CHAPTER 14

MEFISTOFELE TRIUMPHANT—FROM THE IDEAL TO THE REAL

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> There is no such thing as for genius to go undiscovered, nor for a true genius to be misunderstood; it is against the natural order, just as the masses of humanity have greater need of higher spirits than the higher spirits have need of the masses.
>
> —Arrigo Boito

Arrigo Boito, encouraged by his brother, the architect Camillo, author of *Senso*, sought to escape the limiting conventions of contemporary melodrama in order to revolutionize Italian opera.[1] However, the most radical expression of that effort— *Mefistofele* (*Mephistopheles*), which premiered at La Scala on March 5, 1868, with very mixed results—did not attain the desired end. As described by a prominent commentator, with connections both to Scapigliatura and Casa Ricordi, the cheers that evening were few compared to the open dissent:

> Arrigo Boito is a young man of twenty-five years . . . who made his first attempt in the theatre with a work of colossal proportions, aspiring to innovation. Perhaps the seriousness with which one approached this initial effort . . . may have affected its success. But what has undoubtedly helped to stir the public and part of the press to ruthless demonstrations against the work and its creator were the foolish applause and shrill provocations emanating from [the composer's supporters].[2]

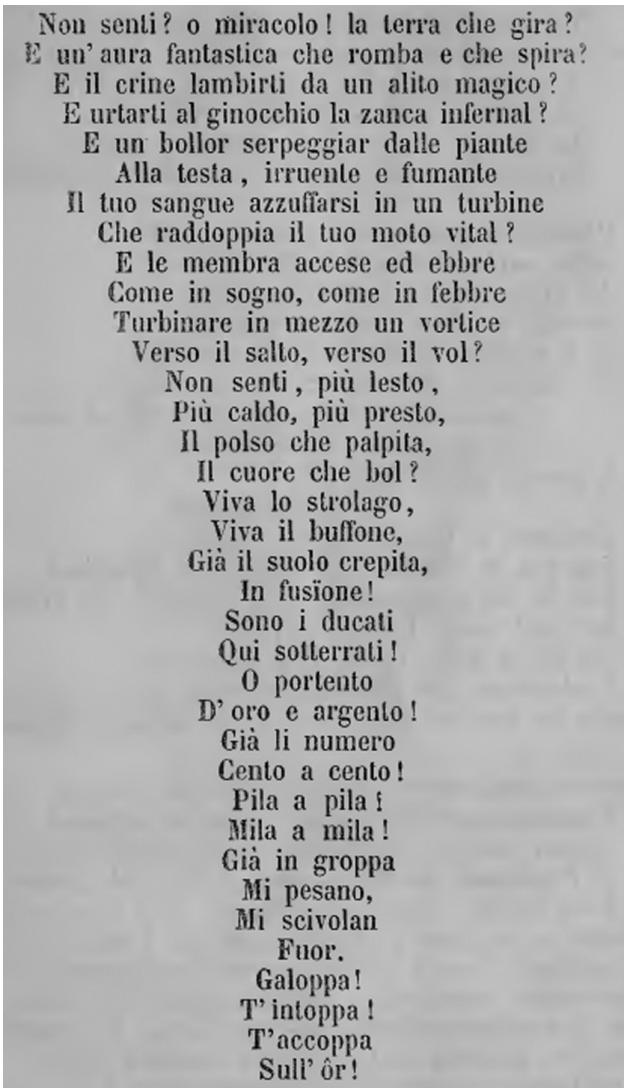
In reworking the score after the fiasco of the premiere, the composer took practical concerns into account, making the opera more pleasing to mainstream audiences who demanded melodious vocal lines and a tighter and more effective dramatic pace.[3] The revised version was staged in Bologna in 1875 under the baton of Emilio Usiglio—at

the Teatro Comunale, October 4—and the subsequent revivals (Venice, Teatro Rossini, May 13, 1876; Milan, Teatro alla Scala, May 25, 1881), conducted by Franco Faccio, Boito's close associate and advisory conductor, marked an important turning point: what had been an avant-garde work now entered into the repertoire of all the major theaters, thanks to a laborious reconceptualization of the opera. In this chapter, I retrace Boito's journey from the setback of the premiere to the eventual success that he sought so diligently, highlighting the creative process that forged a new relationship between poetry and music, which Verdi later exploited in his collaboration with the poet, especially in *Falstaff* (1893).

Mefistofele (1868): An Avant-Garde Work Is Staged

In recent decades, scholars have paid renewed attention to the first *Mefistofele*.[4] Of that work, so huge (over five hours) that the company considered presenting it on two separate nights at the second performance, there remain only the libretto[5] and those sections of the score that were not cut, or were not subjected to substantial modifications for the above-mentioned revivals. Despite missing almost all of the music, except for the piano reduction for a single duet and the score of an important *entr'acte*,[6] it is necessary to briefly consider the first *Mefistofele* in order to understand the true goal of the twenty-six-year-old bohemian artist's effort to create a true union of poetry and music, undertaken by a single craftsman, as Wagner had done before him. Boito, succeeding Alberto Mazzucato, personally directed the premiere of *Mefistofele*, thus forming a *trinity* as "composer, poet, and conductor,"[7] which became a *quaternity* in 1877, when Boito also assumed the role of stage director, dictating to Giulio Ricordi the scenic arrangement of the work.[8] That his genius was capable of visualizing the stage and communicating his vision with great precision even in the libretto itself (where a peerless poetic talent is recognizable)[9] is shown by a justly famous page from the first *Mefistofele* where polymetric lines create a kind of whirlwind, vividly depicting the wild excitement of the crowd that lusts after the gold promised by Mefistofele and l'Astrolago (Astrologer) (see Figure 14.1).[10]

The first *Mefistofele* begins with a "Prologo in teatro" (Prologue in the theater) which precedes the "Prologo in cielo" (Prologue in heaven), set as dialogue in prose between un Critico Teatrale (Theater Critic), l'Autore (Author), and uno Spettatore (Audience Member), intended to be read by those who attended the La Scala premiere; the libretto was distributed by Ricordi and published two months before the premiere at the author's expense. This section was partly modeled on the "Vorspiel auf dem Theater" ("Prelude on the Stage") episode in Goethe's *Faust*, entrusted to the Direktor ("Manager"), Dichter ("Poet"), and Lustige Person ("Player"), who discuss the dramatic arts before the curtain rises.[11] The three actors give voice to the anxieties of the real author, preempting any



Non senti? o miracolo! la terra che gira?
E un' aura fantastica che romba e che spira?
E il crine lambirti da un alito magico?
E urtarti al ginocchio la zanca infernal?
E un bollor serpeggiar dalle piante
Alla testa, irruente e fumante
Il tuo sangue azzuffarsi in un turbine
Che raddoppia il tuo moto vital?
E le membra accese ed ebbre
Come in sogno, come in febbre
Turbinare in mezzo un vortice
Verso il salto, verso il vol?
Non senti, più lesto,
Più caldo, più presto,
Il polso che palpita,
Il cuore che bol?
Viva lo strolago,
Viva il buffone,
Già il suolo crepita,
In fusïone!
Sono i ducati
Qui sotterrati!
O portento
D' oro e argento!
Già li numero
Cento a cento!
Pila a pila!
Mila a mila!
Già in groppa
Mi pesano,
Mi scivolan
Fuor.
Galoppa!
T' intoppa!
T'accoppa
Sull' ôr!

FIGURE 14.1 Arrigo Boito, *Mefistofele*, 1868.

possible objections of the critics and preparing the audience for something unusual. Boito's Critico Teatrale has apparently read many works about the legendary sorcerer and reviewed much of the music inspired by the theme:

> Inoltre ho ripassato al cembalo il *Faust* di Schumann, *La Damnation de Faust* di Berlioz, la sinfonia di Liszt e il melodramma di Rode, che il Principe Radziwil [*sic*] fa passar per suo, e lo spartito di Madame Bertin e finalmente il *Faust* di Gounod ed ho conchìuso col dire ch'è un soggetto *usé jusqu'à la corde*.

> (On the keyboard I played through *Faust* by Schumann [see Chapter 5], *La damnation de Faust* by Berlioz [see Chapter 4], Liszt's symphony [see Chapter 7] and the melodrama by Rode, which Prince Radziwil passes off as his own, and the score by Madame Bertin, and finally Gounod's *Faust* [see Chapter 13], and I say in conclusion that the subject has been *usé jusqu'à la corde* [worn out].)[12]

The Critico Teatrale's smug conclusion that there is nothing new to be said about this character earns l'Autore the right to strike up a long and passionate response:

> E il soggetto non fu esaurito, . . . e non lo sarà mai. Perchè fosse esaurito il tema di Faust converrebbe che fosse morto fra noi l'istinto del Vero dal quale emana. Vedi nel solo poema di Goethe, senza parlare degli altri, vedi raccolti in una immensa unità tutti gli elementi dell'arte. Nel Prologo in cielo vedi il *Sublime*, nella Notte del Sabba romantico vedi *l'Orrido*, nella Domenica di Pasqua vedi il *Reale*, nella Notte del Sabba classico vedi il *Bello*.
>
> (The subject was not exhausted, . . . and never will be. If the Faust theme were indeed exhausted, then our yearning for Truth which emanates from it would also be dead. Just look at Goethe's poem, setting aside the rest, and one finds a monumental convergence of all the artistic elements. In the Prologue in Heaven, we see the *Sublime*; in the *Walpurgisnacht*, we see the *Grotesque*; in the Easter Sunday scene, we see the *Real*; and in the Classical *Walpurgisnacht*, we see the *Beautiful*.)[13]

Boito could not resist showing off his erudition, citing, through the voices of the Critico Teatrale and l'Autore, all the works he had studied. In so doing, he enables us to assess the extent to which his education—based on the French model—affected his aesthetic choices: among other sources, he drew (almost verbatim) from a treatise on the Faust legend by Paul Ristelhuber (*Faust dans l'histoire et dans la légende* [Faust in history and legend], 1863).[14] When l'Autore emphasizes the universality of Faust and Mefistofele, who embody eternal types going back to ancient times, one has the sense of rereading the central passages of Victor Hugo's preface to *Cromwell* (1827), a veritable manifesto of Romantic theater. Where the French writer quotes the Bible, Homer, and Shakespeare as the three sources of modern art, and juxtaposes the sublime against the grotesque in their varied aspects, Boito echoes him, adding only an appreciation of Goethe's unique contribution:

> Giobbe ha un Mefistofele che si chiama Satana, Omero ne ha uno che si chiama Tersite, Shakespeare ne ha un altro che si chiama Falstaff. L'ispirazione originale di Goethe sta nel formare con questi tre tipi, un tipo solo, infernale come Satana, grottesco come Tersite, epicureo come Falstaff.
>
> (Job has a Mephistopheles who is called Satan, Homer has one called Thersites, Shakespeare has another called Falstaff. Goethe's innovation is to have formed, from these three types, a single figure, devilish like Satan, grotesque like Thersites, pleasure-seeking like Falstaff.)[15]

Like Falstaff, Boito's Mefistofele would be capable of eliciting a certain sympathy from the public.

Empowered by these artistic premises, Boito decided as early as 1862 to measure himself against Goethe, driven by the same instinct that in the same year induced him to begin work on *Nerone*, an opera that would trouble him to the end of his life.[16] He set himself the task of molding a work encompassing both parts of Goethe's *Faust*—a daunting challenge, but the young composer was not overly concerned, though he engaged closely with the most obscure and controversial passages and justified any alterations to the source by way of an extensive series of footnotes to each act. He followed the general outline of *Faust I*, culminating in "Kerker" ("Prison"), where Gretchen faces death, but with some significant omissions, including the elimination of a key character, Gretchen's brother soldier Valentin. The portrait of the main character, the scholar Faust, is much less refined than in the source, and the role of Gretchen is less rich and complex even than that of Marguerite in the opera by Gounod (see Chapter 13). In omitting the scenes in which the passion between the lovers develops, and the episodes of Gretchen's desperate loneliness ("Gretchens Stube" ["Gretchen's Room"]), rejected by her community and cursed ("Nacht" ["Night"]), Boito rendered the story in more abstract terms, and made an effective distinction between the ideal world of Helena and the real world of Gretchen, who, in her reduced form, plays no part in the hero's salvation. The composer's achieved aim was to create a seamless connection with the second part of the play, where the theatrical language ceases to represent the facts of a tragic drama, and instead rises to a level that is predominantly allegorical.

It would, in any case, be impossible for an opera to chart the long path to knowledge that leads the German hero, in the five acts of *Faust II*, across time and space, to his death. Boito therefore condensed the material into three scenes (two for the fourth act, and one for the fifth and final act). In the first scene, he summarized the events of Goethe's first act, up to the point where Faust interferes with the abduction of Helena by Paris. In the second, he set to music some of the "Klassische Walpurgisnacht" ("Classical Walpurgisnight"), extended to introduce elements drawn from two scenes from the following act ("Vor dem Palaste des Menelas zu Sparta" ["Before Menelaus' Palace at Sparta"] and "Innerer Burghof" ["Inner Courtyard of a Castle"]). In the descriptive symphonic intermezzo, he illustrated events from Goethe's fourth act while focusing on the death of Faust in the fifth. In terms of dramatic synthesis, Boito was very clever in choosing *Faust*'s salient highlights. But to construct a functional dramaturgy fit for the opera stage, he had to simplify the source's multifaceted metaphorical construction.

To the source, Boito at first applied a far-reaching interpretation in an anti-Christian tone, as shown in a passage of the first act that was removed from the final version of *Mefistofele*. Alone in his study, Faust reflects on the beginning of the Gospel according to John ("Εν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος"), and in particular on the meaning of the "λόγος." Boito, in a note, explains how he interpreted the noun "Tat" in Goethe's verse ("im Anfang war die Tat!" ["'In the beginning was the *Act*'"] [F 1237]), usually rendered as "act" or "action"

by the Italian and French translators. His choice invokes a pantheism—harbinger of materialism—which is far removed from the concept underlying the Goethe passage:

> [N]oi crediamo si debba dire: *in principio era il Fatto, That*, il Fatto cioè il *Tutto*, cioè *tutto ciò ch'è fatto*. Goethe, che amò trasfondersi spesso nel gran personaggio del suo dramma, si manifesta, asserendo questo aforisma, in tutta la forza della sua filosofia panteistica. Traducendo l'*Atto*, l'*Azione*, l'idea resta paralizzata, giacchè l'*azione* può essere la generatrice del *Fatto* ma è ben lunge dall'essere il *Fatto* che intende Faust, cioè la materia una, increata, eterna, divina. Ecco come sotto le mani di Goethe il vangelo di San Giovanni si trasforma e diventa il codice della grande idea materialista del secolo decimonono.
>
> (We believe that we should say: *In the beginning was the Deed*, *That* [Tat], the Deed, that is the *All*, that is, *all that has been made*. Goethe, who often loved to identify with the great characters of his dramas, makes his presence clear by asserting this aphorism, with the full force of his pantheistic philosophy. Translating the *Act*, the *action*, the idea remains paralyzed, since the *Action* can be the generator of the *Deed*, but it is quite far from being the *Deed* that Faust understands, which is the original matter, uncreated, eternal, divine. We see how in the hands of Goethe St. John's Gospel is transformed to become the creed of the great materialist ideal of the nineteenth century.)[17]

Immediately after, the meeting takes place with Mefistofele, who appeared earlier dressed as a friar. So Boito justifies his decision in the previous note:

> È noto come Goethe ponga al posto del frate grigio un can barbone, ma è noto altresi che le vecchie leggende e gli antichi dipinti del Faust mettono il *frate grigio*. Noi per rispetti scenici, che il pubblico troverà ragionevoli, abbiamo preferito la forma antica, convinti che l'indole anticattolica del poema di Goethe sarebbe fors'anche, cosi, maggiormente accentuata.
>
> (It is known how Goethe put a poodle in place of the gray friar. But it is also known that the ancient legends and old paintings of Faust include the gray friar. We, in respect to the stage, which the audience will find reasonable, have preferred the former, convinced that the anti-Catholic nature of Goethe's poem might thus be enhanced.)[18]

Such a change also significantly alters the implications of Faust, where the Doctor returns to his study together with the dog, who reacts to the gospel, revealing his natural evil spirit and taking the form of a Clericus vagans. The sinister friar, who secretly follows Boito's protagonist in the Easter Sunday crowd, embodies the association of evil with the Church, between the sacred and the profane, and after howling at the moment Faust is perfecting his translation of St. John's Gospel, he appears in the guise of an elegant knight, well-disposed to serve, as in Gounod's *Faust*.

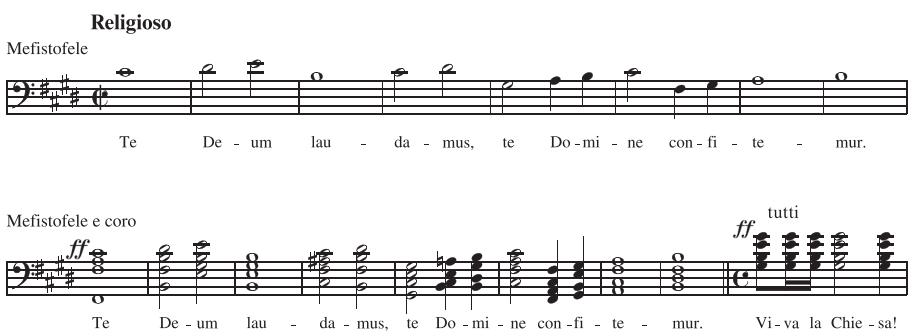
In this vein, fiercely hostile to Catholicism and imbued with anti-clericalism, Boito went further. In the intermezzo, loosely based on the battle that the troops of Goethe's Kaiser fight against the usurper (F 10285-11042)—with the decisive aid of Mefistofele's magical powers—the voices of Faust and Mefistofele give the orders that guide the soldiers to success over a series of exuberant fanfares that echo from different points of the

stage.[19] Since the meaning of the action, taken out of the context of the German drama, would have been impossible for the Milanese public to understand, Boito added an introductory note in which he describes the conflict as a Catholic war, over which Mefistofele has command:

> Eccoci in piena battaglia cattolica. La guerra annunciata timidamente dall'Imperatore anonimo, nel suo discorso della corona (Atto IV, Scena I) scoppia in questo intermezzo.
>
> Faust avido sempre di nuove emozioni si scaglia anch'esso nella pugna. Il comandante supremo dell'esercito è Mefistofele e lo vediamo qui prodigioso generale, come lo vedemmo prima prodigioso ministro di finanze. Mefistofele combatte e vince la battaglia contro gli assalitori del papato; Mefistofele grida: *Viva la Chiesa!* e intuona il *Te Deum*, sacerdotalmente, dopo il massacro. Il salmo ecclesiastico si congiunge allo scoppio delle fanfare infernali e al tuono delle cannonate. Il *nemico della luce*, d'accordo con un Imperatore imbecillito e pericolante, è il naturale alleato della Chiesa. Chiaroveggenza della satira Goetiana!
>
> (We find ourselves in a full Catholic battle. The war timidly announced by the anonymous Emperor in his crown speech (Act IV, Scene I) bursts into this interlude.
>
> Faust, always eager for new experiences, leaps into the battle. The supreme commander is Mephistopheles, whom we see here as an extraordinary general, as we saw him earlier as a capable finance minister. Mephistopheles fights and wins the battle against the assailants of the papacy. Mephistopheles cries: *Long live the Church!* and intones the *Te Deum* in priestly fashion after the massacre. The liturgical psalmody blends with the eruption of infernal fanfares and the thunder of cannon fire. The *enemy of light*, along with an idiotic and dangerous Emperor, is the natural ally of the Church. Such is the prescience of Goethe's satire.)[20]

In the final measures, Boito does not evoke a precise liturgical color. He avoids a direct musical quotation of the hymn and alters some of the text (replacing "Dominum" with "Domine," probably a mistake), creating a French-flavored monody entrusted to the devil, set in a dactylic rhythm, that speeds up as it fades away and is reprised by the male chorus in four-part harmony (see Musical Example 14.1).[21] Goethe's satire, however, is

MUSICAL EXAMPLE 14.1 Arrigo Boito, *Mefistofele*, 1868, *La battaglia.*



not leveled so obviously at the objective that Boito outlines in his libretto, since there is no trace of a "Te Deum" in the corresponding scenes of *Faust II*. Moreover, although the Kaiser accepts Mephistopheles's help, he later scorns him, denying him the "Stab" ("staff") (F 10703), and when the spoils of war are divided after the victory, the Erzbischof ("Archbishop") denounces the pact with the forces of evil, and advises the sovereign to repent of the sins committed. Therefore, once again we are faced with the composer's preference for his own Masonic convictions over fidelity to Goethe.[22] Boito himself, summing up his work years after the revision, had become convinced that the scene was unnecessary, but still did not acknowledge its intrinsic obscurity, even in the context where it was placed.[23]

"Who writes for the theater writes for the public": such was the warning issued by Antonio Ghislanzoni at the premiere of *Mefistofele*,[24] and Boito, in his own way, took note of his bohemian friend's opinion, while exposing himself to serious risks; he may have considered revisiting the unsuccessful work as a means of publicity. This was the opinion expressed some years later by Filippo Filippi, among the most celebrated and influential critics of his time, when he wrote on the revised version of the opera, in Milan in 1881:

> Boito failed with his *Mephistopheles*. But it was one of those failures that are worth far more than the ephemeral triumphs of many other operas, received at their first performances with loud applause and dozens of curtain calls, only to be rejected by the publisher, neglected by the public, and eventually forgotten even by those who had applauded so sincerely.[25]

In retrospect, we can perceive that Boito produced a work of unquestionable originality, the elements of which support a coherent vision of its artistic mission and an overall aesthetic perspective that was ahead of its time, as Adriana Guarnieri Corazzol suggests:

> The great ambition of the first *Mephistopheles* was based in a personal romantic aspiration, in art as religion, in a desire for experimental dramaturgy and operatic reform; but this corresponded above all to a musical project that was particularly Italian in its adaptation (and refinement) of *Wagnerism*. Hence the grotesque emphasis on the fantastic and otherworldly aspects of the Romantic Sabbath; the ironic and self-reflexive twist on satanism seen throughout the role of Mephistopheles; the transformation from Norse mythology to a Greek milieu in the Classic Sabbath; in essence, the foundation of a "reformed" Italian opera in the sense of an Italian musical drama that could compete with Wagner's music dramas.[26]

The principles of this undertaking are articulated in the phenomenology of the grotesque, the most decisive model of which, for Boito, appears to have been that of Hugo:

> In modern thought . . . the grotesque plays a tremendous role. It is everywhere . . . It is what sets in motion in the shadows the frightening circle of the Sabbath. . . . Lastly, it is the element that, bit by bit, colors the very drama of the imagination of the South

and the imagination of the North, prompting Sganarelle to frolic about Don Juan and Mephistopheles to crawl around Faust.[27]

Although this ambitious project of operatic reform was doomed to failure, Boito did not lose faith in the possibility of an artistic reconciliation between North and South.

Mefistofele 1875 and beyond: From Avant-Garde to Standard Repertoire

> *Incubus!!! Belzebub inferni ardenti monarche et*
> *Demogorgon! propitiamus vos, ut appareat et surgat*
> *Dragon, quod tumeraris; per Jehovam, Gehennam*
> *et consecratam aquam quam nunc spargo, signumque*
> *crucis quod nunque facio. Bombo! Mormo!! Gorgo!!!*[28]

This spell in rhythmic prose, which Boito borrowed from Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and assigned to his hero to summon the demon, was not retained as the composer revised the work. The "explanatory notes" also disappeared,[29] as did the Gospel exegesis and the battle: thus Boito suppressed the opera's anti-Catholic veneer. Also eliminated was the first scene of the fourth act, the result being that, if he succeeded in reducing the length of the work to an acceptable time frame even for an increasingly impatient public, the composer did so at the cost of the trajectory of the second part of the drama.

The other changes made by Boito demonstrate that his intent was to have his unusual work enter into the standard canon of his time, while still trying to preserve its avant-garde qualities. From baritone, the ideal register for a mature thinker (but also perhaps chosen out of necessity),[30] the protagonist became a tenor, thus completing the standard vocal trio (although lacking an antagonist, as the bass acts as an ally until it is time to settle the accounts). Thus the conventions of melodrama were reinstated with sufficient clarity, signaling to the public that the hero acts out of love for the soprano—whether she is called Margherita or Elena is of little importance—and not for Knowledge. As a result, an inspired cantabile replaces the learned disquisitions of Faust: "Lontano, lontano, lontano" (Far, far away), taken from the unfinished *Ero e Leandro*, and added as a coda to the prison scene duet in the new version, portraying the two lovers in a romantic moment of illusion. And shortly after, the new short solo for Margherita, "Spunta l'aurora pallida" (The pale dawn appears) evokes, in the suggestion of the words and the lyricism of the music, the shadow of Violetta Valéry's sacrifice.

It was Bologna, a city more open to artistic innovation, that witnessed the rebirth of *Mefistofele* in 1875. But the public did not hear the same work that, seven years earlier, had left the Milanese puzzled, unleashing their destructive instinct. Boito had treasured the traumatic effect he achieved with the reality of the stage, and modified only

the precise sections of the opera that the critics had targeted with their harshest comments. Among the latter, it is worth remembering Ricordi, publisher-cum-musician, for the precision and refinement of his criticism, and for taking the trouble to analyze *Mefistofele* point by point. He praised the "Prologo in cielo," especially for its dazzling finale (which Boito touched up only slightly), but criticized a long recitative passage in which Faust and Wagner conversed among the crowd at the beginning of the first act (the section was duly deleted). He was quite dissatisfied with the middle section of the duet in the following act (which underwent drastic modification), and while he extolled the Classical Sabbath ("the best part of the opera") and, in particular, "Forma ideal purissima" (Ideal and purest form) as "beautiful music, inspired, melodic, new," he wrote that "the third act, and the first part of the fourth act, are the weakest pages of the score." Without hesitation, Boito remedied this by making cuts. He also rewrote the aria "L'altra notte in fondo al mare" (The other night at the bottom of the sea), which, according to the publisher, had been "a monody, without a strong structure or rhythm, in which the strangeness of the harmonies is overshadowed by the strangeness of the vocal lines," turning it into one of the most anticipated pieces in the entire score. He cut, of course, the scene at the imperial palace, for which Ricordi had reserved perhaps his harshest and most sarcastic criticism:

> In the first part of the fourth act we find ourselves in the imperial palace: this passage, necessary to the drama because it explains the reason for the Classic Sabbath, does not offer any interest either dramatically or musically. One can describe it with the same words that the poet uses to close the scene: *darkness, confusion, cries*.[31]

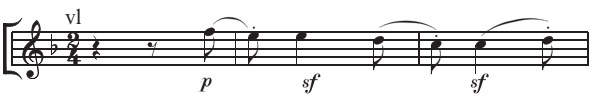
Finally, Boito extensively reworked the fifth act, which he termed an epilogue, by rewriting Faust's monologue, much criticized by Ricordi for its slowness and sluggishness. In 1877, shortly after the triumphant revival of the opera, which in its new form made its way through all the theaters, Ricordi edited and published the staging of Boito's masterpiece, based on "the composer's instructions."

Despite everything, Boito succeeded in preserving the innovative character of his work.[32] One need only look at the structure of the opera, in which there is almost no trace of what we would today call, after Abramo Basevi, a "solita forma" (standard form): an aria or other numbers locked into four or five sections, even if again Ricordi was correct in detecting "a kind of cabaletta" in the Mefistofele-Faust duet that closes the first act, "Fin da stanotte nell'orgie ghiotte" (Starting tonight in the wild orgies).[33]

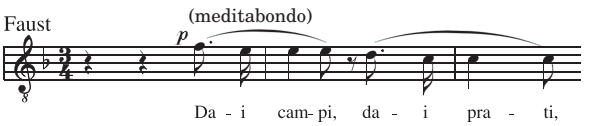
Moreover, at the end of the first scene of the first act, there appears in the score the description "Scene e romanza."[34] But after a long recitative between Faust and Wagner ("Sediam sovra quel sasso" [Let us sit on this rock]), and even a scene change (taking us from the village square to Faust's study), we still await the promised cantabile, in a context where the *mise en scène* plays a very important role in emphasizing the structure of the opera.[35] Distant voices echo the theme of the dance that shortly before was woven into the score by the townspeople while the pact was arranged, and in the tenor's vocal

line we come face to face with a ghostly echo (see Musical Example 14.2b) of the andante con variazioni from Beethoven's "Kreutzer" sonata (see Musical Example 14.2a). Therefore, just at the moment of lyrical expansion, Boito makes use of a musical quotation, not reproduced literally, yet recognizable, as he will do again in act 4, when Faust sings Elena's praises, "Forma ideal purissima" (see Musical Example 14.3b), taken from the second movement of Beethoven's Sonata, op. 7 (see Musical Example 14.3a).[36] Although Beethoven's melodies would have been known to Goethe, they would not have been so familiar to the majority of the public as to convey a suggestion of intertextual reference. Rather, the message was directed to the elite, whom Boito targeted with a special language, both musically and with the numerous literary references that crowd the libretto, even in the "reformed" version: the marked allusion to a Petrarch sonnet ("E adoro e tremo ed ardo!" [And I love, and I tremble and burn!]) at the moment when Faust, in his duet with Elena, forgets all earthly loves.[37] Subtle, but not wholly unconscious,

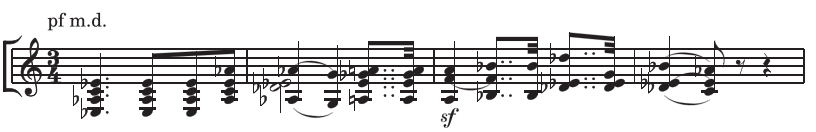
MUSICAL EXAMPLE 14.2A Ludwig van Beethoven, Sonata, op. 47, II, mm. 8–10.



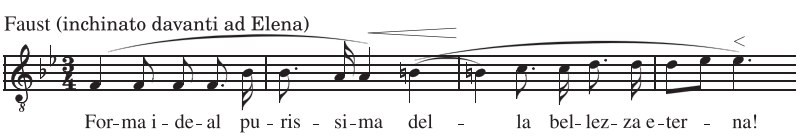
MUSICAL EXAMPLE 14.2B Arrigo Boito, *Mefistofele*, 1, "Officina di Faust," 1 m. after RD.



MUSICAL EXAMPLE 14.3A Ludwig van Beethoven, Sonata, op. 7, II, mm. 25–28.



MUSICAL EXAMPLE 14.3B Arrigo Boito, *Mefistofele*, 4, "La notte del Sabba classico," RI.



since the resemblance is obvious to the ear, is the hint at "Frère Jacques," which resounds off-beat in the prelude to the second act (oboe, mm. 2–3), and throughout the rest of the music for Faust and Margherita, which brings to mind the staccato of the conspirators in *Un ballo in maschera*. The wink to the connoisseurs continues in the Romantic Sabbath: when the wizards and witches exclaim "Siam salvi in tutta l'eternità!" (We are saved for all eternity!), the strings perform figures in superimposed open fifths, which echo Liszt's *Mephisto-Walzer* (*Mephisto Waltzes*) (see Chapter 7), very popular in the salons then (the piano reduction was published in 1862). In doing so, Boito evokes for a moment the feeling of "Der Tanz in der Dorfschenke" ("The Dance in the Village Inn"), which sets the stage for Mefistofele to cut through the crowd and command the stage to intone the ballad "Ecco il mondo" (Behold the world).

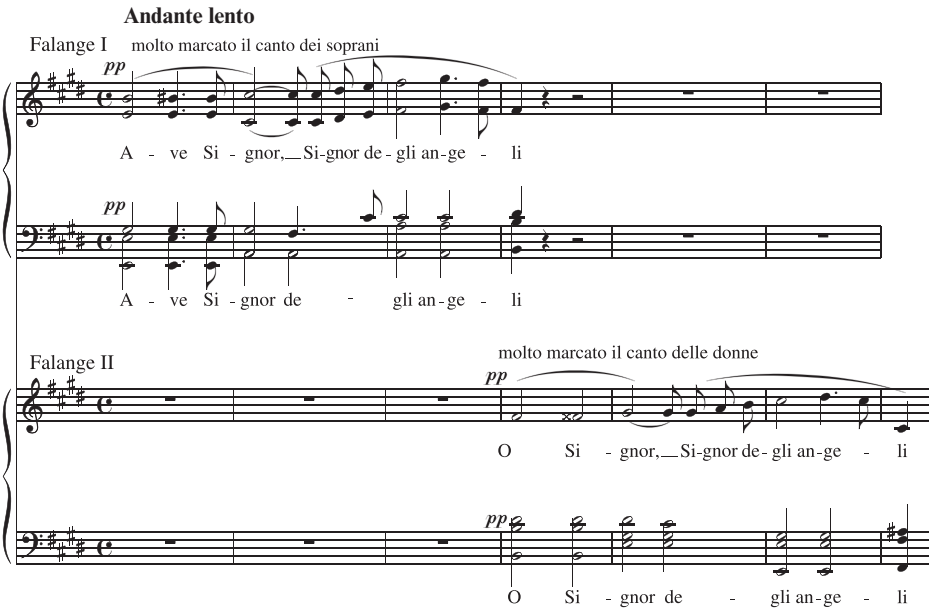
Equally intellectual in nature is the use of forms of instrumental music outside the operatic practices of the period, such as the sophisticated Bogenform in the "Prologo in cielo," where the symmetry of the outer sections ("Preludio e coro" and "Salmodia finale") are like two scherzo movements, one instrumental, the other vocal, which frame a short intermezzo drammatico. On the occasion of the 1868 premiere, Boito explained this structure concisely:

> Per quell'ossequio alla forma, del quale non si deve mai spogliare niuno che tratti il presente soggetto, abbiamo dato a questo Prologo in cielo la linea della *sinfonia classica* in quattro tempi, aggiungendovi l'elemento corale.
>
> (To bow to form, which should never burden anyone who treats the subject at hand, we gave the Prologue in Heaven the structure of a *classical symphony* in four movements, adding the choral element.)[38]

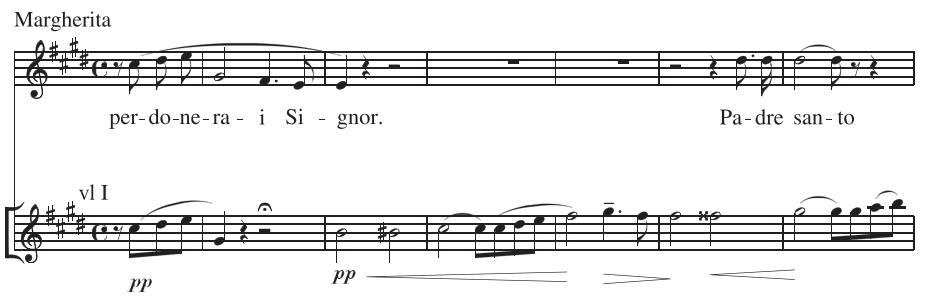
We know of no precedent for this section, which is, like the deleted intermezzo, far ahead of its time.

However, though he fought on the battlefield of the future, Boito did not make use of leitmotifs, only of short themes with the function of a *motto* (a short musical sentence, like "Dalle due alle tre" in Verdi's *Falstaff*), nor did he embellish on narrative technique. So much had he already absorbed from Wagner that he conquered with only a little eccentricity (aside from the "Prologo in cielo," for instance, the alternation between major and minor mode is used almost obsessively).[39] Still, the work rests on recurring melodies that form reminiscences, a common practice in Italian and French musical theater of the era, exemplified by the slow crescendo of the insistent yet captivating melody intoned by the celestial host ("Ave Signor" [Hail, O Lord!]) (see Musical Example 14.4), which returns in the third act to accompany the redemption of Margherita and is also inserted into the finale of the aria added for Adelaide Borghi-Mamo, "Spunta l'aurora pallida" (Venice, 1876) (see Musical Example 14.5). This denotes an increased interest in the significance of the themes; by then, however, Boito had finally been able to hear Wagner in the theater, beginning with *Lohengrin* in Bologna in 1871, and was in contact with him.[40] The "Ave Signor" theme also accompanies the salvation of Faust, and the choice was well conceived:

MUSICAL EXAMPLE 14.4 Arrigo Boito, *Mefistofele*, "Prologo in cielo," 4 mm. after RC.



MUSICAL EXAMPLE 14.5 Arrigo Boito, *Mefistofele*, 3, "Morte di Margherita," 2 mm. before RI.



Goethe, grande adoratore della forma, incomincia il suo poema come lo finisce, la prima e l'ultima parola del Faust [*sic*] si ricongiungono in cielo.–*Le motif glorieux*, scrive il signor Blaze de Bury, *que les immortelles phalanges chantent dans l'introduction de la première partie de Faust, revient à la fin enveloppé d'harmonie et de vapeurs mystiques. Goethe a fait cette fois comme les musiciens, comme Mozart, qui ramène à la dernière scène de Don Juan la phrase imposante de l'ouverture.* Ci siamo provati di realizzare e di sviluppare coi suoni questa aspirazione musicale del poeta, e perciò abbiamo fuso nel *prologo* alcuni elementi paradisiaci dell'*epilogo*, procurando di sintetizzare più che fosse possibile l'unità del pensiero Goetiano.

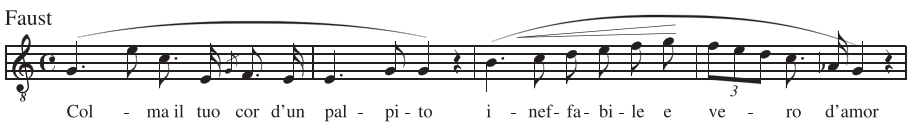
(Goethe, great worshipper of form, begins his poem as it ends: the first and last words of Faust are reunited in heaven. *The glorious motif*, writes M. Blaze de Bury, *that the immortal host sings in the introduction to the first part of Faust, returns at the end, enveloped in mystical, foggy harmonies. Goethe acts here like a musician, such*

> *as Mozart, who in the final scene of Don Giovanni brings back the imposing theme of the Overture*. We tried to realize and develop in sound this musical aspiration of the poet, and therefore infused into the *Prologue* some heavenly elements of the *Epilogue*, to reproduce as best as possible Goethe's unifying concept.)[41]

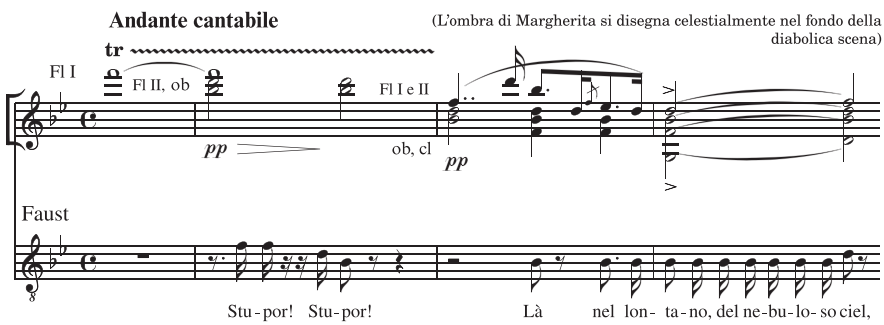
Once established, this symmetrical framework determined the structure of the entire work: the fanfare in E major, which resounds from offstage at the beginning and end of the "Prologo," returns at the conclusion of the opera.

Also rich in implications is the use of the melody that appears in the duet of the second act, where Faust tries to conquer Margherita's natural reticence, spurring her to love (see Musical Example 14.6).[42] It pierces the Romantic Sabbath with angelic woodwind sonorities (see Musical Example 14.7), and reappears when Faust enters the prison in the third act (see Musical Example 14.8). In both cases, the musical reminiscence seems to represent the hero's exalted narcissism rather than the heroine's hidden feelings. Thus it expresses not a mutual romantic rapport, but rather the recollection of the seduction, emphasizing the inability of the two characters to connect.

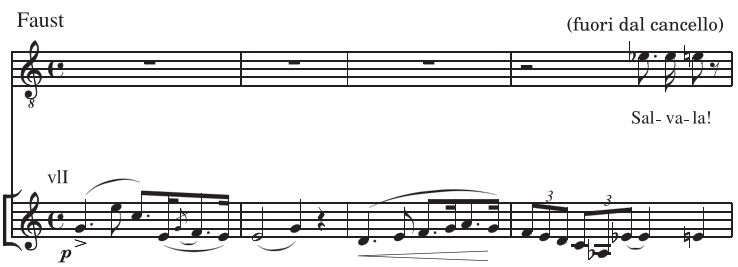
MUSICAL EXAMPLE 14.6 Arrigo Boito, *Mefistofele*, 2, "Il giardino," RD.



MUSICAL EXAMPLE 14.7 Arrigo Boito, *Mefistofele*, 2, "La notte del Sabba," RD.

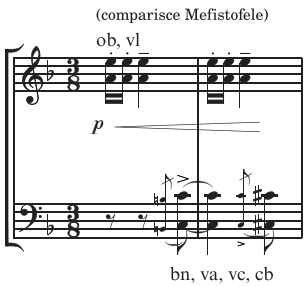


MUSICAL EXAMPLE 14.8 Arrigo Boito, *Mefistofele*, 3, "Morte di Margherita," 12 mm. before RA.

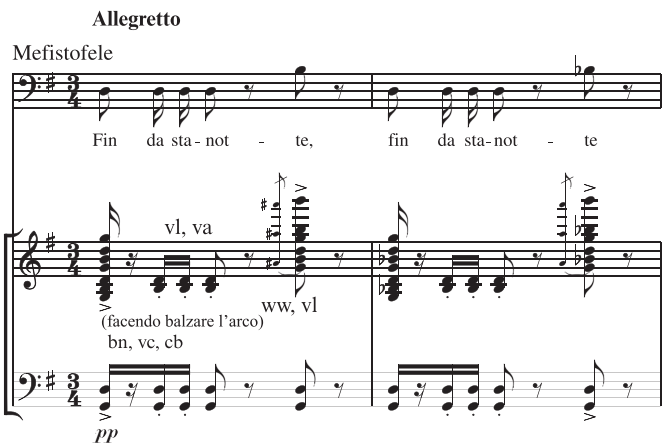


Even subtler is Boito's use of a short motif assigned to Mefistofele as a kind of identifying theme, starting with his first appearance. In 1868 he wrote in a note on the "Prologo in cielo," "Nelle vecchie leggende del Faust, Mefistofele è sempre annunciato da un tintinnio di sonaglio" (In the old Faust legends, Mephistopheles's entrance is always announced by a bell ringing) (see Musical Example 14.9).[43] In the first act, the motif unmasks the gray friar who shadows Faust, and then is heard again when Mefistofele appears dressed as a knight. Later in the same act, it lends itself quite well to the accompaniment of the cabaletta "Fin da stanotte nell'orgie ghiotte," moving between G major and G minor, thanks to the alternation of B♭ and B♮ (see Musical Example 14.10), and in "Il giardino" (The garden), in the second act, it colors the phrases that the devil directs

MUSICAL EXAMPLE 14.9 Arrigo Boito, *Mefistofele*, "Prologo in cielo," 28 mm. after RA.



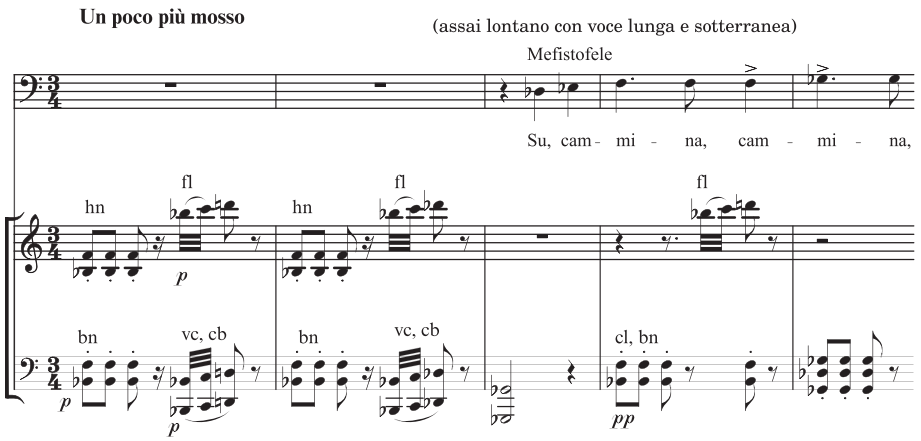
MUSICAL EXAMPLE 14.10 Arrigo Boito, *Mefistofele*, 1, "Officina di Faust," 12 mm. after RE.



to Marta. In the Romantic Sabbath, Boito effectively altered the "bell motif," which acquires a dramatic aspect thanks to the addition of the quick grace notes (see Musical Example 14.11) that produce an alternation between B♭ major and B♭ minor. This "sad ringing," not without ironic resonances, frames the scene where Mefistofele leads Faust

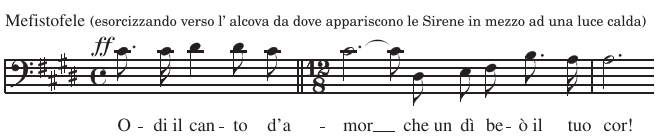
up the Brocken. The extensive use of this motif, and its perfect assimilation to the character, is one of the signs of the particular attention Boito reserved for his demon.

MUSICAL EXAMPLE 14.11 Arrigo Boito, *Mefistofele*, 2, "La notte del Sabba," 14 mm. before RA.

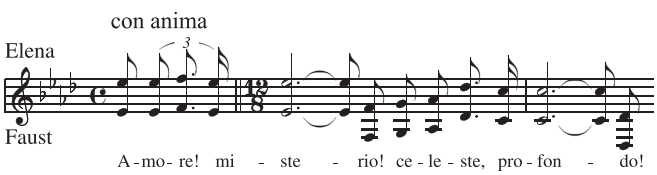


Mefistofele's summons to his "master" returns in the "Epilogo," establishing a significant parallel with the finale of the second act. But this time the call is like the tolling of a clock that signals the hour of death is near, bringing the demon's power to the fore.[44] Now the devil is acting in earnest, and when the score indicates a return to the tempo of the "Prologo in cielo," the final instance of the motif is played, an effect included in the revised version as well. But the reference to Elena's beauty and the ecstasies of love from the Classical Sabbath now sound in vain (see Musical Examples 14.12a and 14.12b). No doubt Boito made the fewest revisions to the role of Mefistofele, legitimately the eponymous hero. In the first version, Mefistofele was the only character to express himself through conventional forms, such as the ballad "Ecco il mondo," the centerpiece of

MUSICAL EXAMPLE 14.12A Arrigo Boito, *Mefistofele*, "Epilogo," 1 m. before RF.



MUSICAL EXAMPLE 14.12B Arrigo Boito, *Mefistofele*, 4, "La notte del Sabba classico," 15 mm. after RJ.



the Romantic Sabbath (act 2), and above all the "whistling aria" ("Son lo spirito che nega" [I am the spirit that denies], act 1) with which he introduces himself to Faust, dressed in the philosophical guise—twenty years in advance—of Iago. According to a witty critical hypothesis, Boito's intention was to pay homage to his own rebel status by mocking, through whistles at the end of each verse, those "closed forms" designed to enthrall the bourgeois public.[45] But it is equally possible that he was expounding on an idea set forth in the "Prologo in teatro," where l'Autore informs the Critico Teatrale that even Rossini considered setting the *Faust* story to music, adding:

> Immaginati il creatore del *Barbiere* e del *Guglielmo Tell* colla sua duplice ispirazione e tragica e burlesca, creante la musica d'un Faust! Immagina la mente stessa che ideò il Figaro della commedia, ideare Mefistofele, questo Figaro delle tenebre!
>
> (Imagine the creator of *Barber* and *William Tell*, equally gifted in tragedy and comedy, composing music for *Faust*! Imagine the same mind that conceived of the operatic Figaro devising his Mephistopheles, a kind of Figaro of darkness!)[46]

A servant to Faust because of a wager with the Eternal, Mefistofele is the very soul—that is to say, the pro-secularistic "soul-buster"—of the opera. He overpowers the most varied and interesting range of characters, beginning with the "Prologo in cielo," where he dominates the second of the four movements, the entire scherzo stromentale that opens with the ringing of the "bell motif." The devil's recitative dispels the smoke of the incense, shatters the sweet lullaby of the heavenly host, and, usurping the power of the fanfare that at the curtain's rise broke through the clouds, he transforms it into wit. The orchestra chases his voice. Whether the strings play staccato or legato figures, the instruments mimic the "concept" of his pompous speech, the foreshadowing of the whistle coming from the quick grace notes in the flute, which are answered grotesquely by the bassoon.[47] Mefistofele is perfectly at home in the form, declaiming proudly over the melody of the lower strings of the trio, then calling forth the trills in the flutes and violins with the image of the "grillo saltellante, a caso spinge fra gli astri il naso" (the hopping cricket that by chance pokes his nose among the stars). When the cellos and basses resume their melody, he again puffs up his chest, waiting for God, who is unable to appear in person in a theater (especially an Italian theater), but who speaks through the offstage "Chorus mysticus." Also woven into this last section are vivid glimpses of things to come, such as the representation of the "cupo delirio" (gloomy delirium) that overtakes Faust, described by Mefistofele in a vocal line that jumps up by a ninth: these are moments that honor every nuance of the text. Finally, just before the cherubs begin the scherzo vocale, the bass exclaims: "È lo sciame legger degli angioletti; come dell'api n'ho ribrezzo e noia" (I find the genteel swarm of the angels as distasteful and annoying as that of bees). A scale played by the bassoon accompanies Mefistofele's signature fifths: no doubt he would have been even more disgusted had he remained to hear the pious hymn of "I Serafini" (Cherubs): "Fratelli, le morbide penne non cessino il volo perenne che intorno al Santissimo Altar" (Brethen, our gentle wings shall not cease their flight until we reach the Holiest Altar). In the meantime, his brief intrusion has shattered our predisposed image of the mystical heavens. Boito would not again in the

course of the opera find another inspiration of this magnitude, but he had nonetheless opened the door to a new relationship between text and music, where poetry becomes the model for the musical setting and gives birth to a nuanced elaboration, made of a kaleidoscopic exchange between recitative and cantabile, involving vocal and instrumental lines without a conventional hierarchy, where a tempo shift can shine for a few beats, in keeping with the dramatic sense. It is the embryonic form of a unique and perhaps unrepeatable style that, in the hands of the elderly Verdi (spurred on by the same poet) will become his trump card with *Falstaff*, and will later imbue Puccini's *La bohème*.

But if such a style proved itself best suited to humorous or "everyday" subjects, far removed from the "heroic," a blending of the two was not to be achieved in *Mefistofele*: Boito lacked the capacity for synthesis that could have ensured the success of the opera. It was idealistic of Boito to attempt to set *Faust* to music; or rather, he needed to be in a position to write the Wagnerian tetralogy, but in that case it would have been superfluous to use Goethe as his source. Although Boito's intellect did not prevail over his Latin nature, it sometimes drove him to bold structures that were considered beyond the pale. One of the last additions, composed for Venice in 1876, attests to this: who else could have written, without compunction, a "Ridda e fuga infernale" (Round and infernal fugue) finale, introduced by a quotation from the *Mephisto-Walzer*, whose subject makes its way relentlessly in a three-voice fugue—"Sabba, Sabba, Saboè! Riddiam, riddiamo, riddiamo, riddiamo, riddiamo, riddiam, riddiam. Saboè! har Sabbah!" (Sabba, Sabba, Saboè! round in circles, in circles, we dance, we dance. Saboè! har Sabbah!)— for a total of eleven measures and thirty-three syllables?[48] And who else could have articulated in his libretto the nature of the project that would rescue the German hero's soul from hell—the salvation of a populace in low-lying lands via a system of dams—in one quatrain (italics mine):

Re d'un placido mondo,	King of a peaceful realm,
d'una spiaggia infinita,	*of a boundless shore,*
a un popolo fecondo	to a fruitful people
voglio donar la vita.	I wish to give life.[49]

But the attempt earns our sympathy. After all, *Mefistofele* worthily embodies the eternal conflict between good and evil (the two male protagonists) and between real and unreal, in the yearning for the sublime (Margherita and Elena). Boito found his inspiration in such contrasts, and like his Faust "Giunto sol passo estremo" (Reaching the final threshold), he had every right to proclaim the failure of his enterprise:

Ogni mortale	Every mortal
mister conobbi, il Real, l'Ideale,	mystery I have known: the Real, the Ideal,
l'amore della vergine e l'amore	the love of the virgin and the love
della Dea ... Sì ... Ma il Real fu dolore	of the Goddess ... Yes ... But Reality was but sorrow,
e l'Ideal fu sogno.	and the Ideal just a dream.[50]

Concluding his analysis of 1868, Ricordi wondered if the opera's many flaws were due to the composer's inexperience and therefore remediable. But, if not, he offered this simple advice: "with all the frankness that I draw from the cordial and sincere friendship I bear to Boito, I dare to tell him clearly: you will be a poet, a distinguished scholar, but never a composer of operas!"[51]

The revised version of *Mefistofele*, a lurid and lively creation that entered the popular imagination through the front door, was the best response to this judgment, which concealed a wish that the composer might gain full access to the opera world's finest salons. In the role of librettist, moving from the ideal to the reality of the stage, Boito would go on to achieve the most beautiful and selfless accomplishment of his career: to be a full co-author of *Falstaff*, the belly of which is drawn from the hedonistic aspects of Goethe's devil, in a characterization indebted to the aesthetic of Hugo, and personified as Shakespeare's aging knight, one more in his line of grotesque types.[52]

Some years earlier, Boito had turned to Verdi, after a misunderstanding, to induce him to resume their joint work on *Otello*. From his words, above all moving, there emerges in just a few lines, with endearing sincerity, a complex and fascinating personality, well aware of his weaknesses, capable of self-criticism (a trait often lacking in Italian intellectuals), and ready to accept submission for the sake of Art, being as aware of his greatness as of his own limitations:

> You are healthier and stronger than I am. We tested our strengths and my arm bent under yours. Your life is tranquil and serene. Take up the pen once more and write to me soon: *Dear Boito, do me the favor of changing these lines*, etc., etc., and I will promptly and happily revise them. I, who know not how to work for myself, know how to work for you, because you live in the real world of Art, and I in the world of hallucinations.[53]

Boito continued to live in that "world of hallucinations" populated by the ghost of *Nerone*—"the ideal that was just a dream"—a kind of malady of which he himself was well aware, as he wrote to Camille Bellaigue: "I have forged with my own hands the instrument of my torture."[54] And while his musical creativity was fading, his rarified talents as a playwright, writer, and man of letters shone ever more brightly, placing him among the greatest representatives of Italian culture of all time.

Despite attaining the status of a "popular" opera, *Mefistofele* nonetheless remains imbued with an iconoclastic flair, vaunted yet vibrant, manifested more clearly in the symphonic-choral structure of the "Prologo in cielo," as well as in the work's renunciation of any remnant of conventional forms, and its employment of strict and daring compositional techniques, than in the intertextual allusions between music and poetry (to Beethoven, Liszt, Petrarch, as well as Dante, Alfieri, and many other pillars of Italian literature). The artist's choices attest to his up-to-date knowledge of European culture and in particular the adoption of the aesthetic principles of Victor Hugo, which brought about, among the many effects of Boito's devil on the opera world of the time, a more

advanced relationship between music and word, which in turn would influence Verdi's final two masterpieces, and other important operas of the *fin de siècle*.

In addition, the topos of *Mefistofele* came to be exploited in contemporary works. One need only think of the clouds that obstruct the clear vision of the heavenly host in the "Prologo in cielo" of which Puccini made use in *Le villi* (1884), introducing a curtain during the symphonic intermezzo in order to soften the image of the funeral procession passing in the background. And then there was the tremendous impact of the libretto, even in the revised version, particularly its revolutionary effect on the metric and formal conventions that had remained in place until then, examples of which are easily found in browsing the theatrical works and libretti of Giuseppe Giacosa, or in appraising the dramatic inventiveness of Luigi Illica, as well as the work of lesser known authors who were prominent in their time, such as Colautti or Marenco.[55]

"Trionfan gli eletti ma il reprobo fischia" (The Lord triumphs, but the reprobate whistles), and while the piccolo echoes the devil, the trumpet fanfares pervade the "Epilogo," reprising the mood of the "Prologo in cielo."[56] Thinking back on that passage in 1879, Verdi wrote to Count Arrivabene that "on hearing how the harmonies of that piece almost always leaned toward dissonances, it seemed as though I was . . . not *in heaven*, certainly."[57] Perhaps his refined ear perceived the message that Boito was breaking down the pompous crust of the heavenly host. Mefistofele—("il dubbio che genera la scienza, è il male che genera il bene" [the doubt that gives birth to science, the evil that generates the good])[58]—still dominates the final scene, and despite his collapsing to the ground, he does not leave the audience with the serene image of a demon defeated by good, thus fulfilling the requirements of the Spettatore in the "Prologo in teatro" from the first version of *Mefistofele*:

> Teorie, commenti, dimostrazioni: tutte bellissime cose che io non voglio sapere quando assisto ad un'opera d'arte. Datemi delle forti emozioni e allontanate da me la noia, ecco tutto quel che vi chiedo, e riescirete a ciò con quattro note e con quattro versi oppure mettendo mano al cielo, alla terra e all'inferno, io ve ne sarò egualmente grato.
>
> (Theories, critiques, proofs: all very lovely things that I don't want to think about when I attend an opera. Give me some strong emotions and keep me from being bored: that is all I ask of you. And if you succeed in this with four notes and four lines of verse, whether reaching for heaven, the earth, or hell, I will be equally grateful.)[59]

Translated by Allan Altman

Acknowledgments

I thank Carlo Vitali for his valuable suggestions concerning this chapter.

Notes

1. Arrigo Boito, *Tutti gli scritti*, ed. Piero Nardi (Milan: A. Mondadori, 1942), 1080–81.
2. Antonio Ghislanzoni, "Rivista milanese," *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, March 8, 1868.
3. Despite the changes, however, the La Scala revival of 1881 unleashed a controversy in the Milan press over whether *Mefistofele*—an experimental work, poorly received, criticized and outrageous—should be presented as part of the National Exposition that was taking place that year in the Lombardy capital. See Giuseppe Verdi, *Carteggio Verdi-Ricordi 1880–1881,* ed. Pierluigi Petrobelli, Marisa Di Gregorio Casati, and Carlo Matteo Mossa (Parma: Istituto di studi verdiani, 1988), 282–96.
4. Guido Salvetti, "La Scapigliatura milanese e il teatro d'opera," in *Il melodramma italiano dell'Ottocento*, ed. Giorgio Pestelli (Turin: Einaudi, 1977), 567–604; Jay Nicolaisen, "The First 'Mefistofele,'" *19th-Century Music* 1.3 (1978): 221–32 and *Italian Opera in Transition, 1871–1893* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1980), 125–36; Mariella Busnelli, "Il primo *Mefistofele*," in *Arrigo Boito, musicista e letterato*, ed. Giampiero Tintori (Milan: Nuove Edizioni, 1986), 55–79; William Ashbrook, "Boito and the 1868 *Mefistofele* Libretto as a Reform Text," in *Reading Opera*, ed. Arthur Groos and Roger Parker (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 268–87; Peter Ross, "'E l'ideal fu sogno': Arrigo Boito und seine Reformoper *Mefistofele*," *Jahrbuch für Opernforschung* 3 (1990): 69–86; Costantino Maeder, "La redenzione di Faust nel *Mefistofele* di Boito," *Incontri* 7.2 (1992): 55–65 and *Il real fu dolore e l'ideal sogno. Arrigo Boito e i limiti dell'arte* (Florence: Cesati, 2002), 53–73; Adriana Guarnieri Corazzol, "Scapigliatura e musica: il primo *Mefistofele*," in *Arrigo Boito*, ed. Giovanni Morelli, 213–31 (Florence: Olschki, 1994) and *Musica e letteratura in Italia tra Ottocento e Novecento* (Milan: Sansoni, 2000), 51–69; Allison Terbell Nikitopoulos, "Arrigo Boito's 'Mefistofele': Poetry, Music, and Revisions" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1994); Sieghart Döhring and Sabine Henze-Döhring, *Oper und Musikdrama im 19. Jahrhundert* (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 1997), 198–216. The two versions of the opera have been studied from the point of view of the performances by Gerardo Guccini, "I due *Mefistofele* di Boito: drammaturgie e figurazioni," in "*Mefistofele*" *di Arrigo Boito*, ed. William Ashbook and Gerardo Guccini (Milan: Ricordi, 1998), 147–266.
5. Arrigo Boito, *Il primo "Mefistofele,"* ed. Emanuele d'Angelo (Venice: Marsilio, 2013). In preparing this chapter, I have benefited from d'Angelo's critical introduction to *Il primo "Mefistofele,"* "Rivolta pazza," 7–49, and from conversations with the author, to whom I extend heartfelt thanks.
6. Arrigo Boito, *La notte del sabba classico. Duetto - Elena e Faust* (Milan: Tito di Giovanni Ricordi, [giugno] 1868), 41004; *La battaglia. Intermezzo sinfonico fra l'atto 4.° e 5.°* (Milan: Tito di Giovanni Ricordi, [settembre] 1868), 41171, Archivio Storico Ricordi, Milan.
7. Piero Nardi, *Vita di Arrigo Boito* (Milan: Mondadori, 1942), 250, and Ashbrook, "Boito and the 1868 *Mefistofele* Libretto," 277.
8. Giulio Ricordi, *Disposizione scenica per l'opera "Mefistofele" di Arrigo Boito, compilata e regolata secondo le istruzioni dell'autore* (Milan: R. Stabilimento Ricordi, [1877]).
9. Emanuele d'Angelo, *Arrigo Boito drammaturgo per musica. Idee, visioni, forma e battaglie* (Venice: Marsilio, 2010), 191–269.
10. Arrigo Boito, *Mefistofele: opera in un prologo e cinque atti di Arrigo Boito, da rappresentarsi al R. Teatro della Scala, carnevale-quaresima 1868* (Milan: R. Stabilimento Tito di Gio. Ricordi, 1868), 51.

11. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust*, ed. Albrecht Schöne, vol. 7.1, *Sämtliche Werke* (Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1994); Goethe, *Faust I & II*, ed. and trans. Stuart Atkins (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), henceforth F.
12. Boito, *Mefistofele . . . 1868*, v–vi.
13. Ibid., viii.
14. See Allison Terbell Nikitopoulos, "Fu il *Faust* di Goethe l'unica ispirazione del *Mefistofele*?" in *Arrigo Boito*, ed. Giovanni Morelli (Florence: Olschki, 1994), 233–59. Boito was familiar with translations from the German, by Scalvini and Gazzino (1857), Persico (1861), and, above all, by Maffei (1866), but he preferred to work from the French translation of *Faust* by Blaze de Bury (1840).
15. Boito, *Mefistofele . . . 1868*, viii; Victor Hugo, préface, *Cromwell*, in *Drames*, vol. 1, *Œuvres complètes de Victor Hugo* (Paris: J. Hetzel-A. Quantin, 1881), 27. Also see d'Angelo, "Rivolta pazza," 42–44.
16. For an annotated chronology of the genesis of the opera, see Ashbrook, "Boito and the 1868 *Mefistofele* Libretto," 268–81.
17. Boito, *Mefistofele . . . 1868*, 12.
18. Ibid.
19. See Ricordi, "Analisi musicale del Mefistofele," *Gazzetta musicale di Milano,* March 15, 1868.
20. Boito, *Mefistofele . . . 1868*, 62–64. See the program, 63–64, and *La battaglia*, 1. (From this point on, the second piano part is found on the even pages, and the first piano part on the odd pages, in between which are notated the interventions of the soloists and chorus.)
21. I have drawn the vocal parts of Musical Example 14.1 from *La battaglia,* 18–19, where the verses are set rhythmically over the bar lines. The score does not follow the libretto faithfully: Mefistofele does not shout, "*Viva la Chiesa!*" (the chorus does this, 12–13) before the "Te Deum," of which he intones, with "una voce sacerdotale" (a priestly voice), the first two verses (Musical Example 14.1), assuming the part of the "celebrante" (celebrant) himself; in this manner, he succeeds in reinforcing the bitterness of the controversy over the connection of church and state (this is in contrast to both the notes to the libretto [64] and the score [1], where the hymn is assigned to "una voce sacerdotale (seguita da Mefistofele)" [a priestly voice (imitated by Mefistofele)]). It is not easy to deduce, however, how many instruments should be positioned around the theater, nor where they should be placed exactly; one list in *La battaglia* includes, aside from the "orchestra sola" (orchestra alone), "tamburi bassi" (bass drums), "tamburi alti" (high drums), "fanfara sul palco" (fanfare on stage) (2); "squillo a destra" (bells offstage right), "squillo a sinistra" (bells offstage left) (3); "fanfara anti-imperiale" (anti-imperial fanfare) (4–5); "tamburi e pifferi" (drums and fifes) (6-7); "squilli sul palco" (bells on the stage) (8); "tamburi" (drums) (10); "fanfara dell'anti-imperatore" (anti-emperor fanfare) and "fanfara anti-imperiale" (12–13); "fanfara infernale" (infernal fanfare) (14); "fanfara imperiale" (imperial fanfare) (16–17); and special effects such as "detonazione" (detonation) (repeated), "esplosione" (explosion) (6–7), and, again, "detonazione" (12–13).
22. See, for example, Angela Ida Villa, "Arrigo Boito massone: gnostico, alchimista, negromante," *Otto / Novecento* 16.3-4 (1992): 5–51; an effective summary of the interpretation of *Mefistofele* in esoteric terms is found in d'Angelo, "Rivolta pazza," 33–35. For a reading from a contemporary political perspective, connecting temporal and

religious power, in reference to Napoleon III's support of the papacy, see Guccini, "I due *Mefistofele* di Boito," 170. Naturally, it is good to keep in mind that Goethe was also an initiate.

23. "L'intermezzo sinfonico . . . non ha più nessuna ragione di esistere nell'attuale *Mefistofele*. Era una descrizione di una battaglia fantastica la quale trovava il proprio legame in un atto precedente che ora è eliminato. Senza la scena del Palazzo Imperiale la battaglia non ha più senso; il pubblico non ne capirebbe più niente" (The symphonic intermezzo . . . has no reason to exist in the current *Mephistopheles*. It was a description of a fantastic battle associated with an earlier act which has since been eliminated. Without the scene of the Imperial Palace, the battle no longer makes sense; the public wouldn't understand it at all). Boito to Agostino Salina, [1884], in Arrigo Boito, *Lettere di Arrigo Boito*, ed. Raffaello de Rensis (Rome: Società editrice di "Novissima," 1932), 50.
24. Ghislanzoni, "Rivista milanese."
25. Filippo Filippi, "La musica a Milano," in *Milano 1881* (Milan: Ottino, 1881), 291.
26. Corazzol, "Scapigliatura e musica," 226.
27. Hugo, préface, 20.
28. Boito, *Mefistofele . . . 1868*, 19.
29. A shorter version of the notes was included at the end of the printed libretto. Arrigo Boito, *Mefistofele: opera di Arrigo Boito, Teatro alla Scala, stagione di primavera 1881* (Milan: R. Stabilimento Tito di Gio. Ricordi, [1881]), 43–44.
30. According to Ashbrook, Boito originally intended to allocate the title role to a tenor, and only financial considerations would have impelled him to make do with a baritone. Ashbrook, "La disposizione scenica per il *Mefistofele* di Boito," in Ashbrook and Guccini, "*Mefistofele*" *di Arrigo Boito*, 9–10. However, a more plausible hypothesis can be formulated based on certain characteristics of the manuscript, according to which Boito wrote the role of Faust for a "baritenor." D'Angelo, "Rivolta pazza," 28–29, n80.
31. Ricordi, "Analisi musicale del Mefistofele."
32. Verdi to Opprandino Arrivabene, March 21, 1877, on the occasion of the Roman premiere of *Mefistofele* at the Teatro Apollo (April 4, 1877), questioned whether Boito would produce masterpieces. In Giuseppe Verdi, *Verdi intimo: carteggio di Giuseppe Verdi con il conte Opprandino Arrivabene (1861–1886)*, ed. Annibale Alberti (Milan: Mondadori, 1931), 201.
33. Ricordi, "Analisi musicale del Mefistofele"; Abramo Basevi, *Studio sulle opere di Giuseppe Verdi* (Florence: Tip. Tofani, 1859), 191. Harold S. Powers, "'La solita forma' and 'The Uses of Convention,'" *Acta Musicologica* 59.1 (1987), 65–90.
34. Arrigo Boito, *Mefistofele* (Milan: G. Ricordi, 1919), 133. This is the source of the musical examples. The heading "Scena e romanza" is not found at the corresponding point of the vocal score, and therefore could have been added to the score by others (Boito died in 1918); however, it matches the nature of the recitative in several sections (in which the chorus intervenes) and the continuity with the tenor aria. Arrigo Boito, *Mefistofele: opera di Arrigo Boito, rappresentata al Teatro Comunitativo di Bologna il 4 ottobre 1875* (Milan: R. Stabilimento Ricordi, [1875?]), 82.
35. Guccini, "I due *Mefistofele* di Boito," 158–64.
36. The author of the first substantial critical study of the version of *Mefistofele* performed in Venice in 1876 identified a "kinship between this duet ["Lontano, lontano, lontano," 16 mm. after Rehearsal (R) E] and the adagio ma non troppo . . . of the Quartet in C♯ minor of Beethoven" in general terms, without citing a specific musical quotation. Raro

Miedtner, "'Il Mefistofele' di Arrigo Boito. Studio critico," *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, July 9, 1876. Nardi follows up on this perceptive hypothesis of a Beethoven allusion, but errs in citing op. 130. Nardi, *Vita di Arrigo Boito*, 396.

37. Boito, *Mefistofele . . . 1881*, 35.
38. Boito, *Mefistofele . . . 1868*, 2; the motivation is justified also in the current version.
39. See Nardi, *Vita di Arrigo Boito*, 289.
40. Richard Wagner, "Lettera ad un amico italiano sulla rappresentazione del 'Lohengrin' a Bologna. Indirizzata ad Arrigo Boito, e da lui tradotta e divulgata per la stampa [November 7, 1871]," in Aldo Oberdorfer, *Riccardo Wagner* (Milan: Mondadori, 1933), 541–43.
41. Boito, *Mefistofele . . . 1868*, 2.
42. The critic of the Venetian performances of *Mefistofele* notes an inconsistency, with respect to the source, in the character of Margherita, whom Boito portrays with more sensuality. Raro Miedtner, "'Il Mefistofele' di Arrigo Boito. Studio critico," *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, May 28, 1876.
43. Boito, *Mefistofele . . . 1868*, 2.
44. Boito, *Mefistofele . . . 1881*, 38.
45. Salvetti, "La Scapigliatura milanese e il teatro d'opera," 602.
46. *Mefistofele . . . 1868*, viii.
47. On the theme of the "ringing of bells" in the poetic and musical compositions of Boito, see Arman Schwartz, *Puccini's Soundscapes: Realism and Modernity in Italian Opera* (Florence: Olschki, 2016), 14–16.
48. Boito, *Mefistofele*, 314–15. It is a three-voice fugue, with variations augmenting the first exposition of the subject, showing considerable technical skill. The number thirty-three is significant in Masonic thought.
49. Boito, *Mefistofele . . . 1881*, 39; the passage is the same in *Mefistofele . . . 1868*, 68, as in the libretto that precedes the reduction for voice and piano (*Mefistofele . . . 1875*, 15). However, Boito did not set "spiaggia" in the score (439) or in the vocal score (255), but rather "landa" (wilderness): the change represents the desire to vary the original Goethe text. See Boito, *Il primo "Mefistofele,"* 218–19, n. on lines 1238–43 and 1254–57 of the libretto.
50. Boito, *Mefistofele . . . 1881*, 39.
51. Ricordi, "Analisi musicale del Mefistofele."
52. Hugo, préface, 23.
53. Boito to Giuseppe Verdi, April 19, 1884, in Giuseppe Verdi, *Carteggio Verdi-Boito*, ed. Mario Medici and Marcello Conati with Marisa Casati (Parma: Istituto di studi verdiani, 1978), 1:72–73.
54. Boito to Camille Bellaigue, January 5, 1902, in Tintori, *Arrigo Boito, musicista e letterato*, 162.
55. Piero Faustini, "La cucina dello spettacolo. Forme drammatico–musicali di transizione nei libretti dell'opera italiana postunitaria" (PhD diss., Università degli studi di Ferrara, 2007), 111–25. See also Stefano Telve, "La lingua dei libretti di Arrigo Boito, fra tradizione e innovazione," *Lingua nostra* 65.1–2, 3–4 (2004): 16–30, 102–14.
56. Boito, *Mefistofele*, "Epilogo," 14 mm. before RC, 462–63.
57. Verdi to Opprandino Arrivabene, March 30, 1879, in Verdi, *Verdi intimo*, 226.
58. Boito, *Mefistofele . . . 1868*, viii.
59. Ibid., ix.

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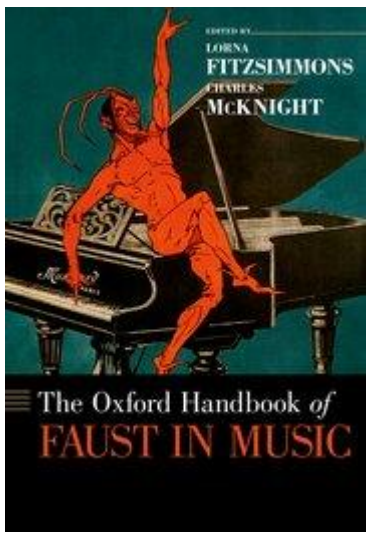

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Eighteenth Century (2017). Other publications include "*Death and the Composer: The Context of Schubert's Supernatural Lieder," in Schubert the Progressive: History, Performance Practice, and Analysis* (2003), and "*Ombra* and *Tempesta*" in *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory* (2014).

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Zoltan Roman was Professor Emeritus of Musicology at the University of Calgary, Canada. His publications include *Anton Von Webern: An Annotated Bibliography* (1983), *Gustav Mahler's American Years, 1907-11: A Documentary History* (1989), and *Gustav Mahler and Hungary* (1991). He contributed to *On the Music of Stefan Wolpe* (2003), *Perspectives on Gustav Mahler* (2005), and *The Cambridge Companion to Mahler* (2007). He was a member of the Executive Committee of the International Gustav Mahler Society and served as President of the Northwest Chapter of the American Musicological Society. His performance history as oboist includes the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra.

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James L. Zychowicz is a scholar in residence at the Newberry Library, Chicago. His publications include *Mahler's Fourth Symphony* (2000), as well as articles and reviews in the *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, *Notes*, and the *Journal of Musicology*. He contributed to *The Cambridge Companion to the Lied* (2004), *Perspectives on Gustav Mahler* (2005), and *Genetic Criticism and the Creative Process: Essays from Music, Literature, and Theater* (2009). He serves on the editorial board of Oxford Bibliographies in Music.

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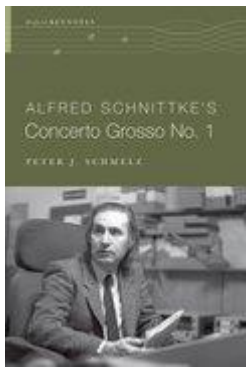

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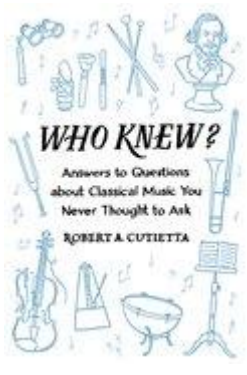

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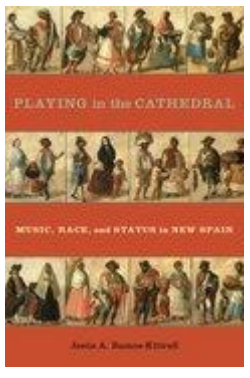

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