

© 2006. Anne Phelan. Sample. Kansas Faust: Adapted from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's Faust, Part One. Music by Alan Cancelino. For scripts and CDs, and performance rights, contact anne@annephelan.com.

Characters (in order of speaking):

| Roles double to six actors (two women/four men) | |
|---|--|
| Henry Faust | a college professor |
| Ford | Faust's graduate assistant |
| Earth Spirit | played by God; a big balloon head on a stick |
| Raphael | archangel |
| Gabriel | archangel |
| Michael | archangel |
| Mephistopheles | a high-ranking devil; at times, a black poodle |
| God | |
| Male Marmoset | kitchen assistant |
| Female Marmoset | kitchen assistant |
| Kitchen Witch | youth potion specialist; one of Mephistopheles' concubines |
| Margaret | |
| Martha | Margaret's aunt and confidante |
| Bessy | Margaret's friend, her contemporary |
| Valentin | Margaret's brother, a soldier away at war |
| Evil Spirit | |
| Ignus Fatuus | will o' the wisp |
| Witch #1 | |
| Warlock #1 | |
| Warlock #2 | |
| Executioner Warlock | |
| Medusa | |

ACTOR #1 plays Faust.

ACTOR #2 plays Mephistopheles.

ACTOR #3 plays Earth Spirit; God; Female Marmoset; Evil Spirit; Warlock #1; Executioner Warlock.

ACTOR #4 plays Raphael; Male Marmoset; Valentin; Ignis Fatuus; Warlock #2.

ACTRESS #1 plays Gabriel; Margaret; Medusa.

ACTRESS #2 plays Ford; Michael; Kitchen Witch; Martha; Bessy; Witch #1.

Scene List:

Act I:

1. Faust's Study, early Easter morning- Faust, Ford, Earth Spirit
2. Heaven- Raphael, Gabriel, Michael, God, Mephistopheles
3. Riverside Park, Easter Day- Faust, Ford, Mephistopheles
4. Faust's Study, Easter Night, and the Next Morning- Faust, Mephistopheles,

5. Witch's Kitchen- Faust, Mephistopheles, Marmosets #1-#2, Kitchen Witch
6. A Street- Margaret, Faust, Mephistopheles
7. Margaret's Bedroom, Evening- Margaret, Faust, Mephistopheles
8. Promenade- Faust, Mephistopheles
9. Martha's House- Martha, Margaret, Mephistopheles
10. A Street- Faust, Mephistopheles

Act II:

11. Martha's Garden, Evening- Margaret, Faust, Mephistopheles, Martha
12. Martha's Garden- Faust, Mephistopheles, Margaret
13. Cemetery- Margaret, Bessy
14. Street Before Margaret's Door, Night- Val, Faust, Mephistopheles, Martha, Margaret
15. Church- Margaret, Evil Spirit
16. Walpurgis Night, Ozark Mountains- Faust, Mephistopheles, Ignis Fatuus, Witch #1, Warlocks #1-#2, Executioner Warlock, Medusa
17. Gloomy Day, A Field- Faust, Mephistopheles
18. Night, Prison- Faust, Margaret, Mephistopheles

Song List- Music by Alan Cancelino, Lyrics by Anne Phelan

Act I:

1. "Easter Hymn"

Act II:

2. "Mephistopheles' Love Song" Scene 14- Mephistopheles
3. "Judgement Day" Scene 15- offstage chorus
4. Witch & Warlock Song Scene 16- Witch #1, Witch #2, Mephistopheles, Warlock #1, Warlock # 2, Medusa

Act One
Scene One: Faust in his Study

(FAUST sits at his desk, very early Easter morning. The sun's not up yet. Crosses to the window)

FAUST:

There's my friend, the moon. I saw you rise tonight, in the blink of an eye. If I made a wish on you, moon, it would be to stop asking questions that have no answers. Can you transform me?

FORD:

(Entering in a frenzy)

So sorry to interrupt, to disturb your mental processes, Professor Faust. But, your mid-term grades-

FAUST:

It's well past midnight, Ford. The coyotes have been howling for hours.

FORD:

I, I don't even know how it happened. It was uncanny. Like some unseen hand reached over my shoulder and deleted the calculations I was trying to save. Do you have another copy?

FAUST:

No, Ford. Your job is to rescue me from the minutiae of academia. Now I'll have to calculate them all over again.

FORD:

I can do it.

FAUST:

You aren't familiar enough with the students.

FORD:

I apologize, Professor.

FAUST:

I assume it wasn't intentional, but it's tiresome.

FORD:

Really sorry, Dr. Faust. But it wasn't me, it was-

FAUST:

Since when are you so ready to blame the spirit world? Go to bed.

FORD:

(Meekly)

Yes, sir. Good night, sir.

(Exits)

FAUST:

Ford's one of my better graduate assistants, and she's barely competent. My students are no challenge- I lead them around by the nose like so many trained bears. I'm not wealthy- all I have are my clothes and my books. The college owns this ramshackle house. I have no family, they've all died off. My body ages without mercy. Where is solace for someone like me? Not in my intellect. I observe people- some of them seem happy. I want them to teach me the secret. Not that I could ever bring myself to ask. No one loves me- that's fact, not self-pity. Every few months, I have the same nightmare. I'm a disembodied head, like a three-dimensional, rubber Halloween mask, floating down the path on my way to class. When I get near to the classroom building, I see that I look like Boris Karloff in "Frankenstein." When I was younger, I thought that my head was all I'd need. Now, I'm afraid that's not true, and it's too late. My last chance is magic.

(Picks up a book of magic and spells)

This book will help. I've been saving it for a night like this. When I'd exhausted every other avenue. I'll conjure up a spirit- it'll know how to talk to me better than any mere man.

(Gets a piece of charcoal, and draws a haphazard pentagram on the floor)

Pentagram.

(Straightens up. Opens the book, looks at a spell)

To know you, Spirit of the Earth.

(Runs his fingertips over the page)

You're so close, I can feel your breath on my skin. You'll reveal the secrets of the universe to me, and I won't care about that I'm trapped in Freedom, Kansas for the rest of my life. The moon's gone behind a cloud. Okay, this is getting spooky. But, no, I'm too close. I can't stop now. Earth Spirit, I call thee here. Now!

EARTH SPIRIT:

(Enters, carrying an enormous balloon on a long stick)

Who summons me?

FAUST:
(Terrified)

Jesus!

EARTH SPIRIT:
You called and called- I couldn't stay away any longer.

FAUST:
I 'm afraid to look at you.

EARTH SPIRIT:
I breathed on you, and even that wasn't enough. You had to see me. You think you're like God? Then why do you cower like a four year old afraid of the monster under the bed? This is the great, renowned Faust! No braver than an earthworm.

FAUST:
(Trying to collect himself)
You can't scare me. We're just alike, the two of us.

EARTH SPIRIT:
I can take any form, go anywhere, dodge any disaster. As swift and strong as God's thought.

FAUST:
You can't rest! Anymore than I can.

EARTH SPIRIT:
It's all in your head. You're nothing like me!
(HE disappears)

FAUST:
How can I be God-like, and not like him? I-
(Knock at the door)
Ford's eavesdropping again. Little sneak. She's lost me my last, best chance, damn it!
(Hides the book as FORD, wearing HER pajamas and carrying a flashlight, opens the door)

FORD:
I heard you talking. Were you practicing your lectures? I really need to work on that. You can teach me.

FAUST:
It's too late for a pedagogical discussion, Ford. Go to bed.

FORD:

I could talk all night with you. You give me such deep thoughts. But we'll talk tomorrow. Easter's a holiday. I know a lot, but some day I'll know everything.

(SHE exits)

FAUST:

Life's infinite possibilities when you're Ford's age. But mine shrink with every passing hour. All these books hold the key to life? They mock me. My father's books are the worst of all. All this knowledge, all my erudition, and for what? I'm Sisyphus on the prairie.

(Looks at a bunch of old medicine bottles)

I'd forgotten about them. Those old drugs must be worthless now.

(Picks one of them up, and reads the tattered label)

But not this one. It would kill a horse.

(Puts it down. Stares at it)

If I drank from the bottle, all my despair would come to an end. All the struggling, the pain. Death has got to be easier. I'm not who the Earth Spirit said I was. I'm Faust afraid of nothing. Then there is only one thing for me to do. It's my only way out.

(Picks the bottle up)

FEMALE OR MIXED CHORUS:

(Offstage, singing, as FAUST unscrews the bottle cap)

WHEN THE WOMEN CAME TO SEE
JESUS' GRAVE, IT WAS EMPTY.
HE HAD RISEN FROM THE TOMB
THREE DAYS AFTER CALV'RY'S GLOOM.

FAUST:

(Puts the bottle down)

Easter. The women go to the tomb and Christ isn't there. Who will visit my grave? Silly Ford?

FEMALE OR MIXED CHORUS:

(Offstage, singing the second verse)

HAIL, TRIUMPHAL EASTER DAY!
WITH HIS LIFE OUR LORD DID PAY
FOR SALVATION FOR US ALL.
HE TRANSFIGURED ADAM'S FALL.

FAUST:

They sing the same hymns every year. I had faith when I was a boy. My heart would swell on Easter Day, no matter how sad or lost I felt the day before. It was like magic. I loved the mystery of it. All just for me. So much joy in that mystery, that it could never end. I believed. I knew miracles were real.

FEMALE OR MIXED CHORUS:

(Offstage, singing the third verse)

ON THIS DAY EXTOL OUR LORD.

PRAISE HIM NOW WITH ONE ACCORD.

HE WHO MADE THE BLIND MAN SEE,

ONLY CHRIST CAN SET US FREE.

(FAUST screws the cap back on the bottle)

End of Scene

Scene Two: Heaven

(In heaven, three archangels- RAPHAEL, GABRIEL and MICHAEL- are praising GOD, who watches THEM)

RAPHAEL:

The sun and the planets orbit in perfect harmony, as deliberate and inevitable as the notes of a Bach cantata. All are beyond our knowing. As You are, O Lord.

GABRIEL:

The oceans subdue your creatures with hurricanes and tidal waves. These amazing creations only add to our awe of You, O God.

MICHAEL:

The great chain of being works like a vast perpetual motion machine.

(MEPHISTOPHELES enters)

Who else could have conceived the creation of such an intricate, flawless piece of work?

THREE ARCHANGELS:

We can't fathom your work anymore than we understand You, but we know art when we see it.

MEPHISTOPHELES:

God, you and I don't get that many chances to chat. I'm hardly in the same league with these three fellas. Sure, the earth is full of beautiful things, but man was supposed to be your greatest achievement, and he's pathetic. At best, he can love himself, and there are few enough of those. Mankind goes on and on, searching for what? The peace that will make them stop striving. It never comes.

GOD:

There's nothing good about man at all?

MEPHISTOPHELES:

Nope.

GOD:

He's completely hopeless in your book?

MEPHISTOPHELES:

Any creature that drives himself like that, looking for what can't be found? It's crazy.

GOD:

Do you know my Faust?

MEPHISTOPHELES:

Hank Faust? The epitome of what I'm talking about. All that struggling, like a bluegill hooked at the end of a line. And for what?

GOD:

Eventually, I'll set him right. But he needs to try on his own awhile longer.

MEPHISTOPHELES:

How about a friendly wager? I bet I can get him to come over to my side.

GOD:

Faust? You're on.

MEPHISTOPHELES:

Hank Faust- he'll be a one-man amusement park for me.

GOD:

You'll lose. Faust'll surprise you.

MEPHISTOPHELES:

No, he won't disappoint. It's only a question of how. And how long.

GOD:

Okay, we have a bet.

(Making a joke)

Do your damndest.

MEPHISTOPHELES:

Faust'll be mine. He'll wind up like my ancient cousin, the snake, writhing on his belly and eating dust, telling himself he likes it.

GOD:

You'll never understand mortals, Mephistopheles. If I didn't give men free will, they'd loll about like fat, contented cows. Free will's the only thing that keeps it interesting for them.

MEPHISTOPHELES:

For you, ya mean.

GOD:

I'm sure you'll get Faust's attention. But not his soul.

(To the ARCHANGELS)

My angels-in-charge, come away! You're held to me by bonds of love that can never fray.

(Heaven closes up, GOD and the three ARCHANGELS disappear from view)

MEPHISTOPHELES:

(Out)

Well, one thing you can say for God, he's got good manners. That's how you can always tell who's really got the power. Even tried to make a devil feel welcome in his home.

End of Scene

Scene Three: Riverside Park

(Easter Day, around noon, in Riverside Park. FAUST enters with FORD)

FAUST:

Look at all those people, Ford: streaming down Main Street like a river. The same as people would when I was a little boy. All out for Easter Day. All risen from their musty little houses. We're just like them.

FORD:

If it weren't for you, Professor Faust, I wouldn't be caught dead here. These people aren't like us- they're vulgar. Those ones over there are *making out-*

FAUST:

It's spring.

FORD:

(THEY start walking again. FORD looks back over HER shoulder)

That one old lady called you "young Dr. Faust."

FAUST:

I am, to her. "Dr. Faust" was my father.

FORD:

Was there really the plague here?

FAUST:

Not bubonic or pneumonic. But there was an epidemic. Wiped out a third of the town.

FORD:

Damn!

FAUST:

My father couldn't figure out what kind of disease it was. He tried everything. Holistic medicine-

FORD:

Folklore! You may as well cast spells.

FAUST:

That, too.

FORD:

Your father believed in magic?

FAUST:

Look at the sun- a day this beautiful makes you think nothing bad could ever happen in the state of Kansas. Unless less you're Cherokee, of course. This was Indian Territory, once.

FORD:

Like in the "Little House on the Prairie" book?

FAUST:

Precisely. Some people think the Cherokee ghosts still haunt this park.

(MEPHISTOPHELES appears as a black poodle. Very slowly, HE begins to make ever narrowing concentric circles around FAUST)

FORD:

I'm cold. Can we go home?

(THEY start walking back the way THEY came)

What are you looking at?

FAUST:

That black dog.

FORD:

(Shrugs)

I saw him before. So?

FAUST:

What is he?

FORD:

A poodle. Probably looking for his master.

FAUST:

Why is he making those circles around us? Like he's trying to trap us in his enchantment?

FORD:

It's just a poodle.

FAUST:

I think he's magic. There's something uncanny about him.

FORD:

Maybe he's been abused. So he approaches strangers in a roundabout way.

FAUST:

Here, boy!

(MEPHISTOPHELES comes, panting. HE rolls over to have HIS tummy rubbed)

FORD:

See, just a poodle!

(FAUST rubs MEPHISTOPHELES' tummy.

MEPHISTOPHELES makes contented dog noises)

He likes you. If there was a stick around here, you could throw it in the river and he'd chase it.

FAUST:

I guess you're right. He's merely a dog.

(FAUST, FORD and MEPHISTOPHELES continue walking)

FORD:

Who couldn't like a well-trained dog?

(FORD exits. FAUST and MEPHISTOPHELES continue walking)

End of Scene