

'Cattle call' gets actor in

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never heard anything about it (the show going to Broadway)."

HEUGHENS LIVES in New York, and he even has his own apartment, now which he got this year. Most of the last six years or so, while he was in New York, he was subletting because apartments are hard to find in New York.

Someday, Heughens would like to live in Seattle. Of course, he loves to travel and that could change.

When he comes to Michigan with "Fiddler on the Roof," he will visit

Howell, for that's where his parents now live. His mother has arranged a special party for him, which will include friends and family. He has three brothers, two of whom live in Alabama.

Heughens attended Berkley High School as a sophomore and spent his junior and senior years at Troy Athens High School. "In high school (Berkley), I just saw a poster one day for auditions for 'The Pajama Game,' he said. "I auditioned and I got the show. And that was it, and I was hooked. I knew as soon as I was at the audition — even before I knew I had been cast in the show — I knew that was what I wanted to do."

He spent a year at Oakland University in Rochester Hills. During the summers of 1979 and 1980, he toured — mostly in Michigan — with the Meadow Brook Estate singing group.

FROM 1983 TO 1984, Heughens attended the Conservatory of Music at the University of Cincinnati. During the last year there and before going to New York, he took a short time off from school to work with the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, where he obtained an Equity Card.



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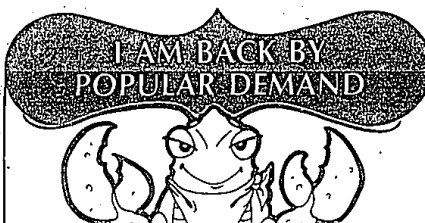
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Will it be a smash hit here, too?

Continued from Page 5

"SHE DID NOT play it that way on stage," he said, obviously agitated about insinuations that the London cast is more refined than the American. "Look, I know what it takes to play that part. That role is about a woman who has lost her job. She is screaming about the miserable condition of her life."

"Les Miz" is taken from Victor Hugo's 19th century melodrama about the wretched living conditions of the poor in early 19th century France, a time when the average life expectancy of poor children was 2 years, when incurable diseases plagued the poor, when unemployment meant starvation.

The leading character Jean Valjean spends 19 years in prison for stealing a loaf of bread and his life explaining for his sin while fleeing his policeman pursuer Javert.

"Sure I was handed this job on a platter," Jay-Alexander said. "I haven't had to gamble on this show like Cameron. But I have a lot of blood and guts in it. I have seen it perhaps more times than anyone else — maybe as many as 1,000 times — but it still moves me when I hear the music or see it again."

What makes this "pop opera" different from a traditional opera is the acting demands on the cast. The actress who plays Eponine appears in a variety of roles in the show. She is a pea picker, a drinker, a pedestrian, an unemployed factory worker and a whore before she stars as Marius' rejected lover. After Fantine dies, she is cast as one of the boys at the barricade during the 1832 Paris uprising.

"THE WORD 'OPERA' scares me," Jay-Alexander said. "I think, though, the show will go into the opera house repertoire when the tours finish."

The show highlights the historical struggle between the French Revolutionaries and the Empire, paralleling freedom struggles today in places such as China, one possible reason for the unwavering public appeal.

"Mackintosh was interested in the show long before Timesmen Square," said Jay-Alexander. "I think he picks his shows because of something that happens inside himself. China is expressing an interest in the show and so is the Soviet Union."

"Les Miz" opened in Paris in 1980 as a series of tableaux. The French

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Richard Jay-Alexander

audience was familiar with the story so no explanation was needed between the scenes. When Mackintosh decided to take the show to London, he had it rewritten, shortening it to three hours and adding many of the famous songs — "Stars," "Empty Chair and Empty Tables" and "Bring Him Home." In New York, the show was again reworked into what is now the "Bible" version.

"When we auditioned the roles for Broadway, it was difficult because no one had seen the show and knew what we wanted. Now everyone is familiar with the parts so when we audition they come out of the woodwork to play the parts," Jay-Alexander said.

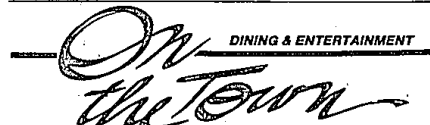
"LES MIZ" got mixed reviews

when it opened in London and was "tried" in Washington before it was mounted on Broadway.

"Cameron did not know if he wanted to risk it in New York, but he took a look at his ticket lines and decided it was worth it. I got mad when reporters take cheap shots at the show. We have not hyped it. The public loves it and has made it a success."

The 37-year-old actor-turned-director is himself a trained singer who graduated from State University of New York at Oswego. The last time he played the Fisher was as the stage manager of "Amadeus."

"I don't know what I will do after this. This show has changed my life. Nothing will ever have the same thrill for me," he said.



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