

Claremore Progress

Production of 'Oklahoma!' will open Claremore Performing Arts Center

The show is cast and rehearsals have begun for the Rodgers and Hammerstein ground-breaking musical, "Oklahoma!"

Produced and performed by Claremore High School, this toe-tapping show will open the much-anticipated Claremore Performing Arts Center.

Richly embedded in Oklahoma's culture, the longest-running Broadway hit for Rodgers and Hammerstein is a fitting opening for the arts center.

"Oklahoma!" which is set in Oklahoma Territory before statehood, was a musical that used an innovative approach to song and dance numbers. Rather than simply inserting them in the story as added entertainment for the audience, Rodgers and Hammerstein, along with members of the original creative team, used these elements to propel the plot forward and to reveal information about the characters.

"Oklahoma!" is under the direction of vocal music instructor Linda Pollock, and assistant director, Sherrell Daniel, band director at Central Upper Elementary.

Due to the strong level of student talent the directors saw, the major roles for the musical have been double cast so that two performers will play each part in alternate performances.

"It's always difficult to make the final decisions for a cast," Pollock said, "but it's because of a good reason ... we have such incredible talent in Claremore, we have so many great singers and actors from which to choose! I am very proud of the cast."

The benefactors behind the CPAC, Frank and Ludmila Robson, know the importance of arts education by creating the state-of-the-art performance center for Claremore schools.

"The Claremore Performing Arts Center is a tremendous gift that will provide countless opportunities for arts in education," said Ruby Quinn, executive director of the center. "And what better way to inaugurate the center than with the fine performances of Claremore's students."

Performances of "Oklahoma!" are scheduled for the evenings of Thursday through Sunday, June 8-11, with a matinee on Saturday afternoon.

"I thought that this particular musical would be the perfect opening for the Claremore PAC, but we were not sure the building would be ready in time," Pollock said. "When the PAC Board gave us the good news that we could plan on it, the kids and I were ecstatic, and 98 percent of the students were able to wait until after school was out to perform."

The cast of "Oklahoma!" includes the following: Brian Lepak and Ross Crawford as Curly; Barry Littleton and Bailey Robinson as Laurey; Cass Wantland and Jason Lahr as Will Parker; Virginia Szcinski and Shelby Coplon as Ado Annie; Emily Kendall and Miranda McCool as Aunt Eller; Joe Hart as Jud Fry; John Thomason as Ali Hakim; Jeff Szcinski and Randy Cargill as Andrew Carnes; Carina Winn and Kelly Crawford as Gertie Cummings; Cameron Gullick as Ike Skidmore; Blake Watson as Cord Elam; Andrew Broad as Fred; and John Dudley as Slim.

Students from both Claremore High School and Will Rogers Junior High will make up the chorus.

Tickets will go on sale at the Claremore PAC Ticket Office in May. For information on contributing to the Claremore Performing Arts Center's Select-A-Seat campaign, call 341-3025.



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