

Oliver with vitality delights audience

YOUTHFUL enthusiasm in the hands of an excellent producer Cynthia Stead, - resulted in an outstanding performance of Oliver by Witham Operatic Society last week. Sold out well before the show opened it, delighted the audience with its vitality and animation.

The children in Fagin's gang were well organised, sang with gusto and responded, especially one young lady, to the dialogue. They even remembered to use their upstage arms and to sing to the audience. The adult chorus was also of a high standard.

Stewart Atkins has a fine voice and commanding presence and was a suitably 'self opinionated, pedantic, pompous' workhouse master. Pat Briggs who makes the most of her last scene after she has married him shows his feet of clay. Richard Ould made an excellent, undertaker and his wife Lydia Clough an entertaining cantankerous nag.

Musical directors are gaining control of the musicians in the orchestra and for the second week it was possible to hear the singers. Jill Parkin, the musical director, gathered together an excellent orchestra who under her direction were always in empathy with the cast.

The title role was well sung and acted with waif like innocence by Anthony Clough. Nicholas Clough played Fagin as a quiet gentle character for whom at the end one has sympathy. John Dalgleish was a cheerful, lively, self confident Artful Dodger who contrasted well with the sinister, sadistic, violent Bill Sykes of Michael Dunion. His devoted lover Nancy dominated the stage in her red dress. David Adams was a Victorian Pater Familias and other minor parts who stood out were played by Natalie Foster and David Willingham.

Lottery money would be well spent to build a theatre for shows of this quality.

JAMES BRIGHT