

THAT's more like it!

For the 25th anniversary celebration of Broadway's longest running musical, a special performance of Andrew Lloyd Webber's *The Phantom of the Opera* was presented at London's Royal Albert Hall. This fully staged extravaganza was filmed for release on video; however, it was also released to a select number of movie houses throughout the world. Over the course of the next month or so, the special is highlighting Great Performances on PBS. Last night, I DVR'd the event and began watching it after I returned from work. **WOW!** Totally made me forget the totally lifeless movie released a few years ago! This actually made me feel as if I were in the audience front row. When actually in a live audience, I have always had the opportunity to see the action from afar taking in the scope and beauty of the theatrical setting without seeing all the nuance of the performers. The filmed rendition allows the viewer to really watch the actors on stage. During *The Music of the Night*, you can actually see the Phantom "pulling the strings (or chains)" that Christine wears as he places her under his hypnotic spell. Of course, after the magnificent piece, the station had one of their pledge drive breaks... somehow I knew that would be one of the high points at which they would interrupt programming. No wonder it was on for a good 3.5 hours!

Filmed stage productions are a funny thing. They either work by drawing you in and holding your attention or fail in some degree. I recently watched the Angela Lansbury version of *Sweeney Todd*. Honestly, no matter how hard I tried I could not get into it. I guess that the process in which filming events such as these has changed in the last 30-40 years. The Phantom experience was so different because the audience seemed to be part of the show. I guess that makes sense since the show is set in a theatrical venue. I am looking forward to watching the rest of the show (even with the breaks).