

Renewed popularity has yo-yos spinning off the shelves

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grew up at a time when computers were still in their infancy and Pong was considered the latest in video-game technology.

There is one big difference, however. When dad steals his yo-yo time, walking the dog, rocking the cradle and around the world are usually his limits. On the other hand, today's young yo-yo aficionados are more inclined to split the atom, ride the elevator, put the rocket in the pocket, dabble with a brain teaser or slay the sidewinder.

"The traditional tricks like walk the dog are still out there," Lomow says. "They're usually the starting point for most players."

Yomegas come with an instruction booklet that teaches everything from tricks to how to maintain a return top — because of the bearings, it needs to be lubricated. To avoid bopping friends on the shin with a runaway yo-yo, the string should be replaced after about eight hours of use. A replacement string is also included.

Yomega models include the All-Star, Firestorm, X-Brain, X-Wing and the Firestorm Wing. They sell from about \$7 to \$13 and can be purchased at Wal-Mart, Toys R Us and Zellers.

But you'd better get there soon. According to Lomow, as yo-yo clubs, tournaments and one-on-one challenges continue to pop up in schoolyards from New York to Newmarket, sales are spinning out of control.

Oliver! prompts pleas for 'more'

BY ELIZABETH WYATT
THEATRE REVIEWER

For a young people's theatre company that specializes in musicals, Lionel Bart's *Oliver!* is a perfect fit. It has choruses of orphans and child pick-pockets, two juicy roles for children and broad, Dickensian characters that teenagers can play with conviction.

It is also an especially cohesive show, with book, music and lyrics all Bart's own work. And it's based on the novel *Oliver Twist* by that master storyteller Charles Dickens, a rags-to-riches tale in which virtue and love triumph over cruelty and greed after an eventful romp through theft, kidnapping and murder.

With all this going for it, it's no wonder that Unionville Theatre Company chose to reprise the show it first staged in 1990. With final performances this afternoon and evening at The Markham Theatre, it's a production with heart.

Director/choreographer Meghan Bowness has instilled her young players with a fine sense of style and an understanding of the period. It is, at times, genuinely moving, and if the comic bits didn't always work, it was as much the fault of the audience, as the timing.

Under Doug Walker's sensitive music direction, both singers and instrumentalists delivered Bart's music — haunting, dramatic, catchy by turns — with musicality and facility.

With one regrettable lapse, the show was well cast. (Why, with the convention of teens playing adults so firmly and delightfully established, did Bowness cast one adult of the character's approximate age — Bob Shapiro as the elderly Mr. Brownlow — and a non-

actor, at that?)

The young players acted as well as they sang (and vice versa), an enviable state of affairs in community musicals. Fittingly, the show's leads — Spencer MacEachern as Oliver, and Anthony Malarky as Fagin — were outstanding on both counts.

MacEachern's vulnerable, yet plucky Oliver as always charming, never saccharin, and his clear, light boy's soprano, was truly touching in the lyrical *Where is Love?* Malarky, as the villain we love to hate, enriched Fagin with his deep resonant voice, his marvellous energy and a subtle suggestion of the insecurity that drives Fagin's greed, making him oddly sympathetic. Malarky commanded the stage whenever he was on.

Christopher Burke, too, brought a fine singing voice to Mr. Bumble, the workhouse beadle, and a nice sense of ridiculous. As the Artful Dodger, Jen Polansky was assured and tuneful, but she could have brought out the role's cheekiness, its street-smart wiles, had she perhaps paid more attention to the character's name.

By the same token, more probing of the subtext would have added poignancy and complexity to the tragic Nancy, complicit victim of the brutal Bill Sykes, (a menacing Dan Boucher.) But Kyla Dixon played and sang her with great energy and panache.

Emily Boag, though at times shrill of voice, and Jesse Carlson, gave amusing turns as the Widow Corney and the undertaker; the singing voice of the strawberry seller glowed with richness and maturity.

To the great credit of Bowness and her young cast, they all came up with surprisingly good English accents; Annette Friel even produced a credible Scottish one as Mrs. Sowerberry.

Some awkward blocking in the Brownlow house scenes, where the beadle and the doctor were repeatedly forced to upstage themselves, marred Bowness' otherwise fluid, lively staging. Unhappily, since it wouldn't have been available during rehearsals, she was unable to use to advantage Wil Pialagitis' impressive set piece — a towering structure of stairs, bridge and arches that, with Andrew Prestwich's wonderful lighting, was splendidly evocative of London's east end dockside.

It served more as a framing device than an integral part of the setting, particularly in the big production numbers. Confronted by Bowness' somewhat linear, symmetrical choreography, one was conscious of all those marvellous levels going to waste.

Amy Willshaw's immaculate costumes, while faithful in line to the period, combined with the actors' scrubbed faces to give the show a squeaky clean look, utterly at variance with the dirt and grime of the mean streets (and even meaner workhouses and taverns) of Victorian England.

The hard work and love brought to the show by everyone backstage from producer Celeste Pellicione to the stagehands, and from director Bowness to the teeniest chorus member were everywhere evident. And we, in the audience, were handsomely entertained.

FOCUS ON FAITH

Make our lives a pleasing aroma

I have discovered two things about noses: some noses are more sensitive than others and some people are more sensitive about their nose.

We can walk into the house and tell what's for dinner without going

into the kitchen and it's the recall of the smell of particular foods that affects our cooking and eating decisions.

God's creation of fragrances and the sense of smell reveals much about His very personal and beautiful nature. He enjoys, He favours, He rejects and He delights. While the Bible is silent about the features of God's nose it does tell us that our lives, our prayers,

our acts of worship are either a sweet fragrance or a stench before Him.

In the Old Testament the nation of Israel was given guidelines for their sacrifices and on numerous occasions they were encouraged to understand that their act of worship, when properly presented, was a pleasing aroma to God. The strongest example of this is recorded in the New

Testament by the Apostle Paul when he declared, "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Ephesians 5:1-2).

When Jesus gave himself over to the death of the cross in order to bear the sins of mankind we are told that this sacrificial act was a "fragrant

offering" to God. The death of Jesus pleased God the Father.

Through Christ our lives can be a pleasing aroma not only to God but also to those around us as we live that life of love.

Jeff Shiplett is the Pastor of Markham Christian Centre, presently meeting at Chapel Place Presbyterian Church each Thursday at 7 p.m. For information call 416-575-4400.

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