

# BACK TO FUTURE THE MUSICAL



## EDUCATION PACK

SECTION 3:  
LIVE PERFORMANCE REVIEW  
STUDENT NOTEBOOK

# QUICK SCRIBBLE REVIEW



So you've seen the show...what did you think?! How did you feel when you were watching it?! Write down your initial ideas in this 10-minute task:

**1. What did you enjoy most about the show? (three things)**

- a)
- b)
- c)

**2. Circle all the emotions you felt when you were watching the show:**

Excitement	Fear	Romance
Awe	Interest	Surprise
Inspired	Relief	Disgust
Adoration	Shock	Joy
Empathy	Nostalgia	Admiration
Intrigue	Sadness	Annoyance

**3. Complete the following sentences:**

I felt ..... when the character ..... did/said .....

One moment when I felt ..... was when .....

**4. The performance I enjoyed the most was the actor who played ..... (character name).**

**5. What did you enjoy most about their performance?**

.....  
.....

**6. My favourite moment was when .....**

.....

**7. Why was this moment so effective?**

.....  
.....

# LIVE THEATRE REVIEW - STUDENT NOTEBOOK

Make thorough notes on the following key elements of **Back to the Future The Musical**, to prepare for writing your Live Theatre Review:

## DIRECTING

### What did you observe?

The Director of **Back to the Future** is John Rando.

- What was the overall style of the production?
- What is John Rando aiming to communicate in terms of key themes and ideas?
- What 'filmic elements' were integral to the stage show?

### **What effect was created for you/the audience?**

- This conveyed/communicated to the audience....
- This created a sense of...
- This made me feel....
- The Director used... to convey...
- The overall Director's concept was....

**Keywords for Directing:** musical comedy, stage positions, blocking, interpretation, director's concept, audience response, filmic elements, style and genre, stage space, set design, video projection.

# PERFORMANCE SKILLS - CHARACTERISATION & MOVEMENT

## What did you observe?

- Were the acting styles naturalistic or stylised? Were there any stereotypes? If so, how was movement used?
- Were there any physical comedy moments? If so, what was the effect?
- How was fight choreography used?
- Describe how two actors played their character using movement.

**What effect was created for you/the audience?**

- This conveyed/communicated to the audience....
- This created a sense of...
- This made me feel....
- One moment which was particularly effective in terms of movement was....

**Keywords:** Movement, physicality, gait, gesture, stillness, facial expression, eye contact, focus, posture, mime, non-verbal communication, characterisation, realistic, stylised, musical comedy, fight choreography.

# PERFORMANCE SKILLS - CHARACTERISATION & VOICE

## What did you observe?

- Comment on two moments when a performer used their voice effectively, using the key vocab for 'voice' below. For example, how did they use emphasis, accent or pause effectively?

**What effect was created for you/the audience?**

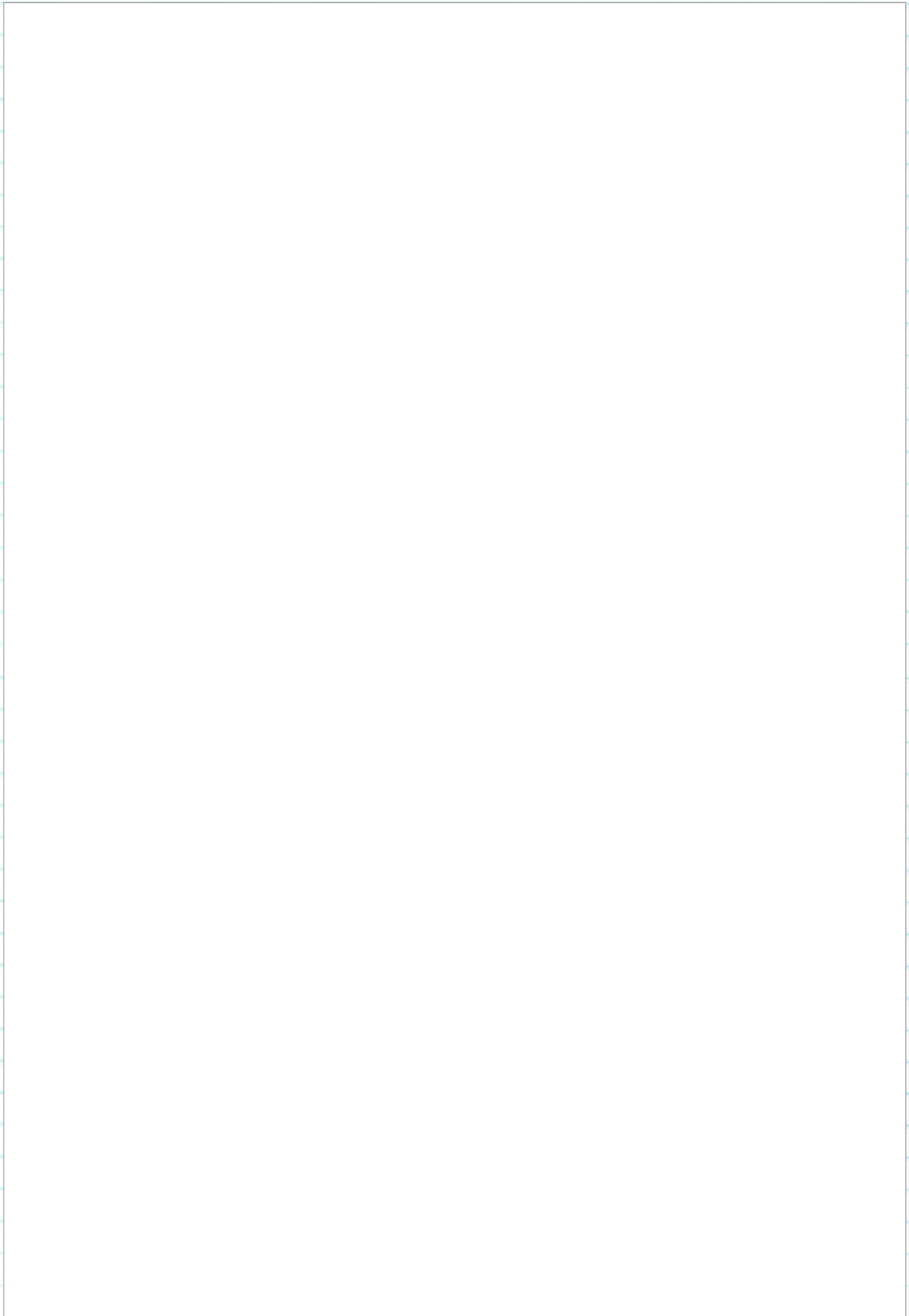
- This conveyed/communicated to the audience....
- This created a sense of...
- This made me feel....
- One moment which was particularly effective in terms of vocal awareness was....

**Keywords:** Actor, pace, pause, projection, vocal tone, emphasis, accent, dialect.



## SET DESIGN & STAGING

Sketch an aerial view of the stage space and set design:



# AUDIENCE

## What did you observe?

- How was the set design used to create different settings and time periods?
- How was the stage revolve used within the set design?
- How were different levels used on stage?
- How did the set work with other design elements, such as lighting and video projection?

### **What effect was created for you/the audience?**

- This conveyed/communicated to the audience....
- This created a sense of...
- This made me feel....
- One moment which was particularly effective in terms of set design was....

**Keywords:** colour & condition, scale, texture, period, setting, realistic, revolve, space, levels, materials, staging, upstage, downstage, stage left, stage right, centre stage, sightlines, wings, scrim or gauze, projections, set dressing, the DeLorean.

# LIGHTING DESIGN

## What did you observe?

- How is the lighting arranged to focus your attention on the action?
- How are colours used in the lighting to convey mood and atmosphere?
- How does lighting work with the other stage elements, such as the projections and the set design?


### **What effect was created for you/the audience?**

- This conveyed/communicated to the audience....
- This created a sense of...
- This made me feel....
- One moment which was particularly effective in terms of lighting design was....

**Keywords:** coloured gels, moving heads, spotlight, slow fade, blackout, practicals, cross fade, lighting 'state', lighting 'cue', floods, gobo, lanterns.

## COSTUME DESIGN

Sketch two of your favourite costume designs in the production here:

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for sketching two favorite costume designs for a production. The box occupies most of the page below the instruction.

**What did you observe?**

- How were design fundamentals used to convey character, setting and period throughout the production?

**What effect was created for you/the audience?**

- This conveyed/communicated to the audience....
- This created a sense of...
- This made me feel....
- One moment which was particularly effective in terms of costume design was....

**Keywords:** colour palette, shape/silhouette, texture/fabric, age/status, character.



# SOUND DESIGN

## What did you hear?

- How was sound used in the production?
- What was recorded and what was 'live' or played by the orchestra?
- What musical themes did you hear and how did these enhance the performance?

**What effect was created for you/the audience?**

- This conveyed/ communicated to the audience....
- This created a sense of...
- This made me feel....
- One moment which was particularly effective in terms of sound design was....

**Keywords:** sound effects, live, recorded, orchestra, music, diegetic, non-diegetic, loud or quiet volume, atmosphere, mood, transitions and scene changes, singing, filmic.

## VIDEO PROJECTION & SPECIAL EFFECTS

### What did you observe?

- When and how were video projections used in the production?
- How did this work with the other stage elements such as set and lighting design?
- What special effects did you notice? What was the effect created?
- How were graphics used to reflect the different time periods?

**What effect was created for you/the audience?**

- This conveyed/ communicated to the audience....
- This created a sense of...
- This made me feel....
- One moment which was particularly effective was....

**Keywords:** The DeLorean, explosion, scrim/gauze, graphics, projection, colour, collage, cross-cutting, stage scenery, setting, location, period.

# WRITING YOUR LIVE THEATRE REVIEW

Once you have compiled all your notes on the show, you can start to structure and write your Live Theatre Review. An effective Live Theatre Review is sophisticated in terms of analysis and evaluation.

## HOW DO I ANALYSE?

When you analyse the production, you explore the use of the theatrical elements in detail. Think of it as 'zooming in' on a specific element or moment. Use phrases such as:

## HOW DO I EVALUATE?

When you evaluate the production, you consider the effectiveness of a particular element or moment. You really weigh up how successful it was in terms of the effect, mood, or atmosphere, it created for the audience.

### Useful Phrases:

- This conveyed...
- In addition, this communicated...
- This depicted...and connected with...
- However, it...

A good idea is to use a 'Point, Evidence, Explain' structure within each paragraph:

**Point:** Make a point which answers the question. This is the paragraph's target sentence.

**Evidence:** A moment in the production that supports your point. You should include details of what happened on stage, using drama terminology and talk about how the element was used.

**Explain:** What was conveyed or communicated to you/the audience at this moment? How did these details relate to the style and/or themes of the play? How did this relate to the intentions of the director or the overall director's concept?

For example, if you were focusing on the direction in the show, you could perhaps write the following:

(Point) The performer Roger Bart used sophisticated movement skills and comedy timing to create an endearing portrayal of the character of Doc Brown.

(Evidence) This can clearly be seen in Doc's workshop scene in 1955, when Marty enters through the door centre-stage left and tries to convince Doc he is from the future.

(Explain) Bart's unpredictable movements conveyed the idea that Doc is constantly thinking. This was further enhanced by his constantly shifting focus and moments of stillness, especially when he has an 'idea'. His comedy timing was brilliant in this scene, especially when he paused before the line 'this thing doesn't work at all!'

## TASK

Now it's your turn. Can you write a Live Theatre Review about **Back to the Future The Musical** and include the following:

- ✓ Analysis and Evaluation
- ✓ All the elements from the production - lighting, set, sound, costume, direction & acting.
- ✓ Use the Point, Evidence, Explain structure.

# GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

## KEY ELEMENTS OF THE STAGE MUSICAL

**Protagonist** - The main character within a narrative or story.

**Antagonist** - The character who opposes or is hostile towards the protagonist. This helps to create conflict within the story or play.

**Narrative** - The story or sequence of events.

**Acts** - A sequence of scenes that establish a major part of the narrative. In most musicals, there are two acts, separated by an interval.

**Backstory** - Events that have happened to the characters before we meet them on stage, often employed to lend depth and believability to the story and its characters.

**Genre** - The category of a piece of theatre or literature, for example musical theatre.

**Style** - The way in which a piece of theatre is performed, using commonly established theatrical conventions.

**Musical Comedy** - A genre of theatre that uses both music and humour to tell the story.

## DIRECTING

**Super objective** - The character's overarching goal in a scene, why they are there and what they are trying to achieve.

**Objective** - What the character wants or is trying to achieve from line to line within a scene. Characters must always be actively pursuing their objectives and can employ a range of actions to achieve these objectives.

**Actions** - Transitive verbs allocated to each line of a scene to guide an actor's vocal delivery and help them achieve their objective. For example, 'I WARN you' or 'I FLATTER you.'

**Status** - The level of power or influence a character has relative to another character in their scene.

**Characterisation** - Vocal, physical or gestural choices used by an actor to help define their character.

## ACTING TECHNIQUES - VOICE

**Tone** - The mood or emotional quality of the voice which helps to colour an actor's dialogue and vocal choices.

**Pitch** - How high or low a character's voice is.

**Pace** - The speed at which a single actor speaks or at which dialogue flows between multiple actors.

**Pause** - A moment of silence within a scene, often used for dramatic effect.

**Projection** - The act of making your voice louder and clearer so that everyone in the audience can hear, regardless of their proximity.

**Emphasis** - The stress or weight an actor puts on a particular word or phrase within a sentence to indicate importance.

**Accent** - A way of speaking and pronouncing words specific to a particular region or group.

**Dialect** - A form of language specific to a particular region or group.

## ACTING TECHNIQUES - MOVEMENT

**Physicality** - The way a character moves onstage.

**Gait** - The manner in which a character walks or moves their body as they pass through a space.

**Posture** - A character's physical alignment.

**Gesture** - Movements of the hands and arms to communicate meaning or attitude.

**Centre of gravity** - A hypothetical point around which the force of gravity appears to act on any given character which helps to define characterisation.

## MUSIC

**Leitmotif** - Commonly used within film music, leitmotifs are intentionally repeated, recurring aural themes associated with a particular person, idea, or action.

**Diatonic** - Music that uses notes from a particular scale with no deviation from this scale. For example, using only notes from the C Major scale within a piece that is written in C Major.

**Tempo** - The speed at which a piece of music is played.

## THEATRE DESIGN - LIGHTING

**Lanterns** - The technical term used for stage lights

**Cues** - The moment at which the lighting changes from one state to the next. Lighting operators will use a 'cue sheet' to guide them through the show, instructing them when to transition the lights from one state to the next.

**Direction** - The direction from which the light is illuminating the actor. For example, light originating from behind the actor will create a silhouette.

**Practicals** - A light source that is on the stage and is therefore part of the practical environment of the show, for example table or wall lamps that form part of the set.

**LEDs** - Light Emitting Diodes, a modern and low energy form of stage lighting which is increasingly replacing traditional filament lanterns.

**Moving heads** - A type of intelligent lighting which is not fixed, but can move and rotate. Lighting designers can programme these lights to move automatically to different areas of the stage within a performance.

**Spotlight** - A type of lantern with a hard edge used to illuminate specific characters or elements on the stage and direct audience focus.

**Slow fade** - A gradual increase or decrease of the intensity of light.

**Blackout** - The absence of any light on stage.

**Cross fade** - Moving gradually between two lighting states.

**Floods** - Lanterns with a wide angle that flood the stage with light.

**Gobo** - A metal disc with a stencil pattern cut into it. When placed in front of a lantern, the shape of the gobo is visible on stage.

## SET

**Sightlines** - An imaginary line between the eyes of the audience and the actors. Designers will consider sightlines in their stage design, to ensure that the audience can see the actors regardless of where they are sitting in the auditorium.

**Scrim/gauze** - A coarsely woven piece of material which can appear translucent or opaque depending on how it is lit. It can be used to create shadows or to reveal something behind the screen to the audience.

**Colour** - The colour of the set, which can often be used to create symbolic meaning.

**Condition** - The condition of the set or furniture (for example, an item of scenery may be distressed or pristine) which can often imply important information about the setting.

**Scale** - Using size, angle and positioning to alter the audience's sense of perspective. For example, a designer may alter the size of an object to make it seem closer or further away.

**Revolve** - A turntable built into the stage on which two or more sets are constructed. This can speed up scene changes as the stage revolves and the new set is revealed.

**Wings** - The areas at the side of the stage that allow actors to enter and exit.

**Projections** - Image or videos projected onto surfaces or screens within the set.

**Set dressing** - Small items added to a set to make it appear more real or 'lived in'.

## COSTUME

**Colour palette** - A selection of colours that are put together by the costume designer for the actors' costumes. Effective colour palettes can often be used to complement the overall look of the show or suggest information about the character wearing them.

**Shape/silhouette** - The outline that the costume gives to the actor wearing it.

**Fabric** - The material the costume is made from.

**Texture** - The quality of the fabric. For example, smooth silk or coarse hessian.

## SOUND

**Sound effects** - Live or pre-recorded sounds within a performance.

**Diegetic** - Sound that is within the context of the story and that the characters can hear. For example, a doorbell or a song on the radio.

**Non-diegetic** - Sound that is not heard by the characters but has been added to enhance the atmosphere or create meaning for the audience.

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**Mousetrap**  
theatreprojects

Commissioned by  
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**WE TEACH DRAMA**

Written by  
**Lucy Bellingham**  
[info@weteachdrama.com](mailto:info@weteachdrama.com)

DESIGNED BY **DEWYNTERS**