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A CONDUCTOR'S GUIDE TO SWEENEY TODD IN A COMMUNITY THEATER SETTING

BY

CHERYL FOREST MORGANSON

SCHOLARLY ESSAY

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in Music
with a concentration in Vocal Coaching and Accompanying
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, 2024

Urbana, Illinois

Doctoral Committee:

Professor Julie Gunn, Chair
Associate Professor Bridget Sweet, Research Adviser
Professor Gayle Magee
Associate Professor Yvonne Redman
Clinical Assistant Professor Michael Tilley

ABSTRACT

Sweeney Todd: the Demon Barber of Fleet Street is an important part of the standard American musical theater canon. Created by Stephen Sondheim and Hugh Wheeler in 1979, this “musical thriller” tells the story of a barber driven mad by vengeance, a baker who loves the barber, and the least-appetizing meat pies in all of London. *Sweeney Todd* is performed throughout the world in settings ranging from professional theaters to community settings.

Despite being widely performed, the *Sweeney Todd* score is neither straightforward nor simple. The vocal demands on the cast are substantial, and the orchestra’s members must be skilled and well-practiced. While the dancing is not generally onerous, the acting skills required are far from trivial. The unevenness of musical experience present in the pool of community theater participants might present some issues with *Sweeney Todd* that would not show up in a less complicated show, and that will likely not be encountered should this production be produced professionally.

I was the Music Director of Parkland College’s *Sweeney Todd* spring 2023 production. While this production is officially sponsored by Parkland, the cast, crew, and pit are drawn not exclusively from the college population, but instead, from the community at large. The following document details my discoveries throughout the production process, particularly in terms of problems I encountered and the solutions I created. It is presented with the hope of assisting future community theater conductors of this wonderful show.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I am incredibly grateful to my research director, Prof. Bridget Sweet, my committee chair, Prof. Julie Gunn, and the rest of my committee: Prof. Gayle Magee, Prof. Yvonne Reedman, and Prof. Michael Tilley. I'd like to also thank Prof. Casey Robards and Prof. (ret.) Dennis Helmich here at UIUC, Prof. Brian Moll of the Longy School of Music and Mrs. Harriet Prevatt, my long-term childhood piano teacher.

I could not have done this project without the support of the Parkland College Theatre Department, starting with the Theatre Department Director, Prof. Brian Morgan. I'd also like to thank Kristin Kelleher (Assistant Technical Director), HeatherAnn Layman (Operations Assistant), Sheri Doyle (Costume Shop Manager), Betsi Freeman (Production Assistant), Michael Atherton (Front of House Manager), Cindy Smith (Marketing and Promotions), Vivian Brown (Graphic Designer), Max Prevatt (Stage Hand), and Richard Ross (Stage Hand).

The *Sweeney Todd* production team was second to none, and included Jeff Dare (Director), Elisandra Rosario (Choreographer), Molly Ilten-Fullan (Scenic Designer), Rob Perry (Lighting Designer), Thom Schnarre (Costume Designer), Michael Miller (Sound Designer), Cindy Adamek (Properties), Danny Yoerges (Dialect Coach), Yen Vi Green (Stage Manager), Michael Steen (Wigs / Hair and Make-up), Rachel Gladd (Dance Captain) and Jon Faw (Fight Captain).

The best cast to ever grace Fleet Street included: Matt Hester, Nicole Morgan, Jacob Deters, Tina Radi, Alex Murphy, Michael Steen, Bryan Goode, Caitlin Richardson, Adrian Rochelle, Braedon Arnett, Kari Croop, Mary K. Ellison, Jon Faw, Rachel Gladd, Izzy Gonzalez, Serena Hamilton, Spencer Hazen, John W. Hurney, Kiah Johnson, Jay Kaboff, Erin Kaufman,

Craig Krukewitt, Jenny Lamberson, Hannah Li, Mia-belle Shannon, and Kaila Simpson, as well as Tania Arazi Coombs. Sam Gegg, Aaron Godwin, Excellence Ona and Kimmy Schofield.

The most generous and gracious pit orchestra ever assembled included: Laura Bauer, Don Colby, Rhiannon Cospers, Jacob Deters, Kat Downs, Jon Faw, Yulu Fu, Sandy Ivy, Jenny Marie Johnson, Kevin Kierpse, Jenny Lamberson, Brian Lauthen, Tania Madrigal, Jerry Min, Elaina Nelson, Stacey Peterik, Amy Reid, Verlin Richardson, Chrissy Sparks, and Matt Woods.

No show of this size can happen without a high-caliber technical crew, and for *Sweeney Todd*, that crew included: Jacob Alfonso, Spencer Baker, Eli Barton, Kaylen Creek, Eli Davis, Jon Faw, Macey Hamm, Reid Harvey, Lexi Heyungs, Kiah Johnson, Jenny Lamberson, Lucas Madera, Izzy Mangren, Tanner Moore, Carolyn Morgan, Max Prevatt, Li Reichlin, Adrian Rochelle, Richard Ross, Mia-belle Shannon, Rachel Tison, and Alison Wiltgen,

Finally, I must thank my family. My parents, Patricia and Jonathan Forest, provided me with a wealth of musical exposure and opportunity as a child. My sister, Liz (Forest) Andersen, graciously put up with a childhood full of the sounds of a pianist in training. My beloved husband and partner Eric Morganson has been a source of unflagging support across 5 cities and 2 continents. My daughter Clara Lucille is the best kid ever, and someday, she will hopefully understand why five year olds are not allowed to see *Sweeney Todd*.

Thank you all so much for getting me to this moment!

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Guide to this Document

This document is a thorough accounting of the discoveries I made as Parkland College's "Sweeney Todd" production unfolded, from background preparation on through closing night. Any conductor who takes this work on is obviously going to be an accomplished musician, and thus, the entirety of this document will likely not be applicable to every Sweeney conductor. My hope is that it can be used as a musical guidebook, with each conductor picking and choosing what parts of this document they specifically need.

Chapters 2 addresses both foundational and preparatory issues associated with this show.

- Leadership of Volunteers and Official (page 5)
- Recommended Scores (page 5)
- The Audition Process (page 6)
- Cast Considerations: Creating a Shared Base of Knowledge (page 8)
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- Orchestra Considerations: Staffing (page 10)
- Orchestra Considerations: Miscellaneous (page 14)

Chapters 3 and 4 discuss Acts 1 and 2, respectively. Each song's issues are addressed, and are broken down into four categories: accompanying considerations, cast considerations, orchestra / conducting considerations, and collaborative considerations. The last category largely deals with issues that appear late in the production as acting, movement, and technical elements are introduced.

Stephen Sondheim and *Sweeney Todd*

“Sweeney Todd is a play about obsession, and when a person is totally obsessed, everything else becomes irrelevant. In this sense, Sweeney is detached: the only interest from which he is not detached is his obsession: his revenge.”¹

Sondheim saw Christopher Bond’s play in 1973, and suspected that the story might be interesting if adapted into a lyric theater setting. While Sondheim ultimately labeled his 1979 work a “musical thriller,” *Sweeney Todd* has been referred to as an opera, an operetta, and a musical by others. Sondheim himself intended it to be “something between a musical and a ballad opera, like *Carmen*, only with less *recitative*, if any.”² What he wound up with, in his own words, was a “movie for the stage.”³ Sondheim viewed “obsession” as the natural metaphor for this story, but Harold Prince, his longtime producer and *Sweeney*’s director, instead viewed the story as a metaphor for the rage and loss of human dignity caused by the Industrial Revolution.⁴

Constructed in two acts and set in mid-19th century London, *Sweeney Todd* is a story of a wronged man who seeks revenge and is ultimately consumed by that pursuit. The main character’s real name is Benjamin Barker. He’s a barber of some skill, and he has a beautiful wife (Lucy) and a young daughter (Johanna). The corrupt Judge Turpin lusts after Lucy Barker, and unjustly sends Benjamin Barker away to a penal colony in Australia. Once that has happened, Judge Turpin assaults Lucy Barker, and she eventually winds up on the street from the trauma. Johanna Barker is taken in as Judge Turpin’s ward.

¹Robert L. McLaughlin, *Stephen Sondheim and the Reinvention of the American Musical*, (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2016), 119.

²Stephen Sondheim, *Finishing the hat: collected lyrics (1954-1981) with attendant comments, principles, heresies, grudges, whines and anecdotes*, (New York: Knopf, 2010), 332.

³ *Ibid.*, 332.

⁴ Arthur Bartow, *The director’s voice: Interviews with theatre directors*, (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1988), 243 and 247.

The show begins 16 years after those horrific events. Benjamin Barker has escaped from Australia and is known by the alias “Sweeney Todd.” He returns to London to seek out his wife and daughter, as well as to hurt those who have taken so much from him. He encounters his old landlord, Mrs. Lovett, who runs an unsuccessful pie shop. Through a series of events that are only believable in a theatrical setting, the two decide to combine Todd’s penchant for throat-slashing with Mrs. Lovett’s need for pie meat. The show ends with uncertainty and loss, as well as with a death count more often encountered in a horror film than on stage. “To seek revenge may lead to hell / But everyone does it, if seldom as well”⁵ is presented as both truth and accusation at the end of the show. Far from being the stereotypically tidy musical ending, the audience is left wondering, “what depths would I descend to if everything I lived for was taken away?” Sondheim was quite clear in his goals for this work.

I wanted to scare an audience out of its wits but not by suddenly opening doors in the dark, which can always terrify audiences and produce little shrieks of surprise, but that is not the kind of scare I am referring to. The true terror of melodrama comes from its revelations about the frightening power of what is inside human beings.⁶

While *Sweeney Todd*’s initial Broadway run did not fully recoup its cost, it did win eight Tony awards that year.⁷ It has been steadily produced around the world in the years since, and has been the source of substantial scholarly attention.

A *Sweeney Todd: School Edition* exists. While this document was prepared using the original show’s materials, personal communications have indicated that the differences between

⁵ Stephen Sondheim, *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Corp, 1978), 374.

⁶ Stephen Sondheim, *Melodrama*, ed. Jeanine Parisier Plottel and Daniel C. Gerould (New York, NY: New York Literary Forum, 1980), 6.

⁷ The Tony Awards, “Winners / 1979.” Accessed November 16, 2022.
<https://www.tonyawards.com/winners/year/1979/category/any/show/any/>

the original show and the school edition are dwarfed by their similarities. Given that, I hope that conductors who are preparing the school version will still find this document applicable.

Parkland College's spring 2023 production

Parkland College is a community college located in Champaign, Illinois. The Theatre department puts on a full season of shows every academic year, and generally finishes the season with a musical. The students within the Theatre program are intimately involved with the technical aspects of the show, and the actors and orchestra members come from both the student population and the community.

The Spring 2023 production of *Sweeney Todd* started with production meetings and auditions in the winter of 2022. I began *repetiteur* work with the leads in early February 2023, and rehearsals with the full cast began in the middle of February. The rehearsal process ran for seven weeks, which included a week off for Parkland's spring break. Cast rehearsals were held on the Parkland campus four nights a week for three hours each time. Three orchestral rehearsals were held ahead of sitzprobe, which occurred the Sunday of technical ("tech") week. Ultimately, the cast included 26 actors. The pit orchestra included 17 instrumentalists and was supplemented by three members of the ensemble when those actors were offstage. Nine performances over three weekends were originally scheduled, though unfortunately, one was canceled due to a power outage at the theater.

-

CHAPTER 2: GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Leadership of Volunteers

Volunteers are generally the lifeblood of any community organization, but particularly of community theater companies. As a conductor in this setting, I have a dual obligation to both the score and to the volunteers that are placed in my care. If a conductor has never critically examined their own leadership style with this cohort, I highly recommend Jo B. Rusin's book, *Volunteers Wanted*, as an introduction to good practices.⁸ I would also always recommend the U.S. Army's Field Manual 6-22, which is a deeper dive into bedrock leadership principles. Obviously, the intended audience of that document is U.S. Army personnel, but information like "Table 2-1: Elements and questions to assess an organization" are applicable to any organization.⁹

My personal code of conduct can be summed up by the following.

- As a leader, I'm in service to the volunteers.
- I aim to steadily eliminate uncertainty ahead of a public performance.
- I intend to use volunteers' time wisely.
- I praise in public, and criticize in private....the latter, only if absolutely necessary.
- If I am talking, the people in my rehearsal are not actively rehearsing.
- I will use every tool available to foster confidence ahead of a public performance.

Official and recommended supplementary scores

This document is written with the assumption that the reader has or will soon have access to the official *Sweeney Todd* rental scores, currently provided by Music Theatre International

⁸ Jo B. Rusin, *Volunteers Wanted: A Practical Guide to Finding and Keeping Good Volunteers*, (Mobile, AL: Magnolia Mansions Press, 1999).

⁹ Department of the Army, *Developing Leaders*, FM 6-22, (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, November 2022), Table 2-1, https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/ARN36735-FM_6-22-000-WEB-1.pdf.

(MTI). One only receives these scores from MTI after a rental agreement has been signed and a performance license issued. Any reference within this document to a “full score,” “P/C score,” “orchestral book / part,” or “libretto” must be understood to refer explicitly to those materials.

While the MTI-provided materials should be sufficient alone to produce *Sweeney Todd*, the materials’ creators have made some confounding editorial choices. Each *Sweeney Todd* conductor should have access to the Hal Leonard version of the show score for rehearsal use if at all possible. In addition to being a far more gracious rendering of the music for a rehearsal pianist than the MTI-provided P/C score, Hal Leonard score includes all dialogue, which is especially useful in the moments with musical underscoring. Otherwise, if using just the MTI rented scores, one would need to have the MTI libretto propped open on the piano keyboard alongside the P/C score, and that arrangement is needlessly awkward.

The Audition Process

A full discussion of the audition process is beyond the scope of this document and would likely be of limited utility here as audition protocols vary widely from company to company. However, a brief discussion of our callback audition material is warranted, as I discovered something during the audition process that I had not anticipated.

We asked for music “in the style of *Sweeney Todd*” for the initial audition, and auditioned a large number of treble-voiced actors who hoped to earn the role of Mrs. Lovett. The Lovett-focused initial auditions generally showcased the actor’s ability to belt, as well as to deliver strong character voice choices. Once Lovett was cast, we were left with a group of actors whose initial audition did not provide sufficient information to immediately place those actors in an ensemble role, as *Sweeney Todd* ensemble roles require a legit-informed vocal technique, impeccable tuning, and the ability to blend.

For any treble-voiced actors who we wanted to hear again, I taught a brief excerpt of the tenor part of “#1 - Prologue,” beginning in measure 122 and going through to measure 135. The tessitura is entirely appropriate for an alto, which most of these people were. After a brief teaching time, I then asked each to sing it alone. This excerpt quickly separated the group into people who could hold their part and those who might be better placed in a different show.

The callback music used for each named character is listed in Table 1. These selections quickly gave the casting team information about each actor’s musicianship and acting ability, as well as allowed for chemistry readings between various pairs of actors.

Table 1: Suggested *Sweeney Todd* callback music.

Sweeney Todd	“#5 - My Friends,” measures (mm.) 49-79. No Lovett lines, and ask for the scene to be acted through to the spoken line.
Lovett	#18 - A Little Priest,” dialogue from “Well, of course, we could do that” and then sung through to mm. 26.
Sweeney Todd and Lovett	#18 - A Little Priest,” mm. 61-81.
Judge	#11 - Johanna (Judge),” mm. 92-105.
Beggar Woman	#20 - Johanna Act II,” mm. 130-136.
Beggar Woman and Anthony	#7 - Ah, Miss,” mm. 41-70, both music and scene.
Tobias (Toby)	#23 - Not While I’m Around,” mm. 43-63.
Johanna and Anthony	#15 - Kiss Me (Pt. II),” mm. 16-29.
Beadle	#14 - Ladies In Their Sensitivities,” mm. 30-53.
Pirelli	#10 - The Contest (Pt. I),” mm. 61-77, to include the final reaction to Beadle’s line.

The callback sides used for our production are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Suggested *Sweeney Todd* callback sides.

Judge and Beadle	Script page 57.
Sweeney Todd and Lovett	Spoken parts of the script pages 48-29 (about the chair) and 107-108 (between Song #20b and Song #21).
Pirelli and Sweeney Todd	Script pages 52-54. From “ <i>Good morning, Mr. Todd</i> ” to “ <i>...do I run down the street for me pal Beadle Bamford?</i> ”
Anthony and Beggar Woman	Script pages 21-22. From “ <i>Alms, alms</i> ” through to “ <i>...Take it and off with you. Off!</i> ” All music rendered in monologue form.

Cast Considerations: Creating a Shared Base of Knowledge

No ensemble of disparate community theater actors will walk into a first rehearsal with a uniform skill set or with a shared understanding of choral and vocal technique terminology. To offset that and to streamline the rehearsal process, I began every new musical with a mini-lecture either in person, or I request that they view a recorded mini-lecture. The basic information that I have decided warrants mention during this time is in outline form in Appendix A. The information can be broadly categorized into four categories: 1) Vocal Health and Hygiene, 2) the Vocal Mechanism, 3) My Singing Strategies and 4) My Rehearsal Process. I have found that 30 minutes spent at the top of a production on these four items has resulted in a much smoother process for all involved in the show during the entirety of our time together. Leading with vocal health material allows me to explicitly state that in times of apparent conflict between apparent obligations to the production and their health, a cast member’s health must come first.

Cast Considerations: The Invisible Conductor

Nothing takes me out of the world of a musical or opera like seeing a singing actor check in with the conductor. It is sometimes necessary, but often, those moments could have been eliminated - keeping the actor engaged in the onstage action - had attention to this issue been paid during the rehearsal process. When moments requiring a visual check-in are necessary, the director and conductor should work together to provide the singing actors with motivation to look at the conductor, or at least to find a way to camouflage that action. In terms of the entire ensemble, community theater casts are often drilled on musical phrase entrances, but the cut-offs are generally not given the same care. Precise cut-offs can make the difference between a cast that sounds well-rehearsed and one that sounds more haphazard.

Cast Considerations: Dialects

Sweeney Todd is canonically a period piece set in London. While people from all over the world make a home there, *Sweeney* company members speak and sing somewhere on the spectrum between a received pronunciation (R.P.) accent and a cockney accent, depending on the social class of the character. The obvious exception is Pirelli, as that actor must be able to speak with a comical Italian accent followed by a believable Irish accent.

Diction / dialect training should happen prior to or in combination with the first company music rehearsal. Music rehearsals involve training the muscles of the articulators, and it is far better to have the target sound clearly in mind from the start than to introduce the dialect midway through the process. My production's dialect coach was Danny Yeorges. He produced written production-specific materials for the show as well as coached all of the actors. Any *Sweeney Todd* production that lacks a dialect coach is encouraged to reach out to him.¹⁰ Additionally, a

¹⁰ <https://www.dannyoerges.com/contact>

wonderful online resource, the International Dialects of English Archive, can be found at <https://www.dialectsarchive.com>.

Cast Considerations: Rehearsal Tracks

The ensemble had only a few weeks in which to rehearse together at Parkland College, though I extended rehearsal time by coaching the principals two weeks ahead of the official first rehearsal day. To maximize productivity in this short time, I made heavy use of my semi-private YouTube channel. I never assume that any ensembles I lead have access to a piano or have the skills to “plunk out” their own part. For this show, I made 79 YouTube videos and additional audio recordings to supplement the rehearsal process. The majority were three minutes or less.

Orchestra Considerations: Staffing

This show calls for a minimum of 22 people in the orchestra, with more ideally in the string section. If a community theater company routinely pays a stipend to their pit orchestra members, this large *Sweeney* orchestra is a substantial cost to the production. Setting aside money, not every theater will have space for 22 or more people, particularly once a full classical percussion set-up is included in the floor plan. Depending on community resources, it might also be difficult to find a full complement of community musicians who can comfortably play this difficult score. For any and all of these reasons, a conductor might wish to reduce the headcount required of Tunick’s orchestration.

If one has to do that, Nathan R. Matthews’ essay on Sondheim’s orchestrations cites Sondheim’s approval of alternative orchestrations when the original orchestration is not practical. Sondheim wrote that “[my] only advice for people who do not have the ability to hire an orchestra would be either to just use a piano accompaniment or any group of musicians that they

can get together on their own...”¹¹ Michael Starobin (one of the two orchestrators of most Sondheimshows) echoed this sentiment with the following statement.

You should be getting permission to do the piece, but if you don’t have the instruments, and [you] get the books and want to rewrite it, there’s no orchestration police. No one comes around and says, “You didn’t use...” if you don’t have strings because you are in a high school or you’re in a small college that doesn’t have a music department that wants to participate...¹²

Different orchestrations have been available throughout *Sweeney Todd’s* existence. A chamber orchestra numbering only nine members was written at some point in the past, and called for violin, cello, double bass, clarinet, bassoon, trumpet, horn, percussion, and keyboard. While this orchestra’s modest size might be more attractive to the average community theater company than 22+ players, this nine person version is no longer available to rent from MTI, and information about it is intentionally scant on official channels.¹³

The 2005 Broadway version of the show required 10 people who both acted and played all of the pit instruments. Patti LuPone famously played both the role of Mrs. Lovett and the tuba in this production. While unquestionably an official version of the show, this version is also not available to rent, and information about it only exists in press write-ups of the production.¹⁴

While I do not condone any changes to a show’s script or music that might violate the licensing agreement, the simple truth of community theater is that pit orchestras are often cobbled together from available community musicians using what funds and pit space are

¹¹ Robert Gordon, ed, *The Oxford Handbook of Sondheim Studies*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 154.

¹² *Ibid.*,154.

¹³ Information about the 9-member *Sweeney Todd* orchestration does not appear to exist on the MTI website. However, there is ample information about it in online groups devoted to musical theater music directors, such as the Facebook group, “Theatre Music Directors” (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/154150617781>).

¹⁴ Don Shirley, “‘Sweeney’ cast truly instrumental,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), September 18, 2005, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2005-sep-18-ca-artsnotes18.1-story.html>.

available. I was unable to fully staff the orchestra in the way that a professional house might do. However, my orchestra members and I made some discoveries as we rehearsed this show that might be useful to other productions faced with similar restrictions.

First, the percussion book calls for two players, but the show does not require two dedicated percussionists playing throughout the entire score. Rather, the score requires a stellar primary percussionist who will occasionally have to make swift instrument changes. This person must have full rein to load in their part of the pit in a way that facilitates those changes.

If budgetary constraints preclude hiring a second percussionist, start first by mapping out with your primary percussionist what parts of the score absolutely require a second person given their preferences and their skill set. Once that information is known, one can then do what my production did: I found four people to occasionally step into the percussion 2 book player role. My production's Anthony actor played the timpani during #9 and #19, my trumpet I player played the timpani in #27 when the ensemble is all onstage and he was *tacet*, and two members of the ensemble (who were conveniently also experienced percussionists) covered the rest.

At the advice of my Trombone I player, I elected to not hire a Reed 5 book (a bassoonist) and assigned much of that material to her. The range of a bassoon and trombone is similar, and a good trombone player will be able to modify their sound between being a lower part of the woodwind ensemble and an upper / mid part of the brass ensemble. The bassoon and trombones often alternate in Tunick's orchestration. The rare times that the two instruments play at the same time are almost all *tutti* moments, and the bassoon line will inevitably be covered elsewhere in the orchestra.

I had known that I could only hire three reeds instead of five, but had the good fortune to cast a flute player into the ensemble. She covered some crucial moments in which a full woodwind ensemble was the desired sound.

If a production needs to cut chairs, I would not advise cutting any of the string chairs. This score requires a string quintet. One might be tempted to assign these books to a keyboardist whose rig is running Mainstage. Keyboardists can credibly cover string sounds when the musical gesture is long, and the strings are functionally background texture. However, that is not the sonic world that Sondheim and Tunick have crafted. Throughout the show, each string player has crucial solo moments requiring very expressive playing. Were those assigned to a keyboard player, the result would likely sound fake and mechanical, as no Mainstage patch I have found can copy the expressive qualities of what a live violinist playing with vibrato can do.

I unfortunately could not hire a 2nd trombone chair, and the covering of that chair's part in other parts of the orchestra was a tedious task. I hired the rest of the brass section as indicated in the Tunick orchestration. Of all of the brass chairs, do not underestimate the way that the bass trombone adds to the color of the orchestra. That instrument often is linked with Todd's rage, and a lack of it will be noticeable.

The organ / celesta / harmonium part was played by my keyboard 1 player, and the harp book was played by my keyboard 2 player. Suggested Mainstage patches are in Appendix C of this document. The use of keyboards in lieu of organ and harp were reasonable changes to the score, though be warned that any use of any electric keyboard instrument in this pit will be a bit of a challenge for your sound designer. All instruments were amplified via microphone, but some obviously carried better into the house and needed far less boosting (timpani, bass trombone, etc.) than others (all strings). While everything might have been balanced in the house in terms

of a blend of acoustic and digital sound, the sound designer had to constantly adjust the levels of the harp and organ keyboards in the onstage monitors. More modern pits that involve almost all digital or amplified instruments are far easier to control in this way than was my hybrid digital / acoustic Sweeney pit.

Orchestra Considerations: Miscellaneous

- While it is traditional to offer notes at the top and end of rehearsal, my preference is to send out notes via email, particularly during tech week. If something absolutely requires a live demonstration, that issue can be scheduled into a pre-rehearsal or pre-show warm-up.
- Keep a dynamic list of any vamps / safety measures etc. in an online cloud location so all of the orchestra can see the current list of adjustments, notes about difficult moments to coordinate, and the score errata. This is particularly important for substitute musicians.
- At a first rehearsal, tell the orchestra about what is going on onstage during “dead measures” as you encounter them. Inform them of warning / cue lines just ahead of each song. The MTI-provided scores do not provide much of that material, but that knowledge makes a huge difference in orchestra members’ comfort level.
- Any conductor of this show must have a clear system to communicate exits from vamps. My system is as follows: in a vamp, I keep my open left hand up at shoulder height. As we approach the end of the vamp, I make a fist with my left hand as a warning, and bring my left fist down on the downbeat of the next measure outside of the vamp to confirm we have left the vamp.
- Warn the orchestra about all of the *attacca* situations as they might not anticipate this. This information is in the score, but even the best musicians are known to play to the final bar line and then relax, not noticing the word *attacca* just below that bar line.

- The MTI-provided P/C score does not indicate much in the way of dynamics as a general case even as the orchestra has dynamic markings clearly indicated. Should one conduct from the P/C score, transfer over the dynamic markings from the full score before the first orchestra rehearsal.
- This production requires a dedicated conductor with a baton. Do not attempt to conduct this from the keyboard. Do not start the show without having a back-up baton in arm's reach.

CHAPTER 3: ACT 1 MUSIC

Prelude

Prelude - Orchestra / conducting considerations

Organs are not ubiquitous in the venues where community theater productions tend to take place. If using a keyboard with Mainstage in place of an organ, this piece will be problematic as it is impossible for one person to perform it alone on a normal keyboard. One option is to use a click track and prerecord the bass line that would normally be played on the organ's pedalboard. If that is not possible, the next option is that the piece be performed as a duet. As all other musicians apart from the organ book musician are *tacet* in the Prelude, a conductor will likely have numerous personnel options of how to cover that line available in their own production's pit, either as a duet on one keyboard, or as a duet played on two separate keyboards. While both options are plausible, the former option will be easier for the soundboard operator as it's only one instrumental feed to adjust. In our production, I chose a third option here: I reached over the keyboard from the conductor's podium and played the bass line while the organ book keyboardist played the two upper lines of music.

Sondheim viewed his *Sweeney* prelude as “clumsy,” “academic,” “thick-textured” and too “contrapuntal.” He encouraged exploration of different stops (or settings in Mainstage) to minimize these aural aspects.¹⁵

#1 - Prologue: The Ballad of Sweeney Todd

#1 - Accompanying considerations

The main left hand beats are much more important to accompanying this piece in rehearsal than the undulating right hand texture. Don't allow the texture to overwhelm the meter.

¹⁵ Mark Eden Horowitz, *Sondheim on Music: Minor Details and Major Decisions*, (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 126-127.

The section from measures 102-135 is prone to rush, and the normally stabilizing influence of a rehearsal pianist will not be heard over the top soprano line. The orchestra will keep the speed in check as of tech week. Prior to that, your rehearsal pianist must be joined here by someone playing a loud percussion instrument (such as a cowbell) to keep the pace steady.

#1 - Cast considerations

The cast should be informed of the use of Dies Irae and of its significance, given that it has a position of prominence in the Ballad material.¹⁶ For an extended discussion of all of the motives throughout the score as well as the score development process, consult Stephen Banfield's book, *Sondheim's Broadway Musicals*.¹⁷

My production treated score indications like "1st man" and "2nd man" as general character names rather than as anything requiring a specific gender or voice part.

Care must be taken that in every repetition of "the Demon Barber of Fleet Street," the actor or actors honor the rests in the final measure of that phrase (e.g., measure 25, measure 52, and many others.) The malice is diminished if these rests are not heeded.

Between mm. 59 - 74, I reassigned the voice parts to balance my treble voice-heavy ensemble, which is a problem shared by many other community theater companies. Using a four-part ensemble division, the altos were assigned to the line labeled "baritones" ("Bari.") Those altos switched to the "women" part in measure 71, which allowed them to sing from an F#4 in measure 40 to G#4 in measure 41, rather than jumping down to a G#3.

Mind the ensemble length of final sibilant phonemes in words like "moralize" (mm. 71-74). Precise cut-offs of those words will add to the malice of the delivery.

¹⁶ A youtube resource: "Why this Creepy Melody is in So Many Movies," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-3-bVRYRnSM>.

¹⁷ Stephen Banfield, *Sondheim's Broadway Musicals* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan, Press, 1993), 281-310.

Measures 102-135 are the meatiest part of this piece's musical challenge. First, one must confirm the ensemble all understand how to navigate hemiolas, as this type of meter shift occurs throughout this section. To that end, I had the cast move to the chorus of "America" from *West Side Story*. I outlined a triangle in the air on the simple triple meter measures, snapping at each point, and I stepped right and left on the compound duple meter measures. Once those movement patterns were set, we rehearsed this Sweeney section again, and I asked the cast to move in the same way: make a triangle for the simple triple meter measures, and sway for the compound duple meter. This method worked well to solidify the distinction between the two meters.

Continuing the discussion of measures 102-135, the reassignment of some voice parts might be warranted if one has a treble voice-heavy ensemble. In that case, tenors should sing the part marked as "baritones," altos should sing the part marked as "tenors," and 2nd sopranos should sing the part marked "altos." Be very judicious about what members of the ensemble are assigned to the top line at the end of this section, as those ensemble members must sing an in-tune C6.

The company should be coached that in general, the rests just before a sung entrance are not dead space or a chance to rest, but instead, are a crucial place of preparation. Specifically, they should be coached to take a breath on the downbeat of measure 166 to ensure that the final sung word "street" is crisp and in time.

#1 - Orchestra / conducting considerations

The start of any of the Ballad songs (#1, #10B, #12C, #25, and #29B) is a place where the first actor to sing is prone to second-guessing their entrance. Tell the orchestra to mark all Ballad material in the show as if it begins with a four-bar safety, and let them know that the actor will come in on the pick-up to measure five. Give an emphatic downbeat after the vocal entrance.

#2 - No Place Like London

#2 - Cast considerations

The Beggar Woman's brief recognition of Todd in measure 42 is crucial foreshadowing. I followed my Beggar Woman's *ritardando* rather than asking the reverse, as my ceding control there allowed my production's Beggar Woman to fully craft that moment of near-discovery.

Sondheim uses his so-called "Stravinsky motif" for the first full time in measures 256-261, though it appears in pieces in the "Prologue." The motif is labeled as such because it reminded Sondheim of Stravinsky, rather than because it was a direct quote. That material "presages Sweeney's madness" and generally occurs before Sweeney is violent, setting aside the trance-like material in the "Johanna Act II sequence."¹⁸ This is a useful bit of trivia for your Sweeney actor and Sweeney victims to know, as it could help better inform their acting choices.

#2 - Orchestra / conducting considerations

As conductor, I generally conducted the "alms" motif material in a broad 4 pattern, but at measure 42, I subdivided and gave 12 beats.

One should enter orchestra rehearsals knowing precisely what a given Sweeney Todd actor wishes to do from measures 215-242. The acting choices must be allowed to drive the music here, as different acting intents will greatly inform the treatment of this section's *rubato*.

#2 - Collaborative considerations

Be aware that Anthony has a short line ("Mr. Todd, sir?") that must occur during the 3 beats of rests in Todd's sung line between measures 14 and 15. It's not in the MTI P/C score.

The underscoring in measures 19-26 must cover a relatively large amount of dialogue. One can either slow the music down to a crawl there, or create a safety. We created a safety, and

¹⁸ Mark Eden Horowitz, *Sondheim on Music: Minor Details and Major Decisions*, (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 128-129.

most nights, we repeated measures 19-22 as a unit, and then repeated measures 23-26 as a unit. Each of those musical units ends with a woodwind player or players leading into the next measure with a 3 note musical gesture. Reed 1 leads into measure 23, and Reeds 1 and 3 lead into measure 28. If a safety is called, those players should be advised to only play those 3 note phrases the last time as we are leaving the safety.

Dramatic shifts of musical character are best accomplished when the cast and orchestra know to expect a brief lift at those transitions. Character shifts frequently occur when the Beggar Woman is on stage, particularly when she is moving between the pathos of the “alms” motif and the sales mode of the “ow would you like...” motif. A lift at the end of measure 31 allows the Beggar Woman to get a necessary breath after “thank yer,” and the downbeat of measure 32 will then be unified between actor and orchestra.

The amount of underscored music seems insufficient given what dialogue must occur between measures 64-67. A safety might be prudent here, or the conductor could move the “*poco rubato, largo*” tempo at measure 201 forward by four measures.

The underscoring at measures 250-255 are a tight fit for the amount of dialogue required, even with a caesura / fermata at the end of measure 255.

#2A - Transition Music

#2A - Collaborative considerations

Don't start this piece until the reed 1 player has had time to switch from flute to piccolo. Applause should cover the brief pause.

Mrs. Lovett can be the source of the percussion at measure 9, but only if she can safely be onstage with the washtub before that moment. Raise this issue with your director early in the process. Scene change business specific to a given production might preclude this possibility.

#3 - Worst Pies in London

#3 - Accompanying considerations

In rehearsal, your Lovett will unquestionably want the verse material played by the trombones, timpani, cellos and basses to be played out. She and you will need to be secure in where those accents land well ahead of sitzprobe.

#3 - Cast considerations

The tempo is marked as a quarter note = 112. Prior to tech week and your sitzprobe, confirm with your Lovett actor that this blistering tempo is reasonable given both blocking and her need to clearly articulate the text. She should be encouraged to move between speech and singing, as this is not a song that calls for an actor to stay “on the voice.” Sondheim very crafted this song with substantial rhythmic change throughout, both in terms of phrase duration and of time signature, as a means of conveying Mrs. Lovett’s scattered state of mind.¹⁹

Our audiences seemed to particularly chuckle with the choice to make the word “no” in measure 21 be spoken with disgust, which our production first heard in Emma Thompson’s portrayal of Lovett. 2014 concert version of Sweeney Todd.²⁰ Another possible laugh line occurs at the end of measure 62. If you insert a caesura after the word “well,” which will be in addition to the one marked just before that in the score, the audience can delight in Mrs. Lovett’s attempts to not complete the obvious vulgar rhyme.

#3 - Orchestra / conducting considerations

The choruses are inclined towards lyricism in contrast to the angular verses, and in the interest of musicality, that should be encouraged. Beyond the mere indications of the score,

¹⁹ Stephen Sondheim, *Finishing the hat: collected lyrics (1954-1981) with attendant comments, principles, heresies, grudges, whines and anecdotes*, (New York: Knopf, 2010), 339.

²⁰ Concerts Captured, “Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street | New York Philharmonic Concert,” YouTube Video, 2:22:3, March 2, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z7D3OptJO-Q>.

though, this contrast dramatically underscores Lovett's racing thoughts, and a lack of contrast will be a lost dramatic opportunity. Conduct the orchestra accordingly.

With regards to the verses, encourage the trombones, timpani, cello and bass to play out relative to the clarinets, violas, and violins, and ask every musician to pay careful attention to all marcato-staccato indications. If the back and forth nature of this syncopated gesture is obscured, Lovett might struggle to stay with the orchestra.

#3 - Collaborative considerations

This song is a useful "canary in a coal mine" test for the clarity of a sound system, both in terms of house sound, as well as in terms of the monitoring system between the pit and the stage. Make sure that Lovett can hear the cello and bass in addition to the percussion and trombones in a pre-show soundcheck.

#4 - Poor Thing

#4 - Cast considerations

Draw your Lovett's attention to Sondheim's choice of rhythm on the phrase "there was a barber and his wife" so that she doesn't automatically replicate Todd's rhythm or emphasis of two songs prior. When Lovett sings it, the word "wife" is on the last note of a quintuplet on beat one, rather than on the second beat as was sung by Todd. Sondheim's text-setting choice underscores that Lovett is focused on Todd instead of the doomed Lucy.

#4 -Orchestra / conducting considerations

The pick-up into measure 124 is hard to catch as the actors have dialogue throughout measures 113-122. Care to the *tenuto*, *staccato*, and accent marks in the cello, bass, and reed 5 instruments should help, but if that's not sufficient, ask the violins, violas, reed 3, and reed 4 players to also mirror those articulation markings in their part.

The cleanest way to exit the minuet is to put a small lift in the end of the measure, and then return to the *tempo primo* as of measure 143.

#5 - My Friends

This piece's preparation immensely benefits by hearing what Sondheim himself intended.²¹ Beyond the cast preparation, the orchestral preparation also benefits from hearing directly from Sondheim. The undulating harp and upper string material is clearly in line with the trance-like motivation Sondheim speaks about in the YouTube-sourced master class, but the irregular cello, bass, and percussion impulses are in line with Sondheim's general compositional goals: specifically, he wishes to avoid the appearance of any piece being "square."²²

#5 - Cast considerations

If the ensemble does not properly cut off on the downbeat of measure 94, Beadle's entrance will be late. The ensemble will want to overhold that note because that is how the analogous material is treated in the Prologue.

The entrance at measure 80 is difficult. Measure 78 concludes with a D chord in the orchestra, there's a dead measure in the score while Todd says, "at last, my right arm is complete again!," and then, the orchestra and ensemble enter in measure 80 on an F# minor chord. I began to sort out this issue by reassigning my ensemble's altos to the "baritones" line as was done in the previous *Dies Irae* "Prologue" material. Next, the ensemble practiced toggling between singing a D major chord and singing their part of measure 80's F # minor chord. All but the sopranos had common tones. The sopranos had to move a half step from D5 to C#5. Finally, I played the D major chord while the ensemble silently audiated that chord, we paused for the

²¹ AllanWo, "Sondheim teaches 'My Friends' from Sweeney Todd," YouTube Video, 8:57. July 7, 2007, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DBCvAFqGJwg>.

²² Mark Eden Horowitz, *Sondheim on Music: Minor Details and Major Decisions*, (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 132.

spoken line, and I cued the measure 80 entrance. I warned them that their microphones were going to be live at some point just prior to their entrance, and they must not hum. With this preparation, the ensemble was silent during Todd's big line, and confident of their own entrance.

#5 - Collaborative considerations

"My Friends" is often blocked with Todd and Lovett onstage alone until just before measure 80. Advise your director that a strong ensemble entrance there absolutely requires that the ensemble has a clear sightline to the conductor, which might limit what the director is otherwise planning to do.²³

#6 - Green Finch and Linnet Bird

#6 - Cast considerations

Sondheim made a notable choice of phoneme throughout this song. The actor playing Johanna must repeatedly sing long notes on words that end in [ɪŋ] or, if not that, on words that contain [ɪ]. Yes, that creates rhyme, but more than that, the Johanna actor is forced to sing about being caged through an oral posture that is remarkably close to clenched teeth. The challenge is to guide her towards finding resonance space through this very closed-feeling text.

#6 - Orchestra / conducting considerations

The orchestra rehearsal of this song must start with a discussion of aleatoric music, which can be simply defined as music in which the composer has ceded control of some aspect of the performance to the performer, setting aside conventions which allow for the performer to temporarily take on the role of the composer (e.g., cadenzas).²⁴ Warn the musicians covering the

²³ Here and in countless other moments, I am incredibly grateful to Jeff Dare, who was the wonderfully collaborative director on this production. He originally blocked the ensemble to enter just as they were singing, but that created a weak initial ensemble sound given sightline issues. Because of his generous and secure leadership style, it was trivial for me to bring up the sightline issue. He slightly adjusted the blocking given my input, and we moved on.

²⁴ Griffiths, Paul, "Aleatory," *Grove Music Online*, 2001, Accessed 22 Oct. 2023, <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000000509>.

violin 1, organ, reed 1, reed 2, reed 3, and reed 4 books that the *ad libitum* indication is meant individually, not collectively. Each player must find their own tempo, and the music will not be the same from performance to performance. Done correctly, the combined effect cleverly mimics a group of birds: each organized within their own song, but not organized as a group. The material is taken from actual birds' song Sondheim observed in Connecticut, but he cited the "limits of research" as to why the bird song he included here was not from Great Britain.²⁵

The organ used in the original Broadway production of *Sweeney Todd* was a Yamaha Electone E5.²⁶ Lacking that instrument, the indications for the organ book player to play with "the portamento strip - birds; Not in strict meter - Imitate the woodwinds" is not going to be possible. The organ could be left out of the aleatoric material, particularly if the sound designer is supplementing the scene with actual bird song.

#6 - Collaborative considerations

One should rehearse this piece as if it actually begins in the ending safety of "My Friends." After the first pass through measures 118-121, I indicated that the six instruments listed above could begin their aleatoric material. I kept conducting measures 118-121 of "My Friends" until those six were playing, and then, I cut off the musicians who were still playing the safety. I stopped conducting during the aleatoric material. Once I heard the cue phrase, "[h]ungry as always, Miss Johanna," I gave the downbeat of measure D in "Green Finch" and the song proceeded. The orchestra should be informed of the conductor's plans through this section, to especially include the warning about the lack of downbeats in measures A-B-C.

²⁵ Mark Eden Horowitz, *Sondheim on Music: Minor Details and Major Decisions*, (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 132-133.

²⁶ Information gained from posts in the Facebook group, Theatre Music Directors.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/theatremusicdirectors/posts/10158040825092782>

#7 - Ah, Miss

#7 - Orchestra / conducting considerations

The first section of “Ah, Miss” will require careful orchestra preparation given the changes of meter. I found that conducting every beat in the 5/8 measures yielded the most secure performance. Take care that measures 13 and 14 stay in “2” for the orchestra’s sake, even though Anthony’s part sounds like it should be conducted in 5/8 as is the case in measure 15.

Pay heed that measure 32 is in 4/8 and measure 33 is in 4/4. I chose to conduct both in a “4” pattern, but I subdivided measure 33 to keep track of the consistent 8th note length across the barline. I stopped subdividing once I reached measure 34.

Measure 36 demands *rubato*, with the downbeat of measure 37 carefully placed as that is the moment Johanna and Anthony first lock eyes.

Measure 49 is scored with three fermatas over the last 3 violin notes. They are awkward to conduct, and they cease to sound like the pick-up into the altered “Green Finch” material the longer that each note is held. I asked our violinist to ignore those fermatas, but did invite her to play those notes with *rubato*. I followed her phrase with my baton, and then, I resumed control with measure 50’s downbeat.

#7 - Collaborative considerations

Measures 50-57 are a place where the underscoring length might be insufficient. In our production, our Beggar Woman and director decided that this character would generally be a bit slow to find her words when recalling things that were both truthful and painful, and so, I conducted these measures twice through to cover the dialogue. If your Beggar Woman speaks quickly, that alteration might not be necessary.

The measure 72 vamp will require some planning, as there is a non-trivial amount of dialogue between Anthony and the Bird Seller that needs to take place there. The cue to leave the vamp is not indicated in the MTI materials, but I chose to move to “Johanna (part I)” at the Bird Seller’s line, “...the pleasure of the birds, Sir.” The trumpet 1 and organ musicians are to hold notes throughout the vamp, but in our production, that did not work. Instead, I cut off both shortly after the vamp started. Otherwise, either would have run the risk of covering up the dialogue, and the length of the scene wound up far longer than any brass player could hold out one note. The conductor should set the tempo there in consultation with the reed 1 player, who is embodying the sound of a frantic bird, and one should expect that some notes will be dropped as otherwise, there’s no space to breathe.

#8 - Johanna (part I) / #8A - Johanna (part II)

#8 - Cast considerations

Small differences in tempo can mean a world of difference to a singing actor, particularly in songs like either of Anthony’s “Johanna” pieces. The conductor should seek out the actor portraying Anthony, and confirm the tempo with him ahead of the first orchestra rehearsal.

#8 - Orchestra / conducting considerations

Remind the orchestra that they should reserve *marcato* attacks for only the places indicated, and otherwise, this material is one *legato* gesture after another.

#9 - Pirelli's Miracle Elixir

#9 - Cast considerations

As in the Ballad material earlier, our production viewed gendered character designations like “2nd woman” and “5th man” to be suggestions rather than requirements.

This song will benefit from being addressed early in the production process, as the ensemble parts include some of the more rhythmically difficult passages of the entire score.

At the time of the Parkland production, the rented MTI materials had the words “rare Oriental disease” in measures 40-41. This phrase is obviously problematic. In the original Broadway cast recording,²⁷ that phrase was instead “dermatological disease,” and the current Broadway production appears to have reverted to the original phrase.²⁸ Future *Sweeney* productions should inquire as to the status of that lyric.

At measure 109 and 110, the score indicates that “women” and “men” all sing the following two-bar phrase: “let me smell that bottle. I don’t want no ink-piss! What is this!” The altos and basses were not enthusiastic about being asked to sing a high B, and having one person sing all three phrases (let alone an ensemble) seemed awkward. I divided those 3 short sentences into three parts: the altos and basses sang “Let me smell that bottle,” the 2nd sopranos and baritones sang “I don’t want no ink-piss,” and the 1st sopranos and tenors sang “what is this?”

#9 - Orchestra / conducting considerations

I strongly encourage dictating the last three beats of the piece in measure 166.

#9 - Collaborative considerations

After the first four bars, there is a lengthy dialogue between Sweeney and Lovett before Tobias begins to sing in measure 7. Given that measures 5-6 are identified as the vamp and measure 7 as a safety, it seems as though the Sweeney/Lovett dialogue is supposed to take place during the vamp. However, the texture and the volume of the orchestra at measures 5-6

²⁷ Stephen Sondheim, “Pirellis’ Miracle Elixir,” *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street (Original Broadway Cast Recording)*, performed by Angela Lansbury, Joaquin Romaguera, Ken Jennings, Len Cariou, Paul Gemignani and the Original Broadway Cast of Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street, Masterworks Broadway, released January 1, 1979, accessed October 23, 2023, Spotify.

²⁸ Stephen Sondheim, “Pirelli’s Miracle Elixir,” *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street (2023 Broadway Cast Recording)*, performed by Annaleigh Ashford, Fred Lassen, Gaten Matarazzo, Josh Groban, and the Sweeney Todd 2023 Broadway Company, Arts Music Reprise, released September 8, 2023, accessed October 23, 2023, Spotify.

prevented the dialogue from being understood in our theater. We solved this issue by making measures 5-6 into the vamp that covered the ensemble entrance onstage, and then, the safety at measure 7 underscored the dialogue.

#9A - Pirelli's entrance

#9A - Orchestra / conducting considerations

At the first pit rehearsal, warn that the first musicians only play on beat 6 of measure 1.

#9A - Collaborative considerations

Should your production team and Pirelli actor want a quasi-recitative treatment of this piece with lots of space for stage business, the conductor and actor must make a decision together as to who will control the piece. If the actor is controlling it, they must be coached to give preparatory gestures for each entrance to the conductor, who will then lead the orchestra. If the conductor is controlling it, the actor must be prepared to keep their eyes on the conductor. I made the error of rehearsing my production's original Pirelli as if he was to be accompanied in the performances by an agile rehearsal pianist rather than by an orchestra that requires preparatory gestures. A far simpler way through is to keep this piece in time as much as possible if the actor and director are amenable.

#10 - The Contest (Part 1) / #10A - The Contest (part 2)

#10 / #10A - Cast considerations

Encourage your Pirelli actor to switch readily between speech and singing as best benefits his acting intentions. Also, be open to playing with *rubato* during the rehearsal process. There are laugh lines that I would have otherwise barreled through had I insisted on relatively strict time throughout the piece.

#10 / #10A - Orchestra / conducting considerations

The more “*espressivo*” an orchestra is during the “*molto espressivo*” section at measures 64 and 65, the funnier the moment will be. I pointed my orchestra towards “Vesti la Giubba” as an example of what we should sound like, and that reference made the moment work.

In measures 75-76, the two fermatas in the orchestral parts seem to invite two separate gestures or events when only one is necessary. My orchestra eliminated the first fermata from their parts. I conducted major beats 1 and 2 of measure 75, indicated a fermata, and then cut off the orchestra having previously coordinated with Pirelli as to how long their C5 was to last.

#10 / #10A - Collaborative considerations

The strop sounds in measures 53-53A and 60A-61 required some collaborative problem solving between our percussionist and sound designer. It seemed impossible for our (or any) Sweeney to mimic pre-recorded strop sounds with onstage movements if those sounds were triggered by the soundboard operator. Miking a strop onstage was also not a satisfactory solution, as a volume sufficient to pick up the strop also picked up the sounds of people breathing. Instead, our percussionist used the heaviest grit (lowest number) sand paper that was available to her and attached it to sanding blocks. The orchestra added *caesuras* to beat 2 of measure 53, and also to beat 8 of measure 60. When we got to those places, I dictated the 3 successive out-of-time sounds to both Sweeney and the percussionist. Our Pirelli led the orchestra out of those sections with their pick-up into the downbeats of measure 54 and measure 62.

Beadle’s line is written as if it is to be in strict time with the orchestra but that felt stiff. Instead, our Beadle put that four-word line into the cadence of his choice, though I would then make his “Todd” the downbeat of measure 77.

“The Contest (Part II)” is optional, and my production did not use it. It seemed foolish to stage any song that involves someone’s bare hands in someone else’s mouth post-COVID. The decision to make it optional was Sondheim’s, made as the show was taking shape.²⁹

#10B - Ballad of Sweeney Todd

#10B - Cast considerations

My treble-heavy ensemble needed to be reshuffled to present this piece in a balanced way. As of measure 19, I assigned all the sopranos to the part labeled “3 women,” with the first sopranos taking the top line. My tenors sang the “3 Baris” part. The Altos sang the part labeled “Tenors” that enters at measure 23. The remaining low voices joined the tenors at measure 25.

Plan on the actors assigned to the “3 women” part to require some extra pitch work. I recommend asking everyone on that part to sing the lower line against a C drone. Only once that is secure should the upper voice or voices be permitted to try the line with the octave jump.

#11 - Johanna (Judge Turpin)

This song is marked “optional” in the score. Given a particular community’s comfort with sexual material, it might make sense to leave it out of a given production. However, note that Sondheim is not the impetus for making this song optional; rather, this was due to Hal Prince’s beliefs. Sondheim stated that “[if] this song isn’t in the show, [the Judge] doesn’t have anything to sing that is his alone.”³⁰

#11 - Cast considerations

Your Judge actor should be heavily encouraged to explore the spectrum between speech and singing if this is not what they are doing at the first music rehearsal. That spectrum exploration

²⁹ Mark Eden Horowitz, *Sondheim on Music: Minor Details and Major Decisions*, (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 137.

³⁰ Mark Eden Horowitz, *Sondheim on Music: Minor Details and Major Decisions*, (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 136-137.

seems obvious in the outbursts (e.g., mm. 29-32) but should also be explored in your actor's treatment of the repeated lyric, "Johanna."

#11 - Orchestra / conducting considerations

If your Judge feels insecure getting in and out of the 9/8 measures with the orchestra (mm. 24, 46, and 92), ask your horn player to play out.

#11 - Collaborative considerations

All productions should have a plan for what is desired at the end of this piece, e.g., applause or not? Even done well, this song is not one that garners immediate applause. If there's a delay of applause and dead air prior to the next scene, this moment can feel awkward. If the possibility of applause is to be precluded, place a fermata over the last horn and trombone note, and extend until the Judge has gathered himself together and crossed to Johanna.

#12 - Wait

#12 - Cast considerations

Whenever I coach an actor in a "villian" role, I advise them to experiment with any sibilants that they encounter in their text, particularly when those sibilants are terminal. One doesn't want to sound like a snake, but a slight elongation of those phonemes readily comes across as manipulative and malicious. Sondheim provides ample opportunity to explore this given the text. In just the first full verse, the lyrics include: easy, hush, yourself, distress, rush, thoughts, nice, and lush.

#12 - Orchestra / conducting considerations

In keeping with the metaphor of a snake, this piece is full of sinuous chromaticism as Lovett attempts to calm Todd, which might also be read as manipulation. Don't let the orchestra make this chromaticism jaunty, even though the syncopation might lead some to play it that way.

Sondheim intended this piece as a lullaby, albeit one in which an adult is not calming a child, but a sane but manipulative person is influencing someone whose mind has broken.³¹

#12 - Collaborative considerations

In our production, the underscoring music from measures 8-24 was markedly insufficient to the accompanying dialogue. There is a vamp indicated at measure 24, yes, but it is short and sounds like a record skipping if performed too many times in a row. I treated measures 8-9 as a vamp, and continued on to measure 10 at Lovett's Lovett's first spoken line ("It's not much of a chair...") instead of at the indicated stage direction. Measure 24 was still needed as a vamp, but the effect was much better than the original plan given our actors' pace through the dialogue. I advise a brief lift at the end of measure 24's vamp to sync up with Lovett at the next downbeat.

#12A - Pirelli's Death

#12A - Cast considerations

This piece starts with Pirelli's *a cappella* entrance. If your actor has a good sense of pitch, this is the moment to show that skill off. Encourage reticent actors to at least try to find the pitch, as many actors have a better sense of pitch than they might realize! If this does not work, they should start by speaking their first phrase. The orchestra's entrance in measure 2 will quickly orient them to the tonal center. A bell tone cue is always a possibility for *a cappella* entrances, but I'd try the other two options before settling for the aural cue.

#12A - Orchestra / conducting considerations

I did not conduct measure 1, and instead gave my first downbeat in measure 2.

#12B - Pirelli's Death Underscore

#12B - Orchestra / conducting considerations

³¹ Mark Eden Horowitz, *Sondheim on Music: Minor Details and Major Decisions*, (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 151.

These chromatic passages will likely present some difficulty for the reed 1, 3, and 4 players. I'd advise cuing each in turn, but then, following their pace rather than asking that they follow you.

The orchestra should be warned that measure 71 will appear to contain more beats than the 6 indicated by the time signature. The Reed 1 player will play 6 beats, there is a caesura, and after that, the celli and basses still have a whole note to play. Advise the celli and bassi to put a fermata over that whole note. It is much easier to cue and cut off a note with a fermata that underscores dialogue than to conduct 4 beats while trying to line up with the actors.

#12C - The Ballad of Sweeney Todd

#12C - Cast considerations

If your trio has any trouble with the music in measures 32-44, start first by working with your director to shuffle them around. Our trio was most successful when the actor on the melody was in the center. Beyond that, your woodwinds are otherwise resting and are available to double any insecure parts. I would advise putting the oboe on whichever of your actors seems to be the least confident as it will cut through the texture easily.

#12D - Underscore

#12D - Orchestra / conducting considerations

Be advised that your organist has the dialogue cues while your harp player does not. The existence of "Cue No.1", "Cue No. 2," and "Cue No. 3" is needlessly complicated. Start the harp player at the appropriate moment, cue the organ player at "Cue No. 2," and then cut off the harp player as you cue the last two measures for your organist.

#13 - Kiss me (Part 1)

#13 - Accompanying considerations

The Hal Leonard *Sweeney Todd* score is generally more gracious for the pianist than the MTI-provided P/C score, but nowhere is this more true for both iterations of “Kiss me”. The P/C score is clearly useful for any rehearsal with the orchestra, but its versions of #13 and #15 run the risk of inducing a repetitive stress injury in your accompanist. Hand that musician the Hal Leonard score, and inform them that in the verses, the left hand is what is important.

#13 - Cast considerations

Patter songs can lead to tension in any singing actor. Should you hear that, confirm that your actor is only taking in as much air as they need for the phrase that immediately follows the breath. Too much air, and they will have to dump that extra air before tanking back up again. That process is inefficient, and that inefficiency leads to tension, but even good singers do this if they have a practiced large volume of air that they are used to taking in.

#13 - Orchestra / conducting considerations

After the busyness of the verses, your actors will provide a welcome contrast to the ears of the audience if they lean into the lyricism as much as possible. Your orchestra (particularly your string players) should be instructed to play out at this section as otherwise, your woodwinds might dominate the sound with a part that is textural, not melodic.

#14 - Ladies in their Sensitivities

#14 - Cast considerations

As with three of the roles in my production, I prepared two different actors for this role due to unfortunate circumstances. Both of the actors and I initially approached this song with an eye towards the vertical, but I now realize that it’s far better to prepare this song with an eye towards the horizontal. As long as your Beadle knows his words, obeys the correct length of rest at measures 8 and 17-18, and starts correctly with the orchestra, he will stay with the harp player.

One of the Beadle actors found it useful to attach a gesture to each obsequious “my lord” phrase in rehearsal, and that helped the “A” section of this song to lock in for him.

A *portamento* at the fermata in measure 36 helps establish how much Beadle enjoys the sound of his own voice, and was a reliable laugh line.

Though I cut off Beadle in measure 37, I let Beadle lead me into the downbeat at measure 38. That worked much better than the reverse. One of our Beadle actors settled on adding a long trilled “r” to the word “fret” in that measure and that, too, got a laugh each night.

#14 - Orchestra / conducting considerations

This piece is fast enough that conducting in “1” could be successful. However, the piece felt more secure when I conducted the 5/8 bars in an uneven “2” pattern. I conducted the 4/8 measures in a fast “4” and kept beats “2” and “3” relatively low towards my conducting plane.

I advised my cello player to play out in the “A” sections as she was the drone, and advised my harp player to give an extra impulse to the downbeat of each measure in that section.

Your Reed 1 player is marked as being *tacet* at the start of the piece. If your Beadle feels insecure, it is trivial to ask the Reed 1 player to play that *tacet* part and solidify the melody.

#15 - Kiss me (Part II)

Also refer to information about #13 above, as #15 is the reprise of #13.

#15 - Cast considerations

The Judge and Beadle have the acting and memory challenge of navigating a text that consists primarily of the word “Todd.” The acting choices will be, as always, at the discretion of the director. However, if the conductor is responsible for coaching these actors as well as conducting, it would be worthwhile to point out this issue as the true challenge of this piece: what might motivate the repetition of that name so many times?

#15 - Collaborative considerations

The P/C score doesn't include any dialogue cues indicating when to leave the safety at the end of #14 and start #15. Your production's stage business will need to dictate that decision.

#16 - Pretty Women (Part 1)

The information written above for "Ladies in their Sensitivities" also applies here.

#16 - Cast considerations

Warn your Judge that he must practice speaking the phrase at measure 36 quickly as otherwise, he will make Sweeney's next entrance at measure 37 late. The Judge's interjection ("You're in a merry mood today, Mr. Todd") fits even better if that actor is coached to begin it while Sweeney is still singing in measure 36.

#16 - Orchestra / conducting considerations

If your Judge is at all uncertain as to his part, there is an optional Reed 3 flute part written for measures 4-16 that can be easily added to bolster his confidence. In that vein, the Reed 1 player accompanies the Judge from measures 24-34 and again from 53-65 on either recorder or piccolo, which is not readily apparent from the P/C or actor's score.

#16A - Pretty Women (Part 2)

#16A - Cast considerations

Rubato is a useful tool for your actors to explore from measures 21-27. The word density and indicated tempo combine to threaten the ability of the audience to understand the text, but with a bit of rubato on the wordier measures, clarity can be maintained.

Sondheim's text-setting in the latter half of this song is unusual. He placed words such as "the" (measure 41 and 43) and "their" (measures 57 and 59) on long notes. In measure 70, the unstressed schwa sound in "heaven" is on the long note, and in the following measure 71, the

“ing” of “living.” Few actors would likely choose to emphasize those specific words or syllables were they reciting the lyrics as if in a monologue. However, as those phonemes are on the long notes of the measure, they automatically have a bit more presence vocally than they perhaps ought to. I coached my actors towards viewing those sections as either 2 or 4 measure-long phrases and encouraged them to place their musical emphasis on whatever words seemed important to them as actors. Sondheim’s musical choices were honored, but the clarified emphasis on what words were important resulted in a balanced phrase.

#16A - Orchestra / conducting considerations

There is no pressing musical need to conduct Sweeney through those first ten measures, and indeed, doing so will take your Sweeney out of the scene.

The orchestra should insert a lift at the end of measure 32. Absent that, the abrupt shift between the foreboding music in measures 29-32 and the following “Pretty Woman” material will be muddy.

This song ends in the worst way possible for a live orchestra to accomplish: “fade on cue.” I chose to cut the orchestra off given a specific cue from the onstage business.

#17 - Epiphany

#17 - Cast considerations

Beware of your Sweeney actor overdriving their voice in this song. They will still need to get through “A Little Priest” before they can rest! When I’m guiding any actor in a piece geared towards strenuous vocalizations, I keep inviting that actor to see how little air they can get away with for whatever sounds they intend to make. Reducing the volume of air available will help reduce the overall pressure on their vocal folds, and be a more sustainable path through the song.

#17 - Orchestra / conducting considerations

The coordination of the start of this piece is not trivial. My production first established that I would go off of Sweeney's cue rather than the reverse. To achieve this, I instructed the orchestra to cross out measure 1, and to reclassify measure 2 as the vamp. There was no discernable aural difference with this change, as the music in those measures is identical. However, with the vamp now in measure 2, it was trivial for the orchestra to follow Sweeney.

However, the reverse was not true. The orchestra and I would know where he was once he spoke, but our Sweeney consistently had a hard time hearing where the downbeat was in the midst of the agitated violin ostinato. (This issue was not present when we were rehearsing with an accompanist.) We corrected this issue by inserting a sharp snare hit on the downbeats of measures 3 and 4. I called those hits "landing strips," guiding our Sweeney towards his pick-up into measure 5. They were not intended to be regarded as additions to the orchestration, but instead, regarded as sound cues. We also used snare hits as "landing strips" in measures 16-17, which had the same sort of agitated violin material as before. Our percussionist played on the downbeat of measures 16 and 17, and on beats 3 and 4 of measure 17. Our Sweeney had trouble hearing the violins, but had no issue hearing the snare.

Beware of the orchestra playing too politely through this song, to especially include the brass players. Subtlety will not aid the theatrical goals of the show. If polite playing is heard, remind the orchestra that this song is one in which Sweeney is going mad, and the music should more resemble *Wozzeck* than *Carousel*.

The one exception to this are the brief *cantabile* passages that interject the "mad" music: measures 41-44, measures 51-53, measures 60-63, and measures 72-75. The "mad" music will be more effective if it is interspersed with music that goes beyond *cantabile* into pathos. Also, I

encourage the low strings to play out at these moments no matter what the dynamic marking is. They will provide a grounding foundation for the tremolos occurring above.

Invite the violas to play out at their *Dies Irae* quotes at measures 33-36, and throughout.³²

#17 - Collaborative considerations

The “long ending” is designed to segue directly into the scene that immediately follows while the “short ending” is designed to allow applause. Our production chose the long ending. Please note that this delay of applause only works if your production’s Mrs. Lovett knows to start speaking before the brass cut off in measure 85.

#18 - A Little Priest

#18 - Cast considerations

As with many comedic musical theater pieces, this piece will greatly benefit if the actors are allowed to explore the spectrum between speech and singing. This piece should be funny, and a rigid adherence to the pitches will interfere with that.

#18 - Orchestra / conducting considerations

The MTI-provided materials are not clear as to the correct order of spoken lines and music at the start of #18. Mrs. Lovett should say the cue line that ends with, “...looking for him.” The orchestra should immediately play measure 1, which is the musical embodiment of Lovett’s cannibalistic inspiration. She continues with “You know me. Sometimes ideas just pop into my head and I was thinking...” Measure 2’s downbeat happens, and then the piece continues.

The opening recitative section requires that a conductor follow Lovett rather than the reverse. I conducted one beat per measure from measures 1-18 aside from the following:

Measure 3: 2 beats on beats 1 and 3.

³² Mark Eden Horowitz, *Sondheim on Music: Minor Details and Major Decisions*, (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 140.

Measure 5: 2 beats on beats 1 and 3.

Measure 7-8: 4 beats.

Measure 17: 4 beats.

In measure 26, the small notes indicated in the upper strings's parts can be used if the conductor is cuing Lovett's line, "Good, you got it." However, if that line is initiated by Lovett, those small notes should be cut.

I conducted 3 beats to a measure starting in measure 27. By measure 41, I was conducting in 1 beat per measure to facilitate the *accelerando*. Note that the tempo marked at measure 49 (a dotted half note = 72) drops to a slower tempo at measure 57 (a dotted half note = 66).

The safety measures throughout this song deserve special attention early in the rehearsal process, and they can be divided into two groups. One group is the terminus of a section of dialogue in which the music stops with a caesura: measures 90-91, measures 128-129, measures 208-209, and measures 278-279. Lovett has the pick-ups into the waltz material that follows each of those safeties. I gave my Lovett *carte blanche* to control the placement of the pick-up note or notes. I followed her gesture, and then, I was back in control as of the next downbeat.

The other group of safety measures officially only includes measures 327B-328B. As described in the other group above, there is dialogue over music, but this time, the music does not stop ahead of Sweeney's next sung entrance. I strongly encourage the establishment of measures 243C-244C as safety measures in direct parallel with the safety covering measures 327B-328B. The assignment of safety measures beyond what is written in the score are insurance policies against any sort of timing malfunction.

While Lovett drove the return to music in the first group of safety measures, Sweeney must drive the return to the music in measures 243C-244C and 327B-328B. Alert the orchestra

that the safety has been left when they hear Sweeney singing. If the conductor can cue that entrance, so much the better.

#18 - Collaborative considerations

Should there be any issues of musical “feel” with this piece, have whoever is struggling (cast or orchestra) dance a waltz. Movement can often convey quickly what would otherwise take several minutes of tortured explanation.

Beyond the opening recitative, this song must not be allowed to go as quickly as it feels it can go. At breakneck speed, the delightfully stomach-churning wordplay will be lost to the audience. Come tech week, this piece will benefit greatly from diction clarity feedback by trusted people who are not on stage or in the pit.

At the other end of the speed spectrum, my experience is that dialogues with underscoring reliably slow down as any show process goes on, and there are several such moments throughout this song. Remind the actors that while the orchestra will wait for them at the vamps, it will benefit the story if the pace of those dialogues is kept up.

CHAPTER 4: ACT 2 MUSIC

#19 - God, That's Good!

#19 - Cast considerations

Encourage your Lovett to explore different tone qualities throughout this piece. She should have a cheerful “sales voice” when she is talking to her customers, but her comments to Sweeney and Toby should be of a markedly different quality.

The ensemble’s performance will strongly benefit from the consistent use of shadow vowels on terminal words, particularly on the word “good” in the phrase, “God, that’s good.” Invite the ensemble to view their accented 3-word phrases as being more percussive than lyrical, which contrasts nicely with the lyrical moments that Sweeney, Lovett, and Toby have.

Stage business during this piece will likely preclude consistent sight-lines from the ensemble to the conductor. Therefore, the ensemble must be deeply secure in their music ahead of blocking rehearsals, to especially include all of the 3-word musical interjections. Don’t skimp on rehearsing those interjections, as the slight differences between all of them can easily be confusing. Rehearse those moments by first feeding the ensemble the handful of measures just prior to their entrance so that they learn those phrases in context.

The assignment of the ensemble parts throughout this song could benefit from a bit of adjustment. For example, “all women” are supposed to sing the following line that begins in measure 50: “Tell me, are they flavorsome? They are. Could we have some service over here, boy? God, that’s good.” However, it makes no sense for one group of people to ask a question that they then immediately answer. I assigned the first question to the sopranos, the two word response to the altos, and asked all treble voices to complete the phrase.

The breakdown of normal speech patterns in measures 165-176 and 314-329 presented some difficulty for my ensemble, for it is human nature to want to complete words and phrases that one has started to say. A question for the director is why the ensemble is choosing to say these words. Challenging musical moments are sometimes aided by the affected company members having clear acting motivation for why something is done a certain way.³³

Sondheim fails to indicate any chance for a breath in the ensemble from measures 195 to 214. There will likely be obvious holes if stagger breathing is employed given the modest size of most community theater ensembles, particularly in the lower voices. I chose instead to write in breath marks every three or four measures.

The phrase between measures 203 and 214 presents a particular challenge to a production's soprano section. The word "yum" is generally sung here by quickly going to the "m," which is a relatively closed oral posture, but when sopranos sing above the staff, they generally prefer to have an open oral posture. One soprano section leader, Kari Croop, suggested that her section imitate a "crying puppy." There was no attempt to make any sort of traditional full soprano sound. After the production closed, I found that Ms. Croop had led us into a technique that Estill Vocal Training (EVP) identifies as the "Estill Siren."³⁴ Given the framework of EVP, this sound is achieved with "Thin [True Vocal Folds] Body-Cover, a High Tongue, a Tilted Thyroid Cartilage, [retracted false vocal folds], and maximum effort."

#19 - Orchestra / conducting considerations

The orchestra might be inclined to play in too lyrical a fashion when Sweeney and Lovett are talking, e.g., measures 92-103, measures 141-149, etc. Make sure that they know that those

³³ Part of the Parkland company of Sweeney Todd decided that the odd breakdown in speech was due to the emergence of prion disease symptoms as might occur when humans are cannibals, while the rest ascribed the breakdown in speech as simply being due to gastronomical ecstasy.

³⁴ Jo Estill, *Estill Voice Training Level One: Figures for Voice Control Workbook*, 2nd edition (Pittsburgh, PA: Estill Voice International, LLC, 2019), pg. 57-58.

moments are deeply sinister, and the orchestra can assist in that mood by taking care with all detached musical gestures as well as by leaning into all dissonances.

#19 - Collaborative considerations

I strongly advise marking measure 7 as a safety, as it's an insurance policy against any start-of-act mishaps, e.g., the main drape not rising on time.

Depending on blocking decisions, measure 36 might benefit from a caesura on the downbeat. With that, your Toby actor will be able to fully craft the pie shop presentation.

#20 - Johanna Act II sequence

#20 - Cast considerations

From measure 23 on through the end of this piece, the tempo your actors take must be balanced between the phrase length capacity of your Sweeney and Anthony actors versus the ability of your Beggar Woman actor to cleanly get her words out. The latter must be allowed to place an upper limit on the tempo, while the former must be allowed to place a lower limit. Should an Anthony or Sweeney actor struggle with the tempo mid-performance, it is always better to musically cut off a solo line early and strong rather than end on time but sound ragged.

#20 - Orchestra / conducting considerations

This piece is easy to get lost in as it is repetitive. That repetition serves the dramatic purpose of underscoring the trance that Sweeney is in as he murders his victims, but guardrails should be set in place should the onstage actors experience a momentary loss of focus. I advise adding rehearsal letters as follows.

Rehearsal A: Measure 37

Rehearsal B: Measure 49

Rehearsal C: Measure 65 (at Beggar Woman's entrance)

Rehearsal D: Measure 85.

Rehearsal E: Measure 97

Rehearsal F: Measure 109

Rehearsal G: Measure 125 (at Beggar Woman's entrance)

Rehearsal H: Measure 150 (at Sweeney's entrance)

Rehearsal I: measure 162

I chose to concede control of the end of measure 22 to my production's Sweeney and Anthony actors, as there was nothing dramatically or musically gained by forcing them to check in with me there. My orchestra wrote in a fermata over the 5th beat of measure 22. Once we arrived at the 5th beat, my next conducting gesture was the downbeat of measure 23.

Your orchestra's prior extensive training to "play musically" might not serve them well here. The trance-like music underscoring Sweeney and Anthony should be as placid as a lake on a moonlit night, but the music underscoring the Beggar Woman must be as agitated and direct as her warnings. Don't allow the indicated staccatos or marcato markings to go unnoticed by your orchestra, particularly in the brass section.

#20A - After Johanna Act II Sequence / #20B - I am a lass

#20A / #20 B - Orchestra / conducting considerations

These two connected short pieces need to be merely cued, not conducted. I cued the reeds for the final measure of #20 (measure 198), cued Johanna for her *ad libitum* section in #20A, cut off the woodwinds after Johanna finished, and then cued the organist to begin at measure 2.

Warn the organist that there are several lines of dialogue and a fight that have to occur during #20A before advancing to #20B. The scene is clearly indicated in the MTI-provided libretto and in the Hal Leonard score,³⁵ but is not indicated in the MTI-provided P/C score.

#20A / #20B - Collaborative considerations

The MTI-provided P/C score indicates that #20B should segue directly into the next scene, but that appears to be an error. The organ's underscoring music should stop once Mrs. Lovett begins her dialogue with Sweeney. The Hal Leonard score indicates this correctly.³⁶

The "birds ad lib" score indication should be brought up to the sound designer, as they will likely cover that sound unless you have a late 1970s-era Yamaha Electone E-5 in the pit.

#20B is another example of aleatoric music. Warn both the organist and the Lovett actor that their parts should not line up as might seem to be the case at first glance. Specifically, Lovett should begin singing "I am a lass" whenever the blocking calls for that, and should pick her own tonal center without regard for what the organ is playing.

#21 - By the Sea (part 1) / #21A - By the Sea (part II)

#21 / #21A - Orchestra / conducting considerations

The start of this piece can be a bit problematic, as the background orchestral texture is a blurry string ostinato. Additionally, the stage business likely involves Lovett kissing Todd instead of staring at the conductor's baton. Should this spot be an issue, encourage your percussion player to play out, as that part plays on the downbeats.

³⁵ Stephen Sondheim, *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2010), 262-263.

³⁶ Stephen Sondheim, *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2010), 265.

Should there be rhythmic instability in the orchestra, remind everyone that this piece is to be played straight, not swung. Musicians with substantial jazz training might be tempted to play it in the latter way as the score does lend itself to that treatment, but it's not correct here.

This song has numerous possible laugh lines, and the teasing out of those possibilities is largely going to be a discussion between the Director and the actor portraying Lovett. However, the orchestra has a delicious chance to support the humor when Lovett imitates the aggressive calls of the seagulls, beginning in measure 66 of #21. My woodwinds made those notes as squawk-like as possible, and the audience roared with laughter every night.

#21 / #21A - Collaborative considerations

The sound designer might not expect the entire orchestra to drop out just prior to the button of this piece, nor might they expect the harmonium player to play for the final two measures having not played anything in the rest of the song. The Wagner Bridal March quote must be fully audible.

#22 - Wigmaker Sequence

#22 - Cast considerations

The MTI-provided scores indicate plural part names between measures 55-66, e.g., “sopranos,” “altos,” etc. However, this quintet section is normally sung by the 5 individuals who are the soloists in #22A.

#22 - Orchestra / conducting considerations

The full score and the Hal Leonard score³⁷ contain one crucial detail about the start of this piece that the MTI-provided P/C score inexplicably lacks: both the violins and the organ should

³⁷ Stephen Sondheim, *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2010), 277.

play their measures A-22 motif “as fast as possible.” Those musicians should not attempt to line up their agitated motifs with each other.

Beyond the issue above, measures A-18 are a conducting challenge. The pessimal solution is to conduct every beat across that section. Conversely, one solution requires ceding control to the reed 2 player, who will currently be on oboe. If this path is chosen, advise the oboist to write in caesuras on beat 4 in measures 6, 14, and 18. The conductor will cue the oboist to begin each of their 3 phrases given the appropriate cue line from the onstage actors. Inform the orchestra that once the song begins, the first emphatic downbeat will be at measure 19, and everything before that will be dictated cues. Tell the violins and organ players to keep playing and not stop their pattern until measure 22. Finally, inform the orchestra that measure 19 will be imminent when they have heard 3 distinct phrases from the oboe with pauses in between each.

Don’t overly manage the actors’ 8th note pick-up notes into measures 19 (Sweeney), 27 and 67 (Anthony.) A far easier route is to trust the actors to catch the conducted downbeats into measures 19, 27, and 67, and also trust each actor to then place the 8th note pick-up notes appropriately. I conducted much of the fast 5/8 measures in an uneven 2-3 pattern, and gave a strong upbeat ahead of those two moments to further clarify the entrances.

#22 - Collaborative considerations

Apart from the discrepancies noted in the Appendix B between the orchestral books / full score and the P/C score at the end of this piece, your production might not need measures 75-84 to be repeated three times as is indicated in the MTI-provided full score. The dialogue is scant for that amount of music, though stage business could elongate the need for underscoring.

#22A - The letter

#22 - Cast considerations

Place this song as early in your rehearsal process as possible, and plan on frequent check-ins as the production process continues. Aim for the quintet to be a self-directed vocal ensemble rather than one beholden to the conductor's every gesture.

There are some habitual choices made about this piece that are not indicated in the score, but have been done so often as to effectively be considered performance practice. First, add a caesura after the word "honorable" in measure 6. "*Molto rubato*" might be construed to be under the umbrella of this gesture, but the caesura was clearer for my production's quintet.

In the original Broadway cast recording³⁸, the tenor sings "Johanna" as a pick-up into measure 18, but the orchestra doesn't place the downbeat written in at measure 18 until after the tenor has cut off. I liked the effect, and conducted that moment in this fashion.

The baritone's word "but" in measure 21 is habitually sung as if it has a *tenuto* indication, if not a fermata. It's generally a good decision to emphasize the word "but" in sung theater as that action will highlight whatever contrast is being discussed.

#22 - Orchestra / conducting considerations

I was most successful as conductor through this piece when I dictated the orchestra's gestures rather than tried to keep any sort of regular time or indicate every beat.

#22 - Collaborative considerations

Some productions, including the original Broadway cast,³⁹ appear to have the Sweeney Todd actor sing the final two words ("Sweeney...Todd") instead of the bass quintet member. That serves the dramatic purpose of taking the personification of Sweeney's thoughts via quintet back into reality, and is an interesting option.

³⁸ Stephen Sondheim, "Wigmaker Sequence," *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street (Original Broadway Cast Recording)*, performed by the Original Broadway Cast of Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street, Masterworks Broadway, released January 1, 1979, accessed October 24, 2023, Spotify.

³⁹ Ibid.

#23 - Not While I'm Around

#23 - Orchestra / conducting considerations

This piece is straightforward apart from a potential coordination issue covering measures 63-74. The placid music in measures 63-66 should underscore Mrs. Lovett's dialogue, and the sinister music in measure 67 should occur just as Toby recognizes Pirelli's purse. With a bit of pacing practice, the actor playing Lovett should be able to get this dialogue out in the given time, particularly if the conductor is prepared to slightly stretch or contract measures 63-66 as needed.

Ask the violin soloist to play out in measures 75-81, and assure them that the dissonant music is absolutely correct. Sondheim undercuts Lovett's text with malicious musical subtext.⁴⁰

#23A - After "Not While I'm around" (Organ underscore)

#23A - Orchestra / conducting considerations

It is unlikely that your organist will be able to play the *ff* as indicated here and have the dialogue be understood. Also, should a production have a keyboardist covering the organ book, there might be a difficult Mainstage patch change required between #23A and #24 depending on staging decisions.

#24 - Parlour Songs (Part I / II / III)

#24 - Cast considerations

Bryan Goode, my production's Beadle actor who completed the run, came up with a novel bit of humor for #24 (Part 1). Most recordings indicate that Beadle actors milk the *tenuto* note a bit in measure 21, specifically on the word "had." Goode interpreted Beadle to be very controlling and arrogant, and to that end, Goode decided to hold the word "had" every night as long as he could while singing at full volume. The dramatic effect was shrewd, and the audience roared every night as Beadle's note dragged on and on.

⁴⁰Steve Swayne, *How Sondheim Found His Sound*, (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 42-43.

#24 - Orchestra / conducting considerations

Plan with the director how Beadle will get his first note, as they might be unaware that Beadle and the harmonium start together given the indications in the score. Be aware that it takes a surprising amount of preparation for diegetic music to sound completely unrehearsed and amateurish as should be the case here, and be prepared to support that.

The MTI-provided scores are inadequate for underscoring the parlor scene appropriately, so either have the libretto or the Hal Leonard score nearby during rehearsal. Once we were in tech, my organ player took the lead and I sat back, as conducting this scene is unnecessary.

As an insurance policy against changes in dialogue pacing, give your organ player *carte blanche* to loop within the #24A measures 51-61 underscoring, or to play with the tempo there as they deem appropriate.

In #24B, be advised that a keyboardist playing the organ book has some particularly fast patch shifts. Specifically, that musician must plan to be abruptly cut off by some cue during measures 24-32, switch patches, and immediately play measure 33.

#25 - Fogg's Asylum

#25 - Cast considerations

The MTI-provided scores lack a few crucial markings for this piece that the Hal Leonard score has.⁴¹ Absent those markings, the music from measure 38 through to the start of #25A (Fogg's Passacaglia) appears to be bewilderingly difficult. Treating the Hal Leonard score as the authority for a moment, the top four vocal lines at measure 38 are meant to be solos. The tempo transition from measure 37 to 38 should be marked as *L'istesso tempo* with a dotted quarter note at measure 37 equaling a quarter note at measure 38. Most crucially, those four solo

⁴¹ Stephen Sondheim, *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2010), 315-320.

lines are meant to be sung *ad libitum*, not in strict time. This passage is another place where Sondheim has used aleatoric music. The solo soprano line is marked “bird-like,” the alto solo line is marked “keening,” the solo baritone line is marked “high whisper,” and the solo bass line is marked “low whisper.”

#25 - Orchestra / conducting considerations

Ultimately, I conducted measures 38 and 39 not as if they were in 8/4, but rather, as if each measure was actually 2 measures in 4/4. That might not have been the most elegant or technically accurate way to conduct that passage, but the clarity it afforded my cast and orchestra made that route the obvious choice.

#25A - Fogg's Passacaglia

#25A - Cast considerations

The MTI-provided score does not have crucial markings that the Hal Leonard score thankfully contains. In this specific case, the solo voices from the very end of #25 are told to continue in an *ad lib.* fashion into #25A.

#25A - Orchestra / conducting considerations

The transition from #25 into #25A is unusual as it continues the aleatoric treatment from #25. I conducted only a handful of measures and then stopped. Beyond that point and until the end of the scene, I asked the ensemble to respond organically to what the others around them were doing as far as the timing of the sigh, “Sweeney.” Combined with the improvisation of the organist, the ultimate effect was not of a precise choir, but of a teeming mass of broken people.

#25A - Collaborative considerations

This scene ends abruptly with an onstage gunshot followed by a cacophony of screams. The orchestra must be given the most literal of “trigger warnings” so no one is surprised at the

first dress rehearsal. Hearing protection is warranted. Additionally, the gunshot / screams moment might present some difficulty for the sound designer. The conductor must be able to hear the ensemble voices at the start of “City on Fire” but the screams preceding that should not be amplified. Have a plan for what aural information you need through the monitors at this precise moment, and communicate that to the sound designer and the soundboard operator.

#26 - City on Fire

#26 - Cast considerations

The altos and basses will likely appreciate the option to drop the octave from measure 37 through to beat 1 of measure 39. The ensemble should practice finding their starting pitches against the cello, bass and organ line, as the violin and viola cluster chords are not useful for that.

#26 - Collaborative considerations

The start of this piece is a challenge, and requires advance planning between the director, the conductor, and the sound designer. The logical staging direction here is “chaos” as Fogg’s inmates break out of the asylum. If your director wants there to be any lingering screams or vocalizations from the ensemble, those sounds will readily cover up the orchestra’s quiet ostinato vamp. If the cast is not directly looking at the conductor when they are cued in, they will trip along in the sea of words, but if they are looking, that action will take them out of the scene.

Our solution to these logistical challenges involved several small decisions that worked together. First, the sound designer made sure that the screams ending #25A were not amplified through the orchestra monitors, but once the screams ended, he knew I absolutely needed to hear at least some ensemble voices again. Next, the cast confirmed that they needed to hear the strings, so the sound designer emphasized the strings’ microphones in the onstage monitor mix. I

decided that the starting vamp would not be uncertain, but would be played through three times, with the cast coming in on the last time, and then the song proceeding as written.

Finally, the most crucial thing I did was to install a cast “landing strip” in our music. As the percussionist was unoccupied and few sounds carry as far and as easily as a snare drum hit, I asked her to play the following rhythm with the strings through the six measures of vamp we had hard-wired at the start of the piece. I viewed this as a crucial sound cue rather than a change to the orchestration.

Example 1: “City on Fire” percussion book adjustment.

Snare Drum: written out vamp (3x) Cast enters 3 4

My percussionist solved another similar problem in the vamp at measures 20-21. Again, stage business, an indistinct ostinato, and sightlines precluded my Johanna actor from finding the downbeat and feeling comfortable at this entrance. My percussionist played a single snare drum hit at the start of each vamp iteration. When I heard Johanna’s voice, I advanced the orchestra out of the vamp.

#27 - Searching (part I)

#27 - Orchestra / conducting considerations

Do not advance to measure 1 of this song from measure A without confirming that the percussionist on chimes is ready to play, as that part is absolutely crucial for Lovett and Todd staying with the orchestra for the first several bars.

Instruct the cellist to put a slight accent on the first beat of every new note they play from measures 5 through 13, and make sure the soundboard operator knows to feature both the cello and the celesta (organ) parts through the onstage monitors.

At every change of section throughout this piece, I inserted the briefest of lifts just prior to the new tempo and mood. When I initially attempted to play straight through, every entrance was muddy, but with the lifts inserted, the entrances were clean.

#27A - Searching (Part II)

#27A - Orchestra / conducting considerations

Should you choose the "long insert" from measures 36-40, warn the orchestra of the empty measures at 36, 37, 38C, and 38D, as anyone counting rests will not expect dead air.

#27A - Collaborative considerations

The dialogue and obvious stage business seem overfull for the amount of indicated underscoring music at measures 1-8. My production had to loop this section.

The music from measure 41 of this piece straight through measure 8 of #28 is one of the most complicated moments to coordinate between the orchestra, the actors, and the technical team. This section must be specifically included in your technical rehearsal to be run not just with the barber chair and lights, but with the music.

First, warn the orchestra that they will likely need to drop to no more than *mezzopiano* as soon as Todd begins speaking after his entrance, "You!...What are you doing here?" Otherwise, it will be impossible to hear enough to line up with the onstage actors.

Next, warn both the violists and your soundboard operator that the viola is the most important instrument from measures 41-54. The violas must be loud enough for the Beggar Woman to easily hear, which requires both that they play out and that their microphone feed is featured in the onstage monitor mix.

The orchestra should put a "in case it's needed" safety fermata over beat 3 in measure 50 as an insurance policy, and should be warned that this section's tempo must be flexible

depending on the dialogue's speed. If the actors are a bit behind the orchestra as of measure 50, release the violins and celesta (organ) to continue their ostinato part while holding the fermata for the violas. If the actors are a bit ahead of the orchestra at that measure, the orchestra plays as though the fermata isn't there. Should the latter case occur, there is a simple acting motivation to explain the pause in the dialogue / singing: the Beggar Woman should use any inadvertent extra time to really look at Sweeney prior to singing, "hey, don't I know you mister?"

#28 - Judge's Return

#28 - Orchestra / conducting considerations

Be able to conduct this song from memory, as you will be reacting constantly throughout it to cues from on stage.

#28 - Collaborative considerations

Segueing directly from #27A, the coordination issues between stage and orchestra continue. In general, the Beggar Woman's throat should be slashed around measure 5, her "body" must disappear during measures 6 and 7, and the Judge should enter on measure 8's downbeat, having likely climbed a set of stairs to get to the Barber Shop. I added another "in case it's needed" safety fermata to the orchestra part in measure 5, beat 3. Relative to the tempo of the first five measures, measures 6 and 7 were greatly elongated, which I achieved in part by indicating the 16th note pulse in my baton.

The actor portraying the Judge should be part of the solution to this coordination issue. He should know what music change occurs as he steps into the shop, and adjust his steps to that..

From measures 14-24, I did not conduct in any meter, but merely dictated each of the 7 orchestral hits. The P/C score makes clear that the woodwinds are on the 5th hit, but there is no indication in the reed books that this is the case, so warn them if choosing to conduct this way.

The conductor's sightline to the Judge is likely going to be an issue at measure 28, as most productions have the barber chair facing directly stage right or left, which is rarely where the orchestra is placed. Should this be the case, ask the orchestra members who play in measure 27 to play their beat 1 8th note on beats 2 and 3 as well. Conduct this altered measure 27 in the same tempo as is the target tempo for measure 28, and all need for sightlines for measure 28's downbeat will be eliminated.

Beware of the impulse for the orchestra's dynamic level to rise prematurely between measures 46-51. In practical terms, this mistake runs the risk of covering up the dialogue. Dramatically, though, the orchestra does not need to metaphorically scream about the danger of the moment, as the audience is smart and will unquestionably know what is coming.

The Judge's death is another moment that should be addressed in your production's technical rehearsal with music included. Given the Judge's line "Benjamin Barker!" realization in measure 51 and the ominous quiet in measure 55, there isn't much music as written for any final scuffling, the murder, and the disposing of the body. Ideally, measure 54 should be played just as the Judge's "body" is going through the floor of the shop as the chromatic descending line is clearly that physical action made manifest. Given all of the above, I made measure 51 into a vamp, and advanced out of the vamp after I heard Todd shout one last "Benjamin Barker!." Those decisions together were what my production needed to cover the required events.

Between measures 56 and 58, your Todd actor will need time to work through a whole range of emotions, and the actor - not the conductor - should decide when it's time to sing. The orchestra put a "in case it's needed" safety fermata over measure 57. I conducted a downbeat at measures 56 and 57, waited for my Todd actor to sing at measure 58, and took my tempo from

him. I did allow for some slight dynamic swells between measures 56 and 58, particularly in the timpani, as staying stagnant felt incorrect for the moment.

Again, the score is not as clear as it could be with measures 66-69 as was the case in the equivalent music in “#12B: Pirelli’s death underscore.” As I did in #12B, I gave the downbeat, and then followed whatever reed player had the chromatic 16th notes for beats 2 and 3. It might be useful to think of there being a caesura on the “and” of beat 3, as if musical slack is needed to cover onstage action, elongating those low notes is a reasonable solution.

My production’s ensemble had difficulty finding their pitch and catching the downbeat at measure 75. While the sightline issue was perhaps specific to my production, any production’s ensemble is likely to have issues picking a “C” out of the dissonant violin ostinato in measure 72 while Lovett is screaming. While the ostinato continued with the violins at measure 72, my percussionist played loud two dotted quarter notes on the timpani she had tuned to F in the tempo of measure 75. Yes, the surprise of the ensemble entrance at 75 was replaced with musical foreshadowing from the timpani. However, this alternative was one we could cleanly execute and was in keeping with the dramatic needs of that moment.

#29 - Final Scene (part I)

#29 - Cast considerations

Between measures 8-9, Sondheim intentionally throws out typical rules about text-setting to dramatically convey Lovett’s frenzy. I strongly advise first rehearsing this section on a sound like “bah” or “pah.” Put extra weight on any notes that are on the beat. Once that is solid, add back in the words, but keep the odd accents as a means of keeping straight where the beats are. Only when this is effortless should the words be sung with the conventional syllabic stress.

One final instruction on this section from Sondheim himself: “You have to turn your ear off to what the other person is singing - that’s the trick...it’s the rhythmic equivalent of polytonality.”⁴²

Lovett’s indicated music from measures 42- 45 should not line up with the accompanying music in terms of rhythm or pitch. Each actor playing Lovett will have her own interpretation of if Mrs. Lovett is calmed by Todd’s words here, or if she still believes that she’s in grave danger. That individual decision must drive this moment’s delivery far more than any set of aesthetics.

#29 - Orchestra / conducting considerations

As with #28, be able to conduct this song from memory, as you will be reacting constantly throughout it to cues from on stage.

#29 - Collaborative considerations

A lengthy dialogue occurs under Measure A that is not immediately obvious from the MTI-provided P/C score. In our production, Measure A took about 50 seconds, which felt like a long time to hold a fermata static. I broke that fermata up via 3 separate cut-offs. The first cut-off was to the ensemble. They knew to expect a certain number of beats given the tempo we just left, so no matter the sightlines, they could reliably cut off without looking at me. The second cut-off was to the trombones, cello, and bass, and occurred about halfway through the dialogue. The last cut-off was to my percussionist on tam-tam, and she provided substantial dramatic color by ebbing and flowing during the final half of the dialogue.

Measure B covers the sickening moment when Todd realizes that he has just killed his beloved wife, Lucy. The music is scored as “*ff*,” but that musical decision greatly limits what any Todd actor is able to do. My Todd actor wanted that moment to be one of disbelieving shock

⁴² Mark Eden Horowitz, *Sondheim on Music: Minor Details and Major Decisions*, (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 144.

morphing into full-throated lament rather than of immediate full-throated lament, and the music as written conflicts with this intention. Should another Todd actor wish to craft this moment similarly, have the orchestra play measure B as written and immediately fade to nothing. Todd can say a horrified “oh no!” in a brief moment of silence, and then, the orchestra can resume.

I strongly advise marking measure 6 as a safety.

The dialogue from the top of this piece through to measure 8 was the most variable element of the show given the depths of emotion in play. Immediately after this, measures 8-9 are the most complicated music of the show, during which time Todd laments his dead wife while Lovett pleads for her life in a stream of words whose meter constantly changes. The actors and I had to carefully plan our way through this moment, with the goal of giving them space to make strong acting choices while also being able to get what they needed from the orchestra.

Once our Todd actor discovered Lucy’s identity, he did not have any acting motivation to drag his eyes away from her body until the reprise of the “A Little Priest” material in measure 14. Likewise, our Lovett actor had no acting motivation to drag her gaze away from Todd while pleading for her life. Having either of them need to stare in my direction for a cue would have ruined the moment, and I strongly suspect that many actors would have a similar impulse.

Together, we distilled the need for visual conducting cues down to one moment: the start of measure 7, which for us, was often following a few iterations of measure 6 as a safety / vamp. After hearing the line “You lied to me” from Todd, my Lovett actor cleverly decided to have a moment of wild searching with her eyes out towards the audience, which gave her a sightline to me. Her acting motivation was simple: “what can I possibly say now to save myself?” Once she saw my cue for measure 7’s downbeat, she would turn back to Todd with the sung line “no no no,” and the rest of that sequence was delivered directly to Todd.

In trying to relieve Lovett of the need to look at me, we quickly realized that we needed to substitute something in place of that. The music was just too similar and keening between measures 8 and 9 for her to reliably catch the downbeats, and trying to adjust mid-sequence was so difficult as to be impossible. Yet again, my percussionist (now on timpani) was the solution to this problem. She played on the downbeats of measures 8, 8AA, and 8BB. In measure 8CC, she played 3 dotted half notes, one on each of the major beats, and again, she functionally played the same 3-note rhythm in measure 9 though the meter (and thus the note value) changes. She again played downbeats on every measure from 10 through 13, at which point she picked back up with her own part and drove the *accelerando* for me.

Conductors should ask their Todd actor and production director one question: how long does it take for Todd to decide to kill Mrs. Lovett? This has repercussions for how the orchestra plays the recapitulation of the “A Little Priest” material. Different treatments of the *accelerando* (rapid or more gradual) will support different versions of Todd’s decision-making progress. Regardless of the *accelerando*, a conductor must mind the dynamic level here, for it is quite easy for the music to stay loud beyond that first beat of measure 14.

Measure 56’s length must be driven by the onstage action. In the case of my production, Todd needed time to fling Lovett’s body into the oven, turn and morph from vengeance into utter despair, and walk to Lucy’s body. It felt wrong to still be playing “*fff*” as Todd was again contemplating Lucy’s body, but the music of the next song had too short an introduction to cover what my Todd actor wanted to do. I put two cut-offs into measure 56 and also put in a *decrescendo*. I indicated a rapid *decrescendo* as Todd was staggering back from the oven, and the first cut-off was given to everyone but the percussionist when Todd was once again looking at

Lucy's body. The tam-tam drum roll cover Todd's travel to the body, and then, the orchestra started "#29A - Final Scene (Part II)."

#29A - Final Scene (Part II)

#29A - Cast considerations

Avoid any inclination for requesting that Sweeney sing with conventional technique here. Our Sweeney prioritized communication of brokenness and despair over a pleasant sound, and the audience responded well to those choices.

#29A - Orchestra considerations

Sondheim wrote only a scant 3 measures to allow Sweeney to transition from Lovett's murder back to mourning Lucy (mm. 214-215A), though there are fermatas in measures 215 and 215B. If these fermatas are held too long, though, the effect morphs from lament to sounding as though the conductor has missed a cue to go on. As our production's Sweeney requested more time there and I didn't want the music to sound incorrect, I added a caesura after each of the fermatas. The musical gesture stayed intact, and Sweeney got the time he needed.

#29A - Collaborative considerations

The MTI-provided P/C score does not indicate the following, but note that #29A should end roughly when Toby appears on stage.

#29B - The ballad of Sweeney Todd

#29B - Cast considerations

Measures 59-74 were a source of concern for our Beadle and Pirelli actors. The vocal effect should not be pretty, but rather, ghostly and ghoulish. The 2012 cast recording was a good resource for this moment.⁴³

⁴³ Stephen Sondheim, "The Ballad of Sweeney Todd," *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street (2012 London Cast Recording)*, performed by Imelda Staunton, Michael Ball, and the 2012 London Cast of Sweeney Todd, First Night Records, released April 2, 2012, accessed October 24, 2023, Spotify.

I started my part of the entire rehearsal process by jumping to the last sung line of the show, which is “the demon barber of Fleet...Street.” Every Sweeney ensemble member runs the risk of inadvertently soloing on the final word “Street” because seven major beats of rest precede it. Sondheim clearly intended that final word to be a surprise. I am indebted to Joe and Jenny Lamberson, who along with Eric Morganson, helped me to develop the “Sweeney Todd chant.” The chant is seven words long, and is as follows: close shaves, meat pies, here on fleet. I ended as many rehearsals as possible by asking the assembled cast to sing the last line, and I would say the chant between their words “Fleet” and “Street.” As we approached tech week, I instructed them to recite the chant silently while they waited through the seven beats of rest. That morale-building tactic was far more effective than merely telling the ensemble to count.

#29B - Orchestra / conducting considerations

Note that this ballad is cued by Toby’s line, “Smoothly...smoothly.”

#30 / #31 - Exit Music

This music is straightforward and is a pure victory lap to conduct.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Having presented four chapters of granular *Sweeney Todd* score analysis, I will conclude this document by discussing how my *Sweeney Todd* experience has crystallized my view that fundamentally, community theater is a collaborative art form.

The name “community theater” makes obvious the creators and audience of this art form, but less obvious how emphasis on community affects the art’s creation. One incident from the rehearsal process highlighted this effect for me. Late in the *Sweeney Todd* process, I was part of a rehearsal for “#17. Epiphany.” The actor playing Sweeney Todd, Matt Hester, kept missing his first entrance despite my increasingly emphatic conducting gestures delivered via back-of-house monitor. I eventually asked him if there was any way I could make that cue gesture clearer.

“Oh, I’m not looking at you. Sweeney has no motivation to look up at that moment.”

My first response was words to the effect of, “well, I’ll give you some motivation!” while miming that I was about to box him. He chuckled as it was clear I was in no way serious about the threat of violence,⁴⁴ but we were quickly at an actual impasse. Who should be prioritized: the actor or the conductor? As music director, I could have required my actor to change his performance to ensure that he caught his cue. But instead, I respected his informed impulse about how to best communicate that moment of discovery, and attempted to first adjust my practical needs before asking that he adjust his crafting of that moment. This decision and countless others like it ultimately created a richer theatrical experience for everyone involved, and truly allowed the work to be collaborative.

This experience contrasts with some less collaborative experiences I have as a musician working in theater. In particular, I’ve been involved with productions in which the director subscribes to the idea that the only thing that matters is their vision. There are ample schools of

⁴⁴ Nothing about this document should be construed as promoting the use of violence to achieve artistic goals.

thought throughout European-derived theater that touch on this mindset, be it the more benevolent “director as *auteur*” model⁴⁵ or the more unfortunate “director as dictator” situations. This might make sense in the narrow situation in which a well-known director is a box-office draw. However, the *raison d'être* of community theater is not generally oriented towards box office profits to the exclusion of such factors as community building. Also, what works in the professional version of a situation is not always a useful surrogate for excellence in an amateur version of that same situation.

Every production I've worked on in which collaboration was encouraged was both a satisfying project to work on as well as resulted in a well-crafted show for the audience. No production staff member is smarter or wiser, alone, than a collective of artists allowed to use their gifts in service of a story.

As conductor, I do have final responsibility for certain parts of the production process. Being open to collaboration doesn't mean that I allow rehearsals to get side-tracked, or that my own artistic vision of the show waffles with every passing comment. However, a spirit of collaboration must undergird the entire production process in community theater, as otherwise, one risks missing the entire point of the endeavor. In that regard, the Parkland production of *Sweeney Todd* was an unqualified success. Community was built as we built this macabre and absurd world of murder and meat pies. Jon Faw, a member of the ensemble, crew and orchestra, neatly summed up his experience, which I venture is representative of the entire production team.

⁴⁵ Christopher Innes and Maria Shevtsova, *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Directing*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013) 147-181.

But at the end of the day, these strangers turned friends, put on a 3-hour Sondheim beast. They cared deeply and poured passion into the show. Teenagers and parents, students and teachers. We looked out for each other and we gave the audience everything we had...⁴⁶

I hope that this guide allows others to build their own precious community around *Sweeney Todd* wherever they are located, with a bit of assistance on the practical side from someone who has done it before.

⁴⁶ Jon Faw, personal communication to author, October 30, 2023.

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APPENDIX A: SUGGESTED CAST FOUNDATIONAL MATERIAL

1) Vocal Health and Hygiene

Discussion of medical providers that deal with the voice

Discussion of smoking / vaping risks

Discussion of vocal nodules and laryngopharyngeal reflux

Does a show occur during a time of seasonal allergies? If yes, create a medical plan with a healthcare provider if warranted, use a mask when outside, sleep in a room with an air purifier if possible, and shower and change clothes after being outside.

Vocal hygiene: the series of things one does to keep the vocal instrument in good shape

- Wash hands frequently.
- Hydrate. Extra hydration is needed if a person consumes alcohol or caffeine.
- Use supported speech.
- Beware of excessive throat-clearing (globus), particularly after a cold has run its course.
- Beware of loud places, as that invites pressed phonation.
- Beware of dry conditions, and drink extra water when that is the ambient climate.

Discussion that subtle changes in the voice often precede the obvious signs and sensations of vocal fatigue, and it's better to start vocal rehabilitation practices (e.g., semi-occluded vocal tract exercises, vocal rest, vocal fry exercises, etc.) as early in that process as possible. Discussion of confidential voice if vocal rest is needed.⁴⁷

2) The Vocal Mechanism

The four parts of the speech / singing mechanism are: respiration, phonation, resonance, and articulation. I spell out how human speech is created with this framing as a foundation. Corrections to vocal technique in my rehearsals are given in context of these four items, specifically in terms of which item or items is currently maladjusted relative to the task at hand.

Introduction of anatomical illustrations related to all facets of the speech / singing mechanism.

Discussion of "breath support" as an active process, and not something that should ever feel tense or locked up.

3) My Singing Strategies

- Breathe in a controlled fashion, and get only the air you need for the next phrase.
- Beware of excessive subglottic pressure.

⁴⁷https://www.asha.org/practice-portal/clinical-topics/voice-disorders/#collapse_6 and numerous other websites devoted to speech pathology / speech therapy.

- Keep air moving, no matter what consonants you have to move through.
- Be aware of tongue placement.
- The act of singing is primarily about vowel elongation. Given that, beware of the MeRLiN consonants (the consonants in the word “Merlin”). When a native English-speaker sings in English, a vowel followed by L, M, N, or R in the same syllable will generally lead to premature sounding of the consonant, while glides at the onset of words will tend to lead to the late sounding of the vowel. In both cases, the vowel is the goal.
- The ensemble that breathes together, sings together. Every phrase should be thought of as beginning not on the first note, but rather, on the breath required for that phrase.

4) My Rehearsal Process for the Cast

- We will generally begin with rhythm, and then add pitch.
- We will generally begin with voices that are on the harmony rather than the melody, or the voices that are on the most difficult material, and then build up towards the parts that are simpler.
- Anticipate that I might not correct every single thing wrong in one pass through a phrase, as people generally cannot keep more than one or two corrections in mind at a time.
- Before moving from one section of music to the next, I will take a “temperature check,” which consists of asking the ensemble where each person is with respect to the material we have just covered. Responses are anywhere on the spectrum between thumbs up (e.g., “I am comfortable with the material”) to thumbs down (e.g., “I am absolutely not comfortable with the material.”)
- We might not move everyone to being comfortable with a given music section in one rehearsal, but I promise that I will do my absolute best to get the cast to that point well in advance of tech week.
- Memorization drills are incorporated into rehearsal as early as possible, so the task of getting “off-book” is not a solitary one or one that is left to the last moment.

APPENDIX B: MTI RENTAL MATERIAL ERRATA

While I have assembled this list myself, this information's collection results from the cumulative efforts of the Parkland Spring 2023 *Sweeney Todd* company and orchestra. It reflects the official scores that MTI sends out upon receiving a *Sweeney Todd* rental agreement and being granted a performance license. The information below will likely no longer apply should the copyright information directly below have changed or been updated.

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Beyond the errors and issues that the Parkland orchestra and cast discovered, an additional errata list was compiled by Brian DeMaris. That information is below in the footnote.⁴⁸

All references below to orchestral parts, the full orchestral score, the Piano / Conductor (P/C) score, and the actores scores refer to the official MTI-sourced rental materials. The “book” (e.g., the Reed 4 book) refers to the physical copy of music a given orchestra member will play off of. The Hal Leonard score will be referred to as the “HL score.” The Original Broadway cast album will be referred to as the “OBC album.”

All (or multiple) scores

Transition between #5 and #6: While the MTI-provided materials are technically correct, the absence of information about the aleatoric music is a problem. See Chapter 4 for explanation.

#19 - God, That's Good!: Apparent error in baritone / bass phrase in measure 52. Mirrored between P/C, full score and actor scores. The HL score and OBC album agree on the phrase contours with the MTI materials, but instead, indicate that this phrase starts on G3, which seems much more consonant than what the MTI materials state.

#22 - Wigmaker Sequence: The full orchestral score and individual parts disagree slightly with the P/C score and actors' scores. Absent a clarifying instruction, the orchestra will expect that measures 75-84 will be played three times as that is what is indicated in their parts. This is not clear in the P/C score, as it only looks like a simple repeat. Also in P/C score, measure 85 is not marked as a vamp though it is marked as such in all other parts.

#22A - The Letter: P/C score and full score both indicate that in measure 10, the baritone's two notes are G3 followed by a Gb3, which clashes with the bass part. The HL score and OBC album agree that the baritone part should match the bass part. The latter resources seem aurally correct.

#24A Parlor songs (Part II):- Beadle's part, measure 39 in the P/C and full orchestral score is clearly incorrect. The two Cbs in the P/C score are instead Bbs in the HL score, which makes much more musical sense.

⁴⁸From Saturday, February 23, 2013:

<https://operamterrata.blogspot.com/2013/02/sweeney-todd-errata-alternate-9-piece.html>

Transition between #25 and #25A: While the MTI-provided materials are technically correct, the absence of information about the aleatoric music is a problem. See Chapter 5 for explanation.

Piano / Conductor score

#9A - Pirelli's Entrance: The P/C score (and only this score) incorrectly indicates that Pirelli is accompanied by instruments in 3rds the entire way through this short song. That maps correctly to the orchestral parts except for measure 15. Pirelli is supposed to sing beats 2-6 of measure 15 by himself.

Full orchestral score

#2 - No Place Like London: Measures A-L, and straight into measures 3-26. Clear transposition error in Reed 4 part that is mirrored in the individual book. Printed as though clarinet players read concert pitch.

#20 - Johanna - Act II Sequence: Apparent error in Percussion part in measures 1-4 that is mirrored in the individual book. The P/C score, HL score and OBC album agree on a different path through those measures, and that path seems correct

#27 - Searching (Part I): There is a potential issue across measures 1-4 in the Percussion part that is mirrored in the individual book. The HL score indicates chime pitches that match Lovett's opening note (B natural) and are thus far more helpful musically to the actor. The MTI-provided materials and OBC album indicate the same phrase contour, but start the chimes on an E natural.

#27A - Searching (Part II):

The Reed 5 part in measure 3 has a one-measure key change / transposition error that appears to be incorrect, and that does not map to the individual book.

Reed 3 book

#19 - God, That's Good!: There is a key signature spelling error that doesn't impact sounded pitches, as it occurs across only rests in measure 266-267.

Reed 4 book

#2 - No Place Like London: Entire first page (measures A-L, and straight into measures 3-26). Clear transposition error. Printed as though clarinet players read concert pitch. Error mirrored in full score.

#7 - Ah, Miss: Error in score spelling. Measures 44-49 are in the wrong key but are correct in the full orchestral score. The key signature should be 6 sharps. The written pitch should be C#, which maps correctly to the Db that is actually written in the book.

#9 - Pirelli's Miracle Elixir: Key signature error in measures 1-4. No notes are played there, and the key signature is corrected at measure 5. Error does not map to full score.

#27A - Searching (Part II): Measures 3 through the entirety of the short insert, and to measure 38 of the long insert. The book is transposed incorrectly across those measures, and the entirety of that music is unplayable as written, not just because the notes are wrong but because they are placed below the range of the clarinet. The individual book's error does not map to the full orchestral score, so the former should be adjusted to reflect what is indicated in the latter.

Percussion book

#20 - Johanna - Act II Sequence: Apparent error in measures 1-4 that is mirrored in full orchestral score. The P/C score, HL score and OBC album agree on a different path through those measures, and the latter grouping seems correct.

#27 - Searching (Part I): There is a potential issue across measures 1-4. The HL score indicates chime pitches that match Lovett's opening note (B natural) and are thus far more helpful musically to the actor. The MTI-provided materials and OBC album indicate the same phrase contour, but start the chimes on an E natural.

Organ book

#2 - No Place Like London: Instruction in music to go "to harpsichord" at m. 56 ignores organ sounds needed mm. 208-211.

APPENDIX C: SUGGESTED MAINSTAGE PATCH LISTS

Should a keyboardist cover the harp book, that is trivial to program, as the harp player in the original Tunick orchestration plays only the harp.

The person who covers the organ book has several decisions to make as they must cover a few more instruments. The list below reflects what my production used in broad strokes. Even if the keyboard rig has a volume pedal, the savvy *Sweeney* keyboardist will have a base collection of organ sounds that are programmed to be of varying dynamic levels and textures. Specifically, there should be at least one “all stops”-style Cathedral organ sound that is programmed to send a loud volume through the house. This should be reserved for solo organ moments like the prelude, but note that this level is likely to be too loud when the rest of the pit is playing or when the cast is singing. There should also be at least one lighter-textured organ patch that is programmed to send a soft volume through the house that will be useful during underscoring moments. A middle volume patch set between the two volume levels would also be prudent in moments when the pit is loud and the organ should be an integrated part of that sound. Organizing the patches in terms of volume will make both the keyboardist’s and soundboard operator’s jobs much simpler than if all of the patches send the same volume.

If the keyboardist is also an organist, they are likely to have informed opinions on how to program the different organ patches to achieve different colors and textures. They should be encouraged to make the Mainstage programming as nuanced as they wish.

Prelude: Cathedral organ patches as a base. In keeping with Sondheim’s wishes (see chapter 4), the keyboardist should choose a few different patches for the middle of the piece that allow for variation in sound as well as variation in dynamic level.

#1. Prologue: The Ballad Of Sweeney Todd: Middle cathedral organ patch at measure (m.) 59. Soft volume organ patch at 102. Suggested return to middle cathedral organ patch at m. 130. Obeying “*ff*” from m. 130 until the end of the piece will likely produce an unbalanced sound relative to the rest of the pit and company, so switch back to a low volume around m. 150.

#2. No Place Like London: Chime patch mm. 9-13, but if this presents any problems, note that this line doubles the percussionist’s chimes lines and can be dispensed if necessary. Middle or low volume organ patch at m. 28. Harpsichord patch at m. 214. (Instruction in music to go “to harpsichord” at m. 56 ignores organ sounds needed mm. 208-211 and should be viewed as an error.) Low volume organ patch at 243. Play until 246. Change patch quickly to harpsichord patch at m. 247.

#2A. Transition music / #3. The Worst Pies In London: The music in #2A is clearly scored for organ (top manual and foot pedals), but no indication is given at the end of #2 to change off of the harpsichord. I assume that this was an error. If a production shares this assumption, use middle volume organ patch for #2A as that moment’s music is entirely the pit, and there is no danger of covering up the actors. Consider switching to a low-volume organ patch for “Worst Pies” as the organ’s part is textural rather than structurally crucial.

4. Poor Thing: Low volume / light texture organ patch at m. 1. Celesta patch at m. 13, and suggested middle or low volume setting on this and all celesta patch uses. Change to middle or low volume (middle or light texture) organ patch at m. 123. Suggested switch to “all stops” loud volume organ patch for m. 175. (The final measure will not cover any actors.)

5. My Friends: Celesta patch at m. 11. “All stops” middle volume organ patch for m. 80.

6. Green Finch And Linnet Bird: The original organ used for *Sweeney Todd* was a Yamaha Electone E-5. If a production has access to that or similar instrument, the use of a *portamento strip* indicated in the first five measures will be trivial. Absent that, if the keyboard has a pitch modification wheel, the woodwind patch plus use of the pitch mod wheel should be appropriate for this moment. Otherwise, use a woodwind patch and refer to the discussion in chapter 4 as to how to manage the aleatoric music. Celesta patch at m. 31.

7. Ah, Miss: The music calls for an organ stop mixture that is bass-focused, but realistically, any even mix of organ stops in which a keyboardist is playing notes off the bass staff will likely achieve this effect and a unique patch might not be necessary. Make sure that the volume of whatever patch is used is calibrated to be low volume. Celesta patch at m. 33. Low or middle volume organ patch at m. 41.

8. Johanna (Part I): Repeat the patch selection from the start of “Green Finch and Linnet Bird.”

8A. Johanna (Part II): Split keyboard patch. Below D5, use the middle volume organ patch. Above D5, use a chime patch. Switch to full keyboard (no more split) middle volume “all stops” organ patch at m. 39.

9. Pirelli's Miracle Elixir/The Contest: Use middle volume organ patch at m. 1. Strongly suggest switching to low volume organ patch under vamp measures as otherwise, dialogue might be covered. Vamp measures listed as mm. 5-6, though chapter three of this document advises moving the vamp to m. 7. Middle or low volume organ patch for rest of song, depending on a given theater’s sound system set-up.

9A. Pirelli's Entrance / 10. The Contest (Parts I and II): Tacet.

10B. The Ballad Of Sweeney Todd: Celesta patch at m. 11. Advise sound designer that m. 11-14 is a celesta solo.

11. Johanna (Judge’s version): Low or middle volume church organ patch from m. 1 on. If using low volume at the beginning, suggest using a middle volume organ patch for mm. 29-32, and again from mm. 51-54. Celesta patch at m. 60. Back to an organ patch at m. 69, which should be the same patch used at m. 29. Celesta patch at m. 93, though note that this is a quick change from the organ patch in mm. 90-92. If this switch presents any difficulties, the organ part is sufficiently covered in m. 92 by the horn that the organ keyboardist should be able to drop out, switch patches, and confidently enter on celesta in m. 93. Another fast patch shift at m. 99 to organ, and back to celesta at m. 106, which holds through the end of the song.

12. Wait: Celesta patch continues from previous song, should “Johanna (Judge’s version)” be used in the production. Warn the sound designer that mm. 22-24 are a celesta solo, and mm. 88-91 are functionally a celesta solo.

12A. Pirelli’s Death: Tacet

12A. Pirelli’s Death Underscore: Middle volume organ patch.

12B. Pirelli’s Death Underscore: Middle volume organ patch.

12C. Ballad Of Sweeney Todd / 12D. Underscore: Low volume organ patch.

13. Kiss Me (Part I): Celesta patch.

14. Ladies In Their Sensitivities: Tacet.

15. Kiss Me (Part II): Begin on celesta patch. Middle volume organ patch at m. 45.

15A. Underscore: Celesta patch.

16. Pretty Women (Part I) / 16A. Pretty Woman (Part II): Celesta patch.

17. Epiphany: Continue celesta patch from previous song. Switch to middle volume organ patch in m. 10. If speed of patch transition at m. 10 is an issue, suggested priority is celesta part through m. 9 rather than being on time with the organ patch at m. 10, as those m. 10 quarter notes are covered by woodwinds.

18. A Little Priest: Begin on celesta patch. Low or middle volume organ patch at m. 41.

19. God, That's Good!: Suggested middle volume organ patch at top of Act II / top of song. If using a middle volume patch at the start, switch to the low volume organ patch in m. 41.

20. Johanna (Act II Sequence): Low volume organ patch.

20A. After Johanna (Act II Sequence) / 20B. I Am A Lass: Middle volume organ patch. Warn the sound designer that the organ will be the only instrument that plays here.

21. By The Sea (Part I): Tacet.

21A. By The Sea (Part II): Middle or loud volume organ patch. Warn the sound designer that the organ will play the final two measures after not playing anything else, and that the penultimate measure is a solo.

22. Wigmaker Sequence: Low volume organ patch.

22A. The Letter: This song is the one that most demands your keyboardist's rig have a volume adjustment pedal. If not, err on the side of programming the organ for a lower volume, as the *ff* moments are generally covered by the woodwinds and brass. This is also the piece during which a trained organist serving as keyboard player should be encouraged to explore the Mainstage patch options and find different colors. If the native Mainstage organ patches themselves seem insufficient, I advise experimenting by layering woodwind and brass patches into any basic organ sound. Otherwise, there are ample supplementary sound libraries one can buy should money be no object.

22B. After Letter: Low volume organ patch.

23. Not While I'm Around: Tacet.

23A. After "Not While I'm Around": Middle volume organ patch as it's a solo, but the actors need to be heard over the organ.

24. Parlor Songs (Part I) / 24A. Parlor Songs (Part II): This sequence calls for a harmonium. I suggest layering one of the simpler Mainstage organ sounds (e.g., a home organ sound rather than a Cathedral organ) with an accordion.

24B. Parlor Songs (Part III): Begin with the harmonium sound from the rest of the #24 sequence. Switch to the low volume organ patch at m. 13. At cue line, jump to m. 33 and switch back to harmonium sound.

25. Fogg's Asylum: Middle volume organ patch.

25A. Fogg's Passacaglia: Low volume organ patch.

26. City On Fire: Err on the side of the low volume organ patch rather than adhering to the *f* as listed in mm. 13-14. The organ sound should be part of the texture of the orchestra.

27. Searching (Part I): Split keyboard patch needed. Low volume organ patch on G5 and higher. Celesta patch needed on C#5 and lower.

27A. Searching (Part II): Celesta patch to begin. If using the long insert, switch to the low volume organ patch at m. 39J. Split keyboard patch needed at m. 40. Celesta patch above A3, and low organ pedal below. (A3 chosen in order to hold this same patch into "Judge's Return.")

28. Judge's Return: Continue split keyboard patch as in previous song. Shift to middle volume organ patch in m. 51.

29. Final Scene (part I): Begin on celesta patch. Switch to the low volume organ patch in m. 14. Switch to the middle volume organ patch by m. 56, if not the loud volume patch.

29A. Final Scene (part II): Patch change to harpsichord must happen by m. 214, which is the first measure in this piece. If the patch change speed is an issue from the previous song, err on the

side of cutting off early in m. 56 of “Searching (Part I)” as in that moment, the organ is covered by the entire pit.

29B. The Ballad of Sweeney Todd: While a change back to an organ patch is not indicated in the score, the held notes (which won’t read on a harpsichord patch) and previous treatments of the Ballad material suggest that this song should begin on an organ patch. If doing that, use the low volume organ patch. Depending on the theater, a switch to the middle volume organ patch might be indicated at m. 130.

30. Exit Music (Part I): Use the middle or loud volume organ patch here.

30. Exit Music (Part II): If the loud volume organ patch was used in #30, it might be prudent to drop back to the middle volume organ patch for the remainder of the song.

SUGGEST EXCERPTS FOR A KEYBOARD-FOCUSED SOUNDCHECK

The *Sweeney Todd* pit orchestra will likely have a mixture of instruments that require little to no amplification (e.g., trombone / percussion) as well as at least one instrument that absolutely requires amplification (e.g., a keyboard running Mainstage that covers the organ book). Here are suggested musical excerpts for checking the basic Mainstage patches described above. For this task, I suggest that a rough keyboard level be set from the soundboard that allows for the entire pit to be heard when playing at a moderate to loud volume. Beyond that first step, I suggest the next portion of the soundcheck be used to confirm that the internal Mainstage volume levels are appropriate. Ideally, the soundboard operator only has to make fine adjustments during the show rather than gross adjustments beyond the rehearsal at which the various Mainstage levels are set.

Full volume / all stops organ patch: Prelude. Organ solo.

Middle volume organ patch: #1. Prologue, mm. 59-74. Organ as part of the pit texture when the cast and pit are loud.

Soft volume / mellow stops organ patch: #25A. Fogg’s Passacaglia. Organ as underscoring for dialogue. Another good option is #22. Wigmaker Sequence, in which the organ is part of the pit during a dialogue underscoring moment.

#22. The Letter: If the keyboardist chooses several patches for this song, I strongly recommend sound-checking the entire piece against the rest of the pit and with the quintet.

Celesta patch: 12. Wait, mm. 10-24. This covers the celesta part both as a quiet part of underscoring with the pit and also covers a celesta solo.

Harmonium patch: Any part of the #24. Parlor Songs sequence.

Harpsichord patch: #2. No Place Like London, mm. 214-234. Another good option is the entire #29A. Final Scene (part II) selection.

APPENDIX D: SAMPLE REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

The whirlwind rehearsal schedule below was only possible as I coached most of the lead actors ahead of “Week 1” (which was mid-February, 2023). These one-on-one rehearsals were used as each actor saw fit. With the benefit of hindsight, I’m particularly pleased that we covered the “Kiss me” quartets in those solo coachings. As that entire sequence was scheduled relatively late in our production schedule, the preliminary work turned out to be crucial for how quickly it came together.

There was at least one additional Letter Quintet rehearsal scheduled that is not reflected below. However, far more important than that one rehearsal was that the quintet members kept finding each other during quiet moments of other rehearsals to run through this piece. This self-directed work was essential to the success of this gnarly and discordant song. Absent that possibility, this piece above all others must have frequent check-ins with the music staff. It is a short work and can start or end any rehearsal at which the ensemble members are present.

Week 1

Monday

6:00-7:30: Music: #5, #17, #18, #21, #22, #27, and #29. Sweeney and Lovett.

7:30-9:00: Blocking: pp 9-17 (Worst Pies in London, My Friends). Sweeney and Lovett.

Tuesday

6:00-7:00: Blocking: pp 9-11 (Worst Pies in London). Lovett and Beggar Woman.

7:30-8:00: Blocking: pp 67-70 before Pretty Women. Lovett, Toby, Sweeney, Beadle, and Judge.

8:00-8:30: Music: #24A. Beadle, Lovett, and Toby.

8:30-9:00: Blocking: pp 75-78 (Epiphany). Sweeney and Lovett.

Wednesday

6:00-6:30: Blocking: pp 16-17 (My Friends). Sweeney only.

6:30-7:00: Blocking: pp 4-8 (No Place Like London). Anthony, Sweeney, and Beggar Woman.

7:00-8:00: Music: #9, 19, and 23. Toby.

Thursday

6:00-7:00: Blocking: pp 105-106 (After Sequence). Anthony, Passerby, Beadle, Police.

Week 2

Monday

6:00-7:00: Designer showcase and administrative work. Full cast.

7:00-7:30: Dialect coaching session. Full cast.

7:30-8:00: Music: #29B. Full cast.

8:00-9:00: Music: #1. Ensemble to include Toby. Sweeney joins after diction coaching.

Second room - 8:00-8:30: RP coaching: Sweeney, Judge, Johanna, and Anthony.

8:30-9:00: Italian / Irish dialect coaching: Pirelli.

Tuesday

6:00-6:30: Music: Vocal Health, Hygiene and Function lecture. Full cast.
6:30-7:00: Music: Review #1 and 29B. Full cast.
7:00-7:30: Music: #10B. Ensemble.
7:30-8:00: Music: #5 and 28. Ensemble.
8:00-9:00: Music: Review #9, 19, and 23. Toby.

Second room - 7:00-8:00: Blocking: pp 43-46 (Judge's Johanna). Judge.
8:00-9:00: Blocking: pp 135-142 (Searching pt.2 and Judge's Return). Anthony, Johanna, Sweeney, Beggar Woman and Judge.

Wednesday

6:00-6:30: Music: Review all music thus far. Ensemble.
6:30-7:00: Music: #25. Ensemble.
7:00-8:30: Music: #19. Ensemble, Toby, Sweeney and Lovett.
8:30-9:00: Music: #12C. Ballad trio.

Thursday

6:00-7:30: Music: #25A, #26, and #27. Ensemble.
7:30-9:00: Music: #22. Letter quintet.

Second room - 6:00-6:30: Cockney Dialect coaching: Lovett, Beggar Woman, Toby, and Beadle
6:30-7:30: Blocking: pp 18-24. Johanna and Anthony only.
7:30-8:30: Blocking: pp 129-135 (The Asylum, City on Fire, Searching).
Ensemble includes Anthony, Johanna, Sweeney, Lovett, Beggar, Fogg, Police.
8:30-9:00: Blocking: pp 18-24. Johanna, Anthony, Judge, Beadle, Beggar Woman, Bird Seller, & Passersbys.

Week 3

Monday

6:00-7:30: Choreography: #19. Toby, Lovett and Beggar Woman.
7:30-9:00: Choreography: #19. Add ensemble to Toby, Lovett and Beggar Woman.

Second room - 6:00-7:30: Music Review #9 and #19. Ensemble.

Tuesday

6:00-7:30: Choreography: #1. Ensemble to include Toby.
7:30-9:00: Choreography: #29B. Full cast.

Wednesday

6:00-7:30: Choreography: #4. Beadle, Judge, and Young Lucy.
7:30-9:00: Choreography: #4. Add ensemble to Beadle, Judge and Young Lucy.

Second room - 6:00-7:30: Music: #9. Ensemble to include Toby, Sweeney and Lovett.
7:30-8:00: Blocking: pp 46-47. Judge and Johanna.

Thursday

6:00-7:00: Choreography: #19. Toby, Lovett, Beggar Woman and Ensemble.
7:00-8:00: Choreography: Review #29B. Full cast.
8:00-9:00: Choreography: Review #4. Ensemble including Beadle, Judge and Young Lucy.

Week 4

Monday

6:00-7:00: Blocking: pp 33-43. Ensemble to include Sweeney, Lovett, Toby, Beadle, and Pirelli.
7:00-9:00: Choreography: #1. Ensemble to include Toby.

Second room - 7:00-9:00: "Music: #7, #13, #15, #20, #22 and #27A. Johanna, Anthony, Beadle, Judge, and Sweeney.

Tuesday

6:00-6:30: Music: Review #1, 5, 28, 10b, #25, #25A, #28, and #29B, Ensemble.
7:30-8:30: Music: #16 and #16A. Judge and Sweeney.

Second room - 6:00-7:00: Choreography: #21 and #21A. Lovett only.
7:00-7:30: Blocking: pp 107-112 (By the Sea). Sweeney and Lovett.

Wednesday

6:00-7:30: Blocking: pp 143-148 (Final Scene). Lovett, Judge, Beggar Woman, Sweeney, Toby, Johanna, Anthony, and Police.
7:30-9:00: Blocking: pp 25-33 (Pirelli's Miracle Elixir). Ensemble to include Sweeney, Lovett, Toby, and Beadle.

Second room - 6:00-7:30: Music: Review and polish ensemble music. Aim for off-book.

Thursday

6:00-9:00: Rough run, skipping what has not yet been covered. Full cast.

Week 5

Monday

6:00-7:00: Blocking: pp 112-111 (Wigmaker sequence, etc.). Sweeney, Lovett, Anthony, Quintet
7:00-8:00: Blocking: pp 50-56 (After Wait). Lovett, Sweeney, Anthony, Pirelli, and Toby.
8:00-9:00: Blocking: pp 117-123 (Not While I'm Around). Lovett and Toby.

Second room - 7:00-8:00: Music: Review #22 & #22A. Letter Quintet.

Tuesday

6:00-7:00: Choreography: Review #19 Ensemble, to include Sweeney, Toby and Lovett.
7:00-8:30: Choreography: Review #4. Ensemble to include Beadle, Judge, and Young Lucy.
8:30-9:00: Blocking: Trapdoor practice. Judge, Beadle, Beggar Woman and Johanna sequence.

Second room - 6:00-7:00: Blocking: pp 43-46 (Judge's Johanna). Judge.
7:00-8:00: Blocking: pp 78-87 (A Little Priest). Sweeney and Lovett.
8:00-8:30: Blocking: pp 48-50 (Wait). Sweeney and Lovett.

Wednesday

6:00-7:00: Blocking: pp 100-105 (Johanna Act II sequence). Anthony, Sweeney, Lovett, Beggar Woman, Victims and Passerbys.

7:00-8:00: Blocking: pp 56-67 (Kiss Me and Sensitivities). Judge, Beadle, Hoodlum, Police, Johanna, and Anthony.

8:00-9:00: Blocking: pp 123-129 (Parlour Songs). Lovett, Beadle, Toby and Sweeney.

Second room- 7:00-8:00: Choreography: Review #21 and #21A. Sweeney and Lovett.

Thursday

6:00-9:00: Run and clean Act 1. Off book. Full cast.

Week 6**Monday**

6:00-9:00: Costume parade followed by music review. Full cast.

Tuesday

6:00-9:00: Run and clean Act 2. Off book. Full cast

Wednesday

6:00-9:00: Full run. Full cast.

Thursday

6:00-9:00: Full run. Full cast.

Saturday

“10 out of 12”tech rehearsal

Week 7 - Tech week**Sunday**

Sitzprobe

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings

Dress rehearsals

Thursday evening

Opening Night