



PRESS RELEASE
AUGUST 2015

Caption – Lydia Cairney, aged 5, (purple leotard and blonde hair) from Tapshoes and Tutus, with the Chinese dancers during a festival workshop. Gracie Dowd, aged 5, with the Chinese dancers from the festival workshop. Pictures from the arena stage include Philippino dancers, and Chilean dancers.

**ECLECTIC MIX OF DANCE FROM
ACROSS THE GLOBE CONTINUES**

A TOWN centre has been transformed into a colourful hub of multi-cultural talent for the Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance.

Yesterday, Tuesday, August 11, was the turn of performers from the Philippines, Chile, Mexico, China and Serbia to entertain the crowds.

Seats in the arena, at the heart of Billingham Town Centre, were filled with adults and children alike, all clapping along to the music and moves from across the globe.

Artistic director of the festival, Olga Maloney, said: “The shows have all been brilliant, and once again, on this, the fourth day, the dancers have excelled themselves.

“The crowds have loved it and the tickets have been selling great for the festival which is known throughout the world.

“It’s such a great coup for the area to have such a prestigious and longstanding global event held here.”

So far hundreds of people have flocked to Billingham to witness the sights and sounds of the much-anticipated concerts, which show case each country’s heritage to the max.

And as well as the shows, which see the dancers adorning elaborate costumes representative of their homeland, there are also a selection of workshops and children’s clubs, to bring an international flavour to local children and young people from the North East.

Mexican and Chinese performers held a high-octane dance workshop which was attended by about a dozen local youngsters aged from about five to 15 years old, including some from Teesside dance school – Tapshoes and Tutus.

They were taught authentic dance steps and used percussion instruments, alongside the talented dancers from Mexico.

Chinese, Italian, Serbian, Philippino, and American performers are to hold similar classes.

The festival, which has become a highlight of the region's arts and culture calendar.

Core funding for this year's festival, which takes place until Saturday, August 15, has come from Stockton Borough Council, while Arts Council England is funding the contemporary elements of the festival and Awards for All funding a programme to take dancers into care homes in the area.

Most of the festival concerts and events are being held at the Festival Arena, in the middle of Billingham Town Centre, with other events being held in Middlesbrough Town Hall Crypt, Middlesbrough Theatre, and Billingham Forum.

To find out more visit www.billinghamfestival.co.uk or call 01642 553220.

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