

HAIR[∞]_I

The American Tribal-Love Rock Musical

A Proposal for Staging

By Gibson DelGiudice

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I. ARTIST STATEMENT

The Show

What can one say that hasn't been said about *Hair*? On paper, it isn't much: very little plot, a unit set, plenty of four-letter words, explicit sexual content, rituals, drugs, lyrics that don't rhyme, and the sound of genuine rock and roll. But in practice, it's a whole lot more. The show rejected every convention of Broadway, of traditional theatre in general, and of the American musical in specific. And it was brilliant. *Hair* dared to put rock music, and the culture that went with it, on stage. As social commentary, it provided insight into the philosophy that drove the "flower children"¹ of the Sixties. Most amazing of all, the show had a strong effect on all audiences, acting as a bridge between generations and viewpoints.

Hair's free-form script tells the story of the "Tribe," a group of politically active, long-haired hippies of the "Age of Aquarius" living a bohemian life in New York City and fighting against conscription into the Vietnam War. Claude, his good friend Berger, their roommate Sheila, and their friends struggle to balance their young lives, loves, and the sexual revolution with their rebellion against the war and their conservative parents and society. Ultimately, Claude must decide whether to resist the draft as his friends have done, or to succumb to the pressures of his parents (and conservative America) to serve in Vietnam, compromising his pacifist principles and risking his life. The work of two "hippies," James Rado and Gerome Ragni, and a staid Canadian composer, Galt MacDermot, the loosely constructed show benefited from the psychedelic vision of its Broadway director Tom O'Horgan, who organized the action and who turned *Hair* into a media event, which further added to its popularity and ensured a long run of 1,750 performances.

Rado and Ragni, both actors, met in 1964 when they appeared Off-Broadway in *Hang Down Your Head and Die*. Rado, a student of Lee Strasberg, had written musical revues in college and aspired to be a Broadway composer in the Rodgers & Hammerstein mold, whereas Ragni was an active member of several Off-Off-Broadway groups developing experimental theater techniques, including The Open Theater², to whose modern methods and styles he introduced Rado. They began collaborating on *Hair* later that year. Recalls Rado, "There was so much excitement in the streets, and the parks, and the hippie areas, and we thought if we could transmit this excitement to the stage, it would be wonderful. [...] We hung out with them and went to their Be-Ins [and] let our hair grow. [...] It was very important historically, and if we hadn't written it, there'd not be any examples. You could read about it and see film clips, but you'd never *experience* it. We thought, 'This is happening in the streets,' and we wanted to bring it to the stage."

¹ A freeform phenomenon that had begun a little earlier in Haight-Ashbury, San Francisco, and would subsequently spread to Europe and elsewhere.

² In 1966, while the two were developing *Hair*, Ragni performed in The Open Theater's production of Megan Terry's play, *Viet Rock*, a story about young men being deployed to the Vietnam War. In addition to the war theme, *Viet Rock* employed improvisational exercises popular in the experimental theatre scene that were later used in *Hair's* development.

As the show took more concrete shape, they connected with composer MacDermot, winner of a 1961 Grammy for his "African Waltz," recorded by Cannonball Adderley, through common friends. MacDermot's "straight" lifestyle ("short hair," "a wife and, at that point, four children," a home on Staten Island, "never even heard of a hippie") was in marked contrast to his co-creators, but he shared their enthusiasm to write a rock musical, and he wrote the score's first draft in three weeks. Phenomenal musical numbers such as "Aquarius," "I Believe in Love," "I Got Life," "Hair," "What a Piece of Work Is Man," and "Good Morning Starshine" gave the show timelessness, vitality and meaning that helped it outlast its late '60s/early '70s origins.³

From there, the saga of the self-proclaimed American tribal love rock musical began with a limited, six-week run in the fall of 1967 at Shakespeare Festival founder Joseph Papp's Public Theatre Off-Broadway, following which they moved to a midtown club called Cheetah for a spell with the help of indie producer Michael Butler. Papp then pulled out, and after massive revisions (including thirteen new songs) and the addition of new cast members, a new director (O'Horgan), a new choreographer (they wanted more spontaneous-looking movement), and designers Jules Fisher and Robin Wagner, *Hair* transferred to Broadway, opening with great fanfare on April 29, 1968⁴ at the Biltmore Theatre, in the middle of the theatre district. The rest was history, not just for the show – which spawned multiple international productions, popular cast recordings, Top 10 hits, and a 1979 film – but for the careers of Nell Carter, Tim Curry, Cliff DeYoung, Peter Gallagher, Diane Keaton, Meat Loaf, Joe Mantegna, Melba Moore, Donna Summer, and Ben Vereen, among many *Hair* vets who went on to great success from the launch pad it provided.

My Background with the Show

If this proposal isn't a clue, let me be clear: I'm a frustrated writer at heart. When I was a kid, I really wanted to write for literature, theater, or film; before I commenced actual work in entertainment, however, I rapidly discovered I was better at tinkering with other people's stuff than creating my own (aside from a few terrific one-liners). Tough luck for a writer, perhaps, but turns out those skills and impulses come in handy if you're a director or producer. And one of my pet projects was planning a *Hair* revival.

I discovered *Hair*, as many do, through the film. While I'm grateful to it for inspiring me to learn about the play, as anyone familiar with both will tell you, it's by no means a faithful adaptation. Rado and Ragni dubbed it *H* "because [director Miloš Forman] took all the 'air' out of it" and opined that "[a]ny resemblance between the 1979 film and the original Biltmore version, other than some of the songs, the names of the characters, and a common title, eludes us." (Ironically, two-time Oscar winner Forman ranked it among his finest works.) Personally, I'm no great fan of the movie, but I share Michael Butler's opinion: "...the film has been an excellent introduction to *Hair* for many people. It has left them wanting to see the real thing. So I'm happy that the movie has created continued interest by stock and amateur, high school, college, and community theaters to do the stage play. No matter the medium, *Hair*'s message seems to endure through generations of views..."

³ The bulk of *Hair* was written from 1966-69, with some revisions thereafter.

⁴ Butler's astrologer picked the opening date to insure a successful run.

One commonly cited problem with the film, and the 1977 Broadway revival which preceded it, was that it came too close to the events it portrayed to show them as history, and too far away to claim the story had any social relevance. *Hair* was no longer shocking; none of what made it a hit was controversial anymore. The draft was over, and young men would no longer be conscripted in time of war; interracial sex wasn't a headline-grabbing novelty; those of diverse sexual orientations were far more open than guarded; long hair on men was normal; sex positivity and children born out of wedlock weren't uncommon, or particularly frowned upon. All the issues to which *Hair* drew attention in its call for change were gone, thanks in part to that attention.

But there's nothing new under the sun, as I learned when I began exploring *Hair* in the seventh grade and grew to understand as I got older. I had only to turn on the news to relate to unpopular presidents and poorly justified wars, to hear adults belittling the music their kids listened to and their bizarre fashion sense to identify with Sixties teens who weren't taken seriously because of *their* aesthetic and tastes, to see the growing number of escape outlets that, to me, eerily resembled the numbing effects of mind-altering substances⁵, and to realize in the wake of many bursts of protest that seemed merely to go round in circles that "weekend hippies" – some of whom are assuredly portrayed in *Hair*, whether or not that was the authors' intention – never change: even with the best of intentions, they'll avoid facing what's really going on, however "woke" they may be, until it's too late.

As long as this continues to be true, there'll always be an audience for *Hair*, as the recent successful stage revival proved. I believe, fortunately or not, that its story will always be well worth telling again, and telling in a way that embraces modern sensibilities in entertainment (i.e., the need for brevity and sparkle). If one trims the fat that has grown around the original piece, and then tightens it even more, another look at *Hair* will always be worth it, particularly if the issues the show touches on suddenly become *au courant* again, as they unfortunately seem to have following the 2016 election. Why *Hair*, you may ask? Because those who forget history's mistakes are condemned to repeat them, and one needs only log on for living, breathing proof.

⁵ Whether you love or hate technology for doing so, it's hard to deny that social media like Facebook, Tumblr, etc., claim to bring us closer together whilst really isolating us from the world in our own self-made cloud. Is that much different from what some hippies hoped to achieve with drugs?

II. PLAY ANALYSIS

Structure

To understate things dramatically, for a director today approaching the show for the first time, *Hair* is... difficult. And by "difficult," I mean "like those dreams when you realize you're the lead character onstage and you don't know any lines and have never rehearsed it." If one isn't a fan, they've at least heard of the piece by reputation; *Hair* isn't widely considered one of the all-time best-known snapshots of an era's counterculture in musical theater history for nothing. Regardless of where they first heard them, anyone born post-1968 is familiar, to a certain extent, with its songs. Perhaps – God help them – one has seen the film, and thinks they know what they're getting into. And then... they crack open the script.

Hair is a strong anti-war statement, a "happening" more often than it is a firmly locked-down story, with hilarious skits and vigorous dance numbers – not to mention a participation-friendly ensemble nature – that add up to a unique theater experience. But its libretto, especially as presently licensed, is unusually open-ended: a collection of lyrics, notes, some dialogue, and infrequent, sometimes imprecise stage directions, not inappropriate for a show that purportedly coined the term "non-book." cursory research further reveals – much to the chagrin of the uninitiated – that no definitive version of "how to do *Hair* on stage" exists, the popularity of choices certain revivals made notwithstanding.

This can be freeing; the scope for innovation and improvisation is part of this show's charm and indeed a large part of how it was initially constructed. An optimistic, ambitious director can view this strange script as merely a scenario on which to base their own unique vision of *Hair*, and trust that as long as they're honest in their mission, they'll be guided to their own version, which will stand by itself as a one-of-a-kind staging of what's already a one-of-a-kind musical. As for the rest of us, even with a fierce love of the material, we have homework to do, or else we may be hopelessly lost. Clarification is needed, or one in our position is likely to flounder.

Personally, I've read everything I can find about the show and its times⁶, without which I'd never have understood topical references to politicians, celebrities, events, and even theater and literature⁷ of the time that were once current but ring less potent as audiences (and those presenting the show) grow further removed from the '60's; dived into Internet resources like social media groups devoted to *Hair*, which gave me access to the insight of both original cast/creatives – including Rado, who frequently offers

⁶ This included an early draft script published by Pocket Books in 1969, books by former cast members like Lorrie Davis' *Letting Down My Hair* and Jonathon Johnson's *Good Hair Days*, and books from a scholarly/historical perspective like Barbara Lee Horn's *The Age of Hair*, Scott Miller's *Let the Sun Shine In*, and Eric Grode's *Hair: The Story of the Show That Defined a Generation*. I even tracked down two early screen drafts, one by Colin Higgins (*Harold and Maude*, 9 to 5) from an earlier canceled production and one by Michael Weller from the final film version, to draw on outsider views (and steal unused imagery that I liked – hey, I'm no angel).

⁷ Compare, for example, the lyrics to "3-5-0-0" to [extracts from Ginsberg's Wichita Vortex Sutra](#).

support to productions worldwide – and fans alike; seen the Diane Paulus-helmed revival; and, for a well-rounded musical base, collected many cast recordings as well.⁸

And I learned fairly quickly that *Hair* got a bum rap, both from its own fan base and from outside scholars. For starters, “non-book” couldn’t be more of a misnomer. Contrary to the opinion of critics in its time (and even today) that there’s slim to no story in the show, *Hair* has a plot, and a fairly fleshed out one at that. It just needs to be brought to the fore, as recent revivals have done. It’s no more or less a collection of “connected vignettes” than *Company*. The sole difference between *Hair* and traditional book musicals, which unexpectedly trips up newcomers, is that it covers a lot of historical – and plot – exposition using songs instead of dialogue, and the material is more devoted to establishing themes and background information than establishing character.

Once one realizes what makes the show tick, the reason for Act I’s meandering pace, until the plot kicks into gear by the time we reach “I Got Life,” becomes clear: most of the first act is – pardon the pun – a potted history of the hippie movement. “Aquarius” heralds the dawning of a new era, and the “Tribe” gathers over the course of the next few songs. We watch them encounter everything hippies went through following the idyllic “Summer of Love” in ‘67: we meet the kinds of kids who became hippies (extroverts flaunting their individuality, young POC and LGBT folks seeking acceptance and to advance their causes, nerdy misfits who *maybe* want to make movies and crazy pregnant girls who love them, etc.), we’re exposed to the mind-altering substances that opened them up to new things about themselves and others (“Hashish”), we learn about their questioning nature (some established taboos and traditions come in for hard knocks), and we watch the adult world turn against them when they realize these entitled little shits have new values they don’t agree with, much less understand (“Ain’t Got No,” “Dead End”), and the kids in return try to prove this isn’t empty sloganizing from navel-gazers with weird fashion sense and they *do* want to change the world. (Sound familiar?) As the things this community has protested and re-examined cut closer to home, life gets colder for the movement, and the lives they knew disintegrate, the ending almost inexorably, and with urgency, pulls them toward their destiny.

With that in mind, once we zoom in on Claude’s journey (and, to an extent, that of his immediate circle of friends), there should be no confusion about what’s going on or which plotline to follow, no matter how psychedelic/fluid-abstract the show’s staging is. Revivals – especially the Paulus production – prove this by portraying some characters more realistically and making the book a touch more linear. A rudimentary comparison of the revival script to the licensed version and the original reveals that, aside from missing ad-libs by cast members, some trims, and added material, the show we see today is virtually the same as it was in 1968, in form, meaning, and spirit.

Further Study

As soon as one understands *Hair* from a structural perspective, the next step is “getting” the show, which in itself is an in-road to enjoying it. I first studied the supporting characters closely, then the songs by themselves, and then finally Claude’s

⁸ This included *DisinHAIRited*, a late 1969 recording by the authors and then-current cast which consisted of both songs that got cut and newly written stuff that never made it into *any* version.

arc. It was only at that point that I really “got” the show. I’ll try to condense that journey for the reader as much as possible here.

I began with Crissy, who we come to know through one song only, and no appreciable dialogue. Listening to her quiet paean to teenage love, “Frank Mills,” I felt layers of adolescent emotion stripped bare and laid out in the space of a very simple narrative. Adolescent is the key word here; you might even call the song “childlike,” in a way. She relates her story the way you might expect an elementary or middle school student to write an essay. She begins with the “where, when, how” of it all, then switches to an inventory of every detail she can remember about him. She admits that she’s embarrassed to be seen with him, and yet she’s longing to see him again – this guy in a leather jacket with gold chains, who wears “this white crash helmet.” She remembers the date they met – note it’s not “yesterday” or “last week,” but “September 12th” – telling us that it’s clearly been some time since this meeting happened... and that she’s saving the date in her memory, like an anniversary. And that’s all we ever learn about her; she waits and waits (skipping the Be-In, even!) for a boy she met, once. She “loves him,” in her own words, despite their brief acquaintance, and she gave him two dollars that day – just about \$14.43 in today’s economy – but wants him to know that she doesn’t care about that, he can keep it. She just wants him.

I’ve known more than one “Crissy.” Shit, I’ve *been* a “Crissy,” pining away whole summers of my youth for boys who barely knew I existed, much less cared. And yet, for every Broadway show about requited love – or overblown, dramatized *unrequited* love – here’s a simple, bare-souled ode to hopeless teen crushes. How will it work out for Crissy? We never learn, but we’re given many data points from which to draw our own conclusions. Will she find Frank someday? Will he even remember her if they do? Will her “love” (more a crush with some obsession) blossom, or will Frank laugh, or take advantage of her? Even now, Broadway fixates on the Beautiful Love Song™ or the Love Gone Wrong Song™ – both chestnuts of the stage, both have their place. But “Frank Mills” is fragile, timid and vulnerable; it’s a song about the real way teenagers “love” at first, not the idealized iconic Love™ for which one turns to Broadway. It’s plain, unmistakable reality.

Listen to “A Heart Full of Love” from *Les Mis*, or “All I Ask of You” from *Phantom*, and try to imagine Raoul or Cosette singing them with an awkward and highly visible pimple, or braces, or dorky clothes... can’t do it, can ya. These are the love songs of Broadway characters that are perfect, night after night. Raoul’s never belched the alphabet for his pals, Marius’ shoes are showroom new even after a day on the barricade, and Cosette never, ever bellows a loud four-letter word when she stubs her toe. Crissy, on the other hand... she’s completely real. She’s probably not the prettiest girl in class, likely not particularly popular though hardly a pariah – rather, in that great attention-less Sargasso between “adored” and “despised” where no one much notices you at all. She’s old enough to think she’s in love and young enough to have no idea what that means, and I’m torn between wanting to be supportive and cheer her on, and wanting to warn her off this guy she can’t possibly “love” from one encounter on the street.

We can care about Cosette and Marius and Raoul in a literary way – we can tell they’re the “good guys,” we’re rooting for them, and we know that it’s Broadway, so they’ll probably be fine in the end, we needn’t worry too much. Can we say the same of Crissy?

Are we really so sure she's "gonna be just fine?" That's the most insidious and brilliant thing about *Hair*: once one starts to care about the characters, one thinks about society's answers to their questions... and how far we haven't come in answering them.

Let's pick a bigger character: Woof. Easy to like – he's a nut. He's over the top and he's silly and goofy and comedically hung up on Mick Jagger. Have we known anyone like him? A guy we all strongly suspect is gay or at least bisexual, but isn't ready to admit and embrace it; someone whose "gay" side is "gay" in a cartoony, childlike, "safe" way. He gets so defensive when Jeanie says he's hung up on Berger – you see, Berger's a real guy, and real guys might laugh at him for being interested and admitting it... or they might grin and suggest having sex, and oh shit, now it's really happening and you're fumbling and nervous and not sure what to do, and... and... and... and so Woof idolizes Mick Jagger, who's safely out of reach, and who'll never enter his life, and thus, remain "safe" by his inaccessibility. Simpleton, fool and sweetheart, Woof "looks at the moon" and acts out with his sexually-charged words ("Sodomy"), and yet, when one girl of the Tribe agrees to sleep with him at the end, he recoils and cries "I'm Catholic!"

I've known a Woof before, someone playing at "adult" concepts with a child's naïveté who giggles when people say "dirty words" and looks at porn with a "connoisseur's" eye, but panics in the back seat of a car with an actual, live member of the opposite sex (let alone the same sex). Every college drama department has at least one; every indie coffeehouse has at least two. We see through him. We recognize a very young soul in Woof, and – I think – we worry a little for him.

Let's up the stakes. How about Berger? He's your classic nutcase, Type A personality, extrovert. There's no accusing *him* of being like Woof, is there? On the one hand, we envy his chutzpah – stepping out, starting off the introductions by dropping his pants and waving around his "three thousand pounds of Navajo jewelry." He's on fire, manic and wild, colorful and bright and funny, and then he sings a song about "looking for my Donna," which at a glance is about a "sixteen year old virgin" who got "busted for her beauty," but under closer inspection, becomes much more interesting.

Berger just got back from looking for his "sixteen year old tattooed woman" in San Francisco... or did the lyrics mean that she came from there? They're so coyly vague. And then he talks about the other places he's been on his search: India, South America. Is his Donna a world traveler? Then he discusses "show[ing] her life on Earth can be sweet." Was she sad, perhaps disillusioned with human existence? Or is she not of this world?

Here, "Donna" unravels and reveals its two faces clearly. On one level, it's a song by a horny teenage boy about finding the most amazing girl and screwing 'til the firmament of heaven shakes free, and on another, it's about hunting for The Feminine, the spiritual, the ephemeral, the wisdom of the mind and soul, the questing of this young cocksure Cernunnos, The Masculine, the earthy and coarse and hirsute and primal and bestial. It is humankind's basest nature chasing after humankind's highest nature.⁹

⁹ The script leans into this; the final repetition at the end, where Berger's vocal line goes up instead of down, is recorded as "Looking for Madonna," not "My Donna," which emphatically meant the Virgin Mary in 1968. The original Broadway cast recording's liner notes quietly nod to

Berger praises drugs and foreign wisdom, and claims he's on a quest for enlightenment, but in the show, that's not really what we see from him. He's a clown, and a particularly arrogant one. His mania is a way of coping with what he can't handle. He cracks jokes when others are upset about serious matters. He'll sleep with Sheila, sure, but when she gives him a yellow shirt as a gift, he mocks it, freaks out, lectures her about how he can't deal with her smothering, and rips it up. When she stammers "Why did you do that?" he genuinely boggles at the question, and in the end can only manage a halfhearted "I hate yellow."

Yes, that's Berger's world – the world of Cernunnos, the Horned God; the realm of Yang, the unbridled, unrestrained masculine energy. He doesn't really know why he does things, but we do. We see through him. We recognize a young man who decided not to give a damn, to laugh through life, someone whose mania is a coping mechanism covering up a deep emotional maturity deficiency. He can't handle the truth, so he hides in his idealism and clowning and follows his urges, never to look his fears in the eye. Watch him at the end, when he finally has to face that Claude is leaving, in their last conversation – the "I wish the fuck it would snow at least" one. You watch Berger realize it, but he's utterly unable to admit what he's realized aloud. And then, he snaps quickly back to a penis size joke, and later (in the revival, anyway) practically begs Claude to be with the Tribe at the protest, following which they'll smuggle him to Canada. Doing his best to laugh in the face of reality, or at least ignore it... it's how he copes.

One thing that became clear: *Hair* was never a teenage love story with long hair. Indeed, when you view the love triangle of Claude, Berger, and Sheila at face value, the show is in danger of seeming remarkably stupid – they all have complicated feelings about each other, Sheila won't sleep with Claude, she either does or doesn't (depending on the version), and he goes off to die. How pointless. The triangle is a symbol; Claude is the intellect, Sheila the heart, Berger the visceral, animal passions. Claude's struggle to win Sheila has nothing to do with romance or sex – it's an echo of Claude's conflicted feelings about being drafted. The mind knows he must go; the carefree hippie world has no answers, no solutions. The visceral urges say, "You don't want this. You don't have to go. Burn your draft card and live in the park forever – stay free!" The heart clearly favors the passions, but, by the end, acquiesces to the mind and concurs that refusing isn't an option.

Ah yes... we've come to Claude, *Hair*'s Charlie Brown – he's in an alien world that makes no sense to him, screaming to anyone who'll listen, "Why is the world the way it is?" Yet, no one answers him. The adults hide in their artificial world of coupon stamps in books¹⁰, a symbol for the artificial banality of the rat race, the corporate ladder, and Big Futile. The hippie kids, for all their pursuit of "higher principles" and alleged "Eastern wisdom," have nothing for him but "so don't go." Gee, that helps a lot, guys. Live in the park, because my folks will kick me out if I evade the draft? Beg for my meals? Never

this as well, though naturally, if they'd been forthright about the fact that the show's second song discusses a quest for enlightenment through the metaphor of banging the Blessed Mother of God, the Catholic Church would have closed the show before the first chorus of "Aquarius."

¹⁰ If you're unfamiliar with that tradition, like I was, think of them like stickers or punch-holes on a card for a free sandwich at Subway.

get a job, open a bank account, or otherwise put myself onto record where I could be tracked down and sent to prison for dodging draft, or sent to Vietnam and drafted forcibly? Sounds like a real treat. Think they'll really let us all live in the park forever?

Claude stumbles through *Hair* unheard and brushed off by his best friends. At the end of the first act, he almost burns his draft card... then can't. He knows better. He knows there's no life for him in the park; his friends will eventually fall ill, or starve, or become old enough that the police lose sympathy and start treating them as homeless people, not "kids." And he turns to the audience, and sings "Where Do I Go?" He's asking you, personally – what should he do? And you have no answers, either. Can't anyone tell Claude Hooper Bukowski why he has to die in a foreign land, when his own is under no threat? Showing Charlie Brown the true meaning of Christmas would be easier.

"Walking in Space" takes us through the drug experience as a mind-opener, as a search for wisdom and answers beyond the stale, bankrupt, conventional sources of society (and their coupon stamps). The tribe gathers, lights up, and sings to an audience who wasn't expected, when *Hair* first debuted, to be familiar with drugs and drug use, what they're doing, how it feels, and most of all, why. They describe it as a "dive," an immersion in a world they cannot inhabit but can visit – a world full of beauty, unfettered by the "ten thousand things," the "mad monkey" of Zen teaching.

For a crowd familiar with *Reefer Madness*-like images of drug use, consider the following phrases: "...my soul is in orbit with God, face to face... my mind is as clear as country air... all colors mesh... all the clouds are cumuloft, walking in space... in this dive, we rediscover sensation... how dare they try to end this beauty? ...our eyes are open wide." Compare Lou Reed's "Heroin" to the images you see here. Lou spoke of "when that smack begins to flow / then I really don't care anymore [...about] all the dead bodies piled up in mounds [...] When that heroin is in my blood [...] yeah, thank God that I'm good as dead / Oooh, thank your God that I'm not aware / And thank God that I just don't care." Lou Reed, mind you, is where many Berger types end up, in about five to ten years. And in a world of this kind of drug use creating people like Jeanie's "crazy speed freak" who "knocked her up," this image of drug use and its purpose is something entirely different.

Claude takes his "communion," and asks the questions of his heart to the Great Beyond, directly. The visions wind through wars of the past, massacres, tragedies, finally to an accelerated, chaotic scene in which various groups (ethnic, religious, professional) all kill one another in rapid succession. The first group, the Buddhists, chant a silly and pointless mantra of stitched-together platitudes, fortune-cookie pop "wisdom" and pop culture references. They're strangled to death by a group of nuns, who in turn are killed by the next group, who are killed by the next. Welcome to the reality of war, Claude. People hate, so people kill. It's been happening since the dawn of time; only the names and rationales change. And when there's no one left to kill, the last one kills himself, and the body pile covers the stage, broken and hideous, staring with blank, lifeless eyes. They rise, one by one, and dance in a terrifying New Orleans jazz funeral number – the laughing, mocking skeletons and their Day of the Dead dance.

Welcome to Niggertown, Claude – pardon my language, but it's the composers' word choice in this scene's song, "3-5-0-0." Take all of the hate and put-down quality of that

word and you have a clear idea of how they believed the military and the government felt about the people they drafted. Claude cowers as the laughing mocking dead of war Hell welcome him "home," as one of their own.

The dead collapse again, and two "angels" sing "What a Piece of Work Is Man." As angels in literature and theater are wont to do, it's merely a declaration of truth, borrowed from Shakespeare's words. As you stare at the pile of bodies, you can read it as a sarcastic remark, or as a gentle but chilling reminder of humankind's importance and capacity for good. Where this question takes you is a very personal matter, but the journey is a rough and painful road.

We wash away the pain and horror with the innocent, Woof, pointing out the moon. It could be another case of Woof not grasping the moment's gravity, or you can read it as a moment of incongruous beauty amid a rough night before a tearful morning. Indeed, Woof, look at the moon. Be lost in wonder with him, and see not a ball of dusty mafic rock some two hundred thirty-nine thousand miles away, but The Moon™ – a thing of wonder, of beauty, once beyond human reach, magical and fascinating and constant; same moon, same stars, same sky, as the Hawaiians say. Good morning, starshine. The earth says hello.

If the show features "The Bed," then Claude and Sheila make love that night; if not, then their goodbye embrace says the same. Heart and mind have come to an understanding; Sheila understands that Claude has to go. She doesn't resent him; she loves him and hopes to see him again. But of course, this is not to be. Claude goes, and Claude dies, as we knew he would.

"The Flesh Failures" isn't sung among the Tribe. (Well, it *is*, but that's not important.) It's sung to you, to the viewer, as the cast sings it to one another. "We starve," the cast sings. "Look at one another. Short of breath, walking proudly in our winter coats." That park must be a lot less comfortable now, with the snow. One wonders how they're eating... oh, right. They're not. And yet, they're "facing a dying nation of moving paper fantasies, listening for the new told lies, with supreme visions of lonely tunes." The emperor is naked, but his guards silence anyone who says so. The new propaganda pounds down the airwaves. Today's heaping breakfast of B.S. we say and do and espouse to avoid actually facing the horrible truth is served; come and get it. We hide away in our dens like foxes in winter, and drown out the cries outside with our daydreams of happier times. Vera Lynn, where are you now? Those bluebirds you promised over the white cliffs of Dover – we could use them, about now.

"Singing our space songs on a spider-web sitar, life is around you and in you..." And down comes the fourth wall, again, as it has every time the cast delivers a monologue to the audience, but this time, it's personal, and the song's now being sung directly to the listener. "Answer for Timothy Leary, dearie. Let the sun shine in."

It's easy to write the show off as "a dumb love story with long hair." It's easy to write off the finale as "pretty words." If it's even a little hard to meet the eyes of the cast when they ask that question, though, perhaps the viewer's conscience has something to say on the subject.

Why is the world still this way? Why do we have a billion new ways to goof off rolling out the door every minute onto store shelves, but we still kill kids routinely and insist that it's "necessary"? Why haven't we solved this problem?

Don't look to the stage anymore; the show's over.

Ara Pro Concreta

III. VISION

Dramaturgy

As mentioned in the previous section, the script of *Hair* as presently licensed is difficult to parse, even for longtime fans. A surprising supporter on this count is James Rado, who stated on his website at one point, "One big mistake happening with regard to the show is that Tams-Witmark is not giving out the superior revised version of the script. [...] the potential [of a production he saw] was hampered because of confusing textual material." A superior revised version, you say? Yep, it's time to talk about that.

See, Rado often consults on revivals at a professional level, and adds a ton of stuff to *Hair* – both newly written and from pre-Broadway material – which he's yet to codify into a formal script for the licensor.¹¹ On one hand, this material helps flesh out the plot; on the other, it's become a bone of contention between Rado and the original cast members. Much of the rest of the Tribe¹² feel that every time he revises, it gets farther away, in their opinion, from what made the show work. Some contemporaries even speculate that he re-shuffles the deck so frequently because he's begun, with age, to succumb to inaccurate assessments and criticisms of *Hair* over the years, in the process perhaps forgetting how it worked in the first place.

This attitude isn't new, and has existed since the show opened. In her book, Lorrie Davis contends that the original production of *Hair* was virtually a different show every night, owing to the cast's improvisations within the framework and timing of the piece. Sometimes this was a matter of a production simply localizing topical and even geographical references to the area in which it ran; more often, this meant that ad-libbing, particularly during comic moments, would be incorporated into the show if it worked, something rarely if ever reflected in the licensed script. In Barbara Lee Horn's book, Tom O'Horgan refers to published scripts in general as suffering from a case of author's revenge. No director cuts – or actor improvises – without authorial consent or participation, but when the show's prepared for licensing, all the cuts (or, in the case of ad-libs, original lines or moments) are put back in: "Everything is published, which is OK. This allows other directors to pick and choose, make cuts. But most people don't realize this, and when they try to put a show on, as a consequence, it becomes an extraordinary piece of unfocused stuff..." Seen in this light, Rado's newest revisions are not the cause, but merely the symptom.

Having seen a version of the original Broadway book that recorded many derivations of lines, etc., I agree some departures have been made to no discernible profit, but I'm more charitable in my assessment of the new edition. I can see why each side favors its respective stance, but I'm one of the few who thinks a middle ground between the revisions and the Broadway original is possible.

¹¹ Per email conversation with Tams-Witmark, the newest changes only appear in productions Rado works with directly, and Tams hasn't received, nor is it able to pass on, any new material. The currently licensed script has a copyright date of 1995.

¹² Members of any *Hair* cast become part of the show's informal "family," and continue to refer to themselves as the "Tribe" long after their time in the show is through.

Having said that, I'm also one of the few who thinks revisions haven't gone far enough in fleshing out the storyline. Once a director determines the key plot elements to include in their production from the many versions of *Hair*, aside from which the scripts are mostly the same, a freer hand should be taken in drawing from available sources.

For example, in a previous footnote I referred to *DisinHAIRited*, a late 1969 recording by the then-current *Hair* cast (and the authors) of numbers that either were in the show but didn't appear on the original recording due to time and space constraints or that were once in the show but dropped pre-Broadway, alongside songs that were basically dialogue from the show newly set to music. There's a wealth of material on this album that could be used to replace dialogue or restored to bolster character development and fill in plot holes, but most productions are either unaware or uninterested.

I'd like to re-explore the book, with the ultimate goal being a well-oiled, finely-calibrated script largely based on the original material; a bit more expansive, with subtle new twists of plot and character, some restored jokes, funny lines, and original blocking preserved in oral traditions passed down by the Tribe, and the return of a handful of songs from *DisinHAIRited* that will both bring the show back to its origins and at once simplify and clarify the many strands woven into the plot's tapestry.

Aside from that, the original hit score would otherwise be retained, albeit with ideas for re-positioning certain numbers pulled from choices made in recent productions. Among the existing songs for which I'd find a new home:

- **Sheila Franklin** – This is moved in most revivals from its usual Act I slot to precede "I Believe in Love," as an effectively brief character intro. I'd make the same choice for the same reason.
- **Initials** – Usually a brief transitory piece in Act I (which precedes "I Got Life" in the original script, and follows it in most revivals), poking fun at the growing prevalence of three-letter sets of initials and positing a scenario where LBJ¹³ hops on the IRT¹⁴ to find America's youth on LSD¹⁵, the American Theatre Company's 2014 Chicago production arranged the song as an elegiac a cappella segment accompanying Sheila's harrowing account of a protest gone wrong in D.C. It was an effective re-use of a song even Rado calls "rather silly" and MacDermot described as having "very little value," and I'd like to do that too.
- **Don't Put It Down** – This mildly sarcastic musical salute to the American flag was moved to Claude's Act II hallucination, set in the initial "landing in Vietnam" sequence, in a touring actor-musician production by the Classical Theatre Project. As my version of Act I might become top-heavy with music due to other additions I'm making (*more on that momentarily*), I'd love to adopt this choice.
- **Hippie Life** – Originally conceived, but never used, as a Best New Song Oscar contender for the *Hair* film, Rado began occasionally incorporating it into

¹³ Lyndon Baines Johnson assumed the office of President of the United States following the assassination of John F. Kennedy and governed during the majority of the Vietnam War.

¹⁴ The Interborough Rapid Transit Company used to operate part of the NYC subway system, and so "the IRT" was used as a generic term, much like "Kleenex" came to refer to tissues in general rather than just that specific brand.

¹⁵ This should be self-explanatory.

European tours of *Hair* he directed from 1995-99, in roughly the spot where "1930s"¹⁶ normally occurs in Act I. He staged it with "American Indian dancing and drumming," and the song proved "dynamic and a real crowd pleaser." It reportedly caught on so well that if "Hippie Life" wasn't included, audiences would demand it as an encore, which presumably explains its odd end-of-show placement in the currently licensed script. An Oregon production in 2000 directed by Randy Bowser placed it before "Frank Mills," as a stoned Jeanie rambles about the virtues of pot and the others invite the audience to the Be-In; if one moves "Don't Put It Down" to Act II, as I would, putting "Hippie Life" there fills the gap left behind with a similarly up-tempo number. Additionally, like many songs I'd restore from *DisinHAIRited*, it serves the function of enhancing (or replacing) dialogue.

Speaking of *DisinHAIRited*, there are two types of songs I'd like to restore: those that were musical settings of dialogue from the show, and those that pave over cracks in the plot or resolve hanging threads rising from years of revisions that weren't exacting when it came to smaller details.¹⁷

Examples of the former – all of which fall into the "if it exists, why not use it" category – include:

- **I Dig** – Drawn from Jeanie's monologue about her crush on Claude.
- **Hello There** – Already partially in the show as "1930s," I'd use the full version, which musicalizes the article Claude is reading at that point.
- **Mr. Berger** – A faster-paced version of the scene where Berger's expelled from high school, set to a melody similar to "Sheila Franklin."
- **I'm Hung** – Part of the show in previews, but deleted before its Broadway opening. This is a setting of Berger's speech before he rips the shirt Sheila gave him.

Examples of the latter include:

- **Exanaplanatooch** – this song was in the original 1967 Off-Broadway production, but didn't make it past previews on Broadway. It has since been restored to some revivals, including the aforementioned American Theatre Company and Classical Theatre Project productions. Rado feels that Claude's "flights of fantasy [...] are crucial to his story and his restlessness." I'm not inclined to disagree.
- **You Are Standing On My Bed** – also technically an example of the former, as this musicalizes a scene between Claude and Sheila dealing with mutual awkwardness over whether or not they'll make love before he leaves that's included in the early script published by Pocket Books. Without this moment,

¹⁶ Also known as "1930s Music," "Hello There," or "The Stoned Age," depending on which score or recording one consults.

¹⁷ This is in keeping with MacDermot's later revision of the score as licensed, which musicalized large (previously spoken) portions of Claude's trip in Act II for a more rock-operatic effect, and would also make the decision to open *Hair* with many short introduction songs in lieu of dialogue, inspired by a band Gerry and Jim saw, less of one that sticks out like a sore thumb.

one of the few plot threads even laypeople can identify in the show – one often reintroduced in most revivals, I might add – is left unresolved, and “The Bed” (frequently cut because its purpose is misunderstood, and sadly not missed by most when this is so) registers as nothing more than a super-exuberant, big kind of orgasmic moment that takes things up to a new frenzy for no apparent reason.

Switching gears from songs I'd add or move around to general plot elements, the question of the show's timeline has arisen now and again. This seems a no-brainer; *Hair* is the quintessential Sixties musical and the licensed script doesn't leave this a mystery: “The setting indicates the fluid-abstract world of the 1960's as seen by, for, and about the ‘Flower Children’ of the period.” But that hasn't stopped many a production from having relevance to today's audience, or, in periods where it doesn't have currency, desperately trying to.

This started small. The original Off-Broadway production, as heard on the cast recording, set *Hair* firmly in the present (i.e., 1967). When the show moved to Broadway, chronological references (such as the dialogue before “I Got Life”) were updated to 1968. Per Nina Machlin Dayton, curator of the *Hair* Archives, from then on the production constantly changed dates and topical references to maintain currency (by closing night, for example, the spoken line was “This is 1972, dearies, not 1942”). It grew to a point where the short-lived 1977 revival grafted very Seventies references onto a very Sixties script, arguing in a Playbill note that it was in *Hair*'s nature to live in the present and make reference to it in its free form, and many noteworthy productions in the show's history (the 1980 Off-Broadway production directed by Richard Haase, the 2001 Vienna revival, the 2005 Gate Theatre London production, and so forth) have even updated *Hair* to the present or near-future, with varying degrees of success.

Productions that update *Hair* are few and far between for a reason: the idea comes very easily, but it's hard to execute well. *Hair* works best as a celebration of the late Sixties, and presenting it as anything other than a total period piece is insulting the audience's intelligence by assuming that they're incapable of drawing parallels to today's world. The question, then, is where in the late Sixties the show falls.

The first clue to ascertaining proper timeframe is the opening number, which references the signs that the Age of Aquarius is dawning: the moon in the seventh house, Jupiter aligning with Mars, and so on. The authors frequently play with the idea that this movement was connected astrologically to the heavens. So, when did the Age of Aquarius begin? Technically, it didn't start until 1968, which seems like an argument in favor of going with the flow of the licensed script. But think in terms of a sunrise; it's coming up on the horizon, but it's not there yet. To quote James Rado's extended lyrics, their “light will lead the way / [they] are the spirit of the Age of Aquarius.” Dawn is only just beginning; much like the feted Summer of Love technically began with the Love Pageant Rally at Golden Gate Park in San Francisco on October 6, 1966, the day LSD became federally illegal, rather than the release of the Beatles' seminal album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* on June 1, 1967.

Moreover, the show seems to evoke a specific moment in the evolution of the hippie movement, a time when they began to realize that peace and love wouldn't always save

the day. During the fabled Summer, as many as 100,000 young people flocked to the Haight-Ashbury district in San Francisco (or to Berkeley, or other nearby Bay Area cities) to join in a popularized version of the hippie experience – free food, free drugs, free love, free clinic, and even a free store that gave away basic necessities to anyone who needed them. It drew together people from all walks of life: teenagers and college students drawn by their peers and the allure of a cultural utopia; middle-class vacationers; even partying military personnel from nearby bases. By October, however, the dream was over: on the 6th, the Haight district staged a symbolic mock funeral ceremony, “The Death of the Hippie.” Said Mary Kasper, one of the organizers: “We wanted to signal that this was the end of it, don’t come out. Stay where you are! Bring the revolution to where you live. Don’t come here because it’s over and done with.”

Indeed it was; *Hair* brims with signs that its hippies are learning just how hard life can be in the Village when mommy and daddy are not sending them checks every month. To quote Jeanie in one of *Hair*’s many scripts: “I wired my parents for money. I told them I was pregnant. They said: ‘Stay pregnant.’”¹⁸ At this point, many hippie communities, including the Haight, were becoming shells of their former selves, rife with overcrowding, homelessness, hunger, drug problems, and crime. A hippie alone could be a hippie tempting fate. As far as most parents were concerned, if their kids wanted to live in squalor, let them. They made their bed, now they can lie in it. And those who still cared about their offspring’s survival did their best to convince them to return to the “straight” lifestyle, as Claude’s parents do.

Autumn (or, appropriately enough, “the fall”) is inevitably followed by winter, one of the darkest and coldest seasons. We see a cold, blustery winter morning at the protest outside the Induction Center (though, as will become clear in a later section, I don’t believe the weather is strictly literal), which is referenced with lines in “Flesh Failures” like “Walking proudly in our winter coats...” Winter ’67 / early spring ’68 would have been just enough time for Claude to have completed his training and been shipped off to Vietnam. How fitting that, when Claude dies and the Tribe pleads with whatever higher power they believe in to put an end to man’s inhumanity to man, the future doesn’t look all that bright or warm.

To sum up this long thought process at last, I don’t think it’s a coincidence that *Hair*’s story follows the main events of the hippie era almost to a T, even hinting at the peak of the scene that followed with Woodstock and the walls crashing down with another rock festival, Altamont, to say nothing of eerily presaging – with Sheila’s account of chemical warfare on the streets of D.C. – the shooting of innocent students at universities by the government, and (though this may be drawing too long a bow) the dawn of a much different tribe led by one Mr. Manson if Berger’s darker side ever meshes with his charisma to disastrous results.

And people wonder why *Hair* is labeled a cultural snapshot. It’s not really about any of these things, and yet because it spares neither the details nor the larger shapes of the narrow experience on which it focuses so tightly, it implies – perhaps prophesies – the

¹⁸ In the original Off-Broadway script, before actress Sally Eaton’s pregnancy was written into the show, the point was driven home even more. Replace the word “pregnant” with “stranded” and you’ve got the general idea. Paulus’ revival includes both.

topics I've raised, and many others. With all this in mind, I would set the show in 1967 as it turns into 1968. It's the most organic and fitting timeline for the piece.

Before we leave this section, I owe a quick note to the subject of Claude's parents. *Hair*, in large part, has always been about the kids' point of view, which was more often than not antithetical to the establishment, but it's not a fully anti-establishment polemic. Especially in the original Off-Broadway version, it tried to understand the adults' point of view as well.

To quote the Off-Broadway director, Gerald Freedman, "The parents were played by adults to play up the conflict between youth and the establishment, so we knew where the kids were coming from." The introduction to the Pocket Books edition of the script bears this out: "MOM and DAD [...] are about forty-five years old. They play six or seven different roles each, weaving through the play as the representatives of 'the older generation.'" They were treated seriously, as the ultimate adult archetype: confused parents trying in vain to understand their children, unable to separate their view of today's world from yesterday. The "Margaret Mead" segment, as seen in the Pocket Books script, was originally a scene involving "Mom" and "Dad" and treated realistically (in the loosest sense), with both adults trying to understand the kids, why they grow their hair, who they seek to emulate, the seriousness of their views, and the like.¹⁹

A serious voice for the adult generation was not to be found in the O'Horgan staging. Though his intentions were apparently pure (one original cast member contends that Tom wanted to symbolize all of the possible backgrounds the kids had, onstage and in the audience), he decided to turn the parents into comic relief; "Dad" and "Mom" were both played with stereotyped buffoonery in gender-bending triplicate, with two women and one man as "Dad" (inevitably carrying bottles of hard liquor or wearing fake bald patches) and two men and one woman as "Mom" (one of them usually pushing a Hoover vacuum). Many budding comic actors with a gift for ad-lib, Paul Jabara and Meat Loaf among them, turned this scene into a showcase for that gift. This bit of business was so effective that it's preserved in the presently licensed script "as is."

I'd echo the choice of many revivals, but especially the Paulus production, in restoring the conceit of two adults playing the roles. They can still be played for laughs without sacrificing a realistic depiction of the alternate viewpoint.

Music and Lyrics

It's time to change focus to the score in general. Firstly, in revivals over the years, Rado has made minor – and major, including new verses – alterations to lyrics in many of the show's songs, including "Aquarius," "Donna," "Hashish," "Hair," "Easy to Be Hard," "Hippie Life," "Where Do I Go," "Oh Great God of Power," "Exanaplanatooch," and "Black Boys." Where they don't detract, I'm more than happy to use his newer inspirations. Die-hard fans of the original can complain all day about these changes, but they aren't

¹⁹ The conceit of sending up "Margaret Mead" as what was then termed a female impersonator was invented by original Broadway cast member Jonathan Kramer, who came up with the idea of shocking the audience by opening his "Tourist Lady" (as she was then known) costume to reveal an obviously male figure clad in nothing but jockey shorts.

different in a meaningful fashion except to nitpicking super-fans or people who've grown protective of the material in which they invested so much of their time and talent. In large part, an audience can live with them, and wouldn't know the difference.

As for musical arrangements, the sound of *Hair*'s score should live in the Sixties. Attempts have been made in the past to update it; when it was initially "adapted" (using that term loosely) for film in 1979, Galt MacDermot revamped the music and gave it a more timely sound. The bass was more prominent, the horns were ever-present, and the soundtrack seemed at times to have a disco-fied, funky sheen. I agree with James Rado when he says the film's musical arrangements "definitely [...] lacked [...] the authentic 60's feel." However, we differ on considering it an error in judgment for any stage production to base their orchestrations on the film arrangements in any way, though this is apparently negotiable if one listens to revival recordings.

In my exhaustive listening to numerous *Hair* albums, I've come up with a list that reflects where I'd draw inspiration for the treatment of various songs. By and large, one should rely on the original Broadway cast recording, but other recordings make some useful choices to bear in mind, and original cast members have clued me in on mistakes in the licensed score worth correcting. All of this follows in show order below, with audio examples where readily available.²⁰

AQUARIUS

- Cut time (in 2s).
- Refer to the [film version](#) for how to incorporate Rado's new extended lyrics without dragging out the song (replace the "When the moon..." and "Harmony and understanding" repeats with relevant verses), and to the [original Broadway cast recording](#) to get the rhythm as notated in the score. This [live performance](#) by MacDermot's New Pulse Jazz Band and Singers has great vibes, too.

"Transcendental meditation..."

- While not a formal musical number, this segment is musicalized as part of "You Are Standing on My Bed" on *DisinHAIRited*; the performers playing Berger and the Tribe should refer to this section of that song as a guide, and if the song is used later in Act II, this shouldn't be repeated at that point, instead following the published vocal selections which lack this segment.

DONNA

- Cut time.
- A bootleg recording of the American Theatre Company production records a fun take on "America the Beautiful" from the Tribe and band as they segue from Berger's speech into the song's intro. I'd love to incorporate that.

HASHISH

- 12/8, counted as a very slow 4.

²⁰ Any music listed in the currently licensed script or conductor's score that doesn't appear here should be considered included, not cut; I left out those titles here to stick to what's most familiar from the vast preponderance of the show's recordings.

- Follow the [1993 London revival recording](#)'s prominent ascending bass line. Do not follow its almost entirely rewritten lyrics; Rado has long cooled on this change.

SODOMY

- 4/4, slowly, with a 6/8 feel.

COLORED SPADE

- Cut time, medium.
- MacDermot is no stranger to hip-hop, his work having been sampled by such rappers as Busta Rhymes, Run DMC, Handsome Boy Modelling School, DJ Vadim, DJ Premier, Oh No, and MF Doom. It's not like rap (or hip-hop) is a particularly new phenomenon. The original production of *Godspell* incorporated it in the telling of a parable, suggested by a cast member who witnessed nascent rap on the streets of Chicago in the early Seventies. Without straying too much from the original arrangement and feel, maybe Hud gets to patter over a funky R&B backing.

MANCHESTER, ENGLAND

- 4/4, slowly.

I'M BLACK

- 4/4, fast. Bar 1 is same as bar 42 of "Manchester." "In-vi-si-ble" lyric transition at end is in strict tempo.

AIN'T GOT NO

- 3/4, slow.

DEAD END

- 4/4, slow hard rock.
- See *Fresh HAIR* (the London cast equivalent of *DisinHAIRited*) for an exemplary edgy-sounding version. This [studio recording](#) on a MacDermot compilation is good as well – not too slow, not too fast, but plenty of soul.

SHEILA FRANKLIN / I BELIEVE IN LOVE / AIN'T GOT NO GRASS

- All cut time, fast. "Grass" should be in 4/4 instead of 3/4.

AIR

- Cut time, medium.

HELLO THERE

- Cut time, swing feel.

I GOT LIFE

- Cut time. First eleven bars free, dictated by singer. A la the 1993 German recording, chords in free section follow after lyrics, not during them, and bass stays on a constant F on the verses for more driving feel.

GOING DOWN

- Cut time. "Free" opening measures in tempo.

HAIR

- 4/4. First eight bars are free.

MY CONVICTION

- 12/8. Piano and acoustic guitar only.

INITIALS

- 4/4, slow minuet feel. A cappella.

EASY TO BE HARD

- 4/4.
- [Film version](#) all the way; much slower, more soulful, good basic feel and tempo. Skip the late Seventies touches and stick to a comfortable key for Sheila. If one wants to combine some of the film's coloration with the basic approach of the Broadway, this [live performance](#) by MacDermot's band is the ticket.

HIPPIE LIFE

- 4/4. Sound must emphasize primitive American "Indian" beat.
- A good example is [this recording](#) from the October 2007 Met Theatre production in Los Angeles.

FRANK MILLS

- 4/4. Light, gentle, with acoustic guitar improvisations.
- The *Fresh HAIR* version has the slight touch of country it needs.

BE-IN

- 4/4.
- *Fresh HAIR* and the Japanese cast recording give good, interesting examples of how exotic the opening percussion should sound. 1993 German recording has the Ravi Shankar Indian sound fully developed, ideal starting point for the blend of straight-ahead rock and unusual. [1993 London recording](#) uses all the measures in the score, and has a terrific brass line worth borrowing. Assimilating vibes from this [studio recording](#) – which has unique chord changes and great touches on piano and percussion – wouldn't hurt either.

WHERE DO I GO?

- 4/4, as simple and elegant as possible.

ELECTRIC BLUES

- 4/4.
- Opening softer section should sound like The Mamas and the Papas.

OH GREAT GOD OF POWER

- 4/4, majestically slow.

- The *Fresh HAIR* recording exemplifies this song best; definitely want the timpani.

MANCHESTER (III)

- 4/4. Short straight reprise.

BLACK BOYS / WHITE BOYS

- Both 4/4.

WALKING IN SPACE

- 4/4, slow, with tempo changes.
- [Original Broadway cast recording](#), [film version](#), and [1993 London recording](#) all good examples.

ABIE BABY

- 4/4.
- This designation also refers to "Yes, I's Finished..." which was part and parcel of this on the original recordings.
- Another quick note: the director has a choice to make between the original spoken "jive Gettysburg Address" with its Ink Spots / Five Satins style backup, or "Fourscore," the version MacDermot musicalized for the film which has since been incorporated into revivals. If I have more of an actress than a singer, she can focus on the jokes; if I have a singer whose comic timing is about akin to that of a lima bean, she can sing the shit out of it and I'll dispense some of the punchlines among whatever "slaves" aren't covering the background vocals. If I get really lucky, and have someone who can riff like Aretha *and* like Jenifer Lewis, then she can go for the gold on all counts and knock it out of the park.

GIVE UP ALL DESIRES

- 3/4, later 4/4.

3-5-0-0

- 4/4, slow.
- [Original Broadway cast recording](#) has great Hendrix opening guitar; [1993 London recording](#) has dramatic dynamics. This [early studio recording](#) has useful touches as well.

WHAT A PIECE OF WORK IS MAN / HOW DARE THEY TRY

- 4/4.
- I might follow the student-directed 2016 production at NYFA's California campus (can be viewed [here](#)), which benefitted from guidance from original cast members, in treating "What a Piece..." as part of the Tribe waking up from the trip, sung by Claude and Berger. It's a worthwhile consideration.

GOOD MORNING STARSHINE

- 4/4.
- Refer to 1993 German recording for interesting chord substitutions.

THE BED / AQUARIUS GOODNIGHTS / REPRISE: AIN'T GOT NO

- 4/4.
- Crucial that these numbers maintain a pulsing rhythm even during brief dialogue segments.
- What is written in the score is best approximated by combining 1993 London, original Broadway, and Japanese cast recordings. The last in particular has the best version of the "Ain't Got No" reprise.

THE FLESH FAILURES (LET THE SUN SHINE IN)

- 4/4, with changes.
- Starts very softly with solo voice.
- Original Broadway cast, film, 1993 London, and 1993 German recordings are all good examples. These [studio](#) and [live](#) recordings by MacDermot and his band also provide coloration and detail worthy of exploration.

General Staging and Design Ideas

Production design is the key to any show, providing the sense of time and place which little else approximates. But it has to fit exactly, like the pieces to a jigsaw puzzle, or it can sink a show. With *Hair*, the primary complaint original cast members – who don't have to be taught how it worked, and thus are very protective of the way *they* did it – have about newer productions is the slickness. People I spoke with said that the Paulus production "just didn't feel right," it "reeked of falsehood."²¹ *Hair* is at its best when it presents an honest portrait of the era; the ideal productions make up for lack of polish and resources with spirit and a certain rough charm, especially if they really pack an emotional wallop toward the end of the show.

I have alluded elsewhere to my production mirroring events in the hippie movement from sunrise to sunset, and I would carry this through to production design, much like Vincente Minnelli followed the changing seasons in his film *Meet Me in St. Louis*. We would also progress with fashion as it changed over this period, taking in everything along the spectrum of authentic countercultural looks from the varied, colorful West Coast palette to East Coast styles. "Anti-fashion" is a good concept to keep in mind. Colors, textures, and patterns are butted up against each other in ways that were considered bad taste before (and after) the hippie era. To purposely flaunt their eclectic ideas of dress is one of the keys to the look. A lived-in, but still colorful day-to-day look is needed.

However, it's also important to note that we're dealing with a group of New York street urchins. These kids don't have money and are almost always seen outside, so the dressier fashions of the time wouldn't be appropriate. Indeed, the reality of what "living on the street" means in a contemporary context is very incongruous with the makeshift, day-to-day living of liberated NYC youth of the Sixties and Seventies; it might be very

²¹ In fact, the most common joke among veterans was that the nude scene had become a fashion show instead of a significant moment, an opportunity to see if the carpet matched the drapes on the rare few who hadn't gotten full Brazilians in anticipation of the big reveal.

interesting if this Tribe singing about their idyllic community look, smell, and act more like today's homeless than a Sixties costume party.

On another costume design note, I was inspired by an untitled comic by *Subnormality* and *PeopleWatching* creator Winston Rowntree about two kids, a guy and a girl, who run into each other on the way to some event. They're kind of flirty, she wants to draw comics, a few political references that could apply to any era are sprinkled in, and then there's a horrific twist ending (you have to check the last page carefully for a caption at the very bottom when you read it to know that an historical event is being referenced) that I won't spoil. [Read it for yourself](#). I liked that twist of not knowing until the very end that the comic is not set in the time period the reader automatically assumes, and though the parallel would not be 100%, I'd like to attempt something similar – albeit mildly more palatable for “the old guard” – with *Hair*.

Namely, we open the show with a look apparently hearkening back to hippie days (with one or two modern pieces, or at least neutral period-appropriate clothing not dissimilar to today's fashions, but definitely not overtly hippie), and gradually introduce more later looks/fashions/etc. (not a hop through the decades, straight to now) until, come the finale, the clothing and whatnot is up to date. Perhaps the protest/rally has the odd poster with references that may have current application as well. The point of all this modernity bleeding through and then taking over is to drive home the story's timelessness. The comparison isn't perfect (let's face it, *Hair* talks about the times it takes place in every five seconds, the exact same execution would be impossible), but I'd like to achieve a similar effect to Rowntree's comic, to give the audience that unsettling realization of how far we still have to go, where people are like “Okay, that's still the show I know, but they looked like kids today and didn't sound that different either...” It'd take some adjusting for the audience, both newbies and longtime fans, but I think it'd emphasize the show's message and accent the characters' personalities, while bringing something new to the piece, especially for those that only know it for three out-of-context radio hits. This gradual progression would also both establish that the show is still set in the Sixties and potentially off-set the awful feeling some people who lived through the era get when they see actors trying to look and act like hippies.

Moving to staging, I have one general idea for an overarching framework and two ideas for key sequences in the show. As this proposal is already running long, I'll do my best to get through them as quickly as possible, starting with the former.

As much as I love Tom O'Horgan's original staging of *Hair*, and would try to utilize some of its best elements as much as possible, I get the distinct impression it didn't prioritize the plot. Working the way he did may have made it more interesting for O'Horgan – after all, aside from substituting songs for dialogue in covering exposition through most of Act I, *Hair*'s more or less conventional in its structure, especially compared to its Off-Off-Broadway forebears – but it didn't make it easier for anyone new to tackle the piece going forward. For everything the revivals get wrong, what they get right is bringing as much of the story into focus as possible. But they're missing a possible element that I would incorporate into my production.

To quote Rado's earlier justification of re-adding “Exanaplanatooch,” Claude's “flights of fantasy [...] are crucial to his story and his restlessness.” And among those flights of

fantasy, Claude Bukowski fancied himself a filmmaker. The clues are all there: the references to Fellini, Antonioni, and Polanski in "Manchester, England," the infamous "movie scene" following Berger's fight with Sheila, the line about "fashion[ing his] future on films in space" in "The Flesh Failures." The Pocket Books edition of the script even has Claude attempt to impress Sheila by showing her a screenplay he wrote about all of them. He may never have had a shot at rivaling early Lucas, Scorsese, or Spielberg, but if he wasn't drafted, or if he'd survived Vietnam, who knows what might have come from this dude from Flushing with the daring to reinvent himself as a British expatriate?

Thing is, barring those lyrics and a single added line about writing a movie in the "I Got Life" scene, this plot thread is entirely discarded in most revivals when it could be used to string together the rest of the story. As close as the Tribe keeps to one another, Claude's always just a step removed. He goes through bouts of distance from the group, particularly as he realizes that as carefree as they seem, they miss the forest for the trees. What better way for him to realize this than through his attempts to achieve a director's studied detachment? Maybe he's got a Super 8 camera, or a sketchpad on which he's forever scribbling notes or mapping out storyboards. Perhaps if my production utilizes projections to provide constantly shifting backdrops as well as commentary on the action, as some productions of *Hair* have done, Claude's "movie" can be the literal lens through which we view the show... scenes begin when we enter his silent mini-flicks, which then expand with sound and color on the stage below, or one of his sketches similarly "comes alive," perhaps even with pre-shot footage of the stage cast with enhancement and rotoscoping (à la *Waking Life*) for proper psychedelic effect. The footage could even be calibrated to resemble the Sixties films that influenced Claude, with low-budget visual effects like double exposures, the stuff common to flicks like *Blow-Up*, *Invocation of My Demon Brother*, *8½*, or *Easy Rider*.

Now, I move on to the pair of specific sequences to which I'd pay special attention in staging, starting with Claude's revelatory hallucination. I want this sequence to have an appropriately dream-like feel, starting off in the psychedelic style of Peter Max and *Yellow Submarine*, and then taking a turn into the kind of work Gerald Scarfe did in *Pink Floyd: The Wall*, some of the darkest and most disturbing animation I've ever witnessed. Whether this is evident in projections, or in costuming along the lines of later O'Horgan work or a Julie Taymor piece, I leave to my creative team. But that's the vibe I'm going for. Tying in with the above, reminiscent of tales of John Lennon's frantic illustrations during his first acid trip, Claude should attempt in some way to document what he sees, even though – on some level – he knows that he will never capture it.

Next up is the show's ending. In my experience, when performed as written, the audience doesn't always realize Claude has died. As scripted, the Tribe sings "Aquarius Goodnights," their farewell to Claude, following which he's left alone onstage singing a terrified, mournful reprise of "Ain't Got No" during which he's shot to death by a Vietnamese sniper. Cut to the Tribe's protest at the Induction Center, where Claude's ghost – unseen by the others – appears for "The Flesh Failures," which featured (in Tom O'Horgan's staging) a "symbolic" death where the Tribe covered Claude's face with their hands and laid him to rest at center stage on an American flag. And people have been misinterpreting it ever since.

One fan opined that he saw Claude's return to sing the finale as a resurrection moment (though not in the triumphant, Christ-like sense), while others have stated that they felt the Vietnamese sniper was an unnecessary addition, because they always read "The Flesh Fails" as taking place in Vietnam, with Claude wishing one last time to be the boy from Manchester as his life ends, and "Let the Sun Shine In" as the dirge at his wake or funeral. The invitation to the audience to dance onstage which follows makes the moment all the more perplexing. Even an original cast member once told me: "I don't know why Tom turned the chorus of 'Let the Sun Shine In' into a moment to come on stage with the cast and celebrate. I'm guessing that he may have been told to do so, as Claude's funeral is a downer²², but it's the major flaw of the show. Claude just died, why would the Tribe be celebrating?"

However, I always felt this reading was too literal. How could the Tribe expect Claude to show up at the protest if enough time had passed that he was already in Vietnam? Had they really not noticed he was gone that long? Didn't anybody hear he'd shipped out?

What made the most sense to me, especially if "The Bed" is there to allow time for a costume change (sweat, face blackened by cordite/oil/grime, clad in web gear/helmet/boots, etc.), is that the show flashes forward to the moment of Claude's death, the price he pays for "doing the right thing," and as he dies, he imagines he's at the protest several months earlier, at the moment his friends realize he's missing.

As he departs from this life, he realizes what's happening and accepts it, and then we catch up to reality by the time Sheila takes the lead, the Tribe parting when they reach the refrain's a cappella portion (as in the Paulus revival) to reveal a coffin draped in an American flag. Especially with the Tribe in fully modern dress by the final moments of the show, the true meaning of the moment will be conveyed, not the happy-clappy Fifth Dimension take on events.

²² There may be some truth to this theory; one source records that Michael Butler felt the show's ending Off-Broadway (six wind-up toy tanks moving slowly towards each other, blasting away as the lights dimmed), while an eloquent metaphor for the folly of war, needed to be replaced with something that left the audience on a high.