



**WATCH THE TOES!** — Jeff Schaus learns how to dance with *Oklahoma!* choreographer Lois Ruff, during a rehearsal for the upcoming Windmill Theatre Players musical. Photo by Pam Doyle





pam DOYLE  
REPORTER

# Oklahoma!

## Actors time travel to Oklahoma!

Photos and story by Pam Doyle

For the actors and crew of Windmill Theatre Players, successfully producing the major musical Oklahoma depends on one thing: teamwork.

"Obviously if you're doing this for nothing, you're doing it because you enjoy it, and you're doing it as a team," said director Karen King.

King is helping to bring that team together with musical director Bonnie Duffell, and choreographer Lois Ruff. They each have an important part to play, behind the scenes.

Set at the turn of the century before Oklahoma became a state and was still considered Indian territory, the play revolves around a woman two men are fighting over. Dialogue is interspersed with song.

"They're all excellent singers. The chorus sounds really powerful and each of the seven leads could stand on their own," King said.

This marks the seventh musical King has directed. She has been with Windmill for 12 years, and during that time has also written 13 one-act plays. She is also a freelance writer.

"Writing is my first love, then directing," King said.

Musical director Duffell frequently works with Windmill and has had leads in Anything Goes and the Mystery of Edwin Drood. Choreographer Ruff is an elementary teacher at Nanton, who has also taught dance.

"They're both wonderful. We have a curse with our choreographers, though. Every time we get a good one, they move, and Lois is moving to B.C. next year," King said.

The actors have been well cast and are enthusiastic about their roles.

Principal leads are Gordon Scott as Curly, and Michelle Beauchamp-DeDominicis as Laurey. Both were highlighted in the Nov. 3 Regional.

Five actors play secondary leads, supported by a large chorus. Here is a summary of each actor.



Ray Fox plays Will Parker, singing to Rachel Kielstra, as Ado Annie.

### Ray Fox as Will Parker

Fox started acting with Windmill in 1984 as one of the soldiers in *The Mouse that Roared*. He is the assistant program manager at a special needs school, and lives in High River.

As the cowboy Parker, Fox is Ado Annie's boyfriend.

"He's not a very bright fellow, but his heart is in the right place," Fox said.

He and wife Cheryl have two children, Tyne, 12, and Layne, 9. Cheryl is also involved in acting. Fox is also interested in other aspects of Windmill Theatre.

"I would like to direct again. I directed the *Mousetrap* in '96," he said.

As an actor, Fox enjoys the audience response.

"Most of us are out there to get something back. You make the audience laugh, and there's instant gratification. There's not many other things you can do and get applauded for it," Fox added with a laugh.

### Rachel Kielstra as Ado Annie

Kielstra lives on a farm near Okotoks, and works as in Calgary as a receptionist at a food brokerage. She plays Ado Annie, a girl who just likes to have fun.

"She's a very comical person who doesn't take life too seriously," Kielstra said.

Kielstra, 20, last acted as Golde in *Fiddler on the Roof* at Calgary Christian school. She sings with a choir at the High River Christian Reformed Church.

Kielstra wants to keep doing musicals with Windmill.

"They're just too much fun. I love theatre music, it's got so much harmony," she said.

Learning to dance and meeting good people are the reasons she is having fun with Windmill Theatre.

"I'm going to keep on with Windmill. They have some exciting plays coming up in the future," she said.

### Jim Goodwin as Ali Hakim

For 20 years, Goodwin has been with Windmill Theatre, and now serves as vice-president. This will be his 35th role on stage, and his second time acting in *Oklahoma*. He was in the first Windmill version in 1977.

As Ali, Goodwin is the travelling salesman who is hustling Ado Annie. He is caught in the middle between Ado and her boyfriend Parker.

"Ali provides the comedy relief," Goodwin said.

Goodwin has directed several one-act plays and four musicals. His favorite roles were as Ito in *Mame*, playing John Jasper in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, and as Nathan Detroit in *Guys and Dolls*.



Jim Goodwin

"Windmill is a hoot. I really enjoy the friendships and it's a lot of fun getting up on stage and performing," he said.

Goodwin also sings with the High River United Church, and farms near Aldersyde.

### Dave Burton as Judd Fry

Burton lives in High River with wife Joanne, who helped with set construction, and children Kristy, 7, and Karley, 5. He grew up in Black Diamond and works for the gas company.

As Fry, this will be the second time Burton has played the villain. In 1995 he was the bad cop Sgt. Trotter in *Mousetrap*. But his part in *Oklahoma* is the most challenging to date.

"I'm doing this because it really scares me. I've never sung in front of people before," Burton said.

He added that it is part of his character to try to improve that side of himself.

"It's like someone who's afraid of heights climbing a tree to get over their fear," he said.

Burton likes to be part of the team, and appreciates the help of every member of cast and crew.

"It's neat to see all the little pieces that are learned come together into a scene or a dance. I always think it's not going to happen, but it always does. It's amazing," Burton said.

People will really enjoy the show, he added.

### Celia Penman as Aunt Eller

Born in High River, Penman has been singing all her life. A valuable member of church choirs, she often is highlighted as a soloist. Penman has been working with Windmill for 15 years, and had her first part in the chorus of *Hello Dolly* in 1984. She played Mother Abyss in *The Sound of Music*, and many other roles with the theatre group.

All of Penman's four children have been on stage in Windmill productions. Her husband, Steve, did the set design for *Oklahoma*. He has also acted, directed, and constructed sets for previous productions.

"I have fun doing this, it's what keeps me sane," said Celia, a child care provider.

Celia has also served as treasurer for Windmill for the past eight years.

"I like that aspect of not just being a performer, but organizing things and keeping the group running. Not just being on stage," Penman said.

In *Oklahoma*, she plays an organizer of people. "She's everybody's Aunt Eller. She's described in the script as a buxom, hearty woman," Penman said.



Dave Burton



Celia Penman



page 3

### Windmill's cast is set

The cast of *Oklahoma!* brings a variety of experience to the High River stage.

page 11



## local color

# Claresholm performers test waters in 'Oklahoma!'

BY JOE FERGUSON

He's an actor.

She's a singer.

But in just over two weeks the Claresholm pair will be expanding their performance repertoires when they play the lead roles in the Windmill Theatre's production of Oklahoma.

And quite frankly, it's got them a little nervous.

"I feel quite confident as an actor," said Gordon Scott, who will play Curly in the High River dinner theatre show.

"But I'm somewhat less confident as a singer and even less as a dancer."

But it's a different story altogether for Michelle Beauchamp-DeDominicis, who's been cast as the musical's leading lady, Laurey.

"I'm not nervous about my singing at all," Michelle said while taking a breather during rehearsal a few weeks ago.

"The singing just seems to come naturally, but I'm a little nervous about the acting because I'm rusty."

The 29-year-old vocalist has been singing on various stages since she was four.

But she hasn't done any acting for several years, not since her time spent studying drama at the University of Calgary.

"I just want to get back into doing what I do best," Michelle said of performing on stage.

"For so many years I haven't done performing. So this (role) gave me the perfect opportunity



Photo by Joe Ferguson

Michelle Beauchamp and Gordon Scott, both from Claresholm, lead the way in Windmill Theatre's musical Oklahoma.

to get back into it.

"I'm a little nervous, because like I said, I haven't done this in

awhile, but after opening night, I think it'll be okay. We'll see what happens."

The play's director, Karen King, says she knows she's got the right pair to lead the way in the production.

"From what I've seen so far, this is going to be a very polished production," King said.

And if mistakes happen along the way, so what — "That," King says, "is what amateur theatre is all about."

"I love mistakes," she chuckled.

"That's the beauty of live theatre. Every performance is different — it's for that cast, for that audience, on that night."

"In professional theatre, if (actors) make a mistake, it's your job. But in amateur theatre, that's just part of the show. Of course, I never let the (actors) forget it — but in a kidding way."

Many times these mistakes go undetected by the audience.

But in King's plays there's always a sure fire indicator that someone's messed up — just listen for a lone laugh bellowing from the back of the hall.

But mistakes or not, the most important thing is to have fun

out there.

"Nobody is getting paid so you have to have fun," King says, "and you have to want to do it."

## Dates & ticket information

Dinner theatre runs from Nov. 20 to 22 at the Highwood Memorial Centre in High River followed by the usual 2 p.m. matinee Sun. Nov. 23. Something new for a major Windmill show will be a dessert theatre performance Nov. 27 followed by evening performances Nov. 28 and 29.

Dinner and dessert theatre tickets are available by calling Marlene Sutor at 652-7605. Tickets for other performances are at Pickersgill's Clothing, High River — call 652-2252 to reserve.



Photo by Joe Ferguson

From left — Choreographer Lois Ruff, musical director Bonnie Duffell and rehearsal pianist Peggy Montgomery sort through the music during a run-through Oct. 22.



## community

# Oklahoma revisited by Windmill Theatre cast

by **anne MOYNHAM**  
TIMES CONTRIBUTOR

This is not the first time that Windmill Theatre Players has entertained the community with a production of Oklahoma.

Twenty years ago, in the spring of 1977, Gwen Richards and Roy Meadows played the lead roles in this musical. They and most of the others who were involved then are no longer performing with Windmill; however, there are three people from that original cast who are with the production this year.

Ev Pickersgill joined Windmill in 1976 and was involved in 14 musicals over the years, including Oklahoma. This year she has been an invaluable asset to the production by helping out as a rehearsal pianist.

"I am pleased to be involved 20 years later in the new '90s production of Oklahoma," she said. Her original costume is in the production as well — it is being worn by one of the ladies in the chorus.

In 1977 two young people joined Windmill Theatre Players because they wanted to be in Oklahoma. Terri (Barton) Thiessen was in the chorus and Jim Goodwin played Fred, one of the local cowhands. Thiessen was in several productions after that, but had not been involved for several years until now.

"Oklahoma was the first play I was in, and I thought it would be nice to return and do the production 20 years later," she said.

Oklahoma will be the 53rd Windmill production in which Goodwin has been involved but he remembers his first production very well.

"As Oklahoma 1977 was my first Windmill play, I remember it very clearly," he recalled. "It was a fun show and cast."

This year Thiessen is in the chorus again and Goodwin is playing Ali Hakim, the peddler who tries to seduce Ado Annie (the girl who can't say no).

Although there are only these three people who were involved 20 years ago, this year's cast of Oklahoma brings with them much experience. Some of them have been entertaining the High River area in Windmill productions for years and others are bringing a wealth of experience from all over Canada.

Theatre gets in the blood. Those who are on stage love the feeling of connecting with an audience. Laughter and applause are like food for their souls. Those who work backstage also enjoy the satisfaction of doing their part to bring



photo by Pam Doyle

Jim Goodwin and Terri Thiessen act in the current version of Oklahoma.

first class entertainment to the community.

Oklahoma is indeed one of those productions that can be considered first class. The story revolves around a score full of wonderful songs — songs that have been popular for over 50 years. The theme song "Oklahoma" is a superb upbeat tune that makes the audience feel good. Then there is the humorous song that Ado Annie sings, "I'm just a

girl who can't say no" and "Everything's up to date in Kansas City," the amusing song sung by Will Parker, the country boy who has been overwhelmed by his visit to the big city.

There are two love stories entwined in this musical production, composed by Rodgers and Hammerstein, each with its

own set of problems brought on by indecision and jealousy. Although the plot could not be considered complex, the show is definitely entertaining.

The tickets are selling fast but there are still some seats available. Tickets for dinner Theatre (Nov. 20, 21, and 22) and the new dessert theatre (Nov. 27) are available from Marlene Suitor at 652-7605. Tickets for the matinee (Nov. 23 at 2 p.m.) and the regular theatre performances (Nov. 28 and 29 at 8 p.m.) are available at Pickersgill's Clothing in High River. All the performances are at the Highwood Memorial Centre.

This is a production you won't want to miss.



Musical director  
Bonnie Duffell.





Windmill Theatre

Players

*Presents*

**Oklahoma!**



Music by Richard Rodgers  
Book and Lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II

HIGHWOOD MEMORIAL CENTRE

High River, Alberta

November 20 - 23, 27 - 29, 1997



community



**RIGHT**  
Aunt Eller, played by Celia Penman, (middle), tries to smooth things over between Jud Fry, played by Dave Burton, (left), and Curly, played by Gordon Scott.

# Oklahoma!

## It was all 'er nothin' for stylish Windmill cast

Photos by Pam Doyle

Windmill Theatre Players present Oklahoma! at the Memorial Centre. Dinner shows have been sold out and the musical, about life and romance at the turn of the century, has been a big hit with audiences. A dessert theatre performance on Nov. 27 will be followed by evening performances on Nov. 28 and 29. Call 652-2252 to reserve tickets.



**RIGHT**  
The chorus line dances up a storm.

**BELOW**  
Rachel Kielstra, who is Ado Annie, and Ray Fox, playing Will, dance together.



**ABOVE**  
Doug Elliott plays peacemaker with Ray Fox.

**LEFT**  
The women's chorus line takes to the stage.



**LEFT**  
The group from Oklahoma listen to Aunt Eller.



Rafting Trip - Aug '97

