

For the better part of the past two years Jonathan Groff has spent nearly every evening squeezing his athletic physique into high-waisted, skin-tight knickers, knee socks, a fitted blazer and suspenders. His naturally wavy, reddish-brown tresses have been coerced, with a curling iron, a diffuser and an arsenal of gels and sprays, into a perfect, light-catching coil of heartthrob curls. Thus transformed, the *Spring Awakening* star has stormed the floorboards of Broadway's Eugene O'Neill Theatre as Melchior Gabor, only to drop trou at the end of the first act in a steamy sex scene.

The garment- and product-heavy ritual is a far cry from Groff's own low-maintenance personal routine. "Lucky Jeans are as fancy as I go," says the Tony-nominated actor, who, on a recent afternoon, was sporting a blue Old Navy hoodie and a ratty brown baseball cap worn backward. Nonetheless, the Lancaster, Pennsylvania, native ("It was Amish farm, my house, Amish farm," he says with a laugh), has become quite the style chameleon. This summer he will be the only cast member keeping his clothes on in the Public Theater's Central Park production of *Hair: The American Tribal Love-Rock Musical*. A three-day concert version of the show was staged last September. Groff headlines as Claude, the groundbreaking musical's conflicted flower child.

"He is a full-blown hippie with long hair, but he's sort of a poseur hippie," Groff says. "He doesn't know who he is or what he believes in." Groff, 23, has suffered from no such existential crisis. After a year waiting tables in Hell's Kitchen, he landed an understudy gig in 2005's *In My Life*, which led directly to *Spring Awakening*. And there's no question the role has gotten under his skin.

"When we were doing the concert, I had the

Hair Today

A Broadway rocker swaps knickers and knee socks for love beads and flares.

Photograph by ADAM GOLFER

strangest experience: I went directly back into playing Melchior and have never felt so suffocated, because *Hair* is so free. When I had to put on my knickers and cuffs...I felt so confined in 1891 Germany," he recalls.

Indeed, 1967 New York is an altogether different stylistic beast. During last fall's brief dress rehearsal, Groff endured three wig and five shirt changes, including a pale, gauzy Timothy Leary-esque number and a floral Sonny Bono-worthy top. While nothing is yet set in stone for the summer performance, costume designer Michael McDonald and director Diane Paulus temporarily settled on a vintage, over-dyed jade green henley to complement Claude's red feathered headband, love beads and dirty, ripped jeans covered in handpainted flowers.

"There is absolutely no tie-dyed clothing in my production of *Hair*," declares McDonald, who combed the New York Shakespeare Festival's costume storage facility (and friends' closets) for vintage pieces like the Gunne Sax dress that the character of Claude's mother wore in the concert. "We never wanted to resort to cliché," he says. For the July staging, McDonald plans to remake the more delicate vintage looks to withstand the grueling schedule while still maintaining a sense of authenticity.

The final scene of *Hair*, in which Claude appears with shorn locks signifying his entry into the army, proved particularly difficult to calibrate. After a turn in regulation green gear from Kaufman's *Army & Navy* didn't quite achieve the desired effect, Paulus suggested simply topping the hippie duds with a Vietnam-era dress uniform jacket that McDonald unearthed. "When it's clear that he's been taken by the army and we see this flash of his future being killed, you still see this purity of his soul by seeing his blue jeans and hippie necklace under his army uniform," explains Paulus.

Given the ages of some of the cast members, it was important for Paulus and McDonald to convey the deeper meaning behind their cool getups. "What you wore as a hippie was about a state of mind, a philosophy," says Paulus. "It was a whole way of life. So it's like you earn the right to wear those clothes."

For his part, Groff is so thrilled with his new incarnation that he may just nab an item or two. "You just want to steal your costumes," he exclaims.

—VANESSA LAWRENCE

"Lucky Jeans are as fancy as I go," admits the low-maintenance, Tony-nominated actor.



Left: Jonathan Groff at New York's Tuleste Market