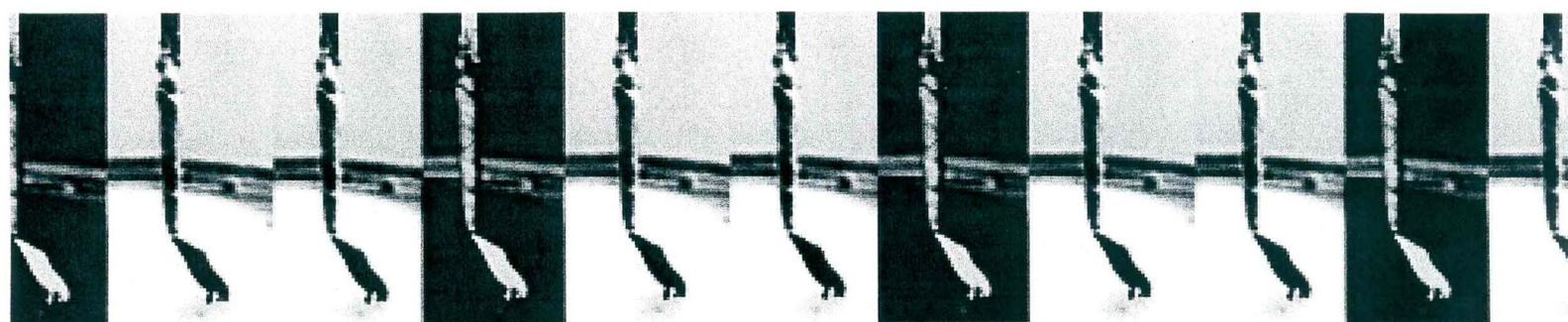


# **Dr Faustus Lights the Lights**

**by Gertrude Stein**



*- a sketch for a production of the libretto for an unwritten opera -*

**7th, 8th, 9th April 2000 at 7p.m. and 10 p.m.**

**Ryan Barolet-Fogarty, Bilge Gulturk, Jasmine Hamedi, Amanda Parla,  
Kamal Shaikh, Krissy Smith, Dan Warren with Ryan Nealon and James Nyman**

**Director: Edward Kemp**

**Design: Sue Rees**

**Lighting: Garin Marschall**

**Sound: Jeremy Romagna**

**Video: Gokcen Ergene**

**Music Consultant: Amy Williams**

**Audience to congregate in the Foyer by the Costume Shop at Bennington College**

**Reservations: 1 802 440 4572**

## Johann(es) or Georg Faust(us) (c1480 or 88?-?1538 or 40 or 41)

German

One or possibly two men who lived in Germany in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, one of whom referred to the devil as his companion or crony. One or possibly both men died in 1540 (or 41) leaving behind a tangled legend of sorcery, alchemy, astrology, sooth-saying, studies theological and diabolical, necromancy and sodomy. Contemporary accounts indicate that he was widely travelled and fairly well-known; Martin Luther railed against him. In 1587 Johann Spies wrote the first account of his life, mixing stories of ancient magi including Merlin and Roger Bacon with the tale of a man who sold his soul to the devil for knowledge and power. The story was widely translated and speedily spread across Europe. While German dramatisations and puppet shows focused on the buffoonery of Faust and Mephistopheles and the stupidity of their victims, Christopher Marlowe's **Doctor Faustus** (1604) was the first to find tragic dignity in the story. Throughout the seventeenth century the publication of magic manuals bearing Faust's name was a lucrative trade. The classic of these, **Magia Naturalis et Innaturalis**, was known to Goethe who dramatised the legend in the two-part work (pt 1 1808 & pt 2 1832) which occupied him for much of his career. In Goethe's version - which weaves together theology, mythology, philosophy, political economy, science, aesthetics, music and literature as well as vast array of theatrical styles and poetic styles - Faust is purified and redeemed, escaping the usual grisly descent into hell. Numerous other eighteenth and nineteenth century writers and artists, including Berlioz, Gounod, Liszt, Lessing and Heine, were inspired by the legend. For many of these Faust represented in part the Romantic desire to step beyond the conventional bounds of thought and theology and dramatised the consequences of such revolutionary Will: their accounts often follow Goethe in seeking to redeem the hero.

In the twentieth century the story has inspired a novel by Thomas Mann (1947) and an opera by Frederick Busoni (1925). In the latter work, composed in the aftermath of World War One the death of Faust brings about the resurrection of a young man.

## Gertrude Stein (1874-1946)

American

Born in Pennsylvania of Austrian Jewish parentage Stein spent most of her life in Paris, where her house at 27, rue de Fleurus was a centre of modernist art. She was a patron and friend to Picasso, Matisse, Juan Gris, Ernest Hemingway and F Scott Fitzgerald to name but a few and made **Portraits** of many of them. Her life in France including her help for American troops during World War One is described in **The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas** (1933). She made her first play **What Happened, A Play** in 1913, and many more followed after a trip to Spain two years later ("she always says that a certain kind of landscape induces plays"). She made plays on and off for the rest of her career, concluding that "anything which was not a story could be a play and I even made plays in letters and advertisements".

Her first libretto, **Four Saints in Three Acts** was made for her friend Virgil Thompson and the premiere in 1934, with choreography by Frederick Ashton, a cellophane set by Florine Stettheimer and an all black company, was a sensation. **Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights** (1938) was commissioned by the English composer Gerald Berners with whom she had previously made the ballet **A Wedding Bouquet**, but the music for the opera was never written.

At the time celebrity, especially her own, was a particular concern of Stein's. Almost overnight she had become a star with her name in lights on Broadway, "we saw an electric sign moving around a building and it said Gertrude Stein has come and that was upsetting". **Ida A Novel**, the work she broke off to make **Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights** which shares many aspects in common with the libretto not least the heroine's name, was based on the romance of Edward VIII and Mrs Simpson. As she came more and more into the light of publicity she was finding it harder and harder to be true to the words, to the moment of creation.

if you have dim lights and you add another perhaps it makes it less light to your feeling than if only have one dim one, if you have enough of them you are in total darkness anyway to your feeling

There were also dark forces at work in the world of 1938. Later that year Austria was annexed by Hitler and Austrian Jews began to be deported to Germany.

There is too much fathering going on just now and there is no doubt about it fathers are depressing. Everybody nowadays is a father, there is father Mussolini and father Hitler and father Roosevelt and father Stalin ... and father Blum and father Franco is just commencing now and there are ever so many more ready to

be one ... The periods of the world's history that have always been most dismal ones are the ones where fathers were looming up and filling up everything.

Stein, courageous in her life as in her work, chose to stay on in France during the Second World War as during the First, providing support for American servicemen.

## Stein on Plays

... The thing that is fundamental about plays is that the scene as depicted on the stage is more often than not one might say it is almost always in syncopated time in relation to the emotion of anybody in the audience.

What this says is this.

Your sensation as one in the audience in relation to the play played before you your sensation I say your emotion concerning that play is always behind or ahead of the play at which you are looking and to which you are listening. So your emotion as a member of the audience is never going on at the same time as the action of the play. This thing the fact that your emotional time as an audience is not the same as the emotional time of the play is what makes one endlessly troubled about a play, because not only is there a thing to know as to why this is so but also there is a thing to know why perhaps it does need to be so ...

... I felt that if a play was exactly like a landscape then there would be no difficulty about the emotion of the person looking on at the play being behind or ahead of the play because the landscape does not have to make acquaintance. You may have to make acquaintance with it, but it does not with you, it is there and so the play being written the relation between you at any time is so exactly that that it is of no importance unless you look at it ...

... The landscape has its formation and as after all a play has to have formation and be in relation one thing to the other thing and as the story is not the thing as any one is always telling something then the landscape not moving but being always in relation, the trees to the hills the hills to the fields the trees to each other any piece of it to the sky and then any detail to any other detail, the story is only of importance if you like to tell or like to hear a story but the relation is there anyway ...

from the lecture **Plays**.

## **Franz Schubert (1797-1828)**

Austrian

The last of the great Viennese masters he was the only one native to the city. Born into a family of devout Catholics, he showed an extraordinary musical aptitude from an early age. The long-standing myth that he became a school-teacher to avoid military conscription is untrue, he was simply too short to meet the five foot height requirement. Central amongst his wide-ranging work is his output of more than 600 songs which first sealed his fame. In this he benefited from the great outburst of contemporary lyric writing and also from the development of the piano as the standard instrument of accompaniment. He wrote several operas during his short career but nearly all were failures. Schubert died, probably of syphilis, at the height of his powers, his last year being one of the most productive of his life. While some critics have described him as a herald of the Romantic movement others place him squarely within Classicism.

**Gretchen am Spinnrade** (1814), his first masterpiece, sets words from Goethe's *Faust*. Margarete or Gretchen, driven mad by her love for Faust sits at her spinning wheel lamenting her lost love and lost wits. It has been said that with this work alone Schubert changed the course of German song.

## **Fryderyk Chopin (1810-49)**

Polish

Born near Warsaw Chopin was a musically precocious child, but his first teachers kept his exuberance in check with a thorough schooling in the discipline of Bach and the Viennese classical school. Although he received composition teaching from a early age he was largely self-taught as a pianist, the instrument with which he is associated and which features in almost all his compositions; his legendary reputation as a performer was built upon only 30 performances. Having travelled widely he settled in Paris in 1831 when Romanticism was at its height. He numbered many writers among his friends, including Balzac, and pursued an often stormy relationship with George Sand. Revolution in Paris drove him to London in 1848, by which time he was already very sick. He died the following year and was buried in Pere Lachaise cemetery. Unlike many of his contemporaries (eg Liszt and Berlioz) there is no indication that Chopin had any interest in the Faust story.

His large output of piano waltzes is represented here by **No.10 in B minor (1829)**

## Alfred Schnittke (1934-98)

Russian

Born to German-Jewish parents in Engels in the Volga Republic was one of the 'young savages' of the 1960s who refused to bow to the aesthetic dictates of Soviet music policy. His early influences were Prokofiev and Shostakovich but studies both in Russia and in Austria stimulated his interest in the Second Viennese School of Schoenberg, Berg and Webern and also in earlier Austro-German music, including Bach, Mozart and Mahler: allusions to all of these composers can often be found in his work. Characteristic of the resulting 'polystylism' is the juxtaposition of very varied materials and styles. Polystylism is in Schnittke's words the attempt to be old and new at the same time:

One can compose with the help of modern musical language by borrowing elements from an archaic mode or the reverse: by using the old idiom but with the logic of contemporary development.

The Faust story fascinated Schnittke for much of his career, ill-health constantly preventing him from working on a long-promised opera on the subject. The story is treated in the cantata '**Seid nüchtern und wachet**' (1982/3), from which is drawn the extract **Es geschah...** describing Faust's diabolical dismemberment. The text comes from Johann Spies' **Faustbuch**. His **Tango(Intermezzo)** comes from the opera **Life with an Idiot** (1992), a surreal work about life in a Soviet apartment block.

## **Conlon Nancarrow (1912-)**

American/Mexican

Born in Texarkana, Arkansas Conlon Nancarrow studied music in Cincinnati, and later in Boston. As an instrumentalist, he played jazz trumpet and among his musical idols are not only Igor Stravinsky but Louis Armstrong, Earl Hines and Bessie Smith.

In 1937 he joined the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in Spain where he participated in the fight against the fascist Franco government, nearly giving his life on numerous occasions and barely surviving both injury and illness. Upon his return to the US in 1939 he underwent political harassment from the federal government which caused him to move to Mexico City where he has resided ever since. Dissatisfied very early in his career with certain inadequacies of human performers Nancarrow began searching for a means of realising a more complex music than was capable of being performed in the 1940s. He began in 1949 to experiment with the player-piano, having a punching machine constructed which would allow him to place notes accurately on fresh rolls one note at a time: a five minute piece can take as long as a year to compose, draw and punch. To date he has completed over 50 **Studies for Player Piano**, the earliest of which have a jazz-blues feel but later studies are increasingly abstract. **Study #6** (played here in an arrangement for piano duet) has a Spanish feel - part tango, part waltz.

**Gretchen am Spinnrade**

Margaret at the spinning-wheel

My rest is gone, my heart is heavy;

I find it never and nevermore.

Where I have him not, there is my grave,  
the whole world is bitter to me.

My poor head is bewildered,  
my poor mind is shattered.

My rest is gone, my heart is heavy;

I find it never and nevermore.

Only for him do I look from the window,  
Only for him do I leave the house.

His proud step, his noble figure,  
the smile on his lips, the flash of his eyes,  
the magic torrent of his speech,  
the touch of his hand, and ah! his kiss!

My rest is gone, my heart is heavy;

I find it never and nevermore.

My breast yearns for him.

Ah! could I but touch and hold him!

And kiss him as I wish,  
with his kisses I should perish!

Oh could I but kiss him as I wish,

With his kisses I should perish!