



Be inspired by amateur theatre

Society : Woodley Light Operatic Society  
Production : Oklahoma!  
Date : Friday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2017  
Venue : Kenton Theatre - Henley  
Report by : Jeanette Maskell

---

## Show Report

Oklahoma! Is one of my all-time favourite musicals. I love the plot the characters and the music; it has everything you could wish for drama humour diverse music and dance.

The show had been well cast with some good performances by principals and chorus.

**Jenny Stacey** - (Aunt Eller Murphy) – Sat in her rocker at the start of the show looking every bit in character this young lady paved the way for a good all round performance. She was warm and caring and delivered her dialogue in this manner. (It was a shame her accent dropped in and out) It was great to see the marked contrast in her dialogue when she was cussin' out Ali Hakim. Movement was agile yet gave the impression of an older person very cleverly achieved. She sang well and put over her numbers in character with good expression.

**Matt Anderson** – (Curly McLean) – After a shaky start this young man settled down and gave us a good characterisation of the self-assured cowboy. His dialogue was energetic and expressive; however he needs to control his facial expressions especially whilst singing. He forged a believable relationship with Laurey which was naturally awkward, teasingly humorous yet poignant and touching. His movement and deportment were exactly right and his ease of manner was most agreeable. He put all his numbers over in character; although there were some tuning and timing issues. He was more confident in his lower register and "Poor Jud is Dead" was well sung

**Melissa Heaps** – (Laurey Williams) – This was a delightfully sassy performance! Her accent enhanced her dialogue tremendously; it was lively spirited and well inflected. Visually she was charismatic and animated with super lithe movement. She has a superlative singing voice and all her numbers were first rate but I particularly enjoyed "Many a New Day". Being a natural dancer she absolutely excelled in the dream ballet and her outstanding acting skills really brought the sequence to life.

**Jasper McGuire** – (Will Parker) – As the simple rope throwing cowboy besotted with Ado Annie this young man was super. He was amiable and good natured with exactly the right amount of high spirits. It was a delight to see someone who smiled constantly and really looked as though they were having just the best time. His dialogue was well delivered (though his accent kept disappearing) with good intonation and his singing had just the right quality required for the role. A well sung and danced "Kansas City"

**Ray Higgs** – (Jud Fry) – For me; I would have liked this actor to have had a more threatening and menacing character. I understand that to a certain extent the audience should feel some

sympathy toward him; and whilst I understand he was following the direction given I was not a fan of the way he broke down in tears on more than one occasion. However that said he looked exactly as I would expect Jud to look and his dialogue and singing had a great tonal quality. I really enjoyed “Lonely Room” which was extremely well sung.

**Samantha Fields** – (Ado Annie Carnes) – Oh how I enjoyed this young lady’s performance! She was enchanting with cheeky animated visuals and sparkling peppy dialogue. Her accent was well maintained and I was pleased to note this carried through to her singing. She worked well with Will and Ali displaying a naivety that really brought the humour out in all their scenes. “I Cain’t Say No” was a highlight of the evening.

**Kevin Goodfellow**– (Ali Hakim) – As the Casanova pedlar this actor was ideally cast. His accent was great and consistent throughout; however it did not impede his dialogue which was well enunciated punchy and dynamic. His comic timing was perfect and this really came to the fore in his scenes with Ado Annie; making them most enjoyable. He really made the most of “It’s a Scandal” which was well put over.

**Clare Kendall** – (Gertie Cummings) – This young lady was appealingly bubbly and animated. She used her vocal skills to great effect and created a deliciously annoying laugh.

**Mike Fields** – (Andrew Carnes) – This was a well delineated character and he portrayed the over protective father superbly. Dialogue was clear well projected with a good accent and “Farmer and the Cowman” well sung in character.

**Phillip Scott** – (Ike Skidmore)

**John Robertson** - (Cord Elam)

**Tony Towers** – (Fred)

**Simon Randy** – (Slim) – This quartet all played their parts with great aplomb; supporting the principals effectively and sympathetically; with first rate dialogue and singing.

**Megan Griffiths** – (Ellen)

**Andrea Adamson** – (Kate)

**Jane Murphy** – (Sylvie)

**Georgia Long** – (Vivian)

**Jane Wilson** – (Aggie)

**Gill Scott** – (Armina) – These ladies were great; they looked super being visually animated ensuring the audience were aware of how much fun they were having. “Many a New Day” was fabulous and for me the young lady in pink had the best singing voice of the evening.

**Chris Wakelin** – (Mike)

**Keith Boseley** – (Joe)

**John Bagshaw** – (Sam)

**Dan Lambert** – (Jess) – This male chorus acquitted themselves admirably giving their absolute all to the overall performance

**Featured Dancers** – This group of dancers really got into character for each role they were portraying. Their highlights of the evening were “Kansas City” and the Dream Ballet.

**Laura-Anne Putterford** - (Director/Choreographer) – This director had thought about characterisations and worked on the relationships therein. She had given the chorus purpose and ensured they too had actual characters. Although the action had good pace and energy it lacked something which I cannot put my finger on. Staging and blocking had been well devised creating good space with no upstaging or masking. As choreographer she had created routines that were aimed at all abilities and this meant at times it was a little repetitive. However every cast member was able to achieve the required movement and really enjoy it.

**Derek Holland** – (Musical Director) – It was obvious that this MD had worked hard with principals and chorus. He ensured their entrances were confident and that all numbers had high energy. The balance between pit and stage was spot on and he controlled the band with expertise.

**Claire Martin** – (Ballet Choreographer) – This choreographer had done an outstanding job in creating a passionate and dramatic routine using classical ballet moves. She must have worked extremely hard with the principal dancers to ensure they were all step perfect.

**David Parsonson** – (Stage Manager) – I am so used to David performing the role of producer it came as surprise to see his name as SM. However he did a grand job running a tight ship and keeping the action moving through well timed scene changes that were effortlessly carried out by his small crew. I liked the fact that they were dressed as cowboys and blended in with the cast.

**Dinrino Theatre Services** – (Lighting & Sound) – There were some lovely subtle touches throughout the performance that created real atmosphere; the opening the smoke house and the ballet are particularly noteworthy. At other times bright light flooded the stage with warmth ensuring faces were clearly visible. There was a good balance of sound and all effects were appropriate to the piece audible but not obtrusive.

**Stage Style Costumes/SPT/WLOS** – (Costumes/Props) – Costumes were super; fresh bright and colourful. They were consistent with the period and helped to bring the era to life. I particularly liked the burlesque girls' frocks and the cowboys' chaps. Props were great from Ali Hakim's cart which was fab to Eller's knitting everything was perfect for its function; what a shame that on the evening of my visit Eller's revolver didn't go off.

**MMCS** – (Set) – What a super set this was! I liked the way the porch came off Eller's farmhouse to make Skidmore's ranch and the whole revolved into the smokehouse. It was so well built it could have been professionally made.

**Jane Murphy/Jane Wilson** - (Wardrobe Mistresses) – These two made sure that all costumes suited the characters and were finished off with the perfect accessories.

**Jane Murphy/Jasper McGuire** – (Programme) – This was a well laid out programme informative and easy to read. Photos by **Chris Easton** were crisp and clear and added to the overall effect. I liked the western silhouettes that appeared as a running theme throughout adding a real flavour of Oklahoma!

**Marilyn Hayward** – (Front of House) – It was lovely to see Marilyn again. The group are lucky to have someone front of house that is so passionate about the society and promotes it at every opportunity. I thank her for looking after me so well.

Thank you

**Jet**

Jeanette Maskell - NODA Representative - London Region - Area 13