



'Phantom' sequel astounds Starlight audiences

By Bob Evans

The long-awaited sequel to Andrew Lloyd Weber's monumental Broadway smash, "Phantom of the Opera" finally arrived—all 11 truck-loads—in Kansas City to open at our largest outdoor venue, Starlight Theatre on a night full of rain threats until 10 minutes before curtain-time.



National Tour "Love Never Dies"/Starlight Theatre

Clouds vanished after a five-minute curtain delay and the new spectacle began with the Phantom on stage for his opening number and to set the pace for the highly anticipated story to follow. Complete with Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical

flourishes, the story unfolds with more spectacle than the first chapter. The sparkle and glamour provide a rich but garish look at circus performers, illusionists, turn of the century vaudeville acts, clowns, and other performers one would see at Coney Island or possibly a circus atmosphere, all designed to lure the audience into the newest chapter of the love story between The Phantom and Christine Daye, 10 years after his escape from authorities in the sewers under the Paris Opera House.

“Love Never Dies” brings probably the biggest technical production ever to Starlight, with average shows only bringing 5-6 trucks, Rich Baker, Starlight CEO said on opening night. The Coney Island set, intricate, constantly moving, makes the show stunning to see. The Phantom, just seems like a long-lost friend whom the audience loves despite his dark character. He was long-overdue for a return to the stage.



National Tour "Love Never Dies"/Starlight Theatre

Unfortunately, the sequel is never the equal to the monstrously popular original. The story to “Love Never Dies” stands alone so those who have not seen “Phantom of the Opera” will understand and follow. This classic love story involves a triangle and hearts torn apart, so nothing new here. But the

story telling gets more and more complicated as events and characters unfold. To those who know the original story, this one just lacks the depth and music that so many know and love in the first installment. Do not be dismayed. "Love Never Dies" stands as a qualified hit, but just of the magnitude of its predecessor.

"Love Never Dies" continues the story of the Phantom's love for Christine and takes place 10 years after his disappearance from Paris. He has traveled to America, specifically New York and to Coney Island where freaks do not stand out like they would in a normal setting. There, he has created a new theatre, produces a local show with less than spectacular talent, and coerces Christine and her husband to come to America. Once on American soil, the Phantom deploys his plan to encourage Christine to once again sing for her teacher.



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Weber's music and orchestration are full, melodic, poignant, dynamic and all emotions in-between. But, there is not a stand-alone song that audiences remember after the show. The signature song, "Love Never Dies" is beautiful from the character of Christine, but does not have the richness of the previous score. The solos by The Phantom, by Christine's son, and by Christine's husband are nice songs, but they never found legs to carry them beyond the theatre to the general public.

Those who want to see “Love Never Dies” will enjoy the show. It is a good show, especially if one does not make comparisons. Therein lies the defect. So much anticipation can spoil an evening. Just sit back and enjoy what is presented and all is fine.



National Tour "Love Never Dies"/Starlight Theatre

The national tour of “Love Never Dies” brings a cast and crew of superior talent and skills. The vocal performances are incredibly strong. The acting and choreography is very good. Most of the characters are well-written and rounded so they grow and change as the show progresses. The set, the set decoration, sound, lighting, staging, costumes, makeup, wigs—all demonstrate intricate attention to detail. The story takes you inside the twisted mind of the Phantom and the co-dependency on Christine. The love story continues but with some new twists and turns. The story, mostly predictable, contains some surprises that engage the audience.



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“Love Never Dies” opened Tuesday, Aug. 14 and continues through Sunday night with performances beginning at 8 p.m. More information about Starlight and the options available to theatergoers can be found on the [Starlight website](#).

I guarantee “Love Never Dies” is like nothing you have ever seen at Starlight in its 60+ years.

Tags: “Love Never Dies”, Starlight Theatre, Kansas City Theatre, Kansas City Performing Arts, Kansas City Arts & Entertainment