



Eccles Theater Review: Back to the Future – The Musical

Description

Salt Lake City, UT – I walked into Eccles Theater genuinely curious and unsure what to expect. *Back to the Future: The Musical* – based on the beloved Universal Pictures/Amblin Entertainment film, with a book by **Bob Gale** and music and lyrics by **Alan Silvestri** and **Glen Ballard** – is one of those adaptations that raises an immediate question: why? The original film is so perfectly constructed for the screen that bringing it to the stage felt almost presumptuous. And yet, knowing that co-creators and producers **Robert Zemeckis** and **Bob Gale** – the masterminds behind the original franchise – are behind this production adds instant credibility. **Zemeckis**, Academy Award-winning director of *Forrest Gump* and co-founder of *ImageMovers*, and Gale, who also wrote the book for this stage adaptation, have ensured the spirit of the film lives on in this production. The moment I saw the lobby packed with fans in *Back to the Future* shirts, I started to understand what kind of night this was going to be.

Let me be upfront: this is not a show for everyone. If you’re a musical theatre purist looking for a powerful score and sophisticated storytelling, this probably isn’t your night out. The songs are serviceable but largely forgettable – you won’t be humming them on the drive home. The Act Two opener, “21st Century,” is the low point of the show – a parade of dancers in light-up future garb that tries to paper over weak material with pure bombast.

The show also makes some curious storytelling choices in adapting the film. Early on, Doc sets up a running gag – every time he sings, a group of backup singers appears. It’s genuinely funny the first time. But “This One’s for the Dreamers” kills it on both counts – the show abandons the gag entirely for a moment of unearned sincerity that grinds the momentum to a halt. The song takes itself far too seriously for a show that works best when it’s campy and self-aware. Honestly? Cut it entirely, and the show would be better for it. There’s also a significant change from the film in how Doc dies – it’s acute radiation poisoning from improperly handling plutonium rather than the original Libyan mobster scene. I understand the choice, likely to avoid staging gun violence, but it ends up feeling anticlimactic and, frankly, makes Doc seem careless with a dangerous substance, which goes against everything we know about the character. And Biff has a moment of deliberately jumbled dialogue later on in the show that lands as more confusing than comedic.

A scene from a musical featuring five male characters in casual 1950s attire, performing in front of a

Company of *Back to the Future-The Musical*. Photo by Evan Zimmerman.

But here's the thing: ticket sales talk. This is a production that has already wowed audiences in London's West End, Tokyo, Sydney, and even aboard Royal Caribbean's *Star of the Seas* and won the Olivier Award for Best New Musical. Something is obviously working, and that something is the wow spectacle it pulls off, combined with the nostalgic factor. This is a show that is near and dear to so many (young and old), myself included. I'll put it this way: the couple behind me was cheering and screaming through the entire show. My 11-year-old son was completely captivated from start to finish. That right there tells you everything you need to know about who this show is for and how much they're going to love it.

The real star is the DeLorean. Car scenes onstage are notoriously hard to pull off; most productions just suggest a car with a steering wheel and a couple of chairs. Not here. The replica DeLorean is tricked out to look exactly like the one from the film, mounted on a turntable that is larger than anything I've seen on a stage, with realistic road projections behind it that genuinely convince your eye the car is moving at 88 mph. As a theatre person, I found myself leaning forward the entire time, trying to figure out how they pulled it off. It gave me serious Disneyland ride energy, and I mean that as a compliment. And it's not just the DeLorean scenes; that turntable is working hard throughout the whole show, powering chase scenes at the school and action sequences everywhere, always in seamless sync with the video projections. There's also a standout moment near the end when Doc climbs the clock tower the video backdrop is perfectly synced to his every step in a way that is genuinely hilarious and technically impressive. This is a master class in what theatre tech is capable of.

A young man in a red shirt and a worried expression sits next to a woman in a purple gingham dress. Lucas Hallauer and Kathryn Adeline in the *Back to the Future* National Tour. Photo by Evan Zimmerman.

CAST SHOUT-OUTS

Lucas Hallauer as Marty McFly brings boundless energy, a knockout voice, and charm to the role. **David Josefsberg** is a delight as Doc Brown - eccentric, warm, and genuinely funny. **Catherine Adeline** as Lorraine absolutely shines in "Pretty Baby" - a standout song and moment that lifts the whole show. Also deserving recognition: **Nathaniel Hackman** as Biff, **Mike Bindeman** as George McFly, and **Cartreze Tucker** as Goldie Wilson/Marvin Berry.

CREATIVE TEAM SHOUT-OUTS

Massive credit to set and costume designer **Tim Hatley**. Yes, the DeLorean is jaw-dropping, but what really impressed me was how he uses that massive turntable throughout - for chase scenes at the school, action sequences everywhere - layered with video projections that make you feel like you're watching a film unfold on stage. Combined with clever use of curtains and multiple levels, the staging creates a seamless, cinematic world that shifts without missing a beat.

Tony Award-winning director **John Rando** keeps the whole thing moving with precision and heart. **Tim Lutkin** and **Hugh Vanstone's** lighting design deserves its own applause - it's doing heavy lifting every single scene. **Finn Ross's** video design is what takes the whole thing into another

dimension. And **Chris Fisher**'s illusions work is responsible for those moments where you genuinely can't figure out what just happened on stage. **Gareth Owen**'s sound design is bold and immersive — bring concert earplugs if you are sensitive to loud sound design, embrace the ride.

Also deserving recognition: **Nick Finlow** (music supervision), **Ethan Popp** and **Bryan Crook** (orchestrations), **David Chase** (dance arrangements), **Matt Doebler** (music director), and **Maurice Chan** (fight director).

A vibrant stage scene from a musical, featuring dancers in colorful costumes, some couples engage Kathryn Adeline, Braden Allen King, More in the *Back to the Future National Tour*. Photo by Evan Zimmerman.

Final Thoughts

Back to the Future: The Musical is not a perfect show. The songs won't linger, some storytelling choices will frustrate fans of the film, and there are moments where it loses the plot entirely. But here's the thing — none of that matters when the DeLorean is spinning on that turntable and the whole theater is losing its mind.

This show has found its people: teens, nostalgia lovers, film fans, and anyone who just wants a big, fun, visually spectacular night out. It's not high art. It's not trying to be. It's a love letter to a beloved film, delivered with enough technical wizardry to make your jaw drop and enough heart to make you glad you came.

Grab a ticket and enjoy the ride. *Back to the Future: The Musical* runs June 9-14, 2026 at Eccles Theater. That car alone is worth it.

• SHOW DETAILS

Back to the Future: The Musical
The George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Theater
131 Main St, Salt Lake City, UT 84111

Run dates: June 9-14, 2026

Runtime: 2 hours 40 minutes with one intermission

Recommended for ages 6+. Children under 4 will not be admitted.

A lively stage scene from a musical performance featuring dancers in colorful costumes, a guitarist in Kathryn Adeline, Braden Allen King, More in the *Back to the Future National Tour*. Photo by Evan Zimmerman.

Performance schedule:

Tue Jun 9 — 7:00 PM

Wed Jun 10 — 7:00 PM

Thu Jun 11 — 7:00 PM (ASL interpreted)

Fri Jun 12 — 7:30 PM

Sat Jun 13 — 1:00 PM (closed captioning) & 7:30 PM

Sun Jun 14 1:00 PM & 6:30 PM

Tickets: Official tickets at Broadway-at-the-Eccles.com or call 801-355-2728

ADVISORIES: Flashing lights, strobe effects, smoke/haze, and pyrotechnics throughout. Loud sound design - concert earplugs recommended for sensitive ears.

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1. Reviews

Tags

1. Alan Silvestri
2. Back to the Future
3. Back to the Future Musical
4. Bob Gale
5. Broadway
6. Broadway at the Eccles
7. Broadway Musical
8. Broadway Review
9. BTTF Musical
10. David Josefsberg
11. DeLorean
12. Eccles Theater
13. Family Theatre
14. Glen Ballard
15. John Rando
16. Live Theatre
17. Lucas Hallauer
18. Musical Theatre
19. National Tour
20. Olivier Award
21. Robert Zemeckis
22. Salt Lake City
23. Show Review
24. SLC Theatre
25. Student Rush
26. Theater Nerd
27. Theatre Review
28. Tim Hatley
29. Utah
30. Utah theatre

Date

2026/06/11

Date Created

2026/06/10

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