

BILLY ELLIOT THE MUSICAL

BILLY ELLIOT THE MUSICAL
BOOK AND LYRICS BY LEE HALL
MUSIC BY ELTON JOHN
ORIGINALLY DIRECTED BY STEPHEN DALDRY
DIRECTED AND CHOREOGRAPHED BY DONNA FEORE

GRADE RECOMMENDATION

Suitable for Grade 5 and up.

CONTENT ADVISORY FOR STUDENTS

Explores mature themes, including issues of gender/sexual identity, contains coarse language and staged violence.

STUDENT MATINÉE DATES

April 16, 22, 24; May 1, 8, 14, 16*, 20, 30; June 4, 7, 12, 14, 19, 20*, 21, 26, 28; September 6, 10, 17, 19, 27; October 1, 9, 10, 15, 18, 23, 24, 25, 29, 30.

(* = Performance starts at 12:30 p.m.)

ABOUT THE MUSICAL

The musical is based on the 2000 film *Billy Elliot*. The story of Billy's struggles is set during the 1984–85 UK miners' strike in the north-east of England. The musical won four Laurence Olivier Awards, ten Tony Awards and ten Drama Desk Awards.

SYNOPSIS

Motherless eleven-year-old Billy is off to boxing class while his dad and his brother, Tony, join the coal miners' strike and clash with the police. After boxing class, Billy comes across the ballet class run by Mrs. Wilkinson and, attracted to the magic of the dance, secretly joins the class.

Billy's dad finds out and forbids him from taking any more lessons. At the same time, Mrs. Wilkinson sees that Billy has talent and suggests he audition for the Royal Ballet School in London. She offers him free private lessons to prepare him. Billy seeks advice from his friend, Michael. He finds Michael wearing a dress and together, they dress up in women's clothes, for a moment breaking free from their daily constraints. Billy decides to pursue dance in secret.

As Billy begins his first private lessons with Mrs. Wilkinson, he brings with him his mum's letter before she died as an inspiration for his dance audition. Meanwhile, Billy's dad and his brother, Tony, struggle to support the family with the little strike and union pay they get.

On the day of Billy's audition for the Royal Ballet School, the police



storm through the town, injuring Tony. When Billy is unable to meet Mrs. Wilkinson at the agreed-upon pick-up to go to London because of the police blockade, Mrs. Wilkinson goes to Billy's house, thus revealing that she has been secretly preparing Billy for the audition. Mr. Elliot and Tony are furious and argue with Mrs. Wilkinson. Tony humiliates Billy by trying to make him dance on the table in front of everyone. As the police approach, everyone runs away. Billy tells his dad that his mum would have let him dance, but his dad refuses to accept this, replying that his mother is dead. A devastated Billy flies into a rage.

Six months later, after the coal miners' Christmas show, we see Billy continue to dream, dancing alone with his music player. Billy's dad arrives and secretly observes him dance. Later, he goes to Mrs. Wilkinson who confirms that Billy has talent. She offers to help pay for the trip to London to audition, but Mr. Elliot is too proud to accept this offer.

Mr. Elliot decides that the only way to pay for Billy's trip is to cross the picket line. This infuriates Tony, they get into an argument, and Billy is hit accidentally. The miners rally together to support the Elliots to pay for the trip to London. Tony is disheartened.

At the Royal Ballet School things don't go according to plan. At the end of the audition, a member of the audition panel asks Billy what it feels like when he dances. Billy responds by passionately describing it as electricity.

Back at home, everyone anxiously awaits to hear if Billy is accepted. The letter finally arrives, but Billy is fearful of the changes that will

come his way and says he was not accepted, throwing the letter away. Tony retrieves the letter and discovers that Billy was, in fact, accepted. Meanwhile, news arrives that the miners' union has capitulated and lost the strike.

Billy goes to Mrs. Wilkinson to thank her for her help. The miners unhappily return to work knowing they will soon be unemployed. Billy says goodbye to his dead mother, who lives in his imagination and who has always given him moral support. He then says goodbye to his best friend, Michael, and walks out into his future alone.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

GLOBAL COMPETENCIES:

- Creativity
- Learning to Learn/Self-Awareness
- Communication
- Collaboration
- Critical Thinking

GRADES 5–12:

- Language Arts/English (listening to understand, speaking to communicate, reading for meaning)
- Dance, Drama, Music, Visual Art

GRADES 5–12:

- Health and Physical Education (conflict resolution, harassment, bullying, care for self and others, stereotypes and assumptions, sexual orientation, acceptance)

GRADE 11:

- Introduction to Anthropology, Psychology and Sociology (explaining human behaviour and culture, socialization)
- Gender Studies (the social construction of gender)
- Equity, Diversity and Social Justice (power relations, social awareness and individual action, respecting diversity)
- Dynamics of Human Relationships (self-concept and healthy relationships, making decisions)

GRADE 12:

- Human Development throughout the Lifespan (factors affecting social-emotional development)
- World History Since the Fifteenth Century (social, economic and political context, communities, conflict)
- Adventures in World History (politics and conflict, work and economics)

THEMES

- Family: Father-Son Relationships, Expectations, Sacrifice, Conflict and Acceptance
- Growing Up: Self-Discovery, Standing Up for Yourself, Pursuing Your Dreams, Self-Expression
- Change: Community, Generational Shifts, Tradition, Challenging Stereotypes, Taking Risks, Re-Evaluating Personal Beliefs
- Justice: Gender Identity And Inclusion, Socioeconomic Disparity and Conflict, the Strength of the Individual and Power in Numbers

CLASSROOM WARM-UP

Ask students the following question:

Are there jobs, sports or other activities that are still restricted, or perceived to be restricted, by gender? Brainstorm these together.

Discuss the ways in which attitudes or rules around gender impact access and equity.

Explore the ways in which these restrictions have or might be challenged.

Have each student choose and do research on either an artist, athlete, politician or businessperson who became famous because of their hard work, perseverance and because they were able to cross the gender barrier. Next, have them share their findings with the rest of the class in a short presentation in a format of their choosing.

Debrief, asking the students the following questions:

Do you think we have attained equity and inclusivity in the arts, sports, politics, business, etc.? Why or why not?

What actions will you take to further foster equity across all genders?

ENRICHMENT

Study Guide available at stratfordfestival.ca/studyguides

Prologues (interactive presentations on stage) at 11 a.m. before every student matinée except April 16, 22, 24; May 1, 20, 30; June 26, 28; September 6, 10, 17, 19; October 10, 24.

Workshops and post-show chats may be arranged by calling the Education Department at 519.271.4040, ext. 2354.

Festival Theatre and Costume Warehouse tours may be arranged by calling the Box Office at 1.800.567.1600.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Online: www.stratfordfestival.ca/schools

Email: groups@stratfordfestival.ca

Phone: 1.800.567.1600 or 519.273.1600

Mail:

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Production support is generously provided by the Harkins & Manning families in memory of Jim & Susan Harkins and by Riki Turofsky & Charles Petersen