



November 2022

Dear Student/Parent,

It is that time of year again. We are in the beginning stages of Highlands High School's spring musical, *Sweeney Todd*. This musical will take place March 23<sup>rd</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

*Sweeney Todd* has become a bloody, worldwide success since being awarded eight Tony's, (including Best Musical), for its Broadway premiere. Stephen Sondheim's and Hugh Wheeler's tasty, thrilling, theatrical treat has simultaneously shocked, awed, and delighted audiences across the world.

An infamous tale, Sweeney Todd, an unjustly exiled barber, returns to nineteenth century London, seeking vengeance against the lecherous judge who framed him and ravaged his young wife. The road to revenge leads Todd to Mrs. Lovett, a resourceful proprietress of a failing pie shop, above which, he opens a new barber practice. Mrs. Lovett's luck sharply shifts when Todd's thirst for blood inspires the integration of an ingredient into her meat pies that has the people of London lining up... and the carnage has only just begun!

We will hold vocal/acting. The times for these auditions will be:

- **Monday, December 5<sup>th</sup> from 3:30 PM to 5:30 PM in the Black Box**
- **Tuesday, December 6<sup>th</sup> from 3:30 PM to 5:30 PM in the Black Box**
- **Callbacks will be Friday, December 9<sup>th</sup> from 3 PM to 6:00 PM in the Black Box**

**CAST LIST WILL BE POSTED BY SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18th BY 9PM**

We will hold dance auditions as well. Everyone must attend the dance audition on the same day that they are doing their vocal/acting audition. The times for these auditions will be:

- **Monday, December 5<sup>th</sup> from 3 PM to 3:30 PM in the Black Box**
- **Tuesday, December 6<sup>th</sup> from 3 PM to 3:30 PM in the Black Box**

We are going to interview for stage crew positions in the show. The reason for this is so that we know exactly what it is that you want to do and why. Times for stage crew interviews will be:

- **Wednesday, January 4<sup>th</sup> from 3:30 PM to 6 PM**

If you are interested in being the Production Stage Manager or the Student Technical Director, I will be interviewing these students separately in order to assist with auditions, crew interviews and callbacks.

- **Tuesday, January 3<sup>rd</sup> during FlexTime and from 2:50 PM to 3:30 PM**

This is just for the Production Stage Manager and Student Technical Director positions. The selection of these positions will be announced by 7pm on Tuesday, January 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**CREW LIST WILL BE POSTED BY SATURDAY, JANUARY 7<sup>th</sup> BY 5PM**

**For auditioning:**

Please only attend one of the auditions dates and you must select a time slot online and fill out a form. The audition form can be found at: <https://forms.gle/bD584uYYMWYAusjW7>

In order to audition, you must select a time slot from the available slots posted outside Mr. Burgess's room (the Humanities Room located behind the Black Box on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor). The dance audition will be taught at the beginning of the audition day and anyone auditioning on that day must be present for the dance portion and then may leave after they have auditioned. So, this means that everyone auditioning on Monday needs to be ready to learn the dance at 3:00 then individual auditions will begin at 3:30. The same will go for Tuesday as well. The dance audition will be taught in the Black Box.

The sign-up sheet will be posted outside of Mr. Burgess's room starting on Monday, November 21<sup>st</sup> before school.

**For interviewing for crew:**

To interview, you must select a time slot from the available slots posted outside Mr. Burgess's room (the Humanities Room located behind the Black Box on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor). Please fill out the crew interview form as well. The form can be found here: <https://forms.gle/ay7VQJ47ummt3CGL9>

The sign-up sheet will be posted outside of Mr. Burgess's room starting on Thursday, December 1<sup>st</sup> before school.

The rehearsal and workday schedule will be finalized once the cast and crew have been chosen. Rehearsals will typically be held after school or in the evening but there might be the occasion because of schedule conflicts and other events that some rehearsals will be held at other times such as Saturday morning/early afternoons or Sunday late afternoon/evenings. This will be determined by the conflicts listed by the students.

**The first rehearsal for *Sweeney Todd* has been decided though and it will be Tuesday, January 17<sup>th</sup> from 3pm to 6pm in the Performing Arts Center.**

**The *Sweeney Todd* Parent Meeting will take place Monday, February 6<sup>th</sup> at 7pm in the Performing Arts Center. At this meeting, Mr. Burgess will go over all vital information with parents and answer any questions.**

We understand that participating in this musical and/or a play requires a commitment. Please consider all extra-curricular activities and work schedules when thinking about joining the musical and/or play. Make sure that this is an activity you can commit to before auditions. Students will

have two (2) unexcused absences and any more after that and students will not be allowed to continue in this program. Also note that mandatory rehearsals will occur the week before the show opens and the production week of the show. Also, if a student's conflicts become too much that they are missing too many rehearsals and causing musical numbers and scenes to be troublesome, disorganized and substandard, the production team reserves the right to pull that student from such musical numbers and scenes.

Audition:

- 1 vocal solo (16 to 32 measures) – bring sheet music. (Music from a Broadway show)
- 1 short dramatic monologue (45 to 60 seconds - memorized). These are available from libraries or online.
- Dance segment, which will be taught by the choreographer (Amy Burgess) at the auditions

**Please fill out the application along with a recent photo of you and bring to the audition. You do not need a photo if you are interviewing for crew.**

**The audition form can be found at:**

**<https://forms.gle/bD584uYYMWYAusjW7>**

**The crew form can be found at:**

**<https://forms.gle/ay7VQJ47ummt3CGL9>**

Thanks!

Mr. Burgess, Ms. Bae and Amy

## AUDITIONING TIPS.

- Do NOT prepare a five-minute monologue. Prepare a 45 to 60 second monologue.
- Prepare yourself for the audition at least a week before the audition by practicing and memorizing your monologue. The more you prepare yourself, the more confident you will feel. Select your music with care.
- When selecting music for an audition, choose pieces that you can perform well and expressively. Try to select pieces that complement each other through your contrasting styles, challenging technical passages, as well as exhibiting tone color and musical markings. Do not sing anything that is not in your range. If you can't sing it, don't use it as an audition piece. If you want Mr. Young's help, you need to see him and discuss it. Mrs. Rowland also has a lot of musical books and music.
- Do not sing songs from the show. Do not sing songs from last year's show or any show you have been in here at Highlands.
- Know the Play - familiarize yourself with the play in general. Knowing the play only increases your chances of making the show because it shows the production staff that you care and are prepared. Read the play in advance, if you can, and see what parts you want to audition for. If you want a copy of the music, bring me a blank cd and I will copy it for you.
- Try to avoid well know speeches, monologues, and songs.
- Make strong choices in your acting and singing. Show us something that will wow us!
- Bring your sheet music to audition.
- Bring a recent photo with you to the audition as well.
- Dress appropriately for the audition. Show you're serious about the play. I'm not saying tuxedos and evening gowns, don't go there, but something nice enough. If you show up in dirty jeans and a ratty t-shirt, the directors might get the idea that you're not serious about the part and maybe won't take you seriously. Also remember that you will be dancing so think comfortable as well.
- Make sure you have a schedule of days you're busy ready so you know when you have to write it down. If you have an acting resume or something like that, bring that too.
- Warm up before you perform. Make sure you have at least half an hour to an hour before your performance to achieve the tone you want. Warming up makes an incredible difference to your sound.
- Check excuses at the door. Time to be an adult. The dog ate my homework didn't work in school, and no variation of that excuse is going to work at a job interview. Roll with the punches, and do what you can. Don't start blaming anything or anyone. It just looks pathetic, and makes you look incompetent. Pity won't get you the job.
- NEVER show up late. If you show up late for an audition, brace yourself for disappointment.
- Be nice to everyone, not just to the people you are actually auditioning for.
- Do say your name and the name of your song and/or monologue before you begin. Refrain from giving too much information. You need not explain the piece, the play or who you are talking to.
- Do NOT chew gum.

# *Plot Synopsis for Sweeney Todd*

The story opens with the wide-eyed young sailor Anthony Hope singing about how happy he is to be back in London. A disgruntled Benjamin Barker enters, scoffing at Anthony's optimism and telling him that life is unfair and someday he will learn how cruel reality is.

Anthony and Barker go their separate ways, and Barker heads to his old apartment, which is now owned by Mrs. Lovett; an absent-minded baker who has turned the first floor into a pie shop and restaurant. He introduces himself with the alias Sweeney Todd. Suspecting Todd is Benjamin Barker, Mrs. Lovett tells him that his wife Lucy was sexually assaulted by Judge Turpin, who had him sent to prison on a false charge, and that Turpin now has custody of his sixteen-year-old daughter Johanna. Barker (now Todd) asks what happened to Lucy, and Mrs. Lovett reveals that she committed suicide via poison. Mrs. Lovett leads Todd upstairs and reveals that she's kept his set of straight razors for fifteen years.

Later, Todd and Lovett meet rival barber Adolfo Pirelli in a town square. Todd challenges him to a shaving competition, betting on his razors, which he shows Pirelli. Todd wins not only five pounds from Pirelli, but the admiration of Beadle Bamford, Turpin's corrupt henchman. The Beadle is impressed and promises he will recommend Todd's barbershop to Turpin.

Meanwhile, Anthony comes across Johanna. Turpin keeps her locked in her room, where he spies on her through a hole in her bedroom wall. Anthony sees her singing to caged birds in her bedroom window. He vows to rescue her, but before he can do anything, he is confronted by the Beadle, who threaten him and tell him to stay away from Johanna.

Todd returns to the barbershop, only to be confronted by Pirelli and his young assistant Toby. Lovett keeps Toby downstairs and gives him a pie, while Pirelli goes upstairs to talk to Todd. Pirelli reveals that he knew Todd back in the day and recognized his razors. He attempts to extort Todd, threatening to rat him out to Turpin if he doesn't pay him half of his salary. In a panic, Todd strangles Pirelli to death and hides the body in a trunk just as Toby comes upstairs. Todd plies Toby with gin to get him to go back downstairs, as Judge Turpin walks in. He shaves Turpin, and, right as he's about to kill him, Anthony interrupts, revealing that he has met Johanna and plans to run away with her. In a rage, Turpin storms out, vowing to never visit Todd's establishment again. Todd yells at Antony to leave and has the revelation that everyone deserves to die and vows to kill all his customers as "practice" before he finally gets to Turpin, vowing revenge not just on Turpin, but the ruling class as a whole.

He and Lovett then discuss what to do with the body. Lovett suggests making the meat into pies, to sell to the unsuspecting public. Lovett re-opens her business to uproarious success.

Later, Antony informs Todd that Turpin has sent Johanna away to an asylum until she agrees to marry him. They concoct a plan to rescue her, and Todd writes a letter to Turpin pretending that he has Johanna and that if Turpin visits his barbershop, he'll give her to him. Meanwhile, Toby catches onto the murder/cannibalism operation and Lovett locks him in the basement. Todd goes upstairs, only to find the Beggar Woman looking at his family photos. She looks at him and starts to remark that she recognizes him. Before she can finish, Turpin stairs to climb the stairs. Todd kills the Beggar Woman in a panic and sends her down the trapdoor.

Turpin enters and asks where Johanna is. Todd reveals his identity and kills Turpin.

Todd goes downstairs, where Mrs. Lovett is hurriedly trying to dispose of the Beggar Woman's body in the oven. Todd goes to help her, and she tries to stop him, as he realizes that the Beggar Woman is Lucy. Lovett reveals that she lied because she loved him. Todd pushes her into the oven and closes the door, leaving her to burn to death.

He kneels beside Lucy's body and sings to her as Toby comes out of hiding and picks up Todd's straight razor that he left on the floor. Todd makes no attempt to resist as Toby slits his throat. He bleeds to death holding his wife.

# Character descriptions of *Sweeney Todd*

Below you will find a basic description of all characters appearing in *Sweeney Todd*. Each person cast in the show will earn International Thespian System (ITS) Points. Points will be in italics.

**Anthony Hope:** Male. Any ethnicity. Anthony is a handsome, young sailor, befriended by Todd whom he has rescued during the voyage home. Trusting, optimistic, and romantic he is prepared to fight for his beliefs. However, he is somewhat innocent of the darker side of society and isn't wise to the ulterior motives of others who try to use him for their own needs. *ITS-6*

**Sweeney Todd:** Male. Any ethnicity. A happy family man sent away on a false charge; he returns a murderous barber. He finds vengeance in his razors by systematically slitting the throats of all his enemies. He is consumed by his thirst for blood. *ITS-8*

**Beggar Woman:** Female. Any ethnicity. A mad crone with a filthy tongue whose cries go unheeded. She is comic, tragic, and repulsive. Her insanity is broken only by flashes of insight and unease about the illegal activity playing out behind closed doors. *ITS-6*

**Mrs. Nellie Lovett:** Female. Any ethnicity. Worn-down owner of a pie shop on Fleet Street. Hard-edged but with a savvy sense of humor. Lovett aides Sweeney in his massacre by making meat pies out of his victims. *ITS-8*

**Judge Turpin:** Male. Any ethnicity. Contemporary of Sweeney's and the man responsible for his downfall. Pompous, self-centered, and powerful. He plans to wed his charge, Johanna. *ITS-6*

**Beadle Bamford:** Male preferred. Any ethnicity. Sleazy, menacing henchman of the Judge. He can be subtly terrifying or outright threatening yet equally fastidious and fussy. *ITS-6*

**Johanna:** Female. Any ethnicity. Johanna is Sweeney Todd's daughter, who was stolen from the barber many years ago by Judge Turpin who has taken her in as his ward. Up in her room, Johanna is locked away from the world. She has no idea about her real father, but still dreams of freedom outside. *ITS-6*

**Tobias Ragg:** Male preferred. Any ethnicity. Young and vulnerable. Assistant to Pirelli, he is an abused orphan. He comes to view Mrs. Lovett as a surrogate mother figure. *ITS-6*

**Pirelli:** Male preferred. Any ethnicity. A flamboyant, outrageous, faux-Italian barber and con man. Really a young Irish man by the name of Daniel O'Higgins, he pretends to be Italian (accent and all) in order to substantiate his false claim that he is the official barber of the King of Naples. In this way, he manages to convince the people of London that he is a stylish and expert haircutter and toothpuller, and returns every Thursday to grace them with his presence. *ITS-4*

**Jonas Fogg** (Speaking role only but will be required to sing in the ensemble) The owner of Fogg's Asylum. They sell the hair of inmates to wigmakers. Can present as any gender. *ITS-4*

Ensemble Townspeople; Police; Lunatics. This show relies on an ensemble of strong singers. *ITS-3*

# ***Crew Descriptions for Sweeney Todd***

Below you will find descriptions of all crew in *Sweeney Todd*. Following the description of each crew position, International Thespian System (ITS) Points will be in italics.

**Stage Manager (SM)** - is a key position in any successful theater production. The SM, stage manager, will be the key assistant to the director; however, the SM also serves as an assistant to the designers, technical director, costume shop supervisor, director of theater, conductor, and all other staff positions. Daily contact must be maintained with the entire production staff in order to communicate all of the various bits of information pertaining to the production. The SM will be responsible for the creation and distribution of the Daily Rehearsal Report and the Performance Log. The report serves as a two-way communication between all members of the production staff. The SM should email the report in order to ensure that everyone receives the information.

A primary duty of the SM is the creation of the Prompt Script. The SM will prepare a prompt script that will eventually contain all blocking notations, plus cues for lights, sound, shift, orchestra, and whatever is necessary for the production. This “bible” must be created with care so that anyone would be able to assume the position of SM and call a successful performance.

The SM will maintain a Production Book that will contain all information necessary for the production: Company Roster, production and rehearsal calendars, prop list, Daily Rehearsal Reports, Performance Logs .... any and everything pertaining to the production. This production book must be brought to every production meeting. When rehearsals move into technical rehearsals, the SM will run the rehearsals. The SM will maintain the show throughout the run of the show, as rehearsed. *ITS-8*

**Assistant Stage Manager(s) – 2 ASMs** – will assist the stage manager in all of the duties above. *ITS-6*

**Assistant Director** – is an extension of the director. The assistant acts as liaison to the performers, coaching those who need extra time while the director focuses on the big picture. During tech rehearsals, the assistant is onstage attending to the details while the director sits in the house conferring with the other members of the production team. *ITS-6*

**Assistant Music Director** – is an extension of the music director. The assistant acts as liaison to the performers, coaching those who need extra time while the music director focuses on the big picture. During tech rehearsals, the assistant is onstage attending to the details while the music director sits in the house conferring with the director and the designer. *ITS-6*

**Student Technical Director** – is an extension of the technical director. The assistant acts as liaison to the crews, helping those who need extra time while the technical director focuses on the big picture. During tech rehearsals, the assistant is potentially backstage attending to the details while the technical director sits in the house conferring with the other members of the production team. *ITS-6*

**Props Master** - supervises properties, also known as props. Props are various objects that are used by actors and actresses during their scenes. He or she usually makes a list of these objects, and meets with the director, costume designer, set designer, and lighting designer to discuss the

vision for the finished piece to ensure that suitable props are picked out. Armed with this list, the props master scours for props. The props master leads the props crew. *ITS-5*

**Props Crew** - is responsible for the upkeep, repair, cleaning, and running of all props during the run of a particular production. *ITS-3*

**Set Decorator/Scenic Painter** - The set decorator is responsible for converting the blank canvas of the set into a space that feels authentic, lived-in, and believable. This artist deals in the details, the small touches that reveal to the audience something about the person or people who occupy the locations of films and television shows. *ITS-5*

**Set Decoration/Scenic Painting Crew** – This crew helps the set decorator(s)/scenic painter(s) convert the blank canvas of the set into a space that feels authentic, lived-in, and believable. These artists deal in the details, the small touches that reveal to the audience something about the person or people who occupy the locations of films and television shows. *ITS-3*

**Make-up Designer/Leader** – is an artist whose medium is the human body, applying makeup and prosthetics. Stage makeup is used as a method in conjunction with stage lighting to highlight the actors' faces in order make expressions visible to the audience from moderate distances. This often includes defining the eyes and lips as well as the highlights and lowlights of the facial bones. *ITS-5*

**Costume Designer/Leader** - is a person whose responsibility is to design costumes. The costume designer might also collaborate with a hair/wig master or a makeup designer. Costume designers will typically seek to enhance a character's personality, and/or to create an evolving plot of color, changing social status or period through the visual design of garments and other means of dressing, distorting and enhancing the body - within the framework of the director's vision. The designer needs to possess strong artistic capabilities as well as a thorough knowledge of pattern development. *ITS-5*

**Wardrobe/Hair/Make-up Crew** - is responsible for the upkeep, repair, cleaning, and running of all costumes during the run of a particular production. Wardrobe Crew members are on the Run Crew and may also be assigned to assist with quick changes or other backstage duties. *ITS-3*

**Light Designer** – is responsible for implementing a light design for the production. They learn light concepts, hang and focus lights. Decide on colors of lights and set light cues. *ITS-5*

**Light Board Operator** - is responsible for helping set lighting cues and assisting the Lighting Designer during Hang and Focus and for implementing the Light Design during the run of the show. The Light Board Operator is responsible for maintaining any paperwork including Light Cue List for the show. *ITS-3*

**Sound Designer** – is responsible for implementing a sound design for the production. They learn sound concepts, fix and troubleshoot mic issues, find and make sound effects and cues. *ITS-5*

**Sound Board Operator(s) – 2 Sound Board Ops** - is responsible for implementing the Sound Design and maintaining all sound equipment for the show. The Sound Board Operator is responsible for maintaining any paperwork including Sound Cue Sheets for the show. The Sound Board Operator performs a sound check prior to each Technical and Dress Rehearsal, and each performance. The Sound Board Operator is responsible for safely storing all tapes, master tape, minidisks, and/or CDs after each rehearsal and performance. *ITS-3*

**Publicity Head/House Manager(s) – 2 HMs** – directs and coordinates the entire house staff for each performance. They coordinate, assign and supervise the work of the house staff; resolve problems such as complaints regarding heating or ventilation, seat location, the seating of infirmed or incapacitated persons, provide training to employees of the house staff. Also directs and coordinates the publicity of the show. How we market the show, what the film trailer looks like, how we get the community interested and involved with the production. This also includes getting photography (or organizing getting photography) of rehearsals, tech work days, performances, etc. *ITS-5 ITS-5*

**House Crew/Publicity Crew/Cappies Crew/Ushers** – assist the house managers in all aspects. Help wherever needed. Pass out programs, help with concessions, create candygrams, etc. *ITS-3*