

REVIEW - 'NODA' review of Oklahoma - Nov 2015



Producer / Director - Debbie Allen

Musical Director - Peter England

Choreographer - Laura Hoblely

Review

Author: Barry Dilworth

Based on the 1931 play “Green Grow the Lilacs,” by Lynn Riggs, Oklahoma! is the first musical written by the legendary team of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II and one of my personal favourites.

Set in the Oklahoma territory at the turn of the twentieth century, it tells the story of Laurey a headstrong farm girl with whom both a cowboy, Curly and her farm hand Jud have fallen in love. Woven into this plot is the life of Ado Annie, who finds it hard to say no to any man, and her indecision to choose between Will Parker and a travelling peddler Ali Hakim. Oklahoma marked a new era in musicals when it was written and its quality, storyline and musicality definitely stands the test of time.

Having never been to the Grange theatre before I was excited to see the fantastic space available to Mid Cheshire MTC with the main body of the auditorium being free to be used in conjunction with the stage. On entering the auditorium it was great to see how the set dressing and hay bales linked the stage into the open space of the main floor.

Curly (Alessio Scappaticci) opened the show well strolling in with confidence and just the right measure of cheeky arrogance straight from the opening bars of 'Oh What a Beautiful Morning'. I think that Laurey is a difficult role to get dynamic variety but Stacy Hancock provided us with both excellent singing and acting, changing both mood and character to the relationships around her.

Richard Wain played Jud Fry completely different than I have seen before being very menacing and aggressive but from a position of someone who was in mental torture. I found this character quite disturbing, an excellent piece of acting which continued throughout the show.

The fun element of the show was captured well by Ado Annie (Ashleigh Jones) and Will Parker (Sebastian Singh) they worked together well and Ashleigh's rendition of “I can't say no” was one of the highlights of the show. Jacqui Burgess as Aunt Eller played the part very

well, I would have liked her to look a little older and weathered but she had just the right mix of sternness and grit to keep order at the box social combined with the loving side when caring for Laurey.

Andrew Carnes (Doug Shingler) Cord Elam (Nigel Porter) and Gertie Cummins (Jenna Finnigan) all captured their roles well.

Peter England MD had obviously worked hard on the music unfortunately the use of a prerecorded backing tracks supported by some live musicians meant tempos were very rigid and left the principles with very little flexibility in their songs however the Societies musical ability is excellent with a good range of voices both in the principles and the Chorus who must be congratulated on the fantastic harmonies throughout and especially in Oklahoma.

During the dream sequence and the box social a lot of action took place on the floor of the auditorium and to be more effective I would have liked the action to have been played more "as in the round", the majority of numbers were still played to the front. Apart from this the dialogue was well paced and choreography moved well, a credit to creative team of Debbie Allen Director and Laura Hopley Choreographer

The stand out performance of the evening came from Andy Jordan as Ali Hakim. His comic timing, accent and all-round performance was one of the best I have seen. His relationship with each of the different characters with whom he came into contact moved his performance up a notch and we were definitely left wanting more of Ali Hakim and his Persian goodbyes.

Overall a really good show and an excellent nights entertainment. Thanks you for your hospitality and I look forward to seeing you all again.