

'Oklahoma,' at English, Proves Top Quality Entertainment

By HENRY BUTLER

The crowd was already gathering in the English theater lobby at 7:30 last night.

People waited patiently in the hope of buying last-minute turn-in tickets for "Oklahoma," which was opening its five-day run completely sold out far in advance.

At 8:20, when the overture began, the house was packed with an audience including as many standees as the fire department permits.

Even a sourpuss critic gets a kick out of a large audience, since any show seems better—is better, when there's a big crowd. The entire cast does better when greeted by noisy enthusiasm.

Theme is a Natural

"Oklahoma" is a natural, to begin with. The pleasing, nostalgic look, all about a particularly uncomplicated and hopeful part of the United States when life was simpler and more promising—that's a fine start.

Add to that the Hammerstein lyrics, the Rodgers music, the Rouben Mamoulian direction, and all the customary Theatre Guild dross, and you've got something lots of producers would give their right arm to be able to work out into a formula.

But there is no formula. "Oklahoma" shows artistry and a lot of hard work in all its departments. Hence the zip and the timing and all that wonderful motion and vitality and enthusiasm that probably gives each performance an opening-night freshness.

Unplanned Episode

One bit of freshness in last night's performance may have been unique in the show's present tour. Somebody prematurely stepped on the curtain-throttle when the orchestra began the second-act overture, and there was a momentary sense of amused and amusing confusion.

Among the principals, James Alexander, Hoosier baritone from Richmond, is Curly, the cowboy; Mary Hatcher as Laurey, Curly's sweetheart; Mary Mario as Laurey's Aunt Eller; and Richard H. Gordon as villainous Jud Fry all merit high praise.

Comedy Excellent

Comic episodes were delightfully put across by Dorothée MacFarland as Ado Annie, Carnes, Dave Malien as her bellowing shotgun-toting father, David Morris as the hapless Persian peddler, Alia Hakim, and Walter Donahue as Ado Annie's suitor, Will Parker.

Ballet numbers, with choreography by Agnes de Mille, were all excellent. The most elaborate and effective sequence was one visualizing Jud Fry's evil dream of murdering Curly and abducting Laurey, after interrupting their wedding.

High Quality Singing

The ensemble singing was high-quality stuff, well managed. One of the best jobs was with the song "Oklahoma" itself—a piece that loses all point when performed

TURNERS TO HOLD ANNUAL STAG PARTY

The Athenaeum Turners will hold their annual stag party at 6:30 p.m. today in the Athenaeum Kellersaal.

A membership event, the party will include entertainment by the gymnasium classes, the Dramatic club, the Maennerchor and the concert orchestra. Charles E. Hess will be chairman. Don Hastings will be toasts master, and Raymond F. Holtzman will represent the 1945 members.

apart from the show. Every musical show has at least one such difficult number. The chorus last night put this one across effectively by rapid re-grouping of voices for successive refrains.

Leviel Ayres, who designed the settings, must have thought of small stages like the English's. His remarkably fine backdrops gave an amazing effect of limitless Oklahoma landscape, despite space handicaps.

"Oklahoma" will continue through Saturday, with matinees today and Saturday at 2:20 p.m.

NEIGHBORHOODS

AVALON—"I Was Faithful" and "Destry." Tomorrow through Saturday: "A Boy, a Girl and a Dog" and "Fuzzy Socks." 2:30 and 8 p.m.

BELMONT—Through Saturday: "Too Young to Know" and "The Very Thought of You."

CINEMA—Through Saturday: "Hitchhike to Happiness" and "Government Girl."

DAISY—Through Saturday: "The Way Around" and "Night Club Girl."

DEAN—Through tomorrow: "Northwest Mounted Police" and "Aracon."

EMERSON—Through Saturday: "In Old Chicago" and "Band on My Knee."

FOOTBALL—Through Saturday: "Lady Confesses," "Tomorrow through Wednesday," "The Dolly Sisters" and "The Third Man."

FOUNTAIN SQUARE—Through Friday: "Something for the Boys" and "Gentle Annie."

GOLDWYN—Through Saturday: "The Way to Know" and "The Very Thought of You."

GARLAND—"Kiss and Tell" and "Lady Confesses." Tomorrow through Wednesday: "The Dolly Sisters" and "The Third Man."

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