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### SPOTLIGHT

## COME AND HEAR THE PEOPLE SING



Photo Credit: The Company of the New 25th Anniversary of Les Misérables;  
Photo by: Deen van Meer

"Come and hear the people sing" as LES MISÉRABLES marches into PlayhouseSquare as part of the **KeyBank Broadway Series** April 5- 17. This new production celebrates the show's 25th anniversary with fresh staging and scenery inspired by the paintings of Victor Hugo.

Critics Rave  
"The act-clinching finales are as thrilling as ever they were, beautifully staged, the complex narrative twining of "One Day More" and finally the redemptive, celestial transformation of deathbed reunions and farewells announcing the hero's spiritual salvation and the affirmation of the human spirit in social and political optimism. You still need those Kleenex."(Watsonstage.com)

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"It's earnest and sensational, yes, but also a beautiful evocation of yearning and redemption, flushed with romance and touched by a very real darkness." ([London Evening Standard](#))

"LES MISÉRABLES is a rousing, shamelessly entertaining evening of tuneful and spectacular popular theatre." ([Guardian.Co.UK](#))

"The show was rapturously received and all the old magic is intact...final exit is perhaps the most spectacular in modern theatre." ([The Daily Telegraph](#))

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LES MISÉRABLES "remains the *Mother Ship of Musicals*, with the sprawl of *Cats*, the swirl of *Starlight Express*, the political passion of *Evita*, and the melodic turns and pop soulfulness of *Jesus Christ Superstar*." ([Chicago Theater Blog](#))

"This new production has already been acclaimed by critics, fans and new audiences and is breaking box office records wherever it goes." ([nowplayingutah.com](#))

#### Awards

LES MISÉRABLES is the third-longest running Broadway musical, having played for 16 years. It has won eight Tony Awards, four Drama Desk Awards, three Drama Critics Circle Awards, a Drama-Logue Award, a National Broadway Theatre Award, and a Drama Critics Award...and that is just in the United States. Internationally, it has received 13 awards in Australia, 11 in the United Kingdom, five in Hungary, four each in Canada, Sweden and the Netherlands, two each in Mexico, France, the Czech Republic and Germany, and one each in Israel, Estonia, Japan and Argentina. There are more than 65 recordings of the show and it has won two Grammy awards.

#### A Global Phenomenon

This show, according to the *Chicago Tribune*, has "seduced almost every major city on the globe." 55 million people in 42 countries, 291 cities and 21 languages have seen LES MISÉRABLES.

#### Synopsis

Based on the *classic novel* by Victor Hugo, LES MISÉRABLES tells the story of Jean Valjean. Arrested for stealing a loaf of bread and imprisoned for 19 years, Valjean is released on parole and forced to wear a yellow ticket marking him as an outcast. He breaks parole, but instead of taking on a criminal's existence, a twist of fate sets him on a path to a better life.

Years later, having changed his life, a dying wish brings Valjean an adopted daughter. Yet he is still pursued by the police for breaking parole.

LES MISÉRABLES is a revolution, crime and punishment, evil innkeepers, poverty and homelessness, a love triangle, a secret, a wedding, a sacrifice, and "the music of a people who will not be slaves again...a life about to start when tomorrow comes."

#### Did You Know...

In LES MISÉRABLES, the character Gavroche is a young orphan boy who lives on the street. Lyricist Alain Boubil was in London watching a production of the musical *Oliver!* when suddenly he got an idea to adapt Victor Hugo's novel into a musical.

Boubil has said, "as soon as the Artful Dodger came onstage, Gavroche came to mind. It was like a blow to the solar plexus. I started seeing all the characters of Victor Hugo's LES MISÉRABLES - Valjean, Javert, Gavroche, Cosette, Marius, and Éponine - in my mind's eye, laughing, crying, and singing onstage."

A new musical extravaganza had begun.


[MORE INFORMATION ON LES MISÉRABLES](#)

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## IS LES MISÉRABLES AN OPERA?



Photo Credit: Josh Caggiano (Gavroche); Photo by Deen van Meer

What do *Evita*, *Caroline or Change*, *Rent*, *Chess*, *The Last 5 Years*, *Miss Saigon*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *The Who's Tommy*, *Cats*, and *LES MISÉRABLES* have in common?

Their stories are told just like an opera...completely through song.

According to *Oxford American Dictionary*, an opera is "a dramatic work in one or more acts set to music for singers and instrumentalists." In other words, opera is an art form that tells a story using only music, singing, dancing, acting and no (or very little) spoken dialogue or narration.

#### Opera

Opera began in 16th Century Italy and quickly spread in popularity throughout Europe. It united all the art forms in a single work: music, singing, dance, acting, literary arts (in the libretto's words in the opera), visual arts (in the costume and set design), technical arts (in the lighting, special effects, prop and sound design).

The music in an opera usually consists of several elements:

- An overture is the orchestral piece at the beginning of the opera, which often has short musical phrases that will be heard later in the opera.
- Recitative is used instead of spoken dialogue to transition from one element to the next. It is a narrative song that continues the action and often has many

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words sung on the same, or adjoining, note while the orchestra plays chords beneath them.

- An aria is a song for a solo singer.
- A duet is for two singers.
- Trios are songs for three singers.
- The chorus is for a large group of singers.
- Dance can be part of the spectacle of opera and is a change from the continual singing.

These elements are often found in the early rock operas, which led the way to the many Broadway shows that tell their stories completely through song.

#### Rock Opera

In 1969, British rock band The Who released an album called *Tommy*. This was the first time a piece of music was labeled a rock opera. The album told a story completely through song. It had different singers playing the roles in the story, just as in a classic opera. While it began as an album, *Tommy* eventually became a concert, film, ballet and a Tony award-winning musical on [Broadway](#).

Influenced by The Who, in 1970 Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice released an album called *Jesus Christ Superstar* that was also labeled a rock opera. One year later, *Jesus Christ Superstar* opened on [Broadway](#). Dubbed a rock musical, instead of a rock opera, the story was told completely through song. It received five Tony nominations and led the way for future musicals to be sung through.


Musicals, like LES MISÉRABLES, that are told in completely in song (with very little or no spoken dialogue) today, are called "sung-through."

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## VERSATILE VICTOR HUGO



Photo Credit: Paris Stars MK with Hugo Clouds; Artwork by Victor Hugo

Victor Hugo (1802-1885) is known primarily in the United States for his two most famous novels, LES MISÉRABLES and *Notre-Dame de Paris* (*The Hunchback of Notre Dame*).

In France, however, Hugo is also known as a poet, playwright, politician and activist supporting freedom of the press, speaking against social injustice and the death penalty, and being critical of the government.

#### Victor As Visual Artist

What many people do not know about Hugo, though, is his skill in visual art. He created more than 4,000 drawings and paintings, some of which we still have today. Hugo sketched his whole life, but wanted his writing to be his main focus. To him, art was more of an hobby, creating calling cards as gifts to be shared only with friends and family.

During the years 1848 - 1851, when Hugo was focusing on politics instead of writing, visual art became his primary creative outlet.

Upon showing his work to artist Eugène Delacroix, this leader of the French Romantic school of visual art was known to say that if Hugo decided to "become a painter instead of a writer, he would have outshone the artists of their century."

In a letter to the French poet Baudelaire, Hugo wrote, "I am very happy and very proud that you should choose to think kindly of what I call my pen-and-ink drawings. I've ended up mixing in pencil, charcoal, sepia, coal dust, soot and all sorts of bizarre concoctions, which manage to convey more or less what I have in view, and above all in mind. It keeps me amused between two verses."

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Hugo often created art on paper, using dark brown or black pen-and-ink wash and occasional touches of white. He would also use stencils, charcoal, lace impressions, and ink blots that he would fold simulating a Rorschach design. In addition to using brushes and pens, Hugo would use his fingers or match sticks to create. He would even add soot or coffee to his picture to get whatever effect he wanted. Perhaps Hugo was anticipating what we now consider abstract art.

#### A New Vision

Mark Hoebee, the producing artistic director of LES MISÉRABLES said, "for the celebration of this 25th anniversary, the idea was to create a whole new visual experience of the show."

#### New Scenic Design

Matt Kinley, the scenic and image designer, started researching the show to find "that Victor Hugo was the most wonderful, forward-thinking painter in the 19th Century, who kept his work relatively hidden. I started researching his paintings and that became the basis for how we developed the show. Once you look at those paintings they are so atmospheric and rich and dark and brooding, exactly the same qualities as the show has." Using Hugo's paintings as the backdrop for the set, "worked very well putting it in a world of decay and darkness, yet gave us the vehicles to take us away from that world into some slightly more beautiful pictures for some of the more romantic scenes."

This new design for the 25th anniversary of LES MISÉRABLES has the flying and moving pieces of scenery enhanced by digital projections inspired by Hugo's own sketchings.

According to Kinley, the set has "been painted by the same hands that wrote it."

[Click here](#) for pictures of Hugo's visual art



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## TALKING WITH LAWRENCE CLAYTON

Buzz Extra spoke with Lawrence Clayton who portrays Jean Valjean in LES MISÉRABLES. Mr. Clayton has appeared on Broadway in the original *Dreamgirls*, *It Ain't Nothin' but the Blues* and *Once Upon A Mattress*. He has toured with *Jesus Christ Superstar* and appeared in *Jerry Springer, the Opera* at Carnegie Hall.

Mr. Clayton never performed in high school musicals. Rather, he sang for every wedding and funeral in his community in Mocksville, N.C. Then, in his last year at North Carolina Central University, a professor asked him to portray Nathan Detroit in the classic *Guys and Dolls*. Clayton fell in love with the theater. He moved to New York City three months later and has worked in the business for 31 years. Last seen in Cleveland at the State Theatre in 1992 performing in Carole King's *Tapestry*, Mr. Clayton looks forward to his return to PlayhouseSquare.



EXTRA: How did you get the role of Jean Valjean in LES MISÉRABLES?

CLAYTON: I earned it, through a long audition process. Let me go back. In the mid-90s I was cast in the ensemble of the show with the promise to understudy Valjean. But I could not do the show because I was contractually bound in another show that we thought would be closing, but did not. I could not get released from my contract to do LES MISÉRABLES.

Then, the last year of the original company on Broadway, they were casting for the role again and it came down between me and another gentleman and I lost out in that instance. So, I have been in the mix over the years. They thought, "he can do this gig."

This time around, I knew they were looking for a new production, to change it in some way; so I thought, maybe this is my opportunity. I really worked on it. I had to learn four or five big musical pieces from the show. I had three auditions, work sessions with the director and the musical supervisor from the show. I worked with my coach and just worked on the material, to make it my own. They liked what I did and that's how I got the job. I certainly don't want people to think that, after all these years, they decided to do some things ethnically different, just because it would be interesting. No, I won this role through a lot of hard work.

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EXTRA: Does your blues and gospel music background play any part in your interpretation of the music?

CLAYTON: I'm singing all of the notes, singing the music exactly as it's written. There are times I add a tiny little turn here and a tiny little turn there. In some instances I've been given the liberty to add or subtract a quarter note or I turn it into a half note - there's a little push and pull. All singers do that, not always singing the notes value for value. If an opera singer does the role, he will sound like an opera singer. If a blues singer does the role, he will sound like a blues singer. Since I have a pop, R & B background, it may sound different, but it really isn't different. I'm singing every single note on the page. It has to be true to the character and the storytelling. I am Jean Valjean every night.

EXTRA: Does the fact that you are African-American come in to play in your interpretation of the role?

CLAYTON: I grew up in the 60s and 70s. There are moments at the beginning of the show when Valjean is turned away from the inn, in spite of the fact that they have room. There are moments when he is fired from his job working in the field because of what he is, a former prisoner. People are afraid to have him around because they think he might cause trouble or harm them. So, there are things that resonate with me because of my age and where I'm from, the south, and things that I experienced a very long time ago, or even things that I experience today in my life that make me go, "oh." But, the show is never about pointing up the fact that I am a black man. It is about a man who, once he gets out of jail, works the rest of his life trying to be just and live a righteous life. I don't think that's white or black or Asian or Hispanic, it's universal.

EXTRA: So, I guess you are for non-traditional casting?

CLAYTON: I sure am. The world we live in is multicultural. It's time that the jobs are open for everybody. See a man for who he is, not for the color of his skin. When you look at me, I don't want you to see a black man, I want you to see a man. And that's as it should be.

EXTRA: It wasn't always like that in the theater. Do you think the industry has come a long way?

CLAYTON: Even though we've come far, there's still a long way to go. My advice to young people is to do everything you possibly can, not to limit yourself. You have to show people there is another possibility. They think they know what they want, in auditions, but sometimes they're waiting for someone to walk in the room and show it to them. Once they see it, it opens up doors.

EXTRA: What do you want people to walk away with after they see LES MISÉRABLES?

CLAYTON: That they loved the show and the racial aspect didn't make a difference. I want them to get the idea that we are all capable of change to make our lives better and be more responsible to our greater community.

[Watch a video interview with LAWRENCE CLAYTON](#)


*Photo Credit: Lawrence Clayton (Jean Valjean), in background Richard Todd Adams & Alan Shaw; Photo by Deen van Meer*

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## THE REVOLUTION OF 1832



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During the French Revolution a document was written called "The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen of 1793." This declaration stated, "equality is the first natural right of man...liberty must be protected...and if the government violates the rights of the people, insurrection is for the people...the most indispensable of duties." This document set the tone for what the French people wanted from their government.

The French Revolution, 1789-1799, was not the only revolt in France. Sixteen years later, in 1832, France was ripe for another.

What Led the "Miserable Ones" to Revolution

There was an unsuccessful harvest, followed by shortages of food. Then, a cholera epidemic left more than 18,000 people dead in the city of Paris alone. These catastrophes, combined with an increase in the cost of living, devastated the poor. Where was the government to help LES MISÉRABLES (the miserable ones)?

"Where the leaders of the land?  
Where are the swells who run this show?  
Only one man - and that's Lamarque  
Speaks for these people here below.  
See our children fed  
Help us in our shame."

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General Lamarque: The People's Man

Then, the beloved General Lamarque, the only man in the government believed to be sympathetic to the wants and needs of the lower classes, died on June 2.

"Lamarque is dead.

Lamarque! His death is the hour of fate.

The people's man.

His death is the sign we await!"

Lamarque's death was a good excuse for an insurrection against a government who did not help the people.

Insurrection in Place

Prior to Lamarque's death, the uprising was already being organized by several groups. These groups were against the monarchy that owed their power to the wealthy middle class. One group failed in an attempt to abduct the Royal Family. Another group called "The Rights of Man Society" announced their determination, at the funeral of General Lamarque, to start a new republic.

"On his funeral day they will honor his name.

It's a rallying cry that will reach every ear!

In the death of Lamarque we will kindle the flame.

They will see that the day of salvation is near!

The time is near!

Let us welcome it gladly with courage and cheer

Let us take to the streets with no doubt in our hearts

But a jubilant shout

They will come one and all

They will come when we call!"

The End of the Revolt

Barricades were built in the streets of Paris and the people resolved to fight for equality. Their society was made up of workingmen, boys, refugees who were living in Paris, students and other people of the lower classes. 25,000 soldiers attacked, leaving 800 of the revolutionaries dead or wounded, crushed the uprising.

Hugo's Inspiration

According to the *LES MISÉRABLES Study Guide*, Victor Hugo, the author of the original novel, "began to think about LES MISÉRABLES as early as 1829. He observed the specific incident that triggers the novel's action on the streets of Paris in 1845. On a sunny but cold day, he saw an impoverished man being arrested for stealing a loaf of bread. As the man stood on the street, an ornate carriage pulled up beside him. Inside there was a dazzlingly beautiful woman dressed in velvet, playing with a child hidden under ribbons, embroidery and furs. The impoverished man stared at the woman in the carriage, but she was totally unaware of him." Hugo wrote that he saw this man as, "the spectre of misery, the ghostly forewarning in full light of day, in the sunshine, of the revolution still plunged in the shadows of darkness, but emerging from them. The moment he become aware of her existence, while she remained unaware of his, a catastrophe was inevitable."

Universality

This inequality between the rich and the poor is often a cause for revolution. Paris in 1832 was no different. Victor Hugo saw the universality of this, saying about his book, "I don't know if it will be read by everyone, but it is meant for everyone. It addresses England as well as Spain, Italy as well as France, Germany as well as Ireland, the republics that harbour slaves as well as empires that have serfs. Social problems go beyond frontiers..."


Quotes are from the lyrics of LES MISÉRABLES.

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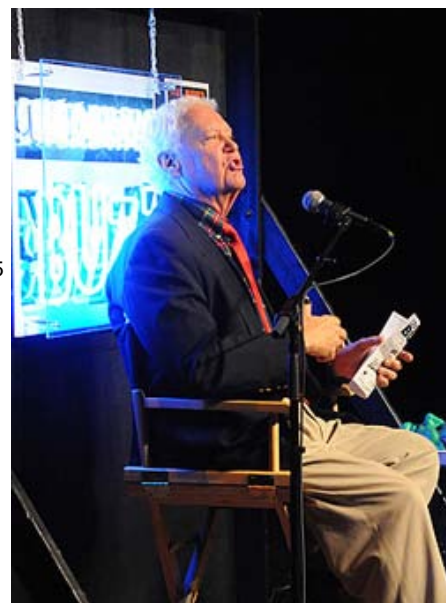
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Want to find out even more about the show? Come get "buzzed" with host Joe Garry at the Broadway Buzz Pre-Show Talk! Join us one hour before performances of LES MISÉRABLES in the Idea Center® at PlayhouseSquare.

The Idea Center is located just two doors west of the Allen Theatre at 1375 Euclid Avenue. You can enter the Idea Center quickly from the PlayhouseSquare parking garage by taking the elevator or stairs to Level 1. Exit through the red doors and cross at the crosswalk which will lead you directly into the rear entrance of the building. You also may enter the Idea Center from Euclid Avenue.



Can't make it to the Pre-Show Talk? Listen live on opening night (April 5) at 6:30 p.m. on WCLV 104.9 FM or watch live on [wclv.com](http://wclv.com). The video will be available for viewing after opening night at [playhousesquare.org/broadwaybuzz](http://playhousesquare.org/broadwaybuzz).

Catch our Post-Show Chats with the Cast following Thursday evening performances (April 7 and 14).

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