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News release

What does Japanese flower arranging have to do with a World Premiere performance, famous ice skaters and Billingham?

This year, the 54th Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance sees the coming together of a nationally-renowned creative team and the local community to deliver an incredible World Premiere performance of dance, music, famous ice skaters, dazzling aerial silks and singing.

'Ikebana, the Journey in Quest of Harmony', funded by Arts Council England, is a unique and beautiful performance that will literally transport the audience on a joyous journey of magic and imagination.

Ikebana is the ancient Japanese art of flower arranging that is said to promote mental peace and harmony and the performance's concept is based on this increasingly popular art form.

And the creators behind the piece came together this weekend from across the UK to work with local choirs and singers, to develop the music that will form an integral part of the performance's magic.

Ikebana Director, Andrew Loretto, who is also Director for renowned arts event, Winchester Hat Fair, visited Billingham this weekend; along with **playwright & dramaturg, Richard Hurford**, an award-winning theatre, radio and multi-media performance playwright, whose work is produced throughout the UK and Europe.

They were joined by **Sally Egan, Ikebana's Choir Director**, who has sung opera and oratorio all over the world under the baton of many leading conductors; and Ikebana's **Music Director, Moony Wainwright**, a community musician, composer, musical director and workshop leader who programs the community music stage at Tramlines, the biggest inner-city music festival in the UK.

Olga Maloney, Artistic Director for Billingham International Folklore Festival, said: 'Our special performance, *Ikebana, the Journey in Quest of Harmony*, promises to be a spectacular and unique experience for our audiences.'

"*Ikebana* is the result of a collaboration between experts in the fields of dance, skating, choreography, music, and digital art – and members of the local community and choirs and singers from across the North East.

"We will quite literally take the audience on a mysterious and intriguing journey from one venue to another, for Acts 1 and 2, in Billingham Forum Theatre and Billingham Forum Ice Arena respectively. It is an unmissable performance that is suitable for all the family".

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 champions, Gary Beacom, Zoe Jones, Chris Boyadji, Phil Harris, and Yebin Mok.

A fusion of art and sport, *Ikebana* will be presented by 300 international performers, world-class ice skaters, dancers, actors, musicians, dramatic Japanese Taiko drummers and a large community cast.

'*Ikebana, the Journey in Quest of Harmony*' takes place at 7.30pm each evening on Saturday 11 and Sunday 12 August 2018 in Billingham.

Act 1 takes place at Billingham Forum Theatre and Act 2 takes place at Billingham Forum Ice Arena. The performance is suitable for all ages. Tickets are on sale now 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
- The Festival runs from Saturday 11 August to Sunday 19th August 2018
- 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