

Iconic Musical 'Oklahoma!' Coming to the Palace Theatre for Musical Theatre Productions' 25th Anniversary

LONDON, ONTARIO, CANADA - October 30, 2013 - Musical Theatre Productions (MTP) opens its twenty-fifth anniversary season with the most beloved and iconic musical of all time, Oklahoma! Celebrating its own milestone anniversary - it opened 70 years in the fall of 1943 - Oklahoma! was the first hit musical for the legendary team of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II. MTP's production has a preview performance on November 14th, and opens November 15th at The Palace Theatre on Dundas in Old East Village.

Set in what then was called the Indian Territory, just before Oklahoma achieves statehood in 1906, this is a show about rivalries - farmers and ranchers are fighting over fences and land rights. But in the middle of that controversy are the two romantic rivalries that make this show sing. One is between a bright and confident cowboy named Curly and a hired hand named Jud, both in love with the strong-willed farm-girl Laurey. The second involves Ado Annie, the girl who "cain't say no", Will Parker, a funny and talented cowboy, and Ali Hakim, a traveling peddler -- a trio that will provide plenty of laughs.

The MTP production is directed and choreographed by Ceris Thomas, who has numerous directorial credits in London, including Follies with MTP, and Treasure Island, Three Musketeers, and Sullivan and Gilbert with London Community Players. This dynamo also directs for Original Kids Theatre Company and has a regular day-job as a teacher of drama and dance at East Elgin Secondary. Andrew Rethazi, a doctoral candidate in Music Performance at Western University, is the musical director. Kristina Baron-Woods, a musical theatre professor at Western, is producing the show, while Steph Molloy is stage managing. Joe Recchia is the set designer and production manager; Mark Mooney is the lighting designer; and sound is being created by Rob Richardson and Stage Wireless. The exquisite costumes are designed and created by Becky Lenko and Kim McCuaig, the team responsible for the costumes in The Drowsy Chaperone at MTP and Sweeney Todd with Pacheco Theatre.

"As a musical theatre professor, I always think of Oklahoma! as the first example of the modern musical theatre - story, comedy, music, and dance all fully integrated," says Baron-Woods. "When you have a team like Ceris and Andrew who know each other so well, and respect the work each other does, and respect the work as a whole, there is a sense that the seamlessness that Rodgers and Hammerstein were going for is being perfectly realized by this team. It seemed like a great choice for this team, and for London audiences."

"Oklahoma! is one of the greatest musicals of all time, but we're not doing it as a museum piece," says Thomas. "Even though it is well-known, the story and music is always fresh and evocative. We have an enthusiastic and energetic cast who are finding the comedy in it. It's everything that people would want from the show, with a youthful and modern energy. We are thrilled to have the largest cast musical on the Palace stage in years. We also have cast

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members who have been with MTP since its founding, such as local theatre legend Art Fidler, and youngsters who are making their stage debuts.”

Oklahoma! is on stage at The Palace Theatre November 14 (preview), 15 (opening), 16, 21, 22, and 23 at 8 p.m. Matinees will be available November 17, 23, and 24 at 2 p.m. Tickets available in person at the Palace Box Office at 710 Dundas Street, by phone at 519-432-1029, or online at mtplondon.ca.

About Musical Theatre Productions

Musical Theatre Productions (MTP) is a non-profit, charitable organization formed in 1988 in London, Ontario, Canada. MTP endeavours to stage two major musical theatre productions per year. The two annual productions are chosen through a formal proposal process where members of the London community are encouraged to submit their ideas for consideration. To date, MTP has produced over 50 musicals in the London community. For more information, visit mtplondon.ca.

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