

"People Will Say We're In Love" With Mission Viejo's Oklahoma!  
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As the first-ever musical featuring singing, acting, and dancing, Oklahoma! is a charming tale of old, featuring a community on the edge of change. Through the unique storytelling technique of ballet, as well as the utilization of strong Oklahoman accents, characters wrestle— figuratively and literally— with the concepts of love, maturity, and belonging. You "cain't say no" to seeing Mission Viejo's excellent production.

Bow-legged and charming from the moment he effortlessly belts the opening number, "Oh, What a Beautiful Morning", Tristan Fordham lights up the stage as Curly. Adeptly crafting a confident, playful demeanor through open, expansive gestures and a grounded stance, Fordham commands the stage. It is only when Laurey (Annika Clark) gracefully strolls on stage where his soft side is revealed. A gentle, loving grin is painted across Fordham's face as Clark rests her head on his shoulder during "The Surrey with the Fringe on Top", echoing his ever-growing desire for her love. With hints of romantic tension and an emotional push-and-pull effect driven by pride, the pair's mutual attraction hides under flirtatious banter and overt stubbornness.

A quintessential triple-threat, Jayden Harville (Will Parker) is the best here tap-dancin' cowboy west of the Mississippi. With the perpetual clutching of his belt featuring an enormous buckle, as well as fast-paced, excited speech, Parker portrays an earnest and slightly-naive, but determined and confident young man. Parker's dancing steals the show. Attempting to identify a moment in which he isn't spinning or jumping across the stage or two-steppin' with his bubbly, chaotic love, Ado Annie (Myrra Uppuluri), proves to be a challenge.

A standout ensemble member, Max Macpherson delivers endless comedic, laugh-worthy moments. With each devious smile and expressive eyebrow raise--often occurring simultaneously-- Macpherson gives each of his three parts (Joe/A Boy/Jess) and every line, albeit few-and-far-between, his all. Macpherson is a true comedic standout, utilizing his notable, ridiculous physicality.

Lighting design by Mark Rainey is creatively executed throughout the production. Bathing the audience in light during the overture and illuminating Jud (Liam O'Rourke) and his dark, miserable smokehouse in blood-red during "Lonely Room", Rainey expertly pulls off impressive techniques.

Mission Viejo's Oklahoma! proves that a classic can still feel fresh when performed with comedy, energy, and commitment, and it's certainly a production worth remembering long after the final bow.