



Creator of the Invisible Dances dance project Elisabeth Schilling.

Wake up to remains of a global dance project

Invisible Dances inspired by lockdown ■ Location and date are not revealed

BY STUART PRESTIDGE

A secretive dance performance will take part somewhere in Shetland over the weekend – leaving only a visual interpretation of the performance for people to interact with.

Conceived by Germany-based dancer and choreographer Elisabeth Schilling as a way to create international performance during the global lockdown, Invisible Dances have been performed in 14 countries.

Ms Schilling, 32, said: “During lockdown we weren’t allowed to perform on stages so I thought we had to find something where we can still do our artform, so I came up with the idea of performing during the night and secretive, so without audiences as we were not allowed to assemble people for a very long time.”

“That’s the concept. Because people don’t watch the dances I thought the dances have to leave traces in some ways so I had the idea of tracing the dance with chalk or chalk spray.”

The colourful lines, cast off while professional the dancers move, have appeared in market squares the world over but Shetlanders will wake up to discover a new twist to the visual art aspect of the installation.

She said: “What is really special about Shetland is that we will not perform with

chalk spray but the visual artist has collected natural materials from the islands and he will trace the dance with those natural materials.

“It is something we have never done before but I think it really works with Shetland because it’s such a beautiful natural place.”

Accompanied by sounds and a poem explaining the concept, the Invisible Dances’ footprint encourages people to interact with the lines and video or picture the results.

The visual remnants usually last a week or so before the rain and footfall eliminate any sign it was ever there. The aftermath here, however, is an unknown quantity.

“Shetland has a very changing landscape because of the wind, it has a lot of weather, so I cannot say how long it will last. I literally don’t know if it will be gone in a day or a month.”

Ms Schilling has been dancing since she was five.

“My mum always said I never stopped dancing at home so she put me into the ballet school,” said Ms Schilling.

She went on to study contemporary dance in London before choreographing her own performances and getting her first gig, not in Vienna or Paris, but Unst.

“I was travelling the islands when I was younger by myself and as an artist I would always think about bringing my work

there. I am really interested in bringing my work to rural places as to me that is where the most interesting audiences are who don’t have the daily offering of performance, who don’t know what contemporary dance is even.

“I saw on Facebook a colleague of mine was travelling to Shetland to have residency with Tony Humbleyard so I wrote to him and just said ‘can I come to Shetland as well and perform?’”

“It was one of my first gigs as a performer with my own work, so I arrived in Lerwick, took the ferry and on the ferry Tony had put posters of my work up everywhere, I felt so touched, felt so welcome.”

Running in conjunction with Invisible Dances is a free 90-minute workshop at Bigton Hall.

Designed and developed by Ms Schilling and led by local artists Kathryn Gordon and Tony Humbleyard, the workshop will fuse dance, visual art, individual creativity and collective reflection.

Ms Schilling said: “I am in Germany so I manage everything from my home and I have really good friends in Shetland who help me manage this.”

She added: “It is completely free for anyone from age six, but we ask for kids to be accompanied by an adult. You don’t need any experience but you should bring the willingness to move about a bit.”

Author to explore wartime history with students

Sandwick Junior High School is one of just 10 selected by the Scottish Book Trust to receive a fully-funded resident author.

The residencies have been created to inspire a lifelong love of reading and writing in youngsters.

It will also give professional writers the opportunity to build relationships with their school and work on creative projects.

Elizabeth Wein will work with Sandwick High School. The American author was born in New York City in 1964 and moved to England when she was three. She went to school in a small village just outside Alderley Edge, Cheshire.

Ms Wein studied at Yale University before earning a PhD in Folklore at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. In 1991 she met her future English husband and in 1995 moved back to England with him.

The pair moved to Scotland in 2000, where they have remained ever since.

She said: “I fell in love with Shetland during a visit in October 2019; its intricate past and present inspired some of my own poetry.”

“I’m thrilled to explore Shetland’s wartime history with a new generation of local writers and to help these young people find connections and inspiration of their own.”

Ms Wein has written numerous novels in addition to short stories and nonfiction works and her first published book, *The Winter Prince*, have all been written in Scotland.

Her most celebrated work is *Code Name Verity*, a Second World War thriller set in 1943 Nazi-occupied France.

Zuzanna O’Rourke, library assistant at Sandwick Junior High School, said: “We are excited to work with Elizabeth Wein on this project.”

“We hope it will bring local World War Two history to life for our pupils through the power of creativity, imagination and empathy.”

The live literature school residencies programme, now in its sixth year, is funded by the Walter Scott Giving Group and delivered by Scottish Book Trust, the national charity with the aim to change lives through reading and writing.

Trust chief executive Marc Lambert said: “The school residencies programme is incredibly important, as it allows authors to build relationships with a school over time, working together with pupils on a dedicated project.”

“Many of these projects will work with the local community and will also build on the school’s Covid recovery plan, addressing issues such as pupil wellbeing; rebuilding reading and writing cultures and also lost transition time for P7/S1.”

He added: “We are grateful to our funders the Walter Scott Giving Group and the Mohn Westlake Foundation for making this programme available to all schools including ASN settings.”

The residencies will run across the 2021-22 school year and finish by May 2022. As well as an author residency, schools will receive a resources grant of £500.

Each school’s project will be showcased on Scottish Book Trust’s website, alongside suggested learning resources and helpful tips to make the most of the residency sessions.



Author Elizabeth Wein will be Sandwick School’s resident writer.

Photo: David Ho



Yoga teacher Maya Schlomka will be travelling over from her home in Jaffa, Israel, later this month.

Yoga teacher to pay visit

An Ashtanga Vinyasa yoga teacher from Israel will be visiting Shetland later this month to offer a number of classes for beginners and experts alike.

Maya Schlomka is visiting from her home in Jaffa, one of the oldest port cities in the world, to offer classes across the isles after a planned three-day yoga retreat had to be cancelled due to Covid.

Ms Schlomka’s parents, Sunita Staneslow and Fred Schlomka are currently renovating the historic Hamars property in Haroldswick, Unst.

Ms Schlomka is a naturopathic doctor and reflex-

ologist and has trained in dance, is a graduate of the Wingate Institute in Israel and has taken an advanced yoga course in Mysore, India.

The classes will be held at the Islesborough Community Centre in Lerwick, Cullivoe Hall in Yell, Uyeasound Hall and the leisure centre in Unst. There’s also a class scheduled to be held at Skaw Beach in Unst.

Shetland yoga teacher Kate Lonsdale has also invited Ms Schlomka to be a guest instructor at her regularly scheduled classes during her visit.

Clubley tells the stories of Orkney and its people

Self-confessed island lover Richard Clubley tells the story of his move to Orkney and describes what makes island life remarkable in his latest book, *Orkney: A Special Way of Life*.

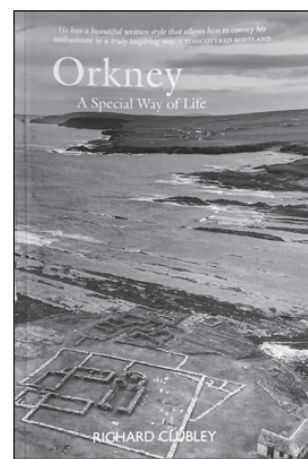
“My town in Derbyshire has a population much the same as Orkney’s but I have never been delayed by a torpedo or been roped in to sell stamps,” he writes.

“I suppose these things could be described as frustrations but, for me, they are just part of what makes Orkney special.”

His experiences of building a house are likely to sound familiar to sooth-moother who have made the move to Shetland.

And some of his observations on rural island life could similarly be said of Shetland – the importance of community, a respect for the sea, frustration over internet speeds and a love of homebakes.

But what makes the book more interesting is that he doesn’t just rely on his words to convey the reality of living in Orkney.



Orkney: A Special Way of Life by Richard Clubley.

There are also contributions from a number of Kirkwall Grammar School students and those from the outer islands.

Kirkwall Grammar School student Izzy Nicholson reflects on being brought up in Orkney: “I

realised that growing up in Orkney has made me too naive and trusting. But I don’t care. It has set a standard for how people all over the world should treat each other.”

He also includes recollections from RNLI volunteers as well as seafarers who have been fortunate to be rescued.

Stromness lifeboat coxswain Fred Breck recalls one successful search and rescue of a Birsay fisherman whose boat had suffered engine failure: “We would have gone on looking all night. After daybreak we would almost certainly have found him, or in the worst case, learned what had happened to him.”

The book is more than one man’s experience of Orkney, it’s a collection of Orcadians’ stories which help to reveal the character of the islands and its people.

Orkney: A Special Way of Life, published by Luath Press, is available now from the Shetland Times Bookshop, priced £9.99.

Jackie Darbyshire