



Show Report

Soup Productions

Sweeney Todd: A Legacy of Blood

09 October 2026

Soup Productions Sweeney Todd: A Legacy of Blood

SHOW REPORT

– 2026–27 Season –



Northern Stage Awards

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PRODUCTION INFORMATION

PRODUCTION	Sweeney Todd: A Legacy of Blood
SOCIETY	Soup Productions
VENUE	The Studio
GENRE	Drama
CAST SIZE	2
WRITER & DIRECTOR	Marcus Cameron
PRODUCTION COORDINATOR	Michael Pirks
SET DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION	Ruth Gosney, Drew Gosney, Josh Gosney, Michelle Drinkwater, Colin Drinkwater, Emmett Drinkwater
LIGHTING & SOUND	Martin Pollard, The Studio Widnes
PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPHER	Colin Drinkwater at Jorube Portrait Photography
MAKE UP & SPECIAL EFFECTS	Abigail Smith at Makeupbysmithy
POSTER DESIGN	Samantha Jayne-Twigg
PROGRAMME DESIGN	Olivia Pryer

CAST LIST

Sweeney Todd	Andy McQuoid
Mrs Lovett	Sam Duxbury
DATE OF PERFORMANCE	Friday 9th October 2026
DATE REPORT PUBLISHED	Saturday 10th October 2026
ADJUDICATOR ID	NSA0003
NSA LOGO ON POSTER	Yes
NSA IN PROGRAMME	Yes
PROGRAMME CLASS	Best Essential Information

THE REVIEW

REVIEW WORD COUNT

2228

STRONGEST ELEMENTS

A Barber's Descent into Darkness

- **Andy McQuoid** delivers an intense portrayal of Sweeney Todd, drawing us into the barber's increasingly troubled mind through compelling storytelling, purposeful dialogue and a chilling exploration of his shifting morality.

A Twisted Partnership

- **Andy McQuoid** and **Sam Duxbury** bring dark humour and unsettling tension to Todd and Mrs Lovett's relationship. Their shifting balance of power keeps us guessing, creating a partnership that is as warped as it is fascinating.

Gruesomely Good Effects

- **Abigail Smith's** makeup and special effects are a real highlight, from Mrs Lovett's pox-ridden appearance to the wonderfully grotesque removable face. These macabre details deliver the shock factor this production promises, leaving a memorable impression on the audience.

It's October, and we have officially entered the spooky season! What better way to kick off the festivities than with a play whose disclaimer promised "violence, gore and some scenes people may find frightening"? Bring it on!

We always receive such a warm welcome at **SOUP Productions**, and tonight was no different. Society Chair **Mike Pirks** greeted us at the door and promptly showed us to our seats. It was also lovely to overhear conversations about our recent Northern Stage Awards, with people reflecting on the backstage photo montage featuring submissions from our societies and the little personal touches throughout the evening. It was wonderful to hear these details being remembered and appreciated.

Heading into tonight's performance, my guest and I weren't quite sure what to expect. We knew the story of *Sweeney Todd* from the musical and film adaptations, but how would this version unfold? Written and directed by **Marcus Cameron**, the production marked a double debut, with Cameron bringing his own interpretation to the infamous tale of Todd and his accomplice, Mrs Lovett, and the dark events that would cement their notoriety.

Andy McQuoid took on the role of the infamous barber, Sweeney Todd, with a gruff voice and a razor that was rarely far from his hands. After all, idle hands are the devil's playthings! From the

moment the lights went up, Andy was fully immersed in the character, delivering a dialogue-heavy script with impressive control and commitment. The storytelling was a particular strength. Andy used variations in pitch and tone to give the dialogue a natural rise and fall, drawing us in and keeping us hanging on every word. His intense eye contact with the audience heightened the unsettling atmosphere, allowing tension to build through purposeful delivery rather than simply reciting the script.

Throughout the production, we watched the darkness and anger within Todd gather momentum, complicated by the remorse of his conscience. Andy portrayed a man caught between his moral compass and the intoxicating power that came from holding other people's lives in his hands. These conflicting layers revealed a thoughtful approach to the character and the turmoil beneath the surface. When it came to the singing, Andy demonstrated good vocal control, ensuring the lyrics remained clear and powerful. It was a compelling portrayal of a man whose darkness was becoming increasingly difficult to contain.

Playing opposite Andy, **Sam Duxbury** took on the role of Mrs Lovett, the pie shop owner and Sweeney Todd's accomplice in his murderous dealings. Sam demonstrated a strong grasp of the dialogue, bringing plenty of layers to a character who could be both psychotic and deranged, with occasional glimpses of something resembling sanity. These shifts were particularly effective when Mrs Lovett took control of a situation, keeping us guessing about what might be going on beneath the surface. There were glimpses of an accent throughout, although greater consistency would help strengthen the characterisation.

Comedy was a particular strength for Sam. The punchlines were delivered with good timing, allowing just enough space for the audience to enjoy the humour before the story moved on. The almost married-couple-esque exchanges between Todd and Mrs Lovett were especially well handled, providing welcome light relief amid the darker subject matter. At times, however, the pace of the dialogue meant some of Sam's words were lost. While Mrs Lovett certainly lends herself to quick-fire delivery, balancing speed with clarity would allow every line to land as intended. A similar challenge arose in the more heightened moments of anger, when shrieks occasionally overwhelmed the dialogue. Maintaining clarity when emotions are running high would make these moments more effective.

Sam also appeared comfortable with the musical elements, delivering assured performances, particularly during the solo numbers. The emotion brought to these moments helped us connect with the character beyond the spoken dialogue. With a little more attention to breath control to support the bigger notes, Sam could approach these vocal peaks with even greater confidence.

As a pair, Andy and Sam demonstrated a clear rapport and an evident comfort with both each other and the material. Their reactive skills were particularly effective, with some lovely tableaux capturing the frustration and complexity of this increasingly warped relationship. Their confidence was especially apparent during the comedic exchanges, while their trust in one another allowed them to explore the darker, more uncomfortable moments together. One of the

most interesting aspects of their partnership was the shifting balance of power between the characters. The audience's sympathies were taken on quite a journey: initially, we could find ourselves viewing Todd as the victim of Mrs Lovett's greed, only to begin feeling for Lovett as she became increasingly caught up in Todd's power-driven madness. Neither character remained firmly in control for long. A particularly clever example came through Todd's changing opinion of his accomplice, moving from dismissing her as "a daft woman" at the beginning to recognising her as "a smart woman, borderline a genius one" once their business plan had taken shape. It was a simple but effective way of illustrating the changing dynamics between them.

There were opportunities to develop the physical storytelling further, particularly in communicating Mrs Lovett's lust and desire for Todd. While the dialogue suggested her attraction, this did not always translate as clearly into the physical action. A stronger physical expression of that longing could have added another layer to their already complicated relationship.

The duets offered a slightly different dynamic. At times, there seemed to be a degree of restraint between the performers, as though they were holding back rather than fully committing to the vocal interplay. Although there were glimpses of harmony, a more confident and assertive approach would have helped these moments soar, allowing both voices to complement one another with greater conviction.

As both writer and director, **Marcus Cameron** clearly had a vision for this production, describing it as his self-confessed "heavy metal jukebox musical". Rather than simply retelling a familiar story, Cameron delved into the psychology of the characters, exploring the *why* behind their actions and the shifting moral boundaries that shaped their descent.

One of the most intriguing threads was the exploration of religion, particularly the parallels drawn with Jesus and the sacrifices described in the Bible. Following his first kill, Todd was seen reading the Bible, seemingly seeking atonement for his actions. Yet, by the finale, this relationship with faith had taken a much darker turn. Proclaiming words associated with the Last Supper, Todd appeared to position himself as a Christ-like figure, moving from a man seeking forgiveness to one who seemed to believe himself almost divine. It was a striking shift, adding a chilling dimension to his psychological descent. The contrast between these moments became an increasingly powerful motif in Act Two, encouraging us to consider how Todd's relationship with morality, guilt and his own perceived power had become so distorted. There were also moments that brought Shakespeare to mind, particularly in Mrs Lovett's characterisation. Her ambition, manipulation and gradual unravelling offered flashes of Lady Macbeth, adding another fascinating lens through which to view her descent into madness. These echoes connected the characters' struggles to some of the drama's most enduring explorations of ambition and moral corruption.

The musical choices also felt carefully considered, with the styles reflecting Todd's changing mental state. Beginning with a more classical sound before moving towards heavier rock, the music appeared to track his psychological deterioration, allowing the soundscape to evolve alongside the character. It was equally pleasing to spot the smaller visual details woven into the storytelling. One particularly striking image was Todd manipulating his razor like the hands of a clock, offering a tantalising suggestion of time, inevitability and perhaps even the steady progression of his own descent. It was a thoughtful touch that rewarded closer attention.

The set, designed and constructed by **Ruth Gosney, David Gosney, Josh Gosney**, alongside **Michelle Drinkwater, Colin Drinkwater** and **Emmett Drinkwater**, took a minimalist approach that worked well for this production. With a story driven by its characters and their increasingly disturbing actions, there was no need to overcrowd the space. At the same time, The Studio offers plenty of room to play with, and it would have been interesting to see more of that space utilised to create additional visual interest. Much of the action unfolded on the floor directly in front of the audience, bringing us close to the performers and adding to the interactive feel of the performance. A baker's bench sat centrally, accompanied by a gothic-style chair that established the shared living space of Todd and Mrs Lovett, while the stage itself became the basement where the bodies were taken. This simple division provided a clear foundation for the storytelling, keeping the focus firmly on the performers and the grisly events unfolding before us.

If there was one element that truly stole the show for me, it was the makeup and special effects provided by **Abigail Smith**. From the facial prosthetics used to create Mrs Lovett's pox-ridden appearance to the individual body parts scattered throughout the production, there was a wonderfully gruesome attention to detail that suited the material perfectly. A particular mention must go to the head with its removable face – positively grotesque, and clearly a hit with the audience, whose audible reaction said it all! It was the kind of practical effect that delivered exactly what the production promised, combining horror with theatrical shock value. Abigail's work was undoubtedly one of the production's most memorable visual elements.

Lighting and sound were provided by **Martin Pollard** of The Studio Widnes. Although the lighting design was relatively minimal, it proved effective in supporting the atmosphere. Red and blue washes suggested internal conflict and heightened tension, complementing the psychological themes running through the story. The spotlights during the characters' inner monologues were particularly effective, drawing our attention into these intimate moments before returning us to the main action. There were, however, occasional extended blackouts that felt unnecessary, particularly given that there was no significant set movement to accommodate. Keeping these transitions tighter would help maintain the momentum and tension.

The sound was generally well handled, although there were a few microphone frequency gremlins along the way, which can be an understandable challenge in a performance space such as this. At times, the backing tracks overpowered the performers, and a better balance between music and vocals would have allowed the lyrics and storytelling to come through more clearly. Some musical transitions also ended with an abrupt cut rather than a more considered fade, making them feel less polished than they might otherwise have been.

The costumes followed the same minimalist approach as the set, with simple choices that largely served their purpose. Sweeney Todd wore a white shirt and braces, which felt appropriate to the period and helped establish the character. The black jeans were a less convincing choice, and I would have preferred footwear that felt more in keeping with the era. These details did not detract from Andy's performance, but they are worth mentioning when considering how the visual elements could have been developed further.

Mrs Lovett's costume adopted a brown colour palette, which worked within the production's overall aesthetic, although some finer details felt less suited to the period. Brown leggings, for example, seemed a less convincing choice than distressed tights, while a traditional lace-up Victorian boot could have helped complete the look. Greater attention to these details could have elevated the overall effect. There were also moments when Sam's corset and bolero-style jacket appeared to cause practical difficulties, with the jacket needing frequent adjustment. Unfortunately, this occasionally drew the eye away from the action. Ensuring performers feel comfortable and secure in their costumes is just as important as the visual design itself. Despite these observations, I enjoyed the subtle nods to the Victorian era, alongside hints of the gothic, Tim Burton-esque aesthetic familiar from other adaptations of *Sweeney Todd*. With a little more refinement in the finer details and practical fit, the costumes could have done even more to immerse us in this dark and unsettling world.

Sweeney Todd: A Legacy of Blood was an ambitious and thought-provoking production that looked beyond the familiar bloodshed to explore the psychology, morality and shifting power dynamics of its central characters. Marcus Cameron's interpretation offered plenty to consider, with intriguing thematic choices and a clear desire to bring a fresh perspective to a well-known tale. Andy McQuoid and Sam Duxbury demonstrated commitment to their roles, building a relationship that moved between dark humour, discomfort and moments of genuine intensity. While there were opportunities for greater refinement in vocal clarity, physical storytelling and some technical details, the production offered plenty to engage with, with Abigail Smith's gruesome makeup and special effects a particular highlight.

Ultimately, this was a production that invited us to look beyond the razors and the recipes to consider the darkness that can take hold when guilt, ambition and power become dangerously intertwined. There was something almost *hiraeth*-like about the lingering pull of this twisted world: a strange yearning to return to a place we know we should probably leave well alone! Perhaps that is the mark of a story that has done its job, leaving us with plenty to ponder long after the final curtain.

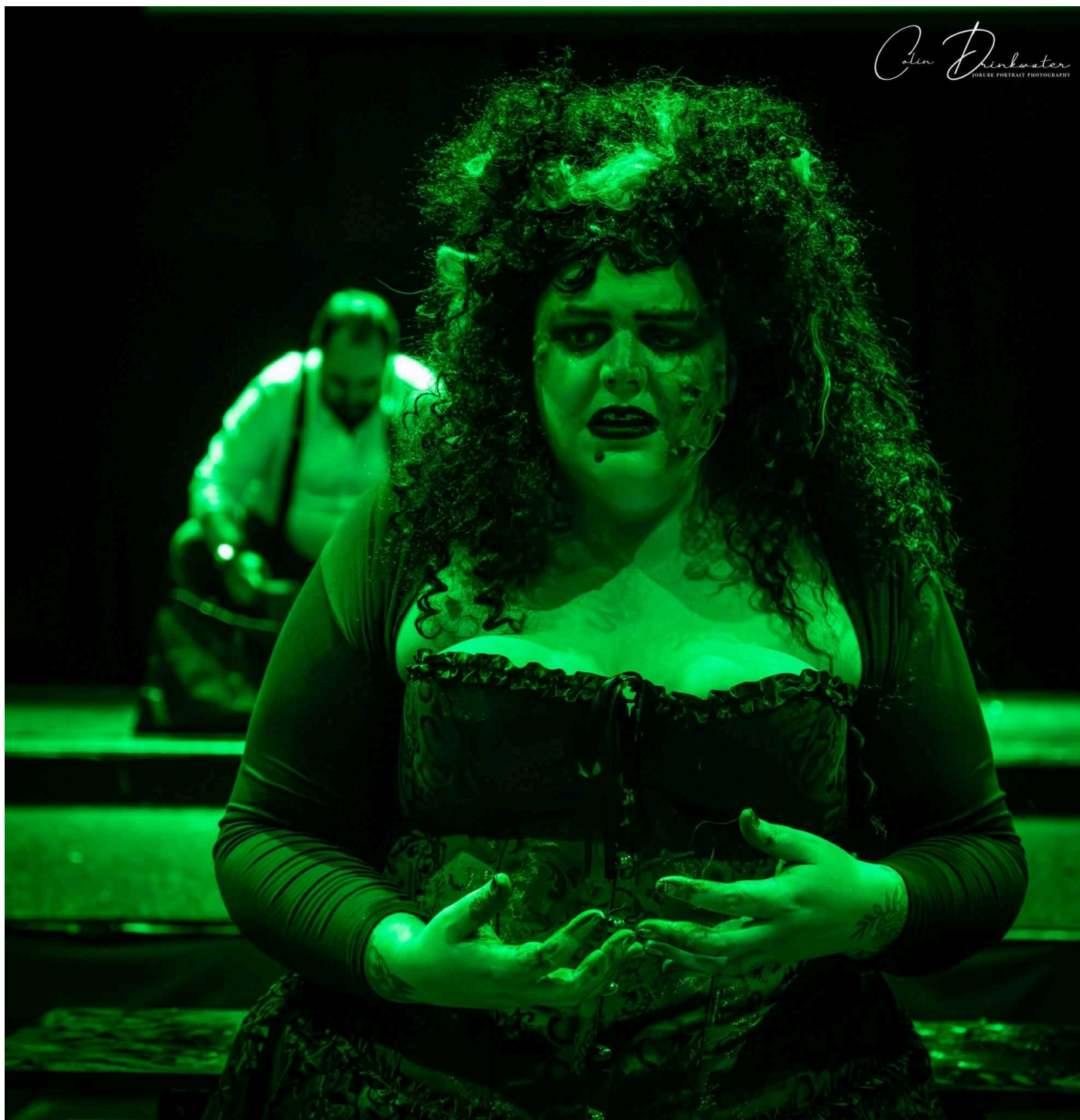
Thank you, as always, to SOUP Productions for your warm hospitality. We can't wait to see you all again as we begin the Christmas festivities!

PHOTOGRAPHS









PROGRAMME

