

FROM THE DIRECTOR

The first day of school. All of us have experienced it. Rules, regulations, new curriculum, new faces, new fears, and new joys. Whether it's 1968 or 1995, it seems as though the year is the same. The best of times and the worst of times. We all remember them. As students, administrators, parents, and teachers, we remember those times. We are living those times.

Up the Down Staircase was written as a novel by a former inner-city high school teacher, Bel Kaufman. As a teacher, she had insight into the typical classroom. Through her book, she invited the American people to see their school. As a theater company, we invite you to see that school as well. But in the characters, the voices, and the messages found in Calvin Coolidge High School, we invite you to see something that is common in all schools..., for in every school, one can hear their voices calling out for help.

Though written back in the days of "Welcome Back Kotter" and "Brady Bunch" and staged in a similar late 60's atmosphere, we believe that you will be able to see a typical school that all should see--the American school. As a high school English teacher, I can assure you that even though the clothes, the books, the music, and even the vocabulary has changed, the student is still the same and the suggestions in our suggestion boxes will never change.

In part...this play allows you to see America...to see its schools, to see its teachers, and most of all to see it's students. For every teacher knows that one's job doesn't end with the paperwork and lectures. We have to *know* the students before we can truly change them. The plea comes out from the students every day...not only in the inner-city, but even here in Wyoming. "Here I am! Know me! Care about me!"

It's a hard world out there and only getting harder. The problems the students of the 1960's face in this play have only been magnified and made greater. The student's need us...as teachers, as parents, and as friends. They need us to hear them, recognize them, understand them, and know them. In the words of Bel Kaufman: "Too many people have given up on them...we're their last chance -- or maybe they're ours."

- Jeremy Schnotala