

TRISTAN UND ISOLDE

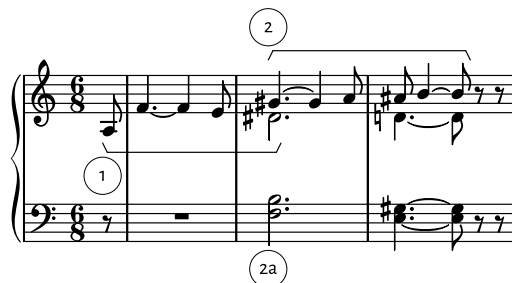
LIST OF MOTIVES

I have tried to list all those themes, phrases, and ideas that have been identified as motives by those who have studied the score of *Tristan und Isolde*.¹ Early commentators—notably Kobbé, Lavignac, Kufferath, and Cleather and Crump—were in the habit of giving names to the motives. Although this practice is now largely disapproved, it is not entirely unhelpful: hence I have given these names and sometimes used them in the course of my argument.

Not all the motives in this list are equally important. Some are brilliant but passing ideas that serve the dramatic purpose but disappear when the action moves on. Others are worked into the very life of the music and can be fully understood only in terms of the entire musical argument. Some might prefer to identify only these more structurally pregnant ideas as the true motives of the work. The reader is therefore at liberty to doubt whether motives 14, 19, 23, 25, 28, 31, 32, 34, 37, 40, 43, 44, 45, and 46 really deserve the name. Nevertheless I list them here, since it does no harm to include them and also offers a better synopsis of Wagner's more important ideas.

List of Motives

1. TRISTAN (Kobbé), THE AVOWAL (Lavignac), TRISTAN'S SORROW (Cleather), YEARNING, SORROW, etc.²
2. ISOLDE (Kobbé), DESIRE (Lavignac), ISOLDE'S MAGIC.
- 2a. The Tristan chord.



3. Variation of 2. THE HERO (Cleather).



4. THE LOOK. Varied retrograde of 1.



¹All text in this document, including the introduction but excepting the footnotes, comes from Roger Scruton's *Death-Devoted Heart: Sex and the Sacred in Wagner's "Tristan und Isolde,"* pp. 199–207. With the exception of a few slight editorial adjustments, none of this material is my own, and any scholarly discussions of it should be done with clear citation of Scruton's book.

²Scruton provides theme names in single quotation marks. Following the practice laid out by Warren Darcy in his guide to the themes of the *Ring*, I have chosen to editorialize these names by typesetting them in all capital letters to separate the themes from that which they signify.

5. Elaboration of 4.



6. Called THE LOVE POTION by Lavignac and Cleather. Further elaboration of 4.



7. Associated with IVY AND WINE by Wagner in a letter to Mathilde Wesendonck; called THE MAGIC CASKET by Lavignac. Variant of 6.



8. Elaboration of 6.

9. FATE (*Verhängnis*), POISON, DEATH, THE DRINK OF DEATH, etc.



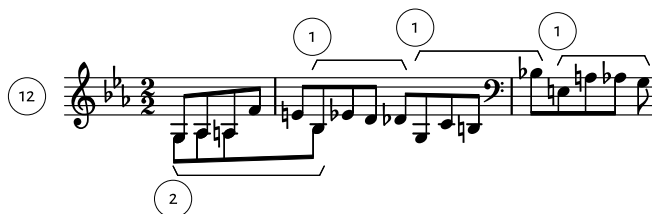
10. DELIVERANCE THROUGH DEATH (Lavignac), LONGING FOR DEATH (Cleather).



11. OCEAN, SEA, CROSSING.



12. ISOLDE'S ANGER. 1 and 2 combined and varied.



13. DEATH-DEVOTED HEAD, DEATH-DEVOTED HEART, and DEATH. Meditation on G#/A, tailing off with 3.

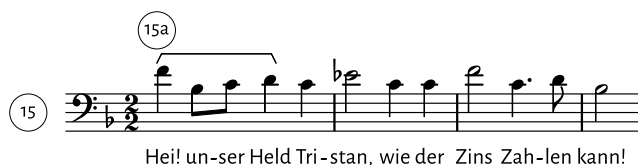


14. KURWENAL.



15. (no label)

15a. TRISTAN'S CALL (Kobbé), THE GLORY OF TRISTAN (Lavignac).

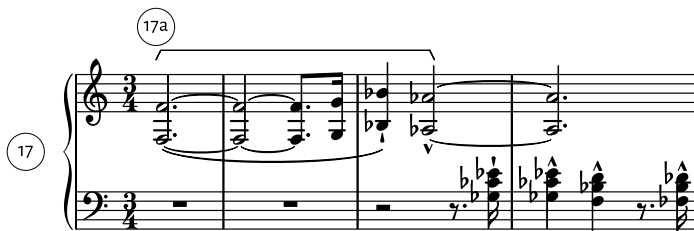


16. SICK TRISTAN, WOUNDED TRISTAN (Lavignac). Variation of 1.



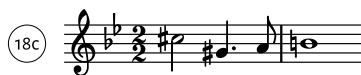
17. HEROIC TRISTAN (Lavignac), DESTINY (Kufferath), MOROLD (Cleather), TRISTAN'S HONOR, CUSTOM (Sitte).

17a. Variation of 3.



18. DAY.

18a. 15a in minor.



19. NIGHT (Kobbé). Variation of 18.



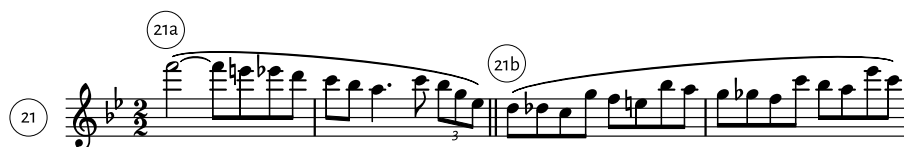
20. IMPATIENCE.



21. LOVE CALL (Kufferath), ARDOR (Lavignac), THE TORCH (Cleather).

21a. Variation of 1.

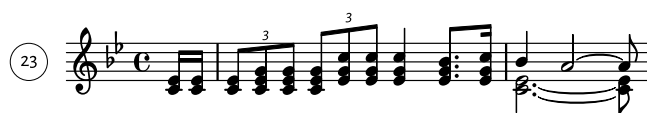
21b. Related to 12.



22. ECSTASY, PASSION, etc.



23. HUNTING CALL.



24. LOVE (Kufferath), THE SONG OF LOVE (Lavignac).



25. THE SUMMONS (Cleather).



26. INVOCATION OF THE NIGHT (Lavignac).

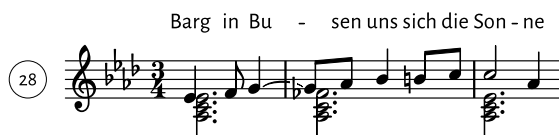




27. DEATH THE LIBERATOR (Lavignac).



28. (no label)



29. LOVE'S PEACE, HAPPINESS, ETERNAL REST (Cleather). Variation of 10.



30. LIEBESTOD. Variation of 1.



31. (Gruppetto).



32. MARKE'S GRIEF.



33. CONSTERNATION (Lavignac), MARKE (Kufferath).



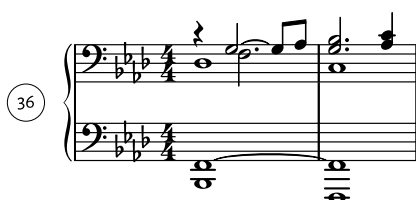
34. BETRAYAL (Cleather).



35. (no label)



36. SOLITUDE (Kufferath). Variation of 2.



37. (no label)



38. ANGUISH (Kobbé), DISTRESS, ISOLDE AS HEALER (Lavignac, Kufferath).



39. (no label)



40. KAREOL.



41. JOY, GRATITUDE. Variation of [2](#) (Kobbé) and/or [19](#) (Kufferath).



42. THE CURSE.



43. (no label)



44. Variation of [28](#).³



45. (no label)



46. SHARED DEATH (Kufferath).



³Scruton says this is a variation of [20](#), but this is surely an error.