

PROCESS

SPIN CYCLE

Billy Elliot's grand finale, dissected

BY GIANNELLA M. GARRETT

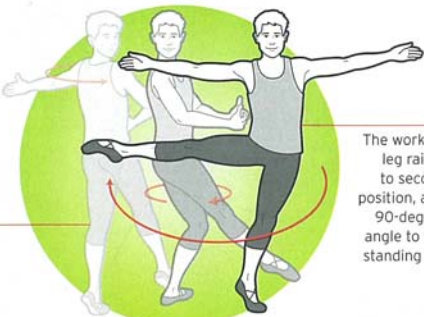
NO BROADWAY ROLE MAY BE MORE demanding than that of Billy Elliot, the young protagonist who dreams of becoming a ballet dancer. Over three hours, the youngster who plays Billy in the eponymous musical must act, sing, flip, and perform complicated dance moves (all the while maintaining a northern England accent). For the Chicago production, which begins March 18th at the Ford Center for the Performing Arts, Oriental Theatre, four exceptional boys will alternate in the role. Here they discuss the toughest move in the show: a finale of 16 grande pirouettes followed by a series of passe pirouettes.



Begins with a point tendu to the side

THE CHALLENGE "To keep my shoulders down while turning and holding my arms in one place," says Corrales.

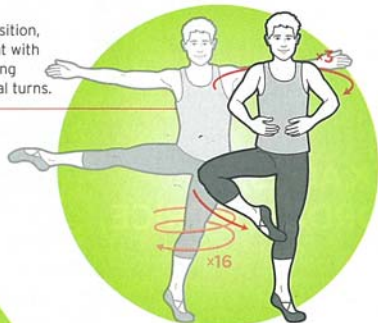
THE CHALLENGE "Spotting, I keep practicing, practicing, practicing, like a samurai, with great concentration," says Bausilio.



The working leg raises to second position, at a 90-degree angle to the standing leg

The body begins to turn, powered by the backward swing of the arm, in the direction of the working leg on the side

After 16 grande pirouettes in second position, the boys "pull in" their working leg, bent with the foot crossing the knee of the standing leg, in passe, for at least three additional turns.



THE CHALLENGE "Learning not to close my arms too quickly while turning," says Viernes.



Finishes in a big plie croise fourth, with the working leg behind the standing leg

THE CHALLENGE "Building up my stamina for a three-hour show," says Batchelor.

THE BILLYS



Tommy Batchelor, 14
Hometown: Palm Beach Gardens, Florida
Fact: The New York production of *Billy Elliot* was Tommy's Broadway debut.



Giuseppe Bausilio, 12
Hometown: Bern, Switzerland
Fact: Giuseppe's parents are ballet dancers, and his older brother dances with the Paris Opera Ballet company.



Cesar Corrales, 13
Hometown: Originally from Mexico; now lives in Montreal with his parents, also dancers
Fact: Cesar appeared in the Richard Gere/Jennifer Lopez film *Shall We Dance?* when he was eight years old.



John Peter (J.P.) Viernes, 13
Hometown: Half Moon Bay, California
Fact: JP was named Junior Mr. Dance of America 2009 in Orlando, Florida.

THE COACH The Chicago Billys underwent intense training three days a week for six weeks with the New York-based coach and ballet master **Finis Jhung**, a former soloist with the San Francisco, Joffrey, and Harkness ballet companies. Jhung says: "You need to make sure you're giving them enough muscle work that really matters; in particular, the fondu [plié] on one leg that will become the turns in second and the push-off for their jumps. It's a balance, keeping both their energy and enthusiasm up yet also making sure they do things properly to build their strength and avoid injuries."