

# Tannhäuser

## by Richard Wagner

### Cast

COUNT HERMANN, Landgrave of Thuringia (bass)

ELIZABETH, his niece (soprano)

Minstrel Knights:

TANNHÄUSER (Heinrich von Ofterdingen) (tenor)

WOLFRAM VON ESCHENBACH (baritone)

WALTHER VON DER VOGELWEIDE (tenor)

BITEROLF (bass)

HEINRICH DER SCHREIBER (tenor)

REINMAR VON ZWETER (bass)

VENUS, goddess of love (soprano)

A SHEPHERD BOY (soprano)

FOUR PAGES (soprano and alto)

CHORUS: Thuringian knights, counts and nobles, noblewomen,  
older and younger pilgrims, sirens, naiads, nymphs, maenads,

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### Overture

### ACT ONE

#### Scene One

*The cave of Venus*

*The stage represents the interior of the  
Venusberg. Sirens, Venus, Tannhäuser, Nymphs,  
Bacchantes, Amorous couples*

SIRENS

Come to this shore!

Come to the land

where in glowing Love's

fond embrace

blessed balm

shall soothe your longings!

#### Scene Two

*A valley near the Wartburg*

VENUS

Beloved, say, where dwell your thoughts?

TANNHÄUSER

Too long! Too long!

O that I might wake now!

VENUS

Say, what troubles you?

TANNHÄUSER

In a dream it was as if I heard

what long has been unfamiliar to my ear,

as if I heard the joyous peal of bells!

Ah say, how long is it since I heard it?

VENUS

Where strays your mind? What possesses you?

TANNHÄUSER

I cannot measure

the time that I have tarried here.

Days, months, exist no more for me,

for no more do I see the sunlight,

no more the friendly stars of heaven;

I see no more the fields which, freshly green,

herald a new summer; no more

I hear the nightingale, harbinger of spring.

Shall I never hear or see them again?

VENUS

Ah, what do I hear? What foolish complaints!  
 Are you so soon weary of the sweet wonders  
 which my love has lavished on you?  
 Or can it be you so regret being a god?  
 Have you so soon forgotten  
 how once you suffered,  
 while now you live here lapped in delights?  
 My singer, rise! Take up your harp!  
 Extol love, which you lauded with such rapture  
 that you won for yourself the goddess of love!  
 Extol love, for its highest prize is yours!

TANNHÄUSER

Let your praises resound!  
 Glorified be the wonders  
 your might has wrought for my bliss!  
 Let my song in loud and joyful tones  
 extol the sweet delights  
 flowing from your bounty!  
 My heart yearned,  
 my soul thirsted for joy,  
 ah! for divine pleasure:  
 what once you showed only to gods  
 your favor has bestowed upon a mortal.  
 But alas! I have remained mortal,  
 and your love overwhelms me.  
 Though a god can savor joy forever,  
 I am subject to change;  
 I have at heart not pleasure alone,  
 and in my joy long for suffering.  
 From your kingdom I must flee;  
 O queen, o goddess, set me free!

VENUS

Must I listen to this? What a song!  
 What mournful mood clouds your lay?  
 Where has that rapture flown  
 which inspired you only to songs of delight?  
 What is it? In what has my love been lacking?  
 Beloved, with what do you reproach me?

TANNHÄUSER

Gratitude for your favor  
 and praise for your love!  
 Forever blessed is he who has dwelt here!  
 Forever envied is he who, hot with desire,  
 has in your arms shared the divine glow!  
 The wonders of your realm cast a spell,

here I breathe the magic of unalloyed bliss;  
 no land in the wide world offers the like;  
 all it holds seems in comparison of little worth.  
 Yet from these rosy scents I long  
 for the woodland breezes,  
 for the clear blue of out sky,  
 for the fresh green of out meadows,  
 for the sweet song of out birds,  
 for the dear sound of out bells.  
 From your kingdom I must flee;  
 O queen, o goddess, set me free!

VENUS

Faithless one! Alas, what is this I hear?  
 You dare to spurn my love?  
 You praise it but seek from it to fly?  
 Has my allure grown wearisome?

TANNHÄUSER

Ah fair goddess! Do not be angry with me!  
 It is your unbounded allure from which I fly!

VENUS

Shame on you! Traitor, dissembler, ingrate!  
 O will not let you go! You shall not leave me!  
 Ah!

TANNHÄUSER

Never was my love greater, never more true  
 than now, when I must leave you forever!

VENUS

Beloved, come! See yonder grotto,  
 permeated with the soft perfume of roses,  
 the abode of sweetest joys  
 which might enchant even a god!  
 Resting on the softest pillow,  
 all pain shall quit your limbs,  
 cool airs shall play about your burning brow,  
 a rapturous glow  
 shall course through your veins.  
 From afar sweet sounds softly whisper  
 for my arms to enfold you in a fond embrace:  
 from my lips you shall sip  
 the nectar of the gods,  
 from my eyes will glow love's gratitude!  
 A feast of joy shall spring from our union;  
 let us gladly celebrate the rite of love!  
 No timid offering shall you dedicate to it,  
 No! Revel in union with love's own goddess!

SIRENS

Come to this shore!  
Come to this land!

VENUS

My cavalier! My beloved! Will you fly me?

TANNHÄUSER

To you, to you alone  
shall my song ever be raised!  
Your praise alone will I sing aloud!  
Your soft charms are the fount of all beauty,  
and every fair wonder springs from you.  
The fire you kindled in my heart  
shall in flame brightly burn to you alone!  
Yes, against the whole world henceforth  
will I be your bold and tireless champion.  
But I must hence to the earthly world,  
with you I can only be a slave:  
for freedom I am consumed with longing,  
for freedom I thirst;  
to strife and struggle will I go,  
even though it be to downfall and death!  
So from your kingdom I must flee;  
O queen, o goddess, set me free!

VENUS

Then go, madman, go!  
Traitor, see, I am not holding you!  
I set you free! Away!  
What you desire shall be your doom!  
Fly to the cold world of men,  
from whose feeble, cheerless fancies  
we gods of joy fled  
into the warming depths of the earth's womb.  
Go then, poor fool! Seek there  
the happiness you never shall find!  
Soon the arrogance in your heart will weaken,  
and I shall see you return humbled,  
remorseful, crestfallen, to seek me out,  
pleading for the magic of my might!

TANNHÄUSER

Ah, goddess of beauty, farewell!  
Never will I return to you!

VENUS

Ha! Never will you return to me!  
If you do not return, then the entire  
race of men shall be accursed!

For my marvels shall it then seek in vain!  
The world shall be desolate,  
and its champion a menial!  
Return, o return to me!

TANNHÄUSER

Nevermore will the pleasures  
of love delight me!

VENUS

Return, if your heart bids you.

TANNHÄUSER

Your beloved flies forever.

VENUS

If all the world repulses you?

TANNHÄUSER

Repentance will free me from your spell.

VENUS

Forgiveness never will be granted you!  
Return, if you wish for happiness!

TANNHÄUSER

My happiness? My happiness lies in Mary!

### Scene Three

*The valley before the Wartburg: the Hörselberg  
in the far distance. A Shepherd, Pilgrims,  
Tannhäuser*

SHEPHERD

Dame Holda came forth from the hill  
to roam through fields arid meadows:  
surpassing sweet sounds reached my ear,  
my eyes craved to see her.  
There I dreamed many a fair dream,  
and scarcely had I opened my eyes  
than the sun was shining warm,  
and May had come.  
Now I merrily play my pipe,  
for May is here, lovely May!

PILGRIMS

To thee I turn my steps, Lord Jesus Christ,  
for the pilgrim's hope art thou!  
Praise to thee, O Virgin sweet and pure,  
and deign to smile upon this pilgrimage!

Ah, the burden of sin weighs heavy upon me  
and I can no longer bear it:  
therefore I seek neither rest nor repose  
and choose for myself pain and toil.  
At the high celebration of God's grace  
I will expiate my guilt;  
blessed is he who is steadfast in his faith:  
through repentance shall he be redeemed.

**SHEPHERD**

God speed! God speed to Rome!  
Pray for my poor soul!

**TANNHÄUSER**

Almighty God be praised!  
Great are the marvels of thy mercy.

**PILGRIMS**

To thee I turn my steps, Lord Jesus Christ,  
for the pilgrim's hope art thou!  
Praise to thee, O Virgin sweet and pure,  
and deign to smile upon this pilgrimage!

**TANNHÄUSER**

Ah, the burden of sin weighs heavy upon me  
and I can no longer bear it:  
therefore I seek neither rest nor repose  
and choose for myself pain and toil.

**PILGRIMS**

At the high celebration of God's grace  
I will expiate my guilt;  
blessed is he who is steadfast in his faith!

### **Scene Four**

*Landgrave, Minstrels, Tannhäuser*

**LANDGRAVE**

Who is that yonder, deep in prayer?

**WALTER**

Surely a penitent.

**BITFROLF**

A knight, by his garb.

**WOLFRAM**

It is he!

**THE OTHER MINSTRELS**

Heinrich! Heinrich! Do I see aright?

**LANDGRAVE**

Is it really you? Are you returning to us,  
whom in your haughty pride you abandoned?

**BITEROLF**

Say, what means your return to us?

**LANDGRAVE, WALTER, HEINRICH,  
REINMAR**

Tell us!

**BITFROLF**

Reconciliation, or renewed strife?

**WALTER**

Do you come to us as friend or foe?

**MINSTRELS**

As foe?

**WOLFRAM**

Do not ask! Is this the demeanor of pride?  
We welcome you, valiant minstrel,  
that hasah! So long been absent from our midst!

**WALTER**

Welcome, if you come in peace!

**BITEROLF**

Greetings, if you treat us as friends!

**WALTER, HEINRICH, BITEROLF,  
REINMAR**

Greetings! We welcome you!

**LANDGRAVE**

Then let me too welcome you!  
But say, where have you been so long?

**TANNHÄUSER**

I wandered in far, far distant lands,  
where repose or rest I never found.  
Do not ask! I came not here to contend with  
you.  
Let us make peace, and let me go my way!

**LANDGRAVE**

Not yet! You are one of us again.

**WALTER**

You must not go.

BITEROLF

We will not let you go.

WALTER, HEINRICH, WOLFRAM,  
REINMAR, LANDGRAVE  
Stay with us!

TANNHÄUSER

Let me go! To linger is of no avail,  
and never can I rest in peace.  
My way urges me to hasten only onwards,  
and never may I look back.

LANDGRAVE AND MINSTRFLS

O stay! You must remain with us;  
we will not let you go again.  
Having sought us out, why hurry away  
after so brief a reunion?

TANNHÄUSER

I must away from here!

LANDGRAVE, WALTER, HEINRICH,  
BITEROLF, REINMAR  
Stay, o stay with us!

WOLFRAM

Stay for Elisabeth!

TANNHÄUSER

Elisabeth! O might of heaven,  
is it you that recalls to me that sweet name?

WOLFRAM

Abuse me not as foe  
when I speak that name to you!  
*to Landgrave*  
My lord, will you permit me  
to tell him of his fortune?

LANDGRAVE

Tell him of the magic that he wrought,  
and God grant him virtue that he may use it  
worthily.

WOLFRAM

When you contended with us for the palm in  
singing,  
sometimes you were victorious over our songs,  
sometimes you suffered defeat through our art:

one prize there was which you alone won.  
Was it magic, was it a divine power,  
by which you wrought such a miracle,  
enchanting that maid of matchless virtue  
by your song of joy and sorrow?  
But ah! When in your pride you left us,  
she closed her heart against our song;  
we saw her cheeks grow pale,  
and she henceforth avoided our company.  
O come back, valiant minstrel,  
and do not deprive us of your song.  
Let her no longer be absent from our festivals,  
and may her star shine on us once more!

MINSTRELS

Be one of us, Heinrich! Come back to us!  
Let discord and strife be laid aside!  
United let our songs arise  
and henceforth let us be brothers!

LANDGRAVE

O come back, valiant minstrel, return to us!  
Let discord and strife be laid aside!

TANNHÄUSER

To her! To her! O lead me to her!  
Ah, now I recognize again  
the beautiful world from which I fled!  
The heavens shine down upon me,  
the fields are resplendent in rich array.  
Spring with a thousand charming sounds  
has filled my heart with joy:  
in sweet, urgent eagerness  
my heart cries aloud,  
“To her! To her! Lead me to her!”

LANDGRAVE AND MINSTRELS

He who was lost has returned!  
A miracle has brought him back.  
Praised be the gentle power  
which has banished his pride!  
Now let the maid we prize  
once again hearken to our noblest lays!  
In joyful tones let a song  
resound from every throat!

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## ACT TWO

### *The Minstrels' Hall in the Wartburg*

#### Scene One

*Elisabeth*

ELISABETH

Dear hall, I greet thee again!  
Gladly I greet thee, beloved place!  
In thee his songs will waken  
and rouse me from my gloomy dreams.  
When he from here departed,  
how bleak thou didst seem to me!  
All peace forsook me,  
all pleasure in thee vanished.  
But now my heart is exalted  
and thou dost seem proud  
and stately once again,  
for he who revives both thee and me  
no longer tarries far away.  
Greetings, greetings!  
Dear hall, I greet thee!

#### Scene Two

*Wolfram, Tannhäuser, Elisabeth*

WOLFRAM

There she is: approach her undisturbed!

TANNHÄUSER

O princess!

ELISABETH

Heavens! Do not kneel! Leave me!  
I may not see you here!

TANNHÄUSER

You may! O stay  
and let me remain at your feet!

ELISABETH

Rise, I beg you!  
You must not kneel here, for this hall  
is your kingdom. Arise!  
Accept my thanks for your return!  
Where have you tarried so long?

TANNHÄUSER

Far from here,

in very distant lands. Dark oblivion  
has fallen between yesterday and today.  
All memory has suddenly deserted me  
and one thing only must I remember,  
that I never dared hope to greet you again  
nor raise my eyes to you.

ELISABETH

What was it then that led you back?

TANNHÄUSER

It was a miracle,  
a mysterious, mighty miracle!

ELISABETH

This miracle I praise  
from the depths of my heart!  
Forgive me if I know not what I say!  
I am in a dream, and more foolish than a child.  
Helpless before the might of this marvel.  
I scarcely know myself any longer: o help me  
solve the riddle in my heart!  
To minstrels' beguiling music I formerly  
lent a willing and a constant ear;  
their singing and their paeans  
seemed a delightful recreation.  
But what a strange new life  
your song aroused in my breast!  
Now I was as if wracked with pain,  
now as if pierced with sudden joy.  
Emotions I had never felt!  
Longings I had never known!  
What once had delighted me had vanished  
before these yet unnamed raptures!  
And then when you left us,  
my peace and joy were gone;  
the melodies the minstrels sang  
seemed stale to me, and cheerless their ideas.  
In dreams I felt dull pain;  
waking, I was filled with troubled fancies;  
joy had fled from my heart -  
Heinrich! What did you do to me?

TANNHÄUSER

The god of love be praised:  
he touched my harp strings,  
spoke to you in my melodies,  
and has led me here to you!

ELISABETH

Blessed be this hour,  
blessed be the power  
that brought me the wondrous tidings  
that you were near.  
Encircled by the glow of bliss,  
on me the sun now smiles;  
awakened to new life,  
I can call joy mine!

TANNHÄUSER

Blessed be this hour,  
blessed be the power  
that brought me the wondrous tidings  
from your lips.  
To this new-found life  
may I now wholly devote myself;  
trembling with joy,  
I name its fairest wonder mine!

WOLFRAM

So am I bereft  
of all light of hope in this life!

### Scene Three

*Landgrave, Elisabeth*

LANDGRAVE

Do I find you in this hall,  
which you have avoided for so long?  
Does the festival of song that we prepare  
at last attract you?

ELISABETH

O uncle, who are a father to me!

LANDGRAVE

Would you then at last  
unlock your heart to me?

ELISABETH

Look in my eyes! I cannot speak.

LANDGRAVE

Then for a little while  
let your sweet secret remain undisclosed,  
the spell remain unbroken  
until you are able to reveal it.  
So be it! The wonder  
that by song was awakened and aroused

today by song shall be revealed  
and crowned with fulfilment.  
Our gracious art shall do the deed!  
Already the nobles of my land are approaching,  
whom I have bidden to this solemn tournament;  
more numerous than ever they come,  
for they have heard  
that you will be the princess of the festival.

### Scene Four

*Counts, Knights, Pages, Landgrave, Wolfram,  
Tannhäuser, Minstrels, Elisabeth*

CHORUS

Joyfully we greet this noble hall  
where only art and peace shall ever dwell,  
where long the glad cry shall resound,  
“Hail to Thuringia’s prince,  
the Landgrave Hermann!”

LANDGRAVE

Full often, dear minstrels, in this hall  
have your fine songs resounded;  
with wise allegories and merry lays alike  
you have gladdened our heart.  
If our sword in stern bloody battles  
fought for the supremacy of the German State,  
if we withstood the savage Guelphs  
and held disastrous discord in check,  
you won no less a prize.  
For charm and gracious ways,  
for virtue and unsullied faith,  
you achieved with your art  
a great and mighty victory.  
Prepare then for us today another festival,  
now that the valiant singer, whom we for long  
so sadly missed, has returned to us.  
What brought him back among us  
remains to me a mysterious secret:  
you shall reveal it to us through the art of song,  
therefore I now propose this theme to you:  
Can you fathom the nature of love?  
He who most worthily succeeds  
shall from Elisabeth receive the prize;  
let his claim be as bold and lofty as he please,  
I undertake that she shall grant it.  
Up, dear minstrels! Strike your strings!  
The theme is set, strive for the prize,  
and let all accept our thanks in advance!

## KNIGHTS AND NOBLE LADIES

Hail! Hail to Thuringia's prince!  
Hail to the protector of the gracious art!

## FOUR PAGES

Wolfram von Eschenbach, begin!

## WOLFRAM

As I look around on this noble assembly,  
what a glorious sight makes my heart glow!  
So many heroes, valiant, upright and wise,  
like a proud oakwood, splendid, fresh and  
green;  
and I see ladies lovely and virtuous,  
a fair garland of most fragrant flowers.  
My gaze is dazzled by this display,  
my song is silenced  
before such beauteous luster.  
Then I raise my eyes to one single star  
up in the heavens which shines on me:  
my spirit is comforted by that distant radiance  
and my soul devoutly sinks in prayer.  
And lo! I behold a fountain of delights  
on which my spirit gazes, filled with wonder:  
from it there flows blissful joy  
by which my heart is inexpressibly refreshed.  
O never may I sully that fountain  
or cloud its limpid waters with impure thoughts!  
In devotion I would sacrifice myself  
and gladly shed the last drop  
of my heart's blood.  
You nobles may gather from these words  
how I regard the purest essence of love.

## KNIGHTS AND LADIES

'Tis so! 'Tis so! Praised be your song!

## TANNHÄUSER

I too may count myself lucky enough  
to see what you, Wolfram, saw!  
Who should not know that fountain?  
Hearken, its virtues I will cry aloud!  
But I cannot approach its source  
without feeling ardent longing:  
my burning thirst I must assuage  
by confidently pressing my lips to it:  
I drink down bliss in full draughts,  
unhindered by any hesitation;  
for the fountain is inexhaustible,

as my longing is insatiable.

Thus I constantly refresh myself at the spring  
so that my craving may burn forever:  
know then, Wolfram, how I regard  
the true nature of love!

## WALTER VON DER VOGELWEIDE

The fountain of which Wolfram told us  
is known to the light of my spirit too;  
but you, Heinrich, who were afire  
with thirst for it, truly know it not.  
Let me then declare it and teach you  
that the fountain is true virtue.  
Ardently you must revere it  
and worship its sweet limpidity.  
If you lay your lips to its waters  
to cool impure passions,  
yes, if you will but sip at the brink,  
its magic power will vanish forever!  
If you wish for refreshment from this source,  
it must be through your heart, not your lips.

## THE LISTENERS

Hail, Walter! Praises to your song!

## TANNHÄUSER

O Walter, if thus you sing,  
you badly belie love!  
If so timid is your longing,  
your world will truly run dry.  
Look up to heaven, behold its stars,  
in praise of God in the supreme heights!  
Give humble worship to such wonders,  
for you shall never know them!  
But that which deigns to human contact,  
which lies near to heart and thought,  
that which, created for like matter,  
inclines to us in soft flesh,  
that is for enjoyment in happy desire,  
and in enjoyment alone do I recognize love!

## BITEROLF

Come forth to combat with us all!  
Who could hear you in silence?  
If your pride will allow you,  
now listen to me, blasphemer!  
When great love inspires me,  
it steals my sword and my spirit;  
to preserve it in its purity forever



I would proudly shed my lifeblood.  
 Woman's virtue and high honor will I,  
 as a knight, defend with my sword;  
 but those delights that captured your immaturity  
 are shoddy, not worth a blow.

KNIGHTS AND LADIES

Hail, Biterolf!

KNIGHTS

Here are our swords!

TANNHÄUSER

Ha, you foolish braggart, Biterolf!  
 Do you sing of love, you fierce wolf?  
 Assuredly you have never known  
 that which I find pleasurable.  
 What, poor wretch, have you known of  
 pleasure?  
 Your life was lacking in love,  
 and what paltry joys befell you  
 were indeed not worth a blow!

KNIGHTS

We'll hear no more! End this audacity!

LANDGRAVE

*to Biterolf*

Put up your sword! Minstrels, keep the peace!

WOLFRAM

O heaven, let me now implore thee,  
 grant my song divine approval!  
 Let me see sin banished  
 from this noble, pure assembly!  
 Let my song resound  
 inspired by thee, sacred love,  
 that pierced my very soul  
 in angelic beauty!  
 Thou didst come from heaven,  
 I follow from afar;  
 so guide me to that land  
 where thy star shines forever.

TANNHÄUSER

To you, goddess of love,  
 shall my song be raised!  
 Loudly let me now sing your praise!  
 Your sweet charms are the source of all beauty,  
 and every fair wonder springs from you.

Only he who has known  
 your ardent embrace knows what love is;  
 poor wretches who have never tasted love,  
 away! Hasten to the hill of Venus!

ALL

Oh, he is wicked! Fly from him!  
 Hark, he was in the Venusberg!

NOBLE LADIES

Away! Away from his presence!

WOLFRAM

You heard it!

LANDGRAVE, MINSTRELS AND KNIGHTS

You heard it! His sinful lips  
 have confessed his fearful crime.  
 He has shared the joys of Hell,  
 he has dwelt within the Venusberg!  
 Abominable! Monstrous! Damnable!  
 Steep your swords in his blood!  
 Let him be condemned and banished  
 and sent back to the bottomless pit of Hell!

ELISABETH

Stay your hands!

WALTER, BITEROLF, REINMAR

What do I hear?

LANDGRAVE, KNIGHTS AND MINSTRELS

What? What do I see? Elisabeth!  
 The chaste maiden shielding the sinner?

ELISABETH

Stand back! For death I care nothing!  
 What are the wounds your swords could cause  
 against the deadly blow he has dealt me?

LANDGRAVE, KNIGHTS AND MINSTRELS

Elisabeth! Can we believe it?  
 How can your heart so delude you  
 as to stave off punishment from him  
 who so vilely has deceived you?

ELISABETH

What do I matter? But he must be saved!  
 Would you rob him of eternal salvation?

## LANDGRAVE, KNIGHTS AND MINSTRELS

He has forfeited all hope,  
 never will he earn salvation!  
 The curse of heaven has fallen on him:  
 let him go hence with his sins upon his head!

## ELISABETH

Stand back from him!  
 'Tis not for you to judge him!  
 Shame on you! Cast aside your cruel swords,  
 and give ear to a spotless virgin's words'.  
 Through me learn what is God's will!  
 This hapless man, that a fearful,  
 mighty spell holds captive -  
 what, may he never find salvation  
 through repentance and atonement in this  
 world?  
 You who are so strong in purity of faith,  
 is this how you understand the will of heaven?  
 If you would deny hope to the sinner,  
 then say, what harm did he do you?  
 Behold me, a maiden whose blossoming  
 he has cut short with one sudden blow;  
 exultantly he has broken my heart,  
 I who loved him with all my being.'  
 I plead for him, I plead for his life,  
 let him contritely turn his steps to atonement!  
 Let him regain the strength of the belief  
 that the Savior once suffered for him too!

## TANNHÄUSER

Alas! Wretch that I am!

## LANDGRAVE, KNIGHTS AND MINSTRELS

An angel has descended from the realms of light  
 to bring us God's holy message.  
 Look up, vile traitor,  
 and realize your sin!  
 You gave her death, she begs for your life;  
 who could hear an angel's plea unmoved?  
 Though I may not forgive the sinner,  
 I cannot oppose Heaven's word.

## TANNHÄUSER

To lead the sinner to salvation  
 an angel was sent down to me from heaven!  
 But ah, profaning her by my presence,  
 I turned on her a lascivious gaze!  
 O thou, high above this mortal earth,

who sent me my guardian angel,  
 have mercy on me, so deep in sin, alas,  
 that to my shame  
 I did not recognize heaven's messenger!  
 Have mercy, o have mercy on me!

## ELISABETH

I plead for him, I plead for his life,  
 let him contritely turn his steps to atonement!  
 Let him regain the strength of the belief  
 that the Savior once suffered for him too!

## LANDGRAVE, KNIGHTS AND MINSTRELS

What? What do I see? Elisabeth!  
 The chaste maiden shielding the sinner?

## LANDGRAVE

A fearful misdeed has been committed.  
 Into our midst in treacherous guise  
 there stole sin's curse-laden son.  
 We cast you out —  
 you shall not dwell among us;  
 through you our hearth is defiled,  
 and heaven itself looks menacingly on this roof  
 which sheltered you too long.  
 But one way lies open to save you  
 from eternal perdition; though I banish you,  
 I point it out. Take it and save your soul!  
 From my lands a throng of pilgrims  
 has assembled, intent on penance.  
 The elders have already set forth,  
 the younger are still halted in the valley.  
 Their hearts will give them no peace  
 even for more venial sins,  
 and to still the pious promptings of repentance  
 they go to the shrine of grace in Rome.

## LANDGRAVE, MINSTRELS AND KNIGHTS

With them you shall travel  
 to the city of gracious mercy,  
 there prostrate yourself in the dust  
 and atone for your sin!  
 Humble yourself before him  
 who pronounces God's judgement;  
 and never return  
 until you have gained his pardon!  
 Our vengeance we were forced to temper  
 because an angel interceded for you,

but this sword will smite you  
if you remain in sin and shame!

ELISABETH

O God of grace and mercy,  
let him seek and find thee!  
Though he has fallen so low,  
forgive his debt of sin!  
For him alone will I plead,  
and spend my life in prayer;  
let him see thy radiance  
before eternal night claims him!  
O receive a sacrifice  
made with fearful joy!  
Take, o take my life:  
I count it no longer my own!

TANNHÄUSER

How shall I find pardon,  
how atone for my sin?  
I have seen salvation vanish,  
heaven's mercy withdrawn from me.  
But I will go forth as a penitent,  
to beat my breast  
and kneel in the dust,  
contrition be my willing lot.  
O could she but forgive me,  
my guardian angel,  
who, so rudely betrayed,  
yet offers herself as sacrifice for me!

PILGRIMS

At the high celebration of God's grace  
I will humbly expiate my guilt;  
blessed is he who is steadfast in his faith:  
through repentance shall he be redeemed,

TANNHÄUSER

To Rome!

ELISABETH, LANDGRAVE, KNIGHTS AND  
MINSTRELS

To Rome!

## ACT THREE

### Introduction

*The Valley in Front of the Wartburg,  
the Hörselberg*

### Scene One

*Wolfram, Pilgrims, Elisabeth*

WOLFRAM

I well knew that I would find her here in prayer,  
as I have so often seen her when I've wandered  
alone from the wooded heights into the valley,  
With the deathblow he dealt her in her heart,  
racked with burning sorrow,  
day and night she prays for his salvation:  
O blessed love, how great thy power!  
She awaits the pilgrims' return from Rome.  
The leaves are already falling,  
soon they will be home.  
Will he return with them, pardoned?  
That is her question, that is her prayer;  
ye holy ones, let it be fulfilled!  
But if her wound remains unhealed,  
O grant her some solace!

PILGRIMS

With joy, my home, I now behold thee,  
and gladly greet thy smiling meadows;  
now I lay down my pilgrim's staff,  
for, submissive to God, I have made my  
pilgrimage.  
By atonement and repentance I have made my  
peace  
with the Lord, to whom my heart bows down,  
who has crowned my remorse with blessing,  
the Lord to whom I raise my song.  
The grace of salvation is granted to the penitent,  
who shall enter into the peace of heaven!  
Hell and death cannot affright him,  
therefore will I praise God  
all the days of my life.  
Hallelujah for evermore!

ELISABETH

That is their song —'tis they.  
They have returned!  
Ye holy ones, show me now my task,  
that I may worthily fulfil it!

WOLFRAM

It is the pilgrims — it is the pious hymn  
telling of grace and mercy received.  
O heaven, now strengthen her heart  
for this crucial moment of her life!

ELISABETH

He has not returned!

PILGRIMS

With joy, my home, I now behold thee,  
and gladly greet thy smiling meadows;  
now I lay down my pilgrim's staff ...

ELISABETH

Almighty Virgin, hear my plea!  
Queen of glory, to thee I call!  
Let me turn to dust before thee,  
O take me from this earth!  
Let me enter, pure and spotless,  
into thy blessed kingdom!

If ever, engrossed in vain fancies,  
my heart turned away from thee,  
if ever a sinful desire  
or earthly longing rose within me,  
I strove with untold anguish  
to stifle it in my heart!

Then, though of every fault I am not shriven,  
turn thy gracious face to me,  
that I may, a worthy maid,  
approach thee with humble devotion  
to implore the rich bounty  
of thy mercy for his offence!

WOLFRAM

Elisabeth, may I not escort you home?

## Scene Two

*Wolfram*

WOLFRAM

Like a portent of death,  
twilight shrouds the earth  
and envelops the valley in its sable robe;  
the soul, that yearns for those heights,  
dreads to take its dark and awful flight.  
There you shine, o fairest of the stars,  
and shed your gentle light from afar;

your friendly beam  
penetrates the twilight gloom  
and points the way out from the valley.

O my fair evening star,  
I always gladly greeted thee:  
from a heart that never betrayed its faith  
greet her when she passes,  
when she soars above this mortal vale  
to become a blessed angel in heaven!

## Scene Three

*Tannhäuser, Wolfram, Venus, Landgrave,  
Minstrels, Knights, Pilgrims*

TANNHÄUSER

I heard a harp — how sad a sound!  
It could not be from her.

WOLFRAM

Who are you, pilgrim,  
who wander so alone?

TANNHÄUSER

Who am I?  
But I know you full well;  
you are Wolfram, the skilled minstrel.

WOLFRAM

Heinrich! You!  
What brings you back here? Speak!  
Do you dare, still unabsolved,  
to set foot in this region?

TANNHÄUSER

Have no fear, worthy minstrel!  
I seek not you nor any of your company.  
I seek for one who can show me the way,  
that way which once I found with such ease.

WOLFRAM

Which way is that?

TANNHÄUSER

The way to the Venusberg!

WOLFRAM

Monster! Do not profane my ear!  
Is that your goal?

TANNHÄUSER  
Do you know the way?

WOLFRAM  
Madman! To hear you fills me with horror!  
Where have you been? Did you not go to  
Rome?

TANNHÄUSER  
Do not speak of Rome!

WOLFRAM  
Were you not at the holy service?

TANNHÄUSER  
Speak not of that!

WOLFRAM  
Were you not there?  
Speak, I implore you!

TANNHÄUSER  
I was indeed in Rome.

WOLFRAM  
Then speak! Tell me all, unhappy man!  
I am seized with deep compassion for you.

TANNHÄUSER  
What say you, Wolfram?  
Are you not, then, my foe?

WOLFRAM  
I was never that, while I thought you honorable!  
But speak! You made your pilgrimage to Rome?

TANNHÄUSER  
Well then, listen!  
Wolfram, you shall learn what happened.  
*Wolfram is about to sit by his side*  
Away from me! Wherever I rest  
is accursed.  
Now listen, Wolfram, listen well!  
With a fervor in my heart such as no penitent  
had ever felt, I sought the way to Rome.  
An angel had banished  
my overweening sin of pride:  
for her sake I wished humbly to atone,  
to beg for the grace once denied me,  
to lighten for her those tears

which she once shed for me, a sinner.  
When at my side  
the heaviest laden pilgrim took the road,  
his burden seemed for me too light:  
when his foot trod the soft ground  
of the meadow,  
my naked sole sought thorns and stones;  
when he refreshed his lips at some fountain,  
I drank in the sun's scorching heat;  
when he offered up his pious prayers to heaven,  
I shed my blood in praise of God;  
when in the hospice he eased his weariness,  
I laid my limbs in snow and ice.  
With eyes closed, not to see its beauties,  
I blindly passed through Italy's fair fields.  
All this I did, wishing to atone in remorse,  
so as to lighten my angel's tears!  
Thus I reached Rome and the holy places  
and lay in prayer at the threshold of the shrine.  
Daylight broke, bells pealed,  
heavenly strains rang out from on high;  
an ardent cry of joy burst forth  
that grace and healing  
were promised to the throng.  
Then I saw him through whom God speaks;  
before him all abased themselves in the dust;  
to thousands he gave his blessing,  
thousands, pardoned, he bade joyfully arise.  
Then I too drew near;  
my head bowed to the ground  
and beating my breast in sorrow,  
I confessed my sins,  
the evil desires that had filled my mind,  
the longing that no penance yet had stilled;  
and for deliverance from these burning fetters  
I cried, pierced with bitter anguish.  
And he to whom I prayed replied:  
"If you have felt such sinful desires  
and warmed yourself at Hell's fires,  
if you have dwelt within the Venusberg,  
you are forever accursed!  
As this staff in my hand  
will nevermore put forth a living leaf,  
so from the burning brand of Hell  
salvation never will bloom for you!  
Then I sank down, crushed and in despair,  
my senses left me. When I awoke,  
night had fallen on the empty square,  
but from afar sounded joyful hymns of praise.

The sweet songs sickened me:  
 from the lying sounds of promise  
 which pierced my soul with icy chill,  
 horror drove me forth in wild flight.  
 It drove me here, where once I so enjoyed  
 bliss and pleasure on her warm breast!  
 To you, fair Venus, I return,  
 to the sweet darkness of your spell;  
 I will come down to your court,  
 where your charms now shall ever smile on me!

WOLFRAM  
 Stop, stop, unhappy man!

TANNHÄUSER  
 Ah, let me not seek in vain;  
 how easily I once did find you!  
 You hear that by men I am accursed;  
 now, sweet goddess, lead me to you!

WOLFRAM  
 Madman, whom are you calling?

TANNHÄUSER  
 Ha! Do you not feel gentle breezes?

WOLFRAM  
 Stay with me, or you are lost!

TANNHÄUSER  
 And do you not breathe sweet fragrance?  
 Do you not hear rapturous voices?

WOLFRAM  
 My heart trembles with wild dread.

TANNHÄUSER  
 That is the dancing host of nymphs!  
 Come on! Come on to bliss and joy!

WOLFRAM  
 Alas! Black magic is abroad!  
 Hell's wild course draws near.

TANNHÄUSER  
 Rapture surges through my senses  
 as this roseate glow I see;  
 this is the magic realm of love.  
 Let us away to the Venusberg!

VENUS  
 Welcome, fickle man!  
 Did earth reject and banish you?  
 And do you nowhere find compassion,  
 and seek for love in my arms?

TANNHÄUSER  
 O Venus, generous of mercy!  
 To you, to you I am driven!

WOLFRAM  
 Enchantments of Hell, away, away!  
 Do not ensnare the hearts of the righteous!

VENUS  
 If you again approach my realm,  
 your pride shall be forgiven;  
 the fount of pleasure will flow for you forever  
 and never shall you fly from me!

TANNHÄUSER  
 All hope of salvation is lost to me;  
 now let me choose the delights of Hell!

WOLFRAM  
 Almighty Lord, help thy servant!  
 Heinrich, one word will set you free:  
 your salvation!

VENUS  
 O come!

TANNHÄUSER  
*to Wolfram*  
 Away from me!

VENUS  
 O come! Be mine now forever!

WOLFRAM  
 You can still gain pardon for your sins!

TANNHÄUSER  
 Never, Wolfram, never! I must away!

WOLFRAM  
 An angel prayed for you on earth,  
 soon she will send her blessing down to you.

VENUS  
 Come to me!

WOLFRAM  
Elisabeth!

TANNHÄUSER  
Elisabeth!

MINSTRELS AND MALE CHORUS  
Hail to the soul that now has flown  
from the body of this virtuous sufferer!

WOLFRAM  
Your angel pleads for you at God's throne,  
and her prayer is heard! Heinrich, you are  
saved!

VENUS  
Alas! Lost to me!

*From the Wartburg a funeral procession bears  
an open coffin.*

MINSTRELS AND MALE CHORUS  
Hers be the angels' blessed reward,  
the rich crown of heavenly joys.

WOLFRAM  
Do you hear the chant?

TANNHÄUSER  
I hear it!

MINSTRELS AND MALE CHORUS  
Blessed be the pure one, who now stands  
among the heavenly host before the Eternal!  
Blessed be the sinner for whom she wept,  
for whom she implored heaven's mercy!

*Wolfram leads Tannhäuser to the coffin, on  
which he sinks.*

TANNHÄUSER  
Holy Elisabeth, pray for me!

*He dies.*

PILGRIMS  
*carrying in their midst a priest's staff covered in  
fresh, green leaves*  
Hail! Hail! Hail to this miracle of grace!  
Salvation to the world is given.  
In this holy hour of night the Lord

hath manifested himself through a miracle.  
The barren staff in the priest's hand  
he has decked with fresh green:  
so to the sinner in Hell's flames  
shall redemption bloom anew!  
Proclaim it through every land  
that through this miracle he found grace!  
God reigns high above the whole world,  
and his compassion is never sought in vain!  
Halleluja! Halleluja Halleluja!

LANDGRAVE, MINSTRELS, KNIGHTS AND  
PILGRIMS  
The grace of God is granted to the penitent;  
now he enters into the bliss of heaven!

*Curtain*