

Birmingham

ISSUE 467 DECEMBER 2025

What's On

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inside:

RAISING THE ROOF

Fiddler On The Roof stops off in Birmingham for Christmas



A FESTIVE HOOT...

The Owl Who Came For Christmas comes to MAC!



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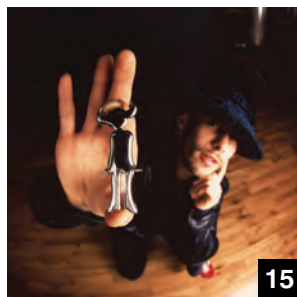




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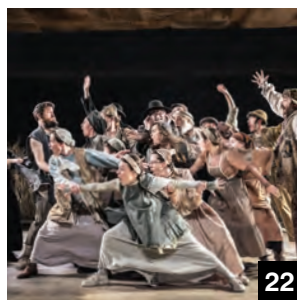
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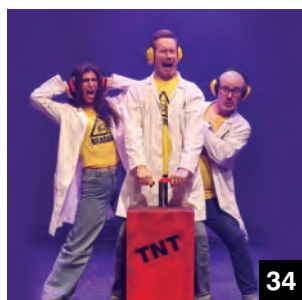
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22



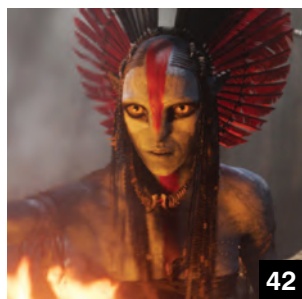
34



38



41



42



45



47

INSIDE:

First Word

4

Gigs

15

Comedy

19

Theatre

22

Dance

41

Film

42

Visual Arts

44

Events

47

What's On

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Christmas market returns to the Jewellery Quarter

Birmingham Jewellery Quarter's much-loved Artisan Market returns on Saturday 20 December. Showcasing independent makers and unique seasonal gifts, the popular event provides visitors with the chance to do some last-minute Christmas shopping. To find out more about the market and the Quarter's other festive-season attractions, visit the website at thejewelleryquarter.org



Roald Dahl's snappy tale to visit the Midlands

The stage-musical version of Roald Dahl's *The Enormous Crocodile* will make three West



Midlands stop-offs next June as part of a major national tour. The hit production visits Shrewsbury's Theatre Severn from Thursday the 4th to Sunday the 7th, the Coventry Belgrade (Thursday the 11th to Sunday the 14th) and the Grand Theatre in Wolverhampton (Thursday the 18th to Sunday the 21st). For further information and to book tickets, visit enormouscrocodilemusical.com

Lest We Forget exhibition at Library of Birmingham

There's still time to check out the Library of Birmingham's *Lest We Forget* exhibition, a National Lottery Heritage Fund-supported celebration of African and Caribbean Royal Air Force veterans from the West Midlands. The exhibition shows at the venue until Friday 12 December.

New musical heading for Birmingham next spring

Critically acclaimed new musical *The Ballad Of Johnny & June* will visit Birmingham theatre



The Alexandra next spring as part of its first UK tour... Telling the love story of Johnny Cash and June Carter Cash - and of course featuring a host of hit songs, including *I Walk The Line* and *Ring Of Fire* - the show stops off at the venue from Tuesday 21 to Saturday 25 April. Visit the website atgtickets.com to book tickets.

Luke Jerram's Helios on display at The Exchange

Birmingham venue The Exchange will next year host acclaimed artist Luke Jerram's large-scale illuminated sculpture, *Helios*. Making use of high-resolution photographic solar imagery to reveal details of the Sun's surface, the sculpture will be available to view from Saturday 21 March to Sunday 1 November. For more information, visit birmingham.ac.uk



Applications now open for Beautiful Borders contest

Applications are now open for the BBC Gardeners' World Live Beautiful Borders competition 2026.

Beautiful Borders provides green-fingered enthusiasts with the chance to create a garden for display at the show, which runs at Birmingham's NEC from Thursday 18 to Sunday 21 June. Visit bbcgardenersworldlive.com for more information. Interested parties have until Friday 23 January to apply.



January date for creative family showcase at MAC

A mixed-media exhibition, showcasing work created by children, young people and families on Midlands Arts Centre's (MAC) creative courses, opens at the Cannon Hill Park-located venue late next month. Taking the title *Creative Family Showcase*, the exhibition will be available to view from Saturday 31 January to Sunday 28 June.

Arts organisation makes purchase to secure future

Immersive-arts organisation Birmingham Open Media (BOM) has secured its future by buying a building on the city's Great Barr Street in Digbeth.

The purchase of the property, originally a Victorian seed mill, which sits on the Grand Union Canal towpath, ensures BOM's long-term presence in the city and positions the organisation at the heart of Digbeth's creative industries. To find out more about the purchase, visit the website at bom.org.uk

Diary date for Birmingham International Tattoo event

Birmingham International Tattoo returns next year, taking place at the city's bp pulse LIVE arena across the weekend of Saturday 14 & Sunday 15 February.

Britain's biggest indoor tattoo, the event will include military and other marching bands, pipes & drums, field gun racing, dog racing, standard bearers, dance teams and a spectacular 'grand finale' featuring more than 1,000 performers. Tickets for the show can be purchased at bhamtattoo.com



Blur vs Oasis at The Rep

Gavin & Stacey actor Mathew Horne will top-bill when a brand-new comedy makes its debut at Birmingham Repertory Theatre next year.

Showing at the venue from Wednesday 11 February to Saturday 7 March, *The Battle* is described by its publicity as a 'wickedly funny dive' into the 1990s Britpop rivalry between Blur and Oasis. To find out more and book tickets, visit birmingham-rep.co.uk

Summer gig for From The Jam

From The Jam have announced a major UK tour for Spring 2026, marking 20 years since their formation. The tour wraps up at Birmingham's O2 Institute on Saturday 13 June.

To secure your place at the gig, visit [ticketmaster.co.uk](https://www.ticketmaster.co.uk)

Comedian Harry to mark 40 years

Harry Enfield will visit two Midlands venues in 2026 with his new tour, Harry Enfield And No Chums.

From the meteoric rise of Loadsamoney - a Thatcherite visionary - to the fury of Kevin the Teenager, Harry will reflect on '40 years of arsing about in comedy'. The show also includes a Q&A.

Harry stops off at Birmingham's Symphony Hall on Wednesday 28 October and Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, on Friday 13 November. Tickets are available at [fane.co.uk/harry-enfield](https://www.fane.co.uk/harry-enfield)

Jane McDonald is Living The Dream

Jane McDonald will head to Birmingham's Utilita Arena next autumn as part of a UK tour in support of her 11th studio album, Living The Dream (set to be released in the spring)... Jane makes her second-city stop-off on Saturday 12 September.

To find out more and book your tickets, visit her website at [jane-mcdonald.com](https://www.jane-mcdonald.com)



Beverley Knight to reprise role in Sylvia Pankhurst musical

Beverley Knight is to reprise her Olivier Award-winning role as Emmeline Pankhurst when hit musical Sylvia visits Birmingham Hippodrome next autumn.

The production, which celebrates the life of Sylvia Pankhurst - the rebellious middle child of Emmeline - and her role at the heart of the Suffragette movement, will show at the venue from Tuesday 6 to Saturday 10 October.

Commenting on the news, Wolverhampton-born

musical theatre star Beverley said: "I couldn't be more chuffed to reprise my role as Emmeline Pankhurst one more time! The spirit, courage and determination of the suffragettes, and in particular Sylvia Pankhurst, is so brilliantly celebrated in this show. The soul, R&B, hip-hop and blues reflects the joy, the passion and the fight of the women and their allies."

For further information and to book tickets, visit the website at [birminghamhippodrome.com](https://www.birminghamhippodrome.com)



City date for Lily

Lily Allen will pay a visit to Birmingham's Symphony Hall next spring.

Stopping off at the venue on Thursday 5 March, Lily will perform her new album, West End Girl, in its entirety.

For further information and tickets, visit [bmusic.co.uk](https://www.bmusic.co.uk)

Karate Kid coming to Birmingham

The Karate Kid - The Musical will have its UK premiere next year, visiting Birmingham theatre The Alexandra in July.

The stage show adapts the 1984 film starring Ralph Macchio and Pat Morita. The movie became a global hit and led to multiple sequels, a remake, and the Netflix series Cobra Kai. The latest installment in the franchise, Karate Kid: Legends, featuring Macchio and Jackie Chan, was released earlier this year. The stage production visits The Alexandra from Tuesday 21 to Saturday 25 July, with tickets on sale at [atgtickets.com](https://www.atgtickets.com)

Lloyd Webber Foundation's funding to subsidise new roles at The Rep

Birmingham Repertory Theatre has received funding from the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation to subsidise two new backstage apprenticeship roles. The new positions will be made available to young people from diverse backgrounds which are traditionally under-represented in the theatre industry.



National Equine Show galloping into the region

The National Equine Show 2026 will take place at Birmingham's NEC across the weekend of Saturday 28 February & Sunday 1 March.

Commenting on the event, the show's Liz Ormesher said: "We're so excited to share everything we've been working on. We have hundreds of the nation's favourite equestrian brands joining us for two jam-packed days, two stages with busy schedules, numerous interactive features, free meet & greets and more. If you're a horse lover, this is the place to be!"

Gladiators show coming to Birmingham next year

A brand-new attraction based on hit BBC television series The Gladiators will open at Birmingham's NEC next year.

Launching at the venue in May, Gladiators Experience will combine 'exhilarating physical challenges and inspiring behind-the-scenes attractions suitable for all ages and abilities'. To find out more, visit the website at gladiators-experience.com

Christmas by candlelight

Christmas music, a 20-foot Christmas tree, turkey baps, hot toddies and indoor snow... The Old Joint Stock Theatre's hugely popular Christmas By Candlelight event is making a return this month. The show takes place at the Birmingham city centre venue on the three pre-Christmas Sundays in December (the 7th, 14th & 21st). For more information and tickets, visit oldjointstock.co.uk

Famous public house reopens after restoration

The Anchor Digbeth has reopened to the public following a £100,000 restoration. The historic public house - a fixture of Birmingham's landscape since 1797 - has been restored to its former glory by new landlord Peter Connolly (pictured).



06 whatsonlive.co.uk



Snowman walking in the air at Birmingham Town Hall

Birmingham Town Hall is this month hosting a screening of Raymond Briggs' The Snowman - complete with a live orchestra performing the animated film's much-loved musical score.

The screening takes place at the venue on Thursday 18 December, with showings at 1.45pm and 6pm.

Further information and tickets are available via the website at bmusic.co.uk

A December opening for Glynn Purnell's Trillium

A new 48-cover restaurant is set to open in Birmingham's business district on Wednesday 10 December.

Taking the name Trillium, the eatery is the newest venture from celebrated chef Glynn Purnell and wine specialist Phil Innes. Reservations are now open and can be made online at trilliumrestaurant.co.uk

Gobby Flicks Comedy to make a mid-month return

A night of comedy and film is coming to Birmingham's Midlands Arts Centre (MAC) mid-month (Thursday 11 December). The latest Gobby Flicks Comedy event features four live acts - Rosie Jones, Tal Davies, Jain Edwards and Leah Fennell - and numerous films submitted by filmmakers from across the Midlands region. More information is available by visiting the website at macbirmingham.co.uk

Fundraising auction for Birmingham Town Hall

Birmingham-based music charity B:Music is hosting a fundraising auction this month in support of its Amplify Town Hall appeal, an initiative which aims to help 'preserve, celebrate and secure' the future of the city's Town Hall venue.

Taking place at the Lichfield Auction Centre on Monday 15 December, the auction will

include a Peaky Blinders script signed by the series' creator, Stephen Knight, and a signed vinyl of Joan Armatrading's 2024 album, How Did This Happen And What Does It Now Mean.

To find out more about the auction - and B:Music's recently launched lottery - visit bmusic.co.uk/amplify-town-hall

Reacher at Grand Central

A free exhibition celebrating Birmingham-raised author Lee Child's fictional character Jack Reacher continues to show at the city's Grand Central venue throughout December. Commissioned by Central BID Birmingham, Lee Child: Creating Reacher showcases rare, never-before-seen material, including handwritten drafts, private photographs, book covers and fan mail.

BOA taster sessions...

Birmingham's BOA Stage & Screen Production Academy is hosting an open evening on Wednesday 7 January for prospective Year 12 (post-16 education) and Year 14 (Level 4) students starting at the venue in September 2026.

The evening will include a tour of the facilities, a chance to chat to staff and current students, and taster sessions in writing & directing, filmmaking, lighting & sound, make-up, and theatre crafts. To find out more, visit the website at boa-stageandscreen.co.uk/open-event

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OF PUNK & NEW WAVE**
19.02.26



**AN AUDIENCE WITH
MARTIN O'NEILL &
STILIYAN PETROV**
02.03.26



SPIDER-MAN: NO WAY HOME
IN CONCERT | 31.03.26



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AGGER & TUFFERS**
15.04.26



**RAY LAMONTAGNE:
TROUBLE 20TH
ANNIVERSARY TOUR**
02.06.26



**AN EVENING WITH
MICHAEL PORTILLO**
18.11.26

B:Music Christmas Gift Guide



Strictly stars Alijaž and Janette face the music!

Strictly Come Dancing stars Alijaž Škorjanec and Janette Manrara have announced a brand-new tour for Spring 2026, including a stop-off at Birmingham's Symphony Hall on Sunday 26 April.

Taking the title Let's Face The Music... And Dance!, the show is being described as 'an evocative tribute honouring the composers, songwriters and record producers whose artistry behind the scenes has transcended generations'. To find out more and purchase tickets, visit letsfacethemusicanddance.com

One-night-only shows to visit the Hippodrome

Birmingham Hippodrome is to host two special one-night-only productions in the spring.



On Sunday 8 March, An Evening With Sir David Jason will see the Only Fools And Horses actor discuss his extraordinary career with BBC Breakfast presenter Mike Bushell... The following month, on Sunday 12 April, West End & Broadway legends Kerry Ellis, Louise Dearman and Rachel Tucker will team up in brand-new touring show Gravity to perform songs from some of musical theatre's best-loved productions. To find out more about both nights, and to book tickets, visit the venue's website at birminghamhippodrome.com

Shrewsbury Folk Festival announces artists for '26

Andy Fairweather Low & The Low Riders, Ferocious Dog (pictured) featuring The Celtic Folk Orchestra and



acclaimed Irish singer Cara Dillon are among the artists who will be appearing at next year's Shrewsbury Folk Festival (Friday 28 - Monday 31 August).

Commenting on the news, the event's director, Sandra Surtees, said: "This first tranche of names promises the festival's usual eclectic mix of traditional and contemporary folk music and Americana, with many more artists and exciting headliners still to come, including world musicians." To check out the full line-up of artists so far announced for 2026 and to book tickets, visit shrewsburyfolkfestival.co.uk



Birmingham stop-off for award-winning dance thriller

Sir Matthew Bourne's award-winning dance thriller The Car Man will visit the Midlands next autumn as part of a UK tour.

Loosely based on Bizet's Carmen, the show stops off at Birmingham Hippodrome from Tuesday 13 to Saturday 17 October.

Commenting on the news, Sir Matthew said: "I never dreamed when we created this show at the beginning of the new millennium that it would still be around, thrilling audiences, 25 years later! Inspired by vintage movie

film-noir classics, it holds a unique and special place in the repertory as the only piece based on an opera and possibly the first ballet to feature a bisexual anti-hero! I'm particularly happy that we are taking the show 'on the road' again after more than 10 years, and I can't wait to re-visit the hot and steamy town of Harmony USA!" For further information and to purchase tickets for the show, visit the venue's website at birminghamhippodrome.com

Light Festival to return to Birmingham city centre

Birmingham's city centre will once again be transformed into a gallery of illuminated artworks early next year, as Birmingham Light Festival makes a welcome return from Thursday 12 to Sunday 15 February.

To find out more, visit the event's website at birminghamlightfestival.co.uk



New action plan launched in support of Digbeth

A new action plan is aiming to support the continued growth and success of Birmingham's culturally significant Digbeth area.

Launched last month, the community-led Companion Culture: Four Actions For Digbeth 'addresses urgent challenges that cultural organisations face, such as rising rents, shifting urban landscapes and increasing development pressures'. To find out more about the initiative, visit companionculture.digbethfirstfriday.com



Romesh Ranganathan hitting the road in 2027

Multi-award-winning comedian Romesh Ranganathan will be back on the road the year after next, bringing an all-new show to Birmingham's Utilita Arena on Friday 2 & Saturday 3 April 2027. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit Romesh's website at romeshranganathan.co.uk



A SPARKLING SEASON AWAITS



Tue 9 Dec – Sat 3 Jan

CAP Thu 18 Dec 7.30pm AD Sat 20 Dec 2.30pm



Tue 27 – Sat 31 Jan



Sat 10 Jan



Thu 15 Jan

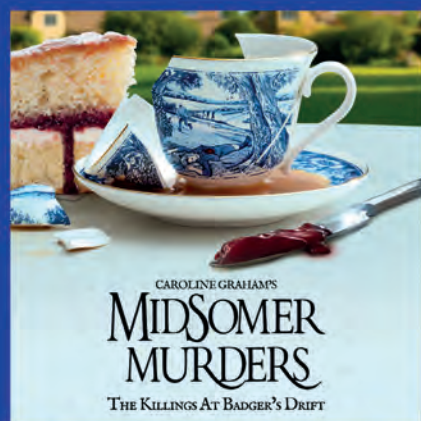


Sun 25 Jan



Wed 4 – Sun 8 Mar

AD Wed 4 Mar 1pm R Fri 6 Mar 1pm



Tue 10 – Sat 14 Mar



Tue 17 – Sat 21 Mar

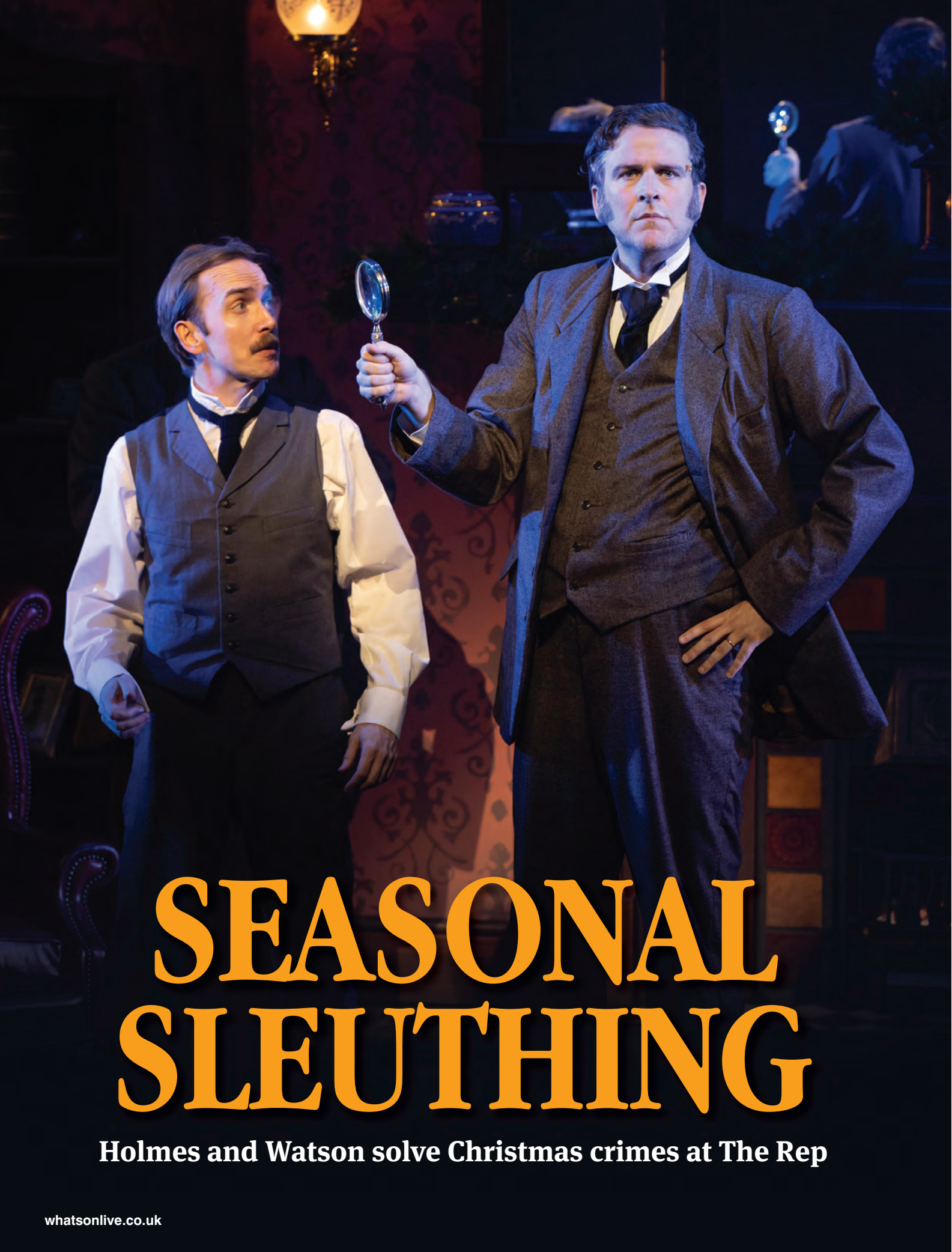


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SEASONAL SLEUTHING

Holmes and Watson solve Christmas crimes at The Rep

A brand-new comedy-whodunnit has landed at Birmingham Rep for the festive season. Penned by and starring Humphrey Ker and David Reed, Sherlock Holmes And The Twelve Days Of Christmas is certain to entertain audiences with its playful investigations of murders most foul in Victorian London's theatreland. What's On recently caught up with Humphrey and David to find out more...

A festive spectacle full of surprises that will keep audiences guessing to the end. That's how the writers of Sherlock Holmes And The 12 Days Of Christmas - currently showing at Birmingham Repertory Theatre - describe their brand-new play.

And Humphrey Ker and David Reed have not only written the show - creating a totally new adventure in which Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson investigate a mysterious killing spree in London's theatreland - they've also taken the lead roles!

"Dave and I first met in Edinburgh in about 2001," explains Emmy and Edinburgh Comedy Award-winning writer Humphrey. "We were immediately drawn to each other because of a shared love of gothic, of Sherlock Holmes and a bit of Dickensian fun.

"We ended up performing in a sketch team together called the Penny Dreadfuls for about five years, which was all driven by melodrama. This show feels like a return to our roots - but much fancier because we made our props out of cardboard [back then] and now an incredibly skilled team are working on the show.

"This show is very silly, it's very joyful, it's packed to the gills with unabashed Christmas cheer; there are dancing Christmas puddings, there are small Victorian urchins, there are all the things we think of when we think of Christmas."

And, of course, it also brings to the stage Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's legendary investigator.

"Sherlock Holmes is really the model for every great detective since," Humphrey continues. "Whether it's Broadchurch or Poirot or Jack Frost in A Touch Of Frost, it's the notion of someone who is almost superhuman finding the truth. And that's very reassuring. We live in a world where justice isn't always served, but when we go on these journeys with great detectives, the goodies triumph and the baddies get their just desserts."

David believes it's the unlikely partnership of Holmes and Watson which draws us in: "At the centre of it all you've got this lovely double act. I think part of the longevity of the characters is that you've got Watson alongside Holmes at every step, and he's the audience's way in. We are seeing Sherlock through Watson's eyes.

"There's a timeless quality to Holmes' character. It's that impervious spirit of investigation but also being cantankerous at

times and in some ways deeply limited. I love the idea that he has this encyclopaedic mind in things like chemistry, but then there are subjects he just has absolutely no interest in."

Humphrey has appeared in Apple TV's Mythic Quest, NBC's American Auto and BBC's Daddy Issues, as well as being a panellist on Have I Got News For You and 8 Out Of 10 Cats. He is also former executive director and now community director at Wrexham Football Club, and has featured in four seasons of the hit Disney Channel series Welcome To Wrexham.

David has written shows including The Penny Dreadfuls Present Macbeth Rebothered, The Odyssey and The Curse Of The Beagle for radio. He appeared in BBC's Daddy Issues and It's Kevin & The Wrong Door, and wrote and performed in the comedy play Guy Fawkes, which premiered at York Theatre Royal.

For their new show, the duo were determined to take the spirit of Conan Doyle's tales but write an adventure which would keep people guessing.

"We wanted to create an entirely new mystery so that even the most hardcore fans of Sherlock Holmes wouldn't know what was coming," says David. "There are lots of references people will recognise, and hopefully we've done a pretty faithful interpretation of them: the pipe, the violin, the magnifying glass, Dr Watson's revolver on a piece of string.

"We also wanted it to have one foot firmly in the tradition of a British Christmas show, so it's got plenty of ingredients of pantomime or A Christmas Carol or any of these wonderfully rich Christmas shows that people love to go and see around this time of year."

And for David and Humphrey, those very British Christmas traditions also include the 'murder-mystery' - as Humphrey explains: "There's always a Peter Ustinov Poirot on TV, and we love the sort of classic high-production Agatha Christie or Conan Doyle adventure - that's what we're trying to capture the spirit of.

"My wife is American, and she was delighted to discover that no UK Christmas is complete without someone being hit over the head with a lead pipe - as long as it's only on the telly!"

A Birmingham Rep production, the show features new songs by musical theatre legends Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber, bringing an added dynamic to the show.

"Our template for it was the pantomime," explains David, "where you have about five or six numbers so that certain scenes are ramped up or elevated above the dialogue. So you've suddenly got this swell of positivity, or this swell of evil from the villain, and we've done very much the same thing with this.

"The songs are bringing a bit of variety, a bit of punch and a touch of class; they elevate it. All the songs are so catchy - we've had them stuck in our heads for months now! They're fantastic, and it's an incredible privilege to have these songs."

The duo are delighted to be premiering Sherlock Holmes And The 12 Days Of Christmas at Birmingham Rep, says Humphrey: "The principle we settled on was, let's go somewhere that the show is going to be appreciated; where it's going to be an event in some ways. Birmingham was top of our list. They read the script and loved it. And that got more exciting when we realised the many connections between Sherlock Holmes and Birmingham: Arthur Conan Doyle did some of his medical training here; you've got Baskerville House next door; and you've got Sherlock Street too."

David says the show pays homage not just to Victorian melodrama but also to the world of the stage: "It's a love story to theatre because it's set in the West End at Christmastime, so Holmes and Watson circle around every kind of show you could possibly want to see. They interact with opera singers and Shakespearian actors and pantomime characters; there's even a pantomime horse that they talk to at one point!

"I think Sherlock Holmes And The 12 Days Of Christmas has a bit of everything you might want in a Christmas show. There's a rollickingly good plot, thrills and spills, an actual whodunnit that will keep you guessing and chatting with your friends in the interval, and bucketloads of laughs. Our primary goal has been to send people away tickled and happy."

.....
Sherlock Holmes And The 12 Days Of Christmas shows at The Rep, Birmingham, until Sunday 18 January

CHRISTMAS WITH THE CBSO



SYMPHONIC SESSIONS: CHRISTMAS SPECIAL

Thursday 11 December 2025, 5:30pm
Hockley Social Club

We're bringing Christmas to Hockley Social Club! Sit back, relax and enjoy your favourite Christmas tunes.



CHRISTMAS BRASS AT PACKINGTON ESTATE

Sunday 14 December 2025, 3pm
St James' Church, Packington Estate

Celebrate the season with joyful sounds of Christmas brass at Packington Estate.



CHORAL CHRISTMAS WITH STEPHEN MANGAN

Thursday 18 December 2025, 7:30pm
Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Expect carols, festive tunes and plenty of Christmas cheer – you'll even get the chance to join in!



CBSO CHRISTMAS PARTY WITH STEPHEN MANGAN

Friday 19 December 2025, 7:30pm
Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Everyone's favourites... all in one concert. Kick your festive celebrations off in the best way!



CBSO FAMILY CHRISTMAS WITH STEPHEN MANGAN

Saturday 20 December 2025, 4pm
Symphony Hall, Birmingham

An afternoon of music for all the family to enjoy, what could be better? There'll be something for everyone!



VIENNESE NEW YEAR

Sunday 4 January 2026, 3pm
Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Let the CBSO and Nil Venditti whirl you into a new year as we raise a glass to the start of another great year of music.

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B:Music Box Office on 0121 780 3333
Tickets start from £12
Students £5 / 18-30s £10

[CB.SO.CO.UK](https://www.cbso.co.uk)

WHAT A HOOT!

Follow the festive adventures of Rosie the Owl in *The Owl Who Came For Christmas* - a warm, wintry story in which a family find an unexpected visitor hidden in the branches of their Christmas tree! Showing at Birmingham's Midlands Arts Centre (MAC) and aimed at children aged three-plus, the production features singing, dancing, puppetry, and a great big helping of Christmas cheer. What's On spoke to the show's director, Ellie Hurt, to find out more...



A charming, Christmassy story lands at Birmingham's Midlands Arts Centre (MAC) this month, in a flurry of snow-covered feathers.

The Owl Who Came For Christmas, adapted by Chandni Mistry from the book by John Hay & Garry Parson, tells the story of Rosie the Owl, who finds herself unexpectedly nestled in the branches of a family's Christmas tree as they prepare for their festivities.

First developed by Norwell Lapley Productions and Leicester Curve, the show features puppets, catchy songs, dancing, and more than a sprinkling of festive cheer. It's being directed by Ellie Hurt.

"We follow the story from Rosie the Owl's perspective," explains Ellie. "You meet all Rosie's friends in the forest first, and some really funny characters along the way. We did the show last year - it did a UK tour - so I know the play very well. We're getting a new cast this time around, which is exciting. It's always nice having a new cast, because you get to rediscover it. My role is making sure that the story is really clear, and bringing all the elements together."

In the play's latest incarnation, the brand-new cast are all Midlands actors - avoiding reliance on London-centric casting is something which Ellie, who hails from Derby, is passionate about. And although there are lots of different characters on stage, the cast is composed of just four actors, who all sing, dance, and operate the puppets.

"It's a real ensemble feel. You get to see people do their best work when you watch a show like this, because they're putting on lots of different hats whilst remaining true to the story, the show and the script."

The music, composed by Jude Taylor with musical direction by Jessica Dives, promises to expand the story of the play's various characters.

"There are brilliant harmonies and lots of character-driven songs. The animals in the forest have their own musical number, and then you hear from Lily, a 10-year-old obsessed with owls - we hear a song about owls sung by her. We also get a fun song called Chop It, Pack It, which the Christmas tree sales people sing as they're working... Hopefully we can get people to join in! A Christmassy vibe is also sprinkled on there - you can't do this show without a bit of Christmas sprinkled on top!"

And that festive feeling is helped along by the show's design - turning the theatre into a wintry wonderland.

"It's quite natural and earthy - we have a bit of an environmental theme. The set is made up of a lot of Christmas trees, so we feel like we're in a forest. We've got an amazing moon at the back that's really big. The set design is really cool and transforms the space."

The production is recommended for children aged three-plus, but Ellie explains that there are plenty of moments aimed at the older siblings or adults in the audience as well: "It's a lovely, vibrant show, with lots happening and really interesting characters to meet along the way. There's an environmental message. It's a chance to open up some conversations with youngsters - Rosie's home gets cut down, she's in the tree that gets transported to the home. The show's got a happy ending and it's all charming and lovely, but it might be a nice opportunity to help talk to children about

nature, conservation and animal habitats."

Rosie herself is naturally the star of the show. She appeared at the auditions in multiple puppet incarnations: "There's just something about [the puppets] that instills this childlikeness in you. Even if you're an adult, you still really appreciate it. I find them quite moving. And Rosie does a lot - you can move her mouth and you can move her eyes. There's quite a lot of freedom to be had with her, and you can definitely feel her personality coming out when people are operating her."

Fans of Rosie - or of owls in general, like Lily in the story - will be pleased to learn that there will be a chance to meet the puppets up close and interact with them.

"There might be some surprises along the way. She might appear from different places within the venue! The puppets are so inviting - quite mesmerising, actually, when you watch them operate. You get lost in them a little bit; it's a nice way into the story. And within the first two minutes, you forget that Rosie's a puppet. It's a credit to the puppet makers, but also the actors who operate them and really make you believe that you're with Rosie on this adventure. And Rosie also gets an amazing final number in the show, where everybody joins in - it's really soulful and fun. A gorgeous ending to the story."

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The Owl Who Came For Christmas shows at Birmingham's Midlands Arts Centre (MAC) from Monday 1 to Sunday 28 December

STEP INTO CHRISTMAS WITH B:MUSIC

Christmas is here, and B:Music has once again pulled out all the stops with its programme of seasonal entertainment at Birmingham's Town Hall and Symphony Hall. Whatever your age or preference, you're certain to find something to whet your appetite and get you into the Christmas spirit. What's On has selected just a few events from the December programme - there really is so much more on offer at bmusic.co.uk. Check it out now!



STEP INTO CHRISTMAS

Birmingham Town Hall, Fri 5 December

Packed with seasonal classics, this feelgood show promises 'dazzling performances, stunning festive visuals and a sensational live band'. Expect heartwarming ballads and upbeat festive anthems in a show packed with holiday cheer. Heck, you'll probably even want to sing along!

Check out all upcoming events at Symphony Hall and Birmingham Town Hall by visiting bmusic.co.uk



SING CAROLS WITH THE CITY ORGANIST AND LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL CHOIR

Birmingham Town Hall, Mon 8 December
Kickstart your festive celebrations with this hour-long concert featuring carols and all-time seasonal favourites, splendidly performed by Lichfield Cathedral Choir and Birmingham City organist Thomas Trotter. Solo carols performed by the choir also feature. Jeremy Nicholas presents the show; Ben Lamb is the man with the baton.



CHRISTMAS WITH ANNA LAPWOOD

Birmingham Town Hall, Tues 9 December
With more than two million followers on social media, it's fair to say that Anna Lapwood is bringing the magic of the organ to the masses. Hailed by Gramophone as 'the dream ambassador for classical music', Anna is here presenting 'a festive evening of carols from the console and tidings through the pipes'. Anna has previously performed with RAYE, Florence And The Machine, Bonobo and Benedict Cumberbatch.



DEAR SANTA LIVE

Birmingham Town Hall, Sun 14 December
Created with children aged two to seven in mind, Dear Santa tells the tale of Father Christmas' backfiring attempts to sort out the most fantastic of festive gifts for a girl named Sarah. With the assistance of his cheeky elf, he finally settles on the perfect prezzie... A meet & greet with Santa after the show, during which each child will receive 'an extra-special present', also features.



THE BIG CHRISTMAS ASSEMBLY

Birmingham Town Hall, Wed 17 December
From classroom teacher to viral TikTok sensation, James B Partridge has cornered the market in school-assembly nostalgia. He's now turning his attention to the festive season, surely the most wonderful time of the whole school year when you're under the age of 10. With James promising an evening of holiday favourites and throwback mashups 'that will have everyone singing', expect to head for home well and truly in the Christmas spirit.



THE SNOWMAN: FILM WITH LIVE ORCHESTRA

Birmingham Town Hall, Thurs 18 December
This magical Christmas event for the whole family features a screening of Raymond Briggs' festive classic, presented alongside a live orchestra performing the film's soundtrack... But wait, there's more... A performance of Prokofiev's Peter And The Wolf, accompanied by a brand-new animated film, features on the bill as an added bonus, and a festive medley - by CBeebies Musical Storyland composer Daniel Whibley - opens the show.



CHRISTMAS WITH SIR KARL JENKINS

Symphony Hall, Sun 21 December
John Suchet joins Sir Karl Jenkins to present an afternoon of classics from the renowned conductor's festive albums: Joy To The World and Stella Natalis. Expect to hear Silent Night, In Dulci Jubilo and The First Nowell performed alongside a selection of orchestral favourites, including The Armed Man and Benedictus. Lucy Crowe (soprano), Philip Cobb (trumpeter), the Canzonetta Choir and the London Concert Orchestra also contribute to proceedings.



HOME ALONE IN CONCERT

Symphony Hall, Mon 22 December
Alongside the screening of this holiday favourite, composer John Williams' delightful score will be performed by a live orchestra. Kevin McCallister (Macaulay Culkin) - an eight-year-old boy who's accidentally left behind when his family leaves for a Christmas vacation - finds himself defending his home against two bungling thieves... Hilarious and heartwarming, this is a film that's fun for the entire family!



HORRIBLE HISTORIES: HORRIBLE CHRISTMAS

Symphony Hall, Tues 23 December
The Horrible Histories team present 'the terrific tale of Christmas'. Charles Dickens, Oliver Cromwell and St Nicholas himself are among the characters who turn up in Horrible Histories: Horrible Christmas - a show that features everything from 'Victorian villains and medieval monks, to puritan parties and Tudor treats'.



THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS IN CONCERT

Symphony Hall, Wed 24 December
What better way to spend Christmas Eve than by enjoying a screening of this Tim Burton classic, with the CBSO performing Danny Elfman's musical score live. Based on an original poem and characters created by Burton, the film follows the earnest-but-misguided adventures of Jack Skellington, who's set himself a merry mission to create a nightmare for good little boys and girls everywhere...

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City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra
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Miriam Allan Soprano
Tom Lilburn Countertenor
Simon Wall Tenor
Alex Ashworth Bass
Thomas Trotter Harpsichord



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CBSO CITY OF Birmingham CHOIR



Night Music

Sunday 25 January 2026 at 3pm
Warwick Hall
Tickets: £30, £10 under 35s

Classical guitarist **Craig Ogden** and accordion player **Miloš Milivojević** join Orchestra of the Swan for this Sunday matinee. From the brilliance of **Mozart's *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik***, to the breathtaking symphonic romanticism of **Tchaikovsky's *Serenade***, to **Piazzolla's** brooding and hypnotic ***Double Concerto for Accordion, Guitar and Strings*** bringing the alleyways and basement clubs of 1950s Buenos Aires to life.

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Classical music from across the city...



Ex Cathedra: Christmas Music By Candlelight

St John's Church, Hagley, Tues 2 December; St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury, Thurs 4 December; Lichfield Cathedral, Fri 5 December; Coventry Cathedral, Thurs 11 December; St Peter's Collegiate Church, Wolverhampton, Sat 13 December; St Mary's Church, Moseley, Wed 17 December; St Paul's Church, Birmingham, Fri 19 - Mon 22 December

What better way to get into the Christmas spirit than by enjoying an evening with one of the country's most critically acclaimed choral music ensembles?

Under the directorship of its founder, Jeffrey Skidmore, Ex Cathedra's atmospheric and much-loved Christmas Music By

Candlelight event features festive favourites from around the globe and across the ages, interspersed with a variety of seasonal readings...

The Saturday the 20th performance at Birmingham's St Paul's Church takes place at 4pm. All other concerts begin at 7pm.

City of Birmingham Choir: Handel's Messiah

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Fri 5 December

The City of Birmingham Choir's December performance of Handel's magnificent choral masterpiece is a well-established element of the Midlands' festive music scene - and as retellings of the Christmas story go, it's most definitely one worth hearing...

The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra further add to the evening's magic. Adrian Lucas conducts, with Birmingham's city organist, Thomas Trotter, on the harpsichord.



Midlands Hospital Choir Sing Noel, Alleluia!

Birmingham Town Hall, Sun 21 December

Britain's Got Talent semi-finalist 2024 Denise Leigh is the soprano for this concert of seasonal music, which sees the Midlands Hospitals' Choir teaming up with the Phoenix Singers. Organist Richard Dawson and the highly rated Gemini Brass also contribute to what promises to be a memorable afternoon of musicmaking.

Birmingham Bach Choir

St Alban's, Birmingham, Sun 14 December

An afternoon concert presenting both familiar and lesser-known festive music, Birmingham Bach Choir's annual carol service is the perfect way to kickstart your Christmas celebrations.

O Come All Ye Faithful, Once In Royal David's City and Hark The Herald Angels Sing are among the featured carols, which will be interspersed with nine readings.

Midland Sinfonia: Musical Inspirations

The Ark at St Laurence, Alvechurch, Birmingham, Sat 6 December

This year marking its 30th anniversary, the Midland Sinfonia makes a welcome return with a programme of music inspired by other compositions.

Included in the concert is The Beatles' Penny Lane, the trumpet solo of which took its inspiration from Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No2, which also gets an airing.

Brandenburg Concerto No4, Rimsky-Korsakov's Christmas Eve Suite, and Gordon Jacob's Suite For Treble Recorder also feature.

Birmingham Philharmonic Orchestra

Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, Sun 7 December

One of the Midlands' best known and most admired non-professional orchestras, the Birmingham Phil here get into the Christmas spirit with an afternoon concert titled Cinderella And Other Pantomime Stories.

Alongside a selection of music from Prokofiev's Cinderella, the programme also features Tchaikovsky's Sleeping Beauty Suite, Rupert Cole's Resonant Tale and Nielsen's Aladdin Suite.

Jack Lovell-Huckle conducts.

Christmas With Anna Lapwood

Birmingham Town Hall, Tues 9 December

With more than two million followers on social media, it's fair to say that Anna Lapwood is bringing the magic of the organ to the masses. Hailed by Gramophone as 'the dream ambassador for classical music', Anna is here presenting 'a festive evening of carols from the console and tidings through the pipes'.





CHRISTMAS STOCKING

**The Old Joint Stock is providing theatrical treats aplenty
this Christmas season...**

Birmingham's fringe theatre, the Old Joint Stock, is presenting a packed programme this Christmas - a children's classic, a musical theatre mash-up, and a sell-out candlelit concert, all topped off with a brand-new musical that's simply crackers! For those wondering how hit 1980s movie Crocodile Dundee and festive-season film classic It's A Wonderful Life might blend on stage, wonder no longer - What's On found out all about it during a chat with the venue's theatre manager, James Edge...

The Old Joint Stock Theatre (OJST), located above the central Birmingham pub of the same name, is now established as a champion of exciting fringe-theatre productions, close-quarters cabaret nights and musical magic.

This festive season, expect a host of musical theatre performances, plenty of festive cheer, and a classic kids' story - not to mention a Christmas crocodile!

"We've been a wee bit ambitious this year," says Theatre Manager James Edge. "In the past we've averaged somewhere between 24 to 28 shows over the Christmas period at the Old Joint Stock. We really wanted to elevate that this year - bring in multiple different shows that play over the top of each other."

The productions in question include family show Pinocchio: A Christmas Tale and two festive concerts: Sleigh Miserables and the ever-popular Christmas By Candlelight. The theatre is also bringing a favourite film to the stage, as never seen before...

"There's a lot of pantos and adult pantos in the area, and we wanted to do something a bit different," says James, "something that was quintessentially 'fringe'."

Unlikely inspiration came from a piece of festive trivia - the UK's most-watched Christmas Day film is the 1986 movie Crocodile Dundee, starring Australian comedian Paul Hogan. When it was broadcast on the BBC on Christmas Day in 1989, over 21 million people tuned in - and it's still the fifth most-watched TV film-broadcast of all time.

"That's a crazy stat," says James. "Not enough to make a Christmas show, but it did pique my interest. I dug a little deeper and found out that Bert, the crocodile from the franchise, died last Christmas Eve Eve, at the age of 90."

The final piece of the puzzle came when James realised that the most famous line in the film - "That's not a knife; THIS is a knife!" - could be blended with the title of classic Christmas film It's A Wonderful Life...

...And so the OJST's brand-new festive-season offering, It's A Wonderful Knife: Christmas Dundee, was born!

"It follows retired actor Paul Hogan, who has fallen out of the limelight and is struggling in the chapter of his life beyond that," James explains. "He finds out about his pal Bert the crocodile's death, and goes into a very low place - following, very loosely, the story of It's A Wonderful Life. Bert, like Clarence the angel [in It's A Wonderful Life], gets sent down to earn his wings. He takes Paul Hogan

through his life and shows him what life would be like if he'd never been born...

"We want people to go 'That sounds absolutely ridiculous - I'm buying a ticket!'"

Without giving too much away, it transpires that if Paul Hogan had never been born, the Crocodile Dundee franchise would have flopped, leading to international tensions and, eventually, the end of humanity as we know it!

An all-singing, all-dancing contemporary musical, Christmas Dundee features 'cameos' by numerous famous Australians, including Hugh Jackman, Kylie Minogue and, according to James, "Russell Crowe riding an Emu in Hell".

From the ridiculous to the sublime, Christmas Dundee will be sharing a stage with Pinocchio: A Christmas Tale, a production which features an entirely female and non-binary cast and creative team.

"Emily Lloyd, my associate artistic director, who directed our recent smash Bonnie & Clyde, will be directing the show. It's been written by Holly Mallett, who is well known for programmes on CBBC. It's a five-person actor-musician Christmas retelling of Pinocchio. It's going to be heartfelt, magical and beautiful."

Not ones to shy away from a challenge, the Old Joint Stock team must perform some theatrical wizardry to accommodate both productions in the intimate venue.

"For both shows we're working with an up-and-coming costume & set designer named George P Martin. George is one of the most exciting creative prospects in the UK right now - the set for Pinocchio will quite literally sit on top of the set for Christmas Dundee."

And if that weren't enough, the theatre is also hosting two festive concerts in the run-up to Christmas. One of them is the well-established Christmas By Candlelight, taking place on each of the three pre-Christmas Sundays in December.

"We've been doing it for about a decade now. It's like the O2 here when it goes on sale - we do three shows before Christmas, and two of the three shows have already sold out. We'll have live singers downstairs, Father Christmas by the massive Christmas Tree, and snow machines."

The Old Joint Stock's final festive offering is the last in a line of successful musical theatre revues: Sleigh Miserables, which is being presented on the first two Saturdays of the month.

"Over the last year we've done these three

other concerts, all based on puns from Les Miserables song names. We did I Screamed A Scream: A Villain's Cabaret, A Little Bawl Of Pain: Musical Tearjerkers, and Do You Hear The People Sing Along: Musical Crowd-pleasers. Now we're doing a fourth and final one - at least, final for now - which is Sleigh Miserables. It's 'the ultimate musical theatre and Christmas cabaret', mixing Christmas songs and musical theatre songs like you've never heard before. No-one's ever heard All I Ask Of You go into All I Want For Christmas Is You, or Let It Go go into Let It Snow, or how beautiful it is when When You Wish Upon A Star goes into White Christmas."

Not content to produce two major stage shows and two concerts in the last month of the year, James is also putting together a Christmas concert outside of his Old Joint Stock Theatre responsibilities - taking place at neighbouring venue St Philip's Cathedral on Wednesday 10 and Sunday 21 December.

"I wanted to create a new annual tradition for the Birmingham community that gives you all the feelings you should feel at Christmastime - something magical, warm, fuzzy and hopeful. It's called Songs For The Season: A Celebration Of Christmas Joy. We've hired a fantastic tech team who are going to bring in *all* of their equipment - we're gonna light up that cathedral like a Christmas tree! There will be live performances, guest spots for students and local choirs, with me hosting, and fantastic guest vocalists as well."

Once the New Year rolls around, James might find a moment to catch his breath.

"I'll slowly start trying to hibernate, but then we've got Next To Normal coming here in April. We'll start the casting process for that, and also for Do You Hear The People Sing Along, which is playing for two weeks at the beginning of February."

If James' schedule is anything to go by, it really does seem that, when it comes to musical theatre, there's no rest for the, er, Wicked...

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It's A Wonderful Knife: Christmas Dundee shows at Birmingham's Old Joint Stock Theatre, from Wednesday 3 to Tuesday 30 December. Pinocchio: A Christmas Tale shows from Thursday 18 to Tuesday 30 December. Christmas By Candlelight shows on Sunday 7, 14 & 21 December, and Sleigh Miserables on Saturday 6 & 13 December



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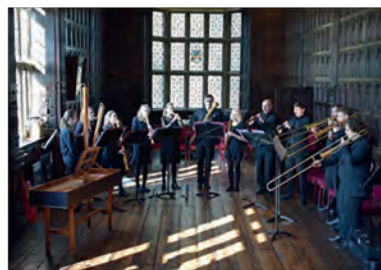
5 Dec

Handel's Messiah
Come and Sing!



6 Dec

The Threads of Time: Music
from Medieval, Renaissance &
Baroque eras



11 Dec

Electra by Frank McGuinness
@ The Crescent



11 – 13 Dec

Swan Lake, Sleeping Beauty &
The Nutcracker



12 Dec

Li-Wei Qin and Jeremy Young



14 Jan

Eastside Jazz Festival feat.
Chris Potter with Pablo Held
Trio



12 – 13 Feb

Colin Stetson
Presented by Supersonic
Festival



4 Apr



/royalbirmcons



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Live music from across the city...

Erotic Secrets Of Pompeii

Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham,
Fri 5 December

If you want to know more about the kind of music Erotic Secrets Of Pompeii play, their official publicity offers a splendidly descriptive helping hand: 'a twisted amalgamation of angular art rock and transgressive post-punk, transmitted directly from the heart of the forbidden zone...'

So now you know.

The talented five-piece, whose above-described sound comes complete with grotesque imagery and vivid symbolism, play the Sunflower Lounge in support of their latest album, the darkly playful Pitchfork Libra, released back in October. Support on the night comes from special guests Kontours.



Jamiroquai

Utilita Arena Birmingham, Fri 12 December

Hats off to acid jazz & funk band Jamiroquai. Led by frontman Jay Kay, they've been a real force on the global music scene for more than 30 years, during which time they've accumulated 15 Brit Award nominations, two Guinness World Records, and more than 1.7 billion Spotify streams. Their mid-month Birmingham visit comes as part of their first tour in six long years.



SupaLung

Hare & Hounds, Birmingham, Tues 2 December

Alt-indie rock fans are certainly well served by up-and-coming Bristolian four-piece SupaLung, whose sound has been described as 'a sonic hug with the heart of a drum that kicks'.

"We want to draw from all the great music across time that we love," the band explain.

"Joy is the keystone - if it doesn't make us smile, give us goosebumps, or bring chills of happiness, we go back and rework it.

"The thought of playing our songs live keeps the fire burning. We can't wait to connect with people in real time - at gigs, at festivals: wherever the music takes us."

Talon

Birmingham Town Hall, Sat 20 December

After 28 successful years together, Talon have certainly fulfilled their mission to 'faithfully recreate the music of the Eagles with honesty, respect and reverence'. This Town Hall stop-off sees the seven-piece counterfeits performing a wide selection of hits from the Eagles' impressive back catalogue, including numbers like Hotel California, Take It Easy, One Of These Nights and Life In The Fast Lane.

Cian Ducrot

O2 Academy, Birmingham, Sat 13 December

Career-wise, Irish singer-songwriter Cian Ducrot has travelled a long way in a short time. Making a breakthrough just three short years ago with hit single All For You, he now finds himself the proud owner of a coveted Grammy Award. Cian is visiting the region this month in support of second album Little Dreaming, the follow-up to his chart-topping debut offering, Victory.

Support comes from Annika Kilkenney.

The Slow Readers Club

O2 Institute, Birmingham, Fri 5 December

With a sound described by their publicity as anthemic electro-rock, critically acclaimed Manchester band The Slow Readers Club visit Birmingham as part of a special anniversary tour celebrating 10 years since the release of their seminal breakthrough album, Cavalcade.



HAVING A BALL!

Director Lorna Laidlaw chats to What's On about making a festive fairytale relatable to 21st-century audiences



Birmingham's BOA group has established a fine reputation for presenting fabulous family-focused festive offerings at the city's Old Rep Theatre. This Christmas, they're showcasing the classic fairytale story of Cinderella, but making sure it's relatable to 21st-century audiences - as the show's director, Lorna Laidlaw, explains to What's On...

Birmingham's BOA Group and The Old Rep Theatre are inviting audiences to go to the ball this Christmas with a sparkling new panto production of the festive favourite Cinderella. And, promise the team, this is a production which brings the classic story bang into the modern day.

Adapted by Birmingham-based actor & comedian Janice Connolly - perhaps better known as her comic creation Mrs Barbara Nice - and Birmingham actor & writer Lorna Laidlaw, who also directs, the show aims to ensure the fairytale and its characters are more relatable to the 21st century.

Lorna and Janice worked on BOA's version of The Wizard Of Oz last Christmas and were keen to bring some of their ideas from that show to this year's production. Lorna says she was initially a bit uncertain that Cinderella was the right choice for families today: "At first I thought, Cinderella? In this day and age? But this Cinderella isn't just about a girl waiting for a bloke to put a shoe on her and be really happy about it. The slipper going on is fine, but it's going to be her own life. I think it's very important to get that balance right."

"We are really making sure that this Cinderella has a bit of oomph about her. She's not waiting for anything to happen. She's going to the ball and having a great time. She's very confident."

The team were also keen to look again at some of the other classic characters.

"We've taken references away like the 'Ugly Sisters'," Lorna explains. "We call them the 'Selfie Sisters' because we've modernised those two girls, and they're absolutely media-savvy. They still have that relationship with the baroness, Cinderella's stepmother, who is pushing her daughters to be more computer savvy because that's the world we're living in."

"These girls have got their phones with them all the time. It's about being noticed; it's about how many 'likes' they get. We're trying to look at the idea that to exist today you have to be in a computer world, but then it's that thing about self-worth not being wrapped up in a machine."

Cinderella marks the 10th year that BOA Group and The Old Rep have presented a Christmas show, and the 2025 production features professionals in many of the lead roles and heading up the creative teams. Students at BOA Stage & Screen Production Academy and BOA Creative, Digital & Performing Arts Academy also take onstage

parts and work backstage in a host of positions, from stage management to scenery.

Lorna says the show's story is also firmly rooted in Birmingham: "The script we originally have is very generic, which means it can be performed anywhere. We then take some bits out and make sure we localise it. All the little things we've put in are definitely Birmingham, and that's important."

Lorna and Janice were determined the show would be aimed at all the family.

"Audiences are still going to see the traditional Cinderella," Lorna explains. "The actual story is true to the original, and it will be fun and engaging."

"Directing it has been a joy, and everyone has been fantastic. When you turn up on the first day of rehearsals, all you've got is words - and then, all of a sudden, there's this amazing piece of theatre that young people are going to engage in. That's a magical thing in itself."

"I think there's something quite special about working with the young people at BOA. That may be going into the wardrobe department and seeing all these young people making costumes. Or it's really inspiring to go to make-up and see that these young people have made a make-up board of how they want all the characters to look. It really is in their hands."

Helping ensure the smooth running of the show is 18-year-old BOA Stage & Screen Production Academy student Beanie Terrington-Burgoine, who is deputy stage manager (DSM). Currently in her second year of a course in Level 3 Set, Props & Costume, Beanie, who hails from Great Barr, says Cinderella is the most ambitious show she's worked on so far: "The biggest challenge is the sheer scale of it. The fact that we're doing 46 shows is a lot. Most shows run for a week at most, but this is five-and-a-half weeks. And we're doing so many performances for primary schools, which come in the morning, so we're having to do the show twice a day - in the morning and then evening performances."

"And there's a lot happening in the show, with a lot of different people involved. There are different crew members who come in and work on different shows, so you never have the same routine. There's always someone new to work with who has a slightly different way of working. It's amazing, but it means I constantly have to adapt how I'm calling the show."

Looking to her future, Beanie believes the

experience will be hugely beneficial: "I would love to do touring DSM. Cinderella is really going to help with that because it's a big show and there's a lot happening. A lot of that is down to the DSM working with different people. It will give me a good base for the next step."

Also enjoying the experience and learning new skills is 16-year-old Ellie McNaughton from Worcester. Currently in her first year of a Level 3 Writing, Directing & Screen Craft course at BOA Stage & Screen Production Academy, Ellie takes to the stage in Cinderella as part of the ensemble.

"The course I do at BOA is more focused on screen, and even though I want to do screen and film as a career, I still want to do theatre at the same time because I do miss it."

"Being in Cinderella allows me to do more of what I want to do, which is acting. It's good to have a really good understanding of both theatre and film. And with theatre, you get to explore other stuff - like dancing and singing - that you don't get to do so much in film."

Ellie is just a few months into her course, and becoming involved in Cinderella has given her the chance to work with people she didn't know - both students and adults: "I've enjoyed meeting other people. I didn't know anybody coming to BOA Stage & Screen, so meeting people in the same college as me who also have an interest in theatre has been really good. And I've not worked a lot with adult actors before, so working with professionals is helpful."

"I feel that a lot of young people, when they hear of working with adults, might think it's a bit scary, but actually they're just the same as you and very friendly. It's like the whole cast is one big family or friends group. At the end of the day, they may be older than you or have a different role, but you all have a part to play, so you're on the same level."

And Ellie says the show will also be great entertainment for audiences: "Panto is for everybody, whether you're a kid or an adult. It's rare in theatre that the audience gets to almost be a part of the show, and that's why [panto] is so engaging. It's really exciting and fun. You go to watch it to have a fun time."

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BOA Group presents Cinderella at The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham, until Wednesday 31 December



BIG AMBITIONS

Midlands actor John Leader talks about taking the lead role in the RSC's 'giant' Christmas production...

Birmingham-born actor John Leader is taking on his biggest-ever role - in every respect - at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre this Christmas, playing the part of Roald Dahl's Big Friendly Giant (The BFG). The festive-season gig also sees him return to a town, a venue and even a story that he knows very well - as he explains to What's On...

Despite his softly spoken tone, it's clear that John Leader can barely contain his enthusiasm for his latest role with the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC): Roald Dahl's Big Friendly Giant (The BFG).

The Birmingham-born actor (he grew up in Nechells) is returning to the town where he studied drama, to a stage on which he's performed before, and to a story he fondly remembers from childhood. And just to ensure we're ticking *all* the boxes, the exciting new production is set to utilise an array of instruments in his actor's toolkit, from drama to movement to puppetry.

Were those wide-ranging skills the reason he was offered the role of The BFG - after all, it's not like he's 10 feet tall?

"Little do they know I've been 10 feet tall this whole time!" laughs the friendly (another reason he got the role?) 35-year-old.

"But yes, I think what led to it was the many different facets of theatre that I've been really fortunate to run into over my career. Sitting in parallel worlds and devised worlds, having movement, puppetry, illusion, bits of flying... all stuff I've been lucky enough to touch into."

Having completed a three-year Physical Theatre course at East 15 Acting School, it's unlikely that 'luck' had anything to do with it, but the shows he's referring to include the likes of War Horse, Peter Pan, A Monster Calls, and The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe - all experiences he can draw upon for his latest challenge.

"I think there's definitely a little shared knowledge and a way of working in those worlds that you can tune into if you already have a knowledge of it. Especially with a show like this, that's doing so many different things, so many amazing things and throwing everything at it."

In the case of Tom Wells' new adaptation of the Roald Dahl classic, 'throwing everything at it' sounds like a fairly accurate summation.

"We're using puppetry, illusions, amazing video, projection, lighting... and we're playing a lot with scale, but I won't reveal too much of what that is!"

John is genuinely excited by every element of the production, which he claims is "the most magical" he's ever worked on.

"The joy of the show is that any one element is worth the ticket price alone, but we've got *everything* in it! The script is worth the ticket price alone, the magic and illusions are worth the ticket price alone, the puppetry is worth the ticket price alone, the movement, the costume design, the video, the sound, the set... just everything. It's worth coming for any one of those facets, but you get it all for one ticket price!"

The fantasy story itself - about how a gentle giant and a little girl (or 'human bean') form an unlikely friendship and ultimately change the world - is one that John has fond memories of having read to him as a young child.

"I was really lucky growing up to have an amazing sister who would read to me at night and introduce me to books. I have really vivid memories of her reading The BFG to me when I was young, and it being the story I would listen to before going to bed."

"It's a book that gives you such visual images - it's so beautiful - and I think the way that [Dahl] writes really plays with your imagination. There's so much in it and so much magic to play with. Everyone has their own picture of the BFG, so it's really exciting - and a bit surreal - to help bring him to life on stage."

Director Daniel Evans, also the RSC's co-artistic director, said finding the right actor to play the eponymous hero had been "a giant undertaking", as well as an essential piece of the casting puzzle, alongside the other key roles of Sophie (a part that will be shared by youngsters Elsie Laslett, Ellemie Shivers and Martha Bailey Vine) and the Queen (Helena Lymbery).

"John brings immense warmth, generosity and humility to the role," says Daniel. "All essential qualities for our BFG. He also has a gleaming and vivid imagination."

For his part, John is excited at a quick return to the RSC - he appeared in productions of The Merry Wives Of Windsor and The School For Scandal last year - but knows the ante has been upped this time around.

"Having grown up in Birmingham and trained at Stratford College, coming back to the RSC for a role like this honestly feels very special - a real full-circle moment."

"Being back again is a really amazing feeling, especially during the current period and seeing what Daniel and Tamara [Harvey, co-artistic director] are doing and the amazing shows they're programming. It feels a real privilege to be a part of it."

The other thing he's most excited about is the heart-warming story - and indeed heart - at the core of Dahl's tale, which he believes Tom Wells (best known for writing stage shows The Kitchen Sink and Jumpers For Goalposts) and dramaturg Jenny Worton have kept front and centre, despite all the bells and whistles of the hugely ambitious production.

"They've taken all the stuff that was already there but changed and moulded it to make it even more special to transfer to the theatre. You can see how they've flown with it - the script is so exciting."

"It's all about what it means to have power, and how much size and scale come into it. It's the idea that sometimes you can be the biggest giant in the world but actually have none of the power that might go with it - in the same way that you could be the Queen of the country but with no power either."

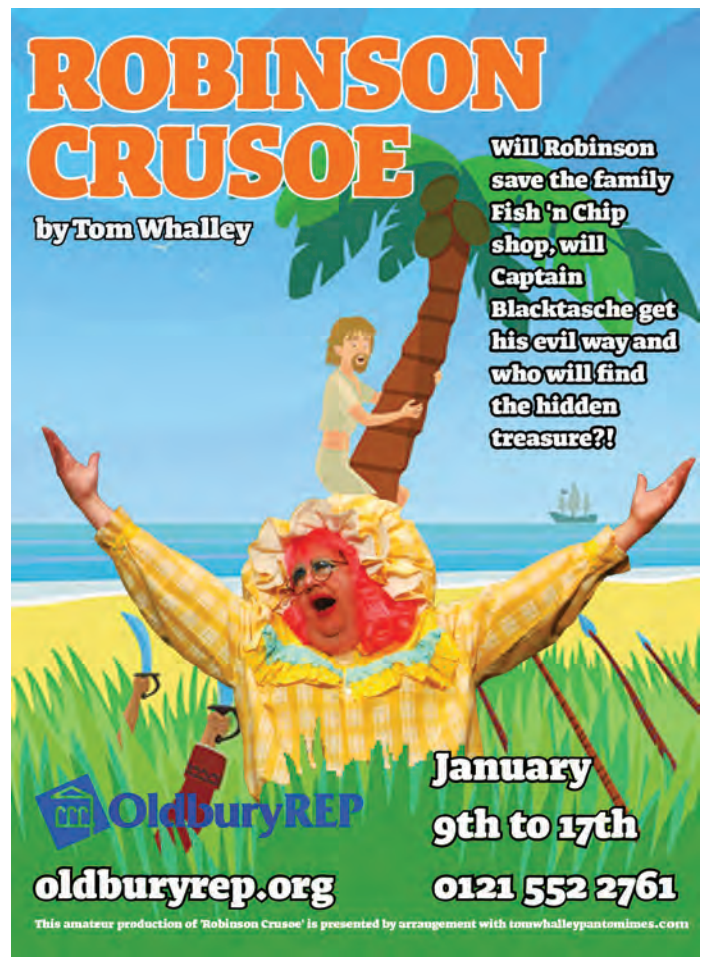
Despite being over 40 years old (50, if you trace it back to its origins as a short story from the novel Danny, The Champion Of The World), Dahl's tale also feels pertinent to modern times, where its messages of hope, community and kindness to outsiders make it ideal for the festive season.

"What this story really tells us is that anyone can create real change, and can do that through play, imagination, kindness, community and friendship. No matter how 'small' you are, everyone can create big change. If that's not a story for what we need right now, then no story is."

"If we can inspire everyone to make change in the world and be a bit more friendly, then we're definitely in a good place."

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The BFG shows at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, from Tuesday 25 November to Friday 7 February



Comedy previews from across the region...

Reginald D Hunter

Huntingdon Hall, Worcester,
Thurs 4 December

One of the most popular comedians currently working the comedy circuit, Reginald D Hunter's no-nonsense style and hugely amusing perspectives on the differences between the UK and his homeland of the US have struck a real chord with his audiences.

"I felt like an outsider in America when I was growing up, and I feel like an outsider in Britain now. The difference is that feeling like an outsider in Britain seems... normal. There are people who've lived here all their lives who feel like outsiders, but one of the things I love about Britain is that it makes room for what y'all like to call 'the eccentric'. I mean, hell, Britain makes a warm and comfortable space for mother****ers who just like staring at trains! I think that's very evolved."

A Chuckl: Christmas Comedy Club

Wulfrun Hall, Wolverhampton,
Fri 19 December

Former medical doctor Simon Brodtkin top-bills this special Christmas edition of A Chuckl. Simon is perhaps best known as the creator of comedy character Lee Nelson, a bling-wearing Stella-swiggling South London geezer. He's also hit the headlines for his unwavering commitment to the business of being a top-quality prankster: he famously handed Prime Minister Theresa May her P45 at a Conservative Party Conference!

Simon is joined for an evening of festive-season revelry by Larry Dean, Louise Young and Jay Neale.

Barbara Nice

Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham,
Sun 14 December

'Ordinary housewife extraordinaire' Barbara Nice is out and about in the Midlands this month, presenting two different shows. Her Staffordshire appearance sees her performing a 'laugh-out-loud' offering titled Fun!.

Three days later, she's making her usual festive stop-off at MAC to present her much-loved Christmas Cracker. As usual, the show comes complete with music, games, balloons, mince pies, a Christmas raffle and a yet-to-be-announced special guest.



Live At Christmas

Birmingham Town Hall, Wed 10 December; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Thurs 11 December

Celebrity (non) Traitor Lucy Beaumont is among the comedians bringing a festive chuckle to two West Midlands venues this month.

Lucy is nowadays well established on the UK comedy circuit, making the switch to stand-up having started out as an actor. "I've had

all sorts of humorous things happen to me in my life," she says, "so I thought it made sense to see how I'd do at being funny."

Lucy is joined for Live At Christmas by Sam Campbell, Tom Rosenthal and Sharon Wanjohi. Amy Gledhill hosts in Birmingham, John Robins in Coventry.



Russell Kane

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry,
Fri 5 & Sat 6 December

Official publicity blurb for Russell Kane's currently touring show, Hyperactive, says it all: "Wear strong underwear - pants will be spoiled."

In short, Russell Kane is a very funny man - and it's not just his publicist who thinks so. Russell's been drawing a crowd since bursting onto the scene back in 2004, serving up liberal doses of humour in an act which features some considerably weighty and thought-provoking material.

Jokes include: "What's the most evil snack imaginable for a vegetarian? Philosophically speaking, it's a Scotch egg, because it's got death on the outside and potential for life within."

COBO: Comedy Shutdown Black History Month Special

Wolverhampton Arts Centre, Sun 14 December

'If you've yet to experience one of our shows,' states COBO's publicity, "then brace yourself for a night filled with side-splitting, knee-slapping comedy!"

COBO stands for Comedy Of Black Origin and works to provide gigs for talented comedians who might otherwise struggle to access sufficient opportunities to shine.

This latest evening of 'rip-roaring belly laughs' - rescheduled from its original Black History Month date of October the 5th - features five highly rated performers: Kat B, Loyiso Gola, Kyrach Gray (pictured), Sikisa and Limahl Germain.





DRESSED TO IMPRESS

Fashion stylist Gok Wan returns to Birmingham Hippodrome this Christmas, having made his panto debut there back in 2013. This year's pantomime production is Robin Hood, with Hippodrome panto regulars Matt Slack and Andrew Ryan featuring in the cast alongside Gok and special guest star Christopher Biggins. Gok spoke to What's On about his love of pantomime, the secrets behind the best costumes, and his take on why panto is such an enduring tradition in the UK...

This year's pantomime offering at Birmingham Hippodrome is Robin Hood, featuring a star-studded cast and marking the return of TV fashionista, DJ & radio star Gok Wan. In appearing as the eye-catchingly attired Gok Scarlet, Gok will be taking a trip down memory lane - the Hippodrome is the place he made his panto debut in 2013.

"I've been a huge panto fan since I was a kid," Gok told What's On. "So much so that 12 years ago, I made the documentary Gok Does Panto in this theatre. It was such an honour to be able to lift up the curtain and be part of something that, without a lot of hard work and saving, would [see us] lose one of the greatest skill sets that the Brits have ever had on stage."

This year's production also features Hippodrome panto favourite Matt Slack as Robin, Faye Tozer as Maid Marion, and the return of dame-extraordinaire Andrew Ryan. Matt Cardle and Sandra Marvin both make their panto debuts, as the dastardly Sheriff of Nottingham and The Spirit of Sherwood respectively. Rounding out the cast is panto royalty, on and off the stage: Christopher Biggins, who makes a special appearance as King Richard.

The story of swashbuckling folk-hero Robin Hood, according to Gok, has "all the elements that you could possibly need" for the panto season.

"It's got love, it's got hope, it's got courage - doing good for the good people. Without getting too academic, if you deconstruct any successful children's story, all of those elements are involved.

"It's a Midlands story, too. It's based in Nottingham - it's based in Sherwood. I'm a Midlands boy, I'm from Leicester, so I kind of join the two cities [Birmingham and Nottingham] together. For me, it's a perfect story to tell - it feels a little bit like home."

Being a die-hard panto fan, Gok has a few opinions about why this great British tradition remains so popular.

"I think it's possibly something to do with the idea that every single person, when they

walk into the theatre, becomes a child again. That's not just the audience, that's the crew, the performers, the people behind the bar, the people that work at the theatre. Every single pantomime I've ever done, I talk to the people who work at the theatre, that do the ballets and the performances and the plays, and they get so excited about Christmas... We've all got to be grown up - until it comes to panto!"

As a fashion stylist, Gok has an insight into what makes the big, bold and often outrageous costumes of pantomime most effective.

"Flamboyant, loud, bright, readable - uncomfortable! If it's comfortable, it's not a panto costume! Something that the kids will look at and go, 'Why can't I wear that to school?' Something the adults look at and say, 'I want to wear that at my next office party!' It's dress up; it's fantasy."

Gok Scarlet will be dressed in red - as his name suggests - in contrast with Gok's first panto costume, which he wore to appear as the (suitably shiny) Man in the Mirror in Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs at the Hippodrome in 2013.

"I've worn that silver suit in many different pantos. When I first joined the panto community - the family - the big bosses said to me, 'Do you want to have a hand in it? You're a fashion designer, you're a stylist.' And I was like, 'No, no, no - this isn't my skill-set at all.' I'm not coming into this as a fashion stylist, I'm coming to this as a performer. I'm probably the easiest person to dress - I will wear anything they throw at me, because that's not my job. They know what looks best on stage, they know what's 'readable'. I love it!"

That initial foray into panto also marked another momentous occasion on the Hippodrome's stage - the first appearance of the now legendary Matt Slack.

"Matt is my child, just so you all know - Matt is actually my son. He is not only a brilliant performer, as we all know. He's a legend in this part of the world. People love him. He's

one of the kindest, most gentle, most insecure people, in a very beautiful way. When he's on stage, he becomes this absolutely ferocious ball of confidence, talent, humour and everything else.

"I learned so much from him when I first worked with him. We've remained friends for those 12 years. We've worked together since, but I haven't been on stage with him for 12 years, and I'm really looking forward to it. I think both of us have grown, and it's going to be really interesting. He has a warmth about him - you can't teach that kind of warmth. He's brilliant, and I adore him. But he is my child - and he will also tell you that I'm his parent."

When the pair reunite on stage, there are sure to be a few hijinx in store - for audience and performers alike.

"I literally cannot wait, because he's so naughty. And my job isn't the comedy - I do the 'set ups'. They call it the 'straight man' in comedy. I set Matt up so that he can land his gags. It's my job, however, to corpse him, to make him laugh at any opportunity, and I'm really good at it! I will get him, every single show. It won't be dangerous, but it'll be absolutely hysterical."

While the gags, glitz and glamour are essential for any panto, something else gives Gok the drive to return to the stage year after year: the people.

"Once a year, I get to be a child again. I get to prance around on stage with some of the greatest performers in this country. I get to make people laugh and smile, I get people to scream at the top of their voices. I get people to leave their inhibitions at the door, and I don't get to do that in any other part of my world. I love that - it's a real privilege to do it."

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Robin Hood shows at Birmingham Hippodrome from Saturday 20 December to Sunday 1 February



Fiddler On The Roof

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Tues 9 December - Sat 3 January

After winning this year's Olivier Award for Best Musical Revival, director Jordan Fein's acclaimed version of *Fiddler On The Roof* headed out on a national tour and is spending Christmas in Birmingham.

The show's story follows Tevye, an impoverished milkman in the tiny village of Anatevka, whose Jewish traditions are challenged and disrupted, both within his family - as his daughters choose husbands - and within his community - as the threat of displacement looms...

First produced for the stage in 1964, *Fiddler* is best known from its

1971 film incarnation starring Topol in the lead role.

Hit songs include *Matchmaker, Matchmaker* and the hugely famous *If I Were A Rich Man*.

"The production is ever-changing, because Tevye contains so many facets," says Matthew Woodyatt, who plays the character. "It's a gift - everyone around me is so brilliant. In a glorious way, the show is never quite the same twice. It's still playful, it's still alive. New things are being discovered all the time, which is lovely."

Sherlock Holmes And The Twelve Days Of Christmas

The Rep, Birmingham, until Sun 18 January

Think Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber and three critically acclaimed musicals come to mind: *Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Evita*. Now, a new show has been added to the list of productions on which the legendary pair have collaborated: *Sherlock Holmes And The Twelve Days Of Christmas*.

A Birmingham Rep production created in association with Rice's company, Heartaches Ltd, the brand-new comedy whodunnit - penned by and starring The Penny Dreadfuls' Humphrey Ker and David Reed - finds Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson investigating a series of murders most foul in Victorian London's theatreland...

And what's more, each of the grisly crimes comes complete with an intriguing link to *The Twelve Days Of Christmas*... The game, as Sherlock is famous for saying, is most definitely afoot...



It's A Wonderful Knife

Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, Wed 3 - Tues 30 December

Now here's a festive production with a difference...

It's *A Wonderful Knife* is partly inspired by the BBC's record-breaking 1989 screening of the hit movie *Crocodile Dundee*, which remains the most-watched film ever broadcast on Christmas Day in the UK. The Old Joint Stock's theatre manager, James Edge, is confident that audiences will very much appreciate the venue's radical alternative to traditional pantomime fare: "We found a story that mixes *It's A Wonderful Life* - arguably the most famous Christmas story of all time - with *Crocodile Dundee*. We've made a story that's cohesive, hilarious and actually heartfelt - and it works. It's going to be barmy. You'll have a croc, wearing crocs - put it that way!"





Robin Hood

Birmingham Hippodrome,
Sat 20 December - Sun 1 February

As if Robin Hood didn't already have enough on his plate dealing with the dastardly Sheriff of Nottingham and wooing the beautiful Maid Marion, the festive season also finds Sherwood Forest's most famous resident getting tangled up in all manner of pantomime traditions (custard pie, anyone?). Gok Wan, Faye Tozer and Matt Cardle here join Hippodrome panto regular Matt Slack, who's playing Robin, for 'the ultimate sheriff-busting pantomime extravaganza'. Christopher Biggins makes a special appearance as King Richard, with Andrew Ryan and Sandra Marvin completing the high-quality line-up.

The Wizard Of Oz: A Wicked Pantomime

Walsall Arena, Sat 6 - Sun 21 December

Classic pop bangers, dazzling dancing, groan-worthy jokes and plenty of audience participation ensure that this particular version of L Frank Baum's much-loved story comes complete with plenty of panto magic. There are ruby crocs rather than ruby slippers, too, while Elphaba and Glinda are known as the Wicked Wench Of The West and The Good Wench Of Walsall respectively!

Dick Whittington

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury,
until Sun 4 January



Telling the terrific tale of a young man who heads for London in search of fame and fortune, Dick Whittington makes for a fantastic pantomime - not least because of the top adventures in which the happy-go-lucky title character finds himself involved... If you're a dyed-in-the-wool fan of the Theatre Severn panto experience, you'll be delighted to know that this year's offering is following the usual recipe for success. What does that mean in practice? Well, to put some meat on the bone, it means Telford-born Paul Hendy is writing it, Evolution is producing

it, and Brad Pitt is both starring in it and taking the directorial reins.

"There are pantos out there that go a bit near the knuckle - but I don't think ours does," says Brad. "I would never tell a joke that was offensive or rude. Sometimes, you can use a double entendre - but then that's in *your* mind, that's not me. You have to blame yourself!"

Treasure Island

Artrix, Bromsgrove, Fri 5 - Mon 29 December

Robert Louis Stevenson's high-seas caper here gets the pantomime treatment, as young Jim Hawkins heads off on the adventure of a lifetime - one which will see him not only setting sail in search of buried treasure, but also spending time in the company of a one-legged pirate with murder in mind... Bromsgrove's favourite Dame, William Hastings - making a welcome return for this year's festive family show - is joined in the cast by 'chief of mischief' Kilian Perpetuini.

Aladdin

The Core Theatre, Solihull, Sat 6 December - Sun 4 January; Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, Wed 10 - Wed 31 December; Palace Theatre, Redditch, Mon 8 December - Sun 4 January

A perfect story for an evening of family-friendly entertainment finds street youth Aladdin trying against all odds to win the hand of the beautiful princess - and being helped in his endeavours by the mystical genie of the lamp...

At Solihull's Core Theatre (top image), the award-winning Little Wolf Entertainment are promising their 'most lavish, action-packed family adventure yet', while Ludlow Assembly Rooms' version of the much-loved

Arabian Nights tale will be the venue's fourth professional pantomime. Meanwhile, there's an all-star cast adding to the panto magic in Redditch, with children's favourite Dave Benson-Phillips, soap star Bill Ward (Coronation Street and Emmerdale) and Britain's Got Talent's Tony Rudd topping the bill.



Peter Pan

Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa,
Fri 5 December - Sun 4 January

Fly away to Neverland with the boy who wouldn't grow up, meet a real fairy, marvellous mermaids, wonderful Wendy and the down-on-their-luck lost boys. Oh, and beware the ever-so-wicked Captain Hook and a very hungry crocodile who goes tick-tock (he swallowed a clock!). JP McCue and Sean Dodds make a welcome return for this year's festive family show, which is being produced by pantomime specialists Imagine Theatre.



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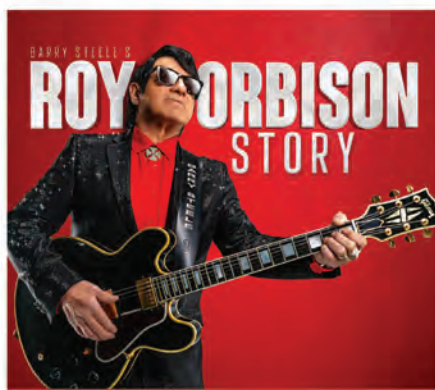
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Sleeping Beauty

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, until Sat 3 January; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, until Sun 4 January; Worcester Swan Theatre, until Sun 4 January; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Fri 5 December - Sun 4 January

The tragic tale of a young princess who's tricked by an evil fairy and pricks her finger on a spinning wheel, causing her to fall asleep for 100 years, offers a great story around which to build a pantomime production of real quality...

And Christmas 2025 sees four of the region's most popular theatres doing exactly that! RuPaul's Drag Race UK winner Danny Beard top-bills in Wolverhampton, where the cast also includes impressionist Debra Stephenson and much-loved pantomime favourites Tam Ryan and Ian Adams (image top left).

Over at the Coventry Belgrade (image bottom left), panto veteran Iain Lauchlan is, as usual, the creative force behind the venue's festive-season offering, while at the Swan Theatre, the Worcester Repertory Company

(image top right) are promising a 'dazzling production' that comes complete with fairies, magic, and heaps of traditional panto fun. And the Sleeping Beauty's getting her head down at Stafford's Gatehouse Theatre (image bottom right) too, with Mark Rhodes, David Phipps-Davis and Samantha Spragg all making a welcome return to Pantoland.



Beauty And The Beast

Sutton Coldfield Town Hall, Sat 6 - Wed 31 December; The Albany Theatre, Coventry, Sat 6 December - Sun 4 January

When a young woman is captured by a hideous beast, she finds herself facing a life of isolation in his mysterious palace. The Beast, too, is trapped - seemingly forever - inside the grotesqueness of his physical appearance, the consequence of a spell cast upon him by an evil witch. Only Beauty's ability to look beyond his ugliness and see the person within can save him...

So that's the basic storyline. Now... what about the two above-listed versions? Well, at Sutton Coldfield Town Hall (pictured below), they've very much gone the panto route - we're thinking custard pies, double entendres, slapstick comedy and a hilariously costumed Dame... In sharp contrast, Coventry's Albany Theatre is proudly declaring *its* version of the much-loved fairytale to be 'a dazzling alternative to the traditional Christmas show', complete with 'bold storytelling, breathtaking visuals, music and dance'.



Cinderella

The Old Rep, Birmingham, until Wed 31 December; Lichfield Garrick, until Sun 11 January; Crown Wharf Theatre, Stone, Wed 3 - Sat 6 December; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 12 December - Sun 4 January; The ICC, Telford, Tues 16 December - Fri 2 January

With its comical Ugly Sisters, matchmaking fairy godmother, drop-dead-gorgeous Prince Charming, super-cute mice, and fits-one-foot-only glass slipper, Cinderella can justifiably lay claim to being the nation's favourite pantomime story...



The Garrick's version of Cinders (image above) has been written by Paul Hendy, is produced by Evolution, and features a 'Dame of longstanding' taking centre-stage; namely, Sam Rabone, who has spent many a festive season in a nice frock or several at the venue. Panto regular Ben Thornton is back too, taking on the role of Buttons... Meanwhile, over in Birmingham, the BOA Group make a welcome return with their 10th Christmas production at the Old Rep Theatre. The company are presenting a version of

Cinderella that they're promising is awash with hilarious comedy, outrageous characters, dazzling costumes and plenty of audience participation...

In Stoke-on-Trent, Jonathan Wilkes leads the Regent Theatre pantomime cast as usual (image of Cinders, below), and is joined by Potteries panto favourite Kai Owen, while the ICC Telford version of the much-loved fairytale is promising 'an unforgettable experience for children and adults alike'. Last but certainly not least, Stone's Crown Wharf Theatre is presenting a brand-new pantomime written and performed by local theatre company Stone Revellers.





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Theatre previews from around the region



A Shoddy Christmas Carol

Lichfield Garrick, Thurs 4 December - Sun 4 January

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 two Midlands venues this month with their own 'unhinged retelling' of *A Christmas Carol*, in which one actor, a panicking stage manager, and a deluded director are left to save the show after the rest of the cast fail to turn up (see *Done To Death, By Jove*, elsewhere on this page, for a similar scenario).

Bleak Expectations

Stoke Rep Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Tues 9 - Sat 13 December

Bizarre adventures, romantic entanglements and fiendish plots are in plentiful supply in this 'deliciously absurd' spoof of Charles Dickens' novels, presented by the always-value-for-money Stoke Rep Players. The show is based on the same-named BBC Radio Four comedy series.

Pinocchio: A Christmas Tale

Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, Thurs 18 - Tues 30 December

The legendary tale of the wooden boy with a disappointing propensity for telling porky pies is here presented in a production that's promising 'soaring songs, lots of laughter, tears of joy and a very large whale'. The show has been created by Holly Mallett, who's perhaps best known for playing the role of Moxie in the hit CBBC show *Andy And The Band*.

The Little Mermaid

New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme, until Sat 24 January

Hans Christian Andersen's famous fairytale tells the much-loved story of a beautiful mermaid princess who believes a better life awaits her out of the water... Adapted for the stage by Theresa Heskins, who co-directs with Vicki Dela Amedume, this brand-new production features the New

Vic's signature blend of impressive circus skills and imaginative storytelling. "There's such rich visual language in the story of *The Little Mermaid*," says Theresa, "and utilising circus opens up a whole host of possibilities for how we create this undersea world. Our audience members have been captivated by the way we combine contemporary circus and storytelling, and this is a perfect opportunity to bring these elements together into our biggest family show of the year."



The BFG

Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, until Sat 7 February

Roald Dahl's delightful tale, written way back in 1982, is here given the Royal Shakespeare Company Christmas-show treatment. The story follows the adventures of a little girl named Sophie, who's taken to a magical land by the Big Friendly Giant (or BFG, for short). There, he teaches her whizzpopping, shows her his secret collection of dreams, and lets her taste his extraordinary food, the

snoozcumber. When it becomes apparent a tribe of man-eating giants are planning to rampage through England, Sophie and the BFG realise they must save the country from unprecedented disaster...

Done To Death, By Jove

Harley Village Hall, Shropshire, Thurs 4 December; Cosy Hall, Newport, Shropshire, Fri 5 December; Welshampton Parish Hall, Shropshire, Sat 6 December; The Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shropshire, Sat 31 January

Fun-loving duo Gavin Robertson and Nicholas Collett blend humour, variety, theatre and dance in a show that pays spoof homage to 'the great British detective'. The production is based around the idea that its cast of six has become a cast of two due to an M6 breakdown of the van carrying the props, the set and four of the performers. The intrepid remaining cast members, Messers Robertson and Collett, are therefore left to present the show on their own - an endeavour which, not surprisingly, leads to all manner of mix-ups and mayhem.





BAD ATTITUDE

**RuPaul's Drag Race UK winner
Danny Beard crosses over to the dark side**

With the pantomime season now upon us, the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre's festive family production has everything needed to brighten the darkest time of the year - glitz, gags, super-sized characters and plenty of mayhem, all wrapped up in the fabulous fairytale story of the Sleeping Beauty. Taking top billing in the production is former RuPaul's Drag Race UK winner Danny Beard, who spoke to What's On about the challenge of playing the show's iconic panto villain, Carabosse...

It's December - and, as usual, that means big names, local legends and West End stars have assembled at the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre to create a dream of a pantomime production. On this occasion, it's the fairytale story of the Sleeping Beauty that's getting a festive-season run-out.

Master impressionist Debra Stephenson dons a tiara as Queen Bertha of Bilstonia, local performer Zak Douglas appears as The Herald, and West Enders Solomon Davy and Georgia Iudica-Davies star as the Prince and Princess Beauty respectively.

Primed to throw curses at the unsuspecting princess is Danny Beard. The RuPaul's Drag Race UK winner, Britain's Got Talent contestant, and Celebrity Big Brother housemate is taking on the role of the ever-so-evil Carabosse.

However, after a long day wearing the character's sparkly, slinky and scandalously shoulder-padded gown - not to mention the foot-long horns - even a seasoned Drag Queen starts to suffer for the art.

"Truthfully, my back's killing," says Danny. "I've got a headache, I can't feel my stomach, my feet are killing, my fingers are killing because my nails are about six inches long. But... I do look fabulous! I think that's all that matters when you're a Drag Queen. Drag is the most uncomfortable art form. Weirdly, as soon as you put all this uncomfortable material on your body, you become comfortable in your person. Is that dead deep? And then you can just have fun and be ridiculous. I mean, look at the state of me - I'm ridiculous! To be *this* ridiculous, and to give people around you a good time, it feels like a superpower. I'm dead lucky that I get to make people laugh, sing songs and tell jokes for a living."

Although much in demand in Pantoland this Christmas, Danny was drawn to the Wolverhampton Grand's home-grown production. Boasting a brand-new set and costumes created by the venue's in-house team, the show also features a fresh script, written once again by panto favourites Tam Ryan and Ian Adams.

"These guys just do it like nobody else," says Danny. "And I'm not just saying that - they really do. Ian and Tam not only write it,

they're also in the show. The passion is weaved through every bit of it. The costume designers design with the set in mind, and the set designers design with the costumes in mind. It just sh*t's glitter!"

Costumes are of course central to drag identity, so it was important to make sure that Carabosse's fabulous outfits were going to be perfect; Danny collaborated with the Grand's production team at the beginning of the design process.

"My friends will tell you I'm a control freak. I think that's probably why I do comedy - you're kind of controlling the audience, because you're making them laugh. I didn't give up control, but what I did do is say: 'Show me what you've got.' The gorgeous costume designer David said: 'Can we have a meeting?' We met in London, he went through the sketches, and I was so inspired. Then I brought things to it - I love Glenn Close as Cruella De Ville, so I brought all these reference images and more 'fashion' elements to some of the costumes. Shoulders, feathers, faux fur, playing with different body shapes.

"The character herself goes on a bit of a journey. She's evil, she's wicked - and I don't know if you know the story, but she kind of turns into a dragon. It's so panto! I wanted to get all of those references in. I love all the layers of fabrics, the textures and rhinestones against rough and smooth. [The costume designers] have certainly delivered. I don't know how much they've spent on it, and I don't want to ask, because I think it's a lot of money. I've got a lot of costume changes, and I'm very, very, very excited."

When it comes to Carabosse, who is, after all, a legendary fairytale 'baddie', Wolverhampton audiences might be surprised to catch a hint of her softer - or at least, more appealing - side: "She's evil, but I think every person on this planet has a redeeming quality somewhere... You should love to hate her! A lot of people say 'I want the kids to cry!' I don't want the kids to cry - I can't cope with kids crying. I can't cope with kids full-stop! I'm glad that I'm on the stage and they're sat in front of me..."

Panto is home to Britain's favourite drag tradition - the iconic Dame. Although they will be sharing the spotlight, Ian Adams'

returning classy Dame character will be very different from Danny's interpretation of Carabosse.

"My persona is very quick witted, very catty. I like to 'read' the audience. And I think one thing that I'm good at is being able to insult people and still leave them liking me. So I think I'm going to slot right in, for want of a better phrase..."

"If only we could say filthy words, though! I think my biggest challenge is that I'm not going to be able to say f*ck or b*gger for seven weeks... Ultimately, though, I'm a professional, so of course I won't swear on stage!"

With a few pantos already under the belt, Danny's sights are set on further theatrical endeavours: "I got onto my manager about six months ago and said: 'Get me a meeting with Wicked UK, because I want to play Madame Morrible - we need a drag Madame Morrible!' And then, about a month ago, in Brazil, they cast the first drag Madame Morrible. So it's not impossible!"

"I would have gone for Elphaba, but I just don't think I've got the range. You've got to be a bit realistic in this world, honey. I've got the figure, I can fly - I've flown before - I'd love to play a drag Madame Morrible. And I'd like to sink my teeth into a bit more serious acting as well - so watch this space!"

For now, Danny is happy to be treading the boards in Wolverhampton, and bringing some festive fun to the theatre's audience as the year draws to a close.

"I'm blessed - it's my first passion, my true passion. I just love being able to stand up there. We live in such a scary world - we could go totally deep right now, but let's keep it light. It's a scary world, so as an actor, or a performer, or an audience member, to be able to escape that for two and a half hours - and have a nice little ice cream in the middle - it's a joy."

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Sleeping Beauty shows at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Saturday 29 November until Sunday 4 January



The Tiger Who Came To Tea

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, until Sun 28 December

Everybody's favourite tea-guzzling tiger is back in town, dropping in on Sophie and her mum just as they're settling down for an afternoon cuppa...

Adapted by David Wood from the late Judith Kerr's 1968 book of the same name, this 55-minute show features singalong songs and plenty of magic - not to mention a big, stripy tiger, of course!

Kerr's 1968 book of the same name, this 55-minute show features singalong songs and plenty of magic - not to mention a big, stripy tiger, of course!

Tales From Acorn Wood At Christmas

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Wed 10 - Wed 24 December

Stage adaptations of books by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler invariably offer theatrical magic aplenty, so this is definitely a show that's well worth catching.



Presented by the team behind two other hit kids' productions, Dear Zoo Live and Dear Santa Live (the latter is previewed elsewhere on this page), the show features clever puppetry, toe-tapping songs, and the chance to join in with Pig and Hen's game of hide & seek.

Horrible Histories: Horrible Christmas

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Tues 23 December

The Horrible Histories team here presents 'the terrific tale of Christmas'. Charles Dickens, Oliver Cromwell and St Nicholas himself are among the characters



who turn up in Horrible Histories: Horrible Christmas - a show that features everything from 'Victorian villains and medieval monks, to puritan parties and Tudor treats'.

Captain Sprout And The Christmas Pirates

Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent, Wed 17 - Wed 24 December

In the time-honoured tradition of the Grinch, the title character of this swashbuckling yuletide adventure has a dastardly plan to steal Christmas...

As rogues go, Captain Sprout is a truly rotten one. Thank heaven, then, for young Freddy Frith, who stands in his way armed with nothing but courage, kindness, and his trusty teddy, Mr Moo.

Expect 'hilarious antics, magical shadow puppetry, original music and plenty of pirate-y chaos'.



The Mince Pie Mouse

Malvern Theatres, Mon 22 December - Sun 4 January

Teaching kids that 'working together is always better' - and that making a mince pie is no walk in the park - The Mince Pie Mouse is presented by Herefordshire's Our Star Theatre Company... It's a snowy Christmas Eve, and with Father Christmas out and about doing what he does best, his playful pets, Cat and Mouse, decide to make him a mince pie. Problem is, they haven't got a clue how to do it - which is where the trouble starts...

The Owl Who Came For Christmas

Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham, Mon 1 - Sun 28 December

It's quite a shock for Rosie when she wakes up to find herself nestled in a family's new Christmas tree. But can Lily, Ethan, Mum and Dad help the little owl find her way home?... A true story lies behind this heartwarming production, which brings together 'toe-tapping songs, captivating puppetry' and plenty of audience participation. Suitable for children aged three-plus.



Dear Santa Live

Stourbridge Town Hall, Thurs 4 December; Birmingham Town Hall, Sun 14 December; Stafford Gatehouse, Tues 16 & Wed 17 December; Dudley Town Hall, Mon 22 & Tues 23 December

Presented with the intention of giving children aged two to seven both a fun introduction to theatre and a



memorable yuletide treat, Dear Santa tells the tale of Father Christmas' backfiring attempts to sort out the most fantastic of festive gifts for a girl named Sarah. With the assistance of his cheeky Elf, he finally settles on the perfect prezzie... Youngsters get the chance to enjoy a meet & greet with Santa after the show, during which each child will receive 'an extra-special present'.

No Such Thing As Wolves

Birmingham Hippodrome,
Sat 6 December - Sun 4 January

A fun-filled family musical, created by Horrible Histories' Gerard Foster and Richie Webb, No Such Thing As Wolves is the second of the Hippodrome's My First Musical commissions, following on from the success of last year's offering, The Jingleclaw.

This year's production, directed by Emily Ling Williams, follows Hettie the Hedgehog as she opts to throw a party instead of settling down into hibernation.

"I think it's such a feelgood show," says Emily. "There's such a sense of how important friendship is, family, and also appreciating the natural world. I think it's really uplifting - there are definitely lots of jokes. I think people of all ages will find it very funny."



Well Done, Mummy Penguin

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry,
Wed 3 December - Sat 3 January

Heartwarming humour and daring acrobatics are being promised by the producers of this 'wintery treat for everyone aged three and up'. The show's story follows the adventures of Mummy Penguin as she swims through icy waters, climbs perilous cliffs and tiptoes past some grumpy seals in search of a fishy dinner for her family.

The production is based on the same-named picture book by award-winning writer & illustrator Chris Haughton.



Santa's Christmas Party

The Core Theatre, Solihull,
Fri 19 - Wed 24 December

Dotty the Elf's decorations have gone missing, Dasher the Reindeer's party games are broken, and something has happened to Pompon the Penguin's Christmas music. Santa's Christmas Party is in definite danger of not happening - and it's all down to the mischief-making Jack Frost...

A 45-minute interactive family show for children aged between two and eight, Honalee Media's latest festive-season offering

comes complete with a host of much-loved seasonal songs and the chance for children to pick up a present from Father Christmas.

Santa's New Sleigh

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre,
Fri 12 & Sat 13 December

When Brad Pitt isn't busy playing pantomime Dames at Shrewsbury's Theatre Severn - this year he's starring at the venue in a sparkling production of Dick Whittington - he enjoys nothing more than replacing the panto wig with his playwright's hat and churning out fun family shows like Santa's New Sleigh.

With a 50-minute running time, the production features audience participation, singalong opportunities and a poster and sticker for every child. And as an extra-special treat, audience members can also have their photo taken with Santa himself - so don't forget to bring along your camera if you fancy taking an, er, 'elfie'...



Anansi The Spider

The Rep, Birmingham,
Thurs 4 December - Sun 11 January

A trickster spider from West African and Caribbean folklore, Anansi is weaving his web in Centenary Square this Christmas with

a show that enjoyed huge success in London a couple of years back.

The production has been created by the critically acclaimed Unicorn Theatre, features a selection of stories, and is suitable for children aged between four and eight.



The Gingerbread Boy

The Albany Theatre, Coventry,
Sat 20 - Wed 24 December

The Gingerbread Boy is the new kid on the children's-theatre block. Running for 50 minutes and suitable for youngsters aged two-plus, the show tells the story of a delightful friendship between young villager Blake and a remarkable boy who lives in the nearby Fairytale Forest and is made entirely from gingerbread. To further add to the production's appeal, there's a free gift for every child and a post-show opportunity to say a big hello to Father Christmas.





BIG BANG FUN!

Brainiac Live! promises to entertain and educate when it stops off at Birmingham Town Hall late month...

He may have presented and helped further develop the hit show Brainiac Live! for more than 15 years, but Andy Joyce is the first to admit he's no science boffin. But, he says, that is the whole point of the show, which is aimed less at child Einsteins and more at families who enjoy a good time.

Brainiac Live!, which first hit theatres in 2008 and comes to Birmingham's Town Hall late this month, is family fun with a few bangs, wallops and flashes thrown in.

"When we're developing the show," explains Andy, who's Brainiac Live!'s creative director, "what we're looking for is a 'Wow!' moment; something that either makes a noise, has a huge effect or creates a bang. It needs to have that pay-off, but it also has to be interesting.

"What I've learnt from doing the show, and now writing it, is that if it interested me and I thought it was fun, then I wanted to learn more about it. And not understanding the science myself almost made it easier for me to learn it and then deliver it in that simple way for children.

"We learn about something from the scientists and then put our little spin on it. So my role has been about being in labs, watching things go whizz bang bok, and then asking the scientists: how big can we go on stage in a way that's safe?"

Originally based on the Sky TV show, now owned by ITV Studios, and aimed largely at children aged between seven and 11, Brainiac Live! features a whole range of science experiments, explanations and thrills. Over the years, the team has also developed new storylines and effects.

And, says Andy, the show brings science alive not just for the audience but also for the team: "When I was at school, I went to my science classes because I had to. But when I started to write this and really got involved in the creative side, I started to learn with the audience. The show has brought me to a place where I now love science.

"The whole point of Brainiac Live! is to entertain the audience, and they will learn something along the way. I think people of all ages, even adults, will learn certain things in the show."

And that learning can spark a new fascination, says Andy: "Over the years, we've had many kids come up to us at the end of the show and say that they will enjoy science now; that it's fun. Hopefully, they can take that [new enthusiasm] back into school, and perhaps the next time they go into a science lesson it will help them enjoy it a bit more and understand it in a different way.

That's what we as performers take away from the show."

The idea for Brainiac Live! was conceived by family theatre producer Dan Colman more than 20 years ago. The show first went on tour in 2008 and has since travelled the globe. It will embark on its first full UK tour for 17 years in 2026.

"Brainiac Live! is really about creating a popular family entertainment science show," explains Dan. "It's entertainment and a theatrical piece first and foremost - but underpinned with good science. When we first created the show, that was a quite unusual approach [to take]. It was when the sort-of Brian Cox effect was beginning to kick in, so science was moving from that very niche market to a much more popular market.

"And, at the same time, something which I've been very keen on throughout my career is creating experiences where basically parents or carers are enjoying the fact that kids are learning something, and critically the kids tend to know more than the parents!"

As a father of four, Dan knows only too well how difficult it can be to create family-focused experiences which can entertain both children and adults alike. But he found the ideal blueprint in the television series: "Originally, we looked very closely at the format of the television show - that was the starting point. It was a comedy sketch show, and we've retained that idea, but those sketches can be on different themes or topics. So it might be electricity, it might be forces, it might be something else.

"And now, as we've progressed over the years, we've looked at introducing new material, looked at the topics and the themes that we think are interesting, or which form part of the school curriculum. It's a careful balance of going with what we know works while at the same time trying to keep it fresh and updated."

The show also has a very definite structure, explains Dan: "It's peaks and troughs. So alongside some of those spectacle moments, there are also quieter moments. Then there are bits that are quite intense with learning. And there are elements which are 100 per cent voiceover or onscreen content, and then moments when there's so much going on that you don't know where to look."

Although the team set out to produce a show that's entertaining, Dan believes its timing has coincided with, and even contributed to, a greater understanding of the importance of science: "I think audiences have developed

over the past 20 years, and there's a recognition that science is a fundamental part of everyday life. I like to think we've been a small part of that journey.

"Probably the most rewarding thing for us is that the show has continued to engage its audience throughout the decades, and that we've only seen that broaden and become more universal. It's fantastic to see audiences enjoy it as much today as when we started."

Unable to resist the obvious pun, Dan adds: "We've all been blown away by it. Who would've thought we would still be producing the same show after all these years? But we do it because it still works. It's very satisfying when you know a show is working. And when you talk to the actors, you hear how much they enjoy delivering it."

The format has proved to be a winner worldwide, from Dubai's Expo 2020 to Butlins Holiday Resorts, London's West End and P&O Cruises. And, in 2025, Brainiac Live! won the Olivier Award for Best Family Show.

"We're really proud of the breadth of different types of venue it's been to," says Dan. "So in 2008, we closed the show after a very successful run at Sydney Opera House, and about eight days later opened in Skegness! We like doing those different venues.

"We now have a full dual English/Arabic show, and this summer we were in the Middle East, which was fascinating. I think any good family entertainment show, if you get the show right, has a universal language, and kids engage globally with the same shows in the same way."

Dan is looking forward to bringing Brainiac Live! to Birmingham this month. It's a destination he knows well, having produced family shows including The Tweenies and Thomas The Tank Engine at the city's Utilita Arena for five years between 2000 and 2005.

"Birmingham is a really large, diverse and broad city, and that's important to us in the show. One of the things we're keen on is that Brainiac Live! plays to a popular audience.

"For me personally it's been 20 years since I was working in Birmingham, and it's great to bring a show back to this important city with an important audience."

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Brainiac Live! shows at Birmingham Town Hall on Sunday 28 & Monday 29 December. It then returns to the region in 2026, showing at the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre on Tuesday 31 March

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Light entertainment from around the region



James B Partridge: The Big Christmas Assembly

Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 12 December;
Birmingham Town Hall, Wed 17 December

From classroom teacher to viral TikTok sensation, James B Partridge has cornered the market in school-assembly nostalgia. Having made a big splash at Glastonbury this summer with his Primary School Bangers, show, he's now turning his attention to the festive season, surely the most wonderful time of the whole school year when you're under the age of 10. With James promising an evening of holiday favourites and throwback mashups 'that will have everyone singing', expect to head for home well and truly in the Christmas spirit.

Christmas With Anton Du Beke

Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, Mon 8 December;
Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Thurs 11 December;
Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Tues 16 December

An evening of cherished Christmas songs and captivating dances is Anton Du Beke's yuletide gift to his legion of Midlands-based fans this month. The much-loved Strictly Come Dancing judge is joining forces with critically acclaimed vocalist Lance Ellington, a 'dynamic' live band and a troupe of 'extraordinary' dancers to present a production in which he's promising to take audiences on 'a dazzling journey into a festive wonderland'. If his previous shows are anything to go by, this really should be a fab-u-lous experience!



Disney's The Muppet Christmas Carol

Symphony Hall, Mon 8 December

The experience of watching The Muppet Christmas Carol on a giant HD screen, while a live orchestra and choir perform its score, has certainly gone down well with festive-season audiences over the last few years. Made in 1992, the film stars Michael Caine as Ebenezer Scrooge, with Kermit the Frog playing his put-upon clerk Bob Cratchit. The Carol's author, Charles Dickens, is played by Gonzo, who narrates the story with a little help from Rizzo the Rat. Adding to the magic is Miss Piggy as Emily Cratchit, Fozzie Bear (Fozziewig) and Robin the Frog (Tiny Tim).



Dream Cabaret

Circus Mash, Kings Heath, Birmingham,
Fri 5 - Sun 7 December

Much-loved local comedian Barbara Nice and Doctors favourite Elisabeth Dermot Walsh lend their talents to Circus Mash's latest production, a high-energy blend of theatre, circus and cabaret which comes complete with after-show parties on the Friday and Saturday nights. All profits from the show will be invested into Circus Mash's Mash Academy, which builds bridges for young people and adult community members transitioning into circus careers.

Step Into Christmas

Malvern Theatres, Wed 3 December; Dudley Town Hall, Thurs 4 December; Birmingham Town Hall, Fri 5 December; William Aston Hall, Wrexham, Mon 15 December

This warm-hearted family spectacular is the ideal show for anybody who fancies spending a relaxing evening enjoying a jukebox-worth of festive-season hits. Expect all the favourites, from heartwarming ballads to upbeat Christmas anthems, in a show which, according to its producers, is bigger, brighter and more festive than ever before.



Bollywood Hungama

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry,
Sat 13 December

A night dedicated to celebrating the golden era of Bollywood music, this colourful show features soulful renditions of chart-topping classics originally brought to life by a host of popular artists, including Udit Narayan, Kumar Sanu, Sonu Nigam and Amit Kumar.



Sleigh Miserables

Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham,
Sat 6 & Sat 13 December

'The best musical theatre songs of all time meet the most-loved Christmas songs of all time in the ultimate Christmas cabaret!' It's a simple enough idea, but one that looks certain to leave audience members full of festive cheer. 'Which songs will we pick?' ask the show's producers. 'You'll have to come along to find out. Expect to laugh, cry, and be filled to the brim with Christmas exultation!'



RAINBOW CONNECTION

**Circus magic is on offer in a very different version of
The Wizard Of Oz this Christmas...**

Pantomime meets circus in the Land of Oz this Christmas, as World's Biggest Productions bring a suitably super-sized show to Birmingham's bp pulse LIVE arena. See Frank L Baum's beloved Wizard Of Oz characters as you've never seen them before, as Dorothy sets off on an adventure over the rainbow with a giant Tin Man and a Lion too cowardly to walk the high wire - all in search of the Wicked Wizard's Emerald Circus. Jordan Conway will be appearing as a delightfully silly and energetic incarnation of Dorothy's best friend, Scarecrow, in a production that promises to be an immersive experience for all the family. What's On caught up with Jordan to find out more...

Enjoy a jaw-dropping reimagining of a classic tale this Christmas, as The Wicked Wizard Of Oz: A Cirque Spectacular, by World's Biggest Productions, comes to Birmingham's bp pulse LIVE arena for two shows only.

Dorothy and her pals must journey over the rainbow and make their way to the Wicked Wizard's Emerald Circus - unless they're foiled in their endeavours by the gravity-defying Witch, who has plans to set up her own 'sinister circus' instead...

Based on the world-famous characters created by Frank L Baum in his children's book The Wonderful Wizard Of Oz, and featuring a spectacular pantomime-meets-circus twist, the production promises breathtaking acrobatics and side-splitting fun for the festive season.



Jordan Conway - fresh from playing Buddy in Elf The Musical - will appear as the hilarious Scarecrow.

"There's action everywhere you look!" Jordan explains. "We have some of the best aerialists in the world - the Flying Annas have recently won silver at the Russian International Circus Championships. The circus is woven in nicely with the narrative. Rather than going to the Emerald City, we arrive at the Wizard's Emerald Circus. There's so much talent on that stage."

The production's circus setting also means that the show features Dorothy, Scarecrow, Tin Man and Cowardly Lion as you've never seen them before - as Jordan explains: "Dorothy is played slightly older, and more knowing. The scarecrow is a bundle of energy rather than having the slightly mopey attitude he has in the film. The Lion is a Hungarian high-wire walker, and the Tin Man is an eight-foot transformer!"

The characters might have been ramped up a

notch, but Jordan maintains that there's a universality about Dorothy's adventure, giving it the power to reach anyone and everyone in the audience: "The story is timeless. At the heart of it, it's a message that adheres to every single human on earth. We often get envious of qualities and traits that people have, when in reality we are all capable of being anything we want to be. All of your dreams are there for the taking if you really want them enough. I think there's real beauty in this message, particularly for children."

Jordan's Scarecrow has been brought to life with clown-like silliness.

"He serves as the main point of energy and drive in the show; a man who wants a brain ends up being the person to come up with a plan to save the day."

He particularly enjoys sharing a stage with piano-playing funnyman and Britain's Got Talent semi-finalist Kev Orkian, who stars as the Wicked Wizard.

"We serve as a comedy double act, yet neither one of us is really the straight man! This is a very odd and different dynamic to most acts. We improvise at will and bounce off each other perfectly. He's a very talented man."

Once the performance begins, the Scarecrow is rushed off his straw-filled feet - meaning Jordan doesn't have time to stop and appreciate the acrobatic feats taking place on stage.

"The show's pace is so fast that every time I'm off-stage, I'm applying make-up or changing! But in rehearsals, I can see that the whole thing is a spectacle. The Flying Annas - they're mesmerising!"

Everything in The Wicked Wizard Of Oz is created at a larger scale than theatre audiences might be used to - no real surprise there, given that the company producing it is named World's Biggest Productions - but the show is carefully calculated to ensure that audiences all around the arena will have a fantastic and thrilling experience.

"We've tried to make it as immersive as possible. Handing out soft sponge rocks to the audience to kill the witch, flying inflatable cows for the twister... and we love taking the show to the arena-floor walkways."

Looking to the future, Jordan is already brewing up suggestions for boundary-pushing shows - with plans afoot for a new production.

"We're taking suggestions, if you have any! We have a very exciting new project hitting stages in 2027 - keep your eyes peeled! It's an odd suggestion, but I would love to stage The Mask. Or do an arena version of Alice In Wonderland that we did a few years back in Blackpool."



Like many performers, the end of the year is the busiest time in the calendar for Jordan - but he's looking forward to spending time with loved ones when he can: "Christmas is a time for family. I'm a 'mumma's boy' and proud of it - I'm so excited to get to see her. I have two days off from now to January the 4th - Christmas Day and New Year's Day. I'll think about relaxing in February... maybe!"

Given the importance he places on family, it's no surprise that Jordan is grateful for the fact that The Wicked Wizard Of Oz's company feels really tight-knit. Indeed, even after a slew of high-energy productions, the performers still enjoy spending time together.

"The pure buzz and friendliness of the cast makes you never want to go to bed! We re-live old stories - as many of the cast are long-term friends - and talk ideas, thinking about how to make each show even better. I don't think you ever truly wind down until you finish the tour. Then I find myself wanting to kickstart it all again a week later! I live for this job."

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The Wicked Wizard Of Oz shows at bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham, on Sunday 21 & Monday 22 December

BIRMINGHAM ROYAL PALLET



Director Carlos Acosta

Carlos Acosta's

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Birmingham Royal Ballet: The Nutcracker

Birmingham Hippodrome,
until Sat 13 December

A gift to the people of Birmingham - from Artistic Director Sir Peter Wright - when the company transferred to the city from London's Sadler's Wells, Birmingham Royal Ballet's (BRB) spectacular production of The Nutcracker is this year celebrating its 35th anniversary at the Hippodrome.

A lavish Christmas fantasy - underscored by the beloved music of Tchaikovsky - the story follows Clara's Christmas Eve adventure with her toy Nutcracker, which has come to life. "It's always very difficult for me to say 'this is the best Nutcracker in the world', because it's very subjective," says Paul James, chief executive of BRB. "And also, we're slightly biased! It's the scale of the storytelling, the scale of the sets, the growing tree, the snow goose, the snow, a full company of musicians [the Royal Ballet Symphonia] - it's all just mind-blowing!"



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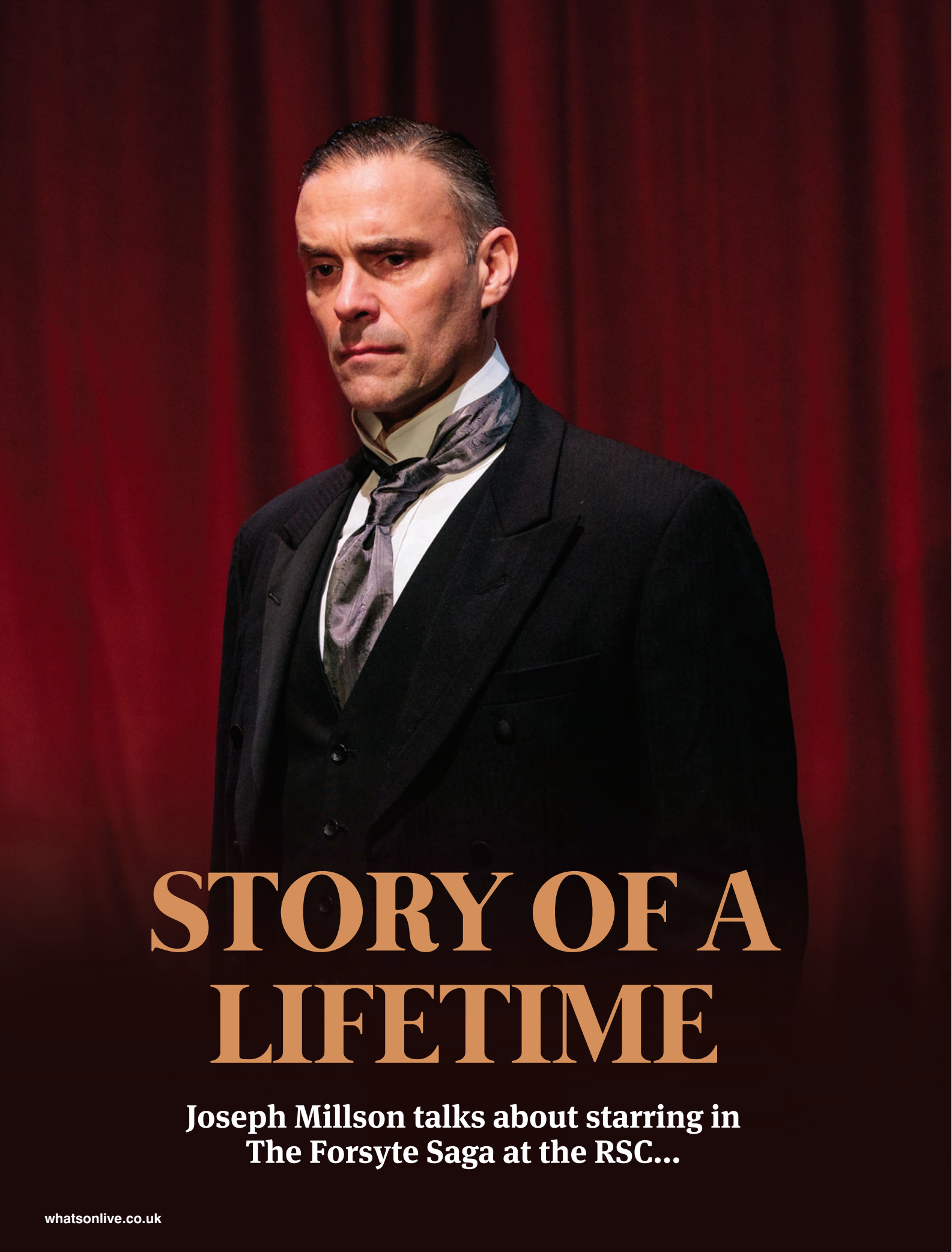
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STORY OF A LIFETIME

**Joseph Millson talks about starring in
The Forsyte Saga at the RSC...**

A series of books by John Galsworthy, and also known from various TV, film and radio adaptations, The Forsyte Saga follows the fortunes of the Forsyte family, illuminating the tensions between the generations - and the family's place in a shifting social landscape - across a 40-year period. The latest incarnation of the Saga is a critically acclaimed stage production, which premiered at London's Park Theatre in 2024 and is this month showing at the Royal Shakespeare Company's Swan Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon. The production is split into two parts and stars Joseph Millson as solicitor and 'man of property' Soames Forsyte. What's On caught up with him to find out more...

Telling the turbulent story of the Forsyte family, *The Forsyte Saga*, in its original form, is a series of three novels and two shorter pieces, written by John Galsworthy. The works contributed to him being awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1932, and were broadcast as infamous TV series in both 1967 and 2002. The story, now adapted for the stage in a two-part production, shows at the Royal Shakespeare Company's (RSC) Swan Theatre this month.

Joseph Millson takes the role of Soames Forsyte, who remains a central figure throughout - although in this adaptation, the first play is named after his wife, Irene, and the second after his daughter, Fleur.

"At the heart of this story is a man who really was obsessed with Irene - wanted this woman, wanted to make her happy and eventually got to marry her," says Joseph. "And to begin with, there was nothing awful - she had money, comfort, everything she could want, but she just could not love this man. Eventually - in this Victorian world where they treated women like 'breaking in' horses sometimes - there is a marital rape, and it's extraordinary and awful. It's not just about that, but also the ripples in a family - how things last through generations."

The plays follow the family from the end of the Victorian era until the 1920s, and Joseph is keen to explain that the production has a wider appeal than simply reaching those who are already familiar with the story.

"I think for people who love things like *Bridgerton* and *Downton Abbey*, this is the easiest sell on earth, because it is extraordinary writing, with very beautiful-looking Edwardian costumes."

And for Joseph, exploring the characters and their fates has helped to broaden his perspective: "I'm someone who was a working-class country bumpkin growing up, and I used to have what I would call reverse snobbery. So when I was around very posh people, I got twitchy. I was very uncomfortable and didn't want to be around them. I played this role before - we did the whole thing on *Radio Four* - 17 hours, in a very gentle, slow adaptation; it's a beautiful radio adaptation. So I spent years with this person and these stories. It really is the thing that made me stop having this reverse

snobbery, because human beings are just human beings."

Joseph is not the only person who has been involved with the story and characters for an extended length of time.

"The writers, Shaun McKenna and Lin Coghlan, who have done the [stage] adaptation, also did the radio adaptation I did 10 years ago. That's partly how I got my foot in the door with this. They did the really hard bit - What do you keep, what do you lose? What is the heart of the story? - and then our brilliant director, Josh, and the designer, Anna, they've done an amazing thing. The Royal Shakespeare Company can make incredible sets, but we began at a tiny fringe theatre in London last year, with a very small budget. They just had beautiful red carpet and a big red curtain at the back, four chairs, nine actors, and that's it. There is no other set. We create everything - with wonderful sound and lighting."

The result is an immersive and unusual theatrical experience.

"They call it 'event theatre', or 'box-set theatre', where you go and watch a matinee of Part One, go and have dinner and come back and watch Part Two. But they're both actually quite short - they're not long plays. I've sat through seven-hour things at the theatre before - it's nothing like that. Nobody wants it to end!"

The production has now transferred to the Swan Theatre - a venue which Joseph is surprisingly familiar with.

"I've done eight or nine things at the RSC, but by fluke, I've only ever performed in the Swan Theatre! I couldn't believe it when we were in there again. It's like it's my front room. I'm so comfortable there."

Part of the story's impact comes from its setting, bridging a tumultuous period of British history - which might hold significance in our modern era.

"Between the two plays, the First World War happens. You've then got these people after the war who actually are very nihilistic. Nothing matters anymore. [Soames'] daughter, Fleur, is just living for the moment. She says 'everything's comedy, it's all just comedy'. In this bonkers world we live in, we really need to cast a look back over our shoulder a bit, rather than just ploughing on

and on. It's reassuring to see how much madness the world has already survived."

In spite of the occasionally heavy subject matter, Joseph maintains that the production has its fair share of lighter moments as well.

"It's also very funny... It's very feelgood, especially the second play. These people are utter buffoons, and actually poor Soames Forsyte is. Yes, he does something horrendous - and they don't excuse it in the production - but you understand his world, and who his parents were and the pressure his father was putting on."

Although it seems counterintuitive, Joseph finds performing in a double bill less draining than a single play.

"As an actor doing theatre, two-show days are tiring when you do the same show twice, because it gets a bit *Groundhog Day*. The wonderful thing about this is that we almost always do one half of a story, go and have a sandwich, and then do the second half of a story. So you don't get that matinee fatigue. When we did it before, I found it the least tiring theatre I've ever done."

And he maintains that this is a production which might appeal to a broad audience - whether you're a regular theatre-goer or not: "As someone who wasn't a theatre starstruck kid - you couldn't drag me to the theatre until I was 18 - I think this is an amazing play to take a gamble on. I'd say this is a brilliant one to drag your not-so-keen-on-theatre partner to... Some people get scared of Shakespeare and the Royal Shakespeare Company. I've been working for the RSC for 20 years, and I think often the RSC's best work isn't Shakespeare! You can't get out of the mind of the actor on stage and the audience member that '[this is] Shakespeare at the Royal Shakespeare Company'. When the RSC do non-Shakespeare things, they're liberated of that pressure, and it's almost always their most fantastic work."

"This is, I think, about to be a legendary Royal Shakespeare Company production."

.....
The Forsyte Saga Part 1: Irene and Part 2: Fleur show at the RSC's Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, until Saturday 10 January

Film highlights in December...



Avatar: Fire And Ash

CERT 12a (192 mins)

With the voices of **Zoe Saldana**, **Kate Winslet**, **Edie Falco**, **Sigourney Weaver**, **Stephen Lang**, **Giovanni Ribisi** Directed by **James Cameron**

James Cameron helms the latest film in the Avatar franchise, taking audiences back to Pandora in what's being described as an immersive new adventure. And if you thought the last movie, *The Way Of Water*, was long, coming in at 192 minutes, then brace yourself for *Fire And Ash* - Cameron has revealed that "movie three will actually be a little bit longer than movie two". Shot simultaneously with *The Way Of Water*,

Fire And Ash has had its release date delayed on numerous occasions - filming was actually completed in late 2020, after more than three years of shooting.

"The Avatar movies reach people with positive messaging," Cameron told *apnews*. "Not just positive about the environment but positive from the standpoint of humanity, empathy, spirituality, our connection to each other."

"And they're beautiful. There's a kind of magnetic draw into the film. It almost feels like it's being pulled out of the audience's dreams and subconscious state."

Released Fri 19 December



Five Nights At Freddy's 2

CERT 15 (104 mins)

Starring **Josh Hutcherson**, **Elizabeth Lail**, **Piper Rubio**, **Matthew Lillard**, **Freddy Carter**, **Skeet Ulrich** Directed by **Emma Tammi**

The horror game phenomenon of the same name was first given the Hollywood movie treatment back in 2023, becoming the highest-grossing horror film of the year. No surprise, then, that there's now a sequel. One year has passed since the supernatural

nightmare at Freddy Fazbear's Pizza. The stories about what transpired there have been twisted into a campy local legend, inspiring the town's first-ever Fazfest. Former security guard Mike and police officer Vanessa have kept the truth from Mike's 11-year-old sister, Abby, concerning the fate of her animatronic friends.

But when Abby sneaks out to reconnect with Freddy, Bonnie, Chica and Foxy, a terrifying series of events is set in motion, revealing dark secrets about the true origin of Freddy's, and unleashing a long-forgotten horror that's been hidden away for decades...

Expectations are high for this follow-up cinematic offering, and well they might be - the first film opened to a record-shattering \$80million and went on to earn almost \$300million at the worldwide box office.

Released Fri 5 December

Eternity CERT 15 (112 mins)

Starring **Miles Teller**, **Elizabeth Olsen**, **Callum Turner**, **Da'Vine Joy Randolph**, **John Early**, **Christie Burke** Directed by **David Freyne**

As tricky decisions go, Joan's is a real humdinger. Having passed away not long after her husband of 65 years, she finds herself in the afterlife faced with a truly mind-boggling conundrum: with whom should she spend eternity? The obvious choice is Larry, the man she's spent most of her life on Earth with. Problem is, there's also Luke, her first love, who died young and has spent 67 years in afterlife limbo waiting for her to arrive...

Released Fri 5 December



Ella McCay CERT tbc (120 mins)

Starring **Emma Mackey**, **Jamie Lee Curtis**, **Jack Lowden**, **Kumail Nanjiani**, **Ayo Edebiri**, **Woody Harrelson** Directed by **James L Brooks**

Fifteen years after helming his last feature film, *Terms Of Endearment* director James L Brooks returns to the fray with this comedy about an idealistic young woman who finds that her preparations to become governor are seriously compromised by events in her personal life.

"I came from a family that wasn't roses and warm bread," Brooks told *The Hollywood Reporter*, "and so I wanted [the film] to be about one errant parent and getting over the loss of a parent. I never want to do anything that's not a comedy, and I always want to represent life. The picture is about how to not make government service and political office something any sane person would flee from."

Released Fri 12 December



Anaconda CERT 12a

Starring **Paul Rudd, Jack Black, Thandiwe Newton, Steve Zahn, Daniela Melchior, Ione Skye** Directed by **Tom Gormican**

Slithering into cinemas on Christmas Eve and inspired by the 1997 film of the same name starring Jennifer Lopez, Jon Voight, Owen Wilson and Ice Cube, *Anaconda* brings together two major Hollywood names in Jack Black and Paul Rudd, who play the characters of lifelong pals Doug and Griff, respectively.

The two friends have always dreamed of remaking their all-time favourite movie: the aforementioned *Anaconda*. When a midlife crisis pushes them into finally going for it, they head deep into the Amazon jungle to start filming, only to find themselves in serious peril when an actual giant anaconda appears...

Released Wed 24 December



The Spongebob Movie: Search For Squarepants

CERT U (96 mins)

With the voices of **Tom Kenny, Bill Fagerbakke, Regina Hall, Clancy Brown, Mark Hamill, Sherry Cola** Directed by **Derek Drymon**

Nickleodeon TV favourite *SpongeBob* and his Bikini Bottom friends here set sail in their biggest cinematic adventure yet...

Desperate to be a big guy, *SpongeBob* is determined to prove his bravery to Mr Krabs by following *The Flying Dutchman* - a mysterious and swashbuckling ghost pirate - on a seafaring adventure that takes him to the deepest depths of the ocean, 'where no *Sponge* has gone before'...

This is the fourth *SpongeBob* film and will shift between animation and live-action. "There are big cinematic moments in it, which are nice," director Derek Drymon told Collider. "In the long form, you can do things that are bigger than you can do in a short. Still, we're taking moments; taking time for *SpongeBob* and Patrick to do their silly stuff within this big adventure."

Released Fri 26 December



The Housemaid

CERT 15 (131 mins)

Starring **Sydney Sweeney, Amanda Seyfried, Brandon Sklenar, Elizabeth Perkins, Michele Morrone, Megan Ferguson** Directed by **Paul Feig**

Director Paul Feig has built his reputation around helming hit comedies such as *Bridesmaids* and *The Heat*, but he's striking an altogether different tone with latest offering *The Housemaid*.

The film stars Sydney Sweeney as Millie Calloway, a troubled young woman with a criminal past, whose fortunes seem to be on the up when she gets a job as a live-in maid for a picture-perfect Long Island family. But it isn't long before her new situation starts ringing some real alarm bells for Millie...

"She's in something way bigger than what she thought she was prepared for," Sweeney explained to CinemaCon.

"She's kind of like the window into the story for the audience. I always felt I was along for the ride the same way the audience is."

Based on Freida McFadden's acclaimed novel of the same name, the film has gone down a real treat with the author...

"I was lucky enough to get to watch a sneak preview of *The Housemaid* movie, and I absolutely loved it!" McFadden posted on Instagram. "The second it was over, I turned to my husband in the theatre and said, 'Omg, I think it was better than the book!' And he said, 'Yeah!'"

Released Fri 26 December

Marty Supreme CERT tbc (149 mins)

Starring **Timothée Chalamet, Gwyneth Paltrow, Odessa A'zion, Kevin O'Leary, Tyler the Creator, Sandra Bernhard** Directed by **Josh Safdie**

If you've never heard of Marty Reisman, you're not alone by any means...

An American misfit with an oversized dream, Marty became an award-winning table-tennis player, winning the US Men's singles title in both 1958 and 1960 and then being crowned US hardbat champion in 1997.

Josh Safdie's new film isn't a biopic of Reisman - the lead character's name is Marty Mauser - but does include some of his biographical details as a homage to his achievements. Set in 1952, the movie follows Mauser's journey as he sets about the

challenge of becoming world champion in a sport which the people around him simply don't take seriously.

Marty Supreme premiered to great critical acclaim at the New York Film Festival in October, with many critics hailing it one of the best movies of 2025.

Released Fri 26 December



Image: Maurice Denis' Portrait of Arthur Huc (1892). Oil on Millboard. The Henry Barber Trust at The Barber Institute of Fine Arts



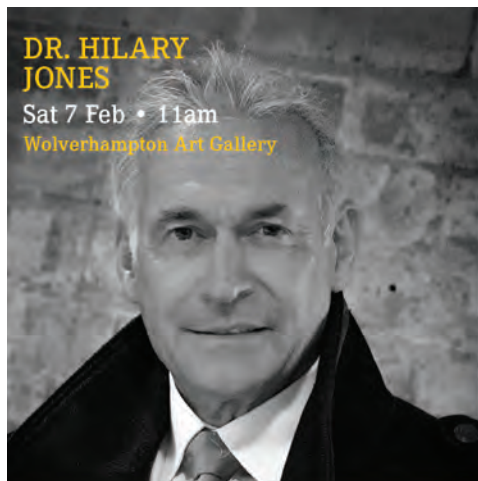
Modern Masterpieces: Paintings From The Barber Institute of Fine Arts

Compton Verney, Warwickshire, until Sunday 6 September 2026

As its subtitle makes clear, the artworks on display in Modern Masterpieces are loaned from Barber Institute of Fine Arts. Presented while the venue undergoes major redevelopment, the exhibition is a rare opportunity for Warwickshire's art-loving community to check out and enjoy six treasures usually seen in Birmingham. The intimate display of exceptional paintings by major modern artists - including Vincent van Gogh, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Édouard Vuillard and Pierre Bonnard - provide timeless reflections on human experience, domestic intimacy and artistic mastery at the turn of the 20th century. The artworks will remain on display at Compton Verney until next autumn.

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Studio Prints: Celebrating The Balakjian Collection

New Art Gallery, Walsall, until Sun 12 April

The archive of London-based Studio Prints is the source of the artwork featured in this new exhibition, which includes prints by Lucian Freud and other 20th-century British greats. Studio Prints was established by the artist Dorothea Wight and her husband, Marc Balakjian, in the late 1960s, going on to produce prints for world-renowned British artists for the following 40 years.

Commenting on the exhibition, the New Art Gallery's director, Stephen Snoddy, said: "It's wonderful to continue to promote the legacy of Studio Prints to new generations. "These fantastic examples of world-class printmaking amplify our collection of modern British art, and are closely attuned to our Garman Ryan Collection."



Takuro Kuwata, Tea Bowl Punk

The Mead Gallery, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, until Sun 15 March

Traditional Japanese pottery techniques are fused with experimental sculptural processes in the work of Takuro Kuwata. Inspired by the boldness of American Pop Art, the Hiroshima-born artist produces works which are not only playful and provocative but also unmistakably contemporary. Indeed, his signature use of vivid glazes, distorted silhouettes and explosive textures has effectively redefined the boundaries of contemporary ceramics...

Grayson Perry: The Annunciation Of The Virgin Deal

Wolverhampton Art Gallery, until Sun 12 April

Grayson Perry's acclaimed artwork *The Annunciation Of The Virgin Deal* is part of the Turner Prize-winning artist's *The Vanity Of Small Differences* series. A flamboyant and funny creation, the artwork is a four-metre-long tapestry that tells the story of Tim Rakewell, a fictional 21st-century software developer who climbs the social and economic ladder from his working-class roots. The work will be shown in Wolverhampton alongside another of Grayson's creations: *Hold Your Beliefs Lightly*.



Sunsets, Food And Friendship

The Exchange, Centenary Square, Birmingham, until Sun 22 February

The importance of culture, heritage and identity in shaping a sense of self and belonging lies at the heart of *Sunsets, Food And Friendship*, an exhibition of young people's photography which saw Ikon partner three photographers with students at Joseph Chamberlain College, Pinc College and Selly Park Girls School. The artists' residencies formed part of an initiative which is being led by University of Birmingham's Reza Gholami.

"We commissioned this project to address questions relating to diversity and belonging in schools," says Reza. "Our aim has been to work directly with local communities, including students themselves, to develop innovative educational practices in which the arts play a central role."

100 Years, 60 Designers & 1 Future

The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, until Sun 7 December

Artworks donated by 60 of the UK's leading artists, architects, designers, musicians and creative polymaths have been the starting point for this exhibition - a specially commissioned collection of plates hand-decorated by potters working for local company 1882 Ltd.

Stories That Made Us

Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry, until Mon 25 May

This 'dynamic' new exhibition showcases the lived experiences of a Coventry-based South Asian family between the years 1968 and 2010, telling a story of migration, activism, and cultural identity.

The exhibition, part-drawn from curator & artist Hardish Virk's personal archive, features film, photographs, magazines, books, posters, vinyl records, cassettes and immersive design.



Image: Sachin K Sharma in 'The Living Room' by Manjinder Virk, Riverbird Films

Inside The Playroom

Stryx Gallery, Digbeth, Birmingham, until Sat 31 January

This imaginative group show sees Digbeth's Stryx Gallery transformed into a colourful playroom featuring more than 30 child-friendly works produced by 11 local artists. All the art on show is available to purchase, with many of the pieces framed and ready to hang.



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Visit Santa: Vintage Sleigh Ride Experience

Coventry Transport Museum,
until Tues 23 December

Coventry Transport Museum's Vintage Sleigh Ride Experience makes a welcome return this Christmas.

Visitors will wander through snowy scenes, board a beautifully restored sleigh pulled by reindeer, write a Christmas wish-list, meet Santa in his grotto, and collect a bespoke gift from one of his elves.

Tickets also include same-day museum admission, allowing families to explore the transport collection either before or after their sleigh ride.



Winter Funland NEC, Birmingham, Sat 6 December - Sat 3 January

Described as a 'full-on festive extravaganza', Winter Funland is home to the UK's largest indoor Christmas funfair, with all of the show's rides and attractions being included in the ticket price.

Alongside a whole host of funfair favourites -

think dodgems and waltzers - the event also features Birmingham's largest ice rink and a special Christmas circus, complete with clowns, acrobats, and the 'jaw dropping' Globe of Steel.

A Family Christmas at Hartlebury Castle

Hartlebury Castle, Worcester,
Sat 6 & Sun 7 December

Returning to Hartlebury Castle across the first weekend of the month, A Family Christmas is this year jam-packed with more festivities than ever.

With seasonal music and festive decorations helping to set the scene - and Mother Christmas on hand to greet families - visitors can get stuck into all manner of Christmassy craft fun, including biscuit decorating and balloon modelling.

There's also the opportunity for children to write that all-important letter to Father Christmas.



THE POLAR EXPRESS™ Train Ride

Departing from Birmingham Moor Street Station, until Tues 23 December

Vintage Trains' POLAR EXPRESS™ Train Ride has returned to Birmingham! An immersive, family-orientated experience, the event sees the much-loved 2004 film theatrically recreated onboard heritage

carriages hauled by a real steam locomotive. Each passenger will receive a golden ticket, a hot chocolate and a cookie to enjoy - and a bell that only rings 'for those who believe', handed out by Father Christmas himself.



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Lisa Lindqvist, *Moltar*, 2013. Courtesy of the artist. Photo by Brendan Buesnal.



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Festive events previews from around the region



Winter Wonderland Stoke

Lichfield Street, Stoke-on-Trent, until Sun 4 January

Winter Wonderland Stoke has returned for its 10th year of festive fun, once again transforming Stoke-on-Trent's city centre into a glittering world of seasonal cheer. Visitors can glide across the ice rink, check out rides and fairground attractions, and sample an array of seasonal food & drink.

In the true spirit of Christmas giving, admission to the event is free. Popular attractions such as ice skating fill up quickly, though, so visitors are encouraged to book ahead to guarantee their space. Visit the website winterwonderlandstoke.com in order to do so.



Festive Gardens

Chelsea & Maxell Gardens, Telford Town Park, Thurs 11 - Sun 14 & Fri 19 - Sun 21 December

Take the kids on a trip to the North Pole this Christmas, as sparkling lights, shimmering displays and enchanting festive projections transform Telford Town Park's Chelsea & Maxell Gardens into Santa Claus' snowy homeland. Visitors can follow a trail and discover all

manner of festive-season delights along the way, from twinkling ice caverns and candy cane forests to heartwarming Christmas scenes brought to life with music and light. Plus... keep 'em peeled for cheeky elves and frosty friends! And who knows, you may even catch a glimpse of Santa himself...

Christmas Grotto and Festive Fun at the Lock-Up

West Midlands Police Museum, Birmingham, Sat 13 & Sun 14 and Sat 20 December

The lock-up at West Midlands Police Museum is being given a festive makeover this month. Visitors can follow a family-friendly trail and discover what the naughty elves have been up to, take part in a Christmas craft activity, enjoy a free hot chocolate, and meet Santa in his grotto to receive a special gift.



Christmas rides at the Severn Valley Railway

Severn Valley Railway, Nr Kidderminster, selected dates until Wed 24 December

The Severn Valley Railway is offering two festive-themed attractions to enjoy in the run-up to Christmas...

Presented in collaboration with Wise Owl Theatre Company, The Elf Express departs from Bridgnorth station, with a cast of mischievous and merry elves entertaining families onboard the steam-hauled train... Santa's Steam Special, meanwhile, starts out from Kidderminster, whisking passengers away to Arley for The Great Christmas Train Rescue, a show featuring Santa, Polly the Polar Bear and a scheming villain called Victor Von Sneeze...

The Steam Specials will operate as 'relaxed' services on selected dates.



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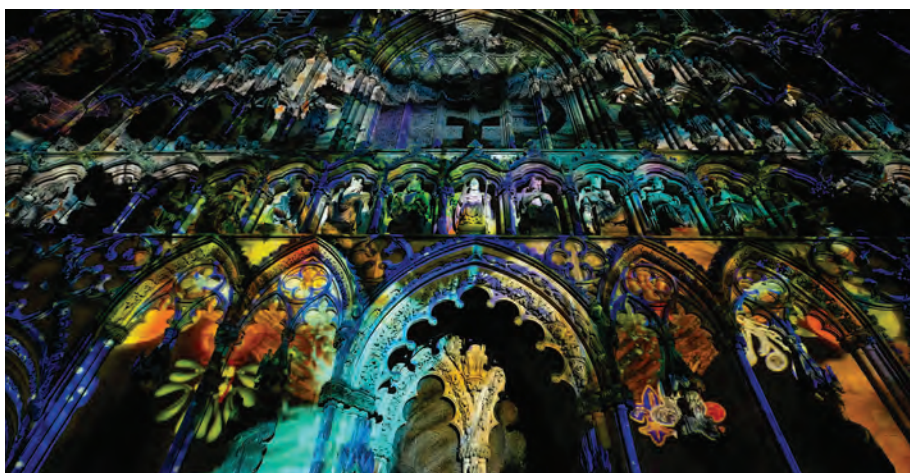


Christmas fun at Thinktank

Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum, throughout December

The festive magic continues at Thinktank this month, with little ones invited into the museum's grotto to enjoy a heartwarming Christmas story read by Santa himself. Each child will then get to meet Santa personally and receive a special gift from him, with parents able to take a photo as a keepsake of the day.

Other festive-season attractions at the venue include the chance to get hands-on with a craft activity in Santa's workshop. There's also a 'cinema under the stars' experience to enjoy in the planetarium on Friday the 12th & Saturday the 13th, with Elf, Gremlins and It's A Wonderful Life among the films being screened across the two days.



Christmas Light Show: A Robin's Reward

Lichfield Cathedral, Mon 15 - Sun 21 December

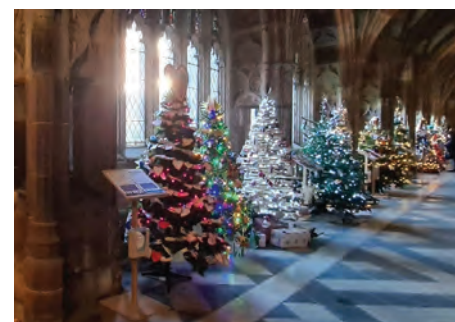
Lichfield Cathedral's Close will once again be transformed into a glowing winter spectacle mid-month, courtesy of acclaimed animation team Illuminos. The 2025 Christmas light show - The Robin's Reward - follows the journey of one little robin through a dazzling display of light and sound.

Meanwhile, inside the cathedral, guests are invited to 'pause, reflect and soak-in the peaceful beauty of the season'. They can also enjoy favourite Christmas carols sung by guest choirs, check out the Crib and the ever-popular Christmas Tree Festival, and take advantage of after-hours access to the gift shop.

Christmas Tree Festival

Worcester Cathedral,
Thurs 4 December - Tues 6 January

Worcester Cathedral's Christmas Tree Festival is bigger than ever this year, with 100 additional trees - decorated by charities, schools, businesses and community groups - featuring in the display. New for 2025 - and located in the ancient Chapter House - are 60 trees dedicated by members of the general public 'in memory of a loved one, in celebration of someone, or simply to say thank you'.



Spectacle Of Light

Sudeley Castle, Cheltenham,
until Tues 30 December

Presented in the enchanting grounds of Sudeley Castle, Spectacle Of Light celebrates its 10th-anniversary year with a King Arthur-themed trail through the myths and mysteries of Camelot. Attractions include an iconic glowing-sword installation, an enchanted woodland, magical beasts, and 'lots of surprises around every corner'.

Christmas Through Time

Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove,
Sat 6 & Sun 7 Dec & Sat 13 & Sun 14
December

Visitors to Avoncroft Museum's Christmas Through Time event not only discover how the festive season has been celebrated throughout the ages, they also get to see the venue's historic homes imaginatively festooned with traditional decorations. Children can take part in a special Christmas Stocking Trail on both weekends, while across the weekend of the 13th & 14th, talented reenactors will recreate the sights and sounds of a medieval Christmas. Other attractions during the second weekend include a carol service in the Mission Church with singing group Stream of Sounds, and a performance by local musical group Bromsgrove Recorder Consort (on Saturday the 13th only).



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thelist

Your week-
by-week
listings guide
December 2025



Robin Hood at Birmingham Hippodrome from Sat 20 December to Sun 1 February

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

What's On

Mon 1 - Sun 7 December



Anansi The Spider - The Rep
**Thurs 4 December -
Sun 11 January**

Mon 8 - Sun 14 December



Barbara Nice's Christmas
Cracker - Midlands Arts Centre
Sun 14 December

Mon 15 - Sun 21 December



OOTS: A Christmas Carol -
Birmingham Town Hall
Mon 15 December

Mon 22 - Wed 31 December



Horrible Histories: Horrible
Christmas - Symphony Hall
Tues 23 December

VISUAL ARTS IN THE MIDLANDS

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

CHRISTOPHER SAMUEL: WATCH US LEAD Through 9 newly recorded interviews, Watch Us Lead highlights the experiences of disabled people of colour in Birmingham, combining these stories with stained glass and drawings by the artist.

OZZY OSBOURNE: WORKING CLASS HERO A celebration of the solo achievements and global awards of rock icon Ozzy Osbourne, and the album art of the original Black Sabbath line-up to coincide with their historic homecoming concert, until Sun 18 January

Compton Verney, Warwickshire

THE SHELTER OF STORIES Groundbreaking exhibition exploring the art of storytelling, its close relationship with the sense of home and belonging and its vital role in times of upheaval and displacement, until Sun 22 February

COMMODITIES: SCULPTURE AND CERAMICS BY RENEE SO Hong Kong-born artist Renee So creates darkly playful ceramic sculptures, exploring how perceptions of history can be distorted, re-fashioned and changed, until Sun 8 March

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

Ikon Gallery, Birmingham

DONALD LOCKE: RESISTANT FORMS An exploration of the Guyanese-British artist's work across five decades, including early ceramics, mixed media sculptures and large-scale paintings, until Sun 22 February

Midlands Arts Centre, Edgbaston, Birmingham

MADE AT MAC: CONNECTED BY THREAD A showcase of textile works by learners from MAC's creative courses, until Sun 25 January

HARDEEP PANDHAL: SAAG AND FISH FINGERS Pandhal's major mid-career exhibition, presented in his hometown of Birmingham, creating mythical narratives that explore the complexities of contemporary culture, until Sun 1 February

BIRDLAND TRAIL A free, fun family trail for the autumn and winter season. Birmingham-based artists Juneau Projects have collaborated with local community members to create a trail of ceramic birds inspired by those found in Cannon Hill Park, until Sun 22 February

HOSPITAL ROOMS: BALANCING ACTS A special project by arts and mental health charity Hospital Rooms, exploring how artists, young people and NHS staff have worked together to re-imagine what a mental health hospital can look and feel like, until Sun 26 April

New Art Gallery, Walsall

HANNAH MAYBANK: UN-STILL With her practice having been heavily influenced by access to the Garman Ryan Collection, Hannah has created a brand-new painting featuring chrysanthemum flowers, as a gift for the Gallery's 25th birthday, until Sun 17 May

RBSA Gallery, Birmingham

RBSA ANNUAL EXHIBITION 2025 Yearly showcase of works, with a broad spectrum of practices represented, until Sat 3 January

Wolverhampton Art Gallery

WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR World-renowned exhibition, on loan from the Natural History Museum in London, featuring exceptional images which capture animal behaviour, species and the breath-taking diversity of the natural world, until Sun 25 January

Elsewhere:

PHOTOGRAPHS: STEVE GULLICK Solo show by the renowned music photographer. The exhibition traces the evolution of Gullick's career and highlights his distinctive approach to portraiture, until Sat 6 Dec, Centrala, Digbeth

THE FORGOTTEN GENERATIONS: LEST WE FORGET EXHIBITION Discover the untold stories of African and Caribbean Royal Air Force (RAF) veterans from the West Midlands, until Fri 12 Dec, Library of Birmingham

UOB 125: THROUGH THE ARCHIVES In celebration of the University of Birmingham's anniversary, this exhibition features photographs of the campus, staff and students over the past 125 years, until Wed 31 Dec, University of Birmingham Library

YOU SHOULD GO BACK Collaborative exhibition, by Prashant Kansara and Kushag Patel, reflecting upon 'the resurgence of the far-right in Britain, the emotional impacts of its legacy of division, and the urgent need for resistance', until Sat 20 Dec, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry

WITCHES, GHOSTS AND SPIRITS: A SHAKESPEARE EXHIBITION See how Shakespeare used the supernatural to tell powerful stories, until Tues 30 June, Library of Birmingham



Everything Everything - O2 Academy

Gigs

CHRIS CLEVERLEY & FRIENDS Mon 1 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

BANDA BRASILEIRA Mon 1 Dec, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

THEA GILMORE Mon 1 - Tues 2 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

JESCA HOOP Tues 2 Dec, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

SUPALUNG Tues 2 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

ACM SOUNDS Tues 2 Dec, Actress & Bishop, Ludgate Hill

ERIN LECOUNT Tues 2 Dec, O2 Institute, Digbeth

JESS AND THE BANDITS Tues 2 Dec, The Victoria, John Bright St

CLIFF RICHARD Tues 2 Dec, Symphony Hall, Centenary Square

NANNA RADLEYS Tues 2 - Wed 3 Dec, The Jam House, Jewellery Qtr

BLUEWALK + JAZZCAT + THE SPEAKERS Wed 3 Dec, Hare & Hounds,

Kings Heath

ELECTRIC SIX + ENJOYABLE LISTENS Wed 3 Dec, O2 Academy

FOUND IN A FIELD + ALVECHURCH MEN + RAGGED OAK Wed 3 Dec, Red Lion Folk Club, Bromsgrove

STEREOPHONICS Wed 3 Dec, Utilita Arena Birmingham

NEW ORLEANS HOT SHOTS Wed 3 Dec, Boldmere Sports and Social Club, Sutton Coldfield

THE MEN THEY COULDN'T HANG Thurs 4 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

KATIE & THE BAD SIGN Thurs 4 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

ATMOS BLOOM Thurs 4 Dec, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

BOB VYLAN Thurs 4 Dec, O2 Institute, Digbeth

FYFE DANGERFIELD Thurs 4 Dec, Centrala, Digbeth

SWEET + BOBBIE DAZZLE Thurs 4 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

PAUL DUNMALL INVITES

NIKKI YEOW Thurs 4 Dec, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

D-BLOCK EUROPE Thurs 4 Dec, bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham

MERRY HELL Thurs 4 Dec, Catshill Club, Bromsgrove

ELLE-J WALTERS BAND Thurs 4 - Sat 6 Dec, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

EROTIC SECRETS OF POMPEII + KONTOURS Fri 5 Dec, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

CHARLOTTE YOUNG Fri 5 Dec, Actress & Bishop, Ludgate Hill

THE HEELS Fri 5 Dec, The Dark Horse, Moseley

THE SHEATLES Fri 5 Dec, The Night Owl, Moseley

WINDOW KID Fri 5 Dec, O2 Institute, Digbeth

HARLEYMOON KEMP Fri 5 Dec, O2 Institute, Digbeth

THE SLOW READERS CLUB Fri 5 Dec, O2 Institute, Digbeth

EVERYTHING EVERYTHING Fri 5 Dec, O2 Academy

VICKY JACKSON AS PINK Fri 5 Dec, O2 Academy

THE CORE REGGAE BAND Fri 5 Dec, O2 Academy

BASIL HODGE Fri 5 Dec, 1000 Trades, Jewellery Quarter

NIALL MCNAMEE Fri 5 Dec, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

SLEEP BROKEN - SLEEP TOKEN TRIBUTE Fri 5 Dec, The Flapper,



Harleymoon Kemp - O2 Institute, Digbeth

Kingston Row

DIDDY SWEG BIG BAND

Fri 5 Dec, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall, Centenary Square

DREW BALDRIDGE Fri 5 Dec, Mama Roux's, Digbeth

SUPERSONIC QUEEN Fri 5 Dec, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

ED SHEERAN Fri 5 Dec, Coventry Building Society Arena

MARK STANWAY'S KINGDOM OF MADNESS Fri 5 Dec, Wolverhampton Arts Centre

THE AMY'S WINEHOUSE BAND Fri 5 Dec, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

NO LIMIT Fri 5 Dec, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

SYNTH Sat 6 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

NO PROOF Sat 6 Dec, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

JAKE HENRY Sat 6 Dec, Actress & Bishop, Ludgate Hill

JULIA WOLF Sat 6 Dec, O2 Institute, Digbeth



INSPIRAL CARPETS Sat 6 Dec, O2 Institute, Digbeth

IST IST + YAANG Sat 6 Dec, O2 Academy

ROXY MAGIC Sat 6 Dec, O2 Academy

RACHEL MAYFIELD GROUP + ASTRALS Sat 6 Dec, Tower of Song, Pershore Road

GRUBSON Sat 6 Dec,

Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

CALL ME AMOUR + FORT HOPE + GOOD INTENT Sat 6 Dec, The Asylum, Hampton Street

LAST HOUNDS Sat 6 Dec, The Flapper, Cambrian Wharf

THE WOMBATS Sat 6 Dec, bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham

A WINTER UNION Sat 6 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Cannon Hill Park



OASIS Sat 6 Dec, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

KD AND THE DOGS Sat 6 Dec, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

BONFIRE RADICALS UNPLUGGED Sun 7 Dec, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

HEJIRA: CELEBRATING JONI MITCHELL Sun 7 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

ISABEL LAROSA + SNOW WIFE + THOMAS LAROSA Sun 7 Dec, O2 Institute, Digbeth

THE GARRY ALLCOCK JAZZ TRIO FT SUZI WOODS Sun 7 Dec,

Tower of Song, Pershore Road

DAN WHITEHOUSE + JASMINE GARDOSI Sun 7 Dec, Justham Family Room & Jane How Room, Symphony Hall, Centenary Square

MUMFORD & SONS + SIERRA FERRELL Sun 7 Dec, Utilita Arena Birmingham



Dan Whitehouse & Jasmine Gardosi - Symphony Hall

Classical Music

LUNCHTIME EARLY MUSIC

CONCERT Featuring Elizabeth McCall (recorder), William Sherratt (baroque oboe), Aidan Hopkins (baroque cello) & Martin Perkins (harpsichord). Programme includes works by Bach, Corelli & Telemann, Mon 1 Dec, Recital Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

RBC SAXOPHONE ENSEMBLE:

BIEGAI IN BRUM Featuring Laefer Quartet (saxophones) & Charles Matthews (piano). Programme also includes works by Nyman, Glass & Morgenstern, Tues 2 Dec, The Bradshaw Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

EX CATHEDRA: CHRISTMAS MUSIC

BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring Jeffrey Skidmore (conductor). Programme includes works by Warlock, Britten, Gibbons & more..., Tues 2 Dec, St John's Church, Hagley

CONCERTO BUDAPEST SYMPHONY

ORCHESTRA Featuring András Keller (conductor) & Paul Lewis (piano). Programme includes works by Liszt, Beethoven, Shostakovich & Tchaikovsky, Tues 2 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

CONCERTO BUDAPEST SYMPHONY

ORCHESTRA PLAY BEETHOVEN 5 Featuring András Keller (conductor) & Paul Lewis (piano). Programme includes works by Beethoven, Shostakovich & Liszt, Wed 3 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

CBSO: BARTÓK & RAVEL Featuring Pierre Bleuse (conductor) & Ryan Wang (piano). The programme, which also includes Liszt's Piano Concerto No. 1, will be preceded by a Pre-Concert performance by Royal Birmingham

Conservatoire musicians, Thurs 4 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

PAUL CARR & DAVID SAINT ORGAN RECITAL Thurs 4 Dec, St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham

VOICES & VISIONS Featuring performers from the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire & the Selly Park Singers. Programme includes works by Vivaldi, Finzi, Tavener & more..., Thurs 4 Dec, The Birmingham & Midland Institute

THE PICCADILLY SINFONIA: VIVALDI FOUR SEASONS AT CHRISTMAS Featuring Andrew Harvey (violin). Programme also includes works by

Pachelbel & Corelli, Thurs 4 Dec, Lichfield Cathedral

CBSO & CITY OF BIRMINGHAM CHOIR: HANDEL'S MESSIAH

Featuring Adrian Lucas (conductor), Miriam Allan (soprano), Tom Lilburn (countertenor), Simon Wall (tenor) & Alex Ashworth (bass), Fri 5 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

RBC OUT AND ABOUT: QUINTUS

BRASS QUINTET Featuring George Sharman & Corey Kohut (trumpets), Eleanor Dierckx (french horn), Amber Martyniak (trombone) & Inioluwa Kuti (tuba), Fri 5 Dec, The Alexandra Theatre

RBC BRASS SHOWCASE

Featuring Ed Jones & Ian Porthouse (conductors). Programme includes works by Lager, Larson, Bernstein & more..., Fri 5 Dec, The Bradshaw Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

RBC VOXBOX: TELL ME THE TRUTH

ABOUT LOVE Featuring Students from the Vocal Department. Programme includes works by Britten, Fri 5 Dec, Recital Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

EX CATHEDRA: CHRISTMAS MUSIC

BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring Jeffrey Skidmore (conductor). Programme includes works by Warlock, Britten, Gibbons & more..., Fri 5 Dec, Lichfield Cathedral

CBSO NOTELETS: THE

NUTCRACKER Featuring Georgia Hannant & Matthew Hardy (presenters). Tchaikovsky's The Nutcracker comes to life in a concert recommended for toddlers and young children, Fri 5 - Sat 6 Dec, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

BRITISH POLICE SYMPHONY

ORCHESTRA: PROMS NIGHT SPECTACULAR Featuring Dr Richard Jenkinson (conductor), Sat 6 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham



CATHEDRAL CHOIR CONCERT: A

CEREMONY OF CAROLS Featuring David Hardie (conductor), Ashley Wagner (organ) & Rita Schindler (harp). Programme includes festive favourites and Britten's Ceremony of Carols, Sat 6 Dec, St Philip's Cathedral, Birmingham

HANDEL'S MESSIAH - COME AND SING!

Featuring David Wynne (conductor) & the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire Orchestral & Vocal students. Open to singers of all abilities, Sat 6 Dec, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

RBC OUT AND ABOUT: 4TUNE

TRUMPET QUARTET Featuring Francis Oldham, Matthew Osborne, Alexander Tucker & Ted James (trumpets), Sat 6 Dec, Library of Birmingham

BIRMINGHAM GAY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA AT THE BALLROOM

Featuring Neavan Lobban (conductor). Programme includes works by Piazzolla, Bernstein, J. Strauss & more..., Sat 6 Dec, The Church at Carrs Lane, Birmingham

THE MIDLAND SINFONIA: GATEWAY

TO WINTER Programme includes works by Bach, The Beatles, G Jacob & Rimsky-Korsakov, Sat 6 Dec, The Ark at St Laurence, Birmingham

THE SEKINE QUARTET: VIVALDI'S

FOUR SEASONS BY CANDLELIGHT Sat 6 Dec, St Paul's Church, Birmingham

BOURNVILLE CLARINET CHOIR:

WINTER CONCERT Featuring Chloë Rogers, Sat 6 Dec, Weoley Hill URC, Birmingham

EX CATHEDRA: BACH CHRISTMAS

ORATORIO Featuring James Robinson (evangelist), Margaret Lingas & Katie Trethewey (sopranos), Martha McLorinan, Gabriella Liandu & Laura Toomey (altos), Daniel Marles (tenor), Oliver Barker & Lawrence White (bass) & Jeffrey Skidmore (conductor), Sun 7 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

CBSO: SATNAM RANA PRESENTS

BRINGING THE LIGHT Featuring Michael Seal (conductor), Akash Parekar (sitar), CBSO Chorus plus the Youth & Children's Chorus. Programme includes new commissions by C Kinoshi, R Panufnik & J Armatradig, Sun 7 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

BIRMINGHAM PHILHARMONIC

ORCHESTRA Featuring Jack Lovell-Huckle (conductor), Programme includes works by Tchaikovsky, R Cole, Nielsen & Prokofiev, Sun 7 Dec, The Bradshaw Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Featuring Daniele Rosina (conductor), Sun 7 Dec, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, University of Birmingham



ALADDIN

by Morgan Brind

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VINTAGE SLEIGH EXPERIENCE

COVENTRY TRANSPORT MUSEUM

Saturday 29 November - Tuesday 23 December

Join us in the North pole, as you take a ride on an enchanting vintage sleigh, pulled by two trusty reindeer. Meet Santa, tell him your Christmas wishes, and collect your gift! A magical array of festive activities also awaits across the museum, as admission is included in the ticket price. Plus, **new for 2025** — explore the North Pole Trail! Find the 3 magic portals, collect your stamps, and complete the sleigh ride adventure!

Book your tickets in advance at transport-museum.com

Tickets are non-refundable and non-transferable.



Comedy

JOE LYCETT & FRIENDS Mon 1 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

KERRY GODLIMAN Wed 3 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

RACHEL FAIRBURN, IGNACIO LOPEZ, ROB ROUSE & MICHAEL ODEWALE Wed 3 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

CLOSEUP COMEDY Wed 3 Dec, Herbert's Yard, Birmingham

MORGAN REES, IGNACIO LOPEZ, ROB ROUSE & MICHAEL ODEWALE Thurs 4 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

PROJECT MAYHEM COMEDY Thurs 4 Dec, Scruffy Murphy's, Birmingham

LOU WALL Fri 5 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

RACHEL FAIRBURN, IGNACIO LOPEZ, ROB ROUSE & MICHAEL ODEWALE Fri 5 - Sat 6 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

PETER KAY Fri 5 - Sat 6 Dec, Utilita Arena Birmingham

RUSSELL KANE Fri 5 - Sat 6 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

GARY DELANEY, DINESH NATHAN & DARIUS DAVIES Sat 6 Dec, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

PROJECT MAYHEM COMEDY Sat 6 Dec, The Wellington, Birmingham

ANGLEA BARNES Sat 6 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

WHITE YARDIE Sun 7 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

PHIL ELLIS, LOST VOICE GUY & JO ENRIGHT Sun 7 Dec, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

Theatre

MACBETH Sam Heughan (Outlander, Love Again) makes his RSC debut in the title role. Lia Williams (The Crown, Skylight) stars as Lady Macbeth, until Sat 6 Dec, The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon

THE FORSYTE SAGA PART 1: IRENE Acclaimed stage adaptation of John Galsworthy's Nobel Prize-winning saga of love, ownership and the end of Empire, until Sat 10 Jan, Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE 12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS World premiere comedy whodunnit, written by and starring Fringe favourites The Penny Dreadfuls and featuring brand-new songs from Tim Rice & Andrew Lloyd Webber, until Sun 18 Jan, The Rep, Birmingham

THE LITTLE MERMAID Theresa Heskins directs a new version of Hans Christian Andersen's famous fairytale, until Sat 24 Jan, The New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

THE BFG Tom Wells' brand-new adaptation of Roald Dahl's story about a gentle giant and the smallest human bean, until Sat 7 Feb, The

Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

THE FORSYTE SAGA PART 2: FLEUR Acclaimed stage adaptation of John Galsworthy's Nobel Prize-winning saga of love, ownership and the end of Empire, Mon 1 Dec - Sat 10 Jan, Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

A CHRISTMAS CAROL Jonathan Goodwin plays Charles Dickens in a one-man performance of the author's most famous Christmas story, Tues 2 Dec, Wightwick Manor, Wolverhampton

INSIDE NO.9 STAGE/FRIGHT Comedy and horror combine as the acclaimed BBC TV series comes to life on stage. Steve Pemberton & Reece Shearsmith star, Tues 2 - Sat 6 Dec, The Alexandra, Birmingham

IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE The Highbury Players present an amateur version of the festive classic, Tues 2 - Sat 13 Dec, Highbury Theatre Centre, Sutton Coldfield

IT'S A WONDERFUL KNIFE - CHRISTMAS DUNDEE A Christmassy musical inspired by the single most-viewed Christmas Day film of all time in the UK, Wed 3 - Tues 30 Dec, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

THE CRUCIBLE Royal Birmingham Conservatoire Actors present an amateur version of Arthur Miller's timeless masterpiece, Thurs 4 - Sat 6 Dec, The Crescent Theatre, B'ham

A SHODDY CHRISTMAS CAROL 'Quick changes, questionable accents and chaotic carolling' are all present and correct in this 'unhinged retelling' of Dickens' festive favourite, Thurs 4 Dec - Sun 4 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

A CHRISTMAS CAROL Guy Masterson's one-man performance of Dickens' festive favourite, Sat 6 Dec, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

ONE DECEMBER NIGHT A story of wine, ghosts, dreams and regrets - of life, death and love..., Sun 7 Dec, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

Pantomimes

CINDERELLA Festive family show packed with romance, comedy, magic and plenty of audience participation, until Sun 7 Dec, The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

CINDERELLA BOA Group bring the timeless festive tale to life with 'breath-taking sets, jaw-dropping special effects, and unforgettable musical numbers', until Wed 31 Dec, The Old Rep, Birmingham

SLEEPING BEAUTY Iain Lauchlan's dreamy tale for the festive season. Featuring Andy Hockley (Grumbleweed), Craig Hollingsworth (Muddles), Wendi Harriot (Carabosse) and Mia King-Harmes (Princess Belle/Queen Hyacinth),



Birmingham Royal Ballet's *The Nutcracker* - Birmingham Hippodrome

until Sat 3 Jan, The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

SLEEPING BEAUTY 'Magical festive fairytale' starring Danny Beard (Carabosse) and Debra Stephenson (Queen) alongside pantomime royalty Tam Ryan and Ian Adams, until Sun 4 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

CINDERELLA 'Festive extravaganza' in which panto favourite Sam Rabone stars as Aldianna. Also starring Matt Daines (Lidleena), Shannon Bourne (Cinderella), Ben Thornton (Buttons), Joe Feeney (Dandini), Adam Craig (Prince Charming) and Clarice Julianda (Fairy Twinklethistle), until Sun 11 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

THE GRINCH - THE PANTO Amateur version presented by Youth Onstage, Thurs 4 - Sat 6 Dec, The Dovehouse Theatre, Solihull

TREASURE ISLAND A timeless tale featuring 'singalong songs and panto magic' as Jim Hawkins and his hearty crew take on the mischievous pirates led by the evil Long John Silver, Fri 5 - Mon 29 Dec, Artrix, Bromsgrove

SLEEPING BEAUTY Family pantomime starring Samantha Spragg as Carabosse, Mark Rhodes as Hilarious Harry and David Phipps-Davies as Nurse Nora Knickerbocker, Fri 5 Dec - Sun 4 Jan, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

PETER PAN Journey to the magical island of Neverland and help Peter Pan and the Lost Boys defeat the villainous Captain Hook. JP McCue, Sean Dodds, Hollie Smith-Nelson, Charlie Smart & Emma Marsh star, Fri 5 Dec - Sun 4 Jan, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

THE WIZARD OF OZ: A WICKED PANTOMIME Expect 'classic pop bangers, dazzling dancing, groanworthy jokes, and plenty of audience participation in a show bursting with panto silliness'..., Sat 6 - Sun 21 Dec, Walsall Arena

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST TaleGate

Theatre present 'a tale as old as time', featuring pop songs, magic, silliness and an abundance of festive family fun, Sat 6 - Wed 31 Dec, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

ALADDIN Embark on a festive journey to the town of Shangri-La, where the sorcerers are sinister, the caves are full of surprises, and the genies have been bottling things up..., Sat 6 - Sun 4 Dec, The Core Theatre, Solihull

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST Theresa Heskins' 'spellbinding staging', inspired by the original 18th-century fairytale, Sat 6 Dec - Sun 4 Jan, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

Adult Pantomimes

BEAUTY BANGS THE BEAST A shamelessly naughty retelling of the classic fairytale, Wed 3 - Sun 7 Dec, The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

Kids Theatre

THE TIGER WHO CAME TO TEA Join the tea-guzzling tiger in a delightful family show packed with oodles of magic, singalong songs and clumsy chaos, until Sun 28 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

THE OWL WHO CAME FOR CHRISTMAS Heartwarming festive tale for all the family, featuring toe-tapping songs, puppetry and plenty of audience participation, Mon 1 - Sun 28 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

WELL DONE, MUMMY PENGUIN Daring acrobatics, integrated sign language and heartwarming humour combine in this wintery treat for children aged three-plus, Wed 3 Dec - Sat 3 Jan, The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

DEAR SANTA LIVE Rod Campbell's



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festive story is brought to life in a show suitable for audiences aged one-plus. A post-show opportunity to meet Santa in his grotto - and receive an 'extra-special gift' - also features, Thurs 4 Dec, Stourbridge Town Hall

ANANSI THE SPIDER Classic West African & Caribbean folk tales about a loveable spider are brought to life 'in a festive show for children and their grown-ups', Thurs 4 Dec - Sun 11 Jan, The Rep, Birmingham



NO SUCH THING AS WOLVES A fun-filled musical adventure featuring 'catchy songs, hilarious scenes' and 'a wolfy twist in the tale'. Suitable for children aged three and older, Sat 6 Dec - Sun 4 Jan, Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

Dance

THE NUTCRACKER BRB's magical festive production, complete with falling snow and a 30-foot Christmas tree, until Sat 13 Dec, Birmingham Hippodrome

Light Entertainment

MAGIC OF MUSICALS: CHRISTMAS SPECIAL WITH TOO DARN HOT Featuring star singers and musicians direct from London's West End, Tues 2 Dec, Dudley Town Hall

STEP INTO CHRISTMAS The spirit of the season brought to life with 'dazzling performances, festive visuals and a live band', Fri 5 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

SLEIGH MISERABLES The 'ultimate musical theatre and Christmas cabaret', featuring cherished festive classics. Expect to 'laugh, cry and be filled to the brim with Christmas exultation', Sat 6 Dec, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

SMILE AT CHRISTMAS - THE MAGIC OF GREGORY PORTER AND NAT KING COLE Sat 6 Dec, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

SOMETHING MAGICAL: WRAPPING UP Annual festive concert featuring The People's Orchestra and The People's Show Choir, Sat 6 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

CHRISTMAS BY CANDLELIGHT Annual festive entertainment featuring Christmas music, a 20-foot Christmas

Tree, turkey baps, hot toddies - and maybe even some snow..., Sun 7 Dec, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

THE CITY OF LICHFIELD CONCERT BAND: CHRISTMAS CONCERT Evening of festive music, Sun 7 Dec, Lichfield Cathedral

Events

THE POLAR EXPRESS™ TRAIN RIDE

Immerse yourself in the sights, sounds and intrigue of this classic children's tale, until Tues 23 Dec, Moor Street Station, Birmingham

VISIT SANTA: VINTAGE SLEIGH RIDE EXPERIENCE Wander through a magical winter wonderland, then take a ride on a vintage sleigh pulled by two trusty reindeer, until Tues 23 Dec, Coventry Transport Museum

THE CHRISTMAS GROTTO Wander through a Christmas village, 'where there's a surprise around every corner', until Wed 24 Dec, Webbs, West Hagley

SANTA'S GROTTO EXPERIENCE Say hello to Santa and his cheeky elves in their magical winter wonderland, until Wed 24 Dec, National SEA LIFE Centre Birmingham

HOLIDAY BRICKTACULAR Get into the festive spirit, courtesy of 'the ultimate Lego Christmas adventure', until Wed 24 Dec, Legoland Discovery Centre, Birmingham

BIRMINGHAM'S FRANKFURT CHRISTMAS MARKET The largest authentic German Christmas market outside of Germany or Austria, until Wed 24 Dec, Birmingham City Centre

LUMINATE - WINTER LIGHT TRAIL Journey through installations, projections, and glowing tunnels of light, until Thurs 1 Jan, Birmingham Botanical Gardens

ICE SKATE BIRMINGHAM The popular ice rink and big wheel are back! until Sun 4 Jan, Centenary Square, B'ham

SNOWY'S CONSERVATION CREW Join Snowy on an arctic adventure to learn about the North Pole and the animals that live there, until Sun 4 Jan, National SEA LIFE Centre Birmingham

CHRISTMAS AT PACKWOOD HOUSE Step into the warmth of the Tudor manor, where the rooms are dressed for the season, until Sun 4 Jan, Packwood House, Warwickshire



TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS AT WIGHTWICK Celebrate a traditional



The Polar Express™ Train Ride - Moor Street Station

Victorian Christmas, until Sun 4 Jan, Wightwick Manor, Wolverhampton

WINTER WONDERLAND STOKE Magical festive experience complete with funfair rides and rollercoasters, classic game stalls, ice skating beneath a canopy of sparkling lights and extensive food offers, until Sun 4 Jan, Lichfield Street, Stoke-on-Trent

BIRDLAND TRAIL A trail of ceramic birds inspired by those found in Cannon Hill Park, until Sun 22 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), B'ham

GUIDED MUSEUM TOUR Hear fascinating stories and take a peek behind the scenes, Mon 1 Dec, Lapworth Museum, Aston Webb Building, University of Birmingham

ELF CADETS 2025 - CHRISTMAS BREAK Learn how to load the sleigh, pick the right aircraft for the job and map a route for Santa, Mon 1 - Sun 14 Dec, Royal Air Force Museum, Cosford

MORNINGS WITH FATHER CHRISTMAS Complete a trail around the site, make a Christmas decoration and share your list with Father Christmas, Wed 3 Dec, Forge Mill Needle Museum, Redditch

CRISIS BIRMINGHAM CAROL CONCERT A night filled with festive carols, music, special readings and seasonal reflections, Wed 3 Dec, St. Martin in the Bull Ring Church, Birmingham

TUDOR CHRISTMAS TOUR Costumed guided tour exploring Tudor Christmas traditions and stories, Thurs 4 Dec, Blakesley Hall, B'ham

WINTER CRAFT MARKET Browse stalls featuring crafts created by local makers, designers and artists, Thurs 4 Dec, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham

THE CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL Featuring real Christmas trees decorated by local businesses, schools and charities, Thurs 4 Dec - Sun 4 Jan, Lichfield Cathedral

CHRISTMAS CONCERT & MINCE PIE MORNING Featuring Ladywood Community Choir, Fri 5 Dec, The

Birmingham & Midland Institute

FITFEST 2025 Europe's only pure functional fitness festival, Fri 5 - Sun 7 Dec, NEC, Birmingham

THE GIFT FAIR Search for that perfect gift from a selection of stallholders, Fri 5 - Sun 7 Dec, Compton Verney, Warwickshire

ARCHERY GB COMBINED INDOOR NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS Event bringing together the best archers in the UK to compete in the Senior and Junior National Indoor Championships, and the legendary Back2Back tournament, Fri 5 - Sun 7 Dec, NAEC Stoneleigh, Warwickshire

A ROARING 20S NIGHT TO REMEMBER! An evening of live performances, speciality cocktails, casino fun and more, Sat 6 Dec, The Birmingham Black Box

SANTA'S STEAM SPECIALS Brand new for 2025, join Santa and friends for The Great Christmas Train Rescue, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, nr Kidderminster

SANTA'S VILLAGE Explore the festive markets and enjoy live music and 'magical' storytimes, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Dec, Sandwell Valley Country Park

FATHER CHRISTMAS AT KENILWORTH CASTLE Join Father Christmas as he tells some of his favourite seasonal stories around the Christmas tree, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Dec, Kenilworth Castle

THE ELF EXPRESS The North Pole favourites bring festive cheer, silly antics and joyful songs to the train, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, departs Bridgnorth, Shrops

CHRISTMAS ARTS MARKET Featuring a festive selection of crafts by designers, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

FATHER CHRISTMAS & FRIENDS Meet Father Christmas and step inside his magical world on this interactive winter trail, Sat 6 - Mon 22 Dec, Skydome, Coventry

Gigs

THE TEALS Tues 9 Dec,
The Sunflower Lounge,
Smallbrook Queensway

**THREE DAYS GRACE +
BADFLOWER** Tues 9 Dec,
O2 Academy

LOATHE Tues 9 Dec, XOYO,
Digbeth

THE COLLECTIVE Tues 9 -
Wed 10 Dec, The Jam
House, Jewellery Qtr

ATTILA THE STOCKBROKER
Wed 10 Dec, Kitchen
Garden, Kings Heath

**OLLIE COOK & THE
HOGWASH** Wed 10 Dec,
Hare & Hounds, Kings
Heath

VIVID SOUL Wed 10 Dec,
Hare & Hounds, Kings
Heath

**THE LOST NOTES + SUSY
WALL** Wed 10 Dec, Red
Lion Folk Club, Vicarage
Road

**BOYZ II MEN + TONI
BRAXTON + JOE + DRU HILL**
Wed 10 Dec, bp pulse
LIVE, Birmingham

LOUIS, LOUIS, LOUIS Wed
10 Dec, Boldmere Sports
and Social Club, Sutton
Coldfield

JAMES YORKSTON Thurs 11
Dec, Kitchen Garden,
Kings Heath

VICTORIES AT SEA Thurs 11
Dec, Hare & Hounds,
Kings Heath

NOVELTY ISLAND Thurs 11
Dec, Hare & Hounds,
Kings Heath

NAUSY Thurs 11 Dec, The
Sunflower Lounge,
Smallbrook Queensway

CG5 Thurs 11 Dec,
O2 Academy

RBC: JAZZ GALA Thurs 11
Dec, Royal Birmingham
Conservatoire

**PETE TONG PRESENTS IBIZA
CLASSICS** Thurs 11 Dec,
Utilita Arena Birmingham

UP4 THE DOWNSTROKE
Thurs 11 - Sat 13 Dec, The
Jam House, Jewellery Qtr

**THE TOTAL STONE ROSES &
OAYSIS** Fri 12 Dec, Hare &
Hounds, Kings Heath

**CHUGGABOOM +
OVERTHRONE +
DREARLEADER** Fri 12 Dec,
O2 Institute, Digbeth

**ELVANA: ELVIS FRONTED
NIRVANA** Fri 12 Dec,
O2 Institute, Digbeth

BAND OF SKULLS + THE



Stereophonics - Utilita Arena Birmingham

**DUKE SPIRIT + THE
HOWLERS** Fri 12 Dec,
O2 Institute, Digbeth

THE ICICLE WORKS Fri 12
Dec, O2 Academy

UNDER THE COVERS Fri 12
Dec, O2 Academy

**LEVY/ROBSON
INTERNATIONAL QUARTET** Fri
12 Dec, 1000 Trades,
Jewellery Quarter

FLEETWOOD SHACK Fri 12
Dec, Castle & Falcon,
Balsall Heath

CODY FROST Fri 12 Dec,
The Asylum, Hampton St

TWO PIECE Fri 12 Dec, The
Flapper, Cambrian Wharf

JAMIROQUAI Fri 12 Dec,
Utilita Arena Birmingham

THE SAROST TRIO Fri 12
Dec, Midlands Arts Centre
(MAC), Cannon Hill Park

SIGNING OFF UB40 Fri 12
Dec, The Rhodehouse,
Sutton Coldfield

THE BONGOLIAN Sat 13
Dec, The Night Owl,
Moseley

**STAY SICK + THE
HEADHUNTERS + DEAD
SHOUT** Sat 13 Dec, Hare &
Hounds, Kings Heath

**GODETH + KNIFEPOINT + IN
ABSENTIA** Sat 13 Dec, The
Sunflower Lounge,
Smallbrook Queensway

DUB FX Sat 13 Dec,
O2 Institute, Digbeth

**CIAN DUCROT + ANNIKA
KILKENNY** Sat 13 Dec,
O2 Academy

THE SMYTHS + BILLY BLAGG
Sat 13 Dec, O2 Academy

ALICE ARMSTRONG Sat 13
Dec, O2 Academy

REM BY STIPE Sat 13 Dec,
Castle & Falcon, Balsall
Heath

JULIET'S NOT DEAD Sat 13

Dec, The Asylum,
Hampton Street

**GASOLINE & MATCHES +
LIAM PRICE + BRONNIE +
ZOE UNSWORTH + THE
ROSELLYS** Sat 13 Dec,
Jennifer Blackwell
Performance Space,
Symphony Hall,
Centenary Square

**AMC GOSPEL CHOIR &
MANCHESTER CAMERATA**
Sat 13 Dec, Birmingham
Town Hall

STEREOPHONICS Sat 13
Dec, Utilita Arena
Birmingham

THE FATHER TEDS Sat 13
Dec, The Rhodehouse,
Sutton Coldfield

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

**KIDS IN GLASS HOUSES +
DEAD PONY + GIRLBAND!**
Sun 14 Dec, O2 Institute,
Digbeth

STEREO MC'S Sun 14 Dec,
O2 Academy

ABBA ALIKE Sun 14 Dec,
O2 Academy

**TERENCE 'THE COOL RULER'
WALLEN** Sun 14 Dec,
Tower of Song, Pershore
Road

BACK ON THE ROAD Sun 14
Dec, Snobs, Broad Street

JINGLE HELL FESTIVAL Sun
14 Dec, The Flapper,
Cambrian Wharf

**ROBERT PLANT PRESENTS
SAVING GRACE** Sun 14 Dec,
Symphony Hall,
Centenary Square

CASKETS Sun 14 Dec,
XOYO, Digbeth

**KYOTOHEAD +
TRANSMISSIONS +
TWINNINETSIX** Sun 14
Dec, The Rainbow,
Digbeth

Classical Music

**SING CAROLS WITH THE CITY
ORGANIST AND LICHFIELD
CATHEDRAL CHOIR** Featuring
Jeremy Nicholas (host) &
Thomas Trotter (organ), Mon 8
Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

RBC LUNCHTIME MUSIC Featuring
Elissa Street (soprano), Jinhe
Huang (viola), Jiayi Chen &
Ruimei Huang (piano).
Programme includes works by
Dvořák, Sibelius, Tchaikovsky &
more..., Mon 8 Dec, Recital Hall,
Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**CHRISTMAS WITH ANNA LAPWOOD
(ORGAN)** Tues 9 Dec, Birmingham
Town Hall

CBSO: KAZUKI CONDUCTS STRAUSS
Featuring Kazuki Yamada
(conductor) & Jonathan Kelly
(oboe), Wed 10 Dec, Symphony
Hall, Birmingham

**CBSO SYMPHONIC SESSIONS:
CHRISTMAS SPECIAL** Enjoy street
food and festive arrangements of
Christmas tunes performed by
CBSO musicians, Thurs 11 Dec,
Hockley Social Club

**RBC OUT AND ABOUT: VOICE &
PIANO RECITAL** Featuring Sara de
Visser (voice) & Sara Wilander
(piano), Thurs 11 Dec, St Paul's
Church, Birmingham

RBC: THE THREADS OF TIME
Featuring RBC Recorder
Consort, Baroque Oboe Band,
Natural Trumpet Ensemble, and
Birmingham Waits Renaissance
Band. Programme includes
music from the Medieval,
Renaissance and Baroque eras,
Thurs 11 Dec, Recital Hall, Royal
Birmingham Conservatoire

**CBSO: JONATHAN KELLY (OBOE)
PLAYS STRAUSS** Featuring
Catherine Larsen-Maguire
(conductor) & CBSO Winds, Fri
12 Dec, CBSO Centre, B'ham

**RBC OUT AND ABOUT: VOICE DUO
RECITAL** Featuring Hannah
Devereux & Millie Royle
(sopranos), Fri 12 Dec,
Birmingham Museum and Art
Gallery

**RBC OUT AND ABOUT: 4TUNE
TRUMPET QUARTET** Featuring
Francis Oldham, Matthew
Osborne, Alexander Tucker &
Ted James (trumpets), Fri 12
Dec, St Hilda's Parish Church,
Smethwick

**RBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: SWAN
LAKE, SLEEPING BEAUTY AND THE
NUTCRACKER** Featuring Daniele
Rosina (conductor). Programme
includes works by Prokofiev,
Chang Ge, Britten & Tchaikovsky,
Fri 12 Dec, The Bradshaw Hall,

Royal Birmingham Conservatoire
**EX CATHEDRA: CHRISTMAS MUSIC
BY CANDLELIGHT** Featuring Jeffrey
Skidmore (conductor).

Programme includes works by
Warlock, Britten, Gibbons &
more..., Sat 13 Dec, St Peter's
Church, Wolverhampton

**CHRISTMAS WITH THE SALVATION
ARMY** Featuring Salvation Army
Brass Bands, Choirs & African
Praise Choir. Programme
features a 'Christmas feast of
music', Sun 14 Dec, The
Bradshaw Hall, Royal
Birmingham Conservatoire

**BIRMINGHAM FESTIVAL CHORAL
SOCIETY: CHRISTMAS CONCERT**
Featuring David Wynne
(conductor), Kevin Gill (piano &
organ) & the Bournville Village
Primary School Choir, Sun 14
Dec, St John's and St Peter's
Church, Birmingham

Comedy

JOE LYCETT & FRIENDS Mon 8 Dec,
The Glee Club, Birmingham

MICHAEL MAROULI Tues 9 Dec,
The Glee Club, Birmingham

**SAM CAMPBELL, LUCY BEAUMONT,
TOM ROSENTHAL & AMY GLEDHILL**
Wed 10 Dec, Birmingham Town
Hall

ASHWYN SINGH Wed 10 Dec,
The Glee Club, Birmingham

**BRENNAN REECE, PHIL NICHOL,
GARRETT MILLERICK & DANA
ALEXANDER** Wed 10 - Sat 13 Dec,
The Glee Club, Birmingham

**ROSIE JONES, TAL DAVIES, JAIN
EDWARDS & LEAH FENNELL** Thurs
11 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre
(MAC), Birmingham

**SAM CAMPBELL, LUCY BEAUMONT,
TOM ROSENTHAL, SHARON
WANJOHI & JOHN ROBINS** Thurs 11
Dec, Warwick Arts Centre,
Coventry

**OLIVER BOWLER, DAVE LONGLEY &
COMIC TBC** Sat 13 Dec, Rosies
Nightclub, Birmingham

**AURIE STYLA, KANE BROWN, TRAVIS
JAY & ANDREW MENSAH** Sun 14
Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**BARBARA NICE'S CHRISTMAS
CRACKER** Sun 14 Dec, Midlands
Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

Theatre

CHECK PREVIOUS WEEKS FOR
THEATRE & PANTOS SHOWING
THROUGHOUT THE MONTH

TOM'S MIDNIGHT GARDEN Amateur
version of Philippa Pearce's
award-winning novel, Tues 9 -

Monday 8 - Sunday 14 December

Sat 20 Dec, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

FIDDLER ON THE ROOF Critically acclaimed production of the iconic musical, featuring classic numbers If I Were A Rich Man, Tradition and Sunrise, Sunset, Tues 9 Dec - Sat 3 Jan, The Alexandra, Birmingham

MRS CRATCHIT: A CHRISTMAS PAST A candlelit one-woman performance, telling the story of Dickens' 'most loyal wife', Thurs 11 Dec, The Birmingham Black Box Theatre and Events Venue

ELECTRA Royal Birmingham Conservatoire Actors present an amateur version of Frank McGuinness' translation of Sophocles' tale of a woman obsessed with revenge, Thurs 11 - Sat 13 Dec, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

PINOCCHIO Fun-filled family show based on the classic story of a wooden puppet who dreams of becoming a real boy, Fri 12 - Sun 14 Dec, The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

Pantomime

ALADDIN High-flying panto featuring children's TV legend & Masterchef Dave Benson Phillips, Emmerdale's Bill Ward and Britain's Got Talent's Tony Rudd. Simon Bashford, Indiya Payne, Laura-Dene Perryman and Niall Gray also star, Sat 13 Dec - Sun 4 Jan, Palace Theatre, Redditch

Kids Theatre

SANTA'S ON HIS SLEIGH Interactive Christmas show featuring Santa's virtual little helper, head elf Justy - played on screen by Justin Fletcher, Tues 9 - Thurs 11 Dec, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

DEAR SANTA LIVE Rod Campbell's festive story is brought to life in a show suitable for audiences aged one-plus. A post-show opportunity to meet Santa in his grotto - and receive an 'extra special gift' - also features, Sun 14 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

Dance

THE NUTCRACKER BRB's magical festive production, complete with falling snow and a 30-foot Christmas tree, until Sat 13 Dec, Birmingham Hippodrome

Light Entertainment

THE REAL QUEENS OF BOLLYWOOD A show that honours the legendary

women whose voices have brought emotion, passion, drama and romance to life on the silver screen, Mon 8 Dec, The Rep, Birmingham

WEST END CHRISTMAS CRACKERS

Promising a stockingful of big laughs, belting tunes and unexpected festive surprises. Lisa Marie-Holmes, Laura Tebbutt & Sejal Keshwala star, Mon 8 Dec, Artrix, Bromsgrove

A CHRISTMAS WASSAIL A festival of choral music, solo songs, spoken word and comedy, Mon 8 - Tues 9 Dec, Highbury Hall, Birmingham

SWING INTO CHRISTMAS WITH THE DOWN FOR THE COUNT SWING ORCHESTRA Annual festive show recreating classic tunes from the swing era, Tues 9 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

BOX OF FROGS An evening of high-octane improvised comedy based entirely on audience suggestions, Wed 10 Dec, 1000 Trades, Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham

MICHAEL BUBLÉ BY CANDLELIGHT AT CHRISTMAS Featuring Josh Hindle and his full band, Wed 10 Dec, Artrix, Bromsgrove

AN EVENING OF BURLESQUE The 'ultimate variety show', blending cabaret, comedy, music, circus and burlesque. Entertainers and stars of stage & screen feature, Thurs 11 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

CHRISTMAS WITH ANTON DU BEKE Join the Ballroom King & Strictly judge for an evening of music, dance and laughter. Vocalist Lance Ellington also stars, Thurs 11 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

COUNT ARTHUR STRONG IS CHARLES DICKENS IN 'A CHRISTMAS CAROL' 2025 Steve Delaney's Count Arthur Strong presents his own adaptation of the most classic of festive tales, Fri 12 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

HOLLY JOLLY CHRISTMAS Studio production featuring musical theatre, songs, Christmas classics, carols & new writing..., Fri 12 - Sun 14 Dec, Oldbury Rep

TEENA'S TINSEL TIME TUNNEL A Christmas cabaret with a time-travel twist, 'packed with laughs, games and retro fun', Sat 13 Dec, The Core Theatre, Solihull

SLEIGH MISERABLES The 'ultimate musical theatre and Christmas cabaret' featuring cherished festive classics. Expect to 'laugh, cry and be filled to the brim with Christmas exultation', Sat 13 Dec, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

CHRISTMAS BY CANDLELIGHT Annual festive entertainment featuring Christmas music, a 20-foot Christmas Tree, turkey baps, hot toddies - and maybe even some snow..., Sun 14 Dec, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

FAMILIES TOGETHER AT CHRISTMAS

2025 A morning of songs, reflections and high-energy musical performances, Sun 14 Dec, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Talks & Spoken Word

AN EVENING WITH KALEB COOPER An intimate evening of honest conversations, anecdotes and surprises with the Clarkson's Farm favourite..., Sun 14 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

Events

CHECK PREVIOUS WEEKS FOR EVENTS SHOWING THROUGHOUT THE MONTH

SEASONAL MAKERS MARKET Featuring an array of independent, local traders selling handcrafted and sustainably made items, Tues 9 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

WINTER WARMER SPECIALS Enjoy a trip out as a majestic historic steam locomotive hauls you through the countryside to Highley and back, Tues 9 - Thurs 11 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, nr Kidderminster

MORNINGS WITH FATHER CHRISTMAS Complete a trail around the site, make a Christmas decoration and share your wish list with Father Christmas, Wed 10 Dec, Forge Mill Needle Museum, Redditch

TUDOR CHRISTMAS TOUR Costumed guided tour exploring Tudor Christmas traditions and stories, Thurs 11 Dec, Blakesley Hall, Birmingham

CHRISTMAS EVENING TOUR Featuring an after-hours house tour and Christmas dinner at the Baddesley Barn Restaurant, Thurs 11 Dec, Baddesley Clinton, Warwickshire

SUTTON COLDFIELD VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS MARKET Sutton Coldfield comes alive with the sights, sounds and scents of a traditional Victorian Christmas, Thurs 11 - Sun 14 Dec, Sutton Coldfield Town Centre

CHRISTMAS CINEMA Christmas films screened under the stars in the 360° dome, Fri 12 - Sat 13 Dec, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

CHRISTMAS ON THE FARM Visit the grotto, work in the teddy bear workshop and have a go in the gingerbread kitchen, Fri 12 - Sun 14 Dec, Cotswold Farm Park, Cheltenham

THE NORTH POLE ADVENTURE Enjoy a magical journey to the North Pole, Fri 12 - Sun 14 Dec, National Forest Adventure Farm, Staffordshire

ASTON BY CANDLELIGHT: A CHRISTMAS TOUR Bathed in the warm glow of LED candles, experience this Grade I listed building at night as you're guided through Christmases past, Fri 12 - Sun 14 Dec, Aston Hall, Birmingham

FESTIVE GARDENS Expect stunning light displays and photo opportunities as you're transported to the North Pole, Fri 12 - Sun 14 Dec, Chelsea & Maxell Gardens, Telford Town Park, Shropshire

BRIDGET JONES'S DIARY Featuring a bottomless brunch and a special screening of the much-loved rom-com, Sat 13 Dec, Millennium Point, Birmingham

SANTA PAWS Take your four-legged friend to meet Father Christmas in his grotto, Sat 13 Dec, Forge Mill Needle Museum, Redditch

THE ELF EXPRESS The North Pole favourites bring festive cheer, silly antics and joyful songs to the train, Sat 13 - Sun 14 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, departs Bridgnorth, South Shropshire

CHRISTMAS GROTTO & FESTIVE FUN Meet Santa and find out what the naughty elves have been up to, Sat 13 - Sun 14 Dec, West Midlands Police Museum, Birmingham

FATHER CHRISTMAS AT KENILWORTH CASTLE Join Father Christmas as he tells some of his favourite seasonal stories around the Christmas tree, Sat 13 - Sun 14 Dec, Kenilworth Castle, Warwickshire

BREAKFAST WITH SANTA Start your day with a breakfast with Santa in the tearoom, Sat 13 - Sun 14 Dec, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

STORYTIME WITH SANTA Step into Santa's Grotto and enjoy a heartwarming story, Sat 13 - Sun 14 Dec, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

SANTA'S STEAM SPECIALS Brand new for 2025, join Santa and friends for The Great Christmas Train Rescue, Sat 13 - Sun 14 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, nr Kidderminster

GLADIATORS LIVE TOUR Featuring the new stars of hit TV series Gladiators, Sat 13 - Sun 14 Dec, bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham

CHRISTMAS THROUGH TIME Discover how Christmas has been celebrated through the ages, Sat 13 - Sun 14 Dec, Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove

FESTIVE STORY TRAIL Inspired by storytelling, look for clues and pose for a photo along the way, Sat 13 Dec - Sun 4 Jan, Compton Verney, Warwickshire

SANTA PAWS Featuring a variety of dog-friendly stalls, photo opportunities, live entertainment and more... Sun 14 Dec, Sandwell Valley Country Park

Gigs

SHACK Mon 15 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE BOOTLEG BEATLES Tues 16 Dec, Symphony Hall, Centenary Square

SHOCK THE RHYTHM Tues 16 Dec, The Rhodhouse, Sutton Coldfield

RED LEMONS Tues 16 - Wed 17 Dec, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

IRE-ISH Wed 17 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

CLUTCH + 1000MODS + BOKASSA Wed 17 Dec, O2 Academy

MAD JOCKS AND ENGLISHMEN Wed 17 Dec, Red Lion Folk Club, Vicarage Road

TONY HADLEY Wed 17 Dec, Symphony Hall, Centenary Square

SHEILA FAWKES CAFÉ ORCHESTRA Wed 17 Dec, Boldmere Sports and Social Club, Sutton Coldfield

THE NATURE CENTRE & SEAN MURRAY + EXOTIC PETS + PORK CHOP Thurs 18 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

JACK GOODALL + THE LINE MANAGERS Thurs 18 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

NECK DEEP + BOSTON MANOR + ANXIOUS Thurs 18 Dec, O2 Institute, Digbeth

THE WONDER STUFF + VENT 414 Thurs 18 Dec, O2 Academy

DETROIT SOUL COLLECTIVE Thurs 18 - Sat 20 Dec, The Jam House, Jewellery Qtr

FLESH CREEP + MEATDRIPPER + TOTAL LUCK + MATTERS Fri 19 Dec, Hare & Hounds,



Tony Hadley - Symphony Hall

Kings Heath

THE DESERT PLAZA Fri 19 Dec, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

THE CLAUSE + THE KAIROS + THE LILACS Fri 19 Dec, O2 Academy

MADNESS + SQUEEZE Fri 19 Dec, Utilita Arena Birmingham

THE 3 SIXTIES Fri 19 Dec, O2 Academy

VEE JAY KING AND HIS DUKES Fri 19 Dec, Tower of Song, Pershore Road

THE BUG CLUB Fri 19 Dec, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

THE NOTEBENDERS Fri 19 Dec, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall, Centenary Square

SYNTH Fri 19 Dec, The Rhodhouse, Sutton Coldfield

GHAIST - GHOST TRIBUTE Sat 20 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

THE SMALL FAKERS Sat 20 Dec, The Night Owl, Moseley

DRINK THE SEA Sat 20 Dec,

O2 Institute, Digbeth

SLADE + SONS OF THE SEVENTIES Sat 20 Dec, O2 Institute, Digbeth

THE TWANG + BRÛGEAL + THE BRACKNALL Sat 20 Dec, O2 Academy

SWEETPOOL Sat 20 Dec, Tower of Song, Pershore Road

DISCHARGE Sat 20 Dec, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

TALON Sat 20 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

UNDER THE COVERS Sat 20 Dec, The Rhodhouse, Sutton Coldfield

FRONTROW Sat 20 Dec, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

VASELINE Sat 20 - Sun 21 Dec, O2 Academy

THE SONS OF PITCHES Sun 21 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

BRAS N' ROSES Sun 21 Dec, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

REWIND: THE JOURNEY OF SOUL, R&B AND UK GARAGE Sun 21 Dec, The Glee Club, The Arcadian, Southside

Classical Music

LUNCHTIME CHRISTMAS MUSIC

Featuring Thomas Trotter (organ) & the Hereford Cathedral Choir. Programme includes traditional carols and modern classics, Mon 15 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

RBC CHORUS CELEBRATES

CHRISTMAS Popular informal carol concert, Mon 15 Dec, The Bradshaw Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

ORCHESTRA OF THE SWAN: A

CHRISTMAS CAROL Featuring Anton Lesser (narrator) & David Le Page (musical director), Mon 15 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall



CBSO CENTRE STAGE: VIOLA

EXTRAVAGANZA Featuring Chris Yates, Adam Römer, David BaMaung, Catherine Bower, Amy Thomas, Jessica Tickle, Sarah Malcolm & Isobel Doncaster (violins). Programme includes works by Bowen, Richter, Dale & more..., Tues 16 Dec, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

2025 CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS GALA

A varied programme featuring Chinese traditional instruments, ancient folk tunes, classical music and Christmas choruses, Tues 16 Dec, The Bradshaw Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

EX CATHEDRA: CHRISTMAS MUSIC

BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring Jeffrey Skidmore (conductor) & Rupert Jeffcoat (organ). Programme includes works by Willcocks, Benjamin Britten & more..., Wed 17 Dec, St Mary's Church, Moseley, Birmingham

CBSO: CHORAL CHRISTMAS WITH

STEPHEN MANGAN Featuring Michael Seal (conductor), the CBSO Chorus, Youth Chorus, Children's Chorus & SO Vocal. Hear Christmas carols performed by the full CBSO and its family of choirs, Thurs 18 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CBSO CHRISTMAS PARTY WITH

STEPHEN MANGAN Featuring Michael Seal (conductor), Elesha Paul Moses (vocalist) & the CBSO Chorus, Youth Chorus & SO Vocal. Sleigh bells, songs, a full symphony orchestra and

plenty of Christmas spirit, Fri 19 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

EX CATHEDRA: CHRISTMAS MUSIC BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring Jeffrey Skidmore (conductor).

Programme includes works by Warlock, Britten, Gibbons & more..., Fri 19 - Mon 22 Dec, St Paul's Church, Birmingham

CBSO FAMILY CHRISTMAS WITH

STEPHEN MANGAN Featuring Michael Seal (conductor), Elesha Paul Moses (vocalist), CBSO Chorus, Youth Chorus & Children's Chorus. An afternoon of Christmas music for all the family to enjoy, Sat 20 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

BEETHOVEN'S MOONLIGHT SONATA

BY CANDLELIGHT Also including works by Chopin & Liszt, Sat 20 Dec, St Philip's Cathedral, B'ham

BIRMINGHAM CHORAL UNION: FAMILY CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Featuring Colin Baines (conductor) & Darren Hogg (organ). A family-friendly concert with carols, music, a festive tea and Father Christmas! Sat 20 Dec, Selly Oak Methodist Church, Birmingham

CHRISTMAS WITH SIR KARL

JENKINS Carols and classics from Sir Karl's festive albums Joy to the World and Stella Natalis, Sun 21 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

MIDLANDS HOSPITALS CHOIR & PHOENIX SINGERS: 'SING NOEL, ALLELUIA!'

Featuring Denise Leigh (soprano), Richard Dawson (organist) & Gemini Brass, Sun 21 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

Comedy

JOE LYCETT & FRIENDS Mon 15 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

LIKE MINDED FRIENDS AT CHRISTMAS Tues 16 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

CLOSEUP COMEDY Wed 17 Dec, Herbert's Yard, Birmingham

ANDY ROBINSON, GBEMI OLADIPO, ANDREW BIRD & COMIC TBC Wed 17 - Thurs 18 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

CLOSEUP COMEDY Thurs 18 Dec, Hockley Social Club, B'ham

JAY HANDLEY Thurs 18 Dec, The Patrick Kavanagh, Birmingham

ANDY ROBINSON, GBEMI OLADIPO, ANDREW BIRD & TOM WARD Fri 19 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

SIMON BRODKIN, LARRY DEAN, LOUISE YOUNG & JAY NEALE Fri 19 Dec, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

DARREN HARRIOTT, TOM WRIGGLESWORTH & JON PEARSON



Madness - Utilita Arena Birmingham

Sat 20 Dec, Rosies Nightclub, B'ham
ANDY ROBINSON, GBEMI OLADIPO, ANDREW BIRD & COMIC TBC Sat 20 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

CHECK PREVIOUS WEEKS FOR THEATRE & PANTOS SHOWING THROUGHOUT THE MONTH

BUY LITTLE, BUY LESS, BUY NOTHING AT ALL Stage2 Youth Theatre present a 'razor-sharp, darkly hilarious show which dives headfirst into the chaos of modern capitalism, identity, and our strange addiction to stuff', Thurs 18 - Sat 20 Dec, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

PINNOCHIO: A CHRISTMAS TALE Musical reimagining of the classic story. Created by Holly Maulett of CBBC's Andy And The Band fame, Thurs 18 - Tues 30 Dec, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

PINOCCHIO Fun-filled family show based on the classic story of a wooden puppet who dreams of becoming a real boy, Fri 19 - Sun 21 Dec, The Blue Orange Theatre, Bham

WICKED WIZARD OF OZ: A CIRCUS SPECTACULAR Brand-new show featuring aerial stunts and special effects. Jordan Conway stars as the Scarecrow, Kelly Banlaki as Dorothy and Kev Orkian as the wicked wizard who runs the Emerald Circus, Sun 21 & Mon 22 Dec, bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham

Pantomime

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK Lyngo Theatre version of the classic fairytale, featuring 'tiny houses, enormous shoes, showers of silver & gold, and a big leafy explosion', Mon 15 Dec, Brasshouse Community Centre, West Bromwich

SLEEPING BEAUTY Touring Pantos fuse romance, comedy and unexpected twists & turns as the festive classic is brought to life, Fri 19 - Tues 23 Dec, West Bromwich Town Hall

ROBIN HOOD A 'sheriff-busting pantomime extravaganza' featuring Gok Wan, Matt Slack, Faye Tozer, Andrew Ryan, Matt Cardle, Sandra Marvin and special guest star Christopher Biggins, Sat 20 Dec - Sun 1 Feb, Birmingham Hippodrome

Kids Theatre

SANTA'S CHRISTMAS PARTY Help get Santa's Christmas Party back on track in an adventure full of fun, festive songs and party games, Fri 19 - Wed 24 Dec, The Core Theatre, Solihull

THE GINGERBREAD BOY A brand-new Christmas story about 'friendship and celebrating our differences', Sat 20 - Wed 24 Dec, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

Light Entertainment

A CHRISTMAS WASSAIL A festival of choral music, solo songs, spoken word and comedy, brought together 'to warm your spirits with the magic of Christmas', Sun 14 & Mon 15 Dec, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

DES COLEMAN'S CHRISTMAS EXTRAVAGANZA Also starring the Paul Drakeley Allstar Big Band. Expect festive classics All I Want For Christmas Is You, White Christmas, Merry Christmas Everyone and more..., Mon 15 Dec, Artrix, Bromsgrove

HAPPY BIRTHDAY JANE Readings, music and dancing in celebration of the 250th anniversary of Jane Austen's birth, Tues 16 Dec, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

CHRISTMAS WITH ANTON DU BEKE Join the Ballroom King & Strictly judge for an evening of music, dance and laughter. Vocalist Lance Ellington also stars, Tues 16 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

THE BIG CHRISTMAS ASSEMBLY 2025 James B Partridge hosts an evening of singalong classics 'to transport you back to the nostalgia of Christmases past', Wed 17 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

THE SNOWMAN: FILM WITH LIVE ORCHESTRA A screening of the 1982 festive classic, brought to life by a live performance from a professional orchestra, Thurs 18 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

ETERNALLY WICKED Tribute show 'celebrating pop icons and musical magic', Thurs 18 Dec, Artrix, Bromsgrove

TRÈS TRÈS CABARET A 'silly and saucy' night, featuring a unique line-up at each show, Sat 20 Dec, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

CHRISTMAS BY CANDLELIGHT Annual festive entertainment featuring Christmas music, a 20-foot Christmas Tree, turkey baps, hot toddies - and maybe even some snow..., Sun 21 Dec, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

Talks & Spoken Word

SUSIE DENT: WORD PERFECT 'Britain's best-loved wordsmith' delves into the joys of the English language, Tues 16 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall



Wicked Wizard of Oz - A Circus Spectacular - bp pulse LIVE Birmingham

FESTIVE STORY BAZAAR Featuring storytelling, poetry, music, laughter 'and a good old festive knees up'..., Sun 21 Dec, Wolverhampton Arts Centre

Events

CHECK PREVIOUS WEEKS FOR EVENTS SHOWING THROUGHOUT THE MONTH

CHRISTMAS LIGHT SHOW: THE ROBIN'S REWARD Enjoy a spectacular light show around the close and on the front of the cathedral, Mon 15 - Sun 21 Dec, Lichfield Cathedral

SENSORY STORIES & RHYMES: SANTA SING-ALONG SPECIAL Meet Santa and sing along to Christmas nursery rhymes. Presented using a sensory play-based approach, Tues 16 Dec, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry

SUTTON COLDFIELD VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS MARKET Sutton Coldfield comes alive with the sights, sounds and scents of a traditional Victorian Christmas, Thurs 18 - Sun 21 Dec, Sutton Coldfield Town Centre

CHRISTMAS GROTTTO & FESTIVE FUN Meet Santa and find out what the naughty elves have been up to, Sat 20 Dec, West Midlands Police Museum, Birmingham

SANTA'S STEAM SPECIALS Brand new for 2025, join Santa and friends for The Great Christmas Train Rescue, Sat 20 - Sun 21 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, nr Kidderminster



CHRISTMAS TALES WITH JASON BUCK Award-winning storyteller Jason Buck presents bite-size storytelling sessions, Sat 20 - Sun 21 Dec, Compton Verney, Shropshire

SOLIHULL ARTS MARKET Featuring a handpicked selection of artists, designers and makers from across the Midlands, Sat 20 - Sun 21 Dec, The Core Theatre, Solihull

FATHER CHRISTMAS AT KENILWORTH CASTLE Join Father Christmas as he tells some of his favourite seasonal stories around the Christmas tree, Sat 20 - Sun 21 Dec, Kenilworth Castle, Warwickshire



THE ELF EXPRESS The North Pole favourites bring festive cheer, silly antics and joyful songs to the train, Sat 20 - Sun 21 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, departs from Bridgnorth, South Shropshire

STORYTIME WITH SANTA Step into Santa's Grotto and enjoy a heartwarming story, Sat 20 - Tues 23 Dec, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

BREAKFAST WITH SANTA Start your day with a breakfast with Santa in the tearoom, Sat 20 - Tues 23 Dec, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION WEEKEND Filled with festive cheer, chocolatey fun and Santa's live show, Sat 20 - Wed 24 Dec, Cadbury World, Bournville, Birmingham



DREAM CABARET

CIRCUS ★ DRINKS ★ CABARET
December 4th - 7th 2025

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BOOK TICKETS



Crisis

CAROL CONCERT

Join Crisis Skylight Birmingham for our Carol Concert - a festive evening to reflect on the past year's successes and celebrate a future without homelessness.

3 December 6pm
for a 6:30pm start

**St Martins Church
B5 5BB**

any questions?
Contact us via email at:
ccbirmingham@crisis.org.uk

Book your free tickets here!



Make this Christmas unforgettable with a magical screening of The Snowman film accompanied by a live orchestra!

Watch in awe as the beloved classic **The Snowman** comes to life on the big screen, with an award-winning live orchestra. As an extra bonus, performances include Prokofiev's classic symphonic fairy tale, **Peter and the Wolf**, played live by the musicians and accompanied by a brand new animated film.

With a fun, festive medley created by **CBeebies Musical Storyland** composer, Daniel Whibley, to open the show – and a special visit from the Snowman himself – this magical show is perfect for the whole family to enjoy!

"Top family things to do at Christmas"
The Guardian, The Telegraph and The Sunday Times

Birmingham Town Hall
THURSDAY 18 DECEMBER
1.45pm | 6pm
carrotproductions.com

2025 TOUR

The Snowman™
WITH LIVE ORCHESTRA

Gigs

INDEPENDENT COUNTRY + JOHNSON & FINNEMORE Mon 22 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

URBAN INTRO Tues 23 Dec, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

H&H HOUSE BAND PERFORM 'THE BENDS' BY RADIOHEAD Tues 23 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

UBMAD4SKA Tues 23 Dec, O2 Academy

LOADED REVOLVER Fri 26 Dec, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

B'SPOKE Sat 27 Dec, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

VINCENT FLATTS FINAL DRIVE Sat 27 Dec, O2 Academy

LOVERS ROCK REVUE Sat 27 Dec, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

SIGNING OFF - TRIBUTE TO UB40 Sat 27 Dec, The Night Owl, Moseley

GBH + DRONGOS FOR EUROPE + DIRTBOX DISCO + CRIMINAL DAMAGE + BIG BLACK EYE Sat 27 Dec, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

ICONIC 80S V 90S Sat 27 Dec, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

UNFORGIVEN Sat 27 Dec, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

ERASURED + WITCH TRIAL + NOT SOUP + DIRTY HOUND Sun 28 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

WEST COAST EAGLES Sun 28 Dec, O2 Academy

THE COLLECTIVE Wed 31 Dec, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

MIDNIGHT CITY SOUL BAND Wed 31 Dec, O2 Academy

KILLERSTREAM Wed 31 Dec, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

SKULL DUGGERY Wed 31 Dec, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

Classical Music

THE PICCADILLY SINFONIA: VIVALDI FOUR SEASONS AT CHRISTMAS Featuring Andrew Harvey (violin) & Warren Mailley-Smith (piano). Programme also includes Beethoven's Emperor Piano Concerto, Sat 27 Dec, St Philip's Cathedral, Birmingham

CANDLELIGHT: CHRISTMAS CLASSICS The Sekine Quartet perform Christmas classics in the glow of candlelight, Sat 27 Dec, St Paul's Church, Birmingham

Comedy

JOE LYCETT & FRIENDS Mon 22 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

DAVE FULTON, MORGAN REES & COMIC TBC Sat 27 Dec, The Glee Club

LUNCHTIME FAMILY COMEDY SHOW Sun

28 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham
COBO: KINGS OF COMEDY FEAT. KAZEEM JAMAL, NABIL ABDULRASHID, AXEL BLAKE & SLIM Sun 28 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

DOUBLE TROUBLE, NABIL ABDULRASHID & TOMMY SANDHU Sun 28 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

DANNY WARD, HASAN AL-HABIB, JO ENRIGHT & KAREN BAYLEY Wed 31 Dec, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

LINDSEY SANTORO, ANDY ROBINSON, DARREN HARRIOTT & THOMAS GREEN Wed 31 Dec, The Glee Club, B'ham

Theatre

CHECK PREVIOUS WEEKS FOR THEATRE SHOWING THROUGHOUT THE MONTH

CHARLES DICKENS TELLING TALES

Jonathan Goodwin's original and authentic one-man recreation of Dickens' dramatic performances, adapted from some of his shorter tales and comic selections, Mon 22 Dec, Lightwoods Park and House, Smethwick

GHOST STORIES FOR CHRISTMAS

Double bill of chilling tales: Charles Dickens' The Signalman and MR James' Casting The Runes, Mon 22 - Mon 29 Dec, The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

Kids Theatre

THE NUTCRACKER Lollipop Puppet Theatre fuse storytelling and intricate puppetry in a new interpretation of the famous festive tale, Mon 22 Dec, Smethwick Library

DEAR SANTA LIVE Rod Campbell's festive story is brought to life in a show suitable for audiences aged one-plus. A post-show opportunity to meet Santa in his grotto - and receive an 'extra special gift' - also features, Mon 22 & Tues 23 Dec, Dudley Town Hall

HORRIBLE HISTORIES: HORRIBLE CHRISTMAS Take a 'hair-raising journey' through the history of Christmas in the company of Charles Dickens, Oliver Cromwell and St Nicholas, Tues 23 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE FATHER CHRISTMAS SHOW - SAVE THE SLEIGH 'Festive cheer, laughter, Christmas magic and songs' combine in a show where the audience is needed to help Santa keep Christmas on track..., Tues 23 - Wed 24 Dec, The Crescent Theatre

BRAINIAC LIVE Award-winning family science show featuring explosive experiments and plenty of action, Sun 28 - Tues 30 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall



Horrible Histories: Horrible Christmas - Symphony Hall

Light Entertainment

THE D-DAY DARLINGS: A CHRISTMAS TO REMEMBER Evening of 'nostalgia and festive cheer' featuring The D-Day Darlings, The D-Day Juniors and the Voices Community Choir, Mon 22 Dec, Halesowen Town Hall

CHRISTMAS BY CANDLELIGHT Join Lichfield Cathedral Choir for an evening of new and classical arrangements of carols, performed by glowing candlelight, Mon 22 Dec, Lichfield Cathedral

THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS IN CONCERT The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra perform Danny Elfman's musical score alongside a screening of Tim Burton's holiday classic, Wed 24 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE MUSIC OF ZIMMER VS. WILLIAMS The London Concert Orchestra, conducted by Anthony Inglis, bring to life legendary scores from cinematic classics, Sat 27 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Events

CHECK PREVIOUS WEEKS FOR EVENTS SHOWING THROUGHOUT THE MONTH

FAMILY BACKSTAGE TOUR Aimed at children aged between five and 14, Mon 22 Dec, The Rep, Birmingham

THE ELF EXPRESS The North Pole favourites bring festive cheer, silly antics and joyful songs to the train, Tues 23 - Wed 24 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, departs Bridgnorth, South Shropshire

SANTA'S STEAM SPECIALS Brand new

for 2025, join Santa and friends for The Great Christmas Train Rescue, Wed 24 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, nr Kidderminster

BIG BLUE BLOCKS Build, stack, channel and connect larger-than-life play blocks, Wed 24 Dec - Sun 4 Jan, Compton Verney, Warwickshire

TOY COLLECTORS FAIR Featuring more than 500 stalls packed with thousands of new and old collectables for sale, Sat 27 Dec, NEC, Birmingham

TINKER | MAKE | PLAY ENGINEERS - FESTIVE INVENTIONS Featuring a variety of messy and non-messy spinning experiments, Sat 27 Dec, Coventry Transport Museum

LDN WRESTLING - TABLES, LADDERS & CHAIRS Featuring 'jaw-dropping championship bouts and epic tag team warfare', Sat 27 Dec, Dudley Town Hall

WINTER DIESEL DAY Featuring a variety of diesel classes, special workings, and regular services at the SVR, Mon 29 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, nr Kidderminster

LIGHTS, SCIENCE, ACTION! THE SCIENCE OF LIGHT SHOW Live show all about the science of light, Mon 29 - Wed 31 Dec, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

WINTER PUPPET WORKSHOP Transform simple white socks into magical hand puppets, Mon 29 - Wed 31 Dec, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry

ART CLUB: FESTIVE NEW YEAR CRAFTS Take inspiration from the New Year's Eve fireworks and create some colourful works of art, Wed 31 Dec, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

NEW YEAR'S EVE SPECIAL Enjoy four round trips between Kidderminster and Highley, Wed 31 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, nr Kidderminster

Cinderella

THE GREATEST PANTO OF THEM ALL!

SATURDAY 22 NOVEMBER -
WEDNESDAY 31 DECEMBER 2025



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