

Coventry & Warwickshire

ISSUE 467 DECEMBER 2025

What's On

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WINTER FUNLAND

seasonal extravaganza makes a welcome return to the NEC





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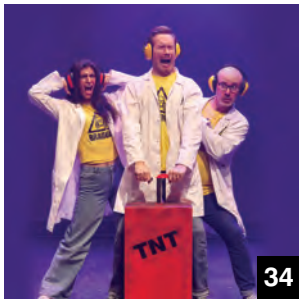
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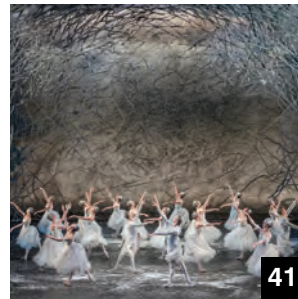
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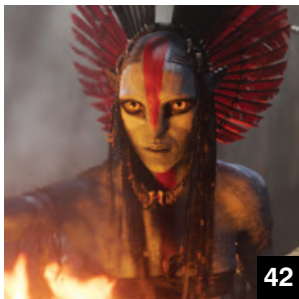
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What's On

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A Christmas feast at RSC venue The Other Place!

A blend of creativity, comedy and music is on offer at the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) this festive season.

Ready Steady Colour's Christmas Feast invites families to a make-believe restaurant, where they get to choose their 'food' and colour it in.

The event is suitable for children aged three-plus, lasts for just under an hour, and takes place at the RSC venue The Other Place in Stratford-upon-Avon from Wednesday 10 December to Saturday 3 January. To find out more and book tickets, visit rsc.org.uk

Stick Man festive trail in two Midlands forests

Midlands families are being invited to check out a festive trail inspired by Stick Man, the much-loved character from the Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler picture book of the same name. The specially designed Stick Man Christmas trail, available to enjoy in Worcestershire's Wyre Forest, offers youngsters the chance to experience an 'interactive adventure' featuring a selection of wintry activities, including a scavenger hunt. For more information, visit the website at forestryengland.uk/stick-man

Festive film favourites with BBC orchestra

A feast of festive film music is on offer at Coventry's Warwick Arts Centre mid-month, when the BBC Concert Orchestra visit the venue (Friday 12 December). Presenting a special yuletide edition of BBC Radio Three's Friday Night Is Music Night, the orchestra will be performing a programme that brings together timeless classics like Scrooge, Miracle On 34th Street and White Christmas with modern family favourites such as Love Actually and The Polar Express. For further information and to book tickets, visit warwickartscentre.co.uk



Brand-new children's show to visit The Albany

A brand-new children's show is coming to Coventry's Albany Theatre in the spring. Billed as 'featuring sqwonky puppets, odd-automata and a slew of charity-shop rejects', Pixiematosis tells the story of how a deranged gardener's actions impact on the pixies who live in a magical midnight garden. To find out more, visit albanytheatre.co.uk

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



Cultural programme launched in Worcester

An Arts Council England-funded two-year programme has been launched in Worcester with the aim of growing the city's cultural life.

Titled Local Voices, Creative Choices, the programme will include arts projects, festivals and new opportunities involving artists, emerging creatives, communities, and FE and HE students.

The programme will run until September 2027... To find out more, visit the website at severnarts.org.uk

New musical heading for the Midlands 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.



Strictly stars Alijaž and Janette to 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



Haircut One Hundred on tour

Haircut One Hundred will visit Warwick Arts Centre next spring in celebration of their first album with Nick Heyward in 44 years.

The much-loved 80s band's Boxing The Compass will be released in March, with their Coventry stop-off happening on Saturday 2 May.

For more information and to book tickets, visit the website at warwickartscentre.co.uk

Midlands date for West End Girl 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



New home for Autocar archive

The British Motor Museum in Warwickshire is to be the new home of the physical Autocar archive.

Autocar is the world's longest-running car magazine, and its archive has been available to access digitally since 2023. Physical copies and future bound volumes of the title will soon be added to the Motor Museum's existing collections. A complete set of What Car? magazines, Autocar's sibling title at publisher Haymarket Automotive, has also been donated to the Motor Museum's archive.



Roald Dahl's snappy tale on stage at Coventry's Belgrade

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

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



Beverley Knight to reprise role in acclaimed 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

Cathedral date for singer-songwriter Rob Halligan

Award-winning singer/songwriter Rob Halligan visits Coventry Cathedral next month (Saturday 31 January) with a show that explores 'our shared human journey' by looking at some of Rob's own experiences - from a dysfunctional childhood and life on the streets, to being an ambassador for vulnerable children. To find out more and book tickets, visit coventrycathedral.org.uk

Michael Rosen to star at Malvern's ideas festival

The 2026 Malvern Festival of Ideas will return in the spring (Malvern St James School, Friday 13 - Sunday 15 March), with its guest contributors including acclaimed children's author Michael Rosen. The theme for the 2026 edition of the event is 'social change'. Further details can be found at malvernfestivalofideas.org.uk

New trail launches at University Sculpture Park

A new children's trail has opened at Coventry's University of Warwick Sculpture Park to honour the life of Soh Morimura Ingram, who grew up close to the campus and died in an accident at the age of five. Created with Warwick Arts Centre's curatorial team, the trail grew from a picture book made by Soh's parents following the loss of their young son. To find out more, visit the Soh's Trail page at warwick.ac.uk

Swing Into Christmas at Warwick Arts Centre!

The critically acclaimed Down For The Count Swing Orchestra are bringing their much-loved Swing Into Christmas show to Coventry's Warwick Arts Centre mid-month. Mixing fresh arrangements of both festive and non-festive classics with their signature wit and flair, the 30-piece 'big band with strings' visit the venue on Tuesday 9 December. For further information and to book tickets, visit swingintochristmas.co.uk



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Classic Ibiza concert event returning to Ragley Hall

Classic Ibiza will return to the grounds of Warwickshire's Ragley Hall on Saturday 4 July. The family-friendly concert will see Urban Soul Orchestra take the audience on 'a high-

octane journey through the biggest anthems in dance-music history, all accompanied by a spectacular laser & light show'. For further information and to book tickets, visit the event's website at classicibiza.co.uk

Karate Kid musical to make a summer stop-off

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

Coventry Belgrade teams up with theatre company

Coventry's Belgrade Theatre has entered into partnership with local theatre company China Plate. The new team-up will see both organisations 'deepen their shared commitment to developing innovative, inclusive and community-led approaches to theatre-making'. Commenting on the news, the Belgrade's artistic director, Corey Campbell, and chief executive, Laura Elliot, said: "We are thrilled to be joining forces with China Plate as we roll out an ambitious series of large-scale co-created productions over the coming years, created with, by and for Coventry residents."

Hit dance thriller The Car Man in Autumn '26 visit

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 repertoire 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



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**AN EVENING WITH
MICHAEL PORTILLO**
18.11.26

B:Music Christmas Gift Guide



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 around the show, free meet & greets and more. If you're a horse lover, this is the place to be!"

Applications 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.

Santa's at Skydome!

A much-loved Father Christmas experience is making a return in Coventry this month. Inclusive local theatre company EGO Arts' immersive, walk-through production, Father Christmas & Friends, takes families on a trail which includes a cosy cottage, a snowy forest and a Christmas cracker factory...

The show will run each pre-Christmas weekend in December at the former JJ's venue at Coventry Skydome. For more information and to book tickets, visit egoarts.co.uk



Gladiators show coming to the region 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



RSC launches Shakespeare Curriculum initiative

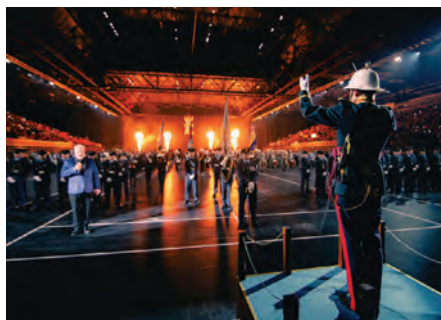
Actors Dame Helen Mirren and Sir Ian McKellen recently teamed up with the Royal Shakespeare Company to launch the RSC Shakespeare Curriculum, a revolutionary new way of studying the bard using the latest

learning technology and innovation. The curriculum has been created with major investment from independent grant-making trust the Foyle Foundation. To find out more, visit shakespearecurriculum.com

Diary date for Britain's biggest indoor tattoo

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

Period podcast comes to Coventry's Square One

Women's-health podcast It's Not Just A Period is hosting a live event at Square One in Coventry on Wednesday 10 December. The evening, which aims 'to confront the catastrophic issues facing women's healthcare today', features an exclusive interview with investigative author Evelyn Scott. Tickets for the event can be purchased at Eventbrite.

A nostalgic Christmaaas at Worcestershire venue

Worcestershire's Hanbury Hall is once again turning back the clock to the late 20th century this Christmas.

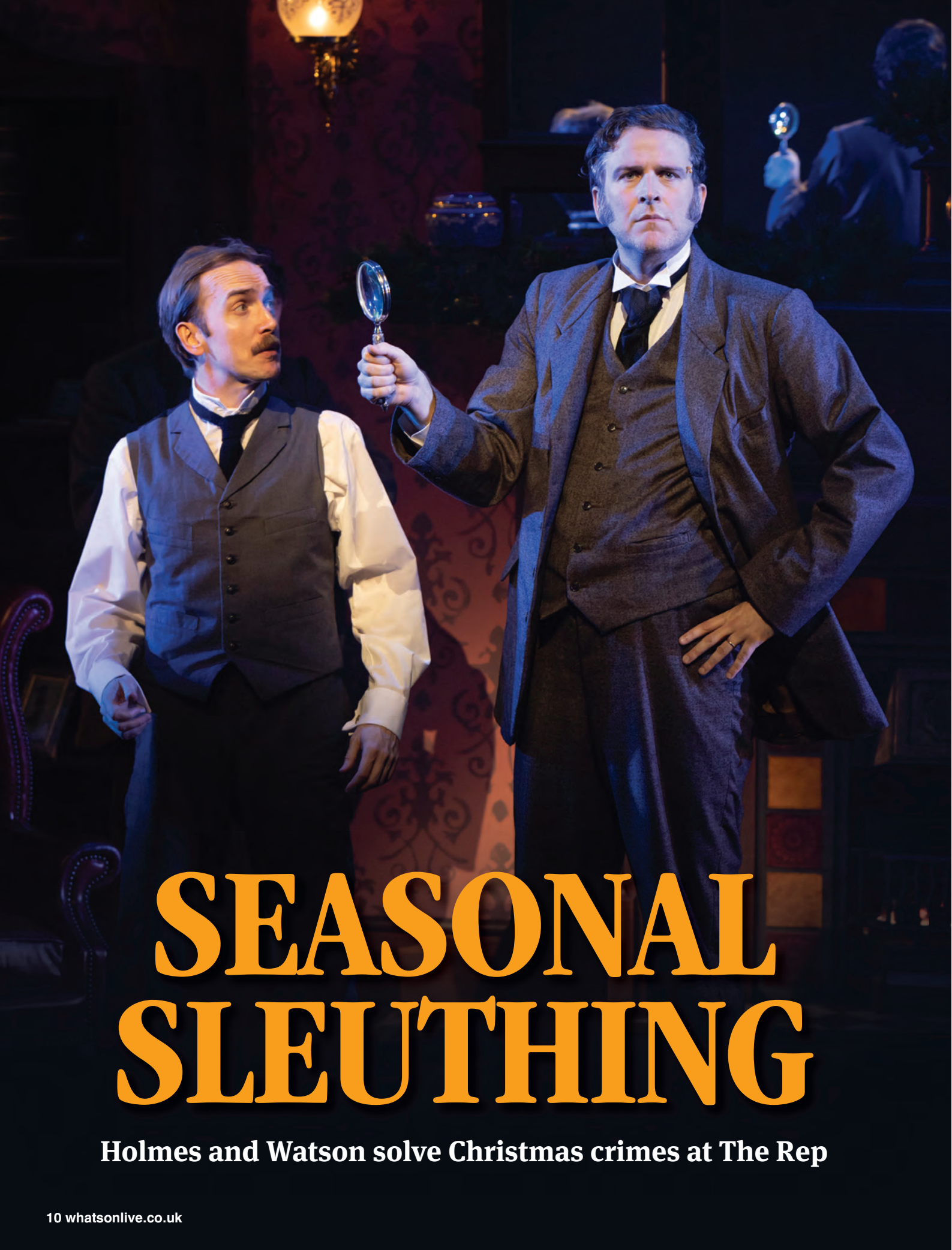
The venue's It's Christmaaas! event (running until Sunday 4 January) sees the house dressed for the festive season, features favourite toys and mementoes from the era, and provides nostalgia buffs with the chance to enjoy Christmas number ones from the 1970s & 80s while sipping on a Babycham!

To find out more about the event, visit the website at nationaltrust.org.uk

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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

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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; Hereford Cathedral, Wed 10 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, Sat 19 - Mon 22 December

Under the directorship of its founder, Jeffrey Skidmore, Ex Cathedra's atmospheric Christmas Music By Candlelight event has become a mainstay of many a Midlands-based music lover's festive celebrations. Offering a perfect, albeit temporary, antidote to the Christmas rush, the concert

features favourite carols from across the ages, interspersed with a variety of readings exploring 'the magic, humour and peace' of the season.

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



Worcester Festival Choral Society

Worcester Cathedral, Sat 6 December

Worcester Festival Choral Society's performance of Handel's magnificent choral masterpiece is a popular element of the Midlands' festive-music scene - and as retellings of the Christmas story go, it's most definitely one worth hearing. The 164-year-old Society's 140 voices will be joined by four solo performers and the Meridian Sinfonia Baroque orchestra. Worcester Cathedral's director of music, Samuel Hudson (pictured), conducts.

Joglaresa

St Mary's Church, Warwick, Tues 16 December

Medieval and folk ensemble Joglaresa bring their unique brand of festive fun to the region mid-month, presenting a concert of carols specifically designed to get their sure-to-be-appreciative audience singing along.

The band will be hosting a short workshop before the show, providing attendees with the chance 'to learn the nuts and bolts of a few numbers you didn't know you always knew!'

Mulled wine and mince pies are included, 'to warm up the vocal cords beautifully'.



Orchestra Of The Swan: The Bells Of Paradise

Holy Trinity Church, Leamington Spa, Sat 20 December

If, for whatever reason, you're struggling to get into the Christmas spirit, this could well be the concert that unlocks those hitherto-constrained feelings of festive merriment.

The Coventry born-and-raised Harvey Brough, who's perhaps most famous from 1980s jazz harmony group Harvey And The Wallbangers, leads local community choir Vox Populi as they perform Christmas carols from around the globe and through the ages.



Armonico Consort

Malvern Theatres, Fri 5 December; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Thurs 18 December

Armonico Consort's latest concert is a tribute to the music of George Frideric Handel and sees them performing anthems which the composer wrote for King George II's coronation in 1727. Two of the works, Zadok The Priest and The King Shall Rejoice, are widely considered to be among the most powerful and evocative pieces ever composed for such an event. The programme also features Dettingen Te Deum. One of Handel's most widely admired works, it was written to celebrate King George II's triumphant return from the Battle of Dettingen in 1743. The composer's famous Fireworks Music completes the line-up. The work was created in 1749, to accompany the royal celebrations for the ending of the War of the Austrian succession.

Linarol Consort

Huntingdon Hall, Worcester, Sun 7 December

Comprising musicians who are leading exponents of the viol, the Linarol Consort present a concert telling the story of a truly dramatic event: a shipwreck that led to a chance meeting between Henry VII of England and Philip the Handsome of Burgundy.

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.



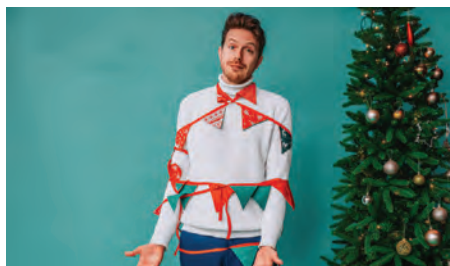
DEAR SANTA LIVE

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 prezziie...

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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Book your tickets in advance at transport-museum.com

Tickets are non-refundable and non-transferable.



Live music from across the region...

Alabama 3

hmv Empire, Coventry, Thurs 11 December

In Alabama 3's own immortal words: "We make sweet pretty muthaf**kin country acid-house music."

The Brixton-formed band achieved international fame when their hit single Woke Up This Morning was chosen as the theme tune for HBO TV phenomenon The Sopranos. Their fondness for outrageous live performances will surely draw a crowd when they visit Coventry this month.

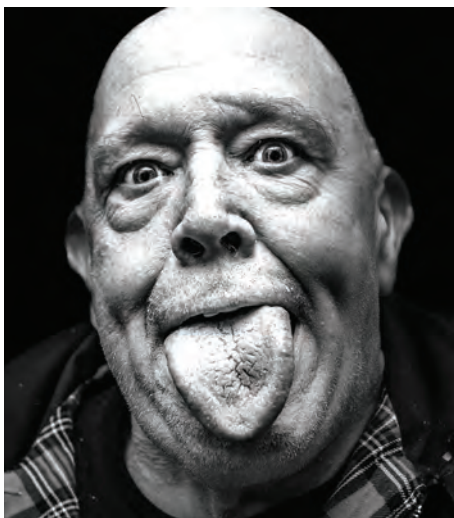


Bad Manners

The Marris Bar, Worcester, Tues 2 December

Long in the tooth they may be, but English 2 Tone ska wizards Bad Manners still command a significant following around the globe. Very much a novelty act - courtesy, in the main, of the on-stage antics of bald-headed frontman Buster Bloodvessel - they spent the early 1980s vying for chart positions with fellow ska revival bands Madness, The Specials and The Selecter.

They visit Worcester this month with their 50th Anniversary Christmas Party show.



The Unthanks

Huntingdon Hall, Worcester, Wed 3 December

Northumbrian folk favourites The Unthanks are marking 20 years of musicmaking with a tour of small, intimate spaces. Very much a family affair, with sisters Rachel and Becky at the forefront, the band's CV boasts a host of interesting projects, from creating song

cycles from Emily Bronte's poetry, to site-specific theatre with Maxine Peake. They're not short of celebrity fans either, with Elvis Costello, Colin Firth, Dawn French, Al Murray and Ade Edmondson among their high-profile admirers.

Eliza Carthy & Jon Boden's Wassail

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Mon 1 & Tues 2 December

Now here's a festive-season team-up well worth catching...

The daughter of Norma Waterson and Martin Carthy, and a familiar name on the UK folk circuit, Eliza is an extremely talented singer and multi-instrumentalist...

Jon, meanwhile, is perhaps best known as the lead vocalist of progressive folk band Bellowhead, whose five studio albums have notched up more than a quarter of a million sales.

The Overtones

Malvern Theatres, Mon 1 December

Vocal harmony group The Overtones were working together as painters and decorators when they were discovered by a Warner Brothers scout, who heard them singing during their tea break. A multi-album deal was subsequently secured with the record label. Blending 1950s harmonies with modern pop, their debut offering featured a number of tracks which the boys themselves had written. Numerous television appearances have followed in the ensuing

years, with slots on shows such as Dancing On Ice and Britain's Got More Talent ensuring they've remained in the public eye.

Jesca Hoop

The Tin at The Coal Vaults, Coventry, Wed 3 December

Jesca Hoop's studio albums have marked her out as a talented singer-songwriter who enjoys performing in diverse musical styles. "She is an old soul," says one-time mentor Tom Waits, "like a black pearl, a good witch or a red moon. Her music is like going swimming in a lake at night."





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."

.....

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

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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-swaggering 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, Kyrah 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."

.....
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...

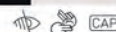
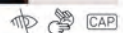
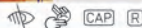


It's A Wonderful Knife

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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THU 15 JAN '26
THE DRIFTERS



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THE ROY
ORBISON STORY



FRI 6 FEB '26
QUEENZ -
DRAG ME TO THE DISCO!



SUN 22 FEB '26
TAP FACTORY



FRI 27 FEB '26
AN EVENING WITH
NIGEL OWENS MBE



SUN 8 MAR '26
SEVEN DRUNKEN NIGHTS -
THE STORY OF THE DUBLINERS



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 grotesquery 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 Moxy 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

snozzcumber. 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."

.....

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!

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.



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'.



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



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 prezzi... 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!

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.



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).



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!'

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.





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."

.....

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

BIRMINGHAM ROYAL PALLET



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Director Carlos Acosta

Carlos Acosta's

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Festive dance showing in the region



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 Symphonica] - it's all just mind-blowing!"



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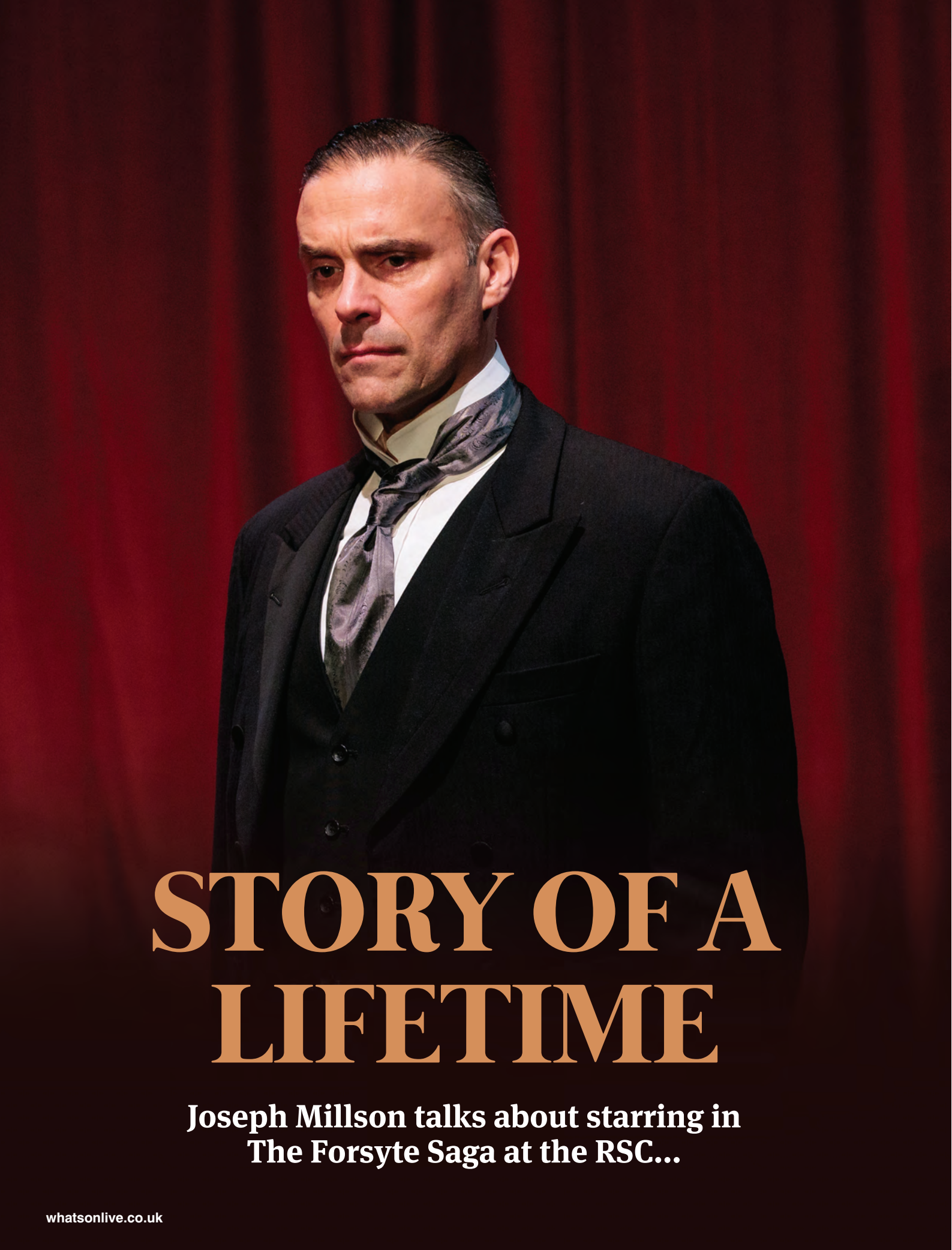


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STORY OF A LIFETIME

**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



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**

Nickelodeon 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



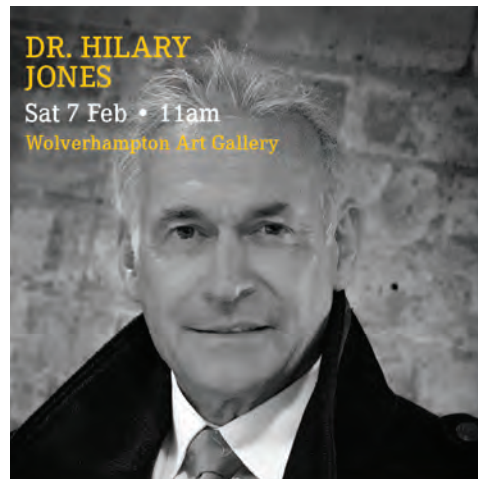


Image: Maurice Denis' Portrait of Arthur Haig (1892). Oil on Millboard. The Henry Barber Trust at The Barber Institute of Fine Arts

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 Lying 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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Festive events previews from around the region



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.

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.



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.

STEP INTO A
**SEASON
of STORIES**
at
**COMPTON
VERNEY**

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.





STAGE & SCREEN PRODUCTION
ACADEMY



OPEN EVENT



WEDNESDAY 7TH JANUARY

6PM - 8PM

Register at www.trainbackstage.co.uk



BOA Stage and Screen Production Academy, 48 Stour Street, Birmingham, B18 7AJ

Festive events previews from around the region

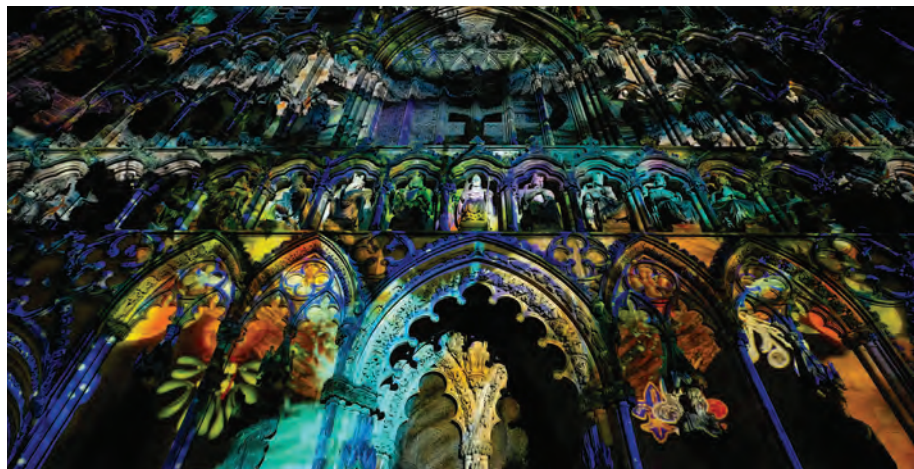


Christmas fun at Thinktank

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

thelist



Down For The Count Orchestra: Swing Into Christmas - Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Tues 9 December

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

What's On

Mon 1 - Sun 7 December



Mobius Loop -
Malvern Cube
Fri 5 December

Mon 8 - Sun 14 December



The Mediaeval Baebes -
Tewkesbury Abbey
Wed 10 December

Mon 15 - Sun 21 December



True Foxes -
Temperance, Leamington Spa
Wed 17 December

Mon 22 - Wed 31 December



Tinker Make Play Engineers -
Coventry Transport Museum
Sat 27 December

VISUAL ARTS IN THE MIDLANDS

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

OSZY 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

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.

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

Coventry Music Museum

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

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

Herbert Museum & Art Gallery, Coventry

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 December

Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum

CHILDISH THINGS A playful, nostalgic and intergenerational exhibition that

explores childhood, through artworks and objects from the Museum's collection, until Sun 1 February

Midlands Arts Centre, Edgbaston, Birmingham

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

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

Nuneaton Museum & Art Gallery

NUNEATON SCHOOL OF ART ALUMNI

EXHIBITION A show examining the history of the organisation, and a show of work by artists who have attended or taught at the institution, until Sat 28 February

Rugby Art Gallery

ANYA KALSI: WINNER OF THE RUGBY OPEN 2024 Until Sat 13 December

TRIPONTIUM: FINDS FROM THE STORES

Exhibition of archaeological finds from a small Roman settlement about four miles north-east of present-day Rugby, permanently donated to the museum, until Sat 11 April

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

Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum

DESIGNING TERRY PRATCHETT'S DISCWORLD: 30 YEARS OF PAUL KIDBY'S ILLUSTRATION Colourful paintings, exquisite pencil drawings, and a rogue's gallery of favourite characters from Pratchett's Discworld, until Sun 4 January

WORCESTER SOCIETY OF ARTISTS: ANNUAL EXHIBITION 2025 Featuring works by members who come from a wide range of backgrounds with different levels of skills, experience and styles; some are lifelong artists while others have only recently come into art, until January 2026



The Wombats - bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham

Gigs

CHRIS CLEVERLEY & FRIENDS Mon 1 Dec, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

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

JESCA HOOP Tues 2 Dec, Kitchen Garden, B'ham

ACM SOUNDS Tues 2 Dec, Actress & Bishop, Birmingham

ERIN LECOUNT Tues 2 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

JESS AND THE BANDITS Tues 2 Dec, The Victoria, Birmingham

CLIFF RICHARD Tues 2 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

BAD MANNERS + MAX SPLODGE Tues 2 Dec, Marrs Bar, Worcester

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

ELECTRIC SIX + ENJOYABLE LISTENS Wed 3 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

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

STEREOPHONICS Wed 3 Dec, Utilita Arena Birmingham

JESCA HOOP Wed 3 Dec, The Tin At The Coal Vaults, Coventry

JACKIE OATES AND JOHN SPIERS Wed 3 Dec, The Fleece Inn, Bretforton, Nr Evesham



THE UNTHANKS Wed 3 Dec, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

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

KATIE & THE BAD SIGN Thurs 4 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

ATMOS BLOOM Thurs 4 Dec, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

BOB VYLAN Thurs 4 Dec, O2 Institute, B'ham

FYFE DANGERFIELD Thurs 4 Dec, Centrala, Birmingham

SWEET + BOBBIE DAZZLE Thurs 4 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

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

MERRY HELL Thurs 4 Dec, Catshill Club, Bromsgrove

KATEY BROOKS Thurs 4 Dec, Temperance, Leamington Spa

BRITISH LION Thurs 4 Dec, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

TALON Thurs 4 Dec, Malvern Theatres

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

CHARLOTTE YOUNG Fri 5 Dec, Actress & Bishop, Birmingham

HARLEYMOON KEMP Fri 5 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham



THE HEELS Fri 5 Dec, The Dark Horse, B'ham

THE SHEATLES Fri 5 Dec, The Night Owl, B'ham

WINDOW KID Fri 5 Dec, O2 Institute, B'ham

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

EVERYTHING EVERYTHING Fri 5 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

VICKY JACKSON AS PINK Fri 5 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE CORE REGGAE BAND Fri 5 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham



Mobius Loop - Malvern Cube

NIALL MCNAMEE Fri 5 Dec, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

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

TOBY LEE + ISABELLA COULSTOCK Fri 5 Dec, Temperance, Leamington Spa

GLUE TRIP + HONGZA + SHANGHAI HOSTAGE Fri 5 Dec, The Tin At The Coal Vaults, Coventry

ED SHEERAN Fri 5 Dec, Coventry Building Society Arena

GREENMAN RISING Fri 5 Dec, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

BLONDISH Fri 5 Dec, Marrs Bar, Worcester

MUD Fri 5 Dec, Kidderminster Town Hall

MOBIUS LOOP Fri 5 Dec, Malvern Cube

ABBA ALIKE Fri 5 Dec, Civic, Stourport

NO PROOF Sat 6 Dec, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

JAKE HENRY Sat 6 Dec, Actress & Bishop, Birmingham

JULIA WOLF Sat 6 Dec, O2 Institute, B'ham

INSPIRAL CARPETS Sat 6 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

IST IST + YAANG Sat 6 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

ROXY MAGIC Sat 6 Dec, O2 Academy, B'ham

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

GRUBSON Sat 6 Dec, Castle & Falcon, B'ham

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

LAST HOUNDS Sat 6 Dec,

The Flapper, B'ham

THE WOMBATS Sat 6 Dec, bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham

A WINTER UNION Sat 6 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), B'ham

THE BAD DAY Sat 6 Dec, Temperance, Leamington Spa

CHEVY + SPIRAL CITY Sat 6 Dec, Arches Venue, Coventry

STONE FOUNDATION Sat 6 Dec, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

CHRISTIAN GARRICK AND THE BUDAPEST CAFÉ ORCHESTRA Sat 6 Dec, The Market Theatre, Ledbury

FOREVER QUEEN Sat 6 Dec, Marrs Bar, Worcester

BONFIRE RADICALS UNPLUGGED Sun 7 Dec, Kitchen Garden, B'ham

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

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

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

THE CHURCHFITTERS CHRISTMAS CRACKER! Sun 7 Dec, Temperance, Leamington Spa

THE TWIN FLAMES + NATURE MAKERS + FAMILY YOGA Sun 7 Dec, The Tin At The Coal Vaults, Coventry

MO DOTTI Sun 7 Dec, Just Dropped In, Coventry

A FISTFUL OF SPOOKIES Sun 7 Dec, The Fleece Inn, Bretforton, Nr Evesham

Classical Music

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

THE MELLSTOCK BAND: THE CHRISTMAS HEARTH Featuring Dave Townsend (concertina & voice), Caroline Butler (violin & voice), Tim Hill (clarinet & voice) & Philip Humphries (serpent & voice). A seasonal mix of jovial songs, stirring dance music, and haunting carols, Wed 3 - Thurs 4 Dec, Unitarian Chapel, Warwick

CBSO: BARTÓK & RAVEL Featuring Pierre Bleuse (conductor) & Ryan Wang (piano). Programme also includes Liszt's Piano Concerto No. 1, Thurs 4 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

ORCHESTRA OF THE SWAN: WINTERTIDE Programme includes works by Holst, Corelli & Vivaldi, Thurs 4 Dec, Number 8, Pershore

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

OTIUM SAXOPHONE QUARTET Featuring Florence Ryan (soprano saxophone), Hannah Kermode (alto saxophone), Evie Cooper (tenor saxophone) & Tom Winter (baritone saxophone), Fri 5 Dec, Holy Trinity Church, Leamington Spa

WINTERTIDE: UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK CHAMBER CHOIR Featuring the University of Warwick Chamber Choir, Fri 5

Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

EBORACUM BAROQUE: HANDEL'S MESSIAH PART 1 AND FESTIVE FAVOURITES Fri 5 Dec, Great Malvern Priory

ARMONICO CONSORT: HANDEL'S FIREWORKS Fri 5 Dec, Malvern Theatres

CHRISTMAS CLASSICS AT THE OLD PALACE Featuring Grace Shepherd (violin), Fri 5 Dec, Worcester Cathedral

BRITISH POLICE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA PROMS NIGHT SPECTACULAR - FROST & FLAMES: A SYMPHONY OF ELEMENTS Featuring Dr Richard Jenkinson (conductor), Sat 6 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

LONDON CONCERTANTE: BEETHOVEN'S MOONLIGHT SONATA BY CANDLELIGHT Programme also includes works by Chopin & Liszt, Sat 6 Dec, Coventry Cathedral

WORCESTER FESTIVAL CHORAL SOCIETY: HANDEL'S MESSIAH Also featuring Amy Carson (soprano), Frances Gregory (mezzo soprano), Simon Wall (tenor), Tim Dickinson (bass), Samuel Hudson (conductor) & the Meridian Sinfonia Baroque Orchestra, Sat 6 Dec, Worcester Cathedral

TEWKESBURY CHORAL SOCIETY Featuring John Holloway (director) & the Regency Sinfonia. Programme includes works by Charpentier, Handel & Haydn, Sat 6 Dec, Tewkesbury Abbey

WORCESTER MALE VOICE CHOIR: THE MERRY CHRISTMAS CONCERT Sat 6 Dec, Huntingdon Hall

CHELtenham SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: A MAGICAL WINTER JOURNEY Featuring Johnny Ball (narrator). Programme includes works by Prokofiev, Lane, H Blake & Tchaikovsky, Sat 6 Dec, Princess Hall, Cheltenham

EX CATHEDRA: BACH CHRISTMAS ORATORIO Featuring James Robinson (evangelist), Margaret Lingas & Katie Trethewey (soprano), Martha McLorinan, Gabriella Liandu & Laura Toomey (alto), 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, Youth & Children's Chorus. Programme includes new commissions by C Kinoshi,

R Panufnik & J Armatrading, Sun 7 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA & CHORUS - ETERNAL ECHOES Programme includes works by C Tin, J Rutter, Respighi & Williams, Sun 7 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

LINAROL CONSORT: SHIPWRECK Featuring James Gilchrist (tenor), Heloise Bernard (soprano), David Hatcher, Alison Kinder, Claire Horacek & Timothy Lin (viols), Sun 7 Dec, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

Comedy

JOE LYCETT & FRIENDS Mon 1 Dec, The Glee Club, B'ham

KERRY GODLIMAN Wed 3 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

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

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

GARY DELANEY (PICTURED), TONY LAW, FINLAY CHRISTIE & AIDEEN MCQUEEN Thurs 4 Dec, hmv Empire, Coventry



REGINALD D HUNTER & SPECIAL GUESTS Thurs 4 Dec, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

LOU WALL Fri 5 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

THE COMEDY STORE Fri 5 Dec, Kidderminster Town Hall

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

ANGLEA BARNES Sat 6 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

ANGELOS EPITHEMIU, LINDSEY SANTORO, FRED FERENCZI & RYAN MOLD Sat 6 Dec, The Bridge House Theatre, Warwick

WHITE YARDIE Sun 7 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham



Stone Foundation - Queens Hall, Nuneaton

FROM THE PRODUCERS OF  A CHRISTMAS SPECTACULAR

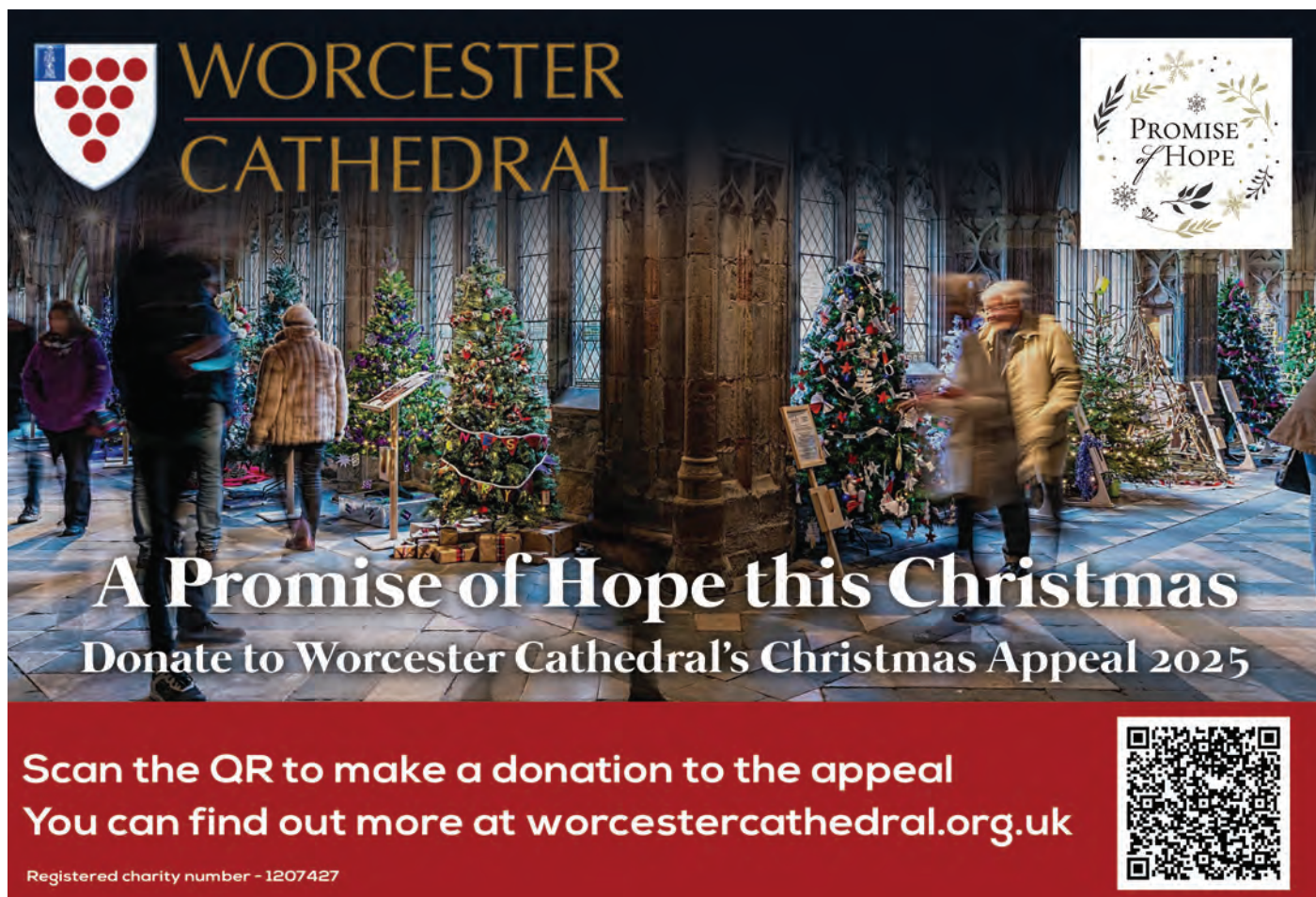
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Theatre

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

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 1 Dec, The Henrican, Evesham

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

HANDEL'S MESSIAH Wild Arts present an 'innovative dramatisation' of Handel's legendary telling of the Christmas story, Tues 2 Dec, Malvern Theatres

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

DANCING IN LUGHNASA Amateur version of Brian Friel's semi-autobiographical play, set in 1936 in the Ireland of his boyhood, Wed 3 - Sat 13 Dec, The Loft Theatre, Leamington Spa

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, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE Wymysical Theatre present an amateur version of CS Lewis' classic adventure, Fri 5 - Sat 6 Dec, Norbury Theatre, Droitwich

THE LION THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE Amateur version of CS Lewis' classic adventure, Fri 5 - Sun 14 Dec, The Bear Pit Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

EVERYWHERE Bridge House Young Company present an amateur version of Nicky Bellenger's play, which revolves around the experiences of a family coming to terms with a dementia diagnosis, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Dec, The Bridge House Theatre, Warwick

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

Pantomimes

CINDERELLA BOA Group bring the timeless festive tale to life with 'breathtaking 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), until Sat 3 Jan, The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

MOTHER GOOSE A 'cracking' family pantomime, until Sat 3 Jan, The Courtyard, Hereford

SLEEPING BEAUTY 'The pantomime of your dreams' presented by Worcester Repertory Company, until Sun 4 Jan, Swan Theatre, Worcester

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

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



Macbeth - The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon

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

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

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), B'ham

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



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

SANTA'S NEW SLEIGH Festive show featuring singalong songs and a free present from Santa. Suitable for pre-school and children up to eight years of age, Fri 5 Dec, Kidderminster Town Hall

SANTA'S CHRISTMAS PARTY Help get Santa's Christmas Party back on track in an adventure full of fun, festive songs and party games..., Sat 6 Dec, The Benn Hall, Rugby

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



THE NUTCRACKER Presented by Kings International Ballet, Sat 6 - Thurs 11 Dec, Macready Theatre, Rugby

Light Entertainment

STEP INTO CHRISTMAS The spirit of the season brought to life with 'dazzling performances, festive visuals and a live band', Wed 3 Dec, Malvern Theatres

Vintage Trains THE POLAR EXPRESS™ *Train Ride*

Birmingham Moor Street Station
22nd November - 23rd December



Book your Golden Tickets



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

THE RAT PACK REPRISE Award-winning theatre show which faithfully recreates the music, magic and comedy of Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and Sammy Davis Junior, Sat 6 Dec, The Civic, Stourport

BEYOND THE BARRICADE The UK's longest-running musical theatre concert tour, Sat 6 Dec, Malvern Theatres

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

LONDON CONCERTANTE: CHRISTMAS MOVIES BY CANDLELIGHT Festive celebration featuring music from a host of classic films, including White Christmas, Love Actually, Home Alone, Elf and It's A Wonderful Life..., Sat 6 Dec, Coventry Cathedral

THE MAN WHO WAS MAGIC Step into James Phelan's world, 'where magic happens and the impossible comes alive', Sat 6 Dec, The Henrican, Evesham

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



MERRY MISCHIEVOUS MICE TRAIL Can you find all the festive mice hiding around the castle? until Tues 23 Dec, Hartlebury Castle, Worcester

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

SANTA SAFARI Combining a four-mile winter safari with a visit to Santa, until Wed 24 Dec, West Midlands Safari Park, Bewdley

SPECTACLE OF LIGHT 2025 Discover the Court of King Arthur and the Magic of Merlin as you embark on an illuminated adventure around the grounds, until Tues 30 Dec, Sudeley Castle, Cheltenham

WINTER GLOW Featuring ice skating, a light trail and a Christmas market,

until Wed 31 Dec, Three Counties Showground, Malvern

THE BIG SNOWMAN SEARCH A blizzard of snowmen has arrived - but they're hidden around the building. Can you find them all? until Wed 31 Dec, The Commandery, Worcester

THE ENCHANTED GARDENS OZ Follow the yellow brick road as the Enchanted Gardens return for a fifth year, until Sat 3 Jan, Webbs at Wychbold, Worcestershire

AESOP'S FABLES - CHRISTMAS AT UPTON HOUSE AND GARDENS See the house decorated with Aesop's Fables-themed displays, until Sun 4 Jan, Upton House & Gardens, Warwickshire

CHRISTMAS AT BADDESLEY CLINTON A Christmas feast is laid out in the dining room, while in the parlour, a winter-wonderland surprise awaits, until Sun 4 Jan, Baddesley Clinton, Warwickshire

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

CHRISTMAS AT CROOME: RAPTUREOUS DELIGHT A festive sensory experience, with glowing interiors, immersive projections, and a festive feel throughout, until Sun 4 Jan, Croome Park, Worcestershire

CHRISTMAS AT THE CASTLE Featuring stories with Santa, an ice rink and a light trail, until Sun 4 Jan, Warwick Castle

BAGS OF FUN: CHRISTMAS CRAFTS Make your own Christmas decoration, design a jolly Christmas card, and create a paper wreath, until Sun 4 Jan, Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum

THE GREAT CHRISTMAS PUZZLE HUNT FAMILY TRAIL A festive family trail with a puzzling twist, until Sun 4 Jan, Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum

THE SNOWMAN SCULPTURE TRAIL Find all the decorated sculptures around the gardens, until Sun 11 Jan, Baddesley Clinton, Warwickshire



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

FUNDRAISING EVENT: FESTIVE WREATH MAKING Make your very own wreath using fresh greenery with the help of the castle's head gardener, Tues 2 Dec, Hartlebury Castle, Worcestershire

CHRISTMAS EVENING TOUR Featuring an after-hours house tour and Christmas dinner at the Baddesley Barn Restaurant, Wed 3 Dec, Baddesley Clinton, Warwickshire

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



MARINA WARNER: IN CONVERSATION & BOOK SIGNING Join writer & cultural historian Marina Warner and Senior Curator Oli McCall for an exclusive discussion, Thurs 4 Dec, Compton Verney, Warwickshire

CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL 2025 Featuring trees from charities, schools, businesses, community groups and others from across the region, Thurs 4 Dec - Tues 6 Jan, Worcester Cathedral

FUNDRAISING EVENT: FESTIVE WREATH MAKING Make your very own wreath using fresh greenery with the help of the castle's head gardener, Fri 5 Dec, Hartlebury Castle, Worcester

CHRISTMAS WREATH MAKING WORKSHOP Join Croome's expert florists and make your own festive wreath to take home with you, Fri 5 - Sat 6 Dec, Croome Park, Worcestershire

CHRISTMAS MAKERS' FAIR Enjoy browsing a range of stalls dotted around the museum, Fri 5 - Sat 6 Dec, Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum

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

CHRISTMAS ON THE FARM Visit the grotto, work in the teddy bear workshop and have a go in the gingerbread kitchen, Fri 5 - Sun 7 Dec, Cotswold Farm Park, Cheltenham

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

JAGUAR BREAKFAST MEET Event open to all Jaguar owners and enthusiasts, Sat 6 Dec, British Motor Museum, Gaydon

ART MASTERCLASS: FESTIVE CANDLE PAINTING Design unique large candles with vibrant acrylic paints, Sat 6 Dec, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry

ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS KINGDOM Featuring Father Christmas, twinkling lights and festive fun, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Dec, Hatton Adventure World, Warwick

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON CHRISTMAS MARKET Featuring 200-plus independent stalls packed with unique gifts, handmade crafts and seasonal food, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Dec, Stratford-upon-Avon

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

CHRISTMAS MAKERS MARKET Featuring unique designs by local makers alongside indie brands you won't find on the high street, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Dec, FarGo Village, Coventry

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

A FAMILY CHRISTMAS Meet Santa and enjoy an array of festive activities, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Dec, Hartlebury Castle, Worcestershire

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

SOLIHULL ARTS MARKET Featuring crafts by artists, designers and makers from across the Midlands, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Dec, The Core Theatre, Solihull

BREAKFAST WITH SANTA Little ones can meet the man in red and share their Christmas wishes with him, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Dec, Anne Hathaway's Cottage, Stratford-upon-Avon

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

STORYTIME WITH SANTA A festive morning with Santa, Sun 7 Dec, FarGo Village, Coventry

CHRISTMAS CRAFT FAIR Browse a variety of craft stalls, Sun 7 Dec, Forge Mill Needle Museum, Redditch



Stereophonics - Utilita Arena Birmingham

Gigs

THE BEN HOLDER TRIO Mon 8 Dec, Temperance, Leamington Spa

THE TEALS Tues 9 Dec, The Sunflower Lounge, B'ham

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

LOATHE Tues 9 Dec, XOYO, Birmingham

THE CRASH COLLECTION BIG BAND Tues 9 Dec, Westwood Club, Coventry

ATTILA THE STOCKBROKER Wed 10 Dec, Kitchen Garden, Birmingham

OLLIE COOK & THE HOGWASH Wed 10 Dec, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

VIVID SOUL Wed 10 Dec, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

THE LOST NOTES + SUSY WALL Wed 10 Dec, Red Lion Folk Club, B'ham

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

SWAPS Wed 10 Dec, Temperance, Leamington Spa

JAMES YORKSTON Thurs 11 Dec, Kitchen Garden, Birmingham

VICTORIES AT SEA Thurs 11 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

NAUSY Thurs 11 Dec, The Sunflower Lounge, B'ham

CG5 Thurs 11 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

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

REBECCA DOWNES Thurs 11 Dec, Temperance, Leamington Spa

ALABAMA 3 Thurs 11 Dec, hmv Empire, Coventry

AIRBORN Thurs 11 Dec, Marrs Bar, Worcester

ELVANA: ELVIS FRONTEO NIRVANA Fri 12 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

BAND OF SKULLS + THE DUKE SPIRIT + THE HOWLERS Fri 12 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE ICICLE WORKS Fri 12 Dec, O2 Academy, B'ham

UNDER THE COVERS Fri 12 Dec, O2 Academy, B'ham

CODY FROST Fri 12 Dec, The Asylum, Birmingham

TWO PIECE Fri 12 Dec, The Flapper, Birmingham

JAMIROQUAI Fri 12 Dec, Utilita Arena Birmingham

QUEEN RHAPSODY Fri 12 Dec, The Bridge House Theatre, Warwick

GRAIL GUARD + ABZ WINTER + ROBINPLAYSCHORDS + THE SUNBATERS Fri 12 Dec, The Tin At The Coal Vaults, Coventry

ANT-TROUBLE Fri 12 Dec, Arches Venue, Coventry

ABSOLVA Fri 12 Dec, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

T-REXTASY Fri 12 Dec, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

A CELEBRATION OF SIMON AND GARFUNKEL Fri 12 Dec, The Civic, Stourport

THE BONGOLIAN Sat 13 Dec, The Night Owl, Birmingham

DUB FX Sat 13 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

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

THE SMYTHS + BILLY BLAGG Sat 13 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

ALICE ARMSTRONG Sat 13 Dec, O2 Academy, B'ham

AMC GOSPEL CHOIR &

MANCHESTER CAMERATA Sat 13 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

STEREOPHONICS Sat 13 Dec, Utilita Arena Birmingham

FRANKIE LEE AND THE CASUALS Sat 13 Dec, Temperance, Leamington Spa

GREENMATTHEWS Sat 13 Dec, The Bridge House Theatre, Warwick

UZAK Sat 13 Dec, The Tin At The Coal Vaults, Coventry

RODDY RADIATION AND THE SKABILLY REBELS Sat 13 Dec, Arches Venue, Coventry

ABSOLUTE BRITNEY Sat 13 Dec, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

THE FEZZ - TRIBUTE TO STEELY DAN Sat 13 Dec, West Malvern Social Club

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

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

STEREO MC'S Sun 14 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

ROBERT PLANT PRESENTS SAVING GRACE Sun 14 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

THE FLEETWOOD MACK EXPERIENCE Sun 14 Dec, The Core Theatre, Solihull

CHRIS CLEVERLEY (FT JOHN PARKER) + AWAKE MOTHER Sun 14 Dec, Temperance, Leamington Spa

TOP OF THE ROCK CHRISTMAS SHOWCASE Sun 14 Dec, The Tin At The Coal Vaults, Coventry

THE JOHN OTWAY BAND Sun 14 Dec, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

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THE JOHN OTWAY BAND Sun 14 Dec, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

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

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

LA NATIVITÉ DU SEIGNEUR Featuring Michael Bacon (organ). Programme includes works by Messiaen, Tues 9 Dec, Great Malvern Priory

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

EX CATHEDRA: CHRISTMAS MUSIC BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring Jeffrey Skidmore (conductor). Programme includes works by Warlock, Britten, Gibbons & more..., Wed 10 Dec, Hereford Cathedral

MEDIAEVAL BAEBES Wed 10 Dec, Tewkesbury Abbey



EX CATHEDRA: CHRISTMAS MUSIC BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring Jeffrey Skidmore (conductor). Programme includes works by Warlock, Britten, Gibbons & more..., Thurs 11 Dec, Coventry Cathedral

EUAN STEVENSON (PIANO): THE CLASSICAL CONNECTION Thurs 11 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

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

COVENTRY CATHEDRAL CHOIR CHRISTMAS CONCERT Featuring the Brass Band of Central England. Programme includes Christmas carols, Fri 12 Dec, Coventry Cathedral

BBC CONCERT ORCHESTRA: CHRISTMAS AT THE MOVIES Featuring George Morton (conductor). Programme includes works by J Williams, I Berlin & more..., Fri 12 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

AUTUMN COUNTY GROUPS CONCERT Featuring County Strings Orchestra, County Wind

Band & guests, Fri 12 Dec, King's High Hall, Warwick

COLIN LAPUS ORGAN RECITAL Fri 12 Dec, St Mary's Church, Warwick

PERSHORE TOWN CHOIR CHRISTMAS CONCERT Fri 12 Dec, Pershore Abbey

THE PICCADILLY SINFONIA: VIVALDI FOUR SEASONS AT CHRISTMAS Featuring Victoria Sayles (violin). Programme also includes works by Corelli, Fri 12 Dec, Worcester Cathedral

HANDEL'S MESSIAH Featuring Alexandra Kidgell, David Whitworth, Simon Wall & Felix Kemp (soloists), Tewkesbury Abbey Schola Cantorum & The Bristol Ensemble, Sat 13 Dec, Tewkesbury Abbey

THE MIDLAND SINFONIA: CHRISTMAS FAMILY CONCERT A seasonal afternoon of music for all the family - including The Snowman set to music by Howard Blake, Sat 13 Dec, St Georges C of E Church, Worcester

COVENTRY CATHEDRAL CHORUS: HANDEL'S MESSIAH BY CANDLELIGHT Sat 13 Dec, Coventry Cathedral

MALVERN FESTIVAL CHORUS: GLORIA IN EXCELSIS Featuring Jonathan Brown (conductor), Sat 13 Dec, Great Malvern Priory

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

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

PETER BRUSH, DAVE WILLIAMS, KATE CHEKA & MARK CRAM Thurs 11 Dec, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

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

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Theatre

CHECK PREVIOUS WEEKS FOR
THEATRE & PANTOS SHOWING
THROUGHOUT THE MONTH

THE WINTER'S TALE Perfect Circle Youth Theatre present an amateur version of Shakespeare's story of jealousy, transformation and reconciliation, Mon 8 - Tues 9 Dec, Malvern Theatres

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

A CHRISTMAS CAROL Paul Nolan's one-man production of Dickens' timeless tale, Wed 10 - Sun 14 Dec, The Charterhouse, Coventry

THE SNOW QUEEN Phoenix Collective and The Coach House Theatre fuse comedy, songs and dance in an amateur version of Hans Christian Andersen's icy tale, Thurs 11 - Sat 13 Dec, Malvern Theatres

CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY Amateur version of Roald Dahl's children's story, various dates between Fri 12 - Sun 28 Dec, The Dream Factory, Warwick

A CHRISTMAS CAROL Behind The Door Productions present a one-man performance of Charles Dickens' Christmas classic, Sat 13 Dec, Greyfriars House and Garden, Worcs

THE NUTCRACKER, BUT NOT AS YOU KNOW IT! Expect bold storytelling, curious surprises and a healthy dose of nonsense in an amateur version of The Nutcracker that's being described as 'reimagined, remixed, and just a little bit unhinged', Sat 13 & Sun 14 Dec, The Rose Theatre, Kidderminster

Pantomime

DICK WHITTINGTON AND HIS MUSICAL CAT! Set sail from the Teme to the Thames in Tenbury's purr-fect family panto, Thurs 11 - Wed 31 Dec, Regal, Tenbury Wells

JACK & THE BEANSTALK Starring Mark James as Silly Billy, Tom Lister (Emmerdale) as Fleshcreep, Nick Wilton (EastEnders) as Dame Trott, Ella Holt as The Spirit of the Beans and Ruth Betteridge as Jill Pickle, Thurs 11 Dec - Sun 4 Jan, Malvern Theatres

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

READY STEADY COLOUR'S CHRISTMAS FEAST A 'merry blend' of creativity, comedy and music. Suitable for children aged three-plus, Wed 10 Dec - Sat 3 Jan, The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon

THE UGLY DUCKLING Worcester Repertory Company present 'a wintery tale of wonder, waddles and finding where you belong', Sat 13 - Wed 24 Dec, Swan Theatre, Worcester

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

THE GINGERBREAD BOY A brand-new Christmas story about 'friendship and celebrating our differences', Sun 14 Dec, Kidderminster Town Hall

Light Entertainment

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

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

MICHAEL BUBLÉ BY CANDLELIGHT AT CHRISTMAS Featuring Josh Hindle and his full band, Wed 10 Dec, Artrix, Bromsgrove

CHRISTMAS LECTURES Join Ally Caldecote and other scientists from the University of Warwick, who are leaving their labs to entertain, inspire and amaze audiences, Wed 10 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

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

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', Sat 13 Dec, Hartlebury Castle, Kidderminster

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

A MAGICAL CHRISTMAS FAMILY CONCERT A special musical performance of the classic tale The Night Before Christmas, Sun 14 Dec, Hartlebury Castle

A CELTIC CHRISTMAS Featuring Christmas music entwined with ancient festive folk tunes, performed in a candlelit setting, Sun 14 Dec, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

Talks & Spoken Word

CHRISTMAS GHOSTS: THE TRADITIONS OF WINTER TALES Kirsty Hartsiotis explores supernatural tales at midwinter, taking audiences back to the early winter stories of the Middle Ages and to the time of Shakespeare and Marlowe, Wed 10 Dec, The Henrican, Evesham

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

CHRISTMAS EVENING TOUR Featuring an after-hours house tour and Christmas dinner at the Baddesley Barn Restaurant, Tues 9 Dec, Baddesley Clinton, Warwickshire

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 A majestic

historic steam locomotive hauls you through the countryside to Highley and back, Tues 9 - Thurs 11 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley

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

CHRISTMAS EVENING TOUR Featuring an after-hours house tour and Christmas dinner at the Baddesley Barn Restaurant, Thurs 11 Dec, Baddesley Clinton, Warwickshire

FUNDRAISING EVENT: FESTIVE WREATH MAKING Make your very own wreath using fresh greenery with the help of the castle's head gardener, Fri 12 Dec, Hartlebury Castle, Worcester

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, Shropshire

CHRISTMAS MAKERS MARKET Featuring unique designs by local makers, Sat 13 - Sun 14 Dec, FarGo Village, Coventry

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

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION WEEKEND 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

SANTA'S CREATIVE CHRISTMAS ADVENTURE Enjoy festive crafting with Mrs Claus and meet Santa by the fire, Sat 13 - Sun 14 Dec, Arley Arboretum, Worcestershire

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



THE MYTON HOSPICES - SANTA DASH 2025 Run, jog or walk the 5k route, Sun 14 Dec, Victoria Park, Leamington Spa

Gigs

SHACK Mon 15 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

TOMMY ASHBY + LYDIA CLOWES + JODIE Mon 15 Dec, Temperance, Leamington Spa

THE BOOTLEG BEATLES Tues 16 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CHURCHFITTERS Tues 16 Dec, The Fleece Inn, Bretforton, Nr Evesham

IRE-ISH Wed 17 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

CLUTCH + 1000MODS + BOKASSA Wed 17 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

MAD JOCKS AND ENGLISHMEN Wed 17 Dec, Red Lion Folk Club, Birmingham

TONY HADLEY Wed 17 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

TRUE FOXES Wed 17 Dec, Temperance, Leamington Spa

ST AGNES FOUNTAIN Wed 17 Dec, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

JACK GOODALL + THE LINE MANAGERS Thurs 18 Dec, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

NECK DEEP + BOSTON MANOR + ANXIOUS Thurs 18 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE WONDER STUFF + VENT 414 Thurs 18 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

FLESH CREEP + MEATDRIPPER + TOTAL LUCK + MATTERS Fri 19 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

THE CLAUSE + THE KAIROS + THE LILACS Fri 19 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE 3 SIXTIES Fri 19 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE BUG CLUB Fri 19 Dec, Castle & Falcon, B'ham



True Foxes - Temperance, Leamington Spa

MADNESS + SQUEEZE Fri 19 Dec, Utilita Arena B'ham

MISSISSIPPI McDONALD Fri 19 Dec, Temperance, Leamington Spa

THE UPSIDERS Fri 19 Dec, The Tin At The Coal Vaults, Coventry

DIZZY LIZZY Fri 19 Dec, Arches Venue, Coventry

SIMON HENLEY & THE KINGCRAWLERS Fri 19 Dec, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

THE CARPENTERS MASQUERADE Fri 19 Dec, The Benn Hall, Rugby

KING PLEASURE AND THE BISCUIT BOYS Fri 19 Dec, Huntingdon Hall, Worcs

FURY Fri 19 Dec, Marrs Bar, Worcester

ROVING CROWS Fri 19 - Sat 20 Dec, West Malvern Social Club

GHAIST - GHOST TRIBUTE Sat 20 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

DRINK THE SEA Sat 20 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

SLADE + SONS OF THE SEVENTIES Sat 20 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE TWANG + BRÔGEAL + THE BRACKNALL Sat 20 Dec, O2 Academy, B'ham

DISCHARGE Sat 20 Dec, Castle & Falcon, B'ham

TALON Sat 20 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

GILES ROBSON Sat 20 Dec, Temperance, Leamington Spa

THE BOHEMIANS + A FOREIGNERS JOURNEY Sat 20 Dec, hmv Empire, Coventry

ULTIMATE COLDPLAY Sat 20 Dec, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

FRED ZEPPELIN Sat 20 Dec, Marrs Bar, Worcester

THE UPBEAT BEATLES Sat 20 Dec, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

VASELINE Sat 20 - Sun 21 Dec, O2 Academy, B'ham

THE SONS OF PITCHES Sun 21 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

CHANTEL MCGREGOR Sun 21 Dec, Temperance, Leamington Spa

THE WILDERNESS YET Sun 21 Dec, The Fleece Inn, Bretforton, Nr Evesham

DEFINITELY MIGHTBE Sun 21 Dec, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

ABBAMANIA Sun 21 Dec, Kidderminster Town Hall

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

ARMONICO: CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring Christopher Monks (director) & George Herbert (organist), Mon 15 Dec, St Mary's Church, Warwick

ORCHESTRA OF THE SWAN: A CHRISTMAS CAROL Featuring Anton Lesser (narrator) & David Le Page (musical director), Mon 15 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall



G4 CHRISTMAS Programme includes traditional carols, sacred contemplations, classical favourites & modern festive hits, Tues 16 Dec, Coventry Cathedral

JOGLAESA: HERE WE COME A-CAROLLING! Featuring Elsa Bradley percussion (dulcimer & chorus), Essa Flett (fidel & chorus), Jeremy Avis (voice), Jonny Akerman (percussion, dulcimer, fidel, & chorus), Louise Anna Duggan (percussion, dulcimer, harp & chorus) & Victoria Couper (voice & harp), Tues 16 Dec, St Mary's Church, Warwick

EX CATHEDRA: CHRISTMAS MUSIC BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring Jeffrey Skidmore (conductor). Programme includes works by Warlock, Britten, Gibbons & more..., Wed 17 Dec, St Mary's Church, Moseley, Birmingham

BRITTEN'S CEREMONY OF CAROLS Featuring the Girls' Choir of the Collegiate Church of St Mary, Wed 17 Dec, St Mary's Church, Warwick

CBSO: CHORAL CHRISTMAS WITH STEPHEN MANGAN Featuring Michael Seal (conductor) & CBSO Chorus, Youth Chorus, Children's Chorus & SO Vocal. Hear Christmas carols performed by the full CBSO and its whole family of choirs, Thurs 18 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

BRITTEN'S CEREMONY OF CAROLS Featuring Cecily Beer (harp) & The Cathedral Girls' Choir, Thurs

18 Dec, Coventry Cathedral
ARMONICO CONSORT: HANDEL'S FIREWORKS Featuring Christopher Monks (director) & The Armonico Baroque Orchestra, Thurs 18 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

DA CAPO CHAMBER CHOIR Programme includes carols - old and new, Thurs 18 Dec, St Mary's Church, Warwick

CBSO CHRISTMAS PARTY WITH STEPHEN MANGAN Featuring Michael Seal (conductor), Elesha Paul Moses (vocalist) & CBSO Chorus, Youth Chorus & SO Vocal. Sleigh bells, songs, a full symphony orchestra and plenty of Christmas spirit... Fri 19 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

COVENTRY CATHEDRAL CHORUS: CONCERT BY CANDLELIGHT Programme includes works by Scarlatti, Willcocks, Tchaikovsky & more..., Fri 19 Dec, Compton Verney, Warwickshire

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

VOX POPULI: THE BELLS OF PARADISE Featuring Harvey Brough (director) & Orchestra of the Swan. Programme includes Christmas songs, old and new, from around the world, Sat 20 Dec, Holy Trinity Church, Leamington Spa

CHRISTMAS WITH THE JENNY LIND SINGERS Programme includes works by Britten, Sat 20 Dec, Great Malvern Priory

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, B'ham

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



Madness - Utilita Arena Birmingham

CHRISTMAS Tues 16 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ANDY ROBINSON, GBEMI OLADIPO, ANDREW BIRD & COMIC TBC Wed 17 - Thurs 18 Dec, The Glee Club, B'ham

ANDY ROBINSON, GBEMI OLADIPO, ANDREW BIRD & TOM WARD Fri 19 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

DARREN HARRIOTT, TOM WRIGGLESWORTH & JON PEARSON 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

A CHRISTMAS CAROL Paul Nolan's one-man production of Dickens' timeless story of redemption, compassion, social responsibility, and the importance of family and community, Wed 17 - Sun 21 Dec, The Charterhouse, Coventry



PINNOCHIO: A CHRISTMAS TALE Musical reimagining of the classic story. Created by Holly Maullett of CBBC's Andy And The Band fame, Thurs 18 - Tues 30 Dec, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

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

GOLDSILKS AND THE THREE BEARS Festive treat in which fairytale magic meets panto family fun, Wed 17 Dec - Sun 4 Jan, Priory Theatre, Kenilworth

ROBINSON CRUSOE Swashbuckling family pantomime, Sat 20 Dec - Sat 3 Jan, Talisman Theatre & Arts Centre, Kenilworth

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 MAN AND THE NAUGHTY ELF A short, pantomime-style play performed by adults for children aged between three and 10, Sat 20 Dec, Norbury Theatre, Droitwich

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

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

SCROOGE LIVE A screening of the much-loved 1951 version of Dickens' classic tale starring Alastair Sim, with a newly orchestrated score by the three-piece FB Pocket Orchestra, Mon 15 & Tues 16 Dec, Worcester Cathedral

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

CHRISTMAS ENTERTAINMENT 2025 An evening of 'music and mirth, merriment and mayhem' featuring songs, sketches and reflection, Tues 16 - Fri 19 Dec, The Rose Theatre, Kidderminster

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

A SWINGIN' CHRISTMAS Festive swing show with a modern twist, Thurs 18 Dec, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

BUBLÉ CHRISTMAS BY CANDLELIGHT



Wicked Wizard of Oz - A Circus Spectacular - bp pulse LIVE Birmingham

'Ultimate feelgood, singalong concert that promises to bring Christmas cheer and have audiences dancing in the aisles!', Fri 19 Dec, Worcester Cathedral

MITCH BENN PERFORMS CHARLES DICKENS' A CHRISTMAS CAROL A one-man performance using Charles Dickens' own abridged text. All proceeds donated to local charities, Fri 19 Dec, Norbury Theatre, Droitwich

KIDDERMINSTER CHORAL SOCIETY - CHRISTMAS GALA CONCERT Sat 20 Dec, Kidderminster Town Hall

DIVA OF THE DECADES Sing along and dance to the music of Tina Turner, Aretha Franklin, Whitney Houston, Dolly Parton, Celine Dion and more..., Sat 20 Dec, The Bridge House Theatre, Warwick

THE SNOWMAN WITH LIVE ORCHESTRA A screening of Raymond Briggs' festive classic, with live orchestra and solo from the Cathedral's Choristers, Sat 20 Dec, Coventry Cathedral

CHRISTMAS: THE CANDLELIGHT CONCERT Featuring timeless sing-along favourites, including White Christmas, Santa Baby, Winter Wonderland and more..., Sat 20 Dec, Worcester Cathedral

Events

CHECK PREVIOUS WEEKS FOR EVENTS SHOWING THROUGHOUT THE MONTH

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

HURD LIBRARY GUIDED TOUR Special talk about Bishop Hurd's life and his

collection of books, Tues 16 Dec, Hartlebury Castle, Worcester

CHRISTMAS GROTTO & FESTIVE FUN Meet Santa and find out what the naughty elves have been up to, Sat 20 Dec, West Midlands Police Museum, Birmingham

CHRISTMAS TALES WITH JASON BUCK The award-winning storyteller presents bite-size storytelling sessions, Sat 20 - Sun 21 Dec, Compton Verney, Warwickshire

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

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 Enjoy seasonal stories around the Christmas tree, Sat 20 - Sun 21 Dec, Kenilworth Castle

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 Bridgnorth, South Shropshire

PARTY WITH SANTA Join Santa for traditional party games and gather round for a special Christmas story, Sat 20 - Tues 23 Dec, Hartlebury Castle, Worcester

SANTA'S CREATIVE CHRISTMAS ADVENTURE Enjoy festive crafting with Mrs Claus and meet Santa by the fire, Sat 20 - Tues 23 Dec, Arley Arboretum, Worcestershire

ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS KINGDOM Featuring Father Christmas, twinkling lights and festive fun, Sat 20 - Wed 24 Dec, Hatton Adventure World

STORYTIME WITH SANTA Enjoy a festive morning with Santa, Sun 21 Dec, FarGo Village, Coventry

Stuff their stockings with magic memories!

**BEST
FAMILY
SHOW**
2025
Olivier Award



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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

 **carrot**
productions



2025 TOUR

Birmingham Town Hall
THURSDAY 18 DECEMBER
1.45pm | 6pm
carrotproductions.com



The
SnowmanTM
WITH LIVE ORCHESTRA

Gigs

INDEPENDENT COUNTRY + JOHNSON & FINNEMORE Mon 22 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

SWAPS + SHANADE + GREEN HANDS Mon 22 Dec, Temperance, Leamington Spa

LINK N PARK Mon 22 Dec, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

H&H HOUSE BAND PERFORM 'THE BENDS' BY RADIOHEAD Tues 23 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

UBMAD4SKA Tues 23 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

GREENMATTHEWS' MIDWINTER REVELS Tues 23 Dec, Number 8, Pershore

SKA TRAIN Tues 23 Dec, Temperance, Leamington Spa

DISCIPLES OF SOUL Tues 23 Dec, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

VINCENT FLATTS FINAL DRIVE Sat 27 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

SIGNING OFF - TRIBUTE TO UB40 Sat 27 Dec, The Night Owl, Birmingham

GBH + DRONGOS FOR EUROPE + DIRTBOX DISCO + CRIMINAL DAMAGE + BIG BLACK EYE Sat 27 Dec, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

PINK BY VICKY JACKSON Sat 27 Dec, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

WINTER WOOFEST Sat 27 Dec, Marrs Bar, Worcester

WITCH TRIAL + NOT SOUP + DIRTY HOUND Sun 28 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

WEST COAST EAGLES Sun 28 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

MIDNIGHT CITY SOUL BAND Wed 31 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

BLACK ROSE SOCIETY Wed 31 Dec, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

Classical Music

ARMONICO: CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring Christopher Monks (director) & Andrew Lumsden (organist), Tues 23 Dec, St Mary's Church, Warwick

CAROLS FOR ALL Featuring Malvern Festival Chorus, Sat 27 Dec, Great Malvern Priory

Comedy

JOE LYCETT & FRIENDS Mon 22 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

DAVE FULTON, MORGAN REES & COMIC TBC Sat 27 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

LUNCHTIME FAMILY COMEDY SHOW Sun 28 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

KINGS OF COMEDY FEAT. KAZEEM JAMAL, NABIL ABDULRASHID, AXEL BLAKE & SLIM Sun 28 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

DOUBLE TROUBLE FEAT. 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

SNOW WHITE Featuring Queen Cruella and the 'wonderful wacky' Dame Dolly Dustpan, Mon 22 - Sun 28 Dec, The Benn Hall, Rugby

STELLA'S IMAGINARIUM A circus fairytale for the whole family, featuring aerial acrobatics and shadow dances, Tues 30 Dec, Number 8, Pershore

Kids Theatre

THE MINCE PIE MOUSE Our Star Theatre Company present 'a super sensory tale for little people and their grown-ups', Mon 22 Dec - Sun 4 Jan, Malvern Theatres

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

SANTA'S CHRISTMAS PARTY Help get Santa's Christmas Party back on track in an adventure full of fun, festive songs and party games, Wed 24 Dec, The Civic, Stourport

BRAINIAC LIVE Award-winning family science show featuring explosive experiments and plenty of action, Sun 28 - Tues 30 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

Light Entertainment

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

MICHAEL LUNTS GOES CHRISTMAS



Horrible Histories: Horrible Christmas - Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CRACKERS Join the pianist, actor, singer & comedy-song entertainer as he delves into the archives to present classic music and comic material from the heyday of satire, Mon 29 Dec, Fairfield Village Hall, Stourbridge Road, Worcestershire

Events

CHECK PREVIOUS WEEKS FOR EVENTS SHOWING THROUGHOUT THE MONTH

FUNDRAISING EVENT: SANTA PAWS Take your furry friend to meet Santa, Mon 22 Dec, Hartlebury Castle, Worcester

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

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

WINTER PUPPET WORKSHOP Transform simple white socks into magical hand puppets, Mon 29 - Wed 31 Dec, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry

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

NEW YEAR'S EVE SPECIAL Enjoy four round trips between Kidderminster and Highley, Wed 31 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, nr Kidderminster



Tinker Make Play Engineers: Festive Inventions - Coventry Transport Museum

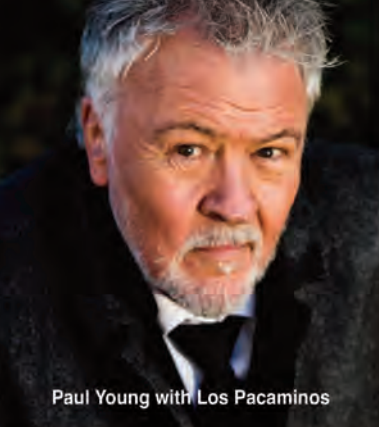
THE 12 WINS OF CHRISTMAS

Win BIG with What's On in the lead-up to Christmas,
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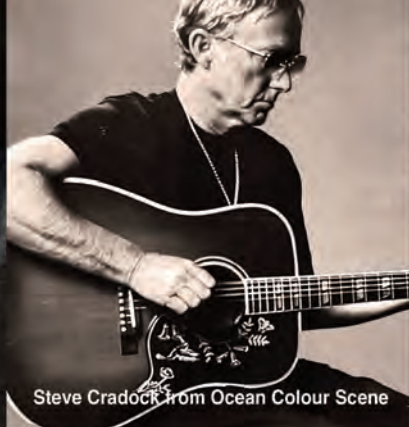


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Paul Young with Los Pacaminos



Steve Craddock from Ocean Colour Scene



John Power - Lead Singer of CAST band



Danny McNamara - Lead Singer of Embrace

OUR BIGGEST EVER LINE-UP IN 2026

JANUARY 2026

Fri 9 Jan: Billy Joel UK Tribute
Sat 10 Jan: Glam 45
Fri 16 Jan: The Superskas
Sat 17 Jan: Brit Pop United
Sun 18 Jan: Teddy Swims/Rag&Bone
Fri 23 Jan: ZZ Topp'd
Sat 24 Jan: Bongo's Bingo
Sat 24 Jan: Disco Bliss - 70s/80s Party
Sun 25 Jan: Country Fest
Fri 30 Jan: Dookie - Green Day tribute
Sat 31 Jan: Bongo's Bingo

FEBRUARY 2026

Fri 6 Feb: Shep Leppard/Extremely
Sat 7 Feb: Miss Rachel Experience
Sat 7 Feb: Martin Kemp - Back to the 80s
Sun 8 Feb: K Pop Superstars
Fri 13 Feb: Paul Young & Los Pacaminos
Sat 14 Feb: Bongo's Bingo
Fri 20 Feb: These Smiths
Sat 21 Feb: 70s Day Party
Sun 22 Feb: Dr Hook Songbook
Fri 27 Feb: Coldplace - Coldplay tribute
Sat 28 Feb: Country Day Party
Sat 28 Feb: Bongo's Bingo

MARCH 2026

Fri 6 Mar: Quo Connection
Sat 7 March: Sounds of Seattle
Fri 13 March: Chasing Mumford
Sat 14 March: Bongo's Bingo
Sun 15 March: - Frankie Valli & Four Seasons MOTHER'S DAY tribute
Thurs 19 March: Calvin Price - Psychic
Fri 20 March: MacBusted
Sat 21 March: Ultra White Collar Boxing
Sun 22 March: Faulty Towers Dining
Fri 27 March: Natasha as Madonna
Sat 28 March: Knackered Knees
Sat 28 March: Bongo's Bingo
Sun 29 March: Luke Combs UK

APRIL 2026

Thurs 2 April: Remi's Hot Trio Club
Sat 4 April: RnB Orchestra
Fri 10 April: Westlife Tribute
Sat 11 April: Emo Fest
Sat 11 April: The Endings - The Cellars
Sun 12 April: Steve Craddock (OCS)
Fri 17 April: Maet Live - Meat Loaf
Sat 18 April: 90s Revival - Day Party

Sun 19 April: John Power (Cast Band)
Thu 23 April: Stuart Michael Medium
Fri 24 April: Moretallica PLUS Ghost

MAY 2026

Fri 8 May: Don't Stop Queen Now
Sat 9 May: Fleeting Rumours
Fri 15 May: Airtight 80s
Sun 17 May: Gordon Hendricks
Fri 22 May: Northern Live
Fri 29 May: Blackmoore
Sat 30 May: Indie Fest
Sun 31 May: Chris Stapleton UK

JUNE 2026

Thurs 4 June: Desperados
Fri 5 June: Nirvana UK / Brain of G
Sat 6 June: Special Kinda Madness
Sun 7 June: The Blues Rock Roadshow
Fri 12 June: Vicky Jackson - P!NK show
Thurs 18 June: The History of Soul
Fri 19 June: Motorheadache UK
Sun 21 June: School of Rock
Sat 27 June: HipHop Fest

JULY 2026

Fri 3 July: Rammlied - Rammstein Tribute
Sat 4 July: ABBA Rooftop Party
Fri 24 July: Dream On: Aerosmith
Sat 25 July: The RnB Lovers Fest

ALSO ON SALE:

Fri 7 August: The Fooz
Thurs 3 Sept: Man of The World
Fri 4 Sept: DS:UK - Dire Straits tribute
Sun 6 Sept: Tom Petty Heartbreak
Sun 13 Sept: Danny McNamara Embrace
Fri 18 Sept: Essentially Cher
Sat 26 Sept: Downloaded Metal Fest
Sun 27 Sept: Morgan Wallen UK
Fri 9 Oct: Gerry Cinnamon Experience
Sun 11 Oct - Superstar - Ben Forster
Fri 16 Oct: Complete Beatles
Fri 23 Oct: Dirty DC
Sat 24 Oct: Take That & Party
Thurs 29 Oct: Gary 'Mani' Mounfield
Fri 30 Oct: Eminem Show
Sun 1 Nov: Go West with Peter Cox
Wed 4 Nov: John Lydon (Sex Pistols / PIL)
Fri 13 Nov: Definitely Oasis
Sun 15 Nov: Kerry Ellis Power Ballads

SHROPSHIRE'S BIGGEST LIVE MUSIC & EVENTS VENUE

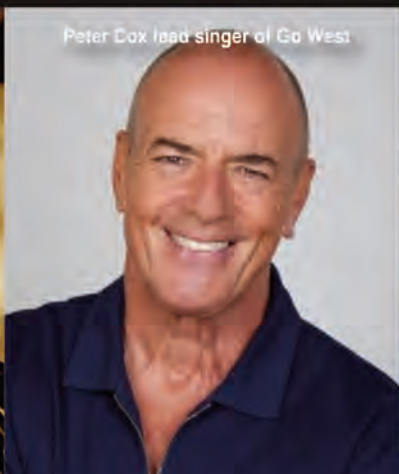
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MANI from The Stone Roses



Peter Cox lead singer of Go West



John Lydon - Sex Pistols/PIL



Kerry Ellis - West End Star

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.

CBSO

City of
Birmingham
Symphony
Orchestra

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

[CBSO.CO.UK](https://cbsoco.uk)