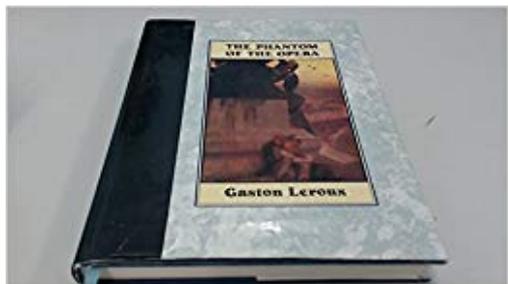


The Phantom of the Opera *by* Gaston Leroux



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Reviews of the *The Phantom of the Opera* *by* Gaston Leroux

Mallador

This is the REAL Phantom of the Opera story by Gaston Leroux, to which Andrew Lloyd Weber was true. Any version-movie, play, cartoon, etc-previous to Lloyd-Weber's musical is not the true story, but a very loose adaptation. The REAL story is far more edge-of-your-seat and amazingly thrilling and dramatic than these pretenders. Gaston Leroux's Phantom is not a pathetic, hunch-backed, limping, weak-willed pervert. Leroux's Phantom-named ERIK- is part-Batman, part-James Bond, part-Beast (as in Beauty and the Beast), and a "dark twin" -if you will- to the Elephant Man (the true historical figure Joseph Merrick who was severely disfigured by a combination of neurofibromatosis type I and Proteus syndrome). In fact, Erik's early life story resembles that of the Elephant Man's in that Erik was born with hideous facial disfigurement and was given his first mask by his mother. He runs away to join a band of Gypsies who put on sideshows for their living and thus employs Erik who gives himself the freakshow name of "Living Dead Man". Under the Gypsies care and training, he

develops into a highly skilled magician, illusionist, and ventriloquist. He gains a sort of underground cult-fame for his eccentric skill to combine singing and ventriloquism which produces a beautiful "other-worldly" voice--so intriguing is his skill that Shah of Persia demands to hear it and commissions a visiting fur trader to bring Erik to Persia. Just as was true with the real-life Joseph Merrick, Erik is a brilliant self-educated man. Leroux amplifies his character by turning Erik into a Leonardo di Vinci renaissance man-artist, poet, scholar, architect, scientist; a man who had mastered several languages, played several instruments--all this in addition to his famous, though elusive speaking and singing voice. And if that's not enough? He's a martial artist, too, with a particular talent for the "Punjab Lasso"-his preferred method of assassination. See what I mean about part-James Bond? Under the patronage and auspices of the Shah, Erik is commissioned to design a palace. The plot thickens at this point--so deliciously so that it's a dizzying, spine-tingling adventure that will not disappoint. In fact, this book is TWO amazing stories in one novel: BEFORE Erik's escape to the Paris Opera House and AFTER he designs, then builds the most intricately sophisticated secret lair underneath the Opera House, the mastery of which the world would never see again after his death. It is this AFTER that builds up to his infamous abduction of the soprano Christine Daae and the dramatic story that follows. If the AFTER appeals to the romantics out there, it's the BEFORE story that will thrill adventurers and action-story aficionados. To say more than this would be a spoiler alert. But GET THE BOOK! Definitely!

Domarivip

As a huge fan of Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical version, I wanted to read the original novel. The two are similar, but there are some major differences. The Phantom of Leroux's novel is darker and more twisted, mentally and physically. The novel explains the Phantom's background and his exploits in Persia, which is hinted at in the musical. He is by far more mad in the novel, his insanity overwhelming his actions. His face is not deformed just on one side: his whole face is described as a mask of death, so horrible that no one can bear to look at it. Both the novel and the musical are psychological; through the story, you come to better understand society's view of the physically and mentally handicapped or deformed.

In both the musical and the novel, I think most people's sympathies will be with the Phantom, rather than with Christine and Raoul. The Phantom is a fascinating, three-dimensional character who is one of the greatest antiheroes ever created. Christine and Raoul are not the most interesting of the novel's characters, but by the end of the novel, Christine matures, and comes to a realization of how terrible the Phantom's life has been. Towards the end of the novel and musical, she shows him an emotional, overwhelming act of compassion that climaxes the story. Raoul never gained my sympathy in either the novel or the musical, but he is much worse in the novel. He is a flat character who is shallow, foppish, and childish, completely lacking in compassion or understanding for the Phantom. He, unlike Christine, is a static character who never seems to mature and change for the good.

The Literary Classics Collection edition for the Kindle is excellently formatted, with a linked table of contents, along with biographical information about Gaston Leroux. The footnotes are also linked, and are sometimes very helpful in reading the story. This edition also includes many extra materials, such as a section about plays and movies inspired by the novel and questions about the material.

While the musical will always be my favorite of the two, the novel is excellent and a classic of dark Gothic horror and romance. This is a story I'm sure I will read many times.

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