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Having the time of my life... at Dirty Dancing workshop

FEATURE

BY GEORGINA BUTLER
georgina.butler@press.co.uk
[@GeorginaLButler](https://twitter.com/GeorginaLButler)

Heat-pounding music, passionate romance and intimate choreography make ‘Dirty Dancing’ a timeless movie and the classic story is returning to the stage later this year.

Milton Keynes Theatre will welcome the as yet unannounced cast when the touring production gives fans the ‘time of their life’ in October and I was treated to a sneaky preview of what is to come at the launch event.

The captivating tale follows Frances ‘Baby’ Houseman as she falls in love for the very first time with sexy dance instructor Johnny Castle while on a family holiday during the summer of 1963.

Author Eleanor Bergstein wrote the film script after choosing the music – a wise move considering the low-budget movie became a worldwide hit, generating two multi-platinum soundtracks that sold over 39 million copies (and still counting).

Producer Karl Sydow, the man responsible for putting ‘Dirty Dancing’ on stage, credits his daughter for his decision to oversee turning the iconic cinematic hit into a stage show.

He said: “It is my daughter’s favourite film and she would always be watching it with her mother and friends.

“It is a strange demographic, not limited by age, it is just women generally and they like to watch it together in groups.

“So I thought it would only be if we ran out of women that we would then run out of audience!”

The Academy Award-winning film is considered one of the greatest dance movies ever made, launching the careers of Patrick Swayze and Jennifer Grey.



LET'S DANCE: GEORGINA Butler is put through her paces; for video see www.miltonkeynes.co.uk

Generations of women are fanatical about the classic moments (the risqué underworld of the staff living quarters, the log scene, the field, the lake) and the erotically-charged moves seen on-screen reinvented partner dancing.

Ensuring the choreography is right for such a well-loved film is surely a challenge.

Associate choreographer Glenn Wilkinson confirms: “It is a conundrum.

“If you watch the film there really is not that much dancing – we get more of a suggestion of the moves, the feelings.

“When you have got a movie camera, that lens can follow just the upper half of the body and come in close.

“Getting that intensity in what I call a ‘wide-shot’ and keeping the dance momentum on stage is the challenge.”

James Bennett will dance in the Ensemble in the upcoming tour and work as Dance Captain and Swing.

He said: “It’s all about enthusiasm – I need to know everybody’s parts and get that feeling of excitement and teenage attraction out on stage.”

Partnering contemporary-trained dancer Lisa Welham (assisting for the launch), James demonstrated some exciting choreography.

And, as we all know, ‘nobody puts Baby in the corner’ so it wasn’t long before James was recreating the famous moves with a certain eager ‘Dirty Dancing’ fan...

GET IN TOUCH!

Dirty Dancing – The Classic Story On Stage comes to Milton Keynes Theatre from **Tuesday, October 21 to Saturday, November 8, 2014.** Call the Box Office on 0844 871 7652 or visit www.atgtickets.com/miltonkeynes to book.