

One boy for sale

Or rather, just over 100 boys and girls in the production of [Oliver!](#) I saw last night. There was a boy, a former student in the 4th/5th grade class at my church who invited me to come. His older brother, also a former student, helped out by running a spotlight. How could I say no? Even though *they* never saw *me* when *I* was in *Oliver!* just two years ago... I was so disappointed then that not a single student from my church came, or at least told me they came if they did. I advertised this to them for a few weekends, but nothing. Oh, well.

This rather large production is apparently typical of [Christian Youth Theater](#). This organization started out west, but became a reality around here when someone move to my wonderful state and received permission to branch out here. Now there are many branches just in the Chicago area, all under the [CYT-Chicago](#) umbrella. This isn't ordinary community theatre though. In order to allowed to audition for a show the kids are required to take one of several theatre classes through this organization. Obviously not a deterrent at all judging by the size of these shows, and even in the number of CYT shows some of them have been in according to the program. The quality wasn't bad at all. The characters for the most part were very convincing and if there were any slipups I didn't notice. I did have a couple of issues with their Fagin, but of course since I played the part myself this is only natural. I wish I could remember what those issues were now. Anyway, the boy who I came to see, Brian, played an orphan at the beginning of the show, then appeared twice more later during chorus numbers. During [Food Glorious Food](#) he nearly slipped up when he saw me in the audience, front and center. Interesting spot they sold me- I guess it pays to come by yourself and get those prime spots when groups fail to completely fill up a row!

I was a bit disappointed at a couple of things though. First

off, the show was shortened quite a bit. The running time was about 1:55, and that included a 20 minute intermission, making the actual running time 1:35. Since the original show has a running time of well over two hour you can see a lot was not there. I Shall Scream and [Oom-Pah-Pah](#) were two full songs that were cut, and were probably the most obvious to go considering the group. Bill Sykes's song, My Name, was cut in half for some reason too though the one who played him did a fine job. Many scenes were abbreviated as well. Ones I noticed most (again having been *in* them before) were some scenes in Fagin's Lair. However, these weren't the only places shortened. The scene where Noah Claypole is introduced was snipped (Oliver just leaves right after [Where is Love?](#)). The scene at the end where everything goes south for Sykes and Fagin's gang was shortened to the point where Sykes doesn't even get killed (Nancy still does though), and the scene at the end of Act I where Oliver goes out with Dodger to pickpocket, then gets falsely accused was missing entirely! Well, that whole thing aside I was also disappointed that for a production so well done they for some reason chose not to have a live orchestra. Everything was sung to recorded music. I'm sure they must have had a reason for this, but even so this took something away from the show. Outside of this, and I should stress that shortening the show sounded much worse in writing than it actually was, it was a very good production. Christian Youth Theater is something that should be considered for many other areas.

In any event, if you want to know why I didn't post yesterday this was why. □ Interesting thing: according to Brian he was considered for the role of Oliver, but at 12 years old he was a little tall in comparison to their pick for the Artful Dodger. Instead they cast an 8-year-old who did a fabulous job considering his age. This brought my thoughts back to a certain [Little Shop of Horrors](#) production where their original pick for Orin, who later dropped out, was actually shorter than me so when considering who would play Seymour they went

with someone smaller and I got stuck with being the understudy. However, I should be happy with that because had the show not been sabotaged by a distraught producer who though he should have been director I wouldn't have been considered at all as I was still kind of a weak actor at that point. Did I get all of that right, O great admin who directed this show? ☐