

# Hair: The American Tribal Love-Rock Musical Review



by Sara  
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You say you want a revolution? Well, make your way over to the Zeiterion's production of *Hair*, and you'll be sure to see the flower power of 1967 making a difference with peace, love, and long hair. With the stage set, people shuffling to their seats, and young hippies roaming the throughout the crowd the air is thick with anticipation, awaiting to see what is going to take place. *Hair* is the musical to exemplify what a peaceful revolution was, and is, all about. It highlights events of the late 1960s as they truly were and, perhaps, even stir some old memories of a radical time. Yah dig man?



The idea of *Hair* was first conceived by two actors, Gerome Ragni and James Rado. Both had very different acting and musical techniques with Ragni being more experimental and Rado having a traditional Rogers and Hammerstein feel. However, when being cast together in the same show, the two became a sort of duo. Ragni and Rado started thinking of the conception of *Hair* after being exposed to the passion of the hippies' anti-war protests, liberation, and equality. Ragni and Rado even grew their hair out after integrating themselves into the hippie culture. The two based many of their characters and plot on people they had met in

streets and events that had actually taken place, such as an increase in students dropping out or getting kicked out of school and draft cards. After the script was completed the two needed to find a composer and Galt MacDermot was the perfect match. Although MacDermot did not follow the same hippie ideals as Ragni and Rado a large portion of the score was completed in three weeks and the entire musical was completed in three months.

At first, the musical did not sit well with many Broadway producers and was repetitively rejected. However, Joseph Papp, founder of the New York Shakespeare Festival was opening a new theatre complex in East Village called The Public Theatre, and he wanted to reach out beyond Shakespeare to different styles of plays. Papp produced *Hair* and it was his first non-Shakespeare play performed. At the Anspacher Theatre, one of the three to open in the Public Theatre, *Hair* debuted in the off-Broadway category on October 18, 1967.

*Hair* tells the story of a group of hippies in New York's East Villiage that band together and become a Tribe of anti-society ideals, such as the war. These friends try to change the ways of society bringing in with them the "Age of Aquarius." Through peaceful protests, drugs, meditation, sex, and their appearances (especially their hair) the Tribe yearns to show society how love can change everything.

The first act opens with meeting the Tribe and all their ideals and beliefs, presented in the song "Aquarius." We meet the main characters and the challenges some of them face with society and within themselves. The first act continues highlighting the beliefs and "customs" of the Tribe adding in the drama of a personal challenge. Claude, the "leader" of the tribe, is



Aquarius destined for greatness or madness. His parents don't understand his lifestyle and constantly pressure him about conforming to society (through getting a job, school, the war, etc.) Berger, Claude's best friend, is a free spirit doing what he wants, when he wants. Shelia, a passionate anti-war protestor, is Berger's, for lack of a better term, "girlfriend" and one of Claude's closest friends. Jeanie, an expecting mother and member of the tribe, is in love with Claude and wishes for his love in return. Claude, however, is in love with Shelia. Yet, this love triangle doesn't disintegrate any friendships. Rather, Claude receiving his draft card does. Many of the male Tribe members have received their draft cards and decide to burn them. Claude agrees to do it as well, but at the last minute changes his mind and keeps it. He is confused about what society is telling him to do and what he believes in.

The second act opens with Claude coming back from the army's induction center. As the Tribe gathers together (and takes up), Claude smokes a joint that was laced with a hallucinogenic. He starts to trip and has terrifying images of the Vietnam War, violence, and death. Upon waking up Claude declares that he can't "take this moment to moment living on the streets" and decides he wants to be invisible. The Tribe disbands and Claude is left with his own thoughts. Ultimately, the Tribe joins together for another protest and realizes that Claude cannot be found. He walks amongst them in an army suit with short hair, "like it or not, they got me."

The production of *Hair* was spectacular. The actors-to-audience interaction made the characters feel all the more real and really showed off how they were to present themselves to society. The energy was high throughout the entire show; there was not one moment where there was any sense of lagging or tiredness. Berger was beyond humorous; nobody could help but outwardly laugh whenever he took his place on stage. His

body movements and delivery of lines were so thorough throughout the entire show. The audience loved everything about Berger. Claude was exceptional. Having to balance the free spirit of Aquarius and the pressures of society within himself was obviously a challenge, but it was delivered beautifully. Within moments of happiness it shown through and through, yet when it was time for confusion and terror it radiated from him. The emotional journey of this character was truly felt. Many of the other main characters did a superb job as well. Woof, one of the Tribe members, was pure comic relief and notably adorable. His energy was bounding through the roof, and you couldn't help but love his goofiness. Hud, a black member of the Tribe, had a charismatic sensuality about him, but had an edginess when passionate about his beliefs. Shelia was pure flower power through and through. Her passion for making love a priority in the world was contagious. Jeanie, the silly mother-to-be, definitely had the audience wrapped up. Her humor was outwardly funny, and her sweet and, often crazy, demeanor added a touch that was unforgettable. The characters of the Tribe played their parts to a tee. The interaction between the Tribe and the audience was humorous, but it also brought the audience in deeper and captured the air of the Tribe so much more.

The music, orchestra and singing both, were well done. The voices integrated seamlessly with each other and the solos filled the theatre with such melodious beauty. So, if you dig a groovy time man, check out *Hair*, and you'll definitely "Let the Sun Shine In."

The show runs tonight, Saturday the 16<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 PM, and a Sunday matinee at 2:00 PM.

To buy tickets or if you have any questions visit the Zeiterion's website: <http://www.zeiterion.org/>

Or call: 508-997-5664

Box office number: 508-994-2900