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SF PERUSALS

Sweeney Todd the Barber

A Melodrama

Book, music and lyrics by
Brian J. Burton

Adapted from George Dibdin Pitt's
Victorian version of the legendary drama

Samuel French—London
New York—Sydney—Toronto—Hollywood



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SWEENEY TODD THE BARBER

First presented at the Crescent Theatre, Birmingham, on 16th June, 1962, with the following cast:

Sweeney Todd	Frank Jones
Ezekiel Smith	Charles Cruxton
Mrs Ragg	Anjela Colley
Tobias Ragg	Sheila Corbett
Mark Ingestre	Ronald Barber
Jean Parmine	Gordon Jackson
Johanna Oakley	Jennifer Hubner
Colonel Eustace Jeffrey	Michael Booth
Jasper Oakley	Fred Smith
Mrs Oakley	Audrey Waterson
Dr Aminadab Lupin	Ron Sadler
Mrs Lovett	Frances Bull
Jarvis Williams	Michael McGrath
Jonas Fogg	Bert Briscoe
Sir William Brandon	Bernard Brunner
Mrs Poorlean	Anjela Colley

Other parts played by:
Dan Cockburn, Ann Dixon, Patricia Harrison, Margaret Hunt, Geraldine Johnson, Davina Lees, Eddy Lowe, Pauline Smith and Gordon Steff.

The play directed by John Taylor and Brian J. Burton

Settings by Eric Laight

Costumes by Pamela Bishton

Lighting by Richard Palmer

Photographs by Lisel Haas

Music for this edition arranged by Sheila Corbett

The action of the play takes place in London in the 1840s

Act I	Scene 1	Fleet Street, outside Sweeney Todd's shop
	Scene 2	Interior of Sweeney Todd's shop
	Scene 3	Breakfast parlour in the house of Jasper Oakley
Act II	Scene 1	The parlour behind Mrs Lovett's pie shop in Bell Yard
	Scene 2	Interior of Sweeney Todd's shop
	Scene 3	Interior of Mrs Lovett's pie shop
	Scene 4	The bakehouse
Act III	Scene 1	Interior of Sweeney Todd's shop
	Scene 2	A chamber in the madhouse
	Scene 3	Temple Stairs
	Scene 4	A court of Justice
Act IV	Scene 1	The entrance to Newgate Prison
	Scene 2	The bakehouse
	Scene 3	Temple Stairs
	Scene 4	Sweeney Todd's shop

The running time of this version (including the songs) is two hours (excluding intervals).

The play was presented at the Crescent Theatre in one basic set (the barber's shop) and a number of inserts and dropcloths. By using traverse curtains for alternate scenes the time taken to effect a change is only a matter of a few seconds.

CHARACTERS

Sweeney Todd, the barber of Fleet Street
Ezekiel Smith, a mechanic
Mrs Ragg, a poor woman
Tobias Ragg, her son, an apprentice boy (played by a girl)
Mark Ingestre, a mariner
Jean Parmine, a lapidary
Johanna Oakley, a young lady in love
Colonel Eustace Jeffrey, of the Indian Army
Jasper Oakley, a spectacle maker
Mrs Oakley, his wife
Dr Aminadab Lupin, a wolf in sheep's clothing
Mrs Lovett, Todd's accomplice in guilt
Jarvis Williams, a lad with an appetite
Jonas Fogg, the keeper of the madhouse
Sir William Brandon, a judge
Mrs Poorlean, an unfortunate woman

A court usher, two warders, a keeper, three bystanders. By doubling certain parts this play can be presented with seven men and seven women

TO FRANK JONES

INTRODUCTION

The legend which provides the story for this melodrama dates back to fourteenth century France when a certain barber in Paris was reputed to have cut throats and disposed of his victims in a highly unconventional manner.

During the first three or four decades of the nineteenth century there was a revival of interest in things horrific and the old story was 'dusted off' and reappeared with its setting changed to late eighteenth century London. It was published as a serial in a series of sixpenny novels called *The People's Periodical and Family Library* under the title 'The String of Pearls' or 'The Sailor's Gift'.

It was this nineteenth century 'horror comic' that George Dibdin Pitt used as the basis of his play 'The String of Pearls' or 'The Fiend of Fleet Street'. Although this was set in the time of George II, the style was unmistakably that which we now associate with early Victorian melodrama and so it was decided to place this new version in the early Victorian period.

The original play contained a number of anomalies and anachronisms and the decision to advance the period created even more but as those in the original were quite amusing no attempt has been made to correct them.

This new version follows very closely that of Pitt but whereas his was little longer than a 'curtain raiser', this has been expanded into a full-length play. A number of songs in the Victorian manner have been written by the present adapter and included in the play. This is no innovation as records show that most melodramas of the period included sentimental ballads and comedy songs. The former were often sung by a female infant prodigy of the time who played the part of a boy. In keeping with this tradition the role of Tobias in this version has been written for a girl.

PRODUCTION NOTES

SETTINGS

Illustrations of the six main settings are given. It is advisable to play the other scenes in front of traverse curtains to facilitate changes. The basic set is the interior of Sweeney Todd's shop with the 'tipping' chair set upstage centre. This is a permanent structure and all other settings are placed downstage of this with the chair tipped back. The chair is mounted on a light base identical in size with the flat against which it stands and to which it is fastened. When this is hinged to the stage floor, the chair can be tipped backwards so that the base fills the gap previously occupied by the back flat and the chair and its occupant are hidden from the audience. This is very simple to construct and most effective. The other main settings can be either drop cloths or flats masked on either side by traverse curtains. If the back flat for the court scene can be a gauze the effect of the apparition is heightened.

CASTING

When there is difficulty in obtaining a cast for this play the parts of the bystanders may be reduced or omitted and other parts doubled to enable the play to be performed by seven men and seven women. It is intended that the part of Tobias be played by a girl particularly if the songs are used as these were written for a treble voice.

MUSIC

This version may be performed without the songs if required but they are very simple and were written for a cast with little expereince of singing. Music must be used for background effect at various points in the play in keeping with the tradition of melodrama. The full piano score includes special background music composed for the play. This is obtainable from Samuel French. A complete music plot appears on page 68 and the melodies of the songs are given in the text. If it is decided to omit the songs the play will end immediately before the final chorus.

PROPERTIES AND FURNITURE

Furniture is best kept to a minimum; in fact the production at the Crescent Theatre used only two tables, three chairs, two benches and a stool.

LIGHTING

No attempt should be made to make the lighting too realistic. The original play was performed when gas lighting was a novelty and the use of coloured glasses for special effects much in vogue. It is possible to heighten the play considerably by generous use of red acting area floods, green spots, etc., for creating atmosphere.

COSTUME AND MAKE-UP

This version is set in the early Victorian period and costume presents little problem. Make-up should be bold and with a tendency towards caricature. A bottle of theatrical blood is most important.

STYLE OF PERFORMANCE

This must be decided by the producer but it should be remembered that audiences at this type of play laugh more readily at overplaying than at burlesque. Audience participation is essential and should be encouraged in every possible way.

ACT I

SCENE 1

Fleet Street. Outside Sweeney Todd's shop

When the CURTAIN *rises the stage is in darkness. A nearby clock is striking the hour of nine. As it strikes, the lights come up R slowly to reveal part of he graveyard of St Dunstan's Church. On the last stroke the rest of the lighting comes up to show the exterior of the barber's shop of Sweeney Todd on L of the stage. Sweeney Todd is standing by the shop door. He is in conversation with Ezekiel Smith, a mechanic*

Todd So, Mr Smith, you are come on the matter of that little consideration you would have me believe to be owing to you in respect of your mechanical toy.

Smith Yes, Mr Todd. I have brought the account with me. (*He produces a document from his pocket*) "Account owing to Mr Ezekiel Smith in respect of . . ."

Todd I am fully aware of the details, Mr Smith. Just state the amount of money you are attempting to rob me of.

Smith No robbery, Mr Todd, only my just reward for labour.

Todd The amount, fool, the amount!

Smith Seven pounds eighteen shillings and ninepence halfpenny.

Todd And what may the ninepence halfpenny be for, Mr Smith?

Smith For one pound of ten inch nails, Mr Todd.

Todd And has it occurred to you, Mr Smith, that there are some parties that might consider ninepence halfpenny a little excessive for a pound of ten inch nails?

Smith It has occurred to me that I do not like your manner of haggling. Be pleased to pay me this minute and let me go.

Todd Come a little nearer, Mr Smith—just a little nearer, if you please.

Smith approaches Todd with great caution

That's better, Mr Smith—much better—now we can talk together in a more friendly manner, can we not?

Smith If you say so, Mr Todd.

Todd Now then, what would you say to a guinea and a half, Mr Smith, eh—eh? (*Leaning towards him*) and perhaps a free shave too—afterwards?

Smith I'd say that you are a rogue, Mr Todd, a rogue!

Todd (*aside*) This individual annoys me. I dislike his method of grabbing money. In fact my gorge rises. I think him mean. With all the pleasure in the world I would shave him, shave him very close indeed. (*Aloud*) I tell you what I'll do, I'll be fair to us both. I will make it thirty shillings. A mere matter of one and sixpence will scarcely embarrass an individual in

such a prosperous way of business as yourself. Come now, let us say thirty shillings.

Smith (*earnestly*) Has it occurred to you that there are certain parties not very far up this street—certain legal parties as you might phrase it—who might gain a good deal of profit and instruction from a perusal of some of the items and specifications in this little account of mine?

Todd And what are you intending to imply by those remarks, Mr Smith?

Smith I know of a place, that perhaps we might call a school, that is a little higher up this very street where there are a number of individuals who keep little bills like this one for their school books. Do you know to where I refer, Mr Todd?

Todd I neither know nor care one jot. I am of the opinion that you are out of your mind, Mr Smith—out of your mind.

Smith I was never saner, Mr Todd. You know full well the place I have in mind—the Old Bailey, Mr Todd—the Old Bailey! (*Aside*) That will quieten him, I think. (*Aloud*) I believe the amount we mentioned was seven, eighteen, nine and a half, Mr Todd.

Todd I was speaking about a free shave, Mr Smith. (*Brandishing his razor under Smith's throat*) Now that I look at you closely I discern a certain roughness about the region of your lower lip and a hairiness about your throat that makes my razor long to be at it. Pray, Mr Smith, come inside this minute and I'll attend to you in no time at all. Come now, Mr Smith, and take a seat inside my shop. It will give me the greatest pleasure in the world to polish you off.

Todd pushes Smith into the shop and closes the door

Todd then sings

Sweeney Todd the Barber



I'm Sweeney Todd the barber
And wicked thoughts I harbour.
When I've got him in my chair
I'll do more than cut his hair.
He'll find out and to his cost,
All he owned in life is lost.

Ho! Ho! Ho! I'll polish him off.
Ho! Ho! Ho! I'll polish him off.
He's got a 'luvely' throat for a razor.
Ho! Ho! Ho! I'll polish him off.

I'm Sweeney Todd the barber
And wicked thoughts I harbour.
He'll wait for me to begin
To operate upon his chin.
But indeed that's not my will.
Shaving doesn't pay the bill.
No! No! No! I polish 'em off.
No! No! No! I polish 'em off.
They've got such 'luvely' throats for a razor.
So! So! So! I polish 'em off.

I'm Sweeney Todd the barber
And wicked thoughts I harbour.
When I raise my brush and comb,
He will wish he'd stayed at home.
When he thinks that I'm but starting,
I will expedite his 'parting'.
Ho! Ho! Ho! I'll polish him off.
Ho! Ho! Ho! I'll polish him off.
He's got a 'luvely' throat for a razor.
Ho! Ho! Ho! I'll polish him off.

(*Speaking*) Ha! If my eyes don't deceive me, I believe I see Mrs Ragg coming here.

Smith opens the door of the shop and emerges with caution. Todd sees him and, pouncing on him, takes him DL

Now just you wait a moment or two, Mr Smith, and I'll be free to seal our little bargain—eh? (*Calling off*) Good morning to you, Mrs Ragg. Come along now, come along, this way. (*He moves C to meet her*)

Mrs Ragg enters R followed by her son Tobias. He is a young boy about twelve years old. This part should be played by a girl

Mrs Ragg Good morning to you, Mr Todd.

Todd I see you have brought me the little whelp.

Mrs Ragg 'E ain't a little whelp, Mr Todd, and I won't 'ave you call 'im so—that I won't.

Todd Only my fun, Mrs Ragg. You know that I dearly love a jest.

Mrs Ragg That is as may be, Mr Todd. All I know is that I 'ave brought you my boy, Tobias, to be your apprentice as you 'ave said you would 'ave 'im as such and 'ere 'e is. And what is more, Mr Todd, I 'ave you to remember that 'e is very dellikite and not to work 'im too 'ard. 'E comes of a very dellikite family 'e does and is very easily upset. Ain't you my little lamb?

Tobias Oh yes please, Ma.

Mrs Ragg And I axe you to remember likewise, Mr Todd, that my little Tobias 'as been tenderly nurtured and to treat 'im as such.

Todd That goes without the necessity of saying, Mrs Ragg. I doubt if you would find a kinder more considerate employer in the length and breadth of London. I will treat your boy Tobias as I would my own son, Mrs Ragg. I love boys and treat them the way they deserve you may be sure. So go along now, Mrs Ragg, and have no fears about this dear little lad, none at all.

Mrs Ragg As you say, sir. With which I says good morning and leaves 'im to you, Mr Todd.

Todd (*to Tobias, watching Mrs Ragg as she goes out*) Come along, come along, my young friend.

Mrs Ragg exits

(*Grabbing Tobias and dragging him DR*) Now remember this, Tobias Ragg, remember it well. You are my apprentice and that you have had of me board, lodging and washing—you understand, boy?

Tobias Yes, sir.

Todd Save that you will take your meals at home, that you don't sleep here and that your mother gets up your linen. (*Fiercely*) Now are you not a fortunate, happy dog?

Tobias does not answer but cowers timidly

Well answer me lad, answer me!

Tobias Yes, sir.

Todd Yes sir, what sir? (*Shaking Tobias*) What are you, boy?

Tobias I'm . . . a happy fortunate dog, Mr Todd.

Todd (*standing back and smiling*) That's better boy, much better. I can see that you and I will get on very well, Tobias—very well indeed. I like you, Tobias, you're a nice boy. (*Leaning towards Tobias, fiercely*) But I'll cut your throat from ear to ear if you repeat one word, just one word mind you, of what passes in this shop, or if you dare to make any supposition, or draw any conclusion from anything you may see or hear. Do you understand me, Tobias?

Tobias Oh, Mr Todd!

Todd Not "Oh, Mr Todd," but "No, Mr Todd," boy. "No, I won't say a word." (*The next words are punctuated by punches on the head*) Do—you—understand?

Tobias Yes, Mr Todd. I won't say anything, Mr Todd, I swear it. If I do may I—may I be made into veal pies at Lovett's in Bell Yard.

Todd What was that you said—boy—eh? (*He takes Tobias' ear*)

Tobias Veal pies, Mr Todd.

Todd How dare you mention veal pies in my presence? (*Aside*) Does he suspect? (*Aloud*) Tell me, boy, do you suspect?

Tobias Oh sir, I don't suspect—indeed I don't. I meant no harm in making the remark.

Todd (*eyeing Tobias narrowly*) Very good. I'm satisfied—quite satisfied. And, mark me, the shop, and the shop only, is your place.

Tobias Yes sir.

Todd And if any customer gives you a penny, you can keep it, my boy, you can keep it.

Tobias Thank you kindly, Mr Todd.

Todd And when you get enough pennies, Tobias, then you'll be a rich man won't you?

Tobias Yes sir, you're very kind.

Todd Good, but I'll be even kinder. I'll tell you what I'll do for you boy. I'll take care of the pennies for you and when I think you require any I'll consider whether—(*Aside*) But who's this? His dress and manner bespeak him a seafaring man and a stranger in these parts.

Mark Ingestre enters R. He is dressed as a sea captain. He walks across the stage examining the names above the shops

Tobias sees him and goes across and talks to him. Todd goes DL to Smith

Todd I fancy, Mr Mechanic, that I have business with this gentleman. If you will call again some time next week we may find time to discuss that little matter you mentioned earlier. Thirty shillings, I think you said, was the sum. In the meantime I dare swear that you have a great deal of business on hand in other parts of the city. I wish you good morning. (*He returns to the shop door*)

Smith I will go now, but I will be back earlier than next week, Mr Todd. (*Aside*) Oh yes—much earlier than next week.

Smith exits

Todd watches Tobias from the shop door

Mark (*to Tobias*) I thank you my good boy for the information you have so kindly afforded me. You say that you know Miss Johanna Oakley?

Tobias Yes sir, I am acquainted with Miss Johanna. She is a kind-hearted lady. Shortly after my father's death, sickness and sorrow overcame my poor mother and myself. Had it not been for Miss Oakley's timely aid, both of us might have perished for want.

Mark (*aside as he moves away L*) How it gladdens a person's heart to hear his sweetheart so highly esteemed. (*Aloud—turning towards Tobias*) Miss Johanna Oakley is my affianced bride. For five years have I been absent from the country that I love so well. My vessel unexpectedly arrived at this port this morning and no sooner did I place foot on shore but I felt a desire to seek out my old friends. Judge of my mortification and surprise when I was told that they were not known at their former address, but had removed, no one knew whither. Heaven alone knows how I should have discovered them had it not been for the valuable information with which you have supplied me.

Tobias How I should love to become a sailor! Happy and joyous in my freedom, breathing the fresh pure air of liberty! (*He moves C to sing*)

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