



OLIVER! AT THE ELKS THEATER

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Photo: Zak Allen as Oliver

With “Oliver!” which opened last night at the Elks Theater, One Stage Family Theatre has given fans of musical theater a wonderful opportunity for family entertainment. Six decades after its 1960 debut in London, “Oliver!” remains as fresh and entertaining as when it was first presented. Based on Charles Dickens’ 1838 novel, *Oliver Twist*, the Lionel Bart musical remains one of the most popular and frequently produced shows in the repertoire of musical theater. Two more shows are scheduled for today, Saturday, November 12th. Tickets for today’s 12:00pm matinee and the 7pm evening performance are available [HERE](#) or [HERE](#)

Oliver! is a classic coming of age story, full of pathos, fascinating characters and a plot driven by coincidences that beggar credulity. But who cares? It's Dickens and it's great fun. Set in Victorian England, the story opens with Oliver in a grim workhouse for orphans. When our young hero innocently asks for more food, he is ridiculed and sold into an abusive apprenticeship with an undertaker. He escapes to the streets of London where he meets the Artful Dodger, a good natured pick pocket who introduces him to Fagin and his school for crime. An attempted robbery goes awry, and Oliver is taken into custody. But the wealthy and kind hearted victim, Mr. Brownlow is interested in Oliver’s story and takes him home.

Fearing that Oliver will betray them, Fagin and his band of thieves try to kidnap Oliver and hold him for ransom. One unexpected turn of plot leads to another. Suffice it to say that the story ends happily with Oliver restored to family and prosperity. Along the way, we hear some of the best tunes the musical theater has ever produced.

Lionel Bart’s 1960 musical adaptation of *Oliver Twist* has remained in production for over sixty years. The musical tells the familiar, engaging story thru songs that have become standards including "Where is Love?", "You’ve Got to Pick a Pocket or Two", "Consider Yourself", "I’d Do it Anyway", and "As Long As He Needs Me".

A cast made up of local talent performed with energy and style. Their obvious enjoyment was contagious. The audience loved the show.

A few standout performances deserve special note. The lead role of Oliver was played by the very nimble and poised Zak Allen, who was in fine voice on opening night.

James “Drew” Burton, was a natural as the Artful Dodger. Levi Campbell as Fagin, Brian Martinez as Bill Sikes, and Parker Anderson as Mr. Bumble rounded out an excellent cast. Ralene Challinor played the lovesick Nancy, whose rendition of *As Long As He Needs Me*, was exceptionally well done.

One Step Family Theater is community theater. It's a local, non profit production company showcasing local talent, "Where Everyone Shines." It was founded six years ago by Tamee Niekamp, who along with Shana Lujan, directed the show.

Two performances remain—a matinee today at 12:00 pm, and a final performance tonight at 7 pm. Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$15 for 18 and under. Tickets can be purchased [online](#).

The author and some of the cast