

Summer Lyric Theatre opens bold new season

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With *Les Miserables*, *A Chorus Line* and *Cabaret*, the 47th season is set to be the most ambitious yet for Summer Lyric Theatre at Tulane University. Even with Summer Lyric's history of award-winning design and talent, this lineup marks a leap in both production scale and artistic boldness, says artistic director B. Michael Howard.



Kicking off with *Les Miserables*, this summer's three musicals share a common theme of underdogs triumphing over hardships. (Photo by Michael Palumbo)

Howard, who performed in Summer Lyric's first production in 1968 and has guided it since 1995, says he was enabled to make such bold choices this year because, "the truth is, my age. I'm not going to be around to do *Les Mis* forever, and I've wanted to do it for 25 years."

Summer Lyric is set to become the first New Orleans theater company to produce the behemoth musical.

While the company typically employs around 200 artists onstage and backstage per season, operations manager Charlie Hayes estimates that *Les Miserables* alone will employ that number.

“It's going to be just huge ? huge cast, tremendous talent, big orchestra, big set, everything,” Howard promises.

While sometimes, Howard says, Summer Lyric stages a “light, fluffy” musical during the season, he's excited to depart from that model this season with shows that “everybody loves and that tell good, meaningful stories.”

Perhaps what most excites Howard, who also chairs the Musical Theatre program at Tulane, is the large number of his undergraduate students participating in it. A student will play a lead role in one production, and Howard notes that several alumni will return to perform leading roles.

When asked what it's like to watch young students grow over four years into professional-caliber performers, Howard says with a smile, “that's why I teach.”

New season [ticket subscriptions](#) are available now; single show tickets go on sale May 12.

Hope Barnard graduated from Tulane in 2012 with a B.A. in English and theatre. She is a freelance writer and actress living in New Orleans.