

Coventry & Warwickshire

ISSUE 460 MAY 2025

What's On

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...Earnest? takes Oscar Wilde's classic to a whole new level



DEATH BY IMPROV

hit whodunnit Murder, She Didn't Write visits the Belgrade



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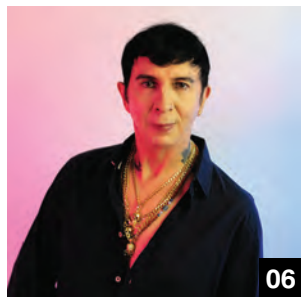
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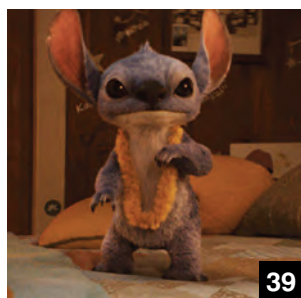
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What's On

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The Coventry Belgrade unveils its autumn season

The Coventry Belgrade Theatre is turning to the famous fairytale of the Sleeping Beauty for its 2025/26 pantomime production. Once again written by panto veteran Iain Lauchlan, the show runs at the venue from Wednesday 19 November to Saturday 3 January. The pantomime forms part of an autumn/winter line-up of entertainment at the Belgrade which also includes much-loved musicals *Blood Brothers* and *The Rocky Horror Show*, as well as a number of brand-new productions. The English Touring Opera will make its debut at the venue with a staging of Britten's *The Rape Of Lucretia*, whilst younger audiences are sure to be entertained by Grandad Anansi - an uplifting tale that shines a light on the Windrush generation. For information on all future programming, visit belgrade.co.uk

The Gallery 2025 still open at Motor Museum

There's still time to check out British Motor Museum exhibition *The Gallery 2025*. Featuring a collection of motoring-related pieces from a variety of Britain's most creative automotive artists and sculptors, the display will be available to view until Thursday 26 June. To find out more, visit the website at britishmotormuseum.co.uk



Headliners announced for Warwick Folk Festival

The 45th Warwick Folk Festival will take place in the town's Castle Park from Thursday 24 to Sunday 27 July. This year's headline acts include Richard Thompson, Le Vent du Nord, Kate Rusby and Martin Simpson. To find out more and book tickets, visit warwickfolkfestival.co.uk

Avoncroft Museum enjoys visitor attraction success

Avoncroft Museum in Bromsgrove has been named Small Visitor Attraction of the Year in the Visit Worcestershire Tourism Awards. This year's ceremony, which featured 70-plus finalists and 16 winners, was held at Malvern's Three Counties Showground and celebrated the county's outstanding contributions to tourism and hospitality. For more information, visit avoncroft.org.uk

Eddie Izzard goes it alone with hit version of Hamlet

Coventry's Warwick Arts Centre will host Eddie Izzard's solo version of *Hamlet* in the autumn. The show, which has received widespread critical acclaim, visits the Midlands venue on Saturday 18 October. To find out more and book tickets, visit warwickartscentre.co.uk



Animals galore at Royal Three Counties Show

The award-winning Royal Three Counties Show will return to Malvern next month (Three Counties Showground, Friday 13 - Sunday 15 June). As well as featuring a host of special guests and leading voices from the worlds of food and farming, the event will also boast a staggering 8,000 animals across the

weekend. Highlights include a grand parade of livestock, a goat show, a pig village and numerous sheep shearing demonstrations. Tickets can be purchased via the website at royalthreecounties.co.uk



Fantasy Forest Festival coming to Sudeley Castle

Sudeley Castle is once again hosting a family-friendly fantasy forest festival this summer. Taking place at the Gloucestershire venue from Friday 18 to Sunday 20 July, the event will feature the return of the ever-popular costume show and competition. To find out more, visit the website: sudeleycastle.co.uk



Eric looks on the bright side of life

Eric Idle will visit the Midlands in the autumn as part of a UK tour.

The much-loved Monty Python star appears at Birmingham's Symphony Hall on Wednesday 10 September, presenting a show which he says "contains everything, including comedy, music, philosophy, and one fart joke". Tickets can be purchased at bmusic.co.uk



Chris Brown tours to Villa Park

R&B superstar Chris Brown is bringing his Breezy Bowl XX Tour to Villa Park next month. The two-time Grammy winner will play the stadium on Thursday 26 June. To check ticket availability, go to the website livenation.com

Cathedral to host a Tudor romp

Coventry Cathedral is next month hosting a brand-new Tudor musical romp that's promising 'regicidal rivalries, devious dramatics, and plotting playwrights'. Publicised as 'largely historical, always hysterical', The Most Perilous Comedie Of Elizabeth I shows at the venue on Sunday 15 June. To find out more about the production and book tickets, visit coventrycathedral.org.uk



Celebrating Wes Anderson at Warwick Arts Centre

Coventry's Warwick Arts Centre is hosting a special event in celebration of film director Wes Anderson this month (Saturday 17 May). Taking place the weekend before the release of the critically acclaimed auteur's latest and highly anticipated movie, The Phoenician Scheme (which is covered in this month's Film

section), the event features three of his best-loved cinematic offerings: Rushmore (showing at 2pm), The Grand Budapest Hotel (4.15pm), and The Royal Tenenbaums (7pm), which will be preceded by a 'suitably whimsical' movie quiz. For more information and to book tickets, visit the venue's website: warwickartscentre.co.uk



Utilita date for Deadly's Steve

A new live entertainment adventure featuring 'daring stunts, mind-blowing experiments, and cutting-edge science' is visiting Birmingham's Utilita Arena in the autumn (Thursday 30 October). Taking the title Deadly Live!, the show is based on popular BBC franchise Deadly. BAFTA-winning wildlife presenter & adventurer Steve Backshall, who hosts the television series, will also front the live version. Tickets are available via the website: deadlylivetour.com

Coventry Open 2025 up and running

A major exhibition celebrating creativity across the Midlands is now open to the public.

The Coventry Open 2025, showing at the city's Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, showcases more than 100 works from artists across Coventry, Warwickshire, and the wider region. Coventry-based photographer Alan Van Wijgerden is the recipient of this year's £1,000 top prize, awarded for his visual-audio piece entitled Sent To Coventry Again. The exhibition is available to view until Sunday 8 June.



Springboard Festival returns to the Criterion

Coventry's Criterion Theatre is this month hosting a week-long festival of performing arts presented by amateur, community and professional companies and artists. Taking place at the venue from Saturday 10 to Saturday 17 May, Springboard Festival will include one-act plays, poetry & spoken word events, music, film, literary discussions and visual art. To find out more, visit criteriontheatre.co.uk

Worcestershire tourism awards applications open

Worcestershire's top tourism and hospitality businesses are being invited to apply for the prestigious Visit Worcestershire Tourism Awards 2025/26, which celebrate excellence across the county's visitor economy. For further information about how to apply, check out visitworcestershire.org

Heritage line to make landslip repairs

Severn Valley Railway is to move ahead with repairs to the landslip it suffered at Mor Brook bridge in late January. The news follows a decision by the heritage line's insurers to settle its claim in respect of the incident.

Acts announced for this year's Godiva Festival

Marc Almond, Clean Bandit and Ocean Colour Scene will headline this summer's Godiva Festival. The ever-popular event, which also features performances by, among others, Neville Staple and Heather Small, takes place at Coventry's War Memorial Park from Friday 4 to Sunday 6 July. More information is available by visiting godivafestival.com



Dianne & Vito: Red Hot And Ready in the Midlands!

Strictly Come Dancing's Dianne Buswell and Vito Coppola are heading to the Midlands with a brand-new show. Taking the title Red Hot And Ready, the production is being described as 'the ultimate high-voltage dance extravaganza,

exploding with jaw-dropping choreography, heart-pounding music and breathtaking moves'. The show visits Birmingham's Symphony Hall on Friday 4 July. To find out more and book tickets, visit dianneandvito.co.uk

Wolf & Owl podcast to go live at the Hippodrome

Comedians Tom Davis and Romesh Ranganathan are bringing a live version of their Wolf & Owl podcast to the Midlands this autumn. The much-loved duo will be stopping off at Birmingham Hippodrome on Monday 29 September. Tickets are available now by visiting the theatre's website.



TV stars to host the VIP enclosure at Game Fair

Broadcaster & farmer Jimmy Doherty (pictured) and mixologist Merlin Griffiths - best known from Channel Four's First Dates show - will host the VIP enclosure at this year's Ragley Hall Game Fair. The popular event, which takes place from Friday 25 to Sunday 27 July, will include, among other attractions, shooting, debates,

exhibitors, fine art, archery, fishing, cooking demonstrations, camping & glamping and falconry. To find out more, visit the show's website at thegamefair.org



Stratford Literary Festival returns this month

The Stratford Literary Festival returns this month (Crowne Plaza Hotel, Thursday 8 - Sunday 11 May) with a packed programme featuring bestselling writers and household names from stage and screen. Contributions from leading historians and experts, award-winning fiction writers and 'some of the most exciting emerging authors published this year', also feature. The line-up includes Radio Four presenter Mishal Husain; 'Queen of Dictionary Corner' Susie Dent; bestselling author Cecilia Ahern; leading actress Sally Phillips (pictured); radio host Simon Mayo; and professional Game Master Jasper William Cartwright. For further information and to book tickets, visit stratfordliteraryfestival.co.uk



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Ghostly goings-on for Stacey and Kevin

Real-life partners Stacey Dooley and Kevin Clifton will star in supernatural thriller 2:22 - A Ghost Story when it tours to the Midlands later this year and early 2026.

The smash-hit show stops off at Stoke-on-Trent's Regent Theatre (Monday 29 September - Saturday 4 October), and Birmingham's The Alexandra (Monday 13 - Saturday 18 October).

2:22 - A Ghost Story then returns to the region next year to play Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Monday 18 - Saturday 23 May.

For more information and to book tickets, visit 222aghoststory.com



Rik Mayall festival brings comedy to Droitwich Spa

Droitwich will host the inaugural Rik Mayall Comedy Festival during the first week of next month.

Running from Saturday 31 May to Saturday 7 June, the festival comprises 130-plus events taking place across more than 25 venues around the town. Free family days, plays, spoken word, improv, music, magic, dance, storytelling and singing all feature. Comedians signed up to take part in the event include Greg Davies, Peter Richardson, Helen Lederer, Shaparak Khorsandi and Dan Skinner as Angelos Epithemiou (pictured).

The festival is volunteer-led and pays tribute to alternative comedian Rik, who grew up in Droitwich. The Young Ones and New Statesman star died in 2014 at the age of 56.



Festival explores worldwide culture and creativity

The University of Warwick's Resonate Festival returns to campus late this month with an array of hands-on activities, performances and creative demonstrations for visitors to enjoy.

The full programme is yet to be announced, but organisers are promising a fun and

festival-style event in which art and science collide.

The Resonate Festival of Arts & Culture takes place in the University of Warwick's Faculty of Arts Building on Saturday 31 May (from 11am to 4pm). For further information, visit the website at resonatefestival.co.uk

Bollywood panto at the Wolverhampton Grand

A British South Asian pantomime, co-produced by Wolverhampton's Grand Theatre, will this autumn head out on a short UK tour - after premiering at the Grand itself. Fusing the British tradition of pantomime with 'a spectacular Desi vibe', Surinderella shows at the venue from Tuesday 23 to Saturday 27 September. Tickets for the show are available by visiting grandtheatre.co.uk

Warwick orchestra pay tribute to Thomas Hardy

The Warwickshire-based Orchestra of the Swan will next month mark the 150th anniversary of the publication of *Far From The Madding Crowd* by presenting a celebration of the novel's author, Thomas Hardy, at Malvern Theatres (Friday 20 June). Featuring Midlands-born actor Anton Lesser as narrator - along with Lucia Bonbright - *A Beautiful Thread* 'weaves Hardy's life with his poetry and novels'.

The readings will be accompanied by 'a musical programme of shimmering beauty', devised by the orchestra's artistic director, David Le Page. To find out more and book tickets, visit orchestraoftheswan.org

Autumn dates for Inside No 9 at The Alexandra

The stage version of award-winning television comedy series *Inside No 9* will make an autumn stop-off at Birmingham theatre The Alexandra.

The creation of *League Of Gentlemen* stars Steve Pemberton and Reece Shearsmith, the production shows at the city-centre venue from Tuesday 7 to Saturday 11 October. For more information and tickets, head to the website at atgtickets.com/venues/the-alexandra-theatre-birmingham



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A NEW CHAPTER

**Orchestra Of The Swan are shining a light on the
life and work of local author George Eliot**



The Warwick-based Orchestra Of The Swan are presenting a show celebrating the life and work of George Eliot in the author's home town of Coventry this month. And their artistic director, David Le Page, is revelling in the chance to perform bolder, more theatrical musical productions - as he recently explained to What's On...

Orchestra Of The Swan has really started to spread its wings in the past few years, embracing a wider variety of musical genres, themes and performance styles than those traditionally associated with a chamber orchestra. The latest string to its bow has involved teaming up with Hamblett's Productions to stage Words & Music - shows that combine musical performances and storytelling to celebrate some of our greatest authors.

The partnership has already resulted in shows about Laurie Lee and Thomas Hardy, both featuring actor Anton Lesser. The latest venture, George Eliot In Words And Music, sees the same creative team tackling the life and work of the Nuneaton-born writer who was christened Mary Ann Evans.

Similar to previous productions, the show involves a presentation of the author's story using biographical details and a script based on her own words (taken from her novels, letters, journals, poetry and journalism). This will be performed in Coventry - alongside a selection of music played by the orchestra - by Cold Feet actress Hermione Norris.

The radical work of the groundbreaking author has prompted a similar approach to curating the music, according to the orchestra's artistic director, David Le Page. David has chosen tunes by contemporary female singer-songwriters to feature alongside the script.

"With George, I wanted to try something completely different, being aware that she was writing under a pseudonym and in a male-dominated environment," he says.

"I've arranged music by contemporary English female singer-songwriters. So we're doing songs by Kate Bush, Bat For Lashes, Alison Moyet, Anna Calvi, Dido, FKA Twigs, Sandy Denny, Florence And The Machine and more." He then reveals the identity of the production's "secret weapon": English singer, songwriter & actor SuRie.

"She's just brilliant - she not only delivers the written material so well, she sings the songs, too. As soon as I knew she was going to be involved, I thought it was an opportunity to do something different. You wouldn't necessarily put those singer-songwriters with George Eliot, but I think the contrast is quite bold."

It will be the first time one of the Words & Music shows has featured a vocalist, as well as the first to contain contemporary music.

"The interesting thing about George Eliot's

writing, particularly when she's writing autobiographically, is that it's quite contemporary sounding. She did things in her life which would've outraged the society that she lived in, so that actually translates very well.

"I've arranged the songs for a particular band - violin, cello, bass, keyboard, oboe and drums - so it's got a contemporary, poppy feel to it, which I think is really appealing. Also, that jolt of hearing a bit of Middlemarch or Silas Marner and then a song by Kate Bush [Running Up That Hill] is really beautiful."

Balancing - and juxtaposing - music with the script, which has been written by Deirdre Shields, is a crucial part of the whole endeavour - and a challenge David clearly enjoys.

"Weaving the music in and out is my job as music director, so I'll arrange or write some of the music, and try to respond to the text. Sometimes there are underscores and it's quite cinematic; like watching a film."

David says the cinematic approach also works well with the way the script effectively tells the author's story, weaving together facts and fiction to get a sense not only of her work but also her life.

"That's Deirdre's brilliance, really. Sometimes you're thinking 'Hold on... is this something from Middlemarch or Mill On The Floss, or is it part of George Eliot's life?' They're so closely related - and sometimes the paragraphs are back-to-back - that you're not sure what's biography and what's fiction. That's a lovely thing, and at the end of it, you know quite a bit more about George Eliot, and will probably want to investigate her work much more."

Another element David relishes - and believes the orchestra, actors and audience do, too - is that the musicians are on stage and part of the action, rather than being hidden from view in the pit.

"The actors seem to really enjoy that we're on stage with them. I think they like that interaction - it feels like a novel way of performing."

The Words & Music shows are something which David feels are a good fit for the orchestra going forward, as it looks for new ways to connect with wider audiences.

"We've definitely got our minds on a much more theatrical model. And we're playing places that the orchestra doesn't usually play, so it's really nice to be in a completely different environment - and on stage, not in

the pit!"

The model, which ticks a variety of boxes, is a direction David believes the orchestra has been headed for a while.

"I've been very keen for us to fly the nest in Warwickshire. We love playing here, but we needed to find something that we could do that no one else was really doing - no other orchestra, anyway - and then take it all over the country and play to as many people as possible.

"I think the Words & Music model we do with Hamblett's and Deirdre has really allowed us to do that. For me *personally* it's creative - making the arrangements and writing a lot of the music - and it's also very creative for the orchestra. It's very dynamic in terms of performance, and you're being watched all the time, so you've got to be in a musical character, responding to the text. I think it's good for everybody."

David also likes the idea that the shows are helping to change expectations of what an orchestra might be, taking it away from being a static, formal affair to something more welcoming to a wider audience.

"I always recognised that although orchestras and classical music are a terribly powerful thing, sometimes the rituals and the things people are expected to do when they go and see concerts can be a bit restricting.

"I'd like people to come and think 'Oh, an orchestra can be a different thing.' It doesn't have to be a certain number of players; it can look like this and doesn't have to wear that... it can be really connecting and communicating with the audience in quite a contemporary way.

"That was my intention when I took over as artistic director eight years ago. It's not that I don't enjoy that other side of it - I can always see the worth in that - it's just that, for me personally and for the orchestra, it felt like this was a necessary step to take; to feel different and to look different. The Words & Music shows are a way to grow our audience, so that people might think we do interesting things and come back and see some of our other concerts."

.....

Orchestra Of The Swan present George Eliot In Words And Music at Coventry's Belgrade Theatre on Friday 16 May

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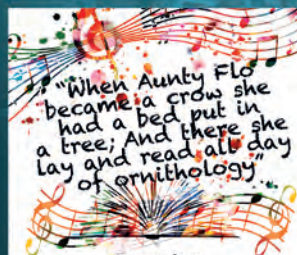
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Warwick performance is generously supported by John Cook, Braunston Marina, and Rosemary Holding Malvern Theatres performance is generously sponsored by John Osborn CBE.

Classical music from across the region...



Halle Orchestra

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Wed 14 May

Admired around the world for their extensive orchestral repertoire, the Manchester-based Hallé here present a programme celebrating French music from the 19th and 20th centuries. The concert begins with Louise Farrenc's Overture in E flat, after which the audience

will be treated to Ravel's G major Piano Concerto (performed by the internationally acclaimed Cédric Tiberghien) and Berlioz's much-loved *Symphonie fantastique*. Alexandre Bloch (pictured), music director of the National Orchestra of Lille, is the concert's conductor.



Sacconi String Quartet feat. Simon Callaghan

Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington Spa,
Mon 5 May

Routinely bringing an infectious energy and huge enthusiasm to their concerts, the award-winning Sacconi Quartet have been widely praised for their imaginative approach to the business of musicmaking. The super-talented foursome perform at the Royal Pump Rooms in the company of pianist Simon Callaghan, their concert bringing to a close this year's Leamington Music Festival.

The programme for the evening features music by Ravel (String Quartet in F major), Bliss (Piano Quartet) and Franck (Piano Quintet in F minor).

CBSO: Mendelssohn & Wagner

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Wed 28 May

Famous and much-loved compositions by Felix Mendelssohn start and finish this two-hour City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra concert (including an interval). Kickstarting proceedings is the Overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, written by the composer 199 years ago at the tender age of 17... The afternoon of musicmaking is brought to a sunny conclusion with a performance of his 'Italian' symphony, a work which has been described as 'reminiscent of beautiful blue skies'. Alongside the double dose of Mendelssohn, the concert also features, as its title makes clear, music by Richard Wagner - to be more specific, his sumptuous *Wesendonck Lieder*. A set of five songs for piano and female voice (in this case, Jamie Barton's), the work was inspired by the poetry of Mathilde Wesendonck, the wife of Wagner's patron, with whom the composer somewhat unwisely fell in love.

The concert programme is completed by Roxanna Panufnik's *Alma's Songs Without Words*. Pierre Bleuse conducts.

Sinfonia of Birmingham

All Saints Church, Leamington Spa,
Sat 3 May

The Sinfonia make a welcome return to the Leamington Music Festival, two years after last contributing to the event.

On this occasion accompanied by CBSO Associate Conductor Michael Seal and soloists Helen Benson (flute) and Alida Fabris (harp), the highly rated orchestra present a concert programme that features Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*, Ravel's *Mother Goose Suite* and Mozart's rarely performed *Flute & Harp Concerto*.



Elgar Festival

Various locations in and around Worcester
& Malvern, Sat 24 May - Sun 1 June

Making a nine-day return, this much-loved festival is this year celebrating great musicmaking (of course!), the natural environment, young musicians, historic buildings, community, diversity and participation.

Highlights include Elgar's *Symphony No2* and John Ireland's *These Things Shall Be*, both of which will be performed by the critically acclaimed English Symphony Orchestra in Worcester Cathedral. Recitals by Raphael Wallfisch, David Briggs and April Fredrick also feature, as do participatory event *Come And Play Elgar* and family concert *Elgar For Everyone*.

There are several free-to-attend events included in the programme, which features relaxed concerts, an exhibition, choral events, a film screening, Q&As, a guided walk, and a new performance partnership with students from the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire.



FUN IN STORE

Kim's Convenience opens its doors in the Midlands this month

The award-winning play that inspired Netflix comedy series *Kim's Convenience* is currently touring the UK and stops off in Coventry this month. Actor James Yi, who's appeared in both the TV and stage versions, explains to What's On why the show means so much to him...

Canadian comedy series *Kim's Convenience* was something of a surprise hit for TV giant Netflix, running for five seasons between 2016 and 2021, winning awards, racking up huge viewing figures and garnering a devoted fanbase worldwide.

The gentle sitcom, set in a convenience store in Toronto, is ostensibly about the (mis)adventures of the Korean-Canadian Kim family and the customers who visit their titular store, but also explores themes of inter-family dynamics, race, identity and the immigrant experience.

The show started out as a play by Korean-Canadian actor & playwright Ins Choi, premiering at the Toronto Fringe Festival in 2011 before touring Canada the following year. It's been performed fairly regularly ever since, making its European debut in London last year and now touring the UK with much of the same cast. They include Korean-born but US-raised actor James Yi, who played recurring character Jimmy Young in the TV series but has stepped up to the role of family patriarch Appa on stage for the past few years. The latest production sees him reunited with Caroline Donica, who played his fiery daughter, Janet, in a US stage version two years ago. Both actors are excited to recreate the dynamic they had first time around.

"We already have such a great connection from the last time we did this show," explains Caroline, "so stepping back into these roles together feels really natural. With a new director this time, we get to bring fresh energy to it while still building on what we already know. And honestly, acting across from James is just the best - he's such a talented actor and an even better human." James is similarly enthusiastic, not least because he thinks the pair's familiarity with the show and each other makes for a natural fit and dynamic: "We both know the show well, so it's easier to jump in and get up to speed with a shorter rehearsal time. I wouldn't say it's harder, but working with a different director gives us a challenge to not just do the play like how we previously did, but to discover a lot of new things in each scene. [It's] a lot of fun to just really focus on playing and discovering things in the freedom of what I already know."

The current tour is the first time UK

audiences beyond London will have a chance to see the play, and while the TV show is obviously the perfect primer, James says there are a few important differences between the screen and stage versions: "The TV series, being a half-hour comedy, was primarily focused on humour as the main vehicle to tell the stories. In the play, there's more freedom to go to much more real, intense and sometimes heart-wrenching places that gives a fuller experience of the story.

"The characters are also around 10 years older in the play, so I think the stakes are quite different for them. The play also highlights the broken relationships and the pain of the Kim family much more than the TV series."

The ongoing evolution also includes his rendering of store owner and family patriarch Appa, even though he admits that the story is so close to his own experience growing up in Cleveland, Ohio (he now lives in Vancouver) that his interpretation hasn't changed dramatically.

"I think that, like with anything, if you do it long enough, you start seeing different details than you did in the beginning, or you understand the bigger picture of the story better - and that has definitely been my experience with Appa."

James also believes his experience of growing up in the Korean church helped him to understand the character, who he recognised as representative of so many people in the local community.

"Even though I didn't know it at the time, the Korean church was the training ground for my preparation for Appa. My friends and I shared a uniquely common bond in our Korean immigrant experience, which greatly involved difficult interactions with our fathers. While killing time waiting for our parents to finish choir practice after service and lunch, we would often entertain each other by imitating the different men in our church, with their thick Korean accents and broken English."

That type of experience, and the disconnect between generations of the same family, is at the heart of the play, and while it's become a familiar dynamic, James believes the show approaches it from a different angle.

"I think that this story is told mostly from the perspective of Appa, the immigrant parent, which is unique because most plays about immigrant stories tend to be from the child's perspective. From the child's perspective, the immigrant parent can often be vilified and sometimes de-humanised, but with *Kim's*, I hear so many responses from audience members who want to connect with their fathers after the show."

He also believes the show resonates just as deeply for people of non-Korean descent because the themes of family and reconciliation are so universal.

"Audiences really identify with how the characters struggle with the cultural and generational differences in the play, because of how the struggles are dealt with so well through humour and heart."

The play is obviously important to him on any number of levels, and while he's struggled a little with typecasting ("I often get offered roles of immigrant Korean dads in short films or other projects because of *Kim's*"), he admits the role of Appa is a gift that keeps on giving.

"Appa is the meatiest character I've ever played. Prior to that, I got to play some good characters in other plays, but Appa's range and complexity stands out above the others."

"Artistically it really fills my tank and satisfies my desire to play such a great role. Prior to *Kim's*, I was waiting for a break and sometimes felt like I just played these day roles on set to pay the bills. *Kim's* has given me the platform to showcase my acting, and it's opened so many doors for other opportunities."

"My involvement with this play seems to grow daily, as more opportunities, like this tour, keep coming my way. I don't know how much longer I'll be doing this role, but I certainly don't see myself leaving for quite a while."

.....

Kim's Convenience shows at Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, from Tuesday 27 to Saturday 31 May, and then at The Rep, Birmingham, from Tuesday 1 to Saturday 5 July

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Live music from across the region...

The Young'uns

Huntingdon Hall, Worcester, Thurs 29 May

After many a year spent plying their trade at festivals and around the folk clubs of the North East, The Young'uns are now well established as one of the country's most popular folk/acoustic acts.

"We approach folk music as stories and songs and anecdotes," explains the trio's singer & accordion player, David Eagle. "Every gig is about storytelling, so our songwriting has become more sophisticated. We know what we like and we're more unabashed now. We know who we are."

Expect plenty of that heart-on-the-sleeve storytelling, along with beautiful lyrics, warm harmonies and relentless repartee, when the trio stop off in Worcester this month as part of their 20th anniversary tour.



The Darkness

hmv Empire, Coventry, Fri 16 May

Formed in the year 2000, The Darkness released debut album *Permission To Land* three years later. The record not only hit the number-one spot in the charts but was ultimately certified quadruple platinum in the UK... The glam-rock four-piece's Coventry concert this month sees them launching eighth studio album *Dreams On Toast*, which they will be performing in its entirety, alongside a selection of firm favourites and greatest hits.



K.O.G.

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Thurs 22 May

Using a mix of English, Pidgin and Ga to paint sonic pictures, Kweku Sackey - aka K.O.G (Kweku of Ghana) - not only boasts a massive vocal range and some wicked dance moves, he's also been hailed "Ghana's finest" by none other than boogie-woogie

piano legend Jools Holland.

"I view music as a major weapon needed in the battlefield for peace of mind in the world," explains Kweku. "I love to make music that connects, revives, educates and entertains, drawing on the spiritual, physical, emotional and mental wellbeing of us as individuals, and our quest to maintain balance with the universe."

Roving Crows

Katie Fitzgeralds, Stourbridge, Sat 10 May

Since forming in 2009, Midlands-based Celtic folk fusion band Roving Crows have released four full-length albums, including most recent offering *Awaken* (2022). They've also picked up numerous coveted gongs along the way, including Best Folk Act at Exposure Awards 2011 and Band Of The Year in the Fatea Music Awards 2014. Expect a fast-paced, high-energy performance from this supremely talented ensemble, who make one hell of a noise for just four people.

Scott Matthews

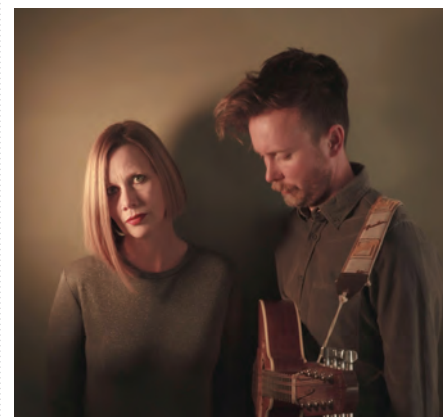
Malvern Cube, Fri 30 May

Singer-songwriter Scott Matthews' ground-breaking debut album, *Passing Stranger*, earned serious critical acclaim, while his first single, *Elusive*, bagged the Ivor Novello award for 'best song musically & lyrically'. Having since gone on to produce a further eight albums, he's visiting Malvern as part of a tour to support latest offering *Restless Lullabies*. Hailed a subliminal listening experience, the much-lauded record has further cemented Scott's status as one of the UK's master songsmiths.

Megson

Temperance, Leamington Spa, Sat 3 May

Since releasing first album *On The Side* in 2004, husband & wife team Stu and Debbie Hanna have developed an enviable reputation on the English folk-music circuit. Hailed as fresh and innovative (a description which is hardly surprising, given that Debbie is classically trained and Stu's a former punk!), the multi-award-winning duo specialise in self-composed melodies which bring together intimate harmony singing and multi-instrumental acoustic playing.



SIMPLY THE BEST

**Holly Bannis talks about playing Tina Turner
in hit show What's Love Got To Do With It?**



After a spectacular 2024, during which more than 60,000 Tina Turner fans danced in the aisles at performances of What's Love Got To Do With It?, the hit show - a critically acclaimed tribute to Tina - is back with a bang in 2025. What's On caught up with Holly Bannis, who plays the rock & roll legend in the production, to find out more...

Whether you've been a fan of Tina Turner for decades or are discovering her magic for the very first time, What's Love Got To Do With It? promises to be an inspiring and uplifting experience that's sure to make you want to sing along. Holly Bannis stars as Tina, and is at the forefront of an evening of unstoppable energy and unforgettable music...

How did you land the part of Tina in the show, Holly?

I'd been singing semi-professionally for 10 years while working a day job - music was always part of my life. My dad, Greg Bannis (ex-Hot Chocolate lead singer), was a big influence.

In 2021, I auditioned for Starstruck on ITV, where I had to perform as three icons. Tina was one of my choices. The show happened during lockdown, so I had time to study her performances and style. The What's Love Got To Do With It? team saw me on TV and got in touch. I started as a backing singer and understudy but stepped into the lead role within a few months.

What makes Tina such a special artist?

When I prepared for Starstruck, I watched a lot of her live performances, studying her energy, movements and mannerisms. But what really struck me was her back story - her resilience, her strength, and how she overcame so much.

She once said that she didn't like her own voice because it was different, which really resonated with me. Learning about her helped me embrace my own voice and understand where I belong musically.

What can audiences expect from the show?

It's a full-on concert experience with a 10-piece band, backing singers, dancers, and all of Tina's biggest hits. We recreate the energy of her live shows - right down to the walk, the moves, and the way she connected with audiences. By the end of the night, it's a party! People always tell us how much it feels like a real Tina show. That's the best compliment we can get.

How did Tina's passing in May 2023 impact the show?

We were mid-show when she passed, but we didn't know until the end. The audience's energy shifted - more phones were out, people were crying. Backstage, we found out why. Since then, we've felt a deeper responsibility to honour her legacy. We haven't changed the show, but we know it carries more weight now. Fans want to keep her spirit alive, and we're proud to help do that.

What are your favourite songs to perform?

Private Dancer is a special moment. It starts with dialogue, and you can feel the audience's anticipation. The lights, the band solos, our sax player stepping forward... it's magic! Then there's Nutbush City Limits, one of the only songs Tina wrote herself. By then, the audience are on their feet dancing, and the energy is through the roof.

How do you keep up with the demands of touring?

Life on the road is intense - sometimes we drive six hours before even setting up. But we have a great team, and we take care of each other. Staying fit and healthy is key. I warm up and cool down my voice religiously, work with a vocal coach, and keep up with physical training. Singing as Tina isn't natural - it's a very specific sound that takes work to maintain safely. Even now, I still watch her performances and pick up new details to incorporate.

What's your pre-show ritual?

After setup and dinner, I start my makeup - Tina's dark eyeshadow and signature red lips. I put on my first of three wigs and my custom-made costume. The last step? Red lipstick. That's when I know I'm ready. Once that's on, I am Tina until the show is over.

Why should people go to see the show?

If you love Tina Turner or rock & roll, this show is for you. Even people who don't think they know her music are blown away - so many of her songs are classics. It's a show for all generations - parents, grandparents.

Everyone knows and loves Tina. And if you're not a fan before, you'll leave as one!

How important is Tina's legacy?

Tina will always be the Queen of Rock & Roll. Her music is timeless, but her story is just as important. She spoke openly about her struggles at a time when few did, and that changed lives. For me, this show has been life-changing. Through her music, I've found where I truly belong as a performer. Every night on stage is a privilege, and I can't wait to share that energy with new audiences.



What's Love Got To Do With It? The Ultimate Tina Turner Tribute shows at Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, on Sun 11 May; Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Sun 6 July; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Wed 29 October; Malvern Theatres, Fri 23 January 2026; The Civic Hall, Wolverhampton, Sun 28 March 2026; Dudley Town Hall, Sun 9 May 2026

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Comedy previews from across the region...

Dara Ó'Briain

Birmingham Hippodrome, Thurs 15 & Fri 16 May; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sat 17 May; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Wed 17 September; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Wed 5 & Thurs 6 November

Charismatic, fast-talking and very, very funny, Dara Ó'Briain is a familiar face on the telly thanks to shows like *Mock The Week* and *Have I Got News For You*.



Jokes include: "If we were truly created by God, why do we occasionally bite the insides of our mouths?" and "Even though you're still allowed to smoke in your own house, do you have to stub it out when a burglar breaks in, as your house is now his workplace?" Dara stops off in the region with his new touring show, *Re:Creation*.

Jamali Maddix

Civic Hall, Wolverhampton, Fri 16 May; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Wed 21 May; Glee Club, Birmingham, Thurs 5 June

One-time Chortle Student Comedian of the Year Jamali Maddix has been hailed for his frank yet ironic take on everyday racism and his willingness to tackle the hot-potato subject of terrorism.

He visits the Midlands three times across the next couple of months with his brand-new touring show, *Aston*.

Jonny Cole

Wulfrun Hall, Wolverhampton, Fri 2 May; Dudley Town Hall, Thurs 8 May; Artrix, Bromsgrove, Fri 16 May; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sun 18 May; Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge, Fri 23 May; Lichfield Garrick, Sat 24 May; Rugeley Rose Theatre, Fri 6 & Sat 7 June; The Albany Theatre, Coventry, Wed 11 June; Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, Thurs 12 June; Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge, Fri 13 June; Wulfrun Hall, Wolverhampton, Sat 14 June; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Thurs 19 June

"It's difficult for me to put my brand of comedy into an industry-standard soundbite," says local comedian Jonny Cole. "There are a lot of people who love Black Country humour and who'd love to go into a rough & ready Black Country pub just to listen to the banter - and that's exactly what I do. I've absorbed Black Country humour the whole of my life. I take it out of that pub - where people wouldn't dare go, in case they got their teeth knocked out - and I put it into a safe, controlled environment where they can enjoy it."



Zakir Khan

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Sun 18 May

"I've been writing jokes ever since I was a kid," says Indian comedian Zakir Khan. "My early years were spent in a boys' school, a fact that gave me a near-unlimited stock of tales that I could use to make people roll around on the floor. The challenge for me was working out the best way to present

them."

The winner of Comedy Central's India's Best Standup award, Zakir has performed more than 1,000 sold-out shows in venues across the world. His Symphony Hall show this month will be performed in Hindi.

Kerry Godliman

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sat 17 May

Comedian & actress Kerry Godliman's new touring show, *Bandwidth*, contemplates how life looks for a middle-aged woman 'who is busy parenting teenagers, feels bogged down with knicker admin, and is giving some serious consideration to the possibility of dealing HRT on the black market'... You may remember Kerry from such TV shows as *Miranda*, *Our Girl* and *Ricky Gervais' Extras*, *Derek* and *After Life*. She's also had her own show on Radio Four. But it's live standup that's closest to her heart. "It's such a creative opportunity to say all the stuff I want to say about things like politics and parenting," she explains. "And that's amazing. There aren't many jobs where you can just say exactly what you like."



Sophie McCartney

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sun 4 May; Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, Sat 10 May; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Fri 16 May

Having previously toured a show based around her experience of the perilous world of parenting, award-winning comedian Sophie McCartney now sets about tackling her perimenopausal panic by asking the question: what does life look like when you're too old to be young, but too young to be old? Sophie is urging her fans to grab their glow sticks and ready themselves for an evening of sequins, snorty laughs, and a pair of killer orthopaedic heels...



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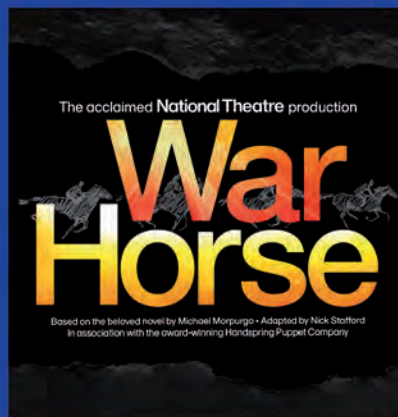


Tue 17 – Sat 21 Jun

AD Sat 21 Jun 2.30pm

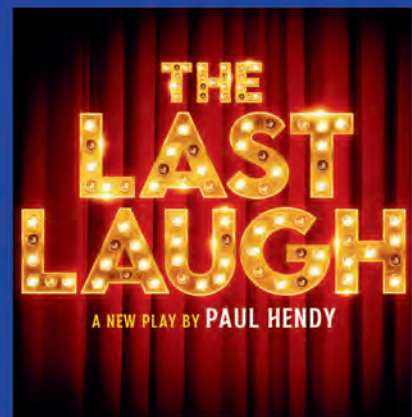


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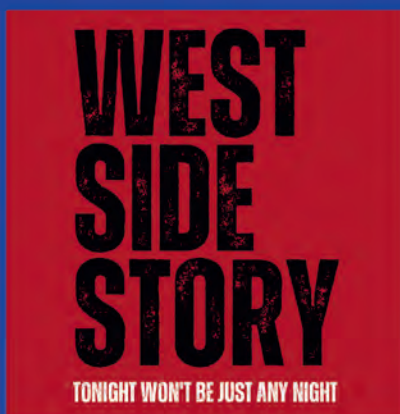
Thu 10 – Sat 19 Jul

CAP Thu 17 Jul 7.30pm AD Sat 19 Jul 2.30pm



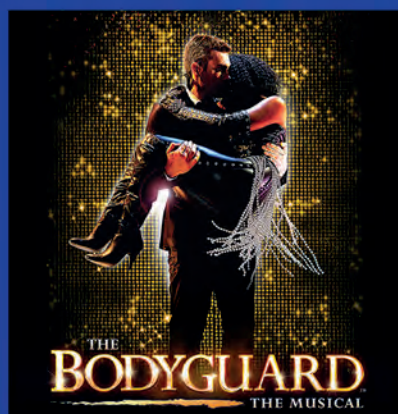
Tue 22 – Sat 26 Jul

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Thu 14 – Sat 16 Aug

CAP Fri 15 Aug 7.30pm AD Sat 16 Aug 2.30pm



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Comedy previews from across the region...

Andy Hamilton

Huntingdon Hall, Worcester, Sun 18 May;
The Roses, Tewkesbury, Sun 15 June

"A lot of comedy shows are confessional, aren't they?" says Outnumbered writer and long-established standup comedian Andy Hamilton, in talking to Cambridge Independent. "People get up and talk about their struggles with their demons. But I don't really have any demons. I mean, maybe I should get some, and then I could do jokes about them!"

Andy is visiting the region with a show that's been described as an intimate evening of comic reflection, reminiscence and revelation.

The second half of the evening will feature a Q&A session with the audience.



Julian Clary

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Fri 23 May;
Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Sat 24 May

Following in the footsteps of comics such as Kenny Everett and Larry Grayson, Julian Clary peddles a fine line in 'saucy postcard humour' that disguises an intelligent sarcasm which digs fun at both himself and his audience.

The world of standup is undoubtedly where he's enjoyed most success, seeming to thrive on the close contact with a live audience. By contrast, his forays into television haven't always gone so well; indeed, a long-ago but infamous 'fisting' gag about a Conservative politician saw him blacklisted by television producers for some considerable time.

He's making a welcome return to the region this month with critically acclaimed standup offering A Fistful Of Clary.

"Yes, it *still* has a Western theme," says Julian of the much-toured show. "It was only a matter of time before I eased myself into some chaps once again..."



Ellie Taylor

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Fri 9 May; Birmingham Town Hall, Sat 24 May

Ellie Taylor kickstarted her comedy career in her late 20s, performing in standup reality TV series Show Me The Funny. "I got some other television work out of that and a few bookings," recalls Ellie, "but people's expectations outweighed what I was able to provide. I wasn't really good enough at that stage."

Now in her early 40s, Ellie's comedy has come a long way. Part of the secret of her success, she believes, is 'the way she tells 'em'. "I enjoy doing comedy with a narrative. A lot of standup shows have absolutely no narrative whatsoever, but a beginning, middle and end is very important to me."

David O'Doherty

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Thurs 22 May

David O'Doherty spent a lot of time wondering whether he actually wanted to be a stand-up comedian. His subsequent award-winning career as a comic shows he's absolutely made the right choice. Jokes include: "I like the Ten Commandments but have a problem with the ninth. It should be: 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's ox - except in Scrabble.'"

Bring The Laughter

Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome,
Sat 17 May

There's the promise of 'pure comedy and good vibes' when Bring The Laughter makes a welcome return this month, with Muhsin Yesilada and Raj Poojara (pictured) being joined by Birmingham's Shazia Mirza. One of the UK's most creative female comedians, Muslim Shazia has never been averse to treading a delicate line when it comes to her material. Her post-9/11 joke, "My name's Shazia Mirza - at least, that's

what it says on my pilot's licence", marked her out as a comedian happy to balance on the very precipice of acceptable humour. Other examples of her style and content include: "My parents really want me to get married. But Muslim men don't want to marry me because... I speak" and "My dad said if I went out with a black man, he'd burn me. Which would be good, because then I'd be black, too"



POWER TRIP

The RSC explores Shakespeare's bloodiest play, Titus Andronicus, through the lens of 21st-century aggression...



One of Shakespeare's earliest - and goriest - tragedies, Titus Andronicus is also one of his least-performed works. Actress Emma Fielding, who stars in the Royal Shakespeare Company's current production, explains to What's On why the play's themes of power, conflict and revenge make it as compelling and relevant as ever...

Written around 1590 and considered to be Shakespeare's earliest tragedy, Titus Andronicus has had something of a chequered history. Initially one of his most popular plays, it has since become widely regarded as his worst, with 17th-century dramatist Edward Ravenscroft notably referring to it as "a heap of rubbish" and numerous scholars debating whether the Bard wrote it at all.

Theories about how much of the play Shakespeare wrote continue to this day, and although it remains one of the least performed from his repertoire - even the RSC hasn't staged it since 2017 - much of the criticism has abated in recent times.

The latest production is directed by Max Webster - fresh from recent successes working with Doctor Who actors David Tennant (in Macbeth) and Ncuti Gatwa (The Importance Of Being Earnest). Now showing at the company's Swan Theatre, it stars celebrated actor Simon Russell Beale in the title role, with Emma Fielding as his sister, Marcia. The award-winning actress has been an RSC regular since spending a season there straight out of drama school, and is now one of the company's associate artists. She firmly believes the historical debate over who wrote Titus Andronicus is less important than how exciting and relevant the play remains.

"Shakespeare might not have written all of it, but that's the same with a lot of plays written at the time," she says. "There was lots of collaboration - people came in to do a bit of a tidy up, or *he* came in to do a bit of a tidy up. "The watchword is that it's his bloodiest tragedy, but it's always about much more than that, and it absolutely has resonance today."

The play revolves around a bloodbath of violent retribution that's set into motion when the titular Roman general, returning victorious from a war against the Goths, executes his enemy's son in a ruthless act of vengeance. The violence that follows highlights the bloody horror of war, which the current production views through the lens of 21st-century aggression.

"We're definitely not doing it in Elizabethan dress," says Emma, while remaining coy

about precisely how the play will look. "I'm trying not to give any spoilers! There is violence written in the script - and we're playing the script largely as written - but it'll be done slightly differently. It's not like Reservoir Dogs!

"Sometimes, if you do things with concealed pouches of blood, everyone spends five or 10 seconds thinking 'How did they do that?' But if you do it a different way, it lets you get on with the story a bit quicker."

Telling the story is crucial, and is one of the reasons Emma enjoys the "on the job training" of rehearsals, where she says the actors not only find out what the words they're saying mean, but why they're saying them.

"It's like we're decoding it. Sometimes it can be really clear, but sometimes it's like a crossword puzzle. And that's fine; that's the joy of it. Ultimately, you've got to communicate it to an audience - that's the most important thing. Shakespeare's plays were written to be performed and not have people scratching their heads and being terribly po-faced about it."

Emma believes the rhythms in the language are there to help, not hinder, the cast or audience. She is confident the story will be clear, as will its underlying theme - the horror and futility of war - even as hostilities rage around the globe.

"There are so many conflicts going on in the world at the moment, where people fly in and think there can be a quick and easy fix, not realising it's generation upon generation and cycles of violence, revenge and inherited trauma.

"Look at Israel and Palestine, Ukraine, Somalia, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo. All over the world, at any time, there's constant military action, which is never a solution in itself because no one ever thinks about 'the day after', sitting down and having a chat. A military solution will never bring peace."

Rather than simply condemn it, she says Titus Andronicus explores why conflict occurs - and, as usual, it involves Shakespeare observing the human condition. "Without ramming it home and dressing

people up in a particular way, audiences will get that it's about whatever conflict you want it to be about, because it's about human nature and our need to get one over on each other in that animalistic, feral way. We're human, we're flawed, we're... difficult. People make rash decisions very quickly.

"It's also about a crumbling empire, and what you do to try to hold on to power. These are massive themes that will always be current somewhere. It's beautiful and horrific at the same time. I love it."

She also loves working with Olivier and BAFTA Award winner Simon Russell Beale, who, although he is Shakespearean acting royalty, is the absolute opposite of a daunting presence to his fellow actors.

"Simon's the least intimidating person you could meet," laughs Emma. "I've known him a very long time. He's incredibly skilful at what he does, but he's also really great to have in a room. He's so encouraging, he's really kind, and I just hope a tiny bit of his talent will rub off on me."

The actress also claims a relaxed vibe in the rehearsal room - where everyone can contribute - is critical to her own enjoyment ("it's why I love doing theatre"), as well as the success of the production.

"Max actively encourages people to make suggestions, and we've got a really great creative team. Any play you do, I think - because I'm an old bag - should always be greater than the sum of its parts, and if you don't allow people to contribute, then it never will be that. With this production, that's what we've got - a really great collaborative environment to try and do our best.

"You've got fabulous language, great performances, and a story that goes like an express train - people won't even stop to think. If you want to be shaken and stirred, you should come and see it - it'll be an exhilarating watch."

.....
Titus Andronicus shows at the RSC's Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, until Saturday 7 June



Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat Birmingham Hippodrome, Tues 20 May - Sun 1 June

Joseph was Tim Rice & Andrew Lloyd Webber's first foray into the world of musical theatre, paving the way for later offerings Jesus Christ Superstar and Evita.

Fabulously fun and frothy, the show offers great entertainment for anybody who fancies the kind of night out that lets you leave your brain at home.

Joseph sees the future in dreams, and tells his 11 brothers that he's had a vision in which he's seen them all bowing down to him. Not surprisingly, the lads are a tad annoyed with him about this - and then feel even more aggrieved when their dad gives him a coat of many colours...

Much-loved Hippodrome panto favourite Matt Slack stars as Pharaoh.

...Earnest?

Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Mon 12 - Tues 13 May; The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, Sat 17 May; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sat 24 & Sun 25 May

"When I pitch it to my non-theatre friends," explains Simon Paris, the director & co-writer of ...Earnest?, "I say we're putting on a very traditional, classical play [Oscar Wilde's *The Importance Of Being Earnest*], and it's all going well until the lead actor doesn't show up. The director comes out, apologises, and says 'It's okay, because one of you is going to do it.' We then find the best person in the audience to play this role, and *they* do it."



What could possibly go wrong? Well, in common with shows such as *Noises Off*, the answer is, pretty much everything, with the desperate director (of the play within the play) doing his best to keep the production on track as more and more audience members are drafted in to replace an ever-thinning cast...

A fun evening is definitely in prospect - particularly if you have aspirations to tread the boards yourself!

Ghost Stories

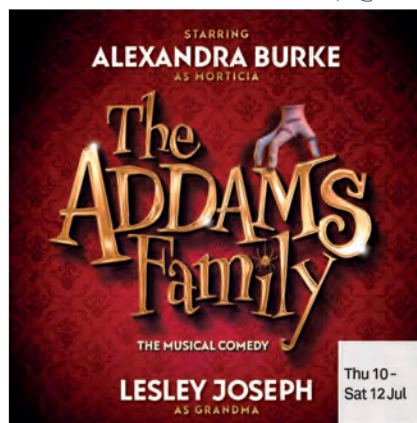
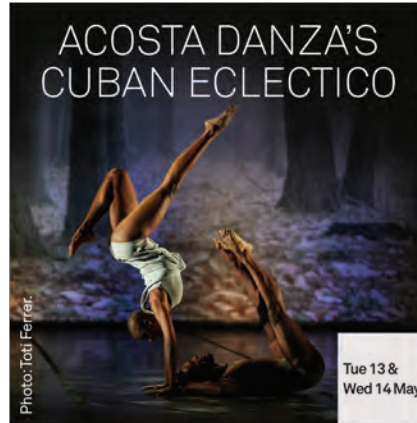
The Alexandra, Birmingham, Tues 20 - Sat 24 May; Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton, Tues 1 - Sat 5 July; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Tues 15 - Sat 19 July; Malvern Theatres, Tues 22 - Sat 26 July

After a couple of years spent giving London West End theatre-goers the heebie jeebies, *Ghost Stories* is this month spooking audiences in the Midlands!

The brainchild of Andy Nyman - co-creator of Derren Brown's television and stage productions - and *The League Of Gentlemen's* Jeremy Dyson,

the show focuses on the character of Professor Goodman, a 'man of reason' who's determined to debunk the paranormal. But when he embarks on an investigation into three apparent hauntings, as recounted by a night-watchman, a teenage boy, and a businessman awaiting his first child, the professor finds himself at the outer limits of rationality - and fast running out of plausible explanations for what he's experiencing... Clive Mantle, Eddie Loddmer-Elliot, David Cardy and Dan Tetsall, star.







A Shoddy Detective And The Art Of Deception

Regal Theatre, Tenbury Wells, Thurs 1 - Fri 2 May; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Fri 23 - Sat 24 May; Lichfield Garrick, Tues 27 May; Swan Theatre, Worcester, Wed 28 May

If slapstick is the name of your game comedy-wise, then bag yourself a seat for this high-energy show from the well-regarded Shoddy Theatre.

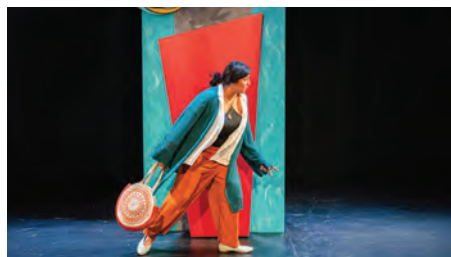
A small group of one-time East 15 Acting School students, the ensemble have previously made a significant splash at the Edinburgh Fringe, where they were nominated for three Offie Awards for their coming-of-age comedy *The Olive Boy*. They're visiting various Midlands venues this month with the first show they ever produced, a lively whodunnit that sees four actors taking on the challenge of playing a dozen characters.

A Beginners Guide To Widowhood

Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Fri 9 May

With her husband having passed away, Suria takes her children on holiday and finds herself facing plenty of challenges - from the turbulent dynamics of a newly fractured family, to dealing with sympathetic head tilts and the use of the dreaded 'W' word...

A one-woman show, *A Beginner's Guide To Widowhood* explores the experiences of young, widowed women as they deal with the loss of their loved one. In the process, the play asks the question: why does society find it so hard to talk about death?



Welsh National Opera

Birmingham Hippodrome, Thurs 8 - Sat 10 May

Welsh National Opera are stopping off in Birmingham this month with two shows. Mozart's *The Marriage Of Figaro* sees love and laughter converge in a whirlwind of clever schemes...

Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes* (pictured), meanwhile, is an iconic tale of isolation and prejudice which comes complete with

dramatic choruses, enthralling solos and the famous *Sea Interludes*.

There's only one Hippodrome performance of each, so be sure to book your seat as soon as possible.



The Pocket Dream

Lichfield Garrick, until Sat 3 May

Lichfield Garrick's latest in-house production is this reworking of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Written by Elly Brewer & Sandi Toksvig - and first performed by Nottingham Playhouse more than 30 years ago - *The Pocket Dream* tells the story of a company of strolling players whose production of the bard's most popular comedy hangs in the balance. Can a motley crew of makeshift mechanicals possibly save the day?...

The Garrick's longtime pantomime favourites, Sam Rabone and Ben Thornton - here reuniting far earlier in the year than usual - are joined in the show by Joe Feeney. Joe starred alongside Sam and Ben in last Christmas' production of *Jack And The Beanstalk*, playing the character of the ne'er-do-well Luke Backinanger (geddit?).

Bosie

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Fri 23 & Sat 24 May

Making a welcome return some eight years after its critically acclaimed debut, Rik Barnett's one-man play - here produced by Northern Rep Theatre and starring Barnett himself - focuses the spotlight on Oscar Wilde's beau, Lord Alfred Bruce Douglas - otherwise known as Bosie.

As Wilde's scandalous story unfolds prior to his sensational trial, the privileged and petulant Bosie ruminates on his own sexuality and prowess, his hunger for position and status - and the part he has played in the very public downfall of his celebrated lover...

Jarman

Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, Tues 27 & Wed 28 May

"Audiences can expect dynamism, inspiration and spontaneity," explains Mark Farrelly, who has written and performs this one-man

tribute to filmmaker Derek Jarman. "Derek was a wondrous polymath; a writer, painter, gardener, filmmaker and activist. He lived a life without boundaries or convention and is a beacon for anyone who wants to express themselves without restriction. He also showed tremendous, heart-breaking courage in dealing with and dying from Aids. So, in this show, you get a thrilling, funny and authentic encounter with this man, who still has so much to teach us."



What will you see next?



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Earnest?

Sat 24 May & Sun 25 May 7.30pm

This one-of-a-kind comedy sensation is completely different, completely chaotic, and completely Wilde every single night.

Kim's Convenience

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Dr Julie Smith In Conversation

Sun 25 May 5pm

Dr Julie has amassed an audience of over 8 million, and is the go-to online resource for mental health tips and tricks for millennials and Gen Z.

Kirsty Gallagher: Your Cosmic Purpose Live

Tue 3 Jun 7.30pm

The Sunday Times bestselling author will share her newest work, *Your Cosmic Purpose*, a simple yet profound guide to uncovering your life's true path.

Michael Rosen: Getting Through It

Wed 11 Jun 7.30pm

Poetry legend Michael Rosen presents his new one-person show, formed of a double-bill of monologues: *The Death of Eddie* and *Many Kinds of Love*.

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Theatre previews from around the region



Marie & Rosetta

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre,
Tues 27 - Sat 31 May

Wolverhampton's very own Beverley Knight returns to her home city to star as African American singer-songwriter Sister Rosetta Tharpe. Sister Rosetta's distinctive gospel recordings - blending spiritual lyrics with the sound of the electric guitar - saw her scoring a major hit with mid-20th-century rhythm & blues and rock & roll audiences. Set in Mississippi in 1946, the story catches up with her at a time when her nightclub performances have seen her shunned by straitlaced church folk. Having persuaded a saintly singer named Marie Knight to join her on a tour of the segregated southern states, Rosetta must first of all convert the younger woman's pure Sunday sound into something that has just a little more swing...

& Juliet

Birmingham Hippodrome, until Sat 3 May;
Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent,
Mon 12 - Sat 17 May

Premiered in 2019 and featuring a string of hits by Max Martin, & Juliet tells an alternative story of Shakespeare's famous heroine.



In sharp contrast to the original tale, this one sees Juliet realising that she *can* survive without Romeo - a revelation that prompts her to set off on her own journey, both in love and life.

The award-winning production, which has proved a massive hit across four continents, visits the Midlands this month with Wanted band member and 2015 Strictly Come Dancing winner Jay McGuinness taking top billing. Steps favourite Lee Latchford-Evans co-stars. Featured pop anthems include Britney Spears' Baby One More Time and Katy Perry's Roar, as well as chart toppers Since U Been Gone, It's My Life and Can't Stop The Feeling.

The Croft

The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Tues 20 - Sat 24 May; Malvern Theatres, Tues 27 - Sat 31 May; The Rep, Birmingham, Tues 10 - Sat 14 June

Two women arrive at a former crofter's hut in the deserted village of Coillie Ghille. The remote Scottish Highlands seems the perfect place to get away from it all - until, that is, the two friends find themselves enveloped by The Croft's dark and dangerous history...

Written by Ali Milles and based on a true

highland story, the show stars Gray O'Brien (Coronation Street), Caroline Harker (A Touch Of Frost - pictured) and, topping the bill, veteran television actor Liza Goddard (Doctor Who and Bergerac).



"I think audiences will enjoy The Croft," says Liza. "I think they'll have a good time, find it intriguing, and maybe a little bit scary!"

The show is being presented by long-established Bury St Edmunds company Original Theatre, which recently toured to the region with its critically acclaimed adaptation of Sebastian Faulks' epic World War One novel, Birdsong.

The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Tues 27 - Sat 31 May; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Tues 3 - Sat 7 June; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 28 October - Sat 1 November

This much-loved story from the pen of CS Lewis is rightly regarded as an all-time classic of children's literature. It sees the lion-god Aslan coming to the aid of four youngsters who've accidentally stumbled into his mystical world of Narnia...

Visiting Birmingham this month having last stopped off in the city at The Rep for the Christmas 2023/24 season, the show features 'magical storytelling, bewitching stagecraft



and incredible puppets'.

"We have this epic stage and fantastic imagery," says the production's director, Michael Fentiman, "but there's not a lot of literal depiction of location of the show. Instead, we're asking the audience to take a leap with us. We work with an illusionist to try and do things that seem impossible. So the way we use magic and lighting and shift-of-focus achieves the possible from the seemingly impossible."

The show's Midlands stop-offs, this month, next month, and in the autumn, come as part of a UK-wide tour to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the novel's publication.

Whatever Happened To Phoebe Salt

New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme,
Sat 31 May - Sat 21 June

Forming part of the Arthur Berry 100 and Stoke-on-Trent centenary celebrations, Whatever Happened To Phoebe Salt is here receiving its world premiere, 37 years after unsung local playwright Berry wrote the play. Born and raised in the industrial heartland of Stoke-on-Trent, Phoebe spends her days working in the meat market but desperate to break into showbusiness. Soon enough, opportunity comes knocking. But will a TV appearance help her finally escape the trials and tribulations of her working life?...

"Arthur was writing specifically for our theatre-in-the-round with Phoebe Salt," explains New Vic Artistic Director Theresa Heskins. "It's such a privilege to be producing his final play, written for the New Vic but never performed."

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24 May | Town Hall



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31 May | Town Hall

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Theatre previews from around the region



Much Ado About Nothing

Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, until 24 May

The course of true love never runs smooth in one of Shakespeare's most popular comedies. Beatrice and Benedick conduct their courtship through sarcasm and verbal sparring. The younger Claudio and Hero, meanwhile, find their heady romance cruelly compromised by the villainous Don John, who's determined to stop them tying the knot...

Fresh from his tenure as artistic director of the Donmar Warehouse, Michael Longhurst takes the helm of this imaginative new version of the bard's oft-performed romcom. Its action is relocated to the world of top-flight football and celebrity culture, 'where scandal-filled rivalries are the hottest new thing, and lads and WAGs collide'. Freema Agyeman (Doctor Who) and Nick Blood (Day Of The Jackal, Slow Horses) top-bill as Beatrice and Benedick.

One Man Poe

Albany Theatre, Coventry, Sat 10 May

Paying homage to the works of Edgar Allan Poe, Stephen Smith directs himself in a one-man presentation which not only completely sold out during its run in Edinburgh last summer but also picked up the Fringe's Spookies Award for Best Horror Solo Show. Featuring Poe's original text, the production includes four of the legendary author's most famous stories: The Tell-Tale Heart; The Pit And The Pendulum; The Raven; and The Black Cat...

Suitable for audience members aged 12-plus.



Pride & Prejudice* (*Sort Of)

Lichfield Garrick, Tues 13 - Sat 17 May

A unique and audacious retelling of Jane Austen's most iconic love story, Pride And Prejudice*(*sort of) has proved a winner with critics and audiences alike. Indeed, celebrity fan Sir Stephen Fry has described it as an evening of "hilarity, romance, madness and

utter theatrical joy".

Alongside the raucously irreverent but admirably affectionate retelling of Austen's rollercoaster romance, the 2022 Olivier Award winner also boasts a host of pop classics, including Young Hearts Run Free, Will You Love Me Tomorrow and You're So Vain.



Spitfire Girls

Malvern Theatres, Tues 20 - Sat 24 May; The Rep, Birmingham, Mon 16 - Sat 21 June

The real life but rarely acknowledged war-effort contribution of the women of the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) is joyously celebrated in this heartwarming new play from Tilted Wig. Paying tribute to the pioneering pilots who took to the skies during the Second World War to ferry warplanes between factories, maintenance units and front-line squadrons, the show has been developed and produced with support from the National Theatre's Generate Programme.



The Rocky Horror Show

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Mon 5 - Sat 10 May; The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Mon 22 - Sat 27 September

Hook up your fishnets, tighten your corsets and prepare to 'do The Time Warp again' - The Rocky Horror Show is returning to the region!

Richard O'Brien's cult production tells the tale of the straight-laced Brad and the deliciously corruptible Janet, who arrive at the castle of the alien transvestite Frank N Furter and witness the birth of the monster, Rocky.

Along the way, they take the audience through a selection of love-'em-or-loathe-'em musical numbers, including Sweet Transvestite, Damn It Janet and The Time Warp. Great fun's a guarantee - particularly if you get into the spirit of things and attend the show dressed in your very best stockings & suspenders (as many patrons do)! Motherland star Jackie Clune - she played school receptionist Irene Lamb in the hit BBC TV comedy series - takes on the role of the Narrator at the Regent.



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Theatre for younger audiences



The Dinosaur That Pooped: A Rock Show

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sat 17 May;
Albany Theatre, Coventry, Fri 30 May;
Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sun 20 July;
Malvern Theatres, Sat 25 October; Lichfield
Garrick, Wed 29 October

Tom Fletcher and Dougie Poynter are promising their brand-new production will come complete with new songs, a lot of laughs and (not surprisingly given the show's title) a whole load of poo!

Based on Tom and Dougie's bestselling children's books, *The Dinosaur That Pooped* follows Danny and Dino as they try to get hold of the last two tickets to their favourite rock band's last-ever concert. But with a villainous band manager lurking, nothing goes to plan... Will the band perform? Will Danny rock out? Or will Dino's rumbling tummy save the day?...

Little Bulb: Four Seasons

Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham,
Sun 25 May

Olivier Award-winning Little Bulb bring together puppetry, physical theatre and clowning fun for yet another of their enchanting and innovative theatre shows. This one catches up with an intrepid team of magical gardeners as they tend to a marvellous menagerie of flora and fauna across the seasons of the year. The action unfolds against a score of seasonally inspired tracks - including, as might be expected given the production's title, Vivaldi's iconic violin concerti, *The Four Seasons*.



You Choose

Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent,
Tues 27 & Wed 28 May; Halesowen Town Hall,
Fri 6 June

The highly rated Nonsense Room have plenty of form when it comes to providing top-quality theatre experiences for youngsters to enjoy - their touring productions of *Shark In The Park* and *Hairy Maclary* have been met with pretty much universal acclaim wherever

they've visited.

The company's latest venture, *You Choose*, is an interactive musical based on the same-named picture book by Pippa Goodhart and *Shark In The Park* author Nick Sharratt. Using the book as inspiration, and via a series of games and challenges, Nonsense Room promise that each show will be a unique experience, 'featuring different locations, costumes and much more, every time!'

An Ant Called Amy

The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry,
Fri 30 & Sat 31 May

"Amy the ant is missing her brother, Andy," explains Julie Sharkey, the playwright behind this well-reviewed 40-minute touring show. "This is a gentle tale. It's entertaining and fun. It's not going to uncover an awful truth or discuss serious illness. Simply, we meet this little ant Amy, who is working to forget - until her supposed arch enemy, the Brown Spider, gently nudges her to find Andy in the everyday..."



The Wiggles

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Wed 14 May

"We love touring the UK," says founding Wiggle Anthony Field. "We're all looking forward to seeing our old friends, as well as meeting some new ones."

Bringing their signature mix of entertainment and education to Birmingham, the fun-loving Australian



music group will be joined by all their Wiggly friends, including Dorothy the Dinosaur, Wags the Dog, Henry the Octopus, Captain Feathersword and TikTok sensation The Tree of Wisdom.

There's A Monster In Your Show

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sat 10 & Sun 11
May; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 13
& Wed 14 May

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



A close-up portrait of a middle-aged man with a shaved head and a short, well-groomed beard. He has light-colored eyes and is smiling warmly at the camera. He is wearing a dark brown, long-sleeved shirt. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

FROM PANTO TO PHARAOH

**Hippodrome pantomime star Matt Slack is back...
in Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat!**

Matt Slack may be the king of comedy in Birmingham Hippodrome's pantomime every Christmas, but his next appearance at the venue is taking place in springtime and sees him donning an altogether different crown - as the rock & roll character of Pharaoh in the currently touring production of Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat.

Matt spoke to What's On about appearing in Tim Rice & Andrew Lloyd Webber's iconic musical, and about the wide-ranging and sometimes entirely unpredictable nature of life as an actor...

Matt, we usually see you causing chaos in the annual panto - how do you feel about your side-step into the Hippodrome's musical theatre programme?

It's fantastic. I'm extremely honoured and privileged to be asked. Michael Harrison - the producer of Joseph, and of course the pantomimes - when he asked me, I said it would be an honour. Such a prodigious role in such a prestigious show - I'm very, very lucky; I can't wait to do it. It's very nice to do something different from panto at the Hippodrome.

What's your history with musical theatre - have you dabbled before?

I've had a very varied career - a lot of people don't know that. I do screen, stage, and serious drama. My first taste of musical theatre was Boogie Nights, the 70s musical. I played a part which was the understudy to the lead role of Roddy, and eventually I played the lead - I loved it. It was something very different to what I was used to, but I took to it straight away. My second real taste was when I went to see Blood Brothers in Torquay, where I'm originally from. The show just blew my mind. It blew me away, and still does to this day. I'm very proud that, after I watched it, about six months later, I was in it!

You've got a long history of working with Michael Harrison, Joseph's producer. Did that influence you when you were asked to play the role of Pharaoh?

He's an incredible man, Michael Harrison, and I owe everything to him - my success at Birmingham, he opened the door for me. He's one of the biggest producers of musical theatre in the country, and he took pantomime to a different level. When I'm asked to go and appear for two weeks only in Birmingham, what is there to say 'no' to? I couldn't say no. I know there'll be a lot of people who will go to see Joseph because they're Joseph fans - musical theatre fans. I'll bring a new audience, and vice versa - people may go away going 'Oh, we must go and see him in the panto!'

What's your Pharaoh going to be like?

It's a tricky one, because originally it was 'The King' - it's based on Elvis Presley. I was a massive Elvis fan as a kid... I think they still want to stick true to that, but I shall make it my own. It's kind of an amalgamation or a hybrid with Matt Slack - whoever that is, I

don't know! The man is very different from the performer.

There will be elements of Elvis in there. It doesn't have to be just an impression of Elvis. I don't need an Elvis wig and sideburns! The show's moved on from how it was originally played when it first came out. The associate director just said "Have fun with it!"

Does your working year usually follow the same pattern?

It's a funny old life, really, because it's either 100 miles an hour, or it's the complete opposite. It can be testing to get back into gear, if you switch off too much... I've just moved home and I've got a 10-month-old baby, so I'm being a dad, doing runs to the tip and things like that, painting and decorating. So I've got one finger on that pulse. The other thing is, after pantomime, I need that down time - just to rest my voice for a start!

I was in episode six of Bergerac, the remake. That was nice. You just don't know; sometimes you've got something on the horizon - next week, I could be cast in a movie! That happened a couple of years ago when we were on honeymoon in Mauritius. I had a casting for a Netflix film. I did a short thing with a phone, just handheld, and I got the job! It turned out to be an award-winning movie alongside Millie Bobby Brown and Ray Winstone. It's very exciting; you just don't know what's around the corner.

What would you say about Joseph to an audience member who comes to see you in panto every year?

If you're a fan of me, fantastic - you'll see me in a different light. I'll still have that little wink and that 'comedy walk', because that lends itself to the role. There are parts that I've played where people wouldn't recognise me. That's what I do; I'm a comic and an actor, and it's not all going to be the same. With this role, they can see a bit of Matt Slack, and the Joseph fans will see an actor they don't necessarily recognise or know, playing the part of Pharaoh - making it as good as I possibly can. It's a great gift of a role. It's a showstopper moment.

There's often a lot of bare chests on show in Joseph. Have you felt any pressure to hit the gym before you hit the stage?

I'll be honest... with having a 10-month-old baby, keeping fit has not been my priority.

You don't have time! It's full-on being a dad again at 54 - nearly 55 - so I'm gonna try and get in shape as much as I possibly can. I don't mind if I've got a bit of a beer belly, though - I'll use that to my comedy advantage! I've got no qualms about the costume - if Joe McDerry can wear it, I can wear it! I've not put it on yet, and I'm having some boots made. I did see footage of Donny Osmond [playing Pharaoh], and he is really fit! I don't know how old he is, but he's an incredible man. I promise, just for the mums, I'll get in the gym - at least once!

Do you have a favourite musical number in the show?

Obviously the number that I'm doing, which is Song Of The Pharaoh - a rock & roll number. That's great fun, with the ensemble performing as well. I think the music, from the off, is just enchanting. It's captivating, it's mesmerising, and it's addictive. Everything seems familiar, because it is familiar! Even if you've never seen the show, you will recognise at least one tune, one melody. You just feel very safe - it's like a warm mug of musical theatre.

Close Every Door is just incredible, and there's one moment in Act Two, with all the brothers. They are absolutely fantastic - it's such a talented cast. They do a big, epic number, and the harmonies, and that's a highlight moment.

If you had your pick of another musical in the future, which would you choose, and who would you play?

I've always been a fan of Les Mis and the role of Thénardier. I'd love to play that, and it was on the cards a while ago. If that came around again, that would be fantastic. I'd also love to play someone like Fagin... Those 'character roles', I would love. Who knows?! The whole point about being an actor - a comic actor or a straight actor - is the diversity of those roles. That's what I find exciting... I find getting laughs from an audience just as rewarding as making an audience emotional or making them cry. I need both ends of the spectrum.

.....
Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat shows at Birmingham Hippodrome from Tuesday 20 May to Sunday 1 June

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Light entertainment from around the region



Murder She Didn't Write

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Wed 14 May;
Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Sun 1 June

Improvised shows are seemingly all the rage nowadays - and this one has certainly got plenty to recommend it...

First and foremost, it was a multiple-sell-out hit at the Edinburgh Fringe...

Secondly, it's presented by a critically acclaimed company - Degrees Of Error - who are past masters of the improv genre...

Thirdly, the show is a real hoot. An Agatha Christie-inspired whodunnit, it features a classic murder-mystery which is created 'on the spot'. Audience members are then encouraged to don their deerstalkers (if they've brought them along), grab a magnifying glass and make sure their 'finger of suspicion' is 'at the ready'... The show runs for two hours, including an interval.

Showdown

New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme,
Thurs 8 - Sat 10 May

Exploring the concept of 'healthy competition' via six fearless contestants pushed to their limits in a no-holds-barred race to the top, Showdown brings together comedy and audience interaction with a bold mix of circus, spoken word, UK hip-hop, grime and Afrobeat.

The show is presented by local contemporary circus company Upswing.



MC Hammersmith

The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, Sat 17 May; The Glee Club, Birmingham, Fri 30 May; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Sat 31 May

Widely considered to be the greatest rapper ever to emerge from the 'ghetto' that is middle-class west London - the competition for such a coveted accolade must be fierce indeed! - MC Hammersmith specialises in improvised freestyle rap comedy based on audience suggestions.

"As a straight, cisgender, privately educated white male," he told voicemag.uk, "I think it's important to acknowledge my struggle: sometimes, I can't get a slot on a professional comedy night in London because too many of my school friends are already on the bill. Cut me a break, society..."

Susan Murray: How Not To Die In A Plane Crash

Wolverhampton Arts Centre,
Sat 10 May

Comparisons with Kerry Godliman and Sarah Millican have done wonders for Susan Murray's profile, playing their part in establishing her reputation as one of the UK's funniest female comedians. Her currently touring show sees Susan promising to make her audience 'laugh and cry at the same time' with a host of 'useful death-defying survival tips, all wrapped up in fantastic jokes'.



Danny Lee Grew: 24K Magic

Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham,
Fri 9 May

Danny Lee Grew's publicity advises would-be audience members to expect their jaws to do some serious dropping during 24K Magic, a 'spellbinding' production awash with 'illusion, laughs, gasps, and stunning sleight-of-hand sorcery'. With celebrities including David Beckham, James Corden, Stormzy, Pink and Chris Hemsworth rumoured to be among his biggest fans, Danny will be hoping to impress a whole new generation with this latest show - a family-friendly offering that's suitable for youngsters aged eight and older.



Nick Mohammed Mr Swallow: Show Pony

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Thurs 15 May

He may have been one of the worst contestants in Taskmaster history, but Nick Mohammed has proved himself a winner in pretty much every other aspect of his showbiz career. His success has been due, in no small measure, to his much-loved alter-ego Mr Swallow, the attention-seeking man-child who he's been playing for more than a decade. Nick and Mr S are here making a welcome return in a brand-new show, one which has been described by the latter as "payback for everyone who didn't come to the last tour". Expect magic, music, 'and a whole load of brand-new mistakes'.



Jamaica Love

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sun 4 May

The 77th anniversary of Windrush is marked via this critically acclaimed show, which was nominated in the Best Musical Production category at the Black British Theatre Awards. Reflecting on the deep and intertwined history of Britain and Jamaica, the production brings together singers John McLean and Celia Wickham-Anderson (of Black Voices fame) for a journey through Jamaica's rich musical heritage, from ska and rocksteady, to reggae, dub and dancehall.





CELEBRATIONS EN POINTE

BRB2's Gala performance will take audiences back to the roots of modern ballet - as Carlos Acosta explains...

A new show by ballet company BRB2 promises to bring the very best past, present and future dance to the stage, according to Carlos Acosta, the director of Birmingham Royal Ballet (BRB).

BRB's junior company, BRB2 aims to identify, develop and showcase talented young dancers from around the world in theatres across the UK.

The new production, Carlos Acosta's Ballet Celebration - which shows at Birmingham Hippodrome early this month - takes audiences back to the roots of modern ballet and pays tribute to legendary stage impresario Sergei Diaghilev.

With the programme featuring The Firebird, Spectre de la Rose, Les Sylphides, Les Biches and Scheherazade, the performance is a showcase of some of the most revolutionary works of ballet, danced by the stars of the future.

"These are very talented young dancers, who, hopefully, in a couple of years' time or in a year's time, will join our company and rise all the way through the ranks," says Carlos. "Some may choose to stay with BRB, but it all depends on people's ambitions and what they want from life. Others will stay with BRB for a time and then go to other companies.

"But this is a chance to see them as they are, starting out. They are excellent dancers. We have brought talented young dancers from Australia, from America, from Cuba, from Ukraine, as I am very aware not just to operate on our own doorsteps but to reach out to different countries to see what talent is there as well.

"It's always nice when you are part of the beginning of somebody's career and you can look back and say 'I saw them when they first started.'"

Launched three years ago, BRB2 features an annual cohort of roughly half a dozen dancers, aged from 18 to 22, who undergo two years of intensive training and development. Along the way, they perform in shows such as The Nutcracker and Swan Lake with the main company, but also tour their own repertory.

The five dancers of the first cohort have all joined the main BRB company as artists. The current BRB2 company comprises dancers now in their second year of the programme and a new cohort on their first tour.

From the very beginning, Carlos and BRB2 artistic co-ordinator Kit Holder have been determined to push the dancers to their limits in terms of the shows they perform. And the new tour puts these young dancers

through their paces with a host of classic works.

"This programme is a tribute to Diaghilev and the beginning of modern ballet," says Carlos. "Diaghilev created a movement that launched the career of artists like Picasso, Cocteau, Stravinsky and Massine, as well as the dancer Nijinsky and the choreographer Fokine. So this programme is a homage to that era.

"If people like their ballet and their dance, it's great to see where it all began. This show is a chance to explore how much ballet has evolved from that time. These dances may be from the past, but they help us understand so much more about where we are going in dance."

Many of the works have a special resonance for Carlos, who performed them during his glittering career as a top principal with companies including the Royal Ballet.

"These are ballets that are very dear to me because I grew up with them. I remember Scheherazade when I was in English National Ballet, performing it when I was 19 - and that is exactly the age that these BRB2 dancers are. And that was the age that Nijinsky was when he danced Scheherazade.

"I have performed Spectre de la Rose in many places, including at The Met with American Ballet Theatre, and I remember when I rehearsed Les Sylphides with Dame Alicia Markova and I was 18.

"I wanted to pay tribute to that era and also my beginnings by bringing these ballets back to the stage. When I came to the UK in the 90s, they were pretty much part of the fabric of the repertory of many companies, but they don't get seen on stage so much these days. And yet they are fantastic ballets."

The pieces are also works which ask a lot of their performers.

"The whole point of BRB2 is to develop these dancers, and the only way to do that is by having them do hard things, technically and artistically. They are still at the beginning of the road, and the only way to develop a dancer is to expose their body to hard training.

"Dancing is a battle between mind and body. The mind has to be able to cope. It has to be trained to absorb all the information, and the more you have access to complexity of work, the better you will be prepared in the future.

"What is special about BRB2 is that it has a tailor-made repertory just for that company, while they are also touring with the main company and featuring in their works. So for two years they are pretty much part of the

company, but at the same time they have a lot to work on with their own rep. That develops the dancers quicker and faster. They are being challenged and pushed, and you can see it in their performances."

For Carlos, who grew up in Cuba's capital city of Havana and became a ballet phenomenon, BRB2 is giving young people a chance to reach for the sky. And the project has been hugely supported by donors including the Jerwood Foundation, the Oak Foundation, Charles Holloway OBE, Linbury Trust, Mary Laing and the late David Laing, the George Cadbury Fund, The Kirby Laing Foundation and The Noël Coward Foundation.

"BRB2 is the only company in the UK of its kind which will be launching the careers of the stars of tomorrow. And we are seeing that there is a demand for this kind of company. We see this in the ticket sales and also from the perspective of donors. Everyone wants to help the next talent out there."

The tour's choreography, sets and costumes retain Mikhail Fokine's original vision and have been adapted for smaller stages. In most venues, the music will be a Royal Ballet Sinfonia recording made exclusively for the tour and presented with live piano.

Carlos is looking forward to bringing the show to Birmingham Hippodrome. It will be the first time the junior company have danced on the main stage.

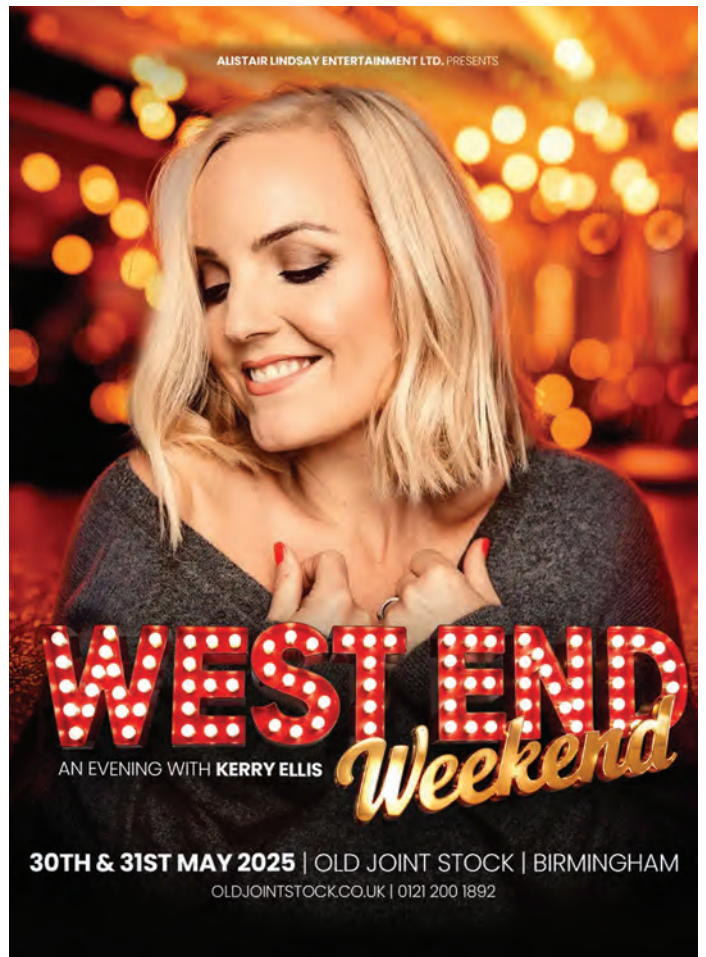
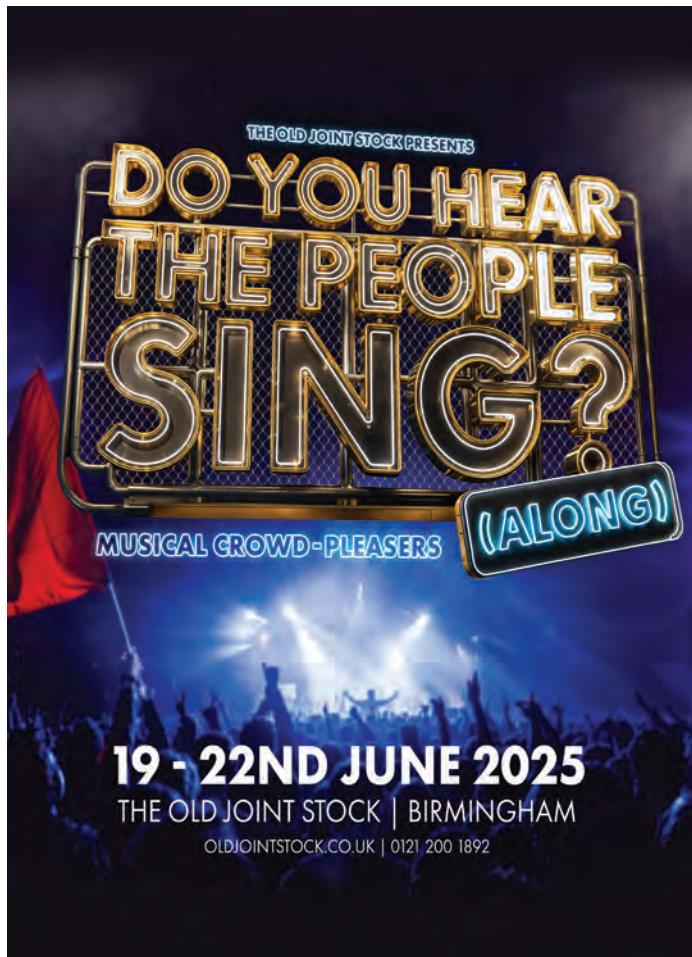
"I'm really pleased to be bringing BRB2 to the Hippodrome, our home stage, where BRB perform so regularly. We have a full-scale orchestra for Birmingham, and for the dancers to have exposure to that sound is fantastic. It's good to develop them for that scale at home, where they have the limelight themselves, not sharing with everyone else. It's fantastic."

And taking the junior company to mid-scale venues and stages which may not often receive live ballet helps BRB reach new audiences, says Carlos.

"The aim of the tour is to bring ballet with great dancers and full production values to people who don't normally have the access or means to come and see these shows in maybe London or other large-scale venues.

"It is important that BRB brings ballet to everywhere in the UK. That's our mission as a touring company."

.....
Birmingham Royal Ballet's BRB2 perform at Birmingham Hippodrome on Tuesday 6 May



Dance previews from across the region



Acosta Danza: Cuban Eclectico

Birmingham Hippodrome,
Tues 13 & Wed 14 May

Danceworks inspired by Cuban culture - but which come complete with a 'twist' - are brought together in this latest creation from Birmingham Royal Ballet Director Carlos Acosta.

The show is presented by Carlos' critically acclaimed ensemble, Acosta Danza, which performed a Latin American-inspired version of The Nutcracker at the Grand Theatre in Wolverhampton earlier in the year.

This latest production will see the company showcasing dance that ranges from modern to Afro-Cuban. The featured works, created in tandem with Carlos by highly regarded choreographers from across the globe, incorporate flamenco, capoeira and hip-hop. A Q&A session will take place post-show on the opening night.

Rhiannon Faith Company: Lay Down Your Burdens

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Wed 14 May

"The constant in all my work is love," explains socially conscious choreographer Rhiannon Faith, who this month brings critically acclaimed show Lay Down Your Burdens to Coventry. "I know how that might sound, but actually, I think it's brave to say. I make work about the human experience, and at the heart of that, the most essential thing that we truly know and we truly need, is love; to give it and to receive it."

Set in an on-stage pub and exploring themes of grief, serious illness and personal suffering, Rhiannon's Olivier Award-nominated show combines physical performance, personal testimonials, music from a live Ceilidh band and a selection of pub games. Its stated aim? To 'draw together those who have been estranged or never even dreamed they were connected'.

A free-but-ticketed workshop takes place the night before the show (Tuesday the 13th) from 6pm to 7.30pm.



Nikita: Midnight Dancer

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 2 May;
Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sun 11 May;
Birmingham Hippodrome, Sat 17 May

International champion and Strictly Come Dancing star Nikita Kuzmin's first-ever solo tour sees him joined by 'a sharp and chic cast of talented dancers and vocalists... for an evening bursting with happiness, euphoria, and (of course) world-class dance'.



Aljaž & Janette: A Night To Remember

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Fri 23 May

Strictly Come Dancing favourites Aljaž Škorjanec and Janette Manrara here make a welcome return to the region with a brand-new show in which they're promising 'unforgettable dancing, great music and plenty of laughter'. Supported by their own big band and an



ensemble cast of dancers and singers, the husband & wife team will be performing routines to a wide selection of music, including classics from the Great American Songbook and various modern-day favourites.

Bibi Rukiya's Reckless Daughter

Patrick Centre, Birmingham Hippodrome,
Thurs 22 & Fri 23 May

Bibi Rukiya's Reckless Daughter is a new dance-theatre production exploring 'the conditioned patriarchy enforced by women within family structures'.

Created by choreographer Amina Khayyam and loosely based on Federico García Lorca's The House Of Bernarda Alba, the story is set in contemporary inner-city marginalised new migrant communities.

The piece was developed over 18 months through an extensive programme of outreach workshops with women's community groups nationwide.



IT'S KICKING OFF...



Showing at Stratford-upon-Avon's Royal Shakespeare Theatre this month is a version of *Much Ado About Nothing* that side-steps the play's original setting in favour of the world of professional football. And what's more, the production comes complete with a celebrity wedding, fake news, and a swimming pool! Director Michael Longhurst spoke to What's On about his bold new take on Shakespeare's much-loved comedy...

Michael, why have you chosen this play, and why this setting?

I had a conversation with Daniel Evans and Tamara Harvey, the co-artistic directors of the RSC, and we were discussing various titles - *Much Ado* was a title that crossed over on both of our lists. I was circling around it, trying to think about how I would bring it to life. I was mentally going through various historical wars, trying to find a setting for the play, and was not particularly inspired or excited by the ideas that I was having... What was interesting to me was, it's a group of men coming back from a victory - which started me thinking about the world of professional sport. As soon as that idea had risen in my mind, it became very exciting. I think the play is about masculinity, about the dynamics of masculine relationships - brought into contact with feminine relationships. I was looking for figures within the world, and Silvio Berlusconi was someone I started researching - as soon as I understood that he was prime minister of Italy, a major owner of a media company and he was the president of AC Milan... that's literally what Leonato could be.

Can you describe what your rehearsal process has been like?

Joyous! There's something that happens when there are footballs to be kicked, and a bunch of guys that enjoy kicking footballs. There's an energy that automatically happens, which is amazing. What this has allowed us to do is to make a really unique world. The actors can be younger, because they're from the world of football, and it's a working-class sport, so I was determined that the voice and identity of the actors playing these roles would be authentic. I think that adds a really brilliant spin on how we might be used to hearing Shakespeare and what's 'the proper way' to speak it. It's been really fun to hear how vivid the world is that we've collectively created. It's a play full of movement - with the masques and dances and all that jazz - and once you're trying to do comic sequences involving a swimming pool... it's been a lot of fun!

Did anything surprise you while you were directing?

I'm always surprised by how little contact Beatrice and Benedick actually have together in the play. They are technically the subplot that we all fall in love with as the leads, but it's extraordinary the speed of development in their relationship, with very little contact time. It's a masterclass in playwriting to watch how we're so quickly hooked into their relationship. We were just working on Act Four Scene One... What an extraordinary scene, starting with the wedding, where Claudio slanders Hero, through to Beatrice and Benedick declaring love to each other. It's just sort of epic to go from polite titters at a wedding, to the absolute trashing of someone's dreams and reputation - essentially the cancelling of someone - through to the rollercoaster of emotion into declaring love. It's the kind of thing that I can imagine in modern telly you'd be told by a script editor "That's not believable, take the edges off it." Shakespeare just writes through it and doesn't let you simplify it, and that is extraordinary to stage and play. So watching the company get their teeth into such a big scene is really thrilling.

Are you a football fan, or have you come to this production from outside of that world?

In honesty, I am absolutely not a football fan. I have three brothers; they're all very sporty. *Match Of The Day* was on the telly on a Saturday, and I had to sit very quietly through it, and it was not my cup of tea. I have been football-adjacent. The job of directing is to become a mini expert before you go into rehearsal. Whether it's the conflict in the Middle East, or the climate emergency, or urban isolation, or quantum physics, - or, in this case, football! It's always something that, as a director, I'm trying to learn in a crash course... All our footballers went to meet players, training staff and members of the PR team at Watford Football Club. They came back with some extraordinary stories, which absolutely fuelled the characters. Once you do that work, you realise these kids have often been obsessively training on that one thing, from a

very young age. They have been moved away from their families, and the team is their life. Their lives are controlled by the managers, and every bit of their life, every beat of their diet, is scheduled and controlled for them. People love to come and share their stories in the rehearsal room, because theatre is an amazing medium for exploring facets of the world that we don't get to walk in ourselves. Or, if you have something important to say, we can be the means by which we share a discussion about it. The boys came back with amazing insights from their time with the footballers.

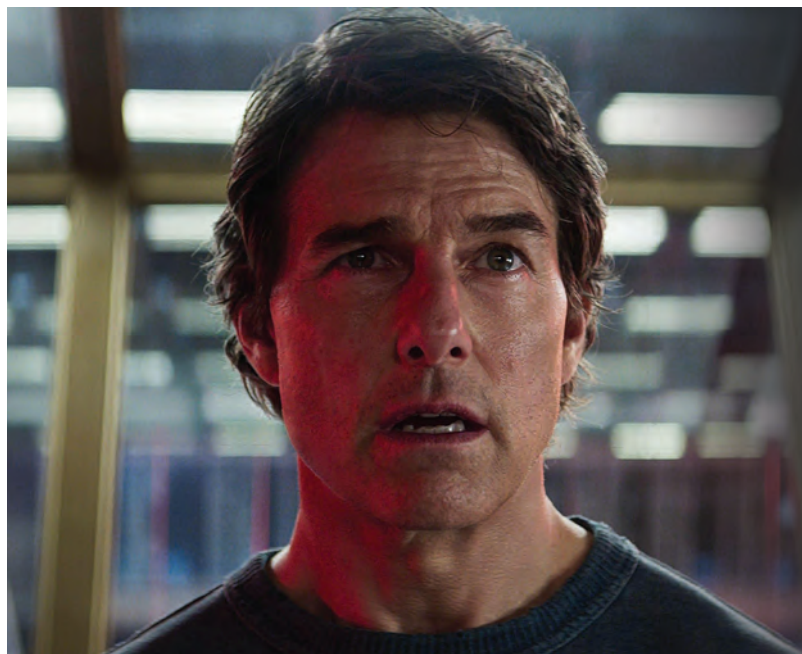
Of the play's two love stories, which have you found most interesting to direct?

I think I identify more strongly with Beatrice and Benedick because of my age. Hero and Claudio are a very young couple; their love is speedy and instant, and historically would have been in the form of romantic chivalry. Today, it's got sucked into the world of influencers and images - the surface veneer of it. Beatrice and Benedick are a much more experienced couple. The parallel between war and love in the original play really holds between sport and love - with the same sort of nationalistic language. We're here to conquer enemies, we're here to vanquish, we're doing national service... those sorts of things.

You have to 'surrender' to be in love. What does it mean to risk that at a certain age, when you may have been hurt in love before? I find it very moving to watch the two actors play all that wit, all the sharp, defensive, protective mechanisms, and then to watch that melt away - as it suddenly does. It's beautiful when that catches. When Freema Agyeman, who's playing Beatrice, declared her love for Benedick, I watched every eye in the rehearsal room wet immediately, and just thought - that's good! It feels like we're on to something.

.....

Much Ado About Nothing shows at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon until Saturday 24 May



Mission: Impossible - The Final Reckoning

CERT tbc

Starring **Tom Cruise, Vanessa Kirby, Hannah Waddingham, Simon Pegg, Tramell Tillman, Hayley Atwell, Angela Bassett** Directed by **Christopher McQuarrie**

Tom Cruise continues to take on impossible missions like there's no tomorrow...

The Final Reckoning was filmed back-to-back with its predecessor, *Dead Reckoning*, and takes the number of M:I movies to an impressive eight.

And Cruise may not be ready to hand in his Impossible Missions Force (IMF) badge just yet either, with the 62-year-old actor having pointed out that Harrison Ford was still playing Indiana Jones as he approached his 80s. This latest addition to the hit franchise (costing a cool \$400million - making it one of the most expensive movies ever made) sees Cruise's Ethan Hunt carrying on where he left off in *Dead Reckoning* - namely, trying his damndest to destroy an AI system called The Entity, which is housed in a sunken Russian stealth submarine.

Released Wed 21 May

Shadow Force

CERT 15 (104 mins)

Starring **Kerry Washington, Omar Sy, Mark Strong, Da'Vine Joy Randolph, Ed Quinn, Sala Baker** Directed by **Joe Carnahan**

Kyrah and Isaac were once the leaders of a multinational special forces group called Shadow Force. Problem was, they broke the rules and fell in love. In order to protect their son, they go underground. But with a large bounty on their heads, and the vengeful Shadow Force hot on their trail, one family's fight quickly becomes an all-out war... Kerry Washington (*Django Unchained*, *Little Fires Everywhere*, and hit thriller series *Scandal*) becomes a fully fledged action hero in this highly anticipated movie.

The film has been produced by Lionsgate, a company that knows a thing or two about making classics out of initially-under-the-radar actioners. Their previous such offerings include *Fall*, *Den Of Thieves 2*: *Pantera*, and the John Wick franchise (including its upcoming spinoff movie, *Ballerina*, which is currently slated for release next month).

Released Fri 2 May



The Wedding Banquet

CERT 15 (102 mins)

Starring **Bowen Yang, Lily Gladstone, Kelly Marie Tran, Han Gi-Chan, Joan Chen, Youn Yuh-jung** Directed by **Andrew Ahn**



Korean rich kid Min's student visa is set to expire, and he desperately needs a green card. Frustrated with his commitment-phobic boyfriend Chris and running out of time, he makes a proposal to their friend Angela: a green-card marriage, and in exchange he will pay for her partner Lee's expensive IVF treatment. Min and Angela prepare to quietly elope, but then their plans are upended by the arrival from Korea of Min's sceptical grandmother, who insists on staging an all-out Korean wedding extravaganza...

Director Andrew Ahn's comedy of errors - a reimagining of Ang Lee's same-named 1993 Oscar-nominated romcom - played pretty well with the critics when it was screened at the Sundance Film Festival earlier this year.

Released Fri 9 May

The Surfer

CERT 15 (103 mins)

Starring **Nicolas Cage, Finn Little, Rahel Romahn, Michael Abercromby, Alexander Bertrand, Julian McMahon** Directed by **Lorcan Finnegan**

The Surfer is intense, unnerving, and made a real splash at last year's Cannes Film Festival.

When Nicolas Cage's unnamed title character and his teenage son arrive at a beach with the intention of riding the waves, they find themselves confronted by a gang of unpleasant, bullying surfers, who make it clear that only local people are permitted in the area. But *The Surfer* isn't about to go home quietly. As he attempts to stand his ground, he finds himself being gaslit by his aggressors, a strategy that leaves him struggling hard to hold onto his sanity... Very much a slow-burn film, *The Surfer* makes for an absorbing watch, comes complete with a twist in its tale, and looks highly likely to acquire cult-movie status at breakneck speed.

Released Fri 9 May



Lilo & Stitch

CERT tbc

Starring **Maia Kealoha, Sydney Agudong, Billy Magnussen, Tia Carrere, Hannah Waddingham** and the voice of **Chris Sanders**
Directed by **Dean Fleischer Camp**

Lilo & Stitch have been around since the early years of the new millennium. Debuting in an animated, cinema-released movie, they then starred in a further three straight-to-video films as well as appearing on television.

For those not in the know, Lilo is an orphaned Hawaiian girl who loves hula, surfing and wildlife. Stitch is a genetically engineered runaway extraterrestrial creature who Lilo adopts as her 'dog'.

This 2025 remake of the original 2002 film is a live-action & computer-generated-animation hybrid. The storyline finds Lilo & Stitch getting involved in an adventure that sees them pursued by aliens (who are attempting to recapture Stitch) and bothered by the delightfully named and oh-so-strict social worker Cobra Bubbles (who's not convinced Lilo's older sister can do a good enough job of looking after her sibling).

The original film's co-writer/co-director, Chris Sanders, once again provides the voice of Stitch, just as he did back in the 2002 version. **Released Fri 23 May**



Hurry Up Tomorrow

CERT 15 (105 mins)

Starring **The Weeknd, Jenna Ortega, Barry Keoghan, Paul L Davis, Roy Williams Jr, David Moskowitz** Directed by **Trey Edward Shults**



"It's about an artist, you could say, on the verge of a mental breakdown," explains Hurry Up Tomorrow's director & co-writer, Trey Edwards Shults. "He meets this woman, and they go on this odyssey together. It's a mix of psychological thriller and drama." The movie stars Abel Tesfaye, aka The Weeknd, who recently released his sixth studio album, also titled Hurry Up Tomorrow. "The film actually inspired the album," Tesfaye told Variety. "It offered me a chance to express a lot that I needed to release, with cinema serving as the ideal medium for exploration. The openness of film allowed me to delve into these themes freely."

Released Fri 16 May

The Phoenician Scheme

CERT tbc

Starring **Scarlett Johansson, Tom Hanks, Benedict Cumberbatch, Bryan Cranston, Rupert Friend, Bill Murray**
Directed by **Wes Anderson**

Wes Anderson has teamed up with longtime collaborator Roman Coppola for The Phoenician Scheme, the pair having previously co-written Asteroid City and Moonrise Kingdom.

A tale of espionage, boasting an all-star cast and described by Anderson as a "three-hander", the film focuses on the character of Zsa-zsa Korda, one of the richest men in Europe, who names his daughter - a nun, and one of his six children - as his heir. He does so, however, without disclosing why he's made the decision, other than to reveal that he's embarking on "the most important project of my lifetime."

Further details about the film are few and far between at the time of writing, but Anderson's legion of fans will care not a jot about that, enthusiastically signing up to anything and everything that passes through the critically acclaimed director's hands.

Released Fri 23 May



Karate Kid: Legends

CERT tbc (118 mins)

Starring **Joshua Jackson, Jackie Chan, Ralph Macchio, Ming-Na Wen, Shaunette Renée Wilson, Sadie Stanley**
Directed by **Jonathan Entwistle**



The sixth film in the Karate Kid franchise is set three years after the events of the Cobra Kai series. It follows the story of kung fu prodigy Li Fong, who, after a family tragedy, is uprooted from his home in Beijing and forced to move to New York City with his mother.

Once in the US, Li struggles to let go of his past as he tries to fit in with his new classmates, and although he doesn't want to fight, trouble seems to find him everywhere. When a new friend needs his help, Li enters a karate competition - but his skills alone aren't enough.

Li's kung fu teacher, Mr Han (Jackie Chan), enlists original Karate Kid Daniel LaRusso (Ralph Macchio) for help, and Li soon learns a new way to fight, merging their two styles into one for 'the ultimate martial arts showdown'...

Released Fri 30 May

BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET

Sofia Liñares, © Perou.

Director Carlos Acosta

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TO BE FRANK...

With previous roles in touring productions of *Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *Rock Of Ages*, *We Will Rock You* and *Aladdin* under his belt, musical theatre star Adam Strong is currently wearing the iconic heels of Frank N Furter in *The Rocky Horror Show*.

What's On recently caught up with Adam to find out more about his performance pathway so far...

Where are you from, Adam?

I grew up in Sunderland and am based just outside of Durham - although I'm never there, due to work.

When did you first realise you had some talent, and who encouraged you?

My sister was a dancer for many years, and I used to love watching her, especially in the panto at the Sunderland Empire, which she did for many years. She was the one who encouraged me to get started in musical theatre and helped me land my first role, which was Jerome in *The Sound Of Music* at the Sunderland Empire. I've loved musicals since being a child - the first time I saw *The Phantom Of The Opera* on stage, I was hooked.

Was there a moment when you realised you wanted to be a professional performer, and is there a role that changed everything for you?

When I auditioned for *We Will Rock You*. I'm a massive Queen fan, and I knew it was time to move from understudy to playing a role of my own. And it worked out.

What was your first major role, and is there a role that has a special significance.

My first musical as an adult was *Jesus Christ Superstar* - the arena tour starring Tim Minchin and Mel C. I played a priest and understudied the role of Annas. I had the most amazing time touring the world with that show - and performing in arenas was just unbelievable.

Also, playing Jafar in Disney's *Aladdin* was very personal to me. Watching the animated film was the first time I had seen anyone who looked like me on screen [Adam describes himself as half Middle Eastern]. Disney is so conscientious about casting a diverse company.

You've performed all over the world. Do you have any highlights?

I have many career highlights, but I think performing opposite Brian May for our gala performance of *We Will Rock You* will always stick out as one of my proudest moments.

What do you love about playing Frank N Furter?

It's such an empowering role, and I get to sing all of my favourite songs and be part of the musical's history. I've been a massive

Rocky Horror Show fan for many, many years, and I've studied many different Franks - so for me, it just felt like the right fit.

The Rocky Horror Show fanbase is legendary. What's your experience of them?

The fans are so supportive of the show! I get a lot of gifts, which is very kind, as I love show memorabilia.

Rocky Horror has been pushing boundaries for 50 years. Do you think it still has that same rebellious edge in 2025?

Oh, I think the show is timeless and always will be! I had a chat with our wonderful director, Chris Luscombe, in rehearsals, and we had a look at the script from the 1970s - it's almost identical!

Adam Strong stars in *The Rocky Horror Show* when it visits the Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, from Monday 5 to Saturday 10 May, and the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, from Monday 22 to Saturday 27 September



Elizabeth And Stanhope Forbes: A Marriage Of Art

Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum, until Sun 29 June

Elizabeth and Stanhope Forbes were very much the power couple of British Impressionism, with both artists already well established and enjoying success at the time of their marriage in 1889.

This brand-new exhibition features what's being described as a 'sumptuous' selection of their artworks. The show includes many pieces that are on loan from Penlee House Gallery & Museum, and which are visiting Worcester for the very first time.

Also on display in the exhibition is Stanhope's Chadding On Mounts Bay, one of the most widely admired and beloved paintings in Worcester City's Fine Art collection.

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John Devis (c. 1815), Head of a Man.
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This exhibition has been made possible as a result of the
Department for Culture, Media & Sport's grant to the
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Mao Ishikawa

Mead Gallery, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Thurs 1 May - Sun 22 June

Warwick Arts Centre is this month and next presenting the first institutional exhibition in the UK of revered Okinawan photographer Mao Ishikawa.

Featuring more than 60 photos from the 1970s onwards, the show includes images

from some of Mao's best-known projects. Among these is an iconic series focusing on Okinawan women who formed relationships with African American servicemen stationed at US military bases on the island.

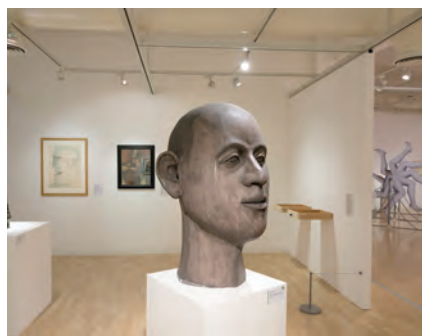
Beyond The Canvas

Rugby Art Gallery, until Sat 7 June

Taking the subtitle A Celebration Of British Sculpture From The Ingram Collection, Beyond The Canvas explores the diverse styles and techniques that defined British sculpture throughout the 20th century.

The Ingram Art Foundation boasts one of the most significant collections of modern British art in the UK. The collection is here sharing space with pieces from the widely admired Rugby Collection.

The display is being presented as part of the gallery's 25th anniversary celebration.



Suzanne Holtom: And Hills Bore Scars

New Art Gallery, Walsall, until Sun 29 June

"During the pandemic, I lost my dad," explains Suzanne Holtom, "and as a result, my trips back home to the West Midlands became far more frequent. It was this continuing return to my original home, contemplating and experiencing this embodied landscape, that initiated a new direction in my work."



A deep mapping of place - encompassing geological time, personal experiences, social histories and memory - has become the primary motivation in Suzanne's art. The paintings featured in And Hills Bore Scars - which draw from 'geosites' in the Black Country Global Geopark - contemplate bodily forms, land masses, histories, patterns of energy and industry, layered materiality and shifting terrains. Visitors to the gallery on Saturday 10 May can join Suzanne for a printmaking session and a tour of her exhibition.

John Piper In The Countryside

Netherwood Manor, Herefordshire, Sat 31 May - Sun 8 June

This major exhibition draws together a wide selection of originals, prints and fabrics by John Piper, a Surrey-born 20th-century artist whose work often focused on the British landscape. An official war artist during 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.

The Netherwood Manor display includes a selection of artworks featuring the local region.



Through Their Eyes: 80 Years On

National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire, Sat 3 May - Sun 16 November

Marking this month's 80th anniversary of the end of World War Two, Through Their Eyes is part of the National Memorial Arboretum's The Year Was 1945... project. The initiative comprises displays, events, services, talks and tours, its aim being to share the stories of those who served during wartime.

Through Their Eyes has been produced by the Royal British Legion, the UK's largest charity solely dedicated to supporting the needs of the Armed Forces community.

PARTY TIME

August Strindberg's Miss Julie has been radically reimaged for a new audience



A radically reimagined version of August Strindberg's Miss Julie shows at Coventry's Belgrade Theatre this month. Directed by Holly Race Roughan and written by Laura Lomas, The House Party is set in modern times and explores themes of class, power and privilege. Holly and Laura spoke to What's On about their critically acclaimed play...

August Strindberg's play Miss Julie has been reimagined numerous times since it was first staged in 1888, but when director Holly Race Roughan and writer Laura Lomas approached the story, they decided to create a radical new version for audiences today. Where the original tells of the fall-out of a brief moment of passion across the class divide, The House Party explores the relationships between three teenagers - Julie, her friend Christine, and Christine's boyfriend, Jon - and how one night changes their lives forever.

As artistic director of Headlong Theatre, which has produced The House Party along with Frantic Assembly and Chichester Festival Theatre, Holly says it was essential that the story spoke to modern audiences and made us hear this classic afresh.

"I think Miss Julie is one of the best plays ever written about the intersection between the personal and the political," she says. "But I re-read it and realised we needed a new version, with more about the psychology and humanity of the characters. Laura was the right person to contemporise it but also complicate it.

"As a production company, we are interested in making a version where you *feel* first for the characters before you then *think* about them. What is genius about Lomas' and the Strindberg version is that it's so balanced; you can't really come down on one side. Who's the victim and who's the perpetrator? Each page slides you back round the drama triangle."

The team also decided to give the play its new name, The House Party, to signify its differences from Miss Julie.

"I'm really interested at Headlong in estranging audiences from works they think they know really well, in order to allow them a contemporary experience of hearing those stories for the first time. Having a different name is partly to acknowledge that this is quite a radical new interpretation. It's so

exciting when you don't know what's going to happen next when you're sitting in the theatre. If it's called The House Party and is based on Miss Julie, you know the playground it's in but you don't really know what's going to happen next. That allows us to create experience that feels more like a modern-day thriller."

When the show premiered at Chichester in May last year, one of the great joys for the creative team was seeing how it appealed to people of all ages but especially younger audience members.

"We were quite knocked out by the reaction from different generations. It's in the mouths of 18-year-olds, but it's an inter-generational theatrical experience.

"Headlong's place in the theatre ecology is - in part, I believe - to be a 'gateway drug'. So what really excites me - as well as playing to brilliant and loyal core audiences - is playing to first timers. What Laura has written is such a tense, exciting show that if it's your first time going to the theatre, you're going to want to come back."

In writing The House Party, Laura was keen to retain the original play at the heart of her version, but also to give it a greater relevance and modern-day resonance.

"Strindberg is so immediate," she says.

"Dramatically, it grabs you by the throat and never stops. The challenge in trying to make it contemporary is being able to update it while also holding onto that propulsive drama.

"It's very emotional, and there's something quite teenage and hormonal about that. And so the idea of setting it in a teenage house party arose. Along with that came the idea of making this party really vibrant and anarchic.

"I think it's a play about friendship and class, and it's about three teenagers who don't fully understand the external pressures that are bearing down on them and the destructive

force of that. So in some ways it's an awakening or a coming of age for them. But I've also written humour into it, so it's funny and entertaining."

The friends face the power of external pressures such as social media.

"It's about Julie's experience of being sexually shamed online, so it's also about misogyny. There's a sense that Julie is a bit of a femme fatale in the original, and I really wanted to address that in this updating. I wanted us to find a way of understanding Julie as someone who is also marginalised and objectified and acting out of the social violence she has experienced by being told that her only worth is her sexual currency.

"There are so many big intersections in all of the characters - so race, gender, class - but there are also smaller intersections, which hopefully mean that different people will hook into different things with each of these characters.

"There's so much going on in the knot between them that your sympathies will shift, but hopefully within that journey you will understand them all."

The success of The House Party would not have been possible without the collaboration of the three producing partners - something of which show director Holly is very aware: "The production really is a love child of the dynamic movement of Frantic Assembly, Headlong's commitment to vivid, robust, thrilling new writing, and Chichester's 'Yes we can' attitude to producing. All three of us felt deeply proud of the show last year. We felt we had surpassed what we could do without each other."

.....

The House Party shows at The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, from Thursday 8 to Saturday 10 May

See website for full line-up

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Events previews from around the region



Laithwaites Wine Festival The Custard Factory, Birmingham, Sat 10 May

Glasses at the ready - the Laithwaites Wine Festival is on its way to Birmingham. Dozens of producers from around the world will be gathering at the city's Custard Factory venue this month to serve their

wines and share the stories behind them. The event also includes a selection of fun and informative masterclasses - including cocktail winemaking and a cheese & wine pairing session.



Digbeth Dining Club Summer Tour

Warwick Castle, Fri 2 May; Beacon Park, Lichfield, Sat 3 May; Brueton Park Lake, Solihull, Sun 4 May; Bromsgrove Recreation Ground, Mon 5 May; Waterfront, Brierley Hill, Fri 9 May; Sutton Coldfield Rugby Club, Sat 10 May; Lightwoods Park, Smethwick, Sun 11 May; Tamworth Castle Grounds, Sat 17 May; Codsall Village Hall, Sun 18 May; Compton Verney, Sat 31 May; Barton Marina, Burton-on-Trent, Sat 31 May

Digbeth Dining Club is back on the road, with the award-winning street-food operator touring local parks, fields and beauty spots across the region over the next few months. Hawker Dan, Original Patty Men, Beef On The Block, Cofton Pizza, Urban Spice Box and Bournville Waffle Co are just a few of the

100-plus street-food traders taking part in the summer tour. Chilled DJ sets, family-friendly activities and drinks stations - such as cocktail caravans and fizz bars - all add to the experience for diners, whose dogs (if they have any) are very welcome, too.

Whitchurch Food & Drink Festival

Jubilee Park, Whitchurch, Shropshire, Sat 24 May

Whitchurch Food & Drink Festival makes a welcome return after a five-year break. A celebration of local produce, the free one-day event features chef demonstrations, exhibitors from across the region, and hands-on food sustainability activities presented by local organisations. Live entertainment takes place on the bandstand throughout the day, and a kids' area will feature a host of free activities, including inflatables, vintage games, alpacas, and have-a-go circus skills and sports.



90's Baby Bottomless Brunch

Gosta Green, Birmingham, Sat 17 May; The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury, Sat 17 May

Get ready to party like it's 1999 as The Brunch Club bring their 90s-themed event to two Midlands venues this month. Guests can enjoy all their favourite 90s hits - courtesy of live performers and the resident DJ - whilst also tucking into their brunch dish and making the most of a not-to-be-missed 60-minute 'bottomless booze' option.

Weston's Spring Fling

Weston Park, Shropshire, Sun 25 & Mon 26 May

Weston Park's popular Spring Fling features unique crafts, a selection of street food, and a line-up of local artisan food producers. Live music is provided by the Dirty Rockin Scoundrels, with fairground rides available to keep visitors of all ages entertained. The whole estate - including the house and its collection, the miniature railway and the woodland adventure playground - is open to explore across the two days.



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RHS Malvern Spring Festival

Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Thurs 8 - Sun 11 May

Taking the theme Plants & People, the RHS Malvern Spring Festival is this year encouraging visitors to explore the numerous ways in which plants bring a positive impact to their lives.

As well as showcasing new attractions - including the first RHS-judged Indoor Plant Gardens and the Give It A Grow Theatre - the

festival also boasts contributions from Alan Titchmarsh and BBC Gardeners' World regulars Adam Frost, Frances Tophill and Rachel de Thame.

Numerous well-established elements of the popular event also make a return, including show and feature gardens, the floral marquee and the Tips & Tricks Theatre.

Spring Diesel Festival

Severn Valley Railway, nr Kidderminster, Worcestershire, Thurs 15 - Sun 18 May

Severn Valley Railway's four-day festival of traction is back this month and features both guest and home locomotives operating a busy timetable between Kidderminster and Hampton Loade.

Guest locomotives include the Freightliner Class 66, Freightliner Class 70, Rail Adventure Powercars 43468 and 43480 and Colas Class 56 x 2 (expected to be 56090 and 56094).

The Kidderminster Diesel Depot & Carriage Shed will be open for tours, which can be booked on the day.



Giffords Circus

Sudeley Castle, Cheltenham, Fri 9 - Mon 19 May

This year celebrating their 25th anniversary, Giffords Circus return to Sudeley Castle with brand-new offering Laguna Bay.

Set in the 'buoyant and sunny era' of 1950s America, the show features a cast of top-rated acrobats, magicians, musicians and clowns.



Makers Central

NEC, Birmingham, Sat 17 & Sun 18 May

Makers Central is back at the NEC, bringing together creators, hobbyists and artists from all over the world.

Visitors young and old can get involved with a selection of interactive sessions, including woodworking, metalworking, electronics and leathercraft.

Everyone from experienced makers to families and first-time triers can have a go at

making things with new technologies, along the way gaining a better understanding of the science behind how things are made. Numerous makers-community YouTube stars and social-media influencers will be putting in an appearance across the weekend, including Britain's very own inventor & maker Colin Furze and the star of Netflix's Making Fun, Jimmy Diresta.

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Three Counties Showground, Malvern



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Events previews from around the region



Circus Extreme NEC, Birmingham, opposite Resorts World, Fri 16 May - Sun 1 June

Combining live rock music and 'world-class' circus stunts, Circus Extreme returns with brand-new show Rock It Out. The two-hour extravaganza features, among

other acts, the Extreme Freestyle Motocross Team, South American stunt legend Paulinho, and The Danguir Troupe's Double Wheel Of Death (pictured).



Birmingham Pride

Birmingham Gay Village & Smithfield, Birmingham, Sat 24 & Sun 25 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 Cabaret Stage and Dance Arena. Headline acts this year include Clean Bandit, Cascada and Bananarama.

Staffordshire County Show

Staffordshire County Showground, Wed 28 & Thurs 29 May

The 2025 Staffordshire County Show offers something for visitors of all ages to enjoy. The Country Pursuits Area will host the West Lancs Dog Display Team, birds-of-prey presentations, a ferret roadshow, a sheep show and giant tortoises. The Main Ring programme, meanwhile, includes the Bolddog Lings Motorcycle Display Team, the Mounted Games, show jumping, a parade of hounds, and young farmers' floats. There will also be a grand parade of livestock - the show features over a thousand cattle, sheep, pigs and goats - and more than 1,500 horses and ponies, some of which will be participating in various competitions across the two days. Four hundred-plus trade stands and a food hall further add to the event's appeal.



AJ Bell Great Birmingham Run

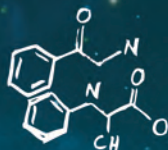
Birmingham City Centre, Sat 3 & Sun 4 May

The Midlands' biggest running event returns across the first weekend of the month. Saturday the 3rd sees the junior and mini Great Birmingham Runs taking place at the Alexander Stadium in Perry Barr. On Sunday the 4th, the city hosts the 10k and half marathon races. Participants will be running past some of Birmingham's best-known landmarks and areas, including the Jewellery Quarter, St Paul's Square, the Mailbox and Grand Central. The event begins in Centenary Square, with both runs ending at Smithfield in Southside, where there will be food stalls and a party to enjoy.





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ENGLAND

Events previews from around the region



World War Two Week

RAF Museum Midlands, Cosford, Sat 24 May - Sun 1 June

The RAF Museum Midlands is travelling back to the 1940s this half-term week, to highlight the importance of World War Two in terms of the development of technology, engineering

and community.

Attractions include talks, make & take sessions, a selfie station, Lego racers, and the return of the popular Spy Hunter Trail.



Half term fun at Thinktank Science Museum

Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum, Mon 26 - Fri 30 May

Thinktank will be keeping youngsters entertained during the half-term holiday with daily events and activities. Highlights include the return of the Roving Robots Family Show, during which kids (and adults) can learn how space rovers are powered, what they might be up to on other

planets, and how they get there.

The venue's line-up of entertainment also includes Lunar Lego Lab workshops, providing youngsters with the opportunity to build, program and customise their very own Science Rover.

Brick Dinos

Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry, Sat 31 May - Sun 7 September

This new exhibition provides families with the opportunity to step back in time to the prehistoric world.

The show's attractions include a range of Lego dinosaur sculptures - created in collaboration with palaeontologists - behind-the-scenes videos, photo opportunities, and the chance to uncover fossils at an interactive 'dino dig'.

Visitors can also get creative with hands-on Lego and Duplo play, design their own dinosaurs on a graffiti wall, and take home dinosaur-themed colouring sheets.



VE80 Anniversary Celebrations

Tamworth Castle, Staffordshire, Sat 10 & Sun 11 May

Tamworth Castle is marking the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe with a weekend of activities and entertainment. Visitors can try their hand at sending Morse Code and decoding secret messages, see if they can pass the army medical, and take the air raid shelter survival test.

Tamworth Games Club will also be contributing to the weekend by reenacting some of World War Two's most significant battles.





BACK TO OLD HAUNTS

**Liza Goddard returns to her first love, the theatre,
as eerie thriller *The Croft* visits the region...**

The Croft, a haunting play by Ali Milles, is on the last leg of its 2025 tour, visiting three Midlands venues in May and June. Based on a true story and set in the remote Scottish Highlands, the play explores the history of an ancient former crofters hut and the terrifying truth hidden within its walls. Taking top billing in the show is Liza Goddard, a familiar television face across the decades who nevertheless feels most at home treading the boards in front of a live audience. She chatted to What's On about The Croft, her life and her career...

Liza Goddard has been a fixture on our screens for decades, from her breakthrough in BBC series *Take Three Girls*, through children's TV favourite *Woof!*, to hit shows including *Bergerac* and *Doctor Who*. But her first love, she says, has always been the stage - and she's delighted to have returned to it this year, starring in Original Theatre's acclaimed production of atmospheric thriller *The Croft*.

"The concept of the play is really interesting," she explains. "It's set in the Highlands, and I play a former inhabitant of a croft, who reveals her story to the modern-day visitors. I love the idea of it being a ghost story."

The production, which also stars Caroline Harker (*A Touch Of Frost*) and Gray O'Brien (*Coronation Street*), is visiting venues across the country, including three theatres here in the Midlands region.

Liza says the setting of the play feels close to home. "I've spent a lot of time in the Highlands. We have relatives who live in the Trossachs, and I absolutely adore it. I'd love to have my own little croft. I just hope they don't burn me at the stake for my Scottish accent."

Smethwick-born Liza is no stranger to life on the road, having appeared in countless travelling productions. These include the recent hit revival of the Michael Frayn farce *Noises Off*. "The nice thing about touring is that you get to see so many different cities. I probably know this country better than anyone, thanks to my work."

Like many actors, her first theatre credits were in regional rep. She even appeared as a baby on stage at the Aldershot Repertory Theatre, where her father, David Goddard, worked before moving to the BBC to become a producer. "They used to hang my Moses basket on the pegs backstage," she says. "I've loved theatres ever since."

She got her first taste of stardom shortly afterwards, at the age of six, when she appeared in a TV show her father was working on. But her big break came after the family relocated to Australia, when she was cast to play Clancy Merrick in *Skippy The Bush Kangaroo*. The show became "a huge international hit".

After returning to the UK in the late 60s, "with the aim of earning enough money to get back to Australia", Liza soon got cast in *Take Three Girls*, which was the first drama series to be broadcast in colour. More roles soon followed, including in *The Brothers*, in which she appeared alongside Colin Baker, who became her first husband. Future co-stars would include luminaries such as Ben Kingsley and Richard Burton.

"I've worked with some amazing actors," she says, "and I've also had some fantastic collaborators on stage. I've worked a lot with the playwright Alan Ayckbourn, and later this year will be returning to his theatre in Scarborough, my spiritual home, for his 96th play."

When she's away from the stage, she enjoys relaxing at home in Norfolk. "I live in a village that has lots of activities to keep me busy, such as keep-fit classes and OAP lunches. I find village life very entertaining. I also walk for miles with the dog. I love dogs - when I was in *Woof!* I had nine of them, because people kept giving me strays!"

But despite the fact that Liza greatly enjoys her downtime, the lure of the footlights remains as strong as ever. "Acting is the only thing I know how to do, and it's quite addictive. I don't think there's anything better than live performance, with everyone experiencing the same thing together. And that's especially true in this age of AI, when you can't really trust what you're watching on screen."

Based on a true story, and set in the real-life former settlement of Coillie Ghille, *The Croft* was first seen in 2020, finding a wider audience when it was broadcast during the pandemic. The play explores a range of issues, from the paranormal through to generational trauma and the nature of relationships. Ali Milles' writing is reminiscent of the work of Conor McPherson, particularly his perennially popular play *The Weir*. "It really resonates with me," says Liza. "I live in an old house, and you're fully aware of the events that have happened there before - it's almost seeped into the stones."

Producers Original Theatre are marking their 20th anniversary this year, and Liza says she was impressed when she recently saw their landmark production of *Birdsong*. "It was absolutely wonderful, and very timely, with its theme of the futility of war. The production values were fantastic, as was the ensemble."

The tour of *The Croft* will take her to some familiar places. "I've probably played Malvern every year for the past 30 years. And the Yvonne Arnaud is somewhere I've performed since childhood, as I used to live in Farnham."

But she's also excited to explore some new venues, including Salisbury Playhouse and Liverpool Playhouse. As she puts it, "Even after so many years in the business, I still have new stages to discover."


.....

The Croft shows at The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, from Tuesday 20 to Saturday 24 May. The tour continues at Malvern Theatres from Tuesday 27 to Saturday 31 May, and then at Birmingham Rep from Tuesday 10 until Saturday 14 June

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*Your week-
by-week
listings guide*
May 2025

the list



RHS Malvern Spring Festival at Three Counties Showground - Thurs 8 - Sun 11 May

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

What's On

Thurs 1 - Sun 11 May



Two Pints -
The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry
Fri 2 - Sat 24 May

Mon 12 - Sun 18 May



Nigel Kennedy: Vivaldi The Four
Seasons - Malvern Theatres
Fri 16 - Sat 17 May

Mon 19 - Sun 25 May



Barb Jungr -
Huntingdon Hall, Worcester
Fri 23 May

Mon 26 - Sat 31 May



Jools Holland -
Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry
Thurs 29 May

VISUAL ARTS IN THE MIDLANDS

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

REMBRANDT: MASTERPIECES IN BLACK AND WHITE A collection of exquisite etchings, on tour from Rembrandt House Museum in the Netherlands, highlighting the full range of Rembrandt's output along with those he influenced across the centuries, until Sun 1 June

CURTIS HOLDER: DRAWING CARLOS ACOSTA Curtis Holder, winner of Sky Arts Portrait Artist of the Year in 2020, was commissioned to draw Carlos Acosta, director of Birmingham Royal Ballet. This display brings together portraits Curtis made during the competition and his working sketches.

Compton Verney, Warwickshire

EMII ALRAI: RIVER OF BLACK STONE Inspired by the disruptive nature of volcanic eruption and paintings of Vesuvius in the gallery's Naples collection, Emii Alrai weaves together ancient mythologies, research and nostalgia as a critical response to our times, until Sun 15 June

TOWERING DREAMS: EXTRAORDINARY ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS Exhibition exploring how architects of the 18th and early 19th centuries understood the world around them. Featuring extraordinary architectural drawings for amazing buildings, both real and imagined, until Sun 31 Aug

THE TAOTIE After an 18-month residency, Gayle Chong Kwan presents an exhibition of her new work alongside the venue's renowned Chinese collection, until Tues 31 March 2026

Coventry Music Museum

WE'LL LIVE AND DIE IN THESE TOWNS A new temporary exhibition, partially based on the anthemic song recorded by Coventry trio The Enemy, but also exploring how football, music and Coventry all combine.

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

Herbert Museum & Art Gallery, Coventry

COVENTRY OPEN 2025 A showcase of work by visual artists in the West Midlands, until Sun 8 June

COVENTRY RUGBY CLUB A new display celebrating 150 years of Coventry Rugby Club, until Tues 30 Sep

WARWICKSHIRE'S JURASSIC SEA

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

BRICK DINOS Step back in time and explore the prehistoric world with Brick Dinosaurs, brought to life with stunning Lego creations by artist Warren Elsmore and his team, Sat 31 May - Sun 7 Sep

Rugby Art Gallery

RUGBY ARTISTS' GROUP: SEASONS An exhibition of works in the Floor One Gallery, until Sat 3 May

COLLECTING RUGBY: 25 YEARS ANNIVERSARY A display looking at a quarter century of object collection in Rugby, and the history of the museum, until Thurs 4 Oct

Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum

H. H. LINES: ARCHITECTURE, ARCHAEOLOGY AND ART Exhibition exploring the three loves of renowned local artist, Henry Harris Lines, until Sun 1 June

Elsewhere:

MAHTAB HUSSAIN: WHAT DID YOU WANT TO SEE? Show exploring the line between photo documentation and surveillance culture, and revealing the vibrancy and diversity of Birmingham's Muslim community, until Sun 1 June. Ikon Gallery, Birmingham

JANE WILLIAMS: MUSICAL COLOURS The exhibition, by Leamington Music's artist-in-residence, is available to view an hour before concerts taking place at the venue as part of the town's annual music festival, Fri 2 - Mon 5 May, The Royal Pump Rooms Conservatory, Leamington

WE ARE SOLIHULL: VISUAL ARTS EXHIBITION Featuring work by young artists from 14 schools and colleges across the borough, until Sat 17 May, The Courtyard Gallery, Solihull

VIEWS ON NATURE Sylvie Millen & Jane Arthur, two textile artists with an innate response to the natural world, join forces to explore what nature means to them, Thurs 1 - Wed 21 May, Number 8, Pershore

ALL THAT PAIN, ALL THAT JOY, ALL THE SAME An exhibition of sculpture, textiles and paintings by artists George Wagstaffe and Michala Gyetvai, Thurs 1 May - Sun 15 Jun, Coventry Cathedral

ELGAR FESTIVAL 2025: ELGAR FOR EVERYONE EXHIBITION Exhibition of Edward Elgar artefacts, manuscripts and memorabilia, Wed 28 - Sat 31 May, Worcester Guildhall

Gigs

CERY'S HAFANA Thurs 1 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

TOBY LEE + ISABELLA COULSTOCK Thurs 1 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

MARIO Thurs 1 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

KATEY BROOKS Thurs 1 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

EVERYTHING EVERYTHING Thurs 1 May, hmv Empire, Coventry

TARA CHINN Fri 2 May, Actress & Bishop, Birmingham

BLACK SHERIF Fri 2 May, O2 Institute, B'ham

THE POGUES Fri 2 May, O2 Academy, B'ham

EMF + SCANT REGARD Fri 2 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

PASSIVE FIX Fri 2 May, Dead Wax, B'ham

GNOME + WALL Fri 2 May, The Asylum, Birmingham

ULTRA FOXX Fri 2 May, The Flapper, B'ham

TATTOO MOLLY Fri 2 May, The Victoria, B'ham

SKIPINNISH Fri 2 May, Birmingham Town Hall

ANDY BELL Fri 2 May, Symphony Hall, B'ham

CHASE & STATUS Fri 2 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham

THE GREY GOOSE BLUES BAND Fri 2 May, Tower Of Song, Birmingham

COPSE + STILL Fri 2 May, The Rainbow, Birmingham

VINCENT FLATTS FINAL DRIVE Fri 2 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

JAMIE KNIGHT Fri 2 May, The Royal Pug, Leamington Spa

THE SOUTH Fri 2 May, hmv Empire, Coventry

RUMOURS OF FLEETWOOD MAC Fri 2 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

FAUX FIGHTERS UK + KINGS OF THE STONE AGE Fri 2 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

THE ROOTERS Fri 2 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton



Katey Brooks - Temperance, Leamington Spa

GYPSY PISTOLEROS + THE OUTLAW ORCHESTRA + JIKSAW Fri 2 May, Marrs Bar, Worcester

TRACK DOGS Fri 2 May, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

THE KINGS VOICE STARRING GORDON HENDRICKS Fri 2 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch

THE GLAM ROCK SHOW Fri 2 May, Malvern Theatres

PARAMORE GB + AIN'T REAL LAVIGNE Fri 2 May, 45Live, Kidderminster

GARY BARLOW Fri 2 - Sat 3 May, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

SLAUGHTERHOUSE FESTIVAL Fri 2 - Sun 4 May, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

STANLEYS + THE VIZ + THE BLOOMS Sat 3 May, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

LOWKEY Sat 3 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

RHYTHM OF THE 90S Sat 3 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

TREY SONGZ & JEREMIH Sat 3 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

IMPERIAL AGE + GROTESCO KARMA + AEON GODS + SEVENTH STATION Sat 3 May, The Asylum, Birmingham

THE HANKSTERS Sat 3 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

MEGSON Sat 3 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

THE ORB + OZRIC TENTACLES Sat 3 May,

hmv Empire, Coventry

WALK RIGHT BACK - THE STORY OF THE EVERLY BROTHERS Sat 3 May, Albany Theatre, Coventry

THUNDER HAMMER Sat 3 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

BLACK ROSE SOCIETY Sat 3 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

LOVE THE BEATLES + ERICA JEAN Sat 3 May, Marrs Bar, Worcester

TALON Sat 3 May, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

THE BOHEMIANS - QUEEN TRIBUTE Sat 3 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch

ELVIS TRIBUTE - MARK SUMMERS Sat 3 May, 45Live, Kidderminster

TOOTS AND THE MAYTALS FEAT. LEBBA HIBBERT Sat 3 May, The Wulfrun at The Halls Wolverhampton

MONICA AND THE EXPLOSION Sun 4 May, The Dark Horse, Moseley, Birmingham

INHUMAN NATURE Sun 4 May, The Flapper, Birmingham

GO WEST Sun 4 May, Symphony Hall, B'ham

SKA TRAIN Sun 4 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

ALASTAIR GREENE Sun 4 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

JUNCTION 77 Sun 4 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

BIG UP THE 90S Sun 4 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

Classical Music

CBSO: KAZUKI CONDUCTS JOY Featuring Kazuki Yamada (conductor) & Kian Soltani (cello). Programme includes works by Berlioz, Fauré, Saint-Saëns & more..., Thurs 1 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

SUMMER LUNCHTIME RECITAL SERIES 2025 Featuring James Topp (french horn), Thurs 1 May, Worcester Cathedral

TRIO SHAHAM-EREZ-WALLFISCH Featuring Hagai Shaham (violin), Arnon Erez (piano) & Raphael Wallfisch (cello). Programme includes works by Ben-Haim, Shostakovich & Ravel, Fri 2 May, Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington Spa

MARK BEBBINGTON PIANO RECITAL Programme includes works by Bliss, Ravel & Poulenc, Sat 3 May, Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington Spa

SINFONIA OF BIRMINGHAM Featuring Michael Seal (conductor), Helen Benson (flute) & Alida Fabris (harp). Programme includes works by Ravel, Mozart & Berlioz, Sat 3 May, All Saints Church, Leamington

RODERICK WILLIAMS (BARITONE) & ANDREW WEST (PIANO) IN CONCERT Programme includes works by Schubert, Bliss, Duparc & more..., Sun 4 May, Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington Spa

CARDUCCI STRING QUARTET Featuring Matthew Denton & Michelle Fleming (violins), Eoin Schmidt-Martin (viola), Emma Denton (cello) & Emma Johnson (clarinet). Programme includes works by Puccini, Bliss, E Johnson & Mozart, Sun 4 May, Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington Spa

ELLI-MAE MCGLOONE ORGAN RECITAL Programme includes works by Bach, Howells, Widor & more..., Mon 5 May, All Saints Church, Leamington Spa

DENIZ SENSOY (VIOLIN) & ALESSIO ENEA (PIANO) Programme includes works by Debussy, Ravel, A Beach & Franck, Mon 5 May, Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington Spa

SACCONI STRING QUARTET Featuring Ben Hancox & Hannah Dawson (violins), Robin Ashwell (viola), Cara Berridge (cello) & Simon Callaghan (piano). Programme includes works by Ravel, Bliss & Franck, Mon 5 May, Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington Spa

ECHO RISING STARS: LUKAS STERNATH (PIANO) Programme includes works by Schumann & Liszt alongside a new commission by Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Sun 4 May, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Comedy

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, IAN COPPINGER & COMIC

TBC Thurs 1 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

LINDSEY SANTORO & COMICS TBC Thurs 1 May, Cherry Reds Cafe Bar, B'ham

MIKE RICE & COMICS TBC Thurs 1 May, Hockley Social Club, Birmingham

SALLY ANNE HAYWARD, JAMES COOK & ABBIE HALE Thurs 1 May, Bear Tavern, Birmingham

DANE BUCKLEY, STEVE BUGEJA, CERYS NELMES & MARKUS BIRDMAN Thurs 1 May, Marrs Bar, Worcester

NATHAN CATON Fri 2 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JONNY COLE Fri 2 May, The Wulfrun at The Halls Wolverhampton

ASHISH SURI, IAN COPPINGER & COMIC TBC Fri 2 - Sat 3 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

KAZEEM JAMAL, KEEFY JEWELL, ALEXANDER BENNETT & JAMES COOK Sat 3 May, Rosies Nightclub, B'ham

DORU OCTAVIAN DUMITRU Sun 4 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

TEZ ILYAS, OLA LABIB, PRINCE ABDI & AATIF NAWAZ Sun 4 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

TEZ ILYAS, OLA LABIB, PRINCE ABDI & COMICS TBC Sun 4 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Theatre

A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS Roxanna Silbert's 2019 stage adaptation of novelist Khaled Hosseini's spiritual sequel to *The Kite Runner*, until Sat 3 May, The Rep, Birmingham

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING Michael Longhurst relocates Shakespeare's original romcom to the world of football, where scandal-filled rivalries could undermine the final result, until Sat 24 May, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

TITUS ANDRONICUS Simon Russell Beale takes the lead in Max Webster's reimagining of Shakespeare's bloodiest play, until Sat 7 June, Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

THE GIRL ON THE TRAIN Louisa Lytton stars as Rachel Watson in the stage version of Paula Hawkins' bestselling novel of the same name, Tues 29 Apr - Sat 3 May, The Alexandra, B'ham

HANDBAGGED Moira Buffini's fly-on-the-wall comedy takes a look at what might have happened when Queen Elizabeth II and Margaret Thatcher came face-to-face in the privacy of the palace, Tues 29 Apr - Sat 3 May, The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

IN VERITAS Cathie Rolinson's locally set play, the 2025 winner of The Three Counties Talent Hub (3CTH) scriptwriting competition, Wed 30 Apr - Thurs 1 May, Malvern Theatres

BUFF Solo-performed play reflecting



Two Pints - The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

on body-image pressures, social-media jealousy and one gay man's journey to self-acceptance..., Wed 30 Apr - Fri 2 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

A TOMB WITH A VIEW The Phoenix Players present an amateur version of Norman Robbins' comedy thriller, Wed 30 Apr - Sat 3 May, The Bear Pit Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

HANNAY STANDS FAST A 'thrilling' sequel to *The 39 Steps* which sees dashing hero Richard Hannay back in the fray on a mission to thwart a new and deadly threat, Thurs 1 May, The Civic, Stourport

A SHODDY DETECTIVE AND THE ART OF DECEPTION A laugh-out-loud slapstick whodunnit featuring four actors, a dozen characters and whole load of chaos, Thurs 1 - Fri 2 May, The Regal, Tenbury

THE CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE Warwick University Drama Society and The Drama Collective present Bertolt Brecht's parable about a peasant girl who rescues a baby and becomes a better mother than its wealthy biological parents, Thurs 1 - Sat 3 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

LAST TANGO IN LITTLE GRIMLEY & THE FAT LADY SINGS IN LITTLE GRIMLEY The Swan Theatre Amateur Company present a double-bill of plays written by David Tristram, Thurs 1 - Sat 3 May, Malvern Theatres

HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL ON STAGE! Presented by Youth On Stage, Thurs 1 - Sat 3 May, The Dovehouse Theatre, Solihull

MATILDA JR. Amateur version, presented by Spa Theatre Juniors, Thurs 1 - Sun 4 May, Bridge House

Theatre, Warwick

TWO PINTS Roddy Doyle's observational comedy, exploring the enduring friendship between two men supporting each other's highs and lows in life - one pint at a time! Fri 2 - Sat 24 May, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

HANNAY STANDS FAST A 'thrilling' sequel to *The 39 Steps* which sees dashing hero Richard Hannay back in the fray on a mission to thwart a new and deadly threat, Sat 3 May, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

CARMEN REIMAGINED Rogue Opera presents an intimate version of Bizet's *Carmen*, scored for four voices with piano accompaniment and a new English script, Sat 3 May, The Regal, Tenbury

SHREK THE MUSICAL Presented by Indigo Arts and based on the Dreamworks Animation Motion Picture and book by William Steig, Sat 3 - Sun 4 May, Artrix, Bromsgrove

JAMAICA LOVE A musical celebration of Windrush and legacy, bringing to life the intertwined history of Britain and Jamaica through the power of music, storytelling and culture, Sun 4 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

Light Entertainment

THE PHANTOMS STARRING LEE MEAD Celebrating a selection of much-loved musicals, including *Les Misérables*, *Miss Saigon*, *West Side Story*, *Jesus Christ Superstar* & many more..., Fri 2 May, The Albany Theatre, Worcester

VIVALDI GLORIA Evening of live music, dance and original poetry celebrating Vivaldi's iconic score, Fri 2 May, Macready Theatre, Rugby

YOU'RE SO FKING CROYDON!** Katie Hurley's bold, unapologetic dive into the female working-class experience and noughties club culture, Fri 2 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

VICTOR AND ALBERT: PURVEYORS OF FINE MUSICAL COMEDY Join identical twins Professor Victor and Dr Albert for an evening of 'riotous comedy, audience interaction, original songs, games, mayhem and a sprinkling of magic', Fri 2 May, Farlow and Oreton Village Hall, Kidderminster

MOVIE MUSICALS Celebration of the most iconic movie musicals seen on the big screen, Sat 3 May, The Henrican, Evesham

MAY THE FARCE BE WITH YOU Comedian Mike Capozzola presents a multimedia show in which he mocks and celebrates all things Star Wars, Sun 4 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

WE ARE SOLIHULL Show celebrating the reopening of The Core theatre and featuring live music, spoken word, dance and a special VIP guest performer, Sun 4 May, The Core,

Solihull

THE GAY AFTER TOMORROW A night of drag and cabaret. Expect fun, laughs, mix-ups and mayhem, Sun 4 May, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

DANNY BAKER: AYE AYE! AHOY HOY! Broadcaster, journalist & podcaster Danny returns with a new show celebrating 50 years of staying afloat on the showbiz seas, Sun 4 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

Talks & Spoken Word

AN EVENING WITH PHIL 'THE POWER' TAYLOR Join the 16x world darts champion for an insight into his incredible achievements and personal experiences, Sat 3 May, Birmingham Town Hall

Events

THE FESTIVAL OF BLOSSOM Featuring a range of activities, including blossom bathing, crafts, face painting, talks, storytelling and yoga, until Fri 23 May, Hanbury Hall, Droitwich Spa,

Worcestershire

BETMG PREMIER LEAGUE DARTS 2025 Featuring the sport's top stars, including reigning champion Luke Littler and world number one Luke Humphries, Thurs 1 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham

AI SUMMIT + DISRUPT BIRMINGHAM Join tech enthusiasts for an afternoon of AI-related speakers, a panel, Disrupt lightning talks and networking, Thurs 1 May, Aston University, Birmingham

HUNTER CHASE RACE NIGHT Amateur riders and trainers compete at the home of jump racing, Fri 2 May, Cheltenham Racecourse

WARWICK CASTLE DINING CLUB A feast of award-winning street food, Fri 2 May, Warwick Castle

GEEK OUT 3.0 A pre-celebration of May the 4th that's all about embracing your inner geek, Sat 3 May, FarGo Village, Coventry

CHRIS MOYLES 90S HANGOVER Take a trip through the golden era of the 1990s with one of the country's most famous and popular DJs, Sat 3 May, Coventry Building Society Arena, Coventry

DAWN CHORUS A sunrise walk & talk in

search of nature's dawn chorus, followed by breakfast at the Garden Café, Sat 3 May, Anne Hathaway's Cottage, Stratford-upon-Avon

GAYDON LAND ROVER SHOW Boasting a huge variety of off-roaders, from 1948 to the present day, Sat 3 - Sun 4 May, British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Warwickshire

SPRING MAKERS' FAIR Browse a range of stalls offering a broad selection of gift opportunities, Sat 3 - Sun 4 May, Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum

MODEL RAILWAY WEEKEND Featuring 25 of the UK's most popular layouts, all on display at the Highley Visitor Centre, Sat 3 - Sun 4 May, Severn Valley Railway, nr Kidderminster

GREAT BIRMINGHAM RUN The Midlands' biggest running event, Sun 4 May, Birmingham City Centre

GUIDED COTSWOLD DOG WALK Take a one-hour guided walk with your furry friend in the Cotswold countryside, Sun 4 May, Cotswold Farm Park, Cheltenham

MEDIEVAL MAY DAY AT THE MANOR Meet the villagers and learn about everyday medieval life, Sun 4 - Mon 5 May, Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire



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Gigs

BROWN HORSE Mon 5 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

DECAPITATED Mon 5 May, The Asylum, Birmingham

DEATH VALLEY GIRLS + BELLA AND THE BIZARRE Tues 6 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

ROBERT JON & THE WRECK Tues 6 May, O2 Academy, B'ham

ELIJAH LYONS Tues 6 May, The Victoria, Birmingham

TWENTY ONE PILOTS Tues 6 May, bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham

THE BLACK FEATHERS Tues 6 May, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

WALTER TROUT Tues 6 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

LEGENDS OF AMERICAN COUNTRY SHOW Tues 6 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch

LAURIE WRIGHT Wed 7 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

AMBER RUN + BILLIANNE Wed 7 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

SARAH MCQUAID + ROB PETERS Wed 7 May, Red Lion Folk Club, Birmingham

TOMMY ASHBY + LYDIA CLOWES + JODIE MARIE Wed 7 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

JEFFREY ALEXANDER & THE HEAVY LIDDERERS + THE CRYSTAL TEARDROP + THE MUTHAS Wed 7 May, The Tin Music and Arts, The Canal Basin, Coventry

DAN WALSH Wed 7 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

MILLTOWN BROTHERS Thurs 8 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

LUCY MELLEFIELD Thurs 8 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

TOM MEIGHAN Thurs 8 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

PANIC SHACK + THE PILL Thurs 8 May, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

WHO SAVES THE HERO + SECOND CITIES + MISTAKES WORTH MAKING Thurs 8 May, The Flapper, B'ham

BAD ACTRESS Thurs 8 May, The Victoria, Birmingham

TANGERINE DREAM Thurs 8 May, Birmingham Town Hall

DANIEL O'DONNELL Thurs 8 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

PETE COE Thurs 8 May, Bromsgrove Folk Club

LEGEND - THE MUSIC OF BOB MARLEY Thurs 8 May, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

EMPIRICAL Thurs 8 May, Marrs Bar, Worcester

JIMI HENDRIX - THE LEGEND LIVES ON Thurs 8 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

KALLE WALLNER Thurs 8 May, 45Live, Kidderminster

SULTAN STEVENSON TRIO Thurs 8 May, Newhampton Arts Centre, W'hampton

THE FIXX + WRECKLESS ERIC Thurs 8 May, The Wulfrun at The Halls Wolverhampton

DAVID GRAY Thurs 8 May, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

MICHAEL CERA PALIN Fri 9 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

MUSCLECARS Fri 9 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

SORRY Fri 9 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

450 LIVE + SUPAHEAT + LOYAL SQUAD Fri 9 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE SMYTHS + BILLY BLAGG Fri 9 May, O2 Academy, B'ham

THE K'S Fri 9 May, O2 Academy, B'ham

GOLD PANDA + BABA ALI Fri 9 May, Castle & Falcon, B'ham

CALIBAN Fri 9 May, The Asylum, B'ham

RUM BUFFALO Fri 9 May, The Victoria, Birmingham

STEVEN WILSON Fri 9 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE FUREYS Fri 9 May, The Core Theatre, Solihull

SOUL'D OUT Fri 9 May, Artrix, Bromsgrove

LEIGHTON TONGUE Fri 9 May, The Royal Pug, Leamington Spa

THE HAZYTONES + SUPERHOOCH + ANALOGUE MAN Fri 9 May, The Tin Music and Arts, The Canal Basin, Coventry

THE MADCHESTER EXPERIENCE Fri 9 May, hmv Empire, Coventry

BOSS MADRA + VOX THEIA + SOULRIDE Fri 9 May, Arches Venue, Coventry

GUNS 2 ROSES Fri 9 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

TICK TICK BOOM Fri 9 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

MARK LATIMER AND FRIENDS Fri 9 May, Regal, Tenbury Wells

EDDIE COCHRAN 65TH ANNIVERSARY SHOW Fri 9 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch

DUB CATALYST + THE UPLIFTER + GOETIA Fri 9 May, Marrs Bar, Worcester

LOGICALTRAMP Fri 9 May, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

9 CARAT PURPLE Fri 9 May, 45Live, Kidderminster

DOM MARTIN + THOMAS HEPELL Fri 9 - Sat 10 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

ACID MOTHERS TEMPLE + ZD GRAFTERS Sat 10 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

DESTINATION DISEASE + ACCELERATED MUTATION + CRACK THE FLAGS + MORE Sat 10 May, The Dark Horse, Moseley



What's Love Got To Do With It? Celebrating Tina Turner - Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

THE SHERLOCKS Sat 10 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

ABDUL HANNAN Sat 10 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

DAFT FUNK LIVE Sat 10 May, O2 Academy, B'ham

COLDPLACE Sat 10 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

FROM THE JAM Sat 10 May, Birmingham Town Hall

TALON Sat 10 May, The Core Theatre, Solihull

THE GLEN CAMPBELL STORY Sat 10 May, Artrix, Bromsgrove

DIANA AND LIONEL - ENDLESS LOVE THE SHOW Sat 10 May, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

NAP EYES + ELIZA NIEMI Sat 10 May, The Tin Music and Arts, The Canal Basin, Coventry

THE BOWIE EXPERIENCE Sat 10 May, hmv Empire, Coventry

LOKKO + JOLLY JOKER + SECOND CITIES Sat 10 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

CLAMPDOWN UK Sat 10 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

THE OTHER COUNTRY Sat 10 May, The Priory Theatre, Kenilworth

THE HAAR Sat 10 May, The Market Theatre,

Ledbury

BIG SKY ORCHESTRA + THE MAYA Sat 10 May, Marrs Bar, Worcester

DS:UK - BROTHERS IN '85 TOUR Sat 10 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

NAP EYES Sun 11 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

THE STEVE GIBBONS BAND Sun 11 May, Actress & Bishop, Birmingham

BETH MCCARTHY Sun 11 May, XOYO, Digbeth, Birmingham

THE SANDY DENNY EXPERIENCE SHOW Sun 11 May, Artrix, Bromsgrove

EASY 3 JAZZ QUARTET Sun 11 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

BELLA GAFFNEY Sun 11 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

THE DEEP DARK WOODS (SOLO) + AUSTIN STAMBAUGH Sun 11 May, The Tin Music and Arts, The Canal Basin, Coventry

DEAN FRIEDMAN Sun 11 May, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT? CELEBRATING TINA TURNER Sun 11 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

DAWSON SMITH AND THE DISSIDENTS Sun 11 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

Classical Music

ORCHESTRA OF THE SWAN: RED SKY AT SUNRISE - LAURIE LEE IN WORDS & MUSIC Featuring Craig Ogden (guitar), Anton Lesser & Charlie Hamblett (actors). Programme includes works by Holst, Britten, Rossini & more..., Wed 7 May, The Courtyard, Hereford

LUNCHTIME RECITALS SERIES Featuring Fumi Otsuki (violin) & Natalie Bleicher (piano), Fri 9 May, St Mary's Church, Warwick

BBC PHILHARMONIC: BEETHOVEN AND CLARA SCHUMANN Featuring Nicholas Carter (conductor) & Clare Hammond (piano). Programme includes works by Wagner, C Schumann & Beethoven, Fri 9 May, Malvern Theatres

ANDRÉ RIEU Featuring the Johann Strauss Orchestra & international soloists, Sat 10 May, bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham

REQUIEM IN A DAY WORKSHOP & CONCERT Featuring Matthew Coleridge (composer), Suzzie Vango (soprano) & the University of Warwick Symphony Orchestra. Programme includes Matthew Coleridge's Requiem, Sat 10 May, Coventry Cathedral

MIDLAND SINFONIA: FAMILY CONCERT Featuring music suitable for all the family including Ravel's Mother Goose Suite, Sat 10 May, St Laurence Church, Alvechurch

LAST NIGHT OF THE PROMS Featuring Samantha Oxborough (soloist), Coventry Cathedral Chorus & Coventry & Warwickshire Youth Orchestra, Sat 10 May, All Saints Church, Leamington Spa

MALVERN FESTIVAL CHORUS: PUCCINI'S MESSA DI GLORIA & FAURE'S REQUIEM Featuring Jonathan Brown (conductor), Hilary Norris (organ), James Atherton (Tenor) & Alexander Jones (Bass), Sat 10 May, Great Malvern Priory

STOURPORT BRASS BAND: SPRING CONCERT Sun 11 May, The Civic, Stourport

MUSIC TO MAKE YOUR HEART SING Featuring GBRT Community Choir, GBRT Flute Choir and Fosseyway Chamber Orchestra, Sun 11 May, Stratford-Upon-Avon Town Hall

Comedy

STUART MITCHELL Wed 7 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JAMIE HUTCHINSON & COMICS TBC Wed 7 May, Herbert's Yard, Birmingham

HARRY HILL Wed 7 May, Malvern Theatres



Katherine Ryan - Utilita Arena Birmingham

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, KEITH FARNAN & ROBERT WHITE Thurs 8 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

KEVIN HART Thurs 8 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham

CHRISTIAN BRIGHTY Thurs 8 May, Cherry Reds, Birmingham

RICHARD HERRING Thurs 8 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

MILTON JONES Thurs 8 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

JEFF ARCURI Fri 9 May, Birmingham Town Hall

RAW COMEDY Fri 9 May, Ecgwins Club, Evesham

JENNY ECLAIR Fri 9 May, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

ELLIE TAYLOR Fri 9 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

DOMINIC FRISBY, KEITH FARNAN, ROBERT WHITE & COMIC TBC Fri 9 - Sat 10 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ROGER MONKHOUSE, JORDAN DUCHARME, FAIZAN SHAH & JON PEARSON Sat 10 May, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

KATHERINE RYAN Sat 10 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham

CHRIS WASHINGTON, BARRY DODDS & COMICS TBC Sat 10 May, Macready Theatre, Rugby

FAMILY COMEDY SHOW WITH BARBARA NICE, AARON SIMMONDS & ADA CAMPE Sun 11 May, The Glee Club, B'ham

Theatre

LA TRAVIATA Verdi's tragic tale, performed by the Ukrainian Opera & Ballet Theatre Kyiv with international soloists, a highly praised chorus and full orchestra, Tues 6 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

AN INSPECTOR CALLS Stephen Daldry's National Theatre production of JB Priestley's compelling thriller, Tues 6 - Sat 10 May, The Alexandra, B'ham

THE SHARK IS BROKEN Acclaimed drama that dives behind the scenes

of 1970s blockbuster movie Jaws, Tues 6 - Sat 10 May, The Rep, B'ham

LA BOHÈME Presented by the Ukrainian Opera & Ballet Theatre Kyiv, with international soloists, a highly praised chorus and full orchestra, Wed 7 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

BOT BROTHERS: A STORY OF OUR TIMES Clown double-act Harris Morris and Joe Smith star as two robo-clones who are separated at birth and raised by different families. Critically acclaimed show loosely based on Willy Russell's Blood Brothers, Wed 7 - Thurs 8 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

THE MAN IN THE IRON MASK Presented by Caramba Theatre Company, Wed 7 - Sat 10 May, The Bear Pit Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY Coventry Youth Operetta Group (YOG) present an amateur version of Roald Dahl's much-loved tale, Wed 7 - Sat 10 May, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

THE HOUSE PARTY Laura Lomas' modern-day play exploring themes of class, power and privilege, Wed 7 - Sat 10 May, The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry



THINGS I KNOW TO BE TRUE Amateur version of Andrew Bovell's story of a family and a marriage, Wed 7 - Sat 17 May, The Loft Theatre, Leamington Spa

WNO: THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO Welsh National Opera present Mozart's tale of love, loyalty and mistaken identities, Thurs 8 May, Birmingham Hippodrome

MADAMA BUTTERFLY Puccini's

heartbreaking story of a young Japanese girl who falls in love with an American naval lieutenant. Performed by the Ukrainian Opera & Ballet Theatre Kyiv with international soloists, a highly praised chorus and full orchestra, Thurs 8 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO WIDOWHOOD

Uplifting one-woman show exploring the experiences of young widowed women, Fri 9 May, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

MISTER SHAKESPEARE Michael Barry's one-man play offers an insight into the life of the Bard - as a father, actor and entrepreneur, Fri 9 May, The Swan Theatre, Worcester

TALKING ABOUT THE FIRE

Chris Thorpe's one-man show about a new nuclear weapons treaty, Fri 9 - Sat 10 May, The Rep, Birmingham

WNO: PETER GRIMES Welsh National Opera present Britten's iconic tale of isolation and prejudice, Sat 10 May, Birmingham Hippodrome

ONE MAN POE Using original text from the 1840s, one actor faithfully brings to life 'terrifying examples' of Edgar Allan Poe's writings, Sat 10 May, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

BRIGHTON BEACH MEMOIRS Amateur version of Neil Simon's coming-of-age comedy, Sat 10 - Sat 17 May, Rugby Theatre

Kids Theatre

SCIENCE MUSEUM - THE LIVE STAGE SHOW

Family entertainment which promises to ignite curiosity and fuel imagination, Sun 11 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

THE ULTIMATE BUBBLE SHOW Join international bubbleologist and Guinness World Record holder Ray Bubbles as he uses various gases to craft stunning bubble sculptures and effects, Sun 11 May, The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

Dance

BRB2: CARLOS ACOSTA'S BALLET CELEBRATION

Brand-new gala production celebrating Serge Diaghilev and the birth of the modern ballet, Tues 6 May, Birmingham Hippodrome

DANCEFEST: YOUTH MOVEMENT

Featuring innovative performances from local youth dance groups, Sat 10 May, Malvern Theatres

READY TO SHINE Showcasing the talents of pupils from local cheerleading squads as well as dance and musical theatre schools, Sun 11 May, Symphony Hall, B'ham

NIKITA KUZMIN - MIDNIGHT DANCER The Strictly star's first-ever solo show sees him joined by a cast of talented

dancers and vocalists in what promises to be 'an unforgettable night of entertainment', Sun 11 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

Light Entertainment

SOUNDS OF THE 60S LIVE: HOSTED BY TONY BLACKBURN OBE

Featuring live music and stories from the most iconic decade in fashion, music and pop culture, Wed 7 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE D-DAY DARLINGS - VE DAY 80

ANNIVERSARY TOUR Brand-new tribute show, Wed 7 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch

ALISTAIR MCGOWAN 3-IN-1 Comedy, impressions and readings from Alistair's newly published poetry collection, Thurs 8 May, The Regal, Tenbury Wells



DANNY LEE GREW 24K MAGIC Expect a 'spellbinding evening of jaw-dropping magic, illusion, laughs, gasps, and stunning sleight-of-hand sorcery', Fri 9 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

THE MUSIC OF FLEETWOOD MAC BY CANDLELIGHT Fri 9 May, Worcester Cathedral

AN EVENING OF BURLESQUE CABARET

Variety show blending cabaret, comedy, music and burlesque, Fri 9 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

LINE DANCING WITH THE DOUBLE DOLLYS

An 'hilarious hoedown featuring live Dolly Parton hits, raucous comedy and extraordinary line dancing', Fri 9 May, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

LIPSTICK ON YOUR COLLAR Evening of nostalgic hits from the 1950s and 60s, Fri 9 May, Number 8, Pershore

THE ABSOLUTELY DRAGULOUS SHOW

Starring husband & husband stage duo Marilyn & Amanda Fockhard. Expect 'side-splitting comedy, dazzling costume changes, West End vocals and more make-up than all the Kardashians put together', Sat 10 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

A NIGHT AT THE OPERA Gala evening of 'beautiful arias, duets and ensembles', performed by soprano Erika Mädi Jones, mezzo soprano Charlotte Wicks, tenor Andrew Henley, baritone Felix Kemp and pianist Charlotte Forrest. The Neen

Sollars and Milson Community Choir also feature, Sat 10 May, The Regal, Tenbury

THE MUSIC OF ABBA BY CANDLELIGHT
Sat 10 May, Worcester Cathedral

CHOIR! CHOIR! CHOIR! Epic anthems singalong during which audience members get to sing their way through 'the greatest songs of all-time', Sun 11 May, Birmingham Town Hall

MUSIC TO MAKE YOUR HEART SING
Afternoon of easy-listening music performed by GBRT Community Choir, GBRT Flute Choir and the Fosseway Chamber Orchestra, Sun 11 May, Stratford-upon-Avon Town Hall

DAD'S ARMY RADIO SHOW Highly acclaimed stage production in which two actors bring Perry & Croft's classic BBC comedy to life, Sun 11 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry



G4: PHANTOMS OF THE POPERA
Celebration of musical theatre, Sun 11 May, The Benn Hall, Rugby

MARK JAMES AND FRIENDS: THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH An evening of magic, illusion, music, comedy, juggling and more..., Sun 11 May, Malvern Theatres

Talks & Spoken Word

AN EVENING WITH LOUISE MINCHIN: WORDS Join the former BBC Breakfast presenter as she discusses her writing career and debut novel, Isolation Island, Wed 7 May, Artrix, Bromsgrove



THE MAKINGS OF A MURDERER 2 - THE REAL MANHUNTER A 'chilling, thrilling night at the theatre', as the former head of a Metropolitan Police murder squad, Colin Sutton, shares stories of how he caught some of the UK's most notorious killers, Thurs 8 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch

Events

FAMILY FUN DAY Featuring horseracing action and plenty of family activities, Mon 5 May, Warwick Racecourse

BIG BUTTERFLY TRAIL Follow the trail, make your own butterfly to take home with you, and do some butterfly painting, Mon 5 May, The Commandery, Worcester

ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND Join Alice and her friends in Wonderland for a fun day of activities, Mon 5 May, Hartlebury Castle, Worcestershire

PLOUGHMAN'S LUNCH Enjoy a traditional and hearty ploughman's lunch while travelling along the railway, Wed 7 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, nr Kidderminster

EUROPHILEX BIRMINGHAM 2025 British international stamp exhibition featuring 2,000 frames of exhibits from 40 countries and over 60 dealers and trade stands, Wed 7 - Sun 11 May, NEC, Birmingham

THE BISTRO EXPRESS SPRING Two-course lunch in a show-stopping first-class carriage, Thurs 8 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, nr Kidderminster

VE80 CELEBRATION AFTERNOON TEA Enjoy a cream tea and see specially selected 1940s photographs from the Changing Face Of Worcester archive, Thurs 8 May, Tudor House Museum, Worcester

STRATFORD LITERARY FESTIVAL Featuring well-known names and bestselling authors, Thurs 8 - Sun 11 May, venues across Stratford-upon-Avon



RHS MALVERN SPRING FESTIVAL One of the first major flower shows of the year, Thurs 8 - Sun 11 May, Three Counties Showground, Malvern

CURATOR'S TOUR AND TEA Take a guided tour of the Towering Dreams exhibition with lead curator Jane Simpkins, then find out more over tea & cake in the café, Fri 9 May, Compton Verney, Warwickshire

THE BABY SHOW Featuring over 350 leading baby brands and thousands of products, Fri 9 - Sun 11 May, NEC, Birmingham

GIFFORD'S CIRCUS Back with new show Laguna Bay, Fri 9 - Sun 19 May, Sudeley Castle, Cheltenham

DOZE UNDER DIPPY Stay overnight in the museum, snoozing under the feet of a 26-foot Diplodocus, Sat 10 May, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry



Doze Under Dippy - Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry

VINTAGE AFTERNOON TEA Travel in style in a luxurious vintage carriage and indulge in a spread of sandwiches, cakes, tea and coffee, Sat 10 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, nr Kidderminster

SPICE GIRLS DRAG BOTTOMLESS BRUNCH Join a drag queen trio as they perform an array of Spice Girls classics, Sat 10 May, Gosta Green, Birmingham

LAITHWAITES BIRMINGHAM WINE FESTIVAL Taste from a range of 100 wines from 20 different producers, Sat 10 May, Custard Factory, B'ham

MINISTRY OF SOUND IBIZA ANTHEMS RACE NIGHT Evening of racing and live music, Sat 10 May, Warwick Racecourse

MEET THE BODGERS Learn about and watch demonstrations of green woodworking and heritage woodland crafts, Sat 10 - Sun 11 May, Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove, Worcs

VE DAY CELEBRATION Weekend of interactive workshops and live performances, Sat 10 - Sun 11 May,

Royal Air Force Museum Midlands

BREAKFAST DINING EXPERIENCE Sit back, relax and enjoy being served a full English breakfast, Sat 10 - Sun 11 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, nr Kidderminster

DOGFEST Enjoy live entertainment, expert talks, and a vibrant marketplace, Sat 10 - Sun 11 May, Ragley Hall, Warwickshire

ANTIQUES & COLLECTORS FAIR Browse a variety of stalls, Sun 11 May, Hartlebury Castle, Worcestershire

BIRMINGHAM HISTORY TOUR: DISCOVER THE HISTORY OF WARSTONE LANE CEMETERY Uncover a rich and intriguing past..., Sun 11 May, Vyse Street, Birmingham

PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP - HERITAGE RAILWAYS Learn more about the theory behind photography, Sun 11 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, nr Kidderminster

GOURMET SUNDAY LUNCH Enjoy an on-board three-course Sunday roast, Sun 11 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, nr Kidderminster



Alan Titchmarsh at RHS Malvern Spring Festival - Three Counties Showground



Jack Francis - The Tin Music And Arts, Coventry

Gigs

ROSE CITY BAND +

BANANAGUN Mon 12 May, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

LIANG LAWRENCE Mon 12 May, O2 Academy, B'ham

SCOTT BRADLEE'S

POSTMODERN JUKEBOX Mon 12 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

STEELEYE SPAN Mon 12 May, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

DAPHNE'S FLIGHT Mon 12 May, The Fleece Inn, Bretforton, Nr Evesham

YOUNG GUN SILVER FOX + SMITH & LIDDLE Tues 13 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

BOB FOX Tues 13 May, The Fleece Inn, Bretforton, Nr Evesham

CALLING PLANET EARTH Tues 13 - Wed 14 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch

MEKONS Wed 14 May, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

ELLIE GOWERS + MIA KELLY Wed 14 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

BOTTLE ROCKETS Wed 14 May, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

ZIMMER90 Wed 14 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

SUPERGRASS Wed 14 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

SAM AMIDON Wed 14 May, Kitchen Garden, B'ham

THE SWAPS + THOMAS HEPPPELL + CHLOE JOSEPHINE Wed 14 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

OUTLAW ORCHESTRA Fri 16 May, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

MAKE THEM SUFFER + RESOLVE + CONJURER + IF NOT FOR ME Fri 16 May, The Asylum, Birmingham

THE WATERBOYS Fri 16 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

OLLY MURS + BLUE Fri 16 May, bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham

WITCHZ Fri 16 May, Mama Roux's, Birmingham

THE TAKE THAT EXPERIENCE Fri 16 May, The Core Theatre, Solihull

GILES ROBSON Fri 16 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

SNAPPED ANKLES Fri 16 May, The Tin Music and Arts, The Canal Basin, Coventry

THE DARKNESS Fri 16 May, hmv Empire, Coventry

MASSASAUGA + WALLACE AND VOMIT + SIOUXSIE SUICIDE + BRIGHT BLACK Fri 16 May, Arches Venue, Coventry

TOO MUCH TOO YOUNG - THE MUSIC OF 2TONE SKA Fri 16 May, Albany Theatre, Coventry

LENE LOVICH Fri 16 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

SCENE IT ALL Fri 16 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

BARE JAMS Fri 16 May, Marrs Bar, Worcester

THE MANFREDS Fri 16 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

THE GREATEST STAR - BARBRA STREISAND SHOW Fri 16 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch

NICK HARPER + BEN DE LA COUR Fri 16 May, West Malvern Social Club

A.C.R SOUNDSYSTEM + TOM BELTE + LOVE VIGILANTES Sat 17 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

BRADLEY SIMPSON Sat 17 May, O2 Institute, B'ham

MOVING PICTURES Sat 17 May, O2 Academy, B'ham

TONY VISCONTI AND WOODY WOODMANSEY Sat 17 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

NOASIS Sat 17 May, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

CLEARWATER CREEDENCE REVIVAL Sat 17 May, Birmingham Town Hall

TYLER, THE CREATOR Sat 17 May, Utilita Arena B'ham

ENDLESS LOVE THE SHOW - A TRIBUTE TO LIONEL RICHIE & DIANA ROSS Sat 17 May, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

THE SPRINGSTEIN ALL-STARS Sat 17 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

MCHALES PERMANENT

BREW Sat 17 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

JACK FRANCIS Sat 17 May, The Tin Music and Arts, The Canal Basin, Coventry

COUNTRY SUPERSTARS Sat 17 May, Coventry Building Society Arena

BLAZE BAYLEY + WHITE RAVEN DOWN Sat 17 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

THE KINGCRAWLERS Sat 17 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

MADE IN TENNESSEE Sat 17 May, The Benn Hall, Rugby

SWING FROM PARIS Sat 17 May, The Market Theatre, Ledbury

BRITPOP UNITED Sat 17 May, Marrs Bar, Worcester

PAUL YOUNG Sat 17 May, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

TASHA LEAPER AS MADONNA Sat 17 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

THE SHAKIN' STEVENS STORY Sat 17 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch

HYPHEN Sun 18 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

THE VINTAGE EXPLOSION Sun 18 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

ROBIN TROWER Sun 18 May, Birmingham Town Hall

BRYAN ADAMS Sun 18 May, bp pulse LIVE, B'ham

THE ELVIS TRIBUTE ARTIST WORLD TOUR Sun 18 May, The Alexandra, B'ham

THE BELL BAND'S OPEN MIC Sun 18 May, Tower Of Song, Birmingham

KATIE SPENCER Sun 18 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

GREEN MILK FROM THE PLANET ORANGE + THE GREY + TELLEMAHOOKAH Sun 18 May, The Tin Music and Arts, The Canal Basin, Coventry

ROADHOGS Sun 18 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

Classical Music

LUNCHTIME ORGAN CONCERT: THOMAS TROTTER Programme includes works by J S Bach, Holst, Anderson & more..., Mon 12 May, Birmingham Town Hall

HALLE ORCHESTRA: SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE Featuring Alexandre Bloch (conductor) & Cédric Tiberghien (piano). Programme includes works by Fauré, Ravel & Berlioz, Wed 14 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

CBSO CENTRE STAGE: CAREER ACCELERATOR CONCERT Featuring Yuliya Ostapchuk (violin), Irene Katsenelson (viola), Josh Mountford (cello) & Yijia Cui (double bass), Thurs 15 May, CBSO Centre, B'ham

PHILIPPINE PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA Featuring Grzegorz Nowak (conductor), Wen-Sinn Yang & Diomedes Saraza Jr (soloists). Programme includes works by Bizet, Vaughan Williams, Tchaikovsky & more..., Thurs 15 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham



FOUR SEASONS & LARK ASCENDING BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring London Concertante. Programme includes works by Mozart, Vivaldi & Vaughan Williams, Thurs 15 May, St Philip's Cathedral, Birmingham

SIMON TARANCZUK ORGAN RECITAL Thurs 15 May, Worcester Cathedral

DAVID THOMAS ORGAN RECITAL Fri 16 May, St Mary's Church, Warwick

NIGEL KENNEDY: VIVALDI THE FOUR SEASONS - THE REAL DEAL Featuring Nigel Kennedy (violin) & The Oxford Philharmonic Orchestra. Programme includes works by Vivaldi & N Kennedy, Fri 16 - Sat 17 May, Malvern Theatres



ORCHESTRA FOR AN OCCASION Featuring Brian Chappell (conductor) & Mary Rhodes (presenter). Programme includes works by Haydn, Gershwin, Jenkins & more..., Sat 17 May, Warwick Hall

PERSHORE CHORAL: ANTHEMS ANCIENT & MODERN Featuring Rose Johnson

(soprano), Justin Jacobs (tenor), Charles Matthews (organ) & Carleton Etherington (conductor). Programme includes works by Elgar & Chilcott, Sat 17 May, Pershore Abbey

CHELTHENHAM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: DRAMATIC MOMENTS Featuring Michael Seal (guest conductor) & Alan Thomas (soloist). Programme includes works by Tchaikovsky & Shostakovich, Sat 17 May, Pittville Pump Room, Cheltenham

TEWKESBURY CHORAL SOCIETY: THE ARMED MAN & MAGNIFICAT Featuring Hannah Davey (soprano) & Regency Sinfonia. Programme includes works by K Jenkins & J Rutter, Sat 17 May, Tewkesbury Abbey

Comedy

MARK NORMAND Mon 12 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

STEWART LEE Mon 12 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

MICHELLE SHAUGHNESSY Tues 13 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JARLATH REGAN Wed 14 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ABIGOLIAH SCHAMAUN Wed 14 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ROB BECKETT Wed 14 Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

SHARON WANJOHI, BRENNAN REECE & COMIC TBC Thurs 15 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

NICK MOHAMMED Thurs 15 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

PROJECT MAYHEM COMEDY Thurs 15 May, Arches Venue, Coventry

DINESH NATHAN, SARAH JOHNSON, DAVID EAGLE & ALEXANDER BENNET Thurs 15 May, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

SCUMMY MUMMIES Thurs 15 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

DARA Ó BRIAIN Thurs 15 - Fri 16 May, Birmingham Hippodrome

OMID DJALILI Fri 16 May, Birmingham Town Hall

HORATIO GOULD Fri 16 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

SOPHIE MCCARTNEY Fri 16 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

HARRY HILL Fri 16 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

JONNY COLE Fri 16 May, Artrix, Bromsgrove

JASON MANFORD Fri 16 May, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

MARK STEEL Fri 16 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

JIMMY CARR Fri 16 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

ALISTAIR WILLIAMS, OLLIE HORN, JAMES SHERWOOD & JON PEARSON Fri 16 May, Abbey Theatre, Nuneaton

JACOB NUSSEY, MARTIN MÓR, SHARON

WANJOHI & BRENNAN REECE Fri 16 - Sat 17 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

MUHSIN YESILADA, SHAZIA MIRZA & RAJ POOJARA Sat 17 May, Birmingham Hippodrome

DARA Ó BRIAIN Sat 17 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

THE COMEDY STORE ON THE ROAD Sat 17 May, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

KERRY GODLIMAN Sat 17 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

ZAKIR KHAN Sun 18 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

RORY O'HANLON Sun 18 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ANDY HAMILTON Sun 18 May, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

Theatre

MURDER, MARGARET AND ME The Nonentities Society present an amateur version of Philip Meeks' story concerning the friendship between Miss Marple actress Margaret Rutherford and Queen of Crime Agatha Christie, Mon 12 - Sat 17 May, The Rose Theatre, Kidderminster

RENT Evesham Operatic Dramatic Society present an amateur version of Jonathan Larson's musical, Tues 13 - Sat 17 May, The Henrican, Evesham

MURDER SHE DIDN'T WRITE Degree Of Error create an improvised murder-mystery in which the audience is the author..., Wed 14 May, The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

THE DIVINERS 'An epic, bizarre and strangely moving exploration of AI and apocalypse', Thurs 15 May, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

PARIS + JULIET The tragicomic story of Romeo and Juliet, told through 'the completely unbiased eyes' of Juliet's lost lover, Paris - the most eligible bachelor in Verona, Fri 16 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

THE 39 STEPS Amateur version of John Buchan's famous thriller, Fri 16 - Sat 24 May, The Priory Theatre, Kenilworth

Kids Theatre

THERE'S A MONSTER IN YOUR SHOW High-energy family adventure in which favourite characters from Tom Fletcher's books come to life on stage, Tues 13 - Wed 14 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

THE WIGGLES Interactive live show for younger audiences which promises to spark creativity and a love of learning, Wed 14 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Dance

MOTIONHOUSE: HIDDEN Gravity-defying choreography, an emotive soundscape and a shape-shifting set combine with groundbreaking projections to create an immersive world on stage, Tues 13 May, Malvern Theatres

ACOSTA DANZA - CUBAN ECLECTICO Carlos Acosta's Cuban dance company showcase works ranging from modern to Afro-Cuban fused with flamenco, capoeira and hip-hop. A post-show Q&A features on the opening night, Tues 13 - Wed 14 May, Birmingham Hippodrome

RHIANNON FAITH COMPANY: LAY DOWN YOUR BURDENS A radically tender dance theatre show inviting audiences to explore the beauty of humanity and the eternal need for community and compassion, Wed 14 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

NIKITA KUZMIN - MIDNIGHT DANCER The Strictly star's first-ever solo show sees him joined by a cast of talented dancers and vocalists in what promises to be 'an unforgettable night of entertainment', Sat 17 May, Birmingham Hippodrome

Light Entertainment

TIM RICE: MY LIFE IN MUSICALS Join the internationally renowned lyricist as he reflects on his illustrious career at the heart of musical theatre, Fri 16 May, Malvern Theatres

SPIRIT OF THE BLITZ Variety show featuring a 1940s songbook including Don't Sit Under The Apple Tree, Leaning On A Lampost and We'll Meet Again. Andy Eastwood, Helen Farrell & Steve Barclay star, Tues 13 May, The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

ALED JONES: FULL CIRCLE An evening with the original classical crossover star, Wed 14 May, Malvern Theatres

AN EVENING WITH THE TWO TOMS Join viral star Thomas Benjamin Wild Esq and London cabaret virtuoso Tom Carradine for an evening of singalong fun and musical humour, Fri 16 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, B'ham

GEORGE ELIOT IN WORDS AND MUSIC Featuring Hermione Norris (Spooks, Cold Feet), Eurovision singer-songwriter SuRie and Orchestra Of The Swan, Fri 16 May, The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

TOO MUCH TOO YOUNG Theatre experience showcasing the musical journey of the 2Tone Ska movement, Fri 16 May, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

BURLESQUE DIVA'S DEBUT Showcase of local starlets, stepping onto the stage

for their first-ever burlesque performance, Sat 17 May, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

AN EVENING WITH JIMMY TARBUCK Join the comedian & raconteur for an evening of anecdotes and jokes as he reflects on a remarkable life in showbusiness, Sun 18 May, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

Events

AN EVENING WITH MIKE BREWER Car dealer turned TV presenter Mike Brewer takes the hot seat to chat cars and shows with Paul Cowland, Mon 12 May, British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Warwickshire

SPRING DIESEL FESTIVAL A feast of diesel traction across four intensively-timetabled days, Thurs 15 - Sun 18 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, nr Kidderminster

QUILTS UK Featuring quilt displays, a variety of exhibitors, workshops and demonstrations, Thurs 15 - Sun 18 May, Three Counties Showground, Malvern

YOUNG DRIVER CLASSIC CAR EXPERIENCES Classic car and fire engine driving experiences, Sat 17 May, British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Warwickshire

GIN AND RUM FESTIVAL Featuring over 120 different spirits for you to try, Sat 17 May, Coventry Cathedral

FARGO X BROKEN SOULS RESCUE DOG FEST Take along your four-legged companions and enjoy a 'paw-some' day celebrating all things canine, Sat 17 May, FarGo Village, Coventry

ST JOHN'S HOUSE BEER, GIN AND CIDER FAYRE Celebrating local brewers and distillers, Sat 17 May, St John's House, Warwick

BIRMINGHAM TOUR: WARSTONE LN CEMETERY UNDERGROUND TUNNEL Explore Warstone Lane's underground tunnel, used as air-raid shelters during World War Two, Sat 17 May, Vyse Street, Birmingham

STREET ORGAN GRINDERS WEEKEND Enjoy organ music and chat to members of the British Organ Grinders Association, Sat 17 - Sun 18 May, Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove

MAKERS CENTRAL Bringing together makers, creators and inventors from all over the world, Sat 17 - Sun 18 May, NEC, Birmingham

AVONCROFT GARDENING DAY Featuring plants for sale, specialist talks and demonstrations, Sun 18 May, Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove

VAUX ALL Bringing together hundreds of classic, modern classic and retro models from Vauxhall, Opel and Bedford, Sun 18 May, British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Warwickshire

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Gigs

BROGEAL Mon 19 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

KRS-ONE Mon 19 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

TATE MCRAE Mon 19 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham

WAYSIDE + POST PROFIT Mon 19 May, The Asylum, B'ham

KANEKOAYANO Tues 20 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

PIXIES + BIG SPECIAL Tues 20 May, O2 Academy, B'ham

FROGLORD Tues 20 May, Dead Wax, Digbeth, Birmingham

TALON Tues 20 May, Rose Theatre, Kidderminster

TOTORRO Wed 21 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

SUNDAY (1994) + BEAUX Wed 21 May, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

OLD TIME SAILORS Wed 21 May, O2 Academy, B'ham

EDWINA HAYES + EMILY SLADE Wed 21 May, Red Lion Folk Club, Birmingham

NASHVILLE SOUNDS IN THE ROUND Wed 21 May, Justham Family Room & Jane How Room, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

DARYL HALL + GLENN TILBROOK Wed 21 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CATHERINE MACLELLAN & LUCY FARRELL Wed 21

May, Kitchen Garden, Birmingham

FLOOK Wed 21 May, The Fleece Inn, Bretforton, Nr Evesham

THE G-DFATHER RETURNS - JAMES BROWN Wed 21 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch

ABORTED + CRYPTA + THE ZENITH PASSAGE + ORGANECTOMY Thurs 22 May, O2 Academy, B'ham

DONNY BENET Thurs 22 May, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

UNDER THE SURFACE Thurs 22 May, Dead Wax, Digbeth, B'ham

WITNESS + DATURA Thurs 22 May, Subside Bar, B'ham

THE JINS Thurs 22 May, The Victoria, Birmingham

NICOLE MITCHELL WITH NEIL CHARLES AND MARK SANDERS Thurs 22 May, Midlands Arts Centre (mac), Birmingham

MISHRA Thurs 22 May, Kitchen Garden, Birmingham

GREG BRICE (DUO) WITH JACK THOMAS Thurs 22 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

GLENN MATLOCK & BAND + STRIP SEARCH TRAMP + WAVE OF SHEEP Thurs 22 May, hmv Empire, Coventry

K.O.G. Thurs 22 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

THE CLASS OF 55 Thurs 22 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester



Barb Jungr - Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

THE OVERTONES Thurs 22 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch

CHRIS INGHAM TRIO: THE JAZZ OF DUDLEY MOORE Thurs 22 May, Malvern Theatres

EAST STREET BAND Thurs 22 May, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

HUEY MORGAN + MELYS Fri 23 May, O2 Academy, B'ham

THE OUTCHARMS Fri 23 May, The Victoria, Birmingham

RIZWAN-MUAZZAM QAWWALS Fri 23 May, Birmingham Town Hall

THE SHAKIN' STEVENS STORY Fri 23 May, The Core Theatre, Solihull

JOE DOLMAN Fri 23 May, The Royal Pug, Leamington Spa

PUNCH AND JUDAS + SERMON + MONASTERY Fri 23 May, Arches Venue, Coventry

FLASHBACK Fri 23 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

ELECTRIC CIRCUS - W.A.S.P. TRIBUTE Fri 23 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

THE ROVING CROWS Fri 23 May, The Market Theatre, Ledbury

BEN OTTEWELL Fri 23 May, Regal, Tenbury Wells

BARB JUNGR Fri 23 May, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

HEAVEN CAN WAIT - MEAT LOAF TRIBUTE Fri 23 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch

OZRIC TENTACLES Fri 23 May, 45Live, Kidderminster

BEATLES COMPLETE Fri 23 - Sat 24 May, Rose Theatre, Kidderminster

PAINT ME IN COLOUR + THE ROYALS + GINGHAM + GENEVIEVE MILES Sat 24 May, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

SANCTUM SANCTORIUM Sat 24 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

WUNDERHORSE + JUNODREAM Sat 24 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

CANAAN COX Sat 24 May, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

OLLY MURS + BLUE Sat 24 May, bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham

BACK TO BACHARACH Sat 24 May, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

DEMI MARRINER BAND Sat 24 May,

Temperance, Leamington Spa

KICK UP THE 80'S Sat 24 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

BREACH UK Sat 24 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

TAYLOR SWIFT TRIBUTE CONCERT Sat 24 May, The Benn Hall, Rugby

HELLO AGAIN - THE NEIL DIAMOND SONGBOOK Sat 24 May, Regal, Tenbury Wells

SPEAR OF DESTINY Sat 24 May, Marrs Bar, Worcester

THE SMITHS LTD Sat 24 May, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

MARTY WILDE & THE WILDCATS Sat 24 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

IT'S A BEAUTIFUL NOISE - MUSIC OF NEIL DIAMOND Sat 24 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch

THE MAGIC OF THE BEATLES Sat 24 May, Malvern Theatres

O.R.K Sat 24 May, 45Live, Kidderminster

FRANCIS ROSSI Sat 24 May, The Wulfrun at The Halls, Wolverhampton

SCISSOR SISTERS Sun 25 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham

JACKHAMMER Sun 25 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

THIS WINTER MACHINE + LAW OF THREE Sun 25 May, 45Live, Kidderminster

Classical Music

VITAMIN STRING QUARTET: THE MUSIC OF TAYLOR SWIFT, BRIDGERTON, AND BEYOND The celebrated classical crossover ensemble promises an unforgettable night blending the beauty of classical instruments with the vibrancy of modern hits, Wed 21 May, Birmingham Town Hall

CBSO SYMPHONIC SESSIONS: MAX RICHTER'S THE FOUR SEASONS Programme includes Max Richter's Recomposed - a 21st century reimagining of Vivaldi's The Four Seasons, Thurs 22 May, Hockley Social Club, Birmingham

JACK MCCABE ORGAN RECITAL Thurs 22 May, Worcester Cathedral

LUNCHTIME RECITAL: KATHERINE COOPER (MEZZO SOPRANO) & MARK SWINTON (ORGAN) Fri 23 May, St Mary's Church, Warwick

CBSO: VIDEO GAMES IN CONCERT Featuring Eimear Noone (conductor - pictured) & CBSO Chorus. Programme includes orchestral arrangements of video game soundtracks, Sun 25 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham



Comedy

DAN TIERNAN Tues 20 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JACK SKIPPER Wed 21 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

AL MURRAY Thurs 22 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

LAURA BELBIN Thurs 22 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, CRAIG HILL & COMIC TBC Thurs 22 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

RUSSELL PETERS Thurs 22 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham

SCOTT CAPURRO, MICHAEL MAY, CRAIG HILL, HANNAH BYCZKOWSKI & ROB MORIARTY Fri 23 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ED NIGHT Fri 23 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ADAM ROWE & SEANN WALSH Fri 23 May, Warwick Castle

JULIAN CLARY Fri 23 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

CHRIS MCCAUSLAND Fri 23 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry



Daryl Hall & Glenn Tilbrook - Symphony Hall, Birmingham



Julian Clary - Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

ELLIE TAYLOR Sat 24 May, Birmingham Town Hall

SCOTT CAPURRO, MICHAEL MAY, CRAIG HILL & COMIC TBC Sat 24 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

FRANKIE BOYLE Sat 24 May, Warwick Castle

BENJI WATERHOUSE Sun 25 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

PAUL SMITH Sun 25 May, Warwick Castle

SIMON BRODWIN, SEANN WALSH, JOHN ROBERTSON & SUZY BENNETT Sun 25 May, Malvern Theatres

Theatre

FRANKENSTEIN Fast-paced, reimagined version of Mary Shelley's classic tale, Mon 19 - Sat 24 May, Talisman Theatre & Arts Centre, Kenilworth

GHOST STORIES A 'truly terrifying' theatrical experience, co-created by The League Of Gentleman's Jeremy Dyson, Tues 20 - Sat 24 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

LITTLE WOMEN Belinda Lang, Honeysuckle Weeks, Jack Ashton and Grace Molony star in Anne-Marie Casey's new version of Louisa May Alcott's classic tale, Tues 20 - Sat 24 May, The Rep, Birmingham

THE CROFT Liza Goddard, Caroline Harker and Gray O'Brien star in Ali Milles' Scottish Highlands-set thriller, Tues 20 - Sat 24 May, The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

SPITFIRE GIRLS Critically acclaimed play inspired by the true stories of the women who dared to fly during World War Two, and the incredible bond that tied them together, Tues 20 - Sat 24 May, Malvern Theatres

JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT Panto favourite and award-winning comic Matt Slack stars as the roof-raising Pharaoh in Tim Rice & Andrew Lloyd Webber's smash-hit musical, Tues 20 May - Sun 1 June, Birmingham Hippodrome

MARSHMALLOW ME The 'heartfelt and hilarious' story of Ruby, a young Scarborough girl who moved to the big city in pursuit of her acting

dreams, Wed 21 - Thurs 22 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

SHOWSTOPPER! THE IMPROVISED MUSICAL Join the Olivier Award-winning Showstoppers for an ingenious blend of comedy, musical theatre and spontaneity, Fri 23 May, Malvern Theatres

SHERLOCK HOLMES VS DRACULA Victorian theatre 'with a bite', in which Jonathan Goodwin plays all four characters: Sherlock Holmes, Count Dracula, Van Helsing and Colonel Moran, Fri 23 May, The Civic, Stourport

MARSHMALLOW ME The 'heartfelt and hilarious' story of Ruby, a young Scarborough girl who moved to the big city in pursuit of her acting dreams, Fri 23 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

HANNAY STANDS FAST A 'thrilling' sequel to The 39 Steps which sees dashing hero Richard Hannay back in the fray on a mission to thwart a new and deadly threat, Fri 23 May, The Henrican, Evesham

DICK WHITTINGTON ADULT PANTO Featuring strong language and adult themes, Fri 23 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

...EARNEST? Spoof performance based on Oscar Wilde's The Importance Of Being Earnest, Sat 24 - Sun 25 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Kids Theatre

MINISTRY OF SCIENCE LIVE A fun and educational show featuring 20ft liquid nitrogen clouds, exploding oxygen & hydrogen balloons, fire tornadoes, hydrogen bottle rockets, ignited methane and a self-built hovercraft, Sat 24 May, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

THE THREE BILLY GOATS GRUFF Worcester Repertory Company present an adventure for younger audiences featuring singing and storytelling, Sat 24 May - Sun 1 June, Swan Studio, Worcester Theatre

LITTLE BULB - FOUR SEASONS A theatrical love letter to nature for children and their families, Sun 25 May, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

Dance

BIBI RUKIYA'S RECKLESS DAUGHTER Amina Khayyam Dance present a new work exploring conditioned patriarchy enforced by women in family structures, Thurs 22 - Fri 23 May, Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

ALJAZ & JANETTE: A NIGHT TO REMEMBER Join the Strictly favourites in a brand-new show that features

routines performed to a wide selection of music - from the Great American Songbook through to modern-day classics, Fri 23 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Light Entertainment

THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE Student production in which six nerdy teens (and four members of the audience) enter a slapstick spelling bee, desperate to prove their worth and claim the title of Champion Speller, Thurs 22 - Sat 24 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

TALE OF A PORK CHOP Join drag performer Just May for an evening of knock-off Ginger Spice, giant wigs, silly games and stupid songs, Fri 23 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

BOND BY CANDLELIGHT London Concertante present an evening of music from the movies, Fri 23 May, Worcester Cathedral

BOTTOMS UP: BURLESQUE & CABARET 'The creme de la creme of the cabaret world take to the stage to surprise and delight with sultry striptease, witty wisecracks and saucy songs', Sat 24 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

Talks & Spoken Word

ADHD UNMASKED Join ADHD speaker, coach, former TV & radio presenter and late-diagnosed ADHDer Hester Grainger for 'an evening of conversation, laughter, and a refreshingly honest look at life', Thurs 22 May, Birmingham Town Hall

AN AUDIENCE WITH LUCY WORSLEY ON JANE AUSTEN Join the acclaimed historian for an insight into the life of one of English literature's most cherished figures, Sun 25 May, Malvern Theatres

Events

BEHIND THE SCENES TOUR Join archivists behind the scenes for a tour of Worcestershire Archives' collections, Wed 21 May, The Hive, Worcester

THE PIE TRAIN Relaxing and leisurely journey through the Severn Valley with Paisley Flour, Wed 21 - Thurs 22 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, nr Kidderminster

RUM & REGGAE RACENIGHT An evening filled with racing, Caribbean cuisine, and plenty of rum! Fri 23 May, Worcester Racecourse



Ministry Of Science Live - The Albany Theatre, Coventry

Monday 19 - Sunday 25 May

BIRMINGHAM PRIDE OPEN DAY Explore Court 15 and the ground-floor rooms of the back-to-back houses, Sat 24 May, Birmingham Back to Backs

TINKER | MAKE | PLAY ENGINEERS - MAY HALF-TERM Workshop space in which to take stuff apart, make old and new things that move and engage in colourful play, Sat 24 May, Coventry Transport Museum

BIRMINGHAM PRIDE Celebrating the city's LGBTQ+ community, Sat 24 - Sun 25 May, Birmingham City Centre

BEES AND BUGS FAMILY TRAIL Nature-themed trail for National Children's Gardening Week, Sat 24 May - Sun 1 June, Hartlebury Castle, Worcestershire

JURASSIC GARDENS 2025 Mighty dinosaurs are back in Birmingham for the third year running! Sat 24 May - Sun 1 June, Birmingham Botanical Gardens

MAY HALF TERM FUN & GAMES Featuring outdoor hands-on activities, Sat 24 May - Sun 1 June, Kenilworth Castle, Warwickshire

MAY HALF TERM Featuring workshops, craft activities and live performances, Sat 24 May - Sun 1 June, Shakespeare's Family Homes,

Stratford-upon-Avon

GEOFEST ROCK AND FOSSILS TRAIL Discover your inner geologist with this free trail, presented as part of Abberley & Malvern Hills Geofest 2025, Sat 24 May - Sun 1 June, Croome, Worcestershire

RETURN OF THE DINOSAURS Join the dinosaurs as they take over Hatton for half term, Sat 24 May - Sun 1 June, Hatton Adventure World, Warwick

WORLD WAR TWO WEEK Featuring the Raid The Shelter experience, Lego racers, talks, make & take sessions, and a selfie station, Sat 24 May - Sun 1 June, Royal Air Force Museum Midlands

MAY HALF TERM Featuring War Of The Roses Live, the Falconer's Quest and more, Sat 24 May - Sun 1 June, Warwick Castle

PLAY AND CONNECT Build, stack and construct with larger-than-life blocks and connectors, Sat 24 May - Sun 1 June, Compton Verney, Warwickshire

UNDER THE SEA FAMILY TRAIL Navigate your way around the venue to find all eight animals and plants from under the sea, Sat 24 May - Fri 4 July, Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum



Eastnor Steam & Vintage - Eastnor Castle

TUCKED Featuring a selection of some of the UK & Europe's best car builds and highly modified show cars, Sun 25 May, British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Warwickshire

VEGAN MARKET Featuring a host of independent and eco-focused companies, Sun 25 May, Winterbourne House & Garden, Birmingham

ASIANA LIFESTYLE SHOW South Asian

celebration of culture, fashion, entertainment, food and more, Sun 25 May, The New Bingley Hall, B'ham

GOURMET SUNDAY LUNCH Enjoy an on-board three-course Sunday roast, Sun 25 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, nr Kidderminster

EASTNOR STEAM & VINTAGE Featuring steam engines and vintage cars, Sun 25 - Mon 26 May, Eastnor Castle, Herefordshire



Stratford
Literary
Festival

Spring Festival

8th - 11th May 2025

Alison Steadman
Mishal Husain
Dame Jacqueline Wilson
Reeta Chakrabarti
John Boyne
Sally Phillips
Dr Julie Smith
Susie Dent
Cecelia Ahern
Juliet Stevenson
Jeremy Vine
Dharshini David
Sir Graham Brady

Emma Barnett
Tracy Borman
Simon Jenkins
Charlie Higson
Chloe Dalton
Carol Klein
Diana Henry
Robin Ince
Julia Samuel
Kit de Waal
...and lots more



Scan me to book



See the full programme
and book now at
stratlitfest.co.uk



Plus Tabletop Games Café
Comic Workshop | Bunny v Monkey Trail
FREE Drop-in Activities

Gigs

MARK RADCLIFFE AND DAVID BOARDMAN

Mon 26 May, Kitchen Garden, Birmingham

SCOTTY MCCREERY

Tues 27 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE SHEEPDOGS

Tues 27 May, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

ANDY WHITE

Tues 27 May, Kitchen Garden, Birmingham

JACOB AND

DRINKWATER Tues 27 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

MARK RADCLIFFE & DAVID BOARDMAN

Tues 27 May, The Fleece Inn, Bretforton, Nr Evesham

THE LUMINEERS +

MICHAEL MARCAGI Wed 28 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham

GUTTER PUPPY

Thurs 29 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

CALL OF CTHULHU

Thurs 29 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

SEMATARY + GHOST MOUNTAIN + HACKLE

+ ANVIL Thurs 29 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

GRACE PETRIE

Thurs 29 May, O2

Academy, B'ham

PARLIAMO

Thurs 29 May, The Victoria, Birmingham

SONNY TENNET

Thurs 29 May, The Rainbow, B'ham

MIKE SILVER

Thurs 29 May, Bromsgrove Folk Club

TALON

Thurs 29 May, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

HANNAH WHITE

Thurs 29 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

JOOLS HOLLAND AND

HIS RHYTHM & BLUES ORCHESTRA Thurs 29 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

THE YOUNG'UNS

Thurs 29 May, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

SEXBOMB - THE MUSIC

OF TOM JONES Thurs 29 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

PHOENIX

Fri 30 May, The Jam House, Birmingham

JOJO

Fri 30 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

COMBICHRIST +

EXTISE + CRIMSON VEIL + ESOTERIK Fri 30 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

KIP MOORE

Fri 30 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham



John Legend - Utilita Arena Birmingham

SPEAR OF DESTINY

Fri 30 May, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

DEAFDEAFDEAF

Fri 30 May, The Victoria, Birmingham

JOHN LEGEND

Fri 30 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham

ONE NIGHT OF ADELE

Fri 30 May, Artrix, Bromsgrove

THE SIMON & GARFUNKEL STORY

Fri 30 May, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

SIMPLY DYLAN

Fri 30 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

ALEX HARRY

Fri 30

May, The Royal Pug, Leamington Spa

ELIS FRAWLEY

Fri 30 May, The Tin Music and Arts, The Canal Basin, Coventry

THE STRAIGHTHEADS

Fri 30 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

STRAIGHTEN OUT - THE

STRANGLERS TRIBUTE Fri 30 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

A NIGHT TO

REMEMBER: MOTOWN SHOW Fri 30 May, The Benn Hall, Rugby

TALON

Fri 30 May, Regal, Tenbury Wells

ION MAIDEN +

WIZARDS OF OZ Fri 30 May, Marrs Bar, Worcester

WALK RIGHT BACK -

THE EVERLY BROTHERS' STORY Fri 30 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

THE TAKE THAT

EXPERIENCE Fri 30 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch

SCOTT MATTHEWS

Fri 30 May, Malvern Cube

BIG SKY ORCHESTRA

Sat 31 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

THE BLACK JEANS

Sat 31 May, The Jam House, Birmingham

THE LOVELESS

Sat 31 May, Actress & Bishop, Birmingham

BRELAND

Sat 31 May, O2 Institute, B'ham

ULTIMATE RNB

Sat 31

May, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

THE TWANG

Sat 31 May, Birmingham Town Hall

KYLIE

Sat 31 May, bp pulse LIVE, B'ham

THE SOUL

CONNECTION Sat 31 May, The Core Theatre, Solihull

ERROL LINTON BAND

Sat 31 May, Temperance, Leamington Spa

STRANGERS

Sat 31 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

SHEF LEPPARD +

MAIDEN ANGLIA + STILL DANGEROUS Sat 31 May, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

MANCHESTER IN THE

AREA Sat 31 May, The Benn Hall, Rugby

GUNS OR ROSES

Sat 31 May, Marrs Bar, Worcester

THE CARPENTERS

EXPERIENCE Sat 31 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

CELINE MY HEART

WILL GO ON Sat 31 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch

THE CLARE TEAL

7 Sat 31 May, Malvern Theatres

WEST COAST SOUND

Sat 31 May, Malvern Cube

JORJA SMITH

Sat 31 May, The Civic at The Halls, Wolverhampton

Classical Music

CBSO: MENDELSSOHN & WAGNER

Featuring Pierre Bleuse (conductor) & Jamie Barton (mezzo soprano). Programme also includes a work by Roxanna Panufnik, Wed 28 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

BBC NATIONAL ORCHESTRA OF WALES

Featuring Ryan Bancroft (conductor) & James Ehnes (violin). Programme includes works by Bartók & Mahler, Thurs 29 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CBSO: BEST OF BOLLYWOOD

Featuring Michael Seal (conductor), Shin DCS, Priti Kaur, Navin Kundra, Rekha Paunrana (vocalists) & Dancers from Sampad Arts. Programme features an orchestral performance of much-loved Bollywood songs, Fri 30 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

WOLF HALL IN CONCERT

Featuring Grace Davidson (soprano), Anton Lesser (reader) & the Locrian Ensemble of London. Programme includes works by Debbie Wiseman, Fri 30 May, Birmingham Town Hall

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Jools Holland - Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Working Mens Club, Droitwich Spa
TIFF STEVESON Sat 31 May, The Norbury Theatre, Droitwich Spa



SHAPARAK KHORSANDI Sat 31 May, The Norbury Theatre, Droitwich Spa
TONY SLATTERY TRIBUTE SHOW IN AID OF MIND Sat 31 May, Droitwich Working Mens Club, Droitwich Spa
NATHAN CASSIDY Sat 31 May, Arch Rivals, Droitwich Spa



Theatre

JARMAN Solo play in which Mark Farrelly (Quentin Crisp: Naked Hope, Howerd's End) tells the story of renowned filmmaker Derek Jarman, Tues 27 - Wed 28 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE Step through the wardrobe into the magical kingdom of Narnia. Based on CS Lewis' classic children's story, Tues 27 - Sat 31 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

THE CROFT Liza Goddard, Caroline Harker and Gray O'Brien star in Ali Milles' Scottish Highlands-set thriller, Tues 27 - Sat 31 May, Malvern Theatres

KIM'S CONVENIENCE Ins Choi's heartwarming comedy drama about a family-run Korean store, Tues 27 - Sat 31 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

MARIE & ROSETTA Beverley Knight stars as 'godmother of rock & roll' Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Tues 27 - Sat 31 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

A SHODDY DETECTIVE AND THE ART OF DECEPTION A laugh-out-loud slapstick whodunnit featuring four actors, a dozen characters and whole load of chaos, Wed 28 May, Swan Theatre, Worcester

FRANKENSTEIN ON A BUDGET One man, one monster - 'and a glorious dream to singlehandedly tell the most famous cult horror story of all time with absolutely no budget whatsoever', Fri 30 May, The Civic,

Stourport

IMPROVESARIOS Improvised opera devised entirely from audience suggestions, Sat 31 May, The Loft Theatre, Leamington Spa

Kids Theatre

THE ENCHANTED PRINCESS BALL Join Chester the castle jester as he goes on an adventure to meet Cinderella, The Little Mermaid, Princess Rapunzel and the Snow Queen, Tues 27 May, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

ALL ABOARD: A PIRATE ADVENTURE! High-energy, swashbuckling family adventure, Tues 27 May, Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

MILKSHAKE! LIVE ON HOLIDAY All-new adventure for younger audiences, featuring show favourites Smurfette, Dora, Pip & Posy, Blue from Blues Clues and You!, Milo and Milkshake! Monkey, Wed 28 May, Palace Theatre, Redditch

YOU ARE THE SUN Hurlyburly Theatre fuse gentle classical singing with sensory play in a musical adventure for babies and very young children, Thurs 29 May, The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

A MUSICAL JOURNEY: MY FIRST CONCERT Relaxed and interactive concert designed especially for babies and children. Presented by professional musicians, Thurs 29 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

CINDERELLA ICE CREAM SELLER Little Seeds Music blend 'storytelling, live music and theatrical magic' in a new musical version of the classic fairytale, Thurs 29 - Fri 30 May, Macready Theatre, Rugby



THE DINOSAUR THAT POOPED: A ROCK SHOW! New musical for younger audiences, adapted from the bestselling books by Tom Fletcher & Dougie Poynter, Fri 30 May, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

AN ANT CALLED AMY Julia Sharkey's charming story about a busy little ant learning to slow down. Suitable for children aged five to nine, Fri 30 - Sat 31 May, The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

SUZI SCARECROW AND HATTIE HENS BARNYARD TALES Classic animal stories with rhyme and song retold, Sat 31 May, Droitwich Library

CLAYTIME Indefinite Articles present an interactive performance filled with



You Are The Sun - The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

'fabulous forms, amazing animals and morphing monsters', Sat 31 May, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

Dance

PHOENIX DANCE THEATRE: INSIDE GIOVANNI'S ROOM A full-length dance production, inspired by James Baldwin's ground-breaking 1956 novel, Giovanni's Room, which tackles themes of love, sexuality, guilt and self-acceptance, Wed 28 May, The Rep, Birmingham

Light Entertainment

MAGIC & MARVELS Join magician and circus performer Michael Jordan as he presents a fast-paced mix of magic, juggling and 'crazy circus thrills', Tues 27 May, The Benn Hall, Rugby

PATRICK LEWIN: DELUSIONAL (WORK IN PROGRESS) Join the comedian, content creator and occasional show-tune belter for an evening in which he takes audiences through 'the ups, the downs, and the fabulously awkward moments of living life in his (tap) shoes', Thurs 29 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

RICHARD DURRANT: THE GUITAR WHISPERER Beautiful acoustic music performed by 'one of the world's greatest guitarists', Fri 30 May, Leintwardine Community Centre, North Herefordshire

MC HAMMERSMITH Fri 30 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

WEST END WEEKEND: AN EVENING WITH KERRY ELLIS An intimate concert with the musical-theatre icon, Fri 30 - Sat 31 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

THE OPERA BOYS: A NIGHT AT THE

MUSICALS Sat 31 May, The Core, Solihull

THE JAMES BOND CONCERT SPECTACULAR Sat 31 May, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

Events

OAK APPLE DAY Step back in time to 1660 and celebrate the restoration of the crown, Mon 26 May, The Commandery, Worcester

VINTAGE AFTERNOON TEA Travel in style in a luxurious vintage carriage and indulge in a spread of sandwiches, cakes, tea & coffee, Mon 26 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, nr Kidderminster

THE BISTRO EXPRESS SPRING Enjoy a two-course lunch in a show-stopping first-class carriage, Mon 26 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, nr Kidderminster

WHAT'S IN YOUR GARDEN? Create your own wild art, enjoy mini den building, and learn about the animals just beyond your back door, Mon 26 May, Hartlebury Castle, Worcestershire

ROVING ROBOTS FAMILY SHOW Learn how space rovers are powered by electricity, what they might be up to on other planets, and how they get there, Mon 26 - Fri 30 May, Thinkthank Birmingham Science Museum

PANORAMA TOWER OPEN DAY Enjoy panoramic views of the countryside from the balcony, Tues 27 May, Croome, Worcestershire

SEPHORA X THE BRIDAL BEAUTY CO. MASTERCLASS With panel talks, mini treatments and a beauty goody bag, Wed 28 May, Sephora Bullring, Birmingham

MAKE A MINI BEE HOTEL Chance for children to make their very own mini bee hotel, Tues 27 - Thurs 29 May, Hartlebury Castle, Worcestershire



Kineton RAF STEM - Compton Verney, Warwickshire

KINETON RAF STEM Kineton RAF STEM are back, presenting 'fun-filled days of design and engineering', Wed 28 May, Compton Verney, Warwickshire

DIG & DELVE DAYS Dig & Delve return to Sudeley with wildlife-themed crafting and twig & tale adventure sessions, Wed 28 - Thurs 29 May, Sudeley Castle, Cheltenham

ARTY ARCHITECTS Create your own fantasy building using loose parts,

glue guns and recycled materials, Wed 28 May - Sun 1 June, Compton Verney, Warwickshire

TINKER | MAKE | PLAY ENGINEERS - MAY HALF-TERM Workshop space in which to take stuff apart, make old and new things that move and engage in colourful play, Thurs 29 May, Coventry Transport Museum

GET MUCKY GET MAKING Build bird nests, make and decorate clay eggs,

mix up muddy delights and find hidden bunnies, Thurs 29 May, Compton Verney, Warwickshire

JUNIOR FALCONRY EXPERIENCE

Opportunity for under-16s to get up close to owls and birds of prey, Fri 30 May, Castle Bromwich Historic Gardens, Birmingham

A WALK IN THE PARK SUMMER STROLL

Join landscape manager Fiona Tansey to explore and connect to the natural world in Compton Verney's grounds, Fri 30 May, Compton Verney, Warwickshire

THE BIG WORCESTER PUB QUIZ Hosted by quiz master Sheena Payne-Lunn, Fri 30 May, Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum

UK GAMES EXPO The largest tabletop games convention in the UK, Fri 30 May - Sun 1 June, NEC Birmingham

MIDLANDS AIR FESTIVAL Returning for a seventh year, Fri 30 May - Sun 1 June, Ragley Hall, Warwickshire



B-SIDE HIP-HOP FESTIVAL 10th anniversary event featuring dance battles, MCs & DJs, Graffiti performances, exhibitions, workshops & tours, Fri 30 May - Sun 1 June, Birmingham Hippodrome

COMPTON VERNEY DINING CLUB

Digbeth Dining Club present their usual mouthwatering selection of award-winning street food, Sat 31 May, Compton Verney, Warwickshire

TINKER | MAKE | PLAY ENGINEERS - MAY HALF-TERM Workshop space in which to take stuff apart, make old and new things that move and engage in colourful play, Sat 31 May, Coventry Transport Museum

SUMMER VEGAN FEASTIVAL Featuring vendors offering all things vegan, Sat 31 May - Sun 1 June, FarGo Village, Coventry

NATIONAL KIT CAR SHOW Meet the manufacturers and see displays from all of the industry's major players, Sat 31 May - Sun 1 June, Three Counties Showground, Malvern

BRICK DINOS Featuring Lego dinosaur sculptures designed in collaboration with palaeontologists, Sat 31 May - Sun 7 Sept, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry

BIRMINGHAM COCKTAIL

WEEKEND



SUMMER
EDITION

10 - 13 July

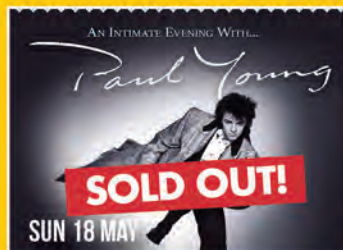
birminghamcocktailweekend.co.uk

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