

Oklahoma!

10oct05

Gilbert and Sullivan Society
Arts Theatre

This is a show to which you "cain't say no". *Oklahoma!*, one of the great musicals, is given a production by the G and S Society that would please the most discerning critic as much as the theatregoer looking for a bright and energetic night out.

It's tuneful – well, it's Rodgers and Hammerstein after all – and presented with panache that truly warms the heart.

Hazel Green's meticulous and loving direction gives her predominantly young cast many chances to shine – and they take them all. Zac Tyler's disarming Curly is, a raw note or two at the top excepted, excellently sung and he's well partnered by Megan Doherty's Laurey.

The second couple, Benjamin Finn's boisterous Will Parker and his vivacious Ado Annie, a fun-filled Emma Hall, nearly steal the show, as they're expected to do.

Timothy Wilson's Jud isn't the traditional black-hearted villain, but a quietly psychopathic and lonely soul, with a very fine voice for his big solo. Wendy Rayner's Aunt Eller stands out, as a caring and highly capable frontier woman, alert to all the subtleties of the heart, and Timothy Ide as the pedlar Ali Hakim milks the role for all it's got. He leads the men's chorus in a song about the duplicity of women that you won't have heard before if you only know the film version. There's a very capable orchestra in the pit, directed briskly by Ross Curtis, though the show is – even with a firm hand on the reins – just over three hours long.

Ole Wiebkin's design, complete with real wagon, is a delight to the eyes and the dream ballet is well presented in Catherine Smith's choreography.

Leave humming the tunes, and you'll find you're still humming them the next day.

– Ewart Shaw