

SHATTERED

BY LESSER OF 2 WEEVILS – 2022

Episode 9

[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?

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

[Parl ophon recording, piano and soloist.]

NEMO: Spooky.

PHIL: Yeah.

SIMEON: *“H sitez sur les ombres, qui, quand vous tournez, bougent,*

Et faites l’attention de la musique qui br le.” [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: This is *The Shattered Podcast*.

PHIL: I'm Phil Donan—

NEMO: And this week we have back with us our guests from last time:

DUSTIN: Dustin Jackson.

LAILA: And Laila Lim.

NEMO: Dustin, we're so sorry to hear Dani's indisposed.

DUSTIN: Well, it's a hazard of the job. She's very sensitive.

NEMO: We had some impressive revelations last time, and we have been overwhelmed with comments and speculation—

PHIL: It's important, in the spirit of establishing facts—which we're trying to do with our historical recordings and our insights into actual events from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—that we don't allow our imaginations to run away with us.

NEMO: However, what we heard last week has made us all very excited. Thanks to Dustin and his allowing us to hear his digitized graphophone recording from 1897, which purports to be a conversation or an interview with Hosein'ali Khan, a former chief of police of Mazandaran in Persia, present-day Iran.

PHIL: We're trying to build up a case to link the Daroghah, heard here, with the voice captured on the cylinders, on impressively prophetic recording equipment buried under the Palais Garnier in 1912.

NEMO: We think these cylinders were made by a composer named Erik, who was responsible for, among other things, an amazing piece of music called *Don Juan Triumphant* and is somehow connected with Christine Daaé, an opera singer, and her husband's brother, Count Philippe de Chagny, who disappeared mysteriously in 1881.

DUSTIN: So, my understanding of the graphophone in my possession is that this Count Philippe didn't just disappear, he was murdered by Erik . . . in his "house by the lake," whatever that means?

LAILA: We have a lot of unanswered questions.

DUSTIN: For one, who is the other person in the recording?

PHIL: Sure, what was his interest in the recordings?

DUSTIN: This Erik person was setting up recording horns—maybe that’s what he was looking for?

LAILA: What recording horns?

PHIL: And we don’t know that the interviewer was from the police—we know that the Daroghah was ex-police.

LAILA: No, but what are recording horns?

NEMO: He wasn’t police, though, at least not French police, because—let’s call him Dude C—said that the investigators into Count Philippe’s death hadn’t believed Khan.

LAILA: I know that the recording horns were mentioned in the architectural drawings, that scan that Dustin shared, that were with the note and the graphophone recordings. But I don’t understand what this means.

NEMO: Laila, if we suppose that this Erik guy was involved with the Paris Opera—let’s say he even had a house on the lake, whatever that means. If he was trying to set up recording horns, unobtrusively it seems to me, in the very fabric of the Paris Opera—

PHIL: On all those different levels—the *foyer de la danse*, the grand foyer, the levels above the stage, and the passages underneath—

NEMO: To me it seems to be some kind of surveillance technology.

PHIL: Albeit—surely—not very good, I mean, not very clear?

NEMO: Most likely not.

DUSTIN: Yeah, but what was the purpose? What was the point?

PHIL: That is the question.

DUSTIN: Okay, I’m not an expert on historical sound recording, but I know my antiques. I know what Edison made and what sold in this time period. How did this Erik guy have the technology to record like this?

PHIL: And you have to wonder—what happened to him? The unnamed interviewer, Dude C as you’ve called him—he mentioned that Erik was really ugly?

NEMO: But he also mentioned his beautiful soul.

PHIL: Yeah. If Erik, whoever he was, actually wrote *Don Juan Triumphant* . . . it's a stunning piece of music. Well ahead of its time.

DUSTIN: I've been listening to this podcast, I've followed it well enough to wonder . . . what if the interviewer was Gaston Leroux?

NEMO: Gaston Leroux, you may remember from our conversation with Mr Simeon Entwhistle, the film historian, was a French writer and reporter who supposedly interviewed the Daroghah of Mazandaran in 1909. It seems very likely this refers to Hosein'ali Khan, but as Mr Entwhistle told us, the interviewee insisted upon anonymity. This interview was supposedly the basis for the now lost silent film, *Das Phantom der Oper*. A plausible explanation indeed, especially given, at least according to Mr Entwhistle's synopsis of what is known about the lost film, it has to do with a mysterious being playing tricks on people at the Opera, using machinery and technology. We couldn't reach Mr Entwhistle to test this theory on him.

NEMO: The graphophone is dated 1897, and according to Mr Entwhistle, Gaston Leroux interviewed the Daroghah of Mazandaran in 1909.

LAILA: To me, and I don't know as much about this as the rest of you, but it seems like the person interviewing Hosein'ali Khan sort of knows him? But isn't his friend. There's a familiarity to it, almost a competitiveness . . .

DUSTIN: You have to think logically. And logically, there's a possibility this could be Leroux.

NEMO: The dates could work for Leroux, who died in 1927. Dustin, do you have any information on the provenance of the graphophone recording?

DUSTIN: It was made by the Columbia Phonograph Company, headquartered in Washington D.C. The business sold phonographs in Maryland and Delaware. I acquired it from an estate sale.

NEMO: Phil, the note that Laila translated. Who do you think wrote it?

PHIL: Well, now, if I had to hazard a guess, and from the available evidence . . . I might theorize it was Darius, the servant who was identified on the graphophone.

NEMO: It therefore seems more likely that he was Hosein'ali Khan's servant rather than Gaston Leroux's.

DUSTIN: Look, you believe what you want. I still think it could be Gaston Leroux.

NEMO: And then there is the curse.

[Night time in a quiet urban area: street traffic, wind.]

Phone conversation:

NEMO: (quietly) Phil.

PHIL: Yeah?

NEMO: I'm sorry, did I wake you?

PHIL: Oh, I hadn't quite dropped off yet, so no, not really. Are you all right? He hasn't been—?

NEMO: I was thinking.

PHIL: Yeah?

NEMO: About the *Das Phantom* film.

PHIL: (yawning) Oh, yeah, *Shattered*.

NEMO: About the curse.

PHIL: The what? Oh. You know, I wouldn't worry about it.

NEMO: I'm not worried about it.

PHIL: I mean, it's hardly worth your time.

NEMO: Don't you think it's a bit of a coincidence that the rhyme thing refers to "the music that burns," which is from *Don Juan Triumphant*, and in the interview with that guy, Khan says that Erik's music was—

PHIL: First of all, I don't believe in curses. Secondly, that "music that burns" things—that could refer to anything.

NEMO: Oh.

PHIL: And we don't know that Erik—whoever he was, with his weird name and everything—even wrote *Don Juan Triumphant*.

NEMO: What do you mean? Is there any doubt?

PHIL: Well, remember that the score in the music library credited it to “M. Giry.”

NEMO: And someone crossed it out and had written “Erik”!

PHIL: Please, will you give it a rest?

NEMO: Don’t tell me what to do, Phil.

PHIL: I’m sorry. Just suggesting that you get some sleep. I don’t know about you, but I’m shattered.

NEMO: What?

PHIL: Shattered. You know. Exhausted.

NEMO: . . . Okay.

PHIL: This will keep for another time.

NEMO: Okay.

PHIL: You *are* sleeping, like? Like, you’re not doing 36 hours awake like you were before . . . ?

NEMO: It’s not easy.

PHIL: Well, you need to try. We care about you.

[Intriguing outro music]

NEMO: . . . Who’s we?

PHIL: Me. Alicja. Laila. Dustin. The listeners. You’re no good to us without a rested mind, right? . . . Oh, and, please, don’t put this in the podcast.

NEMO: Sorry, Phil, I couldn’t help myself.

Next time we’re going to try to trace the police report that Hosein’ali Khan supposedly made after Count Philippe’s disappearance. Until then, we think there’s plenty here for you to ponder over.

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.