

Must see theatre this January

From intimate dinner theatre to grandiose rock operas and cult musicals, Edinburgh's theatreland roars into 2025 like a Bat Out Of Hell ready to do the Time Warp.

Welcome to the first Must See Theatre of 2025, I hope I find you ready for another exciting year of theatre... Moulin Rouge, Dear Evan Hansen, Tina!, Ghost Stories and Quadrophenia: A Mod Ballet are all heading to the capital for the first time, while old favourites such as Mary Poppins, Warhorse and Mamma Mia! are returning.

There's certainly an amazing choice with something for everyone and it all starts right here and now.

In the past, come January, Edinburgh's theatres have often allowed themselves a period of respite after heavy festive schedules. I can remember some years when the c many happily remained dark until February. Not anymore, well not as far as The Playhouse and Royal Lyceum are concerned anyway; the former hits the ground running with two popular rock musicals while the latter looks to the Bard to attract audiences.

Over at Greenside Place, no sooner has Donny Osmond unbuckled his gold tartan kilt for the last time, than the cast of Bat Out Of Hell (6-11 January) arrive to open a brand new UK tour of the popular rock opera that showcases the music of Jim Stienman, songs that were all hits for Meatloaf. If you saw Bat Out Of Hell on its last visit to The Playhouse, then the cast will be familiar, with three returning leads, albeit in a production that will look very different.

The piece still tells the story of Strat, the forever young leader of a rebellious gang, The Lost, as he falls in love with Raven, the beautiful daughter of Falco, the tyrannical ruler of Obsidian. This time around, however, it will be performed on sprawling multi-level platforms set to transport audiences from Raven's bedroom to the underground world of The Lost and beyond, with show producers promising 'a visual feast that pushes the boundaries of live theatre'.

Reprising their roles for this 'epic' production will be Glenn Adamson, Sharon Sexton and Rob Fowler as Strat, Sloane, and Falco, respectively. They will be joined by Katie Tonkinson as Raven for an evening of rock anthems including, I'd Do Anything For Love (But I Won't Do That), Paradise By The Dashboard Light, Two Out of Three Ain't Bad, Dead Ringer For Love, and, of course, Bat Out of Hell. All will be delivered with the backing of a live, heart-pounding, powerhouse eight-piece band, so, altogether now, 'The sirens are screaming, and the fires are howling...' Only, don't sing along on the night.

Running time 2 Hours 40 Minutes including interval. Tickets £15 - £84

from <https://www.atgtickets.com/shows/bat-out-of-hell/edinburgh-playhouse/calendar/2025-01-06>



Glenn Adamson as Strat

Richard O'Brien's cult hit musical, *The Rocky Horror Show* (20-25 January), keeps The Playhouse rocking later in the month as Jason Donovan returns to the role of Frank N Furter a quarter of a century after he first donned a basque and fishnets. How does he feel about that? Well, you can find out on pages 10 and 11 of our January paper where the man himself talks to *The Edinburgh Reporter*.

The Rocky Horror Show, now in its 52nd year, is the outrageously interactive tale of two young, all American sweethearts, Brad and Janet, who find themselves thrown into an unexpected voyage of discovery when a tyre on their car blows out in the middle of a storm, in the middle of nowhere. Seeking help at a nearby castle, they find themselves thrust into the debauched realm of cross-dressing alien scientist, Dr Frank N Furter and his beautiful creation, Rocky. Will they come out of their adventure untainted? Of course, they won't.

Another musical with a well known soundtrack, expect to hear

Science Fiction, Sweet Transvestite, Toucha Toucha Touch Me and don't forget to be upstanding for The Time Warp. And remember, don't dream it, be it!

Running time 2 Hours including interval. Tickets £15-£74 <https://www.atgtickets.com/shows/the-rocky-horror-show/edinburgh-playhouse/calendar/2025-01-20>

A week later the Royal Lyceum springs back into life with a very special production of The Merchant Of Venice (22 January-15 February), starring two-time Drama Desk Award winner John Douglas Thompson as Shylock, alongside a diverse company that 'evokes a deeply stratified Venice' reflecting the 'grievously fractured world' we live in today.

The New Audience production of William Shakespeare's play about corrosive bigotry and blinding vengeance is poised at the radioactive intersection of race, class and religion in director Arin Arbus's production. A mediaeval centre of trade and an early mercantile state, Venice is often considered a birthplace of capitalism. "Perhaps not coincidentally," notes Arbus, "it's also the birthplace of the original ghetto."

Within the world of Shakespeare's predominantly Christian Venice, Shylock is treated as a second-class citizen or worse. Thompson, says, "Shylock is, in my mind, a proxy for the other, if you will. Whether that other is Black, whether that other is immigrant, whether that other is based upon gender, whether that other is based upon sex, whether that other is based upon religion, culture...Shylock, for me, represents all those others. And I feel that we do live in this world where large groups of people, different people, are being persecuted for their differences. And this allows me on some activist level, to speak to that as an actor."

Running time 2 Hours 30 Minutes plus 20 minute interval. Tickets £18-£38 <https://lyceum.org.uk/events/the-merchant-of-venice#dates-and-times>



Now, if you fancy your theatre with something a bit more substantial than a pie or a pint, Dine on Cambridge Street could have just the answer for you throughout January – Dinner

Theatre. It's a concept still somewhat of rarity in Edinburgh unlike other cities where food and entertainment often go hand in hand. Dine, which you will find above The Traverse, has been righting that wrong for the past seven years and at the start of 2025 has a number of theatrical presentations, each preceded by a three course meal from the kitchen of Michelin Chef, Stuart Muir.

On Monday 13 and Tuesday 14 January, there's another chance to enjoy an intimate, post-dinner performance of my very own smash hit Fringe show, I Ran With The Gang: A Tribute to Original Bay City Roller, Alan Longmuir. Look out your tartan and get ready to sing along to old favourites like Bye Bye Baby, Summerlove Sensation and Shanglang, having watched Alan's story brought to life by a company of three actors. I Ran With The Gang's last three visits to Dine sold out quickly, so don't hesitate.



The following week, on Monday 20 and Tuesday 21, Keith Jack is

back. Yes, Dalkeith's very own star of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat always packs them in with his one-man show when he visits Dine. Again, a three-course meal is followed by an up close and personal performance of much loved show tunes courtesy of the popular Any Dream Will Do finalist.

Bringing the January season to a close, Edinburgh's very own Master of the Musicals, Les Miserables and West End legend Jeff Leyton, returns for three evenings of musical theatre classics, from 27-29 January. Dine musical theatre evenings usually sell out, so book now to avoid disappointment.

Tickets, *various*
packages, <https://dine-edinburghevents.giftpro.co.uk>

Finally, if you're escaping to London this month and looking for something timely and powerful, check out Firebird (9 January-9 February) at London's King's Head Theatre. Drawing on a true-life Cold War story, Firebird, a new play by Richard Hough based on the memoir by Sergey Fetisov and screenplay by Peeter Rebane and Tom Prior, follows a handsome, soulful young soldier who embarks on a clandestine affair with a charismatic fighter pilot on an Air Force Base in Soviet-occupied Estonia at the height of 1970s Communist rule.

Starring Theo Walker and Robert Eades, the story comes to the stage for the first time after an acclaimed multi award-winning 2021 film version, and the publication of the English translation of the original memoir.

Producer James Seabright, said: "I'm excited to be marking the first birthday of the new King's Head Theatre with the world premiere stage version of Firebird, which won such widespread acclaim as a film that I was delighted to secure the stage rights, allowing me to commission this adaptation by Richard Hough. His play chillingly evokes the Soviet Union in the Cold War, in a powerful and moving true story of forbidden gay love

brought to life by a cast of four in Owen Lewis' production."

Running time TBC. *Tickets*
£10-£32.50 <https://kingsheadtheatre.com/whats-on/firebird>

As ever, until next month's spread, you can keep up to date with all my theatre news, views and reviews at www.mustseetheatre.com

Until February, happy theatre going.

Liam



The cast of Firebird