

'Hair' will have you rooted to the spot

By Margo Parker
special writer

If you want to sit in a theater and have a play politely unfold before you at a genteel pace, don't go see Oakland University's student production of "Hair." But if you want to be exalted, surrounded, challenged and uplifted by a riotous young cast, by all means experience "Hair" before the closing performances this weekend.

Curtain time is 8:30 p.m. Friday-Saturday and 2:30 and 6:30 p.m. Sunday.

The Student Enterprise Theatre makes excellent use of its flexible barn on the OUI campus near Rochester, using two audiences, four doors, three stage levels, two balconies and an ex-

review

cellent rock band to move the show along at a breakneck pace.

They sit, they stand, they crash, they carry each other around; they skip, they dance, they sing, they group-grope, they meditate.

Despite the strong staging, however, Act I lacks energy in spots. The characters in "Hair" must be spontaneously exuberant and yet exhibit a drug-and-love-induced meekness. The cast members don't seem to find that extra degree of verve at the high spots and

yet, in a seeming paradox, don't relax completely when they're crashing flat on the floor.

THERE ALSO isn't one head of straight, stringy, center-parted hair in the cast. But other than that, if you're looking for memories, try some of these touches of nostalgia, captured nicely in costumes and staging:

Remember how your jeans always used to slide off your hips because you kept stepping on the frayed hem of your bell bottoms? Remember the discomfort you put up with for the sake of going barefoot? Remember tie-dye? Remember TM (Ommmmmmmm)? Remember the universal hand language — one finger uplifted or two, depending on the message? They're all there in this production of "Hair."

Why did the Student Enterprise Theatre choose "Hair" to close its 1980-81 season? It's almost too fresh in some memories to be classed as history, at least for those of us who don't yet think of our own experience as "history."

Director T. Andrew Aston puts it in the context of all the theater genres — from Greek tragedy to drawing room comedy — which described society and defined it at the same time.

Aston explained, "For the first time (in the late 1960s), American theater was responsive and, in the same breath, innovative, in giving its public a form of expression which became so incredibly powerful that theater, world-wide, was altered. At last, like 'jazz,' America had a theatrical experience which could be claimed as its own;

a dawning in the Age of Aquarius.

"We, if for no other reason, are compelled to present this work for that reason alone as it heralds the theater of tomorrow."

AS USUAL, the Student Enterprise Theatre makes fine use of its vocal resources in "Hair." The Tribe is a good vocal ensemble. Strong vocals by Marilyn Renee White and Charlyn Maureen Suriano punch up key numbers: "Aquarius," "Easy to Be Hard," and "Good Morning Starshine."

We do question the use of hand-held microphones for soloists in this show. No matter how deftly the mikes are deployed, singers in a theater as intimate as the Student Enterprise Theatre's barn shouldn't need amplification to be heard.

Nancy A. Candea and Sandra Putnam do a fine job as choreographers. The clearly defined dances aren't all that complicated, but orchestrating the free-form scenes — orgies, freak-outs, be-ins, tribal frenzies — must have been hair-raising.

Candea and Putnam got lucky, too, when they recruited Randolph Price for the show. He displays some of the most memorable hip gyrations this reviewer has seen since the audition sequence in the movie "Fame."

And if you've read this far only to find the answer to just one question, here it is: Yes, they take their clothes off — at least about three-fourths of them do. Perhaps it's a sign of the times that what shocked us in the '60s barely raises our eyebrows in the '80s.



Earth ball illustrates theme of Student Enterprise Theatre production of the musical "Hair."

Tribute at Redford stars the Detroit Concert Band

Leonard B. Smith will conduct the Detroit Concert Band at 8:15 p.m. Friday at the Redford Theatre in Detroit, when the band offers a musical tribute to Patrick Sarsfield Gilmore and Victor Herbert.

All seats are reserved, with admission at \$9.50, \$8.50 and \$7.50. For ticket information, call 886-0394.

The Gilmore-Herbert Festival Concert is being presented as a highlight of the 1981 In-Servant Conference of the Association of Concert Bands of America Inc., meeting today through

Sunday at the Michigan Inn in Southfield. Bandleader Smith heads the local host committee.

The Franklin Village Band and the Plymouth Community Band are among bands participating in the conference.

A second concert, in conjunction with the conference, will be given by the Racine (Wis.) Municipal Band at 8:15 p.m. Saturday at the Redford Theatre, 17380 Lahar. Purchasers of tickets for the Friday band concert at the Redford will receive free tickets to attend the Saturday concert.

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