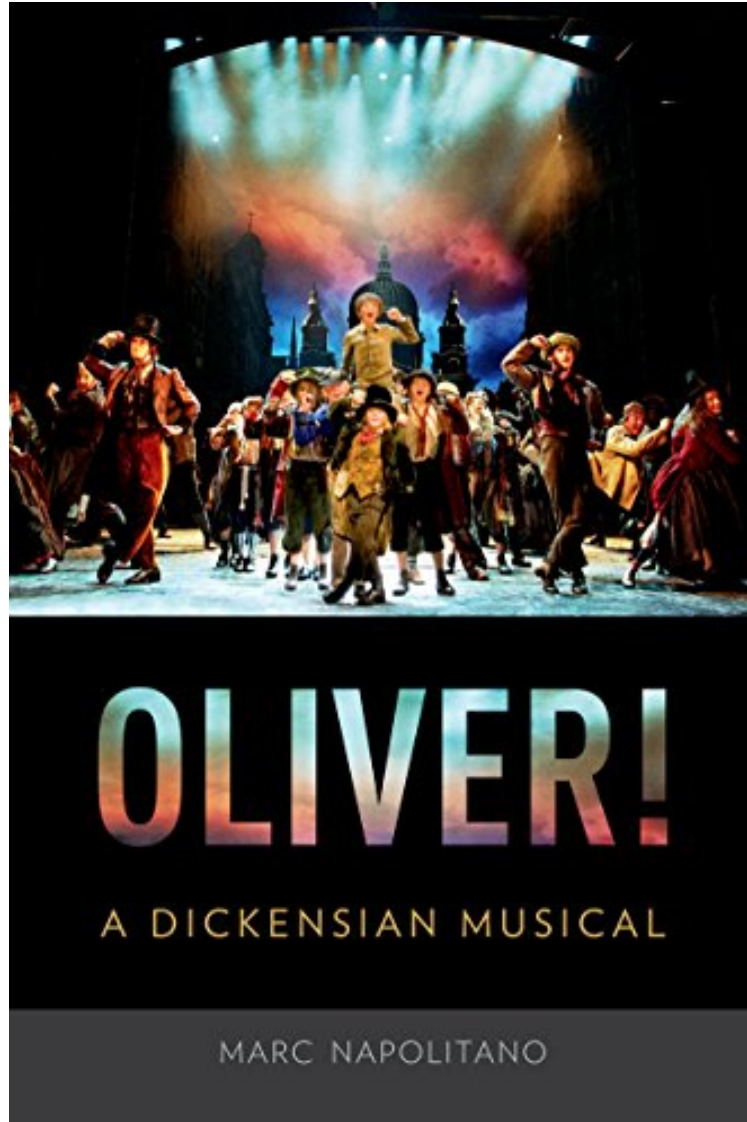


(Free read ebook) Oliver!: A Dickensian Musical

Oliver!: A Dickensian Musical

Marc Napolitano

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Marc Napolitano : Oliver!: A Dickensian Musical before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Oliver!: A Dickensian Musical:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. It's A Fine, Fine Book!By Charles GrippoWith OLIVER! A DICKENSIAN MUSICAL, Marc Napolitano has made a wonderful contribution to the study and history of musical theater. His thoroughly researched and intelligent observations give us tremendous insight into Lionel Bart's groundbreaking musical version of Charles Dickens' "Oliver Twist." By the time we reach the last page of Napolitano's book, we understand just exactly why OLIVER! is a great show and a cultural phenomenon. More importantly, we discover how Bart, through this show, brought significant changes to the musical form. A fan of the

show since childhood, Napolitano understands fully why it touches such a chord deep inside us in such a delightful way, fifty-five years after its debut in England. Among other things, Bart's masterpiece --- and indeed "masterpiece" almost seems like an understatement - paved the way for later English musical transplants to America. But first things first. Napolitano starts by doing an exhaustive -- but not exhausting --- comparison of the various stage and screen adaptations of Dickens' novel that came before Bart decided to turn it into a musical. This by itself is terrific background for what is yet to come. He informs us of the cultural context of both the book and these adaptations. Then he brings Bart into the picture. Born into extreme poverty in the East End of London during the Great Depression, Bart was hardly a likely candidate for musical theater immortality. He could not play a musical instrument nor could he read or write notes. (Actually this is not all that unusual among our great writers of musicals; many of them were also musically untrained.) Yet he was a cockney and a Jew, two parts of his heritage he brought into OLIVER!, particularly in the music. Gradually he moved into the English theater of the mid 1950's. His method, also used by many of our great musical writers, was to sing or whistle his tunes into a tape recorder, for a more trained arranger to transcribe into readable musical notes. At the same time that he was moving into the theater, Bart met up with a young, former merchant marine, named Tommy Steele, who had also been born into poverty. Within a year, Steele and Bart had taken the English pop music world by storm. Steele became the English Elvis Presley, whose biggest hit songs were either written or co-written by Bart. It was for Steele that Bart first conceived the idea of turning "Oliver Twist" into a musical. But soon Bart realized that there was really no part in the show for Steele. Nevertheless he persevered. He was turned down by almost every producer in London. The producers believed the material was too depressing for audiences. Finally, however, he got his chance. But world wide success came with a lot of blood, sweat and tears for Bart. There were arguments with producers, difficulties with Ron Moody over his performance as Fagin in the original British production, claims by others that they helped in the writing of the show and therefore deserved credit and royalties, and many other challenges, all of which Napolitano describes in great detail. Napolitano also analyzes the film version (of which he is particularly fond), which was another frustration for Bart. Finally he provides the sad account of how Bart lost his copyrights --- and millions and millions of dollars/pounds -- to the show. This book is crammed with so much fascinating material, not simply about OLIVER! and Lionel Bart, but also the state of musical theater at the time of the show, both in England and on Broadway. I had to read the book twice in order to take it all in. But I learned so much. As a bonus, the publisher, Oxford University Press, has thoughtfully and generously created an online companion resource to the book presented in the form of five appendices containing additional material. Whether you're a casual member of the audience, a musical theater buff, or a serious theater professional, this book should be mandatory reading. I can't recommend it enough. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Four Stars By PETER PINN Well documented if a little dry but the facts are all there. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Consider this book well bought! By johnkenrick A detailed and fascinating history of a great musical -- great fun for fans of OLIVER!

When the show was first produced in 1960, at a time when transatlantic musical theatre was dominated by American productions, Oliver! already stood out for its overt Englishness. But in writing Oliver!, librettist and composer Lionel Bart had to reconcile the Englishness of his Dickensian source with the American qualities of the integrated book musical. To do so, he turned to the musical traditions that had defined his upbringing: English music hall, Cockney street singing, and East End Yiddish theatre. This book reconstructs the complicated biography of Bart's play, from its early inception as a pop musical inspired by a marketable image, through its evolution into a sincere Dickensian adaptation that would push English musical theatre to new dramatic heights. The book also addresses Oliver!'s phenomenal reception in its homeland, where audiences responded to the musical's Englishness with a nationalistic fervor. The musical, which has more than fulfilled its promise as one of the most popular English musicals of all time, remains one of the country's most significant shows. Author Marc Napolitano shows how Oliver!'s popularity has ultimately exerted a significant influence on two separate cultural trends. Firstly, Bart's adaptation forever impacted the culture text of Dickens's Oliver Twist; to this day, the general perception of the story and the innumerable allusions to the novel in popular media are colored heavily by the sights, scenes, sounds, and songs from the musical, and virtually every major adaptation of from the 1970s on has responded to Bart's work in some way. Secondly, Oliver! helped to move the English musical forward by establishing a post-war English musical tradition that would eventually pave the way for the global dominance of the West End musical in the 1980s. As such, Napolitano's book promises to be an important book for students and scholars in musical theatre studies as well as to general readers interested in the megamusical.