

Oliver & Artful Dodger
Audition Piece

CHARACTER: OLIVER TWIST

Male Principal Role. Playing age 11-12. Unbroken voice.

The protagonist of the story, he is an innocent, malnourished, lonely orphan boy born in the Workhouse. His longing to find a place where he belongs makes him vulnerable, but he is still tough and feisty.

DIALOGUE

NOAH: *(addressing OLIVER - conversationally)* Work'us... How's your mother?

OLIVER: You leave my mother out of it - she's dead.

NOAH: What did she die of, work'us? Shortage of breath?

OLIVER: *(tearfully)* She's just dead! She died of a broken heart.

NOAH: Well tol-de-rol-lol-lol-right-fol-lairy, Work'us. What's set you a snivelling now?

OLIVER: You'd better not say anything more see!

NOAH: Better not say anything more see! The cheek of it - the workhouse cheek of it! My mother, 'e says. She was a nice 'un, she was!

NOAH curls his nose up in disgust

Yer know, Work'us, it can't be helped now, and of course, yer couldn't help it then, and I'm very sorry for it, and I'm sure we all are, and pity yet very much. But yer must know work'us, your mother was a regular right down bad'un.

OLIVER: What did you say?

NOAH: A regular, right down bad 'un. And it's a good thing she died when she did or she'd have been transported, or hung from a gibbet as like as not!

A fight ensues during which, and over the music (12. The Fight) the following lines are shouted.

CHARACTER: JACK DAWKINS (ARTFUL DODGER)

Male Principal Role. Playing age 'a young 16'.

Very energetic, highly personable, intelligent and savvy beyond his years, Fagin's right hand "man". Preferably with excellent song and dance skills. Must have a dynamic stage presence.

DIALOGUE

OLIVER sits down on a monument. It is early morning, the city is waking up.

A CHARACTER appears from behind the monument. He is very dirty but very worldly, is wearing a top hat and a voluminous overcoat which has the cuffs turned back halfway up the arms so that he can keep his hands in his trouser pockets. He whistles the tune of "YOU'VE GOT TO PICK A POCKET OR TWO".

The CHARACTER is now becoming conscious of being stared at and walks over to him - it is the ARTFUL DODGER. DODGER hums "PICK A POCKET OR TWO".

DODGER: What yer starin' at? Ain't yer never seen a toff?

OLIVER: No - never - I...

DODGER: That's all right - don't worry about it. Hungry?

OLIVER: Starving.

DODGER: 'Ere catch.

He throws him an apple

Tired?

OLIVER: Yes. I've been walking seven days.

DODGER: Seven days! Runnin' away from the Beak, yer must be?

OLIVER: The what?

DODGER: Now don't say yer don't know what a beak is, me flash mate?

OLIVER: A beak's a bird's mouth.

DODGER: My eyes - how green! A beak - is a madg-strate, for your information. Who are you runnin' away from then - your old man?

OLIVER: No, I'm an orphan. I've come to London to make my fortune.

DODGER: *(suddenly very interested)* Oh you 'ave, 'ave ya?

OLIVER: Yes.

DODGER: Got any lodgings?

OLIVER: No.

DODGER: Money?

OLIVER: Not a farthing.

The ARTFUL DODGER whistles a snatch of "PICK A POCKET OR TWO" and puts his arms into his overcoat pockets as far as they go.

OLIVER: Do you live in London?

DODGER: When I'm at home. I suppose you want some place to sleep tonight, don't you? Are you accommodated?

OLIVER: No - I don't think so...

DODGER: Then h'accomodated you shall be me young mate.

(He eyes OLIVER speculatively)

There's a certain place and I know a 'spectable gentleman as lives there wot'll give you lodgin's for nothink, and never ask for the change - that is - if any other gentleman he knows interduces yer. And does he know me? I should say he does, not 'arf he don't, and some!

OLIVER: Who is the respectable old gentleman, then? Is he a charity gentleman?

DODGER: Well, I wouldn't eggzackly say that - not eggzackly. But if I interduces someone it's all right, on account of I happen ter be a pertickler favourite of Mister Fagin. That's his name - Mister Fagin. By the way... if I'm introducing you to Fagin, I better know who you are, me old china.

OLIVER: My name's Oliver. Oliver Twist.

DODGER: *(with a flourish)* And my name's Jack Dawkins - better known among me more hintimate friends as the Artful Dodger.

OLIVER: Pleased to meet you, Mister Dawkins.