

OLIVER TWIST - With A Twist -

A Tall Tale In Two Acts
As Told By The Artful Dodger

Recommended for Middle School-Age Audiences Or Older

by Tim Brosnan

Characters and storyline suggested by
Charles Dickens'
OLIVER TWIST

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Production Notes

The style of this play is presentational and broad - almost, but not quite, commedia. It should have a brisk, "by the seat of our pants" feel to it, with transient moments of intimacy and pauses for effect. It is not a tragedy (like the book and movies, with all due respect to both), nor is it an overt message play. It is fast and it is fun and, if the actors seize the spirit of the play, it can be very, very funny.

The characters are bigger than life and the story has been altered in favor of simplicity, some characters expanded, others contracted - ending *definitely* changed. Taped accompaniment, a few set pieces and a few costumes and a handful of properties will comprise the vast majority of the technical support.

An extremely large "Book" from which Oliver and Bumble emerge at the top of the show was constructed for the original production. Plans for this are available at no charge, but the device could be easily described over the phone to anyone with a little mechanical aptitude.

All sound cues referenced in the script are available on cassette tape from the playwright for a nominal charge to cover the cost of blank tapes, postage and time.

As originally staged by The Baillie Players, Inc. - a professional touring company based in Columbia, SC, periactoids (3-sided columns on casters) were used to effect scene changes. These were complemented by minimum set pieces - only those of practical use, nothing purely decorative.

Lighting effects may be used at the discretion of the producing organization, but they are not necessary and only a few are referenced in the script.

The show can be produced quite effectively without a curtain. Where a grand drape is not used, it is suggested that orphans or pickpockets be used as stagehands - to turn periactoids, or effect whatever set changes you invent - and that they do so in a set, choreographed manner - *in character*.

Double-casting works very well with this show. Double-casting orphans as pickpockets is almost mandatory to conserve room backstage. The show can be done easily with as few as five principal actors and orphan/pickpocket extras. Dressers are helpful.

Oliver Twist - With A Twist is an actor's vehicle. It relies upon the actor's tools rather than the technician's tools for its success. The company is advised to have fun. The fun that they have will be infectious.

Time and Place

In and about London, Approximately 1830

Character Descriptions

- Dodger** A good-natured pickpocket and a prematurely worldly preadolescent. A smooth operator. A fast talker. If he were alive today, he might grow up to be a used car salesman. Likes Fagin because Fagin is a kindred spirit, a father figure and a generous employer. Befriends Oliver because Oliver is a curiosity and an easy mark. It could also be that Dodger sees in Oliver something that he would like to be.
- Oliver Twist** The archetypal petunia in an onion patch. A latter day saint who knows nothing about the world. Bright, but utterly, utterly naive. Generally upbeat. Genuinely likes his criminal companions.
- Mr. Bumble** An overbearing, pious fake. A bully in the orphan china shop. Picks on children to shore up his own over-inflated sense of self worth.
- Mr. Fang** The Justice. A senile bureaucrat who has forgotten most of what little he learned in law school. Got to where he is by avoiding the attention of his superiors. Should have been put out to pasture long ago.
- Nancy** An irrepressibly happy trollop - now retired. Loves Bill Sykes. Thinks that Oliver is adorable. Would rather bake pies for Bill than break into houses, but is equally adept at both.
- Mrs. Corney** A bitter shrew. Hates poor people and resents the attention that they get from others. Compensates for the unfairness of her station in life by making everyone around her miserable. Tolerates Bumble.
- Sowerberry** A dignified closet sadist whose baser instincts are drawn out by Bumble. Another pious fake.
- Brownlow** The deus ex machina "nice guy" whose character exists in the novel, the Broadway play, both movies and this version for the sole purpose of tying up loose ends.
- Fagin** A kindly, crafty fencer of stolen goods who manages a small army of pickpockets. He likes his work. Dodger is his top "crafty dog".
- Bill Sykes** *Not* the rabid psychopath of the other versions of the Dickens novel (nor of the novel itself). Crustier and darker than the other characters in this version, perhaps, but sweet on Nancy and able to take a good dirty joke.

Act I

Scene 1

The Parish Workhouse Orphanage

SOUND CUE #1 (Introduction/Preshow) - In

We hear the voice of Charles Dickens speaking directly to us. (If the tape that is provided by the author is not used, or if the producer does not feel that he or she can produce a truly professional-quality voice-over, the Dickens line that follows should be cut.)

Dickens (V.O.) *(an ancient, cracking, offhanded but very lively voice reverberates as if "from the Great Beyond")* Ahem! Ladies and Gentlemen! My name is Charles Dickens. It is with great pleasure that I recommend to you this excellent production of *Oliver Twist - With A Twist*, whatever that's supposed to mean. It bears a striking resemblance to something that I wrote when I was still a young man. *(beat)* So there you have it. Welcome to London and Good day!

Cathedral bells immediately begin to peal and these X-fade into a 30-second sequence of period street sounds mixed with dogs barking, cows lowing, vendors vending, etc. Periactoids are set with dark brick pattern facing out. UC is a huge, steaming gruel kettle. The Book is DL. The Book is approximately five feet tall by three feet wide. It looks old and vaguely magical - leather with a large brass clasp. Printed on the cover is "Oliver Twist". Tape ends.

SOUND CUE #1 - Out

Stage lights are at half, special up on "The Book" which is located DL, preferably off the apron in front of the proscenium arch.

Bumble *(offstage - from "inside The Book" which may be permanently positioned to one side of the stage or withdrawn after use as indicated)* Children!

Orphans *(also, "inside The Book" - offstage)* Yes, Mr. Bumble, sir!

Bumble Sit Down! *(sound of hundreds of orphan bottoms simultaneously hitting hundreds of wooden benches - orphans may all stomp once for this effect)* Children!

Orphans Yes, Mr. Bumble, sir!

Bumble I ask you, don't I provide the very nice roof that hangs over your nasty little heads - and the very tasty food that you gobble into your bottomless little bellies?

Orphans Yes, Mr. Bumble, sir!

Bumble And don't I buy the coal that burns in the fire where you warm your dirty little feet - and the clothing that you wear on your motherless little backs?

Orphans Yes, Mr. Bumble, sir!

Bumble Therefore, I ask you, is it *possible* that I could be the terrible, brutish monster that certain ungrateful orphans seem to think I am?

Orphans Yes, Mr. Bumble, sir!

Bumble Whaaaat?!! *(sounds of orphans screaming and laughing and running away, cries of "Ungrateful piglets!", etc. from Bumble as the Artful Dodger appears)*

Dodger *(enters jauntily from back or side of house)* Well, well, well! Pleased as punch to make your acquaintance, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Dawkins - Jack Dawkins - better known to those what knows me as the Artful Dodger. *(gesturing toward receding "Orphanage" sounds)* I suppose you're wondering what all that commotion was about. That, my friends, was jolly old Mr. Bumble teaching his orphan charges how to be grateful citizens of the Realm. He's growin' 'em up good and proper, you know, feeding 'em gruel and dressing 'em in rags. He beats them when they cry, he beats 'em when they *don't* cry, he ... but I'm getting ahead of myself. This here story is about one orphan inpartiggaler. His name, *(indicating cover of The Book)* is ...

Bumble *(shouting inside The Book)* OLIVER TWIST!

Dodger *(sotto voce to audience, as danger approaches)* Oliver Twist. *(dodges R for cover)*

There is a commotion inside The Book that causes it to rattle and shake. The latch pops, the cover opens and Oliver jumps out, panting and frightened. He looks around quickly, trying to find a place to hide, and starts to run DL. He gets only a few strides away when ...

Bumble *(his head protruding from The Book - he is obviously too large to fit comfortably through its opening - he is winded from the chase)* Mr. Twist!

Oliver *(freezes, afraid to go further)* Yes, Mr. Bumble, sir?

Dodger *(sotto voce, ironically)* Jolly old Mr. Bumble.

Bumble *(freeing himself with one last lunge, he tumbles onto the apron, stands quickly and brushes himself off as Dodger, unnoticed by others, suppresses laughter)* So this is where my ungrateful little piglet has been hiding. *(gently closes book behind him)* Stand up straight! *(Oliver stands at attention)* And what do you suppose I should do with such a naughty piglet as yourself?

Oliver I ... I don't know, Mr. Bumble, sir.

Bumble Be quiet! Out of the bigness of my heart, I give you and your greedy companions all the best things in life and what do I get in return? Indigestion is what I get - indigestion and influenza ... ah ... ah ... ahchooo!

Oliver Bless you, Mr. Bumble, sir!

Bumble Bless me, will you? It is the dinner hour, Mr. Twist, and here I stand sneezing and being blessed by the likes of you! This is intolerable! Get back to your place and eat. *(Oliver does so as orphans enter, bowls in hand and go to places, seated on rows on the floor - Bumble crosses to upstage of the kettle as to a podium as he continues)* Children!

Orphans Yes, Mr. Bumble, sir!

Bumble Let us give thanks for our food.

Orphans Thank you, Mr. Bumble, sir!

Bumble *(smiling broadly)* You are quite welcome. Yes, my children, food ... made all the tastier and all the lovelier by Mr. Bumble's secret ingredient. *(presentationally drops a large, dead rat into the kettle - children groan - and he proudly pronounces ...)* Dee-licious! Thomas Aquinas!

Thomas Yes, Mr. Bumble, sir!

Bumble Winston Churchill!

Winston Yes, Mr. Bumble, sir!

Bumble Which of you shall be the first to taste my dainty gruel today?

Both *(pointing at each other)* He shall, Mr. Bumble!

Bumble Marvelous. Two taste testers for the price of one. Step up to the kettle. *(heads down, they slowly step to the kettle)* There's a good pair of boys. Now, open your mouths. *(they look at each other)* Open your grubby little mouths, I say! *(they do so and he administers the gruel)* There we go ... one for Thomas and one for Winston. *(pause)* Now swallow! *(they gulp and begin to choke, running back to their places - Mr. Bumble laughs)* So, tell me, children, what word do we use to describe Mr. Bumble's cooking?

Orphans Delicious!

Bumble And Mr. Bumble's orphanage?

Orphans Comfortable!

Bumble *(spreads his arms wide in a broad gesture of benediction)* Comfortable and Delicious! Step right up, children, dinner is served, straight line, no pushing, no sniveling and *(leaning closely into Oliver's face)* no seconds. *(orphans quickly file past Bumble who pours a dollop of gruel into each bowl - they return to their places and eat - we continue to hear the sound of quiet slurping as Dodger, steps to edge of apron or into audience and speaks)*

Dodger It ain't easy being an orphan - take it from one what knows. And poor Oliver, to make matters worse, kept drawing attention to himself by being so bloomin' good. He was always giving away his gruel *(Oliver does so, ideally to a small, undernourished-looking Orphan)* - which *he* liked - and helping the other orphans do their chores. Mr. Bumble hated Oliver - mainly because Mr. Bumble could never make Oliver mean. Oliver Twist refused to hate anyone, or even to utter an unkind word, despite the best efforts of Mr. Bumble. *(retires to side)*

Bumble Now, off to bed with you, my piglets! Pleasant dreams to one and all. *(chuckles)* Pleasant dreams ... of *me!* *(orphans exit back of house hurriedly - unseen by Bumble, Oliver remains behind - Bumble laughs and begins to stir the kettle, humming - Oliver tugs his coat tail and Bumble starts, looks quickly behind him to find that Oliver remains at his feet, bowl outstretched plaintively - Bumble clasps his hands behind his back and bends down to Oliver with mock interest)* Oh, ho! Mr. Twist, is it? And might there be something that I could do for you, sir? A softer pillow perhaps? Or perhaps a carriage to the bank to count your golden guineas?

Oliver *(holding out bowl, timidly)* Please sir, I ...

Bumble Want some more? *(snatches bowl from Oliver, chuckling)* Why, *certainly*, Mr. Twist, and what a pleasure it is to serve you, Mr. Twist! *(withdraws the rat - he savors its aroma and then, to Oliver's horror, drops the rat into Oliver's bowl)* Mmmmmm! *(bending low with bowl outstretched in butler fashion)* Care for a bit of red wine to compliment your rodent, Mr. Twist? *(Oliver screams and runs off - Bumble laughs heartily and exits)*

Scene 2

The Widow Corney's Chambers

(Periactoids do not revolve. Two simple wooden chairs are placed DC and a special is brought up on them)

SOUND CUE # 2 (Harpichord transition) - In/Out

Dodger *(entering - he steps into the special and sits in one of the chairs, speaking over music which is brought low)*
So this is the story of Oliver Twist, a poor orphan boy who never did a bad turn to

nobody. This, ladies and gentlemen, is the more or less true story of Oliver's great adventure in the City of London and of all the very interesting characters what he met along the way. Pay close attention, my friends, and there might be a lesson in all of this - or there might not. *(we hear the sound of voices approaching)* Uh, oh! It's Mr. Bumble again - and his lady love! *(exits)*

Corney *(they enter as she speaks and they sit in the chairs provided - the illusion is that this is her parlor)* Well, if you ask me, Mr. Bumble, Oliver Twist has grown a might too big for his britches - and a might too big for us to tolerate his ungrateful behavior. The boy is a bad influence - a bad tooth, don't you know, what needs to be extracted from the jaw of the parish so that the rest of us might live good parochial lives. Why, if we was to give *him* a second helping of gruel, we'd have to give *all* of them second helpings of gruel and *then* where would we be?

Bumble *(behind her one-hundred percent - he is an awkward cuckold around Corney - a radical change of pace from the Bumble we saw just moments ago)* In the poor house, Ms. Corney, in the poor house.

Corney This *is* the poor house, Mr. Bumble, don't be daff!

Bumble *(humbled)* Yes, Ms. Corney.

Corney *(ignoring him)* Oliver Twist is got to be gotten rid of - and it falls to you as the parish caretaker to do it. If you ask me, we ought to apprentice him to a pirate *(pronounced "pie-rate")* ship and send him off to sea. A few years on a pirate ship and he'd know which side *his* bread was buttered on, he would.

Bumble *(gives suggestion a moment of serious consideration, then ...)* But we don't know any pirates, Ms. Corney - at least, I don't know any pirates - do you know any ...

Corney Of course I don't know any pirates! Pirates is not gen-teel, and I don't associate with anyone what ain't gen-teel. I am a lady.

Bumble Yes, my dear. *(pause, then he brightens)* Perhaps, my dear ...

Corney Yes?

Bumble Perhaps we could sell the boy. He is small, but perhaps we could sell him to ... to a chimney sweep! Chimney sweeps can use small boys well enough. They send 'em up inside the chimneys to clean the soot from where grown men can't reach. *(a thought occurs)* Of course ...

Corney What is it?

Bumble Well ... sometimes a boy can get stuck in the chimney ... he can't get down and he can't get up. I hear tell that, when that happens, sometimes they have to light a fire in the chimney to get him out. The boy feels the flames lapping at his feet and he gets so scared that he gets *himself* unstuck - sometimes - other times, well ... *(smiling bashfully)*

Corney *(her sadistic curiosity in high gear)* Other times?

Bumble He gets burnt up.

Corney *(brightening)* Burnt up?

Bumble Like toast.

Corney *(barely able to contain her glee)* Why that's ... that's ... dreadful.

Bumble *(suppressing laughter)* Indeed.

Corney *(likewise)* That would never do.

Bumble No, no, no, that would never *ever* do.

Corney *(suddenly over the joke and in a foul mood again)* Enough, Mr. Bumble! What difference should it make to me if you sell him to a chimney sweep or to the Duke of York? *(taking Bumble's face between her two hands, as if speaking to an idiot)* Just - get - rid of him! *(releasing his face)* And don't come 'round here expecting to warm your fat feet by *my* fire until you have! *(stalks off R)*

Bumble *(trotting a short distance after her, imploringly)* But, my dear! How am I to ... what if ... *(he gives up, then, looking off to see that Corney is completely gone, he straightens himself, turns L and barks)* Oliver!

Oliver *(runs immediately on from R)* Yes, Mr. Bumble, sir!

Bumble *(startled by Oliver's appearance from behind, he utters a frightened chirp, whirls around and barks)* Oliver, you are to be sold to ... to the highest bidder ... so look sharp! *(Oliver stands at attention, smooths out his ragged shirt a little, trying to look sharp)* What a feeble excuse you are for a little boy. I doubt that I'll get the price of a small goose for the likes of you. Ah well, come along. It's off to market - and let the buyer beware. *(advances into the house and quietly tries to sell Oliver to members of the audience while Dodger speaks)*

Scene 3 Sowerberry's Funeral Parlour

Dodger *(enters, walking to DC as set changes behind him to Sowerberry's funeral parlor - this is indicated by a single upright coffin placed center stage - the coffin must be anchored to a base as it will be used to contain Oliver in a moment - Sowerberry enters and begins to primp his parlor, dusting, etc. - he is an evil, prissy man)* Imagine, trying to sell the little lad like he was a sack of potatoes. Now, don't bother reaching for your wallets, friends, the man who is going to buy Oliver is standing right behind me. *(steps to side)*

Bumble *(advancing to stage)* Look sharp, Mr. Twist! Chin up! Shoulders back! *(they arrive DC, facing out)* About ... face! *(they do a snappy 180-degree turn, which puts them facing Sowerberry upstage - they stomp left-right militarily)* At east! *(they both assume "parade rest" position, Bumble then advancing "into" the parlor)* Good day, Mr. Sowerberry! Lovely to see you this fine morning, sir. Care to purchase a small boy? *(Bumble, Oliver and Sowerberry freeze)*

SOUND CUE #3 (Spooky Freeze Music) - In

Dodger *(stepping in)* Allow me to introduce Reginald Sowerberry - discount undertaker - a builder of rickety coffins and a burier of rickety bodies. Dirty deeds done dirt cheap. *(directs the audience's attention back to the stage as the action resumes, taking his reserved seat in the front row, briefly and quietly greeting those near him)*

SOUND CUE #3 - Out

Sowerberry *(unfreezing with others on the word "cheap")* A small boy, you say?

Bumble Yes, and ... *(realizes that Oliver is still "outside", shivering)* Oliver! Get in here! *(Oliver enters)* Yes, and going at an undoubted bargain basement price. Three guineas, Mr. Sowerberry, and he's yours on approval to do with as you please.

Sowerberry And if I don't like him?

Bumble Your money will be cheerfully refunded. *(smiles)* But don't you worry, sir, he's a fine lad - and he's cheap to maintain.

Sowerberry Cheap, is he?

Bumble As the proverbial dirt, Mr. Sowerberry. *(shepherds Oliver to a position between the two men)* He don't eat nothing but thin gruel, the recipe for which is included in his purchase price, and he's durable - takes a lickin' and keeps on kickin', as it were. *(buckles knowingly, as Oliver dangles a bit by the collar from Bumbles grasp)*

Sowerberry Takes a licking, does he? *(catching on, he smacks Oliver lightly on the head for emphasis on the word "licking")*

Bumble Tough as the proverbial nails. *(same gesture, a little harder, on "nails")*

Sowerberry And keeps on kicking, does he? *(feigns punching Oliver in the stomach on "kicking")*

Bumble As sure as the proverbial grave. *(tosses Oliver aside on this line in order to caress the coffin on "grave" - Oliver is horrified, but the men no longer notice him, so involved are they in their fantasy)* I tell you, truly, Mr. Sowerberry, I only want to be rid of the boy. It doesn't matter to me where he goes or what happens to him once he's got there.

Sowerberry Seems to me that I could try him out for a few days - test his metal, locked up tight in one of *(snatches coffin lid open to reveal a bright red interior - and a skeleton, if one can be obtained)* these! *(both men laugh with great gusto as Oliver looks about wildly, makes his decision, and bolts out ... Sowerberry sees Oliver leave and he stops laughing immediately - Bumble is still in stitches)* Mr. Bumble.

Bumble *(wiping the tears from his eyes)* Oh my, yes, Mr. Sowerberry.

Sowerberry I'll not pay two farthings for a disappearing boy.

Bumble What? *(looks around)* What the ... ? Oliver! *(back to Sowerberry)* He's escaped!

Sowerberry So it would seem.

Bumble He must be found, Mr. Sowerberry. He's a vicious boy and a threat to the entire city. *(calling off in another direction)* Oliver! Nobody's safe with that unruly infant prowling the streets. *(exits right calling for Oliver, as Sowerberry exits left)*

SOUND CUE #4 (Transition) - In/Out

Scene 4

Outside, Then Inside Fagin's Lair

Dodger *(walking on from house L, crosses to DC apron)* And so it happened that Oliver Twist set off to see the world. Poor Oliver was so frightened at the prospect of being buried alive that he ran, almost non-stop, for seven whole days - all the way to London! Quite a journey for such a little lad. He slept in ditches and under bridges, he ate from other people's garbage mostly and he nearly died of exposure. *(Oliver enters from house R, tired and dejected, a small bundle slung over his shoulder)* Here he comes now. This, ladies and gentlemen, is where I come in. *(addressing Oliver)* Hallo, there bag-o-bones! Where might you be headed?

Oliver *(approaching Dodger)* Hello, sir. I'm on my way to the city to seek my fortune, if you please.

Dodger I certainly do please, my good man! What's your name, friend?

Oliver Oliver, sir - Oliver Twist.

Dodger Season's greetings, Oliver Twist. And you don't have to call me sir - I work for a living. *(extending his hand)* Jack Dawkins is the name - me friends call me Dodger.

Oliver *(shaking his hand)* How do you do, Dodger?

Dodger Extremely well, if I do say so myself. Tell me, Oliver, have you got someplace to stay while you're in town?

Oliver *(somewhat embarrassed)* Why, no.

Dodger Too bad. Got any food or money?

Oliver No, I haven't.

Dodger Have you got one single friend in the whole wide world?

Oliver *(downcast)* No.

Dodger *(arm over Oliver's shoulder)* Poor lad. Tell me, Oliver, could I interest you in a hot meal, a warm bed, a job and a circle of friends?

Oliver Oh, yes, Mr. Dodger, certainly yes!

Dodger That's the spirit! It happens that I am acquainted with a certain old gentleman whose life work it is to see to the care and feeding of orphan boys such as yourself. He's a sort of ... miser-philanthropist, you might say - a do-gooder, what takes ... uh, *donations* from the rich and distributes 'em to the poor and needy - sort of like Robin Hood, only without the bows and arrows. Me and my pals, we're like his merry men, you see, helping him out and what not. It's a good cause, Oliver. What do you say?

Oliver Do you really think that he'd take me in?

Dodger Why, with the Artful Dodger paving your way, you and the old man will be thick as thieves in no time! *(laughs at his own joke)* Thick as thieves, get it? No. I don't suppose you do. *(cheats upstage to curtain or empty stage, shouting password)* Fliminy-flaminy, ala kazaminy!

Squealer *(from off)* Rum-tum-tigger, potato shoots!

Dodger Hey, diddle diddle, the cat and the fiddle!

Squealer The cow jumped over the mooooooon!

Orphans *(from off, lowing like cows)* The mooooooon!

Oliver What was that?

Dodger Security, Oliver. *(back toward voices)* Come on, Squealer, it's me, the Dodger, open her up!

Squealer Who's that with you?

Dodger A new pal, fresh from the country.

Squealer *(appears from side)* Fresh from the country? *(disappears again)* Hey lads, he's fresh from the country! *(uproarious laughter from off, shouts of "The moooon!", etc. - Squealer reappears)* Why didn't you say so in the first place? *(pickpockets pour in, all vocal and lively, rotating periactoids to reveal Fagin's Lair and placing fireplace - Fagin enters to upstage with back to the audience - he warms his hands at the fireplace)*

Dodger Lads, this here is Oliver Twist! Oliver, these here are the lads!

Oliver Hello, lads.

Pickpockets Hello, Oliver!

Dodger Fagin! I've brought you a new lad what's come to London to seek his fortune. *(orphans fan out in "V" formation - Fagin is at the apex, back still to audience, warming his hands at the fire - after a beat or two, he slowly waves Oliver to him)*

Oliver Does he mean me, Dodger?

Dodger That he does, Oliver - this is your lucky day! *(pushes Oliver toward Fagin)* Go on, boy, before he changes his mind.

(Oliver advances to Fagin until he is standing at his side in profile.)

Fagin *(all are silent as Fagin slowly turns to Oliver, whom he looks up and down - he extends his hand suddenly, a gesture which startles Oliver, and then smiles, speaking softly at first)* Welcome, Oliver Twist, welcome ... *(gestures grandly around him, now speaking like a carnival barker)* ... to the merriest little dungeon in all of merry old England! *(pickpockets all cheer)* Look lively, my dears! Let us give Mr. Twist a proper homecoming!

Pickpockets Welcome, Oliver Twist!

Smiley Hey Oliver, what's your racket?

Dodger He ain't got no racket, Smiley. Like I told you, he's *from the country*.

Knuckles You mean he doesn't know what we do for a living?

Oliver Oh, yes, Mr. ... Mr... uh

Knuckles *(bowing)* Knuckles. *(smacks palm with fist for emphasis, then back to others)* at your service. *(others laugh)*

Oliver Pleased to meet you, Mr. Knuckles. As I was saying, Dodger has already told me what you all do for a living. *(all look suspiciously at Dodger)* You help Mr. Fagin take up donations for the poor and needy. *(beat - all laugh at this)*

Fagin *(seizing upon the fantasy)* Why, yes, Oliver! That's exactly what we do! We distribute wealth among the lower classes. Ours is a most noble and ... misunderstood profession.

Oliver Misunderstood?

Spike Oh, yes, Oliver! You see, a lot of the rich folk from whom we take ... *(glancing at Dodger with a wink)* uh, donations ... are old and forgetful.

Squealer Or too busy to go in person to the poorer parts of town.

Knuckles They've promised to give us money and other, uh, gifts but, uh ...

Spike But they've forgotten that they did so!

Oliver How terrible!

Fagin Indeed it is We act as a sort of ... sort of ...

Smiley Collection agency ... for the poor. *(smiles)*

Fagin Yes! Yes! We keep the great books of charity balanced. And we do so without asking for any thanks - except the occasional shilling or farthing what we use to buy, uh ...

Spike Pencils. *(all look at him)* And ledger books. Office expenses, Oliver, the pebble in the shoe of charity.

Oliver *(impressed)* I see. *(pickpockets are relieved)*

Fagin But it isn't as simple a job as you might think.

Oliver It isn't?

Dodger Gracious, no, Oliver! If only it was.

Fagin No, my boy.

Knuckles You can't just walk up to some bloke and tell him that he's behind on his donations to the poor.

Fagin That would be an embarrassment. We don't want to embarrass anyone in front of his friends. What we do we have to do with finesse - We've got to be careful not to let anybody ...

Squealer ... including the contributor ...

Fagin ... know what we're doing - that way, nobody gets their feelings hurt.

Smiley The poor get fed, the rich don't get embarrassed

Fagin And we get the warm feeling a person gets when he does the right thing.

Oliver But how do you do it exactly?

Fagin That will be your first lesson. Now off to work, my dears - quickly, quickly! *(pickpockets, except Dodger, exit in all directions)* Clever dogs! Clever ... *(glances at Oliver)* unselfish dogs! *(arm over Oliver's shoulder, paternally)* You see, Oliver, charity work is a skillful craft what takes yars of paractice to perfect. Not every lad is sharp enough to take up the torch of good will towards his fellow man. *(significantly)* Do you think *you're* up to it, Oliver?

Oliver Oh, yes, sir! I know I am. I'll practice every day and you'll be glad of the day that you took me in, Mr. Fagin, glad indeed!

Fagin *(glancing meaningfully at Dodger)* I already am, Oliver. And I appoint as your personal instructor my top collector, the Artful Dodger.

Dodger An honor to serve you, Mr. Twist.

Fagin Study him, Oliver. Make him your example and do everything he says. Follow the Dodger and some day you will be a great man, known throughout the kingdom for your good works.

Oliver *(chomping at the bit)* I certainly will!

Fagin Your training begins tomorrow morning, but first you must eat and then you must sleep. The charity business is hard work and a boy's got to be in full vigor to do it well. *(turns to fireplace, taking up a plate of food)* Here's a lovely sausage for you and a thick slice of bread.

Oliver A sausage! I've never had a real sausage before.

Fagin *(to Dodger)* Well, that's a crime if ever I heard of one. *(to Oliver)* Eat your fill, lad, there's plenty more - and this spot beside the fire shall be your resting place. Now, what have I forgotten?

Oliver I can't imagine, sir, you've already given me more than I ever had.

Fagin Oh, yes! How stupid of me! *(reaching into his pocket, withdrawing a small purse from which he takes a coin)* A shilling for you, Oliver - an advance on your first week's wages *(hands the coin to Oliver)*

Oliver Thank you, sir! I don't hardly know what to say.

Fagin Say goodnight, my dear. Sleep well. *(he exits as Oliver sits to eat his bread and admire his coin - curtain closes, or Oliver soon curls up to go to sleep)*

Oliver *(overcome as he drifts off or curtain closes)* A sausage!

Dodger *(stepping front of curtain or DC)* Good night, old bean. *(curtain is closed or Oliver is asleep)*

Scene 4

Same Place, Next Morning

SOUND CUE #5 (Transition) - In

(to audience) Oliver slept well that night. With a sausage in his belly and a shilling in his fist, he must have thought he'd died and gone to heaven. A good little bloke he was - me and Fagin took to him right off. We had big plans for Oliver Twist. The next day, I was out front looking for donations, when who should happen by but the famous Bill Sykes.

SOUND CUE #5 - Out

- Sykes** *(entering from back of house, a large bag slung over his shoulder)* Dodger! Where's the old man!
- Dodger** *(quickly, to audience)* Bill Sykes could clean out a house quicker than a hurricane. Nobody bothered him, lest he should clean *them* out as well. *(to Sykes)* Good mornin', Bill. Come to see Fagin?
- Sykes** Yes, I've come to see Fagin. *(rattling the contents of his bag)* I've got some trinkets here he might be interested in, provided he hasn't died in his sleep.
- Dodger** No, he was well enough last time I saw him - I'll go get him for you. *(starts to go, stops, turns)* Oh ... we've got a new lad, Bill, just come in yesterday, his name's ...
- Nancy** *(entering hurriedly from back of house)* Bill! William B. Sykes!
- Sykes** What is it, Nancy love, can't you see I'm trying to conduct business? *(to Dodger)* Who's the new lad? *(Dodger starts to respond, but Nancy rolls on)*
- Nancy** You run off so quick this morning that you forgot your brass knuckles. It ain't safe in the streets, Bill, and I couldn't stand the thought of you prancing about without your brass knuckles. What if you was to pick on somebody what was bigger than you, then what? *(handing the knuckles to Sykes)*
- Sykes** You're a worrier, Nancy - you oughtn't to worry so much. *(to Dodger)* What new lad? *(Dodger tries again to respond, but is again cut off)*
- Nancy** But I do worry about my little Billy-chicken running about the dirty streets without no knuckles to keep him safe. *(Sykes is visibly embarrassed by this, ad lib mumbling "Oh, Nancy, for the love of ...")* What's this about a new lad?
- Dodger** Billy chicken?
- Sykes** *(exploding)* Who's the bleedin' new lad?!
- Dodger** *(quickly getting the point)* Oh, yes, right ... right. His name's Oliver Twist and he's just come from the country. Fagin and me told him that we take up donations for the poor and today I'm to show him the ropes.
- Sykes** Donations for the poor, eh? *(laughing)* I guess you could look at it that way. Well take me to him, lad, I want to meet this Oliver Twist.
- Dodger** *(gesturing UC)* Right this way. *(curtain opens or he simply crosses UC to Oliver, who is asleep at the fireplace)* Oliver, wake up! You have visitors.
- Oliver** *(rising)* Good morning, ma'am, sir. Very pleased to meet you.

Nancy What an adorable little boy! Oh, Bill, isn't he adorable?

Sykes Yes, my love, he's a regular leprechaun. *(extending his hand to Oliver)* Top 'o the mornin' to you, lad. I hear that you're getting into the charity business, is that right?

Oliver Yes, sir. Today is my first day. Dodger is going to teach me.

Nancy He's so bloody cute!

Sykes Yes, yes, it's a fine thing, Oliver, doing what we do - and the Dodger here is a first-rate teacher. *(roughly slaps Dodger on the back)* Stick with him and you'll go places - of one sort or another.

Oliver That's what Fagin told me.

Sykes That's what Fagin told you, did he? *(to Dodger)* And might the master be receiving visitors today?

Fagin *(entering)* He might if the visitor's got something to give to the poor.

Sykes Well, *giving* to the poor wasn't exactly what I had in mind.

Fagin Good morning, Nancy, you're looking awfully fetching this morning.

Nancy *(coy in the face of a compliment)* Oh, Fagin, you hairy old thing! You're going to get me into trouble with Bill.

Dodger Yes, old Billy-chickens won't stand for it. *(Sykes lunges for Dodger, who slips away)*

Fagin *(to Sykes)* Billy chickens?

Sykes Never mind!

Oliver *(lost in a sentimental reverie)* What a wonderful group of friends you are. *(they all turn to look at him)* - four new friends and only my second day in town.

Fagin *(Sykes starts to respond, but Fagin silences him with a gesture)* Yes, Oliver, soon you'll have so many friends that you'll need a secretary to keep up with them all. You won't have a moment's peace.

Oliver I won't want a moment's peace if they're all as wonderful as you are.

Sykes *(aside to Fagin & Dodger)* Where did you *get* this bloke? *(they smile beatifically and point to heaven)*

Nancy Well, we think that you're pretty wonderful, too, Oliver.

Oliver *(beaming)* You do?

Sykes No we don't! *(Nancy shushes him - they bicker silently for a brief stretch)*

Fagin *(rolling along)* Oliver, the time has come for your training to begin. Dodger!

Dodger Yes, Fagin!

Fagin Take Oliver to The Green at Clerkenwell. I believe that you will find it a fertile place of study. Oliver, pay close attention to the Dodger - his time is extremely valuable. Now,

Bill, Nancy - let us step into my private chambers and have a look at what's inside this large and *(rattling its contents)* noisy parcel. *(exits with Bill & Nancy - curtain may close here)*

Dodger *(stepping with Oliver to front of curtain line)* Oliver, you and me are going to go on what's known as a job. The rules is simple, but listen close because I won't be able to tell you again once we get there. Watch everything I do, don't get in the way, and, if I run, *you* run. Understand?

Oliver Yes ... I think so.

Dodger *(significantly, in the vein of "this is the secret plan")* Good. Now, I want you to go to the big book store on the square at Clerkenwell and wait for me. Do you know where that is?

Oliver Why, yes - I passed it on my way here from the orphanage. It was very large.

Dodger That's the one. Go there and I'll be along in about fifteen minutes, OK? Now, hurry!

Oliver Right! *(exits up aisle and out back of house)*

Scene 5 The Green At Clerkenwell

Dodger *(on stage)* The day of Oliver's great adventure had arrived. Oliver was about to be arrested. *(Brownlow enters from back of house reading a book - he is oblivious to his surroundings)* Well, sort of arrested. But you'll see what I mean. Even though I had given him a head start, I still got to the Green before Oliver, but no matter - *(Brownlow is walking toward the apron)* I'd already picked me out a victim. *(Brownlow moves to the stage and continues to read, facing the audience - Oliver enters from side of house, Dodger sees him and motions him to quietly come ahead)*

Oliver reaches the Dodger on-stage and is wordlessly told by him to stay put DL while Dodger creeps up on Brownlow. He carefully lifts Brownlow's coattail and removes a large wallet. Dodger then darts offstage R to hide. Momentarily, Brownlow reaches for his wallet, and realizes that it is not there. He whirls around and discovers Oliver standing where Dodger left him, transfixed by what has happened.

Brownlow *(advancing on Oliver)* Now, see here, young man! Hand over my wallet or I shall report you to the authorities! *(Oliver is petrified, Brownlow continues to advance, Dodger watches helplessly from the side)* Hand over my wallet, I say, or you shall rue the day!

Oliver *(backing up)* Please sir, I, I ... didn't ...

Brownlow Then who did? I don't see anyone else around here. Very well, then, we shall see what the Magistrate has to say about this - come along! *(lunges for Oliver, who evades his grasp)*

SOUND CUE #6 (Chase) - In

(Brownlow chases Oliver ad libbing "Stop! Thief! Come back here! Stop this instant! etc. - eventually, he collars Oliver) There now!

SOUND CUE #6 - Out

We'll see what Magistrate Fang has to say about your hijinks, Mr. Pocket picker! (hauls Oliver down the aisle and out the back of the house - Oliver ad libs protest, Brownlow ad libs "Yes, yes, you may tell your story in court," etc.)

Dodger *(runs on just in time to see Brownlow exit through back of house with Oliver)* Fagin is definitely not going to like this. Uh, what say you kind folks talk amongst yourselves for a bit while I try to figure out what my excuse is going to be for losing Oliver. *(starts to leave, stops)* This is intermission, by the way. *(exits)*

End of Act I

Act II

Scene 1 Fagin's Lair

SOUND CUE #7 (The Lair) - In

House lights will dim as warmers come up on stage - Dodger will appear from side.

SOUND CUE #7 - Out

- Dodger** *(returning to front - crosses to DC apron)* The long and the short of it was that the long arm of the law had reached out and grabbed Oliver by mistake. *(withdrawing Brownlow's wallet from an inner pocket, he examines it's contents unenthusiastically)* And the five-pound note that Brownlow had left in his wallet seemed mighty small pickins in the face of what happened next. *(pacing with nervous excitement)* Brownlow took Oliver directly to the Magistrate - the notorious Honorable Mr. Fang. Mr. Fang had been a judge since about the time of Adam and had sent more men to the gallows than Bill Sykes' dog had fleas. A mighty cruel twist of fate and a mighty grim day for yours truly, as well. As you might expect, nobody back at Fagin's place was very happy to hear that I'd lost Oliver.
- F, S & N** *(from off - or, as curtain opens to reveal Fagin, Sykes & Nancy in tableau, C, looking furious)* You did WHAT?!!! *(if no curtain, they run on - in any event, they now crowd around Dodger)*
- Dodger** Well, it's not like I lost him exactly. He was took. He wouldn't run! I run, but he just stood there - like he was frozen. When I turned around he just wasn't there. I run back, but it was too late. He was took by a man named Brownlow.
- Fagin** *(taking Dodger by the lapels)* Did you follow him? Where did he go? What's this Brownlow going to do to Oliver?
- Sykes** The question is, what is Oliver going to do to *us* now that he's took?
- Dodger** Brownlow took Oliver to the magistrate.
- Sykes** *(whirling Dodger around and taking him by the lapels)* Which magistrate?
- Dodger** *(head down, knowing this is the last straw)* Fang.
- F, S & N** FANG?!!
- Nancy** *(almost in tears)* Our little Oliver was took to Magistrate Fang? We'll never see him again!
- Sykes** If we never see Oliver Twist again, that'll be the *least* of our worries. Fang'll put the screws to him to make him talk and, once he's done that, we're done for, don't you see? If Oliver tells Fang about this place and what we do, we're all dead men.
- Dodger** But what if Oliver won't talk?
- Sykes** There ain't a man alive what can resist Fang if there's something that Fang wants out of him.
- Nancy** Oliver would never peach on us - he ain't got it in him.

Fagin It don't matter what Oliver's got *in* him, Nancy. It's what Fang is going to put *on* him. The basement of Fang's courtroom is filled with racks and branding irons and iron maidens and thumb screws and Lord knows what else.

Sykes Oliver is going to tell Fang where we live and what we do and, before you can say "Good Night, Sally", they'll be taking us off to the dungeon. *(beginning to get choked up)* We're done for, Fagin. It's been nice knowing you. *(they shake hands)*

Nancy *(again, on the verge of tears)* Oh, Bill, we're too young to die! *(they embrace, howling pitifully)*

Dodger *(interrupting their howling)* You're too young to die? I'm only thirteen! *(a beat - they all look at each other - then all three begin to wail)*

Fagin *(a light goes on)* Wait a minute!

S, N & D *(wailing cut short, the three look at Fagin)* What?

Fagin *(brightening)* You say that Fang is going to make Oliver tell him where we live?

Dodger *(resigned to an early death)* It looks that way, Fagin.

Fagin *(almost merrily)* And you say that, try as he might to resist, Oliver will tell Fang everything that he knows about how we earn our daily bread?

Nancy *(hands on hips, a bit put off by Fagin's good mood)* It looks that way, Fagin.

Fagin And Oliver will sing like a bird in a gilded cage until Fang is satisfied that there's nothing more to get out of the poor waif?

Sykes What are you trying to do, Fagin, make us all start crying again?

Fagin No, no, no! Don't you see? Oliver is going to tell Fang *everything that he knows* about us! *(looks eagerly at his companions - they don't understand)* He's going to tell Fang what we *do*, don't you see?

Dodger I'm a pickpocket, Fagin.

Sykes And I'm a burglar *(Dodger and Sykes look to Nancy for her confession)*

Nancy *(briskly avoiding the issue with uncharacteristic dignity)* Well, I don't suppose that I've been quite the perfect lady in waiting, either - *(back on track)* but I jolly well don't plan to go to jail! *(Fagin has been chuckling throughout the preceeding)* What are you so bloomin' happy about, Fagin?

Fagin *(glancing at them, savoring the moment)* Oliver Twist believes that we are a charitable institution.

Sykes & Nancy *(look at each other, then at Fagin)* He does? *(we can see from the expression on Dodger's face, however, that he is beginning to understand)*

Fagin Yes, he does.

Dodger *(seeing the light)* Yes he does! *(Fagin is laughing now)* All we've ever told Oliver is about how we take up donations for the poor. Oliver *does* think that we do charity work!

Sykes And that's what he'll tell Fang.

Nancy And that's what Fang will believe.

Dodger Until he figures out that Oliver wouldn't know a pickpocket from a pygmy. We've got to hurry! (*Sykes and Nancy begin to follow*) Come on Fagin! (*exeunt - curtain may close*)

SOUND CUE #8 (Transition) - In

(Periactoids are revolved to reveal the third and final side - Fang's courtroom. A tall podium with steps leading up to it is brought on, possibly in pieces, as are two tables - one placed on either side of the podium. Two chairs are placed behind each table, for a total of four chairs - arranged so that the person at the podium, as well as all those who are seated, are facing the audience.)

SOUND CUE # - Out

Scene 2

The Courtroom of Magistrate Fang

Dodger *(runs on from back of house - he is quite out of breath)* We run all the way to the courthouse. And nobody noticed how funny it was that two pickpockets, a burglar and a ... a dance hall girl ... was running as fast as their legs would carry 'em to the police. Anyway, Oliver's case was just about to come up on the docket when we got there, so we weren't a minute too soon. *(reflectively)* Poor Oliver. *(catching his breath, somewhat reflectively)* If he had a known what was in store for him when he first met me, he'd a probably punched me in the nose. On the other hand, probably not. Sometimes I think people like him ought to live on an island somewhere far away from the likes of people like me. Or maybe it's the other way around. *(curtain may begin to open now to reveal, Bill and Nancy seated at one table R and Fagin seated in one of the chairs at the other table L - if there is no curtain, all concerned now enter hurriedly and take their places ... in any event, they ad lib urging Dodger to his place beside Fagin)* Court is in session. *(Dodger quickly crosses to empty chair - pickpockets scramble into house at this time to take available seats or sit on floor - they are still in character, pushing and shoving, etc.)*

Voice *(from off)* All rise! *(orphans and all on stage rise)*

Fagin *(after beat, all principals look out to audience if anyone is still seated)* What's the matter with you people? Some of you got the idea - Hello, Smiley.

Smiley Hello, Fagin.

Fagin *(to audience)* All rise, for the love of Mike! That means stand up! *(ad lib along these lines until audience is standing - at which point others on stage shoo Fagin back to his seat)*

Voice The Honorable Magistrate Fang!

SOUND CUE #9 (Full Orchestra Entrance March) - In

(All on stage look expectantly off Right ... after a couple of measures, Fang enters from Left - which everyone quickly realizes, turning to acknowledge him.)

Fang *(a stooped and doddering old man wanders on absentmindedly with a large book under his arm - he bumps into a few things and makes one unsuccessful attempt to mount the steps to his podium, after which he finally succeeds, standing at the podium staring into the audience with myopic disdain)* Turn that blasted music off!

SOUND CUE #9 - Out

(music stops abruptly - he clears his throat, sounding like a shrill old woman - then slams book down on the podium, sending up a cloud of dust and sits) You may be seated. *(all on stage sit - if audience doesn't follow suit, Fang should repeat the command until they do so)* Now then, ahem! *(begins to go*

thorough the papers on his desk, tossing them onto the floor in all directions as he does so) Yes, yes, here it is! Bailiff, call the first case! *(there is no bailiff - beat)* Where's the blasted bailiff?

Fagin *(leaning into judge, stage whisper)* Excuse me, your honor, but we were told that you fired your entire staff yesterday afternoon. Something to the effect of you "just didn't like their looks," your honor?

Fang I fired them all, did I? Well, yes, I suppose I did! Come to think of it, they *were* a blasted unattractive bunch of swine at that. Glad to be rid of them. *(to Fagin, as if he were speaking to him for the first time)* You there!

Fagin Me, your honor?

Fang Yes, you! What is your name?

Fagin Fagin, your honor. Have I done something wrong?

Fang No doubt you have, my good man, but that's a matter for later consideration. *(briefly surveying Fagin)* Hmph! You look like a fellow who might know which end of a dog bites. You shall be my bailiff. *(tossing powdered wig at Fagin)* Here, put this on. And I don't doubt that I shall fire *you* by day's end, so stay where I can see you with that wig. The city is swarming with thieves!

Fagin Yes, your honor. I'll do my best, your honor. *(looking at tiny wig, aside to dodger)* His last bailiff must have had a head the size of a turnip.

Fang *(overhearing)* As a matter of fact, he *did* have a head the size of a turnip - and he was blasted peculiar looking, as you might well imagine. Glad to be rid of him. *(tossing book to Fagin)* Call the first case!

PRODUCTION NOTE: A member of the audience will have been selected prior to the beginning of the show to be called up as the first accused. They may or may not have been told about this, depending on how likely it is that they will be in the house at the critical moment. An alternate should also be chosen. Both names will have been written down in the case book. It is best to find someone who is both well known and known to be a good sport.

Fagin *(catching or quickly picking up the case book while adjusting the wig on his head - it does not fit, of course - he opens the book to the page marked by the prominent red ribbon and, perhaps removing a pair of spectacles from his pocket, reads)* Will Mr. _____ *(or Mrs. - insert name of person chosen before show)* please approach the bench.

SOUND CUE #10 (Death March) - In

PRODUCTION NOTE: If neither accused can be found, they should both be found guilty in absentia and sentenced to hang.

(Fang might go into the audience to coax a reluctant accused to the stage, music continuing underneath. Music is not faded out until accused is positioned DC of podium, Fagin beside, both facing the audience)

SOUND CUE #10 - Out

Fang *(after accused is in place on stage)* Number three-ought-seven-six-nine-two-P-sub-two ... Mr. *(insert name)*, you stand accused of abducting a herd of dairy cattle from the estate of one Mr. Porkum Piggery and attempting to book passage for said dairy cattle to a remote corner of the West Indies on His Majesty's Ship The Valiant Bob. How do you plead? *(regardless of plea or lack thereof)* Guilty as charged! *(slamming down gavel)* Mr. *(insert name)*, the

wanton pilfering of dairy cattle is a most grievous and unnatural crime, one which causes all of London to cry out in disbelief. (*principals on stage and orphans in audience cry out in disbelief - Fagin looks out impatiently*) Figuratively speaking. You are hereby sentenced to life at hard labor ... (*searching for sentence*) standing on one foot ... (*Fagin prods accused to "act out" the sentence*) with your thumb up your nose and ... and polishing those ... those little things that people use to keep their ... their blasted papers together ... (*irritated by his own bad memory, fumbling for the word*) paper snapper grabby things ... oh, what the devil are they called?!

Fagin Paper clips, your honor?

Fang Yes, by Hecate, paper clips! You shall polish paper clips for the rest of your natural life! (*slamming the gavel*) Bailiff, escort this criminal from the bench.

SOUND CUE #11 (Death March - Reprise) - In

(*Fagin leads condemned man to edge of stage and indicates that he should return to his seat - march plays on for a measure or two*)

SOUND CUE #11 - Out

Bailiff, call the next case.

Fagin (*reading again from the book*) Will Mr. Oliver Twist please approach the bench.

Nancy (*as Oliver and Brownlow enter from opposite sides, each taking his place standing on either side of Fang's podium between the podium and the tables - Oliver between the podium and L table, Brownlow between the podium and R table*) Oh, Fagin, couldn't you just skip over Oliver? He ain't done nothing w'r ...

Fang Silence! One more word out of you, and I'll have you put on the rack!

Nancy Yes, your honor.

Fang (*to Oliver*) So, Oliver Twist is it? Let's see, Twist, Twist (*tossing more papers onto floor*) twist of fate, lemon twist, twisted sister (*etc.*), ah ha! Here it is! I see here that you are accused of petty theft - or, as it is commonly known, "pickpocketing". What do you have to say in your defense?

Brownlow If it please your honor, I would like to speak.

Fang And who the Dickens are you?

Brownlow I am Busterton Brownlow, your honor, the man whose pocket Oliver is accused of having picked.

Fang Very well, then. What is it that you have to say?

Brownlow After some consideration, your honor, I have decided not to press charges.

Fang Not to press charges? And why in heaven's name have you decided not to press charges?

Brownlow Because, your honor, I didn't actually catch him doing it, he didn't have the wallet with him when he was brought in and ... well, now that I've had a chance to talk to the boy, I really don't think that he could have committed this or any other crime.

Dodger (*standing*) Oliver is free!

Fang *(mocking him angrily)* No Oliver is *not* free, young man!

Nancy *(standing)* And why on earth not? Brownlow just dropped the bloody charges.

Fang *(rising angrily - Nancy counters by getting lower)* Because I *said* so, young lady! And I'll thank you to refrain from using the word "bloody" in my courtroom. This is a court of law, not a brothel. Now, sit down, both of you! *(slams gavel - Dodger & Nancy sit)* Now then, Mr. Twist, I ...

Sykes *(standing)* Your honor?

Fang *(fed up)* What is it?!

Sykes I would like to say a word in behalf of the accused.

Fang And who might you be?

Sykes *(looking back at Nancy, who nods encouragement)* I am William B. Sykes, attorney for the accused, your honor.

Fang I don't know of any attorney William B. Sykes. Can anyone in the court attest to this man's credentials?

Fagin I can, your honor - he's a very persuasive gentleman, indeed.

D & Nancy *(ad libbing)* Yes, yes, very persuasive, well-qualified, etc.

Sykes *(chiming in with his own bright idea)* I've only just passed the bar this very morning! *(all stare at him in disbelief - he has overstepped the bounds of plausibility)*

Fang *(slowly)* Just passed the bar this morning, eh? *(Sykes nods, afraid to say anything else)* Well, then this must be your first case, hmm? *(Sykes nods again, overly enthusiastically - then Fang continues, waxing sentimental)* I recall my first case - I prosecuted an elderly matron accused of making overly merry on Christmas Eve. *(a melancholy smile)* She was hung, of course. *(a beat, then he snaps out of it, banging the gavel at an already silent courtroom)* Silence! Ehem! *(beat)* What are you all looking at? *(all avert their eyes - he is mollified)* Ehem! Very well, then, you shall represent Mr. Twist. Proceed.

Sykes I submit, your honor, that Oliver Twist is not a picker of pockets. In fact, he is an employee of your bailiff, Mr. Fagin, who runs a charitable institution devoted to the care and feeding of orphan boys.

Fang A charitable institution, is it?

Sykes Indeed, your honor. This is my secretary *(referring to Nancy)* and that young man *(referring to Dodger)* is my paralegal assistant. *(all concerned nod agreement)*

Fang So, Oliver, are you an employee of this charitable institution?

Oliver Yes, your honor, I am! I'm an orphan myself and I don't know what I'd of done if it hadn't been for Fagin taking me in and giving me a decent place to live and an honest job. Fagin is the nicest man I know.

Fang I see, I see. And tell me, Mr. Sykes, does this institution of yours have a name?

Sykes *(worried and at a loss, Sykes leans over to Nancy, who whispers in his ear)* Happy Days Home for Boys, your honor.

Fang I see. And I assume that this charity has applied for a license?

Sykes License, your honor?

Fang Yes, Mr. Sykes, for as you well know, the penalty for operating a charitable institution without a license is one year on the rack - which no man can survive. *(leans forward, chuckling - all are stunned)* You *don't* have a license, do you, Mr. Sykes?

Sykes No, your honor.

Fang Very well, then. You are all guilty! *(slams down gavel)* Stand for sentencing. *(they stand)* It is the decision of this court that all of you shall be taken to the dungeon where my bailiff shall place you all, including himself, upon the rack! *(slams gavel)*

Nancy Your honor?

Fang What is it?

Nancy Don't we get a last request?

Fang *(caught off guard)* Well, yes, I suppose you do.

Nancy Then my last request, your honor, is that I be allowed to sing a song.

Fang A song, eh? Hmph. Well, it sounds harmless enough. Go ahead and sing, then, young lady, but take care not to violate any sort of musical law.

Nancy Thank you, your honor. This song was sung to me by my dear mother when I was just a babe. Each night, as I was drifting off to sleep, she would bend close to my tiny ear and whisper ... *(sings forte a cappella)*

ROASTED GOOSE, PICKLED HAM,
SAUSAGES, PIES AND BLACKBERRY JAM!
SUPPERTIME COMES JUST ONCE A DAY!
SO PILE ON THE PUDDING WHILE YOU MAY!

(desperate for their cooperation) Come on Bill, Fagin - Dodger - you know this song! *(they shift uncomfortably, glancing at one another)* Bill Sykes!

Sykes & Nancy *(Sykes timid at first, then building)*
ROASTED GOOSE, PICKLED HAM,
SAUSAGES, PIES AND BLACKBERRY JAM!
SUPPERTIME COMES BUT ONCE A DAY!
SO PILE ON THE PUDDING WHILE YOU MAY!

Nancy That's it, gentlemen - sing!

Nancy	Fagin, Dodger, Sykes
GATHER AROUND	PASS THE PUDDING!
SAVOR THE AIR	PASS THE PUDDING!
JOY EMBRACE	PASS THE PUDDING!
SORROW FORSWEAR	PASS THE PUDDING!

All WE SHALL EAT MOST HEARTILY!
AND WE SHOULD BE THANKFUL, YOU'LL AGREE!

(Nancy, Sykes, Dodger & Fagin dance about the stage during the last verse)

ROASTED GOOSE, PICKLED HAM,
SAUSAGES, PIES AND BLACKBERRY JAM!
SUPPERTIME COMES BUT ONCE A DAY!
SO PILE ON THE PUDDING WHILE YOU MAY!

PILE ON THE PUDDING WHILE YOU MAY!

PILE ON THE PUDDING WHILE YOU MAY!

Nancy *(there is a pause after the rousing finale, during which the singers glance at each other in silence, hardly knowing why they've made a spectacle of themselves, then all except Nancy - who remains DC - begin to drift back to their places)* Well, fellas, I suppose there's no point putting it off any longer - it's off to the rack with the lot of us - and a sorrier day never dawned in Christendom!

F, S, D & O Here, here! *(they all begin to follow her lead off)*

Fang Wait! *(all stop and turn to Fang)* Young lady, where did you first hear that song?

Nancy Why, from me mum. Me mum learned it from her mum and her mum learned it from her kindly old wet nurse ...

Fang Gertrude!

Nancy How did *you* know?

Fang Young lady, what was your mother's name?

Nancy Well, I run away with the circus when I was twelve, but as best as I can recall, her name was Angelique. Why?

Fang By all the saints in heaven, this is miraculous! My wife, Ophelia, and I were blessed with one child, Firenza, who married Hortense Flagellum, becoming Firenza Fang Flagellum!

Nancy Poor thing!

Fang Hortense and Firenza had two daughters, both of whom were nursed by the elderly Gertrude, a legendarily bountiful woman, and the song which you just sang was sung to them when they were children. The names of Firenza's two daughters, you will be astounded to know, were Agnes ... and *Angelique!*

Nancy Blimey!

Fang Yes, my well-spoken young friend, blimey. For Angelique, married Mortimer Squalls, becoming Angelique Flagellum Squalls and she, in turn had two daughters - Niagara Squalls, who attended finishing school and later married a Presbyterian minister - and Nancy Squalls, who one cold October morning, announced that she was leaving to join the circus. She left and was never heard from again. *(leaning over bench toward Nancy)* Is your name Nancy Squalls?

Nancy *(in shock)* Well, your honor, I'm married to Bill here now, so my name is Nancy Sykes, but my *full* name is Nancy Squalls Sykes. I think it's a rather musical sounding name.

Fang Then you, Nancy Squalls Sykes, daughter of Angelique, granddaughter of Firenza, are my great, granddaughter.

Nancy *(spreading her arms to Fang)* Great-grandfather!

Fang *(spreading his arms to Nancy)* Great-granddaughter!

Sykes *(spreading his arms to Fang)* Great-grandfather-in-law!

Fang *(spreading his arms to Sykes)* Great-grandson-in-law!

PRODUCTION NOTE: Throughout the next section, no one should actually embrace, rather they should face one another in rapid succession with arms spread wide, calling out one another's names - like cuckoo clock figurines.

Brownlow Wait!

Fang & Nancy What?

Brownlow I, too, recognized the song that Mrs. Sykes sang, a song from *my* childhood. I beg you all to listen as I tell a story which I myself find hard to believe. *(steps forward - a light change might occur here to isolate him)* When I a little boy of twelve, my baby brother and I were stolen by gypsies at the seashore.

Fang & Nancy How dreadful!

Brownlow It gets worse. I will now read an entry from my diary, which I always carry with me. This entry is dated July 1, 1820 - exactly ten years ago.

(reading) "The gypsies have decided that my brother and I should be separated - one of us is to be taken to Tibet *(he gestures at an angle up to the ceiling - all others look to where he points)* the other to remain in England *(gestures to floor - all look at the floor)* I have been chosen to go to Tibet. *(gestures up, all look up)* Tonight I shall take from my pocket the locket given to me by my mother and I shall place the locket around my baby brother's neck, hoping that he and I might someday be reunited and that the locket might help us to identify one another."

(looks up) And this entry, written only yesterday.

(reads) "I have grown to manhood and made my fortune as a merchant seaman. I have searched the world, but I have not found my brother. It is a terrible blow."

(snaps diary shut - brightening) Your honor, my mother's name was Agnes and the song that she used to sing to me was the same song that we have just heard! Your honor, I am your long-lost great-grandson!

Fang *(overjoyed)* Great-grandson!

Brownlow *(equally so)* Great-grandfather!

Nancy & B *(to each other)* Cousin!

Sykes *(to Brownlow)* Cousin-in-law!

Brownlow *(beat-avoiding Sykes' overture)* Right. But tell me, great-grandfather, whatever became of my parents?

Fang It is a tale of woe, young Busterton Brownlow. Perhaps you should sit down. *(Brownlow sits)* Your poor mother, Agnes, chased the gypsy caravan on foot for several miles as it carried you and your baby brother away. She fell into a deep depression and, one day, leaped to her death from a church tower in a suburb of Shrewsbury, the exact name of which escapes me. *(Brownlow ad libs "Oh, my!")* Your father, Solomon Brownlow, was grief stricken

and traveled to Wales where he met and married a woman of questionable parentage known only as "Lillith". I am told, though I cannot say for sure, that she bore him one son, who ran away almost as soon as he could walk. It is all for naught, however. Solomon, Lillith and their theoretical son all seem to have vanished into thin air.

- Dodger** *(standing)* Blimey! *(all look at him)* My mother's name was Lillith and my father's name was Solomon. I run away because I got fed up with my father waking up the whole house every night shouting in his sleep "Don't jump, Agnes!" I *had* to get away or I woulda gone nuts! *(brightening)* Anyway, I suppose that makes me Dodger Brownlow, *(to Brownlow)* your half-brother!
- Nancy** And my half-cousin!
- Fang** And my half-great-grandson!
- Sykes** And my half ...
- Oliver** *(interrupting)* I think that I shall cry! *(nearly doing so as he reaches into his shirt to withdraw the locket)* I've often wondered what this locket meant - I've had it for as long as I can remember. *(opening the locket)* There's an inscription inside which reads "Agnes". I was given the name "Twist" by the man who runs the orphanage where I was raised and who, I suppose, got me from the gypsies on their way to Tibet. *(turning to Brownlow)* I am your brother, Busterton Brownlow! I am Oliver Brownlow!
- Brownlow** Brother!
- Dodger** Half-brother!
- Nancy** Cousin!
- Fang** Great-grandson!
- Sykes** Cousin-in...
- Fagin** Wait a bloody minute! *(all stop to look at Fagin)* Excuse me for interrupting the family reunion, but it looks like I'm the only one left here who's going to the dungeon. What's to become of *me*?
- Oliver** We could never sit by and let you go to the dungeon, Fagin. *(to the rest)* I think that we should adopt him.
- Dodger** As Uncle Fagin!
- Sykes** All in favor?
- Everyone** Aye!
- Sykes** All opposed?
- Fang** *(after a beat)* So ordered. Fagin, you are hereby instated as our legal uncle and you shall be allowed to live as long as you see fit.
- Fagin** *(very grateful)* Thank you, your honor!
- Fang** Furthermore, as our uncle, you shall receive a yearly sum of fifteen pounds.
- Fagin** *(more grateful)* Thank you, your honor!

Fang Furthermore, you shall be the proprietor of a legitimate home for orphan boys, overseen by the Board of Orphans and the Ladies' League of London. *(slams down gavel)*

Fagin *(ecstatic)* Thank you, your ... *(realizing what has happened)* Wait a min ...

Fang Bailiff! You may dismiss the court.

Fagin Oh, very well. *(steps DC, facing the audience)* This court is now dismissed!

(All on stage, except Dodger, exit - they are slapping backs and generally enjoying their reunion as they exit in high spirits, Fagin trying unsuccessfully to get Fang's attention - the curtain may close here - Dodger steps front of curtain, or just DC if no curtain is used)

Dodger And that's what *really* happened. Seeing as how we were all suddenly related to a Magistrate, we never went back to our night jobs and, as a consequence, we never got into trouble. You might say, well ... we all lived happily ever after.

Oliver *(peeking around corner)* Dodger!

Dodger What, Oliver?

Oliver Fagin says that if you don't clean up your room, you'll have to stay behind while the rest of us go to the fair.

Dodger *(glances at audience, then back to Oliver)* Tell Fagin I'll be right there. *(Oliver smiles sweetly, exits, Dodger speaks to audience)* As I was saying, we all lived happily ever after ... especially Oliver, who was already happy to begin with.

SOUND CUE #12 (*Pile On The Pudding*) - In

PRODUCTION NOTE: A fully orchestrated accompaniment tape is available to be played here. If it is not used, the song may be sung again a cappella. The lyrics should be printed in the playbill for the audience to use if they wish to sing along.

Voices Off *(cast makes its way, singing, to the stage during the song. Dodger joins & leads.)*

ROASTED GOOSE, PICKLED HAM,
SAUSAGES, PIES AND BLACKBERRY JAM!
SUPPERTIME COMES JUST ONCE A DAY!
SO PILE ON THE PUDDING WHILE YOU MAY!

ROASTED GOOSE, PICKLED HAM,
SAUSAGES, PIES AND BLACKBERRY JAM!
SUPPERTIME COMES BUT ONCE A DAY!
SO PILE ON THE PUDDING WHILE YOU MAY!

Dodger The words are in your program, ladies and gentlemen, so sing along if the spirit moves you to do so.

Nancy, Sykes, Brownlow, Fang

GATHER AROUND
SAVOR THE AIR
JOY EMBRACE
SORROW FORSWEAR

Fagin, Dodger, Oliver, Orphans

PASS THE PUDDING!
PASS THE PUDDING!
PASS THE PUDDING!
PASS THE PUDDING!

All WE SHALL EAT MOST HEARTILY!
AND WE SHOULD BE THANKFUL, YOU'LL AGREE!

ROASTED GOOSE, PICKLED HAM,
SAUSAGES, PIES AND BLACKBERRY JAM!
SUPPERTIME COMES BUT ONCE A DAY!
SO PILE ON THE PUDDING WHILE YOU MAY!

PILE ON THE PUDDING WHILE YOU MAY!

PILE ON THE PUDDING WHILE YOU MAY!

Dodger

(quickly, before applause begins) Thank you ladies and gentlemen and good night!

SOUND CUE #12 - Out

End of Play

PRODUCTION NOTE: A display may be set up in in the lobby (example follows)
that depicts the Fang/Flagellum/Brownlow/Squalls/Sykes/Family Tree.