

# Colourful Oklahoma

As fresh as the breeze sweeping 'cross the plain, the opening performance of Oklahoma! by Burton Operatic Society had vitality and colour, and brought out all the magic of Richard Rodgers' wonderful music.

It takes courage to tackle a musical show fondly remembered by most people from the big screen, with its wide open spaces and all the resources of the motion picture industry. The society have both courage and professionalism, and they came over well.

Here was the Wild West, with guns blazing, accents drawling, bandy legs splaying, and a Surrey with a fringe on the top.

Backed by a fine orchestra under the direction

of Myra Mesaritis, the principals and chorus provided by superb singing, and sounded as if they were born to those American accents.

Tommy Gregory and Christine George — what a clear voice she has and how it carries — were ideally cast in the main romantic roles of Curly and Laurey. tough old Aunt Eller, with the heart of gold, was convincingly played by Heila Webber, and Steve Hickman gave depth to the character of Jud Fry, the unlucky, unsavoury rival for Laurey's hand.

John Stuart's song and dance as Will Parker in the Kansas City (they've Gone About As Far As They Can Go) number was well matched by the sprightliness and

flightiness of his girl friend Ado Annie (Sheila Boyce), the girl who can't say no.

Adrian Bader made the most of the comic character of Ali Hakim, the persian pedlar with the saucy postcards and the not too honourable designs on Annie.

The show has more opportunities than most of the society's shows for the dancers to show their skill. There was grace and artistry from Julie Cork and Reg Yates, who became Laurey and Curly in The Dream Ballet, and Gordon Fry as the ballet version of Jud added a new dimension to the character. They were well supported by the rest of the dance team — country girls, naughty girls and nimble footed fellows.

D.S.



# Oh what a beautiful stage show

Members of Burton and District Operatic Society, pictured above, are delicately poised to launch themselves into a dance routine for their production of the Rodgers and Hammerstein favourite "Oklahoma." And by the look of it, the society has made sure that nothing has been lost in the transition from the large stage, to the wide screen and back to the smaller stage.

"Oklahoma" is the Society's 1978 production being staged at the Lower Wulfric School. It opened on Monday evening and the last show will be on Saturday. The cheery musical is produced by Frank Doran, with musical direction by Myra Mesaritis and choreography by Prudence Wollaston.

The plot follows the love life of Curly (Tony Gregory) Jud (Steve Hickman) and Laurey (Christine George) who make up a sort of hillbilly eternal triangle.

However, as in the best traditions of the musical, everything is resolved in the end. But it's the music which most people will want to hear with songs like "Oh What a Beautiful Mornin'" and "The Surrey With the Fringe on Top," among the best known.



RODGERS AND HAMMERSTEIN'S "Oklahoma" is being staged at the Lower Wulfric School this week by Burton and District Operatic Society. Some of the cast are pictured.