

'Oliver' Continues CLO Tradition

By JERRY REYNOLDS

Press-Herald City Editor

"Oliver," Lionel Bart's hit British musical based on Charles Dickens' novel, "Oliver Twist," will open Thursday, May 9, for eight performances in Long Beach.

The musical, directed by James Brittain, is the 54th production to be presented by the Long Beach Civic Light Opera Association—now celebrating its 20th season.

During the past several weeks, I have watched the cast and crew associated with "Oliver" put the show together—the hours of auditions, blocking, staging, and the thousand-and-one other things that are decided at rehearsals night after night.

And the story of what is going into the production of "Oliver" is typical of the story of CLO itself—a success story which is unrivaled in community theater in the Southland. That story is not told on the stage—for audiences see only a finished production, polished and refined and ready for presentation. Few in those audiences have the capacity to appreciate—or even understand—the work that goes into that two-hour performance.

The success of CLO is people—dedicated people who have volunteered their time and talents to entertain the community. Architects, attorneys, designers, housewives, students, engineers, and truck drivers—people who love the theater and want the community to experience the vibrant joy of good theater.

"Oliver" is a far cry from that first opening night in 1948 when CLO staged its first production, the Gilbert and Sullivan operetta, "H.M.S. Pinafore," in the old Long Beach Elks Lodge. Since that night, more than a million people have seen some of the best offerings of the American musical theater staged by companies of "amateur" performers whose standards match those of the finest professional companies in the nation.

Twin goals of CLO, as defined by the company's genial general manager, Harvey Waggoner, are to enhance the cultural life of the community and to provide a vehicle for the talents of those persons interested in musical theater.

Those goals have been—and are continuing to be—fulfilled by CLO. The size and composition of audiences is testimony to that, as is the fact that some 35 to 40 performers have found their places in the professional theater.

General Manager Waggoner, now 44, joined CLO in that first season and was one of the company's first leading men. In a sense he continues that role today as the man responsible for over-all production of the CLO season. He took the manager's job in 1958, at no salary, because "I thought I'd like to try the producing end." In 1958, CLO had become a Long Beach institution. Today, it is a Southland institution.

Waggoner is especially proud to point out that membership, audiences, and performers and technical helpers are about 50 per cent Long Beach people and about 50 per cent from other parts of the Southland.

Proof of that is the "Oliver" cast: of the 50-plus members of the cast, less than half come from the Long Beach area. Others drive from Santa Monica,

Hollywood, Van Nuys, Santa Ana, or Downey. Half a dozen of the cast come from the Torrance area.

"Oliver" is indicative of many changes which CLO has had to face in the past 20 years. Costs, for one thing, have risen. The first production of "H.M.S. Pinafore" cost \$30, while the production costs for "Oliver" will exceed \$30,000.

Financing is done in two ways: from box office sales and CLO membership fees and through the solicitation of tax-deductible contributions from individuals. The city of Long Beach and the Los Angeles County Music Commission also support CLO productions. CLO currently is appealing to the community it entertains for funds to carry on its work.

The association is governed by a board of directors, headed this year by President Harv Wehrman, a 12-year veteran of CLO.

Performances today are staged in the concert hall at Long Beach Municipal Auditorium. Shortly, however, the city of Long Beach will close Muni Aud for two years to complete some extensive remodeling. CLO hopes to find a temporary home until the day when the company will return to the refurbished, expanded auditorium.

In the meantime, CLO will open "Oliver" for its eight performances, then begin preparations for the final event of the 1968 season—a second production of "The Sound of Music."

Then preparations for future seasons will get under way. Productions will be selected, fund drives started, directors hired, and auditions scheduled. And the success of those future seasons will depend largely on how audiences react to such productions as "Oliver."

And with CLO's past history, it's almost a sure bet the reaction will be a warm one, as most patrons who see one CLO performance become a part of the CLO family.



Boy for Sale

Robert McCaman (right) as Mr. Sowerbery discusses the terms of the sale of Oliver (played by Ray Dimas) with Lou Monica, who plays the role of Mr. Bumble, during a rehearsal for CLO's production of "Oliver."

Here's the Cast, Crew for 'Oliver'

Charles Dickens started it all with his novel, "Oliver Twist," but it took Lionel Bart to set the whole thing to music and come up with one of the most successful musicals in modern years — "Oliver!"

James Brittain will direct the Long Beach Civic Light Opera production, his 14th show in 10 years with CLO. Brittain, a sensitive and careful craftsman, has assembled a cast of 50-plus for the production.

It features 9-year-old Ray Dimas of Santa Ana in the title role. Dimas has been performing for three years, mostly in theaters in the Santa Ana area where he has appeared in "Heidi," "Carousel," "The Wizard of Oz," and the chorus of a previous production of "Oliver."

Other featured players will include David Darrell of Van Nuys, as Fagin, leader of a gang of youthful pickpockets; Jacqueline McFadden of Long Beach as Nancy; Ken Jones of La Mirada as Bill Sikes; Paul McConnell of Hollywood as the Artful Dodger; Lou Monica of Downey as Mr. Bumble; and Barbara Jordan as Mrs. Corney.

Also featured are Robert McCaman of Palos Verdes and Audrey Share of Long Beach, Mr. and Mrs. Sowerbery; Kathy Arntzen of Long Beach, Charlotte; Bill Earl of Long Beach; Noah Claypole; Lindsay Jones of Downey; Bet; Admand Roles of Seal Beach, Mr. Brownlow; Glenn Sterling of Lakewood, Dr. Grimwig; and Anne Miller of Los Alamitos, Mrs. Bedwin.

The Boys' Chorus is comprised of Bill Southern, Downey; Bob and Bill Cotter, Hawthorne; Clayton Scott and Greg Swanson, Huntington Beach; David Hillinger, John Howard, and David Read, Lakewood; Neil McShane, Lomita; Monte Dyer, Larry Frederick, Steve and Tim Hall, Tom Kunkel, Philip



I Shall Scream

Barbara Jordan and Lou Monica rehearse the "I Shall Scream" sequence from "Oliver" during an evening session in Long Beach. Eight performances are scheduled, beginning Thursday, May 9, at Long Beach Municipal Auditorium.



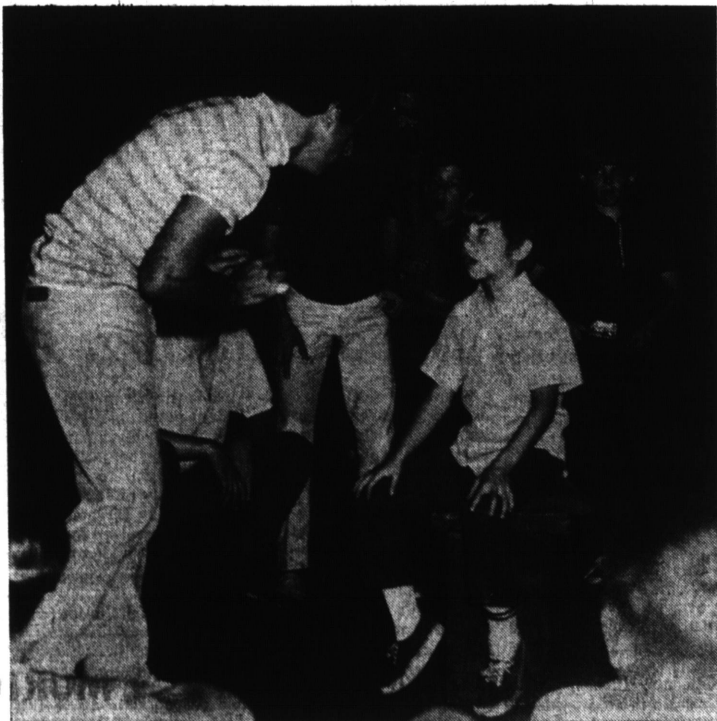
HARVEY WAGGONER
General Manager



HARV WEHRMAN
CLO President



JACK KROESEN
Musical Director

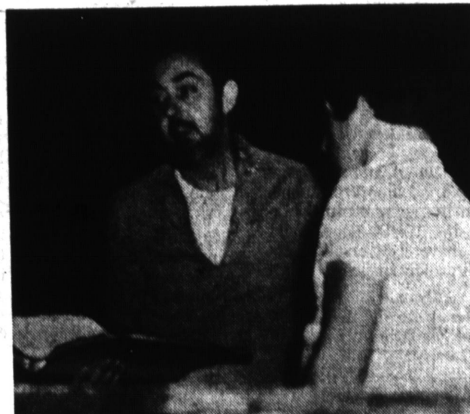


Pick a Pocket or Two

David Darrell, as Fagin, tells Oliver, played by Ray Dimas, "You've Got to Pick a Pocket or Two" during a run-through of the scene. "Oliver" is the 54th production to be staged by CLO in its 20-year history.

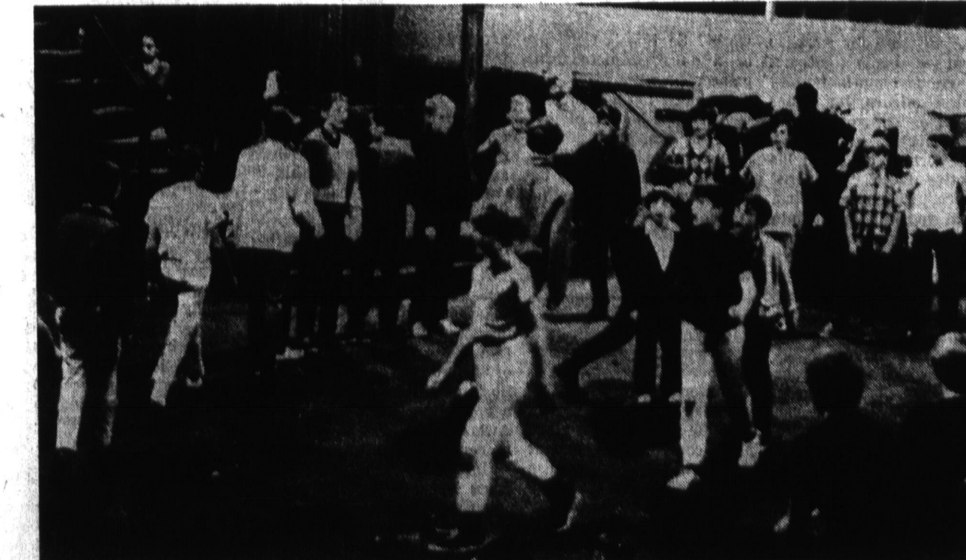


CRIS TIMMONS
Choreographer



Watch Those Lines

Choreographer Cris Timmons (at left) consults his script to give David Darrell (who plays Fagin) instructions about delivering the final lines in a scene from "Oliver."



Boys' Chorus Rehearses

Members of the large Boys' Chorus which is central to the musical "Oliver" rehearse their exit for the day's work of picking pockets. Rehearsals were

held in a Long Beach warehouse, where the multi-level, revolving stage was assembled. Final rehearsals will be held in Long Beach Municipal Auditorium.



As Long...

Jacqueline McFadden rehearses the beautiful "As Long as He Needs Me" during musical rehearsal for CLO's forthcoming production of "Oliver." She will play the role of Nancy, principal female part in the British musical.



What Do You Think?

Director James Brittain turns to other members of his staff as he discusses staging with Jacqueline McFadden during rehearsals for "Oliver." Brittain describes his most difficult work in "Oliver" as coping with the physical limitations imposed by the revolving stage and the difficult blocking which is required.