

Billy Elliot Festival Theatre

4th & 5th June 2010



Matt Hall is playing Billy - seen here reading the letter from his late mother

Celebrating five years in the West End, last December the producers of Billy Elliot The Musical launched a new initiative, Billy Youth Theatre, allowing schools and youth groups around the country the opportunity to perform their own amateur production of the internationally award-winning show.

Edinburgh Gang Show with The Manor School of Ballet are delighted that they will be taking part, with their production planned for 4th and 5th June at the Festival Theatre, Edinburgh, and at the same time raising funds for Radio Forth's Cash for Kids. Lee Hall, who originally conceived the idea behind Billy Youth Theatre, said: "I am delighted that young people around the country will have the opportunity to bring the story of Billy Elliot to life in their local communities."

The boy who will play Billy in Edinburgh, Matt Hall, 13, is hugely excited about playing this iconic role. He says, "It's awesome to be able to say that I'm Billy. I've loved learning to dance and be part of this amazing opportunity – and I get to perform on the massive stage of the Festival Theatre!" The Edinburgh Gang Show is the largest annual show at the King's Theatre and features over 200 young people from Scouting and Girlguiding, and is currently celebrating 50 years of entertaining in the capital. This is the first time it has undertaken such a project and entered into a co-production.

Gordon Blackburn, who is the Honorary Life President of the company Edinburgh Gang Show Productions Limited, says, "This

the first time that EGSPL has presented a production in the Festival Theatre but it is not the first time that Edinburgh Scouts have appeared on the famous stage. In 1960, Edinburgh Wolf Cubs presented Cub Capers in the Empire Theatre.” He adds, “Even before then, the RAF Gang Shows produced by Ralph Reader, the founder of Gang Show, appeared during the 1940s and 50s; it is a great honour for us all to follow in his footsteps with this superb modern musical.”

Director of the Edinburgh Gang Show and Billy Elliot The Musical, Andy Johnston says, “With Billy Elliot, Lee Hall and Elton John have crafted a masterful slice of social history – a story that realistically demonstrates the passion, the desperation and the comradeship within the mining communities of the 1980s. During this production, our entire cast have been on a journey similar to Billy’s – the casts from both the Gang Show and The Manor are working outside their normal parameters, pooling their talents and working as a team to create a memorable production, worthy of the illustrious Festival Theatre.”

The Manor School of Ballet is one of Scotland’s most established and respected ballet schools, with branches across Edinburgh and the Scottish Borders. On the invitation of Andy Johnston and John Duncan from Gang Show, the directors of The Manor School were very enthusiastic about offering their pupils a new theatrical experience. Claire Smith, one of the directors says, “This is the first time I have worked on a Manor production which is entirely different from our own school shows but I have found it a rewarding experience.” She adds, “I’ve thoroughly enjoyed the challenge of working with the cast of Gang Show on the musical numbers, and have been so impressed with their enthusiasm and willingness to learn the dance steps.” Billy Elliot The Musical will be directed by Andy Johnston (07712485318). The Musical Director will be John Duncan, with choreography by Claire Smith and Jacqueline Casey. The show will feature a cast of over 90 young people, a large orchestra and approximately 60 adult helpers behind the

scenes.

Festival Theatre, Edinburgh Fri 4 & Sat 5 June

7.30pm/Sat 2.30pm (running time approx 2hrs 20 mins)

Tickets: £10.00 – £15.00/Family Saver (4 people, max 2 adults)
£42.00

Box Office: 0131 529 6000

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