

Oklahoma, Oklahoma, Oklahoma

by Dionne Drabek

The UNLV Department of Theatre Arts opens its season tonight with the production of *Oklahoma*, commemorating the musical's 50th anniversary.

Bob Brewer, the director of *Oklahoma* and head of the UNLV musical theater program, has brought together the elements of the Rodgers and Hammerstein classic in a unified vision of romance and dreams.

Visits to the set of *Oklahoma* reveal the emotional union amongst cast and crew members.

Brewer admits to the "corniness" of some scenes and is baffled by what makes this play work so well. But the overall strength of the play was described by Hammerstein as, "the heart and flavor" of it. In rehearsal, Brewer jests about the title tune being unnecessary to the actual plot of the play other than the name itself.

"Without these songs," he said, "the audience would revolt."

David Weiller, the production's musical director and conductor, reflects that, "*Oklahoma* deserves to be heard. Although the music might seem mundane, it is still fresh and moving. UNLV's production is a celebration of *Oklahoma*'s 50th anniversary as well as a celebration of talent at UNLV."

This production will also utilize a full orchestra of 20

instruments, composed primarily of UNLV students and alumni, which will perform the original overture.

As for the dancing and movement or stage blocking of the musical, Jacques Jaegar, the choreographer is handling both. Jaegar describes the production "as a synthesis woven together into a seamless, unified work." Though they have used the pure-story score as a guide, Jaegar's choreography is her own. Evidence of this is revealed in the "Dream Ballet," while maintaining the innocence of the time, Jaegar has also added a dose of sensuality.

Overall, the production will be done in a ballet style in which the technical designers have been cued by Brewer to create "an atmosphere where romance can live." In this genre, they are given more freedom to exaggerate the ideal.

Steve Woody, the lighting designer, creates a dream-like day with a bright golden haze. "In this atmosphere," Woody said, "we are able to really explore and ask such questions as 'What color is love, death or absence? What use of shadows will create these feelings?'"

Lois Carder, the costume designer, describes her part of the dream as a quilt. Carder says, "the audience will, in effect, watch the patchwork of the quilt moving much like a moving

sculpture on stage." She has used muted earth tones of plaids, calicos, and ruffles to capture softness and innocence.

Brewer explains, "that much of the success of *Oklahoma* is that it deals with human needs." The people largely dealing with these feelings are, of course, the actors and actresses. Just as the crew has been cued about the feel of the play, each character has been directed to find his or her feelings.

Debbie Greschner, the female lead, Laury, shares a special relationship with Rodda as her voice teacher in real life and her best friend in the play. Greschner describes the collaboration of the show as "watching a plant grow as little leaves begin to pop out." Her character as Laury is more complete than the typical female lead in that she has a feistiness and strength about her much needed for the pioneer days of *Oklahoma*. As an actress, Greschner, loves the multi-dimensional sense of Laury. She struggles with a stubborn toughness as well as with a girlish softness and innocence.

Paul Truckey, describes his character Jud, "as being painfully misunderstood rather than the bad guy of the play." Truckey explains that the situations make Jud seem like a villain. "He is actually thrust into being

an outsider, not well-liked and desperately in love with Laury to the point of wanting to kill for her," said Truckey. Unfortunately the other characters never see them "misunderstood, tender" side of Jud but the audience does. In the solo, "The Lonely Room," Jud reveals his true feelings—suppressed though they may be.

For Michelle Rodda, who plays Addo Annie, finding the right feeling meant approaching her role with genuineness and honesty rather than the stereo-typical cutesy performance of Addo Annie. "The girl who can't say no." To help her to portray this old-fashioned naive, Rodda read "Green Grow the Lilies" by Lynn Riggs, the story in which *Oklahoma* is adapted. Rodda also relies on what her acting teacher calls "believing in the make-believe."

Like the characters, UNLV's version of *Oklahoma* can be seen as a layered piece of art in which each cast and crew member play an interweaving part of the entire production.

Oklahoma opens tonight at 8 p.m. in the Judy Bayley Theatre and will run through October 4.

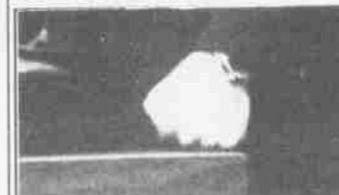


Images of 'Oklahoma'

photos by Wray Halterman



Why is my fist clenched?



Because I haven't tanked up yet at the official Rebel Yell Layout Staff drinking fountain. The Layout Staff call it the "best water on campus" and you can enjoy it too. Just take the elevator up to the third floor of the MSU and make an immediate right and enjoy the "nectar of the gods."



ONLY YOU CAN PREVENT FOREST FIRES.
A Public Service of the USDA Forest Service and your State Forester.





\$1.00 OFF

When you buy a Fatburger, Fries and a Drink
3765 Las Vegas Blvd. S
(Between Aladdin & Tropicana Hotels)

A new Fatburger at 4851 W. Charleston
COUPON GOOD AT EITHER RESTAURANT



Free Movies

Sponsored by MSU Program Council and Domino's Pizza

September 27 (this Sunday)

TOM CRUISE
"FAR AND AWAY IS A SENSATIONAL PIECE OF ENTERTAINMENT!"
"FAR AND AWAY HAS ASTOUNDING COMEDY, ACTION AND VISUALS."

NICOLE KIDMAN

FAR AND AWAY

PG-13

October 4

WHOOPI

No Sex. No Booze. No Men. No Way.

SISTER ACT

October 18

BATMAN RETURNS

PG-13

On the Lawn in Front of
Wright 103
Show Starts at 8:00 pm