

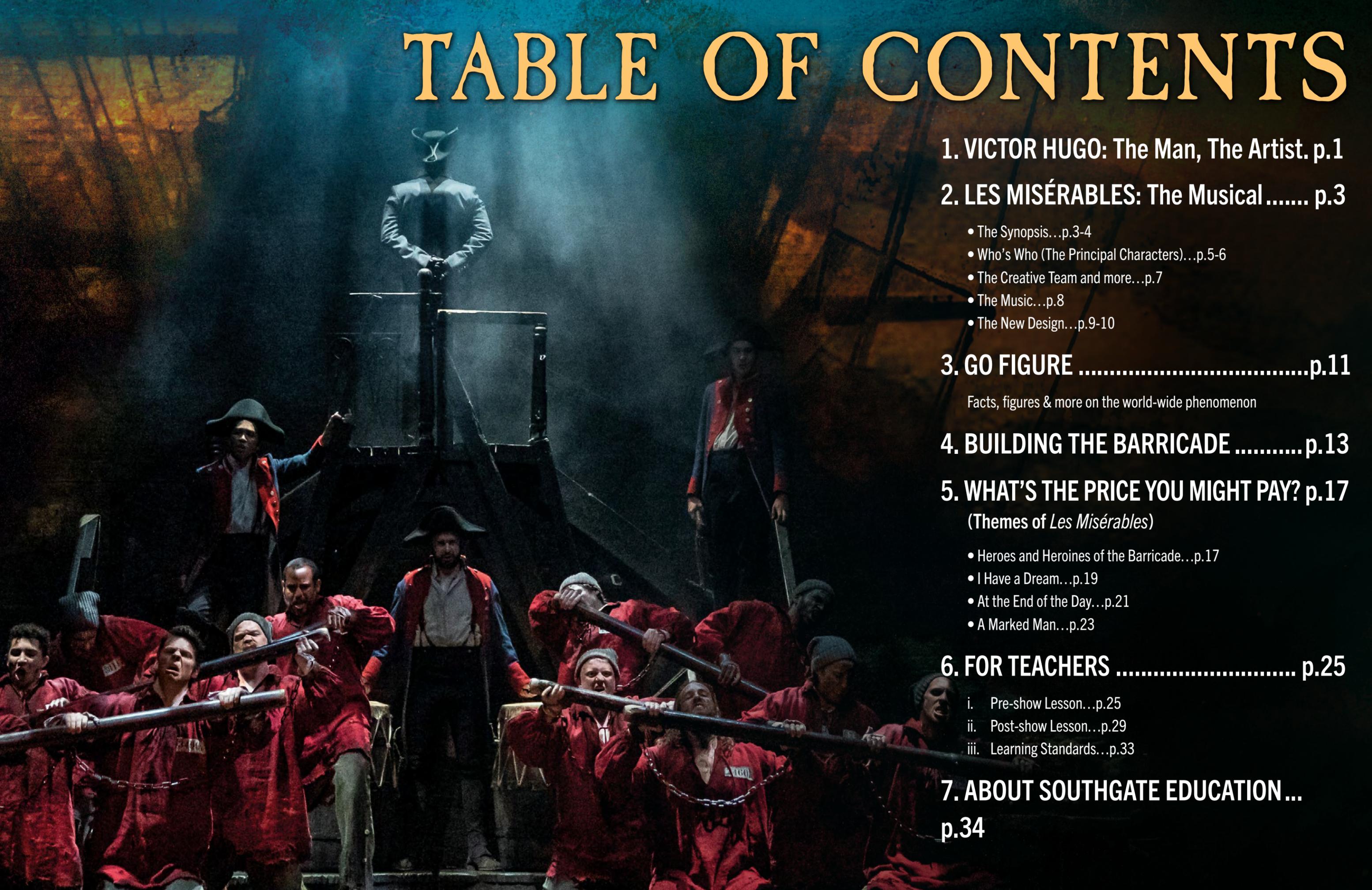
STILL THE WORLD'S MOST POPULAR MUSICAL

# Les Misérables



EDUCATIONAL GUIDE

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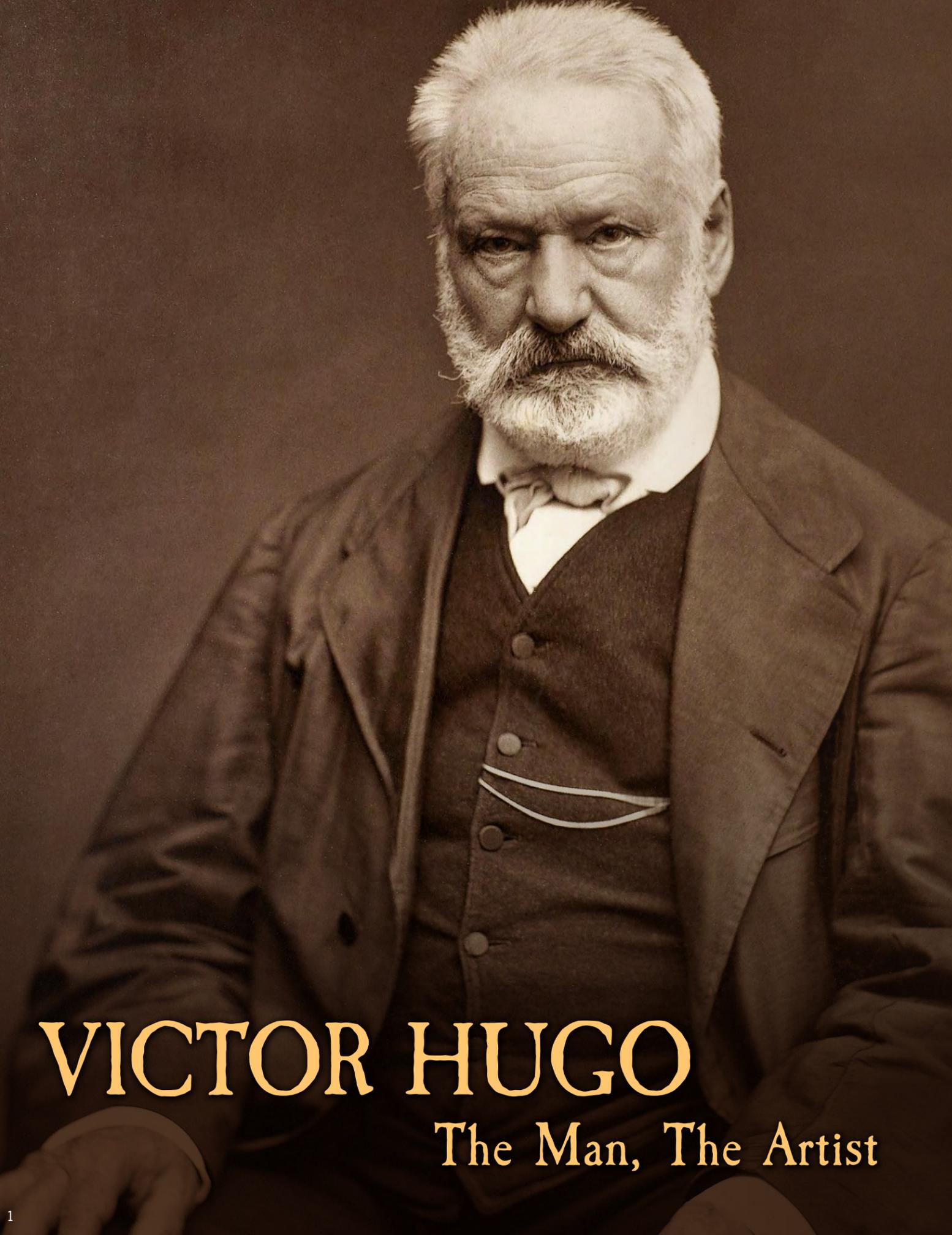
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# VICTOR HUGO

## The Man, The Artist

Victor Hugo's enormously successful career covered most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and spanned both the Romantic and Realistic movements. A great writer, artist, and moralist, Hugo was a man of many talents, high passion, and unwavering conviction.

Hugo was born on February 26, 1802. His father, General Joseph Leopold Hugo, was the son of a carpenter who rose through the ranks of Napoleon's citizen army. However, Victor's mother decided not to subject her three sons to the difficulties of army life, and settled in Paris to raise them. Madame Hugo became the mistress of her husband's commanding officer, General Lahorie, who was a father figure to Hugo and his brothers until the General's execution in 1812.

Victor was an excellent student and excelled in the arts, sciences, and languages. He won first place in a national poetry contest when he was 17. When his mother died in 1821, Victor refused to accept financial help from his father. He lived in abject poverty for a year, but then won a pension of 1,000 francs a year from King Louis XVIII for his first volume of verse. Throughout his lifetime, Hugo played a major role in France's political evolution from dictatorship to democracy and became a hero to the common people.

In 1822, he married his teenage sweetheart, Adele Foucher, who became the mother of his four children: Leopold-Victor, Charles-Victor, Francois-Victor, Adele, and Leopoldine.

In 1830, Victor became one of the leaders of a group of Romantic rebels who were trying to loosen the hold of classical literature in France. His play, *Hernani*, whose premiere was interrupted by fistfights between Hugo's admirers and detractors, took a large step towards a more realistic genre of theatre and made Hugo a rich man.

During the next 15 years, he produced six plays, four volumes of verse, and the romantic historical novel, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, establishing his reputation as the greatest writer in France.

Hugo was also an accomplished artist and his body of work includes more than 4000 drawings. He worked in small scale, only on paper, and usually in pen-and-ink wash with little color. His artistry was "modern," employing techniques of Surrealism and Abstract Expressionism. He originally pursued his artwork as a casual hobby but in his later years, this artistic expression became more important to him.

In 1831, Victor's wife, Adele, became romantically involved with a well-known critic named Sainte-Beuve. At the same time, Victor also became involved with an actress named Juliette Drouet, who later became his mistress in 1833. Supported by a small pension from Hugo, Drouet served as his secretary and travelling companion for the next 50 years.

In 1843, after losing one of his daughters in a drowning accident and experiencing the failure of his play, *Les Burgraves*, Hugo decided to focus on the growing social problems in France. He was joined in his increased interest in politics by a number of other Romantic writers, marking the beginning of the Realistic-Naturalistic era in French literature.

After the Revolution of 1848 and the founding of the Second Republic, Hugo was elected a deputy to the Constitutional Assembly. Three years later, when Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte (Napoléon III) abolished the Republic and reestablished the Empire, Hugo risked execution trying to rally the workers of Paris against the new Emperor. However, his efforts failed, and he was forced to flee to Brussels.

As a result, Hugo spent the next decade in exile with his family and Mme. Drouet on the islands of Jersey and Guernsey off the French coast of

Normandy. During these years, he wrote satires about Napoleon III and published several novels including *Les Misérables*, which he had begun years earlier.

After the Franco-Prussian War and the fall of the Empire in 1870, Hugo made a triumphant return to Paris. In 1876, he was elected to the Senate and, despite his failing health, continued to be active in political affairs.

Around this time, Hugo suffered many personal trials: a mild stroke; the mental illness of his daughter who was eventually placed in an insane asylum; his wife's death in 1868 followed by his two sons in 1871 then 1873; and the death of his mistress, Juliet Drouet, in 1883. Hugo died in 1885 at the age of 83. In accordance with his wishes, his funeral was simple, but over 3 million spectators followed his funeral procession to the Pantheon in Paris where he was buried amid France's great men.

Because of his belief in the triumph of good over evil and his pleading for tolerance and non-violence, Victor Hugo was considered a herald of the new democratic spirit. Hugo's death came at the end of a century of war, civil conflict, social injustice, and brutally repressed insurrections such as the student rebellion portrayed in *Les Misérables*.



## DID YOU KNOW?

Victor Hugo began to think about his novel, *Les Misérables*, as early as 1829. On the streets of Paris in 1845, he observed an impoverished man being arrested for stealing a loaf of bread, which triggered the novel's action. As the years passed, *Les Misérables* evolved as Hugo's own life experiences shaped his philosophy. To give the story a sense of journalistic truth, he incorporated personal memories of all kinds. For example, in 1841, he saved a prostitute from arrest for assault. Part of his dialogue with police made its way into the novel when Valjean rescues Fantine. By the time Hugo's novel was published in 1862, it had become an epic story within a strong framework of history, philosophy, and political theory.

In spite of negative reaction by critics and the government, who banned it, *Les Misérables* was an instant success and generated more excitement than any other book in the history of publishing. "All the reviews," wrote Hugo, "are reactionary and more or less hostile." Like the musical, critical opinion had absolutely no effect on public interest and bookshop owners literally battled to buy copies for their customers. This phenomenon was echoed in 1985, when the musical version of Hugo's novel opened in London to mostly poor reviews.

When producer, Cameron Mackintosh, discouraged by the adverse critical response, called the box office, he was greeted by a happily busy ticket salesman. "I'm amazed you managed to get through," Mackintosh was told, "the phones haven't stopped ringing."

Hugo wrote about his book, "I don't know if it will be read by everyone, but it is meant for everyone." The initial French language success was copied worldwide as soon as the book became available in translation.

As with any work of art, which makes a case for social change, the novel acquired many enemies. Conservatives feared the social impact of the story, and the Vatican banned the novel for several years. A French newspaper wrote that if the ideas of the novel were acknowledged, "no part of the social order would remain standing."

Nonetheless, *Les Misérables* has been translated into nearly every language and, during the past century, has become one of the best-selling books in history.

# Les Misérables

## THE MUSICAL

The multiple award-winning LES MISÉRABLES has become a global success on stage and screen, sweeping audiences through an epic tale of broken dreams, passion and redemption, against the backdrop of a nation seething with revolution.

*Les Misérables* is now the longest running musical in the world and, in October 2010, celebrated its 25th anniversary with a theatrical first – three different productions of the same musical staged at the same time in one city: the star-studded concert at London’s The O2 arena, the acclaimed new 25th Anniversary Production (which completed its sell-out UK Tour at London’s Barbican Theatre) and the original production, which continues its record breaking run at the Queen’s Theatre, London.

The newly re-imagined production has already broken box office records across the UK, America, Japan, Korea, Spain, and Australia. The Oscar-winning film version has become one of the most successful movie musicals of all time.



Les Misérables 2023 Sizzle Reel



The [original] show in 1985 that few people had booked in advance to see was coolly, if not hostilely, reviewed by the early critics. It has [now] become the longest running musical in the world and the most financially successful show ever to be on in London’s West End.

I have hugely enjoyed the adventure and challenge of producing the show all over again myself in a new, exciting staging by Laurence Connor and James Powell. Once again, just as Victor Hugo’s novel was the inspiration for Alain and Claude-Michel, Hugo’s extraordinary and revolutionary paintings have inspired designers Matt Kinley and Paule Constable to bring the show to a vivid and more colourful life. The result has been an overwhelming success with audiences and critics alike; even the hardest fan has embraced the new production as ‘the best yet’.

In the non-musical theatre, reviving classics for contemporary audiences is the norm. However, very few musicals have the source material that lend themselves to be so timelessly relevant, and Victor Hugo was no ordinary writer; he was a genius. He wrote about real characters and emotions that have transcended languages in almost every country around the world. His characters and their behaviour never date. They are re-born in each generation and his story remains a thrilling and exhilarating testament to the enduring power and resilience of the human spirit.

(Cameron Mackintosh, Producer)

“A REBORN DREAM OF A PRODUCTION”

DAILY TELEGRAPH

### ACT ONE

#### PROLOGUE: 1815, DIGNE

After 19 years on the chain gang, Jean Valjean finds that the ticket-of-leave he must display condemns him to be an outcast. Only the Bishop of Digne treats him kindly and Valjean, embittered by years of hardship, repays him by stealing some silver. Valjean is caught and brought back by the police and is astonished when the Bishop lies to the police to save him. Valjean decides to start his life anew.

#### 1823, MONTREUIL-SUR-MERE

Eight years have passed and Valjean, having broken his parole and changed his name to Monsieur Madeleine, has become a factory owner and Mayor. One of his workers, Fantine, has a secret illegitimate child. When the other women discover this, they demand her dismissal. Desperate for money to pay for medicines for her daughter, Fantine sells her locket, her hair, and then joins the whores in selling herself. Utterly degraded, she gets into a fight with a prospective customer and is about to be taken to prison by Javert when the ‘Mayor’ arrives and demands she be taken to the hospital instead.

The Mayor then rescues a man pinned beneath a cart. Javert is reminded of the abnormal strength of convict 24601 Jean Valjean, who, he says, has just been recaptured. Valjean, unable to see an innocent man go to prison, confesses that he is prisoner 24601.

At the hospital, Valjean promises the dying Fantine to find and look after her daughter Cosette. Javert arrives to arrest him, but Valjean escape.

#### 1823, MONTFERMEIL

Cosette has been lodged with the Thénardiens, who horribly abuse her while indulging their own daughter, Éponine. Valjean pays the Thénardiens to let him take her away to Paris.

#### 1832, PARIS

Nine years later, there is unrest in the city because of the likely demise of the popular leader General Lamarque, the only man left in the government who shows any feeling for the poor. A street gang led by Thénardier and his wife sets upon Jean Valjean and Cosette. They are rescued by Javert, who does not recognize Valjean until he has gone. The Thénardiens’ daughter Éponine, who is secretly in love with the student Marius, reluctantly agrees to help him find Cosette, with whom he has fallen in love.

News of General Lamarque’s death circulates in the city and a group of politically-minded students stream out into the streets to whip up support for a revolution.

Cosette is consumed by thoughts of Marius, with whom she has fallen in love. Éponine brings Marius to Cosette and then prevents an attempt by her father’s gang to rob Valjean’s house. Valjean, convinced it was Javert lurking outside his house, tells Cosette they must prepare to flee the country.

### ACT TWO

#### 1832, PARIS

The students prepare to build the barricade. Marius, noticing that Éponine has joined the insurrection, sends her away with a letter to Cosette, which is intercepted by Valjean. Éponine decides to rejoin her love at the barricade.

The barricade is built and the revolutionaries defy an army warning to give up or die. Javert is exposed as a police spy. In trying to return to the barricade, Éponine is killed.

Valjean arrives at the barricade in search of Marius. He is given the chance to kill Javert but instead lets him go. The students settle down for a night on the barricade and, in the quiet of the night, Valjean prays to God to save Marius. The next day the rebels are all killed.

Valjean escapes into the sewers with the unconscious Marius. After meeting Thénardier, who is robbing the corpses of the rebels, he comes across Javert once more. He pleads for time to deliver the young man to the hospital. Javert lets Valjean go and, his unbending principles of justice having been shattered by Valjean’s own mercy, he kills himself.

Unaware of the identity of his rescuer, Marius recovers in Cosette’s care. Valjean confesses the truth of his past to Marius and insists he must go away. At Marius and Cosette’s wedding, the Thénardiens try to blackmail Marius. Thénardier says Cosette’s ‘father’ is a murderer and as proof produces a ring which he stole from the corpse the night the barricade fell. It is Marius’s own ring and he realizes it was Valjean who rescued him that night. He and Cosette go to Valjean where Cosette learns for the first time of her own history before the old man dies.

## DID YOU KNOW?

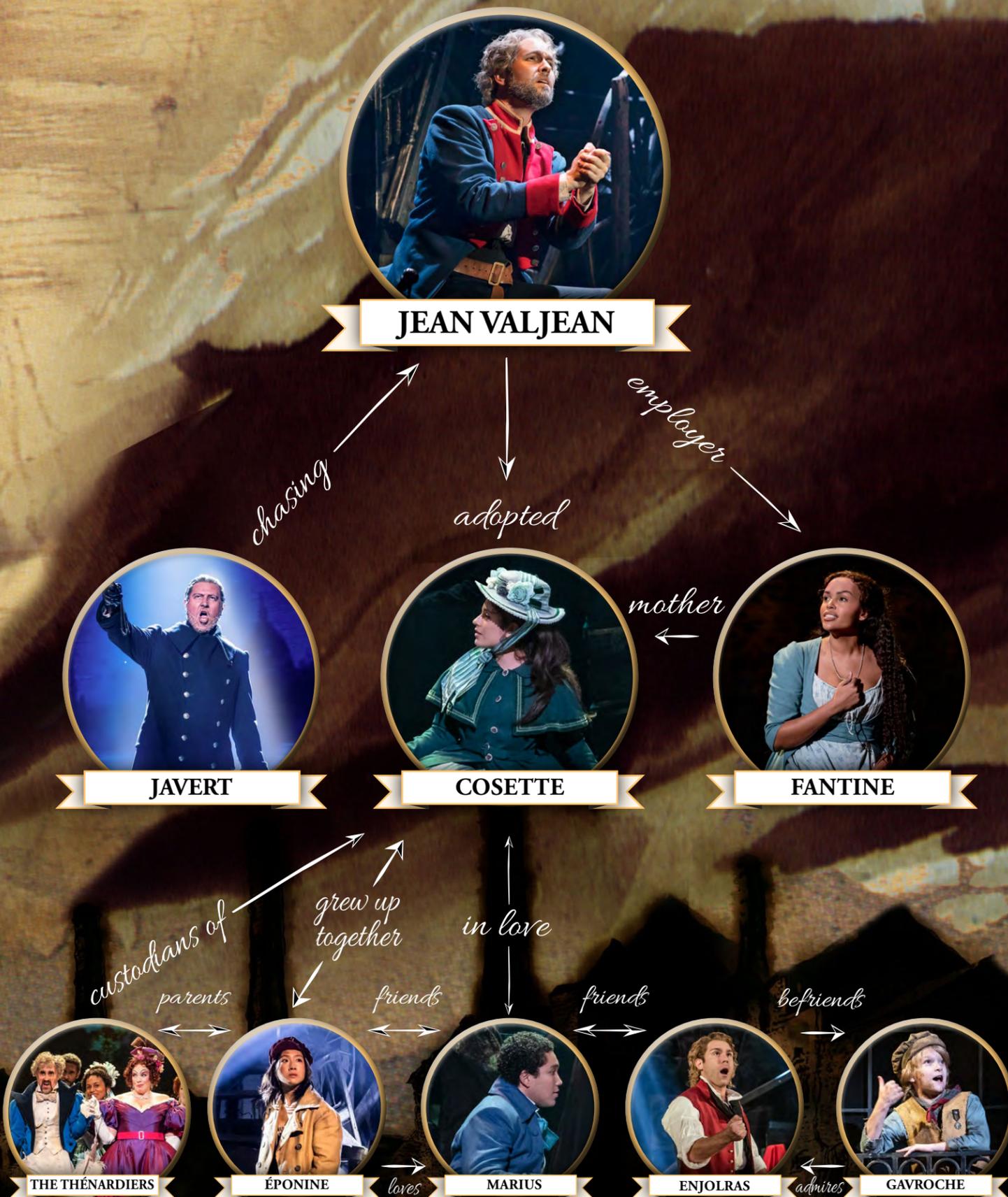
“The phrase ‘les misérables’ (ley mee-zey-ra-bluh), which has a whole range of subtly shaded meanings in French is much better translated into English as ‘the dispossessed’ or even as ‘the outsiders’ – which can describe every major character in the story in one way or another.”

(Susanne Alleyn, historian)



# WHO'S WHO

## (The Principal Characters)



### 1. JEAN VALJEAN

The protagonist (hero) of the story, Valjean is an ex-convict who becomes Cosette's adopted father. He was sent to prison for 19 years for stealing a loaf of bread for a starving child. As an ex-convict, Valjean is an outcast in society, which motivates him to break his parole and, with some help from the benevolent Bishop of Digne, assume another identity, leaving behind his former life of crime and hatred. His new life is prosperous; he finds fulfillment in raising Cosette with love and care and in helping those in need, which he does even at the risk of his own wellbeing.



### 6. GAVROCHE

Gavroche is a willful, spunky, brave, witty, and charismatic boy. He is kicked out of the house at an early age and becomes a Parisian street kid. He considers himself the leader of the streets and hangs out with the ABC gang. Although strong headed, Gavroche is a carefree child who appreciates life's smaller pleasures and is generous to those even less fortunate than himself.



### 2. JAVERT

A vigilant police inspector who strictly upholds the law. After releasing Jean Valjean from prison, Javert learns that Valjean has broken his parole and so begins to hunt Valjean down with pious obsession. Javert is incapable of compassion or pity; he has a firm belief that people are unable to change and, therefore, in his eyes, Valjean will always be a criminal who must be brought to justice.

### 3. COSETTE

Fantine's (illegitimate) daughter who, as a young girl, was raised by the Thénardiens along with their own daughter Éponine. While living with the Thénardiens, she is treated more like a servant than part of their family and is neglected and abused by M. and Mme. Thénardier. Cosette is later adopted by Jean Valjean and flourishes under his care and protection. She matures into a lovely and educated young woman and ends up falling in love with Marius.

### 4. FANTINE

A tragic figure in the story, Fantine is a working-class girl employed in a factory owned by Jean Valjean and a single mother struggling to earn enough money to care for her daughter, Cosette. After her co-workers find out she has an illegitimate child, Fantine is fired from her job. In desperation, she turns to prostitution in order to pay the Thénardiens, who have agreed to raise Cosette and provide her with room and board.

### 5. THÉNARDIER & MADAME THÉNARDIER

Thénardier and his wife Madame Thénardier are amoral opportunists who look out for only themselves. They are greedy, crafty, and tough, yet they are irresistible as they ooze with suspect charm and undeniable humor. For a while, Thénardier and his wife run a small inn, where they raise their daughter Éponine, whom they spoil, and the young Cosette, whom they mistreat and use as their servant. When their unscrupulous dealings finally catch up to them, the family ends up living on the streets where they survive through thievery.

### 7. ÉPONINE

Éponine is the daughter of the Thénardiens. She grew up with Cosette and, as a child, was spoiled at Cosette's expense. Her family later ends up on the streets, where she is forced to fend for herself and learns to become street-smart and tough. She is also sensitive and vulnerable in certain situations, especially when it comes to her friend Marius for whom she feels an unrequited love.

### 8. MARIUS

Although he is a member of 'Friends of ABC', a group of students who are itching for a revolution, Marius is not as passionate about the cause as some of his peers including his close friend and leader of the group, Enjolras. Marius is the son of Georges Pontmercy, a colonel in Napoléon's army and grows up in the home of his grandfather – a monarchist. Despite his wealth, Marius befriends Éponine who is of a lower class and lives on the streets. He is unaware of Éponine's affection for him, and instead falls in love with Cosette. When Marius learns why he was separated from his father, he embarks on a critical path of discovery in knowing who he is and what he wants to be.

### 9. ENJOLRAS

A young, handsome, and confident political radical who is the leader of a group of student insurrectionists called the 'Friends of the ABC'. He leads the insurrection at the barricade and fights courageously. He is risk-taker, 'a thinker and a man of action' (Victor Hugo).



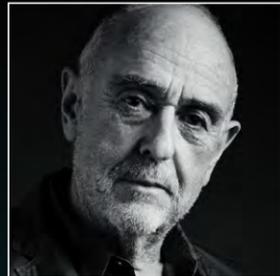
# THE CREATIVE TEAM



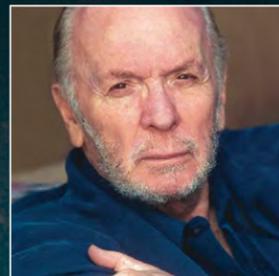
Producer:  
**CAMERON  
MACKINTOSH**



Book & Original Lyrics:  
**ALAIN  
BOUBLIL**



Composer:  
**CLAUDE-MICHEL  
SCHÖNBERG**



Lyrics:  
**HERBERT  
KRETZMER**  
1925-2020



Directors:  
**JAMES POWELL &  
LAURENCE CONNOR**



Set & Image Designer:  
**MATT  
KINLEY**



Lighting:  
**PAULE  
CONSTABLE**



Original Costume Design:  
**ANDREANE  
NEOFITOU**



Additional Costume Design:  
**CHRISTINE  
ROWLAND**



Additional Costume Design:  
**PAUL  
WILLS**

Sound Designer:  
**MICK  
POTTER**

Musical Staging:  
**GEOFFREY GARRATT**

PROJECTIONS REALIZED:  
**FINN ROSS &  
FIFTY-NINE PRODUCTIONS**

Original Orchestrations:  
**JOHN  
CAMERON**

Musical Staging:  
**MICHAEL ASHCROFT  
& GEOFFREY GARRATT**

New Orchestrations:  
**STEPHEN METCALFE  
CHRISTOPHER JAHNKE  
STEPHEN BROOKER**

Musical Supervision:  
**STEPHEN BROOKER  
JAMES MOORE**

Adaptation:  
**TREVOR NUNN &  
JOHN CAIRD**

Original French Text:  
**JEAN-MARC  
NATEL**

Additional Materials:  
**JAMES  
FENTON**

Click here for info on **LES MISÉRABLES'**  
Tour Cast & more on the Creative Team

# THE MUSIC

## ACT ONE

### PROLOGUE: 1815, DIGNE

"Prologue" – The Company  
"Soliloquy" – Valjean

### 1823, MONTREUIL-SUR-MER

"At the End of the Day" – Unemployed and Factory Workers  
"I Dreamed a Dream" – Fantine  
"Lovely Ladies" – Ladies and Clients  
"Who am I?" – Valjean  
"Come to Me" – Fantine and Valjean

### 1823, MONTFERMEIL

"Castle on a Cloud" – Cosette  
"Master of the House" – Thénardier, his Wife and Customers  
"Thénardier Waltz" – M. and Mme. Thénardier and Valjean

### 1832, PARIS

"Look Down" – Gavroche and the Beggars  
"Stars" – Javert  
"Red and Black" – Enjolras, Marius and the Students  
"Do You Hear the People Sing?" – Enjolras, the students and the citizens  
"In My Life" – Cosette, Valjean, Marius and Éponine  
"A Heart Full Of Love" – Cosette, Marius and Éponine  
"One Day More" – The Company

## ACT TWO

"On My Own" – Éponine  
"A Little Fall of Rain" – Éponine and Marius  
"Drink With Me to Days Gone By" – Grantaire, students and women  
"Bring Him Home" – Valjean  
"Dog Eats Dog" – Thénardier  
"Soliloquy" – Javert  
"Turning" – Women  
"Empty Chairs at Empty Tables" – Marius  
"Wedding Chorale" – Guests  
"Beggars at the Feast" – M. and Mme. Thénardier  
Finale – The Company

## DID YOU KNOW?

- In 1980, *Les Misérables* began with a concept album by the French writers, Alain Boublil and Claude-Michel Schönberg. Two short years later, producer Cameron Mackintosh listened to the recording and, without understanding the French lyrics, recognized the material's potential.
- Les Misérables* comes from the French operatic tradition, a through-composed piece of musical theater on the mega scope and grand scale of the French operas of the Baroque period.

So... is *Les Miz* a musical or an opera? It's debatable...you be the judge!



# A LOOK AT THE DESIGN

## BY MATT KINLEY, SET & IMAGE DESIGNER

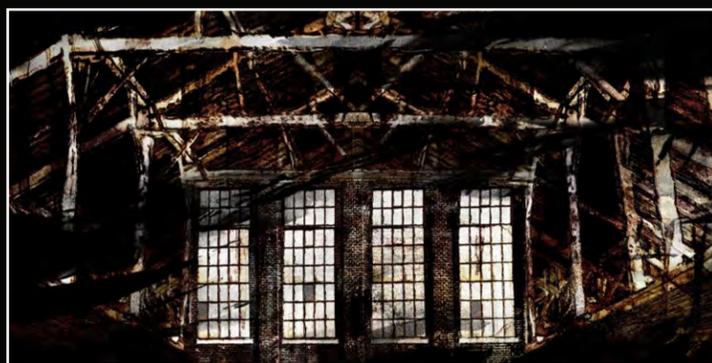
The angle I wanted to explore was releasing the design from the black box it had been in for the past 24 years with color and light, as the one thing the original show doesn't quite communicate to me is any sense of time or place. As there were so many scenes in this epic piece, I knew I wanted to work with projection in order to locate the action, but to use it very simply, almost more like old-fashioned slides or rostrum work as this was a show whose story was so complex it didn't justify constant animation apart from some key scenes. The question was: what to project?

I had been vaguely aware that Victor Hugo was a painter as well as a writer, but nothing quite prepared me for the images that I came across when researching the show. Hugo was obviously a visionary; the drawings I found were at once abstract, fantastical, and free, but also underlined with a backbone of draftsmanship. Hugo, as an artist, was well ahead of his time. There are many examples in among the 4,000 or so works that demonstrate his experiments with different media and processes; from charcoal, sepia, pen, ink and soot to lace prints, folded paper with ink (similar to Rorschach [inkblot] tests) as well as straight responses to either landscape, figure, or the subconscious.

The one unifying feature throughout his whole body of work is the somber, yet beautiful, mainly sepia color palette, and especially his use of chiaroscuro – using the contrast of dark and light to add body and form as well as atmosphere to the work. This brooding blackness and light also seemed the perfect embodiment of so many characters and storylines within the show.

It was for this reason that I started to employ the use of these paintings in the projections as they were so dark and rich I thought they would live well within the original aesthetic of the show. Many of the projections were produced using a blend of his paintings and drawings, sometimes combined with 19th-century French photography to ground and locate them, combined with painted cloths which are more directly based on his abstract and landscape work.

Hugo kept his paintings and drawings away from public exhibit for fear they might detract from his writing. Delacroix expressed the opinion that, if Hugo had decided to become a painter instead of a writer, he would have outshone the artists of their century. Indeed, there are many of Hugo's paintings that would not have looked out of place within the works of the credited abstract expressionists and surrealists in the following century. I hope that this production can go some way to reconciling these two aspects of this artist with each other, as to me, they seem to have a perfect symmetry.



Hugo was creatively resourceful and unconventional in the use of his materials and techniques; for example, he sometimes incorporated charcoal match sticks, puddles, stains, coffee, and soot, which were rubbed or scraped with his finger in place of pen or brush to achieve a desired effect. Hugo primarily drew with his left hand, often without looking at the page, a practice which he sometimes adopted during Spiritualist séances so that his unconscious mind would be more accessible – a concept later popularized by the Austrian neurologist and psychotherapist, Sigmund Freud.



## DID YOU KNOW?

Emile Bayard (a prolific lithographer for magazines and books) was Victor Hugo's favorite illustrator. Bayard was famous in his own lifetime for his brilliant portraits of Hugo's character's, Fantine, Éponine, Valjean and Javert, but is best known today by people all over the world for his illustration of Cosette, which was used originally on the sleeve of the 1980 French cast album, and is now famous as the logo for *Les Misérables*.

Quintessentially a wealthy Parisian "society painter" with pupils and his own studio, Emile Bayard showed a remarkable understanding of Victor Hugo's work as seen in Bayard's illustrations of the cast of characters in *Les Misérables*.

Cora Jane Messer as Little Cosette from *Les Misérables*  
Photo: Matthew Murphy & Evan Zimmerman for Murphy Made



# GO FIGURE

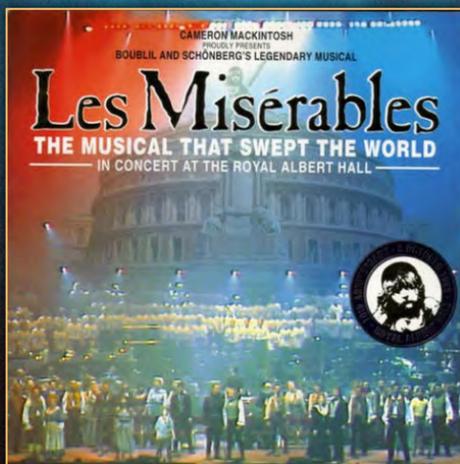
(Facts, figures & more on the world-wide phenomenon)



Productions have played in 53 countries and 438 cities: England, USA, Japan, Israel, Hungary, Australia, Iceland, Norway, Austria, Canada, Poland, Sweden, Holland, Denmark, New Zealand, France, Czech Republic, Spain, Northern Ireland, Eire, Scotland, Wales, Bermuda, Malta, Philippines, Mauritius, Singapore, Germany, Hong Kong, Korea, South Africa, Belgium, Finland, Argentina, Brazil, Estonia, China, Mexico, Switzerland, Serbia, The Channel Islands, Luxembourg, The Dominican Republic, The Canary Islands, The Balearic Islands, Trinidad & Tobago, Panama, Sri Lanka, Ecuador, The United Arab Emirates, Greece, Slovakia And Venezuela.



It is the longest running musical in the world and on 4 September 2019 celebrated its 14,000<sup>th</sup> performance in London.



Over 100 professional companies have opened **LES MISÉRABLES** worldwide



The production has played over 57,000 professional performances worldwide giving a total audience figure of more than 71 million people.



**LES MISÉRABLES** has been translated into 22 different languages: English, Japanese, Hebrew, Hungarian, Icelandic, Norwegian, German, Polish, Swedish, Dutch, Danish, French, Czech, Castilian, Mauritian Creole, Flemish, Finnish, Argentinian, Portuguese, Estonian, Mexican Spanish and Korean.



2014 BROADWAY CAST

There are approximately 101 cast and crew directly involved in every performance.



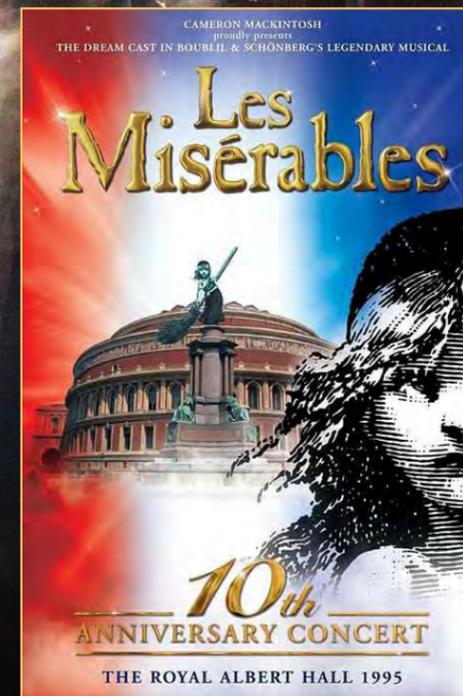
Each performance entails some 392 complete costumes consisting of some 1782 items of clothing and 31 wigs.



The biggest single live audience for **LES MISÉRABLES** to date was 125,000 at the 1989 Australia day concert in Sydney. The biggest broadcast audience was when 250 **LES MISÉRABLES** cast members sang at the 1996 European football championship, televised to 400 million viewers in 197 countries.



**LES MISÉRABLES** is the sixth longest running show in Broadway history after the Phantom of the Opera, CATS, Chicago, The Lion King and Wicked.



**LES MISÉRABLES** celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its world premiere on 8 October 1995 with a gala concert at the Royal Albert Hall, London. The specially arranged finale featured 17 different Jean Valjeans from around the world singing in many of the languages in which the show has been performed.



The **LES MISÉRABLES** school edition was launched in the USA on 10 May 2001. Over 5,000 school productions in the UK, Europe, USA, Canada, Australia, the Middle and Far East making it the most successful musical ever produced in schools.



In 2009 Susan Boyle sang "I Dreamed a Dream" on the television programme 'Britain's Got Talent'. It immediately became one of the most watched videos on YouTube recording millions of hits.



# BUILDING THE BARRICADE

Audience members attending *Les Misérables* often assume that the rebellion in the musical is part of the great French Revolution; however, this is not true. What incited the students and workers to the Paris Barricades in 1832 (the year and event that Victor Hugo used as the climax in his novel, *Les Misérables*) was, in fact, due to the country's economic hardships and a cholera epidemic (1827-1832), which created discontent between the socio-economic classes.

By 1832, the poor people of Paris were deeply affected by the outbreak of disease, namely cholera, which killed many. Among those who died was Jean Maximilien Lamarque, an influential French military commander during the Napoleonic Wars who later became a member of French Parliament. General Lamarque was considered an enemy of the royalists and friend of the common people and his funeral provoked the uprising and the building of the Paris Barricades. During the uprising, approximately 1000 people were injured or killed. Disorder in the country continued through to the mid-1800s and by 1848, fear of revolution throughout Europe became a grave threat.

At the time of the Paris Barricades (June 5, 1832), Victor Hugo was in Paris writing a play. When the battle began, rebel students and workers were on one side and government troops on the other, while Hugo, himself, was trapped in a nearby alley. Hugo stayed out of harm's way

against a wall between the fronts of two shops while gunfire ensued. After the battle, Hugo entered in his diary, that the uprising was a "folly drowned in blood," and that a republic should result from "its own free will." (Benedict Nightingale & Martyn Palmer, *Les Misérables From Stage to Screen*, p. 12.)

## THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

(1789-1799) included a series of violent times and periods of unrest resulting in the declaration of France's first republic and the beheading of thousands. The revolution drastically changed France's culture, government, and military. For example, France went from a largely feudal state under the absolute authority of the monarchy to a republic (a state in which the head of government is not a monarch or other hereditary head of state). The change of authority saw the execution of France's King Louis XVI and, in 1799, the new leadership of the French military – the political leader, Napoléon Bonaparte (1769 – 1821). Outside of France, the revolution resulted in a ripple effect of war throughout Europe.



Louis the XVI



Napoléon Bonaparte

## DID YOU KNOW?

The traditional English translation of the French phrase, "Qu'ils mangent de la brioche," is, "Let them eat cake." This phrase has become a famous quote attributed to King Louis XVI's wife, Queen Marie Antoinette. It is believed by some that the Queen made this statement after being told that the French people were suffering due to a widespread bread famine.

Although there is no evidence that this anecdote actually happened, it has sustained a strong symbolic importance in history because it illustrates the ignorance of the French aristocracy during the period of time in which the French Revolution occurred. Interestingly, a biographer of Marie Antoinette mentioned that, during this time, this phrase was particularly useful because the staple food of the French peasantry and the working class was bread, absorbing 50 percent of their income, as opposed to 5 percent on fuel; the whole topic of bread was therefore the result of obsessional national interest. (Lady Antonia Fraser, *Marie Antoinette: The Journey*, p. 124.)



## THE PARIS BARRICADES

Also known as the June Rebellion and the Paris Uprising of 1832, the Paris Barricades was an unsuccessful, anti-monarchist rebellion of Parisian republicans, mostly comprised of students. It was a small-scale revolt, but was made famous by Hugo's account in *Les Misérables*. The insurrection took place in 1832 over two days: June 5 – 6, and was the result of mounting turmoil over living conditions between classes as well as the reverse of the 1830 establishment of the July Monarchy under King Louis-Philippe I's rule (1830 – 1848). These events occurred shortly after the death of the King Louis-Philippe I's leading supporter, President of the Council, Casimir Pierre Périer, who died on May 16, 1832. Adding to the June Rebellion was the recent death of Jean Maximilien Lamarque (1770 – 1832) who was a French commander during the Napoleonic Wars and later became a member of French Parliament. The June Rebellion was the last eruption of violence associated with the July Revolution.

Victor Hugo described the rebellion in his novel *Les Misérables* and, subsequently, this pinnacle event is highlighted in the musical and films based on the book

## 'TO BARRICADE OR NOT TO BARRICADE' (A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE.)

### Barricade [bar-i-keyd]

derives from the French word *barrique* (barrel) and is a military term denoting a defensive barrier used in urban warfare. Barricades are usually hastily constructed, as in a street, and aim to stop an enemy or obstruct a passage in order to shut in and defend.

Documented use of French barricades dates back as early as 1569; however, the technique did not become publicly well-known until an uprising in Paris in 1588. The event involved supporters of the Duke of Guise and the Catholic Holy League who successfully challenged the authority of King Henry III.

During the French Revolution, (1789 – 1799) barricades were used at various times, but they never played a central role in battle. In the 1800s, barricades were highly visible and became a consequential element in many of France's insurrections, for example, the revolutions of 1830 (the July Days) and 1848 (in both February and June.); the Paris insurrection of June 1832; and the combat that ended the Paris Commune in May 1871.



The June Revolution of 1832

The implementation of barricades began its spread from France during the 1780s and in 1830, it was an integral technique used in the Belgian Revolution. By 1848, barricades were being incorporated on an international scale. By the middle of the 19th century, the barricade had become a worldwide symbol of the revolutionary tradition for many students, workers, and political refugees. Its symbolic reference appears in many songs and stories that pay homage to the power of political and social movements.

# A SMALL HISTORIC SAMPLE OF INTERNATIONAL BARRICADES



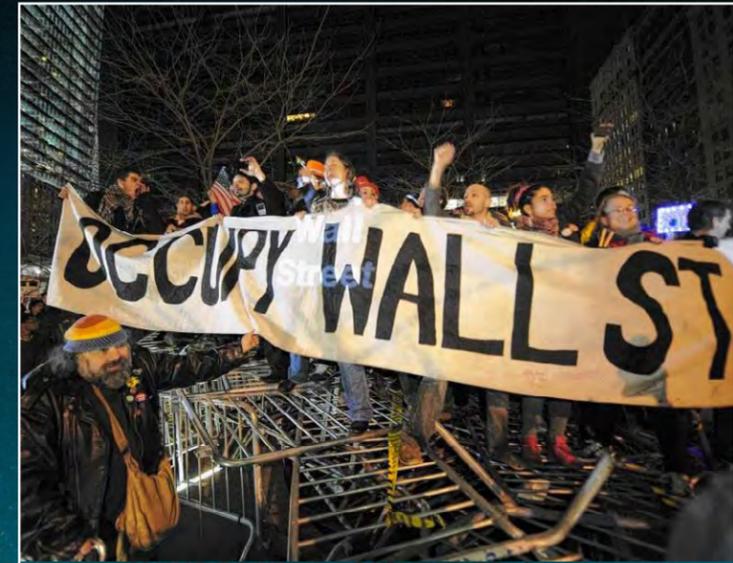
(1884) Cincinnati, USA



(1944) Warsaw, Poland



(2010) Bangkok, Thailand



(2012) New York, USA



(1991) Moscow, Russia



(2009) Wellington, New Zealand



(2013) Kiev, Ukraine



(2020) Pittsburgh, USA

2017 National Tour. Photo: Matthew Murphy



# HEROES & HEROINES OF THE BARRICADE

“Red, the blood of angry men. Black, the dark of ages past. Red, a world about to dawn. Black, the night that ends at last.”  
(Excerpt from the song, “ABC Café”)

Jean Valjean, the predominant protagonist in *Les Misérables*, is undoubtedly a heroic figure. His crime of stealing bread to feed his ailing nephew is the first example of his heroism in rescuing others. Throughout the story, we see him coming to the aid of others and rescuing people from their circumstances: taking care of Fantine then adopting her daughter, Cosette and, in order to save an innocent man, puts his own freedom at risk by exposing his true identity to Inspector Javert. Valjean’s acts of heroism are vast and prominent; however, there are many other heroes depicted in the story of *Les Misérables* that deserve recognition.

In *Les Misérables* the battle at the barricade is led by Enjolras, a young man with charisma and determination. Enjolras embodies the *Revolutionary Hero*. His fight is fought in the name of others. He seeks to better the lives of all the people in his country through direct and concentrated action.

Enjolras’ following included students like Marius, the young man who falls in love with Cosette, but also less educated individuals like Éponine and Gavroche. Éponine plays an important role in the events at the barricade; dressing herself in men’s clothing in order to help and eventually being the first to die. In the end, we are left wondering if their heroism meant anything at all. Marius laments, “Oh my friends, my friends, don’t ask me... what your sacrifice was for.” Do these young men still remain Revolutionary Heroes despite the fact that they lost the battle?

While Enjolras and his fellow insurrectionists

represent the type of hero that most of us envision (those who engage in physical battle to defend the rights of others), there are other notable characters in *Les Misérables* who act heroically on various levels.

Fantine is often overlooked as a heroic figure. She is an *Unsung Hero*; unrecognized for her heroic acts and sacrifice. Despite the greater world’s views of her choice to become a prostitute, she does so to support the health and well-being of her child, Cosette. When she is sent away from the factory for being an unwed mother and for refusing the advances of the foreman she is left with little choice in how she can send money for her child’s care. Before she resorts to selling her body, she sells her few possessions of value: a chain, her hair, and teeth. Without the sacrifices she made to pay for her child’s support, Cosette may have also fallen prey to the circumstances of poverty. Fantine heroically disregards her own well-being to ensure another’s.

Gavroche, the young ruffian of the streets, may also be classified as one of the lesser noticed heroes in *Les Misérables*. Gavroche is an *Everyday Hero*. Though only a child, he is constantly looking out for those around him. He gives himself to the service of the young men who follow Enjolras, serving as a look-out and also an informant. With his keen eye, Gavroche recognizes and identifies Javert behind the barricade posing as a fellow revolutionary. As the battle ensues, it is this young boy who, without regard for himself, comes from behind the barricade to collect more ammunition for the fight and, in the end, dies a martyr.

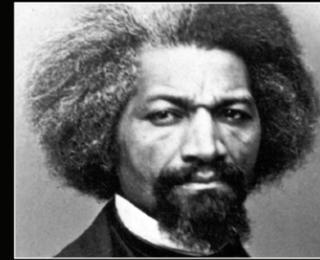
Who are the heroes that exist in your community? Are they Revolutionary Heroes like Enjolras, Marius, and the other students by taking a physical stand? Are they Unsung Heroes like Fantine that largely go unrecognized by those around them? Or Everyday Heroes like Gavroche who are always there to offer their friendship and help?

And let us not forget those heroes who take a quiet, peaceful yet determined approach to effecting change. “In a gentle way, you can shake the world.” - Mahatma Gandhi



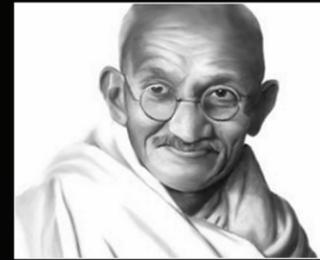
## JOAN OF ARC

(1421 - 1431) was born into a humble peasant family in north-east France in 1412. She claimed to have been visited by the Archangel Michael and others urging her to support King Charles VII in his quest to win France back from British rule. She fought and won many battles for Charles VII until the British captured her. She was tried by the British for a variety of charges and burned at the stake on May 30, 1431 at only nineteen years old. In 1920, nearly 500 years later, she was canonized and became one of the nine patron saints of France. Her life has been the inspiration for many works of art.



## FREDERICK DOUGLASS

(1818 - 1895) was born into slavery in America. By his death at age 77, he had become America’s most famous abolitionist, a celebrated writer and editor, and diplomat. Douglass fought the social evils of slavery with his quick wit, masterful oration skills, and pointed writings. By the time of the Civil War in the 1860s, he served as an advisor to President Lincoln on the condition and treatment of African American soldiers fighting for the Union. Not only did Douglass advocate for rights for his own people, but he was also a champion for women’s rights and worked closely with the Suffragette Movement. “I would unite with anybody to do right and with nobody to do wrong.” – Fredrick Douglass



## MAHATMA GANDHI

(1869 - 1948) has become the face of non-violent movements, which inspired leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. and many others. In the early 1900s, Gandhi became an advocate for the rights of Indians living under British rule. In his fight for India’s independence, he employed the strategies of boycotting British goods, sit-ins, and other forms of non-violent protest. Gandhi was also an advocate for the rights of women and the poor. In 1947, Gandhi saw a bittersweet victory as the British left India in conflict, dividing the country into Pakistan and India, which is now known as Partition. The division pitted Hindus against Muslims and caused wide-spread violence and bloodshed. In 1948, Gandhi was assassinated by a Hindu extremist who did not believe in Gandhi’s non-violent methods.



## MALALA YOUSAFZAL

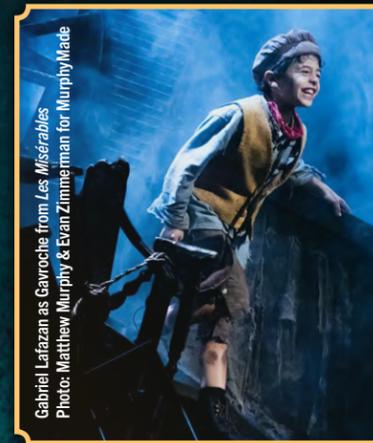
(1997 - ) was born in north-west Pakistan. At age 11 using a pseudonym, Malala began writing a blog for the BBC illuminating what life was like as a young girl living under the rule of the Taliban. Being an advocate for girls’ rights to education, she refused to not go to school even though the Taliban had banned girls from attending. On October 9, 2012 she boarded her school bus as always. A gunman boarded the bus, asked for her by name, and shot her three times. After many days in critical condition in the hospital, Malala recovered. Now at the age of 17, Malala has become an international advocate for girls’ right to an education around the world and the youngest recipient of the Noble Peace Prize.



## MAHSA AMINI

On September 16, 2022, Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian woman died under suspicious circumstances in a Tehran hospital. The Guidance Patrol (a.k.a. morality police), is a regime in Iran that enforces the rules on hijabs, and other conservative Islamic modes of dress and behavior. Amini was arrested for not wearing the hijab in accordance with the country’s government standards. Mahsa Amini is the latest symbol of the oppression of Iranian women. Women of Iran are now burning their hijabs and cutting their hair short in protests over the death of Amini who died a martyr. Omid Djalili, the British-Iranian actor, noted the similarity between demonstrators who want change in Iran and Americans who called for police reforms after George Floyd’s death, “This is Iran’s George Floyd moment.”

(from L.J. Gregory, Lee Rodriguez as Marius, Christine Heeseun Hwang as Éponine, Nick Cartell as Jean Valjean, Adelle Morales as Cosette in *Les Misérables*)



Gabriel Laizazan as Gavroche from *Les Misérables*. Photo: Matthew Murphy & Evan Zimme man for MurphyMade

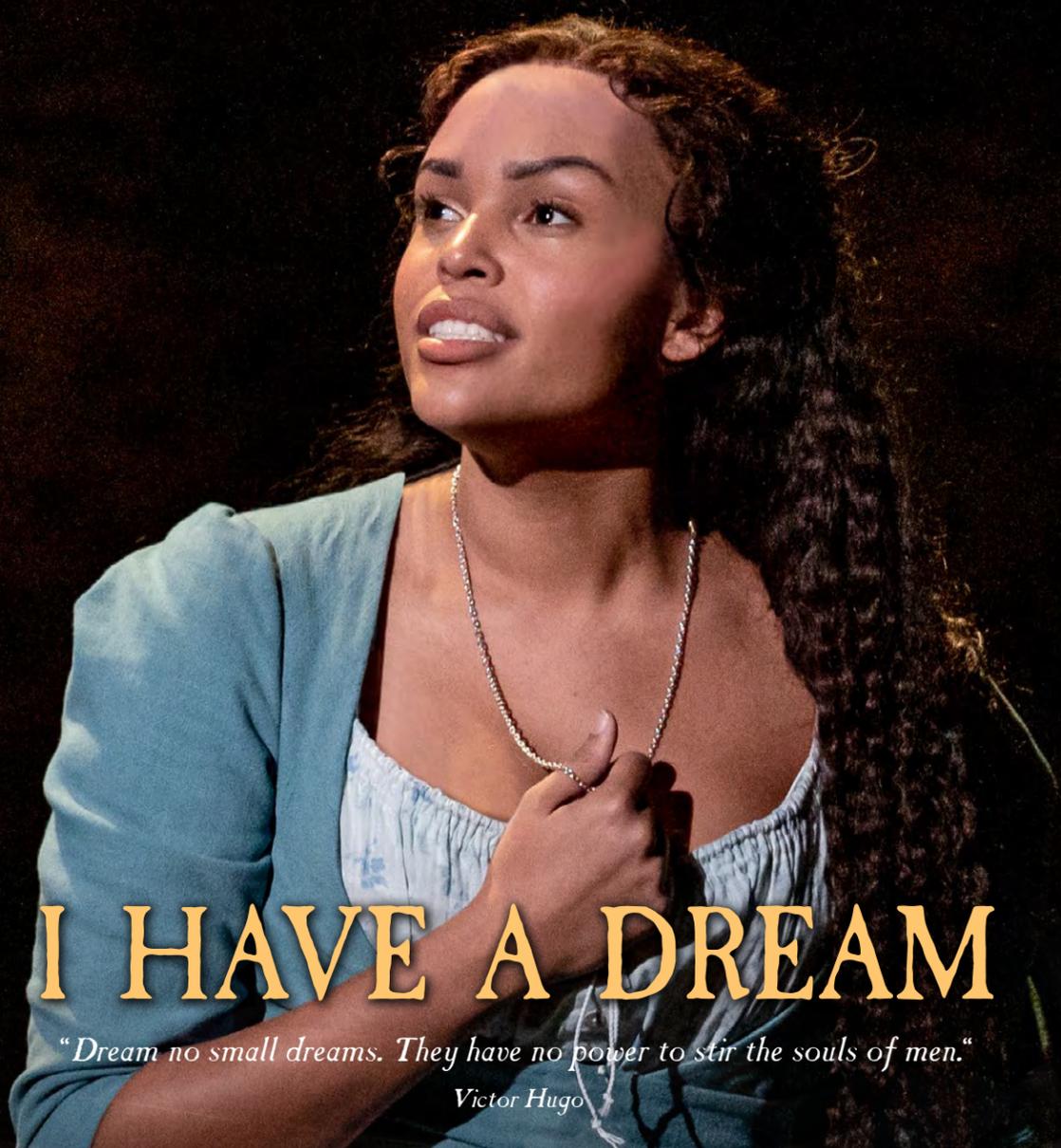
## BIG THINKING: EXPLORE & EXPAND

### HEROISM AND BARRICADES

Select one or two of the above heroic figures and another of your choosing to research. What do they have in common with each other? What do they have in common with the characters of *Les Misérables*? Is there a cause or idea that you would be willing to risk your life for?

### EXTENSION: What is your barricade?

We all have moments in our lives where we need to protect or defend ourselves against other people or ideas. We become practiced at building that wall around us to keep things out. On the other hand there are barricades that are meant to keep us out that we must breakdown and break through. What are the barricades (both figurative and literal) in your own life?



# I HAVE A DREAM

“Dream no small dreams. They have no power to stir the souls of men.”

Victor Hugo

Victor Hugo, known as one of the greatest novelists of the French Romantic Movement, used his work to convey his indignation at the social injustices and human afflictions that were so prevalent in the post French-revolutionary era during which he lived. Hugo knew how to write effectively to show the honest and true nature of his characters including both their darkest ambitions and loftiest dreams. Whereas ambition is defined as a determination or strong desire to achieve success, a dream is something less tangible and harder to define. A dream is an innate hope or longing for something that may or may not be within the realm of possibility. In the face of adversity, ambition can often drive people to tear others down in desperation to achieve their goals, but dreams on the other hand, have the power to carry one through even the darkest of days, guided by the eternal hope of better times ahead. In Hugo’s characters in *Les Misérables*, we can see the juxtaposition of ambition and hope: those who strive to achieve success no matter what the cost, and those who are guided by a dream of a better future both for themselves and for their country.

*Les Misérables* covers a time span of more than 20 years, which allows us as audience members to see the paths the characters take and the results of the choices they make throughout their lives, as they are either driven by ambition or guided by their dreams. Hugo’s protagonist, Jean Valjean, is a deeply complex character, a convict originally sentenced to five years in prison for stealing a loaf of bread to feed his sister’s starving family. Once he is released from prison, it appears that Valjean may continue down this

immoral path, but in a chance encounter with the Bishop of Digne, we see Valjean redeemed. He becomes a man of hope, of moral action, and pious generosity. Throughout the story, we see Valjean faced with many challenges and moral dilemmas, but it is his selfless dream of a better life for his adopted daughter, Cosette, and his hope that he will one day be able to redeem his past transgressions, that guide his decisions and keep him on a righteous and moral path.

Not all of Hugo’s characters are guided by this same moral compass, there are also examples of those who are driven by their own personal ambitions, and while a healthy dose of ambition is often needed in order to achieve one’s goals, when taken too far, ambition can turn into an obsessive compulsion or a life-consuming desire. In the characters of the Thénardiens, we see the result of what happens when desperate ambition is carried too far. The Thénardiens care little for what happens to other people. They only see how others can help to serve their own ambition or make them rich. Even their own children become expendable pawns in their search for wealth and power and when M. Thénardiens’ daughter, Éponine, threatens his ability to make a quick buck, we see how quickly he turns against his own family. Javert is another example of how obsessive ambition can lead one down a dark and difficult path. His obsession with capturing Valjean, blinds Javert to seeing the good in others. He no longer sees Valjean as a man, but rather a dog to be hunted in the night. Javert’s ambition consumes him and once he realizes his goal can’t be realized, it is his ambition that

ultimately destroys him. Literature provides countless examples of the perils of this type of ambition, such as Lady Macbeth’s insatiable yearn for power, or Ebenezer Scrooge’s all-consuming greed, and historically, Napoléon Bonaparte, who is known throughout history as one of the most ambitious and power-hungry leaders of all time, is actually at the forefront of the story in *Les Misérables* as his rise to power sets the backdrop for the political landscape at the start of the novel.

So when is ambition a good thing? You often see ambition turn sour when it is sought solely for personal gain, but when a person or a group of people’s ambition is to see the betterment of their country or the improvement of the living conditions for others, that is when ambition turns into a heroic dream for the future. In *Les Misérables*, Enjolras, the leader of the student insurrectionists, represents this heroic dream. Enjolras is ambitious and determined, and yet because his dream is for the people of France, we see his actions as a brave and selfless sacrifice. There are many examples of such heroes throughout history, those who stood in the face of oppression and adversity to be the voice of the people. In 1963 America, Martin Luther King Jr. spoke of his dream that, “one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.’” King’s was a dream that all people might one day have an equal share of the euphemistic “American Dream,” which simply stated is the ability to live freely without want, to have one’s needs met and happiness within reach. The American Dream, simple as it may seem, is far from attainable for many American Citizens, but it would have been pure fantasy for the Parisians fighting at the barricades back in 1832, a time when even the cost of a loaf of bread was too much for a family to dream.

Whereas ambition is something that is often worn on one’s sleeve like a badge of honor, dreams are often a very personal motivation that we hold close to our hearts because we worry that the dream may disappear if they were ever to be drawn out into the light. By keeping the dream inside, we find the strength that carries us through difficult times. In *Les Misérables* when we first meet Cosette, we see a young girl living in the most destitute and dire of conditions, yet she finds escape from her surroundings in the form of a dream. Her “Castle on a Cloud” fantasy manifests a light of hope that someday she may find a “lady all in white,” who... says Cosette, “I love you very much.” Her world of fantasy gives her the strength she needs to get through even the darkest of days. We see this idea repeated throughout literature in a number of similar characters, mostly children, who escape their dire circumstances and find hope in fantasy and dreams. Roald Dahl’s *Matilda* avoids the antagonism of her family by living out the fantasies she reads about in books. Alice escapes the monotony of her life by venturing to her personal Wonderland. And like Cosette, Little Orphan Annie dreams of having a family and the promise of a better “tomorrow.” These daydreams give us hope and solace in an escape from our daily reality, but they also act as a force that guides us, even when we have lost our way.

Although the nature of the love that Éponine seeks is very different from the familial love longed for by the young Cosette, the essence of their dreams is the same: a longing for someone who would love and accept them unconditionally. Éponine’s dream of a love unrequited, is a universally recognized theme; something common to much of the human experience: a longing for someone or something that will never be ours. Therefore, we understand the plight of young Éponine, as she laments, “and although it’s only in my mind, that I’m talking to myself and not to him, and although I know that he is blind, still I say, there’s a way for us.” This kind of unrequited love is the stuff of legend, it has been the cause of great battles as in *Helen of Troy*, or the ruin of Kingdoms such as Guinevere’s *Camelot*, but it is also the beacon of light that propels Éponine forward; a spot of beauty in an otherwise desperate life. We see in this an example of how dreams can move one through the darkest days, guided only by the hope of a better time ahead.

And what are we without hope? When our dreams are broken we become desperate – living without meaning, life becomes just another day or as the factory workers lament, “One day less to be living.” Fantine represents

the loss of hope and in her story we come to see the tragic effect of broken dreams, the desperation that comes from knowing that hope is gone. Fantine has lost the dream she “dreamed in time gone by, when hope was high and life worth living,” but still having lost all hope for her own future happiness, Fantine fights to preserve the dream that one day her daughter might live the happy life she never got to experience, a dream which keeps her going, striving for the future until her final tragic breath.

Set against the backdrop of a the Paris Barricades, *Les Misérables* tells the story of a country in desperate turmoil, yet through this darkness shines the light of hope, the people’s dream for a brighter future. It is this overarching feeling of hope that has made *Les Misérables* the timeless classic that it is today. We see in these characters the people we want to be, guided by our hopes and dreams with the courage to stand up and fight for what we believe in. Hugo creates complex and compelling characters who find the motivation to move forward despite their dire circumstances. For many it is their dreams that guide them and give them the strength to continue on. Others find motivation through a darker desire, an obsessive ambition that drives them to achieve their goal despite the effect their actions have on the other people they encounter along the way. Whereas ambition is served by desire, which can act as an endless pit of need leaving us constantly searching for satisfaction, dreams are what satisfy us. They fill us and make us whole. Dreams provide internal light that guides us even when we are unable to see where we are going, and it is through these dreams that the future is built.

## BIG THINKING: EXPLORE & EXPAND

### ACTIVITY: DREAM ON!

Dreams are a common theme in literature, poetry, and music. How many songs or stories can you name with the word dream in the title?

- Set a timer for 2 minutes
- On a blank sheet of paper, write down as many titles as you can for songs or stories that deal with dreams.
- When the time is up, compare your list to a friend’s. What are the similarities and differences?
- Considering the list you have created, answer the following questions:
  - What do these songs/stories have in common?
  - Do these songs/stories refer to literal dreams, figurative dreams, or both?
  - In what period of time were each of these pieces written?
  - Has the idea of dreams changed over time?
  - How might a person’s dream be different today from that of a person living at the time of *Les Misérables* (early 1800s)?

### EXTENSION: THE DREAM I DREAMED

What do you dream of? Re-write the lyrics to “I Dreamed a Dream” to reflect your own hopes and dreams:

I dreamed a dream in [noun] gone by  
When [noun] was [adjective] and [noun] worth [rhyme A]  
I dreamed that [noun] would never [rhyme with by]  
I dreamed that [noun] would be [rhyme A]

Then I was [noun] and [rhyme B]  
So dreams were [verb/adjective] and [verb/adjective] and [rhyme C]  
There was no [noun] to be [rhyme B]  
No [noun] un-[verb], No [noun] un-[rhyme C]

# AT THE END OF THE DAY

*"At the end of the day you're another day older..."*

*(Excerpt from the song, "At the End of the Day")*

The end of the day is often a time for reflection: a moment to take stock of your day or your life. It is in these moments that people contemplate their accomplishments, their failings, and the contributions they've made to the world.

We all think about how we are viewed by others and how they might judge us for our choices. The characters of *Les Misérables* are not only concerned about the judgment of their peers and superiors, but also the judgment of God. When preparing ourselves for 'judgment', we take into account our good deeds as well as our missteps.

Throughout history, the Judeo-Christian religions warn us about the end of times and the day of reckoning: when all those souls deemed worthy by God will ascend to heaven. And if you are not deemed worthy by the quality of your choices then you must eternally endure the fiery pits of Hell.

The day of reckoning, or The Rapture, is a powerful image. For centuries, artists have presented their visions of this day in terrifying depictions of fire and twisted bodies while the virtuous float upward into the loving arms of the Lord. This stark depiction of the end of days is so clearly defined that for many, it guides them to behave in virtuous ways.

Throughout the journeys of the two predominant male characters, Jean Valjean and Javert, each one is confronted by his own belief in God and how he wishes to be seen and judged by Him. What we must remember is that for these two men, as it is for all of us, their ideas of God are very different. The way we believe we will be judged is according to our own idea of who is judging us...

How do you view yourself? How do you believe that others view you? Who do you see when you look in the mirror? At the end of your day, how will you be judged? Come judgment day, how will Jean Valjean be judged? Javert?



## AT THE END OF THE DAY FOR JEAN VALJEAN

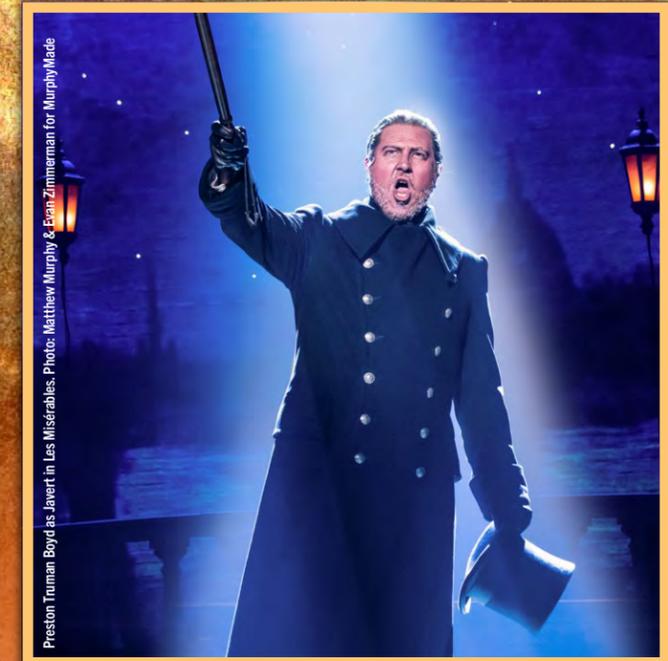
*"He gave me hope when hope was gone.  
He gave me strength to journey on."*

*- Jean Valjean*

Jean Valjean's journey begins when he steals a loaf of bread to feed his dying nephew. For this act he is judged by the law and sentenced to time in prison. While there, he becomes angry and bitter in the face of what he views as great injustice. Upon his release this act of thievery follows him. No one will hire him for an honest day's pay because of his status as a felon. Upon robbing a Bishop of his silver in an act of survival and desperation, Jean Valjean discovers his redemption. When the Bishop bids Valjean to take the stolen silver, as a means to better his life, it is this moment that Jean Valjean takes stock of his life and changes its course. At the end of the day he is a man who has found redemption and forgiveness.

*"Who am I?"*

*(Excerpt from the song, "Who Am I?")*



## AT THE END OF THE DAY FOR INSPECTOR JAVERT

*"And so it must be and so it's written on the  
doorway to paradise that those who falter  
and those who fall must pay the price."*

*(Excerpt from the song, "Stars")*

Inspector Javert's journey begins long before we come to know him in *Les Misérables*. Javert, we learn, was born in prison, the child of a fortune-teller and a man who was in the galleys. Having come from the same wretched place where he oversees the convicts he condemns, Javert's hatred for his own beginnings sets him on a path to extreme piety. He proves himself to be a man of great extremes. The world to him is black and white. Redemption is a dream outside the grasp of the men he jails for their crimes and yet, in his search for Jean Valjean, he is shown many examples of Valjean's transformation. Javert sees Valjean become the mayor of a small town and a business owner who creates jobs.

In the end, Valjean spares Javert's life, even after years living on the run trying to escape him while living a virtuous life. And despite all the proof that Valjean is a changed man, Javert cannot accept the truth. For him there is no God in a world where a man can change. Unable to reconcile his beliefs that the world is rule-bound and absolute, Javert loses the faith that he has so strongly clung to and commits the ultimate crime against his God by taking his own life.

*"Fallen from God. Fallen from grace."*

*(Excerpt from the song, "Stars")*



## FOR TEACHERS: PRE-SHOW

This 90-minute pre-show lesson introduces participants to the setting, characters, and themes of *Les Misérables* and prepares them for the experience of viewing the live musical performance.

### **Learning Goals:**

1. Students will examine the characters from *Les Misérables* and explore their relationships to one another.
2. Students will debate one of the major moral dilemmas at the heart of *Les Misérables*: can a person truly change?
3. Students will research and gain an understanding of the historical, geographic, and political setting of *Les Misérables*.

### **Prior Knowledge:**

None required. Students may have previously read Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, but do not need to have any prior knowledge of the story in order to successfully complete the activities outlined in this lesson.

### **Materials:**

- Paper, marker, tape
- Copies of the 'Who's Who' section found on pages 5-6 of this guide

### **Getting Started:**

#### **Opening Activity: Status**

1. Before the start of the lesson, create labels for each of the students by marking blank sheets of paper with one of the following character types: Factory Owner, Factory Worker, Convict, Ex-Convict, Priest, Orphan, Revolutionary, Student, Thief, Beggar, Soldier, Hero, Mayor, King, Queen, Police Officer, Wealthy Aristocrat, Army General, Inn-Keeper, Un-wed Mother.
2. Ask the students to define the term "status" and provide examples of people with high and low statuses.
3. Have the students demonstrate how they might physically portray someone of high status or low status.
4. Next have the students stand with their backs to you and tape one of the labels onto each of the students' backs without showing them the character displayed on the label.
5. Direct the students to walk around the room and silently look at what labels others have been assigned.
6. As the students walk around, ask them to interact silently, using body language to demonstrate whether the person they are interacting with is high or low status.
7. Next allow the students to add vocalization as they interact with one another in order to give each other subtle clues about the character labels they have been assigned without giving anything away directly.
8. As the students start to get an idea of what their labels might say, direct them to start acting as that character as they interact with the others in the group.
9. Once most of the students seem to have a clear idea of who they are meant to be, ask them to line up according to the perceived status of their character from highest to lowest.
10. Allow the students a chance to guess who they are before revealing their labels to the rest of the class.
11. Give the students a chance to make any adjustments they feel are necessary to the order of their statuses.
12. Next, distribute copies of the "Who's Who" listing found on page 05 of this guide and ask each student

to identify which character(s) their labels might refer to and add the character's name to their label.

13. Allow the students to interact with each other again but this time in the role of the characters from the show. Try matching up different pairings of characters from the show (such as Valjean and Javert) to see how the two interact and which character has the higher or lower status.

14. As a class, reflect on what it was like to complete this exercise:

- What did it feel like to be someone of high status? Someone of low status?
- As a class, were you able to accurately line yourselves up in order of status? Why or why not?
- Which characters in *Les Misérables* have the highest status? Lowest Status?
- Which pairings of characters were the most interesting? Why?
- What expectations do you have for the portrayal of these characters in the musical?

### **Main Event:**

#### **Activity: Moral Debate**

1. Break the group into two sections and provide each with the following details:
  - a. Group A: You are representing Javert in a trial against Jean Valjean. Valjean is a criminal who must pay for what he has done. Valjean is a common thief who feels that he should have the right to take anything he wants, despite the fact that there are honorable people who have worked hard to earn those same things. Javert has seen many criminals go through the system and all of them are the same. They are not capable of changing and should not be allowed to go out into the world and interact with morally upstanding and honorable people. If Valjean is allowed to go free after having served his time, Javert feels that he should be forever marked so that all people will know his true nature.
  - b. Group B: You are representing Jean Valjean, who is on trial for stealing a loaf of bread to feed his starving nephew. Although Valjean understands that it is wrong to steal, the choice to allow his nephew to starve would have been even worse. Furthermore, Valjean has served his time and paid his dues to society and should now be allowed to go off in peace to search out an honorable life as a free citizen.
2. Pair students off so that each pairing has one student representing Javert and one student representing Valjean.
3. Writing-in-role as either Javert or Valjean, ask the students to write a monologue that makes a case for why Valjean should or should not be released from prison and allowed a second chance.
4. Direct the students to practice reading their monologues aloud to their partner and ask them to offer each other feedback as to how they can make their cases stronger.
5. Next inform the students that there is going to be a trial and that you will serve as the judge.
6. Select a pair of students to represent Valjean and Javert and another to represent their respective lawyers. The rest of the class will sit on the jury.
7. Allow each counsel a chance to confer with their clients to confirm their argument and then instruct each side to make their case using their written statements as inspiration.
8. Allow each side the opportunity for a rebuttal before opening it up to the Jury for questioning.
9. Call Javert and Valjean up to the witness stand and allow both counsels the opportunity to question them.
10. Finally, ask the counselors to make their closing arguments as a final plea for their case.
11. Allow the jury sometime to reflect on the case before taking a vote on which case they feel was stronger.

### **Reflection:**

1. As a class, reflect on and discuss the following questions:
  - Do you feel that the 'right' side won out? Why or why not?
  - How do these events affect your understanding of the main characters?
  - Which of these characters do you think acts as the Protagonist (hero) of the story and which the Antagonist (adversary)?
  - Which of these characters has the higher status and which the lower status and how did that affect your view of the character during the trial?
  - Which of the characters did you feel more compelled to believe? Why?

### **Take It Home:**

1. For homework, using this show guide and/or trusted online sources, ask students to research the historical context of *Les Misérables* including the setting, people and events that inspired Victor Hugo's original novel.
  - Where and when did this story take place and why is this setting important to the story.
  - What historical event does the story portray and what other important historical events lead up to the action of the story?
  - What was the political climate leading up to the events portrayed in *Les Misérables*?
  - What do you think inspired Victor Hugo to write the novel *Les Misérables*?
  - Given the historical context, why do you think the story remains relevant to modern day audiences?

### **Tools For Teachers:**

#### Assessment Strategies:

1. During small group time, teacher will note which groups engaged in thoughtful discussion and which students effectively participated and collaborated with their fellow group members.
2. Teacher will collect the students' written work to be assessed for students' ability to creatively and articulately express the thoughts of the characters they were asked to portray.
3. Teachers will analyze homework assignments to assess the quality of students' research skills and the level of thought and detail put into their written responses.

### **Learning Standards:**

- Common Core State Standards (CCSS).ELA-LITERACY.W.8.5  
With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.
- Common Core State Standards (CCSS).ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.4  
Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.
- Common Core State Standards CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.8  
Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.
- The National Standards for Arts Education Theater - Standard 1  
Writing by the creation of improvisations and scripted scenes based on personal experience and heritage, imagination, literature, and history.
- The National Standards for Arts Education Theater - Standard 2  
Acting by developing basic acting skills to portray characters who interact in improvised and scripted scenes.
- The National Standards for Arts Education Theater - Standard 5  
Researching by using cultural and historical information to support improvised and scripted scenes.

## FOR TEACHERS: POST-SHOW

This 90-minute post-show lesson provides the opportunity for participants to review and reflect on the events, characters, and themes of *Les Misérables* as they draw real-world connections to their own lives and experiences.

### Learning Goals:

- To explore the primary characters of *Les Misérables*, their circumstances, and the choices they make.
- To step into the “shoes” of each character and imagine different decisions and outcomes.
- To examine our own lives, circumstances, and choices.

### Materials:

- Large poster paper and markers

### Getting Started:

1. **Role on the Wall** *This introductory activity allows participants to examine some of the primary characters of Les Misérables as well as the internal and external forces that motivate them.*
  - Break participants into groups of 3-5 to explore the following characters:
    - Jean Valjean
    - Inspector Javert
    - Fantine
    - The Thénardiens
    - Cosette
    - Éponine
    - Marius
  - Provide each group with a piece of large poster paper and a marker. On the poster paper should be a simple shape or outline of a person and the name of the character (you may do this ahead of time or ask the participants to draw it).
  - Ask participants to consider the following questions about their group’s character and scribe them within the figure on the paper:
    - How does this character view *him* or *herself*?
    - What are the most important things to this character?
    - What are the internal factors that motivate this character to make certain choices in the musical?
  - Now ask participants to consider the following questions about their group’s character and scribe them outside and around the figure on the paper:
    - How do *others* view this character?
    - What do others think is important to this character?
    - What are the external factors that motivate this character to make certain choices in the musical?

- Have each group post their **Role on the Wall** for all of the participants to see.
  - Ask everyone to walk around the room to look at each **Role on the Wall** and add their own ideas in a different colored marker.
  - Once everyone is back in their own groups, have participants look at the additions that people might have made:
    - Do you agree with what others added to your character?
    - Were there any surprises?
2. **Conscience Alley** *This activity gives participants the opportunity to further explore the motivations of the characters of Les Misérables and begins a dialogue on choices.*
    - Ask participants to think about the character they explored during the **Role on the Wall** activity. Have them think of a pivotal moment for that character in the musical.
      - For example: *When Valjean has Javert’s bare throat beneath his knife.*
        - What would you have done in that moment? Would you have made the same decision or a different one?
    - Have participants form two straight lines facing each other. Ask them to imagine a dark alley in Paris.
    - Have one participant stand ready to walk between the two lines. Before they walk down they should announce their character and the moment.
      - For example: *Fantine when the Factory Foreman makes a pass at her.*
    - As the participant walks down the “alley,” the lines of other participants should voice what they would do when faced with that moment or choice by saying, “If I were you I would...” as they pass.
    - This should be repeated until all participants have had the opportunity to walk down the “alley.”
    - Now as a group, discuss what it was like to walk down **Conscience Alley**:
      - How did it feel to have others tell you (as the character) what choice you should make?
      - Would you make the same choice as your character in the musical? Or would you make a different choice?

### Main Event:

**A Different Story at the End of the Day** *This activity allows participants to consider an alternative ending for some of the characters from Les Misérables.*

- Break participants up into groups of 8 – 10. These can be the same groups from **Role on the Wall** or new groups altogether.
- Ask each group to select a character. This can be a character that has been explored earlier in the lesson, or another character that they are interested in exploring.
- Each group should choose a pivotal moment for that character. A moment when the choice they made could have changed their story.
- Now that each group has their character and moment, they should create three still images or frozen pictures (tableaux) depicting:
  - The moment itself;
  - The original outcome their choice led to;
  - The anticipated outcome of a different choice.

- Once all the groups have had adequate time to prepare their tableaux, have each group share their tableaux for each other.
- Ask the group as a whole to consider these questions:
  - o What moments did the groups choose for each character?
  - o Was there one clear pivotal moment for each character?
  - o How did the option of a different choice create a different outcome?
  - o How feasible do you think it would be for some of these characters to make different choices? Or are they victims of their circumstances?

#### Extension:

This extension activity allows participants to more fully explore the alternative endings for the characters they imagined in **A Different Story at the End of the Day**.

- In the same groups from **A Different Story at the End of the Day** or as an individual, write a scene based on the tableaux depicting the alternative choice and outcome for that character's pivotal moment.

#### Reflection:

These concluding discussion questions give participants the opportunity to reflect on what they did, saw, felt and learned throughout the lesson and by watching *Les Misérables*.

- How can circumstances in our lives affect our ability to make choices?
- To what extent are the characters of *Les Misérables* victims of circumstance?
- To what extent are the characters of *Les Misérables* able to change their circumstances through their choices?
- Of the characters in *Les Misérables*, which characters ultimately achieve their goals?
- What can we learn from the characters and events in *Les Misérables*?

#### Take It Home:

This optional research assignment has participants explore some of the differences between the production of *Les Misérables* and Victor Hugo's novel. Students can conduct research either as homework on their own time or as a self-guided assignment during the class/program time.

Victor Hugo's novel, *Les Misérables*, is counted amongst the world's most influential and important novels. It is also counted amongst the longest at nearly 1,500 pages! There was a lot in the original novel that could not be included in the staged production. Using a trusted online resource, conduct further research on Hugo's novel, *Les Misérables* then answer the following questions:

- What elements of the novel did not make it into the staged production?
- How were the characters and storylines enhanced by the theatrical elements of song and music?
- Based on your research, did you learn anything further about the characters that changed your perspective of them?

#### Tools For Teachers:

##### Assessment Strategies:

- During small group time, the facilitator will note which groups are engaged in thoughtful discussion and which participants effectively participated and collaborated with their group members.
- The facilitator will collect all written work (Role on the Wall) to assess the level of thought and detail the participants put into their responses and the participants' ability to effectively articulate their ideas.
- Facilitators will analyze homework assignments to assess the quality of participants' research skills and the level of details and thought put into their written responses.

#### Learning Standards:

- [Common Core State Standards \(CCSS\).ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1](#)  
Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- [Common Core State Standards \(CCSS\).ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.4](#)  
Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.
- [Common Core State Standards \(CCSS\).ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.4](#)  
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.
- [Common Core State Standards \(CCSS\).ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.7](#)  
Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- [The National Standards for Arts Education Theater Standard 1](#)  
Writing by the creation of improvisations and scripted scenes based on personal experience and heritage, imagination, literature, and history.
- [The National Standards for Arts Education Theater Standard 7](#)  
Analyzing, explaining personal preferences, evaluating, and constructing meanings from classroom dramatizations and from theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions.
- [The National Standards for Arts Education Theater Standard 8](#)  
Understanding context by analyzing the role of theatre, film, television, and music in the community and in other cultures.

# LEARNING STANDARDS



The *Les Misérables* show guide provides instructional activities that bring show-specific themes to life; inspire advanced learning; and provides teachers with curriculum compliant lessons that align to national and/or state learning standards.

The guide's pre- and post-show lessons connect to the following learning standards:

- I. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for **English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies**, Science, and Technical Subjects. These standards are designed to prepare all students for success in college, career, and life by the time they graduate from high school.

The standards establish guidelines for **English language arts** (ELA) as well as for literacy in **history/social studies**, science, and technical subjects. Because students must learn to read, write, speak, listen, and use language effectively in a variety of content areas, the standards promote the literacy skills and concepts required for college and career readiness in multiple disciplines.

For more information and a listing of all CCSS, click on the Common Core logo above.

- II. The National Standards for Arts Education were developed by the Consortium of National Arts Education Associations (under the guidance of the National Committee for Standards in the Arts). These standards outline basic arts learning outcomes integral to the comprehensive K-12 education of every American student.

1. Writing by the creation of improvisations and scripted scenes based on personal experience and heritage, imagination, literature, and history
2. Acting by developing basic acting skills to portray characters who interact in improvised and scripted scenes
3. Designing by visualizing, arranging, and developing environments for improvised and scripted scenes for Classroom Dramatizations
4. Directing by organizing rehearsals for improvised and scripted scenes
5. Researching by using cultural and historical information to support improvised and scripted scenes
6. Comparing, connecting, and incorporating art forms by analyzing methods of presentation and audience response for theatre, dramatic media (such as film, television, and electronic media), and other art forms
7. Analyzing, explaining personal preferences, evaluating, and constructing meanings from classroom dramatizations and from theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions
8. Understanding context by analyzing the role of theatre, film, television, and music in the community and in other cultures

## What We Do — “We Educate Audiences.”

Southgate Education (SGE) provides educational services to audiences of all ages through pre- and post-show workshops/seminars, and educational resources such as show guides for Broadway and national touring productions. All services are designed and implemented by experienced educators and theater professionals. SGE show guides offer background information on specific productions and focus on pertinent topics for discussion. Each guide provides interactive activities for students and practical lessons for teachers that are curriculum-based and age-appropriate. SGE guides are organized in modules that can be used independently or interdependently according to interest, academic level, and time availability.

## Southgate Education

- Enhances audience appreciation of the live theater experience.
- Engages, entertains, and enlightens all audience members using specific elements of the theater and the associated show.
- Introduces all audience members to relevant cultural and historical themes that support and supplement the world of the musical or play.
- Provides instructional activities that creatively bring show-specific themes to life and inspire advanced learning.
- Provides teachers with curriculum compliant lessons that are relevant, accessible, and aligned to national and/or state learning standards.

## Who We Are

Listed below are the industry professionals responsible for the concept and content of the *Les Misérables* show guide.

**ROD CHRISTENSEN** With over 25 years of experience in the nonprofit arts sector, Rod brings dynamic, innovative, and strategic leadership with expertise in all facets of nonprofit operations, project execution, and program development in the performing arts, audience/community engagement, creative learning, and organizational capacity-building to Southgate Education. Key to Rod's mission-driven practice is the unwavering belief that the power of the arts brings transformative experience to individuals and our society at large. Currently, Rod is the Managing Director at The Sharon Playhouse in Sharon, CT. Since 2008, he has been the Managing Director at Southgate Education (SGE) in New York City overseeing SGE's Broadway Study Guide program (e.g., *Moulin Rouge*, *Mean Girls*, *King Kong*, *SquareBob*, *SpongePants*, *Miss Saigon*, *Les Misérables*, *Kinky Boots*, *Lysistrata Jones*, *Tuck Everlasting*, *Billy Elliot*, *Driving Miss Daisy*, and *Million Dollar Quartet*). Prior to his work in NYC, Rod spent eight seasons at Canada's prestigious Shaw Festival Theater where he held the positions of Senior Education Manager and Senior Manager, Audience Sales & Services. He also served as Executive Director and Director of Education at TADA! Youth Theater in NYC and held leadership positions at the Warner Theatre in Torrington, The Maritime Aquarium in Norwalk, The Garth Homer Developmental Disability Centre in his hometown of Victoria Canada, and performed with the international, educational touring program *Up With People!* Rod holds a Master of Education in integrated studies, a Bachelor of Music in Education, and a diploma in business management and leadership skills.

**MARY-CORINNE MILLER** has been a contributing writer and editor for a number of Southgate Education show guides including: *Miss Saigon*, *Les Misérables*, *Million Dollar Quartet*, *Lysistrata Jones*, and *Kinky Boots*. Corinne has previously served as the Director of Education at Barrington Stage Company in Pittsfield MA, the Assistant Director of Education at TADA! Youth Theater in NYC as well as the Artistic and Executive Director of Saratoga Stages, a children's theater company, which she founded in 2004. Corinne has also worked as a Director and Teaching Artist at various schools and theater organizations throughout the Northeast including: the Children's Theater Company in NYC, John Robert Powers School, and Greenfield Elementary School. Corinne earned her Master's degree in Educational Theater from New York University and holds a Bachelor's in Theater from Skidmore College.

**MAYA TURNER SINGH** has been involved in the New York City Arts Education community since 2005. She has worked with many prominent organizations including The New Victory Theater, TADA! Youth Theater, and The Park Avenue Armory, among others. In addition to her work in the United States, Maya has had considerable experience working with international populations through her ongoing involvement with Global Empowerment Theatre (GETheatre), an organization working in East Africa, India and New York City. Maya currently serves as GETheatre's Project Director for GETIndia. Until recently Maya served as the Director of Professional Development for Marquis Studios, overseeing a roster of over 80 teaching artists, designing and facilitating professional development workshops in relevant areas of arts, education and pedagogy. Maya is a committee member for the Teaching Artist Affairs Committee and the Face to Face Conference Session Selection Committee for the New York City Arts in Education Roundtable. Maya also holds a degree in Liberal Arts from The New School and a Masters in Educational Theatre from NYU.

**DUNCAN STEWART** is a Casting Director & Partner at Stewart/Whitley. BROADWAY/NY: *The Great Comet*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *As You Like It*, *Elf the Musical*, *On The Town*, *Pippin*, *Chicago The Musical*, *La Cage Aux Folles*, *The Radio City Christmas Spectacular*, *Carnegie Hall West Side Story*, *The Band Wagon*, *Stuffed*, *Curvy Widow*, *Pageant*; WEST END/UK: *Thriller Live*, *Menier Chocolate Factory*; TV: *Freaky Friday* (Disney Channel); TOURS: *Finding Neverland*, *The Bodyguard*, *Dirty Dancing*, *The Sound of Music*, *Elf the Musical*, *Into The Woods*, *Once*, *Shrek*, *Flashdance*, *Anything Goes*, *Bullets Over Broadway*, *The Duck Commander Musical*, *We Will Rock You*; UPCOMING: LA Philharmonic *Bernstein's Mass*, *Hadestown*, Stephen Schwartz' *The Prince of Egypt*, Maltby & Shire's *Waterfall*, *August Rush*, Andrew Lippa's *The Man in the Ceiling*, John Denver's *Back Home Again*, *Chasing Rainbows*; REGIONAL: American Repertory Theater, The Alley Theatre, Carnegie Hall, Bay Street Theater, Theatre Under the Stars (TUTS), Hollywood Bowl, The Goodspeed, The Ahmanson, Seattle's 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Asolo Rep, TheatreWorks, Philadelphia Theatre Company, For The Record productions, and the Broadway-branded shows on Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines.

Prior to forming Stewart/Whitley, Duncan was the in-house Director of Casting for National Artists Management Company (NAMCO) on various Broadway/West End productions. This year he celebrates 10 years as the Casting Director of Chicago. Previous to this he worked with Elaine Alldaffer (Head of Casting) on numerous productions at Playwrights Horizons.

Duncan has been a TV guest judge and panelist for ABC's Emmy-winning, "Extreme Weight Loss" and Broadway TV's "Next Broadway Star" and is often booked as a guest lecturer and seminar/workshop leader for numerous colleges, studios and universities in the US, Canada and UK. Mr. Stewart is an Artios Award winner and proud member of the Casting Society of America (CSA).

**SCOTT GARIBALDI** has been the graphic designer for a number of Southgate Education show guides including: *Les Misérables*, *Million Dollar Quartet*, *Lysistrata Jones*, *Kinky Boots*, *SpongeBob SquarePants*, *Tuck Everlasting*, and *King Kong*. He has previously worked as Creative Director for TMD, the marketing department of Broadway Across America, and has branded and developed art and marketing materials for the off-Broadway productions *Snow Orchid*, *They Promised Her the Moon*, and *Miracle in Rwanda*.