



# Phantom sings success

Harold Prince’s production of *The Phantom of the Opera* draws audiences into its dark, yet saccharine lair, reclaiming every last theatre-loving heart

**The Phantom of the Opera**  
Directed by Harold Prince  
Starring John Cudia, Jennifer Hope Wills and Adam Monley  
Runs until 24 September  
Northern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium

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Arts & Entertainment Editor

Like *The Sound of Music* or *Gone With The Wind*, *The Phantom of the Opera* is just one of the many classics we’re obliged to see at some point in our lives—and for good reason. These simple, timeless stories, wrapped in elegant ribbons of love and tribulation, cast endless drifts of personal associations within our minds, and the elaborate productions, which frame the talents of actors and musicians alike, only further enhance our appreciation for the arts.

*The Phantom of the Opera*, though, is different from all other classics—and from all other operas, for that matter. It’s the longest running show in Broadway history; it has featured such voices as Sarah Brightman; and, for some reason, it still manages to attract audiences to the sight of a crashing chandelier and a half-masked man, despite its universally known plot. Whether you’re a veteran of the show, or a first-time *Phantom*-goer, let it be known that this year’s production of *Phantom*—directed by 20-time Tony Award winner Harold Prince—simply adds another glittering link on the flowing chain of exceptional performances.

The plot centers on the character of

Christine Daaé (Jennifer Hope Wills, who has recently been replaced with Marni Rabb), and her wish to become a singer. One day, after watching a rehearsal, two new opera house managers, Monsiers André and Firmin (DC Anderson and Bruce Winant), discover Daaé’s talent, and everyone—including the rest of the cast girls present—wonder how she developed her voice.

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Her flair for song remains a mystery until we find out the Opera Phantom (John Cudia) has been the one teaching her. From there, the story illustrates Christine’s successes as an opera singer, and envelops itself in an odd love triangle between the illusive Phantom and long-time friend Raoul (Adam Monley).

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The most beautifully shocking aspect of *The Phantom of the Opera*, though, is the remarkable voices projected from each and every character, especially Christine. Sure, at first, it’s disappointing to know that Sarah Brightman—a former Christine, back in the day—won’t be belting out “Think Of Me” or “The Phantom of the Opera,” but really, Wills could easily replace all of Brightman’s grace. Wills is flawless, as are Cudia and Monley, the two men who act as perfect counterparts to her amazing voice. All of the main characters emit such accomplished senses of passion, confidence and poise that one can barely soak it all up. They just make it look so easy.

With all of the talent, ornamentation and life put into the performance, there’s a reason why *The Phantom of the Opera* has been around so long. The bar had been high-set a long time ago, and with each new performance, that measuring stick just keeps getting higher, allowing the show to dazzle and entice even more when the curtain goes up.



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