

OPENING NIGHT: “Born to boogie!”

Detailed Synopsis

“Where music is played, oh your soul will be swayed.
And your feet they will move as if only to prove that it
wasn’t by chance- we were destined to dance.”

- *Born to Boogie*

The story is set against the turbulent background of the 1984-1985 miners’ strike in the small mining town of Easington in the North East of England (“*The Stars Look Down*”). Billy is naturally expected to become a miner like his brother Tony, his father Jackie and his father’s father before him. Despite the ravages of the strike, the family scrapes together 50 pence (approximately \$0.79) each week for Billy to go to boxing lessons. After boxing one day Billy passes the hall keys to the resident dance teacher, the exuberant Mrs. Wilkinson, and finds himself suddenly part of the dance class, connecting with the power of the music (“*Shine*”). Billy secretly begins to go to ballet classes, unable to tell his family who would never understand. Billy lives with his father, his brother, and Grandma (“*Grandma’s Song*”). Jackie and Tony Elliot stand with the strikers and express their unity (“*Solidarity*”). The only person Billy confides in is his friend Michael, who is happy to listen in between dressing up in his sister’s dresses (“*Expressing Yourself*”).



Trent Kowalik (Billy) and ballet girls. Photo by Alastair Muir.

At home, Billy thinks of his mother, who died when he was young (“*Letter*”). Sparks fly when Billy’s dad discovers that his son has been frittering away his hard earned money on ballet instead of boxing. Nevertheless, Billy takes up Mrs. Wilkinson’s secret offer of free private classes in preparation for an audition for the Royal Ballet School (“*Born to Boogie*”).

The strike, meanwhile, is getting more and more heated. There are pitched battles between the police and the miners that split friends. However, when Jackie Elliot unexpectedly stumbles upon Billy expressing his deepest emotions through dance (“*Angry Dance*”), he is suddenly struck by how talented his son is, and heads off to see Mrs. Wilkinson to find out more about the audition. He reflects on his life and his home (“*Deep in the Ground*”).

Going back to work to earn travel money for the trip to London means breaking the strike (“*Merry Christmas Maggie Thatcher*”). Jackie convinces Tony and the strikers to pool together what little money they have to help Billy go to London and audition (“*He Could Be a Star*”). The audition committee asks Billy why he loves to dance and he responds passionately (“*Electricity*”). Back at home in Easington, the miners express sadness over the loss of the mines in their home (“*Once We Were Kings*”). Billy receives a letter welcoming him to the Royal Ballet School. He says goodbye to Mrs. Wilkinson and shows her the letter his mother wrote (“*Letter - reprise*”). Billy heads off to London, finally fulfilling his dream (“*Finale*”).