

**TWO** Original Musical Classics !  
*Oliver & My Fair Lady*

Julie Andrews  
Rex Harrison  
Stanley Holloway



Georgia Brown  
Ron Moody  
Danny Sewell

*alto Take: 2*



The 1955/56 Broadway season was noted at the time for the small number of original scores (eight, of which three were revues) but did contain the gem *My Fair Lady*, which opened at the Mark Hellinger Theater on 15 March 1956 following try-outs in New Haven and Philadelphia. Running for 2,717 performances, it broke the then record for the longest Broadway run and toured the USA for almost seven years. All four principals played in the London production which opened in April 1958 and played for 2,281 performances. Rex Harrison and Stanley Holloway repeated their roles in the 1964 film, whilst Audrey Hepburn, (controversially in view of Andrews' huge stage successes), played Eliza.

The Hungarian film producer Gabriel Pascal first had the idea of converting George Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion* into a musical. Several leading Broadway composers and librettists including Noël Coward, Cole Porter, Rodgers and Hammerstein, E Y (Yip) Harburg, Howard Dietz and Arthur Schwartz turned him down. First approached in 1952, Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe mulled it over for two years, beginning work after Pascal's death in 1954.

Berlin-born **Frederick Loewe** (1901-88), whose father sang in operetta, studied with Busoni, Reznicek and D'Albert before moving to New York in 1924. He met the lyricist **Alan Jay Lerner** (1918-86) in 1942 with whom he then collaborated. Success came with their fourth show *Brigadoon* (1947). *Paint Your Wagon* followed in 1951 and then *My Fair Lady*, the film *Gigi* (1958) and *Camelot* (1960). Ill-health forced Loewe to retire early but he and Lerner wrote one more score, *The Little Prince* (1972). Lerner, whose father owned a store chain, was educated in England and Harvard, also collaborated with composers including Kurt Weill, Burton Lane and André Previn.

Lerner's choice to produce the show, Herman Levin, wanted a star like Mary Martin or Dolores Gray to play the leading role of Eliza Doolittle, but he was persuaded to cast the relatively unknown **Julie Andrews** (b 1935) whose only previous Broadway experience was as the leading lady in Sandy Wilson's *The Boy Friend* (1954). The rest is history. There was no prospect of any actor other than **Rex Harrison** (1908-90) being chosen to play Professor Higgins: his success in films such as *Blithe Spirit*, *Unfaithfully Yours*, *The Ghost and Mrs Muir*, and *Anna and the King of Siam* had made him a huge favourite with American and British audiences; and having made his debut in 1924, he was a highly experienced stage actor (*French Without Tears*, *Design For Living*, *Bell, Book and Candle* etc). **Stanley Holloway** (1890-1982) had been a hugely popular London star in the annual *Co-Optimists* revues during the 1920s and in *Hit the Deck* in 1927. He had been seen in many British films including *Passport to Pimlico*, *Hamlet*, *The Tiffield Thunderbolt* and *The Lavender Hill Mob*. **John Michael King** (b 1926), the son of 1920s musical star Dennis King, never again equalled the fame achieved in *My Fair Lady*. **Robert Coote** (1909-82) was a distinguished English stage actor who appeared in several films including *Prisoner of Zenda* and *The Ghost and Mrs Muir*.

**Synopsis:** It's 1913; audiences drift out of an evening performance at Covent Garden and a Cockney flower seller (Eliza Doolittle) is being observed by Professor Henry Higgins, a phoneticist, who is both fascinated and appalled by her way of speaking. In conversation with his friend Colonel Pickering, Higgins boasts that he can turn the coarsely-spoken flower seller into a lady (*Why Can't the English*), simply by improving her speech. As the two men hurry back to Higgins' house, they leave Eliza some coins (*Wouldn't it be Luvverly*). Having just been ejected from a nearby pub, Eliza's father asks her for beer money for himself and his drunken friends. Higgins' words have given Eliza food for thought and to her father's delight (*With a Little Bit of Luck*) she gladly stands him another drink.

Eliza decides to take up Higgins' offer and she arrives at his house, to his confusion (*I'm an Ordinary Man*) and the amusement of Pickering. She does not take to his teaching methods (*Just you Wait*) but his persistence pays dividends (*The Rain in Spain*). Eliza sees that with the Professor's help she may yet become a lady. As she prepares for bed, Eliza is excited at the prospect whilst the housekeeper tries in vain to get her to go to sleep (*I Could have Danced all Night*).

Higgins' first test for Eliza is to take her to Ascot where polite society contains its excitement at the races. Not so Eliza, who causes great embarrassment to both herself and Higgins. She has however attracted the attentions of the aristocratic Freddie Eynsford-Hill (*On the Street Where you Live*). Higgins then takes her to an Embassy Ball where Eliza fools a rich Hungarian who boasts that he can spot imposters. Higgins and Pickering congratulate themselves over this success but do not credit Eliza with her progress. Furiously she storms out of the house, bumps into Freddie, and lambasts him for failing to show his real emotions towards her (*Show me*). Some of the respectability Higgins was attempting to give Eliza has rubbed off on her father: he is about to get married and is miserable about it, begging his friends for one last drink (*Get me to the Church on Time*). Higgins voices his confusion over Eliza's sudden disappearance (*Hymn to him*), and eventually finds her visiting his mother. As they argue, Eliza tells him in no uncertain terms that she can appreciate the good things in life. Alone, Higgins has to admit that he has fallen in love with Eliza (*I've Grown Accustomed to her Face*). In one major change from Shaw's play (where it was clear she and Freddie would marry) Eliza returns to Higgins' side before the curtain falls.

**Lionel Bart** (Lionel Begleiter, 1930-99) wrote book, music and lyrics for *Oliver!* basing his show on Charles Dickens' novel *Oliver Twist*. It became the longest-running West End musical and although its total of 2618 performances has been since bettered by many other shows, it is constantly revived by professional and amateur companies, also schools, including worldwide.

Bart was born into a working-class family in Stepney, East London. Wanting to pursue a painting career,

at sixteen he won a scholarship to the St Martin's School of Art and entered the silk-screen painting industry. He then joined a skiffle group The Cavemen and wrote songs for their lead vocalist Tommy Steele, one of which *Rock with the Caveman* was the first British pop song to enter the American Hit Parade. Bart was seen by Joan Littlewood who ran the Workshop at the Theatre Royal, Stratford East. She asked him to contribute lyrics to her productions including *Fings Ain't Wot they Used t'Be* (1958) from which show *Big Time* was recorded by Adam Faith. The following year he wrote lyrics to *Lock Up Your Daughters*. As well as Adam Faith and Tommy Steele (*Little White Bull*, 1959) he composed further hits for up-and-coming stars Cliff Richard (*Living Doll*, 1959) and Antony Newley (*Do You Mind*, 1960).

Bart's breakthrough came with *Oliver!* (1960). Unable to read or write music, as he thought up songs he enlisted the help of Eric Rogers to transcribe his ideas onto the page. The plot to Dickens' novel was simplified and became a feelgood, wholesome family entertainment with Fagin and the boys portrayed largely as comic, dancing characters: only scenes involving Bill Sikes retained the true spirit of the book. Several theatre managements turned down *Oliver!* before the New Theatre in St Martin's Lane (later renamed the Albery and then the Noël Coward Theatre) approved the show. Initially some critics were ambivalent: "the atmosphere of a London Christmas matinee...with a certain guttersnipe charm," wrote Philip Hope-Wallace of *The Guardian* but the public quickly warmed to *Oliver!* Similar attitudes prevailed on Broadway at opening night at the Imperial Theater (6<sup>th</sup> January 1963): critics were disparaging: a "jolly bad show" and a "poperetta" whilst the audiences at the Imperial Theater enjoyed every minute of its 744- performance run. From the West End cast Georgia Brown (Nancy), Danny Sewell (Sikes), Hope Jackman (Mrs Corney) and Barry Humphries (Sowerberry, who in the first London revival in 1967 performed Fagin) repeated their roles on Broadway; Fagin was created in London by Ron Moody (who also starred in the award-winning 1968 film) and in New York by Clive Revill; among other noted performers in the Broadway cast was young David Jones who was later lead vocalist with The Monkees. Decca recorded the London cast in 1960 and Shirley Bassey, (once considered for Nancy), had a hit with *As long as he needs me*.

Bart made a fortune from *Oliver!* and wrote several other hit songs including *From Russia With Love* (Matt Monro, 1964) but never came close to repeating *Oliver!*'s show success. He frittered money away on drink, drugs and high living and in order to pay for a new production he sold the rights for *Oliver!* to his friend Max Bygraves for a fraction of their worth, only to see Bygraves reap the rewards. At the end of the decade Bart's creative tank was empty and his show *La Strada* (New York, 1969), despite Bernadette Peters and Larry Kert, lasted just one performance.

**Synopsis:** At the workhouse, boys dream of tasty dishes rather than the gruel they are served each day

(*Food, glorious food*). One of the boys, Oliver, asks the owners – Mr Bumble and Widow Corney - for more. Their response is to punish him (Oliver!) and after the orphans are in bed Bumble proposes to the widow. Oliver is sold to the undertaker Sowerberry and his wife and left alone among the coffins, Oliver ponders his future (*Where is love?*). Next day he gets into a fight with Sowerberry's assistant but manages to escape. Some days later he meets The Artful Dodger who takes him to Fagin's den. All the other boys welcome Oliver (*Consider yourself*) and then Fagin introduces Oliver to his line of work (*You've got to pick a pocket or two*). Fagin's assistant Bill Sikes strikes fear into all that meet him but his girlfriend Nancy, who works in a pub, has a heart of gold and is popular with the boys including Oliver who is clearly smitten (*I'd do anything*). Fagin sends the boys off to work but Oliver is caught in the act of robbing a fancy gentleman, Mr Brownlow.

Act Two opens at Nancy's pub where she entertains one and all (*Oom-pah-pah*). Bill Sikes and Fagin plot to kidnap Oliver before he gives away Fagin's hideout and Sikes violently forces the unwilling Nancy to help them (*As long as he needs me*). Mr Brownlow has taken Oliver in and sends him on an errand (*Who will buy?*). Sikes seizes Oliver and drags him back to Fagin's den where Nancy tries to shield him from Sikes. Fagin is in two minds whether to mend his ways or not (*Reviewing the situation*). Meanwhile Bumble and his new wife learn that Oliver was born into a wealthy family and trace his movements to Brownlow's house who has put up a reward for Oliver's safe return; it transpires that he is Oliver's grandfather. Nancy arranges Oliver's safe return to Brownlow but is caught by Sikes and brutally murdered. Brownlow organises a posse to catch Sikes who is followed back to Fagin's hideaway and shot. At the final curtain, Oliver is reunited with his grandfather.

© 2018 James Murray ([www.kernowclassics.co.uk](http://www.kernowclassics.co.uk))

**alto = a label of Musical Concepts: [www.altocd.com](http://www.altocd.com)  
(ALTO Distribution, Magnus House, 8 Ashfield Rd, Cheadle SK81BB, UK)**

**Cover image:** 'Oliver Twist' 2012/ Vitaly Shchukin / pinterest (digital painting)  
& 'My Fair Lady' 2006 / Alla Tkachuk / MASK  
**Design** produced by Imergent Images ([info@imergent.co.uk](mailto:info@imergent.co.uk))  
**Project Co-ordinator:** Robin Vaughan ([musicalmerit@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:musicalmerit@blueyonder.co.uk))

ALN 1956 Hollywood's Golden Era Songs: Astaire/ Kelly/ Satchmo/ Garland/ Monroe/ etc  
ALN 1964 Broadway Double ! Original South Pacific & Oklahoma on 1 CD

Hit Musical Double: My Fair Lady / Oliver – Original Casts

**My Fair Lady (Lerner & Loewe)**

**[Julie Andrews, Rex Harrison, Stanley Holloway, Robert Coote]**

1. Overture	3.04
2. Why Can't the English?	2.43
3. Wouldn't it be Luvly?	4.01
4. With a Little Bit of Luck	4.12
5. I'm an Ordinary Man	4.44
6. The Rain in Spain	2.43
7. I Could Have Danced All Night	3.34
8. On the Street Where You Live.	3.00
9. Show Me	2.14
10. Get Me to the Church on Time	2.46
11. A Hymn to Him	3.35
12. I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face	5.08

**Oliver ! (Lionel Bart)**

**[Georgia Brown Ron Moody, Danny Sewell, Hope Jackman]**

13. Food, Glorious Food	3.56
14. Oliver	1.35
15. Consider Yourself	4.06
16. You've Got to Pick a Pocket or Two	2.54
17. Where is Love?	2.51
18. Oom-Pah-Pah	3.16
19. As Long as he Needs Me	3.52
20. I'd do Anything	3.21
21. Who Will Buy?	4.30
22. Reviewing the Situation	4.18
23. Finale:Medley: Food, Glorious Food/Consider Yourself ETC	2.55

Produced by Tony Watts; Master compiled: Paul Arden-Taylor (Dinmore Records)

alto Take:2

# My Fair Lady & Oliver !

**TWO ORIGINAL CASTS!** (Broadway & London) *alto Take:2*

ALN 1965

Newly Re-Mastered: 79:45

ALN 1965

## My Fair Lady (Lerner & Loewe) Original Broadway Cast

[Julie Andrews, Rex Harrison, Stanley Holloway, Robert Coote]

Overture • Why Can't the English? • Wouldn't it be Luvly?  
With a Little Bit of Luck • I'm an Ordinary Man • The Rain in Spain  
I Could Have Danced All Night • On the Street Where You Live •  
Show Me • Get Me to the Church on Time • A Hymn to Him •  
I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face

Oliver & My Fair Lady original Casts

## Oliver ! (Lionel Bart) Original London Cast

[Georgia Brown Ron Moody, Danny Sewell, Hope Jackman]

Food, Glorious Food • Oliver • Consider Yourself • You've Got to Pick a  
Pocket or Two • Where is Love? • Oom-Pah-Pah  
As Long as he Needs Me • I'd do Anything • Who Will Buy?  
Reviewing the Situation • Finale: Medley of Hits

Produced by Tony Watts;  
Re-mastered: Paul Arden-Taylor  
(www.dinmore-records.co.uk)

© & © 2019 Musical Concepts [www.altocd.com](http://www.altocd.com)



Oliver & My Fair Lady original Casts

ALN 1965

alto Take:2