

# Pomegranates Festival will feature dance on film

Traditional Dance will be featured on screen on 25 April at the Scottish Storytelling Centre as part of Pomegranates Festival.

On that evening there will be an evening of ten short films celebrating traditional dance on screen. This is an exclusively curated programme showing diverse dance from Scottish Step and Highland to East African and Chinese.

The programme includes three diverse films directed by award-winning Canadian dance filmmaker **Marlene Millar**, Firstly, ***To Begin the Dance Once More*** – the newly revised Traditional Dance Forum of Scotland's first-ever screen dance production exploring Scottish and Egyptian stories of motherhood, featuring choreography by **Vincent Hantam**, and set to the new epic poem about Beira and Bride (the Queen of Winter and the Goddess of Spring) by Scottish storyteller **Donald Smith**.

Secondly, ***Offering*** – inspired by traditional dance processions from the Quebec-based Migration Dance Film collective, world-renowned for their innovative use of vocals and body percussive movement. *Offering* is directed by **Marlene Millar** in collaboration with choreographer **Sandy Silva** with the guest appearance of street dance sensation **Omari Motion Carter**. And thirdly, ***Bhairava*** filmed on the ancient site of Hampi in India, directed by **Marlene Millar and Philip Szporer** (Mouvement Perpétuel, Montréal) with cinematography by **Kes Tagney**.

**Kes Tagney's** recent short *Home* featuring Scottish step dancer **Sophie Stephenson** accompanied by musician **Ronan Martin** is also featured in the programme.

Other highlights include *The Bright Fabric of Life* directed by celebrated Estonian artist and filmmaker **Mare Tralla**; *Deer Dancer* which was first released as a major commission at the Edinburgh Art Festival in 2019 and features three dances, including *Highland Fling*, by **Hanna Tuulikki** exploring male masculinity in dance; two breakdance shorts *Autocorrect* commissioned by Sadler's Wells and directed by this year's choreographer-in-residence MC, hip hop dance artist **Jonzi D**; and *Second Guessing* by Glasgow Bgirl **Emma Ready** which explores the harm experienced by coercive control.

Two other rarely screened films include Chinese short *Crowned by Flame* directed and performed by **Lyuxian Yu**; and *Echoes of a Taiko Drum* which was produced by Billingham Festival Director **Olga Maloney**, and features a unique fusion of Taiko Drums, Georgian, Irish and Indian Kathak Dance.

This 80-minute shorts film programme will be followed by a Q&A with featured creatives, including Scottish Bgirl **Emma Ready**, Estonian filmmaker **Mare Tralla** and Canadian filmmaker **Kes Tagney**.



HOME directed by Kes Tagney

The Pomegranates Festival (25 – 30 April) is the annual platform for the diverse 250+ individual and organisational members of the Traditional Dance Forum of Scotland to teach, learn and perform in new dance theatre and screen dance shows, as well as new productions and residencies. This is the fourth edition of Scotland's annual festival of international traditional dance, initiated, curated and produced by the Traditional Dance Forum of Scotland. It is presented in partnership with TRACS (Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland), Moray House School of Education and Sport, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh Central Library, Dance Base and the Scottish Storytelling Centre.

In 2025 the Pomegranates Festival is funded by Creative Scotland Multi-Year Funding through TRACS (Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland); the City of Edinburgh Council and University of Edinburgh through the Edinburgh Local Community Fund.

For tickets and more information visit <https://www.tdfs.org/pomegranates/>

**Iliyana Nedkova**, who together with **Wendy Timmons** is co-founder

and curator of the Pomegranates Festival said: “I am very pleased that this year’s Pomegranates Festival’s opening evening show is all about world traditional dance and music specifically devised for the camera, not for the stage.

“I believe that magic happens where cinematography meets choreography. Following years of curating, judging and producing short dance films and screen dance festivals, I always wondered why we don’t have a dedicated platform for trad dance on screen. Well, while waiting for the dance film festival circuit to create such a platform, we decided to launch our own global programme and perhaps sow the (pomegranate) seeds of world trad dance on screen by selecting some of the best and rarest examples in this emerging new genre.”

**Mare Tralla**, the Estonian-born and Edinburgh-based artist, as one of the creatives featured in the programme said: “I can’t wait for the launch on the big screen of the latest Traditional Dance Forum of Scotland’s screen dance production *The Bright Fabric of Life* at the opening night of the Pomegranates Festival.

“I designed the set and costumes, shot and edited this new film in the summer 2024 with a great team of creatives using the body language of traditional African dance choreographed specifically for the camera by the esteemed **Vincent Hantam**. The film tells stories of motherhood and kinship, love and loss from Sub-Saharan Africa and Scotland. Also on the night we will celebrate the paperback release of **Mhairi Collie’s** book which inspired our film. The book, just like the film, explores the dramatic life story of Sylvie, an Ethiopian patient and Juliet – a Scottish surgeon.”



Bhairava directed by Marlene Millar and Philip Szporer (Mouvement Perpétuel, Montréal) with cinematography by Kes Tagney.

The programme includes these ten films:

**AUTOCORRECT** (2022, Dir. Jonzi D)

Commissioned by Sadler's Wells and directed and performed by Jonzi D, *AUTOCORRECT* features three male hip hop dancers from New York, London and Kampala. The short film takes inspiration from the cerebral poetry of Saul Williams, supported by Soweto Kinch's textured soundscape.

**Bhairava** (2017, Dir. Marlene Millar and Philip Szporer)

This short evokes facets of Shiva, the Lord of Dance, as both the destroyer of evil and the guardian of time. Carried by a strong and deeply evocative musical score and by the singular energy of the ancient site of Hampi, dancer and choreographer *Shantala Shivalingappa* embodies the presence and distinctive qualities of Bhairava. With her technical mastery and refined expressivity, she alternates between moments of precise symbolic gestures and more abstract body language surging from the powerful and omnipresent persona of Bhairava, creating a vivid incarnation of the deity.

**Crowned by Flame** (2024, Dir. Lyuxian Yu)

In this work, the artist uses cigarette boxes (the world's smallest drum), fire, and the traditional Ji Guan Headpiece (Cockscomb Headpiece)—key symbols of the Chinese ethnic minority Yi culture—to tell a powerful story about navigating cultural heritage and personal freedom. The performance contrasts black modern props with vibrant, traditional ethnic objects, creating a striking collision between cultural pride and the push for liberation.

**Deer Dancer** (2019, Dir. Hanna Tuulikki)

A cross-artform project that grew out of research into the Deer Dance of the indigenous Yaqui of Sonora, Mexico, and their Pascua Yaqui descendants in Arizona, USA; the Highland Fling of the Scottish Highlands; and the Abbots Bromley Horn Dance of Staffordshire, England. The piece was further informed by experiential research into hunting practices and by direct observation of deer in their habitat and explores the mimesis of male deer behaviours, from the capering fawn, to the rutting stag, and how they can inform a 'performance' of masculinity by male dancers, and the implications of these gendered performances in society today.

**Echoes of a Taiko Drum** (2022, Dir. Olga Maloney) A new short screen dance and music film, produced by Billingham Festival Director Olga Maloney, featuring a unique fusion of Taiko Drums, Georgian, Irish and Indian Kathak Dance. Winner of the Best Audience Award at the European Short Film Festival in Berlin in 2022.

**HOME** (2024, Dir. Kes Tagney)

Shot in Scotland and Cornwall, *HOME* premiered last year at the Inverness Film Festival. It features Scottish step dancer Sophie Stephenson accompanied by musician Ronan Martin. Inspired by Stephenson's love for Scotland, at its heart is a real sense of belonging and feeling of deep connection with the place you call Home.

**Offering** (2023, Dir. Marlene Millar)

Using the traditional dance procession choreography, *Offering* creates a meaningful and joyful conversation between the body percussion artists featured in all Migration Dance Film Projects to date and new emerging artists from street, hip hop and gigue dance and circus arts. Special guest appearance by the British hip hop artist OmariMotion Carter.

**Second Guessing** (2023, Dir. Emma Ready and Therese Lynch )

*Second Guessing* investigates coercive control from the victim's perspective. Emma Ready is a Bgirl, choreographer, and creative educator. During her 25 years of breaking, Emma has established an international reputation as an inspirational, and empathetic motivator.

**The Bright Fabric of Life** (2024, Dir, Mare Tralla)

Using the body language of traditional African dance choreographed specifically for the camera, *The Bright Fabric of Life* tells stories of motherhood and kinship, and love and loss from Scotland and Sub-Saharan Africa. It captures the poignant story of Sylvie – a beautiful Ethiopian girl, whose dreams are destroyed when a disastrous childbirth leaves her broken both emotionally and physically, facing rejection and isolation.



The Bright Fabric of Life directed by Mare Tralla  
***To Begin the Dance Once More*** (2023, Dir, Marlene Millar) Four international dancers based in Scotland and Egypt reimagine the mythological world inhabited by the Celtic and Egyptian mothers of Earth. A beautifully compelling and vital piece of storytelling and movement for the screen. Featuring choreography by former Scottish Ballet Principal Dancer **Vincent Hantam**, and set to a new epic poem about Beira and Bride (the Queen of Winter and the Goddess of Spring) by Scottish storyteller **Donald Smith**.