

A Fanatic for the Phantom

Daniel and Remy Lehner of New York – married on Dec. 12, 1993 – believed in doing up anniversaries in a big, big way.



Before they even marked their first anniversary, they made plans for how they would celebrate their second. They would go to one of their favorite plays, *The Phantom of the Opera* by Andrew Lloyd Webber, which they had already seen many times.

Just going to the play, however, was not enough to express their love. They wanted to make a grand gesture. So, more than a year in advance, they bought tickets for every seat in the house of New York's Majestic Theater for Dec. 12, 1995. That's a total of 1,609 seats.

Why would they do such a thing? Lehner was president of Inflight Newspapers, a multimillion-dollar organization that distributes newspapers and magazines to airlines and hotels around the world. Lehner was known for theatrical gestures. For some years, he posted bail for some Nassau County jail inmates not accused of serious crimes so that they could spend Christmas or Thanksgiving with their families. He was a fanatical fan of *Phantom* and had attended about 100 performances of the musical. He met Remy at a performance of it in 1988 and proposed to her during an intermission four years later.

In booking the Majestic Theater, Lehner raised \$1.2 million for 45 charities by buying out the seats for the performance of *Phantom*, and the charities distributed the tickets to donors giving \$250 or more.

With that date still more than a year away, how do you think they celebrated their first anniversary? That's right. They went to see *The Phantom of the Opera*. And when the second rolled around, Daniel and Remy demonstrated their devotion to each other by this unheard-of action, as extravagant as it was. In a sad footnote, Lehner died of a heart attack in June 1997. He and Remy were dancing in the aisle during a concert at Radio City Music Hall, and he collapsed after returning to his seat. Transported to the hospital, he could not be revived.

When Jesus walked the earth, there were people who expressed their love to Him in extravagant ways.

How do we show our commitment to Him today? We can do so in many ways, including the care and compassion we extend to the residents and families we serve. These deeds may not receive public acclaim, but they are noticed by the One who matters.

– Beecher Hunter