

COMPOSITE REVIEW OF *THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA*

By Denise Weeks' class at Woodlawn High School

On October 16, I and hundreds of other students in the Baltimore area were treated to a special matinee of *The Phantom of The Opera* at the Hippodrome. We were delighted by the marvelous acting and incredible selections and performances of each musical number. (Kristopher Ruffin)

The Phantom of the Opera is a romantic tragedy based on the novel of the same name written by Gaston Leroux in 1910. It was adapted to the stage in 1986 by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Richard Stilgoe and has been running for 30 years and counting.

The story revolves around three main characters: Christine, Raoul, and the titular character, the Phantom. Christine is a young ballet dancer-turned-opera singer. Raoul is Christine's fiancé and a viscount. The Phantom is a man of mystery, who lives in the sewers under the Paris Opera House and teaches Christine how to sing while attempting to court her. (Jonathan Robinson)

The Phantom has a very obsessive and possessive personality. His only goal is to have Christine all for himself and he will go to any and all lengths to get her. He mentors her, sings to her, makes sure she gets the best roles, all so he can try and win her heart. As Christine and Raoul start to get closer, the Phantom gets more desperate with his attempts to have her to himself. (Monica Webb)

The Phantom, who has a hideously deformed face, wears a mask and hides out in the opera house, away from the other workers because he doesn't want anyone to see the horror that lies underneath the mask. He writes songs and pieces to be performed and demands that his orders be carried out. When his orders are disregarded, the Phantom performs disruptive acts.

Derrick Davis portrays the role of the Phantom impeccably. He expresses the Phantom's feelings and rashness in his gestures, the way he sings and the way he performs his actions. I noticed that when his mask was off, he turned his face from the audience, as if he couldn't even bear showing the audience his face. You could feel the dismay radiating off him when his mask is ripped off. The same sensation is easily felt in the brokenness in his heart when he finds that Christine is with Raoul. Davis displayed the stroke of

genius of the Phantom and madness which accompanied it. He let the audience understand the struggles of the Phantom, so much so that the audience was sympathetic to the Phantom. (Ayoboni Odukoya)

Played by the talented Emma Grimsley, Christine's vigilance within the ballet company vanished as her voice burst with seraphic beauty. Her eventual downfall and call to action echoed parallels to her deceased father; particularly her last scene with the Phantom, where she hesitantly chose between love and loyalty. Her performance was enchanting and captivating. (Tishell Green)

Raoul was played by actor Jordan Craig. In the beginning of the story, when Raoul almost forced Christine to come to dinner with him, Craig's attitude and way of acting really showed the character's forceful and confident personality with no regard to her objections. The ambiance of the music and tone of the situation at the time also helped drive the scene home. A scene in a graveyard when Raoul confronted the Phantom on Christine's behalf especially stood out to me. I found the conflict between the Phantom and Raoul entertaining because they sang (and they sang beautifully) to express yelling and arguing and mixed dancing and fighting. The way singing and dancing were added to the characters' fight made the drama and tone of the scene serious as well as beautiful to watch. (Taiwo Sanni-Ojikutu)

Andrew Lloyd Webber and Charles Hart's songs were both fast and slow, or in more musical terms, "presto" and "largo," and they had both happy and sad feelings to them. For example, the song, "The Music of the Night," was slow, and it had a happy feel to it. The songs sound very dramatic and build a lot of intensity. "The Music of the Night" tells us a lot of about the Phantom and his love for Christine and his love for music. This song helps shape the show and helps the audience better understand the Phantom and his passion for music and Christine. I love the lyrics because they help me get a better understanding of what he wants for Christine. For example, when he says, "Close your eyes, let your spirit start to soar! And you'll live as you've never lived before. Softly, deftly, music shall caress you," this is telling me that he really has a deep passion for music, and he wants Christine to not worry and just let the music be her guide. The song had a catchy tune to it. Overall the songs bring more life to the production and help push the plot along very well. For example, the overture brings in a suspenseful feeling for the audience and helps set the tone of the show. The choreography played a big part as well. (Malachi Belote)

What stood out most to me, however, was the intricate and dazzling array of scenery, along with the transitions used to enhance it -- from the opera house to the lair of the Phantom, from dressing rooms to enchanting lakes. My favorite piece of scenery by far was the elegant chandelier hanging in the center of the house -- from the chandelier's disappearing curtains to illuminating the playhouse, to rocking in place. In a climactic moment between opera house managers Monsieurs Firmin and Andre vs. the Phantom, the chandelier, upon the Phantom's command, begins sparking and collapses. All in all, the craftsmanship that designer Paul Brown put to work in the show never ceased to amaze the audience and immensely enhanced the performances and the show. (Kristopher Ruffin)

This play deepened my appreciation for musicals because of the way the actors and actresses conveyed the characters' feelings through singing and performing. (Ayoboni Odukoya) I recommend anyone with the opportunity to watch the splendor of *The Phantom of the Opera*. (Tishell Green)

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