

# SHATTERED

BY LESSER OF 2 WEEVILS - 2022

## Episode 7

[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.]

**NEMO:** And who wrote the haunting music captured on this piano roll from the early 1900s?

[Excerpt from piano roll.]

**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.

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**NEMO:** Spooky.

**PHIL:** Yeah.

**NEMO:** “Be wary of the shadows that move as your head turns  
And watch out for the music, the music that burns.”

**PHIL:** This was the curse that Simeon Entwhistle—

**NEMO:** --the silent film specialist—

**PHIL:** --shared with us last time, which is supposedly attached to *Das Phantom der Oper*.

**NEMO:** The lost 1916 film, which may or may not be a documentary, but probably a fictional feature film, and is based on an interview that journalist Gaston Leroux made with, it would seem—

**PHIL:** --the Daroghah of Mazandaran. The Persian chief of police, who may be the voice, along with our mysterious Dude A, Erik, on the experimental recordings mentioned in our lovely opening sequence.

**NEMO:** Woooo. Is your head spinning? That—that is a lot to take in.

**PHIL:** Well, prepare yourself. And all you out there listening, prepare yourselves. Since the last episode, we had an e-mail—

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**DUSTIN:** Hello, my name is Dustin Jackson. I've been listening to *The Shattered Podcast* since, I think, the second episode?

**DANI:** The second episode, yeah.

**NEMO:** And you are . . . ?

**DANI:** I'm Dani Jubilee.

**DUSTIN:** That's Dani.

**DANI:** Hi. Hi. Hiiii.

**NEMO:** (laughs) Hi.

**DUSTIN:** I own an antiques shop.

**DANI:** So Good They Named It Twice.

**NEMO:** What is?

**DUSTIN:** That's the name, the name of the antiques shop. Come visit us in Chicago some time. Anyway, what came into my possession was a collection of . . . mainly rare Gramophones with a few phonographs. And three graphophone recordings.

**PHIL:** What are graphophone recordings? Are those like parléphons or phono-uh, phonautograms?

**NEMO:** No, they're much closer to phonographs.

**DANI:** The Volta Graphophone Company was founded in 1886. Graphophones were used mainly for business dictation.

**NEMO:** (excitedly) Dani, are you a historical recording collector?

**DANI:** Oh no, honey, oh bless you! I'm a psychic.

**PHIL:** A psychic?

**DANI:** I'm the one who got Dustin to listen to the podcast. I could feel those recordings of yours calling to me. Calling to the ones Dustin was going to sell, without a second thought!

**DUSTIN:** Now, look. I have read up on this. Graphophones were used for business dictation, yes, and also for court reporting. Wax cylinders are right there in the original *Dracula* by Bram Stoker.

**DANI:** Tell them, tell them about the box—

**DUSTIN:** There's a set of three, in a box. Let me read you the label on that box. "The Daroghah of Mazandaran, 1897." It seems to be an interview. Hey, there's also a note with it!

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**NEMO:** Dustin and Dani are consulting experts on digitizing those three graphophones that Dustin acquired. To his knowledge, they have never been played. Until they decide what to do, they've shared with us the note Dustin mentioned. As it happens, it's in Farsi, in the Persian language, and we're lucky to have a translator from AACL—

**PHIL:** --that's the Academy of Asian Culture and Languages in London—

**NEMO:** To help us out. We'll play you a reading of that in a moment. Along with the note in Farsi, there are what look like architectural drawings of the Palais Garnier—

**PHIL:** (dramatically) Where all this started!

[He laughs.]

**NEMO:** (laughing) Okay. There are architectural drawings of the Palais Garnier, with some notations in French, which are quite hard to read, the handwriting is terrible. Like a child got a crayon and scrawled with it. There are little notes in all these different levels of the stage reading, "recording horn here." Something about hollow bricks and a speaking tube?

**PHIL:** Really strange.

**NEMO:** We haven't quite figured it out yet. We're going to leave you with the translation of that note in Persian script. There's no date and no signature.

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**LAILA:** "These were among my master's effects, which he brought with him from Paris after the tragedy at the Opera, and which I bring with me in my retirement in the United States of America. They escaped the grasp of our unknown pursuer, who forgets that my master was also a policeman. They are plans drawn up by Erik who became fascinated by cylinder sound recording. He wanted to install recording horns secretly in the Paris Opera, in the managers' office, in the scene-shifters' area, in the *foyer de la danse*, but the sound quality was too primitive for his liking. So the ghost abandoned his scheme. My master said he was content, for a time, to contemplate his phonautogram, unique in the world, he said, of the American President Abraham Lincoln. That was, however, before the business with Count Philippe de Chagny that resulted in great tragedy. My master kept these plans because they said they amused him, because he thought Erik would have been appalled at the Gramophone and the bringing of opera into people's homes, rather than having to attend live opera."

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[Shattered outro music.]

**NEMO:** You've been listening to *The Shattered Podcast*. Join us next time when we learn more about these graphophones. Enjoy the mystery.

**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.