

# British Theatre Guide

News, reviews, features and podcast on theatre across the UK

## Oliver Twist

Adapted and directed by Neil Bartlett from the novel by Charles Dickens

A Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, production

Theatre Royal, Newcastle, and touring

(2004)

Making a play from a novel - and particularly a nineteenth century novel - is fraught with difficulty, and all too often ends with an episodic trudge through parts of the plot, leaving fans of the novel complaining about what has been left out and others wondering, why bother? It's doubly difficult when the novel in question has already been made into a successful (if emasculated!) musical. Indeed two people sitting next to me in the Theatre Royal left after the first fifteen minutes, having been under the impression (one assumes) that they were coming to see the musical.

So one might assume that Neil Bartlett was on a hiding to nothing in attempting yet another dramatisation of *Oliver Twist* and I have to confess to a feeling of "I don't really want to see this but I suppose I should" when I arrived at the theatre.

And had Bartlett followed the usual route of such dramatisations, my reservations would probably have been more than justified. However this is not the route he has taken. He calls the production an adaptation "in twenty-four scenes with several songs and tableaux" and this gives a clue to the playing style.

Reviewer: [Peter Lathan](#)