



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COCA'S SUMMER MUSICAL RETURNS WITH *BILLY ELLIOT*

In-Person and Virtual Performances to Feature St. Louis Talent

ST. LOUIS—[COCA](#)'s Summer Musical returns to the stage with this summer's production of [Billy Elliot](#). The musical features some of the best talent in St. Louis with COCA's student performers, local apprentice actors, and regional professional performers all coming together under the direction of Nancy Bell for an uplifting and energetic theatre experience. In-person tickets are available for July 30–August 1, and virtual tickets offer access to stream the production any time July 30–August 5.

"Although there is still a lot of suffering in the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have so much to be hopeful and grateful about, which is why *Billy Elliot* is the perfect show for right now. It's about a moment in time when huge historical events overwhelmed normal people's everyday lives and about how those people—especially the kids—survived, thrived, and overcame," said Nancy Bell, Director of *Billy Elliot*. "With this show, we have an opportunity to create a lot of joy and beauty with our art to express our own historical moment."

Set in a village in northeast England during the miners' strike of 1984/5, *Billy Elliot* tells the story of a young boy who transcends class and circumstance to become a ballet star. The show follows Billy's journey from boxing ring to ballet class where he discovers a passion for dance that unites his family, inspires his community, and changes his life. The powerful melodies of Elton John's score take us on the journey of a child's emotional struggle. Based on the acclaimed film and garnering Tony, Drama Desk, and Oliver Awards, *Billy Elliot* is a heartwarming and triumphant tale.

Professional performers include Will Bonfiglio as Mr. Braithwaite/Miner, Antonio Douthit-Boyd as Older Billy, and Duane Foster as Billy's Dad. The role of Billy will be played by COCA student Declan Ryan, who has studied at COCA since 2018 and also performed in productions with the Theatre Guild of Webster Groves, Union Avenue Opera, St. Louis Children's Choirs, and Parkway West Middle School. The *Billy Elliot* production team includes music direction by Colin Healy and choreography by Christopher Page-Sanders.

Billy Elliot is presented by Mary Strauss.

AVAILABLE INTERVIEWS

- **Jennifer Wintzer, COCA Artistic Director of Theatre**, oversees COCA Presents and COCA's Pre-Professional Division training program for emerging theatre artists ages 10–18 and adult professionals.
- **Nancy Bell, Director**, has a 25-year professional acting career, working in film, onstage, and on network TV in New York, Los Angeles, and St. Louis. She is a resident artist at St. Louis Shakespeare Festival and associate professor of theatre at Saint Louis University.
- **Christopher Page-Sanders, Choreographer**, received his education and dance training at COCA and the Conservatory of Dance and Music at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. He is a former member of the Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble, founding artistic director of Nu-World Contemporary Dance Company, and choreographer for dance and theatre programs across the nation.
- **Colin Healy, Music Director**, serves as the music director for COCA's Vocal Company and artistic director and voice instructor for Fly North Theatricals. He was the frontman for The Republik, a nationally touring rock band and his work in pop music has been recognized by Billboard and College Music Journal.

IN-PERSON PERFORMANCES | July 30–August 1

Friday, July 30 | 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, July 31 | 2:00 p.m. – Audio description provided by Mindseye Radio

Saturday, July 31 | 7:00 p.m. – ASL interpretation provided by Deaf Inc.

Sunday, August 1 | 3:00 p.m.

VIRTUAL PERFORMANCE ACCESS | July 30–August 5

A pre-recorded performance of COCA's production of Billy Elliot will be available for virtual ticket holders to access from July 30–August 5, 2021.

Virtual and in-person tickets may be purchased through COCA's website at cocastl.org/tickets or by phone at 314.725.6555.

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ABOUT COCA

COCA's mission is to *enrich lives and build community through the arts*. With a commitment to equity and access, COCA serves as a regional hub for learning in and through the arts for all ages from all backgrounds. One of the most diverse cultural institutions in St. Louis, COCA serves over 50,000 students, audience members, artists and families from over 220 zip codes across the St. Louis region every year. The fourth largest multi-disciplinary arts organization in the country, COCA is committed to supporting the vitality and creativity of over 200 artists at the heart of its work in schools, community centers, local business, cultural organizations, and on-site at its campus in University City.

COCA HEALTH & SAFETY PROCEDURES

COCA's Health & Safety Procedures have been approved by St. Louis County. Guests should expect the following health and safety protocols: COCA has increased seating capacity for the Catherine B. Berges Theatre; Guests must wear masks at all times on the COCA campus in both indoor and outdoor spaces; The production will feature unmasked performers. For a full list of COCA's current health and safety protocols, visit cocastl.org/campus-safety.