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## THE FAUST LEGEND AND ITS MUSICAL MANIFESTATIONS : A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

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### THESIS

**ENGLISH ABSTRACT:** This thesis explores the Faust legend and its musical manifestations since the 19th century. The objective is to provide a thorough background to the legend, before drawing up an account of compositions inspired by the Faust legend. Firstly, the origin of the legend is investigated, followed by a brief summary of the most important literary works on the subject of Faust. This is followed by a comprehensive outline of the story as told by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and then the most significant compositions inspired by the legend are discussed. A short section containing comparisons of the compositions and the conclusions of the study appears at the end. The legend tells the story of Faust, a scholar, philosopher and alchemist in search of divine knowledge, power and pleasure. Faust encounters the devil and makes a pact with him in which he agrees to surrender his immortal soul, if the devil can satisfy Faust's thirst for knowledge and grant him the experience of true happiness. The Faust legend is a very popular theme among composers and artists. One of the reasons for the success of the Faust legend is its universal appeal. This has led to various composers using the material as the basis for their works. Goethe's version of the legend has proven to be the most popular source for composers. To produce a composition that attempts to capture the drama in its entirety, including its psychological and spiritual elements, is not feasible. Works centred on a smaller section, scene or character from Goethe's Faust were often more successful than the larger operatic compositions. Like all great universal ideas, the Faust legend lends itself to an abundance of interpretations. Similarities between works are rare. Each composer who made use of the Faust legend interpreted it subjectively, which has produced many unique and varied compositions.

**AFRIKAANSE OPSOMMING:** In hierdie studie word die Faust legende, soos wat dit in verskeie musikale komposisies van die 19de eeu uitgebeeld is, ondersoek. Die doel van die studie is om 'n lys van werke wat deur die Faustlegende geïnspireer is, saam te stel. Die tesis

ondersoek die oorsprong van die legende en gee 'n kort opsomming van die mees prominente literêre werke met die Faustlegende as onderwerp. Daarna volg 'n uiteensetting van die storielyn soos vertel deur Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. 'n Lys, bestaande uit gesaghebbende Faust komposisies, word ingesluit en laastens volg vergelykings en gevolgtrekkings uit die studie. Die legende vertel die verhaal van Faust, die professor, filosoof en alchemis op soek na kennis, mag en plesier. Faust tree in gesprek met die duivel en gaan met hom 'n ooreenkoms aan om sy siel prys te gee in ruil vir kennis en ware geluk. Die Faust legende is sekerlik een van die mees gewilde literêre onderwerpe vir gebruik deur komponiste en kunstenaars. Die universaliteit van die legende dra by tot die gewildheid daarvan en om gebruik te word as onderwerp in toonsettings. Goethe se weergawe word meestal ingespan as bron van inspirasie. Om die volle omvang van die drama, met al sy sielkundige en geestelike elemente in 'n komposisie vas te vang, is feitlik onmoontlik. Soos die meeste groot universele werke, word Faust op verskillende maniere geïnterpreteer. Gevolglik is daar min ooreenkomste tussen die verskillende toonsettings. Elke komponis se interpretasie van die legende is uniek.

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