

Spring 2015 - 'Sweeney Todd'

Nominated for Best Musical, NODA Eastern Region District 6, in 2015

A very successful run for our spring show 2015 eventually had to come to an end, leaving the applause of an appreciative Last Night audience but a memory. If you thought that some of our recent choices have been rather daring then this one probably topped the lot, because we presented 'Sweeney Todd' - yes, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street!! We welcomed a brand-new directing team for this production, with Cordelia Spence as Stage Director and Jon Gibbs as Musical Director. Cordelia, a professional director, was much in demand elsewhere even throughout our rehearsals and so our very own Jane Zarins was appointed as co-Director to work with Cordelia on all aspects of the production. This relationship worked really well, with each bringing their own touches to the staging and set, but the team still had their work cut out to bring the best out of a complex score - they succeeded in style though!

Based on a Victorian melodrama, and earlier the (somewhat unlikely!) subject of a ballet by Malcolm Arnold, the musical version of 'Sweeney Todd' was adapted for the Broadway stage in 1979 by Stephen Sondheim and Hugh Wheeler, with Angela Lansbury in the role of Mrs Lovett. It then opened in the West End in 1980, starring Dennis Quilley & Sheila Hancock, before being revived in both New York and London throughout the 1980's, 90's and 2000's. The film adaptation of 2007 starring Johnny Depp, Helena Bonham Carter, Alan Rickman, Sacha Baron Cohen & Timothy Spall, and the London stage revival of 2012 with Michael Ball and Imelda Staunton, are perhaps the versions in which it is now best known however.

The Preview Evening was held on Monday 27th October, in Quaker Hall Beccles, giving Cordelia, Jane and Jon a chance to tell us all about this challenging show. There was then a further opportunity to do our homework on 29th October when we held a Video Evening in Beccles Public Hall, showing how the professionals do it. Next up were the Principals' Auditions, on 9th and 10th November, which gave the Panel a tricky task deciding who they might cast in which role. We were delighted to yet again welcome new members and "Rising Stars graduates" to our ranks of potential principals, working alongside the more familiar faces, and even more delighted to say that several of them secured the roles! It took quite a while to secure a complete cast though, but we got there in the end. Those who were "telling the tale of Sweeney Todd" were thus:-

Sweeney Todd - Tom Guttridge	Mrs Lovett - Debbie Lambert	Anthony Hope - Stephen Brown
Johanna - Daisy Tyrell-Kent	Judge Turpin - Martin Clarke	Beadle Bamford - Bob Sharman
Adolpho Pirelli - Ian Cook	Tobias Ragg - Tom Holt	Beggar Woman - Suzie Kingston
Minor roles - Members of the Company		

The final chance for potential cast to make their mark was the chorus auditions on 12th November. Rehearsals then started in earnest, beginning with learning the opening number, and carried on almost to Christmas before starting again in the New Year. Scenes slowly developed through the spring, so by the time we transferred to the Public Hall at the beginning of April everything was really beginning to take shape. There was a lot to do to ensure things ran smoothly though, so we still had a busy time ahead of us. Everything came together really well in the end though, so the whole cast can be very proud of a job well done.