

We enjoy watching "Phantom of the Opera" around Halloween with our friends, can you think of a better movie? Eerie, scary, romantic and full of masks! We find everyone gets in the act for this movie party, even the most timid.

**Set:** Dress the house for the Phantom's Lair- there are great wallpapers in Halloween shops that are of brick, castle stones, cemeteries. Paper your porch or recreation room with them to set the stage. Fog machines are a good buy now, some under \$20 and you can use them for a lot of different themes throughout the year. (Make sure you run them outside so not to set off your fire detectors!). Get some flame flicker bulbs from the hardware store and replace your lamps with those. It looks like a dungeon! Another good idea is to buy colored gels from your local theatrical supply house and put them around white spot lights. The gels, purples and blues, give your set a great foreboding look and they last forever, unlike colored flood lights.



**Costumes:** We suggest setting Phantom at a Venetian Carnival even though the story is set in France. The "Masquerade" sequence from the musical makes for a great visual for your guests to plan their costumes. They can find a wide range of costumes to buy at a Halloween or Party store for under \$10. A cape, a mask for men and for women, they can find vintage gowns at an antique shop or at our party, many of our friends wore their daughter's prom dresses! It's fun to be creative. Remember that your set lighting will make everything look great.



**Music:** We hired our local high school symphony orchestra to play a series of classical pieces during the socializing period of the party. With everyone attired in their operatic finery, it was a very stunning effect. All the guests donated money to the school music department and the band got to learn new music and have a great time.

**Action:** Amid the swirling fog, the Baroque music courtesy of the String Ensemble and the stunning costumes, our guests enjoyed mingling in the Phantom's lair. Spreading cocktail height

tables around the room with various Italian appetizers brought by the guests made for an great pre-movie experience.

**Catering:** With Carnival, there are a lot of Italian recipes that can be found at bookstores, online, etc., it would difficult to name the dish from the party that drew the highest praise. Rachael Ray has great "Passport to Venice" suggestions that many in our group brought as their potluck choice. It's better to go with many appetizer options as your guests will enjoy sampling rather than a large meal and in these costumes, no one was too keen to siit for long!

**Drink:** We recommend serving Bellinis as your guests arrive. They're easy to make and a great way to greet your revelers.! In a champagne flute, add a slice of frozen peach, one shot of peach schnapps and fill the glass with Champagne. It is the Venetian drink of choice and was fun for everyone to learn to make their own.

For wine, ask a friend who is knowledgeable or ask you local wine shop, our "movie club sommelier" Craig suggests inexpensive, yet tasty red and white wine options.

All of these wines come from the Veneto region of Italy which includes Venice and Verona. They should all be around \$10-\$15

Red Wines: Allegrini – Valpolicella Classico

Corte Giara – Merlot/corvine IGT or the Ripaso Valpolicella or Stella – Merlot IGT

White Wines: Corte Giara – Garganega or Pinot Grigio IGT

