

A Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance media item:

FESTIVAL FREEBIES...

You've heard the old saying there's no such thing as a free lunch, well the Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance (BIFF) would like to reassure Festival goers that their advertised exclusive dance workshops are just that...FREE!

BIFF, now celebrating its 52nd year, is proud to offer its new and loyal followers the chance to share and experience a dance arena with one of the UK's leading dance organisations, Balbir Singh Dance Company.

Yorkshire-based Balbir Singh Dance Company will be offering up their expertise and knowledge with the end result being the chance for some people to actually take to the stage as part of the Company's Festival performances.

The workshops will be in conjunction with "Synchronised" and "Painting the Indian Gods"; and both will be staged at the Billingham Forum (atrium and pool).

"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).

There will be two workshops where people will be given the chance to get involved by learning a section of the performance and ultimately become integrated cast members with the professional cast. The workshops are open to people of all ages, who are comfortable in shallow waters with more advanced participants going into deeper waters. The workshops aim to give people the experience of contemporary movement, Classical Indian Dance and water based activities.

The workshops are in the Billingham Forum swimming pool on Tuesday 2nd August (10am-12noon) and on Thursday 4th August (1.30pm-3.30pm).

'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 or by calling 01642 553220.

'Painting the Indian Gods' is a family friendly piece to leave the audience enlightened and uplifted; with its performance roots being in Classical Indian styles – rich in bringing to life stories about Indian Gods with centuries of tradition. The narrative is represented in dance and art – with the artwork coming in the form of figurative and abstract.

The free workshops take place on Monday 1st August (10am-12noon), Wednesday 3rd August (10am-12noon) and Friday 5th August (1pm-4pm) with the end results being shown to audiences in a free performance on Friday 19th August at 5.30pm in the atrium of Billingham Forum.

Painting the Indian Gods will give people the opportunity to learn about and depict Hindu Gods through movement in Contemporary and Classical Indian styles...accompanied by live music.

For those people looking to take part in any of the free 'Synchronised' or 'Painting the Indian Gods' workshops – then please email the BIFF team on info@billinghamfestival.co.uk (or people can turn up on the day of the workshops but places are limited and booking is advised but not essential).

In August from 13th-20th, the Festival will be hosting dance companies from Chile, Egypt, Martinique, Mexico, North Cyprus, Russia, South Korea and of course the United Kingdom.

Olga Maloney, Artistic Director of Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance, said: "These workshops perfectly represent the diverse nature of the Festival and the exclusive, hands-on experiences that we are offering our customers. Where else could amateur and aspiring dancers get free expert tutorage; and the chance to star in not one, but two, Folklore Festival shows? We urge people to grab these opportunities by both hands and be part of something really special!"

Balbir Singh, artistic director of Balbir Singh Dance Company, said: "We want to show that dance is for everyone to enjoy, whether you are taking part and moving around or appreciating it as a face in the crowd. We are casting out our net to work with people of all ages and dance abilities. It will give those who attend a very special insight into the art of dance from a Contemporary and Classical Indian Dance vantage point. It will also be great fun and something different to do over the summer holidays."

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.

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