

SWEENEY

TODD

**THE DEMON BARBER
OF FLEET STREET**

February 11–March 17, 2024

MUSIC AND LYRICS BY

Stephen Sondheim

FROM AN ADAPTATION BY

Christopher Bond

BOOK BY

Hugh Wheeler

DIRECTED BY

Julia Rodriguez-Elliott

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Pictured: Erika Soto, *Much Ado About Nothing* Spring 2023.
PHOTO BY CRAIG SCHWARTZ.

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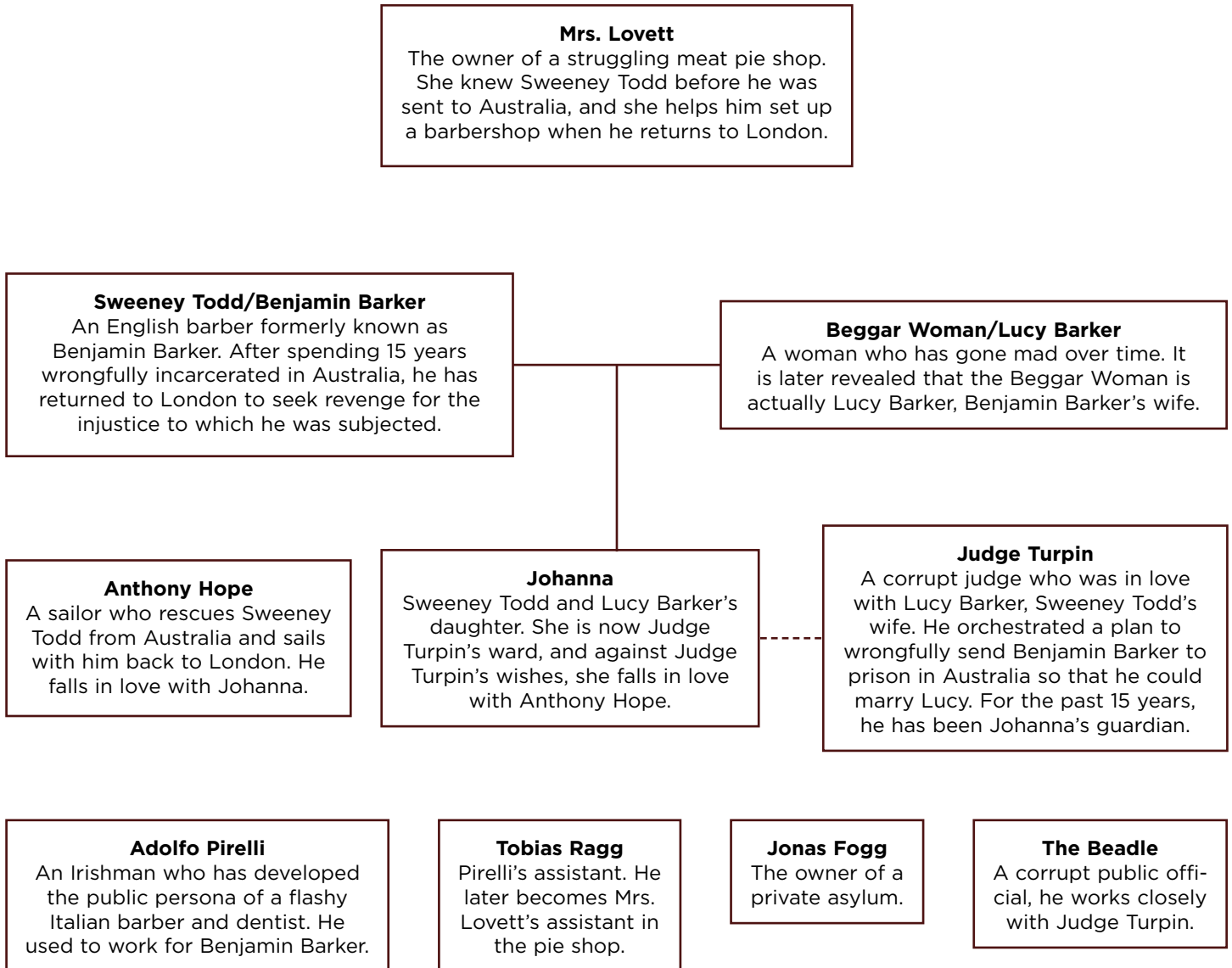


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CHARACTER MAP



SYNOPSIS

After spending 15 years wrongfully incarcerated in the British penal colony of Australia, Benjamin Barker, now known as Sweeney Todd, finally returns to London. He travels with Anthony Hope, a young sailor. The two arrive in the city and are immediately confronted by a Beggar Woman pleading for money. When she approaches Todd, she claims to recognize him, but he shoos her away regardless.

Todd makes his way down Fleet Street to a struggling meat pie shop operated by Mrs. Lovett. Mrs. Lovett describes how she has a room for rent above her shop that no one wants to lease due to the room's history; there was a barber who ran his business out of the room. The barber had a wife and a young daughter. However, Judge Turpin was in love with the barber's wife, Lucy. Turpin had the barber sent to prison in Australia under false charges in order to give himself an opportunity to court Lucy. After the barber was sent away, Judge Turpin invited Lucy to a masked ball, where he violated her. As she tells the story of the room's former tenants, Mrs. Lovett realizes that Todd is actually Benjamin Barker, the barber from the lore. Mrs. Lovett informs Todd that not long after the incident at the masked ball, Lucy drank arsenic and died. After Lucy's death, Judge Turpin adopted Johanna, Todd's daughter, and has since been raising her as his ward. Hearing this, Todd vows to exact revenge on Turpin and his assistant, the Beadle, for the crimes they have committed. Mrs. Lovett fetches Todd's old razors and says that he can set up a business in the room above her pie shop.

Later in the marketplace, hoping to attract business to his barbershop, Todd challenges the flashy Italian barber Pirelli to a shaving contest. The Beadle, the judge of the contest, is impressed with Todd's skill and promises to pay Todd a visit for a shave. This promise excites Todd; it presents a perfect revenge opportunity.

While Todd anxiously awaits the Beadle's visit, Anthony arrives to tell Todd that he has fallen in love with Turpin's ward and plans to steal her away, completely unaware that the judge's ward is Todd's daughter. Not long after Anthony leaves, Pirelli and his assistant, Tobias, appear. Pirelli reveals that he used to work for Todd and thus knows his true identity. He has come to blackmail Todd into working for him. However, before the plan can take

effect, Todd kills Pirelli.

The next scene begins with Judge Turpin walking home from court with the Beadle. He reveals that he intends to marry Johanna, but tells the Beadle that Johanna reacted hesitantly to his proposal. The Beadle suggests that Turpin visit Sweeney Todd, as a good shave might make Johanna more interested in marrying the judge. Meanwhile, in order to cover up the murder of Pirelli, Todd and Mrs. Lovett decide to bake his corpse into Mrs. Lovett's meat pies. Mrs. Lovett suggests they dispose of all future barbershop customers that way—after all, meat is expensive—and Todd, angry with humanity, has no qualms about killing his patrons.

With the new meat pie recipe and a flood of patrons at Todd's barbershop, Mrs. Lovett's pie shop becomes incredibly popular. She even takes on Tobias as her assistant. However, Tobias soon grows suspicious of Todd. Paranoid about Tobias' suspicions, Mrs. Lovett locks the man in the bakehouse. While Tobias is trapped in the bakehouse, the Beadle arrives at the shop, and Todd offers him a shave. During the shave, Todd slits the Beadle's throat and sends his body down a chute that leads directly to the bakehouse. Tobias, still in the bakehouse, sees the body and panics.

Before Todd can address Tobias, Anthony and Johanna appear; they are on their way to elope. Anthony leaves Johanna in the barbershop while he leaves to secure a coach to take them out of the city. Johanna, unsettled by the barbershop, hides in a trunk while Todd is out of the room. Not long after, the Beggar Woman from the beginning of the play wanders into the shop. Frustrated, Todd slits the Beggar Woman's throat and sends her body down the chute. As soon as the woman's body is gone, the Judge enters. Todd offers the Judge a shave, and finally slits his throat and sends him down the chute as well. Horrified, Johanna runs out of the room.

Todd, now able to deal with Tobias, goes to the bakehouse. However, before he can do so, he gets a closer look at the Beggar Woman. Todd is horrified to find that she is actually Lucy Barker, his wife. Todd turns on Mrs. Lovett for lying about his wife and in his grief and anger, pushes her into the oven. Tobias, witness to all this, finds one of Todd's razors and slits the barber's throat with it, ending the cycle of Sweeney Todd's revenge. ♦

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: **GEORGE DIBDIN PITT**

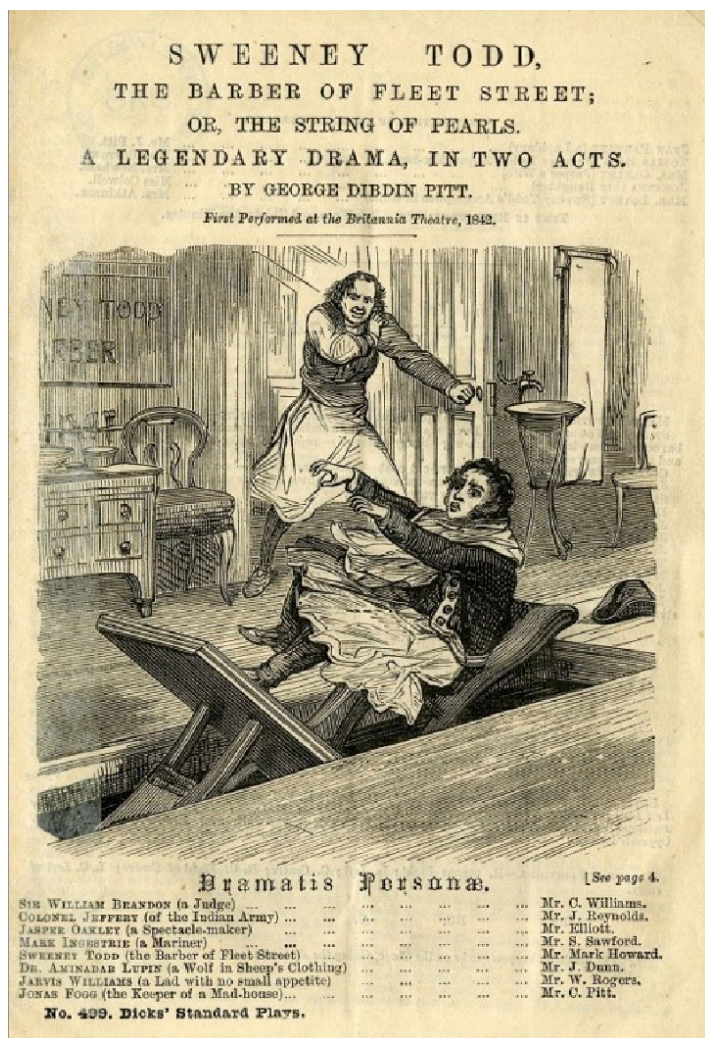
George Dibdin Pitt, originally named George Cecil Pitt, was born to George Cecil Pitt Sr. and Sophia Pyne in northwest England on March 30, 1795. He came from a well-known theatrical family spanning all the way back to his great-grandmother, Ann Pitt, who was known for her numerous performances in Covent Garden.

In 1801, the Pitt family moved to London, where George Cecil Pitt Sr. performed as a musician in Covent Garden, and Sophia acted at the Haymarket. While there is no record of George Cecil Pitt Jr. attending school, he was quite well-read. His plays are full of allusions to literature, and demonstrate a significant knowledge of history and geography, indicating that he was at least self-educated.

When he was 15 years old, Pitt's uncle, Tom Dibdin, helped Pitt land jobs as an actor at a regional theatre company in Exeter. For reasons that are not entirely clear, Pitt changed his middle name from "Cecil" to "Dibdin" around this time—perhaps in gratitude to his uncle, perhaps to set himself apart from his father, or perhaps to capitalize on the Dibdin name which was much more well-known at the time. Eventually, Pitt began to perform at Tom Dibdin's own theatre company in Surrey county, which borders the Greater London area.

When he was 19 years old, Pitt married Sarah Humber, a lieutenant's daughter. A year after their marriage, they moved to Lancashire in northern England, where Pitt spent several years managing a touring theatrical circuit. In 1826, Pitt, his wife, and their four children returned to London where Pitt continued his career as a theatre artist. Pitt wore many hats—acting, stage managing, and writing. By 1839, Pitt had become the principal playwright for the City of London Theatre, where he also performed. Pitt quickly became known for his vast number of popular melodramas. By 1842, nearly every minor theatre in and around London had produced at least one of Pitt's plays.

In 1844, Pitt took a position as the house dramatist and stage manager at the Britannia Saloon in Huxton, a very popular theatre in London's East End. There, Pitt churned out plays of all genres at a rate of one every two weeks. Many of Pitt's plays were adapted from popular novels, stories, and periodicals, and he continued to receive rave reviews for his work by the press. It was at Britannia Saloon in 1847 that Pitt's play, *The String of Pearls, or The Fiend of Fleet Street*, a play about a murderous barber who turns his victims into meat pies, was



Title page of *Sweeney Todd, The Barber of Fleet Street; Or, The String of Pearls* by George Dibdin Pitt.

first performed. Pitt based his play on a story titled *The String of Pearls: A Romance* that appeared in *The People's Periodical*, a popular penny dreadful publication of the time that equates to tabloids today. While the exact authorship of the story is not entirely clear, Thomas Prest and James Rymer, popular penny dreadful journalists at the time, are believed to have written the story. It is also unclear if the *Sweeney Todd* story is based at all in fact. It is the wide consensus that the story is a complete work of fiction, but George Dibdin Pitt advertised his adaptation as "based in fact" nevertheless.

Pitt was notorious for rewriting and changing his work over time, with many of his plays undergoing numerous revisions after having been performed. *The String of Pearls, or The Fiend of Fleet Street* is no exception. This play changed considerably

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: **GEORGE DIBDIN PITT** CONTINUED...

over the course of Pitt's life, and even after. In 1883, twenty-eight years after Pitt's death, *The String of Pearls* was first published under the name, *Sweeney Todd: The Barber of Fleet Street*.

While many of his plays were quite popular, Pitt's plays were often radical in their approach to class representation and their depiction of strong female characters. Occasionally, his plays were deemed too radical and too sensational to be performed; from 1844 to 1851, four of Pitt's plays were denied licenses by the Lord Chamberlain's office for being too rebellious or too violent.

Shortly after his play *Love and Error; or Emmeline the Female Parricide* was denied a license to be performed in January 1851, Pitt ended his career as an in-house writer for Britannia. While records of Pitt's plays are incomplete, the last known play positively identified as Pitt's appeared in February 1851. Pitt died on February 16, 1855. ♦

ABOUT THE ADAPTORS



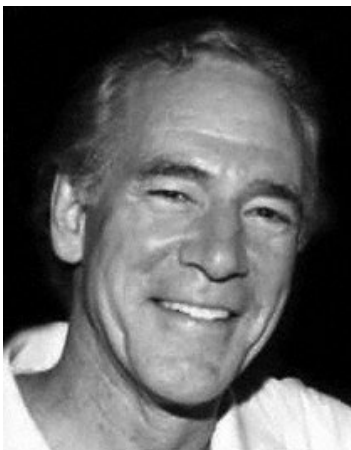
Christopher Bond

Christopher Bond is a British playwright and director born in 1945. He is best known for his work adapting George Dandin Pitt's work into the play, *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. Sondheim based the musical version of Sweeney Todd's story on an adaptation Bond wrote

in 1968 as he was working as an actor at a repertory theatre in central England. The theatre announced that *Sweeney Todd* would be in its upcoming season. However, after getting ahold of the script, the theatre decided that considerable changes needed to be made. In Bond's own words, the script,

"didn't need doctoring, it needed a heart transplant." Bond was 23 when he took on the task of rewriting Pitt's play, and he did so in only one week. He wrote the part of Tobias Ragg for himself and began rehearsals in that role one week after finishing his script. Bond's *Sweeney Todd, The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* was well received and was produced by a number of theaters in England. However, the play's life changed during the mid-seventies when Stephen Sondheim saw a production at the Theatre Royal in London, and approached Bond about adapting the play into a musical. To date, Bond has directed four productions of the musical that emerged from his collaboration with Sondheim.

Since the success of *Sweeney Todd*, Bond has continued to write, adapting numerous classics for the stage. His adaptations include *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Dracula*, and *Alice on the Underground*.



Hugh Wheeler

Hugh Wheeler was born in 1912 in North London. A novelist, playwright, and screenwriter, he wrote the book for the musical *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*.

Wheeler, who grew up in England and attended London University, came to the United States

after graduating and began his writing career as a mystery novelist under the pseudonyms Patrick Quentin and Q. Patrick. Wheeler was a successful mystery novelist for 20 years, writing 30 books and seeing four of them adapted into films. In 1961, Wheeler wrote his first play, a comedy titled *Big Fish, Little Fish*, and began to devote his energy to writing for the theatre.

In 1971, Stephen Sondheim began discussing his ideas for a romantic musical with director Hal Prince. Over the course of the conversation, they decided to contact Wheeler to join the creative team for the musical. The result of this collaboration was the 1973 musical, *A Little Night Music*. The show won six Tony Awards that year, one of which went to Wheeler for his work. The next year, Wheeler won his second Tony for his work on the book for the Leonard Bernstein musical *Candide*, which became one of the most popular musicals of the decade. In 1979, Sondheim and Wheeler collaborated again, this time on *Sweeney Todd*. This collaboration led to a Broadway production that won eight Tony awards, including one for Wheeler. After *Sweeney Todd's* success, Wheeler continued to write plays and books for musicals until his death on July 26, 1987.

ABOUT THE **ADAPTORS** CONTINUED...

Stephen Sondheim

Stephen Sondheim was born on March 22, 1930 in New York City. He was an American composer and lyricist whose compositional and lyrical style, along with dramatic and complex plotlines, have made a significant impact on the landscape of American musical theatre.

Growing up, Sondheim showed an early aptitude for music with the piano and the organ. At 15, while attending George School in Pennsylvania, he wrote his first musical. While in Pennsylvania, Sondheim became close with Oscar Hammerstein II, of Rodgers and Hammerstein fame. Hammerstein became Sondheim's mentor and encouraged him to study musical theatre. After high school, Sondheim attended Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts, where he studied music and wrote musicals on the side. When he graduated in 1950, he received the Hutchinson Prize for composition.

Sondheim made his first significant mark on Broadway in 1957 as the lyricist for Leonard Bernstein's wildly successful musical, *West Side Story*. From there, Sondheim's career took off. In 1959, Sondheim wrote lyrics for *Gypsy*, and in 1962, he wrote music and lyrics for *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, a musical based on comedies by the Roman playwright, Plautus. This musical had an extremely successful Broadway run and won the Tony Award for best musical.

Sondheim soon began exclusively working on projects for which he was able to write both music and lyrics. Sondheim won numerous Tony Awards for his work, including awards for *Company*, *Follies*, *A Little Night Music*, *Sweeney Todd: The Demon*

Barber of Fleet Street, and *Into the Woods*. Additionally, he won eight Grammys, a Pulitzer Prize, an Academy Award, and the 2015 Presidential Medal of Freedom. After a storied career in the theatre, Sondheim passed away from cardiovascular

disease on November 26, 2021 at the age of 91. Thousands flooded Times Square two days later to speak, sing, and pay tribute to Sondheim's legacy.

Many critics agree that Sondheim's work marked a change of musical theatre from the traditional, sentimental comedies of the early 20th century, to the explorations of gritty, complicated, and utterly human experiences that have characterized the late 20th century and beyond. ♦

Edited from:

Sondheim, Stephen, et al. *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. Applause Libretto Library, 2000.

Hampton, Wilborn. "Hugh Wheeler, Award Winning Playwright." *The New York Times*, *The New York Times*, 28 July 1987. Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Stephen Sondheim."

Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 2 July 2019, www.britannica.com/biography/Stephen-Sondheim.



TIMELINE OF **SWEENEY TODD**

- 1795** George Dibdin Pitt is born on March 30 to George Cecil Pitt and Sophia Pyne.
- 1805** With the help of his uncle, Tom Dibdin, George Dibdin Pitt begins his career as an actor.
- 1825** A story about a murderous barber appears in *Tell-Tale Magazine*, a French publication, under the title “A Terrible Story of the Rue de la Harpe.”
- 1844** Pitt becomes the house dramatist and stage manager at the Britannia Saloon in Huxton.
- 1846** *The People’s Periodical*, a popular penny dreadful, publishes a story titled *The String of Pearls: A Romance* about a razor-wielding barber who turns his victims into meat pies.
- 1847** Pitt writes *The String of Pearls, or The Fiend of Fleet Street*. It is performed the same year at Britannia Saloon.
- 1848** The popularity of Pitt’s play inspires dozens of others to write their own versions of the play. The story and these plays continue to be staged in British theatres for the remainder of the 19th century.
- 1851** Pitt leaves his position as the house dramatist at Britannia Saloon.
- 1855** Pitt dies on February 16.
- 1883** Pitt’s play, *The String of Pearls, or The Fiend of Fleet Street* is first published under the name *Sweeney Todd: The Barber of Fleet Street*.
- 1936** *The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, directed by George King, becomes the first film version of the Sweeney Todd story.
- 1959** The Royal Ballet Company produces a one-act ballet version of the story titled *Sweeney Todd* in London.
- 1968** Bond, working at The Victoria Theatre in central England, first encounters George Pitt’s *Sweeney Todd* script. Bond rewrites the play and titles it *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. The play has a successful run at the Victoria Theatre and begins to be performed at other theatres in England.
- 1973** Bond’s play is produced by Theatre Royal Stratford East. Stephen Sondheim sees this production of the play and approaches Bond about turning the script into a musical. Sondheim recruits Henry Wheeler to write the book for the musical while he himself writes the music and lyrics.
- 1979** Sondheim and Wheeler’s musical, *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, opens on Broadway. The production is directed by Harold Prince and stars Angela Lansbury and Len Cariou. This production receives eight Tony Awards.
- 2001** *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* is performed in concert with the San Francisco Symphony. This production, starring George Hearn and Patti LuPone, is filmed and broadcast on PBS.
- 2007** The musical film, *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* directed by Tim Burton, premieres. The film stars Johnny Depp, Helena Bonham Carter, and Alan Rickman.

Edited from:

“A String of Pearls.” PBS, Public Broadcasting Service, www.pbs.org/kqed/demonbarber/play/index.html.

CHANGE IN THE AIR: THE TRANSITION FROM THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION TO THE VICTORIAN ERA

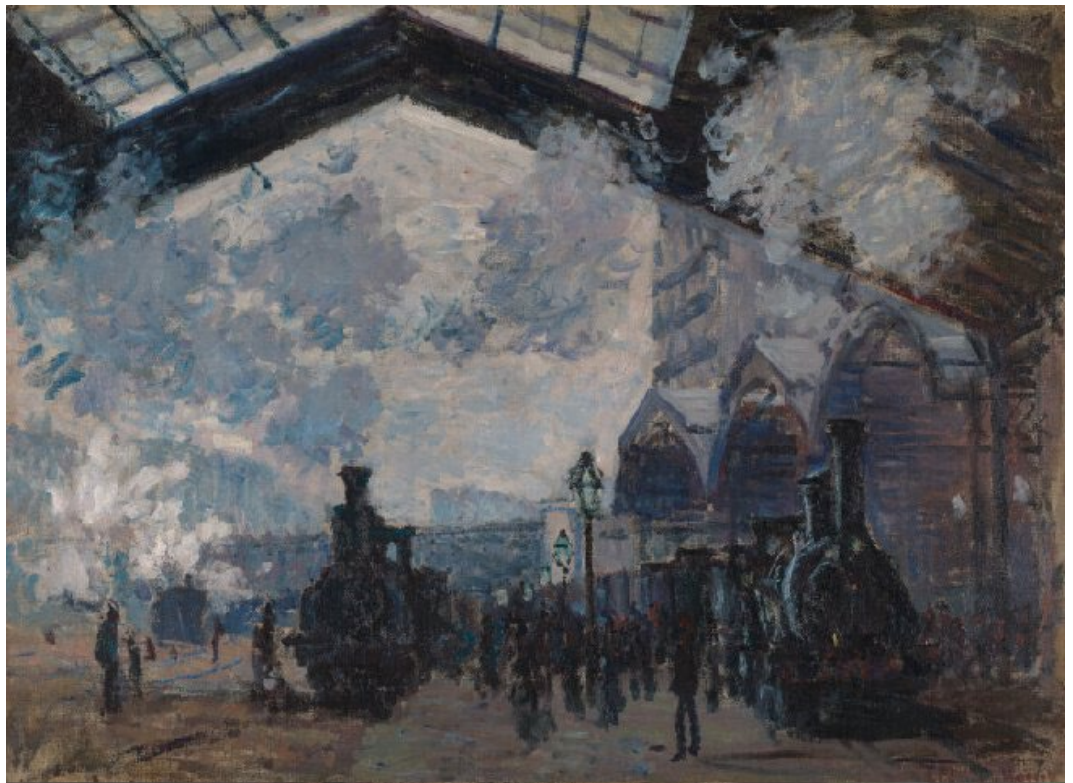
The 19th century in England was a time of great change. In the late 1700s and early 1800s, the country's social and political landscape was disrupted by the Industrial Revolution. As new technologies developed to mass-produce material goods, the gap between the wealthy and working class increased.

Until the mid-18th century, most of the world's population lived in small, rural farming communities. Families were responsible for producing their own food, clothing, furniture, and tools. However, around 1750, new technologies and manufacturing processes evolved. The development of powerful and specialized machinery meant that the production of goods became easier, cheaper, and faster.

This change in manufacturing gave way to a dramatic shift in the world's geographical, cultural, and economic landscape known as the Industrial Revolution. As industrialization grew in Europe, so did the demand for industrial workers. The prospect of well-paying, stable jobs prompted many families who had always lived in rural communities to move to city centers. Cities soon became more crowded than ever and were often unable to keep up with the influx of new workers arriving from the countryside. This resulted in inadequate, overcrowded housing and polluted, unsanitary living conditions for many in the working classes.

While the increased population sizes of urban centers were openly accepted by some, there were many who grew frustrated by the overcrowding of cities. People gravitated toward violent, sensational, and macabre entertainment as social and political frustrations grew, perhaps as a means of emotional catharsis.

In 1837, Queen Victoria ascended to the British throne, and ushered in what is known as the Victorian Era. This era is marked by further



"The Gare St-Lazare" by Claude Monet 1877.

Moral Expectations

- Acting honestly
- Working hard
- Displaying propriety and politeness
- Practicing frugality
- Performing charitable acts for those less well-off
- Practicing sobriety

Entertainment

- Scandal sheets (similar to today's tabloids)
- Sensational novels with plots concerning bigamy, murder, and adultery
- Celebrity gossip
- Theatrical productions with special effects depicting burning buildings, collapsing bridges, and simulated waterfalls
- The exhibition of human oddities ("Freak Shows")

CHANGE IN THE AIR: THE TRANSITION FROM THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION TO THE VICTORIAN ERA CONTINUED...

delineation of socio-economic classes and deeper concern for ethics and morality, or at least the appearance of it. During this time, the entertainment industry began to bloom, and people of all classes flocked to sensational and spectacular displays for entertainment. Consumption of this type of entertainment—full of gossip, grotesque tales, burlesque shows, and death-defying stunts—often directly contradicted the strict moral code of the time.

The Victorian Era is an era of contradiction. On the one hand, there was a deeper consideration of ethics and morality. On the other hand, the consumption of flashy and macabre entertainment led to sensationalism of the grotesque in Victorian society.

This is the historical backdrop of *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. A tale originally published in a penny dreadful in 1846 and quickly adapted for the stage as a popular melodrama, the story is violent and dramatic, perfectly tailored for industrial and Victorian audiences. It also explores the tension and contradictions between morality and the macabre that dominated society throughout the 19th century. Judge Turpin supposedly represents a pinnacle of justice and morality, and yet he continually makes corrupt rulings. Honesty and hard work did little to spare Benjamin Barker from being sent to prison in Australia. As the owner of a modest meat pie shop, Mrs. Lovett struggles to make ends meet until she begins to bake Sweeney Todd's murder victims



"St. Paul's from the Surrey Side" by Charles François Daubigny.

into her pies. The corruption in *Sweeney Todd* both liberates and confines the characters, as it did the people of the Victorian Era. ♦

Edited from:

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"Victorian Era Morality Facts: Moral Behavior, Values, Ideals, Ethics." Victorian Era Life in England. Victorians Society & Daily Life, www.victorian-era.org/victorian-era-morality.html.

Sweet, Matthew. "History - British History in Depth: Sex, Drugs and Music Hall." BBC, BBC, 17 Feb. 2011, www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/pleasure_01.shtml.

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PRETTY WOMEN: THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN 19TH CENTURY ENGLAND

“Pretty women... Fascinating... Sipping coffee, dancing...
Pretty women are a wonder. Pretty women. Sitting in the window
or standing on the stair, something in them cheers the air.”

—Sweeney Todd, “Pretty Women”

During the Victorian period, gender roles became more sharply defined than any other time in British history. In earlier centuries, it was typical for women to work alongside men in maintaining farms and family businesses. However, with the advent of the Industrial Revolution and the influx of urbanization, men increasingly commuted to their place of work, often factories, shops, and offices. While men made their commute, women were left at home to attend to domestic duties.

During the Victorian era, men and women inhabited what was thought of as “separate spheres.” The ideology behind this stemmed from what Victorians considered to be the “natural” characteristics of men and women. Women were considered physically weaker yet morally superior to men. This meant that they were best suited for the domestic sphere, where they could ensure that proper morals were passed along to their children. Men, on the other hand, were seen as physically stronger, more intellectual, and less virtuous than women. This suited them well for the public sphere.

However, with industrialization and increased work opportunities for men, a new, larger middle class began to emerge in British society. Members of this middle class increasingly turned to domestic work; they became servants and housekeepers. This shift in domestic roles led to new ideas of what women should do and how they should behave within domesticity.

Instead of participating in the housework themselves, middle-class women were expected to be good wives. This included learning skills such as playing the piano, needlework, and dancing. In Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, Caroline Bingley describes the skills she thinks are necessary for young ladies to possess:

“A Woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and modern languages...; and besides all this, she must possess a certain something in her air and



Image from *La Belle Assemblée* or *Bell's Court and Fashionable Magazine* circa 1821.

PRETTY WOMEN: THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN 19TH CENTURY ENGLAND CONTINUED...

manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions..."

The expectation of respectable middle-class women to avoid physical work was also dictated by changes in fashion in the 19th century. By the 1830s, many women began to wear crinoline underskirts, huge bell-shaped undergarments that made it virtually impossible to do physical housework.

The complex and restrictive nature of these social expectations did not sit well with all women. Charlotte Brontë, a prominent poet and writer during the time, voiced her frustration with the limited rights of women through the mouthpiece of her heroine Jane Eyre:

"Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags."

In *Sweeney Todd*, we see Johanna and Mrs. Lovett struggle to conform to societal expectations of the time. In their duet, "Pretty Women," Judge Turpin and Sweeney Todd express that women are meant to be pretty, obedient, and virtuous. So, when Johanna denies Judge Turpin's demand that she stays hidden from the public in the house, as well as his demand to marry her, he has her institutionalized in an asylum.

Mrs. Lovett, on the other hand, is not held to the same societal expectations as Johanna due to her lower-class status. Nevertheless, Todd constantly overlooks Lovett, due to her status and behavior uncharacteristic of respectable women in Victorian society. Neither woman in the play has full agency; they are both held to a double standard. ♦

Edited from:

Hughes, Kathryn. "Gender Roles in the 19th Century." The British Library, The British Library, 13 Feb. 2014, www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/gender-roles-in-the-19th-century.



Image from The Ladies' Monthly Magazine circa 1852.



THE FINISHING ROOM.

Women workers in the finishing room of the Douglas & Sherwood cage-crinoline factory, New York, 1859. Cage-crinolines are descending from a hatch in the ceiling to be finished by women workers. Artist unknown. File located on commons. [wikimedia.org](https://commons.wikimedia.org).

THE GREAT DIVIDE: SOCIAL INEQUALITY IN INDUSTRIAL AND VICTORIAN ENGLAND

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the Industrial Revolution led to significant change in the social, political, economic, geographical, and cultural landscape of England. Until the mid-18th century, England was primarily a rural, agrarian society. However, once advancements in technology paved the way for the mass production of material goods, there was a massive increase in urban populations; farmers, agriculture workers, and other members of rural communities began to move to city centers in hopes of securing industrial jobs. While the Industrial Revolution was instrumental in providing stable employment to large numbers of factory workers, it also led to increasing levels of social inequality, particularly in urban areas.

As the population in cities increased beyond capacity, the crime rate increased as well. This increase was the result of three major factors that dominated the urban landscape: poverty, unemployment, and overcrowding. Factory jobs had no job security or social security. If a factory worker was injured or laid off, he had little opportunity to replace his lost income. Although industrialization provided opportunity for new jobs, many cities and factories could not support the amount of people looking for employment. This led to increased competition among workers as well as more concentrated levels of poverty.

Overpopulation and overcrowding, however, was probably the biggest concern stemming from industrialization, as it led to not only unemployment and poverty, but also poor living conditions and the ever-present threat of famine. Thomas Malthus, an economic theorist of the time, speculated that, if left unchecked, the population of cities would completely surpass agricultural production and lead to mass famine. In an attempt to control the population size by preventing families from growing too large, industrial working wages were kept low. There was a belief that if a particular generation experienced too much economic security, they would marry earlier and have larger families.

This systemic control of the working class' earnings limited potential for social mobility. Essentially, it kept the wealthy upper and middle classes rich and the working classes poor.

Social Inequality in Sweeney Todd

“The history of the world, my love, is those below serving those up above.”—Sweeney Todd in “A Little Priest”

In *Sweeney Todd*, the tension between the upper class and the working class is constant. As members of the working class, both Todd and Mrs. Lovett have been subject to the social inequities of 19th century England. Managing a meat pie shop, Mrs. Lovett struggles to bring in enough customers to offset the costs of the shop's operations. Throughout the musical, Mrs. Lovett refers to how expensive it is to buy meat for her pies. “Times is hard. Times is hard,” Mrs. Lovett laments, describing how another meat pie shop resorted to killing feral cats for their pies.

Todd, on the other hand, experiences the inequality that was typical when a member of the working class conflicted with a member of the upper and middle classes. When Judge Turpin falls in love with Lucy Barker, Todd's wife, he uses the power of his position and social status to send Todd to prison in Australia under false charges. Despite Todd's innocence, the limited power of his social status is not enough to fight Judge Turpin's corrupt verdict.

To combat the social inequality, Mrs. Lovett and Todd reframe and repurpose the enterprising and industrial attitude that dominated 19th century England to fit their specific needs. Through establishing a business in which Todd kills the patrons of his barbershop so that Mrs. Lovett can use their bodies in her pies, Todd and Mrs. Lovett embrace the cutthroat nature of industrial England—literally. In doing so, their businesses begin to flourish, and they amass more power and influence in their community. Mrs. Lovett and Todd's business scheme highlights the desperation of the 19th century, and illustrates an absurdly extreme way to mitigate it. ♦

Edited from:

Fitzgerald, Richard D. “The Social Impact of the Industrial Revolution.” *Science and Its Times: Understanding the Social Significance of Scientific Discovery*, Encyclopedia.com, 2019.

MELODRAMA AND MUSICALS

Melodrama

In the 19th century, melodramas became the most prominent and popular form of theatre in Europe, specifically in England. Melodramas were exciting, sensational tales of grand gestures, heightened plotlines, and moral absolutes. The term “melodrama” comes from the Greek words “melos” meaning “song” and “dram” meaning “drama” or “to act.” As “music dramas,” melodramas employed songs and music to underscore the action or to highlight a character’s emotional state. Prominent characters in melodramas typically had their own signature music or theme song to signify their entrance into a scene.

The worlds and characters in 19th century melodramas were simplistic. Unlike modern drama in which human nature is complex, characters in melodramas represent absolute good or absolute evil. Without exception, the good heroic character is rewarded, and the evil villain is punished at the end of a melodrama. In this sense, all melodramas end with happiness and relief as the heroes prosper and the villains suffer.

Melodramatic playwrights often employed this simplistic good-versus-evil plot structure to examine and reflect the social issues of the time. The heroic, good characters in 19th century melodramas would tend to be from the lower working class while villainous characters would occupy positions of power and wealth. In this sense, melodrama was used to highlight the injustice of the class structure..

Beyond simplistic plot structures, melodramas feature one-dimensional characters that are often romanticized. Characterization in melodrama went as far as employing the external features of a character to reflect their morality; heroes were beautiful and villains were ugly.

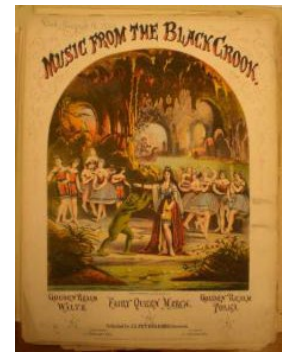
Regardless of the gloom, violence, and tragedy in the story, nearly all melodramas feature scenes of low comedy and cheap humor.

Musical Theatre

Western musical theatre is heavily steeped in the tradition of melodrama and vaudeville. In 1866, *The Black Crook*, a fantastical story about black magic and fairies, became what many consider the first American musical. This musical emerged after a fire broke out at the Academy of Music in New York, leaving a Parisian ballet company without a



Advertising card for *The Streets of London*, Princess Theatre, coloured ink on paper, published by Concanen, Lee & Siebe, London, 1864.



Cover of the music book for *The Black Crook*, circa 1866, from the Library of Congress.

performance space. Just as the ballet company was in search of a performance space, two producers from the New York Theatre Niblo’s Garden were looking for something to make their production of the melodrama *The Black Crook* stand out. So, the ballet company was integrated into the production, and *The Black Crook* had a successful run.

While the production did not necessarily conform to what we would identify as musical theatre standards today (it was a six-hour show with an incomprehensible plot), it sparked the musical comedy movement. By the 1870s, musical comedies began to appear on Broadway. However, these productions were often filled with musical numbers that made little sense in the context of productions’ plotlines. Nevertheless, this type of theatre steadily grew in popularity throughout the early 20th century.

In the 1920s and 1930s, musical theatre entered a “Golden Age” when composer Jerome Kern and lyricist Guy Bolton teamed up to write musicals together. Their works featured sophisticated, well-placed songs that contributed to the overall plots of the productions. Richard Rogers and Oscar Hammerstein soon stepped onto the scene, creating classic musicals such as *Oklahoma*, *Carousel*, and *Cinderella*. Musical theatre experienced another shift when Stephen Sondheim began to compose and write lyrics for productions. In his musicals, Sondheim began to explore complex narratives with multidimensional characters. ♦

Edited from:

Hamadi, Lutfi. “The Main Dramatic Features of Melodrama: A Dramatic Study of Maria Martin and Sweeney Todd And Their Traces In Modern Soap Operas.” *European Scientific Journal*, 2017.

Green, John, and Hank Green. *Broadway Book Musicals: Crash Course Theater #50*. Performance by Mike Rugnetta, YouTube, PBS Digital Studios, 1 Mar. 2019, www.youtube.com/watch?v=4kxzD4ASiol.

Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. “Musical.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia

THE EVOLUTION OF **THE SWEENEY TODD STORY**

When George Dibdin Pitt's melodrama *The String of Pearls, or the Fiend of Fleet Street* first premiered at the Britannia Saloon in East London, it was an instant hit. It gave audiences everything that they had come to expect from melodramas at the time: violence, special effects, spectacle, and a clear-cut conflict between good and evil. In his play, Pitt portrayed Todd as a single-minded, razor-wielding villain. The plot was simple and reductive, easy for audience members to grasp. In fact, Christopher Bond, who adapted Pitt's melodrama into a modern play in 1968, describes Pitt's script as "crude, repetitive, and simplistic [featuring] hardly any plot and less character development." Though Bond rewrote Pitt's work, traces of the story's melodrama remain in the work.

When Stephen Sondheim and Hugh Wheeler worked together to adapt Bond's work into a musical, the melodramatic roots of *Sweeney Todd* came further into view. As melodrama is essentially a predecessor to musical theatre, in placing *Sweeney Todd* into a musical context, Sondheim and Wheeler pay homage to the play's history. The music in the piece

highlights the dramatic themes of the work similarly to how music would highlight character relationships and actions in melodramas. Additionally, despite the overarching dark and tragic atmosphere of *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, the musical features distinct moments of comedy, much like traditional melodramas. Even though the world of the musical is one of sadness, anger, and desperation, songs such as "A Little Priest," are full of dark and sardonic humor.

While the musical version of *Sweeney Todd* honors the melodramatic history of the story, it diverges from melodramatic traditions. The characters of the musical are decidedly multidimensional and the plot is much more complex than in Pitt's original work. Sweeney Todd is at once heroic and villainous, and the plot is one of ambiguous morality. The musical is not the story of a singular "good guy" against a singular "bad guy," nor does it feature a simplistic, happy ending. In revamping the characters and plot, Bond, Sondheim, and Wheeler appeal to the modern tradition of theatre, presenting morally ambiguous, complex characters and intricate plots. ♦

THEMES

“Attend the tale of Sweeney Todd. He served a dark and vengeful god.”

—Sweeney Todd and Company in “Prologue”

Revenge

From the first moments of the prologue, we learn that revenge will drive the action in the musical. Sweeney Todd, having been wrongfully sent to prison in Australia, has returned to London ready to take revenge against the Beadle and Judge Turpin for robbing him of 15 years of his life. Once Todd learns that the Turpin’s vile actions led Lucy Barker to commit suicide and that Turpin has been raising Johanna as his own, his desire for revenge reaches new heights so that everything Todd does throughout the remainder of the play is fueled by his need to avenge the wrongs that have been committed against him and those he loves most.

In fact, the promise of exacting revenge on Judge Turpin is so appealing to Todd that he equates vengeance with salvation—that is, he believes that he will be saved or rescued from the pain he has endured over the past 15 years once he has taken revenge. After narrowly missing an opportunity to kill Turpin, we see Todd compare vengeance and salvation:

“Come and visit your good friend Sweeney—! You, sir, too, sir—Welcome to the grave! I will have vengeance, I will have salvation! [...] and I *will* get him back even as he gloats. In the meantime I’ll practice on less honorable throats. And my Lucy lies in ashes and I’ll never see my girl again, but the work awaits, I’m alive at last and I’m full of joy!”

Beyond being Todd’s self-proclaimed key to salvation, the prospect of revenge becomes a source of joy for Todd—a reason to live, even if that reason stems from taking life away from others.

In this sense, Todd’s desire for revenge and to right the wrongs of the past becomes incredibly strong—so strong, in fact, that it blinds him from the present. As he anxiously awaits Judge Turpin’s arrival near the end of Act 2, Todd notices that a beggar woman, who has been lurking around the

meat pie shop and shouting absurdities throughout the musical, has snuck into his barbershop. Frustrated with the distraction she presents, Todd slits her throat and sends her down the chute to the bakehouse without a second thought. However, after Todd has killed the judge, he goes down to the bakehouse where, in the light of the oven, he sees that the beggar woman is actually his wife, Lucy Barker. In the moment of realization, the Company sings the following line:

“Sweeney wished the world away, Sweeney’s weeping for yesterday.”

Todd’s unquenchable desire for revenge blinds him from truth, reality, and the present moment to such an extent that he, himself, destroys exactly what he so desperately wanted to avenge.

Love and Desire

“’Tis true, sir, love can still inspire the blood to pound, the heart leap higher”
—Judge Turpin in “Pretty Women”

Love and desire are the framework of the tale of Sweeney Todd—that is, the Sweeney Todd story both begins and ends because of love and desire. Before the musical itself begins, desire has already set the stage for the musical’s events. Fifteen years prior to the beginning of the musical, Judge Turpin’s infatuation with Lucy Barker, Sweeney Todd’s wife, drives him to utilize his power and reputation as a champion for justice to wrongfully send Todd to prison in Australia. Turpin does this so that he can have an opportunity to be with Lucy. However, Turpin’s motives are not based in love as much as they are based in lust and desire. We learn as much when we hear Mrs. Lovett describe how Judge Turpin mistreated Lucy in Todd’s absence.

When Todd returns from exile, his love for his wife and his daughter and the prospect of having a family once more (coupled with his desire to exact revenge on Judge Turpin and the Beadle) lead him back to London—a city of which he is otherwise not particularly fond. Although Todd’s desire for revenge evolves into something greater, it is Todd’s love for his wife and for his daughter that initially drive him to create a plan to avenge the wrongs they have endured at the hand of Judge Turpin.

While Turpin’s lust and desire drive many of his actions, and love and a desire for revenge drive

THEMES CONTINUED...

Todd's actions, other characters have different relationships with love and desire. Mrs. Lovett's love for Sweeney Todd drives her to lie about the death of Lucy Barker. In lying, Mrs. Lovett creates space for the possibility of marrying Todd. Alternatively, it is love and desire that prompt Johanna to break free from her captivity in Judge Turpin's home. When she and Anthony first lock eyes, it is love at first sight. The love Anthony and Johanna share drives their plan to elope against Judge Turpin's wishes. For Johanna and Anthony, love is the key to freedom and independence.

Freedom and Captivity

Throughout the musical, we consistently see characters struggle to break free from limiting or restricting circumstances. Johanna, unable to leave Judge Turpin's home, longs to be free to explore the world outside her window. When she sees a peddler selling song birds in cages from her window, she implores the birds to teach her how to find music and beauty even within the confines of her captivity:

“My cage has many rooms, damask and dark.
Nothing there sings. Not even my lark. Larks
never will, you know, when they're captive.
Teach me to be more adaptive.”

As a world-traveling sailor, Anthony gives Johanna the opportunity to escape her present circumstance—and Johanna jumps at the opportunity, despite the consequences she faces for disobeying her guardian, Judge Turpin.

Todd, having recently been freed from prison in Australia, comes back to London hoping to find full freedom and relief in avenging the injustices that led to his wrongful imprisonment. However, in crafting a plan for revenge, Todd is never fully able to embrace his new freedom—that is, in constantly plotting revenge, Todd is unable to escape from the hold of the past. All of his actions are directed at righting past wrongs. In this way, Todd is captive to the past even though he is physically free.

Mrs. Lovett also struggles with the concept of freedom and captivity in a different sense. As a member of the working class, Mrs. Lovett is held captive by her socio-economic status. She is captive to a vicious cycle of poverty: without enough money to purchase quality ingredients for her meat pies, she cannot make meat pies that are good enough to attract customers, and without customers, she cannot make enough money to purchase quality

ingredients. What is more, without money, she cannot easily support her own basic needs. So, when the opportunity to reinvent her meat pie recipe at a low monetary (but high moral) price presents itself, Mrs. Lovett jumps at the prospect of being able to break out of the cycle.

Madness

Over the course of the musical, Sweeney Todd's desire for revenge becomes so all-consuming that it ultimately leads him to a state of madness. Before long, Todd's desire for revenge turns into a desire for general carnage—that is, he becomes unable to separate his craving to right past wrongs from a visceral desire to kill indiscriminately. This shift in Todd occurs after he narrowly misses his opportunity to kill Judge Turpin. After Turpin leaves Todd's barbershop, Todd launches into the song, “Epiphany”:

“They all deserve to die! Tell you why, Mrs. Lovett, tell you why: because in all of the whole human race, Mrs. Lovett, there are two kinds of men and only two. There's the one staying put in his proper place and the one with his foot in the other one's face—Look at me, Mrs. Lovett, look at you!”

In this song, not only do Todd's words indicate that he has started a descent into madness, so does the underscoring music. Jarring and discordant notes accentuate the mad and chaotic nature of Todd's language and thought processes.

As Todd begins to act increasingly mad, the world around him also appears to descend into a state of chaos. As the musical nears its end, the inmates at Fogg's Asylum begin to sing:

“City on fire! Rats in the streets and the lunatics yelling at the moon! It's the end of the world! Yes!”

The city's state of disarray and chaos highlights and heightens the chaotic end to the musical—an end filled with death, destruction, and despair. ♦

INTERVIEW WITH **KEN BOOTH, LIGHTING DESIGNER**

How did you first become involved with A Noise Within?

I first became involved with A Noise Within during the Spring 1998 season, designing *Buried Child* and *The Seagull*, and followed that by designing all three productions of that fall season. Prior, I was aware that the company presented their shows in rep, which to me meant a single light plot (and adding specials) to light everything. Although I had worked on one-act festivals before which usually involves general lighting, I knew this would not be the case working at ANW. It has been a wonderful creative challenge to light multiple productions and make each show look unique.

How did you first become interested in lighting design?

I became interested in lighting design in a roundabout way. Following college, where I only read dramatic literature and attended university productions, I began volunteering at a very small theater in Hollywood (Stages Theater). Beginning as a house manager and eventually serving as the managing director, I was always involved in the technical elements on our productions, foremost the lighting. Our resident lighting designer became my mentor as I was slowly developing an interest and passion for that design discipline, and eventually the theater gave me my first show to light. Because of the extremely narrow and low-ceiling design of the theater, I learned a lot about how to design 'space,' since sets were extremely minimal. Every lighting fixture was used as a special, and lighting cues focused on sculpting and following actors around the stage.

What is the lighting designer's job? How are you going about designing for the spring rep season?

The role of a lighting designer is varied. At minimal, it is to provide enough illumination to showcase the actors, sets, and costumes, while keeping safety in mind. They work with the director, playwright, and set, props, projections, costumes, and sound designers to create a rich and textured atmosphere that helps define place and time of the setting as well as psychological and emotional states of the characters. A lighting design can choose to be presentational and dynamic (i.e. for musicals) or

subtle to keep focus on performances and script. The use of color, intensity, patterns (or 'gobos'), and timing helps immerse the audience into the story. To prepare for designing all the plays in the spring rep season, I attend rehearsals, study the set models and set research created by the scenic designer, and discuss with the director(s) their point-of-view of the play(s). Using this information, I can decide the look of the various 'worlds' the play(s) live in, and what the audience should see and not see.

The designer must produce a light plot to specify placement of all lighting equipment, as well as furnish all associated design paperwork including hook-ups and cue lists.

What are some challenges that come with designing for multiple shows at once?

One of the biggest challenges to design different shows on the same space is that there needs to be an acceptance of compromising even when specific lighting treatment on the sets or multiple specials might be required.

Knowing the synopses of the plays and visualizing all the possible scenic and staging scenarios that one could imagine is the first step in designing for multiple shows at once. The designs must rely on economy in the number of lighting instruments, dimmers, and hanging positions that can be used. The productions have to share a general plot of front lighting, backlighting, side lighting, color washes, and texture washes. There should be minimal gel and circuit swaps between plays, and no re-focusing of lights. The use of LED fixtures greatly serves to cut down the number of lights needed because of their ability to create most any color imagined. Since lighting equipment is merely hardware (instruments, cable, dimmers, and console), the designer must use these common ingredients to create the variable and serviceable lighting designs.

Time is another challenge, since the designer must balance focus on each show as evenly as possible. That includes attending production meetings, rehearsals, tech/dress rehearsals, and previews.

Although the designer must primarily design the rep plot at the start of the season, the scenic designs are submitted at different intervals. Therefore, there will always be constant adjustments in the lighting plot to accommodate the new information that staggers in. ♦

PRE-SHOW PREPARATION: **RESEARCH**

Purpose:

These research prompts will help students develop an understanding of the social and historical contexts of Hugh Wheeler and Stephen Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*.

Prepare:

To prepare for seeing *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, have students break into small groups to research the following topics either in their groups or individually. When they are ready, have students present their findings to the class.

The Industrial Revolution:

- Origins of the Industrial Revolution
- Cottage industries
- Key inventors and inventions
- The factory system
- Urbanization
- Working-class life
- Social norms and morals
- The role of women at the time
- Prominent philosophers and their ideologies

The Victorian Era:

- Queen Victoria
- Victorian social structure
- Social norms and morals
- Education system
- Forms of entertainment
- Gender roles and expectations
- Prominent literary figures

Melodrama:

- Origins of the movement
- Prominent melodrama writers
- Common characteristics of melodramas

Musical Theater:

- Origins of the theatrical form
- The Black Crook
- The “Golden Age” of musical theater
- Prominent figures in the “Golden Age” of musical theater

George Dibdin Pitt:

- His childhood
- His career in the theater
- His work
- His legacy

Christopher Bond:

- His theatrical career
- His other works

Hugh Wheeler:

- His childhood
- His education
- His musical theater partnerships
- His other works
- His legacy

Stephen Sondheim:

- His childhood
- His education
- His musical theater partnerships
- His other works
- His legacy

PRE-SHOW PREPARATION: **ACTIVITIES**

Purpose:

These activities will prompt students to think critically about the themes and ideas in *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* and engage with the narrative.

Melodrama Mixtape

In this activity, students will have the opportunity to explore the role music plays in narratives by developing a well-thought-out playlist of songs that encapsulates the tone and action of the *Sweeney Todd* story.

- Provide students with some background on melodrama—its origins, history, and characteristics.
- Have students read George Dibdin Pitt's *The String of Pearls or, The Fiend of Fleet Street*—the original melodrama version of the Sweeney Todd story first performed in 1847. This script can be found online at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.7227/NCTF.38.1.7>
- Facilitate a class-wide discussion about the core themes in the work, and list the themes discussed for all students to see.
- Have students break into small groups to discuss where they have seen themes and characters similar to those in Pitt's work in other novels, news stories, films, music, paintings, etc.
- In groups, ask students to create a "mixtape" for the work. To do this, instruct students to pick one song for each scene in the melodrama that they believe aligns with the overall tone, theme, and action of the scene.
- After selecting songs, have students compile the lyrics for each of their songs.
- When ready, have each group present their mixtapes to the class by distributing the lyrics to their selected songs and playing brief sound clips of their songs.
- After the presentations, open up a class-wide conversation about the process of creating the mixtapes and what new insights to the story they gained from creating and listening to their peers' mixtapes.

Revenge Reimagined

In this activity, students will have the opportunity to explore how revenge manifests by creating a visual representation of their understanding of revenge.

- Facilitate a class-wide discussion about revenge.
 - What is the definition of revenge?
 - What is the psychology of revenge?
 - What are some images that come to mind when you think of revenge?
- After the discussion, instruct students to create an image of how they each view revenge. This image can be hand-drawn, a collage or collection of printed images, or a combination collage-drawing.
- In creating their images, ask students to incorporate any images they believe are iconic to revenge.
- Allow students to present their work to the class.

PRE-SHOW PREPARATION: **ACTIVITIES** CONTINUED...

Spectrum

In this activity, students will have the opportunity to explore where they stand on various issues or themes related to those present in *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*.

- Set up the space so that one end of the space represents “strongly agree” and the other represents “strongly disagree.” The entire space represents a spectrum of opinions between the two extremes with the center point representing a “neutral” opinion.
- Read out a list of statements related to the themes in *Sweeney Todd*. Examples:
 - a. Revenge can never be justified.
 - b. Secrecy can be good.
 - c. The justice system is always right.
 - d. Good and bad are relative terms.
 - e. Disobedience is never justifiable.
 - f. Ambition can be blinding.
- After each statement, allow students to place themselves in the space according to how they feel about the statement.
- Discussion: How was doing this activity? Were there any surprises? Did you ever find yourself in a corner by yourself? How did that feel?

Secret Allies and Enemies

This activity will help students explore secrecy and complex character relationships through physicalization.

- Have students walk in the space as themselves. As they walk, instruct them to silently pick a person in the group who is their enemy. The students should not let anyone know who their enemy is. As they walk throughout the space, their goal is to stay as far away from their enemy as possible.
- After a moment, have students silently select a different person in the group to be their ally. Again, students should not let anyone know who their ally is. Their goal now, is to keep their ally in between them and their enemy at all times while staying as far away from their enemy as possible, and while not letting anyone know who their enemy is or who their ally is.
- Advanced level: Have students silently pick a third person in the group to be their role model. Students should follow this person as closely as they can, without letting them know that they are their role model. While following their role model, students should also try to keep their ally in between them and their enemy while staying as far from their enemy as possible.
- Discussion: How was this activity? Was it easy? Was it difficult? What was easy or difficult about it? How did it feel to keep those secret? Were you successful at keeping who your enemy, ally, and role model were secret?

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. In his work, *Poetics*, the Greek philosopher Aristotle outlines the basic characteristics of a tragic dramatic hero. The characteristics are as follows:
 - a. The character should be essentially good.
 - b. The character must have a “fatal flaw” or make a serious error in their judgement. This fatal flaw, called *hamartia*, leads the character to their ultimate downfall.
 - c. The character must have excessive pride, or *hubris*.
 - d. The character must experience a total reversal of their fortune. This reversal is known as a *peripeteia*, and usually occurs near the end of play.
 - e. The character must discover or recognize that the reversal of their fortune was brought on by their own actions. This discovery is called *anagnorisis*.
 - f. The character’s fate as a result of their error in judgement must be greater than is deserved.

Aristotle also described the tragic villain as a character whose downfall inspires neither pity nor fear from audience members.

Is Sweeney Todd a tragic hero or a villain? Consider Aristotle’s characteristics of a tragic hero and his definition of the tragic villain as you formulate your argument. Be sure to use evidence from the text to support your stance.

2. In a thesis-driven essay, compare and contrast Mrs. Lovett and Johanna. Consider how both women adhere to or diverge from 19th century European expectations of women as well as how they interact with other characters in the play. Use textual evidence to support your argument.
3. Analyze the role disguise plays in the narrative of *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. Use evidence from the text to support your claim.
4. In melodrama, music was used to signify the entrance of specific characters into the scene and to underscore the action of the play. In a well-developed essay, characterize how Sondheim’s score relates to or diverges from the tradition of music in melodrama.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

BOOKS:

Bond, Christopher G. *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. S. French, 1974.

Pitt, George Dibdin, and Marvin Kaye. *Sweeney Todd, The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. Wildside Press/Marvin Kaye's Nth Dimension Books, 2002.

Sondheim, Stephen, et al. *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. Applause Libretto Library, 2000.

MUSICAL ALBUMS:

Sondheim, Stephen, et al. *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street (Original Broadway Cast Recording)*, BMG Music.

ARTICLES:

Hamadi, Lutfi. "The Main Dramatic Features of Melodrama: A Dramatic Study of Maria Martin and Sweeney Todd And Their Traces In Modern Soap Operas." *European Scientific Journal*, 2017.

Jones, John Bush. "From Melodrama to Tragedy: The Transformation of Sweeney Todd." *New England Theatre Journal*, 1991.

Philips, David. "Crime, Law and Punishment in the Industrial Revolution." *The Industrial Revolution and British Society*, 1993, pp. 156-182.

Taylor, Millie. "Integration and Distance in Musical Theatre: the Case of Sweeney Todd." *Contemporary Theatre Review*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2009, pp. 74-86.

FILMS:

Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street (1936) directed by George King

Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street (2007) directed by Tim Burton

Six by Sondheim (2013) directed by James Lapine, Autumn de Wilde, and Todd Haynes

ONLINE RESOURCES:

The full text of the original penny dreadful story, *The String of Pearls*, is available with Project Gutenberg: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/59828/59828-h/59828-h.htm>

Coal, Steam, and the Industrial Revolution: Crash Course World History: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zhL5DCizj5c>

Broadway Book Musicals: Crash Course Theatre #50: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4kxzD4ASioI>

Gender in 19th Century Britain: <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/videos/gender-in-19th-century-britain>

From Score to Stage: The Unraveling of Sweeney Todd: <https://www.fromscoretostage.com/single-post/2018/02/03/The-Unraveling-of-Sweeney-Todd>

ABOUT THEATRE ARTS: **KEY THEATRICAL TERMS**

Today, movies and television take audiences away from what was once the number one form of amusement: going to the theatre. But attending a live theatrical performance is still one of the most thrilling and active forms of entertainment.

In a theatre, observers are catapulted into the action, especially at an intimate venue like *A Noise Within*, whose thrust stage reaches out into the audience and whose actors can see, hear, and feel the response of the crowd.

After this *A Noise Within* performance, you will have the opportunity to discuss the play's content and style with the performing artists and directors. You may wish to remind students to observe the performance carefully or to compile questions ahead of time so they are prepared to participate in the discussion.

blocking: The instructions a director gives actors that tell them how and where to move in relation to each other or to the set in a particular scene.

character: The personality or part portrayed by an actor on stage.

conflict: The opposition of people or forces which causes the play's rising action.

dramatic irony: A dramatic technique used by a writer in which a character is unaware of something the audience knows.

genre: Literally, "kind" or "type." In literary terms, genre refers to the main types of literary form, principally comedy and tragedy. It can also refer to forms that are more specific to a given historical era, such as the revenge tragedy, or to more specific sub-genres of tragedy and comedy such as the comedy of manners, farce, or social drama.

motivation: The situation or mood which initiates an action. Actors often look for their "motivation" when they try to dissect how a character thinks or acts.

props: Items carried on stage by an actor to represent objects mentioned in or implied by the script. Sometimes the props are actual, sometimes they are manufactured in the theatre shop.

proscenium stage: There is usually a front curtain on a proscenium stage. The audience views the play from the front through a "frame" called the proscenium arch. In this scenario, all audience members have the same view of the actors.

set: The physical world created on stage in which the action of the play takes place.

setting: The environment in which a play takes place. It may include the historical period as well as the physical space.

stage areas: The stage is divided into areas to help the director to note where action will take place. Upstage is the area furthest from the audience. Downstage is the area closest to the audience. Center stage defines the middle of the playing space. Stage left is the actor's left as he faces the audience. Stage right is the actor's right as he faces the audience.

theme: The overarching message or main idea of a literary or dramatic work. A recurring idea in a play or story.

thrust stage: A stage that juts out into the audience seating area so that patrons are seated on three sides. In this scenario, audience members see the play from varying viewpoints. *A Noise Within* features a thrust stage.

ABOUT **A NOISE WITHIN**

A NOISE WITHIN produces classic theatre as an essential means to enrich our community by embracing universal human experiences, expanding personal awareness, and challenging individual perspectives. Our company of resident and guest artists immerses student and general audiences in timeless, epic stories in an intimate setting.

Our most successful art asks our community to question beliefs, focus on relationships, and develop self-awareness. Southern California audiences of all ages and backgrounds build community together while engaging with this most visceral and primal of storytelling techniques. ANW's production of classic theatre includes all plays we believe will be part of our cultural legacy. We interpret these stories through the work of a professional resident company—a group of artists whose work is critical to their community—based on the belief that trust among artists and between artists and audience can only be built through an honest and continuing dialogue.

In its 30-year history, A Noise Within has garnered over 500 awards and commendations, including the Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle revered Polly Warfield Award for Excellence and the coveted Margaret Hartford Award for Sustained Excellence.

More than 45,000 individuals attend productions at A Noise Within annually. In addition, the theatre draws over 18,000 student participants to its Education Program. Students benefit from in-classroom workshops, conservatory training, subsidized tickets to matinee and evening performances, post-performance discussions with artists, and free standards-based study guides.

Study Guides

A Noise Within creates study guides in alignment with core reading, listening, speaking, and performing arts standards to help educators prepare their students for their visit to our theatre. Study guides are available at no extra cost to download through our website: www.anoisewithin.org. The information and activities outlined in these guides are designed to work in compliance with the California VAPA standards, the Common Core, and 21st Century Learning Skills.

Study guides include background information on the plays and playwrights, historical context, textual analysis, in-depth discussion of A Noise Within's artistic interpretation of the work, statements from directors and designers, as well as discussion points and suggested classroom activities. Guides from past seasons are also available to download from the website.

Credits

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