

# The Theater: 'Hair,' a Love-Rock Musical, Inaugurates Shakespeare ...

By CLIVE BARNES By ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE The New York Times (by Neal Boenzi)

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## The Theater: 'Hair,' a Love-Rock Musical, Inaugurates Shakespeare Festival's Anspacher Playhouse

### Contemporary Youth Depicted in Play

By CLIVE BARNES

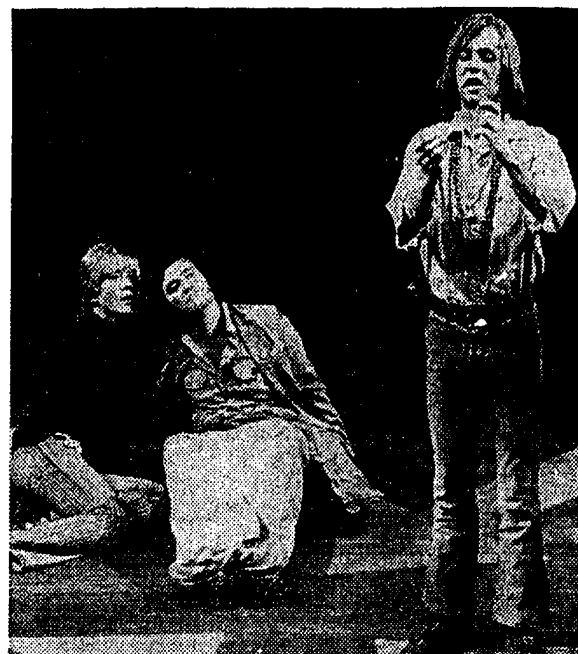
IF ONLY good intentions were golden, "Hair," at Joseph Papp's new Florence Sutro Anspacher Theater, would be great. As it is it is merely pretty good; an honest attempt to jolt the American musical into the nineteen-sixties, and a musical that is trying to relate to something other than Sigmund Romberg.

If it had a story—which to be honest it hasn't—that story would be about the young disenfranchised, turned on by pot, switched off by the draft, living and loving, the new products of affluence, the dispossessed drop-outs. That, if it had a story, would be what "Hair" is about.

But "Hair" is sparing storywise—as someone might say. A boy wants to get to bed with a certain girl before he is drafted—yet that is not what "Hair" is all about. Much more, it is a mood picture of a generation—a generation dominated by drugs, sex and the two wars, the one about color and the one about Vietnam. Not that these two are made so separate. As someone says: "The draft is white people sending black people to fight yellow people to protect the country they stole from red people." Well, at least the description is colorful.

The book and lyrics for "Hair," described as an American tribal love-rock musical, are by Gerome Ragni and James Rado, with music by Galt MacDermot. The intention is clear enough—to show a generation that has freaked out of the American "bedrock foundation of baths and underarm deodorant." The picture given, however, is only honest in parts, for the authors not only have little or no interest in dramatic structure, they are also easy prey for the first shiver of theatrical exaggeration that strikes them.

The piece has, however, two sovereign qualities. The first is the music by Mr. MacDermot, which is rock and swingy, and while not especially original in itself, at least does not sound like a deliberate pastiche of Rodgers and Hammerstein. There was a rough, tough and lusty quality to the music that went far in compensating for its gaucheness. The other quality is simply the likeability and honesty of its cast.



Steve Dean, Gerome Ragni and Walker Daniels in the play

### The Cast

HAIR, rock 'n' roll musical. Book and lyrics by Gerome Ragni and James Rado; music by Galt MacDermot; staged by Gerald Freedman; setting by Ming Cho Lee; costumes by Theoni V. Aldredge; lighting by Marlin Aronstein; musical director, John Morris; production stage manager, Russell McGrath. Presented by New York Shakespeare Festival, produced by Joseph Papp; associate producer, Bernard Gersten. At the Florence Sutro Anspacher Theater, 425 Lafayette Street.

Dionne	Jonelle Allen
Dad	Ed Crowley
Claude	Walker Daniels
Woof	Steve Dean
Joannie	Sally Eaton
Mom	Marilene Maricle
Sheila	Jill O'Hara
Crissy	Shelley Plimpton
Berger	Gerome Ragni
Hud	Arnold Wilkerson
Susan	Susan Balson
Linda	Linda Compton
Suzannah	Suzannah Evans
Lynda	Lynda Guddie
Louise	Jane Levin
Alma	Alma Robinson
Charlie	Warren Burton
Thommie	Thommie Bush
Bill	William Hester
Paul	Paul Jabara
Bob	Bob Johnson
Jim	Edward Murphy Jr.

The director, Gerald Freedman, has not been able to impose any unity on the show—this hair is strictly untrimmed—but he has helped to bring out the natural vitality of both the piece and the very young performers.

Protesting, laughing, fighting, loving, rebel-without-causing, these young people spill across the stage with a sprawling, grinning arrogance. They seem to believe totally in what they are doing, which is always wonderful to see in the theater, and their rather uncivil disobedience is made sharp and to the point.

Dancing, singing, swinging, prancing, the open stage becomes their arena for protest—and although reality is always quite a long way away, it is always just near enough for you to be uncomfortably aware how far away it is.

### Structure Is the First Saved as Landmark

By ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE

THERE is a ghost in Joseph Papp's theater; a most un-Shakespearean ghost with the unlikely name of Austin L. Sands. Mr. Sands was a 19th-century New York merchant and insurance man. As reported by the diarist George Templeton Strong, "old Sand's spook" appeared to Joseph Cogswell, director of the Astor Library, now the New York Shakespeare Festival Public Theater, three times in 1860.

By rights, Mr. Sands and Mr. Cogswell should have been present at the opening of Mr. Papp's theater. This opening is a very special occasion. It marks the transformation of the old Astor Library into the new home of the Shakespeare Festival—the first structure saved and remodeled for re-use under the New York Landmarks Law.

The merits of the play and the technical qualities of the theater are my colleague's responsibility. But as architectural preservation—that combination of civilized sentiment and historic sensibility that makes cities rich and real and has nothing to do with real-estate values that make cities rich and sterile—the new theater is a heart-warming hit.

In the Astor Library's former main hall, a handsome, 50-foot high, skylit chamber with a two-tiered row of classical cast-iron colonnades built in 1851 and scheduled for demolition in 1965, there is now one of the most delightful small theaters in New York.

(House seats, Mr. Papp, for John Jacob Astor, who left \$400,000 in his will to construct the original building on then-fashionable Lafayette Street, for William B. Astor, who added the south section in 1859, and the later John Jacob Astor, who built the north wing in 1881).

The theater, at 425 Lafayette Street, seats 299, not counting ghosts, and cost \$445,000, roughly the same price as the original building. "We were going to have an 800-seat theater," Mr. Papp says, "but we got to love that room. We were showing everyone that room and then we were showing the plans that destroyed the room and we decided against it."

Under the Landmarks Law, the exterior of a landmark building must be preserved,



The New York Times (by Neal Boenzi)

Main hall of New York Shakespeare Festival Public Theater, formerly old Astor Library, at 425 Lafayette Street, is first structure saved for re-use under New York Landmarks Law.

### The Program

FLORENCE SUTRO ANSPACHER THEATER, architecture by Giorgio Cavaglieri; mechanical engineer, Nicola Ginzburg; structural engineer, James Hufnagle; contractor, York Construction Company; theater designer, Ming Cho Lee; theater lighting, Marlin Aronstein; acoustical consultant, Christopher Jaffe. At the New York Shakespeare Festival Public Theater, 425 Lafayette Street.

but there are no restrictions on interior remodeling.

Steeply ranged red velvet seats now lead down on three sides of the virtually intact main hall to a floor level stage. Cream-white Victorian balustrades and columns with leafy cast-capitals have been restored and picked out in real gold leaf. "A quality decision," Mr. Papp explains. "The building kept forcing us into quality decision." (Sorry to add one more crack to the

tiresome total about Lincoln Center, but most of the gold leaf there is fake.)

The old skylights in the gently curved ceiling have been cleaned and lit softly from behind. Red velvet curtains draw on motorized tracks backing the second level colonnades.

On the fourth side of the room, behind the stage, two of the classical columns have been stripped down to their iron shafts and made part of a supporting structure for lights, sound baffles and a second-story catwalk.

All this "working equipment" is left bare and painted a deliberately contrasting black; modern structural "brutalism" played against genteel

Victorian propriety. It is a theatrical exercise in the esthetics of contrast, and it works. The theater has beauty and charm. It says a lot, in succinct architectural terms, of change and continuity in slightly more than a century—one of the most fascinating centuries in the history of the adventure called civilization. Why does New York continue to throw it away?

During that century, visiting celebrities toured the Astor Library as one of the city's chief cultural attractions and found its skylit halls "bright as a house of glass." The building closed at sundown because it had no artificial light. Mr. Sands came later.

The book collections, ac-

cording to a guide of the period, did not contain "all the treasures of the British Museum and the Bibliothèque Nationale," but, it added sanguinely, "that fact is not easily discovered." It scarcely matters now. The 200,000 books are gone, and so are the thousands of refugees who passed through the building's halls from 1920 to 1965, when it served as headquarters for HIAS, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society.

What remains is the continuum called culture, the mixture of past and present, of art, history and humanity, of creative experiment and monumental elegance, that bring people to cities like lemmings to the sea. The strong survive and add to the urban heritage; the weak disappear forever into Uris buildings.

In January 1966, just after the Shakespeare Theater had arranged to purchase the Astor Library from an apartment house developer who had bought it from HIAS, with the 18-month old Landmarks Commission as intermediary, this writer stood in the bone-cracking chill of the deserted and grimy north hall. There is nothing colder than death, and a dead landmark is no exception.

Today, for \$2,535 the north hall has been given fresh paint, gold curtains and new life. Some \$61,490 will turn it into a fully rehabilitated rehearsal and recital hall. The almost identical south hall, still grimy, is a shop for sets. Both are acoustically excellent, spatially extravagant period gems, unreproducible now, with the same skylit ceilings and double tiered rows of classical colonnades as the new theater in the central hall.

In the partly refurbished lobby, brick arches at the rear are left pointedly bare. That will be \$71,590 more. Below, carved out of solid masonry piers and arches is the shell of a second 299-seat theater, shored up by wooden scaffolding while it waits for funds. With structural steel needed, it will cost \$784,713. Approximately \$1-million of an estimated total of \$3-million has been spent; one year of a three-year restoration job is complete.

Outside, the solid brick and brownstone structure is untouched. It has been called "Italianate," "Byzantine," "Rundbogenstil," and "German Renaissance" by 113 years of scholars, admirers and detractors. Call it anything, but call it a success.