

"Oklahoma" coming along

Producing a musical when most of your actors haven't even seen one is a gallant endeavour. But a teacher at North Peace Secondary School, Susan E Popesku, has been doing just that. She has been working steadily at it with her cast since the beginning of November, and her efforts are just about to pay off.

She and her team of helpers, and the cast, of course, are in the final stages of producing the musical "Oklahoma" and it will be presented to the expectant public on February 13 and 14.

"Because most of the kids in the cast have never seen a musical, they can't pattern themselves on someone they have already seen. It's therefore very much their own interpretation, and quite unique." With a script in one hand and a box of makeup in the other Mrs Popesku was clearly talking with conviction.

"They are an extremely enthusiastic bunch of kids. This is the first year that we have ever attempted anything like this, and they are all working very hard. It's going to be a great show."

She is not alone in her opinion. A lot of local people are agreeing with their pocket books. Over half the 960 tickets printed have been sold already. Tickets are \$2.50 each.

Community interest in the project is manifest in other ways too. Apart from the excellent advance sales of tickets, it is also getting a lot of good help from a number of well wishers. People have lent an antique butter churn, an old stove, period guns, an antique Dutch rug beater, a handmade patchwork quilt and a rocking chair.

It hasn't stopped there however. Costumes have been sewn by local ladies and those with other special skills have been quick to donate their assistance. People like Hilary Jones, for instance, who has been responsible for the choreography throughout. Or Dr Jim and Mariana Survis who are 'doing' the music along with Wayne Donn. Dr Survis plays the violin, and Wayne and Mariana play the



SUSAN POPESKU, who is producing the play has worked at rehearsals almost every night

since the beginning of September. Getting the dancing right is a big part of the work.

piano.

Pat Peeke-Vout has been diligently designing and making costumes for as long as rehearsals have been taking place. "These people have been most helpful in everything," declared Mrs Popesku. "We've been holding rehearsals every night of the week, but nobody has found it too much. They've all worked tremendously hard."

Other valuable assistance has come from the Workshop Players. They have every school in the city so wired that they can hook up their equipment and they will be doing the lighting and the stage effects on the night. They are also active in the rehearsals at the moment.

Altogether, Mrs Popesku has about 20 people working fairly closely with her on the production.

Radio Shack is taking care of the sound equipment for her, and she does of course have other parts of the school busy on musical-related work. An occupational class renovated the stove, and the woodwork shop turned out props including barns and fences.

"Really, whichever way you look at it, it has become a community thing," said Mrs Popesku. "Even people from

out of town have helped us. Remember the Anna Wyman Dancers who were here before Christmas? They spent some time with us giving the kids practical tips on body movement and so on. Showed them how to express their feelings with their bodies instead of their faces only. Whether its been digging through their basements for antiques or sewing can-can dresses, a lot of people have done what they could to make it easier for us."

Indeed she admitted to only two problems. "Did we ever have a problem finding a cyclorama!" For the uninitiated, this is a large white sheet that serves as a backdrop for the action. "There just isn't one to be had in the community and there wasn't one in Dawson Creek that we could borrow either. They cost about \$500 to buy, so we ended up renting one."

Her other difficulty echoed a common complaint. "We really need, and I cannot emphasize this enough, we need a full-size stage in this city," she declared. "Trying to put on a full-size production in a gym is a headache from first rehearsals to the closing curtain."

As most people know, the show 'Oklahoma' was made into a film many years ago. There will obviously be many differences between the film and the school production, because whatever problems Hollywood might have, it is not tied down to stage sizes.

The story is unaltered though. It is basically a love story, set in a country town in the American Mid West at the turn of the century. There is one young couple who have only to wait till he can get \$50 before they can get married, and then there is another couple for whom the path of true love runs anything but smooth.

It all ends happily nonetheless, as musicals generally do. And in the school production there are a few climactic surprises for the audience as well.

"We can guarantee folks a good night out," said Mrs Popesku. "All seats are reserved, so if you don't want to miss it, you'd better get down to the school pretty soon. That is the only place we're selling them."