

Hear the People Sing

Arts Center to stage production of Tony Award-winning *Les Misérables*

This spring, possibly the largest cast ever to be assembled on the stage of the Elizabeth Wallace Theatre will recreate the moving, masterfully written musical, *Les Misérables*, Victor Hugo's epic saga of love and redemption.

"We're going all-out with this production," said New York director Casey Colgan, whose Arts Center credits include mega hits *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Cats* and *The Producers*. "The cast is the cream of the crop."

Among the all-star lineup is Jason Kraack, who appeared in the national tour of *Les Misérables*. Doug Jabara, Old Deuteronomy in

the Arts Center's production of *Cats*, will play his nemesis Javert. Cast members also include Meghan Colleen Moroney, from the Broadway production of *Mama Mia*, and Sam Underwood, who starred in the national tour of *Seussical*.

A record-breaking 855 actors auditioned for the Arts Center's production of *Les Misérables*. While most of the 35 cast members are professionals from New York (and one from Florida), 15 were chosen from Hilton Head Island and Savannah, including Daniel Cort, who played Gaston in *Beauty and the Beast*, and his wife Debbie Martin Cort, who appeared in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and *Proposals*.

"People came out of the woodwork to be in *Les Mis*," said Frederick Willard, who returns to the Arts Center after serving as musical director for the holiday production of *South Pacific*. "It's a new show for regional theaters." In fact, the Arts Center is producing the Carolinas/Georgia regional premiere of *Les Misérables*.

One of the most popular musicals of all time, it's still on stage in London's West End, making it the longest-running musical in the theater district's history. The Broadway production was just as successful, winning eight Tony Awards, including Best Musical and Best Score.

Bob Phillips, a four-time Emmy winning art director, designed the Arts Center's set as an impressionistic portrayal of 19th century France.

"It's very reminiscent of the Broadway show," said Phillips. "I'm very happy with the way it turned out, as it's a particularly good set."

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Jason Kraack and Caroline Kobylarz as Jean ValJean and his adopted Cosette in *Les Misérables*

Photo by John Brackett



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Equally impressive are the costumes, which rival anything ever created for an Arts Center show. Among the 150 pieces are nine period gowns that will be featured particularly in the second act wedding scene.

“Imagine Scarlett O’Hara without the hoops,” said Arts Center Costume Director Jennifer Correll.

Based on Hugo’s timeless novel, *Les Mis* follows the life of Jean Valjean, imprisoned

for 19 years for stealing a loaf of bread. Even as he seeks redemption, adopting the daughter of a prostitute, he is hounded relentlessly by the fanatic police inspector Javert for breaking his parole.

Most of the story is told through the score, which features several powerful ballads, among them “One More Day,” “I Dreamed a Dream,” “Do You Hear the People Sing?” and “On My Own.”