

Sweeney Todd – CAODS, February 26, 2007

Director – Ray Jeffery; Musical Director – Andrew Denyer

From a musical standpoint Sondheim is always demanding and yet CAODS chorus rose to the challenge, injecting pace and menace into the opening musical prologue. The eerie organ music, the trademark screech, combined with red mood lighting and moving staircases set the tone in the opening ten minutes. The eponymous villain, Sweeney was strong, dark and brooding, and radiated gloom (if that is physically possible), foreshadowing the tragic destiny that awaited him. His singing was always strong, with a resonant bass tone and he worked well with Mrs Lovett, who had charisma aplenty and was a vocal ringer for Angela Lansbury. The contrast between the single-minded Sweeney bent on revenge at all costs and the amoral Lovett, whose motivation for killing was little more than pecuniary and possibly romantic advantage, was well characterized. My musical favourite, A Little Priest, was a comic feast for the ears and exemplified how well this couple worked together. The other principals complemented each other well, with a special tribute to Joanna, whose vocal tone and accuracy were spot on throughout. Beadle Bamford, whilst not particularly malevolent, had good presence and his diction was excellent. Tobias too came across well, particularly in the second Act and Not While I'm Around was sung movingly and with conviction. Judge Turpin was characterized as suitably seedy and the self-flagellation scene, although disturbing, was effective in delivering a clear message about his dishonourable intentions towards Joanna. Anthony was played very ably and with sufficient passion but despite having a good voice had precious few chances to display it, apart from during Joanna. Signor Pirelli coped well with perhaps the highest notes in the score but the Italian accent could have been even more stereotypical for my taste. Overall this was an enjoyable and ambitious production of a very difficult show. The sets, including two storey barber shop/pie shop, accommodating the trick barber's chair and trapdoor, plus the huge oven for baking Mrs Lovett's "best pies in London" and disposing of surplus "cuts" were effective, although at times appeared a little clunky and awkward to move. The lighting plot also was clever, creating light and shade on what, at times, was a large empty stage. There were some technical hitches on the opening night, when Mrs Lovett appeared to lose her mike and some of the solo lines in the chorus were lost. However, CAODS are to be applauded for acquitting themselves well after tackling a show which few amateur societies would dare to go near.

Reviewer – Stewart Adkins

Posted 11th March 2007 by [Stewart Adkins](#)