

BWT Review

Dazzling performance of this musical delight

OKLAHOMA! is such an established part of the amateur dramatic repertoire that it is easy to take it for granted. Several well-known tunes, plenty of opportunities to dance, and a bit of comedy thrown in, it almost produces itself. Except that it doesn't. It needs a lot of hard work and a bit of flair and invention. And that is what WAOS have produced here.

What takes the eye first is the colour. The set and the costumes abound in primary colours that almost dazzle. Director and choreographer, Robyn Gowers, makes full use of this as she swirls her dancers round in ever more complicated patterns

It is, of course, the music that is the central part, and that brings to the fore Corinna Wilson and Gareth Gwyn-Jones, reprising their double act from Guys and Dolls, this time in the lead roles of Laurey and Curly. They handle the favourites Oh What a Beautiful Mornin', Surrey with the Fringe on the Top and People Will Say We're In Love with poise and assurance.

Meanwhile Gwyn-Jones's baritone duet with Stewart Adkins (Jud) on the lesser known Pore Jud Is Daid is an unexpected delight.

Abigail Lowman, as Ado Annie, pulls the best out of the chirpy I Cain't Say No and Michael Watling leads the chorus heartily in Kansas City.

The comedy is principally in the hands of James Simpson, a WOW graduate who has matured immensely over the past few years. His turn as Ali Hakim the peddler, was a joy. He milked it for all it was worth and then some.

This was the society's fourth crack at this Rodgers and Hammerstein classic (after 1971, 1983 and 2002). It remains a guaranteed seat-filler.

Review by Ron Fosker