

Beverley Knight drops into Arena Theatre to watch Wolverhampton Youth Music Theatre - in pictures and video

By [Marion Brennan](#) | [Wolverhampton](#) | [Entertainment](#) | Published: Sep 7, 2017

Queen of soul Beverley Knight lit up a city theatre when she dropped in on an am-dram show by the theatre group which helped set her on the path to stardom.



The singer was at the Arena Theatre in the city centre for the first night of Wolverhampton Youth Music Theatre's production of the musical Memphis. She had her picture taken with the cast, including Brittany Jarman-Watson, who was playing Felicia Farrell, the same role the 44-year-old star played to great critical acclaim in the West End three years ago.

And she brought with her a message from David Bryan, keyboard player with the rock band Bon Jovi, who wrote all the music and lyrics to the show, which is based on the early days of rock and roll when racial prejudice was rife in America. Holding up her phone, she played them a short video message in which the musician, speaking from his home in New Jersey, America, told them: "All you kids in Wolverhampton - good luck tonight."

Beverley, whose niece Abi Clayton was doing hair and make-up for the show, said: "He was so chuffed when I phoned him and told him you guys were doing Memphis. He's a massive rock star and the fact he even had time to send a message is amazing. " She told the cast: "I'm so excited, it's ridiculous. I'm so proud you are doing Memphis. It's not just the most amazing show, it's an important show because a lot of the issues that you will be portraying are actually going on in the streets as we speak, especially in America. "Have the best time. Everyone is in your corner. Even people who have never been to Wolverhampton, including all the West End cast of Memphis, are massively behind you." Speaking to the Express & Star, the former Highfields School pupil said taking part in amateur dramatics when she was younger helped to shape her own stage performances. "The help it gave me is immeasurable. Any chance you get to stand on a stage and showcase your skills, you grab it, because it's always going to be helpful. That experience of being on a stage for me was invaluable." She added: "I'm here because I think it's important to come back to where it started for you and get behind the kids and help push them up the hill."

The star is looking forward to seeing more of her family and her home town when she returns to the Midlands at Christmas for a panto run at the Birmingham Hippodrome. She said: "Wolverhampton made me. I was born here, and I'm proud that I was born here. My dad came here in 1959, and my mum in 1964, I was raised and moulded here. Every facet of the way my life has gone, the directions in which my life had turned, is because of this place.

"People say I'm a Londoner now. No I'm not, I'm absolutely Wolverhampton. I live in London but when I say I'm going home, I'm talking about Wolverhampton."

