


NAXOS
AudioBooks

CLASSIC
FICTION

Gaston Leroux
**The Phantom
of the Opera**

Read by **Jeremy Nicholas** with **Peter Yapp**



NA237412D

1	Is it The Ghost?	7:10
2	The new Margarita	10:31
3	The Mysterious Reason	9:45
4	Box 5	6:51
5	The Enchanted Violin	17:20
6	A Visit to Box 5	0:54
7	Faust and What Happened	12:04
8	Visit to Mme. Valerius	4:58
9	At the Masked Ball	9:52
10	Above the Trap Doors	3:15
11	Apollo's Lyre	15:04
12	A Master-Stroke of the Trap Door	7:32
13	Christine... Christine	2:36
14	The Viscount and the Persian	3:50
15	In the Cellars of the Opera	7:08
16	In the Torture Chamber	4:38
17	The Tortures Begin	3:57
18	Barrels!...Barrels!...	6:54
19	The Scorpion or the Grasshopper	9:44
20	The End of the Ghost's Love	10:57
21	Epilogue	3:53

Total time: 2:38:57

Gaston Leroux

The Phantom of the Opera

Most people have heard of *The Phantom of the Opera*, probably associating it with Andrew Lloyd Webber's successful musical or perhaps the Hollywood film of 1921. How many people, however, have read the novel by the Frenchman Gaston Leroux – let alone heard it? They are missing a treat.

The Phantom of the Opera is a horror story which reflects all the opulence of the age. It was written in 1911 and the story is set in mid-nineteenth century Paris. Gaston Leroux, who had the dubious privilege of being born on the train between Paris and Normandy, worked first as a lawyer and then as a journalist before becoming a prolific novelist. These early experiences and love of Paris give a definite flavour to the novel.

However, it is his knowledge of and fascination with the Paris Opera House that provides the authentic backdrop to the plot. It is here that the gothic tale of horror is played out. Gaston Leroux maps out the Opera's corridors and dark passages, traces its workshops, sweeps us through the wings onto its stage, climbs with us into its roof space and then drags us down into its labyrinths.

This is an obsessive love story full of contrasts. The plush glamour of the front-of-house contrasts with the other face of the Opera – the fearsome chill of the cellars. This is replicated in the beautiful young life-affirming heroine, Christine, and her opposite, Erik, the hideous monster who belongs to the underworld. We, the audience, are absorbed and mystified: who is this grotesque man in the mask? Illusion and reality criss-cross in rapid succession. 'Is it a ghost?' the ballet girls cry. We are led to believe that it must be, but then what is real and what is not? Everything else seems so normal, but can ghosts really write letters?

The story taps our darkest thoughts and most romantic dreams. In one sense we are part of a battle between good and evil, as Christine struggles against the pull of the embittered Erik. He has a real and dangerous power, the power to teach her how to sing like an angel. She needs him, yet at what cost?

Add to these rich ingredients a couple of buffoon managers, a lovesick viscount and a wizard of a Persian who acts as a go-between 'twixt light and dark and you have

an operatic plot with elements of fairy tale, pantomime and farce.

And yet there is a serious element as well. As the story progresses we learn more about the feelings of tragic Erik. We begin to feel sorry that life has delivered him such a terrible burden to bear. He is a man who needs love, whose own mother could not bring herself to look at him. This drives him to the brink of insanity. He is capable of evil deeds and we get a glimpse into the workings of a criminally deranged mind.

The Phantom of the Opera lends itself perfectly to audio. Its prose is elegant and musical, pleasing to the ear with its cadences and rhythms. Take a deep breath and delve into the mysteries of the Opera.

Notes by Jan Fielden

Cover picture: *Old Bedford*, By Sickert.
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and Galleries on Merseyside (Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool).

The music on this recording is taken from the NAXOS catalogue

FRENCH ORGAN MUSIC Simon Lindley	8.550581
BERLIOZ HAROLD IN ITALY San Diego Symphony Orchestra/Yoav Talmi	8.553034
FRANCK SYMPHONY IN D MINOR/ PRELUDE, CHORALE AND FUGUE Royal Flanders Philharmonic/Gunter Neuhold	8.550155
ORGAN SHOWPIECES FROM ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL Andrew Lucas, Organ	8.550955
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FAMOUS FRENCH OVERTURES Richard Hayman, Conductor	8.550473
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WEBER AN INVITATION TO THE DANCE Czecho-Slovak Symphony Orchestra (Bratislava)/Ondrej Lenard	8.554066

Music programmed by Jan Fielden



Jeremy Nicholas is an actor, writer, musician and Radio 3 presenter. He has presented numerous radio series, has written *The Beginner's Guide to Opera* and an album of songs called *Funny You Should Sing That*. He also reads *Composer's Letters* for Naxos AudioBooks.



Peter Yapp has appeared in plays and theatres across Britain and in the West End including *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* and *The Black Prince*. His TV credits include *House of Elliot*, *Martin Chuzzlewit* and *Poirot*. He also appears on Naxos AudioBooks' *Lady Windermere's Fan* and *Dracula*.

Gaston Leroux

The Phantom of the Opera

Read by **Jeremy Nicholas** with **Peter Yapp**

This 19th century French thriller tells of the mysterious Erik, grotesque and elusive 'phantom', who hides himself from the world in the labyrinthine bowels of the Paris Opera and entices, with his angelic voice, the beautiful opera singer Christine. Her abduction prompts a dramatic search not only for her, but also for the truth about her strange captor.

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Total time
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