



A POINTED TALE

South Coast Repertory mounts Sondheim's landmark 'Sweeney Todd.'

by CRISTOFER GROSS

In 1979, Stephen Sondheim's "Sweeney Todd: the Demon Barber of Fleet Street" gave Broadway an epic transfusion. Its intricate lyrics and interweaving melodies animated a gallery of complex characters. The operatic tale sought vengeance for power abused and justice denied.

It also earned eight Tony Awards, securing Sondheim's place among the greatest minds in theater history.

In Orange County, the show's 40th-anniversary year begins with a new production at South Coast Repertory

David Emmes/Martin Benson Theatre Center; photo courtesy of South Coast Repertory

(Jan. 19 through Feb. 19). Director Kent Nicholson, whose SCR credits include both musicals ("Once" and "The Light in the Piazza") and plays ("Amadeus"), is thrilled to be staging his favorite Sondheim musical.

"Musicals have a greater array of storytelling devices," he said. "But you have to approach them with greater simplicity than a play. Because music is a purely emotional form, it does a lot of the emotional heavy lifting for you."

To further tell the story, the production design will borrow 19th-

"It should feel like you're stepping back to the time of the actual storytelling."

—Kent Nicholson

century stage techniques "to get that Penny Dreadful, Grand Guignol feeling." Musical director David O will conduct the nine-piece band through a score adapted by original orchestrator Jonathan Tunick.

"Sondheim musicals are so smart," said Associate Artistic Director John Glore. "'Sweeney Todd' is a musical masterpiece, but it also addresses class structures and what it's like to live in a society where the poor are oppressed. It's something worth dealing with now." •

Jan. 19 through Feb. 19, scr.org

David Emmes/Martin Benson Theatre Center's Segerstrom Stage; photo courtesy of South Coast Repertory

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Sept. 1 through 29
Jessica Swale's adaptation of Jane Austen's romantic novel

"KINGS"

Oct. 13 through Nov. 10
Vogue calls Sarah Burgess' look at money in politics "absorbing and very funny."

"A CHRISTMAS CAROL"

Nov. 24 through Dec. 24
The Dickens classic is an O.C. holiday tradition with Hal Landon Jr. at its center.

"CULTURE CLASH (STILL) IN AMERICCA"

Dec. 30 through Jan. 20
Comedy and commentary from Richard Montoya, Ric Salinas, and Herbert Siguenza