

## Orange Community Players present "Oklahoma!"

By Charlotte Wray, News of Orange News Editor | Posted: Wednesday, August 1, 2018 1:58 pm

A spotlight illuminates Curly, a cowboy fitted in wrangler jeans and chaps, singing as he walks down the aisle to the stage.

*There's a bright, golden haze on the meadow.*

*The corn is as high as an elephant's eye*

*And it looks like it's climbing clear up to the sky*

He hears the stage, where his Aunt Eller sits in her rocking chair on the porch. Curly tips his hat as Laurey, a beautiful and strong-willed farmgirl – and his love interest – takes the stage. He begins to sing the few lines of song that weaves throughout the play and bursts forward again before curtain call.

*Oh, what a beautiful Mornin'*

*Oh, what a beautiful day.*

*I've got a beautiful feelin'*

*Everything's goin' my way*

These lyrics characterize "Oklahoma!", a theater classic and Roger and Hammerstein's musical debut. These lyrics rang throughout the Orange High School auditorium a dozen times last weekend as Orange Community Players presented this play.

Though the Triangle is abundant with professional theatrics, OCP began when a few residents joined to create an accessible theater community for all ages.

In the spring of 2005, Hillsborough resident Deryl McGuire rallied other residents to create this program, beginning with their first production "HONK!" and since, presenting favorites such as "Annie," "Guys and Dolls," and "Arsenic and Old Lace."

Over 30 productions later, OCP continues to do what it intended from the start: bring those young and old together to enjoy the art of song, dance, and acting.

"Oklahoma!" Director David Boss joined OCP five years ago after moving from Connecticut and in search of a local theater program to call home. He was last seen on stage as Daddy Warbucks in OCP's production of Annie last summer.

Boss has called theater home since he was 6 years old. His mother joined the local theater when he was younger in order to meet people as his father was in the Navy and out to sea. When she went, Boss and his three siblings came along. It left its mark, as all four are still involved with the art.

Though Boss has a wealth of experience in acting and directing, he shares a special bond with this particular show – as a senior in high school, he was cast as Curly. But more than that, this is the first time Boss and his wife Holly and two children, Brendan and Jessica, have worked on the same production.

Each of the characters on stage also plays a role in the community, no matter the age. Davis Leonard, who plays Curly, is a graduate of N.C. State University and works at Duke University Press. He recently played Prince Charming in Raleigh Little Theater's production of Cinderella.

Jessalyn Carpino, who plays Laurey, is a preschool teacher and took on this role, all while planning her October wedding.

With an age range of 5 to 80 years old, the stage is usually comprised of students, artists, professionals, grandparents, commissioned parents, and others.

"Laura Emery, [who is on the performance photos production team] loved seeing 'Oklahoma!' on Broadway in 1979," the playbill reads.

A part of OCP for the past 10 summers, Emery was able to share this production with her who adult children Ross, who played Jud, and Kristen, stage manager.

Andrew Morelli, a rising 3rd grader at Cameron Park Elementary School, made his OCP debut in "Oklahoma!" as part of the ensemble. "In his spare time, he enjoys inventing new machines with LEGOs, reading, and playing cello," the playbill notes.

"You look at all of these people here and they are from all different walks of life in the community," Boss said. "You've got lawyers, you've got farmers, you've got waitresses and waiters, computer programmers – all linked together focusing on a single thing."

Boss has a deep love for community theater. He was involved in such groups in Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and more before his move to North Carolina.

Since joining OCP in their production of Seussical, Boss has returned time and time again.

"The audiences get bigger and bigger every year," he said. "I think the community really enjoys having us here."



"Oklahoma!" Cast

The cast of "Oklahoma!" takes the stage to sing the finale song, "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'." Orange Community Players presented this show over the weekend at the Orange High School auditorium.