Top Class Theatre Studies

Juliette Milne 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

Spit it out, dear. Go on. On the floor. There's worse things than that down there. That's my boy.

Up there? Oh, no one will go near it. People think it's haunted. You see — years ago, something happened up there. Something… not very nice.

[Sings]
There was a barber and his wife, and he was beautiful.
A proper artist with a knife, but they transported him for life.
And he was beautiful...

Barker, his name was — Benjamin Barker. Foolishness!

[Sings]
He had this wife, you see,
Pretty little thing.
Silly little nit.
Had her chance for the moon on a string —
Poor thing.
Poor thing.

There were these two, you see,
Wanted her like mad, one of 'em a Judge, t'other one his Beadle.
Every day they'd nudge and they'd wheedle.
But she wouldn't budge from her needle.
Too bad.
Pure thing.

So they merely shipped the poor bugger off south, they did,
Leaving her with nothing but grief and a year-old kid.
Did she use her head even then? Oh no, God forbid!
Poor fool.
Ah, but there was worse yet to come — poor thing.

Johanna, that was the baby's name… Pretty little Johanna…
My, you do like a good story, don't you?

[Sings]
Well, Beadle calls on her, all polite,
Poor thing, poor thing.
The Judge, he tells her, is all contrite,
He blames himself for her dreadful plight,
She must come straight to his house tonight!
Poor thing, poor thing.

Of course, when she goes there, poor thing, poor thing,
They're havin' this ball all in masks.
There's no one she knows there, poor dear, poor thing.
She wanders tormented, and drinks, poor thing.
The Judge has repented, she thinks, poor thing.
"Oh, where is Judge Turpin?" she asks.
He was there, all right — only not so contrite!
She wasn't no match for such craft, you see,
And everyone thought it so droll.
They figured she had to be daft, you see,
So all of 'em stood there and laughed, you see.
Poor soul! Poor thing!

[Cackling laughter]

So it is you — Benjamin Barker. So changed! Good God, what did they do to you down there in bloody Australia or wherever?

Your wife? She poisoned herself. Arsenic from the apothecary on the corner. I tried to stop her but she wouldn't listen to me.

You daughter Johanna? Judge Turpin’s got her. Even he had a conscience tucked away, I suppose. Adopted her like his own. You could say it was good luck for her…almost. [laughs]

You're going to — get 'em? You? A bleeding little nobody of a runaway convict? Don't make me laugh. You'll never get His 'igh and Mightiness! Nor the Beadle neither. Not in a million years.

You got any money? Listen to me! You got any money? Then how you going to live even? Oh, you poor thing! You poor thing!

Wait! See? It don't have to be the sewers or the plague hospital. When they come for the little girl, I hid 'em. I thought, who knows? Maybe the poor silly blighter'll be back again someday and need 'em. Cracked in the head, wasn't I? Times as bad as they are, I could have got five, maybe ten quid for 'em, any day.

See? You can be a barber again. My, them handles is chased silver, ain't they?

[Interpretation Statement]

My portrayal of Mrs Lovett is eclectic in style, combining conventions of Musical Theatre, Heightened Naturalism and Gothic Theatre in order to create an exaggerated, yet complex, macabre character. I am incorporating Musical Theatre conventions as her movement and vocal expression are heightened and include dance and song.

Conventions of Heightened Naturalism include a complex characterisation and psychologically motivated gestures. Gothic Theatre is portrayed through menacing and sinister characters shown through my transformations of character. Lovett has a joyful wickedness somewhat akin to an evil clown, which is shown through my makeup.

The element of theatre composition of variation is utilised through transformation of character and prop which assists in clarifying the complex storyline which involves multiple characters. Mrs Lovett’s heavy, grounded movement is juxtaposed with Lucy’s buoyant, delicate movement. Transforming into other characters adds to the element of variation.

The element of emphasis is shown through my focus on sinister portrayals of character, course and disconcerting movement and laughter which emphasise the integral theme of the rich’s exploitation of the poor. My menacing, scheming portrayal of Mrs Lovett emphasises the integral theme of obsession.

I have utilised theatre technologies by creating a digital soundscape which evokes the monologue’s context, as typical sounds of a Victorian era London street are heard.

I had to consider occupational health and as I had to climb up and jump off a staircase in a long dress as well as fall to my knees without hurting myself. From the start of the rehearsal process I practised with the staircase and dress and kneepads so I could do this safely.

I chose to retain the original context of Victorian England as I wanted to reflect the psychological effects the Industrial Revolution had on its victims.