

Agape Theatre Company's "Annie"

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December 5, 2025

Theatre reviews by Ken Klingenmeier w/ Larry Adams, Adam Crowe, Glenn Dobbs, Veronique Duprey, Jay Hemphill, Kellyn Merrell, Carrie Neal, Vickie Cornelius Phipps, Amber Shatto, and Daniel Shock

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reviewed by Ken Klingenmeier

Ever since it exploded into American (and worldwide) consciousness in 1977, the musical *Annie*, has held a special place in our hearts. Who can't sing a little bit of "Tomorrow" or "It's the Hard Knock Life"? The show has been done and redone countless times, and it always leaves a satisfying feeling that the world is a kinder place.

Agape Theatre Company brings its version of the show to Theatre at the Fort in Lawrence. Directed by April Barnes with Musical Direction by Misty Irwin, Choreography by Ruth Bowen and Costumes by committee – Agape's *Annie* is a celebration of theatre practices and community.

Over fifty men, women and children have joined together for this onstage excursion and through much hard and joyful work, have created a charming production of this well-known musical. What I saw tonight was a variety of talents and levels of talent – seemingly shaped with two simple instructions – take chances and have fun.

That first instruction is a very important one. Years ago, as I was finding my footing in my early theatre classes – we were encouraged to take chances in our work. It pushes the actor to go beyond their natural limits. I was so pleased to witness this quality in so many of the *Annie* performances. And *everyone* looked to be having fun. Kudos to all of the show's directors for stressing and allowing these aspects to grow in their preparations.

There are more than a few shining moments here: in the title role, Caroline Golbov meets and exceeds expectations. Blessed with a sweet voice, and a touching ability to express her emotions, young Ms. Golbov gives Annie quite a bit of heart-rending presence. Playing opposite her is a group of talented adult actors: Benjamin Tatum is smooth and reflective as Oliver Warbucks, Deborah Bowen is an effusive Miss Hannigan, and Marcy Renken is polished and poised as Warbucks' secretary, Grace Farrell.

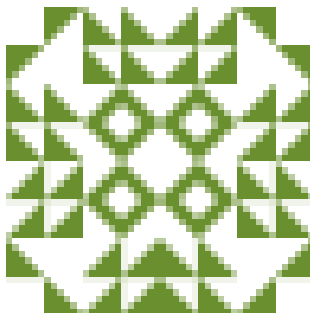
Many of the younger actors provide their own sparkling touches: Felicity Britt enlarges the role of butler Drake with physical comedy and schtick, John Lewis makes radio performer Bert Healy a memorable character (backed by Elenore Grindean, Analiese Irvin, and Genevieve Wilson as the Boylan Sisters, and Ike Moonshower as radio ventriloquist Wacky), and Ephram Finchum and Rachel Majorins combine forces to create comic "villains" as Rooster Hannigan and Lily St. Regis. All of these young performers took chances in creating their roles and it paid off with wonderfully imaginative characterizations.

Lastly – the cadre of orphan girls deserve notice. This group of 14 young ladies did one heck of an impressive job through their many songs and choreography. Their big "Fully Dressed" number was especially noteworthy.

Bottomline: I was so glad to hear the massive cheer of accomplishment come from behind the final curtain as it closed. What these actors and actresses have produced, along with all their supporting directors and crew, is a memorable personal triumph. Agape Theatre Company is such a wonderful outlet for these achievements. Their *Annie* has meant so much to so many. Congratulations to Kathy Phipps, who leads this company with a definite goal of enriching children's and families' lives through theatre.

This show is a total and complete sellout. No tickets are available for any of the 4 remaining shows. On that note – more Congrats to the Agape Theatre Company!

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1. *Kathy Phipps*

Dec 05, 2025 @ 10:38:03

Dear Ken,

Thank you for much for your kind review. I'm extremely grateful.

We're an educational theater group who takes young people of all talent levels, and I'm so very, very thankful for your support and encouragement.

Warmly,

Kathy Phipps

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