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Hair

by Daniel Scheffler
EDGE Contributor
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Steel Burkhardt and Paris Remillard in "Hair" (Source:O & M)

So you'd think that **"Hair"** might be dated, irrelevant to a modern crew cut society? You might even feel uncomfortable with all the tangled, decadent styles of plumage all over a stage. Rethink your mane, or let "Hair" assist. Take to the streets with "Hair."

"Hair" is a musical about a bohemian and politically active tribe of New York individuals fighting against conscription to a faceless Vietnam War. The crew spends its days talking about a revolution and sexually expressing themselves in as many ways as possible.

"Hair" came from a rebellion against society and the restrictions of civilization, in a time where long hair was seen as a truly rioting act. Inspired by a Jim Dine painting with a comb and a few strands of hair, "Hair" was a reflection of how extensive and engrossed the mind could become.

The production is led by the self-assured ringleader with the wildest locks, Berger, played by stud Steel Burkhardt, and evened by sexually, and generally, confused Claude, played poignantly by Paris Remillard. The male actors shine vibrantly and the females, Kacie Sheik, Caren Lyn Tackett and Phyre Hawkins trail slightly.

Claude, vibrant Berger, and roommate Sheila struggle to live their modern lives with conservative parents and society. Within their group of friends Claude has to decide whether to resist the draft as his

friends have done or to give in to the persuasion of his society. Claude battles with his own sense of pacifism and to which extent he can uphold his value structure.

"Hair" has regrowth, and it is more relevant than ever. With the dawning of the Age of Aquarius and the renewed interest in conscious living, "Hair" pledges a shiny commitment to enlightenment.

Theatre lovers will be fully embraced by this shining cast of youngsters. Jolting their sexy, and often naked bodies, across psychedelic stage songs like "Aquarius" and the grinning "Good Morning Starshine" truly fulfill the eager audience. The dancing soon takes to the seats with decked out hippies rubbing the heads of the crowds. The magical references throughout the production include "Romeo and Juliet," Allen Ginsburg, and even "Gone with the Wind." A real dream of contemporary culture.

The original musical "Hair" defined the term "rock musical" and for its time the nudity, racial integration, and sexual nature was risqué yet celebrated. One of the first totally nude scenes on Broadway at the time, a violation of the

American blue, white and red flag and the salacious language all added to the general sense of mutiny. But of course the attention and some legal action was part of the show's huge attraction and success.

Conceived in 1964 by actors James Rado and Gerome Ragni, "Hair" continues to be remade and replayed on and off Broadway, winning a string of Tony Awards. The music, composed by Canadian Galt MacDermot, include African rhythms and a whole new take on rock 'n roll in the form of funk.

Major recording artists still record songs from the show, including The Lemonheads and Run DMC. Even films like "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" feature "Good Morning Starshine," with Willy Wonka oozing the words, and so internationally the play enjoyed enormous success.

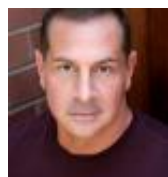
"Hair" has regrowth, and it is more relevant than ever. With the dawning of the Age of Aquarius and the renewed interest in conscious living, "Hair pledges" a shiny commitment to enlightenment. A reminder to just be yourself and to not succumb to society's pressures is prevalent throughout the show.

Pertinent to current New York as youngsters cannot find corporate jobs in a new post-recession yet still searching for escape in free bohemian living. Perhaps the only difference is the trading in of multi-color clothes for pared-down country, almost Amish attire across New York.

"Hair: Summer of Love" is showing through September 10 at St James Theatre, 246 West 44th Street. \$120-37. For tickets call 212-239-6200 or visit www.nycboxoffice.com/st-james-theatre-tickets.php

Daniel Scheffler is a writer who spends his time in New York, Cape Town and India.

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