

A LEVEL

Candidate Style Answers

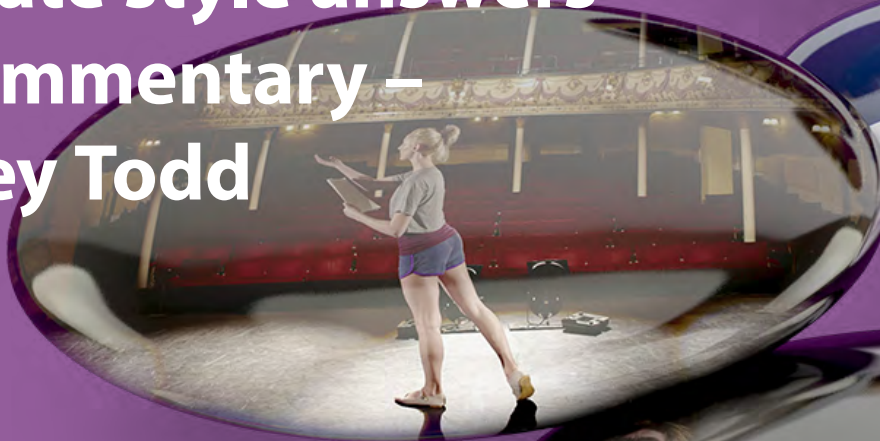
DRAMA AND THEATRE

H459

For first teaching in 2015

**Candidate style answers
with commentary –
Sweeney Todd**

Version 1



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Introduction

This resource has been produced by the A Level Drama and Theatre assessor team to offer teachers an insight into how the assessment objectives are applied.

Please note that this resource is provided for advice and guidance only and does not in any way constitute an indication of grade boundaries or endorsed answers.

The sample assessment material for these answers and commentary can be found on the A Level Drama and Theatre web page and accessed via the following link: <http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/as-a-level-gce-drama-and-theatre-h059-h459-from-2016/>

Question 1 Candidate style answer – high level

Describe your directorial vision for staging this extract, and then annotate the extract to show how you would direct the actors to realise its comic potential.

[30]

When asked about the 25th anniversary of his directed show Phantom of the Opera in 2013, Harold (Hal) Prince told Broadway.com that he loves Victorian melodrama, larger-than-life theatre that is truthful and honest. He compared the phantom with his Sweeney Todd and that definition of larger-than-life but truthful and honest would be the driving force of my directorial vision for an audience.

Todd is in a sense a stereotypical villain, yet is driven by a passion and a lust for bloody revenge on those who destroyed his marriage and happiness. This contrasts with the sense of affection that Mrs Lovett has for him. She kept his knives for him, she came up with the pie idea and she wants to live in a cottage with him.

But he never smiles and has no lightness. In the extract as elsewhere, he is only focussed on his daughter who has been found yet is about to slip from him with Anthony. Mrs Lovett's quickness to suggest his throat needs slicing is comic. Her offer to be a mother to the girl is heart warming. She moves coquettishly to Todd, offering her lips for kissing but as Pirelli climbs the stairs without ringing the bell, Todd breaks away from her like teenagers caught by an adult.

Mine would be a Victorian style production highlighting men's superiority in society (the baddies, Fogg, judge and beadle and goodies, Anthony and lower order women like Lucy) in period costume, dark, badly lit-settings. Pirelli would be dressed in an extravagant costume. Tobias would be in rags and still showing a sore mouth from Pirelli's attempt to extract his tooth earlier.

Pirelli's artificial English with an Italian accent and bowing and kissing Lovett's hand are funny and when he reverts to his native Irish it is very amusing and shows him as a false person as well as Todd who adopted a false persona to avoid being recognised. The split level with Lovett and Tobias downstairs simultaneously with Pirelli and Todd talking upstairs allows the opportunity for mime with Tobias stuffing his face with pie and later with gin and his wig to come off in Mrs Lovett's hands to be funny.

Once Pirelli has blackmailed Todd, the fight between them can be almost slapstick when the razor is knocked from Pirelli but Todd tries to strangle him instead. The stuffing the body in the box with one hand left sticking out just as Tobias climbs the stairs in full view, is classic physical knockabout. As Todd and the boy talk (Todd out of breath), the nearness of the boy's hand and Pirelli's should be very amusing. Snatching the boy up to send him downstairs again for pie and gin, is farce. The actual slashing of the throat in desperation should also be humorous, rather than real gothic horror.

The chorus of tenors is a neat end to the scene that reminds the audience of Todd's characteristics through music and clever lyrics.

To see the text extract/match it to the comments, click here
<http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/242857-unit-h459-45-de-constructing-texts-for-performance-sweeney-todd-sample-assessment-material.pdf>

You may find it useful to print off the sample assessment paper and match the text extract to these comments. Candidate comments should line up to the relevant part of the text.

Throat cutting gesture is amusing and very clear to audience. It makes the pair collaborators in murder.

A bit sentimental that Johanna has not had a proper mother; ironical that a body-disposing cook will be that caring mother.

Pirelli with servant behind takes authority coming up without ringing and catches Todd about to be kissed by Lovett. Embarrasses him; puts Pirelli in charge of the moment.

Mock Italian bow and kissing of her hand. It is sending up Italian mens' behaviour when trying to impress a woman.

The fake accent must be obvious to the audience, as in contest scene, they must know he is false even before he admits it.

Lovett is able to transfer the maternal affection she had just lavished on the absent Johanna on the real Tobias who is looking very young and vulnerable.

Your teeth is strong line is funny, as throughout Act 1 her pies are almost inedible.

Holding the boy's hand is another sign that she has a caring side, particularly for a child.

The choice of Irish to be the 'real' voice of Pirelli is funny and it may be a further fake – he may not be Irish after all.

Five quid was a large sum of money in those times, and it would have impressed a mainly poor crowd when it was won in the shaving and tooth contest earlier.

Inedible or not, Tobias is starving and wolfs it down – comic.

The threat for half his profits is not as menacing as it sounds as the audience knows Todd will kill Pirelli.

Quiet because the anger is rising slowly.

Tobias is also in a disguise with a wig to advertise the work of his boss – hair, beards and teeth.

When he takes it off he is happier and can continue to gobble up the pie.

Pirelli uses the razor which he had recognised to suggest to Todd that he holds the power now and Todd should agree to his demands.

It is ironical to suggest that Beadle is his pal, as Pirelli is as much a deceiving liar as the Beadle is.

While Todd thinks, Pirelli reverts to song, which parallels the way he sang when excited and was over-confident of victory in the public contest. And like before, Todd suddenly surprises him and acts as he reaches the high notes or crescendo of his song.

The fight should be realistic, not comic book hero style, but awkward, floundering about and mock desperate.

Tobias remembering Pirelli's appointment is the device to get him upstairs to make the stuffing the body in the chest even funnier.

Todd has been warned Tobias is coming, so it makes the fight upstairs more frantic, and going back for the wig adds a few more seconds for Todd to deal with Pirelli.

The chest is now the comic centerpiece, a wild solution. He stuffs Pirelli in quickly and roughly. The man is not dead, but the audience might think he is for a moment. The hand at this point is just a dead hand and the audience alone see it.

Tobias is faithful to Pirelli's instructions to remind him of appointment not just because he is a good servant but because he fears being beaten as we saw at the contest scene.

He decides to wait for Pirelli. Sitting on the chest heightens comic tension for the audience – they know what's in there.

At this point Todd has noticed Pirelli's hand near to Tobias and getting near, so Todd becomes more anxious.

The feeble attempt by Pirelli to touch Tobias' hand is also comic and leads Todd to come up with inspired idea to send him down again.

The addition of the gin suggestion shows Todd is determined to keep the boy away longer, so he can polish Pirelli off properly now.

Comedy line that a Christian would give a boy gin.

Pirelli screams as he is pulled up from the chest and has his throat slit so the scream dies with a gurgle and a spurt of blood.

The chorus song continues dark, direct address to audience narrative commentary of the take and Todd's dark soul.

Commentary

The first part of the question asks for the candidate's directorial vision for staging the extract. The second part asks for the extract to be annotated to show how the actors could be directed to realise the comic potential.

An informed opening referencing Hal Prince sets the scene for a knowledgeable and effective account of a workable directorial vision. After more informed background discussion the candidate proposes a Victorian style production which would suit this extract with period costume and dark, badly lit settings.

The key to staging the entire play is the split levels with Todd's upper shop, the pie shop and bakery cellar below. The candidate takes account of that need, but doesn't fully explore a range of staging devices. There could also have been some further discussion on the moves as part of the director's approach.

Pirelli's accents/verbal comedy and the physical humour of the hand from the trunk is described as part of the process of arguing a way of staging the piece. Account is taken of the historical, cultural and social contexts.

The annotations pick up on every comic moment with suggestions that an actor could follow in the development of the characters. They go beyond the humour, but generally meet the task requirements.

The response is marked in level 5, with excellent and well developed references to process, demonstration of how directorial creative choices influence meaning being conveyed and understanding of how the performance text can be performed.

Question 2 Candidate style answer – high level

Describe your directorial vision for staging this extract, and then annotate the extract to show how you would direct the actors to use their voices. [30]

Whether set in Victorian times or as a timeless carnival of freaks and psychopaths, this musical thriller lends itself to a style of performance techniques underpinned by the use of contemporary technology. A Victorian time that had oil lamps and later gaslights is being portrayed by lighting that is computer controlled.

An audience today would feel comfortable with dark-side themes and the motive of revenge but may expect a range of technical support methods that are on a par with high quality gigs and performances and TV shows where laser, computer-enhanced voice amplification and cameras on stage as part of the action are commonplace.

Not all education centres have modern LED lighting systems, but most professional venues do, so a contemporary performance can usually take advantage of modern development to spotlight consistent light.

The barber's chair is a device which challenges theatrical technicians, especially if it is not raised to allow a body to drop below it. It may be that a symbolic tilting is acceptable or a video showing the victim falling through with a profile spotlight on the suddenly empty chair may work well in limited space and facilities on stage.

Lighting with or without gobos is the most obvious way in which a performance can be sympathetically buttressed. However, it would be rather limiting to consider lights alone without collaboration with sound effects, music, images and video/image backdrops.

The prologue includes a grave-digging which at once suggests a dark scene, heavy with death and possibly illicit activities. General overall gloom from floodlights is required but enough to read the backcloth and show the diggers.

In the opening scene with the familiar backdrop of the London skyline, Todd and Anthony encounter the old beggar woman which makes Todd uncomfortable, 'I feel the chill of ghostly shadows everywhere.' Those shadows portrayed in a general wash lighting effect could support the appearance of the old beggar woman throughout – she is his past and his tragic future.

In Mrs Lovett's pie shop for the first time, Todd encounters the woman who will love him, who will become his partner in crime and who is currently struggling to sell 'the worst pies in London.' Insects, dust, the greyness of the pastry, the dark, uncertain corners of the shop can all be enhanced by fragmented lighting effects. Projected images of crawling bugs or cats being minced may illustrate the song.

As Mrs Lovett tells Todd of the fate of his once pretty little wife at the hands of the Judge, the script requires an acting out of the flashback. This develops into a dimly-lit, masked ball sequence culminating in Turpin raping her, cheered on by the leering crowd.

This could be pre-recorded and replayed with distorting effects, or by a single mime dancer symbolically representing the horror of the scene or a laser light representation. His subsequent transportation and Turpin's adoption of the baby Johanna could equally be shown on video as backdrop-narration-backstory.

When she gives Todd his knives that she's carefully hidden all the years of his absence, he has an almost religious moment as he rediscovers 'his friends' and acknowledges that 'his right arm is complete again.' This moment could be reinforced with spiritually uplifting effects projected and haloes of light around an enraptured Todd.

Johanna alone in her room with her songbirds is prefaced by 'a moment of darkness' during which we hear bird sounds. This could be developed through sound effects and then images of gentle birds gradually becoming more frantic within their cages in a developed recurring motif.

It is the backdrop to Johanna and Anthony first meeting (falling in love) including when he buys her one that sings sweetly. It could be savagely ended by audio and visual distortion when the Beadle breaks the bird's neck.

The crowd scenes and facial responses within the mass of humanity could be videoed and shown during the shaving/tooth pulling contest to suggest a larger crowd responding to the events. Pirelli's costume could be so outrageous it is portrayed by video as well as an actual costume.

Key moments in the market place scene might benefit from video and/or lighting effects – when Todd opens Pirelli's elixir and declares it 'piss and ink' or when the shaving is ongoing or the tooth is being pulled.

The scene where Turpin spies on Johanna through the keyhole and whips himself into a climax of frenetic, perverted sexual excitement is difficult to stage convincingly. Lights that rise in power and colour, backdrop of raucous and unpleasant noises and possibly close up videos of Turpin's distorted face would help.

The musical score of the play naturally heightens such moments as the slashings of throats inflicted by Todd, or when he first has a chance to kill Turpin but fails, 'the music reaches a shrill crescendo'. However, it may be an additional visual impact of video of throats, blood and falling, blurred bodies may add to the horror of the piece's impact.

The end of Act 1 when Lovett and Todd decide to embark on their killing/pie making spree, a backdrop of relevant people images, mincing machines and blood may help. This could be reprised as Act II opens with a successful pie business, but this time the video ends with the pies and victims overtaken by maggots as an image of rot and decay.

The arrival of Todd's new chair is a parallel moment to his being given back his beloved razors in Act 1, so a similar light enhancement or religious intensity would add more to the moment as Todd embraces murderous possibilities.

When we first encounter Mrs Lovett in her hellish kitchen, all is dark, lit only by the fierce red intensity from the monstrous ovens. The interior of Fogg's Asylum would certainly benefit from a video enhancement of lunatics close up, appalling living conditions and the swivel eyes of madness looming large. This could be reprised once they have escaped from the place after Fogg's death.

When Mrs Lovett plays the harmonium dreaming of domestic bliss and retirement with Todd, a video of a quaint seaside cottage and children playing in the sand could be overwhelmed by images of human remains from their crimes.

When Tobias is imprisoned in the kitchens and the Beadle's body falls from above down the chute, a series of images of falling bodies in almost non-existent light could help build the boy's terror, to better explain his white hair soon to be seen.

Just before killing him, Todd conjures sweet images on the wall for Turpin to be deluded by. Another video and partial lighting could strengthen that. The actual moment of slashing Turpin's throat is another epiphany for Todd, requiring the heavenly lighting effect. The death of the beggar woman is the opposite effect.

It could be that Todd's own death needs a similar video backdrop, or perhaps it should be left to speak for itself through Tobias' new madness and the epilogue.

Throughout, the live small band of piano, keys, drums, sax, some other wind instruments and possibly strings could be on stage as part of the action dressed as the cast in a Victorian or other setting, or in an orchestra pit or be raised on a mezzanine floor above the stage. Much will depend on who is available to perform, the budget and the aural quality of the performance space. Equally, there may be no live musicians, but the decision about how the music is brought to the stage and merges with the performers is a vital directorial one which determines the success or not of the production.

The use of flies, trucks for scenery or even scenery itself will be determined by space, budgets and personnel. If I was directing a show with limited resources I'd favour a Brechtian-style minimalism to the set and backdrop with lasers, lights, videos and effects to support the acting and singing.

I would even go further and experiment with an asylum approach as in 'Marat Sade' and have all characters as if they were inmates of Fogg's Asylum, including the protagonists, perhaps in all white with deadpan mask faces.

Finally, it is a fair argument that technology has little or no place in a show that works through the music, the portrayal of characters and a gripping tale with sufficient blood and guts to hold a contemporary audience.

Many observers feel that we have become too obsessed with technology and companies such as DV8, Frantic Assembly and Complicite make a virtue of developing integrated technology as much as they develop human actors. When, to take one example, a show like 'Clickwind' from Judith Adams' script, develops multi-media installations, live performance and sonic walkabouts with headphones, technology has done enough. Sweeney Todd stands alone as written.

Commentary

The question asks candidates as if a director to explain and justify how they could integrate technology in a present-day production of the whole play.

The response is a thorough and detailed exposition of a range of contemporary technology which would sit comfortably in front of an audience today. There is recognition of the progress from gas lights to digital and how characters can be portrayed today.

Lights, effects and pre-recordings are suggested and attached to specific moments in the whole play. This is comprehensive, mature work with a very high level of detail.

There are links to practitioners from an informed and knowledgeable understanding. As it concludes it also completes a debating point about whether technology has gone too far, especially in a show like this.

It is marked in level 5, near the top, excellent and perceptive.

Question 1 Candidate style answer – mid level

Describe your directorial vision for staging this extract, and then annotate the extract to show how you would direct the actors to realise its comic potential.

[30]

Sweeney Todd is a melodrama so I would direct it in that style. There is some over-the-top acting to be done and when Sweeney Todd, aka Benjamin Harker, is on stage I would ask the actor to play him with some exaggerated style. One of the interesting features of this musical thriller play is that Todd is a killer and a man determined to have his bloody revenge, but it is also a comedy.

Pirelli the fake Italian is supposed to be a comedy character. He kisses Mrs Lovett's hands as if she is the Queen. He speaks in a funny way with a singing style and making it sound like he is not English. When he confesses to being Irish, we should find that funny. For some people the Irish are as funny as Italians.

Tobias is his servant and we saw him treated badly when Pirelli tried to take his tooth out with a crowd watching. The extract shows he is hungry, so he goes downstairs to eat some pie greedily. This gives a chance for Pirelli and Todd to fight.

First Todd is told Pirelli knows who he is and wants half his profit to keep quiet. Blackmail is not normally funny but Pirelli is ridiculous and even though he holds Todd's razor knife in his hand we know it will be Todd who wins and it will be Pirelli who will end up dead.

Mrs Lovett is like a servant as well for Todd. She always looks after him and clears up the mess of the dead bodies for him into pies. At the beginning of this extract she is like flirting with Todd when Pirelli comes in. There is a song about getting married by the seaside and Todd killing people some times that shows how much she loves him. Her every move shows she loves the man.

The fight between Todd and Pirelli is not where he cuts the throat but tries to strangle him. I would make it clear that Pirelli is not actually dead when he is stuffed in the chest but is maybe stunned a bit. His hand sticking out shows the audience he is not dead. It moves along and tries to touch Tobias hand when he is sitting on the box. This gives Todd a panic and he has to get the boy downstairs for more pie.

As director I would tell actors that we have an upstairs in the shop and downstairs in the pie place so we can do two things at once which will make more comedy. The boy is swigging gin when Todd drags Pirelli up from the chest and cuts his throat. As he is screaming it is funny because he can die as his throat loses power to make noise and he passes away.

To see the text extract/match it to the comments, click here
<http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/242857-unit-h459-45-de-constructing-texts-for-performance-sweeney-todd-sample-assessment-material.pdf>

The sailor is Anthony who is the love interest of Johanna. She and him are pure compared with Todd and Mrs Lovett. She puts idea in his head to kill Anthony but he never does.

Maternal heart and motherly affection from a woman who has cut up dead bodies and baked into pies. This is comedy.

I would make Pirelli come in like a procession with long flowing coat of many colours, slap Tobias round the head a bit and then go silly when he sees Mrs Lovett and kisses her hand. It would be funny if he slobbers on her.

He needs Mrs Lovett to leave so he can blackmail Sweeney Todd.

Strong teeth is funny because Pirelli took one out when they had the competition, him and Sweeney Todd.

Pirelli has been pretending to be someone else. He thinks being Italian is better for business than being Irish. People might trust him more.

Upstairs and downstairs.

Todd eats pie with strong teeth and Pirelli wants the five pounds back that Todd won from him.

Now Pirelli wants half of his profits. He is greedy, like Tobias and his pie eating.

Dramatic music to show that Pirelli knows who Sweeney really is.

Tobias has a wig on. When he takes it off that is funny as he has short hair underneath it.

Pirelli takes up the razor and opens it with a flick. This would be funny if the audience thinks he is going to shave or cut Todd's throat.

Todd is thinking for a long moment. We should see he is thinking whether to pay up or kill Pirelli.

He sings again, like he did at the barber contest. Todd won then.

Todd starts the fight when Pirelli is not expecting it.

Tobias comes back upstairs to get Pirelli because he is scared of Pirelli being angry with him.

When Pirelli is slammed into the chest that is funny for the audience, especially as we see he is not actually dead yet.

This is funny when he forgets his wig. Maybe he is scared that Pirelli will be angry if he doesn't wear it. It must be Pirelli's idea for the wig, it is not the boy's idea.

When he says he has been called away, it is comedy like he is called by the angel of death but just pretends to Tobias that somebody has called him to a meeting or something.

When he doesn't see the hand and then he does it is like a double take, very funny, but he pretends he hasn't seen it.

Todd sends him downstairs to get more pie because he wants to kill Pirelli and stop him moving his hand outside the chest.

Todd says the boy can have some gin. It is funny that a child is given gin, but it was more common in them days.

Mrs Lovett is surprised Todd said give him some gin, but she give it to him.

The actual murder of Pirelli is funny as he screams. Downstairs Mrs Lovett pours gin for the boy and he takes it. The scene freezes so while the song is on from the three tenors the audience sees the boy and gets the message that the boy and Mrs Lovett are doing what Todd wants while he is upstairs killing one of his enemies.

Commentary on Question 1 – mid level

The first part of the question asks for the candidate's directorial vision for staging the extract. The second part asks for the extract to be annotated to show how the actors could be directed to realise the comic potential.

This response advocates working the scene as a melodrama picking up on the point that it is both a tale of grisly murder yet a musical comedy; blackmail is not funny, yet the extract works on a humorous level as the shock of the deaths is not too much.

The significance of Mrs Lovett is highlighted, particularly as her watching Todd's back is actually a symptom of her love for him.

The scene is described as narrative in this response, but there is also quite compelling use of ideas for staging, though often they lack breadth and depth.

The annotation almost exclusively focuses on the humour and draws it out effectively with some good ideas for actors, which would help build their characters. The razor, the wig, accents, violence which is not necessarily realistic – all adds up to a fulfilment of the task.

Overall, this is marked in Level 3, clear reference to processes, clear demonstration of how artistic choices influence outcomes on stage, clear grasp of how the text can be performed and some little acknowledgement of relative contexts. Having said that, there are moments of more confident expression of these criteria, so the mark is +2.

Question 2 Candidate style answer – mid level

As a director, explain and justify how you could integrate technology into a contemporary performance of *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. [30]

Imagining I was a director, I would first note the extent of my budget and resources available. I would then aim to produce a Victorian style version with my small but live band seated on a large raised stage block stage right, always in view like Brecht theory, but acting as commentators through their music.

I have read that Sweeney Todd has been described as an opera rather than a musical and epic theatre rather than a small-scale repertoire piece. For my production I am going to stage it as a story like a Sherlock Holmes mystery or Jack the Ripper murder, in a Victorian setting that reminds audiences of an end of the pier show, a museum of curios and mechanicals.

The chair is central to proceedings, although it doesn't appear until the second act. I won't be able to move much stage furniture about so I will have a large, raised stage block area stage left to balance the band tower opposite. The space between will be the dimly lit streets, the kitchen area and the main asylum area.

On the top level of my tower that is not for the band, there will be the barber's shop, with rickety stairs going up from the ground level. The level below this will be for characters to wait, lying about, for the chorus to be based. Behind them and linking the very top with the stage floor will be a concealed drop area with mattresses at the bottom and handles down the sides.

The chair will be mounted on a metal hoist that tilts at the press of a release handle forwards and allows the dead person to slide out feet first and safely drop below. It will be installed during the interval as it would be in the way during Act 1. Then the barber's shop should be quite bare, with one old chair and the chest.

The walls of the towers will be covered by tall, rectangular stage flats mounted on small trucks running along guide rails screwed to the stage that will represent the beehive of the class system in the prologue and the London street scene, the market place, the outside of the asylum and other places where outsides are needed.

During the Pirelli vs Todd shave off, I would put one man on each tower, Pirelli in with the band. All this would give the scenery and staging an important part in the play, so all the stage crew would be the market place crowd in Act 1 and the lunatics in Act II.

While flats are being moved, either the music/story could flow on, or it could be stopped to allow the noise of metal wheels running along rails to be magnified deliberately to make it more interesting to the audience.

My message is that the world on stage is like a 19th century factory or mill where humanity counts for little, all that matters is profit. The same could be said for the characters in this show. All that matters is revenge. My audience - I want to think they have walked into a warehouse of horror.

The play has been constructed to alternate certain scenes, such as when Tobias and Mrs Lovett are downstairs while Pirelli and Todd are upstairs, which helps to keep the action moving and saves time in explaining plot.

To make my production design stronger I would magnify (exaggerate) sound effects. So the chair could be made to have a metallic squeak when it is released. The sound of a body falling down the chute I would make very loud, frightening like.

My lights would all be done as spots or pools of light - Fresnels mainly. They would be mounted on the tops of my towers, so that light on whoever was on the top levels would be shining up at them from their feet levels, making the sinister effect even stronger.

As there wouldn't be much spare room on the stage itself, I would have a lot of video projection of some big moments. I would use it for the marketplace scene and Fogg's asylum. If near blank screens were trucked in to stand in front of the towers and video images were projected from out front among the audience, the result would be a fragmented view of a setting that would add to the horror in a factory effect.

I think it is important for my show to be set in a time when laws were different, where people maybe could mass murder for revenge because forensics and CCTV were not around.

If the show was in the winter, I'd have a door open for a time to bring in some chill and if in the summer I'd hire cold-blow fans to be on for a time to make it more realistic. If the fans made a noise, it would be adding to the mechanical, factory like sense of the place.

The band would not be traditional, but would be simple – a drummer, a keyboard and a sounds effect operator of a computer through a massive PA system. If a lot of their music was pre-recorded some could be replayed during the musical so that it can be distorted and be over-loud while the band just sits there, staring blankly at the audience.

Commentary

The question asks candidates as if a director to explain and justify how they could integrate technology in a present-day production of the whole play.

The response takes an interesting Victorian show idea, taking up the idea expressed elsewhere that it is more opera than musical and more epic than small scale. It is a valid point and there is some justification for it as the response unfolds.

The band on stage and the careful installation of the mechanical chair are interesting touches. There is not a great deal of exposition of the wide range of stage technology, lights and computer graphics available today, and some of the ideas are not fully developed.

There is some linking to the text and the proposed use of a tower with different flats adorning it is also a futuristic plan. The way a potential factory atmosphere is created is innovative and the intention to make the audience feel they are in a warehouse of horror is laudable.

It all speaks of integration and so meets that aspect of the question. More needed to be focused on the contemporary audience aspects, not just of an age when people expect technology but will settle for more traditional gadgetry if they blend in with the theme.

This is marked in Level 2/Level 3 area, as it is clear with occasional moments of confident expression of the criteria. There is a need for more contexts, but on balance it will go into the bottom of Level 3.

Question 1 Candidate style answer – low level

Describe your directorial vision for staging this extract, and then annotate the extract to show how you would direct the actors to realise its comic potential.

[30]

The scene is when Sweeney kills Pirelli who is pretending to be an Italian. The actor who plays Sweeney only speaks a bit about Johanna who is his daughter but she does not know that. He speaks a bit when Pirelli calls him Benjamin Barker which is his real name. He doesn't want people to know that.

Pirelli wants his five quid back but Sweeney doesn't want to give it to him. He is going to buy a chair for killing rich people in and needs the money.

He waits for Pirelli to start singing in his fake Italian voice and they start a fight when Todd knocks the razor out of his hand. It is a short fight and he ends up being put in a large box or chest upstairs.

The boy called Tobias who is the one who looks after Pirelli is sent downstairs for some pies and has his wig taken off by Mrs Lovett. When he goes back upstairs the fight is finished and Todd has put Pirelli in the box but he is not dead and his hand is sticking out. The hand moves around and nearly touches the boy so Todd has to send him downstairs again so he can open the box and grab Pirelli by his hair. He cuts his throat while he screams loudly.

This should be funny and the director tells people to make screaming and cutting throats funny. When Tobias is downstairs again he has gin to drink. It would make the boy drunk which is funny for the audience.

There should be lights upstairs and some downstairs. The costumes should be long and old fashioned like the Victorians or maybe even a modern version where Sweeney Todd is a sort of gangster.

There isn't much for the director to tell the actors because there are stage directions and the murder of Pirelli is meant to be funny so it is. This is what the audience understands.

To see the text extract/match it to the comments, click here
<http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/242857-unit-h459-45-de-constructing-texts-for-performance-sweeney-todd-sample-assessment-material.pdf>

Johanna is a girl, she is not funny except when the bird in her cage has its neck broke by the beadle.

The sailor is Anthony but he is not in this scene.

Every time there is a throat cutting I would make a sound effect and have red lights go on so the audience understands we mean death by violence.

Pirelli is Italian so should come on wearing Italian clothes which are different from others who are English.

When he speaks Italian it is funny because that is not how Italian people speak in real life.

Mrs Lovett wants to give him a pie because he looks thin and nobody has been kind to him for hours.

Pirelli stops being Italian and becomes Irish. This is funny and he should take off his Italian coat and move in a different way now he is Irish.

He holds out his hand for Todd to put five pounds in it but he doesn't have it on him, which is comedy.

Pirelli wants money from Todd every Friday, that will be his payday.

It is comic when Mrs Lovett sees the wig come off in his hand and his head is revealed. It is short cropped.

Pirelli has the razor in his hand, so it should be funny if he uses it to wave about in front of Sweeney Todd to make him feel a bit scared.

There is a bit of singing so that Todd can kick the razor off Pirelli and they fight like cats and dogs with Todd getting his hands round his throat.

Tobias has finished his pie and wants to get back to Pirelli.

Tobias forgets his wig. It is always funny when people forget something on stage.

Todd wins the fight and drags Pirelli into a chest in the corner. He will be heavy so it is funny when Todd drags him along. When the hand is left dangling out that is very funny as well.

When he says he didn't say it is funny because he had been strangled he couldn't speak.

Todd is all nervous smiles. They are quite amusing for audience.

The hand is moving in the chest and the audience will find this amusing. It gets close to

This is repeated and the audience will find repeating quite funny.

Tobias is very pleased to get some gin. He likes his drink a lot.

Upstairs Todd grabs Pirelli out of the chest and cuts his throat for him. Downstairs Mrs Lovett pours the gin for the boy who holds the glass like he is making a toast to his boss who is now dead.

The song finishes the scene off as it is a musical type play.

Commentary

The first part of the question asks for the candidate's directorial vision for staging the extract. The second part asks for the extract to be annotated to show how the actors could be directed to realise the comic potential.

The response is quite straightforward, mundane in parts, with an account of some of the actual story. There is little vision expressed that a director might have.

Most of what is written is accurate, but there is no real development of ideas and no sense of understanding how staging can be used to present a play. Few are the links with contexts and the candidate shows little grasp of how directorial decisions influence the message that is conveyed to the audience.

The annotations are a series of obvious, often stretching a point statements looking for anything that might seem comical. Other annotations are not fully designed to help actors in realising the text to a stage.

Overall it lacks depth and breadth and is marked in Level 2, basic on the criteria in that band.

Question 2 Candidate style answer – low level

As a director, explain and justify how you could integrate technology into a contemporary performance of *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. [30]

Using technology in Sweeney Todd is a must because music is technology when it is played and recorded. There is music played through almost every moment of the play, so it will need technology to make it possible for the musicians to keep going.

The director's job is to keep everything else going. She decides who does what and when. They all read the script, but it has only a few directions in it, like raising an arm or jumping up or grabbing the razor. The director has to fill in the blanks and tells the actors how to move around.

Sweeney Todd is about revenge and not forgiving. It is through the man who changed his name from when he was a convict for no real reason and it shows that everyone has something to hide. Mrs Lovett doesn't tell about her first husband. Pirelli is revealed as a liar and cheat. The old beggar woman is somebody else and the Judge and his beadle are not honest though they are supposed to be the law itself.

There is no technology for this, it comes from what the actors playing them say and how they move. You wouldn't need any other technology.

You would need lights, of course. Sondheim has put in his writing many times about when it is to be dark and when there are blackouts. The actors must follow those instructions and so must the lighting crew. Even the director won't change them.

If more lights are needed or more blackouts, the director would say it. I think there could be blackout every time someone dies, so that they can get off stage and when the lights come up, the stage is bare where they stood.

If the director didn't say what should happen, then the play wouldn't be successful for the audience who had paid money to see it.

The play moves through time and there are some flashbacks. When the old beggar woman is supposed to be a young wife and mother, the Judge has her at a masked party ball. The lights for that should be multi-coloured and revolving like all the people were doped out of their heads.

In the Victorian days life was different with a lot of very poor people and they didn't earn much. Pirelli asks for his five pounds back as if that is a lot of money. The woman who begs in rags gets a few coins from people who feel sorry for her, showing that poor people didn't have very much.

For lighting poor people there could be spotlights and different colours, like green or just very dull lights, so that the audience knows they are poor and downtrodden in the times.

Commentary

The question asks candidates as if a director to explain and justify how they could integrate technology in a present day production of the whole play.

The response begins with more comment on the play, as if still in Q1 but goes on to claim there is no technology in it. There may not be in a Victorian production, though the chair would be evidence of at least some, but the candidate misses the point about the contemporary audience in the question.

The discussion about lights and blackouts and what has been set down in stage directions adds little depth to this response.

It is marked in Level 2, basic on all criteria. There is a little sense of historical contexts but less of cultural and social ones.



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