

IT'S GOOD TO BE A
MAVERICK



**Tom Willis Calls Accents
Emotions Of *Les Misérables***



MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA – The true story of Les Misérables takes place more in that mystifying and kinetic space that exists between people than it does in any time or location. It is by opening a window into this web of emotional forces that connects us that this sung-through musical based on Victor Hugo's 19th century novel has moved audiences the world over.

Adding impact to the powerful interpersonal currents running through the iconic show in a recent production at Scotch College in Melbourne was a Tom Willis-designed lightshow that featured CHAUVET Professional Maverick MK1 Spot fixtures, supplied by Showtools International.

Creating an array of textures and colors on stage with the 350W moving LED fixture, Willis reflected the hope, despair, and unrequited love that marked the relationships between Jean Valjean, Fantine and the story's other characters.

"This is the second project I did with OSMAD (Old Scotch Music and Drama), the theatre group that performed the musical at the school," said Willis. "The set I worked with was beautiful, but it actually had very few moving parts, so light became important to help transition from one location to the next — from field, to inn, to water hole etcetera. However, there were many times where location was less important, and my main focus was on the emotional journey of the characters. I used light to effect and support the relationships of the different people through combination of color, texture and focus."

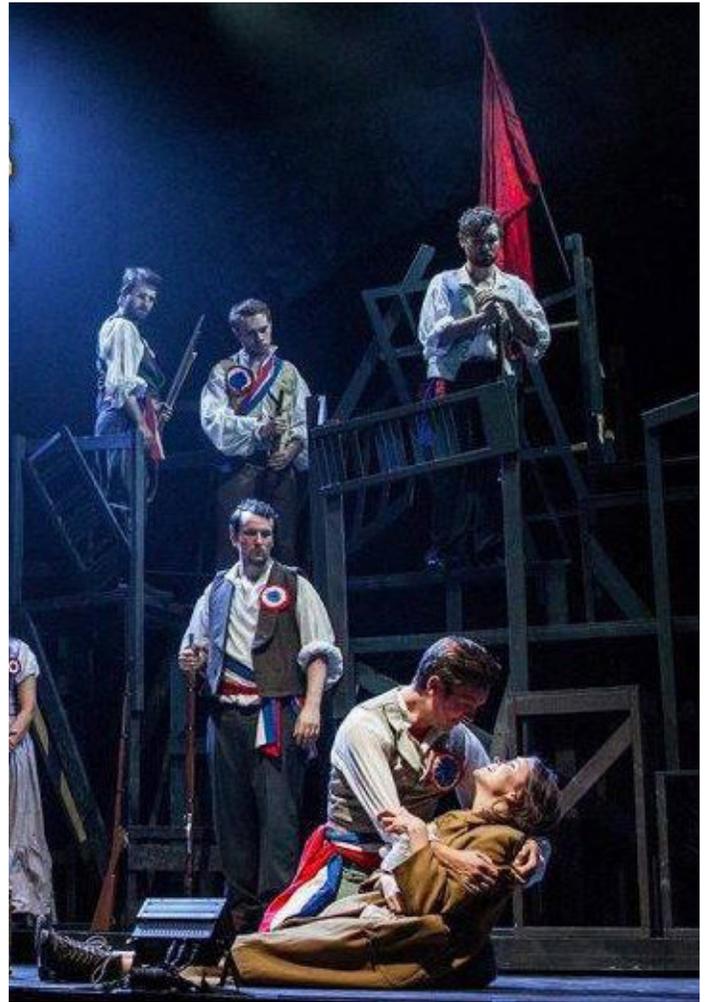
Willis tended to avoid or minimize saturated color when lighting Les Misérables, except during the most dramatic scenes. He opted instead to rely on the interplay of warm and cool, as well as subtle shades of color, to set moods that corresponded to the feelings driving the show's characters.

"Saturated color is great and has its place, but it loses impact in a theatrical context when you're constantly jumping from one primary or secondary color to the next," said Willis. "I'd much rather save those saturated colors for moments of high drama or camp. The same goes for texture — less is more in my book. I very rarely focus to a hard edge on a gobo. Dappled light is far more interesting when you can't quite work out what's going on. Although, like every rule, there are exceptions to that one too, of course."

Beyond color and texture, the focus and direction of light were key to Willis achieving his vision for *Les Misérables*. "The direction of the light source is the single most important variable you have under your control as a lighting designer," he said. "If you don't get that right, then a gobo and a gel aren't going to fix it for you! In this show, texture is so fundamental, so the more I could light from the side and from the pipe ends, the better. I used a smattering of footlight, but not much. I also had very little front light."

Positioned on the upstage LX, the four Maverick MK1 Spots were critical to providing the aerials and surface textures in Willis' design. He used the Maverick fixtures with four other moving LED spots to produce shafts of light that cut through the darkness to create dappled light on the stage's scenic elements, which not only enhanced the realism of the set, but also evoked powerful emotional undertones.

"The Mavericks were used with some much bigger spots, and they more than held their own," said Willis. "I loved being able to throw in the wavy bar gobo and use them to create some soft-edged



corridors or shafts of light. It was nice how they zoom right down to a tight beam, but also have a great sharp focus at their widest. They were also bright enough that four of them could do a good full stage deckle wash, and I could get some nice subtle colors out of them without losing too much output."

By broadening his creative options, the Maverick MK1 Spot made it easier for Willis to convey even the most nuanced emotions in light, something he did often in this show about the journey of the human heart and spirit.



MAVERICK

MK1 SPOT

Maverick MK1 Spot is ready for action with an extremely flat field, CMY color mixing, a 5:1 zoom and multiple control options. Powered by a 350 W LED engine, it features one static and one rotating gobo wheel, a 7 position + white color wheel, variable frost and 3-facet prism. It can be controlled with DMX, sACN, Art-Net, or W-DMX.