotlight...

Hettie Judah is the curator behind Acts Of Creation: On Art And Motherhood, an exhibition which opens at Birmingham's Midlands Arts Centre next month. Presented by Hayward Gallery Touring, this major show brings together over 100 works of art by mothers - from the feminist avant-garde to the present day - and touches on the themes of creation, maintenance and loss. What's On recently caught up with Hettie to find out more about her highly anticipated show...

A new exhibition, curated by Hettie Judah and touring to Birmingham's Midlands Arts Centre (MAC) next month, explores the joys and heartaches, mess, myths and mishaps of motherhood.

Under the title Acts Of Creation: On Art And Motherhood, the exhibition approaches motherhood as a creative enterprise, albeit one which at times is tempered by ambivalence, exhaustion or grief. It's also designed to be a welcoming space, with colourful galleries and an area where visitors are invited to sit at a kitchen table and respond to the art around them.

The inspiration behind the exhibition came in 2019, when Hettie was researching the impact of motherhood on artists' careers. The project was commissioned by Dr Kate McMillan of the Freelands Foundation, who was in turn researching representation of women in the art world.

During her research, Hettie interviewed over 50 artists, and began to realise that the relationship between art and motherhood was largely uncelebrated. She started to consider how that could be rectified.

"A couple of things came out which really set my mind working as to how I might change the picture," Hettie explains. "One was the fact that very often when people were at art school or were starting out in careers, they received this really strong message that motherhood was incompatible with being an artist, and that motherhood wasn't a good subject for art."

Hettie experienced this message first-hand, studying in the early to mid-1990s. Acts Of Creation now seeks to bring the experiences of artist mothers into the limelight.

"The two things that I wanted to do with this show were to make a case for motherhood being an important subject for art - that it's potentially a subject for really good art - and to highlight that there are artists who have successfully combined motherhood and art making, and to make them visible."

Hettie was keen to collect works from earlier generations of artists who had engaged with the subject of motherhood. Each work in the show can be seen to approach the topic in a unique way.

"What was really striking, when you start to look historically, is that the same works are being remade over and over again. There was very little awareness of artists who had made

work in previous generations. It goes back to the point about motherhood not being seen as a particularly legitimate subject, and even within feminist art history, not necessarily being embraced.

"Overall I've been trying to build up a very complex and diverse picture of the experience of motherhood."

The exhibition has three themes which address these diverse experiences: Creation, which looks at conception, pregnancy, birth and nursing; Maintenance, which explores motherhood and caregiving in the day-to-day; and Loss, which touches on miscarriage and involuntary childlessness, as well as reproductive rights.

"Ever since I've been thinking about this exhibition, I've been thinking about doing a progression all the way from conception, and issues around fertility and infertility, right through to addressing maternal grief. That shape has always been part of my conception of the exhibition. There is a fourth section, which is The Temple - a big gallery that is full of self-portraits, in each of which the artist portrays themselves in relation to motherhood."

The remaining section of the exhibition addresses an experience of motherhood which is perhaps most common but most overlooked...

"It was really important to me to have Maintenance as part of the show, because in general, when we think about motherhood in art, we tend to think about the Madonna and Child, pregnancy and breastfeeding, and really tiny children. I wanted to highlight the fact that motherhood doesn't finish when a child is one year old; it's something that continues for the rest of your life.

Maintenance really addresses motherhood in the day to day; that ongoing labour of motherhood that's maybe less visible but still dominates people's lives."

Alongside the exhibition are related attractions, such as a gig theatre event from The Queer Motherhood Project, and a season of film screenings entitled Bad Mums: Motherhood In Cinema.

MAC is also hosting in-tandem exhibitions: Hidden Mothers by Tereza Buskova, and Who Cares?, produced by the venue in collaboration with Kaye Winwood and Balsall Heath CATS - an organisation supporting families who care for disabled children and

young people.

The programme also holds space to explore more sensitive topics within the theme.

"MAC are really brilliantly going to be hosting a symposium in September, which particularly addresses maternal loss and infertility. They're going to dedicate an entire day to that, in the context of the exhibition." The symposium takes place on Thursday 12 September, with presentations by artists, writers and art historians who will be sharing their research and personal work around the subject.

On the evening of the same day, an 'in conversation with' panel discussion will feature artists Felicity Allen, Jai Chuhan and Su Richardson. The panel is chaired by Hettie herself, who is certainly enthusiastic about the lively public schedule which MAC is programming to coincide with her exhibition. "It's a real dream for me. That idea of having a really engaging public face has been central to how I've planned the show. I couldn't be more thrilled that MAC have taken that idea and run with it, with this very strong public programming strand."

Many of the events programmed around Acts Of Creation - and of course the exhibition itself - are free to enter. MAC's standing as a cultural hub for the local community is something that Hettie wants to celebrate.

"It's not like a big, ticketed, blockbuster exhibition where you've got your one-hour time slot when you need to be in and out... There'll be lots and lots to look at and read, but it should all be quite inviting. I'm really happy that people feel they can drop in for about 15 minutes, and come back on another day to revisit their favourite works. My dearest wish is that the community around MAC makes it their own."

.....
Acts Of Creation: On Art And Motherhood shows at MAC from Saturday 22 June to Sunday 29 September

Acts Of Creation: Symposium & Panel Discussion take place on Thursday 12 September

Tereza Buskova: Hidden Mothers runs from Saturday 1 June to Sunday 29 September

Who Cares? runs from Thursday 6 June to Sunday 22 September



Summer Exhibition

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry,
Fri 3 May - Sun 23 June

Coventry's Warwick Arts Centre is hosting three concurrent exhibitions this month and next.

Bologna-based Rwandan artist Francis Offman's *Economics Of Painting* showcases canvases that tell stories of friendship, conversation and travel, while Swiss creative Nicole Bachmann's *There Are Tides In The Body* is a new film commission. Set across two locations in Kent and Spon End in Coventry, the film considers the body as a site of knowledge by using movement and voice to 'embody vocabulary' and create new meaning. Completing the trio of exhibitions, *Activate/Assemble/Amplify* contemplates the creative future of Coventry's children and young people. Sharing artworks and performances made throughout the year as part of youth and schools projects, the exhibition explores the participants' vision for themselves and their city.

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International Watercolour Masters

Lilleshall Hall, Shropshire, Wed 15 - Fri 24 May

The International Watercolour Masters (IWM) makes a welcome return to Shropshire this month, and as usual the exhibition will be showcasing a selection of impressive artwork by some of the world's most talented creatives. Alongside the paintings by global

masters, IWM will also present (via a giant screen in the main exhibition arena) the top 200 entries in the show's hugely popular watercolour competition, which this year was entered by thousands of people from across the world.



Dion Kitson: Rue Britannia

Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, Fri 10 May - Sun 8 September

A major solo exhibition, Dion Kitson's Rue Britannia sees the artist remodelling everyday objects to isolate and elevate ubiquitously 'ordinary' sights, such as a burst football or discarded plastic bottle. The exhibition also includes Council House Of Kitson - a new installation featuring a pebble-dashed façade and footage documenting Dion's father.

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 onward and marks the 35th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall (which happened on 9 November of that year).



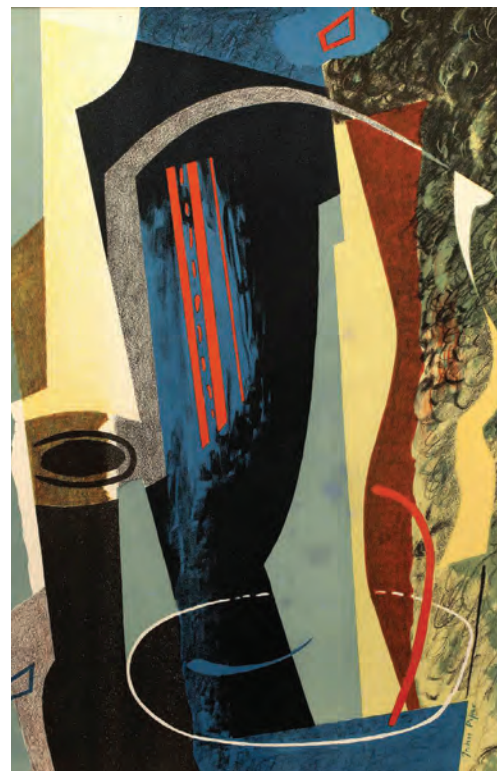
John Piper And 20th Century Art

Barton Court, Colwall, Herefordshire, Sat 11 - Mon 20 May

Barton Court's 10th anniversary exhibition showcases more than 50 fabrics, limited-edition prints and original works by John Piper, a Surrey-born 20th-century artist whose work often focused on the British landscape.

An official war artist in World War Two, Piper's depictions of bomb-damaged churches and landmarks, including and most notably Coventry Cathedral, hugely enhanced his reputation and led to his work being acquired by a number of public collections.

A selection of work by other 20th-century artists also features in the exhibition.



Landscape And Imagination: From Gardens To Land Art

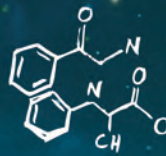
Compton Verney, Warwickshire, until Sun 16 June

Works by celebrated artists including JMW Turner, Nicolas Poussin and Anya Gallaccio feature in this new exhibition at Compton Verney, a show which explores the question of how art might work together with nature to reverse the decline of the UK's green spaces.

An accompanying selection of playful interactive activities in the exhibition galleries will provide families with the opportunity to imagine their own colourful and fantastical landscapes.



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Events previews from around the region



Brick Fest Live NEC, Birmingham, Sat 25 - Mon 27 May

The world's largest hands-on Lego event of its kind makes its UK debut! Offering a wide range of hands-on building activities, Brick Fest Live provides families with the chance to help build a Guinness World Record-setting floor mosaic, race brick-built cars down derby ramps and play

in a brick pit with hundreds of thousands of Lego bricks. The show also features a marketplace - selling rare collectibles - and a selection of 'mind-blowing creations' from around the world, including life-sized Lego models.

1950s Evening

The Black Country Living Museum, Dudley, Sat 11 May

Step back in time at Black Country Living Museum this month and immerse yourself in the cultural revolution of the 1950s! Visitors to the venue will enter a world of rock & roll, skiffle and rhythm & blues, as live performers take to the stage. The line-up includes Rockin'em, The Bitter Lemons, The Washboard Resonators, Lola Lamour, Helen Pearson and Joe James Thomas. The event also offers the chance to check out some vintage fashions and dance the night away in the museum's iconic streets.



UK Slot Festival

British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Sat 11 & Sun 12 May

This Scalextric-sponsored weekend features a wide range of slot cars from major manufacturers, a massive retail area 'selling everything you need for your next great race', and a host of fun activities, including family racing competitions and a stunt show.



Makers Central NEC, Birmingham, Sat 18 & Sun 19 May

Makers Central - the UK's largest gathering for inventors, makers and DIY enthusiasts - is this month returning to the NEC for the fifth year running. The popular family event features hands-on workshops and live demonstrations by some

of the country's most talented makers. YouTube stars and social-media influencers, including Clin Furze, The Hacksmith and Nick Zammeti, will also be in attendance at the show.

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Events previews from around the region



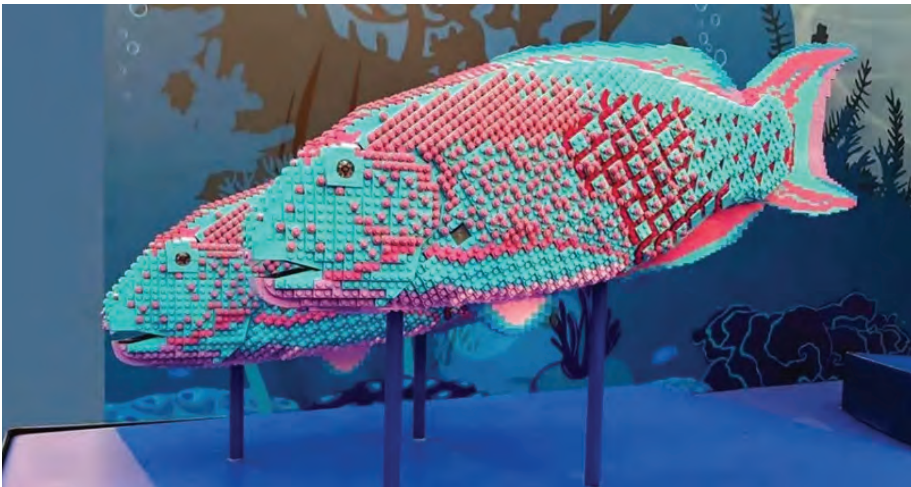
RHS Malvern Spring Festival

Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Thurs 9 - Sun 12 May

Taking the theme ‘gardening for change’, the RHS Malvern Spring Festival is this year celebrating evolution in the world of horticulture - and embracing the positive impact which this has on planting, people and wellbeing...

As well as showcasing new attractions, including features promoting the growth of houseplants, the festival also boasts

contributions from Alan Titchmarsh and BBC Gardeners’ World regulars Adam Frost, Frances Tophill and Toby Buckland. RHS Vice President James Alexander-Sinclair takes on hosting duties. Numerous well-established elements of the festival also make a return, including show & feature gardens, the floral marquee and the Tips & Tricks Theatre.



Brick Ocean at The Engine House

Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster, Sat 25 May - Sun 2 June

Families travelling the Severn Valley Railway during this month’s half-term holiday will get the chance to go ‘under the sea’ and admire a selection of ocean-themed brick-model installations. Making a pit-stop at The Engine House at

Highley, visitors will find 13 impressive installations to check out, including an octopus, a parrot fish, a mako shark and a large squid - each one hand-built using thousands of bricks.

Deaffest

Various venues across Wolverhampton, Fri 10 - Sun 12 May

The UK’s premiere Deaf-led film & arts festival is back for 2024 and celebrating its 15th anniversary. Marking the special occasion with a music theme, the festival includes subtitled film screenings and numerous accessible events, including an art & photography exhibition, panel discussions, workshops and a stalls fair. The highly anticipated ninth Film & TV Awards Gala & Late-Night Party - offering plenty of excellent networking opportunities - also features.

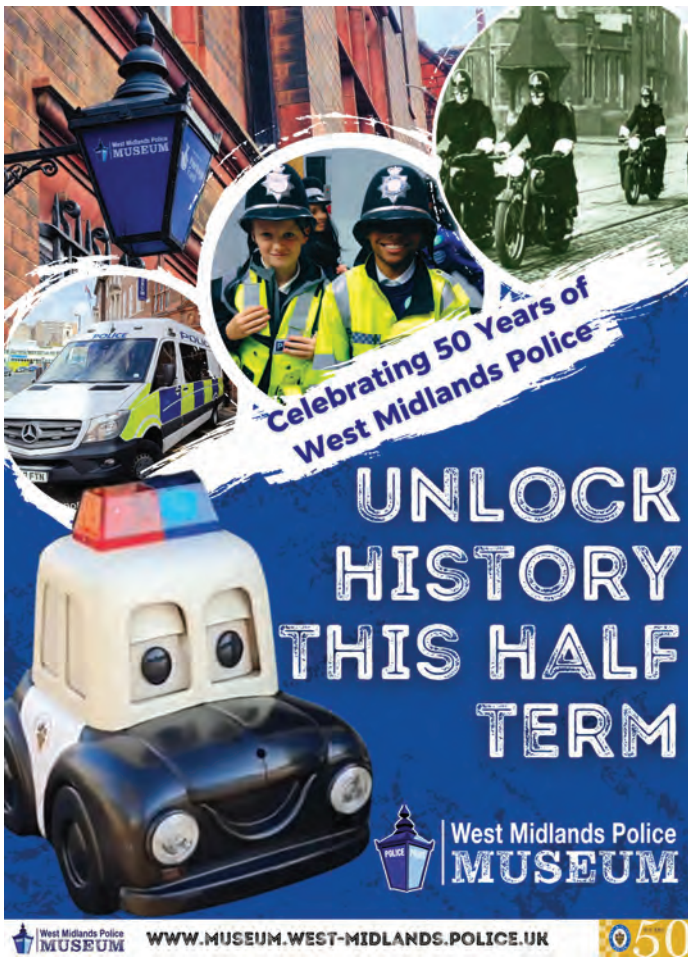


Marvellous Materials

Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum, Mon 27 - Fri 31 May

The Thinktank team are turning the spotlight on different materials and their properties during this month’s half-term holiday.. Families can investigate which materials are conductors of electricity and which are insulators, try their hand at fishing for magnetic fish, and learn about the differences between solids, liquids and gases.





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Events previews from around the region



Eastnor ChilliFest

Eastnor Castle, Herefordshire, Sun 5 & Mon 6 May

Eastnor ChilliFest is sure to pack a punch when it returns this May Day Bank Holiday weekend. Daring diners can get stuck into all things chilli related, with a wide variety of food & drink on offer to get their tastebuds tingling. The day's entertainment also includes a children's cookery school and Eastnor's ever-popular chilli-eating competition. Stilt walkers, fire-show performers, Bhangra dance workshops and live music further add to the fun.



Midlands Air Festival Ragley Hall, Warwickshire, Fri 31 May - Sun 2 June

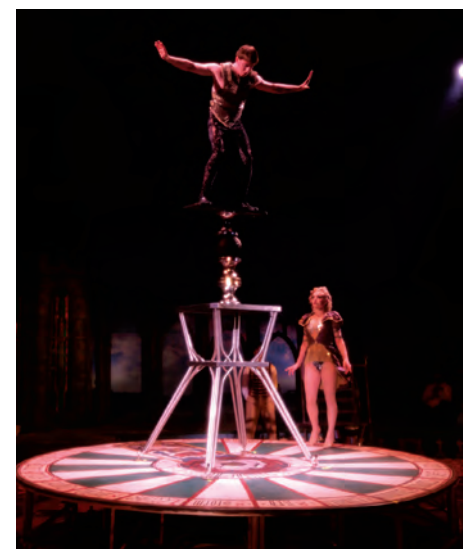
Returning to Ragley for a sixth year, the Midlands Air Festival sees more than 100 hot-air balloons taking to the sky two times a day, with special-shape balloons such as The Orient Express and Hyla the Frog making their festival debuts. And the balloons won't be the only reason for visitors to keep their eyes to the skies; the programme of entertainment also features World War Two Warbirds, World War One air

displays, fast jets, helicopters, gyroplanes, aerobatic displays, aerial ballet and flying circus acts as well as parachute and formation display teams. The festival's hugely popular Nightfire show also returns, featuring an air display of aircraft fitted with pyrotechnics, fireworks and lighting systems, a set-to-music balloon nightglow, and a sure-to-be-spectacular fireworks finale.

Giffords Circus

Sudeley Castle & Gardens, Cheltenham, Fri 10 - Mon 20 May

Giffords Circus returns to Sudeley Castle with a brand-new 'extravaganza' titled Avalon. Coming complete with 'lavish costumes, an opulent set' and a live band, the show brings together acrobats, magicians, musicians and clowns from all over the world to present a colourful medieval world of pageantry and Arthurian legend.



Birmingham Pride

Birmingham Gay Village & Smithfield, Birmingham, Sat 25 & Sun 26 May

Celebrating the Midlands' LGBTQIA+ community, Birmingham Pride will once again be getting the city partying this month. It's expected that more than 40,000 revellers will attend the event across the weekend, with an impressive 75,000-plus people either

participating in or watching the annual Pride parade through the city's streets. The festival's Smithfield site is the centre of the action, featuring a main stage, the Conrad Guest Cabaret Stage and Chic Dance Arena. Headline acts include Loreen, Sophie Ellis-Bextor and Beverley Knight.



Shropshire Horticultural Society
Charity Number: 501564



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Your week-
by-week
listings guide
May 2024

the list



The 39 Steps - Malvern Theatres, Tues 14 - Sat 18 May

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

What's On

Wed 1 - Sun 5 May



Wallfisch & Farrington - Royal
Pump Rooms, Leamington Spa

Sun 5 May

Mon 6 - Sun 12 May



Eliza Carthy - Temperance,
Leamington Spa

Sun 12 - Mon 13 May

Mon 13 - Sun 19 May



The Shires - Warwick Arts
Centre, Coventry

Fri 17 May

Mon 20 - Fri 31 May



Tweedy's Massive Circus -
Waterside, Stratford-upon-Avon

Fri 24 May - Sun 2 June

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

Compton Verney, Warwickshire

A SPIRIT INSIDE A selection of works from the Women's Art Collection and the Ingram Collection, exploring how women and non-binary artists have grappled with the notion and sense of 'spirit', until Sun 1 Sep

REUNITED: THE LAMENTATION ALTERPIECE After 30 years of its central panel being housed in the National Gallery of Scotland's collection, this is the chance to see a rare masterpiece, reunited, until Fri 28 Feb 2025

Coventry Music Museum

OUR TOWN A tribute to This Town through the eyes of a supporting artist, including memorabilia and costumes. The museum also features a new tribute to The Specials' Terry Hall.

Herbert Museum & Art Gallery, Coventry

COVENTRY'S JEWISH COMMUNITY Exhibition exploring a community history that dates back to the 12th century, until Mon 30 Sept 2024

COLLECTING COVENTRY Exhibition reflecting the Museum's collection practice via a catalogue of objects accumulated since the founding of the Herbert in 1949, and Coventry Transport Museum in 1980, Sat 11 May - Sun 27 April 2025

WARWICKSHIRE'S JURASSIC SEA Discover the amazing creatures that lived in Coventry & Warwickshire during the time of the dinosaurs, until Sat 21 Feb 2026

DIPPY IN COVENTRY: THE NATION'S FAVOURITE DINOSAUR Dippy the diplodocus is in Coventry on a three-year loan from the Natural History Museum

Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum

OPEN 2024 Showcase for artists living and working in the West Midlands. The Hug, by Laura Adkins, has been announced as the winner - a sculptural celebration of welcome hugs following social distancing, until Sun 12 May

Nuneaton Museum & Art Gallery

WIV LUV LARRY A celebration of much-loved local comedian Larry

Grayson, the exhibition features letters he wrote presented alongside a selection of images and ephemera, including his big red book from This Is Your Life, until Sun 2 June

50 YEARS OF CHANGE Exhibition commemorating 50 years since the formation of Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough, until Sun 19 May

Rugby Art Gallery

A HISTORY OF RUGBY IN 50 OBJECTS Exhibition featuring 50 objects from the museum's collection which represent a moment, person or event that helped shape the town, from Sat 7 Oct

A QUESTION OF TIME Compilation of work from final-year students studying fine art at Coventry University. Students' work will be displayed in rotation, until Sat 7 Sept

QUENTIN BLAKE: BOOK COVERS Exhibition showcasing 60 of Quentin's book covers, from the 1960s to the present day, and featuring first editions alongside reproductions of his original artwork, until Sat 11 May

GEOFFREY'S ART Exhibition of pouring art by a local resident of the nearby village of Brinklow, until Sat 11 May

DOMESTIC FANTASTIC: PRINTS AND PAINTINGS BY CHRIS ORR Exhibition of work by the Royal Academician 'which will challenge and amuse', until Sat 8 June

RUGBY COLLECTION: SELECTED BY CHRIS ORR Exhibition of works from the gallery's own collection, selected by Orr in conjunction with his visiting exhibition, until Sat 8 June

PICTURING RUGBY Paintings, etchings and sketches of Rugby over the years, selected from the museum's collection, until Sat 5 Oct

Elsewhere:

BRITISH LIBRARY: BEYOND THE BASSLINE An insight into the British Library's flagship exhibition, celebrating Black British music as a form of entertainment and vehicle for community, as well as a source of liberation, protest and education, until Fri 10 May, The Hive, Worcester

LGBTQ+ ZINE YOUTH PROJECT Exhibition displaying a Zine made by the gallery's youth groups, inspired by the collections and 2017 film LGBT Stories. Presented in collaboration with Warwickshire Pride, until Fri 31 May, Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington Spa

TRANSITIONS: THE IMPACT OF INNOVATION Exhibition exploring the technologies that are bringing cars into the future, until summer 2024, British Motor Museum, Gaydon



Paloma Faith - Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Gigs

PARIS PALOMA Wed 1 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

LIL YACHTY + JEAN DAWSON Wed 1 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

FLETCHER + ARXX Wed 1 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

JESSE AHERN Wed 1 May, The Asylum, Birmingham

LIGHTNING THREADS Wed 1 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

JASMINE MYRA Thurs 2 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

THE BREATH FT. RÍOIGNACH CONNOLLY Thurs 2 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

GUIDO SPANNOCCI QUARTET Thurs 2 May, Marris Bar, Worcester

THE EVERLY BROTHERS & BUDDY HOLLY TRIBUTE SHOW Thurs 2 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

TAYLORMANIA Thurs 2 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch

05:40S + THE MESS THEY LEFT BEHIND Thurs 2 May, 45Live, Kidderminster

LEDISI Fri 3 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE MERCIANS + THE ULTRA VIOLETS + JOEL FOSTER Fri 3 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE MANFRED'S Fri 3 May, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

GILES ROBSON Fri 3 May, Temperance,

Leamington Spa

THE SIMON AND GARFUNKEL STORY Fri 3 May, Stratford Playhouse

ALCHEMY RELIVED - DIRE STRAITS TRIBUTE Fri 3 May, Arches Venue, Coventry

ROBERT PLANT PRESENTS SAVING GRACE FEATURING SUZI DIAN Fri 3 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

INKUBUS SUKKUBUS + TOADSTONE Fri 3 May, The Fleece Inn, Bretforton, Nr Evesham

THE FEELING + DAYTIME TV Sat 4 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

JAMES MCVEY Sat 4 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

CVC Sat 4 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

JIM BOB Sat 4 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

KEANE + THE LATHUMS Sat 4 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham

FRANKIE'S GUYS Sat 4 May, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

MISSISSIPPI MCDONALD Sat 4 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

JOHN DOUGLAS + REBECCA MILEHAM + THE SUNBATERS Sat 4 May, The Tin At The Coal Vaults, Coventry

NOASIS Sat 4 May, The Rialto, Coventry

THE STYLE COUNCILLORS Sat 4 May, hmv Empire, Coventry

TRASHCAN SINATRAS Sat 4 May, The Tin at The Coal Vaults, Coventry

HOTTER THAN HELL - KISS TRIBUTE + STOP,

STOP Sat 4 May, Arches Venue, Coventry

DARK SIDE OF THE LEDGE Sat 4 May, The Bear Pit Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

LINK N PARK Sat 4 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

THE MANFRED'S Sat 4 May, Regal, Tenbury Wells

MAINLY MADNESS Sat 4 May, Marris Bar, Worcester

THE SMITHS LTD Sat 4 May, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

NEARLY ELTON Sat 4 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

CODY PENNINGTON COUNTRY SHOW Sun 5 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

A BOOGIE WIT DA HOODIE + FRIDAY Sun 5 May, Utilita Arena B'ham

THE BOOTLEG ROCK SHOW Sun 5 May, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

SKA TRAIN Sun 5 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

THOSE FINE STRANGERS + WAVE OF SHEEP + TAKE ME TO THE DOCTOR + SET IN MOTION Sun 5 May, hmv Empire, Coventry

TIGGUO COBAUC Sun 5 May, 45Live, Kidderminster

PALOMA FAITH Sun 5 - Mon 6 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

DVTR Sun 5 May, Drummonds, Worcester

THE HISTORY OF ROCK Sun 5 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

Classical Music

CBSO: PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

Featuring Kazuki Yamada (conductor) & Jeremy Denk (piano). Programme includes a UK premier of ATLAS by Anna Clyne, and works by Gershwin, Ravel & Mussorgsky, Wed 1 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

PAUL CARR ORGAN RECITAL Programme includes works by Vierne, Saint-Saëns, Wolstenholme & Smart, Thurs 2 May, St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham

AMICI DELLA MUSICA Featuring Philippe Graffin (violin), Elizabeth Wallfisch (viola), Raphael Wallfisch (cello) & Piers Lane (piano). Programme includes works by Mahler, Schulhoff, Smetana & Dvořák, Thurs 2 May, Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington

ORCHESTRA OF THE SWAN: EARTHCYCLE Featuring David Le Page (violin) & David Gordon (keyboard). Programme includes a screening of OOTS's digital concert, featuring two of Vivaldi's Four Seasons concertos, Thurs 2 May, The Courtyard, Hereford

SUMMER RECITAL: CAPTAIN NOAH AND HIS FLOATING ZOO Featuring Kings High School Junior Chamber Choir, Fri 3 May, St Mary's Church, Warwick

MARTIN KASÍK PIANO CONCERT Programme includes works by Smetana, Dvořák & Chopin, Fri 3 May, Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington Spa

GUARNERI PIANO TRIO Featuring Čeněk Pavlík (violin), Marek Jerie (cello) & Ivan Klanský (piano). Programme includes works by Smetana, Martinů & Dvořák, Fri 3 May, Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington Spa

HARRY POTTER AND THE WIZARDING ORGAN Featuring Ewa Belmas (organ). Programme includes works by John Williams, Sat 4 May, St Mary's, Warwick

KUKAL STRING QUARTET Featuring Eliška Kukulová & Klára Lešková (violins), Daniel Macho (viola) & Filip Rufer (cello). Programme includes works by Schulhoff, Bodorová, Smetana & Dvořák, Sat 4 May, Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington Spa



MARTINŮ STRING QUARTET Featuring Lubomír Havlák & Adéla Štajnochrová (violins), Martin Stupka (viola) & Jitka Vlašánková (cello), with Vilém Veverka (oboe) & Martin Kasík

(piano). Programme includes works by Mozart, Bodorová & Dvořák, Sat 4 May, Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington Spa

WALLFISCH & FARRINGTON Featuring Simon Wallfisch (baritone - pictured) & Iain Farrington (piano). Programme includes works by Mahler, Haas, Ullmann, Korngold, Suk, Janáček & Dvořák, Sun 5 May, Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington



LEAMINGTON MUSIC FESTIVAL: WARWICKSHIRE MUSIC Featuring Warwickshire Music's Advanced Musicians. Programme reflects the Czech theme of the festival, Sun 5 May, Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington

MARTINŮ STRING QUARTET Featuring Lubomír Havlák & Adéla Štajnochrová (violins), Martin Stupka (viola) & Jitka Vlašánková (cello), with Vilém Veverka (oboe) & Martin Kasík (piano). Programme includes works by Martinů, Haas, Klein, Smetana & Dvořák, Sun 5 May, Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington

Comedy

NURSE GEORGIE CARROLL Wed 1 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JOE LYCETT & FRIENDS Wed 1 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

BASSEM YOUSSEF Wed 1 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham



ANDY PARSONS Wed 1 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, GEORGE LEWIS & SID SINGH Thurs 2 May, The Glee Club, B'ham

TOM ALLEN Thurs 2 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

ANDY PARSONS Thurs 2 May, Regal, Tenbury Wells

RUSSELL KANE Thurs 2 May, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

JARLATH REGAN Fri 3 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

MICHAEL ODEWALE, MATT PRICE, GEORGE LEWIS & SID SINGH Fri 3 - Sat

4 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

SUKH OJLA Sat 4 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

MICHAEL AKADIRI, SIMON WOZNIAK, SUSAN MURRAY & COMIC TBC Sat 4 May, Macready Theatre, Rugby

Theatre

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, until Sat 18 May, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

THE BUDDHA OF SUBURBIA Emma Rice stage adaptation of Hanif Kureishi's exploration of family, friends, sex, theatre and belonging, until Sat 1 June, Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

THE FERRYMAN Birmingham Ormiston Academy's Year 13 students present Jez Butterworth's hit play, set during The Troubles in Northern Ireland in 1981, Tues 30 Apr - Thurs 2 May, The Old Rep, Birmingham

BLOOD BROTHERS Willy Russell's legendary musical tells the cautionary tale 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



REVISION ON TOUR: DR JEKYLL & MR HYDE Dickens Theatre Company present a new version of Robert Louis Stevenson's gothic masterpiece, Wed 1 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

LOVE NEVER DIES West Bromwich Operatic Society present the UK amateur premiere of the Andrew Lloyd Webber musical, Wed 1 - Sat 4 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

WE WILL ROCK YOU YOUNG @ PART Stratford Musical Theatre Company present a high-energy extravaganza featuring the music of Queen, Wed 1 - Sun 5 May, Bridge House Theatre, Warwick

BOUNCERS (REMIX) Amateur version of John Godber's comedy classic, Wed 1 - Sat 11 May, The Loft Theatre, Leamington Spa

REVISION ON TOUR: ROMEO & JULIET Dickens Theatre Company breathe

new life and wit into Shakespeare's tale of star-crossed lovers, Thurs 2 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

FLASHBANG An 'exuberant, explosive and gut-punching rollercoaster ride' through the ties that bind five best mates together and what happens to them when that world is blown apart. Contains strong language, loud noises, adult themes, and references to drugs, mental health and bereavement, Thurs 2 - Fri 3 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, B'ham

LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS Youth On Stage present an amateur version of the comedy rock musical, Thurs 2 - Sat 4 May, Dovehouse Theatre, Solihull

CONFESSIONS OF SWEENEY TODD Jonathan Goodwin's one-man show, featuring an audience with the infamous Demon Barber of Fleet Street, Fri 3 May, The Civic, Stourport

GENERATIONS A Black British-themed spoken-word poetry piece exploring generational expectations, trauma, culture, identity and family differences, Fri 3 - Tues 7 May, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

WITHNAIL AND I Premiere of Bruce Robinson's new stage version of the iconic 1987 film starring Paul McGann and Richard E Grant, Fri 3 - Sat 25 May, The Rep, Birmingham

YOU'RE BARD! Shakespeare like you've never seen before, with four actors, four Shakespeare shows and endless possibilities... Sat 4 May, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

Kid's Theatre

HORRIBLE HISTORIES: ROTTEN ROYALS Birmingham Stage Company present outrageously regal scenes from history - with the nasty bits left in! Wed 1 - Fri 3 May, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

TOSCANA STRINGS: MONKEY PUZZLE & THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS Toscana Strings are joined by former BRB soloist Laura Tye in a retelling of two family favourites - Julia Donaldson's Monkey Puzzle and Kenneth Grahame's The Wind In The Willows, Sun 5 May, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Dance

STRICTLY THE PROFESSIONALS Featuring professional dancers alongside singers and a live band. The line-up features Dianne Buswell, Vito Coppola, Carlos Gu, Karen Hauer, Neil Jones, Nikita Kuzmin, Gorka Marquez, Luba Mushtuk, Graziano di Prima, Jowita Przystal, Michelle Tsiakkas and Nancy Xu, Thurs 2 - Fri 3 May, Symphony Hall

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JAYKAYS DANCE COMPANY: CURIOS

Various dance and performance genres feature in a choreographed exploration of inventions through history, Sat 4 May, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

Light Entertainment

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



AN EVENING WITH AGGERS Join cricket commentator Jonathan Agnew as he regales audiences with stories from his illustrious career, both on and off the field, Thurs 2 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

SPRING SHOW PHHS Interact presents a night of fun and entertainment inspired by the Paris Olympics, Thurs 2 May, The Henrican, Evesham

DREAMBOYS The Stripped Back Tour featuring dance, chart-topping music and plenty of audience participation. Strictly 18 plus, Fri 3 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

TEENA'S SPRING TEASE Teena Bizkit hosts a variety show packed with stand-up comedy, songs, game shows, TV & music quizzes and special guests... Sat 4 May, The Core Theatre, Solihull

OPERA BOYS Sat 4 May, Artrix, Bromsgrove

WATCH THIS SPACE New show in which astronomer Will Gater delves into some of the biggest questions humans have ever asked... Sat 4 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch

DAD'S ARMY RADIO SHOW Perry & Croft's classic 1970s BBC comedy series is brought to life by two actors playing over 25 characters, Sun 5 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

Talks & Spoken Word

LEAMINGTON MUSIC FESTIVAL: DVOŘÁK IN BRITAIN A talk by David Beveridge, a musicologist and Dvořák specialist who lives in Prague, Sat 4 May, Royal

Pump Rooms, Leamington Spa

TALK BY DANIEL LOW-BEER Exploring The Low-Beer story behind Schindler's List and the Brněnec project. This Leamington Music Festival event is presented in association with the Friends of Czech Heritage, Sun 5 May, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

Events

STRATFORD LITERARY FESTIVAL

Featuring contributions from a range of authors including Mary Beard, David Nicholls, David Troughton, Polly Toynbee, Alistair McGowan, JoJo Moyes, Alan Johnson, Daniel Finkelstein, Michael Rosen, Tamara Harvey, Michael Wood, Alex Wheatle, Rachel de Thame, Patrick Grant, Derek Bardowell, Adam Rutherford, A.L. Kennedy, Clare Mackintosh, Marcus du Sautoy, Ros Atkins, James O'Brien, Paul C Brunson & Royal Correspondent, Robert Hardman Wed 1 - Sun 5 May, various locations in Stratford-upon-Avon

A MOTHER'S PERSPECTIVE - EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF HAMNET Unique opportunity to explore hidden stories of love, loss and Tudor healing in the surroundings that inspired Maggie O'Farrell's novel, Hamnet, Thurs 2 May, Anne Hathaway's Cottage, Stratford-upon-Avon

MUSIC FROM THE MOVIES BY CANDLELIGHT Acclaimed live orchestra London Concertante perform iconic scores and soundtracks from a selection of movies, Thurs 2 May, Worcester Cathedral

AFTER HOURS Artists, musicians, performers and immersive experiences all feature as the galleries and grounds of Compton Verney stay open late, Fri 3 May, Compton Verney, Warwickshire

STEP INSIDE STEWARD'S CHEMIST SHOP Hear about the history of the chemist shop at 27 High Street, Fri 3 May, Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum

VINTAGE AFTERNOON TEA Travel in style in a luxurious vintage carriage and indulge in a 'delectable' spread on traditional vintage chinaware, Sat 4 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

GAYDON LAND ROVER SHOW Boasting hundreds of legendary off-rovers, from 1948 to the present day, Sat 4 - Sun 5 May, British Motor Museum, Gaydon

DONINGTON HISTORIC FESTIVAL Weekend packed with racing and entertainment, Sat 4 - Sun 5 May, Donington Park, Derbyshire

DINE N DEVOUR FOOD FESTIVAL A selection of international street food from around the world, Sat 4 - Sun 5 May, Tamworth Castle Grounds



Gaydon Land Rover Show - British Motor Museum

MODEL RAILWAY WEEKEND Featuring over 30 of the UK's most popular displays and layouts, presented at the Highley Visitor Centre, Sat 4 - Sun 5 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

THE BIG CAT BANK HOLIDAY Prowl through challenges to find out fascinating facts about big cats, Sat 4 - Mon 6 May, Twycross Zoo, Atherstone

MALVERN WATER AND WELL DRESSING FESTIVAL This year taking the theme of trees and featuring creatively decorated wells, springs and spouts, Sat 4 - Sun 12 May, various locations

RAGLEY ASIAN WEDDING SHOWCASE Meet the team and a range of suppliers, Sun 5 May, Ragley Hall, Warwickshire

EASTNOR CHILLIFEST Live music, hot food, chilli-eating competitions and more, Sun 5 - Mon 6 May, Eastnor Caste, Herefordshire

A GRAND MEDIEVAL DAY OUT Visitors to the 900-year-old castle will be transported back to Kenilworth's medieval heyday with re-enactors throughout the grounds, Sun 5 - Mon 6 May, Kenilworth Castle

THE COVENTRY MUSIC MUSEUM
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OUTTOWN

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Hamblett's



Eliza Carthy - *Temperance, Leamington Spa*

Gigs

BRYSON TILLER Tues 7 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

TENACIOUS D + DAVE HILL Tues 7 May, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

HANNAH SANDERS & BEN SAVAGE Tues 7 May, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

THE NORDIC FIDDLERS BLOC Tues 7 May, The Fleece Inn, Bretforton, Nr Evesham

DIDDY SWEG BIG BAND Wed 8 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

SUPALUNG Wed 8 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

THE JAPANESE HOUSE Wed 8 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE ILLEGAL EAGLES Wed 8 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

ELLIOTT ROONEY Wed 8 May, Stratford Playhouse

CARDINALS Thurs 9 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

TANYA OPLAND & MIKE FREEMAN Thurs 9 May, Bromsgrove Folk Club

MARKER STARLING + ELIZA NIEMI Thurs 9 May, The Tin At The Coal Vaults, Coventry

THE INDIAN SAXOPHONE Thurs 9 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

TIGGUO COBAUC Fri 10 May, Devil's Dog, Birmingham

VACATIONS Fri 10 May, O2 Institute, B'ham

CAMERA OBSCURA + LIZ LAWRENCE Fri 10 May, O2 Academy, B'ham

THOMPSON TWINS' TOM BAILEY Fri 10 May, Birmingham Town Hall

ELBOW + THE WAEVE Fri 10 May, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

CORELLA Fri 10 May, Mama Roux's, Birmingham

PAUL YOUNG Fri 10 May, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

CATFISH Fri 10 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

STEELEYE SPAN Fri 10 May, Stratford Playhouse

JASMINE MYRA Fri 10 May, The Tin At The Coal Vaults, Coventry

BOOTLEG BLONDIE Fri 10 May, hmv Empire, Coventry

RESURRECTION - STONE ROSES TRIBUTE Fri 10 May, Arches Venue, Coventry

SIMON HENLEY AS ELVIS WITH THE KINGCRAWLERS Fri 10 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

DENVER TO DIAMOND Fri 10 May, The Benn Hall, Rugby

FRED ZEPPELIN Fri 10 May, Marris Bar, Worcester

SOUL MANIFESTO Fri 10 May, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

THE FUREYS Fri 10 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch

OLIVIA RODRIGO + REMI WOLF Fri 10 - Sat 11 May, Utilita Arena, Birmingham

BAILEY ZIMMERMAN + JOSH ROSS Sat 11 May, O2 Institute, B'ham

BANNERS + IAMTHELIVING Sat 11 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

DIONNE WARWICK Sat 11 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THOMAS HEPELL BAND Sat 11 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

UK FOO FIGHTERS Sat 11 May, hmv Empire, Coventry

JULIE JULY BAND Sat 11 May, Number 8, Pershore

KEITH JAMES PRESENTS THE MUSIC OF YUSUF - CAT STEVENS Sat 11 May, The Market Theatre, Ledbury

THE MIDNIGHT SOUL SISTERS Sat 11 May, Regal, Tenbury Wells

KARL PHILLIPS AND THE REJECTS + CASUAL NAUSEA + M.R.R.L Sat 11 May, Marris Bar, Worcester

TONY CHRISTIE Sat 11 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

FLUFF + KICK THE CLOWN + THE HUMAN ERROR Sat 11 May, Paraddiddles Cafe, Worcester

STRONG ENOUGH - CHER TRIBUTE Sat 11 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch

UNDER THE COVERS Sat 11 May, 45Live, Kidderminster

WILLIE MASON Sat 11 May, West Malvern Social Club

MISS PEARL & THE ROUGH DIAMONDS Sat 11 May, Malvern Cube

KATE RUSBY Sat 11 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry



WES NELSON Sun 12 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

EASY 3 Sun 12 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

CIDER WITH KIRSTY Sun 12 May, The Fleece Inn, Bretforton, Nr Evesham

ELIZA CARTHY Sun 12 - Mon 13 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

Classical Music

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM LITURGICAL CHOIR: EVENSONG

Featuring Dr Paul Rodmell (director), Mon 6 May, Worcester Cathedral

WHITEHEAD & HANCOCK IN CONCERT

Featuring Imogen Whitehead (trumpet) & Oliver Hancock (organ). Programme includes works by Dvořák, Eben, Smetana & Hummel, Mon 6 May, All Saints Church, Leamington Spa

GOLDSCHIEDER & UTTLEY IN CONCERT

Featuring Ben Goldscheider (horn) & Richard Uttley (piano). Programme includes works by Kalivoda, Kofron, Mahler, Janáček & more... Mon 6 May, Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington Spa

MARTINŮ STRING QUARTET Featuring

Lubomír Havlák & Adéla Štajnochrová (violins), Martin Stupka (viola) & Jitka Vlašánková (cello), with Simon Wallfisch (baritone) & Gemma Rosefield (cello). Programme includes works by Krása, Tauský, Bodorová & Schubert, Mon 6 May, Holy Trinity Church, Leamington Spa

JACOB COSTARD ORGAN RECITAL Tues 7 May, Hereford Cathedral

CBSO: FRENCH FANTASIES Featuring Jérémie Rhorer (conductor), Elizabeth Llewellyn (soprano) & the CBSO Youth Chorus. Programme includes works by Debussy, Ravel & Stravinsky, Thurs 9 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

TŌKIO MYERS: AWAKE BUT DREAMING

A solo classical piano tour, featuring stripped back arrangements of his most popular works, Thurs 9 May, St Paul's Church, Birmingham

CBSO CENTRE STAGE: DOUBLE REED

BAROQUE ENSEMBLE Featuring Emmet Byrne & Rachael Pankhurst (oboes) and Nikolaj Henriques (bassoon). Programme includes works by Handel, Madeleine Drinkg & Zelenka, Fri 10 May, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

HALLE ORCHESTRA Featuring Sir Mark Elder (conductor) & Sir Stephen Hough (piano). Programme includes works by Brahms, Butterworth & Elgar, Fri 10 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

MICHAEL SZOSTAK ORGAN RECITAL Fri 10 May, St Mary's Church, Warwick

THE PEOPLE'S PROM Featuring Rachel Mahon & Joe Davies (conductors), Samantha Oxborough (mezzo-soprano), Luke Fitzgerald (organ), Coventry & Warwickshire Youth Orchestra, & Coventry Cathedral Chorus. Programme includes works by Handel, Bizet, Gershwin & more... Sat 11 May, Coventry Cathedral

MIDDAY MANTRA: TAGORE SPECIAL

Featuring Sampad South Asian Arts & Heritage. Performance includes South Asian song & spoken word, Sat 11 May, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

AN EVENING WITH BEETHOVEN

Featuring Carleton Etherington (conductor), Charles Matthews (piano), Victoria Harley (soprano), Noémie Johns (alto), Joe Yates (tenor), Charles Murray (bass) Pershore Choral & West Midlands Sinfonia, Sat 11 May, Pershore Abbey

PETER KING ORGAN RECITAL

Programme includes works by Greig & Guilment, Sat 11 May, Great Malvern Priory

DVOŘÁK & VIERNE Featuring John Wright & David Whitehead (organ), Adam Tunnicliffe (tenor) & Tewkesbury Choral Society, Sat 11 May, Tewkesbury Abbey

CBSO FAMILY CONCERT: CARTOON

CLASSICS Featuring Olivia Clarke (conductor) & Tom Redmond (host). Programme includes works by Rossini, Wagner, Strauss, Elfman & more... Sun 12 May, Birmingham Town Hall

Comedy

NICO YEARWOOD Wed 8 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JOE LYCETT Wed 8 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, RACHEL FAIRBURN & KAZEEM JAMAL Thurs 9 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

KAZEEM JAMAL, NICK DOODY, RACHEL FAIRBURN, JOHN LYNN & ANDY ROACH Fri 10 May, The Glee Club, B'ham

LIAM WITHNAIL Fri 10 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

RAW COMEDY - COMICS TBC Fri 10 May, Ecgwins Club, Evesham

TOM DAVIS Sat 11 May, Birmingham Town Hall

KAZEEM JAMAL, NICK DOODY, RACHEL FAIRBURN & JOHN LYNN Sat 11 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

TEZ ILYAS (PICTURED), PRINCE ABDI, ESHAAN AKBAR & AATIF NAWAZ Sun 12 May, The Core Theatre, Solihull



FRANK SKINNER Sun 12 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

the telling presents

I, Spie

by Clare Norburn

"mesmerising" - The Guardian

Spooks meets Blackadder: a play about composer **John Dowland** and his grisly dealings with the Elizabethan Secret Service, soundtracked live by songs, lively tavern & courtly music



TUESDAY 18 JUNE 2024 7.30PM

Stratford Play House, Stratford-upon-Avon

Tickets: www.thetelling.co.uk/i-spie-stratford

John Piper

and 20th Century Art at Barton Court

This free exhibition showcases over 50 fabrics, limited edition prints and original works by John Piper and a range of twentieth century artists displayed in a lovely country house environment in beautiful Herefordshire.



Friday 10 May (private view) - 6pm - 8pm

Please contact Richard to attend - contact information below

Saturday 11 - Sunday 20 May - 10.30am - 4.30pm

For more information, please contact richard@fiftiesart.com or call 07714 106386
Barton Court, Herefordshire WR13 6HN



MUSIC & DANCE THEATRE & ART SPORT & WELLBEING
HISTORY & LITERATURE

STRATFORD UPON AVON PURSUITS

FREE COMMUNITY FESTIVAL

May 11th & 12th Recreation Grounds



www.pursuitsfestival.co.uk



MUSIC & DANCE THEATRE & ART SPORT & WELLBEING
HISTORY & LITERATURE

ARWICK PURSUITS FESTIVAL

FREE COMMUNITY FESTIVAL

June 22nd & 23rd St Nicholas Park



www.pursuitsfestival.co.uk

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), Tues 7 - Sat 11 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

JUMP Dark comedy that takes an unusual look at contemporary gay life, Wed 8 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

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 8 - Sat 11 May, Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

SCHOOL OF ROCK Amateur version presented by Coventry Youth Operetta Group (YOG), Wed 8 - Sat 11 May, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

STRATFORD ONE-ACT PLAY FESTIVAL - DAY ONE Featuring Roger Gowland's Small Talk, performed by Phoenix Players. A double-bill from Charles Essex - Ulysses Syndrome & Suffer The Little Children - performed by Essex Players, also features, Thurs 9 May, The Bear Pitt Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

GODSPELL THE MUSICAL Amateur version presented by Musical Theatre Warwick, Thurs 9 - Sat 11 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

STRATFORD ONE-ACT PLAY FESTIVAL - DAY TWO Featuring Ben Keyser's Pigeon Syndrome, performed by Kineton Amateur Dramatic Society, Andy Jaggard's Unfinished, performed by Shakespeare's Press, and Baz Stiliński's Boyfriends And Bumfluff, performed by Phoenix Players, Fri 10 May, The Bear Pitt Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

ADULT PANTO: CINDERELLA AND THE TWO UGLY S@GS Liam Mellor stars as Buttons alongside Jimmy Burton-Iles and Robert Squire as the Ugly S!*@S, Fri 10 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

ENGLISH European premiere of Sanaz Toossi's Pulitzer Prize-winning play, set in a classroom in Iran where four adult students grapple with the challenge of learning English, Thurs 9 - Sat 1 June, The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon

COSI FAN TUTTE Welsh National Opera present a brand-new production of Mozart's comic opera, Fri 10 May, Birmingham Hippodrome

STRATFORD ONE-ACT PLAY FESTIVAL - DAY THREE Including Kate Guest's Dr

Jekyll And Mr Hyde and Cassandra - both performed by Caramba Theatre. Miles Malleson's Black 'Eil, performed by Phoenix Players, also features, Sat 11 May, The Bear Pitt Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

DEATH IN VENICE Welsh National Opera collaborate with No Fit State in a reimagining of Britten's atmospheric opera, Sat 11 May, Birmingham Hippodrome

Dance

CARLOS ACOSTA: ON BEFORE The world-famous dancer - and director of Birmingham Royal Ballet - pays homage to his late mother in his most personal work to date, Mon 6 - Tues 7 May, Birmingham Hippodrome

ZEST DANCE: AROUND THE WORLD A dance adventure across the continents, Sat 11 May, Warwick Hall, Warwick School

Light Entertainment

AN AUDIENCE WITH AGGERS AND TUFFERS Jonathan Agnew and Phil Tufnell present an evening of anecdotes from the world of cricket, Mon 6 May, Birmingham Town Hall

I COULD BE WRONG, I COULD BE RIGHT: AN EVENING WITH JOHN LYDON Join the former Sex Pistols frontman as he talks about his unique and extraordinary career, Wed 8 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch

I COULD BE WRONG, I COULD BE RIGHT: AN EVENING WITH JOHN LYDON Join the former Sex Pistols frontman as he talks about his unique and extraordinary career, Thurs 9 May, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

SEND IN THE CLOWNS: TW*TS A 'raucous, wild and tantalising drag revue show' celebrating the magic and madness of musical theatre. Hosted by Fatt Butcher (The Voice UK & winner of Drag Idol UK). A 'stellar line-up' of the UK's finest drag & cabaret talent also features, Thurs 9 - Fri 10 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

I COULD BE WRONG, I COULD BE RIGHT: AN EVENING WITH JOHN LYDON Join the former Sex Pistols frontman as he talks about his unique and extraordinary career, Fri 10 May, Warwick Arts Centre Coventry

THE MUSIC OF ABBA BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring the UK's leading Abba tribute act, Abba Reunion, Fri 10 May, Worcester Cathedral

MUGENKYO TAIKO DRUMMERS: IN TIME 30TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR Theatrical experience featuring dynamic choreography, heart-pounding



Welsh National Opera's Death In Venice - Birmingham Hippodrome

rhythms and contrasting atmospheric soundscapes, Fri 10 May, Malvern Theatres

SIR TIM RICE: MY LIFE IN MUSICALS Join the internationally renowned lyricist as he reflects on his illustrious career in musical theatre and shares anecdotes from 'behind the songs', Sat 11 May, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

MIDDAY MANTRA: SONG AND SPOKEN WORD Expect poetry, readings and music during this relaxed afternoon from Sampad South Asian Arts and Heritage, Sat 11 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

GHOSTBUSTERS 40TH ANNIVERSARY IN CONCERT A film-with-orchestra experience under the big-top tent, Sat 11 May, NEC, Birmingham

MATILDA IN CONCERT A film-with-orchestra experience under the big-top tent, Sun 12 May, NEC, Birmingham

Events

FAMILY FUN DAY Free children's entertainment alongside a day of horseracing action, Mon 6 May, Warwick Racecourse

WELLBEING DAY Head into the gardens for yoga sessions during the day, then round off the afternoon immersed in a wonderful sound bath, Mon 6 May, The Commandery, Worcester

CURIOSITIES AT THE CASTLE Delve deeper into the castle's fascinating history and view usually unseen items from its past, Mon 6 May, Hartlebury Castle, Worcestershire

ENTERTAINING CHILDREN WORKSHOP Featuring tips and tricks to encourage, engage and expand a child's mind, Tues 7 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

RHS MALVERN SPRING FESTIVAL Floral family fun with inspiring gardens and plenty of ideas, Thurs 9 - Sun 12 May, Three Counties Showground, Malvern

BIRTHDAY WEEKEND Celebrate Roundhouse's 150th birthday with a

weekend of special events and tours, Fri 10 - Sun 12 May, Roundhouse Birmingham

THE BABY SHOW WITH LIDL GB The UK's leading pregnancy, baby and parenting event, Fri 10 - Sun 12 May, NEC, Birmingham

FLATPACK FESTIVAL Featuring a programme of screenings and performances, walks and installations, Fri 10 - Sun 19 May, various locations across Birmingham

GIFFORDS CIRCUS: AVALON Combining poetry, music and performing arts, all set on the mythical island of Avalon, Fri 10 - Mon 20 May, Sudeley Castle, Cheltenham

ENGLAND WOMEN VS PAKISTAN WOMEN Women's IT20 cricket match, Sat 11 May, Edgbaston Stadium, Birmingham

THE SPICE TRAIN Indulge in an evening of curry with friends while travelling on the Severn Valley Railway, Sat 11 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

JAPANESE-STYLE STAB BINDING WITH THE HANDCRAFTED HEN Explore three different stab binding techniques, from basic to the more complicated, Sat 11 May, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry

THE VALLEY LADIES NIGHT Six competitive races followed by music, Sat 11 May, Warwick Racecourse

GIN TRAIN Learn about gin's tumultuous past whilst sipping, Sat 11 - Sun 12 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

UK SLOT CAR FESTIVAL Showcasing a wide range of the major slot car manufacturers, including Scalextric, Slot.it, Carrera, SCX, NSR, Ninco and HO AFX, Sat 11 - Sun 12 May, British Motor Museum, Gaydon

VEGAN FESTIVAL Featuring everything from locally sourced artisanal treats to eco-friendly gifts, Sat 11 - Sun 12 May, FarGo Village, Coventry

1940S WEEKEND Travel back in time to the 1940s and get a taste of life in World War Two Britain, Sat 11 - Sun 12 May, Forge Mill Needle Museum, Redditch



The Shires - Symphony Hall & Warwick Arts Centre

Gigs

RIVERSIDE + KLONE
Mon 13 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

LONDON SYMPHONIC ROCK ORCHESTRA Mon 13 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

ERIC CLAPTON + ANDY FAIRWEATHER LOW AND THE LOW RIDERS Mon 13 May, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

LOVE FAME TRAGEDY
Tues 14 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

TAKE THAT + OLLY MURS
Tues 14 - Wed 15 May, Utilita Arena B'ham

MYLES SMITH Wed 15 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

PVRIS + SCENE QUEEN
Wed 15 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

LEE JOHN OF IMAGINATION Wed 15 May, Birmingham Town Hall

RUMOURS OF FLEETWOOD MAC Wed 15 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

THE IRISH HOUSE PARTY
Wed 15 May, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

ECHOBELLY Wed 15 May, 45Live, Kidderminster

TEDDY SWIMS Thurs 16 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE SHIRES Thurs 16 May, Birmingham Town Hall

COUNTRY SUPERSTARS - DOLLY PARTON & FRIENDS Thurs 16 May, Artrix, Bromsgrove

THE LORNA & LAISTER SHOW Thurs 16 May, The Roses Theatre,

Tewkesbury

KENNY THOMAS Thurs 16 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

STEVE TAYLOR'S FUSION PHEW Thurs 16 May, Marrs Bar, Worcester

TALON - THE BEST OF EAGLES Thurs 16 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch

BRETT YOUNG Fri 17 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

WHITE TYGER Fri 17 May, The Core Theatre, Solihull

SHOWADDYWADDY Fri 17 May, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

ENZO Fri 17 May, The Royal Pug, Leamington Spa

OH WHAT A NIGHT! Fri 17 May, Stratford Playhouse

CHEMICAL DANCE + DAFT PUNK EXPERIENCE
Fri 17 May, hmv Empire, Coventry

THE SHIRES Fri 17 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

BRYAN ADAMS Fri 17 May, Coventry Building Society Arena

THE LIQUID ENGINEERS - GARY NUMAN TRIBUTE
Fri 17 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

ELO ENCOUNTER Fri 17 May, The Benn Hall, Rugby

EXIT CHILD + KITE THIEF
Fri 17 May, Marrs Bar, Worcester

GRANNY'S ATTIC Fri 17 May, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

TRANSMISSION - THE SOUND OF JOY DIVISION
Fri 17 May, 45Live, Kidderminster

AMY A TRIBUTE Fri 17 - Sat 18 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

TAKE THAT + OLLY MURS
Fri 17 - Mon 20 May, Utilita Arena B'ham

IYAMAH Sat 18 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

MOVING PICTURES - RUSH TRIBUTE Sat 18 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

BLANCMANGE Sat 18 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

TOTALLY BLONDIE Sat 18 May, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

DARKSIDE THE PINK FLOYD SHOW Sat 18 May, Artrix, Bromsgrove

BLUR2 + PULP'D Sat 18 May, hmv Empire, Coventry

MORETALICA Sat 18 May, Arches Venue, Coventry

NOW I'M HERE - QUEEN TRIBUTE Sat 18 May, Coventry Building Society Arena

SAM LAWRENCE Sat 18 May, The Priory Theatre, Kenilworth

THE SOUTH Sat 18 May, The Benn Hall, Rugby

GUNS OR ROSES Sat 18 May, Marrs Bar, Worcester

MEN UNITED IN SONG
Sat 18 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

BOWEN * YOUNG Sun 19 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

BELLAH MAE Sun 19 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

RICHARD MARX Sun 19 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham



DARKSIDE OF THE LEDGE
Sun 19 May, Albany Theatre, Coventry

ALEXANDER O'NEAL Sun 19 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

STEELEYE SPAN Sun 19 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

Classical Music

LUNCHTIME ORGAN CONCERT Featuring Thomas Trotter (organ). Programme includes works by CHH Parry, JS Bach, J Weir, M Duruflé & G Holst, Mon 13 May, Birmingham Town Hall

CHARLES MAXTONE-SMITH ORGAN RECITAL Tues 14 May, Hereford Cathedral

CBSO: NEW WORLD SYMPHONY
Featuring Joshua Weilerstein (conductor), Michael Mulroy (soprano) & The CBSO Chorus. Programme includes works by Haas, Bernstein, Shaw & Dvořák, Wed 15 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CELEBRATING SANCTUARY Featuring Iryna Muha (guitar and traditional instruments) & Volodymyr Vasylenko (accordion). Programme features eastern european contemporary folk music, Thurs 16 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

SUMMER RECITAL Featuring James Druce (trumpet), Emily Ashby (trombone) & Colin Druce (organ). Fri 17 May, St Mary's Church, Warwick

MALVERN FESTIVAL CHORUS: SPIRITUALS & PSALMS Featuring Jonathan Brown (conductor). Programme includes works by Rutter & Bernstein, Sat 18 May, Great Malvern Priory

MEN UNITED IN SONG Male voice choir concert in aid of Prostate Cancer UK, Sat 18 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

CHELTENHAM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: ENGLAND'S FINEST Featuring David Curtis (conductor) & Rebecca McNaught (cello - pictured), Programme includes works by Holst, Elgar & Delius, Sat 18 May, Pittville Pump Room, Cheltenham



Comedy

EMMANUEL SONUBI Wed 15 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JOE LYCETT & FRIENDS Wed 15 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

MILES JUPP Wed 15 May, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, MICK FERRY & CARL HUTCHINSON Thurs 16 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Club, Birmingham

SIMON BRODKIN Thurs 16 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

PAUL FOOT Thurs 16 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

ADAM ROWE Thurs 16 May, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

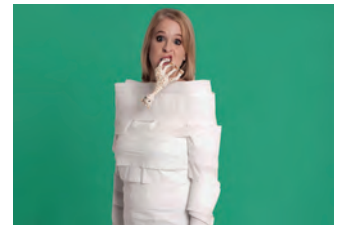
MICK FERRY, CARL HUTCHINSON, GARETH WAUGH, THENJIWE & VINNY SHIU Fri 17 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ELLIOT STEEL Fri 17 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

MICK FERRY, CARL HUTCHINSON, GARETH WAUGH & COMIC TBC Sat 18 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

SUKH OJLA Sat 18 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

HAYLEY ELLIS Sat 18 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry



RICH HALL Sun 19 May, Evesham Town Hall

JOHN KEARNS Sun 19 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Theatre

SISTER ACT THE MUSICAL Brand-new production featuring Sue Cleaver as Mother Superior, Mon 13 - Sat 18 May, Birmingham Hippodrome

BLACK COFFEE The Nonentites present an amateur version of the Agatha Christie whodunnit, Mon 13 - Sat 18 May, The Rose Theatre, Kidderminster

BEAUTIFUL EVIL THINGS High-energy one-woman show 'combining physical storytelling and cut-throat wit', Tues 14 - Wed 15 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

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 14 - Sat 18 May, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

FUNNY GIRL THE MUSICAL Amateur version presented by Evesham Operatic & Dramatic Society, Tues 14 - Sat 18 May, The Henrican, Evesham

THE 39 STEPS Comedy thriller in which four actors play 139 roles in 100 minutes of 'fast-paced fun and thrilling action', Tues 14 - Sat 18 May, Malvern Theatres

GUILLOTINE A brand new stage musical based on Charles Dickens'

classic novel, *A Tale Of Two Cities*, Wed 15 - Sat 18 May, The Civic, Stourport

THE SCOTTISH PLAY Join the Shellsfoot Thespians as they attempt to put on theatre's most celebrated but cursed production. Presented by Phoenix Players, Wed 15 - Sat 18 May, The Bear Pitt Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

LIBERATION SQUARES Three teenage girls forge an unlikely friendship in a play inspired by graphic novels, hip-hop, pop culture and real-world activists, Thurs 16 - Sat 18 May, The Rep, Birmingham

SIX CHICK FLICKS Smash-hit comedy which parodies a selection of popular chick flicks in a 'hysterical, fast-paced show', Fri 17 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

WHAT'S NEXT? Middle-Weight Theatre present a one-woman show that delves into the remarkable life of Harriet Quimby, a trailblazing figure in aviation history, Fri 17 - Sat 18 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, B'ham

THE ADDAMS FAMILY Amateur version of the kooky musical comedy, presented by PQA Coventry AM Academy, Sat 18 May, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

THE OLIVE BOY A 'crude and compelling' coming-of-age comedy, written & performed by Ollie Maddigan, Sat 18 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

Kids Theatre

MORGAN & WEST'S MASSIVE MAGIC SHOW FOR KIDS 'Conjuring capers, mysterious magic tricks, larger-than-life laughs and fantastic facial furniture', all crammed into one hour of non-stop fun for all the family. Recommended for ages five-plus, Sun 19 May, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

Dance

ROSHNI - SONIA SABRI COMPANY An intimate crafting of dance and live music, made up of three distinctive and engaging dance works: *The Call*, *The Light*, and *The Wave*, Thurs 16 May, Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

Light Entertainment

JAACKMAATE'S HAPPY HOUR Join podcast favourites Jack, Stevie, Robbie & Alfie as they head out on a magical quest, Mon 13 May, Birmingham Town Hall

PSYCHIC SALLY Evening of mediumship, Mon 13 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

THE GREATEST MAGICIAN Featuring James Phelan, the magician famous for jamming the BBC switchboard after correctly predicting the lottery, Mon 13 May, Lichfield Garrick

WOLVES WEMBLEY WONDERS Steve Daley, Kenny Hibbitt, John Richards, John McAlle, Derek Parkin, Geoff Palmer, Phil Parkes and Barry Powell re-live the iconic match that saw Wolverhampton Wanderers win the 1974 League Cup Final against Manchester City, Tues 14 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

ADHD LOVE LIVE Bestselling viral duo Rich and Rox promise an evening of laughter, honest conversation and radical shame-reduction as they challenge the biggest ADHD stigmas and lies, Wed 15 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry



WILD ISLES LIVE Featuring highlights from the acclaimed BBC series alongside never-before-seen footage and insight from visionary documentary producer Alastair Fothergill, Fri 17 May, Birmingham Town Hall

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, Fri 17 May, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

OH WHAT A NIGHT! A musical journey through the career of Frankie Valli & The Four Seasons, Fri 17 May, Stratford Playhouse, Stratford-upon-Avon

KEVIN & PERRY GO LARGE IN CONCERT A film-with-orchestra experience under the big-top tent, Fri 17 May, NEC, Birmingham

HELP I SEXED MY BOSS Comedy podcast in which posh etiquette expert William Hanson and Jordan North, an authority on all things common, help audiences navigate the everyday problems of modern life, Sat 18 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Talks & Spoken Word

COLIN SUTTON - THE REAL MANHUNTER Join the former Metropolitan Police Murder Squad officer as he talks



The 39 Steps - Malvern Theatres

about his career, how policing has changed over the years, and what it's like to chase a serial killer, Tues 14 May, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

ELIZABETH SHARKEY: WHY BRITAIN ROCKED From the Celts, Henry VIII, and the Quakers, to Ira Aldridge and Paul Robeson, the award-winning author uncovers the unique events and unexpected influences that gave us British pop, Fri 17 May, Number 8, Pershore

Events

MUSEUM TOUR Join staff and volunteers for a guided tour of the museum, Mon 13 May, Lapworth Museum of Geology, University of Birmingham

BATIK HANGINGS WITH CARRIE BACKHOUSE Learn the intricate process of applying wax onto fabric, Tues 14 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

SPRING GARDEN TOUR Join a skilled member of the horticultural team as they guide you around the garden, paying special attention to seasonal highlights and features of interest, Wed 15 May, Winterbourne House and Garden, University of Birmingham

INTERNATIONAL WATERCOLOUR MASTERS Exhibition and festival featuring the world's best watercolour artists, Wed 15 - Fri 24 May, Lilleshall Hall, Shropshire

ROGUES, VILLAINS & PEAKY BLINDERS - CRIMINALS OF THE LOCK-UP Explore the museum after hours and enjoy an evening talk about some of the criminals held at the lock-up in its 125 year history, Thurs 16 May, West Midlands Police Museum, B'ham

SPRING DIESEL FESTIVAL Featuring both modern and heritage locomotives, Thurs 16 - Sun 19 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr

Kidderminster

WARWICK JAZZ NIGHT Warwick Lions Club host an evening of jazz and real ale, Fri 17 May, Warwick Racecourse

JAGUAR BREAKFAST MEET Open to all Jaguar owners and enthusiasts, regardless of affiliation with a club, forum or group, Sat 18 May, British Motor Museum, Gaydon

THE WARWICKSHIRE WEDDING SHOW Check out Warwick Racecourse's wedding spaces, Sat 18 May, Warwick Racecourse

MAPPING THE SPACE - MINDFULNESS DRAWING WITH THE HANDCRAFTED HEN Create either a large drawing, smaller drawings or a snake book inspired by the gallery space environment, Sat 18 May, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry

CRAFTERAMA Craft-supplies event featuring a selection of companies selling their wares, Sat 18 May, NAEC Stoneleigh, Warwickshire

BATTLE OF EVESHAM MEDIEVAL MARKET Over 120 reenactors welcome visitors into medieval life, Sat 18 - Sun 19 May, Evesham, Worcestershire

AGRIA DOG WALK A mass dog walk raising funds for dog rescues, Sat 18 - Sun 19 May, Kenilworth Castle



MAKERS CENTRAL Offering a chance for budding and established makers to learn, share skills and get creative, Sat 18 - Sun 19 May, NEC, B'ham

BRITISH TARANTULA SOCIETY EXHIBITION 50,000 spiders will compete for best in show, Sun 19 May, Warwickshire Event Centre, Leamington Spa



Nickelback - Utilita Arena Birmingham

Gigs

LEAH KATE + HUNTER DAILY + CEARA CAVALIERI Tues 21 May, O2 Institute, B'ham

TOBY LEE Tues 21 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

PROJECT BLACKBIRD Wed 22 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

MENGERS + YES PRINCESS + FREESPIRITS Wed 22 May, The Tin At The Coal Vaults, Coventry

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

THE GIGSPANNER BIG BAND & RAYNOR WINN Wed 22 May, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

TOMMY BLAIZE Wed 22 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch

NICKELBACK + LOTTERY WINNERS Thurs 23 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham

IONA LANE Thurs 23 May, Stratford Playhouse

TUNDE Thurs 23 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

TOM MEIGHAN Thurs 23 May, Marris Bar, Worcester

TOMMY BLAIZE Thurs 23 May, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

SONU NIGAM Fri 24 May, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

THE CROOKS Fri 24 May, The Rainbow, Digbeth, Birmingham

VOODOO ROOM Fri 24 May, Albany Theatre, Coventry

ONE NIGHT IN NASHVILLE Fri 24 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

HI-ON MAIDEN Fri 24 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

THE BLUETONES ACOUSTIC + ENJOYABLE LISTENS Fri 24 May, Marris Bar, Worcester

BYE BYE BABY - THE MUSIC OF FRANKIE VALLI Fri 24 May, Malvern Theatres

U2 2 Fri 24 May, 45Live, Kidderminster

SARAH MCQUAID Fri 24 May, West Malvern Social Club

SYMPHONIC IBIZA ORCHESTRA FEATURING HEATHER SMALL Fri 24 May, NEC, Birmingham

GOLDIE + DOC SCOTT Sat 25 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

FRIENDLY FIRE BAND Sat 25 May, The Night Owl, Birmingham

SONS OF THE EAST + PAT BURGNER Sat 25 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

DANNY BROWN Sat 25 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE SMYTHS Sat 25 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

ENGLISH TEACHER Sat 25 May, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

THE SILVER WYE + STYLUSBOY Sat 25 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

JACKDAW WITH CROWBAR + SATSANGI + THE ROLLOCKS + TROJAN PONY Sat 25 May, The Tin At The Coal Vaults, Coventry

THE FUREYS Sat 25 May, Albany Theatre, Coventry

TOMMY BLAIZE Sat 25 May, The Henrician, Evesham

MAINLY MADNESS Sat 25 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

THE SPECIALS TRIBUTE CONCERT Sat 25 May, The Benn Hall, Rugby

IAGO BANET Sat 25 May, The Market Theatre, Ledbury

THE STEADY EDD TRIO Sat 25 May, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

THE 80S SHOW Sat 25 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

THE EMERALD DAWN & JOHN HACKETT BAND Sat 25 May, 45Live, Kidderminster

NICKI MINAJ Sun 26 May, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

THE JAZZ APPLES Sun 26 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

DANIEL BARRIE + CHRISSE DUX Sun 26 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

THE SMOOTH ROCK SHOW Sun 26 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

Classical Music

CZECH NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA Featuring Steven Mercurio (conductor) & Mark Bebbington (piano). Programme includes works by Copland, Beethoven, Smetana & Dvořák, Tues 21 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

JOSEPH WICKS ORGAN RECITAL Tues 21 May, Hereford Cathedral

THE ROMANTIC REVIVAL ORCHESTRA Featuring Leo Jaffrey (conductor) & Maciej Rzepczyk (violin). Programme includes works by Dvořák, Mason Ma, Juliana Niu & Wieniawski, Thurs 23 May, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

RBC: DANNY ELFMAN PERCUSSION QUARTET Pre-CBSO concert showcase, featuring musicians from Royal Birmingham Conservatoire's Percussion department. Programme includes works by Sartorius, Glass, Shaw & Elfman, Thurs 23 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CBSO: BERNSTEIN & ELFMAN Featuring Fabien Gabel (conductor) & Colin Currie (percussion). Programme includes works by Bernstein, Elfman & Weill, Thurs 23 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

SUMMER RECITAL Featuring Emmanuel Bach (violin). Fri 24 May, St Mary's Church, Warwick

THE FULLTONE ORCHESTRA, CARLI PAOLI & ALED JONES Also featuring Anthony Brown (conductor) & Gareth Dafydd Morris (voice). Programme includes music from classical favourites and cinema, Sat 25 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Comedy

ANUVAB PAL Tues 21 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

KANAN GILL Wed 22 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, CRAIG HILL & COMIC TBC Thurs 23 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

TOM ALLEN Thurs 23 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

ANDY PARSONS Thurs 23 May, Evesham Town Hall

ED BYRNE Thurs 23 May, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

HORATIO GOULD Fri 24 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

RORY BREMNER, ANGELA BARNES, FREDDY QUINNE, MATT RICHARDSON & JANINE HAROUNI Fri 24 May, Warwick Castle

SILKY, RAUL KOHLI, JACOB NUSSEY & PATRICK DRAPER Fri 24 May, Abbey Theatre, Nuneaton

ROBYN PERKINS, ANDREW WHITE, CRAIG HILL & COMIC TBC Fri 24 - Sat 25 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

MICHAEL MCINTYRE Fri 24 - Sat 25 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham

COUNT ARTHUR STRONG Sat 25 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

SUKH OJLA Sat 25 May, The Rep, Birmingham

SIMON AMSTEL, MAISIE ADAM, FREDDY QUINNE, SPENCER JONES & ESHAAN AKBAR Sat 25 May, Warwick Castle

LEE LARD IS PETER KAY Sat 25 May, Regal, Tenbury Wells

KEVIN J, MR CEE, GBEMI OLADIPO, KYRAH GRAY & JAZZIE ZONZOLO Sun 26 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ADAM BEARDSMORE, HARVEY HAWKINS, LOVDEV BARPAGA, ALEX EGAN, HANNAH WEETMAN, LINDSEY SANTORO, TOM LITTLE & KWAME ASANTE Sun 26 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

NINA CONTI, GARY DELANEY, FREDDY QUINN, MATT BRAGG & STEPHEN BAILEY Sun 26 May, Warwick Castle

ED GAMBLE Sun 26 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry



Theatre

SHEILA'S ISLAND Amateur version of Tim Firth's comedy, set during an outward-bound team-building weekend, Mon 20 - Sat 25 May, Talisman Theatre & Arts Centre, Kenilworth

SWIM, AUNTY, SWIM! Siana Bagura's poetic story of friendship, loss, sisterhood, motherhood, ageing and starting again, Mon 20 May - Sat 1 June, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

THE OLIVE BOY A 'crude and compelling' coming-of-age comedy, written & performed by Ollie Maddigan, Tues 21 - Wed 22 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, B'ham

KINKY BOOTS Sutton Coldfield Musical Theatre Company present an amateur version of the Tony Award-winning musical, Tues 21 - Sat 25 May, Lichfield Garrick

ROMEO & JULIET Flabbergast Theatre fuse live music, clowning and mask work in an innovative approach to Shakespeare's classic love story, Tues 21 - Sat 25 May, Malvern Theatres

COME FROM AWAY Olivier & Tony award-winning musical telling the real-life story of the 7,000 air passengers from all over the world who were grounded in Canada during the wake of 9/11, Tues 21 May - Sat 1 June, Birmingham Hippodrome

THE ROTTING HART - A NEW QUEER HORROR The Crested Fools present a new queer horror tackling the history of homophobia in Spain and 'the enduring hate that persists inside ourselves', Thurs 23 - Fri 24 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

GREASE THE MUSICAL Coventry Musical Theatre Society present an amateur version of the iconic high-school musical, Thurs 23 - Sun 26 May, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

WHAT'S WRONG WITH BENNY HILL? A hard-hitting musical comedy exploring the life and legacy of the legendary British comedian, Fri 24 May, The Bear Pitt Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

SCENES FROM SHAW The Crescent Theatre presents an evening of scenes from the work of George Bernard Shaw, Fri 24 - Sat 25 May, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING... EARNEST? New interactive production based on Oscar Wilde's classic play, Fri 24 - Sat 25 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch

NASTY Succulent Theatre present an autobiographical, confessional theatre piece exploring 'the hidden side of what it means to be a woman', Fri 24 - Sat 25 May, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), B'ham

SIX CHICK FLICKS Smash-hit comedy which parodies a selection of popular chick flicks in a 'hysterical, fast-paced show', Sat 25 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

TREASURE ISLAND Swashbuckling pantomime adventure featuring Davina the Sea Witch and her notorious crew of pirates, Sun 26 May, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

RUBBISH SHAKESPEARE: ROMEO AND JULIET Three Idiots perform Shakespeare's famous tragedy using only a box of tatty wigs, a worn floral dress, and a burst airbed they found by the bins, Sun 26 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Kids Theatre

SPOT'S BIRTHDAY PARTY Interactive and accessible show based on Eric Hill's much-loved children's book, Tues 21 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

THE LION INSIDE Puppetry, music and song feature in a new stage adaptation of Rachel Bright & Jim Field's much-loved story for younger audiences, Sat 25 - Sun 26 May,

Birmingham Town Hall

PEPPA PIG'S FUN DAY OUT Join Peppa and her family & friends for a fun-packed day complete with songs, dance and muddy puddles, Sat 25 - Sun 26 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

Dance

JOHANNES RADEBE: HOUSE OF JOJO Brand-new theatrical celebration 'jam-packed with roof-raising music, dazzling costumes and world-class dance', Thurs 23 - Fri 24 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

BODY CLOCK BY AZIZI COLE A multidisciplinary piece combining music and movement to explore the influence that music can have on the body, Sat 25 May, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, University of Birmingham

A DECADE OF DANCE Sat 25 May, Warwick Hall, Warwick School

Light Entertainment

MICHAEL STARRING BEN Acclaimed production celebrating the King of Pop. Featuring a live band, dazzling costumes and the performer's iconic dance routines, Mon 20 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

CROONERS UNCAGED Show paying homage to some of the greatest crooners of all time, with renditions of songs from Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr, Matt Monro, Nat King Cole and Bobby Darin, Thurs 23 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch

A BIG LOCAL NIGHT OUT Comedy magician Tom Elliot hosts an evening of local talent and guest artists from the UK's performing-arts scene, Fri 24 May, Bridge House Theatre, Warwick

TWEEDY'S MASSIVE CIRCUS Join the star of Gifford's Circus as he and his friends put on their very own sophisticated circus show. What could possibly go wrong? Fri 24 May - Sun 2 June, Royal Shakespeare Company Grounds, Waterside, Stratford-upon-Avon

COVENTRY'S TRUE CRIME TALES Join crime historian Adam Wood to hear true tales from Coventry's dark past, Sun 26 May, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

Events

MINI MOTORISTS MONDAY Chance for under-fives to seek out the different colours and shapes in the museum's

collection, Mon 20 May, British Motor Museum, Gaydon

EXPERIENCE PENTECOST Experience the story of Pentecost and the beginning of the church via story, activities and reflection, Mon 20 - Fri 24 May, Coventry Cathedral

WARWICK RACEDAY Featuring two prestigious races, Wed 22 May, Warwick Racecourse

RUM & REGGAE RACENIGHT Evening of jump racing and live entertainment, Fri 24 May, Worcester Racecourse

SILENT DISCO Dance the night away in the unique surroundings of the cloisters area and grounds, Sat 25 May, Forge Mill Needle Museum, Redditch

HOOKED ON SHAKESPEARE Hands-on amigurumi workshop, Sat 25 May, Shakespeare's New Place, Stratford-upon-Avon

COMIC CON MANIA COVENTRY One-day event packed with pop culture, gaming and entertainment, Sat 25 May, Coventry Building Society Arena

THE HALAL FOOD FESTIVAL Featuring street-food vendors, Muslim lifestyle stalls and an artisan market, Sat 25 - Sun 26 May, NEC, Birmingham

HAGLEY HALL'S 95TH BIRTHDAY AFTERNOON TEA Travel in style in a luxurious vintage carriage with bubbles and afternoon tea, Sat 25 - Sun 26 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

DOGFEST Dog-friendly festival with activities, meet-ups and training sessions, Sat 25 - Sun 26 May, Ragley Hall, Warwickshire

BRICK FEST LIVE The largest hands-on Lego event of its kind makes its UK debut, Sat 25 - Mon 27 May, NEC, Birmingham

CHARACTER WEEK Meet your favourite kids' characters across the half-term holiday, Sat 25 May - Sun 2 June, West Midlands Safari Park, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

PLAY AND MAKE ZONE Discover the world of STEM via a selection of crafts which you can enjoy at your own pace, Sat 25 May - Sun 2 June, Coventry Transport Museum

KIDS RULE! Discover medieval weapons and armour, then test your skills in foam swordfighting games, Sat 25 May - Sun 2 June, Kenilworth Castle

TAKING SHAPE: PATTERNS IN THE MUSEUM Discover patterns of all kinds via numerous family activities, Sat 25 May - Sun 2 June, British Motor Museum, Gaydon

RETURN OF THE DINOSAURS Meet and greet several dinosaurs and learn how to tame them, Sat 25 May - Sun 2 June, Hatton Adventure World, Warwick

MAY HALF-TERM 'BEE DETECTIVE' TRAIL 'Buzz' around the parkland on this

family-friendly activity trail and help the bees find their queen, Sat 25 May - Sun 2 June, Charlecote Park, Warwick

KIDS RULE! Featuring hands-on activities and fresh-air family fun, Sat 25 May - Sun 2 June, Witley Court, Worcestershire

BRICK OCEAN AT THE ENGINE HOUSE Go under the sea and discover ocean-themed brick model installations, Sat 25 May - Sun 2 June, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

DESIGNS AND PATTERNS SEARCH CHALLENGE HALF-TERM TRAIL Search for designs, shapes and patterns around the castle, Sat 25 May - Sun 2 June, Hartlebury Castle, Worcestershire

MEDIEVAL MAYHEM Medieval fun for all the family, Sat 25 May - Sun 2 June, Tamworth Castle

THE ULTIMATE GERMAN CAR MEET Display of 1000 cars from German manufacturers, Sun 26 May, British Motor Museum, Gaydon

ANTIQUES & COLLECTORS FAIR Featuring a range of stalls offering 'high-quality items', Sun 26 May, Hartlebury Castle, Worcestershire

EASTNOR STEAM & VINTAGE Check out a line-up of steam engines and vintage cars in the castle courtyard, Sun 26 - Mon 27 May, Eastnor Castle, Herefordshire

Festivals

BEARDED THEORY SPRING GATHERING Line-up includes Jane's Addiction, Amyl And The Sniffers, Sleaford Mods, Thurs 23 - Sun 26 May, Catton Hall, South Derbyshire

GLASTONBUDGET Line-up includes The Bon Jovi Experience, Absolute Bowie, Young Elton, Thurs 23 - Sun 26 May, Turnpost Farm, Leicestershire

BREAKING BANDS Line-up includes Tailgunner, Stickman, Dead Man's Whiskey, Fri 24 - Mon 27 May, Stoke Prior Sports & Country Club, Bromsgrove

CHESTER FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up includes Greg Russell, Wet The Tea, Calan, Fri 24 - Mon 27 May, Kelsall Village, Cheshire

HOWTHELIGHTGETSIN Line-up includes The Orb, Sea Power, Hercules & Love Affair, Fri 24 - Mon 27 May, Hay on Wye, Hereford

BIRMINGHAM PRIDE Line-up includes Loreen, Natasha Bedingfield, Heather Small, Fri 24 - Sun 26 May, Birmingham Gay Village

DOT TO DOT FESTIVAL Line-up includes Jockstrap, Wunderhorse, The Magic Gang, Sun 26 May, various venues in Nottingham



Tool - Resorts World Arena

Gigs

JENNY COLQUITT + CRAIG GOULD Mon 27 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

HIS LORDSHIP Mon 27 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

BABE RAINBOW Mon 27 May, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

THE LOVELY EGGS Mon 27 May, XOYO, Birmingham

QUADE + MOTHS OF THE MOON Tues 28 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

TINY HABITS Tues 28 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE ZOMBIES Tues 28 May, Birmingham Town Hall

MF ROBOTS Wed 29 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

THE SIMON & GARFUNKEL STORY Wed 29 May, Artrix, Bromsgrove

THE MCCARTNEY SONGBOOK Wed 29 May, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

KRISSY MATTHEWS Wed

29 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

KING GIZZARD AND THE LIZARD WIZARD + GRACE CUMMINGS Wed 29 May, The Civic at The Halls, Wolverhampton

LOGIC Thurs 30 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

CHRIS HELME Thurs 30 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

CONCRETISM + BUNKR Thurs 30 May, The Victoria, Birmingham

TOOL + NIGHT VERSES Thurs 30 May, Resorts World Arena, B'ham

THANK YOU FOR THE MUSIC - ABBA TRIBUTE Thurs 30 May, The Alexandra, B'ham

SARAH MCQUAID Thurs 30 May, The Core Theatre, Solihull

LAUREN SOUTH Thurs 30 May, Bromsgrove Folk Club

THE LITTLE MIX SHOW Thurs 30 May, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

DELVON LAMARR ORGAN TRIO Thurs 30 May, The Assembly, Leamington

Spa

BRIGHDE CHAIMBEUL Thurs 30 May, The Fleece Inn, Bretforton, Nr Evesham

SECRET NIGHT GANG Thurs 30 May, Marrs Bar, Worcester

HAMMOK Thurs 30 May, Drummonds, Worcester

GARY NUMAN Fri 31 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

TEDDY SWIMS Fri 31 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE BLEED + STILL IN LOVE Fri 31 May, The Asylum, Birmingham

VOODOO SIOUX + TAXI FOR JESUS + THE WESTLANDS + PATTIE COOPER Fri 31 May, The Asylum, Birmingham

OLI HAYHURST Fri 31 May, 1000 Trades, Birmingham

THE MAGIC OF THE BEATLES Fri 31 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

SAN QUENTIN Fri 31 May, The Rainbow, Digbeth, Birmingham

XANDER AND THE PEACE PIRATES Fri 31 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

RUM RAGGED Fri 31 May, The Market Theatre, Ledbury

LOVE THE BEATLES Fri 31 May, Marrs Bar, Worcester

NORTHERN LIVE Fri 31 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch

WHO'S NEXT Fri 31 May, 45Live, Kidderminster



Xander And The Peace Pirates - Temperance, Leamington Spa

Classical Music

JEREMIAH MEAD ORGAN RECITAL Tues 28 May, Hereford Cathedral

CBSO: OLD WORLD SYMPHONY Featuring Oksana Lyniv (conductor) & Andrii Murza (violin). Programme includes works by Frolyak, Tchaikovsky & Dvořák, Wed 29 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

ELGAR FOR EVERYONE FAMILY CONCERT Featuring young musicians tutored by members of the English Symphony Orchestra, Wed 29 May, Worcester Cathedral

ELGAR FESTIVAL: RELAXED CONCERT Featuring members of the English Symphony Orchestra's wind section, Thurs 30 May (11am), Henry Sandon Hall, Worcester

ELGAR FESTIVAL: RELAXED CONCERT Featuring members of the English Symphony Orchestra's wind section, Thurs 30 May (3pm), Great Malvern Priory

ELGAR'S STRINGS Featuring Kenneth Woods (conductor - pictured) & Soloists of the English Symphony Orchestra. Programme includes works by I Holst, Elcock & Elgar, Fri 31 May, Worcester Guildhall



LUNCH WITH VIOLINIST ESTHER ABRAMI Programme includes works by Vaughan Williams & Elgar, Fri 31 May, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

BEST OF BALLET WITH THE CBSO Featuring Martin Yates (conductor), Zenaida Yanowsky (presenter) & the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Programme includes popular ballet scores from Sleeping Beauty, The Nutcracker, Swan Lake, Romeo & Juliet, Cinderella, The Firebird and Manon, Fri 31 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Comedy

MICHELLE BRASIER Tues 28 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

WATCH WHAT CRAPPENS Wed 29 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

CHRISTOPHER MACARTHUR-BOYD Wed 29 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

BRENNAN REECE, DAVE LONGLEY, AMY MATTHEWS & FREYA MCGHEE Thurs 30 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ROMESH RANGANATHAN Thurs 30 May,

Utilita Arena Birmingham

RIA LINA Thurs 30 May, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester



COMEDY CLUB Thurs 30 May, Stratford Play House, Stratford-upon-Avon

BRENNAN REECE, DAVE LONGLEY, ROBERT WHITE & AMY MATTHEWS Fri 31 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

SUNSHINE ON LEITH Amateur version presented by Solihull Theatre Company, Tues 28 May - Sat 1 June, Bushell Hall, Solihull School

THE KITE RUNNER Acclaimed production based on Khaled Hosseini's bestselling novel, Tues 28 May - Sat 1 June, Malvern Theatres

SHERLOCK'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE 'Riotous spoof' featuring four actors, minimal furnishings and 'a ton of jolly good fun', Wed 29 May, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

MACREADY A solo show based on the journal of William Charles Macready, Wed 29 May, Macready Theatre, Rugby

I, MALVOLIO A one-man show which reimagines Shakespeare's Twelfth Night from the point of view of its most notoriously abused steward. Suitable for audiences aged 11 plus, Thurs 30 - Fri 31 May, The Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon



Kids Theatre

MILKSHAKE LIVE ON HOLIDAY All-singing, all-dancing show for younger audiences, Mon 27 May, Malvern Theatres

Monday 27 - Friday 31 May

THE THREE LITTLE PIGS Amateur version presented by The Worcester Repertory Company, Tues 28 May - Sun 2 June, Swan Theatre, Worcester

CLAYTIME Indefinite Articles present a 'play with clay' event for kids aged three to six. Expect to enter a world of fabulous forms, amazing animals and morphing monsters, Tues 28 May, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

THE BUBBLE SHOW A unique blend of magic, storytelling, science and bubble art, Tues 28 May, Macready Theatre, Rugby



DINOSAUR ADVENTURE LIVE - TROUBLE ON VOLCANO ISLAND An immersive theatrical adventure for the whole family, Wed 29 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch



RUDE SCIENCE! BBC gastronaut Stefan Gates' 'revolutionary, high-tech, highly-explosive new show', packed with outrageous science stunts, Thurs 30 May, Malvern Theatres

POP PRINCESSES Children's pop concert in which princesses become pop stars against a backdrop of hits from Little Mix, Ariana Grande, Taylor Swift, Meghan Trainor, Miley Cyrus and more... Thurs 30 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch

MADAGASCAR THE MUSICAL CBBC star Karim Zeroual stars as King Julien in an adventure musical based on the hit DreamWorks film, Thurs 30 May - Sun 2 June, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

RAPUNZEL A tangled musical adventure featuring a wicked witch, feisty heroine, tap-dancing horse and adventures aplenty, Fri 31 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

Light Entertainment

MIND MANGLER: MEMBER OF THE TRAGIC CIRCLE New mentalism comedy from Henry Lewis and Jonathan Sayer - creators of the

smash-hit The Play That Goes Wrong and BBC series The Goes Wrong Show, Mon 27 - Wed 29 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

SING-A-LONG-A MATILDA Screening of the Roald Dahl classic, complete with lyrics and dance routines for audience participation. Fancy dress encouraged, Wed 29 May, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

SPIRIT OF THE BLITZ Feelgood show recreating 1940s favourites from the likes of Vera Lynn, George Formby, Max Miller and Bing Crosby. Andy Eastwood, Maggie O'Hara and Pete Lindup star, Thurs 30 May, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

DAD'S ARMY RADIO SHOW Perry & Croft's classic 1970s BBC comedy is brought to life by two actors playing over 25 characters, Thurs 30 May, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

THE D-DAY DARLINGS A musical journey back to the heart of 1940s wartime Britain, Thurs 30 May, The Regal, Tenbury

Events

BLOCK PRINTING HALF-TERM CRAFTS Try Indian block printing on a cloth bag, Mon 27 May, Hartlebury Castle, Worcestershire

OAK APPLE DAY Step back in time to 1660 and celebrate the restoration of the crown, Mon 27 May, The Commandery, Worcester

STREET JAM FESTIVAL DANCE COMPETITION Featuring a performance from Diversity and 100-plus dance schools from around the UK, Mon 27 May, NEC, Birmingham

MARVELLOUS MATERIALS FAMILY SHOW Interactive family show featuring demonstrations and audience participation, Mon 27 - Fri 31 May, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

ACT SHAKESPEARE Dive into The Tempest or Macbeth via a skills-based workshop for children aged eight to 11, Tues 28 May, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

CREATIVE UPCYCLING Re-use and upcycle items from the theatre's museum collection, Tues 28 - Fri 31 May, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

FAMILY SESSIONS - CIVIL WAR SOLDIER SCHOOL Have a go at pike and cannon drills, play games soldiers would have played, and help King Charles II escape from the Parliamentarian army, Tues 28 - Fri 31 May, The Commandery, Worcester

ACT SHAKESPEARE Energetic drama workshops for children aged 11 to 14, Wed 29 May, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

DISCIBILITY Monthly social disco for people with learning disabilities, Wed

29 May, Lillington Club, Leamington Spa

WARWICKSHIRE GIN COMPANY: GIN TASTING EVENT Enjoy a night spent tasting tasty gins! Canapés, a talk from a gin connoisseur and a backstage tour of the theatre also feature, Thurs 30 May, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

MAKING MONSTERS & MISCHIEF: MASKS, PUPPETS & PERFORMANCE Tactile workshops for children aged eight-plus who are interested in the design and making side of theatre, Thurs 30 May, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

PROP-MAKING & PERFORMANCE: DAGGERS, POISONS & OTHER FORMS OF MAYHEM Tactile workshops for children aged 11-plus who are interested in the design and making side of theatre, Thurs 30 May, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

FAMILY STORYTELLING: THE TEMPEST Bitesize storytelling sessions, suitable for the whole family, Thurs 30 May, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

MAKE-UP: BLOOD, GUTS AND GORE Enjoy a demo workshop and learn to

make characters, looks and gruesome injuries through costume and stage make-up, Fri 31 May, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

UK GAMES EXPO Demonstrating, and selling tabletop games of all types, Fri 31 May - Sun 2 June, NEC, Birmingham

MIDLANDS AIR FESTIVAL Featuring over 100 hot-air balloons, Fri 31 May - Sun 2 June, Ragley Hall, Warwickshire

Festivals

FORBIDDEN FOREST Line-up includes Pawsa, Low Steppa, East End Dubs, Fri 31 May - Sun 2 June, Belvoir Castle, Nottinghamshire

BIRMINGHAM INTERNATIONAL SKA & REGGAE FESTIVAL Line-up includes The Pioneers, Stranger Cole, Basil Gabbidon, Fri 31 May - Sun 2 June, Thornborough Farm, Birmingham

WYCHWOOD MUSIC FESTIVAL Line-up includes Sister Sledge, Texas, Ocean Colour Scene, Fri 31 May - Sun 2 June, Cheltenham Racecourse

Cheltenham Science Festival 4-9 June 2024

Talks and interactive activities for all ages including...

Brian Cox
Robin Incc
Sophia Smith Galer
Dara O'Briain
Susie Dent
Jim Al-Khalili
Kate Bradbury
Thomas Hertog
Maggie Aderin-Pocock
Tim Peake

...and so many more scientists, thinkers, writers and creators

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Win! A family ticket to see Peppa Pig's Fun Day Out!

Packed full of singing and dancing (and muddy puddles!), Peppa Pig's Fun Day Out guarantees giggles and snorts for all Peppa fans - and provides a perfect introduction to theatre for your little ones. We have a family ticket (4 tickets) to give away for this oinktastic stage show when it stops off at The Alexandra, Birmingham, on Wednesday 31 July.

Competition closes Friday 19 July



Win! Two adult weekend camping tickets to Shrewsbury Folk Festival

Shrewsbury Folk Festival returns late summer (West Mid Showground, Friday 23 - Monday 26 August) with four days of folk, Americana, blues and world music.

We are offering one reader the chance to win two adult weekend camping tickets for this year's get-together.

Competition closes Monday 5 August



Win! Tickets to ALSO Festival 2024!

Leading lights in the worlds of music, comedy, wellness, food and nature will come together when ALSO Festival heads to Compton Verney in Warwickshire from Friday 12 to Sunday 14 July. We are offering three readers the chance to each win a family ticket (4 tickets) or a pair of adult weekend tickets worth £300!

Competition closes Friday 31 May



Win! Two tickets to BBC Gardeners' World Live!

Green-fingered fans of BBC Gardeners' World Live will be delighted to know that the much-loved annual event is returning to Birmingham's NEC next month (Thursday 13 - Sunday 16 June).

And better still... we're offering two readers the chance to each win a pair of tickets to the final day of the show!

Competition closes Monday 27 May

For your chance to WIN! with What's On, visit:

whatsonlive.co.uk

LIVE EVENTS IN SHREWSBURY

MAY/JUNE 2024

THE BUTTERMARKET
SHREWSBURY
SHROPSHIRE'S LIVE MUSIC & EVENTS VENUE



COMEDY HOTSPOT
SHREWSBURY
THURS 9 MAY

FEATURING:
JON PEARSON
PHILIP SIMON
SAM SERRANO
JJ WHITEHEAD

Totally TINA!
THE ORIGINAL AWARD-WINNING TINA TURNER SPECTACULAR!
FRI 10 MAY

ONE LOVE A CELEBRATION OF BOB MARLEY
FEATURING **THE MARLEY EXPERIENCE**
BOB MARLEY'S NO.1 TRIBUTE BAND
SAT 11 MAY

LEGENDS of MOTOWN
SUN 12 MAY

FLEETING RUMOURS
FRI 17 MAY
GREATEST HITS TOUR

THE BIG 80s OUTDOOR TERRACE PARTY!
SAT 18 MAY
FEATURING **erased**
THE ULTIMATE ERASURE TRIBUTE

Meat Loaf
BAT OUT OF HELL
GREATEST HITS LIVE!
SAT 18 MAY

Dean Friedman
IN CONCERT
FEATURING THE HITS:
Lucky Stars
Woman Of Mine
Lydia
Ariel
and many more!
SUN 19 MAY

IN THE AIR TONIGHT
THE UK'S LEADING SHOW CELEBRATING THE MUSIC OF
Phil Collins & Genesis
AS SEEN ON PBS AND THE KELLY CLARKSON SHOW
FRI 24 MAY

HARD ROCK NIGHT IN THE CELLARS
FRI 24 MAY
RUFFNECKS
SHROPSHIRE'S PREMIER HARD ROCK BAND!

THE **RYAN EVANS** COUNTRY MUSIC SHOW
PLUS SPECIAL COUNTRY GUEST **TOM BYRNE**
SUN 26 MAY

GORDON HENDRICKS
ONE NIGHT WITH YOU
THURS 30 MAY

GORDON HENDRICKS
ELVIS
THE KING'S VOICE
FRI 31 MAY

THE **DOLLY** SHOW
SAT 1 JUNE

LONDON CALLING play
THE CLASH
'GIVE 'EM ENOUGH ROPE'
45th Anniversary Tour
FRI 7 JUNE

DBP
BOXING
SUMMER SIZZLER
ALL DAY CHAMPIONSHIP BOXING
SATURDAY 8 JUNE

DEFINITELY GALLAGHER
FRI 14 JUNE
THE CELLARS

THE DEFINITIVE TRIBUTE TO
QUEEN
FRI 14 JUNE

COME AND WATCH THE EUROS ON THE BIGGEST SCREEN IN SHREWSBURY!
14 JUNE - 14 JULY
EURO 2024
LIMITED FREE TICKETS AVAILABLE NOW

I'M EVERY WHITNEY
STARRING KIESHIA CHUN & HER MILLION DOLLAR LIVE BAND
FRI 21 JUNE

SKA Outdoor Festival
LIVE ON STAGE!
THE SUPERSKAS
SAT 22 JUNE

NIRVANAH
FRI 28 JUNE

Day Life
OLD SCHOOL HIP HOP
OUTDOOR ROOFTOP PARTY
SAT 29 JUNE

A Country Night in **NASHVILLE**
STARRING DOMINIC HALLPIN & THE HUBBARDIANES
SUN 30 JUNE



**THE UK'S BIGGEST
CELEBRATION OF LEGO®**

**SATURDAY 25, SUNDAY 26
& BANK HOLIDAY MONDAY 27 MAY
NEC **BIRMINGHAM****

FANS OF ALL AGES CAN EXPECT:

LIFE-SIZE MODELS

WORLD-RECORD FLOOR MOSAIC

HANDS-ON BUILD ZONES

35' LONG DERBY RAMPS

GLOW ZONE

BRICK PIT

HARD-TO-FIND LEGO® MERCHANDISE

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TRAILER!**



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