

## 'Phantastic' return of 'Phantom' rocks Singapore

If I were to write a book titled *101 must-do things before you die*, I'd definitely include *The Phantom of the Opera*. Those who have seen it would know what I'm talking about.

Kathy Petite  
Contributor/Singapore

With its outstanding cast, goosebump-causing music, brilliant set and mega-lavish costumes, this long-running Broadway musical has

hypnotized millions around the world over the last 21 years.

Once again, it has arrived in Singapore after a 12-year absence, blowing away the audience from head to toe, bringing the man in the mask back to his faithful fans.

Carrying my beating heart filled with anticipation and thrill, I entered the sophisticated Singapore Esplanade Theater. The venue has hosted famous Broadway musicals such as *Mamma Mia*, *The Sound of Music*, *West Side Story* and many more.

Actually to be there to see Andrew Lloyd Webber's masterpiece, I had to pinch myself. Based on Gaston Leroux's novel of the same

name, *The Phantom of the Opera* is a heart-shattering story of love, revenge and devotion.

It tells the story of a mysterious phantom who lives far beneath the Paris Opera House and falls in love with a young beautiful singer, Christine; he devotes his time and energy to breeding a new opera star.

Conflict gets intense with the presence of Raoul, Christine's other love interest. The Phantom continues with his ambition toward Christine and, simultaneously, brings terror to residents of the Opera House.

The entire cast deserves a big hand. Brad Little and Rebecca Pitcher deliver an impeccably sweeping perfor-

mance as Phantom and Christine, injecting the theater with overwhelming emotion as they show amazing consistency in energy and undying chemistry.

Pitcher steals the heart of the audience from the first time she treats us to her rich, enthralling vocals in *Think of Me*.

Or when she sings her heart out with Raoul on the opera house's rooftop in *All I Ask of You*, one of the musical's phenomenal hits.

Having taken the role of the Phantom in more than 2,000 performances around the world, Brad Little is a highly praised actor with a powerful stage presence and a voice that will take your breath away.

He has the remarkable ability to breathe the Phantom's soul into every scene in which he appears. Whether he is physically there or only in the form of vocals that reached every corner of Esplanade, he creates such a deep intensity that it sweeps you off your feet.

It was not easy, either, to forget the equally ravishing Carlotta, played by Pauline du Plessis. Especially when she radiated charm in the amusing *Prima Donna* scene.

Speaking of the scenes, one of the most memorable was the mind-blowing moment when the Phantom abducts Christine to where he lives far beneath the opera house.

I mean, who would not be mesmerized by those candles that emerge from the surface, layered with luminous, gleaming, bluish lighting adorned with a smoke effect that create a mysterious aura as the boat he rows glides along that "underground canal" so smoothly?

Or how the chandelier could swing dramatically before it finally lands on the stage with its dying blink?



*Prima Donna* is one of scenes in *The Phantom of the Opera* in which the audience is fascinated by Pauline du Plessis' performance as Carlotta.

Wasn't it such an amusing little twist as well, remembering how the Phantom suddenly shows himself in spots you never thought before? Hats off to the creative team.

The audience will never forget how the Phantom unexpectedly appears to sing an emotionally charged reprise of *All I Ask of You* to Christine.

The impressive production design reminds me of the chandelier, which is obviously the most talk-about "icon" from *Phantom of the Opera* apart from his famous mask.

What next? I would say the gorgeous-looking costumes with rich countless details that shine so glamorously. The spellbinding wardrobe designs are most apparent in the "Masquerade" scene.

Call me a sentimental soul, but it sent shivers down my spine when the Phantom

sobbed on the floor while expressing his love. Christine's white bridal veil clutched tightly in his hand.

As a legendary Broadway musical show, *The Phantom* has won various accolades including 1998 Tony Awards for Best Musical, Leading Actor/Actress, Director, Set Design, Costume and Lighting.

With a cast of 135, including crew and orchestra from various parts of the world, this Singapore season of *The Phantom* is produced by Lunchbox Theatrical Productions and David Atkins Enterprises collaborating with The Really Useful Company Singapore.

The producers have brought a series of awesome musicals to Singapore over recent years including *Cats*, *Miss Saigon* and *Chicago*, to name a few.

Assistant director Rainer Fried, musical supervisor Guy

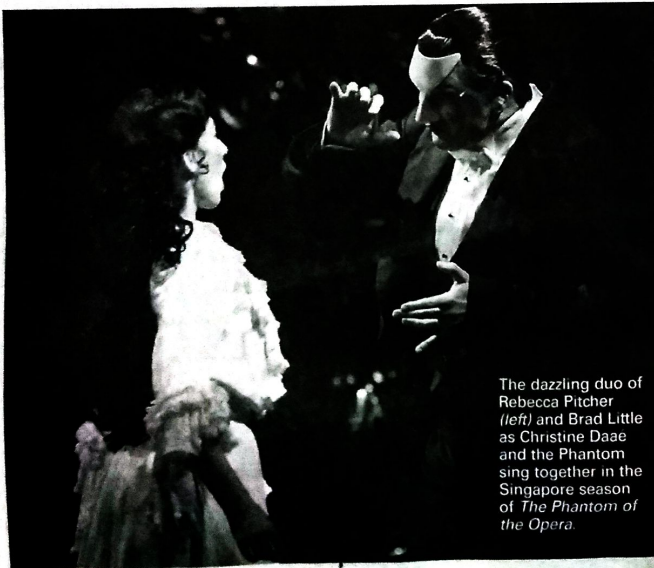
Noble and associate choreographer Patricia Merrin are some of the key team members who are internationally renowned in the arts and entertainment industry.

Tickets are being snapped up faster than expected, say the management.

Don't want to miss the thrilling experience? Lucky you. Due to the overwhelming public response, the show's run has been extended through May 13.

It's time to see one of the world's greatest theatrical performances for yourself. Otherwise, you haven't lived.

The Phantom of the Opera is showing at Esplanade Theater through May 13. Tickets are available through [www.sistic.com.sg](http://www.sistic.com.sg) or hotline: (65) 6348 5555 or Smiling Tour & Travel, Jakarta, Smiling Tour Building, Jl. Mayapahit 28, Jakarta 10160.



The dazzling duo of Rebecca Pitcher (left) and Brad Little as Christine Daee and the Phantom sing together in the Singapore season of *The Phantom of the Opera*.