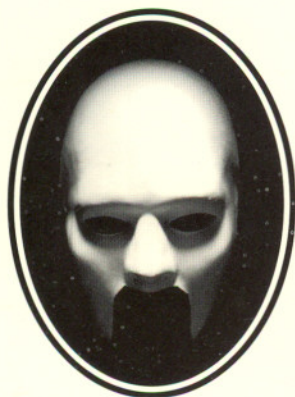




**ERIK**



**THE PHANTOM  
OF  
THE OPERA**

*by*

*Mame Giry*



*EDITOR'S NOTE: The following manuscript was found in Mame Giry's dressing table drawer after her death in 1918. Her daughter, Mary Giry, graciously donated it to this publisher.*

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# ERIK

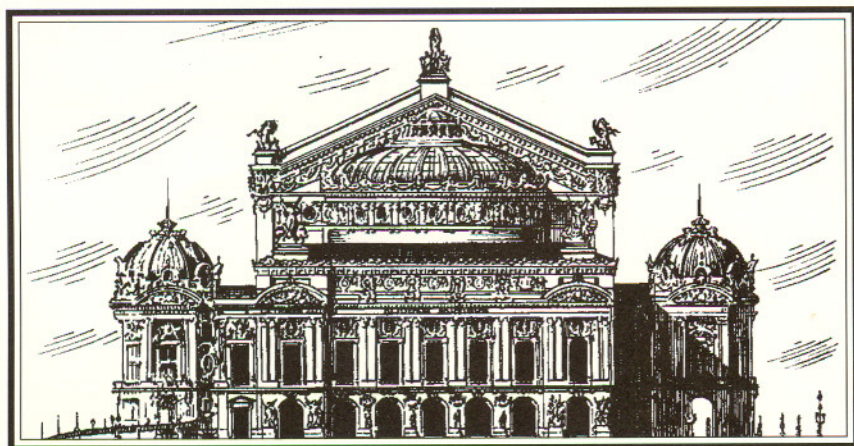
## THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

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I write this narrative from my home in Paris. The date is January 1, 1902. I am writing to clear up the many rumors and inaccuracies surrounding Erik, the "Opéra Ghost", otherwise known as the Phantom of the Opéra.

I knew Erik, you see. I was a boxkeeper at the Paris Opéra House for nearly fifteen years. It was during my tenure there that Erik was "at large." I had the pleasure of tending his personal box, and I must say that I found him to be generous and kind in any dealings we had with one another. Although I never met him face to face, I felt as if I knew him as well as anyone. Some say he is a murderer and a monster. A tragic chandelier mishap in 1881 was attributed to him. Many people died or were injured in that unfortunate occurrence. At least three other Opéra personnel were murdered backstage, and these deaths were attributed to Erik as well. But no one has proved this. It is all speculation. In my heart of hearts, I believe that Erik was a victim of his own wretched existence. Any violence he may have unleashed upon society was the result of what society had done to him. He was, after all, a man with human feelings. And these feelings were corrupt from the day he was born.



*Paris Opera House.*



## ERIK'S EARLY YEARS

Erik was born the son of a mastermason who lived in a small town not far from Rouen. They say that the first gift bestowed upon the child was a mask to hide his hideously deformed face. The sight of her own son so horrified his mother that she refused to nurse him. Because of the lack of love and understanding in his home, Erik ran away at a very early age. He joined a traveling fair, where a showman exhibited him as a "living corpse." He made a living in this humiliating fashion, crossing the whole of Europe. Cavorting with these vagabonds, Erik completed a macabre education as an artist and magician, mostly at the



*Young Erik singing in the circus.*

hands of Gypsies. By the time he appeared at the fair of Nijni-Novgorod, Erik had gained a reputation as the "singing freak." Already his voice was such that no other sounded like his – it was, quite simply, hypnotic. That was the only time I saw Erik in person. I was sixteen years old. At first I too felt repulsed by the ugliness of the boy standing in front of me. But when he opened his mouth and began to sing, I was mesmerized. As Erik grew older, his talent for ventriloquism and displays of legerdemain grew to be so extraordinary that the caravans returning to Asia spoke of them for the entire journey.

Even as a young man, Erik had a reputation reaching as far as the palace of Mazenderan. A sultana, the favorite of the Shah-in-Shah, was dreadfully bored and needed something with which to amuse herself. A fur dealer returning from Europe told her of the amazing feats he had seen in Erik's tent. Intrigued, the sultana ordered her daroga to go and find the youth.

The sultana's men seized Erik, brought him to Persia, and put him in the service of the sultana. Because of the anti-social upbringing to which he was accustomed, the lad did not really know the difference between right and wrong. Or if he did, he did not seem to care, for he engaged in a number of horrific enterprises on the sultana's behalf, including political assassination, tortures of prisoners, and other atrocities. Naturally, the Shah quickly took a liking to him.

Not long after his arrival in Persia, Erik turned his attention to architecture and designed an unusual palace for the Shah. The new building would contain all sorts of trickery and diabolical puzzles. The Shah liked the idea and ordered it built. The project was a success, and the Shah was so pleased with the marvelous palace that he became possessive and protective of it. He worried that Erik might be bought and persuaded to build a similar palace of its kind for another sovereign. He therefore ordered that Erik be put to death!

The daroga who initially brought Erik to Persia had become something of a friend, for Erik had done simple favors for him. Together, they conspired to fool the Shah. They happened to find a badly decomposed corpse on the shore of the Caspian Sea, and the daroga dressed it in Erik's clothes. The Shah and his men took the corpse for Erik's body, while Erik made his escape to Asia Minor and Constantinople.



Erik, now in his twenties, presented his credentials to the Sultan in Constantinople and was immediately rewarded with employment. There, Erik perpetuated his knack for building trap-doors and secret chambers – the sort found at Yildiz-Kiosk after the last Turkish revolution. He also created a horde of automata resembling the Sultan, which he used to convince people that the leader was awake at one location, when, in reality, he was asleep elsewhere.



*Erik in the Sultan's Court*

Ultimately, Erik had to leave the Sultan's service for the same reason he had been forced out of Persia – he knew too much. He made his way back to France, weary of his exciting but reprehensible life. He longed to be "normal." He became a contractor and designed ordinary structures for a while, until he became aware of the massive project about to be undertaken by Charles Garnier – the building of the Paris Opéra House. He tendered for the job designing part of the foundations and was accepted. But once he was alone in the cavernous cellars of the playhouse, his diabolical nature took over. He imagined a dwelling, hidden within the catacombs deep beneath the theatre, where he could live – away from his fellow man who had shunned him his entire life. And so, in 1870, during the Communards' reign, he built his lair and fashioned secret passages into the Opéra through which he could indulge himself in trickery. Erik became the "Opéra Ghost," for he was truly mad now. His longing for love and acceptance had taken its toll – now he hated the human beings who walked on the surface. Erik felt justified in extorting money and other luxuries from the managers of the Opéra. And things progressed without much trouble until the Phantom of the Opéra fell in love.



## ERIK AND CHRISTINE

Christine Daaé was a young singer who had come to France with her widower father from Scandinavia. When Erik first noticed her, she had not been at the Opéra long. He was immediately struck by her simple beauty and pleasant voice. He soon became obsessed with the notion of making her his protégé; it was only later that he became obsessed with the notion of making her his bride. Following some initial investigation into the girl's life, Erik had the ammunition with which to condition Christine into believing in him – through her father, who had died shortly after the couple's arrival in France. Monsieur Daaé promised Christine that he would continue her musical education, even after his death, by providing an Angel as a tutor. Erik became her father's "Angel of Music." Using ventriloquism and the secret passages in the Opéra, Erik spoke and sang to Christine through her dressing room mirror. Christine, under the Phantom's hypnotic spell, became convinced that her tutor was indeed this Angel of Music and resolved to keep it her secret.

Things became more complicated. Another young man was interested in Christine Daaé as well. He was Raoul de Chagny, the younger brother of the Comte de Chagny. Deeply smitten by her, Monsieur de Chagny discovered early on that something was not quite right with Christine. While standing outside her dressing room, he once overheard the Phantom telling Christine that she must love him. When eventually the girl emerged from her room, Raoul inspected the unlocked dressing quarters and found it empty.

Raoul de Chagny met Christine when they were both children. She and her father visited Paris and the two children met on the beach. Christine's scarf blew out to sea, and the boy Raoul retrieved it. Thereafter, they played every day until the elder Daaé and his daughter returned to Scandinavia.

Soon after Raoul's suspicions, an event occurred which no one seems to confirm, but the story goes that Raoul followed Christine to Perros-Guirrec in Brittany to visit her father's grave. He surreptitiously stayed in the shadows as the girl took a walk to the cemetery. There, in



the dead of night, Raoul saw the so-called "Angel of Music" appear before Christine. The man was playing a violin, and the music was truly perfect – Raoul could understand now why Christine was so enthralled. After the music lesson, Christine left the cemetery. On his own way out, however, Raoul was attacked by a specter with a death's head. He barely escaped with his life!

Shortly after this incident, the Phantom made a demand to the Opéra managers that Christine Daaé replace the prima donna, Carlotta, in a production of *Faust*. He threatened to curse the theatre if this demand was not met. Unfortunately for all concerned, the managers



Christine and the "Angel of Music" in her dressing room

decided to refuse the request. Carlotta, suspecting some kind of plot involving her rival, hardened her resolve to appear in the performance – even though she herself received a threatening letter from the Opéra Ghost! During the performance, Carlotta suddenly lost her voice, emitting bizarre toad croaks! And then the "curse" became reality. The huge chandelier in the house plummeted, killing several persons and injuring many others.

Christine Daaé disappeared for several days after the chandelier tragedy. Her sudden disappearance greatly distressed Raoul, and it was only after he received a note from Christine that he felt slightly relieved. The note asked that he meet her in secret at the masked ball.

The two disguised lovers found each other at the ball and, hiding from a mysterious figure costumed as the Red Death, they proceeded to talk. Christine told Raoul that she must give him up and could not say any more about it. The forlorn Raoul then hid in Christine's dressing room – and with his own eyes, saw her "disappear" into the full-length mirror when the voice beckoned to her.

A day or two later, Christine agreed to meet Raoul, but not in a public place. After dark, Raoul and Christine made their way to the roof of the Opéra house. There, Christine told the Vicomte an extraordinary story. She had been lured by the masked Erik into the depths of the catacombs to his hidden lair. Erik had performed his compositions for her, including bits of an opera called *Don Juan Triumphant*. The man professed his love for her and confessed the truth of the Angel of Music ruse. But in a fortuitous moment, Christine managed to unmask the Phantom to reveal a face of indescribable horror. At first, Erik threatened to kill her; but he soon sank in despair and sorrow and again insisted that his love for her was timeless. Erik's vulnerability actually moved Christine to great pity. At this point, Christine made a deal with the Phantom. If he would let her go, she would return often and of her own free will. As a token of her sincerity, she accepted a golden ring from Erik – which meant that she belonged only to him.

As Christine told this story to Raoul, little did she know that Erik himself was perched upon the statue of Apollo on the roof of the Opéra, listening to her every word!



The next night, during a performance, Christine vanished on stage in front of a packed house! Knowing that the Phantom must have used trickery to abduct her, Raoul frantically rushed backstage to find the entrance to the catacombs. There, he came upon an individual known only as "the Persian." This man was a member of the secret police, and had been keeping track of Erik's movements since his days in Persia. In fact, the Persian helped in the ploy to get Erik out of the country when the Shah decreed that he be killed. The Persian persuaded Raoul to follow him and obey his every instruction – lest they both be killed by the Phantom's cunning. Erik had already proven his ability with the *punjab* lasso.



Erik as "The Red Death" at the masked ball

Raoul and the Persian made their way into the catacombs and finally to Erik's lair, where they inadvertently found themselves trapped in a "torture room." The room was designed such that extreme heat would eventually kill the helpless victims inside. But, on the brink of death, the Persian found a secret way out of the room, and the men made their way to a chamber full of gunpowder. The Phantom's intent became clear – if Christine didn't marry him, he would blow up the Opéra house!



*The Phantom unmasked*



Meanwhile, the Phantom had locked Christine in his bedroom and given her a choice. She could be his bride and stay with him forever and also spare the lives of the two men, or she could refuse his hand and lose her lover and be responsible for a "great tragedy." She chose the former.

Then, in an extraordinary act of bravery, compassion, and sheer intuition, Christine managed to persuade the Phantom to let them all go free. She did this by kissing him! She kissed him full on the mouth, something no other woman had ever done before. Touched to the depth of his heart, Erik became human once again. He realized that he had been a monster. And he realized that the ultimate assertion of his love for Christine would be to let her go free. And so he did. Christine's final parting with Erik was to return the gold ring he had given her. She asked him to wear it always – and remember her.

Raoul and Christine disappeared together after they were free. Some speculate that they went to Scandinavia, where they lived happily ever after. The Persian stayed in Paris and died an old man.

As for Erik, the Phantom of the Opéra, no one is entirely sure what happened. How he met his death is unknown. It is said that after Christine Daaé fled with Raoul de Chagny, Erik died of loneliness and solitude in the depths of the catacombs. A skeleton unearthed in 1899 was believed to be that of the Phantom. A few artifacts were found which were thought to have belonged to him. These were placed in the Opéra House library for safekeeping. But no one has proven that the Phantom of the Opéra did in fact die! Perhaps his spirit lives on, hoping that one day Christine Daaé would return to him in another form, in another time.

I do not believe that the world has heard the last of Erik, the Phantom of the Opéra.

Mame Giry

Paris, 1902