

# Movie response – oklahoma featuring hugh jackman

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1. The central conflict of the musical 'Oklahoma' is concerned with the complicated love relationship of the two protagonists, Curly and Laurey. While they evidently fancy each other, they are reluctant to admit it openly. They are afraid that their affair will be talked about all around the town. As young people in love often behave, they are teasing each other by flirting with others. Curly asks Laurey to go with him to the Box Social, yet Laurey decides to go with Jud (who can be regarded as the antagonist).

At the Box Social, Curly outbids Jud for Laurey's baskets, and the young couple acknowledges their feeling towards each other. Conflict resolution occurs when drunk Jud comes to the wedding ceremony of Curly and Laurey and puts up a fight but accidentally stubs himself with his own knife. The people at the wedding stage a quick trial and decide that Curly is not guilty of what has happened. After it, the young couple goes on a honeymoon.

While the relationship of Curly and Laurey is the central conflict of the musical, there is also another love story that contributes to the plot development. Will is in love with Ado Annie, yet upon his return from the Kansas City, he discovers that she is flirting with Ali Hakim, a peddler man. Yet Ali doesn't have any plans to marry Ado Annie, while her father takes everything too seriously and threatens to shoot him if he doesn't propose. However, after the Box Social, when Ali's intentions to stay a bachelor become far too evident, Will and Ado Annie talk freely about their relationship.

Finally, another implicit conflict in the plot is the division between farmers and cowboys. While these divisions are presented in a funny and

lighthearted way, farmers and cowboys represent two different communities, and the any pretext can be used to start a brawl. When two communities come together to raisemoneyfor a schoolhouse is an interim resolution of this conflict.

2. Characters of Curly and Laurey are very graphically depicted in the musical. Their relationship is complicated, yet so is their emotional life. This is specifically true for Laurey who at times finds herself trapped in the confusion of her feelings. At the beginning, Laurey seems slightly too self-confident and stubborn: when Curly asks her to be his company at the Box Social, she doubts whether he is good enough for her. This image is further developed in the ' Many a New Day' scene: she sings that she will never be too upset if her man is gone; she'll find a new love instead. She is confident of her beauty and her charm; she is sure that when she buys a new dress and brushes her hair, she'll be able to start over a new leaf.

However, this image of a self-confident girl who doesn't take her love life seriously is questioned in the scene when Laureydreamsabout getting married to Curly, but the image of Jud penetrates her dream. In this episode, Laurey is presented as a sensitive and vulnerable girl who cannot make up her mind but wants a happy love life.

As for Curly, in the opening scene he is portrayed as an optimistic and buoyant guy with a good sense of humor: he sings of corn as high as an elephant's eye and the cattle are standing like statues. He is determined to win Laurey's affection and is hurt by her refusal to go to the Box Social with him. In the episode when he asks her out, he is presented as a creative and

romantic young man as he promises his honey that he'll take her out in the surrey with the fringe on top with a team of snow-white horses.

As the plot develops, a darker side of Curly's personality is revealed. When he comes to the Smokehouse, consumed with jealousy and the pain from being rejected, he dreams of Jud being dead. Yet he decides to take a more constructive approach, and sells everything he has to outbid Jud for Laurey's basket at the Box Social.

Both Curly and Laurey are too preoccupied with what other people think about their nascent relationship; they don't want neighbors to gossip all day behind their doors. But when everything works out well, Curly rejoices and claims publicly that Laurey is his girl.

Hugh Jackman and Josefina Gabrielle both makes believable Curly and Laurey. However, if I dare voice a personal opinion, Hugh Jackman's performance is slightly superior to that of Josefina Gabrielle. It can be perhaps explained by the fact that the character of Curly is more integral and consistent, while Gabrielle could have done a better job revealing two different sides of Laurey's characters, hard and soft one.

3. To my mind, the song that best serves the purpose of revealing the character is the ' Lonely Room.' It gives a valuable insight into the inner world of Jud. It clearly identifies his motivation for getting Laurey: he cannot stand being in his room, all alone, without a girl to hold. The song probably suggests that it's not so much about Laurey as about his unwillingness to be on her own anymore.

While Jud should be best seen as an antagonist in the musical, the song serves to generate sympathy towards him. He spent so many long and lonely nights in his room that he deserves his own love. The song also gives a sense of Jud's determination and impatience: instead of dreaming of Laurey, he wants to go outside and get her immediately.

4. Apart from serving a purely aesthetical purpose, the Dream Ballet also plays a foreshadowing role. In her dreams, Laurey is getting married to Curly; both look beautiful in their wedding costumes and happy to unite with each others.

Yet this idyllic scene is devastated when Jud appears seemingly from nowhere. His costume and appearance both hint that he is not the one Laurey should be with; it reflects the feeling of insecurity Laurey experience by Jud's side. The choreography of the ballet also represents the build-up of the tension between Curly and Jud; it ends abruptly when Curly is killed by the hatred and aggression Jud emanates.

The theme of the ballet is connected with two dimensions of the first major theme of the musical (i. e. the power of love). First of all, people in love should acknowledge their feelings to each other openly, and girls should look for the right man for them. If it isn't happening, and girls toy with the feelings of other men, the power of love can turn into a destructive and dangerous force.

The ballet helps to advance the plot in two different ways: first of all, it serves the purpose of foreshadowing future events; secondly, it shows what

a nightmare scenario will be like so that the viewer feel emotionally relieved upon the happy end.

5. There are two predominant themes of the film: the first one concerns the issue of true love and its power, and the second one is connected with the separation of public and private. The essence of the first theme is fairly clear-cut: both Curly/Laurey and Will/Ado Anne end up together despite the girls' hesitation and flirt with other men. The film also suggests that girls should be honest with themselves and look for a man that has serious intentions. The power of love is also presented with a dramatic touch: it can grant happiness, but can also lead to tragic consequences, like Jud's death.

The second theme is also implicitly present throughout the whole story. While love is a private matter, people always take the opinion of family and community into account. Curly and Laurey are well-aware of the fact that they love each other, yet they don't want their relationship to be discussed by everybody. Similar is true about Ado Annie's affair with Ali: the father intervenes into their relationship with the intent to make Ali marry his daughter. All these facts exemplify that the line between public and private is blurred.

6. I enjoyed watching 'Oklahoma,' but it would hardly make it the list of my favorite films. While both camera work and actors' performance are great, there are certain limitations. The passages from comic to tragic are too abrupt, and certain characters lack in-depth elaboration. However, keeping in mind that it's a complicated and challenging task to adapt a musical for screen, Trevor Nunn did a fairly good job.

## **References**

Oklahoma. Dir. Trevor Nunn. Image Entertainment, 1999.