

Oliver! is bold and energetic

CAODS are staging a bold, brash, broad-brush production of *Oliver!* at the Civic Theatre — with bags of energy, but not much subtlety.

Ray Jeffery gave us an atmospheric opening, and some great production numbers — *Who Will Buy*, with its chamber version as a taster, *Food Glorious Food*, with gastronomic dreams and nice work with the bowls, a barefist *Oom Pah Pah* and a memorable *Be Back Soon*, with the gang flowing up the steps.

Consider Yourself could not be contained, and spilled out into the stalls — a nice, appropriate touch.

Karen Kelleher stole every scene as a superb Nancy, with a powerful voice and every nuance of the character spot

on. She was well-supported by James Hearn's scary Bill.

On the opening night, Sam Toland was an engaging Dodger, looking every inch the part, with Elliot Elder as a melancholy Oliver.

Patrick Tucker was a coarse Bumble, and Peter Smith played a sympathetic Fagin — his *Reviewing the Situation* was brilliantly judged, with fine support from the fiddler in the pit.

The boys were cute but crisply directed, and there was some imaginative choreography on a packed stage — the funeral cortege, for instance.

The musical director was Andrew Denyer.

MICHAEL GRAY