

When the Academy Awards Were Announced I Was Tempted to Destroy My 'Oliver!' Critique But That Would Be Unfair So Here It Is Along with a Second Thought Because...

'Oliver!' Deflates Fat Cats But It's No 'Lion in Winter'

BY FATHER WILLIAM O'MALLEY, S.J.

'Oliver!' is a heartwarming family tale about prostitution, child-selling, petty and grand larceny and general human degradation set in the grim days of workhouses when the rich got rich and the poor got children. But you'd never know it.

When the starvingurchins on the way to waterygruel pass by the trustees' dining room, dreaming of "Food, Glorious Food" and gasp at the fat burghers gorging on fat meat pies, it's not sad at all. It's great fun, and the joke is on the fat cats. They're worse off than the orphans because they can't sing and dance.

Fagin is not the avicious old skeleton Dickens created. He's Ron Moody—winking, singing, cavorting like an aging benevolent satyr.

When Nancy has been beaten by her lover, lonely, distraught, she does the only thing left—she sings and she dances.

The only really wicked person in the story is Bill Sikes—and he's the only one who doesn't sing. In fact, he doesn't even listen when other people sing. Somehow you can't hate someone who sings and dances—and you can't conquer him either.

I've seen "Oliver!" a thousand times—998 while I was

As I See It

'Mod Squad' May Grow on You

By FAT COSTA

There are television shows which grow on you. For some, the ABC Tuesday night production "Mod Squad" may fall in that category.

For me at least, the hour-long presentation, starring three youngsters is an acquired taste.

At the start of the season when first reading the promotional material on all the new programs, just the title "Mod Squad" was enough to turn me off.

The premise, I thought, added nothing: Three young reformed delinquents turn to the side of the law to seek their action.

And, finally, an initial look at the trio, all blessed with extraordinary crops of hair, was not my idea of how attractive youth look.

But when there are several in your household TV audience, sometimes you find yourself watching programs you'd never turn on yourself.

In the last couple of months I've actually come to enjoy "Mod Squad," principally because of the three

Pre-Awards Version

directing it at McQuaid last year and twice in the film at the Panorama—and yet there was always some magic to it that I could never define. I've never put on a musical that so captured a high school cast—who are the hardest critics in the world, because they are at one time tyrannically simple in their tastes and viciously sophisticated in their judgments of sugary plays. But in "Oliver!" we had football players who were supposed to be offstage sneaking onstage night after night to do "Oom Pah Pah" because it was so much fun.

Where else could you more completely fulfill, all at once, every childhood dream we've elaborated as dressing up in elaborate costumes—and at the same time covered with dirt—and singing and dancing as if we were perfectly natural for human beings to sing and dance? And the kids and grownups in the film look like they're having the same kind of fun.

It's fashionable today to denigrate "family movies" and I confess things like "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang" and "Angel in My Pocket" seem to give ample reason why. But things get pretty bad when you feel stupid for getting all shoky at "The Sound of Music."

But it's more fashionably "interesting" to wrestle with

the problem of God in "J.B." or the meaningless of life in "The Stranger." The self-conscious search for "depth" and "significance" can tolerate nothing so undiscussable as fun.

But there is perhaps as much tribute to the indomitable human spirit in "Oliver!" as there is in "The Crucible."

Dodger and Fagin are as much anti-heroes as "Hamlet"—and yet they may be able to teach us something, because they don't consider their faults with such painful seriousness. Nancy is as much a whore as Sadie Thompson, but there's no one around to make a big stink about it. She is much more important than what she does for a living.

When Lionel Bart's Dickens people are in pain they wrestle with their problems a bit and weep a bit, but when that's done, they sing!

I think "Oliver!" has something to tell us if we have ears to hear. I think it says pretty much the same thing as Ecclesiastes: "There's a time to weep and a time to sing"—which says pretty much the same thing as the Passion and Resurrection.

There's something pitiful but depressing about films that tell us our society and everything in it is in a state of decay. Therefore, I'm will-

Father William O'Malley of McQuaid Jesuit High School has directed a high school production of "Oliver!" and was invited, before the Academy Awards, to review the film version for the Courier-Journal.

ing to sustain the jibes of the sophisticates who say that "Oliver!" doesn't show the evils Dickens hated (as if it were trying to). When the Lucy Van Pelt to ask me how I can dance when the world is the victim of falsehood, plagues, passions, war, famine, etc., etc., I can only answer, "My head says no, but everything else says now!"

Without what "Oliver!" says, what "Oedipus" says would be unbearable.

Movies

Here is a list of motion pictures currently playing in Rochester area theaters and the ratings given them by the National Catholic Office of Motion Pictures:

With the Catholic Office ratings, we include the ratings of the Motion Picture Association: G, general; M, mature audiences; R, restricted (persons under 16 admitted only when accompanied by parents or adult guardian); X, persons under 16 not admitted.

Paramount—"Odd Couple" (Adults); "Rosemary's Baby" (Condemned).

Regent—"The Illustrated Man" (No Rating), M.

Cinema—"Buona Sera Mrs. Campbell" (Adults), M.

Waring—"The Lion in Winter" (Adults), G.

Monroe—"Funny Girl" (Adults and Adolescents).

Rivera—"2" (Condemned), X.

Studio 2—"Three in the Attic" (Objectable), R.

Loew's—"Charly" (Adults), G.

Stoneridge—"The Love Bug" (General), G.

Panorama—"Oliver!" (General), G.

Towne—"Romeo and Juliet" (Adults, with reservations), G.

Stutson—"The Shoes of the Fisherman" (General), G.

Fine Arts—"The Thomas Crown Affair" (Objectable), M.

Little—"Stolen Kisses" (Adults, with reservations), R.

Post-Awards View

Barbra Streisand can out-sing any Academy Award nominee any day of the week, but when she can be equated as an actress to Katharine Hepburn and judged better than Joanne Woodward and Patricia Neal, I get a bit confused (read: "furious").

But then Lee Marvin was better in "Cat Ballou" than Rod Steiger was in "The Pawnbroker."

I don't know anything about Hollywood finance but I always thought I knew something about acting and something about plays and movies.

I liked "Oliver!" but I didn't go all dippy and faint over it. In fact, I thought (with unforgivable smugness) that parts of our

"Oliver!" were better, especially the boy who played the title role. But it was full of fun and dash and the repeated assertion that human beings are irreplaceable.

Yet to compare it to "Rachel, Rachel"—with its more penetrating and more fragile search for human dignity, or to "Lion in Winter" with its clawing intensity, its impudent wit and good humor, its brilliantly articulated script and its even more powerful assertion of the irreplaceable human spirit—well, it seemed "nice" but not just.

"Lion in Winter" says a lot of what "Oliver" says. But it also gives "Oedipus" his due.

I hereby resolve that next April I will not... oh, well!

OLPH Class Plan 50th Year Dinner

The class of 1919 at Our Lady of Perpetual Help will gather in the school hall at 6 p.m. Saturday, May 10, for an anniversary dinner.

Among those invited is Sister Eligia, now of St. Lucy's convent, who taught the jubilarians in third grade.

Mrs. Marian Mueller said that about 30 members of the class had been contacted. Reservation should be made by April 28 through her or Frederick Kuhn, Richard Streh or Mrs. Lauretta Kassman.

A Mass for deceased members is to be scheduled.

Varsity Voices advertisement featuring musical notes and performance schedule for Saturday April 26 and Sunday April 27 at Eastman Theatre.

America's Finest Restaurants Are Featured Here advertisement with a circular logo and images of a fork and knife.

Rund's advertisement for a restaurant at 2851 W. Henrietta Road, featuring Joe Cady's 7 Piece Orchestra.

George's Lounge advertisement for Rochester's favorite nighttime restaurant at 858 Hudson Avenue.

Cathay Pagoda advertisement for Rochester's most exciting restaurant at 488 E. Main St.

The Spring House advertisement for Monroe County's oldest family restaurant at 3001 Monroe Ave.

Buccaneer advertisement for a restaurant and cocktail lounge at 1384 Empire Blvd.

Inver House Rare Scotch Whisky advertisement featuring a bottle and a hand holding a glass.

Tallman Pools & Equipment Inc. advertisement for a high quality in-ground pool with features like heavy galvanized steel and concrete bottom.

TV Movie Ratings table listing movies, channels, and times for Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

Advertisement for Franco Zeffirelli's Romeo & Juliet, including a photo of the couple and text: 'Of plays and films about teenagers, Franco Zeffirelli's ROMEO & JULIET is the greatest of them all.'

Advertisement for a restaurant featuring a circular logo and the text 'America's Finest Restaurants Are Featured Here'.

Advertisement for George's Lounge, a nighttime restaurant at 858 Hudson Avenue.

Advertisement for Grassi's Restaurant, featuring business men's luncheon and diners.

Advertisement for Pancake House, where everyone meets after church at 3400 Monroe Ave.

Advertisement for Top of the Plaza Restaurant, a midtown tower place.

Advertisement for Buccaneer restaurant, cocktail lounge, and banquet rooms at 1384 Empire Blvd.

Large vertical advertisement on the right side of the page, partially obscured, with text including 'Among leaders single Catholic are (from left) St. Joseph's V last Sunday at Michael's parli Christmas' and 'HOUSE'.