

UNCATEGORIZED

'Back to the Future: The Musical' brings the film to life at Detroit Opera House



David Josefsberg, left, and Lucas Hallauer star in "Back to the Future: The Musical," at the Detroit Opera House through Nov. 9 (Photo by Evan Zimmerman for MurphyMade)



By **GARY GRAFF** | | For MediaNews Group

PUBLISHED: October 30, 2025 at 1:20 PM EDT | UPDATED: October 30, 2025 at 1:37 PM EDT

Stage musical adaptations of movies and TV shows are buyer-beware propositions.

It's, over the years, proven not easy to capture such productions in the flesh, with songs added. The ratios of success to failure largely tilts in the latter direction, with a fair number of attempts also follow under the category of "meh."

So "Back to the Future: the Musical?" As Doc Brown would say, "Great Scott!"

With an emphasis on the great.

At the Detroit Opera House through Nov. 9, the treatment of the hit 1985 sci-fi comedy — which premiered days before the pandemic shutdown during 2020 in England and on Broadway in 2023 — ticks off all the boxes that make for a winning musical of any kind, regardless of its source material. The songs — by Alan Silvestri and Glen Ballard, save for those couple of Huey Lewis & the News hits from the film. The acting is on a high level, the choreography energetic. And, as an adaptation, it makes tweaks to the plot that are clever enough to make it work on stage but without losing any of the original, joyous and tongue-in-cheeky spirit of the movie.



Back to the Future: The Musical" is at the Detroit Opera House through Nov. 9
(Photo by McLeod9 Creative)

It adds to that, in fact. Musical numbers such as “It’s Only a Matter of Time,” “Got No Future,” “It’s Only a Matter of Time,” “Future Boy” and “For the Dreamers” dig into the existential struggles Marty McFly (Lukas Hallauer) and Doc Brown (David Josefsberg) are experiencing in their quests to make some sort of mark on the world. That’s added emotional content that brings welcome dimension to the goings-on in Hill Valley, both in 1985 and 1955, where Marty unwittingly travels back to in the infamous DeLorean.

And the car, Flux Capacitor and all, is front and center in “Back to the Future’s” most striking visual moments, as the production uses scrims, screens and video projections to simulate the time travel experience in a seamless fashion that will impress “BTTF” die-hards — including those who dress up in character for the show — and casual theater fans.

Key lines from the film, meanwhile, pop up with applause-generating regularity, and the Under the Sea school dance sequence is recreated in all of its Chuck Berry-predicting glory. The new or changed aspects of the script work so well that they belie any complaints about what might be missing — and even at times make the story that much more enjoyable.

It is, in the end, a great deal of fun — right down to the video screen

The performances are strong from top to bottom. Hallauer channels plenty of Michael J. Fox into his Marty, even looking the part — and, like Josefsberg, has the gift of opening his mouth wide enough that his moments of comic angst can be seen and felt in the top row of the balcony. Josefsberg, meanwhile, plays Doc a bit more like Beetlejuice than Christopher Lloyd but injects a bit more of a human touch into his film counterpart's zany eccentricity.

A perhaps unexpected standout is Cartreze Tucker as future mayor Goldie Wilson, a character that's given more real estate in the musical and nearly steals the show with his gospel-flavored "Gotta Start Somewhere." Mike Bindeman nails Crispin Glover's demeanor from the film but brings more physical comedy to the role, as did Jenny Dalrymple (an understudy for the show's media night) as Marty's future mom/seductress Lorraine Banes.

And Central Michigan University grad Nathaniel Hackmann brings the right amount of comedy to Biff Tannen — a role he created for the Broadway production — particularly in the slapstick of "The Hill Valley School Fight Song" and "Something About That Boy."

All of that makes for a wholly enjoyable and even timeless kind of trip back, and forth, in time. And if you are a fan of those Huey Lewis tunes ("The Power of Love" and "Back in Time"), don't leave during the bows; there's no moment of this party that should be missed.

"Back to the Future" runs through Nov. 9 at the Detroit Opera House, 1526 Broadway St. (313)237-7454 or broadwayindetroit.com.

Around the Web

REVCONTENT

