



A TOUGH INTERROGATION Ruby Venkatesh (Left) and Maka Perry (Middle) play Cosette and Jean Valjean who are interrogated by Javert. photo by Griffin Beam



MAKEOVER! Crew member Astrid Gothard styles the wig for one of the characters in the play. photo by Griffin Beam

Les Misérables

AVANI GANNE | photo editor

As the curtains finally rose on LASA's production of Les Misérables and the pit orchestra played the first notes of the musical, all of the work put in by the performers, crew, and facilitators of the musical's production finally came to fruition during the musical's opening night on Jan. 26, 2023. Surrounded by the sets created and polished over weeks at a time by the crew of the Alley Cat Players and singing the pieces they've learned and memorized, the actors were finally able to show the audience what they've been working on.

Junior Brennan Lein played Marius Pontmercy, who is one of the musical's main characters and a student revolutionary who falls in love with the main protagonist's daughter. As the pit orchestra played below and he performed above them on stage, Lein said that teamwork across all groups in the company, everyone involved in the play's production, was imperative to the overall success of the musical.

"[Teamwork across all of these groups] was more than important; it's absolutely essential," Lein said. "Nothing happens in isolation during a show, and every song, movement, and lyric has to be a combination of the pit, technical aspects, and direction."

Junior Gabby Lee, who worked as a costume designer in the Alley Cat Players crew, also believes this to be true. She believes all of these company groups working together enhanced the overall quality of the musical.

"Teamwork was so essential in this production," Lee said. "Everyone was putting together their parts for this show. The pit orchestra was learning their music, actors their lines, costume crew was costuming, and each tech crew was working on their pieces for the production. But coming together and learning how to work with one another's elements was a hard but super important part of creating a successful show."

The work put in by these groups individually is noteworthy as well, according to junior Davis Burns. Burns played in the pit orchestra as a cellist, and explained how the pit orchestra practiced in the weeks leading up to the musical's opening night.

"We put in just over 30 hours of rehearsal, about 12 without actors, not including time spent practicing at home," Burns said. "All of the musicians were super dedicated and fun to work with, which just makes the show better. Even though it was challenging to play, we had a ton of fun!" Similarly to how the pit

orchestra prepared for the musical's official performances, the cast also had to learn how to perform their songs in tandem with each other, according to Lein. He also mentioned how, beyond the effort of simply learning the music, his process of learning how to best portray his character was mostly centered around discovering the mannerisms and emotions of Marius.

"I spent a decent amount of time learning the music, but I spent more time figuring out my character," Lein said. "I had a lot of freedom to decide how my Marius would think, act, and make decisions, which took up most of my time."

Despite the initial anxiety surrounding the company as opening night finally arrived, Lee described how the nerves transformed into joy as the company saw all of their aforementioned hard-work pay off. As she waited with the other cast and crew members behind the closing curtains, she experienced the effects of the first performance first-hand among the rest of the company.

"Despite the nerves, opening night was full of so much energy that our rehearsals didn't have," Lee said. "We had the presence of our audience and the excitement of the entire company to feed into the energy of our first performance."

After the curtains closed, there was so much joy backstage. It was such an amazing feeling to not only pull this show together, but to see the positive impact it had on the audience."

According to Burns, this influx of emotions was felt by the pit orchestra members surrounding him as well. His own emotions mirrored the ones described by Lee.

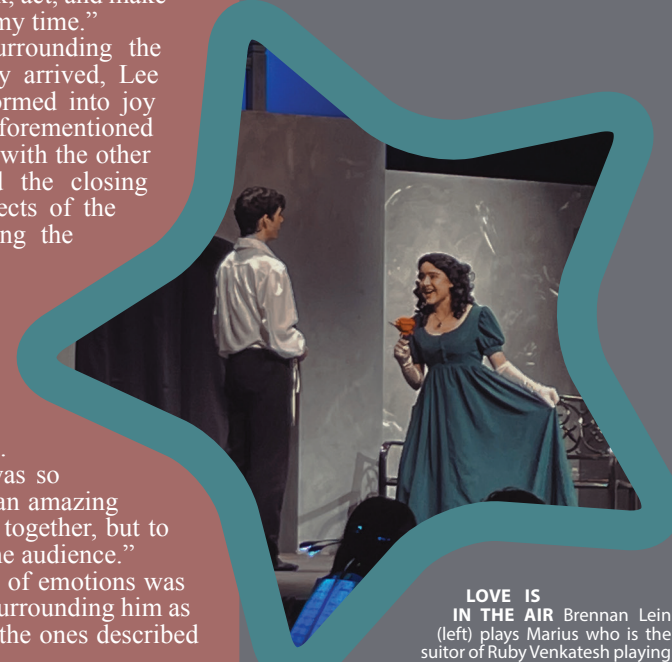
"When Mr. Torres gave the final cut-off and told us to stand, there was nothing to do but smile, and looking around at the rest of the orchestra, I wasn't the only one," Burns said. "Musicians are always critical of our own performances, so right after the show, all I could think about were my own little mistakes. But, after talking to my fellow performers, we knew there was room to improve, but overall it was a fantastic first performance. I think we were all pretty proud of our work."

Following the memorable experience encompassing the production and performance of Les Misérables at LASA, Lein expressed how his time in the company still affects him to this day. Joined together with the perspectives of Lee and Burns as well, it is clear that the production of Les Misérables is still important to many of its cast members.

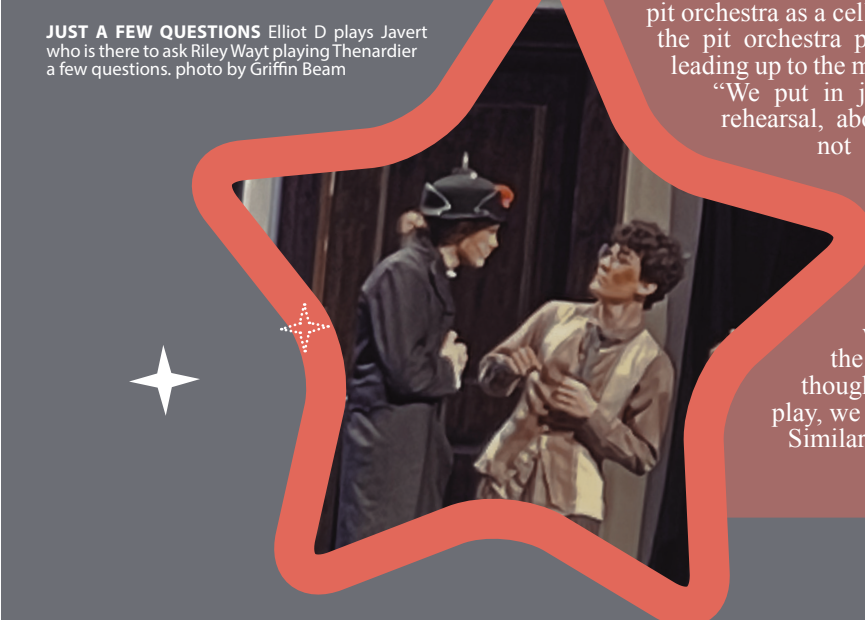
"The Alley Cat Players make up such a welcoming community and I never feel isolated or rejected when I work with them," Lein said. "Just thinking about [the musical] makes me tear up a little bit because I miss it so much."



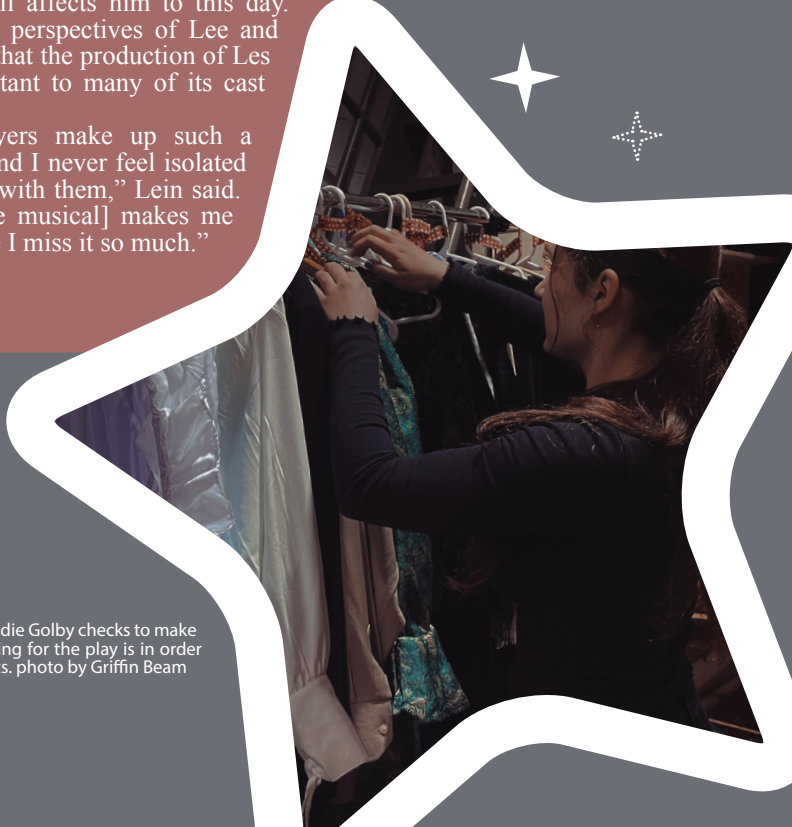
ABC CAFE (Left to right up to down) John Coury, Amelia Coleman, Brennan Lein, Lucy Martin, Sophie Murphy, Kir Kraus, Django Somero, Jonas Klumpp. Play ABC students meeting up at the ABC Cafe. photo by Griffin Beam



LOVE IS IN THE AIR Brennan Lein (left) plays Marius who is the suitor of Ruby Venkatesh playing Cosette. photo by Griffin Beam



JUST A FEW QUESTIONS Elliot D plays Javert who is there to ask Riley Wayt playing Thenardier a few questions. photo by Griffin Beam



DRESS CHECK Maddie Golby checks to make sure all of the clothing for the play is in order before the play starts. photo by Griffin Beam