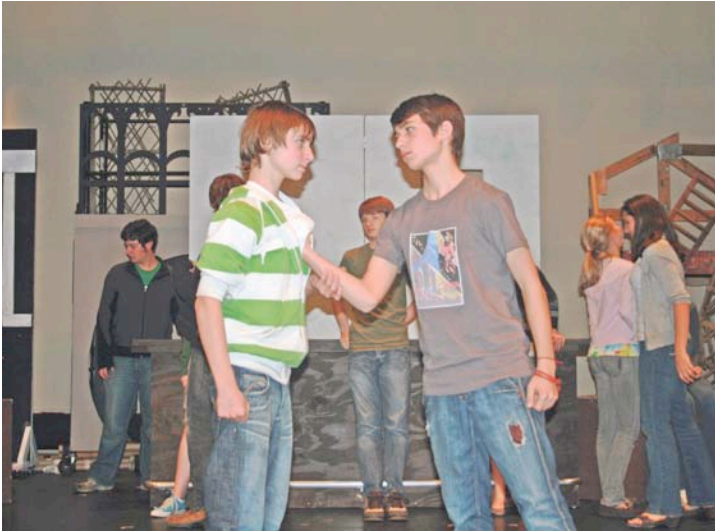


Miramonte Performs Les Mis

By Andrea A. Firth



Max and Daniel Coleman rehearsing for Les Miserables at Miramonte

Photo provided

Tackling a musical that portrays the struggle of a downtrodden man trying to redeem himself in the face of social injustice while set in France as the Napoleonic Wars rage is pretty heady stuff for a high school production. When the musical is the legendary *Les Miserables* based on the book by Victor Hugo, it is even more remarkable. “I couldn’t have imagined in my wildest dreams that such an epic show could ever be performed at a high school,” states Miramonte drama teacher and acting coach Heather Cousins. A school edition of the musical (almost identical to the Broadway version) released with amateur

royalties and “the immense talent of the Miramonte students” makes this possible according to Cousins.

To master this larger-than-life show, the cast (with the female leads double cast) has been working on the production since December with rehearsals lasting up to six hours or more. In addition to the grueling rehearsal schedule, sophomore Max Coleman has found that playing the lead role of Jean Valjean has presented some other challenges. “The major difficulty with the role is demonstrating my age,” says Max. “The age difference between my character and me is about 50 years! Another difficulty

is that I have to show that I am dying of consumption (tuberculosis) throughout the entire play.”

Max and his fraternal twin brother Daniel, who plays Thenardiers the corrupt innkeeper in the play, have been performing in musical theater since they were in grade school, and mom Ellie Schwartzman could not be prouder of her singing thespian offspring. Asked if he could relate to the story of the wretched ones, Max responded, “One of the main themes of *Les Miserables* is the peasants’ rebellion against the cruel and unjust monarchy, and I definitely sympathize with that belief.” He clarified his answer to state that the monarchy in this instance did not represent his parents—but he does believe that the cruelties found in the show in some ways parallel current events of today.

Les Miserables will be performed at the Miramonte High School Theater (750 Moraga Way in Orinda) on March 13, 14, and 15 at 7:30 pm; March 20, 21, and 22 at 7:30 pm; and March 16 and 22 at noon. Advance tickets can be purchased through the Miramonte High School website www.acalanes.k12.ca.us/miramonte or at the door.