Please Note

- all programs are strictly copyright of the university of rochester international theatre program.
- programs are presented in the form given to the printer, thus page order is not consecutive.
- recent programs are formatted to be printed on legal size paper (8.5 x 14) with a centre fold.
Dear Secret Admirer:

Well, it’s that time again!

Yes, we’re producing our 8th Annual One Act New Play Festival. Don’t miss it! Great student plays, with oodles of young talent.

It opens on Wednesday, May 3. See you there!

er: Toddella Nuova  
xoxo
special thanks

Jon Poon - Alex Blakeney - Pamela C. Smith, RN, ANP - Steven J. McNally - Les Pfluke
The U of R Chemistry Department
Ben W. Ebenhack of the Chemical Engineering Department
Karen Culley, Lab Technician for the Educational Resources
Rhonda Wilson of the U of R Medical Center
Applied Audio
Mephisto’s Hair by Aishah Rowland at
Broadway Styles
1144 Joseph Ave
Rochester NY 14621
(585) 338 9160

get with the program

The UR International Theatre Program continually brings new, challenging, and exciting theatre to Rochester. We can’t do it without your support. Become a patron of the arts, and a supporter of new, exciting work and fresh talent, by making a donation to the Program today. Even the smallest amount can make a difference. Call 273-5159 to find out how you can contribute... (and every donation is tax-exempt to the fullest extent of the law.)

www.rochester.edu/theatre

ur supporting the arts

need a gift for that special someone?

how about a Todd Theatre or UR International Theatre Program production momento?
visit our GIFT EMPORIA on the web at www.rochester.edu/theatre/gifts.php
NOEL SALZMAN (Director) works in theater, video and audio. Since 1990 he has been co-artistic director of The Butane Group, a collective of theater and media artists that create new work, often based on politically-charged non-fictional material. He teaches directing to NYU undergraduates at Playwrights Horizons Theatre School. His most recent project, The Loneliness of Noam Chomsky (a performance), was the culmination of his work at NYU’s Gallatin School for Individualized Study, where he studied digital media and social activism. His written MA thesis will focus on a selected history of multimedia political theater, including the work of Erwin Piscator, the Federal Theatre’s Living Newspapers, and Peter Sellers. His video adaptation of The Merchant of Venice, utilizing Kathy Acker’s radical version of the play, was screened all over the world, and won an award at the Rochester International Film Festival. The next Butane Group show, Operation Axis, will focus on the CIA’s covert coup against Iran’s first democratically-elected government in 1953. A radio adaptation of Gertrude Stein’s Listen To Me will be completed in 2005. A work-in-progress of a new theatre piece with video, will be presented in August. The Group also continues to present Neglected Experimental Masterpieces of the 1980s, a reading series.

ANKA LUPES (Set & Costume Designer) Recent theatre design credits include Three Sisters (dir. Pavel Liska) at Classic Stage Co., and Henry IV and A Midsummer Night’s Dream for the Virginia Shakespeare Festival. Past productions include Messecore de Sade and Ruth Margraff’s folk opera, Café Antarctica, both directed by Ian Betton; Goldoni’s La Casa Novia (dir. Liviu Ciulei); Playboy of the West Indies (dir. Tazewell Thompson); Humperdinck’s Hänsel and Gretel (dir. William Wesbrooks); the US premiere of Rossini’s L’Equivoque Stravagante (dir. Benjamin Spierman); Showboat (dir. Randy White); a new musical version of The Nutcracker (dir. Bruce Merril), a children’s opera (dir. Gordon Ostrowski) at MSM; The Battle of the Black and the Dogs (dir. Doris Mierse); and Name Day (dir. by Marcy Arlin). She has designed projects at the Theater Row and Ohio theatres, Kaye Playhouse, Lovinger and Frederick Lowe theatres, Theatre at St. Clements, The Barrow Group Theatre, PS122, HERE, and The Culture Project. Film and television credits include production design and art direction for short films and shows aired on Showtime, TLC, Nick@Nite, NBC, FuseTV. Ms. Lupes is trained as an architect and holds an MFA in stage design from NYU/Tisch.


KATIE DOWN (Sound Designer & Composer) composer, sound artist, multi-instrumentalist, and occasional troublemaker has created and performed numerous sound scores for theatre and dance companies in both NYC and abroad. She is a classically trained flutist and plays numerous instruments including guitar, ukulele, dumbek, frame drum, glass and homemade instruments, and found objects. She has conducted voice and improvisation workshops at international festivals and with theatre companies and schools throughout the Balkans, US, and Europe. She was recently an artist-in-residence at the center for Jewish culture, Makor, and leads the Sephardic ensemble, Adelante. She is occasionally seen performing, singing, and creating general mayhem with the ukulele group, The Ukuladies.

the university of rochester international theatre program presents

doctor faustus

by gertrude stein

directed by noel salzman

set & costume design by anka lupeS

lighting design by kevin hardy

sound design & original music by katie down

voice & acting coaching by ruth childs


cast, in order of appearance

a girl........................................meredith flouton-barnes
a boy.............................................zach sabbah
doctor faustus...................................jonathan wetherbee
mephisto........................................stephanie paredes
the dog.........................................gordon arsenoff
the boy..........................................eugene vaclav
the chorus.....................................anna fagan
taryn kimel
.........................................................liz lirakis
marguerite ida and helena
unnamed..................................annie herzog
a country woman..........................kristin volpicella
the man from over the sea......................walter daley

this production lasts 1 hours and 30 minutes, without intermission
Gertrude Stein was an avant-garde American writer, who lived most of her life and produced the bulk of her work in her famous Paris home at 27 Rue de Fleurus. Her salon became a gallery and a point of gathering for the thriving Parisian art scene between the World Wars. Stein was gay. She was also a notorious egomaniac, who famously wrote her autobiography from the perspective of her lifelong partner Alice B. Toklas largely to escape the requisite humility associated with autobiographical writing.

She was born on February 3, 1874 in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, now part of Pittsburgh, into a wealthy German-Jewish family. When she was only three years old, her family moved to Vienna, and then to Paris. She returned to America two years later and was educated in California. She graduated from Radcliffe College in 1897. She went on to Johns Hopkins Medical School, but dropped out and moved to Paris to live with her brother Leo, supported largely by a stipend from her family’s business in the US. Leo and Gertrude became prominent art critics and were great patrons of cubism. She owned some of Pablo Picasso’s early paintings, along with works by Henri Matisse, Georges Braque and Andre Derain. Picasso became a close friend and painted the most famous portrait of Stein. It was also her personal favorite. As well as befriending and encouraging the founders of cubism, Braque and Picasso, Stein tried to reflect the ideas of cubism in her own literary work. Her texts focus intensely on the present moment and use simplification, fragmentation and slightly varied repetition to achieve the immediacy and completeness associated with cubist art. Other frequent visitors to her home were a group of expatriate American writers including Ernest Hemingway and Sherwood Anderson. She coined the phrase “The Lost Generation” for the American literary scene in Paris which, as well as the aforementioned and Stein herself, included F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ezra Pound, Waldo Peare and Sylvia Beach. The phrase has also now been used to refer to the generation of people coming of age in the US during World War I. It was during this time in Paris that she met Alice B. Toklas. They remained together for the rest of Stein’s life, and The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas is Stein’s autobiography, written from Toklas’s perspective. Around the time that Alice moved into 27 Rue de Fleurus, Leo and Gertrude had a falling out (often blamed on Alice). Leo moved out and he and Gertrude rarely spoke to each other for the rest of their lives.

Stein’s first published work was Three Lives, in 1909. It is the story of three working class women, and is regarded as a masterpiece. Most of her work was too abstract and convoluted for the general public (to whom she was known principally as the author behind “A rose is a rose is a rose is a rose” and little else). The only time she achieved popular acclaim was the only time she tried to achieve it (with The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas; 1933). Her immediate financial and popular success rose” and little else). The only time she achieved popular acclaim was the only time she tried to achieve it (with The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas; 1933). Her immediate financial and popular success.

Stein’s life, and The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas is Stein’s autobiography, written from Toklas’s perspective. Around the time that Alice moved into 27 Rue de Fleurus, Leo and Gertrude had a falling out (often blamed on Alice). Leo moved out and he and Gertrude rarely spoke to each other for the rest of their lives.

Stein’s first published work was Three Lives, in 1909. It is the story of three working class women, and is regarded as a masterpiece. Most of her work was too abstract and convoluted for the general public (to whom she was known principally as the author behind “A rose is a rose is a rose is a rose is a rose and little else”). The only time she achieved popular acclaim was the only time she tried to achieve it (with The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas; 1933). Her immediate financial and popular success upon writing intentionally for the mainstream made her even more thoroughly convinced of her own genius. She went on a very successful lecture tour of the US, and then returned to France, just in time for World War II.

Stein and Toklas stayed in France under the Nazi puppet Vichy Regime. They had friends in high places and were protected despite the fact that they were both Jewish and gay. Stein died at the age of 72 of stomach cancer on July 27, 1946 in France. She is buried in the famous Pere Lachaise cemetery.

and suffering strikes and labor conflicts. Both Britain and France were still empires and had huge expenses associated with maintaining them. These factors partially explain the policy of appeasement carried out by the Europeans. The US population was deeply divided about entering the war. After the horrors of WWI, many Americans desired a sense of isolationism (the US never officially joined the League of Nations, for example).

There was no unified concept within France of how to deal with Germany and Italy – some wanted the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles carried out at all costs (they demanded huge reparations from Germany), others felt no concern at the military build-ups and aggressions of the axis powers. They felt that they would simply spend themselves into defeat and that simply building up an adequate national defense would be deterrent enough. Within the French government were anti-Fascist, pro-Fascist, anti-Communist camps and pro-Communist camps. The government was so divided that it could not function at all and eventually, in effect, surrendered foreign policy decisions to Britain.

Stein herself took politically complicated stances. An initial supporter of the Vichy regime (the puppet government that was installed in June 1940, once France had surrendered to the Germans) she was, at the same time a supporter of the peasant and working classes. At times, in her writings, she exhibits an almost willful refusal to acknowledge the war and its interference in her daily life.

*...*
Stein wrote Docteur Faustus Lights the Lights in France between the World Wars. It was published in 1938. The world in which Stein was writing was tense and rife with conflict. After the devastations of WWI where a whole generation had essentially being slaughtered, there was not a unified opinion in Europe about what to do about the increasing probability of another war. The Treaty of Versailles, which ended the First World War, had as much to do with each allied country's individual goals and interests, as it did with ending the conflict. Much of the war had been fought on French soil, and the French suffered the heaviest casualties. Accordingly, France wanted to severely punish Germany militarily, economically and politically. Britain wanted to punish Germany as well, but also had interests in continuing to trade with Germany. At the same time, Britain was wary of a superior France. The US, especially President Woodrow Wilson, sought to establish a League of Nations to ensure self-government of ethnic groups in the aftermath of the devastations of WWI where a whole generation had essentially being slaughtered. Stein was always respectful of animals. She is talking about breathing; about taking in as much as possible before needing to exhale. This is a function of rhythm.

Stein specifies how she learned to write paragraphs, meaning how she developed prose paragraphs corresponding to her hearing. Given her other principles, how does she know how to group her thoughts together, when to begin and end any sequences. Having decided that the structure of sentences excludes the very possibility of anything but a gigantic simulacrum—not unreal, but a simulacrum, never again changing for what is real, but exchanging in itself, in an uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference.

“Charismatic like “myth” is a distinctive word of the interwar years; a leader to whom godlike wisdom was attributed, a ruler who exercised the power of life and death.”

Raymond J. Sontag, A Broken World 1919-1939

The principle of mechanization excludes the very possibility of growth or the understanding of change. For mechanization is achieved by fragmentation of any process and by putting the fragmented parts in a series. Yet as Hume showed in the 18th century, there is no principle of causality in a mere sequence. Nothing follows from following, except change. So the greatest of all reversals occurred with electricity, that ended sequences, by making things instant.

Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man

Stein wrote Docteur Faustus Lights the Lights in France between the World Wars. It was published in 1938. The world in which Stein was writing was tense and rife with conflict. After the devastations of WWI where a whole generation had essentially being slaughtered, there was not a unified opinion in Europe about what to do about the increasing probability of another war. The Treaty of Versailles, which ended the First World War, had as much to do with each allied country's individual goals and interests, as it did with ending the conflict. Much of the war had been fought on French soil, and the French suffered the heaviest casualties. Accordingly, France wanted to severely punish Germany militarily, economically and politically. Britain wanted to punish Germany as well, but also had interests in continuing to trade with Germany. At the same time, Britain was wary of a superior France. The US, especially President Woodrow Wilson, sought to establish a League of Nations to ensure self-government of ethnic groups in the aftermath of the devastations of WWI where a whole generation had essentially being slaughtered. Stein was always respectful of animals. She is talking about breathing; about taking in as much as possible before needing to exhale. This is a function of rhythm.
Cubism is a school of painting, largely invented by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braques between 1906 and 1913. Working in Paris, these painters developed a form of painting that draws some influence from the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists who immediately preceded them, but with important changes.

Impressionists, like Monet and Manet, began with the idea that the world meets the eye as bits and splashes of color, which we then interpret, based on past experience, as tables, chairs, flowers, fields, etc. Impressionists wanted to capture the immediate visual “impression” of the world, not the fully interpreted mental image we create after having viewed something. In this way, Impressionists made the process of seeing apparent by highlighting exactly what we see rather than our mentally-processed interpretation. While Cubist paintings look markedly different from Impressionist paintings, they retain the emphasis on making sight itself the object of the painting. Cubism highlights sensory experience and the process of seeing.

Both Impressionism and Cubism defamiliarize the commonplace to make the process of seeing more active, more apparent. As the critic, Pepe Karmel writes, "Rather than a description, it offered an 'equivalent' for experience. Cubism took this approach a step further, removing the last vestiges of resemblance and offering a composition that was explicitly a combination of abstract signs and isolated recognizable details. The painted image now needed to be read or decoded." Cubist paintings are often difficult to interpret, even though they may be representing everyday things like a still life or a person. The paintings are abstract, meaning that they do not resemble something from the real world.

Cubism further attempts to de-familiarize reality by offering an equivalent to reality instead of reality itself. Rather than relying strictly on visual sensation, as the Impressionists had done, they turned to representing the emotional or intellectual equivalent to reality. The paintings become tethered to the artist’s reaction to subjects.

A third influence on Cubism comes from the rise of the decorative arts around the same time that the Cubists were experimenting. These decorative arts, like carpets, tapestries, and tile floors relied on simplified forms and geometric shapes rather than creating pictures. Patterns took precedence over pictures in creating designs. The objects in the picture were deliberately made to look flat and two-dimensional. Rather than playing with a range of colors, these forms of art limited the color palette to a few central colors or shades of the same color. Cubism, likewise, relies on geometric patterns, a limited color palette, and simple shapes.

One of the most radical things that Cubism did was to dismantle the traditional notion of perspective. The Cubists dismissed this notion of perspective completely. They built their paintings on a series of planes that are juxtaposed and overlaid. Braque said, "traditional perspective, with its diagonals converging toward a vanishing point, made the things in the picture appear to recede from the viewer. It was therefore necessary to abandon perspective. Instead of beginning with the foreground, I placed myself in the middle of the painting.” Rather than relying on a single perspective in the painting, Braques and Picasso in fact tried to represent multiple perspectives at the same time. Each plane and each perspective in the painting carried equal weight, so that the emphasis is on multiplicity rather than unity.

Just as Cubism tried to de-familiarize everyday objects by making the viewer decipher them in the painting, so Stein’s writing tries to de-familiarize the text by playing with different sentence structures and word choices. While Cubist painting consists of a field of shapes and surfaces, Stein’s writing consists of strange sentence “shapes,” that is, AC or DC?

The turning point of the electric age came a few years later with the development of AC (alternating current) power systems. With alternating current, power plants could transport electricity much farther than before. In 1895, George Westinghouse opened the first major power plant at Niagara Falls. It used alternating current. While Edison’s DC (direct current) plant could only transport electricity within one square mile of his Pearl Street Power Station, the Niagara Falls plant was able to transport electricity more than 200 miles! Electricity didn’t have an easy beginning. Many people were thrilled with all the new inventions, but some people were afraid of electricity and wary of bringing it into their homes. Many social critics of the day saw electricity as an end to a simpler, less hectic way of life. Poets commented that electric lights were less romantic than gas lights. Perhaps they were right, but the new electric age could not be dimmed.

In 1920, about two percent of all the energy in the United States was used to make electricity. Today, about 39 percent of all energy is used to make electricity. As we continue to use technology powered by electricity, that figure will continue to rise.
Starting with Ben Franklin

Many people think Benjamin Franklin discovered electricity with his famous kite-flying experiments in 1752. But, electricity was not discovered all at once. At first, electricity was associated with light. People wanted a cheap and safe way to light their homes, and scientists thought electricity might be a way to do it.

The Battery

Learning how to produce and use electricity was not easy. For a long time there was no dependable source of electricity for experiments. Finally, in 1800, Alessandro Volta, an Italian scientist, made a great discovery. He soaked some paper in salt water, placed zinc and copper on opposite sides of the paper, and watched the chemical reaction produce an electric current. Volta had created the first electric cell.

By connecting many of these cells together, Volta was able to “string a current” and create a battery. It is in honor of Volta that we measure battery power in volts. Finally, a safe and dependable source of electricity was available, making it easy for scientists to study electricity.

A Current Began

An English scientist, Michael Faraday, was the first one to realize that an electric current could be produced by passing a magnet through a copper wire. It was an amazing discovery. Almost all the electricity we use today is made with magnets and coils of copper wire in giant power plants. Both the electric generator and electric motor are based on this principle. A generator converts mechanical energy into electricity. A motor converts electrical energy into mechanical energy.

Mr. Edison and his Light

In 1879, Thomas Edison focused on inventing a practical light bulb, one that would last a long time before burning out. The problem was finding a strong material for the filament, the small wire inside the bulb that conducts the electricity. Finally, Edison used ordinary cotton thread that had been soaked in carbon. The filament didn’t burn at all—it became incandescent; that is, it glowed.

By connecting this new filament to wires, Edison invented the light bulb. People could now turn a switch to turn on a light, instead of using candles, oil lamps, or gaslights.

The next challenge was developing an electrical system that could provide people with a practical source of energy to power these new lights. Edison wanted a way to make electricity both practical and inexpensive. He designed and built the first electric power plant that was able to produce electricity and carry it to people’s homes.

Edison’s Pearl Street Power Station started up its generator on September 4, 1882, in New York City. About 85 customers in lower Manhattan received enough power to light 5,000 lamps. His customers paid a lot for their electricity, though. In today’s dollars, the electricity cost $5 per kilo-watt-hour! Today, electricity costs a little over eight cents per kilowatt-hour.

Even though Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights (1938) is not contemporary with the development of Cubism, it still contains elements of the style that associated Stein with Cubism originally. For example, in Act one, Scene two, Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel say, “I wish, (she whispered) I knew why woods are wild why animals are wild why it still contains elements of the style that associated Stein with Cubism originally. For example, in Act one, Scene two, Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel say, “I wish, (she whispered) I knew why woods are wild why animals are wild why it still contains elements of the style that associated Stein with Cubism originally. For example, in Act one, Scene two, Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel say, “I wish, (she whispered) I knew why woods are wild why animals are wild why it still contains elements of the style that associated Stein with Cubism originally. For example, in Act one, Scene two, Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel say, “I wish, (she whispered) I knew why woods are wild why animals are wild why it still contains elements of the style that associated Stein with Cubism originally. For example, in Act one, Scene two, Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel say, “I wish, (she whispered) I knew why woods are wild why animals are wild why it still contains elements of the style that associated Stein with Cubism originally. For example, in Act one, Scene two, Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel say, “I wish, (she whispered) I knew why woods are wild why animals are wild why it still contains elements of the style that associated Stein with Cubism originally. For example, in Act one, Scene two, Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel say, “I wish, (she whispered) I knew why woods are wild why animals are wild why it still contains elements of the style that associated Stein with Cubism originally. For example, in Act one, Scene two, Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel say, “I wish, (she whispered) I knew why woods are wild why animals are wild why it still contains elements of the style that associated Stein with Cubism originally. For example, in Act one, Scene two, Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel say, “I wish, (she whispered) I knew why woods are wild why animals are wild why it still contains elements of the style that associated Stein with Cubism originally. For example, in Act one, Scene two, Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel say, “I wish, (she whispered) I knew why woods are wild why animals are wild why it still contains elements of the style that associated Stein with Cubism originally. For example, in Act one, Scene two, Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel say, “I wish, (she whispered) I knew why woods are wild why animals are wild why it still contains elements of the style that associated Stein with Cubism originally. For example, in Act one, Scene two, Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel say, “I wish, (she whispered) I knew why woods are wild why animals are wild why it still contains elements of the style that associated Stein with Cubism originally. For example, in Act one, Scene two, Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel say, “I wish, (she whispered) I knew why woods are wild why animals are wild why it still contains elements of the style that associated Stein with Cubism originally. For example, in Act one, Scene two, Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel say, “I wish, (she whispered) I knew why woods are wild why animals are wild.
The earliest incarnation of what is now “The Faust Legend” is the story of Saint Theophilus the Penitent or Theophilus of Adana, who, after being denied his original position in the clergy signed a pact with Satan, in which he renounced Jesus and the Virgin Mary. He became fearful for his soul and prayed to the Virgin and fasted for forty days. The Virgin appeared to him and promised to intercede with God (this is also one of the first instances of Mary having such power, and it played a role in increasing her theological importance). After thirty more days of fasting and prayer, Mary appears again and grants Theophilus absolution. Satan is enraged and three days later, Theophilus wakes up to find the contract resting on his chest. He goes to a legitimate bishop and confesses to all of his sins. The bishop burns the contract and Theophilus dies immediately out of joy.

The origins of the names Faust and Faustus are less clear than the origins of the legend itself. There is an historical record of a German magician and alchemist by the name of Dr. Johann Georg Faust, who is rumored to have publicly denounced Jesus's miracles and boasted that he could perform similar ones. He is thought to have studied in Krakow, Poland. Interestingly, there is a similar Polish folk tale about one Pan Twardowski, who emigrated to Krakow from Germany. Whatever the historical origins, the name is also likely derived from Latin faustus meaning auspicious and lucky. Another possible etymology is from fustum, Latin for a staff, a walk stick.

The most famous literary versions of the myth are Christopher Marlowe’s The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s Faust. Marlowe’s Doctor Faustus was first published in 1604, eleven years after Marlowe died and twelve or more since the play was first performed. It is the oldest theatrical version of the Faust legend. Marlowe was somewhat of a dark legend himself. He was a spy and was killed in a drunken brawl. Before Shakespeare, Marlowe was considered the greatest English tragedian, and it is a popular theory that Marlowe wrote under Shakespeare’s name. Goethe’s Faust, first published in 1808, is probably the best-known version of the story. It was a drama intended to be read, not performed, and considered by many to be the greatest work of German literature ever.

So, it is one myth of our modern life. If Faustus wants power he also wants something to cure his solitude. In Christopher Marlowe’s version (first staged around 1590) he speaks to himself in the third person -- “Settle thy studies, Faustus” “Faustus, thou art damned” -- as if that could help him in the lack of others to talk with. Both company and power come in the form of a devil named Mephistopheles. In Marlowe he arrives disguised as a monk. In the first part of Goethe’s Faust (begun in 1800) he appears first as a black poodle who follows the scholar home after a walk.

The legend becomes in fact a story about companionship, as well as complicity—the desperate contract in which he sells his soul. Mephistopheles’s magic is to draw him out and on, he opens up his desires, thwart them even as he fulfills them, tempts him but also confronts him with what he doesn’t know about himself. He supplies him with dreams. The devil also gives him a girl. In Marlowe, Faustus’s great love is an illusion or demonic double of the ancient beauty Helen. In Goethe it is an ordinary girl, Margaret or Gretchen, whom he seduces into love and murder. Gertrude Stein makes one of her great leaps in combining the two into one creature, who calls herself “Marguerite Ida and Helena An-nabel.” Here someone asks, “Would a viper have stung her if she had only one name would he would he?”

We are not allowed to know clearly the cost of these things.

The legend was hugely successful on stage from its beginnings, partly because of the chance it gave for stage tricks, the swooping in or flight of devils, visions, visitations, magical spectacles, things appearing and disappearing. Goethe saw it first in a popular version done with puppets, probably one with a clown who imitates Faust’s magic tricks. And Faustus himself, in Marlowe, has a penchant for brilliant, coarse practical jokes and spectacles. He likes to remain at once the center of attention and a creature behind the scenes. The story also works on stage, I think, because Faustus is a figure at once strong and weak, masked and exposed, manipulator and manipulated. Puppet-master and puppet at once.

You would think the Faust story is about the fear of Hell. But one of the discoveries Marlowe makes is that it is a story about wanting to die an ordinary death in the world. His Faustus starts out asking for magic, it ends with his solitary cry to be a mere animal, matter, drops of water, breath exhaled in the air. And he gets his wish, you could say, for the play makes pretty absurd, merely theatrical, any manifestation of supernatural magic or demonic punishment. The play does not believe in hell, even if it believes in devils. It becomes a story about our human-ness, our confinement to time, our soul always bound to our body, and to others so bound. One of the most moving and chilling lines in Stein’s play is “I could not go to hell.” Yet her Faustus says at a desperate moment, “I can go to hell all alone.” And then at another: “I could know without any soul to sell, without there being anything in hell.”

Stein knows she is putting on an old show. In some cases, she reminds us of just how emptied out the old mythologies have become. “The devil what the devil what do I care if the devil is there.” Faustus has gone through his story many times, indeed only at the end of Stein’s play do we get round to something like its traditional beginnings. “Mr. Viper” is both a real thing and a mechanical companion, a stuffed animal, something desired and something thrown away. Stein was thinking, I think, of the puppet show, but this made the game all the more serious. “What do I care if the devil is there?” is a serious question.

One great things she does, in probing Faustus’s power and complicity, is to leave us in doubt about who is tempting whom. There is an actor who plays “Faustus,” but in fact every character on stage can become the tempter and every one is tempted. Each is a possible victim or devil, parent or child, seducer or seduced. So they are all the more bound together, even if they seem to find it hard to recognize one other.

But what are the lights?