

6 July 2018
News release

Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance 2018 launches in spectacular style in August

The 54th Bingham International Folklore Festival launches on Saturday 11 August with awe-inspiring displays of dance, skating on ice, music, visual arts and world-class culture

Every year, Bingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance hosts a week-long celebration of culture, music and dance from all around the world.

This unique Festival transforms Bingham into a meeting place for dazzling displays of dance, music, songs, costumes and colour and this year is no exception.

The 2018 programme has a line up of performances and artists from across the globe, including dance companies from Chile, France, Ukraine, Argentina, Canada and Egypt, and Taiko drummers from Japan.

This year the Festival includes a very special performance and World Premiere of *Ikebana, the Journey in Quest of Harmony*, funded by Arts Council England. This unique performance is inspired by the Japanese art of flower making, 'ikebana'.

ITV's Dancing on Ice star, Mark Hanretty who partnered with Donna Air in the TV show earlier this year, plays a leading role in Ikebana, as well as world professional ice skating champion, Gary Beacom. Mark will perform in both the Forum Theatre, with a display of aerial dance, and skating in the Ice Arena.

A fusion of art and sport, *Ikebana* will be presented by 300 international performers, world-class ice skaters, dancers, actors, musicians, Taiko drummers and a large community cast, taking the audience on a real-life journey across two different venues in Bingham.

Olga Maloney, Artistic Director for Bingham International Folklore Festival, said: "This year the Festival promises to be even more astounding, with a real explosion of dance, music and colour, there really is something for everyone and all ages.

"*Ikebana* is the result of a collaboration between experts in the fields of dance, choreography, music, and digital art and we will take the audience on a mysterious

and intriguing journey from one venue to another, for Acts 1 and 2. It is an unmissable performance that is suitable for all the family”.

Highlights of the Festival include displays of dance from an array of cultures across the world, as well as dramatic performances of Taiko drumming, an ancient form of Japanese percussion using large drums.

There are performances every day in Billingham over the nine-day Festival, as well as an International Youth Dance Workshop which will give total beginners, as well as young advanced dancers, first-hand experience of a variety of dance styles represented at the Festival, taught by the international dance artists.

There are also World Dance Workshops for adults, in Billingham Community Centre, taking place over several days.

Thousands of visitors are expected to descend on Billingham for the 54th year, as well as the local community coming together to enjoy the spectacle.

Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance runs from Saturday 11 to Sunday 19 August 2018 in Billingham, County Durham. More information on performances and ticketing can be found at www.billinghamfestival.co.uk

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For press enquiries, images, extra information or interview requests, please contact:

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Notes to editors

Billingham International Folklore Festival 2018:

- More information on the programme can be found at www.billinghamfestival.co.uk
- Billingham International Folklore Festival 2018 is sponsored by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council; Arts Council England; Billingham Town Council; Youth Social Action Fund; The Billingham Legacy Foundation; Boyes & Co Ltd; K W Deveraux & Sons; St. Mowden; Tees Active; Croft Coaches; plus Big Lottery Fund
- Social media: Facebook at @billinghamworlddancefestival and Twitter @BillFest