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Classic

A new Twist
THE TALES OF
CHARLES DICKENS
OLIVER TWIST

On MASTERPIECE CLASSIC

Sundays, February 15 and 22, 2009 at 9pm ET on PBS

"Given the strength of the cast, this adaptation of Oliver Twist couldn't possibly go wrong—and it doesn't."
— the *London Times*

The world's most famous orphan comes to MASTERPIECE CLASSIC in a rousing new retelling of Charles Dickens' much loved story of daring pickpockets, diabolical villains, and amazing adventures on *Oliver Twist*, airing in two parts on Sundays, February 15 and 22, 2009 at 9pm ET on PBS (check local listings).

The program is the first of four sparkling Dickens adaptations in MASTERPIECE CLASSIC's "The Tales of Charles Dickens," to be followed by *David Copperfield* (an encore presentation starring *Harry Potter*'s Daniel Radcliffe in his debut film role, in March), Andrew Davies' *Little Dorrit* (March 29 through April 26), and *The Old Curiosity Shop* starring Sir Derek Jacobi (May 3).

With a modern edge that sets it apart from previous adaptations (a "bold, modern, sleek, dramatic exaggeration" raved the *Guardian*), *Oliver Twist*'s spectacular cast is led by newcomer William Miller as Oliver— orphaned in the countryside, sent to the workhouse, sold into servitude after his immortal appeal, "Please, sir, I want some more," apprenticed to a sadistic coffin maker, and then driven to flee for his life to the only safe haven he can imagine: the den of delinquents, prostitutes, and murderers known as London.

There, Oliver falls in with Fagin, the adult ringleader of a gang of boy-thieves, played with worldly charm by Timothy Spall (*Harry Potter*, *Sweeney Todd*). Fagin is one of Dickens' most conflicted characters: a Jewish father figure for junior felons who risk the gallows on his behalf.

Also appearing are Adam Arnold as the Artful Dodger, pickpocket extraordinaire; Tom Hardy (*Wuthering Heights*) as Bill Sikes, Fagin's cruel accomplice; Sophie Okonedo (*The Secret Life of Bees*) as Nancy, Oliver's guardian angel and Bill's lover; and Julian Rhind-Tutt (*Notting Hill*) as the mysterious Monks, who has an unaccountable grudge against the innocent Oliver.

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Edward Fox (*Foyle's War*) plays the patrician Mr. Brownlow, the victim of Oliver's first stealing spree, who gives the boy refuge—temporarily. And Morven Christie is Rose, Brownlow's ethereal and tenderhearted ward, obsessed by the disappearance of her sister, Agnes.

Dickens is known for his comically quirky characters, and among the most Dickensian are Mr. Bumble (Gregor Fisher, *Love Actually*) and Mrs. Corney (Sarah Lancashire, *Wuthering Heights*). One is the officious beadle, who banishes Oliver from the workhouse. The other is the conniving workhouse matron, who sees her main chance in the bachelor Bumble and a secret item of interest to Monks. Bumble and Mrs. Corney are a match made in heaven—or in the other place, as events prove.

Add to that *Oliver Twist's* complicating factors—functionaries who act criminally, criminals who behave responsibly, children who behave like adults, not to mention lots of biting social commentary about society's treatment of the poor—and Dickens' true genius as a storyteller emerges.

Oliver Twist is a BBC/WGBH Boston co-production. It is directed by Coky Giedroyc (*The Virgin Queen*), and adapted by Sarah Phelps from the classic novel by Charles Dickens. The producer is Sarah Brown. The executive producers are Kate Harwood for the BBC and Rebecca Eaton for WGBH.

MASTERPIECE has been presented on PBS by WGBH since 1971. Rebecca Eaton is executive producer. Laura Linney is the host of MASTERPIECE CLASSIC. Public television viewers provide funding for MASTERPIECE.

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WGBH press contacts

Ellen Dockser, 617-300-5338, ellen_dockser@wgbh.org

Olivia Wong, 617-300-5349, olivia_wong@wgbh.org