

**ARTS CLUB THEATRE COMPANY
TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE
2008/2009 Season**



Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage
May 7–July 19, 2009

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WELCOME

This guide was created to encourage teachers, students, and audience members to explore the play further, either before or after the actual performance.

If you have any questions, comments or suggestions for the guide, please contact our group sales representative at 604.687.5315 x253, or by email at groups@artsclub.com

About the Company

The Arts Club of Vancouver was founded in 1958 as a private club for artists, musicians, and actors, and officially became the Arts Club Theatre in 1964 when the company opened its first stage at a converted gospel hall at Seymour and Davie Streets.

Now in its 45th season of producing professional live theatre in Vancouver, the Arts Club Theatre Company is a non-profit charitable organization that operates two theatres, the Granville Island Stage and the Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage, on a year-round basis. Our popular productions range from musicals and contemporary comedies to new works and classics. The company also tours provincially on a regular basis, with a three-show season presented at venues around British Columbia.

Les Misérables is generously supported by presenting sponsor



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SYNOPSIS

ACT I

Les Misérables begins at a prison in Digne, France in 1815, where imprisoned men are forced to labour ("Overture/Work Song"). After 19 years of imprisonment (five for stealing bread for his starving sister and her family, and the rest for trying to escape), Jean Valjean, Prisoner 24601, is released on parole by the policeman Javert. By law, Valjean must display a yellow ticket-of-leave, which condemns him as an outcast as he tries to start anew ("On Parole"). He then meets the Bishop of Digne, who offers food and shelter. Nevertheless, Valjean repays the bishop by stealing some silver, and is soon quickly caught by the police. However the bishop lies to save Valjean, then gives him two silver candlesticks and asks him to start a new, honest life ("Valjean Arrested, Valjean Forgiven"). Humbled by the bishop's mercy and kindness, Valjean decides to follow the bishop's advice and breaks his parole as he tears apart his yellow ticket-of-leave ("What Have I Done?").

Eight years later, Valjean has assumed a new identity as Monsieur Madeleine, a factory owner and mayor of the town of Montreuil-sur-Mer. One of his workers, Fantine, gets into a fight when the other workers discover that she is sending money to her secret illegitimate child, who is living with an innkeeper and his wife ("At the End of the Day"). The Mayor initially breaks up the conflict, but asks his factory foreman to resolve it. When asked, the other women demand Fantine's dismissal. Because she had previously rejected his advances, the foreman agrees and throws Fantine out.

Fantine sings about her broken dreams and about the father of her daughter who left them alone ("I Dreamed a Dream"). Desperate for money, she sells her locket, and her hair, before becoming a prostitute ("Lovely Ladies"). When she fights with a prospective customer, she is arrested by Javert ("Fantine's Arrest"). Valjean arrives, learns how Fantine was fired from his factory, and orders Javert to take her to a hospital instead.

"The Mayor" then rescues a local man (Fauchelevent) who is pinned by a runaway cart ("The Runaway Cart"). This reminds Javert of the abnormal strength of Jean Valjean, who he has been tracking for years for breaking parole. However, Javert assures "The Mayor" that Valjean has just been recently arrested and will be in court later in the day. Unable to see an innocent man go to prison, Valjean confesses to the court that he is the real Prisoner 24601, showing the convict's brand on his chest as a proof ("Who Am I?").

Before returning to prison, Valjean visits the dying Fantine and promises to find and look after her daughter Cosette ("Come to Me"/"Fantine's Death"). When Javert arrives to arrest him, Valjean asks three more days to fetch Cosette, but Javert refuses to believe his honest intentions ("The Confrontation"). Valjean eventually knocks Javert out and escapes.

The scene then shifts to an inn outside Montreuil run by the Thénardiens, where Cosette has been living. The Thénardiens have been abusing the little girl. Cosette dreams of a better life ("Castle on a Cloud") before Madame Thénardier sends her to fetch water in from a well in the woods. The inn fills up for the evening, and the Thénardiens use several methods to cheat their customers ("Master of the House"). Valjean finds Cosette fetching water and pays the Thénardiens to let him take Cosette away ("The Bargain"/"The Thénardier Waltz of Treachery").

Nine years pass, and Paris is in an uproar because popular leader General Lamarque, the only man in the government who shows mercy to the poor, is ill and may die soon. The young street urchin Gavroche mingles with the whores and beggars on the street, while students Marius and Enjolras discuss the likely demise of the general ("Look Down").

A street gang led by the Thénardiens prepares to ambush Valjean, whom Thénardier recognises as the man who took Cosette ("The Robbery"). As they set up, Éponine sees Marius, whom she is secretly in love with, and warns him to stay away. As Marius tries to ask Éponine about what is going on, he accidentally bumps into Cosette and immediately falls in love with her. The Thénardiens attempt to rob Valjean and Cosette, who are rescued by Javert, who does not recognize Valjean until after he makes his escape ("Javert's Intervention"). Javert gazes at the night sky, comparing his hunt of Valjean and justice to the order of the stars ("Stars"). Gavroche overhears Javert and reasserts that he is the one who "runs this town." Meanwhile Marius, although he does not yet know Cosette's name, persuades a reluctant Éponine to help find her ("Éponine's Errand").

The scene shifts to political meeting in a small café where a group of idealistic students led by Enjolras gather to prepare for a revolution they are sure will erupt after the death of General Lamarque ("The ABC Café/Red and Black"). Marius arrives late, filled with thoughts of love for Cosette, whose name he still does not know. When Gavroche brings the news of the General's death, the students march out into the streets to whip up popular support ("Do You Hear the People Sing?").

Cosette is also consumed by thoughts of Marius, and Valjean realises that his daughter has grown up but refuses to tell her about his past or her mother ("Rue Plumet—In My Life"). In spite of her own feelings, Éponine leads Marius to Cosette ("A Heart Full of Love"), and then prevents her father's gang from robbing Valjean's house ("The Attack on Rue Plumet"). Valjean, convinced it was Javert who was lurking outside his house, tells Cosette they must prepare to flee the country ("My God, Cosette!").

On the eve of the revolution, Valjean prepares to go into exile; Cosette and Marius part in despair of ever meeting again; Éponine mourns the loss of Marius; Marius decides to join the other students as they prepare for the upcoming conflict; Javert plans to spy on the students and learn their secrets; and the Thénardiens look forward to stealing from the corpses of those who will be killed during the battle to come ("One Day More").

ACT II

As the students prepare to build a barricade ("Upon These Stones—Building the Barricade"), Javert, disguised as one of the rebels, volunteers to "spy" on the government troops. Meanwhile, Marius notices that Éponine has joined the revolutionaries, and then sends her with a letter to Cosette. Valjean intercepts the letter. Éponine decides, despite what he has said to her, to rejoin Marius at the barricade ("On My Own").

The students build their barricade ("Upon These Stones—At the Barricade") and then defy an army warning to surrender or die. Javert comes back and lies to the students about the government's plans to attack ("Javert's Arrival"). Gavroche then exposes Javert as a spy ("Little People"). Éponine is shot when she returns to the barricades and dies in Marius's arms ("A Little Fall of Rain"). Valjean also arrives at the barricades in search of Marius as the first battle

erupts, and saves Enjolras by shooting a sniper ("The First Attack"). As a reward, he asks to be the one to kill Javert, but instead releases him and even gives him his address. The students settle down for a night ("Drink With Me"), while Valjean prays to God to save Marius from the onslaught that is to come ("Bring Him Home").

As dawn approaches, Enjolras realises that the people have abandoned them, and sends the women and fathers of children away from the barricades, but resolves that they should fight on ("Dawn of Anguish"). With ammunition running out during the second attack, Gavroche runs out to collect more, but is shot dead by the army ("The Second Attack/The Death of Gavroche"). The army gives one last warning to surrender, but the rebels refuse, and everyone is killed except Valjean and Marius ("The Final Battle").

Carrying a wounded Marius on his back, Valjean escapes through the sewers. Meanwhile, Thénardier is also in the sewers, stealing valuables off the dead bodies that have been dumped from the battle, laughing that he is doing a "service to the town" ("Dog Eat Dog"). Thénardier robs Marius as Valjean is resting, and then escapes when he sees Valjean getting up. When Valjean reaches the sewer's issue, he runs into Javert, who has been waiting for him. Valjean begs Javert to give him one more hour to bring Marius to a doctor, and Javert reluctantly agrees. After Valjean leaves, Javert realizes Valjean is not purely evil as he always thought. Unable to deal with losing his lifelong view of the world, he commits suicide by throwing himself in the Seine ("Javert's Suicide").

Back on the streets, several women mourn the deaths of the young students ("Turning"). Marius also mourns for his friends ("Empty Chairs at Empty Tables"). As he wonders who saved him from the barricades, Cosette comforts Marius by telling him that she will never go away ("Every Day") and they reaffirm their love ("A Heart Full of Love-Reprise"). Valjean then confesses to Marius that he is an escaped convict and tells him he must go away because his presence puts Cosette in danger ("Valjean's Confession"). Valjean makes Marius promise never to tell Cosette, and Marius makes only a half-hearted attempt to hold him back.

Marius and Cosette are married ("Wedding Chorale"). The Thénardiens then crash wedding reception and tell Marius that Valjean is a murderer, saying they saw him carrying a corpse in the sewers after the barricades fell. When Thénardier shows him the ring he took from the corpse, Marius realizes that the "corpse" was he, and that Valjean saved his life that night. After Marius punches Thénardier and the newlyweds leave, the Thénardiens enjoy the party and celebrate their survival ("Beggars at the Feast").

Meanwhile, Valjean prepares for his death, having nothing left to live for. Just as the ghosts of Fantine and Éponine arrive to take him to heaven, Cosette and Marius rush in, just in time to bid farewell to Valjean and for Marius to thank him for saving his life ("Epilogue"). Valjean gives Cosette his confession to read just before he dies, and the souls of Éponine and Fantine guide him to paradise with a last reprise of "Do You Hear the People Sing?" ("Finale").

SONGS FROM LES MISÉRABLES

ACT I

Overture/Work Song—Javert, Valjean, Chain Gang

On Parole-Farmer, Labourer, Valjean

Valjean Arrested/Valjean Forgiven—Bishop, Valjean, Constables

What Have I Done?—Valjean

At The End of the Day—Poor, Foreman,
Fantine, Factory Girls, Valjean

I Dreamed a Dream—Fantine

Lovely Ladies—Sailors, Hag, Fantine, Whores, Pimp

Fantine's Arrest—Customer, Fantine, Javert, Valjean

The Runaway Cart—Valjean, Javert, Victim, Townspeople

Who Am I? (The Trial)—Valjean

Come To Me (Fantine's Death)—Fantine, Valjean

Confrontation—Javert, Valjean

Castle on a Cloud—Cosette, Madame Thénardier.

Master of the House—Thénardier, Madame Thénardier, Customers

The Thénardier Waltz of Treachery—Madame Thénardier, Thénardier, Valjean

Look Down/The Streets—Beggars, Gavroche, Enjolras, Marius, Pimp, young whore, old woman

The Robbery/Javert's Intervention (Another Brawl)—Thénardier, Madame Thénardier, Javert,
Valjean, Éponine

Stars—Javert, Gavroche

Éponine's Errand—Éponine, Marius

ABC Cafe/Red and Black—Enjolras, Marius, Grantaire, Students, Gavroche

Do You Hear The People Sing?—Enjolras, Students, Beggars

I Saw Him Once—Cosette

In My Life—Cosette, Valjean, Marius, Éponine

A Heart Full Of Love—Marius, Cosette,
Éponine

The Attack on Rue Plumet—Thénardier,
Thieves, Éponine, Marius, Valjean, Cosette

One Day More—Full Company

ACT II

Upon These Stones (Building The Barricade)—Enjolras, Javert, Éponine, Marius

The Letter—Éponine, Valjean

On My Own—Éponine

Upon These Stones (At the Barricade)—Enjolras, Students, Army Officer

Javert's Arrival at the Barricade—Javert, Enjolras

Little People—Gavroche, Students, Javert

A Little Fall of Rain (Éponine's Death)—Éponine, Marius
Night of Anguish—Enjolras, Students, Valjean
The First Attack—Enjolras, Students, Valjean, Javert
Drink With Me—Grantaire, Students
Bring Him Home—Valjean
Dawn of Anguish—Enjolras, Students
The Second Attack/The Death of Gavroche—Enjolras, Marius, Valjean, Gavroche, Students
The Final Attack—Enjolras, Students
Dog Eat Dog (The Sewers)—Thénardier, Valjean, Javert
Javert's Suicide—Javert
Turning—Women
Empty Chairs at Empty Tables—Marius
Every Day (Marius and Cosette)—Marius, Cosette, Valjean
A Heart Full of Love (Reprise)—Marius, Cosette
Wedding Chorale/Beggars at the Feast—Thénardier, Madame Thénardier, Marius, Cosette, Guests
Finale—Valjean, Fantine, Marius, Cosette, Éponine, Company

AWARDS

1985 Plays and Players London Theatre Critics' Awards

- Best New Musical (nominations, 11 out of 23)

1987 Tony Awards (Nominations and Winners)

- Tony Award for Best Musical - Cameron Mackintosh, producer; Claude-Michel Schönberg, music; Alain Boublil and Herbert Kretzmer, lyrics (WINNER)
- Tony Award for Best Book of a Musical - Claude-Michel Schönberg and Alain Boublil (WINNER)
- Tony Award for Best Original Score Claude-Michel Schönberg, Alain Boublil, and Herbert Kretzmer (WINNER)
- Tony Award for Best Performance by a Leading Actor in a Musical - Terrence Mann
- Tony Award for Best Performance by a Leading Actor in a Musical - Colm Wilkinson
- Tony Award for Best Performance by a Featured Actor in a Musical - Michael Maguire (WINNER)
- Tony Award for Best Performance by a Featured Actress in a Musical - Frances Ruffelle (WINNER)
- Tony Award for Best Performance by a Featured Actress in a Musical - Judy Kuhn
- Tony Award for Best Scenic Design - John Napier (WINNER)
- Tony Award for Best Costume Design - Andreane Neofitou
- Tony Award for Best Lighting Design - David Hersey (WINNER)
- Tony Award for Best Direction of a Musical - Trevor Nunn and John Caird (WINNER)

ABOUT VICTOR HUGO

Victor Marie Hugo, born in Besançon, France, Feb. 26, 1802, was the preeminent French man of letters of the 19th century and the leading exponent and champion of romanticism. A conservative in youth, Hugo later became deeply involved in republican politics, and his work touched upon many of the major currents of artistic and political thought of his time. Although best known in the English-speaking world for his two major novels, *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1831; translated as *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, 1833) and *Les Misérables* (1862; English translation 1862), Hugo was also the outstanding French lyric poet of the 19th century.



Until age 10, Hugo traveled with his father, a general under Napoleon. He then settled (1812) in Paris with his mother, whose strong royalist sympathies young Hugo shared. He had early success as a poet and novelist and in 1822 married his childhood sweetheart, Adele Foucher. The home of the young couple became a meeting place of romantic writers, among them Alfred de Vigny and the critic Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve, whose search for freedom in art is exemplified in Hugo's epic play *Cromwell* (1827). The play's preface was the most widely read and influential manifesto of romantic literary theory. In it, Hugo spoke of freeing art from the formal constraints of classicism so that it might reflect the full extent of human nature. Many of Hugo's novels, like his dramas, use historical settings. *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* is a powerfully melodramatic story of medieval Paris that deals with a deformed bell ringer's devotion to a wild gypsy girl. *Les Misérables* centers on the life of Jean Valjean, a victim of social injustice, but includes a multitude of scenes and incidents that offer a panoramic view of post-Napoleonic France and the early years of the 19th century.

The publication of Hugo's third collection of poems, *Odes and Ballads* (1826), marked the beginning of a period of intense creativity. During the next 17 years Hugo published essays, three novels, five volumes of poems, and the major part of his dramatic works. In 1843, however, the failure of his verse drama *Les Burgraves*, followed by the death of his beloved daughter Leopoldine, interrupted his prodigious creativity. In 1845 he accepted a political post in the constitutional government of King Louis Philippe and in 1848 became a representative of the people after Louis Napoleon Bonaparte became president of the Second Republic. When Napoleon seized complete power in 1851, Hugo's republican beliefs drove him into exile, first to Brussels and then to the Channel Islands, where he continued to write savage denunciations of the French government.

In exile, accompanied by his devoted mistress Juliette Drouet, Hugo reached maturity as a writer, producing the first volumes of his visionary epic poem *Legend of the Centuries* (1859-83), *Les Misérables*, and *Contemplations* (1856), often considered his finest collection of poems. He returned to Paris after the fall of the Second Empire (1870) to find himself a national hero. He was elected a member of the National Assembly, then a senator of the Third Republic.

The last two decades of his life were saddened by the deaths of his sons, wife, and mistress, but he continued to write poetry and remained active in politics until 1878, when his health began to fail. His death on May 22, 1885, was an occasion of national mourning and he received a state funeral.

FROM PAGE TO STAGE TO SCREEN: ADAPTATIONS OF *LES MISÉRABLES*

Les Misérables, first published in 1862 in French, was almost immediately translated into English, beginning a long history of adaptations and interpretations for the lengthy novel. Although Hugo's novel was a huge commercial success, the critics were not kind. French novelist Gustav Flaubert could find within it "neither truth nor greatness." Baudelaire reviewed the work glowingly in newspapers, but in private castigated it as "tasteless and inept." Nevertheless, the sprawling novel has spawned countless translations, adaptations, sequels and films.

Currently, there are at least six English translations of *Les Misérables*. In Hugo's original French version, which weighs in at well over 1200 pages, there are numerous diversions and digressions that will mean little to contemporary readers. (For example, there is a long digression about the evolution of language and dialects that goes on for many pages.) General readers will enjoy an abridged version more than an unabridged one, which has more use to scholars of Hugo and French literature.



Since the birth of the medium, *Les Misérables* has proven a fertile source for film makers. The first was released in 1907, by Alice Guy Blaché, and was entitled *On the Barricade*. It adapted the uprising scenes from the novel for a short film. In 1909, American director J. Stuart Blackton released a silent version, which unleashed the flood of versions that are still being made to this day. There are more than 45 films inspired by or adapted from *Les Misérables*, including versions in Japanese (*Aa Mujo*, 1929), Hindi (*Kundan*, 1955), and Turkish (*Sefiler*, 1967). The most recent (1998) Hollywood take on the book starred Liam Neeson as Jean Valjean, Uma Thurman as Fantine, Geoffry Rush as Javert, and Claire Daines as Cosette.

Aside from film, *Les Misérables* has inspired a short English-language children's adaptation titled *Jean Val Jean*; a seven-part series for radio by Orson Welles (1937); a 1998 Japanese versus fighting game, *Arm Jo* (pronounced *Amu Jo*, which is a pun on the title of *Les Misérables* in Japanese ("Aa, Mujo," meaning "Oh, Cruelty")); a 2001 BBC 25-part radio dramatization, with a cast of 27; and a sequel entitled *Cosette, or the Time of Illusions* by François Cérésa that Victor Hugo's descendants succeeded in suppressing after a lengthy trial and appeal. In January 2007, Nippon Animation released a *Les Misérables* anime series (consisting of 52 episodes) under the title *Les Misérables: Shojo Cosette*.

As well, Jean Valjean's prisoner number (24601) has appeared in countless television shows and popular culture outlets, including twice in *The Simpsons*, *Southpark*, *Arrested Development*, and *Twin Peaks*. Although mentioned only twice in the novel, this number is the one that captured the popular imagination, probably because it features prominently in the musical. The musical itself has been parodied on such TV shows as *South Park*, *Family Guy*, *Scrubs*, *Animaniacs*, *Saturday Night Live* and *Seinfeld*.

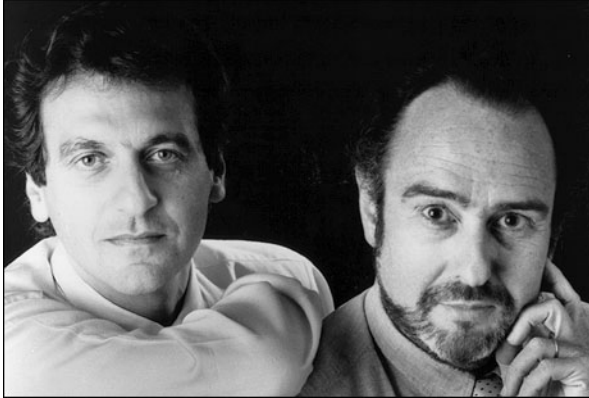


THE CREATIVE TEAM

Alain Boublil, Lyricist and Librettist b. Mar. 5, 1941 (Tunis, Tunisia)

Claude-Michel Schönberg, Composer b. July 6, 1944 (Vannes, France)

Inspired by the success of *Jesus Christ Superstar*, Alain Boublil and composer Claude-Michel Schönberg collaborated on a rock opera, *La Revolution Francaise* (1973). Like *Superstar*, the studio recording led to a well-received stage production. They repeated this pattern with *Abbacadabra* (1983), a musical for children using songs by the rock group Abba.

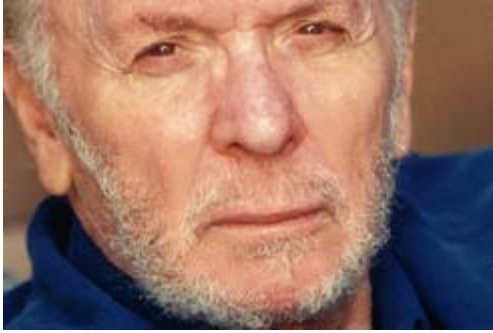


With a clear preference for epic, romantic tales, Boublil and Schönberg went on to write two international sensations. Their adaptation of Victor Hugo's novel *Les Misérables* also began as a recording, had a Paris staging in 1980, and was translated into English for a London production in 1985. The concept album and smash-hit Parisian production of this epic work attracted the kind of international attention no French musical had known for more than a century. An English translation achieved phenomenal success in

London (1985) and New York (1987), winning every major award, running well over a decade in both cities and spawning companies all over the world. The Broadway version received the Tony for Best Musical in 1987, and ran into the next century. Affectionately known as *Les Miz*, it was produced successfully worldwide, winning almost every imaginable theatrical and musical award.

Schönberg and Boublil next reset the tragedy of *Madame Butterfly* in the maelstrom of the Vietnam War, and entitled it *Miss Saigon*. Written in English, it premiered in London in 1989 and reached Broadway in 1991. It had long runs in both cities, and has toured the world, earning hundreds of millions of dollars. Since 1996, Schönberg and Boublil's *Martin Guerre* has had several productions but has only achieved mixed critical and commercial results. Their 2006 *Pirate Queen*, based on the life of a real female Irish pirate, did not achieve the critical and audience success of *Miss Saigon* and *Les Misérables*. The team worked together on the world premiere of the new musical *Marguerite*, which will also included music by Michel Legrand and lyrics by Herbert Kretzmer. *Marguerite*, set during World War II in occupied Paris, and inspired by the romantic novel *La Dame aux camélias* by Alexandre Dumas, fils, is about the mistress of a high-ranking German officer who attracts the love of a musician half her age. The musical premiered in May 2008 at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket in London. The musical premiered on May 6 2008 and runs until November 1 at the Royal Haymarket Theatre in London.

Herbert Kretzmer, English Lyricist b. October 1925 (Orange Free State, South Africa)



Kretzmer settled in London in 1954, where he wrote for several Fleet Street newspapers as a feature writer, interviewer, theatre critic, and television critic, during which time he was awarded two British Press Awards.

During the early 1960s he contributed regular songs to the satirical television series, *That Was the Week That Was*. He wrote the comic songs "Goodness Gracious Me", and "Bangers and Mash" which were hits for Peter Sellers and Sophia Loren, and the

former of which won him an Ivor Novello Award. He also wrote the lyrics of the chart-topping Charles Aznavour song "She", and has collaborated with Aznavour for many years, including lyricist duties on "Yesterday When I Was Young".

In 1985, he was invited by producer Cameron Mackintosh to write the lyrics for the London production of the French musical theatre import *Les Misérables*, by Schonberg and Boublil. He is an Honourary Dr. of Letters at American International University in London, the Jimmy Kennedy Award, British Academy of Songwriters, Composers and Authors, and was appointed Chevalier De L'Ordre Des Arts Et Des Lettres in 1998.

THE MUSICAL GENRE: WHO'S WHO IN THE MAKING OF A MUSICAL

Librettist

Also called the book writer, the librettist creates the book—or script—of a musical. In musicals where the dialogue is almost completely replaced by music (*Cats*, *Phantom of the Opera*, *Les Misérables*), the librettist is essentially responsible for making sure everything weaves into a coherent, dramatic flow.

Composer and Lyricist

The composer writes the music, and the lyricist writes the words. It is not unusual for one person to act as both composer and lyricist. Some lyricists act as their own librettists. Only a very few people, such as George M. Cohan, Noel Coward, Meredith Willson, and Jonathan Larson have succeeded as composer, lyricist, and librettist.

For many years, Broadway composers and lyricists made much of their income from the sale of sheet music. With the change in musical tastes and the near disappearance of sheet music, they get little beyond the share of 2% of a show's profits and, if the show is ever leased for international and amateur productions, part of the long-term rights income. The only way for theatrical composers or lyricists to “strike it rich” is to become their own producer, as Andrew Lloyd Webber did with his Really Useful Company.

Director

Up until the 1940s, writers and producers conceived the concept that the director was expected to stage and supervise rehearsals in a way that made their concept shine through. Starting in the 1950s, directors took an increasing degree of control over the creative process. Today, few producers or writers have the clout to overrule a top director's decisions.

Choreographer

The person who stages the dances and musical scenes of a show was once called the “dance director,” but the title changed when ballet choreographers like George Balanchine and Agnes de Mille began working on musicals. A choreographer must give a musical a sense of movement that helps hold the show together visually. Since the 1940s, directors who also choreograph have staged many musicals.

Set Designer

Until the 1970s, even the most lavish Broadway productions used painted flats as sets, creating 3-D paintings that were more suggestive than realistic. Since then, sets have become increasingly realistic, taking up more space and far more of a show's budget. Sets must move swiftly, allowing a show to flow seamlessly from one scene to the next.

Lighting Designer

This is one of the least noticed and yet most crucial members of the creative team. Costumes, sets, and actors are not worth much if no one can see them! With the exception of the music, nothing sets the mood for a scene as quickly or clearly as the lighting.

Costume Designer

Chances are whatever you see an actor wearing onstage did not come off a store rack. Stage costumes have to stand up to heavy use and daily cleanings, and last for as long as possible without looking threadbare or tattered. Designers must balance sturdiness with the needs of

performers to dance and sing comfortably. When the original *Kiss Me Kate* (1948) ran short of money, designer Lemuel Ayers used heavy-duty curtain fabric for some of the period costumes.

Sound Designer

In the 1950s, a stage manager just turned on some foot mikes at curtain time. Now, in many productions, every principal cast member wears a wireless body mike to provide full amplification—a complex proposition when there are dozens in a cast. Sound staff are on hand during all performances to continually adjust every microphone's setting—a task managed from a bank of computers at the rear of the orchestra section.

Musical Director

In charge of hiring and managing the orchestra, the musical director has a tremendous effect on the sound and pacing of performances. A musical director must be ready to smooth over technical glitches, reassure uncertain understudies, and handle anything else that might stop the music.

Orchestrator

The composer writes the melodies, but the orchestrator determines what those melodies will sound like when an orchestra plays them. The challenge for orchestrators is to make sure their arrangements do not drown out the singers—a task made much easier by electronic amplification. Most composers let orchestrators create the overture as well as the underscoring and scene-change music.

FRANCE FROM 1815–1848: A HISTORICAL TIMELINE OF *LES MISÉRABLES*

1813

- The Battle of Dresden; French victory
- Austria, Prussia, and Russia join forces to defeat France
- Arthur Wellington drives the French entirely out of Spain in the Battle of Vittoria

1814

- Allied forces invade France by entering through Paris
- Napoleon comes down from his throne and Louis XVII becomes King of France until 1824
- Treaty of Paris ends Napoleonic Wars

1815

- The Hundred Days: Napoleon escapes from Elba and marches on Paris
- Battle of Waterloo: Napoleon is defeated and exiled to island of St. Helena
- Second Treaty of Paris: restores France's boundaries like that of those in 1790
- *Les Misérables* story begins with Valjean in prison

1818

- Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle: France joins the four Great Powers in a Quintuple Alliance

1823

- Valjean is reintroduced after eight years on the run, now as the mayor and a successful merchant

1824

- Charles X becomes King of France until 1830

1830

- Louis Philippe becomes new King of France until 1848
- Britain and France guarantee Belgium independence

1832

- Reform Act in Britain extends voting to middle class
- General Lamarque dies, his death is the catalyst for the uprising in *Les Misérables*.

1848

- -Year of Revolutions in Europe
- -Revolution in Paris: Louis Philippe comes down from his throne
- -The Second Republic begins with Louis Napoleon in France

SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN 19TH - CENTURY FRANCE

In 1815 France was still largely a land of peasantry. Urbanization of the largest cities was under way, and Paris was a leading world capital already. Smaller French towns and the country's many small villages, however, were impoverished and industrially-backward.



The Revolution and Republic had failed to address the terrible social conditions in which many French citizens languished. *Les Misérables* became an expression of and an inspiration for that attempt. Hugo initially entitled his work *Le Misère* ("the poverty"), but changed it to *Les Misérables*, which, in Hugo's time, denoted everyone from the poor to the outcasts and insurrectionists. The gulf between "haves" and "have-nots" of the world of *Les Misérables* was vast; an unbalanced economy made jobs scarce for those who earned their living by work. This was an era

without a welfare system, unemployment benefits, or worker's compensation. The closest thing to a homeless shelter was prison, a macabre dungeon where inmates slept on bare planks and ate rancid food. To this place the disabled, insane, hungry, or desperate citizens of France eventually found their way. The one hope of the poor for relief was charity from those who were, if not indifferent to their plight, outright hostile to it.

Women had it the worst. Even the "respectable" jobs that were open to lower-class women (maid, seamstress) were difficult and tiring. But for many women, these jobs did not provide enough income to support families. Once lost, respectable jobs were difficult to regain; it was assumed that the woman had lost her job through her own fault. For many women, like Fantine, there was no alternative but prostitution. Commonly called street-walkers, the women who sold themselves probably had the hardest life in Paris. Once known as a prostitute, a woman was considered unfit for society forever; even menial jobs such as seamstress or waitress were out of reach for a prostitute. Many street walkers started out at ages 14 to 18, when their youth and beauty were at their prime. Once these women aged, there were not many other options save begging.



It was at the *barrières*, the outskirts of the city, close to the poorest districts in Paris, that violence was most frequent and most intense. "The ramparts...retain in the landscape an eminent place...when they lose all military value; the *barrière* still protects the bourgeoisie from the riff-raff of the *faubourgs*." Crime in the *barrières* was also predestined by their proximity to the *faubourgs*. The southern *barrières* were highlighted in *Les Misérables*, the point most strongly made about them being their association with crime. The bandits that made up Thenardier's gang did their dirty work there. It was also the location of the Gorbeau tenement, where Jean Valjean and Cosette briefly stayed upon arrival in Paris as well as where Marius lived along with the Thenardier family. Hugo described the Gorbeau tenement as "admirably chosen for the scene of a violent and sombre deed and the setting for crime."

Despite the deplorable conditions that many characters must live in, *Les Misérables* vindicates those members of society forced by unemployment and starvation to commit crimes—in Jean Valjean's case, the theft of a loaf of bread, in Fantine's, prostitution—who are thereafter outcast from society. It is fairly common today to suggest that prison creates more hardened criminals than it reforms, but the idea was radical to Hugo's contemporaries. The poor and the disenfranchised understood Hugo's message, accepted the affirmation he gave them, and worshipped him as their spokesman. Workers pooled their money to buy the book not one of them could afford on their own. The struggling people of France had found an articulate illustration of the unjust forces arrayed against them.



Liberty, by Eugene Delacroix.

NOTABLE QUOTES

VICTOR HUGO

“When a woman is talking to you, listen to what she says with her eyes.”

“There is one thing stronger than all the armies in the world, and that is an idea whose time has come.”

Have no fear of robbers or murderers. They are external dangers, petty dangers. We should fear ourselves. Prejudices are the real robbers; vices the real murderers.

ALAIN BOUBLIL & HERBERT KRETZMER

By the witness of the martyrs
By the passion and the Blood
God has raised you out of darkness
I have bought your soul for good —The Bishop

I dreamed a dream in time gone by
When hope was high and life worth living
I dreamed that love would never die
I dreamed that God would be forgiving
...Now life has killed the dream I dreamed—Fantine

With all the anger in the land
How long before the judgment day,
Before we cut the fat ones down to size?
Before the barricades arise? —Enjolras

Do you hear the people sing?
Singing the songs of angry men?
It is the music of a people
Who will not be slaves again!—Feuilly & Chorus

There's a grief that can't be spoken
There's a pain goes on and on
Empty chairs at empty tables
Now my friends are dead and gone—Marius

To love another person
Is to see the face of God—Valjean

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WEBSITES TO EXPLORE

<http://www.lesmis.com/>

The official site of the Broadway show.

<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/135>

A free, downloadable version of the Victor Hugo novel.

http://www.rottentomatoes.com/search/full_search.php?search=les+miserables

Features links to dozens of reviews of the many film versions of *Les Misérables*.

http://www.online-literature.com/victor_hugo/

Biography, bibliography, and critical writing about the novelist.

<http://www.allmusicals.com/l/lesmiserables.htm>

All the lyrics to all the songs of *Les Misérables*.

http://www.broadway.com/gen/Buzz_Video.aspx?ci=538283

Footage from an open rehearsal of the 2008 Broadway production of *Les Misérables*.

RECOMMENDED READING

Victor Hugo

Hugo, Victor. *Les Misérables*. Abridged with an introduction by James K. Robinson. New York: Fawcett Premier, 1961.

Brombert, Victor. *Victor Hugo and the Visionary Novel*, Harvard University Press, 1984.

The French Revolution

Cairns, Trevor. *The Old Regime and the Revolution*. Minneapolis: Lerner Publications Co., 1980.

Chalfont, Lord, ed. *Waterloo: Battle of Three Armies*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980.

Davidson, Marshall B. *The Horizon Concise History of France*. New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc., 1971.

Theatre Texts

Cole, Toby & Krich Chinoy, Helen. *Directors on Directing; a source book of the modern theatre*. Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963

Bond, Daniel. *Stage Management*. New York, NY: A & C Black; Theatre Arts Books/Rutledge, 1991

Dukore, Bernard F. *Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greeks to Grotowski*. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974.

Covey, Liz & Ingham, Rosemary. *The Costume Designer's Handbook; a complete guide for amateur and professional costume designers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, c1992.

ATTENDING THE SHOW

Arriving at the Theatre

Please arrive at the theatre with ample time (45–60 minutes, depending on the size of your group) to pick up and distribute tickets and resolve any seating issues within your group. Please ensure chaperones arrive before or at the same time as students.

Buses may unload passengers in the loading zone in front of the theatre but engines must be turned off while doing so. Once passengers have exited the vehicle, please be advised that you must find alternate parking for the duration of the show.

Theatre Etiquette

In order to ensure an enjoyable show for all audience members, please impart some general theatre etiquette to students. They should keep in mind that this is not a movie theatre and different audience etiquette applies to a live theatre environment.

- The use of cameras or any type of recording equipment (including cellular phones) is strictly prohibited.
- It is important to turn off wristwatch alarms, cellular phones, and beepers for the duration of the show. If you are concerned about missing an emergency call, please leave your name or device and seat location with an usher and we will alert you if a call comes through.
- No outside food or drink is allowed in the theatre or lobby.
- Please finish refreshments purchased at the concession in the lobby before entering the theatre.
- We request that you refrain from eating or unwrapping candy in the theatre, as it is a distraction for others.
- Please be modest with your use of fragrances so that audience members with allergies can also enjoy the performance.
- Seating at The Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage and the Granville Island Stage is assigned. Please sit in your assigned seat and respect the fact that other seats have been reserved for other patrons.
- If you must leave the theatre during the performance, you will not be seated again until the intermission or another appropriate interval.
- Please respect your fellow audience members and the performers by refraining from talking during the performance. Even whispers carry!
- If you have a complaint about another guest, please tell an usher or the Audience Services Manager rather than approaching the person yourself. We will be happy to address concerns on your behalf.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- What was happening in Canada in 1815? In 1832? Was it anything at all like France?
- Trace the history of the French government from the French revolution until the student insurrection in 1832 described in *Les Misérables*. Were the students justified in rebelling?
- Have there been any other student uprisings of note? Research a 20th century student rebellion, such as the American student movement of the 1960s or the Chinese pro-democracy movement of 1989 in Beijing. Compare the motivations of the students—and the outcome—to the experience of the student rebels in *Les Misérables*.
- When Valjean is released from prison he is given a yellow ticket of leave, effectively branding him a criminal to all he meets and making it impossible for him to lead a normal life again. How does our society treat people on parole, or ex-convicts? Are they able to lead normal lives again? Why or why not?
- Both Jean Valjean and Thenardier commit crimes in *Les Misérables*: Valjean first steals food to feed his family, then breaks parole when he is treated like an outcast by society, while Thenardier commits fraud and robbery for his own ends. Should Valjean and Thenardier be treated differently by the justice system? Is there a place for mercy in the law? How so? Think of some contemporary examples that are comparable.

SOURCES

www.DiscoverFrance.net

Davidson, Marshall B. *The Horizon Concise History of France*. New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc., 1971.

Merriman, John. *French Cities in the 19th Century*, Random House, New York, 1981.

Cranny Michael. *Crossroads: A Meeting of Nations*, Prentice Hall Canada, 1998.

Kogan, Donald, Steven Ozment, Frank Turner. *The Western Heritage, Fourth Edition, Vol. II*, Collier McMillan Canada, 1987.