

Harry Chapin: 'Angel' With a Guitar

By PRANAY GUPTA Special to The New York Times

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HUNTINGTON—The fundraising efforts of Harry Chapin have helped to revive the sagging financial fortunes of the Performing Arts Foundation of Long Island, an organization here whose pioneering programs in education and the arts have received wide acclaim.

Last night, for instance, Mr. Chapin, a folk singer, held another in a series of benefit concerts here, which attracted nearly 1,700 people and added about \$7,000 to P.A.F.'s coffers. In the last year or so, he has helped raise more than \$50,000 through such benefit concerts, some of which were held on the lawns of his beautiful home overlooking Huntington Harbor here.

In a recent interview, Mr. Chapin talked about his involvement with the organization to whose board chairmanship he was elected not too long ago. At the outset of the interview, he cautioned: "Our organization is not based on a personality cult."

"What we have here is an idea that is terribly, terribly right for the times,"



the 32-year-old singer said. "What we are doing here is to use the talents of our artists not only to entertain but to train. We are committed very strongly to the community."

Although the organization, which is popularly referred

to as "P.A.F.," is Long Island's only year-round professional regional theater with a resident acting company, it has been working with nearly a hundred schools in Nassau and Suffolk Counties as well as New York City in an "arts-in-edu-

cation" program in which company artists collaborate with teachers in the classroom to further strengthen academic courses.

As much as the theatrical programs—nearly a dozen plays by established and new playwrights—are presented

each year, Mr. Chapin says he is enthused by this educational program.

Kas Bendiner, a sprightly woman who runs the program for P.A.F., explained that the system consists of helping students to learn better by acting out roles

that actually symbolize difficult words and even acting out historical scenes and scenes from contemporary events. But teachers are also taught by P.A.F. artists to better relate to their au-

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Harry Chapin, whose benefit concerts have aided the Performing Arts Foundation of Long Island. At left, an acting class shown rehearsing.

P.A.F. Angel With a Guitar

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dience by incorporating techniques of the theater.

"Teaching is like acting," Mr. Chapin broke in. "You have to relate to your audience."

Mrs. Bendiner said that in the last seven years or so, P.A.F. artists have taught more than 100,000 students and 8,000 teachers through this arts-in-education program.

The Huntington organization is generally recognized as being the pioneer in such programs, according to State Department of Education officials.

"These programs work two ways," Mr. Chapin says. "Students get an opportunity to themselves participate in theatrical techniques. Traditionally, the only time artists would go to schools would be to lecture. And for the artists themselves these programs are a matter of renewal."

"It's like going back to the grass roots. Kids are tough, harsh and demanding critics."

The organization also regularly puts on plays for students at schools, says Joseph Brockett, the artistic director of P.A.F. "You get immediate and creative feed-

back, which is very useful for our artists," he says.

The nonprofit organization is supported by contributions from the community and also by grants from the State Council on the Arts. This year's budget, for instance, is \$402,000, which represents an increase of about \$17,000 over last year's, according to Peter Bellermann, the executive director of P.A.F.

However, until less than a year ago, there was serious concern that the organization would not survive. Mr. Bellermann attributed the decline in contributions to the downswing in the economy.

"Now we are stable again," Mr. Chapin says.