

Center For Puppetry Arts

presents



LIVE
FAUST,
DIE YOUNG!

adapted by Bobby Box

Live Faust, Die Young!

Synopsis

Live Faust, Die Young! begins at the Atlanta School for Demons where Mephistopheles is teaching a seminar called "Signing up, Selling Out: Corruption and Damnation of the Human Animal." To illustrate his points, Mephistopheles calls upon three assistants to help him tell the story of Faust - using puppets. First we meet 16th Century English poet, Christopher Marlowe, who introduces us to Faust, a frustrated professor obsessed with accuracy and absolute truth. Unsatisfied with his position in life, Faust has a desperate craving for knowledge which leads him on a journey into the occult. When Faust conjures the devil, a deal is made. Mephistopheles offers Faust 24 years of the ultimate knowledge: a digital subscriber line from the Internet directly into Faust's brain. In exchange, after 24 years has elapsed, Faust must relinquish his soul to Mephistopheles for eternity. Faust agrees and within seconds finds himself inside the Internet, awash in a popular culture that is riddled with conflicting ideas. That evening, when Faust and Mephistopheles go dining, Faust becomes interested in a young woman named Margarite. Mephistopheles, unable to keep out of Faust's business, intervenes, and the outcome is disastrous. Things go from bad to worse when Mephistopheles takes Faust to Hell where they witness a fashion show of the Seven Deadly Sins (plus one). Faust's desire to live a normal life manifests itself as a twisted TV sitcom bringing more disaster. Finally, time runs out. Faust, having gained nothing, is condemned to telling his story over and over again throughout the ages so that others may learn from his mistake.

About the Story

Bobby Box's *Live Faust, Die Young!* is a contemporary retelling of the Faust legend - a story that has existed since the 15th century. The legend is based on the life of an actual person, Johann Faust (Latin Faustus), born in Knittlingen, Germany, in the late 1400's. According to history, Faust was a schoolteacher, astrologer and mystic, who traveled around selling horoscopes and performing assorted feats of magic. The actual events of Faust's life were nothing compared to the legends that became attached to his memory over time. The first book of Faust tales, *Historia von Dr. Johann Fausten*, appeared in 1587. According to this narrative, Faust made a pact with the devil, receiving 24 years of knowledge, power and pleasure in exchange for his soul. Subsequent versions appeared in verse, inspiring English playwright Christopher Marlowe's powerful drama *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, somewhere around 1593. The most enduring version of the Faust legend was the two-part drama *Faust: A Tragedy* by German poet and playwright Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in 1808 (part one) and 1832 (part two). When Goethe was a teenager, he saw the Faust legend performed with puppets. Historians say that this puppet show influenced Goethe's work for the rest of his life. Other works based on the Faust legend include operas by Spohr, Berlioz, Gounod, Busoni, a symphony by Liszt, an overture by Wagner, visual art by Rembrandt and Delacroix, and the book *Doktor Faustus* by Thomas Mann.

Style of Puppetry

Live Faust, Die Young! is performed using a combination of puppetry styles. The principle characters in the show are marionettes, or string puppets. The puppeteers manipulate the marionettes in full view of the audience, cabaret style. The strings are much shorter than on traditional marionettes. The puppets in a traditional marionette play would be operated from a raised platform, or bridge, covered by a proscenium that conceals the puppeteers. Puppeteers operate the glove puppets by placing one hand inside the body of the figure. The index finger controls the puppet's head while two other fingers control the puppet's arms. Shadow puppets are flat figures that are manipulated behind a translucent screen illuminated by a special light source. The audience doesn't actually see the puppet itself, only its silhouette. Table-top puppets are jointed doll-like figures that require the coordinated efforts of two, or even three, puppeteers for each character. This sort of puppet is controlled directly by the puppeteers' hands on different parts of the puppet's

body. Deliberately built with no designated control rods or handles, the puppets can face in any direction on stage without the audience seeing any external control rods protruding from the puppet's body.

Online Resources

<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/faust.html> *An online database of Faust legends from Europe.

<http://www.faust.cc/> *Goethe's Faust as a rock opera.

<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/har/faust.htm> *Notes on the musical work La Damnation de Faust by Berlioz.

<http://titus.ispec.net/faust.html> *View Rembrandt's 1652 etching of Faust.

<http://turn.to/goethe/> *The collected works of Goethe online.

<http://www.npr.org/programs/attheopera/archives/010120.ato.html> *National Public Radio's "At the Opera" page for Doktor Faust by Ferruccio Busoni.

Selected Bibliography

Bell, John. *Strings, Hands, Shadows: A Modern Puppet History*. The Detroit Institute of Arts, 2000. (<http://store.yahoo.com/dia8/strinhanshad.html>)

Benet, Stephen Vincent. *The Devil and Daniel Webster*. Penguin Classics, 2000.

Butler, E.M. *The Fortunes of Faust*. Cambridge University Press, (reprint)1979.

Bockstael, Eric. *Lives of Doctor Faust*. Wayne State University, 1976.

Fettig, Hansjuergen. *Rod Puppets and Table-Top Puppets: A Handbook of Design and Technique*. DaSilva Puppet Books, 1997. (<http://www.puppetbooks.co.uk/>)

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang. *Faust: Part One*. Translated by Randall Jarrell. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976. (First illustrated version, 2000).

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang. *Goethe: The Collected Works, Volume 2, Faust I & II*. Edited and translated by Stuart Atkins. Princeton University Press, 1984.

Marlowe, Christopher. *Dr. Faustus*. Dover Publications, Inc., 1994.

Middle School Learning Activities

Faust Timeline GA QCC standards covered: 6th Grade Language Arts (Literature): 23, 26, 29; 7th Grade Language Arts (Literature): 22, 25, 27, 28; 8th Grade Language Arts (Literature): 21, 22, 25, 27, 28;

Go to the National Public Radio "At the Opera" page located at: <http://www.npr.org/programs/attheopera/archives/010120.ato.html>. Read the background notes for Busoni's opera Doktor Faust. Answer the following questions:

1. Who was the real Dr. Faust? *2. What does the word bamboozled mean? *3. Who was the British dramatist who first translated the story of Faust into English as a play? *4. In which country did the Faust story first appear as a puppet show? How was the story changed for the puppet theater? *5. Who was the American author that based his short story *The Devil and Daniel Webster* on Faust? *6. Why do you think composers have been inspired by the Faust story?

A Letter to Faust GA QCC Standards covered: 6th Grade Language Arts (Literature): 23, 26, 29, (Writing) 71, 73; 7th Grade Language Arts (Literature): 22, 25, 28, 29, (Writing): 67, 69; 8th Grade Language Arts (Literature): 22, 25, 28, 29, (Writing): 67, 69.

French writer Andre Gide once said, "Believe those who are seeking the truth; doubt those who find it." What do you think Gide meant by this? How can this statement be applied to the story of Faust? If Faust had subscribed to this belief, would he have agreed to the devil's bargain? Imagine that Faust is a friend who has told you about his idea to sell his soul. Write a letter to Faust urging him to reconsider his arrangement with Mephistopheles.

High School Learning Activities

Enduring Legends GA QCC Standards covered: 9-12th Grade Language Arts (Core Skills): 13, 15, 19, 20, 25.

The Faust legend has endured for centuries. After attending a performance of *Live Faust, Die Young!* at the Center for Puppetry Arts, write an essay that addresses the following questions: Why do you think the Faust legend has survived for so long? Is the story relevant today? Do you think this story has a special significance for Americans? What do you think is director Bobby Box's opinion of this story's relevance? Why do you think he presented "The Seven Deadly Sins" in the context of a fashion show? Is puppetry an appropriate medium to tell this story? Why or why not? On Fulfillment, Satisfaction and Peace of Mind GA QCC standards covered: 9-12th Grade Language Arts (Core Skills): 13, 15, 19, 20, 25.

Underneath it all, the story of Faust is about one man's search for meaning and fulfillment. After attending a performance of *Live Faust, Die Young!* at the Center for Puppetry Arts, write an essay explaining your personal goals and why they are important to you. What things have brought you fulfillment and satisfaction so far in your life? What kinds of experiences do you value the most? What experiences have left you feeling empty? What kinds of things do you hope to achieve in your lifetime that would bring you satisfaction and lasting peace of mind?