

ENTERTAINMENT

MARCH 11, 2009

GARAGE THEATRE

Sumner Perera part of teen cast in 'Oliver!'

The Tony and Academy Award-winning musical "Oliver!" is brought to the stage by some of New Jersey's most talented teenagers in March. The Garage Theatre Group's acclaimed Youth Conservatory presents the musical story of Dickens' runaway orphan at the Becton Theater, 960 River Road, Teaneck, March 13-15.

"Oliver!" is the story of Oliver Twist and the colorful, larger-than-life characters he encounters in Victorian London. Oliver learns to pick a pocket or two before finding the love - and family - he yearns for. Lionel Bart's unforgettable musical is directed and choreographed in this production by Marilyn Woodhull Cervino. This production is for audiences of all ages and features songs including "I'd Do Anything" and "Who Will Buy?"

Cast member from Teaneck is Sumner Perera.

The acclaimed Garage Theatre Group Youth Conservatory features area students, ages 13-18. "The Garage Theatre Group provides outstanding theatrical learning experiences that develop leadership, emphasize responsibility and foster teamwork," says Michael Bias, artistic director of the Garage. "Our former students are all over now - they've appeared on Broadway and Off-

Broadway, in films—and you can't watch an episode of Law and Order without seeing one of our old students. The kids you see on the stage in 'Oliver!' will be the professionals you're watching in a few years."

The themes are as timely as they were when musical was written in the 1960s - or when Charles Dickens wrote "Oliver Twist" more than 100 years ago: homelessness, crime, the plight of children. Ultimately, though, "Oliver!" is the story of the triumph of love.

"Having endured multiple abuses and exploitation, the human spirit emerges resilient," says director Woodhull Cervino. "It cannot be deterred from its eternal search for love."

"The singing and dancing is just first-rate, as good as anything you'll see in New Jersey," added Cervino. "These kids are great performers."

"Oliver!" the musical is being performed March 13-15 at the Becton Theatre, 960 River Road, on the Fairleigh Dickinson University Teaneck campus. Friday at 8 p.m., Saturday at 3 p.m. and 8 p.m. and Sunday at 3 p.m. Tickets are \$15 for children under 12 and seniors over 65 and \$18 for adults.

They are available by calling 201-569-7710 or visit www.garagetheatre.org.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE GARAGE THEATRE

Catie Connolly (Oliver) and Teaneck resident Sumner Perera (Dodger) are two of the many teenagers cast in "Oliver!" at The Garage Theatre.