

Performers go through motions for 'Oklahoma!'

By GAY ZIEGER

Review

The Will-O-Way Repertory Theatre presented a rather sobering performance of "Oklahoma!" on Friday night at the George P. Way Elementary School. Mostly spiritless, it plodded along with nary a bit of genuine sense of fun emanating from the cast.

It appeared mainly a question of going through the motions and pretending involvement in the joys and sorrows of life. At times, it seemed doubtful that given characters would even be able to relate off stage, which certainly can't be the case since this group is noted for being close-knit and devoted to the craft.

It should be noted that this particular performance was a kind of dress rehearsal for an upcoming road tour. The

group has contracted with the Alger Theatre to bring its company's productions of such plays as "The King and I," "Play It Again, Sam," "Bye, Bye Birdie" and "Fiddler on the Roof."

With some polishing, this play could start off the project nicely. A major part of the problem was a last-minute switch of stages, which resulted in the performers being on unfamiliar turf which included some rather hazardous-looking steps. (The production was moved from the playhouse next door because of a leaky roof).

Another problem was that the actors, many of whom gave strong individual performances, seemed to lack commitment to the vehicle. It was not quite conceivable that any people would accuse the two stars of being in love. There appeared to be no warmth between them.

JAMES KRUEL, as the young swain Curly, sang pretty hollow love songs. When sparring with the evil Jud (Robert O. Rucker), he really came alive, however. He seemed master of the situation and his voice had conviction.

When Curly extolled the virtues of a villain by saying, "He treated the rats as equals and that was right," Jud was duly impressed. This was the first real point of interaction between characters, the first time they seemed really

to play off each other. Jud also rose to the occasion, temporarily abandoning his interpretation of what it is like to be slightly dim-witted.

Indeed, the former exactness of Jud's language and his robust manner would belie his mental state. His concentration on every syllable of every word was disconcerting. He was too pointedly mean, though at times he was deliciously slimy.

Eileen Weiss departed from the traditional pretty and sassy image of Laurey and chose instead to be brash and modern. Her reading of lines showed understanding of denotation but not connotation. Her best moment was when she allowed her anger at Curly to abate slowly during the singing of "Many a New Day." She handled the

transformation nicely.

Mary Verguson's operatic voice gave new dimension to Aunt Eller and probably aided her in projecting so well.

True to the role, she was feisty and tough.

TIMOTHY HALL looked as though he were born to the part of Will Parker.

Camper show selling tickets

Tickets at a reduced price for the 1979 Detroit Camper Show are on sale at Hudson and Sears stores in the metropolitan area through Thursday, Feb. 15.

The 12th annual show opens Friday, Feb. 16, and continues through Sunday, Feb. 25, at the Detroit Artillery Armory on W. Eight Mile near Northland. Discounted regular tickets for adults may be purchased during the advance

sale. The tickets are good any day of the show.

Children's tickets may be purchased only at the box office of the show after it opens. Tickets are priced for children six through 12; ages five and under are free when the child is accompanied by an adult.

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