

# Breach of ancient barrier...

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Les Miserables

Theatre groups have pooled their talents to ensure the success of a special edition of a stage phenomenon, writes Alan Cookman.

Stoke Youth Musical Theatre Company is presenting the student edition of the great musical with a little help from its friends.

The child of the defunct City Of Stoke-on-Trent Amateur Operatic society, the company has had enthusiastic assistance from some of the former society's old rivals.

"The old Stoke society was a rival of the North Staffs and Newcastle operatic societies for donkey's years," said spokesman Robert Clarke.

"In the case of the North Staffs, the rivalry dated back 100 years.

"As well as having the offspring of both North Staffs and Newcastle stalwarts in the production, the North Staffs society's workshop crew have built the barricade.

"Leek All Saints Operatic Society and the Centre Stage company, also from Leek, are putting together the rest of the scenery."

Matt Bateman, who is hero Valjean, leads a cast of 40 in a show that features an eight-strong band.

Oliver Davies is Inspector Javert, Valjean's remorseless nemesis, Ruth Davies is Fantine, Fillipa di Stephano is Eponine, and the Thenardiers are played by Olivia Birkin and Elliot Clay.

Directed by Ian Wilson, with Steve Williams as musical director, the musical also features Charlotte O'Rourke (little Cosette), Danielle Slinn (grown-up Cosette), Max Birkin (Gauroche), Ben Steele (Marius), Tom Pear (Enjolras) and John Mason (Grantaire).

Les Misérables is at The Mitchell Memorial Theatre, Hanley from November 11 to 15 at 7.30pm, with Saturday matinee at 2.30pm. Tel 01782 659156.