

***OLIVER!*, With a Twist, Begins Rehearsal**

Cleveland, OH ((September 28, 2011) - The classic musical *Oliver!*, with a cast of more than 50 and a Near West Theatre twist, is now in rehearsal on Cleveland's West Side. The multi-racial, all-ages production will run Nov. 18 through Dec. 4, 2011, at NWT's performance space, West 38th Street and Bridge Avenue.

The actors encountering this tale of 1850 London include Euro-Americans, African Americans and Latinos/Latinas, ages 7 to 80, urban and suburban. They range from first-timers to veterans of the Cleveland theater circuit. That diversity, together with an intensive process to shape a large cast into an intimate ensemble, is what Director Bob Navis Jr. hopes will result in something unique – even, and maybe especially, for those who think they're already familiar with this Lionel Bart setting of the Charles Dickens novel.

At their first rehearsal Sept. 25, Navis got the entire company on their feet together to explore the “in the round” stage through physical ensemble-building exercises and led a surprisingly successful effort to teach the whole group everyone's first name. Later that same evening, using the signature song “Where is Love” as a springboard, he invited teen and adult cast members to dive deep into their own personal experiences of love: warm, difficult, ecstatic, painful, indescribable. The cast will create back-stories for their characters using this kind of personal searching, communal learning about social conditions in 19th-century England, and various kinds of sharing in cast circles.

For show and ticket information click here [here](#).

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