

Meridian Music of the Week!

Issue No. 90 (based on original Newsletter No.39 – November 2020)

Each week ALL our children will be listening to a piece of music as part of our music lessons. We'll be talking about it in class and discussing what we like, what we don't like and what it makes us think about.

Parents/carers/family - why not join in and listen for yourself at home! All music is available **free** on YouTube as well as paid services such as iTunes and Spotify.

This week's music...



'It's a Fine Life' and 'I'd Do Anything' from the musical 'Oliver!'

Music and lyrics by **Lionel Bart**
(1960)

'It's a Fine Life' from the original film musical version of 1968 – [HERE](#)

'I'd Do Anything' can be found - [HERE](#)

TWO more songs this week and both feature a new character in the musical – Nancy. But let's get back to the story...

We know that Fagin and the boys show Oliver how they pick pockets and Fagin asks Oliver to try and pick a handkerchief from HIS pocket without him noticing. Oliver doesn't do it very well but Fagin fools him into thinking that he did. Fagin finds somewhere for Oliver to go to bed and, kindly, tells him "If you go on, the way you started, you will be the greatest man of all time". He even sings Oliver to sleep. Maybe Fagin isn't so bad after all?

But, once all the boys are asleep, Fagin sneaks out of the house and goes to meet the **REAL** villain of Oliver's story – Bill Sykes. He is a violent burglar who robs houses and then passes the things he's stolen to Fagin. Fagin then sells them for money and shares it with Bill Sykes. Fagin takes the stolen goods back to his house while Bill Sykes meets up with his girlfriend Nancy.

Nancy is a very important character in the story – and she's involved in both of this week's songs. The first, "It's a Fine Life" is a solo for her and it's all about what life is like for the poorer people of Victorian London...

*"If you don't mind having to deal with Fagin – it's a fine life,
Though diseased rats threaten to bring the plague in! - it's a fine life."*



Fagin meets up with the **real** villain – Bill Sykes

Continued/...

Lots of actresses and singers would love to play the part of Nancy in the musical because she has some really good songs, and she's a really interesting character. Back in 2008 there was even a BBC TV talent show called 'I'd Do Anything', hosted by Graham Norton, where actresses competed against each other for the chance to star as Nancy in a new stage production of the musical. You can see a clip from the TV show, with lots of contestants all singing 'It's a Fine Life' [HERE](#).

Before we come to the second song, there's an important scene in Oliver's story. Fagin goes back to the house and gets out a box of stolen treasures that he keeps hidden from the boys.

While Fagin's looking at them, Oliver wakes up and sees him. Fagin gets really angry and threatens Oliver. But Oliver says that he didn't see where Fagin kept the box and so Fagin calms down and apologises. It shows us that, even though Fagin can be friendly to Oliver, he is still a thief and can't really be trusted.



BBC TV's 'I'd Do Anything'



Dodger, Nancy, Oliver and Betty in the song 'I'd Do Anything'

The next song happens on the next morning. Nancy and her best friend Betty go to see Fagin to get the money that Fagin owes Bill Sykes for selling his stolen property. Nancy is very popular with the boys (she brings them sweets!) and she gets to meet Oliver for the first time.

The other boys are mean to Oliver because he behaves like a posh gentleman in front of Nancy. But Nancy is kind and sticks up for him and tells him the other boys are just jealous because he has good manners and they don't.

Dodger disagrees, he begins to pretend HE'S a real gentleman and then starts to sing the song 'I'd Do Anything'.

This is what is called an **ensemble** song in a musical because it's sung by more than one of the main characters. In fact, Nancy, Dodger, Betty, Oliver **and** Fagin all get to sing at some point. This song is famous for the fun dance routine that goes with it. The boys pretend to be a posh carriage and horses for Dodger and Nancy, using umbrellas as wheels.

It is also what song writers call a '**list song**' – because the words are mostly a list of different ideas on the same subject – in this case, the silly things that one person might do for another.

Nancy: Would you lace my shoe?

Paint your face bright blue?

Catch a kangaroo?

Go to Timbaktu?

Dodger: Anything

Anything

Anything

And back again!

Continued/...

Where the composer (Lionel Bart) gets really clever is that, as the song goes on, the rather silly **lyrics** (words) turn more serious. Fagin joins in at the end – and, at first, it looks like he’s joining in with the silly fun. But he actually uses the song to see how loyal the boys would be to HIM and his life of crime. He even uses it to ask the if they’d risk being hanged, just to save his own skin!

Fagin: Would you rob a shop?
Would you risk the ‘drop’?
Though your eyes go ‘pop’?
When you come down ‘plop’?

Boys: Anything
Anything
Anything
Hang everything!
We’d risk life and limb
To keep you in the swim
Yes, we’d do anything...
Anything for you

Fagin: (Seriously) ANYTHING?
(Spoken) Then get to work then!

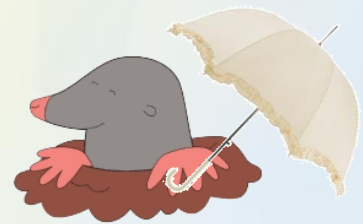
This is a good example of where a composer in a musical uses a song to tell us more about the characters in the story. It tells us that the boys are fond of Nancy, that Nancy likes Oliver, and also that the boys are loyal to Fagin, even though he’s using them to protect himself and his crimes. Would YOU trust Fagin? I’m not sure I would!

Well, the next song in the musical is coming up very quickly – but we’ll leave that until next week!

Listen & enjoy...

Mr. Mole

Music Teacher



Words to ‘It’s a Fine Life’ on the next page...



It's a Fine Life

Small pleasures, small pleasures

Who would deny us these?

Gin toddies, large measures

No skimpin' if you please!

I rough it, I love it, life is a game of chance.

I never tire of it, leading a merry dance.

If you don't mind having to go without things

It's a fine life.

Tho' it ain't all jolly old pleasure outings...

It's a fine life

When you got someone to love

You forget your cares and strife

Let the prudes look down on us

Let the wide world frown on us

It's a fine, fine life!

Who cares if straightlaced

Sneer at us in the street?

Fine airs and fine graces

Don't have to sin to eat.

We wander through London

Who knows what we many find?

There's pockets left undone

On many a behind.

If you don't mind taking it as it turns out,

It's a fine life!

Keep the candle burning until it burns out

It's a fine life.

Though you sometimes do come by

The occasional black eye

You can always cover one

'Til he blacks the other one

But you don't dare cry.

No flounces, no feathers

No frills and furbelows

All winds and all weathers

Ain't good for fancy clothes

These trappings, these tatters

These we can just afford.

What future? What matters?

We've got our bed and board.

If you don't mind having to deal with Fagin

It's a fine life!

Though diseased rats threaten to bring the

plague in

It's a fine life!

And the grass is green and dense

On the right side of the fence.

And we take good care of it

That we get our share of it

And we don't mean pence.

No! If you don't mind having to like or lump
it...

It's a fine life

Tho' there's no tea-supping and eating
crumpet

It's a fine life!

Not for me, the happy home

Happy husband, happy wife

Tho' it sometimes touches me

For the likes of such as me...

Mine's a fine, fine life