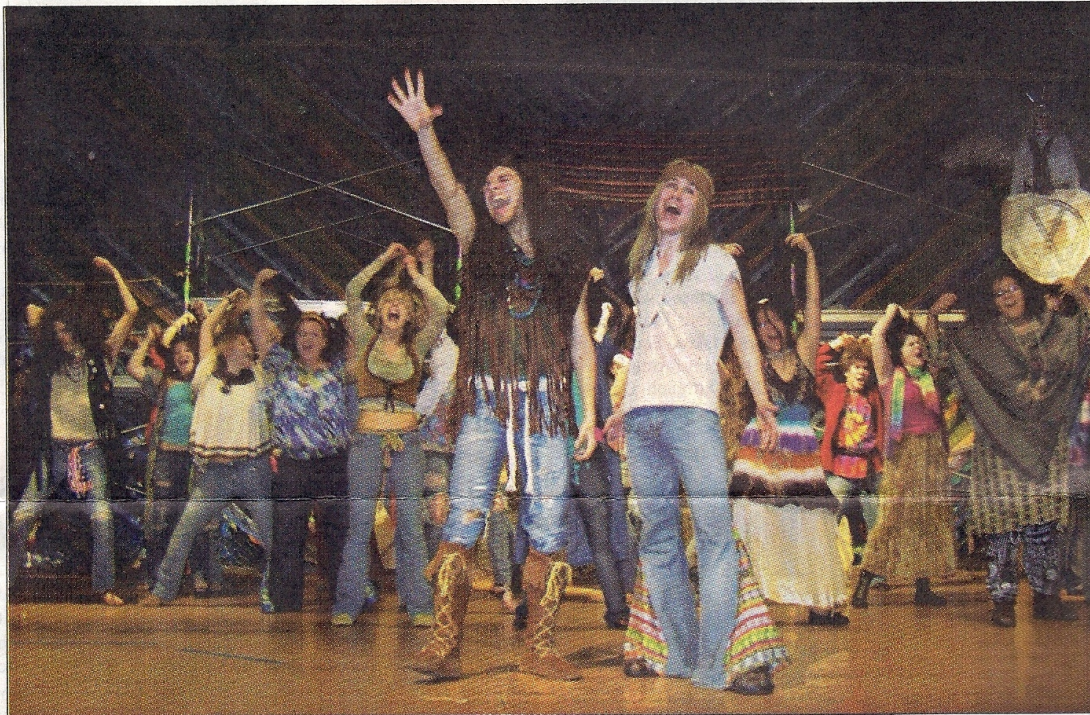


Hair opens this evening at Coventry High School



Lauren Knight-Daily Times

Matthew Prince, 18, playing "Berger," and Brendon Lewis, 16, playing "Claude," rehearse on Tuesday with their cast for the production of *Hair* that opens tonight.

Show has been adapted to reach a younger audience

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COVENTRY — Coventry High School's adaption of *Hair*: the American Tribal Love-Rock Musical opens tonight in the high school auditorium.

Since September, a group of 28 students plus the backstage crew and band have been learning their lines, music and choreography for the show that will be held on tonight, and both Friday and Saturday nights.

According to the theater program director, Myke Wilkinson, *Hair* became a hit in 1968 on Broadway and was very controversial due to drug use and sexual references.

"It's about a group of hippies that are in an abandon lot, a construction site lot, in New York City, and they tell stories and sing songs about themselves, their lives, against society—celebrating peace, freedom and love," said Wilkinson.

In order to be appropriate for a high school production, he explained the show has been adapted for a younger audience including removing a number of songs.

"I wanted to do this one be-

cause I like the music a lot," he said. "I think the spirituality, and the peace, freedom and love [aspect] is important, even in today's environment."

When Wilkinson saw *Hair* on Broadway, he said that by the end of the show, the audience was dancing in the aisles. "Which I hope is the same way here."

Khrysta Ryan, 17, the stage manager for the show, said, "The show, in general, is something I've always been passionate about."

"I was confused at first—thinking how are you going to do the show at a high school?—because if you've seen the show, you know it's very risqué. [But] everything, the changes and the way that each person took the character into their hands, changed the show completely," said Ryan.

Hair is set in the winter of 1968. One of the cast members, William Stiles, 16, explained that it is about one "tribe" of friends who are trying to promote peace during a time when people are being drafted into the Vietnam War.

"It kind of upsets us... Peo-

ple are just sending us off to war and force us to do things just by the fact that we live in America," said Stiles.

Chelsea Shea, 14, another cast member, said that she felt the story was very inspiring.

"I think it's really nice because, not being from that time, I didn't really know what was going on with all the draftings but now I know how the tribe feels," she said. "Now I can share that emotion with other people [through the show]."

Emily Gamage, 16, another cast member, added that she felt it was an important time for the show.

"Vietnam was the first televised war and now we're so immune to things we see on TV. It really shows you how passionate people would get about all this violence," said Gamage. "Now, when we show this passion in a theater, even though we're immune to it, people will be inspired and want to feel that way again. They'll want to be peaceful and happy."

The show will begin at 7 p.m. each night and will last for about two hours. It will feature a variety of music, including "Aquarius," "Hair" and "Easy to be Hard,"

and a type of dancing that cast member Matthew Prince, 18, described as having a "lot more freedom and less structure."

"You can have fun with it and be yourself," he said.

Nina Morelli, 17, explained that this is her sixth show with the school's theater program and found it to have much more energy than her previous shows.

"There's no way you cannot enjoy it," she said. "I don't think I've ever loved a cast as much as I love this one."

Brad Pingley, a history teacher at the school and who is also in the show, added that he felt the band, crew and cast epitomizes the message of *Hair*.

"These kids know who they are—with all the things we see in the high schools—the message in this show these kids are living it everyday. Not because they are pretending but because these are the people they are," he said.

Coventry High School will perform *Hair* on Dec. 8, 9 and 10, beginning at 7 p.m. Tickets for adults are \$12 and students 18 and under are \$10, and will be available at the door.