

Director Tony Legat watches the rehearsal of Grayshott Stagers' production of Oklahoma with just under five hours to burn up at Grayshott Village Hall. Sales no: 042236-1

Oklahoma in 24 hours a triumph

Audiences for Grayshott Stagers' latest one-night performance on Saturday did not even know the title of the show they had paid to see until the very last minute.

The Stagers' second Grayshott 24 challenge was met with great success - presenting Rodgers & Hammerstein's 'Oklahoma' at Grayshott Village Hall after just 24 hours' rehearsal.

None of the performers, or the musicians, or indeed anybody else involved, other than the organising committee of three, had any idea which show they would be performing until 24 hours earlier. Oklahoma was chosen because it was a family show that would appeal to all ages, and one that people would be familiar with, as well as being relatively easy to stage and costume.

Twenty one brave souls volunteered to take part, and settled down to the task ahead of them as soon as the show was announced on the Friday evening. While a small committee discussed the casting of the show, the musical directors set to work teaching everybody the music.

Instigator of the Grayshott 24, and chairman of Grayshott Stagers, Tony Legat said: "One of the pianists, Graham Ross, had never performed the show at all, but you would never have believed it, to hear him play on Saturday." Graham suggested early on that in view of the amount of time



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available, the cast should just concentrate on two lines of harmony, but the cast were not impressed, and gave the audience an impressive four-part harmony to all the ensemble numbers.

Rehearsals continued around the clock, and while scenes were being blocked on stage, other people were using different parts of the hall, and spare rooms, to rehearse other scenes, learn and practise dance steps, and learn the music. A full run-through was attempted at midday on Saturday, followed by a dress rehearsal at 3pm.

During the first full run-through it was discovered that the two pianos in the hall were not in tune with each other, and although a number of people said "you'll never get a piano tuner out on a Saturday afternoon", they under-estimated the Grayshott Stagers, and a piano tuner was tracked down to deal with the offending instrument.

Rehearsals finished at 6.30pm, and everybody worked hard to

clear the hall and set out chairs for the audience.

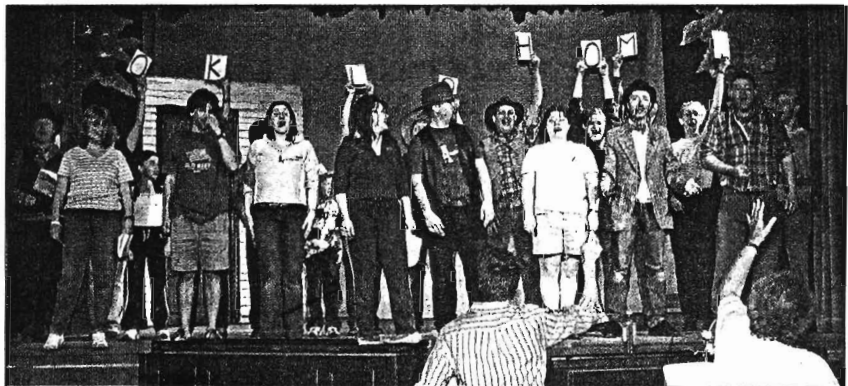
The costume department, Jan Ashwell and Sylvia Boddington, worked wonders and everybody was correctly attired. Stephen Penny and David Peerman produced a set which included Laurey's Farmhouse, Jud Fry's Smoke House, a picket fence, and an impressive ground-row of waving wheat. The props team were given a list of requirements at around 7.35pm on Friday, and by the morning had produced, among other things, four bales of hay and a butter churn.

When the show was announced at 7.30pm on the Friday, a giant digital count-down clock was started so that everybody could see the time ticking away. This clock had been made for the occasion by Richard Batten, who also lit the show, setting lights while the rehearsals were in progress.

The main characters were cast as follows: Paul Tapley as Curly, Susie Hond-Stiff as Laurey, Phil Street as Jud Fry, Jacqueline Protheroe as Aunt Eller, Alexandra Legat as Ado Annie, Richard Milla as Will Parker, Rachel Davison as Bertie Cummins, Colin Wolrich as Ali Hakim, and John Hilder as Andrew Carnes.

The pianists were Graham Ross and Chris Lillywhite, and the conductor was Jeremy Legat.

Tony Legat directed the show, with a lot of help from Doreen Wylde. "I couldn't have done it without her," he said. "The show was a triumph."



Grayshott Stagers rehearse the grand finale at Grayshott village hall. Sales no: 042236-2