

EDITED BY

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≡ The Oxford Handbook of
FAUST IN MUSIC

THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF

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Edited by

LORNA FITZSIMMONS

and

CHARLES McKNIGHT

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THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF

FAUST IN MUSIC

INTRODUCTION

CHARLES MCKNIGHT AND LORNA FITZSIMMONS

Without music the Faust myth would not have lived on after Goethe. Life, however, means transformation.

—Hans Joachim Kreutzer

THE story of Faust, the magical tale that has so intrigued not only European culture but also, increasingly, the world, arose in Germany in the sixteenth century. Today, the identity of the “Faustus” figure remains enigmatic. In the extant documents, the name is associated with necromancy, fortune telling, and disrepute. The documentary evidence for the “historical” Faust(s) is sparse and often unreliable. Palmer and More, in *The Sources of the Faust Tradition from Simon Magus to Lessing* (1936), cite twenty-four mentions in letters, account books, Luther’s *Tischreden*, and other writings. These extend from a letter by Johannes Tritheim (1462–1516) in 1507 to the *Operae horarum subcissivarum* of Philipp Camerarius (1537–1624) published in 1591. All mentions of Faustus as a living person disappear around 1540.¹

The oral tradition of Faust took on such fantastic trappings that in 1587 the Lutheran printer Johann Spies (ca. 1540–1623) published the *Historia von D. Johann Fausten* (*History of Doctor John Faustus*) by an anonymous author as a warning against the ghastly end awaiting anyone who transgresses the God-given limits of human knowledge. The *Historia*’s narrative relates a fascinating account of the divinity scholar Faustus’s pact with the devil, his adventures, his magic, and his last year of life. The pact with the devil remains a fairly constant element in subsequent versions of the tale of Faustus. The adventures and conjurings vary a bit more in later works, with Faust’s death and damnation prevailing until Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s (1749–1832) *Faust* (1808, 1832).

Soon after its publication in Frankfurt, the *Historia* was translated into English, Dutch, French, and Czech. The earliest surviving English edition was translated by the anonymous “P. F.” and published in London in 1592 under the title *The Historie of the Damnable Life, and Deserved Death of Doctor John Faustus*. It was probably circulating in England

as early as 1588. The English Faust Book was the basis of Christopher Marlowe's (1564–93) influential play *The Tragical History of D. Faustus* (ca. 1588–89 or ca. 1592), first published in 1604. Note the word “Tragical” in the title. Marlowe's Faustus is a more fully developed human personality, and his quest for knowledge leads to tragedy; the hero still perishes at the end, but his intentions are not entirely evil. As the chorus in the epilogue states, “Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight, / And burnèd is Apollo's laurel bough, / That sometime grew within this learnèd man.”² Marlowe's Faustus seeks forbidden knowledge and is punished, but his desire to possess the secrets of the universe has a more sympathetic quality than that of the *Historia's* Faustus. Although the Marlovian play is high-minded tragedy, it has plenty of comic scenes, which became an important aspect of the next dramatic incarnations of the Faust story as it traveled back to Germany.

As well as being performed on the boards, the story of Faustus filled the air musically at an early stage in its history. Songs about Faustus conjuring students or silencing peasants were being heard by 1588.³ On February 28, 1589, an English ballad was entered in the Stationers' Company Register as “A ballad of the life and deathe of Doctor Faustus the great Cunngerer” by “Ric. Iones.”⁴ Since it has been lost, its relation to “The Judgment of God shewed upon one John Faustus,” entered in the Register in 1674/75, remains unclear. This ballad was sung to the tune of “Fortune My Foe,” which by 1636 had gained the alternative title of “Doctor Faustus.”⁵

Early modern audiences beheld incarnations of Faustus revealed in stage and marionette adaptations of Marlowe's tragedy, which itinerant troupes brought to Germany. The comedy of the clowns' roles was very popular in German towns, and puppeteers emphasized, therefore, comic antics and magic spectacle, which recontextualized the meaning of Faustus's pursuits.⁶ Remaining popular to the nineteenth century, the Faust puppet tradition led to a turning point in the history of the legend when Goethe first encountered the Faust story at a puppet show.⁷ Dramatizations of Faustus were almost driven from the serious German stage but found timely rescuers, most importantly, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–81), and, subsequently, Goethe.

Lessing's contributions to *Briefe, die neueste Literatur betreffend* (1759–65) include the “17. Literaturbrief” (“Letter on Literature XVII”) (1759), in which he dismisses Johann Christoph Gottsched's (1700–66) call for German playwrights to follow the path of the French, and upholds the plays of the English Elizabethans and local traditions as valuable alternatives to classicism. Applauding *Doktor Faust* (*Doctor Faustus*) as an exemplary work of theatrical genius, Lessing appended a scene from his own Faust drama, depicting Faust and seven spirits. Although Lessing's initial references to Faust imply a critical perspective toward the theme, reports of his Faust play, which was never published, suggest that he came to reconceive the hero's fate in terms of redemption instead of damnation.⁸

Goethe, who knew of the “17. Literaturbrief,” first engaged the Faust story seriously in the early 1770s and gave readings from his *Faust* in 1775; the draft that became known as the *Urfaust*, transcribed by Luise von Göchhausen (1752–1807), was not published until 1887. *Faust. Ein Fragment* (*Faust, A Fragment*) appeared in 1790, followed by *Faust*.

Eine Tragödie. Erster Teil (Faust, A Tragedy, Part I) in 1808. Goethe appears not to have taken up the Faust project again until the mid-1820s. The third act, *Helena, klassisch-romantische Phantasmagorie (Helena. Classical-Romantic Phantasmagoria)*, was published in 1827. The complete second part of *Faust* was published after Goethe's death in 1832. The composition of *Faust* thus spanned a period of sixty years.

Goethe's *Faust* is a profound masterwork with deep philosophical implications and social criticism. Although in some respects satiric of the Age of Reason, Goethe represents Faust as an Enlightenment hero striving to surpass the limitations imposed on him by nature and society. Goethe's hero sought knowledge but also experience. Faust gives up his life as a scholar because he believes there is more to be known and experienced outside his book-laden study. The pact he makes with Mephistopheles is not for the traditional twenty-four years. It is made in the form of a wager that Faust will never be content with any single moment:

Werd' ich zum Augenblicke sagen:
 Verweile doch! du bist so schön!
 Dann magst du mich in Fesseln schlagen,
 Dann will ich gern zu Grunde gehn!
 Dann mag die Totenglocke schallen,
 Dann bist du deines Dienstes frei,
 Die Uhr mag stehn, der Zeiger fallen,
 Es sei die Zeit für mich vorbei!

(If I should ever say to any moment:
 Tarry, remain! — you are so fair!
 then you may lay your fetters on me,
 then I will gladly be destroyed!
 Then they can toll the passing bell,
 your obligations then be ended—
 the clock may stop, its hand may fall,
 and time at last for me be over!)⁹

Mephistopheles is obliged to serve him until that “beautiful” moment arrives. After many years, and many adventures, it is Faust's constant striving that in the end saves him. His salvation, a major departure from the traditional story, is another point of contention between Goethe and his contemporaries.

Goethe's other major departure from the Faust tradition was the Gretchen tragedy. Earlier Fausts had encountered women or a spiritual semblance of Helena of Greece, but the Gretchen tragedy in its depth and significance is something of a completely different order. Since *Faust I* was all that was known of the drama for twenty years, the Romantic generation of the early nineteenth century viewed the Gretchen love story as the vital center of *Faust*. While the play as a whole is informed by Goethe's interest in music, the Gretchen tragedy is particularly musical in its use of solo songs, choruses, and dances—all the ingredients for a good opera, but also ample inspiration for other genres.

While not as well known as Goethe's *Faust*, Friedrich Maximilian von Klinger's (1752–1831) *Fausts Leben, Thaten und Höllenfahrt* (*Faustus: His Life, Death, and Doom*) (1791) is another memorable, but quite different, incarnation of Faust that has exerted some influence. *Fausts Leben* is a novel, a "Romance in Prose,"¹⁰ though much of it is written in the form of dramatic dialogue. In Klinger's telling, Faust wagers that he will be able to persuade the devil of the innate goodness of human beings, a wager he loses in the most horrible of ways and forfeits his soul to hell. The somber gruesomeness of Klinger's Faust story is a stark contrast to the optimism of Goethe's *Faust*.

Dissatisfaction with Goethe's *Faust* in the first half of the nineteenth century was sometimes vociferous. The 1808 *Faust* has an inconclusive ending as Faust flees with Mephistopheles, leaving Gretchen to her doom. Even though, when she calls on God, a voice from above announces that she has been redeemed, readers considered the ending tragic. And what had become of Faust himself? It was only in 1832 that Faust's redemption was revealed at the end of the second part of the play. Many people were outraged that Faust had not been condemned for his sins.

Meanwhile, the Fausts of the puppet plays continued to thrill audiences with exciting spectacles and a typically horrendous end for the hero. Goethe was not the only major thinker in the Faust tradition to succumb to their charm. Nikolaus Lenau (1802–50), Heinrich Heine (1797–1856), and Richard Wagner (1813–83) were among those who recognized the value of the Faust marionette theater.

Over the centuries, then, the Faust legend has appeared in an array of forms, with numerous thematic variations, presenting composers with many options from which to choose as they selected source materials for their Faust compositions.

PART 1: SYMPHONIC, CHORAL, CHAMBER, AND SOLO FAUST WORKS

Before the great operas came into being, the Faust story could be found in realms that tend to be more abstract and philosophical. Songs, piano music, orchestral works, choral works, and cantatas have all had a significant engagement with the Faust story. Table I.1 lists the non-operatic works discussed in part 1 of this book.

The songs sung in Goethe's "Auerbachs Keller in Leipzig" ("Auerbach's Wine-Cellar in Leipzig"), especially "Es war eine Ratt" ("Song of the Rat") and "Es war einmal ein König" ("Song of the Flea"), have been particularly attractive to composers (see Chapter 1). Beginning with Beethoven's "Aus Göthe's Faust" ("Flohlid," "Song of the Flea") in 1810, these texts have been perennial favorites in settings by Hector Berlioz (1803–69), Wagner, Franz Liszt (1811–86), and Modest Mussorgsky (1839–81), the latter of whose *Песня Мефистофеля в погребке Ауэрбаха* (*Песня о блохе*) ("*Pesnia Mefistofelia v pogrebke Auerbakha* [*Pesnia o blokhe*]" [Song of Mephistopheles in Auerbach's Cellar ("Song of the Flea")]) (1880) is exceptional. Their satire and humor have given these works a permanent place in the repertoire.

Table I.1 Symphonic, Choral, Chamber, and Solo Faust Compositions Discussed in This Book

Composer	Title and Date of Composition (or Publication)	Genre	Faust Source(s)
Ludwig van Beethoven	"Aus Göthe's Faust," 1809	Song	Goethe, <i>Faust</i>
Franz Schubert	"Gretchen am Spinnrade," "Szene aus 'Faust,'" and "Der König in Thule," 1814–17	Song	Goethe, <i>Faust</i>
Johann Christoph Kienlen	"Lied der lustigen Gesellen," [1817]	Song	Goethe, <i>Faust</i>
Conradin Kreutzer	"Recitativo ['Es war einmal ein König']," 1820	Song	Goethe, <i>Faust</i>
Anton Heinrich von Radziwill	"Lied des Brander" and "Lied des Mephistopheles," (1835)	Song	Goethe, <i>Faust</i>
Hector Berlioz	<i>Huit scènes de Faust</i> , 1828–29 <i>La damnation de Faust</i> , 1845–46	Cantata Cantata	Goethe, <i>Faust</i>
Robert Schumann	<i>Scenen aus Goethe's Faust</i> , 1844–53	Oratorio	Goethe, <i>Faust</i>
Richard Wagner	<i>Sieben Kompositionen zu Goethes Faust</i> , 1830–31 <i>Eine Faust-Ouvertüre</i> , 1839–40, 1854–55	Song Overture	Goethe, <i>Faust</i>
Franz Liszt	"Studentenlied, aus Göthes Faust," 1841–42 "Es war einmal ein König," 1844/45 <i>Chor der Engel aus Göthe's Faust II^{ter} Theil</i> , 1849 <i>Eine Faust-Symphonie in drei Charakterbildern (nach Goethe)</i> , 1854–57, 1861 <i>Mephisto-Walzer</i> , 1856–61, 1878–81, 1883, 1885	Song Choral Symphony Waltz	Goethe, <i>Faust</i> Lenau, <i>Faust</i>
Pablo de Sarasate	<i>Souvenirs de Faust</i> , 1864 <i>Nouvelle fantaisie sur Faust</i> , [1874]	Fantasy	Gounod, <i>Faust</i>
Joan Baptista Pujol	<i>Fausto opera de Ch. Gounod: gran fantasia para piano</i> , [1866]	Fantasy	Gounod, <i>Faust</i>
Felip Pedrell i Sabaté	<i>Transcripción de la serenata del Fausto</i> and <i>Fantasia sobre motivos del Fausto</i> , [1867] <i>Fausto: rapsodia para piano a cuatro manos sobre motivos de la ópera de Gounod</i> , [1893] <i>Faust: rapsodia para piano sobre motivos de la ópera de Gounod</i> , [after 1897]	Fantasy Rhapsody	Gounod, <i>Faust</i>

(continued)

Table I.1 Continued

Composer	Title and Date of Composition (or Publication)	Genre	Faust Source(s)
Modest Mussorgsky	Песня Мефистофеля в погребке Ауэрбаха (Песня о блохе), 1879	Song	Goethe, <i>Faust</i>
Gustav Mahler	<i>Achte Symphonie</i> , 1906–7	Symphony	Goethe, <i>Faust</i>
Igor Stravinsky	Песня о блохе, 1909 (orchestration of Mussorgsky's Песня о блохе and Beethoven's "Aus Göthe's Faust")	Song	Goethe, <i>Faust</i>
Hanns Eisler	<i>Rhapsodie für großes Orchester</i> , 1949	Rhapsody	Goethe, <i>Faust</i>
Alfred Schnittke	<i>Seid nüchtern und wachet</i> , 1982–83	Cantata	Spies, <i>Historia von D. Johann Fausten</i>

Franz Schubert (1797–1828) composed five *Faust* settings (1814–17), the most well known of which is “Gretchen am Spinnrade” (“Gretchen at the Spinning Wheel”) (1814) (see Chapter 2). The musical genius of Schubert turned this small moment in *Faust I* into one of the composer’s most profound Lieder. Goethe created the scene as a small window into Gretchen’s state of mind, but in Schubert’s hands it became a highly dramatic scene that is carried beyond the words by the music.

The first well-known large-scale work based on the Faust legend that is not an opera (though it is operatic in style, as seen in the composer’s designation of it as a “dramatic legend”) is by Berlioz (see Chapter 3). His *La damnation de Faust* (*The Damnation of Faust*) (1846), based on the earlier *Huit scènes de Faust* (*Eight Scenes from Faust*) (1829), made a significant departure from Goethe, as can be seen from the title of the work: while Faust descends to hell, Marguerite experiences a glorious apotheosis in heaven. Berlioz also places Faust in Hungary at the opening of the piece, where he witnesses a rousing display of Hungarian nationalism conveyed by the “Marche hongroise” (“Hungarian March”). Berlioz dedicated *La damnation de Faust* to Liszt.

Also to mid-century belongs *Scenen aus Goethe’s Faust* (*Scenes from Goethe’s Faust*) (1853) by Robert Schumann (1810–56) (see Chapter 4). This project began as an opera in Schumann’s mind but he decided to make it an oratorio. Schumann draws the text for the first part of the oratorio from four *Faust I* scenes: Faust and Gretchen in the garden (mainly “Garten” [“A Garden”]), Gretchen’s prayer to the Mater dolorosa (“Zwinger” [“By the Ramparts”]), and Gretchen’s scene in the cathedral (“Dom” [“Cathedral”]). The second part draws on three scenes, this time from *Faust II*: the sunrise and Faust’s monologue from the opening of act 1 (“Anmutige Gegend” [“A Pleasant Landscape”]), the visit of the four gray women in act 5 (“Mitternacht” [“Palace”]), and Faust’s death (“Großer Vorhof des Palasts” [“Palace”]). The third and largest part of the oratorio,

“Faust’s Verklärung” (“Faust’s Transfiguration”), is taken from the final scene of *Faust II* (“Bergschluchten, Wald, Fels” [“Mountain Gorges”]). Schumann’s aim was not to recount Goethe’s story, which was certainly known by audiences in central Germany, but to imbue these dramatic scenes with a lyrical and orchestral halo.

Wagner had an enduring interest in the Faust theme, first shown in *Sieben Kompositionen zu Goethes Faust* (*Seven Compositions on Goethe’s Faust*) (1831), which includes “Branders Lied” (“Brander’s Song”) and “Lied des Mephistopheles” (“Song of Mephistopheles”) (see Chapters 1 and 5). Later in the decade, the German composer began his *Eine Faust-Ouvertüre* (*A Faust Overture*) (1839–40, revised 1854–55), which he intended as the first movement of a symphony. Expressive of the Faust character, with a hint of the Mephistophelean, the overture is Goethean in origin. Goethe’s concept of the “Ewig-Weibliche” (“Eternal Feminine”), with which *Faust II* concludes, appears to have been inspirational to a number of Wagner’s works, though he considered Goethe’s hero deficient in various respects. Like Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, Goethe’s *Faust* had an indelible impact on the development of Wagner’s music drama.

Liszt dedicated *Eine Faust-Symphonie in drei Charakterbildern (nach Goethe)* (*A Faust Symphony in Three Character Sketches after Goethe*), which was premiered in 1857, to Berlioz (see Chapter 6). It is notable that the two great Faustian orchestral incarnations in the middle of the nineteenth century were not by German composers, but rather one French and one Hungarian. Liszt’s *Faust-Symphonie* is not only a compelling musical masterpiece, but also an example of the deep psychological insight into the Faust story that became a hallmark of twentieth-century thinking about Faust. The *Faust-Symphonie* takes the form of three character sketches, with that of Faust serving as the first movement. The music suggests that Faust is “redeemed” in the end, but this is not explicit.

Faustian fantasias become popular in Spain following the great success of Charles Gounod’s (1818–93) opera *Faust* (1859), which was premiered in Barcelona in 1864 (see Chapter 7). Among them, Pablo de Sarasate’s (1844–1908) *Nouvelle fantaisie sur Faust* (*Fantasy on Gounod’s “Faust” for Violin and Orchestra [or Piano]*) [1874] is the best known. Joan Baptista Pujol’s (1835–98) *Fausto opera de Ch. Gounod: gran fantasía para piano* (*Faust opera by Ch. Gounod: grand fantasy for piano*) [1866] has a fascinating relationship to Marià Fortuny’s evocative painting *Fantasia sobre Fausto* (*Fantasy on Faust*) (1866). Felip Pedrell i Sabaté (1841–1922) also wrote Faust fantasias, *Transcripción de la serenata del Fausto* (*Transcription of the serenade of [Gounod’s] Faust*) and *Fantasia sobre motivos del Fausto* (*Fantasy on motifs of [Gounod’s] Faust*) [1867], as well as two Gounodian rhapsodies.

Like Schumann, Gustav Mahler (1860–1911) employed the final scene of the second part of Goethe’s *Faust* in the second of two massive movements of his *Achte Symphonie* (*Eighth Symphony*), which was composed 1906–7 and premiered in 1910 (see Chapter 8). The first movement is built on the ninth-century Latin hymn “Veni, creator spiritus.” Why these two texts? Mahler does not use them for dramatic effect, though they are dramatic in his setting. He seems to be drawing on the intertextual resonance of

the traditions associated with each text. Ending with the “Chorus mysticus” from *Faust* gives the symphony an air of mysticism that transcends the work’s enormous size.

In the twentieth century, the Faust story became increasingly political. The most powerful political version of the Faust legend is Thomas Mann’s (1875–1955) novel *Doktor Faustus* (*Doctor Faustus*) (1947). In this novel, the Faust figure symbolizes Western cultural history in general (especially music) and German history in particular. Mann’s Faust is a composer, based not on Goethe but the 1587 *Historia*. Mann has much to say about the essential musicality of German culture and the demonic nature of musical creativity. The author’s concern with infusing political allegory into the Faust story would render the novel a landmark in Western literature.

Hanns Eisler (1898–1962) had read Mann’s novel in 1948, the year before he accepted a commission to compose a work for the celebration of Goethe’s bicentennial in the Soviet Occupation Zone, soon to be the German Democratic Republic, in 1949 (see Chapter 9). Intending to set part of the third act of *Faust II*, Eisler recycled some of his earlier music in the resultant *Rhapsodie für großes Orchester* (*Rhapsody for large orchestra*) (1949), with Goethe’s text sung near the start. While his *Rhapsodie* was well received, his subsequent Faust work, the proposed opera *Johann Faustus*, did not fare so well. His libretto, published in 1952, drew on several Faust sources, the heart of which were the Faust puppet plays. Eisler also had Mann’s *Doktor Faustus* in mind as he worked on the piece. With Goethe’s *Faust* far from central to it, commentators objected to the adaptation choices Eisler had made in his use of Faust legend. The project never progressed beyond the libretto.

A number of composers discussed in this book have taken a personal interest in the Faust story. Alfred Schnittke (1934–98) read Mann’s *Doktor Faustus* shortly after its publication in German and drew many parallels between himself and Mann’s hero (see Chapter 10). Mann’s Faust figure is a composer, Adrian Leverkühn, who appears to derive his creative powers through a bargain with the devil—at least that is how Leverkühn himself explains it. The novel’s complex portrait of the modern composer is indebted to the work of Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951) and Theodor W. Adorno (1903–69). Leverkühn is Faustian in several respects, including his composition of a Faust cantata, *D. Fausti Weheklag* (*The Lamentation of Doctor Faustus*). Deeply inspired by the novel, Schnittke, in turn, composed a Faust cantata, *Seid nüchtern und wachet* (*Be sober and watch*) (from the First Epistle of Peter) (1983), and an opera, *Historia von D. Johann Fausten*, which was premiered in 1995, based on the Spies Faust Book.

PART 2: FAUST IN OPERA

It seems almost inevitable that the Faust story would find its way to the operatic stage. When Goethe and Johann Peter Eckermann (1792–1854) discussed a musical setting of *Faust* in 1829, Goethe suggested that the music would have to be in the style of Mozart’s

Don Giovanni and that Mozart would be the appropriate composer. *Don Giovanni* had been composed forty-two years before this conversation, and Mozart had been dead for thirty-seven years. Goethe's musical sensibility was rooted in the eighteenth century, and he did not think of suggesting composers such as Beethoven (who had died two years before). His next suggestion was Giacomo Meyerbeer (1791–1864), seemingly unaware that the German composer was working on *Robert le diable* at the time. (It was premiered in 1831.)¹¹

In Romantic terms, Goethe's *Faust* has many features that lend themselves to operatic adaptation, including "a foredoomed love affair, a hero in conflict with himself, a villain of suave charm and real menace, an aura of the supernatural, and, at the end, a veritable *deus ex machina* providing salvation."¹² Table I.2 summarizes the operatic *Fausts* discussed in this book. As can be seen, they are almost all based on the first part of Goethe's *Faust*, but interest in the *Faust* puppet play tradition is also important. It is also noteworthy that, with the exception of Louis Spohr (1784–1859), whose opera in some ways recalls Klingler more than Goethe, a number of major German composers viewed the *Faust* story not so much as a vehicle for full-scale dramatic settings, but one suited to smaller, more intimate compositions. Large-scale theatrical works were common in France and Italy but still relatively rare until the middle of the nineteenth century in Germany, *Der Freischütz* (*The Freeshooter*) (1821), by Carl Maria von Weber (1786–1826), which features a demonic bargain, being a notable exception.

It was in a gruesome *Sturm und Drang* (Storm and Stress) form that the *Faust* legend made its first significant appearance on the operatic stage, in *Faust* by Spohr, with a libretto by Josef Karl Bernard (1780–1850) that draws on a number of sources, including Klingler's novel and Heinrich von Kleist's (1777–1811) play *Das Käthchen von Heilbronn* (1810) (see Chapter 11). Already a noted violinist and composer of concerti, Spohr sought to make a name for himself as an opera composer. The subject of *Faust* would have been attractive to the audiences of his day, given the plethora of literary *Faust* incarnations circulating then. Spohr's *Faust* was first performed in 1816 as a *Romantische Oper* (Romantic opera), and in the composer's revision as a grand opera in 1852. Perhaps the aspect of Spohr's *Faust* that has received the most attention is his use of a series of leitmotifs that later influenced Weber and Wagner.

The most successful *Faust* opera has been Gounod's *Faust* (see Chapter 12). Jules Barbier (1825–1901) and Michel Carré's (1822–72) libretto is based on Carré's play *Faust et Marguerite* (*Faust and Marguerite*) (1850), which, in turn, is based on *Faust I*. Its focus on the Marguerite story made the opera extremely popular. The Metropolitan Opera in New York opened with it in 1883. Not until World War I did its popularity begin to ebb. On stages today (such as the Royal Opera House, London, 2019), it continues to appeal. The *Faust* that it portrays is almost overshadowed by the powerful characterization of Méphistophélès. Marguerite's brother, Valentin, has a prominence in Gounod's *Faust* that is far greater than that in Goethe's *Faust*. At the end, Marguerite is redeemed by a heavenly decree, as in Goethe's scene, but *Faust* kneels and prays, protected by the sword of an angel, much to the consternation of Méphistophélès.

Table I.2 Operatic Faust Compositions Discussed in This Book

Composer	Title and Date of Composition	Librettist(s) and Faust Source(s)
Louis Spohr	<i>Faust</i> (1813)	Josef Karl Bernard Friedrich Maximilian von Klinger, <i>Fausts Leben, Thaten und Höllenfahrt</i> Goethe, <i>Faust</i>
Charles Gounod	<i>Faust</i> (1858–59)	Jules Barbier and Michel Carré Carré, <i>Faust et Marguerite</i>
Arrigo Boito	<i>Mefistofele</i> (1862–68, 1871–81)	Arrigo Boito Goethe, <i>Faust</i>
Ferruccio Busoni	<i>Doktor Faust</i> (1914–23)	Ferruccio Busoni Faust puppet plays Goethe, <i>Faust</i>
Igor Stravinsky	<i>The Rake's Progress</i> (1947–51)	W. H. Auden and Chester Kallman Goethe, <i>Faust</i>
Hanns Eisler	<i>Johann Faustus</i> (ca. 1951–52) (libretto only)	Hanns Eisler Faust puppet plays Goethe, <i>Faust</i>
Havergal Brian	<i>Faust</i> (1955–56)	Havergal Brian Goethe, <i>Faust</i>
Henri Pousseur	<i>Votre Faust</i> (1961–68)	Michel Butor Goethe, <i>Faust</i> Faust puppet play Marlowe, <i>Doctor Faustus</i>
Josef Berg	<i>Provizorni předvedení opery Johanes doktor Faust</i> (1965–70) (chamber opera) <i>Johanes doktor Faust</i> (1965–70) (grand opera)	Josef Berg Marlowe, <i>Doctor Faustus</i> Goethe, <i>Faust</i> Josef Berg Matěj Kopecký, <i>Doktor Faust</i>
John Adams	<i>Doctor Atomic</i> (2004–5)	Peter Sellars Goethe, <i>Faust</i> Mann, <i>Doktor Faustus</i> Baudelaire, poems
Pascal Dusapin	<i>Faustus, the Last Night</i> (2005–6)	Pascal Dusapin Marlowe, <i>Doctor Faustus</i>

Arrigo Boito's (1842–1918) opera *Mefistofele* (*Mephistopheles*) premiered at La Scala in 1868, but it was the revised version, staged in Bologna in 1875, that entered the repertoire (see Chapter 13). The composer drew on his extensive knowledge of the Faust theme in literature and music in adapting Goethe's *Faust* for the opera. In the second version, he suppressed some of the irreverence of the first, a Goethean legacy, while tightening the pace. Few changes were made to the eponymous Mefistofele, however, whose power towers over the other characters in the work.

Ferruccio Busoni (1866–1924) presents us with a Faust composer of a rather different type, perhaps the most learned of all the Faust composer-poets (see Chapter 14).¹³ Busoni worked on the music of his Faust opera, *Doktor Faust* (*Doctor Faust*), from 1916 to 1923, leaving it unfinished at the time of his death in 1924. His pupil, Philipp Jarnach (1892–1982), completed the work for the first performance in Dresden in 1925. In 1985, another version of the score, completed by composer and musicologist Antony Beaumont (1949–), was premiered in Bologna. Although some glances at Goethe appear now and then, Busoni's *Faust* takes as its main point of departure the puppet plays, as the composer makes clear in the prologue addressed by the Poet to the audience. The Poet explains that he considered Merlin and Don Juan as heroes, but finally settled on the resilient puppet-play Faust.

The period immediately following World War II was rich in Faust incarnations. It is no coincidence that Thomas Mann, Eisler, and Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971) all spent the war years in southern California. *The Rake's Progress* (1951) by Stravinsky, W. H. Auden (1907–73), and Chester Kallman (1921–75) is the story of a Faust-like character inspired by the satirical drawings of William Hogarth (1697–1764) (see Chapter 15). Auden's versification served as an inspiration for the structure and musical texture of the opera. The hero loves his sweetheart, Anne Trulove, but is corrupted by the devil and life in the big city (eighteenth-century London). Auden and Kallman drew on Goethe's *Faust* in the libretto.

For his opera *Faust* (1955–56), Havergal Brian (1876–1972) created a libretto by condensing Goethe's *Faust I* while trying to respect the drama's philosophic turns (see Chapter 16). This was an ambitious project by any standard, especially one by an English composer writing in German. To Brian, the thought of Germany conjured medieval, Gothic imaginings, yet the "Hexenküche" ("Witch's Kitchen") and "Walpurgisnacht" ("Walpurgis Night") scenes from Goethe's *Faust* are not part of his opera, which represents the first part of Goethe's drama with thirteen solo voices. That Brian's "musical prose" is also dense has likely played a role in preventing this opera from gaining the popularity that often accrues to *Faust* musical settings.

In the mid-twentieth century, Faust moved into the avant-garde experimental musical world. Although the hero of Belgian composer Henri Pousseur's (1929–2009) *Votre Faust* (*Your Faust*) (1969), a composer called Henri, might call to mind Mann's casting of Faust as a composer, Pousseur and his collaborator, French writer Michel Butor (1926–2016),

based their “*fantaisie variable, genre opéra*” (variable fantasy in the operatic genre) on Goethe’s and Marlowe’s versions of the legend, with colorful borrowings from the puppet play tradition, rather than the Faust Book on which Mann centered Leverkühn (see Chapter 17). In this innovative work, which was premiered in Milan in 1969, the Goethean romance is given the iconoclastic twist of a bifurcating storyline, which invites audience participation in determining the heroine’s fate. *Votre Faust* is also distinctive in the breadth of its musical quotation, which ranges from Monteverdi to Webern. Conceiving of Faust as an “*open question*,” Pousseur’s adaptation of the myth created new directions for the operatic genre and serialism.

The innovative creative energy of the 1960s is also evident in Czech composer Josef Berg’s (1927–71) grand opera *Johanes doktor Faust* (Johanes Doctor Faust) (1965–70) (see Chapter 18). Basing his libretto on the Faust puppet play by Matěj Kopecký (1775–1847), Berg wanted to emphasize a folk-like approach to the Faust story, rather than a high-literary one. He composed the opera in parallel with his work on a demythologically naive chamber opera featuring Faust, Anděl (Angel), and Bohodábel (God-devil), entitled *Provizorní předvedení opery Johanes doktor Faust* (The provisional performance of the opera Johanes Doctor Faust) (1965–70), first performed, in part, in 1971. The score of Berg’s grand opera *Johanes doktor Faust* is suggestive of his humor and his interest in the revival of the madrigal. Left half-scored, upon his early death, the work was completed by Miloslav Ištvan and Miloš Štědroň and premiered in Brno in 1981.

Faust has appeared on the operatic stage in at least two new notable incarnations in the twenty-first century. Featuring a libretto by Peter Sellars (1957–), John Adams’s (1947–) *Doctor Atomic* (2005), commissioned by the San Francisco Opera, portrays J. Robert Oppenheimer (1904–67) as an American Faust who makes a pact with the military that enables him to assemble a team of the most brilliant scientists of the day to work on the development of the atomic bomb (see Chapter 19). Oppenheimer’s eventual fall from political grace and his troubled conscience over the use of the weapon he and his team constructed parallel those of the pre-Goethe Fausts. In composing the libretto, Sellars used a “*montage*” technique that recalls Mann’s *Doktor Faustus*.

French composer Pascal Dusapin’s (1955–) opera *Faustus, the Last Night* (2006) is a critical commentary on the Faust legend itself (see Chapter 20). The libretto Dusapin wrote for the opera is highly reflexive, giving prominence to Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* and Shakespeare’s *Taming of the Shrew*. The style of the piece reflects a revival of the composer’s earlier interest in speech intonation, associated now with the jester figure Sly. It also recalls the work of Alban Berg, but without the Bergian lack of light humor. The Mephistopheles who counterfeits as a rabbit encapsulates the “*atmosphere of kitsch*” in this ironic revamping of the Faust legend.

PART 3: FAUST IN BALLET AND MUSICAL THEATER

In addition to the operatic tradition, the Faust legend has inspired a significant tradition of intercultural expression in ballet and non-operatic musical theater (see Table I.3). Explicit Fausts are relatively rare on the ballet stage, though there are Faust-like heroes; Schnittke's ballet *Peer Gynt* (1986) is a good example. Several ballets appeared around the time of Goethe's death, one in Copenhagen in 1832 by the Danish ballet master August Bournonville (1805–79), with music composed and arranged by Philip Ludvig Keck (1790–1848), and a second, at the King's Theatre in London in 1833, choreographed by André-Jean-Jacques Deshayes (1777–1846), with music by Adolphe Adam (1803–56)

Table I.3 Faustian Ballets and Musical Theater Discussed in This Book

Composer	Title and Date of Premiere	Genre	Faust Source(s)
Philip Ludvig Keck	<i>Faust</i> (1832)	Ballet	Goethe, <i>Faust</i>
Adolphe Adam	<i>Faust</i> (1833)	Ballet	Goethe, <i>Faust</i>
František Škvor	<i>Doktor Faust</i> (1926)	Ballet	Heine, <i>Der Doktor Faust: ein Tanzpoem</i>
Henry Krips	<i>Faust</i> (1941)	Ballet	Heine, <i>Der Doktor Faust: ein Tanzpoem</i> Goethe, <i>Faust</i>
Werner Egk	<i>Abraxas</i> (1948)	Ballet	Heine, <i>Der Doktor Faust: ein Tanzpoem</i> Goethe, <i>Faust</i>
Richard Adler and Jerry Ross	<i>Damn Yankees</i> (1955)	Musical	Goethe, <i>Faust</i> <i>The Devil and Daniel Webster</i> (film, dir. William Dieterle; story, Stephen Vincent Benét)
Tom Sankey	<i>The Golden Screw</i> (1966)	Musical	Goethe, <i>Faust</i> Marlowe, <i>Doctor Faustus</i>
Joseph M. Kookoolis and Scott Fagan	<i>Soon</i> (1971)	Musical	Goethe, <i>Faust</i>
Helen Gifford	<i>Regarding Faustus</i> (1983)	Musical	Marlowe, <i>Doctor Faustus</i>
Randy Newman	<i>Randy Newman's Faust</i> (1995)	Musical	Goethe, <i>Faust</i>

(see Chapter 21). Although principally based on the first part of Goethe's *Faust*, both ballets depart from the source, often in similar ways. Deshayes's adaptation reflects the French interest in the Faust theme, and also borrows from Bournonville's.

In 1846, the German poet Heinrich Heine was commissioned by the London impresario Benjamin Lumley (1811–75) to write a ballet scenario based on the Faust story (see Chapter 22). The result was *Der Doktor Faust: ein Tanzpoem* (*Doctor Faust: A Ballet Poem*) (1851). The London staging of Heine's scenario never materialized, but there were three significant productions in the twentieth century, in Prague (1926), Sydney (1941), and Munich (1948), with music by František Škvor (1898–1970), Henry Krips (1912–87), and Werner Egk (1901–83), respectively. Though he retains some Goethean elements, Heine returns to Spies and the puppet plays, and his devil is feminized as Mephistophela, which is like the name of the character who dispatches Faust at the end of Schnittke's *Faust Cantata*.

Faust has had a checkered career in the American popular musical theater. *Damn Yankees* (1955 on stage [revived in 1994] and a film in 1958) was a successful adaptation of the Faust story for Broadway (see Chapter 23). The story was adapted to the quintessentially American realm of baseball. The Faust character, Joe Boyd, is transformed by Mr. Applegate into a star hitter for the Washington Senators, enabling them to defeat their archrivals, the New York Yankees. In the end, he returns to his ordinary life and the devilish Applegate is defeated. The show is more about the affirmation of middle-class American values of the 1950s than the eternal struggle between good and evil that characterized many earlier Fausts.

There have been several attempts to incorporate Faust into rock genres. Some rock musicals have had limited success, and concept albums such as *Randy Newman's Faust* (1995) have sought to relate the Faust story to modern pop culture (see Chapter 24). Tom Sankey's (1933–2010) Off-Off Broadway musical *The Golden Screw* (1966) draws on Goethe and Marlowe in its ambivalent look at the commercialization of the arts. The Broadway musical *Soon* (1971), by Joseph M. Kookoolis (1940–79) and Scott Fagan (1945–), also explores industry and art through a Faustian lens. More explicitly Goethean in inspiration, *Randy Newman's Faust* recasts the Faust hero as a student whose love affair with Margaret (Linda Ronstadt in the concept album) adapts the Gretchen tragedy.

Catering to more intellectual circles, *Regarding Faustus* (1983) by the Australian composer Helen Gifford (1935–) is a multimedia theatrical production that returns to the early modern version of Faust made famous by Marlowe (see Chapter 25). While no attempt is made in this one-act theater piece to reset Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* in the twentieth century, the early modern theme is modernized through the work's psychological and aesthetic approach. Like a number of other twentieth-century Faust compositions, Gifford's libretto is a self-conscious assemblage of different works, bringing the Faust theme into dialogue with Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* (ca. 1587), Robert Greene's (ca. 1558–92) *The Honorable Historie of Frier Bacon, and Frier Bongay* (ca. 1589), a Shakespeare sonnet, and John Marston's (ca. 1576–1634) *What You Will* (1601). In contrast to Marlowe's devil, Gifford's Mephistophilis, played by the same singer as Faustus, is

a disembodied presence expressed in sound, suggesting the hero's alter ego. Enhancing the work's interculturalism, the thunderstick (bull-roarer) twirled over Faustus's head embodies the totem-god in Australian rites.

Since Goethe, Faust has had a diverse life in almost all genres of music. While it is too early to tell in which directions the rich history of Faust in music may evolve in the twenty-first century, the indications are that the legend will continue to be a source of creative inspiration, as it has been since its beginnings. Faustus began life as a literary and popular culture phenomenon in the sixteenth century, and the early ballad sung in the streets about him at that time was prophetic of the popularity of musical incarnations of the theme in other forms and later centuries. In the sixteenth century, Faustus was used as a didactic story to warn of the evil wiles of the devil. Marlowe made him more human than allegorical. In the Enlightenment, Faust became the archetype of human questing for knowledge and fulfillment. The Romantics saw Faust as a bearer of authentic, non-rational emotions. Faust later came to carry the burden of the effects of two world wars and emerged in the mid-twentieth century as a conveyer of social and individual angst. As powerful as the character of Faust is in Goethe, the Spies and puppet-play Fausts keep recurring. Perhaps that is where we should look to find the enduring influence of the Faust legend.

NOTES

1. Philip Mason Palmer and Robert Pattison More, *The Sources of the Faust Tradition from Simon Magus to Lessing* (New York: Octagon Books, 1978), 81–126.
2. Christopher Marlowe, “*Doctor Faustus, A-Text (1604)*,” in *Doctor Faustus: A- and B-Texts (1604, 1616)*, ed. David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1993), E. 1–3.
3. Osman Durrani, *Faust: Icon of Modern Culture* (Mountfield: Helm Information, 2004), 244.
4. *A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London; 1554–1640 A.D.*, vol. 2, ed. Edward Arber (London: Privately printed, 1875), 516.
5. John Henry Jones, introduction to *The English Faust Book: A Critical Edition Based on the Text of 1592*, ed. John Henry Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 52.
6. Palmer and More, *Sources of the Faust Tradition*, 242–44.
7. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *From My Life: Poetry and Truth, Parts One to Three*, ed. Thomas P. Saine and Jeffrey L. Sammons, trans. Robert R. Heitner (New York: Suhrkamp, 1987), 306.
8. G. E. Lessing, “Letter on Literature XVII (1759),” in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust*, ed. Cyrus Hamlin, trans. Walter Arndt (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976), 391; Hugh Barr H. Nisbet, *Gotthold Ephraim Lessing: His Life, Works, and Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 406–8.
9. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust*, ed. Albrecht Schöne, vol. 7.1, *Sämtliche Werke* (Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1994), 1699–706; Goethe, *Faust I & II*, ed. and trans. Stuart Atkins (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 1699–706. Throughout this book, parenthetical F citations give line numbers from these editions, to which related material is referenced.
10. Friedrich Maximilian von Klinger, *Faustus: His Life, Death, and Doom. A Romance in Prose*, trans. George Borrow (London: W. Kent, 1864).

11. Johann Peter Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens*, ed. Fritz Bergemann (Wiesbaden: Insel-Verlag, 1955), 284.
12. Steven R. Cerf, "The Faust Theme in Twentieth-Century Opera: Lyric Modernism," *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik* 66 (1987): 29.
13. Hans Joachim Kreutzer, *Faust: Mythos und Musik* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2003), 136, trans. by the authors.

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PART 1

SYMPHONIC,
CHORAL, CHAMBER,
AND SOLO
FAUST WORKS

CHAPTER 1

SELECTED SETTINGS FROM “AUERBACHS KELLER”

ALBERTO RIZZUTI

GOETHE’S “Auerbachs Keller in Leipzig” (“Auerbach’s Wine-Cellar in Leipzig”) is an amusing scene near the beginning of Faust’s adventure in Mephistopheles’s company.¹ The set is a tavern where Goethe used to spend time during his student years in Leipzig, hence the vividness of the imagery, the liveliness of the characters, and the skillful evocation of the atmosphere. One could not think of a better choice for an episode aimed at stimulating a man oppressed by his erudition: a tavern crowded by students drinking, shouting, and singing represents everyday life, in stark opposition to the atemporal stillness of an alchemist’s studio.

The noise of Auerbach’s Cellar gives way to sustained song on two occasions, when two of its customers—first the student Brander, then Mephistopheles—perform a song. Not surprisingly, the two songs, both dealing metaphorically with animals, a rat and a flea, have attracted the attention of a number of composers since the publication of *Faust* in 1808. Starting with Beethoven, the chain of artists who devoted their craftsmanship to the stanzas resounding under Auerbach’s vaults extends well into the twentieth century. The focus of this chapter is on the first century of the musical fortunes of Goethe’s rat and flea. The time span is marked by a centennial occasion: Stravinsky’s 1909 orchestration of Beethoven’s 1809 voice-and-piano setting of “Es war einmal ein König” (“Song of the Flea”). Between these endpoints, Berlioz, Wagner, Liszt, Mussorgsky, and some lesser-known composers also engage with the theme. A synoptic reading of the two series of settings produced by these artists, sometimes at the outset of their careers, will help shed light on their individual achievements, among which Mussorgsky’s attains unparalleled heights.

GOETHE’S TEXT

The protagonists of the songs do not pop up unexpectedly under Auerbach’s vaults in Goethe’s *Faust*. In fact, rats and fleas are “announced” some five hundred lines earlier,

toward the end of “Studierzimmer [I]” (“Faust’s Study II”), in which Faust first encounters Mephistopheles in human form. After the chorus “Schwindet, ihr dunkeln / Wölbungen droben!” (“Vanish, dark arches / high but confining!”) (F 1447–505), with which Faust is lulled to sleep by the spirits, Mephistopheles explains that in order to leave the alchemist’s room, he needs a rat’s tooth to erase part of a cabbalistic symbol—the pentagram—drawn on the threshold. By summoning one, Mephistopheles defines himself as “Der Herr der Ratten und der Mäuse, / Der Fliegen, Frösche, Wanzen, Läuse” (“The Lord of Rats and Lord of Mice, / Lord of the Flies, Frogs, Bugs, and Lice”) (F 1516–17). Popular culture attributed to the devil a sort of patronage of repugnant animals and troublesome insects.² In Mephistopheles’s self-presentation, Goethe includes several references to the subject of Brander’s rat song in “Auerbachs Keller,” thus bridging the world of the alchemist’s study and that of the tavern over which Mephistopheles asserts his dominance.

Faust and Mephistopheles enter the tavern when Brander has already sung his strophes (F 2126–49), assisted by his friends in the performance of the refrain. Goethe suggests that the strangers might have heard the shouts of the chorus when they were still outside. It is possible that the shouts from the tavern as perceived by Faust and Mephistopheles did not correspond to the performance of the refrain; conceivably, they could derive from the bystanders’ violent reaction to Frosch’s attempt to sing first a political song (F 2090–91), then a love song (F 2101–2). In fact, Brander and another of the students, Siebel, brutally silence their friend as soon as he dares to perform a couple of lines. Marked by emphatic pounding on the table, Brander’s decision to sing instead three satiric strophes telling the story of a miserable rat derives from his ironic attitude toward love.

The choice of a certain topic involves the adoption of a specific meter for each song performed in the tavern, even if they are incomplete, as in the case of the two begun by Frosch. In “Es war eine Ratt’” (“Song of the Rat”), Goethe’s choice of meter deserves special attention, since the metrical structure reveals the satiric attitude of his strophes (F 2126–49). An overtly anticlerical tirade starting with an irreverent reference to Luther, “Es war eine Ratt’” adapts the so-called *Lutherstrophe*, the seven-line stanza alternating, on the base of a pattern of four four- and three three-foot iambs (4/3/4/3/4/4/3), with masculine and feminine ending, respectively.³ Consistently used by Luther in his *Kirchenlieder* (church songs), this kind of stanza recurs in folksong collections and in late eighteenth-century art ballads: hence the irreverence of Goethe’s decision to allude to the response uttered at the end of each stanza by a church congregation repeating the last line sung by the soloist.

The metrical organization of “Es war einmal ein König” discloses an analogous satirical intent through the choice of the so-called *Hildebrandstrophe*,⁴ involving that of a genre—the ballad—whose opening evokes a legendary time, ridiculed by the story of the unlikely rise of a flea (F 2211–40). In this case the chorus enters only at the end of the last stanza, a repetition of the two final lines, written in the first person plural. If in rhetorical and semantic terms the choral intervention is largely predictable, Brander’s statement after the first stanza is not. The four lines (F 2219–22) uttered by this student,

who just performed "Es war eine Ratt," are a consequence of Mephistopheles's position in the tavern, and of the placement of his song at the heart of a theatrical unit. In contrast to Faust, who silently observes the noisy scene taking place, Mephistopheles decides to get personally involved in the chaos of Auerbach's Cellar. Although he is perceived as a stranger, his song is rather like an interjection, as if it were performed by another student; although it is not subject to brutal interference, unlike Frosch's attempts, it becomes the object of a gloss uttered by Brander at the end of the first stanza (F 2219–22). Putting himself simultaneously in Hans Sachs's place as a poetic advisor, and in the flea's place as a *dramatis persona*, Brander encourages Mephistopheles to go on. In fact, the second stanza proves that the skyrocketing fortune of the flea has its roots in the perfect job carried out by the tailor, whose silk-and-velvet clothes fit him perfectly.

Having earned a focal position with the performance of his song, Mephistopheles concludes his appearance in the tavern by giving a troubling proof of his extraordinary nature. When wine is requested and various opinions about its quality resound, Mephistopheles practices magic; as soon as a drop spills on the floor, a fire flares up ("ein Brand," another "announced" event—in this case, through the use of Brander's name) and causes terror among the students.

Summing up these preliminary remarks, it is evident that the songs have offered various suggestions to composers eager to set Goethe's lines. The basic question of this chapter concerns the way in which the songs have been approached, that is, whether composers intended to set them as independent pieces or as parts of larger units, be it the scene in Auerbach's Cellar or *Faust I* as a whole. As we shall see, each setting displays its individuality, showing strengths and weaknesses. In order to give as broad a picture as possible, compositions will be analyzed by pointing out their mutual relationships, not necessarily in the order in which they were composed or published.

THE SETTINGS

In the beginning was Beethoven. By 1808, Mozart, the one composer who in Goethe's opinion would have been able to set *Faust* to music, was long dead;⁵ Haydn, an artist whose muse was all but Faustian, was aging and enfeebled, and died in May 1809; therefore, the task could be carried out by no one but Beethoven, an artist who, having received the spirit of Mozart from Haydn's hands, at that point had established his fame firmly.⁶

A survey of Beethoven's relationship with Goethe and his works far exceeds the scope of this chapter; suffice it to recall the composer's extreme caution in selecting texts for setting. Having endowed a much less problematic drama as *Egmont* with no more than an overture and a few numbers of incidental music, Beethoven did not envision setting *Faust* as a whole, either in its original or in any refashioned form. Therefore, in the same year in which the commission for *Egmont* reached him (late 1809), Beethoven pulled from his drawer a sketch dating back to the years in which

Mozart's spirit was still in Mozart's body or had been just transferred to Haydn's hands. In fact, the sketch is an attempt to set "Es war einmal ein König" shortly after its appearance, in the *Fragment* published by Goethe in 1790.⁷ Probably completed in late 1809, the song, "Aus Göthe's Faust" ("Flohlied," "Song of the Flea"), appeared in October 1810 as part of op. 75.⁸

Although a comparison between the two versions of "Aus Göthe's Faust" discloses a harmonic refinement in the opening measures, it is evident that the structure and the physiognomy of the song remained that of the sketch.⁹ In fact, Beethoven chooses the late eighteenth-century model of the *Klavierlied*, in which the vocal line is essentially matched by the top part of the piano accompaniment. In theory, the strophic pattern of the ballad would allow a composer to place only the lines of the first stanza under the vocal part; nonetheless, Beethoven assigns one staff to each stanza, in order to transcribe Goethe's text fully and to add small variants to the vocal line where metrical differences occur.¹⁰

Beethoven's deference to Goethe's text involves a kind of setting tailored to the poet's preference for light, strophic songs. In fact, the Lied does not show deviations from the norm of syllabic setting, clear articulation of phrasing, and placing of instrumental sections at the beginning and the end of each stanza. The choice of a minor key is not surprising for a text whose satiric mood finds one of its musical correlates in the sudden change of mode: the most striking of all occurs at the end of each stanza, where a sudden G-major chord occurs in *sforzando* under the last syllable, and is immediately contrasted by the reverse switch to G minor, marked in the accompaniment by a new *sforzando*, reinforced by an octave upward leap (see Musical Example 1.1). Hovering above the entire composition, Beethoven aims at conveying the witty nature of the flea, whose springs and quick moves are portrayed in the ample leaps and changes of register in the piano part. Conversely, the vocal line moves by small steps in the most ordinary range of a ninth. Harmonically, the only relevant spot corresponds to the setting of the second distich, the lines recalling the bizarre love of the king for the flea: in fact, the words "den liebt er gar nicht wenig" ("and loved him no less dearly")

MUSICAL EXAMPLE 1.1 Ludwig van Beethoven, *Sechs Gesaenge*, op. 75, no. 3, "Aus Göthe's Faust," mm. 19–21.

19

Klei - der, und miss ihm Ho - sen an!

sf *sf* *sf*

(F 2213) are set on a modulation to F major (mm. 9–11) that continues to C minor on “als wie seinen eignen Sohn” (“than if a son were he”) (F 2214) (mm. 11–13). Just after that, however, the piano reintroduces its sparkling opening figure; in so doing, its lower neighboring note lets sound B \sharp , thus suggesting a new, malicious change of mode (C minor to C major). Then, the second half of the stanza explores the relative major of the key (B \flat) and concludes with the joke on the two subsequent sforzandos.

Beethoven exploits intensively the potential of the change of mode in the final part of the song (mm. 69–81), where he sets the two lines assigned to the choir. By repeating them, he emphasizes the accented syllables of “ersticken” (“crush”) and “sticht” (“twitch”) (F 2239–40), making the voices swing between B \flat and B \sharp and eventually resolving in favor of the latter, hence in the major mode. The satiric mood of the song is exemplified once more in the last measures of the postlude, where the right hand—and implicitly the left—is assigned a strange fingering—1–1—mimicking the act of smashing a flea by means of thumb pressure.¹¹

Goethe’s opinion of Beethoven’s “Aus Göthe’s Faust” is unknown, yet his suspicious attitude toward the younger artist is disclosed in a letter written to Carl Friedrich Zelter (1758–1832) a couple of months after his meeting with Beethoven at Teplice, in the summer of 1812. After a bit of generic praise for the composer’s talent, Goethe adds “er ist leider eine ganz ungebändigte Persönlichkeit” (unfortunately, he is a totally untamed person), a judgment that seems to express a substantial distancing from the composer of the music for *Egmont*.¹²

In the crowd of composers who sent Goethe their settings, few are famous, and many obscure. The name of Johann Christoph Kienlen (1783–1829) is crucial because of his setting of “Es war eine Ratt,” “Lied der lustigen Gesellen” (Song of the merry companions), which appeared in a collection published ca. 1817.¹³ The work of the music director of Bratislava’s court theater is accompanied by other songs found in *Faust I*, but is not paired by a setting of “Es war einmal ein König.” Kienlen’s work emphasizes the reference to Luther by means of a sudden harmonic jump that moves to the sharp side of the chromatic universe from a musical discourse rooted in the flat one (see Musical Example 1.2). In fact, once the satiric reference to Luther’s paunch

MUSICAL EXAMPLE 1.2 Johann Christoph Kienlen, *Lieder aus Göthe’s Faust*, no. 5, “Lied der lustigen Gesellen,” mm. 7–9.

The musical score consists of two staves. The top staff is for the voice, and the bottom staff is for the piano accompaniment. The key signature has two flats (B-flat major), and the time signature is 6/8. The music begins with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The lyrics are: "mäst't, als wie der Doc-tor Lu-ther. Die". The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some chords in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

is over, the composer drives his piece back to the flat side, starting an effective crescendo in a progression whose chasing triplets lead to a fortissimo setting of the refrain.

A composer who in Goethe's opinion could carry out a worthy setting of the lyric sections of *Faust I* was Anton Heinrich von Radziwill (1775–1833), “the first real Troubadour” whom the poet had the chance to meet. A nobleman of Polish origins, this man—an accomplished cellist, singer, and composer—made a favorable impression on Goethe on the occasion of his visit to Weimar in 1814, yet Goethe's enthusiasm for his talent was subsequently withdrawn when rumors of a full setting and performance of the tragedy with Radziwill's music began to circulate.¹⁴

The problem, however, was not Radziwill's talent, but Goethe's work. In the author's words, *Faust* is a “seltsames Stück” (strange piece), which makes it unsuitable for the stage. Nonetheless, performances took place, with Radziwill's music, between 1816 and 1820. Working on *Faust I* throughout his life, Radziwill set selections from much of the tragedy, which he prefaced by means of an orchestral transcription of Mozart's Adagio and Fugue in C minor (K546), entrusted with the task of outlining the mood of the work.¹⁵

The scene in Auerbach's Cellar is placed at the outset of part 2 of his *Compositionen zu Göthe's Faust* (Compositions on Goethe's Faust), published in 1835 by members of Berlin's Sing-Akademie. After a prelude pivoting around an orchestral rendering of the goliardic hymn “Gaudeamus igitur,” Radziwill writes a scene in the style of a Singspiel, alternating spoken recitation with singing. Brander's violent dismissal of Frosch's attempt to start a political song is left to speech, as is Siebel's opposition to Frosch's second try. In this case, however, Frosch switches to speech in his turn; then he resumes singing on “Riegel auf! in stiller Nacht” (“Draw the bolt, the night is clear”) (F 2105). Siebel's ensuing intervention is unset, like Brander's announcement of a “Lied vom neusten Schnitt” (“The song's brand-new”) (F 2124).

If Brander's song is brand new, Radziwill's setting, “Lied des Brander” (Brander's song), is not. His choice of a slightly varied strophic form is opportune, given the structure of the text, but the satiric mood is hardly traceable among the staves of his composition. Having honored Mozart with a transcription of an important work, here Radziwill makes a reference to Beethoven by means of an almost literal citation of the opening of his “Aus Göthe's Faust” (syllabic setting, initial upward-fourth leap, and iteration of tonic are common to the two tunes), but the real surprise is the similarity between the bass lines, both descending by leap on quarter-note values. Apart from this, Radziwill's setting shows an effective chromatic turn where the text makes reference to Luther, a vivid depiction of the words “zernagt', zerkratzt' das ganze Haus” (“he gnawed and scratched, tore up the house”) (F 2136), and an equally expressive setting of the lines “fiel an den Herd und zuckt' und lag, und thät erbärmlich schnaufen” (“flopped on the hearth and, sad to say, / lay gasping, moaning,

twitching”) (F 2144–45), entrusted to a descending chromatic scale sung with the support of a lonely bassoon (see Musical Example 1.3).

MUSICAL EXAMPLE 1.3 Anton Heinrich von Radziwill, *Compositionen zu Göthe’s Faust*, no. 13, “Lied des Brander,” mm. 35–44.

35

Solo

-be Sie kam vor Angst am hel - len Tag der

38

Kü - che zu - ge - lau - fen, fiel an den Herd und

41

rit.

zuckt' und lag, und thät er - bärm - lich schnau - fen. Da

The “Lied des Mephistopheles” (Song of Mephistopheles) follows, and is structured as a scene, with the setting of the opening stanza preceded by Mephistopheles’s first attempt to sing and by Frosch’s spoken interjection, and with Brander’s spoken comment before

the setting of the other two stanzas. For his second song, Radziwill chooses a strictly strophic form, with each stanza followed by an extensive postlude based on a lively figuration in sixteenth notes. The jumps of the flea are to be regularly perceived under the setting of lines 5–6, but the effect aimed at conveying the satiric mood of the text is a three-note motif played by the oboe just after the emphatic setting of the first distich. Acting as an unwritten question mark (How can a king love a flea like his son?), this subdued chirruping is the only minor inflection of a song that owes its musical originality to this little, descending semitone.

In 1820, Conradin Kreutzer (1780–1849), Kapellmeister to Prince Carl Egon of Fürstenberg, composed a set of *Faust* compositions that were published in 1836, soon after Radziwill's *Compositionen zu Göthe's Faust*.¹⁶ Kreutzer's score comprises no fewer than twenty-two pieces, starting with the choir of angels "Christ ist erstanden!" ("Christ is arisen!") (F 737) and finishing with the choir of spirits addressing Gretchen in the cathedral scene. The songs performed in "Auerbachs Keller" are numbers eight and nine in the collection. They are both set as operatic scenes, with extensive recitatives and massive participation of the choir. Although Brander's song, "Zeche lustiger Gesellen" (Bill of the merry companions), does not display great originality, Mephistopheles's song shows a stylistic feature not found in other settings, despite a suggestion derived directly from Goethe's text. Introducing himself and Faust to the noisy tableful, Mephistopheles says, "Wir kommen erst aus Spanien zurück, / Dem schönen Land des Weins und der Gesänge" ("We've only just come back from Spain, / that lovely land of wine and song") (F 2205–6). Playing on this reference, Kreutzer sets Mephistopheles's stanzas to the driving rhythm of a bolero (see Musical Example 1.4). The choice gives the song a spicy flavor, and shows the assimilation of a theatrical device that had become famous with the act 1 finale of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, where a minuet starts in the middle of a phrase, giving the impression of the unexpected opening of a ballroom door. Kreutzer offers a passage resembling Mozart's at the beginning of the second strophe, where the bolero rhythm in the piano accompaniment takes over the section in recitative, starting on a degree other than the tonic.

Radziwill's choice of the bassoon as an instrumental support to the setting of the line that depicts the wretched fate of the poor rat finds an amplification in Berlioz's first setting of Brander's Lied, "Écot de joyeux compagnons—histoire d'un rat" ("Song of the Rat"), the fourth of his *Huit scènes de Faust* (*Eight Scenes from Faust*) (see Chapter 3) composed in 1828–29 to a translation by Gérard de Nerval. In fact, a quartet of bassoons represents the only group of non-stringed instruments in this setting. Preceded by Brander's call for attention, the song is further framed by a quotation from *Hamlet* ("How now? a rat? dead, for a ducat, dead"). After a four-measure motto, performed fortissimo by four bassoons and strings, Brander starts singing his first stanza excitedly ("ivre") in an atmosphere of "joie grossière et désordonnée" (coarse and unruly joy). Not surprisingly, Berlioz saves his most daring harmonic move for the passage where

MUSICAL EXAMPLE 1.4 Conradin Kreutzer, *Gesänge aus Goethe's Faust*, no. 9, “Recitativo [‘Es war einmal ein König,]” mm. 1–9.

Tempo di Bolloeros.
Moderato

Cantabile

Es war ein -

- mal ein Kö - nig, der

hatt' ei-nen gros - sen Floh.

Nerval’s translation introduces the word “diable” (devil). After the reference to Luther, the satiric intent of which made a negligible impact on Berlioz’s imagination, Nerval recasts Goethe’s three subsequent lines (“Die Köchin hatt’ ihr Gift gestellt; / Da ward’s so eng’ ihr in der Welt, / Als hätte sie Lieb’ im Leibe” [“The cook, she set some poison out; / and then he felt as helpless as if—/ as if he’d fallen in love”]) (F 2130–32) to four