



'Oklahoma!' captures the patriotic passion of America

MANISTEE — "Oklahoma!" opens Friday, June 24 at the Ramsdell Theatre.

"This exceptional musical is hands-down the most American of all musicals. It captures our national character perfectly—our rugged individualism, which we all prize, and our love of community," said Director Rick Plummer.

The first musical written by Rodgers & Hammerstein, "Oklahoma!" will sing its way into your heart, claims JoAnn Muma, executive director of the Manistee Civic Players, which is collaborating with West Shore Community College for the production. The

IF YOU GO

TICKET INFORMATION

PAST WSCC and MCP productions have included this past fall's "Cabaret," last summer's "Annie Get Your Gun," Neil Simons' comedy "Barefoot in the Park," and the enduring classic, "The Sound of Music." MCP and WSCC will also collaborate on next fall's musical, "Sweeney Todd: the Demon Barber of Fleet Street."

"OKLAHOMA!" will be performed at the Ramsdell at 7:30 p.m. June 24, 25 and July 1, 2 and at 2 p.m. June 26 and July 3.

TO MAKE reservations for "Oklahoma!" call the WSCC box office at 843-5507 or stop by the office in the Arts and Sciences Center, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday through Friday.

TICKETS MAY also be reserved in advance by calling TREATicketing at 1-800-836-0717, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., or by ordering online 24-7 at www.ramsdell-theater.org. The Ramsdell Theatre box office will open for ticket sales at noon Wednesday, June 22.

songs and dances are fully integrated into a story with serious dramatic goals.

ABOUT "OKLAHOMA"

Composer Richard Rodg-

ers had wanted to adapt a rural folk drama of the 1930s, "Green Grow the Lilacs," to the musical stage and lyricist Oscar Hammerstein II was asked to collaborate. They decided this collaboration would be different from standard Broadway musicals. Hammerstein would first write the lyrics and Rodgers would set them to music. Both were determined to put the narrative of the story and character development before typical musical comedy convention. Aided by the choreography of Agnes de Mille, their simple tale of cowhands and farmers finding love and community in the Oklahoma

territory caught the imagination and patriotic passion of wartime America.

This is a love story that challenges the typical romance with the independent Laurey refusing to acknowledge her feelings for Curly; to Ado Annie who can't seem to say "no" even though she knows it's wrong.

The villain is Jud Fry, the brooding outsider who lives in Aunt Eller's smokehouse and pines for the beautiful Laurey, who's really in love with the handsome Curly. The soot-smear'd brute is the tortured center of this unrequited love story, which flickers from light comedy to

fierce tragedy. The contrasting themes raised the dramatic bar for musical theater.

"Oklahoma!" was the first real phenomenon in modern Broadway history. The first hit to run more than 500 performances, "Oklahoma!" ran for 2,212 performances. The songs are wonderful and addictively hummable, Plummer said.

"People Will Say We're in Love" was a No. 1 hit song in 1943 and "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'" and "The Surrey with the Fringe on Top" also topped the charts.

It ran on Broadway for five years and two months, grossing \$7 million.

Better than Ezra is back

Bassist discusses new album, social media and this weekend's show

BY ANDREW J. COOPER
DAILY NEWS INTERN

Better than Ezra bassist Tom Drummond is excited about Saturday night's show at Val-Du-Lakes, he told the Daily News this week.

The band he helped found achieved mainstream popularity in the 1990s with songs like "Good" and "Desperately Wanting," and is back, having released a new album, "Paper Empire," in 2009.

VAL-DU-LAKES

It was 100 degrees in New Orleans at the time of the interview, but Drummond was two hours away from the 70-degree weather in Ludington.

"(It feels) great," Drummond said of escaping the heat. "It's actually been a fairly late summer (in New Orleans). Right now, it's really hot and humid."

Although he was glad to get out of the weather in Louisiana, Drummond said the state plays a big part in his music.

"I've been living (in Louisiana) since the very early '90s," he said. "Even if it's not a direct influence, you can't help but have some of that seep into what you do."

Better than Ezra plays a mix of indoor and outdoor shows, performing indoors Friday at the Chicago House of Blues, then outdoors at Val-Du-Lakes, which Drummond said may give Ed Roland from Collective Soul a chance to play with Better Than Ezra.

"They're very nice people," Drummond said of Collective Soul. "They have been around basically the same time, maybe slightly earlier than us. We've known those guys a long time."

"They're from the South, too," he said of the Atlanta, Ga., based band.

Drummond said one of the reasons for Better than Ezra's success and ability to keep touring is that fans never know what they're going to get.

"Our philosophy is that if we are having a good time, then the audience is too," Drummond said.

Although the concerts may be unpredictable, Drummond said the



Better Than Ezra members are Tom Drummond, Kevin Griffin and Michael Jerome.

band would definitely be performing their hit song "Good."

"We would p... people off if we didn't," he said.

THE MUSIC

Better than Ezra is often categorized as alternative rock, which Drummond was drawn to in the '90s.

"I think first of all, Kevin and I

have similar tastes when we started back in college," he said. "You have to get along with each other or you're not going to be around for very long. We both listened to Kiss and Rush."

Drummond said he's currently listening to Kings of Leon, the Flaming Lips (which he called "the Pink Floyd of our generation"), and a variety of other styles of music.

"My tastes are all over the place, but I think that's good to have a lot of flavors to pull from. We have a lot



Collective Soul

of different influences (but) we still remain Better than Ezra — Kevin's voice is going to make that happen. Kevin is writing songs for a lot of different people. (Listening to other artists and writing songs for them) just helps both of us grow. It creates bigger and better albums and gives you a new perspective."

SOCIAL MEDIA

Better than Ezra has been using social media extensively.

"We're all into it," Drummond said. "We have 'em all, Facebook and Twitter, the whole she-bang."

They also use those new tools creatively. "Sometime we have free passes for people. We literally leave tickets under the rock and Tweet photos. (Social media) also keeps awareness of what our fans are into, what they like and don't like. We've embraced that from the very beginning. We've had an AOL email account since way back in the early '90s when it was just starting out. It's part of the new game, when we first started we put out a cassette. Now it's downloads, basically."

However, there are some drawbacks to social media, according to Drummond.

"It's easier to get your stuff out there," Drummond said. "Now there's more competition. Anyone with a sliver of talent can put their stuff out there. It's a difficult animal."

THE MYSTERY

Perhaps the most frequently-asked question of Better than Ezra is the origin of the band name.

"We don't say," Drummond laughed. "The real answer is not that great. We stopped telling peo-

ple, so people are interested in the mystery of it."

For more information on a personal tour of New Orleans with Better than Ezra during Mardi Gras, visit www.kreweofrockkus.com

For more information on Better than Ezra, the band members, and their nonprofit organization BTE Foundation, visit www.betterthanezra.com.

COLLECTIVE SOUL

Collective Soul, from Atlanta, Georgia, had its break in the grunge scene of the early 1990s, although founder Ed Roland said in an interview with bullz-eye.com that he had never put the band's music in that category.

Collective Soul is made up of lead singer Ed Roland, guitarist Dean Roland (Ed's brother), guitarist Joel Kosche, and drummer Ryan Hoyle. The name of the band derives from a passage in Ayn Rand's 1943 novel, "The Fountainhead."

Ed Roland studied guitar at the Berklee College of Music in Boston, Massachusetts, before forming Collective Soul. The debut 1994 album, "Hints, Allegations, and Things Left Unsaid," included a No. 1 hit and perhaps the song the band is best known for, "Shine."

More recently, Collective Soul released albums "Youth" and "Afterwords" under an independent label El Music Group before releasing a 2009 album, "Collective Soul," under Roadrunner Records (a subsidiary of Warner Music Group).

Collective Soul was featured on the soundtrack of the 2008 movie "Twilight" with the song "Tremble for My Beloved." Author Stephenie Meyer is a fan of the band.

SCENE IN BRIEF

ENTERTAINMENT TIDBITS

Oceana Youth Theatre tryouts

The Oceana Summer Youth



Performed
at the
Ramsdell Theater

June 24, 25 and July 1, 2 at 7:30 pm
and June 26 and July 3 at 2 pm

Tickets: TREAT ticketing at 1-800-836-0717 (10 am-5 pm)
or online: www.ramsdell-theater.org

Rodgers & Hammerstein's first collaboration

WEST SHORE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
PERFORMING ARTS

Series

Hart Public Schools Auditorium and will continue through the first week of August. Some flexibility is possible and interested students who are concerned about conflicting activities should attend the auditions and discuss those conflicts with the director. Show dates for the public presentation are Aug. 5 and 6.

For more information, contact Hart Public Schools Auditorium manager Tom Kirk at (231) 873-6270.

Zonta's sneak peek of 'Oklahoma!'

The Zonta Club of Ludington Area, West Shore Community College Performing Arts and the Manistee Civic Players offer the "Zonta Sneak Peek," an opportunity to attend the full dress rehearsal of the upcoming musical production "Oklahoma!"

The dress rehearsal performance is Thursday, June 23, at 7:30 p.m. at the Ramsdell

Theatre in Manistee. This partnership will benefit the Zonta Club of Ludington Area's community service projects while offering an affordable alternative for people to see this show. Tickets are available for \$10 in advance or \$12 at the door through WSCC's Ticket Office (843-5507) or through any Zonta Club member.

All proceeds will benefit the WSCC Liberal Arts Scholarship Fund of the Zonta Club of Ludington Area. Zonta is an organization of local business and professional women who work to improve the legal, political and economic status of women, serving both international and local communities.

For additional information regarding Zonta Club of Ludington Area, contact Lindsey Reynolds at 231-580-1372.

Artisan Learning Center raffle

The Pentwater Artisan Learning Center holds the

annual fundraising raffle of handcrafted fine art items at the Pentwater Craft and Art Fair on June 18 and 19 on the Pentwater village Green.

Items include, a Gene Davidson handcrafted rocking horse, a glass mosaic glazing ball, an Adirondack chair, fused glass plates and vases, Swarovski Crystal jewelry pieces, wooden bowls, a hand-knit designer scarf, unique pottery bowls and a Patchwork quilt made by a group of the artisan members. All items have been made and donated by Artisan Center members.

Tickets are \$1 each for a choice from forty handcrafted art items. Winning tickets for half of the items will be draw on Saturday, June 18 at 4 p.m. and the second drawing will be on Sunday, June 19 at 3 p.m. Tickets holders do not have to be present to win. Tickets can be purchased from members, at the Artisan Center or at the booth.