

OKLAHOMA!**Centre Stage****The Exmouth Pavilion**

Director/Choreographer: Sue Bonnett

M.D. Simon Carter

This was Oklahoma with a difference, not so much about the creation of a brand new state, but more about the characters involved. The set and lighting were both quite dark, so you never had the impression of miles of prairie land and wide open spaces; instead a more intimate atmosphere was created in which the characters thoughtfully acted out their well prepared roles and relationships. Gone was the usual sweet Laurey and in her place was a strong and dignified girl who stood up for herself and sang beautifully, especially, "Out of My Dreams". It is always difficult doing justice to a well known song especially when it opens the show, but Curly made his entrance and sang, "Oh What a Beautiful Morning" with the assurance it needed and he and Laurey had a convincing relationship. Ado Annie and Will Parker were a strong contrast to Laurey and Curly; they had a good rapport with each other and a good sense of the comedy these roles involved. Andrew Carnes was well played with a good sense of humour, Gertie was appropriately very irritating and Aunt Eller was played with authority. Jud was menacing and sang "Lonely Room" very well and Ali Hakim put a lot of thought into his character and used some excellent facial expressions. The orchestra was well balanced with the singing and the choreography was excellent. It was a refreshing change to see a production with the characters so thoughtfully portrayed and so supportive of each other. It definitely deserved the tremendous ovation it had at the end.

Lynne Caygill