

Meridian Music of the Week!

Issue No. 209 (based on original Newsletter No.171 – November 2024)

Each week ALL our children will be listening to a piece of music as part of our music lessons. We'll be talking about it in class and discussing what we like, what we don't like and what it makes us think about. Parents/carers/family - why not join in and listen for yourself at home! All music is available **free** on YouTube as well as paid services such as iTunes and Spotify.

This week's music...



'Food Glorious Food' from the musical 'Oliver!'

Music and lyrics by
Lionel Bart (1960)

You can listen to the song from the original film musical version of 1968 – [HERE](#)

OR you can watch the **whole opening sequence**, including the song 'Oliver' [HERE](#)

Or you can try the 'Ice Age II' version - [HERE](#)

Please sir... can I have some more?

It's **ALL CHANGE** at the Music of the Week newsletter this term!

Last year the children spent a term listening to something different. And they seemed to enjoy it so much, I thought we might go back to it for this term.

Once again, we're going to take a break from 'classical' music and, instead, concentrate on a British **musical** from the 1960s – 'Oliver!'

A musical is simply a story with songs. It might be in the theatre, or a film, but the idea is that sometimes the actors sing a song to explain the story, or to tell the audience what they feel. Quite often the song is also accompanied by a dance routine. It is similar to **opera** – except that in opera the performers usually sing ALL the time. Some people say opera is for singers who can act a bit, while musicals are for actors that can sing a bit!

This term we're going to revisit a series of songs from the same musical. It was originally performed on stage in 1960 and was then made into an oscar-winning movie in 1968. The story is based on Charles Dickens' novel '**Oliver Twist**' – one of his most famous books. It's the story of the life and adventures of an orphan boy in Victorian London. Because he is a poor orphan, the story begins with Oliver in a **workhouse**.



An original poster for the movie of 'Oliver!'

Continued/...



A later photograph of workhouse children.

A workhouse was a place in Victorian times where very poor people could live if they worked for their food and lodgings. Workhouses were terrible places and the poor people in them, especially children, were treated very badly. They had very little to eat and it was more like being in prison.

This is the first song in the musical, where all the children in the workhouse are queueing up to get their daily meal. This was usually something called 'gruel' which was like a very weak, watery soup. It was often all they had

to eat all day. In the song, the children sing about their dreams of eating better food – and as much of it as they can!

In the video you can see the boys jealously watching the rich people who are in charge of the workhouse eating a huge banquet in the room next door. The main character Oliver has a solo line in the song – “Just thinking of growing fat...” and just at the end you see a character with a funny hat and a big stick enter the dining hall. This is Mr. Bumble the Beadle (a Beadle was a bit like a kind of Victorian policeman). He is important in Oliver’s story.

If you watch [this short clip](#) from the film you’ll see Oliver, with his gruel bowl in his hand, asking Mr. Bumble “Please Sir, I want some more.” Mr. Bumble can’t believe a boy could be so disobedient to ask for more and he sings a song threatening what he will do with him...



The children stare through a window at the workhouse owners tucking into a huge banquet.

**“Oliver, Oliver, never before has a boy
wanted more,
Oliver, Oliver, won’t ask for more when he knows what’s in store!
There’s a dark, thin, winding stairway without any banister,
Which we’ll throw him down...
And feed him on cockroaches served in a canister!”**

More boy?!



Mr. Bumble – the Beadle.

Continued/...



An original illustration from the book of 'Oliver Twist'.

This starts off Oliver's adventures and he soon leaves the workhouse to go to... well... if you don't know the story, I won't spoil it! You'll just have to wait until next week's 'Meridian Music of the Week' when we'll look at another song from the musical and catch up with the next part of Oliver's adventures.

When you listen to 'Food Glorious Food', notice the difference in sound between the opening verse and the choruses. I've attached the lyrics to the end of this newsletter. The words in the verse are sad because the children are singing about how badly they're fed. Because of this, Lionel Bart (the composer) writes the tune in a sad, **minor key**. But this changes in the choruses. Then the boys sing about all the wonderful food they're dreaming of and the music changes to a happier **major key**. These changes give the song its sad/happy structure. A clever musical trick by the composer.

Eugh!

In the original story by Charles Dickens, one of the workhouse boys says that he is so hungry that, if he didn't get an extra bowl of gruel a day, then one night he might **eat** the boy who slept next to him! The boy has such 'a wild, hungry eye' that the other boys believe he just might do it!

Listen & enjoy...

Mr. Mole

Music Teacher



Words to the song on the next page...



Food Glorious Food

Is it worth the waiting for? If we live 'til eighty-four
All we ever get is gruel!

Every day we say our prayer - Will they change the bill of fare?
Still we get the same old gruel!

There's not a crust, not a crumb can we find,
Can we beg, can we borrow, or cadge,
But there's nothing to stop us from getting a thrill
When we all close our eyes and imagine...

Food, glorious food! Hot sausage and mustard!
While we're in the mood - Cold jelly and custard!
Peas, pudding and saveloys! What next is the question?
Rich gentlemen have it, boys - In-di-gestion!
Food, glorious food! We're anxious to try it.
Three banquets a day - Our favourite diet!
Just picture a great big steak - Fried, roasted or stewed.
Oh, food, wonderful food, marvellous food, glorious food.

Food, glorious food! Don't care what it looks like
Burned! Underdone! Crude! Don't care what the cook's like.
Just thinking of growing fat - Our senses go reeling
One moment of knowing that full-up feeling!
Food, glorious food! What wouldn't we give for?
That extra bit more - that's all that we live for
Why should we be fated to do nothing but brood?
On food, Magical food, Wonderful food, Fabulous food, Heavenly food, Beautiful food,
Glorious food!