

Sweeney todd: the demon barber of fleet street essay



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This musical is based on a 1973 play by Christopher Bond before becoming a 1979 musical with the music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim. Today's musical was directed by Sasha Gerritson, orchestra constructed by R. Shayne Cofer, and choreographed by Andrew Waters. The musical tells a story of Sweeney Todd, aka Benjamin Barker, who returns to 19th century London after 15 years' transportation on made up charges. He seeks revenge on the judge that transported after he learns his wife poisoned herself after being sexually defiled by Judge Turpin. He then opens a barbershop with a pie maker, Mrs. Lovett, in which he gashes the throats of customers and baked them into pies.

The stage in the concert hall isn't necessarily known for their ample space, but the cast and crew made the most of it in this masterpiece. The orchestra was strategically placed in the basement of the stage which I thought was interesting because I have not seen anything like that done before. Every other play I've attended had the orchestra on the side. With the orchestra barely visible in the basement area, the music felt real like it was just playing from thin air or like you would hear music in a movie.

The main part of the stage was the pie/barbershop with the big box on the 2nd floor of the shop being able to access the first floor from there. To the very right was a small wooden balcony to represent the bedroom window of Todd's daughter Johanna, whom Todd's friend Anthony and the judge are madly in love with. For the sake of the screenplay no other stage setup was really needed except for a small rolling stage where Todd had a shaving contest with Signor Pirelli in the middle of the town square.

The audience of the musical consisted of us classmates in Music 101 and other music classes, faculty, friends and family of the performers, and also theatre fanatics who enjoy musicals or more specifically, big fans of previous Sweeney Todd musicals. The hard work that was put into the production of this music gave the audiences a fair share of ooh's and aah's with some gasping, clapping and laughing all in between.

Given that Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street, has a very dark storyline, the beginning set the tone for the rest of the play. The play starts off in complete darkness with a glowing red light on the stage for it to appear dark and ominous. The entire cast is on stage depicting a burial where a body bag is thrown into a shallow grave. The cast is facing away from the audience, the show's opening statement "Attend the tale of Sweeney Todd", shouted and sung fierce fully in the spooky red lights which will make you attend, no questions asked.

The musical has nine main characters with a couple different types of voices in the production. The lead role, Benjamin Barker/Sweeney Todd, is the miserable and gloomy barber who seeks revenge on the corrupt judge. Todd's voice is a baritone, the most common male voice which is very deep and heavy sounding. With the role played by a rather larger man, his voice boomed over the audience living up to his role of baritone singer. The next character Mrs. Lovett, a fun and lively pie maker whose business has become run down due to a scarcity of meat, teams up with Mr. Todd on his quest for revenge. Mrs. Lovett role has a contralto singing voice, which is a classic woman's voice with the lowest vocal range and texture.

Anthony Hope is the young sailor who arrives in England with Todd and befriends him and eventually falls in love with his daughter Johanna. Anthony has a tenor voice, which is one of the highest male voices. Todd's beautiful young daughter, Johanna, was claimed by Judge Turpin as his own ward and refuses to marry him as she is in love with Anthony Hope. Johanna has a soprano singing voice which is the highest vocal range of the voice types. Judge Turpin is the corrupt judge that sent Benjamin Barker on his 15 year excursion, raping his wife, and keeping his daughter as his own ward.

Turpin's style is more of a bass voice which is the lowest vocal range of all. Beadle Bamford is Turpin's accomplice and right hand man to his dirty deeds who has a tenor voice. The beggar woman is the poor and deranged woman who roams the streets harassing Todd and many of the other main characters. She has a mezzo-soprano voice, aka half soprano, which ranges in between the soprano and contralto voices. Adolfo Pirelli, aka Danny O'Higgins, plays an Irish hustler with a tenor voice who has a public persona as a flashy Italian barber. He was once an employee for Benjamin Barker and attempts to blackmail Barker once he finds out Todd's secret.

And the last important role in the musical is Tobias Ragg, a tenor voiced man who works for Pirelli.

Review the performance of Beauty and the Beast (NEIU Auditorium, April 10, 7: 30 PM). Include in your paper: 1. a brief description of the setting: concert hall, stage set-up, type of audience, audience reaction 2. a discussion of the music you heard and your critique of the performance. This is the main body of your paper. Use the information from the preparatory class, the program

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notes and other sources of your choice, citing them appropriately. Use appropriate musical terms. 3. your personal reactions to the music and the performance, stating your reasons for enjoying or not enjoying it. 4. a list of your sources (footnotes or final bibliography)