

A Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance media item:

BILLINGHAM, STAND UP AND BE COUNTED...THE WORLD IS AT YOUR FEET!

BILLINGHAM INTERNATIONAL FOLKLORE FESTIVAL OF WORLD DANCE

13-20 August 2016

www.billinghamfestival.co.uk (includes an online box office)

This year's theme: "PORTRAIT OF A DISTANT LAND...ACROSS THE SEAS"

Please click this link to download a low resolution version of the Festival programme:

www.billinghamfestival.co.uk/billinghamfestival/billfest/media/2016leafletlowres.pdf

Balbir Singh Dance Company - North East premiere of aqua-dance spectacular "Synchronised" – 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...

The Festival will also showcase the talents of **BBC Young Dancer 2015 Winner**, Connor Scott (of Blyth in Northumberland, who trains at Dance City's Centre For Advanced Training) & Vidya Patel, winner in the South Asian Dance Category (from Birmingham)

The Festival is privileged to have the premiere of "Interrupted Souls" by **Eliot Smith Dance Company**

*** Entertainment * Elation * Education * Expertise * Enthrallment * Entitlement * Elevation ***

Eight days of magical dance, theatre and storytelling will illuminate the town of Billingham in Tees Valley, as dancers from eight countries scattered around the globe will be bring audiences to their feet with some breath-taking acts of world dance.

The only dates that you need to remember are the 13th until 20th August as this is when time will stand still and dance will take over the momentum of daily life. For these eight days the Festival will have something for everyone, for residents to be proud of their town, for the dance community to be proud of their fellow professionals, and for Billingham to be recognised for hosting a festival that stands tall in its 52nd year.

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.

The Festival is also a member of CIOFF - International Council of Organizations of Folklore Festivals and Folk Arts; an organisation aimed at safeguarding, promotion and diffusion of traditional culture and folklore.

Dancers are travelling thousands of miles to a place that some call the 'stalwart heartbeat' of world dance; ask the man-on-the-street where they feel captures the soul of International dance and many will sight other more historic cultural cities. But in folklore dance circles, the small town of Billingham will be uttered followed by a wry smile, as for over half a century the world has been showcasing its dance techniques for generations to enjoy and admire.

You only have to see the countries represented to appreciate what the Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance means to dance professionals and the respect they have for the annual event.

In August you can find dance companies from:

BASHKORTOSTAN (RUSSIA) - Folklore song and dance ensemble "Miras"; **CHILE** - Ballet Folklorico Tupa Marka; **EGYPT** - Egyptian Folklore Group; **MARTINIQUE** - Ballet Racine Creole; **MEXICO** - Ballet Folklorico de Estado de Hidalgo; **MEXICO** (2) Ballet La Grana 'Beatriz Ramirez' de Autlan, Jalisco and Mariachi Rosales; **NORTH CYPRUS** - Alaykoy Folklore Ensemble; **SOUTH KOREA** - Society for Korean Dance Education; and last but not least **UK** - BBC Young Dancer 2015 Winner, Connor Scott & Vidya Patel, winner in the South Asian Dance Category, Balbir Singh Dance Company, Eliot Smith Dance Company, Yuvel Soria, Bellamy School of Ballet, Tapshoes & Tutus and Respect Theatre.

Balbir Singh Dance Company will also be setting up exclusive drop-in sessions aimed at providing a chance for anyone keen to take part in *Synchronised* and *Painting the Indian Gods*, to get involved.

The Festival will also play its part in the 'Tees Dance Film Fest' an event supported by Tees Valley Dance – with films being shown in everyday venues around Billingham including a local bingo hall.

"We have scoured the world, visiting dance companies in their local communities to bring our audience the very best in International dance. We are proud of the healthy mix of traditional and contemporary programming that fits alongside the education and development work.

"The Folklore Festival stands by its traditions of not only bringing some of the top performers to Tees Valley but also setting the benchmarks for other Festivals and practitioners to follow," said Olga Maloney, Artistic Director, of Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance.

The Folklore Festival will be reinforcing its ties with education by delivering a number of projects including “Cave of Hands” with Respect Theatre; dance masterclasses with the Macmillan Academy (Middlesbrough) and Billingham Community Primary School; and the Festival’s continued association with Tees Valley Dance. There will also be the legendary Uncle BIFF’s Children’s Club for young people to enjoy the wonders of dance; and a number of students from Teesside University will be using the Festival to fulfil work placements as part of their BA (Hons) Dance degree module.

A major contributory factor of the Festival’s appeal to supporters and funders was the training elements for young people. This is represented by daily International Youth Dance workshops from Mon 15th and Fri 18th / 1.30 - 2.15pm at Seven Entertainment Hall (above ASDA in Billingham).

The town centre will yet again be at the heart of the Festival with the Festival Arena acting as a hub for daily events, and for staging the opening and closing ceremony. On the opening day there will be the annual parade that illuminates the streets of Billingham, and there will also be a fireworks display to close the Festival on the final day.

Olga, who is also Secretary General of CIOFF International, added: “The education element has always been very important to the Festival. We see the young people coming up through the ranks of school, colleges and youth centres, as being the future of traditional and contemporary dance, not only in Tees Valley but also in countries further afield.”

Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance recently won the “Best Community Arts” category at the Catalyst (Stockton) Achievement Awards.

Councillor Norma Wilburn, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council’s Cabinet Member for Arts, Leisure and Culture, said: “Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance is a vibrant and exciting event that is anticipated by so many residents both from the Borough and visitors from further afield.

“To have hundreds of performers bring their first class performances from across the globe right on the doorstep in Billingham is a real coup for the area and a boost for the local economy. It complements the exciting summer of events planned as always in Stockton Borough, sitting alongside the renowned Stockton International Riverside Festival.

“I’d encourage everyone to come down to Billingham in August and take in the magical dance, theatre and storytelling that will be on offer across the eight days.”

Jane Tarr, Director North, Arts Council England said: "I'm delighted support from Arts Council England will allow BIFF to present new, contemporary work with diverse roots from some of the North's most exciting dance artists, alongside the festival's traditional programme of performances by visiting international folk dance companies. I hope people in Billingham and Stockton will support the festival and maybe go and try some of the new performances, as well as the festival favourites."

For people interested in seeing the full line up for this year's Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance please visit the website 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 You can follow the Festival on social media via Facebook 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.

We are also on the look-out for Vloggers and Bloggers to help spread the word about the Festival, they will have access all areas and be able to capture the unique atmosphere of the events.

Make sure you either dip your toe or submerge yourself totally in this year's Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance.

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Notes to Editor:

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