

# One singular sensation! 'A Chorus Line'

by Ann Stringfield

Wednesday, October 22, Stewart Theatre presented the New York Shakespeare production of Michael Bennett's "A Chorus Line" at the Raleigh Memorial Auditorium.

"A Chorus Line" is the story of an audition for a musical. It is the story of the theatre and the people whose lives are forever a part of it.

The director of the

audition wants to know more about the auditioning dancers. He wants insight into how and why they are there. The dancers, then, are auditioning their lives. The story is the unfolding of their hopes, their dreams and their despair.

"A Chorus Line" opens with an electrifying number, "I Hope I Get It." There is a thrill when the music swells and thirty dancers move downstage with force,

precision and an unfathomable energy. "Step, Kick, Kick...turn, turn, out, in...back step, pivot step...walk, walk, walk" -- all with unbelievable speed and fluidity.

The interspersing of music, dance and plot is brilliant. The entire musical is, indeed, a continuum. The most successful blend of dance and dialogue is "Hello Twelve, Hello Thirteen," a song about adolescence.

The choreography of "The Music and The Mirror"; however, is rather disappointing. Cassie's dance lacks the movement and defined space of the other numbers.

Michael Bennett's choreography is at its best, though, in the finale, "One." "One" is worth its weight in glitter and gold. Every movement is as precise and synchronized as a fine quartz watch.

"A Chorus Line" is a comic, poignant and very, very real. It is a story about all of us. We are Maggie, who dances around the living room, and Paul, who struggles with manhood, and Cassie, who only asks to be given a chance.

"Kiss today good-bye and point me toward tomorrow ...." There's always the hope of tomorrow for all of us in the chorus line.

## Campaigning and the presidency

(Continued from Page 2)

presidential office (and the future president) from dangers that were thought to arise from direct appeals to the voters by ambitions and contending candidates. In particular, these were three features of the Presidency that were thought to be threatened by direct campaigning: its Constitutional authority, its receptivity to genuine statesmanship, and its accountability to the people.

The Presidency was designed to be an office whose authority stemmed from powers granted by the Constitution and from the President's place in the tripartite Constitutional design. But the Constitution itself rested upon the authority of "We, the people." By directly campaigning before the voters, a President might plausibly claim to embody the will of the people since their vote could be taken to be an endorsement of his personal appeal. Neither the justices of the Supreme Court nor members of Congress could make a similar claim. Hence a President might attach the authority of "we, the people" to himself at the expense of the other branches of government and, indeed, of the Constitution itself. His power would rest on his relationship with the people, not his Constitutional position, and he might use that authority to usurp powers properly belonging elsewhere or nowhere. Nixon's claim to have received a "mandate" in the 1972 election to which Congress ought to bow in illustrative of the danger feared. "Front porch" campaigns would help to make victories party as well as personal victories, thus diminishing the President's claim while increasing the claims of the party in Congress.

Secondly, the Presidency ought to attract and give scope to genuine statesmen. But direct campaigning would give the advantage to candidates who were preeminently orators and rhetoricians--men who could appear to understand politics without really doing so. These orators might easily become the slaves as well as the manipulators of people's passions and moods. Instability would be introduced into Presidential programs as Presidents scurried to play to the changing moods of the people, and the discretion and flexibility essential to the conduct of the Presidency would be diminished.

The "front porch" campaign sought to insert a party organization between the candidate and the people which would shield the future President from excessive dependence on transient moods. The enthusiasm and diligence with which he was supported would depend to a large extent on his serving the stable principles and interests of an organized party rather than the shifting sentiments of an inchoate mass. Oratory would take second place to substantive political goals and be contained by a candidate's ability to serve concrete interests.

Finally, it was thought that the President should be accountable to the people. But this did not mean accountable to people's whims, for the people themselves would be likely to repent of their whims within a short time. Rather it

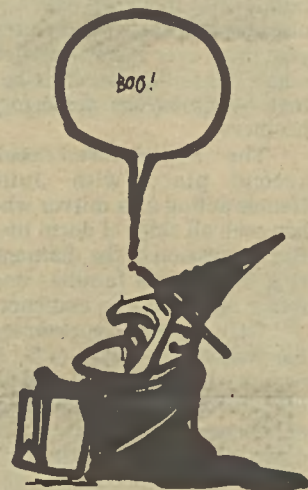
meant accountability to the more stable and better considered opinions of the voters--to what the Federalist called "the cool and deliberate sense of the community." But in a campaign of direct personal appeals, free of the discipline of having to govern, candidates would be likely to compete with each other to exploit the latest mood passing through the public. The "cool and deliberate sense of the community" would not rule in such an election, but victory would go to those who most skillfully gave expression to transient opinion. The role given to parties in the "front porch" campaign would help to inject stability into public opinion and curb the bobbing and weaving of candidates.

When William Jennings Bryan campaigned in 1896, he was widely condemned as a demagogue for his courting of the people. But Woodrow Wilson articulated a new view of the Presidency that has made stumping the country for votes a respectable activity ever since. This new Presidency, in Wilson's view, would derive its authority, not primarily from the Constitution, but from its expression of the will of the people. True statesmanship would come not from a President using his Constitutional prerogatives wisely, but from a President who could articulate the deep-felt desires of the people and marshal them to compel Congress and Party to accede to his program. The President

would be the "voice of the people" and elections would be, not so much occasions to hold Presidents and would-be Presidents to account, as occasions for the skillful orator to arouse the public by tapping its feelings and articulating its wishes. Thus all the power that could be generated by a modern democracy would be focused in the hands of the President for the good of all. Wilson's Presidency (which is now ours) requires an election in which the personal campaign of the candidate is central in order to establish the President's personal authority, arouse the force of the people, and concentrate this force in one man.

Whatever the merits of Wilson's view, more striking today, are its failings. Presidents who rely on the power of their oratory alone rather than their Constitutional authority and their strategic position within the Constitutional structure seem weak, not strong. Leadership seems too often to have transformed itself into "followership" of shallow moods and sentiments. And the people's opinions seem inchoate and unable to direct the government or to call a President to account even as Presidents disregard Con-

stitutional boundaries. We have the personal campaigns favored by Wilson without the fruits he thought would come from them. We need to reconsider not merely the campaign practices but the view of the Presidency of which they are part and parcel.



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