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Sweeney Todd, The Demon Barber of Fleet Street - July 2008

Some 16 - 21 year-olds spend their summer in a part-time job; others reportedly waste their time fulfilling the first minister's "ned" criteria. Then there are those who get involved in theatre.

Scottish Youth Theatre's ambitious rendering of this Stephen Sondheim musical, directed by Mary McCluskey, pictured, is the fruit of the five-week production course at the company's summer festival.

Kenny Miller's clever set resembles an enlarged version of the shower scene from Psycho, with tiled walls, mirrors and curtains bathed in blood. Everything is bloody, from the varying shades of red hair sported by the devilishly waif-like chorus girls to the scarlet lace trimming the skirt and embroidering the shoes of the excellently portrayed, salacious Mrs Lovett. The intense crimson lighting and blazing onstage furnace compounded the bloodthirstiness of this Victorian underworld, policed by the Matrix-like baddies of Beadle and Judge Turpin.

However, while the cramped studio theatre might have been thought, in artistic terms, a suitable space to host this claustrophobic melodrama of revenge, villainy and incest, the large cast and oppressive heat made for an atmosphere a little too stifling in which to be able to fully enjoy the performance.

It is hard to dislike something put together with so much enthusiasm by such a capable and motivated group of young people but, given another week's rehearsal, certain things could surely have been improved, especially the singing. Frustratingly, important details were lost due to background noise and bad projection during what was, on balance, an entertaining evening. And the pies were fantastic.