

Magic returns to the Majuro stage

REBECCA LATHROP

Two hundred and fifty folk were transported to the farming plains of Oklahoma in the 1940s Tuesday night, laughing and tapping their toes to the magic that was happening on stage. The lights came up and Aunt Eller, played by Carnie Reimers, began churning butter. Her green bonnet in place and her stage make-up perfect, she enthralled the audience. The play kicked off and the audience was clearly spellbound.

Oklahoma! is well cast and the best part of the show is the boundless energy. The viewer can't help but love being part of the special night because the performers obviously love every minute of being on stage.

As always there are some favorite moments: Makali'I Kelen seems born for her part as Ado Annie. She is charming, flirtatious and funny as she belts out the song "Can't Say No" and then later allows a very funny Ali Hakim, played by Duke Gaston, to kiss her up one arm and down the other. It is fun to watch Curly, played by Bryant Zebedy, and Laurey, portrayed by Terri Komwenga, develop their relationship through songs such as "People Will Say We're in Love." On the serious side, Tommy Kabua, plays a convincing, dark and moody Jud Fry.

If you didn't see the play yet, don't even think about leaving during the intermission. The first half was wonderful but the second half outshines the first. Aunt Eller begins Act II as she auctions off Ado Annie's basket. Will Parker, played by Jabod Silk, does a grand job as he cautions Ado Annie in song that he expects "All Er Nuthin."

The boys are up to all sorts of mischief and show off some impressive stage fighting skills, all the while keeping the audience in stitches.

The stage fills with all of the actors as they sing and dance their way through the title song, Oklahoma! and the audience is a little sad that it has all come to an end.

Alas, the lights come back on and they are back in Majuro.

Get your ticket

Oklahoma! will play Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights at the International Convention Center.
Show time is promptly at 8:00pm
Cost $2/adult, $1/child/student
Tickets are sold at the door.
Come early to get the best seats.







Above: Will Parker (Jobod Silk) tells the group all about his adventures in Kansas City.
Left: Ado Annie (Makali'i Kelen) is kissed up one side and down by Ali Hakim (Duke Gaston).
Bottom left: Aunt Eller (Carnie Reimers) and Curly McLain (Bryant Zebedy) singing "Surry With a Fringe on Top."
Bottom right: Curly McLain (Bryant Zebedy) works to win Laurey's (Teeri Komwenga's) hand.
Photos: Isaac Marty and Hilary Hosia.

In spite of potholes and hurdles

How does it happen? How does Dartmouth Emeritus Professor Andrew Garrod bring a play of this caliber to Majuro 13 times? In the US it's not easy, but it is certainly a smoother ride than it is to make a production soar here. In the US the cast members come with years of dance and music lessons behind them. The prop master doesn't have to look far to find a saddle or a rocking chair and the costume designer doesn't have to sweat over cowboy boots or belt buckles. And in the States, the script is done, has been for 70 years, in English of course. Oh yes, the road to Oklahoma! in Majuro wasn't paved; it was rocky with many potholes and hurdles.

Yet, the play began on time and was everything and more that the audience was hoping it would be.

Several key people fell into place to help with the magic this year. The Professor brought Casey Hunter, a talented, capable young producer eager for the challenge and adventure. Joseph Cardozo accompanied them as the musical director ready to train students who came with raw talent but little and mostly no training. Dance expert Marisa Clementi returned to Majuro during rehearsals and is the genius behind the moves, choreographing the dance scenes in a quick two weeks.

One important difference in the production this year is that it had more student involvement behind the scenes. Save Tililito assisted Marisa with the choreography, while Tania and Peter Fowkes stepped up to lead the costumes and set building with a lot of assistance from students. Chloe Knowling and four of her Assumption students applied the make-up and Becky Lathrop's 19 art students painted the sets.

The cast was a mixed group: The students, from third grade to college age, came with varying degrees of experience. Many of the cast are new faces and are youngsters that were smart enough to try out for an experience of a lifetime, and dedicated enough to take three months of hard work to fruition.

In the program the Professor mentions his educational goals and his reasons for coming to the RMI 13 times. He looks to "the rising of personal and academic aspirations among our students, building lasting friendships across different communities, instilling confidence in voice and body, honing powers of self-reflection, and finally learning to work as a team member who must subordinate his/her own personal gains for the good of the team and the play."

The play is the test and the cast has passed with flying colors. Well done!