



Show Report

Footlights Tameside

Annie JR.
Lily Cast

16 July 2026

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

PRODUCTION	Annie JR. – Lily Cast
SOCIETY	Footlights Tameside
VENUE	Hyde Festival Theatre
GENRE	Musical
CAST SIZE	35
DIRECTOR	Josh Fyson
MUSICAL DIRECTOR	Joanie Edge
LEAD CHOREOGRAPHER	Hannah Lees
LIGHTING & SOUND	Ste Oliver-Grant & Daniel Oliver-Grant
BACKSTAGE CREW	Caitlyn Spurgeon, Aimee Bone, James Bradshaw, James Bradbury Erin Bradbury, Niamh Edge
CHAPERONES	Clara Selberg, Lady Sue Bradbury, Jayne Webber, Nicola Haughton, Karen Matthews, Tony George, Nicola Mulryan, Sally Morgan, Susan Beddows, Diane Laurent, Elliot Eve, Katie Costello & Hayley Waugh
COSTUMES	Tameside Youth Drama Group, Showstoppers, Sparks Dramatic Society & Drama Department
PROPERTIES	TYDG and Showstoppers, Sean From Stage Squad, Conor Hanvey Of Tameside College and Ace Entertainment Ltd
FRONT OF HOUSE	Hyde Festival Theatre Volunteers
TICKET SALES	Sparks EM
FILMING	Mike Berry
PHOTOGRAPHY	David Lee
REHEARSAL SPACE	Holden Clough

CAST LIST

Annie	Sophie M
Miss Hannigan	Bria E
Grace	Jessica C
Warbucks	Aleyna W
Molly	Emma G
Duffy	Megan R
Kate	Kaycee Jo C
Rooster	Robyn C

Lily	Jess T
July	Ayomide B
Tessie	Keeva G
Pepper	Daisy B
Sandy	Patrick H
Apple Seller	Liya G
Star-To-Be	Aoife E
Bert Healey	Keilan G
President FDR	Harry K
Dogcatcher	Noah R
Florence	Scarlett H
Orphan	Millie J
Mrs Pugh	Sydney B
Drake	Leah G
Bundles	Elijah M
Officer Ward	Madi R
Mrs Greer	Stevie G
Annette	Ruby E
Howe	Tommy M
Mary	Sofia G
Taryn	Isla-Rose M
Millie	Lilly R
Leiana	Georgia R
Rosie	Emma S
Cecille	Abella W

ENSEMBLE

	Marco F
	Allison B

DATE OF PERFORMANCE	Thursday 16th July 2026
DATE REPORT PUBLISHED	Saturday 18th July 2026
ADJUDICATOR ID	NSA1004
NSA LOGO ON POSTER	Yes
NSA IN PROGRAMME	No
PROGRAMME CLASS	Best Licensed Design

THE REVIEW

REVIEW WORD COUNT	1685
-------------------	------

STRONGEST ELEMENTS

Powerful Performances

- **Sophie M** as Annie delivered a confident and engaging portrayal of the title role, combining strong vocal ability, clear diction and believable characterisation to carry the production with maturity beyond her years.

Bold, Intelligent Direction and Structure

- **Josh Fyson**'s direction ensured every member of the company had the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the production. The opening prologue effectively established each orphan's individual character, whilst the emphasis on background acting throughout created a believable and engaging world on stage.

Commitment to Character

- **Consistent use of mime, reactive acting and individual characterisation created a believable world from the opening scene and strengthened the storytelling throughout.**

Returning to Hyde Festival Theatre to watch Footlights Tameside's production of Annie Jr., I was looking forward to seeing how a musical that is so well-known would be brought to life with a full youth cast in a condensed Jr. version. This production, directed by **Josh Fyson**, featured a large company of performers across a range of ages and experiences, with some cast members making their stage debut.

From the opening scene set in Miss Hannigan's orphanage, it was evident that this cast knew their characters well. I particularly enjoyed the use of the overture to allow each child playing an orphan to have their own chance to shine. As I looked across the stage, I saw a story coming

from each person's mime, and it was clear that the cast had worked hard on their miming abilities to create believable characters before anyone had even spoken. I also enjoyed the addition of bunk beds in the opening scene, as these helped to immediately establish the setting at the beginning of the show.

The title role of Annie was played by **Sophie M**, who gave a very confident and engaging performance. Sophie portrayed the character well throughout, with strong clarity in her spoken diction and singing parts. She maintained an American accent well throughout the entire performance and use of confident body language supported her to open up even further to the audience. What impressed me the most about Sophie however, was her vocal ability. Within her solo performances of some of the most well known songs- 'Maybe' and 'Tomorrow', she displayed vocal range and clarity beyond her years. As she continues to develop, even greater emphasis on emotional intensity during more vulnerable scenes would strengthen her performance even further. That being said, she delivered a confident and assured character and is certainly one to watch as she gains more experience.

As Miss Hannigan, **Bria E** embraced the character's larger than life personality and clearly enjoyed the role. Vocally, she displayed a confident singing voice, particularly during her solo numbers where her assured belting voice added strength to her performance, although there were some occasions where moving into her head voice would've supported her in sustaining the more difficult notes towards the end of the song. Her characterisation became noticeably stronger during these musical moments, allowing her confidence to shine. Continuing to carry the same vocal confidence from her singing into her spoken dialogue would strengthen the overall consistency of the character, but overall she was enjoyable to watch.

Jessica C gave a lovely sincere performance as Grace Farrell, bringing the warmth and kindness required for the role. She displayed clear diction and strong posture to support her characterisation. Vocally, she displayed a pleasant contemporary quality with smooth vibrato that suited the score well. She displayed a caring and genuine relationship with Mr Oliver Warbucks, played by **Aleyna W**. Aleyna presented the part of the uptight businessman well, with good posture and physicality, creating a strong stage presence from her entrance. I liked how she used this to show her character warming as his relationship grew with Annie, letting go and physically opening up more to the audience towards the end. At times, a greater variation in vocal expression during spoken dialogue would've added further emotional contrast to the role, but her confident stage presence and commitment ensured she remained a convincing portrayal of the character.

Robyn C and **Jess T** made the most of their opportunities as Rooster and Lily. Both performers had already caught my eye for their background acting during ensemble numbers such as 'I think I'm gonna like it here', so I was happy to see them stepping into a speaking role later on in the show. They both fully committed to their characters, displaying strong physicality that created an entertaining partnership during their scenes together. I also appreciated the harmonies towards the end of 'easy street', with Mrs Hannigan, as these added even greater depth to their vocal performance.

The Senior Ensemble (F3 Performers) also made a valuable contribution throughout the production, particularly during I Think I'm Gonna Like It Here and N.Y.C.. They used background acting effectively to establish the atmosphere of each scene, whether portraying the household staff at the Warbucks mansion or the bustling citizens of New York. Their commitment to character helped bring these settings to life and added another layer of authenticity to the storytelling.

The Junior Ensemble (F1 & 2 performers) created a playful and energetic atmosphere with their bold movement, facial expressions and volume during group singing. Throughout their scenes and songs, it was evident that each performer had created an individual personality for their character, rather than blending into one collective group. I enjoyed watching their background reactive acting, particularly in the first scene between Miss Hanigan and Annie, where Annie is found in the laundry basket attempting to escape. This emphasis on characterisation added natural authenticity to their relationships. Their choreography was performed confidently, and despite the large numbers on stage, was generally well-timed.

Amongst the orphans, **Scarlett H** particularly caught my attention as Florence. She displayed strong facial expressions and dance ability throughout, remaining fully engaged, even when not the main focus of attention. As July, **Ayomide B** also stood out through her commitment to character. She brought lovely energy to her role and vocally performed with confidence and clarity.

Keeva G as Tessie brought plenty of personality to the role, with her repeated line, "Oh my goodness! Oh my goodness!" delivered with good comic timing. Molly, played by **Emma G** made the most of her speaking and singing opportunities, delivering her lines with confidence and very clear diction and sincerity, making her a memorable member of the orphanage.

One creative addition to the production was the use of a puppet to portray Sandy. This was an effective way of bringing Annie's loyal companion to the stage and allowed the character to be included naturally within the story. **Patrick H** handled the puppet confidently throughout, maintaining consistent movement and ensuring Sandy remained an engaging part of Annie's journey. Away from his role as Sandy, Patrick also caught my attention during the ensemble numbers. He performed with confidence and commitment throughout, maintaining strong energy and characterisation even when he wasn't the focus of attention. His stage presence remained consistent, and it was evident that he approached every moment on stage with enthusiasm.

The remaining supporting roles all contributed well to the storytelling. **Harry K** gave a confident performance as President FDR, carrying on with no hesitation despite a microphone issue that was out of his control. **Leah G**, as Drake, displayed good posture and measured delivery throughout, portraying the loyal butler with believable professionalism. Smaller featured roles throughout the production helped to create a well-rounded cast where every performer had an opportunity to contribute.

Amongst these supporting roles however, two in particular impressed me. **Keilan G** as news presenter Bert Healy and **Aoife E** as Star-to-be were the embodiment of the saying that there are no small parts. Keilan had very strong stage presence, diction and confident body language and Aoife presented a lovely singing voice that left me wanting to hear more.

The costumes successfully established the setting from the outset, with each character appropriately dressed to reflect their role within the story. The orphan costumes contrasted nicely with the smarter attire worn by Warbucks and his household, helping the audience immediately understand the different worlds Annie finds herself in. Whilst the majority of the props were used effectively, there were a few key items, such as Annie's locket and the note, that I felt would have strengthened the storytelling had they been incorporated into the production. Including these props would provide clearer visual references for the audience during some important narrative moments.

The set was simple, but generally effective as it established the location of each scene well. Scene changes were generally well organised and ensured the production continued to move at a steady pace. There were, however, occasions where members of the backstage crew entered the stage in full view of the audience whilst scenes were still in progress or under full lighting. Exploring alternatives such as the use of blackouts, the half cloth, or even allowing the performers themselves to manoeuvre selected set pieces in character could help maintain the illusion of the production and create smoother transitions between scenes.

The choreography by **Hannah Lees** was a strong element to the show, with choreography being well suited to the age range and ability of the company, ensuring every performer could contribute confidently whilst maintaining the energy expected from Annie Jr. Musical Direction by **Joanie Edge** supported this, ensuring the company produced a confident overall vocal sound throughout the production. Group numbers were generally well balanced, whilst many principal performers displayed clear knowledge of their music.

Lighting and sound, operated by **Ste Oliver-Grant** and **Daniel Oliver Grant**, mostly supported the performers well throughout. Lighting states effectively established changes in location and mood, with natural washes in the more natural scenes contrasting the colourful lighting in musical numbers nicely. In the future, the company could delve into the lighting even further to enhance scenes by using a wider range of lighting options such as spotlights and lighting up the 'ashtray' part of stage whilst performers are there so they can be clearly seen. Overall, the lighting was nice, simplistic and operated well. Sound was generally well balanced, with music cues coming in consistently on time. There were times, however, where the microphone levels could've been adjusted slightly to ensure the vocal performances were not overbearing in comparison to the music.

Overall, Annie Jr. showcased the enthusiasm, commitment and talent of Footlights Tameside's young performers. It was evident that a great deal of hard work had gone into creating a production in which every member of the company was given an opportunity to contribute and develop their skills. Thank you to Tony, the Hyde Festival Theatre volunteers and everyone involved for bringing Annie Jr to the Stage. I look forward to seeing what Footlights Tameside brings to the stage next.

PHOTOGRAPHS







PROGRAMME

