



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FANCY A SHAVE? *SWEENEY TODD: THE DEMON BARBER OF FLEET STREET* SETS UP SHOP AT THE HUMAN RACE THEATRE COMPANY

Tony Award-winning tale of madness, murder and meat pies opens The Race's 30th Anniversary Season, September 8 – October 2, 2016 at the Loft Theatre.

(Dayton, OH) — The Human Race proudly kicks off its 2016-2017 Eichelberger Loft Season with the smash hit *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street – A Musical Thriller*. Created by the Tony Award winning team by Stephen Sondheim (music and lyrics) and Hugh Wheeler (book) and based on an adaptation by Christopher Bond, this masterpiece of suspense invites audiences to attend the tale of Sweeney Todd. A barber unjustly imprisoned by corrupt Judge Turpin, Sweeney returns to 19th century London after fifteen years to take his revenge on the man who took him from his wife and young daughter. Todd's need for vengeance becomes indiscriminately murderous—and profitable—when he partners with the unscrupulous Mrs. Lovett and opens his new barber practice above her failing meat pie shop. With his busy straight razors and her new secret ingredient, their fame grows until Todd comes face to face with the judge. Can he avenge his family before their dastardly deeds are uncovered?

The Human Race Theatre Company's production of *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street – A Musical Thriller* is directed by Human Race Resident Artist **Scott Stoney**, who also directed *Master Class*; *Crowns* and *Caroline, or Change* in the Loft Theatre. Resident Artist **Sean Michael Flowers** (HRTC's *Avenue Q* and *The Full Monty: The Broadway Musical*) is the production's music director and conducts its eight-member band. **Tracey Bonner**, a recent Kentucky Arts Council Al Smith Artistic Fellow, is the choreographer.

The preview performance of *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street – A Musical Thriller* is Thursday, September 8. Opening night is Friday, September 9. This production contains adult situations and stage violence and may not be suitable for all audiences.

The Human Race Theatre mounted a very popular production of *Sweeney Todd* in 1996 at the Victoria Theatre, and company President & Artistic Director **Kevin Moore** has been long planning a return to Fleet Street, this time on the thrust stage of the 212-seat Loft Theatre. "Sweeney is a big show, typically staged in large, proscenium theatre spaces. And in that kind of setting, the audience is safe in their seats out in the house while these terrifying—and sometimes comic—acts are happening at a distance on the stage." But **Moore** believes the audience misses much of the point in that environment. "This is a story about revenge, and revenge is personal

and is usually not fully appreciated unless it's witnessed up close. That's why we're so excited to tell Sweeney's tale in the Loft. That distance between action and audience is gone. The revenge is intimate for everyone. Our actors will be performing some pretty dastardly deeds right in front of the audience, and in several scenes, around and even behind them."

Knowing that this story of murder and meat pies is only as good as its story teller, **Moore** selected a director with a long and personal history with *Sweeney Todd*. **Scott Stoney** was already a die-hard Sondheim fan in 1979 when he bought the cast album of a recently-opened Broadway production about a vengeful barber and immoral pie shop owner, and memorized every note, lyric and nuance. **Stoney** recalls his first time seeing the show that same year, "I took a trip to New York City with my best friend, Marsha Hanna. We sat in the 8th row of the orchestra with mouths open for the duration—one of those life-changing moments for both of us. I knew I was meant to perform that role." In 1983, he got his chance when Wright State University put the musical on their theatre season and offered him a guest professional contract to star as Sweeney. "I remember coming in to the first rehearsal with all the music learned. Thanks to that album, I had already sung the score hundreds of times with Broadway's original Sweeney, Len Cariou!" Lightning struck twice thirteen years later when Marsha Hanna, then Artistic Director of The Human Race, tapped Stoney to pick up the straight razors again for the 1996 production at the Victoria Theatre. Twenty years have since passed, and while **Stoney** admits it's bittersweet to hand those razors over to another actor, he's delighted to be able to lead this new telling for a theatre company he's called home for three decades.

CAST AND DESIGN TEAM

The Human Race's 2016 production features the talents of 17 gifted musical theatre actors from the Miami Valley area and across the country. Leading the cast in the title role of "Sweeney Todd" is Human Race Resident Artist **Jamie Cordes** (HRTC's *The Full Monty*, *Mame* and *Next to Normal*). Wooster, Ohio, native **Rebecca Watson** (*By Jeeves* on Broadway) returns to the Buckeye State to play "Mrs. Lovett." Cincinnati **Zack Steele** (HRTC's *Mame* and *It's A Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play*) is back for his second Loft Theatre musical as the young sailor, "Anthony Hope." University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music alumnus **DJ Plunkett** is "Tobias Ragg." **David McDonald** (*Side Show*, *Memphis* and *Doctor Zhivago* on Broadway) plays the cruel "Judge Turpin." **Kimberly Hessler** makes her first appearance with The Human Race as the judge's ward, "Johanna." Actor/director/writer **Aaron Vega** (HRTC's *Other Desert Cities*, *Lend Me a Tenor* and *Was*) is "The Beadle." Los Angeles-based actor/musician **Craig McEldowney** is "Adolfo Pirelli." **Christine Zvakos** (HRTC's *Fiddler on the Roof*) plays the "Beggar Woman."

Other cast members in the ensemble include: Resident Artist **Scott Hunt** (HRTC's *The Glass Menagerie* and *Big River*, *Rent* and *Les Misérables* on Broadway) as "Jonas Fogg;" Carlisle, Ohio, native **David Shough** as the "Bird Seller;" **Nathan Robert Pecchia** as the "Passerby;" **Gina Handy** (HRTC's *The Full Monty*, *Parallel Lives* at Magnolia Theatre Company); **Drew Helton** (HRTC's *Fiddler on the Roof* and workshop of *The Noteworthy Life of Howard Barnes*); **Cassi Mikat** (HRTC's *Master Class* and *It's A Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play*); **Sherri L. Sutter** (HRTC's *Mame* and workshop of *Molly Sweeney*); and **Kandis Wean** (HRTC's workshops of *The Noteworthy Life of Howard Barnes* and *Love Makes the World Go Round*).

Cordes, Hunt and **Sutter** all appeared in The Human Race's 1996 production of *Sweeney Todd* at the Victoria Theatre. **Cordes** played the young sailor "Anthony Hope." **Sutter** was "Johanna," his love interest. **Hunt** portrayed Mrs. Lovett's assistant, "Tobias."

The current production's cast contains a number of connections with Wright State University's Department of Theatre, Dance and Motion Pictures. **Cordes** and **Sutter** are instructors there. **Helton, Mikat, Steele** and **Vega** are alumni (as are production stage manager **Kristin A. Sutter** and assistant stage manager **Preston D. McCarthy**), and **Pecchia** is a current student.

Scenic designer **Dan Gray** (*Taking Shakespeare; Caroline, or Change*) takes on the challenge of setting this large show into the intimate Loft Theatre. Costume designer **Janet G. Powell** (*One Slight Hitch; The Full Monty*) clothes each of the actors in mid 18th century English attire. Resident Artists **John Rensel** (lighting designer) and **Jay Brunner** (sound designer) round out the design team.

Biographies on the cast and creative team can be found on The Human Race Theatre Company's website.

The Human Race Theatre Company's production of *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street – A Musical Thriller* is sponsored by the Schiewetz Foundation, Dr. Robert L. Brandt, Jr., M.D, Gosiger, Matthew J. Scarr, CPA LLC and Larry S. Glickler—Glickler Funeral Home.

PERFORMANCE AND SPECIAL EVENT INFORMATION

Tickets for the preview performance of *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street – A Musical Thriller* on September 8 start at \$35 for adults, \$32 for seniors and \$17.50 for students. For all performances September 9 – October 2, single ticket prices start at \$40 for adults, \$37 for seniors and \$20 for students. Prices vary depending on the day of the week and seating location. Group discounts are available for parties of 10 or more. The Human Race is offering a pair of discount ticket opportunities. A limited number of \$12 and \$25 side-area seats are available in advance for all performances. The Sunday, September 11 7:00 p.m. performance is "Sawbuck Sunday," when any available seat can be purchased in person for just \$10 at the Loft Theatre box office two hours prior to the show. Discounts are subject to availability and some restrictions apply.

All performances are at the Metropolitan Art Center's Loft Theatre, located at 126 North Main Street in downtown Dayton, Ohio. Show times for *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street – A Musical Thriller* are 8:00 p.m. on Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings. Performances on Sunday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings begin at 7:00 p.m., and at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday matinees.

Tickets and performance information on *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street – A Musical Thriller* are available at www.humanracetheatre.org or by calling Ticket Center Stage at (937) 228-3630, and at the Schuster Center box office.

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Now celebrating its 30th anniversary, The Human Race Theatre Company was founded in 1986 and moved into the Metropolitan Arts Center in 1991, taking up residence at the 212-seat Loft Theatre. In addition to the Eichelberger Loft Season, The Human Race produces new works development and special event programming. Under the direction of President and Artistic Director Kevin Moore, the company also maintains education and outreach programs for children, teens and adults, as well as artist residencies in area schools, an In-School Tour, and a summer youth program. Human Race organizational support is provided by Culture Works, the Montgomery County Arts and Cultural District, the Shubert Foundation, the Erma R. Catterton Trust Fund, the Jesse & Caryl Philips Foundation, the Virginia W. Kettering Foundation and the Ohio Arts Council, which helped fund this organization with state tax dollars to encourage economic growth, educational excellence and cultural enrichment for all Ohioans. The 2016-2017 Sustainability Sponsors are the ELM Foundation, Anne F. Johnson, Steve and Lou Mason, and Morris Home Furnishings. The 2016-2017 Loft season sponsor is the Jack W. and Sally D. Eichelberger Foundation of the Dayton Foundation, with additional support from Premier Health.

CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

The Human Race Theatre Company presents
Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street – A Musical Thriller
music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim
book by Hugh Wheeler
from an adaptation by Christopher Bond

directed by Scott Stoney
music direction by Sean Michael Flowers
choreography by Tracey Bonner

September 8 – October 2, 2016

Performed at the Loft Theatre
Metropolitan Arts Center
126 North Main Street (between First and Second streets)
Dayton, Ohio 45402

Attend the tale of Sweeney Todd, a barber unjustly imprisoned by corrupt Judge Turpin, who returns to 19th century London fifteen years later to take his revenge on the man who took him from his wife and young daughter. Todd's need for vengeance becomes indiscriminately murderous—and profitable—when he partners with the unscrupulous Mrs. Lovett and opens his new barber practice above her failing meat pie shop. With his busy straight razors and her new secret ingredient, their fame grows until Todd comes face to face with the judge. Can he avenge his family before their dastardly deeds are uncovered?

For tickets:

Ticket Center Stage box office phone: (937) 228-3630

Box office hours: Monday – Friday, 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.; and two hours prior to each performance

Online: www.humanracetheatre.org or www.ticketcenterstage.com

Ticket prices start at: \$35 – \$50 for adults, \$32 – \$46 for seniors and \$17.50 – \$25.00 for students. Prices vary depending on performance date.

Discounts: Select side-area seats available for \$12 and \$25 at all performances; “Sawbuck Sunday” September 11 at 7:00 p.m. – \$10 seats available for walk up sales only

Group sales: contact Betty Gould at (937) 461-8295 or Betty.Gould@victoriatheatre.com

***Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street – A Musical Thriller* performance dates:**

Wednesday, September 7 8:00 p.m. Pay-What-You-CAN open rehearsal

Thursday, September 8 8:00 p.m. “Inside Track” pre-show discussion/Preview performance

Friday, September 9 8:00 p.m. Opening night with post-show lobby party

Saturday, September 10 8:00 p.m.

Sunday, September 11 2:00 p.m.

Sunday, September 11 7:00 p.m. "Sawbuck Sunday" – \$10 tickets at the door
Tuesday, September 13 7:00 p.m. Lite Fare at The Loft pre-show lobby dining
Wednesday, September 14 7:00 p.m.
Thursday, September 15 8:00 p.m.
Friday, September 16 8:00 p.m.
Saturday, September 17 8:00 p.m. Audio Described/Sign Interpreted performance (reserve by
September 2)
Sunday, September 18 2:00 p.m. "While We're on the Subject" post-show talk-back
Tuesday, September 20 7:00 p.m.
Wednesday, September 21 7:00 p.m.
Thursday, September 22 8:00 p.m.
Friday, September 23 8:00 p.m.
Saturday, September 24 8:00 p.m.
Sunday, September 25 2:00 p.m.
Tuesday, September 27 7:00 p.m.
Wednesday, September 28 7:00 p.m.
Thursday, September 29 8:00 p.m.
Friday, September 30 8:00 p.m.
Saturday, October 1 8:00 p.m.
Sunday, October 2 2:00 p.m. Closing performance