

Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance

Media Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ice meets spice - the world premiere of 'Peacock Lake'

Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance in partnership with Balbir Singh Dance Company proudly present the world premiere of their ice skating, dance and music spectacular, **Peacock Lake**, to be performed at Billingham Forum Ice Arena on 19 and 20 August 2017.

A modern take on Tchaikovsky's classic ballet **Swan Lake**, the show draws on the narrative and musical legacy of that great work, creating a contemporary piece that reflects the diverse musical and choreographic traditions of East and West. Performed on ice to live music and featuring international stars of ice skating along with a global cast of dancers, **Peacock Lake** is a glittering show that will dazzle and entertain audiences of all ages.

The performances bring to a close the Billingham International Folklore Festival and its exhilarating week-long programme of international dance. It was following last year's Festival that the idea to create a production combining dance and ice skating was born. Balbir Singh Dance Company (BSDC) had been commissioned to open the Festival with a performance of *Synchronised*, a water-based dance, synchronised swimming and live music extravaganza which performed to a sell out audience in the Billingham Forum swimming pool. This success paved the way for future collaboration.

Olga Maloney, Artistic Director of Billingham International Folklore Festival, said:

"The idea to create a production combining dance and ice skating came after our successful collaboration with Balbir Singh Dance Company during Billingham International Festival of World Dance in 2016, presenting Synchronised, a pool-based spectacular to a sell-out audience."

Coming from an ice skating background and being very passionate about dance, it was always my dream to combine ice skating and dance in a spectacular show with live music.

The international nature of our festival allows for the integration of world music and dance performances into the production, making it a truly unique multicultural event and creating an unforgettable experience for both our audience and all the participants.”

With choreographer Balbir Singh's Punjab heritage and expertise in creating high profile performances combining dance and sport, it was a natural progression for the two artistic directors to start comparing folk traditions to find common ground on which to base their ideas. One theme to emerge in both Russian and Indian folklore was the reverence of the peacock with its many spiritual and religious references. Taking the ballet *Swan Lake* as a basis, but focusing on the peacock and its cultural significance rather than the swan, a contemporary piece has been created that weaves together the rich dance and musical heritage of two very diverse countries. This completely original and fascinating presentation allows the audience to enjoy a classic tale, but with a twist.

Balbir Singh, Artistic Director of BSDC, said:

As an artist, growth happens by working outside of one's comfort zone and by forming new collaborations with artists and disciplines. Having never worked on ice before, this production presents a creative challenge like no other, to make sense of and bring together dance from different cultures, ice skating, music and storytelling to create a holistic theatre experience for all the family. Nothing like this has been done before in the world.

Peacock Lake combines professional dancers from Balbir Singh Dance Company, trained in contemporary and Kathak dance (north Indian classical dance), leading professional ice skaters, 60 skaters from Billingham Ice Skating Club, around 30 dancers from regional dance schools, as well as traditional and contemporary dance companies from Taiwan, Chile, Tahiti, Philippines and Colombia. They are being directed and choreographed by Balbir Singh, Artistic Director of BSDC, and ice choreographer Tatiana Tarasova, former Artistic Director of Russian Ice Theatre “All Stars” and coach of 12 Olympic Champions and 41 World Champions.

The music for **Peacock Lake** is composed by Jesse Bannister, internationally respected musician and composer. Drawing on the existing melodic themes of *Swan Lake*, as well as introducing Russian, Indian and British folk themes into the score, Jesse has produced an original composition that incorporates a live and colourful mix of orchestral instruments,

world music and traditional voices.

Jane Tarr, Director North, Arts Council England, said:

*"We're delighted to be supporting this exciting collaboration between Balbir Singh and Billingham Festival. Last year, there was a sell-out performance at Billingham Forum pool of Balbir's piece Synchronised, which was commissioned as part of the London 2012 cultural programme and has toured across the country. **Peacock Lake** will premiere in Billingham in August, so we hope people will take the opportunity to see it first, here. I'm definitely booking early!"*

Peacock Lake premieres at Billingham Forum Ice Arena at 7.30pm on Saturday, 19 August with a second performance at 4pm on Sunday, 20 August 2017. Tickets cost £10 for adults and £6 for children under 16 years. Family tickets for two adults and two children are also available and cost £20. Tickets can be purchased from the Billingham Forum Leisure Centre reception, online at www.billinghamfestival.co.uk/store, or through the Festival box office, telephone (01642) 553220.

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Notes to Editors:

Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance

Billingham International Folklore Festival (BIFF) is a unique multi-cultural festival achieving global impact through the celebration of world dance. Since its foundation in 1964, BIFF has welcomed 20,000 performers from 93 different countries and is considered one of the leading festivals of its kind in the world. In 1970, Billingham Festival became one of the eight founders of the world-wide organisation CIOFF® (Council of International Folklore Festival Organisers and Folk Arts), which is committed to the safeguarding, promotion and diffusion of traditional culture and folklore. www.billinghamfestival.co.uk

Balbir Singh Dance Company

Balbir Singh is a graduate of the Northern School of Contemporary Dance, Leeds and a

disciple of world-renowned Kathak exponent, Padmashri Guru Pratap Pawar. BSDC is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. In 2014, the company was selected by the Royal Opera House to take part in its Links partnership programme for two years; partners are chosen for their ability to demonstrate a compelling artistic vision and their potential to have a transformative impact on the future of opera and/or ballet. BSDC creates dynamic dance through a synthesis of Kathak, live music and contemporary dance, and has worked on numerous large-scale high profile arts/sports productions.

Arts Council England

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