Jesusmania!: The Bootleg Superstar of Gettysburg College

Devin McKinney
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Jesusmania!: The Bootleg Superstar of Gettysburg College

**Description**
In 1971, an illegal performance of the rock opera Jesus Christ Superstar was staged at Gettysburg College. It was the spontaneous project of students, professors and a renegade seminarian. Performance rights were being negotiated, when suddenly legal action was threatened against any group staging the work before its Broadway premiere. The cast and crew put the show on anyway, and many hundreds attended. But the outlaw production drew the college administration and the Lutheran church into controversy. Drawing from original documents, recordings, and interviews with the cast, this book tells the behind-the-scenes story of the production.

**Keywords**
Jesus Christ Superstar, Gettysburg College, musical theater, counterculture, radical theater, 1970s

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ALSO BY DEVIN McKINNEY


Voices of D-Day: June 6, 1944 (2014, co-editor)

Encounters with Eisenhower (2015, co-editor)
Jesusmania!
The Bootleg Superstar of Gettysburg College

Devin McKinney

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Musselman Library
Gettysburg College
2016
For Larry
who is still with us
and for
Al Papp,
Dave Bauer,
and
Paul Hitchens
who are not
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A Note to the Reader

While an intimate knowledge of *Jesus Christ Superstar* in its original form—the album released in late 1970—is not essential to following this story, a familiarity with it will of course facilitate and enlarge the reader’s understanding. The author recommends listening to the album at least once, at whatever point seems right.
momentary as a sound
Swift as a shadow, short as any dream

– A Midsummer Night’s Dream
Jesusmania!
It's always the specific that helps us to understand the general.
– One of the performers

A number of people asked why I’d chosen to write a book on this subject. Trying to think it out, for them and for myself, I usually fumbled the answer. But I might have it now.

I think any historian is drawn to reconstruct an event for two reasons: one, it is unique; two, it is typical. Both fact and metaphor; both itself and something else. Though probably any event can be seen both ways, not all will repay the effort. So if you’re lucky enough to discover an event that is compelling on both levels, you’ve struck gold. Thus, my interest in the Jesus Christ Superstar that was performed at Christ Chapel on the campus of Gettysburg College in the spring of 1971.

Most basically, what follows is the story of a modest musical production mounted by a handful of students, a few faculty members, and a seminarian at a small, mid-Atlantic liberal arts college forty-five years ago. More expansively, it is an attempt to examine, from what I hope is a novel perspective, a richly documented and heavily analyzed era the stimulations and pressures of which drew a multitude of responses from different people. It would be pompous, not to mention simply false, to claim epochal significance for the Gettysburg Superstar—a risk I’m keenly aware of this very day, which happens to be the anniversary of the Kent State massacre. But to view it in a historical vacuum would divest it of many well-earned meanings, while to ignore it altogether would be perverse: it is too good a story to let fall into oblivion.

At its best, the experimentation that occurred at Gettysburg College and places like it in the late 1960s and early 1970s resulted in a more robust relationship to the world beyond the campus; an enlarged sense of college life as community life; and a renewed conception of the academy as meeting ground of culture and history, creativity and rigor, the real and the ideal. At its very best—collaborative, alchemical, unrepeataable—it resulted in something like the Gettysburg Superstar. In one way, this production had nothing to do with the Vietnam War, with feminism, or with the end of the Sixties. In another way, it had much to do with them.

The individuals in this book, because they lived in a certain time, amid certain influences and events, faced a set of imperatives—of action,
energy, creativity, commitment—that were historic in scope and all but unprecedented in synchronicity. To a degree, their privileged placement on a fairly isolated, high-priced college campus buffered them from such imperatives; to a degree, it was exactly because of where they were that they felt the imperatives more forcefully and immediately than did other citizens. It was a time uniquely demanding of American youth, a time when even to “drop out” was to make a personal choice with social implications. The individuals in this book chose to make their Superstar in ways and for reasons that were entirely personal; but in so acting, all became, whether they sought to or not, peripheral players in a much larger drama.

If that doesn’t answer the question of why I wanted to write a book, let me attempt this sideways approach. A favorite painting of mine since childhood is Botticelli’s Adoration of the Magi. Painted about 1475, it shows the Holy Family under a shelter of stones, the Star of Jerusalem overhead. In the foreground has gathered a small group of people. “The figures,” wrote art historian Frederick Hartt, “are scattered loosely through this informal composition as if actually gathered before a family altar. Profiles and foreshortened views of faces are juxtaposed so as to create a ripple of activity throughout the crowd. Some figures are lost in contemplation of the mystery, some engaged in disputation about its meaning, some gazing outward toward the observer.” In the style of Renaissance painting, some of the faces in the crowd were those of actual people. One of them, Hartt speculated, belonged to the recently deceased Cosimo de’ Medici, while another—off to the side, its gaze turned not to the magi but to the viewer—belonged to Botticelli himself.

Clearly one didn’t need to be a Christian, or have any religious belief, to be haunted by this tableau, the power of which, it always seemed to me, lay not in the content but in the arrangement. I loved the painting not for what was at its center, but for its promise that if one looked away from the center—into the backgrounds, margins, peripheries—one might find a lifetime’s worth of sustaining surprises. A king among commoners, say, or the artist looking at you as you looked at him. Or simply a sense of the life that has always teemed around those centrifugal forces which for most of history have been considered, in the narrowness of our vision, to be the only history that matters.

So, a long-winded answer to the original question. This book is a natural outgrowth from Botticelli. While the Sixties are at its center, its focus is on a piece of the life that existed in the background, at the margin, on the periphery, yet without which there would have been no center. I began this research because I was interested in an event. I continued it because I kept being surprised by what I found. Finally I wrote a book because in following the story I found a face looking back at me, and the face was mine.
I thank my wife, Kathy Berenson, for her unconditional support of my labors and fancies, which is to say my often digressive pursuit of an eccentric happiness.

This book is directly attributable to Professor Michael Birkner, alumnus of Gettysburg College and pillar of its History Department. At every stage, he has been the project’s advisor and champion. To say it would be poorer without him is pointless: without him, it wouldn’t exist.

It’s been my great fortune these five years to work in Musselman Library, specifically the Special Collections and College Archives division. Director Carolyn Sautter, Digital Projects Director Catherine Perry, and Archivist Amy Lucadamo all encouraged and enabled me whenever and however they could. Robin Wagner, Dean of the Library, was a supporter from the beginning, and is directly responsible for getting this book into print. Her assistant, Miranda Wisor, was invaluable at key points, as was Melanie Fernandes, 2016 Gettysburg graduate and Barbara Holley Library Intern.

For the creativity and expertise she brought to this book’s design, I thank Kate Brautigam. For affording me the use of crucial images, I thank Sheila Joy, Archives Assistant at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg; Ron and Howard Mandelbaum at Photofest in New York; and Peter Sando. For his critique of the text, I thank John Shaw. For his onstage support, I thank Ted Gilbert, Gettysburg College Class of 1967.

Among those who created and documented the Gettysburg Superstar, I must single out Mark Teich, Clay Sutton, and Larry Recla. Each was generous with time, memories, and artifacts; none ever sought to impose a proprietary interpretation of the events. The story might have gotten told without them, but it wouldn’t have been nearly as much of a story. Most of the others who made Superstar happen consented to be interviewed, but those who didn’t are no less to be thanked. The chief responsibilities I’ve felt have been to the facts as I found them, and to the realities of those who shared their memories with a stranger, trusting that he’d use them honestly and with some sensitivity.

To the reader, I offer the faith that you will come away understanding why I found it easy to become entranced by these people, this story. To the cast, band, and crew, I offer these words, from an Elton John song that was in the Top 20 the week the first planning session occurred: “I know it’s not much, but it’s the best I can do.”

Devin McKinney
Gettysburg, Pennsylvania
May 4, 2016
All undergrounds are different, and all are the same. As a type of human grouping, they arise in response, and usually in opposition, to the dominant way of things. Their coordinates tend to move around, and they usually develop organically, rather than being willed into existence.

The word is coalesce. “This was not a recruitment,” Larry Recla stresses, remembering how it all came together. “It was a coalescing.”

The Gettysburg College underground of 1970 had no headquarters. Its constituents were not necessarily known to the administration or even to each other, despite the campus’s small size. Part of that underground could be found in a dark, low-ceilinged room in the basement of the old gymnasium, where students played music, read poetry or plays aloud, and huddled over candles. Other parts of it developed in dormitory rooms where residents talked about issues, listened to rock records, had sex, and engaged in illicit experimentation. Some of it lay in the country outside of town, at rural gathering points where students attempted one form or another of communal living.

And there was underground right there on the sidewalks and lawns of the academy, sometimes in Gettysburg itself—the sitters and marchers, pacifists and peace creeps, malcontents and misfits, all those making irritatingly persistent use of their constitutional right to complain. In those days, people recall, there was always someone protesting something. But then, there was always something to protest.

On Friday, January 15, 1971, the campus newspaper, The Gettysburgian, printed a list of events to be held in the college chapel in the coming week. The Chapel Council’s annual field trip to New York, designed to give a group of selected students an idea of “what action the church is taking
in the city,” was approaching. A “gospel-rock mass” would be conducted by Jim Henderson, a religion major and popular senior. Topping the week’s activities was a meeting slated for the following morning: “Anyone interested in working on a production of ‘Jesus Christ: Superstar’ [sic] meet Room 2.”

Of all the campus undergrounds, by far the most unassuming was the basement of Christ Chapel, the college’s official place of worship. Beneath all that stained glass and burnished wood was situated a complex of offices, work rooms, sanctuaries, and studios: what one former student has called “the little clubhouse of the protest movement.” Room 2 was generic office space—couches and desks, folders and coffee cups, folks coming and going—and it was where Larry Recla spent much of his time.

If there’s a fulcrum to this story, it’s Larry Recla, the one individual involved in the Gettysburg Superstar before it began and after it was over. He dealt with the dramatic end, and with the business end; with the students and with the administration; with the college and with the church. Though people’s memories of Recla are kaleidoscopic, all agree that, when it came to Superstar, he was the inspirer, shaper, and constant. And though he was less a Gettysburg College person than a temporarily encamped outsider, he was the main force behind the culminating college event of the year—a year that was in many ways, for Gettysburg and for America, itself the culmination of an era.

The twenty-eight-year-old Recla was chapel ministry intern for 1970-71, and a student at Gettysburg Seminary. Like interns before him, he was present mainly to assist the chaplain, John Vannorsdall, and his associate chaplain, Gerard Knoche (known as Jerry). Most of his job involved working directly with students. The kids at the chapel dug Larry, on the whole: he was only a few years older than they, more big brother than authority figure, and he looked every bit the hip, unorthodox young minister of the new decade. He often wore “clerics”—white collar and black short-sleeved shirt—but it wasn’t unusual to see him in civilian clothes. Like the kids, he enjoyed contemporary popular music, though he leaned away from heavy rock toward a more respectable, folk-derived
genre: Peter, Paul and Mary, Simon and Garfunkel. He wore his jet-black hair long and chain-smoked Pall Malls; he was outspoken and irreverent, with a reflexive dislike of authority, churchly or secular.

He was not the man of the cloth most of these sheltered, middle-class Christian kids were used to. “I don’t remember him fitting the mold at all,” says one of them. “I remember him being kind of crazy—cigarette-smoking, beer-drinking. He wore the collar, but he was accessible. You could talk about things with him.” Other responses ran the gamut. “He tended to be a little—I’m not sure if ‘far-out’ is the right expression,” says Nancy Locher, then the college’s Dean of Women. “But in terms of what you might expect a Lutheran pastor to be, he was a little far-out.” Some students, put off by his bluntness, or by what they sensed as his air of general disdain, simply didn’t like Larry. Still others didn’t know what to make of him, and mistook outward appearance as evidence of inner belief: he’s remembered by one person as a “hippie,” by another as a “flower child,” by still another as “liberal.” He was, in fact, far from any of those things, though he might have appeared at different times to be some of each.

For even if they weren’t always apparent, broad gaps existed between Larry and many of the kids he dealt with at Gettysburg. There were differences of class and background, as well as the less tangible divisions bound to exist between Americans born during World War II and those born after it. Some subjects, chiefly the Vietnam War, simply weren’t
discussed. Had they been, those gaps would have become obvious, perhaps unbridgeable, and Larry, who took his pastoral relationships very seriously, didn’t wish to contaminate them with political disagreements. So he kept his own counsel when Vietnam came up—or poverty, or welfare, or crime, or police brutality. It was enough that he looked like a hippie, grinned like a flower child, and tolerated like a liberal, for these behaviors meant, in the eyes of many students, that he was one of them.

But Larry, for his part, didn’t feel quite at ease on the Gettysburg campus. Certainly, he considered his status to be second-class. “If there were a plantation that had domestic help,” he offers by way of metaphor, “and that help tended the plantation owner’s children, and it was a marvelous thing for the children, the owner would certainly rejoice that the children had a nice thing. But that owner wouldn’t invite the domestic to sit at table. It never much occurred to me that I was anything other than a domestic.”

But that wasn’t a new feeling for Larry. He was familiar with resentment, and with displacement. In fact, one day he would write a speech that ended this way:

For those of you who I have offended by my grousing,
remember, I truly know nothing,
and I am a stranger in your land.

Then, at one point, Jesus Christ Superstar appeared. It had nothing to do with Larry Recla: strangers in another land had conceived and created it. Nevertheless it appeared before him, and, having appeared, all but took over his life. It soothed, for a few months that spring, his doubts about himself and the people around him, the work he was doing and the time he was doing it in. It left him feeling that the assignment of a year of his life to Christ Chapel and the students of Gettysburg College was no mere happenstance but rather, in his words, “a direct intervention from God.” It eased somewhat his feeling, as long-lived as a curse and as closely held as a grudge, of always being a stranger in another’s land.
2. the misanthrope

Larry tells the following joke:

Three Lutheran ministers from different synods—one eastern, one Midwestern, one western—are playing golf. Ahead of them is a group so slow, it takes the ministers all day to finish the course. They confront the club pro and complain. The pro responds: “I can't believe how cruel you’re being. There’s a very good reason the group ahead of you were slow. They’re blind.”

Humbled, the minister from the Midwest says, “I feel so guilty about my selfishness. This Sunday I’ll preach about it, so that my parishioners can feel guilty, too.”

The minister from the west says, “I feel so guilty about my insensitivity. This Sunday I’ll preach about the need for society and government to reach out to the disabled, so that my parishioners can experience the shame of our culture.”

“Those people were blind?” the minister from the east says. “Screw ‘em. They can play at night.”

“I’m from the east,” Larry says.

Lawrence Robert Recla was born in 1942 in Hazleton, Pennsylvania. He was raised until four in the nearby coal-patch town of Nuremberg, and after that in Berwick. His mother, a homemaker; and his father, a jeweler and watch repairer; came from different churches—he Roman Catholic, she Lutheran—which made Larry the product of a “mixed marriage.” (He was in college before he learned what other people meant by that phrase.) The Reclas lived in the heart of the Valley and Ridge Province, known to most simply as “the coal region.” Here, in a swath 1,200 miles

Above: A woodcut of Larry Recla by artist Ron Bower, a childhood friend.
long and 80 miles wide running along the Appalachian Highlands, lay America’s richest veins of anthracite coal. By the time Larry Recla was born, companies had been mining there for well over a century, and the often deadly work was simply a day’s labor for generations of regional males. Larry’s own grandfather had worked in the mines, starting at the age of twelve as a breaker boy, hand-separating coal from rock.

“Sixteen Tons,” the Merle Travis song that was a national hit for Tennessee Ernie Ford in 1955, highlighted the economic exploitation of miners, a phenomenon Recla was aware of early. “People living in a company town got paid, not a salary, but by the coal they produced. All the equipment, all the food, everything, was bought from the company. So it was not unusual for a miner, after a month of brutal, dangerous work, to owe the company money.” The region’s social stratifications (distinctions of quality were made between inhabitants of patch farms, mining towns, and “regular” towns) instilled Larry with a keen sensitivity to those he felt would place themselves above him. “I never understood myself as part of the Key Club group—the white folk, so to speak.”

His background inculcated a social conservatism that would later place him somewhat at odds with the Sixties counterculture. He felt, for instance, that a clear line existed between the economic empowerment represented by unions and the kind of aid known as welfare. Among impoverished coal families, Recla says, “there was this thing called ‘relief.’ Not welfare—relief. What a fascinating word: so that there were people and families and otherwise who would have to ‘go on relief’ for a while. And one did it because one had to, not because one was entitled to it.”

Many of his region’s social principles and civic certitudes remain set in Larry as solidly as coal in bedrock. “That is much of my heritage that I accept,” he says. “In our house, ‘gun safety’ meant the gun was always loaded.”

* * *

Though he was about fourteen when he realized he’d be a priest, it would be years before he did anything about it. But it was understood that he would go to college, and his options were clear: the family could afford either a single year at Gettysburg or four at Bloomsburg State, an old and well-respected teachers’ school. Since the latter was close enough to allow him to live at home, the issue decided itself, and Larry entered Bloomsburg in 1960, majoring in English.

Study, commuting, and part-time work left little time for extracurriculars or socializing. Then his father died, and Larry was dealt his first real devastation. “I had gotten my legs under me; I was starting to do decent, reasonable college work. That knocked that out. I told my
mother I’d quit school, get a job. She absolutely refused.” Lawrence Recla Sr.’s funeral drew the largest turnout the town had seen for such an event in years: his wit and gift for storytelling had, unknown to his son, made him famous in Berwick. But Larry didn’t cry, even at the funeral.

At Bloomsburg, he joined the chess club and newspaper staff, and did student teaching in Bucks County. He also worked at Camp Nawakwa as a summer counselor. Located in the Appalachian foothills near Arendtsville, Nawakwa is the oldest Lutheran youth camp in the US, and it was there, the summer after his father’s death, that Larry met his first wife. Sue Ann Nephew was a year younger than Larry, likewise a camp counselor, and, it turned out, an elementary education major at Bloomsburg State. They continued to see each other after returning to school.

In 1965, Recla graduated with a bachelor’s degree in secondary education. He applied for a job teaching English in the Waynesboro school system, to begin in the fall. A contract was offered and signed. But at Nawakwa that summer, Larry had caught the attention of a local parish pastor, one Reverend Logan, who told him his proper place was in the church. Logan contacted the Central Pennsylvania Synod, the regional governing body of the Lutheran Church of America (LCA), and wheels were set in motion. Next steps were for Larry to enter seminary, earn a Bachelor of Divinity degree, be ordained, and receive his first parish assignment. Two weeks later, Larry withdrew from the teaching contract.

There were then eleven Lutheran seminaries in the US and Canada, spread out from Saskatoon to Berkeley, but in central Pennsylvania, Gettysburg was where one went. The question was how to pay for it. Most seminarians relied on a subsidy from their regional synod, the granting of which required a formal approval, or “endorsement.” Following an interview with synod representatives, Larry got his endorsement, and by summer’s end he was enrolled, along with some 150 other aspirants, at the seminary in Gettysburg.

Larry (top row, second from left) on the staff of the Bloomsburg literary magazine.
The oldest Lutheran theological school in America (founded 1826) sits on Seminary Ridge, overlooking Gettysburg from the west. Its white bell tower was the crow’s-nest used by Union officers on July 1, 1863, the first day of the eponymous Civil War battle, to survey the developing mayhem—and then, for the succeeding two days, by the Confederates as they drove the northerners into the final hellholes of Devil’s Den and Little Round Top. The seminary survived the battle largely unscathed, save for a rash of bullet holes and broken windows in the main building, Schmucker Hall.

The institution survived in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on a modest but reliable enrollment and its status as one of only two Lutheran seminaries in a state with a heavy German-descended population. It also had a beneficial, albeit informal, arrangement with Gettysburg College, whereby the seminary faculty was largely composed of graduates of the college’s Bible program. But as the 1960s loomed, Gettysburg Seminary, like so many other established institutions, was struggling not only to survive but to justify itself.

In 1962, the LCA’s Board of Theological Education conducted a critical review of the seminaries. Its report found an “atmosphere of unreality” pervading Lutheran education, with classes consisting mostly of pedantic lecture and rote note-taking. “There is everywhere a feeling that changes in society are taking place which vitally affect the nature of
the ministry,” the report read—including changes in technology, mobility, and “the revolt of the Negro against his suppression.” Organized religion was no longer seen as an exciting or meaningful way of engaging with the temporal world: “We must face the fact that a large part of our educated citizenry seeks for an understanding of modern man in today’s novels, or dramas, or music. The theatre, the art gallery, even the television replace the church as the educators of youth in the understanding of life.”

On September 8, 1965, the Reverend Dr. Donald R. Heiges, president of Gettysburg Seminary, gave the annual convocation address to returning and incoming students. His theme was the decay he saw promoted by “a combination of piously posed solemnity on the part of the laity, the sepulchral voice of the officiant, the artificial tonality of the pulpiteer, the depressing weight of introspective hymns, the irritation of cheap and sentimental anthems.” The result, Heiges estimated, was that “the sensitive person needs at least three days to recover from the enervating experience, while the outsider collects still further evidence that God is dead.”

Heiges had taken charge at Gettysburg in 1962, at a time when enrollment had held steady for years; the endowment was respectable, and contributions from supporting synods and private donors had allowed for modest capital improvements. But Heiges felt the seminary had to grow, not simply maintain, and that times were calling for new approaches. “In a revolutionary age,” he declared, “theological education must be revolutionary.”

A number of controversial church leaders had taken stands on integration, poverty, and disarmament, and contributed to a revisionist momentum in the major denominations. The work of young radical theologians to philosophize a Christian atheism was among the factors that inspired Time magazine in April 1966 to ask on its cover, “Is God Dead?” Soon after, Presbyterian minister David Poling wrote a syndicated newspaper series titled “Are These the Last Years of the Church?” When news reached the US that August that John Lennon had claimed the Beatles were “more popular than Jesus,” the heresy was begrudgingly seconded by many within the church.

In his 1965 address, Donald Heiges saw the modern Christian living in “a culture soaked in existential anxiety, forced to live in a society bedeviled with myriad forms of alienation, and stranded upon an earth ruthlessly ravished and callously poisoned with industrial excrement, while at any moment he may be vaporized in a nuclear holocaust.” It was crucial, he said,
that the church address “the reality of our cultural anxiety, the devastating alienation of our society, and the alarming befoulment of our environment.” Heiges also expressed, in lines borrowed from Shelley, a hope that the church would, in the process, shed some of its solemnity and emerge as an affirmative stronghold in an increasingly apocalyptic age—“a splendour among shadows, a bright blot / Upon this gloomy scene.”

In Heiges’s audience that day was Larry Recla. But ecclesiastical handwringing was not uppermost in his mind. Just turned twenty-three and happy to be leaving home (“The best way to see Berwick is in the rearview mirror”), he’d hit Gettysburg with five dollars in his pocket and less interest in churchly studies than in discovering the institutional limits of a good time.

He likens his first year, complete with coed keg parties, to *Animal House*. On Epiphany evening of 1966*, he and his classmates made the rounds of the town bars, singing Gregorian chants in exchange for pitchers of beer. Staggering back to campus, they cased the seminary chapel; Recla jimmyed a window. Inside, they resumed their rambunctious, one member pounding away at the chapel organ. “Suddenly,” Recla says, “from the shadows came a figure: Donald Heiges in a bathrobe. I’ve never sobered up so fast in my life. He greeted us, then spoke to the student at the organ. The organ had a switch with three positions—inside only, outside only, both—and Dr. Heiges simply inquired whether the person had checked the switch. Granting the rapid intake of breath from the one behind the organ, we had the answer. That was all that was said. The president left, and so, shortly thereafter, did we.”

Affectionately dubbed “the Abbot,” Heiges was enormously popular with the seminarians. His presence, Larry recalls, “was pastoral, focused, and glorious,” yet he was approachable even by a lowly junior.*

He also found novel ways of disciplining the brilliant but coltish Recla. Larry’s first class occurred at 7:45 a.m., “which I thought was an unconscionable hour. So it came to pass that every classroom on the first floor of the building was entirely devoid of furniture. Every chair was gone. In one room was stacked thirty feet of chair.”

Heiges summoned Recla to his office. “He said to me, ‘Larry? I’ll bet you didn’t know I was having a visiting professor come by to tour the campus this morning.’

“No, Dr. Heiges, I certainly didn’t.”

---

* Epiphany, the holiday celebrating the manifestation of God’s humanity in Christ, falls on January 6.
+ In seminary nomenclature, a first-year student is a “junior.”
“I didn’t think you did. But I’ve noticed the floors are in need of waxing, and our sexton is overworked. Would you see to that?”

“I’d be happy to, Dr. Heiges.’

“No accusation, no denial; very decent and civil. And I got to not only put the goddamn chairs back, but see to it that the floors were waxed. That’s the kind of president Don Heiges was. I loved and adored the man.”

Among Larry’s teachers, one made a particular impact. Austria-born Eric Gritsch, professor of church history, had grown up in some of the darkest days of World War II. Much of his family was killed or lost in the March 1938 Anschluss, the Nazis’ annexation of Austria; the teenaged Gritsch was conscripted into a Nazi guerilla unit, but managed to escape under cover of fog on a Good Friday night, taking several others with him. (Those who stayed behind, the story went, ended up dead.) Rescued by a Russian tank corps, Gritsch went on to study at the University of Vienna, and at Yale as a Fulbright scholar. At Gettysburg in the Sixties, he was a civil-rights and antiwar activist.

Gritsch took a mentoring interest in many seminarians, but he’d probably never met a more discerning or receptive acolyte than Recla—whose institutional rebellions were offset by an adoration of figures who humanized authority with qualities of wit and depth. In Gritsch, Larry saw embodied the full commitment to the church which he was still unprepared to make.

Elsewhere, Larry grew notorious for a wicked tongue often directed at the well-intended liberal experiments that were ever more in the air. A number of students petitioned the administration to let them board off-campus with low-income families in and around Gettysburg, and to report on the experience for academic credit. A meeting was convened; wondering if the proposal and its associated ideals applied equally across the socioeconomic scale, Larry said, “I think it’s a marvelous idea. In fact, I wish to go and live with your parents for a period of time, and receive credit for it. How does that sound?”

The Reclavian barb had a chilling effect on the do-gooders. As Larry says, “the petition just kind of—fwip—went away.”

In early 1966, Sue Ann learned she was pregnant. Since the couple were unmarried, the biological fact would have to be finessed to the synod. (Larry admits that, when questioned later about the timing, he simply
lied.) But things were moving forward: Larry, in his second semester, was gaining ground as a scholar, and Sue Ann, anticipating graduation in May, had landed an elementary teaching position in York Springs, northeast of Gettysburg.

They married on May 3 in East Stroudsburg, their license paid for by Eric Gritsch. Sue Ann got her degree. Then the bottom fell out of their lives.

In June, Larry got a letter informing him that his synodical endorsement was being revoked. In bureaucratic terms, it was not expulsion, but in practical terms, it was. At the time, seminary education was limited to those planning to enter the priesthood, and thus required the imprimatur of regional church authority. Loss of that imprimatur—along with financial aid, which meant immediate liability for any sums thus owed—left the seminarian without institutional standing. Larry Recla, quite suddenly, had no standing.

“Devastated,” he describes his response. “Left without breath.” There’d been no prior notice; neither would there be an opportunity for Recla to appeal the decision or answer any charges. He was told only that the action was taken “for pertinent information”: the synod’s way of saying, “We have our reasons.” In addition, a letter was sent to the local induction center, saying that Larry Recla was no longer a student. A carbon copy came to Larry, with a handwritten note to the effect that he should soon expect a letter of “Greetings” from President Johnson: his draft notice.

That’s how Larry Recla was removed from seminary and stripped of his standing. The mystery, to this day, is why. Withdrawal of endorsement was by no means common; it might happen once or twice a year, usually for such self-evident causes as poor grades or disciplinary problems. Given the pool of 150 enrolled at Gettysburg Seminary in 1965-66, Larry’s nullification must be considered highly irregular. Who had proposed it, and on what accusation or evidence? What had been the discussions at the synod?

Larry believes he knows at least some of the answers. But they are not provable, and he prefers to leave them in the realm of private speculation.

The Vietnam draft was not the immediate concern: with Sue Ann pregnant, Larry was assured of a III-A “hardship” deferment. (A son, Lawrence Jr., would be born in December 1966.) The immediate concern was employment. Larry scrambled to find a job. What turned up was a teaching position in Manheim Township, a suburb of Lancaster, to begin in the fall. The relocation meant Sue Ann had to resign the job she’d accepted four months before, and to bide time with a series of substitute teaching jobs.
The Reclas moved into a furnished apartment in Lancaster to await the birth of their baby, and Larry found himself again a stranger in a strange land. He didn’t look forward to teaching upper-middle-class junior high schoolers in a “snooty” suburb; but he says the Lancaster digression, which lasted three years, turned out to be “absolutely vital, necessary—pick a positive word—for me as a person, pastor, man.” Teaching his students about literary analysis via pop lyrics, directing their performance of scenes from Macbeth, he built on his skills as a coordinator and organizer. The job also restored some badly-needed self-esteem: “It meant that, unique among many pastors, I was putting food on my family’s table by my labor. And what I got from the experience of teaching was invaluable.”

But it was always his intention to be readmitted to the seminary. “I didn’t even consider it a hope. It was a fact, a laser focus.” He stayed in touch with Eric Gritsch, who advised him on the political subtleties that might get him back within the gates. After a year, Larry applied to have his endorsement reinstated; he was refused. On Gritsch’s advice, he then became a member of the Church of the Holy Trinity, Lancaster’s largest Lutheran congregation, and an associate of its pastor, Wallace E. Fisher. A native of Gettysburg, “Wally” Fisher had graduated from the college in 1940 and later taken over at Christ Lutheran, the college’s “official” church, leaving in 1952 to take the Lancaster job. Recalled by Larry as “a man of Napoleonic stature and ego,” Fisher befriended the erstwhile seminarian, and became an influential advocate.

In the spring of 1969, Larry again filed to regain his endorsement. He’d made the most of his time at Manheim Township, forming bonds that would result in his eighth-grade class inviting him back as seniors to preach at their baccalaureate service. That, along with his impressive references, overrode whatever objections had been lodged against him. The synod notified him that his endorsement would be restored, clearing the way for readmission to seminary in the fall.

A lot would have to be done quickly, including the location of a home closer to Gettysburg. Larry still had his teaching contract to fulfill, and there was a child, barely two years old, to be cared for. Sue Ann, again
needing to find work close to Larry’s, secured an elementary teaching job in the Cashtown area.

The couple found a home they liked a great deal, but lost out on it. Sue Ann wept as they drove back to Lancaster. “All this means,” Larry told her, “is that God’s got something better for us.” That turned out to be a two-story, eight-room, pre-Civil War farmhouse near Arendtsville. More than a home, this would become for the Reclas and their friends a rural retreat and social center. Located in orchard country, amid thousands of acres of apple and peach groves, it answered the family’s needs for space, privacy, and beauty.

In midsummer, Larry sent his family to the farmhouse while he stayed on to complete a course in Clinical Pastoral Education at Lancaster General Hospital. The course was designed as a three-month immersion in a large medical, mental, or penal institution, entailing a rotation of duties under the supervision of a resident pastor. Larry was based on the surgical floor, where he often mediated between doctors and families. Of all the wards, he gravitated most to the emergency room. That’s where the action was—or as he puts it, “the rock and roll, high-adrenalin yes!”

In a written self-evaluation at the end of the course, Larry alluded to his exit from the seminary, suggesting it had left him hostile to church people and to the institution as a whole. He proposed, as a required part of seminary education, a study of “power politics’ as it relates to a chaplain as part of an institution governed by factors not always of a religious nature.” As suitable reading material, he offered Machiavelli’s The Prince.

“And who am I,” he asked. His chief talents, he’d found, lay not in creating, but in communicating; not in performing, but in witnessing. “I am able to give what others have made. I have the tongue of a poet, though I cannot write; the voice of a singer, though I cannot compose. My role, it seems to be, is to sing what others have written, to read to others what some have written.”
This lack of vanity was more than seemly in one aspiring to the priesthood. Yet Larry Recla was, if not an author or composer, very much a creative person. He was the less common type, the conceptualizer-instigator who inspires and shapes new combinations. From seminary escapades to his classroom of middle-schoolers, he’d shown a gift for coordinating groups, putting talents in dialogue, and synthesizing a result which was both the organic product of a community and indubitably a Larry Recla production.

He was not the humble country priest or pious supplicant, and never would be: he was too much the intractable individual. He also drank, smoked, cursed, told rude jokes, and preferred good times to guilt. He had impulses toward self-abnegation, unconditional love, and a ministering to unhappiness, but equal impulses toward defiance, reckless self-assertion, and contempt for the human species. In his self-evaluation, Larry dealt with both aspects of himself. He felt Jesus’s love come upon him as an “awful realization,” awful in both the literal sense of awe and the figurative sense of disgust—disgust that he might be found worthy of such love.

To summarize his general attitude to people, he quoted the nineteenth-century German writer Heinrich Heine: “I, too, might have died for men, had I not the suspicion that they were not worth it.”

Yet here he was in an emergency room, tending to patients and their families, being of use to strangers, even if that meant just sitting silently, witnessing their grief; still striving, against the Machiavellians in his midst, to finish seminary and carry his work forward. Much of that drive, surely, was pure ego. But it was also the nagging conviction that the final measure of his life lay in what he might be able to do for others.

“And so a misanthrope becomes a Christian,” Larry wrote, in as close as he could come to a note of optimism.

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Though happy to be back at the seminary, he wouldn’t stay quiet for fear of drawing attention. “I’ve been described as a provocateur, because I would say out loud what other people were thinking. I was never intentionally rude, nor did I act in a way to humiliate or disrespect a person’s position. I’ve just never been prone to career-enhancing comments.

“Part of it is that, in the moment, I simply don’t care. But I upon occasion can ruminate that perhaps I need not have been . . . quite that way.”

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Things had more or less righted themselves in Larry’s universe. Slings and arrows had found him, but he’d come out stronger, smarter, and more serious. His attitude, as he churned through the 1969-70 academic calendar en route to his compulsory internship year, was bolstered by a growing sense of something like hope. “In many respects,” he says, “I was more optimistic than I had any right to be. There’s a sense in which it was like giving someone a second bullet after they’d missed the first time.

“You go one foot after another. It’s possible to do that without an attitude of resignation, or of brutal endurance. Overarching it is, ‘This is the right thing. This is supposed to be.’ Now, how is it going to work out? Beats the hell out of me. But let’s have at it.”

Gettysburg College, meet Larry Recla.
In 1970, Gettysburg College was 138 years old. It stood on 175 acres in the town of Gettysburg (pop. 7,275) in south-central Pennsylvania, less than ten miles from the Mason-Dixon Line, bordered to the west and southeast by fields and forests that had absorbed the mortal matter of over 7,700 dead humans.

Founded in 1832 by Samuel S. Schmucker—the same Lutheran minister who six years before had founded the seminary—Gettysburg College was a private liberal arts institution, predicated on the ideal of the well-rounded education. In the context of post-war America, liberal arts posed an alternative to specialization, the educational cult to which business, government, and the large “multiversities” that supplied them were increasingly tending. Regardless of major, a Gettysburg graduate was expected to leave proficient in a foreign language, grounded in scientific methods and findings, and familiar with the philosophical, theological, literary, and artistic foundations of Western civilization.

The president of the college, its tenth, was Dr. C. Arnold Hanson, who administrated in conjunction with a thirty-eight-member Board of Trustees. The school received financial support from the Central Pennsylvania and Maryland Synods of the Lutheran Church of America; eight members of these synods also sat, at any given time, among the trustees.

Gettysburg College had approximately 1,850 students, at a ratio of two men to one woman. There were 124 full-time faculty members,
and just over 150 full- and part-time support staff. Endowment—total funds available for investing, the interest from which paid salaries and operating expenses—stood at roughly $3 million, very nearly the smallest of any Pennsylvania liberal arts college. The average cost of an academic year was slightly over $3,000. That was expensive compared to state universities, but Gettysburg was actually one of the more affordable colleges in its liberal-arts peer group.

The college’s culture was historically conservative, as was to be expected of a small, church-affiliated, racially and economically homogeneous campus. While faculty brought new perspectives and edgier politics from big schools in urban centers, the administration and trustees held the line for tradition. The students too were preponderantly conservative, coming as most did from churchgoing families in suburban areas. This was demonstrated in 1960 when Gettysburg students, bucking the national trend, overwhelmingly favored Richard Nixon over John F. Kennedy in the upcoming presidential election.

But things had changed by the end of the decade. In 1968, peace candidate Eugene McCarthy and moderate conservative Nelson Rockefeller emerged as the favorites of Democratic and Republican students respectively. In 1970, the American Council on Education conducted a nationwide survey of the class of 1974, and Gettysburg’s responses showed a majority of freshmen supporting an all-volunteer army; the legalizing of marijuana and abortion; and more government involvement in sex education and anti-poverty programs. Each of these figures was notably higher than national student norms. Meanwhile, only 9.7 percent of incoming freshmen supported a continued military presence in Southeast Asia—a figure much lower than the national norm.

Judged against the Gettysburg College of ten years before, these results were fairly astonishing. Judged against what America had become, they were perhaps less so. And what had America become? That depended on who you asked, but everyone could agree that America 1970 was a noisier, livelier, angrier place than America 1960. That it felt less regimented, and more dangerous; that it was less predictable, and more demanding. Some saw a country in its death throes, while others saw a country fighting to be born.

Everyone wondered how it had come to this. But it was possibly very simple, simple enough to capture in the lyrics of a song: the time had come. Too much had gone too unchanged for too long. The pendulum was swinging away from continuity and toward disruption. Demographic waves (the baby boom), heroic rebellions (the Civil Rights Movement), unforeseen disasters (JFK’s assassination), and explosive cultural influences (the Beatles) had combined to give people all over the world a sense that history was not something determined by others but a live
opportunity right in front of them. In America, generations of impacted assumptions about the limits of social and political life had been blasted loose, and millions of young people were finding themselves within their country’s history by discovering that they were the ones now making it.

Once the first few million had engaged that momentum, it was inevitable that millions of others who at any other time would have stayed home would instead come out to play. There was a place for almost everyone in what came to be broadly called the Movement—leader, follower, observer, sympathizer, functionary, fan. You didn’t have to be political to be part of it (though you might be ostracized by those whose motivation was political). If you were white or black, male or female, even if you were middle-class and thoroughly bourgeois, you could put your body into the movement—not the Movement necessarily, but movement: the veer away from the accepted and toward the possible. You could march in the street or listen to the music. Or both. You just had to want a piece of the action—whatever and wherever you felt “the action” was.

The Movement was a jumble of influences and energies, of desires and drives. Some were idealistic, others hedonistic, some were both at once. There was no headquarters, and no one in charge. No single push had set the boulder rolling. No single resistance would be able to stop it.

Partly as a cause and partly as an effect of all of this, a new American counterculture had emerged. In truth, a host of countercultures—social, political, creative, behavioral.

Witness Gettysburg College. Counterculture was manifesting even there. Stemming from the small, unfocused rebellions of the white, middle- and upper-middle-class Fifties—the Holden Caulfield recoil from homecoming games, dating rituals, petty authority—and thriving in the unregulated hothouse of the Sixties, protest and experiment had crowded to the center of campus life. Gettysburg was no different in that sense from any other American institution of higher learning: it existed in the world, and could no longer behave as if it did not. To survive, it needed to at least try to understand that contemporary world outside, the nature of the realities that were being assailed from week to week—realities of racism, sexism, the right of authority to have its decisions go unquestioned and unopposed.

Firstly, the Vietnam War was not going away. From a tiny gathering of faculty and students in a room in 1965, Gettysburg’s antiwar movement had grown to involve the entire campus, even that apparent majority that didn’t seem to care about it. An antiwar petition had been signed by over 100 students, and by nearly half the faculty. Busloads of students had
gone to Washington DC to participate in the historic protest marches of late 1969. Draft—that is, anti-draft—counseling was readily available on campus. A good part of each issue of the school paper was now taken up with coverage of military news, Nixon speeches, and national student activism, as well as op-ed debate of strategy and ideology. The sheer volume of war-consciousness that The Gettysburgian insisted on placing before its readership suggested that several people behind the paper were questioning the logic of the conflict, and expecting others to do the same.

Race was the other towering issue of the American Sixties, and Gettysburg’s lack of diversity had become something of an open wound. The school had only forty-nine black students in 1970; a mere eight had been graduated in the previous decade, and exactly one in the century-
plus before that. There had never had been a black faculty member, and in terms of staff, the Admissions Office had one black employee, 1969 graduate James Hyman, to innovate and coordinate its entire inner-city recruitment effort. There were four blacks on the college’s service staff—three men who worked in the Dining Hall, and another who worked at the Bullet Hole, the student café.

Black students, whatever their level of activism or visibility on campus, were by the nature of the situation isolated. Confederate flags were draped from fraternity windows; many commercial establishments both in town and in the surrounding country were still de facto segregated. A few blocks off campus lay Gettysburg’s Third Ward, the northeast corner of which—wedged between the tourist drags of Baltimore Street and Steinwehr Avenue—was essentially a racial ghetto, with dozens of black families living in cramped, decaying housing.

If in 1970 one narrowed a telescope down to the center of Gettysburg College—the majority of students, the tendencies of social life, the prevailing placidity and order—it would be easy to conclude that the place had not changed much since 1960. Back then, political controversy had been almost nonexistent, integration was a matter of exactly one black (male) student per class, and the college was presided over by a US Army officer—and not just any officer, but Lt. Gen. Willard S. Paul, who had been recommended for the job by Dwight D. Eisenhower, ex-president, Gettysburg’s most famous landowner, and the symbolic if not actual progenitor of so much that the Sixties were resisting.

But as the telescope expanded, the picture changed. One saw the fringes and undergrounds pushing inward and upward, minorities making more urgent demands in stronger voices. On the fringes existed
much of the campus’s juice and movement, its cutting edge; from the undergrounds were bubbling its richest creativities. There one saw a range of experimentation in art, politics, discussion, drugs, and the “cosmetic” matters of clothing and hair length that was inconceivable in the America of ten years before. One saw poverty, racism, exclusion—the evidence of a society splitting apart. One also saw constructive efforts to manage the ruptures. One saw the center going about its business, and the business itself threatening to buckle.

Look at Gettysburg College in 1970, and you saw the United States.

It was apt that Arnold Hanson had come to Gettysburg from Cornell University, where he’d been dean in the School of Labor Relations, soon after John F. Kennedy’s branding of the New Frontier. In many ways, Hanson exemplified the Kennedy-era bureaucrat—socially liberal and personally conservative, with a respect for intellectual autonomy and a desire for progress, albeit of a measured and incremental kind. And the Sixties did to Hanson what they did to almost all Kennedy-era bureaucrats: the very attributes that had made him appear masterly at the decade’s dawn left him looking at its twilight like a man out of time.

Though a small minority in the late Sixties attempted to paint Hanson as a villain, faceless representative of the hated Establishment, most Gettysburg students thought about him little if at all. To them he wasn’t a person so much as a background fact of college life, like the curfew, the parking shortage, or the buildup of rain that every autumn turned the center of the quad into a quagmire. “It wasn’t that I had a positive or negative attitude towards him,” says Robert Ulmer of the class of 1972. “He
was simply the president.” Denise Rue ’74 agrees: “I didn’t really have an opinion about him one way or the other.” “I didn’t sense that he was engaged, or knew what was going on,” says Rick Ludwick ’73; “he’d only intervene when things got hot and threatened to fall apart.” John Kuehl ’73 admits, “I don’t know what he did.” Even in person, Hanson seldom left strong impressions on students. Paul Hitchens ’73 spoke to him at a reception for incoming freshmen, and thought “he seemed like a nice gentleman. I didn’t have any feelings beyond that.”

But those ex-students with inside knowledge of college administration assess Hanson differently, at least in retrospect. John Hylton ’72, who went on to be a university dean, expresses “the highest regard” for a president who he feels was “very important in keeping the campus moving ahead, making sure everybody kept talking.” Neal Smatresk ’73—formerly president of the University of Nevada at Las Vegas, now holding that office at the University of North Texas—notes the vast difference between liberal arts colleges and state universities, but still considers Hanson an influence. “The general atmosphere of Gettysburg at that time, which was community- and family-oriented, is something that’s persisted with me. Whether that was because of his leadership or it was just what I found, it’s fair to say that I value that, and have tried to create it wherever I’ve gone.”

In his book Leaders in the Crossroads, a study of college presidencies, 1969 Gettysburg graduate Stephen J. Nelson writes that Hanson was “a reasonably accessible and interesting character. The often-tense campus times of the late 1960s created numerous occasions when he had to encounter students, sometimes in moments of confrontation and high drama. Some faculty and students found Hanson’s style off-putting, officious, and even arrogant. But he was steady, a leader not easily rattled—or at least it appeared—by challenges.”
Undeniably, Hanson’s personal manner was rigid. Even those in the faculty and administration who worked with and liked him describe him that way. But they also witnessed the grind he labored under, and knew the dexterity it took to balance competing interests while running the college efficiently enough to afford students the luxury of ignoring him. “He tended to be rather aloof,” says political science professor Ken Mott. “But he managed the process of change very well. Maybe his aloofness was helpful to him in that he was able to rise above the fray, and to manage it.” Nancy Locher agrees that Hanson’s “academic orientation was good for the faculty, and for the campus as a whole. He was here at a difficult time, and he was able to maintain a pretty steady helm.”

“His persona was very Scandinavian in certain respects—reserved, not emotive,” says Michael Birkner ’72, who spent considerable time covering Hanson as a reporter and editor for The Gettysburgian. “He spoke bureaucratese, and he wasn’t good at relating to students who challenged the status quo. On the other hand, he had a carriage that I admired; he was a very dignified person. But he was fighting, on another front, to hold his job, because some trustees didn’t want the college changed. They were angry at students who had long hair, who were having sex and using contraception, who were protesting the war, and they were hard on Hanson because he wasn’t cracking down on them.”

Hanson’s strengths and weaknesses, typical of human beings, were inextricable. The composure which rendered him unexciting also bespoke the levelheadedness that kept the college functioning at times when it might have come apart. The progressive-liberal ideals which the high protest era rejected as passé were also the principles by which Hanson ensured, in the face of considerable pressure, that students would retain their right to dissent—sometimes obnoxiously, sometimes obscenely.

It may be that Arnold Hanson, for all his limitations, was the best president Gettysburg College could have had at that time. And there was warmth to the man, even if its public exposure was mostly limited to a gleeful, eye-crinkling grin, and the forbearance with which he usually met complaints and criticisms. Neal Smatresk came away with an appreciation of this aspect of Hanson: “He was a tolerant guy, with a grandfatherly aura. He just put up with us crazy kids.”
As influential as Hanson on Gettysburg's institutional character in the Sixties—and far more influential in terms of direct student relationships—was its chaplain, John Vannorsdall. It was largely through or because of this one man that an insular campus reached out, in historic and decisive times, to touch and be touched by the world outside.

“JV,” as many called him, was an activist cleric in the contemporary mode of William Sloane Coffin and Daniel and Philip Berrigan: for civil rights, against the Vietnam War. Ohio-born, he’d grown up a typical conservative Midwestern Lutheran, but his education, field experience, and theological mentors had transformed him. Educated at Harvard and the Philadelphia Theological Seminary, veteran of a year’s teaching at Yale Divinity School and five years as chaplain of Cornell University, Vannorsdall had come to believe that social change could, and should, be effected through the church. By the time he arrived at Gettysburg in 1962 at the age of thirty-six, he was an activist in the making. In the coming years, through the aegis of Christ Chapel and its student group, the Chapel Council, Vannorsdall used his leverage as a campus favorite to engage the school with issues of race, rebellion, welfare, and warfare, and to ensure that it stayed engaged.

Prior to the Chapel Council, the dominant religious organization at Gettysburg had been the Student Christian Association, established (as the Young Men’s Christian Association) in 1867, and implanted at the center of campus life ever since. But for a variety of reasons—post-war trends toward science and objectivity, the trustees’ decision in 1960 to abolish compulsory chapel—the SCA had gone nearly dormant by the time Vannorsdall arrived. In 1963, he combined its remnants with a small group of students who had come under his influence, thereby forming the first Chapel Council. Its brief was to schedule
speakers, plan chapel activities, and coordinate the autumn tradition known as Religious Emphasis Week; but under Vannorsdall’s guidance, the group increasingly involved itself in off-campus, world-out-there issues.

Among the Chapel Council’s initiatives—all of them originated by Vannorsdall—were field trips to Harlem, which gave most students their first experience of a black community; an exchange program that had Gettysburg students trading places for a week with a delegation from Tennessee’s all-black Knoxville College; tutorial and recreational programs for local youth, and for the children of migrant farm workers; and speakers and workshops relating to the war. Among the few surviving SCA traditions was its publication, *Junto*, which as the Council organ featured writings and artwork of a bluntly antiestablishment nature, often rooted in secular protest rather than in Christian doctrine.* All of which raised more than a few conservative hackles: for many parents, alumni, and trustees, John Vannorsdall’s social activism equaled radicalism—which is precisely what, by 1970, such people were convinced the chapel was actively encouraging and supporting.

*Junto was named after Benjamin Franklin’s “Club for mutual Improvement,” formed in Philadelphia in 1727 to discuss and share writings on “any Point of Morals, Politics or Natural Philosophy.”*
Despite such conflicted opinions, it’s possible that no figure in the history of Gettysburg College is better loved or more venerated than John Vannorsdall. Even now, his name draws every kind of praise from those who worked with him. Jan Kitchener ’73, a member of Chapel Council, describes him as “low-key, patient, understanding. A good listener, with a soothing, calming voice. I’d grown up in the hellfire-and-brimstone Baptist church, with pounding on the pulpit. But he knew what our issues were. And he talked about the war: he understood that that affected a lot of us in different ways.”

“I counted John as a dear friend,” says Ken Mott. “He had a very liberal bent, more so than his boss. But Arnold tolerated him, because they were good friends.” Barbara Hanson, a Gettysburg student who was also the president’s daughter, says Vannorsdall “had a deep faith that inspired and comforted you, because it allowed for lots of doubts and questions, and said that those kinds of things were all right.” Jean LeGros, a 1973 graduate, says, “He had this wonderful voice; he smoked a pipe, and was very calming. Just a very faithful man. We loved him.”

*JV prepares for “Peace Week,” October 1966.*
From the moment they met, John Vannorsdall and Larry Recla were congenial and coexistent. They were also fundamentally irreconcilable and, one suspects, mutually uncomprehending.

“Larry was a little different,” John Vannorsdall says, in his kind voice and politic way. “But I liked him. He would say what he thought; he would do pretty much what he wanted to do; he would dress the way he wanted to dress.” Was there an essential difference between them? “I wore a tie,” says Vannorsdall.

He expands on that a bit. “I grew up in a middle-class family that followed the etiquette of our population. And thank goodness—I mean, I went from Gettysburg to Yale, and when the president of Yale invited you to dinner at his house, you wore a tux. I don’t think Larry would do that. I’m not condemning that in any way. It’s just that he was different. He was outspoken, and said things that later he might change. But he wasn’t dull. I never thought he was dull.”

Whereas to hear Recla describe his former boss is to experience a sort of verbal judo, with each apparent compliment flipped neatly on its head. “John Vannorsdall,” Larry says, “is an exceptional, elegant, educated, erudite person. His default setting is graciousness.

“Most of John’s experience with interns was that they were incredibly happy even to be in his presence. With good reason, by the way; with good reason. But our relationship was out of the ordinary in that I was, I think, the only intern who had previously been employed full-time in something other than church work. So while I was impressed with John, I was not overawed by him.”
Larry, incipiently class-conscious, was cool to Vannorsdall’s patrician manners and Ivy League pedigree. And if he was previously unaware of the chaplain’s devout liberalism, he discovered it soon enough. It’s easy to imagine the two constantly at odds over the chaplain’s fusion of ministry and social activism, just the conflation that Recla wished to avoid. Yet neither man remembers any clashes, political or otherwise. That, according to Larry, was simply because he understood his own subordinate position, and kept to it. Christ Chapel was Vannorsdall’s house, and the intern, constitutionally unwilling to follow his boss’s activist program, would have to find other ways of contributing.

“I was not particularly for or against the war in Vietnam,” Larry says. “The passions involved, I did not entirely understand; the high-towered righteousness was a tad put-offish, in terms of the ‘Kumbaya.’ But it was for me a non-event, something parallel-noticeable. I had other things to do. ‘Where’s my next pack of cigarettes?’"

He’s sardonic about the frequency with which young men claimed spiritual callings during the Vietnam years. “It was amazing, the number of people who found Jesus when it came with a IV-F, and who suddenly discovered that maybe God wasn’t calling them when there was no more Vietnam and they weren’t going to get their asses shot off.” But he kept such observations largely to himself, and bowed discreetly out of ideological discussions. “My only point was that I could make a better case for the war than I heard the government making. If you’re going to be in a war, win it. At that point, I shut up.”

That may have been difficult for him to do, given the incongruence of his beliefs with those of many of the kids who frequented the chapel in 1970-71. He didn’t discuss the war even at his farmhouse, which became a gathering point. Mark Teich ’73 speaks insightfully about Larry’s peculiar position in that time and place:

I think he has a deep and profound respect and love for the flag and for the country. He may have worn his hair long, like we all did back then, but he was not prone to taking sides. Larry can hold his own with anybody as far as conversation goes, and when we’d be out on the farm, it wasn’t just playing music; there was a lot of philosophical discussion. If Vietnam came up, and I’m sure it did, I have an idea that he either stayed silent or somehow turned it to a religious interpretation. That’s not to say he was overly pious—that’s the last thing Larry is—but I think he loves to relate world events to stories in the Bible, without being too political about it.

How does somebody tread a line like that, in those times, doing what he was doing with a lot of young people, many of whom were on the radical edge? I really never thought about it that way. But it is rather amazing that he was able to tread that line.
Larry never disrespected John Vannorsdall’s convictions, but he does suggest that they were a form of noblesse oblige, emerging partly from the chaplain’s overdeveloped sense of his own eminence. He has an anecdote:

“The sexton for the chapel was a very decent, ordinary man, dirt-under-fingernails type, on the opposite side—political, social, economic—from John. Every Christmas, John saw to it that he had a rather expensive Woolrich shirt. But at one point, he overheard me in conversation with this gentleman, and said, in a genteel but clear way, that I really should watch myself with that kind of thing. Now this was not, from John’s standpoint, a chastisement, a harshness. This was John doing what John does best, in terms of a gracious reminder of how one might appropriately behave: that I ought not be that familiar.”

The admonition, Larry believes, “was a measure of John’s integrity. And please note that the root of ‘integrity’ means ‘everything in alignment.’ John was always in perfect alignment.”

A curious addendum to the Vannorsdall-Recla relationship arose in the course of research for this book, and it bears relating.

Chapter 2 described the sudden withdrawal of Larry’s endorsement by the Central Pennsylvania Synod, resulting in his displacement from the seminary, the plunging of his family life into turmoil, and the near-derailed of his priestly aspirations. The synodical board that voted on such actions was at that time called the Committee on Church Occupations; its job was to appraise seminarians for ongoing endorsement or, if they were graduates, promotion to ordination, and to recommend in each case for approval or disapproval. The committee comprised a dozen members, each an LCA minister, each serving a two-year term. As it happens, among the men sitting on that committee in 1965-66—one of the twelve ministers who voted to withdraw Recla’s endorsement—was John Vannorsdall.

This suggests, obviously, that the chaplain had to have known about Larry and his unusual situation three years before the latter became his intern. But asked today if that was the case, Vannorsdall says he remembers nothing about it. Which he surely doesn’t: many years have come and gone. Larry, for his part, is quite surprised to receive this information. “I did not know that. There was no indication in any of my dealings with John that he was privy to or involved in the withdrawal of my endorsement. That’s a fact.”

It’s also a mystery—but only one of several between two men whose coexistence, it seems, meant conversing every day and communicating as little as possible.*

* For the record, Larry doesn’t believe Vannorsdall had anything to do with instigating the withdrawal.
Students who came to the chapel with personal issues had a range of pastoral temperaments to choose from—Vannorsdall’s avuncular gentleness, Knoche’s straitlaced warmth, Recla’s vinegary directness. Some sensed tension in the dynamic. “There was a bit of conflict,” says Jan Kitchener. “Jerry was a very traditional family man, maybe more so than JV. And to see the two of them try to work, when Larry was just kind of out there . . . He was definitely different from the seminarians they’d had in the past.” “I don’t think John got along very well with Larry Recla. I don’t think they saw eye to eye,” says biology professor Ralph Cavaliere. “I just have that feeling.” Others perceived no tension at all. Michael O’Brien ’72, a Chapel Council member, says that at the time he “didn’t realize Larry’s feelings toward JV. They handled that well, at least publicly.”

Setting up camp in Room 2, Larry saw to the intern’s obligatory duties. These included consulting with the student editors of Junto; glad-handing with groups whose financial support was crucial to the chapel; and advising the managers of the In, the student-run coffeehouse. Located in the basement of Eddie Plank Gym, the In was a dark room with a low ceiling, lit mostly by
candles melted into wine bottles. Tables were wooden wiring spools, and a snack bar dispensed popcorn, apples, and non-alcoholic beverages. A short riser functioned as a stage; campus performers and college-circuit professionals would perform thereupon.

One of the few openly tense moments Larry recalls in his relations with John Vannorsdall involved the In. The three chaplains were in conference.

"John said, ‘Larry, would you like to go over to the coffeehouse?’ ‘No.’ Pause. ‘No?’ ‘No. I wouldn’t like to. However, I’m the intern, and you’re the senior chaplain. You tell me to go over, I will go over. And trust me, I will do a competent, very good job of it.’ Long pause. ‘But you wouldn’t like to?’

“That would go back and forth, and in the meantime, Jerry Knoche’s head would explode. At one point he said, as close to screaming as I ever heard him, ‘John, just tell him to do it!’"

Private counseling was the heaviest of the intern’s duties. Larry estimates his caseload outweighed Vannorsdall’s and Knoche’s combined, and believes this was partly because many students were afraid of “disappointing” JV by confessing their little falls from grace. The associate chaplain, too, was seen to have limitations. “Jerry Knoche wouldn’t say ‘shit’ if he had a mouthful,” Larry says. “And if you weren’t a virgin, what was left to talk about?”* Most counseling sessions with students revolved around age-appropriate concerns: values, goals, spiritual doubt, self-examination. In one case, an unwed couple faced an accidental pregnancy. “This was before Roe v. Wade. But I was able to hook them up with a clergy medical group, a network I stumbled into through phone calls that could be made, which saw to therapeutic abortions. An abortion did occur. After it, they got married.”

* Like Vannorsdall a graduate of Harvard and Yale, Knoche was hired as associate chaplain in 1969. Departing in 1974, he later became bishop of the Delaware-Maryland Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. He died on May 5, 2016.
His personality youthful, his dealings refreshingly unpreachy, Larry quickly drew a coterie of fans. Those most attracted to him were not of the Chapel Council set, students who also tended to be high achievers with firm goals and leadership ambitions—i.e., Vannorsdall’s people. Larry instead drew the fringe-dwellers and arty types, the hippies and agnostics, or simply the confused ones, those less certain of their place on the campus or in the world. Vannorsdall noted this development in his mid-year evaluation of Larry, referring to the “growing following of students who respect him and seek his help.” The obverse was also noted, that “some of [his] qualities of directness . . . have meant that other students have not been drawn to him.” Larry admits he had little to offer those seeking a reassuringly familiar priestly touch: “I tended antithetical to the stereotypical religious-type person, so my impact was not with the religious students. I actually didn’t have that much to do with those folks.”

Vannorsdall’s comments illuminate both Larry’s progress as a minister and the chaplain’s bemused yet supportive, perplexed yet perceptive regard of it. In them, he says that both Junto and the In have grown and improved under Larry’s stewardship, and even suggests the intern’s misanthropy has had its benefit: “His realistic and jaundiced view of things as they are is almost unfailingly accurate.” He may be alluding to the aftermath of Larry’s seminary trauma when he notes the younger man’s apparent “anxiety about whether he would be related to with integrity and honesty by his supervisors. These anxieties seem to have been largely resolved, and in my judgment, he is operating with considerable self-confidence and with considerable openness.”

Finally, Vannorsdall suggests that as Larry accumulates self-confidence, “[he] will be freer to perceive and respond to the needs of others. I feel that this process is occurring, and probably is not something with which he can be helped from the outside.”

Meanwhile, thousands of miles away . . .
Composer Andrew Lloyd Webber and lyricist Tim Rice had come together in London in the mid-Sixties. Typical pop-obsessed members of their generation, they were also drawn to musical theatre. In those years, popular music was taking flight, while the musical, particularly the English musical, was stuck in a rut. Somewhere in the gap, Lloyd Webber and Rice saw their chance to bring together the emotive and dynamic potentials of rock with the formal rigor and storytelling possibilities of the musical. Their notion of a Bible-based musical was a keen inspiration, especially for an educated post-war generation fascinated not just with sound and sensation but also with abstruse and mystical texts, from *Siddhartha* to *The Lord of the Rings*.

The team’s first staged collaboration, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, debuting in May 1968, seemed to demonstrate that something pop-oriented and narratively sound could be made of Biblical materials. Then, in September, the “American tribal love-rock musical” *Hair*, a big hit on Broadway, opened in the West End, commencing a blockbuster run that would end just short of two thousand performances. The show was innovative for its fluid use of music and theatrics to make fairly candid commentaries on virtually every issue dividing the generations—drugs, sex, race, religion, war—and its music ran a gamut of styles from straight rock to Motown pastiche to Indian chant.

*Hair* upped the ante considerably on Lloyd Webber and Rice, whose *Joseph* now looked pretty tame. So, after discarding a variety of non-religious follow-up subjects, they went back to their dog-eared King James Version—and found their next hero staring them in the face.

At about the same time, Pete Townshend, guitarist and songwriter for the English group the Who, was executing a similar idea, and getting it to market first. Released as a two-record set on May 23, 1969, the Who’s *Tommy* was the story of a nominally Christ-like youth who, traumatized and abused, loses his power to hear, speak, and see, but gains magical sensory abilities and becomes a “pinball wizard” and worshipped cult leader. As a dramatic text *Tommy* was far from complex, but musically it was riveting—both propulsive and melodic—and as a concept it broke...
new ground. Many previous rock albums had boasted unified themes and intimations of profundity; none had constructed a coherent, character-based narrative solely through music and lyric. By inventing the “rock opera,” Tommy also constructed a commercial framework within which other hybrids of stage musical and rock album could bid for attention.

By mid-1969, Lloyd Webber and Rice had determined that their next subject would be no mere Christ figure, but Christ himself in the last week of his life. A version of the Passion rendered in rock terms was an idea so made for its moment that the moment seemed equally made for it. It looked a natural for the stage, but the young songwriting team had neither high-powered representation nor a track record, and theatrical financing wasn’t forthcoming. So, with Tommy only a few weeks old but already rewriting the rules, a concept album was seen as the way to introduce Superstar to the masses.

Decca Records (the Who’s label) found the pitch sufficiently promising to finance the recording of a single, the success of which would determine the marketability of a full-length album. The song that was chosen, “Superstar”—the climactic theme of the encompassing opera, most of which had yet to be written—was a litany of penetrating questions flung at Jesus by an unknown interrogator (Judas Iscariot, it might be inferred, though the lyrics gave no clue). To sing it, Rice suggested Murray Head, a young actor-singer of his acquaintance. None of Head’s own records had been successful, but he had a strong journeyman technique, and behind him were the massed voices of the Trinidad Singers and the full blast of “The Andrew Lloyd Webber Orchestra.”

“Superstar” was released in the United Kingdom on November 21. Given its first push on a David Frost TV special, swatted at in the press by the usual ninnies, the single was an enormous hit—first in England, then in the rest of Europe. Undeniably impressive, inescapably catchy, it was among the most grandiose themes anyone had heard in a musical era not short on grandiosities. Head’s delivery brought attitude and glamour to the hectoring lyrics, and the mix of sacred and profane in a bombastic...
production gave the whole thing an air of novelty, pageantry, provocation, and sex.*

Within days of “Superstar”’s release, it was known that the song was the prelude to an album to be called *Jesus Christ Superstar*, which in turn would be the foundation of a musical. It was also known as early as December 4 that John Lennon had been asked to portray Christ on both record and stage, and that Mary Magdalene would be played by either Yoko Ono or Marianne Faithfull. Those rumors had no factual basis, but they raised immensely the profile of the work to come—especially after it was claimed that Saint Paul’s Cathedral, presumptive venue for *Superstar* (*Joseph* had debuted there), had refused to host the production once Lennon’s name was attached to it.+  

All of which hubbub ensured an attentive audience for the album. Lloyd Webber and Rice wrote the remainder of the opera over the winter of 1969-70; the album was recorded, under their direction, between March and July. The singers included Head as Judas; Ian Gillan, lead singer of the hard rock band Deep Purple, as Jesus; Yvonne Elliman, an unknown folksinger, as Mary; Barry Dennen as Pontius Pilate; and Mike d’Abo, voice of Manfred Mann’s recent smash “The Mighty Quinn,” as King Herod. Among the musicians were guitarists Henry McCullough, later a member of Paul McCartney’s Wings, and Chris Spedding, the hottest English session player of the moment; Mike Vickers, wizard of the Moog synthesizer; and several members of Joe Cocker’s Grease Band, including drummer Bruce Rowland and bassist Allan Spanner.

Presented as a two-record boxed set with printed libretto, its psychedelic cover evoking either an exploding nebula or the incandescent pit of a volcano, *Jesus Christ Superstar: A Rock Opera* was issued by Decca in the UK in October 1970. Curiously, given the gossip of the previous winter and smash reception of the “Superstar” single, the album’s success, while solid, was only moderate: the LP would never go higher on the UK album chart than #23. Perhaps its price tag daunted the merely curious, and perhaps the excitement of the single failed to carry many listeners through a double album: four sides lasting nearly ninety minutes may have seemed to some a bit too much like Bible study.

There was also the fact that, while “Superstar” had been a genuine novelty in late ’69, since its release “Jesus rock” had developed into a full-blown genre. Norman Greenbaum’s ironically worded but explicitly devotional “Spirit in the Sky,” a UK #1, had augured other hits which, while basically secular rock filtered through stained glass, fed into the new infatuation with churchy themes and sounds: the Beatles’ “Let it

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* It became something of a queer anthem in Holland, where its popular ascent began in an Amsterdam gay bar.
+ “Superstar” may have directly influenced Lennon’s hit “Instant Karma!” (recorded January 27, 1970), both in its choral arrangement and in one eerily familiar line: “Who in the world do you think you are—a superstar?”
Be,” Simon and Garfunkel’s “Bridge Over Troubled Water,” Elton John’s “Border Song.”

In America, though, this commercial trajectory was reversed. The “Superstar” single had barely registered on the US charts, stalling at #74 in late January 1970; but the double album, appearing on November 21, was an immediate and overwhelming hit. The musical trend it played into, and ultimately crowned, was far from exhausted on these shores. “Jesus rock is just about the hottest thing going these days,” Rolling Stone’s Langdon Winner had written in April; “the back to Christ kick is forging ahead full karma.” The “kick” was a fascination with Christian religion, and especially with Jesus as a rebel and revolutionary, proto-rock star and transcendent sex symbol. Manifestations of this ranged from trendy Christian communes and mass conversions in football stadiums to a widespread flirtation with Holy Land fashion.

Opinion varied as to whether this represented a sincere search for values, the hunger for novelty typical of the pop marketplace, or, in the words of a New York Times writer, “a rebuttal to the drug lyrics of the recent past.” Some even suggested the vogue for Jesus rock was a reaction to the recent overdose deaths of Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin. Perhaps American youth were less jaded than their English counterparts, or less discriminating; perhaps they were behind the times, or ahead of them; perhaps they took Jesus more seriously than the English, or perhaps less. But Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice had blown a horn, and in America they found their flock.

The album was introduced stateside with some very well-managed hype, including a lavish launch-and-listening party for reporters, critics, church authorities, and industry insiders at St. Peter’s Church in New York City, and press releases calling the album “one of the most monumental rock recording projects ever undertaken.” Jesus Christ Superstar—its cover redesigned for the US in somber pseudo-leather, its mirrored angels an instant icon—entered the Billboard album chart at #40 and began to climb. Outdistancing such competitors as Led Zeppelin, Carole King, the Rolling Stones, Santana, Diana Ross, Chicago, the Carpenters, Glen Campbell, the Partridge Family, James Taylor, Grand Funk Railroad, Michael Jackson, and two or three ex-Beatles, it would go on to become the top-selling American album of 1971.

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“IT was like nothing before.” So Tom Breton, Gettysburg College junior, describes his feeling on first hearing the album. He was right: Jesus Christ Superstar was rock music about the very guts of Christianity, made by, for, and about young people. As a passion play it was reverent
but challenging, anti-authoritarian and revisionist. Rice’s lyrics subtly weaved biblical quotation and witty anachronism, fusing the political and popular climate of Jerusalem then with the urbanized, commercialized western world of now. Lloyd Webber’s music, pompous in parts, was just as lovely in others, the pomposity tempered and the loveliness lifted by a structural coherence that was finally full and magnificent.

But it was quite simply rock music itself, and the popular power it commanded, that made Superstar “like nothing before.” Almost instantly, snatches of tune and pieces of lyric became lingua franca among the country’s youth. There had been, in recent years, other significant works of revisionist Christianity: Nikos Kazantzakis’s novel The Last Temptation of Christ had been translated into English in 1960; Pier Paolo Pasolini’s film The Gospel According to St. Matthew had been an art-house success four years later; two years after that, Hugh J. Schonfield’s The Passover Plot was an American bestseller. But such works, while generating much discussion, had little or no influence on the mainstream. They were too dense and challenging, and whatever sex they contained was the wrong kind—conflicted, conscience-ridden sex, not the combination of piety and thigh that had made DeMille epics from The Sign of the Cross to The Ten Commandments into blockbusters. Few of the rank-and-file, Middle American Christians who had enjoyed, say, Lloyd C. Douglas’s 1942 bestseller The Robe, or its 1953 Hollywood version, would subject themselves to the daunting Kazantzakis novel, or Pasolini’s punishing portrait of Christ as a humorless disciplinarian, or Schonfield’s scholarly conspiracy theory—let alone to the apparent blasphemies upon which each was based. Jesus Christ Superstar, on the other hand, because it was chart-topping, radio-friendly rock, was revision that any American mainstreamer could respond to simply by living an ordinary day with ears open. Given the music’s sudden ubiquity, one scarcely had to be a rock fan to be aware of it, or of where it was coming from.

The reactions of the hip rock press ranged from skeptical to disdainful. Covering the St. Peter’s Church launch, Jonathan Cott of Rolling Stone deemed Superstar “an egregiously over-sweet rock-coated Broadway musical” whose overall quality was “one of forced hipness and sentimentality.” He felt there was a basic and insurmountable disjunction between material and treatment: “When Jesus rails at the polluters of the temple, his wailing ways sound more like Jimi Hendrix calling on his foxy lady than someone expressing a fine sense of moral outrage.” Jack Shadoian’s review in the same paper was largely positive with regard to the music, but couldn’t get past the contradictions inscribed in the text. “Who could have imagined that Rock . . . would become so incredibly elastic that anyone would choose it to retell this spiritual odyssey? And that’s what’s going against Superstar too. A kind of incredulousness.
Where do they get off fucking with the heaviest subject around?” It was felt that rock’s raunch and spontaneity were inapplicable, or simply inappropriate, to subject matter of such solemnity. “It does what it does perfectly,” Shadoian said of Superstar. “It’s what it’s doing that’s maybe questionable.”

Mainstream respondents, on the other hand, permitted themselves to be impressed, even wowed. Pundits offered few substantial objections to Superstar as text or treatment, with Time magazine calling it “a modern-day passion play that may enrage the devout, but ought to intrigue and perhaps inspire the agnostic young,” and UPI religion writer Louis Cassels praising its “great contribution to the task of making the Christian Gospel meaningful to today’s young people.” “Far from seeing [the album] as offensive,” one historian notes, many church authorities “viewed it as the perfect teaching tool.” Organized religion had taken its lumps throughout the Sixties, the major denominations attempting in various ways to soul-search and contemporize; many clerics embraced this heaven-sent opportunity to use rock to bring kids back into the fold.*

In sum, Superstar had taken hold of the moment. Plenty of people were for it, some were against it, and many were indifferent to it. But everyone knew about it.

* Some of the first “stage versions” of Superstar were slide shows: Holy Week scenes accompanied by corresponding excerpts from the album were a popular item on church agendas in the early months of 1971.
LP across. Among the thousands of recipient stations was WWGC, the student-managed and staffed operation at Gettysburg College. Licensed, like its peers, to broadcast the album in advance of its national release, WWGC aired *Jesus Christ Superstar* in its entirety, beginning at midnight on Sunday, November 15, 1970.

That’s probably how most Gettysburg students first heard it. But if they didn’t hear it then, they heard it in the days following, in dorm rooms and common rooms and off-campus apartments. *Superstar*, like other rock hits, was suddenly part of the air students breathed. “I remember walking around singing it,” says freshman Denise Rue. “A bunch of us were sitting in one of the off-campus houses that somebody had,” says Vicki Berg, a junior. “They put a record on the stereo—remember records?—and played it. We all said, ‘My God, this is great. We’ve got to do something with this.’” Freshman Mark Dryfoos calls it “a seminal album at the time. It was vibrant, very alive. It had a lot of meaning, both spiritually and musically.”

For some Gettysburgians, it was the album’s confrontation with religious questions that made it important. Betty-Lynn White was most taken by “I Don’t Know How to Love Him,” Mary Magdalene’s song, which raised “all the gnostic issues about
whether he’s human or whether he’s God-like. It’s a very sophisticated way of saying, ‘How do you love God? What is the way to be a faithful disciple?’” Sophomore Richard Schindler liked Superstar’s “counterculture approach to the crucifixion story. Lloyd Webber and Rice picked up that the roles being played by these people, which had been unfolding for centuries, had other ways of being read. That Judas was in some ways the focus, because he asked the questions all of us wanted to ask.”

Others were most impressed by the opera as music. “I enjoyed the interaction, the layering,” says Jakob Vinten-Johansen, a senior and guitarist who’d been playing with various loose groups on campus. “It wasn’t in the small-band genre; it was much larger. It opened my mind a bit.” Sophomore Mark Teich was intrigued, but had to be won over. “When I heard the term ‘rock opera,’ I was kind of dubious—like something was trying to reach for what it really wasn’t. What lured me in was when I sat down and listened to it. There were things I hadn’t heard before.”

For others, the Superstar album was both a musical and a spiritual sensation, and an event of unclassifiable impact. “It was huge,” says Neal Smatresk. “Monstrous.”

“There was a little record store right across from the Majestic Theater,” Clay Sutton recalls. “I was in there a lot, and that’s where I bought the album.” Sutton took Jesus Christ Superstar back to his apartment on Middle Street and listened to it. And listened again. The next time he went over to Christ Chapel, he took the record with him. He wondered if Larry Recla had heard it yet.
Clay Sutton was born to an assistant county engineer and a homemaker. Raised Lutheran, he attended church and taught Sunday school. He’d declared history as his major at Gettysburg, then was “lateraled” into biology by his parents’ insistence that he become a dentist. But he’d always been a nature lover. “I grew up in Stone Harbor, New Jersey. Today it’s all giant mansions and expensive homes, but back then it was an undeveloped barrier beach with dunes and wetland marshes. I could ride my bike around looking for snakes, frogs, toads, all that cool stuff.” At Gettysburg, he took an ecology course from Associate Professor Neil Beach, and he feels it changed his life.

Sutton was not a hippie. His hair was only longish, and he didn’t use drugs, even grass (“I was asthmatic”). Despite demonstrating occasionally, he was neither a leader nor a devoted follower of the antiwar movement. He was, in fact, among the majority of American college students whose primary goal in these years of historic upheaval was making grades. But he also fell into the burgeoning overlap between the counterculture and that part of the youthful middle class that was excited by change. These were straight kids for whom “straight” was not synonymous with “hawkish”; whose perspective was fundamentally peaceful, but who were also inquisitive and analytical, and for whom few issues, even the war, were black-and-white. Clay Sutton’s initial objection to Vietnam, inherited from his World War II veteran father, was “not so much whether it’s right or wrong, but whether we should be involved in a war if we’re not going to attempt to win it.” His attitude changed at Gettysburg. “The more I learned about it, the more it became a moral thing. It was a civil war on the other side of the world, and we had no real right to be there. It was very ugly.”

Feelings of religious obligation drew Sutton to Christ Chapel, but other things kept him coming back. “It was different than my Lutheran
church back home; there wasn’t the repression and guilt. I had this angst about religion, and the chapel was very different. Larry Recla was a big part of that.”

Betty-Lynn White, a political science major from upstate New York, was also looking for a place to discuss spirituality without dogma, to do creative work outside of the grading system, and to belong. “I didn’t fit in at all. I was looking for some system that would say it was okay for me to be here, that I belonged in this place.” Her mixed feelings about religion enabled her to have “some really interesting conversations” with the chapel staff. She recalls writing a poem on the theme of “why your God doesn’t speak to me,” signing it anonymously and leaving it under John Vannorsdall’s door. Soon after, the chaplain based a sermon on the poem. When White revealed herself as its author, the two began to talk, and she came to see Vannorsdall as “very progressive, a very good and generous man.”

Spiritually, White was an agnostic, but she supplemented her study of government and politics with courses in the Religion Department. Especially meaningful was a class in Asian religions taught by Lou Hammann, a professor popular with counterculture students. Hammann introduced White to Buddhism, which she considers the closest she ever came to finding a religious system that suited her.

Like Sutton, White responded to Larry Recla’s unconventional style, and felt he understood her doubts. “He wasn’t your typical minister. He beat his head against the organized church more than I did, because he was inside it. He had to make accommodations, where I could’ve simply said, ‘That’s bullshit, and I’m rejecting it.’”

Despite the fear and alienation implanted by a dysfunctional upbringing, White had an assertive personality, energetic and forceful.
“She was one of those in-your-face type people,” says Ken Mott, who became one of her mentors. “Just a little thing. But very bold, very outspoken.” Coming to Gettysburg, she’d already made firm decisions about who she was and where she was going. Her plan was to enter the law: hence political science, the nearest Gettysburg offered to a pre-law track. She was also a committed feminist, and would spend much of her time at the school exposing the sexual inequalities codified in its institutional policies.

The Superstar album having made its way, in Clay Sutton’s hands, to the chapel, someone floated the notion of a live performance. Sutton believes that someone was Larry Recla. They would have been in Room 2 one afternoon in early December 1970, just the two of them. “I think it was him and me sitting around his office, probably. We were at the very ground level, getting each other worked up about it.” Betty-Lynn White agrees that Larry “deserves the credit for taking the idea and saying, ‘We can do something with this.’”

While it impressed him, the album didn’t bring Larry to his knees. Hearing it “was not a charismatic, twitchy, religious experience. I simply thought, ‘This is good stuff. There’s fun to be had with this. Let’s do something, see how far it goes.’”

Sutton, with no particular performing abilities, offered to take photographs and design posters. White, a member of the college’s Modern Dance Group, volunteered to put together a small ensemble. Larry was the only one of them with stage experience: after reentering the seminary, he’d joined the Chancel Players, a student group that put on dramas in the campus auditorium. His primary involvement was offstage, but he also played the occasional bit part, and it was through the Chancel Players that he first put his organizational skills to the purpose of live performance.

Larry said something like this, first to himself, then to others: Let’s take this thing off the record and do it live. Let’s do it right here in the chapel—echoes of Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland—with students singing the parts. We have no money and no pretensions, so there’ll be no costumes as such, no props as such, no scenery as such. We’ll have a band—a real band, a rock band with horns. And a chorus: a large chorus right at the middle of the stage, a chorus that’s active, through which the action seems to flow. We’ll do it loud and for real. This could be good.

In his accelerated imagination, This could quickly became This will. “We’ll do this for the joy of it,” is how he remembers framing the prospect. “We’ll do it—though it was never articulated quite this way—as a proclamation of the gospel. It will be a religious experience, in that way.
It will be exciting. It will be entertaining. It will be involving. And it will be done with an eye always on simplicity and starkness.

The notion gave off a buzz, and the more he thought about it, the more possible it seemed. The LP could be heard all over campus, “Superstar” trading off with George Harrison’s “My Sweet Lord,” “I Don’t Know How to Love Him” with Led Zeppelin’s “Immigrant Song”: an eager audience stood right outside, wanting to experience this music. And they had the perfect theater—a chapel whose stage had accommodated innumerable services, sermons, speeches, concerts, and recitals, but had never seen anything like this.

Tom Breton played guitar and sang, read books on philosophy and theology, and wore every emotion on his sleeve. Contemporaries and friends remember him as a raw, exposed individual. “A good man,” says Beth Kershaw, “but super-intense. Wound up.” Mark Teich agrees: “He seemed to always be under a tremendous amount of tension and pressure.” Larry Recla says, “We’ve all met people who, when they look at you, do so with a touching, relational sincerity that’s almost toilet-huggy. Tom, at that point, never had a body function that wasn’t deeply, profoundly sincere.”

“I was really intense, yeah,” Breton concedes.

Born in Glen Ridge, New Jersey, Breton had always felt a distance between himself and the world, what he was taught and what he saw. “I had a lot of trouble with hypocrisy. People saying something and not doing it; talking about Christian values but not exhibiting them. I was a depressed high school kid, and I was extremely depressed in freshman year. I think the sincerity and intensity came from struggling with things—baggage you pick up at home, identity within family, identity with peers.”

Gettysburg College attracted him for its small size and natural surroundings. He didn’t come with a major in mind. Though he took notice of the Music Department—he’d played in high school rock bands, and attended Broadway musicals with his parents—his first major was biology; thus he met Ralph Cavaliere, later a mentor and close friend. But it soon became clear he wasn’t cut out to be a scientist. “That was something that sounded impressive. As a freshman, you can say that, and at least you’re not lost. But I was pretty lost.”
He drifted into a fraternity, Lambda Chi Alpha, and would never overcome his ambivalence about Greek life despite remaining a member his entire time at Gettysburg. “I thought it was, in many ways, really stupid. I was extremely idealistic, and not as tied to reality as I was to . . . idealism, I guess. They had these ideas about how brothers should form communities and be helpful, but I was always ragging on the ones smoking pot in the basement. There was a crew down there that never got off campus, never had a date, barely got through courses.

“I loved some of the seniors in the house—Bob Hallett, Okie O’Conor.* Bob was very together for a college student. He had a lot of serious thoughts, but he was outgoing, worked hard, and was involved in a variety of things. He put the Chapel Council on the map for me. I got involved in that and enjoyed the people, but the chapel wasn’t a huge center for me—until Larry Recla came along, and Superstar took everyone by storm.”

The study of religion seemed a natural enough transition. By the fall of 1970, Tom had switched majors. “Gettysburg became a place for me to branch out and try things. I was into Viktor Frankl, a psychologist who’d been in a Nazi concentration camp; he’d written a book called Man’s Search for Meaning, and that became my Bible. In our home, we’d always talked about various philosophies, various people, but now there were also the issues of what to do with your life. And that’s very personal.”

The solemn, seeking aura intensified. When the two first met, Jake Vinten-Johansen got the impression that Tom was an aspiring seminarian who “wanted to incorporate music into his spiritual life.” “A lot of people thought that,” Breton says. “They were trying to make sense of what I was doing, as was I. I must have considered five majors at least. I chose religion because it didn’t demand much specialization, and was a safe thing that would please my parents.”

What sustained him was music, his background obsession since coming to Gettysburg. In August 1968, prior to freshman orientation, he’d attended the school’s week-long band camp, there befriending fellow freshmen John Hylton and Bob Gastaldo. As sophomores, the three co-founded a singing group, Kaleidoscope, which performed a handful of times on and around campus, covering songs by the Fifth Dimension and the Association. After taking a music history course, Tom moved on to more challenging classes in theory and composition.

He was a sitting duck for Jesus Christ Superstar. “I was into religion, rock music, drama. I was struggling with these heavier issues. Then that came out. The rhythms were exciting, mixing up three and four and five beats to a measure. The lyrics brought the story of Jesus to life for us in a way we could relate to.” Suddenly the most important thing in Breton’s world

* Robert Hallett and Paul O’Conor, both of the class of 1969.
was to become part of that music by joining the small but excited group in the chapel basement. He introduced himself to Larry Recla, said he played guitar and wanted to be in the band. Larry said sure—and by the way, they didn’t actually have a band yet. Could Tom help with that?

Breton thought instantly of his little brother in Lambda Chi, a sophomore who played bass, whose band had just broken up, and who was looking for new people to play with.

John Mark Teich, a history major whom everyone called by his middle name, had come to Gettysburg from Philadelphia, where he’d been born on Elvis Presley’s birthday. That seemed more than coincidence for a boy who lived, ate, and breathed rock music, and whose family had music in its blood. Mark’s mother played piano in the Christian Science church, and his father, a branch manager for the Latrobe Steel Company, had been a gifted singer once scouted for Fred Waring’s Pennsylvanians, a choral group enormously popular on radio and on the concert circuit from the 1920s into the ’50s.

Mark was music-obsessed. Trained early in piano, he was, like Tom Breton, among the hundreds of thousands of American kids who took up electric guitars after the Beatles’ 1964 US debut. “I was in bands that would play at the local YMCA, or at Friday night dances. In the summertime, we’d do dances at the town hall. I did that pretty much all through high school.” Connecting with like-minded classmates, he switched instruments after realizing bass players were an especially rare commodity.

Music was his passion at Gettysburg, but history was his subject. Like everyone in the major, he took the demanding Historical Methods class taught by department eminence and former dean of the college Charles H. Glatfelter. “That was the litmus test of whether you’d make it or not. I finished with a B, which to this day I wear as a badge of honor: a B from Glatfelter was like an A from anybody else.” Still, the rigor of Gettysburg had him on academic probation by the fall of 1970. “I got off to a horrible start, and I was on thin ice halfway through my sophomore year. If it weren’t for Superstar, I probably wouldn’t have made it.”
In his first year, music claimed almost as much of Teich’s attention as his studies. Noting his musical interests, his freshman advisor had slated him for a couple of music courses. “I found myself with students who wanted to become music teachers, and that wasn’t of any interest to me. I was scratching my head: ‘Okay, this isn't what I intended, but let’s see how it goes.’” Teich was talented enough to be accepted as one of the few non-music majors in the elite Gettysburg College Choir. But it was a demanding activity, and he withdrew when it threatened to crowd out his real musical desire—to play in a rock group.

“I formed a band within the third week I was there,” he says. Its name was Moss Carpet. Composed of five freshmen, covering material from the earnest end of the folk-rock spectrum, they played the usual fraternity parties, and soon were being invited to other campuses. On lead vocals was a music education major named Beth Kershaw, whose strikingly rich voice was showcased by the band’s canny choice of material. “Beth was the exceptional member of the group,” Teich says, “the big draw wherever we played. She had pipes that were unmatchable.”

A foggy reel-to-reel recording, made at the In during a performance in spring 1970, catches the band covering “Can’t Find My Way Home,” from Blind Faith’s self-titled album of the year before. The accompaniment—finger-picked electric guitar, thin layer of organ, Teich’s subdued bass—is subtle and skilled, though not extraordinary. Kershaw’s voice, as Mark attests, is the exception. Like most classically trained singers, she brings little

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Mark Teich, as student and bassist. “I was on thin ice.”

Saturday, February 28—The In, 9:00 p.m. Dance with the Moss Carpet.

From The Gettysburgian, February 27, 1970.
rawness to popular material; what she does bring is a depth and drama that evoke contemporary sirens like Sandy Denny and Grace Slick, both of whose songs the band also covered.

Moss Carpet didn’t last. Of the five members, Teich recalls, “three were gone at the end of freshman year. One transferred, one quit, and the third was asked to leave because his grades were so bad. Probably it had a lot to do with being so focused on this band. They had big ideas: ‘This is what I’m here for. I’m not here to go to college.’ But Beth was there to work. She’d already set up a game plan; the rest of us hadn’t.”

It was through the pop and rock ensembles forever forming and dissolving at Gettysburg that Teich met Tom Breton. New on campus and scoping out prospective bandmates, Mark went to see a campus group known to rehearse at the Lambda Chi house on Sunday afternoons. This was Kaleidoscope. “That was my first exposure to what was happening on campus musically, as well as to Tom. They had great harmonies, but they were a little too pop for me. They did a lot of Sergio Mendes, and I wanted something with more of an edge.”

In late 1970, with Moss Carpet defunct and academic probation looming, Teich was looking for another band, another project. It first came to him through Nancy Group, a music major from Gardners, Pennsylvania, also a member of the class of 1973 and of the College Choir, and a frequenter of Christ Chapel. Superstar was nothing but talk at that point, and Mark disregarded it. Then Tom Breton played him the album. He insisted that the project—and the chapel intern who was in charge of it—were for real. He asked Mark’s help in getting a band together, and urged Mark to go to Room 2 and introduce himself.

Mark Teich and Larry Recla have been friends for over four decades. But their first meeting wasn’t magical: “I thought he was a pompous ass,” Mark says. Yet the project intrigued even as the personality grated, and in time Larry’s more attractive qualities subsumed the more abrasive. “He had a vision, a confidence. I sensed that he saw something in me that I hadn’t noticed myself. Maybe that’s how he won me over.” As a paid-up subscriber to rock’s rebel mythos, Mark was also responsive to Larry’s renegade aspect. “He was far from being your establishment type. It was clear that he was on our side, and if there was a line to be crossed, he was going to cross it with us.”

Larry, spotting an enthusiasm complementary to his own, and a degree of musical acumen he couldn’t approach, was glad to take the
sophomore aboard. “Mark was in his person what he was with his music: a pulse, if you will. Quiet, not out front, but excruciatingly knowledgeable. Ever brilliant, in the exact use of that word—reflecting light.”

“I remember going home on Christmas break and buying the album,” Mark says. “I locked myself in a room and started working through it.” The printed libretto that came with the LP was soon filled with his marginal notes, “not only written but musical notes—where there’s 7/4 time, or when I have to play a certain progression. Having those was a big help, because a lot of the changes were new to me. Rock music is pretty straightforward: all 4/4, sometimes no more than three or four chords. This was a challenge. And when I realized it wasn’t insurmountable, I got excited about it.”

While Larry had the enthusiasm and drive to guide a production, he would need help with administration and stagecraft. He found his aide and accomplice in Gretchen Cranz, a junior from New London, Connecticut. The two knew each other slightly through the In, where Gretchen helped coordinate activities.

While double-majoring in classics and theater arts, Gretchen devoted most of her extracurricular time to the Owl & Nightingale Society, the college’s dramatics group, founded in 1924 and advised since 1962 by theater professor Emile Schmidt. The “O&N” usually performed in the ballroom of the Student Union Building (known as the SUB), and alternated full-length works with one-acts, mainstream with avant-garde. The diminutive Schmidt, a bearded, beaded bohemian in the midst of conservative Gettysburg, liked to push the limits. One of Gretchen’s most memorable O&N productions was also one of her first. Marat/Sade, Peter Weiss’s controversial play set among asylum inmates after the French Revolution, flamboyantly addressed the politics of revolution, the radical implications of sexuality, the social construction of insanity, and numerous other ideas meant to make the bourgeoisie fidgety. The O&N production of March 1969 was conceived as a statement on revolution, with particular relevance to the current state of the US. “Emile encouraged us to get rowdy,” says Gretchen. “On the line, ‘What’s the point of a REVOLUTION without COPULATION—COPULATION—COPULATION?!?’ people started thrusting their hips,
rather obviously. It truly blew my mind.” Gretchen discovered she was more comfortable behind the scenes, and moved into stage managing.

Branching out as a junior, she responded to a campus notice about chapel activities. “So I went, and there he was”: the new chapel intern. Gretchen didn’t care for Larry at first—“He really, really put me off”—but something about him grew on her, and she became more engaged with chapel life as a result. “I’d gone pretty exclusively to the Episcopal Church in town. I kept going to church on Sundays, but I got more involved with the stuff Larry did.”

She was by now a skilled stage manager, good with plans, performers, and pressures. When Superstar arose, Larry asked her to join the nucleus in the same role. “She was a perfect assistant—gracious, helpful, making things happen, a fully involved partner,” he says. “She would defer to a judgment on my part, but she was never silent about her own opinion.”

Gretchen was glad to be asked. Despite being turned off at first, she’d decided she liked the blunt but magnetic intern, in part because of the questions his approach raised in her about who she was and what she wanted. “I’d had a sheltered upbringing, raised by two professors, and here comes Larry, boisterous and passionate. The point of his life was to see what difference he could make. Mine was to see how well I could fit in.”

Gretchen (top row, second from right) participates in a chapel encounter session, 1970.
Everyone who came to Superstar was looking for something, and for all of his intellectual leanings, Larry Recla craved excitement. As a seminarian, he’d raised hell on campus; as a hospital chaplain, he’d gravitated to the ER. Putting on a religious rock opera in Christ Chapel with a crew of green kids as yet unknown; with who knew what kind of administrative support or lack of it; with the thousand contingencies and anxieties that would be entailed by not only doing such a thing but doing it right—this would be his new keg party, his new emergency room.

“Emergency” wasn’t a bad word, because the clock was already ticking. The show would have to happen in the spring, and there were many arrangements to be made. Plus, Christmas break was approaching: soon kids would disperse to their homes for two and a half weeks, and precious organizing time would be lost.

First, they had to secure the use of the chapel. After getting John Vannorsdall’s approval for the fledgling project (“His attitude was, ‘Larry’s found something—if it makes him serene, why not?’”), Larry and Gretchen checked the chapel calendar. The week of March 21-26 was marked off for a series of events relating to “Christianity and the Arts,” for which the Swedish theologian and playwright Olov Hartman would be artist-in-residence. It was decided that Superstar would occupy the chapel on the nights of March 24 (a complete run-through) and March 25 (the performance itself). The latter date, coincidentally, marked the Feast of the Annunciation.*

These would be the weeks leading up to midterm examinations; the ultimate performance would take place in the midst of exams themselves. Perhaps reasoning that students at an expensive liberal arts college ought to learn to handle multiple stresses, Larry went ahead and booked the dates.

The second order of business was to obtain performance rights, a production logistic with which Larry was familiar through the Chancel Players. As far as he could determine, clearance for Superstar performances was the province of MCA Music—American subsidiary of Decca, the English company that had financed and released the album. Larry drafted a letter to Arthur Cohn, director of MCA’s Serious Music Division,+ requesting permission to perform the opera at least once in its entirety, in the chapel, free of charge to the public, and asking for several copies of the band and choral scores. He sent the letter off to MCA’s Park Avenue offices, hoping for a timely response.

* The archangel Gabriel’s appearance before the Virgin Mary to tell her that she would give birth to the Christ child.
+ As an “opera,” Superstar was cataloged under “serious” (i.e., classical) rather than rock music.
Mark Teich says, “There are probably seventy-five different stories of why people wound up in Superstar.” For one person, the project was a puzzle, and the point was to solve it. “I think I took it as an interesting challenge,” says Doug Wyatt.

Born near Lansdown, Pennsylvania, Wyatt was a junior majoring in physics. He also sang in College Choir and sometimes performed at the In, playing guitar and singing (“Simon and Garfunkel, Donovan, some Beatles”) in a smooth baritone shading into bass. Music and science had always meshed for Doug. As a boy, he sang in the church choir with his father, a textiles engineer; he also “got much of my rational, technical way of thinking from my dad. He was a ham radio operator; I got my first ham license when I was twelve, and made the radio I was using. I’ve always liked problem-solving, puzzles, math things.”

When Doug entered Gettysburg in the fall of 1968, physics was perhaps the school’s most cutting-edge program. The previous year, the American Institute of Physics had ranked Gettysburg ninth among 700 colleges for its ability to produce grad school-ready physicists; a planetarium had recently opened; and a $13,000 research grant had purchased new X-ray diffraction equipment. The physics and chemistry departments regularly received corporate aid from the likes of General Electric, Du Pont, and Gulf Oil. Using funds from the National Science Foundation, the college had obtained its first computer, an IBM 1130 (“16K of memory,” says math professor Carl Leinbach, “and disk drives the size of sombreros”).

Quiet and intent, usually laboring in his dorm or a Masters Hall lab, Doug made his presence felt. In time, he had all but exhausted
the resources of the Math Department. “Outstanding, insightful, multitalented,” Leinbach calls him. “He wasn’t the type that would come in for office hours. He didn’t need to; he did his job in class.” By junior year, Doug had distinguished himself by means of flawless classwork, lightning-quick analytical skills, and imaginative side projects.

Some of the projects mutated science and music, with the 1130 as the instrument. For instance, feedback music: “We discovered that if you set an FM radio on the computer console and started the computer executing stuff, you’d get tones out of the radio. With a little experimentation, you could write FORTRAN* loops of various lengths to get various pitches. You’d actually get the computer to play a tune, however crudely.” Neal Smatresk remembers another experiment along similar lines. “Doug had discovered that the Hollerith card-reading machines, as they ran the punch cards for producing code, created musical notes, or sounds that could be equated to music. So he scored a bunch of Hollerith cards to create songs on the computer. That was pretty weird at the time; now it would be considered ordinary.”

Those who knew Doug as a singer, while aware of his scientific brilliance, were more impressed by his musical gifts, which were just as unusual, well-honed, and seemingly innate. As a College Choir member, he became known for his unerring ear. “Most everything we did was unaccompanied, so it was really important to stay on pitch,” says John Hylton. “Doug’s ear was so acute that when something would start to go off, you could see him physically react. His head would tilt to one side, and he’d get a sort of pained expression on his face.”

Wyatt doesn’t recall how he was drafted as musical director for Superstar. “It just sort of evolved,” he says. Mark Teich had seen Doug perform at the In, and in College Choir; he knew the tall man’s sense of musical interrelationships would enable him to coordinate a rock band with horn players and a chorus. “Doug could hear things that the rest of us might not. Or, when we sensed that something wasn’t right but didn’t know where it was coming from, he knew where it was coming from.”

* FORmula TRANslating System, a pioneering programming language created at IBM in the 1950s.
It often struck others that the parameters of Doug Wyatt’s brilliance and curiosity were so wide that science alone couldn’t fill them, and that music was a way for him to expend some of that excess intellectual energy. Leinbach sensed Doug’s hunger for new puzzles: “He may have been one of those people who things come too easy to. I think music gave him more of a challenge.” Indeed, Superstar would end up challenging him in ways that no one could foresee.

Jakob Vinten-Johansen has a touching memory of visiting Doug Wyatt’s house, and watching Doug and his father make music together. “They played a recorder duet, and I thought that was wonderful. I was a bit envious, actually, because my family life was not like that.”

Vinten-Johansen, a senior majoring in biology, was among the many of his generation who felt alienated from his heritage, more for cultural than for political reasons. The Vinten-Johansens were of the steely Nordic variety; in fact, Jake was born in Denmark—Odense, also the hometown of Hans Christian Andersen. Soon after his birth Jake’s father, an anesthesiologist, had come to the US for additional training, bringing his family over in 1952 and settling them in Annapolis, Maryland.

Encouraged—or pushed—toward biology by his father, Jake initially thought of becoming a veterinarian, and scouted a pre-medical track among local schools. Visiting Gettysburg in the summer of 1967, he “liked the look and feel of it.” His first important contact in the Biology Department, and later his adviser, was assistant professor Ralph Cavaliere, who’d been at Gettysburg only a year but was already one of the school’s most popular teachers. Still, he got, Jake says, “a little bit lost.” Was he at Gettysburg because he wanted to be? Was he tracking to medicine for himself, or for his father? Hampered by uncertainty, he was a lackluster student for his first two years.

Music, not academics, was the positive constant in his life. It both comforted and excited him, and he was turning into an accomplished guitarist. He’d been playing the instrument since the eighth grade: fascinated with a friend’s new electric model, he’d begged his parents to get him one. As haters of rock music (“They thought Elvis Presley was the scourge of the earth”), they refused, caving in only under pressure from
Jake’s older brother. Thus, a certain tension developed between desire and practicality, what he wanted and what he felt was demanded.

It came to a head in his junior year at Gettysburg, when he decided to shift his main energy from medicine to music. His parents didn’t take the news well; in fact, he says, “they basically disowned me.” There the situation remained for the next year. Then, as a senior, Jake decided to see through what he’d begun: he would complete his degree, he promised his parents, then take stock of his future. Thus was peace made, or at least a truce struck.

Entering his final semester, he was coming off a bad year. He was even unhappier than before, more alienated, with little sense of self-worth. Working toward his degree provided a short-term goal, but beyond that lay only more uncertainty. Then Superstar appeared, and he became one of those for whom it would assume unique importance.

“I recruited Jake,” says Clay Sutton. “He’d been a friend from the dorm, and I went to him and asked if he was interested.” He was. Breton, Wyatt, and Teich were acquaintances from the In and other musical hubs, and Jake had a good first impression of Larry Recla: “I liked Larry from the get-go. He was an organizer, and he could work with people.” As for Superstar, Jake hadn’t heard it except in fragments on the radio, but listening close, he found it intriguing, a puzzle. Not Doug Wyatt’s kind, a helix of notes and symbols, but a puzzle with people as the pieces, a dynamic of players forming a whole. The world of elaborate brass and choral arrangements was new to him: “It was the first time I’d have to deal with a larger group, one with so many moving parts.” He learned the music in what was then the amateur’s classic fashion—sitting at a turntable, playing the record repeatedly, and imitating what he heard.

Superstar offered him validation, something he needed just then. But true to the Nordic example, he kept his unhappiness hidden, always striking others as positive and likeable. His optimism and character would see him through the difficult passage from Gettysburg into adulthood—as would an empathy that enabled him to see his own struggle as part of a larger story. “Those were turbulent times,” he says. “I think we all came a bit unglued.”

Larry Recla downplays the spiritual and emotional impact of the Superstar album on most of the students he saw: “No one came to me breaking out in crosses. There were no stigmata.” Perhaps not, but several Gettysburg undergrads had intense responses to the record, feeling it addressed, as nothing else had, some need or question inside them. One was Neal Smatresk, the last member of the inner circle.
Smatresk grew up in Buffalo, New York, a grandson of Swedish immigrants. The family’s Methodism was more social than devotional, and Neal developed an objective faith that befit a fundamentally scientific intelligence. His interests pointing to biology, he sampled programs at several colleges, and had the best feeling about Gettysburg, whose Biology Department was headed by Professor Robert Barnes, author of *Invertebrate Zoology*, the standard text in the field.

Summers back in the Buffalo area, Smatresk participated in community theatre. At school, he sang in College Choir; and his stark photographs of Gettysburg people and landscapes appeared in the student literary journal, *The Mercury*. He also sang in Opus I, a group formed in early 1971 by freshman Stan Beard.* Neal compares their sound to that of the Swingle Singers, a unit popular on TV variety shows that specialized in complex vocal arrangements of classical pieces; Opus I applied the same approach to pop material. While he enjoyed the group, Smatresk also found it vaguely embarrassing, both musically (“a little too college glee club”) and sartorially, as Beard mandated the wearing of matching outfits—blue shirts over red, white, and blue-striped bell bottoms.

* Beard dropped out to join Fred Waring’s Pennsylvanians (still kicking in the Seventies). He went on to a varied musical career including stints with *The Carol Burnett Show*, Disney touring revues, and commercial jingle-writing.
For Neal, Superstar was, among other things, the antithesis—even the antidote—to Opus I. It was also a new angle on Christianity, a rock statement, and it “hit me like a lightning bolt when I heard it the first time. It was almost overwhelming.” Catching wind of the production plans, he made for the chapel, where he’d only ever gone for chorus concerts and the occasional service. Meeting Larry and the other early arrivers, he perceived that no one was dictating the project, that everyone was pooling their abilities and ideas. It remained to be determined what role Neal Smatresk would play; the important thing for him, as for the others already there or soon to come, was simply to be involved.

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It had been a couple of weeks since Clay Sutton brought *Superstar* to Larry. In that time, this handful of chapel rats had accomplished a lot. With Christmas break days away, they had a venue, a director, a stage manager, a choreographer, a photographer, and the beginnings of a band.

By the time these parts were in place, Clay had retreated to the background. His continuing involvement would be that of a chronicler, not a shaper, and though his name would be listed on the planning committee and director’s staff, he was largely invisible to the others. He was happy to move to the margins as other hands took over. His inspiration had set everything off, but once begun, he says, “it took on a life of its own.”
Over the fall of 1970, the Recla farmhouse near Biglerville had become a focal point for the less conventional chapel dwellers. Less than ten miles from campus, it was near enough to be easily accessed, remote enough to seem almost a different world. Groups of students would grab food items, pile into their cars, drive past the Peace Light—a Civil War monument topped with an eternal flame, dedicated by Franklin D. Roosevelt on the battle’s seventy-fifth anniversary—continue west on Mummasburg Road, and follow a twisting two-lane blacktop into the silent hills of orchard country. At the farmhouse, they’d eat from communal pots, interact with Larry and Sue Ann, play with Larry Jr., and spread out around the house and yard. Someone always had a guitar, so there was usually singing; otherwise, records played on the hi-fi. Occasionally, Larry would use his reel-to-reel tape recorder to capture the talk and the music.

“I had students out all the time,” he says. “Across from the house was a longyard, with orchards going up a gentle hill. We’d have students on the hillside, with long hair and psychedelic dresses, and they were, for lack of a better word, frolicking. That’s an indelible picture in my mind.”
“He loved to have people at his farm,” says Mark Teich. Asked if illicit substances were ever consumed, he replies, “Nothing other than wine or beer. I don’t know if Larry has ever done drugs in his life. I always had the sense he wasn’t that keen on it.”

*Superstar* planners say the farmhouse was a great place for brainstorming, and for general reflection. “It was a sort of seclusion camp for us, where we could really immerse ourselves,” says Jake Vinten-Johansen. “Definitely a special place,” agrees Gretchen Cranz. “Etiquette was out the window. Everybody could say what they wanted to say; everybody delighted in everybody else. The farmhouse was pivotal to my whole experience with Larry—bringing me out, giving me space to start to rethink who I was.”

Most memories of the farmhouse are charmingly bucolic. One is a bit more bizarre. Neal Smatresk was among a group engaged in post-meal dialogue one night. The peace was shattered when Larry bolted from his chair. “I remember him springing up and saying something like, ‘Damn gophers!’ then running out with a pistol and taking shots at them. I thought, ‘This is strange behavior for a minister.’”

Mark Teich laughs at the story: “It wouldn’t surprise me.”*

It was at the farmhouse that the first communal experience of *Superstar* occurred. “We all sat around and listened to the LP on Larry’s stereo,” says Teich. “Doug had his guitar, and I had my bass, with a little bass speaker. We were playing along with the record, and it got to the point where we said, ‘Turn it off. Let’s do it ourselves.’ And when we started to play, everything was there.”

By the fourth day of 1971, when students returned for the start of the January Term, *Superstar* talk was drawing in students from every point on the campus.+ Many Larry knew only slightly, if at all; often they were kids whose majors and other interests kept them away from the chapel. But they had a talent, sometimes even a need, and they wanted in.

Early pieces began to fall into place. Soon after the start of the year, Larry heard from Arthur Cohn at MCA Music, who affirmed the request for *Superstar* performance rights and said he’d be in touch shortly with more information. Then, on January 16 in Room 2, Larry made public the plans for a *Superstar* production. This was a brief meeting involving

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* Responding to the anecdote, Larry conducts, as he often does, a Socratic dialogue with himself. “Was I, and am I, familiar with weapons? Yes. Would there have been a weapon apparent? Yes. Is there enough core to that story to make it credible? Yes. Do I have a specific recollection of this incident? No. Would I be able to deny it? No. Does it kind of make sense? Errrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr...
JEZUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR

GENERAL MEETING:
TUESDAY NIGHT IN THE CHAPEL AT 8:00
to explain what is planned, answer any and all questions, & RECRUIT!

SINGING TRYOUTS:
sorry, but we won't have scores for this...so either work from the record or bring your own music

WEDNESDAY 7:30 to 9:30
THURSDAY 7:30 to 10:30
in the chapel

for further information contact Mr. Recla at the Chapel

Trained voices not mandatory
little more than the announcement itself; a few of the planners may have been present, joined by a handful of curious outsiders. A meeting four nights later in the chapel proper was the real Superstar gateway: a general opening up of the project to the campus at large, with a much bigger contingent turning out to hear Larry and his staffers “explain what is planned, answer any and all questions, and RECRUIT!”—in the words of the flyer that had gone out from the chapel basement.

The flyer also gave dates and times for the first vocal auditions. Focused on lead roles and limited to College Choir members, these were held in the chapel on the nights of January 20 and 21.

According to one participant, many in the College Choir disregarded the notice, assuming that such an amateurish enterprise would not be worth their time. So these first tryouts would have been sparsely attended, with a few dozen auditioners at most. But the ones who came were the ones who wanted it, and who didn’t mind interacting musically with students from other departments. One after another, they performed selected Superstar solos, while a chain-smoking Larry observed from the nave and a skeleton band—Wyatt and Breton on acoustic guitars, Vinten-Johansen on electric, Teich on bass—provided accompaniment.

Since the arrangements with MCA were still pending, the flyer had announced there would be no scores on hand. “You had to learn the piece from the album, and just go and sing

Mark Teich at the auditions.

Beth Kershaw, freshman.
it,” remembers Beth Kershaw, who along with several others was trying out for the role of Mary Magdalene.

Beth had come to Gettysburg from Providence, Rhode Island, in the fall of 1969. She laughs remembering how, as an eighteen-year-old who wanted to teach music, she decided on the school. She’d been accepted at Lebanon Valley College, some seventy miles north of Gettysburg, “but I went and looked, and it was just—blechh. All the boys had acne.” At Gettysburg, Beth auditioned for professor Harold Ackley, singing “The Church’s One Foundation,” an especially challenging hymn assigned on the spot. She passed, was offered a modest scholarship, and discovered another plus: “The boys were really handsome.”

Music and boys both ranked high on Beth’s list. She’s remembered as fun-loving, provocative, and “sort of a rebel,” in John Hylton’s opinion. “She did her thing. I remember thinking, in a good way, that she didn’t care what other people thought about her. She was a fun person to be around, not hesitant to say outrageous things.”

Coming from a conservative Anglo-Catholic household whose cultural forays were limited to Disney movies, Beth was ready to cut loose at college. “I was wild. I have to tell you, I was. The freedom of being seven and a half hours away from my parents was really fun.” Freedom meant experimenting socially and chemically, but also exposing herself to discussions and points of view she’d never heard at home. “I was kind of a hippie,” she says. “I knew what was going on; I embraced all the new thinking.”

For private voice instruction she was assigned to Marie Buddé, a graduate of the prestigious Peabody Conservatory at Johns Hopkins University, and a ten-year veteran of the Music Department. Buddé had had a previous life as an opera singer, and was correspondingly operatic in her teaching. Beth didn’t respond well to that. “At my first lesson, she karate-chopped me in the throat. She’d say, ‘You’re tight! You’re tight!’ And every time she said ‘tight,’ she’d hit me in the throat. Of course you’d tighten up.”* Beth

* Beth’s friend Jan Kitchener, on the other hand, remembers Buddé as “a delight. She had a piercing voice, and when she was looking for people, she’d run down the hall and shout their name.”
was also performing at the In, either with Moss Carpet or in impromptu combinations, and attracting attention; Jim Henderson, accomplished musician and big man of the senior class, recalls “being very impressed with her.”

She seldom performed as a soloist, preferring the support of a partnership or group. She and Mark Teich connected early on, and preserved a rapport through numerous shifts of band personnel. It was Mark who pressed her to audition as Mary Magdalene. “There was another girl who’d been in on the planning, and it was kind of expected that she would be Mary,” Beth says, presumably referring to Teich’s friend Nancy Group. “I remember saying to Mark, ‘This girl has it in the bag.’ He said, ‘Oh, I don’t know. You should try out.’”

She remembers no gasps of astonishment at her performance. “I did my thing, they said ‘Thank you very much,’ and I left.” But she’d made quite an impact. “She was far and away superior,” says Teich. “Few singers I’ve heard in my lifetime approached that.” According to Larry, one or two demurrers arose to Beth’s casting, but on moral rather than musical grounds. “There were those who knew of her—um—reputation, and who slightly objected. But there were others who said, ‘This is perfect.’ I would have been one of those.”

John Hylton was another. “I think that somehow, at that point in time—whether it was through God, or Larry Recla, or whatever—the right people were found for the right roles in this production. Beth would be an example.”

Later, when the cast list was posted, Beth felt “amazed. I don’t think I realized what a big deal it was going to be. But I felt badly for the other girl. She’d done a lot of work on the planning, and people thought she was going to do that part.” Teich, though friendly with both women, felt the choice was clear. “Nancy had a fine voice, but nothing as powerful as Beth’s. It was something she felt with every fiber of her body. She carried herself that way, she had that kind of gift. I think Nancy was disappointed, but perfectly happy to be part of the ensemble.” Several others passed over for leads were likewise asked to sing in the chorus.

The auditions were free of strict protocols or exacting standards. In fact, two of the leads were not assigned by audition at all. “I remember sitting with Larry out at his house one night, drinking wine,” says Neal Smatresk. “He said, ‘What are you in this for, Neal? You want to be Jesus?’ I went, wow. That felt immodest—although probably in the back of my head I thought I’d be a really good Jesus. I said, ‘Maybe not. How about Pilate?’ He goes, ‘Okay.’ And that was that.”
The role of Judas—*Superstar’s* most demanding part, aside from the obvious one—ran the range of expression from fury to heartbreak. It seemed to cry out for Tom Breton. Indeed, Larry says Tom’s casting was “one of the easiest picks.” But Breton never wanted the part; in fact, he hadn’t sought a singing role at all. “Tom was one of the guitar players,” says Jake. “But at one early practice, we decided there were too many guitars. Larry stepped back and asked Tom if he’d sing Judas. That upset Tom, and Larry had to do a magnificent job of salesmanship.” “He really wanted to be in the band,” agrees Mark Teich. “I got a sense he wasn’t entirely happy having to play that dark role.”

Tom was surprised by this general agreement that he was the right Judas, but he did not resist it. Anyway, he already knew Judas’s music backwards and forwards. “I’d been singing the parts all along, most of them—anything I could sing. I remember somebody suggesting I do Judas, and before I knew it, that’s what was going on.” Though it would cause him considerable anxiety, the role would prove a perfect vehicle for Tom’s “intensity” and “sincerity,” the sense of inner turmoil so palpable to those around him.

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Clay Sutton had never taken pictures seriously in his life. But at Gettysburg, he says, “I took a photography course as an elective, got access to the Biology Department’s darkroom, and became fascinated.” Most of his work was nature photography, captured while exploring the flora and fauna of the surrounding country. “I had a camera in my hand all the time, and I’d wander around. Right off campus was an abandoned building that had been some sort of hospital; it was called ‘the insane asylum.’ It was out by itself in a field, toward the Peace Light. The doors were open, and I remember going through and taking lots of pictures of this haunted house. Jesus Christ Superstar was probably the first time I did any human photography.”

Sutton snapped many dozens of shots at the auditions and rehearsals—not for posterity, but to have a stock of publicity images. Once the show was on its feet, philosophy major Karen Burdack—Clay’s friend, classmate, and the only
Two of Clay Sutton’s unused publicity images.
other member of the public relations staff—planned to place posters, flyers, and newspaper announcements in Gettysburg and neighboring towns. These efforts would be vital in getting the word out. Otherwise, it was assumed, no one beyond the campus would ever know about it.

Arthur Cohn was on the case. He wrote Larry on January 27 that all performance materials, including scores for rock band, chorus, and conductor, would be available within two weeks, and promised to be in touch soon with specifics on fees and royalties. The news was well-timed: Larry and several students were about to depart Gettysburg for their long-scheduled between-terms field trip to New York City, and it was nice to leave with some peace of mind.

The New York trip had been initiated by John Vannorsdall in 1964 to enable students “to observe some of the creative efforts of the Church,” and to “provide an overview of the church’s ministry in the big city.” It had become a yearly tradition, typically featuring museum tours, visits to the United Nations, and participation in inner-city services from Harlem to the Bowery. Initially shepherded by Vannorsdall, the New York trip was now the lookout of his chapel intern. Larry drove them up in a college-owned station wagon. “I remember pulling into the parking garage, and the attendant saying [in an Irish accent], ‘Good evening, Father. I shouldn’t be tellin’ you this, but it’s likely that at midnight we’ll be goin’ on strike, and you shan’t be gettin’ this car back for an extended period of time.’ To which I said, ‘Bless you, my son,’ and parked on the street. I then offered
a little prayer of ‘Goodbye’ to the hubcaps, and perhaps the car.” Happily, the wagon stayed present and intact.

They roomed at a Lutheran hostel on East 15th Street. Among Larry’s flock was Gretchen Cranz. “I was overwhelmed by it,” she says of New York, “but only within the context of Larry being there, seeing that I’d be all right.” Also along was Susan Beebe, a senior math major soon to be a Superstar chorus member. “We split up, and went off in groups of no less than two, for safety’s sake. We saw interesting parts of New York, and learned to use the subways.”

On the itinerary was a performance of The Trial of the Catonsville Nine, a new play based on the government’s prosecution of Philip and Daniel Berrigan, Jesuit priests who had been convicted of burning draft records at a federal induction center in Maryland. The mix of politics and piety made it more a Vannorsdall thing than a Recla thing. “It left no lasting impression on me,” Larry says, dryly.

But something else did. On either February 1 or 2, Larry and Gretchen were at the Billy Rose Theatre on West 41st Street, watching with speechless amazement a performance of A Midsummer Night’s Dream. Staged by the Royal Shakespeare Company under the direction of Peter Brook, this rendition had originated at Stratford-on-Avon in the summer of 1970, then played the West End; it was already being acclaimed as one of the most revolutionary Shakespeare productions ever mounted. Clive Barnes, chief drama critic of the New York Times, had called it “the greatest Shakespearean production I have seen in my life,” and other reviews in England and New York were barely less rapturous. More recently, journalist and Shakespeare scholar Ron Rosenbaum has placed it among “the most influential productions of the century.”

Brook’s staging was inspired by two things—a performance by the Peking Circus, and a Jerome Robbins ballet set to Chopin nocturnes. Both struck him, in their agility, grace, and humor, as a conjuring of “pure spirit,” and “a pointer to go beyond illustration to evocation.” His Dream occurred on a plain white, brightly-lit stage, with sound effects, props, trapeze wires, and even actors entering from exposed overhead catwalks. The costumes were multicolored satin, directly inspired by the Chinese circus performers; the very atmosphere, Rosenbaum writes, grew increasingly “eerie” and “circus-like” as the evening progressed. The end result was an uncluttered, reimagined Shakespeare which joined language and movement in “pure spirit.” The actress Zoe Caldwell said, “The effect was truly dreamlike, but the main difference was the incredible clarity of the play.” Rosenbaum felt his life changing as he watched from his seat: “I’d
never experienced anything of such radiant clarity.

Gretchen and Larry weren't lucky enough to get seats. "We had standing room only in the back," she says. "It was Shakespeare's play, but they performed it as a present experience. I stood next to Larry during the whole thing, and both of us were just like—Ohhhh! I normally gabber all the time, but I don't think I spoke during it. It was incredible." On her return, Gretchen wrote a review for The Gettysburgian. "It is bright, lively, and lovely. . . . At the end of the production, all the happy couples are joined, and the audience has had a fine evening, not sure if they were more kin to the mortals or the imaginary creatures." Brook's staging, she wrote, "cuts down on the discordance of incidents, presents a delightful unity of mood, and sends the dreamer away changed."

Interestingly, recalling the show, Larry Recla uses a key word employed by both Caldwell and Rosenbaum. "What I remember now," he says, "is always being in awe, because of the clarity and focus of what was going on. People were present, and enjoying themselves and each other.

Drama Review

A Midsummer Night's Dream

By GRETCHEN CRANZ

"The magic was not in concealment. The magic was in exposure. There was no scenery—period. You had three white walls, with occasional doors or windows, and that's it. On top of the walls, people would walk around. The costumes were rather remarkable and nice, but because of the starkness, it's not
like they were costumes: it was just what they were wearing. The sound effects were from above, on a balcony-shelf kind of thing. Whether it was ticking a finger on a glass, or swinging a wand, or how a rope was attached, you weren’t just hearing the sound—you were seeing it made."

*Superstar* was already percolating in Recla’s mind. It had become the thing at the center of his days and more than a few of his nights. Instantly his imagination was working on how to transport an essence of this experience to the stage of Christ Chapel. How to translate, convey, co-opt, or simply steal some of its magic; how to keep that magic alive long enough so that an audience back in Gettysburg could enter into and be transported by a similar kind of shared dream, and come out changed.

His first ideas derived from Brook’s aesthetic of exposure, simplicity, and clarity. "What that meant for Superstar," Larry says, “was that the chorus would always be onstage. Everyone would always be onstage. The action points would be pulpit, center stage, aisles for dancing. And all in bright light. There would be nothing in concealment—everything would
be in focus and present. That was deliberate, conscious, and crystal. *That’s how I was doing this.*

Larry would find other ways too of bringing home the “pure spirit” of the production. A quote from Peter Brook becomes relevant. As he and his company of young performers set to work on their revolutionary *Dream*, he says, “we began with only the conviction that if we worked long, hard, and joyfully on all aspects of the play, a form would gradually appear. We started preparing the ground to give this form a chance.”

Which may be what Larry meant all along by “coalescing.”
Three days before the chapel group left for New York, the last tryout had been held for College Choir members. It was thought wisest to prioritize these over other auditioners—those who belonged to the smaller Chapel Choir, or who were unaffiliated with either organization.

Gettysburg’s College Choir was founded in 1935 by Parker Wagnild, who over a forty-one-year career molded it into one of the premiere outfits of its type in the US. “It was a big deal,” says John Hylton. “Professor Wagnild was a graduate of St. Olaf College in Minnesota, and St. Olaf was the source of a very influential tradition of unaccompanied choral singing. Wags—that’s what we called him—was a student of F. Melias Christiansen, the founder of that movement, and I think he wanted to establish something of that stature. And Gettysburg really did have a very fine choir. For years, it was the college’s most effective P.R. tool.”

Made possible by the full admission of female students in 1935, the College Choir grew in its first two decades from extracurricular activity to major institutional enterprise, its reputation built on a regular schedule of brief regional tours. Performing mostly at churches, the choir also played prestigious secular sites, and by the late Fifties had covered virtually every segment of the eastern US, including major cities from New York to Atlanta to Chicago. In 1963, the choir played its first European concerts, and its world tour of summer 1967—unprecedented in the group’s history for expense and exposure—encompassed performances in Japan, China, Thailand, India, Greece, Italy, and Austria.* A reviewer for the Bangkok Post praised the choir’s “exceptionally intelligent and musically superior

* Scheduled stops in Jerusalem and Beirut were canceled due to the Arab-Israeli Six-Day War.
program,” noting with some surprise that “the backwoods colleges at times make their better-educated colleagues look inferior.”

In 1970, an invitation came to sing at a Christmas reception for President Richard Nixon, his family and cabinet members in the East Wing of the White House. Doug Wyatt was among those who took part in the December 21 performance; he recalls it as an impersonal affair. “We were led into the proper room at the proper time, we sang our arranged pieces, President Nixon thanked us, and we went away. It was, of course, exotic and all that. But that’s what’s stuck in my head, after all these years.”*

Wyatt was something of a legacy in the College Choir: his mother, a 1940 graduate, had sung in Wagnild’s very first conglomeration. “A lot of what we did I characterize as blockbuster pieces—very thick and lush, a lot of sound, all very pretty,” he says. Wagnild’s thorough indoctrination of his singers enabled him to “play” the choir like an instrument, calling forth changes and effects with the subtest of hand gestures. Wyatt recalls this in the context of a Christmas concert. “There was some confusion about what the next number was. It became apparent that Wagnild thought it was some quiet lullaby thing, whereas most of us thought it was a piece called ‘Blow Ye the Trumpet of Zion.’ He gave this very gentle downbeat,

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* It was actually the second time the College Choir had performed for Nixon. He’d met earlier members at a restaurant in Luzerne, Switzerland, in 1963, when the choir was on its first international tour and Nixon was simply a recognizable American traveler.
and as loudly as we could, we came together with ‘Blowwww—!’ We nearly knocked him off the podium.”

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The first of the non-College Choir tryouts were held the evenings of February 8 and 9, the first two days of the spring semester. By scheduling separate auditions, the planners were, knowingly or not, perpetuating a years-long division between the College Choir and the Chapel Choir, which sang at Sunday services under the direction of Professor Dexter Weikel. “There was always a big rivalry,” says Jan Kitchener, both a soloist and the student director for Chapel Choir. “Things like which group got to march down the central aisle at the Christmas concert, and which got the side aisles. If there was a scheduling conflict, College Choir usually won, because Wags was the department chair.”

Susan Fischer sang in Chapel Choir. “We had a different sound,” she says. “College Choir was a lot darker, more serious. We did more fun stuff. But they had the tradition, they had the great singers, and we had the seconds. We didn’t really feel like that; that’s the way we were supposed to feel.”

“A few people actually moved between groups, because different skill sets were needed,” says Jan. “Some saw Chapel Choir as a training ground. We had to learn two or three pieces every week for the regular chapel service, plus prepare for concerts, whereas the College Choir would rehearse for about six weeks before they performed. That was good for people who didn’t read music, who had good tonal memory and could learn pieces by rote. But I liked the challenge of having new music all the time. We’d do a long weekend tour in the spring, and sometimes have what we called ‘run-outs’—like when the Lutheran Home was dedicated, we’d run out and sing for them. Things like that kept us busy.”

Music education major John Kuehl, who sang with the Chapel Choir for two years, acknowledges that Wagnild’s “was the more prestigious group. But for those of us who were instrumental music majors, it was understood that you couldn’t be in both, because they rehearsed at the same times. Instrumental majors could join Chapel Choir, because there was no conflict. College Choir was the touring group, and we’d always been considered the stepchild. It came along—the numbers grew, the quality grew—but there was a bit of rivalry.”
Critics rarely had unkind words for the Gettysburg College Choir; but its concerts at New York’s Town Hall in 1961 and 1966, both reviewed by Allen Hughes of the Times, drew the same negative. Namely, that Wagnild’s rigid adherence to the St. Olaf style made every number sound the same, and that the choir’s virtuosity, applied without modulation to classical and devotional pieces alike, resulted in an “austere,” “bland,” “depersonalized” sound. That was one reason why Mark Teich and Tom Breton, along with other gifted musicians who sought the spontaneity of pop and rock performance, dropped out. “I loved being in the College Choir; in some ways,” says Breton. “But the kind of voice Wags wanted was very polished and controlled, and that was difficult for me.”

From the start, Teich, Breton, and the others had wanted Superstar to be open to trained and untrained musicians alike. It was more democratic that way, but it was also because an infusion of unruly voices would prevent the Superstar chorus from sounding too much like the College Choir. “Trained voices not mandatory,” the flyer had promised; thus, many who tried out belonged to no choir; had no musical training, and in some cases had never sung in public. This would help ensure a choral sound that was polished but rowdy, resonant but rough, without the College Choir’s highly-drilled homogeneity.

The coalescing continued to take care of itself, with auditioners coming via different prompts and for different reasons. Rick Ludwick, a sophomore majoring in economics, belonged to the Chapel Council and was a crew member on Owl & Nightingale productions; Superstar appealed to both interests. Richard Schindler, a junior art major and Junto contributor, spent a lot of time in the chapel because “the Art Department was in the basement. There were bulletin boards, and I saw an invitation to audition.” Sue Beebe had seen a poster. “None of my friends were interested, but that didn’t matter to me—I liked singing. I’d tried out for the choirs; my roommate got in, and I didn’t. So this was an opportunity to sing, but it also had some religious themes that seemed interesting.”
Two close friends from Huber Hall, freshmen Bonnie Stephan and Denise Rue, talked each other into auditioning. “It was totally on a whim,” says Stephan. Rue recalls that she and Bonnie “used to sit around the dorm and sing hippie songs—‘Leaving on a Jet Plane’ and ‘Blowin’ in the Wind’ and ‘If I Had a Hammer.’ I played the guitar, and other girls would join in. There was a poster or flyer up somewhere, and I remember Bonnie and myself saying, ‘We’ve got to do that.’” But in the two and a half weeks between the flyer and the second round of tryouts, both Stephan and Rue caught late-winter bugs. “I’d come down with the flu, and I could hardly sing,” says Rue. “I said, ‘Bonnie, my voice is shot.’ She said, ‘You know what? Just go over, tell them you’re sick, and do it anyway.’” Then, almost simultaneously, Stephan caught laryngitis. She was permitted to postpone her audition for a few days.

Fortunately for Bonnie, Denise, and other latecomers, further auditions were held on February 17 and 18. Like the previous ones, they were low on pressure and easy on expectation; “I don’t think it was difficult, put it that way,” says Beebe. The men sang Jesus or Judas songs, the women sang Mary songs. Sophomore Peggy Dungan had
convinced her roommate Donna Lester and their mutual friend Sharon Fuller to accompany her. Too nervous to sing solo, uncertain of their skills and even of their right to be there, the three instead auditioned as a trio.

Stephan and Rue likewise came to the tryouts together, and stuck together throughout. Each attempted a solo, and each apologized for the seasonal illness that had ravaged her throat. “I told them, ‘I’m sick. I don’t usually sound like this,’” says Rue. How did she sound? “Pretty much like a frog.”

She and Bonnie left the chapel that night fairly certain they would never be in the cast of *Jesus Christ Superstar*. They weren’t the only ones.

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Helping to assess the singers was Jan Kitchener, a new addition to the director’s staff. Jan was a sophomore from Bethesda, Maryland, majoring in voice and music education. As a *Junto* assistant and Chapel Council member, she knew about Larry Recla, and about *Superstar*. But she hadn’t thought enough of either to become involved, and had had nothing to do with the pre-Christmas planning. Only on February 16, when the last tryouts were announced in *Potpourri*, the campus’s mimeographed daily newsletter, did she decide to volunteer.
She had something in mind besides simply singing. “I said, ‘I wanted to know if you had a choir director.’ I thought they’d be happy to let me do it, because they wouldn’t have to go out and look for somebody. And they were really glad I wanted to do it. I got to be in the group that made decisions, and I felt good about that. I hadn’t had a lot of pats on the back.”

Despite that, Jan was confident in her abilities. Her experience made her the likeliest person around to direct what was shaping up as a motley group of singers. “In high school, I’d been student director for two choirs, and I knew I could do it. I thought, ’I’m gonna show them I’m qualified.’ That’s why I did it—to one-up the others.” She laughs. “Actually I was very shy, and I surprised myself that I did that. But I wouldn’t have, if I didn’t think I could.”

Another crucial addition was now made to the mix. The important role of King Herod remained unfilled: none of the auditioners so far had looked remotely equal to it. Herod—the ruthless, bloodthirsty king of Judea, he who ordered the massacre of the innocents and Christ’s imprisonment—has just one song in Superstar, but it is a raucous and powerful one, a decadent vaudeville turn that becomes a hysterical denunciation. It called for a large voice and a large presence. The willowy young men of Gettysburg, so many of whom seemed to model their looks on Jesus and might slip comfortably into Judas’s self-pity, would, if asked to embody King Herod, look and sound embarrassingly out of their depth.

John Hylton was already implicated in Superstar through his musical and/or social ties to Tom Breton, Doug Wyatt, Beth Kershaw, and Neal Smatresk. The College Choir had taken a short tour of the South in mid-February, and on the bus Hylton had heard Tom, Beth, and Doug talking about the show; his little frat brother Neal was also caught up in it. But Hylton was at least as busy as the average Gettysburg student, and may also have been among the College Choir members who felt this upstart chapel “production” was a bit beneath them. Larry Recla says that Beth Kershaw, though known campus-wide for her pop and folk singing, was “not one of the approved stars of the Music Department. John was. And knew it. And was helpful in letting other people know it.”

It may also be that Hylton was not by nature a joiner. “He went his own way,” says his classmate and Alpha Chi Rho brother Steve Leverette.

John Hylton. “He didn’t look like a college kid.”
Tom Breton concurs: “John traveled to the beat of his own drum. He could even seem aloof at times.” Part of Hylton’s differentness lay in his appearance. “He didn’t look like a college kid,” says Breton, “he looked like a professor.” Mark Dryfoos, another frat brother, says, “I remember John very vividly—he was bald at twenty-one.” Well over six feet tall, with thin hair, thick glasses, and a linebacker’s build, Hylton looked distinctly out of place in his age group, more like a hulking academic or bookish athlete than a pedagogue-in-training who had always known what he wanted to be.

“I was very goal-oriented,” he says. “In my high school yearbook, it said under my picture, ‘John wants to become a high school choir director.’ That’s what I zeroed in on, and that’s what I did. In retrospect, I think I’d have enjoyed deviating somewhat from that; but I didn’t. I was focused on getting my degree.”

Growing up in Norwalk, Connecticut, Hylton had heard about Parker Wagnild from his choir director. He chose Gettysburg for its music program—his longtime interest in the Civil War being an added inducement—and by his sophomore year he was a Wagnild protégé. He was also elected president of the Gettysburg chapter of Phi Mu Alpha, the national honorary musical fraternity, whose choral concerts he conducted. Out of class, he sang in campus groups, including Kaleidoscope and Opus I. In spring 1971, he was also directing the Christ Lutheran Church choir in town.

It was on the choir bus that Hylton first heard about Superstar. “I was involved in some aspects of chapel, and I knew Larry Recla somewhat. But I think Tom Breton asked if I’d be interested in this role, because it suited my range.” Tom doesn’t remember “pushing him to do Herod. Though we spent a lot of time performing together, we didn’t have a lot of heart-to-hearts. The question of who brought who into this show is amazing, but it didn’t take much to get a lot of us into it. John was a character anyway, and not shy of being onstage.”

He was, in short, perfect for Herod—“absolutely stone-cold perfect,” in Larry’s words. With his size, his carriage, and even his baldness, Hylton looked like some kind of king or emperor; and his voice, with its years of training, booming from a big man’s chest, could blast out the chapel’s back wall.
Once pulled into the show, Hylton was in turn responsible for recruiting two others. Sophomore Paul Hitchens was a frat brother with a superior voice, whom Hylton had urged to audition for College Choir the year before. Hitchens had declined, and lived to regret it. “John had been teasing me about missing out on the White House. Then he got into Superstar, and he said, 'Are you going to miss this, too?’” Freshman Mark Dryfoos likewise auditioned on Hylton’s suggestion. A New York City native, Dryfoos had seen plenty of Broadway as a kid, and worked on musicals in high school; but the Superstar venture didn’t immediately enthuse him. “At the time,” he says, “it was kind of a knock-off: ‘Oh, let’s go do it.’ I went with some other people, tried out for several parts, and didn’t think much of it. Then I got a call saying I’d been cast—they gave me Simon, and I also got to be in the chorus. That changed everything in my life for a while.”

The chorus and most of the lead roles were announced on February 19, by way of lists posted in the chapel and the SUB. If Beth Kershaw was “amazed” at being chosen for Mary, other, less experienced and gifted singers were confounded to find their names listed at all. “I was so surprised that they took me,” says Denise Rue, then still recovering from the flu. Donna Lester was thankful she’d come with her friends Sharon and Peggy, and that the three had sung as a unit. “That’s how I got in—because I really can’t sing very well. Why they let me in, I don’t know. But they did.”

Coalescence may have been the principle, but obviously Larry, Jan, and the others had some idea of what they wanted—and of what they didn’t want. The Superstar chorus, whatever its peculiar graces or flaws, wouldn’t be as magisterial as the College Choir. But neither would it be something to which words like “austere,” “bland,” or “depersonalized” could be applied. Its members were seniors Sue Beebe, Bethany Parr, and Kathie Zurich; juniors Kathy Jo Dixon, Craig Kegerise, Richard Schindler, and Jim Starner; sophomores Peggy Dungan, Sharon Fuller, Nancy Group, Paul Hitchens, Donna Lester, Rick Ludwick, and Albert Papp III; and freshmen Susan Fischer, Mark Kleinle, Bruce MacKinnon, Alice Murphey, Denise Rue, and Bonnie Stephan.
Others in the chorus

Seniors
Bethany Parr
Kathie Zurich

Juniors
Kathy Jo Dixon
Craig Kegerise
James Starner

Sophomore
Albert Papp III

Freshmen
Mark Kleinle
Bruce MacKinnon
Alice Murphey
The same day the names were listed, a photo appeared in *The Gettysburgian*, showing Doug Wyatt, Jake Vinten-Johansen, Mark Teich, and Neal Smatresk rehearsing. The announcement to the college community of date and place took the production to its next stage of reality, and of irrevocability.

Everything was smooth on the permissions front: Arthur Cohn had written Larry three days before, confirming the March 25 date. Most importantly, there was now a bottom line—$600 for the combined rental fee and performance royalty. John Vannorsdall would sign off on it, and chapel funds drawn from the Student Senate war chest would cover it. Larry mailed the check the next day.

But there was still much to do, and little more than a month to do it in. Most pressing, musically, was the need for horn players—who in any case couldn’t be properly rehearsed until the scores arrived from MCA. Jan would have to get the chorus in order, and it would have to be brought together with the rock band (still incomplete!), the horn players (still unknown!), and Betty-Lynn White’s dance ensemble (where was that at, by the way?). And what about the theatrical elements of staging, the properties and peculiarities of the chapel itself? “We were struggling,” Tom Breton says, “with how we were going to make things work there. Where do people sing from? What’s the blocking? Where’s the bandstand? How are we going to deal with these acoustics?”

These were only some of the foreseeable questions. But good and fast answers would have to be found, because the date had been announced, campus expectation had begun to build, and it was—in the words of a Van Morrison song first heard just a few months before—too late to stop now.

The new issue of *Billboard*, leading trade publication of the radio and recording industries, came out one day after the cast list went up. No one in the Gettysburg production paid any attention to it, but it bore in no small way on what they were doing. *Jesus Christ Superstar* had been moving steadily upward since its first appearance on the LP chart, and now it had climbed as high as it could go. The Gettysburg College company had committed itself to a live performance of the #1 album in the country.
There was no more popular student at Gettysburg in the spring of 1971 than Jim Henderson. He was involved in everything—chapel life and Greek life, athletics and music, social protest and spiritual adventure. Thanks to a combination of personal qualities and luck, he lived out some of the richest opportunities available to an American of his status and abilities. He was even born on the Fourth of July.

But Henderson—or Hendo, as he’d been nicknamed since adolescence—hadn’t simply laid back and waited for experience to find him. In the spirit of the day, he’d gone after it. He worked hard and reveled in scholarship, while also promoting the value of play and ecstasy. There seemed nothing shadowy to his makeup; whatever demons he harbored were undetectable even to dogs. With his athletic frame, blond hair, and beatific smile, Jim Henderson might have come to Gettysburg straight from Nirvana, or at least the beaches of Southern California.

In fact, he’d grown up in Ho-Ho-Kus, New Jersey. But early on he showed a knack for being in the right place at the right time. When Jim was about ten, his family moved to New Orleans for a year; the city was in the midst of desegregating its public schools, and the experience gave him a perspective on race that many of his later Gettysburg cohort wouldn’t have. “First day of school, I found myself in the cafeteria line next to this black girl, and I tried to have a conversation with her. I instantly got on the wrong side of people there, and the girl lasted about a week at that school. Or less.”

New Orleans was an unhappy detour in other ways, but it was there that Henderson discovered his love for music. The saxophone was vital to early rock ‘n’ roll, and Jim loved its voice-like timbre. Back in Ho-Ho-Kus, he began to play, giving special study to the work of Lee Allen and King Curtis, sax heroes of hits by Fats Domino and the Coasters, respectively. At fourteen he joined his first band, two members of which were sons of the electric guitar pioneer Les Paul.

Soon after, he brushed up against another legend, and discovered the instrumental “hook” which would become central to his Gettysburg identity. “A friend and I were at the Garden State Mall, and I heard this strange sound. There, with a drummer and a bassist, was someone called
Roland Kirk.* He was playing three saxophones at once, and a nose flute. When he took a break, I sat next to him very enthusiastically—and actually scared him, because he was blind. I asked him how he did that; he said, ‘I close my eyes and blow.’ I asked if he could show me how, and his advice was to start with just two horns. So I went home and started with two, a tenor and an alto. I’ve been doing that for fifty years.”

As a Gettysburg freshman, Henderson played in the marching band, pledged Phi Gamma Delta, excelled at intramural soccer, and joined Chapel Council. But it was as a sophomore, in 1968-69, that he began to set himself apart. A musical piece he’d written, arranged, and directed for Phi Gam won first prize at that year’s interfraternity sing. He moonlighted as a disc jockey on WWGC, was student manager of the In, and played sax in a campus band called the New Times Quintet. He also staged, in Christ Chapel, the first of several musical “masses” augmenting John Vannorsdall’s service with contemporary music performed by both Gettysburg students and Jim’s musician friends from New Jersey and New York.

There were plenty of outlets that year for those interested in social action, and in a hip new thing called “interpersonal communication.” At Phi Gam, Henderson and a few others succeeded in getting the frat’s mascot, “Fiji Man,” a racist cartoon figure, removed from the front of the house. He quit the soccer team rather than cut his hair, per the coach’s command. And he took on two crucial spiritual mentors. One was Vannorsdall, who, inspired by the therapeutic focus of both youth culture and modern psychology, founded an overnight rap session called Communities of Risk (COR), of which Henderson was a pioneer member. Jim also came under the influence of religion professor John Loose, perhaps Gettysburg’s most unconventional teacher. A former Marine Corps drill sergeant, ordained minister, and self-described “intellectual onanist,” Loose was a radical theologian who looked like a rockabilly singer. He opposed the Vietnam War, seldom removed his sunglasses (“Pure affectation,” he’d say when asked why), and was notorious for public statements that irritated his colleagues while inspiring his nonconformist protégés.

Henderson was instrumental in the planning and execution of Gettysburg’s April 1969 Moratorium, a two-day suspension of classes in favor of workshop discussions between students, faculty, and administration of everything from Vietnam to race relations, alcoholic prohibitions to student representation in policy-making. The Moratorium was attended by much grumbling from trustees and faculty wary of the concept of “Student Power,” and even from students themselves, some of whom resented the deferral of class time. But the consensus—shared in even by Arnold Hanson, who’d supported the experiment against

* Later, Rahsaan Roland Kirk.
no doubt robust opposition—was that the Moratorium had changed Gettysburg for the better. “It is unquestionable,” Jim wrote in his morning-after assessment, “that our college has been moved. The direction it will take is the immediate and ongoing responsibility of all those who share in its community.”

Having done his bit, at least for now, to “move” the college, Henderson chose to spend his junior year at the University of Bristol, near England’s southwest coast. Taking nothing but “a trunk and my saxophones,” he spent several weeks traveling through Europe, living for a time with a group of hippie pilgrims, before settling in at Bristol. Successful in his studies, he also hit musical pay-dirt. At the student union one day, superstar singer and organist Steve Winwood played an impromptu gig backed by drums and guitar. Henderson retrieved his horns and sat in. Impressed, Winwood offered the young American a spot in his band, which was playing small dates across England. Jim declined: “I said I’d just gotten there, and was supposed to be a university student. He said, ‘Really? You want to be a student when you could be out playing with me?’ I had a moment of thinking, ‘Maybe I ought to be out playing with Steve Winwood.’”

The Henderson knack—right place, right time—paid off again the following summer. With a few weeks to fill before returning to Gettysburg, Jim visited the Samye Ling Centre, a recently established Buddhist monastery and training school in Dumfriesshire, Scotland. “It was an old hunting lodge that had been painted up in Tibetan colors. ‘It’s now the largest Buddhist temple in Europe, but it was much smaller then. George Harrison was there at the same time as me, and we’d be at dinner together. I was dying to talk to him, but dinners were silent. So I sat, ate my rice next to George, and never spoke.’

Eastern religion had often been seen by westerners as an attractively lean and exotic alternative to a bloated, institutionalized Christianity. Jim Henderson was ready just then, as were George Harrison and so many others, to embrace the crystal simplicities and egoless ethics of Buddhism and Hinduism. After just a short time at Samye Ling, Jim resolved to give up his previous life and remain there, learning Tibetan and seeking wisdom in the monk’s cloister. But his spiritual teacher, a Tibetan refugee, guided him back to reality. “He looked me in the eye and said, ‘Jim, you’re no Buddhist. Go back and see what there is in American religion that you can relate to. Find yourself in your own tradition.’”

Back in Gettysburg, he did his best to follow that advice. On October 4, he conducted another musical mass in the chapel. He co-founded two
new discussion groups: the Harmon Webb Literary Society and Garden Club, described as “a two-day conference for invited persons to share their ideas about literary and spiritual matters”; and something called the Human Awareness and Potential Investigation Society, which met in the chapel basement to explore such things as yoga, meditation, and creative play. He jammed informally with musicians on and off campus, and entertained friends and strangers at his apartment on Breckinridge Street, in the Third Ward.

Among the regulars at Jim’s place was his younger sister, Nancy, who had entered Gettysburg as a freshman that fall. Despite trying hard, she’d been unable to get a feel for the place; nor did the place have much feel for her: “I was a hippie girl, and misplaced there,” she says. “It was too conservative and restrictive. There were a lot of rules for women, and I didn’t like being harassed by fraternity men as I walked to the cafeteria.” She found Jim’s apartment a respite from such things. “I’d missed him while he was in England, and he was always very welcoming. He tried to usher me through registration, and generally be a big brother to me.”

In a way, Jim Henderson was every student’s big brother, just as he was every teacher’s favorite pupil. “We loved that kid,” Ralph Cavaliere smiles. “He was just so cool,” says Beth Kershaw, sounding infatuated decades later.

The whole campus welcomed him back: “Hendo Returns,” ran the Gettysburgian headline.

The Superstar planners certainly took notice of the homecoming. “He was one of the high-performance, high-visibility people,” says Jim’s classmate, Jake Vinten-Johansen. “Popular, charismatic, involved. And he played that beautiful saxophone.” Wasn’t he a natural for the Superstar band?

Probably just before or after his “gospel rock mass” of January 17, Jim was approached. “I was talked to pretty early in the process. I would have been enthusiastic about it, because I thought the record was great, musically. I’d enjoyed other concept albums—Sgt. Pepper,
the Fifth Dimension’s *Magic Garden*, the Who’s *Tommy*, which I’d seen them perform in Bristol. *Superstar* certainly had an interest to me as a religion student, though I might have quarreled with some aspects of its interpretation. But it was the songs and the concept that appealed to me right away.”

As the band’s sole saxophonist, Henderson would get a solo spot or two, and otherwise play back-up; essentially, he’d be a featured sideman, not a center of attention. But his participation—a selling point for the show, a validation for the musicians—had a value disproportionate to his role, making the production into something suddenly bigger and better than it had been the day before.

Whitney Myers and Jim Henderson had arrived in the same freshman class. They’d also played together in a local jazz group—Myers was a skilled pianist—and had a mutual regard. Other than that, the two could hardly have been more different.

Myers, a physics major from Fairfax, Virginia, was more interested in scientific than spiritual experimentation. Raised mainstream Methodist, he felt at home in his tradition. He wore short hair, horn-rimmed glasses, and conventional clothes. He belonged to the ROTC, and his views on most issues were solidly Middle American. While no mindless follower, he was far from an activist; John Kuehl remembers him as “quiet, not demonstrative.”

He was a musician before he could walk or talk. “My mother said that at one year old, I’d stand up in the crib when the radio played and rattle the bars.” Starting piano lessons early, he was playing hymns in Sunday school by age ten; in high school, he accompanied the choir and performed with the jazz band. His first year at Gettysburg, Myers majored in music while also taking freshman physics. “By the end of the year, I was wrestling with the big life question—what should I choose. For me, it was science or music. The music program was geared primarily toward education, the training of teachers. So even though music was my passion, I decided I’d major in physics—principally for the purpose of making a living.”
In his major, Myers worked independently on network design models and spent time in the basement of Glatfelter Hall, programming the IBM 1130. He was also in Air Force ROTC (“Rotsy,” as it was pronounced). The existing draft system was soon to be replaced by a lottery, with each male birthday between 1944 and 1950 assigned a number and pulled in random order. Conducted via a series of televised drawings beginning in December 1969, the new system did not affect existing student deferments in good standing; but Myers, whose number came up 66, wasn’t taking any chances, and signed up for ROTC as a sophomore. Demands were a six-week summer boot camp, several courses in Gettysburg’s Department of Air Science, and a four-year commitment after graduation. One day each month, recruits had to wear their dress uniforms and stand inspection. Myers remembers walking to campus from his Middle Street apartment. “I crossed the railroad tracks, and the wind caught my cap and blew it into the street—where it was immediately run over by a Ford station wagon. And I’m on my way to inspection.”
In spring 1969 members of the Chapel Council, objecting to the use of Christ Chapel for ROTC commissioning ceremonies, demonstrated by reading the names of US war dead outside the event. The protest was lodged again in 1970, but the ceremonies continued—including Myers’s own, a year later. Yet he never felt like a pariah because of ROTC. In fact, his roommate for a time was a protester, and “we got along fine. Occasionally there were jokes each way, but no persecution. He respected me, and I respected him.” Myers’s own feelings on the war were those of the American majority. “It’s unfortunate that one or two hundred Americans are getting killed every week. But since we’re there, we should fight it well, without our hands tied behind our backs. We can do more; we’re fighting a vicious enemy. We should support our government so that it can end, not do it halfway.”

Besides playing in the college jazz ensemble, Myers worked as a cocktail pianist at the Stonehenge Lodge, a restaurant on Baltimore Pike,* playing light, romantic pop hits for the diners. But when Jesus Christ Superstar appeared, his musical and cultural orientations didn’t prevent him from appreciating its affronts to convention. “It was kind of revolutionary,” he says. “Definitely provocative. Sacrilegious, in a way, the entertainment aspects of it—Herod challenging Jesus to walk across his swimming pool.”

He doesn’t recollect who asked him to play in the band. It could have been Jim Henderson, or it could have been Doug Wyatt, another

* Today, the Pike Restaurant and Lounge.
physics student who frequented the Computing Center. What Myers does remember, vaguely, is a meeting at someone’s house where the album was played through: “That was the first time I heard Superstar.” He was asked to familiarize himself with the album completely, since the goal would be “to make it sound as close to the record as we could.”

Myers remembers the musical intricacies. “‘Heaven on Their Minds’ has a meter of 7/8 for the last part. ‘Everything’s Alright’ is in 5/4. ‘Hosanna’ has some wide chromatic interval jumps—the vocals go from a high F-sharp, an octave and a half above middle C, down to F-natural, an octave below that. There are also some chromatic jumps from a B-flat chord to an E-major chord. We had to learn to play that stuff.

“I thought it would be fun and challenging to do. I also thought it was good to get the message out. Again, Superstar was a bit sacrilegious, but that was part of its attraction, I think.”

Little is definitive about how the horns came together. “The details are really hazy,” says sophomore trombonist John Kuehl. “Whoever organized the pit band probably just asked if I wanted to play.” Junior trumpeter Bob Ulmer has a firmer memory. “I was in the same dorm as Doug Wyatt, and word spread that they were looking for band members. I said, ‘If they need a trumpet player, I’d love to play.’” “I had friends who were involved,” says freshman trombonist Jesse Ehrlich. “They knew I could play, so they contacted me. There was a kid named Jimmy, who was a guitar player and went by the name of Screamer; he might have been the one.”*

Kuehl believes the brass players were probably put through some form of tryout. But Ulmer disagrees, suggesting it would have been unnecessary to audition any player sufficiently skilled to hold a spot in the rigorous instrumental program. Certainly Ulmer was unusually devoted to his playing, considering that his major was not music but economics and business administration. “People mistook me for a music major,” he says, “because I took

* Research to date has turned up no other reference to Screamer.
courses that usually only majors took. A group of us were known as musicians who could handle this type of thing. I don’t think many trumpet players were that interested in the show, but the ones who were interested were capable of performing it.”

Jesse Ehrlich was a biology major from Philadelphia, and a member of the marching band and brass ensembles. Still months shy of his eighteenth birthday, he was one of the youngest students on campus, and may have been regarded as unproven; but his audition was quick and successful. “I remember somebody putting music in front of me and having me play it. I was pretty good—I could sight-read most anything—and I remember just jumping in.”

As well as younger than anyone else, Ehrlich was also one of the few Jewish students at Gettysburg. “When I wrote my application essay, I talked about growing up in a Jewish family. I’d been to Israel a few times, and had some strong opinions about it. My attitude was, I might as well put that out there—see if this will be a welcoming environment or not. In a few days I was accepted, and I received a generous financial award. This was before people were talking about diversity, but my conclusion was that perhaps my background was a plus.” Playing in brass ensembles, he got used to performing at chapel services, an experience he found ironic. “While my friends were sleeping off their parties, I was getting up Sunday morning to play at the chapel. During the holiday season, we used to walk the streets of Gettysburg playing Christmas carols, making a few bucks. I knew the trombone part to every obscure Christmas carol ever written.

“I was used to a liberal, urban environment, with people from different backgrounds. Gettysburg was not that at all. Most of the fraternities were founded on what were called Christian ideals; there were a lot of crosses. I was the first Jew a lot of kids there had ever met. It wasn’t as though I wore it on my sleeve, but it was part of my identity. I never felt any anti-Semitism, though it was probably in a lot of people’s minds, just below the surface.”

Showing up at the chapel for his Superstar tryout, some night in late February, Jesse found himself among friends and acquaintances. Sophomore Roy Giese was first trombone in the marching band, to Jesse’s second: “Roy was a year or two older, and a mentor. John Kuehl, also in the marching band, was a music major,
and more serious about the whole thing.” Also volunteering his services was freshman economics major Bob Nahmias, Jesse’s friend and brother in the Kappa Alpha Rho fraternity. Nahmias and sophomore psychology major Jim Donough were ultimately selected to join Bob Ulmer in the trio of trumpeters.

Dan Beach, from Williamsburg, Pennsylvania, was a sophomore, a music major, and a last-minute addition to the horn section. He played the tuba—an instrument that would not feature prominently in most of the show, but would be important to King Herod’s number in particular.

Since the scores still hadn’t arrived from MCA, Doug Wyatt told them all to sit tight: they could expect to convene soon for their first play-through. The players were eager to hear themselves in this new context. Accustomed to performing in conventional concert bands and small groups, or blasting fight songs at football games, for *Superstar* they’d be playing pop material while backed by electric instruments. “Almost a Chicago thing,” as Kuehl puts it, referring to one of the country’s biggest bands at the time. “A rock ensemble plus horns.”

“As we were organizing, it was just a guitar thing—coffeeshouse instrumentation,” says Jake Vinten-Johansen. But now a drummer was needed, and a good one. *Superstar* demanded not just a steady beat but complex accents. It demanded a drummer with stamina, who could handle jazz time, rock time, and a host of changes in between. Conceivably there was someone on campus who was up to it; but where to find them, and how long would it take?

Hendo to the rescue. Jim told the planners that he knew a guy—an old jamming buddy from New Jersey. A guy who’d played with some heavyweights, was now back home in New York, and might be available for a few nights’ work.
Dave Bauer* was mostly a jazz player, but he had a rich background in rock and blues. When a New Jersey garage band called the Rahgoos lost its original drummer to the navy, Bauer, then all of sixteen years old, filled in. In the midst of reading *The Hobbit*, he suggested a name change, and the group became Gandalf; with Bauer drumming, Gandalf recorded its first, self-titled album, a gem of dark-edged psychedelia, in 1967. Too restless to stay in one genre, Bauer left Gandalf to join bluesman Albert King’s 1969 tours of the US and England; he drummed for King at New York’s Fillmore East on June 5, and at the Ronnie Scott Club in London, where he appeared in a short film shot for the BBC on November 8.

It was during King’s UK swing that Bauer reconnected with Jim Henderson, then at the University of Bristol. Jim saw the band’s show at Colston Hall, even sitting in for a couple of numbers. He and Bauer stayed in touch after returning to the States; when Hendo directed his “Gospel Rock Mass” in the chapel on January 15, 1971, Bauer was in the band. So when the need for a *Superstar* drummer arose just weeks later, Jim thought of him at once.

Though willing, Bauer wouldn’t be free right away. The recollection is that he joined late, after the other groups had been working on their parts for a while. The *Superstar* schedule reserved the March 11 and 13 rehearsals for “band and drums,” but that may have been wishful planning. Jim Henderson believes Bauer “might have only come for the dress rehearsal, or possibly one rehearsal before that.” Indeed, March 19—three nights out from the first full run-through—is identified on the schedule this way: “+ drums.” That may be the first time that Bauer played with the band.

* He was usually billed professionally as Davy Bauer.
Such a late entrance would have handicapped anyone with less experience. Despite being just twenty years old, Bauer was already seasoned by years in clubs, in studios, and on tour. Jim knew his friend could play in a variety of styles, blend with unfamiliar musicians, and get a performance together under pressure. He’d even played Christ Chapel before.

Bauer drove down from New York and crashed at Jim’s apartment. People didn’t know exactly what to expect at his first rehearsal—but they breathed a sigh of relief that he was there.

That spring, Steve Snyder was between stations. A native of Littlestown, just south of Gettysburg, he’d recently dropped out of York College of Pennsylvania. Right now, he was working in his family’s factory—the Littlestown Hardware and Foundry Company, which his grandfather and great-uncle had established in 1916. His plan was to reenter college in the fall, major in business administration, and work himself out of academic probation.

It was his mother’s fault, in a way, that he’d had to drop out. In 1965, at the age of fourteen, Steve had convinced her to buy him an electric guitar. He’d learned to play by copying Beatles and Stones records; then he’d found a drummer to bang around with, then a second guitarist, then a bassist. “We started a band called the Brutes. The first time we played was in May 1966, the last day of school. We did four songs: ‘Wipe Out,’ ‘Gloria,’ ‘For Your Love,’ and I forget the fourth. Every time we touched the microphones while playing our guitars, we got shocked. That was the start of my rock ‘n’ roll career.”

It was then that a lot of other things, including school, went out Steve Snyder’s window. In high school, he says, “I was interested in sports, music, girls, cars, boats, and girls, and cars, and music. I drove my parents crazy. I didn’t study a lot; I was more interested in where the Brutes were going to play next, what song we were going to learn next.”

After playing guitar for a year, Snyder saw what the Brutes needed to give them an edge over other local bands. In his grandmother’s house was a Baldwin organ, and when the place was empty, Steve would come in, put on the Animals’ “House of the Rising Sun,” and play it repeatedly, figuring...
out the chords by ear. He wasn’t very good at first, but it was a way in for one who’d never learned to read music—and who knew that in rock ‘n’ roll, formal training was usually beside the point. “Guys with eight years of lessons would say, ‘Show me how to play “House of the Rising Sun.”’ I thought that was funny: this guy can play rings around me, but he can’t listen and pick it up.”

Snyder talked his mother (again) into buying him a secondhand Farfisa organ. Eventually he upgraded to a Lowrey, then to the almighty Hammond, top of the line for rock players. He outfitted it with a revolving Leslie speaker, a built-in resonator capable of colorful effects. Switching instruments was smart: organists were harder to come by than guitarists, and many 1967 hits, from the Doors’ “Light My Fire” to Procol Harum’s “A Whiter Shade of Pale,” were organ-powered. Groups like Deep Purple, Traffic, and Emerson, Lake and Palmer would soon make the organ fundamental to “progressive” rock; by the time these sounds were in demand on the party circuit, Steve Snyder was ready.

Kids in the Gettysburg area were well-placed to see virtually all the major rock artists of the era. Philadelphia, Baltimore, and DC were within drivable distances; and Pennsylvania and Maryland both had plenty of the colleges and universities where first-, second-, and third-tier bands found their most appreciative audiences.* Steve Snyder and his buddies caught as many shows as they could, and the list is a scrapbook of late-Sixties concert action in the mid-Atlantic region. “I saw the Doors twice,” he recalls, “first at Susquehanna University in 1967, the second time at the Annapolis National Guard armory. I saw Emerson, Lake and Palmer at Painter’s Mill Music Fair, a little place on Reisterstown Road that burned down; the J. Geils Band opened for them. I saw Iron Butterfly, Derek and the Dominos, Ten Years After, King Crimson, Black Sabbath. I saw Vanilla Fudge at Gettysburg College. The Baltimore Civic Center is where we saw most people. We saw the Mothers of Invention there, and Jimi Hendrix when he was with Buddy Miles. I saw the Rolling Stones at the Civic Center. Blind Faith as well. They were late in coming out, and when they did, they said, ‘We were backstage, watching us land on the moon.’ That’s how I remember that: it was the night we did the moon. Everybody applauded.”

Steve Snyder was living the dream, but his grades had been dropping in proportion to the fun he’d been having. Come graduation, he found that York College of Pennsylvania, a former junior college only recently upgraded to a four-year program, was the only local institution that would accept him. His first year there, he got mostly C’s and D’s, and was told he’d

* Among the bands playing Gettysburg College in 1967-71 were the Turtles, Mitch Ryder, the Buckinghams, Brooklyn Bridge, the James Gang, and Yes. Nearby schools hosted even bigger groups—e.g., Jefferson Airplane at Mount St. Mary’s, Three Dog Night at Franklin & Marshall.
have to repeat most of the year. “I essentially flunked out,” he says. “I didn’t really flunk out—I just had to take a lot of courses over again. But when that happened, I lost my II-S deferment. And my number was 16.”

Most of his elders pressured Steve to go willingly into the draft. The exception was his grandfather, an orchard farmer near Biglerville, who had lost his oldest son in World War II. Sitting Steve down, he said, “I don’t care if you have to go to Nova Scotia. You don’t get drafted. You don’t go to Vietnam.” But Snyder already knew how he felt about the war. “Vietnam was not somewhere you wanted to go. It was drilled into my head: we’re not doing what we need to do to win. All we’re doing is sending my brothers over there to get killed. For what? If we’re going to be there, let’s win it.” His draft anxiety was obviated, in the end, by several preexisting medical conditions. “I had pretty bad asthma, and a lot of allergies. So I ended up failing the physical, and they rated me IV-F. That didn’t break my heart.

“Then I went to work in the family business. I was out in the factory, running drill presses and lift trucks. That’s when I decided school wasn’t so bad after all. I grew up a bit that year.”

He applied to a college in West Virginia, and was accepted for the fall. It was a chance to start over—but that was another set of unknowns, several months and many miles away. Right now Steve Snyder was at loose ends, stuck behind a drill press and starving for music. The Brutes had pretty much dissolved. He needed something else.

“The fact is,” says Mark Teich, “in that Superstar production, you have to have a Hammond organ. There’s no way around it: that’s how it opens. I didn’t know that there was anybody on campus that played Hammond. And even if we were able to find them, where would we find the organ? So we had to recruit from outside the normal circles.”*

Steve Snyder hadn’t spent much time at Gettysburg College, but he had connections there. His sister was dating a student, a WWGC staffer who sometimes let Steve read news on the air; the Brutes had performed at the occasional frat party; and he’d jammed with different people on campus. One of these was Eric Lindeman, son of English Department professor Ralph Lindeman. “Eric was a guitar player who my drummer and I had played with a few times. He knew I didn’t read music. He called and said, ‘They’re looking for a rock organist who could learn Jesus Christ Superstar by listening to the record, because they don’t have the score yet.’ I told him, ‘Yeah, I’d absolutely be interested. I don’t know if I’m good enough, but I’ll start listening to it.”’

* The organ already installed in Christ Chapel was so powerful, it would have overwhelmed the rest of the band.
The theology of *Superstar* meant nothing to Steve; he paid attention solely to the music. One or two songs appealed to him, but he was temperamentally against the immersive demands of a four-sided LP. That didn’t mean he wouldn’t play: “I was really happy to get the call,” he says.

And the band was happy to have him. Like Henderson and Myers, Snyder wasn’t asked to audition: his experience spoke for itself. Mark Teich found him to be both a musical and a practical blessing. “Steve came much more from the rock ‘n’ roll tradition than some of our other players. And he not only brought his talent, he brought his equipment.”
In the late Sixties, a new breed emerged on college campuses: writer Theodore Roszak referred to him as “that significant new entity, the non-student—the campus roustabout.” Invariably male, he was seen at demonstrations, hangouts, and musical events. He was involved in campus life, but obliquely; he’d perhaps been a student, but was no longer. Where others had graduated and moved on, he’d stuck around.

Such figures could be found in legion at large universities, but they were an emergent population at small schools too. “In that era,” says Carl Leinbach, “there were a lot of students that came to Gettysburg and didn’t want to leave.”

All of that described Zane Brandenburg. Many on campus knew him, while others only knew of him. “He was part town, part college,” says friend and Gettysburg student Marianne Larkin. “A part of the street theater. One of the characters. He had almost an aura about him—I don’t know how to describe it. Carrier of the heart, carrier of the message.” Zane was a local celebrity of sorts, or had been; one person uses the term “cult figure.” Some wondered exactly who he was, what he did, and why he’d become a near-recluse within the community he’d chosen not to leave. But his talent was unquestioned by those who knew it, and he became the one member of the Superstar cast whose involvement was actively sought.
The part they wanted him to play was the largest and the most difficult, the one around which everything would revolve: Jesus, the original superstar.

The oldest of eight children, Zane was born in 1944 in Hagerstown, Maryland, forty miles southwest of Gettysburg, in a region where Brandenburgs had lived since Colonial times. His father, Rowland, a contractor and builder of custom homes, had served in the Chemical Corps in World War II, and graduated from Gettysburg College in 1946. Prospering in the post-war building boom, Rowland and his wife, Mary, raised a warm, tight-knit family. “They were all really kind, sweet people,” says a friend.

The young Zane had two primary interests: scouting and music. As a member of Troop No. 10, he spent summers at Sinoquipe, a camp in the Appalachian range northwest of Chambersburg, and at thirteen was promoted to Life Scout. His musical abilities were evident early. By the age of ten he was performing in piano recitals, later singing in the junior choir at the family’s Lutheran church. He competed in local talent shows, and as a middle-schooler played Ko-Ko in a production of The Mikado. At North Hagerstown High, he sang the spiritual “The Heavens Are Telling” in a vocal group at the winter concert; he was featured in the school musical, Get Up and Go, in his senior year.

After graduating, Zane spent a year at the military academy in Fork Union, Virginia, a detour probably necessitated by low scores on college entrance exams. It helped: Zane was admitted to Gettysburg College for the fall of 1963, history his declared major. (He would later switch to biology.) Singing tenor in the College Choir didn’t satisfy his hunger for music-making, so he formed a folk group called the Couriers with fellow students Gene Cotton, Gilda Salto, and Kurt Neidhart. Playing a repertoire ranging, in Zane’s words at the time, “from love ballads to war laments, as well as Negro blues and work songs,” the Couriers found success quickly, taking first prize at an intercollegiate hootenanny held at Wilkes College in March 1964.

But the folk revival had already passed its peak, and from the remains of the Couriers came the nucleus of Zane’s next project. Formed in the fall of 1965, the Brandenburg Jazz Ensemble comprised twelve
male and female vocalists, backed by three instrumentalists. Practices were squeezed in between classes, study hours, and Parker Wagnild’s draconian rehearsal schedule, and hard work again paid off. A few months after forming, the BJE (as they came to be called) won the Intercollegiate Music Competition at Lycoming College, and soon after made their first appearance at Gettysburg’s SUB Ballroom. Later in 1966, they signed with an independent label on Long Island to record an album. They were on their way.

Despite the group’s name, Zane was not the star of the BJE. Most of the arranging was done by Gene Cotton, and Zane took few solos, instead using his gifts to enrich a group sound that blended choral and jazz techniques. Their album, *Multiple Choice!*, featured a representative selection of the group’s concert favorites, encompassing pre-rock pop, Broadway, traditional material, and light jazz.

In 1967 the group consolidated its popularity on regional campuses, though that spring marked the graduation of several key members. Always adept at finding collaborators, Zane recruited new blood—such as Jim Henderson and Whitney Myers, each of whom was so impressed by the group’s performance at their freshman orientation that they’d independently approached Zane and asked to be included. But

![The BJE, late 1967 or early 1968 (Zane at center, in glasses and beard).](image)
for whatever reason, the BJE’s momentum began to dissipate after 1967. Ironically, the group was running down just at the time it came closest to breaking out. In spring 1968, a concert at Pittsburgh’s Duquesne University led to a featured spot on a local TV show, which in turn caught the eye of a talent scout for star crooner and Pittsburgh native Perry Como. This led to an appearance that December on a Christmas telethon for Pittsburgh children’s hospitals, hosted by Como himself. But it wasn’t long after that that the Brandenburg Jazz Ensemble effectively dissolved. The moment had passed, and people were moving on.

Zane had never gotten the hang of schoolwork, and he’d ceased to be a Gettysburg student two years before Jesus Christ Superstar came along. He may have been out of his scholastic depth, but more probable is that his musical projects left him little time, energy, or desire for academics. Still, rallying in the fall of 1970, Zane enrolled as a senior at Mount St. Mary’s College in nearby Emmitsburg, Maryland. Building on his Gettysburg credits, he would earn a bachelor’s degree in sociology in the spring of Superstar.

Around this time, he seems to have gone into a kind of retirement. This may have been due, in various degrees, to the dissolution of the BJE; the demands of school; heavy marijuana use; and the death in June 1969, after a two-year illness, of Marilyn Lee Brandenburg, Zane’s younger sister and nearest sibling. Though remembered as socially anxious, he seemed comfortable enough when surrounded by friends. “I liked Zane
a lot,” says Nancy Henderson, at the time an aspiring musician. “He was kind to me. Very soft-spoken, and a bit of a feminist, in that he took me seriously musically and didn't objectify me as a person worthy only of sexual favors. He was just my friend.” The Brandenburgs, whose home Nancy visited, “were very religious, and they sang hymns. I think every single kid in that family could sing, and the parents too. That's what they did for entertainment after the meal: they sat around and sang hymns.”

Kelly Alsedek got to know Zane through friends in the summer after *Superstar*, and spent time at his farm south of town. Not quite an intimate, more than an acquaintance, she experienced other sides of Zane. “He was always trying to get drugs. It wasn’t heavy drugs, but there were always people coming and going—a collection of people with beards and long hair—and half their life was about, ‘We gotta do this, because there might be a bust.’ But he was a sweet, really sensitive, down-to-earth kind of guy.” He could also be, Kelly says, “a little scary, a little weird at times.”

“He was crazy,” laughs Donna Lester, who dated Zane briefly just after *Superstar*. “A good guy, a lot of fun.”

Susan Fischer says that at one point during *Superstar* rehearsals, Zane invited her to his farm, or what he called his “commune.” Despite misgivings, she accepted. “He drove up to the dorm, and I got into the car thinking, ‘They'll find my body somewhere—and if they don’t, my mother will kill me.’” What she encountered at the farm was no Manson Family Saturnalia; nevertheless, it was a hippie scene rawer than any she’d experienced before. “There's people in bare feet offering me pot. I say, ‘No, thank you.’ Finally Zane says, ‘You’ve never smoked?’ I say, ‘No.’ I’d tried a cigarette once, but I choked and people laughed at me, so I didn’t do it again.” The insinuating vibes and druggy miasma were too intense for the sheltered freshman. “He scared me,” Susan says. “I said, ‘I want to go back. Take me back.’ So he did. End of story.”

Clearly Zane could create vastly differing impressions, depending on the observer and his own relationship to them. What’s documented in photographs is that, in the time between BJE and *Superstar*, he had gone from a clean-shaven, chino-wearing preppie to a hippie with long beard, frizzy mane, and wire-rimmed glasses. Though small and undemonstrative, Zane presented a striking appearance in early 1971: he could have been a flower child or an anarchist, a mountain man or an urban guerilla. People didn’t know what to make of him until they met him, and maybe not even then. The only clear thing was that in his transition from Boy Scout to commune-dweller, Zane Brandenburg had gone, as people said then, through heavy changes.

“He was very deep, very sensitive, with self-inflicted wounds, so to speak,” says Marianne Larkin. “But I don’t know what he was grappling with internally. How can you ever know?”
To many in the *Superstar* company, he was a mystery man. “What I knew of him,” says Mark Teich, “was that he had been a student once, had dropped out, and was living on a farm somewhere outside Gettysburg. It was his voice that people talked about.” Tom Breton had seen the BJE perform, and was impressed by Zane’s reputation. “But I didn’t know where he lived or where he came from, and as far as what he was doing now—no idea.” Neal Smatresk likewise knew of Zane only by name. “He was one who’d been in the community, and had kind of dropped out. But he was known.”

Who suggested Zane for the Christ role is not recalled, but the job of approaching him fell to Jim Henderson. By that point the two were musical familiares, Hendo having played with the BJE during its last year of existence, including the Perry Como telecast, and done a lot of jamming at the Brandenburg farm. “Somebody talked to me about it, and wondered if I knew how to get in touch with him, and what did I think about asking Zane to be Jesus. I remember part of it being to *encourage* him to do it, because he was such a retiring person.” Henderson’s intercession was essential to securing Zane’s participation, which would also mark his return to the public stage after a long absence.

Larry Recla had never heard of Zane Brandenburg. “He was presented to me as someone who could sing, an occasional student who had been inside, outside, expelled, not-spelled, suspended or not, leave of absence or not, but around and about. Who was, though this particular word

“He was such a retiring person.” Zane and Hendo at the Hendersons’ home, Christmas 1970.
wasn’t used, druggy; who was involved in that stuff. And who would be a perfect Jesus.”

Quiet, crazy, kind and sometimes scary, Zane sent out strange vibrations, projecting mystique in spite of himself. But beyond challenge was his brilliance as a singer, his magnetism as a performer. For physical characteristics, stage presence, and technical virtuosity, the Superstar organizers couldn’t have located a likelier Jesus if they’d gone to the shore of Galilee. Mark Teich reckoned his casting a coup that, like Hendo’s enlistment, would confer greater cachet on the production. “Being able to lure him from his seclusion, if you will, to a role like that, and to see what this Zane Brandenburg was all about—that was a draw in itself.”
Judy Annis began dancing early, as dancers must, and never stopped. Born Judy Green in Newton, Iowa, in 1931, she graduated from New York’s Juilliard School, where she studied under modern dance pioneers Martha Graham, Hanya Holm, and José Limón. She went home to get a physical education degree at Iowa State College (now the University of Northern Iowa), and there met Norman Annis, a sculptor and art student, who became her husband. The couple moved to Gettysburg in 1959, when Norman was hired by the Art Department; two years later, Judy joined the Health and Physical Education faculty as an assistant.

She taught the dance component of the “Basic Activities” module, a group of phys. ed. electives from which all students were required to choose. But Judy Annis left her true mark on the college as faculty adviser to the Modern Dance Group. From an extracurricular founded in 1959 by senior Barbara Sampson, the group evolved under Annis into a fixture of the performing arts program. It hit its stride as the Sixties became the Seventies and more women, and increasingly men, sought out what former student Suzanne Smith calls “the dramatic, interpretive aspect of modern dance.” The immersive nature of the January Term, begun in 1969, was perfect
for Annis’s intensive technical instruction, and she was able, through her ties to the New York dance world, to attract as artists-in-residence such notables as James Clouser, Libby Nye, Clyde Morgan, and Emery Hermans.

Though she didn’t participate directly, Superstar wouldn’t have taken the form it did without Judy Annis. Each of the dancers belonged, at one time or another, to the Modern Dance Group, and they recall their teacher with great fondness. “She was a real motivator for me,” says Smith. “She was very sweet, very enthusiastic. She’d come in wearing her leotard, with a piece of fruit for a snack. Judy took a personal interest. I felt she saw talent in me, and worked to bring it out.” Kelly Alsedek joined the group in her junior year. “I loved it. It was the first time I’d had instruction in modern dance, which allowed you to express yourself in a totally different way. And expressing yourself was the whole idea.”

Which made it a natural complement to the gestalt of Superstar. Modern dance’s disciplined but free-flowing character was as distinct from the graceful rigidity of ballet as Superstar itself was from the tropes of conventional Christian art. The opera was less about retelling a mythic narrative than about characters expressing aspects of humanness; it was the job of the dancers to take such things past words, past voice itself, and give them pure form in the body.

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Kelly Alsedek, Susan Tackach, Suzanne Smith, Vicki Berg, and Barbara Hanson were five young women, all different if not especially diverse, who’d come from middle-American, middle-class homes in northeastern or mid-Atlantic states. Only Alsedek had a legacy at Gettysburg College: her father, Donald, was a member of the Class of 1947. “He loved his experience at Gettysburg,” says Kelly, who grew up in Harrisburg. “We’d go back for homecoming. Students would say, ‘Come over—we’ll show you the girls’ dorm,’ and I’d walk through. From an early age, I equated ‘Gettysburg’ with ‘college.’” Raised conservative, Kelly came to campus from the straight end of the spectrum. She was among the many who wanted to taste of the era’s opportunities without deranging their senses. “I’d experiment a little. Not as much as some people; I had friends who’d try anything. I wasn’t rebellious, but I might bend the rules a bit, and to some extent I was philosophically a hippie—very idealistic. A middle-of-the-road hippie.”

Sue Tackach grew up in West Hartford, Connecticut, in a home that was Catholic and politically centrist. At Gettysburg she majored in math, minored in education, and welcomed the philosophical shifts that were occurring by 1967. “I didn’t do drugs, but I was in tune with the changes. Changes in terms of energy, a softer approach to life, a connection to the earth—that side of it. ‘Spiritual’ in the lower case.”

Her opposition to the war was more emotional than political. “The idea of that kind of violence horrified me. Politically, there was no reason for us to be there, but beyond that, the horrors you’d hear about . . . It needed to be stopped.” She recalls the silent march that occurred on October 15, 1969, the day of the Vietnam Moratorium in Washington DC. Some five hundred Gettysburg students, faculty, and others walked with banners and placards from Lincoln Square, at the town center, up Mummasburg Road to the Peace Light. There, speeches were given and songs were sung, but up to then there was no sound—save a few frat brothers shouting “Eat a peacenik for Peace Week.” “That kind of thing carried emotion in many ways,” Tackach says. “A group of people, quiet, holding candles, walking to this point.”
“There’s this energy around Gettysburg, and so many people who’ve gone to the college have felt that. They’ve perhaps seen spirits, or felt the suffering and pain and uselessness of what happened there. Marching in a peaceful way said a lot about our view of the war, but I think it also honored the boys who had died in Gettysburg.”

Suzanne Smith of Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, grew up in a moderately liberal household, making her a relative rarity among Gettysburgians of that era. She was also closer than most to her immigrant roots. “My mother’s parents had immigrated from Germany, and worked in factories. My other grandfather was Polish and came as a child; his name had been Solabotski. The family story is that when he went to school, the nuns told him that wasn’t American enough, and they changed it to Smith.”

Her major was psychology. (“I wanted to work with emotionally disturbed children; I’d read David and Lisa and I Never Promised You a Rose Garden.”) “I really loved Gettysburg,” she says, “both the academics and the social life. But as a junior I thought I should try a larger school, and transferred to the University of Colorado at Boulder, which had a program in dance therapy.” She returned after one semester; now aware that the bigger campus didn’t suit her.

Suzanne’s parents had encouraged her to be open to experience. “At some point in high school I’d thought, ‘Marijuana—that’s something I’d like to try.’ I intuitively knew it was the right substance for me, and I was very interested in getting to college and

Suzanne Smith performing (above) and in class (far right).
giving it a try. Which I did get to do. And it went quite well.” Her social philosophy was conciliatory, not revolutionary. “I certainly believed in peace, love, and understanding, and I loved rock ‘n’ roll. I wore the flowing clothes of the hippie, and my hair was right for the era—straight and long: I didn’t have to roll it out on beer cans, like other girls did. But I considered myself a flower child, where hippies seemed more like dropouts. They were very critical: society was all wrong, the establishment had to be brought down. I never felt that. I always felt the system had to be made more positive.

“Hair was the second Broadway show I saw. I loved the music, and identified with what the characters were going through, especially this young woman who’s in love with a leader of the movement. She’s saying, ‘You care about the bleeding crowd, but what about the individual? What about me?’ People seemed wrapped up in political movements, which I had sympathy with, but I also felt a lot of them were in it because it was personally gratifying. They liked leading a group, and they liked the attention. I wasn’t sure they cared about people as much as they cared about the movement.”

Some students felt straitjacketed at Gettysburg, but Suzanne Smith was eager to receive what the college was able to give. “I had a lot of freedom to pursue what I was interested in—the classes I liked, the dance I liked. And when there were rules, I was able to work around them.”

Most students had to find ways to work around the rules—of their parents, of the college, of society. But where some arrived with a sense of their own identity, others saw college as their chance to create an identity. Yolanda Victoria Berg, known to her friends as Vicki, was one of those. Her home was, she says, “exceedingly conservative,” and her parents tried to instill in her the traditional limits on what women could do or should want. But the indoctrination hadn’t taken, and at Gettysburg she cultivated herself as someone her parents wouldn’t recognize.

“I’d wanted to become a doctor. But of course I was told that women are not doctors. Women are nurses.” It was okay for her to study science and go premed, as long as her ambitions ended at that predestined point. Her older cousin, John Perdew ’65, had gone to Gettysburg, “so I
was taken for an interview, and it was decided that I should go there. I was just the little girl. So I went."

The campus was only a hundred miles from her hometown of Cumberland, Maryland, but to a young person itching for freedom, any distance is good. Without parental eyes on her, Vicki got busy changing. At first, she says, “I was Goody Two-Shoes. ‘Yes, ma’am.’ ‘Yes, sir.’ Do what you’re told. But when I realized I could do what I wanted, I wanted to do everything. I did theater. I hung around with hippies. I started to make up my own mind about things.”

Her changes took in every aspect of her life as a student. Joining a sorority had once seemed compulsory, but Vicki knew that for her it would be a step backward. “I thought I was finally free, and I didn’t want to get into anything that would compartmentalize that.” After initially majoring in chemistry and math, she switched to English and theater arts. She got into performing by accompanying a friend to an audition for Sartre’s *No Exit.* “When it came time for my friend to read, Emile Schmidt said, ‘I need someone else to read with her. Just sit opposite her with the book and read it.’” In the end, “I got the part she wanted, and she got the other part. I did it, and I loved it.” Vicki would go on to act in or direct numerous productions for campus theater groups.

She developed a set of ethics quite different from those that prevailed in her “hardcore Republican” home. An admitted control freak, she avoided drugs, but made no judgment on those who chose differently. For the war she felt a primal disgust that contradicted her parents’ support of it. And unlike most Gettysburg coeds, she paid attention to the women’s movement, realizing it was a struggle which implicated her. “It was a good time for women to start change and get change,” she says. “I think it made a big difference.” Her own self-invention, after all, had been largely in response to sexist limitations. “I was following my own path. I felt like, ‘You can’t tell me I can’t do something if I know I can.’” She laughs. “Some people, you just ignore.”

Inventing herself meant veiling her changes from her parents, so Vicki grew accustomed to slipping in and out of alternate identities. “I said and did what my parents wanted when I was with them, and said and did what Friend A or B wanted when I was with them.” Being in Judy Annis’s Modern Dance Group was another way for her to create herself. It represented many things of which her parents didn’t approve—such as drawing attention in a way that was free, physical, and potentially unladylike. In the class, Vicki struck up a close friendship with a fellow dancer, another young woman living under limits that to others were mostly invisible. This was Barbara Hanson, a senior, and the daughter of the college’s president.

* Perdew, a leading researcher in solid-state physics, quantum chemistry, and density functional theory, teaches at Temple University in Philadelphia.
Barbara Jean Hanson Nixon’s face is a composite of her parents’—her mother’s pert features, her father’s eye-crinkling grin—and as a person, too, she combines their qualities. Like Jean Hanson, she enjoys entertaining and tries “to see the good in everyone.” What makes her Arnold Hanson’s daughter are a reserved, analytical demeanor and talents for mediation and adjudication, all of which served her well in an eighteen-year career as a district judge in York, Pennsylvania.

She was born in 1948 in Ithaca, New York, just after her father had begun his new job at Cornell. Her brother, Carl Arnold Jr., nicknamed Chip, was born three years later. They were a close family that accepted philosophical difference (“I was aware early on that my father was a Democrat and my mother a Republican”). The Hansons attended the Lutheran church associated with the university; its pastor was John Vannorsdall, and Barbie and Chip grew up thinking of him as a kind of uncle.
The kids were thirteen and ten when their father agreed to become president of Gettysburg College. The Hansons moved in August 1961, taking a house the college had purchased for them in the new suburban development of Twin Oaks. The two previous presidents had lived on campus, in a house built by a faculty member in 1915; upon President Paul’s retirement, the house had been offered to his old boss, Dwight Eisenhower, for the writing of his memoirs. This made the Hansons the first presidential family in decades to reside off-campus, a temporary arrangement that wound up lasting six years. Twin Oaks was little over a mile away, but the distance was significant on a small campus. “That separation probably made it a bit harder for my parents,” Barbara says. “Although maybe it was a relief sometimes, too.”

Graduating from Gettysburg High School in 1966, Barbara returned to Cornell to study chemistry, envisioning a career in veterinary medicine. She witnessed no campus confrontations, though the unrest that would soon make Cornell a hot spot of student protest, and of black revolt in particular, was then building. “I did attend a couple of things,” she says, “but they were more parties than meetings.” Her views on major issues were, like her father’s, ideologically qualified and cautiously liberal. They were also mostly congruent with those of her white, middle-class college cohort, as was her willingness, within sensible limits, to be influenced by the times. “I was probably open to a lot of new ideas about things,” she says, without elaborating.

But her studies weren’t going well, and eventually she decided that chemistry had been the wrong choice. After two years, Barbara withdrew from Cornell and returned to Gettysburg “to take time off and figure out what I was going to do.” In the summer of 1968 she worked in the Dining Hall, and that fall audited a couple of courses. Early the next year, she took a job at the Medical Center in Hershey, Pennsylvania, two hours away, doing assistant-level lab work in the Pathology Department.

Then, in December 1969, Jean Hanson was diagnosed with cancer. Barbara left her job and came back to help out. It wasn’t just her mother’s illness that prompted her return; there were, she says, “probably a lot of things that entered in there. A lot of factors.”

A month after being diagnosed, her mother underwent surgery. This was followed by two months of treatments. But they had little effect, and through the spring and summer the disease grew. Chip visited from Wooster College in Ohio, and President Hanson did what he could, but Barbara was the constant—the one at her mother’s side, witnessing the decline. The ordeal continued into the fall.
Now majoring in biology, Barbara registered as a full-time Gettysburg senior for the 1970-71 year. While she didn’t advertise her relationship to the president, as she says, “It’s a small school. That kind of thing spreads.” It wasn’t easy, just then, to be Arnold Hanson’s daughter. While crossing the campus or socializing in the SUB, she would overhear unflattering appraisals of her father; she couldn’t open The Gettysburgian without seeing him criticized. The peculiar reality of her situation bred different coping mechanisms. “Sometimes, if I felt a comment was unfair, I’d challenge the person. But if I felt they were just blowing off steam, I’d walk away.”

Vicki Berg met Barbara in Judy Annis’s class. They shared no wrenching dialogues about Mrs. Hanson’s illness, or its effect on Barbara; theirs wasn’t that kind of friendship. “I’ve never been a person who tells someone, ‘You need to talk about this,’” says Vicki. “I listened when she wanted to talk, but I didn’t make inquiries.” She has warm memories of President Hanson: “He was like every other Swedish father I ever met—quiet and kind, with peppermints in his pocket.”

At home, Barbara’s father never talked about the pressure he was under, the thousand and one daily irritants that came with his job. “He might have shared that with my mother,” says Barbara, “but not with me or my brother. I think he would have felt it wasn’t appropriate.” Nor did he use his kids as handy barometers of youthful opinion. “I was his daughter, not his confidante, not his advisor. We argued about things, but it was father-daughter stuff. I was certainly aware of the stresses on him. I can remember my mother being upset about those things, too, at times.”

Jean Hanson died on December 9, 1970. “The faculty wives had been nursing and taking care of her,” Carl Leinbach remembers. “My wife was with President Hanson the night Jean died. She recalls him having a massive nosebleed.”

Nancy Locher thought Mrs. Hanson was “a lovely person, warm and hospitable.” Pat Crowner considered her “one of the nicest people I’d ever met.” “It was a loss for us,” her daughter says. “For the college, too. She’d instituted a lot of things, like freshman open houses, to make students and their families feel welcome.” A memorial service was held in Christ Chapel three days after her death; more than seven hundred people, among them Mamie Eisenhower, came to pay their respects. “None of us,” John Vannorsdall eulogized at a private gathering, “can be so dead of heart that we do not cry out against the cutting short of such a life. Nor so ungrateful that we fail in our thanksgiving for a life so rich in giving, however short.”
Among the things Jean Hanson didn't live to see was her daughter’s wedding. Barbara married her high school sweetheart, Henry Nixon, in Christ Chapel on January 31, 1971, in a ceremony officiated by Vannorsdall. The newlyweds had no proper honeymoon. “Henry was working and couldn’t get time off,” Barbara says, “and I was obviously busy with things. We went to Philadelphia one day the following week, and that was it.” For the rest of the school year, Barbara remained in Gettysburg, her husband at his home in York.

Grieving her mother’s death, enduring public criticism of her father, and just married to a man who was living in another town, Barbara Hanson had to be in some emotional turmoil in the spring of 1971. Her history with Gettysburg College, and with Christ Chapel, was bittersweet at best, and it wasn’t over: she would be dancing there in a few weeks, as part of the Superstar ensemble. But one thing she shared with her father was a resistance to emotional display; as a result, few people in the company would register that she was the Hansons’ daughter. Even less would anyone besides Vicki Berg know what she had been going through.

But her father knew, and Barbara believes Arnold Hanson was pleased at her being in the show—“pleased that I was involved in something on the campus that was positive. It was nice for him to see me doing this. It wasn’t the happiest time in our lives.”
In the New Testament, the conspiracy leading to the crucifixion is hatched by a cabal of priests who are interested only in serving the Roman power and, along the way, themselves. In *Jesus Christ Superstar*, these are Caiaphas, high priest of Jerusalem; Annas, his chief henchman; and Priests 1, 2, and 3. Rice and Lloyd Webber depicted them as almost comically villainous, though just as treacherous as their Biblical models.

The Gettysburg *Superstar* incorporated many light-bulb ideas, and one of the best was to have the priests played by faculty members. The role of Caiaphas went to Neil Beach, professor of biology. Carl Leinbach, assistant professor of mathematics, was asked to portray Annas. The numbered priests were reduced to two, and taken by Ralph Cavaliere, assistant professor of biology, and David Crowner, assistant professor of German.* While Beach, Leinbach, and Crowner had experience in church choirs, Cavaliere had never even sung in the shower.

All were in sympathy with the *Superstar* endeavor, and with the social climate...
that fostered it. Leinbach, though a Republican, leaned left on social and military issues, and was a committed pacifist. Crowner had once been jailed in a civil-rights demonstration. Cavaliere and Beach had planted trees on campus on April 22, 1970—the first Environmental Awareness Day, better known as Earth Day. All four had signed the anti-war petition of February 1968.

Cavaliere was the first to be approached. As a teacher of the General Biology requirement and advisor to several student groups, he knew most kids at Gettysburg; they often sought his participation in campus activities. Superstar offered the perfect role for his narrow talent: one of the album’s priests sang in a nasal sneer which would allow Cavaliere to make up in comedy what he lacked in musicianship. For Caiaphas, Cavaliere proposed his colleague Beach, possessor of an impressive bass voice. Leinbach, who attended Christ Lutheran Church and sang in its choir, was brought in by the choir’s director pro tem, John Hylton. David Crowner was a graceful singer, and a friend of the other three. They made a natural and happy grouping.

It was an era when students and faculty were growing close in new ways. Part of it was shared politics, and part of it was age: younger faculty were often more like siblings to students than like parents. Part of it was that more students than ever before felt emotionally and existentially lost. With the upending of conventions came a corresponding unfastening from the basic assumptions about life, family, and career that had ushered previous generations through their youthful doubts. This left many feeling adrift in themselves and in their country. They needed guidance, as youth always needs it—but as a source of sympathy and counsel, not chastisement and correction.

“Everything was out in the open,” Cavaliere says of these years. “There wasn’t much a student would hide from you. A lot of them were on drugs of some kind, and often they cried in my office. I just sat with them while they unwound.”

Cavaliere, who lived a block from campus, had a porch-light system: if the light was on after dark, students were welcome to drop in. Shirlee Cavaliere remembers Tom Breton’s frequent visits. “He’d ring the doorbell. ‘Hi, Mrs. C! Doc home? Can I study upstairs?’ I’d say ‘Yeah’ from the bedroom, and pull the covers up a little. ‘Make sure you turn the light off when you leave.’ He liked to study where Ralph’s office was, up on the third floor—a little room with slanted ceilings.

“We made extra food every night, because kids were at our house all the time. They needed a family.”
Everyone on the faculty essentially got along. But when differences arose, they could grow heated. Asked by Michael Birkner if the Vietnam War strained any friendships, Dorothy Bloom, wife of history professor Robert Bloom, said that it did: “Many of our pot lucks ended up in violent disagreements.” “We were in a time of turmoil, and we got caught up in that,” says Ken Mott. “We were a growing community, hiring more faculty—which meant we were developing a younger faculty. There was a more youthful spirit.”

Other disagreements concerned student pressure for representation on academic and administrative committees. At a faculty meeting in May 1968—just days after student-led strikes had brought Paris to a historic standstill—the question of student participation in the General Education Committee was considered. James Pickering, an English Department Medievalist, was adamant that such involvement, if allowed at all, should
be kept to a minimum. “Student control scares the hell out of me,” he said.

Mott recalls these debates vividly. “Students wanted access to faculty meetings and meeting minutes. Those were considered sacred, and there was that element of caution among older faculty. Bruce Bugbee* was our secretary; he’d write extensive, very detailed minutes after each meeting. During the debate he said, ‘If it happens, I’m going to have to write these in a very different style.’ He made it sound like we were the CIA.”

*  Professor, Department of History, 1958-91.

The key to Ralph Cavaliere’s popularity was his personality. Kelly Alsedek recalls him leaping onto a table to emphasize a point to three hundred freshman bio students. “He just exploded all over the room,” says Denise Rue. “You were mesmerized.”

“I didn’t really get to know him until I declared biology as my major,” says Tom Breton. “There were two tracks, zoology or botany, and I chose botany. That meant a more serious concentration on the nitty gritty, and I realized that if I was going to do this, I couldn’t do much music. I needed direction. That was when Doc took an interest in me.”

Cavaliere was born in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1937. His parents immigrated from the Amalfi coast of southern Italy in 1920, settling in a multi-ethnic enclave where Italian was spoken; Ralph didn’t learn English until he was thirteen. He entered Southern Connecticut State College to study art, but felt straitjacketed and rebellious; his advisor, returning from an Arizona sabbatical, suggested he consider a radical change. So he applied to Arizona State University’s biology program, and entered as a probationary sophomore.

His gift for biology flowered in the desert air. There he discovered mycology—the study of fungi, his scholarly passion—taught lab courses, and met Shirlee, who was beginning graduate work in biology. She saw a young man sitting on a crate, dressed in T-shirt and jeans, packing Petri dishes with a cigarette dangling from his mouth. “He said he was interested in fungi, and I said, ‘Oh, with the basidiomycetes?’” “That’s when I fell in love with her,” Ralph says.
Degrees in hand, they married and moved to Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, where Ralph would do doctoral work and Shirlee would run research labs. Neither had thought much about segregation, racism, or the Civil Rights movement, but living in the South gave them a daily education. Cavaliere's mentor was Dr. Frederick Wolf, the grand old man of mycology, as well as a native Southerner and diehard segregationist. In 1963, the year the Cavalieres arrived, Duke enrolled its first black undergraduates, and one of them turned up in Ralph's lab class; Wolf refused to enter the room with the student present.

The couple had hired an African-American woman to look after their first child; often they would drive her home at the end of the day. "In Durham," Shirlee says, "you'd go up and down these hills. On the high spots there'd be pavement, with all whites living there. Then you'd go down, and the roads would turn to dirt. Those were the black areas. We'd think, 'This isn't right.' It was also the time of the sit-ins. Over in Chapel Hill, they had a demonstration at this grocery store-lunch place; the owners pulled a black teenager inside and poured lye down his throat." In November 1964, Martin Luther King spoke at Duke's Page Auditorium. The Cavalieres went, and Shirlee came away feeling she'd had "one of the most touching, emotional, electrifying times of my life." As a result of everything, she and Ralph finally began to realize "what the nation was going through."

Later, when Vietnam took center stage, Ralph didn't hesitate to sign the antiwar petition. His opposition was not impersonal. "I had six brothers, and five of them were in the service," he says. "One was in the Normandy invasion, and he saw a lot of death. When he came home, he had a hard time adjusting. He drank a lot and cried a lot, but he'd never tell us what happened. That feeling stayed with me. The idea of war, of killing, is appalling to me."

Cavaliere's first impression of Gettysburg, when hired in 1966, was of a provincial town and an "impoverished" Biology Department. The Sixties were hard financial times for the college, and Arnold Hanson was not adept at fundraising. Campus buildings were in disrepair, some dangerously so. Even when McCreary Hall, a new facility for the scientific departments, was finished in early 1969, it didn't relieve a dire lack of resources. "Our 'research laboratory' for students had a table and a chair from the old building," Ralph says. "No refrigerators, no incubators, no microscopes, no centrifuges." He taught plant physiology in a basement lab at Glatfelter Hall. "That building was so decrepit that sometimes when I made noise or moved a desk or touched the wall, plaster fell. I was offered a position at Oberlin, and I don't know why I didn't take it. I think I felt an obligation to Bob Barnes. So we decided to stay another year."
Come the spring of 1971, Cavaliere was still dealing with the college’s limitations, still nursing his hopes for the future. But he’d grown to love the place and the people, and he’d decided to stay.

That same spring, Neil Beach sported a rakish goatee, with a matching mustache whose tips he waxed and curled. The Snidely Whiplash effect would help him incarnate the baleful Caiaphas, but it was wholly at odds with his personality. Peaceful and nature-loving, Beach grew flowers at home and promoted campus beautification through landscaping. Clay Sutton remembers him as “a very kind person, very gentle and outgoing.” In the Eighties, he came out as a gay man, and co-founded the college’s first support group for gay and lesbian students.

Beach says he got his values from his parents. He was born in 1928 in rural Michigan, on a farm near a railroad track that connected Detroit to Chicago. It was the Depression, and the railroad brought a steady stream of what were then called hoboes. The Beaches’ house was “marked”: stones were laid out front a certain way, or a post was carved with an X, so that men riding the rails knew they could get a meal there. Neil’s mother would give a man a cup of coffee and a sandwich, then tell him to chop firewood as repayment.
Attending the University of Michigan, Beach began on a premed track. But as a junior he took a course in vertebrates, and suddenly all he cared about was natural biology. He developed a research focus on the freshwater rotifer—a microscopic animal often found in zooplankton—and decided to teach at the college level. He even met his wife at the university’s Biological Station in Cheboygan County.

His first teaching job was at Lake Forest Academy in suburban Chicago, a tiny, wealthy college most of whose students deserted the campus on weekends. In 1959, while on a research trip to the famed Marine Lab at Duke University, Beach met Robert Barnes, rising star of the Gettysburg College Biology Department. Barnes told him Gettysburg was looking for someone to teach ecology and genetics—Beach’s subjects. He joined the faculty in 1960, and never regretted it: “It was much, much better here. It was twice the number of students, with a lot more community life.”

Today, Environmental Studies is one of the most popular programs at Gettysburg College, and ranks with the best liberal arts ES programs in the United States. That’s partly because the surrounding country is home to a rich variety of plant and animal life, both terrestrial and aquatic. Neil Beach was in his element. He especially enjoyed teaching ecology. “I’d find good collecting spots. Students would say to me, ‘How in the world did you find this place?’ I just liked to drive roads I’d never driven before.”

One incident led to a memorable encounter with President Hanson. In the early Sixties, the president’s office was on the main floor of Glatfelter Hall; just up the stairs was the lab where Beach taught parasitology. Part of the course involved dissection of roadkill; students were instructed to bring in anything they might find flattened along Route 30 or Mummasburg.
Road. One session, a dead skunk was presented. Withstanding the stench, Beach and his students began an evisceration. After an interval, the door opened, and Arnold Hanson appeared. “He didn’t shout,” Beach says. “He just very gently said, ‘Ahem. I would take that someplace else.’”

As shy as he seemed, Beach enjoyed performing: “I’ve always been an exhibitionist.” Emile Schmidt had begun a summer theater in 1962, staging productions in a tiny black-box theater on Chambersburg Street; Beach was often in his casts. In 1968, he was among the professors tapped by students for a parody performance of Swan Lake, which required wearing a tutu and face glitter—after which, Caiaphas wasn’t a particularly intimidating prospect.

The audition was terse. With a voice ranging over two and a half octaves, Beach could go from tenor to bass. “Larry Recla asked, ‘How low can you go?’ We went down the scale. Then he said, ‘How high can you go?’ We went up. ‘You got the part.’”

Carl Leinbach could have passed for Neil Beach’s kid brother. He had the same thinning hair, the same goatee, the same theatrical mustache, and he too was among the gentlest of men. “He was great,” says Sue Beebe. “He was interested in you on the math level, but also on the human level. I liked him a lot.”

Leinbach had always been in church choirs. As an undergraduate at Lafayette College, he was directed by the well-regarded John Raymond. He recalls the choir traveling to a church in Harlem, around 1960 or ’61. He’d grown up in a virtually all-white town, and like most of his group, grew nervous as they neared the church. Then they went inside. “We get on our robes and proceed up the aisle. We’re going on, the people start singing, and—wow. You could feel the vibes in that church. They just drew it out of us, and it was one of the best concerts we ever played.”
Leinbach sang at Christ Lutheran Church after moving to Gettysburg in 1967; that was his entrée into Superstar. “John Hylton directed the choir. I was a second tenor—no voice, no range—but John said, ‘We’d like you to be one of the priests.’ He mentioned that Ralph and Neil were doing it, and I said, ‘Gee, sounds like a good group. Yeah!’”

Born in 1941, Leinbach grew up in a succession of northeastern Pennsylvania towns. He considered following his father into the ministry, but was more drawn to numbers, and took mathematics degrees at Lafayette and at the universities of Delaware and Oregon. His wife, Pat, who had trained as a registered nurse in her native New Jersey, supported her husband through graduate school.*

“I started as a mechanical engineer, and was pointed out as the person in class with the least talent. Then I switched to math, and graduated with an 88 average. I’m a minor player as far as research goes; I’m not a whiz. But I see relationships, and math is about relationships.” Leinbach was instrumental in developing Gettysburg’s Computing Center, grasping early on the computer’s potential as both teaching tool and imaginative portal. “Say we’re using derivatives to plot population growth. We can say, ‘There’s a predator-prey situation, and the prey is dying out. What happens to the population?’ With the computer, you could get people to see that math isn’t just equations and numbers. That it’s reasoning, seeing relationships, asking ‘what if.’”

Despite coming from a long line of ministers and missionaries, Leinbach never considered any spiritual question settled. That took him on a search through different faiths, beginning with the Evangelical and Reformed Church of his childhood. “We were Lutherans when we came to Gettysburg, and I’m a Quaker now. It was a long chain of questions

* Pat later became a pathologist, serving as Adams County coroner from 1991 to 2004.
about what I really believe.” It was natural for him to combine the what-ifs of mathematics and religion, and during the January Term of 1971 he did just that, in a course called “A Mathematician Examines Theology.” It neither promised nor promoted answers. What mattered were the questions.

As an undergraduate at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington, David Crowner was editor of the student newspaper, The Mooring Mast. A prescient editorial ran under his by-line in the issue of January 13, 1961:

To a degree, we students live detached from society, and therefore cannot influence it. So why worry about Cuba, communism, school curriculums, ecumenicity, United Nations, integration, and so on? . . . Wait till graduation, or later, or never, to fan sparks of concern. But what makes you think that pushing a tassel across your forehead will ring up a new set of habits? . . . Great character typical of individuals who forge the course of humanity requires conviction, vision, and hard work. This comes from a stirring heart. And that must begin now.

This call for action from a young man to his contemporaries preceded by a week John F. Kennedy’s inaugural address, which famously declared that “the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans.”

David Crowner’s trip through the Sixties was as bold in its way as Jim Henderson’s—though no one could have been cleaner-looking or straighter-seeming than this pastor’s son. He was born, in 1938, of Swedish ancestry, in Brainerd, Minnesota, one of the whitest places on earth. When he was two, his father took a new pastorate in Bell, California. This was an offshoot of Los Angeles, and Crowner grew up in the City of Angels at a time when its suburbs were synonymous with middle-class aspiration.

A typical happy, active Southern California kid, he left home to attend Pacific Lutheran, but dropped out for a year, uncertain of his direction. Once back in school, he had a key experience. “There was
an ecumenical conference in Lausanne, Switzerland. They chose sixty Lutheran youths to go from the US, and I was one. It opened up a whole new world, finding other people in this international setting who were interested in the same things you were.”

He’d begun to study German, and the summer after graduating from PLU, attended a German-language summer camp in Portland, Oregon. His future wife, Patricia, had come there from Illinois. Her skills were more advanced than his: “That’s how we really got to know each other—I’d help him with his German,” she says. “I went back to college, and we wrote back and forth. All our love letters were in German.” They were married in 1962, and for the first year were mostly separated: while Pat finished college in Illinois, David went to Rutgers University in Brunswick, New Jersey, for graduate school. When they were reunited, it was to live in graduate student housing, a bunch of converted barracks left over from World War II.

Crowner was by now a card-carrying liberal. Student deferment aside, he’d decided he would not go to Vietnam, and he’d had his first taste of racial protest at PLU. “Every year they had a talent show, and part of it was students dressing up in blackface. We started a campaign to get them to drop it. They did.” For him, it was an example of applied Christian philosophy. “I took seriously the message that we should be peacemakers. Follow the example of Jesus. Treat everyone with kindness and respect. Nonviolence.”

Among the Crowners’ barracks neighbors was Jacques Marchan, later the editor-publisher of the far-left journals Marxist Perspectives and Mother Jones. Rutgers had active chapters of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE); at Marchan’s suggestion, Crowner joined. He was among the more than 200,000 people at the August 28, 1963, March on Washington, the occasion of Martin Luther King’s “I have a dream” speech. “I had no clue it was going to be such a historic event. The bus parked, and we walked through this huge crowd to the mall; we were there to participate in the march and show our presence. Facing King, I was on the right side, near the front, and I could hear everything he said. I came away feeling it was something special.”

On April 22, 1964, Crowner was arrested at the opening of the World’s Fair in Queens, New York. It was a combined SNCC-CORE protest, with an estimated seven hundred young people from around the country convening on the Flushing Meadow fairgrounds to stage protests. “It was a big event that people would be watching,” says Crowner. “A good place to make a show.” When President Lyndon Johnson began to speak, the protesters raised banners and chanted slogans for the passage of new, contested legislation—the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act.
TV cameras turned their way, and the world’s press were diverted from the presidential podium by legions of young black and white Americans making a stand. In the end, three hundred were jailed, Dave Crowner among them. A few months later, on July 2, 1964, Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act into law.

“I thought it was great,” says Pat of her husband’s activism. “A little irresponsible, with a brand new baby; but he wanted to do it, and I supported him. I’d have done it, but women weren’t as involved in the front lines then.”

Academia influenced Crowner’s expanding conception of social problems. At Rutgers there were, he says, “lots of people, lots of opinions. It was good to see what people were thinking. There was an interest in war and peace, the nuclear threat, Marxism. And a lot of my outlook came from the messages of the church. But why was I an activist? That’s another issue.

“Part of it is the models you pick. I think in terms of Martin Luther King, but also Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Heinrich Böll, Rosa Parks. My parents, too—they were very accepting of people. You hope somebody’s going to catch a glimmer and spread the news, the hope, the work. There are so many people who don’t stand up and take a position.”

* *

While finishing his doctoral dissertation on German writer Heinrich Böll, Crowner took a job at Hartwick College in Oneonta, New York. He taught there three years. “There were lots of jobs available in those days,” he says. “I went to the meeting of the American Association of Teachers of German, and next to me was Henry Schneider, head of the Gettysburg German Department. I said I was looking for a job, and he said they were looking for someone. He seemed really nice, so I came down and had an interview with President Hanson.”

The Crowners, now with two children, joined a tightly-knit college community. Husbands and wives would socialize regularly; there were many inter-department relationships. “It was mainly the women who got to know each other,” Pat says, “and we’d do all kinds of things together. Have gourmet dinners, learn how to play bridge. We had our preschools together. Shirlee Cavaliere and Pat Leinbach and I were really good friends.”
Even as junior faculty, Crowner didn’t hesitate to express himself. He was among those who called for the faculty to issue a public disavowal of the war, and he joined the push for curricular reform. From the minutes of the faculty meeting of April 2, 1968:

If Gettysburg is to justify its existence, Mr. Crowner continued, then there should be a real commitment to teaching in the Liberal Arts. . . . Mr. Crowner concluded by urging that course content be made relevant—that students want this. He advocated the offering of courses dealing with such subjects as urban affairs and Negro history. Then, he said, Plato is relevant.

All of the professors were flattered at being asked in to Superstar, and all understood what their presence meant. Leinbach believes it was “a conscious effort on Larry Recla’s part to say, “This is not just a bunch of students. It’s students, faculty, chapel. We were young enough so that the students didn’t put up barriers, and we didn’t put up barriers. We were part of the group.”

The first walk-through was to occur in the chapel the night of February 21, but was postponed for a screening of a documentary on Martin Luther King. Two nights later, with all roles filled and all instruments in hand,
the company assembled for its first group experience of the complete show. Nothing like a real performance, this was for the purpose of placing bodies onstage and deciding where and how they should move, putting rock band together with horns together with chorus together with leads. Larry roved the chapel floor, taking notes and drawing sketches, chain-smoking and shouting encouragement.

Surely the performance at this stage looked and moved something like Frankenstein's monster: uncoordinated, unshapely, its mind not yet its own. But finally everyone had glimpsed the big, albeit blurred, picture. It was another step—a big one—toward the fulfillment of a vision.

*It's going to happen!*

This is what happened instead:

On or about March 1, an envelope came from MCA Music. Larry might have been puzzled on seeing it: he'd expected a large package with several scores and a contract, but this was a business-size envelope containing, it appeared, very little. Over the previous two and a half months, rights had been negotiated, and fees had been paid. What formalities could possibly remain?

Inside the envelope was an impersonal, undated form letter over Arthur Cohn's signature. It read, in its entirety:

> It is with regret that we must inform you that no performance of any kind may be presented of JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR. This is due to a clarification of the contractual status of the work, which postpones any presentation of the work until at least after the Broadway production has been given.

We apologize for any inconvenience caused you and ask for your understanding.
It was hardly the worst news in the world just then. The US Army, having secured Hill 31 at the cost of three thousand lives, was advancing into Laos. An American colonel was about to be tried for his role in covering up the massacre of civilians by US troops at My Lai. In Belfast, two British soldiers had been shot to death by Irish guerillas; another had been burned alive with a gasoline bomb in Londonderry. Deadly political riots had caused the president of Colombia to declare a state of siege in the city of Cali. There were neo-fascist rallies in Italy, and strikes threatened by farmers and laborers in France. Domestically, officials in New York were concerned about recurrent “outbreaks of disorder” among black, white, and Latino students at Queens high schools. It was wondered if the Black Panther Party, now underground, was defunct or simply “regrouping.”

The world was going about its brutal, chaotic way. It would not feel the merest flutter at the fate of the Gettysburg Superstar.

Along with his letter, Arthur Cohn had sent Larry a piece of paper spelling out the reality of the situation:

NOTICE

This will notify whoever may be concerned that no performances of JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR may be held without prior written authorization from the Robert Stigwood Organisation Ltd., 67 Brook Street, London W.1, England

So far no licenses have been granted to perform JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR to any persons whomsoever
There was no explanation of why licenses would not be granted, or whence this notice had come, or who Robert Stigwood was.

Larry got on the phone to MCA Music. Somehow he made it past the switchboard and all the way to Bill Levy, Director of Creative Services and head of advertising. Levy had helped to create the iconic packaging for Superstar’s US release, as well as the multimedia presentation that was being used to promote the album in key American markets. He was also intimately involved in the granting of performance rights to amateur groups. As Superstar skyrocketed, MCA had been inundated with such requests, and the company wanted to facilitate the trend, no doubt seeing local productions as a smart, lucrative way to get the word out.

But now MCA was dealing with thousands of panicked, angry, or simply disappointed people whose applications had either been refused outright or granted and then withdrawn. Levy could only inform them, as he informed Larry, that the matter had been taken out of MCA’s hands, and attempt to explain the legal contest now developing.

The issue came down to control of performance versus publishing rights. The UK-based Leeds Music, Ltd., which administered the copyrights on all Superstar compositions (with the exception of “King Herod’s Song”), had licensed Decca Records to release the Superstar album in England and the US. Decca was owned by the talent conglomerate MCA (Music Corporation of America), which controlled North American publishing through its music division. Absent any competing claim, MCA Music believed itself to be the sole agent for Superstar. So when requests for performance rights began to flood their offices, Arthur Cohn and Bill Levy had seen no reason not to act on them—and, in the cases of church-based and other nonprofit groups, grant them for modest fees.

But it turned out there was a competing claim. Robert Stigwood was an Australia-born, London-based pop promoter who in the past few years had become one of the most successful figures on the UK music scene. Formerly a business associate of Beatles manager Brian Epstein, he’d formed his own company, the Robert Stigwood Organization (RSO), in 1967, and through it managed such top acts as the Bee Gees, Cream, and Blind Faith. Toward the turn of the decade, he’d become increasingly interested in stage and film production. When the “Superstar” single was released in 1969, Stigwood noted both its success and the accompanying talk of a musical to come. He contacted Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber in October 1970, when they were in New York to promote the album’s US release and to field pitches from prospective producers; Stigwood impressed them by being the only one to send a limousine to their hotel. The three struck a deal, and a company called Superstar Ventures, Ltd., was formed, with Stigwood, Rice, and Lloyd Webber as principals. Their contract gave the company a five-year exclusive on all
stage and film productions of *Jesus Christ Superstar*—rights which MCA, focused entirely on record and tape sales, had neglected to vie for.

Stigwood, with a 25 percent profit share in Superstar Ventures, commenced his plans to debut the show on Broadway, and to block the unlicensed productions already springing up, mostly in America. Legal action would not be taken until April, when the ideal foil for a court case presented itself (details to follow). In the meantime, via the printed “Notice,” all applicants were peremptorily warned that any performance of *Superstar* conducted under auspices other than RSO’s would be subject to prosecution—and that those auspices had not and would not be transferred “to any persons whomsoever.”

Thus, Arthur Cohn’s allusion to “a clarification in the contractual status of the work.”

The talk with Levy left Larry’s head spinning. Was there anything to be done? If so, what? By whom? On what legal grounds? And how much would it cost to find out?

Only a few people were told directly about any of this. The members of the inner circle had a variety of responses, from the crestfallen to the philosophical to the defiant. Jan Kitchener mainly recalls the abruptness of the news: “All I knew was that they—someone—had said we couldn’t do it, and that Larry was in a panic.” Clay Sutton was “devastated”: “It was like a wake. We’d put so much effort into it.” Mark Teich was a bit more Zen. “My initial reaction was, ‘I’m not surprised. This is just too big; it’s a whole other league. I’m disappointed. But I’m not surprised.’” Neal Smatresk found the prohibition both “clinical” and “ambiguous,” and feels it was effectively disregarded almost immediately: “We pretty much didn’t respect it.”

Tom Breton, knee-deep in the dark matter of the Judas role, refused to countenance the possibility that *Superstar* might not happen. “At that point, I was on automatic pilot. I didn’t say, ‘Oh, well—it’s over,’ or anything like that. My sense was, ‘This is going to go where it’s going to go. I’m not directing anything except myself. I’m not going to stop trying to live this through.’” Gretchen Cranz specifically remembers *not* being told. “I guess Larry decided not to mention it. Something like that could have pretty well incapacitated me.”

The others in the company were left to find out, or not, on their own. “Did I make announcements or have meetings? That’s not the way this was done,” Larry says. “But were people aware of contemporaneous conversations? Sure. People were involved. They knew what was going on. None of this was concealed, or behind the scenes.” Yet many never
learned of the troubles, directly or indirectly, until well after the fact. “I don’t think I was privileged to that information,” says Beth Kershaw. Neither, according to Carl Leinbach, were the professors: “Larry kept that pretty much hidden, at least from us. We didn’t know there was any possibility of being sued—but we were conscious that this was kind of an underground thing.”

“It existed in the form of a rumor,” says Richard Schindler. “People weren’t really talking. But somehow stuff gets out.”

Neal Smatresk still couldn’t believe there was any real risk. “We were running a play in the chapel of a college. Who was going to do anything about that? We were a blip on the radar, not some movement that was going to threaten their commercial property.”

No. But as amateurs mounting a pirate production of Superstar, the Gettysburgians were part of a movement—one which garnered a significant amount of national publicity in the first half of 1971, and which muddied the prospects of a theatrical commodity yet to go public. Estimating in court papers in early May that unlicensed performances had so far robbed Superstar Ventures of approximately a quarter of a million dollars, Stigwood showed that he was ready to enforce his ownership with legal action, even if it made him appear more of a pirate than the pirates themselves. Among the amateur productions estopped by his lawyers later in the year was a charity performance organized by a group of nuns in Sydney, Australia. Henry J. Miller, Stigwood’s Sydney promoter, had this to say: “Like all Christians, these nuns believe Jesus Christ is theirs. What they are forgetting is that there is such a thing as copyright.”

The risk to Gettysburg College wasn’t monumental, but it was real. Consider the case of the American Rock Opera Company (AROC), a professional group that had been rehearsing Superstar while Gettysburg was still gathering its forces.

AROC had purchased, through the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP)—a venerable show-business outfit established to collect royalties and grant rights on behalf of its members—the sole performing license available for Superstar in the US. This license permitted the performance only of excerpts, and only in “non-dramatic situations,” that is, without the use of lyrics, costumes, scenery, or physical action. Yet AROC elected to ignore those restrictions and perform the entire show, with lyrics, in costume, for admission, on professional stages. It went so far as to book and publicize a nationwide tour, announcing its debut at the Powell Symphony Hall in St. Louis on April 13, 1971.

The St. Louis performance occurred—and the Stigwood Organization acted swiftly. On April 29, its lawyers won a temporary restraining order that stopped the tour in its tracks. The defendants claimed they were acting within the bounds of the ASCAP license, that in fact only
selections from *Superstar* were being offered, and those “without benefit of costumes, scenery, or dramatic gestures”—a patent falsehood. On May 7, New York District Justice Constance Baker Motley issued a preliminary injunction which canceled the remainder of the tour:

The Gettysburgians had never planned to charge admission, let alone to perform in professional venues, heralded by copious publicity. But in every other way, their piracy was identical to that of the American Rock Opera Company; they lacked even the limited ASCAP license AROC had purchased. Which left them entirely vulnerable, should their doings be detected, to injunction, prosecution, and, in all likelihood, financial liability.

On March 5, Larry wrote to Arthur Cohn, “Understand and appreciate your problems with the music rights in *Superstar*. Conversation with Mr. Bill Levy has been helpful in further appreciation of those problems. Hope you understand the excruciating difficulties we face as well. Please inform me as any new events break in this legal tangle.”

He’d gone as far as he could on his own authority. The next move was the chaplain’s. “I was never unaware that I was an intern,” Larry says. “I had no illusions or delusions of anything else. If Vannorsdall had said ‘That’s it’—that’s it. Period. I might have whined, sniveled, or growled, but done is done.”

He presented the facts to Vannorsdall. The chaplain had never been less than an enthusiastic supporter of student enterprises, and it’s unlikely that he would have recommended instant capitulation, even in the face of a legal challenge. Indeed, he made a personal inquiry with MCA. But the bottom line, Vannorsdall says, remained the same. “I called whoever owned it to see if we could get permission to put it on; basically, that was not granted. They wanted to maintain some control over the thing, and I didn’t blame them for that.” Having reached the same dead end as Larry, Vannorsdall was forced to concede that the Gettysburg *Superstar* wasn’t meant to be.

But Recla had a dirty ace up his sleeve. He knew how important the students’ esteem was to Vannorsdall, and how painful he would find it to disappoint them. “When John said to me, ‘I guess you’re not going to be able to do this,’ I said, ‘Fine. I’ve got a rehearsal scheduled for tonight. Not only my main people but the chorus are there. *You* tell them.’ There was calculation and conniving in that—straight-up calculation and conniving. At which point, he folded. And what was agreed upon was that we could go ahead, with the caveat that there would not be one word about it in print, anytime, anywhere.”
JV with Bob Schaper ’69, a prominent campus peace activist.
It was a decision of some gravity. Whatever joyful spirit or creative altruism had inspired the production, it would go forward, in violation of fair legal notice, as a form of intellectual theft. As a liberal activist in a conservative community, John Vannorsdall was hardly unfamiliar with risk; but neither was he known for taking foolish chances. The few conditions he imposed were meant to minimize everyone’s exposure. “What I agreed to,” he recalls, “was that we wouldn’t charge anything, and we wouldn’t advertise it very far; I didn’t want it to be seen as an official thing the college was putting on. What I did was to say, ‘We can’t do this publicly, but we can practice it. We can test it; we can learn from it. We just can’t take it anyplace.’ So I called it a rehearsal, in case at some point we did get permission to do it. That was what everybody understood.”

In Larry’s view, Vannorsdall’s prohibitions, far from being fatal, befit the shirttail spirit of the thing. “For us, okay—nothing’s in print or advertising. Fine! We weren’t doing this with the idea of a major production. This was nothing to do with the Music Department, nothing to do with the Theater Department; looked at one way, nothing to do with the chapel program. This is a bunch of people who have gotten together to have a good time.”

His ingrained suspicion of authority, even benevolent authority, shapes Larry’s view of how and why John Vannorsdall allowed the production to go forward. “What John thought the effect of that caveat against publicity would be or not be, one could speculate on. From what I knew of him, a credible explanation, albeit perhaps not actual, is: ‘I’m not going to be the bad guy in this. You kids want to go ahead and do something, have a good time. Ain’t nobody gonna know about it.’ Furthermore, the fact that nothing was in writing made it entirely untraceable; it provided plausible deniability. I’m not sure John ever thought much that way, but I say so with a great deal of hesitancy. John Vannorsdall was not a stupid man.”

Neither was Larry Recla. Given that Superstar had been his project from the start, it was quite Machiavellian of him to saddle Vannorsdall with the task of terminating the performance and dashing everyone’s hopes—and then, after Vannorsdall had “folded,” to question the magnanimity of his motives. In fact, it was valiant of the chaplain to give the go-ahead for an unauthorized performance knowing it would leave him, as the chapel authority, most vulnerable.

What is to Larry’s credit is that, once that go-ahead was given, he positioned himself as the brunt of any reprisals that might come. “He said, ‘I’ll take it on myself,’” Jan Kitchener recalls. “‘I’m the main backer of this’—or instigator, or whatever—‘and I don’t want these students to get in trouble.’”

Anyone could see that the show mattered enormously to Larry, that it had become much more to him than just “a good time.” He wouldn’t
surrender it easily—even if that meant being underhanded with Vannorsdall, even if it meant several days of depression, anxiety, and misanthropic maledictions against the petty irritations of man. The stress, Tom Breton says, “was sitting mostly on Larry’s shoulders. He’d be demonstrative, emotional, angry. He’d show his frustration. And it was very frustrating.”

Many members of the company, as they picked up facts or rumors about the rights controversy, found the idea of a bootleg production appealing. It gave the event an added charge.

“There was a rebelliousness amongst a lot of us,” says Mark Teich. “We wanted to go up against the man, whether that was President Hanson, or Robert Stigwood, or Richard Nixon.” “Given the mood of the time, we were going to do it,” agrees Richard Schindler. “It was in some way countercultural, disruptive. We seemed to be making a statement by putting it on.” Steve Snyder thought, “This is really interesting: we’re doing this in the chapel, and it has to do with Jesus, and it’s illegal. That was fine with me—I kind of liked it, that whole Sixties, rebellious attitude. Grow hair. Smoke dope. Get away with something.” “Maybe that did lend a certain sense of excitement to it—that it was an outlaw performance,” says John Kuehl. Neal Smatresk was even willing to see it as civil disobedience in action: “Let them come after us.”

Today, people are lighthearted about the degree to which their illegal Superstar was truly, or significantly, rebellious. It was certainly a modest rebellion, even covert. But it was undeniably a defiance, one accompanied by some measure of risk and consequence—even if most were never fully aware of the obstacle that almost derailed the show, and which would continue to make it a chancy proposition.

The advertising ban meant there was suddenly a lot less to do in the way of public relations. Those were to be handled mainly by Karen Burdack and Clay Sutton. Clay had designed posters around the photographs he’d taken at the early rehearsals. These had already been printed, he says, and were about to be posted; now they would have to be junked. What advance publicity Superstar received would be strictly on campus, in the ephemeral inks of Junto, Potpourri, and The Gettysburgian; no notices would appear anywhere in town, or in the Gettysburg Times, Hanover Sun, York Daily Record, or Hagerstown Daily Mail.

Additionally, the language of the event was altered to obscure any implication of institutional sanction. As Jan Kitchener remembers, “Instead of ‘Come see Superstar,’ we’d say, ‘Some of us who are really into this music would like you to come join us,’ or something like that.” Rather
than a performance, “it was more like a gathering.” The pretense was that a bunch of students had simply come together in common enjoyment of a piece of music, and were inviting the likeminded or curious to drop by the chapel while they ran through it. Which was, ironically, exactly the case.

It had been an anxious few days, mostly for Larry. And the anxiety was hardly over: they were moving forward, but for all anyone knew, it might be into a minefield. The first all-group rehearsal was marked down for Monday, March 15, a mere ten days before the night of the performance—or the “gathering.”

Larry had a favorite aphorism: “Yahweh provides.” He’d picked it up while teaching in Lancaster, and used it to calm himself in the years before he was readmitted to the seminary. It expressed his belief in, or hopeful submission to, a godly gestalt that would restore things to their proper balance, whatever the uncertainties of the moment. It had applied when he and Sue Ann found a house near Gettysburg that they loved and lost, only to find a better one. It applied in daily situations at home, at the seminary, and at Christ Chapel—where it became well-known to Larry’s circle of intimates.

“He used to live by that back then,” says Mark Teich. “‘Yahweh provides.’ There may have been one day where everybody was down in the dumps. But it didn’t last long, because Larry let it be known that we were going to get around this somehow. Now, whether it was God or Larry that found a way, I don’t know. But that’s the genius, the magic of the guy. He refused to allow that flame to go out.”
Christ Chapel was the dream of Henry W.A. Hanson, seventh president of Gettysburg College. A Lutheran minister, bold and stentorian in the pulpit, Hanson had resigned a large Harrisburg congregation to take the office in 1923. The atmosphere he promoted was one of great—some might have said overwhelming—piety, and he did all he could to encourage the perception of Gettysburg as a Christian institution first and foremost.

Since 1889, Brua Chapel (later Brua Hall) had been the on-campus place of worship. By the late 1940s, a growing coed population and post-war enrollments were pressing the need for something much larger. Hanson, who had been lobbying for a new chapel since the Depression—Michael Birkner refers to it as “his white whale”—spent the last years of his presidency largely focused on finding donors. In 1951, the trustees approved a new set of plans, and such was the fixity of Hanson’s vision that during its construction the academic program suffered, faculty salaries were frozen, and the college coffers accumulated a debt that took many years to repay.

But Christ Chapel was, whatever one thought of Henry Hanson or of God, quite a place. Designed in Georgian

13. THE REHEARSALS—I
style by architect Alfred Hamme, it was topped by a spire and stainless-steel cross 140 feet high. In front were four Doric columns in a flagstone base, three doors of red mahogany, and a cornerstone quarried from the Mines of Solomon, near Jerusalem. Inside, the altar comprised two tons of Italian rose marble; on it were a gilt cross and matching candlesticks of original design. The twelve stained-glass windows, each ten feet tall and five wide, were created by the eminent Harold W. Rambusch firm. The organ console was based on the design of Virgil Fox, organist at New York’s Riverside Church.

The chapel’s final cost came to $592,871.* It was dedicated on October 17, 1953, with an inaugural sermon from Henry Hanson, by then the ex-president. The debt that had been incurred would be offset in the coming years by the building’s many non-religious uses. The Art Department held its studio classes in the basement for years; concerts were given on the chancel by both college musicians and invited professionals; guest speakers delivered addresses from pulpit and lectern. Students made regular use of the downstairs rooms for group meetings, and save for The Gettysburgian, virtually all student publications were produced in the basement.

After leaving the White House, Dwight Eisenhower spent parts of his remaining years on his farm adjacent to the Gettysburg battlefield. It entered college lore that, when attending services at Christ Chapel, “Ike” liked to sit in the seventh row, on the left side of the aisle.+

Superstar began cohering in the series of rehearsals held between March 11 and 22. Especially for the more devoted members of the company, Christ Chapel would become as familiar an environment as their own dorm rooms, and almost as intimate.

Rehearsals had begun with small groups meeting separately for “sectionals.” Jan Kitchener practiced with the choir in Brua Hall; the lead singers worked on their songs alone, or in the basement rehearsal room; the rock band were in a music room somewhere. “It was pretty much compartmentalized,” Mark Teich recalls. “The steering committee had regular meetings where decisions were made as to when we’d merge one group with another, and eventually get to the point of merging them all. That didn’t happen until those last two weeks.”

Pressure was a chief motivator: everyone felt a sense of accelerating time. But once the sections came together, synergy developed. Gretchen

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* Equal to more than $5.5 million in 2015 dollars.
+ In fact the Eisenhowers, Presbyterians, were in the chapel only a few times.
Cranz feels the rehearsals benefitted from “a very fluid atmosphere. If something needed to get directed or suggested, it would.” There were more biology majors in the Superstar company than any other kind, and a clue to the show’s ecosystem may be found in Neil Beach’s comment: “The study of biology is about understanding yourself and your environment, what can harm you and what cannot. The main thing is to understand that there is a balance, and that you don’t kill off one thing to save another.”

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The rock band began, Mark Teich says, by “going into a music room and going through the stuff. I don’t recall that we had many problems. Jake had a good ear, I was playing mostly by ear, and if we went off-script, Doug would be quick to tell us where we fell down.” The solidity of this foundation made it easier for later arrivals like Jim Henderson, Whitney Myers, and Dave Bauer to layer in their contributions.
From the beginning, Teich had been marking up his copy of the *Superstar* libretto, making notes on chord progressions and key changes. He always tried to bring a personal flair to existing lines. “My thing was to imprint my own interpretation. That being said, my interpretation here was to mimic the recording. If a passage was beyond my expertise, I’d come up with a simplified version, and imprint it that way.” For the performance, Teich would play the same inexpensive Hagstrom bass he’d owned for years.

Vinten-Johansen’s guitar was a Gretsch Clipper with a sunburst finish and two Gibson Humbucker pickups, added as a custom touch to reduce amplifier buzz. As a player, he relied on intuition more than technique. “I was a feeler. I would get into the emotion of the piece, try and capture the spirit of it, rather than taking it from the written notes.” But he too wanted to stay faithful to the music as recorded. “Doug and I worked closely in shoring up the guitar sections so that they sounded accurate.”

Whitney Myers, on the chapel’s concert piano, prepared studiously and privately. The other keyboardist, Steve Snyder, had to bring his Hammond M3 organ and Leslie 145 speaker back and forth from Littlestown. Working at his family’s foundry, he was able to use the company truck to haul his gear. “It took two people to carry.” Steve Snyder’s Hammond M3 today.

Snyder demonstrates his playing-by-ear method.
took two people to carry the Leslie,” he recalls, “and two to carry the organ. The Leslie cabinet was probably three feet by two by four, and bulky. No handles. You grabbed them and you carried them. The Leslie is what everybody used back then; it was the hot setup. It had a revolving horn at the top, and a unit at the bottom that spun. Spinning slowly, it gave you a rolling chorus sound; fast, a hard tremolo.”

Though not a campus person, Snyder never felt like an odd man out. “Mark made me feel welcome, and as a player, he really impressed me. I remember saying to him, ’I wish you were the bass player in my group.’ Sometimes he and I and Jake would play music after rehearsal, just for fun.” But his relationship with the college musicians pretty much ended at the chapel doors. “I didn’t hang out with them, and I wasn’t invited to. I had to be at work at seven the next morning, anyway.”

When Jim Henderson showed up, his presence was felt at once, especially by the horn players. “He was an amazing saxophonist,” says Jesse Ehrlich, who would sometimes stop in mid-rehearsal to listen. “We were happy to be on the same stage with him; we knew he was head and shoulders above us. Hendo took the whole thing up a few notches.”

Henderson says the band gelled quickly, and concurs that the goal was mimicry colored with personal expression. “We pretty much tried to sound like the record, and did the songs in the key they were recorded
in. I had some horn lines that were written out with the other brass instruments, and I had to play certain notes, but I saw myself more as a part of the rhythm section.” The opera had several spots that were open for improvisation; these would be Jim’s moments to step up, and he knew what to do with them.

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Tall, skinny, with wavy black hair and beard, Doug Wyatt resembled a modish Abe Lincoln. Several Superstar people remember him as unusual, in the sometimes distracted nature of the highly intelligent. Doug was, in Mark Teich’s opinion, “a very sweet guy, but somewhat socially awkward”; in John Hylton’s, “sort of eccentric.” “He was probably, in latter-day terminology, a geek,” Tom Breton says. In Beth Kershaw’s view, he was “kind of an odd duck.”

Bob Ulmer found him to be “not that approachable.” That may have been because, like many people with theoretical-conceptual gifts, he spent much of his time focused inwardly, on questions that to others
were unfathomable. Sometimes he could be short, when the input he needed from others was unsatisfactory or slow in coming. “Doug was not warm and fuzzy,” Breton says. “If someone came up to him, he’d answer whatever questions they had, not encourage extra conversation, and be on his way.”

Yet people liked Doug. Larry Recla remembers him as “always cordial, precise, disciplined.” To Teich he was “a deep thinker;” but also “a sensitive guy.” Gretchen Cranz, who knew Doug through campus theatrics, thought he was “very unassuming. We all knew he was brilliant in his academic endeavors, but that was coupled with huge creativity, and those don’t always go together.” “An interesting blend,” says Vinten-Johansen. “He had this whole other side, something beyond the grade point average.”

When Gettysburg lost its performance rights, the most immediate musical contingency was that the horn section and chorus would not have professional scores to work from. The planners knew they couldn’t merely approximate Superstar’s horn parts. The trained musicians, unlike the rockers, did not play such things by feel; they needed a printed standard—needed to be literally on the same page.

Teich sighs: “It would’ve been so much easier if we’d had the scores.”

It was here that Doug Wyatt proved his singularity. He decided he would transcribe the horn parts himself, recreating the score by ear and by hand. It was a considerable undertaking, especially given the impending deadline, yet it never occurred to Doug that it couldn’t be done. He took it as he took most problems that would have left other people glassy-eyed—with equanimity, and a shrug at whatever difficulties it might pose.

Today’s digital technology would make Wyatt’s job infinitely easier, but in 1971, there was only one way to do it. Freshman Owen Marks, a trumpet player and music major, was friends with Superstar chorus member Jim Starner, Wyatt’s Apple Hall roommate. “I would hang in their room sometimes while Doug was working on it,” says Marks. “You drop the needle, listen to a couple of measures, stop it, write down what you think you heard, and drop it again. He’d be playing the record and making notes as he was going. I can’t imagine how many copies he must have gone through.”

Doug has a vague memory “of being in the dorm room with a record player, and dropping the needle many times in succession. I just listened to what was on the record, and imagined how to get the same musical message across with the instruments we had.” The horns “were fairly straightforward. Lloyd Webber threw in a few meter changes, but it wasn’t anything over the top.” Doug had taken the standard high school music classes, but most of what he knew was self-taught, including his ability to write notation. “It’s something I picked up over the years, and it’s something I like to do.” He laughs: “My idea of fun.”
Accustomed via physics to equations of sublime complexity, Doug was one of those individuals gifted in both science and music for whom one informs the other. "In a way, they're both about finding patterns, enjoying patterns, putting new patterns together. I know a lot of technical people who are musical, and I think that's not an accident." Wyatt says he hears a piece of music not as a wave of melody or totality of sound but as a collection of such interlaced patterns, and that often while listening he will run a mental analysis of those patterns "on the fly."

Augmenting that was his uncanny ear for notes. "Doug had perfect pitch," says Vinten-Johansen. "I could play a note on the piano, and he'd be in the next room. I'd say 'What note is this,' and he'd tell me: 'A-sharp.' Or, 'That's a G, but slightly flat.' He was unbelievable." Other Gettysburgians also remember this ability. But Doug thinks they're mistaken. "I have excellent relative pitch—a good ear for intervals and harmony. That lets me do things like listen to a recording of Jesus Christ Superstar, hear the notes, and write them down. But if you asked me to sing a G-sharp, I couldn't pick one out of the air."

In rehearsals, the potential difficulty lay in a musical director without formal technique attempting to communicate a handwritten score to a horn section composed mostly of music majors steeped in technique. "Doug was always a very nice gentleman," says John Kuehl. "But he had no training in directing other people to play the effects he wanted, and probably felt a bit awkward at it. 'Wait a minute—you're not sounding the way I want you to sound. But I'm not sure how to get you to that point.' Because he himself was so good at it, I can imagine he was asking, 'What's the matter with you guys? How come you can't do it?'"

"He got frustrated with you if you weren't performing up to his standard," says Owen Marks, who, though ultimately absent from the March 25 performance, rehearsed with the trumpets. "Horn players are the worst as far as sitting in the background and fooling around, making an off-color comment to the guy next to you right before you play. I think that sort of stuff drove him crazy. He was a very dedicated guy, and impatient with people who weren't there to work."

"I try to be polite and respectful to everyone," says Wyatt. "But I've given the impression sometimes that when something is wrong, I want it to be made right now."

His memory, though, is that "it all came together remarkably well," and the horn players recall little difficulty in following him. "He did a fantastic job," says Ulmer, who many years later was asked to perform Superstar with a semi-professional group and realized, working from the
professional score, “how accurately Doug was able to transcribe those parts.” Here and there, says Marks, an anomaly cropped up. “We tried to play exactly what Doug gave us, whether it was ‘correct’ or not. We had to play this one hard, weird lick—a big jump, something a trumpet isn’t designed to do. I remember leaning over to Bob Nahmias and saying, ‘Pretty clear Doug’s not a trumpet player, isn’t it?’”

The inherent challenges of the parts were taken in stride. “I don’t remember it being horribly difficult,” says Marks. “We were used to difficult material,” says Jesse Ehrlich, like Marks and Kuehl a member of music professor Robert Zellner’s tightly drilled marching band. “In competitions, a lot of it is about who plays the hardest music while marching, and Zellner used to pick really tough scores, like Flight of the Bumblebee.” But Ulmer found the trumpet parts “absolutely challenging. Some of the time signatures are similar to what Dave Brubeck started in the late Fifties with ‘Take Five,’ and the key signature is not what we typically play in. For a B-flat instrument, there are a lot of sharps. A lot of sharps.”

Doug Wyatt would also be conducting Superstar, guiding the musicians through the myriad shifts of an unbroken seventy-minute performance. Teich remembers, “Doug would stand at the lectern with his back to the audience, guitar around his neck and the score in front of him. He’d lead by giving a head nod, or a point with a finger. Whenever he didn’t need
his hands, he’d play.” He was certainly easy to see: at six feet, four inches, Wyatt towered over the other participants.

Doug’s conducting was, like his transcription, self-taught. “I knew some of the basic patterns. Beyond that, it was just intuitive gestures to get across what I was trying to make the music do.” The rock band required minimal direction (“I’d give downbeats and set tempos”), so most of his conducting was of the horn players. Owen Marks describes how a discrepancy between instrumental and choral conducting came into play. “Being mostly a singer, Doug didn’t completely get what it is to conduct instrumentalists. What bands count on is the ‘ictus’—the conductor giving the downbeat in this vertical motion. They’re used to being very clear about that, whereas choir directors aren’t necessarily so definite. I think Doug was from that tradition of the ictus not being in this hard place, and we had to get used to it. I’m sure we made smart comments that would humiliate me now, if I could think of them.”

The dancing, while important, would be sparsely deployed. For the troupe, that meant short periods of strenuous movement alternating with long stretches of inactivity. Many Superstar people brought homework and studied in their down time, but the dancers probably more so: Kelly Alsedek remembers spending “a lot of time sitting in a pew with my invertebrate zoology book.”

When they were on, however, the demands were high. A common dancer’s injury is the shin splint, an aggravation of the muscle tissue around the tibia, caused by the impact of weight on the legs and feet. Because they were executing high-impact moves on an unyielding surface while barefoot, the dancers were the only performers subject to pain and physical injury. “Dancing on marble floors is tough,” says Susan Tackach. “We were doing some off-the-floor stuff and landing pretty hard.” The remedy was ice and aspirin. It wouldn’t have occurred to any of the women to withdraw. “Dancers don’t drop out,” says Vicki Berg. “Unless you’re in intensive care, you show up.”

The job of choreography “sort of fell into my lap,” says Betty-Lynn White, but she devoted herself to it. “It was all-consuming. Total investment. I never shortchanged my academics, and I was working, too, but spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, physically—it was all there.” She had sketched basic ideas against numbers that seemed most danceable: “Hosanna,” accompanying Christ’s arrival in Jerusalem; “Damned for All Time,” Judas’s wail of fear, which featured a lengthy instrumental passage; a Charleston interlude for “King Herod’s Song”; and “The 39 Lashes,” depicting Christ’s torture at the hands of Pilate.
The art of choreography, as Betty-Lynn describes it, sounds simple: “You spend time with the music and the physical structure, asking what message you want.” But the physicalization of that message as synchronous movement is never simple. This highly collaborative project required a pooling of ideas. “I think I did most of the choreography, then modifications came from the others, and we melded them to see what worked. It was open enough that if somebody thought there was a better way, we might do that.”

There are recollections of small, usually unspoken tensions between the dancers. According to Betty-Lynn, whispers, looks, and implied put-downs are common in such situations: “Dancers are notorious for being mean to each other.” She allows that, as the choreographer of record, she may not have dealt well with that dynamic. Her defense against friction, she says, “was to be incredibly sarcastic. I’m sure I wasn’t as kind as I’d like to believe I could be. But I wasn’t capable at that stage of sitting down with five dancers and saying, ‘Guys, we’re having issues, and we need to address those.’ I’d hide out from that kind of stuff.”

She may have felt emotionally safer with Larry. “I was always around him. It was like, ‘Is that working? Is that not working? Can we do this, can we do that?’” That may account for a certain distance between Betty-Lynn and the other dancers. She suggests as much: “Was I a great manager, or a great director, or very helpful to those people? Bottom line, probably not. Because I was just terribly afraid.”
Jan Kitchener describes the hurly-burly that consumed the chapel when the separate groups came together. “The dancers were practicing their parts up and down the aisle, while Larry was working with the leads in the front. The choir would come in, sit in the background, and wait. It took a while before we got the feel of what it was going to be like.”

Part of Jan’s job was to transcribe the choral parts from the album—much easier, she says, than what Doug Wyatt had done for the horns. From there, directing the choir “was pretty basic. All I really had to do was find their voice placement and make sure they could hear their parts.” Some of the untrained singers required special attention: “If they weren’t used to singing in a choir, they might have a hard time singing the countermelody instead of the melody. But the stronger singers helped them.”

She fed the chorus their material in several steps. “First we’d learn the part, then how to attack it—or how long to repeat it, because some of them were chants. I’d cue them, and a helper would sing the lead so we could hear how we sounded as the backup.” Since she would not be...
conducting the performance, Jan had to wean the singers away from her direction even as she was giving it. “I stopped cueing, and let them listen and memorize. I wasn’t going to be up there during the show, waving my arms; everybody had to learn to do it by feel.”

The chorus had been a distinctive and crucial element of the Superstar album. Jan had to preserve its humor and energy, and its progress, as Christ’s story evolves, from passionate support to fierce negation. But the performers were acting out on a live stage what existed only on record; therefore the chorus, like the leads, would have to contribute a bit of what might be termed acting. “A lot of our stuff was just singing in the background to the soloists,” Jan says, “but on other songs we had a much bigger part. After the Last Supper, ‘Look at all my trials and tribulations,’ when they get drunk and start swaying and falling down—we had a little drama in there.”

“The thing that was really cool” about the chorus, says Denise Rue, “was that it was people from all the classes.” There were three seniors,
four juniors, seven sophomores, and seven freshmen, running the gamut of majors. Some were Greeks, some independents. Relatively few belonged to one of the official college musical groups. Most were meeting each other for the first time. Inevitably friends tended to stick with friends, yet a collective spirit developed. “The chorus felt very much like a group effort,” says Rick Ludwick. “There was no sense of competition, of people trying to outdo each other.” This togetherness would prove essential as Larry Recla developed his larger ideas of how the production’s parts would function in unison.

When the chorus moved to the chapel, says Susan Fischer, “we sat or stood wherever we landed. It was like in church: you pick a spot, and that’s your spot. ‘Get outta my spot.’” The singers developed fast relationships with whoever was nearest them, and stayed serious about getting a good sound and working as a unit. Neal Smatresk, though he would solo as Pilate, was in the chorus for the group numbers. “It was quite fun,” he says of the rehearsals, “but there was a workmanlike attitude about it. We were there to learn parts, get it down, and make sure everybody came in at the right time.”

Sue Beebe too recalls the atmosphere as “fun and loose,” yet serious in intent, and relaxing in the way of work that doesn’t feel like work. That spring, Sue was student teaching at a secondary school in a nearby town, as well as working with Gettysburg students through the chapel’s community tutorial program. She spent much of her day off-campus, dealing with the moods of students, the rigors of classes, and “senioritis”—the stress and relief of being close to graduation. But on a
few of those evenings in March, she would drive back to campus, go to Christ Chapel, and release her stress in singing: *Look at all my trials and tribulations* . . .

The faculty members were all game, but they were also unused to singing solo in front of a group—or, in Ralph Cavaliere’s case, to singing at all. “To get up and do what they did took guts,” says Mark Teich. “That was something we struggled with in rehearsals. We had to work with those guys, calming them down, finding ways for them to go about it. But they worked awfully hard, and that had to have been mostly Jan Kitchener.” Tom Breton also spent extra time in the chapel with “Doc” Cavaliere, coaching him on how to open his throat and project his lines.

All four took the production seriously, if not solemnly. “We really got into it,” says Carl Leinbach. Neil Beach took his cue from the students: “I took it seriously because everybody else was serious.” “I became very involved in the music, the moves, the whole concept of it,” Cavaliere says. Sometimes wives and children would attend rehearsals. Pat Crowner, carrying her third child, remembers listening while lying in a pew, and Shirlee Cavaliere brought her two small children. Sometimes the show would follow the faculty home. The Cavaliere’s four-year-old middle child, Gregory, snapped plastic play beads together to create a “guitar,” and sat strumming it on the kitchen floor while pretending to sing *Superstar* music. When the album played, Gregory would stand on tiptoe, look down at the record, and begin to cry, thinking it was his father’s voice coming from the speaker.

“We really got into it.”
*The professors rehearse.*
The lead singers—Kershaw, Breton, Brandenburg—had the easiest and the hardest jobs of all the performers. They had only to focus on their own songs, throats, and emotions; but they would be the ones out front. Each handled the pressure differently, according to his or her nature.

For Beth, the sole female in the spotlight, it was no great strain. “I loved going to the rehearsals,” she says. “It was focused, and it was serious. Everybody was supportive of each other.” At first there were more rough edges than smooth, but she wasn’t concerned about that. “It’s always ramshackle at the beginning. You start, you stop, and you redo. The rehearsal process is always like that: ‘Let’s do that one more time.’”

Tom Breton, typically, was on a different level of anxiety. “I tried to stay away from thinking, ‘This is one of the major roles, and I don’t know what I’m doing.’ I was just trying to figure out how to do my own thing. I thought, ‘In these pop groups, I have it mapped out; I’m trying to be very accurate. But there are places on the record where Judas sings higher, sort of ad-libs, and that’s not my style. But I love this thing, I’ve been chosen to do this thing, and I’m going to keep thinking about the tunes and staying with a lot of energy.’”

When not rehearsing, Tom usually sat on a far bench, observing, brooding. “I was very introverted doing that role—watching everybody, seeing how it all fit together, staying up and ready. I never felt we weren’t moving in the direction and toward the timing that we needed. I’m sure there were problems. But they weren’t my problems.” He laughs. “I had my own.”

The mystery of Zane Brandenburg continued even after he was in the chapel. Getting acquainted with the others, he was reserved, and as far as most were concerned, he stayed that way. “Technically he worked hard at the role,” Betty-Lynn White says. “But he didn’t want to have much part in the rest of it.” John Hylton had little personal interaction with Zane, but says he came off as “quiet and gentle, not a boisterous person.” Beth Kershaw describes him as “very charismatic and easy to work with.” Other women in the company, as noted previously, were having or would soon have differing experiences with him.

Tom Breton felt that “Zane was always a very warm guy. It was a pleasure to have him there, exciting to have him in the role; he did things
with his voice that I wished I could do. But he was a space cadet, too. There was no doubt about that. “I definitely had the feeling we were of different ilks,” says Gretchen Cranz. But she sensed that Zane was “a very interesting character. I think I was kind of in awe of him.”

Mark Teich was wondering how Zane would come across in the chapel—if the Brandenburg reputation would hold up in the present tense. In the early rehearsals, he says, “I was a little worried; it didn’t always seem like he was mastering the passages. Some of what he had to sing was immensely challenging, so that didn’t come as a surprise. But we were still stumbling through this, literally days before we had to put it on, and I wondered what was going on here.

“There was scuttlebutt that he may have had a drug problem. When you hear that, and you’re in a situation like we were, with a limited time-frame, it heightens your anxiety.”

Zane was no abler than anyone else to be something he was not. As rehearsals progressed, he would seldom socialize freely, or open himself to strangers. Instead he would put every energy into his singing. It was then that people saw the instinctive performer; heard the possessed vocalist, and realized there was a dynamo inside the small, quiet, mysterious man.
Then there were the technical aspects: light and sound.

While most of the show would occur in unfiltered overhead light, some dramatic spotting would be employed. Meanwhile the combination of instruments, voices, and ambience entailed a public-address setup with mixing capabilities. Systems for both would have to be brought in, and scaffolding built.

John Vannorsdall connected Larry with Rex Maddox, the college’s Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds since 1956. With responsibilities ranging from snow removal to landscaping, plumbing to electrical repairs, Maddox was accustomed to solving problems. He and his people built two elevated platforms, twelve to fifteen feet in height, one for each rear corner of the nave. They would hold speakers, and one would also carry a spotlight borrowed from the Theater Arts department. The light would be operated by junior Gregory Grigg.

The planners wanted the best sound system they could manage, but no one on campus had the necessary equipment or expertise. Vannorsdall’s suggestion was to employ a firm from Camp Hill, the same one used by the Central Pennsylvania Synod to wire its annual conventions. “Perfectly logical on his part, gracious on his part, and made sense to me,” Larry says. But the resulting sound-check was not what anyone had hoped for—probably because the firm, experienced at setting basic levels for speeches and the like, knew nothing about wiring a rock concert. “I had kids looking at me, going, ‘Really?’ It was, ‘Oh, no. Uh-uh. No, no, no. N-noo0000000000.’”

Two men, Cam Hitchcock and Tom Simpson, wound up in charge of the sound. Both were non-college people and independent contractors, possibly freelancers doing similar jobs for schools, churches, and concert promoters in central Pennsylvania. No documentation or recollection tells
us how they were found, or how they went about their jobs once hired, but indications are that the system—mixing board, microphones, cables, amps, speakers—was brought in by Hitchcock, who would receive credit as chief sound engineer, with Simpson listed as “consultant.” Larry’s vague memory is that Hitchcock worked with the audio-visual department of the Gettysburg school system, and was well-paid for the job.*

The soloists would sing into hand-held microphones, the chorus into six stand-up mikes. These fed into a two-fold amplification system—main speakers for the audience, and monitor speakers, placed closer to the stage, directed at the audience yet enabling the performers to hear themselves. Given the chapel’s high, concave ceiling and other acoustical peculiarities, speaker placement and sound levels took extensive calibration. Music that was loud on the chancel might struggle over the nave to reach the back rows and balcony as a muffled, chaotic din. “It was like playing in a fishbowl,” says Jim Henderson. “There was a lot of natural reverberation, and a sense of not knowing how it was sounding out front.”

For further complication, the acoustics changed depending on how many people were in the chapel. At the start of rehearsals, with the nave empty, the band had experienced bounce-back, its sound returning from the void in a flurry of echoes. That caused difficulty in keeping musicians and chorus together. “It was a big, empty cavern, and everything would just echo on,” says Steve Snyder.

* The bulk of the production costs were covered by a grant from the LCA’s Boards of College Education and Church Vocations.
The only others in costume were the faculty. It was Larry’s idea to drape them in black academic robes. “In the story you’ve got officials, and we’ve got faculty members who are willing to have fun. Let’s play off priestly robes with academic gowns. It came under the category of no-brainer.” Yet the professors themselves don’t recall being aware of any irony. “I don’t think any of us really picked up on that,” says Carl Leinbach. Dave Crowner shrugs, “Never thought of it.” “They didn’t get to be faculty members if they were stupid,” says Recla, begging to differ.

*Superstar* would be performed, basically, as an oratorio—in narrative sequence, but with a minimum of theatrical devices. There would be some physical interaction, some business involving props or pantomime, but only the dancers would use their bodies fully. The chorus would stand or sit on the three steps between chancel and altar. The soloists would deliver their numbers from the forward chancel, with only enough movement to avoid looking stiff. (The exception was Breton, who would embody Judas’s exile by singing mostly from the pulpit on the chancel’s far right side.)

Sophomore John Abrassart, an artist and acquaintance of Betty-Lynn White’s, was asked to produce layout drawings for use in diagramming lights and blocking. To keep track of logistics, Gretchen Cranz had customized her libretto, pasting each page onto a large sheet, leaving margins for notes.
Since the chapel hadn’t been designed for this type of performance, allowances had to be made. The rock band was situated in the rear left of the sanctuary, with pianist Myers in the center, before the altar; tuba player Dan Beach behind him. Ahead of the rockers were the horn players; between the two units stood Jim Henderson. The horns were squeezed with music stands in the spaces between chorus benches, and standing at different heights. “It was a little tricky getting in there,” says Bob Ulmer. The dancers likewise had to adjust to limited space. Their entrance down the narrow side aisles on the “Hosanna” number called for
choreography favoring upward arm movements because, as Betty-Lynn says, “You don’t want to hit anybody in the face.” She was aided by a spotter in the balcony, calling out the perspective from above.

The chorus would be literally at the center of things. Jan Kitchener had developed an *esprit de corps* among her singers, and that closeness, the sense of a community within a community, was vital. Larry Recla had a vision of the role this group needed to play in the production, and it went back to something he’d experienced when very young.

“I was watching a TV show. You’ve got tap dancers. One person comes out, and the others clap while he does a solo number. He goes back, others come out. I’m enthralled. I hear my father say, ‘Watch—the joy is in them watching the person doing the solo.’ So when I talk about the chorus as my fulcrum, that’s what I mean. In my head it’s the *Greek* chorus, the place for the audience to look to see who *they* are.”

Larry never made any of this explicit. Rather, “it was a matter of encouraging what was already there. I do remember saying out loud, ‘The chorus is our key. If they’re happy and excited, this will fly.’” Jan says she “knew we had to remain engaged. This was an opera, not a musical, where you have action and lines and then stop for a song. The music was constant, and we were the crowd. We were the ones yelling ‘Hosanna,’ the ones yelling ‘Crucify!’ We were clapping our hands to the cracks of the whip that was breaking Jesus. You couldn’t help but be engaged.”

Richard Schindler too recalls an implied sense of the chorus’s role. “It was something Larry communicated in terms of when we sang, how we sang, and how we moved. We’re the metaphor for the audience, but at the same time, we invite them in. Part of what I liked was breaking that barrier, inviting the audience to participate. It’s a commentary on the action, but it’s also an engagement for the audience, because we *are* the audience.” Denise Rue remembers the chorus being encouraged to move their bodies, make eye contact, and never let their expressions go dead. It helped remind them, she says, that they were “a very important part of the show. Mary and Jesus were incredible singers—you’d sit there in awe, even in practice—but they made us feel we were just as important.”

“I watched the leads very carefully,” says Susan Fischer, “and made faces at the right places, like I was supposed to. If someone caught me sleeping they’d go, ‘Wake up!’”

A few key adornments would help shape the atmosphere. Most prominent of these was a blue flag sewn with a white *Superstar* emblem, suspended over the rear of the chancel—a loan from Larry’s colleague John Hagedorn, pastor at St. Mark’s Lutheran Church in nearby Hanover. Hagedorn also
contributed a banner proclaiming “HE LIVES!” in bold colors and post-psychadelic lettering; hanging from the balcony over the center aisle, it would be perfect for the finale Larry had in mind.*

One element had to be hidden, not shown. On the reredos, or rear wall, of the sanctuary, looming over the rehearsals—yet unknown to many of the students—was a mural in marble and glass depicting Jesus leading a Gettysburg graduate from Christ Chapel into the world, over an inscription from the Book of John. Based on Henry Hanson’s idea, it was the work of Leif Neandross, designer of the original ceiling murals for the Empire State Building. Supposedly, Neandross had fashioned the graduate’s face as a composite of an unidentified senior class; this being Gettysburg in 1952, the graduate, in addition to wearing a crewcut, was Caucasian and male.

The mural was a source of some embarrassment to John Vannorsdall. Before him, few had noted, or cared, that it implied a racial and cultural norm against which Gettysburg students were to be judged. After him, it became, as a 1965 Gettysburgian article put it, “the subject of much attention and controversy,” with reactions ranging from tourists requesting reverential private views to students boycotting chapel rather than having to stare at “that picture.” Within a few years, the mural was covered virtually all the time. Eventually a program for Sunday services carried the notice, “Someday, an Italian mosaic is going to be discovered in Christ Chapel. Historians may wish to know that it disappeared on February 15, 1970.”

That fall, two consultants were hired by the Commission on Church Architecture to assess the mural; Larry Recla was present for one of their visits. “What I remember is this gentleman sitting in one of the front pews, the covering being lowered, him looking down with some disgust, and with hand over face going, ‘Enough, enough. Cover it. Cover it.’” Noting

* Also overhanging the chancel was an artwork, fashioned from iron rods, depicting a flying dove. Created in 1967, it was the work of Bob Schaper ’69, a campus protest leader and Vannorsdall acolyte.
the mural's blasphemous visualization of Jesus and man as equals, the consultants in their report recoiled from its “silly piety,” which was forced on “a captive audience” in “a brutal head-on confrontation” from which there was no escape “outside of blindness.”

In the spring of 1971, the image was covered by a drapery of red and white cloths. Along with Hagedorn’s banner, these would provide the Superstar backdrop. That the mural’s Hollywood Christ and crewcut cipher should remain out of sight was one of the few things on which Vannorsdall and Recla could completely, harmoniously agree.

Larry seems to have done most of his directing of the performers by not directing—or sometimes even talking. He remembers someone saying, after it was all over, that “Recla directed this by the expression on his face.” “I take that to mean that, as I’m watching rehearsal, people are looking to see whether or not I approve. And that was done, in the majority, nonverbally. Or how about minimally verbal. Because it’s quite that simple: ‘How the hell much direction do you need? You’re standing there—go.’ Am I giving direction to the dancers on how to dance? No. Am I approving this, disapproving that, encouraging this, pulling that back? Yes. Based on what’s presented to me.
“When I say this was emerging and coalescing, I do not mean it was cavalier and slipshod. If I didn’t like something, it didn’t happen. The words would on one level appear to be contradictory: ‘coalescing,’ ‘emerging’—‘disciplined.’ But that was how you knew it had coalesced: when it had become a discipline.”

“It was funny,” says Tom Breton. “I thought Larry was leading things, but really he was an enabler. He wasn’t one to say, ‘This is what we’re going to do.’ But he was relentless in moving ahead until each question was resolved to people’s satisfaction. You’ve got to have someone pushing it forward.”

Everyone agrees that Recla was that someone. “He never made you feel he wasn’t open to ideas,” Betty-Lynn White says. “But the big pictures, the blocking, how the chorus was supposed to be—those were Larry’s ideas. It was clear that he ran the show.” That’s confirmed by Gretchen Cranz: “Larry was the exclusive point man. If he asked, we wanted.” But he never dictated. People note his openness to collaboration—an openness which to him was closer to dependency, since he had no musical, theatrical, or dance training to call on. “He was making suggestions, but they weren’t directive, unlike the way he sometimes was,” says Cranz. “He let everybody interpret their part the way they felt it should be interpreted,” says Beth Kershaw. “He was easygoing, and very open to suggestions.”

Jan Kitchener was impressed by Larry’s passion. “He was obsessed with this musical, with how it could reach people who’d never be reached by ordinary services. He wanted to reach everybody with this message.”

Richard Schindler had the same response. “To Larry it was a real statement, and that drove us, because we were making that statement. He had a connection with our mindset, the way we looked at the world, and I remember his energy and his involvement: he was so immersed in this. I thought he was an amazing person.”

He was also, at times, snarky, inscrutable, and superior; the definition of an acquired taste. Not everyone knew rapture in his presence. “I didn’t like him,” says Rick Ludwick. “I didn’t like what he was about. I felt he didn’t have any depth.” Even Tom Breton, though impressed by Larry’s commitment, felt alienated from him. Maybe because of the intern’s aversion to interpersonal “sincerity,” their interactions even when positive and useful were not deep, and didn’t extend beyond the chapel; e.g., Tom wasn’t among the regulars at the Recla farmhouse.

“He didn’t seem overly interested in getting to know me,” Tom says. “I was taking this inward trip on my own energy, letting that push me along, and not reacting to all the dramatic inflections possible in my role. During rehearsals, Larry said, ‘There are different intensities and emotions in different parts of your songs. You could vary those a bit.’ That’s the only direction he ever gave me, and I wonder if I just looked at him like a cow in front of a new gate.”
“I guess he wanted to see whether something like that would have an effect on me. I probably listened to him, didn’t say anything, and went back to doing what I was doing before. He may have thought, ‘That didn’t get me much—I guess I’ll let him do his own interpretation.’ So there were a couple of places he might interject something, and if it was accepted and helped things along, good. If it didn’t, he didn’t get bent out of shape. He saw that we were all in tune.”

Recla never used Superstar as an excuse to discuss theology or preach at people. “The play and the experience had an integrity of their own,” he says. “What I would have been most interested in is following the pulse and the flow and the passion. In terms of using it to achieve something extraneous—‘I’d like to sell you Fuller brushes, but notice how this brush looks like the Virgin Mary. Let’s talk about Christmas’—no.”

Judging from his career before and after Superstar, Larry’s methods have more to do with striking sparks and fanning flames than with laying battle plans or shifting bodies. Despite his social views and often his language, he is more yogi than platoon leader. Paradoxically for a misanthrope, he genuinely enjoys watching other people shine, and takes great satisfaction in knowing that he has played a part in their success.

“One thing I very much like to do,” he says, “is what I call making room at the table. Some people find that freeing and inviting. Others apparently find it puzzling. Some have found it a sign of weakness—those who operate entirely by authority, and assume that their role in life is to give or deny permission.

“I’m able to deal with patterns and ideas and trends much more than details. I could read a book or hear a lecture and get the idea, then churn that idea out in terms of: ‘If that’s true, then maybe this is true, too. Boom-boom-boom.’ Superstar was an example of that. I can’t read music. I’ve never been trained in drama. But I can get the idea, put things together, excite myself, and make room at the table.”

Carl Leinbach became a big Recla fan in the course of rehearsals. “Nobody at the college before or since has done anything close to this,” he says. “Larry took it and, my gosh, did he run with it.” Not only ran with it, but brought it home—while seeming only to stand there and watch.

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The show, Larry had decided, would run no more than seventy or seventy-five minutes. Since the album was just under ninety, cuts were in order. His changes to the libretto were therefore partly to make things tighter and faster. “Early on, I established a narrative,” he says, “and that was the overarching thing: did it fit the narrative or not? Second, did it fit my criteria for simplicity, openness, and delight? If it didn’t add to the
narrative; if it took time; if it was one more piece of complexity—it was
gone.”

A verse was cut from the “Simon Zealotes/Poor Jerusalem” medley; two songs, “Pilate’s Dream” and “Peter’s Denial,” were dropped altogether. The most significant change, while it trimmed the running time considerably, was mainly meant to dramatize Larry’s variation on the Christ story. The album, after climaxing with “Superstar,” decrescendos with “The Crucifixion,” in which a faltering Christ commends his spirit to God, and concludes tragically with an orchestral reprise of Christ’s Gethsemane plaint, here named for the John verse that describes his burial cave. The mournful, even defeatist style of this ending posed theological and emotional problems for some Christians. As Cheryl A. Forbes had recently written in *Christianity Today*, the album’s “wordless finale . . . leaves Christ in the grave. No faith and no victory emerge from this weary music, but the relentless quest remains, haunting and hollow.”

By not dramatizing the resurrection, Lloyd Webber and Rice had opted for an ending more modern, anti-heroic, and challenging than Christians were used to in their art. Post-war fiction, film, music, and painting had established that negation could be a powerful artistic principle, and that “the relentless quest” for belief—in anything—had particular dramatic and existential meanings in the wake of the gas chamber and the atom bomb. Still, it was easy to argue that cutting the resurrection from a passion play would have been like Melville ending *Moby-Dick* before Ahab confronted the whale. Whitney Myers, for one, had felt troubled by this all along. “The way it’s written, there’s no mention of the resurrection, or of the witnesses who encountered Jesus afterward, or of the impact he had on them. It seemed to me it ended too early.”

That was roughly how Larry Recla felt. So the performance he conceived would offer no tortured prayer from the cross, would end with no modernist ambiguity. It would end instead with “Superstar;” the album’s peak of musical excitement, replayed as a marathon finale combining, in triumphal unity, the apotheosis of martyrdom with the ecstasy of resurrection.*

Jan Kitchener, who was in on these discussions, remembers that “Larry didn’t want to end it on a down. He said, ‘The story of Jesus doesn’t end with mourning. It ends with resurrection.’” “That was Larry’s conception,” Mark Teich confirms. “That was all his.”

One chorus member disliked the choice then, and dislikes it now. Rick

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* There were also musical reasons for excising the “Crucifixion” number, which began with the sound of nails being hammered and elaborated a dirge-like synthesizer chord with electronically distorted laughter, moans, and cries. Less a song than a soundscape, it was beyond the musicians’ capabilities to reproduce live. The closing instrumental, written for a string quartet, presented its own performance problems.
JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR
A ROCK OPERA

TIM RICE
OCTOBER ONE
Ludwick says Larry never explained his removal of the crucifixion to the cast at large. “We just cut it. And it was, like, weird. I don’t know that I ever believed that Christ takes on the sins of the world—that all sins past, present, and future are forgiven through imputation. It wasn’t that. It was the idea that you’d chop out this critical point in a play. To me it was like living in a fantasy: this guy’s a superstar, and he’s going to solve all the problems of the world. To do it without cost felt phony.”

Ludwick says other cast members approached John Vannorsdall to question Recla’s decision. “JV’s response was, ‘It’s Larry’s baby, and he gets to choose. I’m staying out of it.’ He wanted Larry to run it his way and take responsibility for his choices. But there was controversy. I mean, come on: the world doesn’t have any pain in it? Everybody lives happily, we all sing hosannas and wave a magic wand and everything’s good? The world doesn’t require sacrifice—it just happens? It was a Super Bowl kind of thing, and it tinged my perception of who Larry was.”

“Who Larry was” would be answered differently by different people. But he’d experienced sacrifice, and harbored few illusions about the power of music, words, or wands to turn pain into victory. If he was anything, he was both a deep believer and an intuitive showman.

“The record ended one way,” Larry says. “That wasn’t the way I was going to end it.”

His Superstar would run on two parallel tracks: a story of human relationships, and a trip through Holy Week. “The show would have velocity—plot, if you will—only in terms of Holy Week. Other than that, the focus was relational: Jesus, Judas, Mary Magdalene, and the disciples.” On the level of velocity and plot, “you have a trial. After a trial, you have the result. The crucifixion as such, dramatically, was done as ‘The 39 Lashes.’ You’ve got the lashes, the dance, and the impact of that. Then we went to ‘Superstar,’ done as the resurrection. Notice the relationship. What made that crucifixion, and that resurrection, was entirely psychical and dramatic—not narrative.”

If that seems obscure, a translation might read this way: As both theater and message, the production depended on a cumulative energy directed toward celebratory release. Inasmuch as a crucifixion scene would impede that by lingering on misery and subjecting the audience to anticlimactic music on the way out—“no faith and no victory”—it could, and should, be removed. Instead, let pain and sacrifice be conveyed by a drawn-out lashing scene, resurrection and redemption by Jesus rising in triumph on the backs of those who had sentenced him.

Hopelessly irreverent in his approach to texts both sacred and profane, Larry also had an innate theatrical sense of what would work. He knew that people could fill in any missing bits for themselves, as they walked out on a celebratory high instead of a remorseful low. His ending
was undeniably “a Super Bowl moment,” but it was also typical of both his earthy character and his spiritual passion: far from pale and sepulchral, his Christ was full-blooded and riding high.

The production had taken on different meanings for the performers. To some, it was simply a pleasant thing to be involved in. “It was nice music, and something fun to do,” says Vicki Berg. “It had no particular bearing on my beliefs,” says John Kuehl. “I enjoyed taking part, but it produced no revelations or changes.” Others, like Barbara Hanson, while they felt no personal resonances, appreciated what they saw as the project’s implications. “I wouldn’t say it was a deep religious experience, but it was meaningful to be part of that story. It seemed counter to so much else that was going on around us.”

Of course, there were those who dug it for reasons having nothing to do with society or spirituality. “More than the message,” says Doug Wyatt, “my interest was in all the disparate pieces you had to put together to make it work.” “It was a vehicle,” says Mark Teich. “The storyline, the religious aspect, even the theatrical side, really weren’t motivating me. I was there to play music. When Moss Carpet fell apart, I was floundering. Superstar was like somebody threw me a rope, and I grabbed it, and I was able to get past a rough patch. I had to devote a lot of time to it, and the levels of expectation were off the ceiling, so I had to organize my studying. When that happened, my grades started to improve. I started running at that time, and I haven’t stopped. A lot of good came from that rope being thrown. I was not alone in that.”

Superstar involvement took on, for others still, a spiritual relevance that may have surprised them. For Paul Hitchens, “it was a religious experience. It didn’t change my religion—I can’t say that—but it had some impact. I just can’t put my finger on it.” “I don’t wear my faith on my sleeve,” says Rick Ludwick, “so to be up there expressing it was important to me.”

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“There was absolutely a spiritual aspect,” says Clay Sutton. “My ideas of religion and what it meant to me were changing. I was realizing that Jesus Christ was possibly very different than he’d been portrayed. That was a bit radical to me, and it was part of that reinvention of ourselves that was going on in colleges across the nation.”

The show led a few people to question themselves on their own beliefs. Whitney Myers says, “Superstar ends with the question, ‘Do you think you’re what they say you are?’ But there’s an implied question: ‘Do we believe you were what you said you were?’ That needs to be answered too.” Superstar humanized Jesus for Gretchen Cranz: “It made his miracles more powerful, because it wasn’t God waving a magic wand. It was the power of God in Jesus that was healing people. I think very few of us felt it was centered on God, but that was okay; sometimes God works best when people don’t know he’s working.” Richard Schindler says that taking part “reminded me of why, for all my counter-cultural assumptions and behavior, I was still very religious. But I also saw the revolutionary aspect—that Christ was a revolutionary, that Christianity should be revolutionary.”

For two other performers, Superstar was an important station in journeys that continue today. “At the time, much of it really communicated to me,” says John Hylton. “But Jesus Christ Superstar presents a shallow view of Jesus. I was shallow, too, but what I’ve come to realize is that Jesus is fully God and fully man, and that things went according to his plan. Superstar is focused on the human aspect of Jesus, and I think that’s important, but it presents him as the tool of a higher power, when in reality this was a plan he’d had throughout time.”

For Suzanne Smith, the show’s human focus was most meaningful. “I loved that it looked at Jesus from that standpoint. Religiously, I accepted him as the son of God, but I felt it was equally important that he was human, that he felt those pains and sorrows, that it wasn’t easy following the path his life led him down. What was this very unusual human experiencing?

‘And I became aware for the first time of the political background of his ministry—how strongly the Jews were looking for someone to lead them out of the bondage of the Roman Empire, and how worried the
religious leaders were that the Romans would come down on them. They didn’t want to see this revolt of the people around a new messiah. I was beginning to see that politics is never separate: it affects your personal life, and your religious life. There’s a cycle going on. They’re forming each other.”

Being in *Jesus Christ Superstar* “was the most religious experience I’ve ever had,” says Ralph Cavaliere. “The singing, the rehearsing, the dialogue, the whole concept of this man. It put so much reality into it; it was so human. Usually when you see Jesus he’s got a halo, and there are colored lights behind him, and he’s *bright*. It doesn’t look real. This person was real. And he was suffering.”

* *

For weeks, the college had sensed something unusual brewing in the chapel. Sue Tackach says the rehearsals “became a part of school life early on.” Through open doors and windows, “the sound floated around the school. All through the process, people walked by, came in, sat for a while, and left.” As a series of run-throughs neared, everyone felt the rise in anticipation. “It got more intense as we came closer;” says Neal Smatresk. “We felt like we had something pretty good.”
The last week of rehearsals saw all the groups finally coming together. On Tuesday, March 16, the first run-through with the dancers; two nights later, the first general rehearsal with all groups. The night after that, Dave Bauer had his first full session with the band. The afternoon of the 20th was reserved for targeted rehearsal on rough spots, and Sunday night saw the first all-group run-through of the whole show. On Monday, March 22, a final rehearsal was devoted to problem points.

As the parts were joined and fine tuning continued, Jake Vinten-Johansen realized that the idea hatched in the basement a little over three months before had become “a living thing.” “We knew we were doing something that would attract attention from the community as well as the students,” says Sue Beebe. John Hylton remembers “an impetus beginning to develop, a sense that we were part of something special.” “I don’t think we realized how special,” says Carl Leinbach.

Lights and sound were installed, levels taken and cues adjusted almost to the last minute. “It was great to have lights in place,” says Jim Henderson, and as for the acoustics, “the main thing was to keep the amps down on the bass, guitar, and drums. Probably Dave Bauer had to use light sticks; he needed to have a driving rhythm for the rock songs, but not be too loud.” Jake remembers sound men Hitchcock and Simpson doing

Dave Bauer arrived just before run-throughs began. “I was nervous,” says Mark Teich.
checks from all over the chapel: “We had people in the balcony, in the corners, in the center, down below.”

The first run-through before an audience began at 7 p.m. on March 23. Barely even a dress rehearsal, it was mostly a chance for performers and technicians to work with actual bodies on the benches. Few people knew about it, and few showed up. Anyway, the next night, Wednesday the 24th, was seen as the real run-through—the one that mattered, equivalent to an out-of-town tryout before a Broadway opening. A notice had appeared in Tuesday’s Potpourri: “Some people who are really into Superstar invite their friends to share their experience at Christ Chapel on either Wed. Mar. 24 or Thurs. Mar. 25 at 8 p.m.” It was written in the vague language mandated by John Vannorsdall, but by now everyone knew what that “experience” was meant to be—if not what it would feel like.

The doors of the chapel swung open at seven-thirty. People wandered in, took seats, folded their coats, chatted, and waited.

It’s difficult to say how it seemed to most of the audience, but the performers may have wished they’d gotten in one more rehearsal—or a dozen more. What distinguishes the night for those who recall it are the mistakes and miscues, the things that didn’t flow quite right or that simply went wrong. “From the band standpoint,” says Mark Teich, “it wasn’t very tight. I was nervous about the drummer; he just didn’t seem up to the task. The professors struggled somewhat. It was very disjointed.”

The biggest mishap occurred early on. Jan Kitchener was in the balcony with a very nervous Larry Recla. “All of a sudden,” she says, “the music stopped. Then the singers stopped. The band just started jamming. Larry had his head in his hands, and he looked up and went, ‘What’s going on? What’s going on?!?’”

“The place was hushed,” Vinten-Johansen remembers, “and we’d just started to play. I looked over at Doug Wyatt. He was holding a broken guitar string.”

“I played a loud chord that snapped the string,” Wyatt says, chuckling. “It was a problem, and it needed to be fixed. Spontaneously, the band started vamping on one of the songs.” Wyatt clambered back through
the horn section and vanished into the sacristy, the small supply room adjacent to the chancel, where he’d had the foresight to stash backup strings.

The band went on improvising in his absence. “We were playing some bluesy thing, I don’t even remember what,” says Jake. “We were on that for probably five minutes, and the natives were getting restless. But it filled up the time, Doug got back onstage, and we started over.” During the unplanned interlude, Jan says, “Larry was going nuts. I said, ‘Don’t worry. They’re in control.’ It was cool that the band picked it up and starting jamming—the audience was clapping and singing and swaying. When it finally got going again, it was okay. The comment from Wyatt later on was, ‘That’s the first time I ever had to stop a show because of a broken G-string.’”

And the evening rolled along: highs, lows, mumbled lyrics, strangled notes, passion running into excess. It probably wasn’t that bad, but it probably wasn’t that good, either. The “Blood Money” number was marked by a minor embarrassment. One of the show’s few props was a small bag, filled with pebbles and tied with a drawstring, representing the silver paid to Judas for revealing Jesus’s location. At the key moment, one of the priests had to toss the bag to Tom Breton in the elevated pulpit. “The bag didn’t even make it to him,” says Teich. “It was a terrible throw.” Breton had to step down to retrieve the bag. “You go on as if it didn’t happen,” Mark says.

Throughout the performance, Larry darted nervously from place to place, sitting in different areas for different numbers, getting the audience’s view from all over. At several points, he was close to freaking out. Each flubbed lyric and late entrance gave him a minor heart attack. “I had to keep calming him down,” says Jan. “‘Don’t worry, Larry, it’s gonna go. Everybody’s excited. Everybody knows what they’re supposed to do. And there’s nothing you or I can do at this point to fix anything.’”

Overall, though, the final run-through left Larry astonished and invigorated. He’d known for weeks that they had something. Tonight, for all its flaws, had shown him the effect it might have on people. “It was at that point,” he says, “and not until that point, that I and I think everyone else went, ‘Whoa. Something big is going on.’”

The audience, which he estimates at between six hundred and seven hundred people, had brought dimensions of energy and presence that took everything to a new level. The joining of musical sections had been one transformation of ideal into real, as had the blending in of choral voices, dance numbers, and technical aspects. But the coming together of performers and audience—a real audience, substantial and responsive—was something else. This is what it was all for.

∗
A performance program was printed in the chapel basement. It bore an embossed representation of Christ’s sepulcher surmounted by a brilliant light; in the doorway were the words, “He is not here ... he is risen.”

Below were listed the musical numbers and the characters singing them, with songs grouped by the places and days of Holy Week: Bethany on Saturday, Jerusalem on Sunday, the Temple on Monday, etc. The more observant audience members would see that the time and location of the final number were noted thus: Thursday night, Gettysburg, 3/25/71.
THOSE OF US WHO ARE REALLY INTO

JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR

WELCOME YOU TO SHARE IN THIS EXPERIENCE WITH US

We remind you that because of limited facilities, there may be NO SMOKING in the building, also please keep all aisles clear; they are used for the dancers during parts of the singing.

OVERTURE

Saturday, Bethany

Heaven on Their Minds .......................... Judas
What's the Buzz ................................. Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Apostles
Strange Thing Mystifying ...................... Jesus, Judas
Everything's Alright ............................ Mary Magdalene, Judas, Jesus

Sunday, Jerusalem

This Jesus Must Die .............................. Caiphas, Annas, Priests
Hosanna ........................................ Caiphas, Jesus, Chorus
Simon Zealotes ................................. Simon Zealotes, Chorus
Poor Jerusalem .................................. Jesus

Monday, The Temple

The Temple ...................................... Jesus, Moneylenders and Merchants
Everything's Alright ............................ Mary Magdalene, Jesus
I Don't Know How to Love Him .............. Mary Magdalene

Tuesday

Damned For All Time ............................ Judas, Annas, Caiphas
Blood Money ..................................... Judas, Annas, Caiphas, Chorus

INTERMISSION

Thursday Night

The Last Supper ................................. Jesus, Judas, Apostles
Gethsemane ..................................... Jesus
The Arrest ...................................... Caiphas, Annas, Jesus

Friday

Pilate and Christ ............................... Pilate, Jesus
King Herod's Song .............................. Herod
Judas' Death ................................... Judas, Priest, Caiphas, Chorus
Trial Before Pilate ............................. Pilate, Caiphas, Jesus, Chorus
(including the 39 lashes)

Thursday Night, Gettysburg, 3/25/71

Superstar ...................................... Judas, Chorus
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Lawrence R. Recla</td>
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<tr>
<td>Director-Coordinator</td>
<td>Lawrence R. Recla</td>
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<tr>
<td>Musical Director</td>
<td>Doug Wyatt</td>
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<tr>
<td>Choral Director</td>
<td>Jan Kitchener</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choreographer</td>
<td>Betty-Lynn White</td>
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</tbody>
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- **Jesus Christ** . . . Zane Brandenburg
- **Judas** . . . Tom Breton
- **Mary Magdalene** . . . Beth Kershon
- **Herod** . . . John Hylton
- **Pilate** . . . Neal Smatresk
- **Simon Zealotes** . . . Mark Dryfoos
- **Caiaphas** . . . Carl Keimach
- **Annas** . . . Ralph Cavaliere, David Crowner

**BAND - Doug Wyatt**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Trumpets</td>
<td>James Donough</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Bass</td>
<td>Robert Ulmer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organ</td>
<td>Jesse Ehrlich</td>
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<tr>
<td>Piano</td>
<td>Roy Cise</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drums</td>
<td>John Kuehl</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saxophone</td>
<td>Dan Beach</td>
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**CHORUS - Jan Kitchener**

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Susan Beebe</td>
<td>Rick Ludwig</td>
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<tr>
<td>K. J. Dixon</td>
<td>Bruce MacKinnon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peggy Dungan</td>
<td>Alice Murgheyn</td>
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<td>Sue Fischer</td>
<td>Albert H. Papp, III</td>
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<td>Sharon Fuller</td>
<td>Bethany Parr</td>
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<td>Nancy Group</td>
<td>Denise Rue</td>
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<td>Paul Hitchens</td>
<td>Richard Schindler</td>
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<td>Craig Kegerise</td>
<td>Jim Starners</td>
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<td>Mark Kleinle</td>
<td>Bonnie Stephan</td>
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<td>Donna Loster</td>
<td>Kathie Zurich</td>
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**DANCERS - Betty-Lynn White**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kelly Alsedek</td>
<td>Barbara Hanson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yolanda V. Berg</td>
<td>Suzanne Smith</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Betty-Lynn White</td>
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**Soloist, "39 Lashes"**

**Soloist, "Damned For All Time"**

**DIRECTOR'S STAFF - PLANNING COMMITTEE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tom Breton</td>
<td>Photographer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neal Smatresk</td>
<td>Sound Consultant</td>
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<tr>
<td>J. Mark Teich</td>
<td>Director's Assistant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Betty-Lynn White</td>
<td>Layout Drawings</td>
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**BAND ARRANGEMENTS BY:**

Doug Wyatt, J. Mark Teich, Jakob Vinten-Johansen, Tom Breton

Financed by Chaplains' Office

Ushers by Alpha Phi Omega
“You heard about it,” says Jean LeGros. “Grapevine. People saying, ‘We have to go.’ You knew it was going to be huge.” Michael Birkner, the new editor-in-chief of The Gettysburgian, did not come as a journalist. “I was there because it was a campus moment. There was a buzz that this was going to be something different and exciting.”

Starting time had been announced for eight o’clock, but people began to gather a couple of hours early, as the sun was going down. First came kids in long hair, headbands, and bell bottoms, others in V-neck sweaters, Ban-Lon, and midi-skirts. Then older people: faculty, staff, the common curious from Gettysburg, Hanover, Littlestown, and York. This infusion of straightness, of thin lapels and housewifely dresses and half horn-rims, kept the assemblage from looking like any miniature Woodstock. Whatever this event would be, it was for anyone who came.

Buses roared into view, inching through the human traffic; from them came area church groups, youth clubs, and nuns in rippling habits. In no time, a few dozen people had become a few hundred. They kept coming, and the few hundred became several hundred. Hundreds to fill the front walk, cram the vestibule, clog the stairways so that reaching the balcony became a lengthy trudge. Hundreds to fill the balcony itself, and the deep alcoves that held the stained-glass windows. Hundreds to fill the nave below, to pack the benches, line the walls, wedge into the windowsills, sit with knees pulled close on the floor before the chancel.
Most of the Christ Lutheran Church choir were there, at the invitation of John Hylton. So were the faculty performers’ wives and children. “We got there early,” says Shirlee Cavaliere. “It was almost like an athletic event. I was sitting there with these two little bodies, wondering where we’d go if things turned bad.” Junior Mike O’Brien, Chapel Council member and managing editor of *The Gettysburgian*, arrived early with his date. “I didn’t know what to expect,” he says. “I’d read about Superstar, but I hadn’t heard the music.” Spotting a frazzled Larry Recla in the lobby, O’Brien approached him and asked where to go to get the best view. “He said nothing. With his hands clasped in front of his face, he simply pointed to the balcony. Up we went.”

There were people, mostly youth, who’d come all the way from Philly and DC, from South Jersey and Virginia. There may have been a few from as far out as Chicago. Or that’s what the performers would hear later, as apocrypha accrued around the event. Carl Leinbach says, “I heard a story that someone was hitchhiking, and a group of students picked him up. The guy said, ‘I’m going to Jesus Christ Superstar.’ And they said, ‘Great! Where?’”

Visible in the balcony are Mike O’Brien (center, in glasses, arm around date Janice Hiland ’74), Ken Mott (left, in dark button-down shirt and jacket), and John Vannorsdall (bottom left, in shirt and tie).

View from the balcony windows.
Most of the performers had roommates, classmates, frat brothers or sorority sisters in the audience. But few had family there. Many were from towns too far off to be easily traveled; many had assumed that their parents wouldn’t be interested. Some knew their parents would flatly disapprove. Yet there were surprises: Donna Lester’s parents drove down from Delaware, “which was crazy,” she says. “They’d never come to anything before. But they came to that.”

From Philadelphia came Mark Teich’s parents and younger sister. “My dad, bless his heart, had had to tolerate my bands playing in his basement for years. But being the musician that he was, and wanting to encourage his kids, he made the trip.” The Teiches sat in the front row of the balcony, down the bench from John Vannorsdall. To allay any appearance of officialness, JV hadn’t set aside the customary front pew for the president, so Arnold Hanson too was in the balcony. So was Ken Mott, who had come too late to get a seat downstairs.

The chapel’s official capacity was 1,200; already it had accepted far more than that. But people kept coming, and the chapel patiently ingested them all, until finally the crowd began to spill back. The balcony was closed off, and ushers recruited from Alpha Phi Omega reported no more space. So many were stranded outside the chapel that doors and windows were left open, allowing the unadmitted to at least hear what they wouldn’t be able to see—for it’s possible that the music, amped and echoing in the rural night, would be audible for a good half-mile in any direction.

It wasn’t a warm evening: a morning low of 21 degrees had made this Gettysburg’s coldest March 25 in fifteen years. By sundown it had only reached the thirties, and the temperature would drop back as night set in. But nearly everyone remained, clustered around the glowing doorways and windows, staying warm, smoking, talking, laughing, kissing—above all, waiting to hear.

The lights were up full when the performers emerged—musicians from the sacristies, singers from the rear lobby doors. It was an unassuming entrance. “We just came out,” says Leinbach. “No procession or anything like that.” Paul Hitchens remembers running down the center aisle with the chorus. “As I went, I heard somebody say, ‘Paul!’ It was my grandmother. My mother had driven her over from Pittsburgh to surprise us, and JV had found them seats on the aisle.”
The singers took their seats, the musicians readied their instruments, and for the first time, performers and audience got a good look at each other. “I was astonished at how many people there were,” says Dave Crowner. “There were people falling out of the balcony, almost,” says Susan Fischer. The performers then looked at each other, as if to confirm what they were seeing. Leinbach says, “It was like, ‘Okay, ready to go? Wait—what are all these people doing here?’”

Gretchen Cranz looked out to see “people sitting in each other’s laps.” Bob Ulmer remembers spotting nuns in the audience, “a dozen at least. I went out later and asked them how they’d heard about it. They’d heard through word of mouth, and come up from near Baltimore.”* Jesse Ehrlich recalls the “palpable excitement in the room, the feeling that this was something totally different.”

* There were evidently different groups of nuns. Michael Birkner recalls sitting near a trio from St. Joseph’s College; Larry Reda was told later that two busloads of nuns from Mount St. Mary’s had been turned away.
The performers were in various states of nervousness and confidence. “Even though we had small parts, we were really excited,” says Hitchens. “SRO always gets your adrenaline going,” says Vicki Berg. “I was nervous,” says Mark Teich, “but not anxious or worried. I knew I was ready, and I was excited for certain people who I knew would blow the crowd away.” Tom Breton staved off his panic by not looking at the audience. “I really didn’t want to think about it. I didn’t want anything to get in the way of remembering my lyrics.”

As amplifier levels were set and signals passed between the sound technicians, Neal Smatresk sat on a chorus bench, chatting with Beth Kershaw. “What Beth was saying was a little on the rude side. She was nervous; she wasn’t sure she had it. But we’d practiced enough. We were all stoked. We were in the groove and ready to roll.”

It was a quarter to eight, everything was set, and it became obvious that the show would have to begin at once. Ralph Cavaliere remembers the crowd’s anticipation impending like a force. Mark Teich had the same feeling: “Everybody’s focus was at such a heightened state. You couldn’t wait to get it going.” “There was no reason to wait,” says Jan Kitchener.

At the front of the chancel, in collar and sleeves, nervously surveying the audience, stood Larry Recla. Jan had been tending to him, as she had the night before. “He was remembering all the mistakes, thinking of all the things that could go wrong,” she says. “Maybe he was nervous about somebody coming and trying to bust us.”

But it was all up to Yahweh now. Larry looked at his watch, turned and nodded to Mark Teich. Mark reached back and switched on Larry’s reel-to-reel recorder.* The lights came down, and for a moment in the darkness, each performer was alone with his or her thoughts. “Some part of my brain was thinking, I hope this goes well,” says Doug Wyatt. “It’s live music,” Whitney Myers recalls thinking. “We’ve got one shot.”

Doug Wyatt: “I hope this goes well.”

* This is a guess: the provenance of that night’s recording is not definite. Steve Snyder’s then-brother-in-law also recorded the show, from the balcony, with an off-line reel-to-reel machine. “It was a reasonable recording, because it was in stereo, and it was really how it sounded up there,” Snyder says. “Too bad he doesn’t still have it.”
Larry slipped out through a side door. He couldn’t stand to be there when the show began. Few who saw him would know that this was the person who, more than any other, had brought them together tonight. Circling the chapel in an aureole of tobacco smoke, hunching against the cold, he would have looked strange, distracted, fixated—but not like anyone particularly important.

* 

The first number, “Overture,” begins in a darkness lit only by the candles on the altar. The first instruments heard are Snyder’s Hammond and Vinten-Johansen’s Gretsch. The organ holds a low, menacing tone: Snyder says Wyatt had told him to find “a clashing sound between a bass pedal note and a keyboard note.” Jake bends his strings toward the melody that will later return as “This Jesus Must Die.” He misses notes—some by a mile. It’s the sound of pressure, nerves, and self-doubt. 

“Overture”
He and Snyder harmonize on the eerie, snaky "Hosanna" theme. Then Wyatt counts in the horns—and they light up the building. The audience discovers the true meaning of vaulted ceilings, not to mention a great PA system. As the overture accelerates, the melodic and instrumental varieties multiply. Over an exciting stop-time passage, Myers sustains a single note at high speed; playing his first solo, Jim Henderson augurs the theme that Pilate will sing as he orders Jesus flogged. Already, a definitive element is Dave Bauer’s drumming. His backbeat is the band’s pulse, while his fills and cymbal work are its sweat. Part of the choppiness of the night before, Mark Teich had felt, was due to Bauer’s unfamiliarity with the music and the band. But at the performance, “he had it down cold.”

The musicians have answered anyone who wondered how good this group of college students and off-campus pick-ups could be. Their stripped-down sound is far less elaborate than that of the highly-produced album, with its string section and small army of auxiliary percussionists, but it has a grandeur all its own. Technically keen, it is also filled with the amateur momentum of something just within control—yet never so controlled that it ceases to breathe, as the album sometimes did.

“From the get-go,” says Michael Birkner, “the place was transfixed. It was like, ‘What’s going on here? What am I actually seeing?’ And then trying to absorb it.”

The “Overture” draws big applause. “As soon as you hear that,” Jake says, “you know things went over well.” But the show has only begun, and there’s plenty still to prove.
The lights cut out, returning all to darkness. The rock band, again led by Jake’s guitar line, develops a tight funk riff. A bright white spot hits the pulpit, and Tom Breton’s Judas declaims the first word of the show: “Jesus!”

“Heaven on Their Minds” is an overture in words, stating themes and issuing warnings. Against a relentless ostinato, Judas proclaims his devotion to Jesus while inveighing against the adoration of the crowd, as well as Jesus’s apparent willingness to believe the hype building around him. Murray Head’s Judas was almost a theatrical villain—fervent, but also conniving, haughty. Breton’s Judas has a desperate youthfulness. He is in love with his own ideals, carried away by his own passion, but his voice contains a terror encompassing the despair and defeat Judas is riding for. The band, at ease with the song’s complexities, pushes and lifts the vocal at once; Breton fights to stay on top of the music, as Judas fights to hold back the wave that he knows will swallow him. Breton sounds nervous.

“I was nervous,” he says. “I forgot my lyrics for a couple of phrases. But I thought, ‘I’ll make like I’m overwhelmed and can’t even speak—or something.’ I was out of my league.”

“He was in black, he had a beard and a brooding expression,” says Teich. “He put so much into it that you lost yourself. It wasn’t Tom, it was Judas.”

“It wasn’t Tom, it was Judas.”
Jesus and his followers converge on Bethany in “What’s the Buzz.” Rice’s lyrics convey the thrill of being in on a movement, or simply jumping a bandwagon: this is the theme song of anyone who has ever sought an excitement, a purpose, a messiah. These singers had seen a few social movements these recent years, had maybe even joined one or two. It’s their first number, and there’s wild delight in their sound, a hunger to be turned on.

Zane Brandenburg takes his first solo. He must impress Jesus upon the audience as plausibly charismatic, infuriating, and inspiring. Sounding sometimes like Mitch Ryder fronting the Detroit Wheels, he taunts the faithful even as he draws them in. Beth Kershaw’s Mary joins him for some syncopated vocals, and a sensual interaction develops, sustained by the chorus’s gospel rhythm. Jesus seduces the followers with promises of mystery and revelation, while telling them how little they suspect of what lies ahead; Mary offers him anointment, peace, escape from his own obsession.

In “Strange Thing Mystifying,” Judas steps out to judge the whole scene, to warn that the message is undermined by the acceptance of one so compromised as Mary. Breton catches the right edge of contempt when singing of and at Mary, indicating Judas’s jealousy of her and preparing a psycho-sexual dimension that will pay off later. Jesus thunders back
about clean slates, thrown stones, and hypocrisy, silencing all with a condemnation that climaxes this suite of songs and the performance so far.

Zane has taken over the part of Jesus as if he owns it, as if he can own it; as if Jesus is merely one very vital, very angry man. Or not so merely. His voice carries the anger, but also the agony of one being gripped and transformed by something outside himself.

He may have been drawing on some angst already in his gut, since there are indications his life then was not quite under control. A few nights before, driving toward campus, Zane had rear-ended a car at the corner of Middle and Baltimore Streets; perhaps he was in a hurry to make that evening's rehearsal, which had already begun. And Larry Recla says that Zane came to him the night before a performance (either the final run-through or the actual gathering, he can't recall), asking for advice: he was afraid the Bureau of Drug Abuse Control was looking to bust him, and
wondered if he should be splitting town. (Larry, tossing up his hands, had referred him to Chaplain Vannorsdall.)

But it’s pointless to speculate on the extent to which Zane’s performance is determined by his life versus his training and intuition. Artists create, and Zane is indubitably an artist. His Jesus, compact and ferocious, evokes the messiah of T.S. Eliot’s “Gerontion”:

In the juvescence of the year
Came Christ the tiger

In depraved May, dogwood and chestnut, flowering judas,
To be eaten, to be divided, to be drunk
Among whispers

Mary, backed by the women in the chorus, tries again to calm him down in “Everything’s Alright.” Such warmth and love in Beth’s voice as she makes this impossible promise—which can also be heard, right now, as a promise to America, and to the world. But Judas isn’t buying
it: he recriminates Mary further, pushing so hard that Jesus strikes back, excoriating the disciple for his shortsightedness. Here Zane hits another peak, warning the crowd how lost it will be when he’s gone—and the way he sings \textit{GAHHHHHHHHH} tells us Jesus knows what his end will be.

Mary’s part returns, lulling, swaying, and finally prevailing as the chorus joins in: \textit{Everything’s alright, yes, everything’s fine}. Hendo improvises behind the chant, loose, free, swinging. Jesus and Judas retreat to their corners, Zane and Tom to their benches. The chant mounts inexorably, and for these moments peace and acceptance subdue anger and prophecy.

Somewhere outside, Larry listens. “I could visualize everything going on inside,” he says. “What I couldn’t do was anticipate the reaction. That was the new part.”

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The professors, in their shining robes, take the spotlight. Beach and Leinbach, both of them balding and bearded, stand symmetrically at the perimeters, while Cavaliere and Crowner share a mike at the center. The audience feels a new anticipation—possibly of disaster. “Are these guys going to be up to it? Can they pull it off? That was part of the excitement,” says Teich.

Whitney Myers plays dissonant chords as the priests commiserate. Each professor has a unique vocal personality: Crowner is smooth and anxious, Beach solemn and sanctimonious, Leinbach peevish and disdainful. Between stanzas, the chorus sings “Hosanna Superstar” over and over, women’s voices interlacing with the men’s, Möbius-strip like. Cavaliere sings his first line in that homunculus voice, and audience laughter bubbles up over the music. Leinbach throws himself into things with abandon, creating from his limitations something like a real character—an arrogant mediocrity, a posturing middle manager.
Technically, the professors’ performances are erratic at best: they simply don’t have the training, the experience, or the confidence of the younger singers. “We went off-key a couple of times. We missed a couple of cues,” Cavaliere admits. “But we had a ball,” Leinbach says. “You grabbed your microphone and you got excited.”

The four pounce hungrily on their final line: Jesus must DIEEEEEEEE. The applause is a shower of appreciation for how these four have laid themselves on the line next to their students. From the balcony, Ken Mott watches with a sense of having missed out: “I was probably kicking myself, thinking, ‘Jesus, I should’ve listened to Betty-Lynn.’”

“Hosanna” comes next, a victory march for the savior/superstar, and it is an impressive, ecstatic event. Each voice is pitched at the ceiling, and the band creates a regal cacophony. The horns and drums work especially hard, and when Caiaphas pompously interjects, Henderson blows a sour counterpoint at him.

The dancers make their first appearance. It is, Sue Tackach remembers, “pretty powerful.” They enter from the back doors, in darkness broken by a single spot; then the house lights blaze as the “Hosanna” march begins. Coming down the aisles, the dancers throw their legs high, and in their sweeping arms wave sprigs of dogwood. “We were doing large forward battements, a big kick forward, and our feet were going up past our heads,” Suzanne Smith recalls. “I over-kicked, the standing leg came out from under me, and I plummeted straight down on my ass. But the adrenaline kicked in—I bounced back up and kept dancing.”

They form ranks on the chancel, Betty-Lynn at the center, and their dance is all reaching arms and striving legs, a pinwheeling of limbs. Their physicality, after the comparative plainness of the staging thus far, pulls the audience in further. Even the band and singers are caught up as witnesses. “You look up,” says Jake Vinten-Johansen, “and you see the dancing, you see the chorus. Mark and I and the drums and Doug were
"Hosanna"
interacting, but we were also watching the whole thing come together.”

“Simon Zealotes” begins with a lonesome call-and-response figure between two trumpets, then hurtles into Simon’s call for bloody revolution. The Simon of the album is recorded with an obtrusive echo, as if to evoke a concert arena; again the singer’s technique creates an arch, theatrical effect. Freshman Mark Dryfoos has a simpler tone but also a wilder one, full of a radical’s passion and blindness. The part, he says, “was in a higher range than mine, and I was hoarse afterward, because I didn’t use my voice correctly. But I was nineteen years old, and very excited.”

Jesus assures Simon that neither he nor anyone comprehends what is at stake in this drama they’re living out. For these lines, Zane sounds not angry but entranced, as if in reverie. This is followed by a hard shift into “The Temple”—both the song and the place. The church has become a bazaar, the chorus embodying merchants who call their spiels in an unusual 7/8 time signature. Over an instrumental break come shouts and laughs, the gleeful noise of corruption, until Zane shrieks like a banshee at the money-changers. His scream flies up to the back row of the balcony and hits Mike O’Brien like a spear. “I nearly jumped out of my seat,” he says. “At that moment, I left behind fifteen years of Sunday school Jesus: gentle, meek and mild, patting little children on their heads. I experienced his fully human side—his anger and passion, his challenge to the system. In forty years of ministry I’ve often returned to that moment, and cited it as formative for my faith.”

From the mob outside the temple come the blind, lame, and diseased: chorus members call out their afflictions and beg for healing. As they press toward Jesus, the music intensifies, crowds in upon itself. Dave Bauer beats his snares and rides his cymbals, driving the music toward explosion. “Heal yourselves!” Christ finally shouts, for a moment freezing the scene.

Zane’s virtuosity is nowhere more evident than in “The Temple.” His vocal is a combination of musicality and murder, and so emotionally extreme that it risks self-parody. But there is nothing funny about it. He
makes Christ’s disgust deep, physical, and true, and it suddenly matters greatly that he is years older than Breton, Kershaw, Dryfoos, Smatresk, the chorus. It’s clear, as Zane sings him, that Christ knows what the excited, noble, but naïve children who surround him do not.

Mary settles Jesus with a short, lilting melody: an invitation to sleep, to forget his troubles for a few hours. Steve Snyder’s organ draws an incandescent spiral, and Beth comes forward.

“I Don’t Know How to Love Him” is among the handful of melodies that justify Andrew Lloyd Webber’s career, and Tim Rice’s lyrics eloquently state the dilemma of anyone who has tried to live by Christly principles in a horrific world. As sung by Yvonne Elliman, the song was for many the highlight of the Superstar album. Sue Tackach remembers, “A number of us were saying that the voice on the record was so powerful and specific and beautiful; how would they ever find anyone to do it like that?”
Control is again the key, and the question. Will the young, well-trained but immature singer exert such control that the song dies, or so little that it overwhelms her? “I felt pretty in control,” Beth says, and that’s exactly how she sounds—pretty in control, not fully in control. At first her power is variable, her emphasis rises and falls at arbitrary points; she’s pushing the song rather than letting it be. But because she is sensitive to it, and seems to be teaching herself on the spot how to sing it, the performance has great emotional suspense. With the help of the band, which under Wyatt’s direction crescendos and decrescendos superbly, she finds her feet in the song and allows it to carry her through.

It’s the show’s first ballad, its first sustained solo vocal that is neither testosterone-driven nor filled with accusation. People fall in love with it, and with Beth singing it. “It still gives me chills,” says Mark Teich. Michael Birkner calls it “the highest note by far.” Jean LeGros says, “People just gasped.” The applause goes on and on.

* * *

“People just gasped.”
On the record, “Damned for All Time,” sung by Judas as he both rationalizes and agonizes over his betrayal, begins with a long, distorted guitar jam. Wisely, the Gettysburgians cut directly to the vocal passage, set to a hard boogie rhythm, with more desperation from Breton and good rolls and cymbals from Bauer. There’s an instrumental interlude, Jim Henderson working improvisations over the unvarying beat. At the same time, Betty-Lynn White dances a solo at center stage. She was interested, she says, in expressing “a deep despair. The movements were staccato, not flowing or graceful. Freestyle, a lot of arms up and down, crushing into the body.”

Caiaphas and Annas reappear. The rhythmic transition out of Judas’s wail is like a speeding train, and both Beach and Leinbach have difficulty catching it: not fatal mistakes, but mistakes. Another sudden transition leads into “Blood Money.” Judas and the priests determine the price of betrayal, and make the payoff. Steve Snyder holds a single note as Judas seals his fate: On Thursday night you’ll find him— The money-bag is thrown. The night before, it had fallen short, hitting the floor like a dead bird, an omen of failure. Tonight, it flies toward the pulpit like a guided missile. “It went right into my hand, boom,” says Tom. “I was in a trance.”

“That,” says Teich, “is the way things went that night.”

Well done, Judas, the chorus hum in mournful praise, the grim pact completed. Their voices cease, leaving a sudden silence, which is then flooded with applause as the musicians leave the stage.

Intermission.

People don’t know whether to remain seated or join the Israelites trekking to the exits for a bathroom break, room to stretch, a place to smoke. The talk and laughter, the human hum, are so high that a kind of auto-exhilaration enwreathes the chapel, the audience feeding off its own excitement.

The performers are over the hump, but only halfway home. Nerves are a lot looser now. The night is going well—actually, better than well. Larry Recla comes in from the cold: he finds himself a spot in the back, where he can stand and watch the rest of the show.
The crowd is still chattering, still settling back in, as “The Last Supper” begins. *Look at all my trials and tribulations.* The cynical lyrics, delivered by apostles anticipating their future fame, are buffered by a gentle, folkish melody. The daydream is broken by Jesus’s intimation of what’s to come—*One of you will betray me*—and his confrontation with Judas. Zane sounds full of hate, and Tom sounds on the edge of hysteria, a criminal wanting to confess. Their interplay is hot and exciting, the horns expand behind Hendo’s improvisation, and the apostles’ jumbled voices are met by a gorgeous squeal of unplanned feedback. Under the final “trials and tribulations” refrain, a harmonica, blown by Doug Wyatt, wails forlornly.

*Sinking in a gentle pool of wine*
Then comes “Gethsemane,” Jesus’s monologue of doubt in the garden. As the song makes its trembling beginning—*If there is a way*—Vinten-Johansen contributes a three-chord accent: crystalline, heartbreaking, it’s his finest moment of the night. There’s little to be said of Zane’s performance, except that one can hardly imagine a finer rendition of this lovely, almost indescribably difficult song. Its whisper-to-scream dynamics again risk overindulgence, but Zane burns away all excess, all doubt. For Whitney Myers, it was “the emotional high point of the show. The high A-flat, where he says, *Lord, thy will is hard, but you hold every card*—it took a special person to sing that.”

“His voice trailed off to almost a whisper,” says Teich, “but you could still hear the vibrato. It was like, *ho-lee shit.* I wasn’t sure about Zane until the last moment, but he showed up and blew the doors down. He was incredible.”
The song’s screaming climax is followed by a quiet recovery, in which Teich’s bass doubles Myers’s piano: a nice piece of instrumental teamwork.

A lot happens in “The Arrest,” a portmanteau number encompassing Judas’s betrayal, Jesus’s apprehension, and the crowd’s turn from congregation to mob. Chorus members get solo lines, each one stepping to the mike to ask Christ a question. Offering Judas a bit of sour praise, Leinbach’s Annas suggests he remain a while longer to see the victim bleed—and Leinbach gives “bleed” an ugly, knifing enunciation.

Tall, thin, perversely angelic in a white shirt with fringed sleeves, Neal Smatresk comes out as Pilate, whom Rice’s lyrics depict as a company stooge with just enough moral intelligence to know how rotten he is. “Pilate and Christ,” set to the bump-and-thrust rhythm of a Bob Fosse dance, is highly theatrical; so is Smatresk, who circles Zane as if appraising a slave. His delivery, full of little grins and grimaces, sounds disgusted, debauched.

The tension is peaking: song by song, the cross has come into view. Pilate has set the stage for King Herod, and Smatresk for John Hylton. In his bulk, Hylton makes Zane Brandenburg puny; in his stars and stripes, he renders his surroundings monochromatic. Saying how pleased he is to meet the great Christ at last, Hylton’s tone is suave, fulsome—until he reaches the word “God,” and rips into it like a feudal despot into a roasted "The Arrest"
pig. The song centers on jaunty rhythm and caustic insults, with Hylton framed by Kelly Alsedek and Sue Tackach as demonic flappers. Belittling Jesus in every way short of obscenity, the number is a blasphemous irony, an outrageous irreverence, and irresistibly entertaining.

Its instrumental break features a showy Charleston between Hylton and the dancers. Hollering and clapping, the chorus could be rodeo fans or a lynch mob, and they magnetize the chapel audience. The dance was, Larry says, “a way to maintain involvement, but to change the valence of it.” Before the number is half over, the audience, exhilarated, is clapping to the beat. On the last verse, Hylton pulls out the stops—going to his knees, spreading his arms, leaping up to shout in Zane’s impassive face. The ending is a clatter of drums and horns, broken rhythm and wild applause. Arriving amid an intensity which it both relieves and magnifies, “King Herod’s Song” is the showstopper.

Hylton has brought to the surface the savagery underlying the whole performance. The singers, from Breton through Brandenburg, Leinbach and Smatresk, have been delivering a range of growls, screeches, screams, and burrs that were never heard on the album. Some of it comes from youth and inexperience wrestling with operatic complexity. But it also sounds like a choice, a collective decision to be harsh rather than mellifluous, to embody blasphemy rather than merely signify it: “beyond illustration to evocation,” as Peter Brook had put it. “There was an underlying, and sometimes overt, savagery,” says Hylton. “We mocked this guy. We wanted to get rid of him. It probably emanated in part from Zane’s portrayal of Jesus. But I don’t know that anybody was coached that way.”

Larry says that aspect developed on its own. “Did I sit down and say, ‘Let’s go forte on this’? No. That’s the way it was going, and that became the encouragement and the natural progression thereof. I don’t think it could have been stopped by me.”

“I’d never been in a position to have that reaction from a crowd,” Hylton says. “It was different from anything else I’d done. If my students could see me doing it, they’d be shocked: that has not been my persona.” His other memory is that Mark Dryfoos, also in Alpha Chi Rho, made him a pledge paddle. “That was a symbolic thing your little brother made for you to hang on the wall. The one Mark made said something on the front: ‘58 seconds.’ That was the length of the applause after my number.”
On his last solo, “Judas’ Death,” Tom Breton enters late, and rushes up to the music. The priests taunt him with praise, then desert him in the cold, bright light where he began. Backed by nothing but Teich’s bass and Wyatt’s acoustic guitar, Tom briefly revisits “I Don’t Know How to Love Him”: the reprise of Mary’s love song as Judas’ last testament implies the romantic aspect of his own love, and the human ache at its center. Breton sounds utterly broken. It’s a naked end to a brave performance.

Steve Snyder sounds a hard, clear tone, leading to an intense build-up which crossfades into a dirge—Poor old Judas—and Smatresk’s return. Where his earlier song was all contemptuous display, “Trial before Pilate” expresses Pilate’s mounting sense of being trapped in a nightmare, a horrible plot he has helped to write. Neal’s singing, still theatrical, is now drained of irony as he interrogates Christ, finally begging him to save himself. Tricky stop-time beats challenge both the vocal and Doug Wyatt’s conductorship. As Smatresk and Brandenburg exchange lines, Henderson doubles them, his reedy sound a shot of wit and poison.
Pilate then subjects Christ to “The 39 Lashes.” The funk riff heard earlier returns. On each lash, the chorus claps as one—and, in one of the night’s finest ironies, many spectators find it impossible not to participate. Mike O’Brien remembers the “odd reaction” of all those who, “caught up in the moment, began clapping as each lash was called out.” During the counting, Barbara Hanson does a thrusting, angular solo dance, representing both the arc of the whip and the cut of the lash. Performing for the first time before such an audience, she is profoundly nervous; but like everyone tonight, she trusts herself, and goes beyond herself.
Her dance has a significant effect on at least one audience member. Nancy Henderson is feeling increasingly dislocated at Gettysburg. “I was gearing up to quit school. I didn’t know what I was doing there, except spending my parents’ money. I didn’t know what I wanted to major in, I wasn’t having a good time, and I was thinking it was silly.” In the audience to support her brother, she isn’t expecting to be transformed. “Here comes this amazing dancer. She takes a fabulous solo. I thought, ‘That’s what I should be doing. That’s it—music and movement in one.’ It was an epiphany.

“I said, ‘I want to go to Colorado College and take this summer dance workshop.’ My parents were unhappy with me quitting school, but it sounded like college to them, and like I had a plan. And that’s what I did that summer.”* 

Dave Bauer punctuates the final lash with his fiercest accent of the night. Smatresk follows it with Pilate’s dismissal of the martyr; an escalation of rage that climbs on Vinten-Johansen’s ugly heavy-metal chords to crest on the line, Die if you want to, you innocent puppet!! At which moment, in a segue as majestic as it is contrived, the horns of “Superstar” amass to spread golden light over the chapel.

Larry has decided there will be no crucifixion, no comedown. The audience understands that this is the natural climax, and that its part is to help lift the performers as they extend the moment into euphoria. So they stand and cheer, and their response swells as Tom Breton sings the

* Today Nancy teaches adaptive physical education to disabled children, often via theatrical performances combining music and dance.
words of “Superstar” and the chorus shouts the questions the opera has been asking, all amounting to a single question: Jesus, who are you?

The leads assemble for their bows as the music continues. There is particular applause for the professors, for John Hylton, and for Beth Kershaw. Then Hylton and Smatresk lift Zane Brandenburg onto their shoulders. They go down the steps, carry him up the center aisle and back to the chancel, the other singers following. “John and I just grabbed him and hoisted him up,” says Smatresk. “It was as triumphant as could be.”

For many, this finale will crystallize the entire event. It goes back to that winter evening on Broadway, when Larry Recla witnessed A Midsummer Night’s Dream. At the end of it, as Gary Jay Williams describes, Peter Brook’s actors “left the stage to an explosion of drums to come into the auditorium and shake hands with the audience. The moment, in performances in both England and the United States, was something of a lovefest, ‘a feast of friendship,’” in which “the audience ‘eager clutched the cast’s hands as they burst up the aisles.’ . . . It seemed as if audiences were, in effect, eager to carry the young love-world of the production away with them into the world outside.”

Flower-child imagery aside, Larry’s vision for the Superstar finale was not so different. It too was meant to give the audience an ethos of love and transcendence to carry out of the chapel and into the world. It too represented, and effected, a communion of performers and observers as equal participants, but with a clear Christian logic. “In scriptural terms,” Larry says, “we might call it ascension. You describe a crescendo of intensity with one break—the Herod dance—and this then becomes the top-off: the full and complete involvement. We have now not just the dancers and singers but everybody in and among. The party realized. Or, insofar as one wants to be hifalutin, the Pentecost. Blah, blah, blah.”

Despite his theological misgivings about Superstar, John Hylton liked the ascension tableau Larry had devised, the irony of “having the two biggest villains of the piece carry Jesus out on their shoulders. It reinforced the point that, in the end, Jesus did triumph.” It was, he says, “a great moment. A great feeling.” Smatresk experienced “overwhelming, spontaneous joy. And also relief—relief that we’d pulled it off.”

“God, it was an explosion,” says Paul Hitchens of the cheering that stoked the seven-minute finale, and that continued long past the closing notes. “The crowd was going wild,” says Mike O’Brien, still processing his own epiphany as waves of happiness engulfed the balcony.

“The whole place was on a high,” says Bonnie Stephan. “I have never, ever experienced anything like that.”

Ever since rehearsals, Rick Ludwick had felt that Larry’s ending was a cop-out. That didn’t kill his enjoyment of the production or of the finale, but as he stood on the chancel among the chorus, clapping his hands,
singing “Superstar,” and watching Zane float above the crowd, he felt the same doubts. “It was like a parade,” he says, “a super-high moment. And that is not what Christianity’s about. Communion is a profound feeling that comes from calm and deep interiorization. We were externalized. We were focused on adrenaline and music, and it was exciting, but it reflected what megachurches do when they have these high-powered performances with music. People feel like they’re in communion with others, but it’s a rock-band experience. It’s false in terms of what it means to commune with our Lord, and to be in deep communion with others through the Holy Spirit.”

Others were experiencing the same moments in very different ways. Marianne Larkin saw Zane’s ascension as “almost a transfiguring” of what she and others her age had been working toward over the last few years, as they tried to budge, even by the merest margin, such social facts as racism and war. “Underneath the yelling and the crying and the gnashing and the street theater was this sense of really wanting things to be right, in a high, spiritual way,” she says. “That was the true wish. The end of Superstar was almost a visual of that for me: I really wanted the world to be that uplifted, that triumphant.

“That’s what I remember from that night. The roots of my hair still get tingly.”

The performers were proud of what they’d brought off. “If I’d been in that audience,” says Mark Teich, “I would’ve been excited by the fact that—I know these guys. These are my friends. And they just carried me somewhere I’ve never been before.” “For a bunch of unorganized folks to pull together and do something like that—hit the Zeitgeist, the spirit of the times—was big,” says Neal Smatresk. “It was really big. I think we nailed it.”

“I was proud of the quality of the production, and of the musicianship overall,” says Bob Ulmer. Whitney Myers “felt exhilarated from having done it, and done it well.” “It felt like we were bringing something modern to the community,” says Jesse Ehrlich, “and I was proud to be part of something so professional.”

“We picked them up and carried them through the whole thing,” Rick Ludwick says, “and they were involved, emotionally and intellectually. They were with us all the way.” Gretchen Cranz was left feeling “elated. Often when you’re in a play and it goes well, you’re pleased, but you’re already thinking about the next night—washing the costumes or whatever. This was a spiritual experience. Unlike most plays where the crowd leaves pretty quickly, they hung around.”
Even Doug Wyatt, a man not given to hyperbole, admits, “It was quite something.”

The performers were showered with praise both collective and individual. “I remember people saying how great it was, and how glad they were that they’d taken part,” says Kelly Alsedek. “And that they didn’t know I could dance like that.” Reunited with his grandmother, Paul Hitchens got a reaction he hadn’t expected. “My grandmother was something. She was born in the 1800s, was in the Temperance Union, and was still angry about Prohibition being repealed. Couldn’t have been more right-wing. But she just loved it. Afterward, she was gushing.”

Most of the musicians chose not to taint the experience by critiquing their own performances too closely. “You always step back and say, ‘We didn’t do that right,’ or ‘We dropped this line,’ or whatever;” says Richard Schindler. “But at the same time, there was a feeling that we’d done what we set out to do.” Beth Kershaw had never sung alone for such a large audience. “It was different, being up there by myself. I was never one to toot my own horn much, and there were things I could’ve done better, but I thought it went well. I hadn’t embarrassed myself.”

Tom Breton ceased brooding long enough to enjoy the moment. “People were very positive. But I knew there were a lot of weaknesses in my vocal style, and I didn’t want to put myself down by going through them. So I didn’t even think about it.”

No one rode higher that night than the two students who, along with Larry, had begun the whole thing. “I was on cloud nine,” says Betty-Lynn White. “We’d started out with a little idea, and it grew. It was sculpted and molded by many hands, and it came out, not as this grotesque thing, but as the embodiment of what we’d all wanted it to be.” Clay Sutton, as reluctant as ever to take credit, says he “felt a real pride in having been a small part of it. I thought we’d really accomplished something.”

The hours after the show—where people went, how they celebrated—are a blur to most. “I don’t remember,” says Beth. “Probably went to Wolfe’s and drank, which was my modus operandi in those days.” Larry recalls nothing beyond a general elation.

Mark Teich and a few others went to a party in the basement of the Lambda Chi house. Walking there from the chapel, “we were on air. I was with Zane, and even he was shaking his head and smiling, saying, ‘This has just been incredible.’ My father’s lasting memory was of Zane and me with our arms around each other, heading off to the party. He said that really got to him.”
Two or three days later, a message, typewritten on Chaplain's Office letterhead, was found taped to the door of Room 2.

For a moment in the time of our lives here at Gettysburg College, the rocks and trees sang. It was an everyone night, not an anyone time; it took us all—those in the chancel, those sitting on the window sills and standing in back rooms . . . it was us all. Yet even more, it was a spirit moving as if on the face of waters; it was a love, not LOVE, but the experience evoked by the rehearsal of a story of a man, a particular man, and it was that particular spirit which moved us all.

It was not only an evening of singing rocks and trees, but also of temple curtains rent. It should be increasingly difficult after Thursday to pick up the old refrain of the dull and apathetic students at Gettysburg; it should be difficult to get away with the excuse that things can't be done here because there is not enough talent; anyone who saw four faculty almost indistinguishable from the rest, who were people with people, should have difficulty speaking of all faculty as uninterested.

So for a time even the rocks and trees sang, for a time there have been more smiles, cheering, and even singing than ever before. The high will down, but it can't die, nothing can erase that moment for 1,500 people. And who knows when that spirit, when that superstar, will again conjure rocks and trees to sing.

The message was signed, in letters barely big enough to read, lrr.

It wasn't unknown for an event to grip the Gettysburg campus so that it felt, as Beth Kershaw says of Superstar, that "everybody was talking about it." There'd been the Student Power-driven Moratorium of April 1969, aimed at all-inclusive discussion of institutional policy; there'd also been, a year later, the spectacular Symposium 70, a four-day convention of
leading politicians, activists, writers, and thinkers.* Like *Superstar*, both events had been predominantly the work of students, with crucial faculty input, and administrative support that was on the whole reluctant.

But in every other way, *Superstar* was unto itself. Nothing ever seen at Gettysburg had had this electricity. It wasn't a workshop or panel discussion but a musical and dramatic performance—a cultural event. It wasn't overtly political or issue-oriented, though such implications were there for any who wanted them. It had involved elements of the greater Gettysburg community not just as witnesses but at the creative base. And rather than days, it had lasted only a few very intense hours, bonding hundreds of people, many of them relative or total strangers, in a unity of emotion.

Many calls and letters came in the days after. One which Larry Recla may have found especially gratifying came from the staff assistant to Howard J. McCarney, president of the Central Pennsylvania Synod. “I'm still emotionally and spiritually high,” Richard Jones wrote the morning after. “Your talent and creative ability peaked that congregation. To see the pews and walls of Christ Chapel crowded with persons in the midst of the Lenten Season with the input and content of *Superstar* is another indication that the institutional church needs to be alert to new forms of communication. . . . Keep up this kind of creative witness.” Arthur Stees, a Lutheran pastor from Princeton, Illinois, who happened to be visiting the seminary that week, wrote Arnold Hanson to say that *Superstar* had been “a tremendous experience.” “I expected a fair performance but got much, much more,” John Hagedorn wrote Larry. “If because of demand you put it on again, please let me know: there are many others who now wish they would have gone.”

The response from faculty and staff took the form of warm compliments and pats on the back addressed to Hanson, Vannorsdall—and

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* Symposium 70 (March 10-13, 1970) attracted such luminaries as former Attorney General Ramsey Clark; social scientist Michael Harrington; columnist Nat Hentoff; former Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall; and labor organizer Saul Alinsky. The culmination of a year's planning, controversy, dissension, and devotion, Symposium 70 can only be noted here, but it deserves its own chronicle.
Financial Crossroads

The economic vitality of Pennsylvania private colleges and universities is steadily deteriorating. This grim assessment, evidenced in the recently released McKinsey study, has marked implications for the future of Gettysburg.enic study, has marked implications for the future of Gettysburg College. By SUZANNE JOHNSON

The six-man military jury that heard the testimony of millen- t and a work week of 40 hours, William Lilly, owner of Miller's Factory, was found guilty of the premeditated manslaughter of a mill worker and sentenced to 20 years in prison.

There was little doubt that he would be found guilty. The case was said to be of such importance to the interest of the mill owners as to warrant a thorough investigation into every phase of the mill operations. As a result of this, the jury sat two weeks before arriving at a verdict.

Suzanne Johnson is Features Editor of the "Gettysburgian."
sometimes even to Larry. Ken Mott took the time to compose a note. The night of March 25 was, he told Larry, “the finest I have spent at the College … Some of us were beginning to lose faith that the kind of spirit generated last week was even possible in 1971—here or anywhere else. Thank you, good Sir, for giving us super entertainment, and above all, real hope.”

“The spirit of change that had characterized the late Sixties was running into bumps by the early Seventies,” Mott says today. “Second thoughts, a kind of backlash. That’s what I was alluding to. The spirit is still there, and you were able to capture it, channel it, and share it. Good for you.”

*The Gettysburgian* devoted no article to the campus event of the year. Michael Birkner says he was “aware of the legal issues, but I can’t recall any editorial conference about what we were or weren’t going to do. I speculate it was a conscious decision not to write an article, but to deal with it backhandedly.” What did appear in the edition of April 1 were two photographs taken at the performance by junior Vernon Miller, a Rho Beta brother of Birkner’s. One of them, captioned “A triumphant climax,” showed Brandenburg on the shoulders of Smatresk and Hylton; the other was of Hylton’s Charleston, with a caption referring to “Gettysburg’s greatest ‘non-happening’ ever.”

Several performers felt a change in status in the following days. Sue Tackach recalls, “I was walking across campus, and these two students were like—gasp. They came up to me and said, ‘Are you—?’ And I’m kind of like, ‘Yeah . . . ’” Jan Kitchener’s dorm room was filled with congratulatory bouquets. “My roommate was pissed,” she says. “She’d already had it with me and my rehearsals, and these flowers all over the room were the last straw.” “People were very flattering,” says John Hylton, “even my music professors. I was young, and my ego was stroked.” Beth Kershaw was suddenly a minor celebrity: “I went from being some music major stuck in the practice rooms at Brua Hall to everybody on campus knowing who I was.”

*The Gettysburgian*

The production had outstripped all expectations and become, on its regional scale, a phenomenon. It was of sufficient impact—and just as important, potential impact—that people within both Gettysburg College and the Central Pennsylvania Synod began to probe the possibility of keeping it going.

*Jesus Christ Superstar* was generating ever more momentum nationally, and, as noted elsewhere, was widely seen as a godsend for the established church. The top staff person at the synod had expressed to Larry his organization’s eagerness to find “new forms of
communication”—and now a fully loaded, audience-tested, ready-to-go production of the hottest property in Christendom had fallen into its lap. Given the intense competition between Pennsylvania liberal arts schools for publicity, money, and students, the college too saw its reward in putting a proprietary Superstar on the road. The two institutions would therefore be close partners in the inquiries that ensued: options were discussed and ideas mooted both in Gettysburg and at synod headquarters in Harrisburg. Perhaps because of the rights issue, perhaps because of the project’s conceptual nature, most conversations occurred in person or by phone. Very little was committed to paper.

The synod began by hiring attorney John Carpenter, of the Sunbury firm of Carpenter, Carpenter and Diehl, to review the legal questions—including liability, should further performances be executed under the synod’s banner. The college commissioned no review of its own, deciding it would go along with whatever Carpenter said; but presumably the college’s own attorney, Donald M. Swope—a 1935 graduate, and a partner in the local firm of Swope and Swope—was kept informed.

In the interim, Larry Recla was the subject of an approach from within the college. Donald Yoder had joined the staff of the Business Office in 1969, prior to which he’d worked for both Holiday Inns of America and Servomation-Mathias, the food-services company which supplied the college’s cafeteria.* As assistant to Business Manager F. Stanley Hoffman, Yoder would continue to oversee dining, in addition to a realm known as Auxiliary Enterprises—basically, opportunities for money or publicity falling outside the college’s ordinary academic functioning.

A day or two after the performance, Yoder came to Larry to discuss the future of Superstar. He suggested various forms that future might take: one or more repeat performances at the chapel; a highly-publicized one-off at the annual synod convention; or—the most elaborate proposal, and the one behind which most of the official weight would be thrown over the next two weeks—a regional tour. The question, Larry says, was “would I take a group of students and musicians, produce and direct a scaled-down version, and take it on the road over the summer. The idea was that people would be paid, that it would represent the college, and that it would be funded, one hundred percent, by alumni.”

Larry stresses that last point: “This was not a budget item of the college.” The implication is that such a project, more than simply “auxiliary,” would be off the official ledger entirely. To the degree that Yoder sought to claim the production as a college property, he had to have

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* Gibes about the unpalatability of “Servo” food were pervasive at the college in the Sixties. “5,747 horses were killed in the Battle of Gettysburg,” ran a quip in an April 1969 Potpourri, “and the last one is being served Thursday in the café.”
done so with the approval, perhaps even at the direction, of the Business Office. But again, nothing was left on paper, and we can’t know that for sure.

With reservations, Larry was intrigued. He even let a few people in on the news. “It was an item of some excitement, and I found I had enough key people who in their estimation and mine meant that we could do this.” Mark Teich remembers discussing “who was going be able to stay during the summer, because the synod wanted to take it all over Pennsylvania. Everybody got fired up about that.”

The obvious question of how a nonprofit, all-volunteer production could expect to survive as a salaried venture leapfrogged an even more basic issue: the absence of performance rights. That absence complicated things, and not simply by making such a production illegal. It also meant that, as far as Larry Recla was concerned, one very specific person had to give his okay before things could move forward. That person was Howard McCarney, president of the synod. McCarney was a 1942 graduate of Gettysburg College, and currently an ex-officio member of its Board of Trustees. He bled blue and orange for his alma mater, and no doubt hoped to see it benefit as it might from a Superstar tour. But as a man of pru-
dence as well as principle, he’d be unlikely to defy a court order unless assured by legal counsel that no effective harm could result. McCarney was, Larry Recla felt, “one of the most brilliant political men” he’d ever come across, “able to hold everything up with a civility and panache I’ve not seen anyplace else.” He was also Larry’s LCA superior. In his mind, the president’s blessing was the sole determinant in any ongoing Superstar enterprise—and McCarney wasn’t going to weigh in until John Carpenter had completed his review.

Yoder must have felt the main chance slipping away. On March 31, he urged Larry to take the initiative. The word of Jesus called for bold moves, especially now: “In times like these,” Yoder wrote, “we have to go right through or over whatever stands in our way.”

The message you have to offer the poor of spirit is too great, too valued, and needed at this time in all of our lives to wait for politics. Larry, what would have happened if God, Martin Luther King, John F. Kennedy or our good friend Wally Fisher had waited? The message is needed now!

You must do the pushing. The synod needs Superstar and all those other creative ideas your great mind has to offer.

I sincerely believe that your destiny in the work of God is greater than you yourself realize.

Larry wasn’t impressed by such blandishments. While he didn’t feel it was irreligious of Yoder to employ pious rhetoric to achieve an earthly end, he did wonder whether Yoder had the resources and backing that he claimed: “I never had that demonstrated to me, nor did I ever inquire of that.”

In fact, Larry’s hesitancy to commit to anything without McCarney’s go-ahead was less political than biological: the president’s authorization meant his own posterior would be covered, should an illegal Superstar come under fire. Further, he was troubled by the conflict he saw developing between his transient status as a Gettysburg College employee and his vocation as a Lutheran minister. In his April 5 response to Yoder, he tried to correct several assumptions about the nature of Superstar and his own relationship to it.

Under no circumstances whatsoever will I engage in any relationship to a production of Superstar other than at the request of some agency of the Church. This is to say that I have no intention of becoming an entrepreneur. . . .

The decisions as to who actually performs Superstar and the circumstances under which that is done are in the hands of the President of this institution and the person in charge of the Chapel Program in this institution. If an agency of the Church wished to produce Superstar, it is then their decision who they wish to contact; in other words, they might wish to
go through the institution of the college (a choice I would weight) or contact whosoever they please.

Now, if you, in whatever position you see yourself, wish to contact this institution or any agency of the Church with as detailed a proposal as you can do, that is a matter between you and the institution or agency with whom you are talking. If you have questions in the process of gathering information, I would certainly be of whatever assistance I could. But under no circumstances is it to be assumed that there exists a production company of *Superstar* which is peddling itself. Upon contact and negotiation from an agency of the Church, I do believe that people could be found to perform *Superstar*. As far as contacting or not contacting people, or who should be contacted, or the circumstances under which they should be contacted, these are your decisions and are not contingent upon my approval or disapproval—in other words, it’s your ball, not mine!

Let me clarify the relationship between the *Superstar* people and myself. After March 25, 1971, there are just persons and what they did, i.e., I am not the director; I was the director. The interpersonal relationships that have been built prior to March 25 are not the sort that terminate with a performance. We *Superstar* people have been in conversation after the 25th of March. I am in no way empowered to make binding statements on behalf of anyone but myself. I am, however, in the position to discuss issues concerning us all not due to any vote, but simply from having been at gatherings where these things were discussed, just as anyone else who was there could speak.

Larry was telling Yoder, and whoever else might be listening, that absent specific direction from McCarney, any discussion of a tour was so theoretical as to be meaningless. That for now the next move lay with the authorities—the synod, Arnold Hanson (“the President of this institution”), and John Vannorsdall (“the person in charge of the Chapel Program”). That he, Larry Recla, was a servant of the church and not of the college. That he was not the spokesman for “the *Superstar* people,” that he had no unilateral power to make anything happen with *Superstar*, and that in fact *Superstar* as such didn’t exist: it had existed only for a few hours on the night of March 25.

“There was some pushback on that from the shadowy alumni group,” Larry says. He doesn’t specify what form that took, but he understood the group’s priorities even if it didn’t understand his. These alums were hungry for the P.R. value of such a tour, seemed prepared to brave any legal risk, and couldn’t understand how such a potentially lucrative venture might hinge, to any degree, on the personal scruples of a mere seminarian—a chapel intern who would, after all, be gone from the campus in a few months.

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At the same time that Larry was being wooed by the shadow people, Arnold Hanson was putting an idea to John Vannorsdall. The Robert Stigwood Organization controlled Superstar’s performance rights; RSO’s main offices were in London; and a Gettysburg College faculty member, Professor Robert Bloom of the History Department, was currently on a research sabbatical in London. Why not, Hanson suggested, ask Bob Bloom to visit Stigwood’s office and make a personal appeal on behalf of the college?

Bloom was living in the northern suburb of Muswell Hill with his wife, Dorothy, and commuting each day to the archives of the British Library to read UK news reports on the American Civil War. Vannorsdall wrote the Blooms on March 30, describing the triumph of five nights before and giving a brief outline of the legal challenge. Then he got down to cases:

We are desperate for permission to perform this. Would it be possible for you to call or visit the Stigwood firm and see what they have to say? If they will deal, call me collect, and we’ll send them the particulars. It would be no charge and religious. We don’t need scores.

To tell the truth, and this is confidential, we were so far into rehearsal that we did an “in the family” performance. The Chapel filled to overflowing and we turned away five hundred at least. It was the most exciting, electric, amazing experience I’ve had at the College. Absolutely out of sight. We’ve had calls from all over the state in the last few days. We can’t in good conscience (in part because of our skins) do another performance without due permission.

Anything you can do will be greatly appreciated.

There was some irony in Robert Bloom being tapped for this peculiar assignment. Though he was no doctrinaire conservative, the confrontations of the late Sixties—Vietnam, Black Power, Student Power—had consistently seen him defending the status quo, and he’d taken several sharp hits from campus activists. Whatever he knew of Jesus Christ Superstar cannot have appealed to him terribly much. Still, he was a good man and a good teacher. As the department’s Civil War specialist,

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* His research produced a lecture, “The British Press Covers the Civil War,” delivered in the January Term of 1972.
he’d guided thousands of students and others over the battlefields since coming to Gettysburg in 1949; as a protégé of the great Civil War historian Allan Nevins, he was familiar with the unruly forces of history, even if he bore them little sympathy in his own day. Michael Birkner, once a student and later a colleague, memorialized Bloom after his death in 1990 as “a vigorous lecturer and compassionate mentor who represented about as well as any professor might the best of the old liberal arts college.”

Vannorsdall trusted Bloom to do all that he could.

Larry Recla would have no role in the London outreach, but JV kept him apprised of it. Communication between chaplain and intern was still quite poor—a fact which would lead to sour notes later on—but as Larry Socratically asks, “Was I aware that this was happening? Was I grateful for it? Was I interested in following it? Yes.”

The synod’s inquiry, on the other hand, was conducted entirely beyond his knowledge. “I kind of thought, ‘Well, you know, hey—whatever you guys are doing, or whatever.’” He’s surprised by the lengths to which the executive board went to investigate its options; at the time, he was unconscious of how badly McCarney and others wanted to make a go of Superstar.

Gettysburg College began its week-long Easter recess on April 2, just as John Carpenter was compiling his research in Sunbury and Bloom was making inquiries in London. There was little for anyone else to do but wait.
Within a few days, Vannorsdall received word of Carpenter’s finding—which the lawyer had communicated to the synod orally, in advance of a written report—and immediately sent a memo to Arnold Hanson. He said that Carpenter would be advising the synod to “just go ahead” with Superstar, since the monetary damages, if Stigwood sought them, would be negligible. He also mentioned that Hanson’s own son, Chip, had called from Wooster College in Ohio to see if the Gettysburg Superstar would travel there—and to neighboring Baldwin-Wallace College, which was likewise eager to see it. All expenses, Chip promised, would be paid by the host schools.

Regarding next steps, the chaplain’s questions to Hanson were:

1) Can we go ahead with Synod if the cast can make it?
2) How about two performances here over Parents’ Weekend?
3) How about Wooster?
4) If Synod sponsors, how about a summer tour?

All of this depends upon the cast, of course, but if you have reservations we should know that before anything is done.

The picture Vannorsdall painted for Hanson was an optimistic one. There was clear demand for the Gettysburg Superstar; the synod would sponsor; and the legal risk, it appeared, was minimal. If enough of the performing personnel could be interested (as Larry Recla already knew they could), there seemed no impassable reason why a tour shouldn’t happen.

No more than two or three days later, John Carpenter’s written opinion—dated April 6, and addressed to Rev. Thomas Myers of the synod’s executive board—was forwarded to the chapel. Referring to the findings of his copyright expert, who had spoken with MCA’s counsel in New York and California, and with RSO’s in London, Carpenter revealed that MCA had now ceded all contested rights to Superstar. That meant that its initial clearance for the Gettysburg show had been invalid from the start. Strike one.

Carpenter continued:

Robert Stigwood Organization, per Mr. Stigwood's assistant, claims to have the rights to the production in the United States. They deny, however, that any rights will be given out until the play reaches Broadway, presently estimated to be in October. They suggest that this is a vague date, inasmuch as they may determine to make the movie before the play hits Broadway. At any rate, they refuse to give out rights to the production, even to amateurs and even when no charge is being made.
Strike two. On the question of liability, Carpenter said that Stigwood could legally enjoin any unauthorized performance, however unlikely that might seem given that RSO had not yet taken such action.* Alternatively, Stigwood might sue the synod for damages. Punitive damages, Carpenter reasoned, “would probably not be assessable in the instance of an amateur performance where no charge is being made.” Statutory damages would apply; but statute limited the penalty to $100 for an unauthorized performance—$500 less, ironically, than the original deal with MCA would have cost.

The only hopeful note in the report dealt with the spreading phenomenon of amateur Superstar productions—a nationwide outbreak of which Gettysburg’s had been among the earliest reported cases. For reference, Carpenter attached a clipping from the April 3 New York Times, showing a rock group called Ravenswood rehearsing for a Superstar performance to be held the next day at the Madison Avenue Baptist Church. “We have heard that a college group is doing it in Philadelphia, and that Cornell has already done it,” Carpenter offered. “One could certainly assume that, if this is happening in this area close to us, it is probably being done generally throughout the United States.”

But that Gettysburg was far from alone in violating the court injunction did not change the fact that Superstar was under legal lockdown, and that penalties awaited any agency sponsoring an unauthorized production. “What you will have to determine,” Carpenter told the synod in conclusion, “is whether or not the desire to do the performance and what you hope to accomplish by it outweighs the possibility, no matter how slim or great, that the performance will not only be detected but that some action would be forthcoming.”

Reading this, John Vannorsdall must have felt a bit deflated: the advance word he’d received, or his interpretation of it, had been faulty. Carpenter’s advice, contrary to his summary in the Hanson memo, was not “just go ahead.” It was, rather, Proceed at your own risk.

The chaplain still had not heard from Robert Bloom when writing Hanson on April 10. In fact, Bloom’s letter, dated three days earlier, was already in the mail. The news it brought was anticlimactic to the Carpenter report, but similarly disheartening.

Bloom had been to the fashionable Mayfair offices of the Robert Stigwood Organization.+ After being told that Stigwood was away and

* In fact, it would take such action just a few days later, against the American Rock Opera Company (see Chapter 12).
+ The office, at 67 Brook Street, is now a historic site of the English Heritage Foundation, the Bee Gees having composed several songs and, on occasion, even resided there between 1968 and 1980.
that his secretary was out until the afternoon, Bloom left for a few hours, then phoned the office. Stigwood’s secretary told him that her employer was on holiday in the Bahamas, that he would return after Easter, and that she didn’t wish to disturb him until then. After reiterating that Stigwood “planned to produce the show in the autumn and would not be granting rights until then,” the secretary suggested the college contact RSO’s New York representative. Bloom closed his letter by offering to again attempt to speak with Stigwood after the latter’s return.

Strike three. Or, as Larry Recla told himself, “Game, set, and match.”

Clearly, the synod would not sponsor a tour on the basis of John Carpenter’s wary report. That decided the matter for Larry, and, in all likelihood, for Vannorsdall and Hanson: there’s no evidence that Bloom made a second visit to RSO, or that a New York follow-up was attempted. To Larry, the final falling-through of a *Superstar* tour was “not a matter of great disappointment, in the same way that I’m not overcome with depression when I buy a lottery ticket and don’t win. I heard what Don Yoder was saying, and I didn’t think he was a liar. But to me, it was unbelievable from the beginning.”

Yet even here, at the last redoubt, some wouldn’t surrender their version of the *Superstar* dream. Larry claims there was still another overture from the shadowy alums. Without specifics, he says he was offered double or even triple the remuneration previously proposed; again, it would be under the table and off the books. He calls this “the final, stone-cold nail in the coffin. Never mind going to McCarney. There was no way on God’s green earth I was taking money that my people—excuse the expression—weren’t also getting.”

And that, everyone assumed, was that.

The foregoing occurred behind the scenes and in multiple locations, and was not reported comprehensively to the *Superstar* people. Many of them, including planners like Breton and Wyatt, never knew a tour was under discussion; as we’ve seen, even Larry didn’t know much of what was transpiring at upper levels. Yet scraps of pseudo-information somehow came through to some people. Beth Kershaw, Vicki Berg, and Mark Dryfoos all remember tour talk and the excitement it inspired. Whitney Myers vaguely recalls “discussions of taking the production somewhere—maybe Chambersburg, someplace fairly local.” Paul Hitchens got the word from John Hylton, who had “heard we were going to be asked to tour big Lutheran churches that summer, that we’d be paid a thousand bucks and expenses.”

The most detailed rumor is reported by Jesse Ehrlich, who heard that the tour would “go through the middle-Atlantic states, and be similar to
a marching-band tour: you’d be in buses, staying with host families, and playing at high schools or at churches. People were talking about it as if it was going to happen. I had a steady summer job as a camp counselor, and I remember thinking, ‘I’d better let them know I’m not coming back.’”

Mark Teich went so far as to phone his parents and say, “I don’t think I’ll be coming home this summer.”

For one person, the notional Superstar tour is an uneasy memory. “I was aware of it,” says Betty-Lynn White, “but I was excluded from the conversations. The reason, I found, was that Larry knew I had to get a summer job and make money, or I couldn’t continue school. Later on, he realized I was hurt, and he said, ‘You couldn’t have done it anyway.’ He was right. But there was this space between my wanting to do it and his not asking. And that was a rejection I felt.”

Asked if they would have participated in a summer tour, the Superstar people give a range of responses.

Suzanne Smith: “Oh, yes.”
Jakob Vinten-Johansen: “Yeah!”
Denise Rue: “If they asked me. That would have been a hoot.”
Bonnie Stephan: “I probably would’ve considered it.”
Jim Henderson: “I would’ve been interested in that.”
Sue Beebe: “Probably not. I had to get a job.”
Whitney Myers: “Maybe. It’s an awful lot of work to take a production on the road.”

Vicki Berg: “Yes—although I did have a job that year, doing summer stock on the Cape.”
Donna Lester: “I totally would’ve been up for it.”
Susan Tackach: “Oh my gosh yes.”
Rick Ludwick: “I’d have loved doing that. It would’ve been better than working a construction job that summer.”
Tom Breton: “I think I probably would have done it, if I’d been asked. Yeah.”

Gretchen Cranz: “I’d have eaten it up with all the spoons I could find.”
Mark Dryfoos: “Oh, yeah. It would’ve been really fun.”
Barbara Hanson: “I sure would have. Absolutely.”
John Hylton: “That would’ve been really neat.”
Paul Hitchens: “Why not? I usually worked in the steel mills in the summers. This sounded better than that.”
Steve Snyder: “I’d probably have put off school for another semester.”
Doug Wyatt: “I don’t know what I might have wanted at the time. Sitting here now, I think, ‘Oh, good Lord, no’—in part, I guess, because it
becomes less special the more you do it.”

Richard Schindler: “I probably wouldn’t have been involved. I was interested in it as a temporary experience.”

Jan Kitchener: “That would’ve been great.”

John Kuehl: “I don’t think I’d have been wildly enthused. For me it would’ve been, ‘What are the conditions? Where are we going? How long is it going to take?’ I’d have had to know if it fit into my schedule.”

Beth Kershaw: “That was the summer I worked at Ted’s Big Boy in Gettysburg. I mean, let’s weigh this: sing Superstar, or wait tables. Which would you rather do?”

Larry already had a summer job lined up: a state park chaplaincy in the Pocono Mountains. “The name of the place was—wait for it—Promised Land State Park. Which allowed me to make the observation that Moses’s failure to reach the Promised Land was actually a matter of taste.

“In the park was a non-denominational church, where I was to be pastor. I want to be kind and not snarky, which puts me in great internal conflict; but it was, excuse the expression, a living.”

Would he have bagged the job if a Superstar tour had happened? “In an instant.”
Friday, May 14th

Saturday, May 16th
Easter Recess ended on April 13. Classes resumed, the normal chapel program proceeded, the Business Office and synod moved on to other projects.

But Larry Recla couldn’t quite let it go: he knew there was some blast left in this cannon. Part of the aftereffect of March 25 was the audible dismay of those who had missed Superstar, either because they’d bet against it being anything memorable or because the advance talk had eluded them. As Steve Snyder says, “The word got out, and a lot of people realized they’d missed a happening. It was like Jimi Hendrix was in Hanover, and they hadn’t heard.” He laughs. “You know what I’m saying. A lot of people thought, ‘Why didn’t I know about it?’ Well, they didn’t advertise. That must have been the groundswell.”

In finding an audience for one performance, the Gettysburgians had readied the audience for another. Even if the synod tour was a dead letter, Larry considered, a repeat performance in the chapel might not be. It would write a more purposeful ending to the story begun months before; spread the opera’s message a little wider; and end Larry’s year at Gettysburg with a bang, not a whimper.

They’d brought it off once. Could that lightning be bottled again, that magic retrieved for another night? Or even two?

Larry decided to find out. “I had conversations about whether we could do this again,” he says, “and people were, I think, delighted. There was no coercion, argument, begging with anyone.”

“Back by popular demand” was the pitch, and the nights he wanted were Friday, May 14, and Sunday, May 16. Those dates were both climactic, since they marked the last weekend of the school year, and symbolic, since they preceded Ascension Day, identified in the Christian calendar as the day Jesus was lifted into Heaven. Larry put the notion to John Vannorsdall, who in turn relayed it to Arnold Hanson—for this time it would be he who decided if Superstar lived or died. Illegality was still the issue, as a boulder blocking a mountain pass is an issue, and sufficiently
weighty that only the school’s chief executive could rule on Larry’s proposal.

Pondering it, Hanson may have sighed and swallowed an aspirin. In staging one performance to great acclaim and no reprisal, the college seemed to have quite nicely gotten away with something. Now the same people were back, asking everyone to run the risk all over again. And the risk was exponentially greater now: the unflagging success of Superstar on the charts and in the culture surely meant that its rights would be even more jealously guarded than before. Yet the only point of repeat performances was to spread the word further, draw in more people—exactly the viral association of “Gettysburg” and “Superstar” which John Vannorsdall had meant to prevent with euphemistic language and contained publicity.

Confronted, as Vannorsdall had been, with both a pressing time element and the unhappy prospect of saying “No” to something that cried out for a “Yes,” Hanson chose to permit the performances. The move was gutsy, since he was risking his own good name as well as that of the college. It was also kindhearted, since he had nothing to gain from it but the knowledge that many people would get something they badly wanted. Even as a recent widower, Arnold Hanson was not known to act out of mere sentiment, and his daughter is adamant that her participation in the show was irrelevant to his decision. “He wouldn’t have done something he felt was wrong just to make it possible for me to do it,” says Barbara Hanson. “That simply wasn’t the way he was.”

On or around April 20, the president sent a handwritten memo to Donald Swope, the college’s attorney. It read, “Superstar: Apply same reasoning as applied to first perf. No roadshow. Synod on its own.” Translation: If we get caught, we call these “dress rehearsals,” not “performances.” We’ll have nothing to do with any tour. And any show after this will be the church’s liability, not ours. Then, on April 21, he typed an official memo to Vannorsdall, confirming both these ground rules and his permission for “a repeat performance” (apparently bundling both the Friday and Sunday shows into a single event).

That left just one piece of business. Hanson asked that the chapel intern behind the whole business be summoned to his office in
Pennsylvania Hall. This would be Larry Recla’s sole personal meeting with the president of Gettysburg College—and what was said there made it plain that Arnold Hanson didn’t appreciate having to be the good guy simply to avoid being the bad guy.

“It was a short meeting,” Larry says, “just the two of us. The import of it was where he said to me—and this is close to verbatim—‘You have caused me to do something that I really don’t want to do. There will be two more performances of Jesus Christ Superstar. Again, there will be no written publicity whatsoever. And by the way, Mr. Recla, I want you to understand that, as long as I draw breath, you will never, in any capacity whatsoever, be in the employ of this institution.’” Those, Larry Recla claims, were pretty much the first and last words Arnold Hanson ever spoke to him.

Such harshness was uncharacteristic, but not unprecedented. Normally placid and accommodating, a moderate in all things, Hanson could also be, under an accumulation of stresses, spiteful and unpleasant. Michael Birkner recalls being publicly snubbed and otherwise frozen out by Hanson after writing several Gettysburgian editorials critical of his leadership. Interviewed by Birkner in 2001, veteran religion professor Edwin Freed said Hanson sometimes “became angry if people differed from him too much.” He offered an anecdote. The two had enjoyed a warm, collegial relationship for several years; then, Freed said, sometime in the late Sixties, “We had a meeting.”

We were talking about the alumni and the finances of the college. Hanson was proposing something, I don’t remember what. However, he said something about the Alumni Association, and I said to him, “Dr. Hanson, that might not be a very good tactic. It might offend some alumni.” He looked at me and said, “Ed, I don’t give a damn what the alumni might think.” . . .

[Afterward] I said, “Dr. Hanson, I’m really sorry you said what you did about the Alumni Association. I’m an alumnus of this college, and I know that alumni give a lot of money . . . Hen Bream has done a lot for this college.”* And then Hanson got red from the neck on up, and he just took off on Hen. Hanson never liked Hen Bream . . . After that, Hanson rarely talked to me. We’d attend[ed] church together; he or I would wait for each other after church and exchange greetings and talk a little bit. After that meeting, we’d go out the same aisle, and he would not look at me . . . If I’d say, “Good morning,” he’d say, “Hello.” And that was it.

* A legend in mid-Atlantic collegiate sports, Henry T. “Hen” Bream graduated from Gettysburg in 1924 and returned two years later as an assistant football coach. He later became head football and basketball coach, and was Athletic Director from 1953 to his retirement in 1969.
Arnold Hanson could sometimes be a difficult man to figure. But at other times he was quite unmistakable, and Larry Recla left his office clear on one thing: he and everyone else involved in Superstar were pushing their luck to the limit.

★

Just three days after Hanson sent Vannorsdall his formal note of approval, Billboard carried a front-page story titled “Rights Clamor on ‘Superstar.’” It detailed the legal hassle between MCA Music, which was still receiving “literally thousands of applications” for performance rights, and the Stigwood Organization, which on behalf of Superstar Ventures was denying those applications. Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice, the story explained, “wish to be in direct charge of a first production of the rock opera in order to protect the integrity of the work.”

That was more than justified, but RSO was attempting to police a black market only a fraction of which it could even see. Most of the offending amateurs were small groups working out of small buildings in small towns, some smaller even than Gettysburg. The boat had long since sailed on Superstar’s “first production,” and most aspects of its “integrity”—the meanings, interpretations, and presentational elements which the creators wished to determine—had been up for grabs ever since the album appeared. Given that Superstar was incontestably the property of its authors, the violation of their rights and hijacking of their creative prerogatives by overenthusiastic pirates was ethically indefensible. Yet it was a measure of Superstar’s allure that so many were compelled to break principle in order to customize and recreate it, to populate the work with their own voices and bodies.

Rampant piracy certainly hadn’t hurt its commercial viability: the buzz around Superstar was higher now than it had been back in March. Songs were being covered by dozens of artists including Petula Clark, Henry Mancini, José Feliciano, and Percy Faith. The sheet music was selling well, as were sound-alike recordings of selected tracks on budget labels. With more than half a million copies sold, Superstar had been certified gold by the Recording Industry Association of America, with Bill Levy claiming weekly sales of between 65,000 and 75,000 sets. On May 1, the album, having fallen behind Janis Joplin’s Pearl, reached the top spot in Billboard for the second time. A week later, both Murray Head’s original “Superstar” and Helen Reddy’s version of “I Don’t Know How to Love Him” entered the US Top 20, where each would stay for the next two months.

At the same time, in New York, Judge Motley granted RSO its preliminary injunction against the American Rock Opera Company—
thereby putting a fresh spotlight on all the Superstar pirates, and their vulnerability to prosecution.

Hundreds of students’ relatives descended on the campus on Friday, April 30, for the biannual Parents’ Weekend. Each semester, families were invited to come and get a sense of how their sons and daughters lived. The playing fields opened up to picnics and games, the classrooms to inquiring mothers and fathers, and the SUB Ballroom to mass meet-and-greets with faculty and staff. Everyone put on their best face—and in preparation, no doubt, many dorm rooms were hastily rearranged, many private pleasures securely stashed.

Part of the weekend tradition was a Sunday chapel service, with a sermon from John Vannorsdall. If the service was a benediction on the college community, JV’s sermon was typically a challenge to its cloistered complacency. In his address of May 2, Jesus Christ Superstar served as the instrument of that challenge.

Writing to Robert Bloom, JV had called the Gettysburg Superstar “exciting, electric, amazing.” Still today, he recalls it as “an amazingly successful event.” Yet something about the show’s success bugged him, and he isolated it in the song “Everything’s Alright,” Mary’s lullaby to Jesus. Vannorsdall heard it as an endorsement of apathy disguised as an offer of comfort, one whose implications were almost diabolical. “If Jesus had listened to Mary Magdalene, it could have been all over. No passion, no garden of Gethsemane, no Calvary, no Easter, no Superstar . . . The priests could have relaxed, the Zealots could have manipulated him, and he could perhaps have slept well that night.”

The crux of the sermon was its distinction between “happiness,” a superficial contentment which Vannorsdall equated with avoidance of confrontation, and “joy,” a euphoric release which only confrontation could earn. In the McLuhanesque terms of the era, joy was “hot,” while happiness was “cool,” and Vannorsdall warned that “we have so cooled
our loving that it is just plain sick. We love with detachment, we form sexual relationships which are without commitments. . . . Cooling it may result in happiness, but joy arises out of conflicts faced, out of a passion lived.”

This reproach was directed at both young and old—“all of us who long for the quiet green of the country.” Mary Magdalene, Vannorsdall said,

beckons us out of the cities into the plush rugged clubs where epithets are always softly spoken and smilingly delivered, the greens where passion is dissipated on the golf course, and in the way we drive our mowing machines, or honk our horns at city intersections. She is also the patron saint of large numbers of students who call their country estate a farm somewhere, and their country club a commune. “Try not to turn on to problems that upset you.” Like courses which don’t seem immediately likeable and useful. Like the spontaneity which allows us to rejoice in whatever immediate gratification comes along, regardless of the consequences to longer-range commitments. Like the drug scene which allows us our own counterpart to the alcoholic nirvana of an older generation. . . . Mary Magdalene sings a siren song to all of us, luring us toward the whirlpool of a passionless, insipid death.

Vannorsdall did make some allowance for joy in the older generation, for passion in the younger. And his social barometer was acute to the degree that many young people were already in retreat from Sixties conflict, seeking refuge in rural communes and solipsistic “human potential” movements. But the sermon was fundamentally a scolding, and a curiously reductive one: it committed the fallacy of composition, which assumes true for the whole what is true of the part. “Everything’s Alright” was but one song in a long, intricate opera, and hardly its definitive statement of theme; nor was Mary the only character with a point of view to impress, a desire, a plea. To other ears than Vannorsdall’s, her words were a compassionate and all too human reminder that even a messiah needs a rest. But Vannorsdall took her offer of peaceful oblivion as the want and wish of the entire work—and, by implication, of the Gettysburg production.

Sitting by in his sacral vestments, face fixed solemnly despite his slow burn, was Larry Recla. Inasmuch as he’d never fully trusted Vannorsdall, the sermon’s negativity wasn’t altogether shocking to him. In his view, the chaplain’s aid on behalf of Superstar, while more than useful, had also been reluctant; and after the show’s triumph, Larry says, JV had extended him only a tepid, reserved form of congratulations. As for the exhilarated superlatives Vannorsdall expressed to Bloom, Larry says, “I never got that from him. Ever.” Still, he felt a bit blindsided by the sermon, feeling it had
turned an exhilarating success into an instrument of chastisement, and reduced everyone’s inspired labor to a vapid evasion.

"My initial reaction was: ‘Huh.’ It seemed to me that this was John trying to contain something, tamp it down. I didn’t think it was a bad sermon; I didn’t think it was an attacking sermon; I didn’t think it was, to anyone sitting in the pew, dismissive. I did think it was: ‘Got a little out of hand, did we? Well, let’s put that down.’ That was my unkind reaction, and I confess it may say more about me than about him.”

The sermon served only to deepen his doubts about how white Vannorsdall’s collar truly was. These were not lessened when he received warnings from (unnamed) individuals at Gettysburg Seminary. “There was a point, with the success of Superstar," Larry claims, “that a couple of professors gathered me in and sought to protect me. There was concern that this thing was so successful that Vannorsdall would be threatened by it, and would have to take action against it. Nothing like that ever transpired in my sight. But the articulation was, ‘Larry, get your head out of your ass. You’re in some danger, and we want you to know that we’ve got your back.’ I was astounded. ‘Me? A threat to him?’"

The prophecy, and the poignancy, of Vannorsdall’s sermon lay in its sense that the tide of history was turning—turning back from the battles on which he had staked so much of his ministry, his sense of self and vocation; that the generation so recently and passionately committed to those battles was copping out, en masse, to disengagement. This may be why he fixed on one part of the opera at the cost of the whole. He felt already what Ken Mott called the “second thoughts” that would turn the Seventies into the “Me Decade”; felt already that America had passed what Hunter S. Thompson, later in 1971, would call “the high-water mark—that place where the wave finally broke and rolled back.”

This ties in with another, typically mordant Recla observation. “The war wound down while I was at Gettysburg. I saw what I believe was disappointment in Vannorsdall when that happened, because it removed a raison d’etre and a cause. Now, that was nothing that John and I were involved in conversation on. I watched much of it from some distance, and was quite engaged in other things. Like the sun coming up or going down.”

The two men’s relationship had always been tenuous, but by semester’s end it was at a sorry pass. It bespoke their inability to communicate that Larry never understood what a magnificent coup Vannorsdall felt the Gettysburg Superstar to be. It bespoke Larry’s own problems with authority that he entertained the paranoid innuendoes that came his way, instead of rejecting them as palace gossip. Vannorsdall’s sermon, aimed at modulating and even dimming the afterglow of Superstar, would be bookended weeks later by Larry’s own, a defense written in
direct response. It was funny, and it was sad: rather than discuss their differences directly, these two thoughtful, articulate men sermonized in aphoristic code across the heads of a chapel audience that never fully understood what it was hearing, or why.

Throughout his time at Gettysburg, Larry stood ready to be betrayed by Vannorsdall. Unless the Parents’ Weekend sermon counts, he never was. Yet his doubts have not died to this day. Larry makes his truest and simplest comment on their relationship when he says, “John Vannorsdall taught me the meaning of the word ‘ambivalent.’”

Four nights of refresher rehearsals were scheduled between May 9 and May 13. As before, the timing was especially hard on the students: where the first show had occurred during midterm exams, the resurrection came amidst finals preparation. But only two of the original performers, trumpeters Jim Donough and Bob Ulmer, chose not to reenlist. Their places were taken by sophomore business major Curvin Dellinger III, known as Kip, and freshman Owen Marks.

Marks slotted easily into the existing lineup. As a music education major and member of the concert band, he knew the other horn players; as bassist for Opus I, he’d backed most of the lead singers. Invited into the May shows by Apple Hall roommates Doug Wyatt and Jim Starner, he was, he says, “late to the party. But you gel fairly quickly, because you don’t know enough to be scared of what you don’t know. When you’re young, you just want to play.” He felt no special investment in Superstar’s spiritual content—not at that time. “I wanted to play well, but in terms of some higher thing, I don’t know that I saw that. It’s funny, because my views on religion have changed since then. I’d love to play that show now, where I am in my faith; I know I could’ve dug the experience a lot more. But I wasn’t spiritually aware enough to have any overwhelming feeling about it. It could have been Evita or The Music Man.”
Filling the seat of Dave Bauer, who would be unavailable, was sophomore Mike Wert, a double major in mathematics and economics who was currently drumming for Opus I. "Mike just kind of showed up one day," says Mark Teich, "probably recommended by the music majors. From a technical standpoint, he knew the part well. Bauer had played more from feel; I found his interpretation much looser and more relaxed, with a little improvisation that fit well. Mike was a student, and he had that approach to it." There would also be four additional chorus members: seniors Karen Burdack (the show’s titular publicity director) and Mike Henderson (no relation to Jim); sophomore Kathy Moore; and freshman Kristin Schricker (a military brat who became the cast’s second ROTC member).

The rehearsals were not lax in comparison to the March preparations; Jake Vinten-Johansen remembers them being "even more focused, because we were building on success." Asked back to lead the chorus, Jan Kitchener took a disciplined approach. "Larry told me, 'You've got some extra chorus people.' I said, 'Fine, but I don't want people up there just having fun. We're going to go back and rehearse everything again. They're going to have to learn what we did, and why we did it, and how we did it, and they're going to be there every time. They have to be able to do it right.'" Jan also decided that this time around, she would perform with the chorus. "I said, 'I've worked too hard on this. I want to be up there with them.' Larry was fine with that."

Karen Burdack found ways to once again bend or evade the iron rule against publicity. Junto’s ad illustrated the performance dates and times with a crucifix and the following text: "Junto's ad illustrated the performance dates and times with a crucifix and..."
Opposite: May rehearsals.

This page: Richard Schindler’s Junto ad for the May shows.
stars, but left out the title of the work. *The Gettysburgian* ran photographs from March 25 over informational captions. So that as many as possible could experience the show, repeat attendance was discouraged. Thus, *The Gettysburgian*’s weekly list of chapel activities announced the May 14 performance with the request, “If you’ve participated before, please give others a chance.” And, for the last show on May 16, “JC Himself would look dimly upon those who attend both Friday and Sunday.”

The May shows were just as well-attended as the first—more so, in fact, given the buzz that had been building over the previous two months. “I had a lot of friends come who’d heard about it and wanted to see it,” says Vinten-Johansen. “It was standing room only, even behind the stage.”

Despite that, the shows are mostly not well-recalled by the performers. Memories are clouded by time and by everything else that was occurring at the end of the semester, but mainly by the explosive success of March 25. Everyone agrees that the first night had had something that could never be replicated. “It was still good,” says Steve Snyder, “but the magic wasn’t there.” Carl Leinbach agrees. “You didn’t quite feel the crowd lifting you up, like in the first one. It was so unexpected—whereas we were expecting the later ones to be big.” Jan Kitchener too felt the May shows “didn’t have the electricity the first one did.” Others had forgotten they even occurred. “They all run together in my mind,” says Tom Breton. For Mark Dryfoos, “It’s all one giant moment.”

Aside from the personnel changes, there were a few key differences in May. The chilly late winter had turned into a sultry spring, and doors and windows were opened not just to let the music out but to let the breeze in. Since sound technician Cam Hitchcock wasn’t returning, there was a different PA system; junior Steve Leverette volunteered to help operate it with Tom Simpson. The March 25 performance had impressed Leverette enormously, and he was proud to be aiding in *Superstar*’s resurrection. For him, running the sound “wasn’t just a job. It was exciting being part of such an inspiring show.

“We did some sound checks, but we were flying blind in the performances, because without the crowd in the chapel you really couldn’t sense what it would be like. That was the purpose of having the controls in the middle of the audience: you had to do it on the fly, adjusting for each singer to make sure they could be heard.” As before, the control center...
was a blocked-off middle pew, the soundboard suspended from the bench ahead. “It was a small board,” Leverette remembers, “with basic controls for the various mikes and levels for the output speakers.” He says the new rig didn’t match the power of the March 25 sound system. “It was a bit tinny. The sound drivers—that big, bell-shaped horn with a unit attached to the bottom of it—were on stands up front, and they were fairly small. The original had had huge horns. We did the best we could, it was good, and everybody enjoyed it, but I didn’t feel it had nearly the presence of the first performance.”

Mark Teich remembers Larry bringing his reel-to-reel to the chapel on May 16, because “he was adamant that the final performance be recorded.” Copies of the March 25 tape had been circulating among the cast and other curious listeners.* Most have surely been lost in the mists of forty-odd years, but the last night’s recording, thanks to Larry, has never been absent from posterity. Nonetheless, most of the performers have never heard it. Tom Breton “didn’t know there was one. I think I’d like to hear it—I don’t know.” Doug Wyatt was never terribly interested. “Mostly when I listen to a recording of something I’ve done, I hear all the little flaws I wish I could fix. I’d rather remember it as it seemed to me at the time.”

The money bag tossed by the priests to Judas continued to be a symbolic barometer of the overall performance. “On the Friday night, the throw was there, but Tom dropped it,” Teich recalls. “For the final show, he caught it just like he did on March 25.”

The music followed the same inspired trajectory. With every allowance for the unrepeatable high of March 25, Superstar was a better show on its last night than on its first. The band is more polished, the vocals more detailed, yet the sound remains raw, the emotional thrust unrelenting. The first night, Vinten-Johansen’s opening guitar lines were badly awry; on May 16, they are sinuous and precise. The horns are just as brash and brilliant as before, the chorus just as euphoric. Mike Wert’s drumming is a constant source of crashing excitement. Beth Kershaw matches her earlier performance, while both Brandenburg and Breton surpass theirs: “Gethsemane” and “Judas’ Death” in particular are as fully realized as they could conceivably be. As for Smatresk and Hylton, the savagery they had achieved before is heightened to an almost terrifying degree: Herod’s roars come as if from the mouth of a monster, and the combined rage, fear, and surrender in Pilate’s final words express, at

* “Is it still possible to obtain a reel-to-reel recording of Superstar and if so where?” ran an anonymous query in Potpourri.
the climactic turning, every emotional complexity of the work as a whole. Which makes the following sunburst of horns that much more glorious and exultant.

"I feel we just got better and better," Smatresk says. He’s right.

“I think 1971 was the end of the Sixties,” says Greg Seckman. “It was a pivotal time for me, for the country, for the Christian church. There was radical change, and some of it was good and some of it was bad. But change shouldn’t be something that you fear.”

Today a pastor in York, Pennsylvania, Seckman was in 1971 a senior at York Suburban High School, and a youth leader at Eastminster Presbyterian Church. A friend had attended the March 25 show; his wild praise inspired Seckman to take his group of eight or ten teenagers down on May 16. “It was something to do. I’d never heard of Jesus Christ Superstar, and I wasn’t a big fan of rock music. The songs I liked had lyrics you could chew over—Bob Dylan, Peter, Paul and Mary, Simon and Garfunkel.

“When we arrived, the chapel was full, the windows were open, and a large number of people were sitting on the grass because they couldn’t get in. Our group was part of that. I’m pretty tall, so I stood behind the people crammed in the doorway and looked over their heads. I was the only one in my group who even saw that much; the rest had to listen to it outside.

“I’d never heard anything other than organ or piano played in a church before. Old hymns and classical music. I didn’t know you were allowed to play guitars and drums in a church, much less in that style. That you could play what was basically rock music, and tell the story of Jesus without that churchy feel. At the end they had a curtain call, and the band played the ‘Superstar’ theme over and over. They lifted Jesus on their shoulders and carried him around, people were standing on the
pews, and I was shocked—shocked that people would be standing and clapping. To see something like that in a church... it was absolutely brand new. Most people didn’t think worship could be joyful. It was supposed to be serious, somber. This was anything but that. It was a joyful experience. A breath of fresh air.

“The performance opened my eyes. Worship didn’t need to be everyone sitting down, shutting up, and listening to the pastor: You could use different kinds of music, and it could be joyful, and it could be loud. That’s carried over to my church this day.

“Everything I thought I believed about God was challenged—right there.”

* *

“Thank you,” Larry says near the end of the May 16 tape, a bit out of breath. He’s been inside the chapel tonight, watching the show, “not nearly as jittery this time,” as Jan Kitchener observes. Still, his tone wavers slightly, and it’s odd to hear this supremely sardonic man sound flustered.

He stands at the center of the chancel with the performers ranked behind him, “addressing the congregation,” in Teich’s phrase. Larry thanks several “people that have been of great help to us in putting this on”: John Vannorsdall, Rex Maddox, Jerry Knoche, Tom Simpson. He wants to acknowledge “one guy in particular—Doug Wyatt, our musical director.”

Doug turns from his conductor’s stand and, for the first time that night, allows the audience to see him. He is met by a huge round of applause.

“Join us in singing this time,” Larry asks the audience. “Doug: ‘Superstar,’ from the top.”

* *

The day after, which was also the last day of classes, the front page of the Gettysburg Times carried a story, “‘Superstar’ Crowds Jam Chapel Here.” It reported that all seats had been filled within fifteen minutes of the doors opening the night before, and estimated that 2,100 people had been present. The three performances together, it was said, had played to more than five thousand people.

Though for some performers the May shows were anticlimactic, others, like Sue Beebe and Dave Crowner, say they were equally special. To Betty-Lynn White, they mattered because they proved “we weren’t just lucky the first time. There were people who came back, which said
to me this had touched them. A spiritual sharing happened, and that’s the feeling I got on those last two days.” Jake Vinten-Johansen feels May 16 was meaningful “because we knew it was the last one.”

“Each performance was special,” says Neal Smatresk, “and more bittersweet.”

For Bonnie Stephan, whose family was in the audience, May 16 was bittersweet in the most personal way. “My dad said, ‘Your mom is really upset—your brother’s sick and he’s not getting better.’ He died that September, from leukemia. My parents brought him up for the last performance, and it was the last thing they ever did together. My mom could hardly listen to *Jesus Christ Superstar* again. That was her last memory of him being well.”

“There was a lot of emotion” in that last night’s performance, Smatresk says. “Like we’ve done something very triumphant, and now it’s over. Now we go back to life.”

On May 23, the Sunday after Ascension, Larry Recla officiated the chapel service, and delivered the sermon. It was the third service he’d led over the course of the year, and his last as chapel ministry intern.

His reaction to John Vannorsdall’s Parents’ Weekend sermon, Larry says, “was a primary motive drive to mine.” Thus, as JV had opened by referring obliquely to “a certain rock opera called *Jesus Christ Superstar*,” so Larry used that exact phrase. He defended the Mary Magdalene scene in particular, saying that it “takes on whole new shades of meaning when one sees a man and a woman standing right up there, singing to and touching one another.” But mostly he stressed the fundamental contradiction of Jesus—man and god, human and divine—that was so often ignored or evaded, but which lay at the heart of *Superstar*. In a recognition of Christ’s humanness, Larry seemed to suggest, the extremes of the rock opera, the mysteries of faith, and the misgivings of a misanthrope could be joined, even if they could never be resolved.

Some see *Jesus Christ Superstar* as another kind of Woodstock experience, notable for good vibes and a crowd, and that’s the end of it. What I wish to suggest is that the experiences [people had] here were an experience of the story of Jesus Christ, and further, that it was this fact which caused the most excitement and the most offense.

It is possible to take the scripture accounts and ignore the fact that Jesus was a man. We can get all kinds of sentimental and comic book pictures of a simp with long hair who sort of floats around, deigns to die, and disappears in the clouds…. While *Superstar* has its problems, this is not one of them....
The frightening thing for many people was that the Herod scene was funny, that people laughed, that in fact they laughed, and they were laughing at the mocking of God. The same thing occurred in the “39 Lashes” scene. . . . It is indeed possible that some of you did not clap your hands, but I wager that your emotions at that time were not the way you would hope to feel if someone was being beaten. It indeed is a kind of mob psychology, for one is caught up in the crowd, in the music, and it is only later that we realize what is going on. The beast is released in us—a beast in all of us.

We somehow try to forget whenever the gospels speak of Jesus as being human. *Superstar* forces upon us the body language of the Jesus story. . . . I would contend that what occurred to people in [experiencing] Superstar is what occurs to people whenever they are confronted with God as man, as Jesus the Christ. It is the very fact that this God reveals himself as this man that allows us at the time of finals, of leaving school, or of risking a sermon like this, to realize that God buys into us: that God accepts us as we are.

At least in part, Larry was saying that by allowing oneself to accept Jesus as human, one could accept oneself as divine. It was a very old point of theology, a conundrum and a truism. But it was also a step toward a state of thinking and feeling that might allow him to accept others’ flawed humanness by first accepting his own, and to accept his own by first accepting Christ’s. “And so a misanthrope becomes a Christian.”

Of course this is interpretation, *ex post facto* (Latin for “bullshit”). Larry has a memory of what he was trying to express at the time: “This is so grandiose—at least allow me to hang my head in shame—but I felt a bit like Jesus talking to the Pharisees on Palm Sunday. I was saying, ‘Even the rocks and trees will sing. It’s a party. Get over yourself.’”

The school year ended, and the campus dispersed. Kids went back to their homes; a few hung around town.

Commencement for the class of 1971 was held on June 6. Among the graduates were *Superstar* people Kelly Alsedek, Susan Beebe, Karen Burdack, Barbara Hanson, Jim Henderson, Mike Henderson, Whitney Myers, Bethany Parr, Suzanne Smith, Clay Sutton, Susan Tackach, Jakob Vinten-Johansen, and Kathie Zurich. On a stifling day in the SUB Ballroom, Jim Henderson, voted class speaker, spoke about “ecstasy in higher education,” and punctuated his words with tones from the two saxophones around his neck. Crossing the stage toward her father, Barbara Hanson shared with him a little smile, and the sadness of her mother’s absence. But the audience saw none of that, she recalls: “He gave me my diploma, I shook his hand, and I kept moving, just like everybody else.”
Beth Kershaw was invited to sing at the baccalaureate ceremony preceding commencement. She performed two songs: the Beatles’ “Blackbird,” and—backed by Mark Teich and Doug Wyatt—“I Don’t Know How to Love Him.”


In August the annual Christ Chapel report, recapping activities and statistics for the previous year, was compiled. The section on Superstar listed cast and crew beneath a brief, unsigned text whose authorship would be obvious to anyone who had been around the chapel that year.

The bulletins read “He is not here . . . He is risen.” But for the many who declared that this was “the most profound religious experience of a lifetime,” He was there. The happening was scheduled for one night only, March 25—but the response was so overwhelming that two more, May 14 and 16, had to be scheduled.

The triumph of the evenings was self-evident, but the circumstances that made it possible make the accomplishment even more spectacular. The singers and musicians, dancers and technicians were all gathered for this event alone. All the music was transcribed, orchestrated and arranged by ear by Doug Wyatt, J. Mark Teich, Jakob Vinten-Johansen and Tom Breton. All the work was accomplished at a time when other performing groups made heavy demands on the personnel and the facilities. But Yahweh provided—beyond all expectations.

Packing for his summer pastorate in the Poconos, bound for the Promised Land—Promised Land State Park, anyway—Larry Recla had to feel the sense of sorrowful release that follows when something long and dearly held is suddenly gone. But he would be taking the experience away with him. Each stage, from first thoughts to final thanks, had been to him a challenge and a thrill; he’d lost his breath, his temper, once or twice almost his

Larry and Larry Jr. at Promised Land State Park, Summer 1971.
mind. There had been costs, and infinitely greater rewards. At no point had he regretted ever hearing of Jesus Christ Superstar.

Having said his goodbyes, Larry felt differently than he had nine or ten months earlier, at the start of the school year. Then, he’d felt a stranger on the campus, uncertain of what he would do there, of what he could do; of who he was in relation to the church, the times, the people to whom he was meant to minister. Now at least he was on his way to a few more answers. And if it would be a while before he came to see his Christ Chapel internship as “a direct intervention from God,” he would leave knowing that both he and the place had left their marks on each other.

“There was no sense of anticlimax,” he says of that ending, of those quiet days when it sank in that the year was over, Superstar was over, and life now lay elsewhere. “Insofar as I reflect or remember, it was the feeling one has after an exquisite and outstanding Thanksgiving dinner. The hackneyed word is ‘closure’: a logical and complete conclusion. This is great. We’ve done it. Enough.”
It may never be definitively established which band of pirates first put a complete *Superstar* on the stage, but a number of sources which attempt to do so are demonstrably inaccurate. Ravenswood’s concert at the Madison Avenue Baptist Church on April 4, 1971, has been identified as the opera’s “first live concert performance,” but it came well behind the Gettysburg gathering. Meanwhile the *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Christian Music* says the “first staged performance” was put on by students at Southold High School in Suffolk County, Long Island, in June—a full month after the final Christ Chapel performance.

In fact at least one group, uncredited in any extant source, beat them all to the post. The sophomore class of Villa Maria High School, a Catholic girls’ academy in northwestern Pennsylvania, staged its *Superstar*—in full, in costume, in the school auditorium—on February 17, 1971. The only permission the girls seem to have worried about getting was from their nuns. “However, once the Sisters heard the album,” one reads, “it was agreed that they could attempt the production. There was a belief that it would be too much for them to handle but, if one can judge by an audience’s reaction, they handled it quite well. . . . Now there is talk of taking the rock opera to other high schools in the area and even presenting it to the public.”

School justifies presenting ‘Superstar’

On March 14, a repeat performance was given to benefit the Second Baptist Church of nearby New Castle; approximately a thousand people attended, most of them children and teenagers. After that, nothing: possibly the school’s officials were chastened by the burgeoning legal threat. In obvious respects a foreshadowing of Gettysburg’s, the Villa Maria production deserves to be considered the “first” *Superstar*, at least until an earlier one is documented.

In any case, Gettysburg had come and gone by May 28, when *Life* magazine put the amateur-*Superstar* phenomenon on its cover. The story inside told of a Kansas City opera company which had assembled an
impromptu performance in lieu of a scheduled one by the American Rock Opera Company, canceled by RSO’s injunction after selling eight thousand tickets. A précis of the libretto was illustrated with photos of the singers, an anti-Superstar picketer, and the standing ovation of an audience that included the mayor of Kansas City and the chancellor of the University of Missouri.

The story, which smiled upon the opera company’s hustle and gumption and mentioned the projected Broadway version only in passing, was in at least tacit sympathy with the pirates. Maybe it was then that Robert Stigwood decided if he couldn’t beat them, he’d join them. He put together an official touring show and debuted it on July 12 at the Pittsburgh Civic Arena (only an hour’s drive from Villa Maria!), where it played to a capacity audience of more than 13,000. Demand was so high
that a second touring company was launched in September, going on to set an all-time attendance record over two nights at the Hollywood Bowl.

The Broadway production bowed on October 12, 1971, at the Mark Hellinger Theatre. Directed by Tom O'Horgan, who'd helmed the record-breaking *Hair*, it was an instant and overwhelming success, despite mostly negative reviews focusing on the pomp and pageantry of the staging. *Rolling Stone* pronounced it a “rich, gaudy, vulgar, stupefying spectacle”; the *New York Post* called it “flat, pallid, [and] pointless”; and *Life* deplored it as a “circus,” with “dancing dwarves, shuffling lepers, hooded demons, and enough elaborate hardware to delight the Joint Chiefs of Staff.” Still, the production ran for a year and a half and logged over seven hundred performances, closing on July 1, 1973.

The film version, also co-produced by Stigwood, appeared just six weeks later. Directed by Norman Jewison, whose last film had been a well-received rendering of *Fiddler on the Roof*, the film posited a tribe of hippies riding a bus into the desert and staging the opera on a variety of dunes, mesas, and promontories. Despite some painfully fey singing; the clash between operatic stylization and natural settings; and a cast unable to strike unified notes between over- and underacting, the movie earned nearly $11 million in North American rentals in its first year. The soundtrack likewise became a huge seller. Finally it was possible to say that Robert Stigwood had put the amateurs in their place—while, it could also be argued, sacrificing much of what had attracted them, and millions of others, to this work to begin with.

Having conquered each medium in turn, *Jesus Christ Superstar* was now poised to enter theatrical legend as one of those works that would never die: popular with every age group, accessible to every audience. The odds are good that it is being performed somewhere, by some committed band of professionals or amateurs, at this very moment—with or without permission.*

John Vannorsdall and Larry Recla parted amicably, both men say. Except that the two took a road trip to a college chaplains’ convention in Atlanta later in 1971, and Larry says JV found the event somewhat chagrining. For also on hand was Olov Hartman, playwright in residence during the first *Superstar* performance—and all he cared about was extolling the production, and its director-coordinator, to whomever would listen.

Chaplain and ex-intern would meet just once again, about a year later, in Columbia, Pennsylvania. Larry had taken his first parish there, after

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* A revival tour was announced in April 2014, with Sex Pistol Johnny Rotten starring as Judas; it was canceled a few weeks later, to widespread relief.
graduating from the seminary in early 1972. Vannorsdall, he says, “came by, looked through the building, was reasonably impressed, and made some comment that, granting my use of language, I would not go far in the church. I have absolutely no argument, with either his observation or the accuracy thereof.”

What do the performers think of their Superstar, reflecting on it after more than forty years?

Jesse Ehrlich: “It gave me a good feeling to know that this could happen at Gettysburg—that it wasn’t just another super-conservative, middle-class, white liberal arts school.”

Bonnie Stephan: “It was a hoot. I loved every single minute of it.”

Ralph Cavaliere: “I can’t go to a college function where someone won’t come up to me and say, with such sincerity, ‘It was one of the greatest things I’ve ever seen.’ This is years and years after it happened.”

Gretchen Cranz: “A wonderful experience. A freeing. The visualization is people in windowsills, windows open, and people outside listening.”

Betty-Lynn White: “It was the kind of communal experience which the factionalism of the Seventies didn’t often allow. The whole world was emery boards scraping, and Jesus Christ Superstar put balm on it.”

Mark Dryfoos: “Its impact on my life was huge. The excitement of the audience carried across to us, so that when it happened, it was an organic thing. Performer and audience: you couldn’t separate one from the other.”

Whitney Myers: “It was an inspired idea. I was glad to be part of it.”

Susan Tackach: “I think of a Charlie Brown cartoon. Someone asks, ‘Do you believe there’s a one most important moment of your life?’ And he says, ‘What if you’ve already had it?’ Not to suggest that there haven’t been good things since. But it was the highlight of my life.”

Steve Snyder: “I feel very fortunate to have been a part of Superstar. It was something I bragged about for a long time. Thank heavens I had a Hammond and a Leslie, and Eric Lindeman knew I played by ear.”

Bob Ulmer: “It was part of the liberalization of me.”

Kathie Zurich: “I was raised Unitarian, and came to Gettysburg College confused as to why I landed there. I have to consider, as a person who has looked long and hard at the Passion story from a non-Christian perspective, that it’s a mystery. It’s raw, it’s real, and so much is unknown about not just the story, but also the experience of being human and singing that music. It brought something forward that was moving in ways that are very difficult to describe.”

Jean LeGros: “I was Director of Alumni Relations for ten years, and alumni always say, ‘Remember Superstar?’ Part of my memories are not
because I recorded them in my head at the time, but because so many people have been talking about it for so long.”

Neal Smatresk: “It was better than all of us thought. You’re not quite sure, and you look at what you’ve made, and you go, ‘Wow.’ A little bit transcendent. I was part of something that was perfect for the times.”

Carl Leinbach: “A once in a lifetime thing. I was Carl, and Ralph was Ralph, and we were just cast members. It was a democracy of the arts.”

Kelly Alsedek: “People find out that I went to Gettysburg and say, ‘I saw *Jesus Christ Superstar* there.’ I go, ‘I was in it.’”

In the years after, as these people spread out to every corner of the American map, they would go through the usual life stages of success and compromise, upheaval and monotony. Jobs would be secured, homes bought, babies had. Innocence would become experience as parents, spouses, and friends died, marriages ended, children grew up and went away. New lives would be sought, and sometimes found. Life-changing traumas would fall like pieces of airplane from the sky.

Here are some of the stories:

*When I was 32,” John Hylton says, “I came to a realization that I personally needed a savior. That I was a sinner by nature. That *John Hylton* was: it wasn’t some vague concept. At that point, I accepted Christ into my life fully. God’s been good. He’s opened doors for me, and closed others.

“I started off in a program at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis—a Master of Arts in Theological Studies. I’m switching to a Master of Divinity degree, the full-blown three-year program where you end up ready to be ordained. I’ll probably be 66 when I finish. I’m just hoping to get in a few years of ministry. Do some filling in, maybe at a small church that needs somebody.”

Bonnie Stephan and Denise Rue, the freshmen from Huber Hall who stood together through every phase of *Superstar*, maintained their close friendship for a long time after graduating. Then they had a falling out, and didn’t speak for twenty years.

“It was awful,” says Denise. “We don’t even know now what the real reason was. But she was off doing her thing, and I was doing mine.”

“I reached out to her one Christmas,” says Bonnie. “I said, ‘Just wondering what you’re doing.’ She wrote back, ‘I’m so glad you contacted
me.’ We met up for lunch, and it was like we never took a break. Now we’re best friends again.”

Denise says the same. “Bonnie and I are still best buds. I just spent a week with them on their boat, and we were sitting there saying, ‘What was that fight about?’ But we’re closely connected now, and that means a lot to both of us.

“I remember walking to the cafeteria when I’d first gotten to the college. You’re a freshman, you don’t know what’s going on, and you have to walk past the SAE house to get to the cafeteria.* Bonnie was in Huber, too, but on a different floor. I still remember her coming out and saying, ‘You want to walk down with me?’ I’m like, ‘Yeah.’ And we just hit it off.

“We’re such different kinds of people. It’s interesting that we were able to find each other.”

John Vannorsdall left Gettysburg College in 1976, one year before the retirement of his friend, boss, and benefactor Arnold Hanson. Succeeding William Sloane Coffin, he became chaplain at Yale University, serving mostly under president A. Bartlett Giamatti (later the commissioner of Major League Baseball). According to Donna Schaper, his former student and intern at Gettysburg and assistant at Yale, Vannorsdall “got pushed around really badly” by Giamatti. His attempts to orient students toward social causes were monitored and restricted, and he was never able to develop anything like the activist ministry he’d built at Gettysburg.

After ten years, Vannorsdall left Yale to become president of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, where he stayed until his retirement in 1990. Today he lives in Ohio, two hours from where he was born.

Toward the end of May 1971, Vannorsdall addressed a memo to Arnold Hanson and his Dean of Students, Frank Williams. It recommended that Zane Brandenburg be awarded an honorary degree at the following month’s commencement exercises. “You will think I’m losing my mind,” JV wrote, “but I’m dead serious and know what I’m doing.”

The students would go wild at the humanness of it. Audacious humanness. Consider: two of the biggest things in the last eight years (as students see it) have been the Brandenburg Jazz Ensemble and Superstar. Everyone knows he has been a lousy student, and a great

* Sigma Alpha Epsilon, then known as the campus’s lewdest, crudest fraternity.
human being. We’ve never done it before and might not do it again for
ten years. It’s not political and not competitive. Just a warm human
act which every student would understand. . . .

Make it a surprise. Prepare the band to play the Superstar theme.
Wow! Commencement is a happening!

This act of humanness was found to be impracticable, indeed illegal,
under statutory requirements for honorary degrees. But as Vannorsdall
suggested, there would have been something karmically exquisite in it.
Zane Brandenburg, though he’d failed as a student, had conferred nothing
but good upon the college.

“I think he had a hard struggle academically,” says Nancy Henderson.
“But nobody could sing like Zane. I always thought he should’ve done
Superstar on Broadway, and when I saw the movie I thought, ‘No. He
doesn’t hold a candle to Zane.’ He could’ve gone somewhere with that,
but I don’t know if he was in a position to.”

Zane is more reclusive now than he was in 1970. “I don’t think he
sings much anymore,” says Jim Henderson, who has ongoing, if infrequent,
contact with him. In fact, one of the last known credits in Zane’s musical
portfolio is his appearance with the Gettysburg Civic Chorus in a 1980
production of The Mikado—one of the earliest shows he’d ever appeared
in, back in Hagerstown as a teenager.

Ironically, or appropriately, Zane works today as a carpenter, restoring
historic homes along New Jersey’s southern shore. Fittingly for the
product of a large family, he has sired one of his own. The word is that its
members are loving and supportive of each other, and that Zane is happy
within it.

In her junior year, Betty-Lynn White, along with five others, co-founded
Gettysburg G.R.O.W. (Group for the Re-Education of Women), the first
feminist group in the college’s history. Seeking to “mold awareness on
campus about women’s issues, and to involve more students in areas that
concern women directly or indirectly,” G.R.O.W. offered information and
counsel on birth control, abortion rights, and day care. It also worked to
reduce gender inequality in school policies, and lobbied state lawmakers
for passage of the Equal Rights Amendment.

As a graduate student at New York University Law School, White
clerked and represented several clients, “mostly women and unions,” on
issues relating to Title VII, the employment clause of the 1964 Civil Rights
Act. She then became a litigator for Union Carbide, one of the world’s
largest chemical manufacturers, and worked there for 25 years while
raising two children with her Gettysburg classmate and first husband, John Abrassart. Her work as a corporate attorney mostly involved labor and employment law, and far from compromising her Sixties principles, she feels it “helped change the industry dramatically.”

After she and Abrassart divorced, White remarried, this time to a musician. With him, she wrote music and co-hosted a radio show near her home in Westport, Connecticut; though now divorced, they remain friends. Today Betty-Lynn teaches law as an adjunct professor, does pro bono legal work, and enjoys her grandchildren. She is thinking of getting into immigration law.

She considers it a victory to have achieved a certain normalcy in her life, despite the troubles of her childhood and her sense of alienation as a student. Now, she says, she has “one of the best lives anybody could have.”

Doug Wyatt is on Gettysburg College’s list of “lost alumni.” That is to say, no one at the school knows where he is, or even if he is.

The last his classmate and fellow physics student Steve Leverette heard of Doug, “he was wandering the streets of San Francisco playing his guitar, and not doing anything in physics.” Others were likewise asked if they knew what had become of Doug; Hylton, Vinten-Johansen, Breton, and Kershaw all said no. Neal Smatresk said he’d be shocked if Wyatt “didn’t go on to become a success either in Silicon Valley or on Wall Street.” Mark Teich believes he was offered a scholarship to a top-level Bay Area university, but doesn’t know for sure. Anyway, “that was the last we ever heard of him.”

“I tried to keep track of Doug a bit,” says Carl Leinbach. Like others, he got the idea that Wyatt had gone to the Bay Area and dropped out to become one of the era’s innumerable lost souls. Checking with physics professor David Cowan, he heard the same story as Leverette—that Doug was “playing guitar on the streets of San Francisco. I think maybe he got to Berkeley and said, ‘Is this really what I want to do?’ I felt it was a real loss, because he was so talented.”

“He kind of disappeared onstage,” says Larry Recla. “What happened to Doug, without specific knowledge, becomes more of a Rorschach of the person speculating than anything else.”

Gretchen Cranz says, “It makes me sad that nobody knows where he is.”

Informed of all the mystery, rumor, and speculation that have surrounded his activities and whereabouts—and even his continued existence—Doug Wyatt laughs heartily over the phone from a suburb of Seattle, Washington: “That’s hilarious.” As for what he’s been up to since Gettysburg, he says, “I’m happy to share.
“I don’t think I’ve ever played my guitar on the streets of San Francisco. But I did once, just by chance, play stand-up bass there with Jerry Garcia. A housemate at the time often went to a place in San Francisco that had bluegrass music. Jerry Garcia and David Grisman showed up one evening to do a short acoustic set at this little place, and my housemate called and said, ‘They’re missing a bass player. Throw your bass in the car and get on up here.’ So I did. Played a few songs. That’s a true story.

“But I digress. Yes, I dropped out of school. But I stayed in the musical groups.”

Doug had always planned to attend graduate school. This plan was jeopardized briefly by the draft, for student deferments had been discontinued in September 1971, as he began his senior year; though assigned a perilously low lottery number, he was ultimately rejected due to an eye condition. “I ended up going to Stanford, where I’d been accepted in the Applied Physics Department. But within a few months, it was evident that life as a full-time student was quite different from carrying physics as a major at a small liberal arts college.” The chief project he worked on “was initially going to involve acoustic delay lines sending waves down the surface of crystals that would be used in radar systems. I felt it didn’t allow enough time for other interests. So I dropped out of Stanford after a couple of months, and went to look for a job.”

The campus placement center had a listing seeking a part-time computer programmer with knowledge of a particular IBM language—a language Doug happened to have learned in the basement of Glatfelter Hall. “The job was at a place called the Xerox Palo Alto Research Center, or Xerox PARC. Maybe you’ve heard of it; in computer circles, it’s famous. That turned into a career of twenty years or so.”

Though he’d joined several musical groups while at Stanford, from the college choir to a group that played nothing but Renaissance-era music on period instruments, Doug never seriously considered becoming a full-time musician. “It’s hard to make a living. I probably understood that even at the time, and also that it wouldn’t satisfy the other half of my brain. I was interested in programming and computers, and I wanted to continue playing with that.

“I got a studio apartment in Palo Alto, and Xerox PARC turned into a full-time job. I retained that through the mid-Nineties, pursuing my musical interests on the side. I got hooked up with a madrigal singing group, and that’s how I met my wife: she was singing alto in the group, and also, as it turned out, worked at Xerox. In 1978, I got a call from someone named Louis Botto. A friend had recommended me to him, and this turned out to be the origin of Chanticleer, a pretty famous all-male singing group. I have the distinction of being one of the founding members.

“A small bunch at Xerox PARC decided to form a startup company
called PlaceWare. The World Wide Web was fairly new, and our product was a web conferencing system: people in widely separated places could beam their browsers at a virtual meeting place and share information, give presentations, that sort of thing. In early 2003, Microsoft acquired PlaceWare and moved the engineering team to Redmond, Washington, and I went with that. Since then, I’ve been a senior software engineer at Microsoft.”

It’s widely felt among computer people that Apple and Microsoft simply brought canny business models to concepts & products which originated at Xerox PARC. Doug worked there with John Warnock, future co-founder of Adobe Systems, and later with Pavel Curtis, an icon of the computer revolution, and also a PlaceWare co-founder. Doug was an original member of Curtis’s LambdaMOO, which has the cult fame of being one of the very first virtual communities. He and Curtis still work closely together.

Wyatt also collaborated early on with the late Jef Raskin, a pioneer in computer graphics. Raskin had done graduate work at Penn State on a program for computer drawing; he was also interested in using computers to create musical notation. In California in 1972 to set up a one-man computer center, he visited the Stanford University Artificial Intelligence Laboratory. That led him to Xerox PARC—and to a certain Doug Wyatt. In his autobiography, Raskin described his new friend as “a tall, thin man who is as quiet as he is technically brilliant and musically talented.”

“Yeah, that’s me,” Doug confirms. “I did a project with Jef the year Nixon resigned. We also flew model gliders made of corrugated cardboard off the cliffs near San Diego.”

Doug, who has two grown children, is one of Gettysburg’s most impressive and illustrious alums—even if no one at the college knows it. “I’m not sure how illustrious I am,” he says. “I can’t say any of that was planned. But this seems to happen over and over: I meet people through a musical connection and discover their technical interests, or meet them through a technical interest and discover that they’re musical. I fall into these things. I’m a lucky guy that way.”

Yet Doug Wyatt, even if he is hardly a lost soul, remains among the lost alumni. Perhaps he always will—though not because he has unhappy memories of Gettysburg College. “I haven’t deliberately tried to shut off the past,” he says. “It’s just not something I pursue.”

He’s still looking ahead, to the next challenge.
“I always thought I was at best an annoyance, maybe a distraction, and even an embarrassment to the college and the chapel,” says Larry Recla. Whatever the reality of that perception, the fact is that there is no file on him in Arnold Hanson’s presidential papers, unlike chapel interns before and after. The college yearbook for 1970-71 carries one picture of Larry—he appears, in profile, in the margin of a shot focusing on students—where other interns had always been part of the Chapel Council group portrait. Embarrassment or not, Larry is effectively absent from Gettysburg’s institutional record.

The size of his accomplishment as chapel intern—with Superstar, and with any number of less spectacular influences—makes that absence all the more unfortunate. After graduating, says Gretchen Cranz, “I didn’t know what I was going to do with myself. It was Larry who said, ‘I think you should go to the seminary.’ I spoke with the dean, and went there the next year.” As one of only seven women at Gettysburg Seminary at the time, Gretchen got a Master of Arts (Religion) degree in 1976. She completed her Master of Divinity in 1996, and was a pastor in Sagerstown, Pennsylvania, for a decade before retiring. “That,” Gretchen says, “makes Larry pretty formative in who I am.”

“He’s a gifted individual,” says Mark Teich, “and he’s brought so much to so many people in different ways. I lived with him for a semester in college, at his suggestion, and it was a wonderful experience. I got to know and love him and his first wife very, very much. And then things happened. Sue Ann left him, rather suddenly, and it had to be a crushing blow for Larry. It came at a time when his boys were probably ten and twelve, and it was awful. My wife and I loved Sue Ann as much as we loved Larry, and we could never understand it. But Larry moved on.

“He co-officiated at our wedding in 1978. My wife was brought up Roman Catholic, and the ceremony was in a Catholic church, but we both wanted him to be part of it. It’s not often that you get a Lutheran pastor on the altar next to a Catholic priest. But you did that day.

“I miss him. We haven’t stayed in touch as much as we should have.”
“After Gettysburg,” Larry says, “I spent ten years in Columbia. Another five in Harrisburg, at Messiah Lutheran Church, then as a pastor-developer in Colorado Springs. Then for seven years, though it felt like seventy, in a parish in Utah. Then one year as the Wyoming Valley Health Care System chaplain in Scranton. Then, in 1999, Trinity Lutheran Church in Long Island City, New York.

“I started law enforcement chaplaincy in Colorado Springs. Now and again had my own police car, with ‘Chaplain’ on the side. In Utah, I was law enforcement chaplain for two of the podunk places, taught classes to state law enforcement people, was the chaplain for the Inter-Mountain Division of the FBI, and did training at the FBI Academy in Quantico.

“In New York City, I wasn’t doing chaplaincy until a certain September morning. Then I did eight months at Ground Zero, as a Red Cross chaplain in the temporary morgue. All the work I did there was inside the perimeter, with body parts recovery.”
A few events rank with Superstar as highlights of Larry’s pastoral life. One came in his first year at the Columbia parish. “The senior class of Manheim Township, a majority of whom I taught in eighth grade, had me back to do their baccalaureate sermon. That was a big deal. That sat me down.” Years later, in Colorado Springs, Larry and his wife, Sherry, whom he’d married in 1986, developed close relationships at the nearby US Air Force Academy, turning their home into a hangout for music, talk, and entertainment—a sort of Superstar farmhouse for the cadets. Upon graduating, two of the regulars presented the Reclas with the Plaque and Sabre, the highest civilian award the Academy offers. One of those regulars, by now an officer, invited Larry back on September 11, 2008, to address the cadet wing about his Ground Zero experiences. When he finished, the entire wing stood in ovation.

Asked what he’d care to say now about Ground Zero, Larry says, “I collect aphorisms, and two came out of that. One was, ‘I don’t trust a man who can’t cry.’ That’s peculiar out of Ground Zero. The other, not peculiar but certainly applicable, is, ‘I never met anyone who on their deathbed said, ‘If only I’d had one more day at work.’’ Those are pretty good flashlights in the darkness of the world.”

In 2005, the Reclas moved to Florida, where Larry became priest-in-charge for an Episcopalian church in Bushnell. The couple shared both home life and church work until Sherry’s death, from several long illnesses, in May 2016, a few weeks short of their thirtieth anniversary.

Larry still uses profanity, and still bristles perceptibly at antiwar talk. But he quit smoking long ago, and he’s not the misanthrope he was in 1970. “I have become more impressed with people than I was then. Call it age. I still tend to be something of a cynical curmudgeon, but that’s balanced out a great deal.”

Has it been painful to relive and relate a time in his life that saw such highs and lows?

“No painful. It has been an interesting experience. Upon occasion disquieting. Upon occasion … strange. Going back through in such detail, in a non-therapeutic setting. Fascinating. Sometimes mildly embarrassing. Gratifying at other times.”

In law enforcement and in the aftermath of 9/11, Larry has done much ministering to people with post-traumatic stress disorder. “One thing I say to them is, ’Look, we aren’t changing any memories. What we’re doing is unpacking them. If you throw things in a suitcase, it fills up. But if you take the time to pull everything out and get it neat, you’ll have room. You’re in a situation where you’ve got to be the adult. That
doesn’t mean you don’t have the feelings everybody has; it means you’ve
got to take things and quickly stuff them away. Now’s the time to get them
unstuffed, redone, and put away neat.’

‘Another thing I say is, ‘Just so we understand: this is your shit. You’re
the one doing the work. The thing that counts least is whether or not I
understand you. What counts is you understanding you. The single most
important, potent feeling mechanism is your ears hearing your mouth
saying what’s in your heart. I’ll be there to witness that process.’”
On July 1, 2016, Larry Recla entered Christ Chapel for the first time since 1971. He looked around quietly; peeked behind the curtain at the “hidden” mural; and crossed to the railing where he’d thanked the audience 45 years before. He explored the basement rooms, and shared a newly recovered memory or two. Then it was time to go.
I can’t believe someone’s writing about this—like it’s history.

– One of the performers

In *The Making of a Counter-Culture* (1968), Theodore Roszak wrote that “No society, not even our severely secularized technocracy, can ever dispense with mystery and magical ritual . . . mysteries which are encountered by the community—if such exists—in a stance of radical equality, and which are meant to be shared in for the purpose of enriching life by experiences of awe and splendor.”

The Gettysburg *Superstar* was not a radical act. Nor was it, like Sixties works from *The Fire Next Time* to *Meet the Beatles!* to *2001: A Space Odyssey* to *The Female Eunuch*, a watershed work of the imagination meant to express the ineffable and inspire the unthinkable, to divide audiences and create new ones. But it was manifestly an instance of magical ritual and radical equality. It was a spontaneous creativity as free of hierarchy, profit motive, or concern for consequence as any nominally organized enterprise could be. It brought together believers and agnostics, scientists and artists, professionals and amateurs, students and faculty, college and seminary, antiwar protesters and ROTC members.

The syncretic character of this production—to employ a word with a uniquely religious application—is striking and, in terms of its era, vitally important. Among the great gifts of the 1960s was the constant innovation on all fronts, whether by force, design, or alchemy, of new combinations in action and consciousness. That era, so wondrous and so disturbing, profoundly changed our sense of what is possible in this world. The Gettysburg *Superstar*, by embodying radical equality, and by involving virtually every segment of its community in an experience of magic and ritual, awe and splendor, realized the highest social and creative potentials of its time. Neither heeding the past nor shrinking before the future, it grabbed a moment, twisted and shaped it, used it to create what hadn’t existed before and wouldn’t exist again, not ever again.

Prime movers and radical shifts get the most attention from historians. There we find the drama; there we view the larger landscape. But most of
history occurs far from the main stage. Most of us are objects, not subjects, of history; not the movers but the moved. Yet we make history every day by living and acting within it, making daily choices about how to process, negotiate, respond to and remake the world around us. We may do that by joining the forums of popular culture and public discourse; by ignoring or resisting them; or, sometimes, by taking material pieces of that culture and discourse and from them creating something which illustrates the art of the possible.

Thus is history made; thus, at Gettysburg in 1971, was it made. Ordinary history, certainly, the kind narrowly noted and mostly forgotten; but even for that—because of that—no less to be preserved, known of, celebrated. And no less to be reckoned with, whenever we would consider what made us a human race at a given point in time.

Each of us has known that moment when all things coalesced. When the bag of stones flew into one’s hand; when the cooperative, not the competitive, seemed the natural way to structure human interactions; when the center dissolved and somehow nothing fell apart, but everything came together—only then to end, as performances do; disperse, as groups do; recede, as memories do.

There’s majesty in memory, and in its fading. We often realize the dearness of a thing only once it begins to fade, or is gone altogether. The Gettysburg Superstar is now a collection of memories—spoken, written, photographed, recorded—and to slow its fade by catching it and placing it where others might find it is the best we can do.

Maybe that’s enough. Nothing stays forever, after all: it only lingers a while.

In A Midsummer Night’s Dream, a band of “rude mechanicals” assembles a homemade, hand-sewn production of Pyramus and Thisbe for the wedding party of the Athenian royals. Though ragtag, they perform as if soul and honor depend on their ability to transcend their own limitations, to express truly and sing beautifully, to caper and fly in the very aerie of inspiration.

“This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard,” says Hippolyta.

To which Theseus—musing on actors and plays, performances and pleasures, the richness of moments and the fading of memory—responds:

*The best in this kind are but shadows; and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them.*
finished

it is
Notes

Abbreviations:

CAH = C. Arnold Hanson
GBn = Gettysburgian
GCB = Gettysburg College Bulletin
GT = Gettysburg Times
JV = John Vannorsdall
LR = Larry Recla
ML/SC = Musselman Library/Special Collections
OH = Oral history

Many citations refer to these resources, located in Special Collections and College Archives, Musselman Library, Gettysburg College:

Faculty Meeting minutes, 1967-1971.
Board of Trustees minutes, 1967-1971.
MS-069: The Papers of John W. Vannorsdall. Abbreviated as “Vannorsdall papers.”
RG-2.0.10: Office of the President, Carl Arnold Hanson, 1961-1977. Abbreviated as “Hanson papers.”
MS-200: The Jesus Christ Superstar Collection. Includes all documents, photographs, and memorabilia relating to the Gettysburg production; recordings of the March 25 and May 16 performances; other recordings by Superstar personnel; and transcripts of the author’s interviews. Abbreviated as “JCSC.”

Other archival sources—e.g., digitizations of The Gettysburgian, the Gettysburg College Bulletin, and Spectrum yearbooks—may be found via the Special Collections website (www.gettysburg.edu/special_collections/). Unless otherwise noted in the text, direct quotations are from the author’s interviews.

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3. "It’s always the specific": Neal Smatresk OH.

1. The basement

9. "I don’t remember": Clay Sutton OH.

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13. 11 Lutheran seminaries: Conrad Bergendoff, The Lutheran Church in America and Theological Education: A Report to the Board of Theological Education (New York: Board of Theological Education, Lutheran Church in America, 1963).
13. 150 other aspirants: GT, 9/10/1965 (Seminary insert), 1.
15. “the funeral atmosphere”: GT, 9/10/1965 (Seminary insert), 2.
15. “revolutionary age”: GT, 9/10/1965 (Seminary insert), 1.


20.1. CPE evaluation: Provided by LR, quoted with permission.

3. The college


23-4. Faculty number: 1969-70 catalog, 175-183; support staff: *Meet the College Staff* (Chapel publication). ML/SC.


25. Tiny gathering: On 3/4/1965, a memo was sent to “All Faculty and Staff Members,” announcing a discussion of the war to be held two days later. Its tone strongly suggests the proponents were opposed to the war, and sought to consolidate a protest. See RG 3.4, Papers of the Chapel Council and Student Christian Association, Box 1.


26. Black students: Board of Trustees minutes, 10/1/1970.

27. Black employees: *Meet the College Staff*.

27. Confederate flags: Buddy Glover OH.


32. radicalism: Hanson papers, Box 41, Folders 14 through 17 include many letters from members of the community condemning JV and campus protesters.


40. JV evaluation of LR: Provided by LR, quoted with permission.

4. The album


43. Lennon rumors: Walsh, 64-65.

43. UK album chart: “Jesus Christ Superstar (album),” Wikipedia (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus_Christ_Superstar_[album]).


44. “one of the most”: “Jesus Christ Sings,” 10.
46. “Far from seeing”: Walsh, 71.

5. The circle
60. $13,000 grant: Hanson papers, Box 4, Folder 5.
60. NSF grant, IBM 1130: Hanson papers, Box 4, Folder 5; “G-burg Receives Computer Grant,” GBn, 2/9/1968, 10.

6. The coalescing
68. Cohn affirms request: Cohn to LR, 1/27/1971. JCSC.
68. Larry made public: GBn, 1/15/1971, 7.
70. Vocal auditions: audition flyer. JCSC.
76. “all performance materials”: Cohn to LR, 1/27/1971. JCSC.
76. "provide an overview": GBn, 1/17/1964, 6.
77. East 15th Street: Christ Chapel Report, 1970-71. Hanson papers, Box 11, Folder 4. The group lodged at the Seamen and International House (now known as the Seafarers & International House), near Irving Plaza.
77. "the greatest": Quoted in Rosenbaum, 362.
77. "the most influential": Rosenbaum, 6.
77. "pure spirit": ibid.
77. “eerie”: Rosenbaum, 362.
77. "The effect": Quoted in Rosenbaum, 363.
80. “we began”: ’A Cook and a Concept.”

7. The chorus

81. 1967 world tour: “Middle East Hostilities Detour Tour,” GCB (Summer 1967), 13; Hanson papers, Box 13, Folder 3.
83. tryout dates: rehearsal schedule. JCSC.
85. further auditions: Potpourri, 2/16/1971.
91. Cohn confirms date, fee: Cohn to LR, 2/16/1971. JCSC.
91. LP chart: Billboard, 2/20/1971, 59.

8. The players


94. “Pure affectation”: Ken Mott OH.


103. “+ drums”: rehearsal schedule. JCSC.


9. The star


109. Fork Union: The academy still offers a program for “young men who have already graduated from high school, but need to improve their SAT, ACT, or other standardized test scores to gain entrance to the college of their choice” (www.forkunion.com/page.cfm?p=517).


111. Sociology degree: Author communication with Mount St. Mary’s registrar.


10. The dancers


115. Silent march: GBn, 4/12/1968, 1. Photographs of the march are in ML/SC.

117. “Eat a peacenik”: Ken Mott OH.


123. “None of us”: GCB, 1/1971, 2.


11. The professors
126. Earth Day: “Plant Trees on Earth Day,” GT, 4/23/1970, 1; Neil Beach OH. See also memo from Prof. David J. Cowan to faculty and staff, 4/9/1970, Vannorsdall papers, Box 1, Folder 8.


128. “student control”: Faculty Meeting minutes, 5/16/1968.

129. first black undergraduates: “Duke to Commemorate 50 Years of Student Integration,” Duke Today, 10/29/2012 (today.duke.edu/2012/10/50thanniversary).


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134. “A Mathematician”: January Term Course Catalog, 1/1971, 25. ML/SC.


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138. “It is with regret”: Cohn to LR, undated. JCSC.

12. The rights

139. “NOTICE”: JCSC.


140-1. Superstar Ventures: Citron, 152.


144. “Understand and appreciate”; LR to Cohn, 3/5/1971. JCSC.

13. The rehearsals—I

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149. Trustees approve plans, debt: Glatfelter, 836.

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14. The rehearsals—II

166. Rex Maddox: 797; GCB, 1/1964, 19; GT, 10/28/1991, 6B.


171. “Someday”: *Christ Chapel Vertical File*. ML/SC


182. First run-through: rehearsal schedule. JCSC.


184. Performance program: JCSC.

15. The gathering

189. Chapel capacity: Glatfelter, 836.


16. The tour


224-5. Jones, Stees, Hagedorn, Mott letters: JCSC.


229. “In times like these”: Yoder to LR, 3/31/1971. JCSC.
231. CAH suggests Bloom contact: JV to Bloom, 3/30/1971. JCSC.
231. “We are desperate”: JV to Bloom, 3/20/1971. JCSC.
233. “Can we go”: JV to CAH, 4/1971. JCSC.

17. The resurrection
240. CAH memos to Swope and JV: Hanson papers, Box 11, Folder 3.
243-4. JV sermon: “Passion and Joy,” 5/2/1971. JCSC.
246. Four nights of rehearsal: rehearsal schedule. JCSC.
255. Henderson voted class speaker: Hanson papers, Box 15, Folder 12.

18. The echoes

258. Ravenswood performance: The Central Opera Service Bulletin (March-April 1971), 3, claimed this as “the first time” Superstar would be presented “in a live, concert performance.”


261. “I was raised”: Kathie Zurich, Jesus Christ Superstar reunion, Gettysburg College, June 4, 2016.


263-4. “The students would”: Vannorsdall papers, Box 1, Folder 13. CAH’s negative response to the request is in Hanson papers, Box 11, Folder 3.


266. deferments discontinued: Card and Lemieux, “Going to College to Avoid the Draft,” 98.


**Outro**

274. “I can’t believe”: Susan Fischer Wade OH.


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**Discography**


*Jesus Christ Superstar*. Decca DXSA 7206. 1970.

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Peter Sando: Page 103.

Steve Snyder: Pages 104, 152 (top).

Clay Sutton: Pages 6, 9, 70, 73, 74 (top and bottom), 75 (top), 151, 152 (bottom), 153, 161, 176, 178, 180, 181, 276.

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