





QUICK CHANGE

*One performance, three hours, countless theatrical guises.
Actor Martin Ball races through his many faces*



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**LINK AND YOU'LL MISS
THE AMAZING METAMORPHOSES AND SERIES OF QUICK CHANGES
HAPPENING BACKSTAGE AT WEST END SHOW LES MISERABLES**



PHOTOGRAPHY: JAMIE BAKER

MARTIN BALL is adept at the speedy switch. His role as the villain Thénardier in West End musical *Les Misérables* requires him to undergo a multitude of transformations in every three-hour show. Previous parts in *Mamma Mia*, *Mary Poppins* and *Wicked* have provided lots of practice, but during a *Les Mis* matinée, Martin runs through a whole host of dramatic ensembles. 'I put on my first costume at about 2.15pm, and for the initial 20 minutes of the performance I jump into a series of brown hessian outfits,' he explains. Martin creates the evil Thénardier in the 15 minutes before he takes centre stage, donning his costume (one of nearly 400 in the production) and greasepaint mask. 'It's the make-up that takes the time,' he says. The story sees Martin's character changing once more, into the white face and sculpted wig disguise of the Baron de Thénard, before the final scene and curtain calls.

Martin may effect many role reversals during his performance, but *Les Misérables* itself has kept to its winning formula since it opened at the Barbican Theatre in 1985, making it the longest-running musical in the world. In its 24-year run it has been seen by 54 million people in 249 cities and in 21 different languages. • **KATE LAUER**

- The longest-running West End show of all is *The Mousetrap*. This Agatha Christie whodunit has seen more than 23,000 performances in its 56 years.
- The title of shortest run goes to *The Intimate Revue*, which failed to reach the end of its first night at the Duchess Theatre in 1930, as the audience walked out.
- With estimated costs of £12.5 million, the musical version of *The Lord Of The Rings* was the most expensive show ever staged.

→ **Les Misérables is at the Queen's Theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue, W1, lesmis.com**

FANCY THAT! Men played women's roles in British theatre until 1660. The prohibition ended because Charles II liked watching actresses.