

“This play was different from last year, I felt like I was closer to the cast this year. I was very excited to be part of this play and I wish to continue being in more productions and plays such as this.”

— Jimada Glanry

“I feel like I am in a dream. This is my sixth play, and I wish to pursue my dream of becoming a dancer. I also help with the make-up, it's really fun.”

—Save Filolito

“I always feel hyper acting as Jud Fry, even though my character is supposed to be tense and suspicious. Although it was difficult getting in my role, I really enjoyed being the villain in my fifth play.”

—Tommy Kabua

“I was very nervous. It was a struggle for me getting some of my lines. My dad helped me a lot on the way. Even though some of the words were hard and ancient, I think it is our responsibility as the new generation to learn the language fully, as it is part of our culture.”

—Almer Lang

“The kids are more confident this year, and I love seeing that. Marshallese students are usually shy and modest, and I am very happy that the Professor helps the kids to be more open and confident, because they are so talented and dedicated.”

—Teeri Komawenga

“Will was hard to play on stage at first, but then I became more confident and found in my abilities that Will has become a part of me as I progressed in my theatrical journey.”

—Jobod Silk

The man behind the plays

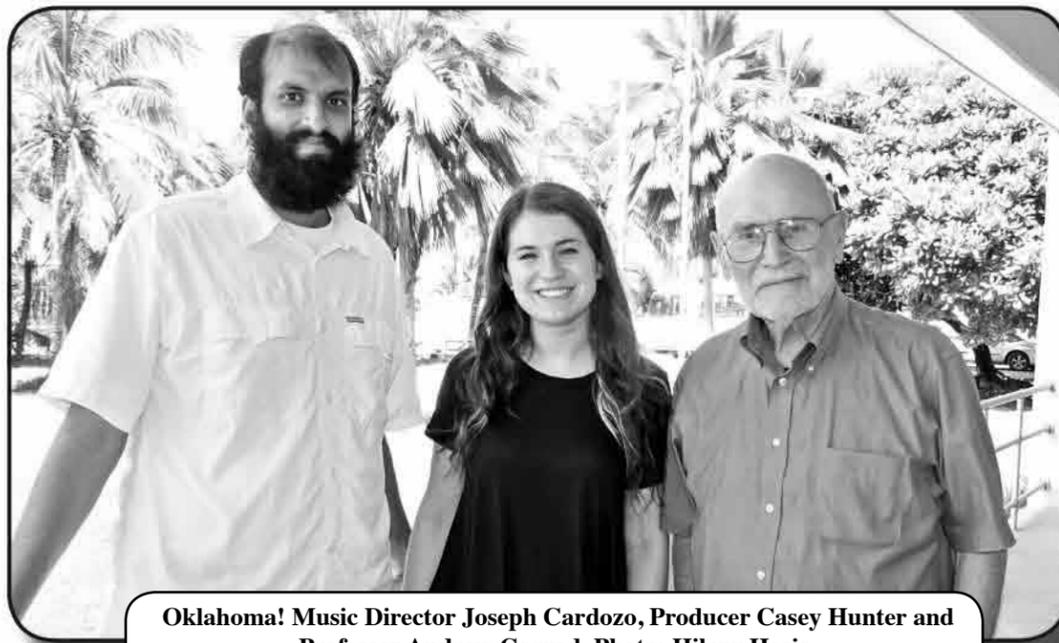
KIRAN DATWANI

What does the man behind the success of so many theater productions in Majuro feel about these plays? What are his thoughts?

We asked Professor Andrew Garrod (who is 79, but acts decades younger) about his thoughts and feelings of the numerous plays that he's helped stage in Majuro over the years. “I have done eight Shakespearean plays, and this year is the fifth Broadway musical,” he said.

Professor Andrew sincerely enjoys coming to the Marshall Islands, especially for the students, who are talented and have a work ethic. “The amount of talent, dedication to the productions, and enthusiasm attracts me, and so I come back every year. The students always rise to the challenge.” His first play, Shakespeare's “A Midsummer Night's Dream,” was in 2004 at MIHS. It was by far the most difficult play Professor Andrew directed in Majuro. “None of the kids knew anything about drama,” he said. “The kids would run away from rehearsals. But now, kids come to rehearsals, and they enjoy being part of the play company.”

With the staging of Oklahoma!



Oklahoma! Music Director Joseph Cardozo, Producer Casey Hunter and Professor Andrew Garrod. Photo: Hilary Hosia.

this year, Andrew changed the acting format. “An important part this year is that I double casted almost all of the main leads,” he said. “This is particularly important because it develops more talent in a big group. It is also a precaution in case one member gets sick; we have a back-up person. I don't consider anyone as an understudy though — they are equal to my eyes.”

The main leads are always critical, but this year some medium or minor characters were hugely important for the success of the play as well.

Plays are carefully chosen each year. “I select plays that would be appropriate for kids — interesting characters, different roles, dancing, melodies, nice set,” he said. “I try to pick plays that have a big cast, many dance opportunities,

and complex characters. It also has to be viewed acceptable for the community. This year's play had the largest audiences ever at the ICC. It shows the community greatly supported the play.”

Many earlier plays offered a significant theme. But Oklahoma! was different. There weren't significant themes.

This play wouldn't have happened if it was not for a large

number of people supporting the effort, including the yachties, students, and especially his partners, Joseph and Casey. “I also get a strong support from the President, who is the reason these plays are so successful.” Professor wants to continue these plays if his health and the ongoing support from Ministry of Education allow it. He is very grateful to be able to have the plays take place at ICC in the recent years, even though it is not a theater.

“My biggest goal is to have more youth productions,” he said. “It creates more confidence in the youth, and helps them decide their future.”

Quoted from the Okalhoma! program's Director's Note: “All the elements of musical theater and the rehearsal process itself are critical to achieving our educational goals — the raising of personal and academic aspirations among our students, building lasting friendships across different communities, instilling confidence in voice and body, honing powers of self-reflection and finally learning to work as a team member who must subordinate his/her own personal gains for the good of the team and the play.”



Professor Andrew Garrod pays attention to every detail during the three months of rehearsals leading up to the play. Pictured left, he and Joe Cardozo critique the work of Olivia Williams and Duke Gaston. Right, the professor coaches Bryant Zebedy and Tommy Kabua. Photos: Hilary Hosia.