

**THE DAMNATION OF FAUST; A
DRAMATIC LEGEND IN FOUR
PARTS. FRENCH AND ENGLISH
LIBRETTO WITH SYNOPSIS,
AUTHOR'S PREFACE, AND MUSIC**

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The damnation of Faust; a dramatic legend in four parts. French and English libretto with synopsis, author's preface, and music by Hector Berlioz

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HECTOR BERLIOZ

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LIBRETTO WITH SYNOPSIS,
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AND ENGLISH TEXT
AND MUSIC OF THE PRINCIPAL AIRS

**THE DAMNATION
OF FAUST**

BY
BERLIOZ

**OLIVER DITSON COMPANY
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THE
DAMNATION OF FAUST

A DRAMATIC LEGEND IN FOUR PARTS.

BY
HECTOR BERLIOZ

FRENCH AND ENGLISH LIBRETTO WITH
SYNOPSIS, AUTHOR'S PREFACE, AND MUSIC

BOSTON
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THE DAMNATION OF FAUST.

(HECTOR BERLIOZ.)

PERSONAGES.

MARGUERITE	<i>Mezzo-Soprano.</i>	MEPHISTOPHELES	<i>Baritone or Bass.</i>
FAUST	<i>Tenor.</i>	BRANDER	<i>Bass.</i>

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

THIS work, as is indicated by its title, is not founded on the principal idea of Goethe's *Faust*, for in that illustrious poem, Faust is saved.

The author of *The Damnation of Faust* has only borrowed from Goethe a certain number of scenes adapted for introduction into the plan that he had laid out, scenes the beauty of which were, to his mind, irresistible. But, even had he followed faithfully the idea of Goethe, he would nevertheless have incurred the reproach which has been addressed to him (at times with severity), of having mutilated a monument.

It is a well-known fact that it is absolutely impracticable to set to music a poem of considerable length which was not written with this object in view, without introducing many modifications. Of all existing dramatic poems, *Faust* is, without doubt, the most impossible to sing in its entirety, from beginning to end. Now, if, while adhering to the principal idea of Goethe's *Faust*, it becomes necessary, in order to make of it the subject of a musical composition, to modify the masterpiece in various ways, the crime of treason against genius is quite as evident in this case as in the other, and is open to equal criticism.

From the foregoing, it would appear that musicians should be prohibited from selecting famous poems as themes for their compositions. By this rule we would be deprived of the opera of *Don Juan*, by Mozart, for the libretto of which Da Ponte has modified the *Don Juan*, of Molière; we would be without his *Marriage of Figaro*, in which the text of Beaumarchais's comedy has certainly not been respected; nor yet, for the same reason, should we possess *The Barber of Seville*, by Rossini; nor *Alceste*, by Gluck, which is simply a paraphrase of the tragedy by Euripides; nor his *Iphigenia in Aulis*, in which needless and regrettable changes have been made in the verses of Racine, verses which, in their pure beauty, might well have been introduced in the recitatives. The numerous operas founded on the dramas of Shakespeare would have remained unwritten, and finally, it would be necessary to condemn Spohr for having produced a work which also bears the name *Faust*, in which are to be found the characters of

Le titre seul de cet ouvrage indique qu'il n'est pas basé sur l'idée principale du *Faust* de Goethe, puisque, dans l'illustre poème, Faust est sauvé. L'auteur de *la Damnation de Faust* a seulement emprunté à Goethe un certain nombre de scènes qui pouvaient entrer dans le plan qu'il s'était tracé, scènes dont la séduction sur son esprit était irrésistible. Mais fût-il resté fidèle à la pensée de Goethe, il n'en eût pas moins encouru le reproche, que plusieurs personnes lui ont déjà adressé (quelques-unes avec amertume) d'avoir mutilé un monument.

En effet, on sait qu'il est absolument impracticable de mettre en musique un poème de quelque étendue, qui ne fut pas écrit pour être chanté, sans lui faire subir une foule de modifications. Et de tous les poèmes dramatiques existants, *Faust*, sans aucun doute, est le plus impossible à chanter intégralement d'un bout à l'autre. Or si, tout en conservant la donnée du *Faust* de Goethe, il faut, pour en faire le sujet d'une composition musicale, modifier le chef-d'œuvre de cent façons diverses, le crime de le lèse-majesté du génie est tout aussi évident dans ce cas que dans l'autre et mérite une égale réprobation.

Il s'ensuit alors qu'il devrait être interdit aux musiciens de choisir pour thèmes de leurs compositions des poèmes illustres. Nous serions ainsi privés de l'opéra de *Don Juan*, de Mozart, pour le livret duquel Da Ponte a modifié le *Don Juan* de Molière; nous ne posséderions pas non plus son *Mariage de Figaro*, pour lequel le texte de la comédie de Beaumarchais n'a certes pas été respecté; ni celui du *Barbier de Séville*, de Rossini, par la même raison; ni *l'Alceste* de Gluck, qui n'est qu'une paraphrase informelle de la tragédie d'Euripide; ni son *Iphigénie en Aulide*, pour laquelle on a inutilement (et ceci est vraiment coupable) gâté des vers de Racine, qui pouvaient parfaitement entrer avec leur pure beauté dans les récitatifs; on n'eût écrit aucun des nombreux opéras qui existent sur des drames de Shakespeare; enfin, M. Spohr serait peut-être condamnable d'avoir produit une œuvre qui porte aussi le nom de *Faust*, où l'on trouve les personnages de Faust, de Méphistophélès, de Marguerite. Une scène de sorcières, et qui pourtant ne ressemble point au poème de Goethe.

(iii)

Faust, Mephistopheles, Margaret, and with a Witches' Scene, but which, however, bears no resemblance to Goethe's poem.

A reply may readily be found to the detailed criticism which has been made on the text book of *The Damnation of Faust*.

Why, it has been asked, has the author placed his characters in Hungary?

Because he wished to introduce a piece of instrumental music, the theme of which is Hungarian. He confesses this frankly. He would have placed them anywhere else, had he had the least musical reason for doing so. Has Goethe himself, in the second Faust, not taken his hero to Sparta, to the palace of Menelaus?

The legend of Doctor Faust is capable of the most varied treatment; its adaptability is world wide; it had been dramatized by others before Goethe; it had long been known, under divers forms in the literary world of Northern Europe, when he made use of it, and even Marlowe's *Faust* had, in England, a certain popularity and celebrity, which, however, diminished and disappeared before the masterpiece of Goethe.

As regards the German verses which are sung in *The Damnation of Faust*, and which are Goethe's verses with changes, they must, evidently, be as displeasing to the German ear, as are to the French ear the verses of Racine, so needlessly altered in the *Iphigenia* of Gluck.

It must be remembered, however, that the score of this work was written from the French text, which, in certain places, is itself a translation of the German, and that in conformity with the desire of the composer to submit his work to the judgment of the most musical public in Europe, it has been necessary to write in German a translation of the translation.

These remarks may perhaps seem somewhat puerile to those powerful minds that grasp at once the whole of a subject, and who think it unnecessary to have it proved to them that there is no desire to dry up the Caspian Sea, or to blow up Mount Blanc. Mr. H. Berlioz has, nevertheless, felt it incumbent on him to offer them, so much does he deprecate being accused of unfaithfulness to the religion of his life, or of having failed, even indirectly, in the respect due to genius.

Maintenant, aux observations de détail qui ont été faites sur le livret de *la Damnation de Faust*, il sera également facile de répondre.

Pourquoi l'auteur, dit-on, a-t-il fait aller son personnage en Hongrie?

Parce qu'il avait envie de faire entendre un morceau de musique instrumentale dont le thème est hongrois. Il l'avoue sincèrement. Il l'eût mené partout ailleurs, s'il eût trouvé la moindre raison musicale de le faire. Goethe, lui-même, dans le second *Faust*, n'a-t-il pas conduit son héros à Sparte, dans le palais de Ménélas?

La légende du docteur Faust peut être traitée de toutes manières : elle est du domaine public ; elle avait été dramatisée avant Goethe ; elle circulait depuis longtemps sous diverses formes dans le monde littéraire du nord de l'Europe, quand il s'en empara ; le *Faust* de Marlow jouissait même, en Angleterre, d'une sorte de célébrité, d'une gloire réelle que Goethe a fait pâlir et disparaître.

Quant à ceux des vers allemands, chantés dans *la Damnation de Faust*, qui sont des vers de Goethe altérés, ils doivent évidemment choquer les oreilles allemandes, comme les vers de Racine, altérés sans raison dans *Iphigénie* de Gluck, choquent : les oreilles françaises. Seulement, on ne doit pas oublier que la partition de cet ouvrage fut écrite sur un texte français, qui, dans certaines parties, est lui-même une traduction de l'allemand, et que, pour satisfaire ensuite au désir du compositeur de soumettre son œuvre au jugement du public le plus musical de l'Europe, il a fallu écrire en allemand une traduction de la traduction.

Peut-être ces observations paraîtront-elles puérides à d'excellents esprits qui voient toute de suite le fond des choses et n'aiment pas qu'on s'évertue à leur prouver qu'on est incapable de vouloir mettre à sec la mer Caspienne ou faire sauter le mont Blanc. M. H. Berlioz n'a pas cru pouvoir s'en dispenser, néanmoins, tant il lui est pénible de se voir accuser d'infidélité à la religion de toute sa vie, et de manquer, même indirectement, de respect au génie.

SYNOPSIS OF THE DAMNATION OF FAUST.

(From the N. Y. Musical Review, January 29, 1880)

THE *Faust* of Berlioz cannot be taken as an exact paraphrase of the poem of Goethe. But, if the author makes undesirable omission of some important scenes, such as in the prison and in the church, and if he deprives himself of the character of Valentin with its admirable episodes, he treats certain situations neglected by earlier (and by later) composers, and has known how to compose a poem with two essential qualities, *color and life*. Berlioz carefully justifies his free use of the original poem in these words: "The title of my work sufficiently indicates that it is not based upon the principal idea of Goethe's *Faust*, for in the illustrious poem Faust is saved." Berlioz has borrowed from Goethe only a certain number of scenes which entered into his plan, and which seem to have attracted him irresistibly. The very fact that he should have substituted Faust's descent to hell for that portion of the German work in which the hero is saved, shows a characteristic phase of his genius. Berlioz, not unlike Edgar Allan Poe, took a peculiar delight in the horrible; and he could not possibly resist so favorable an opportunity to send a man to the devil, with all the accompanying terrors.

The score of *La Damnation de Faust* is divided into four parts, containing nineteen scenes and an epilogue. The scene opens without an overture. Faust is wandering amid the plains of Hungary, singing a monologue to the awakening spring, accompanied by a lovely symphonic picture. It is important to note in these passages fragments of the march, suggesting the approach of the Hungarian soldiers and of the *Rondo des Paysans* (introduced later) in condensed rhythm, piccolo, oboes, bassoons, and horns alternately intoning these fragments. The *Rondo* of the peasants is cleverly orchestrated, so as to preserve the pastoral tone throughout. Flutes and oboes have the melody, which is accompanied almost entirely by the clarinet, bassoons, and horns, and only occasionally by strings.

This gayety calls from the unhappy Faust a regretful sigh, breathed forth in a musical phrase of deep melancholy. Then passes a troop, with its martial sounds. This is the popular *Kakoczky March*. Berlioz here developed the theme of the Hungarian national hymn wonderfully, and then arranged it for orchestra, and it is to his brilliant scoring that the march owes its universal popularity. While he himself considers its introduction here a caprice, it is of deeper poetic import. For it enables Berlioz to present in the first part two powerful contrasts: Faust's melancholy and the peasants' mirth; Faust's renewed gloom and the boisterous joy of the Hungarian soldiers.

The second part begins. Faust is in his laboratory, eager for knowledge, weary of life. As he raises the poisoned death-cup to his lips, comes the sound of Easter music. This scene, taken textually from Goethe's poem, is of great

beauty. The *désillusion* and the ardor of Faust are painted with a masterhand. The Easter hymn, after a short introduction for sopranos and altos accompanied by double basses, is first sung by male voices only. When afterward sopranos and altos join, and the full orchestra spreads its shimmer over the choral masses, the effect is of a sublime majesty. The apparition of the demon is treated in a few highly colored measures, and the concise motive with which Mephistopheles is introduced, and which occurs several times later on, is the earliest example of a leading motive in an oratorio. The demon transports his lord and master to the tavern of Auerbach. Here Berlioz has given a literal rendering of the original scene and words. The drinking-chorus has an irresistible *crescendo*. Theo Brändler, heavy and vinous, as suits his listeners, sings the stanzas of the *Song of the Rat*. Hardly has the crowd pronounced its lamentable *Requiescat*, when begins a "dishevelled" fugue on the word *Amen*. This is a musical jest on the part of the composer, who was glad thus to turn the tables upon his detractors, the ardent defenders and compilers of pseudo-classical fugues. For Berlioz himself by no means underrated the power of the artistic fugue, and has introduced several fugatos into *La Damnation de Faust*. The fugue ended, the devil flings at the gaping crowd his bizarre *Song of the Flea*. This is one of the most interesting parts of the work. For Berlioz has described, by means of clever forms in the accompaniment, the skipping of the flea in various directions. Further on occurs what might be described as a skipping-climax; and that part of the song which mentions the singing flea is accompanied by a quick thrust on the kettle-drum. It is interesting to note the fact that even Beethoven, not disdaining program-music, has composed music to the same text with an equally descriptive accompaniment, ending with a rapid passage, whose notes are all, with Beethoven's characteristic humor, marked to be run down with the thumb. To accomplish this, the tip of the thumb closes on the third finger-tip—an exceedingly suggestive position under the circumstances.

Under the title, *Bosquets et Prairies au Bord de l'Elbe*, Berlioz has transcribed the end of the third scene, and composed a marvel of graceful, fairy-like inspiration. The demon murmurs into the ear of Faust a softly penetrating melody. The *Chorus of the Gnomes* and the *Ballet of the Sylphs* defy all word-description. The slumber-chorus in this scene is perhaps the most difficult number of the work. The rhythm of the soft melody taken by the altos is exceedingly catching. It begins with a part for chorus and orchestra in $\frac{1}{2}$ time (*Andante*); then the chorus sings in $\frac{3}{4}$ time (*Allégo*), while the strings continue in the old tempo, so that three of the bars of the chorus correspond to one bar of the strings. The rest of the orchestra continues all through in