

m i z b i z



Les Miserables
directed and adapted by Trevor Nunn
and John Caird
The Royal Alexandria Theatre

by Darren Alexander

Les Miz. That's what everyone is calling it these days. That way, nobody need call it by the full name — *Les Miserables* — thereby revealing their imperfect command of the French language. So it's *Les Miz*... "Let's do brunch," "Let's do din," "Let's do *Les Miz*." It's got that kind of a ring to it, doesn't it? Everyone's on a kind of

first-name basis with this musical now, they know it so well.

Well I didn't know a thing about it, except that Victor Hugo, author of *Hunchback of Notre Dame*, wrote it. I've read *Hunchback* — it's a classic — but that's about it. I haven't even seen the movie.

So who is this little waif adorning all those ads? And what's with her hair, standing up off the side of her head? Are there wind machines in this production? Or is it just greasy? And the title, *Les Miserables*, what does it mean? Hey, I'm bilingual too; 'The Miserable,' right? But what I'm getting at here is, what the hell is the show all about?

I asked some people:

friend: "... fuck if I know ..."

bartender: "... about some little girl, isn't it? Some miserable little girl ..."

cook, Harry's restaurant: "... about some revolution, not the American one, though, the French, I think ..."

lawyer: "... isn't that the one where everyone takes off their clothes ...? No, that's 'Oh, Calcutta' ..."

It turns out the grillmaster at Harry's was closest. Victor Hugo's story is about the pathetic situation of the oppressed peasantry in France and their subsequent (and failed) attempt at a revolution. It's an okay story — about the oppressed and for the oppressed. And, since Vic's version, it has ended up a stageplay musical. Which raises another question; what's so damn special about it?

Well, for starters the price; the better seats are 55 bucks a pop. There are cheaper, mind you, but not cheap enough for the poor or oppressed. (Students, who often may be poor and/or oppressed, are offered 'special rates' — I think Victor would have wanted it that way).

This exclusivity is all just as well because the lower class would likely feel out of place at The

Royal Alexandra Theatre. I found myself wishing for slacks and a tie. And a smoking jacket would have been nice for the intermission. But at least I was the right skin colour, blending in easily with the homogenous Wonderbread whiteness of the other patrons.

What else is so special about *Les Miz*? Well, it's hard to find stage shows like this one anymore. I mean, it's a classic — like Shakespeare — only all the lines are belted out like in *Mighty Mouse* cartoons. And to think that all this time I've been wasting my evenings checking out aspiring theatre around town — the stuff dealing with contemporary issues and innovative ideas.

Nevertheless, this *Les Miz* thing has really stood the test of time; it's bigger, it's better, it's more polished. And the theatre's a lot nicer, too.

But there's more that makes *Les Miz* so special: you don't just watch it and then applaud, and

applaud some more, and then head off to the nearby Ed's Warehouse for overpriced cocktails. I mean, you can if you like, but you also have the option of bringing some of *Les Miz* home with you.

You can wear the "little-waif on a button," drink from the "little-waif on a mug," or light up a cigarette with a match-stick from a "little-waif matchbox." You can also sport the little peasant on a t-shirt or sweatshirt (available in all sizes, cotton/polyester blend). I understand that plans are in the works for a little-waif doll complete with tangled hair and a miniature tin can for panhandling. Negotiations for a cartoon series may follow.

So now I've seen *Les Miz*. Now I'm in tune with what's happening in the theatre scene. I've got my *Les Miz* toilet-seat cover and should any mention of it come up in a social engagement, I can act bored and say I've seen it. Now I'm cultured.

CARTOONS

Cyrano ©

THIS WEEK ON THE RICH & FAMOUS WE LOOK AT TWO STARS WHO SHARE, SURPRISINGLY ENOUGH, ONE BODY GUARD. WHO ARE THESE THREE PEOPLE? WELL...

PLEASE, LET THIS END SOON!

ONE IS TOM HANKS OF "BIG" FAME. YES, MR. HANKS SHARES A BODYGUARD WITH...

TOM CRUISE, STAR OF "COCKTAIL" AND SOMETIMES "VIDEO" PRODUCER. AND WHO IS BIG ENOUGH TO PROTECT THESE 2 MEN FROM THEIR ADORING FANS?

JUDGE WAPNER. YOUNG LADY, LEAVE MR. HANKS & MR. CRUISE ALONE, OR I'LL PUT YOU UNDER OATH AND GRILL YOU LIKE A T-BONE STEAK.

By: F.W. Cameron



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