TRADITIONAL DANCE FORUM OF SCOTLAND

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Kukeri is a centuries-old Bulgarian tradition intended to dance away the evil spirits and welcome the arrival of spring. Once a year, Kukeri don scary masks, dress up in furs and dance into the night, armed with huge bells (as featured here) around their waists.

The *Living Heritage* exhibition chronicles how this tradition is passed down through the generations to the children from the **First Bulgarian School *Nadejda Stancioff - Lady Muir,* Edinburgh.**

Scan this QR code to watch the **New Yorker documentary** *How a Bulgarian Village Dances Evil Spirits Away* (2023, Dir. Killian Lassablière, 9 min). Link to the New Yorker YouTube channel.

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The featured Kukeri masks were created by children aged 8-11 from the **First Bulgarian School *Nadejda Stancioff - Lady Muir,* Edinburgh**.

The children wore their masks on stage, embodying the ancestral power of the Kukeri tradition, as they performed in the new dance theatre show *When Will Spring Arrive?* by **Dr Yana Alexandrova** on 22 March 2025 as part of the school's 10th anniversary celebration.

Scan this QR code to see the featured Kukeri masks come alive in the children's performance *When Will Spring Arrive?* Videography by **Martin Dralchev of MA Studio.** Skip to 60 minutes in.

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Commissioned specifically for the *Living Heritage* exhibition, the featured Kukeri landscapes were also created by children aged 8-11 from the **First Bulgarian School *Nadejda Stancioff - Lady Muir,* Edinburgh** under the guidance of the school teachers **Mariana Ilcheva-Dimitrova and Lidiya Ivanova.**

The exhibited works are by **Alex, Alex D, Aleks V, Angel, Angel V, Bozhidar, Daniel, Danimir, Dayana, Eleanor, Elena, Elizabeth, Gabi, Giana, Halil, Iva, Ivanesa, Mia, Mira, Moni, Nicole, Nia, Sofia, Tsveti, Victor and Daria** aged 14.

Scan this QR code to find out more about the school, including the classes in Bulgarian traditional dance led by **Ariana Stoyanova** and **Gabriela Shokolarova** of Hop Trop Edinburgh.

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"When Will Spring Arrive? *is not just a performance but a return to something ancient – fusion of folklore, history and philosophy in one show where winter and spring meet on stage. It tells the story of Baba Marta and a group of children preparing for the arrival of spring, which doesn't seem to be in a hurry to arrive.*

Through dance, music and ancient legends, the children and Baba Marta bring warmth back to the earth. But they are not alone. Strong and masked, the Kukeri arrive with heavy bells, the sounds of which echo through the darkness and with footsteps that chase away the last traces of winter. Even the youngest take their part in the fight against the frost."

Joana Dimitrova

Extract from a review of *When Will Spring Arrive?*

Scan this QR code to read the rest of **Joana Dimitrova's** review and enjoy more images of *When Will Spring Arrive?.* Photography by **Anna Dobreva of MA Studio.**

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In 2015 Kukeri was inscribed in the **UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity**. Safeguarding Scotland's diverse dance traditions as part of our intangible cultural heritage, including those brought to our shores from as far as the lands of Kukeri, is at the heart of what we at **Traditional Dance Forum of Scotland** do. Our Pomegranates Festival last year was themed all around intangible cultural heritage.

This *Living Heritage* exhibition is our latest in a series of curated events about the new opportunities for Scotland's traditional dance practitioners following the UK Government recent ratification of the UNESCO Convention for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Scan this QR code to find out more about **Kukeri's inscription** in the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity as part of the Surova Folk Feast in Pernik Region of Bulgaria.

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This *Living Heritage* exhibition of Kukeri Dancing in Scotland is a companion to the other *Living Heritage* exhibition which we curated specifically for the Edinburgh Central Library this year. It tells the story of Scottish Country Dancing – another centuries-old dance tradition which originated in Scotland and is now practised on all continents. This companion exhibition is also showing until 30 April 2026 but on the Mezzanine Level.

Together with the **Royal Scottish Country Dance Society**, we are advocating for the inscription of Scottish Country Dancing in the UNESCO UK National Inventory and then in the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Scan this QR code to become a member of the **Traditional Dance Forum of Scotland** and find out more about traditional dance as intangible cultural heritage. **Membership is free and open to all.**

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This *Living Heritage* exhibition ends on a high note with another fine example of the Kukeri dance tradition being transmitted through a performance: *Declining Solo* by the award-winning Scottish-Bulgarian theatre company **Two Destination Language** led by **Katherina Radeva and Alister Lownie.**

The Kukeri mask featured here was worn by Alister in this touring show on stage and even featured in the *Staging Places* exhibition at the V&A Museum London. This is its first exhibition in Scotland.

In a nutshell, *Declining Solo* is where "*memories, folklore, political turmoil and family history combine in a celebration of life and our shared stories.*"

Scan this QR code to find out more about **Two Destinatiion Language**. Enjoy a selection of *Declining Solo* production images by **Alex Brenner** also featured in the exhibition.

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Exhibition Acknowledgements

Kukeri Dancing in Scotland as part of our Global Living Heritage

Curated by
Daniela Dimova Yaneva
Iliyana Nedkova

Initiated and produced by
Traditional Dance Forum of Scotland as part of our ongoing campaign for Scotland's diverse traditional dances to be inscribed in UNESCO's lists of intangible cultural heritage

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