

A Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance:

### **OZ COUPLE TO FLY 10,500 MILES TO ATTEND BILLINGHAM INTERNATIONAL FOLKLORE FESTIVAL**

A couple from New South Wales (NSW) in Australia are planning to travel across the world to attend an international festival in Tees Valley.

Steve and Galina Wardrop are from Port Macquarie, a small coastal town, 450km north of Sydney – where they will set off on the 10,500 mile journey to explore the 52<sup>nd</sup> Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance.

Steve and Galina contacted the Festival organisers when they were planning their exciting globe-trotting tour. Galina has additional interest in the subject as she has been a dance instructor for the past 16-years.

The Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance will be welcoming performers and dance companies from as far afield as Chile, Egypt, Martinique, Mexico, North Cyprus, Russia, South Korea and of course the United Kingdom.

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.

Steve, aged 65, was born in Sydney and is a licensed real estate agent, a job he's enjoyed for over thirty years. Galina, aged 55, was born in London and before moving out to NSW, fourteen-years ago – worked as a librarian.

Steve and Galina have been married for seven years. Steve has three grown-up children and six grandchildren; and Galina has one daughter.

“It will be a wonderful opportunity to see so many talented dancers, from such an array of interesting countries,” said Galina.

Galina has looked through the online brochure and selected her festival highlights as the Egyptian Folklore Group, the North Cyprus Ensemble, and the Russian Ensemble "Miras".

Galina is no stranger to the Billingham International Folk Festival of World Dance, as her passion for dance has meant that she stops at nothing to sample what the festival has to offer...even if it does mean travelling across the world to watch the performers.

Galina particularly loves Salsa, Raqs Sharqi (Belly Dance) and Balkan Folk Dance. She has danced since the age of four, when she was frequently entered into competitions by her mother, Kathy, who is also a passionate dancer, and still teaches dance at the age of 82 in Eastbourne where she lives.

Galina has taught Raqs Sharqi since 1985, and studied with the Suraya Hilal School of Dance. She has taught Bulgarian Folk Dance since her scholarship there in 1986; and since coming to Australia, she has taught various types of Street Latin including Cuban Salsa, Rueda, Son, Bachata, Merengue, and Chacha.

Galina added: “As a dancer myself, I'm always inspired by watching performers who wear their heart on their sleeve, and who translate their heritage and culture into their dancing on stage.”

Monday July 4th, will see Steve and Galina setting off on their journey, and their amazing holiday will take them to Thailand ('Chaing Mai') on the way to Turkey, where they will see Galina's daughter in Fethiye.

They will then board a plane destined for the UK, where Galina's parents live (Eastbourne). From there, the couple will venture north to sample the Edinburgh Tattoo, and then travel to Billingham, where they will stay in Middlesbrough during the Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance. A wonderful touch, is that Galina's mother Kathy will be joining the couple in Billingham for the Festival, making it a real family affair.

Then on the way home, they will return to Turkey, enjoy a stay in the Greek Islands, and finally spend time in Koh Samui, Thailand.

Steve said: "We are really looking forward to visiting Billingham on our holidays, as we aim to add a splash of culture during our stay in the North East of England. As well as creating fond memories and making some new friendships along the way."

Olga Maloney, Artistic Director, of Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance, said: "We are humbled by the support and belief in the Festival shown by Galina and Steve. It shows that faith hasn't waned from people, even after over fifty years.

"It's amazing that Billingham is uttered in the same sentence as Thailand and Turkey, when it comes down to Galina and Steve's vacation. It just shows how Billingham can be chosen as a key tourism destination by people living on the other side of the world. Confidence breeds confidence, and this is a real boost for the Festival."

The Festival also enjoys the presence of great UK dancers and companies including Balbir Singh Dance Company, Eliot Smith Dance Company, Yuvel Soria, plus the BBC Young Dancer 2015 Winner, Connor Scott and Vidya Patel, winner in the South Asian Dance Category.

One of the highlights promises to be the North-East premiere of aqua-dance spectacular "Synchronised" by Balbir Singh Dance Company – first commissioned for the London 2012 Olympic Games; and last seen at the London's Southbank Centre. It pays homage to Busby Berkeley's legendary Hollywood 'water musicals' and will be staged at the Forum Swimming Pool – 10 swimmers, 10 dancers and live orchestral music.

There will be a parade, performances, a Festival Arena, workshops and even fireworks throughout the week-long showcase.

If people want to follow Galina and Steve's lead, then the full line up for this year's Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance is available at [www.billinghamfestival.co.uk](http://www.billinghamfestival.co.uk)

The website also has an online box office facility, where people can purchase tickets from [www.billinghamfestival.co.uk/billinghamfestival/store](http://www.billinghamfestival.co.uk/billinghamfestival/store) You can follow the Festival on social media via Facebook [facebook.com/billinghamworlddancefestival](https://facebook.com/billinghamworlddancefestival) and on Twitter @BillFest

The box office telephone number is 01642 553220 and there's a walk-in box office situated in Billingham Town Centre - 5 West Precinct with the opening times of Monday to Saturday / 10.30am until 2.00pm. People can pay by cheque, postal order or cash.

The Festival venues include the Festival Arena (town centre), The Forum Theatre and Swimming Pool, Billingham Town Centre Ramp, Billingham Forum Atrium and Middlesbrough Theatre.

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**Media Contact:**

Garry Smith  
Strictly Press  
(on behalf of Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance)

**T:** 0191 682 5445

**M:** 07899910823

**E:** [strictlypress@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:strictlypress@yahoo.co.uk)