

SUPERB ACTING IN DICKENS REVIVAL

**Nat Goodwin, Constance Collier,
and Lyn Harding Give New
Life to "Oliver Twist."**

LOW-LIFE SCENES ARE BEST

**Marie Doro a Lovely Oliver—Fine
Scene of London Bridge—Very
Good Version by J. Comyns Carr.**

OLIVER TWIST, a play in five acts, adapted from Charles Dickens's novel by J. Comyns Carr. New Amsterdam Theatre.

Mr. Brownlow.....	Charles Harbury
Dr. Sime.....	Robert Vivian
Mrs. Bedwin.....	Jane Wilson
Harry Maylie.....	Courtenay Foote
Oliver Twist.....	Marie Doro
Maid.....	Ada Gifford
Mr. Grimwig.....	Fuller Mellish
Mr. Bumble.....	Frank A. Lyons
Mrs. Bumble.....	Alice Belmore
Tom Chitting.....	Perceval Clark
The Artful Dodger.....	Charles Rogers
Charmé Bates.....	Percival Vivian
Betsy.....	Gertrude Boswell
Fagin.....	Nat C. Goodwin
Barney.....	Alfred Grey
Bill Sikes.....	Lyn Harding
Nancy.....	Constance Collier
Monks.....	Howard Gould
Mrs. Maylie.....	Suzanne Sheldon
Giles.....	Alfred Hudson
Brittles.....	Frederick Smyth
Rose.....	Olive Wyndham
Toby Crackit.....	Joseph Vaitin
Servant at the Hotel.....	Godfrey Knowles
Warder.....	George Walter
Jaffor.....	Vernon Steele

Acting of a highly imaginative sort was shown at the New Amsterdam Theatre last night in J. Comyns Carr's very excellent dramatization of "Oliver Twist." It was, in fact, a sort of histrionic carnival, in addition to a Dickens centenary. Whether the conveyance of these highly colored Dickens figures represents a higher or a lower form of the art does not really matter much. The fact is that the peculiar sympathy and training which makes satisfactory exposition of them possible is unusual at the present time.

There is cause for congratulation, therefore, on a cast which contains such unusual players as Mr. Goodwin, Miss Collier, and Mr. Harding to bring the figures from the printed page and give them life, and on the presence of Miss Doro, a lovely and highly sympathetic little Oliver.

Dickens's books have seldom if ever made good plays, or, shall one say, plays that satisfied an informed idea of what a good play is. But Dickens's characters, whatever they may not be, are in the essence theatrical figures, broadly drawn, highly colored, and postured in circumstances which are apt to be strange or exciting, or both together. Also there is in Dickens a good deal of sentiment, and in Dickens on the stage as in the book, much of it appears cloying to our modern taste. So it is no wonder that in a dramatization of "Oliver Twist" those portions are the most interesting and appealing in which Fagin and Nancy Sikes and the Dodger fill the eye, rehearsing for their trade of thieving or carrying on their dirty sort of business. It has always been so.

And so if Mr. Comyns Carr has not succeeded in making his goody-goody people nearly so interesting as the bad ones he has at least the consolation of knowing that that is often the way of life. As dramatizations go, this one is exceptionally good. It ought to be lucid even to those who do not know their Dickens. And it will be less disappointing to those who do than such things usually are. Also, as it is not only remarkably well acted, but remarkably well staged, it has an atmosphere and flavor truly Dickensian.

Last night's performance was much too slow. It began late for one thing and the waits were long. Moreover the principal players, as is not unusual under such conditions, made much more of their individual points than was good for the general representation. But these are things to be expected on opening nights and doubtless will be amended.

Time could be saved, too, by some judicious pruning of the scenes in which Fagin and his crew do not appear. There is something too much of these. And, besides, the acting of Mr. Goodwin, Miss Collier, and Mr. Harding is so very fine that it is the greatest sort of a pity that there should be any deterrent on general appreciation in the presence of material which makes the action drag.

It is not in fact until the second scene, showing Fagin's den, that the interest begins to be acute. Previously you have seen Oliver at Mr. Brownlow's, had a brief glimpse of Grimwig, who, by the way, is over loud; met the Beadle and his wife, and seen the young headle sent on his errand with the money and the books. And now you are to see him brought in by Nancy, protected by her against Fagin's wrath, and ultimately drugged and put to bed before the treacherous Monks appears to make his bargain with the Jew.

All this is highly entertaining, and carried forward with a fine insistence upon its seriousness, but, yet, with inimitable touches of humor to humanize the Fagin bugaboos. Monks, it must be admitted, never does seem human. But that is not altogether Monks's fault so much as the method of the actor.

Mr. Goodwin's Fagin is a gorgeously composed character, splendidly made up to satisfy a general ideal of what the figure ought to be, and decked out with a dozen and one little peculiarities of speech and movement and gesture that define the racial peculiarities and the environment and ambition of the horrid creature. The blend of cruelty and whimsical humor, the sharpness and craftiness, and again the unrelenting vengeancefulness of the old man are superbly shown in Mr. Goodwin's figure. Never once is there a suggestion of caricature.

It is not until a little later that Miss Collier's Nancy has opportunities for rounding out. Here it is very properly a subdued note. But presently in the scene of confession of Oliver's danger, Miss Collier gave a splendidly nervous, vibrant suggestion of present fear and impending danger. She was most appealing.

And from the beginning to the end Mr. Harding's Sikes is a masterly thing as a picture of the man and a study of moroseness, crass hard-headedness, and animal brutality.

One recalls with especial satisfaction in the earlier scenes the picture of the Jew crooning a lullaby by the boy's cot, and there is a capital touch in half light and shadow as Bill Sikes's face appears at the opening of the panel in Chertsey Hall, when Oliver is sent through to open the door, gives the alarm, is shot for his pains, and ultimately has the reward of meeting the adorable Rose, from whom he is to hear of his mother. Miss Olive Wyndham is the Rose, and a very charming one indeed, though the sketchy rôle gives her little to do.

From this point on "the plot thickens." The den is shown again, with more of Monks and more of Bill and Fagin, and then comes the scene in which Nancy begs Rose to keep a watchful eye on Oliver. Presently on London Bridge, a magnificent picture—huge, impressive, grim, and forbidding—Nancy meets Mr. Brownlow and Rose, and her talk is overheard by Fagin and his henchman Barney. And shortly thereafter is the revelation of Nancy's alleged treachery, with Bill Sikes, wildly excited and on murder bent, sending Nancy from the room, to follow her presently and beat out her brains, (off stage, fortunately,) with the Jew's baleful figure slowly disappearing in the gloom. Then, of course, on to the end of the story, with the flight over the housetops and the end of Fagin.

It is an interesting revival and of course a timely one. And it has been done liberally and generally in good taste. Not all the acting is as fine as that of the three people principally engaged, but there are good figures by Suzanne Sheldon, Courtenay Foote, Fuller Mellish, and Alfred Hudson. And Charles Rogers as the Artful Dodger and Percival Vivian as Charlie Bates are especially good.

Also, Bill Sikes's dog deserves a line himself.