



HALE  
CENTER  
THEATER  
OREM



THE  
HUNCHBACK  
OF NOÏRE DAME

2021  
SEASON

MUSICAL

PRODUCTION NUMBER 235

Oct. 08 — THROUGH — Nov. 20

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## ◇ INTERESTING FACTS ◇

*The church of Notre-Dame de Paris is still no doubt, a majestic and sublime edifice. But, beautiful as it has been preserved in growing old, it is difficult not to sigh, not to wax indignant, before the numberless degradations and mutilations which time and men have both caused the venerable monument to suffer, without respect for Charlemagne, who laid its first stone, or for Philip Augustus, who laid the last.*

*On the face of this aged queen of our cathedrals, by the side of a wrinkle, one always finds a scar. Tempus edax, homo edacior; which I should be glad to translate thus: time is blind, man is stupid.*

Victor Hugo, *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*

Victor Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* is filled with memorable characters: the enchanting Esmerelda, the riveting Claude Frollo, and the titular hunchback named Quasimodo. For Hugo himself, the main character is found in the second part of the title: Notre Dame Cathedral itself. In fact, the 1831 novel's original title omits the hunchback entirely

and is simply Notre-Dame de Paris. The novel would not only celebrate the legacy of this jewel of French culture but play a vital role in its future.

Built on the ruins of earlier places of worship, including a Roman temple of Jupiter pre-dating the arrival of Christianity in France, the cornerstone was placed by the



*Notre Dame de Paris during reconstruction in 1844, including the new spire.*



*Notre Dame de Paris*

Bishop of Paris, Maurice de Sully, in 1163. It was a revolution in architecture, working in the Gothic style, a radical new approach that brought height and light to a world accustomed to squat, dark Romanesque architecture. While the first phase of construction would have the choir completed by 1177 and the altar consecrated in 1182, the project itself would take nearly two centuries, finishing in 1345.

Though now considered an iconic building and an essential symbol of France itself, the cathedral was not always universally acclaimed. In the Renaissance, Notre Dame's Gothic style fell out of favor and much of the interior was covered with tapestries to hide the unfashionable stonework, columns, and sculptures. In 1548, French Huguenots

responded to their continuing persecution by storming the church and destroying many of the statues, which they believed to be graven images. In the 17th Century, King Louis XIV hired Robert de Cotte to redesign and "restore" the church including removing tombs from the nave and creating a new altar featuring statues of Louis and his father kneeling before a pieta.

It was the French Revolution that saw perhaps the most substantial changes take place. In 1789, the church was seized by the government and turned into public property. It was rededicated to the "Cult of Reason" and then the "Cult of the Supreme Being" a few years later, with the Goddess of Liberty replacing statues of the Virgin Mary. Statues of 28 biblical kings were beheaded in the

mistaken belief they represented Kings of France, and all but one of the statues on the façade were destroyed. It was finally gutted and turned into a food storage warehouse.

While Napoleon had the church reconsecrated and restored for his coronation as Emperor in 1804, it was in complete disrepair within 20 years and there was talk of simply demolishing the building entirely. To acclaimed poet, playwright, and novelist Victor Hugo the state of Notre Dame was unacceptable. A staunch defender of French culture, history, and art, he began writing the novel we know as *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* to advocate for the cathedral's Gothic architecture and original beauty before it disappeared forever. The book was an instant hit, and the flood of tourists coming to the building convinced King Louis Phillippe in 1844 to restore the church to its former glory. Architect Eugène Viollet-le-Duc spearheaded the project, which took 20 years to complete. Working from original drawings and plans, Viollet-le-Duc commissioned modern craftsmen to re-create the lost

*Notre Dame de Paris fire, April 15, 2019*





*Notre Dame de Paris restoration*

stained glass, sculptures, and stonework. The iconic spire of Notre Dame was added during this period, based on original designs that were beyond the technical possibilities of the original architects but feasible in the mid 19th Century.

Of course, the future of Notre-Dame de Paris is still very much in flux. In April 2019, a fire broke out due to renovation work, destroying the roof and spire. A valiant firefighting effort involving 500 firefighters saved much of the structure, but smoke, heat, and water caused incalculable damage. Even

removing the wreckage of the 300 tons of scaffolding left behind took over 18 months. French President Emmanuel Macron has promised to restore the building before the 2024 Paris Olympics, and even now thousands of oak trees harvested from French forests are drying for 18 months to be used in the restoration of the roof and spire. More than a relic, more than a building, more than a church, and more than a home for a hunchback, over its 858 years, Notre-Dame de Paris has been a living, changing testament to Paris and reflects the history of the city itself.