



Dr Faustus

Written by: Christopher Marlowe

Directed by: Richard Frampton and Kathryn Young

Performed: Wednesday 21st - Saturday 24th July 2010 at 7.30pm at [St Anne's Hall](#).

	Cast	Crew		
	Doctor Faustus	<i>Ian Pring</i>	Producers	<i>Lesley Tulley Mark Stannett</i>
	Mephistophilis	<i>Catherine Fox-Kirk</i>	Set Design	<i>Richard Frampton</i>
	Chorus	<i>Becca Stafford Joanna Dodd Emma Stallard Jon Simmonds Becca Duke</i>	Costume	<i>Kathryn Young</i>
			Lighting Design	<i>Richard Frampton</i>
			Sound Design	<i>Chris Chivers</i>
			Prompt	<i>Fiona Makujina</i>

Synopsis

Doctor Faustus, Marlowe's most famous play, is about desire, sin, ambition and salvation. First performed in the 1590's, the text was first published in 1604 with a heavily revised and longer text published in 1616. Feeling he has achieved all he needs to as a physician and philosopher, Dr Faustus becomes fascinated by magic. When he manages to conjure a spirit, Mephistophilis, he believes his powers are great; yet he soon discovers that this spirit is a devil, and will do as he commands on one condition – that Faustus gives up his soul to Lucifer. With 24 years to enjoy his newfound power before the debt is called in, the Doctor is sure he will gain fame, knowledge and riches. As it turns out, his achievements with Mephistophilis are something of a disappointment – he conjures grapes, out of season, for the wife of a powerful duke; plays tricks on a horse peddler; steals food from the Pope and summons Alexander the Great and Helen of Troy. At times, he questions his decision, and is tempted to repent and seek salvation. The devil will not give his soul up so easily though and uses visions of the seven deadly sins to keep him on his damned path. Ultimately, the hour comes and Faustus descends in to "ugly hell". The play is full of high drama and has a fast, relentless pace, as we watch the Doctor's descent into depravity and damnation.

NODA Review by Tony Sweeney

General

This was an excellent production of a 16th Century classic which stayed true to the original in terms of both the dialogue and the cultural context which, whilst different from our own still manages to ring true in our modern world. This is a dark piece exploring man's temporal and spiritual make-up, the production certainly conveyed these aspects. The casting was good with performers playing a variety of parts; the characterisations were strong and excellent throughout. It was possibly a brave decision to take on such a complex and demanding piece but it worked extremely well.

The prompt was never used which given the complexity of the dialogue was excellent.

Players

Ian Pring (Faustus) took on and met the challenge of a difficult part. The dialogue alone must have been tough to learn, but added to that a range of emotions and mental torment on display, meant this was a superb performance. As the main character he was on stage throughout and interacted well with the variety of characters played by the other actors.

Catherine Fox-Kirk (Mephistophilis) was a real and imposing presence on stage as Faustus's private demon. Her use of snake like body movements not only added to the sense of evil but also gave her an ethereal quality. Her costume had the feel of the Arabian nights and hence was somewhat more subtle than a more traditional devil costume, but still added to her character.

Becca Stafford (Wagner) introduced the show and appeared at intervals to narrate and help convey the progress of the plot. This was a good device used well.

Joanna Dodd (Cornelius) played a number of roles the pinnacle of which was her depiction of Helen of Troy, where she was transformed by a simple costume change into the mythical figure. She has a good stage presence displaying great confidence and supporting the main action well.

Emma Stallard played a number of mainly un-named but key supporting roles. Her depiction of the seven deadly sins was excellent, using a range of body language and facial expressions to reinforce the dialogue.

Becca Duke (Valdes) again displayed great confidence and poise performing a number of supporting roles.

Jon Simmonds also had a number of the smaller characters to portray, which was done well and with apparent ease.

Richard Frampton's performances ranged from Satan to one of Faustus's local neighbours. He seemed to move effortlessly between roles using a variety of voice and body language skills to reinforce these changes.

Director

Kat Young and Richard Frampton co-directed and clearly brought an expansive imagination coupled with considerable innovation to bring to life a 16th Century tale for a modern audience and still keep it fresh and relevant. There were overtones which are still relevant today and these came across i.e. the dangers of overt materialism. The decision to have Mephistophilis on the stage but partially hidden for the initial section of the play was interesting and I was unclear if this was to hint that evil is never far from the surface or to give her opening entrance more impact.

Stage Management

The stage management was seamless with entrances and exits timed well. The absence of curtains meant this became quite a key element which was handled well. The props were all to hand and used well. This was very slick throughout.

Sound

The sound was clear and audible making full use of the acoustics offered by a church hall.

Lighting

The lighting certainly added to the mood. The main lighting rig being supplemented by hand held devices to highlight key moments worked well and gave the production a range of options not possible from a standard static rig. The appearance of the devil and Mephistophilis amplified by hand directed lighting again added to a menacing atmosphere.

The final moments where Faustus is dragged to hell was especially well lit adding to the terror aspects and helping build to a crescendo.

Set design

A simple but effective set used in a variety of ways. It felt like a circus tent with strands of material forming an apex over the front rows. This meant the curtains could not be closed and so the performers were visible on stage before the performance began and this added to the atmosphere giving it a more inclusive feel.

Props

A variety of props ranging from bottles and vials to books were used to good effect. The books helped portray Faustus as a man of learning which is central to the plot.

Costumes

The costumes had a timeless quality which reinforced the universal and relevant themes Marlow tapped into. Overall it had a quality which reminded me of Bladerunner i.e. the almost circus feel. Indeed Becca Stafford's costume had overtones of the ringmaster which tied into her role as narrator in key moments.

Programme

A simple programme containing all the elements need to help the audience member to both appreciate the story and the players.

Front of House

The front of house team were welcoming and helpful as were the members manning the refreshment booth. It all added to the general feel of a strongly community based group.

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