Cast members of “Chicago” perform opening night in the musical that was well received by theater fans. The show was presented by the Rainbow Players, which is made up of individuals from the Southwest Kansas and Oklahoma Panhandle areas. L&T photo/Chris Linenbroker

By VICTORIA CALDERON

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Brights lights, swinging jazz music, and conniving criminal minds. The Rainbow Players organization brought all these elements to stage, along with an exceptionally talented cast and a hardworking behind-the-scenes crew in the musical “Chicago.”

The musical is centered around two women who commit murder in 1920s Chicago. The lead roles of Velma Kelley and Roxie Hart were played by Alison Chambers and Jamie Mix, respectively. During the course of the show, they vie for media attention and work with famous lawyer Billy Flynn (played by Michael Ask) to be found “not guilty” by the court.

“Chicago” is different than many other shows. Actor Dylan Holt described it as a “very female-oriented show... it’s definitely different in the vaudeville style it’s being performed in, compared to things like ‘Les Mis’ or ‘Zombie Prom.’ But it was fun, it was a good change.”

From the music put together by the orchestra to the phenomenal actors onstage, “Chicago” was a hit. The show was full of raunchy humor, and although opening night was not a full house, the audience there was enraptured by the performance. The crowd was full of laughter the entire night. The actual performances were only the end product of several weeks of dedication and hard work, though.

From the get-go, director Gloria Goodwin had faith in the talent of the cast she had put together.

“I was impressed with the depth of talent that we had at auditions,” Goodwin commented. “But in the time since, they have really been so impressive in their dedication, coming together not only onstage, but building the set and coming up with the props and the costumes.”

However, no matter how well some aspects of a big project go, other details will still go awry. Goodwin, as a director, constantly had to think about any possible thing that could go wrong so as to avoid issues. Unfortunately, worrying could also take its toll.

“There are always points during a show where the director has scary thoughts and scary moments,” she said.

One of the main problems was with the sound for the show. With so many people on stage during any given scene, the microphones were more difficult to manage.

“It’s probably the second hardest show I’ve ever done,” sound engineer Bryan Peters said.”We haven’t had a backstage person until this week. We were behind, very very far behind; last minute props, and for Trina (stage manager), this was her first time doing lights and calling the show, so I was helping her get situated so we could do a good show.”

Along with having to aid the less experienced, the light and sound crews had limited time during rehearsals to work on their share of the show, as well as build sets. According to Peters, many from the crew were out working on various projects until two or three in the morning to make sure everything was ready for dress rehearsals and opening night.

Another issue popped up with the budget. Since the Rainbow Players is a non-profit organization, they had to pinch pennies to pull off this extravagant endeavor. Fortunately, many local businesses were willing to help. United Wireless became the corporate sponsor for the show, and Mead Lumber donated lumber to build the set. Also, Goodwin had a friend in Nebraska who was willing to let the cast borrow costumes for the production. The borrowed costumes amounted to about $5,000, which was all saved from the Players' expenditures thanks to the help of a friend.

Despite the occasional onslaught of obstacles, the cast and crew worked together to keep their heads high and fix whatever needed fixing.

"Everybody knew they were going to do it; it was a quiet kind of confidence that, no matter what rough patches we might hit, that we'd pull it off," Goodwin said. "It seems like they were never complaining about whatever was asked them to give. Some of them worked all night long to build the set. I was so impressed by the level of effort."

The cast and crew all managed to pull off a fantastic show, and opening night went great by their standards. As for the sound and technical situations, everything was resolved by show time.

"Tonight, it was perfect," Peters said regarding opening night.

Goodwin added, "I thought it went really well. Every opening night has maybe a glitch or two."

Overall, the performance went smoothly.

As for the rest of the shows, the cast and crew felt confident to take them on.

“I’m sure something will go wrong, because that’s just how it works,” Holt said. “But everyone’s very professional, so it’ll be dealt with accordingly, and it will be just as great.”

Since the Rainbow Players are non-profit, they need large audiences and good ticket sales to fund future projects and performances. They put together a community musical every summer, and bring wonderful entertainment and talent in the theatre arts to Liberal.

Currently, the Players need to find a replacement for board president Alison Chambers, who will be continuing her theatre career in Wichita.

Goodwin’ said her experience with the Rainbow Players has been excellent so far.

“I’d be certainly honored and thrilled if they’d ask me to do other shows with them,” she said. “It’s a great group to work with, and they’re just a lovely bunch of people.”