A General Discussion of Notre Dame de Paris Musical

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I. Introduction

Thousands of audience burst into thunderous cheers in the Assemblée National in Paris on 16 September 1998 because an ever great musical had just borne. _Notre Dame de Paris_, a French-Canadian musical based upon the novel _Notre Dame de Paris_ by the French novelist Victor Hugo, in 1831, was a tragic love doomed by injustice and hypocrisy. Afterwards, they embarked on a travelling show around the world and had even been translated into various languages, making people worldwide crazy for it. When they came to Taiwan, they aroused an ardent passion widespread as well, and opened the new Silk Road for the French musicals to the Asia.

Owing to our teacher’s introduction, we had access to the French modern musical, and deeply fascinated by its magical performance so much that we decided to dig into it. Accordingly, we would like to anatomize it thoroughly in honor of this masterpiece – Notre Dame de Paris.

II. Thesis

A. Original Author

Victor Hugo, born in 1802, was known as a French Romantic literary giant in 19th century. He went through an unrestful and difficult time, when French literary circle encountered the conflict between Classicism and Romanticism. His insistence in Romanticism contributed to the publishing of _Notre Dame de Paris_, a landmark of Hugo’s novels, which depicted people’s real life in France in 15th century.

B. Musical Lyricist

Luc Plamondon is a talented French-Canadian lyricist, who has written for many world-famous singers. He also wrote many musicals and the most renowned work was _Notre Dame de Paris_. His contributions to music and his international success have earned him the title of Most popular and Greatest lyricist of the Francophonie.

C. Composer

Riccardo Cocciante is a French-Italian singer-songwriter and an actor. His oeuvre includes recordings in Italian, French, and Spanish; he has recorded some of
his songs in all three languages. As of 2008, Cocciante has three musicals running, probably *Notre Dame de Paris* being the most known.

D. Director

Gilles Maheu as an actor, a playwright, and a director, was born in Montreal, Quebec in 1948. He founded Carbone 14, an artistic group which went on tour around 26 countries under his leadership and won more than 30 prizes.

III. Summary

This was the story of Quasimodo, the hunchbacked bell-ringer of Notre-Dame, and his tragic love for Esmeralda, the beautiful gypsy woman.

Quasimodo, watching the world from the spires of Notre-Dame, had fallen in love with Esmeralda, who sang and danced in the square in front of the great cathedral. However, Esmeralda loved Phoebus, the handsome captain of the King’s cavalry. Phoebus was engaged to Fleur-de-Lys, a young wealthy lady, but was soon captivated by the exotic gypsy girl.

The priest, Frollo, had a crush on Esmeralda as well, which complicates the situation. It was Frollo that enslaved Quasimodo and keeps him in the cathedral. The priest's intense desires and jealousy had led him to assassinate Phoebus in order to get rid of his rival.

Esmeralda herself was falsely accused of the attempted murder and flung in jail. Frollo took advantage of Esmeralda’s plight and offers her freedom in return for her body. She refused his proposal and consequently, he plotted to take revenge on her.

Quasimodo freed Esmeralda and hided her in his realm, the belfry of Notre-Dame while Clopin, the leader of the refugees, and his people, misunderstood Quasimodo’s intentions and attacked the cathedral to save the gypsy dancer. In the chaos, Phoebus and his soldiers intervened to quell the riot and unfortunately, Clopin was killed.

Thinking that the captain would save Esmeralda, Quasimodo allowed Frollo to hand his love over to Phoebus. However, Phoebus had every intention of seeing Esmeralda hanged. After witnessing his love’s hanged, Quasimodo threw Frollo from
the belfry with rage and rushes to save Esmeralda once again. Regrettably, he was too late. Consumed with grief, the hunchback held Esmeralda in his arms, and lay at her side.

IV. Character Analysis

A. Quasimodo (Acted by Garou)

Quasimodo, with a warm and gentle heart, though, is repelled by people owing to his ugly appearance and the deformity of his body. He is the symbolic of the disadvantaged group in society. However, people decline to give him a hand and look down on him. On seeing the beautiful girl, Esmeralda, he can’t help but fall in love with her. Such is his love to Esmeralda that he tries hard to protect her and even thinks Esmeralda to be his pure goddess. The story tries to tell us that we can’t judge a person by his or her appearance. Like Quasimodo, he never gives up to rescue Esmeralda until the end of the musical. Despite the tragedy that Esmeralda dies at last, people see how selfless Quasimodo’s love, which is definitely opposite to his exterior, for his beloved woman.

B. Esmeralda (Acted by Hélène Ségara)

The woman born with extraordinary beauty is a roaming Gypsy girl. Misapprehended as a femme fatale, she is actually the most innocent person in this story. She used to be such a sweet girl who is sanguine and kindhearted. The biggest mistake she makes is that she falls in love with a player, Phoebus, who has been engaged to another girl. In a party of fools, she makes friend with Quasimodo, the humpbacked campanile striker. However, owing to her dissent to Frollo’s trade which puts an attempt to exchange her freedom with her body, she is involved in a major catastrophe.
C. Phoebus (Acted by Patrick Fiori)

Phoebus, a young, charming captain of King’s cavalry, is in charge of guarding the city’s security. He falls in love with the beautiful gypsy girl, Esmeralda at the first sight, but he has been engaged to Fleur-de-Lys, which makes him in a dilemma. He tells his retinues about his cowardice to face his true mind and his fear of betraying his pledge he has made. However, his pusillanimity prevails the sincerity, which causes his willingness to execute Esmeralda in order to regain Fleur-de-Lys’ trust.

D. Frollo (Acted by Daniel Lavoie)

Frollo, the man who possesses a powerful social status is actually greedy, selfish, and despicable. He has a crush on Esmeralda, an attractive woman whom he attempts to occupy, and tries to fulfill his plan at any price. It is the strong desire that makes his emotion almost out of control even if he knows better that what he does will disobey the doctrine, which he should abide by all the time. However, he can’t resist the yearnings deep inside his heart and thus relinquishes the ownership of his immortal soul into the keeping of Satan, the Master of Evil. What’s worse, he takes advantage of his power so as to attain his vicious goal unscrupulously, which finally leads to the disaster for many people. He doesn’t reach his plan at last; instead, he destroys not only those who are innocent but also himself.

E. Fleur-de-Lys (Acted by Julie Zenatti)

Fleur-de-Lys, born with silver spoon, is Phoebus’ fiancée. Her deep love with Phoebus causes her strong jealousy of Esmeralda. Such is her envy to Esmeralda that she wants to revenge her for being betrayed by Phoebus.
F. Gringoire (Acted by Bruno Pelletier)

As a saying goes, “The outsider sees the most of the game.”, Gringoire acts as a narrator who tells this story in Limited Omniscience, and plays as a bard and Esmeralda’s husband as well. He is the best person to present this drama in an absolutely objective way. He is poor, yet abundant in intelligence. He is homeless, but is free to travel to anywhere he wants to. He can hardly put body and soul together; however, he is rather romantic. In all, he is the only one who doesn’t lose himself in the story.

G. Clopin (Acted by Luck Mervil)

The head of the biggest gypsy refugees in Paris, is a born leader. He is not only brave but also wise. On behalf of the vagrants forsaken by the society, he is sure to detest the world, and tries to put it right. With lowly social status, though, he devotes himself to carrying out universal harmony in this world, which means the gypsy at least should live as most Parisian do.

V. The Major Setting

Notre Dame de Paris is located in the core of Paris; precisely speaking, it sits in Île de la Cité – the most developed region. What’s more, with the characteristics of classical and modern Parisian architecture, Notre Dame de Paris has been gradually become the center of religion, art, and travel. Therefore, the French set the entrance of Notre Dame as the origin, counting other cities’ coordinate in France according to it. That is, if you stand in front of Notre Dame de Paris, you are standing in the heart of France as well. Then, you can well imagine that how important Notre Dame de Paris is to the French.
VI. Major Themes

A. Love

1. The innocent love: Quasimodo to Esmeralda

Because of the water that Esmeralda gives Quasimodo in his hard time, he is deeply in love with the kindhearted girl. In the whole story, he is the only one who wants to protect her out of true heart. All he wants is to look her from the spires.

2. The deceptive love: Phoebus to Esmeralda

After falling in love with Esmeralda, Phoebus decides to conceal his engagement from her. He is obsessed with her fascinating appearance, though, he can’t escape from the constraint of promise which he has made to his fiancée. However, the unreal love is just an illusion.

3. The selfish love: Frollo to Esmeralda

Contrary to Quasimodo, the love of Frollo is more complicated than that of Quasimodo’s. He is fascinated with the beauty of Esmeralda and is determined to
get her by any means. He struggles with the decision between his belief and love while he eventually betrays the God. The love of possession makes him crazy. Since he can’t occupy her, neither can anybody else.

B. Hatred and Revenge

1. Frollo to Esmeralda

Frollo refers to Esmeralda as a lowly Gypsy and confirms that she will give in to his power; however, her refusal irritates him, which results in his revenge. He tells people that Esmeralda, whom is thought to be witch, is guilty and finally leads to the tragedy.

2. Fleur-de-Lys to Esmeralda

As Fleur-de-Lys finds out that her love one has betrayed her and the woman who interferes in Phoebus and her’s engagement is Esmeralda, she is so jealous and angry that she requires that Phoebus execute Esmeralda.

C. Inner Beauty

Quasimodo, who is regarded as the ugliest person in the world, is not as horrible as what he looks like. Instead, he is kind-hearted and considerate, and tries as much as he possibly can to do everything which he values just like his pure love to Esmeralda.

Esmeralda, whose heart is as beautiful as her appearance, is actually innocence and tender. She never intends to get some or win some from others while people misunderstand her as a mean witch. In spite of the tragedy, she is undoubtedly the noblest person in the story.

Contrary to either Quasimodo’s kindness or Esmeralda’s innocent, Frollo, the despicable priest, takes advantage of his power and attempts to gain whatever he wants. He doesn’t care about other’s feelings; consequently, it leads to his misfortune of death.
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Ⅶ. Behind the Screen

A. Music

The composer adds a great deal of pop music, which is totally different from the conventional musicals and emphasizes on the melody that is not seen in classic musicals such as the combination of rock music and pop music. And our generalization of the most representative repertoires are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Repertoire(French/English)</th>
<th>Actors/Actresses</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Le Temps des cathédrales (The age of the cathedrals)</td>
<td>Gringoire</td>
<td>It’s the opening song, which brings us back to the age of the cathedrals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ces diamants-là (So look no more of love)</td>
<td>Phoebus, Fleur-de-Lys</td>
<td>This song is nothing but full of sweetness and affection. It expresses that Phoebus and Fleur-de-Lys deeply falls in love with each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>La Cour des miracles (Court of the miracles)</td>
<td>Clopin</td>
<td>It is the song which describes that the Gypsies have formed a small country. In this song, we can find that they are really content with their lot and has optimistic attitude.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Le Mot Phoebus (The word Phoebus)</td>
<td>Esmeralda, Gringoire</td>
<td>This song is short; however, it reveals the relationships between the roles. The melody is graceful and easy to be remembered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Beau comme le soleil (Shining like the sun)</td>
<td>Esmeralda, Fleur-de-Lys</td>
<td>This song shows the two girls’ mental state. They are both in love with Phoebus, the man whom they intensely love is just as bright as the sun, which lights up their lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Belle (Belle is the only name)</td>
<td>Quasimoto, Frollo, Phoebus</td>
<td>Three different men express their respective feelings to Esmeralda.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Song Title</td>
<td>Performer 1</td>
<td>Performer 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Le Val d'amour</td>
<td>Gringoire,</td>
<td>Phoebus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(At the Le Val d'amour)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>Frollo,</td>
<td>Gringoire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Talk to me Florence)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Les cloches</td>
<td>Quasimoto</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(The Belles)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Lune</td>
<td>Gringoire</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Moon)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**B. Dances**

As to the part of dance, there are all professional dancers and acrobats, who used to be gymnastics players or athletes. In addition, the design of dance gives room for dancers to develop their ideas. When the actors used their voice to express their feelings, the dancers beside them would use body languages to present the complications of the actors’ emotions. They also turned abstract emotions into concrete movement. Take Esmeralda’s first performance of 《Bohémienne》 for example; her passion is interpreted well by the dancing.

**C. Stage Properties**

In addition to the elaborate arrangements, stage properties are used to divide the stage into partitions, which shows the twist and struggles between good and evil. At the same time, they also reach the balance of realism and lyricism. In the
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presentation of 《Les Cloches》，the song of Quasimodo’s love to Esmeralda, three gigantic clocks landed from the ceiling with acrobats inside, responding to Quasimodo’s flushed emotion, which is a really touching performance.

D. After the Debut

Notre Dame de Paris has sold 2 million admission tickets and 7 million Original Soundtracks in only a year, breaking the record built by Les Misérables and becomes the most successful French musical ever. Before long, it starts to make a tour in French speaking country, receiving tremendous comments in September, 1999. And it crosses the Atlantic Ocean to Quebec, Canada, in October, creating an astonishing achievement of selling thirty thousand tickets. The English version has been performed in Las Vegas, U.S. for a half year in January, 2000 and moved to western London in May. It’s supposed to camp out there and initiate another miracle.

E. History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place of Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998 / 01</td>
<td>Cannes, France (The Grand prix du Disque)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998 / 02 / 02</td>
<td>Montreal, Canada (Release Notre Dame De Paris album)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988 / 09 / 16</td>
<td>Paris Congress, France (Official Debut)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999 / 02</td>
<td>Brussels, Belgium (Debut)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999 / 04 / 01</td>
<td>Montreal, Canada (Debut)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999 / 03</td>
<td>Toronto, Canada (Debut)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999 / 09</td>
<td>Belgium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999 / 10 / 4</td>
<td>Montreal, Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999 / 12</td>
<td>Belgium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 / 01</td>
<td>Geneva, Switzerland (Debut)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 / 01 / 21</td>
<td>Las Vegas, America (Debut in English)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 / 02 / 15</td>
<td>Paris Congress, France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 / 05 / 23</td>
<td>Dominton theater, London, England (Debut in English )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001 / 08 / 10</td>
<td>Lebanese (Debut)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001 / 11 / 28</td>
<td>Barcelona, Spain (Debut in Spanish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002 / 01</td>
<td>Shanghai, China (Debut)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002 / 01</td>
<td>Beijing, China (Debut)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002 / 01</td>
<td>Milan, Italy (Debut in Italian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002 / 03</td>
<td>Roman, Italy (Debut in Italian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002 / 05</td>
<td>Moscow, Russia (Debut in Russian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002 / 09</td>
<td>Amsterdam, Holland (Debut in Dutch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003 / 08</td>
<td>Arena, Verona, Italy (Debut in Italian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005 / 02</td>
<td>Seoul, Korea (Debut)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005 / 03</td>
<td>Taipei, Taiwan (Debut)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006 / 11</td>
<td>Singapore (Debut)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**VII. Conclusion**

To sum up, here are several reasons accounting for the success of the musical. In the first place, the combination of pop music is widely accepted by audience and it is also easy to be remembered and sung. Next, the strong cast of the world-famous singers participating in this drama allures people to watch it even though they are not interested with musicals. Last but not the least, each scenes and stunts in the musical is delicately designed.

Therefore, we know that the success of the musical is not accidental. From lyrics, songs, dance to stage effect, there is nothing produced without elaborate preparations. As we are influenced by classic musical so much, Notre Dame de Paris makes us realize the other aspect of musicals. It gives us the enjoyment of the sense of sight, hearing, and even the pleasure of our mind, creating a brand-new experience to the musicals, and the possibilities of its development.

**IX. Reference**

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2. 鐘樓怪人音樂劇 DVD(雙碟版) 齊威國際多媒體發行
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3. Website:

3.1 Notre Dame de Paris 鐘樓怪人 http://web.my8d.net/x29df/Dame.html

3.2 Notre Dame de Paris (English website) http://www.ndp.ru/index.html


3.4 加拿大魁北克金嗓子:

3.4.1 http://tw.myblog.yahoo.com/jw!vzqNtFCRFQdW7nyI7_FK9sr3/article?mid=592&prev=617&next=489&l=f&fid=33

3.4.2 http://tw.myblog.yahoo.com/jw!vzqNtFCRFQdW7nyI7_FK9sr3/article?mid=617&prev=859&next=592&l=f&fid=33

4. Pictures:

4.1 Quasimodo, Phoebus, Frollo, Fleur-de-Lys, Gringoire, Clopin


4.2 Esmeralda

http://mangwengjid.spaces.live.com/blog/cns!721A2F18AABBA6F!813.entry

4.3 Notre Dame de Paris

http://www.flickr.com/photos/mathieufrancoisdubertrand/2765751645/