

A Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance media item:

Splash-Dance!

This week, two best friends from Hartlepool took part in an exclusive aqua workshop at Billingham Forum swimming pool as part of the 52nd Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance.

Heidi Day and Jessie Laking, both aged 11, attended the two-hour water based dance workshop run by Balbir Singh Dance Company; in conjunction with a show that will open this year's festival on Saturday 13th August entitled "Synchronised".

The workshops were open to people of all ages with varied dance and swimming abilities. It gave attendees the chance to get involved with the Festival by learning a section of the performance [Synchronised] and ultimately become an integrated member of the cast alongside the professional dancers and swimmers.

The two workshops offered people the chance to experience a special insight into the wonderful world of contemporary movement, Classical Indian Dance and water based activities.

"Synchronised" is a stunning show that will offer audiences a dance, synchronised swimming and live music spectacular. The one-off event pays homage to Busby Berkeley's legendary Hollywood 'water musicals' of the 1940s and 50s with an influence of traditional North Indian Kathak dance. It was originally commissioned for the London 2012 Olympic Games. It will open the Festival on Saturday 13th August (5.30pm).

Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance is made possible by support from Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and Arts Council England through its National Lottery funded Grants for the Arts programme.

Heidi and Jessie are no strangers to the Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance as their parents have been bringing them to the 'Uncle BIFF Children's Club' for the past seven-years. The dance workshops give young people a valuable window into international cultures and customs that would normally only be available from a text book.

Heidi Day, said: "I loved pretending to be a sea serpent wriggling around in the water. It was really great fun as I enjoy both dancing and swimming; I'd like to do it again, especially as a member of the Synchronised cast!

"I've been coming along to the Folklore Festival since I was a little girl with my favourite country being Iceland; as I've been there on holiday with my family."

Jessie Laking, said: "The best part of the workshop for me was learning how to dance in the water; and creating the shapes with my arms and hands. The great thing about the Festival is the way you can learn about so many different countries and their customs; and actually get to see them in person."

Rhiannon Davison, a dance instructor with Balbir Singh Dance Company, said: "It was a pleasure teaching Heidi, Jessie and everyone who came along to the Billingham Forum. Water and dance are a perfect pairing as it allows you to express yourself and move freely in the pool.

“For us to open the Folklore Festival with Synchronised is such an honour, as the event is steeped in over five decades of history; and the first era of people to experience the Festival would’ve enjoyed Busby Berkeley’s classic water musicals so we are going full circle. This promises to be a wonderful occasion and to have members of the community taking part will make it extra special.”

‘Synchronised’ will entertain audiences on 13th August at the Billingham Forum from 5.30pm. The tickets range from £5 (adults), under 16s £3, family (2 adults, 2 children) £10. People can buy them from the website www.billinghamfestival.co.uk/store or by calling 01642 553220.

The show forms part of the full Festival programme that takes place from 13th until 20th August with dance companies representing the following countries Chile, Egypt, Martinique, Mexico, North Cyprus, Russia, South Korea and of course the United Kingdom.

You can learn more about the Festival at www.billinghamfestival.co.uk or on social media via Facebook [facebook.com/billinghamworlddancefestival](https://www.facebook.com/billinghamworlddancefestival) and on Twitter @BillFest.

Please note: On August 13th audiences for Synchronised are advise to dress appropriately for the swimming pool environment, as the conditions can get warm at times.

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Media Contact:

Garry Smith
Strictly Press (on behalf of BIFF 2016)
07899910823
0191 6825445
strictlypress@yahoo.co.uk