

March 19, 2020 – Gounod's *Faust*

On this week's WCPE Opera House we'll hear an encore performance of Charles Gounod's *Faust*, hosted by the late **Al Ruocchio** (1937-2007). Loosely based on several episodes from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's classic play about an aged philosopher who strikes a deal with the devil in return for regaining his youth, Jules Barbier and Michel Carré's libretto focused so much on the love story between the youthful Faust and the innocent Marguerite that, to this day, many German opera houses refer to Gounod's tuneful 1859 French opera as *Margarethe*.

The opera takes place in sixteenth-century Germany. The aging philosopher Faust (tenor **Plácido Domingo**) sells his soul to Méphistophélès (bass **Nicolai Ghiaurov**) in return for renewed youth and the love of Marguerite (soprano **Mirella Freni**). Méphistophélès frustrates the attentions of Siébel (mezzo-soprano **Michèle Command**), Marguerite's faithful admirer charged with protecting her by her brother, Valentin (baritone **Thomas Allen**), and introduces her to Faust, with whom she falls in love. Valentin returns from the wars to find her compromised, and challenges Faust to a duel. Valentin is killed and Faust abandons Marguerite. She bears Faust's child and is condemned to death for killing it in shame. The repentant Faust tries to rescue Marguerite from prison, where she is now deranged, but she recognizes him as evil and dies renouncing her love for him. Méphistophélès declares her condemned, but angels announce her salvation and raise her to Heaven, while Méphistophélès forces Faust down to Hell.

Georges Prêtre conducts the Paris Opéra Orchestra and Chorus in this 1978 EMI recording, CD number 5091662.

From a 1973 Tokyo performance, **Nicolai Ghiaurov** sings Méphistophélès's "Le veau d'or" (Song of the Golden Calf): <http://youtu.be/asXI3oLofS8>.

This Saturday afternoon, March 21st, at 12:30, please join us for the Metropolitan Opera's production of Gioachino Rossini's *La Cenerentola* (*Cinderella*). **Tara Erraught** is Don Magnifico's daughter Angelina and **Javier Camarena** is Don Ramiro, the prince who eventually marries her. **So Young Park** (Clorinda) and **Maya Lahyani** (Tisbe) are Angelina's ugly stepsisters. **Maurizio Muraro** (Don Magnifico) is Angelina's henpecked father, **Christian Van Horn** (Alidoro) arranges for Angelina to attend the ball, and **Vito Priante** (Dandini) temporarily switches places with his boss, Don Ramiro. **James Gaffigan** conducts.

Be sure to join **Rob Kennedy** and me next Thursday, March 26th, for our Spring Membership Drive. In addition to arias, choruses and ensembles from the station's extensive collection, we'll play selections from our two thank-you gifts: Berlioz's *La Damnation de Faust* (3 CDs) and a Covent Garden production of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* (1 DVD). Pledge by phone (800-556-5178) or online.

The WCPE Opera House is heard every Thursday evening at 7 o'clock in the Eastern time zone on 89.7 FM in central North Carolina. We're streamed online world-wide at <http://www.theclassicalstation.org>, and you can listen on WCPE's Android or iPhone apps.

Bob Chapman

W. Robert Chapman, Host of the WCPE Opera House