

‘Oliver’: Dark, well-done fun

Morgan Hill Times

Posted on Aug 5, 2014

by *Camille Bounds*

Lionel Bart took Charles Dickens’ story, “Oliver Twist,” and wrote the music, lyrics and book to this tale that combines tragedy and joy. “Oliver” premiered in the West End in London in 1960 and ran successfully on Broadway in 1963 with many tours and revivals. “Oliver’s” music can be haunting and enjoyable. An excellent movie version was released in 1968 directed by Carol Reed.

In this production, tiny, 9-year-old gamin gal Tegan Leong flawlessly plays a captivating Oliver with a winning personality and generous energy.



Lora Schraft/Chief Photographer

Tegan Leong, playing the role of Oliver, performs with Kathy Tom, playing the role of Mrs. Sowerberry, during dress rehearsals for the South Valley Civic Theater production of *Oliver!* at the Morgan Hill Community Playhouse.

The abused Nancy is well carried by Suzanne Guzzetta who brings in a strong performance in fine voice and delivery with “As Long As He Needs Me.”

Jason Harris gives us a Fagin we can love and enjoy in a delightful performance along with Chris Goller who delivers the nefarious Bill Sykes with believability and apprehension.

The large cast (50 plus) gives 110 percent with what they are given to work with. “Consider Yourself,” “Pick A Pocket Or Two,” “I’d Do Anything” and “Reviewing The Situation” are delightful and amusing. The movingly, plaintive “Who Will Buy” and “Where is Love” are beautifully presented.

Director Joanna Evans and choreographer Jyovonne Montosa move this large cast on the small stage with smoothness that almost defies description.

The unsung heroes are stage manager Larry Tom, stage hands and backstage people who make the production work. They should never be overlooked.

Scott Lynch’s interesting, flexible and changing set give the mood of Dickens’ Victorian England without being obtrusive. Matthew Hendrickson’s creative lighting and Mary Doktor’s variety of costumes that fit the time give the production a fine touch of authenticity.

Musical director Carol Harris is a star onto herself, conducting this difficult score without missing a cue or moment. She bonds with her nine fine musicians who give this production a professional feeling community theater seldom offers.

“Oliver” is dark, well-done and will entertain.

‘Oliver’

Where: Morgan Hill Community Playhouse, Fifth and Monterey streets, Morgan Hill

Through: Aug. 17

Tickets: General \$22, students \$15 and seniors \$18

For more information, call (408) 842-7469

or visit SVCT.org

Oliver!' comes to South Valley Civic Theater stage

Show based on Charles Dickens classic story

Published in the July 23 – August 5, 2014 issue of Morgan Hill Life

By Staff Report



“Oliver!” starts August 1 at the Morgan Hill Playhouse

A little bit of Victorian London comes to downtown Morgan Hill as the South Valley Civic Theater opens “Oliver!,” the beloved musical created by Lionel Bart.

“The play is a family musical,” said Scott Lynch, the co-producer. ““Oliver’ naturally fits in that category. The subject matter is family friendly and very touching. It serves the community well.”

The story of a young orphan is based on the Charles Dickens novel “Oliver Twist.” Memorable songs include, “Food, Glorious Food,” “I’d Do Anything,” and “Consider Yourself Lucky.”

The show is co-produced by Pam Drayton with Lynch and directed by Joanna Evans. Young actress Tegan Leong plays the title role of Oliver.

“She’s awesome. She has a beautiful voice,” Lynch said. “She’s has, you would hope for a child that age, a wonderful innocence about her. And she plays off all the other characters so wonderfully.”

The play will create a Dickensian world with 47 performers and a live orchestra. “From the basic story to the heart-warming music to the wonderful performances that are coming together, it’s going to be a great show,” Lynch said. “I saw the movie when I was six and loved it, loved the songs. I’m a fan of Dickens. It’s all those things rolled into one making it a fun project to be involved in.”

Photo essay: **Oliver!** comes to Morgan Hill

Published in the August 6 - 20, 2014 issue of Morgan Hill Life

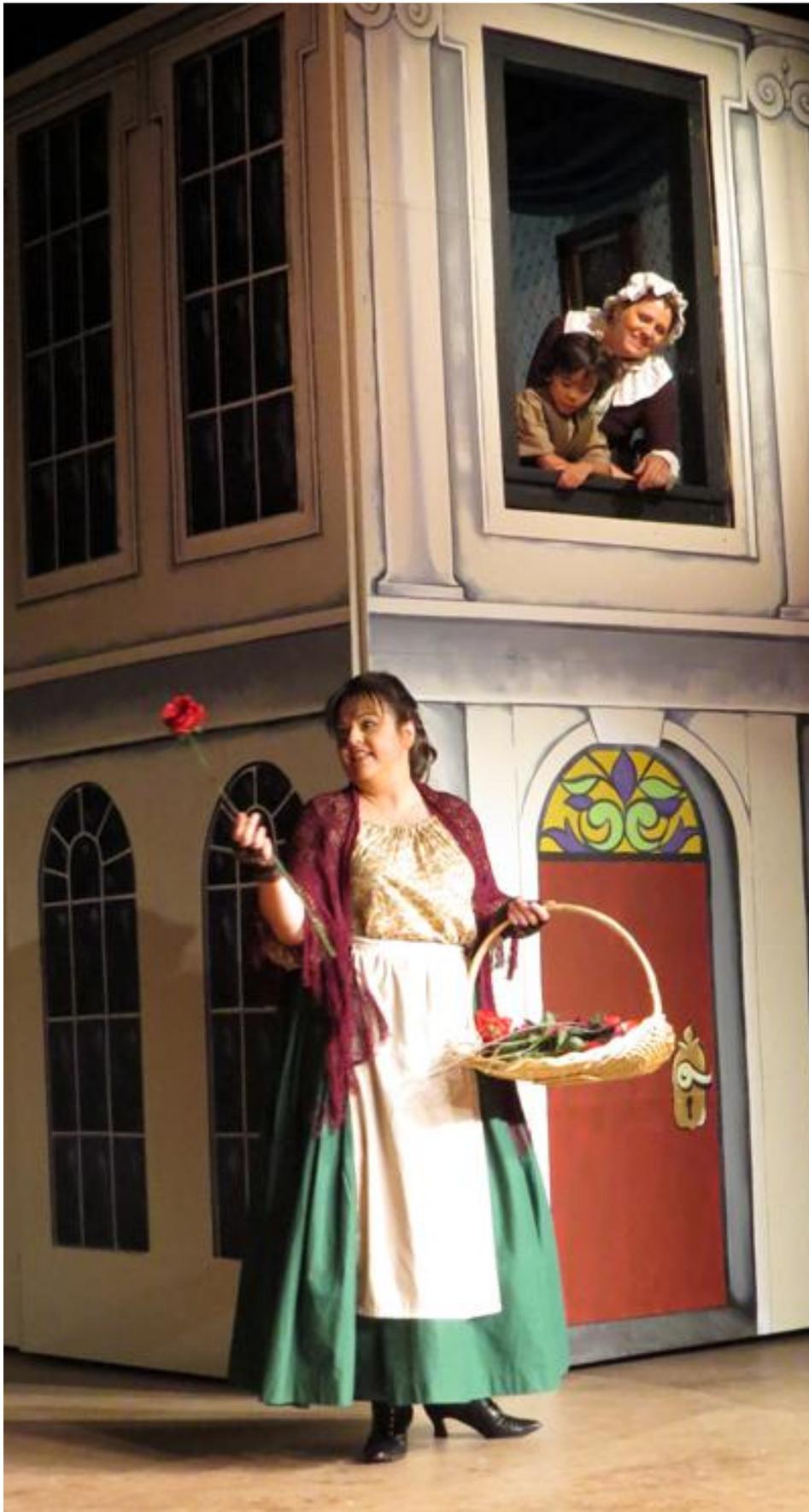
Photos by Marty Cheekt



Jason Harris as "Fagin" schemes with his crew of boys



Street urchins sing with "Nancy" about life in London



“Oliver” and Joyce Bedard as “Mrs. Bedwin” watch rose seller “Ingrid Rottman.”



Tegan Leong as "Oliver" sing about the glory of food with fellow orphans



Joseph Biafore as "Mr. Bumble" and Lisa Singleton Quijano as "Widow Corney" discuss the future of Oliver;



Nancy” sings to Sean O’Connor as the “Artful Dodger

“Oliver!” at South Valley Civic Theatre

Paul Myrvold's Theatre Notes, Saturday, August 9, 2014

<http://www.myrvoldstheatrenotes.com>



**Tegan Leong in the title role of “Oliver!” at South Valley Civic Theatre through August 23.
Photo: Martin Cheek–Morgan Hill Life**

There is nothing like a production of “Oliver!” to get dozens of kids and adults up on a community theatre stage for weeks of summer time fun. Orphans and ragamuffins festoon the stage with adults playing all classes of London denizens, often in more than one role. The actors get to try out a variety of English dialects with varying degrees of success and then there are the terrific songs by the genius Lionel Bart who single-handedly wrote the music, lyrics and book. How does it all work in the South Valley Civic Theatre production? Pretty well, say I. The show looks and sounds good with capable singers fronting a wonderful orchestra led by the expert, indefatigable Carol Harris. The colorful, architectural set representing various London locales is as good as the best I have seen on the Morgan Hill Community Playhouse stage and scene changes, which can often be a momentum killing affair, went swiftly and smoothly in the capable hands of a disciplined crew aided by orchestra underscoring.

Yes, yes, but what about the performances? Great news! The leads are terrific and the supporting players capable. Start with the title role of Oliver, the casting of which can make or break the show. SVCT had the great good fortune of discovering the endearing Tegan Leong, a child performing in a show for the first time. Tegan, who will be entering fourth grade in a few weeks, sings out forthrightly, does her choreography as well if not better than anyone else on stage, and plays her role with joyous confidence. She has become my favorite Oliver, obliterating memories of other child performers.



**Jason Harris as Fagin in “Oliver!” at South Valley Civic Theatre through August 23.
Photo: Martin Cheek–Morgan Hill Life**

As the notorious Fagin, leader of a gang of juvenile pickpockets, Jason Harris is a serio-comic delight. He is especially puckish in the song “Reviewing the Situation” playing off the scintillating violin work of Beverly Olivier Blount. As Nancy, the vivacious, worldly graduate of Fagin’s gang, Suzanne Guzzetta sings with soul searing intensity of the joy of life itself (“It’s a Fine Life”) and of her troubled love for the vicious, murderous criminal Bill Sykes (powerful, scary Chris Goller) in “As Long as He Needs Me.” Sean O’Connor creates a lively Artful Dodger and Allen Siverson brings caring nobility to Oliver’s grandfather, Mr. Brownlow.



**Suzanne Guzzetta sings “It’s a Fine Life” in “Oliver!” at South Valley Civic Theatre.
Photo: Martin Cheek–Morgan Hill Life**

“Oliver!” runs through August 23 at the Morgan Hill Community Playhouse.