Faust has been called the fundamental icon of Western culture, and Goethe’s inexhaustible poetic drama is the centrepiece of its tradition in literature, music and art. In recent years, this play has experienced something of a renaissance, with a surge of studies, theatre productions, press coverage and public discussions. Reflecting this renewed interest, leading Goethe scholars in this volume explore the play’s striking modernity within its theatrical framework. The chapters present new aspects, such as the virtuality of Faust, the music drama, the modernization of evil, Faust’s blindness, the gay Mephistopheles, classical beauty and horror as phantasmagoria, and Goethe’s anticipation of modern science, economics and ecology. The book contains an illustrated section on Faust in modern performance, with contributions by renowned directors, critics and dramaturges, and a major interview with Peter Stein, director of the uncut ‘millennium production’ of Expo 2000.

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GOETHE’S FAUST

Theatre of Modernity

EDITED BY

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In the summer of 2000, the World Exposition in Hanover, Germany, presented visitors with an extraordinary experience: Peter Stein’s uncut production, in twenty-three hours of stage time, of one of the most massive pieces of world literature ever written. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe dedicated over sixty years of his life (1749–1832) to the composition of Faust, a Tragedy in two parts. The production, which moved on to Berlin and Vienna over the next two years, was timely indeed: many other productions followed. Faust was rediscovered not only as a vital document of Western cultural memory, but also for its unsurpassed prophetic power. A major symposium in Toronto, Canada, and the development of this book were meant to take these discussions to the next, international, stage.

Obviously, there are numerous translations of Goethe’s Faust. Unless cited otherwise, our default translation is that of Stuart Atkins, Faust i and ii, Cambridge, MA: Suhrkamp, 1986. We have tried to maintain the flow of the text by keeping the original German to a minimum. What we have lost in philological precision we have gained in readability. But we allowed Goethe’s full poetic text to stand in the longer, indented quotations. This poetry counts among the most sublime in the history of European literature, and the richness of its music and associations remains ultimately untranslatable.

Our thanks are due to all those who invested much patience, thought and energy into making this book possible – most of all, our contributors from Europe and North America, who were more than understanding throughout the long editorial obstacle course. Sadly, Wolf-Daniel Hartwich passed away before this book could go to press; his untimely death has meant the loss of a talented scholar.

We thank the team of stylists put together by John Noyes who corrected and refined the English of our German authors, and Deirdre Vincent, Nina Peters and John Koster, who translated some of our most demanding essays. Our thanks go also to Peter Stein, who graciously granted a substantial
Preface

interview, and to Samir Dobric, who took on the daunting task of transcribing a near-inaudible CD. We thank the Staatstheater Stuttgart, Luigi Ciminaghi of the Piccolo Teatro, Milan, and Ruth Walz for granting us the copyrights for the illustrations. Finally, we are grateful to Vicki Cooper and Rebecca Taylor, our editors at Cambridge University Press, for their patience and encouragement.
Abbreviations


P Anne Bohnenkamp. ‘... das Hauptgeschäft nicht ausser Augen lassend’: Die Paralipomena zu Goethes Faust, Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1994.