



Helpful Information about *Billy Elliot the Musical*

Audience Advisory:

This production includes strong and at times profane adult language and staged violence. It may not be suitable for young children or audiences sensitive to mature themes. Strobe lights are used. For the relaxed performance, house lights will be raised.

About the Language:

"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 specifically cause offence. It is firmly in a British tradition which allows more robust language into its drama.... The language in *Billy Elliot* is used to balance the potential that the show could become too sentimental. The power of the piece is in the contrast between the roughness and the delicacy."

– Lee Hall, book & lyrics, *Billy Elliot the Musical*

In the show, characters pay "50p" for their dance and boxing lessons. In British currency, 50p (50 pence, or half a pound sterling) is currently equivalent to \$0.81 Canadian.

Historical Background:

Billy Elliot the Musical is set in the north-east of England during the bitterly divisive coal miners' strike of 1984-85.

Margaret Thatcher was prime minister of the United Kingdom at the time of the strike. Her economic policies included reducing the power of trade unions.

Trade unions are organizations formed by workers to protect and further their rights and interests in their field of work. The miners in *Billy Elliot the Musical* are part of the National Union of Mineworkers, the initials of which appear on their work jackets.

Imagination:

In the show, Billy uses his imagination to cope with the loss of his mom. She appears several times on stage, visible only to Billy (and to the audience), not to the other characters. Billy also imagines himself as a grown-up and highly accomplished dancer. In one dream sequence, he and his older self – again, visible only to Billy and to the audience – perform a ballet together.

Billy's Grandma sings a song about her deceased husband. In her imagination, she dances with a number of young men representing her husband. Again, only she and the audience can see them.

Actor Interaction with the Audience:

Throughout the performance, actors will be entering and exiting the stage using some of the same aisles audiences use to enter their seats. This happens in aisles 3, 5 and 7.