

ENTERTAINMENT MEAT

A New Year...

A New Format?? When Uncle Stevie left us did he take his MEAT with him??

We want to know what our readers think...come and express your opinion at the Bruns



Acclaimed Shakespearean actor Brian Bedford will present his one man tribute to the Bard, at the Playhouse on Sunday January 14, 1990. His Performance of "The Lunatic, The Lover and The Poet" is almost sold out to ONSTAGE subscribers

Brian Bedford to appear at Playhouse Sunday January 14th

Brian Bedford, born in Yorkshire, has lived the last quarter of a century in North America. His first West End appearance was in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Young and the Beautiful*, after which Peter Brook asked him to play the young Italian immigrant in Arthur Miller's *A View From The Bridge*, and Ariel in *The Tempest* with Sir John Gielgud as Prospero. Peter Schaffer's first play, *Five Finger Exercise*, directed by Gielgud, followed and subsequently led to Mr. Bedford's American Debut. A series of New York assignments followed, including the roles of Charles Boyer's son in *Lord Pengo*; Mike Nichols' production of *The Knack* (for which Bedford received the Obie and New York Drama Desk Award); Tennessee Williams' *The Seven Descents of Myrtle*; Peter Ustinov's *The Unknown Dream, As You Like It,*

Soldier and His Wife; and Richard Wilbur's brilliant translation of Moliere's *School for Wives* for which Bedford won the Tony Award for best Actor.

His most recent New York appearance as Alceste in the Circle in the Square's production of *Misanthrope*. A second attempt at *Hamlet*, directed by John Dexter and the role of Tusenbach in *The Three Sisters* took him to Stratford, Connecticut, followed by starring roles in the national tours of *Equus*, *Deathtrap*, *Whose Life Is It Anyway?* and *The Real Thing*. His appearances during nine seasons at Canada's Stratford Festival include Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*, Angelo in *Measure for Measure*, *Tartuffe* (which was televised by the CBC), Bottom in *Descents of Myrtle*; Peter A Midsummer Night's

Much Ado About Nothing (see photo), and most recently, *The Merchant of Venice*, and his one man show *The Lunatic, The Lover and The Poet* currently on tour.

Bedford starred in and directed *Tartuffe* at the Kennedy Center and acted there in *The Physicists* and *The Opera Comique*. His movie credits include *Grand Prix*, *The Pad and How To Use It*, *The Angry Silence*, and Walt Disney's *Robin Hood*, and appeared on television in *Cheers*, *The Equalizer*, *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* and *Murder, She Wrote*.

Write for MEAT

record reviews, movie reviews, anything... please!!

TORONTO ARTS ABROAD

Les Misérables

The critically acclaimed musical production of Victor Hugo's novel *Les Misérables* is presently playing an 8 month series at Toronto's Royal Alexandra Theatre. The story deals with the social conditions in France following the French Revolution (which ended in 1789), and traces the life of one individual, Jean Valjean.

Briefly, Valjean is released on parole from the Chain Gang, after having served 19 years, instead of the 5 years he was originally sentenced to for stealing a loaf of bread. He finds himself treated as a pariah of society, his parole conditions forcing him to display his ticket-of-leave. Only a Bishop shows him hospitality - but Valjean, embittered, repays him by stealing the silverware. The townspeople and police catch him, return him to the Bishop, who lies to the police to save him. Valjean, in return promises to start life (fresh over again)

Years later, his work and industry brings him up to be both a mayor and a factory owner in another town. Valjean, now calling himself, M. Madeleine runs into a former factory worker of his, Fantine, who was dismissed when his foreman discovered she had an illegitimate child. Fantine is dying in circumstances having forced her to become a prostitute.

The whole scene was an excellent scene. Delightfully, outrageously bawdy, the prostitutes all exuded pure enjoyment in their roles, which is something I always love to see.

Valjean, feeling guilty at not having prevented her dismissal from the factory, promises to raise her child Cosette.

Fantine, played by Louise Pitre from Montreal was absolutely superb. The suffering, the strong character of Fantine was portrayed convincingly, and I believe her scenes were the most touching and poignant of the whole production. Pitre has a full resonant voice and tears actually flowed despite myself myself when she sang. Beautiful.

Cosette, treated as a slave when staying with her aunt and uncle, is delighted to be taken away under Valjean's care and the

two move to Paris.

The performance of Niki Holt as the young Cosette was pleasantly surprising. She imparted a rather poignant edge to her role despite her young age.

Years later, Paris is uneasy in the probable death of their popular leader and idealistic students begin planning for a new revolution. One of these Marius, meets Cosette and Valjean who are delivering alms and food to the poor. Love at first sight of both sides for Marius and Cajette.

By a curious coincidence the Thenardier family (Cosette's aunt and uncle are also in Paris, running press-gangs in the streets. Both the Thenardiers - the rogue and his wonderful wanton floozy of a wife- were excellent. Played by Graeme Campbell, an Australian by birth, and Janelle Hutchison, who is American born and has played with theatre New Brunswick, the Thenardier couple imparted a comical, if deliberately tacky, edge to the performance. One is almost inclined to forget their hard, dissipated characters as the two are so delightful.

Their daughter, Eponine is also in love with Marius. She helps the two come together after realizing that Marius does not love her in the same way.

The General dies, the uprising by the valiant students starts - almost all die, including Eponine and Gavroche, an endearing, precocious street-urchin. Valjean saves Marius who is sorely injured, reunites the two lovers, and leaves, not wanting his past to taint their lives.

For all the while, throughout the years, Valjean has been pursued haunted by the upright police sergeant Javert. Javert is determined to bring Valjean to justice for escaping his parole, no matter how precarious this "justice" is in light of Valjean's reformation. However, during the uprising, Valjean has saved Javert's life. Javert's sense of duty renders him unable to live without turning Valjean in, but feeling he owes Valjean his freedom, he kills himself.

Thomas Goerz as Javert was another character perfectly played. His voice took is very strong and rich and his austerity of movement brought that added dimension to his role. his suicide along the Seine was very well executed and I thoroughly appreciated his performance.

Cosette and Marius go to the dying Valjean, who finally tells Cosette the truth. He dies joining Fantine, Eponine, the gallant students and all others whose lives on earth allowed them no sanctuary from hardship.

The older Cosette, played almost flawlessly by Kymberley Huffman, and Ontario native, was really a nothing-role. The production didn't focus on any of the character's development from youth into maturity, and all the audience can gather is that she's lonely, confused about her past, and exceedingly protected from the eh struggles around her. Too bad, so sad - there is nothing redeeming about the role, and although Huffman has an extraordinary voice, clear and true to pitch, it tended to get lost in the orchestra.

Michael Burgess, displaying the finely tuned technique acquired through 25 years of performance both within and outside Canada, played an excellent Jean Valjean, especially in the latter part of Valjean's life. His scenes with Marius and his death-bed scene were particularly affecting.

The performance was outstanding from the cast to the orchestra to the production itself. Very few props were used and with the exception of a ingeniously constructed barricade, those that were used were fairly simple. The lighting too, was very well-done - spotlights focusing on the solo/group singer in the front of the circular stage, enabled quick changes of props and cast to occur at the back of the rotating stage.

Lynne Wanyeki