

"THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA"

TITLE:

PARIS.....THE DREAM CITY OF
OUR YOUTH...THE METROPOLIS
OF GAIETY...THE HARBOR OF
BEAUTIFUL WOMEN AND LIGHT-
HEARTED MEN.....~~PARIS, THE~~
~~MOTHER OF THE ARTIST AND~~
~~OF ART.~~

EXT. PARIS BOULEVARD. NIGHT. FADE IN:
This is a picture of what people imagine the
fashionable night life of Paris to be. The
scene is an open boulevard cafe. The side-
walk is about thirty feet wide and there is
room for at least two rows of tables upon the
sidewalk in front of the cafe. These tables
are sheltered by ornate awnings. The period
is 1890. The cafe and street are electric
lighted.

It is a scene of laughter and of gaiety. The
women are dressed in the evening dress of the
period. The large windows facing the sidewalk
are open and all is lightness and movement
inside. The sidewalk tables are filled.
Fashionably dressed people are promonading
up and down the sidewalk. Carriages are
drawing up and departing. Parties are bidding
goodnight.

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA (UNIVERSAL, 1925)

Early Working Draft with Significant Annotations

TITLE:

THE MANHATTAN RARE BOOK COMPANY, ABAA, ILAB

CITY OF WEALTH...AND OF POVERTY.
OF ROMANCE....AND OF TRAGEDY.

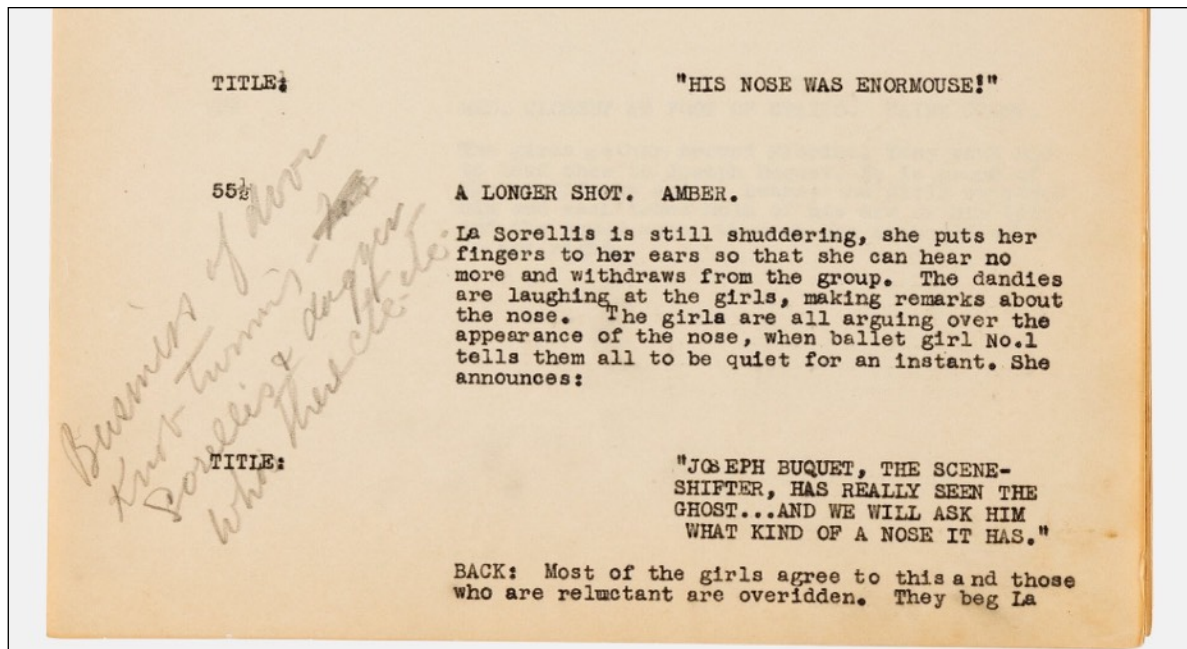
THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA (UNIVERSAL, 1925)

Early Working Draft Screenplay (Typescript) with Significant Annotations

The present manuscript is an early working draft of Elliot J. Clawson's scenario for the 1925 Universal production, preserving a more disturbing vision of the story than the version Universal ultimately brought to screen — and standing in a relationship to the production's documentary record that has not previously been established.

The evidence for priority is both structural and textual. Philip J. Riley, in *The Making of the Phantom of the Opera* (MagicImage Filmbooks, 1999), quotes scene directions from what he identifies as the early Clawson draft. At the equivalent narrative moment — the bedchamber scene in which Raoul awakens to find the Phantom's eyes staring at him from the darkness — Riley's source carries scene number 286. The present manuscript places the same scene at 289. The three-scene offset indicates that this manuscript contains material absent from Riley's source at the same point in the narrative, suggesting either an earlier compositional layer or a parallel version of greater narrative density. This comparison is necessarily limited to the scenes Riley chose to reproduce; given the divergences already identified, further systematic comparison may well reveal additional discrepancies throughout the manuscript. Riley's study traces two principal script documents — an early Clawson draft and the fifth revised shooting script reproduced in full in his Chapter III. The present manuscript shares the general character and narrative scope of the former while diverging from it in both scene numbering and specific direction language, indicating that it represents a distinct though related early layer of the production's development rather than a copy of any document Riley examined. Riley does not cite the source of his early draft text anywhere in his study, leaving its location unestablished and the relationship between his source and the present manuscript an open question of considerable scholarly significance.

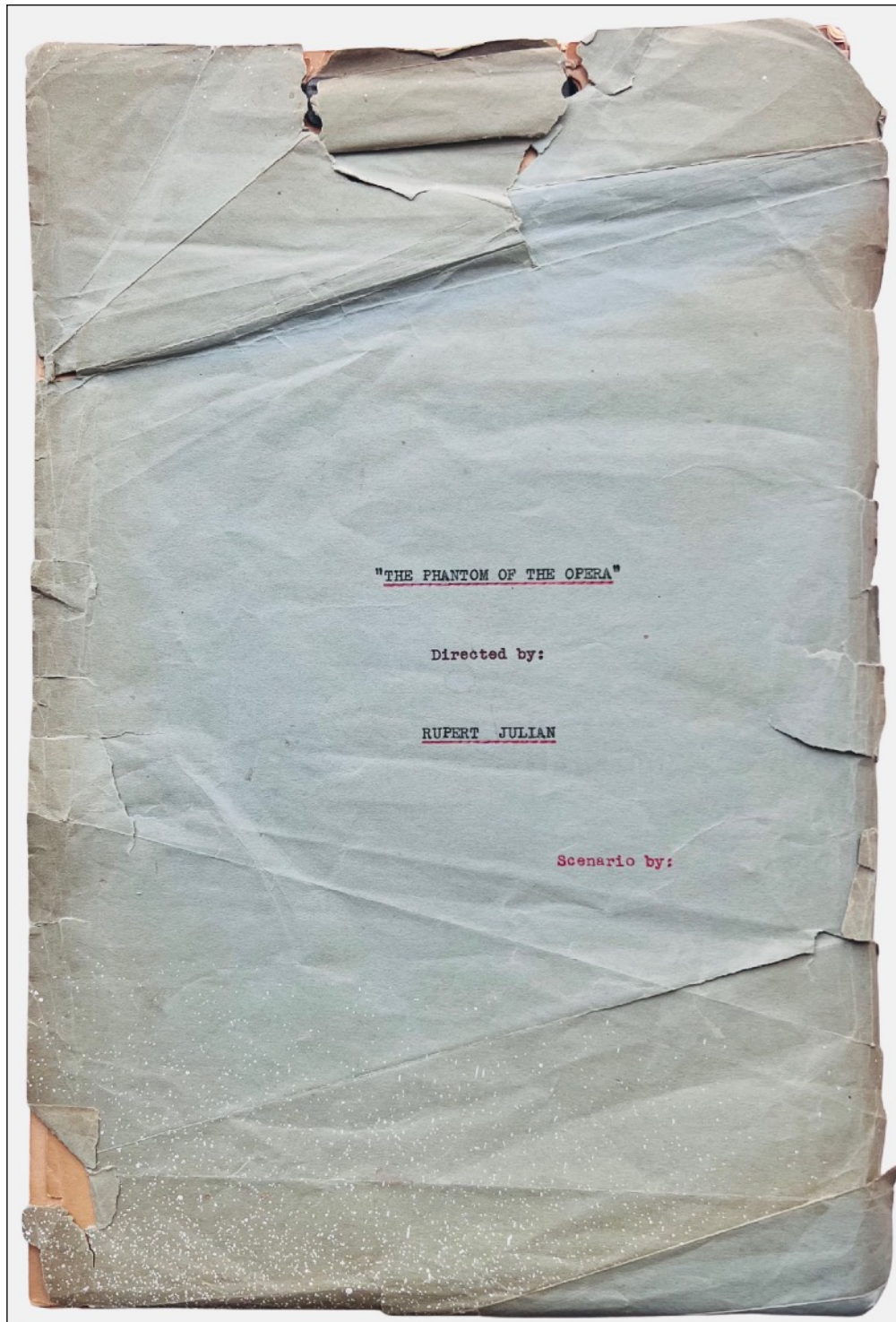
Riley notes explicitly that the fifth revised shooting script had most of its scenes of genuine terror removed, the front office having determined that the original material risked driving audiences from the theater. The present manuscript predates those cuts. It preserves Clawson's scenario as originally conceived, including a lengthy origin episode — the Phantom condemned to death on an anthill by a Sultan, rescued by the Persian who would become his lifelong associate — that was abandoned before



production began and survives in no filmed version of the story. Riley acknowledges this episode in his narrative account of the production's development; the present manuscript preserves it in primary form, as a physical document rather than a retrospective description.

The working draft is typed on 8½ × 13 in. legal-size pulp stock and bound in its original blue wrapper, extending to more than 200 pages. Handwritten annotations in graphite appear intermittently throughout, precise and analytical in character: targeted questions concerning continuity, pacing, and narrative logic — among them how Christine could communicate with Raoul while held captive, and why certain developments do not occur earlier within the opera — suggesting close critical review by a reader with editorial authority. The draft concludes during the climactic rescue attempt by Raoul and Ledoux, with no evidence of removed pages, consistent with an unfinished working draft rather than later loss.

Survival of any Universal silent-era screenplay is uncommon. Scripts were produced in minimal numbers on unstable pulp stock and seldom preserved; much of the studio's early paper record was subsequently discarded. The present manuscript documents the production at a stage prior to the commercial pressures that reshaped Clawson's scenario and the successive rewrites that displaced his original conception — preserving, in physical form, a version of *The Phantom of the Opera* that Universal chose not to make.



Original detached blue paper wrapper with typed title page crediting director Rupert Julian, showing wear, tears, and creasing consistent with studio use and the fragile pulp stock of Universal scripts from the mid-1920s.

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1

EXT. PARIS BOULEVARD. NIGHT. FADE IN:
This is a picture of what people imagine the
fashionable night life of Paris to be. The
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up and down the sidewalk. Carriages are
drawing up and departing. Parties are bidding
each other goodbye.

QUICK FADE OUT.

TITLE:

CITY OF WEALTH...AND OF POVERTY...
OF ROMANCE....AND OF TRAGEDY.

Opening page of the early draft screenplay showing the typed title, scene-setting prose for Paris, and initial exterior boulevard sequence, with struck-through descriptive text and wear consistent with studio use on fragile Universal pulp stock.

111

(Continued)

upon a stretcher. Buquet's face is covered with a handkerchief which has been dampened and will cling closely to the face. There are five other stage hands in the procession including Florine, who leads it. All have their heads bared. As this procession comes from the cellar and moves toward the stage, it interrupts Raoul's hasty exit and delays him. He slows up his pace and bows his head in the presence of death.

112

INT. MANAGERS' OFFICE. AMBER.

M.M. Moncharmin and Richard are discovered. The first night of their management has been a most successful one. The strain of this first night being over, they are sitting in easy chairs, chatting and enjoying their cigars. Their secretary enters, followed by the head groom of the Opera stables, dressed in the costume for the head groom. The Managers rise and are curious as to who this person is. The groom is reticent and worried. The secretary introduces him.

TITLE:

"THIS IS THE HEAD GROOM OF THE OPERA STABLES IN THE CELLARS."

113

MED. CLOSEUP OF GROUP. AMBER.

The new managers are mystified at this and question the secretary, "Cellars?" He nods and replies:

TITLE:

"THERE ARE FINE CELLARS, ONE BENEATH ANOTHER, AND IN THE LAST CELLARE IS A LAKE...A PART OF THE THIRD CELLAR IS USED AS A STABLE FOR THE TRAINED HORSES."

BACK: The managers immediately understand this explanation and turn to the head groom.

Annotated interior page showing scene descriptions, intertitle text, and a penciled marginal note addressing narrative continuity, characteristic of late-stage review during development of the production script.

431

CLOSEUP CHRISTINE. AMBER.

She peers through the screen. There is just the slightest fleeting tremor about her eyes. She turns to him with poorly affected surprise and tells him:

TITLE:

"WHY? THERE IS NO ONE THERE!"

432

A LONGER SHOT. AMBER.

Christine comes down the steps, trying to affect an air of being nonchalant. Erick steps up to her and takes her by the wrist, asking her:

TITLE:

"NOT EVEN THE LITTLE CHAP
YOU WERE GOING TO RUN AWAY
WITH?"

433

MED. CLOSEUP ERICK AND CHRISTINE. AMBER.

He holds her with his hollow eye. The terrible realization comes over her that Erick knows that Raoul is in the torture chamber. In a helpless automatic way, knowing that he knows she ~~is~~ lying, she repeats: "No! No! No! Nobody is there!"

Final page of the early draft screenplay for *The Phantom of the Opera* — concluding with the climactic confrontation between Erik and Christine, including intertitle text and scene directions; the draft breaks off at this point, consistent with an unfinished working screenplay rather than later loss.

CONDITION:

The original wrapper is present but detached; internal leaves show expected brittleness, edge chipping, creases, foxing, marginal staining, and small losses, consistent with Universal scripts of the period.