



PHOTOS BY STEVE MARCUS / LAS VEGAS SUN

Broadway comes to Las Vegas as actors perform in the Masquerade scene Saturday during the opening of Andrew Lloyd Webber's "Phantom: Las Vegas Spectacular" at the Venetian.

## FABULOUS LAS VEGAS

### John Katsilometes on how the flip of a quarter determined the cast for opening night of 'Phantom: Las Vegas Spectacular' at the Venetian



Even in a \$40 million production, the most important decisions can rest on the toss of a quarter.

That was the case for "Phantom: Las Vegas Spectacular," which ended its preview period and held its opening-night premiere on Saturday at the Venetian. Because the show is so physically (and vocally) demanding, the production alternates a total of six world-class performers in the lead roles of the Phantom, Christine and Carlotta.

And, of course, all those performers would prefer to take the stage on opening night.

So they flipped for it.

Actually, the Phantoms (**Anthony Crivello** and **Brent Barrett**) and Christines (**Sierra Boggess** and **Elizabeth Loyacano**) were the principals who agreed to the coin toss. Taking the role of Carlotta on Saturday was **Elena Jeanne Batman**; **Geena Jeffries Mattox** stepped aside voluntarily so she could take in the opening performance with her family.

Crivello and Loyacano won the toss (which, as Barrett said, was conducted "by the powers that be") and were onstage opening night.

"Obviously all leads are great, so that isn't even an issue," a pumped-up Crivello said after Saturday's soaring performance. "It was the best way, a fair way, to make that decision."

At least one offbeat, Vegas-centric idea was floated.

"They wanted us to spin a roulette wheel, and I thought that idea was heinous" said Barrett, who along with Boggess and Mattox joined the rest of the cast for Saturday's curtain call. "We're artists. We're not football players."

#### Note Mart

**I'm so glad we had this time together:** Taking in Saturday's opening-night "Phantom" party was **Carol Burnett**, who said the show "blew me away." The 73-year-old Burnett, moving gracefully in a black dress and flashing that warm, familiar smile, said she attended the show and party as a show of support for producer **Hal Prince**, a longtime friend. When asked to recall her most recent visit to Vegas, Burnett paused and said, "Wow, about 30 years ago ... I don't even remember the reason." ...

**The ups and downs of the Strip:** This week we bid adieu to a piece of Old Vegas while ushering in the next generation of Strip projects. Closing is the Klondike Hotel, just east of the famous "Welcome To Fabulous Las Vegas" sign on Las Vegas Boulevard. Klondike owner **John Woodrum** has sold the property to a group of investors based in Boca Raton, Fla., who plan to build a high-rise condo-casino project on the site. The Klondike's casino is shutting down Wednesday (a couple of days earlier than expected) and the hotel kills the lights on Friday.

Meanwhile, today at 10 a.m. the MGM Mirage's CityCenter holds an event dubbed the "Big Pour," the concrete foundation pour for the \$7 billion, 18-square-foot urban metropolis scheduled to open in 2009. MGM Mirage President **Bill McBeath** and CityCenter executive **Tony Dennis** will be on hand and two new members of the project's architectural team will be announced ...

**No show:** Fast approaching a near-sellout show at Lake Las Vegas on Saturday, **Hall & Oates** abruptly canceled their scheduled perfor-



Tim Martin Gleason, left, Anthony Crivello, and Elizabeth Loyacano give a curtain call after the opening of "Phantom: Las Vegas Spectacular" on Saturday at the Venetian.

mance at the lake's floating stage on Reflection Bay. The reason given on Sunday was that the performers, not the venue, made the decision. Lake Las Vegas Resorts swiftly regrouped by providing two free shows — by **Skip Martin of Kool & The Gang** and the **Warren Brothers** (who hustled over to Lake LV after opening for **Martina McBride**'s at Mandalay Bay).

All fans who purchased tickets to Hall & Oates will receive a full refund.

The veteran pop duo also canceled a performance set for Friday at Harrah's Rio Vista Outdoor Amphitheatre in Laughlin ...

**Robin's reach:** Column staple

and 64-year-old comeback kid **Robin Leach** is the subject of a long (1,200 words worth) profile piece in the new issue of *Forbes* magazine. The story details Leach's reascent to celebritydom (with Vegas as his launching pad) after dropping from the scene almost entirely in the mid-'90s. **Matthew Miller**'s colorful story gives a rundown of Leach's business interests in Vegas — "I want a media platform that will rival those in Los Angeles and New York" — and notes that Leach puts his annual income in "the seven figures" ...

**"Love" conquers all:** England's print media — or at least the Sunday

Telegraph — is claiming that Friday's gala opening of "Love" at the Mirage will mark the end of one of the longest feuds in entertainment history. No, not between **Paul McCartney** and **Yoko Ono** (who appear to have settled into a sort of truce) but between **Ono** and **Cynthia Lennon**, John Lennon's first wife. Cynthia is quoted as saying, "I've tried to reconcile the situation. I've tried to get Sean and Julian together because they are such good friends." That's **Sean Ono Lennon**, 30, and **Julian Lennon**, who at 43 is three years older than John Lennon was when he was killed. The two camps have been at odds, often publicly, since Lennon's death ...

**My Venetian moment:** During a set by the soul band Showtyme at the Venetian's La Scena Lounge on Friday night, one of the troupe's members spotted a guy in the audience wearing a big brown cowboy hat. That sighting led to a string of pretty bad cowboy jokes (can we officially mark as "stale" references to "Brokeback Mountain"?), but a great impromptu, bass-heavy rendition of **Garth Brooks** "I Got Friends in Low Places" ...

**Pack mentality:** Jeff Greenberg, music director for "The Rat Pack Is Back: The Tribute to Frank, Sammy, Joey & Dean" at the Greek Isles hotel, has vanity plates on both of his vehicles. One reads OCNS 11; the other EEEO 11 (an ode to **Sammy Davis Jr.**'s song from the original "Ocean's 11").

Fabulous Las Vegas runs Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday in the Las Vegas Sun. John Katsilometes can be reached at 259-2327 or 812-9812 or at [kats@lasvegassun.com](mailto:kats@lasvegassun.com).