

# 'Hair'-Based Minimusical Tackles Tough Issues

BY MICHELLE CRAMPTON  
STAFF WRITER

"Hairpieces," a minimusical put on by second-year graduate student Thomas King, isn't about wigs, toupees or other false head coverings.

It's about stereotypes and controversial topics like sex, homophobia and racism. To develop "Hairpieces" for his master's thesis, King added a '90s twist to the musical "Hair," which was first performed in the 1960s.

"I call it 'Hairpieces' because, first of all, it's a play on a hairpiece being fake or as a part of something else," he said. "I also see it as taking pieces of the show and making a new show that may be similar or at least as thought-provoking as the original."

### Hairpieces

Thursday and Friday: 8 p.m.  
Saturday: 3 p.m.  
All shows in 203 Bingham Hall.  
Admission: free

His production, which runs about 45 minutes, takes the reactions to the original and uses them as part of the script.

Other portions of his musical are derived from lyrics to "Hair" songs. "Songs are actually just poems," King said. "So I took several of the songs and changed the lyrics into a performance text."

Cast members brought their own views to the performance by helping to write the script. They spent the first two weeks after auditions in January getting to know one another. By divulging personal information to each other and voicing concerns about issues such as homosexuality, drug use and racism, they developed their characters.

The characters themselves embody such figures as an overzealous feminist, a promiscuous woman and a lesbian. There is also a character who represents society, one known as the Earth mother,

another known as the wigger or "white nigger," and a character called "da man," a white male oppressor. Together, these seven characters form a group called "the tribe."

In addition to playing their roles as these stereotypes, the cast members also portray themselves. "They can play, at any given point, their character, but they also play themselves," King said. "And while it is them telling their own stories, these people are still performers, so they are performing their stories."

Jasme Kelly, a senior communication studies major from Durham, plays the Earth mother. "It's a threefold play," she said. "There's the lyrics from the songs of 'Hair,' and the criticism that gets added to it, and then there's us actually living it. I think that's brilliant."

Since much of the material for the show involves sensitive issues, the cast realizes that it might offend some in the audience.

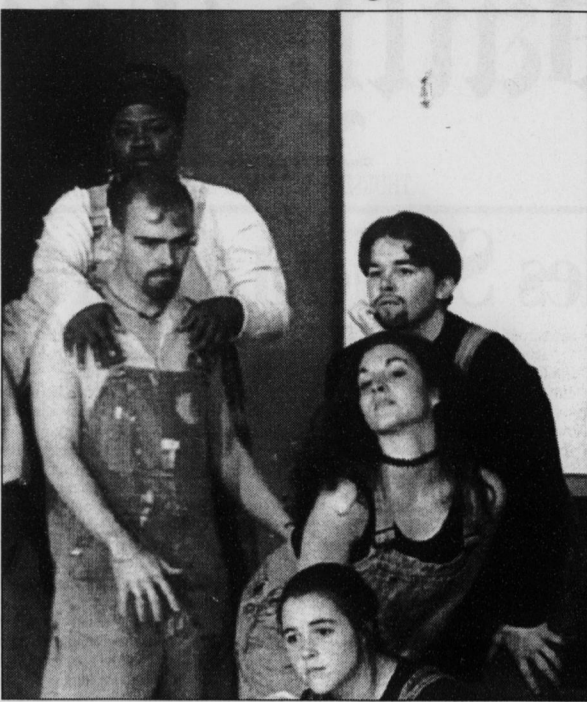
"I myself don't necessarily agree with all the sexual messages in it," said Rita Walter, a senior biology from Albemarle who plays Tuna, the promiscuous woman. "I really believe those things are immoral, but I do believe the racial things."

Travis Laughlin, a senior who plays "da man," likes the ideas the show brings up and the way they are presented.

"I think it's good to bring issues such as the ones that (King) raises in this show to the forefront," he said. "A lot of times you have to offend people and raise controversy in order to help people see things. If you keep it quiet, people are going to remain ignorant."

Kelly said: "I think it's really daring in the sense that (King) pushes the issues to the edge. There's actually a scene where we are basically sitting around doing drugs."

That, paired with other things, could be a problem for some viewers, Laughlin said. "People could be offended because we



Cast members of the musical "Hairpieces" rehearse in 203 Bingham Hall. The free play runs tonight through Saturday.

re-enact smoking dope on stage, and there is sensuality just oozing everywhere," he said.

King said: "The material may be offensive, but I'm not actually trying to offend anyone. What I'm trying to focus on is that

we do need to think about this and talk about why we say these things and think this way."

Admission is free, and doors will open half an hour before the performance because seating is limited.

McSurely said the primary goal for black employees was to get higher salaries. The starting salary for housekeepers is \$14,767, which is below the poverty line for a family of five.

These (pay) grade classifications were based on the idea that black people can live on less than white people. That initial (idea) has been accepted by the state (which sets the base pay for UNC employees).

Because of the low pay, many housekeepers hold two full-time jobs, keeping them at work and away from their families for long hours, McSurely said.

And the problem is not only the pay itself but also the significant difference in compensation between the job categories where blacks are clustered and the job categories filled by mostly white employees, he said.

"There is still a disparity between the lowest paying jobs and the predominantly white job categories right above that — clerical and skilled trade. The origins of that practice are racial."

Beyond pay, McSurely points to a laundry list of problems facing the black staff at UNC — from a workday that begins at 3:50 a.m. and poor health to a punitive supervisory system and half-hearted efforts by the University to provide training that would give black staffers a genuine opportunity to get a better job.

McSurely said pay increases and promotions for housekeepers depended on good supervisor evaluations. "In the housekeeping department, these evaluations are given by supervisors who are under a great deal of pressure from their managers to

keep the budget as low as possible. They have set up a very punitive system."

He also criticized the University for not setting up an apprentice program to help housekeepers move into the higher paying trade jobs such as carpentry and plumbing. "Despite it's (public relations) on that, the University has not done anything but a few cosmetic programs," he said, referring to the clerical skills classes.

### Dissonant Voices

Others add to McSurely's list of problems by citing recalcitrant administrators and an increased use of temporary labor.

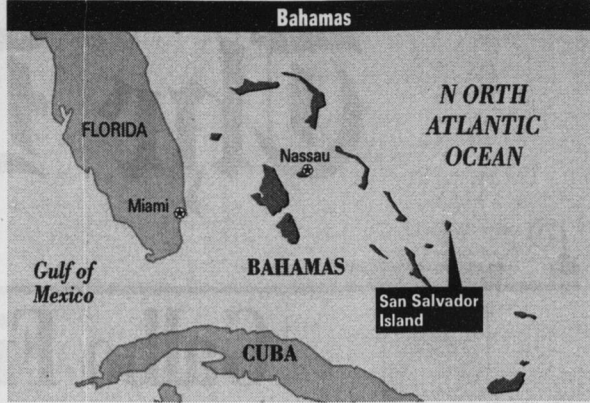
Said housekeeper Prear, "There are still some supervisors who treat black and white workers differently on the same job. Some things have improved and others haven't really. I think that there are certain people who refuse to change, and it seems like our administrators allow them not to change."

Prear cited instances of blacks being asked to do additional work when the same was not asked of white employees.

"People refuse to acknowledge that things happen, and when you try to deal with it you have fears from a lot of people, especially housekeepers, (in addressing the problem)."

She also said there was a perception that promotions were given unfairly. "To me it's not that they move up the most qualified people — it's that they move up people who kiss butt."

Housekeeper superintendent Hardy White responded, "We have discussed the housekeepers' feeling that there may be perhaps some skeletons still in the closet as



# It Sure Beats Mitchell Hall: Class Breaks in Bahamas

BY CATHLEEN LINEBERRY  
STAFF WRITER

When Spring Break begins in less than two weeks, at least one class will still be in session. Students enrolled in Marine Sciences 123, crosslisted as Geology 123, aren't complaining, however.

After all, there's something to be said for taking a field trip to the Bahamas.

As part of the four-credit course called "Marine Carbonate Environments," students will be conducting their own research projects in San Salvador Island, Bahamas.

"It's going to teach us a lot, and I think it will be fun," said Nancy Black, a graduate student in the geology department.

"We're going to draw on a lot of the knowledge that we've learned through our other course work. We've studied a lot of litera-

ture and now will be able to conduct our research and take measurements. It's a great opportunity."

San Salvador Island, about 375 miles southeast of Miami, was chosen as the location of the trip because it offers students the opportunity to study various environmental settings, said Bret Jarrett, a teaching assistant for the class.

Conrad Neumann, professor of marine sciences, teaches the course and is also leading the trip, which costs students \$600. "We're hoping to have some good science and good fun," he said.

The group going on the trip will consist of 12 graduate students and six undergraduate students from different departments, including geology and marine sciences. Five faculty members, including Neumann and two members of the Institute of Marine Sciences, will also be going.

"It is a rather intense exercise," Neumann said. "Students are very stimulated to learn in that environment, even when they are working in muddy, hot, stinky ponds and lagoons."

Neumann, who has taught this class in the spring every other year since 1972, will be making his 10th trip with students to the Bahamas. While there, the class will stay in a converted Navy tracking station.

Neumann said the students' learning would be mostly self-directed. "Each student does his own research on the trip," Neumann said. "The selected undergraduates have a science background that will allow them to conduct their own research."

He isn't worried about the students' varying level of experience with these sorts of projects. "We've already had almost 20 hours of lecture to prepare students," Neumann said. "They will also have an exam before the trip."

### Black History Month Spotlight

The Statue of Liberty  
After the Civil War, the French gave the Statue of Liberty to the United States of America in honor of its newly freed citizens.  
The French gave America the Statue of Liberty. However, when the statue arrived, its features were manipulated to appear more Caucasian (the statue was in the image of a black person). Therefore, the next time that you journey to New York City, keep in mind that that tourist attraction was supposed to be a black woman.

### Campus Calendar

THURSDAY  
3:30 p.m. "Opportunities: Resources Abound," a program for women and proteges, will be held in the Assembly Room of Wilson Library. Sponsored by Leadership Matters...  
Astrophysics/Theoretical Physics Seminar in 247 Phillips.  
Particle and Field Theory Seminar in 258 Phillips.  
"Solutions for Multimedia Networking" will be presented by Bert Dempsey, Ph.D., from the University of Virginia Department of Computer Science, in 208 Manning Hall.  
4 p.m. "The Endangered Species Act Reauthorization" will be presented by David Wilcove of the Environmental Defense Fund in 128 Wilson Hall.  
5 p.m. Psychology Club meeting/movie/free pizza night, will be held in 101 Davie Hall.  
Only members are invited to attend this club meeting.  
5:30 p.m. VSA in Union 205.  
7 p.m. SNCAE will meet to discuss "Student Voices" in 10 Peabody.  
Outing Club in 109 Fetzer Gym.  
8 p.m. UNC Symphony Orchestra, with winners of the annual UNC Concerto Competition, will sponsor a Scholarship Benefit Concert in Hill Hall Auditorium.  
Tickets are on sale now in 104B Hill Hall: \$9 for adults, \$5 for senior citizens and \$2 for students. Call 962-1039 for more information.

### For the Record

In the "Briefs" column in Wednesday's edition of The Daily Tar Heel, it was incorrectly reported that the reception for the "Humpty Smiled" exhibit would be March 3. The reception actually will be held from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. March 2 in the Union gallery. The DTH regrets the error.

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### STAFF

FROM PAGE 1  
"In part, this unfortunate climate may result from recent budget cuts, the recent absence of salary increases, fear of staff layoffs, and (in the view of some) a protracted debate concerning changes in the University grievance process," the report continued.

Thus, the report concluded that although progress was being made, there were several "hot spots" (probably a reference to the Keith Edwards and housekeeper cases) where blacks faced a "hostile work environment."

### Are Staff Problems Always About Race?

The casual observer of the Keith Edwards, Eric Browning and housekeepers court sagas might conclude they are mainly about race. But actually, it is not always easy to identify which staff problems are distinctly racial.

For example, Barbara Prear, a leader of the Housekeepers Association, characterized the housekeepers' fight for better pay, training and working condition as a fight on behalf of "the working-class poor."

"I think that race keeps us divided on certain issues," she said. "If you haven't got money to buy a loaf of bread, it doesn't

matter if you're black or white." Rachel Windham, chairwoman of a group that provides a forum for UNC staffers, agreed that the problems facing housekeepers were not necessarily racial.

In fact, Windham said she could not remember any issue that had been brought to the Employee Forum having been described as about race.

"We've never had a discussion of an issue as a black and white issue," she said. "Our approach is generally looking at issues that are related to the entire work force. I'm not going to take an issue and turn it into a black and white issue when it is not that at all."

### It's About Institutional Racism

Chapel Hill attorney Al McSurely, who represents Keith Edwards, Eric Browning and the housekeepers, had a different take on what had happened to black staffers at UNC. He calls the concentrations of blacks in lower-paying jobs an example of institutional discrimination that has survived at UNC from the times of slavery through segregation and the fight to end it.

"It is that history that has to be looked at when you look at the treatment of minorities," he said. "My view is that (UNC) has a legal duty to remove the vestiges of that history."

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