

Centre Stage with Alan Cookman
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THE Stoke-on-Trent Youth Music Theatre Company remains on track to make Les Misérables the must-see show of the new season.

As we stand by to man the barricades, however, a question arises: what distinguishes Les Misérables proper from the schools' edition thereof?

It's a moot point, considering how many adult companies would gladly offer themselves to Madame Guillotine to get their hands on the rights to the original musical based on the Victor Hugo novel.

Although this is still out of the question – the amateur sector worldwide is still patiently waiting permission to stage the show – the younger element have been authorised to present a special version since 2006.

It's available only to amateur groups whose cast members are aged under 19.

Although most of the big scenes and musical numbers are preserved intact, the schools edition has been shortened by about 25 minutes.

For the SYMTC production, directed by Ian Wilson, a cast of 40 has been assembled, led by Matthew Bateman as the paroled convict Jean Valjean.

There are still vacancies for young musicians to take part. It's a demanding engagement but if they have the stamina and talent required, they'll be part of a memorable presentation.

Musicians who are qualified to grade seven or eight in string, brass, woodwind and percussion instruments are invited to call Ian Williamson on 01782 659156 (same number for tickets).

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