

THE EPILOGUE OF THE MEFISTOFELE OPERA BY ARRIGO BOITO – SACRED CONNOTATIONS –

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SUMMARY. The intrinsic spirituality of Arrigo Boito's art in the opera *Mefistofele* results from the vibrant expressions of the sacred that directly accompany the tumultuous path of the Faustian quests. The present article highlights the way in which the composer penetrates through music and text into the metaphysical mysteries of the fight between good and evil, in the scene of Faust's salvation – the *Epilogue*. The violent confrontation of the antagonistic forces of the universe takes place when Faust, at the end of his life, manages to free himself from Mefistofele. The musical, literary and scenic means of expression imposed by the composer – being the sole creator of the libretto, music and mise-en-scène – masterfully reproduce this confrontation. The fragment we analyzed emphasizes this by noting at the same time how metaphysical space can be rendered with the help of music. Placed at the end of the opera *Mefistofele*, through the dramatic unfolding rich in sacred symbols, the scene of salvation crowns the series of defining elements with which Boito contributes to the evolution of the Faustian myth.

Keywords: *Mefistofele*, *Epilogue*, Boito, Faust, Sacred.

Driven by the desire for absolute knowledge, Faust pursues the path of human dualism, following his tragic destiny. At the end of this journey, in the final scene of the *Mefistofele* opera by Arrigo Boito – *The Epilogue* – he finds himself in his old laboratory, where he had once signed the pact with the devil. We find him again meditating, but now his tormenting meditation passes

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from slivers of profound memories to scraps of a much-desired picture, an ideal world's image of his own making. Faust discovers fulfillment by dedicating his existence to others, precisely when his journey through a life full of illusions, trials, temptations, hope, and sadness is coming to an end. An end in which he manages to defeat the egocentrism that has guided him up until that moment, letting go of his individualism and seeking, even if only imaginarily, the attainment of humanity's most beautiful desiderate – the building of a perfect world. Despite this world being simply the product of his imagination, Faust now becomes a creator, which is essential for his redemption, in Boito's vision. Faust becomes an autonomous subject who thinks, dreams, creates, liberated from the initial constraints relative to human limitations as well as from those limitations imposed by Mefistofele, because of the pact. Faust succeeds only now to completely break away from Mefistofele's manipulating influence.

Nikolaos Matsoukas, a former professor of Dogmatics at the University of Thessaloniki, points out a fundamental aspect of Satan's *modus operandi*, namely leading man to the center of his own being up to the moment in which he begins to function according to a *satanic logic*. From his point of view, "the satanic logic represents the egocentric closure of existence, and, consequently, a fissure and a discontinuity in the memory that connects God and beings."³ Thus, "satanic possession does not only refer to a devil entering a human, but chiefly to the domination of the human by a satanic logic, meaning the tearing apart of all unity and all relations of love, resulting in an egocentric decay."⁴ This is the same principle employed by Mefistofele as concerns Faust's life – separating him from all that he loves – until he falls into Mefistofele's devilish trap. However, this fall of man means suffering, while divine love "heals creation and the suffering humanity."⁵

Faust embodies man's journey on earth from the standpoint of a free being, subject to ordeals, capable of making decisions and of confronting their consequences. In a topical article, Theodor Baconski explains the difficulty that we face in making decisions and the great opportunity of having been created free:

"Nothing shackles as much as freedom: it asks you to choose the good, and, no matter how much post-modernity has strived to make the boundaries relative, the evil remains easily detectable: we do not have many excuses. It is detectable following the decalogue, also easy to catch through the analysis of its devastating effects. We live with this evil, manifested in

³ Nikolaos Matsoukas, *Teologie Dogmatică și Simbolică (Dogmatic and Symbolic Theology)*, volumul IV, Demonologie, București, Editura Bizantină, 2002, p. 150.

⁴ *idem*, p. 159.

⁵ *idem*, p. 158.

many ways, because it belongs to us, it is the mere outcome of our choices, starting from the ethical and political ones and ending with the axiological ones. It is the dowry that we cannot be separated from, when we define ourselves as unrepeatable beings.”⁶

In an equally topical article, Andrei Pleșu reminds us, too, of the freedom with which we have been endowed by the Creator, touching also on the shapes taken by evil in its permanent fight against the good for our souls:

“One of the most beautiful themes pertaining to Christian theology is that of the freedom bestowed by the Creator unto man, so that from his composition (envisioned to reflect the likeness with the Author) an essential attribute would not be missing: the right to choose and to have the initiative. There is no “person” in a full sense without free will, without a decision’s autonomy and being responsible for our own decisions. [...] Freedom is – we know this from the day-to-day experience of the mundane – a value that is hard to administer. [...] Therefore, it is imperiously necessary for the “deviant”, false, deceptive good to enter the scene. Meaning evil. Should I then understand that God has consented to evil’s existence for the sake of His creature’s unbound freedom? Yes, answer the theologians. This is indeed how the emergence of evil on earth is explained. To be free, man must choose freely.”⁷

The issue of man’s freedom is in fact one of the major themes of Christian theology. In volume IV – *Demonology* – of the University of Thessaloniki treaty on Dogmatic and Symbolic Theology, Nikolaos Matsoukas analyzes the subject in relationship with God – the Creator:

“Freedom, creating together, and working together are the first and greatest gifts that God has offered to rational beings, to people and angels. [...] This endowment of man, which could have led him to creative ascension, in other words to the beauty of deification, is re-established after its failure and perversion *into the mystery of redemption*. The liberty corresponding to this dowry of man, even though it has been perverted, always subsists as a free movement. Nonetheless, it needs mending and healing. God never forces man to turn in a coercive manner *towards the mystery of redemption*. This is because every rational being enjoys its own decision-making power in this sense. Besides, solely through this power can man become together creator, God by vocation.”⁸

⁶ Teodor Baconski, *Omul moribund (The dying man)*, in *Dilema Veche*, <http://dilemaveche.ro/sectiune/din-polul-plus/articol/omul-muribund>.

⁷ Andrei Pleșu, *O „piatră de poticnire” pe tema libertății (A ‘stumbling block’ on the theme of freedom)*, in *Dilema Veche*, <http://dilemaveche.ro/>.

⁸ Nikolaos Matsoukas, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

So, man was created free and endowed with the sublime gift of being able to choose the path of redemption. However, it is very important for him to understand that he surrounds himself with what he chooses, and that this will mark his life. We refer once again to the explanation given by Andrei Pleșu in this sense: “Thinking of the angel makes the angel be born in the space of thought, the same as thinking of man makes the man be born in the space of angelic existence. [...] You become what you adopt in your train of thought. You identify yourself with what you contemplate.”⁹ Moreover, when we “reflect upon the angel we illustrate its very essence, our reflection becoming one with the angel’s spiritual essence, respectively.”¹⁰ What could be more desirable to man than knowing himself encompassed by the divine energy and being guided by the angel’s presence? But man was created free, and at the other end, Satan is always tempting by enfolding man’s mind in empty promises, because “satanic possession means influencing man’s mind and imagination.”¹¹

Mefistofele, Satan’s embodiment in Faust’s life, undoubtedly suffers a significant defeat and no longer hides his desperation when he sees that, in a last attempt to reclaim Faust, his insistence remains without an echo. What bothers him even more is the shield that will form around the soul in prayer, the divine shield represented by the angels’ chorus. This is the context in which the last part of the opera, that of Faust’s redemption, will unfold, redemption now also possible due to the intensity with which he has acted to discover and get to know his identity, provoked by Mefistofele.

The orchestral introduction of this part – a true philosophic discourse expressed in musical language – allows both for ominous premonitions and sad memories, interrupted by dreamlike glimpses now sparking to life, in an extremely dramatic moment in which it looks as if time were pressing down Faust’s tired yet hopeful soul. The perfect intervals, namely the fourth, fifth, and octave that build the most important defining moments for the good-evil dialectical extremes of the opera, appear now as altered, increased, or decreased, conveying – along with the brief chromatisms – the full complexity of the lived drama. The music renders a melancholic feeling, being interpreted by the winds section in a succession of contrasts which contain short and very colorful flashes of certain reflections that musically express the unrelenting hallucinations of an inner life in profound transformation.

⁹ Andrei Pleșu, *Despre îngerii (On Angels)*, București, Humanitas, 2003, p. 224.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹¹ Nikolaos Matsoukas, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

Figure 3

Amoroso ♩=52

pp legatissimo

Arrigo Boito, Opera *Mefistofele*, *Epilogo – La morte di Faust*, The orchestral introduction of The Faust-Mefistofele duet, The *Amoroso* part, bars. 1-3.

The vital impulse of this thought also pierces through the melodic line of Faust's vocal part from his duet with Mefistofele, which follows this cutting instrumental presentation and paints the beginning of a beautiful dream in the depths of the human soul. *O, rimenbranza!*¹⁴, exclaims Faust, rising from the chair as if lured by an ecstatic vision. In this instance, Mefistofele sits unseen behind the armchair in which Faust spends the last moments of his existence, attentively and impatiently observing his prey. With a sinister voice, still focusing on Faust, Mefistofele launches the same insistent call addressed to him when Mefistofele had led him into the Sabbath's infernal world, only this time Mefistofele's call is one towards eternal death:

Cammina, cammina, superbo pensier.
(*La morte e vicina, cammina, cammina, superbo pensiero*)¹⁵

"In *The Epilogue* comes back the same demon that had appeared in *The Prologue* as well, only now more somber, more deadly, ever sinister, and livid than in all the other parts of the opera, convulsively trembling due to being consumed by envy, because he feels that he will lose the bet. And so it will be."¹⁶ Therefore, mockery and irony are violent in Mefistofele's text and music, and the melodic passages of some descending scales from his vocal part resemble trodden paths onto which he wishes to steer Faust towards hell.

Instead, old Faust, his face pale and wrinkled, meditates gravely and calmly, while the melodic line accompanying his thoughts is like an echo of his conscience's aspirations and inscrutable questions. All throughout their short duet, as opposed to Mefistofele, Faust permanently aims his chant towards the skies, the melodic line of each intervention ascending.

¹⁴ Oh, remembrance! (it.).

¹⁵ Walk, walk, proud thought. (Death is near, walk, walk, proud thought) (it.).

¹⁶ *Disposizione scenica per l'opera Mefistofele di Arrigo Boito (Stage arrangement for the opera Mefistofele by Arrigo Boito)*, Editura Ricordi, p. 38.

*Ogni mortal mister gustai, Il Real, l'Ideale,
Mai Il Real fu dolore, E l'Ideale fu sogno...*¹⁷

It may seem like these thoughts are ill-suited to Faust, the one who has agreed to sell his soul to the devil to obtain what surpasses human powers. However, now he is no longer the same as before but profoundly transformed because he presently feels that only the will to act independently and sovereignly can bring him fulfillment. Constantino Maeder argues that just when Faust manages to rebel against Mefistofele he becomes an autonomous subject who creates his own world. Even though this world exists only in his imagination, evolving from *soggetto voluto*¹⁸ to *soggetto che crea*¹⁹, autonomy and success are so important that they are rewarded with redemption²⁰. He “understands now that if Reality is pain, the Ideal – the Ideal in its pure submission to the *self* – is nothing but a dream. The knot in his soul unties itself, the intellect becomes bright will; and that longing for life... restores its humanity in the highest sense of the word. In a universal vision of the infinite torment, he views himself and man *sub specie aeternitatis*, with the sole purpose of perfecting – which is a sacred purpose in its infinite intangibility – the deepest human and divine essence of the *self*.”²¹ He tends to vanquish any selfish trace from his soul, renewing within himself the source of universal life, finding again the road to freedom and to the desire of winning, expressing all these truths in the song of redemption.

In the ensuing aria, Faust presents his dream to us, dream that becomes a reality through the power of artistic imagination, the language of the verses suggesting the ideal, enigmatic world so commonly encountered in the poetry of the *Scapigliatura* movement.

A chant emerged from the deep-seated emotion of a noble soul, at first tender, pierced by the sadness of life's last seconds, it lights up at the same time with the bliss of the moment in which Faust glimpses the picture of his dreams. Faust is the king of a tranquil world, of a nation that rules over an infinite realm enjoying wise laws, and this is expressed with warmth and dignity. The aria composed in A flat major, 4/4, *Andante sostenuto* tempo, is supported by an almost imperceptible, rarefied orchestral accompaniment, to put into relief the intimate expression of the *melos*. Those pauses interrupting the string of

¹⁷ Every mortal mystery I tasted, The Real, the Ideal, Never was the Real without pain, And the Ideal was but a dream... (it.).

¹⁸ The desired subject (it.).

¹⁹ The creatig Subject (it.).

²⁰ Constantino Maeder, *Il Real fu dolore e l'Ideale sogno (The real was pain and the ideal dream)*, Franco Cesati Editore, Firenze, 2002, p. 48.

²¹ Antonio Borriello, *Mito poesia e musica nel Mefistofele di Arrigo Boito (Myth, poetry, and music in Arrigo Boito's Mefistofele)*, Napoli, A. Guida Editore, 1950, p. 336.

ideas reveal this tragic hero's strength of soul, he who, already with one side of his being in the world beyond, soars right at this very time towards reliving the miracle of youth.

In the next example, we can notice a series of musical elements such as the *andante sostenuto* tempo, the diminished sound intensity, the melodic line, and the *legando assai* accompaniment which suggest the disposition of the character – his calm, self-trust, self-reconciliation – but also a new articulation of the good-evil dualism, manifested through the dissonant overlap of fifths from the two chords present in the orchestral introduction. It is the measure that bridges Faust's memories up to this point and that point in which he becomes aware of the major change he is traversing, the dark side and the luminous side of his life, respectively.

Figure 4

Andante sostenuto ♩ = 42

Andante sostenuto ♩ = 42

pp legando assai

**Arrigo Boito, Opera *Mefistofele*, Epilogo – *La morte di Faust*,
Faust's Aria "Giunto sul passo estremo", bars. 1-4.**

His chant gradually becomes more and more penetrating, and once Faust truly sees the view of his creation – plains, houses, thousands upon thousands of people – the shiver of emotion that arises within him amplifies the intensity of his voice, instilling a beneficial force which encapsulates his whole being, to then melt in the wave of gentleness caused by his ultimate desire: for this dream to endure across centuries under the holy guise of poetry.

*Voglio che questo sogno
Sia la santa poesia
E l'ultimo bisogno
Dell'esistenza mia*²²

²² I want this dream/ To be the sacred poetry/ And the final longing/ Of my existence (it.).

On these verses, the musical background from the beginning of the aria returns just as gentle and with the accompaniment still unfolding in the *dolce e tranquillo* sonority, simply adding to the *teneramente* vocal part – the tenderness associated with the strong feelings and the aesthetic creed held by the composer with respect to the poetic genre.

Faust's transformation is being watched by Mefistofele with heightened preoccupation, and his short interventions are at first statements spelled in silence, *aparté*, showing that he understands how close to the danger of losing the bet he is. Interesting to notice is the fact that this time the demon is the one who picks up the melodic line from Faust, not the other way around like until now, a sign that he is the dominated one instead of just the ignored one, as is visible in the example beneath:

Figure 5

The image shows a musical score for three parts: Faust's vocal line, Mefistofele's accompaniment, and the piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in treble clef with a key signature of two flats and a common time signature. The lyrics are "- con - do___ vo-glio do-nar la vi - ta" and "Sot - to". The Mefistofele part is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature, with the instruction "(Spiar vo-glio il suo cor.)" and a dynamic marking "p". The piano accompaniment is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature, featuring a "pp" dynamic marking. Two blue ovals highlight specific melodic passages: one in the vocal line and one in the Mefistofele part.

**Arrigo Boito, Opera *Mefistofele*, *Epilogo* – *La morte di Faust*,
Faust's Aria "Giunto sul passo estremo", bars. 13-15.**

The radiant and pure palette of vibrant images that now live in Faust's inner vision can be found in the dense lyricism of the ascending melodic line, *legato*, *crescendo*, up to *con forza*, supported by the harmonies of the A flat Major tonality. In *Disposizione scenica*, the composer asks the performer to exaltingly exclaim the last words of the description that Faust makes to his creation, when the melody rises towards the acute "Faust's vision being explicitly 'holy', and the doctor's last wish not being owed to *hybris* but to the love for man and God."²³

The duet that follows Faust's aria displays the two at the start of their terrible, final fight. Faust lives ever more plenary his newfound truth, affirming

²³ Virginia di Martino, *Tra cielo e inferno. Arrigo Boito e il mito di Faust (Between Heaven and Hell: Arrigo Boito and the myth of Faust)*, Edizioni ETS, Pisa 2016, p. 125.

it with authority, “creating this world through sheer will and strength of spirit. He becomes *artifex*, namely a demiurge-artist, while the caption – *Faust estaticamente* – ignites the ecstatic visionary aspect.”²⁴

*Ecco... la nuova turba
Al guardo mio si svela!
Ecco... il colle s'inurba
E il popolo s'inciela*²⁵

The emotional distress that envelopes Faust when he declaims the recalled verses is musically alluded to through the refreshing of the tempo – *un poco più mosso* – simultaneous with the abrupt change of tone – (*A flat Major – A Major*). This modulation brings shininess, so that the unfolding of the vocal part and the accompaniment with simple harmonies throw a clear light on the picture described by Faust.

Mefistofele is annoyed by the ray that illuminates Good, revealing it, hindering his ability to defend his darkness from the divine flame now burning in Faust's soul. The prospect of losing the bet humiliates him, even more so because he feels superior and is convinced that all people are vulnerable and easy to conquer. Thus, the hard tried devilish conceit makes Mefistofele's replies be spoken staunchly and spitefully, in *ff*, this bursting being supported by the accentuated attack of each sound coming from the orchestral accompaniment, as can be seen in the next example:

Figure 6

The musical score for Figure 6 consists of three staves. The top staff is for the vocal part (Mefistofele), the middle staff is for the vocal part (Faust), and the bottom staff is for the piano accompaniment. The key signature is A-flat major (three flats) and the time signature is 3/4. The vocal line for Mefistofele begins with a rest, followed by the lyrics '- cie - la.' and then a double bar line, followed by 'S'ode un'. The piano accompaniment begins with a rest, followed by a series of chords and eighth notes. The dynamic markings are *ff* (fortissimo) and *p* (piano).

**Arrigo Boito, Opera *Mefistofele*, Epilogo – *La morte di Faust*,
The Faust-Mefistofele duet, bars. 7-9.**

²⁴ Constantino Maeder, *Il Real fu dolore e l'Ideal sogno (The real was pain and the ideal dream.)*, Franco Cesati Editore, Firenze, 2002, p. 48.

²⁵ Behold... the new crowd Reveals itself to my gaze! Behold... the hill becomes agitated And the people gather (it.).

The aggressiveness that characterizes someone when in peril is manifesting more and more unbounded in the obsessive and violent repetition of the warning „*All’erta!*”²⁶, Mefistofele adding to each intervention an ever-bigger determination, both in the vocal line and in the speed of the movements likened by Boito to those of one of the most feared felines – the panther. As depicted in the following example, Mefistofele’s musical replies initially pick up Faust’s melodic line, essentially changing the character of his interpretation, in a duet in which Faust is addressing Heaven, and Mefistofele is addressing Hell, at the point when the fight transcends into the Universe.

Figure 6

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system (bars 9-11) shows Faust's vocal line starting with 'S'ode un can - ti - co in ciel' and Mefistofele's response '- la! Al - l'er - -'. The piano accompaniment is marked *p*. The second system (bars 12-13) continues the duet with Faust's 'S'ode un. can - ti - co in ciel' and Mefistofele's '- ta! Al - l'er - ta! ten - ta - tor!) Già mi'. The piano part is marked *Meno mosso* with a tempo of 76, *cresc.*, and *mf staccato*.

Arrigo Boito, Opera *Mefistofele*, *Epilogo – La morte di Faust*,
The Faust-Mefistofele duet, bars. 9-13.

²⁶ On the alert! (it.).

*(All'erta! All'erta!
È la battaglia incerta
fra Satana ed il ciel.)*²⁷

As is noticeable, in the verses above Mefistofele calls to battle the forces of Evil, and in his desperate clenching he reiterates fragments pertaining to the musical theme of the first demonic apparition in *The Prologue*, backed by the specters that violently raise the orchestral sonority together with the vocal part, similar to the unleashing of an immensely harmful wave. Spectacularly, he is confronted with the divine theme, that of the seven trumpets from *The Orchestral Prelude*, rustling gloriously and warmly, pulverizing into the void the gigantic satanic breath. It is like an answer to uncontested instigation, an answer that breaks through the Cosmos with an infinite and protective love. The celestial motif overlapping Mefistofele's last word, simultaneous with the distant modulation *G Major – B Major*, surprises and strongly affects due to the absolute contrast of the artistic and musical ideas representing the two cohabitating forces, capitalizing here, aesthetically speaking, on another form of musical dualism. The incessant conflict between the two forces characterizing life on earth deeply intensifies the moment that the soul powerfully vibrates hoping for a victory of the Good.

Next is a brief moment of divine grace in the proximity of the great storm, in which the *Largo* tempo quietens the atmosphere, and the color of the glowing timbers brightens it, providing an opening for an optimistic, consoling perspective. The sonority diminishes the disquieting intensity, becoming tender, the melodic line seemingly re-entering the miraculous world of heaven, while the canon overtaking the theme and creating a polyphony on the upper octave, in an overlap of orchestral planes, makes the sounds fill the sonorous space just like the stars illuminate the firmament on clear nights.

²⁷ (On the alert! On the alert!/ It's the uncertain battle/ between Satan and heaven) (it.).

Figure 7

The musical score for Figure 7 is set in 3/4 time and marked 'Largo' with a tempo of 50. It features a vocal line for Mefistofele (labeled 'M') and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line starts with the lyrics 'ciel.)' and the piano part includes the lyrics '(squilli, echi celestiali)'. The piano part is marked with a forte 'f' dynamic. The score consists of two systems of staves, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment.

Arrigo Boito, Opera *Mefistofele*, *Epilogo – La morte di Faust*,
The Faust-Mefistofele duet, bars. 21-26.

Upon hearing the divine music, the dumbfounded devil is petrified for a minute, then looks up furiously and, terrified, he tries to escape as soon as possible from the area invaded by the trumpets' sounds, at the same time searching for the magic cloak he had once used to tempt Faust into his painful journey. He tries even now to reclaim him, stretching the cloak in front of him in a provoking fashion, but he notices that Faust remains unmoved, contemplating the sky with transfixed features. We recognize in the melodic line the musical motif of Faust's flight in the mephistophelic embrace from the end of *The Pact*, motif which we could call that of "the magic cloak". This now appears lesser, more nervous and uncertain, in comparison to his triumphant exposition from the beginning of the adventure, when the pair took to the skies wrapped up in the same cloak.

The first example portrays Mefistofele's line from *The Epilogue*, whereas the second example portrays his line from the scene of *The Pact*:

Figure 8

$\text{♩} = 58$
(a Faust dispiegando il mantello come nell'atto primo)

pp

MEF.

Vien! io di - sten - do que - sto man - tel

p

M

e vo - le - rem sul - l'a - ria! Faust! Faust! Faust!

Arrigo Boito, Opera *Mefistofele*, *Epilogo – La morte di Faust*, The Faust-Mefistofele duet to which the choir of heavenly voices is added, bars. 1-4.

Figure 9

Largo $\text{♩} = 42$
vigorosamente

ff

M

Pur ch'io di - sten - da que - sto - man - tel

crescendo sempre e accel.

M

noi viag - ge - re - mo sul - l'a - ria...

Arrigo Boito, Opera *Mefistofele*, The First Act, *La Domenica di Pasqua*, The Pact of Faust, The Mefistofele-Faust duet, bars. 47-50.

Devastated by the indifference with which he is met, he starts to call out his name with all the might. In this repetition, panic transforms the call in a commanding howl having as an acoustic support the dark and cold orchestral *tremolo*, which for four bars rustles on the sounds of the Dominant seventh chord of the *E Major* tonality, as a sign of conflict. Faust does not answer this time either, remaining unwavering, invoking celestial power the moment in which the marvelous caress of the sacred chant joins his vision.

The choir of heavenly voices exclaim, so as to show communion with Faust's soul, the sympathetic interjection *Ah!*, solemn, affectionate, and pious. Again, the two forces collide, the sublime universal embrace that Faust revels in coinciding with the desperate mephistophelic urge not to give up on supremacy, transposed into the insistence of the violent call: *Faust! Faust! Faust!*

The expanded breath of the melody which had made itself heard in greeting the *Mystic Chorus*, in *The Prologue*, once again lifts us up to spiritual peaks, the sacred chant arriving now as a comfort, as an invitation into the world of love and forgiveness.

*Ave, Signor,
Signor degli angeli,
Dei santi, delle sfere erranti*²⁸

This music impregnates the atmosphere with divine spirit, which is why an exasperated Mefistofele quickly launches another assault, enticing Faust with the song and the deceiving beauty of the sirens he conjures, for a short while, in the alcove, bathed in a warm light. He lures him once more with the earthly vices, drawing his attention with those voices that are so melodious and captivating, obstinately seeking again to damn him through the sins of the flesh. This moment is particularly noteworthy, because when Mefistofele praises the seductive power of the sea maidens' song, *Odi il canto d'amor! Che un di beò il tuo cor*²⁹, referring to the fatal chant of the sirens, what can be heard is the heavenly psalm that raises Faust's soul into a world of paradise.

But Faust remains under the spell of the divine choir, liberates himself from Mefistofele, sees him no more, hears him no more, nor perceives the apparition of the sirens, blending his chant with that of the celestial forces and ecstatically declaiming, on the backdrop of the high and unleashed sounds of the entire sonorous universe, the miraculous words: *Arrestati sei bello!*³⁰.

Discouraged, Mefistofele helplessly releases the cloak from his hands, and when he sees Faust living in complete joy his communion with the divinity, he throws himself in anger at him, repeating the words and music with which he had managed to separate him from Margherita in the romantic Sabbath: *Torci il guardo!*³¹. Nonetheless, Faust continues unimpeded on his path towards eternity, and hopefully taking the Gospel into his hands, begins to pray fervently,

²⁸ Hail, Lord, / Lord of the angels, / Of the saints, of the wandering spheres (it.).

²⁹ Listen to the song of love! / That once blessed your heart. (it.).

³⁰ Stop, you're beautiful! (it.).

³¹ Turn your gaze! (it.).

being transfixed by the divine vision which has come up in the background³². In the passionate melodies of the celestial choruses, he “kneels and, in a supranatural ecstasy, dies drowning in the happiness and glory of the angels, but not before saying to the moment: *SANTO ATTIMO FUGGENTE, ARRESTATI, SEI BELLO! A me l’eternità!*”³³.

The ending of the opera is triumphant, the composer demanding, from the moment of the heavenly vision’s apparition, that the choruses, the orchestra, and the performers execute a *crescendo gradatamente sino alla massima sonorità della fine*, with an *ffff* sonority in the high weave of the voices and orchestra, joined in the last bars, *con tutta forza*, by the divinity’s theme, that of the seven trumpets which initially had indecisively pierced through cosmic nebula, and which now, complete, is solemnly celebrating its purpose. Faust is saved when he discovers his own imagination, the only one that allows free creativity, being imbued by the divine grace with which man has been endowed in the moment of his creation.

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³² As Boito himself explains in the Stage Directions, the painted canvas representing the nebula, at this moment ‘... rises and reveals the heavenly vision, illuminated by a vivid azure electric light’.. *Disposizione scenica per l’opera Mefistofele di Arrigo Boito (Stage arrangement for the opera Mefistofele by Arrigo Boito)*, Editura Ricordi, p. 77.

³³ Sacred fleeting moment, stop, you’re beautiful! To me, eternity! (*Disposizione scenica per l’opera Mefistofele di Arrigo Boito*, Editura Ricordi, p. 2.).