

Review Surrey Mirror 2007

Oklahoma!

Youth East Surrey Operatic Society, The Harlequin, Redhill.

Reviewed by Tony Flook

The cast, none more than 21-years-old, brought exuberance to this ever-popular musical.

The quality of the singing was set off from the off-stage notes as Andrew Gallo, Curley, burst into *Oh, What a Beautiful Morning*. This teenager went off to confirm in all his other numbers that he has a mature voice and should, with experience, find it easy to relax more in his acting. Jenny Clarke showed a facial expression for every situation in her lively interpretation of Laurey. She and Curley started off by pretending to be indifferent to each other but it wasn't long before they attractively duetted *People Will Say We're in Love*.

The two leads were ideally supported by Patrick Clarke and Charlotte Cobain, in their strong stage presence and full understanding of their characters Will Parker and Ado Annie. He the steady sensible partner; she the effervescent, slightly scatty one who *Can't Say No*. It was clear from their interaction that their marriage would be full of fireworks.

Katy Rudd gave an excellent all-round interpretation of the sometimes crusty sounding but always warm-hearted Aunt Eller. It was quite an achievement for this young actress to portray – and even speak like – an older woman so convincingly.

James Croft brought out Jud Fry's simmering resentment and hinted strongly at his inherent loneliness. His two cleverly devised fights with Carly were acted with believable animosity.

Darrell Williams tended to underplay Ali Hakim, the sharp, wheeler-dealer peddler and could have made more of the scope the role offers.

The *Dream Ballet*, choreographed by Alys Dreux and led by Anna Longford, supported by Hannah Miles and other members of the cast, was a showcase climax to Act I. Ensemble singing and dancing in the boisterous *The Farmer and The Cowman* and spirited title number was a pleasure to watch as well as to listen to.

A minimal set helped to ensure free flowing action and the only criticism on the technical side was that the light in Jud's admittedly dingy room was, if anything, rather too dim. This production, under Lydia Easton's meticulous direction, gave a number of talented young performers valuable experience as well as entertaining large, enthusiastic audiences.