

SYNOPSIS

ACT I

Out of darkness, the lights come up on the ensemble, cloaked in masks and robes. Here in the **PROLOGUE** we introduce the story of the *Phantom of the Opera*. At the bang of a gavel we find ourselves at the first Inquisition, the purpose of which is to determine the circumstances surrounding the disappearance of Christine Daaé, the beautiful young opera diva, and the mysterious death of stage manager, Joseph Buquet. The story is told with the use of Inquisitions throughout. At each critical juncture a new witness is brought forth to give testimony and thereby introduce the following scene. Immediately, the action takes us back in time to the performance of *Faust* at the Paris Opera House. Christine is playing the role of Margarita, singing **THE PRISON SONG** from *Faust*. During the curtain call, a young gentleman comes forth to present her with roses. We hear an angry shout from one of the box seats and see Joseph Bouquet hung from that box. Christine faints and is taken to her dressing room. Meanwhile, the superstitious members of the Opera ensemble fearfully ask **DO YOU BELIEVE IN GHOSTS?**

Back at Christine's dressing room, amidst the confusion of that evening, the young gentleman comes to Christine's side and introduces himself as Raoul de Chagny, a childhood friend of Christine's. Christine pretends not to recognize him, but he sees through her attempt at denial. An encouraged Raoul exits her dressing room and sings of his love in **BEHIND EVERY DOOR**. However, as he is about to leave from the doorway, he hears voices inside and realizes that Christine has another admirer. Upon Christine's exit, he breaks into the room only to find it empty.

With M Debiene on the witness stand, we become privy to introduction of the new managers of the Opera House. He tells us of the meeting, back in their office, between the two current managers Ms Poligny and Debiene and the new managers Ms Richard and Moncharmine. As they prepare to turn over the keys of the Opera House they explain all of the Opera House protocol, including some rather strange demands made by the Opera Ghost. Despite Richard's and Moncharmine's protests the old managers insist that **THAT'S THE WAY IT'S DONE AROUND HERE**. These bizarre requests include leaving 20,000f each month with Mme Girya, the box-keeper, as payment to the Opera Ghost and a promise never to use Box 5 -- that is the Opera Ghost's private box! Even though the new managers are sure this is a prank they all finally shake hands and close the deal.

During this time Christine Daaé has run off to Perros, to visit her father's grave. She had intended to go alone, but was followed by the Count de Chagny. The handsome Count tries to woo her with reminiscences from their childhood in **SOMETHING IN THE SEA**. She admits that she did recognize him back at the Opera House, but was afraid to say anything for fear that her "Angel of Music" would be displeased with her interest in a mortal man. Christine explains how her **FATHER'S ANGEL** was sent down from heaven to watch over and to teach her. Unbeknownst to Christine, her "Angel" (the Phantom) has also followed her to Perros and as she leaves the graveyard, he strikes Raoul.

Upon returning to the Opera House Christine resumes her music lessons from her Angel, but she is distracted. He tries to persuade her to put away her mortal thoughts and concentrate on her music. She, however, is unable to do so. Frustrated, she runs out of the room and we see her Angel, the Phantom, come forth and sing of his unrequited feelings for her in **THE LOVE YOU NEVER HAD**.

On the witness stand, Mme Giry recounts the evening of Christine Daaé's bizarre disappearance. She recalls the backstage bustle of the Opera House in preparation for that evening's performance. In addition to all of the usual madness, which the stagehands and performers complain about in **AT THE OPERA**, there have been even more complications. Mme Giry received a letter from M Moncharmine telling her she was to be removed from her position. However, M Moncharmine had no knowledge of such a note. Furthermore, Carlotta received a note, also, supposedly from M Moncharmine, threatening her against showing up for that evening's performance. She, however is determined to go on and, as divas will do, duels it out with Christine for the part of Margarita. In the end Carlotta, through trickery, wins out. M Moncharmine and M Richard refuse to give in to the Opera Ghost's demands and decide that they will view the Opera from Box 5 -- The Ghost box!

More than halfway through the Opera, Carlotta sings the lovely **JEWEL SONG** from *Faust*. In the middle of her song the lights begin to flicker and a Chandelier comes crashing down on the stage, barely missing Carlotta. As panic ensues, Christine ventures out onto the stage where she is confronted by The Phantom! She faints as he briskly whisks her away.

ACT II

Act II Opens with the strains of the Phantom's violin. We find Christine in the Phantom's lair, beneath the Opera House. The Phantom suggests they sing something from *Othello* and dutifully, Christine obliges. As this is the first time that she has seen the Phantom, she is intrigued with the mask that he wears, and at the finale of the piece,

she rips it off to reveal a horribly disfigured face. Christine shrieks, but quickly regains her composure and replaces her fear with pity. "Have you always been this way?" she asks. As he gently puts her to sleep, he tells of his childhood in **A ROOM FULL OF SHADOWS**, where the Phantom, whom we now know as Erik, confronts the child within.

Erik returns Christine unharmed, asking only that she wear a ring he gave her with the warning that should she ever remove the ring she would be in terrible danger. With M Moncharmine now on the witness stand we are invited to view the events that led up to Christine's second disappearance a few weeks later, on the night of the masquerade ball. The scene opens with all of the attendees singing about the **RITUALS** of life. Christine and Raoul meet, cloaked in disguises to plan their escape from Erik's reach. However, Erik, too, is in attendance dressed as the "Red Death."

Christine and Raoul escape to the rooftop where they make plans for **LEAVING FOR THE WORLD** to start a life together. They are unaware however, that Erik has followed them and has heard their plans. He confronts Raoul, who, prepared with a gun, shoots Erik in the arm, wounding him.

Once again, Christine has disappeared, and the managers and performers are all full of **QUESTIONS** concerning her disappearance. Raoul seeks the assistance of a strange Persian fellow who seems to have a special connection with Erik and is always mysteriously hanging around the Opera House. The Persian takes Raoul through back passages to Erik's realm where Christine is held prisoner. However, Erik has secured the entire area with traps and soon the Persian and Raoul are also caught.

Erik explains to Christine how solitary and empty his life has been and how he wants her to be his bride. He tries to convince her that beauty is only **SKIN DEEP** and that the two of them could have a normal, happy life together. Therefore, in his mind her only choices are to either stay with him forever in life or for them to be bound eternally in death. A terrified and confused Christine is unable to choose. In the meantime, Erik becomes aware of Raoul's presence and threatens Christine with not only her life, but Raoul's as well. In order to save her love, Christine agrees to become Erik's "living breathing bride." As he prepares Christine for their wedding, Erik, Christine, the Persian and Raoul contemplate their predicaments **IN A WHISPER**.

Now that Erik has Christine, he frees Raoul and the Persian who quickly run to Christine's aid. Erik, however, has been dealt a hard blow. What he thought was Christine's love was really only her pity. He sees that clearly now, and in his shame tells her to go with Raoul. The compassionate Christine comforts Erik, but goes with Raoul leaving a shattered Erik to live out his life alone.

As the lights dim, the Inquisitor explains that, in the cases of Christine Daaé and Joseph Buquet, no clear evidence has been found. We are left to decide for ourselves whether the Phantom of the Opera is really man or myth. It is the mysterious Persian who guides us in understanding by showing that each of us is **HAUNTED** and that we all have our own masks to wear. As the Finale builds, he is joined by the ensemble, once again in robes and masks, to close the final chapter of the *Phantom of the Opera*.