



The Phantom of the Opera

Gaston Leroux (1775 - 1815)

Translated by Alexander Teixeira de Mattos

Read by:	Ralph Snelson	Format:	MP3 CD in DVD case
Length:	8 hours 35 minutes	Catalog:	DB-1080
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Before the music and the elaborate stage production, before Lon Chaney, Sr. frightened movie goers in the Roaring 20's, *The Phantom of the Opera* was a book written by the French author Gaston Leroux in 1909 and 1910. Taking away nothing from the success of the musical or the movie or other less well known adaptations, it is a shame that the book proved so popular for adaptation, because it has been overshadowed by the musical and films. It's a particular shame because the book by Leroux is a beautiful, poignant, suspenseful piece of art with a Gallic tone of love wrapped in danger, wrapped in tragedy, wrapped again in love that has seduced the English speaking world for centuries. Christine is the ingénue, who takes the stage of the Paris Opera and scores a brilliant success. Her former lover

attends the performance, hears the beauty of her voice and falls in love again. The two plan to wed. On a subsequent night, as the prima donna, Carlotta, performs in Faust, the massive chandelier falls into the audience. In the ensuing confusion the Phantom, who until then was but an incorporeal presence, kidnaps Christine and takes her away to his hiding place in dark recesses deep beneath the Opera House. Having made himself known up to that time only through letters and malevolent acts, he becomes flesh and bone for Christine. He shows himself to her, and in time he will remove his mask and show her his face. The story is a love story in the deepest, most mysterious sense of the word. It portrays a love that is and is not dependent on superficial or surface gifts. Rather it portrays the many mansions within a single heart, with its consequent confusion of devotion, jealousy, possessiveness, passion, desire, and heat, mixed in their measure, contradictory and utterly human.

Gaston Louis Alfred Leroux (May 6, 1868 – April 15, 1927) was a French author best known in the English-speaking for his novel *The Phantom of the Opera*. He produced many works of adventure, mystery, horror, romance and fantasy. His contribution to French detective fiction equals that of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in the UK and Edgar Allan Poe in the United States.

He was born in Paris into a well-to-do family in the ship-building business. He was raised in the village of St. Valery-en-Caux on the coast of Normandy and schooled in Caen and then Paris, obtaining a law degree in 1889. His father's death in that same year left him a wealthy man, enabling him to indulge in the good life and pursue a career as a journalist, court reporter and drama critic. He covered trials and executions, interviewed prisoners, and traveled to Asia, Africa, and Russia to cover events, including the Russian Revolution of 1905. After years of experimenting with novels and works for the stage, he turned to fiction full time in 1907, publishing *The Mystery of the Yellow Room* in 1908, the first of seven mysteries featuring reporter Joseph Rouletabille. He published a total of 36 novels over the course of about 20 years, including four in the Cherie-Bibi series. With Athur Bernede he formed the Societe des Cinemoromans to publish novels concurrent with their release as films.

After a short-lived marriage to Marie Lefranc in 1899 he met Jeanne Cayatte in 1902, with whom he had two children and who he married in 1917. He died and was buried at age 59 in Nice.