

Richard Wagner's
TANNHÄUSER

singing translation

by

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'Tannhäuser on the Venusberg (1864)'
Henri Fantin-Latour (French, 1836-1904)
Artvee

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TANNHÄUSER
a drama in three acts



‘The Discouraged Artist’
Henri Fantin-Latour (French, 1836-1904)
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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Hermann, Landgrave of Thuringia.....	Bass
<i>his knights and minnesingers:</i>	
Tannhäuser.....	Tenor
Wolfram von Eschenbach.....	Baritone
Walther von der Vogelweide.....	Tenor
Biterolf.....	Bass
Heinrich der Schreiber.....	Tenor
Reinmar von Zweter.....	Bass
Elisabeth, niece of the Landgrave.....	Soprano
Venus.....	Soprano
A Shepherd Boy.....	Soprano
Four Noble Pages.....	Soprano and Alto

Chorus: Thuringian knights, counts and noblemen, noblewomen, older and younger pilgrims, sirens, naiads, nymphs and maenads.

SETTING

Thuringia, near Eisenach; 13th Century

Act I: Inside Venusberg (the Mountain of Venus), also known as Hörselberg, near Eisenach; A valley below Wartburg Castle

Act II: Song Hall, Wartburg Castle

Act III: The valley below Wartburg Castle

Act I

Act I, Scene 1

DRESDEN VERSION (Paris Version appended)



Wagner, Tannhäuser, Act 1, Scene 2
Henri Fantin-Latour (French, 1836-1904)
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Inside Venusberg (the Mountain of Venus): a wide grotto extends into the background and curves Upstage Left until it disappears from view. In the most distant background we see a blue sea with bathing naiads. Sirens recline on the beach. Far Downstage Right, Venus lies stretched out on her couch, as Tannhäuser half-kneels before her with his head on her lap. Pink light suffuses the whole grotto. Center, a group of dancing nymphs. On platforms throughout are pairs of lovers, some of whom join the nymphs' dance.

A line of bacchanalian revellers moves Down from Upstage in a wild dance. With drunken gestures, they make their way through groups of nymphs and pairs of lovers, who get pulled into their dance.

SIRENS: Come hide away here!

(The passionate dance suddenly stops and the dancers listen to the song.)

Come, come and play here
Where the embrace of love's glowing fire
Gladly fulfils your every desire!

(The dance begins again and builds to a frenzy. At its height, the bacchanalian dancers suddenly go limp. The pairs of lovers slowly leave the dance and, pleasantly fatigued, stretch out somewhere comfortable on the Downstage side of the grotto.)

SIRENS: Come hide away here!
Come, come and play here!

(The dancers disappear Upstage, as from Upstage rises an increasingly dense mist. The mist covers the group of sleeping lovers in rosy clouds so that only one section of the stage remains visible, the part where Venus and Tannhäuser have remained in their poses.)

Act I, Scene 2

DRESDEN VERSION (Paris Version appended)

Tannhäuser suddenly raises his head as if startling awake from a dream. Venus, caressing him, pulls him back.

VENUS: Beloved, say, what's on your mind?

TANNHÄUSER: Too much! Too much! Oh, if I could awaken!

VENUS: Say, what troubles you?

TANNHÄUSER: I dreamed I heard the far-off sound,
A sound my ear so long has missed,
I dreamed I heard the sound of bells in the distance.
Oh say, how long since I last hear them ring?

VENUS: What has come over you? Where have you gone?

TANNHÄUSER: The time that here I have dwelled,
I don't know how to measure!
Days and months just seem to pass me by.
How long since I last saw a sunrise?
Last saw the friendly stars up in the heavens?
No green plants have I seen
That bloom and blossom each year when summer comes.
The nightingale I hear no more as she the spring announces.
Will I not hear, not see her e'er again?

VENUS: *(sitting up on her couch)*

Ha! What is this, such ludicrous complaining?
Have you so quickly tired of the banquet
That my affection lays before you?
Could you be sorry you've become a god down here?
Have you so soon forgotten all the pain you suffered
And how happy you are now?
My singer, come, take up your harp and play it!
To love, sing praises with your celebrated voice,
This voice that won you love's own goddess for your own!
To love, sing praises, for you've won her highest prize!

TANNHÄUSER: *(suddenly resolute, picks up his harp and stands formally before Venus)*

Your praise I sing, I praise the wonders gracious
That by your power on me you have bestowed!
May the delight that flows forth from your favour
Lift up my song in loud and joyful tones!

For pleasure, ah!, for exquisite indulgence
My heart did long and all my senses thirst.
You made this world for gods in their refulgence;
Into its charms, this mortal you immersed.

But mortal I am, mortal merely
And of your love I have grown weary.
The gods enjoy your endless fun
But I need change or I'm undone.
This pleasure dome, I find it smothering.
My heart goes seeking after suffering,
So from your kingdom I must flee.
My queen, O my goddess, set me free!

VENUS: What are you saying? What a song!
What tragic tale do you tell?
What happened to the bliss you felt,
The songs of passion it inspired?
What's this? Just how was my affection lacking?
Beloved, tell me, where did I go wrong?

TANNHÄUSER: Praised be your charms and treasured your embraces
And may he happy be who dwells with you!
Envied for always who's in your good graces,
Who's in your arms and shares your godly glow!
Enchanting are the joys of your dominion
Where magical delight shines through and through.
No land on earth could boast of such a kingdom
Yet all that's here is child's play to you.

But I, deep in this rosy bower,
I long to see some trees and flowers,
Long for our sky so blue and clear,
Long for our forests and our fields,

Long for our birds, their tuneful singing,
Long for our bells, their trusty ringing,
So from your kingdom I must flee!
My queen, O my goddess, set me free!

VENUS: *(jumping up from her couch)*
Disloyal knave! What nonsense are you saying?
You dare accept my love and then disdain it?
You praise my love and want to run away?
You're weary of my charms and cannot stay?

TANNHÄUSER: Ah, lovely goddess, do not be offended!

VENUS: You're weary of my charms and cannot stay?

TANNHÄUSER: Your lovely charms are what I run away from!

VENUS: Villain! Betrayer! Ingrate! Woe betide you! Woe!
You mustn't go! I'll never let you leave me!
Villain! Betrayer! Woe betide you!
You mustn't go! I'll never let you leave! You mustn't leave! You mustn't go! Ah!

TANNHÄUSER: Ne'er has my love been greater, never truer
Than now, when I must leave you.
Forever I must leave, now that I must leave you.
Forever I must leave.

VENUS: *(covers her hands with her face and dramatically turns away from Tannhäuser. After a moment, she turns back to him, smiling and seductive.)*
Beloved, come, look at our grotto:
The scent of roses wafts throughout.
It would enchant even a god to
Abide here in this charming house!

Reclining on the pillows downy,
Your limbs are freed from every hurt!
Your burning brow now cool and drowsy,
Exquisite ardour swells in your heart!

Out in the distance bells are sweetly tolling.
They whisper, "Fondly in your arms enfold him!"

As from my lips you sample a godly wine,
As by my eyes you're lit with love divine,
Our union turns into a celebration,
Our feast of love becomes a revelation!
No timid victim to her altar bring, no!
Here with love's own goddess, worship revelling!

SIRENS: (*Off, from a distance*)

Come hide away here!
Come, come and play here!

VENUS: (*as she tries to pull Tannhäuser gently toward her*)

My champion, my beloved!
Would you leave me?

TANNHÄUSER: (*in a state of utmost rapture, drunkenly grabs his harp*)

Of you alone, alone will I sing praises
As, long and loud, your glory I intone!
Your sweet allure begets all that is gracious
And all things beautiful come from you alone!

The glow you kindled in your humble servant,
Its fire burns now brightly just for you!
Against the very world will I, unswerving,
Henceforth become your champion brave and true!

But I must join the world of humans,
For here I live in bondage to you!
I long for my own liberty!
I long for freedom thirstily:
In wars and contests to compete,
Even to death and harsh defeat,
So from your kingdom I must flee!
My queen, O my goddess, set me free!

VENUS: (*with violent fury*)

Get out, mad maniac!
Get out, you traitor! Leave! Who's stopping you?
I set you free!
Get out! Get out!

May you get everything you want!
Ah, may you get just what you want!
Get out! Get out—
Out to the world of cold mankind
With its delusions dull and drab,
The world we pleasure gods escaped
Here in the warming womb of the earth!

Get out, you beggar! Seek to be saved!
Seek the salvation you'll ne'er find!

Soon will the pride seep from your soul.
Humbled I'll see you as you near.
Destroyed, defeated, crawling, you'll come
Beg for the wonder of my charms,
Destroyed, defeated, crawling you'll come
Beg for the wonder of my charms!

TANNHÄUSER: Ah, lovely goddess, fare you well!
Never will I come back to you!

VENUS: (*despondent*)
Ah, if you don't come back to me...
If you don't come back, ah!,
I'll take the whole human race
And curse them, curse them all their days!
They'll seek my wonders but in vain find only,
They'll seek my wonders but in vain find only
The world a wasteland and its knight a knave!

Come back, ah, come to me again!

TANNHÄUSER: Our happy love has reached its end!

VENUS: Come back, oh, heed your heart's own plea!

TANNHÄUSER: Forever must your lover leave!

VENUS: You'll be rejected and disgraced!

TANNHÄUSER: From magic spells, through penance, saved!

VENUS: There's no forgiveness for your crime!
Salvation you will never find!

TANNHÄUSER: My soul will be saved by Maria!

(Venus screams, collapses and disappears. Sudden change of scene.)

Act I, Scene 3

Tannhäuser, without ever having moved, finds himself suddenly in a beautiful valley. Blue skies, sunlight. Upstage Left is Wartburg Castle. Hörselberg is visible to the Right. A path into the mountains leads Off Left. On a small outcropping is a shrine to the Virgin Mary. On a high outcropping sits a young Shepherd, playing his shawm. From high up, Off Right, comes the sound of sheep bells.

SHEPHERD: Dame Holda came from the mountain down
To stroll through meadow and forest.
My ear caught wind of beautiful sounds,
My eye sought a glimpse of the goddess.
I dreamed then many lovely dreams
And as my eyes were opening
The sunlight pleasant shone in,
For May, for May had come in.
Now on my reed I gladly play,
For May is here. It's lovely May!

(The Shepherd plays his shawm. From the direction of Wartburg Castle comes the sound of pilgrims walking towards the mountain.)

PILGRIMS: To You I travel, Christ Jesu.
I place my pilgrim's hope in You.
The Virgin's praise we pilgrims sing.
By her, be blessed our pilgrimage.

(Upon hearing the song, the Shepherd puts down his pipe and listens attentively.)

Ah, heavy hang my sins on me.
No longer can I bear their burden,
So I renounce repose and peace
And gladly choose this troubled journey.
There at the feast of clemency
I'll make confession humbly.
Oh, blessed be he who lives in faith.
Through penitence will he find grace.

(As the pilgrims appear in the mountains across from him, the Shepherd waves his cap at them and calls:)

SHEPHERD: Good luck! Good luck in Rome!
Pray there for blessings on my poor soul!

TANNHÄUSER: *(deeply shaken, sinks to his knees)*
Almighty one be praised!
Great are the wonders of Your mercy!

(The procession of pilgrims passes the shrine of the Virgin Mary and exits Right. The Shepherd takes his shawm and exits Left. The sound of sheep bells recedes.)

PILGRIMS: To You I travel, Christ Jesu.
I place my pilgrim's hope in You.
The Virgin's praise we pilgrims sing.
By her, be blessed our pilgrimage.
Ah, heavy hang my sins on me.
No longer can I bear their burden,
So I renounce repose and peace
And gladly choose this troubled journey.
There at the feast of clemency
I'll make confession humbly.
Oh, blessed be he who lives in faith.
Through penitence will he find grace.

TANNHÄUSER: *(kneeling, deep in prayer)*
Ah, heavy hang my sins on me.
No long can I bear their burden.
I, too, renounce repose and peace
And gladly choose this troubled journey.

(choking back tears, bows his head to the ground and seems to sob)

PILGRIMS: There at the feast of clemency
I'll make confession humbly.
Oh, blessed be he who lives in faith.
Through penitence will he find grace.

(From the distance, bells and hunting horns are heard.)

Act I, Scene 4

From a forest path, Right, the Landgrave and Singers enter one at a time, wearing hunting costumes.

LANDGRAVE: *(noticing Tannhäuser)*
Who's praying there in fervent adoration?

WALTHER: Some penitent.

BITEROLF: Judged by his clothes, he's knightly.

WOLFRAM: *(hurries to Tannhäuser and recognizes him)*
It's Heinrich!

ALL: Heinrich! Heinrich! Is that you?

(Tannhäuser jumps up startled but gets ahold of himself. He silently bows his head to the Landgrave after a fleeting look at the Singers.)

LANDGRAVE: Is that you, really? Have you come to join this group you once so pridefully abandoned?

BITEROLF: Tell us all, why this sudden reappearance?

WALTHER, DER SCHREIBER, REINMAR AND LANDGRAVE: Tell us all!

BITEROLF: To own up or to seek another fight?

WALTHER: Come you as friend here or as foe?

SINGERS: As foe?

WOLFRAM: Don't ask him that!
Is this a prideful posture?

(approaches Tannhäuser in friendship)

We gladly greet you, ardent singer,
Away so long and very greatly missed!

WALTHER: We greet you if you come in peace!

BITEROLF: I greet you if our friend you be!

SINGERS: We greet, we greet you fondly, friend!

LANDGRAVE: Then, too, be welcomed back by me!
Say, where've you been for all this time?

TANNHÄUSER: I wandered off so far, so far away
Where not a moment of repose I found.
Don't ask!
To fight you all I have no wish.
Let us make peace
And let me go my way.

LANDGRAVE: Nonsense! You've only just come back among us!

WALTHER: You mustn't leave!

BITEROLF: We'll never let you go!

WALTHER, DER SCHREIBER, REINMAR AND LANDGRAVE: Stay with us!

TANNHÄUSER: Stop it!
To sloth I give no quarter!
From rest and comfort I abstain!
For I am called to make my journey forward
And I must not look back again!

ALL: Oh, stay, oh, stay!
Oh, stay with us, you singer ardent!
Oh, stay and do not leave your friends!
You sought us out; why hurry onward
When you just now came back again?

TANNHÄUSER: Stop it! I must, must go!

SINGERS: Stay, stay with us!

WOLFRAM: Stay with Elisabeth!

TANNHÄUSER: *(deeply, joyfully shaken, stands transfixed)*

Elisabeth! O heavenly power,
Speak you her gentle name to me?

WOLFRAM: Bear me no ill intention,
I 'twas, spoke her name.

(to the Landgrave)

Allow me, O my liege,
To be the herald of some happy news!

LANDGRAVE: Speak of the spell, the magic spell he cast.
May God lend him the virtue and wisdom to undo it.

WOLFRAM: The day you boldly joined our singing contests,
You won some victories o'er us with your song.
Though other times we were the winning artists,
One prize to you and you alone belonged.

Your magic or, perhaps, your might
Left us to marvel on that night:
How did your song of love and pain
Leave spellbound our most virtuous maid?

But when you left in pride so hasty
Our songs she shut out from her heart.
We watched her rosy cheek grow pasty.
She kept herself from us apart,
Ah, she kept herself from us apart.

Come back to us, you ardent singer,
Keep not your song from us, your friends!
May your return among us bring her,
Our star, among us once again!

SINGERS: Come back to us, you ardent singer!
Come back again!
Conflict and strife be put away!
In harmony our songs will bind us.

We'll brothers be as of this day!

LANDGRAVE: Come back again, you ardent singer!
Come back among us!
Conflict and strife be put away!

(Tannhäuser, deeply moved, heartily embraces Wolfram and the Singers.)

TANNHÄUSER: To her! To her!
Oh, lead me back to her!
Ha! Now I know that I belong here,
Here in the world I'd turned away,
Where heaven's gaze looks down upon me
And meadows bloom in rich display.
The spring, the spring with lovely sounds abounding
Has filled my soul with joy and mirth.
In sweet, impetuous tones resounding,
My heart calls out: To her! To her!
Oh, lead me back to her!

SINGERS: He's home again, who once forsook it.
A miracle returned him here.
His bluster's gone. Whatever took it,
May praises reach its glorious ear!

Now may our songs and may our voices
Sound in our lady's ear most blessed.
May notes ring out in music joyful!
May songs spring forth from every breast!

During the previous, hunters and falconers have entered from the forest and assembled onstage. The hunters blow their horns.

The Landgrave and his Singers turn to the hunters. The Landgrave blows his horn; horns and hounds answer him. As the Landgrave and Singers mount the horses that have been brought from them from Wartburg Castle, the curtain falls.

Act II

Act II, Scene 1



Wagner, Tannhäuser, Act 3
Henri Fantin-Latour (French, 1836-1904)
Picaryl

Song Hall, Wartburg Castle. Upstage, a view of the courtyard and valley.

ELISABETH: Dear hall of song, we're reunited!
How joyfully we meet again,
For soon his song will come revive you

And wake me from my gloomy dream!

E'er since the knight departed,
How empty you have seemed!
He left me heavyhearted;
He left you dull and bleak.

My heart leaps up so high and joyous
Just as you gleam with noble pride.
The man whose singing once revived us
Will soon be by our side!

My heart leaps up so high and joyous
Just as you gleam with noble pride.
The man whose singing once revived us
Will soon be back and by our side!

Joyful, we meet!
Joyful, we meet!
Dear hall of song, we
Joyfully meet,
Joyfully meet!
Dear hall of song, we
Joyfully meet!

Act II, Scene 2

Tannhäuser, accompanied by Wolfram, enters from Upstage and walks with Wolfram down the stairs.

WOLFRAM: She waits there. Worry not; approach her now!

(Wolfram leans against the Upstage wall. Tannhäuser rushes forward and throws himself at Elisabeth's feet.)

TANNHÄUSER: O Princess!

ELISABETH: *(shyly, confused)*

God! Oh, stand up! Leave me!

I dare not see you here!

TANNHÄUSER: Oh, dare! Oh, stay and let me at your feet remain!

ELISABETH: Oh, please get up! Here you should never kneel:

Inside this hall is your kingdom and your realm.

Oh, please get up! Receive my thanks that you've come back again!

But all this time, where were you?

TANNHÄUSER: Far from here in far off, far off places.

Fog of forgetting has, 'twixt the night and now, spread through my mind.

My recollections suddenly have vanished

And only one thing can I still remember:

That I had no more hope you would receive me,

That I might lift my eyes to you in greeting.

ELISABETH: What was it, then,

That led you back to us?

TANNHÄUSER: A miracle! A most astounding holy wonder!

ELISABETH: I bless this holy wonder

With all my heart's devotion!

Forgive, for I know not what I am saying!

I'm dreaming now and foolish as a child.

Helpless, enthralled, abandoned to the wonder,

I know myself no more.

Oh, help me now to solve the mystery of my heart's desire!

The singers' clever ballads
Heard I oft in childhood days.
Their singing and their carols
Seemed but a lovely game,
Their singing and their carols
Seemed but a lovely game.

But what a new and foreign feeling
Your song awoke inside my breast!
It shook me and it sent me reeling!
With sudden joy, my heart it pressed!

New feelings, unfamiliar ardour,
Such longs as I can't explain!
What once I treasured, I discarded
For joy I could not even name!

And when you left, when you went missing,
My joy and my repose were gone.
The ballads sung by fine musicians
To me seemed only empty songs.

Asleep, my dreams were full of suffering.
Awake, my gloom blocked out the sun.
All joy and happiness fled from me.
Heinrich! Heinrich! To me what have you done?

TANNHÄUSER: Then thank the god of love and praise him!
He plucked my harp and wrote the tune.
His voice you heard; my serenades, his.
'Twas he who led me here to you.

ELISABETH AND TANNHÄUSER: Oh, blessed be the hour.
These tidings, blessed be.
And blessed be the power

ELISABETH: That brought you here to me.

TANNHÄUSER: That made you think of me.

ELISABETH: I feel it bright and radiant,
The smile of the sun.
My newfound life awaits me,
I claim the joy I've won!

TANNHÄUSER: My newfound life awaits me,
The life I'd led is done.
I claim with joy breathtaking
Life's loveliest wonder, won!

WOLFRAM: Naught but despair awaits me.
My every hope is gone!

Act II, Scene 3

Landgrave enters from the side. Elisabeth hurries to him and buries her face in his chest.

LANDGRAVE: You? You are here inside this hall that for so long you had avoided? So, did it tempt you, this song contest, at last to join us?

ELISABETH: My uncle! O my kindly father!

LANDGRAVE: Finally has your heart resolved to yield its secret?

ELISABETH: My eyes will tell you;
I can't speak the words.

LANDGRAVE: Then let the words remain unspoken
And keep your secret safe inside,
Its sweet, enchanting spell unbroken,
Until you're ready to confide.

Well then, that which his song so wonderfully
Awoke inside your breast,
He'll soon explain its meaning
And bring it to completion
As beautiful art becomes a beautiful deed.

The nobles of my lands whom I invited
To this rare festival are coming in.
Far more than ever before are here
Because they heard that you're to be the pageant's queen.

Act II, Scene 4

The Landgrave and Elisabeth appear on the balcony to view the arrival of the guests. Four Noble Pages announce the guests as they come in, and look to the Landgrave for orders as to their reception, etc.

Knights and counts enter individually with their noble ladies and retinues. The retinues remain in the background. The knights, counts and their ladies are received by the Landgrave and Elisabeth.

CHORUS: Gladly we greet again the noble song hall.
May art and peace alone within her dwell!
May here our joyful salutation sound long:
Prince of Thuringia! Landgrave Herman hail!

(The assembled guests take their seats in a large semi-circle. The Singers step forward, enthusiastically greet the guests and are shown to their seats by the Pages.

Landgrave rises.)

LANDGRAVE: So many lovely tunes have been performed here
By you, our treasured singers, in this song hall.
With hymns mysterious and with jolly ballads
You equally have gladdened all our hearts.
If we took arms, raised deadly, bloody battle cries
For the glory of our German lands,
If we withstood the Guelphs with brave resistance
And a disastrous conflict thus averted,
So, too, did you win meritorious victory:
Through graciousness and courteous manners,
Through virtue and through faith untarnished
That shine forth clearly from your art,
You've won the highest victory.

So sing another contest here today
Now that our ardent singer has come back again,
He who so sadly long was absent.
What summoned him back to our singers' circle?
What secret glad and wondrous could it be?
Through song, through art, to us he will reveal it.
Therefore, I pose the question to you all:

Who here can love's true nature for me fathom?

He who solves that, who sings it worthily and well,
Wins from Elisabeth the prize.
He'll lay his claim with singing bold and ardent.
I'll make sure she's the one who will reward it!

Come, treasured singers!
Men, take up your harp strings!
The challenge has been laid.
Fight for the prize
And, in advance, accept our grateful thanks!

CHORUS: Hail! Hail! Prince of Thuringia hail!
The arts' protective patron hail!

(The Four Noble Pages step forward. They take a small, rolled up piece of paper from each Singer with the Singer's name written on it and collect the papers in a golden goblet. They bring the goblet to Elisabeth, who reaches in, pulls out one of the pieces of paper and hands it to the Pages. They read the name on it and announce:)

FOUR NOBLE PAGES: Wolfram von Eschenbach, begin now!

(Wolfram rises. Tannhäuser rests on his harp and appears lost in daydreams.)

WOLFRAM: I look around and see such noble persons,
The lofty sight of them delights my breast:
So many heroes fearless, wise and German,
An oaken forest splendid, green and fresh.
And fair and virtuous I find the ladies,
Delicate blossoms, wafting sweet perfume
Such that my eye turns drunken in its gazing.
Before their graces, silent falls my tune.

And then I see a star up in the heavens.
Bright and celestial is it shining there.
Such distance gives me comfort and, with reverence,
Devoutly does my soul sink down in prayer.

And look! It shows to me a wondrous fountain
On which my awe-struck spirit's eye might rest.

That font of joy, all graciousness flows from it.
From it, my heart with nameless joy's refreshed.

That fountain would not suffer my corruption:
I'd never touch it out of sin or lust.
I'd practice self-denial and devotion,
In adoration, shed my heart's last blood!

You nobles may hear in the words I favour
Just how I fathom love's true, purest nature.

CHORUS: Just so! How worthy is your song!

(Tannhäuser, who appeared to wake up toward the end of Wolfram's song, rises.)

TANNHÄUSER: May I count myself happy also?
I've seen what Wolfram sang about.
What man here could that fountain not know?
Listen, I'll praise its virtue now!
But I would overheat with yearning
If I the font could not come near
So I must slake my thirsty burning,
My lips put to its water clear,
In hungry gulps, drink joy unmeasured—
No hesitation mars my bliss—
For it's a font of boundless pleasure
And, like my yearning, limitless.

To fan the fire of my ardour
I'll drink forever at that stream.
So that's what, Wolfram, I regard as
What love's true nature means to me!

(He sits. Elisabeth gestures as if to praise his song but the others receive him with silence. Embarrassed, she takes the gesture back.)

WALTHER: That fountain, the one Wolfram praises,
Is one my spirit also saw.
But with your thirsty, burning blazes,
You, Heinrich, know it not at all.

So take my counsel, I implore it:
That fountain's made of virtue pure,
So you should fervently adore it.
Renounce your fire forevermore!

Touch not that fountain with your lips, then,
To cool your sinful passion's flame!
If you took just a tiny sip, then
Its wondrous purity would fade!

If you should seek after refreshment's mercy,
Water your heart and let your lips go thirsty.

CHORUS: Hail! Hail Walther! Worthy is your ballad!

TANNHÄUSER: (*rising forcefully*)
You, Walther, sang with lofty language
Yet cruelly love you have deflowered.
While timid at that font you languish,
The whole wide world could well dry out!

Give praise to God in His celestial distance.
Look up to heaven and see its starry vision.
Save piety and lofty speech
For them, because they're out of reach.

Instead, give in to blissful touches,
To what your heart and dreams desire.
Give in to supple flesh—it's luscious!
Give in to passion's burning fire
And ecstasy, for, by my measure,
The one true form of love is pleasure!

BITEROLF: (*rises quickly, angrily*)
Get up and fight! We're all against you!
Who here could stand such blasphemy?
Or, if your haughty pride will let you,
Then listen, sinner, now to me!

When I'm by courtly love inspired,
It fortifies my knightly strength.

To keep love's purity undefiled
I'd proudly die in its defence.
Our ladies' virtue is a treasure
I'd give my knightly life to guard.
But to defend your puerile pleasure—
For that, I'd not unsheathe my sword!

CHORUS: Hail Biterolf! Here are our swords!

TANNHÄUSER: *(with increasing scorn)*

Ha! Foolish braggart Biterolf!
Sing you of love, you grizzled wolf?
I'm certain that you did not speak
Of what seems pleasurable to me!

What pleasure, poor man, could you fathom?
You've never been loved or adored.
As for the paltry joys you've managed,
For them, I'd not unsheathe my sword!

CHORUS: Don't let him finish!
Silence this effrontery!

LANDGRAVE: *(to Biterolf, who has drawn his sword)*

Put down your swords!
You singers, keep it peaceful!

(Wolfram rises and, as he begins his song, the room becomes profoundly quiet.)

WOLFRAM: O heaven, deep in prayer I ask you:
Grant me your blessing on my song!
May sinfulness and lust be cast out
From this, our pure and noble throng!

Let now, O love celestial,
Your name my song extol!
Your loveliness angelic
Has pierced my humble soul!

God sent you to be near us.
I follow from afar,

Knowing you'll chastely steer us
To heaven, where shines your star!

TANNHÄUSER: *(in a state of ecstasy)*

You, Goddess of Love, alone receive my praises
As, long and loud, your glory I intone!
Your sweet allure begets all that is gracious
And all things beautiful come from you alone!
Who's held you close in all your fiery refulgence
Knows love's true nature there alone is found!
Poor souls who never savoured love's indulgence,
Get ye, get ye into the Venus Mount!

(General outrage and horror. The women leave the hall, greatly distressed and disgusted. Of them, Elisabeth alone remains behind and observes the confrontation with increasing anxiety. Pale, she leans against a marble column, using all her strength to remain upright.)

The Landgrave, knights and Singers have left their seats and come together. Tannhäuser, standing far Right, remains for a moment in his ecstatic trance.)

CHORUS: Ha! He's a madman!

Flee from him!

You heard: He was in Venusberg!

Away! You heard yourself!

His sinful rhyme

Exposes his most sinful crime!

He sampled devilish lust most vile:

In Venusberg he stayed a while!

The horror! Awful! Damnable!

So thrust your swords up to the hilt!

Return him to hell's fiery gates!

He is condemned, he is disgraced!

(They unsheathe their swords and point them at Tannhäuser. Elisabeth throws herself between Tannhäuser and the men.)

ELISABETH: Stay your hand!

CHORUS: *(shocked)*

What is this! What? What is this?

Elisabeth, the virgin chaste, speaks for the sinner?

ELISABETH: (*shielding Tannhäuser with her body*)

Stay back! The threat of death means naught to me!
How could your weapons ever hurt me
After the mortal blow he struck me with his words?

SINGERS AND LANDGRAVE: Elisabeth, how could you say this?

Have you been so infatuated
That you would shield the man who shamed you,
The villain who betrayed your trust?

ELISABETH: What of my trust! Think of his soul!
Or would you keep salvation from him?

SINGERS AND LANDGRAVE: He cast aside all hope of heaven.

Redemption he will never win!
He's cast his lot in with the devil
So we'll despatch him to his sin!

ELISABETH: Stay back from him!
Not one of you can judge him!
Savages! Cast aside your raging swords!
Obey instead the virgin chaste and pure!
Now hear through me
The will of God decreed!

This broken soul has been imprisoned,
Held captive by a magic curse.
Why should salvation not be his if
He does his penance on this earth?

How could you strong, you pure upright men,
How could you so deny the Lord?
You'd crush a sinner's hope to spite him
When none of you was by him hurt?

See me, the maiden, the fair blossom
He crushed without a single thought,
Into whose tender, loving bosom
He, laughing, dealt a mortal shock!

I plead for him; I plead he'll go on living
 To find the peace that penitence provides!
 May bravely he believe in God's forgiveness:
 'Twas for his sake our Savior died!
 'Twas for his sake, too, that our Savior died!

TANNHÄUSER: (*collapses, wracked with contrition*)
 Save, save this wretched sinner!

SINGERS AND LANDGRAVE: An angel came from heaven's aether;
 The counsel pure of God she brought.
 Look there, you dastardly deceiver!
 Acknowledge all the harm you've wrought!

You caused her death; for your life she petitions.
 Whose hardened heart won't soften at her plea?
 I won't forgive the sins that he committed
 But I will do as heaven asks of me.

TANNHÄUSER: To bring the sinner to salvation
 God sent His angel down to me.
 But, ah, a carnal conversation
 With her I sought lasciviously!

To You do I send my petition skyward,
 Whose saving angel went unrecognized!
 Oh, pity me, in sin so deeply mired:
 Cruelly I heaven's messenger denied!
 Oh, pity me! Oh, pity me! Pity, pity me!

LANDGRAVE: (*solemnly comes Center*)
 A most terrible crime has been committed.
 It stole upon us with the two-faced, shifty smile
 Of sin's own curse-bedevilled son.

We banish you from here! With us tarry no longer!
 You have stained our home and hearth with sin
 And wrath will rain from heaven itself
 Upon this house if you stay longer here!

To save yourself from flames of hell eternal,
A single path awaits.
Though I must spurn you,
I'll point the way:
Walk it to save your soul!

A multitude has come together,
Penitent pilgrims from my lands.
The old have started their endeavour;
The young still in the valley stand.

Though they've but venal sins committed
Their hearts won't let them live in peace.
Of sin to finally be acquitted
They'll go to Rome to be redeemed.

SINGERS, LANDGRAVE AND CHORUS: So join their great procession,
Find clemency and grace!
Kneel down and make confession
And penitence embrace!

Go kneel before the throne of
God's vicar here below
But don't you dare come home if
His grace he won't bestow!

Although our wrath subsided--
An angel intervened--
This sword is poised to smite you
If you persist in sin!

ELISABETH: Receive him as a pilgrim,
O God of love and grace!
Pardon the mortal sinner,
His penitence embrace!

For him do I petition,
For him alone I pray.
Oh, save him from perdition
And from a wicked way.

Ah, joyfully, this proffer,
This sacrifice I make:
My life for his I offer.
Oh, take it for his sake!

TANNHÄUSER: Ah, now that I've been banished
Ah, how can I repent?
Deliverance has vanished!
How can I make amends?

Ah! I'll become a pilgrim.
I'll walk the pilgrim's way
Then kneel down in contrition,
In dust until I'm saved
And with her reconciled,
My guardian angel kind,
The one whom I reviled,
Who trades her life for mine.

(from far Upstage, off, as if echoing from the valley:)

CHORUS OF YOUNG PILGRIMS: So at the feast of clemency
I'll make confession humbly.
Oh, blessed be he who lives in faith.
Through penitence will he find grace.

(At the song, the general mood softens. The song fills Tannhäuser with hope and he races to the exit.)

TANNHÄUSER: *(hurrying away)*
To Rome!

ALL: *(calling after him)*
To Rome!

Act III

Act III, Scene 1



Wagner, Tannhäuser, Act 3
Henri Fantin-Latour (French, 1836-1904)
Picaryl

The curtain rises on the valley below Wartburg Castle as in Act I, scene 3. Evening is coming. Elisabeth lies prostrate at the shrine of the Virgin Mary on the small outcropping, Left. Wolfram enters Right from the first path and stops when he sees Elisabeth.

WOLFRAM: I knew I'd find her here in prayer and silence
As I so often find her
When, alone, from the woods I roam
Into the valley yonder.
Afflicted by his mortal injury
And wracked with deepest pain and misery,
For him unceasingly she prays:
O sacred love, your power is great!

She waits for the arrival of the pilgrims.
It's autumn now; from Rome they'll soon return.
Will he be with the pardoned when they come?
This is her question, what she prays for.
Ye heavenly host, grant her this favour!
But should he not come back again,
Oh, send her help, relieve her pain,
Oh, send her help, relieve her pain!

(from Off: the older pilgrims come from the far distance slowly closer)

CHORUS OF PILGRIMS: With joyful eyes, O my homeland, I see you.
Beloved meadows, I joyfully greet you.
Now I hang up my walking stick,
For I've completed my pilgrimage!

ELISABETH: That is their song!

WOLFRAM: The pilgrims' song.

ELISABETH: They're here! They're coming home!

WOLFRAM: This is the chanting pious of those
Who sought salvation's grace and found it.

ELISABETH: O heaven, show me now my task,
That I may worthily fulfil it!

WOLFRAM: O heaven, strengthen now her heart
For this, her life's deciding moment!

(The pilgrims enter Down Right and cross slowly through the valley. Elisabeth searches feverishly among them for Tannhäuser.)

CHORUS: Through penitence I'm reconciled
With Him, my Savior meek and mild
Who crowned my sin with blessings great,
To whom my song I dedicate!

Salvation's grace is the penitent given;
He'll live one day in the wonder of heaven.
Of hell and death he's not afraid.
For this, I praise God all my days!
Hallelujah!
Hallelujah for evermore, for evermore!

(pilgrims gradually exit Up Left)

ELISABETH: *(pained but composed)*
No, he has not returned!

CHORUS: With joyful eyes, O my homeland, I see you.
Beloved meadows, I joyfully greet you.
Now I hang up my walking stick....

Act III, Scene 2

ELISABETH: *(sinks to her knees with great solemnity)*

Almighty Virgin, maid angelic,
Most blessed, hear my cry of pain.
Down in the dust, oh, let me perish.
Oh, lift me from this earthly plane,
Oh, lift me from this earthly plane.

Grant I may come, angelic, chaste,
Into your pure and blessed domain;
Grant I may come, angelic, chaste,
Into your pure and blessed domain.

If ever in my foolish yearning
I turned my heart away from you,
If I was gripped by wishes worldly,
If sinful longing in me grew,
I struggled so to mortify it,
To strike it dead or purify it.

If every sin I can't atone for
Then by your grace my soul receive,
By your grace my soul receive
So I may humbly adore you
And worthily unto you cleave;

There I will beg you, righteous maid:
Spare you his soul and grant him grace;
There I will beg you, righteous maid:
Spare you his soul and grant him grace!

(remains a while in prayer until she sees Wolfram approach. With a gesture, she asks him not to speak with her.)

WOLFRAM: Elisabeth, won't you let me escort you?

(With gestures, she thanks him with all her heart for his steadfast, faithful love but tells him that her fate lies in heaven where she must fulfil her duty, and that it is his duty to let her go there and not to follow. Elisabeth exits.)

Act III, Scene 3

WOLFRAM: *(watches her go, sits at the base of a hill, Right, and plays his harp)*

Like death's dark shadow, evening falls upon us
And wraps the vale in dark and sombre garments;
The soul that yearns to heaven to steal away
Still fears the flight through darkness it must take.

Then I see you, O shining star, O vision.
Your gentle glow illuminates the distance.
You part the shroud of evening with your light
And lead us out of the valley of night.

O you, my lovely evening star,
Fondly I greet you from afar,
My heart, which ne'er betrayed her trust,
Greets her as she shimmers over us,
As she departs this earthly veil
To be transformed into an angel;
As she departs this earthly veil
To be transformed into an angel.

(eyes heavenward, continues to play his harp)

ACT III, Scene 4

Night has come. Tannhäuser enters in ragged pilgrim's clothing. His face is pale and disfigured. He takes exhausted steps, supported by his walking stick.

TANNHÄUSER: I hear a harp string sound.
It rings so sadly,
From her it can't have come!

WOLFRAM: Who are you, pilgrim?
Why do you wander lonely?

TANNHÄUSER: Who am I? But I know you full well.
Wolfram, that's you,

(derisively)

the skilled and expert singer!

WOLFRAM: *(startled)*
Heinrich! You?
What brings you here into this valley? Talk!
Dare you come unforgiven?
Dare set foot upon this land?
Dare show your face here?

TANNHÄUSER: Be without care, my kindly singer!
You I don't seek and not your kindred, either.

(with eery lewdness)

I seek someone to show the way unto me,
The way that once with wondrous ease I found.

WOLFRAM: Which way is that?

TANNHÄUSER: The way to Venusberg!

WOLFRAM: Degenerate! Do not profane my ear!
There you would travel?

TANNHÄUSER: Know you then the way?

WOLFRAM: Maniac! Terror grips me when you speak!
Where were you?
Did you not go to Rome?

TANNHÄUSER: Speak not of Rome!

WOLFRAM: You missed the Holy Service?

TANNHÄUSER: Speak not of that!

WOLFRAM: You did not go? Tell me, I beg of you!

TANNHÄUSER: *(as if remembering, with painful fury)*
Yes, I did go to Rome.

WOLFRAM: So talk! So tell me!
Unhappy man, I'm seized with deepest sympathy for you!

TANNHÄUSER: *(moved and astonished, observes Wolfram for a long time)*
What say you, Wolfram?
Then are you not my foe?

WOLFRAM: Ne'er was I that...
Not when I thought you pious.
How went your pilgrimage to Rome?

TANNHÄUSER: Alright, I'll tell.
You, Wolfram, you should know what happened.

(Exhausted, he sits against the base of the hill. Wolfram moves to sit at his side.)

Away from me! The place I rest my body bears my curse!

(Wolfram remains standing a short distance from Tannhäuser.)

So hear, Wolfram, my words!

With deep contrition
As no penitent has felt before,

I sought the way to Rome.
An angel it was, ah!,
Who showed to me the wickedness of my transgression.
For her I made my pilgrim's journey
To find the grace I'd been denied,
To ease the angel's tears of mercy
That for this sinner she once cried!

Around me pilgrims bore their burdens heavy.
The weightiest of them seemed all too light
So when their feet stepped on the meadow gently,
My naked soles sought every thorn and spike.
When water from the well their mouths replenished,
I sucked the burning sunlight's blazes bright.
The pious sent their spoken prayers to heaven;
I shed my blood His name to glorify.
When in the hostel, weary, they lay resting,
I put my limbs to bed in snow and ice.
I closed my eyes to nature's wondrous beauty
And blindly did my pilgrim's holy duty.
Thus shamed and thus abased I made my journey
To ease my angel's gentle tears of mercy!

I got to Rome in all her holy glory
And lay in supplication at her doorstep.
At break of day, cathedral bells were ringing
As, from above, sweet anthems floated toward us.
The voices rose so joyful in their singing,
Of mercy mild they made a promise for us.

Then I saw him who speaks for God in person.
Before him in the dust they all bowed down.
He pardoned many thousands, offered mercy
As joyfully they rose up from the ground.

Then I approached,
My head bowed down in deference,
Chastised myself and beat my breast in penance
For the delight I took in base desire,
For longing that no penance yet has quelled.
For salvation from this blinding fire,

Him I implored amid my pain and guilt.

And he whom I implored spoke thus:
“Did you indulge in lust and pride?
Have you the fiery hell-flames fanned?
Did you in Venusberg reside?
Then for eternity, you're damned!
Just as the staff here in my hand
Never again will grow green leaves,
So from hell's red-hot burning brand
Salvation's flowering you'll ne'er see.”

I sank as if destroyed by his pronouncement.
I fell into a faint. When I awoke
The square was empty and I was alone
As distant hymns of grace around me sounded.
Disgusted, the songs I did despise!
The hymns of grace were naught but dirty lies
That cut my soul with sharp and icy blows,
So stumbling, horrified, I rose to go!
From there I went to find that lavish nest
Where comfort I'll find on her burning breast!

(with harrowing rapture)

I'll come back, Venus, to your kingdom,
Back to your palace deep in earth.
I'll gather up my sins and bring them
To meet your charms' eternal mirth!

WOLFRAM: Oh, stop, oh, stop your madness!

TANNHÄUSER: Ah! I'll no more seek grace and mercy!
To find you I've not far to roam!
You heard how humankind has cursed me:
Now, gentle goddess, guide me home!

(Darkest night. Light fog gradually fills the stage.)

WOLFRAM: *(horrified)*
It's madness! Ah, maniac, whom do you call?

TANNHÄUSER: Ha! Feel you not the gentle breezes?
And smell you not perfume that pleases?
Hear you not voices resounding?
Those are the dancing nymphs 'round us crowding!
They bring, they bring, they bring, they bring delight and bliss!

WOLFRAM: Stay here! Stop now or else you'll fall,
You'll fall into the fiery pit!
Ah! Wicked magic now appears!
The hellhounds gallop wildly near!

(The fog begins to glow in a rosy light.)

TANNHÄUSER: Enchantment fills me with its sweet fire!
The rosy dawn is rolling in!
Yes, this is love's enchanted empire!
To Venusberg, we've broken in!

(A chaotic whirl of dancing figures can be seen. Venus appears, bathed in bright, rosy light, lying on her couch.)

VENUS: Hello again, unfaithful man!
So, from the faithful were you banned?
And did you meet with such disgraces
That you've come back to my embraces?

TANNHÄUSER: Dame Venus, merciful and mighty!
I'm drawn, I'm drawn into your arms!

WOLFRAM: Magic of Hades, get behind me!
The chaste and pure one do not harm!

VENUS: If you've come back to me, my treasure,
Then I'll forgive your naughty deed.
You'll move back into my dome of pleasure
And never will I let you leave!

TANNHÄUSER: *(pulls himself wildly, decisively away from Wolfram)*
I've lost all hope of my salvation;
Now let the charms of hell replace them!

WOLFRAM: Almighty, guide him, I beseech!
Heinrich, Heinrich, one word can set you free, redeemed!

VENUS: *(with increasing fear)*
Oh, come! Oh, come! Forever now be mine!

TANNHÄUSER: *(to Wolfram)*
Get back! Away from me!

WOLFRAM: *(struggles with Tannhäuser)*
You, sinner, may yet find salvation!

VENUS: Oh, come! Come, oh, come!

TANNHÄUSER: No, Wolfram! No! I have to leave!

WOLFRAM: Your angel kneels in supplication.
Soon in the next world she will be.

TANNHÄUSER: Stop it!

VENUS: Come, oh, come! To me! To me!

WOLFRAM: Elisabeth!

(Tannhäuser, who has just pulled himself free, remains rooted to the spot.)

TANNHÄUSER: Elisabeth!

CHORUS: *(Off)*
Her holy soul has slipped its bond,
The body of the martyred one!

WOLFRAM: Your angel pleads before the throne of God.
Her prayer is heard!
Heinrich, you are redeemed!

VENUS: No! I have lost him!

(She sinks and disappears. The fog vanishes completely. It is dawn. From Wartburg comes Elisabeth's funeral procession carrying torches.

The older pilgrims lead the procession, followed by the Singers, who bear the open coffin in which Elisabeth's body may be seen. The Landgrave, knights and nobles follow the coffin.)

CHORUS: Hers be the angel's blessed wage;
Heavenly joy, her just reward.

WOLFRAM: Say, can you hear their song?

TANNHÄUSER: I hear it!

CHORUS: Blessed be the pure one who now unites
With all the rest of the host of the heavens!

(Here, Wolfram gestures to the Singers. Moved, they recognize Tannhäuser and put the coffin down.)

Blessed be the sinner for whom she cried,
For whom she begged that grace be given.

(Tannhäuser, accompanied by Wolfram to the coffin, bends his body over Elisabeth's and slowly sinks down.)

TANNHÄUSER:
Blessed Saint Elisabeth, pray for my soul!

(He dies. All extinguish their torches and lay them down. Morning light illuminates the scene.)

YOUNG PILGRIMS: Saved! Saved! By mercy's wonder saved!
Redemption to the world He gave!
It happened in night's holy hour
When God displayed His wondrous power:
A barren staff in priestly hands
By God was crowned with fresh green leaves!
Thus sinners who in hell did land
By this same power are redeemed!
Proclaim aloud in every place

That by this wonder he found grace!
High above all the world is God
And godly mercy is no lark!

SINGERS, LANDGRAVE, KNIGHTS, OLDER PILGRIMS: By godly grace, her
petition's accepted.
He enters now the repose of the blessed!

YOUNGER PILGRIMS: Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

Final Curtain.

END

PARIS VERSION

Act I, Scene 1

Inside of Venusberg (the Mountain of Venus), also called Hörselberg, near Eisenach. A wide grotto Upstage follows a curve around Stage Left and extends until it disappears from view. From an opening in the rocks through which dim daylight shines, is a greenish waterfall that plunges down the whole cliff face, foaming and crashing wildly over the rocks. From the basin that receives its water, a stream flows Upstage where it forms a pool in which the Naiads bathe. Sirens recline on its banks.

On both sides of the grotto are irregularly shaped cliffs bedecked with wonderful, tropical, coral-like growths. In front of one grotto opening that leads Up Right and from which dim, rosy light shines, Venus reclines on her couch. Before her kneel the Three Graces, charming entwined with one another. To either side of the couch and behind it, Cupids are heaped and tangled together like tired children asleep after play. The whole Downstage is lit from below by a magical red light, which strongly contrasts with the green waterfall and its foamy white waves. In the furthest background, the banks of the lake are lit with a moonlight-like light blue.

As the curtain rises, Youths lie on high outcroppings holding goblets. Immediately, they hurry to the Nymphs, who flirtatiously beckon to them from below. The Nymphs have begun an alluring dance around the waterfall's foamy pool, designed to attract the Youths to them.

The Youths join in. They pair off and exchange partners. Pursuits, escapes and charming flirtations enliven the dance.

From far Upstage a train of Maenads comes forward and breaks into the dance, encouraging the pairs to wild lust with drunkenly animated gestures. The lovers embrace in most ardent passion.

Satyrs and Fauns appear from clefts in the rocks and, dancing, interpose themselves between the lovers and the Maenads. In their hunt for the Nymphs they amplify the confusion. The general tumult rises to a climax.

At this point, the Three Graces get up in horror. They try to put a stop to the mad goings on and make the participants leave. Powerless and afraid of being drawn into the mayhem themselves, they turn to the sleeping Cupids, shake them awake and send them flying into the air. These flutter upwards in all directions like a flock of birds. They form battle lines and, commanding the entire cavern, unleash a hail of arrows on the tumult below.

The wounded, suddenly gripped by a powerful longing for love, leave off their wild dance and sink down in exhaustion. The Graces gently take control of the wounded and lead them, by drunken pairs, with light force Upstage. The Maenads, Fauns, Satyrs, Nymphs and Youths withdraw, pursued by Cupids.

An increasingly thick rosy mist settles over the stage. It covers first the Cupids, then the whole area until only the Three Graces, Venus and Tannhäuser remain visible. The Graces, gracefully linking arms, come Downstage to Venus, to tell her of the victory they won over the wildly carousing subjects of her kingdom. Venus gives them a grateful glance.

The heavy mist Upstage dissolves, revealing a cloud-picture of the Rape of Europa, who, carried through the blue sea on the back of the flower-garlanded white bull, is accompanied by Triton and nereids.

SIRENS: Come hide away here!
Come, come and play here
Where the embrace of love's glowing fire
Gladly fulfils your every desire!

(The rosy mist closes in again. The picture disappears and the Graces perform an interpretive dance whose theme is the secret meaning of this picture as a work of love.

The rosy mist lifts again. Now in soft moonlight Leda can be seen reclining on the bank of a woodland lake as the swan swims up to her and affectionately lays its head on her bosom.)

SIRENS: Come hide away here!
Come, come and play here!

(This picture also fades from view. Gradually, the mist rises completely and the grotto can be seen, lonely and quiet. The Graces bow impishly to Venus and slowly depart in the direction of the love grotto. Deepest silence. Venus and Tannhäuser have not changed position.)

Act I, Scene 2

Tannhäuser suddenly raises his head as if startling awake from a dream. Venus, caressing him, pulls him back.

VENUS: Beloved, say, what's on your mind?

TANNHÄUSER: Too much, too much! Oh, if I could awaken!

VENUS: Tell me what's the matter!

TANNHÄUSER: I dreamed I heard the far off sound,
A sound my ear so long has missed,
I dreamed I heard the sound of bells in the distance.
Oh say, how long since I last hear them ring?

VENUS: Where have you gone? What has come over you?

TANNHÄUSER: The time that here I have dwelled,
I don't know how to measure!
Days and months just seem to slip away.
How long since I last saw a sunrise?
Last saw the friendly stars up in the heavens?
No green plants have I seen
That bloom and blossom each year when summer comes.
The nightingale I hear no more as she the spring announces.
Will I not hear or see her e'er again?

VENUS: Ha! What's this nonsense? What's this complaining?
Have you become so tired of the banquet that my affection lays before you?
Or else, what? You regret that you've become a god?
Have you so soon forgotten all the pain you suffered
And how happy here you are now?
My singer, come! Come take your harp strings and pluck them!
To love sing praises with the celebrated singing
That won you love's own goddess for your very own!
To love sing praises, for you've won her highest prize!

TANNHÄUSER: *(suddenly resolute, picks up his harp and stands formally before Venus)*

Your praise I sing, I praise the marvels gracious

That by your power on me you have bestowed!
May the delight that flows forth from your favour
Lift up my song in loud and joyful tones!

For pleasure, ah!, for exquisite indulgence
My heart did long and all my senses thirst.
You made this world for gods in their refulgence.
Into its charms, this mortal you immersed.

But mortal I am, mortal merely
And of your love I have grown weary.
The gods enjoy your endless fun
But I need change or I'm undone.
This pleasure dome, I find it smothering.
My heart goes seeking after suffering,
So from your kingdom I must flee.
My queen, O my goddess, set me free!

VENUS: What are you saying? What a song!
What tragic tale do you tell?
What happened to the bliss you felt,
The songs of passion it inspired?
What's this? Just how was my affection lacking?
Beloved, tell me, where did I go wrong?

TANNHÄUSER: Praised be your charm and treasured your embraces
And may he happy be who dwells with you!
Envied for always who's in your good graces,
Who's in your arms and shares your godly glow!

Enchanting are the joys of your dominion
Where magical delight shines through and through.
No land on earth could boast of such a kingdom
Yet all that's here is child's play to you.

But I, deep in this rosy bower,
I long to see some trees and flowers,
Long for our sky so blue and clear,
Long for our forests and our fields,
Long for our birds, their tuneful singing,
Long for our bells, their trusty ringing,

So from your kingdom I must flee!
My queen, O my goddess, set me free!

VENUS: *(jumping up from her couch)*
Disloyal knave! What nonsense are you saying?
You dare accept my love and then disdain it?
You praise my love and want to run away?
You're weary of my charms and cannot stay?

TANNHÄUSER: Ah, lovely goddess, do not be offended!

VENUS: You're weary of my charms and cannot stay?

TANNHÄUSER: Your lovely charms are what I run away from!

VENUS: Villain! Betrayer! Ingrate! Woe betide you!
You must not go! I'll never let you leave!
You mustn't go! No! No! Ah!

TANNHÄUSER: Ne'er has my love been greater, never truer
Than now, when I must leave you evermore!

VENUS: *(covers her hands with her face and dramatically turns away from Tannhäuser. After a moment, she turns back to him, smiling and seductive.)*
Beloved! Come, look at our grotto:
The scent of roses wafts throughout.
It would enchant even a god to
Abide here in this charming house!

Reclining on the pillows downey,
Your limbs are freed from every hurt.
Your burning brow now cool and drowsy,
Exquisite ardor swells in your heart!

Come, dearest friend, come follow me! Come!

SIRENS: *(Off, from a distance)*
Come hide away here!

VENUS: Out in the distance bells are sweetly tolling.
They whisper, "Fondly in your arms enfold him!"

As my lips greet you, as my gaze meets you,
 You sip a drink divine, love's gaze upon you shines.
 Our union turns into a celebration,
 Our feast of love becomes a revelation!
 No timid victim to her altar bring:
 Here with love's own goddess, worship reveling!

(as she tries to pull Tannhäuser gently toward her)

Tell me, my friend, tell me, beloved: would you leave?

TANNHÄUSER: *(in a state of utmost rapture, drunkenly grabs his harp)*

Of you alone, alone will I sing praises
 As, long and loud, your glory I intone!
 Your sweet allure begets all that is gracious
 And all things beautiful come from you alone!

The glow you kindled in your humble servant,
 Its fire burns now brightly just for you!
 Against the very world will I, unswerving,
 Henceforth become your champion brave and true!

But I must join the world of humans,
 For here I live in bondage to you!
 I long for my own liberty!
 I long for freedom thirstily:
 In wars and contests to compete,
 Even to death and harsh defeat,
 So from your kingdom I must flee!
 My queen, O my goddess, set me free!

VENUS: *(with violent fury)*

Get out! Witless madman! Get out! Go!
 You traitor, leave! Who's stopping you?
 Leave! I set you free! Get out, you beggar!
 Ah, may you get just what you want!
 Get out! Get out--

Out to the world of cold mankind
 With its delusions dull and drab,
 The world we pleasure gods escaped

Here in the warming womb of the earth.

Get out, you beggar! Seek to be saved!
Seek the salvation you'll ne'er find!

Those whom you haughtily abandoned
And mocked in the hall that you did flee,
You'll beg for their compassion!
There in that hall you'll beg them on your knees!

Then brightly will your shame shine
And they will laugh at your disgrace!
Outlawed and cursed, ha!, I see you come crawling back
Stooped and genuflecting.

“Oh, could you once more find her who on you once smiled!
Ah! If once more she would open the portals of her pleasure!”

On the doorstep, broken,
Prostrate there in the dust,
Where in comfort once he had reveled,
He begs and pleads for mercy, not affection!
Go run, go flee, beggar!
Knives I scorn. For heroes only is my realm!

TANNHÄUSER: No! My pride will spare you all that trouble.
To come back would dishonor me!
This man who must leave you, O goddess,
He'll leave and go away for good!

VENUS: *(with a scream)*
Ah! You'd go away for good?
How could I...
Ah! How could he...
Leave me for good?
How could I think it
Or understand it?
My beloved, ne'er to return?

(with tender hesitation)

How ever did I fail him or so neglect my duty
 That I'm denied the joy of pardoning my friend?
 The queen I am of love and the goddess of all beauty:
 Should I not be allowed consolation to lend?
 Oh, how once I cried and smiled,
 I listened and I yearned for
 The music proud you sang me,
 That I've not heard for so long!
 Oh, say: How could you ever suppose that
 I'd show you no compassion
 If your soul were to beseech me someday
 And I should hear it?
 My sweetest comfort I found within your arms.
 Oh, for that let me not suffer:
 Oh, spurn not the comfort I would give!

If you do not come back then I will curse the whole wide world!
 May a wasteland forever be the world the goddess shuns!

(despondently implores him)

Oh, come back to me!
 Trust in my grace, in my love pledge!

TANNHÄUSER: Who leaves behind a goddess, leaves every hope of grace!

VENUS: Don't let your pride pull your heartstrings,
 For they long to come back to me!

TANNHÄUSER: I long for mortal combat,
 Not ecstasy and bliss!
 Ah, can't you understand it, goddess?
 It is death I go seeking!
 It's death I run to find!

VENUS: Come back when from you death runs away,
 When you're shut out e'en from your grave!

TANNHÄUSER: My death, my grave, in my heart have their place.
 Through prayer and penance I'll find repose and peace!

VENUS: For repose you're not destined!
You're doomed to rejection!
Come back to me someday and be saved!

TANNHÄUSER: Goddess of ecstasy and bliss, no!
In you I will not find peace or repose!
I'll be saved by Maria!

(Venus disappears. Sudden change of scene.)

END Act I, Scene 2 PARIS VERSION