



Registered charity no. 284122

Rodgers & Hammerstein's

# OKLAHOMA!

Music by RICHARD RODGERS

Book and lyrics by OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN II

Based on the play "Green Grow the Lilacs" by Lynn Riggs

Original Dances by Agnes de Mille



6th to 10th May 2014

An amateur production by arrangement with R&H Theatricals Europe Ltd.

**WOKING AMATEUR OPERATIC SOCIETY**

**OKLAHOMA!**

**MAY 2014**

This musical was Rodgers and Hammerstein's first collaboration and is probably one of the finest ever. With its fresh score, absolutely bursting with vitality, it changed the direction of musical comedy forever and in try-outs it was known as 'Away We Go'. It opened at the Drury Lane Theatre four years after its premiere in New York, and there it ran for over 1500 performances.

I really like the way you present your productions with the main tabs open, which I know I've commented on before but it's worth repeating. As a member of the audience one feels an affinity with piece before it begins, and this time we even watched the sun rise and the light change as the minutes ticked by!

Curly's entrance through the auditorium, (another aspect of presentation that I enjoy) made a good start to the musical and Eddie King could not be faulted as Curly. Both his acting and singing were excellent.

In the role of Laurey, the reluctant (but not really!) love interest in Curly's life, Mel Willis gave a wonderfully natural performance, showing vulnerability as well as spirit, and appeared to sing without any effort at all.

The set was good and the hay cart made an appropriate and substantial substitute for the Surrey in the captivating scene of the imagined ride. That really was a delight.

Sam Moylan-Heydt had a convincing mid-west accent and she made a most likeable Aunt Eller who was full of fun and energy but also protective and gentle toward Laurey when necessary.

Judd Fry is the lecher feared by everyone and whose social skills leave a great deal to be desired. Lee Power played the character with strength, and yet as the unlikeable misfit he somehow tugged at the heartstrings and certainly raised some sympathy from me during the bidding at the box social. His singing was first class and in the rendition of 'Pore Jud is Daid' both the men acted out the number superbly.

Peter Howitt brought out the comedy as Ali Hakim the pedlar and competently put across 'It's a Scandal it's an Outrage'. He made the most of his 'Persian goodbye' much to the amusement of the audience, but his accent was more Russian than Persian.

Ado Annie is a plum part to play and Darea Ellis did it well. Although she did give the audience plenty to laugh at I felt that perhaps she could have been even more superficial than she was. 'I Cain't Say No' was especially enjoyable.

As her father Andrew, Brian Higgs acting was good as was his accent.

The other comic female character, Gertie of the dreadful laugh, was confidently played by Geninne Menzies but I would have liked to have heard even more of that excruciating laugh!

David Methven made a rather gentle Will Parker and his duet 'All Er Nothin' with Ado Annie was well done. He moved well too.

Polly King and Anna Marsh's choreography was good throughout and with some eye catching routines such as the one which involved the girls passing the hat in 'Many a New Day'.

'The Farmer and the Cowman' was packed with energy and provided a super opening to act two.

The 'Dream Sequence' was well done but rather too long - I felt could have been shortened and still achieved the desired effect, and unfortunately the men were a bit messy in their moves. One of the dancers had a moment with her costume but dealt with it admirably.

Although I know how short we all are of men on stage I'm not usually in favour of women 'in drag', however I have to admit that your three ladies did it as well as possible, and Natasha in particular was almost convincing.

Other members of the cast all played their part in making 'Oklahoma!' a polished production and Beth and Amanda should be proud of the results they achieved.

The slow motion acting in the background at the box social was cleverly done and the cast kept it up constantly throughout that fairly long section.

You are fortunate to have people in house who can design and make the set. Jud's cabin was suitably unsettling and converted cleverly from the porch of Aunt Eller's ranch, and as always the lighting plot was excellent adding to the presentation of the show.

Sound and sound effects were good.

Costumes were colourful and suitable and my only negative comment is that Laurey's boots looked too modern. In the absence of more suitable boots, character shoes would have been quite acceptable in the first act too.

Properties were appropriate for the period and Ali's suitcase with legs was perfect -I've never seen one like that before.

The small orchestra under the leadership of Ian Peters played the overture beautifully, introducing the audience to the treat that was in store from this well-known musical score.

Your programme contains all the necessary information. I look forward to seeing you all again in October for another of the most popular musicals, (and another with an exclamation mark in the title!) 'Oliver!' which, rather surprisingly, according to the list of shows in the programme you have never done before.

Thank you for inviting me to see 'Oklahoma!' which my guest and I thoroughly enjoyed. Thanks too for the hospitality in the interval – it was good to meet Beth, Amanda and Ian and of course to meet the cast and crew on stage afterwards.

**E. Gloria Smith**

**NODA South East Regional Representative District 12**