

Birmingham


ISSUE 446 MARCH 2024

# What's On

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**TAKE A CHANCE ON A  
HAPPY ENDING  
THIS NOVEMBER**

**HERE & NOW** 

*A Brand New Musical*

BASED ON THE SONGS OF  
**STEPS**

BOOK BY **SHAUN KITCHENER**    DIRECTED BY **RACHEL KAVANAUGH**    CHOREOGRAPHY BY **MATT COLE**

**THE ALEXANDRA**  
SATURDAY 9 — SUNDAY 24 NOVEMBER  
WEEKEND TICKETS SELLING FAST!  
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## inside:

### SPELLBINDING!

hit musical Wicked flies back to Birmingham Hippodrome



### HAVING A LAUGH

Alasdair Beckett-King tours to Birmingham's Old Rep theatre



### SPACE, RACE AND FLY

family-friendly fun at RAF Museum Midlands this Easter







Birmingham  
Museums

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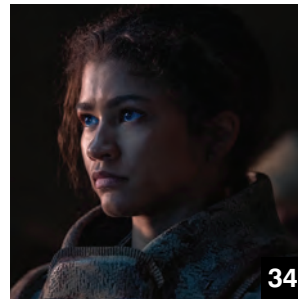
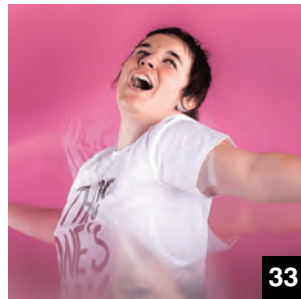
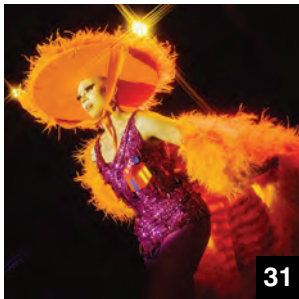
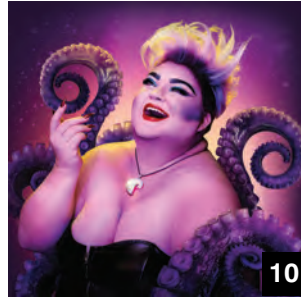
# RADICALS

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ENGLAND**



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### What's On

#### MEDIA GROUP

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## New Steps musical to debut at The Alexandra

A brand-new show featuring the music of pop band Steps is coming to the Midlands in the autumn.

Titled Here & Now, the production will stop off at Birmingham theatre The Alexandra from Saturday 9 to Sunday 24 November. Commenting on the news, Steps said: "We've searched for the perfect story for our music, and we've found it in the aisle of a seaside superstore, where four friends set out on their own Summer of Love."

For more information and to book tickets, visit [atgtickets.com/birmingham](http://atgtickets.com/birmingham)

## Funding secures future of region's historic buildings

West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), working in partnership with the Architectural Heritage Fund (AHF), has provided vital funding to help protect the long-term futures of four of the region's most historic buildings: 16th-century pub The Golden Lion in Birmingham's Cannon Hill Park; Matthew Boulton & James Watts' Soho Foundry in Smethwick; Walsall Imperial theatre & cinema; and Balsall Heath's Old Print Works. As well as financially supporting plans to restore the historic buildings and bring them back into use, the WMCA has set up a Heritage Taskforce as the first regional body to advise on how they can be protected and re-used for generations to come.

## Lego's Brick Fest Live coming to Birmingham

The world's largest hands-on Lego event will visit Birmingham this spring.

Brick Fest Live, running at the city's NEC venue from Saturday 25 to

Monday 27 May, will feature more than a million Lego bricks, life-size models, hands-on build zones and 'an enormous marketplace where avid builders will be able to find rare collectibles not available anywhere else'.

To find out more, visit [brickfestlive.co.uk](http://brickfestlive.co.uk)



## Brum Rocks! Want to appear in a rock concert?

Amateur musicians and singers are being given the chance to participate in free

workshops and events across Birmingham and the Black Country ahead of performing in a ticketed rock concert in the summer. The opportunity comes courtesy of Misfits Music Foundation's Brum Rocks project, which will culminate in a concert at Birmingham's Forum venue on Sunday 14 July. To find out more about the initiative and how to enter, visit [brumrocks.com](http://brumrocks.com)



## Two Midlands concerts for Birmingham music group

Birmingham Contemporary Music Group (BCMG) is presenting two concerts for Midlands audiences this month - one in their home city and one in Coventry.

First up is a performance at Coventry Cathedral, on Thursday 7 March, by the Group's wind trio, who will be playing pieces by Sir Harrison Birtwistle, Melinda Maxwell and Brian Ferneyhough.

BCMG then return to Birmingham's Brindleyplace on Sunday the 24th to present their annual outdoor cherry blossom concert. The event will feature a programme of music 'reflecting on nature and the energy of the incoming spring'. To find out more and purchase tickets, visit [bcmg.org.uk](http://bcmg.org.uk)



## Cadbury unveils new chocolatey ride for 2024

Spring visitors to Birmingham's Cadbury World will be able to enjoy a brand-new and immersive chocolatey ride.

Featuring 3D sets and virtual screens, Cadbury Chocolate Quest challenges guests to jump aboard a Cadbury car and use lasers to collect all the ingredients needed to make a bar of Cadbury Dairy Milk.

To find out more about the new attraction, which replaces the venue's Cadabra ride, visit [cadburyworld.co.uk](http://cadburyworld.co.uk)

## Birmingham Royal Ballet announces 2024/5 season

Birmingham Royal Ballet's (BRB) programme of shows for its 2024/25 season will include an autumn presentation of Sir Frederick Ashton's *La Fille mal gardée*.

Other shows featuring in BRB's later-year line-up include Sir Peter Wright's much-loved version of *The Nutcracker* and the world premiere of *Luna*. A two-act ballet in six movements, *Luna* is the final production in the company's Birmingham Trilogy (the previous two being *City Of A Thousand Trades* and *Black Sabbath The Ballet*).

Early 2025 will see BRB once again presenting one of its most popular works: Sir David Bintley's *Cinderella*. To check out the whole programme and book tickets, visit [brb.org.uk](http://brb.org.uk)





## Back with a bang

The UK's largest celebration of science, technology, engineering & maths (STEM) for young people is returning to Birmingham's NEC venue this summer.

Taking place from Wednesday 19 to Friday 21 June, the Big Bang Fair provides young people with the opportunity to meet STEM professionals from some of the UK's top employers.

The event will also feature live shows, career panels and a wide range of hands-on activities. Further information is available by visiting the website: [thebigbang.org.uk](http://thebigbang.org.uk)

## Gabrielle to play Birmingham

Gabrielle is touring to the Midlands next year in support of her soon-to-be-released new album.

The singer will take to the stage at Birmingham's Resorts World Arena on Saturday 5 April 2025.

New album A Place In Your Heart is released later this spring (Friday 10 May).

For further information and to book tickets, visit the website: [resortsworldarena.co.uk](http://resortsworldarena.co.uk)

## New theatre space for Brum

Birmingham will have a new theatre venue from this month.

Situated in the heart of the city, The Birmingham Black Box is described as a vibrant hub committed to creating and hosting an array of performances, nurturing local artistic endeavours, and serving as a platform for diverse voices and narratives. The venue is due to open its doors on Friday 1 March.

To find out more, visit [birminghamblackbox.com](http://birminghamblackbox.com)



## Circus spectacular as Cirque return after six long years

Cirque du Soleil are returning to the UK for the first time in six years, with their latest tour, which is starting mid-March, coming to an end at Utilita Arena Birmingham next month (Thursday 25 - Sunday 28 April). The world-

renowned company will be performing the critically acclaimed OVO, which they describe as 'a colourful intrusion into a new day in the life of insects'. For further information and book tickets, visit [utilitaarenabham.co.uk](http://utilitaarenabham.co.uk)

## Flamenco magic at the Town Hall

The award-winning Daniel Martinez Flamenco Company is bringing a brand-new show to Birmingham Town Hall this month (Friday 15 March). Titled Andalucia, the production will see flamenco guitarist Daniel joined by musicians, singers and a chamber-orchestra ensemble for an evening which is being promoted as 'a stunning and unmissable flamenco experience'.

Tickets for the concert are available at [bmusic.co.uk](http://bmusic.co.uk)



## Aston's hitting the yellow brick road!

JLS star Aston Merrygold will play the Tin Man in The Wizard Of Oz when a critically acclaimed stage version of the classic MGM musical visits Birmingham Hippodrome this summer (Tuesday 11 - Sunday 16 June).

Aston will be joined in the show by Strictly Come Dancing's Craig Revel Horwood, who will take the role of the Wicked Witch of the West. For more information and to book tickets, visit [birminghamhippodrome.com](http://birminghamhippodrome.com)



## Rock stars Heart to bring Royal Flush tour to Utilita

Veteran American rock band Heart will visit Birmingham's Utilita Arena in the summer as part of their first UK tour in eight years. The Rock & Roll Hall of Fame inductees play the venue on Wednesday 3 July and will be joined by special guests Squeeze, who are celebrating their 50th anniversary. For ticket information, visit [utilitaarenabham.co.uk](http://utilitaarenabham.co.uk)

## City residents invited to share their experiences...

As part of a new campaign titled #MyBirminghamStory, the National Literacy Trust and University of Birmingham are asking Birmingham residents to write an account or record a video explaining their connection with and feelings towards the city. Commenting on the initiative, Kyle Turakhia, Manager for the National Literacy Trust in Birmingham, said: "The Trust is working to raise literacy levels across Birmingham - and increasing storytelling is one of our key objectives." Contributors to #MyBirminghamStory can submit entries on the My Birmingham Story webpage, where they can also find tips on structuring and filming their story.

## Say cheese! Popular food festival returns to Digbeth

Calling all cheese enthusiasts... Get ready to indulge in a seriously cheesy celebration at Seasonal Markets' Cheese Fest on Saturday 23 March! Held at The Bond in Birmingham's Digbeth area (pictured), the event features 'some of the best street-food vendors around, live music, kids' entertainment, market traders and drinks'.



## Birmingham gallery Ikon celebrating 60th anniversary

Birmingham art gallery Ikon is celebrating its 60th anniversary. The venue has kicked off its birthday year by hosting two exhibitions: Birmingham artist Exodus Crooks' Epiphany (Temporaire), and

Start The Press!, which will see a cohort of regional printmakers operate a vintage printing press... To find out what else is happening at Ikon during its anniversary year, visit [ikon-gallery.org](http://ikon-gallery.org)

## Tony hits the road with Sounds Of The 60s show

Veteran DJ Tony Blackburn is visiting Birmingham Town Hall this month (Thursday 7 March) with a live version of his BBC Radio Two show, Sounds Of The 60s. He will then make another Midlands stop-off, at Malvern's Forum Theatre, later in the tour (Thursday 18 July). For further information and to book tickets, visit [ticketmaster.co.uk](http://ticketmaster.co.uk)



## Diary date for this year's Colmore Food Festival

Birmingham's Colmore BID - one of the UK's leading Business Improvement Districts - has announced the dates for the 2024 edition of its popular Colmore Food Festival. The award-winning event - which provides guests with 'an appetising and affordable selection of mouthwatering taster dishes from the traders' latest menus' - will take place in the city's Victoria Square on Friday 13 & Saturday 14 September. For more information about the festival, visit [colmorebusinessdistrict.com](http://colmorebusinessdistrict.com)

## Adults-only pantomime at Birmingham's Old Rep

Just when you thought the pantomime season was well and truly over, Adult Panto is returning to Birmingham's Old Rep Theatre! Promising a show featuring 'wacky and wonderful characters - as you've never seen them before - in a naughty tale full of camp and filthy fun', the company is presenting a version of Alice In Wonderland at the Station Street venue on Saturday 9 March. For more information and to book tickets, visit [oldreptheatre.co.uk](http://oldreptheatre.co.uk)

## New Japanese restaurant & bar opens in the city

A brand-new restaurant & bar concept has opened at Utilita Arena Birmingham. Promising 'authentic Japanese dishes, expertly chosen sake, and an eclectic cocktail selection curated by some of the city's top mixologists', MoonCat is open seven days a week for food & drink, with musical entertainment being provided from Wednesday to Saturday. For more information about the venue, visit its website at [mooncatbar.com](http://mooncatbar.com)



# B:Music

Town Hall & Symphony Hall



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0121 7803333

## Ben Portsmouth: This Is Elvis

09 Mar | Town Hall



## Women In (E)Motion: Black Voices, Agaama & Emily Saunders

| 09 Mar | Symphony Hall



## The Musical Box 2024

09 Mar | Symphony Hall



## Sasha Velour: The Big Reveal

12 Mar | Symphony Hall



## Dirty Dancing Live In Concert

16 Mar | Symphony Hall



## Just My Imagination: The Music Of The Temptations

| 17 Mar | Symphony Hall



## The Circus of Horrors: Dr Hazes Cabaret of Curiosities

| 19 Mar | Symphony Hall



## Tchaikovsky Classics with Birmingham Royal Ballet

| 28 Mar | Symphony Hall



## Good Friday St John Passion with Ex Cathedra

| 29 Mar | Symphony Hall



## Karl Jenkins' 80th Birthday Concert

| 30 Mar | Symphony Hall



# bmusic.co.uk

There's something for everyone this March!



## Cutting-edge arts shows at Hockley Social Club

Popular Birmingham nighttime destination Hockley Social Club has announced a spring programme of 'cutting-edge' arts, comedy and music events, with contributors including Birmingham Royal Ballet (BRB) and stand-up comic Tez Ilyas. Commenting on the news, the venue's director, Jack Brabant, said: "Whether it's our partnership with the BRB, monthly comedy nights, jazz, live music two nights a week, or talks by Aston University, our programme of events pulls together some of the biggest and most respected brands in the city."



## Scrooge joined by The Snowman at The Rep

Birmingham Repertory Theatre's festive-season family offering this year will be a Mark Gatiss-adapted version of Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol. The production will run at the venue from Thursday 14 November to Sunday 5 January. Commenting on the news, The Rep's artistic director, Sean Foley, said: "This production is a supernatural theatrical extravaganza that has thrilled audiences in Nottingham and London with its stagecraft and storytelling... We are looking forward to welcoming audiences, new and returning, to enjoy the very best of family theatre this Christmas." The Rep's winter programme also includes The Snowman, returning for the first time in three years. Based on Raymond Briggs' much-loved story, the production runs at the venue from Thursday 9 to Sunday 12 January. For more information about both shows and to book tickets, visit [birmingham-rep.co.uk](http://birmingham-rep.co.uk)



## Moseley Folk Festival reveals its line-up for 2024 event

Belle & Sebastian (pictured), Levellers, Dexys, Flogging Molly and CMAT will be among the big-name acts headlining this year's Moseley Folk & Arts Festival (Friday 30 August - Sunday 1 September). The Birmingham-based event will also showcase performances by, among others, Lisa O'Neill, Dublin's folk/metal quartet The

Scratch, siblings The Staves, prolific troubadour Beans On Toast, Tuareg songwriter Mdou Moctar, and local folk-album chart-topper Katherine Priddy. Further information about this year's festival is available at [moseleyfolk.co.uk](http://moseleyfolk.co.uk), where you can also purchase tickets.

## Ballet school launches photography campaign

Birmingham's Elmhurst Ballet School has launched a brand-new photography campaign to celebrate the diversity, individuality and talent of its students. Titled Exceptional Dancers, Exceptional People, the initiative marks the school's 20 years in its current home in the Edgbaston district of the city. For more information, visit [elmhurstballetschool.org](http://elmhurstballetschool.org)

## Arena to host Netball Super League grand final

The Grand Final of the Netball Super League (NSL) will this summer be held at Birmingham's Resorts World Arena for the first time ever (Saturday 29 June). Commenting on the announcement, Claire Nelson, managing director of the NSL, said: "Building on the incredible success of the Netball Super League in 2023 - a season that saw more fans show up for the League than ever before - we are taking this year's Grand Final up a gear. Bringing the Grand Final to Resorts World Arena will be the perfect way to bring to a close what will no doubt be our biggest and most exciting NSL season to date."

## Midlands festival lifts the lid on life in the lab

If you've ever wondered what happens on a day-to-day basis in a science laboratory, an evening event at Coventry's Tin Music & Arts venue on Thursday 7 March provides the perfect opportunity to find out. Presented as part of Resonate Festival of Science & Technology 2024, Behind The Scenes With Science Technicians lifts the lid on the everyday life of a lab technician. A related event - The Resonate Festival Of Science and Technology - Day Out! - takes place on Sunday the 10th but is already sold out... To find out more about the Resonate programme, visit [resonatefestival.co.uk](http://resonatefestival.co.uk)

## The Libertines to bring new tour to Birmingham

Rock band The Libertines will perform in Birmingham in the autumn as part of a tour to support brand-new album All Quiet On The Eastern Esplanade (released on the 15th of this month). The boys stop off at the city's O2 Academy on Thursday 3 October. For further information and to book tickets, visit the venue's website.



# A sensational season of theatre at The Alex

THE WEDDING'S OFF, BUT THE HONEYMOON IS ON!

STOCK AITKEN WATERMAN'S

## I SHOULD BE SO LUCKY

THE MUSICAL

with BECKY DODD

**Mon 1 – Sat 6 Apr**  
AD Sat 6 Apr 2.30pm

Disney Presents

## SHREK the Musical

**Tue 9 – Sun 14 Apr**

THE ORIGINAL CAST RETURNS 30 YEARS ON

## DROP THE DEAD DONKEY

THE REAWAKENING!

THE PIONEERING TV COMEDY HITS THE STAGE **ON TOUR 2024**

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CAP Sat 20 Apr 2.30pm

ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S

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Sat 8 Jun 2.30pm

ROALD DAHL'S

## Charlie and the Chocolate Factory

**Tue 11 – Sat 15 Jun**  
Sat 15 Jun 2.15pm

KAY MELLOR'S

## THE SYNDICATE

A NEW PLAY DIRECTED BY GAYNOR FAYE

**Tue 25 – Sat 29 Jun**

## 101 DALMATIANS THE MUSICAL

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AD Sat 6 Jul 2pm

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MUSICIANS HILARY PHILLIPS

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with NEVILL GUNN

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Wed 17 Jul 7.30pm

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**Tue 23 – Sat 27 Jul**

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\*Fees apply.



# A DREAM COME TRUE

Shawna Hamic talks about playing fun and sassy  
Ursula the Sea Witch in hit touring musical Unfortunate...





**Musical parody Unfortunate tells the previously untold story of Ursula the Sea Witch - the underwater baddie in hit Disney movie The Little Mermaid. Described as a tell-all tale of sex, sorcery and suckers, the show is rated 16-plus and is currently touring the UK - stopping off at two Midlands theatres along the way. Shawna Hamic - best known from award-winning Netflix series Orange Is The New Black - plays Ursula. She recently spoke to What's On about starring as her favourite Disney villain...**

Unfortunate is a theatre success story. First staged at Edinburgh Festival in 2019, the quirky musical has gone from strength to strength. When it toured five years ago, it played small-scale venues - including Birmingham Hippodrome's Patrick Studio - but now the production has been expanded and re-imagined as a full-scale musical.

Inspired by Disney's The Little Mermaid, Unfortunate: The Untold Story Of Ursula The Sea Witch puts Ursula in the driving seat, telling her saga - and it's a very different fairytale from the one people are used to!

The show stars actress Shawna Hamic as Ursula, performing alongside River Medway as Ariel. Probably best known to readers as prison guard 'Ginger' Copeland in the hit Netflix series Orange Is The New Black, Shawna couldn't resist the opportunity to play the sea witch.

"When I was first approached about it, I was really excited because Ursula has always been my favourite Disney villain," she says. "She's the bad guy, and who doesn't love the bad guy? But also, I loved the fact that she represented something that I was in real life - a big girl who was powerful and yet fun and sassy. While we think of villains as bad people, it didn't seem like she was *that* bad. Just to get a chance to portray my favourite villain is a dream come true."

By putting Ursula in the centre of the narrative, Unfortunate allows audiences to understand her past and her motivation.

"The story is told through her point of view - she's the narrator as well as the lead character. She speaks to the audience and wants to really show her side of the situation made famous by the Disney movie. She wants it to be what really happened from her perspective, not just seen through the eyes of the heroine that you know.

"So it's the things that happened to her and caused her to be the way she is, and why she reacted the way she did. What caused her to really step into herself as a magical being. It's a love story - she gets the tragedy that happens to lots of people in life, and it makes her more recognisable in everyday life. We

are shaped by the situations that we live through - and that can be true for our favourite 'octowoman' as well.

"We like to cast people as the villain, to see them only one way, and now we get to see Ursula as fully formed. We see her as a kid, we see her as a teenager, we see her on the cusp of greatness, then we see her as everyone recognises her. It's very much like Wicked - that same exploration of why she is the way she is. When we know that, we can accept that she's not just the villain."

In encouraging audiences to see beyond their preconceptions of Ursula, Shawna hopes the show will also inspire them to think a bit more about other people - and themselves.

"As a person who is large, as a fat woman, I want to be seen as more than just the funny woman or the sidekick that's sassy. I feel the same about Ursula being a villain - she's the one-dimensional bad guy who everyone has to hate. I don't think anyone is fully good or fully bad; I feel like, in life, we each have different levels and extremes within us. Exploring Ursula's story specifically allows us to explore the stories of the people around us. It may give us an opportunity to see someone in a different light who we have cast as one-dimensional in our mind. While that seems deep for a panto-comedy-musical, I feel it's part of what we try and explore.

"I think Unfortunate is a show that also allows you to look at yourself and rejoice in who you are completely. We want you to leave celebrating who you are, knowing that you are perfect the way you are, even if society doesn't want you to believe that. The way you look, who you love, how you see the world - you are unique, and unique is important and should be celebrated."

Written by Robyn Grant and Daniel Foxx with music by Tim Gilvin, Unfortunate may be inspired by The Little Mermaid but it's no children's cartoon. The production carries an age recommendation of 16-plus - and there's an important reason for that, says Shawna.

"Ours is an adult show - there are adult themes and adult language. And it seems that however much we warn people, there

are still people who bring their children to the show. So we have five and six-year-olds and seven-year-olds and 12-year-olds in the audience! I come out and use some pretty blue language right off, and then there are adult visuals and themes. So you might have to have some awkward conversations with your children that you didn't want to have yet, if you bring them to this show."

Shawna is no stranger to the stage, having been in US productions of Les Misérables, 1776, Kinky Boots and The Last Ship, but this is her first UK theatre tour.

"I've been to London many times because I would come with my best friend and see theatre in the West End. We would spend a week or two weeks, so I've explored all of the touristy things of London, but I've never had the chance to be in London for a length of time, let alone explore the rest of the UK. So it's a really exciting adventure that I'm on, and what a great way to do it - working here, rather than exploring it by myself!

"I'm excited about getting to see and meet the people in all of the different tour locations. I want to see what resonates with everyone in their own towns and what makes them proud to live where they live. I want to see places that I've read about for my whole life or seen on TV and film but never visited."

With a seven-month tour in the UK, there are a couple of home comforts Shawna admits to missing.

"This is going to seem so silly, but any time someone comes over, I ask them to bring some gum and also to buy a Sprite or a 7up from the airport. You guys have a sugar tax, so you use artificial sweeteners in your drinks, and I can't have them - they make me ill - so the weirdest thing is that I ask people to bring me soda from the US!"

.....  
**Unfortunate shows at Birmingham Hippodrome from Thursday 11 to Saturday 13 April and at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Thursday 11 to Sunday 14 July**



# Haydn - Stabat Mater

Bach - Cantata 12: Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen  
Albinoni - Adagio in G minor

## REFLECTIONS

**City of Birmingham Choir**  
conducted by Adrian Lucas

**Lichfield Cathedral**  
Saturday, 2 March 2024, 7pm



Tickets: £20 (Students £10 | U16s Free)  
From : [ticketsource.co.uk](https://ticketsource.co.uk) and search for 'City of Birmingham Choir'

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PEOPLE'S POSTCODE LOTTERY

POSTCODE COLLECTOR



Classical music from across the region...



## Ex Cathedra: Good Friday St John Passion

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Fri 29 March

A favourite at Eastertide, Bach's St John Passion - a retelling of Christ's betrayal and death - continues to be one of classical music's most profound experiences. Performed by Ex Cathedra under the direction of founder & conductor Jeffrey Skidmore (pictured), the work is 300 years

old in 2024. To mark the occasion, the performance will incorporate chorale preludes, motets, congregational hymns and readings, the intention being to offer 'a richer experience of the Good Friday service as Bach knew it'.

## Adelphi Quartet

Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, Wed 6 March

"Belgium, Spain, United Kingdom, Germany? So what!" say the Adelphi Quartet. "What separates us? A lot of things! What unites us? Even more! Spontaneity, self-doubt, fun, perfection, stress, fear, adrenaline, basic trust, joy, madness - and time and again, music, music, music."

Founded in Salzburg in 2017, the quartet visit Birmingham to perform an afternoon concert featuring the following programme: Haydn's String Quartet No19 in C minor, Op17 No4; Purcell's Fantasias in four parts; and Britten's String Quartet No2 in C, Op36 (1945).



## CBSO: Baroque To Broadway

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Fri 22 March

Iconic compositions by Handel, Jerome Kern and Astor Piazzolla share programme space with movie themes and Broadway classics in this broad-appeal concert by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Celebrating the evolution of music, the CBSO is joined for its journey through time by soprano Danielle de Niese (pictured) and trumpeter Niall O'Sullivan. Featured works include Bizet's Habanera - familiar to many by way of Sesame Street and Trainspotting - and Gershwin's Porgy And Bess.

## City of Birmingham Choir

Lichfield Cathedral, Sat 2 March

The City of Birmingham Choir makes its first visit to Lichfield Cathedral early this month, to perform a programme of choral music for Lent.

The concert sees the choir joined by four soloists and the orchestra of the Musical & Amicable Society.

The programme features Haydn's Stabat Mater, JS Bach's Cantata no12 and Albinoni's Adagio for strings and organ...



## Ligeti Quartet

Elgar Concert Hall, University of Birmingham, Fri 8 March

Ground-breaking musical festival CrossCurrents is making a return at the University of Birmingham this spring, weaving together new music, electronics, jazz and folk to create 'new sounds and never-before-heard experiences'.

And it's in order to contribute to the festival that the ever-exuberant Ligeti Quartet are making this lunchtime stop-off with The Memory Project.

The wide-ranging programme explores numerous themes, from the history of Colombia, through the changed cultural landscape of Kazimierz - the old Jewish district of Kraków - to sonifications of the epigenetic memory of trees.





# BUGG'S LIFE





## Singer-songwriter Jake Bugg is returning to the region to play headline and support-act shows ahead of the release of a much-anticipated sixth album. What's On caught up with him to find out about the new record, live gigs and supporting rock royalty...

If you want a reminder of how quick time flies, how about this: precocious singer-songwriter Jake Bugg, who performed at Glastonbury at the age of 17 and had a number one album the following year, has just turned 30. In the interim, he's released four more albums, toured the world, supported the Rolling Stones and even recorded the soundtrack to a documentary about football superstar Ronaldinho. It's been a whirlwind 13 years for the boy from a Nottingham council estate, a background that keeps him grounded as well as amiably matter-of-fact during our chat.

### It's been a while since your last album, Saturday Night, Sunday Morning, and the Ronaldinho soundtrack. How are things coming with the next one?

I did the soundtrack, and I've been writing ever since then, really. I was in the studio all of last year and the record's pretty much there - we'll be playing a few new songs from it on the upcoming tour. I'm really happy to have a new record pretty much ready to go, although it's always a funny one - you're excited about it but you're worried at the same time.

### Tell us a bit about how the album has come together.

I've been working with these guys at Metrophonic, and they've been great and done the whole record, really - it's been a great experience. It's just picking up a guitar and jamming around and seeing what comes out - it might be a riff, it might be a few chords or a melody - and just going from there.

I didn't do too much sitting at home on the acoustic with the laptop because I spent two years doing that for the soundtrack during Covid, so I wanted to get into the studio.

### And play with other people?

Yeah, exactly. I love playing and writing on my own, but it's good to go and work with other people. You learn new things, and you come up with stuff you probably would never have done on your own.

### What can fans expect from the new album? Saturday Night Sunday Morning took you in a poppier direction - does the new one continue in that vein?

I'd say this one has gone back the other way -

it's a lot more gritty, more energetic, more uptempo... definitely more on the rock side than pop side this time, which I think is a good place for me. Obviously there'll be some traditional kind of Jake Bugg things in there as well. I like to think the fans will be quite happy with this one; it seems a bit more like something I would do. I really like the songs, and I just hope other people can relate to them like I can - that's always the interesting part.

### The Your Town shows are set to feature two sets - one solo acoustic and one with a full band. How do you choose which songs appear in which section? Is the new material best suited to a full band, to make it more palatable to audiences hearing it for the first time, or do you like the idea of leading people in with an acoustic rendition?

With these shows the acoustic section of it is more of a nod back to how I grew up playing. I used to play shows just me and my guitar, kinda half an hour every now and then, so we're playing some older songs from that period. I think when you're playing brand-new songs, you want them to have the biggest impact they can have, so I do them with a band. There's obviously a few songs on this new record that are slower - not every song's uptempo with a full band - so maybe there's an argument to sneak a new ballad one into the acoustic set. So that's an option, too.

### So audiences will get a few brand-new songs and, by the sounds of it, a few very old ones?

Yeah, pretty much. We'll give people a flavour of everything, really. It's nice to mix it up and do stuff we haven't done for a while - and stuff that we've never played before as well.

### And at venues you've not played before, since many aren't on the traditional touring map...

Yeah, it's something we realised last year when we were playing festivals and going to places we wouldn't usually go. The reception and appreciation from the audience was fantastic, so we thought why don't we go to some of these places on the tour, as we hadn't really done some of them before.

### There's a gap in the middle of the tour when you'll be opening shows for Liam Gallagher and John Squire. Does that mean you knew about their unexpected partnership before everyone else?

Oddly enough, I didn't! It was by some miracle that the dates worked out in between mine. It's a pure coincidence but one I'm quite happy with. To go out on the road with those guys will just be a great experience. I love my guitar, so getting to see John play each night will be a great inspiration.

### You weren't even born when the Stone Roses were in their pomp, but it sounds like you're a fan?

Absolutely. I actually supported the Roses when they did their comeback around the 2012 Olympics and played a small show in the Village Underground in East London. It was great to support them - but more than that, I got to watch them in a 500-capacity venue, which was amazing. They were really on it that night.

### Playing on the same stage as such a legendary act and then having a number-one album all at the age of 18 was obviously an amazing experience, but you've said before that you suffered a lot from insecurity and imposter syndrome. Have you got a bit more relaxed about that as you've got older?

I'm a bit more relaxed in general, I think. It's always a funny one when you see your mates doing the graft and going to work while you're getting to travel to all these lovely places and just play shows every night...

### ...with Liam Gallagher...

Yeah, exactly! A lot of our mates grew up listening to Liam, so it does feel quite surreal. But yeah, it's fine - you've just got to get on with it. The music keeps me sane!

.....

**Jake Bugg plays headline shows at Keele University, Staffordshire, on Friday 8 March and Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, on Sunday 28 April. He supports Liam Gallagher and John Squire at Civic Hall at the Halls, Wolverhampton, on Thursday 14 March.**





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Thu 14 Mar  
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Thu 11 Apr  
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Jazz Festival)

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Fri 17 May  
Bill Frisell with Rudy Royston  
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Space, Symphony Hall)



Bill Frisell.  
Photo: Carole D'Inverno

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Birmingham City University



Live music from across the region...

## The Smile

O2 Academy, Birmingham, Fri 22 March

Given that two members of The Smile are Thom Yorke and Jonny Greenwood (the third is Tom Skinner from Sons Of Kemet), it's hardly surprising that the trio's output has been likened to that of Radiohead, the band with whom Thom and Jonny also play. After making people sit up and listen with 2022's *A Light For Attracting Attention*, the boys are visiting Birmingham in support of second studio album *Wall Of Eyes*.



## The Pretenders

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Wed 6 March

The Pretenders are famous enough that even people with little or no interest in music might well have heard of them.

Far fewer are likely to know that the band actually originated here in the Midlands - in Herefordshire.

First enjoying chart success way back in 1979 with *Brass In Pocket*, they went on to score numerous other hits in the years that followed, including *Back On The Chain Gang*, *Message Of Love*, *Talk Of The Town*, *Thin Line Between Love And Hate* and *Don't Get Me Wrong...* The Chrissie Hynde-fronted group is stopping off in Birmingham in support of critically acclaimed new album *Relentless*.



Image credit: James Hodges

## Judas Priest

Resorts World Arena, Birmingham, Tues 19 March

Formed in 1969 and with a string of classic songs to their name - not to mention more than 50 million album sales worldwide - Birmingham's Judas Priest really hit their stride creatively in the second half of the 1970s, delivering a quartet of albums which cemented their reputation as one of heavy metal's greatest-ever bands: 1977's *Sin After*

*Sin*, 1978's *Stained Class* and *Hell Bent For Leather*, and 1979's *Unleashed In The East*. More recent times have shown that they're still very much alive and kicking when it comes to creating new material - 2018 release *Firepower* was their highest-charting album ever...

Bringing their *Invincible Shield Tour* to their home town this month, the guys will be sharing the spotlight with fellow veteran metal masters Saxon and Uriah Heep.

## Buzzard Buzzard Buzzard

Hare & Hounds, Birmingham, Sun 17 March

Having enjoyed a massive success with debut album *Backhand Deals* two years ago, Cardiff-based four-piece Buzzard Buzzard Buzzard are now hitting the road with some brand-new music.

"Playing new songs is always exciting," says vocalist & guitarist Tom Rees, "but these ones are so heavy and loud and relentless that playing them live is like drinking adrenochrome or something. It's why I live! I'm very excited!"

## Bleachers

O2 Institute, Birmingham, Sat 23 March

US rockers Bleachers' self-titled fourth album has been described as sonically sad, joyful, and music for driving to, crying to, and dancing to at weddings...

In short, it's a record that's ideal for plenty of occasions!

The album is due for release on the 8th of the month, so this O2 Institute gig offers Midlands-based fans of the Jack Antonoff band a fairly swift opportunity to check out the tracks live.

## Simple Minds

Utilita Arena Birmingham, Sat 23 March

Formed from the ashes of Johnny & The Self-Abusers, Simple Minds took their name from a line in David Bowie's *The Jean Genie*. And while only Jim Kerr and guitarist Charlie Burchill remain

from the original line-up, the art rock of the band's early albums has played an increasingly prominent role in their recent resurgence, as well as their live sets.

"It's strange to try and work out what's behind the resurgence," says Kerr, "beyond the fact that more and more bands are playing big shows, and more and more people want to attend live gigs. Certainly for bands of our generation it seems there's still an audience that wants to come along, or come along *again*. And not only are they coming along, they're bringing their kids with them!"







# LABOUR OF LOVE

The Old Joint Stock's theatre manager, James Edge, talks about bringing exciting new productions to the Birmingham pub venue...



Birmingham’s Old Joint Stock Theatre will bring a tale of family, friendship and the desire for freedom to the stage this spring in a brand-new production of *The Mad Ones*.

The musical, which opened off-Broadway in 2017 under the former title of *The Unauthorized Autobiography Of Samantha Brown*, centres on the character of 18-year-old Sam as she reaches a crossroads in her young life.

Sitting in her car, keys in hand, she is trying to decide whether to take the safe route and stay home, or start the engine, take off and reach for the unknown. She hears the voice of her best friend, Kelly, urging her to go, while her mother and boyfriend press her to stay... The story then moves forward from that scenario.

“There are a lot of flashbacks, and Kelly is there talking to Sam throughout the show,” explains producer and Old Joint Stock Theatre manager James Edge (pictured). “The basis of the story is Sam making a decision about whether she wants to stay with this overbearing mother and do what her mother wants her to do, or take a risk for the first time in her life, see what the future holds and drive off. It’s a really beautiful piece.”

James is always keen to bring new work to Birmingham audiences and feels *The Mad Ones* is an ideal production for his venue.

“A big thing when producing shows for the Old Joint Stock is that you’ve got a 70 to 80 capacity, so there are limitations. You can’t get massive bands in there; you can’t get huge casts. *The Mad Ones* is a cast of four, with two or three band members, and I thought it would be the perfect show for our space.

“You can relate to every character in the show: the person who wants to stay; the one who wants to take the risk; even the mother, because she was a young, free spirit once, but the way her life turned out wasn’t the way she wanted it to.

“There’s definitely something for everyone. If you’re a lover of musical theatre, if you’re a lover of intimate storytelling, this is the show to come and see. It’s simple and stripped-back, but it hits you in the heart. It’s an absolutely gorgeous piece - a really pure, beautiful story with great songs.”

James took over as theatre manager at the Old Joint Stock in February last year. A former actor, he also runs the theatre website *West End Best Friend*. And his experience on stage has helped him hunt out lesser-known productions to showcase.

“Before running theatres, I was an actor for eight years, mainly doing musical theatre. When training at drama school, you spend a lot of time looking for songs for your rep, so you get to know a lot of the less-well-known writers. You start following their journey and seeing the shows they make. I also hear about new shows because of *West End Best Friend*, and I always try to listen to new cast recordings when they come out.

“The Old Joint Stock has really forged a name for itself with high-quality fringe theatre, especially musical theatre. When I took over, we did a musical called *I Love You, You’re Perfect, Now Change*, and that went down really well, so I’ve been looking for the next right thing. I love the thought of producing shows that people haven’t really heard of yet, but which will become their next favourite show.”

James ran *The Town & Gown Theatre* in Cambridge before taking over the helm at the Old Joint Stock, back in his home city.

“When I was an actor, I performed in about four or five shows at the Old Joint Stock, and some of my favourite experiences were at this theatre. I think it’s a hidden gem. We’d just had Covid, it was slowly trying to build its audiences back up, and they were looking for a manager. I heard about that and thought, that’s the role for me.

“The Old Joint Stock has so much potential, and it’s such a gorgeous building. I have visions for its future. You look at the London pub theatres and what they can achieve, and we can do that here in Birmingham. We are a receiving house, but also we’ve just produced four in-house productions between August and December of last year. I’d love to get to the point where most of the year we are staging our own in-house productions of new work and unknown work.”

James has two colleagues on the team at the Old Joint Stock: theatre supervisors Liam Alexandru and Emily Lloyd.

“We are working rigorously to get the theatre on the map, get audiences through the door, and do bigger and bigger projects each time. We’re doing the musical *First Date* in August - it’s on Broadway, and I don’t think it’s had a live production here in the UK yet. We’re doing that for three weeks. And going forward, I’d love us to be doing productions for four weeks, then five weeks, and running for a few months at a time and maybe even in rep.

“We’ll also start looking for sister venues where we can take Old Joint Stock Theatre



productions around the UK - I’d love to take *The Mad Ones* out on the road.”

Producing in-house shows is a lot of work for three people, but James believes the benefits pay off.

“With your big, standard theatres, you have a big team to do all the different tasks, but with fringe theatre you just don’t have that budget. You’re selling to small audiences due to capacity limitations, so you do it all.

“So when you take on producing a show, you do absolutely everything. You find the show, you sort out the licensing, you do the casting yourself, you get the director on board, you do marketing - you organise everything. Every single bit of prop, costume and set, you make, source, beg, steal or borrow yourself. It’s a real labour of love compared with a visiting show, but there is something very special about an in-house production.

“Fringe theatre is unique. When people come to fringe theatre and watch the show, there’s something about that smaller space. The audience energy dictates the production, and that’s the magic of fringe theatre. You find that as soon as people have been once or twice, they just keep coming back.”

**The Mad Ones plays at the Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, from Wednesday 10 to Saturday 20 April. For information about all upcoming productions at the venue, visit [oldjointstock.co.uk](http://oldjointstock.co.uk)**



# INTO THE FUTURE





## David Haig's new play, *Minority Report* - adapted from Phillip K Dick's 1956 sci-fi thriller - promises audiences 'an electrifying ride into the future' when it opens at Birmingham Rep late this month. What's On recently caught up with the *Yes*, *Prime Minister*, *Killing Eve* and *Thin Blue Line* actor to find out more...

When actor & writer David Haig agreed to adapt Philip K Dick's classic 1956 sci-fi novella, *The Minority Report*, for the theatre, he knew it would be a challenge - but it was the demands of staging a futuristic story which made the project so compelling.

"Simon Friend, the producer, rang me up," recalls David. "He was a fan of *Pressure*, my last play, and said: 'How would it interest you writing a sci-fi thriller based on *Minority Report*?'"

"Immediately my response internally was, 'What? How can I do this, and is it me? Me, whose plays have been about the First World War and Second World War, and with conventional structures?'"

"Then I thought that was the very reason to do it. How incredibly exciting to go off-piste and just write exactly what came into my head on the basis of this short story written in the 1950s."

And he was given carte-blanche to go as off-piste as he chose.

"The Philip K Dick Estate have been incredibly generous and said that, as long as you use the title and the basic premise of *PreCrime* - ie, that you can anticipate murder and get criminals off the streets before they've even committed the crime - you have complete freedom to write exactly what you want. And I've taken them at their word!"

David is not the first person to adapt the novella - Steven Spielberg turned it into a 2002 blockbuster movie starring Tom Cruise. But the playwright has taken a very different approach and made a fundamental change: his lead character is female.

"I thought it would be really exciting to get as far away from the original story in that sense, but also from the film, which in fact I hadn't seen when I wrote the first draft of the adaptation. So it felt right to write an exciting part for a middle-aged woman in a sci-fi thriller. It's unlikely, it's unexpected, and that's what's interesting about it."

"The principle of the play is that the head of *PreCrime*, Julia Anderton, sees her own name on the list as the next pre-murderer - ie, it has been predicted that she will murder - and it's the last thing in the world that she, as head of the whole organisation, expects.

"Then the play is 80 minutes of real time

from that moment. It's always through her point of view, and it's her run from potential incarceration and criminalisation. Will she kill? Won't she? Will she be proved innocent? Won't she?"

"Not only is it a sci-fi thriller, the play is an interesting portrait of a woman who has to change her mind on a very important premise. Yes, it's a sci-fi thriller, but also it's a conventional play with a story and a journey."

David's previous dramas include *My Boy Jack*, *The Good Samaritan* and the aforementioned *Pressure* - but adapting a futuristic tale set in 2050 is a very different prospect.

"The challenges of writing sci-fi for the stage are writing stage directions like 'the van chases the car at 40 miles an hour, the two collide, there is an explosion of metal and the car bursts into flames....'"

"That was the freedom that I adopted when I was writing it. You just write anything that comes into your head, and then the director, Max Webster, and the incredible design team that we've got say, 'That's possible, that's not possible, that's possible, that's not possible.' And so we work towards a solution in that way."

David has also found the notion of writing about a future world fascinating.

"When *Blade Runner* was filmed, which is also based on a Philip K Dick story, he turned down literally ten to 15 applications for screenplays before he agreed to one. And the one he agreed to was because they created the tone of his world right, and the tone of his world was some bits very dilapidated and old-fashioned, and some bits very modern and futuristic."

"You have to get a mixture, so that people feel comfortable in the world they're in but at the same time think: 'Wow, that's new, and that might already have happened. and that could be about to happen...'"

And the unnerving part of writing about a possible future is that some of it has already come true.

"The whole premise of predicting crime is very close to us. What has struck me is that each time I've done a new draft of this play, it's been because the whole obsession with,

the fear of, the respect for artificial intelligence (AI) has raced forward as I've been writing it.

"I'd already written a draft before Covid, and by the time the lockdowns had finished, AI was rattling forward and I was already out of date, so I've had to keep up with those developments. This prediction of how the brain behaves and in what ways it pre-empts stuff and predicts stuff is already there. It doesn't actually feel so outlandish."

David is also well known as an actor, playing Inspector Grim in television's *The Thin Blue Line* and appearing in series as diverse as *Downton Abbey*, *Killing Eve* and the 2013 re-make of *Yes, Prime Minister*. He's no stranger to acting in films either, having appeared in hit movies *Four Weddings And A Funeral* and *Two Weeks Notice*. He grew up in Rugby and knows Birmingham well, having worked at *The Rep* more than 40 years ago.

"My wife Julia was born in Coventry, and we met in Birmingham. She was working, at the time, for a very good community theatre company called *Second City*, and then we went on to work together at Birmingham Rep. "This was in the era of Clive Perry, back in the late 1970s and early 80s, and I loved my time there."

"I've been back very regularly over the years and have a loyalty to the city. I'm very excited that the show is coming to *The Rep*, and I'm looking forward to seeing how it fits into that environment."

And David encourages everyone, not just sci-fi fans, to see *Minority Report*.

"People who have an open mind to the whole concept of how much our society is watched and monitored - and how much our thoughts are probed, and how much science is racing ahead of any safety - as well as people who just want a straight adventure story, will be excited by it."

.....

**Co-produced by Birmingham Rep, Nottingham Playhouse and Lyric Hammersmith Theatre in association with Simon Friend, *Minority Report* shows at The Rep, Birmingham, from Friday 22 March to Saturday 6 April**



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Comedy previews from across the region...

**Sophie McCartney**

Victoria Hall, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 15 March; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Thurs 18 April

Award-winning comedian Sophie McCartney has entered the perilous world of parenting and thinks it's high time she told her audience all about it. "Why did no one tell me what to really expect



after I was expecting?" she questions. "Will my belly button ever go back to 'normal'? Why do you need a degree in collapsing travel cots? And do I have what it takes to stop my current cereal eaters from becoming future serial killers?"

These and many more questions will hopefully be answered in latest show Tired & Tested, during which Sophie makes her way through subjects including mating, birthing, body changes, school WhatsApp groups, overbearing nutjob love, and still not being able to handle her booze on a night out...

**Jessica Fostekew**

The Glee Club, Birmingham, Tues 19 March; Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton, Thurs 16 May

"I exist in real life but am also a comedian, actor and writer," says Jessica Fostekew. "Since 2008 I've been throwing this job around like you would a walnut in a sock."



Realising herself to be a feminist "the very first time somebody said: You're really funny for a woman", Jessica gets her comedy inspiration from her life, her family and, er, witchcraft - although reassuringly reveals that the latter source provides only around one per cent of her material!

"I'm not a comedian in order to abuse people or to get laid," Jessica wrote in the Huffington Post. "I want to make people laugh. I'm there to be judged on my jokes. I've had everything shouted at me, from "My tits are better than yours" to "When's the raffle?" but it's never been meant to hurt me."



**Matt Chorley** Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Wed 13 March

There can surely be no better time than a probable general election year for Times Radio presenter and Have I Got News For You regular Matt Chorley to hit the road with a brand-new touring show. This latest offering sees Matt draw on two decades of reporting from Westminster - and two centuries of

history - to deliver 'a hilarious guide to winning and losing at the polls'. In the process, he'll be focus-grouping the audience and compiling his own manifesto - one that he firmly believes is guaranteed to get him the keys to No 10!

**Tom Houghton**

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Thurs 14 March

In an age where tradition and progress are wrestling against each other, what are the parts of ourselves that need shedding, and what is it worth holding on to?



That's the question which will be posed by Tom Houghton when he visits Coventry mid-month. Tom's star is very much in the ascendant right now, thanks to a break-out year that saw him become a social-media hit courtesy of multiple viral videos. He's also appeared in Netflix's The Circle, hosted Very British Problems: Live and the Bad Manors podcast, and pretty much looks set for a fantastic future on the UK comedy circuit.

**Adam Kay**

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Mon 25 March; Victoria Hall, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, Thurs 3 October

After watching an Adam Kay performance, Stephen Fry declared, "This made me very, very happy." Numerous sell-out years at the Edinburgh Fringe and tens of millions of YouTube hits later, former obstetrician and gynaecologist Adam is this month visiting the Midlands with brand-new offering Undoctored, a follow-on from previous smash-hit stage show This Is Going To Hurt.





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## WHAT'S ON



**JAMES BLUNT**  
Sun 7 April  
Resorts World Arena



**PETER KAY**  
Fri 19 April,  
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Comedy previews from across the region...

## Leigh Francis

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 1 March;  
Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Sun 31 March

Funnyman Leigh Francis - best known as comedy creation Keith Lemon - is bringing to life his various characters in a 'live' environment for the very first time. Leigh is promising an evening awash with hilarious sketches and bucketloads of audience interaction - not to mention, of course, close encounters with not only Keith Lemon but Bear & Avid Merrion, 'David Dickinson', 'Ant & Dec' and Myrtle.



## Jo Caulfield

Number 8 Pershore, Fri 8 March; Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Sat 9 March;  
Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire, Fri 19 April; Lichfield Garrick, Fri 17 May

"I always question where my comedy's coming from," says Jo Caulfield, who's appeared on much-loved TV shows *Mock The Week* and *Have I Got News For You*. "Is it coming from a good place and is it a worthwhile target? I'm rude, I swear and can be very harsh, but I'm not that crude. I tend not to do graphic sex stuff, because it doesn't make me laugh. I always say I don't do fluids, because I don't find that funny. I also think it's quite childish. I don't think people are shocked by that kind of humour anymore. When comics think that they're being shocking, I just want to say, 'We're not shocked; we're just bored and find it distasteful.'"



## Ania Magliano

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry,  
Fri 15 March

Describing herself as a triple threat (bisexual, Gen Z, bad at cooking), Ania Magliano is currently going down a storm on the UK comedy circuit. And not just with appreciative audiences either; critics have also been waxing lyrical about her, describing the Cambridge University graduate as everything from artfully accomplished to profound, modern, incisive and deadpan hilarious.

Her latest offering, *I Can't Believe You've Done This* - nominated for an award at the Edinburgh Fringe and featuring an imaginative blend of the frivolous and the serious - covers everything from bad haircuts and dating experiences, to breast-reduction surgery and trauma.



## Alasdair Beckett-King

The Old Rep, Birmingham, Wed 27 March;  
Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Thurs 25 April

When, as a stand-up comedian, you find that no less a laughter merchant than Stewart Lee is hailing you a five-star example of 'clockwork comedy perfection', it's reasonable to assume that you must be doing plenty right. And Alasdair Beckett-King most definitely is. Lee's glowing recommendation is no stand-alone tribute, with critics and audience members alike routinely praising the self-described hedge-wizard and cat burglar...

Alasdair - who also describes himself as England's most Scottish-looking man - visits the Midlands this month and next with latest touring show *Nevermore* - an offering in which he's promising to unravel some of life's shallowest mysteries...

## Iain Stirling

Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Sat 23 March;  
The Alexandra, Birmingham, Sun 24 March

"To help convince my father that comedy is a real job," says Iain Stirling, "I've dressed up smart and gone along to numerous posh parties where I didn't win the following things: Bafta Best Children's Presenter 2011, Chortle Best Newcomer 2011, Loaded Lafta Rising Star 2011, and a good few more!" Iain's self-deprecating style of humour has proved hugely popular since he burst onto the scene in 2009, when he finished runner-up to Joe Lycett as Chortle Student Comedian Of The Year at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. The ensuing years have seen him enjoy considerable success as a children's television presenter and, most famously, as the narrator on the hit TV series *Love Island*. Jokes include: "When Jesus went to heaven, was that not essentially 'moving back in with your parents?'"





# GLASS ACT

**A new production of Tennessee Williams' semi-autobiographical  
The Glass Menagerie is this month visiting the Coventry Belgrade**





## Director Atri Banerjee's highly acclaimed production of Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* visits the Coventry Belgrade this month. Actress Geraldine Somerville talks to What's On about returning to a play in which she first appeared some 35 years ago...

Actress Geraldine Somerville - best known from the Harry Potter movies, the film *Gosford Park* and as Robbie Coltrane's long-suffering sidekick DS Jane Penhaligon in hit television series *Cracker* - is delighted when I tell her she's made my job easier.

"Oh good! I'm glad I've helped somebody already today," she laughs, before I explain that her latest role gives me an instant angle for our chat. She's playing matriarch Amanda Wingfield in Tennessee Williams' classic domestic drama, *The Glass Menagerie* - the semi-autobiographical tale of a family on the verge of meltdown that kickstarted his playwrighting career. It's also the play that launched Geraldine's acting career, as she played the role of the daughter Laura in her first professional gig after leaving acting school in 1989.

To top it off, the latest version of the play, directed by Atri Banerjee, premiered at the Royal Exchange in Manchester, the same theatre where Geraldine made that debut 35 years ago. She giggles again when I suggest that her life has come full circle so she can now retire.

"I did think that, funnily enough!" she laughs. "It did cross my mind that maybe this is the end!"

If this *was* her final curtain call - and it's evidently not - then there'd be few better ways to bow out than returning to the incredible world that Tennessee Williams created, she admits.

"When I got that job back in 1989, I was cock-a-hoop because it was my first job after leaving drama school - wonderful theatre, wonderful part, wonderful play. But I probably didn't appreciate quite how wonderful the play is and what an amazing writer Tennessee Williams is. So I came back to it going 'Wow, oh my gawd!'"

The deep-south accent she adopts for those last words could almost be Amanda, the overbearing Southern Belle she plays in the show but who Geraldine admits she understands and appreciates so much more now that she herself is a mother (and not just to a certain kid magician!).

"My original take on Amanda was that she was stuck in the past, but then you see she's a woman who has survived on her own in America during the Depression, bringing up two children in a huge city where she's unable to work - because women couldn't - and with a daughter with a disability and no support. So she can't have been just a flighty

little Southern Belle - she must have had some grit to survive that and to have got to where she is.

"I think the challenges with Amanda are that she's the mother of all mothers - in every respect - but because she's so vocal, and around a lot in the play, you don't want to be annoying and irritating; you've got to find a way into the character so that she's appealing in some way. That's the eternal challenge of playing this part. And you can play her in many different ways."

And as Geraldine points out, Amanda has rather a lot to say for herself...

"Yes, yes, yes! Laura's a joy to play because she does so much observation; she's just quietly there, soaking it all in. Amanda is the engine in a way; she drives the energy and the pace of the play, and that's quite a responsibility. And oh my God, all those flipping lines!"

Like Shakespeare, Tennessee Williams' beautifully written work isn't the sort of script you can adlib your way through when the brain freezes, Geraldine admits.

"He was a poet and his dialogue is so poetic. There's so much of a rhythm and a rhyme to it, so you really do need to get it right. You can't just generalise your way through or give an appropriation - not that I would, being the very professional actress that I am! That said, I *have* been known to come out with some gobbledygook now and again, which is funny because it throws the rhythm out of balance."

Despite the challenge of such a wordy script, Geraldine had no hesitation in saying yes when offered the chance to reprise the role that she first played when the new production debuted in 2022.

"There aren't many acting roles in my age group, particularly in great classic plays like this, so it's a great opportunity. I couldn't say no!"

Better yet, Atri Banerjee's production (and Geraldine's performance) earned rave reviews, not least for offering an innovative new take on the original text - something the actress herself says was apparent from the off.

"I think what was - and is - really joyous about the production, and the design and the way Atri directs, is that it has a very dreamlike quality, because it's a play of memory, and you can interpret that in so many different ways."

The staging is "quite stark and pared back,

almost ethereal" according to Geraldine, who admits the lack of props meant the actors - as well as their characters - were effectively "floating around in the ether of [narrator] Tom's memory".

"That was really interesting and different and fresh and new, but it had its challenges, I have to be honest.

"When I did the production back in 1989, we had props and it looked quite authentically 1937 - which is when it's set - but we don't have any of that, so it's challenging. As an actor you have to really use the text to tell the story - I mean really, really use it - because it isn't visually going to be delivered to the audience. You're trying to contextualise time and place, because they are very important in order to have an understanding of the characters."

The challenge is clearly something she's relishing though - not least because the new production is much more physical, leaning heavily on movement and symbolism to tell the story.

"It was a new territory for me as an actor. I haven't done plays for a long time because I've been busy with my children, so yes, it was really interesting, and I'm very interested in that kind of work - I like physical stuff.

"It's a more abstract - or expressionistic, maybe that's the word - version of the play, which I hope connects with the audience."

One thing that definitely has connected with an audience - or at least the BAFTA-voting one - is *Gorka*, a short movie Geraldine recently made alongside David Baddiel. The film was nominated for Best British Short Film at the 2024 BAFTA Film Awards, which were due to take place a few days after we spoke. Had she got her gladrags ready?

"Don't even get me started! I've just rustled up something of my own. The whole thing is crazy."

'Rustled up'? What, so you made it?

"No, no, no! Just something I had at home - shall we call it 'vintage'? I do many other things, but sewing definitely isn't one of them!"

.....

**The Glass Menagerie shows at the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, from Saturday 16 to Saturday 23 March and Malvern Theatres, Worcestershire, from Tues 26 - Sat 30 March**





**Wicked** Birmingham Hippodrome, Tues 5 March - Sunday 7 April

Offering evidence that you simply can't please all of the people all of the time, Wizard Of Oz spin-off Wicked had to dodge its fair share of slings and arrows when it opened in London in 2006 (three years after debuting in the US).

The proof of the pudding, however, is most definitely in the eating, and 18 years after its West End premiere, Wicked is still going strong. Based on novelist Gregory Maguire's revisionist exploration of Frank L Baum's famous tale, the show basically tells the story of The Wizard

Of Oz from the perspective of two sorcery students, one of whom will become Glinda The Good, the other the Wicked Witch of the West. If you've seen the show before, chances are you'll be eager to catch it again when it visits the Midlands this month. If, on the other hand, Oz is a land to which you've yet to travel, then follow the yellow brick road to the Birmingham Hippodrome box office just as fast as your ruby slippers will carry you...



**Madagascar The Musical**

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Thurs 14 - Sun 17 March; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Thurs 16 - Sun 19 May; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Thurs 30 May - Sun 2 June

The smell of the greasepaint and roar of the crowd has tempted the furry cast of Madagascar the movie to forsake New York's Central Park Zoo in favour of treading the boards on a UK theatre tour.

The blockbuster DreamWorks film comes to life at venues across the region over the next few months, with Alex the Lion, Marty the Zebra, Melman the Giraffe and Gloria the

Hippo all present and correct in a show that producers promise will send your kids home positively wild (which may or may not be a good thing!). CBBC and Strictly Come Dancing favourite Karim Zeroual stars.

**Peak Stuff**

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Thurs 21 & Fri 22 March

Award-winning theatre company ThickSkin here collaborate with up-and-coming playwright Billie Collins to contemplate the question: in an age of retail therapy, climate crisis and click & collect, how does our 'stuff' define us?

Presenting three fast-paced stories about consumer culture, Peak Stuff is one of the works chosen to be part of the Writers' Guild of Great Britain's New Play Commission Scheme. The initiative was created in response to the decline in new-play commissioning following the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Ben And Imo**

Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, until Sat 6 April

Legendary composer Benjamin Britten's struggle to write an opera in time for the 1953 coronation of Queen Elizabeth II provides the subject matter for Ben And Imo.

Receiving its premiere in Stratford, the play focuses on the timely arrival in Britten's life of the inspirational Imogen Holst, the daughter of composer Gustav and an accomplished musician in her own right... Originally written by Mark Ravenhill for radio, the new production is directed by Erica Whyman.





**WICKED**

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33 Years

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Cosi fan tutte

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Fri 10 May

WNO Welsh National Opera

Death in Venice

Britten

Sat 11 May





## Bonnie & Clyde

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 5 - Sat 9 March; Birmingham Hippodrome, Tues 3 - Sat 7 September

This award-winning musical tells the Great Depression-era story of Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow, two small-town nobodies destined to become one of America's most notorious couples.

The production stars Catherine Tyldesley - best known from her time in Coronation Street and on Strictly Come Dancing - as Clyde's sister-in-law, Blanche.

"If you want to go on a real emotional adrenaline high, this is the show for you," says Catherine. "I think you would come out having been on a real journey with the highs and lows of the characters. And you'll learn a lot; and you'll surprise yourself in terms of judgement of the characters as well."

## The Haunting Of Blaine Manor

Albany Theatre, Coventry, Fri 29 & Sat 30 March; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Thurs 18 & Fri 19 July

When Doctor Roy Earle, a renowned American parapsychologist famous for discrediting hauntings and exposing fake mediums, accepts an invitation to attend a seance at 'the most haunted building in England' - the Blaine Manor of the title - he finds himself, along with his companions for the evening, temporarily cut off from the outside world by a raging storm. And as every lover of the ghost/horror genre very well knows, where there's a raging storm *and* a haunted house, there are also, inevitably, things that go bump in the night... An award-winning love letter to both the Golden Age of Hollywood and the era of Hammer Horror movies here in the UK, *The Haunting Of Blaine Manor* is described by its publicity as the new *Woman In Black* - only scarier. That's quite a claim to make, but then there are also plenty of theatre critics and audience members who would be in absolute agreement about its quality.

## Minority Report

The Rep, Birmingham, Fri 22 March - Sat 6 April

Widely known thanks to the 2002 Tom Cruise film version, Philip K Dick's 1956 novella is here adapted for the stage. Set in a near future, the story focuses on the character of Dame Julia Anderton, a neuroscientist who has created a programme which monitors people's thoughts and

detains them before they commit a crime. But when Julia herself is accused of 'pre-murder', she becomes convinced that not everything is quite as it seems...

"We commissioned this project several years ago," says the show's producer, Simon Friend, "but with its prescient central theme of personal technological surveillance, it has only become more alarmingly relevant to the world in which we live, despite the original story having been written in 1956."

## My Life With Oscar

Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, Wed 20 & Thurs 21 March

Described as a tragicomic, true-life *Sunset Boulevard* - and critically acclaimed at last summer's Edinburgh Festival - *My Life With Oscar* finds actor & filmmaker Nick Cohen re-living and attempting to exorcise his desperate Hollywood years. Starting life in a dysfunctional wannabe family in Croydon, Nick chases his dream of winning an Oscar all the way to Tinseltown, where a film-producer family friend promises to teach him the secrets of bagging an Academy Award. Needless to say, not everything goes entirely according to Nick's plan...

## Boy Out The City

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Mon 25 - Thurs 28 March

Moving to the countryside during lockdown came at a price for Declan Bennett. When his boyfriend left on a six-month work placement abroad, Declan found himself with plenty of time on his hands; time in which to ruminate

on his previous life experiences. And not everything that he recalled made for a comfortable memory...

Taking audiences on an often-turbulent journey through his earlier years - and in the process bringing them face-to-face with challenging issues such as toxic masculinity, homophobia and men's mental health - *Boy Out The City* is Coventry-reared Declan's debut play.

## And Then There Were None

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Tues 5 - Sat 9 March

Lucy Bailey directs this new version of Agatha Christie's 1943 adaptation of her own novel - a book which the legendary author admitted had been her most difficult to write. The storyline follows the fortunes of a group of strangers who, having been lured to a solitary mansion off the coast of Devon, find that their eccentric millionaire host has mysteriously disappeared.

The plot then thickens in a truly shocking way when one of the 10 guests meets with an untimely demise...





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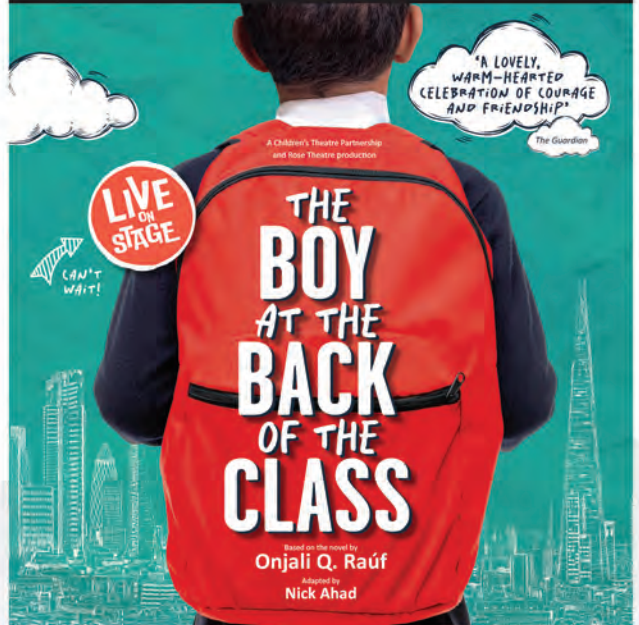
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Theatre previews from around the region



**The Mousetrap**

Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Mon 25 - Sat 30 March; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Mon 3 - Sat 8 June; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 25 - Sat 29 June

Not only has everybody heard of Agatha Christie's *The Mousetrap*, everybody's seen the show as well - haven't they?... Okay, maybe not, but as the production recently celebrated its 70th consecutive year in the West End, it's fair to say its capacity to put bums on seats is absolutely beyond question. Not surprisingly the world's longest-running show, its touring version here makes a welcome return to the Midlands, with *EastEnders'* Todd Carty and *Only Fools And Horses'* Gwyneth Strong top-billing.

**Farm Boy**

Lichfield Garrick, until Sun 10 March; Tittensor Village Hall, Thurs 14 March; Armitage with Handsacre Village Hall, Fri 15 March; Abbots Bromley Village Hall, Sat 16 March; Barton-under-Needwood Village Hall, Sun 17 March; New Oscott Village, Tues 19 March; Marchington Woodlands Village Hall, Wed 20 March; Alstonefield Village Hall, Thurs 21 March; Burntwood Memorial Hall, Fri 22 March; Denstone Village Hall, Sat 23 March; Weston Village Hall, Sun 24 March

For anybody who loved *War Horse* - whether as a book, a film, a stage production or all three - this new adaptation of Michael Morpurgo's compelling follow-up novel is surely a must-see work of theatre. Presented by Lichfield Garrick, the family-friendly production revisits *War Horse's* main characters of Albert and Joey the horse via the story of a teenager who regularly visits his grandfather on his farm in rural Devon... A moving account of the changing face of the English countryside, *Farm Boy* was written by Morpurgo as a response to the many post-*War Horse* enquiries he received from readers wanting to know what happened to Joey. Morpurgo has also stated that of all the books he's written, *Farm Boy* is his favourite... If ever there was a good reason to check out the stage version...

**Waiting Room**

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Wed 6 March; Old Joint Stock Theatre, Fri 22 & Sat 23 March  
Laughter may well be the best medicine, but it's definitely been in short supply for anybody needing to use a hospital accident & emergency department in recent times. Acutely aware of this, Thomas Levi, Rebecca Morris and Chris Stevenson - aka Elemental Theatre Company - have here set out to

provide their audience with a serious dose of the chuckles, transporting them to the medical mayhem of an A&E waiting room that's positively awash with eccentric staff and peculiar patients. Sections of the show have been developed verbatim through interviews and discussions with junior doctors and paramedic staff, a strategy which has allowed Thomas, Rebecca and Chris to deep-dive into the day-to-day lives not only of NHS key workers but also the often-difficult patients they encounter.

**Wanted**

Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Thurs 14 & Fri 15 March; The Albany Theatre, Coventry, Wed 27 March

Powerful drama presented with a smattering of humour and plenty of heart is the tried-and-tested formula in which *Gazebo*



Theatre place their trust when producing new work for the stage. This currently touring production from the highly rated company explores the stories of some truly extraordinary women: Irena Sendler, who rescued more than 2,500 children from the Warsaw ghetto during the Nazi occupation; Olive Morris, a British Black Panther and avid activist for women and squatters' rights; Phoolan Devi, India's fearsome Bandit Queen and politician; and Dr James Barry, a woman very much ahead of her time. The play is directed by Tonia Daley-Campbell and features Alexia McIntosh, who was nominated for an Olivier Award for *Six The Musical*.

**Ladies Down Under**

New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Fri 8 - Sat 30 March

Amanda Whittington enjoyed such a big hit with her play *Ladies Day* that she decided to write a sequel - and this is it. When Hull-based fish-factory colleagues Pearl, Jan, Shelley and Linda hit the jackpot at Royal Ascot, they decide to head off for the adventure of a lifetime *Down Under*. But once they're there, it becomes blindingly obvious that each of them is on a very different journey...

**The Hound Of The Baskervilles**

Prince of Wales Theatre, Cannock, Sun 24 March

Sherlock Holmes is one of literature's most enduring characters, *The Hound Of The Baskervilles* his most famous adventure. Yet no matter how many actors don the deerstalker and solve the mystery of the moors-roaming mutt, audiences never seem to tire of the story, and it remains a hugely popular choice for both stage and screen adaptation... Former *Dr Who* star Colin Baker here takes on the role of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's legendary sleuth.

**Self-Raising**

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Tues 12 & Wed 13 March

After a life spent championing stories by Deaf and disabled artists, Jenny Sealey - the award-winning artistic director of Graeae theatre company - takes to the stage to tell her own story, a 'blisteringly honest' account of growing up deaf in a family with secrets.



# WICKED WITCHES

Hit musical *Wicked* reimagines the story of *The Wizard Of Oz* from the perspective of Elphaba (who becomes known as the Wicked Witch of the West) and Glinda, the Good Witch. Twenty years on from its first-ever staging, the show is once again touring the UK. What's On caught up with Laura Pick (Elphaba) and Sarah O'Connor (Glinda) to find out why the musical remains so Popular...





**Wicked has become a huge hit around the world. What makes the story so special?**

**Laura:** It means so much to so many people. I think no matter who you are, where you're from, or what your life experience is, there's something in this show for everyone. It's about this beautiful, strong friendship between two women - I think we as women can relate to it.

**Sarah:** Whoever goes to see it will find something different from their perspective. There's not just one 'lesson' or one storyline; you can pull from it what you want and what connects and resonates with you most, be it a love story, finding who you are, wanting to become a better person. It's a well-rounded musical - it's great!

**Have either of you played these characters before?**

**L:** I have. I was stand-by Elphaba at the Apollo Victoria Theatre in London for two years, and then I took over the role for about six months in total. I said during our rehearsal process that I've been on a completely different journey with the story this time. It feels brand new again.

**S:** It's my first time! I'm loving it. It's quite a beast, but it's been very exciting with Laura having done it before. She knows it, and feels like a really strong anchor for me to play against, but she's also been really open to finding a new journey for Elphaba and Glinda together.

**Have you enjoyed working together to build the characters' relationship?**

**L:** The funny thing is, during the show, other than moments on stage, we don't see each other. We have to make the effort to pop into each other's rooms, or go for a coffee. The special thing about Elphaba and Glinda is that you can find ways to communicate just with a look. Sarah had cut her arm one day on a very sharp sequin - I noticed it. Within five seconds, we'd communicated just with our eyes: 'Are you okay?' 'Yeah, I'm okay, I know about it!'

**S:** ...While we were singing a duet! We've had many conversations with our eyes - it's hilarious. Laura will be in my life forever. It's an absolutely amazing connection that we've got, and we feel very lucky to be working with each other. We're having the best time, and we know we have each other.

**L:** It's been lovely seeing feedback from fans or reviews, where people are saying that the chemistry between us is so strong.

**S:** You can tell we're friends off stage as well.

**L:** That's what she thinks!

**Getting hurt by a sequin might be the most showbiz injury of all time!**

**S:** You're telling me! That was my wand... it's really dangerous stuff, you know!

**For a lot of musical theatre performers, these roles are on their 'bucket list'. Was that the case for you?**

**S:** Yes, and I think that comes with the weight of the role. It's so important to get it right and deliver it as best we can. We know how lucky we are - we work hard. You have to have talent, and you have to have a really good work ethic and audition... but there is an element of luck. I auditioned for Elphaba for years! It just wasn't sitting right. Then I found my inner comedy, and I thought 'Maybe I'm a Glinda,' and it made way more sense. When I met Laura, I thought 'You're the kind of person who needs to play Elphaba.' Her vocals are ridiculous!

**L:** I wouldn't even dream about playing Glinda! It's a completely different beast. We both understand how challenging each other's roles are. Sarah makes it sound so easy.

**The show is full of amazing songs, but Defying Gravity (sung by Elphaba) and Popular (by Glinda) are huge. When preparing to sing, did you look back at iconic performances, or did you try to distance yourself?**

**L:** I still do! I still spend time on YouTube...

**S:** I've watched a lot of both Elphaba and Glinda - every country, every language, every version - but you cannot use those for your own version. It wouldn't be your natural progression in the role. I've watched them all, but I didn't go anywhere near them when I was choosing what I wanted to do with Glinda.

**L:** There's a lot of previous Elphabas all over the world that add riffs, but if it doesn't benefit the storytelling, why would we be doing this beautiful riff on the word 'and'? You listen and think 'I like the way that they've phrased that, I like the way they've put that sentence together.' And don't get me wrong, I'm sure we've been listening to the

soundtrack on repeat from age 13.

**S:** Yeah... I could sing all the parts.

**L:** I wonder whether we could put on a two-woman show?

**S:** I reckon we could.

**Laura, can you tell us what it's like when you're actually defying gravity on stage?**

**L:** Flying is great. I love it! It was definitely nerve-wracking the first few times, but now it's just part of my day. You mentioned Popular and Defying Gravity being two of the most iconic songs, and we're actually both on stage for the whole time during those, so we get to share that moment.

**S:** Well, while you're singing those notes, I don't think you're worrying about how high you are!

**Sarah, do you see any of yourself in Glinda, or are you very different people?**

**S:** There are little elements... I'm definitely a lot more like 'Act Two Glinda' than 'Act One Glinda'. I wasn't born with a silver spoon in my mouth, I don't just say things that I'm thinking, and I'm not going to climb up the ladder any way I can... I think I'm answering my own question here - no, we're not similar! I can be on the spot and witty sometimes, but generally no. In Act Two, she's a lot more grounded and grown-up, so I can connect with her there. She's probably the funnest I've ever been from a character - but that's why I love her. When I come out of the stage door, people don't even know it's me.

**Are you excited about the new Wicked film, which is coming out in November?**

**L:** We'd better be invited!

**S:** If we don't get a private screening, I'll be livid.

**L:** I want to be invited to the real deal - the premiere in London.

**S:** I would love if the whole touring production could rent a cinema for the day, and go together, and enjoy it as a team. That would be cool - and we can all dress up!

**L:** We could just go after work in our costumes! The film is going to be so different from the musical - I'm excited.

.....  
**Wicked shows at Birmingham Hippodrome from Tuesday 5 March to Sunday 7 April**



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## Theatre for younger audiences



## Zog And The Flying Doctors

Worcester Swan Theatre, Tues 19 - Thurs 21 March; Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Tues 26 - Thurs 28 March; Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Fri 14 - Sun 16 June

Freckle Productions' adaptation of Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler's much-loved book finds everybody's favourite dragon (that's Zog!) providing an air-ambulance service with the assistance of his 'flying doctor' crew, Princess Pearl and Sir Gadabout. But Pearl's uncle, the king, doesn't believe that princesses should be doctors, and before too long Pearl finds herself locked up in the castle and forced to wear a crown and a 'silly frilly dress'. Needless to say, help is soon at hand...

## Claytime

Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Sat 16 & Sun 17 March; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Thurs 28 & Fri 29 March

"Come to a place where the earth's natural material meets with children's imaginations," say Indefinite Articles theatre company, in talking about currently touring production Claytime. "It's a world of fabulous forms, amazing animals and morphing monsters!"

Interactive play with clay is a guarantee in this lively show for children aged three to six, with the award-winning ensemble further advising "It's messy fun, so don't wear your party clothes!"

## Jurassic Live

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sun 24 - Tues 26 March; The Halls, Wolverhampton, Fri 24 & Sun 26 May

Jurassic Live's promoters are hailing this prehistoric extravaganza 'a roarsome adventure' not to be missed. Featuring professional puppeteers and impressively realistic dinosaurs, the production follows a team of dino rangers as they search for a missing baby dinosaur... Highlights of the show include the UK's only flying Pterodactyl and the country's biggest Tyrannosaurus Rex.

## Awful Auntie

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Thurs 28 - Sun 31 March; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Thurs 17 - Sat 19 October

Fights, fights and friendships are the order of the day in this lively adaptation of David Walliams' much-loved story. At the centre of the tale is a young girl named Stella. The sole heir to Saxby Hall, she finds herself in danger of losing both her inheritance and her life

when she comes up against her thoroughly unpleasant Aunt Alberta...

## Along Came A Magpie

Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton, Wed 27 March

Puppetry, plants, and pots aplenty feature in this intimate work of theatre for youngsters aged two to six. Telling the tale of a gardener who finds her potting shed turned upside-down by a visiting magpie, the show takes audiences on a playful and heart-warming journey as the pair set about navigating the intricacies of friendship...

## Dear Zoo

Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Sat 2 & Sun 3 March; Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Thurs 14 & Fri 15 March; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Fri 29 & Sat 30 March; Birmingham Hippodrome, Thurs 11 - Tues 16 April; Lichfield Garrick, Sat 20 & Sun 21 April

First published in 1982, Rod Campbell's lift-the-flap book, Dear Zoo, has delighted generations of children and accumulated millions of sales worldwide.

This hugely popular stage version of the story features music, child-friendly puppets and lots of audience participation.



## Dogs Don't Do Ballet

Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent, Sat 23 - Mon 25 March

Little Angel

Theatre make a welcome return with a show about a dog named Biff who thinks he's a



ballerina. The production is based on the same-named book by Anna Kemp and brings together 'beautiful puppets, well-loved ballet music and dazzling comedy'.

## Peppa Pig's Fun Day Out!

Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Wed 20 & Thurs 21 March; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sat 25 & Sun 26 May; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Wed 31 July & Thurs 1 August; Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Wed 28 & Thurs 29 August; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Wed 18 & Thurs 19 September; Palace Theatre, Redditch, Wed 25 & Thurs 26 September; Malvern Forum Theatre, Wed 16 & Thurs 17 October

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

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

Parents are advised to prepare their children for all manner of cracking capers, including singing and dancing with colourful scarecrows, feeding penguins, building big sandcastles, and swimming in the sea! Looks like an oinktastic time is going to be had by all!





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**LA VOIX**  
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**PAUL RILEY**  
SATURDAY 16 MARCH



**SONGS OF INNOCENCE  
AND OF EXPERIENCE**  
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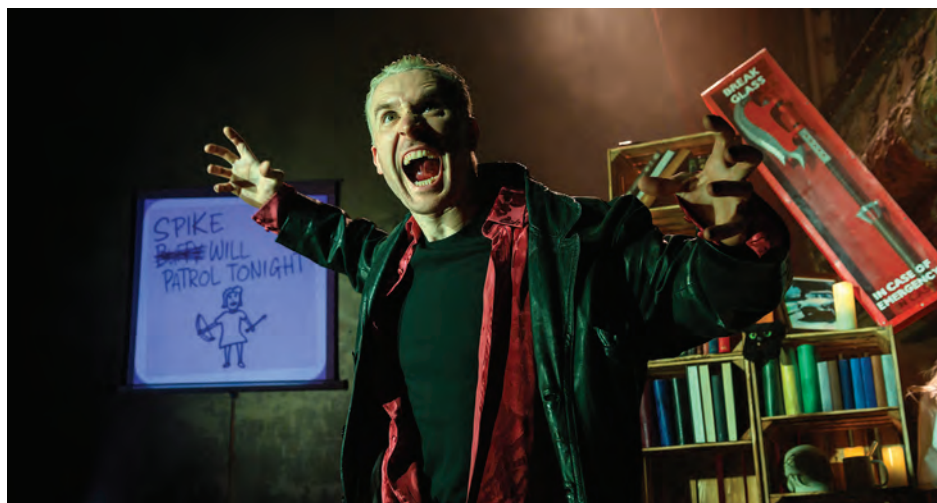
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Light entertainment from around the region



## Buffy Revamped

Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, Sun 10 March;  
The Alexandra, Birmingham, Tues 26 March

Calling to mind the work of ensembles such as the Reduced Shakespeare Company, *Buffy Revamped* is a fast-paced new production that wings its way through all 144 episodes of hit 1990s television series *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*. Not only that, but it does so in an admirably concise 70 minutes.

The one-man production is presented by Brendan Murphy, whose central character of Spike is a fella who, as you might imagine, knows a thing or several about the now-cult US TV show... *Buffy Revamped* scored a big hit in Edinburgh, so if you're a fan of the series yourself, a fun evening out is pretty much guaranteed.

## I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre,  
Tues 26 March

One-time Young Ones favourite Adrian Edmondson has called it "the most ridiculous, most surreal, most incomprehensibly funny show on any medium," while *The Radio Times* confidently described it as "indisputably the greatest radio comedy of all time."

Having garnered plenty more similarly effusive praise across its 52 years and 70-plus series, *I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue* continues to strike chords with BBC Radio Four listeners throughout the country.

The comedy panel game has been touring to theatres since 2007 and here makes a welcome return to the Midlands region.

This particular evening of inspired nonsense sees host Jack Dee joined by pianist Colin Sell and a 'star-studded' cast of as-yet-unannounced (at the time of writing) comedians.



## The Great Baldini

Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs, Wed 6 March;  
Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Sat 9 March

Those unfamiliar with *The Great Baldini* are advised to imagine an amalgamation of arch Bond villain Ernst Blofeld and legendary

magician/comedian Tommy Cooper. The self-proclaimed - presumably with his tongue firmly in his cheek - 'emperor of illusion, prince of prestidigitation and maharajah of mystery' is stopping off in the region this month to present 'a cabaret of magical illusions'.

Bristol-based Baldini comes complete with a host of five-star reviews and is a firm family favourite, so be sure to check him out before he vanishes in a puff of smoke...



## Jerry Sadowitz

Dudley Town Hall, Thurs 28 March;  
Huntingdon Hall, Worcester, Sat 6 April

American-born Scottish comedian & magician Jerry Sadowitz comes with a big fat health warning; he is most definitely not for the fainthearted!

A man who's not averse to hurling his underwear at female members of the audience, Sadowitz is about as far away from political correctness as it's possible to get. On-stage antics have included stamping on a blow-up doll of Linda McCartney not long after she'd died, spitting in the face of a drunken heckler, and pouring scorn on Jimmy Savile just days after the DJ had passed away (although history does of course show that Jerry was singing from the correct hymn sheet regarding the Jim'll Fix It star).

## The Bugle Live

Old Rep, Birmingham, Sun 10 March;  
Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sat 16 March

Fans of long-running podcast *The Bugle* - it was launched in 2007 and has run for 600-plus episodes - here get the chance to sample its magic live on stage.

Presented by Andy Zaltzman - perhaps best known to BBC Radio Four listeners as the host of *The News Quiz* - the show sees co-hosts and guests delivering 'freshly hewn topical satire, as well as probable and certifiable lies and other assorted high-grade nonsense'.

## Sasha Velour: The Big Reveal Live Show

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Tues 12 March

The gender-fluid Sasha Velour - the season-nine winner of *RuPaul's Drag Race* back in 2017 - stops off in Birmingham in support of recently published book *The Big Reveal: An Illustrated Manifesto Of Drag*.

Offering an immersive evening of storytelling and live art, the show features 'iconic new performances' by Sasha and an appearance by a special guest star.





# BEAUTIFUL BALLET

**English Youth Ballet principal dancer Lindsey Fraser talks about the company and its production of *The Sleeping Beauty*...**





## Founded by Janet Lewis in 1998, English Youth Ballet offers young people who are interested in dance the opportunity to perform classical ballet alongside professional dancers and tutors. Ahead of the company's performances of *The Sleeping Beauty* at Stoke's Regent Theatre next month, What's On spoke to Lindsey Fraser, who will be taking to the stage in the title role...

Many a young person would love to be a ballet dancer, performing centre stage in extravagant costumes. For such children, the opportunities presented by English Youth Ballet are surely a dream come true.

EYB has recently celebrated its 25th anniversary. The organisation provides young dancers with the chance to perform classical ballet on stage at major regional theatres in the UK, and to be taught and mentored by professional dancers.

Lindsey Fraser, who performs as a principal dancer with the company, began her journey as a child with a passion for dance.

"I first started going to ballet when I was two-and-a-half years old," she recalls. "My mum started taking me to baby ballet, because I had too much energy at home - I was zooming around a lot! I've been in ballet ever since. I started doing professional training when I was 11 years old, at Tring Park School of Performing Arts. It was quite full-on but very good. We would start at half eight and finish at half six."

Lindsey will be appearing on stage in the lead role of *Aurora* - the *Sleeping Beauty* - at the Regent Theatre in Stoke-on-Trent next month.

"It's based on the fairytale, and the production that we do is very classical. All the children have their own parts. *Aurora* is a great role - it's quite challenging!

"The production sticks to the original tale pretty much. *Aurora* pricks her finger on the spindle and goes to sleep for 100 years; the prince comes along and wakes her up... It's a great one for the families to come and see."

Lindsey started dancing professionally when she was 19. Ballet has always been a big part of her life, and the art of dance has always fascinated and inspired her.

"I was two, so I don't really remember, but my mum says that *Cats*, the musical, was on TV. I pointed at it and said: 'I'd like to do that.' As I was growing up, I was inspired by one of the dancers at the Royal Ballet in London: Marianela Núñez. She's my biggest inspiration."

Although she's been a dancer for as long as she can remember, Lindsey has been able to pursue other interests - one of which provides quite a contrast to her day job.

'Alongside ballet, I've also done a Maths & Physics Bachelors degree with the Open University. I've loved maths since school, so eventually, when I hang up my pointe shoes, I'm looking to have a career in accountancy. We'll see what the future brings. It will be difficult to think of a career that doesn't involve ballet, but that's definitely another interest of mine.'

After performing *The Sleeping Beauty* in Stoke, the company moves to Nottingham, where it will present a production of *Giselle* with a different group of young dancers.

"It's the first time I'm going to be performing *Giselle* with English Youth Ballet, so that's exciting. We also have *Swan Lake* - I think I'll probably be *Black Swan* again, which is quite challenging but a fabulous role. Each role is demanding in its own way. It's really great to have that variety; it keeps things exciting."

Anyone from age eight to 18 can apply to join the EYB company, as long as they have a little bit of ballet experience - applicants who have at least Grade 1 are encouraged. There's an audition day, which is an experience in itself, with auditions split into Juniors (ages eight to 11) and Seniors (ages 12 to 18).

According to Lindsey, Janet Lewis - the company's founder & director - maintains that the overall experience of performing is the most important thing.

"She is really strong on performance - that's the aim of the production. We do look at technique and offer help with that, but the main part of it is the performance. She wants children to enjoy it!"

Not only will the young dancers become part of a high-quality production, they will also be given the space to make friends and enhance their love of the art form.

"We adapt the choreography to them and their standard. We want them to learn something from the experience as well, but they're on stage doing the choreography, so

we want them to look great."

Rehearsals take place during the month before each performance and are scheduled so that they don't interfere with school hours.

"We rehearse with the children for around 10 days, at weekends - unless it's during the summer holidays, when we might spend five days with them."

Each production's final performance takes place in a regional theatre which is large enough to accommodate the number of people on stage and the scale of the show. The chosen dancers will come from an 80 to 100-mile radius around the theatre.

"We have a lot of rehearsals and then one weekend of shows in each place. The principal dancers rehearse during the week, and then, at the weekend, we travel to wherever we're performing, to rehearse and teach the children. We get to know them and see how they improve and grow. In the end, we're on the stage dancing with them, which is really lovely - it all comes together."

Auditions for the performances in Stoke-on-Trent took place in January, but there are plenty more opportunities for young dancers to audition this year. Children based in the Midlands can apply to perform in *Giselle* at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, with auditions taking place on Monday 17 June.

In the meantime, why not get along to EYB's performances of *The Sleeping Beauty* at the Regent Theatre next month... It's the perfect opportunity to see what's in store for any aspiring ballet dancers - and to enjoy the company's performance of a classic tale.

.....

**The *Sleeping Beauty* shows at the Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, on Friday 12 & Saturday 13 April. *Giselle* shows at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, on Friday 6 & Saturday 7 September. For more information about performances and auditions, visit [englishyouthballet.co.uk](http://englishyouthballet.co.uk)**



THE OLD JOINT STOCK PRESENTS



# BOTTOMS UP

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NEW ACTS MONTHLY



## Dance previews from across the region



## Sao Paulo Dance Company

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Fri 15 & Sat 16 March

It's 'Brazilian sunshine time' in Wolverhampton mid-month, courtesy of a triple bill from first-time visitors São Paulo Dance Company. The talented ensemble have produced more than 100 classical and contemporary works since forming 16 years ago, in the process touring to nearly 20 countries and performing in front of 900,000-plus people.

"São Paulo is a dance company with a very special Brazilian accent," explains Artistic Director Inês Bogéa. "We have the passion for dance,

we have the energy of Brazil, and we love to share that with audiences around the world.

"In the programme that we're presenting here, the choreographers are trying to reflect on stage what we are all feeling in this moment of our lives. They create a unique world through the movements, the connections with the music, and the images that they evoke..."

"We are open to sharing ideas and sensations, and we aim to meet people and understand different ways of looking at our world and our time. So we are looking forward to showing audiences a little bit of our culture, and through the dance we will all feel the energy of Brazil."

## Diversity

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Wed 20 & Thurs 21 March; The Halls Wolverhampton, Sat 6 April

With numerous sell-out tours under their belt, it's fair to say Diversity have made the most of their Susan Boyle-beating success on Britain's Got Talent 15 years ago.

The London-based street-dance crew are this month and next visiting the Midlands region with latest offering Supernova. Extremely well received on its mammoth 66-date tour across 40 towns and cities, the production differs somewhat from previous Diversity shows in the sense that it follows a storyline.

The group is using the tour to support anti-poverty charity the Trussell Trust, with audience members being invited to bring along food donations to the shows.



## A Midsummer Night's Dream

Albany Theatre, Coventry, Thurs 21 March

Having earned an enviable reputation for presenting innovative and magical productions, it's reasonable to assume that Ballet Theatre UK will once again be striking all the right notes with this currently touring dance version of the classic Shakespeare comedy... Expect impressive choreography - set to the iconic Mendelssohn score - and a wardrobe's worth of beautiful costumes.

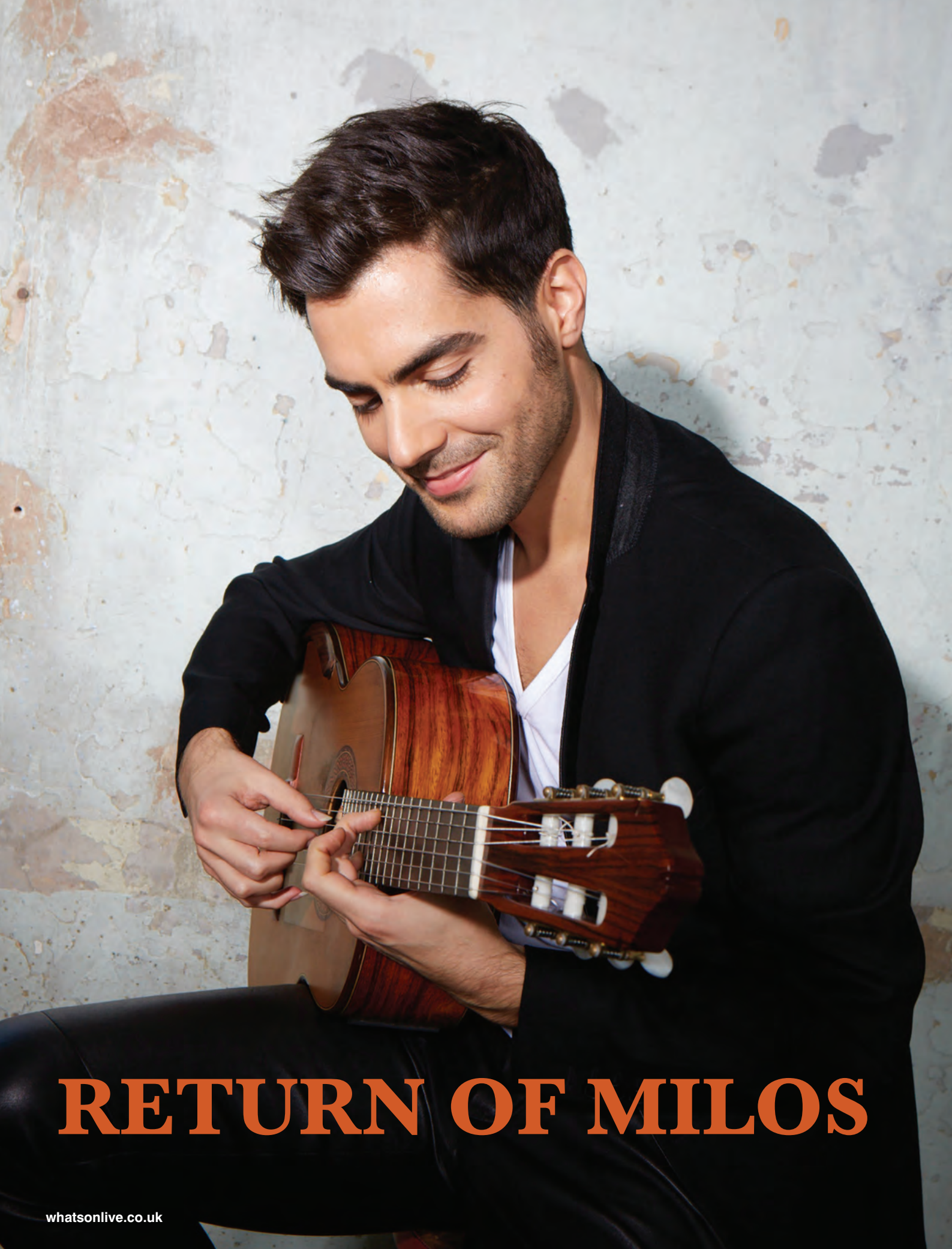
## 40/40 By Katherina Radeva

The Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome, Fri 8 & Sat 9 March

Award-winning performance maker and visual artist Katherina Radeva describes her critically acclaimed 40/40 show as an inspiring, insightful and moving celebration of her 40 years as a woman, a migrant and an artist... The production takes its audience on a journey through Kat's life, from long-ago days spent dancing at her parents' student parties, through her experience of being body-shamed as a teenage rhythm gymnast, to the present day, when she defines herself as a creative who refuses to be categorised.







# RETURN OF MILOS



**Described by BBC Music Magazine as ‘one of the six best classical guitarists of the last 100 years’, Montenegro-born Milos Karadaglic this month makes a welcome return to Warwick Arts Centre, where he’ll be joined by the Arcangelo Chamber Orchestra to present a programme of Baroque classics...**

**Is your most recent album, *Baroque, a bit of a reset for you, Milos?***

I tend not to look at things in this way, because I always see music as one thing. I have changed through the years, and so has the world around me. I feel that it has never been more important to really be true to yourself. That’s the only way that we, as artists, are going to be able to survive and stay relevant in a world that is constantly changing around us. So in many ways, yes, it’s a bit of a reset if you want to look at it like that; but for me, it’s just a natural return to the core values of who I am as a musician.

**There are some interesting choices within *Baroque* - can you tell us a bit more about the selection process?**

Baroque is the treasure trove of the pieces that I have loved over the years; pieces that have been played by so many of my heroes and colleagues, and works that I have enjoyed as a listener. I wanted to see how I could tackle the subject of Baroque music from that perspective; not looking at it from the perspective of the classical guitar, where the view on Baroque is limited to just a handful of composers. It was a big process to make the selection because some pieces work and some pieces don’t work for the guitar. But the one thing that makes them all come together is the variety of styles and influences. Each piece on the album is a little bit like a Baroque pearl. Each one is slightly different, and each one has its own beauty. And yet, at the same time, all together as an album they make just one perfect whole. I have very rarely enjoyed the process of making an album as much as I have this one - working with Jonathan Cohen and Arcangelo

and arranging the works together with Michael Lewin. I feel really proud of this one.

**Many of the pieces were written for other instruments. Did that present challenges in terms of translating them to guitar? And if so, how did you get over them?**

There were many challenges. There were pieces that I would work on until the very end, and then I would realise that a phrase wouldn’t work simply because of the limitations of the guitar compared to the keyboard, or the fact that I don’t have a bow like you have on the violin or on the cello. Whenever you are dealing with transcriptions, it’s so important to know that the main moral guide in any transcription should be that you should only be doing it if it adds another layer of expression, another layer of quality and another idea to what is already there from the composer. The moment it becomes a compromise, an ego trip, rather than something that serves the music and the purpose of why it’s done, I’ve always been very conscious of that throughout my career. It only makes sense if it stays true to the message.

**Which are your favourite tracks on the album?**

It was tremendous fun to play the Vivaldi concerto movements that were written for four solo violins. But also, all my life I’ve been drawn to pieces that are lyrical and that wake up your inner heartstring: pieces like the Rameau, Handel and Couperin. Finding a way to make the guitar sing, and finding a way to make the string become a voice, is what always gives me the most pleasure - and that is always what I love sharing the most

with my audience in concert. Rameau’s The Arts And The Hours and Handel’s Menuet are two such pieces on the album.

**What are your plans for the year ahead?**

I’m touring Baroque in the UK, America, and in the summer at festivals. And at the same time, I’m very much thinking about the next album and the next cycle. That’s never easy, because so much consideration and thought goes into that. It’s a process that always lasts for many months before that journey becomes clear. Right now, I’m in the middle of exactly that.

**You’ve played Warwick Arts Centre before. Any memories of previous appearances there?**

Yes, of course. How could I forget?! Coventry was a huge open-air festival organised by the BBC, and that’s always really special because you get to play in front of a very wide audience. That’s something I love doing very much because guitar is that perfect instrument that bridges the gap between classical and mainstream. It really is always very special. I have been to Warwick Arts Centre numerous times with orchestras and solo, and every time I played there, there was something I remembered. I also love coming here as I have close friends that live nearby, and seeing them every time makes it feel very, very memorable.

.....

**Milos Karadaglic performs at Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, on Saturday 9 March.**





## Film highlights in March...

### **Dune: Part II** CERT tbc (166 mins)

Starring **Timothée Chalamet, Zendaya, Florence Pugh, Austin Butler, Rebecca Ferguson, Josh Brolin**  
Directed by **Denis Villeneuve**

One of the most high-profile sci-fi movies of the mid-1980s - and directed by David Lynch - *Dune* actually began life as a novel, written by Frank Herbert back in the 1960s...

This latest cinematic incarnation - the second film of a two-part adaptation - explores the mythic journey of Paul Atrides, the heir to a noble house, as he follows a path of revenge against the conspirators who destroyed his family.

Facing a choice between the love of his life and the fate of the known universe, he endeavours to prevent a terrible future which only he can foresee...

**Released Fri 1 March**



### **Lisa Frankenstein**

CERT 15 (101 mins)

Starring **Kathryn Newton, Liza Soberano, Jenna Davis, Trina LaFargue, Paola Adino, Joshua Montes** Directed by **Zelda Williams**

Described by its publicity as a coming-of-age love story, *Lisa Frankenstein* follows the adventures of a misunderstood teenager and her handsome high-school crush - who just happens to be a corpse.

After a set of playfully horrific circumstances

bring him back to life, the pair embark on a murderous journey to find love and happiness - and a few missing body parts along the way...

Robin Williams' daughter, *Zelda*, is the woman at the helm of a film that aims to pay homage to the hugely popular horror comedies of the 1980s. Sadly, its inability to merge the two genres with any real sense of focus or conviction has seen it dig its own grave with many critics.

**Released Fri 1 March**

### **Imaginary** CERT tbc (104 mins)

Starring **DeWanda Wise, Tom Payne, Veronica Falcón, Betty Buckley, Alix Angelis, Dance DiLiegro** Directed by **Jeff Wadlow**

Are imaginary friends really just creations of a child's mind, or is something far more sinister at play?

That's the question being asked in this original horror from Blumhouse, the production company behind *Five Nights At Freddy's* and *M3GAN*.

When Jessica moves back into her childhood home with her family, her youngest stepdaughter, Alice, develops a disconcerting attachment to a stuffed toy bear named *Chauncey* which she finds in the basement. As Alice's behaviour becomes increasingly concerning, Jessica decides to intervene - only to realise that there's way more to *Chauncey* than meets the eye...

**Released Fri 8 March**







## Kung Fu Panda 4 CERT PG (94 mins)

With the voices of **Jack Black, Awkwafina, Viola Davis, Dustin Hoffman, James Hone, Bryan Cranston**

Directed by **Mike Mitchell** and **Stephanie Stine**

Launched in 2008 with a film that went on to earn an Academy Award nomination, the Kung Fu Panda franchise is big, big business, having so far made more than \$1.8billion at the global box office.

Jack Black once again voices the character of Po Ping - the Kung Fu Panda of the title - for an adventure that sees powerful sorceress and tiny shapeshifting lizard The Chameleon doing her very best to re-summon all the master villains whom Po has previously vanquished to the spirit realm... Veteran British actors Ian McShane and Gary Oldman lend their voices to villainous snow leopard Tai Lung and power-hungry peacock Lord Shen respectively.

**Released Fri 29 March**

## Drive-Away Dolls

**CERT 15 (104 mins)**

Starring **Margaret Qualley, Geraldine Viswanathan, Beanie Feldstein, Joey Slotnick, CJ Wilson, Colman Domingo**  
Directed by **Ethan Coen**

With uninhibited free spirit Jamie bemoaning yet another breakup with a girlfriend, and demure pal Marian seriously needing to loosen up, what better way to make a fresh start than by heading out on an impromptu road trip? But when the pair cross paths with a group of inept criminals, things soon start to go horribly wrong... The first film Ethan Coen has directed without the collaboration of brother Joel (excluding a documentary about Jerry Lee Lewis), Drive-Away Dolls hits cinema screens 17 years after it was first announced as a 'lesbian road movie' entitled Drive-Away Dykes. Apparently, it's the first in a planned lesbian B-movie trilogy from Coen, with second film Honey Don't slated to go into production this very month.

**Released Fri 15 March**



## Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire CERT tbc

Starring **Bill Murray, Dan Aykroyd, Paul Rudd, Finn Wolfhard, McKenna Grace, Carrie Coon**  
Directed by **Gil Kenan**



A bit like superhero movies, Ghostbusters films just keep on coming - although nowhere near as relentlessly. This latest addition to the franchise sees the Spengler family return to where it all started - the iconic New York City firehouse - to team up with the original Ghostbusters, who've developed a top-secret research lab to take the business of busting ghosts to the next level. But when the discovery of an ancient artefact unleashes an evil force, Ghostbusters both new and old must join forces to protect their home and save the world from a second Ice Age.

**Released Fri 22 March**

## Immaculate CERT tbc (99 mins)

Starring **Sydney Sweeney, Simona Tabasco, Alvaro Morte, Benedetta Porcaroli, Giampiero Judica, Giorgio Colangeli**  
Directed by **Michael Mohan**

Given that recent superhero release Madame Web - in which she co-starred with Fifty Shades Of Grey's Dakota Johnson - received a sound spanking from the critics, Sydney Sweeney will be hoping that this Black Narcissus-inspired psychological horror movie puts her otherwise-promising career firmly back on track.

The Euphoria and White Lotus star plays a woman of devout faith who, having taken up a new role in a prestigious convent in the picturesque Italian countryside, finds that the warmth with which she is greeted is soon replaced by a shocking nightmare of seriously epic proportions...

**Released Fri 22 March**







# INTERNATIONAL WATERCOLOUR MASTERS

prestigious exhibition returns to the Midlands





## The International Watercolour Masters, a 10-day festival featuring visiting artists from around the world, returns to Shropshire’s Lilleshall Hall in May. The event has been organised and hosted since 2018 by local watercolour master David Poxon, who here explains what visitors to this year’s show can expect to see...

David Poxon’s work in watercolour has taken him around the world.

Since 2018, he has also been gathering expert painters to Shropshire, his home county, on a regular basis for the International Watercolour Masters (IWM) event, which he hosts.

The idea for the Lilleshall Hall-located get-together was born in a Shanghai hotel bar, following David’s attendance at a prestigious art show.

“I was having a couple of drinks,” he explains, “and one of the big watercolour stars from Argentina - his name is Alvaro Castagnet - asked me what my plans were for the following year.” David was already planning to exhibit his own work at Weston Park, near Telford. “I told him all about it, and the venue, and he said ‘That sounds great - but with me in it, it would be fantastic!’ He’s not shy!”

Before he had left the bar, David’s initially modest exhibition had grown even further, as more watercolour masters showed an interest in joining him. “I left Shanghai thinking ‘What have I done? I’ve invited all these people to be in a show - so I’d better organise it!’”

Fortunately, in a previous incarnation, David worked in the music industry, a fact which meant he had the necessary skills to plan a large-scale event. The show was an incredible success, with nearly 17,000 visitors in a single month. “It was a prototype. It became obvious to me that I had a great format, but I needed a much bigger venue, and I needed to expand it.”

In his hunt for a more spacious location, David discovered Lilleshall Hall, again situated in the countryside around his home. “Lilleshall is the UK’s national sports & conference centre, so Britain’s elite athletes are always wandering around the place. I thought, now it can be the home of the world’s elite watercolour painters as well!”

“When you walk in the hall, there’s this beautiful atmosphere, with ambient light, a nice bit of jazzy music, and everybody starts floating around. There’s nothing like it in the world - and it’s coming here!”

Watercolour became known as ‘the English style’ of painting thanks to the 17th and 18th-century artists who developed it - including Midlanders David Cox and Walter Langley.

“They used to go on what is now known as The Grand Tour. They would get a sleeping

bag and a bag of equipment, and wander all over Europe - Italy, Switzerland - gathering information and subjects to bring back to their studios to paint. Just like when we go somewhere, we might take photographs, they would do quick sketches.”

Watercolour has since become one of the most popular painting disciplines in the world. “It’s the easiest to start, but the hardest to master. It’s like dealing with a wild animal - you never can quite tame it.”

The artists featured in the show have certainly mastered the craft, however. “The tonal depth, the definition, skill and detail, emotion, drama - there’s everything in these paintings.”

While painting might appear to be a solitary activity, IWM 2024 is very much a group effort. David compares it to playing in a football team: “No one in the team is more important than the team itself. That’s the kind of philosophy that I try to have with this show.”

The event has gained a reputation around the world for its organisation, venue, and top-class presentation, as well as the unique presence of the artists themselves. Multiple live demonstrations are scheduled each day, with attendees able to watch a master at work. “There’ll be a sit-down audience, and each side of the stage will have giant monitor screens which capture what the artists are doing. The audience will be able to follow every brush stroke - and they will be amazed. Last time, you could hear a pin drop. People were sitting there with their mouths open in complete awe at what they were seeing.”

There are also workshops with different artists: “So if anyone wants to spend some real quality time under a master’s tuition, they can book in on the IWM website.”

As well as the activities taking place on site, the event will find an audience much further afield - in a bid to reach fans of watercolour who can’t attend the event in person, the 10-day festival is being filmed. “This is the equivalent of Glastonbury - but for watercolour!”

There will be interviews with artists, a tour of the exhibition, and plenty more besides. “I’ve made a little series called Watercolour Basics - five-minute modules, without any jargon, aimed at people who want to get started painting.”

IWM tickets should be bought in advance - there’s a limited capacity, in the interest of audience comfort - and all of the 150-plus

paintings are for sale.

In addition to IWM events, Lilleshall Hall’s cafe, restaurant and Italian Gardens will be open as well. “It’s not just for people who may be interested in painting - we want everybody to come along. This is something completely different, and the atmosphere is very therapeutic.”

Alongside paintings from global masters, IWM also hosts a watercolour competition, which this year brought in nearly 3,000 entries from people all around the world.

“People say ‘It’s not the winning that’s important, it’s the taking part,’ but actually, winning is nice! When you do win something, and you get the acceptance of your peers, it gives you a good boost, and it enthruses you to do more.”

Judging the competition was no mean feat. David collected 20 masters and four industry professionals to judge the entries remotely.

“The amazing thing was, when all the results were in, the same 10 people had got the most votes from all these judges. You could see the pattern. These are judges from China to North America, to Brazil, to Europe, and they were all voting independently.”

In addition, the top 200 entries will be given their moment in the spotlight, broadcast on a giant screen in the main exhibition arena.

David has been blown away by the skill exhibited by his fellow masters. “The artists in the show have taken it to a new dimension. The watercolour paintings at IWM 2024 are all museum quality.”

The International Watercolour Masters 2024 offers visitors the chance to enjoy fantastic artwork, insightful workshops and fascinating demonstrations in a beautiful setting. Whether you’re an established or aspiring artist, a fan of watercolour, or just somebody who wants to see true artistic skill in practice, this is definitely an event not to be missed.

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**International Watercolour Masters 2024 runs at Lilleshall Hall, Shropshire, TF10 9AT, from Wednesday 15 to Friday 24 May. The exhibition is open daily from 10am - 4pm and admission is by advanced ticket only. Prices cost £10 each and group discounts are available. For more information, and to purchase tickets, visit: [IWM2024.com](http://IWM2024.com)**





## Drawing Attention: Emerging Artists In Dialogue

Wolverhampton Art Gallery, until Mon 6 May

This thought-provoking British Museum touring exhibition features art produced by some of the most promising up-and-coming names in the field of contemporary drawing.

Their work is displayed alongside art by numerous celebrated creatives, including Mary Delany, Edouard Manet, Barbara Hepworth, Andy Warhol and Yinka Shonibare. The exhibition showcases a wide range of techniques and practices, with artists illustrating the ways in which drawing - often considered a quiet or private medium - can be used to challenge social norms, explore identity and protest injustice.




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**IKON/60**    
Ikon is supported through public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England, and Birmingham City Council. Ikon Gallery Limited trading as Ikon. Registered charity no. 528895.  
Images: Ikon Gallery. Photo by Tom Jones.





## Tatiana Wolska: Leisure As Resistance

Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham, Sat 9 March - Sun 2 June

Resourcefulness ingrained in her during a childhood spent in communist Poland - where recycling became a necessity due to the scarcity of goods - has had a significant impact on Tatiana Wolska's output as an artist. Tatiana describes herself as a 'junk collector', using her artistic talents to breathe new life into discarded plastic bottles, salvaged timber, rusty nails and foam from old mattresses.

This first solo exhibition in the UK showcases some of her signature recycled bottle sculptures and several new commissions, including scrap-wood sculptures, large-scale drawings, a makeshift hut and a mural. Members of the general public viewing her art will be invited to engage in community activities such as reading groups, knitting clubs, repair cafés and meditation-through-drawing sessions.

## Landscape And Imagination: From Gardens To Land Art

Compton Verney, Warwickshire, Thurs 21 March - Sun 16 June

Works by celebrated artists including JMW Turner, Nicolas Poussin and Anya Gallaccio feature in this brand-new exhibition at Compton Verney, a show which explores the question of how art might work together with nature to reverse the decline of the UK's green spaces. An accompanying selection of playful interactive activities in the exhibition galleries will provide families with the opportunity to imagine their own colourful and fantastical landscapes.

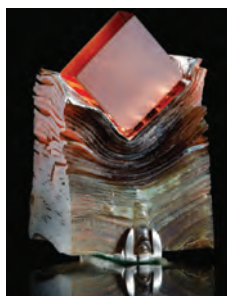


Image: JMW Turner, c1827-8, The Lake, Petworth, Sunset

## Contemporary Pâte de Verre: The Material Of Time

Stourbridge Glass Museum, until Sun 23 June

This unique exhibition of internationally acclaimed Pâte de Verre glass artists is the result of a collaboration between Stourbridge Glass Museum and the Contemporary Pâte de Verre Association. The Association works to support new investigations into Pâte de Verre and what the 5,000-year-old glass technique can do 'in sculpture and new narratives for our rapidly changing world'. The show is based on the same-named 2022 book (The Material Of Time) by Dr Max Stewart and Tone Orvik.



## After The End Of History: Contemporary Working-Class Photography 1989 - 2024

Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry, Fri 29 March - Sunday 16 June

The challenges, beauty and diversity of contemporary working-class life - as depicted by working-class artists using the medium of photography - are explored in this fascinating new exhibition, curated by acclaimed photographer, writer & broadcaster Johnny Pitts. A Hayward Gallery Touring show, the collection features work from 1989 onwards in order to mark the 35th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall (which happened on 9 November of that year) and the symbolic end of Communism.



Photo: Goldie taken by Eddie Orchere

## Victorian Radicals

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, until Thurs 31 October

Birmingham's impressive collection of Pre-Raphaelite art is here being displayed in the city for the first time in more than five years. Taking the subtitle 'From The Pre-Raphaelites To The Arts & Crafts Movement', Victorian Radicals features vibrant paintings and exquisite drawings presented alongside jewellery, glass, textiles and metalwork. The show provides visitors with the chance to discover the story of the Pre-Raphaelites - Britain's first modern art movement - and learn about their influence on artists and makers well into the 20th century.

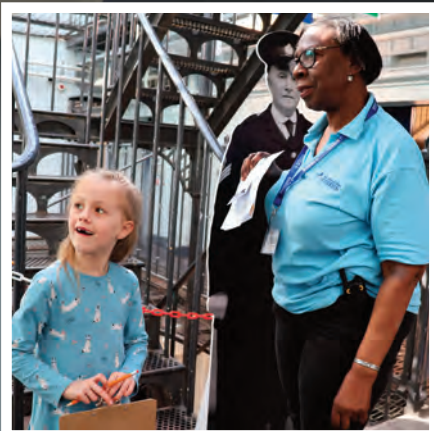


Image: The Last Of England, 1852 - 1855. Artist: Ford Madox Brown



# BANGED UP!

There's plenty to see and do at Birmingham's West Midlands Police Museum





## West Midlands Police Museum offers a unique day out in the heart of Birmingham. From visitors with an interest in local history, to budding detectives (of all ages) and fans of the macabre, the venue has something to suit all tastes. Intrigued to find out more, we took a visit to The Lock Up to check out 'life on both sides of the bars'...

Birmingham's West Midlands Police Museum is an unassuming red brick building, situated on the city's Steelhouse Lane and only five minutes walk from Snow Hill Station. The popular visitor attraction will soon celebrate its second birthday, after opening its doors in April 2022.

The building was a fully functional 'Lock Up' from 1891 until 2016 - a place to hold people after they had been arrested. In most cases, prisoners would spend less than 24 hours in the building before being sent to trial in the courts next door. Intriguingly, this journey was made through a tunnel between the two buildings, which can still be seen in the museum's basement.

Visitors spend a moment behind bars in the entrance 'lock up' and check in at the erstwhile charge desk - now a reception desk - before making their way to the main prison block. Unlike the blue Police Box on display from Coventry - which is a hit with visiting Doctor Who fans - the museum really does seem bigger on the inside.

Metal grille balconies give access to the cells on each floor. From any point in the main building, it's possible to see all the way down to the basement and up to the glass roof. This is actually a 130-year-old security feature, allowing police officers to see and hear trouble arising - even two floors away.

Unsurprisingly, the open feeling doesn't extend to the cells. Many lack windows, and in their original form were lit only by a candle in a recess high up the wall. On busy nights, multiple prisoners could occupy one cell - an unsettling thought for those free to wander in and out of cells as they please.

When safer prison conditions were implemented in the early 21st century, four cells were kept in their existing condition - honouring the building's Grade II listed status and providing a glimpse of its former life. Each cell now hosts an exhibit, covering anything from early police bicycles, to corporal punishment, and stories of people who were detained there.

The museum is run by a tight-knit team of staff and a large bank of volunteers, which includes serving and retired police officers. It's supported by both the Heritage Fund and

West Midlands Police and promises 'a unique perspective of life on both sides of the bars'.

Real care has been taken to maintain this balance, and the staff do everything they can to ensure that visitors have a grand day out.

Engagement Officer Archie creates bespoke programmes for visiting schools and the museum boasts a huge amount of educational material, designated space for sessions, and an enthusiastic team to deliver them. School visits can even include sleepovers, where pupils bunk down in cells.

There is a forensic trail in the basement, where visitors solve a crime by collecting clues, fingerprints and plaster casts of footprints. On occasion, crime scenes feature Camilla - a full-size mannequin donated (and named) by the hospital next door.

As well as catering for younger visitors, the museum also offers popular murder-mystery nights, giving would-be detectives the chance to catch a murderer by interviewing suspects dotted around the cells. There's also a host of after-hours talks, events and activities to suit visitors with darker tastes.

Fans of true crime can hear 'stories of murder and mayhem' and see some of the more ghoulish items in the museum's collection at a bespoke event called The Macabre Museum on Sunday 14 April. Not for the faint-hearted and limited to visitors over 18 years old, the event provides an opportunity to see the most notorious items in the venue's archives.

There are also regular after-dark ghost-hunting tours of the building, which feature spooky stories of strange sightings and mysteries from around the West Midlands and the Lock Up itself.

Talks by visiting West Midlands Police officers and experts in related history complete the programme. Previous talks have included deep dives into the history of the real Peaky Blinders - a moniker that was never used by the police. The talk was hosted by well-known local historian Professor Carl Chinn, who has a family connection to one of the gang members.

In addition to events and activities, the museum houses an impressive archive of records and artefacts, including some of the

country's first prisoner 'mug shots', dating back to the mid-19th century. Photography was a luxury commodity at the time, and the collection's photos are often the only remaining images of these people. Members of the public investigating their family history occasionally approach the museum to check these records, and the staff are happy to oblige - although searching through them is no mean feat.

Some of the archive's items, ledgers, photographs and historic uniforms are on permanent display. To see more of the collection, visitors can book a behind-the-scenes tour. These are generally scheduled during Birmingham Heritage Week in September.

Each month at the museum is themed to celebrate a different facet of the police force and its history. In March, the focus is on diversity within the police, while April marks the 50th anniversary of the West Midlands Police forming. The museum will be celebrating the occasion throughout the month, and the build-up to the anniversary is already in full swing - check out the website and social media for updates.

Although currently a gem hidden in plain sight, word is spreading about this fascinating building and the stories locked within. Tickets to visit cost £10 for adults and £6 for under-16s (with other concessions available).

West Midlands Police Museum offers an interactive journey into local history while celebrating revolutionary officers of the last 130 years. It's also perfect for those with an interest in the techniques and technology the police have used to crack down on crime. And for anyone keen to see a life-size police horse, solve a murder, or dive into the past, the museum is a real treat.

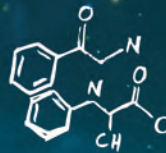
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**West Midlands Police Museum at The Lock Up on Steelhouse Lane is open Wednesday to Sunday, and during the school holidays. Visit [museum.west-midlands.police.uk](http://museum.west-midlands.police.uk) for more information.**





**thinktank**  
Birmingham science museum



# DISCOVER



## Family Fun at Thinktank



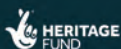
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Birmingham Museums



Events previews from around the region



**YONEX All England Open Badminton Championships**

Utilita Arena Birmingham, Tues 12 - Sun 17 March

The world's oldest and most prestigious badminton tournament (it was first held in 1899), the YONEX All England Open Badminton Championships returns to Utilita Arena (for the 31st time) this month.

The tournament comprises 155 matches and 50 hours of live badminton, contested in front of a global audience of more than 350 million people.



**Get crafting at the NEC...** NEC, Birmingham, Thurs 14 - Sun 17 March

Crafting fanatics will be descending in droves on the NEC this month when Creative Craft Show, Sewing For Pleasure and Fashion And Embroidery make a welcome return to the venue.

With all three shows available to enjoy for the price of one, visitors can check out a variety of workshops and demonstrations

presented by creatives in a wide range of disciplines, including crochet, ceramics, goldwork and glass fusion, to name but a few. There's also a new-for-2024 all-day 'masterclass' workshop to sample, which comes complete with lunch and refreshments as well as all the required materials and tools.

**Homebuilding & Renovating Show**

NEC, Birmingham, Thurs 21 - Sun 24 March

Celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2024, the Homebuilding & Renovating Show brings together designers, experts, builders and suppliers to help you create the home of your dreams.

Visitors can discover all the latest products, join a seminar or masterclass, and check out an architect's opinion on everything from small plots to big builds.

For people keen to maximise the efficiency of their home, the show also features the Home Energy Academy, which includes all-new theatre sessions, and contributions from eco-energy-focused experts in the show's Advice Centre.



**Monster Jam Ramped Up**

Utilita Arena Birmingham, Fri 29 - Sun 31 March

World-class drivers showing off crazy skills and all-out racing in 12,000-pound Monster Jam trucks are among the mouthwatering attractions featured in adrenaline-charged motorsport event Monster Jam Ramped Up. A fierce head-to-head battle for the Event Championship will see the trucks take on numerous fan-favourite stunts, including sky wheelies, big-air jumps and backflips. The show also features Monstergon, a multi-sided metal ramp which is making its debut in Birmingham.







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[rafmuseum.org/midlands](http://rafmuseum.org/midlands)  
 01902 376 200



Lysander Avenue, Cosford,  
 Shropshire, TF11 8UP

The Royal Air Force Museum is incorporated by Royal Charter (RC000922) and is a charity registered in England and Wales (1197541)



Events previews from around the region



**Space, Race And Fly** RAF Museum Midlands, Cosford, Sat 23 March - Sun 7 April

Family-friendly STEM-based events are all the rage at RAF Museum Midlands this Easter! Attractions include a time-travelling science show - A Volatile History Of Chemistry (23 & 24 March and 2 & 3 April) and the interactive

Apollo 11 Academy - Space Race show (29 - 31 March). The Shropshire Astronomical Society will be hosting special stargazing evenings on 23, 24 & 27 March, and there's a 3D film about space flight to enjoy from 4 to 7 April in an immersive mobile planetarium.



**Countrytastic** Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Thurs 28 March

An educational event aimed at the under-11s, Countrytastic provides families with a great opportunity to learn about food, farming and the countryside. Show highlights include a host of both indoor and outdoor activities, including

animal meet-and-greets, arts & crafts, cookery workshops and tractor rides. This year's theme is Farming Heroes, with organisers encouraging visitors to come dressed as their favourite superhero.

**Feed The Need For Speed**

British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Warwickshire, Sat 23 March - Sun 14 April

It's all about speed at the British Motor Museum this Easter, with the popular Midlands attraction inviting visitors to explore some of Britain's fastest cars and take part in a number of associated activities. Highlights include a fastest car trail, a workshop where you can make your very own fast car, and daily racing-driver tours. The latter attraction provides youngsters with the chance to join energetic racing-driver characters for an interactive journey through the museum collections, learning about the venue's greatest speed machines along the way. A traditional Easter Egg hunt is also available to enjoy.



**AGBO Rally**

Weston Park, Shropshire, Sun 17 March

With Weston Park having been its home since 1997, the annual AGBO Rally makes a welcome return to the venue this month. The event will see 80 rally cars from all vintages and eras take on the stages around Weston - including the iconic watersplash! The event is also home to two championships in 2024: the AWMMC Heart of England Stage Rally Championship and the HRCR Mini Sports Cup.





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## What's On recommends: Places to visit in the Midlands



## Severn Valley Railway

Kidderminster: Station Dr, Kidderminster, DY10 1QX; Bridgnorth: 2 Hollybush Rd, Bridgnorth, WV16 4AX Website: [svr.co.uk](http://svr.co.uk)

Operating mainly steam-hauled passenger trains between Bridgnorth, Bewdley and Kidderminster, this much-loved railway transports visitors on a route of about 16 miles along the beautiful Severn Valley. The journey includes a stop-off at the Engine House Visitor Centre at Highley, where passengers can check out massive locomotives, enjoy themed exhibitions of unique railway vehicles and meet Gordon the Blue Engine.

Those starting their journey at Bridgnorth will also have the option of stop-offs at Bewdley and Kidderminster, the latter of which boasts a railway museum.

**PRICES:** Freedom Of The Line adult tickets £25, child (four - 15-year-olds) £16.50, Small Family Saver (one adult and up to two children) £52, Large Family Saver (two adults and up to four children) £77.

## Legoland Discovery Centre Birmingham

Utilita Arena Birmingham, King Edwards Road, Birmingham, B1 2AA Website: [legolanddiscoverycentre.com/birmingham](http://legolanddiscoverycentre.com/birmingham)

Legoland Discovery Centre is a great place to get creative with your little ones.

The venue houses a city builder area, a duplo farm, two rides - Kingdom's Quest and Merlin's Apprentice Ride - and a 4D cinema. Perhaps the most impressive attraction at the centre is Lego Miniland. Built from more than 1.5 million Lego bricks, Miniland is a replica of Birmingham. The model includes Lego constructions of Bullring, the BT Tower, The Mailbox and the Library of Birmingham.

**PRICES:** Standard Play Session tickets start from £20, Anytime Entry ticket £30, adults and pre-schoolers £12 (online only).



## The Bear Grylls Adventure

Birmingham International Railway Station, Exhibition Way, Marston Green, B40 1PA Website: [beargryllsadventure.com](http://beargryllsadventure.com)

Celebrity adventurer Bear Grylls has certainly pulled out all the stops with this popular visitor attraction, with activities including high ropes, indoor archery and climbing, escape rooms, axe-throwing and a Royal Marines-inspired assault course.

The more-courageous visitor can check out Cage Snorkel and Shark Dive, where they can 'take the plunge' with blacktip reef sharks and tropical fish.

Fancy experiencing the thrill of free-falling at 12,000ft without having to jump out of a plane? Then iFly is for you! The weightless adventure takes place in a wind tunnel and comprises two one-minute flights to get the adrenaline pumping.

**PRICES:** Activities start from £20pp with online advance tickets.



## Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

Millennium Point, Curzon St, Birmingham, B4 7XG Website: [birminghammuseums.org.uk/thinktank](http://birminghammuseums.org.uk/thinktank)

Located in Birmingham city centre, Thinktank offers a great day out for visitors of all ages.

From steam engines and talking robots through to gurgling guts and a chocolate-wrapping machine, the venue features more than 200 hands-on science & technology displays.

Highlights include MiniBrum - an interactive mini city for under-eights - a 4k planetarium and a science garden.


**PRICES:** Adults from £15.50, children (three - 15-year-olds) from £7.50, concessions £12.50, under-threes go free.



**UNLOCK HISTORY THIS EASTER**

West Midlands Police  
**MUSEUM**

CYBER CRIME  
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 The Lock-up, Steelhouse Lane  
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# RHS Malvern Spring Festival

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What's On recommends: Places to visit in the Midlands



**Roundhouse Birmingham**

1 Sheepcote St, Birmingham, B16 8AE  
 Website: [roundhousebirmingham.org.uk](http://roundhousebirmingham.org.uk)

A unique Grade II listed building at the heart of Birmingham's canal network, The Roundhouse is a hub from which to explore the city. The venue is looked after by Roundhouse Birmingham, who are dedicated to sharing stories of the city's industrial heritage in new and imaginative ways. Attractions include walks, cycle tours, boat trips and a range of kayak and paddleboarding tours. For those wanting to 'go it alone', there are pay-as-you-feel local audio tours or printed trails from which to choose.

**PRICES:** The Roundhouse Visitor Centre and Display Space are free to enter, kayak tours range from £24.50 - £50, kayak taster sessions are £8 - £10 and walking tours range from £8 - £14.

**Stratford Butterfly Farm**

Swan's Nest Lane, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 7LS  
 Website: [butterflyfarm.co.uk](http://butterflyfarm.co.uk)

Set in a large greenhouse landscaped with waterfalls, ponds and tropical plants, Stratford Butterfly Farm is home to hundreds of the world's most spectacular butterflies. The popular venue features a 'discovery zone' - inhabited by giant silkmoths and their cocoons - and the Minibeast Metropolis - home to snakes, reptiles, amphibians and other invertebrates. The Butterfly Farm's connections to the rainforests of Belize and the Maya civilisation are also in evidence, with more than 30 replicated ancient Maya artefacts on display throughout the attraction. **PRICES:** £8.95 adult, £8.45 students and seniors, £7.95 children aged three to 16.



**Compton Verney Art Gallery & Park**

Warwickshire, CV35 9HZ Website: [comptonverney.org.uk](http://comptonverney.org.uk)

Compton Verney is widely considered to be an art gallery of international standing. The Georgian house is set in more than 120 acres of Grade II listed classical parkland, created in the 18th century by eminent landscape architect Lancelot 'Capability' Brown. Although the original estate was split up and sold a century ago, the 'pleasure grounds' still clearly reflect the sweeping grassland, ornamental lakes and Cedars of Lebanon for which Brown is famous. **PRICES:** Adults £19.80, 19 - 25-year-olds £10, under-18s free.

**Coventry Transport Museum**

Millennium Place, Hales St, Coventry, CV1 1JD  
 Website: [transport-museum.com](http://transport-museum.com)

This popular museum not only houses the largest publicly owned collection of British vehicles on the planet, it also tells the story of a city which changed the world through transport. There are 14 fully accessible galleries to enjoy at the venue, featuring, among other attractions, pioneering bicycles, transport champions, innovative, memorable and luxurious vehicles from the last 200 years, and the world's two fastest cars.

**PRICES:** Adults from £14, concessions (senior & student) from £10.50, junior (five - 16-year-olds) from £7, under-fours and essential carers free.





# THE HUMAN HEART

A brand-new choreographed production gives voice to an unspoken and overlooked love story





Two internationally renowned kathak choreographers and dancers will come together at Birmingham Hippodrome next month to present a brand-new work.

Birmingham-born Aakash Odedra and New Delhi-based Aditi Mangaldas have joined forces to create and perform *Mehek*, a work which explores the power of love, memory, desire, attraction and resilience.

The show focuses on the often taboo subject of love between an older woman and a younger man. In doing so - explains the project's dramaturg, Karthika Nair - it takes a look at society's expectations in terms of an 'acceptable' relationship, and also celebrates the courage of those who defy societal norms: "The story explores both the immense strength that one can derive from love and also the challenges that are faced by people who are willing and brave enough to not abide by certain societal preconceptions about who can love and who can be loved.

"We are so used to older men courting, marrying and raising families with younger women, including some very famous men. I think history is ripe with examples. Aditi has been exploring these questions about the double standards we often find in society's expectations of men as opposed to those that it has for women.

"She mentions that women get slotted very easily into roles. So first, you're the daughter, then you're the suitable lover, then you become the wife, and then you become the mother. The idea that a woman could be multiple things is something that we grapple about.

"Love is not an exception in terms of how it's viewed in society. It's maybe heightened because it comes with an added explosive element, which is feminine desire, which is what all societies try to police. And the idea that an independent woman who is older, and therefore has seen the world and is not necessarily cowed by any kind of influence, should express desire is probably a very frightening thing for many people."

The title *Mehek* is derived from the Hindi word for fragrance. The team have been researching ideas of memory and love through Western and South Asian literature and also through the importance of our senses.

"Some of my other early tasks as a dramaturg were to dissect the notion of love and see

what the intersections of memory were," says Karthika. "So, for instance, in the first workshops in Delhi, we worked round the idea of objects or sounds associated with love. What would be the fragrance that one associates with love or a loved one? What would be a memory that one associates with love? And what would be the places associated with love?

"These questions were to stimulate the senses and see what the responses would be in movement terms. For instance, how do you describe the fragrance of love in just movement terms?

"It's not a linear narrative necessarily, but there is a story. And with any dance piece, anyone should be able to access it without knowing the back story or having to read the programme notes. So I think my job has been to ensure that, even if it's abstract, the emotional connections are comprehensible to the audience. The narrative is always true to itself, and my role is just to make sure that all of the ingredients which go into making the piece are coherent."

As part of the research and development of the show, the team worked with Leicester-based creative dance company Moving Together in *Mehek Live*, a community-engagement project during which they listened to the experiences and views of older people. Workshops exploring dance, music, memory and story-sharing have so far involved more than 450 people in venues including care homes and community centres.

"It was humbling and moving, because we got to explore so many questions with them. One of the questions I asked was: 'When love ends, what remains? What do you give, and what do you take back?' And I remember one woman saying that even when love ends, it never ends.

"I think they felt heard, and that is wonderful because we often don't have time for older people, especially for their memories. These workshops gave a platform for memories. They could bring their memories and know they are treasured.

"Not every project comes with these echoes. For me, it was one of the big takeaways. It was wonderful that the company facilitated those weeks and continues to do so. They are on at it even now, so there are all these homes and community centres where *Mehek* is still alive."

Karthika believes the production and the themes it explores are accessible to people of all backgrounds.

"I don't think one needs cultural shorthands to unpack the story; it's really identifiable. There is a certain amount of kathak vocabulary, but much of it is also universal. When you hold a hand in front of your face, it symbolises a mirror, and that's very clearly so in kathak, but I think that becomes very clear to anyone who is watching. And Aakash and Aditi are extraordinary performers. They perform to people all over the world who have never even heard the word kathak or know anything about the code and language of South Asian dance."

Born in Kerala and now living in France, Karthika is a writer, academic and dance enabler who has worked with companies across the globe. Co-founder (with Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui) of Antwerp-based dance company Eastman, she has also worked with numerous internationally renowned dancers and choreographers, including Akram Khan, Carlos Pons Guerra and Shobana Jayasingh. *Mehek*, she says, is a rare chance for audiences to see two of the international stars of South Asian dance performing together.

"This is a duet by two extraordinary performers who are both very conversant in different techniques. Aditi has been dancing for close to 50 years - since she was a child - but in the last decade or so, her work has also encompassed the contemporary. Aakash has always inhabited these various spheres. So what audiences can expect is performers who are hypnotic, powerful dancers.

"I guess one thing we would like through this piece is to gently remind ourselves that we needn't be judgmental; that we can just let ourselves be happy that others are happy; that who you love is a personal thing. And also that we should be so lucky, whatever our age, to find someone to love us or to find someone to love. Life is short; it's horribly unpredictable. Love, for all the messiness that it brings, is also salvation."

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**Aakash Odedra Company and Aditi Mangaldas Dance Company present *Mehek* at Birmingham Hippodrome on Tuesday 9 April**



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# TITANIC

— EXHIBITION —

# BIRMINGHAM



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birmingham



Your week-  
by-week  
listings guide  
March 2024

# the list



Michael Ball at Symphony Hall, Birmingham - Mon 25 March

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

## What's On

Fri 1 - Sun 10 March



And Then There Were None -  
The Alexandra

**Tues 5 - Sat 9 March**

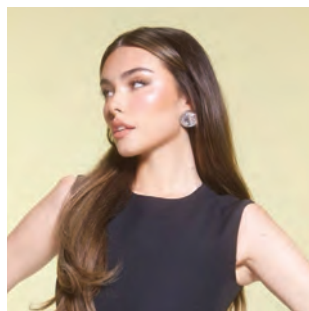
Mon 11 - Sun 17 March



Luisa Omielan -  
Hockley Social Club

**Thurs 14 March**

Mon 18 - Sun 24 March



Madison Beer -  
O2 Academy

**Sat 23 March**

Mon 25 - Sun 31 March



Mr Ben & The Bens -  
Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**Tues 26 March**



## VISUAL ARTS IN THE MIDLANDS

### Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

**VICTORIAN RADICALS** Exhibition presenting works by 19th-century artists, designers & makers, from the Pre-Raphaelites to the arts & crafts movement, until Thurs 31 Oct

### Compton Verney, Warwickshire

**SENSING VESUVIUS** A range of creative works from students at Kineton High School, in response to the collection's evocative painting, Vesuvius Erupting at Night, Thurs 21 Mar - Tues 30 Apr

**A SPIRIT INSIDE** A selection of works from The Women's Art Collection and The Ingram Collection, exploring how women and non-binary artists have grappled with the notion and sense of 'spirit', Thurs 21 Mar - Sun 1 Sep

### REUNITED: THE LAMENTATION

**ALTERPIECE** After 30 years of its central panel being housed in the National Gallery of Scotland's collection, this is the chance to see a rare masterpiece, reunited, Thurs 21 Mar - Fri 28 Feb 2025

**THE TAOTIE** Exhibition of new work from Gayle Chong Kwan, following an 18-month residency at Compton Verney, in response to the venue's collection of Neolithic Chinese bronzes, Thurs 21 Mar - Tues 31 Mar 2026

### Herbert Museum & Art Gallery, Coventry

#### CASE: COVENTRY ART SOCIETIES

**EXHIBITION** A new, varied exhibition showcasing work by members of art societies and groups in Coventry & Warwickshire. Includes paintings, sculpture, ceramics and more, until Sun 3 Mar.

#### WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR

Renowned exhibition on loan from the Natural History Museum, until Mon 1 Apr

### Midlands Arts Centre, Edgbaston, Birmingham

#### NEW NARRATIVES IN PHOTOGRAPHY

Showcasing new work by artists based in Pakistan (Asad Ali, Hira Noor, Ume Laila and Waleed Zafar) who use photography in innovative ways. The works explore narratives of community, public space and diaspora, until Mon 6 May

**MATERIAL EVIDENCE** Exhibition of textile art by current and former members of pan-European group Quilt Art, inspired by the life and work of founder member Mary Fogg, until Mon 27 May

### MADE AT MAC: CELEBRATING CERAMICS

Showcasing the creativity and skill of participants, tutors and artist pass holders who created work at MAC in 2023, until Sun 2 June

### Ikon Gallery, Birmingham

**START THE PRESS!** With a vintage, flatbed printing press as a centrepiece, West Midlands printmakers will produce original prints to fill the gallery walls, making work in real time. Presented as part of Ikon's 60th anniversary year, until Sun 21 Apr

#### EXODUS CROOKS: EPIPHANY

**(TEMPORAIRE)** Exhibition combining sculpture, film and text in an exploration of memories, histories and traditions transferred through time and shared space, until Sun 21 Apr

### RBSA Gallery, Birmingham

**RBSA PRINT PRIZE** Biennale exhibition celebrating all forms of print making. Both contemporary and traditional techniques are on display, until Sun 7 April

#### DRY MEDIA WORKS 1822-2022

Exhibition of works from the RBSA collection in celebration of the use by artists of dry media, such as pencil, pastel and charcoal, until Sun 7 April

### Wolverhampton Art Gallery

**POP ART AND POETRY** A kaleidoscope of Pop ceramics by key artists from around the world, until Sun 7 April

#### ED ISAACS: DRAWING PLACES

Exhibition of intricate, large-scale pencil drawings. Wolverhampton-based artist Isaacs primarily focuses on capturing the 'spirit of an environment', until Sun 24 Mar.

**FRIENDS IN FOCUS** Exhibition bringing together a selection of artworks from the gallery's permanent collection, acquired with support from the Friends of Wolverhampton Art Gallery & Museums, until Mar

### Elsewhere:

#### FREEFALL 21ST ANNIVERSARY

**EXHIBITION** Using photos, film and testimony to tell a story, the exhibition celebrates Freefall: Birmingham Royal Ballet's groundbreaking company for dancers with learning disabilities, until Sat 2 Mar, Birmingham Hippodrome

**ARTISTS BEHIND BARS** In collaboration with Fierce, artists will become bartenders for one night-shift only. The bar is their work of art and spectators become punters, Fri 1 Mar, Eastside Projects, Birmingham



James Arthur - Utilita Arena Birmingham

## Gigs

### ROSIE TEE + EMILY ALICE

+ AMELIA HARRISON Fri 1 Mar, Lichfield Guildhall

**TOTALLY TINA** Fri 1 Mar, Lichfield Garrick

**TOMMY SCOTT (SPACE) DUO** Fri 1 Mar, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

**APOLLO SOUL** Fri 1 - Sat 2 Mar, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

**ELVANA** Sat 2 Mar, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**NEWDAD** Sat 2 Mar, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**PULSE + HAZE + GUTTER PUPPY + DUNEBUG + VIOLENT GIANTS** Sat 2 Mar, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**THE LANCASHIRE HOTPOTS + PANTOGOGO** Sat 2 Mar, O2 Academy

**EDITORS + WINGS OF DESIRE** Sat 2 Mar, O2 Academy

**UNDERDARK + GRIEF RITUAL + WITHER** Sat 2 Mar, The Asylum, Hampton Street

**SIMON AND GARFUNKEL THROUGH THE YEARS** Sat 2 Mar, The Wulfrun at The Halls W'hampton

**86TVS** Sun 3 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**THE STEVE GIBBONS BAND LIVE** Sun 3 Mar, Actress & Bishop, Ludgate Hill

**CROWBAR + VOIDLURKER + INHUMAN NATURE** Sun 3 Mar, The Asylum, Hampton Street

**JA RULE + KERI HILSON + LLOYD + MYA** Sun 3

Mar, Utilita Arena Birmingham

**X AMBASSADORS + FIEVES** Sun 3 Mar, XOYO, Digbeth

**LIME GARDEN + UGLY** Mon 4 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**KNOCKED LOOSE + DEAFHEAVEN + HEADBUSSA** Mon 4 Mar, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**POLARIS + SILENT PLANET + THORNHILL + PALEDUSK** Tues 5 Mar, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**THE MARRAKESH EXPRESS** Tues 5 Mar, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

**EDGAR MACÍAS QUINTET** Wed 6 Mar, The Jam House, Jewellery Qtr

**LUST FOR LIFE + FIFTEEN LIONS** Wed 6 Mar, O2 Academy

**MAD JOCKS & ENGLISHMEN** Wed 6 Mar, Red Lion Folk Club, Vicarage Road

**THEO KATZMAN** Wed 6 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

**THE PRETENDERS** Wed 6 Mar, Symphony Hall

**JAMES ARTHUR + DEAN LEWIS** Wed 6 Mar, Utilita Arena Birmingham

**GRACE PETRIE** Wed 6 Mar, The Glee Club

**KEITH JAMES - THE MUSIC OF NICK DRAKE AND JOHN MARTYN** Wed 6 Mar, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

**RUBY TURNER** Wed 6 Mar, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry



# Friday 1 - Sunday 10 March

**GREG PUCIATO + TRACE AMOUNT** Thurs 7 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**OMAR** Thurs 7 Mar, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

**MOTHER MOTHER + CRAWLERS** Thurs 7 Mar, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**HAWXX** Thurs 7 Mar, The Asylum, Hampton Street

**PAUL DUNMALL QUARTET** Thurs 7 Mar, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**BASKERY** Thurs 7 Mar, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

**TOBY MARRIOTT + WHEN TIGERS USED TO SMOKE + EDEN SAM** Fri 8 Mar, The Night Owl, Digbeth

**CAST** Fri 8 Mar, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**THE APPEARANCE + TOM HEWITT + RIBBONS FOR ROSE + DELUSIONAL POETRY + LOTUS EYES** Fri 8 Mar, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**BRAINSTORM** Fri 8 Mar, O2 Academy

**LUCA SIMIAN + DOWNFALL 77 + RED BY NIGHT + THE ACHILLES + THE TYSMS** Fri 8 Mar, O2 Academy

**TIGERTAILZ** Fri 8 Mar, The Asylum, Hampton Street

**ELYSIA BIRO** Fri 8 Mar, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall

**10CC + PAUL CANNING** Fri 8 Mar, Symphony Hall

**JASON DERULO + AFRO B** Fri 8 Mar, Utilita Arena Birmingham

**MCGOLDRICK, MCCUSKER, DOYLE** Fri 8 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Edgbaston

**KARL LOXLEY** Fri 8 Mar, Artrix, Bromsgrove (Tickets via The Core Theatre, Solihull)

**TOM MEIGHAN** Fri 8 Mar, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

**BACK INTO HELL: A TRIBUTE TO MEATLOAF** Fri 8 Mar, Lichfield Garrick

**SOLID SOUL** Fri 8 - Sat 9 Mar, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

**PAMA INTERNATIONAL** Sat 9 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**STRANGE BELIEVERS** Sat 9 Mar, The Dark Horse, Moseley

**LUCAS D & THE GROOVE GHETTO** Sat 9 Mar, The Night Owl, Digbeth

**THE BLINDERS** Sat 9 Mar, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

**DESERT STORM** Sat 9 Mar, Dead Wax, Digbeth

**ORBIT CULTURE** Sat 9 Mar, The Asylum, Hampton Street

**SONS OF LIBERTY + THE MIKE ROSS BAND** Sat 9 Mar, The Asylum, Hampton Street

**SOUNDS OF SEATTLE** Sat 9 Mar, The Flapper

**BLACK VOICES + AGAAMA + EMILY SAUNDERS** Sat 9 Mar,

Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall

**THE MUSICAL BOX** Sat 9 Mar, Symphony Hall

**BEN PORTSMOUTH: THIS IS ELVIS** Sat 9 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

**JON LLOYD QUARTET** Sat 9 Mar, 1000 Trades, Jewellery Quarter

**RE-TAKE THAT** Sat 9 Mar, Lichfield Garrick

**THE WATCHDOGS** Sat 9 Mar, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

**ACROBVT + CHRISTIE REEVES** Sun 10 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**REALLY BIG REALLY CLEVER + FAMILY DINNER** Sun 10 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**GIANT ROOKS + ANDREW CUSHIN** Sun 10 Mar, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**FORT HOPE** Sun 10 Mar, Dead Wax, Digbeth

**UNZANE** Sun 10 Mar, The Flapper

**RØRY** Sun 10 Mar, XOVO, Digbeth

**THE CARPENTERS STORY** Sun 10 Mar, The Alexandra

**MICHAEL MCGOLDRICK, JOHN MCCUSKER AND JOHN DOYLE** Sun 10 Mar, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

**THE GEORGE HARRISON STORY** Sun 10 Mar, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

## Classical Music

### RBC SPRING OPERA: CINDERELLA

Featuring Royal Birmingham Conservatoire's Vocal & Operatic Studies Department. Performance comprises Massenet's Cendrillon, until Sat 2 Mar, Gas Street Central, Birmingham

### CROSSCURRENTS: LUNCHTIME CONCERT

Featuring Siwan Rhys (piano). Programme includes works by Nono, Nobuto, Crane & Guèbrou, Fri 1 Mar, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, B'ham

### CENTRE STAGE: CBSO BAROQUE ENSEMBLE

Programme includes works by Bach, Avison & Handel, Fri 1 Mar, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

### BOURNVILLE LUNCHTIME CONCERT

Featuring Allan Schiller & John Humphreys (piano duet), Fri 1 Mar, Bournville Quaker Meeting House, Birmingham

### CITY OF BIRMINGHAM CHOIR: REFLECTIONS - MUSIC FOR LENT

Featuring Adrian Lucas (conductor). Programme includes works by Haydn, Bach & Albinoni, Sat 2 Mar, Lichfield Cathedral

### UNIVERSITY CAMERATA

Featuring Emma Baker, Belén Clemente Gargallo, Naomi Hnat, Michael Stahl and Miles Swinden (conductors). Programme includes works by Purcell, Weir, Barber, Gibbons, Elgar & more... Sun 3 Mar, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, B'ham

### LUNCHTIME MUSIC: TRUMPET CLUB

Featuring RBC Musicians. Programme includes works by Shostakovich, Debussy & Calvert, Mon 4 Mar, Recital Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**CBSO CUPPA CONCERT** Featuring a small ensemble of CBSO musicians. Programme created for people living with dementia & their carers, Tues 5 Mar, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

### BARNARDO'S NATIONAL CHORAL COMPETITION

Featuring Douglas Coombes (conductor) & 22 competing school choirs, Tues 5 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**ADELPHI QUARTET** Featuring Maxime Michaluk (violin), Esther Agustí Matabosch (violin), Adam Newman (viola) and Nepomuk Braun (cello). Programme includes works by Haydn, Purcell & Britten, Wed 6 Mar, The Bradshaw Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**CROSSCURRENTS: MINIBEAST / EFÍMERO** Featuring Jorge Garcia & Santiago Lozano. Wed 6 Mar, The Dome, Bramall Music Building, Birmingham

**CROSSCURRENTS: THE MAHTANI / MAPP DUO** Featuring Annie Mahtani

(composer and sound artist) & Chris Mapp (composer and bass), Wed 6 Mar, Lapworth Museum of Geology, Birmingham

**MUSIC FOR TWO PIANOS** Featuring Ella Cordon Vieto & Martina Cuevas Cuevas. Programme includes works by Glass & Rachmaninoff, Thurs 7 Mar, Recital Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**THALLEIN UNCONDUCTED** Featuring RBC Musicians. Programme includes new music from Andrew Toovey, Yuna Namdar, Peter Bell, Ella-Rose Rayner & Jo Nicolae, Thurs 7 Mar, The Bradshaw Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

### INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATION 2024

Featuring RBC Saxophone Ensemble, RBC Woodwinds & Brass Ensemble, Ex Cathedra Scholars, Eastside Voices and RBC Early Music Ensemble. Programme includes works by RBC composers & more... Fri 8 Mar, The Bradshaw Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

### CROSSCURRENTS: THE MEMORY PROJECT - LIGETI QUARTET

Featuring Chris Jones (violin), Patrick Dawkins (violin), Richard Jones (viola) & Val Welbanks (cello). Programme includes world premieres of works by Natalia Valencia, Daria Kwiatkowska, Jorge Garcia, Santiago Lozano, Sara Caneva & Scott Wilson, Fri 8 Mar, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, Birmingham

### CROSSCURRENTS: BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY SINGERS & UNIVERSITY UPPER VOICES

Featuring Bob Chilcott & Mariana Rosas (conductors). Programme includes works by K Andrew, J Dove, D Tabakova, S Quartel, B McGlade & more... Fri 8 Mar, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, Birmingham

**BIRMINGHAM CONTEMPORARY MUSIC GROUP: NEXT** Featuring the NEXT Cohort. Programme includes Morton Feldman's 'timeless' studies alongside works by D Jaskot, T Murail & I Mundry, Fri 8 Mar, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

### BIRMINGHAM BACH CHOIR: BACH, ST MATTHEW PASSION

Featuring Paul Spicer (conductor), Thomas Hobbs (evangelist), Henry Waddington (Christus), Sophie Bevan (soprano), Lawrence Zazzo (countertenor), Ed Lyon (tenor) & Stephan Loges (bass), Sat 9 Mar, Lichfield Cathedral

### UNIVERSITY WIND BAND & CHAMBER CHOIRS

Featuring Angus Winton, Patrick Sharman, Jonathan Quinton & Jessica Duckworth (conductors). Programme includes works by Ellerby, Crausaz, Saint-Saëns, Rutter, Tallis & more... Sat 9 Mar, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, Birmingham

**MIŁOŚ KARADAGLIC** Featuring Johnny



Baskery - Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath





Melanie Bracewell - The Glee Club

Cohen (conductor) & the Arcangelo Chamber Orchestra. Programme includes works by Vivaldi, Marcello, Boccherini, Bach, Handel & more... Sat 9 Mar, Butterworth Hall, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

**REVERIE AND REFLECTION** Featuring Tom Newall and Suzzie Vango (conductors), Kishor Subramaniyam (violin), Imogen Russell (soprano), Themba Mvula (baritone), Julian Metzger (cello) & the University Symphony Orchestra and Chorus. Programme includes works by Ravel, Berlioz, Parry & Coleridge, Sun 10 Mar, Butterworth Hall, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

**SYMPHONY & STRING ORCHESTRAS** Featuring Daniele Rosina, Raya Arunachalam and Conrad Geake (conductors). Programme includes works by Borodin, Tchaikovsky, Ginastera, Corelli, Barber & Elgar, Sun 10 Mar, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, Birmingham

## Comedy

**STEPHEN BAILEY** Fri 1 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

**SEANN WALSH, NABIL ABDULRAHID, TAL DAVIES & WAYNE BEESE** Fri 1 Mar, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

**MICKY P KERR, BEN NORRIS, KATE BARRON & COMIC TBC** Fri 1 - Sat 2 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**PETER BRUSH, JOSH HOWIE, DARIUS DAVIES & COMIC TBC** Sat 2 Mar, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

**SIMON WOZNAK, ANDREW BIRD & COMICS TBC** Sat 2 Mar, Lichfield Garrick

**RICHARD BLACKWOOD** Sun 3 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**VIDURA BR** Sun 3 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**UNDER THE EMBASSY COMEDY** Sun 3 Mar, The Cuban Embassy (The Bulls

Head), Moseley, Birmingham

**SUKH OJLA, NOREEN KHAN & COMICS TBC** Sun 3 Mar, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

**TANYALEE DAVIS** Tues 5 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**IAN STONE, NINA GILLIGAN, TOM TAYLOR & FREDDY QUINN** Wed 6 Mar, Herbert's Yard, Birmingham

**CHRIS KENT** Fri 8 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**LINDSEY SANTORO, THANYIA MOORE, ELLIOT STEEL, COLIN HOULT (ANNA MANN) & ALEX EGAN** Fri 8 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**PETER RETHINASAMY, CHRIS KEHOE, SCOTT BENNETT & JON PEARSON** Sat 9 Mar, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

**LINDSEY SANTORO, THANYIA MOORE, ELLIOT STEEL & COLIN HOULT (ANNA MANN)** Sat 9 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**MARK NELSON** Sat 9 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**BIG DEAL COMEDY** Sat 9 Mar, Old Joint Stock, Birmingham

**MELANIE BRACEWELL** Sun 10 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

## Theatre

**THE BAR AT THE EDGE OF TIME** Frozen Light present a multi-sensory spectacular for audiences with profound and multiple learning disabilities, until Fri 1 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham



**AN OFFICER AND A GENTLEMAN THE MUSICAL** A timeless story of love, courage and redemption, based on the award-winning 1980s movie of the same name, until Sat 2 Mar, The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

**EDUCATING RITA** Amateur version of the Willy Russell classic, until Sat 2 Mar, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

**CINDERELLA** RBC's Vocal & Operatic Studies Department present Massenet's Cendrillon, based on the story of Cinderella, until Sat 2 Mar, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**FARM BOY** A Lichfield Garrick production of Michael Morpurgo's compelling sequel to War Horse, until Sun 10 Mar, Lichfield Garrick

**BLACK IS THE COLOR OF MY VOICE** Apphia Campbell's acclaimed play, inspired by the life of Nina Simone, follows a successful singer and civil rights activist as she seeks redemption after the untimely death of her father, until Sat 2 Mar, The Rep, Birmingham

**SIX THE MUSICAL** Smash-hit musical in which the six wives of Henry VIII take to the stage to tell their stories by fusing historical heartbreak and 21st-century girl power, until Sun 3 Mar, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre



**BHANGRA NATION** A 'brash, intoxicating and joyous musical comedy celebrating traditions we inherit and those we create', until Sat 16 Mar, The Rep, Birmingham

**A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM** Mathew Baynton (Horrible Histories/Ghosts) stars as Bottom in Shakespeare's captivating comedy, until Sat 30 Mar, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

**VICTORIAN GOTHIC - AN EVENING OF EERIE DEEDS** Don't Go Into The Cellar present an anthology stage show based on a trio of nineteenth century chillers, Fri 1 Mar, West Midlands Police Museum, Birmingham

**STRANGER SINGS!** Award-winning parody musical providing an irreverent twist on the hit Netflix series, Fri 1 - Sat 2 Mar, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

**QUEER MY THROAT** Generation Q Collective's new gig theatre show - a loud and proud journey through history, 'climaxing in queer joy', Sat 2 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

**DONUTS** A celebration of how music

brings us together, no matter what life throws at us, Sun 3 Mar, Thimblemill Library, Smethwick

**BLUE REMEMBERED HILLS** The Highbury Players present an amateur version of Dennis Potter's wartime classic, Tues 5 - Sat 9 Mar, Highbury Hall, Sutton Coldfield

**AND THEN THERE WERE NONE** Lucy Bailey directs a new version of Agatha Christie's bestselling crime novel, Tues 5 - Sat 9 Mar, The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham



**BONNIE & CLYDE** Catherine Tyldesley (Coronation Street) stars as Blanche Barrow in an award-winning show about America's notorious folk heroes, Tues 5 - Sat 9 Mar, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

**WICKED** Award-winning musical telling the untold story of the witches of Oz, Tues 5 Mar - Sun 7 Apr, Birmingham Hippodrome

**CRACKING BY SHÔN DALE-JONES** A thought-provoking solo performance about loving in the face of hatred, Wed 6 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

**THE SORCERER** Birmingham Savoyards present one of Gilbert & Sullivan's lesser-known operas, Wed 6 - Fri 8 Mar, Old Rep, Birmingham

**FRANKENSTEIN** All & Sundry Limited present Nick Dear's version of Mary Shelley's gothic horror, Wed 6 - Sat 9 Mar, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

**SCIENCE FICTION BY GASLIGHT** Don't Go Into The Cellar's Jonathan Goodwin explores the literary origins of Steampunk, with dramatic retellings of classic Victorian science fiction, Thurs 7 Mar, Lapworth Museum, University of Birmingham

**THE LIGHT HOUSE** A real-life story about falling in love and staying in love, even when the lights go out and you're lost in the dark, Thurs 7 - Fri 8 Mar, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

**ELECTRA** The Drama Collective Society from the University of Warwick present a timeless Greek tragedy which dives into the turbulent universe of familial antagonism and unwavering justice, Thurs 7 - Sat 9 Mar, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

**HANNAH WALKER: GAMBLE** A bittersweet multimedia show about addiction and its effects on families, friends and communities, Fri 8 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), B'ham



**ADULT PANTO TOUR: ALICE IN WONDERLAND** A brand-new adventure down the rabbit hole, starring Bailey J Mills, Sophia Stardust and Lucy Fernandes, Sat 9 Mar, Old Rep, Birmingham

## Dance

**THE SLEEPING BEAUTY** Birmingham Royal Ballet present Sir Peter Wright's production of the much-loved fairytale, with Tchaikovsky's magical score played live by the Royal Ballet Sinfonia, until Sat 2 Mar, Birmingham Hippodrome

**ASIAN SPRING: A CELEBRATION OF DANCE** Join hundreds of local dancers for an afternoon of Kathak and Bhangra, showcasing the rich tapestry of South Asian culture through dance, Sun 3 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

**40/40 BY KATHERINA RADEVA** Solo dance performance showcasing the joys and sorrows of 40 years - from childhood parties and rhythm gymnastics through to defiant divorce and dancing for the joy of it, Fri 8 - Sat 9 Mar, The Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

## Light Entertainment

**TALES TILL RAMADAN** One-woman show in which Eleanor Martin goes in search of sincerity via a collection of Muslim heritage stories from Rumi, Uzbekistan, Iraq, Palestine and Pakistan, until Sat 2 Mar, The Rep, Birmingham

**DOES MY FANNY LOOK BIG IN THIS?** Eleanor May Blackburn's solo show tackles sex education, validates sexual anxiety, and deals with sexual trauma while answering questions you've always been a little too embarrassed to ask, Fri 1 Mar, Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

**FOOTBALL CLICHÉS LIVE** Join the adjudication panel of Adam Hurrey, Charlie Eccleshare and David Walker for 'the most pedantic footballing night of all time', Fri 1 Mar, The Old Rep, Birmingham

**JAMES PHELAN: THE GREATEST MAGICIAN** Magic show which promises to leave you 'aching from laughter and dizzy in disbelief', Fri 1 Mar, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

**ASTON VILLA LEGENDS** Paul Merson, Andy Townsend, Dion Dublin and Dean Saunders discuss all things football... Mon 4 Mar, The Alexandra, Birmingham

**IRELAND THE SHOW** Featuring an all-star cast of singers and performers, accompanied by the Keltic Storm Band and world champion Gael

Force Irish dancers from Kerry, Mayo and Clare, Mon 4 Mar, Artrix, Bromsgrove

**DREAMCOAT STARS** Concert-style performance where the stars of Joseph present hits from the musicals alongside brand-new songs and arrangements, Thurs 7 Mar, Lichfield Garrick

**PROFESSOR BRIAN COX: HORIZONS** The Guinness World Record holder presents 'a celebration of our civilisation, our music, art, philosophy and science', Sat 9 Mar, Civic Hall, The Halls, Wolverhampton

**THE BUGLE LIVE 2024** Live version of the long-running podcast in which Andy Zaltman chairs an evening of 'freshly hewn topical satire, as well as probable and certifiable lies and other assorted high-grade nonsense', Sun 10 Mar, Old Rep, Birmingham

**SAM RABONE'S BIG BOSTIN' VARIETY SHOW** The Garrick's own panto dame presents a handpicked programme of entertainment - including magic from Mark James, ventriloquism from Crackerjack's Max Fulham, music from Kiki Deville and comedy from Kings Heath housewife Mrs Barbara Nice, Sun 10 Mar, Lichfield Garrick

## Talks & Spoken Word

**JUMPROV!** The UK's first Black and Brown Improv group present a performance made up entirely on the spot, Sat 2 Mar, Birmingham Hippodrome

**BEN FOGLE: WILD** Brand-new show in which the adventurer shares true stories of his encounters with people and animals, Tues 5 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

**BRIAN BILSTON AND HENRY NORMAL** An evening of poetry from 'the Banksy of poetry' (Bilston) and the founder of Manchester Poetry Festival (Normal), Thurs 7 Mar, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

**BRIAN BILSTON AND HENRY NORMAL** An evening of poetry from 'the Banksy of poetry' (Bilston) and the founder of Manchester Poetry Festival (Normal), Fri 8 Mar, The Halls, Wolverhampton

## Events

**FREDDO'S TREASURE TROVE** Discover all of Freddo's treasures and learn what it takes to become a pirate on the seven seas, until Sun 17 Mar, Cadbury World, Bourneville

**WHAT UNIVERSITY? & WHAT CAREER? LIVE** Meet representatives from many of the UK's top unis and employers to find out about apprenticeships and higher education opportunities, Fri 1 -



Asian Spring: A Celebration Of Dance - Birmingham Town Hall

Sat 2 Mar, NEC, Birmingham

**THE NATIONAL WEDDING SHOW** Featuring a host of exhibitors who can help to plan your special day, Fri 1 - Sun 3 Mar, NEC, Birmingham

**VINTAGE AFTERNOON TEA** Travel in style in 'a luxurious vintage carriage' and indulge in 'a delectable spread' presented on traditional vintage chinaware, Sat 2 Mar, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

**BEYOND THE MASK: POISON, POLICE, AND PUNISHMENT OF THE 18TH & 19TH CENTURIES** A retired Coventry West Midlands Police officer takes a look at some 18th & 19th century arsenic poisoning cases, Sat 2 Mar, West Midlands Police Museum, B'ham

**THE NATIONAL EQUINE SHOW** Featuring hundreds of brands and activities, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Mar, NEC, Birmingham

**LAMBING WEEKEND** Explore the lambing barn and help welcome over 100 lambs and kids, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Mar, Forge Mill Farm, West Bromwich

**GO DIVING SHOW** Showcasing new diving equipment, idyllic holiday destinations and comprehensive training resources, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Mar, NAEC Stoneleigh, Warwickshire

**TUDOR WOMEN GUIDED TOUR AT BLAKESLEY HALL** Mark International Women's Day by learning about Tudor women, Sun 3 Mar, Blakesley Hall, Birmingham

**COLOUR BOX: THE LAST UNICORN** Drop-in workshop followed by a screening of the animated musical, Sun 3 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), B'ham

**THE PLANETS 360 (CLASSICAL)** A re-imagining of British composer Gustav Holst's The Planets orchestral suite, Sun 3 Mar, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

**MAC'S ARTS MARKET** Bringing together the best independent makers from Birmingham, the West Midlands and beyond, Sun 3 Mar, Midlands Arts

Centre (MAC), Birmingham

**CRUFTS** The famous annual dog show makes a welcome return, Thurs 7 - Sun 10 Mar, NEC, Birmingham

**IN HER SHOES: INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY WORKSHOP** An 'empowering' singing & songwriting workshop to mark International Women's Day, Fri 8 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

**A WOMAN'S LIFE AT ASTON HALL TOUR** Learn about women's lives in the Hall - from the glamour of Barbara Lister to the work of scullery maids, Sat 9 Mar, Aston Hall, Birmingham

**VINTAGE AFTERNOON TEA** Travel in style in 'a luxurious vintage carriage' and indulge in 'a delectable spread' presented on traditional vintage chinaware, Sat 9 Mar, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

**NATURE EXPLORERS: WOODLAND ART** Get creative with nature in this outdoor workshop, Sat 9 Mar, Sarehole Mill, Birmingham

**RUSTIVAL** All-new car & vehicle show hosted by YouTubers Ian and Carly from HubNut, Matt from Furious Driving and Steph from idriveaclassic, Sat 9 Mar, British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Warks

**THE RESONATE FESTIVAL OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY - DAY OUT** All-ages fun exploring science, technology and engineering, Sun 10 Mar, Warwick University Campus

**MOTHER'S DAY LUNCH** Treat Mum and your loved ones this Mother's day with Sunday lunch on the Severn Valley Railway, Sun 10 Mar, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

**MOTHER'S DAY BRUNCH** Enjoy a brunch with the family in the newly refurbished Event Suite, Sun 10 Mar, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum



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Echo And The Bunnymen - O2 Academy

## Gigs

**RBC JAZZ ORCHESTRA** Mon 11 Mar, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**MARTIN CARTHY** Mon 11 Mar, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

**DAMIEN DEMPSEY** Tues 12 Mar, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**SOUTH ARCADE** Tues 12 Mar, O2 Academy

**STIFF LITTLE FINGERS** Tues 12 Mar, O2 Academy

**CHRIS WOOD** Tues 12 Mar, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

**MUTUAL BENEFIT + ODETTA HARTMAN** Wed 13 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**ALBERT LEE** Wed 13 Mar, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

**HEADQUARTERS OF GROOVE + DELE + SERENA JASMINE + NOVA** Wed 13 Mar, The Night Owl

**WILL DOWNING + MAYSA** Wed 13 Mar, O2 Institute

**ECHO AND THE BUNNYMEN** Wed 13 Mar, O2 Academy

**BONFIRE RADICALS + ROB PETERS + HANNAH BROWN** Wed 13 Mar, Red Lion Folk Club

**TONY HADLEY** Wed 13 Mar, Symphony Hall



**24K MAGIC** Wed 13 Mar, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**ENUFF Z'NUFF + STOP STOP** Wed 13 Mar, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

**TOM ODELL + SOFIA ISELLA** Wed 13 Mar, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

**DEATH VALLEY GIRLS** Thurs 14 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**WILLE & THE BANDITS + WILLE EDWARDS** Thurs 14 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**MOCKINGJAYS** Thurs 14 Mar, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

**DIZZY LIZZY** Thurs 14 Mar, Actress & Bishop, Ludgate Hill

**KRYSTHLA + KING ABYSS + MONETOPIA** Thurs 14 Mar, Devil's Dog, Digbeth

**DEAD POET SOCIETY + READY THE PRINCE** Thurs 14 Mar, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**LEAVES EYES + NORTHTALE + METALITE + CATALYST CRIME** Thurs 14 Mar, The Asylum, Hampton Street

**MILLICENT CHAPANDA** Thurs 14 Mar, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall

**CLOUDMAKERS TRIO + RBC JAZZ ORCHESTRA + AFRO-CUBAN JAZZ ORCHESTRA** Thurs 14 Mar, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**SERENITY + EVER + LUCIETH + FOWL PLAY** Thurs 14 Mar, The Rainbow, Digbeth

**MAIR THOMAS** Thurs 14 Mar, Bromsgrove Folk Club

**LIAM GALLAGHER AND JOHN SQUIRE** Thurs 14 Mar, The Civic at The Halls

Wolverhampton

**NE-YO + MARIO** Thurs 14 - Fri 15 Mar, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

**GRATEFUL DUDES** Fri 15 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**THE LONGEST JOHNS + COLM R. MCGUINNESS** Fri 15 Mar, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**FILTER** Fri 15 Mar, O2 Academy

**BILL RYDER-JONES** Fri 15 Mar, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

**FASTLOVE - A TRIBUTE TO GEORGE MICHAEL** Fri 15 Mar, Symphony Hall

**TRIO NOBLE-SLAVIK-CLARVIS** Fri 15 Mar, 1000 Trades, Jewellery Quarter

**U2 VS SIMPLE MINDS** Fri 15 Mar, The Rhodhouse, Sutton Coldfield

**OMD + WALT DISCO** Fri 15 Mar, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

**DETROIT SOUL COLLECTIVE** Fri 15 - Sat 16 Mar, The Jam House, Jewellery Qtr

**LAID - JAMES TRIBUTE BAND** Sat 16 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath



**RED RUM CLUB** Sat 16 Mar, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**FEEDER** Sat 16 Mar, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**PRAIRIE** Sat 16 Mar, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**SKINDRED** Sat 16 Mar, O2 Academy

**CATTLE DECAPITATION** Sat 16 Mar, O2 Academy

**THE NOTEBENDERS** Sat 16 Mar, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall

**THE JOHNNY CASH SHOW** Sat 16 Mar, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

**SYNTH** Sat 16 Mar, The Rhodhouse, Sutton Coldfield

**THE STRANGLERS** Sat 16 Mar, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

**STORY OF SOUL** Sat 16 Mar, Lichfield Garrick

**BUZZARD BUZZARD BUZZARD** Sun 17 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**SAM SWEENEY** Sun 17 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**CONAN + WALLOWING + VOIDLURKER + BILE CASTER** Sun 17 Mar, Devil's Dog, Digbeth

**LOSTALONE + AS SIRENS FALL + WOOD AND NAILS** Sun 17 Mar, The Asylum

**JUST MY IMAGINATION: THE MUSIC OF THE TEMPTATIONS** Sun 17 Mar, Symphony Hall

**JUSTIN HAYWARD** Sun 17 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

**THE DRIFTERS** Sun 17 Mar, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

**LEGEND - THE MUSIC OF BOB MARLEY** Sun 17 Mar, Lichfield Garrick

## Classical Music

**THOMAS TROTTER: INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY CONCERT** Programme comprises works by women composers including Wallen, Price, Traillferne & Demessieux, Mon 11 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

**CHINA SHENZHEN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA** Featuring Tamsin Waley-Cohen (violin - pictured), Jiapeng Nie (cello) & Daye Lin (conductor). Programme includes works by Tan Dun, Saint-Saëns, Chausson & Respighi, Mon 11 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham



**LUNCHTIME CONCERT** Featuring Hannah Morley (mezzo-soprano), Jonathan French & Mario Bobotsov (piano). Programme includes works by Mahler/Rückert, Bach and Franck, Mon 11 Mar, Recital Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**AFGHAN YOUTH ORCHESTRA: BREAKING THE SILENCE** Programme includes Afghan traditional folk music alongside Indian & western classical, Tues 12 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

**LUNCHTIME CONCERT** Featuring Hannah Morley (mezzo-soprano) and Jonathan French (piano). Programme includes works by Tippett, Clarke, Debussy & more... Tues 12 Mar, The Bradshaw Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**CENTRE STAGE: CBSO YOUTH ORCHESTRA** Repertoire and musicians TBC, Thurs 14 Mar, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

**CROSSCURRENTS: THE UNFURROWED FIELD** Featuring Fergus McCreadie (piano), David Bowden (bass), Stephen Henderson (drums), Rakhi Singh (violin), Donald Grant (violin), Simone van der Giessen (viola) & Christian Elliott (cello). Programme includes works by McCreadie, Donald Grant and Christian Mason, Thurs 14 Mar, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, Birmingham

**LUNCHTIME CONCERT** Featuring Harriet Mackenzie (violin) & Gabriel Francis-Dehqani (cello). Programme includes works by JS Bach alongside a world premiere by Mackenzie, Thurs 14 Mar, Ensemble Room, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

**LUNCHTIME RECITAL** Repertoire and musicians TBC, Fri 15 Mar, St Philips Cathedral, Birmingham

Ne-Yo - Resorts World Arena



## BARBER LUNCHEON CONCERT

Featuring Lorena Paz Nieto (soprano) and Sholto Kynoch (piano). Programme includes works by Poulenc, Rachmaninov, Takuboku Ishkawa, Ginastera & Gardel, Fri 15 Mar, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, Birmingham

## CROSSCURRENTS: EMBOLDENED

Featuring Steve Banks (guitar), Jonathan Silk (conductor) & the University Jazz Orchestra. Programme comprises Emboldened by Banks, re-voiced for the orchestra, Fri 15 Mar, CBSO Centre, B'ham

## BOURNVILLE LUNCHEON CONCERT

Featuring David Saint (organ), Fri 15 Mar, Bournville Quaker Meeting House, Birmingham

## CANDLELIGHT: VIVALDI'S FOUR SEASONS

String quartet tbc, Sat 16 Mar, St Philips Cathedral, Birmingham

## BIRMINGHAM FESTIVAL CHORAL SOCIETY: BACH, B MINOR MASS

Featuring David Wynne (conductor), Emilia Morton (soprano), Martha McLorinan (mezzo soprano), Jack Granby (tenor), Andrew Tipple (bass) & Kevin Gill (organ), Sat 16 Mar, Lichfield Cathedral

## BPO CONCERTO COMPETITION FINAL 2024

Featuring Michael Lloyd (conductor) & the Birmingham Philharmonic Orchestra. Programme includes works by Glinka, Haydn, Jenkins, Rachmaninoff and Dvořák, Sun 17 Mar, The Bradshaw Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**CROSSCURRENTS: IVES 150** Featuring Daniele Rosina (conductor) & the Philharmonic Orchestra. Programme includes works by Ives & Vaughan Williams, Sun 17 Mar, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, Birmingham

## Comedy

**PHIL ELLIS** Wed 13 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**UNDER THE RAINBOW COMEDY** Wed 13 Mar, The Rainbow, Digbeth, B'ham

**MATT CHORLEY** Wed 13 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

**COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, LAURA LEXX & DANA ALEXANDER** Thurs 14 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**LUISA OMIELAN** Thurs 14 Mar, Hockley Social Club, Birmingham



**TOM HOUGHTON** Thurs 14 Mar, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

**DANIEL FOX** Fri 15 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**RUSSELL KANE** Fri 15 Mar, Lichfield Garrick

**THE SCUMMY MUMMIES** Fri 15 Mar, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

**GEOFF NORCOTT** Fri 15 Mar, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

**ANIA MAGLIANO** Fri 15 Mar, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

**JASON PATTERSON, LAURA LEXX, ALEX KEALY & DANA ALEXANDER** Fri 15 - Sat 16 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**PETE OTWAY, JESSIE NIXON, MICKY OVERMAN & DAVE LONGLEY** Sat 16 Mar, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

**PAUL RILEY** Sat 16 Mar, The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

**LLOYD GRIFFITH** Sun 17 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**JOE WELLS** Sun 17 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

## Theatre

**SELF-RAISING** Jenny Sealey's 'blisteringly honest and laugh-out-loud' one-woman show about growing up deaf in a family with secrets, Tues 12 - Wed 13 Mar, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry



**CORAM SHAKESPEARE SCHOOLS FESTIVAL 2024** Evening of live theatre showcasing a series of abridged Shakespeare productions performed by local schools, Tues 12 - Wed 13 Mar, Old Rep, Birmingham

**CRAZY FOR YOU** Amateur version presented by Knowle Musical Society, Tues 12 - Sat 16 Mar, Artrix, Bromsgrove

**BLUE REMEMBERED HILLS** The Highbury Players present an amateur version of Dennis Potter's wartime classic, Tues 12 - Sat 16 Mar, Highbury Hall, Sutton Coldfield

**BERT'S HOUSE** New production described as a 'sea-side-splitting comedy', set in a guest house run by tight-fisted but kind-hearted Bert, Thurs 14 - Fri 15 Mar, The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

**WANTED** Gazebo Theatre present a powerful drama exploring the stories of five extraordinary women, Thurs 14 - Fri 15 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

**INDIGO GIANT** A haunting new drama inspired by Dinabandhu Mitra's trail-blazing Indigo Mirror - a play that shook colonial India, Thurs 14 - Sat 16 Mar, The Rep, Birmingham

**MADAGASCAR THE MUSICAL** Karim Zeroual (CBBC & Strictly Come Dancing) stars as King Julien in a stage show based on the Dreamworks adventure film for younger audiences, Thurs 14 - Sun 17 Mar, The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

**URINETOWN** Royal Birmingham Conservatoire presents Greg Kotis' satire, which contains adult themes and takes its inspiration from Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill, Fri 15 - Sat 16 Mar, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

**AS SHE LIKES IT** A darkly comedic explosion of multimedia, verbatim, cabaret and drag, inspired by the story of #MeToo pioneer Patricia Douglas, Sat 16 Mar, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

**THE GLASS MENAGERIE** Atri Banerjee's acclaimed production of Tennessee Williams' semi-autobiographical masterpiece, starring Geraldine Somerville (Gosford Park), Sat 16 - Sat 23 Mar, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

## Kids Theatre

**CLAYTIME** The award-winning Indefinite Articles present a play with clay for very young children, Sat 16 - Sun 17 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

## Dance

**GIOVANNI: LET ME ENTERTAIN YOU** The Strictly favourite is joined by a cast of professional dancers and West End performers for a show of 'non-stop action', Tues 12 Mar, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

**SAO PAULO DANCE COMPANY** The Brazilian dance company fuse classical ballet and Latin American dance in a programme of three works, Fri 15 - Sat 16 Mar, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

## Light Entertainment

**VAMPIRES ROCK** Steve Steinman's 'musical sensation', fusing narrative, comedy, horror and rock anthems, Mon 11 Mar, The Alexandra, Birmingham

**QUEENZ - THE SHOW WITH BALLS** Dazzling divas deliver 'a night of fun and fabulousness' with live vocals and a setlist of party pop anthems, Tues 12 Mar, The Alexandra, B'ham

**SASHA VELOUR THE BIG REVEAL LIVE SHOW** An immersive evening of drag, storytelling and live art. A special guest star and post-show book signings also feature, Tues 12 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**ROB BRYDON: A NIGHT OF SONGS & LAUGHTER** Join Rob as he shares his personal musical journey - from South Wales to Hollywood and back, Wed 13 Mar, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

**LA VOIX: THE RED AMBITION TOUR** 'Britain's funniest redhead' swings into town with her most ambitious show to date, Thurs 14 Mar, The Old Rep, Birmingham



**FORBIDDEN NIGHTS** Celebrating nine years of muscles, mayhem and over 11,000 shirt rips! Thurs 14 Mar, Lichfield Garrick

**DANIEL MARTINEZ FLAMENCO COMPANY: ANDALUCIA** Classical music meets the passion and fire of flamenco in a musical representation of the eight regions of Andalusia, Fri 15 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

**DR JOHN COOPER CLARKE** An evening with the 'original people's poet', Fri 15 Mar, The Wulfrun, The Halls, Wolverhampton

## Talks & Spoken Word

**STEVEN BARTLETT PRESENTS: THE BUSINESS & LIFE SPEAKING TOUR** Learn how to cultivate the mindset and strategy required to overcome challenges, stay focused, and turn your dreams into reality, Thurs 14 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham



**HIT THE ODE X UNISLAM SPECIAL** Performance poetry evening featuring Safia Elhillo, Yomi Sode & Bridget Hart. Bohdan Piasecki hosts, Fri 15 Mar, The Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

**ONCE, TWICE, THREE TIMES A BOROUGH!** A local-history talk by Solihull Council's archivist and local-studies



librarian, Sat 16 Mar, The Core, Solihull

**PAUL MCKENNA: SUCCESS FOR LIFE**  
Brand-new show in which the behavioural scientist uses the latest psychological techniques to help you move beyond your limitations, Sat 16 Mar, The Bradshaw Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**UNISLAM 2024** Poetry festival based around the UK & Ireland National Inter-University Poetry Slam, Sun 17 Mar, The Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome



## Events

**MUSEUM LATES: LONGBRIDGE LEGACIES**  
A special evening to celebrate the Longbridge factory, its achievements and its impact on the local community, Tues 12 Mar, British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Warks

**CHELTENHAM FESTIVAL 2024** Featuring 28 races across four days, Tues 12 - Fri 15 Mar, Cheltenham Racecourse



**YONEX ALL ENGLAND OPEN BADMINTON CHAMPIONSHIPS 2024** Bringing together the best badminton players from around the world, Tues 12 - Sun 17 Mar, Utilita Arena Birmingham

**KIDZ TO ADULTZ MIDDLE** Dedicated to children and young people with disabilities or additional needs, Thurs 14 Mar, Coventry Building Society Arena

**FASHION & EMBROIDERY** Including exclusive never-before-seen features and contributions from industry experts, Thurs 14 - Sun 17 Mar, NEC, Birmingham

**THE CREATIVE CRAFT SHOW** The UK's biggest mixed craft show, Thurs 14 - Sun 17 Mar, NEC, Birmingham

**SEWING FOR PLEASURE** Meet sewing personalities as seen on TV, chat to your favourite social-media sewing stars and marvel at catwalk displays, Thurs 14 - Sun 17 Mar, NEC, Birmingham

**BIRMINGHAM ART ENSEMBLE: POWER**  
Free drop-in performance event, Fri

15 Mar, Aston Hall, Birmingham

**RED BY NIGHT** Enjoy an evening of live entertainment, industrial demonstrations, steam action and living history, Fri 15 - Sat 16 Mar, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

**TOUCH SCREEN: ONCE UPON A TIME**  
Relaxed screening in which you will be invited to touch, smell and feel your way through a collection of colourful short films inspired by storytelling and World Book Day, Fri 15 - Sat 16 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

**DYSLEXIA SHOW** The UK's leading exhibition dedicated to dyslexia and neurodiversity, Fri 15 - Sat 16 Mar, NEC, Birmingham

**ARNOLD SPORTS FESTIVAL UK 2024**  
Bodybuilding expo boasting a record-breaking prize, Fri 15 - Sun 17 Mar, NEC, Birmingham

**AI FUTURES: BRAIN AWARENESS WEEK**  
Join researchers from the University of Birmingham's Centre for Human Brain Health (CHBH) to celebrate Brain Awareness Week 2024, Sat 16 Mar, The Exchange, Centenary Square, Birmingham

**MIDLANDS GRAND NATIONAL** Runners and riders compete for some of the most sought-after titles in the region, Sat 16 Mar, Uttoxeter Racecourse, Staffordshire

**MAGNIFICENT 7 RIDE AGAIN** An evening of top championship boxing fights, Sat 16 Mar, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

**THE MURDER OF JULIUS CASTERBROOK: A VICTORIAN MURDER MYSTERY**  
A Victorian-inspired murder-mystery night, Sat 16 Mar, West Midlands Police Museum, Birmingham

**GIN TRAINS** Sample a variety of gins whilst enjoying a scenic train journey, Sat 16 - Sun 17 Mar, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

**SPRING GIFT FAYRE** Featuring a whole host of suppliers selling local and hand-made goods at the Engine House, Sat 16 - Sun 17 Mar, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

**THE PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO SHOW**  
Check out and buy the latest cameras and accessories, learn new skills and techniques, and be inspired by top creators, Sat 16 - Tues 19 Mar, NEC, Birmingham



**PLAY UNSTOPPABLE** Design your own spirit animal, add your creation to the



Sao Paulo Dance Company - Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

Lego Flower Cart and share your best moves at the Play Unstoppable Dance Party, Sat 16 Mar - Mon 6 May, Legoland Discovery Centre, B'ham

**ANTIQUES AND COLLECTORS FAIR**  
Featuring traders from across the UK selling a wide range of items from

yesteryear, Sun 17 Mar, Himley Hall, Dudley

**AGBO RALLY** Eighty rally cars from all vintages and eras take on the stages around Weston - including the iconic watersplash! Sun 17 Mar, Weston Park, Shropshire

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**OPENING TIMES**

THURSDAY - SATURDAY - 10.00am to 4.00pm  
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SUNDAYS - 10.00am to 3.00pm  
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**ADMISSION**

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\*CHILDREN MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN ADULT

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Madison Beer - O2 Academy

## Gigs

**DAN STUART + TOM HEYMAN** Mon 18 Mar, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

**THE DUBLIN LEGENDS** Mon 18 Mar, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

**1-800 GIRLS** Tues 19 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**MARIKA HACKMAN + GIA FORD** Tues 19 Mar, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

**REBECCA WING** Tues 19 Mar, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

**JUDAS PRIEST + SAXON + URIAH HEPP** Tues 19 Mar, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

**RICHARD SHINDELL** Tues 19 Mar, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

**MASTER PEACE** Wed 20 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**CHALK** Wed 20 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**BRUM BEATLES** Wed 20 Mar, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

**KINGS HEATHENS + WILL KILLEEN** Wed 20 Mar, Red Lion Folk Club

**THE MARY WALLOPERS** Wed 20 Mar, The Wulfrun at The Halls Wolverhampton

**BROWN HORSE** Thurs 21 Mar, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

**THE COLLECTIVE** Thurs 21 Mar, The Jam House, Jewellery Qtr

**LUKAS GRAHAM** Thurs 21 Mar, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**THE NIGHTMARES + MOTH SLUT** Thurs 21 Mar, The Asylum, Hampton Street

**GUTLOCKER** Thurs 21 Mar, Subside Bar

**YONAKA + NOISY + MIMI BARKS** Thurs 21 Mar, XOYO, Digbeth

**FEBUEDER + PEM** Fri 22 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**COMMON PEOPLE** Fri 22 Mar, The Night Owl, Digbeth

**GHETTS** Fri 22 Mar, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**THE SMILE** Fri 22 Mar, O2 Academy

**THUNDER HAMMER** Fri 22 Mar, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

**COLLIDESCOPES** Fri 22 Mar, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall

**FROM THE JAM** Fri 22 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

**DAVE JONES QUINTET** Fri 22 Mar, 1000 Trades, Jewellery Quarter

**UNDER THE COVERS** Fri 22 Mar, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

**JOHN FISHELL** Sat 23 Mar, The Night Owl, Digbeth

**SI CRANSTOUN** Sat 23 Mar, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**BLEACHERS** Sat 23 Mar, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**BROKEN DRUMSTICK + ROOM 11 + THE VIOLETS**

**+ SHUTUSUP! + THE ESSENTIALS** Sat 23 Mar, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**THE STAIRS** Sat 23 Mar, O2 Academy

**DODGY + CHRIS HELME** Sat 23 Mar, O2 Academy

**MADISON BEER + JANN** Sat 23 Mar, O2 Academy

**SOUND & VISION - BOWIE TRIBUTE** Sat 23 Mar, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

**BORN OF OSIRIS + ATTILA + AVIANA + CROWN MAGNETAR** Sat 23 Mar, The Asylum, Hampton Street

**LAKE MALICE** Sat 23 Mar, The Asylum, Hampton Street

**GIPSY KINGS** Sat 23 Mar, Symphony Hall

**SIMPLE MINDS + DEL AMITRI** Sat 23 Mar, Utilita Arena B'ham

**SMALL CHANGES + MR APOLLO** Sat 23 Mar, Thimblemill Library, Bearwood, Smethwick

**LUTHER UK** Sat 23 Mar, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

**THE FATHER TEDS** Sat 23 Mar, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

**RESURRECTION MEN + THE GASLIGHT ANTHEM** Sat 23 Mar, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

**ALEIGHCIA SCOTT + JAY BLADES** Sun 24 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**THE BUS STATION LOONIES + SIDETRACKED + DOG MESS + AYSLUM + YOUTH WITHIN + FATAL DOSE** Sun 24 Mar, The Dark Horse, Moseley

**HENRY MOODIE** Sun 24 Mar, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**AND ALSO THE TREES + TONY ADAMO + TEN:TEN** Sun 24 Mar, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

**STEVE TROMANS & HOWL** Sun 24 Mar, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall

**ALASDAIR ROBERTS** Sun 24 Mar, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

## Classical Music

### QUATUOR BOZZINI: RBC STAFF WORKS

Featuring Clemens Merkel & Alissa Cheung (violins), Stéphanie Bozzini (viola) & Isabelle Bozzini (cello).

Programme comprises new and old works by RBC staff, including Seán Clancy, Joe Cutler, Kirsty Devaney, Michael Wolters and more... Mon 18 Mar, Eastside Jazz Club, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

### RBC MUSICIANS: PUTTING IT TOGETHER

Programme includes works by Stephen Sondheim, Tues 19 Mar, Recital Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

### REBECCA WING: HERITAGE

Featuring Rebecca Wing (saxophone & vocals), Leah Wing (flute), Charlie Humphrey-Lewis (trumpet), Matthew Holmes (drums), Nick Manz (piano), Amy Coates (bass) & Leo Morland (guitar), Tues 19 Mar, Centrala, Minerva Works, Birmingham

### UNIVERSITY BRASS BAND

Featuring Stuart Birnie (conductor), Wed 20 Mar, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, Birmingham

### CBSO: FAURÉ REQUIEM

Featuring Rosanne Philippens (violin), Benjamin Appl (baritone) & Alexandre Bloch (conductor). Programme also includes works by Saint-Saëns & Ravel, Thurs 21 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

### UNIVERSITY VOCAL CONSORT

Featuring Georgia Tuke (conductor), Thurs 21 Mar, The Dome, Bramall Music Building, Birmingham

### BAROQUE TO BROADWAY

Featuring Danielle de Niese (soprano - pictured) Niall O'Sullivan (trumpet), Michael Seal (conductor) & the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Fri 22 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham



### LUNCHTIME RECITAL

Featuring David Hardie (organist). Programme includes works by Bach, Reger, Brahms & Langlais, Fri 22 Mar, St Philips Cathedral, Birmingham

### GRIMETHORPE COLLIERY BAND

Featuring Rex Richardson (trumpet). Programme includes works by M Arnold, Vaughan Williams, M Gould, Bernstein & more... Fri 22 Mar, The Bradshaw Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

### BARBER LUNCHTIME CONCERT

Featuring Ryan Corbett (accordion). Programme includes works by Bach, Grieg, Viacheslav Semionov, Mozart & Victor Vlasov, Fri 22 Mar, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, Birmingham

### INSTRUMENTAL CHOIRS GALA

Featuring Christopher Hill, Thomas Wykes & Louise Akroyd (conductors). Programme includes works by K Mayne, H Beeffink, Smetana, Hermann, Back, Mancini & more... Fri 22 Mar, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, B'ham

### EBLANA STRING TRIO, WITH EMMA HALNAN

Featuring Jonathan Martindale (violin), Lucy Nolan (viola), Peggy Nolan (cello) & Emma Halnan (flute). Programme includes works by Mozart, Cras, Matthews & Viotti, Fri 22 Mar, Routh Hall, Bromsgrove School

### WOMBOURNE & DISTRICT CHORAL SOCIETY

Conducted by Edward Caine. Programme comprises Bach's Mass in B Minor, Sat 23 Mar, St John's Church, Wolverhampton

### GIPSY KINGS

Featuring Nicolas Reyes (voice). Programme includes Catalan rumba, flamenco and salsa, Sat 23 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

### BIRMINGHAM CHORAL UNION: RADIANT JOY!

Featuring Colin Baines (conductor), Darren Hogg (organ) & soloists. Programme includes works by Holst, C McDowall & Handel, Sat 23 Mar, St Paul's Church, B'ham

### ECHO RISING STARS

Featuring Sean Shibe (guitar). Programme includes works by Poulenc, Mompou, De Falla & Adés, Sun 24 Mar, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

### YOUNG COMPOSERS PROJECT: SUSTAIN

Featuring Rosalie Thomas (violin), Alex Wyatt (piano), Casper Shaw (bassoon), Noah Blythe (cornet) & Helena Bowen (harp). Programme includes works by George West, Dan Cippico & Charlie Kedge, Sun 24 Mar, The Lab, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

### CHERRY BLOSSOM CONCERT, 2024

Featuring Birmingham Contemporary Music Group. Programme includes music by Japanese composers whose work is inspired by nature, Sun 24 Mar, Oozells Square, Birmingham

## Comedy

**JESSICA FOSTEKW** Tues 19 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**VITTORIO ANGELONE** Tues 19 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**PAUL FOOT** Wed 20 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**HAL CRUTTENDEN & COMICS TBC** Wed 20 Mar, Herberts Yard, Birmingham

**COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY**



**ROBINSON, NATHAN CATON & ADAM BLOOM** Thurs 21 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**KAMIKAZE CLUB COMEDY** Thurs 21 Mar, 1000 Trades, Birmingham

**ROB AUTON** Fri 22 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**KATE LUCAS, ANDY ROBINSON, NATHAN CATON, ADAM BLOOM & MARK BITTLESTONE** Fri 22 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**ALISTAIR BARRIE, CHANTEL NASH, DANNY MCLOUGHLIN & KAREN BAYLEY** Sat 23 Mar, Rosies Nightclub, B'ham

**KATE LUCAS, ANDY ROBINSON, NATHAN CATON & ADAM BLOOM** Sat 23 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**AURIE STYLA** Sun 24 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**IAIN STIRLING** Sun 24 Mar, The Alexandra, Birmingham

## Theatre

**PETER PAN GOES WRONG** Mischief Theatre's spin on a timeless classic follows the not-entirely-competent Cornley Drama Society as they do their best to mount a production of JM Barrie's classic story, Mon 18 - Sat 23 Mar, The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

**FARM BOY** New version of Michael Morpurgo's sequel to War Horse, combining drama, storytelling and original music, Tues 19 Mar, New Oscott Village, Sutton Coldfield

**NEL'S PLACE** A new musical from Sheep Soup which examines what material things really mean to us, and how easily we can become buried by the past, Tues 19 - Wed 20 Mar, Birmingham Hippodrome

**THE TIME MACHINE - A COMEDY** Acclaimed show (very) loosely adapted from HG Wells' novel, Tues 19 - Sat 23 Mar, Lichfield Garrick

**LIFE WITH OSCAR** One-man show in which actor/filmmaker Nick Cohen assumes numerous characters while re-living his desperate Hollywood years in a tragicomic true-life Sunset Boulevard, Wed 20 - Thurs 21 Mar, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

**THE MEMORY OF WATER** Amateur version of Shelagh Stephenson's 'poignant and painfully funny comedy' about conflicting memories, life and loss, Wed 20 - Sat 23 Mar, The Blue Orange Theatre, B'ham

**PEAK STUFF** Three fast-paced and funny stories about consumer culture, Thurs 21 - Fri 22 Mar, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

**MOSQUITOES** Royal Birmingham Conservatoire Theatre Company presents Lucy Kirkwood's gripping drama, in which family politics and quantum physics collide, Thurs 21 - Sat 23 Mar, Crescent Theatre

**FIND ME** The Crescent Youth Theatre present an amateur version of Olwen Wymark's thought-provoking drama exploring the impact of living with someone suffering mental-health problems, Thurs 21 - Sat 23 Mar, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

**WAITING ROOM** Elemental theatre company present a brand-new comedy set in the Accident & Emergency department of an NHS hospital, Fri 22 - Sat 23 Mar, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

**MINORITY REPORT** Staging of Phillip K Dick's sci-fi thriller, which challenges our beliefs about justice and free will in a real-time chase through a London of the future, Fri 22 Mar - Sat 6 Apr, The Rep, Birmingham

## Kids Theatre

**JURASSIC EARTH** Meet the bravest of rangers as they introduce their herd of dinosaurs - including the world's largest walking T Rex! Sun 24 Mar, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre



## Dance

**SAMAAGAMA 2024** Embark on a cultural odyssey with Chitraleka Dance Company's student showcase, Sun 24 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

## Light Entertainment

**THE CIRCUS OF HORRORS: DR HAZES CABARET OF CURIOSITIES** Featuring sword swallows, hairculean aerialists hanging from their hair whilst suspended above the auditorium, whirlwind jugglers, twisted contortionists, voodoo acrobats, pickled people, hula-hooping sideshow showgirls and lots more... Tues 19 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**ROYAL BIRMINGHAM CONSERVATOIRE: SONGS OF INNOCENCE AND OF EXPERIENCE** Brand-new production exploring 'the turbulent paradise of William Blake's life, art and visions', Thurs 21 - Sat 23 Mar, The Old Rep, Birmingham

**TWIST AND SHOUT** Travel back to the Swinging 60s with over 40 classic



*The Circus Of Horrors: Dr Hazes Cabaret Of Curiosities - Symphony Hall*

songs performed by a live band and cast of six singers and dancers, Fri 22 Mar, Artrix, Bromsgrove

**DREAMCOAT STARS** Concert-style performance where the stars of Joseph present hits from the musicals alongside brand-new songs and arrangements, Sat 23 Mar, Artrix, Bromsgrove

## Talks & Spoken Word

**TOP HAT SPOKEN WORD OPEN MIC** Hosted by Joss Musgrove Knibb, Tues 19 Mar, Lichfield Garrick

**FEMINIST READING GROUP: CONVERSATIONS ON POSTCOLONIAL FEMINISM** Share, learn, and engage with works by influential authors including Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Audre Lorde, Sun 24 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), B'ham

**THE POST OFFICE SCANDAL - THE INSIDE STORY** Journalist & broadcaster Nick Wallis reveals even more shocking details and stories about the scandal that has gripped the nation, Sun 24 Mar, Lichfield Garrick

## Events

**MINI MOTORISTS** To celebrate British Science Week, this month's Mini Motorists will be 'fixing' push-along Minis, Mon 18 Mar, British Motor Museum, Gaydon

**NAIDEX** The UK's leading event dedicated to empowering and supporting disabled individuals, Tues 29 - Wed 20 Mar, NEC, Birmingham

**NATIONAL HOMEBUILDING & RENOVATING SHOW** Hear from inspiring speakers live on stage, get tailored advice for your project, and see, touch and compare all the latest products, Thurs 21 - Sun 24 Mar, NEC, Birmingham

**AI FUTURES: AI AND THE FUTURE OF POLICING** Hear from University of Birmingham academics about the latest AI advancements in the criminal justice system, Thurs 21 Mar, The Exchange, Centenary Square Birmingham

**PRACTICAL CLASSICS CLASSIC CAR & RESTORATION SHOW** Explore automotive history, from rustic gems to pristine classics, Fri 22 - Sun 24 Mar, NEC, Birmingham

**PIRATE TREASURE HUNT** Join Captain Careless on a swashbuckling adventure, Fri 22 Mar - Sun 21 Apr, National SEA LIFE Centre, B'ham

**VOLUNTEER OPEN DAY** Meet the team and find out about volunteering opportunities at the museum, Sat 23 Mar, Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove

**WORLD WATER DAY ACTIVITIES** Get hands-on exploring water, both as a habitat and a source of power, Sat 23 Mar, Sarehole Mill, Birmingham

**THE SPICE TRAIN** Indulge in an evening of curry with friends while travelling on the Severn Valley Railway, Sat 23 Mar, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

**GRAFTING WORKSHOP WITH FRUIT AND NUT VILLAGE** Discover the art of creating fruit trees through grafting, Sat 23 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

**THE NATIONAL OUTDOOR EXPO** Be inspired by some of the world's greatest outdoor enthusiasts, take part in a range of performance workshops, and get your adrenaline going via one of the many interactive features, Sat 23 - Sun 24 Mar, NEC, Birmingham

**SPACE, RACE AND FLY!** A STEM-based event featuring activities, shows and more, Sat 23 Mar - Sun 7 Apr, Royal Air Force Museum Midlands, Cosford

**TUCKED** Showcasing a collection of some of the UK & Europe's best car builds and highly modified show cars, Sun 24 Mar, British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Warwickshire





## RICHARD JONES

Military illusionist and *Britain's Got Talent* winner  
Friday 1 March



## BACK TO BACHARACH

Breath-taking celebration of Burt Bacharach's music  
Friday 1 March



## HENRY BLOFELD

An evening with the legendary cricket commentator  
Saturday 2 March



## THE SOUND OF SPRINGSTEEN

Celebrating 40 years since *Born in the USA's* release  
Saturday 9 March



## FAIRPORT CONVENTION

The legendary British folk-rock pioneers  
Sunday 10 March



## CASH RETURNS

Celebrating country music's most iconic couple  
Thursday 14 March



## WOMEN IN ROCK

A celebration of the greatest female rock anthems  
Friday 15 March



## THE FUREYS

St Patrick's special with the acclaimed Irish folk band  
Saturday 16 March



## AN EVENING OF BURLESQUE

A scintillating night out of sparkling entertainment  
Saturday 23 March



## JERRY SADOWITZ

Comedy tour show *Comedian, Magician, Psychopath!*  
Thursday 28 March



## RUSSELL KANE

Brand new comedy tour show *HyperActive*  
Friday 29 March



## THE STORY OF GUITAR HEROES

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# ENTERTAINMENT CANNOCK CHASE

at the PRINCE OF WALES THEATRE

## MARCH

### THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES

Sun 24 March • 7.30pm • £23.00

### ROBIN HOOD - EASTER PANTOMIME

Mon 25 March • 3pm & 7pm •  
£18, £16, £64 Family Ticket

### DUBLIN LEGENDS

Tues 26 March • 7.30pm • £26.00

### INTO THE SHADOWS

Sat 30 March • 7.30pm • £20.00



## APRIL

### GO YOUR OWN WAY

Thurs 4 April • 7.30pm • £27.00

### SHAPE OF YOU - THE MUSIC OF ED SHEERAN

Fri 5 April • 7.30pm • £22.00, Under 16s £16.00

### THE OPERA BOYS

Sat 6 April • 7.30pm • £23.00

### HELLO AGAIN - THE NEIL DIAMOND SONGBOOK

Sun 7 April • 7.30pm • £27.00

### AMBIENT NIGHT PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS MORT

Wed 10 - Thurs 11 April • 7.30pm • £16.00



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Mr Ben & The Bens - Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

## Gigs

**TOBY SEBASTIAN** Mon 25 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**CHRIS SHIFLETT** Mon 25 Mar, O2 Academy

**MICHAEL BALL** Mon 25 Mar, Symphony Hall

**MR BEN & THE BENS** Tues 26 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**PEACE OF MIND + BITTERWOOD** Tues 26 Mar, Devil's Dog, Digbeth

**WEIRD ON PURPOSE + GENEVIEVE MILES + GINGHAM + JAZZCAT** Wed 27 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**CARA DILLON** Wed 27 Mar, Symphony Hall



**CHEEKFACE** Wed 27 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**ACOUSTIC SESSIONS** Wed 27 Mar, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

**JOHN & CAROLE HOARE + CHRISTOPHER CROMPTON** Wed 27 Mar, Red Lion Folk Club

**JUSTIN HAWKINS** Wed 27 Mar, The Glee Club, Southside

**SÉAMUS ÓG** Wed 27 Mar, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

**TABLE SCRAPS** Thurs 28

Mar, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**BOOTLEG BLONDIE** Thurs 28 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**LAST RESORT** Thurs 28 Mar, Devil's Dog, Digbeth

**YOUNG ELTON** Thurs 28 Mar, The Night Owl, Digbeth

**DEADLETTER** Thurs 28 Mar, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

**SYNCOLIMA** Thurs 28 Mar, Subside Bar

**PENDULUM + SCARLXRD + SHOCKONE** Thurs 28 Mar, Resorts World Arena

**JENNIFER BOLTON** Thurs 28 Mar, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

**THE DUSTY SHOW** Thurs 28 Mar, Artrix, Bromsgrove (tickets via The Core Theatre, Solihull)

**THE SCRIBES** Fri 29 Mar, The Night Owl, Digbeth

**SHOWHAWK DUO** Fri 29 Mar, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**SAY SHE SHE** Fri 29 Mar, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

**LEWIS POOLE + PORTSIDE** Fri 29 Mar, The Flapper

**THE CORAL** Fri 29 Mar,

Lichfield Garrick

**PROTOJE** Sat 30 Mar, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**GRIFF** Sat 30 Mar, O2 Institute, Digbeth

**HAPPY MONDAYS + INSPIRAL CARPETS + STEREO MCS** Sat 30 Mar, O2 Academy

**DECOLONISE FEST** Sat 30 Mar, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

**STINKY** Sat 30 Mar, The Asylum, Hampton Street

**THE STEVIE WONDER CELEBRATION** Sat 30 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

**SLASH FEATURING MYLES KENNEDY AND THE CONSPIRATORS** Sat 30 Mar, Resorts World Arena

**THE LITTLE MIX SHOW** Sat 30 Mar, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

**THE LAST DAYS OF DISCO** Sat 30 Mar, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

**THE HIVES** Sat 30 Mar, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

**DON'T STOP BELIEVIN'** Sat 30 Mar, Lichfield Garrick

**TRAGEDY + WARD XVI** Sun 31 Mar, The Asylum, Hampton Street

**MARTI PELLOW + CASEY MCQUILLEN** Sun 31 Mar, Resorts World Arena



**THE WANDERING HEARTS** Sun 31 Mar, XOYO, Digbeth

**THUNDERCAT** Sun 31 Mar, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton



Say She She - Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

## Classical Music

**THOMAS TROTTER ORGAN**

**CONCERT** Featuring the Lichfield Cathedral Choir. Programme includes works by Handel, Byrd, Mozart, Elgar, Trotter & Lamb, Mon 25 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

**CBSO: RHAPSODY IN BLUE**

Featuring Iann Volkov (conductor) & Stewart Goodyear (piano). Programme includes works by Ives, Zappa, Lewis & Gershwin, Wed 27 Mar, Symphony Hall Birmingham

**CENTRE STAGE: CBSO STRING SEXTET** Thurs 28 Mar, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

**ROMANTIC REVIVAL ORCHESTRA**

Featuring Leo Jaffrey & Howard Skempton (conductors) alongside Royal Birmingham Conservatoire performers. Programme includes works by Chopin & Skempton, Thurs 28 Mar, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

**EX CATHEDRA: GOOD FRIDAY ST JOHN PASSION 300TH ANNIVERSARY** Featuring Jeffrey Skidmore (conductor), James Robinson (Evangelist), Themba Mvula (Jesus), Lawrence White (Pilate & Bass), Margaret Lingas & Katie Trethewey (soprano), Mercè Bruguera Abelló & Gabriella Liandu (alto), Bradley Smith (tenor) & Thomas Lowen (bass), Fri 29 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**KARL JENKINS 80TH BIRTHDAY CONCERT** Featuring Sir Karl Jenkins (conductor), the London Concert Orchestra & the Canzonella Choir. Programme comprises selected works by Jenkins, Sat 30 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**ADAM KAY** Mon 25 Mar, The Alexandra, Birmingham

**HARE OF THE DOG COMEDY** Sun 24 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

**DOM JOLY** Tues 26 Mar, Lichfield Garrick

**ALASDAIR BECKETT-KING** Wed 27 Mar, Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

**COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, PAUL TONKINSON & COMIC TBC** Thurs 28 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**REGINALD D HUNTER** Thurs 28 Mar, The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

**SCOTT BENNETT, ALI WOODS, JORDAN DUCHARME & FREDDY QUINNE** Thurs 28 Mar, Hockley Social Club, Birmingham

**MIKE COX, ANDREW MENSAH, JIN HAO LI & PAUL MOORE** Fri 29 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**TATTY MACLEOD** Fri 29 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**FRANKIE BOYLE** Fri 29 Mar, The Alexandra, Birmingham

**RUSSELL KANE** Fri 29 Mar, Stourbridge Town Hall

**ROGER MONKHOUSE, JAY NEALE, ANDY ROACH & JACK CAMPBELL** Sat 30 Mar, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

**MIKE COX, ANDREW MENSAH, PAUL TONKINSON & COMIC TBC** Sat 30 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**LEIGH FRANCIS** Sun 31 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**ROUGH WORKS: NEW MATERIAL NIGHT** Sun 31 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

**JUSTIN MOORHOUSE** Sun 31 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

## Theatre

**BOY OUT OF THE CITY** Coventry-born Declan Bennett's autobiographical debut addresses toxic masculinity, homophobia and men's mental health, Mon 25 - Thurs 28 Mar, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

**MAYBE DICK** Comic retelling of Moby Dick, Herman Melville's classic tale of revenge and retribution, Wed 27 - Thurs 28 Mar, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

**NO MORE MR NICE GUY** Award-winning gig-theatre production blending storytelling, movement, rap, RnB and sound effects, until Sat 30 Mar, The Rep, Birmingham

**TIS PITY SHE'S A WHORE** Lying Lips Theatre Company presents John Ford's story of incestuous love. Note that this performance contains partial nudity, smoking herbal or e-cigarettes, stroboscopic lighting effects, violent scenes, adult themes, drug abuse and scenes of a sexual nature, Fri 29 - Sat 30 Mar, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

**DICK WHITTINGTON** Easter pantomime based on the classic tale of Dick and his faithful feline friend who travel to London to seek their fortune, Fri 29 Mar - Sun 7 Apr, The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham



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### Kids Theatre

**EXCITING SCIENCE** Fun and educational show for audiences aged four-plus, Tues 26 Mar, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

**ZOG AND THE FLYING DOCTORS** A modern take on a classic fairytale, based on the book by Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler, Tues 26 - Thurs 28 Mar, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

**AWFUL AUNTIE LIVE ON STAGE!** Birmingham Stage Company present David Walliams' much-loved adventure featuring a small ghost, a huge owl and a very awful auntie, Thurs 28 - Sun 31 Mar, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

### Dance

**BRB: TCHAIKOVSKY CLASSICS** Featuring Birmingham Royal Ballet & Royal Ballet Sinfonia performing highlights from *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Swan Lake* and *The Nutcracker*, Thurs 28 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

**KILL THE LIGHTS** Student showcase from the Angela Beardmore School of Dance, Thurs 28 - Sat 30 Mar, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

**SNOW WHITE** Presented by Midland Theatre Ballet, Thurs 28 - Sat 30 Mar, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

### Light Entertainment

**I'M SORRY I HAVEN'T GOT A CLUE** Join host Jack Dee and a star-studded cast of comedians for an evening of inspired nonsense. Colin Sell provides piano accompaniment, Tues 26 Mar, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

**BUFFY REVAMPED** The entire 144 episodes of the hit 1990s TV show as seen through the eyes of superfan Spike - a man who knows the show inside-out... Tues 26 Mar, The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

**AN EVENING WITH THE FAST SHOW** Featuring original cast members Simon Day, Charlie Higson, John Thomson, Paul Whitehouse, Mark Williams and Arabella Weir, Thurs 28 Mar, The Alexandra Theatre, B'ham

**GRAFFITI CLASSICS - THE COMEDY STRING QUARTET** An all-singing, all-dancing musical comedy show, Thurs 28 Mar, Lichfield Garrick

**AN AUDIENCE WITH THE MANCHESTER UNITED LEGENDS** Evening of entertainment and banter, hosted by Brian McClair and Andrew Cole, Thurs 28 Mar, Wulfrun Hall at The Halls, Wolverhampton

**SHELL SUIT CHER: BELIEVE IN BINGO** Laugh, dance and singalong as Tracey Collins (aka Tina Turner Tea Lady) brings her brand-new weird and wonderful character to the stage, Fri 29 Mar, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

**DEEP FILL DOUBLE BILL** Comedy cabaret night in which Fatt Butcher hosts an evening of unfortunate music, outrageous laughs and supersize performances, Sat 30 - Sun 31 Mar, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

### Talks & Spoken Word

**SIR GEOFF HURST: THE FAREWELL TOUR** Join the football legend as he chats about his career, modern-day football and that 1966 hattrick, Wed 27 Mar, Lichfield Garrick

### Events

**AI FUTURES: CODE MASTERS' EASTER HUNT** Pick up a self-guided trail and crack the code - get it right and you'll be led to a safety deposit box featuring a tasty surprise, Mon 25 - Thurs 28 Mar, The Exchange, Centenary Square, Birmingham

**PLANT MAC'S EXHIBITION LABELS** Plant mac's seeded paper labels to watch them grow into a mini wildflower or herb garden, Tues 26 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

**PREPARING FOR EASTER** Pop in and get crafty - exploring how Christian countries prepare for Easter, Wed 27 Mar, Lichfield Cathedral

**REEL & MEAL: PETER RABBIT** Watch a showing of the 2018 feature *Peter Rabbit*, followed by a carrot-filled meal, Wed 27 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

**BRUM HIGHLIGHTS PADDLE TOUR** A chance to see Birmingham from a different perspective, Wed 27 Mar - Mon 1 Apr, Roundhouse, Birmingham

**WORKERS OF THE ROUNDHOUSE TOURS** Pop in for a free drop-in tour and get to know the curious survivor on the canal, Wed 27 Mar - Mon 1 Apr, Roundhouse, Birmingham

**COUNTRYTASTIC** Fun-filled day of indoor and outdoor activities where kids can learn all about farming and the countryside, Thurs 28 Mar, Three Counties Showground, Malvern

**INSOMNIA THE GAMING FESTIVAL** Immerse yourself in a world of non-stop gaming, with everything from the latest video games to retro classics, Thurs 28 Mar - Mon 1 Apr, NEC, Birmingham

**MONSTER JAM RAMPED UP** Featuring high-flying stunts and an all-star line-



Explore Hidden Birmingham Kayak Tour - The Roundhouse

up of monster trucks, Fri 29 - Sun 31 Mar, Utilita Arena Birmingham

**BUSTLING BIRMINGHAM KAYAK TOUR** See Birmingham from a different perspective, Fri 29 Mar - Mon 1 Apr, The Roundhouse, Birmingham

**EXPLORE HIDDEN BIRMINGHAM KAYAK TOUR** Discover Birmingham's canals, exploring areas accessible only by water, Fri 29 Mar - Mon 1 Apr, The Roundhouse, Birmingham

**MORE CANALS THAN VENICE? WALKING TOUR** Explore and learn about canal history, Sat 30 Mar, The Roundhouse, Birmingham

**BIRMINGHAM BINGO WALKING TOUR** Walking tour 'that mixes canals and comedians; Baskerville and Brutalism; and heavyweight politicians with heavy metal', Sat 30 Mar, The Roundhouse, Birmingham

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### Mozart 'Great Mass in C Minor' / JS Bach Magnificat in D BWV 243

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Demonstrating the huge influence of Bach and Handel who Mozart was studying at the time, his *Great Mass in C minor* is regarded by many to be one of his greatest works. Reflecting the pomp and solemnity which was characteristic at the time in Salzburg where it was first performed, it is a masterpiece in the realms of mass settings across the centuries. Bach's incredible *Magnificat* for so many lovers of his choral music is his finest work, and without doubt the most dramatic and intensely beautiful of any setting of this text. As virtuosic and almost acrobatic in writing for the singers, as it is tender and sublime in its beauty, it is simply Bach at his finest!

**12th April 2024 7.30pm**, Malvern Theatres, Worcestershire  
Tickets from £26. 01684 892277 [armonico.org.uk](http://armonico.org.uk)

**13th April 2024 7.30pm**, Collegiate Church of St Mary, Warwick  
Tickets from £19.50. 01926 334418 [armonico.org.uk](http://armonico.org.uk)

This performance is generously supported by Braunston Marina and Derek and Rosemary Holding



Enter now at [whatsonlive.co.uk](http://whatsonlive.co.uk) to be in with a chance of bagging one of these fabulous prizes!



**Win! A family ticket to see Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler's Charlie Cook's Favourite Book!**

Little Angel Theatre bring to life Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler's Charlie Cook's Favourite Book. Featuring clever puppetry and enchanting songs, the new production visits Coventry's Warwick Arts Centre from Thursday 4 to Sunday 7 April... We have a family ticket to give away for the 1.30pm performance on Saturday the 6th.

**Competition closes Friday 22 March**



**Win! Two tickets to see 101 Dalmatians: The Musical**

Telling the story of fashionista Cruella de Vil's attempts to swipe all the Dalmatian puppies in town to create a fabulous fur coat for herself, this hit musical visits the region direct from London's West End.

We have two tickets to give away for the show when it stops off at The Alexandra, Birmingham on Tuesday 2 July.

**Competition closes Friday 21 June**



**Win! A family ticket to Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum!**

Situated in Millennium Point, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum has four floors to explore and features more than 200 hands-on displays, historical collections and natural science specimens to enjoy. The popular visitor attraction is offering a family ticket to one lucky What's On reader - date of visit to be arranged.

**Competition closes Friday 8 March**



**Win! A family ticket to see Madagascar The Musical!**

Join in the fun as Alex, Marty and friends escape from their home in New York's Central Park Zoo and embark on a journey to the madcap world of King Julien's Madagascar.

We have a family ticket (four people) to give away for the Thursday 14 March performance at The Alexandra, Birmingham.

**Competition closes Monday 4 March**

For your chance to WIN! with What's On, visit:  
**[whatsonlive.co.uk](http://whatsonlive.co.uk)**





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