

Shropshire

ISSUE 467 DECEMBER 2025

What's On

FILM | COMEDY | THEATRE | GIGS | VISUAL ARTS | EVENTS

shropshirewhatson.co.uk



inside:

CANDLELIT CHOIR

Ex Cathedra present Christmas favourites in Shropshire



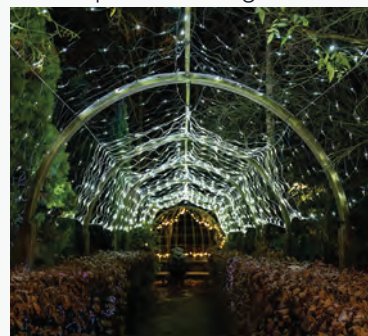
THEATRICAL MAGIC

snowy tales from Acorn Wood at Shrewsbury's Theatre Severn



FESTIVE GARDENS

Telford Town Park transformed into a spectacle of light



BRAD FITT

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Dick Whittington and his Cat

Written by Paul Hendy

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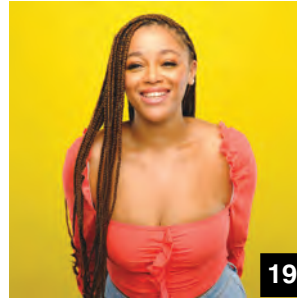
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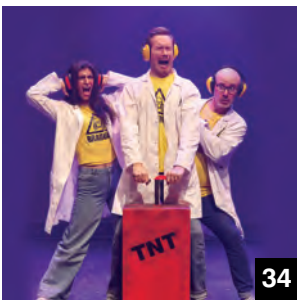
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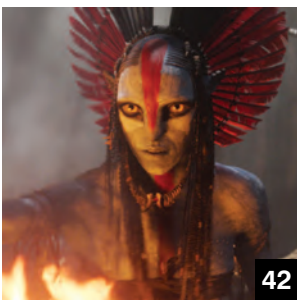
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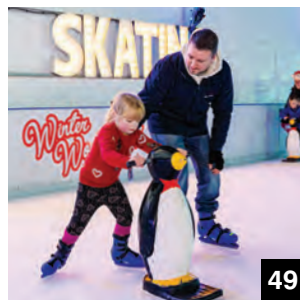
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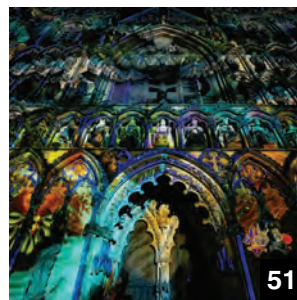
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What's On

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First artists announced for Shrewsbury Folk Festival

Andy Fairweather Low & The Low Riders, Ferocious Dog featuring The Celtic Folk Orchestra and acclaimed Irish singer Cara Dillon are among the artists who will be appearing at next year's Shrewsbury Folk Festival (Friday 28 - Monday 31 August). Commenting on the news, the event's director, Sandra Surtees, said: "This first tranche of names promises the festival's usual eclectic mix of traditional and contemporary folk music and Americana, with many more artists and exciting headliners still to come, including world musicians."

To check out the full line-up of artists so far announced for 2026 and to book tickets, visit shrewsburyfolkfestival.co.uk

Karate Kid musical to make a summer stop-off

The Karate Kid - The Musical will have its UK premiere next year, stopping off at Birmingham's The Alexandra in the summer. The stage show, an adaptation of the hit 1984 film starring Ralph Macchio and Pat Morita, visits the venue from Tuesday 21 to Saturday 25 July. Tickets are on sale at atgtickets.com

Witchcraft and wizardry at Potteries pottery museum

Wannabe witches should point their flying broomsticks in the direction of Gladstone Pottery Museum in February, when the Stoke-on-Trent venue hosts a half-term show about witchcraft and wizardry.

Taking place on the 18th of the month (it's a Wednesday), Witches And Wizards offers visitors the chance to learn how to cast spells and incantations, take lessons in wizard wand-craft and create their own potion. To find out more about the event, visit the website at stokemuseums.org.uk

Improv fundraiser in aid of Compton Hospice

Wolverhampton's Compton Hospice is set to benefit from a special fundraising evening of improvisation.

Presented by the talented members of short-form comedy improv group Improv Wolves, the show takes place at Wolverhampton Space on Sunday 21 December.

To find out more and book your seat, visit wegottickets.com

New musical comedy to debut at Lichfield Garrick

A new US-made musical comedy, debunking the myth of the 'damsel in distress', will make its professional UK theatre debut at Lichfield Garrick Theatre next spring.

A mash-up of much-loved fairytales, Disenchanted! shows at the venue from Friday 24 April to Saturday 2 May. Commenting on the production, Gemma East, chief operating officer at the Garrick, said: "With its riotous musical numbers, laugh-out-loud one-liners and twist on familiar characters, we're incredibly excited to see how our audiences respond to this smash-hit from across the pond."

To find out more and purchase tickets, visit the venue's website at lichfieldgarrick.com

Diary date for Severn Hospice's Lights Of Love

Shropshire charity Severn Hospice is this year hosting its Lights Of Love Service on Sunday 7 December.

Featuring music, readings and moments of reflection, the free-to-attend annual event takes place in the grounds of the hospice in Bicton, Shrewsbury, at 4pm.

Commenting, Heather Tudor, Severn Hospice's chief executive, said: "Our Lights Of Love service is an opportunity for people to join us and be comforted together as we remember them at what can be a difficult time of year. Our care is everywhere and does not end with the passing of a loved one."

For more information about the event, visit the website at severnospice.org.uk

More festive fun with Eric

Popular New Vic Theatre character Eric is making a festive-season return this month. Actor David Graham's much-loved creation is starring in Eric's Christmas Turkey, a show featuring 'sensational 60s songs, lots of laughs, dancing, and Christmas sparkle'. The production runs at the Newcastle-under-Lyme venue from Monday 1 to Saturday 13 December, with tickets available to purchase via the website at newvictheatre.org.uk

Festive PJs at the ready...

Shrewsbury's Theatre Severn is hosting a special Pyjama Party screening of The Polar Express this month.

The animated Christmas adventure will be shown at the venue on Saturday 6 December at 5pm, with youngsters being urged to 'grab your teddy, pop on your pyjamas, and join in the fun!'. For more information and to book tickets, visit theatresevern.co.uk

Shropshire country house hosts Father Christmas

A woodland light trail and an indoor craft market are among the festive-season attractions at Shropshire's Berwick House. Situated just outside Shrewsbury, the Grade II listed Georgian-Victorian manor is also hosting Father Christmas, who will be meeting families in his grotto and giving every child a gift to take home.

To find out more about Berwick's Christmas attractions - which run from Monday 1 to Sunday 14 December - visit the website at berwick-house.com

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

John Lydon at Shropshire venue

John Lydon will return to Shropshire next autumn with his touring show, *I Could Be Wrong, I Could Be Right*. The informal evening of 'untamed, unscripted and uncensored' conversation will see the former Sex Pistol reflecting on his life and career, as well as answering questions from the audience... John will stop off at Shrewsbury's Buttermarket on Wednesday 4 November. To find out more and book tickets for the show, visit johnlydon.com



Rock & Pop icons to visit The Edge

The Edge Arts Centre in Much Wenlock, Shropshire, is hosting evenings with some 'true icons of British rock & pop' in 2026. The venue's line-up includes Status Quo's John Coghlan on Friday 6 February, Go West's Peter Cox (Saturday 4 April), Fun Lovin' Criminal Huey Morgan (Saturday 11 April), and later in the year, Happy Monday's Shaun Ryder. For more information and to book tickets, visit the venue's website at edgeartscentre.com



Beverley Knight to reprise role in Sylvia Pankhurst musical

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

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

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

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

Harry Enfield - without chums!

Harry Enfield will visit two Midlands venues in 2026 with his new tour, *Harry Enfield And No Chums*. From the meteoric rise of *Loadsamoney* - a Thatcherite visionary - to the fury of Kevin the Teenager, Harry will reflect on '40 years of arsing about in comedy'. The show also includes a Q&A. Harry stops off at Birmingham's Symphony Hall on Wednesday 28 October and Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, on Friday 13 November. Tickets are available at fane.co.uk/harry-enfield

Jersey Boys back in the region...

Award-winning musical *Jersey Boys* will return to the region next autumn as part of its 20th-anniversary tour.

Telling the inside story of Frankie Valli & The Four Seasons, the show will visit the Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, from Monday 26 to Saturday 31 October, and Birmingham theatre The Alexandra from Monday 9 to Saturday 21 November. It then spends a week at the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre in Spring 2027 (Monday 15 - Saturday 27 March).

Visit the website of the relevant venue for further information and to purchase tickets.



Snowman walking in the air at Midlands venue

Birmingham Town Hall is this month hosting a screening of Raymond Briggs' *The Snowman* - complete with a live orchestra performing the animated film's much-loved musical score... The screening takes place at the venue on Thursday 18 December, with showings at 1.45pm and 6pm. Further information and tickets are available via the website at bmusic.co.uk

National Equine Show galloping into the region

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

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

Sir Derek in conversation at the New Vic Theatre

Much-admired actor Sir Derek Jacobi will visit Newcastle-under-Lyme's New Vic Theatre next spring.

Sir Derek, whose impressive acting CV includes *Gladiator*, *I, Claudius* and *Last Tango In Halifax*, will be in conversation with Richard Clifford at the venue on Thursday 7 May. To find out more about the event and check out the New Vic's spring-season programme, visit the website at newvictheatre.org.uk



Staffordshire Moorlands venue to host wool art

Community arts programme Outside is bringing *The Longest Yarn 2: Britain At War* wool art exhibition to the Staffordshire Moorlands this month.

Visitors can see the extraordinary display of knitted and crocheted wartime scenes at Great Wood Community Hall in Tean from Monday 1 to Tuesday 30 December. For further details about the show, visit the website at outsidearts.org



Roald Dahl's snappy tale heading for the Midlands

The stage-musical version of Roald Dahl's *The Enormous Crocodile* will make three West Midlands stop-offs next June as part of a major national tour.

The hit production visits Shrewsbury's Theatre Severn from Thursday the 4th to

Sunday the 7th, the Coventry Belgrade (Thursday the 11th to Sunday the 14th) and the Grand Theatre in Wolverhampton (Thursday the 18th to Sunday the 21st). For further information and to book tickets, visit enormouscrocodilemusical.com

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 Staffordshire's Cannock Chase Forest, Worcestershire's Wyre Forest and at Shrewsbury's Haughmond Hill, 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

Iconic thriller heading to Wolverhampton in 2026

Patricia Highsmith's iconic thriller *The Talented Mr Ripley* will return to the Midlands next year.

Starring Ed McVey and Maisie Smith, the show visits the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Monday 20 to Saturday 25 April.

The production was previously in the region earlier this year, when it stopped off at the Birmingham Rep as part of its first-ever tour. To find out more and book tickets, visit the website at grandtheatre.co.uk

Get your festive skates on at Telford Ice Rink!

December visitors to Telford Ice Rink should have no trouble whatsoever getting into the Christmas spirit, with the popular venue boasting a fun festive vibe in the run-up to the big day (there's a 'fabulous' Christmas tree at the rink on Saturdays and Sundays!). Attractions include Christmas Jumper Weekend (on the 13th & 14th), offering 10% off an entry ticket to a public skate session for anybody who turns up wearing festive attire (Telford residents with a TLC card get an additional 10% off).

To find out more and book tickets, visit the website at telfordicerink.co.uk



Gladiators Experience coming to the Midlands

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

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THE DRIFTERS
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**PUNK OFF: THE SOUNDS
OF PUNK & NEW WAVE**
19.02.26



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



**SPIDER-MAN: NO WAY HOME
IN CONCERT** | 31.03.26



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WITH A B:MUSIC GIFT
VOUCHER!**

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than the holidays:
Stuff the
stockings of your
nearest & dearest
with tickets for a
Great Night Out...**



**AN EVENING WITH
AGGER & TUFFERS**
15.04.26



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



**AN EVENING WITH
MICHAEL PORTILLO**
18.11.26

B:Music Christmas Gift Guide



Shakespeare Curriculum initiative launched

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

Summer date in the forest for dance queen Becky

Award-winning dance queen Becky Hill will perform in Cannock Chase Forest next year as part of Forest Live, Forestry England's summer concert series (Friday 26 June). To find out more and purchase tickets, visit the website at forestlive.com

Beverley Knight becomes theatre's first Patron

Musical theatre star Beverley Knight has become Wolverhampton Grand Theatre's first-ever official Patron. Commenting on her appointment to the role, Wolverhampton-born Beverley said: "It's an incredible honour to become the first Patron of the Grand Theatre - the venue where I made my first stage appearance... "I am excited to support wonderful community projects like the Memory Café, and help nurture the next generation of performers and audiences."

New musical heading for the region 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 at atgtickets.com to book tickets.



Music legends Reef and Ash announced for Loopfest

Music legends Reef and Ash (pictured) are set to rock Shrewsbury's Quarry Park next spring as part of the town's Loopfest event. The two bands will be joined on Friday 1 May by The Bluetones as an acoustic duo and Black Country singer/songwriter Jess Silk.

Amongst the 250 acts playing at various venues throughout the town on Saturday 2 & Sunday 3 May are Elvana, Gentleman's Dub Club, DJ Yoda, The Allergies, Henge, Ian Prowse & Amsterdam and Little Comets. To purchase tickets, visit loopfest.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 book tickets, visit Romesh's website at romeshranganathan.co.uk

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.



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. For further information about the production and to book tickets, visit the website at birminghamhippodrome.com



Krazy racing in Telford!

The UK's largest touring soapbox derby is coming to Telford for the very first time. Krazy Races will visit the town next summer, on Sunday 12 July...

Commenting on the news, Telford & Wrekin Councillor Angela McClements said: "A great event for all to get involved with - whether that's entering a team or coming along to watch - Krazy Races promises to be a fantastic family fun day out and an exciting addition to our events programme."

For further information, visit the website at krazyraces.co.uk

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Fri 12 Dec – Sun 4 Jan



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Tue 20 & Wed 21 Jan



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026 Dance: Rewind!

Wed 28 Jan – Sat 7 Feb



The award-winning
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Bluey's Big Play

Fri 13 – Sun 15 Feb



A celebration of classical
Chinese dance

Shen Yun

Tue 17 & Wed 18 Feb

Victoria Hall



Don't miss this fab-u-lous show

Christmas with Anton Du Beke

Mon 8 Dec



An unmissable festive
celebration

That'll Be Christmas

Tue 9 Dec



The ultimate Irish
Christmas concert

A Fairytale for Christmas

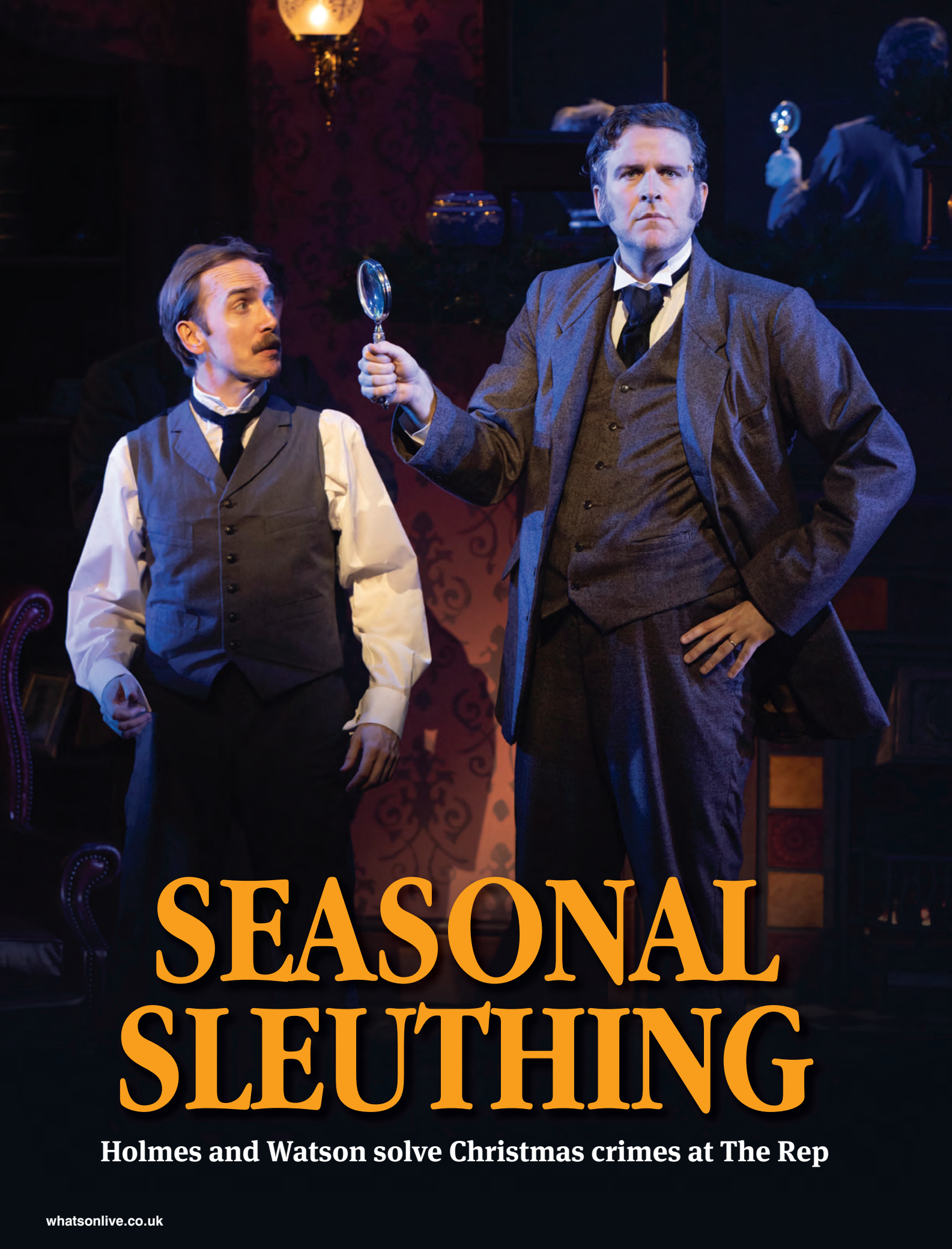
Fri 19 & Sat 20 Dec



Experience the soundtrack
of James Bond live

The James Bond Concert Spectacular

Sun 21 Dec



SEASONAL SLEUTHING

Holmes and Watson solve Christmas crimes at The Rep

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHRISTMAS WITH THE CBSO



SYMPHONIC SESSIONS: CHRISTMAS SPECIAL

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

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



CHRISTMAS BRASS AT PACKINGTON ESTATE

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

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



CHORAL CHRISTMAS WITH STEPHEN MANGAN

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

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



CBSO CHRISTMAS PARTY WITH STEPHEN MANGAN

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

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



CBSO FAMILY CHRISTMAS WITH STEPHEN MANGAN

Saturday 20 December 2025, 4pm
Symphony Hall, Birmingham

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



VIENNESE NEW YEAR

Sunday 4 January 2026, 3pm
Symphony Hall, Birmingham

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Tickets start from £12
Students £5 / 18-30s £10

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

Classical music from across the region...



Ex Cathedra: Christmas Music by Candlelight

St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury, Thurs 4 December; Lichfield Cathedral, Fri 5 December; St Peter's Collegiate Church, Wolverhampton, Sat 13 December; St Mary's Church, Moseley, Birmingham, 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.



Piccadilly Sinfonietta: Vivaldi Four Seasons

Lichfield Cathedral, Thurs 4 December; Shrewsbury Abbey, Wed 10 December

The ever-busy Piccadilly Sinfonietta have established an impressive reputation for their performances of baroque and classical works for chamber orchestra. Their presentation of Antonio Vivaldi's Four Seasons takes place by candlelight. The programme also includes Corelli's Christmas Concerto and a number of other much-loved works.

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'.



Manchester Camerata & Kantos Chamber Choir

Victoria Hall, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 5 December

As retellings of the Christmas story go, Handel's Messiah is definitely one worth hearing...

Originally written for Easter and featuring a series of much-loved classics - including For Unto Us A Child Is Born and the legendary Hallelujah! - Messiah was first performed in 1742 and had been much anticipated. Indeed, so large an audience was expected for its Dublin premiere that women who were attending were asked to wear dresses 'without hoops' in order to make 'room for more company'...

Manchester Camerata here team up with Kantos Chamber Choir for a rendition of the work that should certainly get its audience in the Christmas spirit.

Jarualda Quartet

The Gateway, Shrewsbury, Thurs 4 December

"Our name is a fusion of all our names," explains the Jarualda Quartet, "because our interdependence is at the core of our ethos. We are all equally important, and a good quartet is always about more than the sum of its parts."

Comprising violinists Alex Postlethwaite and David Joyce, viola player Jane Park and cellist Ruth Henley, Jarualda boasts a wealth of experience, with all four of its members being much in demand as soloists, chamber musicians and section principals.

The quartet's Shrewsbury concert features works by Shostakovich, Beethoven, Haydn and Paul Henley.

Halesowen Orchestra

Halesowen Town Hall, Sat 13 December

The Halesowen Orchestra has been described as one of the town's hidden jewels - and it's a description with which the ensemble's many supporters would no doubt wholeheartedly agree.

Founded in 1986, the amateur group of musicians meet once a week to practise a varied repertoire of works by some of the world's greatest classical composers. This month's concert features a wide selection of music, from Sibelius' Karelia Overture to the Wallace And Gromit Theme and Polar Express Suite.

STEP INTO CHRISTMAS WITH B:MUSIC

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



STEP INTO CHRISTMAS

Birmingham Town Hall, Fri 5 December

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

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



SING CAROLS WITH THE CITY ORGANIST AND LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL CHOIR

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



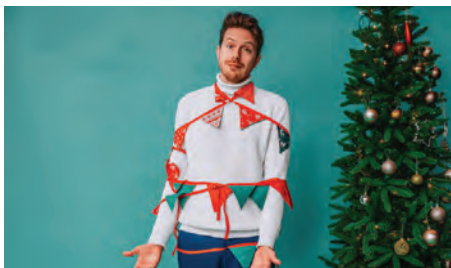
CHRISTMAS WITH ANNA LAPWOOD

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



DEAR SANTA LIVE

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



THE BIG CHRISTMAS ASSEMBLY

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



THE SNOWMAN: FILM WITH LIVE ORCHESTRA

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



CHRISTMAS WITH SIR KARL JENKINS

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



HOME ALONE IN CONCERT

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



HORRIBLE HISTORIES: HORRIBLE CHRISTMAS

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



THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS IN CONCERT

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



DEAR SANTA LIVE

Every child meets Santa in his grotto after the show to receive a gift
Various December Dates



STEP INTO CHRISTMAS

Back by popular demand - the feel-good festive concert spectacular
Thursday 4 December



THE DRIFTERS

Performing all their classic hits with both matinee and evening shows
Saturday 6 December



SETH LAKEMAN

Mercury Prize nominated folk artist tours new album *The Granite Way*
Saturday 6 December



SOUNDS LIKE CHRISTMAS

An evening of festive favourites, carols and feel-good Christmas music
Monday 8 December



THE MAGIC OF MOTOWN

Join the biggest party of the year for a special festive performance
Saturday 13 December



SCROOGE LIVE

A screening of the classic 1951 film with newly orchestrated live score
Wednesday 17 December



A GOOD OLD FASHIONED CHRISTMAS

A joyful afternoon of music and cheer, celebrating holiday traditions
Saturday 20 December



THE CANDLELIGHT CONCERT

Incredible singers and live band with a fresh take on the festive classics
Sunday 21 December



HARRY REDKNAPP

Chance to spend an evening with one of football's most beloved figures
Friday 16 January



THE DUDLEY COMEDY ALLSTARS

Top bill with Sara Pascoe, Rhys James, Sarah Keyworth and Josh Pugh
Saturday 24 January



RICHARD JONES

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Saturday 31 January

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December

The Wizard Of Oz:

A Wicked Pantomime

6 - 21 Dec various times

£12, £14 & £17



January

Go Your Own Way -

Fleetwood Mac Legacy

Fri 23 Jan 2026 7.30pm £28.50



Drag Me To The 80's

Sat 31 Jan 2026 7.30pm £27.50



February

Stuart Michael:

Psychic Medium

Sat 7 Feb 2026 7.30pm £29.50



Emilio Santoro as Elvis

Fri 27 Feb 2026 7.30pm £31



March

A Tribute to Sting & The

Police starring The Rozzers

Sat 14 Mar 2026 7.30pm £28



May

A Night To Remember

Sat 9 May 2026 7.30pm

£29.50



Box Office: 0300 555 2898



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Walsall Council

Live music from across the region...

Fatboy Slim

The Wulfrun at The Halls Wolverhampton,
Sat 6 December

The one-time bassist for indie rock band The Housemartins, Quentin Leo Cook - aka Norman Cook, aka Fatboy Slim - is widely regarded as one of the UK's most creative DJs. Adopting the Fatboy Slim moniker in 1996, Cook scored a massive hit with *Better Living Through Chemistry*. Follow-up albums *You've Come A Long Way*, *Baby and Halfway* and *Between The Gutter And The Stars* played their part in achieving mainstream popularity for the big beat genre. Norman visits Wolverhampton early this month with his Acid Ballroom tour.



Skinny Lister

The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent,
Thurs 11 December

From ska to rock, and from folk-punk to traditional shanty, Skinny Lister bring together a wide range of genres, along the way presenting their sound and story in an all-guns-blazing style that's seen them garner praise from right across the music universe. For their Sugarmill stop-off, they're supported by American alternative country music group Vandoliers - with their signature brand of buckaroo burlesque - and London-based singer-songwriter Claudia Kate, whose sound sits somewhere between the outspokenness of Kate Nash and the honest musicality of Maggie Rogers.



The Charlatans

Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, Sun 7 December

Having recently released their 14th studio album, *We Are Love* - their first in eight years - West Midlands-originated Manchester band The Charlatans return to the region as part of a UK tour. Currently celebrating 35 years together - a period during which they've explored all manner of genres, from psychedelia and soul to funk and country rock - the band have notched up plenty of chartbusters, including iconic hits such as *The Only One I*

Know, *One To Another*, *How High* and *North Country Boy*.

It hasn't all been plain sailing by any means - keyboardist Rob Collins passed away in 1996 and drummer Jon Brookes in 2013 - but the boys have nevertheless managed to carry on doing what they do best: creating memorable tunes that maintain their status as one of the most influential British groups of the last few decades.

Merope

Unitarian Church, Shrewsbury,
Sat 6 December

Lithuanian singer & kanklės player Indrė Jurgelevičiūtė and Belgian guitarist/producer Bert Cools create an intimate soundscape by bringing together elements of jazz, traditional, ambient music, 20th-century minimalism and kosmische, in the process presenting a contemporary vision of ancient Baltic music. Support on the night comes from M.Haiux, the musical alter-ego of Liverpool-based guitarist Matthew McPartlan.

Winter Wonderband

Wolverhampton Arts Centre,
Sat 13 December

Chamber folk quartet Winter Wonderland's concerts combine traditional and modern winter- and festive-themed music, creating an unusual, distinctive and seriously spinetling sound via a combination of melodeon, hammered dulcimer, cello, harp and guitar. They're visiting Wolverhampton on the back of their recently released debut album, *Joy Illimited*.

Deborah Rose

Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire,
Thurs 4 December

Welsh singer-songwriter & guitarist Deborah Rose delivers Celtic-inspired music with a timeless voice that calls to mind Eva Cassidy, Enya and Joni Mitchell. Having toured with, among others, folk legends Judy Collins, Ralph McTell and American songwriter Jimmy Webb, she boasts a style which transcends genres, drawing inspiration from her travels, nature, poetry, and in more recent times, the psalms.



MEET THE STARS

Panto time is here again - oh yes it is! - and as always, the Midlands will be dishing up a fabulous feast of festive fun to satisfy the pickiest of princesses and the most particular of princes. Audiences can expect to be indulged with gags, giggles and mayhem aplenty as a dollop of zany characters don colourful costumes and reach for their slosh buckets. What's On recently caught up with some of the well-known names who are helping to bring seasonal magic to the region...

Georgia Iudica-Davies and Debra Stephenson spin a yarn at the Grand

Debra (Queen Bertha) and Georgia (Princess Beauty) show their good sides in *Sleeping Beauty*, which runs at the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre until Sunday 4 January

Debra and Georgia are a royal mother & daughter duo this year - and they're already getting comfortable in their regal attire.

"The costumes are brand new, the script is brand new - it's going to be very fresh," says Debra.

Both actors are delighted to be working with the team at the Grand.

"I'm amongst people who have really mastered the art of panto and writing panto," Georgia says. "That's the thing I love about being within a new cast - you learn and you continue to evolve."

The Queen and Princess are definitely at the 'goodie' end of the spectrum, which is one of the reasons Debra took the role: "In most fairy stories, you get strong women who are evil. Or you get nice women who are weak. This mother is a strong warrior woman and a real queen, but she's no pushover, and she's gonna fight for her daughter... I thought, 'That sounds great to me!' I don't want loads of kids booing me."

And although Georgia is more open to crossing over to the dark side ("The villains get the good songs!") she's happy to be making her debut panto princess appearance: "I'm excited to represent girls of my heritage. I'm a mixed-race, black-heritage actor from London, so I'm really excited to show girls - and boys, and everyone in between who looks like me - that they can be the royalty."

A good old Potteries ball for Jonathan Wilkes and Kai Owen

Jonathan Wilkes (Buttons) and Kai Owen (Dandini) return to the Regent Theatre in Stoke-on-Trent to star in *Cinderella* from Friday 12 December to Sunday 4 January

Jonny and Kai are back - ready to get up to holiday hijinx and, as always, adding some extra-special silliness into the mix for Potteries panto audiences.

"We give so much every year," says Kai. "We bring the chaos with all these fantastic routines. We could add so much more - we make it as slick and as funny as possible!"

"I'd be silly if I didn't say I like throwing toilet rolls out," adds Jonny, "because you know I do!"

This year's panto promises a winter wonderland...

"Cinderella is a classic story," says Jonny. "Especially for the children, and the little girls who come dressed as Cinderella. It's magical. That's the one thing I would say about this year's pantomime - what we've seen already from the sets, the costumes, it's got *the* most Christmassy feel."

Kai is celebrating a decade as part of the Regent's panto family: "I've been here 10 years because I got welcomed in by Johnny. His care and attention, his pride in the city - it's infectious. The crew in this theatre, and the audience, are really special as well. Every single night it's like a warm hug... Once you're in here, that's it - it's in your blood."



Christopher Biggins and Faye Tozer journey to Sherwood Forest

Biggins (King Richard) and Faye (Maid Marion) reunite in *Robin Hood*, which runs at Birmingham Hippodrome from Saturday 20 December to Sunday 1 February

The Hippodrome's star-studded cast includes Steps singer Faye Tozer and panto royalty - both on-stage and off - Christopher Biggins. And this isn't the first time the pair have shared a stage... "I worked with Faye last year and I adore her!" Christopher says. The feeling is clearly mutual... "The lovely Biggins!" says Faye. "He is just the sweetest man. When I first met him, he was very rude to me - which I knew meant that I was on his side and that he'd fallen in love with me! He's a really, really dear friend. He's just a delight."

Both actors are well accustomed to the world of panto - but what is it about this Christmas tradition that keeps people coming back for more year after year?

"It brings young people to the theatre," says Faye. "It's a really great place for families over the festive season - they're looking for joy, and that's exactly what it brings."

And the actors get just as much joy from their audiences, according to Biggins: "I think it's the audience reaction which is important. You can hear the audience coming in, and they get louder and louder, and more and more excited, and that gives you a real lift. When you go on, they do it all for you. It's thrilling!"

Sam Rabone and Matt Daines fight over a glass slipper at the Garrick

Sam (Aldianna) and Matt (Lidleena) are double trouble in *Cinderella*, which runs at the Lichfield Garrick Theatre until Sunday 11 January

You're not seeing double! This year, the Garrick panto has two Dames and *twice* the chaos - a pair of Wicked Stepsisters!

"Me and Sam worked together in 2013 for the first time and have stayed friends ever since," says Matt.

"My first ever 'sister' from 2013 - Matt Daines!" says Sam. "It's nice to be reunited with him. I just love being in Lichfield. It's one of the most magical places at Christmas."

It is, of course, a busy time of year for our panto performers, but Matt is ready to embrace the challenge: "I love three-show days! I don't know why, I've always got a little buzz from doing them. You kind of do the first show, and you do it at full-out capacity, and then you reset as if it didn't happen and you're ready for your matinee and evening shows."

And for Sam, what makes Lichfield so magical?

"Well, I live here! I love the fact that I'm local and at home for Christmas. Not many panto performers get to say that - but I can! And I love the theatre here. There's not a bad seat in the house."



Brad Fitt and Tommy J Rollason seek their fortunes at Theatre Severn

Brad (Dame Dolly) and Tommy (Billy) star in *Dick Whittington*, which runs at Shrewsbury's Theatre Severn until Sunday 4 January

Brad and Tommy make a great double act on stage - although one has quite a few more pantos under his belt than the other...

"My *boots* are older than Tommy!" says Brad.

For Tommy, the showbiz apple hasn't fallen far from the tree: "All my family are in entertainment. My dad's a comedian, my mum's a singer and a dancer, and my sister's in showbiz as well. So we all go away for Christmas, and then spend Christmas Day sleeping!"

This year's panto, *Dick Whittington*, is Brad's favourite.

"It has everything," he says. "There's a nautical theme, you travel overseas... It's got, I think, the best baddie: King Rat."

"My favourite bit's normally the slosh," adds Tommy. "We had a slosh routine in *Sleeping Beauty* - I always made Brad laugh..."

Brad once again takes on his double role of director/Dame and is looking forward to seeing how the show evolves across time: "It changes over the course of the run - I enjoy that about pantomime. If the audience are taken along with you, it's fun for everyone."





LIVE EVENTS AT THE EDGE ARTS CENTRE MUCH WENLOCK

DECEMBER

The Rat Pack Christmas in Vegas

Fri 5 December 7.30pm



Pantomime: Shrewsbury College presents Aladdin

Fri 12 December 7.30pm



The Edge Comedy Club Christmas Special: Paul Kerensa, Daliso Chavonda & Jo Enright

Sat 13 December 7pm



Santa's Christmas Party

Sat 20 December 2pm



JANUARY

An Evening with Cuan Wildlife Rescue founder Megan Morris-Jones

Fri 9 January 7.30pm



Luke Jackson

Sat 10 January 7.30pm



The Fourmost

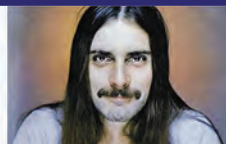
Fri 16 January 7.30pm



FEBRUARY

An Evening with Status Quo's John Coghlan

Fri 6 February 7.30pm



Little Wander presents...

Ria Lina - Riabellion

Sat 14 February 7.30pm



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MEET THE STARS BRINGING SEASONAL MAGIC TO THE REGION...

Mark Rhodes and David Phipps-Davis catch 40 winks in Stafford

David (Nurse Nora Knickerbocker) and Mark (Hilarious Harry) are back in *Sleeping Beauty*, which runs at the Gatehouse from Friday 5 December to Sunday 4 January

This year's Gatehouse panto features a dream of a comedy duo... "Finding a comic you get on with and work well with is invaluable," says David. "We do very different things; he's more there for the kids - and the mums! - and I'm there for the adults - and the dads!"

"Dave is a dream to work with," says Mark. "He has so many ideas, and he really wants to nail it. The key to watching a show where it looks completely crazy is that it's been worked on to perfection!"

Midlander Mark is also happy to be spending the panto season close to home: "It's brilliant for me, as I get to see all my friends and family over Christmas!"

And, of course, there's going to be plenty of silliness on stage - which is just how this pair like it...

"I certainly do more ad-libbing than Mark," says David. "There's a level of love between us on and off the stage, and that informs everything. We make each other laugh."

"With Dave, you just go with the flow," adds Mark, "and every single scene with him could go anywhere. And that's what I love about panto!"



Ian Smith and Alex Bain get ready for a royal wedding in Telford

Ian (Fairy Godmother) and Alex (Dandini) make the magic happen in *Cinderella*, which shows at the Telford International Centre from Tuesday 16 December to Friday 2 January

With redevelopments continuing at Telford Theatre, Ian Smith is back at the Telford International Centre for a second year - and this time he's casting spells as the Fairy Godmother!

"It's quite an unusual role for the Dame," he says. "I'm really looking forward to it. Fairy Godmother - or Fairy G, as I'm going to be called - is still Telford's nutty old aunt!"

The Telford panto isn't Ian's first brush with a glass slipper, however. This year he's already worked with several cast-mates - including Alex and Shelley Anne Rivers - while directing *Cinderella* in Blackburn.

"I can't wait to work alongside them!" says Alex. "Amazing, kind and supportive people - I'm looking forward to being on stage and in rehearsal with them all once again!"

"Alex is playing Dandini," says Ian. "Very funny, very down-to-earth, very supportive... I'm really looking forward to not only directing him, but being on stage and sharing laughter."

"Nothing is better to me than seeing an engaged and hooked live crowd," adds Alex, "especially when they're joining in with your jokes, the story and the performers on stage."

"It's going to be magical," Ian continues. "I mean, it's going to be ridiculous. We can't wait for Telford. We love it; it's great. And it's up the road from Nandos, so happy days!"



To find your pick of pantos from across the region visit whatsonlive.co.uk



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...

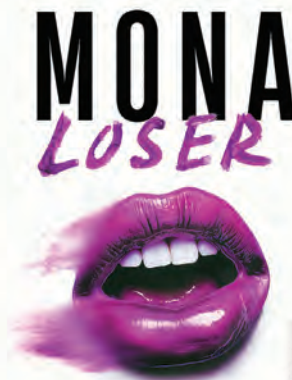
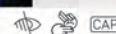
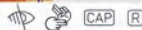


It's A Wonderful Knife

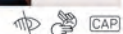
Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, Wed 3 - Tues 30 December

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!"



Tue 10 - Sat 14 Mar





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

Atrix, Bromsgrove, Fri 5 - Mon 29 December

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

Aladdin

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

A perfect story for an evening of family-friendly entertainment finds street youth Aladdin trying against all odds to win the hand of the beautiful princess - and being helped in his endeavours by the mystical genie of the lamp... At Solihull's Core Theatre (top image), the award-winning Little Wolf Entertainment are promising their 'most lavish, action-packed family adventure yet', while Ludlow Assembly Rooms' version of the much-loved

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



Peter Pan

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

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



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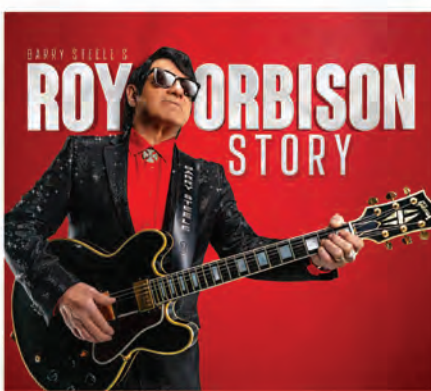
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Sleeping Beauty

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

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

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

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

(image top right) are promising a 'dazzling production' that comes complete with fairies, magic,

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



Beauty And The Beast

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

When a young woman is captured by a hideous beast, she finds herself facing a life of isolation in his mysterious palace. The Beast, too, is trapped - seemingly forever - inside the 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 Moxey 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."

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



The Tiger Who Came To Tea

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, until Sun 28 December

Everybody's favourite tea-guzzling tiger is back in town, dropping in on Sophie and her mum just as they're settling down for an afternoon cuppa... Adapted by David Wood from the late Judith

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

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 prezzie... Youngsters get the chance to enjoy a meet & greet with Santa after the show, during which each child will receive 'an extra-special present'.



No Such Thing As Wolves

Birmingham Hippodrome,
Sat 6 December - Sun 4 January

A fun-filled family musical, created by Horrible Histories' Gerard Foster and Richie Webb, No Such Thing As Wolves is the second of the Hippodrome's My First Musical commissions, following on from the success of last year's offering, The Jingleclaw. This year's production, directed by Emily Ling Williams, follows Hettie the Hedgehog as she opts to throw a party instead of settling down into hibernation. "I think it's such a feelgood show," says Emily. "There's such a sense of how important friendship is, family, and also appreciating the natural world. I think it's really uplifting - there are definitely lots of jokes. I think people of all ages will find it very funny."



Well Done, Mummy Penguin

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

Heartwarming humour and daring acrobatics are being promised by the producers of this 'wintery treat for everyone aged three and up'. The show's story follows the adventures of Mummy Penguin as she swims through icy waters, climbs perilous cliffs and tiptoes past some grumpy seals in search of a fishy dinner for her family. The production is based on the same-named picture book by award-winning writer & illustrator Chris Haughton.



Santa's Christmas Party

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

Dotty the Elf's decorations have gone missing, Dasher the Reindeer's party games are broken, and something has happened to Pompon the Penguin's Christmas music. Santa's Christmas Party is in definite danger of not happening - and it's all down to the mischief-making Jack Frost... A 45-minute interactive family show for children aged between two and eight, Honalee Media's latest festive-season offering

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

Santa's New Sleigh

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre,
Fri 12 & Sat 13 December

When Brad Pitt isn't busy playing pantomime Dames at Shrewsbury's Theatre Severn - this year he's starring at the venue in a sparkling production of Dick Whittington - he enjoys nothing more than replacing the panto wig with his playwright's hat and churning out fun family shows like Santa's New Sleigh. With a 50-minute running time, the production features audience participation, singalong opportunities and a poster and sticker for every child. And as an extra-special treat, audience members can also have their photo taken with Santa himself - so don't forget to bring along your camera if you fancy taking an, er, 'elfie'...



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.



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



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."

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

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


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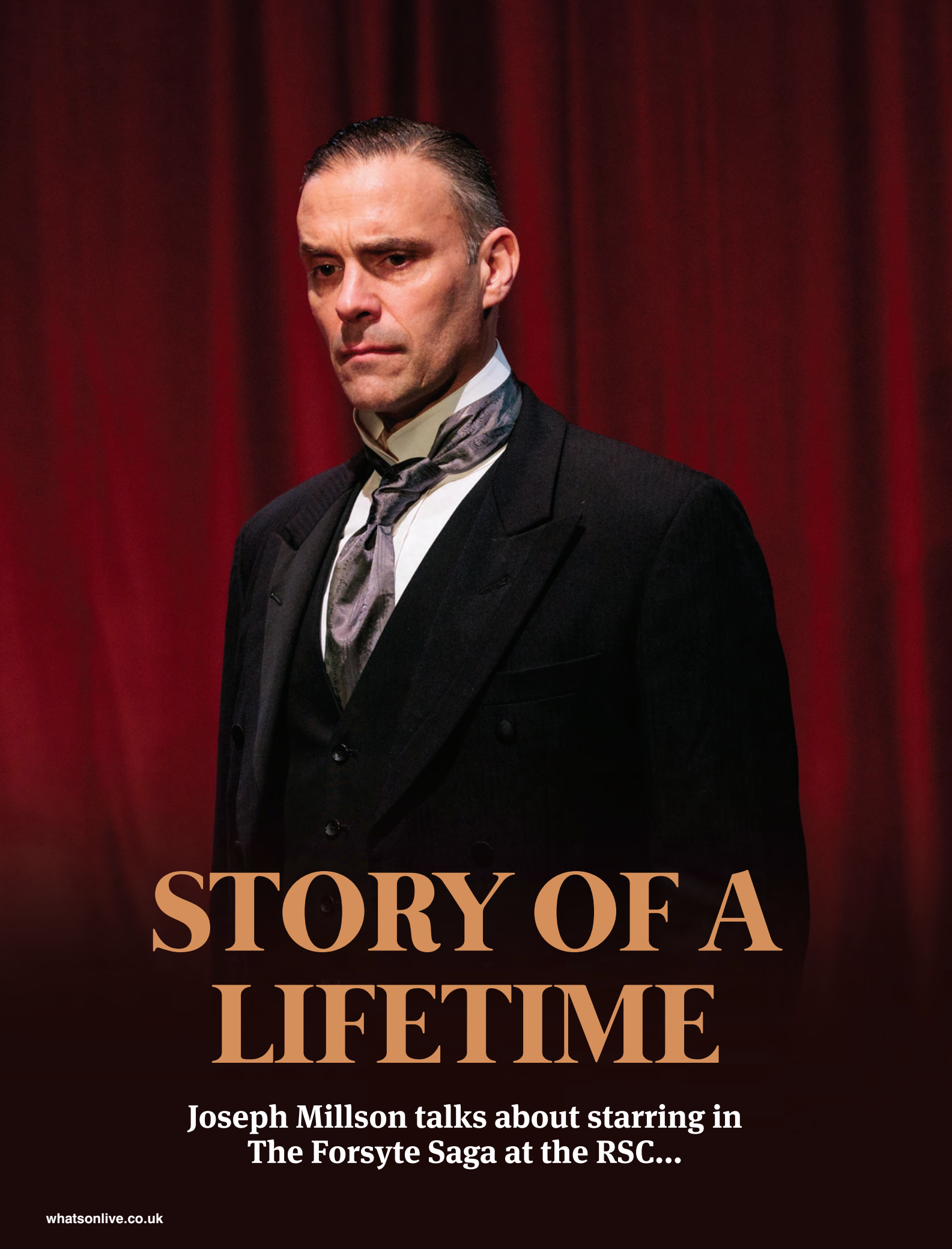



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**Joseph Millson talks about starring in
The Forsyte Saga at the RSC...**

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**

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

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

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

Released Fri 26 December



The Housemaid

CERT 15 (131 mins)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Released Fri 26 December

Marty Supreme CERT tbc (149 mins)

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

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

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

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

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

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

Released Fri 26 December





Image: Maurice Denis' Portrait of Arthur Hue (1899). Oil on Millboard. The Harry Barber Trust at The Barber Institute of Fine Arts

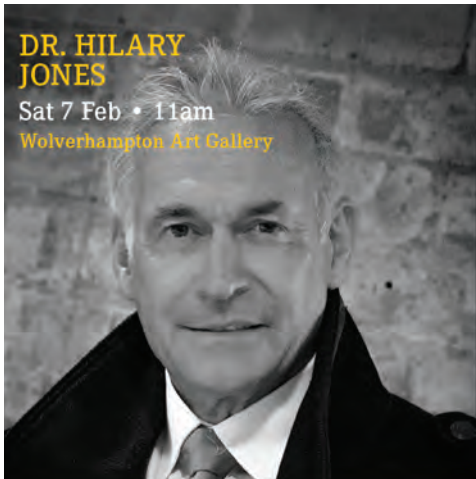
Modern Masterpieces: Paintings From The Barber Institute of Fine Arts

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.

DR. HILARY JONES

Sat 7 Feb • 11am
Wolverhampton Art Gallery



KIT DE WAAL

Sat 7 Feb • 3pm
Wolverhampton Art Gallery



IMANI ERRIU

Sun 8 Feb • 1.30pm
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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."

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.



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.



Stories That Made Us

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

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

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



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

Inside The Playroom

Stryx Gallery, Digbeth, Birmingham, until Sat 31 January

This imaginative group show sees Digbeth's Stryx Gallery transformed into a colourful playroom featuring more than 30 child-friendly works produced by 11 local artists.

All the art on show is available to purchase, with many of the pieces framed and ready to hang.



Birmingham
Museums



Festive Fun

at Thinktank

Birmingham
Science Museum

- Storytime with Santa
- Seasonal Planetarium Shows
- Christmas Cinema



Plus lots
more



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Festive events previews from around the region



Visit Santa: Vintage Sleigh Ride Experience

Coventry Transport Museum, until Tues 23 December

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

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

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



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

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

Alongside a whole host of funfair favourites -

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



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.

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.

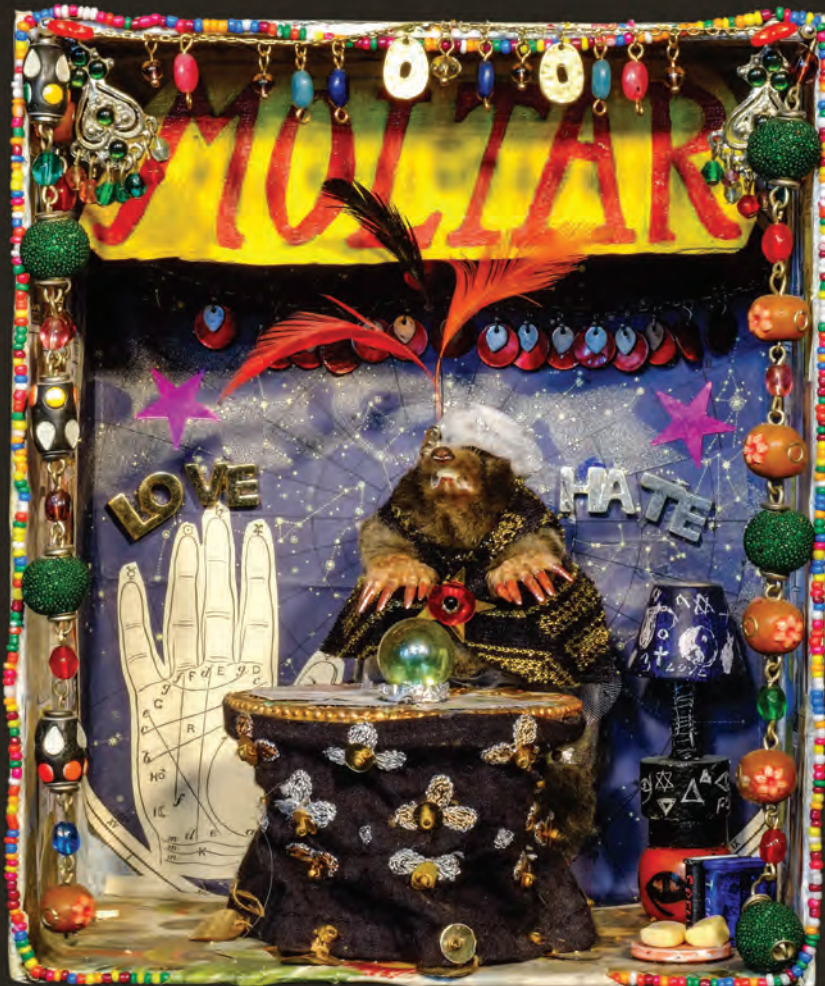
With seasonal music and festive decorations helping to set the scene - and Mother Christmas on hand to greet families - visitors can get stuck into all manner of Christmassy craft fun, including biscuit decorating and balloon modelling.

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



STEP INTO A
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Lisa Lindqvist, Mollat, 2013. Courtesy of the artist. Photo by Brendan Buesnal.



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Festive events previews from around the region



Winter Wonderland Stoke

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

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

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



Festive Gardens

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

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

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

Christmas Grotto and Festive Fun at the Lock-Up

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

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



Christmas rides at the Severn Valley Railway

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

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

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

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



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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 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

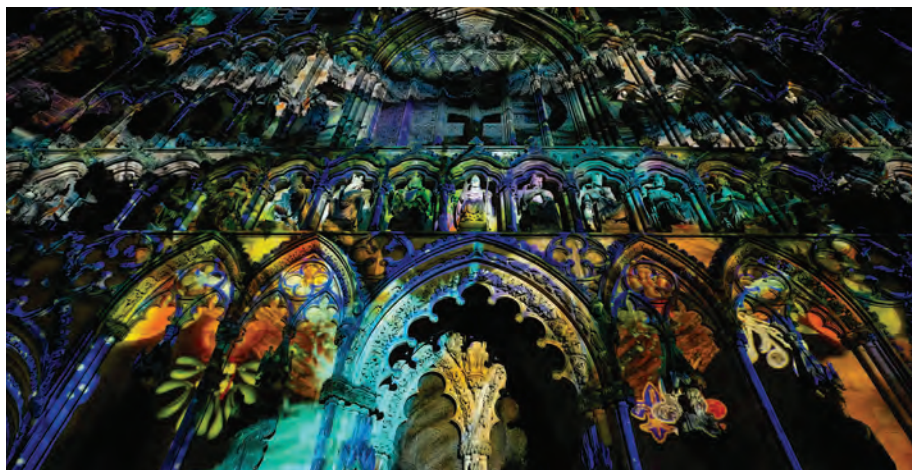
Sudeley Castle, Cheltenham,
until Tues 30 December

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).



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.

HAVING A BALL!

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Looking to her future, Beanie believes the

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

thelist

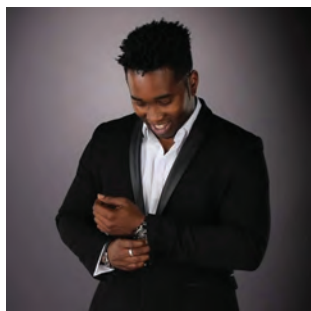


Festive Gardens at Telford Town Park - Thurs 11 to Sun 14 and Fri 19 to Sun 21 December

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

What's On

Mon 1 - Sun 7 December



Dayton Grey -
The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury
Sun 7 December

Mon 8 - Sun 14 December



Christmas with Anton Du Beke -
Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent
Mon 8 December

Mon 15 - Sun 21 December



The Robin's Reward -
Lichfield Cathedral
Mon 15 - Sun 21 December

Mon 22 - Wed 31 December



Dear Santa Live -
Dudley Town Hall
Mon 22 & Tues 23 December

VISUAL ARTS IN THE MIDLANDS

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

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

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.

Midlands Arts Centre, Edgbaston, Birmingham

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

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

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

New Art Gallery, Walsall

BETWEEN HERE AND THERE: ART & DESIGN STAFF FROM WALSALL COLLEGE Featuring a variety of work in a broad range of media, until Sun 8 March

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

The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent

JESUS & THE POPE BY ROBBIE WILLIAMS Stoke native and global superstar Robbie has worked with ceramic design brand 1882. Ltd at its factory in Barlaston to transform two of his 'inkling' drawings into four vibrant, abstract ceramic works of art, until Sun 7 December

Wolverhampton Art Gallery

POP ART GALLERY The largest collection of Pop Art outside of London, highlighting the gallery's iconic Pop works, until Wed 31

December

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

Elsewhere:

BEAR STEPS ART GALLERY EXHIBITIONS Featuring works by John Willetts, Pat Griffiths & Tom Griffiths, until Sat 6 December, Bear Steps Art Gallery, Shrewsbury

AMPLIFY CELEBRATION & ART SALE FUNDRAISER Exhibition celebrating Hive's Amplify initiative, featuring photos and visuals showcasing events organised and influenced by the project's participants, until January 2026, The Hive, Shrewsbury

JOE PARSONAGE: CARVER OF PUNCH AND JUDY A selection of carvings by Parsonage, the prolific creator of Punch and Judy puppets, who supplied hundreds of figures to the Supreme Magic Company, until Sat 3 January, Bantock House Museum, Wolverhampton

THE SALOPIAN OPEN ART EXHIBITION A showcase of works in a variety of media - drawing & painting, printmaking, 3D and digital, highlighting Shropshire's growing creative community, until Mon 5 January, Gateway Gallery, Shrewsbury

GREENER GLASS Explore the beauty and innovation of environmentally sustainable glass art in this unique exhibition, co-curated by local and regional UK artists, until Sat 17 January, Stourbridge Glass Museum

CANALS, KILNS AND CHARACTERS: MAURICE WADE AND ARTHUR BERRY Step into the evocative worlds of two artists whose work captures the spirit, grit and beauty of the industrial North, until Mon 19 January, Keele University, Staffs

LOVE WAR LOSS Exhibition exploring how the family, friends and sweethearts of Shropshire's First World War soldiers grieved the war death of their loved ones, until Easter 2026, Soldiers of Shropshire Museum, Shrewsbury Castle

HALLS YOUNG ARTIST COMPETITION Featuring 'show-stopping artwork' from the next generation of creative artists, Thurs 4 December - Mon 26 January, The Rose Paterson Art Gallery, Weston Park, Shropshire

BEAR STEPS ART GALLERY SOLO EXHIBITION Featuring works by Gill Stokes, Sun 7 - Wed 24 December, Bear Steps Art Gallery, Shrewsbury



Stereophonics - Utilita Arena Birmingham

Gigs

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

BOUZATINA Mon 1 Dec, Bill's Kitchen, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

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

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

SUPALUNG Tues 2 Dec, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

ACM SOUNDS Tues 2 Dec, Actress & Bishop, Birmingham

ERIN LECOUNT Tues 2 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

CLIFF RICHARD Tues 2 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

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

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

STEREOPHONICS Wed 3 Dec, Utilita Arena Birmingham

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

LEBROCK Wed 3 Dec, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

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

SWEET + BOBBIE DAZZLE Thurs 4 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

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

THE COMMONERS Thurs 4 Dec, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

THE BON JOVI EXPERIENCE Thurs 4 Dec, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

HEIDI BROWNE + WALKING INTO THE SEA Thurs 4 Dec, The Artisan Tap, Stoke-on-Trent

DEBORAH ROSE Thurs 4 Dec, Bill's Kitchen, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shrops

CHARLOTTE YOUNG Fri 5 Dec, Actress & Bishop, Birmingham

THE HEELS Fri 5 Dec, The Dark Horse, Moseley, Birmingham

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

HARLEYMOON KEMP Fri 5 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

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

NIALL MCNAMEE Fri 5 Dec, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

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

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

SUPERSONIC QUEEN Fri 5 Dec, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

FLASH - QUEEN TRIBUTE Fri 5 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

OLD Fri 5 Dec, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

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

RETURN TO SOLACE + ENCLOSED + BOUND BY BURDENS Fri 5 Dec, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

ALMOST IN CHAINS + LOUDER THAN SOUND Fri 5 Dec, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

CLAY LAKE Fri 5 Dec, The Underground, Stoke-on-Trent

TONY WRIGHT Fri 5 Dec, The Rigger, Newcastle-Under-Lyme

MAETLIVE AND THE NEVER NEVER EXPRESS Fri 5 Dec, The Station, Cannock

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

NO LIMIT Fri 5 Dec, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

BON GIOVI Fri 5 Dec, The

Monday 1 - Sunday 7 December

Buttermarket,
Shrewsbury

SYNTH Sat 6 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

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

THE WOMBATS Sat 6 Dec, bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham

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

OASIS Sat 6 Dec, The Rhodhouse, Sutton Coldfield

THE DRIFTERS Sat 6 Dec, Dudley Town Hall

SETH LAKEMAN WITH BENJI KIRKPATRICK & ARCHIE MOSS Sat 6 Dec, Stourbridge Town Hall

SWEDS DREAMZ Sat 6 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

T.REXTASY Sat 6 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

CANDLEMASS + VENOM INC. + RAISED BY OWLS + HELLRIPPER + TORTURED DEMON + KING KRAKEN Sat 6 Dec, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

THE YEAR GRUNGE BROKE Sat 6 Dec, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

DIRTY DC Sat 6 Dec, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

ADORED STOKE Sat 6 Dec, Keele University, Stoke-on-Trent

BRAIN OF J - PEARL JAM TRIBUTE Sat 6 Dec, The Rigger, Newcastle-

Under-Lyme

FLEETWOOD MAD Sat 6 Dec, The Station, Cannock

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

LOVE DISTRACTION - HUMAN LEAGUE TRIBUTE Sat 6 Dec, Lichfield Guildhall

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

THE GARRY ALLCOCK JAZZ TRIO FT SUZI WOODS Sun 7 Dec, Tower of Song, B'ham

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

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

THE LEGENDARY GRAVY TRAIN Sun 7 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

ROXY MAGIC Sun 7 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

THE CHARLATANS Sun 7 Dec, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

TV SMITH + ZIPSTYLE + NICK DEGG Sun 7 Dec, The Artisan Tap, Stoke-on-Trent

TEACHERS PET ROCK SHOW UK Sun 7 Dec, The Station, Cannock

RICH PARSONS Sun 7 Dec, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

DAYTON GREY Sun 7 Dec, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury



Classical Music

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

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

CONNAUGHT BRASS Featuring Aaron Akugbo, Harry Plant, Zoë Tweed, Chris Brewster & Aled Meredith-Barrett (brass). Programme includes works by Vivaldi, Prokofiev, Tchaikovsky & more..., Wed 3 Dec, Keele University Chapel

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

EX CATHEDRA: CHRISTMAS MUSIC BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring Jeffrey Skidmore (conductor). Programme includes works by Warlock, Britten, Gibbons & more..., Thurs 4 Dec, St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury

THE PICCADILLY SINFONIA: VIVALDI FOUR SEASONS AT CHRISTMAS Featuring Andrew Harvey (violin). Programme also includes works by Pachelbel & Corelli, Thurs 4 Dec, Lichfield Cathedral

CBSO & CITY OF BIRMINGHAM CHOIR: HANDEL'S MESSIAH Featuring Adrian Lucas (conductor), Miriam Allan (soprano), Tom Lilburn (countertenor), Simon Wall (tenor) & Alex Ashworth (bass), Fri 5 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

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

MANCHESTER CAMERATA - MESSIAH Featuring Laurence Cummings (conductor) & Kantos Chamber Choir, Fri 5 Dec, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

CONCERTS IN THE ROUND Featuring Carleton Etherington

(organ), Fri 5 Dec, St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury

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

THE BRITISH POLICE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA - PROMS NIGHT SPECTACULAR Featuring Dr Richard Jenkinson (conductor), Sat 6 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

HANDEL IN ITALY Featuring Margaret Lingas & Imogen Russell (sopranos), Suzie Purkis (mezzo-soprano), Tom Hawkey-Soar (tenor), Samuel Oram (baritone), the Ludlow Camerata, Anne Tupling (leader), Ludlow Choral Society & Nicola Starkie (conductor). Programme also includes works by Vivaldi, Scarlatti, Lotti & Corelli, Sat 6 Dec, St Laurence Church, Ludlow, South Shropshire

TELFORD ORCHESTRA: A CLASSIC CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL Featuring Samuel Lellouch (musical director). Programme includes works by Strauss, Humperdinck, Sibelius & more..., Sat 6 Dec, The Anstice Hall, Madeley, Shropshire

EX CATHEDRA: BACH CHRISTMAS ORATORIO Featuring James Robinson (evangelist), Margaret Lingas & Katie Trethewey (sopranos), 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

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

THE ALTER COMEDY CLUB Wed 3 Dec, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

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

BEN NORRIS, HOWARD READ, HENRY MICHAEL, DEMITRIS DEECH & DAVE TWENTYMAN Thurs 4 Dec, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

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

PHIL ELLIS, LOST VOICE GUY, JO ENRIGHT & WAYNE BEESE Sat 6 Dec, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

WHITE YARDIE Sun 7 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

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

LUISA OMIELAN Sun 7 Dec, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

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

ERIC'S CHRISTMAS TURKEY A 'fun-packed festive treat' filled

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with 'sensational 60s songs, plenty of laughter, dancing and Christmas sparkle', Mon 1 - Sat 13 Dec, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

THE FORSYTE SAGA PART 2: FLEUR

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

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

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

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

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

DONE TO DEATH, BY JOVE! Gavin Robertson and Nicholas Collett present 'a whodunnit with a difference', in which Holmes & Watson, Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple join forces in a whirlwind of fast costume changes and misdirected acting hiccups, Thurs 4 Dec, Harley Village Hall, Shropshire

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

DONE TO DEATH, BY JOVE! Gavin Robertson and Nicholas Collett present 'a whodunnit with a difference', in which Holmes & Watson, Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple join forces in a whirlwind of fast costume changes and misdirected acting hiccups, Fri 5 Dec, Cosy Hall, Newport, Shropshire

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

DONE TO DEATH, BY JOVE! Gavin Robertson and Nicholas Collett present 'a whodunnit with a difference', in which Holmes & Watson, Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple join forces in a whirlwind of fast costume changes and misdirected acting hiccups, Sat 6 Dec, Welshampton Parish Hall, North Shropshire

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

DICK WHITTINGTON Fun-filled family musical featuring Brad Fitt, Tommy J Rollason, Tim Whitnall, Cara Dudgeon, Ollie Wray and Lottie Stone, until Sun 4 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

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

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

CINDERELLA The Stone Revellers present a new festive version of the famous fairytale, complete with panto classics and 'a few surprises', Wed 3 - Sat 6 Dec, Crown Wharf Theatre, Stone

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

ROBIN HOOD Christmas hijinks in Sherwood Forest with the notorious outlaw and his merry band, Sat 6 & Sun 7 Dec, Rugeley Rose Theatre

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

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



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

Adult Pantomimes

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

Kids Theatre

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

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, Thurs 4 Dec, Stourbridge Town Hall

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

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 & Sun 7 Dec, Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke-on-Trent

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

Dance

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

Light Entertainment

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

THE RAT PACK: CHRISTMAS IN VEGAS! Featuring David Alacey (Lovejoy & Inspector Alleyn) as Frank Sinatra, West End favourite Tim Harwood as Dean Martin and former Coronation Street & Hollyoaks star Ashley Campbell as Sammy Davis Jnr, Tues 2 Dec, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

STEP INTO CHRISTMAS The spirit of the season brought to life with 'dazzling performances, festive visuals and a live band', Thurs 4 Dec, Dudley Town Hall

THE RAT PACK: CHRISTMAS IN VEGAS! Featuring David Alacey (Lovejoy & Inspector Alleyn) as Frank Sinatra, West End favourite Tim Harwood as Dean Martin and former Coronation Street & Hollyoaks star Ashley Campbell as Sammy Davis Jnr, Fri 5 Dec, The Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shropshire

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

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

Vintage Trains THE POLAR EXPRESS™ *Train Ride*

Birmingham Moor Street Station
22nd November - 23rd December



Book your Golden Tickets



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

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

A CELTIC CHRISTMAS Featuring Christmas music entwined with ancient festive folk tunes, performed in a candlelit setting, Sat 6 Dec, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

CHRISTMAS BY CANDLELIGHT Annual festive entertainment featuring Christmas music, a 20-foot Christmas Tree, turkey baps, hot toddies - and maybe even some snow..., Sun 7 Dec, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

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

CHRISTMAS FANTASY Featuring Brandhall Community Choir & Langley Community Brass. Programme includes festive favourites and Christmas classics, Sun 7 Dec, Halesowen Town Hall

Events

CHRISTMAS MAKERS MARKET Showcasing award-winning local food & drink, art, craft producers and vintage artisans, until Sun 7 Dec, Trentham Estate, Staffordshire

MADE IN TELFORD CHRISTMAS MAKERS MARKET Featuring an array of festive stalls, until Sun 7 Dec, Southwater Square, Telford

THE LAST LETTER TO SANTA Go on a journey to a magical world from where all the letters to Father Christmas are sent, until Tues 23 Dec, Dudley Canal & Caverns

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

MEET FATHER CHRISTMAS Father Christmas says a big festive hello to families in his traditional museum workshop, until Tues 23 Dec, Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery

SANTA'S GROTTO Visit Santa in his grotto, located inside the 11th-century castle, until Wed 24 Dec, Dudley Zoo

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

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

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

MEET FATHER CHRISTMAS Join Father Christmas - and his loveable elf - in his grotto at Trentham's North Pole, until Wed 24 Dec, Trentham Estate, Stoke-on-Trent

CHRISTMAS WONDERLAND Featuring the Twinkle Express, Enchanted Santa's Grotto and the new Elfioria, until Wed 31 Dec, Drayton Manor Resort, Tamworth

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

SANTA'S WINTER WONDERLAND Step into a winter wonderland, complete with real snow, until Sat 3 Jan, SnowDome, Tamworth

CHRISTMAS THROUGH THE DECADES Experience generations of Christmas traditions brought to life, until Sun 4 Jan, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

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

CHRISTMAS AT SHUGBOROUGH Featuring festive displays celebrating food, gift giving, games and family traditions, until Sun 4 Jan, Shugborough Estate, Staffordshire

TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS AT WIGHTWICK Celebrate a traditional Victorian Christmas, until Sun 4 Jan, Wightwick Manor, Wolverhampton

WINTER LIGHT TRAIL Brand-new illuminated light trail, until Sun 4 Jan, Trentham Estate, Stoke-Trent

CHRISTMAS AT ALTON TOWERS Enjoy a sleighful of festivities, including the UK's only CBeebies Land at Christmas, until Sun 4 Jan, Alton Towers Resort, Tamworth

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

CHRISTMAS REMINISCENCE TALK Join reminiscence expert Kath Reynolds for an interactive session, taking a look at classic Christmas traditions, celebrations and toys, Wed 3 Dec, Biddulph Grange Garden, Staffs

FESTIVE MORNINGS IN THE MANSION Watch the rooms come to life and hear about the behind-the-scenes work that goes into creating Christmas in the mansion, Wed 3 Dec, Shugborough Estate, nr Stafford

CELEBRATING A VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS

Step back to the Victorian era and find out about the origins of various festive traditions, Wed 3 - Tues 23 Dec, Blists Hill Victorian Town, Ironbridge, Shropshire

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

FOLLIES SAFARI A magical 4x4 journey to see Santa in his real hillside grotto, Thurs 4 - Sun 7 Dec, Hawkstone Park & Follies, North Shropshire

THE ENCHANTED ADVENTURES The Christmas light trail returns for a second year, Thurs 4 - Sun 7 Dec, Himley Hall, Dudley

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

LEEK TWILIGHT MARKET Featuring market trader stalls, live music, food & drink and Christmas entertainment, Fri 5 Dec, Leek Indoor Markets, Staffs

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

THE POLAR EXPRESS CHRISTMAS TRAIN RIDE Event recreating the adventure and excitement of everyone's favourite Christmas movie, Fri 5 - Sun 7 Dec, Churnet Valley Railway, Staffs

ILLUMINATED ARBORETUM Discover extraordinary stories told through colour, light and sound, Fri 5 - Mon 22 Dec, National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire

NEWCASTLE LANTERN PARADE A community winter event featuring hand-made willow and tissue paper lanterns, Sat 6 Dec, Newcastle Under Lyme Town Centre

FESTIVE LIGHTS Explore the garden after hours, beautifully lit with Christmas lights, Sat 6 Dec, Biddulph Grange Garden, Staffordshire

SANTA AND MRS CLAUS WINTER WONDERLAND Sing, laugh and share stories with the Clauses, Sat 6 Dec, British Ironwork Centre, Oswestry, North Shropshire

THE POLAR EXPRESS PYJAMA PARTY A special pyjama-party screening of the 2004 classic, Sat 6 Dec, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

SANTA'S CHRISTMAS CASTLE Tour through the decorated castle, looking for clues to lead you to Santa, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Dec, Tamworth Castle

MEET FATHER CHRISTMAS Meet Father Christmas in his grotto in the atmospheric ruins of Ludlow Castle, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Dec, Ludlow Castle, South Shropshire

SANTA'S GROTTO Take part in festive activities with the elves before meeting Santa himself, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Dec, Peak Wildlife Park, Leek, Staffs

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 MARKET Featuring local artisan stalls, festive treats and handcrafted gifts, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Dec, Peak Wildlife Park, Leek, Staffs

SANTA & MRS CLAUS: FESTIVE FUN Travel through a winter wonderland and meet festive characters, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Dec, Hoo Zoo & Dinosaur World, Telford, Shropshire

CHRISTMAS WREATH MAKING WORKSHOP Join Kiwi Creations for their special workshop, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Dec, Himley Hall, Dudley

THE NORTH POLE ADVENTURE Go on a magical journey to the North Pole, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Dec, National Forest Adventure Farm, Staffordshire



THE SANTA EXPERIENCE Santa and his magical elves turn the farm into an enchanting wonderland for the festive season, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Dec, Park Hall Farm, Oswestry, North Shropshire

STAFFORDSHIRE CONTEMPORARY ARTIST AND DESIGNER FAIR Your chance to buy original, handcrafted items directly from the artists and designer makers, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Dec, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek

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

CHRISTMAS AT THE ZOO Featuring a brand-new Santa's grotto and Christmas Village in the evening, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Dec, Exotic Zoo, Telford

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, South Shropshire

JINGLE-VILLE Step into a world straight out of a storybook as you explore the charming town of Jingle-Ville, Sat 6 - Mon 8 Dec, Lower Drayton Farm, Stafford

MENTAL ELF RUN Walk, jog or run your way around the scenic 5km route at Trentham Gardens, Sun 7 Dec, Trentham Estate, Staffordshire

A WARTIME CHRISTMAS A 1940s event featuring 'fabulous vintage fashions', Sun 7 Dec, The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent

FROZEN PARTY With Elsa and Anna, Sun 7 Dec, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

Gigs

BAD MANNERS Mon 8 Dec, The Underground, Stoke-on-Trent

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

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

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

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

SPIKE AND THE GIMME GIMMES + BAD COP/BAD COP + PET NEEDS Wed 10 Dec, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

JAMES YORKSTON Thurs 11 Dec, Kitchen Garden, Birmingham

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

CG5 Thurs 11 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

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

A NIGHT OF JAGGED LITTLE PILL Thurs 11 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

CROBOT + ASOMVEL Thurs 11 Dec, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

SKINNY LISTER + CLAUDIA KATE Thurs 11 Dec, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

SHOWADDY WADDY Thurs 11 Dec, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

JAMES KIRBY Thurs 11 Dec, The Artisan Tap, Stoke-on-Trent

BRIAN CARRINGTON Thurs 11 Dec, Bill's Kitchen, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

THE TOTAL STONE ROSES & OAYSIS Fri 12 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

CHUGGABOOM + OVERTHROW +

DREARLEADER Fri 12 Dec, O2 Institute, Birmingham

ELVANA: ELVIS FRONTED 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

FLEETWOOD SHACK Fri 12 Dec, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

CODY FROST Fri 12 Dec, The Asylum, Birmingham

JAMIROQUAI Fri 12 Dec, Utilita Arena Birmingham

THE KING'S VOICE STARRING GORDON HENDRICKS Fri 12 Dec, Dudley Town Hall

KILLERSTREAM Fri 12 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

FLEETWOOD BAC Fri 12 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

THE ALL STAR REJECTS Fri 12 Dec, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

ORANGE GOBLIN + GRAND MAGUS + URNE Fri 12 Dec, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

MAET LIVE & THE NEVERLAND EXPRESS Fri 12 Dec, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

ROB LAMBERTI PRESENTS PERFECTLY GEORGE Fri 12 Dec, King's Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

JOHN KIRKPATRICK Fri 12 Dec, Fenton Town Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

TALON Fri 12 Dec, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

SLADY Fri 12 Dec, Lichfield Guildhall

TOUCH TOO MUCH Fri 12 Dec, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

GREENMATTHEWS Fri 12 Dec, Wem Town Hall, North Shropshire



SGODETH + KNIFEPOINT + IN ABSENTIA Sat 13 Dec, The Sunflower Lounge, 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

JULIET'S NOT DEAD Sat 13 Dec, The Asylum, B'ham

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

STEREOPHONICS Sat 13 Dec, Utilita Arena Birmingham

ROB LAMBERTI AS GEORGE MICHAEL Sat 13 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

INCA BABIES + LIZARDS + HUMDRUM EXPRESS + THE PROCTORS + BOO TIKIS Sat 13 Dec, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

THE DUALERS + THE REGGULITES Sat 13 Dec, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

WINTER WONDERBAND Sat 13 Dec, Wolverhampton Arts Centre

THE 9075 Sat 13 Dec, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

ULTIMATE LEPPARD Sat 13 Dec, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

GORDON HENDRICKS - THE KING'S VOICE Sat 13 Dec, King's Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

THE TWO TONE REVOLUTION Sat 13 Dec, Two Gates Club, Tamworth

ALMOST IN CHAINS & LOUDER THAN SOUND Sat 13 Dec, The Station, Cannock

DOMINO SUGAR Sat 13 Dec, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

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

ABBA ALIKE Sun 14 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

TERENCE 'THE COOL RULER' WALLIN Sun 14 Dec, Tower of Song, B'ham

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

BUBBLE LIVE Sun 14 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

FRANKIE - THE CONCERT Sun 14 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

VICKY JACKSON AS PINK Sun 14 Dec, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

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

SOUNDS LIKE CHRISTMAS Featuring Judith Moreland (musical director) & In Sound Company Community Choir, Mon 8 Dec, Stourbridge Town Hall

LUNCHTIME CONCERT Featuring Esther Clay (violin), Tues 9 Dec, St Alkmund's Church, Shrewsbury

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



THE PICCADILLY SINFONIA: VIVALDI FOUR SEASONS AT CHRISTMAS Featuring Victoria Sayles (violin) & Warren Mailley-Smith (piano). Programme also includes works by Beethoven, Wed 10 Dec, Shrewsbury Abbey

CONCERTS IN THE ROUND Featuring Ulrich Heinen (cello) & John Humphreys (piano), Fri 12 Dec, St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury

PHOENIX SINGERS Family carol concert, Fri 12 Dec, St Alkmund's Church, Shrewsbury

EX CATHEDRA: CHRISTMAS MUSIC BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring Jeffrey Skidmore (conductor). Programme includes works by Warlock, Britten, Gibbons & more..., Sat 13 Dec, St Peter's Church, Wolverhampton

A WINTER FESTIVAL Programme includes works by Sibelius, Massenet, Svendsen & more..., Sat 13 Dec, Halesowen Town Hall

BACH: CHRISTMAS ORATORIO Featuring Richard Robbins (director) & Shrewsbury School Community Choir & Orchestra, Sat 13 Dec, Shrewsbury Abbey

STAFFORD SINFONIA: CHRISTMAS CONCERT Sat 13 Dec, St. John the Baptist Church, Stafford

THE MARCHES CHOIR: ST NICOLAS CANTATA Featuring Cantorion Aberteifi & Marches Sinfonia.

Programme includes works by Britten & Vaughan Williams, Sat 13 Dec, St John's Church, Bishops Castle, South Shropshire

BIRMINGHAM PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA Featuring Jack Lovell-Huckle (conductor). Programme includes works by Tchaikovsky, R Cole, Nielsen & Prokofiev, Sun 14 Dec, St. Laurence's Church, Ludlow, South Shropshire

Comedy

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

MICHAEL MAROULI Tues 9 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

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

SEAN PERCIVAL, ANTHONY WILLIAMS, DAN SMITH & COMIC TBC Thurs 11 Dec, Stourbridge Town Hall

MICK MILLER Fri 12 Dec, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

PAUL KERENSA, DALISO CHAPONDA & JO ENRIGHT Sat 13 Dec, Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shropshire

AURIE STYLA, KANE BROWN, TRAVIS JAY & ANDREW MENSAH Sun 14 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

KAT B, LOYISO GOLA, KYRAH GRAY, SIKISA & LIMAH Sun 14 Dec, Wolverhampton Arts Centre

Theatre

CHECK PREVIOUS WEEKS FOR THEATRE & PANTOS SHOWING THROUGHOUT THE MONTH

BLEAK EXPECTATIONS Stoke Rep Players present Mark Evans' spoof of Charles Dickens' novels. Based on the award-winning BBC Radio Four series, Tues 9 - Sat 13 Dec, Stoke Repertory Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent



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

DARK TALES IN WINTER: THE FACE A new version of EF Benson's chilling tale of a woman and her strange, recurring nightmare, Thurs 11 - Sat 13 Dec, Arena Theatre, W'hampton

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST JR Amateur version of the family-friendly musical, Sat 13 Dec, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

Pantomime

SINGING STARS CRAZY CHRISTMAS - SNOW WHITE Join the Singing Stars as they travel to Fairytale Land, where an evil queen plots to be the top baddie of all time..., Mon 8 & Tues 9 Dec, Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke

ALADDIN High-flying family panto presented by Ludwig Arts, Wed 10 - Fri 19 Dec, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

ALADDIN Shrewsbury College presents a family pantomime in support of Wenlock Olympian Society's running-track appeal, Fri 12 Dec, The Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shropshire

CINDERELLA Jonathan Wilkes (Buttons) and Kai Owen (Dandini) are joined by Rhiane Drummond (Fairy Godmother), Kirsty Ingram (Cinders) and Ben Oatley (Prince Charming) in 'a feast of a festive show where everyone gets to go to the ball'..., Fri 12 Dec - Sun 4 Jan, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

Kids Theatre

TALES FROM ACORN WOOD Puppetry and toe-tapping songs combine in a show for children based on favourite stories by Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler, Wed 10 - Wed 24 Dec, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

SANTA'S CHRISTMAS PARTY Help get Santa's Christmas Party back on track in an adventure full of fun, festive songs and party games..., Mon 8 Dec, Festival Drayton, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

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 12 & Sat 13 Dec, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

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

Light Entertainment

THE REAL QUEENS OF BOLLYWOOD A show that honours the legendary women whose voices have brought emotion, passion, drama and romance to life on the silver screen, Mon 8 Dec, The Rep, Birmingham

CHRISTMAS WITH ANTON DU BEKE Join the Ballroom King & Strictly judge for an evening of music, dance and laughter. Vocalist Lance Ellington also stars, Mon 8 Dec, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

THAT'LL BE CHRISTMAS Featuring festive classics, laugh-out-loud comedy sketches and plenty of seasonal cheer, Tues 9 Dec, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

NEIL SANDS CHRISTMAS MEMORIES An afternoon 'full of festive joy and heartwarming nostalgia', featuring over 60 all-time favourite Christmas songs and carols, Tues 9 Dec, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent

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

STONE CHORAL SOCIETY: CHRISTMAS CONCERT Featuring classics, carols and brass 'to brighten your Christmas', Thurs 11 Dec, Crown Wharf Theatre, Stone

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

FESTIVITIES WITH FRIENDS An evening of Christmas songs and carols to get you in the festive spirit, Thurs 11 Dec, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent

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

CHRISTMAS BY CANDLELIGHT 2 The Ludlow Music Project presents music for voices and strings, including carols old and new, Fri 12 Dec, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

THE BIG CHRISTMAS ASSEMBLY 2025 James B Partridge hosts an evening of singalong classics 'to transport you back to the nostalgia of Christmases past', Fri 12 Dec, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

HOLLY JOLLY CHRISTMAS Studio production featuring musical theatre, songs, Christmas classics, carols & new writing..., Fri 12 - Sun 14 Dec,

Oldbury Rep

I'M DREAMING OF A MYTS CHRISTMAS Musical Youth Stafford present a selection of musical theatre festive favourites - as well as a selection from their upcoming 2026 production, Bugsy Malone, Sun 14 Dec, Crown Wharf Theatre, Stone

DYNAMICS CHRISTMAS CONCERT - JINGLE BELL JAM Festive family entertainment, featuring live music, singing, dancing, a light & sound show, Christmas anthems and performances by junior choirs, Sun 14 Dec, Dudley Town Hall

Events

CHECK PREVIOUS WEEKS FOR EVENTS SHOWING THROUGHOUT THE MONTH

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, nr Kidderminster

TALE TRAIL TO THE LITTLE MERMAID Playful, sensory journey inspired by the underwater world of The Little Mermaid. Suitable for children aged between three and five, Tues 9 - Wed 24 Dec, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

SANTA & MRS CLAUS: FESTIVE FUN Travel through a winter wonderland and meet festive characters, Wed 10 - Sun 14 Dec, Hoo Zoo & Dinosaur World, Telford

FOLLIES SAFARI A magical 4x4 journey to see Santa in his real hillside grotto, Wed 10 - Tues 23 Dec, Hawkstone Park & Follies, Shropshire

TUDOR CHRISTMAS TOUR Costumed guided tour exploring Tudor Christmas traditions and stories, Thurs 11 Dec, Blakesley Hall, B'ham

THE ENCHANTED ADVENTURES The Christmas light trail returns for a second year, Thurs 11 - Sun 14 Dec, Himley Hall, Dudley

FESTIVE GARDENS Expect stunning light displays and photo opportunities as you're transported to the North Pole, Fri 12 - Sun 14 Dec, Chelsea & Maxell Gardens, Telford Town Park



FESTIVE LIGHTS Explore the garden after hours, beautifully lit with Christmas lights, Fri 12 - Sun 14 Dec, Biddulph Grange Garden, Staffs

ASTON BY CANDLELIGHT: A CHRISTMAS TOUR Bathed in the warm glow of LED candles, experience this Grade I listed building at night as you're guided through Christmases past, Fri 12 - Sun 14 Dec, Aston Hall, B'ham

WOLVERHAMPTON CHRISTMAS SHOPPING MARKET Explore a huge variety of stalls, Fri 12 - Thurs 18 Dec, Dudley Street, Wolverhampton

A MAMMOTH SANTA TRAIL Follow the elves and snowballs through the exhibition to find Santa, Sat 13 Dec, Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, Craven Arms, South Shropshire

SANTA'S VILLAGE Explore the festive markets, enjoy live music, 'magical' storytimes and more, Sat 13 Dec, Sandwell Valley Country Park

THE ELF EXPRESS The North Pole favourites bring festive cheer, silly antics and joyful songs to the train, Sat 13 - Sun 14 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, departs Bridgnorth, South Shropshire

WORLD OF WEDGWOOD ARTISAN MARKET Featuring independent local makers and small businesses from Staffordshire, Sat 13 - Sun 14 Dec, World of Wedgwood, Staffordshire

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, Bewdley, nr Kidderminster

CHRISTMAS AT THE ZOO Featuring a brand-new Santa's grotto and Christmas Village in the evening, Sat 13 - Sun 14 Dec, Exotic Zoo, Telford, Shropshire

SEVERN HOSPICE CHRISTMAS FAYRE Featuring local traders offering food, crafts and unique gifts, Sat 13 - Sun 14 Dec, Severn Hospice, Bicton Heath, Shrewsbury

CHRISTMAS MARKET Featuring local artisan stalls, festive treats and handcrafted gifts, Sat 13 - Sun 14 Dec, Peak Wildlife Park, Leek, Staffs

GLADIATORS LIVE TOUR Featuring the new stars of hit TV series Gladiators, Sat 13 - Sun 14 Dec, bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham

CHRISTMAS AT APLEY Wander through the festive courtyard to find Santa's Grotto, Sat 13 - Sun 14 Dec, Apley Farm Shop, Shropshire

THE SANTA EXPERIENCE Santa and his magical elves have turned the farm into an enchanting wonderland for the festive season, Sat 13 - Sun 14 Dec, Park Hall Farm, Oswestry, North Shrops

TELFORD 10K The fastest 10k course in the UK, Sun 14 Dec, Telford Town Park, Shropshire

Gigs

SHACK Mon 15 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE BOOTLEG BEATLES Tues 16 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

SHOCK THE RHYTHM Tues 16 Dec, The Rhodhouse, Sutton Coldfield

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



SHEILA FAWKES CAFÉ ORCHESTRA Wed 17 Dec, Boldmere Sports and Social Club, Sutton Coldfield

NULL STATE + HABITUAL LINESTEPPEERS + SUBFUSC + LAST NIGHTS LEFTOVERS + BIG PHOENIX SWORD Wed 17 Dec, Wolverhampton Arts Centre

TOM BROOKSBY & THE SECRET SERVICE Wed 17 Dec, The Artisan Tap, Stoke-on-Trent

THE NATURE CENTRE & SEAN MURRAY + EXOTIC PETS + PORK CHOP 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



Madness - Utilita Arena Birmingham

BOOT LED ZEPPELIN Thurs 18 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

DIZZY LIZZY Thurs 18 Dec, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

MARK LOCKHEART & JOHN PARRICELLI Thurs 18 Dec, Wolverhampton Arts Centre

TALON Thurs 18 Dec, Stoke Rep, Stoke-on-Trent

EAST 17 Thurs 18 Dec, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

ROB LAMBERTI PRESENTS PERFECTLY GEORGE MICHAEL Thurs 18 Dec, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

RAPSQUILLION Thurs 18 Dec, Bill's Kitchen, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

THE DESERT PLAZA Fri 19 Dec, The Sunflower Lounge, 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

MADNESS + SQUEEZE Fri 19 Dec, Utilita Arena Birmingham

STARVING RASCALS Fri 19 Dec, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

SWALLOW THE SUN + SATURNUS + OPIA Fri 19 Dec, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

THE KILLERZ Fri 19 Dec, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

DISCHARGE + EXTINCTION OF MANKIND + THE THIRTEENTH TURN + ASYLUM Fri 19 Dec, The Underground, Stoke-on-Trent

THE SEVERN Fri 19 Dec, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

DON'T STOP QUEEN NOW Fri 19 Dec, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

THE RONALDOS Fri 19 Dec, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury



GOOD TO GO Fri 19 Dec, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

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

THE SMALL FAKERS Sat 20 Dec, The Night Owl, 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

TALON Sat 20 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

KICK UP THE 80S Sat 20 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

SPACEHOPPERS Sat 20 Dec, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

JAYLER + GORILLA RIOT + VOODOO SIOUX Sat 20 Dec, KK's Steel Mill, Wolves

BON GIOVI Sat 20 Dec, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

DARTS Sat 20 Dec, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

CALLUM & THE POOKIES Sat 20 Dec, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

BOBCAT BILLY'S MOONSHINE MISSION Sat 20 Dec, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

THE FURROW COLLECTIVE Sat 20 Dec, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

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

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

LYDONS Sun 21 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

MOSTLY AUTUMN Sun 21 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

THE WEST COAST EAGLES Sun 21 Dec, The Station, Cannock

GORDON HENDRICKS IS ELVIS Sun 21 Dec, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

Classical Music

LUNCHTIME CHRISTMAS MUSIC

Featuring Thomas Trotter (organ) & Hereford Cathedral Choir. Programme includes traditional carols and modern classics, Mon 15 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

GAUDETE! Featuring Felicity Murphy (soprano), Mon 15 Dec, St Alkmund's Church, Shrewsbury

STAFFORD CHORAL SOCIETY: HANDEL'S MESSIAH Featuring Sam Hayes (conductor), Mon 15 Dec, The Collegiate Church of St Mary's, Stafford

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

CBSO CENTRE STAGE: VIOLA EXTRAVAGANZA Featuring Chris Yates, Adam Römer, David BaMaung, Catherine Bower, Amy Thomas, Jessica Tickle, Sarah Malcolm & Isobel Doncaster (violins). Programme includes works by Bowen, Richter, Dale & more..., Tues 16 Dec, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

PETER SHEPHERD ORGAN PROMS Programme includes works by Stanford, J.S. Bach, Gigout & more..., Tues 16 Dec, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

CHRISTMAS WITH THE CERAMIC CITY CHOIR Featuring Anthony Rose (conductor) & Ian Riddle (piano & organ), Tues 16 Dec, Stoke Minster

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

MERRY CHRISTMAS BREWOOD Featuring Brewood Singers & Shropshire Brass Ensemble, Thurs 18 Dec, St Mary & St Chad Church, Brewood, South Staffs

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

CONCERTS IN THE ROUND Featuring Gill Styles & Richard Walker (pianos), Fri 19 Dec, St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury

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

WOMBOURNE & DISTRICT CHORAL SOCIETY: CHRISTMAS ORATORIO Featuring Edward Caine (conductor), Sat 20 Dec, Beckminster Methodist Church, Wolverhampton

HANDEL'S MESSIAH Featuring Gemma King (soprano), Bethan Lagford (alto), Tom Kelly (tenor), Piran Legg (bass), Shrewsbury Sinfonia, Anne Tupling (leader), Shrewsbury Cantata Choir & Anthony Coupe (conductor), Sat 20 Dec, St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury

THE FRONCYSYLITE MALE VOICE CHOIR Sat 20 Dec, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

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

CHRISTMAS WITH THE JOHN RUTTER ENSEMBLE Sun 21 Dec, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

Comedy

JOE LYCETT & FRIENDS Mon 15 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

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

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

SIMON BRODWIN, LARRY DEAN, LOUISE YOUNG & JAY NEALE Fri 19 Dec, The Civic at The Halls, Wolverhampton

ANDY ROBINSON, GBEMI OLADIPO, ANDREW BIRD & COMIC TBC Sat 20 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JAMIE SUTHERLAND, JOSH SEDMAN, MAD RON & DAMION LARKIN Sat 20 Dec, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

Theatre

CHECK PREVIOUS WEEKS FOR THEATRE & PANTOS SHOWING THROUGHOUT THE MONTH

A CHRISTMAS CAROL Amateur version of Charles Dickens' festive favourite, Mon 15 - Wed 17 Dec, Stoke Repertory Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

A CHRISTMAS CAROL Jonathan Goodwin plays Charles Dickens in a one-man performance of the author's classic Christmas story, Wed 17 Dec, Biddulph Grange, Stoke-on-Trent

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

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, Fri 19 Dec, The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent

PINOCCHIO Fun-filled family show based on the classic story of a wooden puppet who dreams of becoming a real boy, Fri 19 - Sun 21 Dec, The Blue Orange Theatre, 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

CINDERELLA Get ready to go to the biggest ball in the land in this traditional family pantomime. The show stars Coronation Street's Alex Bain as Dandini, Britain's Got Talent finalist Lucy Kay as Cinderella and Shelley Ann Rivers & Orla Ridpath as the Ugly Sisters. Telford favourites Ian Smith (Fairy Godmother) and Carl Outfield (Buttons) also star, Tues 16 Dec - Fri 2 Jan, Telford International Centre, Shropshire

CINDERELLA TLC Panto bring the classic fairytale to life with 'dazzling costumes, lively songs and hilarious antics', Thurs 18 - Wed 31 Dec, Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke-on-Trent

SLEEPING BEAUTY Touring Pantos fuse romance, comedy and unexpected twists & turns as the festive classic is brought to life, Fri 19 - Tues 23 Dec, West Bromwich Town Hall

ROBIN HOOD A 'sheriff-busting pantomime extravaganza' featuring

Gok Wan, Matt Slack, Faye Tozer, Andrew Ryan, Matt Cardle, Sandra Marvin and special guest star Christopher Biggins, Sat 20 Dec - Sun 1 Feb, Birmingham Hippodrome

Kids Theatre

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK Lyngo Theatre version of the classic fairytale, featuring 'tiny houses, enormous shoes, showers of silver & gold, and a big leafy explosion', Mon 15 Dec, Brasshouse Community Centre, West Bromwich

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, Tues 16 & Wed 17 Dec, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

CAPTAIN SPROUT AND THE CHRISTMAS PIRATES A swashbuckling adventure featuring shadow puppetry, original music 'and plenty of pirate-y chaos', Wed 17 - Wed 24 Dec, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent

THE GINGERBREAD BOY Puppetry, live music, action and humour combine in a pacey retelling of a much-loved classic, Fri 19 Dec, Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

THE FATHER CHRISTMAS SHOW - SAVE THE SLEIGH 'Festive cheer, laughter, Christmas magic and songs' combine in a show where the audience is needed to help Santa keep Christmas on track..., Sat 20 Dec, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

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 20 Dec, The Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shropshire

Light Entertainment

A CHRISTMAS CAROL WITH ANTON LESSER & ORCHESTRA OF THE SWAN Words and music combine in an illuminating performance of Dickens' festive classic, Mon 15 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

SCIENCE RE-PUBLIC The University of Wolverhampton's free STEM research/stand-up comedy mash-up event aims to bring science back to the community, Mon 15 Dec, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

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

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, Wed 17 Dec, Stourbridge Town Hall

THE CHRISTMAS RAT PACK SHOW Wed 17 Dec, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

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

AFTER SUPPER GHOST STORIES BY JEROME K JEROME; READ BY GAV Featuring ghostly tales told by an unreliable narrator and tied together with 'nonsense, noise and whiskey-punch'..., Thurs 18 Dec, Clungunford Village Hall, South Shropshire

WORD UP 80S CHRISTMAS PARTY Take a journey back in time to the decade of big hair, neon, and epic anthems from the likes of Madonna, Tears For Fears, Wham!, Rick Astley and more..., Fri 19 Dec, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent

THE MAGIC ROOM! - STAND UP MAGIC & COMEDY SHOW A 'memorable and engaging' evening fusing magic, mind-reading and improvised stand-up comedy, Fri 19 Dec, Rugeley Rose Theatre

A FAIRYTALE FOR CHRISTMAS The 'ultimate Irish-inspired Christmas concert' featuring renditions of yuletide favourites, Fri 19 - Sat 20 Dec, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

TEA & BISCUITS PRESENTS: HO-HO-HO! Festive drag show featuring songs and performances. Suitable for ages 15-plus, Sat 20 Dec, The Hive, Shrewsbury

A GOOD OLD FASHIONED CHRISTMAS A celebration of holiday traditions, 'capturing the magic and nostalgia of Christmases past' with music by Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra, Judy Garland and more..., Sat 20 Dec, Halesowen Town Hall

THE JAMES BOND CONCERT SPECTACULAR An evening of iconic tunes, compered by Caroline Bliss - Miss Money Penny in The Living Daylights and Licence To Kill, Sun 21 Dec, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

CHRISTMAS WITH THE JOHN RUTTER ENSEMBLE Christmas concert featuring John Rutter's classic and festive songs, Sun 21 Dec, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

CHRISTMAS: THE CANDLELIGHT CONCERT Featuring timeless sing-along favourites, including White Christmas, Santa Baby, Winter Wonderland and more..., Sun 21 Dec, Dudley Town Hall

Talks & Spoken Word

SUSIE DENT: WORD PERFECT 'Britain's best-loved wordsmith' delves into the joys of the English language, Tues 16 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

FESTIVE STORY BAZAAR Featuring storytelling, poetry, music, laughter 'and a good old festive knees up'..., Sun 21 Dec, Wolverhampton Arts Centre

Events

CHECK PREVIOUS WEEKS FOR EVENTS SHOWING THROUGHOUT THE MONTH

CHRISTMAS LIGHT SHOW: THE ROBIN'S REWARD Enjoy a spectacular light show around the close and on the front of the cathedral, Mon 15 - Sun 21 Dec, Lichfield Cathedral

ICE PALACE GROTTO Meet Santa, share Christmas wishes and take home a gift, Mon 15 - Tues 23 Dec, Mander Centre, Wolverhampton

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

SANTA'S CHRISTMAS CASTLE Take a tour through the decorated castle, looking for clues to lead you to Santa, Sat 20 - Sun 21 Dec, Tamworth 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

MEET FATHER CHRISTMAS Meet Father Christmas in his grotto in the atmospheric ruins of Ludlow Castle, Sat 20 - Tues 23 Dec, Ludlow Castle, South Shropshire

CHRISTMAS AT THE ZOO With a brand-new Santa's Grotto and Christmas Village in the evening, Sat 20 - Wed 24 Dec, Exotic Zoo, Telford, Shropshire

CHRISTMAS AT APLEY Wander through the festive courtyard to find Santa's Grotto, Sat 20 - Wed 24 Dec, Apley Farm Shop, Shropshire

THE SANTA EXPERIENCE Santa and his magical elves will turn the farm into an enchanting wonderland for the festive season, Sat 20 - Wed 24 Dec, Park Hall Farm, Oswestry, North Shropshire

SANTA HUNTS Meet a host of jolly Black Country Christmas characters as you track down Santa, Sat 20 - Wed 24 Dec, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley



Handel's Messiah

CITY OF
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CHOIR

Friday 5th December 2025 at 7pm

Symphony Hall
Broad Street
Birmingham
B1 2EA

Artists

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

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Olivier Award

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Gigs

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

THE FRIENDLY CAMPAIGN + XTRO GHOST Mon 22 Dec, The Artisan Tap, Stoke-on-Trent

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

UBMAD4SKA Tues 23 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

SWIFT & STYLE - THE TRIBUTE SHOW Tues 23 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

LOADED REVOLVER Fri 26 Dec, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

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

SWEDD DREAMZ Sat 27 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

MAETLIVE Sat 27 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

BAD MANNERS + MAX SPODGE Sat 27 Dec, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

WHITESNAKES JOURNEY Sat 27 Dec, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

GREG MURRAY & THE SEVEN WONDERS Sat 27 Dec, The Artisan Tap, Stoke-on-Trent

THE PERRY TONES Sat 27 Dec, The Rigger, Newcastle-Under-Lyme

BON GIOVI Sat 27 Dec, The Station, Cannock

UNFORGIVEN Sat 27 Dec, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

ERASURED + SMALLTOWN BOY Sat 27 Dec, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

WEST COAST EAGLES Sun 28 Dec, O2 Academy, Birmingham

FLASH - A TRIBUTE TO QUEEN Sun 28 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

AC/DSHE + WIZARDS OF OZ Sun 28 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

DIRTY DC + FRED ZEPPLEIN + ED FORCE ONE + POPESTARS Sun 28 Dec, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

THE FREDDIE & QUEEN EXPERIENCE Sun 28 Dec, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

YOODOO VODOO + DANDELION CURSE + ZIPSTYLE Sun 28 Dec, The Artisan Tap, Stoke-on-Trent

THE BIG COUNTRY SHINDIG Sun 28 Dec, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

MOSHTALGIA Mon 29 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

COZY POWELL BIRTHDAY BASH V Mon 29 Dec, KK's Steel Mill, W'hampton

ERASURED Mon 29 Dec, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

FOREVER ELTON Tues 30 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

TOM HINGLY & THE KARPETS + ABSOLUTE STONE ROSES + OASIS FOREVER + THE JONESES Tues 30 Dec, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

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

KILLERSTREAM Wed 31 Dec, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

ICONIC 80S VS 90S Wed 31 Dec, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

THE SUPERSKAS Wed 31 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

NOT QUITE DEAD YET + MATT JOHNSON & THE REPROBATES + SHOTGUN MARMALADE Wed 31 Dec, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

THUNDER HAMMER Wed 31 Dec, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

SKULL DUGGERY Wed 31 Dec, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

THE ENDINGS Wed 31 Dec, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

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, KAZEEM JAMAL, NABIL ABDULRASHID, AXEL BLAKE & SLIM Sun 28 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

DOUBLE TROUBLE, NABIL ABDULRASHID & TOMMY SANDHU Sun 28 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

LINDSEY SANTORO, ANDY ROBINSON, DARREN HARRIOTT & THOMAS GREEN Wed 31 Dec, The Glee Club, B'ham

LOL COMEDY CLUB Wed 31 Dec, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

Theatre

CHECK PREVIOUS WEEKS FOR THEATRE SHOWING THROUGHOUT THE MONTH

CHARLES DICKENS TELLING TALES Jonathan Goodwin's original and authentic one-man recreation of Dickens' dramatic performances, adapted from some of his shorter tales and comic selections, Mon 22 Dec, Lightwoods Park and House, Smethwick

Pantomime

ALADDIN Amateur version promising 'enough magic to fill a genie's lamp', Sat 27 Dec - Sun 4 Jan, Stoke Repertory Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK A 'giant panto adventure', Tues 30 Dec - Sun 18 Jan, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

Kids Theatre

THE NUTCRACKER Lollipops Puppet Theatre fuse storytelling and intricate puppetry in a new interpretation of the famous festive tale, Mon 22 Dec, Smethwick Library

DEAR SANTA LIVE Rod Campbell's festive story is brought to life in a show suitable for audiences aged one-plus. A post-show opportunity to meet Santa in his grotto - and receive an 'extra special gift' - also features, Mon 22 & Tues 23 Dec, Dudley Town Hall



HORRIBLE HISTORIES: HORRIBLE CHRISTMAS Take a 'hair-raising journey' through the history of Christmas in the company of Charles Dickens, Oliver Cromwell and St Nicholas, Tues 23 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

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 D-DAY DARLINGS: A CHRISTMAS TO REMEMBER Evening of 'nostalgia and festive cheer' featuring The D-Day Darlings, The D-Day Juniors and the Voices Community Choir, Mon 22 Dec, Halesowen Town Hall

CHRISTMAS BY CANDLELIGHT Join Lichfield Cathedral Choir for an evening of new and classical arrangements of carols, performed by glowing candlelight, Mon 22 Dec, Lichfield Cathedral

THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS IN CONCERT The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra perform Danny Elfman's musical score alongside a screening of Tim Burton's holiday classic, Wed 24 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE MUSIC OF ZIMMER VS. WILLIAMS The London Concert Orchestra, conducted by Anthony Inglis, bring to life legendary scores from cinematic classics, Sat 27 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Events

CHECK PREVIOUS WEEKS FOR EVENTS SHOWING THROUGHOUT THE MONTH

FAMILY BACKSTAGE TOUR Aimed at children aged between five and 14, Mon 22 Dec, The Rep, Birmingham

THE ELF EXPRESS The North Pole favourites bring festive cheer, silly antics and joyful songs to the train, Tues 23 - Wed 24 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, departs Bridgnorth, Shrops

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

CHRISTMAS EVE FAMILY SKATE Take to the ice for some Christmas Eve festive fun, Wed 24 Dec, Telford Ice Rink, Shropshire

TOY COLLECTORS FAIR Featuring more than 500 stalls packed with thousands of new and old collectables for sale, Sat 27 Dec, NEC, Birmingham

LDN WRESTLING - TABLES, LADDERS & CHAIRS Featuring 'jaw-dropping championship bouts and epic tag team warfare', Sat 27 Dec, Dudley Town Hall

FESTIVE LIGHTS Explore the garden after hours, beautifully lit with Christmas lights, Sat 27 - Sun 28 Dec, Biddulph Grange Garden, Staffs



WESTON'S WOOF WALK Take your furry friend along for a scenic 5k walk to help raise vital funds for Brighter Days Rescue, Sun 28 Dec, Weston Park, Shropshire

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

STAFFORD TOY FAIR Featuring more than 300 stalls, Mon 29 Dec, Stafford Showground, Staffordshire

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

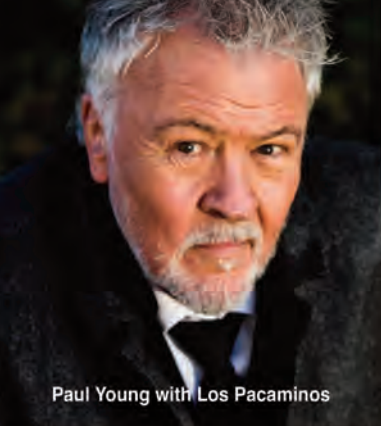
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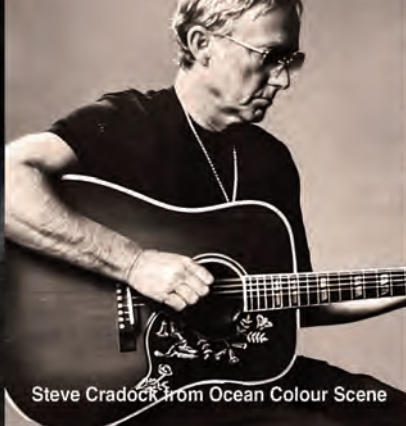


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Paul Young with Los Pacaminos



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:

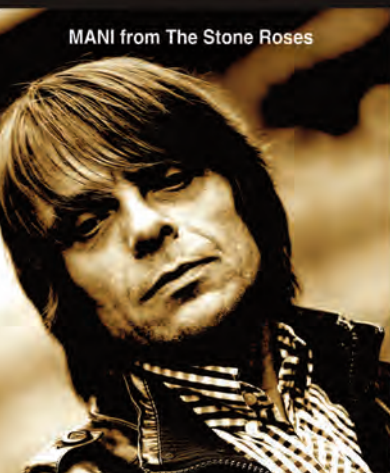
Fri 7 August: The Fooz
 Thurs 3 Sept: Man of The World
 Fri 4 Sept: DS:UK - Dire Straits tribute
 Sun 6 Sept: Tom Petty Heartbreak
 Sun 13 Sept: Danny McNamara Embrace
 Fri 18 Sept: Essentially Cher
 Sat 26 Sept: Downloaded Metal Fest
 Sun 27 Sept: Morgan Wallen UK
 Fri 9 Oct: Gerry Cinnamon Experience
 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

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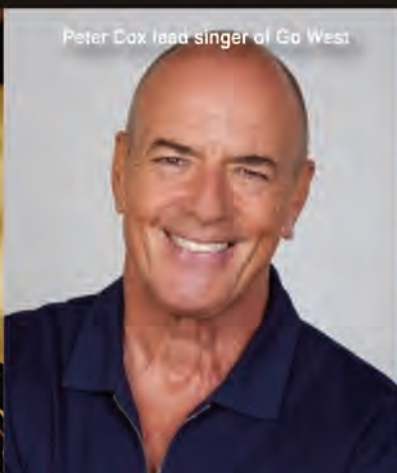
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MANI from The Stone Roses



Peter Cox lead singer of Go West



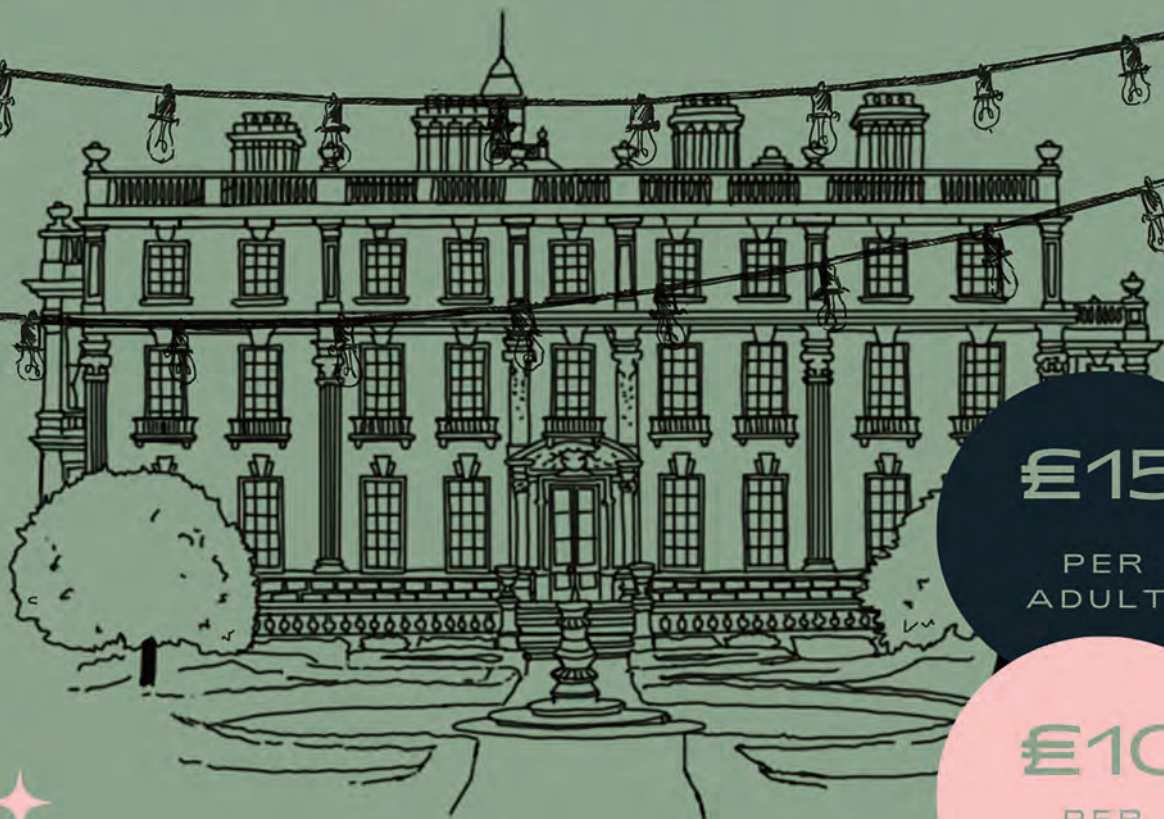
John Lydon - Sex Pistols/PIL



Kerry Ellis - West End Star

Christmas Light Trail

AT
BERWICK HOUSE



£15

PER
ADULT

£10

PER
CHILD

1ST - 14TH
DECEMBER

TICKETS ON WEBSITE