

# PARSIFAL

Richard Wagner (1813 — 1883)

The knight Titurel has built a fortress for two sacred objects he has miraculously obtained: the chalice from the Last Supper in which Christ's blood was later collected, and the spear that wounded Christ on the cross. The chalice is believed to be the Holy Grail that gives life and has a purifying effect on the human race. The Grail has become the focus for a community of knights who, strengthened by the holy chalice, are willing to fight for the faith. All the knights have taken a vow of chastity. However, the Grail King Amfortas, their leader and Titurel's son, fails to resist seduction by Kundry, a woman with a double life: she is both a Grail messenger and temptress in the service of Klingsor.

Klingsor was previously expelled from the Grail community because he wanted to keep his vow of chastity not through inner strength but by castration. He revealed himself to be an opponent of the Grail community and founded a counter-empire in which everything is about physicality.

When Kundry seduces Amfortas, the spear with which he wanted to fight Klingsor was taken away from him. In his moment of weakness the Grail King was wounded. Since then Amfortas has suffered severe pain in the wound, which refuses to heal. According to a Grail prophecy, only a 'pure fool' – meaning an outsider – who is enlightened 'by compassion' can cure the king and save the Grail community from an impasse.

The old knight Gurnemanz believes he has found this 'pure fool' in the form of the thoughtless boy Parsifal. In his wanderings, Parsifal ends up in Klingsor's realm. Klingsor, who fears that Parsifal could heal Amfortas and is out for power, tries to get rid of the boy. Once again he makes use of Kundry, who nevertheless longs to be released from her role of temptress. Only when a man can resist her will she be released. Parsifal resists Kundry, but she gives him a kiss that gives him insight into Amfortas' suffering, Kundry's role in it and his own role as saviour. Through Kundry, Parsifal also becomes aware of his own identity.

He manages to retrieve the spear from Klingsor and after many wanderings, which are mainly an 'inner quest', he arrives back at the Grail domain after many years. Amfortas' wound heals. All hopes are pinned on Parsifal, whom everyone sees as the saviour of the Grail community and as the new Grail King.