

2FAUST 2FURIOUS

DAS UNZULÄNGLICHE, HIER WIRD'S EREIGNIS!

15 STUDENTS ATTEMPT TO PERFORM FAUST IN 60 MINUTES

Admission is Free, Walpurgisnacht is priceless

Welcome to GRMN 468's *2Faust 2Furious*: -- *Das Unzulängliche, Hier wird's Ereignis!* This performance presents the collaborative creative work of the class participants from over the course of the semester. *2Faust 2Furious* attempts to accomplish two tasks: Firstly, the students are attempting to capture the essence of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust I+II*, seeking to portray the text in an updated format, dividing the sections into individual skits with their own actors and charms. Secondly, the students, in their modernization

of the text, seek to critique, reinterpret, and riff on the text with the same gusto that Goethe originally changed the Faust myth in his play. This includes bringing forward the themes and actions within the original play that are, in our current climate, morally questionable, and incorporating the works of others, notably Nobel Prize winning Austrian Author Elfriede Jelinek's *FaustIn and Out*, which is in itself a shocking criticism of Goethe's magnum opus.

THE FAUST MYTHOS

The story told in Goethe's *Faust* is a permutation of the tale of Doctor Faust and his bargain with the devil. Emerging in the 16th Century and published by a devout Protestant Johann Spies as the *Historia von D. Johann*, the story existed as a collection of accounts describing the endeavors of the mysterious figure, Johann Faustus, whose existence is certain, but background is not. He is described as a scholar wielding the magical powers of a sorcerer, who travelled around northern Germany performing miracles and often accompanied by a black dog or horse. The legend of Faust follows Dr. Faust/Faustus and his demonic servant, Mephistopheles, with whom the doctor makes a pact. The Doctor, a sorcerer, offers his eternal soul in exchange for the demon's servitude under him for the duration of his life. The tale consists of Faust being consistently swindled and distracted by the demon, engaging in debauchery and lechery, at one point turning Helena of Troy into his concubine. In his moments of clarity, the devil, Mephistopheles, ensures the continuance of their pact, preventing his redemption. Though the fate of his eternal soul is never explicitly stated, Faust's physical body is found dismembered and destroyed.

In the context of 16th Century Europe, the tale of Dr. Faust was a cautionary tale. It's connection to religion, the necessity of faith, and uncertain fate of the protagonist demarcate fierce Christian undertones. As Sarah Munson Deats writes, "in their fascination with the Devil, hell, and witchcraft, their anti-clerical bias, and their elevation of the faith over works, (the Faust legends) reflect the militant Protestantism of the time". The Faust mythos spoke to a wide audience with Christopher Marlowe's play, *Doctor Faustus*, being staged in 1588 in London.

GOETHE'S FAUST

In 1806, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, while living in Weimar, Germany, published the first part of *Faust*, which was at that point known as *UrFaust*, which he had been working on since 1771. This was edited and republished twice, once in 1808 and 1828-29, resulting in *Faust: Der Tragödie erster Teil*. Goethe only wrote the second section of the in life it was published following his death in 1832. Goethe's play offers a radical reinterpretation of the Faust mythos. First and foremost, it departs from the Christian framework of the original mythos, offering an alternative message and moral universe. The ethereal powers that be, such as the demon Mephistopheles and even the Lord, keep their names, but there is a clear shift even in the opening "Prologue" in heaven, where it becomes clear that the Lord is sending Mephistopheles to earth not to tempt him, but rather to keep him from coming to a standstill, to "stimulate him to further action" and striving towards his ideals. Goethe's Faust thus hijacks the allegorical framework the Christian morality play and transform into an allegory of man's striving towards ideals modern world, in which Mephistopheles, the "spirit of negation," no longer represents evil per se, but rather a natural principle necessary for progress. Goethe's new contribution to the Faust mythos, the creation of the "Gretchen tragödie" or "Gretchen Tragedy", features a relationship between Faust and a teenage girl, Margarete, demonstrates the dark side of this principle of striving. This relationship ends in the death of her mother and brother, her murder of her child, and her imprisonment and execution, all as byproducts of the actions of Faust. At the end of Faust II, Faust, now a wealthy and somewhat wiser landowner, gets more blood on his hands as he attempts to win back new land for the masses from the ocean. The ending of Faust features a definitive answer to the fate of his soul, which is stolen from Mephistopheles by angels and brought to heaven with Gretchen, who was saved at the end of *Faust I*. Goethe's *Faust* thus presents a world in which striving is the one precondition for salvation. The story of Goethe's *Faust* deviates from the Christian undertones of the original mythos, offering an alternative message. For audiences in the early 19th Century, it proposes that, even in the face of horrible errors, one may still be saved. The popularity of Goethe's *Faust* is indicative of a shift in popular perception for the people of modern Europe, whose preoccupation with technological innovation and social upheaval drew focus from traditional good works. For the audiences of *Faust*, the possibility of achieving a pleasant afterlife, despite destructive behavior, provided comfort.

OUR PERFORMANCE

Our final performance consists of several parts, all of which have their own special twists:

Vorspiel auf dem Zoom:

To begin the play, the students have created a Zoom prelude, which draws inspiration from the "Vorspiel auf dem Theater". This part of Goethe's original play was a discussion between illusory figures about how the play should be staged and performed, creating a "meta" layer of the play. Our performance follows a similar vein but addresses the participant's problems with the subject matter of the story, as well as the frustrations caused by the impossible task of staging it online.

Ur-Faust/The Bet:

The next segment follows the plot of *Ur-Faust/Faust I*, beginning with the "Prologue in Heaven" where God and Mephistopheles (Mephisto), and progressing through to the wager between Mephisto and Faust. During this segment of the performance, however, there will be constant interruptions and reorganization, as three main characters of the "meta" layer return to put their spin on and critique the events of the play.



The Witches' Kitchen and Gretchen Tragedy:

Following a transition through a modern version of the Hexenküche (Witches' Kitchen), where the elderly Faust is turned into a young man, we move into the Gretchen Tragedy. This part, however, has seen a comedic and

“Es irrt der Mensch, solange er strebt”

-Der Herr (L:317)

“While Man's desires and aspirations stir, He
cannot choose but err.” - The Lord

critical face-lift, as the students lampoon the entire plot and point out social and gender problems throughout the play. The section ends with a blending of “Walpurgisnacht” and “The Chapel”, posing questions for the audience as it segues into the final act of *Faust II*.

Faust II Act V: The Radio Show:

The final section that focuses on Goethe's *Faust* itself take the form of a Radio Show/Sports Broadcast and recounts the conclusion to the story while taking aim at some of its problems.

Unterweltkatsch: Talk Show in the Underworld:

Following the conclusion of (some of) the original play, our performance moves into a “plot postmortem”,

which takes the form of a talk show, where the characters, including a very special cameo, give their take on the events of the play.

Jelinek Conclusion:

In the final moments of the play, there is a rendition of lines taken from *FaustIn and Out*, which was itself a gruesome secondary play for *Urfaust*, written by the Nobel-Prizewinning author Elfriede Jelinek in 2010. It combined the events of the play with the case of Josef Fritzl, who locked his daughter Elisabeth in a bunker at his house for 24 years, raping her and producing seven children with her. Jelinek's “secondary text” to *Faust* uses the case of Joseph Fritzl as a metaphor to critique the brutality and perversity at the heart of systems of patriarchal control generally and the Gretchen plot more specifically. Our performance concludes by directing Jelinek's dark and satirical text back at Goethe, but resisting the negativity of *FaustIn and Out* in the final lines by turning it into a call to action in reference to more current trends and events in the United States and around the globe. We offer many thanks to those who have chosen to attend tonight and the students who have worked so hard to create this elaborate play, despite COVID-19.



Our Participants

Cara Bevenssee: Writer and Actor

Evelyn Breza: Writer and Actor

Jonathan Dattilio: Dramaturge, Translator
and Author of the Newsletter

Gregory Fields: Writer and Actor

Alyssa Halbig: Animator, Writer and Actor

Willem Haller: Writer and Actor

Cyril Langston: Writer and Actor

Madison Mahrlig: Writer and Actor

Anne Moore: Writer and Actor

Matthew Morris: Writer and Actor

Hannah Obenaus: Writer and Actor

Benjamin Ross: Sound Editor, Writer and
Actor

Hannah Salmonowicz: Writer and Actor

Thomas Waln: Writer and Actor

Wesley “Quinn” Williams: Animator,
Writer and Actor

Dr. Morgan Koerner: Professor, Motivator,
Editor, Producer, Streber, Task
Coordinator