



From the Musical Director

“Sweeney Todd” is one of Sondheim’s best-loved and most complex musicals, and I am very much looking forward to performing this amazing show.

For this show we have chosen excerpts from the show that we would like you to prepare for your audition. If you are auditioning for a specific principal role then please prepare *both* excerpts for that role (except for Pirelli, who only has one), and if you are auditioning for ensemble please again prepare both excerpts. If you would like to be considered for more than one principal role then feel free to bring two contrasting excerpts (from different roles), but please be prepared to try out any excerpts you’ve not prepared for those roles.

As Chris says in his introduction, we’re most interested in seeing your acting through the delivery of the song, and so these excerpts will serve as the acting as well as the singing audition, and you may be asked to say the words of the song as a piece of dialogue.

Here are some general musical notes, together with some specific points for ensemble and individual principals.

General notes/Ensemble

Let’s get this out of the way first: the music is hugely rewarding to perform, but it is *hard*. Both principals and ensemble must be prepared for difficult melodies, complex harmonies and singing in cross-rhythms against other singers. However, it is not impossible, and we will have plenty of time to learn it. I would advise getting hold of recordings and familiarising yourself with the music before the auditions and certainly before the rehearsal period starts -- however, do try and find a variety of recordings to listen to! There are so many different interpretations of the characters, and as Chris says we don’t want to hear your Angela Lansbury or your Bryn Terfel, so please don’t get too used to any particular recording.

The music is written in a very operatic style, with motivic elements providing cue themes for almost every principal character. The dialogue is almost all underscored, with very few moments of silence from the orchestra. The ensemble act as both a sort of Greek Chorus, providing commentary on the

scenes (in each 'Ballad of Sweeney Todd') as well as forming part of the story (in the shaving competition, the pie shop, and the lunatic asylum).

Ensemble excerpts

The ensemble is mostly split into either four (SATB) or five (SATBarB) parts, with particularly high soprano lines in places. There are also several solo vocal lines in various ensemble numbers, that will be cast during the rehearsal process, as well as a few non-singing principal roles.

The two ensemble excerpts are as follows:

- Prologue: take bars 1-74, taking the melody line all the way (use the soprano part when it splits).
- God That's Good: take bars 195-212, and learn whichever harmony line is appropriate for your voice. There will be mp3s of the individual harmony lines provided alongside the excerpt pdfs.

Principal notes

I've included vocal ranges, but since various different sites disagree as to exactly what these are (and I've not gone through and made my own) they should be taken as advisory only. None of the principals really have anything stratospheric other than the Beadle and Pirelli, both of which can sing all their top notes falsetto.

In general the separate excerpts are chosen to either show off contrasting styles or moods, or to test various tricky corners of the parts.

Anthony

Light baritone/tenor voice, Ab-F#. Excerpts:

- Ah, Miss: take from the start to bar 37. If you're unfamiliar with the piece use a recording to check the rhythms at bar 17, bearing in mind the quaver is the same length regardless of the surrounding time signature.
- Wigmaker Sequence: take bars 23-37, and be prepared to sing against a second part: again, use a recording to check the rhythms of the $\frac{5}{8}$ bars.

Sweeney

Rich bass-baritone voice, F-Gb. Needs power and control, and the stamina to make it through two shows in a day! Excerpts:

- No Place Like London: take bars 214-226.
- Epiphany: take bars 17-44

Beggar Woman

Light to medium mezzo or soprano voice, Ab-F. Excerpts:

- No Place Like London: take bars 23-42. Pitch control is crucial in the 'Alms...' sections.
- Searching: take bars 14-32

Mrs. Lovett

Ballsy alto or mezzo voice, G-E. Again, power, control, stamina required, to match Sweeney.
Excerpts:

- Worst Pies: whole song. Use a recording to become familiar with awkward rhythms and time signature changes.
- Wait: take bars 25-56.

Judge

Rich bass-baritone: E-F#. Excerpts:

- Pretty Women p1: take bars 1-16. Use a recording if unfamiliar with the $\frac{5}{8}$ time.
- Pretty Women p2: take bars 49-75, and be prepared to sing against a second part.

Note that we do *not* intend to include the optional solo song, 'Johanna', for the Judge.

Beadle

Light tenor with strong (ideally counter-tenor-ish) falsetto: D-D. Excerpts:

- Ladies in their Sensitivities: whole song
- Kiss Me p2: take bars 31-45 (you won't be expected to sing this with harmony parts, but the falsetto at bars 37-39 etc. is important)

Johanna

Light high soprano: A-Bb. Excerpts:

- Green Finch and Linnet Bird: whole song
- Kiss Me p1: take start to bar 28: if you're unfamiliar, use a recording to gauge the fast rhythms and overall effect (but note that the actual words are indistinct in many recordings)

Tobias

Light tenor: Bb-A. Played as a child but needs a broken voice. Excerpts:

- Pirelli's Miracle Elixir: take bar 7-56
- Not While I'm Around: take start to bar 36

Pirelli

Light baritone or tenor (with good comedy falsetto, especially if baritone). Excerpt:

- The Contest: whole thing.