

ACADEMY OF PERFORMING ARTS IN PRAGUE  
THEATRE FACULTY

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ACADEMY OF PERFORMING ARTS IN PRAGUE

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**MASTER'S THESIS**

**Don Juan and Faust by Christian Dietrich Grabbe**

**Character analysis and visual interpretation**

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**Analýza postav a vizuální interpretace**

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## **Abstract**

The Subject matter of this master thesis is a comprehensive study of *Don Juan and Faust*, a play written by Christian Dietrich Grabbe. My work starts with an introduction of Grabbe's life, social background, and personage, which I found of great importance for a better understanding his dramatical work. Further, the focus is on in-depth analysis and my interpretation of the play *Don Juan and Faust*, and their characters. The goal of my research is to develop a concept connected with contemporary aspects and questions supported with visual interpretation. Conclusively, I presented the result through scenography sketches of main dramatic situations and costumes.

## **Abstrakt**

Diplomová práce se zabývá komplexní studií divadelní hry "Don Juan a Faust" jejímž autorem je Christian Dietrich Grabbe. Práce začíná úvodem do života a kontextu autora, jenž je důležitý pro pochopení jeho dramatické tvorby. Dále se soustředím na podrobnou analýzu a vlastní interpretaci postav a samotné hry "Don Juan a Faust". Cílem této práce je návrh konceptu s přesahem do současných otázek a aspektů dnešní doby, podpořený vizuální interpretací. Výstupem je prezentace pomocí scénografických náčrtů hlavních dramatických dějů a kostýmů.

## Table of Contents

|                                                                                        |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| I. Introduction .....                                                                  | 1  |
| II. About Christian Dietrich Grabbe .....                                              | 2  |
| II.I Biography .....                                                                   | 5  |
| II.II About Christian Dietrich Grebbe's style .....                                    | 13 |
| II.III All Christian Dietrich Grabbe's works .....                                     | 14 |
| II.IV Famous works .....                                                               | 15 |
| III. Don Juan and Faust, introduction to the play .....                                | 17 |
| III.I Summary of the plot .....                                                        | 19 |
| III.II Brief description of characters .....                                           | 23 |
| III.III Analysis of the text and interpretation of characters Don Juan and Faust ..... | 26 |
| III.IV Tangible versus Unattainable (reality versus idea) .....                        | 27 |
| III.V Don Juan's and Faust's relations and treatment of women .....                    | 33 |
| III.VI Key moments of the play .....                                                   | 36 |
| III.VII Contemporary aspects of Don Juan and Faust. ....                               | 38 |
| IV. Visual interpretation .....                                                        | 45 |
| IV.I Chosen theatre .....                                                              | 45 |
| IV.II Stage design .....                                                               | 45 |
| IV.III Essential dramatic situations .....                                             | 52 |
| IV.IV Costume design .....                                                             | 62 |
| V. Conclusion .....                                                                    | 76 |
| VI. Bibliography .....                                                                 | 80 |

## I. Introduction

Having the freedom to choose among numerous texts, the title *Don Juan and Faust* sounded intriguing, as so far unfamiliar and uncommon synthesis. Christian Dietrich Grabbe and his dramatical work are not widely known and translated. Furthermore, theatre productions of his dramas are rare and cannot be seen often on theatre repertoires. German dramatist and his clash of two legends of European literature – Don Juan and Faust, were challenging and, therefore, the topic of my final project in stage design.

During my studies, both bachelor's and master's here at DAMU, regarding text analysis - I was always the most interested in the characters of a play and how their interpretation can shape and direct a concept of a theatre performance. Thoroughly questioning who they are, subsequently researching and understanding through philosophical, ideological, social, psychological aspects of an individual - is always a crucial part of the process. I aim to answer the question of who they are today, why, and how those characters are relevant in a contemporary context. What are they stressing and claiming, what are they questioning, is it possible or necessary to answer?

*Don Juan and Faust* gave the impression to be the perfect ground for my interest, where I was able to comprehensively investigate them as individuals, similarities, differences, influences. Further, develop a concept and embody contemporary aspects.

My intention is to apply knowledge gained in the master's program at DAMU, my previous studies, and experiences, combined with personal affections and aesthetics in order to present my perception of the chosen dramatical text.

My work starts with the introduction of the personage of Christian Dietrich Grabbe, then the interpretation of the drama *Don Juan and Faust* and my visual interpretation, given through stage design and costumes.

## **II. About Christian Dietrich Grabbe**

Extensive exploration about the life of Christian Dietrich Grabbe had great importance for the process of my work. I believe that the link between a personage and his professional and creative achievements is inseparable. It is crucial to comprehend which aspects influenced and shaped a personality. Only after, it seems reasonable to give a context and genuinely understand.

Christian Dietrich Grabbe was a German dramatist from the beginning of the 19th century. Grabbe's position in German literature now seems established. For a long, his work was underrated and seemed without great significance. Even nowadays, the life and work of this German dramatist are not broadly recognizable. There is little chance that Grabbe will ever be extremely popular. Factors that caused lack of acknowledgment are firm and undeniable: Grabbe's unfavorably complex character, destructive life, difficulties to express creatively, find accurate language - caused his work to be insufficiently solid and consistent.

Without any doubt, Grabbe's dramatic work was overshadowed by his troublesome life. Further insufficient professional appreciation worsened his already disturbed lifestyle. Grabbe started to drink at a very early age, and during his whole life, he was facing issues with alcoholism. This addictive disorder then contributed further to his mental unbalance.

According to many sources, Christian Dietrich Grabbe had an eccentric personality and turbulent life, followed by constant ups and downs. After shorter successful episodes, difficult moments occurred, full of bitterness and frustration.

It is challenging to classify Grabbe from a literary point of view. After long neglect, Grabbe became a research topic for many literary critics in the previous century (especially mid 20th century). In terms of writing style, Grabbe was "*caught between the classic and the modern*"<sup>1</sup>. It seems like he did not have great success in breaking and overcoming traditional influences and approaches, though he was trying. Without consistency in writing style and technique, "*he experimented with the many dramatic modes of his time and tried to fill them with his own particular themes. A man of extremes of moods, vacillating between despair and overwhelming self-confidence, his outputs consists of a series of new beginnings, ever new attempts to find his own manner and style*"<sup>2</sup>.

Precisely because of these literary inspections and wandering, his works give the impression of being inconsistent. The closest attempts to create a new form are Grabbe's historical dramas. Grabbe's unpopularity among theatre artistry and productions comes from text adaptation challenges, both during his lifetime and nowadays. A. W. Hornsey, in his *Idea and Reality in the Dramas of Christian Dietrich Grabbe*, shared his point of view about Grabbe's writing style and adjusting text for the theatre performances. His opinion is that Grabbe's plays require rigorous re-writing and cutting besides technical difficulties caused by numerous drastic changes, megalomaniac and massive scenes. Dramatists' contemporaries and critics often pointed out that he was not aware of the limitations of the theatre. He remained undecided whether theater or reading public was his target. Grabbe was mindful of this challenge, which was noted in his letters to Kettembeil in 1927, where he wrote: "*that a drama must be theatrical and produceable*"<sup>3</sup>. Carried by his unsettled temperament and thoughts, he later wrote to Menzel that "*he demands that the theatre should adapt itself to poet*"<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholls, 1961, pg. 11

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pg. 11

<sup>3</sup> Hornsay, 1966, pg. 8

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, pg. 8

Afterward, to Immermann, Grabbe declared "*that his talents were more dramatic than theatrical.*"<sup>5</sup> The only play produced and performed while he was living was *Don Juan and Faust*, in his native city, Detmold, once, without repeating.

Grabbe did not receive the desired acknowledgment in his lifetime, but he pretentiously predicted that his personage and work would be appreciated in upcoming times and after his death. Regarding new and upcoming artistic formations, A.W. Hornsey wrote that "*The Naturalists, however, were interested in his work. They admired his short, impressionistic scenes and his hatred of social indifference, his brutal honesty, his realistic view of history were things they could understand.*"<sup>6</sup>

During the era of National-Socialism in Germany, Grabbe's work was rediscovered through publications because of his lifetime expressions of patriotic and national viewpoints. However, critics of that era of German history did not see the relevant and vital reasons for discussing parallels, similarities in ideology, and political themes.

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<sup>5</sup> Hornsey, 1966, pg. 8

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, pg. 4

## **II.I Biography**

Important sources about Grabbe's life are exchanged letters he wrote to his parents while studying, his first publisher Georg Ferdinand Kettembeil, and dramatist and novelist Karl Immermann. His contemporary, Heinrich Heine, gave an exciting review and description of Grabbe and his life through his student memoirs. Detailed insight into Grabbe's life can be found in two biographical studies written soon after his short life ended. Those studies, written by Grabbe's friends, are considered the most reliable and important ones. The first is by Eduard Duller, written in 1838, and the second, in 1855, written by Karl Ziegler. Sometime after, when a new wave of interest in Grabbe encountered, Alfred Bergman wrote a study, which brought Grabbe's work and life even closer to understanding. A.W. Horsney (1966), Roger A. Nicholls (1969), Roy C. Cowen (1972), and Maurice Edwards (2015), with the most up-to-date observations, are later authors and critics whose publications were essential for my research.

Grabbe was born on December 11th in small Detmold, the capital city of the principality of Lippe, an independent state of Westfalia. Grabbe was the only child of his parents, tolerant Lutherans. They were working-class people without educated ancestry, an ordinary and modest family.

Father was a humble standing prison guard. The family lived in an apartment which was part of the prison complex. These surroundings and circumstances were, beyond any doubt, cruel and harsh for a sensitive boy, his growing up and development. Little Grabbe spent most of his early years in such an environment. The family lived in modesty, but his parents made great sacrifices for his education and had a wish for him to become part of the priesthood.

During his school years in Detmold, Grabbe was interested in history and geography, less in classical languages, but he enjoyed reading.



In the adolescent period, when only 15, Grabbe wrote his first drama – *Theodora*. Unfortunately, the manuscript didn't come to approval by the publishing company in Leipzig and was returned without any explanation. This text is, sadly, lost and remains unknown. The second one, *Der Erbprinz (The Prince's Heir)* had the same destiny. He might have incorporated elements of those two dramas in his first important play *Herzog Theodor von Gothland (Duke Theodor of Gothland)*. Nevertheless, dramatic arts occupied the attention of young Grabbe, and he was very enthusiastic about his frequent visits to the local theatre.

In Gymnasium days, Grabbe discovered Shakespeare, whom he admired and who became his avowed model. He expressed his appreciation in a letter he wrote to his father. Book of Tragedies of the great English playwright, Grabbe described as "*the first book of the world, valued by many more than the Bible*".<sup>7</sup> The English Dramatist and his work indeed influenced young Grabbe. Later on, following his elusive attitudes, Grabbe claimed autonomy of Shakespeare's manner and influence. In 1827, Grabbe wrote *Über die Shakspearo-Manie (Shakespeare-mania)*, an essay, critic and reaction on one-of-the-greatest-dramatist' work.

*"As a boy the excitability and changeableness of his temperament was already evident. Ziegler reports on his violent changes of mood, cast down by opposition and yet inclined to be overweening and extravagant in success. At times he was very independent and kept his thoughts to himself, on other occasions he was like a plaything of the winds, easily led and convinced by others. Sometimes mild and easy-going, he could become very arrogant and assertive, especially if he felt he was not getting enough recognition. Although Grabbe made friends at Gymnasium, he led an isolated life. He was never sure of himself and was over-eager to impress."*<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Cowen, 1972, pg. 16

<sup>8</sup> Nicholls, 1969, pg.18

Parents were very devoted to their fragile and talented only son, and their connection was strong. Furthermore, they invested what they had to support Grabbe in his academic journey. In May 1820, Grabbe enrolled at the University of Leipzig, intending to study law. As well, he aspired to become an archivist of the Lippe archive. A young student was impressed by the big city and wasn't very devoted to attending lectures. Even though he made a few friends, he enjoyed his isolation. He continued with the same interests, mostly humanities, reading, attending concerts, seeing theatre performances. He also dedicated his time to working on a manuscript of *Herzog Theodor von Gothland* (*Duke Theodor of Gothland*). In Leipzig, Grabbe met Georg Ferdinand Kettembeil, a crucial figure for his dramatist career – his first publisher. Wandering around the city and social detachment also had negative aspects, so Grabbe continued with a bad habit – consuming a lot of alcohol and he was often visiting brothels and prostitutes.

In 1822, Grabbe left Leipzig and relocated to the newly founded University of Berlin, a place-to-be, literary center with many young creatives and thinkers. At the same university, G.F.W.Hegel was teaching the philosophy of history. Direct connection and influence are absent, and there is nothing "*Hegelian*"<sup>9</sup> in the work of Grabbe. Studies did not occupy his attention, but theatre visits broadened Grabbe's perspectives and benefited his creativity. In 1822, Grabbe completed his first known drama – *Herzog Theodor von Gothland* (*Duke Theodor of Gothland*). Young dramatist entered artistic and literary circles, and his piece was causing controversy whenever it was read. He was different and eye-catching, and this new attention excited him. The attention did not last for long, and his *Gothland* didn't meet massive general acceptance.

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<sup>9</sup> Cowen, 1972, pg. 17

*"He was also introduced to "society" but his lack of finesse, his appearance, his bad-manners and his outspokenness were unwelcome".<sup>10</sup>*

Grabbe's contemporary was Heinrich Heine, who also lived in Berlin at that time. Heine sympathized with Grabbe and publicly compared his talent and creativity with Shakespeare's. However, he also stressed unfavorable aspects:

*"He has the same sudden effects, the same natural sounds with which Shakespeare frightens, moves and charms us. But all his good qualities are obscured by a lack of taste, cynicism, and wildness that exceed the maddest and most disgusting things a brain has ever produced. It is however, not a sickness, like fever or idiocy, for example, that produced those things, but rather the mental intoxication of genius".<sup>11</sup>*

Persistent and with belief in his *Gothland*, in autumn 1822, Grabbe sent a copy to Ludwig Tieck, author from Dresden, who replied with enthusiasm and optimism. After letter exchanges with him and wishing to pursue a theatre career, the young dramatist decided to try his luck in Dresden. Ludwig Tieck was engaged with a theatre in Dresden, and Grabbe desperately wanted to be a part of his group as an actor. Tieck did not find his appearance or voice satisfying enough for theatre performances. Grabbe overestimated himself or wasn't aware of his true potentials and flaws.

In unfavorable circumstances but convinced that theatre and writing is his vocation, in autumn 1822, the second piece was finished – *Scherz, Satire, Ironie und tiefere Bedeutung (Jest, Satire, Irony and Deeper Significance)*. This play contains motives and directions that will be recognized and repeated in most of Grabbe's future plays - a satire of society, mediocrity, mockery of his contemporaries. He did not leave himself out either. He stated that lack of talent he masks with his eccentricity, whether irony or suspicion.

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<sup>10</sup> Hornsay, 1966, pg. 18

<sup>11</sup> Cowen, 1972, pg. 18

*"Grabbe is, of course, attacking many of his contemporaries and particularly their Romantic cult of genius and eccentricity. Seeing Grabbe, however only as a man of self-righteous toward the faults of others and blind, or at least indulgent, toward his own would be a serious error. He actually fluctuates between self-pity and self-ridicule, between messianic zeal and cynicism, between adulation of greatness and indulgence baseness. Indeed he did not take anything seriously all the time, least of all his own person. If much in his manner, actions and speech was, in fact, only a pose, it did not stem from either naïve or dishonest view of the world or himself".<sup>12</sup>*

After rejections, Grabbe would comfort himself with arrogant claims that those occurred because he was not from a big city. He was always ashamed of his inferior background and humble birth - Detmold was personification for lethargy, where he did not belong. He desperately wanted recognition in big cities and was frustrated about not receiving it; he believed the masses would appreciate him in times after his death. Due to professional failures, disappointment in theatre, bitter and drained, Grabbe was forced to return to his hometown, Detmold.

Fortunately, steadier years were in front. In Detmold, he took an examination in law and dedicated himself to a new practice. Since history was the topic of his interests, he desired to become an archivist of Lippe. Even after the insistence of influential, previous archivist Christian Gottlieb Clostermeier, Grabbe did not reach the position. Soon after, he became a part of the military and was very proud of its association. Besides certain professional and financial stability, it was also beneficial for his creativity and future writing – his battle dramas. While figuring out professional ways, Grabbe attempted to find happiness in his private life. Sadly, he had no favorable outcome in this sphere of life either. After a short engagement,

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<sup>12</sup> Cowen, 1972, pg. 21

then a rejection of Henriette Mayer, a woman he truly loved, he connected with Louise Christiane Clostermeier, ten years older, daughter of mentioned Lippe archivist, a woman of strong will. Unfortunate circumstances regarding love and family life drew him to depression. From 1823 to 1827 was the lowest point of his creativity, and he barely made any artistic effort. He only finished *Nannete und Maria* at the end of 1826. Grabbe was nostalgic about the life he led in the bigger cities. Engagement in law practice and the military provided a balance, but they were without doubt an escape from the dissatisfaction of the small community of Detmold.

*"He seems to have missed the stimulation and recognition he had enjoyed as a student in the company of Heine and others. Indeed, Grabbe's inability to write under the unpropitious circumstances in Detmold indicates that the environment and public recognition played a greater role in the pattern of his creativity than they do in the legend depicting him as an isolated, misunderstood, but self-assured genius".*<sup>13</sup>

After many betrayed expectations, reconnection with an old friend from Leipzig will revive and encourage Grabbe's hopes in dramatic creation and rise in literary circles. Namely, in 1827, Kettembeil inherited a publishing house and offered Grabbe to publish his works. Enthusiastic Grabbe sent to Kettembeil his first four works: *Herzog Theodor von Gothland; Scherz, Satire, Ironie und tiefere Bedeutung; Nannette und Maria*; and unfinished *Marius und Sulla*. In letters exchange with Kettembeil, regarding publication, Grabbe also mentioned works in progress - *Don Juan und Faust* and examination of famous Shakespeare and his works – a piece that was later included under the title – *über die Shakspeare-manie*.

Without any supervision or recommendation, or support from someone already acknowledged in the literary world, but with the luck of Kettembeil's publishing house - suddenly, Grabbe and his work became a subject of conversation in literary circles.

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<sup>13</sup> Cowen, 1972, pg. 24

After a lengthy writing pause, Grabbe wrote *Don Juan und Faust* in 1828 – the only play performed during his lifetime. Since dramatist never found his unique writing language, this play stands for transition work. Same can be claimed for *Kaiser Friedrich Barbarossa* (Emperor Friedrich Barbarossa) and *Kaiser Heinrich der Sechste*, (Emperor Henry the sixth) - dramas written for *Hohenstaufen* cycle. Dramas are following those rulers from Hohenstaufen dynasty. The initial idea was to write six dramas, but Grabbe wrote only those two. In 1831, he wrote *Napoleon oder die hundert Tage* (Napoleon or The Hundred Days) - the drama considered as his professional and career zenith. Even though the subject lies in politics, the play did not have political connotations and wasn't a ground for expressing political ideologies.

Years in Detmold were overall miserable, and besides several dramas he wrote, anxiety undoubtedly influenced his artistic progress. Regardless of his health issues and overall unhappy life, Grabbe still had an office job. However, he finally resigned from his position in 1834.

Nevertheless, Grabbe still had some faith in pursuing a dramatist career. Ill and disabled, he first went to Frankfurt with a manuscript of his *Hannibal* and offered it for publishing to an old friend Kettembeil. After Kettembeil's rejection and end of the friendship, Grabbe was en route to Düsseldorf. He made a professional connection with Karl Immermann, director of a local theatre, *Düsseldorf Stadttheater*, who paid for Grabbe's room and gave certain professional supervision. Immermann advised Grabbe to adjust *Hannibal*, and in 1835 piece was published by Carl Georg Schreiner. With Schreiner, Grabbe published new work *Aschenbrödel* (*Cinderella*) and reviews of local theatre productions written for local newspaper, *Düsseldorf Fremdenblatt*. Subsequently, Grabbe worked on the piece *Kosciuszko*, about Polish revolutionary hero and had ideas about Alexander the Great and Christ. *Kosciuszko* remained unfinished, and only fragments are known. In Düsseldorf, he also wrote *Der Cid* (*Der Cid*), for a new friend, composer Norbert Burgmüller, who accidentally died and never performed it. Even in this productive period and under the guidance of Immermann, Grabbe continued to live dissolute life and harm his health.

Soon, his acquaintanceship with Immermann, his last patron, was over. The last creative efforts Grabbe directed towards writing *Die Hermannsschlacht* (*Hermann's battle*). At the beginning of 1836, Grabbe seriously neglected his health, he was drinking heavily, and his debts were unpayable. Under those depressing and unfortunate circumstances, Grabbe was forced to return to despised Detmold.

The first few months Grabbe spent in the hotel. He had very little strength but a wish to finalize *Die Hermannsschlacht*. Incapable of taking care of himself, Grabbe had no choice but to ask his wife for a comeback home, which she refused at first. On September 12, 1836, Grabbe died in his mother's arms. There were assumptions that the cause of death was syphilis complications rather **than** severe digestion issues, but what definitely contributed and weakened him was his struggle with alcoholism.

## II.II About Christian Dietrich Grebbe's style

During his studies, Grabbe exchanged letters with his family. This correspondence is valuable for a closer understanding of Grebbe's personality and writing style.

Namely, he was sharing with his parents only what was pleasant to hear and not fully honest about his feelings and thoughts. From the writing style of those letters, it can be understood and concluded that, *"he jumps hastily from topic to topic making no attempts to organize his thoughts or develop an argument. It is, of course, sad that he does not even attempt to explain his feelings to his family. But the results have its own attractions. Thoughts come into his head and go straight down on paper."*<sup>14</sup>

*"No single play can represent him. Instead we have nine or ten extraordinarily interesting dramas, all full of ideas and brilliant situations, but no one of which is totally satisfactory in itself or does full justice to the remarkable possibilities Grabbe had within him".*<sup>15</sup>

Grabbe's literary opus was never consistent, and he never showed direction towards one philosophy, genre, or style. He never wanted to write conventionally, and he struggled to express, present, and shape his creativity in new dramatic forms.

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<sup>14</sup> Nicholls, 1966, pg. 21

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, pg. 12



### **II.III All Christian Dietrich Grabbe's works**

**(1816 Theodora)**

**(1816 Der Erbprinz)**

**1822 Herzog Theodor von Gothland** (Duke Theodor of Gothland)

**1822 Scherz, Satire, Ironie und tiefere Bedeutung** (Comedy, Satire, Irony and Deeper meaning, also found under title Jest, Satire, Irony & Deeper Significance)

**1823 Nannete und Maria**

**1827 Abhandlung über die Shakespearo-Manie** (Essay on Shakespeare Mania)

**1828 Don Juan und Faust** (Don Juan and Faust)

**1829 Kaiser Friedrich Barbarossa** (Emperor Friedrich Barbarossa)

**1829 Kaiser Heinrich der Sechste** (Emperor Henry the sixth)

**1830 Napoleon oder Die hundert Tage** (Napoleon or The Hundred Days)

**1835 Aschenbrödel** (Cinderella)

**1835 Hannibal**

**1835 Der Cid**

**1836 Die Hermannsschlacht** (Hermann's battle)

## **II.IV Famous works**

### ***Herzog Theodor von Gothland***

*(Duke Theodor of Gotland)*

Gothland was Grabbe's first important piece. He started writing it in Gymnasium days and finished it in his studying period. With Gothland, Grabbe introduced himself to German literary circles but there was little approval and understanding for Grabbe's writing. Namely, his contemporaries were terrified by Grabbe's brutality, cynicism and amorality he presented in this tragedy. After some rejections, it was finally published in 1822. Kettembeil, Grabbe's friend published Gothland as altered and censored version. "*Set in Sweden at an unspecified time during the Middle Ages, Gothland follows the descent into nihilism and amorality of its title character, Duke Theodor von Gothland.*"<sup>16</sup> The play portrays decadency of Gothland - tricked by his rival Berdoa, he will begin his cruel acts, commit murders, question and despise family, and on the way lose hopes and the meaning of life.

### ***Scherz, Satire, Ironie und tiefere Bedeutung***

*(Comedy, Satire, Irony and Deeper meaning)*

This text is the second notable work, where criticism of society was established as one of Grabbe's subjects in his plays. Opposite to tragic *Gothland*, *Joke, Satire, Irony and deeper significance* is a comedy, in three acts. The plot is following Devil, brought on Earth. Besides him as a key character, action is also centered around a beautiful noblewoman Liddy and her love choices. Devil follows all these events. Through this plot, which somehow seems conventional, Grabbe presented satire of the whole world.

The play gives severe, satirical attacks against upper and working-class, journalists and teachers. It is a revolt and mockery against the literature of that time, religion, philosophy.

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<sup>16</sup> Heady, 2009, pg. 29

Without any suppression, Grabbe criticized Romanticism, acknowledged writers Goethe, Shiller, and many more, Biedermeier ideal of femininity, even women generally. Overall, the play is full of absurdity, paradox, and explicit parts. That goes to the extent that Grabbe, an author, appears just before the play ends – and breaks the illusion of theatre. The play's humor is undeniable, even though it fluctuates between fine irony and disgust. Grabbe wrote the play when he was only twenty-one and already expressed a pessimistic view of the world. *Jest, Satire, Irony & Deeper Significance* is Grabbe's most performed play.

### ***Napoleon oder Die hundert Tage***

*(Napoleon or the Hundred Days)*

It is considered one of Grabbe's most extensive dramas, written in five acts. As the title suggests, the plot is about Napoleon. It follows his return from exile on the island Elba, his road to Paris, and his ultimate defeat in the Battle of Waterloo by the English Duke Wellington and the Prussian General Blücher. Grabbe embodied historical facts and real events in the play. Though with a historical and political focus, Grabbe did not use his writing to express his political beliefs. The drama portrays events that occurred, perceived through Grabbe's dramaturgical prism. In terms of writing style, it was experimental. Dramatist from Detmold „avoided continuous action by the use of a series of vividly depicted and contrasting scenes“.<sup>17</sup> Piece has a critical aspect and does not hide the horrors of war. Like many other plays, *Napoleon* has dramaturgical difficulties, which is problematic for theatre adaptation.

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<sup>17</sup> Britannica, 2021

### **III. *Don Juan and Faust*, introduction to the play**

Due to previously elaborated causes, Christian Dietrich Grabbe did not receive desired attention and appreciation during his lifetime. One of the noticeable moments of his career was the theatre performance of *Don Juan and Faust* in Hoftheater on 28<sup>th</sup> of March 1829, in his hometown, Detmold. The music of Albert Lortzing followed the play. It was the only play staged during his short life.

The idea about connecting those two great characters was following Grabbe from 1823, but work was slowly progressing due to various life circumstances and the development of other plays. Dramatist from Detmold finished the manuscript in August 1828, and was finally published by Grabbe's friend Kettembeil in the following spring, 1829.

It is essential to present a specific background for creating the tragedy. After wandering around in bigger German cities in student days, Grabbe returned to his native town Detmold. Some financial stability through law practice and his position in the military was granted, but he was unhappy with other aspects of his life, beyond any doubt. He was facing a lack of creative drive, but an artist in him was patiently waiting. In this crossroad period of his life, Grabbe questioned his artistic and existential values. He wanted both a life of an artist and a respected upper-class citizen. Being aware of the previous lack of appreciation among literary circles and the public, Grabbe tried in *Don Juan and Faust* to write a play that would entertain and satisfy a wider audience. Also, knowing his theatrical limits to a certain level, he hoped this play would be easier to stage and successful in theatres. However, in terms of writing style and theme, *Don Juan and Faust* is considered for transitional play. As Grabbe never found ultimate writing language and was always trying different approaches, this piece wasn't an exception.

*“The romanticism emphasized the individual, the subjective, the irrational, the imaginative, the personal, the spontaneous, the emotional, the visionary, and the transcendental.”*<sup>18</sup>

Oscar Mandel explains in his introduction (chapter: Don Juan as Titan(1829)) to forthcoming Maurice Edwards’s translation of *don Juan and Faust* that - “No work better exemplifies the Romantic need to break through limits, and the Romantic disdain for regular forms”.<sup>19</sup> Grabbe was farewelling from Romanticism influences and stepping into new ways of expression. Regarding that - it seems like it’s directly manifested in the main ccharacters. In Faust we find core values of Romanticism and elements of Idealism and Don Juan - rejected all ideals and believes in pleasures on Earth. Both creative conditions and Grabbe’s state of mind can be described as elusive and dissonant, which is surely embodied in the whole play. Play stands for his “only genuine “drama of ideas”, with its polarity of idealism and materialism, of the spiritual and sensual in man”,<sup>20</sup> which I examined in following chapters.

Maurice Edwards translated and quoted Christian Dietrich Grabbe and how he described his work: “The names Don Juan and Faust stands for two tragic tales, the first that signifies the downfall of overly Sensual nature, the second that of overly Supernatural nature of the man – we have in the two main personages before us, the two extremes of mankind.”<sup>21</sup>

As the title itself is saying, the play focuses more on the characters of Don Juan and Faust and not on actions, but in the core – it deals with the fundamental problem of existence. Written in four acts, this tragedy with elements of comedy follows two titans in their journey of self-acknowledgment.

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<sup>18</sup> Britannica, 2021

<sup>19</sup> Mandel, 1993, pg. 329

<sup>20</sup> Edwards, 2015, pg. 169

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, pg. 170

### **III.I Summary of the plot**

#### **Dramatis Personae**

|                               |                               |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| The Governor, don Gusman      | Signor Negro                  |
| Donna Anna, his daughter      | Leporello, Don Juan's servant |
| Don Octavio                   | Lisette, Donna Anna's maid    |
| Don Juan, a Spanish grandee   | Gasparo, the Governor's aide  |
| Doctor Faust                  | A Priest                      |
| A Knight                      | First Gnome                   |
| Signor Rubio, Chief of Police | Second Gnome                  |

Guests, servants, policeman, gnomes, and devils

#### **Synopsis of the Scenes**

##### **Act I**

- 1.Vicinity of the Piazza di Spagna, Rome.
- 2.Dr. Faust's study on the Aventine Hill, Rome.

##### **Act II**

- 1.The Garden of the Governor's residence, Rome.
- 2.Salon in the Governor's residence.

##### **Act III**

- 1.Square before one of the Rome's northern gates.
- 2.A chamber in Faust's Magic Castle on the peak of the Mont Blanc.
- 3.A wild region on the Mont Blanc

##### **Act IV**

- 1.A graveyard near Rome
- 2.Mine shafts under Mont Blanc.
- 3.A room in Faust's Magic Castle.
- 4.A hall in Don Juan's residence, Rome

*Don Juan and Faust* is tragedy written in four acts. The first act opens with a scene in Rome, near the Spanish embassy, in front of Don Gusman's palace. In the very beginning, Don Juan and Leporello discuss beautiful Donna Anna, and the Spanish lover immediately becomes interested and falls in love. Insightfully, Don Juan devises a plan to win Donna Anna's heart, regardless of her engagement to Don Octavio. As part of the plan, he fabricates a fight, causes a stir, even hurts Leporello, intending to meet Donna Anna, Don Octavio, Don Gusman (the Governor). Following by lies, he introduces himself as an attentive defender who highly appreciates his beloved homeland and explains the disturbance and the fight as Faust's attempt to kidnap Donna Anna, which he tried to stop. Grateful, Don Gusman invites Don Juan to his daughter's wedding, and they start the persecution of Faust. To get more information about Donna Anna, how and where Don Juan can approach her, Leporello connects with Lisette, the maid of Donna Anna, and she reveals that Anna will be in the garden tomorrow morning.

Scene two is a switch to Faust's room in Rome. After a long monologue and expression of life dissatisfaction, Faust searches for nonearthly assistance. He summons the Devil, who appears through Black Knight, and promises Faust that he will show him how he could have found happiness. They sign the pact and go on a trip through the cosmos.

Scene one from Act two follows Don Juan's plan to win Donna Anna, so Don and Leporello are expecting her in the garden of the Governor's palace. Before their eye-to-eye rendezvous, she confesses out loud that she has fallen for him but also that she won't leave her soon-to-be husband. Don Juan appears after hearing this aside and tries to seduce and conquer her. Still, Donna Anna rejects him, claiming she will stay loyal, emphasizing honor as the most important merit. Don Juan hides when hearing Don Octavio is joining Anna. There aside and hidden, Don Juan expresses his hatred towards upper class values - represented through Don Octavio and decides to kill him. Further, he will elaborate on the incident with Leporello.

At the end of the scene, the Dark Knight appears with Faust, who is frustrated with their so-far cooperation. To ease the tension, Dark Knight shows the picture of Donna Anna to Faust.

Faust immediately becomes interested, wants to win her over, and demands Knight's help in achieving that.

In the second scene of this act, we are at the wedding of Donna Anna and Octavio, which takes place in the Salon in the Governor's residence. Introducing us with celebration, Signor Rubio and Signor Negro are leading the ridiculous, somewhat sarcastic conversation. First, Don Juan and Leporello appears and rejuvenated Faust and Dark Knight soon after. Faust reveals his plan – to kidnap Donna Anna and take her to the Magic Castle on Mont Blanc, which Dark Knight must create meanwhile, with his superpowers. Continuing with his plan, after a deliberately provoked incident between Leporello and Don Octavio, Don Juan kills the groom. Then comes Juan's false consolation to Donna Anna for Don Octavio's death, which Faust will interrupt. He kidnaps Anna and takes her to the magic castle. Before joining them, the Dark Knight exposes the castle's location to Don Juan. Desperate about events, the Governor, Don Gusman, challenges Don Juan to avenge Don Octavio.

The first scene of the third act begins with the fight between Don Juan and Don Gusman at the square before one of Rome's northern gates, where Gusman loses his life. Right before he dies, Gusman begs Juan to save Anna from Faust and put her in a monastery. Don Juan stays true to himself, his beliefs, intentions, and continues with his plan of winning Donna Anna. Hence, he refuses Gusman's request.

The next scene takes place in Faust's Magic Castle on Mont Blanc. Though unimpressed with the castle arrangement, Faust concludes that love is the ultimate phenomenon that matters. He puts all of his strength to attract, even forces Donna Anna to like him. After confronting him and mentioning his marriage, Faust kills his wife with a magic word. In exchanging life attitudes and actions, Faust reveals to Donna Anna that Don Juan killed her father.

The last scene of the third act follows Don Juan and Leporello on their journey to Faust's Magic Castle. As a matter of fact - Don Juan's journey of fulfillment of his values and beliefs is personified through Donna Anna. Dual protagonists meet in the wild region of Mont Blanc. After confronting their life perspectives, Faust uses his superhuman powers and displaces away Don Juan and Leporello.



The fourth act opens with Don Juan and Leporello, unexpectedly found in a graveyard near Rome. There we discover the statue of Don Gusman. Don Juan continues to express his fearless thoughts, supporting his strive and plans another pursue of Donna Anna. Also, he organizes with Leporello a banquet and boldly invites the statue of Don Gusman.

Scene two occurs in a mine shafts under Mont Blanc, where Faust expresses his great pain over Donna Anna's rejection and overall misery. Accompanied by the gnomes who mock him, Faust even requests help from them – a painful potion to forget the pain he feels towards Donna Anna.

In scene three of the fourth act, we are back in the Magic Castle. The scene starts with Faust's monologue about self-acknowledgment, followed by an awareness of love failure. Donna Anna expresses hatred towards Faust and decisively rejects him. Filled with misery and rage, Faust kills her. Afterward comes his great repent and grief. Faust realizes how he could have found happiness and finally settles with the Dark Knight – he will surrender in one hour. Lastly, he only wishes to inform Don Juan about Anna's death, hoping Don Juan will suffer as well.

In the last scene, the Dark Knight appears in the majestic hall of Don Juan's residence and starts with his winning, full of pleasure monologue. Don Juan and Leporello appear in good spirits. Suddenly, Signor Rubio and Signor Negro arrive to arrest Juan for the murders he committed. Don Juan expels them from his residence in an arrogant and assaulting manner. Soon Faust comes, declaring Anna's death to Don Juan. Realizing that he is the only one suffering and guilty for his misery, Faust surrenders to the Devil. Unaffected, Juan continues with celebration. Subsequently, Don Gusman's statue comes to the banquet calling Don Juan to repent for his actions. But there is nothing to repent for – Don Juan remains honest and loyal to his ideology and belief system until the end. Lastly, the Dark Knight abducts Juan and takes him to Faust. They disappear in flames.

### III.II Brief description of characters

As the play is centered on the characters of Don Juan a Faust and their parallel and extreme life perspectives, other characters are supporting their processes and helping in the achievement of their self-knowledge.

#### Don Juan

Borrowed from previous authors, he doesn't vary largely from the traditional figure of Don Juan. Initial personality and manners are the same. Widely known lover and winner of women hearts, Juan is self-assured and arrogant noble man. Grabbe gave new aspects of Spanish lover – he is pleasure driven hedonist on his way of self-acknowledgement, trying to avoid monotony of life at any cost.

#### Faust

Likewise, already known from European literature, famous German magician has similar fundamental characteristics, which Grabbe altered and presented a new dimension. Faust, *"that prince of melancholy"*<sup>22</sup>, how Juan calls him, is seeker of metaphysical truth. Through Faust, Grabbe showed the decadency of an idealist. On his journey of self-fulfillment, he would experience nothing but pain and misery.

**The Dark Knight** is the personification of the Devil and Grabbe borrowed the character from Goethe (Mephistopheles, in Goethe's version) The Dark Knight is introduced as *"dressed in the style of sixteenth-century costume - all in black"*.<sup>23</sup> He follows Faust throughout the whole play and he expressed nothing but cruelty, hatred and malice. The Dark Knight will conclude how neither Faust's or Don Juan's perception of living/mode of existence is right and sufficient.

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<sup>22</sup> Grabbe, 1829, pg. 338

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, pg. 347

**Donna Anna** is a Spanish noblewoman, daughter of Don Gusman, Spanish Governor. Donna Anna is the central female character and she somehow holds the dramatical structure.

*"Fidelity is eternal; love is mortal"*<sup>24</sup> - Anna stands for traditional, family merits, she is loyal to her fiancé, but she doesn't love him. She falls in love with Don Juan, but her beliefs and morality are stronger than her love. Regarding Faust, she just sees terror and fear in his acts and behavior.

**The Governor, Don Gusman** is also used as a critic and mock of social atmosphere. Accenting his honor and patriotism, he is a victim of his convictions. He stands for rigorous traditionalist, highly valuing national characteristics.

**Don Octavio** is Donna Anna's fiancé, a Spanish nobleman. One of the instruments for stressing hatred towards social conventions and upper-class conducts is done through Don Octavio's character. He reflects all that Don Juan despises and disrespects. As a character, he's an elitist, emphasizing national and family ethics. There is nothing malicious in Octavio and only he has genuine and pure feelings for Donna Anna.

**Leporello**, Don Juan's servant and actually the only one successful in love and achieving what he desired for. He personifies the ideal which Dark Knight suggests to Faust – to be just like other ordinary people, to *"sleep, eat, drink and be merry"*<sup>25</sup>. And Leporello succeeds in that. Leporello is Juan's loyal companion, but also a critic of Don's actions and behavior. With the absence of anything of higher understanding and questioning, Leporello is instinctive, driven by elemental needs. He fluctuates between having and not having a moral compass. To protect himself and reach a low but desirable level of success, Leporello is ready to cheat, deceive and steal, even from his Master. He treats Lisette like Don Juan treats women, but without deeper significance.

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<sup>24</sup> Grabbe, 1829, pg. 355

<sup>25</sup> Grabbe, 1829, pg. 358

**Lisette**, Donna Anna's maid appears only in the beginning. With Anna, they are women representatives of the play. Naïve and with pure heart, Leporello and Don Juan use her as a source of information about Anna's activities. Lisette doesn't give us a sense of any sophistication, and the most basic human impulses also drive her. She just wants to get married and to belong to someone. Maybe it is not even important to whom.

Grabbe presents her as a quite single-dimension character and even describes her only through her physical characteristics. Stressing her attributes, the author utilizes her to emphasize Don Juan's perception of women and his own philosophy.

**Signor Rubio, Signor Negro** are Italian noblemen and representatives of police. Their characters bring comic relief, but Grabbe gave us satiric revision and criticism of authority and social establishment through them. He showed how the structure and the system are full of corruption, how the police are not doing their job correctly, and how easy it is to intimidate them. This critic is given mostly through Don Juan's attitudes and correlation with Signor Rubio and Negro.

### III.III Analysis of the text and interpretation of characters Don Juan and Faust

*“To understand the play, the structure of the action is less important than understanding what Grabbe made of his heroes, and we must examine them in some details”<sup>26</sup>*

Knowing their background and what those strong names stand for, a question about the connection between Don Juan and Faust appear naturally. In his drama, Christian Dietrich Grabbe was precisely focused on their personages and what they represent, emphasizing their differences. The author found a link in their heroism, determination, and boldness to fight for their individuality and confront lethargy and stagnation which surrounds them. Don Juan and Faust exemplify two – side by side, parallel lives, with the absence of genuine essence, which could anyhow disrupt their charted, selfish individual life paths. They never abandon their belief system. Their worlds can't be shaken and undoubtedly not redirected by the existence of one another.

The play is full of individual scenes and magnificent monologues where the main characters explain their beliefs and are, as Nicholls defines, *“commentators of their own existence”*.<sup>27</sup> Grabbe even underlined it, with characters having their isolated moments, where they are directly addressing thoughts to readers or spectators. But when together, Don Juan and Faust, in their rare and short clashes, barely communicate and exchange ideas. They seem to give up, and a proper confrontation is missing. In terms of confronting each other, it is elemental to highlight that Faust represents superhuman, while Don Juan remains only human. At the end of act III, a conflict between Don Juan and Faust is essentially irrelevant. Faust, the mighty magician, could easily use his powers over only human Don Juan and have him killed in a moment. Which he never does. Superhuman Faust could be the victor effortlessly if there is only a legitimate battle. Hence, Don Juan and Faust are not even equivalent fighters.

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<sup>26</sup> Nicholls, 1969, pg. 129

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, pg. 126

The lack of substantial conflict between legends like Faust and Don Juan is dramatically problematic. The play was the only one performed during Grabbe's lifetime, and it is considered relatively easy for stage adaptation (among his other plays). The absence of conflict represents a theatrical flaw, which can be why this play is not widely recognized and is often performed in theatres. Nevertheless, inner conflicts in Faust and inner harmonies in Don Juan, their consistent philosophies, their inability to deviate themselves awoke my interest in this play.

### **III.IV Tangible versus Unattainable (reality versus idea)**

Don Juan and Faust are juxtaposed, with an aim to present how neither of their belief system are ultimate and to underline their flaws. As they are both known from previous authors, we are already familiar with the temperaments of Don Juan and Faust. But Grabbe gave them a new dimension. *"Faust is Grabbe's last dreamer and Don Juan is his first down-to-earth realist. Faust wants to conquer heaven and; Don Juan is satisfied to remain on earth and enjoy life."*

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A widely known lover, Don Juan, was winning the hearts of every woman he desired. He started with the same approach in the play, and Donna Anna is just one of them. Though he showed interest, it was only to express his life principles insensibly. Don Juan is a pleasure seeker who enjoys the moment. Down to earth, he finds delight and fulfillment in facts of existence. Intelligent and clairvoyant, he reads very well other characters and what they advocate. His comments are brutally honest, intensified with mockery, sarcasm, sometimes contempt.

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<sup>28</sup> Hornsey, 1966, pg. 68

*“Hedonism is the philosophy that pleasure is the most important pursuit of mankind, and the only thing that is good for an individual. Hedonists, therefore, strive to maximize their total pleasure (the net of any pleasure less any pain or suffering). They believe that pleasure is the only good in life, and pain is the only evil, and our life's goal should be to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. Hedonism usually pre-supposes an individualist stance, and is associated with Egoism (the claim that individuals should always seek their own good in all things).”*<sup>29</sup>

Regarding the question of human existence in certain structures, I found it important further to analyze Don Juan's attitudes and survival methods. Undoubtedly, he is part of the upper class and enjoys benefits from his wealthy surroundings. But what is interesting is that he also despises the values that the elite brings. Don Juan hates conventions and rejects any structure or system. Juan's critic and mock towards social atmosphere and appreciated values, I recognized through his attitude towards Don Octavio. That wasn't jealousy.

Don Juan ridicules Octavio's both visual and social appearance: *“leads moderate life, gives no offense, dances well, rides passably, speaks French, moves in the best circles, and may even spell correctly.”*; *“How long will the until the senor speaks of cloak and beret, of money and dowry, of procreation, childrearing, and education?”*; *“I'll swear the impending marriage has made the dry Mr. Bridegroom bold enough to drink three glasses of wine”*; *“Money, marriage and income, the pillars of his existence! What a shame there aren't machines to replace such people in the marriage bed, in church, in the fields, and in the kitchen.”*<sup>30</sup>

Don Juan refuses everything of general acceptance and considers it mediocre. He believes that there is no vitality, individuality, genuine expression. For him – that's dishonest.

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<sup>29</sup> The basics of philosophy, 2021

<sup>30</sup> Grabbe, 1829, pg 335-356

*“Do you take me for a silly pedant fettered by systems? I value beauty wherever I find it and whatever its brand. The maid makes love one way, her mistress another. Only variety lends spice to life and helps us forget how unbearable it is.”*<sup>31</sup>

Those lines from Don Juan awoke my curiosity. Here I identified aspect of him that shows existential pressure and his coping with it. Here he explained himself, why he eternally thrives, and why he chases women's hearts. He needs quantity because with it comes variety, and when having much and different - Don Juan escapes boredom. For him, heaving a goal means death and he enthusiastically waits for new challenges – hoping that moment will bring more enjoyment than the previous one. Pleasure is supreme feeling, the one repeatedly worth fighting for. *“Friend, only where it becomes endangered does life gain a little value.”*<sup>32</sup> In his search for pleasure, Don Juan craves for uncertainty and danger. Conflicts, battles, even killing create excitement for him.

*“**Existentialism** is a philosophy that emphasizes individual existence, freedom and choice. It is the view that humans define their own meaning in life, and try to make rational decisions despite existing in an irrational universe. It focuses on the question of human existence, and the feeling that there is no purpose or explanation at the core of existence. It holds that, as there is no God or any other transcendent force, the only way to counter this nothingness (and hence to find meaning in life) is by embracing existence.”*<sup>33</sup>

Juan is accomplishing himself in the tangible and visible – the physical world. Without believing in ideals, he desperately wants to escape the monotony of absurd reality. Freedom at all costs is Juan's motto until the very end. Even with given opportunity to repent for the murders he did, he believes there is nothing to repent for. Lacking moral compass and sentimentality, he

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<sup>31</sup> Grabbe, 1829, pg 339

<sup>32</sup> Cowen, 1972, pg 87

<sup>33</sup> The basics of philosophy, 2021



doesn't recognize it as harmful and unethical. He did it with one aim – to stay true to himself. Driven by spite, nothing can disturb him. Consistent to himself even in the moment of dying, his last words are: *“What I am, I will remain. I am Don Juan; if I become somebody else, I shall be nobody”*.<sup>34</sup>

Scenes with Don Juan are vibrant and funny and often full of cynicism. He gives a sense of character that found cope and survival method. Self-confident, satisfied, he achieves what he desires. Regardless, I see him as a tragic character. It is devastating to recognize the loss of all hopes and meaning of existence. I found in him the values of hedonism, which emphasizes pleasure and minimizing pain, but on the contrary, Don Juan is actually suffering anyway. His strong stance and the specific views on human existence also brought him loneliness. Usually, people who insist on their pretentious behavior are lacking something essential. Behind the mask of self-assured Don Juan, he hides his insecurities and fears. His characteristics are often recognized in people nowadays.

In all previous interpretations, **Faust** is fundamentally defined as a man of intellect. Legendary German magician was a true seeker of knowledge, but in Grabbe's version he seeks only through ideas.

*“**idealism**, in philosophy, any view that stresses the central role of the ideal or the spiritual in the interpretation of experience. It may hold that the world or reality exists essentially as spirit or consciousness, that abstractions and laws are more fundamental in reality than sensory things, or, at least, that whatever exists is known in dimensions that are chiefly mental—through and as ideas.*

*Thus, the two basic forms of idealism are metaphysical idealism, which asserts the ideality of reality, and epistemological idealism, which holds that in the knowledge process the mind can grasp only the psychic or that its objects are conditioned by their perceptibility. In its*

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<sup>34</sup> Grabbe, 1829, pg 397

*metaphysics, idealism is thus directly opposed to materialism—the view that the basic substance of the world is matter and that it is known primarily through and as material forms and processes. In its epistemology, it is opposed to realism, which holds that in human knowledge objects are grasped and seen as they really are—in their existence outside and independently of the mind.”*<sup>35</sup>

Scene 2 from Act I is entirely dedicated to Faust and his introduction. Through his magnificent monologue, Faust introduces us to his struggle. He reveals immense pessimism and lost hopes in humankind, and he *"would rather bleed under torture than rejoice in stupidity"*.<sup>36</sup> The magician points out his nostalgia and strong national ideas and how *"Only the Fatherland can make us happy: treason to prefer the foreign! I would not be Faust were I not a German!"*.<sup>37</sup> Neither Faust's senses nor mind was satisfied with the experience and knowledge he had collected so far. Feeling limitations of it, he reconsiders and questions his beliefs and concludes that an essential element is missing: *"We must break ourselves to pieces before we know what we are, what we can be and do! Horrible Fate!"*.<sup>38</sup>

Found himself in Rome, Eternal city, Faust verbalized his wishes: *"Oh Rome, I fled to you in order to embrace within myself all the joys and woes of mankind, and to satisfy my thirst in this fulfillment"*.<sup>39</sup>

Throughout the whole scene, Faust shares his beliefs and attitudes. Therefore, he states that *"history has never improved mankind"*<sup>40</sup>; that he is a genuine goal seeker; regarding his life path that *"If there is a road to Heaven, it must lead through Hell"*<sup>41</sup>, at least in his case.

Overwhelmed with despair and having plenty of questions, doubts, frustrations - Faust found himself in a dead-end. Helpless, he used superpowers to summon the Devil.

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<sup>35</sup> Britannica, 2021

<sup>36</sup> Grabbe, 1829, pg 344

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, pg 334

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, pg 345

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, pg 345

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, pg 345

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, pg 345

The Devil appeared through the Dark Knight. Faust wanted to understand the ultimate truth of life – *“to understand World and Mankind, to decipher the essence of their Being and their Purpose”*.<sup>42</sup>

Faust’s demand from the Dark Knight was to discover *“the path by which I might have found Peace and Happiness”*.<sup>43</sup> But only in theory. As an answer, the Dark Knight suggests Faust to fall in love with Donna Anna. At the very beginning, unsatisfied with the offer, Faust took his chances in getting what he wished.

Having the meaning of life as a core of the play, pain as the fundamental concept of existence is embodied in Faust. Unlike his rival, Faust is inconsistent and on a life journey. Inner dissonance leads him to reconsider all of his beliefs and accomplishments. From sublime intelligence and prudence, he shifts to lust-driven affections.

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<sup>42</sup> Grabbe, 1829, pg 349

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, pg 349

### III.V Don Juan's and Faust's relations and treatment of women

Grabbe hardly experienced any true love, care, and devotion from a woman. Some critics and bibliographers claimed that his mother had known about and even supported his alcohol addiction from a very young age. Furthermore, his marriage with Louise was an absolute failure, full of insurmountable differences, without support and understanding. Both of them were women of strong will, lacking tenderness and kindness. Grabbe also did not stand for a man easy to follow and comprehend. As those two primary relations with women were probably frustrating, Grabbe might have embodied a particularly negative perception of women in the play itself.

As the main female character, Donna Anna occupies the attention of Don Juan and Faust. Even though they represent two extremes of understanding life, they found a common interest in Donna Anna. According to Cowen, Donna Anna somehow holds the structure regarding the dramaturgical point of view, but her character and actions are not sufficient for dramatic conflict. "One of the reasons for the absence of a forceful confrontation lies in the fact that there is no tangible object or issue that could precipitate it. They are both pursuing Donna Anna, but her role is ultimately that of a chance encounter with both."<sup>44</sup> In their contrasting life paths, both Don Juan and Faust seek self-acknowledgment and self-fulfillment. Both are egocentric, aren't genuinely interested in Donna Anna, and do not love her.

On the first encounter of Don Juan and Donna Anna, a Spanish lover, who traditionally adores women, is seducing Anna with magnificent love phrases. Don Juan gets annoyed when Don Octavio approaches and interrupts this love-making, but only because his excellent love speech, which was "*in the best form*"<sup>45</sup> was stopped. Sweet-spoken and passionate lies are part of his language. Spanish lover selfishly cares about his image, always aiming to be at his best. Self-confidence and pretentiousness now outgrow into an obsession.

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<sup>44</sup> Cowen, 1972, pg 84

<sup>45</sup> Grabbe, 1829, pg 355

Prioritizing himself, Donna Anna is not an ideal or woman he is in love with, but an object he pursues. She is an instrument he uses in the realization of his personality. Just like other women would be, there is no difference.

*“And yet – the women are so stupid – only stupidity can conquer them. Howl with the wolves, and with the woman feign piety, dance and lie.”*<sup>46</sup>

From those lines we can conclude how little appreciation and respect towards woman Don Juan has. The most banal urges, followed by lies and deceptions, are just enough to satisfy women. Another aspect of Juan's disdain towards social conventions and upper-class values is given through his insulting attitude about marriage. He doesn't believe in union and loyalty; he hates sincere feelings. For him - that's limiting pleasure and freedom.

*“They used to lead calves and sheep to the altar for slaughter; now they lead girls to the altar for marriage”*<sup>47</sup> In his manner, Don Juan equalizes women and animals. This insulting approach is repeated through Leporello's angry replicas when Lisette doesn't respond to his love long:

*[...] My little ermine, my little doll, how can you be peeved with me?*

*[To Don Juan] the cussed little rat's not asleep or she'd have woken up long ago and answered me.*<sup>48</sup>

And about marriage, Leporello would say that *“good girls give up on their innocence three times just to gain one husband”*.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Grabbe, 1829, pg. 355

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, pg. 341

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, pg. 340

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, pg. 341

When Juan finds out about Donna Anna's death, immediately the interest is gone. Untouched, he stays loyal to his beliefs. With other authors and predecessors, there are other women related to the character of Don Juan. Besides Juan's overall perspectives and treatments of females, Grabbe gave us only connection with Donna Anna, with a final aim – to point out Don Juan's personage and his existence vision.

Faust's aspiration was to understand the ultimate truth of life and find out how he could have been happy. *"You want to believe? You wish to love? Well than fall in love with Donna Anna, the most beautiful woman ever to walk in Rome! Then you'll experience all you want together, for he who falls in love, sighs and hopes, believes and exults".*<sup>50</sup>

Those words are from the Dark Knight, and his response to Faust's wishes. Donna Anna is imposed as an answer and solution, and her qualities are only in her beauty. And yes, Faust has fallen in love, but not for the purpose of loving. Anna is again objectified and used for Faust's self-acknowledgment. On his journey - Faust needed Anna to get closer to the real-world and humankind's affections and excitements. As an object, Faust will chase her, kidnap, torture, hold her as a hostage. After realizing that emotions cannot be forced and when she rejects him, he kills her. If he couldn't have her, nobody else will. Only after killing Donna Anna, he concludes how he could have been happy, which is now impossible. After realizing how egoistic and infatuated he was, he regrets and asks forgiveness.

It is also interesting to mention Faust's wife, which is Grabbe's invention. As Faust lives isolated intellectual life, his wife is in his Fatherland – beloved Germany. In one moment, Faust reveals the existence of his wife to Donna Anna. Honor and loyalty are codes of conduct that Anna appreciates the most. Desperately wanting Anna and thinking that his wife is standing in the way, according to Anna's appreciation of marriage and loyalty, Faust ruthlessly uses his magic powers and kills his wife. Again, Faust shows the absence of empathy and will do whatever it takes to achieve what he wants.

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<sup>50</sup> Grabbe, 1829, pg 350

### **III.VI Key moments of the play**

Presented key moments of the play formed my interpretation of Don Juan and Faust, both conceptually and visually. Grabbe wasn't very mysterious in terms of discovering us his focus of a play. In act I, he gave us a key moment, presenting two parallel and opposite perceptions of life. In first scene we have Don Juan, showing his active principle, his lust for pleasures obtained in real world, his disdain for conventions and bourgeois values and fact that he will do whatever it takes to save himself from ordinaries. In scene two, we have Faust realizing that everything he knows so far seems insufficient, that he needs to try to abandon his belief system and identify what is he missing to feel complete and achieved. Nevertheless, we have two completely different and contrasting characters, but united in their individualism, and obviously, according to their beliefs, not belonging to surroundings and system represented by other characters.

Solving stage design through one major space, my aim was to emphasize that, no matter how much one feels excluded from the surroundings and certain conventions – it is deniable that its part of it.

Second Key moment I found in act II, first scene. There both characters expressed lack of moral compass and how far would they go, so they can get what they wanted and by that get closer to their self fulfilment (or at least what they imagined that would self-fulfil them).

Determined in his ambition, Faust rejuvenates and change his appearance to get closer to Donna Anna and kidnaps her. Also, Don Juan is ready to kill Octavio and Governor, just to win Donna Anna.

Third key moment was the scene where Don Juan kills Don Gusman. Just before Don Gusman dies, there is very important dialogue between them, where Juan expressed his conception of truth and individuality. That was essential for underlining individuality and isolation as contemporary connection: *"You don't know what I have done in the past; and what I did today was all very natural. The natural thing, my good man, is certainly the right thing."*<sup>51</sup> Then Juan continues: *"True, you believe was on your side. But I believe it was on mine. Right is hundredfold, and everyone is entitled to his own version. I was led on by what you, what I, what every inhabitant on this earth is moved by. Only we give it a different name. Why does the priest pray? Why does the business man worry? Why do the kings wage battles which outdo thunder and lightning in their tumult and destruction? Because in the final analysis they want to enjoy life – to be satisfied, to please themselves."*<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Grabbe, 1829, pg. 370

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, pg. 370



### III.VII Contemporary aspects of Don Juan and Faust.

My motivation for choosing the drama *Don Juan and Faust* was interest in psychological aspects of character, individual, which I believe are timeless challenges. Analysis of the characters of the play, through multiple layers aroused fundamental existential questions. Consideration of as many features of personality, I find necessary for more profound meaning and understanding and therefore positioning in certain social situations or context.

During his short life, Christian Dietrich Grabbe was facing non-acceptance, both socially and professionally and his character and behavior surely contributed to that. Due to social disapproval and rejection, undoubtedly, his life was depressed and he experienced loneliness, isolation, even destruction. His characters, Don Juan and Faust have the same destiny. They have different, even opposite views of life, but both of them are alone in their modes of existence. Their individuality makes them isolated among surroundings and they don't find a common ground with it. It is a question whether they rejected it, or they were rejected. Or one influenced the other and so on, in a circle. The struggle to choose between staying true to oneself and one's individual expression on one hand and the desire and need to fit in and be accepted by our surroundings/society seems time-transcending, making the main topic of this play relevant to our times.

Both author and his characters were facing difficulties and suffered consequences for expressing their strong Individuality. Disagreement with surrounding and mainstream values in modern world can cause **rejection**, afterwards solitude. The rejection and solitude can bring a person to an existential crisis, where questions regarding the meaning of life may appear.

The question of what is the **meaning of life** has been present in the minds of philosophers, writers and other thinkers for a very long time. From Aristotle, to Aquinas, Kant and Nietzsche, Schopenhauer and many others tried to find the avoidant answer to this question. Don Juan

found a meaning and survival method in pleasures experienced in the real world, but only to forget and camouflage his pain because he truly lost the meaning of life. Faust' meaning of life was in intellectual and knowledge, but he realized its incompleteness. Aware of that he searched for a new one – in mankind's emotions and joys. At the end, they both faced disappointment in life and acknowledged how unbearable it is. Having the question of existence, meaning of life, as foundation, the text is utterly modern, and the same crucial queries can be challenged nowadays.

Having conscious thinking about the individual and its place in the world, meaning, and purpose, and questioning that – is leaning towards the query of **existential crisis**. An existential crisis is a confusing and anxious feeling of not knowing who one is as a person. They can include questions about one's identity, mortality, achievements and legacy. Existential issues also reflect problems the society is facing as a whole – existential crisis is an internalized byproduct of societal issues.

*“Because social rejection thwarts a core human need, it is not surprising that it influences a variety of outcomes—emotional, cognitive, behavioral, biological, and neural. In terms of emotional responses, social rejection tends to increase various types of negative emotion. Hurt feelings are the core emotional marker of social rejection, but rejection also increases anxiety, anger, sadness, depression, and jealousy”.*<sup>53</sup>

A person in today's society which expresses his/her strong individuality supported by invasive ideas can have consequences. Even though freedom of speech is considered a fundamental human right today, there are examples in many countries whose leaders seem to ignore this right.

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<sup>53</sup> DeWall, Busshman, 2021

I want to portray this subject by using a high-school teacher from Serbia. She was always passionate, with qualified knowledge, and she knew how to motivate her students. With an extraordinary approach, she brought her classes to high standards. Empowered by firm beliefs, she was never afraid to speak up when she believed something was not rightful, even against superiors in the school environment. Since circumstances and situations became less and less just in the educational system, her voice grew stronger and louder. Her strong voice was always justified by the rules and regulations of the scholarly standards. Her loud voice became unbearable for the superiors who are not driven by the motivation to prosper the educational system; instead, power and greed stimulates them, which is now commonly found in our society. The stronger she would fight, the more significant obstacles were thrown in her direction. People from the highest positions in the educational system were determined to shut her down. This resulted in her losing job and both professional and social rejection. This type of rejection can lead to significant identity and existential crisis. Questions arise: are my values really so strong and important if they lead me to complete rejection in the working environment? Am I supposed to ignore my values and beliefs in order to be financially stable? Is my way the right one?

Due to certain social pressure and impossibility to achieve what society concern as achievement, success, natural, normal, healthy etc. – many among us are facing frustration. Through the process of socialization, we are thought that those are the important values- without questioning them, their effects on our lives and the consequence that the pursue of these values can bring.

Due to their actions, Don Juan and Faust lacked decency of behavior. Opposite to them, the woman they chase has a substantial code of conduct. She remains determined to her beliefs - that much that she becomes their victim. Honor and fidelity forbid her to confess her love to don Juan and surrender to him. Donna Anna reconciles that marriage to Octavio will bring unhappiness and dissatisfaction.

She accepts the misfortunate marriage, suppressing her love to Juan – just so she doesn't betray traditional values that emphasize family, religion and nation.

Nevertheless, Donna Anna's character gives another aspect that can be recognized in our times. Contracted marriages, such as Donna Anna's with Octavio, can be seen nowadays in Eastern cultures and societies, like Indian for example. Apart from cultures where contracted marriage is a core traditional value, we can recognize relations forced by family or absence of freedom to choose a partner independently.

Forced by certain traditional and family values, people often go with a path that others choose for them, knowing that it is utterly wrong for them, suppressing what they want and feel so that they don't disappoint their social circles. Sometimes very close people, friends, and family give recipes for success in certain life spheres. All that coming from their point of view, without considering that it just won't work for someone. Among many cases, this pressure is identified through parents pushing children to go to specific schools and universities assuming that career in certain field will bring financial stability, even wealth. Another example is surroundings suppressing one's sexuality – believing only in heterosexual relationships, furthermore rejecting, even bullying if a person belongs to LGBTQ+ community.

As Don Juan and Faust are extreme examples of individuality, alone in their beliefs, an interesting contemporary parallel is **self-isolation**. This social phenomenon can be addressed as problem of developed world countries. Examples of detachment and alienation from surroundings, absence of human interaction and excessive focus on individuality, hence solitude I found in the documentary titled ***The Swedish Theory of Love***, written and directed by Erik Gandini in 2015.

In Sweden in 1972, group of politicians created a manifesto - *The family of the future*, with the idea that it would prosper even further the lives of its citizens. It would free them to become fulfilled individuals, independent from each-other and live their own personal full potential, which was seen as liberation.

*“In the richest countries you can afford to be concerned with yourself as the most important project in the world; self-realization, your own career, self-fulfillment and so forth...”<sup>54</sup>*

*“Swedish Theory of Love says that all authentic human relationships have to be based on the fundamental independence between people.”<sup>55</sup>* They questioned if relationships endure because of true connection or because of economical dependency.

The documentary begins with the query of human reproduction without natural and direct interaction between men and women. Men are donating sperm with the understanding of women who openly decided to have children, refusing the traditional way of requiring a man present in their lives. Following, example of assisted reproduction is presented: a woman ordering online the sperm, choosing preferences among ethnicity, certain genetic predispositions of a donor, paying her purchase, which will arrive at her address at desirable time. Just like buying a new sweater online. When the package comes, the home insemination, with clear instruction can begin.

*“the community is simply collapsing if you don’t reproduce yourselves”<sup>56</sup>*

Regarding the absence of physical contact in reproduction - sperm donating, from men's perspective and self-insemination for women and, afterward, raising a child alone - general question that occurred was why. Is it because they are so used to be independent and secure, without challenges which relationship could potentially bring? Or is this way a new tradition now? Is it because a person doesn't want to deal with daily situations with another person, sharing tasks like washing clothes, dealing with common meals, taking care of household etc.

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<sup>54</sup> Gandini, 2015

<sup>55</sup> Ibid

<sup>56</sup> Ibid

Then bigger challenges - raising a kid with the partner, with the other parent? Is it an assumption that those acts with another person will bring pressure, difficulties and how easy that is when alone? Where is the value of partnership?

*“Here, not only do half of us live alone...one in four die alone.”<sup>57</sup>*

Continuously, other examples of extreme solitude are cases of people who passed away completely ignored. Even having families, the connection between is wholly lost. In Sweden, specific special agencies deal with investigations regarding death of a citizen and his or her inheritors. In cases of solitude deaths, investigators are entering the apartments of the deceased, trying to figure out potential connections between family members, inheritance, often discovering huge amounts of money on bank accounts. Usually, cognition is very sad – those people were barely leaving their apartments, neighbors know almost nothing about who lived next to them and family members, if they exist – live their own detached lives.

*“we have to be self-sufficient. We are not in a group any longer, the very large family...instead we live alone behind our close doors.”*

If a connection with a family member wasn't found and there is no official inheritor, the deceased's money will be passed to the state. Apartment leftovers would be trashed and a trace of a human life will be lost. Deaths and suicides come unnoticed. Since the payments like apartment rent and others are automatic, it is difficult to detect one's death - *“how ironic: to pay your bills after you are dead”*.<sup>58</sup>

On the other hand, another extreme example of isolation, lies in communities, which live away from Swedish cities and their society and systems because of the values that society

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<sup>57</sup> Gandini, 2015

<sup>58</sup> Ibid

represents and highly emphasizes – focus on individuality. As a result of hyper individual society, which pushes to isolation, those groups felt forced to detach from such systemic surroundings and intensively search for connection and interaction among themselves. Through sanctuaries and certain rituals, they reach the feeling of happiness, fulfilment and mutual care. One community member says that *“what society offers has nothing to do with happiness”*, then continues stressing that *“security of the society is not happiness”*.<sup>59</sup>

As wealthy and developed country, Sweden seems to give all required for a high-quality life – security, good jobs and income, stability, but not openness for socialization and human interaction. That’s something that citizens need to do by themselves. This documentary gave a perspective of Sweden as financially wealthy but socially desolate and sterile. Absolute individuality is not the path towards happiness and undoubtedly human interaction and social connections are crucial for the progress of mankind.

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<sup>59</sup> Gandini, 2015

## IV. Visual interpretation

### IV.I Chosen theatre

With interest in institutional theatre, I chose Stavovské divadlo (The Estates Theatre, Prague) as a stage for my visual interpretation of Don Juan and Faust. Following the author's input of many locations/spaces changes and adjusting my stage design, I believe Stavovské divadlo was the right choice, having great technical possibilities.

### IV.II Stage design

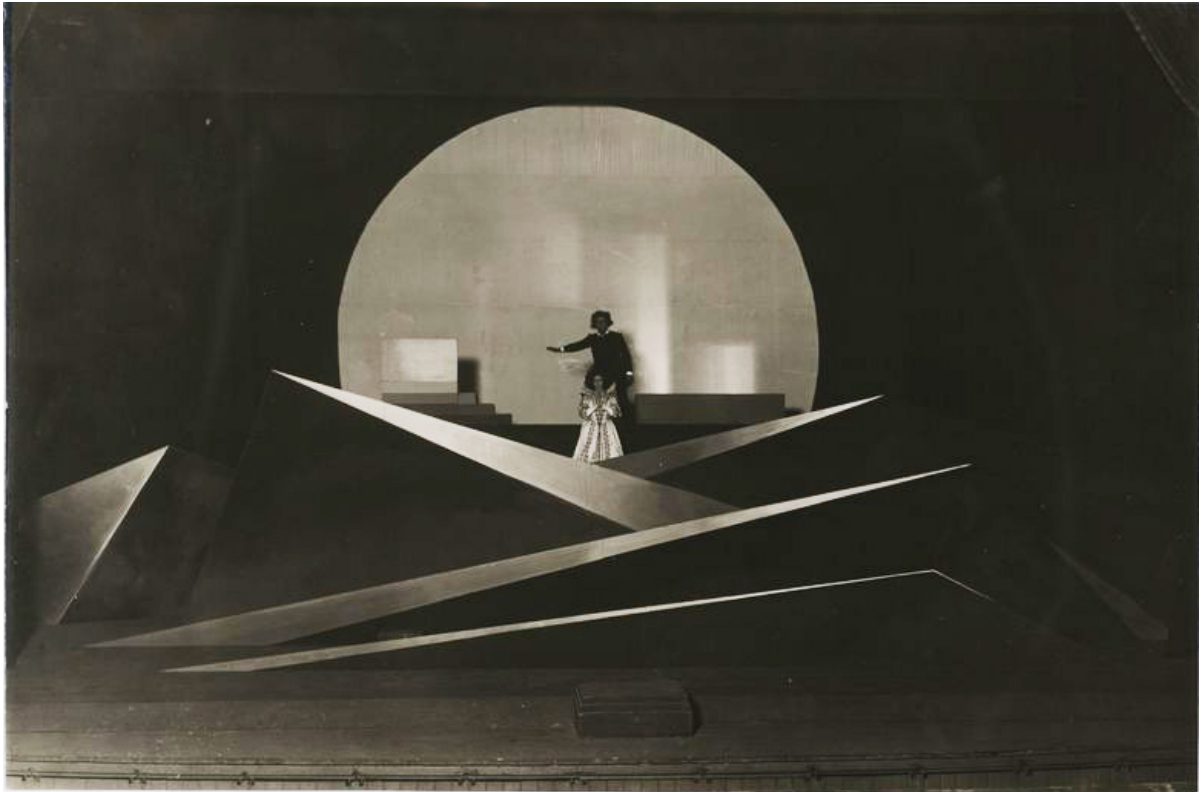
With a concept of having main characters living as part of system, still isolated and alienated, unable to fit and adjust – my main idea for visual interpretation was placing them in sharp and unfriendly environment. As others are very much part of the environment, are integrated, they support it and follow it – by that defining it. Don Juan and Faust seem like outcasts, thrown there unexpectedly. Truth is, no matter how much one tries to be against a certain structure (for various types of reasons and beliefs) that seems to be inevitable.

*“It is natural that the aims of Bauhaus – to seek the union of the artistic-ideal with the craftsmanlike-practical by thoroughly investigating the creative elements, and to understand in all its ramifications the essence of der Bau, creative construction – have valid application to the field of the theatre. For, like the concept of Bau itself, the stage is an orchestral complex which comes about only through the cooperation of many different forces. It is the union of the most heterogeneous assortment of creative elements. Not the least of its functions is to serve the metaphysical needs of man by constructing a world of illusion and by creating the transcendental on the basis of the rational.”<sup>60</sup>*

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<sup>60</sup> Gropius, Wensinger, 1971, pg 81





**Oskar Schlemmer**, great Bauhaus designer did a scenography for Grabbe's play – *Don Juan and Faust*, almost century after the play's premiere. Besides the photography of performance, I faced difficulties to source other material in written or visual form about Schlemmer's design for the *Don Juan and Faust*. It is clear from the photography that Schlemmer's stage design approach is utterly abstract. With geometric shapes, he formed conceptual and unreal space. Having layers of asymmetrical triangular forms, he created the depth of the stage, allowing performers surprising and unusual motions and actions. The multilayered set gives a feeling of something holy: the combination of a very sharp elevations from the floor level with white background in the shape of a moon - it seems like it was used to indicate a heavenly oddity. Placement of triangular structures I also read as a symbol of both Don Juan's and Faust's living on the edge on the opposite way. Performing requires sharp and precise movements, like balancing on a string.



With personal aesthetic leaning towards minimalistic design and angular shapes, I was influenced and inspired by **Brutalist architecture** in shaping my visual, scenographic interpretation of the play Don Juan and Faust. Coming from Belgrade, Serbia, I grew up in environment where examples of Brutalism – concrete residential blocks, hotels and monuments are spread all over the country. With roots in a communist architecture, Brutalism in former Yugoslav republics follows similar style and design. This monumental architecture, with its sharp and raw forms, gives feeling of strength, power and dominance.

Contrary from Brutalist materials, which are heavy and durable, materials I decided to use for my scenography are various plastics. Inspiration in Brutalist architecture were in its geometrical shapes, monumentality and unfriendly feeling it can awake.

Regarding scenographic structure, my idea was to have one general space, with changes within. Without levels in space, I aimed to have dramatical actions only on floor level. Having monumental, but minimalistic decor and actors only performing at the bottom of theatre box - I wanted to emphasize the contrast in size of a man and the space he is in. The main architectural/scenography elements – symmetrically and under angle positioned transparent corrugated wall and curtain wall I imagined having infinity effect (preventing the spectators from seeing the end of scenography element).

Furthermore, mentioned scenography elements are creating the triangular space, my idea was to place characters in corner, and by that underline unfriendly atmosphere and the fact that they are stuck and going nowhere.

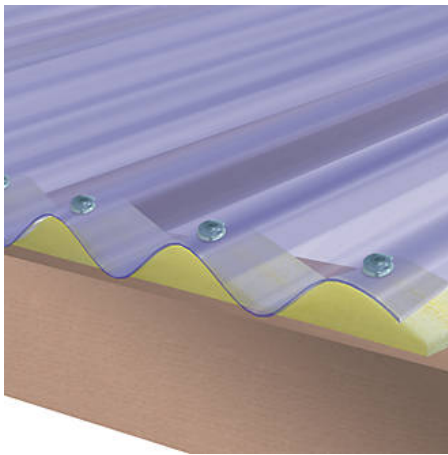
A society with the mainstream values and systems that Don Juan and Faust disdained and couldn't adjust to – is spatially personified through a **mannequin's factory**. Those perfect-looking plastic figures represent the surroundings with which Don Juan and Faust didn't share the same principles.





In the beginning, I would like to focus on the factory. Living in a capitalist society, for many, the source of income exactly comes from working in such an environment as factories. Even though I haven't experienced working in the mass production of certain products, researching the labor and workflow in factories awoke unfriendly impressions. In a highly organized and systematic environment, workers in factories constantly repeat a single action to achieve daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly reach. With these needs for mass production, I aimed to stress the rigidity and focus on quantity as a negative aspect of the contemporary world.

Concerning the visual interpretation, both factories of mannequins and other types of factories were sources of my inspiration for the scenography of *Don Juan and Faust*.



Regardless of the production sphere, many factories have typical exterior and interior elements. After analyzing factory spaces and realizing the most used materials in both exteriors and interiors, I decided to focus on plastic materials - PVC stripe curtain and corrugated plastic sheets, which are usually used as constructive, roofing material. Regarding floor treatment, idea was to imitate factory floors and in terms of scenography materials shiny linoleum in gray color was the choice.

Scenography made from transparent materials gave favorable foundation for dramaturgical purposes. Industrial stripe curtain enabled possibilities for entrances, exits, semi-transparency allows light changes and creating various atmospheres -blocking the space, yet giving a depth.

The history of mannequins starts in the mid 19th century. They were changing the shape and making technique but always reflected society's tendency towards a specific physical image of men and women. From the 20th century, they became an unavoidable element of retail design, always simulating ideal human silhouette at particular times.

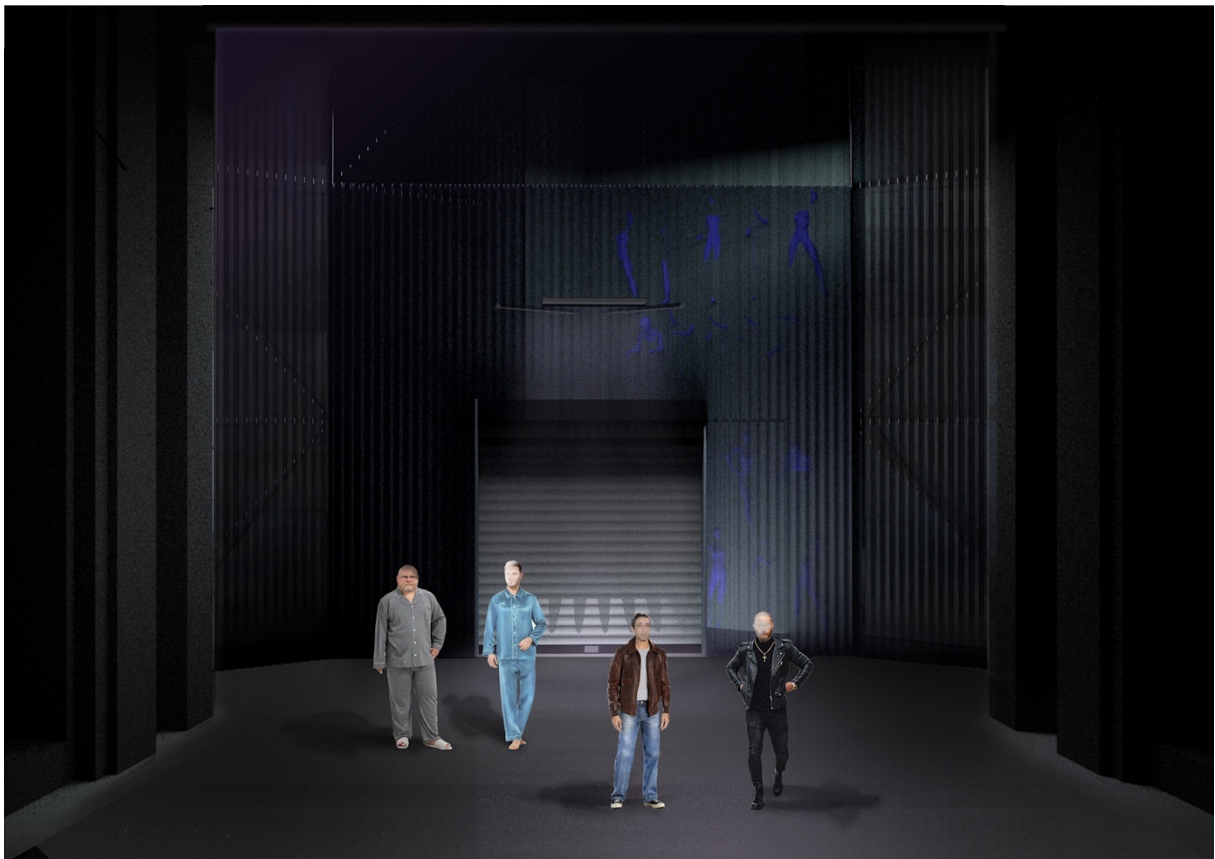
One of my main motivations for the choice of mannequins, was to portray today's beauty standards. Everything is subordinated to the imitation of perfection. Rarely they are presenting, in terms of shape, anything but, standards and ideal, accenting (as society adopted and accepted) both woman and men attributes. Something that is overall attractive and handsome. In case of woman – tiny waste, long legs, proportional breasts and backside. Faces are as well ideal - tiny nose, big lips, accented cheeks. In case of men representatives – tall figure, masculine, strong arms, shoulders, abs. Perfectly looking window-shop. Can we buy it and achieve it? Should we?

We live in a world that is driven by fast trends, short fast videos that communicate what is valuable, desirable. These superficial trends are dictated by people who become visible thanks to algorithms that support such content. And there are millions of followers of superficial content, trends, beauty standards. And by eventually achieving to look like beauty idols of the most commercial formats – comes the success, measured by likes on social medias.

With the variety of settings of mannequins, I aimed to accentuate further the mainstream values of today's society, which is forcing standards regarding physical attractiveness and image. Hence, mannequins are essential for my visual interpretation of the chosen play. Symbolizing mainstream values and today's physical standards (whose imposition is difficult to avoid), mannequins or their parts are present in every scene of *Don Juan and Faust*.

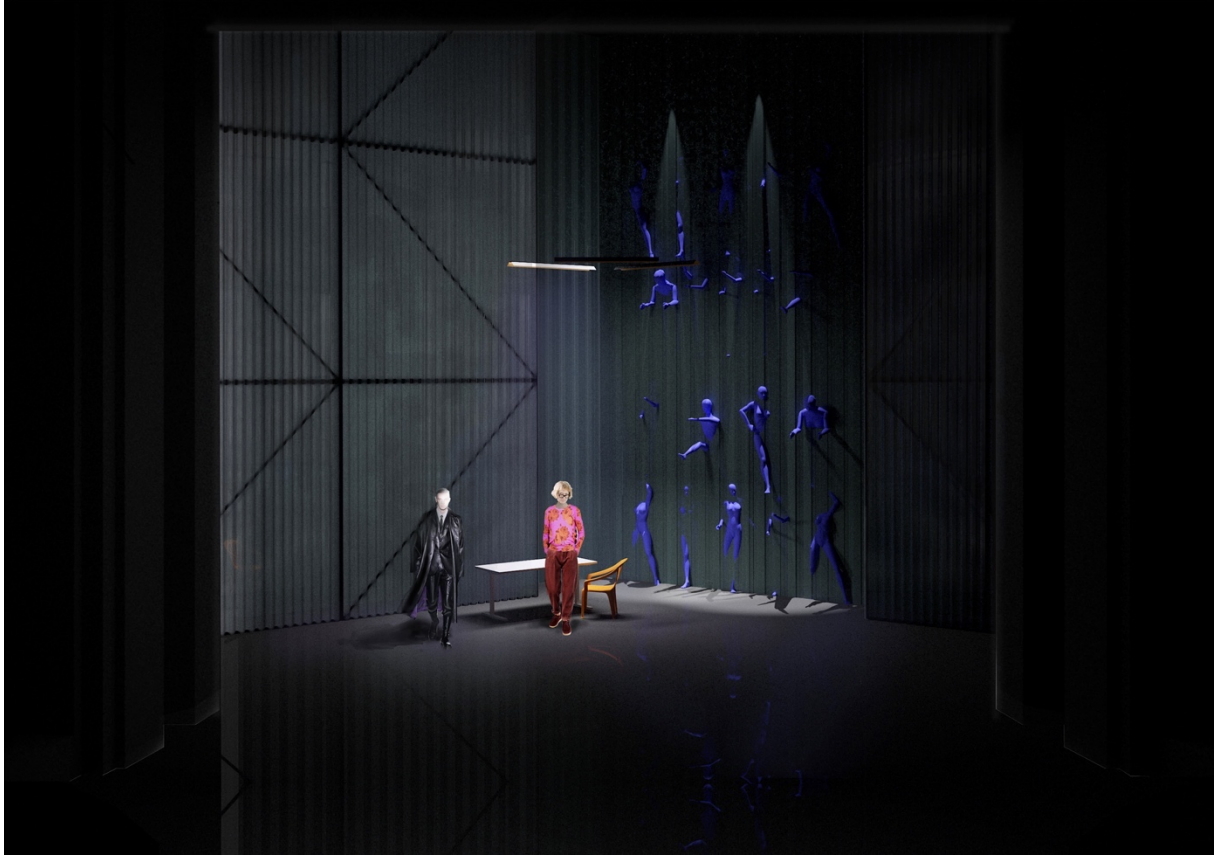
### IV.III Essential dramatic situations

This chapter is dedicated to the result of my research through stage design sketches of each scene. Process started with hand-drawn sketches, furthermore in-scale model of scenography elements and final result is shown through digital collage technique.



#### Act I, scene 1

Meeting point of two legends is in Eternal city of Rome. Stage design is “pushed” in front and the action takes place closer to audience. It is obscure and mystic atmosphere, but elements of unfriendly, plastic architecture of stage design can be recognized.



### Act I, scene 2

Dr. Faust's study room is revealed as well as mannequins, as main symbol and visual concept holder. Seen through plastic stripe curtain, mannequin's arms are set in threatening, trying to grab, chasing position/posture. Faust lives in isolation and this mannequins setting represents the society, that he is trying to avoid.





### Act II, scene 1

Here elements of factory of mannequins are revealed. This sketch represents first encounter of Don Juan and Donna Anna. Costume and stage design elements connection (Donna Anna's boots and mannequin's parts), with shades of purple color, stands for bound between Donna Anna and mannequins, both representing society's mainstream values and physical standards.



Act II, scene 2 – celebration of love and marriage between Donna Anna and Octavio. Mannequins are positioned behind stripe curtain, whose transparency allows attractive possibilities for lights and shadows. Closer to audience, we see signor Negro and Rubio, behind them topic of their conversation – Anna and Octavio, and Don Juan stands aside observing the ceremony.



Act III, scene 1, we have Don Gusman and Don Juan before their clash where Gusman will be defeated. This scene has one of the key moments regarding my interpretation of the play, both dramaturgically, conceptually and visually.



In scene 2 from act III, Faust's Magic Castle is revealed. Change in scenography is portrayed through the different settings of strip curtains and the introduction of a new element – reflecting, mirror-effect foils. Aesthetically, this material follows other used industrial materials and supports the idea of magical since positioning it in a triangular shape – gives infinity reflections. With plastic strip curtains, clumsy imitating baroque curtain setting, I aimed to underline The Dark Knight's indifference and lack of desire to impress Faust when creating the Magic Castle. The figure in the middle is a figure of Donna Anna, symbolizing Faust's wish to impress her – with her own statue. With this scenography element I aimed to underline an obsession with the image.





Scene 3, from act III – Mont Blanc, wild region, while trying to reach Faust's Magic Castle, Don Juan and Leporello are climbing mannequin hill. Wrapped by them, but managing to find a way through mannequins, by kicking, pulling, pushing, throwing them - I wanted to symbolize Don Juan's fight with that fabricated, superficial, plastic surroundings representatives. Through aggressive treatment of mannequins, Don Juan expresses his disdain to society.



In first scene of act IV, Don Juan and Leporello are at graveyard, which I symbolized through precise order of mannequins. In this scene, statue of Don Gusman comes to life (body positioned on the floor behind Don Juan).



In second scene of the act, Faust desperately needs a potion which would cause even stronger pain than one he feels because of Anna's rejection. This encounter of Faust and Gnomes, I found suitable for using the projection.



Final scene is set in Don Juan's residence. Besides established stage design elements, Juan's treadmill is a new component. Even though he found a coping mechanism in chasing pleasures in real world, with running on treadmill I wanted to symbolize that he is actually running nowhere, in circles. Parts of women mannequins are spread all over the stage are interpreting Don Juan's relentless use of woman for the purpose of self-fulfillment.



#### **IV.IV Costume design**

An inevitable aspect for better explanation and perception of the play undoubtedly lies in costume design. My interpretation and idea for Don Juan, Faust, and other characters came from the contemporary world. Hence, I found inspiration for costumes in the people surrounding us. The result are sketches of costumes done in digital collage technique.

It is unlikely that leading personages would ever meet in common ground or occasion by presenting two completely different worlds. With entirely different, even opposite interests and aspirations, visual interpretation of Don Juan and Faust needed to be presented through contrary elements. It was also essential to keep generally familiar aspects of Don Juan and Faust but interpret them in nowadays relevancy.

**Don Juan**, widely known lover, I imagined having so-called typical masculine attributes and behavior. Witty and self-confident, he is the man with good physique. I also had an idea of giving him slightly traditional style, with elements of lack of taste. In scene 1, first act, he has black trendy combination of tight long sleeve t-shirt, skinny jeans, black leather jacket paired with leather shoes. The same costume would be used for garden scene. On wedding, he has a white suit, black shiny shoes and light pink shirt. In scene where he is at home, he has more relaxed combination of tank top, sweat suit paired with sleepers.



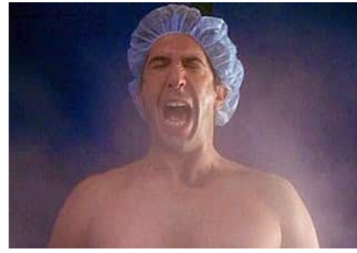
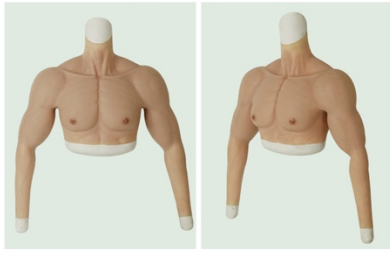


**Faust** represents intellectual in man, which, in his case, comes with self-isolation and an introverted personality. Lonely and miserable. We somehow sense that he is frightened about his surroundings and socializing. He lacks social skills but craves attention. I imagined him as insecure and unsteady, even clumsy, man in mid 50s. He is skinny and pale, with longer grayish messy hair. His style is neat, simple and with touch of softness.

I aimed to give him a femininity aspect, through his fragility and finesse. Even though Faust is mighty magician, I interpreted him as untypical, not fitting in normative perception of heterosexual man. In terms of visually reflecting those features, Faust wears light sweater with floral pattern, combined with dark red corduroy pants, both sizes bigger, in scene 2, from act I. When Dark Knight presents his offer, which Faust undoubtedly accepts – he accepts to get closer to society and surroundings he isn't a part of. To be accepted and liked, he wears a silicone upper body suit built out of muscled shoulders, chest, arms. Before this action, we see Faust in his oversized blue underwear and white tank-top. Dark Knight also air-brushes his pale face to look tanned, like others. When ready for the wedding, Faust has an oversized, 90s style black suit with robust black shoes. But under sleeves, we can see his pale hands.







At the same time, the bearer and the victim of the represented society is precisely the character of **Donna Anna**. Her style looks like that of women seen in most commercial formats today. She represents the latest trend, combined with elegance. In opening act, in the middle of the night, fuss created by Don Juan interrupted Anna`s peaceful sleep. Donna Anna enters the stage in light, pink, satin night suit, and on back of it, there is embroidered text saying *HIS*. Don Octavio is having the same night suit, in light blue, embroidered on the back *HERS*. With this, I aim to underline couples' tendencies towards having similar clothing, with which they believe they show belonging and closeness. In her second appearance, Anna wears coat with animal print and long purple boots. Her boots being the same color as mannequins, my idea was to connect Anna`s character with impersonal mannequins.











**Don Octavio**, at his wedding



**Don Gusman**, act I, scene 1





**Don Gusman**, at wedding

With all the main characters having their servants, Grabbe set a query of class differences. Direct link to factory of mannequins, as main visual concept, is character of **Lisette** which would portray a worker in factory. We see her only at the beginning, hence she is also dressed in pajama. Her costume is the only one having letters and message on it. Sign *LOVE*, underlines her naïve way of looking at life and emotions. Letter O is in shape of heart and has the same, defined purple color - which we can see in costume details of other characters besides Don Juan and Faust.





**Leporello**



**The Dark Knight**





**Signor Rubio and Signor Negro**

## V. Conclusion

Relentless drive in individuality brought the repression by social disapproval. Did society reject them, or they despised their surroundings and what came first - are the questions concerning both Grabbe and his characters. Without finding a satisfying coping mechanism, progress and fulfillment were unimaginable.

This project aimed to present all the knowledge gained from my respected professors during my master's studies and combine it with personal aesthetics and approaches towards stage design. My goal was to explore possibilities of interpreting classical text and position it in the contemporary context, questioning parallels and giving a visual designer's solution. The direction of my visual interpretation was the combination of realistic elements recognized in our environment and giving them a glimpse of surreal association. Being in the intense process of creating this work - new visual and conceptual ideas and interpretations of *Don Juan and Faust* seem never-ending. Regardless of Grabbe's works not being often on theatre repertoires, I believe his *Don Juan and Faust* and acknowledged subject matter of the play have timeless meaning.

Questioning the purpose and meaning of life regarding surroundings and its influences, the position of an individual in society, I believe, will always be an actual topic for many research disciplines and, without any doubt - for dramatic and performing arts.

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