

Tam Lin is a tone poem in the tradition of the great tone poems of Richard Strauss, such as *Don Juan* and *Death and Transfiguration*. It is structured in Classical sonata form, and its story is based on the Irish legend of Tam Lin, with a Wagnerian twist at the end:

Lady Margaret is warned to stay away from Carterhaugh, where Tam Lin, an Elven womanizer, is said to reside, but she is unable to resist and journeys to Carterhaugh nevertheless. There she meets Tam Lin, and she succumbs to his charms. As a result of this romantic encounter, she discovers she is with child, and in distress she returns to the forest to find an herb which will abort the pregnancy. Tam Lin comes to her, however, and tells her of a way they can be together: he was once a mortal man, but long ago was made a captive of the Queen of Fairies, who granted him immortality in return for his servitude. However, he can be freed if Margaret should come to a certain spot in the forest on All Hallows Eve, when the Fairie Folk are riding past. She follows his instructions, and when Tam Lin rides past, she grabs on to the back of his horse. As predicted, the Queen of Fairies changes Tam Lin's shape, first to a lion, then to a serpent, and finally to a torrent of fire, but Margaret continues to hold tight, and he is finally transformed into his own human shape, a mortal man once again. However, their happiness is short-lived, for, once mortal, Tam Lin ages before Margaret's eyes, and dies. The piece ends with Lady Margaret's lament for her dead lover.