IN CELEBRATION OF
25 YEARS

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
at the
ROYAL ALBERT HALL

1 & 2 OCTOBER 2011
CAMERON MACKINTOSH and ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER present
THE 25th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION PERFORMANCES
INSPIRED BY THE ORIGINAL PRODUCTION
of ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER'S
THE PHANTOM
OF THE OPERA
at the
ROYAL ALBERT HALL
Starring
RAMIN KARIMLOO SIERRA BOGGESS
HADLEY FRASER
KIERA DUFFY BARRY JAMES
GARETH SNOOK LIZ ROBERTSON
and
SERGEI POLUNIN
Music by ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER
Lyrics by CHARLES HART
Additional Lyrics by RICHARD STILGOE
Book by RICHARD STILGOE & ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER
Based on the novel Le Fantôme de l'Opéra by GASTON LEROUX
Orchestrations by DAVID CULEN & ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER

Original London Creative Team
Sound Design by MARTIN LEVAN
Lighting Design by ANDREW BRIDGE
Production Design by MARIA BJÖRNSON
Musical Staging and Choreography by GILLIAN LINNE
Directed by HAROLD PRINCE

Royal Albert Hall Creative Team
Produced by CAMERON MACKINTOSH
Lighting by ANDREW BRIDGE and PATRICK WOODROFFE
Sound Design by MICK POTTER
Musical Supervisor and Conductor ANTHONY INGLIS
Musical Supervisor STEPHEN BROOKER
Costume Design by MARIA BJÖRNSON
Projection Design by JON DRISCO
Set Design by MATT KINLEY inspired by the original design by MARIA BJÖRNSON
Musical Staging and Choreography by GILLIAN LINNE
Directed by LAURENCE CONNOR

A CAMERON MACKINTOSH & REALLY USEFUL THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTATION
World premiere of The Phantom of the Opera at Her Majesty's Theatre, London, 9 October 1986
The Irreplaceable Maria Björnson

Occasionally, in life a thought comes to one's head on a fly-by-night and the result is something quite extraordinary. That was how Maria came to design Phantom. Almost immediately after Andrew Lloyd Webber mentioned the idea of doing a musical of Gaston Leroux's novel, I felt that she was the only person who could bring this extraordinarily theatrical story to life. And that is what she did. Maria was thrilled by the idea of working on Phantom, and she was especially excited by the prospect of creating costumes that would be both stunning and practical for the actors performing on stage.

Everyone who worked on Phantom was amazed by the level of detail and attention to the smallest of details. From the intricately embroidered costumes to the elaborate headpieces, every element was carefully crafted to bring the characters to life. Maria's work was a testament to her skill and passion for the art of costume design.

Unfortunately, Maria passed away shortly after the premiere of Phantom. Her death was a tragedy that left a temporary void in the world of costume design. However, the legacy of Maria Björnson lives on through the stunning costumes that she created for Phantom and her other works. Her influence can still be seen in the work of contemporary designers, who continue to be inspired by her creativity and dedication to the craft.
Maria Björn was absolutely the right designer for Phantom: her style and methods of working were a wonderful match for the ambitious and romantic production. She had a complete, thought-through vision for the piece with strong ideas for every detail and made it a dramatic, glamorous and also fun, with her way for the charming and quirky.

Maria was a perfectionist, with a remarkable ability to capture a historic period and mood in meticulously detailed design. She strove into intense research, spending weeks in Paris studying and photographing every aspect of the 19th Century Parisian life, and in museums hunting out the costumes and decor of this de-light-fully.

Maria's brief for the design from producer Hal Prince was minimal – a black, cushion box set that everything, comes out of – and for this Maria planned and designed the whole show, working, with her assistants, execute set moves of every detail.

The costume designs are lovely things in their own right, as well as excellent working drawings. Most of the attention is given to every hat, wig or shoe, with detailed instructions as to how they should be worn (e.g. below, any performer found with a belt out or of place. Feats in the costume designs are often photographed and copied in. Maria enjoyed the theme of using famous faces, like her figures in her designs for Phantom. In this, for instance, of Kenneth Williams's face on a female costume design.

Maria spent hours choosing fabrics, attaching swatches to the designs and often visiting antique stores when at a loss for suitable pieces. She was extremely skilled at choosing colour and pattern together in one garment, often using complementary combinations to great effect.

Maria Björn's realistic vision for Phantom cannot be understated the theatrical evolution of early 19th Century Paris and its dark, eerie, curious and the writing of songs for this musical.

Michael Linth, Archivist, Maria Björn Archive www.mariabjorn.com