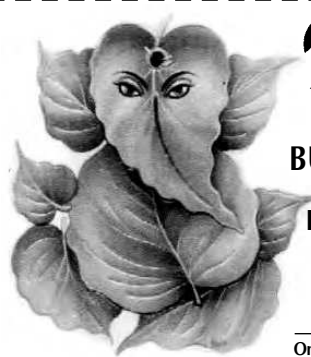




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Review

Demon Barber

Sweeney Todd entertains at ACE.

For its season finale, The Actor's Cabaret of Eugene presents the Tony award-winning thriller *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. Set in 19th century London, *Sweeney Todd* is a deliciously macabre tale of vengeance, murder and pies.

Sweeney Todd, aka Benjamin Barker, escapes from prison and returns to London 15 years later to avenge the wife and child that were unjustly taken from him by an evil judge. He rents a room upstairs from Mrs. Lovett, a seller of meat pies, who has kept his shaving implements all these years. Todd sets up shop again, hoping to bide his time until he can exact revenge upon his nemesis and his accomplice, Beadle.

However, when a rival barber threatens to reveal Sweeney Todd's true identity as Barker, Todd slices his throat while shaving him. Realizing that something must be done with the body, the enterprising Mrs. Lovett, whose pie shop hasn't been doing so well lately, offers Todd a moneymaking proposition — that he supply the "filler" for her pies.

In next to no time, Sweeney is killing with relish and Mrs. Lovett's business is booming. Meanwhile, Anthony Hope, a young sailor who saved Todd from drowning at sea, has fallen in love with Todd's daughter, Johanna, but the Judge, who wants her all for himself, has her committed to an insane asylum. Todd and Anthony hatch a plan to free Johanna and lure the judge to the shop for the kill. All seems to be falling into place until Beadle comes snooping around the pie shop inquiring about complaints of a strange odor coming from Mrs. Lovett's bake house and things quickly escalate as the body count rises.

Joe Zingo has united many talented *Jekyll & Hyde* alumni for this performance. The high mark, however, is the outstanding pairing of Kevin Boling and Kristina Seleshanko in the lead roles of

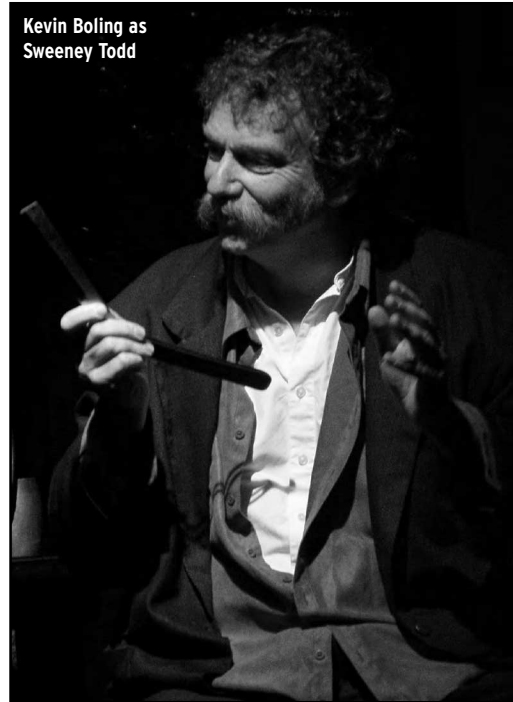
Sweeney Todd and Mrs. Lovett, respectively. Seleshanko is both comedic and expressive and Boling is a master of the brooding, sinister character. Together, they form a spirited twosome, as in the darkly humorous number "The Little Priest." Also providing a number of superb duets are Blake Hodgetts and Carson Shelton with "Ah, Miss," "Johanna," and "Kiss Me," as well as individual solo performances by Erica Jean (the Beggar Woman), Bruce McCarthy (Judge Turpin), Marcello Innocenti (The Beadle), Greg Mathans (Pirelli), and Anthony McCarthy (Tobias Ragg).

The production staff deserves recognition for the excellent props and set design, as well as great attention to detail in the selection of period costumes. The only real drawback was that the background music seemed a tad too loud at times, often obscuring some of the vocals.

Still, ACE scores a hit with this musical thriller.

EW

Kevin Boling as
Sweeney Todd



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