



PRESS RELEASE

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INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL COMES TO A CLOSE

TWO hundred dancers from around the world have left the North East with a string of memories after more than a week of spectacular performances.

This year's Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance – which is in its 51st year – arrived with an explosion of colour and culture wowing hundreds of audience members for eight days.

The performers from countries including America, the Philippines, Chile, Mexico, China, and Serbia, burst onto the various festival stages with their flamboyant costumes, dance moves, and music, all indicative of their homelands from Saturday, August 8.

People from the area and beyond packed into the festival arena – which was situated in the centre of Billingham Town Centre – and other venues including Middlesbrough Town Hall Crypt, Middlesbrough Theatre, and Billingham Forum Theatre.

And as well as the shows, there was a chance for people to turn their toes to the global dance moves with a selection of workshops held by representatives of each country.

But the final day of the international spectacular, was a fantastic round-up of the week's entertainment with a Farewell Parade through Billingham Town Centre, at 2pm, watched by crowds of amazed shoppers, who all clapped and cheered at the exotic sights.

The dancers then moved to the main stage at 2.30pm where they performed the Farewell Gala Concert - a high-octane programme of captivating numbers for the arena audience, some of whom had returned to watch each day throughout the eight-day event.

The whole extravaganza was wrapped up, however, with a Mini Gala Concert at 7.30pm, and the Closing Ceremony at 9pm.

Festival Director Olga Maloney, who was beckoned to the concert stage on the last day to receive a huge bouquet of flowers for her efforts, said: "It has been an emotional and exciting week for everybody involved in the festival.

"The audiences have been amazing and have shown great support.

"We are very proud to be able to bring such a prestigious and world-renowned event to the North East, it has been an honour once again."

Olga, who has a background in ice-skating and was the World Tour Manager for skating stars Torville and Dean for three years in the late 80s, added: "People of all ages have turned out and enjoyed the performances from the dancers who have travelled thousands of miles, from all around the world to be here.

"The applause from the audiences has said it all."

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

Core funding for it has come from Stockton Borough Council, while Arts Council England funded the contemporary elements of the festival.

Awards for All funded a programme to take the dancers into care homes in the area.

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