

A Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance media item:

## **FESTIVAL A GO-GO!**

The 52<sup>nd</sup> Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance, 13-20 August, is all systems go - as dancers descend upon the town from around the world.

The party atmosphere got underway as the thirty-one members of Ballet Folklorico del Estado de Hidalgo of Mexico took their energetic brand of singing and dance to the people of Billingham.

They did an impromptu meet and greet that visited a variety of town centre locations including Billingham Town Library, Barnacles Fish and Chips Takeaway and Laundroclean dry cleaners and laundrette.

People borrowing their library books, grabbing a bag of fish and chips and picking up their service wash got more than they bargained for.

Saturday will see Billingham come to life with the 'Parade of Nations' [13:45 start time] signifying the start of the Festival. The eight countries being represented are (introducing the dance companies):

BASHKORTOSTAN (RUSSIA) - Folklore song and dance ensemble "Miras"

CHILE - Ballet Folklorico Tupa Marka

EGYPT - Egyptian Folklore Group

MARTINIQUE - Ballet Racine Creole

MEXICO (group one) - Ballet Folklorico de Estado de Hidalgo

MEXICO (group 2) Ballet La Grana 'Beatriz Ramirez' de Autlan, Jalisco and Mariachi Rosales

NORTH CYPRUS - Alaykoy Folklore Ensemble

SOUTH KOREA - Society for Korean Dance Education

UK - BBC Young Dancer 2015 Winner, Connor Scott & Vidya Patel, winner in the South Asian Dance Category, Balbir Singh Dance Company, Eliot Smith Dance Company, Yuvel Soria, Bellamy School of Ballet, Tapshoes & Tutus and Respect Theatre

The parade route is directly through the town centre commencing from the Festival's box office [5 West Precinct opposite Boyes] and snaking down to the 400-seater Festival Arena in the market square. This will be the location for the daily Gala events that will see the customs and traditions of each country come to life.

Alvaro Serrano, Director of Ballet Folklorico del Estado de Hidalgo, said: "Mexico has always enjoyed a close connection to England ever since groups of miners came over to our country to work - bringing their customs and traditions. They introduced much things like football, pasties and golf!

"We have cities in Mexico that to this day still wear traditional English costume and prepare traditional food. Our countries' bond makes our cultural visit to Billingham very important as this is the first time we have performed at this special festival."

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.

Olga Maloney, artistic director of Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance, said: "The Folklore Festival is a people's festival, as it continues to attract some of the finest dance

companies, year-upon-year, from across the globe - who command the crowds with their customs and cultural prowess. We have been so fortunate that since its creation over five decades ago, BIFF has entertained people, young and old. The Festival Arena provides a comfortable community space with affordable prices that enables the whole family to get involved.”

There is so many different ways to engage with BIFF 2016 whether it's watching a Gala performance at the Festival Arena or young people attending one of the exciting educational workshops.

If you want to learn more about BIFF 2016 please visit [www.billinghamfestival.co.uk](http://www.billinghamfestival.co.uk) or on social media via Facebook [facebook.com/billinghamworlddancefestival](https://www.facebook.com/billinghamworlddancefestival) and on Twitter @BillFest.

The website also includes a box office section, where people can buy tickets online at [www.billinghamfestival.co.uk/store](http://www.billinghamfestival.co.uk/store) or by calling 01642 553 220.

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