

Cottage Theatre hits all-time high with Les Misérables

BY MATT HOLLANDER
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Is there any production too big or challenging for the Cottage Theatre?

After a successful opening of the epic Broadway musical "Les Misérables" this past weekend, the answer to that question is quite arguably 'no.'

The show represents one of the most ambitious productions in the 33-year history of the theatre, and the excitement has been running high ever since its announcement last September, executive director Susan Goes noted in the program.

The cast of 33, the 16-piece orchestra and the production crew deliver on all of those expectations and make the audience forget they are sitting in a community theater.

"I think this production represents the

very best of all the talent that's available to Cottage Theatre," said director Alan Beck. "From the painters and the builders, to the technical crews and to the cast and voices; it's as good as we are capable of doing at this moment."

Managing that amount of talent was a feat in itself. Beck said that the assistance of music director Larry Kenton and vocal director Mark VanBeever allowed for the cast to break up into groups during rehearsals and work on specific aspects of their roles.

"Casting was the key to everything," Beck said. "Because it's so big, you've got to cast people who are self-directing and self-correcting; people who know their business and can take care of themselves on the stage because there are so many other things to concentrate on."

In the role of Jean Valjean, Beck cast Lanny Mitchell, a veteran of the stage

but a relative newcomer to the Cottage Theatre community. While Valjean could be a bucket-list role for many performers, Mitchell had to convince himself to audition.

"I wasn't a 'Les Mis' fan because I'm a gospel singer," said Mitchell, who first appeared on the Cottage Theatre stage in "Assassins." "But then I started listening to the music, and I wanted to take on the challenge."

In "Les Misérables," Mitchell leads a talented cast of varying backgrounds and experiences, including many regular Cottage Theatre performers such as Ward Fairbairn (Javert), Tracy Nygard (Fantine) and Marius (Kory Weimer).

The show also received delightfully impressive performances from young actors Oceana Taylor (Little Cosette), Maia Willough (Young Eponine) and Owen Hovet (Gavroche).

"This show could easily be regional

production," said Mitchell. "The only difference between this not being a professional show is we didn't get paid for it. That's it."

The challenging pace of the show — 20 scenes over two acts — required the very best coordination between cast and crew. Beck said that the first tech rehearsal took six hours to complete, but, obviously, they got it down to three hours for the show.

The set, which Beck designed, is a simple yet versatile stone, façade that can be configured for steps, parapets or the barricade.

However, there's more than meets the eye to this production. In several instances, the crew had to get creative with the available space — for example, staging the orchestra backstage in the Rehearsal hall.

Costume designer Rhonda Turnquist produced a marvelous wardrobe, de-

spite the challenge of a large cast with multiple costume changes.

The production cost a bit more than a typical Cottage Theatre show, if only for the greater expense to obtain the rights, Beck explained. But the show has been selling very well, he added.

Which brings us back to the original question: is there any production too big or challenging for the Cottage Theatre?

"I think this is a big break through for us," said Beck. "If we can do this, and do this well, there's very little that we can't consider doing."

"Les Misérables" continues at the Cottage Theatre through May 3 with Thursday, Friday and Saturday shows starting at 8 p.m.; Sunday matinees start at 2:30 p.m.

KINDER

Continued from page 1A

instructional materials can be moved from room to room for music instruction.

At the District's smaller schools, which have only one kindergarten class that is often taught simultaneously with a first-grade class, educators say the transition will be much easier, logistically. Such is the case at London School, where Mina Christianson's K-1 class will soon host kindergarteners for the entire day. Christianson

said that, aside from the need for more educational assistants at various times, the change shouldn't be difficult to weather. Latham Principal Anne Fisk echoed that sentiment.

"It's not something that should have a big negative impact," Fisk said.

To the contrary, many teachers and administrators say they're excited about the opportunities full-day kindergarten can provide.

"It's a beautiful thing," Har-

ison kindergarten teacher Sarah Parsons said. "It's amazing when I think about how much we can get done in a half-day, and the possibilities of how much further we can go with a full day are so exciting."

Parsons pointed out that, with about 2 1/2 hours of instruction time at her disposal, reading and math understandably take precedent and transitions and behavior issues sap precious instruction time. But with more time, more subject matter can understandably be considered.

"There should be more time for science and social studies," Parsons said.

Educators also believe that having kindergarten students at school all day will foster a greater sense of connectedness to the rest of their schools.

"We're a small school that focuses on doing things school-wide," said London Principal Bill Bechen. "Inviting our kindergarteners to stay for a full day can mean those students get

to be a part of a lot more of what we have to offer."

South Lane Superintendent Krista Parent said the District absolutely needs full-day kindergarten, due in no small part to the disparity of experience kids get before school age. (Lester pointed out that about 60 percent of incoming kindergarteners have had no experience with outside daycare options, let alone any form of schooling.)

"So many of our kids are showing up to kindergarten without a lot of experience," Parent said. "Our kindergarten readiness scores are absolutely awful — there's such a range between students who can't recognize one letter and the few who show up reading already. There are all kinds of pluses to making school a richer experience for our kids."

Parents of incoming kindergarteners have shared their concerns, and some have said they weren't appreciative of the changes full-day kindergarten entails.

"Parents have said that they

don't think their kids are prepared, that it creates problems with the schedules of their older children," Lester said. Bohemia recently offered a question-and-answer session that was attended by about 60 sets of parents, and more such events are planned.

Teachers and administrators say they've also been preparing for some time for the adjustments that need to be made to ensure the effectiveness of the school day for a brand-new kindergartener.

"We have to think about pacing and the stamina of our students," Christianson said.

"Our teachers are sensitive to the need for more breaks and downtime, especially at the beginning of the year," Bechen said.

"Fitting in breaks as needed, providing time for movement — these are going to be especially important," said Harrison kindergarten teacher Stephanie Black.

Funding for full-day kindergarten is also a high-profile consideration at present. In late

March, Tina Kotek, Speaker of the Oregon House of Representatives, congratulated lawmakers on passing a biennium budget of \$7.255 billion that "will provide stability for most school districts while also funding full-day kindergarten for children throughout Oregon for the first time in state history."

South Lane Superintendent Krista Parent stated, though, that the District anticipates a cost of about \$350,000 to implement full-day kindergarten, adding that the \$7.255 billion State School Fund figure offered by legislators will actually leave South Lane with about a \$700,000 budget shortfall for the biennium. Still, Parent said the District will "be okay" even if such cuts are necessary. And, as teachers point out, the sacrifices should be worth it.

"The most important thing is that we will be able to consider the whole child," Parsons said. "We'll be closer to meeting all their needs, including social and emotional needs in addition to those of academia."

URGENT NEWS IF YOU USED XARELTO BLEEDING, STROKE OR DEATH?

Xarelto, a blood thinner given to patients to prevent blood clots and strokes, has been linked to serious bleeding episodes, strokes and death. If you or a loved one suffered a serious bleeding event, stroke or died after using Xarelto, call us at 1-800-THE-EAGLE now. No fees or costs until your case is settled or won. We practice law only in Arizona, but associate with lawyers throughout the U.S.

GOLDBERG & OSBORNE
1-800-THE-EAGLE
(1-800-843-3245)
www.1800theeagle.com

Open 7 Days a Week

WENDOVER, NEVADA CASINO VACATION PACKAGE

PACKAGE INCLUDES:
Round-Trip Airfare, 3 Night's Lodging, All Taxes & Fees and Valuable Coupon Book

FLIGHT FROM: EUGENE, OR

\$149*

SUN, MAY 31 - JUNE 3 | MON, AUG 3 - AUG 6

Book Online at WENDOVERFUN.COM Or call 866-FLY-WENDover (866-359-9363).
Reservations open 7 days a week.

* Per person double occupancy. Single add \$90. Montego Bay upgrade fee may apply. Reservations Required. Plane Operated by Allegiant. See Operator Participant Agreement for further information. Availability may be limited. Must be 21. Add \$25 per bag for more than one checked bag. Golf clubs not allowed. Golf club rentals available at Toana Vista Golf Course. Fuel stop may be required. Flight times subject to change. Management reserves all rights.

RAINBOW HOTEL + CASINO **Peppermill HOTEL + CASINO** **MONTEGO BAY CASINO - RESORT**

DANCING WITH FARMERS
Sunday, April 19th 5:30 – 10:00

Dinner and Dancing sponsored by **cgFEAST**
Will be held at the **Cottage Grove Public Market**
(10th and Washington)

Dinner options include: wood fired pizza, handmade tortillas and tacos, salad, and African vegetarian stew.

First serving is donation based.
Additional items are priced \$2.50 to \$6.00.
There will be juice, soda, local beer and wine, plus dessert.

Dancing to live local music from 7:00 to 10:00
Grab your partner for some swing lessons and line dancin', then finish off with Polka.

Enjoy a fun evening promoting our local food growers.
For more information call 541-942-2360
Sustainable Cottage Grove

Notice of Director Vacancy: Row River District
(Appointment to Board of Directors)

A vacancy will occur on Lane Electric Cooperative's board of directors for a position representing the utility's Row River District. The early retirement of the incumbent director that served in the position caused the vacancy. Lane Electric's board of directors will appoint a member/consumer to serve the remaining portion of the term of office for the departed director. The board of directors is currently accepting applications from members interested in being appointed to the position. The member appointed to the position will be eligible to seek election to a full three-year term when the current term of office expires after Lane Electric's 2016 Annual Meeting (April, May or June, 2016).

Members interested in being appointed to the position should have an interest in their communities and feel a civic responsibility to their neighbors. Directors have the same basic duties as other public and private corporations. Primary duties will include setting policy, approving budgets, contractual considerations, hiring a general manager, and monitoring the operations of the Cooperative. Applicants must reside in the Row River District.

Lane Electric members interested in being considered for appointment by the board of directors should contact Lane Electric at 541-484-1151 to request an application and information packet.

Applications must be delivered to Lane Electric's office no later than Friday, May 15, 2015 at 1:00 P.M.

Lane Electric Cooperative • 787 Bailey Hill Road / PO Box 21410 • Eugene, OR 97402
541-484-1151 • www.laneelectric.com

LANE ELECTRIC
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

London School Kindergarten Round Up
Wednesday, April 22nd 4:45 – 5:30 pm

As a K-8 school, London focuses on hands on learning in a family centered environment.
Come register your kindergarten student for the 2015/2016 school year.
We have openings next year in our Middle School Classroom as well.

You are welcome to stay after registration and be a part of our Title 1 Science Fair Family Night. Come see our student's Science Fair Projects and meet our London Family!

London School
"Quality education in a rural community"
73288 London Road, Cottage Grove, OR 97424
Phone: 541-942-0183 Fax: 541-942-8849
<http://blogs.slane.k12.or.us>
Bill Bechen, Principal—April Sexton, Office Manager