

the cornell concert commission & john scher proudly present the

GRATEFUL DEAD



TICKETS:

6.50 CORNELL STUDENTS
ADVANCE SALE ONLY
ALL OTHERS AND
AT THE DOOR **7.50**



**SUN., MAY 8,
BARTON
8:00 P.M.**

OUTLETS:

W.S.H., NOYES CENTER, N.C.U., DISCOUNT RECORDS, RECORD PEOPLE,
I.C. RECORD STORE, RECORD THEATRE - SYRACUSE, CHRISTENSON -
GENEVA, RECORD PEOPLE & COREY UNION - CORTLAND,
HI-FI RECORD & TAPE CENTER - JOHNSON CITY



DEADHEADS

Forty years later, a legendary Dead concert in Barton Hall still rocks—and Cornell University Press has the book to prove it

BY BRAD HERZOG '90



Before Dean Smith was appointed director of Cornell University Press two years ago, he arrived in Ithaca to interview for the job. As he walked out of the Statler Hotel, Smith noticed the Gothic façade of a nearly century-old armory, a cavernous building where military history is celebrated but the acoustics are not. It was his first visit to Cornell, but he thought: *There's Barton Hall*. He knew about Barton Hall. "At that moment, I wasn't thinking about the upcoming interview," he recalls. "I was thinking about what happened in that building. What would it have been like to have been there?"

What happened there was a Grateful Dead concert, perhaps the band's best—and that's saying something. From its formation amid the

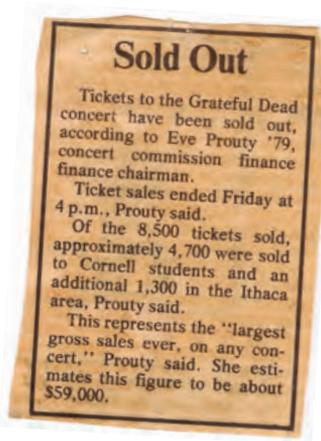
California counterculture scene in 1965 to the death of lead guitarist Jerry Garcia in 1995, the Dead played more than 2,300 shows, each one singular. Every set list was a surprise, every song performance its own unpredictable iteration. "The shows are never the same, ever," Garcia once said. "And when we're done with it, they can have it." For Deadheads, known for amassing bootleg tapes the way oenophiles collect fine wine, the dates of the band's most beloved concerts—2-14-69 (Carousel Ballroom, San Francisco); 2-13-70 (Fillmore East, New York)—are seared into memory. And the most revered show of all, according to a fan poll by DeadBase (a database dedicated to the band and their shows) is 5-8-77, held at Barton Hall on Mother's Day forty years ago this spring.

Smith saw his first Dead show in 1982, at nineteen, and went on to attend about sixty

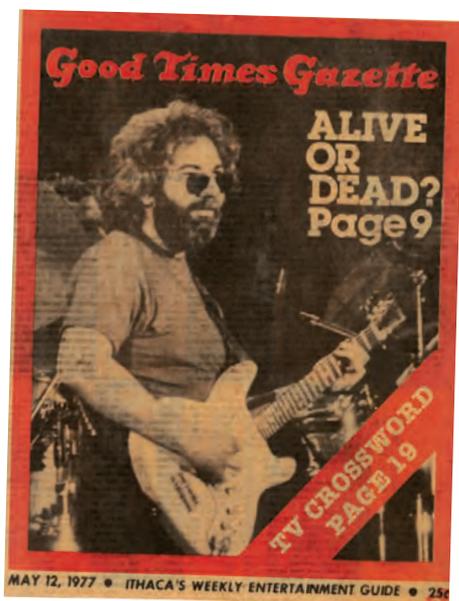


PHOTOS: JON REIS

GRAVEYARD



BEAT POETRY (clockwise from far left): A ticket stub, a clipping from the *Daily Sun*, the band arriving via limo, coverage in an Ithaca weekly, and the Dead onstage in Barton.



more—an experience he describes as “meeting the friends I hadn’t met yet.” (He has a master’s degree in poetry.) He even sold T-shirts emblazoned with the slogan “See the Dead, come out a Head.” Thus, in that job interview more than three decades later, when Smith was asked what kind of books he might like to publish, his thoughts turned to the only Dead show included in the National Recording Registry of the Library of Congress. “As an editor, you get goosebumps when you hear a certain book or article concept,” says Michael McGandy, a senior acquisitions editor at the Press who was in on the interview and would go on to oversee the project, “and that was one of those moments.” So in mid-April—fresh off publishing titles about Plutarch, North Korea, and the sagas of Norwegian kings—the Press is releasing *Cornell ’77*, an account of what author Peter Connors calls “the music, the myth, and the magnificence” of the now-legendary concert.

That show provided a much-needed financial boost to the Cornell Concert Commission, which was still reeling from a costly riot during an aborted Deep Purple concert that damaged >

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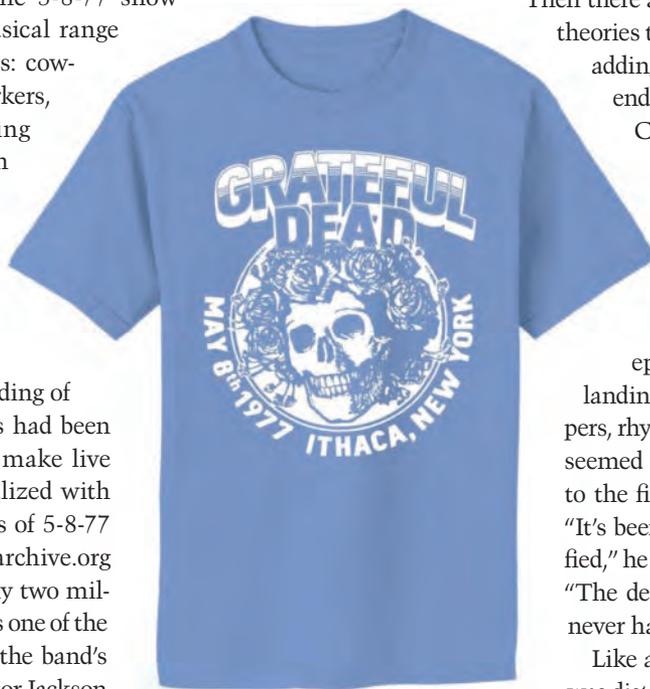


Schoellkopf Field four years earlier. However, McGandy says, "I was keen on making sure it was a Grateful Dead story and not just a Cornell story. I always thought of this as being fundamentally a Dead book that intersects importantly with Cornell."

For the members of the band, Cornell was just another road gig, albeit a strange one. At a time when disco ruled the airwaves, here was the old house band from Ken Kesey's Acid Test performing at an ROTC training ground on an Ivy League campus. Even the spring weather was absurd. A seventy-seven-degree Saturday became a frigid Sunday, and snow was falling by the time the concertgoers left the smoky warmth of Barton. And there is certainly no consensus about 5-8-77; some Deadheads contend it wasn't even the band's best show that *week*. But for many, something about that evening turned a concert into a classic.

Was it the timing? *Rolling Stone* has called 1977 the Dead's best year, and many Deadheads consider the spring tour to be a peak of the band's resurgence after a twenty-month hiatus. Connors writes that the 5-8-77 show "illustrates the astonishing musical range available at the band's fingertips: cowboy songs, dance songs, tear-jerkers, love songs, anthems, and raving rockers." The Dead played fan favorites like "Scarlet Begonias/Fire on the Mountain" and "Morning Dew," as well as reimagined tunes originally performed by the likes of Bo Diddley and Merle Haggard.

Was it the widely lauded recording of the show? For years, Deadheads had been using their own equipment to make live bootlegs—a process later formalized with the band's blessing. The versions of 5-8-77 available at the digital library archive.org have been streamed online nearly two million times, but the most famous is one of the "Betty Boards"—a recording by the band's former audio engineer Betty Cantor-Jackson that was stashed in a storage locker for several years before being auctioned off, copied, and traded by the Deadhead community.



DEAD AHEAD: The concert's poster (opposite) and commemorative T-shirt (above)

Like all Dead shows, the Barton Hall gig was distinguished by its particular combination of venue and vibe—the ineffable magic sparked by interplay between the band and the Big Red-Deadhead crowd.

For decades, private ownership of the master tapes prevented the release of an official, professionally curated version of the recording. However, coinciding with the fortieth anniversary of the Cornell concert, Grateful Dead Productions is releasing the recordings (see box, bottom left).

Then there are the various off-kilter conspiracy theories that have cropped up over the years, adding a hint of mystery to the show's legendary status. Was the concert part of a CIA mind-control experiment? Was it actually performed at an alternate location? Was the famed recording, in fact, a spliced-together greatest hits from different shows passed off as a single concert? Given that only epic events—assassinations, moon landings—tend to attract conspiracy whispers, rhythm guitarist and vocalist Bob Weir seemed to relish adding some playful fuel to the fire during an interview years later. "It's been a long time; I think it's unclassified," he confided with a twinkle in his eyes. "The deal is, that legendary Cornell show never happened."

Like all Dead shows, the Barton Hall gig was distinguished by its particular combination of venue and vibe—the ineffable magic sparked by interplay between the band and the Big Red-Deadhead crowd. "Above all, being at a Dead show was about being in

the moment," writes Connors, noting that the band always fed off a crowd's particular energy. By the end of the Barton show, as Connors describes it, "the audience had played out the full scope of the human experience under the skilled guidance of seven intrepid travelers."

Ironically, one student who was on campus then but didn't attend the concert—and wasn't even a Dead fan—would go on to become the wife of the band's drummer. Caryl Ohrbach Hart '79, now director of regional parks in California's Sonoma County, has been married to Mickey Hart for more than a quarter-century. But, as the drummer once lamented to a blogger for the Dead's official website: "She didn't go to the show. She was off with her boyfriend, seeing Barry Manilow or some dumb thing." ■



Barton Box Set

Deadheads, rejoice: an official recording of the Barton show is nigh. Available for pre-order on the band's website for release on May 5, *Cornell 5/8/77* will be on CD, LP (seen at left), digital download, and streaming. The Barton show will also be included on *Get Shown the Light*, an eleven-disc package with three other recordings from the tour (in New Haven, Boston, and Buffalo), plus a copy of *Cornell '77*. But if you haven't already snagged one, you're out of luck: limited to 15,000 copies, the \$140 package sold out its pre-orders within days.

POSTER BY JAY WARBREY

Working the Door

An excerpt from *Cornell '77* recounts how Cornell Concert Commission member Stephen Burke '77 took a creative approach to letting fans into Barton Hall

BY PETER CONNERS

Burke didn't want anyone taking cash bribes for entry into the show. If that ever happened, he didn't know about it. His plan for easing the burden of fans who were shut out of the show was much more benevolent and in keeping with the Grateful Dead ethos. To his thinking, the show was already sold out. Nobody—not the band, the promoter, the CCC, or Cornell—was going to make any more money on ticket sales. Why not help some people out, and also avoid potential problems on campus caused by fans who were shut out?

The plan that Burke and his fellow ticket takers hatched was a prankster masterpiece of which the Grateful Dead—had they known about it—may have very well approved. Once all the fans with tickets were let into the show, Burke's plan was to start easing some non-ticket-holders in the doors. People trying to immediately scam their way through the doors without tickets were told to wait. "We need to take care of people with tickets," Burke told them. "Come back when they're done. Come back and we'll see what we can do."

It was not a brief process. Eighty-five hundred ticket holders had to be let in the doors first. That process was not without wrinkles of its own. Matt Adler '80 feared that he would be crushed when the doors first opened. For those who waited to get into the show, entry was a smooth breeze through the doors. But for those eager to be the first into the venue, the experience was potentially dangerous and certainly claustrophobic.

And then there was Louis Gross, PhD '79, who was manning the Super Trouper spotlight, seated on rickety scaffolding high above the crowd. Looking down, it was as if a magical transition had occurred, as a "whoosh of multicolored people simply flowed all around the Barton Hall floor and in seconds the scaffold was surrounded by flowered shirts and what appeared to be hundreds of small 'trees' holding mics." The crowd was robust, yet once inside the venue they were peaceful. Gross sniffed the air and considered that perhaps the pungent, organic smell drifting up to his nose was part of what kept the crowd so passive and relaxed.

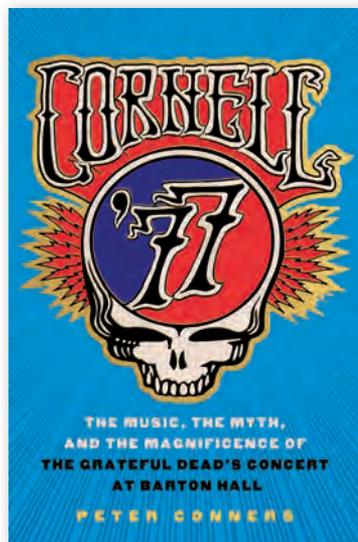
Meanwhile, back down on terra firma, Burke and his fellow ticket takers were done letting the paying customers in the door. It was time to have some fun. Burke instructed everyone,

"Absolutely under no circumstances do you take money from anybody. Absolutely none. You don't take anything from them. If they offer you a joint, you don't take it. If they offer you a beer, you don't take it. You don't take anything. It's absolutely not quid pro quo." Rather than accept bribes, the ticket takers had something more playful in mind. If people didn't have tickets, they would have to contribute something else to get in the door. They could sing. They could dance. They could do chin-ups, push-ups, or tell a corny joke. Don't have a ticket to the show? You're in luck!

You can get in with a speeding ticket, a laundry ticket, or a ticket to see *Creature from the Black Lagoon*! One guy got in with a guitar pick. Another dude—a gnarled older hippie who had traveled all the way from Tennessee to see the show—got in with a peanut butter sandwich wrapped in tin foil. Holding the sandwich up to his fellow ticket takers, Burke proclaimed, "Hey, look at this! It's a peanut butter sandwich! I've never seen a sandwich from Tennessee before. This guy is beautiful! You're in!"

Overall, Burke estimates that 250 attendees gained entrance that night simply by playing along with good spirit. It took some people a minute to catch on to what was going on. Some of the more jaded concertgoers were wary that it was some kind of scam. But eventually, as more and more fans were admitted with a hearty chuckle and a wave-through, everyone who had the chance got in the door with some small, pleasant contribution to the night's festivities. Burke was thrilled. It wasn't something he—or anyone else working the doors that night—had ever tried before or would ever try again. To his thinking, a stunt like that could work only at a Grateful Dead concert.

Looking back nearly forty years later, Burke doesn't want to inflate the importance of the playful prank. But he is also aware of how such small acts of kindness can elevate everyone in attendance, including the band, to be just a little bit happier about the night's proceedings: "It could definitely be that those 250 people and their energy and surprise and their delight made it to the other 8,500 people and made it up to the stage. To tell you the truth, I really believe that. I really do."



The plan that Burke and his fellow ticket takers hatched was a prankster masterpiece of which the Grateful Dead—had they known about it—may have very well approved.

Excerpted and condensed from *Cornell '77* by Peter Connors, published by Cornell University Press. Copyright © 2017 by Peter Connors. All rights reserved.

Flashbacks

Alumni—many of whom worked on the concert crew—share their memories



ALMOST SHOW TIME: Setting up for the Barton gig

'I operated one of the Super Trouper spotlights. I have very little memory of the music, because I was wearing a headset that blocked out much of it. But of course you felt it.'

— LOUIS GROSS, PHD '79

'I took a woman from my dorm along for her nineteenth birthday present, and she and I have now been married for thirty-one years.'

— MATT ADLER '80
— MARRIED TO LORETTA DEINTINIS ADLER '80,



'I remember wandering through the floor of Barton, and people were all twirling and having a great time. I stood out there for a while and got into it—but as members of the Concert Commission, we didn't always get to enjoy the acts. Afterward, we went to a room and ate sandwiches; it was like four o'clock in the morning and we were knackered, but very proud of what we had done.'

— EVE PROUTY '79

'I was an undergraduate at Berkeley from '71 to '75, so to me the Dead were like a local band. The Barton show was good from start to finish, but I didn't have a sense that I was listening to something epic—that it was going to be singled out as a high point of the Dead's career.'

— STEVE ELLNER, PHD '82

'This being my first Dead show, I wasn't very familiar with the music. I had no idea I was witnessing history. If you know anything about the Dead, there's consensus that the Barton show was one of the best they ever played—which is freaky to think about, because I was there but didn't appreciate it at the time.'

— LAURAN JACOBY '80

'I remember sitting backstage with one of the drummers for the Dead, being exceedingly nervous because it was my task not only to announce the show but tell everyone not to smoke and to stay back from the stage. He said, "Bob, we've done thousands of these, and they've never attacked either the band or the announcer. You'll be fine."'

— ROBERT HOROWITZ '78

'The day had started off bright and sunny, but by showtime the weather had changed dramatically. When the big rollup door at the back of Barton came up at the end, you looked outside and it was snowing. It was typical Ithaca weather: May 8 and snowing.'

— MIKE MCEVOY '78

'Working on the crew, the actual day went by in a blur. But it was a great experience—the kind of brush with show business and rock and roll that's wonderful when you're young—and it's gratifying that the show is remembered all these years later.'

— SIMON RADFORD '79

Rock Star For the Dead's frontman, a heavenly body

Jerry Garcia will always live on in the hearts of Grateful Dead fans—but two decades ago, astronomer Simon Radford '79 helped give him a different kind of immortality. When Garcia died in 1995, Radford and another Dead-loving friend convinced a colleague to name an asteroid he'd discovered after Garcia. That fall, the International Astronomical Union announced that Asteroid 1985RB1 would henceforth be known as 4442Garcia. Measuring about fifteen kilometers in diameter, Asteroid 4442Garcia is in the evening sky at about 45 degrees from the sun and 4 degrees from Venus; it's currently located about 4.3 times further away from Earth than the sun is, on the far side of the solar system. "But it's about 10 billion times fainter than Venus," says Radford, now operations director for the Smithsonian's submillimeter array telescope atop Hawaii's Mauna Kea, "so you won't see it without a large telescope."



Let's Put on a Show

The student-run Cornell Concert Commission has been bringing top acts to campus for more than four decades

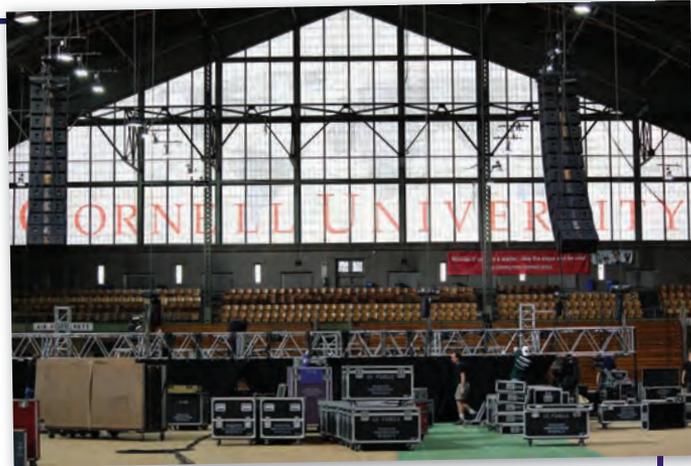
Selecting the acts. Reviewing the contracts. Promoting and producing the shows. Managing a budget in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. Staffing the door. Transforming a gym into a concert venue—and back again—in a single day.

While it's not unusual for colleges and universities to host large-scale pop music shows, one thing sets the Cornell Concert Commission apart: it's almost completely run by student volunteers. "They're doing what people are getting paid millions of dollars to do," says Joe Scaffido, Cornell's director of campus activities, who served as the group's advisor from 1997 to 2016.

From Joni Mitchell to Kesha, Bob Dylan to Dave Matthews, the Beach Boys to Maroon 5, the Concert Commission has been bringing notable acts to East Hill since its inception in 1971. (Prior to that, various campus groups would mount shows on an ad hoc basis.) Today, the commission—which is open to all Cornell students—has upwards of ninety members and a board of directors made up of six seasoned volunteers. At the start of each school year they're given a portion of the student activity fee to jumpstart their budget. "From there, we get to keep whatever we make in ticket revenue and use that to put on more concerts," says executive director Will Donnelly '18, adding that the group generally puts on five to six shows annually, including a free concert on the Arts Quad to welcome students at the start of fall semester.

The planning process begins with the commission brainstorming a list of acts that are popular among the student body. That list is quickly whittled down due to constraints like performance fees and touring schedules, and the fact that the two most-used venues on campus—Barton and Bailey halls—are only earmarked for the commission's concerts a few days each year. "Sometimes the dates we get are during a huge festival in California, so all the names we want are out West that weekend," says Scaffido. When the stars align and an act is booked, the commission has anywhere from one to six months to plan and promote the event.

Concerts in Bailey, which has its own stage, involve significantly less set-up than those in Barton, which is a veritable blank canvas. For these, volunteers typically arrive between four and five in the morning for a marathon day of assembling the stage, furnishing dressing rooms, wiring speakers, and unloading and setting up the band's equipment. Working a Barton show—seen as a Concert Commission right of passage—is at least a twenty-hour commitment. But according to former executive director Mason Montgomery '17, it's one



PERFORMANCE SPACES: The Concert Commission primarily hosts events in Barton (top) and Bailey (left), plus an annual welcome show on the Arts Quad (below) each fall.



of the highlights of the entire experience. "It's amazing to see 5,000 people in front of the stage that you built with your own hands earlier that day," he says.

In return for their grueling work, the members are rewarded with a T-shirt, a couple of free meals, and the chance to interact with the artists. Sometimes they only catch glimpses, like when the lead singer of Modest Mouse ran warm-up laps around the Barton track. Occasionally band members will offer a quick thank you to volunteers or pose for a group photo. Others get a little more personal, like the lead singer

'It's amazing to see 5,000 people in front of the stage that you built with your own hands earlier that day,' says former executive director Mason Montgomery '17.

from the Flaming Lips—who braided a student's hair while they were setting up—or blues great BB King, who signed autographs and chatted with each member after his show. Then there are the truly singular moments, like the private performance Scaffido once enjoyed. "I was sitting in Bailey Hall and it was totally empty except for me and Billy Joel, who was doing a sound check," Scaffido recalls. "It was the highlight of my career." ■

—Alexandra Bond '12