

7 – 17 December
at 7.30pm (no Sunday performance)
Matinees 10 & 17 December at 2.30pm

Loft
theatre company

OLIVER!

by Lionel Bart

Based on Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*

Oliver*	Megan Bignall
Mr Brownlow	Paul Boyle
Bill Sikes	Chris Cortopassi
Artful Dodger*	Aaron Crockford
Mr Bumble	John Fenner
Widow Corney	Elaine Freeborn
Oliver**	Oscar George
Bet	Flo Hatton
Mrs Sowerberry	Lucy Maxwell
Mrs Beewin	Judy Murdoch
Charlotte Sowerberry	Laura Simmons
Fagin	Steve Smith
Noah Claypole	Ash Spall
Mr Sowerberry/Dr Grimwig	Benjamin Wellcome
old Sally	Judy Wellcome
Nancy	Louise Woodward
Artful Dodger**	Nathan Woolley
Bulls-Eye	Henry and Daisy O'Sullivan

Company

Rosie Aspinall, Lauren Bignall, Katie Burrows, Madeleine Burrows, Lily Butler**,
Elie Churchill, Beth Crossley, Annabelle Eden-Humphreys**, Hattie Gatfield,
Darcy Harrison, Rosie Jeffs**, Beth King, Rosie Lawrence**, Briony Lettington,
Ed Murdoch, Ellie Pawsey**, Harmony Kenny, Poppy Kenny**, James Seymour-Grant,
Kayeleigh Sheehan, Judy Wellcome, Henry Whitehurst, Beth Woolley

* - performing on 8, 10 matinees, 12, 14, 16, 17
** - performing on 7, 9, 10, 13, 15, 17 matinee

Orchestra

Keyboard - Matt Flint, Violin - Maddy Evans, Cello - Issy Worrall,
Bass - Sunim Koria, Reed I - Mike Read, Reed II - Rebecca Eldridge,
Trumpet - Frank Stubbs, Horn - Helen Pugh, Percussion - Ashley Ward

The action is set in various locations in London during Dickensian times

Running time approximately 2 hours 25 minutes including interval

Director	Tim Willis
Musical director	Matt Flint
Choreographer and assistant director	Francesca Smith
Lighting design	Michael Wheeldon
Sound design	josh smith
Technical team	Technical team led by Dave Barclay
Company stage manager	Viki Betts
Deputy stage manager	Emily Morgan
Assistant stage managers	Kim Green, Cath Lyon
Set design	Richard Moore
Set built, painted and crewed by	Richard Moore, Ian Asbury, Amy Rodger, Wendy Morris, Adina Burca, Alwin McGibbon, Andrea Opatowska, Monika Surinya, Lynda Fletchig, Danielle Robinson, Davine Spiers, Dawn Spencer, Yas Shilton, Amy Barrett, Becky Howell, Chris Moss
Wardrobe	Wardrobe team led by Helen Brady
Props	Props team led by Elspeth Dales
Press and publicity	Anna Laycock
Photography	Richard Smith
Theatre technician	Kimberlee Green

With special thanks to Brenda Leedham, Christopher Ward, Charles Withall,
Brenda Finn, Sandra Hay, Mike and Ali, Amy Cox and Bertie,
and last but not least, our team of chaperones

OLIVER! Loft Theatre, Leamington, until December 17 Reviewer: Peter McGarry

By its sheer weight of tuneful songs this remains one of the most popular musicals. The exclamation mark in the title could also be seen to reflect the enormity of staging it.

Dickens's evocative tale of the orphan lad's progression from Victorian workhouse through the grimy environments of back-street London to eventual long-overdue happiness demands numerous set changes and a great many faces.

Tim Willis's bold production tackles them all head-on and if it tends to be a bit stop-start in the early stages, this will be smoothed out as the run continues.

By the time Oliver sings *Where is Love?* (hauntingly performed by Oscar George, who alternates the role with Megan Bignall), the emotional tug of Lionel Bart's superb show is becoming evident. And when act two opens with the rampantly full-blooded *Oom Pah Pah*, we're more than into the swing.

This show-stopping number is magnificently performed by Louise Woodward who so effectively etches the character of Nancy between bouts of bubbly high spirits and sad reflection (*As Long as He Needs Me*). There is eye-catching work too from Flo Hatton as her tag-along friend Bet.

The *Oliver Twist* story will, of course, always centre on the raw, brash humour and chill factor of Fagin's den of thieves and here the splendid Steve Smith once again delivers a master-class in rich characterisation, investing the wily old villain with a heady mix of comedy and pathos. His young gang members respond well, despite looking a little too clean-cut for their back-alley lifestyle.

This hardly applies to the fearsome nastiness embodied in Chris Cortopassi's compelling Bill Sikes, a well-judged essay in cold ruthlessness, and there are fun elements in Benjamin Wellcome's undertaker and John Fenner's Mr Bumble.

The austerity of the locations is significantly captured in Richard Moore's set design which works wonders on a limited stage, and Matt Flint's musical direction does full justice to those evergreen songs.

With a little more refinement along the way, this will be a worthy tribute to Bart's brilliant adaptation. Even Oliver himself could hardly ask for more.

Reviewing the situation: *Oliver!* at the Loft Theatre in Leamington by Oliver Williams

Showing ambition without overreaching is obviously one of the biggest challenges for a theatre company of the size of the Loft when staging famous and much-loved musicals such as *Oliver!*

In his programme notes, director Tim Willis talks of the many working parts which need to come together to make this production a success.

He must be delighted then that, after this opening night, it's very clear that he has a team and cast who are more than up to the task.

It's a production which requires several quick set changes, with heavy sections of scenery being moved around regularly, and not once was the flow of the performance ever upset by this.

The well drilled set crew and excellent musical team provided the platform on which the actors could shine and by and large they did to a woman and man.

Oscar George, one of the two Olivers who will be used during this run, carried the weight of opening night hopes and fears on his small shoulders with admirable confidence – displaying impressive vocal chops in his solo parts.

With popular and well known characters comes both the privilege and expectation of portraying them and those in the main roles embraced the former to satisfy the latter.

Louise Woodward captured Nancy's infectious optimism and tragic dependence excellently, while Nathan Woolley was suitably assured as the Artful Dodger.

Chris Cortopassi's Scottish accent adds a new element to the menace of Bill Sykes and he deserves a particular mention for his dog handling skills.

But one of the longest applauses of the night was given to Steve Smith as Fagin who, toward the end of a masterful performance, delivered a superb rendition of *Reviewing the Situation*.

It's moments like that, which are fit for stages both amateur and professional – which are worth the admission fee on their own.



