

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: THE MUSICAL** 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: The Musical**. 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.