

DRAFT REPORT FOR THE SPRING 2007 EASTERN NEWS
PERFORMANCE OF 26TH SEPTEMBER 2006

CHELMSFORD A. O. D. S. - OLIVER!

Director & Choreographer: Ray Jeffery, Musical Director: Andrew Denyer

On the big scale, this really was a most impressive production. There were children aplenty, all doing their thing with gusto; excellent chorus work, including a tremendous 'Consider Yourself'; marvellous stage pictures where each member of the crowd came across as an individual, and a scene change technique that involved playing the end of the outgoing scene in front of the incoming set without a break and using character dressed people to shift as necessary. This worked extremely well and through many changes the action was continuous and I was only aware of 'the people in black' just prior to 'Reviewing the Situation'. Again, on the big scale costume and lighting were excellent, though Brownlow's appearance was quite inappropriate.

Characterisation generally was in line with expectation, though the pomposity of Bumble lost its edge with pitch uncertainty in 'Oliver' and 'Boy for Sale'; Bumble and Corney were good together, with perhaps more comedy to be had in their parlour scenes; Fagin came across well as did Nancy, Dodger and the Sowerberry's with Noah Claypole. Bill Sykes was a convincing villain and Oliver looked and felt right, though audibility was not good. Grimwig fitted in well, though Brownlow did not convince. Whilst this was a good and expressive orchestra, there were occasions where underscore and accompaniment overcame the stage. Perhaps there was a problem with sound management because there were other signs of imbalance e.g. Dodger upstage and heard, with Oliver downstage and unheard in I'll do Anything?

Overall this was a production that clearly gave great pleasure and enjoyment to its audience.

Report by John Warburton Regional Councillor