



WHITGIFT

# DOCTOR FAUSTUS

WHITGIFT SCHOOL BIG SCHOOL  
7/8/9 DECEMBER 2011 7.30PM  
FREE ADMISSION (BY TICKET ONLY)

arts  
events

## CAST



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Bad Angel	Toby Bradshaw
Chorus Captain	Geddy Stringer
Cornelius	Michael Tree
Duchess	Alex Buchanan
Duke	Yvan Bollet-Quivogne
Emperor	Stuart Nunn
Faustus	Oliver Neil-Smith
Ghost	Rory Allen
Good Angel	Paul Thomas
Horse Courser	Liam Fernandes
Knight	John McGhee
Mephistopheles	Douglas Wood
Pope	Daniel Crook
Ralph	Daniel Alsoof
Robin	Sam Herman Wilson
Scholar 1	Tom Munns
Scholar 2	Bardeya Firoozkoohi
Scholar 3	Toby Fisher
Valdes	Jamal Hassan
Vintner	James Finnie
Wagner	Joe D'angelo

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Director/Producer	Mr P Dinnen
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Co-directors	Miss Alison Gaster Miss Miranda Hughes
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Stage Manager/ Technical Director	Mr Peter Crook Mr David Jenkinson
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Lighting	Raj Sukul
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Sound	Tom Higgins Josh Daniels
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Make-up Design	Mrs Debbie King
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Photography	Mr Ben Prestney
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### *Grateful thanks to:*

Mr Paul Wilson, Miss Saskia Payne, Mr Tom Hibberd, Mr Lloyd Beecham, Mr Tom Biddle, Mr Sami Michael, Mrs Sarah Donwa, Mr Chris Shaw, Mrs Paula Trewin, Rev. Canon Colin Boswell, Mr Graham Maudsley, Mrs Kate McCormack, Miss Sian Herring, all the forbearing and supportive parents, partners and families of the company, and the Headmaster for his continued support of all productions at the School

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Mr Paul Dinnen

*'Che Sera, Sera: What will be, shall be'*

One of the key challenges with which we have wrestled in staging Doctor Faustus has been that of charting a dramatically compelling psychological journey for the central character, and in doing so we have found that we have also had to tackle one of more bold theological assertions contained in the play.

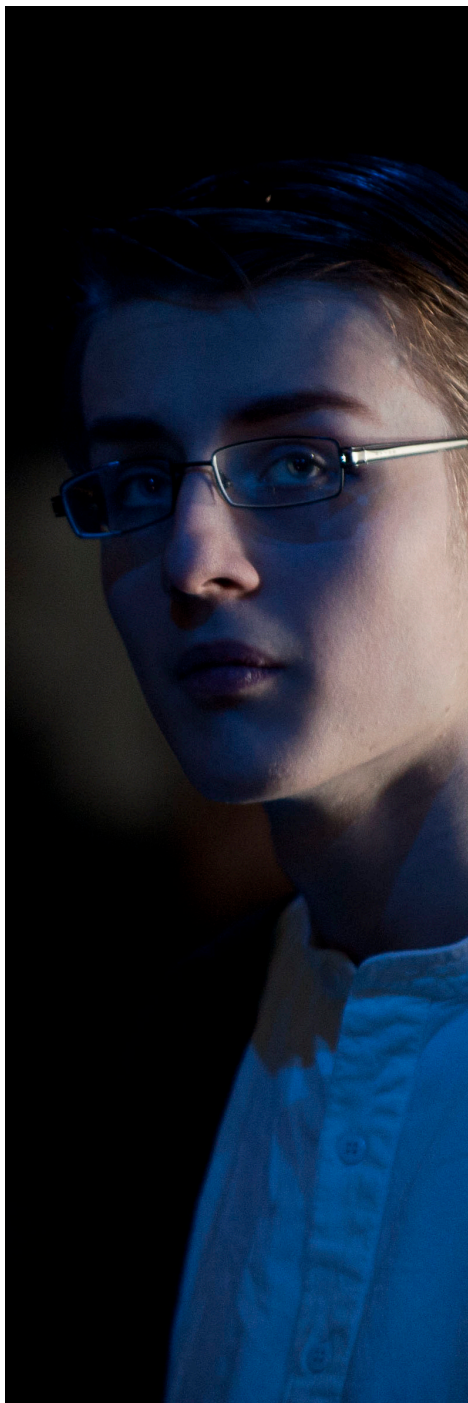
As Mr. Biddle points out in his essay later in the programme, Marlowe was playing with fire in more ways than one in writing a play so explicitly blasphemous, and so implicitly critical of some of the religious views of the day. In particular, the play challenges the Calvinist belief in predestination.

In the opening soliloquy, Marlowe seems to suggest that the inevitability of 'an everlasting death' is what forces Faustus to turn to Lucifer in the first place. In 1592 this was to challenge the beliefs of the most powerful churchmen of the day. In 1595 the Archbishop of Canterbury published the Lambeth Articles in response to disputes which had arisen at Cambridge University, clarifying his own belief in the theology of predestination and stating that: 'It is not in all men's power or will to be saved.'

But predestination is also clearly an anathema to both dramatist and director. If a character's fate is not at least partly in his own hands, if the actions and decisions he makes before us are of no consequence, they lose their dramatic power. The Book of the Elect would truly be the spoiler to end all spoilers. Foregone conclusions, then are the essential bane of drama, and for that matter, education and sport.

Just a year later the same Archbishop who published the Lambeth Articles, one John Whitgift, founded the School in South Croydon which bears his name and in which we find ourselves watching Marlowe's seditious affront to his teaching this evening.

We hope that our production will keep you on the edge of your seats – and I would avoid glare of the Founder's portrait on the way out.



## SYNOPSIS

### ACT 1:

As the halls ring with cheering students, the ghost of Doctor Faustus recounts his own tragic end and calls us to 'regard his hellish fall'. We meet Faustus, a brilliant German scholar at the height of his powers, who has grown dissatisfied with the limits of traditional forms of knowledge. He is unimpressed with the Christian account of human sinfulness and predestined judgment. We watch him wrestle with the possibility of rejecting God and turning to black magic; witnessing his struggle through the voices of the good and bad angels. Ultimately, his pride and desire for power lead him to consult the conjurers Valdes and Cornelius. They are disturbing characters, but with the help of their teaching Faustus summons Mephistophilis, an angel fallen from the glory of heaven and now in the service of Lucifer. Despite Mephistophilis's warnings about the reality and the horror of hell, Faustus offers his soul in exchange for twenty-four years of service from Mephistophilis.

Wagner, Faustus's vindictive servant and comic foil has picked up some magical ability and uses it to press a clown named Robin into his service.

As Faustus signs the pact with Lucifer in his own blood, he recognises that he could instead repent and find forgiveness. His body recoils from the action and the blood dries in his veins. As Faustus hands over the deed to his soul, the words "Homo fuge," Latin for "O man, fly," appear branded on his arm. Mephistophilis distracts him from this horror with visions of the riches that will be bestowed on



him by Lucifer. Appeased, Faustus begins to question Mephistophilis about the nature of the world, but he is disappointed by the simplicity of the answers he is given and disconcerted when Mephistophilis refuses to tell him who made the universe. Mephistophilis presents personifications of the Seven Deadly Sins to ensnare him.

### ACT 2:

Armed with his new powers and attended by Mephistophilis, Faustus begins to travel. He goes to the centre of Christian power, the Pope's court in Rome. Once there he makes himself invisible, and disrupts the Pope's banquet by stealing food. Pleased with his tomfoolery he travels through the courts of Europe, with his fame spreading as he goes. Eventually, he is invited to the court of the feckless German emperor, Charles V, who asks Faustus to summon his ancestor Alexander the Great. Charles' knight scoffs at Faustus's powers, and is chastised when Faustus punishes him by making antlers sprout from his head. Obsequious to Charles and cruel to the knight, Faustus has fallen short of the great man he desires to be.

Meanwhile, Robin, Wagner's clown, has picked up some magic on his own, and with his fellow stablehand,

Ralph, he undergoes a number of comic misadventures. At one point, he manages to summon Mephistophilis, who turns Robin and Ralph into animals to punish them for their foolishness.

Faustus is wearying of his magic and the recognition that his time is passing too fast starts to weigh heavily. When he meets a horse-trader, Faustus vindictively sells him a horse that turns into a heap of straw when ridden into a river. Eventually, Faustus is invited to the court of the Duke of Vanholt, where he performs various feats to entertain the Duke and his crass and pregnant Duchess. The horse-courser, outraged at his loss, arrives along with Robin, Ralph and the Vintner to demand recompense. Mephistophilis brutally silences them and sends them on their way.

As the twenty-four years run out, Faustus begins to dread his impending death. Still keen to impress others, he acquiesces to the request of the scholars to call up Helen of Troy, the famous beauty from the ancient world. When alone, Faustus asks to see Helen again. Enraptured, he is shocked when the vision fades and he is faced with the ghost offering a futile call to repentance. On his final night, Faustus is overcome by fear and remorse. He begs for mercy, but it is too late. As the clock tolls for midnight, a host of devils appear. On hearing his screams the scholars find what is left of Faustus's mangled body.

## 'FAUST' AND MUSIC

Mr Paul Wilson, Director of Music

It is unsurprising that such an elemental story as Faust has attracted a wide range of composers. There are five main operatic treatments that deserve our attention. The most famous of these is, of course, Gounod's *Faust*, the grandest of grand operas, premiered in 1859. Gounod's *Faust* is packed with good tunes and dramatically effective but hardly a subtle psychological study. Berlioz in his *La Damnation de Faust* of 1846 is more penetrating in this regard, even though he cannot match Gounod's sheer melodic invention. Interestingly, Mephistopheles is presented in both as, initially at least, a rather jolly individual, with music that is positively spritely. If this character seems remote from Marlowe's conception, 'Why this is hell, nor am I out of it.', it should be remembered that most composers taking Faust as their subject use Goethe's monumental epic poetic drama as a starting point; Mephistopheles here starts off far more urbane than anguished. Arrigo Boito attempts something even more ambitious psychologically than Berlioz in his *Mefistofele* of 1868 but, despite much beautiful music, the whole lacks coherence and is rarely performed now. Even less well-known, but certainly worth the occasional revival, is *Dr Faust* (1925) by Ferruccio Busoni. Busoni is noteworthy for attempting to write operas on subjects already tackled by great composers: he also composed a *Turandot*. *Dr Faust* is fascinating in our current context as it was

based on the German 'chap book' Faust which was Marlowe's source in an English translation. Most recently, Igor Stravinsky in 1951 composed *A Rake's Progress* based on Hogarth's engravings, and clearly a version of the Faust story. The naïve Tom Rakewell is led astray by his devilish manservant, Nick Shadow and, while his soul is saved by the fidelity and courage of Ann Truelove, Tom's past sins mean that Shadow, before his return to hell empty-handed, has the power to render him insane. Stravinsky's neo-classical score is a masterpiece and W.H. Auden's libretto a work of genius.

Outside the realm of opera, Liszt's *Faust Symphony* presents Faust as a species of brooding Byronic hero, while Schubert has written a number of sublime Lieder based on Goethe's Drama. A curious snippet from Goethe, 'The Song of the Flea' has inspired a number of composers, including Mussorgsky, Wagner and, again, Liszt. Mussorgsky's version has gained particular favour with recitalists, and every great Russian bass, from Chaliapin onwards, has included it in their repertoire.

The ubiquitous power of the Faust legend is well illustrated by the Broadway Musical 'Damn Yankees': a smash hit in its day (1955) and later adapted into a successful movie. This tells the story of a middle-aged New York Yankees baseball fan who says 'I'd sell my soul if the Yankees could win the World Series this year.' The Devil takes him up on



this and transforms him into a teenage baseball phenomenon who signs for the Yankees and leads them to the World Series Finals. Here again, our hero is saved by the love of a faithful wife.

It is also interesting to consider two virtuoso violinists who were seriously thought to have links with the Devil. Giuseppe Tartini (8 April 1692–26 February 1770) wrote a violin sonata which contained a passage thought to be impossible for a mere mortal to play. The piece became known as 'The Devil's Trill Sonata' and Tartini did nothing to dispel the rumours circulating about him – they were excellent box-office! Another 'demonic' violinist who understood the value of publicity was Niccolò Paganini (27 October 1782–27 May 1840). With his cadaverous frame, deathly pallor, and long red hair, Paganini looked a likely candidate for an infernal pact even before he started to play. As his playing was quite phenomenal this only served to strengthen the popular belief that he had indeed sold his soul. A combination of these factors gave him super-star status. Paganini also composed music of extraordinary difficulty and some his 'Caprices' will be used as incidental music in this production.

## FAUSTUS AND THE MODERN MIND

*Mr Tom Biddle, Head of English*

Kit Marlowe was a man presumably well acquainted with fear. His life as, we believe, a secret service operative (at one point he was arrested in Holland with counterfeit money) must have been filled with moments of thrill and terror up until his untimely murder in a pub in Deptford over something more sinister we can assume, than the commonly quoted bar bill. He was only twenty-nine but had established himself as the pre-eminent dramatist of his time though he didn't live to fight for the laurels with Ben Jonson and William Shakespeare. In Elizabethan England not only was it extremely dangerous to express any kind of dissent from a Christian religious world view, it was potentially fatal to express the wrong kind of Christian belief. Sea voyages were full of uncertainty and danger, and war was only ever a short distance away. If your views on life, religion or the monarchy, war with Catholic Spain, or a nasty storm at sea didn't get you, the plague might. In the year that Marlowe wrote his *Faustus* London was racked with an outbreak of the plague that lasted for two years and forced the closure of the theatres. Drake was sailing round the world, Raleigh was adventuring; others were forming groups to push the boundaries of study in mathematics, geometry and literature.

At the centre of this luminous group was Christopher Marlowe, and it is not surprising

therefore to find him taking one of the most dangerous and alarming stories in existence and writing it for the public stage. It is worth asking then, just how frightening *Faustus* would have been for his audience and what it has to say about the modern mind.

Modern students of the play, together with Marlowe's audience, will recognise some formulaic characters from the Morality plays that had been the theatrical staple in the recent past. The Good Angel and Evil Angel would have been familiar figures in the ear of a protagonist and it is easy for us to imagine an Elizabethan audience in an era full of innovation, adventure and new scholarship, smiling indulgently at this old-fashioned representation. The reality was, though, that many ordinary folk, (and many educated and exalted people too) would have had a real and vivid belief in angels and their capacity to communicate with humans. The prominent figure at Elizabeth's court, Dr John Dee, was renowned for his interest in magic of various types but in particular in the 'science' of angelic communication. He believed and taught that it was possible to communicate with angels if you had the special knowledge that he had acquired. Against this background then, the entrance of the two angels in the first scene becomes terrifyingly serious:

### GOOD ANGEL

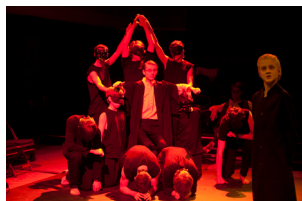
*O Faustus, lay that damned book aside  
And gaze not on it, lest it tempt thy soul  
And heap God's heavy wrath upon thy head!  
Read, read the Scriptures. That is blasphemy.*

### EVIL ANGEL

*Go forward Faustus, in that famous art  
Wherein all nature's treasury is contained.  
Be thou on earth as Jove is in the sky,  
Lord and commander of all these elements. (l.i.72-79)*

The Evil Angel's language slips into the world of the classical gods in an implicit attempt to soften the blasphemy that Faustus is being drawn towards; the audience though would have recognised this as a stark choice with real and terrible consequences.

The question that follows for us is whether this exchange holds any force now? Our society is secular; belief in God is a matter of personal choice in the West and we are bolstered by several centuries of increasing belief in the scope and capacity of human knowledge.







It is possible to treat *Faustus* as a diverting exploration of the metaphorical duality of human nature and experience, and one that has something interesting to say to our head, but little to our heart. We are beyond the world of belief in magic of any type; the notion of a real hell or heaven is passé and so we watch *Faustus* as a study in hubris, in the character's flaws and temptations but without the fear that would have attended it in Marlowe's age.

The trouble with this view that comfortingly anaesthetises the play is that magic meant something much wider than wand-waving and closer to our notions of science, that heaven and hell are concepts that find their place more readily than ever in our parlance, and that the human impulses and obsessions that engulf Faustus are as prevalent and real today as they were then.

The only thing that changes for the modern avowed atheist is the location of the consequences: Faustus' hell must then be understood not as an eternal place outside himself but as found within his mind itself. This interpretation

not only finds significant basis in the text but also speaks loudly and frighteningly to us as our understanding grows of the mind, its glorious possibilities, and also its capacity to wreak pain and damage on us. Consider the grand journeys of Faustus and Mephistopheles in Act III. Their colourful and absorbing scope provide a sweeping counterpoint to the enclosure of Faustus's study in which the play opens. They also appears to be, at least initially, the magnificent pay-off for his pact: he is genuinely seeing things no other has seen, that no other could. In addition they allow for some of the most comic scenes of the play, especially in Rome where Faustus metaphorically tweaks the nose and literally boxes the ear of the Pope. But if Faustus's story is one of internal conflict and tortured desires then are we in fact witnessing the fevered imagination of a mind teetering on the brink of chaos and collapse? The very scale of the journey and the farcical comedy of parts of it could point us to a mind entirely out of balance and in the grip of breakdown.

There are elements of the play that point us to this internalised reading: Faustus calls up his own infernal 'minder' in the first place. Mephistopheles and later Lucifer and Beelzebub speak only to Faustus apart from a brief conversation with the horse-courser who does not know Mephistopheles.

Two other devils very briefly appear to Wagner, but the principal representatives of hell are Faustus's alone. At the end of Faustus's increasingly wild hallucinations, ending with the appearance of Helen of Troy, we hear from Mephistopheles that Faustus has 'not slept this eight nights': an indication either of the urgency of time left to him, or of the warped state of consciousness into which he has descended. Mephistopheles is forced to admit that Faustus could release himself from the bond, even up to the final moments and says, 'I cannot touch his soul,' even as Faustus is signing his assent in blood.

The play can exist very convincingly as a tragedy of the mind and it is there that we might find its contemporary chill. We are familiar with obsession and its consequences, and are increasingly aware of the creaking psyches of those whose minds are out of balance. The door into Faustus's misery opens when his interest in books and knowledge becomes an obsession. For Marlowe's time it would have been the topic of his researches that would have shocked and frightened; that may be so too with us, but it might also be that it is the very portrayal of an obsession and its self-destructive consequences that makes *Faustus* every bit as real and terrifying now as it was in 1592.



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