



## Love Is Seeing Clearly in the Dark: The Phantom of the Opera at Eccles Theater

### Description

Salt Lake City, UT—There is something immediately unsettling about how *The Phantom of the Opera* begins. Not with grandeur, but with decay. **Andrew Lloyd Webber's** musical adaptation—with book by **Richard Stilgoe** and Andrew Lloyd Webber, based on the novel *The Phantom of the Opera* by **Gaston Leroux**—opens in the future: a dusty, forgotten opera house draped in sheets, like something out of an archaeological dig. Even the chandelier, the production's most iconic symbol, hangs covered and lifeless. The choice is deliberate. Before spectacle, we are given absence; before beauty, we are given ruin.

And then—slowly—everything comes back to life.

When the chandelier is revealed as lot 666 at auction, the production signals what is to come: something ominous, something dangerous. The transformation that follows is nothing short of breathtaking. Sparks fly, lights flash like lightning, the chandelier rises, and the entire theater seems to shift backward in time. Curtains fall, color floods the stage, and the world of the opera is reborn. Even a brief technical pause during this sequence did little to disrupt the experience—if anything, it revealed just how invested the audience already was, erupting into excited chatter before eagerly applauding the show's return.

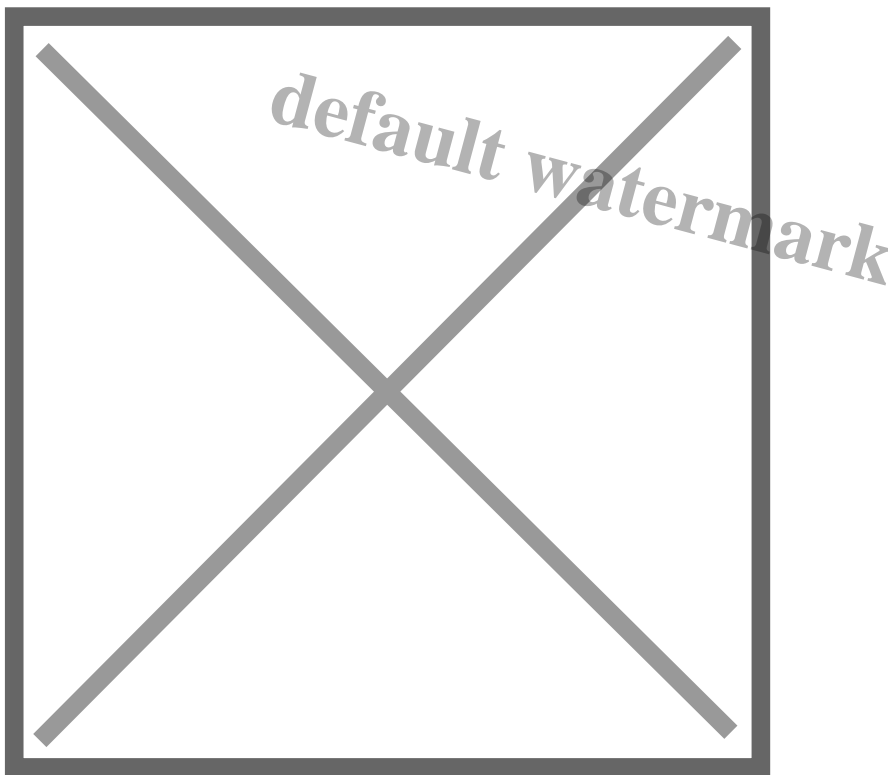
This is theatrical scale at its highest level—and at its most precise. And importantly, it helps explain something about audience expectation. While I am just as moved by intimate, minimalist theatre, productions like *Phantom* reveal why some audiences crave scale. Once you experience this level of visual and technical mastery—the choreography of set pieces, lighting, sound, and human labor working in perfect coordination—it becomes clear: this is what those ticket prices are paying for. And here, it feels worth it.

A male performer in a mask embraces a female performer in a white dress, set against a backdrop of  
(L to R) Isaiah Bailey as The Phantom and Jordan Lee Gilbert as Christine Daaë in *The Phantom of the Opera* North American Tour.

### Context

But this kind of theatrical scale is not new. First premiering in London's West End in 1986, *The Phantom of the Opera*—based on the novel by Leroux—became the longest-running show in Broadway history, running for over 35 years before closing on April 16, 2023, after nearly 14,000 performances. Its closure marked the end of an era—one defined by the rise of the mega-musical, where spectacle, scale, and technical innovation reshaped what audiences came to expect from Broadway. Notably, however, *Phantom* continues to run in London's West End, maintaining its presence as a global theatrical institution even after its Broadway closing.

And yet, *Phantom* has not disappeared. Instead, it has entered a new phase of life through its revitalized North American tour, launched in 2025, bringing this iconic production back into theaters across the country. For many audiences, this tour is not simply a continuation, but a reintroduction—an opportunity to experience the scale, atmosphere, and legacy of *Phantom* in a way that still feels immediate, immersive, and undeniably powerful.



1929 Lon Chaney in *The Phantom of the Opera*

While *The Phantom of the Opera* has become synonymous with Webber's musical, the story has been adapted across stage and screen for more than a century. It originates in *The Phantom of the Opera* (1910) and was popularized early through film, most notably the silent classic starring **Lon Chaney**, as well as later adaptations such as the 1943 version and the 2004 film musical. Onstage, alternative interpretations include **Ken Hill's** earlier musical adaptation, which leans more heavily into the novel's gothic tone, along with various international and experimental productions that reinterpret the story. That layered history is part of what makes this production so effective—it honors the spectacle audiences expect while still engaging the story's darker, more unsettling core.

## Performance Highlights

That legacy lives or dies in performance—and here, it is fully realized.

**Isaiah Bailey** emerges as the clear standout of the production in the role of the Phantom, delivering a performance that is both vocally commanding and emotionally layered. His Phantom is not played as purely monstrous, but as deeply fractured—oscillating between control and vulnerability. What stands out most is how he uses stillness and voice together; even when unseen, his presence is felt. Paired with the immersive sound design, Bailey's performance extends beyond the stage, creating the sense that the Phantom is not confined to a single space, but exists throughout the theater itself.

**Jordan Lee Gilbert's** Christine Daa© brings technical precision and sincerity to the role. Her performance grows with the production, becoming especially compelling in the more intimate and emotionally charged scenes—most notably in her solo at her father's grave, where her voice opens into something fuller and more expressive, and in "Past the Point of No Return," where she balances vulnerability with intensity. In her interactions with both the Phantom and Raoul, her emotional responsiveness grounds the production.

As Raoul, **Daniel Lopez** offers one of the evening's most surprising performances. Often an underdeveloped role, Lopez brings warmth and steadiness, creating a genuine contrast to the Phantom's instability. In the rooftop scene, his presence anchors Christine, embodying a version of love that feels safe, clear, and emotionally accessible. His performance helps clarify one of the production's central tensions: the difference between love that controls and love that supports.

A theatrical performance featuring seven actors dressed in period costumes, standing together on stage—Prima Donna—from The Phantom of the Opera North American Tour. (L to R) Melo Ludwig, Christopher Bozeka, William Thomas Evans, Midori Marsh, Daniel Lopez, Carrington Vilmont, Lisa Vroman. Photo: Matthew Murphy and Evan Zimmerman

A standout among the supporting cast is **Midori Marsh** as Carlotta, whose performance is both technically impressive and, unlike the film's exaggerated portrayal, marked by a rich, resonant tone. Where the role can sometimes lean into caricature, Marsh delivers strong, confident vocals that elevate the character beyond comic relief. In this portrayal, it becomes clear why Carlotta is the prima donna—her vocal authority and stage presence command attention.

**William Thomas Evans** and **Carrington Vilmont**, as Monsieur Firmin and Monsieur Andr©, bring a welcome sense of humor to the opera house, their contrasting energies adding texture to the production's managerial chaos. **Lisa Vroman's** Madame Giry is quietly compelling, her composed exterior hinting at a deeper complicity in the theater's unraveling. **Christopher Bozeka** gives Ubaldo Piangi both vocal presence and an engaging sense of character, while **Melo Ludwig's** Meg Giry adds emotional nuance that enriches the world around her.

The ensemble as a whole deserves recognition, particularly in numbers like "Prima Donna" and "Masquerade," where layered vocals and distinct characterizations create a rich, textured soundscape. These moments showcase not only individual talent, but the production's ability to balance multiple voices—both musically and theatrically—without losing clarity or cohesion.

A female performer in an elaborate red and green costume sings on stage, while a group of dancers  
Jordan Lee Gilbert as Christine Daa© in The Phantom of the Opera North American Tour.  
Photo: Matthew Murphy and Evan Zimmerman

## Creative Design

While the performances ground the production, the design pulls us fully into the Phantom's world. One of the most impressive elements of this production is its sound design by **Mick Potter**. The Phantom's voice does not remain onstage—it travels around us and surrounds us. At times, it feels as though he is directly beside you, then suddenly across the theater, then somewhere above. The result is something rare—the theater itself begins to feel haunted. You are not just watching the Phantom; you are inside his world. It is a world that echoes his command: "Close your eyes and surrender to your darkest dreams," a line that feels less metaphorical than directive—an instruction the production itself enacts through sound.

A vibrant theatrical performance featuring a large ensemble of actors in colorful costumes, singing and dancing from *The Phantom of the Opera* North American Tour. Photo: Matthew Murphy and Evan Zimmerman

That immersive quality reflects the larger vision of **Cameron Mackintosh's** revitalized production, directed by **Seth Sklar-Heyn** and based on the celebrated original direction by **Harold Prince**. This is not a simple replication of the original, but a carefully updated and re-energized staging that sharpens its scale, precision, and emotional impact. Featuring **Maria Björnson's** iconic designs, with video design by **George Reeve** and musical staging and choreography by **Gillian Lynne** (recreated by **Chrissie Cartwright**), the production restores and elevates the theatrical language that has defined *Phantom* for decades, allowing scale and atmosphere to function as storytelling tools rather than mere embellishment.

This design language reaches its peak in the lair sequence. The mirror opens. The staircase unfolds endlessly across the stage. Fog fills the space as a boat glides forward, surrounded by candles that seem to appear from nowhere. The palette shifts to stark black and white, and the energy becomes unmistakably sensual. It is a moment where design, movement, and sound fully converge—seductive, overwhelming, and, at times, slightly unsettling.

It's easy to get swept up in the seduction of "The Music of the Night" until the illusion breaks, revealing that real love cannot be rooted in coercion. [Even in its earlier iteration—once titled "Married Man"—the song makes this dynamic more explicit.](#) The title itself gestures toward a relationship already claimed, positioning the Phantom as someone who imagines Christine as already his, before she has been given any real choice. Stripped of some of its polish, the language reads less as romance and more as possession, exposing what the final version so carefully disguises. What feels intoxicating is, at its core, about control.

Lighting by **Andrew Bridge**, supported by **George Reeve's** atmospheric projections, further shapes this world, guiding the audience through shifts in tone—from the warmth of the opera house to the cold, shadowed isolation of the Phantom's domain. The result is a production that does not simply present scale, but constructs an environment—one that is immersive, controlled, and undeniably haunting.

## Orchestra & Musical Direction

That same sense of scale extends into the music itself. The scale of Webber's score is matched by an orchestra that delivers with precision and depth. Under the direction of **Isaac Hayward**, the music never feels secondary to the production's visual scale—it drives it. With musical supervision by **Kristen Blodgett** and orchestrations by Webber and **David Cullen**, the score retains its full richness and complexity, even within the demands of a touring production.

After the performance, I had the opportunity to speak briefly with Hayward, and one detail in particular speaks to the level of mastery behind this production: he conducts the show without a score. Having led the production so many times, his command of the music is internalized to the point that he no longer relies on the page. That confidence translates directly into the performance, where timing, dynamics, and transitions feel seamless—even within a production of this scale.

Hayward also noted that while audiences might expect the iconic organ sound to be produced traditionally, much of the musical texture is created through keyboards, supported by a combination of touring musicians and local performers. Rather than diminishing the experience, this blend highlights the adaptability and professionalism required to sustain a production of this magnitude across multiple venues. The result is a sound that is both expansive and controlled—capable of filling the theater with overwhelming force in moments like "Masquerade," while still allowing for intimacy in quieter scenes. It is a reminder that behind the scale of the production lies an extraordinary level of musicianship. That same level of control extends beyond precision into storytelling: the way the production shapes and directs sound—how the Phantom's voice moves around the theater and surrounds the audience—works the same way the Phantom controls Christine in the story.

A woman in a dark Victorian dress stands center stage, addressing a group of young dancers in which Lisa Vroman as Madame Giry and the Corps de Ballet in *The Phantom of the Opera* North American Tour. Photo: Matthew Murphy and Evan Zimmerman

## Themes & Analysis

This pattern becomes even clearer in the Phantom's language. [Close your eyes, for your eyes will only tell the truth, he insists](#)—an invitation that feels exciting and immersive, but also unsettling and manipulative, drawing Christine into a world where his perception overrides her own. Love is too often confused with blind devotion or total submission to a partner. But real love does not demand that—it recognizes and respects a person's autonomy.

At its core, *Phantom* is not just about spectacle or romance—it is about love, and the ways it can be distorted. This becomes especially clear in the rooftop scene. After witnessing violence, Christine escapes into a moment of calm with Raoul. The shift is immediate. Where the Phantom's world is shadowed and disorienting, Raoul's is open, warm, and grounded. "Say you'll share with me one love, one lifetime," Raoul sings, grounding the moment in something steady and mutual—a stark contrast to the Phantom's seductive love, which operates through manipulation. In contrast, Raoul's love—grounded in clarity and mutuality—allows Christine to return to herself.

A dramatic stage scene featuring a performer in a black cape atop a rearing horse with large wings, Isaiah Bailey as The Phantom in *The Phantom of the Opera* North American Tour. Photo: Matthew Murphy and Evan Zimmerman

And yet, even here, the Phantom is present—revealed watching from above, riding the statue horse like a looming specter. He cannot take that moment away, but he refuses to disappear from it.

That tension carries into the production's largest ensemble moment, "Masquerade." With the full cast filling a grand staircase, the number is overwhelming in scale and precision. It is celebration, excess, and control all at once. And in the midst of it, the Phantom appears—bold, exposed, and triumphant—only to vanish just as suddenly, reminding us again that he exists both inside and outside the performance.

Throughout the production, that duality remains constant: beauty and horror, love and manipulation.

By the time we reach the final act, those tensions collapse into a single, devastating question. Christine is forced to choose—not just between two men, but between two understandings of love. When the Phantom echoes "All I ask of you," the song takes on an entirely different meaning—no longer a promise, but a desperate attempt to claim a love he cannot sustain. One rooted in control and fear. The other—in trust and care. And it is not power that resolves the story. It is compassion.

A dramatic scene from a theatrical performance featuring a man in a white shirt and a woman in a white dress (L to R) Daniel Lopez as Raoul, Vicomte de Chagny and Jordan Lee Gilbert as Christine Daaë  
in The Phantom of the Opera North American Tour Photo: Matthew Murphy and Evan Zimmerman

In the end, Christine's choice is shaped not by fear, but by empathy. She begins to see the Phantom not simply as a monster, but as someone deeply alone—someone shaped by rejection and longing. And in that moment, something shifts. The Phantom, who has controlled everything—music, space, people—begins to lose that control in the face of something he does not fully understand: love, offered freely.

It is a world that echoes his command to close your eyes and surrender. In contrast, seeing clearly—refusing illusion, recognizing both harm and humanity—becomes the only path forward. To see clearly is to resist that command. That is both the haunting and the promise of *The Phantom of the Opera*: that violence will always exist, injustice will remain, and darkness will surround us—and yet, compassion still holds the power to transform us through love.

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## Show Information

### **The Phantom of the Opera (North American Tour)**

**Location:** Eccles Theater

**Dates:** Through April 26, 2026

**Music:** Andrew Lloyd Webber

**Lyrics:** Charles Hart

**Additional Lyrics:** Richard Stilgoe

**Book:** Richard Stilgoe and Andrew Lloyd Webber

**Based on the novel by:** Gaston Leroux

**Directed by:** Seth Sklar-Heyn (based on the original direction by Harold Prince)  
**Musical Staging & Choreography:** Gillian Lynne (recreated by Chrissie Cartwright)

**Production Design:** Maria Björnson  
**Lighting Design:** Andrew Bridge  
**Sound Design:** Mick Potter

**Producer:** Cameron Mackintosh

**Principal Cast:**

- Isaiah Bailey as The Phantom
- Jordan Lee Gilbert as Christine Daaë
- Daniel Lopez as Raoul
- Midori Marsh as Carlotta

**Ticket Information**

Tickets for *The Phantom of the Opera* at Eccles Theater are available through the official Broadway at the Eccles box office.

**Run:** April 8-26, 2026

**Location:** Eccles Theater

**Address:** 131 Main St, Salt Lake City, UT

**Tickets:** \$133-\$344

**Performance Times:**

- Tue-Thu at 7:00 PM
- Fri at 7:30 PM
- Sat at 1:00 PM & 7:30 PM
- Sun at 1:00 PM & 6:30 PM
- **Purchase:** Online at [Broadway-at-the-Eccles.com](http://Broadway-at-the-Eccles.com) or by phone at (801) 355-ARTS

Advance purchase is strongly recommended, as performances of *Phantom* continue to draw large audiences on tour.

[Tickets](#)

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**Date**

2026/04/14

**Date Created**

2026/04/11

**Author**

keola06

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