

The Whitgift
production of
Billy Elliot the Musical

WHITGIFT

BILLY ELLIOT

THE MUSICAL

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Wednesday 22 – Saturday 25 June
7pm | Big School

PERFORMING
ARTS EVENTS
TRINITY TERM
2022



The Whitgift production of



Book and lyrics by
Lee Hall

Music by
Elton John

Originally directed by
Stephen Daldry

Orchestrations by
Martin Koch

Executive producers (original production)
Angela Morrison David Furnish

Producers (original production)
Tim Bevan Eric Fellner Jon Finn Sally Greene

Originally presented in London by
Universal Pictures Stage Productions, Working Title Films and Old Vic Productions,
in association with Tiger Aspect.
Based on Universal Pictures/Studio Canal Film.



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

As a northern lass who has been dancing since the age of 4, it comes as no surprise to me that I eventually find myself directing this coming-of-age show here at Whitgift, where, despite being a linguist, my love of dance and musical theatre continue to be indulged and called-upon with frightening frequency! A tendency to flatten all my vowels has come in rather handy with this production too, unsurprisingly!

The plot of 'Billy Elliot, the Musical' focusses on working-class, motherless Billy, who begins taking ballet lessons almost by accident, and finds, much to his surprise, that he has talent and far more enthusiasm for this pursuit than for boxing. This story of his personal struggle to be true to himself by overcoming family bigotry and financial hardship to eventually make it to the Royal Ballet School is juxtaposed against community strife caused by the 1984–85 miners' strike in County Durham. Although Billy's aspirations may eventually be realised, his local community faces ruin and class differences still persist.

The central theme of this musical is of being able to

express oneself, in Billy's case, through art, and in doing so, set oneself free from the constraints of society (*'suddenly I'm flying, flying like a bird'*). But it's not just about Billy finding his voice, it's about his Dad finally hearing him too. When Billy is asked the question *"What does it feel like when you're dancing?"*, this is used as the impetus for him to explain to his father why they are at the audition in the first place and how much ballet really means to him (*'I feel it move me, like a burning deep inside, something bursting me wide open, impossible to hide'*). Billy is not really telling the panel at all. He's actually telling his father how he feels, something he knows his mother would have better understood. In this scene, and gradually throughout, the tone is of acceptance and open-mindedness, particularly in the way the story explores and challenges traditional masculine stereotypes, which are also repeated in the show's lyrics of *'Expressing Yourself'* and embracing one's *'individuality'*. It is a heart-warming story of what acceptance between friends, family and community members should look like, that can resonate with us all.

It is worth noting that the language in Billy Elliot reflects a very specific culture and moment in time. Swearing in the play is often used to capture certain 'rhythms' and informality of speech and is not meant to cause offence. The same can be said of some of the language, that today might be considered homophobic in nature. With a nod to our somewhat younger cast members, we have substituted less provocative words or phrases at times, to strike a more appropriate balance between drama representative of a certain era and acceptability.

As with any Whitgift Musical, this has been a hugely collaborative effort to rehearse and stage, and I am immensely grateful to Thomas Motley, in his final incarnation as a Whitgift Musical Director, for ensuring the appropriate roughness and delicacy of the lyrics and tone of the story have been conveyed and that the band have been prepared with his trademark enthusiasm and are able to bring the 'razzle dazzle' to set this show alight. I have been equally delighted to welcome onboard relative Whitgift newcomers Alistair Henfrey, George Dixon and

Isobel Jacob and draw on their many years of expertise in direction, choreography and production respectively – I simply could not have managed without them! With the unbridled professionalism of Peter Crook, David Jenkinson, Alex Hill and Henry Parritt – our Technical Direction team – added to the mix, transforming my inexpertly drawn ideas into reality on stage, collectively, I hope we have pulled off a remarkable feat for these performers to experience the joy of involvement in a full-blown production.

Staging a complex musical such as this was never going to be easy, not least with life having to mirror art in terms of our lead cast members needing to learn to dance from scratch. They have risen to this challenge with

unbelievable enthusiasm, swapping ballet shoes for tap shoes with ease and practising their pirouettes at every turn (no pun intended!). We have been constantly astonished by the progress made and the skills developed in these young performers. We are so proud that our relatively inexperienced cast has risen to the challenge of conveying these important messages of acceptance and tolerance through the medium of drama, music and dance, and hope that this uplifting performance has you all considering how you too, can 'be who you want to be'.

'Everyone is different, it's a natural thing!'

FE Carter
Director



CAST

<i>Billy Elliot</i>	Monty Al-Qassab and George Pang
<i>Michael</i>	Daniel Ampleford and Logan Brunni
<i>Mrs Wilkinson</i>	Anna Brovko
<i>Dad</i>	Clifford Ho
<i>Tony</i>	Marcos Byrne
<i>Grandma</i>	Elana Punjani
<i>Dead Mum</i>	Amira Gill
<i>Mr Braithwaite</i>	Louis Boon
<i>Older Billy</i>	Joe Reynolds
<i>Debbie</i>	Reya Shah
<i>George</i>	Joe Sigrist
<i>Big Davey</i>	Nick Seal
<i>Posh Boy</i>	Louis Boon
<i>Posh Dad</i>	Oscar Robinson
<i>Small Boy</i>	Tolly Danielson
<i>Tall Boy</i>	Hamish McMillan
<i>Pit Supervisor</i>	Kolawole Oyewole
<i>Scab</i>	Cormac Walters
<i>Clipboard Woman</i>	Imogen Bourn

BALLET GIRLS

<i>Julie Hope</i>	Elan Bartlett
<i>Tracy Atkinson</i>	Grace Binacchi
<i>Susan Parks</i>	Imogen Bourn
<i>Tina Harmer</i>	Alexa Haslock
<i>Karen Davidson</i>	Arianna Mohammadi
<i>Sharon Percy</i>	Vienne Punjani

MINERS & POLICE OFFICERS

Gibran Ahmed, Leo Archer, Nifemi Bankole, Amira Gill, Joseph Gill, Henry Hudson, Otto Monge, Hugo Ong-Seng, Teddy Proud, Theo Tabraham, Joe Reynolds, Oscar Robinson, Henry Walton

WOMEN

Grace Binacchi, Imogen Bourn, Amira Gill, Elana Punjani

BAND

<i>Conductor</i>	TJ Motley
<i>Keyboard 1</i>	Ethan Gilbert
<i>Keyboard 2</i>	L Connery
<i>Bass</i>	S Kennard
<i>Drums</i>	Samuel Burke
<i>Guitar</i>	M Helm
<i>Horn</i>	Alexander Blonski-Rulach and K Elliott
<i>Reed 1</i>	S Corkin
<i>Reed 2</i>	Kamau Davis and M Gray
<i>Trumpet</i>	Edward Bowley and J Marshall

CREATIVES

<i>Director</i>	FE Carter
<i>Co-Director</i>	AG Henfrey
<i>Musical Director</i>	TJ Motley
<i>Choreographer</i>	GL Dixon
<i>Assistant Choreographer</i>	FE Carter
<i>Producer</i>	ICS Jacob
<i>Lighting Designer</i>	DP Jenkinson
<i>Sound Designer</i>	AJ Hill
<i>Sound 2</i>	Max Edwards
<i>Stage Manager</i>	Sam Parker
<i>Assistant Stage Managers</i>	Krystal Appau, Freya Hawker, Phoebe La, Zara Ogazi-Khan and JM Nash
<i>Scenic Artists</i>	M Saunders, OA Bhatti and DA Binacchi
<i>Technical Support</i>	HD Parritt and PJ Crook

HAIR AND MAKE-UP

Adjoa Abboah-Offei, Isabel Anyani-Boadan, Saambavee Comaren,
KB Barker, OA Bhatti, JS Barrat, G Campos Rodriguez,
DL Fieller, YA Idris, A Nicholls, EO Spedding



BILLY ELLIOT: A STORY OF HOPE IN A CHASM OF CHAOS

The 1980s was a time of monumental change and transition for the UK, led by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Towns that were once thriving observed a fundamental change due to the mines closing, as part of Thatcher's economic programme which left many unemployed and isolated. Lee Hall sets the original film, *Billy Elliot*, in County Durham during the 1984-85 Miners' Strike. Released in 2000, Lee Hall's film is quickly made into the musical which is first performed in 2005. The setting can be seen as the apex of tensions between trade unions, such as the National Union of Mineworkers, and the Conservative Government. The Strike launched nationwide on March 12th, 1984, when the NUM's president, Arthur Scargill, made the strike official

These elements of the play provide a stark contrast to the hopeful story of Billy Elliot, and encapsulate the disjointed society that Thatcher had created in the hope of a more modern Britain.

The Miners' Strike was declared illegal by the Conservative Government in September 1984, due to a national ballot of NUM members not being held on commencing the strike. This was a defining moment in UK politics, since the once dominant Trade Unions were severely weakened. Only seven years earlier, in a survey, the general secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union, Jack Jones, was voted the most powerful man in Britain by 54%, ahead of the Prime Minister. This meteoric fall was a massive victory for the Conservatives

programme. Since County Durham was at the heart of this struggle, *Billy Elliot* is set in Britain's most volatile and transitional period within the 20th Century.

Despite the Strike's short period of a year, it caused widespread disruption and unrest throughout England. This reached a fever pitch on July 16th, 1984, when Thatcher convened a ministerial meeting to consider calling a National State of Emergency. This rare sense of concern for Thatcher was predominantly caused by the NUM's organisation of picketing and strikes throughout the country. This involved preventing workers from going to work in local mines or preventing the government from travelling down motorways through blockades. Mrs. Thatcher considered using 4,500 military drivers and 1,650 tipper trucks to keep coal supplies available. The scale of this strike can't be overestimated; it provides an injection of reality in Billy's story that taints his dreams and ambitions.

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across Britain. We see this highlighted in moments throughout the musical, like when Mrs. Wilkinson's ballet class' usual studio is converted into a soup kitchen for the striking miners.

and triggered the beginning of the end for the Miners' Strike and its cause. This end was reached only six months after it was ruled illegal, allowing Thatcher to consolidate her economic

The Miners' Strike directly impacts the musical and is mainly explored through Billy's father, due to his



Miners Strike March on Rotherham Silverwood Pit (1973) – Paige / Licensed under CC BY 2.0.

response and dilemma towards it. He is a single father who is struggling for money so, despite it going against his political beliefs, he chooses to go back to work. On the other hand, Billy's brother continues his violent protesting, highlighting two conflicting approaches to the ongoing struggling, providing a microcosm for the damage felt by families across England. A sense of sectionality is present in Billy's hometown between the establishment and its residents; in the film, Billy's brother Tony accosts a strike-breaker in a grocery store saying, "Scabs eat well, do they?". Lee Hall is able to demonstrate the pain and suffering from the strike on a multi-dimensional level

since he explores it on the individual, community, and in relationships.

Arguably the most notorious moments from the Miners' Strike were the violence as a result of the clashes between protesters and the police. One of the most renowned was the "Battle of Orgreave" on 18th June 1984, only around 100 miles away from *Billy Elliot's* setting. A confrontation occurred between 5,000 miners, and an equivalent number of police officers, that broke into violence after the miners tried to form a blockade. This led to 51 picketers and 72 policemen being injured. This event wasn't unique, since instances in Maltby, South Yorkshire and Brampton

Bierlow in Yorkshire fuelled tensions. These incidents encapsulate the deeply broken nature of the UK at the time, and the majority of the Working Class who felt disenfranchised and villainised.

The aftermath provided a sombre picture for England, especially the North. Thatcher's plan did not address the huge chasm in income or daily life that people felt as a result of the mines shutting. Poverty ravaged old mining communities, and Grimethorpe, South Yorkshire was classed as the poorest settlement in the country in 1994. Protestors in South Yorkshire did receive some recompense, since the police paid compensation of £425,000 to 39 miners who were arrested during a protest for "assault, false imprisonment and malicious prosecution" in 1991. Unfortunately, this grace didn't reach so many other victims of police violence, which adds a bittersweet element to the musical's context. Many people's dreams of justice were never fulfilled.

Thomas Kiely
Lower Sixth Form







'So we walk proudly

And we walk strong

All together

We will go as one...'

THANK YOU...

Mounting a theatrical production in such a busy school requires the help and goodwill of a great number of people. We would like to thank: the Headmaster and the Governors for their support; subject teachers for their patience and understanding in helping the performers to balance their studies with rehearsals; William Barnes-McCallum and Alan Weakley for their musical assistance; James Hammond, Director of Drama,

for his endless support, belief and guidance; Old Palace of John Whitgift School, Trinity School, WAVPA and Freeflow Performing Arts for encouraging and supporting their girls to join our production; Lesley Goucher for helping us to source the many props and costumes; Samantha Vary for sending letters and organising the calendar; the marketing team for advertising the show and Graham Maudsley for designing the poster and

programme; the catering team for providing dinners during show week and for organising interval refreshments; Christine Pennicott for managing the box office; John Hickey-Birkett for finding endless rehearsal venues during a busy exam period; the great cleaning staff; and, finally, the parents of the cast for supporting their children to attend rehearsals, learn lines and commit to what has been an intense process.

Free WAVPA Workshop



Sunday 26 June from 11am to 1pm.

The Performing Arts Centre, Whitgift School, South Croydon.

This free workshop will provide 2 hours of **DRAMA**, **DANCE** and **THEATRE** training and is an ideal taster session for 8 – 18 year olds thinking about joining a Saturday performing arts programme.

For more information, visit www.whitgift.co.uk/wavpa

To reserve a place, please scan the code below to **pre-register**:

WAVPA

WHITGIFT ACADEMY
OF VISUAL AND
PERFORMING ARTS





WHITGIFT

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National Theatre New Views

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PAC

Thursday 13 October 2022

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PAC

Wednesday 7 – Friday 9

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by Bertolt Brecht

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