

I guess all these *Phantoms* came about because the book went into public domain in 1986. The London production had been scheduled for some time before Capital Rep made the decision to do *Phantom*. It was also well known that Arthur Kopit and Maury Yeston were working on a version. David and I consequently felt free to offer what we hoped would be an alternative version.

*Can you talk a little about the slant you decided to take on the subject, with respect to Jungian psychology?*

I like to check out my *Timetables of History* when I work on an adaptation, and to my mind the most significant event around the turn of the century when Gaston Leroux was writing was the emergence of the work of Freud and his disciples—the “discovery” of the unconscious. Gaston Leroux was one of the first detective writers to develop the psychological aspects of his stories in a serious way. I went back and read some Freud and then some Jung and felt an immediate resonance between the character of Erik, the Phantom, and Jung’s ideas about the animus figure or shadow in the unconscious.

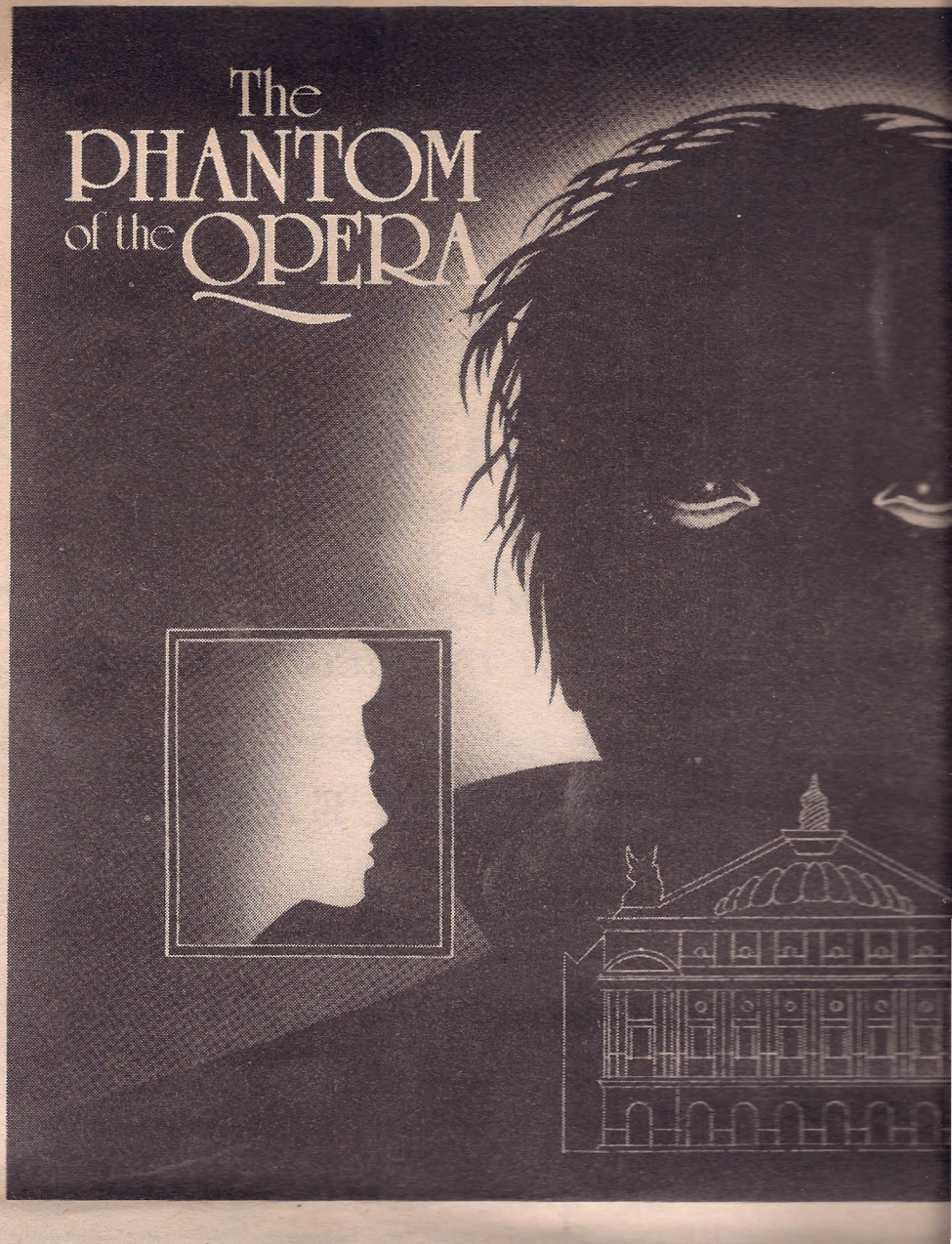
*Why did you subtitle the work “The Passage of Christine”?*

We decided to develop the piece on two levels: as the ghost story set in the world of the Paris Opera House, and as the rite-of-passage story set in the unconscious world of the female protagonist, Christine Daae. Thus the subtitle “The Passage of Christine.”

I saw some research on horror stories which indicated that the primary audience for this genre is adolescent (and this is borne out by the audience composition at the latest scary films). It seems that the enduring stories contain subliminal messages specifically regarding sexuality and possibly incest taboos, much in the same way fairy tales transmit essential psychic information to young children, as Bruno Bettelheim showed us in *The Uses of Enchantment*. All this is simply to say that I began to feel as we worked on *Phantom* that there was more to it than met the eye, and I wanted to incorporate some of the psychological complexity I was perceiving in the story into the musical. I should mention that I was being treated for cancer during the months we were writing the piece. I’m sure it would be quite a different play if we began it now. Four of the principals were comic characters from the Opera House world: Mme. Giry, the boxkeeper; Giulietta, the diva; and Richard and Moncharmin, the managers. The other four crossed over from the Opera into the “shadow”

*The Phantom of the Opera, Or The Passage Of Christine* was first produced on April 19, 1986 at Capital Repertory Company with the following cast:

Christine Daae.....Yvette de Botton  
 Usbek.....Patti Perkins  
 The Phantom.....Al DeCristo  
 Firmin Richard.....John Barone  
 Armand Moncharmin.....Roubert Ousley  
 Giulietta.....Giannini Malita  
 Baron Arron Raoul de Chagny..Joseph Kolinski  
 Mme. Giry.....Jan Buttram  
 Meg Giry.....Tracy Daniels  
 Gabrielle.....Dyann Arduini  
 Jammes.....Nicole Stokes  
 Madeleine.....Carlotta Chang  
 Carolus Fonta.....Spencer Cherashore  
 Stanislav Kotyza.....Will McGarrahan  
 Fraulein Krauss.....Helen Lesnick  
 Madame Valla.....Michele Ortlip



story. Erik, the Phantom, functioned as Christine’s animus, and Usbek, the Persian, as the positive anima. Together with Raoul, the explorer, the four composed a whole: instinct, worldliness, beauty, and transcendence.

*Can you talk a little about Uzbek as a character; where he comes from and what he/she represents in Jungian terms?*

Usbek was an invented character based on the Persian who appears as a kind of detective in the novel. This character was a man played by a woman following Jung’s idea that the most highly evolved personality synthesizes the best qualities of both male and female. In our mystery story, Usbek was Erik’s go-between with Christine. Gradually Usbek was won over by the depth of Raoul’s passion for Christine, and by the sacrifice he made of his wealth. Eventually, Usbek turned against the violent Erik.

*What were the reactions to that character?*

Usbek evoked some strong reactions in the audience (the woman/man aspect) including some hostility. We thought of it as a pants part and were surprised that people objected. A lot of people wanted to know if Usbek was gay, etc. Patti Perkins, who played the role, took the brunt of it with a great sense of humor. The reactions to Usbek were a barometer for the reactions to the production as a whole and were quite polarized.

*Were there elements you wanted to explore but didn’t because of time or the demands of production?*

As far as I’m concerned, the production was probably too realistic. The script is not at all realistic. We went into production meetings just as the second draft was being finished, and the designers [Dale Jordan, set and lights; Lloyd Waiwaiole, costumes] hadn’t heard any of the

music. Certain production decisions were made before we knew what the production was to become. I think any production of the future would be much more extreme if it were done as a dream, or more like a nightmare.

There were technical/financial constraints which the actors had to surmount. One of the most famous—the famous boat which flooded did not exist. My favorite came from an audience member’s friend in the cast “They say water is water? I can’t see any water.” We were, or less, throughout. The costumes were affordable, and quite lovely. The set was Nouveau. Dale’s set had no straight lines, speak of, lots of circular shapes, and it looked like the inside of a brain. The other major technical difficulty was the lack of a sophisticated sound system. We were working with the idea that the inventor, that he was composing music and could enhance Christine’s music electronically. So, especially in the scene where Christine triumphed as *Mefistofele*, we needed some technical equipment we couldn’t afford.

*What aspect, to your knowledge, did you explore in your piece from the other Phantom versions?*

I would imagine the emphasis on the rite-of-passage as the central act. I wanted her to be passive, to be abandoned, to be saved. I wanted her to save herself both as an artist and as a person. I wanted the other versions, and can only compare them to the films in this regard, and to the books.

*Had you written a musical adaptation of the novel and what is your experience of it? How difficult is it?*