

OLIVER! by Lionel Bart
Performed by NOMADS

Lionel Bart's *Oliver!* may just be the most well-loved British musical of all time, and for good reason: it's got it all, from a bit of a mystery, lots of children, a battle of good against evil, cracking songs, love gone wrong, and to a (mostly) happy ending.

The two-level setting worked well and very good use was made of it. The lighting design was excellent with some lovely silhouettes against the backdrop. Sound unfortunately was problematic particularly in the higher register which was incredibly shrill. Costumes were excellent.

The youngest members of the cast acquitted themselves well throughout. Musical Director JOSEPH HALL and Choreographer JESS CLIFFORD had schooled the "workhouse brats" well. The famous opening number "Food Glorious Food" got the show off to an impressive start and well done to all the youngsters involved.

HARRY BEAMOND as Oliver was confident, has a nice voice and good stage presence. A lovely performance. The diminutive LEIA SCHULTZ as the Artful Dodger was not quite the forceful character one normally sees, but was lively and showed confidence. For this little performer, a major acting challenge throughout the show was pretending to be equal to the more mature players. To her credit, she succeeded most of the time!

There was a light-hearted scene between Widow Corney (well played by FREYA BRUNTON) and Mr Bumble (an excellent performance from OLIVER SQUIRES) with "I Shall Scream". The rather short scene in the undertakers is often under-played but Directors SARAH SMITH and JOHN MITCHELL gave it the attention it deserved with STEVEN FENN as a first-rate Mr Sowerberry and CHARLIE MAGUIRE as his harridan of a wife. I did fear Ms Maguire's voice might not last the week with the strain of so much shrieking. LAUREN GODFREY as Charlotte completed the awful Sowerberry family. I always enjoy hearing the Sowerberry's macabre song "It's Your Funeral". DAVID PHILPOTT played Noah Claypole Charlotte's boyfriend and Oliver's tormentor.

STEVEN BEACH in the much coveted role of Fagin gave a great performance. We were also treated to an excellent performance from LAURA JOLLEY as Nancy. Great voice and excellent acting. Nancy was well supported by FAYE DOWER as Bet. GEORGE NOLAN was a suitably threatening Bill Sykes, sadly minus his canine companion, Bullseye.

In other roles, DAVID PHILPOTT did the double as Mr Brownlow, APRIL COOK provided maternal warmth and comfort as Mrs Bedwin and MATTHEW MCGURK was Dodger's side-kick Charley Bates. In fact all other named players did their bit to ensure the show's success.

Oliver! has only two or three big chorus numbers in the show but those involved all gave committed performances. All numbers were done exceedingly well.

I have seen this show many times but it is impossible to tire of it. The cheeriness of songs like "Consider Yourself," "It's A Fine Life" and "Oom Pah Pah" means there's something for everyone in *Oliver!* Congratulations to all involved, it was a lovely evening.

Julie Petrucci
Regional Representative NODA East District Four South