

SHATTERED

BY LESSER OF 2 WEEVILS – 2022

Episode 11

[Shattered theme music]

NEMO: In the early 1900s, the great and good at the Paris Opera buried an urn full of “living voices”—Gramophone recordings of famous opera stars—to be disinterred after a century. When those urns were opened, mysterious recordings, similar to experiments done by Alexander Graham Bell at the Volta Laboratories in Washington D.C. in 1881, were discovered. Who made them? And why?

[Phonograph recording.]

COUNT PHILIPPE DE CHAGNY: *Qui sème le vent, récolte la tempête.* [As you sow, so shall you reap.]

DUDE C: And what was he recording exactly?

DUDE B: Uh, music, I think.

LAILA: “They are plans drawn up by Erik who became fascinated by cylinder sound recording.”

PHIL: This podcast will investigate the mysterious happenings in turn-of-the-twentieth century Paris at one of its most popular cultural institutions, the Paris Opera, now the Palais Garnier. I’m Phil Donan, and with my colleague—

NEMO: --we’re going to use research, sound recording playback technology, and good old-fashioned detective work to try to find you the answers.

NEMO: Welcome back to *The Shattered Podcast*. What a journey it’s been. After the debacle with the cylinder, Hakim was eager to help. He sent me a link to a newspaper article.

Phone conversation:

HAKIM: *En anglais*, euh, it basically says, “Officials at the Opéra Nationale de Paris-Palais Garnier confirm a theft.”

NEMO: Could you read out the full translation, please?

HAKIM: *Je serais ravi!* [I'd be happy to!] “*Alors*, Claude Lapluie, the Director of the Palais Garnier, has released a statement regarding a recent theft that has taken place. As regards CCTV—uh, CCTV—footage, a source close to the Estates team at the dance auditorium indicated that the theft took place in an area not normally accessible by the public. The nature of the theft has not been specified, but a number of staff members such as cleaners and workers from the building firm Hilti who were repairing damage done to the lowest level of the structure have been reportedly questioned. The Palais Garnier, originally the Paris Opera, was completed in, uh, *attends*—[Hang on] 1875—*oui, c'est ça* [Yes, that's it] and became a venue for dance in, uh, 1989. *Pas mal*. [Not bad] Its original construction included a number of levels above and below the stage. The lowest level, allegedly occupied by a lake once used for ballast, is rumored to be connected by tunnels to the catacombs. Police are investigating.”

NEMO: *Merci beaucoup*, Hakim! [Thanks a lot!]

HAKIM: *Avec plaisir!* [It was my pleasure!]

NEMO: I agreed that this was interesting and quite suspicious. I persuaded my friend Alicja to phone Claude Lapluie, the Director's office. She had worked for the bibliothèque-musée several years ago, which is how she got me the digitization job in the first place. No one would give her a straight answer, but reading between the lines, it seemed as though the theft itself wasn't recent, only the discovery of it was. They won't confirm what exactly is missing. But we've since received listener tip offs regarding one word that keeps swirling around the investigation. But I don't know what it means.

--

PHIL: You don't know what it means?

NEMO: *L'ombre*, the shade. I know what it means—I mean, I can translate the French. I just don't know what the significance is. The way they were talking, it was like a title or a person . . .

PHIL: We had to leave it there for the time being, but in the meantime I've been trying to trace the interview Gaston Leroux made with the Daroghah of Mazandaran, if it does indeed exist. I followed up an e-mail with a listener who had contacted us with what purported to be the notes of Gaston Leroux when he interviewed the Persian—who we think is Hosein'ali Khan.

PODCAST LISTENER 2: Well, it says here, Leroux says, "Very well, sir, but what do you say to the official conclusions that Monsieur le Vicomte Raoul de Chagny was deranged and that his older brother's death was accidental, the ultimate consequence of a quarrel between the two brothers over the singer Christine Daaé?" And the Persian tells Leroux, "I think you have heard from the family friends of the Chagnys who would agree that my version of events is much more probable than such malicious gossip." Now, this interview doesn't say anything about that diagram or the recording horns as such, but it does include this bit, which is quite interesting: the Persian says, "He was always interested in sound, whether it was created for hallucinatory effect or to deceive or to spy on people . . ." Leroux says, "But not to record music?" "No, it seems not. He told me he had read a paper by Abbé Lenoir about how to make a phonograph, and he made one. He was very proud of that object and the versions that followed."

PHIL: While we appreciate this listener going to the trouble of contacting us, it's hard to verify this information. However, this listener also sent us a link to a Reddit forum which was discussing, coincidentally enough, L'Ombre, or The Shade, this mysterious figure apparently being connected with the Palais Garnier theft. It's buried among speculation that Charles Piazzi Smyth's predictions using mathematical formulations based on the Great Pyramid of Giza—namely that the world was going to end in 1881—were not actually wrong. That the world did come close to ending in 1881. Hard to dignify most of this with any credibility whatsoever. But along with the Shade, a figure called the Angel of Music is also referenced. A spirit who visits the pious and talented, not threatening exactly, but neither exactly what it seemed to be . . .

Phone conversation:

NEMO: Phil.

PHIL: What? What is it?

NEMO: Something very strange is happening to me.

PHIL: What do you mean?

NEMO: I told you about the power cut at . . . at Joel's apartment.

PHIL: Yes. Yes.

NEMO: Right before I'd left.

PHIL: Yes, you said you'd had enough, and good riddance to him, the tosser—

NEMO: Just . . . ! Did Alicja tell you--?

PHIL: I got the gist of it.

NEMO: I--Well, after that—I started hearing—I—

PHIL: What's wrong? Are you okay?

NEMO: Just—let me play you something.

[A Berliner-type disc being digitized]

PHIL: Please, no more voyeuristic recordings—it makes me so uncomfortable—

NEMO: Please, just listen.

PHIL: Okay, I'm listening. What am I listening for?

NEMO: Phil, I heard a voice.

PHIL: . . . A voice? In the music?

NEMO: You have to equalize recordings like this. Listen to it untreated.

PHIL: What does that mean?

NEMO: It was Erik's voice.

[A voice repeats *L'ange de la musique* . . .]

End credits:

The Shattered Podcast is hosted by Nemo and Dr Phil Donan, with theme music by Katie Seaton. It is produced by Leslie McMurtry and is a Lesser of 2 Weevils production 2022.
