



Albany's Capital Idea

The Capital Repertory Company produced the first American musical version of the ageless tale

BY JOE EASTBURN

The *Phantom of the Opera*. April 19—May 18, 1986. Produced by the Capital Repertory Company, Albany, New York. Book and lyrics by Kathleen Masterson; music by David Bishop; directed by Peter H. Clough; sets and lights by Dale F. Jordan; costumes by Lloyd Waiwaiole; musical direction by Hank Levy; production stage manager—Patricia Frey.

The first American musical production of Gaston Leroux's *The Phantom of the Opera* was presented by Capital Repertory Company in Albany, New York. Founded in 1980, Capital Rep is located at the Market Theater, 111 North Pearl Street in Albany. The company season runs from October through May, annual attendance is 35,725, and shows are produced under an Actors Equity Association League of Resident Theaters (LORT) D contract. Producing directors for Capital Rep are Bruce Bouchard and Peter H. Clough.

TheaterWeek recently spoke with Kathleen Masterson, the librettist and lyricist of that production, about its genesis and about the largely ignored psychological underpinnings of the archetypal tale.

Joe Eastburn: *How did you come to write a musical of The Phantom of the Opera?*

Kathleen Masterson: David Bishop, the composer, and I received a commission from Capital Rep Company in Albany, New York to adapt the novel by Gaston Leroux. I had written an adaptation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* for Capital Rep in 1982. Peter Clough directed both of these productions. We weren't sure when we began that we would write a musical as opposed to a play with music, so that decision was made after the reading of the first draft. David was involved in another show and wasn't sure until then that there would be time. I began in September of 1985 and David in December. The play went into rehearsal at the end of March 1986.

How many characters were in the play? How many songs?

The play had 16 characters; 9 of them were Equity contracts. There were 22 songs or musical sections.

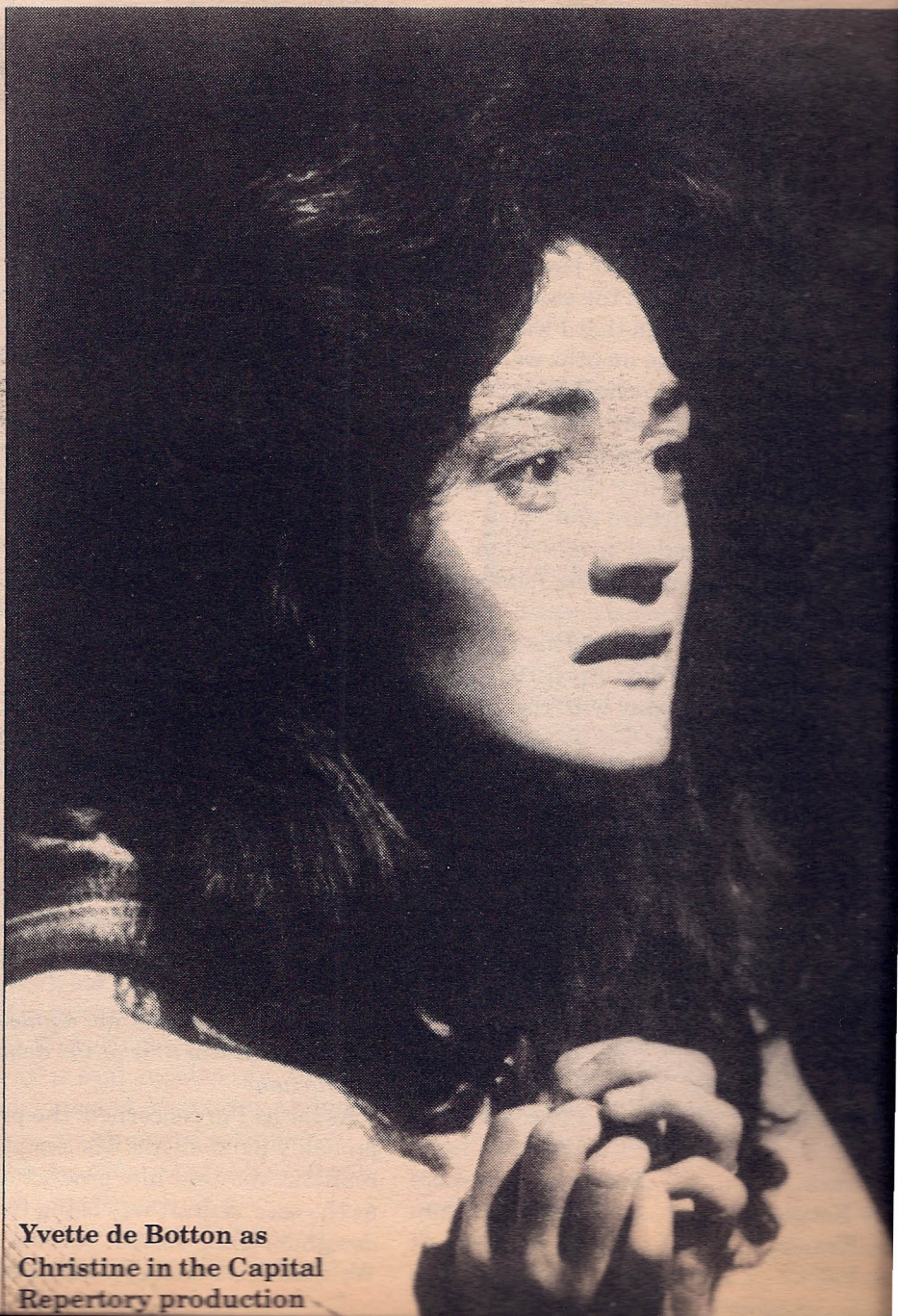
How much time was involved from the inception of the idea to the opening night?

About 8 months.

In terms of writing, how did the time factor affect your work?

Well, obviously, we had to work very quickly. David prefers and probably requires deadlines. I work more methodically, unless I have the music first. We certainly wished we'd had another year. However, we did say yes. Terror is a stimulating motivator, as we discovered.

How were you and your composer affected by the knowledge that the Prince/Lloyd Webber version was to be done in London?



Yvette de Botton as
Christine in the Capital
Repertory production