

Earlsdon Makes September Golden

No one who has been around Earlsdon in September can have missed the enormous efforts made in support of Child Cancer Awareness month under the Go Gold banner and in memory of seven year old Ben Crowther.

Organiser Hannah Talbot commented "I am so grateful for the people in the community who have come together to turn Earlsdon gold. Too many to mention individually, but I'm sure you will have noticed the efforts made by shops, businesses and individuals. Almost every shop in Earlsdon has a box of gold pins for sale raising money for Ben's named fund at Children's Cancer and Leukaemia Group (CCLG). We

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A decorated Earlsdon roundabout

Photo by Hannah Talbot

Clean Air Zone: The Fog Continues

A public meeting attended by over 100 people was held on 2 September at the Old Clarence pub in Earlsdon Ave North, organised by local resident Roy Scott. This was in response to concerns about the City Council's plans for imposition of a congestion charge around the City centre, an area which could include parts of Earlsdon.

Speakers were Councillor Jim O'Boyle (Cabinet member responsible for climate change and clean air), Dave Nellist (former councillor for St Michaels ward) and Cllr Bally Singh (Councillor for Whoberley ward).

Cllr O'Boyle referred to the fact that the UK government had lost three cases brought by ClientEarth, a group of environmental lawyers. In the most recent case heard in February 2018 the High Court ruled that the government's failure to require action from those local authorities with illegal levels of air pollution was unlawful. According to ClientEarth ministers were ordered to require local authorities to investigate and identify measures to tackle illegal levels of pollution in thirty three towns and cities as soon as possible. This number was later increased to forty five. Coventry City Council submitted a plan to the government identifying particular issues (for example pre-2016 diesel fuelled vehicles) and

particular problem areas: Holyhead Rd and Ball Hill. However this plan was rejected and the Council was told it had to introduce a Clean Air Zone i.e. an area where polluting vehicles would have to pay a charge in order to drive through. As Coventry is a radial city this means the CAZ would cover everything within the ring road and indeed beyond, including Spon End and parts of Earlsdon. Cllr O'Boyle said the local authority has completely rejected this idea and has been presenting alternative proposals. These include changing traffic junctions, removing traffic lights (pollution is much worse when vehicles are stationary) and increasing the use of electric

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A Thoroughly Modern Musician

Talented Earlsdon based musician Bella Martin-Williams is building a considerable online following and is also making an impression in live gigs after taking the decision to devote all her time to music.



Bella Martin-Williams.

Photo by Michelle Tennison

Her presence is developing via a dedicated Facebook page, Instagram and her own YouTube channel, the latter having recently reached the level of subscribers needed to personalise it. She is aware from the online response that her fanbase is growing not only locally but across the UK and internationally, notably in the US and Sweden. "I'm not sure why Sweden in particular," Bella admits, "but it may be down to a cover I did of a Swedish artist's song!"

As a solo performer Bella is blessed with strong vocals and plays keyboards as her main instrument. The videos she posts are straightforward but effective presentations of her at the keyboard, performing 'as live' with minimal editing. She may look to elaborate on this style of video post eventually but for the time being finds it the best way to make herself known without the cost and time involved in making studio standard recordings.

She describes her style as a mixture of classic jazz and modern pop - her online posts include covers of songs from such diverse artists as Ella Fitzgerald and Billy Holiday at one end of the spectrum to Beyoncé and Adele at the other. Her classically trained voice works well across this wide range of material and her formal musical education gives her

the basis to make the right decisions about the technicalities: selecting the right key for her vocal range and the ability to make her own arrangements to suit her style. "There is no point covering other people's material unless you can bring something new to it," she says.

Beyond the cover versions, Bella is also looking to write her own material but confesses to "struggling with the lyrics". However, unlike previous generations of musicians, who would have relied on a small ad in the NME or Melody Maker to find the right collaborator, there is a wealth of potential contacts in the digital world and perhaps Bella's ideal working partner is amongst them.

In addition to her solo work Bella sings and plays with a jazz band, Bella and the Beamers, and is developing a new musical relationship with guitarist Ross Harrison. She also appears live at so-called 'jazz jams', at various West Midlands and Warwickshire venues including Drapers in Coventry city centre. These are a more structured progression from open mic nights, where musicians form impromptu line ups to perform live with no rehearsal, a 'challenging' environment to work in. Bella has found these different ways of performing a good form of discipline and musical education, learning to improvise and adapt whilst acquiring a substantial repertoire from her older Beamer bandmates.

Where to from here? Bella has already made the decision to go into music full time, saying "If you don't fully commit you won't ever know what you might have achieved and I don't want to end up with any regrets".

It is a brave move in an uncertain world - ECHO wishes Bella every success and we will follow her progress with interest.

For more information about Bella and to hear and see her work go to:
Facebook: www.facebook.com/bellamwmusic/
YouTube: search for Bella Martin-Williams
Website: www.bellamwmusic.com

The Albany Theatre



The Albany Theatre celebrates the bicentenary of the birth of Coventry's famous resident George Eliot with a look at her life, locations and works, across three events during October. This month also sees children's shows, drama, dance and a sportsman's memoirs.

Scamp Theatre, the team behind *Stick Man* (pictured above right) presents the best wedding ever in Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler's *The Scarecrows' Wedding*, which calls at the Albany Theatre on 3 and 4 October. Betty O'Barley and Harry O'Hay are excellent scarecrows. Their wedding plans are all falling into place until Harry leaves Betty's side and the devilishly smooth Reginald Rake tries to take Harry's place. Will Harry make it back in time to save their special day?

Coventry Photographic Society stages its debut exhibition, *The George Eliot Connection* in collaboration with the George Eliot Fellowship, as part of the author's bicentenary. Six out of George Eliot's eight novels were set in the Midlands and draw on stories she heard and characters she knew in and around North Warwickshire. Her fiction gave her imagination the chance to live again in the beautiful countryside she knew and loved and to dip back into what she later called 'the memory of that warm little nest where my affections were fledged'. The exhibition displays copies of photographs from 1919 alongside contemporary images taken in those same locations during 2019 by society members, to produce an insightful and fascinating look at the local places that informed Eliot's novels. The free exhibition is open from 7 to 26 October during the theatre's opening hours, 10am to 5pm.

L Frank Baum's timeless tale *The Wizard of Oz* is told through the magic of classical dance in a full-length, two-act ballet adaptation on 11 October, when Ballet Theatre UK returns to the Albany. Join Dorothy and her dog Toto, Scarecrow, Tin



Man, and Lion as they follow the Yellow Brick Road in search of the wonderful Wizard who will help Dorothy to find her way home. Set to a score that brings the story to life, this family friendly show is the perfect way to introduce children to classical ballet. The production features beautiful backdrops, stunning theatrical sets and costumes to evoke WW Denslow's iconic sketches from the original 1900 novel.

On 16 and 17 October, there's a unique opportunity to enjoy Margaret Eddershaw's compelling and evocative verse drama *From George to George*, based on George Eliot's relationship with George Lewes. This entrancing and informative one-woman tour-de-force is based on Eliot's fiction, poetry, letters, journals and biographies and takes the form of a dreamlike dialogue that is at once magical, warm, articulate and poetic. All proceeds from the show will be donated to Ibba Girls' School, South Sudan – see friendsofibba.org for details.

Silas Marner, George Eliot's great Victorian epic novel, is brought to the stage on 18 and 19 October by the acclaimed Conn Artists Theatre Company. Wrongfully condemned and outcast from society, a poor weaver, eaten up with bitterness and anger, becomes a doomed miser and recluse, until he is forced to take in a young orphan girl. Their mutual friendship leads to joy, love and his redemption. Set in the early years of the 19th Century, this heart-wrenching yet uplifting story is performed by an ensemble cast and accompanied by music and songs of the period.

First published in 1969, Eric Carle's children's story *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* has sold more than 43 million copies worldwide and delighted many more young readers. Eric's books have captivated readers with colourful hand painted tissue paper collage illustrations and distinctively simple stories,

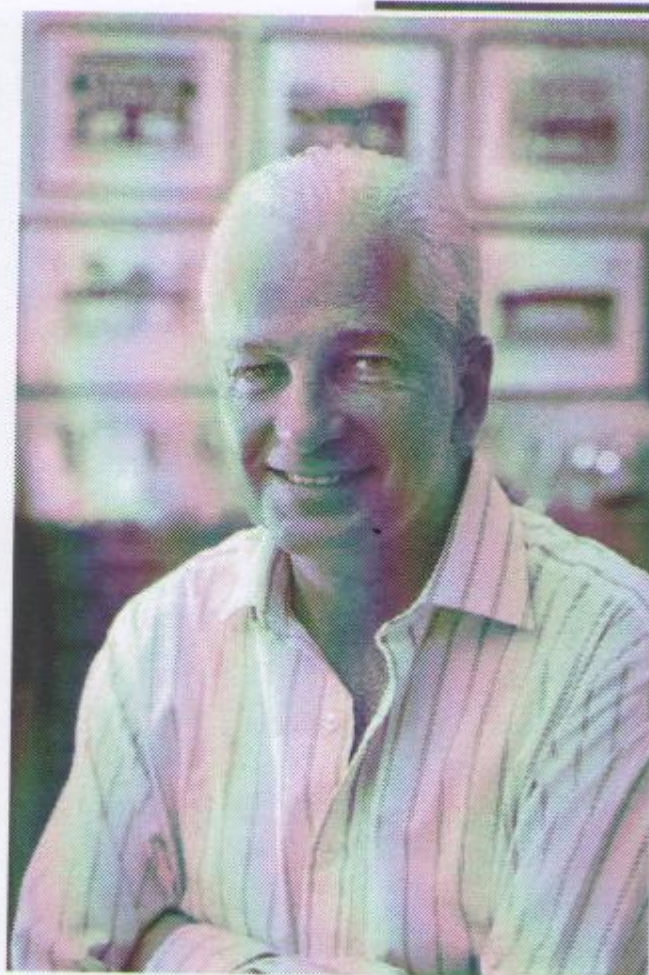
introducing children to a bigger, brighter world. The critically acclaimed *The Very Hungry Caterpillar Show*, on 22 October, features a menagerie of 75 lovable puppets in a faithful adaptation of four of the author's stories: *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What do You See?*, *10 Little Rubber Ducks*, *The Very Lonely Firefly* and in celebration of 50 years, the famous *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*.

Set in a library full of books and stories, Michael Morpurgo's *I Believe in Unicorns* tells a magical tale of the power of books and the bravery of a young boy called Tomas. Tomas hates reading and school but his world is turned upside down the day he meets the Unicorn Lady. You are challenged not to believe in unicorns after joining Tomas' spellbinding journey in an enchanting and interactive, award-winning production to spark the imagination on 24 October.

Legendary former England cricket captain David Gower (pictured above right) visits the Albany on 26 October to share his thoughts and anecdotes from a lifetime spent playing world class sport. Often described as one of the most stylish left handed batsmen, Gower will tell tales from his time captaining the national team, victory in the Ashes and just what went on flying that Tiger Moth in Queensland. Witty, entertaining and personable, catch *David Gower: on the Front Foot* on 26 October.

Enjoy a free musical celebration of 75 years of the world's first twin cities in *Volgograd/Coventry - Twin Cities*, an exciting performance of traditional Russian dance, music and song on 27 October. Performances include Russian folk and ballet from children's dance company Volzhanochka, joined by local schools, composer/pianist Derek Nisbet, violinist Albert Zhmaev, pianist/conductor Yuri Ilinov and acclaimed soprano Yana Besyadynskaya.

Star of *Red Dwarf*, *Death in Paradise* and *Strictly Come Dancing* Danny John-Jules brings his tribute to Sammy Davies Jr, *I've Gotta Be Me* to Coventry on 30 October. Danny will be singing some of Sammy's best-known hits and performing slick dance routines, while telling the compelling story of the world's greatest all-round entertainer. This musical and visual delight follows the almost



unbelievable life of the coolest cat ever, leaving you feeling entertained but most of all enlightened.

There's another Michael Morpurgo story on 31 October, this time for older children. The emotive and poignant tale of love, loss, friendship and war *Private Peaceful* recalls the life of Private Tommo Peaceful, a young First World War soldier awaiting the firing squad at dawn. During his final night, he looks back at his short but joyful past: his exciting first days at school; the accident in the forest that killed his father; his adventures with Molly, the love of his life; and the battles and injustices of war that brought him to the front line. This enthralling and deftly dramatic adaptation of Morpurgo's novel was said by the Sunday Herald to be "as moving as the poetry of Wilfred Owen and as painfully memorable as white-hot shrapnel."

Tickets for these shows can be bought in person from the Albany Theatre box office (Monday to Saturday between 10.30am and 1.30pm and one hour before performances start), by phone (7699 8964) or via the theatre's website at albanytheatre.co.uk.