

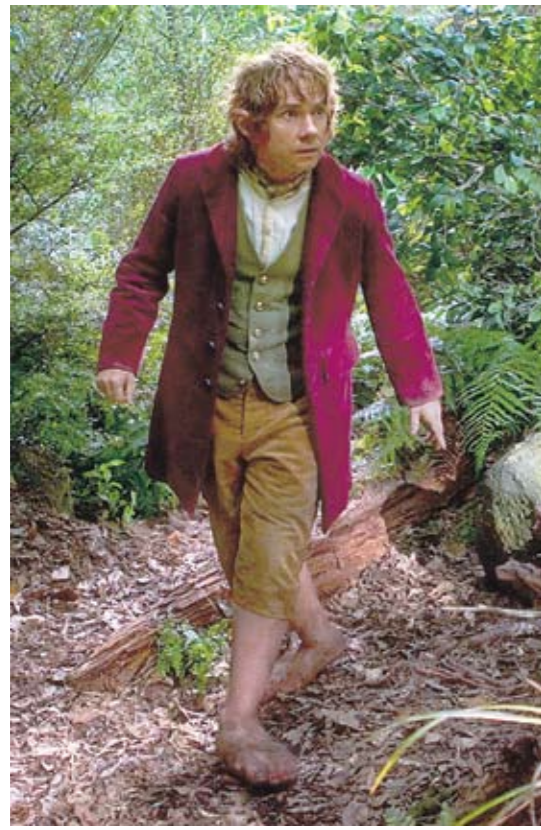
The Observer's critics pick the season's highlights

## DECEMBER

1

### FILM THE HOBBIT: AN UNEXPECTED JOURNEY

Well, not so very unexpected. Every move has been tracked by fanboys, through casting Martin Freeman as Bilbo and Benedict Cumberbatch as the dragon Smaug to the return of the king, Peter Jackson, to take over directing from Guillermo del Toro. But Middle-earth (or, as it's sometimes known, New Zealand) is back for the next three Christmases.



3

### POP SCOTT WALKER

The avant-garde Walker Brother returns with his first album since 2006's *The Drift*. Not for the faint-hearted, *Bish Bosch* finds the former romantic hero deep in dystopian territory, at once sonorous and rigorous.

### CLASSICAL H7STERIA

World premiere of Jocelyn Pook's *Hearing Voices* and a makeover of Muse's *Hysteria* (I Want It Now) in centenary celebration of Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*. BBC Concert Orchestra, Queen Elizabeth Hall, London.

4

### THEATRE JULIUS CAESAR

Phyllida Lloyd, returning to theatre after *The Iron Lady*, directs an all-female cast at the Donmar, with Frances Barber playing Caesar, Jenny Jules as Cassius and Harriet Walter as Brutus.

### DANCE MATTHEW BOURNE'S SLEEPING BEAUTY

The master of the dance musical completes his Tchaikovsky trilogy with the gothic tale of Aurora and a love beyond time. Sadler's Wells, London, to 26 January.

5



### THEATRE HELLO, DOLLY!

Janie Dee takes the lead role in Paul Kerryson's production of the 1964 hit, featuring music and lyrics by Jerry Herman, who also wrote *La Cage aux Folles*, *Mack and Mabel* and *Mame*. Curve, Leicester, until 12 January.

7

### POP THE BLACK KEYS

Before finally going overground with last year's raved-about *El Camino* album, Ohio duo the Black Keys had been touring extensively for a decade, honing their excellent live shows. Having stepped up to arenas with ease, their latest UK tour kicks off in Newcastle. Metro Radio Arena, Newcastle and touring.

10

### THEATRE PRIVATES ON PARADE

The Michael Grandage Company opens a season of five plays at the Noël Coward, London. Simon Russell Beale is the cross-dressing Captain.



11



### THEATRE VIVA FOREVER!

Spice Girls songs provide the music. A TV talent show is the starting point of the plot. The script has been written by Jennifer Saunders — her first West End musical. Piccadilly theatre, London.

12

### THEATRE THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS

Now a full decade on from its premiere, William Tuckett's larky version of Kenneth Graham's bucolic tale, with libretto by Andrew Motion, is an established Christmas treat. Linbury Studio theatre, Royal Opera House, London, until 5 January.

13

### CLASSICAL FAIRFIELD HALLS AT 50

London Mozart Players perform Britten's *Les Illuminations* with soprano Sally Matthews, and symphonies by Mozart and Schubert. Conductor Gerard Korsten. Fairfield Halls, Croydon.

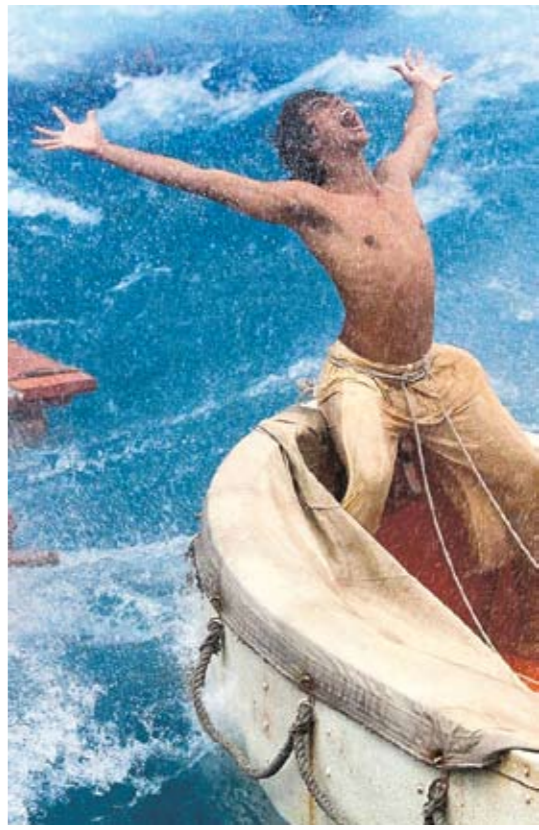
### THEATRE HANSEL AND GRETEL

Katie Mitchell directs Lucy Kirkwood's script. Based on the Brothers Grimm story, the play has puppets designed by Toby Ollé, while the human cast includes Ruby Bentall. Cottesloe, London until 26 January.

15

### ART FROM DEATH TO DEATH

Masterpieces from the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art and the Daskalopoulos collection. Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, until 8 September.



20

### DANCE BOING!

On Christmas Eve, Wilkie and Joel are too excited to sleep. Breakdance meets comedy in this acclaimed children's show. Lillian Baylis Studio, Sadler's Wells, London, until 31 December.

### FILM LIFE OF PI

Ang Lee films the unfilmable: the Booker-winning Yann Martel novel about a boy stranded at sea on a lifeboat with, eventually, just a (crouching?) tiger called Richard Parker for company.



22

### CLASSICAL BACH'S CHRISTMAS ORATORIO

Highlight of a Christmas festival at St John's, Smith Square, London, with the choir of Trinity College Cambridge and Stephen Layton conducting the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment.

## JANUARY

11

### FILM LES MISÉRABLES

Tom Hooper follows *The King's Speech* with an epic adaptation of the Bouffalé-Schönberg musical. The USP is that Hugh Jackman (Valjean), Russell Crowe (Javert), Anne Hathaway, et al recorded their vocals live during takes.



### THEATRE OLD TIMES

Kristin Scott Thomas and Lia Williams alternate roles in Harold Pinter's play. Rufus Sewell is their man. Harold Pinter theatre, London, until 6 April.

15

### POP KENDRICK LAMAR

Hot new US rapper Lamar embarks on his first headline tour of the UK — accompanied, we hope, by a hologram of Tupac Shakur, as featured at last summer's Coachella festival. Newcastle's O2 Academy, and touring.



### CLASSICAL OTELLO

Opera North marks the 200th anniversary of Verdi's birth with a new production by Tim Albery conducted by music director Richard Farnes. Grand theatre, Leeds, then touring Salford, Belfast, Nottingham and Newcastle until 23 March.

17

### CLASSICAL THE MINOTAUR

Harrison Birtwistle's epic version of an ancient myth returns with John Tomlinson unmissable in the title role and Christine Rice as Ariadne, conducted by Ryan Wigglesworth. Royal Opera House, London, until 28 January.



18

### FILM THE SESSIONS

Bravely physical performances from John Hawkes and Helen Hunt power the Sundance festival prize-winning story of polo victim and poet Mark O'Brien, who hires a "sex surrogate" to lose his virginity. Also out today: Tarantino's hotly anticipated *Django Unchained*.

### POP ALT-J

Mercury prize-winners Alt-J continue to celebrate their panel validation with a pair of sold-out gigs at the O2 Shepherd's Bush Empire, London, tonight and tomorrow.

19

### CLASSICAL THE REST IS NOISE

The start of the Southbank Centre's year-long "soundtrack of the 20th century" festival, inspired by the book by Alex Ross. Opening the event are the London Philharmonic Orchestra and soprano Karita Mattila in an all-Richard Strauss programme. Royal Festival Hall, London, until 9 June.

21

### DANCE THE OLD KING

In a new production by Ballets C de la B, with choreography by Alain Platel, a lost soul undertakes a harsh interior journey in search of his humanity. Linbury theatre, Royal Opera House, London, until 23 January.

23

### THEATRE QUARTERMAINE'S TERMS

Rowan Atkinson makes his first appearance in a play for almost 25 years. He stars at Wyndham's theatre, London, alongside Conleth Hill and Will Keen in Simon Gray's tragicomedy. Richard Eyre directs. Until 13 April.

25

### FILM LINCOLN

Daniel Day-Lewis grows whiskers to play the icon of American political thought battling to bring an end to slavery, under the direction of Steven Spielberg and the music of John Williams. Sally Field, David Strathairn and Tommy Lee Jones co-star.



26

### ART MANET: PORTRAYING LIFE

The blockbuster of the year and the first British show ever to focus on the portraits of this archetypal modern master, with more than 50 works. Royal Academy of Arts, London, until 14 April.

28

### THEATRE IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE END

Dreamthinkspeak's promenade production weaves through underground passages, using film, installation and mechanical engineering. Somers House, London, until 30 March.



30

### ART SCHWITTERS IN BRITAIN

This exhibition follows the career of the German dadaist Kurt Schwitters from his escape to Britain in 1940 to his death in Cumbria, focusing on his collages and assemblages incorporating every conceivable material. Tate Britain, London, until 12 May.

### LIGHT SHOW

Neon sculptures, optical illusions, atmospheric shadows and fluorescent installations: from Dan Flavin to Olafur Eliasson. Hayward Gallery, London, until 28 April.

31

### POP JANE BIRKIN

The Japanese tsunami feels like a long time ago, but the suffering continues. Rescheduled from last October, Birkin plays the music of her former partner, Serge Gainsbourg, in aid of Japanese tsunami victims. Cadogan Hall, London.

### THEATRE A LIFE OF GALILEO

Mark Ravenhill has written a new translation of Brecht's play. It will be performed, with Ian McDiarmid in the lead, at the Swan in Stratford-upon-Avon, until 30 March.

## FEBRUARY

1

### DESIGN SHARD VIEWING GALLERY

You've probably seen Britain's tallest building from the outside. Now you'll be able to get the view from its high-level viewing gallery, a panorama that takes in the whole of Greater London and, on a clear day, Southend.

### FILM HITCHCOCK

The relationship between Alfred Hitchcock (Anthony Hopkins) and his wife Alma (Helen Mirren) as they fight to get *Psycho* made.



2

### POP JAKE BUGG

The hardworking troubadour tours throughout February. O2 Academy Sheffield tonight.

4



### CLASSICAL EUGENE ONEGIN

A new production of Tchaikovsky's masterwork by Royal Opera House head of opera Kasper Holten in his house directorial debut, with Simon Keenlyside in the title role. Royal Opera House, London, until 20 February.

7

### ART MAN RAY PORTRAITS

This first major retrospective of the artist's photographic work is a snapshot of an art era as well as an exploration of Man Ray's pioneering use of solarisation and early colour. National Portrait Gallery, London, until 27 May.

### THEATRE PLAYING CARDS 1: SPADES

The first of four Robert Lepage plays based on a deck of cards. Set in Las Vegas in 2003, this one looks at war. Roundhouse, London, until 2 March.

8

### CLASSICAL LULU

Marie Arnet stars in Welsh National Opera's new staging of Berg's last masterpiece, directed by David Pountney. Millennium Centre, Cardiff, then touring Birmingham, Llandudno, Southampton, Milton Keynes and Plymouth, until 2 April.



12

### POP AZEALIA BANKS

The Brooklyn rapper's debut album, *Broke With Expensive Taste*, finally comes out after some delay. Expect more fruity takeaways in the style of her killer single, 212, as approved by Sam Cam.



14

### FILM THIS IS 40

As it's a Judd Apatow movie, this should be the big comedy hit of the year: a sort-of sequel to *Knocked Up*, with Paul Rudd and Leslie Mann (Apatow's real-life wife) reprising their characters of Pete and Debbie, coping with family, jobs and daughters (again, Apatow's own). Watch out for Albert Brooks and John Lithgow as respective fathers-in-law.

15

### THEATRE THE MISANTHROPE

After the success of his versions of *Tartuffe* and *The Hypochondriac*, Roger McGough now adapts a third Molière comedy. It runs at Liverpool Playhouse until 9 March, then tours.

### TRELAWNY OF THE WELLS

Joe Wright — director of *Anna Karenina* — makes his theatre debut at the Donmar, where he directs Arthur Wing Pinero's affectionate 1898 tribute to the Victorians stage. Donmar, London, until 13 April.

21

### ART LICHTENSTEIN: A RETROSPECTIVE

The most popular of all the pop artists. The show will include 125 major works, from *Wham! to I Know How You Must Feel, Brad*, in collaboration with US museums. Tate Modern, London, until 27 May.

### POP GIRLS ALoud

How has it been 10 years? Possibly the best pop talent-show outfit to date. Girls Aloud park the TV careers and the solo records and reunite for a monster spring tour. Metro Radio Arena, Newcastle, tonight and touring.

22

### DANCE ROYAL BALLET TRIPLE BILL

Balanchine's *Apollo*, a new Christopher Wheeldon ballet and the world premiere of Alexei Ratmansky's first creation for a British company. A hot ticket. Royal Opera House, London.



23

### ART RB KITA J: OBSESSIONS

The first major retrospective in 20 years for RB Kitaj, one of the most significant British painters of the postwar era. Pallant House Gallery, Chichester, until 16 June.



24

### FILM ACADEMY AWARDS

And the winner is... Seth MacFarlane. *The Family Guy* creator, director of hit comedy *Ted* and noted big-band crooner of the American songbook, seems the first natural fit for Oscars host since Billy Crystal. MacFarlane is able to combine old-school showbiz with edgy, foul-mouthed humour and, most importantly, get away with it.



25

### POP JOHNNY MARR

After stints in the Healers, the Cibs, Modest Mouse, film-scoring, remastering and various other part-time assignments, the former Smiths guitarist Johnny Marr finally gets around to releasing a shimmering debut solo album.

