

A Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance media item:

BILLINGHAM WELCOMES THE WORLD TO 52nd INTERNATIONAL FOLKLORE FESTIVAL

The people of Billingham continued to show their support for a Festival that has entertained thousands of people across five-decades.

The 52nd Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance kicked off in style with the traditional "Parade of Nations" which worked its way through the town centre to the temporary Festival Arena that will be the centre of dance action until 20th August.

The Folklore Festival worked its usual magic by attracting generation-upon-generation of families to welcome the dance groups, who've travelled thousands of miles to perform in Billingham.

In total over 350 performers from eight different countries are involved in BIFF 2016 including Chile; Egypt; Martinique; Mexico; North Cyprus; Russia; South Korea; and UK.

Joe Maloney, Festival Director said: "It never fails to amaze me how after fifty years, people still have an affiliation for the Folklore Festival with familiar faces being joined by new audiences. This is down to the town's heritage and the way it has continued to be supported on an annual basis. People coming out to wave and cheer dancers who've left their own families to entertain people on the other side of the world is moving to see. The empathy from our International counterparts is heartening and encouraging as the feedback we receive about our dance festival is one of respect and notoriety.

"The arena is deliberately at the heart of the town centre as we have always thought of our dance gathering as being at the centre of the community. We can't do this without the audiences' support and we hope to see as many people as possible over the coming days."

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.

A few daily highlights to look forward to:

Sunday 14th August:

Family Concert, Festival Arena, 4pm, All seats £1

Feat. Cave of Hands by Respect Theatre, Tapshoes & Tutus, N. Cyprus, S Korea and Egypt

Monday 15th August:

International Concert, Festival Arena, 2.30pm, All seats £6 / Children under 12 £1

Feat. Chile, S. Korea, Martinique, Mexico (Hidalgo)

Dance Gateway, Festival Arena, 8pm, All seats £5 / Feat. Macmillan Academy, Bellamy School of Ballet, Eliot Smith Company, Yuvel Soria, Chile, Mexico (Jalisco)

Tuesday 16th August:

International Concert, Festival Arena, 2.30pm, All seats £6 / Children under 12 £1

Feat. Mexico (Jalisco), Martinique, Chile and Bashkortostan (Russia)

Viva Mexico! Festival Arena, 8pm, All seats £5 / Companies from Mexican States of Hidalgo & Jalisco

Wednesday 17th August:

International Concert, Festival Arena, 2.30pm, All seats £6 / Children under 12 £1
Feat. Egypt, S. Korea, Chile and Mexico (Hidalgo)

International Concert, Festival Arena, All seats £5 / Martinique, Egypt and Bashkortostan (Russia)

Thursday 18th August:

International Concert, Festival Arena, 2.30pm, All seats £6 / Children under 12 £1
Feat. Mexico (Hidalgo), Martinique, N. Cyprus and Bashkortostan (Russia)

Edmond Beaumont Memorial World Dance Gala Concert, Middlesbrough Theatre, 7.30pm, All seats £15 / dance companies Chile, Egypt, Martinique, Mexico, North Cyprus, Russia, South Korea and UK

Friday 19th August:

International Concert, Festival Arena, 2.30pm, All seats £6 / Children under 12 £1
Feat. Mexico (Hidalgo), Egypt, S. Korea, N. Cyprus & Bashkortostan (Russia)

Painting of the Indian Gods / Billingham Forum (atrium), Billingham / 5.30pm, free
A unique display of arts and dance by Balbir Singh Dance Company

World Dance Gala Concert, Billingham Forum Theatre, 7.30pm, All seats £18
Feat. all International dance companies inc. Chile, Egypt, Martinique, Mexico, N. Cyprus, Russia, S. Korea and UK plus the premiere of 'Interrupted Souls' solo by Eliot Smith Company

Saturday 20th August:

Farewell Gala Concert, Festival Arena, 2.30pm, All seats £8 / Children under 12 £2
Dance companies inc. Chile, Egypt, Martinique, Mexico, N. Cyprus, Russia, S. Korea and UK

Mini Gala Concert, Festival Arena, 7.30pm, £5 / Children under 12 £1
Dance companies inc. Chile, Egypt, Martinique, Mexico, N. Cyprus, Russia, S. Korea and UK. Followed by the closing ceremony at 9pm.

Stockton Council quote – to be added

Jane Tarr, Director North, Arts Council England said: "I'm delighted support from Arts Council England is allowing BIFF to present new, contemporary work with diverse roots from some of the North's most exciting dance artists, alongside the festival's traditional programme of performances by visiting international folk dance companies. I hope people in Billingham and Stockton will support the festival and maybe go and try some of the new performances, as well as the festival favourites."

Two crowd member quotes to be sourced during the parade.

If you want to learn more about BIFF 2016 please visit 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 or by calling 01642 553 220.

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