

Parent Advisory — Oliver!

Oliver! is one of the most beloved musicals in the theatrical canon, based on Charles Dickens' timeless novel *Oliver Twist* and featuring some of the most recognizable songs in musical theater history — *Consider Yourself*, *Food Glorious Food*, *As Long as He Needs Me*, and *You've Got to Pick a Pocket or Two* among them. It has been entertaining families and introducing young audiences to the power of live theater since its London debut in 1960.

Like the Dickens novel that inspired it, *Oliver!* does not shy away from the harder realities of 19th century London life. The story follows young Oliver, an orphan who escapes a brutal workhouse only to fall in with a gang of young pickpockets led by the charming but morally compromised Fagin. The world Oliver navigates is one of poverty, hunger, street crime, and survival — themes Dickens used to shine a light on the social injustices of his era, and which remain as powerful today as they were when he wrote them.

Parents should be aware of the following:

Themes throughout the show include child poverty and neglect, orphan life, petty crime and pickpocketing presented in a comedic context, alcohol consumption, and the manipulation of children by adults for criminal purposes. These themes are handled with the lightness and humor that have made the show a family classic, but they are present throughout.

The character of Nancy is one of musical theater's most complex and compassionate heroines — a woman trapped in a dangerous relationship with the violent criminal Bill Sikes. She ultimately chooses to protect Oliver at great personal risk. Her story is one of courage, loyalty, and sacrifice, and her signature song *As Long as He Needs Me* is one of the most emotionally resonant ballads in the musical theater repertoire. Parents may wish to discuss with younger children why Nancy makes the choices she does, and what her story tells us about the courage it takes to do the right thing.

The death of Nancy is the dramatic climax of the show and the moment parents most frequently ask about. Bill Sikes' act of violence against Nancy is a pivotal and emotionally intense scene. **In our production, the actual act takes place entirely offstage** — the audience does not witness it directly. The weight of the moment is conveyed through the reactions of the onstage characters and the dramatic shift in the atmosphere of the scene. While the moment is not graphic, it is emotionally powerful, and younger or more sensitive children may find it upsetting. We encourage parents to prepare children in advance so that the intensity of the moment does not come as a surprise.

Bill Sikes is portrayed as a genuinely threatening and frightening villain — one of Dickens' most menacing creations. His scenes carry a dramatic weight that distinguishes them from the lighter, more comedic portions of the show.

Oliver! is generally considered appropriate for children aged 7 and up, though every child is different. Families with younger children or children who are particularly sensitive to themes of loss, danger, or domestic violence may wish to have a brief conversation before the show to provide context and reassurance. Far from diminishing the experience, that conversation may enrich it — giving young theatergoers the tools to engage with a story that, at its heart, is about the resilience of the human spirit and the power of kindness to change a life.

We are proud to bring this classic to the Kitsap Forest Theater stage and grateful that you are considering sharing the experience with us.