

Original set designer lends hand to <i>Grease&/i>

November 17, 2011 3:15 AM Alicia Duplessis Jasmin
aduples@tulane.edu

Theatergoers at *Grease* this weekend are in for a treat. Rick Paul, the musical's original set designer, has created the set for the Newcomb Department of Music production at Dixon Hall.



Performers (from left) Anna Cargill, Ali Bloomston, Kelsea Beck, Alexandra Weinroth and Allie Zodin rehearse a scene from *Grease*, which opens tonight (Nov. 18) on the Dixon Hall stage. (Photo by Sabree Hill)

The musical, written by a pair of Paul's colleagues at the Kingston Mines Theater Company in Chicago, debuted in 1971. Forty years later, Paul says that he enjoyed his experience making the backdrop for the Tulane presentation just as much as he did when the production was unknown.

"I was just about the age of the kids putting on this show when I first designed the *Grease* set years ago," says Paul, who has been designing sets around the world since 1965. "I was part of *Grease* before it took off."

And it did take off. The musical eventually landed on Broadway, followed by a hit movie and a sequel. Paul says he did not provide design work for either of those ventures.

While the sets of Paul's shows can be as elaborate or as basic as the director desires, he describes Tulane's set as “high energy” and “colorful.”

Paul's relationship with the Tulane theater and music departments developed as he built a clientele base in the New Orleans area over the years. Much of his earlier work in New Orleans involved set designs for ballet companies, Mardi Gras balls and a few other Tulane productions. When he isn't traveling as a freelance designer he teaches courses at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Tickets for [Grease](#) are available for two shows tonight (Nov. 18) and Saturday (Nov. 19) at 8 p.m. in Dixon Hall.