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July, 2009

Theatre for Young People to Perform *Les Misérables – School Edition*

by John Lieder

Composed in 1980 by Claude-Michel Schönberg, *Les Misérables* won eight Tony awards and had the third longest run in Broadway history, closing after 6,680 performances. Community Players has waited a long time to get this superb show on our stage, and that is finally happening this summer, albeit in a format somewhat different from the original Broadway production. This production is *Les Misérables – School Edition*. The licensing agency (Musical Theatre International) is very strict that each member of the cast be under 19 and that the show is specifically advertised as the “School Edition.” We are also prohibited from doing television and radio advertising for this production.

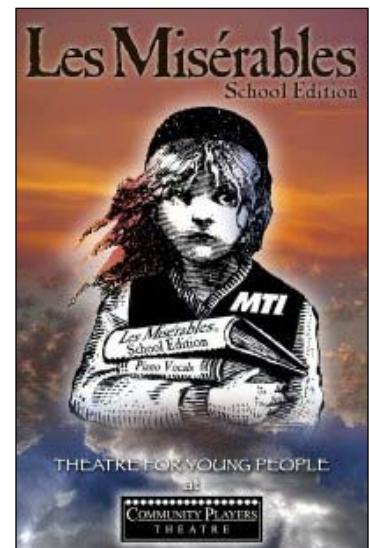
Some of us oldsters are a little jealous that the young people in this cast have an opportunity that has eluded us. C’est la vie! From what I’ve seen and heard from the June 23 rehearsal, this group is up to the challenge of this demanding musical. I left with goose bumps and a great deal of excitement, looking forward to seeing

the final product. In fact, I already have my tickets, but I may have to sneak into the Preview Performance. I just hope I can suppress the urge to sing along, especially with the big chorus numbers.

The cast totals 43 and space prohibits me from listing all the names. Leading the cast as Jean Valjean, is **Cody Stuepfert**, with **Erin Smith** as Cosette, **Brittany Amber** as

Fantine, **Jenny Koth** as Eponine, **Kyle Holliday** as Marius, and **Jaron Rhoda** as Javert. **Elijah Susong** portrays Gavroche, **Rachel Smith** is the young Cosette, and **Laura Lehmkuhl** and **Zach Taylor** are the Thenadiers. **Garret Medlock** is Enjolras and **Wes Ellias** is the Priest. Nine youngsters portray the “urchins” and there are 22 in the ensemble.

Alan Wilson is Director and **Sally Hoffmann** is Music Director. The choreographer is **Kathy Taylor**. It was good to see these three stalwarts in action; their rapport with these young people is admirable. **Cathy Sikyta** is Producer, Alan’s better half, **Penny Wilson**, is doing costumes. **Dorothy Mundy**



The cast rehearses the famous Barricade Scene.

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COMMUNITY PLAYERS
Calendar

July–August 2009

Board Meetings

July 14, 6:00 p.m.
August 11, 6:00 p.m.
Community Players Theatre

Les Miz

Preview: July 9
Shows: July 10-12, 16-19, 23-26

Lost in Yonkers

Auditions: July 27-28
Preview: Sept. 10
Shows: Sept. 11-13, 17-20, 24-26

Tickets can be ordered online at
www.communityplayers.org.
Click on "Online Ticket Sales."



Community Players

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www.communityplayers.org

Newsletter Committee

Jim Kalmbach
Barb Lemmon
John Lieder
Bob McLaughlin
Sally Parry

We are always looking for
writers, artists, designers and
story ideas. Send comments and
suggestions to lieder78@yahoo.com

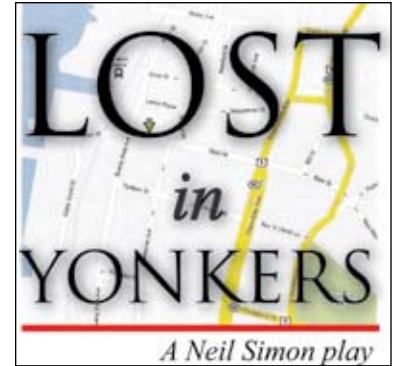
Curtain Calls is published six
times a year for the voting mem-
bers of Community Players.

For information about joining us,
please contact our membership
chair, Barb Lemmon at
barb.lemmon@comcast.net.

Back issues of *Curtain Calls*
are available on the Commu-
nity Players web site. Click on
"Newsletter Archive."

Lost in Yonkers Auditions

Lost in Yonkers by Neil Simon is a Pulitzer Prize winning play that Community Players will be doing for the first time this fall. This thoughtful coming of age tale is about two brothers left in the care of their domineering grandmother and warm-hearted aunt while their father works as a traveling salesman to pay off debts incurred following the death of his wife. Like most of Simon's works, this one features an eccentric cast of characters and contains Simon's trademark mix of comedy and drama: there are both hilarious one-liners and poignant characters with sad, dysfunctional relationships.



Lost in Yonkers opened on Broadway 1991 and ran for 780 performances. It won the 1991 Drama Desk Award for Best New Play, Pulitzer Prize for Drama, and Tony Award for Best Play

Auditions will be Monday, July 27, and Tuesday, July 28, at 7 p.m. Director **Opal Virtue** is looking for two boys, approximately 13 and 16 years old, two women and two men ages 30-40, and one woman 60-70 years old. Those auditioning should be prepared to read from the script and should arrive 10-15 minutes early to complete audition forms.

The Pay What You Can Preview will be September 10 with performances September 11-13, 17-20, and 24-26, 2009. Evening performances are at 7:30 pm and Sunday matinees are 2:30 pm.



Community Players' Board Plans for Tomorrow

On June 22, 2009, the Community Players Board of Governors completed a planning retreat at the Bloomington Public Library. Mysty Thomas facilitated the session in which the Board discussed our vision, mission, goals, and objectives for the 2009-10 season and beyond.

Innovative Marketing Pushes Urinetown over the Top

by Bob McLaughlin

When Community Players decided to present *Urinetown: The Musical* as its final show of the 2008-2009 season, we faced a problem that had followed the play from

its first presentation in the New York Fringe Festival, though its off-off Broadway mounting, to its Broadway production, and then to its national tour: how to keep the title and subject matter (a future society where all peeing is regulated by a huge corporation) from scaring audiences away from a funny and smart musical play. Marketing Chair **Chris Strupek** and *Urinetown* director

Kathy Parrish planned an advertising campaign aimed at younger audiences. As Kathy explains, “Chris Strupek and I talked about using social media outlets from the beginning to reach an audience who doesn’t look at traditional forms of media. We do have very loyal patrons who attend regularly and look for our announcements in the *Pantagraph*, but we wanted to

introduce the theater and this production to people who weren’t familiar with Community Players.”



You can view our *Urinetown* TV ad at <http://www.youtube.com/user/CommunityPlayers>

The campaign was a success: after *High School Musical*, *Urinetown* was the most profitable show of the season. More important, Players made use of some innovative marketing techniques that should also produce results in the future.

Television Advertising:

Thanks to the media-tech knowledge of **Adam Sitton**, **Zach Hoesly**, and **Brett Cottone**, Players produced our first TV

commercial, which was broadcast locally on Comcast. The 30-second spot ran 324 times, anytime during the day, on tru TV, TLC, History Channel, Cartoon Network (only during the 9 p.m. to midnight slot, to appeal to the “Adult Swim” audience), Fox News, Food Network, Discovery Channel, CNN, Comedy Central, and AMC.

Electronic Billboards: An ad for the show, with artwork courtesy of Brett Cottone, ran on three electronic billboards around town: one on IAA Drive (April 25-May 3); one on Center Street (May 4-May 10); and one on Veterans’ Parkway and Lincoln (April 30-May 6).

Facebook and YouTube: Brett Cottone (you’re noting Brett’s name here a lot because he did an enormous amount of work promoting the show) took video of rehearsals, including **Aimee Kerber** conducting a tour of the theater for newcomers and an early music rehearsal, and made them available on the Web. **Joe Strupek** posted photos of the set being built and the show coming together. This social-networking presence created a buzz about the show among potential younger audience members weeks before we opened. The TV commercial could also be accessed through the show’s Facebook page.

To learn more about Community Players online, visit the following websites:

Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Community-Players-Theatre/10171142198>

Flickr

<http://www.flickr.com/communityplayerstheatre>

Youtube

<http://www.youtube.com/communityplayers>

Twitter

<http://www.twitter.com/cptheatre>

Home page

<http://communityplayers.org/>

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. . . *Les Miz* preview continued from page 1.

and **Carol Plotkin** are double-teaming on properties. **Brett Cottone** is Lighting Designer and Alan is also Set Designer and Master Builder along with **Scott Heap**, while **Dave Fuller** again applies his expertise with the paint brush. **Judy Stroh** is stage manager. **Kim Snyder** is rehearsal accompanist and **Beth Stuepfert** (yep, that's Cody's mom) is House Manager.

In reviewing the cast list, it is good to see so many young people returning from last summer's *High School Musical on Stage*. We must be doing something right.

The Preview Performance is Thursday, July 9, with regular performances July 10-12, 16-19, and 23-26. As always, evening performances begin at 7:30 and Sunday matinees are at 2:30. Don't miz this terrific production.



Jenny Koth (Eponine) and **Cody Stuepfert** (Valjean) rehearse.



. . . Innovative Marketing continued from page 3.

Radio: Chris Strupek explains, "Instead of only WJBC, in keeping with the idea of appealing to a broader range of people, we did radio interviews with Magic 100.7, WBNQ, and WGLT's Wednesday night show. Zach Hoesly, who is a broadcast personality on WBNQ, set that one up. I arranged the WJBC, WGLT, and Magic 100.7 interviews. Julie, of Julie and Fasiq on Magic 100, was thrilled that we contacted them and wants to keep doing the interviews. So does WGLT."

Chris also put "**table tents**," foldable ads that look like, well, tents, on the tables at Eastland Mall food court for a week. She also arranged for an ad to be a **tray liner** at McDonald's for the month of May. **Gary Strunk** arranged for an ad to appear on the **checkout screens** at Cub Foods. The cast covered the town with **posters**. All this, of course, was done in addition to our usual **advertising** in the *Pantagraph* and on local radio.

The results were spectacular, especially in developing an audience of people in their

teens and twenties. Kathy Parrish explains, "Research shows that the Bloomington-Normal market turns over almost one-third of its residents every year. That means we have to find 1,100 new attendees each season. The turnover also affects our talent pool, so we have to find new actors each year." Innovative marketing strategies, like the ones employed for *Urinetown*, ought to help Community Players in the important work of developing new audiences.



A *Urinetown* table tent designed by Brett Cottone.