

Adaptation
staged in
splendor,
novel by
Leroux.

Lyrics by
Masterson
David Bishop

APRIL 19 -
MAY 18

Capital Rep

Celebrating our fifth season.

For reservation and information call 462-4534.

David and I collaborated on a children's musical, *The Amazing Bone*, from the story by William Steig. He also wrote music for some plays with songs I had written. *Phantom* was our first full-length collaboration, and my first full length musical adaptation. My experience writing *Phantom* was most illuminating. The play is like a liquid you distill into lyrics. This condensation and the subsequent transformation of the action is truly exhilarating. It is another way of thinking altogether. I've never experienced anything more thrilling than hearing David sing one of the songs for the first time—except possibly hearing the actors do it better. You have to think in terms of musical sections, rather than simply inserting a song into a scene. The songs must happen—when the emotion is so heightened that the characters can no longer speak. There is tremendous scope for expression, something you can approach only with music.

What was your experience of working with Capital Rep?

The whole history of that theater is one of risk-taking. In some seasons they do as many as three new plays. That season they also did Toni Morrison's *Dreaming Emmett* and they were really stretched to the limit. Then *Phantom* came along and it was a huge undertaking for them. We had a fine cast of singer/actors and a terrific music director in Hank Levy. I remember our co-producer Bruce Bouchard combing the woods for a maskmaker during tech week. He found someone incredible at the last minute. There were similar problems with instrumentalists for the band. Peter Clough, the director and co-producer, saw the project through from the inception and had the lion's share of work. It was a staggering amount of

work. He put the show on its feet in three weeks and we were adding numbers and rewriting all that time. It was an extraordinary time.

You mentioned that the reactions to the piece were extreme. Can you talk about what became controversial, and why?

The reviews were polarized. Some people objected to the use of material from Gounoud's *Faust*, some to the character of Usbek, as I mentioned before, some to Erik's desire to live an ordinary life, etc. Some thought the piece didn't work at all, some thought it was the most promising play of the last several years—and if I could tell you why, well . . .

What was it like creating a musical at The Millay Colony for the Arts?

The Millay Colony is an artist's colony in Columbia County, New York located on Edna St. Vincent Millay's farm, Steepletop. There are five artists there in residence every month, room and board is provided, and it is serenity itself. I would gladly stay there forever. The idea for my favorite lyric in *Phantom* came from a late-night conversation with a painter there who spoke about art and painted eloquently. The chance to experience the working lives of people from other disciplines is something every writer should have.

How did you find your Christine?

Yvette de Botton played Christine Daae. We met her at a party. She is a radiant person, you can't help but notice her. We asked her if she could sing, she said she could. She came to the auditions and she could sing, she has a heartbreaking quality to her voice. It was essential that the audience accept without question the idea that a grown woman could believe in the Angel of Music, and this required a very special combination of innocence and later on, fire. *Phantom* was Yvette's first Equity job.

Who played your Phantom?

Al DeCristo. He was not type cast, he was quite young for the role, but he has enormous power and he worked like a demon. We were very fortunate with the whole cast, especially considering the obstacles and pressures they faced.

How were you influenced by David Bishop's music?

Well, the music is the soul of the show. David's score was moving and funny and sophisticated and innovative and he wrote it very, very quickly. He's enormously talented and very professional.

What's next for you in your playwriting/acting career?

I'm still an actor and I'm playing Catherine Sloper in *The Heiress* at the Asolo Theatre in Sarasota, Florida until the first of March. I have writing projects in various stages of development, and hope my play *Awakenings* will be produced in the coming year. I'm in the very early stages on an opera libretto for children.

What is it like to go from writing to acting?

I don't experience it as a conflict. One feeds the other, informs the other. I'm very happy to be acting. They drive us around the Gulf of Mexico on yachts and stuff down here.

Still, being away from one or the other and then going back requires a catch up period of being off balance. But actors—they really live on the edge. When all is said and done, by directors and critics and agents and whatever, actors are there with their necks stretched out every night. They make the play from nothing every night. It's especially poignant, that vulnerability, when you meet actors who've been at it for thirty or forty or fifty years, and

they still have to audition and get the greenest kid from Wisconsin. Then they do the play and it's gone. Ephemeral. A writer, at least, can't do anything in her hands.

Do you prefer one over the other?

On a bad day I prefer the other. I always love rehearsal.

What vision do you have for yourself?

I want to be an artist, if you can give me a vision for a career. I have a lot of ideas in my mind, but that one idea never seems to take.

Mirages

Quartet from *Phantom of the Opera*
Music by David Bishop.
Lyrics by Kathleen Masterson.

Raoul

There, through the branches, the shadows,
A shadow, another, Christina,
Shining in my mirror
I reach out
But she is quick as silver
She is gone
I am alone.

(Repeat. Add Usbek.)

Usbek

There, through the branches, the shadows,
Night is falling, the wild beasts,
Gather in my mirror
From a tree I break a limb, I fall
But they are gone
I am alone.

Phantom

All I ever wanted
Was an ordinary life
Was I asking too much?

Usbek

I am alone

Raoul

I am alone!

Christine

Two evils
Which one is the less
Which one shall I choose
Neither one will save
Either way I lose
Which one shall I choose

Phantom

All I ever wanted
Was an ordinary life
In an ordinary place
With an ordinary wife
And an ordinary
Ordinary
Face

Raoul and Usbek

There, in the distance
Just beyond the desert
Water, water
I taste it with my eyes
There, in the distance
I hear it with my tongue
Water, Water

All

I am alone
I am alone!