

Oliver!

In this, the musical version of Charles Dickens' classic story, the orphan Oliver Twist is thrust out of the workhouse, having dared to 'ask for more', by the pompous and miserly beadle Mr. Bumble who sells him for £5 to Mr. Sowerberry the undertaker.

Refusing to be put upon he runs away and, innocent that he is, is recruited by the Artful Dodger, ringleader of a gang of young thieves employed by the scheming but benevolent arch-fence Fagin. In the thieves' kitchen he also meets the warm and sympathetic Nancy, girlfriend of blackguardly Bill Sykes. On his first pocket-picking expedition he is caught, but exonerated and cared for by kindly Mr. Brownlow, the erstwhile intended victim. Afraid that Oliver will reveal their misdeeds and whereabouts, Fagin and Sykes force Nancy to take part in kidnapping him and returning him to their clutches.

Meanwhile, through the dying confession of old Sally, an inmate of the workhouse, Mr. Brownlow learns from the mercenary Bumble that Oliver is his own grandson by the beloved daughter who disappeared and died whilst giving birth in secret. Nancy, tied by bonds of devotion to Sykes as she is, nevertheless determines to return Oliver to the caring Mr. Brownlow. Sykes surprises her in the act, kills her in his rage, and recaptures Oliver. But the police and public are on his trail which leads to the thieves' kitchen. Sykes is shot dead in the chase, Oliver returned unharmed to the bosom of his true family, and the Artful Dodger apprehended, cheekily resourceful as ever. Fagin, bereft of his ill-gotten gains, escapes into the shadows of the future. Will he turn over a new leaf? Who knows?

So much for the story. It's even better with music!

F.H.