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## REVIEW: Broadway meets Benito ... San Benito that is

posted on Mon, 07/21/2014 - 08:14am by [Catherine Mifsud](#)

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The latest production from San Benito Stage Company has us all wondering 'is this really Hollister?'



"Am I really in Hollister?" I couldn't help but wonder where I was, as I sat in the auditorium of San Benito High School to attend San Benito Stage Company's (SBSC) latest production, "Les Miserables." I have just returned to living in Hollister after over a decade of living in Boston, San Francisco, and New Orleans. I have always enjoyed the theater and have grown accustomed to the caliber these world-class cities have to offer. I also consider myself a thespian and, therefore, when I tell you that this production is done very well, I hope you'll listen.

Les Miserables is not an easy show to produce. It requires a massive set, a massive cast, and a massive amount of courage. I applaud San Benito Stage Company for their willingness to take on this epic musical and to present it with such talent. Bravo, indeed!

I am impressed with SBSC's ability to keep the cost of the tickets down so that people can afford to take in the cultural experience. With tickets at \$16 for adults and price breaks for seniors/students and groups, SBSC is doing it right. It seems as if the people of Hollister and the surrounding county are responding, as the crowd for the Sunday matinee was more than decent. Young families, teens, and seniors all were in attendance, proving that there is a way to entertain a multitude of ages with one event.

Now, why should you make it out to the final three performances (Thursday July 24, Friday July 25, and Saturday July 26)? The talent of the musicians and the ensemble are beyond that of some amateur experiment. They are professionals and with that there comes a quality to their craft that you may not be expecting from our sleepy town.

As if bringing the fifth longest-running Broadway show in history to Hollister isn't daunting enough, consider the fact that the musical was adapted to film in 2012 and garnered 8 Academy Award Nominations and 3 wins. This show is known by so many and yet, SBSC's treatment of it did not lose much considering the serious limitations placed upon it with regard to space. I will say, however, that at times I felt the actors were relaying the film's take on the score and not that of the musical with which I have become most familiar. Call it the "Hugh Jackman" style, but for me, I prefer that of Colm Wilkinson who is credited with originating the role of Jean Valjean. However, Matt Thorpe should be proud of his performance, especially in the number, "Bring Him Home."

I won't get all nit-picky about the little things my eyes may have picked up, the stiffness of some actors, the over jumpy hyper activity of others, because I don't want this to bring anything down about this experience. Yes, there were times that I felt some were over acting and I am sure others felt the same, but those moments are few in relationship to the many times I got goosebumps. The ensemble numbers were rich in their layers of harmony. The 60-person cast sounded so powerful and beautiful, but they looked even better. The costuming team, led by Lois Kincaid and Toni Smith, should certainly be applauded for the incredible work

at taking us to 19th-Century France.

I would be remiss if I didn't point out the young talent present in the show, young Cosette, played by Hana McElroy draws us in with her haunting melody in, Castle on a Cloud. I see wonderful things for Hana and I hope she will continue to share them with our community. Director Dennis Beasley has assembled some of Hollister's best with Christian Barrera keeping us laughing as the swindling, Thenardier. How we love to hate you! The Burchard twins, Brandon and Cam, did very well to portray the young lives lost in the 1832 Paris Uprising. Although not from Hollister, Andrew Cooperfauss and Cameron Jackson are wonderful additions to this production. Their strength of voice as well as character provided excellent artillery to the army of wonderful young men.

I found it fitting that SBSC would ask our community to bring in canned food donations to the performance, as the premise of the show surrounds itself with themes of poverty, forgiveness, and retribution. The arts have always been a window to the culture of the time and the desperation experienced by the characters of the production are all too real today. This production is more than just a few good songs sung by a few good actors; it is a glimpse into what our community could be doing and what it should be doing. As the men sang in "Drink with Me"... "Let the wine of friendship never run dry," perhaps it is my hope that the momentum of such a production never run dry.

San Benito Stage Company

Les Miserables

Thursday, July 24 7 p.m.

Friday, July 25 7 p.m.

Saturday, July 26 7 p.m.

All performances are at San Benito High School in the Auditorium, 1220 Monterey St, Hollister. Ticket prices are \$16 for adults, \$13 for seniors and students or \$47 for a four-pack, pre-sale only.

Tickets may be purchased at Postal Graphics (831-636-3787), San Benito Bene (831-638-1188), online at [www.brownpapertickets.com](http://www.brownpapertickets.com), or at the performance at The Box Office.



About:

[Catherine Mifsud \(CMifsud\)](#)

Catherine M. Mifsud, MA is a Hollister native. She attended the University of San Francisco

and graduated in 2001 with a degree in Communication Studies & Theology. After returning to Hollister to teach at Sacred Heart School, she received a Master's Degree in Theology from Boston College in 2005. Since then, Catherine has worked in Catholic Schools in both Northern California and New Orleans, Louisiana. She has recently returned to Hollister to begin work on her next adventure, co-founding Strada Leadership.

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Submitted by (Gary E Byrne) on Mon, 07/21/2014 - 1:46pm

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