Top Class Theatre Studies

Harrison Dart monologue transcript

*Sweeney Todd, The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, book by Hugh Wheeler, from an adaptation by Christopher Bond.

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Monologue script from Act 1, pp.37-41

[Bell tolls]

I beg your indulgence boy, my mind is far from easy. For in these once familiar streets I feel the chill of ghostly shadows everywhere. Forgive me.

Farewell, Anthony. – What is it? No!

There's a hole in the world like a great black pit  
And the vermin of the world inhabit it  
And its morals aren't worth what a pig can spit  
And it goes by the name of London...  
At the top of the hole sit a privileged few  
Making mock of the vermin in the lower zoo  
Turning beauty to filth and greed...  
I too have sailed the world and seen its wonders,  
For the cruelty of men is as wondrous as Peru  
But there's no place like London!  
  
There was a barber and his wife,  
And she was beautiful.  
A foolish barber and his wife.  
She was his reason and his life,  
And she was beautiful,  
And she was virtuous,  
And he was... naive.  
  
There was another man who saw  
That she was beautiful.  
A pious vulture of the law,  
Who, with a gesture of his claw,  
Removed the barber from his plate,  
Then there was nothing but to wait,  
And she would fall,  
So young, So lost, So soft,  
And oh so beautiful!  
  
Oh, that was many years ago...  
I doubt if anyone would know...

Now Anthony, you must leave me, I beg of you. There’s somewhere I must go, something I must find out. Now, and alone. You may find me if you want, around Fleet Street…I wouldn’t wonder.

There's a hole in the world like a great black pit  
And it's filled with people who are filled with shit  
And the vermin of the world inhabit it...

Would no one have mercy on her? Not Barker! Not Barker! It’s Todd, now! Sweeny Todd! Where is she? Where is my wife? Where is Lucy?

And my daughter? He? Judge Turpin?

Fifteen years sweating in a living hell on a trumped-up charge! Fifteen years dreaming that perhaps I might come home to a loving wife and child. Let them quake in their boots – Judge Turpin and the Beadle! For their hour has come. No money. But I’ll live if I have to sweat in the sewers or in the plague hospital I’ll live - and I’ll have them!

Silver… yes.

[Sings]  
These are my friends.   
See how they glisten.   
See this one shine.   
How he smiles, in the light.   
My Friends, my faithful friends.   
Speak to me friends.   
Whisper, I’ll listen.   
I know, I know, you’ve been locked out of sight all these years.   
Like me, my friends.   
Well I’ve come home to find you waiting.   
Home, and we’re together, and we’ll do wonders.   
Won’t we?

You there my friend, come let me hold you.   
Now with a sigh, you grow warm, in my hand.   
My friends, my clever friends.   
Rest now my friends, soon I’ll unfold you.   
Soon you’ll know splendours you never have dreamed all your days.   
My lucky friends.   
‘Til now your shine was merely silver.   
Friends, you shall drip rubies.  
You’ll soon drip precious, rubies.

My right arm is complete again.

[Interpretation Statement]

My decision as a director was to stay traditional in terms of time period and Theatrical Style by using an operatic baritone timbre in order to emphasise the operatic quality that Sondheim was inspired by when writing Sweeney Todd.

I've explored the key themes of Obsession, Revenge and Morton's Fork – which is the decision that one makes when at a crossroads – through variation of expressive skills, vocal tone and pitch, gesture and movement.

I've used a red scarf to symbolise Todd's wife Lucy and I've replaced his razors with forks to symbolise the dog-eat-dog nature of London and the choice that Barker makes setting him down a vengeful path, and finally a white sheet to symbolise Sweeney uncovering the judge's attempt to hide the past, while also representing Lucy and his baby daughter Johanna as he cradles them in his arms.

I have kept the set downstage in order to maintain a strong actor/audience relationship. The set emphasises a barbershop design painted in black and white to replicate jailbars, symbolising his torment and his time in exile, and the symbols of his family across the set, for example the photo and white sheet representing his wife and the bundle at the bottom of the set representing his baby daughter Johanna.

I use variation in my movement and facial expressions in order to emphasise the changes in mood and the development of Todd's thoughts throughout the monologue.

I utilise stillness and silence in order to emphasise key moments and ideas, for example Lucy's "death".

I have used contrast through the untainted side of the set and the use of spoken lyrics. This symbolises the solemn, mournful mood of the first half. Compare this to the tainted version of the set with the spiteful and more sinister side of Sweeney that is made obvious in the second half.

I have variation in my tone when addressing Anthony in the switch between sinister and vengeful (the Sweeney persona) and miserable yet polite (the final glimpses of Benjamin Barker).

The set rhythm of the sung piece contrasts the varied rhythm of the spoken piece and my use of motion in the set to transform character, time and place through specific phrases of the song allows for great cohesion, helping the monologue flow quite smoothly and keeping it all tied together.