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HAIR: CHANGING VERSIONS

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HAIR: CHANGING VERSIONS

by

Barbara Lee Horn

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in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

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The evolution of the rock musical Hair is examined from its initial presentation at the Public Theater in 1967, through its stagings on Broadway and elsewhere, and to its 1978 film adaptation. The study is of value to three categories of readers. Students of American social history in the late 1960s will find an investigation of the ways in which the show's dramatic form, thematic content, and theatrical techniques reflected the beliefs and practices of the "hippie" counterculture. For those interested in the development of American musical comedy, Hair is discussed in relation to significant antecedents as well as to musicals which followed it. The third group of readers for whom this study is intended consists of those with a specific interest in the staging of Hair. The show was completely rewritten between the Public Theater presentation and its production on Broadway. Aside from the addition of more than a dozen songs, the revision transformed the piece from an antiwar protest musical into a theatrical orgy featuring "non-plot," nudity, and an explicit assault on the conventions of Broadway musical comedy. As a nonbook musical Hair varied from performance to performance, responding to pertinent topics of the day and adapting to mores both in the United States and abroad.

Consequently, while not all of the changes which Hair underwent are encompassed in the study, there is a recounting of the significant types of alterations which occurred. Interviews with several of the musical's principals should be of particular interest to this third group of readers. Opinions of critics and theatre historians about Hair are analyzed and reasons suggested for the success and failure of different productions. Ultimately, Hair is revealed as an authentic and accurate extension of the hippie movement, theatrically innovative if not unique, its popularity derived mainly from social relevance, adaptability, and substantive appeal.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to chronicle the evolution of the rock musical Hair from its inception and initial staging at the Public Theater in 1967 through its run on Broadway and elsewhere until its motion picture adaptation in 1978-1979. The term "chronicle" implies that the study will be mainly descriptive. However, two analytical frameworks are believed necessary for a complete examination of the show. The first, in a chapter immediately following this introduction, will attempt to place the musical within the sociocultural context from which it emerged. The second, a brief analysis of relevant American musical theatre pieces produced prior to Hair, will assist in revealing Hair as part of an evolving genre.

The musical which originally appeared at the Public Theater was far removed from the one later staged at the Biltmore Theatre on Broadway, as were its various renditions staged concurrently with or after the Broadway run. Produced in numerous cities across the United States and in nearly a score of foreign lands, the show was adapted to accommodate local conditions. In 1977, Hair was revived at the Biltmore and shortly thereafter it was adapted for

the screen. Therefore, the scope of this inquiry is not limited to one fixed version of the show. Instead, this study encompasses numerous versions of Hair, describing the changes which the work underwent over the course of the years.

Information regarding the social context in which Hair appeared and of the history of the American musical theatre is derived mainly from published materials. With the exception of Lorrie Davis's pedestrian account of the show, there are no books devoted exclusively to it. There are, however, numerous articles that appeared in a wide range of journals, popular magazines and newspapers, and these do provide information for the study of Hair. Of equal importance are a series of interviews conducted with individuals who were centrally involved with the show. Held in New York City between 1977 and 1982, these interviews include discussions with Gerald Freedman (the director of the Public Theater and Cheetah versions of the show), Tom O'Horgan (the director of the Broadway production, who went on to direct other versions of the musical in the United States and abroad), Jules Fisher (the lighting director of the Broadway production and the 1977 revival), Galt MacDermot (the composer of the score), and Robin Wagner (the set designer for the Broadway production and the 1977 revival). Collectively, such interviews provided valuable insights into the show not available from other sources.

As indicated above, the next chapter of this study

will describe the cultural and social context which Hair expressly sought to reflect: the hippie counterculture of the late 1960s. The chapter will attempt to define the hippie counterculture, identifying its origins, ideology, and world view, and to detail its modes of expression. Chapter III will be devoted to the history of the American musical theatre as such history relates to Hair. This brief history begins with the revue shows of the late nineteenth century, proceeds to the advent of the integrated musical, and arrives finally at the era of Hair's staging. The analysis deals with dramatic structure, social content, and theatrical technique. Subsequently, Chapter IV is concerned with the Public Theater and Cheetah renditions of the show. The show's Broadway version is the topic of Chapter V, this chapter including a synopsis of the opening night presentation. In Chapter VI Hair's productions in the United States and abroad are examined. Chapter VII contains an investigation of the 1977 revival effort and the 1978-1979 film production. The critical receptions with which various versions of the show were met are delineated in Chapter VIII. Conclusions will be found in Chapter IX.

The study should be of interest to three types of readers. First, the analysis of Hair will be of value to anyone specifically interested in the show. Unlike the integrated musical, Hair is a "non-book" show, and this partially explains why there has been no comprehensive treatment of the work as it evolved. Second, the study has

relevance for those concerned with the evolution of the American musical theatre, particularly with regard to its departures from long-standing conventions of the genre. For better or worse, Hair was an attempt to reflect the hippie counterculture. Thus, finally, this study should be of value to students of the turbulent era of the 1960s.

CHAPTER II

THE HIPPIE COUNTERCULTURE

In explaining his selection of Hair for presentation at the Public Theater Joseph Papp, the original producer of the show, expressed his belief in its social relevance. "We must be a modern theater, engaged in producing modern plays dramatizing the potent forces of our time--events and feelings which shape history and man."¹ The same contemporary immediacy of Hair tempted Tom O'Horgan, the director of the Broadway version of the play, to lend his talents to the show. "Only once in a lifetime do you come upon an idea that perfectly expresses a point in time--a theater form whose demeanor, language, clothing, dance and even its name accurately reflect a social epoch in full explosion."² Even reviewers and critics who had reservations about Hair noted that the show was a direct expression of a highly visible social phenomenon of the times, the hippie movement.³ Interestingly, Hair was initially shown at Papp's Public Theater

¹Joseph Papp in "Program of New York Shakespeare Festival, Public Theater" (New York: New York Shakespeare Festival, 1967), n. p.

²Tom O'Horgan in Introduction to Lorrie Davis and Rachel Gallagher, Letting My Hair Down (New York: Arthur Fields, 1973), p. 12.

³Edith Oliver, "Hair," The New Yorker, 11 November 1967, pp. 127-130.

which is located in the then-epicenter of the hippie movement, New York's East Village.⁴

Definitions

A culture may be defined simply as a group of people whose "members manage to collectively coordinate their everyday experience through sharing a common body of social knowledge."⁵ A culture has internal and external aspects, ideas, values, beliefs, and the resultant outer manifestations. Culture is learned through the process of socialization. In complex and heterogeneous societies, such as the United States, there are subcultures.

The major forms of these are class cultures, and subcultures can be conceptualized as subsets of these larger cultural configurations. Subcultures share elements of the larger class culture (sometimes called the parent culture), but are also distinct from it.⁶

The hippies constituted such a subculture both similar to, but distinct from, the dominant middle-class culture of the Western world during the 1960s.

Still another designation has been applied to the hippie phenomenon, "counterculture." The hippies constituted a counterculture because of their "almost studied"

⁴Sherri Cavan, *Hippies of the Haight* (St. Louis: New Critics Press, 1972), p. 28.

⁵Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), p. 98.

⁶Mike Brake, *The Sociology of Youth Culture and Youth Subcultures* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), p. 7.

turning away from certain key values and practices of the dominant culture.⁷ A more complete concept of a counter-culture is provided by Westhues.

On the ideological level, a counterculture is set of beliefs and values which radically reject the dominant culture of a society and prescribe sectarian alternatives. On the behavioral level, a counterculture is a group of people who, because they accept such beliefs and values, behave in such radically nonconformist ways that they tend to drop out of society.⁸

Because they seemed to renounce "straight society" the hippies may be considered a counterculture. The hippies, however, did not totally reject the values of the parent culture. For instance, they maintained a predisposition toward monogamy, and consequently, for them, the fine line between counterculture and subculture was sometimes blurred.

What was the "parent culture" to which the hippies were so opposed? The parent culture was that of the generation which was born and reared during the years of the Great Depression, reaching maturity about World War II. It was a conservative, mostly conformist generation attuned to the disruptions which accompany social and economic change. This culture placed a high priority on material betterment, viewing hard work as the surest and most legitimate avenue towards it. It was a generation enamored of science, with

⁷Fred Davis, On Youth Subcultures: The Hippie Variant (New York: General Learning Press, 1971), p. 4.

⁸Kenneth Westhues, Society's Shadows: Studies in the Sociology of Countercultures (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, Ryerson, 1972), pp. 9-10.

a seemingly inexhaustible faith in the capacity of man to conquer the unknown by reason. Oriented simultaneously toward the individual and the nuclear family, the parent culture, which the hippies eschewed, viewed the problems of others as essentially the result of personal shortcomings. This parent generation had a fixation on maintaining a "grip on reality."

The hippie counterculture interfaced with the parent culture of the times. Bemoaning the condition of modern man and the legacy which he is passing on, one critic remarked that, "young people of the present generation are coming of age in an historical period that is experiencing the traditional communities, the crumbling of traditions and stated values."⁹ In part, the emergence of the hippie counterculture was a result of the erosion of just such traditional values and institutions, "a response to a breakdown on all levels of community."¹⁰ The hippies attempted to cope with the agonizing contradictions which had arisen in "straight society."

As a counterculture, the hippie movement appeared to identify man's prevalent and important values of "straight society" and then consciously to replace them with antithetical values. If holding a job was considered socially

⁹Allen J. Moore, The Young Adult Generation: A Perspective on the Future (Nashville: Abingdon, 1969), p. 24.

¹⁰D. L. Earisman, Hippies in Our Midst (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), p. 142.

desirable in the "straight world," being unemployed must become a requisite for admission to the hippie fold. The observation has been made that the norms of a counterculture "can be understood only by reference to the relationship of the group to the surrounding culture."¹¹ The hippies examined the values and mores of the "straight world" and then constructed their contrasting culture.

The hippie movement, however, adopted personae which were embedded historically in Western Civilization. Any hippie gathering contained its share of youths dressed as Indians, frontiersmen, and military men of the past. Such historical garb might be viewed as an effort to ridicule the past, but there is also the belief that it was a collective effort to "remythologize some of the earlier cultural heroes of American society."¹²

What precisely is it that made one a hippie? According to a popular news journal, there were approximately 300,000 hippies in the world in the year 1967¹³ However, not everyone calling himself a hippie was an authentic hippie, nor did others necessarily proclaim that they were hippies.¹⁴ For

¹¹Milton Yinger, "Contraculture and Subculture," American Sociological Review, 1960, p. 627.

¹²Moore, p. 42.

¹³Correspondents of Time: The Hippies, ed. Joseph David Brown (New York: Time Incorporated, 1967), p. 5.

¹⁴William L. Partridge, The Hippie Ghetto: The Natural History of a Subculture (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1973), p. 51.

every visible "teenybopper" or "weekend hippie" there may have been an invisible "real" hippie.

Several researchers have attempted to enumerate the salient characteristics of a hippie. Kenneth Keniston analyzes the style of "post-modern youth" and identifies five outstanding features of hippies: fluidity, flux, change, movement, both ideational and spatial; exclusive identification with members of their own generation; an emphasis upon personalism and participation; an ambivalence toward technology; and an adherence to the principle of nonviolence.¹⁵ William Partridge describes the distinguishing features of the hippie as: isolation from the larger American society; experimentation with alternatives to life in the larger society; intimacy in social relations; communal intoxication; dependence upon esoteric views of the world; and transience or mobility.¹⁶ Finally, Mike Brake identifies hippies as those whose major concerns are: passive resistance; movement, dissociation; expressivity, subjectivity; and individualism.¹⁷

Why this difficulty in forging a conclusive definition of a hippie? Perhaps because the hippie counterculture was composed of a heterogeneous, eclectic, and varied grouping. Brake writes:

The term "hippy" obviously covers a vast array of

¹⁵Kennith Keniston, Young Radicals: Notes on Committed Youth (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1968), pp. 275-285.

¹⁶Partridge, pp. 64-67.

¹⁷Brake, pp. 101-103.

bohemian and student subcultures, and as with the beats there was a hard core of artistic-literary intelligentsia, with an aristocracy of rock musicians and a vast following of life-style rebels.¹⁸

Differences among hippies were based on such factors as individual idiosyncrasies, regional variants, and urban and rural backgrounds. Cavan, in her survey of San Francisco hippies, describes a set of distinct subcultures converging into the hippie counterculture of Haight-Ashbury. Some were involved in the drug scene while others were simply mystics; and there were also those who were "simply living," selfseekers, the Diggers and the Hell's Angels.¹⁹ In short, the definition of a "hippie" is elusive.

One final aspect of the hippie counterculture, its international presence, deserves our attention at this point. One researcher describing the "youth scene" writes: "There exists today at a very real level an international youth culture; through which young people have come to recognize that they have common aims, common needs, common problems, and, most important, common doubts about the societies in which they live."²⁰ During the late 1960s recognizable hippies appeared around the globe from New York City to Katmandu. While the hippie phenomenon is usually associated with the United States and Western Europe, the hippies soon

¹⁸Ibid., p. 93.

¹⁹Cavan, p. 33.

²⁰Arthur Chisnall, Brian Lewis, and Auriol Hall, Unattached Youth (London: Blond and Briggs, 1974), p. 15.

had allies and converts throughout the world. Paradoxically, hippies, themselves, tended to concentrate in tiny enclaves such as New York's East Village and San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury. Hence, even though the hippie counterculture was a worldwide phenomenon, even at its height, there remained many regions of the civilized world where no hippie cared or dared to tread.

Etiology

As should be apparent from the analysis above, the reasons for the emergence of the hippie counterculture are numerous and varied. As a manifestation of generational conflicts it is certainly not unique. Throughout most of history youth has been viewed as being in conflict with their elders. As early as the 1950s, sociologists identified a separate youth culture, "a 'more or less specifically irresponsible' youth culture," which exists, "in conflict with the adult world's sense of responsibility, conformity and productive work," and one which, "emphasizes hedonism, and 'its recalcitrance to the presence of adult expectations and discipline.'"²¹ While evaluating the post-modern styles of young radicals, one theorist maintains that adolescent rebellion is inherent in the process of becoming an adult, asserting that, "in part, this style reflects the characteristics of youth itself--the concern with developing a 'personal' position vis-à-vis a wider

²¹Brake, p. 88.

society, the combination of psychological adulthood with unreadiness to become involved in the structures of occupation and family."²² Thus, the hippie movement may be viewed as an exaggerated avatar of youthful angst which has afflicted adolescents and young adults from time immemorial.

Another causal factor leading to the hippie counter-culture may be seen in the discontent of Western Civilization itself. Laing points to the repressive and inhibiting nature of contemporary Western Civilization.

Freud insisted that our civilization is a repressive one. There is a conflict between our demands for conformity and the demands of our instinctive energies, explicitly sexual. Freud could see no resolution to this antagonism, and he came to believe that in our time the possibility of simple natural love between human beings had already been abolished.²³

This thesis of a repressive society inhibiting sexual energies in order to harness the psychic power necessary to perform the work of the world has been advanced in a variety of ways.²⁴ They all lead us to the possible conclusion that the hippie movement was an attempt to overcome inhibitions imposed by modern civilization by a new and intense preoccupation with libidinous expression and subsequent release.

²²Keniston, p. 273.

²³R. D. Laing, The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1960), pp. 11-12.

²⁴See, for example, Herbert Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964).

Still another set of factors which may be said to have contributed to the emergence of the hippie counterculture resides in emotional configurations with the modern nuclear family of mother, father, and offspring. Social critics noted that, "large numbers of white young people, mostly apolitical, were alienated from their economically, educationally and socially privileged families."²⁵ Comparing young radicals with hippies, Keniston finds a common meeting ground in their socioeconomic profiles, both groups being composed of individuals with "upper-middle class, politically liberal, secular families, excellent educations and attendance at prestigious colleges--in short, the kind of background that makes a stage of youth most possible."²⁶ Society found itself at a loss to explain why, "hippies are . . . in many cases our sharpest and most aware young people."²⁷

Many social analysts blamed the hippie movement on middle-class parents who had been overly permissive and had gratified their children's every whim.²⁸ According to one theorist, the hippies were individuals in an arrested state of development, occupying a limbo stage "between a permissive

²⁵John A. Hostetler, Communitarian Societies (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974), p. 55.

²⁶Keniston, p. 274.

²⁷Earisman, p. 138.

²⁸Henry Malcolm, Generation of Narcissus (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1971), p. 87.

childhood" and an "obnoxiously conformist world."²⁹

Hippies had a different explanation for why they had "dropped out." Many hippies asserted that while they were offered material advantages and opportunities during their childhood, there was a painful lack of genuine love and emotional interaction within the home.

There is not enough love. If we had enough love in our homes, if the parents . . . had given us more love, maybe we wouldn't have come down here. All of this, the sex, the drugs, the be-ins . . . is a way to try to have a kind of universal love because we haven't been able to learn to love as individuals.³⁰

This explanation may be considered as facile as the "spoiled rotten" thesis.

A somewhat different analysis of the contribution of the family psyche to the "making" of the hippies has been stated by Keniston. Focusing upon the family background of alienated students, Keniston found this similarity.

Both parents seem to have been frustrated and dissatisfied. The mother's talents and emotionality found little expression within her marriage; the father's idealism and youthful dreams were crushed by the realities of his adult life . . . Often these mothers explicitly deprecated or disparaged their husbands. . . .

Unconsciously, alienated students seem to believe that they defeated their fathers, who are now seen as weak and inadequate models of male adulthood. Probably, like most small boys, they attempted a "revolution" within

²⁹Theodore Roszak, The Making of a Counter Culture (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1968), p. 35.

³⁰Earisman, p. 17.

the family in order to overthrow the tyrannical father and gain the exclusive love of the mother. But, unlike most boys, these boys believed that their revolution succeeded in destroying male authority.³¹

Such destruction of authority within the home is viewed as a precursor to the defiance of authority in general at a later stage in the individual's development; and it is interesting to note that the same kind of rebellion exists in the female, although it is less pronounced.

Another theoretical cause of the hippie movement may be found in the lack of participation by young people in the outside or "real" world. According to one observer of the youth scene, the key word in youth's collective attitude was "participation."³² Such need for participation can be interpreted as a form of compensation for a cloistered adolescence. Sheltered from the harsh realities of the work place, afforded an extended education apart from the vocational grind, the youths who became hippies did not have the opportunity to participate in the mainstream of social activity.³³ Such lack of participation in the "outside" world did not permit youths to develop their own value system. Confronted by this lack and the further need to see themselves as individuals, these youths simply inverted the values of their parents. An interesting corollary is found

³¹Keniston, p. 337.

³²Chisnal, Lewis, and Hall, p. 17.

³³Herbert Hendin, The Age of Sensation (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975), p. 18.

in Roszak's analysis which relies heavily upon the observations of Max Weber. During the 1960s, merit, as opposed to ascriptive characteristics, was taken as the sole criterion for occupational status and advancement. Millions of youths demonstrated their talents in universities throughout the land, and believed that this demonstration would be rewarded with prestigious jobs. However, as our economy became less labor-intensive, the number of elite positions available to talented youths was reduced. Faced with the alternative of accepting less than high-level employment, many such youths dropped out and became hippies.³⁴

There was an "employer" of sorts willing to absorb this overflow, the armed forces. The last of the 1960s was an era in which America gave its intellectual youth an image of an "ugly" and grasping superpower bullying smaller nations into submission. In the opinion of leftist political analysts, the hippie movement was a protest against worldwide American imperialism, a struggle in the "belly of the beast."³⁵ Although most hippies were comparatively apolitical, some did pay lip service to the barbs of the New Left against American policies at home and abroad, and, almost without exception, they sought to avoid "paying the bill" by evading the draft. Above all else, the Vietnam debacle

³⁴Roszak, p. 30.

³⁵Jean Francois Revel, Without Marx or Jesus (New York: Dell Press, 1970), p. 209.

crystallized the opposition of youth to their government,³⁶ the hippies seeing Vietnam as the epitome of injustice wrought by the American War machine.

Another political explanation of the hippie counter-culture has it that while the hippies came primarily from middle-class backgrounds, they were, while in college and/or in the armed forces, compelled to take on a proletarian role. Hence, one radical critic asserts that, "what gives specific class content to the struggles of youth--in the schools and in the army specifically--is the proletarianization of the roles youth play in those institutions."³⁷ This process of proletarianization led, according to some analysts, to the formation of the hippie counterculture.³⁸

Prior deviant subcultures also provided a legacy to the hippie movement. Following World War II, a "bohemian" culture espousing existential precepts spread from Paris throughout Europe and North America.³⁹ Two decades later, a portion of this bohemian subculture might be seen in the hippie movement,⁴⁰ as relayed to American youth by

³⁶Keniston, p. 182.

³⁷Jim Mellen, "More on the Youth Movement," Weatherman, ed. Harold Jacobs (New York: Ramparts, 1970), p. 45.

³⁸Roszak, p. 43.

³⁹Brake, p. 90.

⁴⁰Kenneth Keniston, Youth and Dissent: The Rise of a New Opposition (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1971), p. 177.

the Beat Generation of the 1950s.⁴¹ Simultaneously, American youth adopted the spirit and the techniques of the civil rights struggle of the 1950s and early 1960s as a model for organized protest.⁴² Although the hippies may appear not to have immediate precursors, the bohemians, the beats, and the freedom riders provided them with anticonformist and antiestablishment role models.

The impersonal nature of the "technological age" also encouraged the youth of the 1960s to drop out. The ascendance of technology over emotion resulted in one commentator's observation that, "an enormous technology seems to have set itself the task of making it unnecessary for one human being ever to ask anything of another in the course of going about his daily business."⁴³ This trend was felt by youth who were confronted with a future of more and more technological depersonalization.⁴⁴ The hippies reacted to the depersonalization of the technological age, protesting against the replacement of man by automaton masquerading as human beings.

A final cause of the rise of the hippie counterculture may be found in the media coverage of the movement's

⁴¹Bruce Cook, The Beat Generation (New York: Charles Scribner, 1971), p. 5.

⁴²Keith Mellville, Communes in the Counter Culture (New York: William Morrow, 1972), p. 18.

⁴³Ibid., p. 17.

⁴⁴Fred Milson, Youth in a Changing Society (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 32.

initial stirrings. Hippies made for good press and good television. They were unusual and they were active, capable of providing attractive footage which could hold the attention of mass audiences. Ironically, one of the major avenues through which alienated youth learned of the incipient hippie movement was through the establishment's own media facilities.⁴⁵ The media played an ancillary role in popularizing and promoting the hippie counterculture, serving as a conduit through which the ideas and activities of the hippies were channeled to others in the Western World.

Ideology, Credo, and World View

The hippie counterculture rejected "objective" and "scientific" approaches to the investigation of nature and the classification of knowledge. Instead, they saw personal experience as the only genuine basis for knowledge of man and his environment.⁴⁶ The hippie world view was succinctly summarized by Abbie Hoffman in his statement that "reality is a subjective thing."⁴⁷ In place of an "objective" understanding of the universe, the hippie counterculture offered an existential and transcendental romanticism. This anti-rationalist stance might also be viewed as a product of the

⁴⁵ Brake, p. 99.

⁴⁶ Keniston, p. 284.

⁴⁷ Abbie Hoffman, Revolution for the Hell of It (New York: Dial Press, 1968), p. 9.

implications of nuclear warfare, a warfare which "rational" society contemplated, but which threatened the most irrational of consequences.⁴⁸ Bodily and particularly sexual gratification was preferred to the accomplishments of reason.

The hippies also veered toward transcendental philosophies. Like Thoreau and Emerson before them, many hippies turned toward Eastern religion, particularly Hinduism and Buddhism. Of especial significance was Zen Buddhism. Unlike Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism, Zen promises "instantaneous" enlightenment through meditation, with meditation leading to revelatory experiences. Indeed, in its most vulgarized form, Zen "dovetails remarkably with a number of adolescent traits."⁴⁹

The hippies responded positively to the concept of "karma." When the historical Buddha proclaimed the operation of "karma," he did so in order to place moral responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the individual. Paradoxically, the hippies debased this concept and used "karma" as a means of escaping from personal responsibility. The hippies' use of "karma" is illustrated in this terse example.

Where a member of the conventional community might explain the falling of an apple from a tree by invoking the Newtonian law of gravity, a member of the Hippie community might explain

⁴⁸Earlsman, p. 141.

⁴⁹Roszak, p. 134.

the same event by invoking the "karma" of the apple . . . its intrinsic fate is eventually to fall from the tree.⁵⁰

The hippies placed Zen Buddhism in an astrological, metaphysical framework. Astrology, other forms of divination, and conventional Eastern philosophies served the same purpose for the hippies. They enabled the hippies to infuse reality with irrational elements, and responsibility was thus shifted from the individual to the mechanics of the universe. Through their own distortion of Eastern philosophy the hippies arrived, ironically, at a world view more akin to that of Protestant determinism than to that of ancient Eastern religion.⁵¹ The hippies adopted the trappings of Eastern religion, especially mystical and transcendental elements, but ended with an explanation of reality far removed from Buddhism and Hinduism.

How did the inversion of values which characterizes a counterculture work in the case of the hippies? The salient tenet of the parent culture's "work ethic" provides an illustration. The "work ethic" is based upon the premise that man has a moral duty to work, not only because work provides for his needs, but because work is an end unto itself.

The hippie drops out of society. But luckily for him, society sticks around, because the hippie is a parasite. The straight world supports him. Without this country's

⁵⁰Cavan, p. 92.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 103.

prosperity, there could be no hippies. They'd have nobody to bum from, nobody to give them easy jobs to tide them over the winter. There would be no leisure time in which to practice being hip. . . .⁵²

To the hippies, on the other hand, anyone who ranks work higher than "freedom" is absurd. The hippie's "freedom" equates to instant gratification, and the hippies do not find this in conventional work. The phrase "do your own thing" is synonymous with avoiding conventional work. In the hippie counterculture, "each individual must discover what the activity is, which, at a given moment, most meets his personal needs, and then he must do that."⁵³

While theoretically allowing everyone to "do his own thing," the hippies took exception to views which challenged their own. They believed that what they preached and practiced was the only truth. All those who believed otherwise were deluded.⁵⁴ The hippies were averse to the questioning of their assumptions, not only because they were aware that such questioning would expose deep contradictions.⁵⁵ The actual maxim of the hippies states, "Do your own thing and all will be well, as long as your own thing is certified pure by the rest of us."⁵⁶

⁵²Cecilia Holland, "I Don't Trust Anybody Under 30," Saturday Evening Post, 10 August 1968, p. 11.

⁵³Earisman, p. 65.

⁵⁴Cavan, p. 28.

⁵⁵Harold Garfinkel, Studies in Ethnomethodology (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1967), p. 50.

⁵⁶Holland, p. 12.

One last feature of the hippie world view which deserves attention is the principle of nonviolence. Nonviolence has a history extending from ancient Eastern philosophy to the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Hippies did consider violence abhorrent in most instances, but also used the concept as a way of justifying their dissociation from society. Holding a conventional job, in the view of the hippies, would promote the interests and continued existence of the parent culture, and thus further violence and oppression created by the Western industrial machine. Nonviolence, then, was both a lofty principle and convenient excuse for the hippies.

Forms of Expression

The hippie world view was externalized by various means of expression involving appearance, behavior, and communication. Reflecting a rejection of materialism, hippies often wore uniformly drab work clothes, such as dungaree shirts and pea coats. On the other hand, a number of hippies adopted highly ornamental dress featuring apparel from other lands, other times, and, sometimes, seemingly from other planets.⁵⁷ Thus, at a hippie gathering one might find many individuals wearing essentially the same drab garments, others sporting unique costumes with beads, feathers, jewelry and body paintings. Such outfits

⁵⁷Cavan, p. 49.

were an expression of individual freedom and a rejection of the regimentation of conventional society.⁵⁸ Hippies also wore garments produced in the Third World or made to resemble Third World clothes, e.g., the Nehru shirt, again reflecting the same rejection of high-technology, mass-produced, and synthetic goods.

The most frequently scorned part of hippie appearance was the nearly universal adoption of long hair by males. Shoulder-length hair on hippie males represented a renunciation of the crew-cut or bald "Mr. Clean" look of the conventional world. Women, too, often grew their hair longer than was the fashion in the immediate past. Unlike garments which could be tossed aside after participation in a hippie event, long hair was obtrusive, and thus a recognizable symbol of commitment.

As already mentioned, hippies often assumed the outline of figures of past historical eras, literally "putting on history."⁵⁹ Hippie males adopted military uniforms from World War II, as well as the traditional garb of the American Indian. Females cultivated the "granny look," wearing long dresses resembling turn-of-the-century garb coupled with "granny glasses" similar to those worn by the grandmothers of the hippie generation.⁶⁰

Finally, a "relatively shocking" expression of

⁵⁸Charles Perry, "The Gathering of the Tribes," The Sixties (New York: Random House, 1971), p. 190.

⁵⁹Malcolm, p. 159. ⁶⁰Ibid., p. 160.

hippie reverence for the body and "freedom" was public nudity. While some hippies were still somewhat inhibited, others disrobed publicly. The naked body in the eyes of the hippie was an object for aesthetic admiration. Along with long hair and beards, nudity was symbolic of a return to a natural and unblemished world.

Individualism in the hippie world view was balanced with a strong tribal appeal. Communes, both rural and urban, were characteristic modes of hippie organization. An historian of communal movements writes:

Everything communal that happened in America in the three hundred years before 1965 was dwarfed by what happened in the five years that followed. By 1970 there were at least twice as many rural communes in America as there had been throughout all previous history. An even greater number of communes had been established in America's cities.⁶¹

Communes appealed to hippies for many reasons.⁶² They were a response to the "each man for himself" ethic of the parent culture, and a muted link to the communist world. Communes also offered the opportunity to create "families." Life in rural and urban hippie communes was comparatively Spartan. Communes were frequently located in "ghetto" areas. The daily fare of the hippies consisted of basic

⁶¹Hugh Gardner, Children of Prosperity: Thirteen Modern American Communes (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), p. 3.

⁶²William M. Kophart, Extraordinary Groups: The Sociology of Unconventional Life Styles (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), p. 284.

natural foods which were cheap, nutritious, and bland. The existence of communes across the country made it possible for members of the counterculture to settle somewhere cheaply and easily in virtually any region of the country.

An outstanding analyst of the tribal movement throughout the world, Marshall McLuhan, maintained that electronic technology had transformed man's communities into global villages.

Our world is a brand-new world of allatonce-ness. "Time" has ceased, "space" has vanished. We now live in a global village . . . a simultaneous happening. We are back in acoustic space. We have begun again to structure the primordial feeling, the tribal emotions from which a few centuries of literacy divorced us.⁶³

According to McLuhan, the world of "electronic information transfer" compels people to recognize the existence of others.⁶⁴ They are brought face to face with others of radically different cultures because of the electronic media, and thus made aware of the possibilities of communal and tribal teamwork.⁶⁵ In Happenings and Be-Ins the "gathering of the tribes" was repeatedly in evidence, communes representing a more permanent institutionalization of such informally structured events.

Much has been made of the hippie predisposition for casual and premarital sex. The "sexual revolution" in which

⁶³Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, The Medium Is the Message (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 63.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 24.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 123.

the hippies played so noticeable a role was probably furthered by improvements in birth control techniques.

Keniston states:

In the era of the Pill, responsible sexual expression becomes increasingly possible outside of marriage, at the same time that sexuality itself becomes less laden with fear, prohibition and guilt. Among post-modern youth, as asceticism has been overcome, promiscuity has not followed. The personalism of the post-modern youth requires that sexual expression occur in the context of a good relationship . . . of intimacy and mutuality.⁶⁶

The hippies were more open about sex than their parents, but, at the same time, sexual expression usually required some form of emotional interaction.⁶⁷ Interviewing a sample number of hippies, one sociologist found that the majority of those questioned believed that they would eventually marry and raise a family.⁶⁸ While the hippies may have appeared to differ with the sexual mores of the straight world, their attitudes about sex were mostly conventional. In this regard the hippie movement appears to have been more "subculture" than "counterculture."

If the hippie attitude toward sex was relatively orthodox, in their use of drugs there was a distinct deviation from the norm. Hippies used a wide variety of drugs,

⁶⁶Keniston, p. 281.

⁶⁷Lewis Yablonski, The Hippie Trip (New York: Pegasus, 1968), p. 138.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 182.

primarily of the psychedelic variety, such as marijuana and hallucinogens, LSD for example. The spread of the hippie movement has been correlated with the spread of these mind-altering drugs.

The genesis of the commune movement, of course, was the postbeatnick bohemian youth culture that developed in the early 1960s with the proliferation of psychedelic drugs like marijuana, peyote and LSD, the latter two legal then.⁶⁹

Some analysts have even viewed the hippie phenomenon as essentially a cult deriving its mystique from the influence of hallucinogenic drugs.⁷⁰

Hallucinogenic drugs were compatible with the non-objective hippie world view. As mentioned previously, "immediate subjective experience was important," to the hippies, "and drugs assisting this projected them beyond the coercion of the world."⁷¹ Drugs were seen as "liberating" forces for the psyche, allowing their users to "clear away the cobwebs" of the mind and lead them into the substratum of reality hidden beyond the physical world. Hippies insisted that drugs such as LSD only enhanced the capacities of the human mind, claiming, LSD does not put anything in the human consciousness that is not already

⁶⁹Gardner, p. 5.

⁷⁰Philip Mandelkorn, "The Flower Children," The Hippies (New York: Time Inc., 1967), p. 2.

⁷¹Brake, p. 96.

there.⁷²

Psychedelic drugs also had religious and mystical qualities for the hippies. They reported experiencing revelations during LSD trips. One hippie recounted his feelings under LSD as being:

. . . in communion with a whole, of loving and wanting to share, a sense that God was there, was everywhere, was among men, that one was God. It was, he said, the most intense religious experience of his life-- and he had been reared as a Catholic.⁷³

Some "trippers" reported encounters with the familiar religious personalities of Christian and Judaic heritage.

Others used drugs to unlock the secrets of Eastern religions, Zen, for example, to try to attain enlightenment without extensive meditational practice. There was a tendency to proselytize on behalf of psychedelic drugs.

If, as we claim, love is the reason we turn others on in the first place, the reason others first introduced us to the psychedelic state, then the same reason would dictate that we continue to explore their minds, and, in turn, initiate their friends.⁷⁴

Hippies became "preachers" spreading the "gospel" of the psychedelic experience.

It has also been noted that the use of drugs by hippies may be viewed as simply a continuation of the self-indulgent hedonism of the conventional world's widespread

⁷² Earisman, p. 84.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 23.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 83.

use of alcohol.⁷⁵ Hippies, however, distinguished between positive and negative drugs, rejecting alcohol, nicotine, tranquilizers, and other addictive narcotics, such as heroin. It was the hippies' perception that while hallucinogens raised consciousness, narcotics and alcohol blurred the mind and were only a weak, transient escape from the world.⁷⁶

One of the characteristic features of a subculture is the development of a distinct jargon. Hippie jargon took the form of a loose and unstructured dialogue or "rap." The hippie "language" contained numerous slang expressions capable of a wide range of applications. Dialogue among hippies did not require direct and pointed interchanges. It was generally assumed that the topic in question must remain fluid and open.⁷⁷ Terms like "wow" and "far out" expressed a wide range of possible responses from fear to elation.⁷⁸ Other words, such as "hassle" and "trouble," were more content-oriented, but even such terms might be applied to varied objects and occurrences.⁷⁹ Hippies adopted obscene terms from the parent culture and other subcultures more to demean the parent language than to

⁷⁵ Brake, p. 95.

⁷⁶ Helen Swick Perry, The Human Be-In (New York: Basic Books, 1970), p. 73.

⁷⁷ Cavan, p. 96.

⁷⁸ Yablonski, p. 367.

⁷⁹ Cavan, p. 94.

express outrage.

Music, not language, was the particular mode through which the hippie counterculture communicated. Music was "the chief ritual of a new life," simultaneously a form of "community and religion."⁸⁰ Unlike reading or the traditional visual arts, music became a communal activity which could be easily shared. "Rock music" was the musical genre of the hippies. Rock was a product of the age. Stemming from minority and Third World origins, it appeared to provoke the Establishment. Brake states: "Progressive music matched in its complexity and rhythmical symmetry the hippie life style, setting the form which through hallucinogenic drug use could be used to undercut the linearity of the straight world."⁸¹ The rock concert best expressed the hippie movement as a counterculture. At such gatherings, "the whole culture complex--the music, the lyrics, volumes, artifacts, audience, set and setting--facilitates an unprecedented questioning of basic cultural values and institution."⁸² While it may be true that some rock music gratuitously glorified drug use,⁸³ rock, even acid rock, meant more than simply "getting high": rock brought together

⁸⁰Earlsman, p. 11.

⁸¹Brake, p. 91.

⁸²James E. Harmon, "The New Music and Countercultural Values," Youth and Society, Vol. 4 (1972), pp. 61-83.

⁸³Mark Evans, Will the Real Young America Please Stand Up? (Harrisberg, PA: Stackpole, 1973), p. 63.

the basic elements of the hippie counterculture.

The 1967 release of Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Heart Club Band by the Beatles was a seminal event in the diffusion of psychedelic rock, the album achieving a mass youth response almost overnight. The popularity of the Beatles was established before the release of this record, but now the Beatles were telling their listeners to follow the advice of Timothy Leary, to "turn on, tune in, and drop out."⁸⁴ Popular rock groups had generally served as an outlet for adolescent rage against the adult world⁸⁵ Sgt. Pepper, however, suggests a new culture, an alternative to the world of authoritarian adults. The Beatles gave their mass youth audience a look into a radically different world, an attractive realm with few restrictions and many pleasures. As one student of rock culture writes:

The Beatles' ecstatic, alive, electric sound had a total sensory impact, and was inescapably participational. It was "psychedelic music," The Beatles are a trip . . . their songs reflect LSD values . . . love, life, getting along with other people, and . . . this type of involving, turn-on music galvanized the entire hippie underground in overt, brassy existence.⁸⁶

Virgin youth were exposed to the hippie credo through the

⁸⁴Joan Peyser, "The Beatles and the Beatless," The Age of Rock: Sounds of the American Cultural Revolution, ed. Jonathan Eisen (New York: Vintage Press, 1969), p. 135.

⁸⁵David Riesman, "What the Beatles Prove About Teenagers," U. S. News and World Report, 24 February 1964, p. 88.

⁸⁶Warren Hinckle, "The Social History of the Hippies," Ramparts, March 1967, p. 19.

Beatles for the first time, and the hippies' life style was legitimized by their songs. It was to rock music that youth turned after the coming of Sgt. Pepper, moving them, in turn, toward other attitudes and expressions of the hippie counterculture. Among the hippies, there was a perception that Sgt. Pepper was a milestone in the evolution of Western music, one which would allow them to dismiss all music prior to rock as antiquated. In short, rock music bound together the youthful tribes of love.

CHAPTER III

HAIR AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AMERICAN MUSICAL

The analysis of Hair in relation to the evolution of the American musical theatre will be three-pronged. First, selected precursors of Hair will be examined for development of dramatic form, content, and theatrical technique. Second, similarities between Hair and various forms of the avant-garde or experimental theatre will be demonstrated. Finally, the influence of Hair upon American musicals to the present will be studied.

This assessment will be narrowly focused. There will be no attempt, for example, to relate Hair to lines of development that go back as far as the eighteenth century and to view Hair as the ultimate expression of an idea of freedom as contained in the theory of romanticism.¹ Such background material would be of little service to the study. Even a concentration on the American musical comedy genre encompasses too broad a range of work, with much having little or no relation to Hair. Consequently the examination will be restricted to those aspects of the American musical theatre which have strong and demonstrable

¹John Gassner, Directions in Modern Theatre and Drama (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1966), p. 7.

relationships to Hair. The evolution of the integrated musical in the American theatre is significant because Hair represents a departure from a structure. Antecedents to Hair of socially relevant theatre are equally important in an examination of content. Theatrical techniques used in the show, such as the breaking down of the "fourth wall" and the use of rock instrumentation, will be traced to previous works. The contribution of the avant-garde or experimental theatre to Hair will be limited to dramatic forms prevalent during the late 1960s. Lastly, the influence which the play exerted upon subsequent theatre works will be seen as quite limited.

Form

Musical comedy did not originate in the United States. The form which eventually flourished on Broadway was the result of a long line of development including, "the ancient Greek comedies, with their musical accompaniments; the spectacular court masques of Tudor and Jacobean England; the ballad operas of the eighteenth century . . . and, more recently, the burlesque, vaudeville, and variety shows of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century."² Historians have traced American musical theatre back to the year 1735 when the first ballad opera was advertised in the

²McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of World Drama (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972), Vol. III, p. 233.

United States, performed under the title of Flora or Hob in the Well.³ For a century and a half, however, the American public preferred works written by European artists, such as a perennial favorite, Gay's The Beggar's Opera.⁴

Immediately after the Civil War, in 1866, a recognizable example of the American musical comedy appeared, titled The Black Crook.

This concoction of music, elaborate fairyland scenery, beautiful ballet girls in tights, specialty acts and a plot remotely related to the Faust legend ran for sixteen months in New York City, something of a record for those times. That the visual and musical elements completely overshadowed plot did not seem to bother audiences.⁵

The Black Crook was significant not simply because of its unprecedented popularity, but also because it established "a tradition that later such later showmen as Florenz Ziegfeld would carry on, that was to prosper for about a decade at the Winter Garden in plays starring Al Jolson and for about twenty years at the Hippodrome Theatre."⁶ The plot, where one existed, was unimportant. The presentation consisted of separate acts with narrative being

³Gerald Bordman, American Musical Theatre: A Chronicle (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 1.

⁴Garff B. Wilson, Three Hundred Years of American Drama and Theatre: From Ye Bear and Ye Cubb to Hair (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973), p. 191.

⁵Glenn Loney, "Musical Comedy," The Reader's Encyclopedia of World Drama, eds. John Gassner and Edward Quinn (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1969), p. 593.

⁶David Ewen, New Complete Book of the American Musical Theatre (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970) p. xxi.

employed only as a "clothes-line" for carrying songs and spectacular visual effects.

There were more musical revues in the 1890s and after the turn of the century, such as the Passing Shows and the Ziegfeld Follies. Such works did not have a coherent story line. They were collections "of heterogeneous, independent acts unified only by the presence of music and alluring girls."⁷ The revue form lasted well into the 1940s, but as early as 1915 an alternative type of musical show began to appear, the Princess Theatre shows. These shows had modest production values and employed the talents of such up-and-coming "stars" as Jerome Kern. There was an attempt at verisimilitude, including recognizable American backgrounds and comparatively well-developed characterizations.

Jerome Kern altered the course of musical theatre development in 1927 with Show Boat. "Show Boat marked a turning point in the history of the musical, possibly the only turning point it ever had."⁸ Based upon Edna Ferber's novel, it "brought a new unity of story and music to the Broadway stage."⁹ Show Boat differed from past musicals because of Kern's conscious attempt to integrate musical

⁷Wilson, p. 373.

⁸Ethan Mordden, Better Foot Forward: The History of the American Musical Theatre (New York: Grossman, 1976), p. 101.

⁹McGraw-Hill, p. 237.

numbers into a sophisticated narrative containing three-dimensional characters. In short, Jerome Kern fathered the integrated musical form in which the various dramatic elements of the piece combine with the visual elements of the production with the libretto and the musical numbers contributing to a unified whole. This musical was the capstone to Kern's efforts in the earlier Princess Theatre shows and created a radical departure from the extravaganza revue.

Other composers, notably Rodgers and Hammerstein in their homage to folk America, Oklahoma!, advanced the integrated musical. In the assessment of one scholar, "the so-called integrated musical in which the story could be told through the songs, not just with the songs, was the contribution of Rodgers and Hammerstein."¹⁰ In Rodgers and Hammerstein's work the singers of the musical numbers were not singers but characters and, in addition, Agnes de Mille's choreography integrated dance movement into the play as still another advance in the integrated musical.

During the 1940s, 1950s and into the 1960s the integrated musical dominated Broadway. Musicals, such as West Side Story, followed the direction set by Kern in embracing the integrated structure. There were a few revues, but the majority of musicals produced on Broadway during this period were of the type created by Kern and refined by Rodgers

¹⁰Michael Kirby (ed.), The New Theatre (New York: New York University Press, 1974), p. 31.

and Hammerstein.

In the late 1960s, as epitomized by Hair, the American musical form came full circle, composers utilizing what has been referred to as non-plot.¹¹ Lehman Engel states:

In the turn-of-the-century musical the book existed only to string the songs together. I believe that this accurately describes the books of Hair, Promenade and Salvation.¹²

However, Engel continues to distinguish between the "non-plot" techniques of today's rock musical and the revues of the past.

It would seem, then, that a musical minus all of the elements of story, premise, characters, conflict, development would wind up as a revue, but the non-plot shows are not revues. There is no recognizable start or stop to the "happening" as a whole, no well-defined units, no sketches, no dance, no connecting thread.

"Non-plot" musicals reject the integrated musical form, opting for an unstructured, loose format permitting greater freedom, or, as some would have it, anarchy. Hair has only a remote connection to the revues which dominated American musicals through the 1930s. At the same time, Hair consciously turns away from an integration of music, dance, and plot which had served as the trademark of the modern American musical.

¹¹Lehman Engel, The American Musical Theater: A Consideration (New York: Collier, 1975), p. 213.

¹²Ibid., p. 217.

¹³Ibid., p. 214.

Content

As noted earlier, Hair sought to reflect the hippie counterculture. Thus, the show may be seen as yet another attempt at social relevance. The work, although displaying particular elements of foreign cultures in productions abroad, initially mirrored the counterculture of the United States of the late 1960s. In earlier times, the American musical had been set in foreign and unspecified places in order to evoke the exotic and unusual. With the exception of George M. Cohan's patriotic pieces, it was only with the work of Kern, Gershwin, and Rodgers and Hammerstein that American composers began to employ realistic American backgrounds. Oklahoma! falls into this category, as does Gershwin's Porgy and Bess which "contained what was for its time the most imaginative application of native American musical material."¹⁴ Hair, then, continues this trend in the American musical.

A focus on the common man, as appeared in the 1880s in the plays of Hart and Harrigan, was virtually unknown in the early American musical theatre. Characters in musicals before the 1880s were generally divorced from the man in the street. Harrigan and Hart provided a link between the stage and the street. Their work contained lower middle class characters of foreign origin. Hair, it might be said, dealt with the travails of the average hippie, a "common

¹⁴Ibid., p. 141.

man" of the 1960s.

Hair also attempts political satire, continuing a tradition begun with George Ade's Sultan of Sulu in 1903 and carried on in the 1930s with such musicals as Of Thee I Sing. However, Gershwin's satire of American political life in Of Thee I Sing is directed at politicians in general. Hair is much more specific in, for instance, its references to Lyndon Johnson. Hair may also be said to bear a relationship to protest works of the 1930s, such as Pins and Needles, a musical revue concerned with the garment industry, as well as to such politically oriented shows of the 1960s as Dynamite Tonight and Now Is The Time For All Good Men, both of which dealt with the war in Vietnam.¹⁵

Hair contains, too, another major issue of the 1980s, that of race conflict. Kern's Show Boat was the first major Broadway musical to feature a racial theme.¹⁶ A racial theme is also found later in Rodgers and Hammerstein's South Pacific. Still later, Leonard Bernstein's West Side Story has the conflict between white and Puerto Rican youth.¹⁷ One year before the advent of Hair on the Broadway stage, the musical Halleluah, Baby (winner of a Tony award) also dissected the racial issue. Such works,

¹⁵Mordden, p. 307.

¹⁶Engel, p. 374.

¹⁷McGraw-Hill, p. 239.

however, were cautious and somber, while in Hair the treatment of race was outlandish and bold.

Finally, the central characters of Hair are by no means heroic. Even Claude who joins the army and is slain in Vietnam may be considered to be more of a victim than a hero. Thus Hair is a continuation of anti-hero also found in some American musicals, a trend which started with the 1940 production of Pal Joey.¹⁸ In Pal Joey, Rodgers and Hart's central character is a cad, a man without scruples. Later, one finds similar characters in Carousel (Billy Bigelow), Guys and Dolls (Sky Masterson and Nathan Detroit), and My Fair Lady (Henry Higgins). Hair, with such anti-heroes as Claude and Berger, continues this movement.

Theatrical Techniques

Many of the theatrical techniques employed in Hair, which seemed so novel and fresh to youthful audiences, may be viewed as having evolved from musicals of the past. Here is an account of the theatrical origins of The Black Crook.

Two impresarios, Henry C. Jarrett and Harry Palmer, had imported a French ballet troupe to perform La Biche au Bois and had booked the academy to display its art. Suddenly without a stage, in desperation they approached William Wheatley, the manager of Niblo's Garden, hoping to obtain this house. They discovered that Wheatley had committed himself to a second-rate melodramatist, Charles M. Barras, and was preparing to mount the author's piece of ersatz German

¹⁸Engel, p. 15.

romanticism. Luckily for the annals of our stage, Jarrett and Palmer's frantic cajolery induced Wheatley to merge the two offerings. The result was a five-and-a-half hour spectacle . . . which made all three men comfortable for life.¹⁹

Similarly, the authors of Hair, Gerome Ragni and James Rado contacted Hair's first producer, Joseph Papp, almost by chance, and the show staged at the Public Theater in 1967 was assembled loosely rather than as a fully conceived piece. Constructed so loosely, Hair had much in common with the grandfather of American musicals, The Black Crook.

Most conventional dramatic productions use what is referred to as a "fourth wall," the invisible barrier between the performers and the audience which helps to create theatrical illusion. O'Horgan's Hair has its actors cavorting in the aisles, talking directly to members of the audience, thus consciously attempting to break down the concept of the "fourth wall." The technique had been employed long before Hair. Commenting upon audience reaction to Hair, one critic states:

A few remembered that Carnival had had a parade in the aisles, but most of them had never heard about Hellzapoppin or Sons o' Fun, the Olsen and Johnson shows in which stooges came up and down the aisles or chorus girls danced with some of the patrons. They had also not known that another novelty they enjoyed--an actor swinging on a rope out over the heads of the audience in Tarzan fashion--was a variation of a Beatrice Lillie skit in The Show Is On in which Miss Lillie sat on a half moon that moved out over the first few rows of the

¹⁹Bordman, pp. 18-19.

audience while she dropped garters to the men sitting below.²⁰

As early as Of Thee I Sing, other musical shows had made use not only of the stage proper, but of other sections of the theatre, including those normally reserved for the audience, to breach the "fourth wall."

Many of the stage props used in Hair were real objects brought into the theatre by members of the cast and crew. The use of such objects to enhance realism in musicals may be seen in the "social commentary" shows of the 1930s.

Often these settings went to the extreme and filled the stage with so many real objects that the audience saw little else. For example, in a street scene the spectator was treated to the spectacle of lampposts, fire hydrants, sidewalks, garbage cans, pushcarts containing actual vegetables, storefronts displaying real merchandise and every other object he (Belasco) had seen on his way to the theatre.²¹

Some of the props used in Hair were created especially for the show. Many, however, had been brought to the theatre for no theatrical purpose, but were subsequently incorporated into the musical.

Hair is classified generally as a "rock musical." While the show did not contain a single "real" rock song, elements of rock music were there, such as the heavy accent upon electrical instrumentation, particularly string

²⁰Abe Laufe, Broadway's Greatest Musicals (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1969), p. 360.

²¹Wilson, p. 301.

instruments, the core of a rock band. But even here the Ragni and Rado piece was not completely innovative. The 1950s musical Bye-Bye Birdie had a few popular, if "impure," rock numbers,²² and West Side Story had musical pieces with "rock" associations. Again, while Hair's use of rock elements may have seemed unprecedented to youthful audiences, it did have a number of antecedents.

Finally, Hair is often cited as unique because it moved from off-Broadway to Broadway, such a change being rare at that time in the American musical theatre. During the 1950s, however, two musicals successfully made the same transition, The Golden Apple by John La Touche and Jay Thompson's Once Upon a Mattress.²³ Consequently, Hair's change of venue from off-Broadway to Broadway had been previously accomplished.

Avant-Garde or Experimental Theatre

At the time that Hair reached Broadway musical comedies were not displaying signs of innovative change. The integrated musical might almost be regarded as a conservative form in its resistance to change. This conservatism is different from the dramatic theatre of the same period. During the 1950s and 1960s there was much avant-garde or experimental theatre in evidence.

²²Ewen, p. 203.

²³Laufe, p. 402.

If one had to identify a single crucial event in the evolution of the avant-garde theatre of this period, it would be the first presentation of Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot in 1953. Beckett's play embodied the helplessness and bewilderment of modern man, and helped to popularize the work of many contemporary playwrights, including Genet, Ionesco, Pinter, Stoppard, and Albee, as well as the efforts of experimental directors like Brook and Grotowski. Beckett's work was preceded by the Dadaist and Surrealist movements in theatre, as well as by Antonin Artaud's "theater of cruelty." In Artaud's pieces the design was a "stripping away the veneer of civilization, of compelling men to see themselves as they are, and of freeing the repressed inner forces of human nature."²⁴ Experimentation was occurring in the dramatic theatre of the 1960s, but not particularly in musical theatre, Hair being an exception to the conservatism of the integrated musical.

According to Wilson, a Polish director Grotowski was the foremost figure in experimental theatre when Hair made its first appearance. Grotowski was an advocate of the "poor theatre," rejecting the elaborate trappings of conventional drama. While Grotowski sometimes employed innovative sets, his dramas were focused upon the actor. "The script, scenery, costumes, makeup, lighting effects

²⁴Wilson, p. 496.

and even the stage platform itself were eliminated or reduced to negligible importance."²⁵ During rehearsals, like Hair's second director, Tom O'Horgan, Grotowski permitted his actors to modify the details of their performances, with group creation playing a significant part in leading to actual performances. While Hair was shifting from the downtown Public Theater to Broadway, Grotowski and his New York City Performance Group were producing plays with "all the avant-garde techniques, including audience participation, textual rearrangement, improvisation and expressive gymnastics."²⁶ Not only did O'Horgan encourage improvisation from his cast in rehearsals (thus, contributing to Hair's ever-changing "book"), as we shall later detail, but also he employed many of the same techniques which Grotowski and his group were using in their dramatic presentations.

Off-Broadway is a term which supposes innovation and experimentation. Prior to the 1960s, however, many off-Broadway musicals were novel neither in form nor in content.

Played in theatres seating two hundred or less, limited to small casts and almost no scenery, accompanied by piano, drums and the occasional clarinet, the off-Broadway musical was a pallid cover slide of the uptown show, frail in conception, sometimes frailer in execution.²⁷

²⁵Michael Kirby (ed.), The New Theatre (New York: New York University Press, 1974), p. 1.

²⁶Wilson, p. 499.

²⁷Mordden, p. 272.

Exceptions to the pattern of undistinguished off-Broadway musicals might include the ever-popular Fantasticks. Off-off-Broadway, however, did provide more independence from conformity to the Broadway formula. Caffé Cino, Café La Mama, and the Hudson Poets' Theatre were some of the more distinguished innovative groups of the off-off-Broadway theatres of the 1950s and 1960s.²⁸ Ellen Stewart's La Mama specialized in nonrealistic offerings by young playwrights such as Megan Terry.²⁹ A pivotal figure at La Mama was Tom O'Horgan, who would later direct Hair on Broadway. At La Mama, O'Horgan "exhibited the most free-flowing experimental techniques,"³⁰ some of which he employed later for the Broadway version of Hair. O'Horgan, along with one of the authors of Hair, Jerry Ragni, was also associated with the Caffé Cino Group,³¹ an innovative theatre which started in 1958, and which was dedicated to showcasing the talents of young playwrights.³² Consequently, the link between Hair and the off-off-Broadway groups of the 1950s and 1960s is a direct one.

²⁸Wilson, p. 475.

²⁹Oscar G. Brockett and Robert R. Findlay, Century of Innovation (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1973), p. 712.

³⁰Stuart W. Little, Off Broadway: The Prophetic Theater (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1972), p. 195.

³¹Wilson, p. 494.

³²Ibid., p. 726.

Hair may be said to relate, too, to Peter Schumann's Bread and Puppet Theatre. Formed in 1961, the Bread and Puppet Theatre was "concerned with overcoming the perennial subversion of love, charity and humility by political and materialistic deceptions."³³ This group gave free performances in the "streets." According to Schuman, "the audience that doesn't go to the theatre" is "the best one."³⁴ Schumann rejected what to him was the materialist orientation of conventional theatre. While Hair was not "poor theatre" and might have been derided by Schuman, it did express an antimaterialistic, anti-Establishment philosophy not far removed from Schumann's.

Even more politically radical than Schumann's group were "guerilla theatre" groups. The appellation "guerilla theatre" was first proposed by R. G. Davis in 1966.³⁵ Davis pointed out how theatre might be used for revolutionary purposes, describing "guerilla theatre."

"Guerilla theatre" . . . as its name implies, is the use of theatrical forms and techniques to attack "the establishment" and to further the causes of reform and revolution. Demonstrators and protest marchers are apt to use puppets, costumes, masks and props of all kinds to dramatize their cause and to attract the maximum attention from television cameras.³⁶

³³Brockett and Findlay, p. 729.

³⁴James Roose-Evans, Experimental Theatre: From Stanislavsky to Today ((New York: Avon Books, Inc., 1970), p. 139.

³⁵Wilson, p. 500.

³⁶Ibid., p. 54.

The primary targets of "guerilla theatre" were American capitalism and war. While the term "guerilla theatre" has been applied to Schumann's group, it is more appropriately used with reference to more strident companies, such as the Living Theatre. Schumann attempted to embrace his audiences. "Guerilla theatre," on the other hand, assaulted and insulted theirs. Hair did succeed in offending some of its patrons, but even in the more abrasive Broadway production, it remained closer to Schumann's group than to "guerilla theatre."³⁷

One other form, the "happening," may be seen to have a relationship to Hair. Generally associated with the experimental explosion of the 1950s and 1960s, "happenings" were first staged by the Dadaists following World War I.³⁸ John Cage revived the form in 1952 at Black Mountain College in North Carolina.³⁹

Cage put together a presentation called "Theatre Piece #1." It was a mixture of dancing, music, poetry, motion pictures, and slide projections, as well as other activities, some of which were planned and some of which just "happened." This performance became the prototype for hundreds of others until by the late 1960s the happening was a fairly common form of entertainment.⁴⁰

Cage's work was followed in the 1960s by mixed media

³⁷Roose-Evans, p. 124.

³⁸Ibid., p. 88.

³⁹Brockett and Findlay, p. 766.

⁴⁰Wilson, p. 501.

presentations and events in which previously orchestrated elements were combined with spontaneous occurrences often involving the direct participation of the audience. Happenings peaked along with the emergence of the hippie counterculture. Often called "Be-Ins," hippie gatherings of this sort emphasized the spontaneous nature of the theatre, with virtually all forms of human activity and interaction viewed as theatre. The hippie "Be-In" paralleled the "happening," and this fortuitous convergence of art and life became central in the structure and theme of Hair.

The Impact of "Hair"

One of the most controversial features of the Broadway Hair was the use of full frontal nudity along with a liberal employment of obscene terms in the text. Hair broke down the barriers which had restrained the use of nudity and profanity on the Broadway stage. The Ragni and Rado musical was a forerunner to such later pieces as Oh! Calcutta! which provided audiences with prolonged and well-lit views of naked actors.⁴¹ Although the nudity and obscenity of Hair may seem tame to that which followed, at the time the show was extremely controversial in this regard, leading the way for future productions.

Hair also appears to have influenced subsequent shows employing rock instrumentation. Joseph Papp

⁴¹Laufe, p. 403.

presented an updated version of Hamlet, immediately following the Public Theater's production of Hair in which rock songs were featured. In January 1968, there was another Shakespearean rock musical, Your Own Thing, based loosely upon Twelfth Night.⁴² Your Own Thing also featured a rock musical group called the Apocalypse along with other contemporary cultural manifestations.⁴³ Your Own Thing was among the most successful of the rock musicals which immediately followed Hair. Through the early 1970s, both on and off-Broadway, some musicals contained rock numbers. In 1971, Galt MacDermot, the composer of Hair's songs, composed the tunes for yet another rocked-up version of Shakespeare, a contemporary Two Gentlemen of Verona.⁴⁴ Still other rock musicals which followed Hair combined rock pieces with semireligious themes, such as Jesus Christ Superstar and Godspell.⁴⁵

Did Hair have an influence on society other than the short-lived rock musical phenomenon of the late 1960s and early 1970s? Probably not. While Hair did succeed in "turning on" a middle-class audience to the hippie counterculture, it does not appear to have altered the

⁴²Little, p. 250.

⁴³John Simon, Uneasy Stages: A Chronical of the New York Theatre, 1963-1973 (New York: Random, 1975), p. 125.

⁴⁴Carl Belz, The Story of Rock (New York: Oxford University, 1972), p. 216.

⁴⁵Simon, p. 338.

course of American society. Engel writes: "It's utter poppycock to entertain any idea whatsoever that Hair, Salvation, or any of the others will have exerted any pressure on our futures as once did Uncle Tom's Cabin."⁴⁶ The audiences which viewed Hair hardly defected from the ranks of mainstream society.

Hair's direct influence on the American musical theatre was short lived, extending only a few years. Presently, the rock musical form seems to have exhausted itself, a condition exemplified by the unsuccessful attempt to revive Hair in 1977. There seems to have been a move back toward the integrated musical form during the decade of the 1970s, while rock musicals were few and far between during the same period. Hair's impact was immediate and pervasive, but it did not change the course of the American musical theatre to the degree of a Show Boat or an Oklahoma! The "hon-book" format did not last very long; avant-garde techniques are used sparingly in today's musical theatre, and experimental theatre itself has become almost redundant. With the hippie counterculture a thing of the past, ironically, Hair seems socially irrelevant.

However, while it is extremely unlikely that the hippies and the life style which Hair portrayed will reemerge, the rock musical form may once again appear in the American theatre. Rumors of the "death of rock" are exaggerated,

⁴⁶Engel, p. 219.

and a new generation of rock concert audiences is in evidence. Indeed, it is difficult to obtain tickets for mass rock concerts by premier groups such as the Rolling Stones. In addition, while the late 1970s seem a period of political and social quietism, social activism follows a cyclical pattern, and the activism of the 1960s may spring up again in the future. There is, then, the possibility that a socially relevant rock musical form may again find expression in the American theatre, and should this be the case, theatre historians will undoubtedly refer to Hair as a pioneer venture.

CHAPTER IV

THE PUBLIC THEATER AND CHEETAH PRODUCTIONS

The Principals

The principal individuals involved in the first production of Hair at the Public Theater were Gerome Ragni and James Rado (authors of the "book" and lyrics), Joseph Papp (producer), Galt MacDermot (composer), and Gerald Freedman (director). The show was the brainchild of Ragni and Rado, two off-Broadway actors with considerable experience, including work at the Caffé Cino, Café La Mama, Living Theatre, and Open Theatre.¹ Despite their seemingly advanced ages (both men were nearing or over thirty at the time of the Public Theater staging), Ragni and Rado were intimately associated with the hippie counterculture. From 1965 to 1967, Ragni and Rado pieced together various skits and songs for a rock musical which would reflect the beliefs of the hippies. In early 1967, Ragni and Rado approached Tom O'Horgan, asking him to direct their composite effort. At the time, however, O'Horgan was committed to a European theatrical tour, and he declined the offer.

Joseph Papp, a major New York theatrical producer, served as the catalyst for the first staging of Hair. Since

¹Nahma Sandrow, "What Will 'Hair' Say to the 70s," New York Times, 2 October 1971, D5.

the early 1950s, Papp headed the New York Shakespeare Festival, and he had also produced a number of works in the city's neighborhood playgrounds. He enlarged the scope of his activities when the Astor Library was transformed into the Public Theater in 1967.² Papp was an unusual producer. He once stated: "For some theaters, a great night is to have a packed house," but "When I say a great night I mean a great audience."³ Papp was struck by the vitality of the hippie counter-culture which engulfed the East Village neighborhood in which the Public Theater was located. Though he was not in favor of all aspects of the hippie lifestyle (he rejected the use of drugs, for instance),⁴ he enjoyed the freshness, naiveté, and sincerity of the hippies.

In the summer of 1967, Gerome Ragni was appearing with the Open Theatre Company in a production of Viet Rock at Yale. Simultaneously, Papp was teaching a theatre course at the University. The two met on a train returning from New Haven to New York, and Ragni discussed his ideas for a rock musical with the producer. Papp was dismayed at the authors' notes for Hair, a "mess of stuff" in piecemeal form, but found some of the material engaging.⁵ He later recounted his initial

²Brockett and Findlay, p. 715.

³Jack Kroll, "Making of a Theatre," Newsweek, 13 November 1967, p. 121.

⁴William Harris, "Theatre: A Man for All Seasons," East Side Express, 27 October 1977, p. 9.

⁵"Theatre Goes Public: New York Shakespeare Festival," Players, December-January 1970, p. 58.

meeting with Ragni.

"I've just written something with Jimmy Rado. Would you like to see it?" I said, "What is it?" "Well, it's kind of a musical called Hair." He showed me six or eight handwritten pages. I read it and asked "Do you have any more?" "There are more pages at home," he answered. I told him to bring them to me in the morning and that I would read them. On going through the rest of Hair, without the music, my reaction wandered all over the place, some of it was boring and some was interesting. The thing that struck me was that it had to do with the loneliness of young people,⁶ and that's why I became involved in the material.

From this fortuitous meeting the show took its origin.

Papp later showed the Ragni and Rado material to his associate at the Public Theater, director Gerald Freedman. Freedman remains the play's forgotten man, and expressed mild resentment at his status in the show's history.

I'm like the shadow--the director of the original Hair. Productions like that don't come along very often in your life. I don't know when I'll get the chance to do something equally as flashy and sensational again.⁷

Unlike the director of the Broadway production of Hair, Tom O'Horgan, Freedman did not share in the phenomenal profits which the musical eventually reaped. "Quite honestly, I put it all together,"⁸ he later confided indignantly.

Freedman had been associated with Papp in the Shakespeare-in-the-Park series, and at the Public Theater he

⁶Howard Greenberger, The Off Broadway Experience (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1969), p. 87.

⁷Interview with Gerald Freedman, New York City, 27 October 1977.

⁸Ibid.

held the title, Artistic Director. His work on The Taming of the Shrew, King Lear, Macbird, Peer Gynt, and Hamlet had earned him much critical approval. Like Papp, Freedman was interested in the hippie counterculture, and by 1967 was convinced of its importance.

The flower culture, both alien and fascinating, was a particularly American phenomenon and it was happening all around the Public. What I wanted to get on stage, what I saw in this material (Ragni and Rado's notes), was a terrific vulnerability, a tremendous innocence, but a courage about what these kids were doing.⁹

At first Freedman was taken aback by the lack of structure in the author's conception. Even the songs which were later to receive critical acclaim failed to impress him. However, when composer Galt MacDermot was brought in to write Hair's score, Freedman agreed to direct the original production.

It should be noted that Freedman is a director who believes in directorial control.

I believe in discipline and detail in the theatre, so the challenge was how to create that sense of spontaneity and amateurishness in a professional context. There were a lot of problems because I wanted to keep a show that had theatrical discipline. I had to devise various techniques that for me were new to structure the piece but at the same time keep it open so that I wouldn't lose that kind of sense.¹⁰

Freedman attempted to impress a conventional form on the show's unusual materials, and his insistence on directorial control and theatrical discipline brought him into conflict with Ragni and Rado. To this day, Freedman considers Hair's

⁹ Ibid. ¹⁰ Ibid.

writers to have been destructive forces in the original production of the show.

As mentioned, Freedman's decision to direct Hair was influenced by the introduction of Galt MacDermot on to the creative team. MacDermot was an unlikely person to be associated with a rock musical. He was nearing forty, and had once worked as a church organist and choir conductor in Montreal. At the time, he was firmly ensconced as a jazz pianist on Staten Island. He was introduced to Ragni and Rado by the music publisher Nat Shapiro, and as one critic put it, "Shapiro's hunch clicked."¹¹ MacDermot was able to compose the tunes which would eventually be assessed as among the most captivating elements of the musical.

MacDermot was not just a rock composer. His musical work included jazz, blues, country and western, and rock. MacDermot drew heavily on his knowledge of African rhythms to which he had been exposed as a child in South Africa to create the feeling of freedom for the show's lyrics. MacDermot explained that he was "trying to communicate the elements of freedom, a musical approach that I had learned in Africa, and which is really the basis of American music, and put it into the theatre."¹² He said:

I like setting words to music I especially liked the idea of a rock-and-roll musical because

¹¹William Glover, "'Hair' Is a Continuous Happening," Newark Sunday News, 2 August 1970, p. E4.

¹²Interview with Galt MacDermot, New York City, August 11, 1980.

I wanted to try out certain rhythmic things that I had first heard in South Africa. I love African rhythms; the rhythms of the Bantu theatre fascinate me. So I took the lyrics home and I could hear melodies to those words.¹³

It took MacDermot only four days to write the music for Hair. MacDermot remained with the show through its run on Broadway and again in the 1977 revival of Hair. A patient and amiable individual, MacDermot was one of the few principals who avoided conflict with his co-workers.¹⁴

The Public Theater cast consisted of a score of youthful actors playing the roles of hippies, along with two older actors portraying the parents. These actors were an extremely varied lot. Some had had considerable experience in off-Broadway musicals, others had no stage credits. Some of the cast were hippies, while others were professionals with little personal relationship to the hippie counterculture. The three leads, Claude, Berger, and Sheila were played, respectively, by Walker Daniels, Gerome Ragni, and Jill O'Hara. The minor leads of Woof, Hud, Jeannie, and Crissy were interpreted, respectively, by Steve Dean, Arnold Wilkerson, Sally Eaton, and Shelley Plimpton. O'Hara, Eaton, Plimpton, and Ragni would later reproduce their roles in the Broadway version of Hair, but Daniels, Dean, and Wilkerson would be dropped from the show. A complete listing of the staff and cast of the Public Theater version of Hair appears in

¹³Sandrow, p. D5.

¹⁴Lorris Davis with Rachel Gallagher, Letting Down My Hair (New York: Arthur Fields, 1973), p. 49.

Appendix I of this study.

Staging

Hair was first performed at the Public Theater on Lafayette Street in New York's East Village on October 29, 1967. It ran for forty-nine performances and was then moved to the Cheetah discotheque.¹⁵ Hair was the first show to be staged at the Public Theater, and its initial success helped launch the theatre as a major venue for innovative works.¹⁶ The Public Theater itself helped to attract Hair's first audiences.

An audience at the Public Theater is already half won before a play begins. There are so few theatres in New York that are a physical pleasure to enter that the space and beauty of the converted Astor Library provide an aesthetic come-on. Giorgio Cavaglieri, the architect who did such a stunning job with the old Jefferson Market Courthouse in Greenwich Village, has done a similar valuable service here.¹⁷

The physical environment in which the musical was first performed played a major role in its successful showcasing.

At the Public, in spite of the subsequent debate about whether the show's tunes constituted authentic rock, Hair was billed as a "rock musical." Some reviewers have a relatively broad concept about "rock." Borzinger discusses Hair and then asserts:

¹⁵Laufe, p. 358.

¹⁶Little, p. 257.

¹⁷Gerald Weales, "I Left It at the Astor," Reporter, 4 April 1968, p. 36.

Today's rock follows a different--and more muffled--drummer. It exploits off-beat tempos, eerie electric tonalities and eclectic sources of sound ranging from Indian ragas to bluegrass ballads. It can even be played pianissimo. This is why rock now fits into musical comedy.¹⁸

Other theorists adopt a narrower definition of rock, rejecting the above observation by sharply distinguishing between pure rock and popular hybrids. Galt MacDermot himself asserts that the show's score is not pure rock, explaining that "strictly defined" rhythm music does not lend itself to drama.¹⁹

Hair's accompanying score is a confluence of jazz, blues, soul, country and western, raga, and rock. Although the Public Theater production of the musical included rock instrumentation, electric guitar and electric piano, for example, the score is only remotely akin to the hard rock sound of groups such as the Rolling Stones and the Grateful Dead. Commenting upon the syncretic character of the music, Ewen noted that members of the cast, "sing all kinds of songs in many different styles and idioms, some with a strong rock beat, some primitive and formless, some with a swinging and lusty emotion, and some with a good deal of tender feeling to them."²⁰ A music reviewer for The New York Times said that Galt MacDermot was able to, "reach out and find considerable

¹⁸John Borzinger "Whang! The Rock Musical," Life, 26 December 1969, p. 93.

¹⁹MacDermot interview.

²⁰Ewen, p. 204.

variety on the outskirts of his rock-bound core."²¹ A complete listing of the song sequence in the Public Theater version of Hair appears in the next chapter of this study, permitting us to compare it with the song sequence of the Broadway show. Suffice it to say, the Public Theater Hair, while promoted as a rock musical, had a score encompassing many musical genres.

The performance of the songs at the Public Theater was judged by MacDermot as "lackluster." The composer was not happy with the downtown version of the show. He liked the "little band" at the Public, but observed that, "there wasn't one good singer other than Shelley Plimpton."²² This shortcoming would later be rectified by adding such singers as Ronnie Dyson and Melba Moore to the cast of the Broadway Hair. Still, MacDermot admits that the vocal renditions of his songs at the Public Theater were undistinguished.

For the task of choreographing the show Gerald Freedman adopted an improvisatory method, thus allowing his actors considerable freedom and spontaneity in their dance movements. Freedman was later joined by Anna Sokolow, who was called in to provide choreographic direction.²³ Sokolow had a

²¹John S. Wilson, "Rock Goes the Musical Theater," The New York Times, 15 October 1967, n.p. (Clippings, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library.)

²²MacDermot interview.

²³Dan Sullivan, "Papp Is a Love Person," The New York Times, 15 October, n.p. (Clippings, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library.)

predetermined conception of how the dance segments of the work should be done, an approach which contrasted radically with Freedman's original method. Sokolow tried to instill an aura of professionalism which brought her into conflict with other members of the crew and cast. Some thought that Sokolow's approach was inappropriate to the content of Hair. One reviewer found that, "the choreographed action," was, "essentially antithetical to an authentic hippie atmosphere which should be cool and lobbed-out rather than bouncing with chorus-boy energy."²⁴ Eventually Sokolow would be replaced by Julie Arenal for the Broadway production of the show.

The set designer for the downtown version of Hair was Ming Cho Lee, a long-time associate of Joseph Papp. Lee made extensive use of hippie artifacts which he found in the streets surrounding the Public Theater. These included posters and signs taken directly from the head shops and hang-outs of St. Mark's Place. Lee's set is described as follows:

Mr. Lee has put a lid on his double-decker set on the arena stage, but above it and around it the audience can see a handsome white and gold ceiling with large skylight windows. On the upper decks sits the orchestra . . . and the deck is supported by ladder-backed pillars for the actors and dancers to scramble up and down.²⁵

Lee was assisted by the Public Theater's own scenery studio and by an outside shop run by Peter Feller.²⁶ Lee's

²⁴Robert Brustein, "From Hair to Hamlet," The New Republic, 18 November 1967, p. 39.

²⁵Edith Oliver, "Hair," p. 128.

²⁶Greenberger, p. 103.

"attractive" and "striking" set was a component of the off-Broadway production which was warmly received by reviewers. In fact, many found the downtown set superior to the one designed by Robin Wagner for the Broadway version.²⁷ (The off-Broadway staging will be further detailed when contrasted to the Broadway production at the Biltmore Theatre in Chapter V.)

Theoni Aldredge designed the costumes for the Papp production of Hair. She had little trouble in duplicating the basic elements of hippie attire, which consisted of readily available garments, such as blue jeans and beads. For certain scenes, such as those depicting historical figures, more elaborate outfits were created. In general, however, Aldredge replicated the comparatively simple dress of the hippies.

Social Issues, Plot, and Lyrics

In both the downtown and Broadway versions of the show Hair sought to reflect "the tribal rituals of the hippies."²⁸ At the same time, however, both versions of the musical tackled some of the most controversial and explosive social issues of the day. The Public Theater show focused upon two basic social conflicts, the war in Southeast Asia and racial

²⁷George Oppenheimer, "On Stage," The Newark Evening News, 8 June 1968, n.p. (Clippings, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library.)

²⁸Howard Taubman, "Untitled," The New York Times, 14 November 1967, n.p. (Clippings, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library.)

inequality at home.²⁹ In its off-Broadway version the plot of Hair revolved mainly around a young man's unsuccessful efforts to resist induction into the army. Antiwar songs and other tunes deriding racial intolerance pervaded the show. As will be discussed later, although the Papp production of Hair was not nearly as strident as the Broadway version, it was concentrated on these two dominant issues.

One feature of the later Broadway show which was not a problem for Papp and Freedman was that of nudity. The nudity of the uptown production was one of its most controversial (and commercial) elements, but Papp and Freedman rejected the concept of gratuitous nudity on the stage.

We talked about the nudity. I didn't think it was germane. I felt they wanted to get someone undressed just for the sake of getting them undressed. It was a big thing at the time, getting undressed on stage, getting arrested by the cops. I thought it was exhibitionism. I wasn't opposed to nudity, but the intellectual idea behind it revolted me.³⁰

The "they" referred to by Freedman were Ragni and Rado whose demands for nudity were later met in the Broadway version of the show. Not only were Papp and Freedman committed to a degree of decorum for the Public Theater, they were truly repelled by the notion of nudity for the sake of nudity. They did not want to divert attention from the pressing social issues which Hair addressed.

²⁹John Beaufort, "Controversial 'Hair'," The Christian Science Monitor, 15 March 1970, n.p. (Clippings, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library.)

³⁰Interview with Freedman.

The original version had a loose structure, a shaky plot line, and characters that were not fully rounded. As Freedman observed, the downtown production was similar to the revues which dominated the American musical theatre prior to Show Boat. It was a series of sketches on which musical numbers were "clotheslined."³¹ Some reviewers of this first production chastised Ragni and Rado, complaining that "the authors have little or no interest in dramatic structure."³² Others viewed the informal structure as related to the "happening" and signaling a new era in which a stage piece is looked on as a collage of dramatic effects which call for "groovin', not understanding," for, "opening your senses to what is happening without anticipation or imposition of logical structures."³³

A reconstruction of the "plot" of Hair will be undertaken in the next chapter of this study which deals with the Broadway show, generally considered the "authentic" version in contrast to Papp's rudimentary Hair. The simple story-line of the downtown Hair is summarized by one theatre historian thus:

The plot, although thin, deals with a young man and his parents who try to bridge the generation gap in voicing their views on the war. The young draftee cannot make up his mind whether to burn

³¹Ibid.

³²Clive Barnes, "Contemporary Youth Depicted in Play," The New York Times, 30 October 1967, p. 55.

³³William Kroman, "'2001' and 'Hair'--Are They the Groove of the Future?" The New York Times, 12 May 1968, D5.

his draft card or go to war. He goes to Vietnam and is killed.³⁴

Hair, then, was originally an antiwar protest musical, with the action of the narrative line clearly around a youth's resistance to the draft.

In all of its versions the show is divided into two acts and has three central characters: the youth Claude who is being drafted; a dropout hippie named Berger who will not go to war; and Sheila, a college student who also rejects America's involvement in Vietnam. Claude's vacillation over the draft is pitted against the hardcore hippie attitude of Berger and the left wing stance of Sheila. Berger, who remains true to the values of the hippies is the counter-culture "hero" of the piece. There are some romantic entanglements in Hair, but essentially it is Claude's struggle that dominates the musical's plot.

While the plot proceeds towards its inevitable resolution, the musical contains skits, some of which depict the lifestyle of the hippies, such as a Be-In and an LSD sequence, and others lampoon the values of the straight world. Sometimes issues are juxtaposed or overlap. For example, the LSD-pot party includes a sequence which captures the essence of American history from Lincoln's emancipation of the slaves to the Vietnam War, and which climaxes in the ritualized slaughter, under strobe lights, of Buddhists by nuns, then of

³⁴Laufe, p. 358.

nuns by Indians, then of Indians by soldiers."³⁵ According to one critic, this sequence may be interpreted not only as an indictment of American history, but also as the outcome of a bad LSD trip.³⁶ Whatever the interpretation, it is such sketches which constitute the core of the show.

Two other figures played an integral part in the downtown rendition of the musical, Claude's parents. Throughout the piece Mom and Dad provide a contrast in values to those of the hippies. Although some reviewers found these parents to be "one-dimensional,"³⁷ others recognized the effort to present their case with some objectivity. Walter Kerr wrote:

The elders are not entirely dismissed or done out of their rights. Mother is perfectly capable of taking a long, judicious look at her bobcat son and asking, "Besides disheveled, what do you want to be?"³⁸

The function of the parents in the Public Theater version of Hair is in contrast to the later Broadway production. In the uptown show no sympathy was extended to Mom and Dad, and, in fact, they were simply debased.

Reflecting the hippie counterculture, the dialogue is short, clipped, elliptical, and filled with meaningless generalities. Often, words like "wow" and "far out" are the only comments emanating from the hippie characters. As

³⁵Brustein, p. 39.

³⁶Henry Hewes, "The Theater of Shattered Focus," Saturday Review, 13 January 1968, p. 95.

³⁷Brustein, p. 39.

³⁸Walter Kerr, "Untitled," The New York Times, 19 November 1967, p. 11.

O'Horgan pointed out, such dialogue has much in common with the poetry of the Beat Generation, particularly that of Allen Ginsberg.³⁹ Conventional syntax is replaced by spontaneous, fluid, and nebulous verbal expression.

The show's lyrics, examined in greater detail in the next chapter of this thesis, are also based on the hippie lexicon, and reflect the ideals of the hippies. The language of the lyrics departs radically from orthodox English. There are exceptions, as in the case of the touching ballad "Frank Mills" and the tune "Good Morning Sunshine,"⁴⁰ but, in the main, the Ragni and Rado lyrics reproduce hippie verbalizations, which are nearly unintelligible to those unfamiliar with the jargon.

Michael Butler and the Cheetah Production

Hair underwent a major transformation as the result of the work of Michael Butler and, later, Tom O'Horgan. Butler was a millionaire from Chicago with a financial interest in paper, aviation, and real estate, and a personal interest in astrology, American Indians, and esoterica.⁴¹ Butler's involvement with the show came about by accident. He saw a poster advertising the Public Theater production of the

³⁹ Interview conducted with Tom O'Horgan, New York City, 4 November 1977.

⁴⁰ Weales, P. 38.

⁴¹ Marilyn Bender, "Topless, and No Bottoms Either," The New York Times, 28 April 1968, p. D3.

musical which featured the image of an American Indian. Believing that the show was concerned with the plight of Indians, he attended a performance of Papp's production.⁴² The youthful enthusiasm of the show impressed him, and the hippie ideology was compatible with his own conceptions. Butler obtained the rights to the show from Papp when Hair finished its limited engagement downtown. He then prepared to bring the musical to a new venue, an uptown discotheque called the Cheetah.⁴³

Butler was much more amenable to the ideas of Ragni and Rado than Papp and Freedman had been, agreeing with the authors, for example, on the issue of nudity. According to Lorrie Davis, Butler adopted a paternalistic attitude toward the cast, telling them that they were all members of a tribe of which he was the chief.⁴⁴ He employed a professional astrologer, Marie Elise Crummaire, whose forecasts were used in determining policy decisions for the show.⁴⁵ It was Butler who first suggested that the cast strip at the end of the first act, and who provided injections of what seems to have been "speed" to cast members under the auspices of a mysterious "Doctor Feelgood."

In late December, 1967, Butler took the company and crew to the Cheetah, an uptown discotheque, where the show would play for forty-five performances. Papp was no longer

⁴²Glover, p. E4. ⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Davis, p. 40. ⁴⁵Ibid., p. 39.

associated with the property, though Gerald Freedman remained as director at the Cheetah, Butler serving as producer. With Papp gone, Freedman's positions were frequently voted down by Butler and the authors.

The Public Theater had seats for three hundred, but the Cheetah had a capacity of nearly seven hundred.⁴⁶ Consequently, the move to the Cheetah was welcomed by some as an opportunity to expand audiences, and, of course, box office revenues. William Goldman concurred with Butler's reasoning in bringing the show to the Cheetah.

It was probably as astute an idea as anyone had come up with all year. The Cheetah, a leading Broadway discotheque, was a perfect place to unite this show about kids and their troubles with kids who have troubles.⁴⁷

At the Public Theater the audience had been primarily middle-class, older patrons drawn mostly because of Joseph Papp's reputation. At the Cheetah, on the other hand, the audience was younger, more racially mixed, and less middleclass. The Cheetah audience even contained hippies! For the price of admission to the discotheque the audience would be treated to a "free" showing of Hair.

Goldman was favorably impressed by the freedom with which members of the cast mingled with the discotheque patrons. "Actors wandered around almost, it seemed, at will," Goldman

⁴⁶"Rock and Roll Musical Moving to Cheetah," The New York Times, 6 December 1967, n.p. (Clippings, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library.)

⁴⁷William Goldman, The Season: A Candid Look at Broadway (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1969), p. 381.

remarked, resulting in "no fourth wall feeling whatever, and the sense of participation that was allowed the audience was wonderful."⁴⁸ Goldman also liked the ending of the Cheetah production in which the cast left the stage as six toy tanks slowly blasted away. Goldman commented that this was an "eloquent" statement about the folly of war.⁴⁹

Many who attended the Cheetah production, however, were more impressed by the show's shortcomings than by its merits. Goldman included this evaluation of "someone close to the show" in his analysis of the Cheetah production.

The show wasn't as effective at the Cheetah; the acoustics were terrible. The step was not significant enough to get space in the papers, and there was no chance to accumulate promotional material. So it was not re-reviewed. Those who did come liked it less than before, so they said nothing. We thought the Cheetah was the "in" thing for kids. We thought we could combine the discotheque-goers and the theatre-goers, but the two groups never became a union.⁵⁰

The sound, then, was poor, the stage was set too close to the seats of the audience, the set was cavernous, and Ragni was openly critical of his fellow cast members. It was at the Cheetah that nudity was first introduced against the wishes of director Freedman. He reluctantly admits that, "the production degenerated actually into a light show."⁵¹ In fact, as Julie Arenal later pointed out, the choreography at the Cheetah, which should have loosened up, given the discotheque

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 382. ⁴⁹Ibid., p. 382. ⁵⁰Ibid., p. 382.

⁵¹Freedman interview.

environment, was predetermined and cliché-ridden.⁵²

The Cheetah production was not even a commercial success. On the evening that Goldman viewed a performance at the discotheque the house was "perhaps one-tenth full."⁵³ As noted, the Cheetah production ran for only forty-five performances, and even Butler began to have misgivings about the venture. Told by his father to "drop this turkey," Butler stubbornly decided on another approach, to take Hair to Broadway in the spring of 1968.⁵⁴ The show closed at the Cheetah in late January, 1968, and the discotheque itself gave way for a real estate developer soon after.⁵⁵ With a modestly successful run at the Public Theater, and an inconclusive showing at the Cheetah, the Hair company faced its next hurdle, the transfer to Broadway.

⁵²Ronald Gold, "It's 'Non-Choreography' But, 'All Dance'," Dance Magazine, July 1968, p. 29.

⁵³Goldman, p. 382.

⁵⁴Collette Dowling, "How Hair Found Fortune and Fame," Playbill, September 1968, p. 35.

⁵⁵"Hair Closes Sunday," The New York Times, 23 January 1968, n.p. (Clippings, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library).

CHAPTER V

THE BROADWAY PRODUCTION

As one theatre historian notes, there are two basic versions of Hair.¹ After it closed at the Cheetah, Ragni and Rado rewrote the show.

Most of the plot was deleted from the original production, a great many songs were added, together with new irrelevant sequences and production novelties. What emerged was an almost entirely new stage production.²

After the loose-knit concept of Ragni and Rado was brought to Broadway, the show remained in a perpetual state of change, varying from performance to performance, from city to city, and from country to country. It is the Broadway production as it was presented on opening night which is generally considered the "model" version, however, and in this chapter that is the presentation examined.

O'Horgan's Role

With Papp gone, Freedman demoted, and Ragni, Rado, and Butler vying for control, Hair was bound to undergo changes after its staging at the Public. The individual responsible for developing the show into a unified presentation was Tom O'Horgan. O'Horgan had had an extensive career in off-Broadway

¹Ewen, p. 204. ²Ibid.

productions and experimental theatre, having been a member of Second City and La Mama companies. Immediately prior to his involvement with Hair, he had directed the off-Broadway show Futz, an absurdist piece about a farmer's relations with his pig. Initially contacted by Ragni and Rado, O'Horgan had turned down the task of directing their work to go to Europe for La Mama. The show was already in production at the Public Theater when he returned from abroad. Dissatisfied with Freedman's more conventional directorial style, Michael Butler contacted O'Horgan through one of his associates, Bertrand Castelli. O'Horgan was schooled in experimental techniques, improvisation, and employed a permissive directorial style. He was also convinced of the show's social relevance. It is O'Horgan's belief that, "theatre is the conscience and the morality of the people."³

If there is a single word that expressed the directorial approach of Tom O'Horgan it is "unconventional." He has rebelled against most of the stage conventions that have dominated Western theatre for centuries. O'Horgan believes in total theatre with active involvement and participation by the audience. His theatre is, "sensual, savage, and," in the case of Hair, "thoroughly musical."⁴ O'Horgan wanted to break down the concept of the "fourth wall" which separates actors and audience. His previous experience in

³O'Horgan interview.

⁴"Director of the Year," Newsweek, 3 June 1968, p. 102.

off-Broadway productions had provided him with the necessary techniques to do so. Breaking down the concept of the "fourth wall" had been one of his principal concerns in Futz, and he was eager to use a similar approach on Broadway.

Unlike Gerald Freedman, O'Horgan believed in giving his actors as much latitude as possible in the creation of their roles. Somewhat similar to the style of Jerzy Grotowski, his approach relied on, "extreme permissiveness based on exploratory improvisation with his actors."⁵ He employed a series of acting exercises which he had culled from the Esalen Institute for Human Potential and the Polish Lab Theatre, designed to establish trust among members of the cast and crew. The exercises combined physical interaction and intimacy with psychic bonding.⁶ O'Horgan became impressed with the effectiveness of such exercises when he witnessed an incident involving a concert pianist who was unable to play a certain Bach piece. The pianist started rolling around on the floor, performing strange gyrations. Next, he rose and played the piece perfectly.⁷ Throughout the show's Broadway run, O'Horgan, along with Butler, insisted that the whole company engage in such exercise sessions.

The idea of bringing Hair to Broadway had a special appeal for O'Horgan. He had observed that off-Broadway techniques were innovative, but were not being viewed by the

⁵Ibid.

⁶Dowling, p. 36.

⁷O'Horgan interview.

people who "needed them most," the establishment audiences who were accustomed to the theatrical conventions of Broadway. He states:

I had come to the conclusion that communication of ideas to a small group of friends, who already understood and agreed, was pointless, and that it was time to seek out a larger and essentially unconvinced audience and purposefully set out to turn their heads in another direction.⁸

O'Horgan did "turn heads" with his Broadway version of the show, but some were turned in disgust.

A complete listing of the staff and cast of the Broadway show appears in Appendix II of this study. There were changes in the cast of the uptown version which deserve our attention at this time, however. While Ragni continued to play the role of Berger, the part of Claude was taken over by Rado, with Lynn Kellogg assuming the character of Sheila. Shelley Plimpton continued to portray Crissy, and Sally Eaton remained as Jeanie. However, Steve Curry was the new Woof, and Lamont Washington the new Hud. There were also changes in most of the minor parts which were recast mainly to improve the quality of the company's dancing and singing. Very significant was the change in the part of Claude. Some critics objected to the casting of Rado in this role because the character of Claude was supposed to be in his late teens or early twenties, and Rado was reportedly over thirty.⁹

Again, there was considerable debate about whether the

⁸David, p. 13.

⁹Goldman, p. 384.

members of the cast were "authentic" hippies. Henry Hewes wrote: "Instead of finding conventional music comedy performers to impersonate hippies, O'Horgan had encouraged a bunch of mainly hippie performers to explore their own natures with song and dance."¹⁰ There were, however, some who believed that O'Horgan had recruited professional "mercenaries" whose own values and life styles were far removed from that of the hippie counterculture.

O'Horgan's particular technique in the building of character was often seen as unorthodox.

O'Horgan does not build character in the conventional ways that invite audience identification. He fragments roles, uses the cast as a chorus and frequently has his actors switch roles in the midst of a play. "I'm trying for an alienation from the physical aspects of character," he says, "I hope this will make the part itself become really visible."¹¹

O'Horgan wanted his cast to be interchangeable, informing them that his "game" was, "for no one to know who he or she was playing in the show," so that, "everyone would know the entire show, then pick a part out of a hat."¹² He did not force this concept on his performers, but he did make frequent changes in roles among the cast. Some of these changes were for the purpose of jarring both cast and audience, such as use of Melba Moore, a black performer, in the role of Sheila, a

¹⁰Henry Hewes, "Blow-Ups," Saturday Review, 11 May 1968, p. 26.

¹¹Newsweek, p. 102.

¹²Davis, p. 188.

white hippie.¹³ Similarly, Robert I. Rubinsky played the part of Mom, and Lorrie Davis, the role of Abe Lincoln. While some of these interchanges were theatrically purposeful, in part, they were a response to the chronic absenteeism which plagued Hair on Broadway. As Davis recalls, on one occasion only two of the five leads showed up for a performance, which left some sixteen people, mostly understudies, to carry a show designed for about thirty characters.¹⁴

Throughout the show's Broadway run new performers were found to replace those who had dropped out or were fired. Davis reports that, "they were still casting Hair on our twenty-third day into rehearsals, fifteen days before our first public performance, and they continued to cast twelve days after we opened."¹⁵ By February of 1969, none of the three leading roles were being performed by the actors who had played these roles on opening night at the Biltmore. Joseph Campbell Butler was now playing Claude, Barry McGuire, Berger, and Heather MacRae, Sheila.¹⁶

Staging

On April 29, 1968, Hair began its Broadway run at the Biltmore Theatre. The musical remained at the Biltmore for

¹³Robert Berkvist, "Melba Changes Color of 'Hair'," The New York Times, 14 September 1969, n.p. (Clippings, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library.)

¹⁴Davis, p. 168. ¹⁵Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁶Clive Barnes, "'Hair' Holds Up Under 2nd Look," The New York Times, 5 February 1969, p. 36.

more than four years and over seventeen hundred performances. The opening date had been selected by Butler's astrologer, Maria Elise Crummaire, who predicted that opening on April 29 would assure the venture's success.¹⁷ The show's use of a major Broadway theatre resulted in both advantages and disadvantages. One critic remarked: "The theatre into which it was moved was a standard Broadway house, so that when the actors came down the aisles, you were very much aware of a certain falseness, and attempted theatricality."¹⁸ O'Horgan does not agree with this assessment. He asserts that the use of the Biltmore was a type of "goof."

Since Hair was the first rock musical to come to Broadway, we didn't think anybody would pay much attention to it, so we decided to have fun with it and set it up as a protest. We'd just sit in the Biltmore and drive people crazy. It seemed like a joke. We really didn't think it was very important.¹⁹

Moreover, he contends, the venerable and plush Biltmore contrasted nicely with the performance on stage.

The show had a very specific point of view. It really belonged in one of those old plaster palaces where this group of people . . . this show . . . was really out of its idiom. Hanging clothes and junk all over the festoons, actors scampering up and down the aisles, hanging all over the proscenium arch like really rebellious kids, that's what it was all about. That was the underlying humor of the piece, that we should dare to do it. Elsewhere it would not have had the same impact.²⁰

¹⁷Dowling, p. 31.

¹⁸Goldman, p. 383.

¹⁹O'Horgan interview. ²⁰Ibid.

Hence, the environment of the Biltmore was itself a part of the show's shock value.

One of the theatrical conventions that O'Horgan most wanted to undermine was that of the nonexistent "fourth wall." Centuries before, a theatrical tradition had evolved of an invisible wall which separated performers from spectators.

The audience was no longer to be wrestled with or brought to a sense of communal self-judgment. Passive, sitting in darkness, silent with expectancy, it was now a collection of random voyeurs who could offer nothing to the drama but the most primitive responses.²¹

Richardson comments on the contrasting theatre of director O'Horgan in Futz and Hair as follows:

The fierce consciousness in all of these productions that every gesture and movement is indeed being watched and that the purpose of the performance is to make that observation a self-conscious one. This is to deny the individual in the audience his private crescendos of understanding and feeling, even to mock them if they should occur; it is to comment on the play's action with body positions that thrust the physicality of the actors uncomfortably on one; it is to perform not as one drowning in character involvement but as one aware that character is a weapon that can be used; it is, finally, to keep the actors and the audience out of their emotional petticoats and to force them to encounter each other naked.²²

The set designer for the show's Broadway production, Robin Wagner, similarly observed of Hair that, "the only thing innovative was that we threw out all the old conventions."²³

²¹Jack Richardson, "Avant-Garde Theatrics," Commentary, November 1968, p. 24.

²²Ibid., p. 25.

²³Interview conducted with Robin Wagner, New York City, 19 June 1981.

O'Horgan underscores Wagner's remark, stating, "We were trying to eliminate fourth wall theatre, whatever that means."²⁴ "Listen to me, I'm important too," was the message which had been conveyed to audiences at the Public Theater, but, with the assault on the fourth wall, at the Biltmore the message became: "you may not give a damn about me, but you're going to listen."

The staging of Hair at the Biltmore exposed stage devices to the audience rather than attempting to conceal them. The actors did most of the set changes in full view of the audience, and the stage hands were not hidden either. Robin Wagner observed that the designers were involved in, "tearing down any walls we could, including any kind of masking."²⁵

As far as the scenery, the lighting, the production and all the rest of it was concerned, basically what we were doing was allowing the audience to be part of it. Showing everything. Letting it all hang out, as it were. You know, when you go to a theatre, you'll notice, there's masking and the lights are hidden. And this is where we differed, particularly, so we took out everything.²⁶

With lights, microphones, speakers, stage hands all in plain view, the show did not permit its audience any comfortable illusion, but demanded active involvement.

Other techniques were employed to fracture the "fourth wall." For example, Hair opens with members of the cast moving up the aisles in a "sculptured rhapsody of slow

²⁴O'Horgan interview.

²⁵Wagner interview. ²⁶Ibid.

motion."²⁷ During the show, as one reviewer stated:

The players run and crawl and tumble up and down the aisles. They also walk, arm in arm, from the front (of the theatre) to the rear, stepping on the backs of the seats between the patrons' shoulders. Some of them swing by ropes above the audience's heads. Others clamber down into the house from rope ladders, or strike up conversations with guests in the front rows.²⁸

Occasionally, such intimate contact between the actors and their audience led to disturbances, and several times cast members came into direct conflict with the theatre's corp of ushers.²⁹ As part of the nude scene, for instance, a performer impersonating a policeman runs down the aisles as if he is about to arrest the offending players. When this scene was first performed some members of the show believed that a "bust" was actually in progress.³⁰ While such techniques had been used in off-Broadway productions before, their use at the Biltmore provided novelty, lending shock value to the show.

If Freedman had been considered too authoritarian in his directorial style, Anna Sokolow, the show's choreographer at the Public Theater, was seen as even more of a disciplinarian. Thus, when O'Horgan assumed the role of director, Sokolow was replaced by Julie Arenal. Commenting on the Broadway choreography, John Lahr declares: "Hair loosens up the

²⁷"Hairpiece," Newsweek, 13 May 1969, p. 110.

²⁸William Leonard, "Hair" Scores Roaring, Raunchy Triumph," Chicago Tribune, 23 October 1969.

²⁹Davis, p. 81.

³⁰Clive Barnes, "Hair," Saturday Evening Post, 8 September 1977, p. 23.

musical's formula for movement with acrobatics that go beyond conventional choreography to statement."³¹ Hair was unusual in dance movements without "a single full-scale dance number in it."³²

Julie Arenal believes that her choreographic approach to the Broadway show was very much in tune with the overall directorial concept of O'Horgan.

I guess we just had the same ideas. Like we shouldn't try to hide anything, the mikes or the costume changes. That we should use as much of the theatre as we could; have the kids in the aisles and up on ladders. That every number should have a different physical conception--not all the same like it was before. All movements evolving from the situation, changing shapes and levels. But no dance steps!³³

While the Public Theater and Cheetah productions of the musical utilized predetermined dance movements, the Broadway rendition employed "non-dance movements," which were individualized, organic, and natural.³⁴ Arenal contrasts her own choreography for the Broadway Hair with that of Freedman and Solokow, stating: "The movement looks more natural, more improvised than it did when the show was off-Broadway."³⁵ Some of the performers under Arenal's supervision had a dance background, but a considerable number lacked dance experience. With regard to the former, Arenal had to free them from preset

³¹John Lahr, Up Against the Fourth Wall (New York: Grove Press, 1970), p. 134.

³²Gold, p. 29. ³³Ibid., p. 29-30.

³⁴Hewes, p. 34.

³⁵Gold, p. 29.

notions about dance, while with the latter, she had to start from scratch and make them aware of their own bodily movements. Although the Broadway show's dance patterns were coordinated, the performers were given latitude to develop the details of their movements. David Toguri, assistant to O'Horgan for the London production of Hair, provides an example of such freedom.

There will be, say, four bars of music which allow for vertical or horizontal expression, and it is left to the dancers themselves to choose which they will use.³⁷

Like O'Horgan's overall direction, Arenal's choreographic approach stressed freedom of individual expression for the performer, working toward a sense of naturalness.

The relationship between Arenal and members of the show's cast and crew was not always smooth, however. Apparently, Arenal was not liked by some cast members.³⁸ In fact, O'Horgan tends to downgrade her contribution to the production. He claims that "basically I did all the movements."³⁹ Nevertheless, Arenal's choreographic approach seems to have been compatible with the rest of the show.

The set design was created by Robin Wagner and the lighting by Jules Fisher. The set and the lighting differed

³⁶Ibid., p. 30.

³⁷R. B. Marriott, "The Freedom That is 'Hair'," The Stage and Television Today, 31 October 1968, p. 8.

³⁸Davis, p. 127.

³⁹O'Horgan interview.

from other components of the show. According to Davis, "the scenery and lighting were about the only things that ever remained constant in the show."⁴⁰ Wagner used no curtain and exposed the fly area to the full view of the audience. The background of the set consisted of the brick wall in the rear of the stage with radiator and pipes. The slightly raked dirt floor was covered by oriental rugs for the interior scenes. There were two permanent set pieces in the middle, a totem pole, symbolizing a ritualistic observance of primitive American Indian culture by the "tribe," and a "crucifix tree," an abstract Jesus on a metal rod containing electrified eyeballs. Performers climbed both the totem pole and the tree during the show.

Like Lee, Wagner found real objects for the set. He "just took things off the street and made a set out of it."⁴¹ He collected hippie artifacts and other props to exemplify the absurdity of conventional society, Santa Clause dolls, for example. He created a cluttered environment. For every member of the cast there were a dozen props used in the Broadway production.

I mean, the stage was decorated by the actors right there. As they performed and were living there, they were filling it with graffiti and bringing junk in and piling it up. And in a sense, the environment was "by the cast" as well as the designers.⁴²

Thus, the tradition of finding street-objects for the set of

⁴⁰Davis, p. 57.

⁴¹Wagner interview. ⁴²Ibid.

Hair begun downtown was continued in the uptown version.

Jules Fisher's lighting at the Biltmore was relatively complex. The lighting plot required instruments which ranged from the use of a single spotlight to strobe-lights. Commenting on the complexity of the lighting, one reviewer wrote;

One stroboscopic sequence alone requires 108 lighting cues. To get the company through the scene and the 108 cues, three electricians work the levers with their hands, elbows, knees and even their feet.⁴³

Fisher was able to supply the required effects with relatively standard equipment. Since the Biltmore was not a musical house, Fisher had only two-thirds of the lighting capacity available to the average Broadway musical. Fisher manipulated what was available to him.

The trick I had there was a relatively limited palette of five colors that came from four different directions. And that gives you many permutations. So I could have the whole stage in any one color from any one direction or mix those. It was just the combination of those that seemed so varied.⁴⁴

There were many special effects in Fisher's lighting as well, such as the strobe sequence, a flashing police car signal, and the electrified eyes of the crucified Jesus.

One additional lighting effect at the Biltmore was the way in which the auditorium was lit. To help destroy the "fourth wall" O'Horgan asked that the theatre's auditorium be lit with spot lights and theatre lights "in patterns that we

⁴³Robert Kotlowitz, "'Hair': Side, Back and Front Views," Harper's Magazine, September 1968, p. 108.

⁴⁴Fisher interview.

repeated in the play, Hindu and Indian patterns," suggested by Wagner.⁴⁵ With this technique the audience found itself in an unconventional space before the show's first act had begun.

The band at the Biltmore was seated on stage in a "hollowed out" truck.⁴⁶ The instrumentation allowed the band to play both "rock" type numbers and pieces outside of "authentic" rock. One observer noted that, "the band is made up of rhythm instruments, including two, sometimes three, guitars, a bass, percussion, and one versatile wind instrumentalist; all of them, to put it mildly, are amplified."⁴⁷ Under the ongoing direction of Galt MacDermot, the band was amplified by means of eight large loudspeakers, one hung at the back of the Biltmore. The singers were amplified through the use of four hand mikes, five shotgun mikes, and one wireless mike.⁴⁸

The costumes for the Broadway show relied on the hippie blue jeans, beads, and other paraphernalia used originally at the Public Theater. "Just figure out a basic costume for everyone,"⁴⁹ Nancy Potts, the costume director for the uptown version, was told by O'Horgan. Potts did go beyond O'Horgan's minimal suggestion, and created some innovative and

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Davis, p. 69.

⁴⁷Kotlowitz, p. 108. ⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Davis, p. 58.

amusing costumes for specialty sequences.⁵⁰ For example, for a scene involving a trio of black female singers lampooning the Supremes, Potts fashioned a single shimmering dress to enclose all three of the performers. Other costume ideas, like so much of Hair, emerged over time, and additions to the wardrobe were a continual feature of the show.

Social Issues

The presentation of social issues in the downtown production of the show was relatively muted, but in Ragni's and Rado's rewritten version, "the play was made more trenchantly topical on race politics and war."⁵¹ "New songs and comments on everything from pollution, sex and drugs to military services and religion were added,"⁵² for the Broadway Hair. Originally, the musical had focused on the issues of the Vietnam War and racial equality, and these two issues were retained in the uptown show. The new Hair, however, also included commentary on a wide range of tangential issues, particularly sexual freedom. The cumulative impact of such emendations was that "the polemic against society was understandably diminished, and instead, the show, "became permeated with a youth cult."⁵³

⁵⁰Theophilus Lewis, "'Hair'," America, 8 June 1968, p. 760.

⁵¹Dowling, p. 35.

⁵²Laufe, p. 358.

⁵³John Elson, Erotic Theatre (New York: Taplinger, 1973), p. 203.

In short, Hair was transformed from a protest musical into a proselytizing of the hippie lifestyle.

While the topic of sexual freedom had appeared in muted form at the Public Theater, in the Broadway show it became an extremely prominent element. The Broadway version had many obscene references and openly advocated deviant sexual practices, for example: sodomy. Hair was the first show on Broadway to include total nudity of both men and women.⁵⁴ About the show's nudity, Tom O'Horgan observed:

I had used it in many pieces before and nobody had ever said anything. But this was a different kind of nudity than had been done on stage, quite different from Oh! Calcutta! and the nine million shows that followed and had to have a nude scene no matter what. The nudity was part of the freedom, part of the liberation.⁵⁵

The use of nudity was responsible for a great deal of the critical controversy which surrounded O'Horgan's Hair. While some critics thought it infinitely less objectionable than the desecration of the flag which occurs in the piece, others expressed dismay at the formerly "tame" show which now shocked by its open display of the human body.

It should be noted that none of the cast members was explicitly ordered to appear naked. Participation in the nude sequence at the end of Act I was at the option of each individual actor.⁵⁶ Butler and O'Horgan did suggest

⁵⁴Kloman, p. D8.

⁵⁵O'Horgan interview.

⁵⁶Suzannah Nostrand, "Optional Nudity in 'Hair'," Esquire, September 1968, p. 151.

"stripping" to members of the cast, but "the nude scene was never pushed,"⁵⁷ a policy continued for the show's later road productions.⁵⁸ In addition, the exhibition of nudity which did occur was brief, lasting no more than two minutes, and was done in dim stage lights without being spotlighted.⁵⁹ Finally, the addition of nudity was defended by the play's principals as a legitimate expression of the hippie lifestyle, as seen at hippie Be-Ins, such as those in Central Park. These principals believed that the nudity of Hair was not a prurient or a gratuitous addition to the show.

Dramatic Structure

The Broadway show all but eliminated the thin plot-line of the Public Theater production. "Much else is dropped in the revision," one reviewer observed, "notable its entire story line."⁶⁰ At the Public Theater, Hair was "in no traditional sense a 'book' show," but "it had a clear continuity that pivoted around distinguishable characters."⁶¹ At the Biltmore, the plot of the musical was conceived as "a story-less contrast in values rather than as a clothesline for songs."⁶² Freedman had attempted to make the piece a real

⁵⁷Davis, p. 60. ⁵⁸Marriott, p. 8. ⁵⁹Goldman, p. 385.

⁶⁰Harold Clurman, "Clown and Hero," New York, May 20, 1968, p. 54.

⁶¹Newsweek, p. 110.

⁶²Ross Wetzsteon, "Theatre," The Village Voice, 6 March 1969, pp. 39-44.

"book" musical. O'Horgan dropped the "book,"⁶³ with the result that in its revised form the show's book was "about as identifiable as the Manhattan telephone directory."⁶⁴

The lack of a book was not universally admired. Lehman Engel considered the revised Hair, "plotless, humorless, self-conscious, stale and largely lyricless . . . characterless and without development."⁶⁵ Another observer remarked:

Hair was Broadway's first rock musical and its success unsettled the tight little community of musical theatre professionals. A number like "White Boys/Black Boys," with three girls in one stretchy sequined dress, was cute but by ordinary standards, Hair was a mess, disorganized, unintelligible, and unstructured.⁶⁶

Still another critic stated: "By minimizing plot and concentrating on sensationalism in action and dialogue to shock audiences, the Broadway version lost the poignancy of the off-Broadway production."⁶⁷

Along with the reduction of plot, the uptown show had less-rounded characterizations than the Papp production. Whereas characters downtown might be considered two dimensional, in the Broadway version they might be deemed one dimensional. William Goldman illustrates such demeaning of character:

Example: In the earlier version, a young man is about to leave home, and his mother grabs

⁶³MacDermot interview. ⁶⁴Barnes, p. 23.

⁶⁵Engel, p. 220.

⁶⁶Martin Gottfried, Broadway Musicals (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1979), p. 310.

⁶⁷Laufe, p. 359.

him and shoves his head into her bosom, saying with deadly seriousness and therefore comic effect, "This is where it's at, baby, not out there." When this moment took place in O'Horgan's Broadway version, the mother, instead of being played by a middle-aged suburban-type woman, was played by a young male actor dressed in drag.⁶⁸

Walter Kerr, who generally liked the Broadway version, admitted that the mother and father figures of the revised Hair were less-rounded and were treated less sympathetically than in the Papp production. Kerr notes that O'Horgan "takes one of the best lines (a mother patiently asking her son, 'Besides disheveled, what do you want to be?') and chops it up among so many actors that it can scarcely be heard, let alone laughed at."⁶⁹ In the original version the treatment of the adult figures had given the work a certain counter-point. The debasement of these parts eliminated any semblance of a balanced presentation of viewpoints.

The rewriting of the show by Ragni and Rado occurred before its opening at the Biltmore. During the course of its run on Broadway, however, the authors, with the assistance of the staff and cast, continued to make changes. Indeed, the entire company was encouraged to be innovative, and their many collective contributions to the work later made them resent the lack of credit accorded them in the playbills.⁷⁰ The extent of these alterations is reflected in the deletions, additions, and sequence changes which appear in the Broadway

⁶⁸Goldman, p. 383. ⁶⁹Kerr, p. D3.

⁷⁰Davis, p. 107.

Hair when contrasted to the downtown show. In the Public

Theater version the song sequence ran as follows:⁷¹

Act I

Red, Blue and White.	Mom and Dad
Ain't Got No	Claude, Berger, Woof and the Company
I Got Life	Claude and Mom
Air.	Jeannie, Crissy, Dionne
Going Down	Berger and the Company
Hair	Claude, Berger and the Company
Dead End	Sheila and the Company
Frank Mills.	Crissy
Where Do I Go.	Claude and the Company

Intermission

Act II

Electric Blues	Suzannah, Linda, Paul
Easy To Be Hard.	Suzannah, Linda, Paul and the Company
Manchester	Claude
White Boys	Dionne, Susan, Alma
Black Boys	Linda, Crissy, Suzannah
Walking in Space	The Company
Aquarius	The Company
Good Morning Starshine	Sheila and the Company
Explantetooch.	Claude, Sheila
Climax	Sheila

The song list given in a playbill for the presentation at the Biltmore is as follows:⁷²

Act I

Aquarius	Ron and Company
Donna.	Berger and Company
Hashish.	Company
Sodomy	Woof and Company
Colored Spade.	Hud and Company
Manchester	Claude and Company
Ain't Got No	Woof, Hud, Dionne and Company
I Believe in Love.	Sheila
Air.	Jeanie, Crissy, Dionne and Company

⁷¹Hair Playbill, December 2, 1967.

⁷²Hair Playbill, April 1968.

Initials.	Company
I Got Life.	Claude and Company
Going Down.	Berger and Company
Hair.	Claude, Berger and Company
My Conviction	Tourist Lady and Company
Easy To Be Hard	Sheila
Don't Put It Down	Berger, Steve and Woof
Frank Mills	Crissy
Be-In	Company
Where Do I Go	Claude and Company

Intermission

Act II

Electric Blues.	Suzannah, Leata, Steve and Paul
Black Boys.	Martha, Suzannah and Natalie
White Boys.	Dionne, Lorrie and Emmaretta
Walking in Space.	Company
Abie Baby	Hud, Ron, Tomay and Lorrie
Three-Five-Zero-Zero.	Company
What a Piece of Work.	Ron and Walter
Good Morning Starshine.	Sheila, Dionne and Company
The Bed	Company
The Flesh Failures.	Claude, Sheila, Dionne and Company

(Let the Sunshine In)

Three songs, "Dead End," "Exanaplanetooche," and "Climax," were eliminated from the show in the Broadway production. More significantly, fourteen new songs were added to the show by the time of this performance, including, "Donna," "Hashish," "Sodomy," "Colored Spade," "I Believe in Love," "Initials," "My Conviction," "Be-In," "Abie Baby," "Three-Five-Zero-Zero," "What a Piece of Work Is Man," "The Bed," "The Flesh Failures," and "Let the Sunshine In." Moreover, in terms of sequence, it is "Aquarius," not "Red, Blue and White" (title changed to "Don't Put It Down"), which opens the show, while "Easy To Be

Hard" and "Manchester" have been pushed up from the second act in the downtown version to the first act of the Broadway show and the "White Boys"/"Black Boys" sequence is reversed to "Black Boys"/"White Boys" in the revised version. In general, these changes, especially in the additions, reflect a broader scope of concern in the show and a more shockingly militant style of presentation.

Reconstruction

There follows now an attempt to reconstruct the Hair which opening night audiences saw at the Biltmore on April 29, 1968. Lorrie Davis comments:

Since Hair was virtually a different show every performance, it's hard to pin down one final and "frozen" version of what each audience saw. The performance we gave opening night comes closest to the "authentic" one.⁷³

Productions of the show varied from country to country, from city to city, and from night to night, but from this single performance the others followed.

The audience at the Biltmore expected an unconventional evening before the musical's action began. There was no curtain, and consequently, the first thing the audience saw was Wagner's set. Along with the two permanent set pieces already described, it included a tower with a stairway. The set's color was predominantly gray. The stage was raked at a slight incline. Visible props included cycling gear, a juke

⁷³Davis, p. 92.

box, and a papier mâché Santa Claus. There were signs which read "Dead End" and "No Smoking." There was no attempt to conceal the stage lights and other theatrical devices from the audience.

The cast was scattered throughout the theatre: in the balconies, on the catwalks, in the orchestra, and on stage. Claude, played by Jim Rado, was seated on stage center, cross-legged in Indian fashion. He faced a small grill and remained motionless throughout the opening vamp. On cue, the entire cast suddenly froze and then proceeded to the stage in slow motion, some of the actors walking on the backs of the audience's chairs. Claude was joined at center stage by Berger (Gerome Ragni) and Sheila (Lynn Kellogg). Claude is a youth who has just received his induction notice, Berger, a more outlandish hippie, and Sheila is a student protestor from N.Y.U. As the cast made its way to the stage, Berger cut a strand of Claude's hair and burned it ceremonially on the grill. The act is a ritual sacrifice and a precursor of Claude's ultimate demise.

The cast now forms a circle, as Ronnie Dyson, later to gain considerable acclaim as a singer, launches into the opening musical number, "Aquarius." The tune begins with an astrological prediction.

When the moon is in the seventh house,
And Jupiter aligns with Mars,
Then peace will guide the planets,
And love will steer the stars,
This is the dawning of the Age of Aquarius . . .

The lyrics suggest that the Age of Aquarius is the antipode of

of the "Age of Reason." It is an era in which mystical insight will guide conduct.

Harmony and understanding
 Sympathy and trust abounding
 No more falsehoods or derisions
 Golden living dreams of visions
 Mystic crystal revelation
 And the mind's true liberation

Like meditation, psychedelic drugs, and other hippie manifestations, the new age will reveal the inner world of vision.

Berger strips down to his shorts and wanders around the audience. He begins a fast rock tune entitled "Donna." The song concerns a sixteen-year-old virgin whom Berger met in San Francisco and for whom he now pines. He tells the audience that he has seen much of the world. He describes the yogas of India and how he smoked "pot" in South America. As he sings, he mounts a rope and swings out over the heads of the audience.

Berger now leads the company (broken up into small groupings on stage) in the song "Manhattan," later titled "Hashish." It extols such drugs as hashish, cocaine, heroin, opium, and LSD. As the number ends, the cast assumes various religious posturings, two members of the company pose as Madonna and Infanta, for instance, which Woof (Steve Curry), a boy with homosexual tendencies and a yearning for Mick Jagger, sings "Sodomy." Its lyrics speak glowingly of sodomy, fellatio, cunnilingus, and pederasty as if they were sacraments. He wonders about society's repression of sexuality, contrasting such sexual "grossness" with the obscenity of the Vietnam conflict, a conflict which threatens one of the objects of his

passion: Claude.

After Woof's piece, two white hippies carry in Hud (Lamont Washington), a young black male, in tar and feathers, and held dangling upside down. In "Colored Spade" Hud sings of racial injustice. He catalogs the epithets used about blacks. He is a jungle-bunny, niggercoon, cotton-picker, ubangi-lipped, Uncle Tom, Aunt Jemima, Black Sambo, a resident of Harlem, and the President of the United States of Love. Three black girls then wash away the tar and feathers.

During the cleansing, Claude sings about himself in "Manchester." Actually from Queens, Claude claims to come from Manchester, mistaking it, perhaps, as the home of the Beatles. He praises the Beatles as the greatest of all rock groups.

In "Ain't Got No" Hud, Woof, and other members of the cast express their voluntary adoption of Spartan poverty. As Hud, Woof, and a young colored girl, Dionne, alternately sing "ain't got no," the company responds as follows:

<u>Solo</u>	<u>Response</u>
Ain't got no home	So
Ain't got no shoes	Poor
Ain't got no money	Honey
Ain't got no class	Common
Ain't got no bed	Beat
Ain't got no pot	Busted
Ain't got no faith	Catholic
Ain't got no father	Dead
Ain't got no pizza	Starving
Ain't got no TV	Honest
Ain't got no Gallo	Nervous
Ain't got no sleep	High
Ain't got no rhythm	White
Ain't got no books	Lovely
Ain't got no socks	Nasty
Ain't got no sex	Ugly

What, then, do the hippies have? Sheila reappears on stage as if on horseback, singing the lyrics of "I Believe in Love." It is love, spiritual, communal, and carnal which binds the hippie community together, not material things. She asks her fellow hippies: "What do you want?" They respond by chanting, "Peace, now."

Jeanie (Sally Eaton) emerges from a trap door on stage. She describes her predicament before beginning a diatribe against air pollution. She is stranded on St. Mark's place because her parents won't send her any money. She loves Claude (who himself loves Sheila), but she has been made pregnant by an unidentified "speed freak." Her song is "Air," also titled "Welcome Sulfur Dioxide."

Welcome, sulfur dioxide
Hello, carbon monoxide
The air, the air
Is everywhere
Breathe deep
While you sleep
Breathe deep
(cough)
Deep, deep, deep
(cough)

Hippies like Jeanie, then, confront both general social problems and their own personal travails.

The company (or tribe) next shapes itself into a classroom and sings "Initials," an imaginative parody.

LBJ took the IRT
Down to 4th Street USA
When he got there
What did he see
The youth of America on LSD

The use of initializations is a form of analytical dissection, a practice which this number derides.

From the audience, three pairs of moms and dads come on stage. The downtown version of the show had only one pair of parents. The Broadway rendition not only triplicates the parents (thereby adding "carbon copy" stereotypes), but now male actors are portraying the moms, and females, the dads. One of the fathers, who, with his camera and notebook, resembles a tourist, asks the hippies about their heroes. The "tribe" responds with the names of comic book characters at first, suggesting the hippies transcendent, if ludicrous, reality, and then mentions heroes who have died, such as John Kennedy, suggesting their helplessness.

Claude next sings the tune "I Got Life" to his parents.

I got life, Mother
 I got laughs, Sister
 I got freedom, Brother
 I got good times, Man
 I got crazy ways, Daughter
 I got Million-Dollar Charm, Cousin
 I got headaches and toothaches
 And bad times too . . . like you

This bouncy tune reflects the vitality of the hippies, simultaneously "humanizing" them by expressing their involvement in joys and sorrows universal to mankind.

Berger re-enters the scene, making a dramatic leap from the tower into the waiting arms of the company. He has just been expelled from school for refusing to cut his hair. He sings "Going Down" as an expression of his situation. Three members of the tribe wearing Hitlerian moustaches impersonate school principals during the tune.

Claude returns. He has passed his army physical and is about to be drafted. A tourist from the audience asks

the hippies why they wear their hair so long. Berger and Claude reply in the title song, "Hair."

She asks me why/ I'm just a hairy guy
 I'm hairy noon and night/ Hair that's a fright
 I'm hairy high and low/ Don't ask me why--
 don't know
 It's not for lack of bread/ Like the Grateful Dead
 Darlin'/ Give me a head with hair
 Long beautiful hair
 Shining gleaming streaming/ Flaxen waxen
 Give me down-to-there hair/ Shoulder-length or longer
 Here baby, there momma, everywhere daddy daddy
 Hair hair/ Hair hair hair/ Hair hair hair
 Flow it/ Show it/ Long as God can grow it
 My hair

Another tourist lady is sympathetic toward the hippies. She says she is a "friend," and then provides an anthropological explanation of long hair in the song "My Conviction."

That longer hair and other flamboyant affectations
 Of appearance are nothing more
 Than the male's emergence from his drab camouflage
 Into the gaudy plumage
 Which is the birthright of his sex
 There is a peculiar notion that the elegant plumage
 And fine feathers are not proper for the man
 When, actually, that is the way things are
 In most species

Her efforts to rationalize, defuse, and possibly trivialize the appearance of the hippies is met by the tribe with a rousing, "Fuck you, Margaret Mead." The tourist lady flings open her fur coat to reveal that she, like the mothers in the "I Got Life" sequence, is a man in drag.

Sheila now sings "Sheila Franklin," a song which was later dropped from the show. Enamoured of Berger, she presents him with a yellow satin shirt, but he becomes angry and rips up the garment. Sheila then sings a memorable tune, "Easy To Be Hard," which asks questions such as: "How can

people be so heartless? How can people be so cruel? She finds it "easy to be hard, easy to be cold, easy to say no." Sheila, however, has no trouble saying yes. While she loves Berger and is loved by Claude, she is living in the East Village with a painter, Mark. When Jeanie emerges from her manhole once again, she reveals that she loves Claude, Claude loves Sheila, Sheila loves Berger, Claude, and Mick Jagger.

At this point, the company engages in a mock tribute to the American flag (actually a piece of bunting). They fold it according to prescribed regulations, while singing the satirical "Don't Put It Down," which mocks American society's reverence for the "best flag around."

The cast steps down into the audience, supposedly on their way to a Be-In, but using the time to change costumes for the more colorful garb befitting the "happening" sequence. During this interlude, a female hippie, Crissy (Shelley Plimpton), quietly sings the critically acclaimed ballad "Frank Mills."

I met a boy called Frank Mills/ On September twelfth right
here/ In front of the Waverly
But unfortunately/ I lost his/ Address
He was last seen with his friend/ A drummer
He resembles George Harrison of/ The Beatles
But he wears his hair tied in a
Small bow at the back
I love him
But it embarrasses me to walk/ Down the street with him
He lives in Brooklyn somewhere
And wears this white crash/ Helmet
He has gold chains on his/ Leather jacket
And on the back is written the/ Names
Mary and Mom and Hell's Angels
I would gratefully appreciate it/ If you see him
Tell him I'm in the/ Park with my girlfriend
And please . . . Tell him Angela and I
Don't want the two dollars/ Back . . . Just him

"Frank Mills," with its comparatively gentle tone, and its exposure of hippie vulnerability, was one of the high points of the show for many Establishment critics. Virtually all commented favorably on the waiflike appearance of Plimpton in the part.

The Be-In begins. Berger strips down to his under-shorts. A small grill is set up. As the tribe frolics to the familiar tune of "Hare Krishna," some of the male hippies burn their draft cards. When it is Claude's turn to burn his card, he refuses to participate. He sings the song "Where Do I Go?" which, using simple images of nature, delves into the meaning of life and the death which awaits Claude in Vietnam. During the tune, the stage is covered with a scrim under which the tribe crawls.

The purpose of the scrim becomes clear as the company emerges, some completely nude. They chant a "Be-In" in the nude sequence which aroused many middle-class patrons of the show. A police siren is heard, and two actors dressed as policemen run down the aisles of the theatre announcing that the show is closed. The audience is let in on the ruse as Act I of the musical ends.

Act II opens with Hud walking onto a darkly lit stage, carrying an antique windup victrola. As Hud and Cissy listen to an old Kate Smith recording of "The White Cliffs of Dover," a spotlight reveals four cast members in mirrored costumes. The company launches into an "authentic" rock number, "Electric Blues," which proclaims "old songs leave you dead." An

elaborate strobe-lit light show accompanies the number and its frantic dance movements.

There follows a spoof on Con Edison, later dropped from Hair, entitled "Oh, Great God of Power." In contrast to the complicated lighting effects of "Electric Blues," the Con Ed number is lit by candles held in the hands of the company. When Shelley Plimpton's hair caught fire in a later performance, this sequence nearly resulted in a calamity.

Claude reappears, riding a motorcycle from the audience to center stage. He is dressed in a gorilla costume, growling at the audience. He reveals his identity by removing the head of the gorilla costume. He tells the audience that he has just returned from an induction center. Meanwhile, Berger and the company provide a mock rendition of the scene at the draft board and Claude presents Woof with a poster of Mick Jagger. Now, three white girls appear on stage. They sing "Black Boys" to Hud, telling him of their preference for "chocolate-flavored treats." In their turn, three black women imitating the Supremes emerge and sing a counternumber to Claude, "White Boys." What seems like three conventional Supreme costumes is shortly revealed as one large stretch dress, a size-60 outfit designed by Nancy Potts, which envelops all three of the singers.

Berger, acting as master of ceremonies, hands out "joints" to the tribe (at times "reefers"). With the stage lights dimmed, a free-form homage is paid to psychedelic drugs in the tune "Walking in Space." On this, his last night before

leaving the tribe for the army, Claude takes LSD. A parody of American history follows. Berger, attired as George Washington, is trailed by members of his "army" (six or seven of the tribe, all girls), whom he orders to retreat. When Berger goes off stage, four Indians appear and shoot down the continental contingent. General Grant enters, dressed in a Confederate uniform, and resurrects the "army" which now contains various figures from American history and culture, including Abraham Lincoln, John Wilkes Booth, Calvin Coolidge, Clark Gable, Scarlett O'Hara, Teddy Roosevelt, and General Custer. Lincoln, played by Lorrie Davis, a black actress, is the most elaborately costumed of the group, with a finely brocaded velvet jacket, red, white, and blue stockings, and a contrasting "stoved-in" top hat. The historical figures perform a minuet. The dance is interrupted by an attack of three African witch doctors. Playing the head witch doctor, Hud berates Lincoln on the state of racial equality in America, commenting that Vietnam is a war in which the white man has sent the black man to fight with the yellow man for the purpose of promoting the fortunes of a country stolen from the red man. While a white girl shines his shoes with her hair, Lincoln replies in an up-dated and slang-filled version of the Gettysburg Address. The witch doctors, transformed into a Black Power group, sing the satirical "Happy Birthday, Abie Baby," following which they shoot Lincoln, who, falling to the stage, rises again, shouting, "Shit, I ain't dying for no white man."

Claude's trip continues. Four Buddhist monks wearing long robes appear, one of whom seems to be in flames, possibly as the result of self-immolation. Three Catholic nuns come in and strangle the remaining Buddhists with their rosary beads. Next, three astronauts slay the nuns with ray guns; three Chinese stab the astronauts; American Indians, using tomahawks and arrows, dispose of the Chinese; the American Indians are slaughtered by Green Berets, wielding machine guns, who, in turn, shoot themselves. The entire sequence is then played in reverse with elaborate strobe lights. After these effects cease, a drill sergeant reads a roll call. Two parents carry on stage a suit on a hanger, apparently intended for their drafted son.

Relief from this deafening sequence follows as a childlike tune is played. The company enacts children's games which quickly degenerate into a simulated combat. Now, the company sings a biting antiwar song, "Three-Five-Zero-Zero," a section of which follows:

Ripped open by metal explosion
 Caught in barbed wire
 Fireball
 Bullet shock
 Bayonet electricity
 Shrapneled
 Trembling meat
 Electronic Data Processing
 Black uniforms
 Bare feet
 Carbines
 Mail-order rifles
 Shoot the muscles
 256 Vietcong captured
 256 Vietcong captured

Starting as a whisper, the lyrics build to an anguished

crescendo, expressing the futility of war.

After the conclusion of "Three-Five-Zero-Zero," two members of the company, who have been watching from the tower, descend, singing "What a Piece of Work Is Man." Based on a passage from Shakespeare's Hamlet, the piece may have been a borrowing from Papp's production of Hamlet, the musical which followed Hair at the Public Theater. Whatever the original inspiration, the tune contrasts the inherent nobility of human nature with the "pestilent congregation of vapours" present in human conflict, like the napalm vapors of Vietnam. While stepping around the bodies of those who have been "killed" in the war games sequence, the two singers fall, but they soon sit up with the rest of the cast as a few lines of "Walking in Space" are repeated to indicate the end of Claude's trip.

Sheila appears at center stage. In an effort to escape the dreadful reality of Claude's induction, she sings the light-hearted "Good Morning Sunshine." Along with some scat-type lyrics, the song includes reference to a comforting correspondence between human beings and the stars. The innocence of this number is quickly removed, however. Crissy is brought on stage on a mattress, singing "The Bed," with lyrics devoted to all the things that can be done in bed.

The cast waves a symbolic goodbye to Claude, singing a few bars of "Ain't Got No," as an army sergeant waits on the margin of the stage for his new inductee. The company goes off stage, returning with various homemade rhythm

instruments, such as garbage can lids. In a mounting crescendo, they intone the phrase "Hell, no. We won't go," expressing their adamant refusal to participate in the army. Suddenly, there is a freeze as Claude appears in an army uniform with his hair neatly shorn (an easy transformation for Rado, who wore a blond wig to portray Claude). However, he is apparently not seen by the tribe. He is now in an invisible state of limbo. Claude sings a section of "Manchester." He is then joined by a trio for "Eyes Look Your Last," another tune later deleted from the show, which underscores Claude's eventual death. The company surrounds Claude, who, in slow-motion, "dies" symbolically, while they cover his face with their hands.

Sheila enters with the opening lines of the show's finale. The entire cast, without the "dead" Claude, moves downstage and sings along with Sheila.

We starve—look at one another/ Short of breath
 Walking proudly in our winter/ Coats
 Wearing smells from/ Laboratories
 Facing a dying nation of moving
 Paper fantasy
 Listening for the new told lies
 With supreme vision of lonely/ Tunes
 Somewhere inside something there
 Is a rush of greatness
 Who knows what stands in front/ Of our lives
 I fashion my future on films in/ Space
 Silence tells me secretly . . ./ Everything
 Singing my space songs on a/ Spiderweb sitar
 Life is around you and in you
 Answer for Timothy Leary dearie
 Let the sunshine in
 Let the sunshine in
 The sun/ Shine in

There is a final explosion of movement, waving, dancing, and

holding hands, before the company walks off stage singing "Let the Sunshine In." The motionless Claude is left lying as if he were dead. This final image concluded the version of Hair as seen by the opening night audience at the Biltmore.

As indicated, subsequent performances of Hair varied greatly. Some of the tunes and sequences described above were altered or deleted, and other elements were added during the show's Broadway run, and later on the the road. Nevertheless, this reconstruction of the "original" version of the Broadway show may be viewed as the "authentic rock" book of this non- or antibook musical.

CHAPTER VI

HAIR BEYOND ITS BROADWAY OPENING

After four years and over 1700 performances, the Hair being performed at the Biltmore in 1972 was considerably different from the one that opened there in 1968. The show was produced in a number of American cities, as well as in nearly a score of foreign lands. In 1970, a critic reported that Hair had gone "farther faster than any other show in history."¹ Sometimes, members of the original Broadway cast and crew accompanied the show on its travels. Tom O'Horgan directed the Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, and London productions, while Ragni, Rado, and Arenal worked on the Toronto show.² In most instances, however, companies of the productions across America and abroad were virtually entirely different from those appearing simultaneously on Broadway. At almost every venue where it was performed, the show was adapted to accommodate local conditions. As one of its followers understated: "The quality, style and details of the performance," varied, "from

¹Tom Prideaux, "'Hair:' That Play Is Sprouting Everywhere," Life, 17 April 1970, p. 63.

²"Hair Around the World," Newsweek, 7 July 1969, p. 94.

city to city and night to night."³ Such variations were particularly evident in the foreign productions, where languages, moral standards and topical interests differed from country to country.

This chapter chronicles Hair's evolution on Broadway and some of its showings in American cities and foreign lands. Unfortunately, the only individuals capable of discerning major alterations which occurred in the show from venue to venue are a handful of principals. However, when interviewed, these individuals seem unable or unwilling to provide concrete details of the changes which the show underwent in its travels. Tom O'Horgan, for example, stated that the show varied from place to place, but later qualified this observation by recounting that he "stuck to the book" in directing the show at various locales.⁴ Nevertheless, from the available evidence, some examples of changes in Hair can be culled, and while all the alterations cannot be catalogued, representative illustrations can be provided.

Evolution on Broadway

Some ten months after it opened at the Biltmore, Clive Barnes, a devotee of the show, stated that Hair remained "beautiful" on second viewing, for, in his opinion,

³Rockwell, p. 12.

⁴Interview with Tom O'Horgan, New York City, March 9, 1982.

"it still seems as though the whole thing is swiftly, deftly, dazzlingly being improvised before your very eyes."⁵ At this point, it should be noted, all three of the starring roles in the Biltmore production had been recast, with Joseph Campbell Butler playing Claude, Barry McGuire, Berger, and Heather MacRae, Sheila. In Barnes' view, this infusion of "new blood" helped to keep the show fresh and did not detract from the performance.

During its first two years on Broadway, all seemed well with the show. In January 1970, RCA Victor announced the release of a Ragni, Rado, and MacDermot album entitled "DisinHairited." The heralded team had composed new songs for the album, demonstrating their ongoing creative talent. In April 1970, the management of Hair gave a free concert in Central Park to an audience of over 10,000. This birthday celebration was financed by the \$2 million in profits which the musical had netted to that point.⁶ At this time, it appeared that the show might thrive on Broadway indefinitely.

From an insider's perspective, however, the picture was not nearly as promising. "As Hair grew," recounts Lorrie Davis, "it fell apart."⁷ Tom O'Horgan had left the

⁵Clive Barnes, "'Hair' Holds Up Under 2d Look," The New York Times, 5 February 1969, p. 36.

⁶Ewen, p. 206.

⁷Davis, p. 201.

show shortly after its opening to initiate other productions around the globe. "When Tom O'Horgan left the show," Davis states, "what little discipline we had left with him."⁸ Unable to find a capable replacement for O'Horgan, Butler assumed much of the director's job, but with O'Horgan gone, a power struggle ensued between Butler, on the one hand, and Ragni and Rado, on the other. At the same time, members of the cast began to drop out of the show; some, like Diane Keaton and Ronnie Dyson, to pursue more ambitious career aims, others, to simply leave and fall into oblivion. Some of the early recasting was fortuitous, but, as time went on, it became less so. By 1971, Davis's assessment of the cast was negative.

Obviously they were still casting from the original molds, but when it came to talent, all resemblances stopped. People who had been doing bit parts in the chorus, badly and who had left, were back performing lead roles.⁹

After hundreds of performances and countless changes, the seemingly endless abundance of talent and energy present at the beginning of Hair's Broadway run had been depleted.

As early as 1970, some critics observed that Hair was becoming a cliché-ridden show, losing its contemporary relevance with the passage of years.

Watching the vividly real, passionate young folks of "Hair" today, one is repeatedly shocked by the rusty creak of allusions to

⁸Ibid., p. 125.

⁹Ibid., p. 267.

Be-Ins, by the quaint strewing of daisies, by the sanguine vision of easy interracial harmony, and by innumerable other instant relics of an already doddering sensibility. The archaisms of "Hair" are less shocks than little twinges, but they add up. One of their serious effects is to focus attention on such details as plot, lyrics, and dialogue . . . and that is sometimes not good.¹⁰

Even at this juncture, the show was becoming trapped in time, with an idealistic approach to social change which was already proving unworkable. Like the 1974 revival of Hair in London and the 1977 restaging at the Biltmore, during the final years of its original Broadway run, a show which had been acclaimed for its freshness and contemporary relevance was becoming dated and passé.

Domestic Productions

The early success of Hair at the Biltmore encouraged Butler and O'Horgan to open road companies of the show in various cities around the United States. The task of supervising such new companies was O'Horgan's. He provided initial directorial input for the Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chicago productions of the piece. Periodically, O'Horgan and others from the Biltmore cast and staff participated in one or more American productions outside of New York, and when they returned to Broadway, they brought back some of

¹⁰Peter Schjeldahl, "Can 'Hair' Be Taught To Hate?" The New York Times, 27 September 1970, p. 11.

¹¹Fisher interview.

the innovations which had been devised in these venues. Consequently, there was a good deal of cross-fertilization among the various productions being performed across the country.

In Los Angeles, for instance, O'Horgan had access to a revolving stage. In itself, this gave a new look to the show.¹¹ O'Horgan's permissive directorial method allowed his Los Angeles company a great deal of latitude for improvisation. When O'Horgan returned to New York, he brought back some of the most effective improvisations created in Los Angeles, "and much of the L. A. improvisation was eventually incorporated into the Broadway performance."¹² Butler also went to Los Angeles where he viewed a performance in which live chickens were tossed out onto the stage. When he returned to the Biltmore, he tried the live chicken "bit" on Broadway, but there it proved more of a distraction than an innovation. While some of Hair's cross-fertilizations were effectively transposed then, others failed and were dropped.

O'Horgan also directed the show's production in San Francisco. Like New York, San Francisco, with its large hippie colony, was a natural locale for Hair. O'Horgan considers the San Francisco production his favorite.

San Francisco was an oasis of crazy cultural madness. The audience was so with it. The flower children came wearing flowers. One of

¹¹Fisher interview.

¹²Davis, p. 213.

the things we were doing then was at the beginning of the show we would do a little meditation, sitting on the stage. Well, the audience would just come up and join. The whole stage would be these big concentric circles of people meditating. One day we went out into the park and started one of our slow-motion exercises, and people began to join up with us. There was a rock band too, playing in the park. And just strangers, everyone, began to do slow motion, till the whole street was moving in slow motion with us.¹³

Hair was really an extension of the street activities of the hippies, and in a city like San Francisco, the barrier between "art" and "life" was often transcended.

Productions of the show were not confined only to locations which were meccas of the hippie counterculture. Washington, D. C., for instance, was an establishment bastion lampooned in the musical. When it was produced in Washington, many of the city's political notables attended performances, including Henry Kissinger, who reportedly enjoyed the musical.¹⁴ In Washington Hair was picketed by a number of highly diverse groups, ranging from the Smite Smut League to the Gay Liberation Front.¹⁵ Obviously, the show was capable of appealing to mentalities far removed from its expressed ideological position, and it also had the effect of provoking passionate responses from diverse quarters.

¹³Sandrow, p. D5.

¹⁴Dowling, p. 20.

¹⁵Ibid.

The musical was staged in some of the more remote areas of the country, regions with little direct connection to the hippie movement. In St. Paul, concerned citizens rallied against the show, and tried unsuccessfully, to ban its opening. On opening night, a frustrated clergyman released eighteen white mice into the lobby hoping to frighten the audience. His actions went unnoticed, and the show enjoyed a warm reception in Minnesota.¹⁶

Opposition to the show in St. Paul was minimal when compared to the legal furor which Hair underwent in Boston.

There had been complaints in cities across the United States, but the show ran into trouble in Boston, where the advance ticket sale was over \$600,000. The district attorney who saw the show at a preview tried to stop it from opening but finally agreed to withhold judgment until the seven judges of the Massachusetts Supreme Court had a chance to see Hair for themselves.¹⁷

The justices concurred with the district attorney. They ordered changes in the show before it could be performed in Boston. These changes included the wearing of some clothing during the nude scene, and the elimination of the flag desecration skit. The producer, Butler, refused and the case was brought before the United States Supreme Court.¹⁸ The Supreme Court overturned the decision of the Massachusetts Judiciary, the majority opinion stating that such restrictions

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Laufe, p. 362.

¹⁸ "Supreme Court Clears 'Hair' for Boston Run," The New York Times, 23 May 1970, p. C-27.

would have "a chilling effect on the right of free expression," as guaranteed under the First Amendment.¹⁹ Thus, the musical was staged in Boston without any of the demanded alterations. The case was viewed as a landmark decision for freedom of expression in the American theatre.

The issues which Hair raised came before the Supreme Court again, this time as the result of steps taken by officials in Chattanooga, Tennessee. In Chattanooga, the authorities did not even permit Hair preview performances, relying on the musical's reputation as the basis for banning its performance.²⁰ In 1975, the United States Supreme Court condemned the Chattanooga action.

The Court ruled that the Chattanooga theater board had exercised "unlawful prior restraint" when it denied "Hair" the use of its civic auditorium back in 1972--even though it may have been obscene by local standards. "A free society," wrote Justice Harry Blackmun for the 5-to-4 majority, "prefers to punish the few who abuse rights of speech after they break the law rather than to throttle them and all others beforehand."²¹

Thus, although the show was generally successful on the road in America, it did create controversies which could be resolved only by the highest judicial authority in the land.

¹⁹"Uncut 'Hair' Reopens in Boston, Saved by Supreme Court Ruling," Variety, 27 May 1970, p. 57.

²⁰William K. Warren, "Attorney for 'Hair' Irks Judge with Comments on Scopes Trial," Chattanooga Times, 5 April 1973, p. 1.

²¹"Supreme Court: Letting the Sun Shine In, " Newsweek, March 31, 1975, p. 37.

"Hair" Abroad

Hair was performed in nearly a score of foreign countries, and, as was the case in the United States, reactions to it varied. In England, the musical was able to circumvent the obscenity issue through a fortuitous circumstance. Immediately prior to its scheduled opening in the fall of 1968 at the Shaftesbury Theatre, the British Parliament eliminated the post of Lord Chamberlain, thereby dismantling the only legally constituted censorship office in the land.²² One day after this action, Hair opened in London, avoiding the type of legal entanglement which it would later confront in America. In any event, as was reported in a London daily, the concern over nudity was not called for since the majority of the company refused to disrobe voluntarily, believing that the show's nude sequence diluted its antiwar sentiments.²³

In London, Claude was played by Paul Nicholas, and Berger, by Oliver Tobias.²⁴ As was the case in all the foreign productions of Hair, the London show had "its own local references and minor departures from the New York

²²"Exit the Censor," The Christian Science Monitor, 5 October 1968, p. 18.

²³Kevin D'Arcy, "A Little Nudity Sells a Lot of Tickets," London Sunday Telegraph, 29 September 1968, p. 17.

²⁴Frank Marcus, "A Splash of Hair Tonic," London Sunday Telegraph, 29 September 1968, p. 14.

original."²⁵ Hair was warmly received by its London audiences. During one performance, "Princess Ann jumped into the communal on-stage dance that follows every performance,"²⁶ raising some royal eyebrows.

One curious postscript to the London Hair was the attempted revival of the show in 1974 at the Queens Theatre, only months after the completion of its long run at the Shaftesbury.²⁷ As was the case in the 1977 revival of the musical at the Biltmore, the 1974 British revival was not well received. Some critics thought that it had retained its original charm,²⁸ but, aside from MacDermot's score, the majority thought that Hair was suffering from "middle-aged spread." Frank Marcus, who enjoyed the London show in 1968, assessed the 1974 revival differently.

Apart from Galt MacDermot's excellent score, how little of the excitement has remained. The attempts at updating are ludicrous. Draft-dodging is no longer a controversial activity; idolatry extended to a husband and father of mature years called Mick Jagger seems pathetic; and pot-smoking has become a form of pollution condemned by a new generation of idealistic youth.²⁹

²⁵Clive Barnes, "New 'Hair'," The New York Times, 13 September 1969, p. 30.

²⁶Glover, p. E-4.

²⁷Frank Marcus, "Graying 'Hair,'" London Sunday Telegraph, 30 June 1974, n.p. (Clippings, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library.)

²⁸Derek Jewell, "Still a Winner," London Sunday Times, 30 June 1974, p. 37.

²⁹Marcus, "Graying 'Hair,'" n.p.

Hair, as an extension of the hippie movement of the 1960s, was now considered history.

In Paris, the show was produced and directed by Bertrand Castelli, a long time associate of Michael Butler. Castelli auditioned some 2,400 performers for the 28 roles available in the Paris production.³⁰ Castelli had no problem convincing the Paris company of the relevance of the nudity sequence in Hair: the cast disrobed on stage "almost religiously."³¹ The Paris production was charged with local references. For instance, "when a Hippie distributes LSD sugar cubes, he says, 'Here's one for Francois Mauriac, one for Tante Yvonne (the nickname for Charles de Gaulle's spouse), and one for Madame Pompidou'--and that brings down the house."³²

The Parisian "Hair" is perhaps the best, the hippiest, and the happiest of them all. The cast, led by Julien Clerc as Claude and Herve Matine as Berger, is splendidly uninhibited and enormously likeable. They belt out Galt MacDermot's music with a pounding authority and bring out all the poetry in the lyrics and "non-livret" of James Rado and Gerome Ragni, here adapted by Jacques Lanzmann.³³

Barnes's estimation of the Paris show was shared by the majority of the French critics who saw it.

Even in Paris, however, the musical was not without its opponents. In one amusing episode, a contingent

³⁰Newsweek, July 7, 1968, p. 94.

³¹Ibid. ³²Ibid.

³³Barnes, 13 September 1969, p. 30.

of the local Salvation Army came to view a performance of the work, led by Gilbert Abadie, the French commander of the Army.

Early on, during a pseudo-religious episode featuring a crucifix, the commissioner used a portable loudspeaker to call a halt to the show. His party climbed onstage to exhort the cast and audience.³⁴

Eventually the show resumed, despite these protestations, and happily enough, the Salvation Army and the show's cast left each other with more amity than enmity.

Whereas the London and Paris productions were the most noteworthy of the stagings abroad, they were preceded by openings in other European cities. One week before its London debut, the show opened in Stockholm. Given Sweden's reputation for sexual freedom, there was a surprising reluctance by the Stockholm company to appear unclothed on stage. Moreover, Julie Arenal found her Swedish dancers uncomfortable with the American style of dancing. Consequently, she was forced to work long hours to reshape the dance movements. In Bergen, Norway, the local citizenry formed a human barricade to prevent (unsuccessfully) Hair's showing, the townspeople viewing it as a "brutalizing spectacle."³⁵ On the other hand, in Copenhagen, the Danish company felt that the mild nudity contained in the musical's Broadway version did

³⁴John L. Hess, "Salvation Army Jousts with 'Hair' in Paris," The New York Times, 2 February 1970, n.p. (Clippings, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library.)

³⁵Glover, p. E4.

not have sufficient shock value. Hence, as a follower of the show abroad related:

The kids decided to do that particular scene clothed, and to take off their clothes during other, less predictable moments. Some even went nude during the opening sequence, when the actors come down the aisles of the theatre, mixing and mingling with the audience en route to the stage.³⁶

Thus, while some Scandinavians found Hair's sexual license too much to accept, others found it too mild, and the show was adapted to local mores.

In Munich, Germany, where Castelli again directed, authorities threatened to close the show if the nude sequence was allowed to remain. Castelli, however, proved more than equal to this challenge.

A spokesman for the local impressario replied that his relatives had been nude when marched into Auschwitz. At the premiere, the emsemble came out unadorned except with a torso covering banner that listed all of Germany's World War II abattoirs. There were no further executive murmurs.³⁷

Another ineffectual effort to close Hair was made by the Protestant ministry in Montreux, Switzerland, a conservative community which viewed the work as a scandal.³⁸

A most unusual and successful production of the show took place in Belgrade, Yugoslavia. As described in Newsweek, the Yugoslav version was a delight for both audience

³⁶Dowling, p. 32.

³⁷Glover, p. E4.

³⁸Gene Lees, "'Hair' in Europe," Hi Fidelity, p. 108.

and company alike.

"Kosa," the Communist world's first staging of "Hair," is the favorite of the musical's authors, and sometime actors, Gerome Ragni and James Rado, globe-trotting from one production to the next. They found the Belgrade show "so beautiful, so spontaneous that we had to go right on stage and share the enthusiasm." "Said Medusa-haired Ragni, "There's no middle-class prejudices here."³⁹

One patron of the Belgrade show who reportedly enjoyed himself was Josef Broz, also known as Marshal Tito.⁴⁰ In the Belgrade production local references were again introduced into the performance. There were barbs aimed not only at Mao Tse-Tung, but also at Yugoslavia's traditional enemy, Albania.⁴¹ On the other hand, the issue of draft-dodging in America was disregarded probably because most Yugoslav youth felt it is honorable to serve in the national armed forces, particularly one committed to maintain independence from the Soviet Union.

The show was favorably received in countries belonging to the British Commonwealth, most especially Australia and Canada. In the Toronto production, the Canadian cast was directed by Ragni and Rado, the only version of Hair directed by its authors.⁴² Julie Arenal accompanied Ragni

³⁹Newsweek, July 17, 1969, p. 94.

⁴⁰Glover, p. E4.

⁴¹Newsweek, July 17, 1969, p. 94.

⁴²Clive Barnes, "Untitled," The New York Times, 13 January 1970, p. C26.

and Rado to Toronto. She was quite impressed with the talent and vivacity of her dancers there. For the Toronto show Ragni and Rado teamed with MacDermot to compose another tune, "So Sing the Children."⁴³

In June 1969, Hair opened in Sydney, Australia.⁴⁴ The Sydney production was enthusiastically greeted by audiences and critics alike, and the reaction to the nude sequence was, in general, far more sympathetic than in some of the cities of the United States. Nudity was seen by the Australian audiences as a legitimate form of youthful expression, and the Australian directors did not have to urge their casts to disrobe.

The show did not enjoy a similar welcome in Acapulco, Mexico. There authorities closed the piece after a single performance.⁴⁵ In this country little concern was demonstrated for a "chilling effect" on freedom of expression. Members of the cast found themselves roughly handled.

At seven the following morning, the kids were hauled off to jail, where each was handed a piece of paper with this warning: Be out of the country within 24 hours or stay and face charges.⁴⁶

Unsure of their legal position, the members of the Mexican

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ "'Hair' Reaches Australia," The New York Times, 7 June 1969, p. C26.

⁴⁵ "Mexico Shuts 'Hair' and Expels Its Cast After One Showing," The New York Times, 6 January 1969, p. C43.

⁴⁶ Dowling, p. 32.

company, many of whom had been in the Los Angeles show, decided to quit Acapulco, a move which was seconded by the Mexican Actors Association.⁴⁷

Japan was an unusual setting for Hair. Under the supervision of Hiroshi Kawazoe, a Japanese entrepreneur, however, it did quite well in Tokyo.⁴⁸ The dim lighting of the nude sequence there obviated the problem of censorship. "The Japanese police code forbids total nudity on stage," wrote one observer, "but so far the police have adopted the attitude that so long as the nudity is not clearly visible, there was no basis for closing the show."⁴⁹

Hair underwent still other experiences abroad which have not been truly documented. In Rome, Hair was first shown in the summer of 1970, meeting with distinct indifference at this late date.⁵⁰ In Spain, Butler found a Madrid company performing an unauthorized pirated version of the show, and the bogus production was soon closed by the Franco government.⁵¹

⁴⁷"Mexican Actors Favor 'Hair' Cast Deportation," The New York Times, 8 January 1969, p. C35.

⁴⁸Mel Gussow, "Fair (Osaka) and 'Hair' (Tokyo) Keep Producer Busy," The New York Times, 9 October 1968, n.p. (Clippings, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library).

⁴⁹Takashi Oka, "Japan Hails the Dawning of the Age of 'Hair'," The New York Times, 10 December 1969, p. 64

⁵⁰Robert Ghisays, "Rome Test: Bracing for 'Hair'," The Newark Evening News, 20 August 1970, p. 46.

⁵¹"Assert Madrid 'Hair' Was Pirate Version," Variety, 19 August 1970, n.p. (Clippings, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library).

In general, then, Hair did quite well abroad. The universality of its message appealed to audiences around the world, wheareas the looseness of its format permitted the musical to be adapted to local conditions.

CHAPTER VII

REVIVAL AND ADAPTATION

Much of Hair's impact and appeal was the result of its reflection of an ongoing contemporary social phenomenon, the hippie counterculture of the late 1960s and 1970s. By the mid 1970s the hippies had faded from the scene, but two attempts were made to present the show in the late 1970s. In 1977, the principals of the original Broadway production tried to restage the musical at the Biltmore, and in 1979 a movie adaptation of Hair was released. This chapter examines these two efforts.

Revival

In October, 1977, the principals who had originally staged Hair at the Biltmore collaborated on the revival of the show at the same theatre. Butler (producer), O'Horgan (director), MacDermot (musical director), Arenal (choreographer), Wagner (scenic designer), Fisher (lighting designer), and Potts (costume designer) were all involved in the enterprise, as were Ragni and Rado, the two authors playing minor parts as the bogus policemen who "bust" the show during the nude sequence. While the production staff of the revival was basically the same as that of the original Broadway show, the

cast was entirely different. Randall Easterbrook played Claude, Michael Hoit had the role of Berger, Ellen Foley portrayed Sheila. The minor leads of Woof, Hud, Jeanie, and Crissy were performed, respectively, by Scott Thornton, Cleavant Derricks, Iris Rosenkrantz, and Kriston Vigard.¹ A complete listing of the cast and staff of the 1977 show appears in Appendix III of this study. It is important to note that of the twenty-six cast members of the revival, only four, David Patrick Kelly, Toni Moreno, Alaina Reed, and Jim Sbrano had previously appeared in any version of Hair.²

Why would the principals of Hair elect to revive the musical in 1977 after its success in the late 1960s and early 1970s? Asked about the decision, Gerome Ragni replied:

Why not now? Hair is about life. I believe in life, and love and emotion and passion. I believe in festivals and carnivals. We're ready for another creative explosion. Make the theater as exciting as the street!³

Queried on the same matter, Tom O'Horgan viewed the revival as an opportunity to evaluate the meaning of the 1960s.

This is a good time to find out what we were doing in the '60s. That was a very good period, very productive, very inventive. For me it's important to go back and find out where the creative energy was. We've been at a low point. People are frozen. But

¹John Willis, Theatre World: 1977-1978 Season (New York: Crown 1979), p. 42.

²William Harris, "Hair Transplant," Soho Weekly News, 8 September 1977, p. 26.

³Nahma Sandrow, "What Will 'Hair' Say to the 70s?" The New York Times, 2 October 1977, p. D26.

I think we're waking up. 1977 seems like a⁴ strange period; I think they're changing the reels.

In another interview, the director commented that the show's revival might help its original principals to renew their creative energies, speculating that, "Maybe we can revive ourselves."⁵

In its basic outlines, the 1977 show was virtually identical to the original Broadway production. Although some new songs were presented in the revival's previews,⁶ for the opening night performance (October 5, 1977), the sequence of songs was the same as it had been for the Broadway show. There was an attempt to make the musical more topically relevant. References were made to such contemporary figures as Anita Bryant, Reverend Moon, Idi Amin, Andrea McCardle and Crazy Eddie. Picketers carried signs with topical messages such as "No Nukes Is Good Nukes," "Con Ed Goofed," and "Save the Whales."⁷ An effort was made to present Sheila as a representative of the women's movement.⁸ Simultaneously, however, the 1977 production included the customary hippie paraphernalia, strobe lights, flowers, electronic rock and ragas, all of the basic accoutrements of the previous decade. The 1977 revival,

⁴Ibid.

⁵Harris, p. 23.

⁶Barbara Crossette, "'Hair'-- In Case You Missed It," The New York Times, 2 October 1977, p. 19.

⁷Sandrow, p. D26.

⁸Crossette, p. 19.

then, was a curious hybrid of the 1960s and 1970s.

The 1977 production at the Biltmore ran for a total of 43 performances and 79 previews, a far cry from the outstanding box office performance ten years before.⁹ The 1977 version met with "almost universal revilement,"¹⁰ and even Galt MacDermot was compelled to admit that "it just wasn't a good production."¹¹

Why did one of the biggest hits of the previous decade fare so poorly in 1977? The most frequently given answer to this question is simply that Hair in 1977 was in a state of chronological limbo, too "old" to be socially relevant, and too "new" to serve as nostalgia. One of the lines which recurs in the published edition of the show's "book" is: This is 1968, not 1967.¹² This statement reflects the fine distinctions in historical time embodied in the original work. However, as Edwin Wilson remarked:

Cultural historians have pointed out that rarely has there been a social transition as abrupt as the one between the late '60s and the early '70s. Changes which ordinarily take 10 to 20 years seem to have occurred in five or six. Both the threat and the promise of a few short years ago seem to have disappeared.¹³

⁹Willis, p. 42.

¹⁰"The Yellow Brick Road to Profit," Time, 23 January 1978, pp. 80-81.

¹¹MacDermot interview.

¹²Gerome Ragni and James Rado, "'Hair'," Great Rock Musicals, ed. Stanley Richards (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), p. 406.

¹³Edwin Wilson, "A Look at 'Hair' Six Years After," The Wall Street Journal, 20 September 1974, p. 7.

A primary reason for Hair's dismal performance in 1977, then, lies in the fact that it no longer reflected a cultural movement which could be found happening "in the streets."

Directly related to this lack of immediate social relevance was the tendency to include all of the materials which had been incorporated into the show over its four year run on Broadway and its stagings elsewhere. Richard Eder, a New York Times critic, complained that this bias toward inclusion resulted in overly long sequences.

By and large, the skits are poorer than the songs. A scene where six stuffy parents with false mustaches and false bosoms urge the benefits of jobs, television and plastic flowers upon their hippy son is painfully long and obvious. Tom O'Horgan who directed this production, as he did the original--the production staff as a whole is virtually unchanged--¹⁴ allows this and other numbers to drag on and on.

Much of the material contained in the original Broadway production of the musical came about through a process of accretion, but, after years of additions, it may have been difficult for the show's principals to pare away at the mountain of material which had been collected.

As already mentioned, the revival's cast was completely different from that of the original Broadway show. Consequently, another reason for Hair's failure in 1977 may be that the 1977 cast was not as talented or as committed to the material as the 1968 company. A reviewer provides some insight on this point.

¹⁴Richard Eder, "Stage" Revived 'Hair' Shows Its Gray," The New York Times, 6 October 1977, p. C-22.

O'Horgan explains how the original cast questioned every one of his decisions, how each issue raised within the material was heatedly debated. By contrast the current cast offered no resistance. Times have changed.¹⁵

O'Horgan's observation suggests that the 1977 cast was not as personally involved as the original company. The question of talent apart, it is evident that the 1977 cast relied on a professional distancing from the material, a "disciplined" and "objective" approach which runs counter to the uninhibited spontaneity of the musical.

Hair was not the only show to be revived on Broadway during the 1977-1978 season. Writing in 1979, a critic of the Broadway stage observed: "For the past three or four years, month has scarcely followed month without the unearthing of some hit play or musical of the past."¹⁶ Attempting to explain this wave of "revivalists," the same critic asserted that it was not "nostalgia," but "escapism" which these revivals provided for their audiences.¹⁷ If this is the case, Hair, with its strident approach to social issues, may have failed in revival because it did not provide escapism, but, rather, confrontation with social issues.

Finally, as previously noted, one of the central features of Hair is its rejection of the "rational" and "analytical" bias which pervades Western culture. However,

¹⁵Harris, p. 25.

¹⁶T. E. Kalem, "Theater," Time, December 24, 1979, p. 77.

¹⁷Ibid.

when a piece is brought back to the same venue years after the closing of its original production, there is a natural tendency to compare it with the earlier version. One of the reasons why audiences did not "groove" with the revived Hair may have been a predisposition to compare the 1977 production to that of 1968. Audiences may have been caught up in the process of sorting out how the revived version differed from the original piece. This analytical predisposition may have inhibited those viewing the 1977 show from "grooving" with its performance.

Adaptation

In 1978, work was begun on adapting Hair for the motion picture medium, and a completed film was released in March, 1979. The film was produced by Lester Persky and Michael Butler, directed by Milos Forman, scripted by Michael Weller, choreographed by Twyla Tharp, with Miroslav Ondricek serving as director of cinematography and Galt MacDermot as musical director. Claude, Berger, and Sheila were played, respectively, by John Savage, Treat Williams, and Beverly D'Angelo, and the minor leads of Hud, Woof, and Jeanie were performed by Dorsey Wright, Don Dacus, and Annie Golden, the part of Crissy having been dropped.¹⁸ A complete list of the cast and crew of the film is presented in Appendix IV.

¹⁸John Willis, Screen World: 1980 (New York: Crown, 1980), p. 25.

In the opinion of one reviewer, Milos Forman was "perhaps the perfect choice" for the director's slot.¹⁹ Forman had directed a series of anti-Establishment films in his native Czechoslovakia, and in the United States he had continued his examination of rebellion in Taking Off and One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest.²⁰ His past efforts had included collaboration with both Ondricek and Weller, while his dynamic cinematic style was compatible with Twyla Tharp's gymnastic approach to choreography. Forman's acting company included the rising film stars John Savage and Treat Williams, two actors who exemplify the cast in general in that they were highly talented but had not yet developed a filmic persona which might interfere with their roles in the movie.²¹

While Forman had been contemplating bringing Hair to the screen for over a decade, various obstacles had stood in his way. In an interview, Forman described his long-standing interest in the property:

I saw the very, very first public preview off-Broadway of Hair; the very first one, at the Public Theater, in the Fall of 1967. And I went backstage right that day and asked the authors to give me the music sheets and the book. I took it to Prague and I tried to interest some theater in Prague to put it on stage, but of course they couldn't do that. Then, as a matter of fact, before Taking Off, I wanted to do Hair as my first American Film. The story of Taking Off was my story for Hair, but

¹⁹Auster, "Hair," Cineaste, Spring 1979, p. 55.

²⁰Todd McCarthy, "Milos Forman Lets His Hair Down," Film Comment, March-April 1979, p. 17.

²¹Penelope Gilliat, "The Current Cinema: Fuz," New Yorker, 16 April 1979, p. 142.

because the film became such a hot property, I was very naïve to think they would just give me the songs.²²

Ragni and Rado, who held the screen rights to the piece, tried to launch a film version of Hair in 1970, and it was not until 1973 that Butler acquired exclusive film rights to the musical.²³ It required another five years for Butler to decide to attempt making a movie of the show with Butler selecting the principals of the production staff. It took nearly a year to complete the production of the film. As Forman himself admits, the ratio of film footage shot to that actually used was thirty-seven to one,²⁴ a figure which reveals the painstaking labor which was expended on the piece.

Transposing Hair into film provided Forman with two cinematic techniques not available to O'Horgan. First, Forman made extensive use of visual effects unique to film. "A cascade of visual ingenuities" and special effects were employed in the movie,²⁵ and the technical expertise of Ondricek resulted in a visually beautiful film.²⁶ Forman used special effects and optical distortions throughout the film, these techniques being particularly appropriate to a work with a

²²McCarthy, p. 18.

²³"'Hair'," The Second Dawning," American Film, March 1979, p. 30.

²⁴McCarthy, p. 19.

²⁵Stanley Kauffmann, "Ex-Champions," The New Republic, 14 April 1979, p. 40.

²⁶Auster, p. 55.

number of hallucinatory sequences. Second, unlike O'Horgan, Forman had the opportunity to edit his presentation before its release. This enabled him, for example, to employ montage sequences which depend on careful editing of footage.²⁷ One critic complained that Forman had employed too heavy a hand in editing the dance sequences.

Forman's editing of the dance sequences--lots of medium shots very rapidly spliced together--obstructs our view of the dancing itself. It gives the choreography the maddening quality of a dance seen under one of those bright, blipping strobe lights at a disco.²⁸

Whether this strobe-light effect was intended by Forman is a moot point but there is no doubt that he used editing techniques which were simply not available to O'Horgan.

In its original form, Hair had a self-reflective theatricality. The "book" of Hair contains several references which depend on conscious undermining of the theatrical illusion. For example, when Berger asks Sheila why she's always making posters, she responds that the posters are "for the end of the show."²⁹ At another juncture, Woof complains "If I hear Vietnam one more time, I'm leaving this theater."³⁰ Obviously, such references to the work as a stage piece had to be excised from the film. But the changes which Forman made in Hair were not simply the deletion of a few lines of

²⁷David Denby, "'Hair' Transplanted," New York, 19 March 1979, p. 63.

²⁸Colin L. Westbrook, "Hair Today," Commonwealth, 25 May 1979, p. 306.

²⁹Ragni and Rado, p. 425. ³⁰Ibid., p. 428.

dialogue. Forman explained the extent of his revisions:

Hair was such a brilliant piece of theatrical genius that you have only two ways how to make a film out of it, either photograph the stage play faithfully or let me make, absolutely free, my own version. ¹³ Anything in between and you end up like a bastard.

Although he admits that he would have taken the first course "if they insisted,"³² he chose the second option, making extensive changes from the original "book."

One area in which Forman attempted to remain faithful to the original Broadway version of the show was its musical numbers. One or two songs were added as source music by MacDermot, Ragni, and Rado, but they were employed as source music, "not as upfront musical numbers."³³ MacDermot did all of the orchestrations for the film, and about one-half of the finished production was devoted to musical numbers. While Forman tried to include all of the original songs from the Broadway show, ultimately he deleted "Frank Mills" and "What a Piece of Work Is Man," and reduced "Three-Five-Zero-Zero" to a background piece accompanying a slapstick review of the troops at an army boot camp.³⁴

In terms of the work's structure, however, Forman made considerable changes, giving the work a comparatively coherent plot. The film opens with Claude (John Savage) leaving his home in the Mid-West to attend an induction physical in New York. In Forman's version Claude is not a "weekend hippie,"

³¹McCarthy, p. 18. ³²Ibid. ³³Ibid., p. 19.

³⁴Westbrook, p. 306.

but a genuinely typical and naive American youth. Claude wanders into a Central Park Be-In, a seemingly endless happening to which the camera returns again and again, where he meets Berger and the other members of the tribe. Berger initiates Claude into the joys of the counterculture, a life style of which Claude is initially innocent. In Forman's version, Sheila has been transformed from a student protestor into a society debutante. It is not Berger's cajolings, but true emotional attachment, which causes Sheila to become romantically interested in Claude. Sheila's status as a society deb permits Forman to include a lengthy sequence in which Berger and the tribe invade a posh birthday party given for her, with Berger dancing on tables and performing other antics to the chagrin of the guests. Berger devises a means of helping Claude escape the draft. He will temporarily take Claude's place at the army barracks. The ruse backfires, however, and Berger, not Claude, is sent to Vietnam. Forman has loaded his version of Hair with complex contrasts in character and ironic twists in narrative development which have no counterparts in the stage piece. In terms of structure, then, Forman's film had a much more complicated and coherent form than that of the Broadway musical.

The setting of the original Hair was highly localized, with numerous references to the East Village as the scene of the musical's action. In the Forman work, however, we move from Oklahoma to New York and back to Nevada. It appears that Forman tried to make Hair into a piece with geographical scope.

During the Depression, when the movie musical was being invented, what kept America going was the feeling that we were all in the same boat. Forman's Hair has a similar vision of America, except that what we're all in now is a Lincoln Continental. That's what all the principals in Hair finally get into and drive and sing their way cross-country. It's a real ethnic ark. In the original Hair the thing that all the street people had in common was their rootlessness. No one had a background or a home. Everybody was free-floating--a condition epitomized by the song "Frank Mills" in which a girl had tragically lost her boyfriend's address. But "Frank Mills" is one of the songs dropped from the movie version, where family backgrounds and off-stage homes are created for major characters. It's as if Forman were trying to make more explicit the connection of these hippies with America at large--as if he were afraid the rest of us Americans might miss the point.

The Lincoln contains every race, creed and social persuasion--a very straight black lady and her little boy (archetypes of the new black bourgeoisie in the post-Hair era) along with a newly liberated debutante from Westchester and a drop-out from a lower-middle-class home in Queens. The only important character not in the car is Claude Bukowsky (John Savage), whom the movie turns into a cowboy from Oklahoma. The car is, however, on its way to rescue Bukowsky from the military. We visit each of these characters from the original Hair in the different economic and regional backgrounds the movie has created for him. This is the movie's way of making them all more representative, like Congress.³⁵

It is possible to interpret this transnational feature of the Forman film primarily as an effort not to provide backgrounds for the major characters, but to divest them of their highly localized origins in the East Village. The song "Frank Mills" may have been dropped from the movie because it contains specific allusions to the streets of the East Village "outside the Waverly." This, of course, would increase the degree of

³⁵Westerbrook, pp. 305-306.

identification which movie audiences outside of New York City could extend to the characters in the movie. Whether the purpose was to provide varied backgrounds or remove the localization of background, the effect is the same, with Forman transforming the piece into an America-wide spectacle and including various shadings of socioeconomic background in contrast to the hippie/straight dichotomy of the original stage piece.

The next chapter includes a survey of the critical reception which the film received, but it is appropriate to mention here one feature of the movie which resulted in a critical debate about Forman's interpretation. Some reviewers found Forman's treatment of the hippie counterculture to be highly objective in its balancing of "hip" and "straight" viewpoints. Contrasting the film to its Broadway precursor, a critic asserts:

Moreover, the screen transplant of Hair adds to his balance sheet by sobering up its utopianism with a realistic appraisal of the gains and losses of rebellion. This alone should retrieve a splendid musical from premature predictions of irrelevance.³⁶

The characterizations in the Broadway Hair were obviously biased toward the hippies, whose vitality and innocence were juxtaposed against the materialism and absurdity of the parent culture. In the movie version, the hippies are "both innocent and selfish, sweet and surly, peace-loving and disruptive."³⁷

³⁶Auster, p. 56. ³⁷Denby, p. 62.

As an example of this "objectivity" in the movie rendition of its hippie characters, one reviewer notes: "When Berger leads his friends to a stately suburban home, where he dances along a polished dinner table and outrages the stuffy guests, it now seems to shame him not them."³⁸ Moreover, where the "straights" of the Broadway Hair appeared simply ridiculous, Forman has treated them more sympathetically, especially in the case of Claude.

By contrast to the longhairs, the straights come off rather well in Forman and Weller's adaption. John Savage milks the part of Claude, the innocent hick, for all it's worth. Some of his "I-can't-believe-what-I'm-seeing-but-not-about-to-admit-it" doubletakes are quite amusing, particularly when directed at the frenetically hustling Berger.³⁹

In the opinion of these viewers, Forman introduced a balancing of viewpoints in this film, making the hippies appear less attractive than was the case in the Broadway show, and the straights seem more appealing and understandable than in the stage piece.

However, other critics did not agree that Forman had truly given his audience a balanced presentation of the hippie/straight conflict. One reviewer commented on Forman.

He has seen and elaborated only those aspects of the Broadway original which made it widely popular. In the true tradition of musicals, he has accented the positive, eliminated the negative and not messed with Mr. In-Between.⁴⁰

³⁸Kauffmann, p. 41.

³⁹Robert Asahina, "Cinematic Delusions," New Leader, 9 April 1979, p. 21.

⁴⁰Westbrook, p. 305.

The charge that Forman glossed over the uglier side of the 1960s is made by another film analyst.

In the movie recollection, however, the age of the "flower children" has become one grand, happy love-in, bubbling with youth, vitality and freedom. In the meantime, the establishment was busy napalming civilians in the process of losing a war that was a mistake from the outset. How clear is the logic of memory! The ruined lives of drug addicts and professional (now middle-aged) dropouts, the cultivated rootlessness, alienation and the death of civility can be forgotten as easily as the disillusion of embittered veterans.⁴¹

From the perspective of these critics, Forman avoided the crucial issues of the 1960s, his objectivity being simply a manifestation of a superficial approach to a complex and tortured era.

⁴¹Richard A. Blake, "Selective Memory," America, 7 April 1979, p. 286.

CHAPTER VIII

HAIR'S RECEPTION

As previously suggested, critical reaction to the various versions of Hair from reviewers, audiences and others are varied. In this chapter an attempt is made to systematically sort out these responses and to provide representative examples of them.

Public Theater Reception

Although it was the first show produced at the Public Theater, the downtown version of Hair did not command the mass media attention elicited by the Broadway show. Nevertheless, a number of prominent New York theatre critics reviewed the Papp production. Edith Oliver provides a specimen of early critical reaction to the Public Theater show.

I have mixed feelings about Hair, but only unmixed admiration for Galt MacDermot's score, for Ming Cho Lee's setting, and, above all, for the engaging young members of the cast, under Gerald Freedman's direction.¹

Oliver cited "fine performances" by virtually all of the show's major and minor leads. She does not explain her

¹Edith Oliver, "Hair," The New Yorker, 11 November 1967, p. 127.

negative feelings, but does observe that it "could not have existed ten years ago, and it is conceivable that it could mystify audiences ten years from now."² Her review is a typically cautious reaction to the work for, like others, she found merit in the downtown show, but also refrained from providing her unqualified endorsement. Jerry Tallmer expressed similar reservations. He called the piece "potentially terrific," implying that it somehow failed to meet its full "potential."³

Among the positive and mixed responses to the Papp production, there seems to have been two points of critical consensus. First, there is praise for the vitality of the production and of its company. Howard Taubman asserted that "whatever reservations one may have about 'Hair,' one is constantly disarmed by the youngsters' engaging high spirits."⁴ Jack Kroll made a similar observation.

Under Gerald Freedman's brilliant direction the show has a strong happy heartbeat that can be felt in every seat in the house. Watching one of its people is like watching a peppy proton in an automic reaction--speaking lines, breaking into song, pivoting into dance, shooting into the audience to become

²Ibid.

³Jerry Tallmer, "Across the Footlights: They Say No," The New York Post, 30 October 1967, n.p. (Clippings, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library.)

⁴Howard Taubman, "Untitled," The New York Times, 13 November 1967, n.p. (Clippings, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library.)

a flash point in a constant crackle of music and movement.⁵

In analogous fashion, Richard Cook found the pervasive animation of the musical engaging and "likeable."⁶

Hair's contemporary relevance was the second major basis for positive critical reaction. Along with Oliver and others, Richard Hummler alluded to this dimension of the show. He maintained that it was "as contemporary as the East Village craze,"⁷ an honest reflection of the hippie counterculture. In particular, Galt MacDermot's score was praised not only for its liveliness but also for its social relevance.

There were exceptions. James Davis termed the downtown show "clichéd," and denied any trace of vitality or relevance to it.⁸ To Davis, Hair was simply a reworking of the old "generation gap" theme, a topic more adequately expressed in the past. Davis, however, was in the minority, and his response may have reflected the editorial policy of the Daily News. In general then, critical reaction to the Papp production was positive, but without an unqualified

⁵Jack Kroll, "Making of a Theatre," Newsweek, 13 November 1967, p. 124.

⁶Richard P. Cooke, "The Theater: Protestors, but Likeable," The Wall Street Journal, 31 October 1967, n.p. (Clippings, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library.)

⁷Richard Hummler, "Humm," Variety, 30 October 1967, n.p. (Clippings, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library.)

⁸James Davis, "Hippie 'Hair': Cliché Show," The New York Daily News, 30 October 1967, n.p. (Clippings, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library.)

endorsement.

The Broadway Reception

Hair's transfer to the Cheetah was not significant enough to evoke a general response. The Broadway show, by contrast, was widely covered. Much of the musical's commercial success on Broadway was due to promotional activities and exposure through the media, especially the television news. Shortly after its Broadway opening, Brendan Gill commented: "'Hair' is, among other things, a tour de force of adroit press-agentry."⁹ Butler and Hair's promotional staff were well aware of the magnetic attraction which the controversial elements of the musical had for audiences. Goldman believed that television was instrumental in broadening the musical's popular appeal.

It was a triumph for the power of the television critics, all of whom loved it. As a matter of fact, the television notices were so good that in an early ad Hair did not even bother to use the Channel 2 review that only said it was the "best musical of the year." Eventually, Hair got around to honoring the Channel 2 quote, but they had other wares to sell first. The two main quotes they used in their early ad campaign were ones that said that Hair "makes Marat/Sade look like Peter Pan" and another that called it "the frankest show in town."¹⁰

The support of the television critics counterbalanced a noticeable antagonism to the show by the New York theatre

⁹Brendan Gill, "The Theatre," The New Yorker, 11 May 1968, p. 84.

¹⁰Goldman, pp. 384-385.

establishment. When Butler first planned to bring Hair to Broadway, he was assured by officials of the New York Theater League that if the show opened before a certain date, which it did, the musical would be considered for the Tony awards. The League reneged on this promise proclaiming, ex post facto, that works which did not originate on Broadway would be ineligible for consideration.¹¹ It appears that this "rule" was fabricated to bar the "naughty" musical from the possibility of endorsement by the New York theatre establishment.

At the Biltmore, Hair was reviewed by all of the usual New York theatre critics. Again, the reception was a mixed one, but this time with more sharply stated reactions than had been the case for the Papp production. Some critics dropped their earlier reservations about the Public Theater production, and now evaluated the piece as the best musical of the Broadway season.

Three members of the Critic's Circle--Clive Barnes, Henry Hewes and Emory Lewis--voted Hair as the best musical of the year. Most of the critics were in agreement on one point --the excellence of the score. In Variety's poll of eighteen New York drama critics, Hair won two awards: Gerome Ragni and James Rado were elected as best lyricists of the season with seven votes; Galt MacDermot received the Drama Desk-Vernon Rice Award for his score.¹²

¹¹"Producer Sues NY Theatre League on 'Hair' Exclusion as Tony Entry," Variety, 20 March 1968, n.p. (Clippings, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library.)

¹²Laufe, pp. 358-359.

In the favorable reviews of the Broadway production, critics repeatedly referred to the freshness as an uninhibited performance of the company. Walter Kerr sought to allay fears of potential patrons.

Yes, the din is dynamic, the stomp is perpetual, the put-on is unflagging, the nudes are there. But there is no pressure to make you buy the bag, no fear in the performers. They aren't wooing you anxiously. Neither are they walloping you, desperately. They are simply beside you like bears coming into your cabin in Yellowstone Park, soliciting no love, causing no trouble, doing what they do. Occupying a lot of space but effortlessly belonging. They float free--free of our pleasure (take pleasure if you wish), free of design (or any designs on you), free of all urgency except the inspiration of the beat.¹³

The "trusting naiveté," the "laid-back" attitude of the performers, was stressed by several critics who viewed the Broadway show.¹⁴

Others saw Hair as having momentous and lasting importance. Ross Wetzsteon contended that Hair was a significant departure from conventional theatre. He wrote:

More broadly . . . this theatre rejects the conventional Western dualism of body and soul, seeking out ways in which the healthy bodily "organization and functioning," the subconscious . . . expresses itself in a unity of impulse and language, in both gesture and thought.¹⁵

¹³Walter Kerr, "'Hair': Not in Fear, But in Delight," The New York Times, 19 May 1968, p. D-3.

¹⁴Richard Watts, "The Innocent Revolt of Youth," The New York Post, 1 June 1968, p. 2.

¹⁵Ross Wetzsteon, "Theatre," The Village Voice, 6 March 1969, p. 39.

Opera News critic John Rockwell speculated that Hair was the "tip of the iceberg," predicting that a wave of rock musicals would follow in its wake.¹⁶

Unfavorable reviews of the Broadway show were also expressed, particularly from the critics of the politically conservative press. Daily News critic John Chapman was repelled by the uptown show.

The most dismaying low of 1967-1968 is the Broadway version of an off-Broadway rock musical, "Hair," which has found a certain type of audience and may run for a little while. It is vulgar, perverted, tasteless, cheap, cynical, offensive and generally lousy, and anybody connected with it should be washed with strong soap and hung up to dry in the sun.¹⁷

Jack O'Brian echoed these sentiments in a notice appearing in the Daily Column. O'Brian forcefully dismissed the Broadway Hair as "a tangled mad-mod musical whose ultimate obscenities are not shocking though execrably tasteless, whose cast looks permanently bathless, whose points are not irreverent but sacrilegious; its hymns of 'love' are evilly hateful."¹⁸

There was also disparagement of the uptown production based on technical criticisms. The show was said to lack plot, characterization and talent. Successful musical comedy composers who attended Hair at the Biltmore to

¹⁶Rockwell, p. 10.

¹⁷Goldman, p. 386.

¹⁸Ibid.

observe the handiwork of a new generation were not particularly pleased.

Reportedly Richard Rodgers considered it "one-third music." He could "hear only the beat." Burt Bacharach thought it didn't even belong on the same record player as Richard Rodgers's music. Leonard Bernstein commented, "the songs are just laundry lists" and walked out.¹⁹

Collectively, the established musical theatre perceived Hair at the Biltmore as artless, dismissing the show on this basis.

Several reviewers were critical of the changes which had been brought about in the show between its performance at the Public Theater and the Broadway production. A Boston critic, Timothy Crouse, viewed the off-Broadway version as a "cozy show," which, "in its heart was as romantic as 'The Fantasticks.'"²⁰ He cautioned his readers, however, that "pandering turned 'Hair' from a naive, sometimes banal, always sincere play into a calculated shuck."²¹ In his view, Butler and O'Horgan had enlisted "mercenaries" for the revised version and concentrated on sensationalism at the expense of meaning. Similarly, John Simon bemoaned:

As performed last fall at the off-Broadway Public Theater, Hair was an unpretentious, charming, swinging little musical. Not without flaws, it was youthful, zestful,

¹⁹Davis, pp. 146-147.

²⁰Timothy Crouse, "'Hair'--Ugly Personality," Boston Sunday Herald, 15 March 1970, p.- 16.

²¹Ibid.

tuneful and brimful of life. In its new Broadway version, it is merely fulsome. What happened? It would seem that the new producer was hellbent on giving uptowners a sensational revelation of how it really is; as part of that endeavor he hired Tom O'Horgan . . . as director. Now, O'Horgan is a sort of off-off-Broadway Peter Brook: clever, chic, and, at bottom, quite commercial. Given his first go at Broadway, he was, like the producer, out to epater les bougeois for all he was worth (which, in my book, is not very much); but at the same time, care had to be exercised not to titillate the middle class, not to offend it. So with shock and inoffensiveness as its contradictory aims, Hair was off on an internal collision course.

Typically, nudity, perversion, four-letter words were built up, whereas the story with its anti-war but also anti-bourgeois bias was either soft-pedaled or transmogrified into stingless farce, when not actually thrown out altogether.²²

Such views were voiced by others who would have preferred a Broadway Hair without extensive rewriting and production changes.

These critics were not alone in their condemnation of the obscenity and iconoclasm of Hair. Many patrons left the theatre because of the nudity sequence, while others expressed outrage in letters to magazines and newspapers. In addition, the desecration of the American flag on stage caused as much furor as did the show's nudity and obscenities.²³ Astronauts James Lovell and John Swigert walked

²²Simon, p. 141.

²³"Desecration of the Flag Irks Hub More Than Nudity in 'Hair'," Variety, 25 February 1970, n.p. (Clippings, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library).

out of the Biltmore during the "Don't Put It Down" sequence's defilement of the flag.²⁴

Ironically, there was even a protest about Hair from the political left. The show was viewed by many radicals as a commercialization, a cooption, a dilution of an important social phenomenon. Rockwell reported: "Hair has been attacked itself as a calculated dilution of Hipdom for the straight."²⁵ To some hippies, Hair was an example of "mod-com," a term defined by Elson as:

The commercial exploitation of modernity without regard to dramatic art. Modcom peddles the youth cult as a product. It is replete with cynical counterfeits of innocence, freedom and dissent.²⁶

Michael Smith, a Village Voice critic, had identified the commercialized "modcom" element in the Public Theater version of the musical. It was the disingenuous parody of the hippie counterculture that caused him to "loathe" and "detest" the musical.²⁷ A review of the Broadway production printed in the East Village Other was as vitriolic as any seen in the conservative press.

"Hair" makes me sick . . . up there on a stage for 2-1/2 hours is an ersatz tribe

²⁴Abel Green, "L'Affair 'Hair' and the Astronauts Who Walked out," Variety, 18 June 1979, p. 65.

²⁵Rockwell, p. 12

²⁶Elson, p. 204.

²⁷Michael Smith, "'Hair,'" The Village Voice, 2 November 1967, n.p. (Clippings, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library.)

of loving, rocking, musical, hairy, quasi-hip people If you have never seen a nude boy before--from the front!--and you don't mind bringing a flashlight . . . then go . . . "Hair" is mildly funny, like remembering when you thought people did it using wires; both experiences are invalid, but you can still hallucinate on them, right?²⁸

The indignation of "authentic" hippies toward Hair continued throughout the show's run on Broadway. When Hair celebrated its second anniversary in Central Park, the New York Provos were on hand, distributing leaflets which characterized the show "as a cultural rip-off and inviting followers to the cast's own private party at the Four Seasons afterwards."²⁹

The controversy over whether Hair was a sincere attempt to reflect the hippie counterculture or merely a blatant commercialization became the focus of a debate about musical genres. Was the music "pop" or "rock"? One writer has delineated the distinction between "pop" and "rock" as follows:

- (a) Rock music is not commercial, whilst pop music is.
- (b) The rock performer is a sincere, creative artist who has control over his product.
- (c) The separation of composer, performer and producer in "pop" music denies the possibility of creativity to the "pop" performer.
- (d) "Pop" music is homogeneous, whilst rock is subdivided into many different types

²⁸Goldman, p. 386.

²⁹Alfred G. Aronowitz, "'Hair's Happy Birthday,'" The New York Post, 27 April 1970, p. 2.

which tend to appeal to different sections of the audience for rock music.

- (e) Rock music is neglected in the mass media; the latter concentrates on standardized ("singles") "pop" music.
- (f) Rock music is complex and musically developed (with respect to Afro-American musical criteria), whereas "pop" music is standardized and musically clichéd.³⁰

Hair's score and lyrics share some of the features of "pop" music listed above, but the primary reason why some rejected its music as "authentic" rock was simply because it was commercially successful.

There were those, however, who did not object to the convergence of "rock" and "pop" in Hair. According to John Rockwell, "What is fascinating about Hair's appeal is its very characteristic of compromise, its tenuous position between the hip and the commercial, between the popular and the sophisticated, between artifice and nature."³¹ For some critics, the show's mixtures of "pop" with "rock" and "hip" with "commercial" were dilutions of meaning, but, for others, these same syntheses were interpreted as laudable attempts to "bridge the gap" between the hippies and mainstream society.

³⁰Graham Vulliamy, "Music and the Mass Culture Debate," Whose Music?: A Sociology of Musical Languages, ed. Howard S. Becker (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Press, 1977), p. 191.

³¹Rockwell, p. 13.

Reception Abroad

As already mentioned, the reaction to Hair abroad was as varied as the reception in the United States. Indeed, on Broadway, across America and in foreign lands the show was met by a wide set of critical responses. The musical received critical acclaim in France and England, as well as in Japan, Holland, and Australia. In each of these countries, however, there were dissenting voices objecting to it either on aesthetic grounds or because of its controversial issues. Thus, critical reactions abroad mirrored domestic response. After a period of time, Hair even met with indifference in foreign lands. In Rome, for example, where Hair appeared in the fall of 1970, it was greeted with "benign yawns."³²

Revival and Adaptation

Hair's 1977 revival at the Biltmore was not covered extensively by the New York corps of theatre critics, and the reasons for the show's failure in 1977 have been suggested in Chapter VII of this dissertation. Critical reaction to Forman's filmic version of Hair, however, varied as greatly as that extended to the original Broadway production.

There were several film critics who lavished praise

³²"Untitled," The New York Times, 5 September 1970, p. 10.

upon Forman's adaptation. One critic wrote:

This has not been a decade for film musicals. For all the emphasis on rock, musical excursions in movies or on TV have not been in. But with Hair, director Milos Forman has created a musical fantasy cum message that is both exuberant and unique. Known for his satirical comedies and acclaimed for his dramatic One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, he now proves an innovative interpreter of film musical fare as well.³³

This positive evaluation of the film was echoed by other movie reviewers. Indeed, according to one viewer, the performance of all of the principal members of the crew was, without exception, outstanding.

Surprisingly and happily, however, the film version works. Nostalgic to be sure, but mercifully unsoppy, it comes up bright and handsome, thanks to the expert lightness of Milos Forman's direction, the casual illusion of Twyla Tharp's choreography which makes dance flow more naturally out of more ordinary forms of movement, a reworking of the material by Michael Weller in a screenplay that has more truck with plot than the stage show did, and some marvellously heady cinematography by Miroslav Ondricek, using lots of fresh air locations which in themselves establish a different and lively look.³⁴

Similarly, critical plaudits were given to all of the movie's cast, most especially, John Savage as Claude, and Treat Williams as Berger. According to New York Times critic Vincent Canby, the Forman film was superior to the original Broadway version of Hair, Canby contending that

³³ Rob Edelman and Eric Bradford, "'Hair': Two Views Films in Review, May 1979, p. 314.

³⁴ Gordon Gow, "Hair," Films and Filming, August 1979, p. 36.

the film version seemed "much funnier than I remember the show's having been."³⁵

Not all of the critics who reviewed the Forman film concurred in this estimation. For example, one reviewer asserted:

Hair, the film version of the Ragni/Rado/MacDermot hit musical of the late '60s, should have been an affectionate, insightful ode to the era of flower-power and psychedelia. Instead, it is a disappointing, one-dimensional Grease, an energized though candy-coated vision of the counterculture.³⁶

In the opinion of some, while it was difficult to criticize the technical execution of the film, its overall conception did not accurately reflect the turbulent era of the 1960s. New York's film critic, David Denby, exemplified this position by maintaining that Forman "hasn't turned the sixties into neutral history . . . but my feeling is that he has achieved tension without release, energy without exhilaration, power without ecstasy."³⁷ Some critics appeared confused about Forman's position vis-à-vis his material. One reviewer stated that he could not discern whether the director intended the film as a reflection of the hippie counterculture or as parody of it.

As for Forman, it is hard to tell exactly what he is up to Perhaps it was his

³⁵Vincent Canby, "Film: 1969 Relived in 'Hair'," The New York Times, 14 March 1979, p. C-15.

³⁶Edelman and Bradford, p. 313.

³⁷David Denby, "'Hair' Transplanted," New York, 19 March 1979, p. 63.

foreigner's eye that permitted him to create his unflattering portrait of the counterculture. Yet the music and the choreography embody everything that Forman seems to be satirizing. Consequently, much as I would like to believe that he intended to debunk the myth of the 60s, I'm forced to the conclusion that he simply did not know what kind of movie he was making, or what its effect on the audience would be. Or maybe the whole enterprise is completely commercial and cynical: Perhaps Hair is supposed to appeal to both those who see the '60s as a paradise lost and those who regard the decade as a bad dream.³⁸

As previously noted, while some critics interpreted Forman's film as being too harsh upon the hippies, others read it as being too idealizing. The critical reception to the movie version of Hair, then, was mixed, with many critics apparently confused about its ultimate intent.

An Audience Profile

In its time, Hair was one of the biggest successes in box office history. In late 1969, one analyst asserted that, "Hair has been the most successful musical drama of the decade, if not of the entire postwar era."³⁹ According to calculations by Forbes magazine, "Hair played to approximately 4 million people in the first two years and grossed over \$22,300,000."⁴⁰ The show ran at the Biltmore for almost 1,750 performances, its backers receiving a 4,000

³⁸Robert Asahina, "Cinematic Delusions," New Leader, 9 April 1979, p. 21.

³⁹Rockwell, p. 9.

⁴⁰Laufe, p. 362.

percent return on investment.⁴¹

Like its critical reception, audiences for Hair varied. At the Public Theater, the audiences tended to be conventional middle-class theatregoers. Reviewing the downtown show, Clive Barnes observed: "It did seem strange that the audience last night . . . was predominantly middle-aged."⁴² Barnes continued: "This is a show that might have brought some young people to the theatre--especially with the seats priced at a \$2.50 top."⁴³ At the Cheetah, the audience was younger, but whether they were attracted to the discotheque because of Hair, or were the regular Cheetah patrons, cannot be truly determined.

At the Biltmore, there appeared to be a departure from the general demographics of Broadway theatregoers. A survey of audiences for the Broadway show led one researcher to state:

On some counts, however, the audience at Hair is different from most. Forty-six percent of our sample was under 30, and only 13 percent were 50 or over. Seven percent of our sample was black, all under 30.⁴⁴

In another sampling 50 percent of the audience was determined to be between the ages of 18 and 25 as compared to only 3 percent of the audience attending other Broadway

⁴¹"Untitled," Variety, 5 July 1972.

⁴²Barnes (30 October 1967), p. 55.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴George Nash, "What People Think of 'Hair'," New York, 6 September 1968, p. 60.

shows.⁴⁵ Tickets, it should be noted, were priced as high as those of other shows running on Broadway concurrently with Hair.

There seemed to have been differences of opinion within audiences resulting from variations in age.

Audience reaction to Hair differed widely. Older theatregoers who disapproved of it expressed their condemnation by walking out during the performance; those who liked it voiced their approval by claiming that Hair was a significant expression of the youthful rebellion. Younger theatregoers who thought Hair was symbolic and sophisticated because the cast engaged in simulated sex antics on stage and spoke the language of the gutter, were bewildered to learn that older patrons often referred to the actors as young children pretending to be naughty.⁴⁶

Regardless of this variation between audience age groupings, the show was successful in attracting many young theatre-goers to Broadway for the first time.

Finally, with a cast which was one-third black, the show brought many black patrons to the theatre. "The emergence of a black audience on Broadway," wrote a critic in the Soho Weekly News, "can partially be attributed to Hair's colorblindness."⁴⁷ In this regard, George Tipton, a black member of the Broadway cast, commented:

I understand that the message is not a black message. It relates more to white suburbia

⁴⁵"Shaggy Show Story," The Wall Street Journal, 11 June 1969, n.p. (Clippings, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library.)

⁴⁶Laufe, p. 359.

⁴⁷Harris, p. 23.

and their problems. I don't think it was written to be a black message show, although the black kids carry the show. I think the few blacks that see it are proud we are on Broadway.⁴⁸

If Hair did not speak directly to black audiences, it did use black talent; it did address civil rights issues; and it did bring increasing numbers of blacks to the Broadway theatre. While the show did not create a revolution in the form of the Broadway musical, it did have an impact upon the characteristics of Broadway theatre audiences, attracting younger people and blacks who had not previously seen a Broadway show.

⁴⁸Helen H. King, "'Hair': Controversial Musical Is Biggest Outlet for Black Actors in U.S. Stage History," Ebony (May 1970), pp. 120-121.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

Hair attempted to reflect the beliefs and practices of the hippie counterculture of the late 1960s. Joseph Papp's selection of the musical as the first show to be presented at the Public Theater was based primarily on his perception of its social relevance. As an exposure of a counterculture, the Ragni and Rado piece was both a depiction of the hippie lifestyle and a critique of the parent culture against which the hippies defined themselves. The show included protests against the attitudes of the parent culture on such issues as war and racial inequality along with a portrayal of the alternative stances of the hippies. The outward manifestations of the hippie lifestyle were re-created in the show through costuming, communal rituals (especially those involving psychedelic drugs), and beginning with the Cheetah production, nudity. The show's dialogue and lyrics expressed the philosophical assumptions of the hippies, including their rejection of "scientific objectivity" and their complementary adoption of mysticism. Loose structure, disregard for plot and rounded characterizations, use of hippie jargon and rock instrumentation, and a blurring of the line between "art" and "life," gave Hair a form expressive of the beliefs and

practices of the hippies.

The question of whether Hair was a "sincere" and "authentic" reflection of the hippie movement, or a commercial exploitation of it, cannot be resolved. The show's detractors, particularly those with a left wing political orientation, argued that the musical did not accurately reflect the hippie counterculture, and that claims of its being an extension of what was happening "in the streets" were false. The strongest piece of evidence offered by such critics was that Hair eventually reaped large profits for its backers, pecuniary gain being an anathema to the hippies. However, there are several grounds on which the show can be defended against such charges. First, as O'Horgan has stated, the decision to bring Hair to Broadway was, in large part, a result of the perceived need to expose an unorthodox worldview to audiences with traditional orientations. As such, it was an attempt to interpret and make intelligible an exotic social movement rather than to reproduce it meticulously. In order to reach viewers who could "benefit most" from exposure to an alternative lifestyle, the show departed from "realistic" presentation, functioning as an interpretation for those unfamiliar with the hippies. Second, the hippies were an eclectic group. No consensus is available about what constitutes a "hippie," and the causes of the hippie movement are extremely diverse. Therefore, it is understandable that some "hip" critics considered the show's claims of representation fraudulent simply because they occupied a different position within the spectrum

of the "hip" world. Finally, Hair is a piece of dramatic art. The matter of whether its participants actually believed in the countercultural principles being espoused on stage is essentially irrelevant.

Although Hair appeared to be a unique departure from conventional theatre, it had its antecedents both within the American musical theatre and in off-Broadway avant-garde works. In terms of dramatic structure, the show resembles the revue format of the early American musical theatre, sharing a looseness of form with works such as The Black Crook and the Ziegfeld Follies. It is, of course, structurally different from the integrated musicals which dominated the Broadway stage during the 1940s, 1950s, and into the 1960s, but its similarity to the revue form provides it with precursors.

While Hair did resemble the revue shows of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, one must note that its dramatic structure was not identical to such shows. The show did not have a series of separate skits with distinct beginnings and endings. Instead, its skits ran together and overlapped. In addition, the thematic element linking the show's sequences was extremely broad, being the entire lifestyle of a varied and far-flung subculture.

As to content, Hair may be seen as continuing trends in the American musical theatre which had been evolving for decades. Like Oklahoma! and Porgy and Bess, Hair revealed a way of life which was immediately recognizable in American society, set in a specific, contemporary historical period.

The "common man" theme which had emerged in the American musical genre was continued with Hair, the Ragni and Rado piece employing "common" hippies who lacked extraordinary features. By the time Hair opened at the Public Theater, a tradition of political satire had long been in evidence in a number of American musicals, while the themes of racial conflict and the folly of war had already been treated within the genre. As specimens of the "antihero," the show's hippies were preceded in the American musical theatre in works such as Pal Joey and Guys and Dolls.

Hair was the first Broadway musical devoted to the hippie counterculture, but while the show had a recognizable background, it was not a piece of Americana in the same sense as Oklahoma! Indeed, for many viewers, the lifestyle portrayed in the show was as unfamiliar and exotic as that of a show like The King and I; and while Hair focused on "common" hippies, to some viewers, these characters were extraordinary and unusual. Its use of political satire was more pointed than in Broadway musicals of the past, and its handling of social issues such as war and racial inequality, was more strident than that of most other musicals which had previously appeared on Broadway. Moreover, although Berger and the tribe were "antiheroes" in one sense, seen from the perspective of the hippies, their activities were laudable. Consequently, the show created a dual perspective on its "antiheroes," for they could be viewed as disreputable figures, like Pal Joey or Nathan Detroit, or they could be seen as heroes in their

concern with social issues.

The "fourth wall" had been assaulted by Broadway musicals long before Hair opened at the Biltmore. As early as Of Thee I Sing, producers had used techniques to eliminate this perceived barrier. The Ragni and Rado piece, however, was more radical in its efforts to tear it down. While Broadway shows of the past had sought to dispel the illusion of the proscenium arch, Hair sought a direct extension from the theatre to the street outside. The techniques used in Hair to break down the fourth wall represented both an attack on theatrical convention and an effort to establish continuity between what was happening in the theatre and what was simultaneously occurring in the streets surrounding it. Finally, while not all of Hair's score could be termed "rock," its use of rock instrumentation and rhythm music with rock associations was more extensive than in previous Broadway musicals like Bye-Bye Birdie and West Side Story.

The show's impact on the American musical theatre must be evaluated from several perspectives. First, in being billed as a "rock musical," the matter of whether it stimulated the development of a "rock musical" subgenre becomes important. After the show's opening on Broadway, a number of commercially successful "rock musicals" were produced on Broadway and off-Broadway, works such as Your Own Thing, Jesus Christ Superstar, and Godspell. Yet, despite this initial upsurge, the "rock musical" did not evolve into a significant subgenre.

Following "Hair," for instance, one hoped for a synthesis of musical comedy and rock. Aside from "Godspell" and one or two others, however, no such synthesis took place. Instead there were several million-dollar disasters like "Dude" and "Via Galactica."¹

Such failures may have been the result of producers simply relying on the label "rock musical" to attract audiences without regard to the quality of the material presented; or, they may have not been able to compete with alternative types of "rock" theatre, such as rock concerts;² or perhaps pure rhythm music is simply unsuited for the needs of integrated musicals. Whatever the cause, while a resurgence of "rock musicals" may yet occur, as of this date, Hair does not appear to have had a lasting effect on the "rock musical" subgenre.

The show's influence can also be viewed for its possible effect on the integrated musical. Hair departed from the integrated format of Show Boat and Oklahoma!, and while it may or may not have contributed to the demise of the integrated musical in the 1970s, it was symptomatic of a breakdown in the consensus which had contributed to the success of such shows. Wilson states:

In the late 1960s, however, things began to fall apart. Symbolically the watershed event was the musical "Hair." A huge success on Broadway when it opened in 1968, "Hair" signalled a shift from the traditional book

¹Edwin Wilson, "The Rare Birds of Broadway," The Wall Street Journal, 18 August 1978, n.p. (Clippings, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library).

²Robert Palmer, "Writing Musicals Attuned to the Rock Era," The New York Times, 10 February 1982, p. C-21.

musical. With no plot to speak of, songs placed at random, and choreography that looked like long-haired students milling on a picket line rather than organized dance numbers, "Hair" was a far cry from "My Fair Lady."³

A "non-book" show like Hair did not necessarily overwhelm traditional integrated musicals, but it helped to fragment the total support for book musicals on Broadway.

Finally, for better or worse, Hair was the first Broadway musical to display complete nudity of both males and females. Such use of nudity soon became commonplace in a number of shows both on and off Broadway. In fact, Hair's "nudity" helped to define permissible limits of free expression within the American theatre when the United States Supreme Court twice issued major decisions concerning First Amendment rights based on the show.

Hair, too, in its employment of black performers, may have contributed to the current wave of "black" musicals on the Broadway stage. In addition, Hair helped to attract many black and younger patrons to Broadway, altering the social profile of Broadway audiences.

Why did Hair enjoy such enormous early commercial success? Its innovative quality may have been a factor, but novelty alone may not explain a Broadway run of over 1,700 performances. Talent possibly played a major role. Surveying the staff and cast of the Broadway show, it is apparent that talented individuals like O'Horgan and MacDermot were at

³Wilson, "The Rare Birds of Broadway."

a phase in their careers where their abilities had not been fully recognized. In short, these relative "unknowns" were ripe to "take off," and Hair offered them the opportunity to do so.

Aside from innovation and the collective talents of staff and cast, there are two additional factors that may serve to explain the show's success. First, Hair was a piece which lent itself to change and adaptation. Its loose structure and dialogue, and its two-dimensional characterizations afforded the flexibility needed for additions, deletions, and rearrangements without harming the overall conception. Indeed, Hair underwent a major transformation between its initial staging at the Public Theater and the Broadway opening, a transformation which included the addition of fourteen new songs and an intensified effort to proselytize the hippie lifestyle. The show's looseness permitted it to adapt to changing social circumstances, to different cultural mores, and even to rapid changes of cast and staff members. There was cross-fertilization among various versions of the show as staged in diverse venues, which created a flow of materials.

Second, as a revelation of the hippie lifestyle, the production shared in the universal "appeal" of the hippie movement. Audiences around the world recognized the hippies, and thus the show did not require much exposition or character development. For example, Berger's opposition to war does not require Ragni and Rado to relate this concept to his personal

background. Berger is opposed to the war simply because he is a hippie and this could be understood in more than a score of foreign countries. Flexibility and universality, then, were the two main factors which probably contributed to the show's early success.

And what caused the show's later failures, the 1974 revival in London, and the 1977 effort at the Biltmore? One critic of the American musical theatre offers this insight.

Above all, Hair fed a widespread hunger in post-consensus America to know more about a strange, alluring, dangerous foreign country that seemed to be emerging in the midst of these United States and threatening to take it over and either destroy it or save it: the country of "the hippies," "the counter-culture," "the kids."⁴

When the "hunger" had been satiated and the "threat" of the hippies had vanished, the show lost much of its appeal. The principals for the 1977 revival, too, seemed to be at a loss as to how to select from the body of material which had accumulated over the years, and the cast, probably as talented as its 1968 counterpart, was surely not as committed to the show's message. Other successful revivals of the late 1970s may have been the result of the audiences' desire for escapism and sentimentality, but even in 1977 Hair continued to confront its viewers with unwanted controversial social issues.

The film version of Hair was not a commercial success, but it did receive some positive notices in contrast to the

⁴Julius Novick, "In Search of a New Consensus, Saturday Review, April 3, 1976, p. 40.

negative critical reception afforded the 1977 revival. The film version, however, was radically different from the original stage piece. There were talents, notably those of Forman, Weller, Ondricek, Savage, and Williams. The film medium allowed Forman to use special visual effects and to edit his piece especially for movie audiences. Forman gave Hair a revised and relatively coherent and complex narrative line. He also expanded the show into a trans-American spectacle. Some critics praised his objective handling of the hippie/straight conflict, other disparaged it, and still others seemed confused by his intentions. What is apparent is that Forman altered Hair so much that it is difficult to explore the piece within the context of the original stage musical.

APPENDIX I

STAFF AND CAST FOR HAIR AT THE PUBLIC THEATER

(December 2, 1967)

Producer.	Joseph Papp
Book & Lyrics by.	Gerome Ragni and James Rado
Music by.	Galt MacDermot
Directed by	Gerald Freedman
Scenery by.	Ming Cho Lee
Costumes by	Theoni V. Aldredge
Lighting by	Martin Aronstein
Musical Director.	John Morris
Associate Producer.	Bernard Gersten
Band.	Greg Ferrara
	Steve Gillette
	Jimmy Lewis
	Galt MacDermot
	Leonard Seeds
Dione	Jonelle Allen
"Dad"	Ed Crowley
Claude.	Walker Daniels
Woof.	Steve Dean
Jeannie	Sally Eaton
"Mom"	Marijane Maricle
Sheila.	Jill O'Hara
Crissy.	Shelley Plimpton
Berger.	Gerome Ragni
Hud	Arnold Wilkerson
Susan	Susan Batson
Linda	Linda Compton
Suzannah.	Suzannah Evans
Louise.	Jane Levin
Alma.	Alma Robinson
Charlie	Warren Burton
Thommie	Thommie Bush
Bill.	William Herter
Paul.	Paul Jabara
Bob	Bob Johnson
Jim	Edward Murphy, Jr.

APPENDIX II

STAFF AND CAST FOR HAIR AT BILTMORE THEATRE

(April 29, 1968)

Producer.	Michael Butler
Book & Lyrics by.	Gerome Ragni and James Rado
Music by.	Galt MacDermot
Executive Producer.	Bertrand Castelli
Director.	Tom O'Horgan
Dance Director.	Julie Arenal
Musical Director.	Galt MacDermot
Costumes by	Nancy Potts
Scenery by.	Robin Wagner
Lighting by	Jules Fisher
Sound by.	Robert Kiernan
Band.	Galt MacDermot
	Alan Fontaine
	Jimmy Lewis
	Zane Paul Zacharoff
	Donald Leight
	Eddy Williams
	Warren Chaisson
	Leo Morris
	Neil Tate

Cast

Claude.	James Rado
Ron	Ronald Dyson
Berger.	Gerome Ragni
Woof.	Steve Curry
Hud	Lamont Washington
Mother.	Sally Eaton
	Jonathan Kramer
	Paul Jabara
Father.	Robert I. Rubinsky
	Susannah Nostrand
	Lamont Washington
Jeanie.	Sally Eaton
Dionne.	Melba Moore
Sheila.	Lynn Kellogg

Tourist Couple.	Shelly Plimpton Jonathan Kramer Robert I. Rubinsky
Box Office.	Steve Gamet
General Grant	Paul Jabara
Young Recruit	Jonathan Kramer
Parents	Diane Keaton Robert I. Rubinsky
The Tribe	Donnie Burks Lorri Davis Leata Galloway Steve Gamet Walter Hariss Diane Keaton Hiram Keller Majorie LiPari Emmaretta Marks Natalie Mosco Susannah Nostrand Robert I. Rubinsky

APPENDIX III

STAFF AND CAST FOR HAIR REVIVAL AT BILTMORE THEATRE

(October 5, 1977)

Producer. Michael Butler in association
with K. H. Nezhad
Book & Lyrics by. Gerome Ragni and James Rado
Music by. Galt MacDermot
Associate Producer. George Milman
Scenic Design by. Robin Wagner
Lighting Design by. Jules Fisher
Costume Design by. Nancy Potts
Sound Design by. Denzil A. Miller
Vocal Direction. Patrick Flynn
Production Stage Manager. . J. Galen McKinley
Assistant Choreographer . . Wesley Fata
Choreography by. Julie Arenal
Directed by. Tom O'Horgan
Band. Denzil A. Miller
Jerry Jemmott
Chris Alpert
Richard Hurwitz
Danny Bank
Brian Koonin
Billy Butler
Rick Cutler
Muhammad Abdullah

Cast (in order of appearance)

Claude. Randall Easterbrook
Berger. Michael Hoit
Woof. Scott Thornton
Hud. Cleavant Derricks
Sheila. Ellen Foley
Jeanie. Iris Rosenkrantz
Dionne. Alaina Reed
Crissy. Kristen Vigard
Shopping Cart Lady. Michael Leslie

Mothers	Annie Golden Louis Mattioli Perry Arthur
Fathers	James Rich Eva Charney Martha Wingate
Principals.	Carl Woerner Michael Leslie Linda Myers
Tourist Couple.	Perry Arthur Carl Woerner
General Grant	Carl Woerner
Abraham Lincoln	Linda Myers
Sergeant.	Byron Utley
Parents	Lorie Wagner James Rich
Tribe	Perry Arthur Emily Bindiger Paul Binotto Eva Charney Loretta Devine Doug Katsaros Michael Leslie Louis Mattioli Linda Myers Raymond Patterson James Rich James Sbano Deborah Van Valkenburgh Lori Wagner Doug Wall Martha Wingate Carl Woerner Charlaine Woodard

APPENDIX IV

STAFF AND CAST FOR THE MOTION PICTURE VERSION OF HAIR

Producers	Lester Persky Michael Butler
Director.	Milos Forman
Screenplay.	Michael Weller
Choreography.	Twyla Tharp
Music	Galt MacDermot
Lyrics.	Gerome Ragni James Rado
Associate Producer.	Robert Greenhut
Assistant Director.	Michael Hausman
Photography	Miroslav Ondricek
Costumes.	Ann Roth
Designer.	Stuart Wurtzel
Editor.	Lynzee Kingman

Cast

Claude.	John Savage
Berger.	Treat Williams
Sheila.	Beverly D'Angelo
Jeanie.	Annie Golden
Hud	Dorsey Wright
Woof.	Don Dacus
Hud's Fiancee	Cheryl Barnes
Fenton.	Richard Bright
The General	Nicholas Ray
Party Guest	Charlotte Rae
Steve	Miles Chapin
Sheila's Mother	Fern Tailer
Sheila's Father	Charles Deney
Sheila's Uncle.	Herman Meckler
Sheila's Aunt	Agnes Breen
Berger's Mother	Antonia Rey
Berger's Father	George Manos
Vietnamese Girl	Linda Surh
Debutantes	Jane Boone Suki Love
Claude's Father	Joe Acord
Sheldon	Michael Jeter

Prison Psychiatrist. Janet York
Lafayette Jr. Rahsaan Curry
The Judge. Harry Gittleson
The M. P. Donald Alsdurf
Barracks Officers. Mario Nelson

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