This version of 'PHANTOM OF THE OPERA' is a Gothic Ghost Story.

Inspired by the original novel ‘The Phantom of the Opera’ by Gaston Leroux and the 1925 film of the same title, both of which are in Public Domain.

One suggested twist is that the Phantom really is a ghost, not a living grotesque human being, as in the book. He died in the theater some years before.

The other suggested twist is that he is Christine’s father (not her wannabe lover). From beyond the grave, he tries to gain for his daughter the respect and glory his talent deserved, but never received during his lifetime because of his hideousness.

The element of Raul’s obsessive love for Christine remains. Now his nemesis is her father, who sees him as a threat to his plans for his daughter. Raul doesn’t realize that his rival for Christine’s affections is a dead man or that he’s her father.

Christine is torn between two powerful forces - her love for Raul and her dreams of fame that are fostered by her father. Because of her father’s jealousy she can’t have both. Raul wants her to give up her career aspirations and run away with him. She at first resists, but then decides she wants to get away from her father.

She is a talented singer but not the musical genius her father was. She finds she can only perform her best when she is in the opera house and under his tutelage and inspiration.

Suggested story outline: (to be evolved in the Writers Room):

In his lifetime, the Phantom was a human monster, suffering the physical and mental effects of a deformity so severe that he was completely rejected by society. He was also a musical genius whose talent was fueled by dark creative energy.

In the present, the old opera house is being renovated and reopened, despite its reputation for being haunted. The former owner warns the new owner about the ghost, but he ignores him. Bizarre things immediately start happening. The theater is haunted by a skeletal figure who lives in the cavernous cellars. There are various sightings and the cast and crew become scared,

Christine is an ingénue, a wannabe singer. She has run away from her stifling life with her grandparents to join the theater. She gets hired on to be part of the chorus and becomes understudy to the lead. She hears a violin playing at night, follows it into the bowels of the theater, and ‘discovers’ the ghost. He tells her he is her father. He has returned as her ‘Angel of Music’, as he had promised. She becomes fixated, She sings for him and he coaches her, telling her he’s going to make her a star.

An accident, orchestrated by the Phantom, befalls the diva Carlotta and Christine gets her chance to step into the lead role for a night. She is an instant sensation. Raul
is in the audience and is smitten. It turns out that they knew each other when they were children. He had chivalrously rescued her favorite scarf from the ocean. Going backstage to see Christine, he overhears her talking to someone unseen and tries to discover who it is. She won’t tell him. Raul falls in love with her and tries to get her to run away with him, but she won’t/can’t leave.

Christine is tempted to go with Raul, and they eventually make love, but she becomes more and more obsessed with the Phantom. She finds she cannot perform outside the theater – failed recording session? She goes to her grandparents to find out the truth about her heritage. Raul follows her there.

Backstory (to be intercut with the present-day story): Eric (the Phantom) spends his youth in a traveling freak show as a ‘living corpse’ because of his hideous appearance. He finds and learns to play a violin and becomes a virtuoso. He is discovered by a wealthy, childless couple, who adopt him. He plays for them, but never performs in public because of his ugliness. He has developed an abiding hatred for humanity based on how he’d been treated as a child, though he accepts the kindness of these strangers in order to escape the freak show.

He rapes a family servant. After the wealthy couple find out, they kick him out. The servant dies giving birth to a daughter, who is raised by the wealthy couple as their ‘granddaughter’. This is Christine.

After playing and begging on street corners for years, Eric finds his way to the Opera, auditions for the (former) owner and gets his debut, wearing a grand theatrical mask. Word spreads and crowds line up to see this mysterious musical sensation. He starts to live below the theater. He occasionally goes back to the wealthy couple’s house to secretly visit his daughter. He slips her out of the house with him, tells her stories and plays the violin for her, while she sings. She never wants him to leave, but he promises that he will always be her ‘Angel of Music’, even after he dies. On one occasion he shows her his real face and she is the first person ever who is not horrified by the sight.

On one fatal night at the Opera, as Eric receives a standing-ovation, his mask falls off and the applause turns to cries of horror at the sight of him. In humiliation and despair, he runs down into the bowels of the theater and hangs himself in a storage cellar. When his spirit starts to haunt the place, the theater is forced to close down.

This is the suggested set-up. The Writers Room will explore, evolve and expand this story, and adjust it as necessary.

Location, date and style of music to be determined. Themes: attraction and repulsion, artistry and suffering, love, loss, and redemption. Evil is learned not innate. Hints of ‘A Star is Born’.

This is planned to be gothic, dark, moody, scary and tragic.