



## Audition Guide

**Performance Dates: 19th - 22nd February, 2025**

**Venue: John McIntosh Arts Centre, London Oratory School, Fulham SW6**

### Show Summary

First debuted in 1979 with music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim and book by Hugh Wheeler, *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* is based on the 1970 play by Christopher Bond, *Sweeney Todd*, the titular character of which drew inspiration from the penny dreadful *String of Pearls*.

After spending 15 years in exile, Benjamin Barker, a renowned barber, returns to London under the alias Sweeney Todd to exact revenge on the corrupt Judge Turpin, who drove Barker's wife to poison herself before taking wardship of their infant daughter, Johanna. After a number of setbacks, Todd turns to the aid of his neighbour and pie shop owner, Mrs Lovett, and the two devise a plan that will fulfil Todd's desire for bloodlust while also boosting Lovett's business.





## Our Production

Returning to its roots as a popular ghost story of Victorian London, we seek to transport our audience to these 19th Century streets, and immerse themselves in a story filled with such horror and tragedy.

We are aiming for a sizable cast, lead by a quintet of narrators, that will guide the audience through the story, drawing out the gothic themes within the plot and maintaining a presence on stage akin to that of the tragic chorus from ancient Greece. In addition, we hope to employ a choir of singers, who will underpin this iconic musical score.

## Workshops

A workshop will be held on **Tuesday, 24th September**, 2024 at 7.30pm in St Barnabas Church Hall, Lavenham Road, Southfields, SW18 5EP. Here, you can experience some of what this show has to offer, learn some music from the show, go through the audition movement, and meet some of the creatives working on this production! Please bring along any questions about the casting or rehearsal process.

For more information please contact [SweeneyCygnet@gmail.com](mailto:SweeneyCygnet@gmail.com) or see contact information for the society below.

## Auditions

Please submit an [Audition Form](#) to book your audition slot. The deadline to submit an audition form is **Thursday, 26th September**. All additional information - character descriptions and what to prepare - can be found below.

**You do not have a confirmed audition slot unless you have submitted an audition form.**

**Link to ALL Audition Extracts and Movement Videos:** [Sweeney Auditions](#)

## Audition Information

Auditions will be held at **St Barnabas Church Hall, Lavenham Road, Southfields, SW18 5EP** on the dates below:

- Sunday, 29th September, 2024 from 6.00pm.
- Tuesday, 1st October, 2024 from 7.30pm.
- Sunday, 6th October, 2024 from 6.00pm.
- Recalls - Thursday, 10th October, 2024 from 7:30pm.

For your audition, you will be asked to prepare a short extract of dialogue and a section of music, which will be sung accompanied in a solo audition slot (see further details below). In addition, you will be asked to attend a movement workshop during your time slot, in which you will perform set movement from the show alongside other auditionees.

**Advice on acting:**

Please prepare one of four extracts (found [here](#)) for your audition. At this stage, we are not looking for cemented character portrayal but rather we hope to see how well you are able to convey a part of the story. We encourage you to think outside the box and try something new, perhaps unrelated to the show, that would suit the writing. In addition, you may be asked to perform the same side with further direction, to see how you respond. Although we do not expect anyone to have memorised the acting excerpt for this initial audition, we do encourage you to have a strong grasp of the text as this will allow you to add more nuance to your performance. There is no specified accent required. Please do whatever feels comfortable - however, you may be asked to perform in a cockney accent during recalls.

**Advice on singing:**

The vocal parts in this show are wide ranging and there are a lot of close harmonies in this show. In the initial audition, we want you to pick the excerpts that best show off your voice and your abilities. Those seeking a principal role or who are auditioning to be a part of the quintet or would like to be featured vocally in the show, should be ready to perform two excerpts of music: the ensemble excerpt and one other of your choice. If you would just like to be considered for the ensemble, please prepare the ensemble excerpt. Please note, the ensemble extract is a range test so do not worry if some of it is tricky to reach. We may also do a range test in the audition. More details on the excerpts can be found with the audition material.

**Advice on movement:**

For the audition we are looking to see how well you can embody a character and move with purpose and intent. There is a teaching video [in the drive](#) along with two videos of the dance itself - one with counts and one without. You are expected to learn the movement in advance, it will not be taught on the day of the audition. We will go over it with you and you will have a chance to practise in the audition room. You may be split into smaller groups to audition but you will not be dancing on your own. We are looking for performance rather than technique so please do not worry when preparing for this section of the audition. Sell it with your face.

## Choir

In addition to the roles typically portrayed in this musical, we will also be seeking to cast a choir that will bolster the harmonies within the score. In particular, the choir can expect to sing along with the *Ballads* throughout the show and may be utilised during transitions to cultivate an eerie atmosphere within the theatre.

Those cast in the choir will pay a reduced show fee (see below) which reflects the lessened commitment required for rehearsals, as they will feature in only select songs. Similarly, the choir will be distinct from an ensemble in that they will not be expected to learn any blocking on stage but rather will be situated in seats around the auditorium in the theatre (see below for further advice on accessibility arrangements). However, anyone cast will still remain an integral part of the show, and can of course be expected to be involved with all cast and crew social events.

If you would like to be considered for the choir only, please submit a video audition of you singing any of the initial vocal extracts. Please submit the video with your name and any information you would like us to consider (e.g. past experience or range) to [SweeneyCygnet@gmail.com](mailto:SweeneyCygnet@gmail.com) by **10pm on Sunday, 6th October, 2024**; you will not be required to attend the initial round of auditions. The choir is perfect for anyone who wishes to have a lower commitment but still wants to be involved in our production of Sweeney Todd.

**Link to Audition Extracts folder:** [Sweeney Auditions](#)

## Character Descriptions

		Vocal Range:
<b>Sweeney Todd</b>	A wrongfully imprisoned barber seeking to right the wrongs committed against him. He is Johanna's father, singularly focussed on taking bloody revenge. Our story's tormented protagonist.	F2 - Gb4
<b>Mrs Lovett</b>	An entrepreneurial and amoral meat pie shop owner. She falls in love with Todd and turns his desire for revenge into a profitable business venture.	G3 - E5
<b>Tobias Ragg</b>	A poor youngster apprenticed to Pirelli. He finds a surrogate family in Todd and Lovett.	Bb2 - Ab4
<b>Anthony Hope</b>	A naive and youthful sailor returning to London. He helps Todd return to London and unexpectedly falls in love with Johanna.	Bb2 - F4



<b>Johanna Barker</b>	A spritely girl, full of innocence, constantly yearning for freedom. Todd's long-lost daughter and Turpin's ward.	Bb3 - A5
<b>Judge Turpin</b>	A lecherous public official who portrays himself as a sanctimonious authoritarian. He takes advantage of his position in the city and is responsible for imprisoning Todd.	E2 - Gb4
<b>Beadle Bamford</b>	A pompous public official. They are deeply loyal to the corrupt Turpin.	D3 - D5
<b>Beggar Woman</b>	A deranged and schizophrenic woman who harbours a dark, surprising secret.	Ab3 - F5
<b>Adolfo Pirelli</b>	A flamboyant Italian rival barber; a charlatan with a secret past.	B2 - C5
<b>Jonas Fogg</b>	The owner of Fogg's Asylum. They sell the hair of madmen to wigmakers.	Speaking role
<b>The Quintet (5 people)</b>	These five ensemble members will guide the audience through the plot, featuring in additional moments throughout the performance. They will also sing <i>The Letter Sequence</i> in Act II.	Varied
<b>Ensemble</b>	Various roles, including: townsfolk; patrons; asylum patients; and more. There may be opportunities for solo moments within certain scenes and songs.	Varied
<b>Choir</b>	An additional vocal group that will support the larger company numbers and transitions. There will be reduced rehearsal commitment as you will not be required on stage.	Varied

### Notes on Casting

When deciding on roles you would like to be considered for, please refer to the information above. This should provide insight into the range required for each principal role and, where applicable, the character's presented gender. Within these guidelines, we would love to see any gender for any role that would best suit your abilities. Please indicate in auditions if you are happy presenting as another gender on stage, as such, or contact the creative team with any further questions.

Those seeking to audition who require additional access arrangements should make this known in advance on the audition form - we are willing to make any necessary accommodations.



We will not be casting for understudies initially but there may be scope within the rehearsal process to utilise members of the ensemble in a swing capacity. This would require no additional rehearsals, but individuals appointed should be able to take on additional roles in case of emergency. Anyone auditioning for an ensemble role with interest in being considered for understudy should make it known to the creative team during their audition.

### **Rehearsal Information and Key Dates**

Rehearsals will take place at **St Barnabas Church Hall, Lavenham Road, Southfields, SW18 5EP** every Tuesday and Thursday between 7.30pm and 10.00pm, beginning Tuesday, 15th October, 2024. Further into the process, most likely in January, Sundays will also be included in the rehearsal schedule between 6.00pm and 10.00pm. All successful auditionees should be free during this time until the show dates listed above, or should make known any unavailable dates at the earliest possible convenience. The rehearsal schedule has not been finalised yet and will partly depend on cast availability, so please let us know your availability as accurately as possible on the audition form.

The following dates should be considered when auditioning, as your presence will be required during the times below:

- Thursday, 10th October, 2024 (Audition recalls)
- Tuesday, 15th October, 2024 (First rehearsal)
- Sunday, 16th February, 2025 (Get in and Sitzprobe 9am - 11pm)
- Monday, 17th February, 2025 (Tech Run - TBC Cast required from 6pm)
- Tuesday, 18th February, 2025 (Dress Run - TBC Cast required from 6pm)
- Wednesday, 19th February, 2025 - Friday, 21st February, 2025 (Shows - TBC Cast called for 6pm)
- Saturday, 22nd February, 2025 (Double Show day and Get-Out - TBC Cast called for 12.30pm and 5.30pm show, and get-out until late)

Should you be unable to attend any of these dates, it is imperative that you alert the creative team before leaving your audition. We will require ALL cast to be present for the get out of the theatre after the Saturday evening performance, and there will of course be an aftershow party.



### **Meet the Creative Team**

**Thomas Howard (Director):** As a great fan of the works of Stephen Sondheim, Tom is particularly excited to get stuck into this masterpiece of a musical with Cygnet Players. During the day, Tom works as a teacher of Latin and Classics, having read such at King's College London. During this time, Tom spent a lot of time reading about ancient Greek theatre; an influence that he hopes to bring into draw upon for this production. He also became heavily involved with King's Musical Theatre Society, even directing this same show with the company in 2019.

**Ashley Harvey (Musical Director):** Ashley trained as a classical pianist in Manchester. She read Natural Sciences at University College London graduating with first class honours. She returned to music to pursue a career as a musical director. Highlights include the Last Five Years (Electric Theatre), West Side Story (Michael Frayne Theatre), Life Could Be A Dream (UK Premiere), Return to the Forbidden Planet (Epsom Playhouse), Wizard of Oz (Cockpit Theatre), Mess (Ed Fringe), Urinetown (Cockpit Theatre), Luck Be A Lady (Upstairs at the Gatehouse), Kinky Boots (London Oratory Theatre), Sister Act (London Oratory Theatre), Big Fish (Putney Arts Theatre), Yeast Nation (Southwark Playhouse), Young Frankenstein (Arthur Cotterell Theatre), The First Years (New Musical), Fame (London Oratory Theatre), Once (Putney Arts Theatre) and Rock of Ages (Arthur Cotterell Theatre). Ashley has starred in the live final of the Iranian X-Factor, performed with Mexican "The Voice" star Morganna Love and cabarets across London including The Sing Easy West End.

**Joanna Cheng (Assistant Musical Director):** Joanna is a keen musician, across both musical theatre pit bands and symphony orchestras - Sweeney is the perfect blend of both! She recently conducted the summer concert of the Pico Players, and was assistant musical director for *Fame: The Musical* with Cygnets. When not playing music, she works as a technical project manager for a digital services consultancy.

**Catherine "Chiggins" Higgins (Choreographer):** Chiggins has been choreographing musicals for over 10 years. Previous credits include Sunshine on Leith (SEDOS), Kinky Boots (Cygnet Players), Return to the Forbidden Planet (Mayhem), Jesus Christ Superstar (FCT) and Jekyll and Hyde (Cecilian Society). She loves big ensemble movement and is excited to weave the cast around the dreary streets of Victorian London. Outside of am dram, Chiggins works in project management for the NHS, teaches couples their first dances for weddings and performs in musical improv group AdLibretto.



**Lydia James (Producer):** Lydia is extremely excited to get to work on her first Sondheim project. Her muggle job is the Production Executive for Andrew Lloyd Webber's musicals across the globe and she has previously worked as a freelance production coordinator for tv and film. Ironically, Lloyd Webber has the same birthday as his fellow composer Sondheim and he mentions it frequently. She studied Ancient History at the University of Birmingham so looks forward to creatively collaborating with Tom on all things ancient. She has recently produced Centre Stage's *The Wedding Singer* (2024) and *Our House* (2023). When in doubt, she's probably at a karaoke night...

### **Membership and Show Fees**

Cygnet Players Membership is £35 a year if you pay as a one-off, or only £30 when you set up a standing order or direct debit. This lets you audition for all productions within that year (usually two musicals and a play). It also gives you discounted members' rates to our social events and access to the dedicated members' Facebook group and mailing list. In amateur dramatics, because we are self-funded and doing this for fun, a show fee is paid by participants to cover all the costs of the show— things like performance rights, venue hire, scenery, costumes, lighting, insurance and lots more!

For *Sweeney*, the show fee will be **£125**. The fee for the show choir will be **£50**. If you are not a member and auditioning, there will be a **£10** audition fee - this will be deducted from the show fee if you are cast. There is no audition fee for those only submitting choir videos.

The cost of living has risen sharply recently and we don't want financial circumstances to be a barrier to participation. If you are concerned about the show fee or membership cost, or due to current circumstances you are unable to pay the full amounts upfront, please speak to the Cygnet Players Committee in confidence to arrange a payment plan by emailing [info@cygnetplayers.com](mailto:info@cygnetplayers.com).

### **Other Costs**

It is worth noting that there may be other costs associated with participating in the show. Many of these are optional (for example, show t-shirts and contributions to gifts for production/backstage teams), but we may ask cast members to provide their own character shoes, makeup, and other personal costume items. Please note there will also be a refundable deposit due to be paid for use of a libretto throughout the rehearsal process. The cost is £25 and this will be returned to you at the end of the show upon return of your libretto.



## Promoting the Show

It's crucial that everyone involved with the show does everything they can to spread the word and encourage their friends, relatives, colleagues and acquaintances to buy tickets and come along. At the end of the day, we want big audiences to perform to and appreciate all the hard work that you've put in! The Committee marketing team will coordinate efforts across our social media channels and we ask everyone involved to help by sharing posts, and capturing photos and videos in rehearsals that we can use for content. If you have a particular flare for insta stories and want to help further with the social media campaigns, there will be opportunities to be more involved to support the marketing team - more details to follow once the show gets going! Closer to show week, we will organise some targeted promotional events, such as flyering and promo shoots. More details on these events, including confirmation of dates, will be given in due course. Each member of the cast will be expected to participate in at least one promotional event, as these are vital for making sure you have big audiences to perform to!

## About Cygnet Players

Cygnet Players is a young and vibrant company based in South West London. We rehearse in Southfields and put on shows in and around Putney. We perform two musicals and a play every year, as well as putting on various concerts and other events. We also have regular social events, which are great opportunities to meet and catch up with other Cygnets. We always welcome new members, so if this is your first show with us— welcome to the family! For more information about the company in general, have a look at our website at [www.cygnetplayers.com](http://www.cygnetplayers.com) or email [info@cygnetplayers.com](mailto:info@cygnetplayers.com).

You can also find us on social media:

- Facebook— [www.facebook.com/cygnetplayers](http://www.facebook.com/cygnetplayers)
- Instagram— [@cygnetplayers](https://www.instagram.com/cygnetplayers)
- TikTok— [@cygnetplayers](https://www.tiktok.com/@cygnetplayers)

## Social events

Cygnets do have some social events coming up, the next one is:

- **Cygnets Entertains, Sat 30th November** - our infamous Christmas extravaganza!

We would LOVE as many people as possible to be able to attend this event so we hope that cast members will be there - more to follow on this! There will inevitably be some cast/crew socials along the way, plus regular post-rehearsal pub visits!



### **Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility**

Cygnet Players strive to create an accessible and welcoming environment for members and audiences. We are committed to diversity and inclusion within our casting and storytelling to ensure there are opportunities for all people, from every walk of life, to take part.

As part of this, we are committed to a conscious casting process; making conscious decisions about how a show can be cast, rather than following the “traditional” model that repeats whatever has been done before. We are always open to non-traditional casting, and conscious artistic decisions will be made whenever race, ethnicity, gender or other factors are a key component of the story or integral to the relationships between characters.

Cygnets is a member of the South West London amateur theatre societies’ Inclusion, Diversity, Equality and Accessibility Group (IDEA): a group of five societies working towards improved diversity and inclusion in amdram.

We are open to feedback to improve our processes and create a warm and welcoming atmosphere that creates opportunities for people of all ethnicities, gender identities and physical abilities. If you have any suggestions, feedback or ideas please speak to a member of the Committee or Production Team, or email [swamdramidea@gmail.com](mailto:swamdramidea@gmail.com). It will always be treated in the strictest of confidence but if you wish to provide feedback anonymously, please fill in this form.

### **Contact**

Please contact [sweeneycygnets@gmail.com](mailto:sweeneycygnets@gmail.com) with any questions. Good luck with your audition!