The image shows the grand interior of the Paris Opera House, specifically the foyer. The space is characterized by its extreme opulence, with walls and ceiling covered in intricate gold leaf decorations and large-scale frescoes depicting various scenes. Several large, multi-tiered chandeliers hang from the ceiling, casting a warm, golden light. The floor is made of polished wood with a complex geometric pattern. On the left and right sides, there are large, ornate columns and decorative elements, including busts and candelabras. The overall atmosphere is one of historical grandeur and artistic excellence.

A 90 and 52-minute fiction documentary
Produced by Arte France, Bel Air Media
Full Dawa Production and Opéra national de Paris
Directed by Patrick Cabouat
Co-author : Stéphane Landowski

BUILDING THE PARIS OPERA

Provisional Delivery : April 2020

Logline

Famous for its ghost, the Garnier Opera House is above all the product of a titanic building site and the window of a time, the Second Empire.

From 1852 to 1870, eighteen years of flamboyance made Paris the capital of modernity and the seat of "the civilization of opera".

This 90-minute documentary will tell the story of the great Paris construction of the Garnier Opera House, which lasted 14 years (from 1861 to 1875).



INTRODUCTION

The Garnier Palace: a universally renowned monument



The largest opera house in Europe, the Opéra de Paris building, with its seven hundred thousand annual visitors, is the second most visited opera site after the New York Met. Behind the Eiffel Tower and its 7 million visitors or the Palace of Versailles and its 6 million visitors, the Opera Garnier is thus one of the flagship monuments of the Parisian influence and a symbol of France abroad, its architecture having been copied in many countries.

Beyond the numbers, the building is known throughout the world thanks to the legend of the "Phantom of the Opera", a novel published in 1910 by Gaston Leroux and its innumerable adaptations (movies, musicals, cartoons etc ...). An emblematic monument, it remains to this day the symbol of this "civilization of the opera", born in the 19th century, and which continues today.



SYNOPSIS

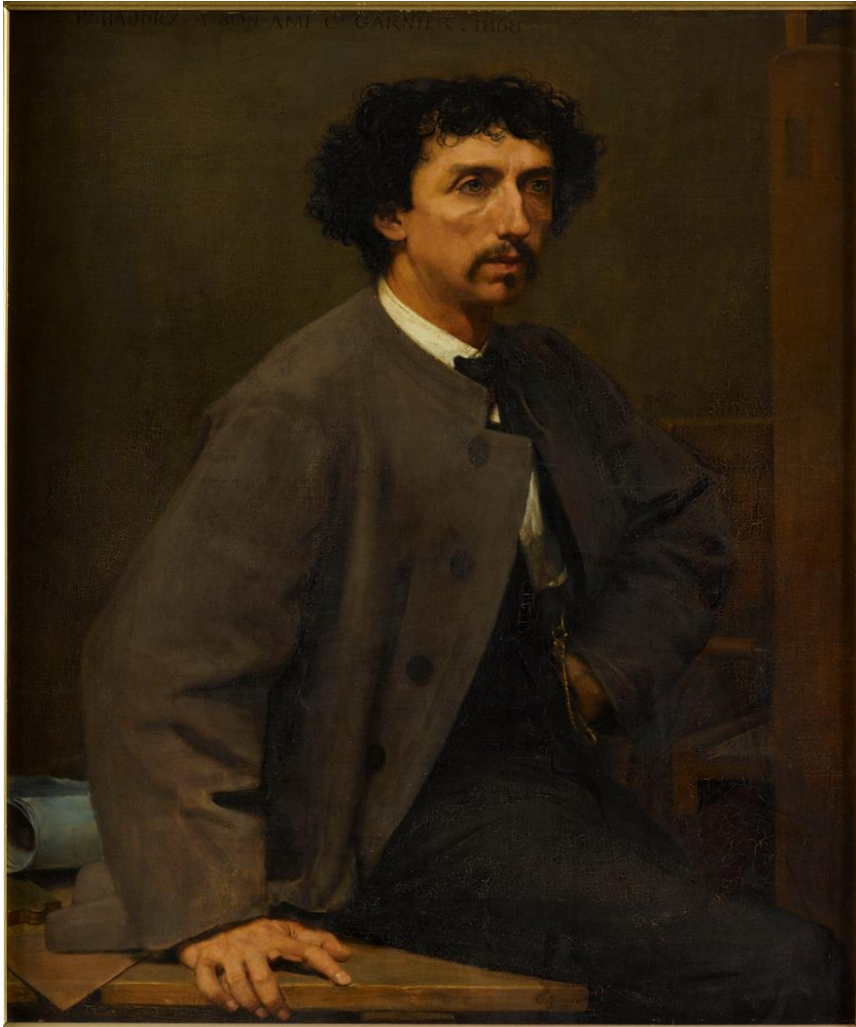
1 - Synopsis

1858. The Paris of Napoleon III is upside down. Decided to demolish a dark and unhealthy city that dates mostly from the Middle Ages, **the Emperor gives Haussmann, prefect of the Seine, the task of rebuilding ... 60% of Paris**, to make the city cleaner, more beautiful, safer. *Haussmannisation* is on the way. Napoleon III takes also a major decision: the construction of a New Opera House, which is the measure of his reign. In the heart of a new district, it must become the centerpiece of the new Paris and more, the symbol of a triumphant Second Empire.

The Emperor makes arrangements, and rare enough to be noted, he organizes an anonymous competition to select the best project. Everyone thinks Eugène Viollet-Le-Duc, official architect and favorite of Empress Eugénie will win the bet, but he loses in the first round. And finally, it is a young architect, totally unknown who wins the setting in 1860: **Charles Garnier, barely thirty-five years and almost no construction to his credit.** He has for him only his modesty, his dreams and the motto inscribed on the envelope of his project: "I hope very much, I'm expecting little. "



2 - Synopsis



CHARLES GARNIER

The model with which he won the competition allows to see the genius of Garnier. With its ultra-rational design, the Opera House is one of the first functionalist buildings in the world. The exterior clearly shows which function is dedicated to each part: space dedicated to the public, theater, backstage, administration - each function translates into a clearly visible volume.

The most important space is dedicated to the public. Because in the Second Empire, a new bourgeoisie rises to power, a bourgeoisie thirsty for art, money, pleasure: a bourgeoisie who wants a palace to give a show. The building of Garnier is not only a monument, it signals the entry into "the civilization of the Opera ». A society founded on appearances, in which entertainment becomes an object of mass consumption.

3 - Synopsis

The problems started immediately after the beginning of the construction. The land on which the opera is to be built is on a water table which makes foundation work impossible. Garnier doubts, seeks, butts and ends up finding an innovative solution: using steam pumps that he will activate for several months. He will succeed in drying the ground before creating a tank. This hidden "lake" will contribute greatly to the legend of the ghost. But the amplification of Gaston Leroux's novel covers a much more pragmatic technical reality. For Garnier, this reduced water supply has two concrete advantages: on the one hand, it will stabilize the building. On the other hand, it can serve as a reserve in case of fire ... the terror of all the theaters.

Once overcome the problem of the foundations that have already delayed the site, Garnier can begin his building. And again, he shows inventiveness and modernity. Thanks to the iron and steel revolution, the architect enjoys great freedom in construction. If metal is everywhere, we do not see it anywhere. Modern in the making, but relatively old fashioned in style, Garnier loves detail, color, baroque and pittoresque!

4 - Synopsis

AN OPERA TO SEE AND BE SEEN



Inside the building, one by one the main parts of the device are built: the Grand Staircase with its 24 different marbles, its small steps to allow ladies in crinoline to climb effortlessly and with its interior balconies allowing the new elite to show itself.

See and be seen, we are here in the heart of the building, in the heart of Garnier's mind, in the heart of the Second Empire, in the heart of the Opera civilization.

5 - Synopsis

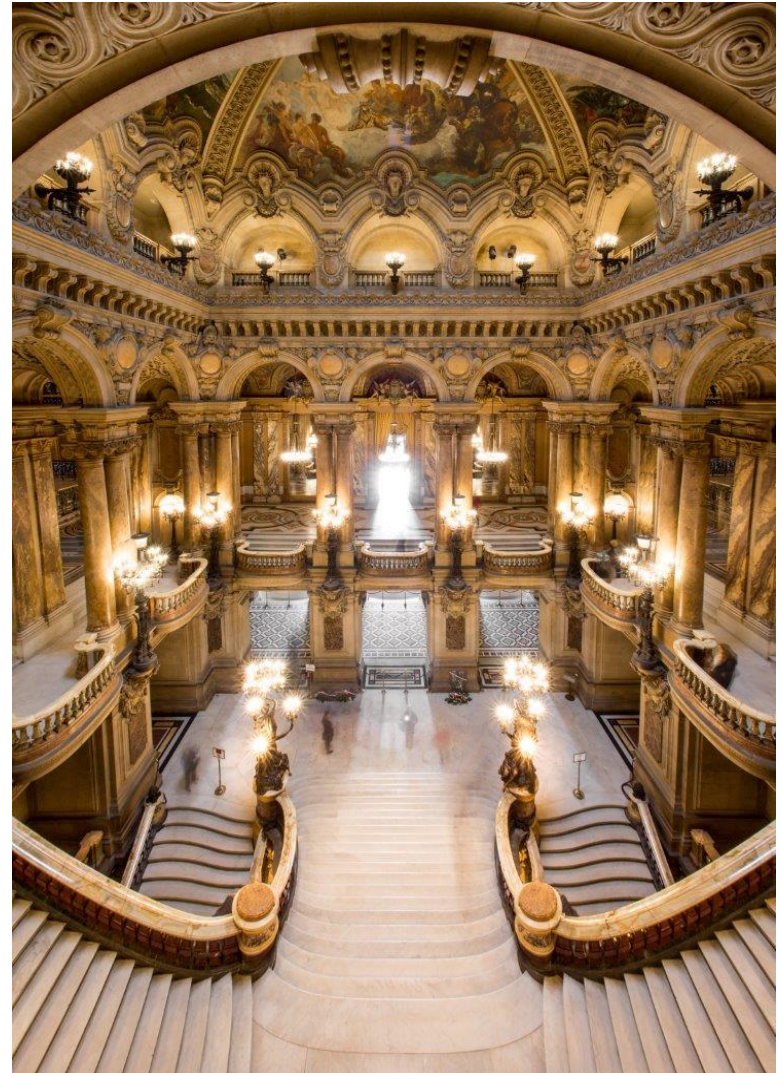
A SOCIETY OF PLEASURE

While the ladies receive guests in their boxes, the gentlemen go discreetly in the foyer of the dance. Men come here, literally, to "choose a dancer".

Between entertainment, social life and the sex market, the Opera represents a new society, focused on pleasure. Because the Second Empire is not only a period marked by a very intense economic activity (development of the railroad, birth of modern banks, birth of shopping), it is also the birth of the leisure society, with the generalization of music kiosks, theaters, seaside cities, baths and casinos.

The Emperor himself, organizes great parties several times a year in Compiègne, near Paris, where he invites, for a week, a hundred « quality » guests: high-ranking military, painters, thinkers, writers and architects.

Garnier, who hated court intrigues, kept away as much as he could from the mundane world. But as the budget of the Opera increases, he must resolve to attending the famous Imperial parties.



6 - Synopsis

THE CRISIS

Despite the unwavering support of Napoleon III, debts are piling dangerously. Garnier has spend double the budget that was intially planned, 14 million gold francs ! Critics are starting to harden, especially as the Empire is no longer thriving. The economy is slowing down and foreign military expeditions are beginning to cost a lot.

As a result, the funds initially allocated to the Nouvel Opéra are gradually redirected to the army, which is more necessary for the survival of the nation and the easing of tension within the country. The deterioration of the economic situation pushes Napoleon III to demand that the new hospital of the Hotel-Dieu, in the center of Paris, be finished before the Opera...

7 - Synopsis

THE CONSTRUCTION SITE RESUMES WITH THE UNIVERSAL EXHIBITION OF 1867

In 1867, Paris hosts the World Fair and the Opera must be reopened. Napoleon III wants to inaugurate the facade. It's a prestige issue. The event is a huge public and critical success. Inside the monument, though, everything remains to be done. The shell is completed, but the interior decoration is yet to be completed.

In this tense context, Garnier manages, somehow, to obtain the necessary credits to move ahead. He ends the fore-hearth, the theater, where once again, he shows creativity and modernity. The seats, usually covered with blue velvet, will be red, « to enhance », he says, « the complexion of women, and to cut with the blue, the traditional color of the monarchy ».

8 - Synopsis

1870 : EXILE

Once again, the organization of the site is upset. The French armies are defeated in Sedan by the Prussians, and Paris is soon besieged. The curtain definitely falls on the regime of Napoleon III. The battle of Sedan marks the end of the French Empire and the birth of the German Empire, enlarged of Alsace and Lorraine.

This time, the construction site of the New Opera stops definitively. German troops spread, and in Paris, civil war threatens in the streets between traditionalists and those in favor of a more social and liberal society. Garnier falls out of favor. He chooses exile in Bordighera, Italy, where he builds a villa.

But rest is impossible, because Garnier has only one fear: not to be able to finish his Opera! Or even worse, let it be destroyed by the demonstrators. It will ultimately end up being a prison for a few months.



9 – Synopsis

THE FINAL RESCUE

Exiled in England, ill and prematurely aged, Napoleon III dies in 1873, without descendants. Orphaned by its sponsor and its architect, the opera is deteriorating...

Once again, it is the fate that comes to its rescue. The same year, the opera of the rue Le Peletier burns from the ground to the roof. Paris has no more opera. It is unthinkable! Garnier is urgently called back to finish his work.

At the same time, in Germany, Wagner starts building his Opera House in Bayreuth. In their design, their architecture, their vocation, everything indicates the difference of approach and culture. While in France the crazy exuberance of the new opera is intended primarily for the representation of high society, Bayreuth's much more sober hall is designed as a temple dedicated to music.

In Paris, Garnier finishes the last decorations inside. Outside, he installs his final masterpiece, a huge arch of light, candles carved in stone like a crown.

STANDING OVATION



On January 4, 1875, Garnier handed the keys of the building to the new directors. And the next day, the day of the inauguration, Garnier is not even invited!

On the 5th of January, he is in his box with his wife. He did not resist the temptation to come, paying his ticket, like everyone else...

As he left his box, the architect is recognized. The noise spreads, the rumor grows and suddenly a "standing ovation" resonates throughout the building. Downstairs and on the balconies, everyone pays homage to his genius. Marshal MacMahon, President of the Republic, shakes his hand to congratulate him. Paris finally has its Opera. And what a masterpiece!

While Napoleon III and Charles Garnier will gradually fall into oblivion, in the early 20th century, the writer Gaston Leroux writes his novel, *The phantom of the opera*. It will be an international success and its many adaptations contribute, even today, to the immense fame of the Opera Garnier.



NOTE OF INTENT

1 - Note of intent

ALL IS THEATER AND REPRESENTATION

"All that happens in the world is, in short, only theater and representation," said Garnier. In fact, the architect conceived his Opera as a "place of entertainment". The party, the show, yes, but not only on stage! He dreamed that "comedians AND spectators mingle to invest the social spaces of his Opera". "If I were director of the Opera," he said, "I will use the costumes to spread them throughout the building, and an invisible orchestra will fill it with sound waves."

Garnier therefore conceived his monument as a vast stage where actors and spectators replay indefinitely the spectacle of social representation. A kind of grand lyric opera, improvised by two thousand people in a sumptuous setting of velvet, gilt and marble.

But the architect's choices also meet the political demands of his patron, Napoleon III, and the social demands of an era that sees the emergence of a new business bourgeoisie, concerned about its rank and its social image. For Garnier, this new opera must reflect its time, the flamboyant Second Empire in which Paris has become the world capital of arts and modernity.

Forty years later with the famous phantom, the novelist Gaston Leroux created a guardian to this fascinating "opera civilization" based on appearances and merchandization of the spectacular.

2 - Note of intent

A VOICE OVER INSPIRED BY THE WORK OF GARNIER

The commentary will be punctuated by many quotes from Charles Garnier. His work, written in 1881, entitled *The New Opera*, recalls each of the stages of this 14-year project. It tells very precisely the incredible adventure that was the construction of this monument.

Garnier testimony recalls on a day to day basis the obstacles, the criticisms and the oppositions which he had to face to finish his task. Garnier's work is therefore the first documentary source of our story.

A VISIT GUIDED BY ART HISTORIANS AND OPERA EXPERTS

Using drones we will be able to observe the architectural details of the building. This visit, we will do it with speakers who will help us understand the choices of Garnier.

Throughout our visit of the building, we will also evoke the social, political and economic contexts of the time: rise of the business bourgeoisie, overbearing presence of the Emperor and his court and the industrial revolution boom which largely influenced the choice of building material such as metal.

3 - Note of intent



These historical insights, provided in part by anecdotes and comments, will allow us to specify an extremely rich political, economic, cultural and social context, essential to the understanding of the site: Revolution of 1848, Presidency of Charles Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, Coup d'Etat and Second Empire, War of 1870, defeat of Sedan, Paris Commune, Third Republic.

4 - Note of intention

SKETCH BOOKS, DRAWINGS, PLANS, MODELS AND PHOTOGRAPHIES – TREATMENT AND ANIMATION OF THE VISUALS

We have many visual sources that allow us to illustrate both the site and the historical context.

- **The 2D parallax:** The parallax 2D allows to reconstruct tables with camera movements from photos or vintage engravings. Several photos can be assembled to recreate a decor. Point elements will be colorized to maintain consistency with plans, portraits and 3D animations.
- **The parallax 3D:** As for the parallax 2D, the parallax 3D allows to animate 2D documents. Each photo is reconstructed in a 3D scene, which allows the addition of animated 3D elements such as characters, vehicles or smoke, snow ... As for 2D, point elements will be colorized to keep Consistency with portrait plans and 3D animations.
- **2D editing:** Several documents can be assembled in the same image to present them in an original way, without having to work inside each document in a specific way. For example, photos can be presented on a wall of frames, plans assembled on top of a table, or engravings assembled and energized with shutter effects. Elements will be colorized.
- **3D animation:** 3D plans show the places and their dimensions, and in particular the location of a room in the building.
- **3D scan:** In collaboration with the Meeting of National Museums (NMR), we will be able to scan in 3D new works, which will enable us to observe them, for the first time, from all angles and with a definition never before seen.

5 - Note of intention

REENACTMENTS



The narrative will also offer a space for the reenactments, as it seems necessary to us to bring the opera to life.

This device will be mainly used to weave two distinct narrative lines:

By following Charles Garnier, the competition he won at the inauguration of his masterpiece, through study tours and the follow-up of the works since his workshop, I wish to show, in the way the most alive possible, the reality of the site.

By following some bourgeois spectators on a representation evening, their entry by the rotunda to their lodges, through the Grand Foyer and the Foyer of the dance, I wish to show a social practice of the Opera which has nothing to do with today.

6 - Note of intention

EXCERPTS FROM THE GREAT MUSICAL PIECES OF THE 19TH CENTURY

This film can not be imagined without being largely influenced by the great classical arias of the Opera: we obviously think of Gounod's Faust, Verdi's Traviata and Othello, but also Bizet's Carmen or Tannhäuser's Wagner and Offenbach's operettas such as La belle Hélène, La vie parisienne or La grande duchesse de Gerolstein. The most famous of these arias will accompany the story, dramatize the plot. We plan to use them (off) to accompany and dramatize the scenes of historical evocation.

Excerpts from Leo Delibes's ballet "La source", played on the night of the inauguration and recently filmed at the opera Garnier will punctuate the film.

Finally, to evoke the famous ghost, we will use several sequences from Weber's film "The Phantom of the Opera" inspired by the novel by Gaston Leroux and directed by Lloyd Weber.



SPEAKERS

S p e a k e r s

- **Timothée Picard** – Musicologist, specialist of the Phantom of the Opera.
- **Paul Perrin** – Curator at the Orsay Museum and of the exhibition Spectaculaire Second Empire in 2016
- **Alice Thomine-Berrada** – Curator of the Fine-Arts Paris
- **Xavier Mauduit** – historian, specialist of the Second Empire.
- **Bertrand Lemoine** – Architect, specialist in Metal buildings in the XIX century.



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