
CAMERON MACKINTOSH and
THE REALLY USEFUL THEATRE COMPANY, INC.

present

THE STUDY GUIDE FOR

The
PHANTOM
of the
OPERA™

Music by ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER

Lyrics by CHARLES HART

Additional Lyrics by RICHARD STILGOE

Book by RICHARD STILGOE and ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER

Based on the novel 'Le Fantôme de L'Opéra' by Gaston Leroux

Production Design by MARIA BJÖRNSSON

Lighting by ANDREW BRIDGE

Sound by MARTIN LEVAN

Musical Staging and Choreography by GILLIAN LYNNE

Directed by HAROLD PRINCE

About the PHANTOM of the Opera

Welcome to a strange new world! Andrew Lloyd Webber's darkly romantic musical about a mysterious "Opera Ghost" who inspires a young singer has become a legend, drawing standing-room audiences throughout the world.

The Phantom of the Opera is a perfect way to introduce young people to the pleasures and mysteries of a live theatre experience. In these days of film and video, **The Phantom of the Opera's** unforgettable score and breathtaking spectacle can show students that the theatre is an exciting and vital place.

This study guide takes you behind the scenes and shows you how **The Phantom of the Opera** was born. From the creation of the Paris Opera House to Gaston Leroux, the audacious creator of the tortured Phantom and from Andrew Lloyd Webber's first inspiration to Maria Björnson's brilliant sets and costumes, students will learn each step in the creation of a theatrical wonder.

As well as being a sweeping, fantastic story, **The Phantom of the Opera** evokes ideas and concepts that run through history and literature: the outcast, the mythology of beauty and the beast, the use of the mask, women in Victorian society and the power of music. Students will learn that ideas and language which seem dry and dull on the page come vividly to life on stage.



This study guide is designed to encourage teachers and students to deal with the ideas and themes found in **The Phantom of the Opera** through individual and class activities and research and discussion. Considering the ideas detailed in this guide will prepare students for a richer, more knowledgeable viewing of **The Phantom of the Opera**.

The Paris Opera House

WHERE THE PHANTOM WAS BORN

In 1858, the Emperor Napoleon III of France gave an order that a new building dedicated to the art of Opera would be built in Paris. The new Opera House would be the envy of the world. It would be a building not only for performances of opera, but a center for upper-class society, a place where the rich and well-to-do could congregate and preen.

Charles Garnier, a relatively unknown young man, was chosen among 700 architects competing to create the new theatre. Taking on the project with youthful audacity, Garnier proposed to create a monumental building that would be a true temple to the Renaissance, built using modern construction techniques.

IDEAS FOR RESEARCH & DISCUSSION

- ∞ Discuss the history of cities in relation to the arts. How has the world of music and art pushed forward the creation of modern cities?
 - ∞ Emperor Napoleon III single-handedly ordered the creation of the Paris Opera House. Research the creation of other famous structures that have been driven by one person's vision.
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Construction of the new building began immediately. The three-acre space in which the Opera House would stand, called the *Place de l'Opera*, was cleared with seven great thoroughfares radiating from it like the spokes of a giant wheel. During construction, a deep bed of water was discovered in what were to be the cavernous basements. This water had to be drained, at great expense, by eight huge steam pumps working nonstop for eight months! Finally, a strong foundation was laid, and the water was allowed to seep back, creating an eerie underground lake that exists to this day.

The great basements of the Opera House were needed for the raising and lowering of giant sets, some of which could reach 50 feet high and weigh as much as 11,000 tons!

The Opera House would eventually have 17 floors, 80 dressing rooms and a total of 2,500 doors. Along with the lake, water from which was often used to power the hydraulic engines needed to move the scenery, there was a permanent stable with enough room to accommodate six coaches and fifty horses!

IDEAS FOR RESEARCH & DISCUSSION

☞ Research the creation of one of these famous buildings, or choose one of your own:

- The Empire State Building
- The Taj Mahal
- Buckingham Palace
- The Parthenon
- The Coliseum in Rome

☞ Compare your findings. What were common problems, obstacles or impediments that each building shared in its creation?

☞ Write a newspaper article from the time period of your research, describing the difficulties in creating your famous building.

Construction of the Opera House was interrupted in 1870 by the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War, which saw the defeat of the French army and the end of Napoleon III's reign. As the Prussian army surrounded Paris through a bitter 19-week winter, the working classes rose up and declared a new government: the Paris Commune. The Opera House performed the role of storehouse, arsenal, and later, military prison. When the Communards were eventually broken by government troops, ghastly legends of bodies left in the catacombs of the Opera became a grisly legacy of the Commune.

It was not until 1875 that the Opera House finally opened. France's Third Republic had been declared and the people of Paris were eager to put bloody times behind them. An era of culture, excess and the arts called *La Belle Époque* had begun.

It was this time of refinement and pleasure, and the dark emotions that often lay just underneath, that proved an inspiration to a young and adventurous reporter named Gaston Leroux.

IDEAS FOR RESEARCH & DISCUSSION

- ☞ Using your research on famous architecture, chart how wars, social changes and political difficulties can often interfere with the creation of buildings.
 - ☞ The Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune added layers of legend to the feeling or the “character” of the Paris Opera House, which eventually led to **The Phantom of the Opera**. Discuss how stories and myth can “build” a building.
 - ☞ Sometimes a writer’s description of a building or a place can be so complete and evocative that the architectural site can seem like another character. Why is this so? Consider these authors and their descriptions of famous architecture:
 - Victor Hugo: Notre Dame Cathedral in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* or the streets of Paris in *Les Misérables*
 - Charles Dickens: The streets of London in *Oliver Twist*
 - Graham Greene: The sewers of Vienna in *The Third Man*
 - ☞ Consider instances when authors and their books have contributed to the fame of a building or work of architecture.
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Gaston Leroux

THE MAN BEHIND THE MASK

Gaston Leroux, author of **The Phantom of the Opera**, was a big, bold, audacious man who loved good living, drinking and dressing colorfully to hide a large, round belly. He tried to portray himself as bigger than life, and many of his novels and stories echoed his own adventures.

A Born Writer

Born in 1868, Leroux was a highly intelligent child and began early on to develop a great passion for literature and the theatre. At a young age he was writing short stories and plays, and throughout college he was, in his words, “tormented by the demon of literature.”

Still, like many boys of upper-class families, Leroux was forced to study law. He passed the bar in 1889 and was miserable. During his studies he kept writing stories and poems, finally publishing a group of sonnets (typically for the pleasure-loving Leroux, written in honor of a leading actress of the day!) in the newspaper *L’Echo de Paris*. He received only a few pennies for this work, but the die was cast. He could no longer deny that writing was in his blood!

IDEAS FOR RESEARCH & DISCUSSION

☞ Many writers start their lives in other professions: Anton Chekhov and William Carlos Williams were doctors; Charles Dickens was a reporter; Wallace Stevens was a lawyer; and O. Henry was a pharmacist. Discuss how other professions and interests often feed the work of a writer.

The Eternal Reporter

Leroux’s father died the same year he gained his law degree, leaving him a million francs, which Leroux promptly spent in a happy half-year of indulgence. Nearly penniless, he applied for and received a job at *L’Echo de Paris* as a court reporter, in which he was able to use his knowledge of the law.

In 1892, his audacity drove him to the next step in his career. He was convinced that an accused man was innocent and was being kept in solitary because of official mistakes and incompetence. He explained how he learned the truth in a 1925 interview:

“I managed to get hold of a sheet of official paper and wrote on it that I was M. Arnaud, an anthropologist charged with visiting local prisons.

This I presented to the Director of Prisons, and he allowed me free access. I had no trouble finding the man I wanted to see, and he was only too delighted to tell me what had really occurred.

“I got my paper to publish a full report which completely exonerated the prisoner – and as a result the Prefect of Police was disgraced, and the Prison Director was sent packing!”

The story catapulted Leroux to stardom: he became one of France’s leading journalists, a reporter who could combine detailed facts with a sense of adventure and urgency. Soon he was working for the international daily *Le Matin*.

Leroux took full advantage of the new technology of telephone and telegraph that was revolutionizing journalism. He crisscrossed the world, cabling his stories from Africa, Egypt, Morocco and Russia. He moved easily from backroom intrigues to small wars, from border skirmishes to full-blown revolutions. He gained a reputation for staying ahead of disaster and for escaping the bullet, the spear or the arrow just in time to cable the story to Paris. He became a master of masks and disguises, traveling in Morocco as an Arab to witness the troubles in Fez and in Moscow as a Russian to behold the first glimmers of the Revolution. He was known as “The Eternal Reporter.”

Literary historian Stanley Kunitz wrote, “He tramped up and down the world, his daring spirit carrying him into faraway corners and into and out of a dozen scrapes.”

IDEAS FOR RESEARCH & DISCUSSION

- 🌀 Research how the telegraph and telephone brought on what we know as modern journalism. How has journalism changed in the past 100 years? Create a timeline of major inventions, stories and personalities that have created modern journalism.
 - 🌀 Does Gaston Leroux’s adventurous career as a journalist remind you of any journalists you know today? Who? In what ways are they the same or different?
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Masks, Mysteries and the Yellow Room

In 1907, wealthy and secure, he decided to give up his world-traveling and return to his first love: literature. He would use his skills as a reporter and his sense of adventure and the unknown to become a novelist.

His first four novels were fairly standard adventure stories, received with appreciation by a public who already knew and loved Leroux. But his fifth novel, *The Mystery of the Yellow Room* (1907) was not only a major success, it was also a groundbreaking novel of the mystery genre, the first

of the “locked room” mysteries, where an impossible murder is committed in a sealed room.

A great admirer of Edgar Allen Poe and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of Sherlock Holmes, Leroux later said “I knew that I must do better than Poe and Conan Doyle, so I decided to have a murder committed in a room which was hermetically sealed, as closed as a safe, in fact.”

In his 1942 treatise on the mystery genre, *Murder for Pleasure*, Howard Haycraft noted, “The Mystery of the Yellow Room is generally recognized, on strength of its central puzzle, as one of the classic examples of the genre.”

IDEAS FOR RESEARCH & DISCUSSION

- ☞ It is said that one out of every four books published in the English language is a mystery or detective novel. Why is this genre so popular?
 - ☞ Edgar Allan Poe, known for his macabre tales and poems, is also known as the “Father of the Detective novel.” Find out why.
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The hero of *The Mystery of the Yellow Room* is a young star reporter named Joseph Rouletabille, mocked and shunned for his fierce independence and his unusually large head. In Rouletabille, we can hear a whisper of the despair and detachment that would eventually coalesce in his greatest creation, Erik, the malformed Phantom of the Opera, as well as, perhaps, a glimpse of Leroux himself. Like the Phantom, Rouletabille’s ugly appearance is a mask that hides a brilliant, lonely mind.

Leroux’s career as a novelist flourished. He wrote six more Rouletabille novels and sixty other novels of adventure, romance and horror.

At Last, the Phantom

In 1911, during one of his frequent visits to the Paris Opera House, Leroux began to hear rumors of a ghost that haunted the old building. Several unexplainable deaths had been attributed to this spectre, and backstage gossip only fueled the story. The Opera House had already had its share of mysterious accidents: on May 20, 1896, a counterweight of the seven ton chandelier had fallen into the audience, killing a concierge named Mme. Chomette. His reporter’s instincts aroused, Leroux studied the Opera House, exploring it from the slimy underground caverns to the dizzying pinnacles of its rooftops.

Leroux saw in the Opera House a mirror of the *Belle Époque* society that passed through its halls: beautiful, stately and refined on the outside, but just below the surface, a dark undercurrent of secrecy and horror. In a feverish three months, often bounding out of bed in the middle of the

night to scribble down an image from his nightmares, he completed what would be his most memorable work. **The Phantom of the Opera** was born.

IDEAS FOR RESEARCH & DISCUSSION

- ∞ Read Leroux's novel, **The Phantom of the Opera**. After seeing the musical version, compare the two. How much of Leroux's original vision does the musical retain?
 - ∞ How does Leroux use his training in journalism to create a realistic atmosphere in the novel?
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Although **The Phantom of the Opera** was not a popular success as a novel, its eerie horror and romance has attracted many artists to adapt it to other forms. Over the years, many films of the story were produced. The most famous version was the first, in 1925, due mainly to the powerful performance of a young actor named Lon Chaney as the tortured Phantom.

Chaney had gained the nickname "The Man of a Thousand Faces" from his detailed and often horrible disguises, from Quasimodo in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* to Fagin in one of the first film treatments of *Oliver Twist*. The Phantom proved to be his greatest triumph.

British film critic Milton Shulman wrote in 1975: "My most horrific moment in the cinema came when I first saw Lon Chaney spinning around from his playing the organ at the Paris Opera to display his fanged, corroded, skull-like visage to Mary Philbin, who as Christine, had dared unmask him. That tingling, hair-on-end experience has lived with me for over fifty years."

IDEAS FOR RESEARCH & DISCUSSION

- ∞ View the Lon Chaney film version of **The Phantom of the Opera**. How does the film, produced in 1925, appear to you today? How does it compare to horror movies of today? After seeing the musical version, compare the film and the musical. Which did you like better? Did the producers of the musical use any elements from the film? Were they effective? Which is more faithful to the original Leroux novel? What elements determined your choice?
-

It was the success of the 1925 film, and Chaney's performance, that brought attention back to the original story and allowed Leroux a last moment of popularity before his death in 1927. It seemed for years that the Chaney version would remain throughout history as the definitive Phantom – that is, until 1985 when the creation of the musical version began...

Creating the Musical

THE FACE BEHIND THE MASK

The **Phantom of the Opera** is really a musical about the theatre and all its secrets, grandeur, glamour and hard work. The Phantom's story takes us backstage, behind the scenes, behind the "mask" of the theatre.

After the prologue of **The Phantom of the Opera**, we see an army of dancing slaves and an elephant, rearing its powerful head, carrying the great warrior Hannibal. But wait! A voice calls out, correcting "Hannibal's" pronunciation of the word "Rome." The elephant turns, revealing two stagehands controlling its movements. We are suddenly where few are ever allowed: in the heady atmosphere of a rehearsal.

The story of **The Phantom of the Opera** allows us a glimpse of how the illusion of the theatre is created, but the story behind the musical is an adventure of determination, talent and risk that Leroux himself would have envied.

The Composer: Giving the Mask a Voice

On a cold February morning in 1984, producer Cameron Mackintosh received a phone call while taking a bath. It was Andrew Lloyd Webber, the composer of *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Cats*, *Evita*, *Song and Dance* and *Starlight Express*, with whom he had co-produced *Cats* and *Song and Dance*. It proved to be a fateful call.

Mackintosh remembered later, "His first words were 'If I said to you **The Phantom of the Opera**, what would you say?' Even in my prune-like condition, I recognized Andrew had come up with another good idea. We screened copies of the original Lon Chaney movie and the later Claude Rains version. Though very enjoyable, neither one made us shout *Eureka!* So we decided to find a copy of the original Leroux novel."

Reading Leroux's story excited them both (the novel was then out of print; Lloyd Webber found a copy in a New York secondhand bookstore, and Mackintosh found one in his aunt's garage). Here was not a simple horror story, but a dark heartbreaking tale of unrequited love.

The initial press release in 1984 stated, "The score for **The Phantom of the Opera** will include both existing and original work." The original idea was to use mainly famous classical and operatic works for the score. But as Lloyd Webber reread the Leroux novel, he grew more and more

convinced that he should write the music. In the Phantom's yearnings, Lloyd Webber felt his own need to write a romantic score.

With lyricist Richard Stilgoe, they presented a draft of the first act of the show in a private music festival at Lloyd Webber's home during the summer of 1985. English National Opera and Royal Shakespeare Company designer Maria Björnson was brought on board to create the sets and costumes. She was the only one, said Mackintosh, who could "make this preposterous world real!"

Lloyd Webber and Mackintosh were heartened by their beginning ("Despite flaws in the material, the story really worked theatrically," said Mackintosh) and decided to press on. They found their romantic ideas shared by Harold Prince, who was asked to direct the show.

The Director: Creating the Atmosphere

I said 'yes' immediately," said Prince, the director of countless legendary musicals, including *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Cabaret* and his first collaboration with Lloyd Webber, *Evita*. "I don't usually say 'Yes' right away. It was exactly the sort of show I wanted to do – I felt there was a real need for a romantic show."

"When you work, you need to feed something. I really wanted to do a romantic musical. I remember going to the opening of *South Pacific* when I was twenty, and I retain a vivid memory of when I first heard *Some Enchanted Evening*. The theatre became the most romantic place..."

IDEAS FOR RESEARCH & DISCUSSION

∞ What makes something romantic? Is romance considered "old-fashioned" today?

PPrince: "I wanted to create a mysterious, 'perfumy' atmosphere. The heavy drapes give the show an aroma. Everything is seductive, mysterious. I also talked to Andrew about the show's rhythm. I wanted to keep it moving with a strong pulse, because the people are almost paralyzed by fear and a sense of... vulnerability."

With Prince in place, the writing of the show continued. It became obvious that, because the show was moving in a more operatic direction, another collaborator would have to be brought on board as a lyrical dramatist, fleshing out Lloyd Webber and Stilgoe's original framework.

Lloyd Webber and Mackintosh asked Alan Jay Lerner, the famous lyricist of *Brigadoon*, *My Fair Lady*, *Gigi* and *Camelot* to take on the project. He told Lloyd Webber, "Dear boy, it's your best score so far. The main thing you must not do with this plot is ask too many questions – because

it works!” Although interested, Lerner was terminally ill with cancer and had to pull out. He never recovered, and when he died, an era in musical theatre passed with him.

Finally, a young man named Charles Hart, who had gained the attention of Lloyd Webber and Mackintosh as a promising lyricist with a good ear, was taken on. He immediately saw the power in the story of three men (Raoul, The Phantom and Christine’s dead father) each holding a different sway over Christine.

The Set and Costume Designer: “The Trap Door Lover”

Maria Björnson continued to create the sets and costumes, now for the full-scale theatre. Fiercely independent, Björnson was known as a maverick who used the weight and texture of different fabrics to create exciting environments. Her job would be to persuade the audience that they could go back in time, creating a new world they could completely believe in.

“As a set designer, I try to move and disturb an audience visually. I try to get a response from them. You may not see everything I’ve done, but you should feel it.”

Björnson visited the Paris Opera House, exploring and studying the building just as Leroux had done. She took hundreds of photos of the Opera House to use as reference for set designs, supplementing the photos with books and films about opera in the Victorian age.

“Against the backdrop of the Paris Opera we used drapes swagging downwards and upwards, dark Turkish corners leading off to nowhere, and candles rising out of the floor through mist as devices to underline the repressed Victorian sensuality and ritualistic quality of the piece.”

The famous chandelier required the work of six separate scenery shops, which spent a total of six months putting together its various parts: painting, lighting and automation. It crashes to the stage at the end of the first act on an elaborate cat’s-cradle of wires.

The chandelier is also used in the prologue, rising like a ghost from the ground after the auction in 1905, bringing the audience back to 1881 and the Opera at its peak.

As the Phantom and Christine enter the Phantom’s subterranean lair, hundreds of candles rise up through tiny trap doors in the floor. In certain productions, each candle operates on an elaborate telescoping mechanism similar to a car’s automatic radio antenna.

Including the many doors for the candles, there are a total of 184 trap doors in the floor of the set. The first London theatre for the show, Her Majesty’s Theatre, was the only theatre in London that still had its

original trap door system from the Victorian period, so in many ways the Victorian feeling of the show came from using the original stage as it was designed. It was a combination of “practicality and imagination,” said Mackintosh.

In the novel **The Phantom of the Opera**, the Phantom’s obsession with hidden doors and entrances earns him a nickname that could have been shared by Björnson: “The Trap Door Lover.”

“I wanted to design a show in which the journey down the lake would be a secret journey, one in which the audience could participate with the two main protagonists.”

IDEAS FOR RESEARCH & DISCUSSION

☞ After seeing **The Phantom of the Opera**, judge the effect of Maria Björnson’s production design. Has she succeeded in “moving” you with her sets and costumes? Were you “disturbed” by the production design? If you were to give any suggestions on how to heighten the effect of the sets and costumes, what would they be?

The Lighting Designer: Playing with Light and Dark

As the lighting designer, Andrew Bridge was excited by the dark romanticism Prince and Björnson wanted to bring to the musical. “It’s the sort of piece a lighting designer loves, because you’re moving around darkness as well as light. In fact, darkness is just as important as the light.”

“We wanted it to be extremely mystical and magical, to leave gaps in the design for the audience to fill in with their own imagination.”

Because of the shadowy feeling needed, Bridge used only 400 lighting instruments, as opposed to the usual 700 or 800 needed for a Broadway show. The hundreds of candles that magically appear through the floor are actually electrical instruments of Mr. Bridge’s design: tiny lamps which contain even smaller lamps which twinkle in a silicon gel, giving the impression of flickering flame. Motorized wheels of gelled material and rotating disks are turned in front of spotlights to create the feeling of light on water or the flash of gaslight.

“What’s been fun,” says Bridge, “has been using modern technology to create an old-fashioned look.”

The Sound Designer: Whispers and Roars

A too-often overlooked part of the creative team is the sound designer. Sound Designer Martin Levan employed his skills to create sound effects and calibrate acoustics and sound levels to create the immersive sound for the production. Each of the leading actors is equipped with a body mic: a tiny microphone hidden in near the hairline that is attached to a wireless transmitter and battery pack in the actor's costume. With these tiny microphones, we can hear the lowest whispered groan to the loudest angry roar.

The Choreographer: Moving the Story

Gillian Lynne, who had done the choreography for *Cats*, was asked to lend her eye and sense of movement to **The Phantom of the Opera**. Although there is little dancing in the show, her presence would enrich the production. Lloyd Webber and Mackintosh felt that her Royal Ballet training would make her the perfect person to evoke the backstage atmosphere of a ballet company.

The Actor: Power and Passion

With design and direction under way, the next step was casting. Soprano Sarah Brightman was chosen to play Christine Daaé.

Lloyd Webber said, "The role of Christine is one of the most demanding I have ever written. It involves not only being able to sing music covering an enormous range for a considerable length of time, but it demands that the artist can dance *en pointe*. My Christine is a member of the *corps de ballet*. The Phantom believes in her voice because it represents a new sound in music..."

Michael Crawford, who had the lead roles in the musical *Barnum* and the movie *Hello, Dolly!* with Barbara Streisand, was chosen to be the first in what would become a long line of Phantoms.

Crawford felt an immediate bond with the character.

"I feel incredibly sorry for Erik. I feel terrific compassion for him. And I think that the audience must also, because I have never seen such a reaction from men and women alike. They feel sympathy towards that man's plea, that cry he makes at the end..."

"You've got to play this part with total commitment and believability. That's why I respect him. I won't treat him cheaply. I won't put this mask on and camp it up. I've got to go out there and believe, so that the power and passion come through to the audience."

Crawford used the Lon Chaney film as a guide: "I was very inspired by Chaney, by his passion. There was so much love there."

The Audience: The Final Member of the Team

Creating **The Phantom of the Opera** required each member of the company, from Composer to Producer, from Director to Lyricist, from Actor to Designer, to work together as a team. Björnson said, “It’s much more complicated than building a house. The precision required is much greater. It’s like a huge jigsaw puzzle.” And Cameron Mackintosh noted **The Phantom of the Opera** was “the work of people who are at the top of their theatrical powers.”

But no element of the production is more important than another – each part of the puzzle was necessary to create a glorious, mysterious whole.

The last member of a theatrical team is the audience. Hal Prince said he wanted the audience “to be contributors, to be collaborators, to use their imaginations to fill in the spaces we’ve deliberately left blank.”

“All the details are really important, because an audience has to believe they are inside the opera house. We’re going into a theatre to see a piece about this theatre, a piece that takes you back 110 years. And the Phantom lives, below the ground, in the theatre. The audience really has to believe the Phantom exists.”

Fear Can Turn to Love

THE MYTHIC POWER OF BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

“**P**hantom is about something very basic. The story of the ugly man in love with the beautiful woman goes back to mythology. Everyone is fascinated by the idea, and that’s why Phantom has remained so popular.”

-Maria Björnson

IDEAS FOR RESEARCH & DISCUSSION

- ∞ Explore the “beauty and the beast” motif throughout the history of art, literature, theatre and film.
 - ∞ Compare this motif in the story of **The Phantom of the Opera** to these other works:
 - *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* by Victor Hugo
 - *Cyrano de Bergerac* by Edmond Rostand
 - *Richard III* by William Shakespeare
 - *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte
 - *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte
 - *Jude the Obscure* by Thomas Hardy
 - ∞ Why do we continue to be attracted to this story? How high a priority do we place on physical beauty and perfection? Why?
 - ∞ Create a short play or story about someone unable to express their love because of something they see as an ugliness or physical deficiency.
-

Paper Faces on Parade

THE PHANTOM'S MASK

It was the voice! My rage equaled my amazement. I rushed at the mask and tried to snatch it away, so as to see the face of the voice. The man said, 'You are in no danger, so long as you do not touch the mask.'"

- Christine Daaé from "The Phantom of the Opera" by Gaston Leroux

IDEAS FOR RESEARCH & DISCUSSION

☞ Discuss the importance of masks throughout *The Phantom of the Opera*.

☞ How does the Phantom use his mask throughout the musical? Does he behave differently with it on or off? Do other characters see him differently with or without his mask? Why?

☞ From the Biblical story of Jacob and Esau to Homer's *Iliad* and *The Odyssey*; from comic-book heroes like Batman and Green Lantern to the movie *The Mask*; disguises and masks are a continuing theme in history and the arts.

Divide your class into groups, with each group researching the significance of one type of mask throughout history (African tribal masks, Japanese Kabuki masks, Greek theatrical masks, the "Masques" of the Elizabethan Theatre, *Commedia Dell'arte* etc...).

Make sure to include pictures, drawings or photos along with your research. Put your research together on a bulletin board to create a timeline history of the mask.

☞ How does the Phantom's mask fit into your research?

☞ Maria Björnson fashioned the Phantom's mask after half-masks worn by disfigured soldiers in World War I, often with a detailed eye painted on to "replace" the lost one. How does knowing this fact affect how you feel about the Phantom?

☞ Discuss the use of masks and disguises in the following Shakespeare plays:

- *Romeo and Juliet*
- *As You Like it*
- *The Merchant of Venice*
- *King Lear*
- *Othello*
- *Twelfth Night*

☞ Draw or sculpt your own mask. How would your mask be used? For entertainment? For protection? What will your mask be showing the world? What will it be hiding?

☞ With your knowledge of the history of masks, and the masks you have created, write and act out a short skit where mask your is used:

- To hide identity
- To hide deformity
- To change personality

How are the different reasons for wearing a mask similar? How are they different?

☞ The scene where Christine unmask the Phantom was made famous in the 1925 silent movie of the story starring Lon Chaney.

Of this scene, Andrew Lloyd Webber said, “Clearly, one of the biggest problems was the unmasking of the Phantom. In the cinema tremendous impact can be made by virtue of a close-up shot, but we had to devise a way that would make the unmasking effective from any point in a big musical theatre.”

If you can, view the silent film as well as the musical. Compare the two scenes of the Phantom’s unmasking. Did Lloyd Webber succeed in making the theatrical unmasking effective? Why or why not?

☞ After seeing **The Phantom of the Opera**, write a diary as if you were The Phantom. Describe the time before Christine unmask you, and then describe the days after she has seen your true face. How does your outlook change?

☞ The symbol of The Theatre is often an interposed set of comic and tragic masks. Why do you think this is?

Not for Any Mortal Sin...

THE OUTCAST

“Why, you ask, was I bound and chained in this cold and dismal place? Not for any mortal sin, but the wickedness of my abhorrent face!”
- The Phantom

IDEAS FOR RESEARCH & DISCUSSION

- ∞ What is an outcast?
 - ∞ Have you ever been cast out of a group because of race, gender or physical difference? How did it make you feel?
 - ∞ Have you ever cast anyone out of your group? Why?
 - ∞ Compare the character of the Phantom with outcasts in the following works:
 - *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare
 - *The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare
 - *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison
 - *Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoyevsky
 - *Paradise Lost* by John Milton
 - *The Inferno* by Dante
 - *A Separate Peace* by John Knowles
 - *The Book of Genesis*
 - *1984* by George Orwell
 - *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley
 - *Beowulf*
 - *Grendel* by John Gardner
 - *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley
 - ∞ Write and act out a skit in which someone is unable to attend a play or a movie because they are confined to a wheelchair, or where a student is barred from a club because of gender, race or religion.
 - ∞ Has seeing **The Phantom of the Opera** changed the way you feel about outcasts? In what way?
-

Think of Me...

THE CHARACTER OF CHRISTINE

Think of all the things we've shared and seen – don't think about the way things might have been..."

- Christine Daaé

IDEAS FOR RESEARCH & DISCUSSION

☞ In his treatise on fairy tales and fables *The Uses of Enchantment*, Bruno Bettelheim writes, "Each fairy tale is a magic mirror which reflects some aspects of our inner world, and of the steps required by our evolution from immaturity to maturity."

Relate this statement to Christine. How is **The Phantom of the Opera** the story of her maturity, of her "growing up"?

☞ During **The Phantom of the Opera**, Christine is torn between three powerful men: Raoul, The Phantom and the memory of her dead father. Does she ever become completely free and her own person? If so, when?

☞ In fairy tales and fables, a kiss always has magical properties (turning a frog into a prince, awakening Sleeping Beauty, etc...). What effect does Christine's kiss have in **The Phantom of the Opera**?

☞ Compare Christine's story with the following myths and fables:

- Pandora's Box
- Sleeping Beauty
- Alice Through the Looking Glass
- Bluebeards Castle
- Snow White and Rose Red
- The Frog King
- Pygmalion and Galatea
- Cupid and Psyche
- Svengali

☞ Research the changing role of women during the Victorian Period. How does Christine fit in to your research? Would you say she was a "modern" woman? Why or why not?

☞ How did literature written during the Victorian period reflect the shifting role of women in society? Compare Christine with women in the following works:

- *Madame Bovary* by Flaubert
- *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen
- *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen
- *The Mill on the Floss* by George Elliot
- *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy

☞ Do you think Christine made the right decision by staying with Raoul? Why? What would you have done?

☞ Discuss the phrase “Beauty is in the eye of the Beholder” in regards to Christine. Remember that she is the only character to see “the man behind the monster” when she sings “Yet in his eyes/All the sadness/Of the world... / Those pleading eyes/That both threaten/and adore...”

Victorian Literature

AND THE GOTHIC NOVEL

Although **The Phantom of the Opera** was written in 1911, its events take place in a time known as the Victorian Period, because it was during the reign of Queen Victoria in England (1819-1901).

IDEAS FOR RESEARCH & DISCUSSION

- ☞ Research the Victorian period, placing special emphasis on changing perspectives and attitudes.
 - ☞ Survey the literature of the Victorian period. Discuss one of the authors below or choose one of your own and discuss how he or she “unmasked” traditional concepts in regard to:
 - The Nature of Government: *Major Barbara* and *Saint Joan* by George Bernard Shaw; *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens
 - The Nature of Society: *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde; *Oliver Twist* and *Bleak House* by Charles Dickens
 - The Nature of Marriage: *A Doll’s House* by Henrik Ibsen; *Candida* by George Bernard Shaw; *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen
 - The Nature of Science: *The Island of Doctor Moreau* by H.G. Wells; *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* by Jules Verne
 - The Nature of Identity: *Dr. Jekyll and Mister Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson; *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde
 - ☞ Gaston Leroux wrote in the original novel of **The Phantom of the Opera**, “None will ever be a true Parisian who has not learnt to wear a mask of gaiety over his sorrow and one of sadness, boredom or indifference over his inward joy... In Paris, our lives are one masked ball...” How does Leroux and his novel fit into your timeline? What social ills was he trying to “unmask”?
 - ☞ **The Phantom of the Opera** belongs to a genre called “Gothic” fiction, which combines equal parts of horror and romance. Compare the story of **The Phantom of the Opera** with the works of these other Victorian novelists, all of which use elements of the “Gothic” formula:
 - Bram Stoker: *Dracula*, “Lair of the White Worm”
 - Robert Louis Stevenson: *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, “The Bottle Imp”
 - Mary Shelley: *Frankenstein*
 - ☞ Using your research into the Victorian period, account for the great popularity of the “Gothic” novel, and its fascination with horror, repressed sexuality and the dual nature of man.
-

The Music of the Night

THE POWER OF THE MUSIC

“I have brought you to the seat of sweet music’s throne... to this kingdom where all must pay homage to music...”
- The Phantom

IDEAS FOR RESEARCH & DISCUSSION

∞ In **The Phantom of the Opera**, The Phantom pretends to be “The Angel of Music” and inspires Christine to be a great singer.

Discuss the power of inspiration. Have you ever been inspired by someone or something?

∞ Research and discuss the origins of the words “muse” and “genius.” How are they used today?

∞ The word “inspiration” comes from the Latin *inspirare*, or “to breathe.” How are they related?

∞ Listen to the CD of *The Phantom of the Opera* and analyze the following songs:

- “Think of Me”
- “The Phantom of the Opera”
- “The Music of the Night”
- “All I Ask of You”
- “Masquerade”
- “Wishing You Were Somehow Here Again”
- “The Point of No Return”

How do the different songs and the different music make you feel? How do you think the composer makes you feel a certain way (what instruments are used, what rhythms, what harmonies, etc...)? How does the composer use the repetition of musical themes to create moods and build characters? How does each song continue the story? How does each song tell us different things about the characters?

∞ What is an Opera? How is it different from a musical? Would you say **The Phantom of the Opera** is an opera or a musical?

∞ Before seeing **The Phantom of the Opera**, survey your class with the following question: How do you feel about Opera? Does it bore you? Excite you? After seeing the show, ask the same question. Has seeing **The Phantom of the Opera** changed how you feel about Opera?

☞ In the novel of **The Phantom of the Opera**, Christine describes the music from the Phantom's opera. "His Don Juan Triumphant... seemed to me at first one awful, long, magnificent sob. But, little by little, it expressed every emotion, every suffering of which mankind is capable. It intoxicated me..."

While listening to the music from **The Phantom of the Opera**, note the music from Don Juan Triumphant. How does it make you feel? What do you think the composers of the musical are saying about the Phantom's music versus the other operas heard throughout the musical? How does the Phantom's music reflect his inner emotions?

☞ How do these two quotes from Shakespeare relate to the use and power of music in *The Phantom of the Opera*?

The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils;
The motions of his spirit are as dull as night,
And his affections dark as Erebus:
Let no such man be trusted."

- from *The Merchant of Venice* (Act V, sc. 1)

Music oft hath such a charm
To make bad good, and good provoke to harm.

- from *Measure for Measure* (Act IV, sc. 1)

The Audience

FILLING IN THE BLANKS

Director Harold Prince wants the audience “to be collaborators, to use their imaginations to fill in the spaces we’ve deliberately left blank.”

IDEAS FOR RESEARCH & DISCUSSION

∞ “Fill in the blanks” of **The Phantom of the Opera**. In diary, story, poem or skit form, create the legends of:

- The Phantom’s early life: from his childhood and time at the sideshow, to his life at the Opera House and the first moment he saw Christine.
 - Christine and Raoul’s first meeting on the beach.
 - Christine and her father, the famous violinist, and their relationship.
 - The Phantom and Madame Giry: how they met, the nature of their bond.
 - Christine and Meg Giry: how they became friends, their relationship after the musical.
 - Raoul and Christine’s life after they leave the Phantom: do they become married? How do they feel about each other after the events of the musical?
 - The Phantom’s life after Christine leaves him: what happens to him in the last moment of the musical?
 - Does Christine ever see the Phantom again? What might happen?
 - Write the “legend” of Gaston Leroux, and how he was inspired to write *The Phantom of the Opera*? Did he meet the “Opera Ghost?”
-

The Story of THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

Prologue

It is 1911 and the contents of the Paris Opera House are being auctioned off. Present are the auctioneer, porters and bidders. Raoul, now seventy years old and in a wheelchair, buys a poster and a music box. As the auctioneer displays the Opera House chandelier, he explains that it is connected with the legend of **The Phantom of the Opera**. With a flash of light, the audience is flung back in time, when the Paris Opera was at its height.

Act 1

We are thrust in the middle of a rehearsal for the opera *Hannibal*. Monsieur Lefèvre, the retiring manager of the Opera, is showing the new managers, Messieurs Firmin and André, the great stage. As the prima donna, Carlotta, is singing, a backdrop falls to the floor, nearly killing her. The cry is raised, "It's The Phantom of the Opera!" Upset, Carlotta refuses to sing.

Meg Giry, daughter of the ballet mistress, Madame Giry, suggests that her friend, Christine Daaé, take Carlotta's place. Christine has been taking lessons from a mysterious new teacher.

At her triumph in the Opera is Raoul, a nobleman and patron of the Opera. Raoul recognizes Christine as a childhood friend. He comes backstage after the performance to escort her to dinner, but Christine tells him she cannot go, because her teacher, "The Angel of Music," is very strict.

When Raoul leaves Christine's room, the Phantom appears. Christine is lured into the bowels of the Opera House, where the Phantom will continue her lessons.

He leads her to his underground lair, where she sees a frightening vision of herself in a wedding gown. She faints, only to be awakened several hours later by the Phantom's music on the organ. Creeping up behind him, she rips off his mask. Horrified, he takes her back to the surface.

The Phantom has sent notes to both the managers of the Opera, as well as Raoul, Madame Giry and Carlotta, which give instructions that Christine will have the lead in the new opera, *Il Muto*. The managers refuse to give in to the Phantom's demands.

Il Muto proceeds as planned, with Carlotta in the lead, and Christine in a secondary role. As promised, disaster strikes - the stagehand Joseph Buquet is killed and Carlotta's voice is stolen.

In the confusion, Raoul and Christine escape to the roof of the Opera House. There, with all of Paris around them, they pledge their love to one another. They cannot see the Phantom overhearing their vows of love. Enraged at Christine's betrayal, the Phantom causes the final disaster of the night - the mighty chandelier comes crashing to the stage floor.

Act 2

The second act opens at a grand Masquerade Ball, held on the steps of the Paris Opera. No one has heard from the Phantom in six months. Christine and Raoul are engaged but are keeping it a secret; Christine keeps her engagement ring on a chain around her neck.

Suddenly, the Phantom appears, disguised as The Red Death, and delivers to the managers a score from his opera, *Don Juan Triumphant*.

At first, the managers refuse to perform the strange, disturbing opera. Then, with the help of Raoul, they devise a plan to trap the Phantom, using Christine as bait. Plans for *Don Juan Triumphant*, and the trap, are made.

Christine visits the grave of her father. There on the grave stands the Phantom, beckoning her to join him. Raoul appears and takes her away.

At last, the opening night of *Don Juan Triumphant* arrives. The theater is surrounded by guards and police eager to catch the Phantom. As the opera comes to its end, the Phantom takes the place of Piangi, the lead singer. He confronts Christine on stage during the performance, and escapes with her once more to his labyrinth below the Opera House.

In a last confrontation, the Phantom gives Christine a choice: stay with him forever, or he will kill Raoul. Her decision brings to an end the story of **The Phantom of the Opera**.

SCENES & MUSICAL NUMBERS

“Prologue”

The stage of the Paris Opera House, 1911
Auctioneer, Raoul & Company

“Overture”

ACT ONE

SCENE 1 - The Dress Rehearsal of Hannibal
Think of Me

Carlotta, Christine & Raoul

SCENE 2 - After the Gala

Angel of Music

Christine & Meg

SCENE 3 - Christine's Dressing Room

Little Lotte/The Mirror (Angel of Music)

Raoul, Christine & The Phantom

SCENE 4 - The Labyrinth Underground

The Phantom of the Opera

The Phantom & Christine

SCENE 5 - Beyond the Lake

The Music of the Night

The Phantom

SCENE 6 - Beyond the Lake, the Next Morning

I Remember/Stranger Than You Dreamt It

Christine & The Phantom

SCENE 7 - Backstage

Magical Lasso

Buquet, Meg, Madame Girly & Ballet Girls

SCENE 8 - The Manager's Office

Notes/Prima Donna

Firmin, Andre, Raoul, Carlotta, Girly, Meg & The Phantom

SCENE 9 - A Performance of Il Muto

Poor Fool, He Makes Me Laugh

Carlotta & Company

SCENE 10 - The Roof of the Opera House

**Why Have You Brought Me Here?/
Raoul, I've Been There**

Raoul & Christine

All I Ask of You

Raoul & Christine

All I Ask of You (Reprise)

The Phantom

“Entr'acte”

ACT TWO - Six months later

SCENE 1 - The Staircase of the Opera House,
New Year's Eve

Masquerade/Why So Silent

Full Company

SCENE 2 - Backstage

Raoul and Girly

SCENE 3 – The Manager's Office

Notes/Twisted Every Way

*Andre, Firmin, Carlotta, Piangi, Raoul, Christine,
Girly & The Phantom*

SCENE 4 - A Rehearsal for Don Juan Triumphant
Christine, Piangi, Reyer, Carlotta, Girly & Company

SCENE 5 - A Graveyard in Perros

Wishing You Were Somehow Here Again

Christine

Wandering Child/Bravo, Bravo

Christine The Phantom, Christine & Raoul

SCENE 6 - Before the Premiere

Raoul, Andre, Firmin, Fireman and The Phantom

SCENE 7 - Don Juan Triumphant

Carlotta, Piangi, Passarino and Company

The Point of No Return

The Phantom & Christine

SCENE 8 - The Labyrinth Underground

Down Once More/Track Down This Murderer

Full Company

SCENE 9 - Beyond the Lake

Christine, The Phantom, Raoul & Company

FACTS & FIGURES

BROADWAY

☞ The Broadway production opened on January 26, 1988 with a then-record advance of \$18 million.

☞ On January 9, 2006, **The Phantom of the Opera** played performance #7,486, surpassing the 7,485 performance run of *Cats* to become the longest-running show in Broadway history.

☞ **The Phantom of the Opera** has been seen in New York by almost 11 million people.

☞ The Broadway production has grossed over \$600 million, more than any other show in Broadway history.

☞ Winner of seven 1988 Tony® Awards including Best Musical.

☞ The New York production cost a record \$8 million in 1988. The same production today would cost \$12 million.

☞ The dazzling replica of the Paris Opera House chandelier features 6,000 beads. It weighs one ton and has traveled 2,512,368 feet (476 miles). The original version (in London) was built by 5 people in 4 weeks.

☞ 244 actors have appeared in the New York production.

☞ 16 actors have been cast as **The Phantom**: Michael Crawford, Timothy Nolen, Chris Groenendaal, Steve Barton, Jeff Keller, Kevin Gray, Mark Jacoby, Marcus Lovett, Davis Gaines, Thomas James O’Leary, Gary Mauer, Hugh Panaro, Ted Keegan, Howard McGillin, David Gaschen, and James Romick. Hugh Panaro returned to the role in 2003, and Howard McGillin returned in 2005. At over 3 ½ years and 1,300 performances, Mr. McGillin has played the title role in Broadway production more than any other actor.

☞ 3 actors from the original Broadway cast are still with the Broadway show.

☞ **Phantom** composer Andrew Lloyd Webber has composed the two longest-running shows in Broadway history: **Phantom** and *Cats*. **Phantom** producer Cameron Mackintosh has produced the three longest-running shows in Broadway history: **PHANTOM**, *Cats* and *Les Misérables*.

☞ Highlights of the Original Cast Recording of **The Phantom of the Opera** is the fourth longest-running pop album of all time on Billboard Magazine’s Pop Album Chart, where it spent a total of 331 weeks (over 6 years). The Complete Original Cast Recording (a 2-disk set) is 16th of all time, having spent 255 weeks (5 years) on the chart. It has gone gold and platinum in both the U.S. and the U.K., selling over 2 million copies.

☞ The **Phantom** Company has raised over \$1 million for Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS.

WORLDWIDE

☞ **The Phantom of the Opera** had its World Premiere at London’s Her Majesty’s Theatre on October 9, 1986. It won every major British theatre award, including the Olivier and Evening Standard Awards, and has since won over 50 major theater awards including an additional Olivier Award in 2002 (Audience Award for Most Popular Show), 7 Tony® Awards including Best Musical, 7 Drama Desk Awards and 3 Outer Critic Circle Awards.

☞ Worldwide box office is in excess of \$3.2 billion, making **Phantom** the most successful entertainment venture of all time, surpassing not only any other stage production, but also far surpassing the world’s highest-grossing film *Titanic* (at \$1.2 billion) and such other blockbusters as *The Lord of the Rings*, *Jurassic Park* and *Star Wars*. Over 80 million people have seen **The Phantom of the Opera**.

☞ There have been over 65,000 performances.

☞ **The Phantom of the Opera** has been performed in 124 cities in 25 countries: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, England, Germany, Holland, Hungary, Ireland, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, Scotland, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan and the United States.

☞ There are currently eleven productions around the world: London, New York, Budapest (Hungary), Tokyo (Japan), Sao Paulo (Brazil), Essen (Germany), Las Vegas, Hong Kong (China), Pretoria (South Africa), Cape Town (South Africa) and the U.S. National Tour.

ACROSS THE UNITED STATES

☞ There have been five U.S. productions: New York, Las Vegas, and three national tours. The First National Tour played Los Angeles and San Francisco for a combined total run of almost 10

years. The Second National Tour had an eight and a half year run. The Third National Tour (the only production currently touring the U.S.) has played over 5,000 performances and will celebrate its fourteenth anniversary on the road in December 2006.

☞ Over 36 million people have attended the five U.S. productions. The three national companies alone have been attended by over 25 million people.

☞ Box office for the five U.S. productions (New York, Las Vegas and three national tours) is nearly \$2 billion. The three U.S. touring companies alone have grossed over \$1.3 billion.

☞ 73 U.S. cities have hosted 167 engagements of **The Phantom of the Opera**.

[All figures are estimated through December 2006.]

Peter Royston (Study Guide Writer): Peter Royston is the creator of over 40 study guides for Broadway, Off-Broadway, touring and regional productions, including *Les Misérables*, **The Phantom of the Opera**, *Miss Saigon*, *Rent*, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, *A Chorus Line*, *Grey Gardens*, *Tarzan* and *Mary Poppins*. A contributor to *Center Stage*, *Stagebill*, *Equity News*, and *American Theatre Magazines*, Peter is the author of the special timeline/history of Actors' Equity, created for the Union's 90th anniversary in 2003, which won First Prize in 2003 from the New York Labor Communications Council. Peter was a contributing writer on the New York City Department of Education's Theatre Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts. Contact him at peter@guidewrite.com.