

A Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance media item:

Two 'BBC Young Dancers of the Year' to spearhead World Dance Gala at Billingham Folklore Festival....

Two of the Country's hottest dance talents will be making an extra special appearance this coming Saturday [August 13th] at the Billingham Forum as part of the opening day of the 52nd Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance.

'Faces of Dance' is a two-hour dance extravaganza that will feature performers from as far afield as Chile, Martinique, Mexico, South Korea, Bashkortstan (Russia) and of course the United Kingdom.

Topping the bill will be Connor Scott and Vidya Patel, who will be performing their brand new piece "Boundaries".

Connor Scott, winner of BBC Young Dancer 2015 is a native of the North-East, as he originates from Blyth in Northumberland; and trains at Dance City's prestigious Centre For Advanced Training in Newcastle. Connor will be accompanied by Vidya Patel, winner in the BBC Young Dancer's "South Asian Dance Category" from Birmingham.

"I am really looking forward to the day, and very grateful to be performing in such a diverse festival alongside some amazing talent. Vidya and myself are both extremely excited to be sharing our new piece with the Folklore Festival audience," said Connor.

Connor, aged 18, has shown an interest in dance since the early age of three-years-old; and since winning the competition [BBC Young Dancer] life has definitely been different, as he moved to London and began training at the illustrious, Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance.

Connor goes on to talk about the importance of events such as BIFF 2016. He said: "I think the North-East doesn't gain the recognition for what's on offer up here because the talent is booming and should be showcased; so without wonderful events like BIFF - dancers wouldn't have this platform to exhibit their work and skills."

Connor and Vidya met during the BBC Young Dancer of the Year competition and their friendship and creative flare will be onstage for all to see during "Faces of Dance". Connor said: "Throughout the creation process, we both talked about the innocence and purity of our passion for dance. I think going through the competition and then onto collaborating together has meant a great deal to me, and gaining a strong friendship offstage has created a connection in our movement onstage."

Connor and Vidya's new duet "Boundaries" reflects a sense of harmony between the two dance styles of Kathak and Contemporary. The piece has been saved for prestigious gatherings including BIFF, with the first showing being the curtain-raiser for Navadisha 2016 – International Dance Conference.

Vidya, is aged 20 and hails from Birmingham. She has danced in a number of world-class venues including performing a solo at Wembley Stadium. She said: "BIFF is great! It's bringing together so many diverse dance styles and artists on one platform; reflecting the diversity in society and making more people aware of this.

"I'm also using BIFF to achieve one of my main aims and that's to inspire more young people to take up dance professionally especially within the South Asian dance community. Dance is such a vast

subject and education - not only physically but mentally and emotionally as well. It [dance] does a lot for me and has given me so many opportunities I wouldn't have had otherwise."

Having Connor and Vidya present at BIFF 2016 shows the respect the Festival has in professional circles, and reflects the continued investment that BIFF makes into nurturing and developing the performers of the future.

BIFF has a daily "Uncle BIFF Children's Club" (Mon 15th to Fri 19th / 10am-12noon) at Seven Entertainment Hall (above ASDA) £1 per day or £4 for all 5-days including a Passport to the World. The Club is accompanied by the daily International Youth Dance Workshops (Mon 15th to Fri 19 / £5 per day or £20 for all 5-days including tickets to the afternoon concert on the same day) – also staged in Seven Entertainment Hall.

Connor and Vidya will be in good company during the opening World Gala Dance event [Faces of Dance] as also on the bill will be Ballet Folklorico Tupa Marka (Chile); Ballet Racine Creole (Martinique); Ballet Folklorico de Estado de Hidalgo (Mexico); Society for Korean Dance Education (South Korea); and Bashkortstan (Russia).

The Billingham Forum will be a painter's palette of colour, cultures and customs with the stage a canvas waiting to display an evening of spectacular dance styles and techniques with all of the performers wearing their country's national dress.

Olga Maloney, Artistic Director of the Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance, said: "We are so lucky to have young award-winning dancers like Connor and Vidya wanting to dazzle and entertain audiences in Billingham with their collaborative work; as it's fitting to have two of the country's newest stars visiting a festival steeped in over half-a-century of tradition. BIFF has always been about celebrating world-wide cultures and styles but at the same time recognising the latest in contributors of Contemporary dance; giving people the chance to experience every facet that dance has to offer.

"Faces of Dance is going to be mesmerising with the combination of old and new styles sharing the stage to represent the values of our wonderful festival."

'Faces of Dance' will take place at the Billingham Forum Theatre on Saturday 13th August at 8pm with tickets priced at £12 and are available from the Forum Theatre box office by calling 01642 552 663 or on their website www.forumtheatrebillingham.co.uk (alternatively tickets can be purchased on the door).

For people interested in seeing the full line up for this year's Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance please visit the website www.billinghamfestival.co.uk

Billingham Town Centre will play host to the Festival Arena that all week-long will stage stunning displays of World Dance from a selection of the visiting companies. It's perfect family entertainment, ideal to be added to any parent's activity calendar for the summer holidays.

BIFF has enjoyed 52 years in the dance spotlight - come join in the fun, and make your own memories!

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Support Images: A performance image has been provided of Connor Scott and Vidya Patel dancing a section from “Boundaries”. Photo credit: Simon Richardson

For all interview opportunities please call the Festival’s press officer using the details listed below.

Media Contact:

Garry Smith
Strictly Press (on behalf of BIFF 2016)
0191 682 5445
07899 5910823
strictlypress@yahoo.co.uk