

**“Though this be madness, yet there is method in’t.”**  
**A Counterfactual Analysis of Richard Wagner’s *Tannhäuser***

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Much like Wagner himself, the eponymous hero of *Tannhäuser* treads a path of stark contrasts and rapid swings. From Wartburg to the Venusberg and to the Vatican, the gifted bard transforms from self-centered artist to seduced disciple, disillusioned devotee, hopeful lover, self-loathing pilgrim and finally redeemed martyr. He tries everything and everything is trying. These contrasts reach a peak in the opera’s central episode, the song contest at Wartburg. Tannhäuser has just been welcomed at the court, received Elisabeth’s favor and affection, and is ready to compete for the contest’s prize, one as lofty as possibly the princess’ hand. Instead of securing his reintegration to Wartburg with a brilliant performance, however, he spoils the event with insolent remarks and the exhibitionist disclosure of his Venusberg experience. His behavior offends his peers, scandalizes the court, breaks Elisabeth’s heart, and brings him to the edge of death. Why would Tannhäuser sacrifice everything for nothing?

Character flaws may be one answer. By this time in the opera, we know that his pride led him away from Wartburg:

Landgraf.

... Kehrest in den Kreis  
zurück, den du in Hochmuth stolz verließest?

LANDGRAF

... Have you returned to the circle  
you forsook in haughty arrogance?

Wolfram.

... als du uns stolz verlassen,

WOLFRAM

... when, in haughtiness, you left us,<sup>1</sup>

(Act 1, sc. 4, ll. 387-88, 458)

In the Venusberg, we find him incapable of fulfilling his duties (all attempts to praise the goddess end up in complaints and self-pity) and his betrayal of Venus with the Virgin Mary (“mein Heil ruht in Maria!” [my salvation rests in Mary!]) Act 1, sc. 2, l. 302) is followed by swapping the latter for Princess Elisabeth and then her, too, for a limelight moment of swaggering self-adulation. This, in turn, he publicly regrets preferring penance over sin, a penchant he is no longer sure of when he

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpts from the libretto are from Wagner’s *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen* (1871), reprinted in Richard Wagner, *Dokumente und Texte zu Tannhäuser und der Sängerkrieg auf Wartburg*, ed. Peter Jost and Cristina Urchueguía (Mainz: Schott Music, 2007), 491-524.

finally returns to Wartburg. Thus, Tannhäuser's irrational behavior in the song contest is not surprising; indeed, it prepares us for the opera's tragic end. A man of such swings of mood and action will never find peace in this world.

Another explanation points the finger to Wagner himself, who forged a story out of two loosely connected tales, recorded in the opera's title (*Tannhäuser und der Sängerkrieg auf Wartburg*). The need for formal discipline (for example, having the big climax just before the end of Act 2) overrode that for dramatic conviction. Whether for structural or philosophical reasons, Wartburg had to appear midway between the Venusberg and Rome, the song contest should stand between a life of sin and one of redemption, and Elisabeth had to become "the woman who, star-like," leads Tannhäuser "from the hot passion of the Venusberg to Heaven".<sup>2</sup>

Both explanations are valid and offer insights into Tannhäuser's reckless behaviour. Like most exegetical efforts on the opera, however, they take for granted the hero's hyper-emotional nature, compulsiveness, and spontaneity.<sup>3</sup> Issues of choice, planning and strategy, are left out of the picture,

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<sup>2</sup> "A Communication to my Friends," *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, trans. William Ashton Ellis, 1:340. "das Weib, das dem Tannhäuser aus den Wohllusthölen des Venusberges als Himmelsstern den Weg nach Oben wies": *Dokumente*, 67.

<sup>3</sup> "Provoked to the utmost by the arrogant impotence of the other court poets" (Dieter Borchmeyer, *Drama and the World of Richard Wagner*, trans. Daphne Ellis (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003), 125), Tannhäuser "becomes more and more frenzied, as if forgetting his present surroundings" (Claude M. Simpson, Jr., "Wagner and the Tannhäuser Tradition," *PMLA* 63 (1949), 244-61: 259) and acts "Faster than [he] can think" (Joachim Köhler, *Richard Wagner: The Last of the Titans*, trans. Stewart Spencer (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 170), "as if possessed by a demon" (Ernest Newman, *Wagner Nights* (London: Putnam, 1949), 97) so that "the very decision to sing appears in him as a spontaneous action bringing out the real drama" (Reinhard Strohm, "Dramatic Time and Operatic Form in Wagner's *Tannhäuser*," *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 104 (1977-8), 1-10: 4) which would not have unfolded had he not been "rash enough to boast that he had known the unholy joys" (D. Millar Craig, "Some Wagner Lapses," *The Musical Times* 80 (1939), 17-18: 18). For Carl Dahlhaus, "Tannhäuser's feelings and actions ... are marked by impulsiveness and an extraordinary amnesia. He appears to be not completely in control of himself, a prisoner of the moment and of the emotion that happens to have hold of him. Events take place in abrupt oscillation between extremes": *Richard Wagner's Music Dramas*, trans. Mary Whittall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 25. Even a sympathetic reader of the opera like Carolyn Abbate understands Tannhäuser's relation to Venus as a "compulsion" and calls his interruption of the contest a "rebellion against the platitudinous serenades of the other singers"

as if his actions are involuntary responses to external stimuli and his decisions lack any kind of mental processing. Yet his departure from the Venusberg is a conscious choice arrived at through rational thinking. Memories of his past life interlace and clash with his present Venusian experiences, leading to comparison and, ultimately, preference for the one over the other. His longing for change and freedom in Act 1 shows an active mind capable of choosing between alternatives. This is indeed the subject of his lengthy argument with Venus (reminiscent of the Orpheus-Euridice confrontation in Gluck's *Orfeo*). Tannhäuser abandons the Venusberg fully aware of the privileges he leaves behind and the hardships lying ahead:

Tannhäuser.	TANNHÄUSER
nach Freiheit doch verlange ich,	for freedom, then, I long,
nach Freiheit, Freiheit dürstet's mich;	for freedom, freedom, do I thirst;
zu Kampf und Streite will ich stehen,	for struggle and strife I will stand,
sei's auch auf Tod und Untergehen: –	though it be, too, for destruction and death:
drum muß aus deinem Reich ich flieh'n, –	from your kingdom, therefore, I must fly,

(Act 1, sc. 2, ll. 209-13)

Similarly, in his encounter with the knights, we find him resisting their offer, which shows at least knowledge of two alternative paths. He agrees to join them only when Wolfram reveals Elisabeth's favorable response to his songs. In what statisticians call Bayesian updating,<sup>4</sup> Tannhäuser revises his beliefs about Wartburg and his decision not to look back ("denn rückwärts darf ich niemals seh'n." Act 1, sc. 4, l. 424). Learning about Elisabeth's feelings makes a return to Wartburg into a compelling choice ("Ha, jetzt erkenne ich sie wieder, / die schöne Welt, der ich entrückt!" [Ha, now I recognize it again, the lovely world that I renounced!] Act 1, sc. 4, ll. 474-75).

Pursuing this line of inquiry, this paper offers a new reading of the *Sängerkrieg auf Wartburg*. We propose that Tannhäuser's seemingly irrational behaviour is actually consistent with a strategy of redemption, in ways that recall Polonius's famous diagnosis of Hamlet "Though this be madness, yet there is method in't."<sup>5</sup> We also suggest that he consciously disrupts the contest, knowing that only a public disclosure of his sinful past can propel him on the path of redemption.

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prompted by "frustration, pride, and the inescapable memories of Venus": "Orpheus and the Underworld: The Music of Wagner's 'Tannhäuser,'" in Richard Wagner, *Tannhäuser* (Opera Guide 39) (London and New York: John Calder / Riverrun Press, 1988), 33-50: 34, 39.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen M. Stigler, 'Thomas Bayes's Bayesian Inference', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society. Series A (General)*, 145 (1982), 250-58. See also Andrew I. Dale, *Most Honourable Remembrance: The Life and Works of Thomas Bayes* (New York, 2003), 258-335.

<sup>5</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, II.ii.206.

### Wagner's master plan

The existence of such a strategy emerges from Wagner's own writings. In his essay "Über die Aufführung des *Tannhäuser*," he explicitly identifies the hero's *crie de coeur* in the Act 2 finale as the opera's turning point:

Tannhäuser.	TANNHÄUSER
Zum Heil den Sündigen zu führen, die Gott-Gesandte nahte mir: doch, ach! sie frevelnd zu berühren hob ich den Lästerblick zu ihr!	To lead the sinner to salvation God's messenger drew near me! But, oh, to touch her wantonly I raised my dissolute gaze to her!
O du, hoch über diesen Erdengründen, die mir den Engel meines Heil's gesandt, erbarm' dich mein, der ach! so tief in Sünden schmachvoll des Himmels Mittlerin verkannt!	Oh Thou, high above this land of earth, Who sent the angel of my salvation to me, have mercy on me who, oh, so deep in sin, shamefully failed to recognize heaven's mediator!

(Act 2, sc. 4, ll. 417-24)

"These words," Wagner declares,

contain the pith of Tannhäuser's subsequent existence, and form the axis of his whole career; without our having received with absolute certainty the impression meant to be conveyed by them at this particular crisis, we are in no position to maintain any further interest in the hero of the drama. If we have not been here at last attuned to deepest fellow-suffering with Tannhäuser, the drama will run its whole remaining course without consistence, without necessity, and all our hitherto-aroused awaitings will halt unsatisfied.<sup>6</sup>

This moment is important because until now Tannhäuser is really a fugitive from the Venusberg, his options being the pilgrimage to Rome or the reunion with Elisabeth. But her saintly response to his betrayal generates so much pain that redemption becomes irrevocable. As Wagner explained to audiences in 1853,

This chastened erstwhile knight of Venus has seized upon the sole path to salvation now pointed out to him, terribly aware of the outrage he committed against his good angel

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<sup>6</sup> *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, trans. William Ashton Ellis (1894), 3:179. "Diese Worte, mit dem ihnen verliehenen Ausdruck und in dieser Situation, enthalten den Nerv der ganzen ferneren Tannhäuserexistenz, die Axe seiner Erscheinung, und ohne den durch sie hier, an diesem Orte, beabsichtigten Eindruck mit vollster Gewissheit empfangen zu haben, sind wir gar nicht im Stande, ein weiteres Interesse an dem Helden des Dramas zu bewahren. Wenn wir hier nicht endlich zum tiefsten Mitleiden mit Tannhäuser gestimmt werden, ist das ganze übrige Drama ohne Zusammenhang und Nothwendigkeit in seinem Verlaufe, und alle bis dahin angeregten Erwartungen bleiben unbefriedigt;" *Dokumente*, 127.

Elisabeth. He is stung with remorse and animated solely by the desire to perform the direst acts of penance for the deadly blow dealt to the pure heart of this loving maiden.<sup>7</sup>

So important was Tannhäuser's epiphany for Wagner that he decided to cut the entire passage at the opera's first run in Dresden after Tichatschek, his lead singer, had failed to meet the dramatic challenges of the role.<sup>8</sup>

If Wagner intended to create such a powerful moment in the drama, one that would engender the utmost sympathy and pity from the audience, he may well have remembered his Aristotle. We read in the *Poetics* that

tragedy is an imitation ... of events inspiring fear or pity. Such an effect is best produced when the events come on us by surprise; and the effect is heightened when, at the same time, they follow as cause and effect.<sup>9</sup>

The surprise we experience in the opera comes from an anticipated *lieto fine* turning into disaster. From the closing of Act 1 and until the disruption of the contest the theme of redemption disappears altogether and we are prepared for Tannhäuser's reunion with Elisabeth. To make their Act 2 duet even more suggestive, Wagner draws on the Leonore-Florestan reunion duet in *Fidelio* (perhaps influenced by the presence in his cast of Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient, the most famous Leonore of her time). (**Example 1a-c**) Tannhäuser's *volte-face*, his failure to perform what everyone (on- and off-stage) has been expecting of him, is a brilliant *coup* that makes the opera work as drama. We will discuss later whether or not there is causality involved here.

Far from a cheap diversion to renew the redemption plot, Elisabeth's sacrificial rescue is meant to be the catalyst for Tannhäuser's salvation. As in the *Flying Dutchman* and *Lohengrin*, the hero needs not only redemption but also a redeemer, a woman that can bear personal responsibility for his salvation. If prior to the contest Elisabeth was a patroness/potential bride, she now becomes a guardian angel,

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<sup>7</sup> Concert program for the May 1853 Zurich concerts: *Richard Wagner and His World*, ed. Thomas S. Grey (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), 502-3. "Vom Innewerden seines Frevels an Elisabeth, dem Engel seiner Noth, auf das Furchtbarste ergriffen, zerknirscht von Reue und beseelt von dem einzigen Verlangen, durch Martern aller Art den Todesschmerz zu sühnen, mit dem er das reinste Herz der liebenden Jungfrau traf, ergreift der entnüchterte Venusritter wahllos das Heilmittel, das die Welt ihm zeigt," *Dokumente*, 153.

<sup>8</sup> See *Dokumente*, 127, and Patrick Carnegie, *Wagner and the Art of the Theatre* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 34-35.

<sup>9</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, ch. 9, [52a]. For Wagner's knowledge of the work, see Jeffrey L. Buller, *Classically Romantic: Classical Form and Meaning in Wagner's Ring* (Philadelphia : Xlibris, 2001).

the “star-like” object leading the sinner to redemption.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, for Wagner, Tannhäuser embarks on the pilgrimage “not for the pleasure of his own redemption, but only so as to be able to return with a pardoned soul and thereby conciliate the angel who has wept for him the bitterest tears of her life”.<sup>11</sup> It is true that they will never see each other in this world and their love can only be completed beyond this life, something that post-*Tristan und Isolde* listeners can figure out from a “Liebestod” moment in the Act 2 finale. **(Example 2)** But this is secondary to the fact of their spiritual bonding as redeemer-and-redeemed.

The *Sängerkrieg* is thus not “merely a façade ... filling the second act with theatrical parades and noisy disputes,”<sup>12</sup> but a sanctioning device for Tannhäuser’s redemption *through* Elisabeth.<sup>13</sup> But in order for her to reveal her redemptive qualities Tannhäuser has to do something sufficiently unforgivable and offensive to incur universal condemnation. Praising Venus exactly when he was supposed to publicly solicit Elisabeth’s favor (and possibly hand) is an act of dramatic necessity serving the opera’s goals.

### Game theory

If Wagner’s strategy is to extract, so to speak, Tannhäuser’s redeemer through an “irrational” choice, what about the hero himself? Is he aware of this master plan? Does he intentionally disrupt the contest to bring about the desired outcome or is he simply irritated by the artistic impotence of his fellow minstrels? To put it differently, does he have to *choose* between alternatives at the start of the *Sängerkrieg*? To answer this question, we draw on methodologies from the social sciences, specifically on game theory, which seeks to account for social interaction by assuming that individuals make choices that express some underlying preferences and beliefs. Such an analysis requires two steps, a reconstruction of the choice set (what else might Tannhäuser have done) and an analysis of unobserved counterfactuals, namely potential outcomes of the alternative unchosen actions. What would have happened if Tannhäuser had won or lost the tournament instead of interrupting it? How would the others have reacted and what would his gains and losses have been in

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<sup>10</sup> To emphasize this contrast in her function, Wagner decided to excise Tannhäuser’s Act 1 reference to her as “Engel” in the opera’s first prose draft: *Dokumente*, 341.

<sup>11</sup> Concert program for the May 1853 Zurich concerts, *Richard Wagner and His World*, 503. “nicht um die Wonne der Entündigung für *sich* zu gewinnen, sondern als Begnadigter den Engel zu versöhnen, der ihm die bitterste Thräne des Lebens geweint.” *Dokumente*, 153.

<sup>12</sup> Dahlhaus, *Richard Wagner’s Music Dramas*, 23.

<sup>13</sup> Mary A. Cicora, too, finds that the song contest “helped realize or ‘redeem’ the Tannhäuser legend” by providing “the crucial *plot* element” in the opera: *From History to Myth: Wagner’s Tannhäuser and its Literary Sources* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1992), 165, 174.

each case? Comparing these potentialities with the outcome of his real action helps us reconstruct the strategic context at a particular point in time and evaluate the significance of the decisions we observe on stage.

Although not every action results from strategic thinking, the interpretation of human behaviour becomes hardly possible without assuming some form of goal-orientation on the part of its agent. For example, the conclusion that Paris *prefers* love to wisdom, when he awards Eros's golden apple to Aphrodite and not to Athena, lies in the assumption that he is making a conscious goal-oriented choice. Had his action been determined by social forces (protocol) or biochemical processes (genetic factors, use of controlled substances), we would have been unable to infer anything about his values and preferences. This is particularly important in drama, which typically explores the clash between human free will and external powers. Much of our empathy with a tragic hero predicates on our knowledge or inference of alternative scenarios. Adam and Eve could have refrained from eating the forbidden fruit; Antigone could have obeyed Creon; Elsa could have honoured her marital oath to Lohengrin; and Tannhäuser could have praised Elisabeth instead of Venus.

A staple in the social sciences and the methodological engine in modern economics, games theory has had limited impact in the humanities so far.<sup>14</sup> Unfamiliarity with the “rationality” assumptions and concerns about a universalism that favours statistical averages and downplays historical variables, perhaps explain the unwillingness of scholars and literary critics to engage with the theory. Yet game theory may better accommodate drama than real-life situations. By its very nature, already analyzed in Aristotle's *Poetics*, drama telescopes and reconfigures reality in ways that make it meaningful to an audience. Formal divisions (three or five acts) and time-space unities allow for the creation of short and long arcs emphasizing the causality of human action. Unlike history, Aristotle insists, poetry (including drama) not only describes events but also imbues them with character, helping us understand their origin and probable consequences as a class of phenomena.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> A notable exception is Paisley Livingston's *Literature and Rationality: Ideas of Agency in Theory and Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Livingston examines works by Theodore Dreiser, Emile Zola, and Stanislaw Lem and offers a broad discussion of why and how the assumption of rationality can advance literary analysis. Roughly speaking, he pursues three lines of enquiry. Firstly, he shows how the taking into account of characters' (as well as authors') intentions and rationality can improve our understanding of literature. Secondly, he argues that many rather ordinary statements made in literary criticism do, in fact, presuppose intentions and rationality. And, thirdly, he tries to illustrate how the analysis of literature can contribute to the advancement of concepts of rationality in philosophy or the social sciences.

<sup>15</sup> <<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/poetics.html>>; translation by S. H. Butcher.

it is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen – what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity. ... Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular. By the universal I mean how a person of a certain type on occasion speak or act, according to the law of probability or necessity; and it is this universality at which poetry aims in the names she attaches to the personages. [9/51a-b]

Critical for the success of drama is the absence of irrationality (“Within the action there must be nothing irrational” [15/54b]). To achieve this the poet has to describe a person’s preferences: “Character [*ethos*] is that which reveals moral purpose, showing what kind of things a man chooses or avoids.” [6/50b]. As preference and probability are key concepts in game theory, one could understand drama as the first social science laboratory in history, a controlled space where human behavior is exhibited, observed, and studied in optimal cognitive settings. By applying game theory to Tannhäuser’s behaviour at the song contest we will be able to test the rationality of his actions.

### Tannhäuser’s dilemma

According to Dieter Borchmeyer, Wagner draws “a veil over the motivation behind the tournament in the libretto” in order to cover the “fundamental contradiction at the root of the opera’s conception”, namely Tannhäuser’s incoherent behaviour.<sup>16</sup> Yet a close reading of the score provides clues about the hero’s state of mind – what he knows, what he is aware of, and what he hides – which help us understand his seemingly incomprehensible actions. To begin with, Tannhäuser leaves the Venusberg determined to repent for his sinful life there (“Den Tod, das Grab im Herzen, / durch Buße find’ ich Ruh” [Both death and the grave they are here in my heart; through penance I shall find peace] Act 1, sc. 2, ll. 293-94) and sticks to his choice until just before the end of Act 1. Not only is he moved to tears by the pilgrims’ chorus but also he fully adopts, in solo singing, the second stanza of their hymn (**Example 3**):

Tannhäuser.	TANNHÄUSER
Ach, schwer drückt mich der Sünden Last,	Alas, the burden of my sins weighs me down,
kann länger sie nicht mehr ertragen;	I can endure it no longer;
drum will ich auch nicht Ruh noch Rast,	I will know neither sleep nor rest therefore
und wähle gern mir Müh’ und Plagen.	and gladly choose toil and vexation.

(Act 1, sc. 3, ll. 360-63)

Why then does he decide to return to Wartburg? The view that Elisabeth’s name and memory cast a spell upon him is simplistic if not misleading. Actually, his conversion requires both persuasion and peer pressure. The knights’ first attempt to recruit him meets with strong resistance:

Tannhäuser.	TANNHÄUSER
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<sup>16</sup> Borchmeyer, *Drama and the World of Richard Wagner*, 145.



Laßt mich! Mir frommet kein Verweilen, Let me be! Delay avails me naught,  
 und nimmer kann ich rastend steh'n; and never can I stop to rest!  
 mein Weg heißt mich nur vorwärts eilen, My way bids me only hasten onward,  
 denn rückwärts darf ich niemals seh'n. and never may I cast a backward glance!

(Act 1, sc. 4, ll. 421-24)

The intensity of their effort is evident in the multiple renderings of the concluding two lines in diminished seventh chord arpeggiation leading to a rhythmic stretto. (**Example 4**) And even after Elisabeth's name is put on the plate, Wolfram launches a second round of discourse, putting a rational case for Tannhäuser's return to Wartburg:

Tannhäuser.	TANNHÄUSER
verschloß ihr Herz unsrem Lied;	her heart closed to our song;
wir sahen ihre Wang' erblassen,	we saw her cheeks grow pale,
für immer unsren Kreis sie mied. –	she ever shunned our circle.
O kehr' zurück, du kühner Sänger,	Oh, return, you valiant Singer,
dem unsren sei dein Lied nicht fern, –	let not your song be far from ours.
den Festen fehle <i>sie</i> nicht länger,	Let her no longer be absent from our festivals,
auf's Neue leuchte uns ihr Stern!	let her star shine on us once more!

(Act 1, sc. 4, ll. 459-65)

Only after Wolfram's long and eloquent narrative, reinforced with a new round of pleas by the knights, does Tannhäuser shout:

Tannhäuser.	TANNHÄUSER
Zu ihr! Zu ihr! O, führet mich zu ihr!	To her! To her! oh, lead me to her!
Ha, jetzt erkenne ich sie wieder,	Ha, now I recognize it again,
die schöne Welt, der ich entrückt!	the lovely world that I renounced!

(Act 1, sc. 4, ll. 473-75)

It would be unfair, then, to interpret this change of mind as opportunism. Without necessarily betraying his resolve to repent, Tannhäuser embraces a task that is more urgent and close to hand (Wartburg already appears in the background;<sup>17</sup> Rome is far away). In a sense, he is on a rescue mission to restore Elisabeth's mental health and the court's proper function. Elisabeth being a princess and heiress, her melancholy and absence from the court's tournaments are indeed matters of state, and so is Tannhäuser's return to Wartburg. Indeed, the brilliance of the festivities music leaves no doubt of the significance of the song tournament. Statements by both Elisabeth and the Landgraf create high anticipation for Tannhäuser's appearance. Never explicitly stated in the libretto, yet present in

<sup>17</sup> See *Richard Wagners Tannhäuser-Szenarium*, ed. Dietrich Steinbeck (Berlin: Gesellschaft für Theatergeschichte, 1968), 87.

Wagner's first prose draft,<sup>18</sup> the idea of a marital union sealing the contest hovers in the air (hence Wolfram's regret "So flieht für dieses Leben / mir jeder Hoffnung Schein!" [Thus vanishes, for this life, my every gleam of hope!] Act 2, sc. 2, ll. 106-7).

Tannhäuser's affection for and commitment to Elisabeth are evident in the early scenes of Act 2. Upon seeing her, he throws himself at her feet ("ungestüm zu den Füßen *Elisabeth's* stürzend" Act 2, sc. 2, l. 25) and their synchronous cries of joy in their duet leave no doubt of their destined union. **(Example 5a-b)** But there is a shadow. When Elisabeth inquires about his past ("Wo weiltet ihr so lange?" l. 39), Tannhäuser's singing freezes to recitation and the haziness of his statement is matched with descending lines in the lower register, as if the heathen forces of his past drag him down to the cavernous Venusberg:

Tannhäuser.	TANNHÄUSER
Fern von hier,	Far from here
in weiten, weiten Landen. Dichtes Vergessen	in broad and distant lands. Deep forgetfulness
hat zwischen heut' und gestern sich gesenkt. –	has descended betwixt today and yesterday.
All' mein Erinnern ist mir schnell geschwunden,	All my remembrance has vanished in a trice,
und nur des Einen muß ich mich entsinnen,	and one thing only must I recall,
daß nie mehr ich gehofft euch zu begrüßen,	that I never more hoped to greet you,
noch je zu euch mein Auge zu erheben. –	nor ever raise my eyes to you.

(Act 2, sc. 2, ll. 41-47)

Either his memory is clouded or he just lies to protect Elisabeth from damaging knowledge of his past. The second seems to be the case. Elisabeth is absent from his deliberations and longings at the Venusberg, and his surprise at hearing her name from Wolfram suggests that his memories of her were deeply buried. Even more suggestive of his concealment is the use of the masculine form "Gott der Liebe" before Elisabeth, when everywhere else in the opera we encounter the feminine "Göttin":

Venus.

Die Liebe fei're, die so herrlich du besingst,  
daß du der Liebe Göttin selber dir gewannst!

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<sup>18</sup> [6 July 1842:] "so bleibe hier und wirb um Elisabeth!" the Landgraf urges the hero in Act 1.

Wagner notes "Die folgende Schilderung von der Entdeckung der Liebe Elisabeths zu Tannh. trägt Wolfr. vor. – Der Landgr. nimmt dann das Wort u. gestattet Tannhr um Elisabeths Hand zu werben." Immediately after the reunion scene, the Landgraf says "Was der Gesang Wunderbares weckte u. anregte, soll er denn heute krönen u. zur Vollendung führen! Tannhäuser, dir zeig' ich den Weg auf dem du diese Edle erringen kannst. / Ein Fest hab' ich bereitet, du, Elis., sollst seine Fürstin sein! Die Sänger alle berief ich, – meine Ritter u. Edlen sind geladen. Sie nahen.": *Dokumente*, 341, 342. The explicit references to their impending marriage disappear in the second prose draft dated July 8.

Die Liebe fei're, da ihr höchster Preis dir ward!

(Act 1, sc. 2, ll. 111-13)

Tannhäuser (hingerissen).

Den Gott der Liebe sollst du preisen,  
er hat die Saiten mir berührt,  
er sprach zu dir aus meinen Weisen,  
zu dir hat er mich hergeführt!

(Act 2, sc. 2, ll. 82-86)

Tannhäuser (in höchster Verzückung).

Dir, Göttin der Liebe, soll mein Lied ertönen!  
Gesungen laut sei jetzt dein Preis von mir!

(Act 2, sc. 4, ll. 322-24)

Most importantly, his lie is exposed by his music, which shifts from A-flat major to C major with descending lines in the bass linking his statement to a similar denial of his past in Act 1. In particular, the claim “All’ mein Erinnern ist mir schnell geschwunden” receives swinging chromatic semitones in the bass line, a harmonic challenge to the solidity of his claim. (**Example 6a-b**)

Actually, Tannhäuser remembers very well, as we discover in his next statement. To Elisabeth’s question “Was war es dann, das euch zurückgeführt?” (What was it then that brought you back? l. 49) he answers: “Ein Wunder war’s, / ein unbegreiflich hohes Wunder!” (It was a miracle, / an unbelievably sublime miracle! ll. 51-52) (**Example 7a**). Miracles defy explanation and have no traceable cause. But while he claims ignorance, his music identifies the exact moment that led him to Wartburg. As Carolyn Abbate has found, his musical statement is a recasting of his Act 1 epiphany following the pilgrims’ chorus.<sup>19</sup> (**Example 7b-c**) It was his resolve to repent for his Venusberg years and his decision to seek absolution in Rome that brought him back. In other words, in the middle of his reunion scene with Elisabeth, when all attention goes to the lovely couple and the redemption plot is about to be forgotten, Tannhäuser shows awareness of the causal link between his pilgrimage to Rome and his return to Wartburg.

At the start of the *Sängerkrieg*, then, Tannhäuser faces a dilemma. He has a past that he cannot reveal, an obligation waiting to be fulfilled, and a present desire to unite with Elisabeth. What shall he do? By winning the contest, he gets the girl but will be in danger of losing her once his past is revealed (a scenario that Wagner will explore in his next opera *Lohengrin*). If he loses, he is free to make the

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<sup>19</sup> “Orpheus and the Underworld,” 45-46.

pilgrimage but Elisabeth's hand may well be offered to the winner. Both options are problematic because Tannhäuser participates in a high-profile competition while still being a sinner, and therefore vulnerable. Since there is no time to seek absolution before the contest, his best option is to cancel or postpone the event and avoid the danger of Elisabeth being committed to another minstrel. His strategic situation can then be described as follows:

	make pilgrimage	unite with Elisabeth
Win the contest	NO / PERHAPS	YES
Lose the contest	YES	NO / PERHAPS
Sabotage the contest	YES	YES / PROBABLY

The table's rows show his possible actions, the columns his aims, and the entries where rows and columns meet indicate whether the actions are likely to achieve the aims. The table shows that both, winning and losing the contest, have undesirable consequences – consequences he can avoid by sabotage. So, however irrational and self-defeating his behavior at the contest may appear to everybody, on- and off-stage, it actually serves his twin aims of redemption and unity with Elisabeth better than any other choice. Like Hamlet, he may have ultimate goals that only the semblance of madness can help him realize. Praising Venus creates a scandal, interrupts the competition, generates public pressure for his repentance, and keeps Elisabeth available. Of course, at the start of the competition there are variables he cannot control, namely Elisabeth's reaction, the punishment of the court, and the Pope's decision.<sup>20</sup> Still, under the given circumstances his choice of praising Venus is strategically superior to any other, and as we find in the end, it is the only one that can lead him to salvation because Elisabeth's pain and sacrifice will become his path to freedom, peace, and spiritual union with her.

The question here is whether Tannhäuser's praise to Venus is conscious, premeditated, planned.<sup>21</sup> To be sure, Wagner's stage directions and the flashes of Venusberg music suggest that Tannhäuser is gradually being overtaken by past memories,<sup>22</sup> exactly as memories of his mortal life had spoiled his

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<sup>20</sup> For a game-theoretic treatment of the latter (in particular, the use of the staff miracle), see Heike Harmgart, Steffen Huck, and Wieland Müller, "The miracle as a randomization device: A lesson from Richard Wagner's opera *Tannhäuser und der Sängerkrieg auf Wartburg*," *Economics Letters* 102 (2009), 33-35.

<sup>21</sup> While economists would typically be agnostic about whether decision making is conscious or not, content with "as if" approaches, it appears to us that applying these instruments to drama and opera requires a fuller approach, taking into account mental processes.

<sup>22</sup> "*Tannhäuser* ... scheint sich in Träumereien zu verlieren" (ll. 195-96); "Tannhäuser (in höchster Verzückung)." (l. 322).

service to the goddess of love in Act 1. **(Example 8)** A 2007 production of the opera by Robert Carsen at the Paris Opera took another view, however. Turning the *Sängerkrieg* into an early 20<sup>th</sup>-century exhibition, Carsen had Tannhäuser calmly choose the “Praise of Venus,” a large (presumably nude) painting he had started working on in Act 1, as his entry for the competition – before he has a chance to see/hear any of the other competitors and to become agitated by their hypocrisy.<sup>23</sup>

Eliminating temporality makes things easier, of course, as each contestant makes a decision prior to the event. But is there anything in the score that could support the idea of premeditation? The answer is yes: we do find signs of thinking and calculation in Tannhäuser’s performance.<sup>24</sup> In a radical departure (“a brutal musical interruption” according to Abbate<sup>25</sup>) from Wolfram’s key E flat major, Tannhäuser launches his praise to Venus on E major. He thus continues the pattern of ascending semi-tone keys in his Act 1 eulogies (D-flat, D, E-flat), which signaled his renewed efforts to please the goddess of love while pleading for his freedom. **(Example 9a)** Resuming this sequence after an entire act and in a contrasting environment can hardly be a coincidence; it rather suggests an intensification of the process. Indeed, his tonal alignment with the Venusberg underscores the genuine enthusiasm in his statement. But exactly when his words prepare us for the climax (“zieht in den Berg der *Venus* ein!”) his music swerves away from the initial key and concludes in D major. This is unexpected and breaks the pattern of tonal consistency in each of his previous praises. What is more, the new key is associated with invocations of Maria and Elisabeth in Act 1, and the cadential phrase is a recasting of his liberation shout “mein Heil ruht in Maria!” in Act 1, whose power instantly dematerialised the Venusberg. **(Example 9b)**

This musical betrayal of Venus is not an accident. Being a master musician, Tannhäuser surely understands the difference between the two keys and has memorised enough music to know which cadence is attached to which text. Had he been genuinely transported and sincerely enthusiastic, he could not have produced such glaring contradiction between the rhetorical and musical aspects of his

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<sup>23</sup> [unsigned], “‘Tannhäuser,’ frère de Wagner; Lyrique. Le metteur en scène Robert Carsen fait du héros un artiste incompris. L’opéra, à Paris, est porté par des voix et un Seiji Ozawa très inspirés,” *Le Temps*, 29 December 2007.

<sup>24</sup> Many of the musical similarities below have already been discussed in Reinhold Brinkmann, “Tannhäuser’s Lied,” in Carl Dahlhaus, ed., *Das Drama Richard Wagners als musikalisches Kunstwerk* (Regensburg: Gustav Bosse, 1970), 199-211; Abbate, “Orpheus and the Underworld”; and Carolyn Abbate, *In Search of Opera* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 117.

<sup>25</sup> “Orpheus and the Underworld,” 43.

performance, between his song and his signal.<sup>26</sup> And the fact that he is the only one in the Hall aware of this betrayal renders the scenario of an engineered crisis more likely, not less. (Remember that he wants the disruption, the sabotage, and if everybody else would understand the *double entendre* his strategy might become effectless.) Within a few bars, Tannhäuser succeeds in sabotaging both the contest and his own attachment to Venus. While everyone hears him praising the goddess of sensual love, he himself reaffirms his denial of her. (His decision to rejoin her in Act 3 comes only after his strategy fails, leaving him without absolution and any hope to return to Elisabeth.) It is a brilliant *coup* that tricks both the Wartburgians and the audience. It also helps resolve the chronic complaint about his swift (and thus unconvincing) change of heart from praising Venus to submitting to Wartburg's strict morality.

### **Epilogue: Tannhäuser the artist**

This new interpretation of Tannhäuser's *faux pas* works not only because he is a full human being – someone who can not only feel and love in this way and that but who is also able to think, reflect, remember, and update – but also because he is a music artist in control of two different informational tracks, verbal and musical.<sup>27</sup> Thus he is able to produce statements of varying truth depending on the convergence of musical and rhetorical content. A musical gesture and phrase already associated with a thought or decision can later be used for the exact opposite claim, as we saw above.

When and why this happens predicates on social context. Tannhäuser is unable to get roots in any establishment because his artistic self is constrained by convention and repetitiveness. The eternity he is offered at the Venusberg becomes as torturous as living the same winter day in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania in Danny Rubin and Harold Ramis's *Groundhog Day* (1993). What the recurrence of his Venus aria tells us is that he is stuck as an artist, he keeps repeating himself like an industrial worker and no renewal of sensual ecstasy can revitalise his art. In Wartburg, too, he finds an institutionalised setting with pompous rituals and a strong division between acceptable and forbidden themes. As long as these external forces restrict his expression, Tannhäuser is compelled to be untrue to others and to make contradictory statements. The semblance of irrationality is his only shield against attachments that threaten his art.

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<sup>26</sup> For Carolyn Abbate, the recurring musical references in the opera represent the hero's "conscious memory": "the orchestra is the sound of Tannhäuser's mind. ... The music is what is inside his mind as he recovers the past" ("Orpheus and the Underworld," 44, 47).

<sup>27</sup> As James Garrat puts it, Tannhäuser is "highlighting the predicament of art" and his story is "that of art itself": *Music, Culture and Social Reform in the Age of Wagner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 49.

Thanks to his musical track, however, we are able to see through his mind and detect a strategy of redemption and artistic rebirth. The remarkable thing about Elisabeth is that she turns from a romantic pursuit to a means of redemption for him. She came to love him because of his art, but unlike Venus she is pure and spiritual enough to sacrifice her love, nay her life, for his salvation. Her intervention in the Act 2 finale is what revitalises Tannhäuser's mission and becomes his source of inspiration. It is the epiphany of realising the pain he has caused to her that sanctifies his Act 1 resolve to expunge the impurities of sensuality from his art. This is why his two cries in Act 1 and 2 are identical musical gestures yet of different musical content. **(Example 10)** They are signposts in his progress towards redemption and artistic renewal.

Artistic truth predicates on what Wagner calls “the high tragedy of renunciation”<sup>28</sup> – sacrifices, conflict and clash with anything that keeps the artist attached to the phenomenal world, be it the sensual parlor of Venus or the pious Wartburg culture. Like Jesus flogging the Temple's money lenders, Tannhäuser has to spoil the *Sängerkrieg* in order to achieve redemption, to expose the perils of institutionalised art, and, not least, to warn Wagner himself as he was entering his own Wartburg castle, the Dresden Court Theatre.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Letter to August Röckel, Zurich 23 August 1856: *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, ed. and trans. Stewart Spencer and Barry Millington (London and Melbourne: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1987), 357.

<sup>29</sup> See Köhler, *Richard Wagner*, 161-62.

Example 1a

Allegro. (♩ = 100) Elisabeth.

Oh bless - ed  
Ge - prie - sen

feet.  
führt!

Allegro. (♩ = 100)  
Wind sustain.  
Klus.

Oh bless - ed  
Ge - prie - sen

*p* Cello. *cresc.*

Allegro vivace. Leonora. *Finale*

O na - men,  
O joy - ful,

Str., W. Wind & Horns

Viol. *pp* *cresc.* *ff*

Example 1b

Oh blessed pow'r  
ge - priesen sei

Oh blessed pow'r  
ge - priesen sei

of love;  
die Macht!

of love;  
die Macht!

*f* *ff*

Adagio.

so ü - ber - gro - sse Lust! nach un - nenn - ba - ren  
Our hearts are whol - ly blest! Our name - less woes are

so ü - ber - gro - sse Lust! nach un - nenn - ba - ren  
Our hearts are whol - ly blest! Our name - less woes are

Adagio.

*cresc.* *f* *p* str.

Wind



Example 1c

1

Now life — re-new'd a -  
 Von Won - ne-glanz um -

Oh blessed  
 Ge-priesen

*Strings & 1 V. Horn.*

*p*

*Drums tr pp.*

wak - eth With - in this heart of mine, with - in this  
 ge - ben lacht mir der Son - ne Schein, lacht mir der

pow'r of love! Now life — re-new'd a -  
 sei die Macht! Dem neu - er - kann - ten

*Cl. & Bassoon.*  
*cresc.*

3

heart of mine; The cloud — of sor - row  
 Son - - ne Schein; er - wacht — zu neu - em

wak - eth The hope that once was mine The cloud of  
 Le - ben darf ich mich mu - thig weih'n, ich nenn' in

*Wind.*  
*cresc.*

Ex. 1c

L. namen - lo - se Freu-de, 1

F. o na - men-, na - menlo - se Freu-de, mein Weib, mein Weib an mei-ner

Bläs.

*p*

Str. *cresc.*

L. 2 du wie-der mein, an meiner Bru 3 o Dank dir,

F. Brust, du wie-der mein, an mei-ner Brust, o Dank dir,

Example 2

him, oh spare him, I im - plore ye, oh spare him, I im -  
 ihu, ich fle - he für sein Le - ben, ich fle - he für sein

*cresc. poco a poco.*

*cresc.*  
 plore ye, oh spare him, I im plore ye, To  
 Le - ben, ich fle - he für sein Le - ben! Der

*cresc.*

*più cresc.*

*ff*  
 life re - new'd his sink - ing faith re -  
 Muth des Glau - bens sei ihm neu ge -

*ff* *dim.* *dim.* *p* *più p*

*ff trem.*

Lüf - te? Sind es Wol - ken won - ni - ger Duf - te? Wie sie

*cresc.*  
P. P. *sempre con P.*

schwel - len, mich um - rau - schen soll ich at - men, soll ich

*cresc.*

lau - - schen? Soll ich schlür - fen, un - ter - tau - chen?

*pp*  
P. ✦ P.

Süss in Duf - ten mich ver - hau - chen? In dem

*cresc.*

Ex. 2

386

wo - genden Schwall, in dem tö - nenden Schall, in des

*molto cresc.*  
P.

Welt A - - - - - tems

P.

we - - - - - hen - dem All, -

P.

er - trin - - - - - ken, ver -

*dim.*  
P.

Example 3

Tannhäuser. (on his knees, sunk in fervent prayer.)

Oh see my heart by  
 Ach, schwer drückt mich der

(Here the Pilgrims have quitted the stage.)

have be - gun!  
 gün - stig - sein!

2nd Vln. pizz.

*pp* *r. h.*

Vln. & Tenor. Cello.

guilt op - press'd, I faint, I sink be -  
 Sün - den Last, kann län - ger sie nicht

*più p*

neath the bur - den, Nor will I cease, nor will I  
 mehr er - tra - gen, drum will ich auch nicht Ruh' noch

*pp*

(Tears choke his utterance.)

rest Till heav'n - ly mer - cy grants my par - don.  
 Rast, und wä - le - gern mir Müh und Pla - gen.

Pilgrims. (far distant.)

*pp*

At thy au - gust and  
 Am ho - hen Fest der

*pp*



Example 4

The past to me is  
Mein Weg heisst mich nur

'Mid friends and homethou shalt find rest!  
wir las - sen dich nicht von uns gehn!

friends and home thou shalt find rest!  
las - sen dich nicht von uns gehn!

home thou shalt find rest!  
dich nicht von uns gehn!

home thou shalt find rest!  
dich nicht von uns gehn!

home thou shalt find rest!  
dich nicht von uns gehn!

'Mid friends and home thou shalt find rest!  
wir las - sen dich nicht von uns gehn!

clos'd for ev - er,  
vor - wärts ei - len,

The  
mein

What dost thou seek with vain en - deav - or?  
Du such - test uns, war - um ent - ei - len

What dost thou seek with vain en - deav - or?  
Du such - test uns, war - um ent - ei - len

What dost thou seek with vain en - deav - or?  
Du such - test uns, war - um ent - ei - len

What dost thou seek with vain en - deav - or?  
Du such - test uns, war - um ent - ei - len

What dost thou seek with vain en - deav - or?  
Du such - test uns, war - um ent - ei - len

What dost thou seek with vain en - deav - or?  
Du such - test uns, war - um ent - ei - len

past to me is clos'd for ev - er, I'm  
 Weg heisst mich nur vor - wärts ei - len, und

Why is thy soul with grief op -  
 nach sol - chem kur - zen Wie - der -

Why is thy soul with grief op -  
 nach sol - chem kur - zen Wie der -

Why is thy soul with grief op -  
 nach sol - chem kur - zen Wie - der -

Why is thy soul with grief op -  
 nach sol - chem kur - zen Wie - der -

Why is thy soul with grief op -  
 nach sol - chem kur - zen Wie - der -

Why is thy soul with grief op -  
 nach sol - chem kur - zen Wie - der -

Why is thy soul with grief op -  
 nach sol - chem kur - zen Wie - der -

doom'd to roam a - lone, un - blest! I'm doom'd to roam a -  
 nim - mer darf ich rück - wärts sehn! Ach, nim - mer darf ich

press'd? We must not sev - er.  
 sehn? Warum ent - ei - len?

press'd? We must not sev - er.  
 sehn? Warum ent - ei - len?

press'd? We must not sev - er.  
 sehn? Warum ent - ei - len?

press'd? We must not sev - er.  
 sehn? Warum ent - ei - len?

press'd? We must not sev - er.  
 sehn? Warum ent - ei - len?

press'd? We must not sev - er.  
 sehn? Warum ent - ei - len?

press'd? We must not sev - er.  
 sehn? Warum ent - ei - len?



Ex. 4

lone, un - blest!  
rück - - wärts sehn!

Oh stay, be  
O bleib, bei

Oh stay, be ours, we must not  
O bleib, bei uns sollst du ver-

Oh stay, be ours! be  
O bleib, bei uns! Bei

Oh stay, be ours!  
O bleib, bei uns!

'Mid friendsand home thoushalt find rest. Oh stay, be  
nach sol - chem kur - zen Wie - der - sehn? O bleib, bei

'Mid friendsand home thoushalt find rest, Stay, be ours, so  
nach sol - chem kur - zen Wie - der - sehn? Bleib' bei uns! Bei

*Horns sustain.*

I'm doom'd to roam a - lone,  
Nein! Rückwärtsdarfich nie -

ours, we must not sev - er.  
uns sollst du ver - wei - len!

sev - er, 'Mid friends thou shalt find rest.  
wei - len, bei uns ver - wei - le jetzt!

ours, we must not sev - er. So soon we  
uns sollst du ver - wei - len! War - um so

Oh stay, we must not sev - er. We must not  
O bleib, o bleib, ver - wei - le! War - um er!

ours! We must not sev - er.  
uns! Bei uns ver - wei - le!

soon, we must not sev - er. Oh stay, oh  
uns sollst du ver - wei - len! O bleib, o

*cresc.* *Wind.* *fp*

Ex. 4

a lone, un-blest! Fort!  
 mals, nie-mals seh!  
 Oh stay, be ours! stay, oh stay,  
 O bleib' bei uns! Bleib; o bleib!  
 Oh stay, be ours! stay, be ours! So War-  
 O bleib' bei uns! bleib' bei uns!  
 must schnell not ent-sev-er, Stay, oh stay,  
 schnell ent-sev-er, Bleib; o bleib!  
 sev-ei-er, stay, be ours! So War-  
 ei-len? Bleib' bei uns!  
 We must not sev-er, Stay, oh stay,  
 War-um ent-ei-len? Bleib; o bleib!  
 stay, be ours, stay, be ours, So War-  
 bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei uns!  
 must fort a-way, hier! Nay, stay me  
 fort von hier! Lasst mich! Lasst  
 Stay, oh stay,  
 Bleib; o bleib;  
 soon we must not sev-er, 'Mid friends thoushalt find  
 um so schnell ent-ei-len? Bei uns ver-wei-le  
 Stay, oh stay,  
 Bleib; o bleib!  
 soon we must not sev-er, 'Mid friends thoushalt find  
 um so schnell ent-ei-len? Bei uns ver-wei-le  
 Oh stay, and be ours! Oh  
 O blei-be bei uns! O  
 soon we must not sev-er, 'Mid friends thoushalt find  
 um so schnell ent-ei-len! Bei uns ver-wei-le

Ex. 4

not, I must a-way, I must a-way!  
 mich! Fort,fort von hier! Fort,fort! Fort, fort!

Oh stay, beours! Ohstay, beours! stay, stay,be ours!  
 O bleib' beiuns! O bleib' beiuns! Bleib, bleib bei uns

rest, ohstay, be ours! ohstay, be ours,stay, stay,be ours!  
 jetzt! O bleib' bei uns! O bleib' bei uns! Bleib, bleib bei uns

Oh stay, be ours, Ohstay, be ours!  
 O bleib' bei uns! O bleib' beiuns!

rest, ohstay, be ours, ohstay, be ours,stay, stay,be ours!  
 jetzt! O bleib' bei uns! O bleib' bei uns! Bleib, bleib bei uns

stay, oh stay, beours! Oh stay, beours, stay, stay,be ours!  
 bleib, o bleib' beiuns! O bleib' bei uns! Bleib, bleib bei uns

rest, oh stay, be ours, ohstay, be ours!stay, stay,be ours!  
 jetzt! O bleib' bei uns! O bleib' bei uns! Bleib, bleib bei uns

*f* *f* *f* *ritenuto.*

Moderato.

Tannhäuser. (in violent and joyful agitation, stands entranced.)

li - sa - beth! E - li - sa - beth! Oh, ruth of  
 li - sa - beth! E - li - sa - beth! O Macht des

Wind sustain.

Harp. *p*

Wolfram.

heav-en, that name a - dor'd once more I hear? He is no  
 Himmels,rufst du den sü - ssen Na - men mir? Nicht sollst du

*pp* *p*

Example 5a

(He remains at the back, leaning against a mural projection.) (Tannhäuser throws himself impetuously at Elisabeth's feet.)

naught your meeting shall dis-turb.  
na - he dich ihr un - ge-stört!

*Vlns.*  
**ff** Quick, and with great animation.

Tannhäuser.  
Oh Prin-cess!  
Oh Für-stin!

*Wind.*

Example 5b

Allegro. (♩ = 100) Elisabeth.

Oh bless - ed  
Ge - prie - sen

Oh bless - ed  
Ge - prie - sen

feet.  
führt!  
Allegro. (♩ = 100)  
*Wind sustain.*  
*Vlns.*

*p* *Cello.* *cresc.*

hour of meet - ing, Oh bless - ed pow'r  
sei die Stun - de, ge - prie - sen sei

hour of meet - ing, Oh bless - ed pow'r  
sei die Stun - de, ge - prie - sen sei



Example 6a

stay! and let me kneel for ev - er  
 bleib; und lass' zu dei - nen Fü - ssen

Elisabeth.

here!  
 mich!

I pray thee, rise!  
 So ste-het auf!

'Tis not for thee to kneel where thou hast con - quer'd, this hall is thy do -  
 Nicht sol-let hier Ihr knien, denn die - se Hal - le ist Eu - er Kö - nig -

main. Rise, I im-plore! Thanks be to heav'n  
 reich. O, ste - het auf! Nehmt mei - nen Dank

that thou re-tur'n'st to us!  
 dass Ihr zu-rück - ge-kehrt.

So long, where hast thou  
 Wo weil - tet Ihr so

## Tannhäuser (slowly rising.)

tar-ried?  
lan-ge?

Far a-way, in strange and distant re-gions -  
Fern von hier, in wei - ten, wei-ten Lan-den: -

*ff* *dim.* *p* *piu p* *ff* *dim.*

*Bassoons.*

and between yes-ter-day and to - day ob-liv-ion's veil hath fall'n.  
dich-tes Ver - ges-sen hat zwi-schen heut' und ge-ster-n sich ge - senkt.

*p* *piu p* *piu p* *pp*

Ev-'ry re-mem-brance hath for ev - er vanish'd. Save one thing on-ly,  
All mein Er - in - nern ist mir schnell ge-schwunden, und nur des Ei-nen

*pp*

ris-ing from the darkness: that I then dared not hope I should be-  
muss ich mich ent - sin-nen, dass ich nie mehr ge-hofft Euch zu be-

*pp* *pp*

Elisabeth.

hold thee, nor ev-er raise my eyes to thy perfec - tion.  
grü-ssen, noch je zu Euch mein An-ge zu er - he - ben.

How wert thou  
Was war es

*pp* *p*

Example 6b

Landgrave.

I al-so welcome thy re-turn! But say, where tarriedst thou so  
So sei will-kommen denn auch mir! Sag' an, wo weiltest du so

Moderato.

Tannhäuser.

long? lang? In strange and dis-tant  
Ich wan-der-te in

V. Horns & Bassoons sustain.  
pizz.

realms I wan-der'd far, wei-ter, wei-ter Fern; Where neither peace nor  
da, wo ich nim-mer

rest were ev-er found. Ask not! At en-mi-ty I am with  
Rast noch Ru-he fand. Fragt nicht! Zum Kampf mit euch kam ich nicht

none; we meet as friends\_ let me in peace de-part!  
her; seid mir ver-söhnt\_ und lasst mich wei-ter zieh'n!





Br. *p* **A**

Der Hirt. (Der Hirt, als die Pilger auf der ihm gegenüberliegenden Höhe angelangt sind, ruft ihnen, die Mütze schwenkend, laut zu:

D.H. Glück auf! Glück

Ten. *più p* *f* *p* *f* *p*  
 büß ich mei-ne Schuld; ge-seg-net, wer im Glau-ben treu! Er wird er-löst durch Buß und Reu. (Tannhäuser, der in der Mitte der

Baß *più p* *f* *p* *f* *p*

Fl. *ff* *zu 2* *ff*

Hob. *ff* *ff*

Klar. in B. *ff* *ff*

Vh. in F. *ff* *zu 2* *I.* *ff* *zu 2*

Wh. in G. *ff* *zu 2* *ff*

Fag. *ff* *p* *ff*

Trp. in F. *ff* *ff*

3 Pos. *ff* *ff*

Btb. *ff* *ff*

Pk. in Cu. E. *ff* *ff*

I. *ff* *p* *p* *ff*

Viol. II. *ff* *p* *p* *ff dim.*

Br. *cresc.* *molto cresc. ff* *p* *p* *ff dim.*

D.H. auf nach Rom! Be-tet für meine ar-me See-le!

T. Tannhäuser. Bühne wie festgewurzelt gestanden, sinkt heftig erschüttert auf die Knie.) All-mäch't-ger, dir sei Preis! Groß-sind die

Vcl. *ff* *p* *ff*

K.B. *ff* *p* *ff*

I. Viol. *p* *più p*

II. Viol. *p* *più p*

Br. *p* *più p* *pizz.* *p* (jedesmal entfernter)

Engl. H. a.d.Th.

T. Wunderdeiner Gna - - - de!

Ten. Pilger. Zu dir wall ich, mein Je - sus Christ, der du des

Baß. *p* *più p* *pizz.* *p*

Vcl. *p* *più p* *pizz.* *p*

K.B. *p* *più p* *p*

Der Zug der Pilger biegt von hier an auf dem Bergwege bei dem Mutter-Gottes-Bilde links ab und verläßt so die Bürne. — Der Hirt entfernt sich ebenfalls mit der Schalmei rechts

Br. *dimin.* *più p*

Engl. H. a.d.Th. *p*

Ten. Pil - gers Hoff - nung bist! Ge - lobt sei Jung - frau süß und rein! Der

Baß. *p*

Vcl. *più p*

von der Höhe; man hört die Herdenglocken immer entfernter.)

I. Viol. *pp* *pizz.*

II. Viol. *pp*

Br. *arco* *pp*

Engl. H. a.d.Th.

T. Tannhäuser (auf den Knien, wie in brünstiges Gebet versunken.) *p*

Ten. Wall - fahrt wol - le gün - stig - sein!

Baß.

Vcl. *pp*

(Die Pilger haben hier bereits die Bühne verlassen.) Ach, schwer drückt mich der — Sün - den

Example 7c

Elisabeth was was (ed) Tamkaiser back "to us"

Act II



Act I

Handwritten musical score for two acts. The top staff (Act II) contains the melody and lyrics: "Eis Wump der war's ein un-be greif-lich ho-hes Wun der". The bottom staff (Act I) contains the melody and lyrics: "All-mächt-ger dir sei Preis! Gross sind die Wun der deiner Gna de". Roman numerals for chords are written above the notes. A bass line with chords is written below the Act I staff.

Four empty musical staves for accompaniment or further notation.

Example 7c

Tannhäuser. *Meno allegro.* (♩ = 56)

the end of Wolfram's song seems to start from a dream, rises.) Auch

*trem.* *f* *f* *3* *Harp.* *Red.* \*

(Tannhäuser rises impatiently.)

*p* *f* *oroso.*

(♩ = 66) Tannhäuser.

Oh min-strel, if 'tis thus thou sing-est, Thou ne'er hast known or tast-ed  
 O Wal-ther, der du al - so sang-est, du hast die Lie - be arg ent -

*Harp.* *f* *f sempre*

Chorus of Nobles and Ladies. (with loud approbation.)

*Allegro.* (♩ = 88)

Hail, Bi - te-rolf!  
 Heil, Bi - te-rolf!

Hail, Bi - te-rolf! come, draw thy sword!  
 Heil, Bi - te-rolf! Hier un - ser Schwert!

Hail, Bi - te-rolf! come, draw thy sword!  
 Heil, Bi - te-rolf! Hier un - ser Schwert!

*Allegro.* (♩ = 88)

*ff* *ff*

*Tutti.*

Tannhäuser. (with rising resentment.) *Meno Allegro.* (♩ = 66)

Yea, i - die boaster,  
 Ha, thör'ger Prahler,

*ff* *P2d Vln. & Ten.* *trem. & Harp.*

Example 9a

Tannhäuser.

Allegro. (♩=69.)

All praise be\_ thine! Im -  
Dir tö - ne\_ Lob! Die

mortal fame at - tend thee, Pæ - ans of joy to thee be ev - er  
Wunder sei'n ge - prie - sen, die dei - ne\_ Macht mir Glück - lichem er -

Tannhäuser.

Allegro. (♩=72.)

Oh, gra - cious  
Dank dei - ner

fair, in numbers sweet I'll praise thee, Thrice bless - ed he who thy de -  
Huld! ge - prie - sen sei dein Lie - ben! Be - glückt für im - mer, wer bei

Allegro. (♩=76.) (Tannhäuser, in the greatest agitation, seizes his harp and sings with a rapt expression.)  
Strings & Wind.

Tannhäuser.

While I have life, a - lone my harp shall praise thee, No  
Stets soll nur dir, nur dir mein Lied er - tö - nen, ge -



(Tannhäuser starts from his seat.)

thy star! dein Stern!

*accel. Plus. arco.*

*piu f*

**Tannhäuser (in wildest exaltation.)**

(♩ = 76.)

Thou, goddess of love, shalt now in-spire my meas-ure, In  
 Dir, Göt-tin der Lie-be, soll mein Lied er-tö-nen, ge-

*Ob. with voice. Vlns. divided.*

*ff p trem.*

*mf Harp.*

joy-ful strains thy-praise be ev-er  
 sun-gen-laut sei-jetzt dein Preis von

sung! Thou art the source of  
 mir! Dein sü-sser Reiz ist

*mf*

all in life we treas-ure, Thy sweet de-  
 Quel-le al-les Schö-nen, und je-des

lights are ev-er fair and young! Whose  
 hol-de Wun-der-stammt von dir! Wer

Ex. 9a

Wagner — Tannhäuser, Act II

burn - ing soul once hath with ar - dor em -  
 dich mit Gluth in sei - ne Ar - me ge -

brac'd thee, Can speak of love, none  
 schlos - sen, was Lie - be ist, keunt

else its joys can prove! Dull mor - tals, who of  
 er, nur er al - lein! Arm - sel' ge, die ihr

love have nev - er tast - ed, Go  
 Lie - be nie ge - nos - sen, zieht

forth! Ve - nus a - lone can show ye  
 hin! Zieht in den Berg der Ve - nus

Ex. 9a

Wagner — Tannhäuser, Act II

love!  
ein! (General consternation; all rise from their seats.)

**Walter.**

**Schreiber.** Ah! hear the mis - creant!  
Ha! Der Ver-ruch - te!

**Wolfram.** Ah! hear the mis - creant!  
Ha! Der Ver-ruch - te!

**Biterolf.** Ah! hear the mis - creant!  
Ha! Der Ver-ruch - te!

**Reinmar.** Ah! hear the mis - creant!  
Ha! Der Ver-ruch - te!

**Landgrave.** Ah! hear the mis - creant!  
Ha! Der Ver-ruch - te!

**Chorus of Nobles and Ladies.**  
SOPRANO. Ah! hear the mis - creant!  
Ha! Der Ver-ruch - te!

ALTO. Ah! hear the mis - creant!  
Ha! Der Ver-ruch - te!

TENOR. Ah! hear the mis - creant!  
Ha! Der Ver-ruch - te!

BASS. Ah! hear the mis - creant!  
Ha! Der Ver-ruch - te!

*ff*  
*Tutti, without Bases.* *ff* *Bases.*



Example 9b

Wagner — Tannhäuser, Act I

Venus.

heart for - lorn! Nev - er to thee will Heav - en  
Buss' er - löst! Nie wird Ver - ge - bung dir zu

Tannh.

opel Re - turn, then, if there is no hope! No  
Theil! Kehr' wie - der, schliesst sich dir das Heil! Mein

hope! my hope rest - eth in Ma -  
Heil! Mein Heil ruht in Ma - ri -

ry!  
a!

(Venus, with a cry, shrinks away and vanishes. The scene instantaneous-ly changes.)

*Tutti except Cymbals & Triangles.*

*ff* *ff* *dim.*

**G**

Fl. zu 2 *ff* *dimin.* *p*

Hob. *ff* *dimin.* *p*

Klar. in A. *pp* *ff* *dimin.* *p*

Vh. in E. *ff* *dimin.* *p*

Wh. in H. II. *pp* *ff* *dimin.* *p*

Fag. *pp* *ff* *dimin.* *p*

Trp. in E. *f* *dimin.* *p più p* *pp*

Pos. *f* *dimin.* *p più p* *pp*

Btb. *f* *dimin.* *p più p* *pp*

Pk. in H. Fis. *f* *dimin.* *p più p* *pp*

I. Viol. (ohne Dämpfer.) *più f* *ff* *dimin.* *p*

II. Viol. (ohne Dämpfer.) *più f* *ff* *dimin.* *p*

Br. *p molto cresc.* *ff* *dimin.* *p*

E. lö - ser litt. Tannhäuser (in furchtbarer Zerknirschung zusammenstürzend.) *W. Ziemlich fließendes Tempo.*

T. Weh! Weh mir Un-glück - sel' - - gem!

Walt. Walther. Ein En - gel stieg aus

S. Der Schreiber. Ein En - gel stieg aus

W. Wolfram. Ein En - gel stieg aus

Bit. Biterolf. Ein En - gel stieg aus

R. Reinmar. Ein En - gel stieg aus

L. Landgraf. Ein En - gel ward ge-

Vcl. (ohne Dämpfer.) *molto cresc.* *ff* *dimin.* *p*

K.B. *ff* *dimin.* *p*

66.