

BACK TO FUTURE THE MUSICAL



EDUCATION PACK

SECTION 4: ROLES IN THEATRE
(PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE)



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STUDENT WORKSHEET 1

BOB GALE ON COLLABORATION

In this section, you are going to learn about all of the roles and skills which were involved to create **Back to the Future The Musical**. Here is Bob Gale talking about how collaborative the show was, and how everyone had to work together to face the challenges posed by the production:

“Theatre and movies are collaborative arts. It takes a lot of people doing different things to create the final product. (Books and paintings are examples of art created by a single individual.) Although directors are generally in charge of what ultimately ends up on the stage, one of their most important duties is to inspire everyone on the show to use their knowledge, experience, skills, and imagination toward creative problem-solving in a team effort. We had regular production meetings to discuss our challenges, and the solutions always involved combinations of various elements.”

“The illusion of the car going 88 miles per hour required a car that could lift off the stage a few centimetres so that its wheels could actually turn, a physical turntable on the stage so that the vehicle could ‘turn’, a moving video background, a foreground video screen, stage lighting, sound effects, and music to make it more exciting. This was a collaboration between production designer Tim Hatley, video designer Finn Ross, lighting designer Tim Lutkin, special effects designer Chris Fisher, sound designer Gareth Owen and composer Alan Silvestri. The movie gave everyone the common understanding of what we were trying to achieve. When there is no movie as a reference point, drawings, illustrations, and models are used instead because the words on the script page can only go so far.”

“In the lunchroom chase (at the end of Act 1), the early versions of the book had the entire sequence taking place only in the lunchroom with just a few ‘gags’ described. I kept it simple because I was ignorant of some of the things that could be created via clever stagecraft. But thanks to the knowledge, experience, creativity, and collaboration of the director with Tim Hatley, and the stunt coordinator, the special effects supervisor, the choreographer and the video supervisor, the chase occurs in a much bigger environment with many more ‘gags’.”

STUDENT DISCUSSION TASK

What is the most collaborative project you have been involved with? How did you work together to overcome problems? What were the challenges? How did you work through these problems?

Write down three ways how to work most effectively in groups:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

STUDENT WORKSHEET 2

CREATING 'SEQUENCE TO '55'

“There are so many cogs in the machine backstage that need to all line up”

TIM LUTKIN (LIGHTING DESIGNER)

If you were asked who is key to telling the story of **Back to The Future the Musical**, you might say: the performers – the talented actors, singers and dancers that we see on stage and who we applaud at the end for a job well done. The performers do, of course, play an important role but there are countless talented people behind the scenes who help to create such an awe-inspiring show. Each one of these roles are different and have their own unique set of skills. They must work together to create a cohesive story-telling experience.

During the 'Sequence to '55' in Act 1, Marty travels to 1955 in the DeLorean. The behind-the-scenes team must find ways for the iconic DeLorean to appear as though it is travelling at 88 miles per hour across different locations and time zones on stage.

All these different, very technical elements must work together in harmony. To do this, the design team must work collaboratively, using the problem-solving abilities unique to their craft to create an illusion that will effectively and efficiently tell the story of Marty McFly's drive to 1955.

Task 1 - look at Student Worksheet 3, showing the moment when the DeLorean is driving on stage in Act 1. Select three key roles which are integral to making this moment happen and brainstorm some ideas about what each role involves:

Production Role	What did they contribute to creating this theatrical moment?
1)	
2)	
3)	

TASK 2

Now, select one of the 'Production Roles Flash cards' on Student Worksheet 4 and present ideas to your class about the role and how it contributed to creating 'Sequence to '55' on stage.

STUDENT WORKSHEET 3

WHO CREATES 'SEQUENCE TO '55'?

STAGE
MANAGER

DEPUTY
STAGE
MANAGER

ASSISTANT
STAGE
MANAGER

DIRECTOR

HEAD OF
EFFECTS

PROPS
SUPERVISOR

PRODUCTION
DESIGNER

LIGHTING
DESIGNER

PRODUCER

ILLUSION
DESIGNER

SOUND
DESIGNER

VIDEO
DESIGNER

HEAD OF
AUTOMATION

COMPANY
MANAGER

PERFORMERS

HEALTH
AND SAFETY
MANAGER

MUSICAL
DIRECTOR

WRITERS

MUSICIANS

WIGS, HAIR,
MAKE-UP

STUDENT WORKSHEET 4

PRODUCTION ROLES FLASH CARDS

PRODUCTION DESIGNER

Working closely with the lighting designer, sound designer, video designer, illusion designer and director, Production Designer Tim Hatley is responsible for the visual concept for the show. He oversees all of the design and creative decision-making related to costume, set and props. Tim Hatley did a lot of visual research into the fifties and eighties to ensure that his designs, props, and costumes were historically accurate. He was always mindful of the design fundamentals such as scale, colour palette, texture, scale and materials. The production designer often leads the collaborative process and makes sure everyone is using their unique skills to enhance each other's work and the show as a whole. He says:

“THE ART OF CREATING A DESIGN FOR A MUSICAL, ESPECIALLY ONE THAT MOVES AROUND AND IS SO FLUID, IS ABOUT THE WHOLE PICTURE.”

TIM HATLEY (PRODUCTION DESIGNER)

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Working closely with the production designer, sound designer, video designer, illusion designer, director and technical operator, the lighting designer decides which lights are used and when to light the show in a way that best tells the story. The lighting director has a lot of power; they control what and who the audience see (or don't see) and when. This is especially true in a show like **Back to the Future**, which uses a lot of illusions and relies on complex lighting plans.

“LIGHTING IS THIS LAYER THAT NEEDS TO BRING OUT THE BEST IN EVERYBODY'S WORK... IT SHOULD ABSOLUTELY BE FUSED WITH THE REST OF THE WORK.”

TIM LUTKIN (LIGHTING DESIGNER)

The key elements of lighting which Tim Lutkin used to create his designs are direction, intensity, colour and movement.

SOUND DESIGNER

Working closely with the production designer, lighting designer, video designer, and director, the sound designer finds or creates the appropriate sound effects needed to help to tell the story. The sound designer Gareth Owen must make decisions about the source and direction of sound, types of sound (live or recorded), volume and levels and how sounds are manipulated or edited. Think of all the exciting sound effects used in the 'Sequence to '55': the screeching tyres, the heavy rain, the sound of the car crashing into the hay bales... The sound designer is responsible for all of these and more!

VIDEO DESIGNER

Working closely with the production designer, lighting designer, sound designer and director, the video designer creates and incorporates recorded media into the live show to enhance the storytelling. **Back to The Future The Musical** relies heavily on the use of projection and moving graphics to help with its time travelling scenes, created by Video Designer Finn Ross. Think about how the moving projection behind the stationary car in the 'Sequence to '55' scene helps to make it look like the DeLorean really is accelerating to 88 miles per hour! This all thanks to the video designer and their collaboration with the other behind the scenes roles.

ILLUSION DESIGNER

Not every show needs an illusion designer but this one certainly does! Did you know **Back to the Future** Illusion Designer Chris Fisher is a member of The Magic Circle? He has also worked as International Illusions & Magic Associate for Harry Potter & The Cursed Child. Working closely with the production designer, lighting designer and director, the Illusion Designer is often a member of the magic circle and cleverly uses light, sound and projection to create spectacular illusions live on stage, for example the flying DeLorean in the final moments.

STAGE MANAGER

Working as a bridge between the creative and technical departments, the stage manager is in charge of coordinating the production, making sure every performance runs smoothly. This includes ensuring that the actors, props, set and costumes are all exactly where they need to be at the correct moments and calling all the technical cues (light, sound or video changes) on time. The list of responsibilities for a stage manager is always long but for a show like **Back to the Future**, with its complex design and many technical aspects, the stage manager certainly has their hands full!

DEPUTY STAGE MANAGER

Working closely with the Stage Manager and the Assistant Stage Managers (ASMs), the Deputy Stage Manager (DSM) plays a key role during rehearsals, technical rehearsals, and the show. They keep an accurate record of key decisions made by the directors and actors during rehearsal. The DSM will instruct or 'cue' the technicians, sound and lighting box to start the performance. Then, during the show, will cue any lighting changes, sound effects and music. For example, in **Back to the Future The Musical**, they would 'cue' the scrim or gauze to come down at the front of the stage, for the start of the final storm scene.

HEAD OF EFFECTS

Working alongside the production designer and stage manager, the Head of Effects plays a huge part in the smooth execution of the many live effects used throughout the show. They are an integral cog in the backstage machine and must be on hand during every performance. A key responsibility for the head of effects is cueing all of the explosions, flashes, smoke, flames and fireworks - otherwise known as pyrotechnics - that are used during the many jaw-dropping moments in the show, such as the moment when Marty goes back to 1985 and tracks of fire are created on stage. In the case of shows that make use of complex illusions like this one, the Head of Effects will also work closely alongside the illusion designer to help ensure that the show's many impressive illusions run smoothly and that the secrets to those illusions are kept safely under wraps.

STUDENT WORKSHEET 5

THE ROLE OF THE PRODUCER

COLIN INGRAM IS THE EXECUTIVE PRODUCER FOR **BACK TO THE FUTURE** AND HAS WORKED IN THE THEATRE INDUSTRY FOR 23 YEARS WITH SOME OF THE WORLD'S LEADING PRODUCERS, DIRECTORS, DESIGNERS, AND WRITERS. HE HAS PREVIOUSLY PRODUCED SHOWS SUCH AS *GHOST: THE MUSICAL* AND *GREASE*, AND IS CURRENTLY DEVELOPING A STAGE MUSICAL OF *THE TIME TRAVELLER'S WIFE*, BASED ON THE BEST-SELLING NOVEL.

Q. HOW DID YOU BECOME INVOLVED IN BACK TO THE FUTURE?

I was brought into it very early in 2012, actually, when I worked with Glenn Ballard on *Ghost*, which we were doing on Broadway at the time. And Glenn said to me, 'I'm talking to Bob Gale, Bob Zemeckis and Alan Silvestri about making **Back to the Future** a musical,' and I instantly went 'well... I'd love to do that. That's amazing. I love that film!'

Colin had previously translated the film Ghost onto the West End Stage, which he says also involved a lot of 'technology and spectacle', so he was the ideal Producer to bring on board.

Q. WHAT DOES YOUR ROLE AS PRODUCER INVOLVE?

In terms of my role and the show, as a producer, you put the creative team together, you put the money together, you hire the theatres, you hire the casting director. You get all these things parked together and, a big part of this, the marketing of course as well. So, there's a lot of things going on with it. But on **Back to the Future**, it was really putting it all together.

Q. WHAT IS A COMMERCIAL PRODUCING?

I guess the difference is a commercial production is a show that is completely driven by profit, where the money comes from investors who expect to have their money back and a profit. And the producer takes a split of the profit when it's been recouped.

So, all the surplus of a show will go back to the investors to recoup their initial money. When you get to recoupment, you then split according to the terms you've agreed. If they put a lot of money in, they'll have a higher split because they're taking a higher risk. If they have a smaller amount of money, then it's a lower split.

"There's no subsidy from the government or any Arts Council money."

When you go into the theatre, it is what they call a 'four-wall deal', which means they are renting the theatre to you. They're not helping you in any other way apart from, 'here's the theatre.'

But essentially, you're not going into a non-for-profit house where they've got a whole marketing department and they've got a set building area and a box office... you're not going into something which is being managed. You are managing everything.

Q. WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THE ADELPHI THEATRE FOR BACK TO THE FUTURE?

There really aren't many theatres for this show. We were pretty fussy about where we went to. We didn't want to go in too big because it's a comedy and you'd lose the comedy. Being small, it wouldn't have worked financially. So, yeah, there are plenty of 1500-seaters on Broadway, but we don't have many. The problem with the West End is there's a lot of big theatres and lots of small theatres. And there's really not many in the middle. So, the Victoria Palace and the Adelphi are probably the best.

Q. WHAT SKILLS ARE INVOLVED IN BEING A PRODUCER?

"I think when you're a producer, you have to kind of will something to work. You've got to be optimistic."

Tenacity, optimism. Your interpersonal skills are absolutely critical because you're not just dealing with investors, you're dealing with a director, a writer. When you go into the theatre, you have to deal with actors. So, you have to deal with everybody. You probably have to have a bit of an ego because otherwise, you've really got to have a belief in what you're doing. I know that you got to believe you're right. I do think you do have to listen to people. And I think you have to be willing to take advice.

There's two types of producers, of course. There's a creative producer who's there to create the show and put the team together and get the rights and put it on. That's what I do. And then there's the money producer who just raises the money.

So, you can do both things. You could be a money producer and that's just a case of raising money and getting to know who the investors are out there and how to present your work. And you've got to put a pack together. You've got to show the numbers. You've got to have a story to selling it. It's a cliché, but you've got to say why you're passionate about it, how it's come about, why is it going to be successful?

Q. WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE SOMEONE WITH ASPIRATIONS TO BECOME A THEATRE PRODUCER?

Work for a big organisation because I think with a big organisation, you're going to get a lot more experiences. You can have a good turnover of shows. You don't want to be working on just one show. You're there to train and to learn, a sort of apprenticeship.

"See a lot of shows. I don't think you can see too many shows."

I think that's really important. Good shows, bad shows, see lots of shows in the West End. See smaller shows. And what I used to do is I used to write down in the programme who I liked and where I thought the lighting was good, the sound was good. And I sort of kept this big bundle of programmes with lots of notes on them, according to what I saw. And then you start to learn, the same people start to come up because it's a pretty small business really. And then you start to get a feel. You'll know the creative teams who are good. You'll know the actors who are good and the directors.

TASK

- ✓ Can you find the names of any other West End Producers?

STUDENT WORKSHEET 6

THE ROLE OF THE PRODUCTION DESIGNER

TIM HATLEY IS AN AWARD-WINNING PRODUCTION DESIGNER FOR FILM AND THEATRE. HE IS THE WINNER OF THE TONY AWARD FOR BEST SET DESIGN AND BEST COSTUME DESIGN FOR NOËL COWARD'S PRIVATE LIVES AND SHREK THE MUSICAL. WE ASKED TIM ABOUT HIS ROLE AS A PRODUCTION DESIGNER ON **BACK TO THE FUTURE** AND WHAT IT REALLY INVOLVES. HE SAID:

“Ultimately, I’m responsible for the set, the props and the costumes. However, a production designer on a big show like this does more than that, because of the way you have to pull everyone together. So, as the production designer you’re designing the set, but as I said, the other designers can’t work with you until they know what you’ve done, so you have to kind of give them a pointer and a head start. So the whole video sequence at the end, we designed that, but then Finn Ross (Video Designer) made it better.

“You’re the production designer. You’re responsible for what people are looking at, whether it’s a video, whether it’s a curtain, whether it’s a bit of painted scenery, whether it’s 15 actors all stood on top of each other.”

“You’re the designer, so you’ve got to know what that is going to look like. It might then go into other departments to make that better, but you don’t just design a box and a floor and walls and say, ‘That’s my job done’. So that’s why ‘production designer’ is actually more accurate, because it is broader than just doing set and costumes. Not the same for necessarily every single play.”

So, Tim Hatley played a key creative role as the Production Designer for **Back to the Future**. His designs communicated to the audience a sense of time, plot, location, along with the character’s actions and feelings. Here are just a few more aspects to his role:

- ✓ Creator and writer of **Back to the Future** Bob Gale shared visual research with Tim from the original film, and advertising images from the fifties and eighties, which informed Tim’s designs.
- ✓ He worked closely with Lighting Designer Tim Lutkin and Video Designer Finn Ross to create the effect of the DeLorean travelling through time.
- ✓ He collaborated with the Illusion Designer Chris Fisher (and many others) to create the effect of the DeLorean flying at the end of the show.
- ✓ Supervising and managing the building of the set and set pieces, including how the DeLorean moves on the revolve.
- ✓ Creating costume designs for all the characters and ensemble performers, which are historically accurate and stay faithful to aspects of the film.
- ✓ Whilst developing the show, he was always mindful of sightlines in the theatre and would ensure that all of the actors and set pieces could be seen from every seat in the theatre.



STUDENT WORKSHEET 7

TIM LUTKIN ON BEING A SUPPORTIVE LEADER

“LIGHTING IS THIS LAYER THAT NEEDS TO BRING OUT THE BEST IN EVERYBODY’S WORK.”

TIM LUTKIN

TIM LUTKIN IS AN OLIVIER AWARD-WINNING LIGHTING DESIGNER, WHO HAS WORKED ON MANY SHOWS IN LONDON’S WEST END AND THROUGHOUT THE UK. COMPANIES TIM HAS DESIGNED FOR INCLUDE THE NATIONAL THEATRE, THE ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY AND THE OLD VIC. WE SPOKE TO HIM ABOUT HIS ROLE AS THE LIGHTING DESIGNER ON **BACK TO THE FUTURE THE MUSICAL**.

As the lighting designer on the show, Tim Lutkin has the overall responsibility for creating and delivering the design. However, a large part of Tim's role is also supervising a whole department of lighting specialists which includes:

- ✓ The associate lighting designer (associate LD) assists the lighting designer in creating and executing the lighting design. This might include assisting the lighting designer in creating the lighting plot and sketches.
- ✓ The assistant lighting designer (assistant LD) assists both the lighting designer and the associate lighting designer. The main difference between the lighting associate and the assistant is that the associate is generally authorized to speak on behalf of the LD and can make creative and design decisions when needed, whereas the assistant is not.
- ✓ Lighting supervisors, whose responsibility it is to look after the lighting night after night, when the show is up and running.

We asked Tim what this management role involves, now the show is open. He said:

"I go and see the show every few weeks... Maybe once a month basically, to check it looks good. Usually a surprise visit, or I'll tell them an hour before.

"I'd say that my role very much becomes a maintenance role, visually maintaining the show. But there's another side to it, which I do believe is really important."

"And it's important for anybody in any job, and it's important for students to understand when they go into lighting design, which is to be a supportive leader. And Monday I was in there with our two lighting supervisors who look after the show... Whose specific job is only to look after the lighting on the show.

"And I do feel that it's partly my role to support them. Both with anything they might need practically, but also to go in there and support them and tell them what they're doing right. And actually enjoy being there with them, and make them feel that we're part of a team. Because a very old-fashioned way of working, and some of the older designers still do this, is they operate on a fear basis and that's not the way of the world today. So I do believe that it's my duty, and my role as the lighting designer now, to not only maintain the visual look of the show, but to support those people. Even just to go in there, and show a bit of interest, and tell them where it's going right. And when you do that as a person, everybody's happier."

"You actually can get down to solving problems easier because there's less conflict in that world."

If you want to read more about the Tim Lutkin's lighting designs in the show, look at **Student Worksheet 13** in **Section 2: Screen to Stage**.

STUDENT WORKSHEET 8

THE ROLE OF THE STAGE MANAGER

GARY WALL IS THE STAGE MANAGER FOR **BACK TO THE FUTURE THE MUSICAL**. WE ASKED HIM WHAT HIS ROLE INVOLVES:

“I suppose that the bottom line is that I run the show, day to day.”

I look after a team of five, including myself. So that's my stage management team. I have a DSM (Deputy Stage Manager), two ASM (Assistant Stage Managers) book covers, and one ASM swing who covers all the tracks. So I suppose my routine would be the setting up of the show, in the first place, just on a normal show day. So there'll be a whole rig check session, a preset. And I just oversee that. And sort of with that, I'll set all the paperwork up for the day, so the show report, the covering, which gets passed down to me from the company manager and I just filter that into the show report for the day. I do all the band lists, as well. So that's kind of the short part of the day. And then the sort of bigger pictures that I look after the, obviously, the technical side.

When it comes to pre-show, we have warmup and we have a fight call, which we supervise, and then we do a note session. So, we go around a big circle and then every HOD (Head of Department), basically, will give their notes for that day or, if there's any previous problems from the night before, then we discuss that. And then, yeah, that's kind of my show day. When we get to 7:30, that's when we kind of fire into the show. So, from the whole kind of first LX cue to the last LX cue or auto cue, that's basically me, obviously, in that whole process.

Q. WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT WORKING ON BACK TO THE FUTURE FOR YOU?

We've got a car on stage, for a start. I think that's probably the extra cast member, if you want to say. It's got its own personality, it's got its own problems.

When it works, it works and it's great. And 99.9% of the time, it's absolutely fine. When it doesn't work....it's the most difficult part of the set and the most easy part of the set, at the same time, if that makes sense, because it's just one thing that's moving on stage.

Q. WHAT ARE THE SKILLS YOU NEED TO BE A STAGE MANAGER?

I think first and foremost is communication. You've got to be able to communicate at the highest level as a stage manager. It's just key to everything you do.

Sometimes, you want to change your name because everyone is just asking for you all the time. It's not a bad thing. It's just how it goes, but yeah, you communicate with so many people and so many departments. Obviously, it's all in our ear (through the 'cans' or headphones) and you have to be able to filter all of that stuff in your ear whilst people are actually talking to you, face-to-face. So the cast, they don't hear what's going on on their headset. So sometimes, they'll be talking to you and you might be having three or four different conversations.

Delegation, as well, is key. It's just that ability to stay calm, as well. I think it's funny because a lot of people say to me, 'How do you stay so calm when things go wrong?' I say, 'Well, the answer is you have to because, if you don't, if people see you panic, then that's when they panic.'

“If you see me panic - then we've got a problem!”

I think attention to detail is, obviously, a big thing of mine. I was always taught that. That makes a difference, I think, with being good and being great, is your attention to detail because I guarantee that, if you don't pick up those little details, someone else will. And my kind of goal is to make sure that they don't pick them up for me, especially directors and creators.

Q. HOW DID YOU TRAIN TO BECOME A STAGE MANAGER?

“I had a bit of an unconventional journey into theatre.”

When I left school, I joined the Air Force. I was in the Air Force for four years and left when I was 21 and actually started as a stagehand as an apprentice up in Manchester. And then I trained as I was working. I was very fortunate. I think, back in those days, you could network quite easily. If you really wanted to get around, you could just jump into little things here and there. So I kind of did that. I was really, really lucky. I worked for Live Nation for a good five years. So I did a lot of apprenticeships and a lot of management training through them. When I transitioned into stage management, I was actually working in the West End. I did all my training as I was working.

Q. WHAT HAVE YOU ENJOYED MOST ABOUT WORKING ON BACK TO THE FUTURE?

“I mean, theatre, for me, is all about the people you work with.”

I think the show, itself, is just such an amazing production and the heart and soul that's gone into it from people like Bob (Gale) and John (Rando) and Tim (Hatley). I mean, I love Tim (Hatley). I've worked with Tim before. His designs are always really great fun to work on, almost like a bit of a playground, **Back to the Future**, I think, especially for the techies. We've got so many gadgets and things. And no one's ever done this kind of thing before. I mean, there's plenty of shows that have got amazing technical aspects, but I think this one, it's just got so many cool things. It's full of surprises, this show.

I think the illusions, for me, are the standout because they're so simple. They're so simple and people always say, 'How did you do that?' Obviously, we're not going to tell you, but I think, yeah, that's the best thing for me. I don't know. There's so many things. I've got to be honest, the last 20 minutes of the show are probably the most frightening 20 minutes.

“I get the same feeling in that last 20 minutes, 89 shows in, that I did on the first preview.”

STUDENT WORKSHEET 9

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A PERFORMER

Being a performer is an aspirational and exciting job. But have you ever wondered what it takes to stay mentally and physically healthy enough to ‘wow’ audiences day after day? We were lucky enough to speak to two of the incredibly talented members of the original London cast of **Back to the Future The Musical** to get their personal insights, top tips, and to take a deep dive into a day in the life of a professional performer.



ENSEMBLE MEMBER **RHIANNE ALLEYNE** OPENED UP ABOUT THE REALITIES OF WORKING A TWO-SHOW DAY AND TALKED ABOUT HOW SHE FOCUSES ON HER WELL-BEING SO THAT SHE CAN PERFORM TO THE BEST OF HER ABILITY.

7.30AM – 8AM GET UP & EAT BREAKFAST

“I always make sure I have a really good breakfast. I try and have my biggest meal in the morning because it sets you up. It fuels you. You’re ready to go!” And Rhianne’s right, a good breakfast boosts your energy levels and alertness, while also providing other essential nutrients required for a healthy mind and body.

8.30AM – 11.00 AM – LEISURE TIME

After having breakfast, Rhianne stresses the importance of doing non-work-related activities to keep a healthy work / life balance. (I know singing and dancing every day may not seem like work but it takes a huge amount of physical and mental energy!) Rhianne told me that she finds taking her dog out for a walk, watching a film, or simply doing tasks around the house helps her to stay grounded before a long day of performances.

11AM – THE COMMUTE BEGINS

Rhianne told me that her day starts a little earlier than some of her other fellow cast members as she lives outside of London, giving her a commute of almost two hours! That’s dedication.

12.30PM – ARRIVE AT THE THEATRE

In the half an hour before the warm-up, Rhianne takes the time to settle herself into her dressing room which she shares with four other members of the cast, telling me, “we have a lovely, friendly atmosphere.”

1PM – PHYSICAL WARM UP

This takes place on stage and is led by the company dance captain. It’s important for the performers to maintain a high level of fitness as their day-to-day work is so physically demanding. Warm-ups not only prepare your body for the task ahead, but they also help to prevent the risk of injury and muscle soreness.

1.10PM – VOCAL WARM UP

Just like the physical warm up, vocal warm ups are an essential part of a performer’s day. Vocal warm ups help with breath support, range and vocal stamina whilst preventing the risk of any future damage.

1.20PM – CAST AND CREW CIRCLE

An hour before curtain up the entire cast and crew will gather to check in. This happens every day but Rhianne tells me about a special practice that the cast and crew engage in on weekly check ins which is always sure to keep morale high: “We like to do a ‘company member of the week’: you can nominate someone throughout the week if you feel like they’ve done a great job... There’s something really special about the company of **Back to the Future the Musical**. We all have this love for each other, respect for each other and we all really enjoy each other’s company.”

1.25PM – FIGHT CALL

Rhianne tells me, “Because there’s a fight sequence in our show, a fight call has to be done every single warm up.” A fight call gives the performers a chance to practise any fight sequences that occur in the show so that they are well prepared when it comes to doing the fight in front of a live audience.

1.35PM – HEAD BACK TO DRESSING ROOMS

During this time performers can continue to get ready for the upcoming show. Rhianne told me how taking pride in her hair and make-up as she prepares for a show is a fun way to take care of her mental wellbeing. “One of my ballet teachers at college told me that if you feel like you look good, it makes you feel good.”

1.55PM – HALF HOUR CALL

This is the call given to the actors and company half an hour before they will be called for the beginning of a performance. Contrary to its name it’s actually given not 30 but 35 minutes before curtain up! The half is the performers’ last chance to get show-ready. Microphones are left outside the performers’ dressing rooms ready to be collected, costumes are put on, make-up finished, and any other final touches are carried out. After this the performers get their quarter hour call at 2.10pm and their five minute call at 2.20pm.

FUN FACT – EACH PERFORMER IS GIVEN A SPECIFIC TIME SLOT TO HEAD TO THE WIG ROOM WHERE THEY WILL BE ASSISTED WITH PUTTING ON THEIR ELABORATE WIGS!

2.25PM – BEGINNERS’ CALL

This is the call for all performers and crew who are involved in the opening of the show to make their way to their starting positions. Curtain will soon be up!

2.30PM – CURTAIN UP

SHOW NUMBER 1 BEGINS!

With show number 1 finishing after five o’clock, Rhianne and her fellow cast mates must then get ready to do it all again at 7.30pm – talk about stamina! As Rhianne says, “You do live a perpetual groundhog day. It’s a groundhog day you’ve chosen to live through so it’s okay because it’s amazing and I love my job. I wouldn’t have it any other way.”

6.30PM – GET READY FOR EVENING SHOW

“After we’ve had a short break, we start to get into costume, to do it all over again!”

7.30PM – CURTAIN UP FOR EVENING SHOW

10.30PM – LEAVE THE THEATRE AND TRAVEL HOME.

STUDENT WORKSHEET 10

THE WELL-BEING OF A PERFORMER



CAMERON MCALLISTER IS AN ENSEMBLE MEMBER AND FIGHT CAPTAIN IN **BACK TO THE FUTURE THE MUSICAL**. WE ASKED HIM ABOUT HIS PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE AND HOW HE LOOKS AFTER HIMSELF PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY ON A DAILY BASIS. THESE WERE HIS TOP TIPS:

1. NUTRITION IS KEY

The most important part is how you look after yourself in regards to diet. Everyone does it in different ways but what's really important is that you eat a lot. Because the amount of calories you're burning off throughout [each show] is pretty considerable... I have a massive breakfast, porridge, raspberries, strawberries, loads of fruit and on a typical show day I would have a big dinner before the show and a big dinner after the show so I have basically two whole dinners!

2. GIVE YOURSELF A BREAK

As a performer it's about looking after yourself and making sure you're not doing too much outside of work. Because if we're doing all that cardio and all that physical work [in the show] it's actually about looking after yourself and making sure that on your days off you're giving yourself a bit of a break, because if you don't that's where you start to fall. And if you aren't looking after yourself outside the building that where it's really going to catch up with you.

3. UNPLUG

I recently took three days off and I got massive FOMO. My phone was still on and I messaged my assistant fight captain... I was messaging her 'what's going on? What am I missing out on? Tell me what I'm missing out on.' I found it really difficult. And I eventually managed to relax but it took some time and in all honesty it wasn't nice. So the next time I take my holiday I need to really make sure I turn that phone off, take some time to myself and really look after myself.

4. GET A CHANGE OF SCENERY

I love working in London. The big metropolis of London is incredible, I think it has probably the best atmosphere of any city I've ever been to, it's quite incredible. But on my day off it's nice to get outside of that for a single day. For that one day it's nice to get outside, get into a nice quiet area and detox for the day.

5. OPEN UP

It's just really important that you talk things through and don't bottle things up. Just make sure you talk about what's going on because it makes it much easier. If you're having a bad day speak to your dressing room pals because no one's judging you... Everyone has a bad day and it's really important that as a company - and I think this company does it so well - is that we all really look after each other.

STUDENT WORKSHEET 11

ROLES IN THEATRE MINI-PROJECT

READ THROUGH THE INFORMATION ABOUT ROLES IN THEATRE ON P. 4-15. SELECT ONE OF THE PROFESSIONALS TO FOCUS ON AND CREATE A PROJECT ABOUT ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING ROLES:

- ✓ Producer - Colin Ingram
- ✓ Stage Manager - Gary Wall
- ✓ Production Manager - Tim Hatley
- ✓ Lighting Designer - Tim Lutkin
- ✓ Ensemble Performer - Rhianne Alleyne
- ✓ Fight Captain - Cameron McAllister

You can create a:

- ✓ Podcast Documentary
- ✓ Presentation to Peers
- ✓ E-Book
- ✓ Written Case study
- ✓ A 'Day in the Life' Profile

In terms of content, you should include:

- ✓ Details of their role whilst working on **Back to the Future The Musical**
- ✓ Main responsibilities
- ✓ Skills required
- ✓ Challenges of working on this particular show
- ✓ Who they collaborate and work closely with on the show



BACK TO FUTURE THE MUSICAL



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WE TEACH DRAMA

Written by
Lucy Bellingham
info@weteachdrama.com

DESIGNED BY **DEWYNTERS**