

# Old England revisited in Town Hall's 'Oliver!'



Photo by BILL HUGHES

Fagin, played by Joe Inscoe, tells Oliver, played by Zachary Stier, "how to pick a pocket or two." "Oliver" was

sponsored by MSC Town Hall Thursday night and played to near-capacity crowd in Rudder Auditorium.

By LOUIS HILGARTNER  
Staff Columnist

Early 19th century England came to life in Rudder Auditorium last night as a near-capacity crowd was taken back to the London of the early 1800's in MSC Town Hall's presentation of "Oliver!"

"Oliver!" is a musical adaptation of the classic novel *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens. The story revolves around a poor orphan, Oliver Twist (played by Zachary Stier), who spends the first ten years of his life in a miserable orphanage/workhome managed by the hard-hearted Mr. Bumble (played by Michael D. Cupp) and his matron the Widow Corney (played by Susan C. McMahon.)

Amid smoke and stark back-lighting, the orphans solemnly file onstage to take their places at the dining table. A vat is lowered from a balcony, and you know it isn't full of prime rib.

The orphans express their dreams for real food as they sing "Food, Glorious Food." The singing stops abruptly as Mr. Bumble steps onto the stage banging his staff and generally hollering for order.

As the orphans turn in their bowls after this "meal" Oliver asks for more. Mr. Bumble goes absolutely ape and orders Oliver sold. The rest of the orphans trudge off.

With the youth out of the way, the coast is clear for Mr. Bumble to make a pass at the Widow Corney, and amid the running, chasing and goosing she manages to sing "I Shall Scream."

The fun is interrupted by Oliver who has returned with his belongings. Mr. Bumble takes Oliver and sells him to a Mr. Sowerberry (played by Robert McGrath), a cruel undertaker. Oliver is left to spend his first night with the Sowerberrys on the floor and, pondering his future, he sings "Where Is Love?"

Oliver's stay with the Sowerberrys is short, because the following morning he runs away.

Alone and wandering the streets of London, Oliver meets The Artful Dodger. The Dodger (Marc Morozumi) welcomes Oliver with open arms as a fellow destitute. "Consider Yourself", probably the most memorable song from the whole show, is sung by the Dodger, Oliver, and the other young street toughs.

Dodger introduces Oliver to a man named Fagin. Fagin (played by Joe Inscoe) is a mobster of sorts, employing young boys to steal for him. Fagin and the boys tell Oliver the way to a better life is to "Pick A Pocket Or Two."

Oliver is told that "It's A Fine Life" they lead, and is instructed in the facts of life by a young woman named Nancy (Elizabeth Van Den Berg) who also works for Fagin.

The first day on the job doesn't go so well for Oliver though.

Under the tutelage of Dodger and his cohort Charley Bates (Ravi Tolliver), Oliver is arrested for picking pockets.

That arrest is the best thing that happens to Oliver.

Since he didn't actually do the dirty deed, the gentleman who lost his wallet to Dodger and Charley takes Oliver in as a form of recompense.

This gentleman turns out to be Oliver's grandfather.

Oliver tries to be responsible at his grandfather's, but is "recaptured" by a desparate character known as Bill Sykes (Paul W. Hermanson). Sykes returns Oliver to Fagin, but Nancy who loves Bill wants to see that Oliver gets back to where he belongs. Oliver is returned, but it costs Nancy her life.

The performances of the various characters were excellent and it is likely we will see the names of these kids again.

The use of fog, lights, and the set construction all combined to help create the right atmosphere for each of the different scenes.

The bottom line is the audience enjoyed the show.

## Governor promises jail investigation

United Press International

AUSTIN — Saying he is "ashamed" of the conduct of some state prison officials, Gov. Mark White promised Thursday "to get to the bottom" of growing reports of wrongdoing within the Texas Department of Corrections.

"I think they've got to recognize this is not just a wind that's going to blow through there over Monday," White said.

But the governor defended the prison board's decision to review a special management report behind closed doors next week.

The prison board meets next Monday in Huntsville to review a comprehensive management report that was ordered after the resignation last year of former prison director W.J. Estelle.

White said if the report deals with personnel or matters that already are in court, the board may be within its right to withhold public disclosure of the report.

"There cannot be a pre-release of that information until there is an opportunity for legal response," he said. "Let the attorney general have an opportunity to do his job and I think you'll find a full revelation of all those reports."

The prison system has been

beseiged in recent months by numerous reports of wrongdoings, including brutality of inmates by guards, fraud in the construction program, misuse of funds and false reports on employee fringe benefits.

White said if the report contains allegations of criminal activity he will recommend prosecution.

"We're going to get to the bottom of it. I'll guarantee you that," he said. "I want to make certain that any individual who has been breaking the law over there is going to be treated accordingly."

And the governor specifically promised to pressure local prosecutors to investigate reports of inmate brutality. A warden, two other high-ranking prison officials and two guards were fired and 10 other officials were demoted Monday in the wake of an investigation into brutality.

"Loose practices will no longer be condoned," White said. "There's going to be a new pattern for leadership over there and there's going to be a new pattern for every employee of TDC."

White said he believed that most TDC employees will "cheer what we're doing."

The governor said prison employees had been "supremely embarrassed" by reports of misconduct.

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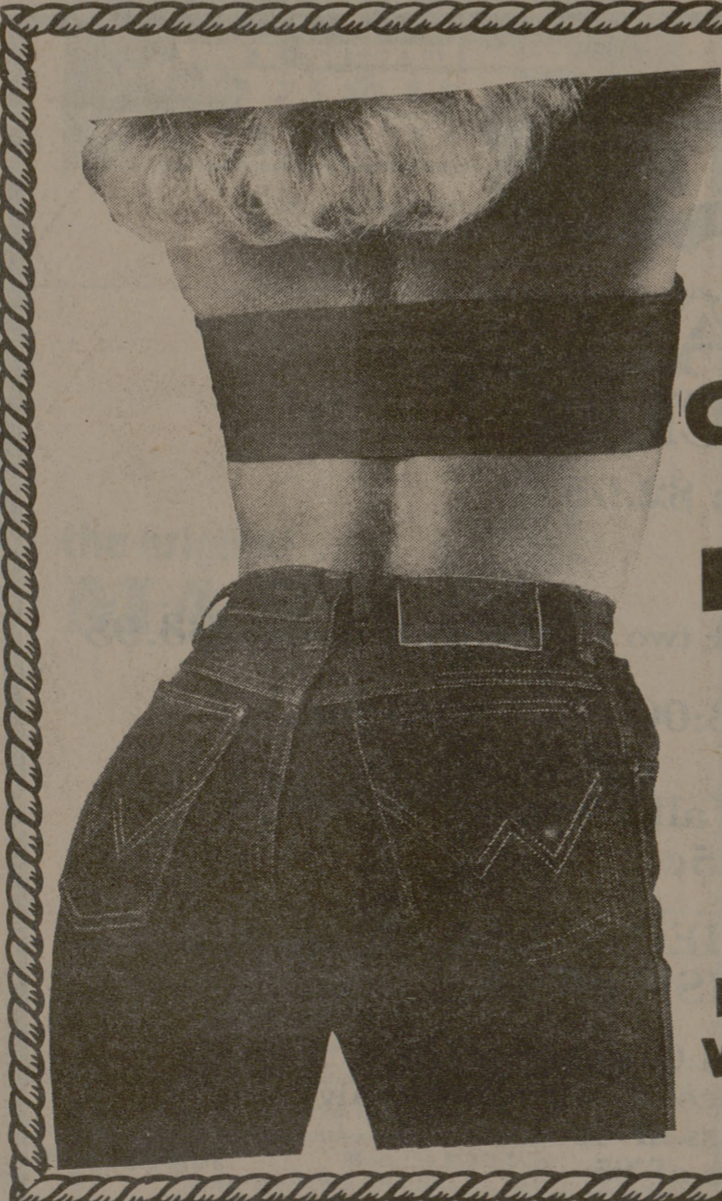
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