Liebestod music is heard for the first time in the opera, but it is not completed here, being interrupted at its highest point. When this music is recapitulated at the very end of the opera—in the Liebestod proper—it does reach completion and resolution. What more compelling way to dramatize the idea that the tragic lovers end their longing only in death.

The Prelude and the Liebestod both contain the Desire motive (No. 1b). Analyze the ambiguous chord that always occurs with the first note of this motive (G♯), and notice how this chord is differently resolved each time.

A piano arrangement can be of great help in analysis, but the interested student will also want to refer to the full score, a sample of which has been appended.

Prelude

Langsam und schmeichlend.
Lento e languido.

Piano reduction continues on page 352.
Allmählich im Zeitmass etwas zurückhaltend.
Il tempo poco a poco ritenuto.