

The Making of the Phantom

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In this project, we will analyse, 'The Phantom of the Opera', a number in the eponymous musical. We will try to analyse musical choices made by the composer and the singers - the instruments used, the tonal quality of the singers, pitch, rhythm and other such musical elements. Through this, we hope to both understand and explain why this piece has kept garnering such worldwide praise and popularity for more than 40 years.

Unlike other musical pieces, Phantom of the Opera was used by two characters as a way to tell their part of the story. The music here is used as a tool to create a convincing atmosphere for the musical, guiding the audience. It is a constant signifier of emotion, as the characters express their feelings through the songs. The score is emotional and scary that ties into the characters' diegetic singing, giving the main characters an identity, specifying situations and places to help connect certain points. For example, Christine sings louder and higher at the end to express her admiration for the Phantom's musical talent; The Phantom regards Christine as an angel but also his own property to some extent. Two different kinds of emotions collide here, forming a strong musical contrast that enhances both the plot and the two characters. The dark, heavy music that plays throughout gives the audience a clear hint of who or what the music is talking about.

Diving into the main song, it is in quadruple meter and essentially is in a moderate pitch, even though it increases in the end. In some parts, there is also a combination of spoken words and singing, which serves two purposes - firstly, it makes the conversation between the two characters seem more natural, and secondly, it emphasises the importance and effect of the

singing parts. Also, throughout most of the song, the orchestra in the background plays in what seems to be mezzo forte, which makes the music apparent, yet not in your face. This choice was probably made by the composer to create an enigmatic atmosphere without distracting the audience from the dialogue between Christine and the Phantom, the protagonists in this piece. Now, to elaborate on the musical tools used, the first most evident yet subtle is the play on vocal timbre by the two characters. Both singers use varying vocal textures, oscillating mostly between a soft, focussed timbre and a strong, loud assertive texture. This oscillation portrays the mental state of the characters as well as their changing situations. In the beginning of the piece, Christine says, 'In sleep he sang to me, in dreams he came. That voice which calls to me and speaks my name. And do I dream again, for now I find, the Phantom of the Opera is there, inside my mind'. Here, Christine is very unsure of her situation, both nervous and excited about what lies ahead. Thus, the singer uses a very soft rounded voice, indicating that she is afraid and confused of who and what the Phantom is. However, in the next line, she says 'And do I dream again?', which sounds as if she is eager to meet him again and learn from him. She uses the same soft vocal timbre for both these lines, but the first line is darker and heavier than the second one, which makes it seem as if in the first line she is intimidated and anxious, but in the second line, she is eager to do something dangerous.

Moreover, through most of the piece, the Phantom sings in fortissimo, while Christine mostly remains on forte. This resembles the dynamics between the two characters - the Phantom is dominating and assertive, while Christine is stepping into uncharted territory, both afraid and keen to see what will happen in the future. Besides this, the Phantom's voice remains focussed, as if it were an edge, throughout the whole song. However, Christine's voice oscillates between focussed and rounded, which again indicates the duality of her thoughts in this situation. The orchestra also plays around here, conveying this progression to the audience subtly, yet clearly.

More specifically, when Christine finally gives her hand to the Phantom, the style of music suddenly shifts - a symphony with a strong rhythm of rock with acoustic instruments is played again. Music with the appearance of pipe organ in chromatic scale is much more powerful and astounding, which is consistent with the desire of possession on Christine by the Phantom through the lyrics "Sing! Sing for me! Sing!", giving a sense of step by step psychological oppression.

Both the characters are very resonant throughout the piece, and it seems as if they're shifting between chest voice and head voice. Talking about the Phantom, he mostly uses his chest voice, which could be for two reasons. Firstly, using chest voice allows him to enunciate properly, which is very important as the Phantom is a character filled with inner turmoil, yet exceedingly clear with his words. Thus it is very important for the actor to enunciate properly. Secondly, using his chest voice allows the actor playing the Phantom to be louder, and to be bright yet heavy, which as mentioned before, is essential to his character. On the other hand, the actor playing Christine shifts between using her head voice and a slight chest voice. Again, this is probably to acquire the voice texture that she wanted to use to portray Christine's character. However, later, she shifts into completely using her head voice, especially towards the end, where she has to keep increasing her pitch. Here, there is very strong use of vibrato and squillo and she is also singing in fortissimo. This combination of voice seems as if Christine has reached the peak of her realisation of what she's gotten herself into, and this realisation is very loud and clear, reaching the mind of each person in the audience. Here, there is also a strong play on vibrato. This is to signify the buildup in the narration. As the narration gets stronger and Christine's situation becomes clearer to her and she is pushed to her limits, the vibrato gets stronger.

This piece also has a very unique composition. It is in a minor scale using mostly minor notes. However, there are several lines which mostly use minor notes, but end on a major note. This makes several parts of the song sound very unusual, showcasing the duality and peculiarity of the situation, especially Christine's mindset. However, with regards to the form, the song is essentially in binary form, (AABB), where this same pattern of melody is repeated throughout the song. This song is also syllabic, which means that there is only one note per syllable. Now this combination of form and syllabic singing makes the main composition quite straightforward. The composer probably chose this because he wanted to keep the audience's attention stuck on the narrative itself, without getting distracted by a complex composition. However, to compensate for this, he adds complexity to the piece using the above mentioned play of a minor scale and major notes, which also adds a certain flavour of dissonance to the piece. In addition, the combination of pipe organ and acoustic rock instruments makes this piece distinguished and very iconic throughout the musical. The pipe organ is used to add a gothic effect, amplifying the theme of darkness, mystery, and fear, thus achieving the composer's main intention of shaking the audience. The pipe organ is extremely fit in the whole environment in the shadowy "palace" beneath the Opera House. The use of pipe organ sound renders a classical, eerie but romantic atmosphere, just like the abnormal love the Phantom has for Christine.

Thus, this musical piece is very unique and has its own character. It successfully portrays the temporary emotion and the characteristics of Christine and the Phantom through musical techniques like vocal timbre, dynamics, form, and use of instruments. The complex play on the composition and singing, using a fusion of both simple and complicated tools has turned it into a critically acclaimed creation. This piece manages to keep the audience's attention hooked to

the narrative, while also using the orchestra as an imperative tool for the progression of the same.