



# Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street (Yikes, just typing that out makes the hairs on the back of my neck stand on end)

By **Bittersweet**, Saturday at 11:53 am

My high school theater teacher once told our theater class at the beginning of freshman year that when you go to a play you must empty out your brain and set it up on the stage.

So that is what I did this weekend when I went to see Sweeney Todd: The Barber of Fleet Street, showcased by the Williams Street Repertory Theater at the Raue Center for the Arts in Crystal Lake.

Though we see lots of live theater as a family and are aware of many great shows out there, I have never seen this one. I didn't know very much about it.

All I knew was that it was a dark story about a barber who killed his customers.

So after being asked so kindly to review the show, I went to the theater with my daughter, Emily, and her friend, Tia, (both major theater kids) picked up our tickets

at will call, and settled into our balcony seats inside this beautiful star-lit theater for the next 2 1/2 hours.

With my emptied brain setting up on the stage, I experienced a range of emotions and reactions from down-right creepy, tingly fear where the hairs on the back of my neck stood on their ends to surprisingly placed moments of laughter.

The gory musical is about a "naive" barber who was banished from his town by the evil judge who wanted the barber's "beautiful and virtuous" wife, Lucy.

Fifteen years later, with a new name, an older appearance and a heart filled with sadness, agony, hate and revenge, he returns.

Sweeney Todd, played perfectly evil and creepy - yet with a dash of sadness - by Rob Scharlow, slits the throats of his customers because he feels they did nothing to help him or protect his poor wife from the lecherous judge.

Then the crazy and hilarious widowed baker lady downstairs, Mrs. Lovett, played by Amanda Flahive - with just the right pinch of absolutely crazy - uses their ground up bodies to make what become her delicious and popular meat pies.

It was easy and fun to let my empty brain soak up these quirky and passionate characters, as well as the rest of the talented ensemble. The set was cold and dark, the costumes were drab and dreary. All visuals were perfect accompaniments to tell the story.

The voices in the cast were strong and pitch perfect.

We left the theater a little creeped out, but also a bit heart-broken.

This play touched many parts of my heart and soul, and of course my brain.

The story told a tale of what happens when someone is truly heartbroken. It taught that true heartache can often times turn to anger, rage, insanity and evil actions. Extreme sadness can completely change a person to the point of no return. That hatefulness can ruin your life and the lives of those around you.

Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street reminded me that when I encounter an angry, bitter heart that lashes out in anger, that heart likely was broken beyond repair at some point.

The dark story, which some say is based on actual events, reminds me to have patience and kindness toward even the most offensive of people.

Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street plays at the Raue Center in Downtown Crystal Lake through Nov. 8.

Until next time, love each other...