

### Part III: HPC in the 1990's

Even though there was still one more semester left in the 1980's decade, for the purposes of this chapter, the decade was over. The 1980's was the decade of Patrick Misciagna and Adam Brown. Both of those individuals were gone and the responsibilities of carrying HPC into a new decade fell to a new generation of thespians. A few individuals carried over from the previous guard including Kim Usas, who was now President of HPC.

Early on in the semester, *Pipe Dream* did a spread on HPC and its rich and varied history. Here, Usas and others involved with HPC reiterated their stance as being unaffiliated with the theater department and offering roles to students who would otherwise not be able to act while in college. Usas also stated her hope that more students, particularly Hinman students would get involved with the organization. Although in many ways nothing new about HPC can be gleaned from this article, its importance can be summed up succinctly. HPC was all about fun, friendship, and the love of theater.<sup>1</sup> Although this mantra had been beat into the skulls of every HPCers since the early days of Adam Brown's leadership in the company, it did not hurt to have it be repeated. As would soon be seen, the lessons learned in the long 1980's would have to be relearned in the even longer 1990's.

Unfortunately, there is no oral history available for much of the 1990's and many of the behind-the-scenes escapades which are so important to the understanding of HPC are lost. Only if alumni of that organization come forward will the full story of the organization be known. Luckily, there are written reviews of just about every HPC play produced in the 1990's, so at the very least that vital bit of information is available to the general public.

The play to be produced for the Fall of 1989 was Neil Simon's *Fools*. This would be the first play that HPC would produce without the guidance and support of Adam Brown.

However, the men and women of HPC were up to the challenge. Veteran HPCer William Kahn was set to direct *Fools*. The story of *Fools* centers around a remote Russian village of Kulyenchikov. Unlike *Fiddler on the Roof*, which contained many memorable and beloved characters (like Tevye), *Fools* is a tale populated with characters who are nothing short of complete idiots. The story is that about two hundred years earlier a scorned father cursed the village and so now everyone who lives there is to be hopelessly ignorant. Mitch Hoffman plays Leon Tolchinsky, the schoolmaster who is determined to educate the residents of the town. The basic premise of the plot is that Hoffman's character goes from person to person and hopelessly tries to enlighten the villagers. Barri Sperber played Snetsky, the shepherd who is constantly losing her sheep, and the ditsy Dr. Zubritsky and his wife Lenya Zubritsky was played by J. Scott Sanpietro and Sharon Elyse Getlen respectively. Tolchinsky is just about to give up when he meets Dr. Zubritsky's beautiful daughter Sophia, who has just mastered the art of sitting down. Another honorable mention should be the evil Count Gregor Youskovitch, played by David Rossmann, who is responsible for the town's curse.<sup>2</sup>

The reviews for this play were mixed. Director William Kahn was praised for his abilities directing what amounted to verbal slapstick humor. However, that was where the praise ended and the criticism began. The actors were criticized for being "stiff" and "lacking enthusiasm" in the first half of the play. Most of the criticism was leveled at writer Neil Simon for writing what is considered a very sub-par play. The best way to summarize the review is this: "Hinman Production Company's presentation of Neil Simon's *Fools*, was neither funny nor did it exhibit many of the imaginative qualities that mark a good fairytale. The directing and acting can not be faulted, the play was simply a poor choice."<sup>3</sup>

The Spring semester saw the cast and crew of HPC bounce back with a hit. This time it was the drama *Talk Radio*. This play is a dark and depressive drama set entirely in Studio B of the radio station WTLK of Cleveland, Ohio. Martin Anderson played Barry Champlain, the main focus of the story. Champlain is the caustic host of a talk radio show. During his show, Champlain takes various callers, who offer up their opinions on everything from nuclear power plants to *I Love Lucy*. Champlain's character is stubborn and opinionated and filled with biting sarcasm. He has no problem hanging up on callers he tires of and berates those whose opinions he thinks are wrong. His audience adores him for this and his ratings continue to climb. Anderson was highly praised for his role as Champlain, easily blending both the dark portions of his character's soul with the more comedic portions. On the outside, Champlain's character appears to be the cocky host of a popular radio show, but deep down he is a very sad individual who has addictions to both cigarettes and alcohol. Also praised for their roles in the play were Martin Krain, who played Kent, a character who is obsessed with meeting Champlain, whom he considers his idol. Daniel R. Barkley was also praised for his role of Dan Woodruff, Champlain's manipulative boss. The many minor characters were also given accolades, especially the cast members who simply acted as callers for the show. The many callers were all unique with differing accents and provided a great deal of believability to the play. The set design for *Talk Radio* was also praised. Although perhaps not as elaborate as other earlier HPC shows, the set for *Talk Radio* still conveyed the realism of a radio station complete with computers, coffee tables and even an "On Air" sign. Overall, *Talk Radio* was highly praised for both its production aspects and its acting. The only criticism was that it was not publicized as well as *Fools* was, and that this play was the obvious superior of the two.<sup>4</sup> HPC ended the 1989-

1990 academic year with both a miss and a hit. So far, the mostly novice cast and crew of HPC was living up the high standards set for them by the heroes of its storied past.

In the Fall of 1990 it was decided that the play for that semester would be *Nuts*. The three-act play centers around Claudia Faith Draper (played by Kimberly Green), an innocent all American girl who by great misfortune winds up working as a prostitute in uptown Manhattan. The action in the play begins when Claudia is accused of murdering one of her clients. Claudia is deemed unfit to stand trial and is sent to the psychiatric wing of Bellevue Hospital for observation and treatment. The main action of the play is her fight to gain a fair trial. The set design was very realistic and the absence of a raised stage made it feel like one was watching actual courtroom proceedings. The standout performance of the show was by Marc “Duke” Harber, who played Dr. Herbert Rosenthal, the psychiatrist who believes that Claudia should remain in his care at the hospital, even though he acts as though he is afraid of her. Harber’s character offered some moments of comic relief in the otherwise dark play. “...Rosenthal was humorous because he made the audience believe that he took every word seriously.”<sup>5</sup> Kimberly Green’s portrayal of Claudia Faith Draper also was exceptional. Her excellent acting abilities made the audience wonder if Draper was innocent or really insane. Overall, it was a successful and popular play for HPC.<sup>6</sup>

In the Spring of 1991, the dedicated group of HPCers decided to take a risk and put on the play *Into The Woods*. This ambitious musical would try the mostly untested HPCers. *Into The Woods* would also be the first musical that the group would perform since *Fiddler on the Roof*. The major story of the play centers around the Baker and his wife played by Michael Giommetti and Elizabeth Saunders respectively. These two characters are unable to conceive a child because the wicked witch (played by Heater Kayson) has put a spell on them. They go into

the woods in order to gather the ingredients for an elixir so that their wish for a child will come true. Along the way they come across numerous fairy tale characters such as Jack of Jack and the Beanstalk fame (played by Nicholas M.S. Potenzieri), Cinderella (played by Sarah Unell), Little Red Riding Hood (played by Jennifer L. Weston), Rapunzel (Tammy Schottler), Snow White (Caryn Schecter) and Sleeping Beauty (Susan Iannone) among many others. The play was praised for its fine acting and for its nice use of sets. The crew actually went into the Binghamton University Nature Preserve to find tree branches to make the Hinman Commons seem more like the forest that the characters inhabit. The crew used only dead branches and assured the audience that no live trees were harmed in the making of this particular production. Overall the play was well received and got good reviews.<sup>7</sup>

In the Fall of 1991, HPC decided once again to take a risk. This time they put into production a very dark and serious play called *The Diviners*. The story takes place in the small, rural Indiana town of Zion, Indiana at the start of the Great Depression. Its focus is the introduction of a former preacher who comes into town, which is struggling through a drought, and befriends a teenage boy who is afraid of water but who nonetheless can predict the weather.<sup>8</sup> The subject matter of *The Diviners* was very serious and many in HPC believed that the play would tank. Like the earlier production of *Our Town*, this play dealt with serious and sometimes dark subject matter that many HPCers thought would drive away a usually youthful and optimistic college crowd. Celia O'Donnell, who would play Jennie Mae Layman, told one *Pipe Dream* reporter, "It is a mature step for HPC to tackle a mature drama," and fellow HPCer Ann Beirne added, "It's a play for an audience who is open for it. It's not a feel good show, but it will make people think."<sup>9</sup> As opening night approached, many in HPC believed the show would

tank. Even though they had put in long hours of hard work to make the play good, most believed that it simply would not appeal to a college audience.

HPC's production of *The Diviners* was, to avoid the pun, heavenly. Michael Knopf did an excellent job in his portrayal of Buddy Layman, the emotional disturbed boy, as was Brett Krichiver, who played C.C. Showers, the ex-preacher from Kentucky who comes to town and befriends Buddy. Accolades were bestowed on Celia O'Donnell for her wonderful portrayal of Jennie Mae, Buddy's loving and sensitive older sister. The most praise was handed out to the play's director, R.J. Tolan and Assistant Director Erin Rodat. "They did a great job with a play that is of this serious a nature. It was their vision that enabled the conversion of a dry script into a believable drama that college students would enjoy."<sup>10</sup> Even though, in the words of Director R.J. Tolan, the subject matter of the play was something that you'd see your parents rent from a video store, the opening night was nearly sold out and the following Saturday night performance was completely sold out. Once again, HPC had accomplished the impossible. They had taken a play which no one thought could entertain college students and not only made it accessible to them, but also made them think about the content of the very serious play.<sup>11</sup>

Riding high of their success with *The Diviners*, HPC decided to stage two plays the following semester. The first play would be a straight show called *Betrayal*. *Betrayal* centered around the lives of three characters, Jerry, played by Chris Nacinovich, and the husband and wife Robert and Emma, played by Rick Brody and Denise Duclaux respectively. Joel Simon plays a minor character as a nameless waiter/barman and offers moments of comic relief throughout the play. The play spans nine years and deals with the affair that Emma and Jerry carry on behind Robert's back. Unlike *The Diviners*, whose philosophically deep subject matter turned off many college-aged students, *Betrayal* was ripe with lies, sex, deceit and infidelity.<sup>12</sup> Alice Brod was a

member of HPC during the production of *Betrayal*. Brod and the others members of HPC stayed late on many nights to finish constructing the sets for the play. One night, the crew decided to take a break from the set construction to see a movie sponsored by the SA in Lecture Hall 1. The movie that evening was called *Dead Again*, a thriller involving scissors. After watching the movie, the dedicated crew returned to the laborious task of building the set. However, for the rest of the night they would sneak up on one another and “threaten” each other with scissors. This bit of comic relief helped make the hard and often dull work of building the set easier and more enjoyable for all.<sup>13</sup>

The play was well received, with Rick Brody accumulating most of the praise for his wry and often comic delivery of his lines. Nacinovich was also applauded for his performance as Jerry, Robert’s best friend and the person whom his wife is having an affair with. He was criticized somewhat for his performance. Where Robert is supposed to be very stoic and dispassionate, Jerry is supposed to be more emotional and active. Unfortunately, this did not come across very well in his performance. In fact, many times there seemed to be little difference between the two male lead characters, which would call into question why Emma would have an affair with someone exactly like her husband. Much of the negative criticism of the play, however, was leveled at Duclaux for her performance of Emma. In the words of one reviewer, “Duclaux was unconvincing as a woman searching for happiness outside her marriage. She gave little or no indication as to what made Emma ‘tick.’”<sup>14</sup> Despite its flaws, *Betrayal* was an accomplishment for HPC. Sadly, the success would be short lived. What would happen next during that very same semester would not only tarnish HPC’s reputation, but bring the once mighty community-theater based organization to its knees.

After *Betrayal*, HPC decided to stage the musical *Hair*. The plot of *Hair* takes place in the 1960's and centers around a group of young hippies called The Tribe. The Tribe decides to abandon their parent's conservative ways and take on the more liberal and free spirited attitude shared by the various counter culture movements of that era. Besides a soundtrack featuring many 1960's rock 'n roll staples, the play also tackles many controversial issues of that era such as the war in Vietnam, Civil Rights, free love and recreational drug use. That last theme almost got HPC into hot water. During one of the play's dress rehearsals, a tour group stopped by outside the Hinman Commons. As the tour guide was speaking about Hinman College, a mischievous group of cast members, in full 1960's hippie dress, decided to go outside and pretend to smoke some of the fake joints that they used in the play. Both the tour guide and the parents alike stood wild-eyed as these "hippies" openly smoked what they thought was marijuana right in front of them.<sup>15</sup>

Although the 1960's had been over for well over two decades, some of the issues that are brought up in the play continue to be controversial. Cast member Giovanni Mastracchio said, "I don't [know] if it will shock the audience but I didn't invite my parents to see it." Similarly, Director Brian Crotty called the play, "an unpredictable visual spectacle combined with great singing and great drama."<sup>16</sup>

There was much anticipation for the play as students from across campus crammed into the Hinman Commons to view the controversial play. The play itself was of top quality and the audience, made up of mostly college students, did not take offense at the liberal and suggestive subject matter. All was going well and everyone was having a good time reveling in the nostalgia of the 1960's. That is, until an American flag was burned on stage. Although flag burning was a common practice during the anti-war movement and other protest movements

during the 1960's, many students took the view that flag burning had no place on campus in the 1990's.

Following one of the shows, an editorial written by Larry Wissink was printed in the campus newspaper, *Pipe Dream*, condemning the play and all of HPC for putting on an anti-American production.

This last Saturday, I saw Hinman Production Company's brilliant production of the musical "Hair." Every aspect of the production, from the costumes to the music brought to life the generation of free love in 1968. Every aspect, that is, except one.

Towards the end of the first act, three of the characters sing a flippant song about patriotism, while holding an American flag upside down. The irreverence of the song made it mildly amusing. What they did next was neither amusing nor appropriate. From somewhere inside their costumes they pulled out three small flags, and proceeded to burn them for all to see.

I sat there stunned in disbelief. I rose to leave in protest, but decided against it because several of my friends are involved in the production. Unfortunately, for me, the performance was ruined. In that single act, I had lost all sympathy for the characters. The burning of the flag was an act of violence and hatred in direct opposition to the musical's theme of universal love.

Truly, much of the material of the musical is meant to be shocking and offensive. However, a distinction can be made between the offensiveness and raunchy sexual behavior, and the offensiveness of an act of hatred.

The former may or may not be shocking but the offense is not directed toward anyone. Outrageous sexual acts are a form of perverted love, but are still acts of love. As such they are far above any act of hate.

The latter, includes such things as slander, racial or religious slurs, and all expressions of contempt and malice. Burning the Stars and Stripes was an expression of contempt and malice which I felt very dearly, since I hold the flag as a symbol of our nation. It was offensive to me as if they put a crucifix in a jar of urine. Any reasonable person will agree that acts of hatred are not appropriate for our theater companies.

If overall, the musical had somehow disapproved of the flag burning, I might have been mollified. Then it could have been compared to a bigot who is added to a novel to be ridiculed for others as a form of social satire.

But that was not the case in this musical, which clearly approved of the flag burning. Such acts of hate, whether they are national, ethnic, or religious should not be supported by our community theaters.

Because of this, I contend that the musical would not be harmed by the elimination of this singular act. Indeed, it would be greatly improved, since as I said earlier, the burning of the flag was contrary to the overall theme of universal love, which is so appealing to many of us. I suggest that in future productions of “Hair” by HPC or any or any other community, the flag burning be left out.

Finally, since there are indeed actors portraying given roles, I find no fault in them in following their instructions. Although it certainly would have been admirable if they had refused on moral grounds, whether personal or for the sake of more sensitive people, such as myself. But the director and producer are responsible for the material of the performance and should reconsider whether this act was appropriate.

Lastly, in the words of Margaret Mead, “Kids, be free...do whatever you want to as long as you don’t hurt anybody.” Unfortunately, flag burning is a form of hatred that hurts as much as any ethnic, racial or religious hatred.<sup>17</sup>

Wissink was not alone. Many on campus felt that there was no place for flag burning in this era, where patriotism was more fashionable than it was in the counter-culture movements of the 1960’s.

Not all agreed with this stance. In a later issue of *Pipe Dream*, a number of people rushed to HPC’s aide and offered this perspective on the flag burning issue.

The Hinman Production Company’s production of “*Hair*” has spread a great deal of controversy, the focus of which is a song that included the burning of American flags. A perspective by Larry Wissink (printed in the April 10 issue of *Pipe Dream*) seemed to represent the opinion of many, judging by the lack of audience response following the song.

I feel compelled to respond to this article not so much as the assistant producer though Mr. Wissink holds the director and producer “responsible for the material of the performance” but as an average viewer of the play, which is the point of view I am taking—especially since the producer does not have a say in what is presented on stage.

It appears Mr. Wissink has misinterpreted part of the play. He refers to the song of American flags as “an act of violence and hatred [which is] in direct opposition to the musical’s principle of universal love.”

It is hard to believe that in a society where rape, murder and other violent crimes are not even news anymore, there is such a tremendous outcry against the burning of a flag. Although it is a symbol of the nation, let's keep in mind the flag is a piece of cloth. Burning it, as opposed to killing, doesn't actually harm anyone. It is difficult to see how it can be compared to an act of violence. Burning the flag is simply an act of protest against the policies and actions of the government. There is no connection between that and violence. As a matter of fact, the significance is just the opposite.

The focus of the play was on the Vietnam War. The U.S. government had thousands of young men fight for a cause many Americans didn't believe in. They sent them there, as George Berger, (one of the play's characters) puts it, to "rape, loot and murder"—as well as to die.

Then there's the violence: over 50,000 Americans dead. Doesn't that bother anyone. Well it certainly bothered some people who burned flags to demonstrate this. I believe their actions were completely certified. If we view the "Stars and Stripes" as a symbol of our nation, specifically a government and its policies, one which seems to completely disregard human life?

One of the most chilling lines of the play is delivered by a typical father of the 60's. In addressing the protesting hippies he said, "In two months my son is going to be in Vietnam and be killed...and I'm proud of him." Doesn't that offend anyone? How can so many people be outraged by the burning of a piece of cloth yet not be affected by the deaths of thousands of innocent people, both American servicemen and Vietnamese civilians?

Don't get me wrong. America has some very special and unique qualities, but it is quite far from the beautiful land of equality and opportunity that many people make it out to be. We are certainly not "one nation...indivisible with liberty and justice for all." There are a lot of things wrong with our nation and society as a whole. Everyone is not given the same opportunity and treated with the equality that the flag is supposed to symbolize. And our government, you know the one which is of the people, by the people, and for the people, often uses its power to satisfy its own desire, disregarding those of the people they are, or at least should be, serving.

It is here where we see another principle, if not main theme of the show. It is every citizen's role in society to stand up for what they believe in and, if government assumes too much power, they should make their voice heard, and attempt to change what they perceive to be wrong. Burning the flag furthered this theme and was in one way in opposition of the theme peace and love—as a matter of fact, that's exactly the reason that the flag burners were protesting.

If you love and respect your country that's wonderful. Everyone should be proud of where they live, but it is just as important to make sure that the ideals and goals our country strives for are something we can all be proud of. While we should respect our leaders we must also keep them in check and be weary of the policies they institute.

We must be prepared to speak up if the need arises and not stifle those who are willing to do so. Anyone who loves America so much that they will so blindly accept the policies of the government and ignore the wrongs of this country, should open their eyes—and let the sunshine in!<sup>18</sup>

Brody was not alone in his defense of HPC. Others quickly rushed to the beleaguered theater company's aide with their own letters of defense. One letter read:

I was extremely shocked and surprised at the perspective by Larry Wissink and its incredible misstatements and immense lack of understanding. Although his offense to the event in HPC's production of "*Hair*" may be justified, his comprehension of the situation is severely incomplete.

One of the biggest problems with putting on a 1992 production of "*Hair*" is that the play itself is a period piece, reflecting various social conditions of the late 1960's, and unfortunately the subject matter of the show is quite outdated.

Contrary to what some may want to believe, flag burning was a very common and popular event; it was one of the many forms of anti-establishment expression of the time period.

In Mr. Wissink's article, flag burning was described six times as an act of hate, and it was also described as an act of violence, an expression of contempt and malice.

Unfortunately, it was never any of these things during the late sixties. Rather, flag burning was an act of honest protest against a government who was sending the nation's friends and family members off to war to fight for a cause they didn't believe in.

More importantly, such acts weren't carried out by blindly country-hating, lower-class people, but by the upper middle class and intelligencia who demanded an active change in the nation's politics.

If the "flagburners" [sic] of the generation had hated their country, they would never have cared enough to protest by burning the flag. Instead of getting uptight and offended, Mr. Wissink should be proud to know that he lives in a country where people won't be arrested or executed for their political expression, but rather can make demands on the government. This is what burning the American flag represents.

To state that the event in "*Hair*" was inappropriate [sic] is totally false. The production was written in order to show the social conditions and events of the sixties, of which flag burning was an important part. To ask that it be omitted from the show is the equivalent of trying to pretend that it never existed in history.<sup>19</sup>

This was not the only letter to come the defense of HPC. Michael Knopf wrote a similar letter in the very same issue of *Pipe Dream* defending HPC.

This is in response to the perspective written by Larry Wissink one week ago. It seems to me that the author of this piece simply did not understand the intent of the flag-burning that took place within HPC's recent production of "*Hair*."

While he has every right to be offended by the company's decision to perform the act, it should be made clear that within the play's context, it was as relevant as any other part.

The characters' friends were being sent to fight and die in a war which they did not support. Their actions were to be a message to the political leaders to their time, announcing their disapproval of the "meat grinder" which was about to take one of their friends, a member of their "tribe."

These were not self-hating Americans as Mr. Wissink seems to feel they are.

I cannot understand how he views an anti-war protest as an act of violence. Flag burning did occur, and as expressed in HPC's production, was not in any way of a violent nature.

As a part of a theatrical production, especially to present a message as strong as "*Hair*" does, I totally support that which my fellow student condemns. The legality of actions such as this one is what makes this country what it is.

May this right never be taken away from us by those who view harmless anti-war protests as violent.<sup>20</sup>

In time the furor over the flag burning died down and HPC was able to weather the storm. In fact, the controversy of the play almost helped them. HPC got so much exposure from the scandal that subsequent shows sold out and the show's run was extended for a third week. Besides the issue of flag burning, the play was also considered a very well-done and professional production. When the run of *Hair* finally ended, HPC had much to be proud of. Still, there were lingering issues that had to be dealt with.

While *Hair* was undeniably a success, the resulting scandal rocked HPC to its very foundation. Not since the early day's of HLT and the "open-door" scandal of 1974 had the

future of community-based theater in Hinman been tested as much as it did during this current scandal involving the burning of the American flag. HPC survived this scandal but the organization took a hit. It is important to note that not that many people came to the defense of HPC. Rather most of the letters were supporting the opinion that flag burning was a form of free speech protected under the First Amendment to the Constitution. A relative few people actually defended HPC. This is perhaps one of the earliest examples of what would become a downward trend for HPC in the 1990's decade. The little theater that could do no wrong was beginning to fray at the edges and chinks in its once invincible armor began to appear.

For the Fall of 1992, HPC decided to go back to an old favorite performed well by both HLT and an earlier generation of HPC. That Fall *You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown* returned to the Hinman Commons. Playing the role of Charlie Brown would be Steve Munch. Munch gave an excellent rendition of the song "The Kite" and "...with his knee-high tubes [sic] socks, woeful expressions, and well-articulated feelings of frustration, he was very much the part and played it well."<sup>21</sup> Other notable performances that evening came from Dee Scheidman who played Peppermint Patty, Kevin Laub who played Schroeder, and Elissa Miller who played Lucy. The standout performance of the evening though came from Jonathan Valuckas who played the beloved beagle Snoopy and brought down the house with his musical number "Supertime." *You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown* was an audience favorite and HPC did not disappoint.

HPC also showed Neil Simon's *Rumors: A Farce*. Unfortunately, no review of the play exists. What is known is that dedicated HPCers like Debbie Jaffe, Stephen Loch, Sharon Chalson, Adam Scally, Rick Brody, Gayle Jaffe, Michael Cavanaugh, Heather Kuhn, Michael Morgan, Caitlin Stedman, and Ingrid Gherson starred in this farcical play. Alice Brod also

remembers that this play presented unique challenges to the crew designing the set. After working long hours, they were finally able to build an elaborate living room with a stairway leading to a second story.<sup>22</sup>

In the Spring of 1993, HPC decided to take on some more dramatic fare with the murder mystery *Dangerous Corner*. The play is set in the living room of the head of an English publishing firm where the characters try to find out the truth behind the supposed suicide of the publishing head's brother. HPC veteran performers Brian Crotty, Rick Brody and Jonathan Valuckas were the stand-out performers of the play.<sup>23</sup>

Although the play was a success for HPC, it is important to note at this juncture that the last few plays had been relatively lackluster. For reasons unknown, HPC was unwilling to take the risks that it once did. Perhaps following the scandal of *Hair*, the cast and crew of HPC felt that they needed to play it safe for a while. This is seen in their selection of the uncontroversial plays *You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown*, *Rumors*, and *Dangerous Corner*. It's not to say that these productions were bad, from what the record shows they were all quality performances. However, some of the magic that had seemed so prevalent in the early days of HLT and throughout the 1980's had worn off. HPC would need to start taking some risks if it was to achieve the same caliber of performances that the earlier generations had shown.

In the Fall of 1993, HPC decided to stage the play *Chess*. *Chess* is a musical set during the Cold War and its underlying themes deal with the ideological struggle between the Soviet Union and the United States, communism and capitalism, East and West. Thomas C. Kouo played the arrogant American chess player Freddie Trumper and performed a powerful rendition of the song "Pity the Child." James R. Fowler played his Russian counterpart Anatoly Sergievsky who, with the exception of an erratic Russian accent, played the calm and

conservative character very well. Ann Beirne played the female lead Florence Vassy. Although her acting was lukewarm throughout the first act, by the second act she showed just how incredible her talents were with her beautiful and emotional rendition of “Heaven Help My Heart.” She further highlighted her outstanding abilities during her duet with Thea McCartan (who played Svetlana Sergievsky) when they sang “I Know Him So Well.” Some secondary characters also brought much life to the play. Robert Scott Deluca and Kevin Laub as Molokov and Walter respectively did a wonderfully humorous duet “Let’s Work Together.” The play was not without its criticisms. “One Night in Bangkok,” which was one of the most anticipated and popular songs of the play, was a big let-down. “The choreography was sloppy and the energy was not at the level it could have been.”<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the ensemble cast did not mesh well. Their singing and dancing were out of sync and distracted from the show. Furthermore, the frequent set changes and backstage noise detracted from the show’s quality. However, the actual set design was excellent. Despite all its problems, the cast and crew of HPC should be given accolades for their willingness to take on such an ambitious production.

The Spring of 1994 saw HPC take on another similarly ambitious play with very timely and complex themes. This time it was Brian Friel’s play *Freedom of the City*. The play is a tragedy that centers around the deaths of three people caught in the wrong place at the wrong time. The play takes place in Northern Ireland, where the British Army had just broken up a mass demonstration. Caught in the shuffle of this demonstration are three characters who seek refuge in the Guildhall, where the mayor of Derry lives. Adam C. Scally played Adrian “Skinner” Fitzgerald Casimer, a man who has no home, family, or job and believes in nothing but himself. Diane Susan Weinberger played Lily Doherty, an ignorant mother of eleven children who knows nothing except being a homemaker and caring for her husband and children.

Brian Fitzgerald played Michael Joseph Hegarty, a young and naïve idealist who sincerely believes that the Irish can achieve their independence through non-violent, peaceful demonstrations. The three main actors did an excellent job in their particular roles. Scally had the standout performance of the evening, showcasing the most lifelike and engaging of the three characters. Weinberger adequately performed the role of Lily. Her acting abilities truly shone through in the instances when her character realizes that most of her life has been a waste. Brian Fitzgerald “is a nerdy killjoy [who] fails to understand what it means to be poor and outcast like Skinner and Lily.”<sup>25</sup> Although the review calls Fitzgerald’s performance a disappointment, from the description of his character it seems as though Fitzgerald did an excellent job portraying a character that is supposed to be nerdy and a killjoy. Director Bre Braat did an excellent job directing the ambitious production and focusing the action on the development of the three main characters. The supporting cast was not nearly as good. The reviewer criticized Robyn Gemeiner in her role as the American sociologist Susan Dobbs, and Fiona Brett as the loudmouthed Irish newscaster Deirdre O’Kelly. Joseph M. Moniaci was also criticized for his role as the English judge Maurice Copeland. Luis Lendesbort was also criticized for his overacting and over-accenting of the Italian priest Father Pietro Brioni. Despite its flaws, *Freedom of the City* was an ambitious play that dealt with the serious issues of death and the suffering that war brings to the lives of innocent people.<sup>26</sup> It would seem that HPC had finally gotten out of its funk. Despite their flaws, they had successfully taken on two ambitious productions and had succeeded. Everyone was looking forward to an exciting new year of ambitious and quality HPC productions. Regrettably, that was not to be.

In the Fall of 1994, HPC decided to stage the children’s musical *Free To Be You and Me*. Conceived during the Women’s Liberation Movement, the play is written for a young audience,

but touts the ideology of many feminist thinkers of the time, chiefly that girls can compete with boys, boys shouldn't be afraid to show their feelings, and generally just breaking down traditional gender roles. While the content of the play was lightly controversial in the mid 1990's, this was not the concern of those who viewed this production. Their concern was that virtually the whole play, from beginning to end, was just plain bad. Seth Blum and Patty Corwin played the main characters, a little boy and girl named William and Janet. Micha Liberman played another little boy Richard, and Tricia Alexandro played the little girl Vickie. These made up the four principal characters of the play. They along with their supporting cast performed well in their rendition of the rap song "No One Else." However, this is perhaps the only good part of the entire production. The transitions between songs and skits were criticized as being awkward. Blum and Corwin sang well, but they completely drowned out the rest of the ensemble. While the four principal characters were usually front and center on the stage, the rest of the cast was positioned statically upstage on risers. The set design was so problematic that community theater producer Kelly Ann Scanlon noted that HPC had poorly designed the set. Micha Liberman was, deservedly or undeservedly, criticized for his performance. One reviewer stated, "His arms and legs moved stiffly, as if he had spent the night before on a bed of nails tipped with Novocain."<sup>27</sup> The choreography was also criticized for being reminiscent of a cheesy vaudeville act. Perhaps the harshest criticisms came when one reviewer stated:

The production was not just bad high school theater, it was bad high school theater done by college students, an even worse sin. The talent gap among the cast members was glaring...

...There was no reason to stage this show. Eric Arlin's static direction would get ripped apart by any theater professional. Stage space was used ineffectually: risers came forward unnaturally, and pushed the principals center front and into the audience members' personal space. The rest of the cast was just a backdrop that occasionally circled to the front or ran around a little, but did little else. The chorus couldn't even make a circle at one point because of Arlin's strange use of stage space.

Mercifully, *Free To Be You and Me* ran only an hour (and even that was too long). It was at best amateurish and certainly not worth the \$4.50.<sup>28</sup>

This highly critical review was published in *Pipe Dream* and circulated across campus.

Although nothing the reviewer said was categorically untrue, the editorial staff of *Pipe Dream* printed a small, semi-apology letter/award to the cast and crew of HPC. The letter/award read:

Victims of Undue Clobbering: To the cast of Hinman Production Company's *Free To Be You and Me*, for enduring the most negative theater review in *Pipe Dream* history. Despite the fact that anyone over the age of 10 has no business putting on this show, HPC's production was entertaining and fun, and was neither "thoroughly mediocre" nor "ill-fated."<sup>29</sup>

The cast and crew of HPC had hit rock bottom. The downward spiral of events that had begun after the departure of Adam Brown and the rest of the "old guard" in the Spring of 1989 and had accelerated with the scandal of *Hair* had finally come to its conclusion with the devastating production of *Free To Be You and Me*. HPC, which had once been one of the crown jewels of Hinman College, known for consistently going against all the odds and breaking all the rules to put on professional shows, was now seen as nothing more than a second-rate community theater troupe. Gone were the days of Stan Goldberg and Steve Young constantly rehearsing the numbers to *Kiss Me Kate*. Gone were the days of Patrick Misciagna and Jody Sandler tying a curtain rod to their car and driving it through the busy streets of Binghamton so they could use it in their production of *Guys and Dolls*. Gone were the days when Adam Brown brought HPC to the edge of what they could do by bringing a car into the Hinman Commons for what is perhaps HPC's greatest and most famous play, *Grease*. To the outside observer, it appeared as though HPC was finished as an innovative and passionate community-based theater organization. The magic that seemed to have resided inside the seemingly invincible group that could do no wrong was gone. It seemed as though they went from being "little theater that could" to "the little

theater that could not” almost overnight. HPC, at this stage in its existence, was a shell of its former glory. However, this spurt of bad luck would not last forever. HPC was down, but it was most certainly not out.

In the Spring of 1995, HPC decided to return to the tried and tested genre of the murder mystery. The play that was selected that semester was Agatha Christie’s perennial favorite *Ten Little Indians*. There were many challenges associated with this show. Besides coming off the rebound of perhaps the worst HPC show ever produced, the story of *Ten Little Indians*, while being popular, is also very well-known. Legions of Agatha Christie followers knew the story by heart and would not be surprised at all by the once surprise ending. David Gran, the director of the show, knew that he needed more than just the play’s plot and suspense to entertain the audience. What he needed was a lot of talented actors ready to bring something new to the table and give a new feeling to this classic play. Joe Vaughn, who played Anthony Marston commented that the script was plot heavy and that ““it remains amusing and suspenseful; something is always being discovered or looked at in a new light.””<sup>30</sup> Doreen Bond, who would play the part of Mrs. Rogers, reminded everyone that there were a lot of humorous lines in the play and that by emphasizing that humor a new light could be shone on the play. Mike Malavet, who played William Blore, stated, ““Everybody in the cast brought something different to the show and now that it’s together, the show’s going to be great.””<sup>31</sup> Also enticing the audience would be a new surprise ending that was different from the original version. Besides the enthusiastic cast, the eager crew prepared a minimalist, yet extraordinary set that brought to the life the elegance of an English study in the claustrophobic space of the Hinman Commons. The excellence of the set is credited to Art Director Carlo Pastore, who explained, ““I wanted the feeling of contentment to prevail within the realms of the set. I wanted the audience to be

deceived by the peacefulness of the study, thus adding even more shock when they realize the events that take place there,”<sup>32</sup> In the days leading up the debut of the play, the cast and crew of HPC held their breath. HPC desperately needed a hit. If *Ten Little Indians* was a flop, the reputation of HPC could have possibly been forever tarnished.

The members of HPC did not need to wait long to see if their production was viewed favorably. Joseph Moniaci was given accolades for his portrayal of Dr. Armstrong. “From his affected nervous mannerisms to his near flawless dialect, Moniaci’s performance was undoubtedly among the best of the cast.”<sup>33</sup> Tarra Christoff was also praised for her performance as Vera Claythorne. “...Christoff played the role with a balance of slickness and naiveté that gave her character an undeniable charm. Among a cast of such comically exaggerated characters, she deserves recognition for pulling off such a relatively ‘straight’ role.”<sup>34</sup> Joe Vaughn, Sarah Klein and Eric Arlin also were given kudos for their respective roles. The only source of criticism in the play came from the ambiguity of the accents that some of the characters possessed. It seemed that some of the actors had trouble maintaining an English accent and those who still had American accents read dialogue that was clearly written for English actors and seemed out of place coming from an American. Otherwise the play was considered a quality performance of popular mystery.<sup>35</sup>

*Ten Little Indians* was a success. While perhaps not being as innovative as some past HPC productions (like *The Diviners*) or being as artistically beautiful as other English murder mysteries (like *The Mousetrap*), the success of *Ten Little Indians* gave a welcome and needed boost to cast and crew’s morale and a needed shot in the arm for the organization’s reputation. The question on everyone’s mind at the end of the 1994-1995 academic year was could HPC keep up their success and continue with a quality performances the next year?

HPC (probably unbeknownst to any members at the time) decided to stage a play that had been successful for HLT twenty years previous. The show that was scheduled for the Fall of 1995 would be Woody Allen's *Play It Again, Sam*. Although the dedicated cast and crew of HPC worked hard to put on a quality performance, the reviews of *Play It Again, Sam* make it clear that HPC fell short of this goal. Shachar Link played the main character, Allen Felix, a deeply neurotic character who is based on Woody Allen himself. While years of theater and movie going audiences have fallen in love with this nerdy and neurosis-stricken man, Link fell short of the grand expectation that fell to him. Link was not the only cast member to be criticized. Many of the actors who portrayed secondary characters in the play were also criticized for failing to fully realize their characters. Only Brendan Galivan who played Humphrey Bogart was given much positive mention. Galivan was praised for his ability to accurately capture the mannerisms and demeanor of one of cinema's most famous leading men. Perhaps one reviewer explained the play best when she wrote, "During the show, Felix explains his reason for buying Linda a small plastic skunk for her birthday. 'It doesn't function really, it exists,' he tenderly says. Perhaps what he is really talking about is this production."<sup>36</sup>

The Spring of 1996 saw HPC bring an ambitious musical production to the floors of the Hinman Commons. The show for this semester would be the campy theatrical version of the classic B-grade science fiction film, *The Little Shop of Horrors*. In this production, Shachar Link played the protagonist, Seymour, a nerdy apprentice in a florist shop who has a crush on one of the shop's assistants, Audrey (played by Beth Ehrenberg). Perhaps what makes his play so unique is the character of the alien life form in the shape of a gigantic Venus flytrap, a creature which Seymour takes upon himself to raise and nurture and names Audrey II. Whatever problems Link faced with his acting in *Play It Again, Sam* were quickly dissolved in this

production. Link was praised for his performance as Seymour, a role which he gave just the proper amount of charm too and allowed the audience to fasten on to him and sympathize with him even while he fed innocent people to Audrey II. Beth Ehrenberg as Audrey was also praised for her exceptional singing ability and her natural charm. Many of the play's humorous moments came during her scenes and she provided just the right amount of black humor to make this dark comedy highly enjoyable. The play was also notable for its use of a 1950's style doowop chorus called the Ronnettes, who provide many of the catchy musical numbers of the play, and who follow the main characters around. Rennica Johnson, Tanika Angrum, and Mary Faughnan were praised for their singing prowess. Kevin Cohen, who played Audrey's abusive and sadistic dentist boyfriend, stole the show with his wit and marvelous black humor. The play was not without its problems and criticisms. Audrey II, the man-eating alien plant, was described as never becoming more than a puppet with a disembodied voice. The actor who voiced Audrey II and the puppeteer were never able to adequately sync their performances which distracted the audience and detracted from the overall quality of the performance. The out of sync voice and puppetry got so bad at times that one reviewer stated that, "...at its worst moments it seemed like we were viewing a badly dubbed kung fu movie."<sup>37</sup> Besides the poor puppetry, the play's other short-fallings fell mostly to the issues that surface in every B-movie or theatrical production—they're campy and ultimately there is little material that one can work with on them. This final shortcoming was absolutely no fault of the cast and crew of HPC; in fact they did much to help make what is really a cheesy black comedy into something enjoyable and special to a wide variety of audience members. One reviewer even went so far as to say, "Hinman's production goes a long way to erase the problems inherent in the play, and for the most part they succeed."<sup>38</sup> HPC's *The Little Shop of Horrors*, despite its campy reputation, was

overall a success for the beleaguered organization. Following up on the success of this play, HPC sought to bring another exciting production to the Hinman Commons.

In the Fall of 1996, HPC staged Neil Simon's *Brighton Beach Memoirs*. The play tells the story of a Jewish family living in Brighton Beach, Brooklyn in 1937 and its struggle to deal with not only the Great Depression but also one another. Although the play is set against the backdrop of the Great Depression, the play is full of wisecracks and barbs directed at the feuding family members each with their own set of problems. Jeff Weber plays Eugene Jerome, the teenage son who is the embodiment of any young teenager, concerned mostly with flirting with members of the opposite sex and defying his parents any chance he gets. "Weber seemed to be made for the role, and if he wasn't then he molded into it perfectly. The young face, knee-highs and Brooklyn accent added to the effect. Neil Simon himself could not have found a better actor for the part."<sup>39</sup> Accolades were also given out to the rest of the cast including Doreen Bond who played Aunt Blanch and Maddy Polsky and Roslyn Shoenbrun who played her daughters Laurie and Nora respectively. Austin Basis played Stanley plays Eugene's ne'er-do-well brother, Stanley and George Ford played the Jerome family patriarch Jack, who besides from recovering from a heart attack also had to deal with the loss of his job. Rounding out the cast was Julianna Blunt who played Kate, Eugene's guilt-trip inducing mother. The play centers around family dysfunction and economic distress, all prime topics for high and lowbrow humor. Numerous hysterical scenes and one-liners abound when the extended family sits down at the dinner table and can't help but insult one another and lament their problems. The play is not afraid to tackle serious issues either. Each character begins to learn that all of their problems are miniscule in comparison to family members who still live in Europe in the grip of the Nazis and at the dawn of the Holocaust. One reviewer went on to write,

I tried long and hard to think of something wrong with the acting, but all I saw were flawless performances. Polsky transformed herself to look ten years younger in playing the allegedly helpless younger sister. Schoenbrun's performance as the rebellious teenager was superb. Basis and Bond were outstanding. Blunt had an unmatched accent which nicely complemented her acting. Ford brought a newfound admiration for the patriarchal position.<sup>40</sup>

*Brighton Beach Memoirs* was undoubtedly a hit for HPC. The acting was flawless and memorable. This is exactly what HPC needed at this time. For the past few years, with few exceptions, HPC had been putting out mostly flops or mediocre plays at the very best. *Brighton Beach Memoirs* was a complete smash hit for HPC and exactly what they needed to boost morale and the reputation of the company.

In the spring of 1997, HPC revisited another successful play that had been done in the past—the musical comedy *Company*. Unfortunately, there is no review or oral history available about the production or outcome of the play besides a playbill. In the following fall, HPC decided to stage another favorite that had been done with much success nearly ten years earlier—the bawdy play *Cabaret*. This version of *Cabaret* was just as much a hit as the 1980's production. The crew of HPC did an astounding job transforming the Hinman Commons into the Berlin nightspot, the Kit Kat Club. Director Robbie Rozelle, played to the strengths of HPC, speaking to the audience right before the play and setting the mood for the performance. The mostly veteran HPCers meshed well and their chemistry was perfect. One reviewer was so pleased by the performance that she wrote, "The players looked as though they were having a great time, and they really put their all into it. It made me realize how much hidden talent there is at Binghamton University."<sup>41</sup>

The Spring of 1998 offered mixed results for HPC. That semester, HPC decided to stage two plays. The first would be another play that had been done with much success in the late 1980's—Neil Simon's *Plaza Suite*. Unfortunately, this particular production showcased the

many flaws still inherent in HPC. One scathingly critical review began by saying, “Although it [HPC’s *Plaza Suite*] wasn’t a complete waste of time, I might think twice before attending another HPC performance.”<sup>42</sup> With this opening statement, things did not bode well for the production. Both Maggie Durham and Kevin Dedes who play Karen and Sam Nash respectively, were criticized for their still performances and their seeming inability to get into character. They, along with many of the other actors in the play, were criticized for stammering, mumbling, and sometimes completely forgetting their lines. The second act of the play was fairly humorous with Austin Basis (who played Jesse Kiplinger) being praised for his performance. Rachael Freedman, who played Jesse’s old high schools sweetheart, Muriel Tate, was also praised. Their comedic duo sparked much laughter and was very entertaining. Unfortunately, the third act was criticized as being poorly performed. The actors in the third act, like in the first, were criticized for being stiff and dull in their performances and for seeming to forget a number of their lines. Only George Ford escaped the harsh criticism somewhat, though even he seemed to suffer from momentarily forgetting his lines. The reviewer ended her criticism by saying, “There were worse things I could have done this weekend instead of seeing HPC’s *Plaza Suite*. What I really hope is that HPC can get their act together in time to pull off *A Chorus Line*, or else I know one that won’t be a ‘singular sensation.’”<sup>43</sup> *Plaza Suite* was a disappointment for HPC. In order to regain their momentum, their next play, *A Chorus Line*, would have to be a hit.

*A Chorus Line* is a musical about a group of performers auditioning for a part in a musical. The play is famous for its intricate and grand choreography and its numerous solos. There were a number of bright spots in HPC’s *A Chorus Line*. The choreography of the show was praised for its jaw-dropping intricacy and it was obvious that the cast spent a lot of time practicing the show’s numerous dance numbers. Christine Verzosa, who played Connie, and

David Shildkret, who played Paul, were praised for their great singing and dancing abilities.

Shildkret in particular was praised for his passionate and heartfelt monologue at the end of the show.<sup>44</sup> Regrettably, this is where the praise of HPC ended and the harsh criticism began.

*A Chorus Line* is not so much a story as it is a platform to showcase the musical talents of the actors. However, many of the actors had difficulty with their solos and with singing in general. Many of the actors and actresses of HPC had difficulty hitting their notes and remembering the lyrics to the songs, which distracted from the show. It got so bad that during one of the performer's solos, the line "No, I really couldn't sing..." is sung. Immediately following that, someone in the audience responded, "Don't worry honey, neither can the rest of the cast."<sup>45</sup> It appeared that HPC had rehearsed nothing but the dance routines (which everyone considered to be excellent) but spent no time on the musical numbers. One reviewer said it best when she wrote,

...this was a show that needed an intermission. It's a tough show for the actors, and at times, for the audience too. Both groups looked exhausted by the end of the night. The actors from staying on their feet and the audience for having to listen to them sing. The choreography was impressive, but it looked like the cast was picked primarily on their ability to twirl, instead of carry a tune.<sup>46</sup>

In the end, *A Chorus Line* was a huge disappointment for HPC. The cast and crew desperately needed a hit and they all thought they had found it in this particular musical. While the actors obviously had talent, it was not enough to save this particular show. Both shows of the spring of 1998 were disappointments. With the successes of *Ten Little Indians*, *The Little Shop of Horrors*, and especially with *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, it seemed that HPC had gotten out of its funk and was back on track. The failures of *Plaza Suite* and *A Chorus Line* showed that HPC still had a long way to go if it was to reach the same level of quality that it once was famous for.

HPC was able to redeem itself somewhat in the Fall of 1998 when it staged Wendy Wasserstein's comedy-drama *Isn't It Romantic?* The play takes place in 1980 and centers around the lives of two women, Janie Blumberg and Harriet Cornwall, played by Kerry Bayowitz and Rachele Colantuono respectively. The play focuses on these two women and their attempts to find love and happiness in modern times. Bayowitz was praised for believably showing the character of Janie, a woman who is rocked by uncertainty about her goals in life. Colantuono also did an excellent job portraying Harriet as a Janie's polar opposite—a fiercely independent woman who nonetheless has a vulnerability which everyone sympathizes with. The supporting cast was also praised for their roles. Debbie Goodman and Jordan Schlang were given accolades for their roles as Janie's parents, Tasha and Simon Blumberg. Likewise, Ceren Arslanbas was praised for her role as Lillian Cornwall, Harriet's mother. One standout performance was given by David Berkowitz, who played Marty Sterling, the Jewish doctor who captures the heart of Janie. "David Berkowitz was engaging, sympathetic and sweet."<sup>47</sup> The play was also given kudos for its exceptional use of realistic and believable sets and their often hilarious costumes. Scott Eckers, who was in charge of lighting, was given kudos for his excellent use and placements of light to show the passage of time and to highlight certain features. Director Marlo Beth Schettino Lancia was also praised for putting the whole production together and tying it up nicely. In the end the play was described as, "...a surprising, enjoyable, and cute production with tender and bittersweet moments. There is absolutely no reason why anyone should find much wrong with this sweet confection of a show."<sup>48</sup> Although perhaps not as well known as *Plaza Suite* or *A Chorus Line*, HPC's production of *Isn't It Romantic?* was a desperately needed success for the struggling organization fraught with the

stress of trying to find a new identity during the long 1990's. As the new millennium approached, HPC was also presented with the challenge of what it would do to define itself then.

In the Spring of 1999 and the Fall of 1999, HPC staged the plays *Gypsy* and *Sweet Charity*, respectively. During the year 2000 the plays *Steel Magnolias*, *Godspell* and a play called *Love Letters* were produced. During 2001 the play *Once Upon A Mattress* is the only recorded production that year. In 2002 the plays *The Shape of Things* and *Picasso at the Lapin Agile* were produced by HPC. The years between 1999 and 2002 are a sort of dark ages for HPC. There is no written record for these plays (with the exception of *Picasso at the Lapin Agile*) and the oral history is sparse. The only way for the details surrounding these plays to be known is if those who worked and acted in those plays come forward and tell their stories. Otherwise what went on behind the scenes and on the stage will forever be lost to history. The written record would continue to remain sparse in the following early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Luckily, the oral history would pick up the slack left by written records and the story of HPC would continue to be known.

As one reads over the written records and the countless reviews, and listens to the oral histories, one thing becomes abundantly clear: that community-based theater in Hinman becomes defined by the decade. The 1970's were marked by experimentation and innovation through HLT. Similarly, the 1980's saw what can only be called the perfection of community-based theater in the form of HPC. Though it may sound harsh, the 1990's were a decade that saw a downturn in the quality of HPC productions. That is not to say that the dedication on the part of the casts and crews of HPC during that time diminished. Rather for whatever reason, HPC and community-based theater in Hinman took a downturn during that decade. HPC was plagued by problems in all but a few productions during the 1990's and as a result the reputation

of quality and professionalism that HPC possessed for the better part of two decades had long since vanished. Just as the future of community-based theater in Hinman was in doubt in the late 1970's, so to was it in the late 1990's and the early part of the new millennium. However, there was still a sprinkling of magic in the organization. There was something special about it that kept it alive through all the dark and turbulent times even if nearly everyone had written HPC off as a lost cause and a shell of its former glory. Just as it took a few dedicated individuals to turn Hinman community-based theater around in the late 1970's, it would be a select few individuals in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century that would revive the little theater that could and return it not only to its former position of prestige and glory, but bring it to new heights of achievement and success.

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<sup>1</sup> Jennifer Kramer, "The Hinman Production Company: Acting Speaks Louder Than Words," *Pipe Dream* Vol. XLIX, No. 22, December 1, 1989.

<sup>2</sup> "Matthew M. Furman, "HPC's Fools Fun but Not Funny," *Pipe Dream* Vol. XLIX, No. 20, November 14, 1989.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Irin Israel, "HPC's Talk Radio Airs," *Pipe Dream* Vol. XL No. 16, March 20, 1990.

<sup>5</sup> Kate Babroski, "The audience is 'Nuts' about Hinman Production Co.," *Pipe Dream* Vol. XLK, No. 16, November 6, 1990.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Jen Kramer, "Hinman Goes 'Into The Woods,'" *Pipe Dream* Vol. XL, No. 14, March 15, 1991.

<sup>8</sup> Amy T. Golubtchik, "HPC's play is divine," *Pipe Dream* Vol. XLI, No. 14, October 29, 1991.

<sup>9</sup> Amy T. Golubtchik, "Hinman Stages Drama: HPC is ready to perform 'The Diviners,'" *Pipe Dream* Vol. XLI, No. 12, October 22, 1991.

<sup>10</sup> Amy T. Golubtchik, "HPC's play is divine," *Pipe Dream* Vol. XLI, No. 14, October 29, 1991.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Amy T. Golubtchik, "Lies and 'Betrayal' in Hinman," *Pipe Dream* Vol. XLII, No. 19, February 18, 1992.

<sup>13</sup> Alice Brod, e-mail message to author, March 26, 2007.

<sup>14</sup> Nicole Stein, "'Sex, lies and deceit in Hinman,'" *Pipe Dream* Vol. XLII, No. 11, February 27, 1992.

<sup>15</sup> Alice Brod, e-mail message to author, March 26, 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Patricia Foley, "'Hair' takes a look at the '60s,'" *Pipe Dream* Vol. XLII, No. 15, March 24, 1992.

<sup>17</sup> Larry Wissink, "Flag burning tarnishes 'Hair's' message," *Pipe Dream* Vol. XLII, No. 20, April 10, 1992.

<sup>18</sup> Rick Brody, "Flag burning is not violence, but peaceful protest," *Pipe Dream* Vol. XLII, No. 22, April 24, 1992.

<sup>19</sup> Chris DeCicco, letter to the editor, *Pipe Dream* Vol. XLII, No. 22, April 24, 1992.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Knopf, letter to the editor, *Pipe Dream* Vol. XLII, No. 22, April 24, 1992.

<sup>21</sup> Mitchell Katz "Peanuts in Hinman," *Pipe Dream* Vol. XLII, No. 12, October 20, 1992.

<sup>22</sup> Alice Brod, e-mail message to author, March 26, 2007.

<sup>23</sup> Ely S. Kaplan, "HPC reveals a 'Dangerous Corner,'" *Pipe Dream* Vol. XLV, No. 14, March 23, 1993.

<sup>24</sup> Tarra Christoff, "'Chess' avoids a stalemate on stage," *Pipe Dream* Vol. XLV, No. 14, October 26, 1993.

<sup>25</sup> Adam Schindler, "Hinman offers serious tragedy," *Pipe Dream* March 8, 1994.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Chris Duro, "HPC play should be free for you and me," *Pipe Dream* Vol. XLVII, No. 15, November 1, 1994.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> *Pipe Dream* clipping. Located in the Hinman Archives.

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- <sup>30</sup> Patty Corwin, "Ten Little Indians to come to Hinman," *Pipe Dream* Vol. XLVIII, No. 12, March 7, 1995.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>33</sup> Max Goodman, "Agatha Christie chills & thrills in Hinman," *Pipe Dream* March 14, 1995.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>36</sup> Patty Corwin, "Play It Again, Sam," *Pipe Dream* Vol. XLIX, No. 14, October 31, 1995.
- <sup>37</sup> Marc Kaufman, "HPC's version of Little Shop goes a long way to erase inherent problems," *Pipe Dream* Vol. XLX, No. 14, March 19, 1996.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>39</sup> David Berkowitz, "7 stars shine in Brighton Beach," *Pipe Dream* Vol. LI, No. 15, November 16, 1996.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid.
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