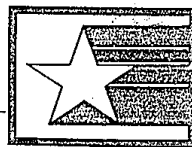


Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



Thursday, September 14, 1989 O&E

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'Cattle call' gets actor in as a dancer

By Victor E. Swanson
special writer

Actor Todd Heughens, a former Troy resident, couldn't get an audition for a role in "Fiddler on the Roof" but with ingenuity, he managed to become a dancer in the show.

"Fiddler," which opens Tuesday at the Fox Theatre in Detroit, stars Topol, who played the lead role in the movie version of "Fiddler on the Roof," released by United Artists Pictures in November 1972.

The producers (of the stage production) were worried that everyone who was interested in seeing Fiddler had already seen it," Heughens said during recent telephone interview from Cincinnati, where the production was playing.

"But they want to see it again — done right. They've all seen the dinner-theater and community theater productions, and now they want to see the guy (Topol) from the movie."

"FIDDLER" RUNS through Sunday, Sept. 24, at the Fox. Besides being one of the dancers, Heughens also understudies the part of Mendel, the Rabbi's son. As Heughens said, "I was hired as a dancer — slash — understudy."

He was nearly not hired at all for the production.

"I was out of town working in Cincinnati, which is where I am right now, when they (the producers) were holding principal calls, auditions for the leading roles, and I had my agent submit me anyway, and I was thinking I could always fly in." Flintly he said, "They want to see me for any of the roles."

Determined to get a part, Heughens attended a cattle call for the show when he returned to New York.

"There were about 250 guys auditioning as dancers, and by the end of the day, there were maybe 80 left. They called us back for another day, and throughout the day — the six-hour audition — they needed it down to eight. It's a pretty grueling process."

What's surprising is that Heughens got a part without really knowing much about "Fiddler on the Roof." "I hadn't even seen 'Fiddler' — the movie or the play — before I auditioned for it," he said.

Heughens explained, as simply as he could, what "Fiddler on the Roof" is about. "The storyline has to do with this man, Tevye (played by Topol) and his relationship with his three daughters, and through the show each of them ends up falling in love, and Tevye has to deal with them wanting to spend the rest of their lives with these three men, when the tradition is that they would



Todd Heughens is a dancer in "Fiddler on the Roof."

be set up with men chosen by a matchmaker. . . The third daughter falls in love with a Russian — a non-Jew . . . and he just can't deal with that. He (Tevye) says, 'I can only bend so far before I break!'

Heughens described the production as "almost a perfect musical." He added, "It really gets to the heart. It's very funny and very moving. And, certainly, Topol does a wonderful job with it."

ALSO IN THE CAST is Ruth Jaroslow, who plays — as she has for many stage productions over the last 20 years — Yente, Rox Harris, who joined the cast in Cincinnati, is Tevye's wife. In the 1971 movie, she was one of the daughters, Zeltel. So far, the production has been on the road for about 12 weeks. It's scheduled for a 40-week tour of the country, which has already taken it to audiences in such cities as San Francisco, where it opened; Seattle, Vancouver, Canada; Los Angeles, and Kansas City.

"We're supposed to end up on Broadway. That's what they keep saying," he said.

However, Heughens did say he was in an off-off Broadway show, "Big River," a Huckleberry Finn musical, that was expected — by the cast — to go to Broadway a few years ago. It did not.

He also appeared in a well-received production at Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C., called "The Hot Mikado," which looked as if it would go to Broadway.

"They had Broadway in mind and I ('The Hot Mikado') was a huge hit in Washington, and we were given Broadway opening dates (and) rehearsal dates and everything. I wasn't living in New York at the time, and they said, 'Well, you better find an apartment!' And I did, and I

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"Les Misérables," the most successful musical of all time, held its opening night Wednesday at Detroit's Fisher Theatre. It is expected to run at least through the end of the year. The show has five casts in North America and 17 casts around the world.

'Les Misérables'

Will it be a smash hit here, too?

By Mary Jane Doerr
special writer

SITTING BACK in a comfortable lounge chair in the lobby of the St. Regis, a casually dressed, long-haired Richard Jay-Alexander declared, "Detroit makes me nervous."

"There are no guarantees in this business. I don't come in here cocky, sure of myself, thinking that we can't lose. I have been told that this is a great theater town but I am not ready to cash in my chips."

Jay-Alexander was still jettisoned from his flight from Las Vegas the night before. The associate director and executive producer of what has become the most successful musical of all time, "Les Misérables," he was exasperated as he talked about his show. Next door, the sets had been hung at the

Locals appear in 'Les Mis'

Several area residents are appearing in the cast of "Les Misérables" at the Fisher Theatre.

Traveling with the show are Jennifer Naimo, originally of Farmington, who plays Eponine, and Dan Cooney, originally of Westland, who is in the chorus.

Fisher Theatre, ready for the first rehearsal of the Chicago cast.

"Les Mis" played for nine months in Boston, six months in Philadelphia and six months in Chicago. There are five casts now playing North America and 17 casts around the world. The Broadway production costs \$4.4 million but recouped the investment in only 23 weeks. It now records weekly profits of hundreds of thousands of dollars for the show's English producer Cameron Mackintosh.

As mastermind of "Cats," "Les Mis," and "Phantom of the Opera," Mackintosh is the most powerful producer anywhere.

"MACKINTOSH WOULD have been here if he could have," added Jay-Alexander. "I talk with him every day. He is really quite simple and basic. He loves his work and is

very accessible." Jay-Alexander arrived in town for 10 days to rehearse the cast before going to London for the opening of Mackintosh's newest musical "Miss Saigon."

"When I went to London to interview for this job, I thought I knew the interview. I did not speak French. I hadn't seen the show. That night I went to the Palace and cried my eyes out," he said.

Jay-Alexander does the casting for the American productions. Last



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— Richard Jay-Alexander
associate director

week he cast 47 parts. He has worked with at least 20 Fantines, the character who sings one of the show's most popular numbers, "I Dreamed a Dream."

"You can't play the part unless you belt," said Jay-Alexander, who went on to explain how much of the color and finesse of Patti LaPave's voice in the English recording was produced in the recording studio.

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