

10-25-2012

## Billy Elliot Film Review (2012)

Louise Conces  
*Valparaiso University*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://scholar.valpo.edu/core\\_reader](http://scholar.valpo.edu/core_reader)

---

### Recommended Citation

Conces, Louise, "Billy Elliot Film Review (2012)" (2012). *The Valpo Core Reader*. Paper 35.  
[http://scholar.valpo.edu/core\\_reader/35](http://scholar.valpo.edu/core_reader/35)

This Film Review Essay is brought to you for free and open access by ValpoScholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Valpo Core Reader by an authorized administrator of ValpoScholar. For more information, please contact a ValpoScholar staff member at [scholar@valpo.edu](mailto:scholar@valpo.edu).

# Billy Elliot Film Review

*By Louise Conces*

The film *Billy Elliot*, directed by Stephen Daldry, is a passionate and dynamic masterpiece that exposes not only the societal plight of its young main character, Billy Elliot, as the title suggests, but also the austere political struggles of his father and older brother. Daldry indeed emphasizes Billy's vocational transformation from a gawky boy toying with the curiosity of ballet into a prima performer for a dance company as an adult. However, the triumph of Billy's fervent desire is frequently offset by Daldry's truthful presentation of North England's miner work force and its degrading effect on the labor exerted by Billy's family, in particular. Upon the conclusion of the film, one could rationally argue that Daldry's underlying goal in *Billy Elliot* was to explore the complex juxtaposition between dreamers and realists within a small, distressed community.

There are several methods through which Daldry displays the career path of Billy as a uniquely pure vocational calling rather than a general form of employment attained out of necessity. Most scenes in which Daldry exhibits Billy's relationship with dance as a calling are those in which Billy dances to release his intangible emotions or inexpressible words. One of the most significant instances of Billy

fending off frustration in his turmoil world is when he seemingly uncontrollably tap-dances through the town's deserted cobblestone streets. Here, Billy's genuine natural talent is observed without the dictation of Mrs. Wilkinson or the awkwardness of classroom instruction. One other scene that is equally as monumental is when Billy aggressively dances in the gym to illustrate for his father, Jackie, how much his family's disapproval upsets him. This occurrence serves as a chief turning point in the film because Jackie now recognizes and appreciates the intrinsic dream of his son despite the societal assumptions of male dancers being "poofy." Another instance in which Daldry highlights Billy's life mission as a dancer is when Billy auditions for the Royal Ballet School. When asked by the panel of judges what he feels when he dances, Billy simply responds, "electricity." Daldry chose the perfect response to embody Billy's sincere and inherent vocation to dance.

While revealing the pleasure Billy finds in his line of work, Daldry also provides a stark contrast via a more accurate representation of the widespread disgruntled relationship found among men who merely possess certain jobs as a means of survival. Unlike Billy, the heavily fluctuating attitude of Jackie and Billy's older brother, Tony, towards their jobs as miners suggests that mining is in no manner their vocation. In contrast to the indifference of an individual who loves their career, the men join the strikers in political opposition to their primary concerns in a job of being overworked and underpaid. The primary relationship

between these men and their job is to lessen the negative aspects of already non-ideal circumstances. Although they maintain this attitude throughout the vast majority of the film, at one point Jackie decides to forfeit the strikers' cause and become a scab in order to help financially support Billy's dream. However, in the process of joining the scabs, Jackie risks disappointing Tony, whose fanatical opposition to his job was the cause of his earlier arrest. Ultimately, they are forced to return to mining after the union collapses. Daldry employs the fierce outbursts of anger and irritation by the pair in order to accurately portray the harsh mental and emotional consequences that accompany having a job solely as a source of income.

The struggles that Billy endured were primarily due to gender discrimination in trying to reach his goal, while those faced by Jackie and Tony were the result of discontent within their profession. Despite these contrasting representations of struggles between a worker and a career, Daldry intended for them to complement one another. Witnessing the continual predicament of his family, Billy is already partially inclined to seek another professional output in life prior to discovering dance. Likewise, Jackie and Tony hope for Billy to have a better future than them so, as a result, they go to great lengths to distance him from mining. Furthermore, Billy's talent teaches them to be more open minded and liberal with traditional gender associations.

An incredibly moving film exploring family relations amidst life in a fraught community, *Billy Elliot* was quite impressive in proving that love and courage enable an individual to reach their dreams. These dreams can additionally serve as inspiration to those initially too apprehensive to disregard life's traditional routes.