

SHATTERED

BY LESSER OF 2 WEEVILS – 2022

Language advisory on this episode – some adult language is used

Episode 8

[Distorted phone conversation.]

ALICJA: You can't stay there. I honestly don't know what possessed you to see him again. And if you say he reminds you of Patrick . . .?!

NEMO: There's broken glass, all over the floor.

ALICJA: You wanted a fresh start in Paris.

NEMO: I can't escape from him. Coming to terms with that made Joel seem not such a bad guy after all.

ALICJA: You're emotionally vulnerable. You should go home . . . or come and stay with me . . .

NEMO: Even the mirror is shattered . . .

ALICJA: Are you listening to me?

NEMO: I have to stay. I have to finish this. I owe it to Phil.

[Breaking glass]

ALICJA: Wait—to *Phil*?

[Feedback and distortion]

[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.]

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

[Parléophon recording, piano and soloist.]

NEMO: Spooky.

PHIL: Yeah.

SIMEON: “*Hésitez sur les ombres, qui, quand vous tournez, bougent,*

Et faites l’attention de la musique qui brûle.” [Watch out for the shadows that move as your head turns,

And be careful of the music, the music that burns.]

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: there are just . . . layers upon layers here.

PHIL: It’s incredible, really. And to think the *bibliothèque-musée* at the Palais Garnier weren’t going to do anything with those original two cylinders . . .

NEMO: This could change the way we perceive the history of sound recording.

PHIL: And music in the nineteenth century. Can we go over that note that Laila read again?

NEMO: Sure.

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."

PHIL: All right. This calls for a debrief.

NEMO: Where do we even begin?

PHIL: Okay—one. Mysterious cylinder recordings where they weren't supposed to be, in the 1912 Paris Opera urns, buried for a century. Connected to Count Philippe de Chagny. Count Philippe made a phonograph recording—

NEMO: --in about 1879—

PHIL: --but it's not him on these cylinder recordings. It's someone called Erik and it's the Daroghah of Mazandaran, a Persian chief of police who liked attending the Paris Opera, at least according to Armand Moncharmin in his memoirs. Right?

NEMO: Right so far.

PHIL: Two. These led us to various recordings associated with a missing opera called *Don Juan Triumphant*, supposedly by someone called M. Giry but most likely by this person Erik. One of these recordings is, we infer, by a Swedish soprano called Christine Daaé who married Count Philippe's younger brother Raoul.

NEMO: Don't forget that Count Philippe was an *abonné* at the Opera and disappeared mysteriously.

PHIL: Three. According to Simeon Entwhistle, the Daroghah of Mazandaran was interviewed by a French journalist, Gaston Leroux, in what became the basis for a lost silent film—

NEMO: --which is supposedly cursed—

PHIL: (sighs) Which is supposedly cursed.

NEMO: Four. We have these graphophone recordings that Dustin and Dani have alerted us to as well as the note in Persian that we just heard.

PHIL: We assume by inference—because this note was collected with a graphophone recording labelled the “Daroghah of Mazandaran”—that the person writing it, he was the servant of the Daroghah of Mazandaran.

NEMO: Speculative but plausible, because the writer of the note says his master is an ex-policeman. Also the note was in Persian.

PHIL: It mentions Erik by name.

NEMO: It says that he drew up the accompanying architectural drawings of the Palais Garnier, the Paris Opera, and that he had been planning to install sound recording horns—pre-microphones—in strategic positions in the opera.

PHIL: What for, exactly?

NEMO: It’s not really clear. Erik, we guess from previous pieces of evidence, was a composer and a musician.

PHIL: The note called him a ghost.

NEMO: Yes, I thought that was some kind of joke.

PHIL: Like I said earlier, there was some kind of tragedy with Count Philippe de Chagny . . .

NEMO: . . . Phil, are you satisfied this note and the architectural drawings are genuine?

PHIL: Well, there’s no way of knowing that for sure. Dustin has provided us with a scan, but I can’t authenticate them. And this handwriting that diagrams these horns. It’s very odd. Like the handwriting of a child. Anyway, I’m not in that line of work . . .

NEMO: Because the note said something really extraordinary.

PHIL: (amused, sarcastic) Oh really? Just one extraordinary thing?

NEMO: No, I mean *really*. It mentioned the phonautogram of Abraham Lincoln. That is like the Holy Grail of historical sound recording. If you remember, Léon Scott recorded phonautograms in the 1850s, but no one ever expected to be able to play them. Until recently. And there’s always been a rumor that Léon Scott went to the United States and made this recording, but it’s never been substantiated . . .

PHIL: Well, I thought . . .

NEMO: What?

PHIL: Don't get angry, now. I thought *that* might have been a joke.

NEMO: Oh.

PHIL: What about the "unknown pursuer" chasing after the Persian and his servant?

COMPUTER VOICE: Someone is trying to dial into your call. Someone is trying to dial into your call.

NEMO: Who's that?

PHIL: It's Laila.

NEMO: Laila?

PHIL: The Masters student who translated the Persian for us.

LAILA: Hello?

PHIL: Hi, Laila.

LAILA: Hi, is that Phil?

PHIL: Yes. All right there?

LAILA: I'm very well, thanks.

NEMO: (coldly) We were just in the middle of recording an episode.

LAILA: Oh, sorry to interrupt—

PHIL: No, no, don't—you didn't—

LAILA: Hi, I'm Laila Lim.

NEMO: Yes, I know.

LAILA: Professor Shahzad is supervising my Masters at AACL. That note was quite fascinating, wasn't it? Anyway, I just wanted to let you know that I had had a thought about the name Giry.

[A distorted phone conversation.]

NEMO: I have nowhere else to go. Do you understand that?

PHIL: What about your parents? Can't they send you money to get you back to Toronto?

[Long pause]

PHIL: Hello? Are you still there?

NEMO: What you don't understand—and what Alicja doesn't understand—is that Joel and I *know* each other.

PHIL: But he's the one who came up with that ridiculous nickname. Nemo!

NEMO: It was affectionate. It was what he called my brother.

PHIL: Oh grow up. Haven't you got any pride?

NEMO: Of course I do. That's why I can't go back to Toronto until I finish this!

PHIL: And that's supposed to be pride, is it?

NEMO: What do you mean?

PHIL: You were really horrible to Laila.

NEMO: I wasn't horrible.

PHIL: You were, you were rude.

NEMO: Who invited her on this podcast anyway?

PHIL: *I* did! Or don't I get a say? She *helped* us out. And she's genuinely interested in the mystery.

NEMO: She's genuinely interested in *you!*

PHIL: Oh, that's very mature.

NEMO: My thoughts exactly. She's half your age.

PHIL: Excuse me?!

[Reverbed and warped sound of shattering.]

[Dialling phone]

COMPUTER VOICE: Please leave your message after the tone. To re-record your message, key hash at any time.

[Beep]

[An answerphone message.]

PHIL: I just wanted to say . . . if things get really bad . . . I know somewhere you can stay. Hello? Are you there?

HEIDI SCHLESSINGER: Hello there. I'm trying to reach *The Shattered Podcast*. My name is Heidi Schlessinger. I'm a graphologist, someone who studies handwriting. Um, handwriting is like DNA; no one has the same handwriting as anyone else, and it can tell you a lot about someone's personality and character. Um, having had a look at the notations from the Opera diagram, I think this handwriting sample has a lot to say about the person who wrote it. This Erik—look at it this way. As children, we were taught a certain way to write. We're given letter forms to copy from, and even more so in the nineteenth century, when this writing is allegedly from. We are taught a certain way to write, and then we deviate from this in various ways as we get older, and what we do and why, is the subject of graphology. This Erik's style of writing, it's very arrested, it's crabbed and childlike. This suggests a person with a great deal of emotional baggage—someone who's volatile—perhaps whose hand is not keeping pace with the speed of his thoughts. He's not that interested in others understanding what he's trying to say. He's more interested in getting ideas down on the page. And perhaps he might have very low self-esteem. If you have any other samples of this handwriting, I can be hired to analyse it at very reasonable rates . . .

[Beep of message cutting off.]

NEMO: Yes, yes, we're here. Believe it or not, we've had technical difficulties.

PHIL: The Internet's been playing up. And the electricity, apparently.

NEMO: And my editing software seems to have developed a bug. It started out where the two channels, right and left, were a split second off, which is very distracting to playback, actually . . .

PHIL: But you think you've fixed it.

NEMO: I think I've fixed it.

PHIL: That's good, because we're being joined by three guests today.

DUSTIN: Hey there, everyone, it's Dustin –

DANI: And Dani!

DUSTIN: I own the So Good They Named It Twice antiques shop in Chicago . . .

DANI: Find us on Instagram!

LAILA: Hi, I'm Laila Lim, I'm a student at AACL specialising in Persian and Arabic languages.

NEMO: So, Dustin, do you want to take up the story?

DUSTIN: Due to, I guess, the publicity from the last episode and Dani's . . . connections, Our Sounds got in touch with us, and using the technology that digitized the Léon Scott recording, they were able to digitize the graphophones I acquired.

LAILA: Wow.

NEMO: And just to remind those who might be listening, this recording is . . . ?

DUSTIN: Well, it was labelled "Daroghah of Mazandaran, 1897" and was part of a collection with that note in Farsi.

PHIL: The note that Laila read for us translating . . .

LAILA: Yeah, from Persian. And the Daroghah of Mazandaran was a police chief from that province in present-day Iran.

NEMO: And we speculate that he might be the Persian mentioned by Armand Moncharmin in his *Memoirs of a Manager*.

AUDIOBOOK READER: A man known as the Persian in fashionable circles.

NEMO: Have you heard this recording yet, Dustin?

DUSTIN: Yes, I have. Our Sounds shared it with me. But my understanding is that Dani and I, we're the first people to have heard this recording probably since it was made—

PHIL: Some time after 1897—

DUSTIN: Because—like all pre-Gramophone technology—graphophones degrade after playback. Rapidly degrade.

DANI: And this cylinder was in pretty good condition. I told you I had a feeling about it!

PHIL: Meaning it hadn't been played back very much?

NEMO: But the really wonderful thing is that now that it's digitized, we can scrutinize that recording as much as we want without there being a danger to the cylinder

DUSTIN: It's important to me, of course, for the piece to remain undamaged.

NEMO: Even so, those of you listening, you're going to find the quality is pretty poor, so we're including a transcript of the graphophone, along with the text of the note, on the website—

DANI: Oh c'mon! Let's hear this thing!

[Graphophone recording.]

DARIUS: Take a seat, sir, if you will.

DUDE B: (much aged) Thank you, Darius, that will be all.

DUDE C: I see you keep your servant from the old days. For the benefit of the transcriptionist, here interviewed is Ebrahim Amir Hosein'ali Khan. Can you confirm that is your name?

DUDE B: Yes.

DUDE C: And you were the former Daroghah of Mazandaran in Persia.

DUDE B: Yes, that is so.

DUDE C: Please speak loudly into the horn for transcription purposes.

DUDE B: I know how this works. Erik had one of these recording contraptions.

DUDE C: Is that so?

DUDE B: Yes—although it was rather more primitive.

DUDE C: And what was he recording, exactly? Or didn't he tell you?

DUDE B: Uh, music, I think.

DUDE C: It was a phonograph?

DUDE B: Oh, I suspect so.

DUDE C: He recorded his own compositions?

DUDE B: Without a doubt. For curiosity's sake.

DUDE C: From the house on the lake?

DUDE B: Yes.

DUDE C: *Don Juan Triumphant?*

DUDE B: You thought it had all been destroyed, didn't you?

DUDE C: I thought you condemned Erik, as a murderer, as a kidnapper, as a man of many crimes.

The police did not believe you when you told them that you suspected how the Comte de Chagny had died. I have read the official statement that you gave to Commissaire Mifroid. Here is a rare case of a man being as ugly on the outside as his twisted soul was on the inside.

DUDE B: His soul was in his music, and that was beautiful.

DUDE C: How did he smuggle his music out?

DUDE B: I don't understand you.

DUDE C: I have received copies of notes, sheet music. I recognize the music that burns, the music of the Opera Ghost! Yet it is credited to an M. Giry. Surely not—

[Graphophone ends.]

DUSTIN: Are we allowed to swear on this? Because, shiiiiit.

LAILA: That sounded almost like an interrogation. A police interview.

PHIL: Nemo?

NEMO: Yes?

PHIL: I have to agree, it sounded like a police interview.

DUSTIN: (laughs) For the benefit of the listeners, you might want to recap.

PHIL: We don't know who that was doing the interview or why, but it seems very very likely that the voice of that man being interviewed—

NEMO: --the Daroghah of Mazandaran—

LAILA: Ebrahim Amir Hosein'ali Khan—

PHIL: Was the Daroghah from our first recording, the cylinders buried beneath the Palais Garnier in 1912—

NEMO: The recordings like the ones being made in the Volta Lab in Washington, DC in 1881.

PHIL: And it seems to unequivocally name the composer of *Don Juan Triumphant*, the elusive opera, where the music of our piano roll comes from. Erik. The Opera Ghost, they called him . . . ?

LAILA: Who also apparently murdered . . . ?

PHIL: Count Philippe!

NEMO: Count Philippe de Chagny—

PHIL: --a French aristocrat whose voice is captured on an early phonograph recording and whose signed receipt was found with the Volta cylinders buried beneath the Palais Garnier in 1912!

[DANI is making noises of distress.]

NEMO: We knew, Phil, that in the historical record that Count Philippe had disappeared, but murdered--?

DUSTIN: Dani! Hey, Dani? What's wrong?

DANI: Not good vibes, honey! Someone's coming!

PHIL: (slowed down and distorted) But about how and why Erik, apparently, killed Count Philippe—

COMPUTER VOICE: Your battery is low. Please plug in your computer.

NEMO: Hey—hey, wait a second. What happened to the power? Hello? Hello? Joel—do you have any candles? What's going on?

[The sound of **NEMO** breathing]

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.