

# ENTERTAINMENT

## 'Phantom of the Opera' heads for Hult Center

London group pokes fun at silliness of traditional opera, brings in big buck

By Layne Lakefish  
Emerald Entertainment Editor

The famous story of a disfigured ghost and his love of a chorus girl will hit the Hult Center stage this weekend.

*The Phantom of the Opera*, the original London stage musical, will be performed three times, once on Saturday at 8 p.m. and twice on Sunday at 2 and 7 p.m. Tickets for the show are \$24 and \$29.

The plot goes as follows. Christine Daae is an opera house chorus girl longing to play the lead in *Faust*. A phantom, who has been inhabiting the opera house, falls in love with her and attempts, through notes and finally devious deeds, to land her the lead.

"It's not so much the story of the Phantom himself," said Ken Hill, show director, in an interview with a Los Angeles Times reporter. "Mostly it's the effect the Phantom is having on these respectable, boring people who're trying to run an opera house — and there's a lunatic hiding out in the house."

Don't let the title fool you, however. This is not an opera in the classical sense of the word. This, instead, is musical theatre staged in an opera house.

"It's not really an opera," said Pat Cusick, Hult Center assistant marketing director.

The show features the music from operas by the likes of Mozart, Gounod, Weber, Verdi, Offenbach and Donizetti. Keyboards, percussion, bass, cello, French horn and oboe sounds accompany the vocals.

"This is funnier than traditional opera," Cusick said. "In a way it's a spoof on operas, showing as silliness the puffery that is often found in operas."

"Of course, opera buffs will know all this material," Hill said. "They usually quite enjoy the show."

"You see, we poke a little fun at opera and opera singers — because opera, like any art form, can get rather pompous. So we have a theater manager, a secretary, a fat opera tenor, a diva who throws her weight around, a pretty little ballerina who's always flitting in and out...."

This production opened its tour in the fall of 1989 with turn-of-the-century costumes, special effects, a live orchestra and humorous lyrics. After just eight weeks on the road, the touring company had recouped its entire investment, netting an average \$125,000 a week.

"This is a major top-notch production," Cusick said. "It's getting incredible reviews and people seem to be captivated by the storyline."

As far as local response goes, "The opening night show has filled (sold) very well, and we're hoping the other performances will do real well too," she said.

*The Phantom of the Opera* was performed in Eugene last year, but by a different, less impressive touring group. This year's performance and performing group have more to offer.

"This is the London version," Cusick said. "It is a much more major production of *The Phantom of the Opera*."

"And besides that, it may be the only national or international caliber *The Phantom of the Opera* people are going to get to see."

For ticket information, call the Hult Center box office at 687-5000.



*The Phantom of the Opera* will take the Hult Center stage for three performances this weekend.

Courtesy photo



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