Before the opera begins

The spear that pierced Christ’s side during the Crucifixion and the Holy Grail in which Joseph of Arimathea caught His blood were entrusted by a band of angels to Titurel. He and his fellow warriors established the Grail community to be atoning for transgressions in a former life. The Grail community came to be (Narration: Ja, wann oft lange sie uns ferne blieb) and repeats the prophecy of the holy fool. A swan rises from the lake and the youthful Parsifal appears and shoots it down. He is soon captured, and unaware of any wrongdoing, he freely confesses to killing the swan. When Gurnemanz shames him for destroying one of God’s most beautiful and harmless creatures, Parsifal weeps. Gurnemanz discovers the depth of his innocence: he does not know his own name. Kundry reveals that the boy’s father, Gamuret, perished in battle and that his mother, Herzeleide (Heart’s Sorrow), raised him in the wilderness to keep him ignorant of the knightly arts that caused her husband’s death. Parsifal remembers how he once saw a group of knights riding through the air on her magical steed, bringing a balsam from Arabia to ease Amfortas’s pain. The wild sorceress Kundry arrives through the air on her magical steed, bringing a balsam from Arabia to ease Amfortas’s pain. The king is carried into the clearing, still suffering after a terrible night. He is resigned to await the prophesied savior, one “made wise through compassion – the holy fool.” Amfortas thanks Kundry for her efforts, but she is scornful. After he is carried to his bath, some of the esquires torment Kundry, but Gurnemanz protects her, telling of her years of service to the knights, and that she may be atoning for transgressions in a former life.

Gurnemanz now explains how the Grail community came to be (Narration: Ja, wann oft lange sie uns ferne blieb) and repeats the prophecy of the holy fool. A swan rises from the lake and the youthful Parsifal appears and shoots it down. He is soon captured, and unaware of any wrongdoing, he freely confesses to killing the swan. When Gurnemanz shames him for destroying one of God’s most beautiful and harmless creatures, Parsifal weeps. Gurnemanz discovers the depth of his innocence: he does not know his own name. Kundry reveals that the boy’s father, Gamuret, perished in battle and that his mother, Herzeleide (Heart’s Sorrow), raised him in the wilderness to keep him ignorant of the knightly arts that caused her husband’s death. Parsifal remembers how he once saw a group of knights riding through the air on her magical steed, bringing a balsam from Arabia to ease Amfortas’s pain. The king is carried into the clearing, still suffering after a terrible night. He is resigned to await the prophesied savior, one “made wise through compassion – the holy fool.” Amfortas thanks Kundry for her efforts, but she is scornful. After he is carried to his bath, some of the esquires torment Kundry, but Gurnemanz protects her, telling of her years of service to the knights, and that she may be atoning for transgressions in a former life.

Gurnemanz now explains how the Grail community came to be (Narration: Ja, wann oft lange sie uns ferne blieb) and repeats the prophecy of the holy fool. A swan rises from the lake and the youthful Parsifal appears and shoots it down. He is soon captured, and unaware of any wrongdoing, he freely confesses to killing the swan. When Gurnemanz shames him for destroying one of God’s most beautiful and harmless creatures, Parsifal weeps. Gurnemanz discovers the depth of his innocence: he does not know his own name. Kundry reveals that the boy’s father, Gamuret, perished in battle and that his mother, Herzeleide (Heart’s Sorrow), raised him in the wilderness to keep him ignorant of the knightly arts that caused her husband’s death. Parsifal remembers how he once saw a group of knights riding through the air on her magical steed, bringing a balsam from Arabia to ease Amfortas’s pain. The king is carried into the clearing, still suffering after a terrible night. He is resigned to await the prophesied savior, one “made wise through compassion – the holy fool.” Amfortas thanks Kundry for her efforts, but she is scornful. After he is carried to his bath, some of the esquires torment Kundry, but Gurnemanz protects her, telling of her years of service to the knights, and that she may be atoning for transgressions in a former life.

Gurnemanz now explains how the Grail community came to be (Narration: Ja, wann oft lange sie uns ferne blieb) and repeats the prophecy of the holy fool. A swan rises from the lake and the youthful Parsifal appears and shoots it down. He is soon captured, and unaware of any wrongdoing, he freely confesses to killing the swan. When Gurnemanz shames him for destroying one of God’s most beautiful and harmless creatures, Parsifal weeps. Gurnemanz discovers the depth of his innocence: he does not know his own name. Kundry reveals that the boy’s father, Gamuret, perished in battle and that his mother, Herzeleide (Heart’s Sorrow), raised him in the wilderness to keep him ignorant of the knightly arts that caused her husband’s death. Parsifal remembers how he once saw a group of knights riding through the air on her magical steed, bringing a balsam from Arabia to ease Amfortas’s pain. The king is carried into the clearing, still suffering after a terrible night. He is resigned to await the prophesied savior, one “made wise through compassion – the holy fool.” Amfortas thanks Kundry for her efforts, but she is scornful. After he is carried to his bath, some of the esquires torment Kundry, but Gurnemanz protects her, telling of her years of service to the knights, and that she may be atoning for transgressions in a former life.

Gurnemanz now explains how the Grail community came to be (Narration: Ja, wann oft lange sie uns ferne blieb) and repeats the prophecy of the holy fool. A swan rises from the lake and the youthful Parsifal appears and shoots it down. He is soon captured, and unaware of any wrongdoing, he freely confesses to killing the swan. When Gurnemanz shames him for destroying one of God’s most beautiful and harmless creatures, Parsifal weeps. Gurnemanz discovers the depth of his innocence: he does not know his own name. Kundry reveals that the boy’s father, Gamuret, perished in battle and that his mother, Herzeleide (Heart’s Sorrow), raised him in the wilderness to keep him ignorant of the knightly arts that caused her husband’s death. Parsifal remembers how he once saw a group of knights riding through the air on her magical steed, bringing a balsam from Arabia to ease Amfortas’s pain. The king is carried into the clearing, still suffering after a terrible night. He is resigned to await the prophesied savior, one “made wise through compassion – the holy fool.” Amfortas thanks Kundry for her efforts, but she is scornful. After he is carried to his bath, some of the esquires torment Kundry, but Gurnemanz protects her, telling of her years of service to the knights, and that she may be atoning for transgressions in a former life.

Gurnemanz now explains how the Grail community came to be (Narration: Ja, wann oft lange sie uns ferne blieb) and repeats the prophecy of the holy fool. A swan rises from the lake and the youthful Parsifal appears and shoots it down. He is soon captured, and unaware of any wrongdoing, he freely confesses to killing the swan. When Gurnemanz shames him for destroying one of God’s most beautiful and harmless creatures, Parsifal weeps. Gurnemanz discovers the depth of his innocence: he does not know his own name. Kundry reveals that the boy’s father, Gamuret, perished in battle and that his mother, Herzeleide (Heart’s Sorrow), raised him in the wilderness to keep him ignorant of the knightly arts that caused her husband’s death. Parsifal remembers how he once saw a group of knights riding through the air on her magical steed, bringing a balsam from Arabia to ease Amfortas’s pain. The king is carried into the clearing, still suffering after a terrible night. He is resigned to await the prophesied savior, one “made wise through compassion – the holy fool.” Amfortas thanks Kundry for her efforts, but she is scornful. After he is carried to his bath, some of the esquires torment Kundry, but Gurnemanz protects her, telling of her years of service to the knights, and that she may be atoning for transgressions in a former life.

Gurnemanz now explains how the Grail community came to be (Narration: Ja, wann oft lange sie uns ferne blieb) and repeats the prophecy of the holy fool. A swan rises from the lake and the youthful Parsifal appears and shoots it down. He is soon captured, and unaware of any wrongdoing, he freely confesses to killing the swan. When Gurnemanz shames him for destroying one of God’s most beautiful and harmless creatures, Parsifal weeps. Gurnemanz discovers the depth of his innocence: he does not know his own name. Kundry reveals that the boy’s father, Gamuret, perished in battle and that his mother, Herzeleide (Heart’s Sorrow), raised him in the wilderness to keep him ignorant of the knightly arts that caused her husband’s death. Parsifal remembers how he once saw a group of knights riding through the air on her magical steed, bringing a balsam from Arabia to ease Amfortas’s pain. The king is carried into the clearing, still suffering after a terrible night. He is resigned to await the prophesied savior, one “made wise through compassion – the holy fool.” Amfortas thanks Kundry for her efforts, but she is scornful. After he is carried to his bath, some of the esquires torment Kundry, but Gurnemanz protects her, telling of her years of service to the knights, and that she may be atoning for transgressions in a former life.
The voice belongs to Kundry, who orders the Flower Maidens to disperse.

Kundry now appears, breathtakingly beautiful, and speaks to Parsifal about his childhood (Narration: Ich sah das Kind). The evocation of Herzeleide’s love for her son leads Kundry to kiss Parsifal. When the kiss turns passionate, a wave of empathetic understanding for Amfortas overcomes Parsifal (Monologue: Amfortas! Die Wunde!). He traces the line of compassion back to the bloodshed of Christ’s Passion, and knows that in expiating his own guilt, he can close one circle of God’s redemptive work. Kundry pleads for redemption from the curse incurred when, in an earlier life, she laughed at Christ on the Cross. But Parsifal knows that these flowers cannot see Christ as He was on the Cross, but smile and shed tears of dew on a redeemed world. With full understanding, Parsifal now accepts his kingship.

Scene Two. In great sorrow, the Grail knights blame Amfortas for Titürel’s death and demand that he perform his duties one last time (Chorus: Geleiten wir im bergenden Schrein). Amfortas tears open his tunic and begs the knights to end his misery with their swords (Monologue: Ja, Wehe! Wehe über mich!). Parsifal now steps forward with the spear and touches it to Amfortas’s side, instantly healing his wound and simultaneously redeeming Kundry. Assuming his kingship and restoring Monsalvat to spiritual health, Parsifal commands that the Grail be kept unveiled for all time. As all the men and women declare, “Redemption to the redeemer,” the Grail begins to glow and a white dove descends.