THE MET: HD LIVE IN SCHOOLS

2015–16 Educator Guide

Elektra

STRAUSS

The Metropolitan Opera HD Live
Celebrating 10 years

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The program is supported through a partnership with the New York City Department of Education.
VENGEFUL, IMPLACABLE, PATHOLOGICAL—THE CHARACTER OF ELECTRA has gripped writers for nearly 2,500 years. This mesmerizing protagonist, with her notorious lust for revenge and morbid father fixation, has conjured representation in formats as diverse as Greek tragedy, Expressionist opera, contemporary theater and film, Marvel comics, and Jungian psychology. Richard Strauss’s *Elektra* is a searing masterpiece of early 20th-century theater that sets the title character on an inexorable path leading to a final cataclysm of violence, accompanied by a revolutionary score that is, in the words of one critic, “the color of blood.”

The Met’s new production, previously presented in Aix-en-Provence and Milan, is by the acclaimed director Patrice Chéreau, who died in 2013, before his *Elektra* could make it to the stage of the Met. Chéreau viewed this opera as a kind of counterpart to Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, with both title characters destroyed by the same fantasy of vengeance. “As in the Shakespeare,” Chéreau explained when his staging premiered in Aix, “you can see the black wing of depression at work, with its exhausting alternation of wariness, fear, panic, and exultation.” Written early in Strauss’s operatic career, *Elektra* achieves a level of psychological depth rarely equaled in his later works. Its music perfectly embodies the unremitting cycle of violence called forth by the Greek tragedy and the internal devastation wrought by the pursuit of revenge.

This guide is intended to help your students appreciate the opera within the context of the early 20th-century artistic avant-garde and its expansion of musical language. By exploring the opera’s tightly woven plot and its treatment of Greek mythology and tragedy, students will gain an understanding of the opera’s seminal status as a work of radical innovation. The activities on the following pages are designed to provide context, deepen background knowledge, and enrich the overall experience of this *Live in HD* transmission. This guide will also align with key strands of the Common Core Standards.
The activities in this guide will address several aspects of *Elektra*:

- The underlying dramatic structure of literary works and the opera’s formal organization
- The musical representation of dramatically significant moments
- The musical techniques employed by Strauss to create internal cohesion and meaning
- Creative choices made by the artists of the Metropolitan Opera for this production
- The opera as a unified work of art, involving the efforts of composer, librettist, and Met artists

This guide is intended to cultivate students’ interest in *Elektra*, whether or not they have any prior experience with opera. It includes activities for students with a wide range of musical backgrounds and seeks to encourage them to think about opera—and the performing arts as a whole—as a medium of both entertainment and creative expression.

**THE SOURCE: ELECTRA BY SOPHOCLES**

The works of the ancient Greek dramatist Sophocles date from the fifth century BC and feature some of the iconic figures of Classical tragedy: Oedipus, Antigone, and Electra. His *Electra* play (ca. 410 BC) explores the domestic fallout after the murder of the mythological King Agamemnon—one of the heroes of the Trojan War and a major character in Homer’s *Iliad*—by his wife Clytemnestra and her lover Aegisthus. Agamemnon’s bereaved daughter Electra and her plot for revenge appear in similar works by Sophocles’s near contemporaries Aeschylus and Euripides. In his version, Sophocles explores Electra’s character and motivation, questioning what kind of person would so relentlessly pursue the goal of her own mother’s death.

In 1903, the poet Hugo von Hofmannsthal adapted Sophocles’s tragedy into a stage play for the director Max Reinhardt in Berlin. Strauss attended a performance, and within two years, he and Hofmannsthal were collaborating to create an opera based on the play. Hofmannsthal had made a number of changes to the ancient Greek source that re-cast the characters in the light of the burgeoning field of psychoanalysis and the writings of Sigmund Freud, and he also altered the ending. The Electra of Sophocles finishes the play in triumph, whereas Hofmannsthal and Strauss’s comes to a different, much darker end.

(Note: This guide uses the German spelling of the characters’ names, as they appear in the opera’s libretto.)

**MYCENAE, AN INTERIOR COURT YARD OF THE PALACE.** A group of maidservants to Clytemnestra, Queen of Mycenae, gossip by the well, wondering whether Clytemnestra’s daughter Elektra will appear to grieve over her father, Agamemnon, as is her daily ritual. Elektra enters and the maidservants mock her for her unkempt appearance and venomous attitude. Left alone, Elektra recalls Agamemnon’s brutal murder at the hands of Clytemnestra and her lover Aegisth, and she imagines her father returning as a shade to oversee his own violent revenge. Elektra foresees the bloody completion of her vengeance, crowned by her dancing triumphantly on Agamemnon’s grave.

Elektra’s younger sister, Chrysothemis, interrupts Elektra’s reflections to warn her that Clytemnestra and Aegisth are planning to lock her away in a tower. Chrysothemis pleads with Elektra to renounce the blood feud that prevents them from leading normal lives. Noises from the palace signal the imminent arrival of the queen, and Chrysothemis urges Elektra to avoid their mother. Instead, she awaits the confrontation with glee.

Clytemnestra arrives accompanied by her entourage and finds Elektra in a more agreeable mood than usual. The queen sends away her followers and approaches her daughter, asking her whether she knows of a remedy for bad dreams. Elektra draws
This guide is divided into five sections:

- **THE SOURCE, THE STORY, WHO’S WHO IN ELEKTRA, AND A TIMELINE**
- **CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:** Two activities designed to align with and support various Common Core Standard strands used in ELA, History/Social Studies, and Music curricula
- **PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES:** Two activities to be used during The Met: Live in HD transmission, highlighting specific aspects of this production
- **POST-SHOW DISCUSSION:** A wrap-up activity, integrating the live in HD experience into the students’ understanding of the performing arts and the humanities
- **STUDENT RESOURCE PAGES:** Classroom-ready worksheets supporting the activities in the guide

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Since the early 19th century, singing voices have usually been classified in six basic types, three male and three female, according to their range:

- **Soprano**: the highest-pitched type of human voice, normally possessed only by women and boys. Examples include Elektra, Chrysothemis, and Klytämnestra.
- **Mezzo-Soprano**: a female voice whose range lies between the soprano and the contralto (Italian “mezzo” = middle, medium). Examples include Orest and Elektra.
- **Contralto**: the lowest female voice, also called an alto. Examples include Elektra and Chrysothemis.
- **Countertenor**: a male singing voice whose vocal range is equivalent to that of a contralto, mezzo-soprano, or (less frequently) a soprano, usually through use of falsetto. Examples include Elektra and Chrysothemis.
- **Tenor**: the highest naturally occurring voice type in adult males. Examples include Elektra and Chrysothemis.
- **Bass**: the lowest male voice. Examples include Elektra and Chrysothemis.

Elektra becomes aware that she is being watched by one of the strangers who had come bearing the news of Orest’s death. Her obvious grieving for Orest prompts the stranger to ask her who she is. When she reveals that she is Elektra, kin to Agamemnon and Orest, the stranger reels in shock. It is only when the aged servants of the palace throw themselves at the stranger’s feet that Elektra realizes that he is in fact Orest, returned in disguise. Together, they mourn the ravages of body and mind caused by Elektra’s pursuit of revenge. Elektra and Orest are interrupted by his tutor, who comes to summon Orest to the palace: Klytämnestra is within unprotected, and the moment of vengeance has come.

Orest enters the palace, and Elektra realizes that she has forgotten to give him the axe. From inside, Klytämnestra screams, and Elektra exults in her mother’s death. The maidservants are thrown into confusion, and when Aegisth is heard returning from the fields, they flee in fear before him. Only Elektra is left to light the way for Aegisth, and she ushers him into the palace with fawning delight. Soon Aegisth too screams for help and succumbs to the vengeance waiting for him within.

Chrysothemis enters to report on a battle within the palace between those loyal to Orest and Aegisth. Elektra exults in the final completion of her revenge and begins her triumphal dance. In an extreme state of ecstasy, she dances briefly in frenzied rapture before collapsing to the earth, dead.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHARACTER</th>
<th>PRONUNCIATION</th>
<th>VOICE TYPE</th>
<th>THE LOWDOWN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elektra (Electra)</td>
<td>eh-LEK-truh</td>
<td>Soprano</td>
<td>Implacable and possessed by an all-consuming desire for revenge, Elektra spends her days in fits of rage and mourning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chrysothemis</td>
<td>kroo-ZOE-teh-meet</td>
<td>Soprano</td>
<td>Unlike her sister, Chrysothemis longs for a normal life and to become a wife and mother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klytämnestra (Clytemnestra)</td>
<td>KLOO-tame-NESS-truh</td>
<td>Mezzo-soprano</td>
<td>Fearsome and powerful, she is haunted by nightmares; seeking relief, she performs sacrifices to pacify the gods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orest (Orestes)</td>
<td>oh-REHST</td>
<td>Baritone</td>
<td>Although long absent from his native land, he is a figure of fear for Klytämnestra and one of hope for Elektra.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aegisth (Aegisthus)</td>
<td>ae-GEHST</td>
<td>Tenor</td>
<td>A secondary character in the opera, he appears only briefly before being murdered.</td>
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**BAHS**
the male voice lying below the tenor and above the bass

**BASS**
the lowest male voice

Elektra describes with morbid pleasure how the queen will be chased and killed in her own palace by Elektra’s brother, Orest.

Just then, Klytämnestra’s confidante runs to her mistress and whispers a message in her ear. The queen returns to the palace with savage pleasure without interacting further with Elektra. Chrysothemis in her plan to murder Klytämnestra and Aegisth. Chrysothemis refuses and flees. Cursing her, Elektra decides to commit the murders on her own. She begins to dig wildly in the ground, looking for the axe used in Agamemnon’s murder, which she had secreted away and buried for this purpose.

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While conducting in Paris, Strauss meets the young Austrian poet Hugo von Hofmannsthal, who is interested in collaborating to create a ballet. Strauss is impressed with Hofmannsthal’s scenario, but is too busy with existing projects to work with him at the time.

Hofmannsthal writes the play *Elektra*, a free adaptation of the tragedy by Sophocles. It is mounted by the director Max Reinhardt in Berlin, where Strauss attends a performance.

Strauss’s opera *Salome* premieres in Dresden. Its lurid subject matter and sultry atmosphere are matched by Strauss’s shockingly inventive musical setting. The opera is soon performed at all of the major European opera houses to great critical acclaim. The composer Gustav Mahler calls it “emphatically a work of genius, very powerful, and decidedly one of the most important works of our day.”

Strauss and Hofmannsthal agree to work together to create an opera based on Hofmannsthal’s *Elektra*. Following this first joint effort, they continue to collaborate on operatic projects until the poet’s untimely death in 1929.

*Elektra* receives its premiere on January 25 at the Court Opera in Dresden, and its success, enhanced by the public interest in its modern, emotionally fraught plot, is soon a worldwide phenomenon.

Hugo von Hofmannsthal suffers a fatal stroke and dies on July 15. Strauss is too distraught to attend the funeral, but he writes to Hofmannsthal’s widow: “This genius, this great poet, this sensitive collaborator, this kind friend, this unique talent! No musician ever found such a helper and supporter. No one will ever replace him for me or the world of music!”

Although apolitical by nature, Strauss is compelled to accept an appointment by German Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels to the presidency of the Reichsmusikkammer, the official organization of the Third Reich that coordinated all facets of the music industry.

Strauss is forced to resign from the Reichsmusikkammer owing to his defiant insistence on working with the Jewish librettist Stefan Zweig.

Strauss composes his final works, later published as *Vier letzte Lieder* (“Four Last Songs”), for soprano and orchestra. Though he had written songs steadily throughout his long career, these late, luminous works, set to texts reflecting on the meaning of death, are among his finest compositions.

Strauss dies on September 8, having suffered from declining health for several years. At a memorial service in Munich, conductor Georg Solti leads the final trio from *Der Rosenkavalier*. 
Elektra History

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Fate, Fault and Catharsis: A Close Look at Dramatic Structure in Elektra

Strauss’s opera Elektra possesses a concise, tightly controlled plot, with its dramatic arc largely determined by the conventions of Greek tragedy. Over the course of the opera, there is little extraneous music or dialogue, with nearly every utterance of its characters propelling the action towards the opera’s catastrophic finale. In this activity, students will consider some of the ways in which authors bring together elements of a narrative into a cohesive, satisfying whole. Students will:

• learn and become familiar with the literary concept of dramatic structure
• learn vocabulary associated with Greek drama
• discover some of Strauss’s musical representations of the elements of dramatic structure in the opera
• apply their knowledge through storyboarding activities

**STEPS**

In this activity, students will have several opportunities to become familiar with the plot of Elektra and with the conventions of Greek tragedy. They will identify major themes, follow the development of the action, and hone their understanding of literary structure. They will read and listen to excerpts from the opera that demonstrate dramatic high points, and in groups they will interpret the opera’s action and articulate the relation of various musical moments to dramatic structure. The lesson will close with an activity that encourages students to respond both analytically and creatively to their understanding of dramatic structure.

**STEP 1:** Introduce the concept of dramatic structure and explain that it refers to an underlying or guiding framework behind literary narratives, particularly stage dramas. Dramatic structure provides a way for authors to organize the action in their stories so that characters’ actions build upon one another towards compelling high points and an ultimate resolution.

Explain that many literary critics and philosophers have developed systems for analyzing dramatic structure, from simple frameworks (Aristotle: a tragedy must have “a beginning, a middle, and an end”) to much more detailed schemes. One of the most common analytical frameworks proposes a five-part structure, according to the scheme below.

- **Exposition:** an opening portion of the play in which the audience learns important background information about the main characters and their histories
- **Rising Action:** a series of conflicts, sometimes begun by an inciting event, that successively build towards a high point
- **Climax:** The moment of highest tension; the turning point when the situation for the protagonist changes—for good or ill
- **Falling Action:** Events that grow out of the reversal of fortune experienced in the climax
- **Denouement:** The final resolution of conflicts leading to the close of the drama

**IN PREPARATION**

For this activity, students will need the reproducible resources available at the back of this guide, a copy of the synopsis, as well as the audio selections from Elektra available online or on the accompanying CD.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

• To become familiar with the characters and conflicts of Elektra
• To explore dramatic structure and plot conventions
• To interpret characters’ motivations and predict the outcome of their actions
• To prompt curiosity about the Met’s production of Elektra

**CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS**

English/Language Arts, Literature, Theater/Drama, Philosophy, Music

**COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND ELEKTRA**

This activity directly supports the following ELA-Literacy Common Core Strands:

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly, as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-12.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-12.3 Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-12.1c Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.
CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

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**Falling Action:** Events that grow out of the reversal of fortune experienced in the climax

**Dénouement:** The final resolution of conflicts leading to the close of the drama. In comedies, the protagonist is typically better off than at the play's start; in tragedies, the final catastrophe often includes the protagonist's death.

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**English/Language Arts**

You may need to fire students' imagination by starting off the discussion with a couple of popular examples from recent movies or fiction. You might bring up the example of Twilight, which could be analyzed in the following way:

**Exposition:** Bella is a new student in school and several boys vie for her attention.

**Rising Action:** Edward saves Bella's life and she discovers that he is a vampire. Their relationship begins to develop.

**Climax:** A dangerous coven of vampires, led by James, moves to the area and decides to hunt Bella for sport.

**Falling Action:** Edward rescues Bella after she is trapped and extracts the vampire venom after James bites her wrist.

**Dénouement:** Edward and Bella return home and their relationship continues to grow. Edward's family has made powerful enemies, and Bella starts to want to become a vampire.
The Surprising Etymology of Tragedy

Tragedy (n.): A drama typically exploring serious events, often including the main character’s downfall caused by personal faults and/or fate, and with an unhappy or disastrous ending.

It may not make immediate sense that the word tragedy originally meant “goat song”—derived from the ancient Greek tragōs (“goat”) and oide (“ode” or “song”). To understand what this says about the nature of tragedy, we need to go all the way back to Greece in the seventh century BC, and the ancient rituals, or Dionysia, held in Athens in honor of Dionysus, the god of vegetation, wine, and fertility. The Dionysia were religious festivals associated with the harvest and vintage and which included ritual sacrifices and fertility celebrations, as well as wild dancing and singing by characters with their faces smeared by wine and wearing goatskins—in imitation of the satyrs, Dionysus’s attendants. These rustic episodes eventually acquired a greater degree of literary refinement and included the dramatic performance of poetry by choruses called tragoi. In time, they incorporated spoken portions with serious plots inspired by the Dionysia’s commemoration of death and the renewal of life. Long after these performances had left the immediate context of religious ritual, they continued to explore matters of solemn import to the culture: the causes of suffering, the nature of guilt, and the absence of justice.

STEP 4: Next, distribute the synopsis of Elektra and ask for volunteers to take turns reading it aloud. Before launching into the reading, ask students to keep in mind the five stages of dramatic structure and to listen to the synopsis analytically, keeping an eye out for how the plot’s actions correspond to the different dramatic stages.

Following the reading, ask students to summarize the main events of the opera. At this point, keep the discussion on the level of events and actions; students will analyze the dramatic structure later.

STEP 5: Now it’s time to delve into the text and music of Elektra. Each of the following examples provides a snapshot of a character or moment in the opera that will give students further evidence as to how the actions in the opera knit together to form a cohesive, dramatic arc.

Play the musical selections one at a time, while students follow along to the text and translations provided on the handout. Students can note their observations on how the music reflects the events at hand and amplifies the dramatic situation. (You may want to play each selection twice—first for students to gain a general sense of the music and dramatic situation, and a second time to give them a chance to take notes.) After they’ve written down what they hear, ask them to share their observations with the class; you may want to list the characteristics they’ve noted on the chalkboard. Repeat for each of the five listening selections. A listening guide to the five tracks is provided for your reference below.

Track 1: In this selection, we hear Elektra lamenting her solitude and crying out to her dead father. She sings slowly and plaintively against a sustained, dissonant orchestral accompaniment. Notice that Elektra addresses her father directly—she continues to communicate that Klytämnestra has been driven to the breaking point but is yet powerful and capable of potent action. What do your students make of this? How do they view the character of Klytämnestra?

Track 2: Against a steadily rising, frantic accompaniment, Klytämnestra begs for an end to her nightmares. This dissonant passage lands on a high point on “Blut” (“blood”), her music is based on the leitmotif associated with Agammenon. (For more information on leitmotifs, see the Ten Essential Musical Terms.) In this section, what do your students hear in Elektra’s voice?

Track 3: After feigning cooperation and taunting Klytämnestra with hints, Elektra reveals her true attitude in this outburst of malice. She prophesies the reckoning her mother will soon face, her frantic chase through her own home, and her eventual murder. The orchestra underpins the text with violent, dissonant eruptions. As Elektra exults that it will be she who releases vengeance upon the household (“Und ich! ich! ich!”), the music breaks through into a more consonant, victorious texture. How can students describe the narrative arc of this section? (Refer to the Ten Essential Musical Terms for a discussion of consonance and dissonance.)

Ten Essential Musical Terms

for a discussion of consonance and dissonance.)
The Surprising Etymology of Tragedy

It may not make immediate sense that the word tragedy originally meant “goat song”—derived from the ancient Greek τραγῳδία (tragōidía) and the Latin oide (“ode” or “song”). To understand what this says about the nature of tragedy, we need to go all the way back to Greece in the seventh century BC, and the ancient rituals, or Dionysia, held in Athens in honor of Dionysus, the god of vegetation, wine, and fertility. The Dionysia were religious festivals associated with the harvest and vintage and which included ritual sacrifices and fertility celebrations, as well as wild dancing and singing by characters with their faces smeared by wine and wearing goatskins—in imitation of the satyrs, Dionysus’s attendants. These rustic episodes eventually acquired a greater degree of literary refinement and included the dramatic performance of poetry by choruses called tragoidoi. In time, they incorporated spoken portions with serious plots inspired by the Dionysia’s commemoration of death and the renewal of life. Long after these performances had left the immediate context of religious ritual, they continued to explore matters of solemn import to the culture: the causes of suffering, the nature of guilt, and the absence of justice.

Following the reading, ask students to summarize the main events of the opera. At this point, keep the discussion on the level of events and actions; students will analyze the dramatic structure later.

STEP 5: Now it’s time to delve into the text and music of Elektra. Each of the following examples provides a snapshot of a character or moment in the opera that will give students further evidence as to how the actions in the opera knit together to form a cohesive, dramatic arc.

Play the musical selections one at a time, while students follow along to the text and translations provided on the handout. Students can note their observations on how the music reflects the events at hand and amplifies the dramatic situation. (You may want to play each selection twice—first for students to gain a general sense of the music and dramatic situation, and a second time to give them a chance to take notes.) After they’ve written down what they hear, ask them to share their observations with the class; you may want to list the characteristics they’ve noted on the chalkboard. Repeat for each of the five listening selections. A listening guide to the five tracks is provided for your reference below.

Track 1: In this selection, we hear Elektra lamenting her solitude and crying out to her dead father. She sings slowly and plaintively against a sustained, dissonant orchestral accompaniment. Notice that Elektra addresses her father directly—she continues to fixate on him long after his death. As she calls upon him by name (“Agamemnon!” “Agamemnon!”), her music is based on the leitmotif associated with Agamemnon. (For more information on leitmotifs, see the Ten Essential Musical Terms.) In this section, what do your students hear in Elektra’s voice?

Track 2: Against a steadily rising, frantic accompaniment, Klytämnestra begs for an end to her nightmares. This dissonant passage lands on a high point on “Blut” (“blood”), as Klytämnestra searches for the correct sacrifice to calm her torments. The music communicates that Klytämnestra has been driven to the breaking point but is yet powerful and capable of potent action. What do your students make of this? How do they view the character of Klytämnestra?

Track 3: After feigning cooperation and taunting Klytämnestra with hints, Elektra reveals her true attitude in this outburst of malice. She prophesies the reckoning her mother will soon face, her frantic chase through her own home, and her eventual murder. The orchestra underpins the text with violent, dissonant eruptions. As Elektra exults that it will be she who releases vengeance upon the household (“Und ich! Ich! ich! ich!”), the music breaks through into a more consonant, victorious texture. How can students describe the narrative arc of this section? (Refer to the Ten Essential Musical Terms for a discussion of consonance and dissonance.)
Track 4: Following a queasy and disjointed orchestral introduction, Chrysothemis bursts onstage to report that Orest is dead. Immediately following her delivery of the news, the musical texture changes to a slithery, falling chromatic gesture, punctuated by quiet, more static sections in which Elektra denies the possibility that Orest is dead. The psychological states of the two sisters are contrasted directly in their music. The musical representation is tied directly to the central importance of Orest and his role in Elektra’s program of revenge. (Refer to the Ten Essential Musical Terms for a discussion of chromaticism.)

Track 5: In this longer example, we hear the dramatic progression by which both Orest and Elektra discover that they are in the presence of their sibling. Beginning with Orest, the music is exploratory, seeming to strive towards a greater lyricism and consonance, leading towards an expressive arrival at the moment of Orest’s discovery and his repeated pronouncement of Elektra’s name. Following an almost gentle orchestral interlude as an old palace servant recognizes Orest, Elektra’s similar discovery about Orest is given a treatment of even greater musical exultation, as she reaches into the top of her vocal range with her first pronouncement of “Orest!” Another ensuing orchestral interlude brings the music into a much more gentle and soothing attitude. Elektra’s repeated statements of “Orest!” approach the manner of a lullaby or dream. What do your students make of this? How would they describe this moment of dramatic discovery?

STEP 6: Divide students into groups of four or five and explain that their next job is to map out the dramatic structure of Elektra. Referring to the synopsis as well as the texts and translations studied in the previous step, students will discuss how to divide the opera into the five stages of Exposition, Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action, and Dénouement/Catastrophe. (It may be helpful to note that the dramatic moments explored in texts and translations provided may not correspond directly to stages of a dramatic structure.) Students will engage in collegial discussions and support their opinions with evidence from the written synopsis. Students may also be able to identify moments of anagnorisis and peripeteia, or to describe the means of catharsis in the opera.

STEP 7: After agreeing on the dramatic structure of the opera, students will collaborate to develop a storyboard that captures their understanding of the structure. Distribute copies of the storyboard handout from the reproducible handouts at the back of this guide. After writing a brief description of the major events in each element of the dramatic structure, students will make visual depictions of those events. Students may decide among themselves how to divide the artistic responsibilities in this exercise—whether one individual among their members will be the group artist, or if each member will contribute one drawing, for instance. An example storyboard is provided below for your reference. (Please note that this is not meant to be a definitive answer; it is merely one interpretation among many other possible and defensible options.)

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FOLLOW-UP: As a final wrap-up discussion, ask for volunteers from a couple of groups to explain their storyboards in front of the class and to share their visual depiction of Elektra’s dramatic structure. Ask students to pay particular attention to the storyboards that connect the different dramatic stages through interwoven plot strands. Do these make for the most concise and rational storyboards? Ask students to draw conclusions on what made for the most successful depictions of Elektra’s plot.

**FUN FACT:** Richard Strauss’s father was an accomplished musician: he held the post of principal French horn player in the Munich Court Orchestra. His musical tastes tended strongly toward the conservative, and he much preferred Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven over composers of his own generation. The conductor Hans Richter is supposed to have once said, “Strauss’s son may be happy that he doesn’t have his father in his own orchestra.”
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The devastation that Elektra wreaks upon her household, while extreme in its own right, is only one example of the bloody history of her family, the House of Atreus. Greek mythology and literature include the histories of several dynasties—those based in Thebes, Crete, Athens, and Mycenae—whose invertebrate moral failures called down retribution upon generation after generation. The curse of the House of Atreus began with King Tantalus, a mythological son of Zeus. He had attempted to test the gods’ omniscience by offering them a gruesome feast—a dish made from the flesh of his own son, Pelops—to see whether they would recognize it. The gods denounced Tantalus’s act as an atrocity. As punishment, they imprisoned him for all eternity, hungry and thirsty, in a pool of water beneath fruit-laden branches that forever elude his grasp. (The story of Tantalus provides the root of the English word tantalize.)

The gods restored the butchered Pelops to life, and he went on to ascend the throne of Arcadia, marry the former king’s daughter, and sire many children, both legitimate and illegitimate. The curse of his forbear was revisited upon his generation when his twin sons Atreus and Thyestes conspired with their mother to murder their half-brother Chrysippus, the favorite son of the king. Atreus and Thyestes then fled to Mycenae, where their spectacular rivalry included such barbaric acts as Thyestes’s seduction of Atreus’s wife, Atreus’s revenge by butchering Thyestes’s sons and feeding them to Thyestes, and Thyestes’s rape of his own daughter, whom Atreus then took as a new wife. She gave birth to Aegisthus, who was raised by Atreus (although his natural father was Thyestes). When the grown Aegisthus discovered the circumstances of his birth, he slew Atreus and forced Atreus’s sons, Agamemnon and Menelaus, into exile.

Agamemnon and Menelaus allied themselves with King Tyndareus of Sparta and married his daughters, Clytemnestra and Helen, respectively. With the military support of Sparta, Agamemnon returned to Mycenae. When Menelaus’s wife Helen was abducted by Paris of Troy (the precipitating event of the Trojan War), Agamemnon assembled 100 ships to sail on his rival. But the fleet was forced to stay in the harbor by contrary winds sent by Artemis. To appease her, Agamemnon sacrificed his own daughter Iphigenia to the goddess. The winds lifted, and Agamemnon sailed to war. By the time Agamemnon returned to Mycenae ten years later, Clytemnestra had taken Aegisthus, Agamemnon’s cousin and rival for the throne, as a lover. Together, they plotted Agamemnon’s death in payment for Agamemnon’s sacrifice of Iphigenia. The events of Strauss’s opera Elektra begin after Agamemnon’s murder, when Clytemnestra and Aegisthus have occupied the throne for some years.

In each succeeding generation, the House of Atreus was plagued by corruption, curses, betrayal, and the most heinous crime of all, the murder of family members. This cycle of never-ending, bloody retribution ultimately ended only with Orestes, who accepted the guilt of killing his mother and sought to make amends for his crime (and to be delivered from the torments of the Furies). According to Euripides, he was eventually acquitted at a formal trial of the gods, and the curse of the House of Atreus was finally broken.

**Fun Fact:** In 1898, the Metropolitan Opera offered Strauss the position of principal conductor, at twice the salary of a rival offer from the Royal Court Opera in Berlin. Strauss turned down the Met in favor of Berlin’s more generous vacations and pensions. At the time, he wrote to his mother, “I shall still be able to graze in American pastures ten years from now, while at the moment it’s more important to make myself still better known in Europe.”
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**Background: The Curse of the House of Atreus**

The Mask of Agamemnon, a funeral mask in gold, ca. 1500–1500 BC, from Mycenae
Unweaving a Tangled Web: Identifying Leitmotifs in Elektra

In Elektra, Strauss creates a complex musical structure through the technique of leitmotifs, which he ingeniously weaves into a musical fabric of great symbolism. Some of the leitmotifs are dissonant and violent, expressing the trauma and emotional distress of Elektra and the things she has witnessed. Others sound lush and beautiful, and are associated with joyful moments, happy memories, or triumph. The following activity is designed to introduce students to a selection of Elektra's leitmotifs and to become accustomed to Strauss's compositional techniques in creating a dense, allusive musical score.

In the following activity, students will:
- become familiar with the concept of leitmotifs
- explore the structural function of recurring thematic material
- listen to and analyze a selection of leitmotifs from Elektra

**STEPS**

**STEP 1:** Distribute copies of the Ten Essential Musical Terms found in this guide. Have your students review it as a pre-lesson assignment or at the beginning of the class. Note that several of the terms build upon one another, so it will be important that students have a firm understanding of tonality before moving on to bitonality, chords and dissonance before moving on to chromatic harmony; and so on.

As this activity explores the leitmotifs in Elektra, it will be particularly important that students understand the meaning of this term. A leitmotif is a recurring musical theme or motto that can represent a person, place, emotion, idea, object, or any other element in a musical work. A familiar example from film is the “shark theme” from Jaws, which recurs whenever the shark appears—even if it’s not visible on screen. Students might enjoy trying to think of other examples of leitmotifs from movies or television.

**STEP 2:** Distribute the Unweaving a Tangled Web reproducible handout found at the back of this guide. First, play Tracks 6 through 14 and have students listen to the motifs without knowing what they stand for. Using the handout, students may record impressions and make notes of the musical elements that contribute to their understanding of each motif (i.e., high strings, insinuous rhythms, chromatic scale, etc.). It may be necessary to play through each leitmotif several times. Students may also need to refer back to the Ten Essential Musical Terms for vocabulary to support their impressions. Either individually or in groups, have students brainstorm what they think each leitmotif could mean or be associated with in the story. The track list below provides the correct identifications.

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Elektra’s Hatred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Elektra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
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<td>The Dance</td>
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**STEP 3:** In a free discussion, explore students’ impressions of each leitmotif. What were the musical elements that contributed to their understanding of each? In the course of your discussion, you may reveal what the meanings are for each motif, provided in the answer key above. Discuss how the musical representation corresponds to the textual or thematic identification.

**STEP 4:** Explore the following scenes first by reviewing what is happening dramatically. Texts and translations are provided in the reproducible handouts. Then, while listening to the audio examples, work together as a class to identify the leitmotifs that are used within the scene. This portion of the activity allows for further discussion and investigation into why Strauss employed certain motifs at certain moments within the dramatic action of the opera.

A teacher’s listening guide is provided for your reference below.

**TRACK 15:** Elektra’s Monologue

Elektra relates the horrible trauma she has experienced, having witnessed the murder of her father and been maltreated by her mother, Clytemnestra. She dreams about the day her father’s death will be avenged.

This excerpt contains Elektra’s Hatred motif, Elektra’s motif, the Agamemnon motif, and the Children of Agamemnon motif.
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STEP 4: Explore the following scenes first by reviewing what is happening dramatically. Texts and translations are provided in the reproducible handouts. Then, while listening to the audio examples, work together as a class to identify the leitmotifs that are used within the scene. This portion of the activity allows for further discussion and investigation into why Strauss employed certain motifs at certain moments within the dramatic action of the opera.

A teacher’s listening guide is provided for your reference below.

**TRACK 15: ELEKTRA’S MONOLOGUE**

Elektra relates the horrible trauma she has experienced, having witnessed the murder of her father and been maltreated by her mother, Klytemnestra. She dreams about the day her father’s death will be avenged.

*This excerpt contains Elektra’s Hatred motif, Elektra’s motif, the Agamemnon motif, and the Children of Agamemnon motif.*
**Ten Essential Musical Terms**

The following list of terms provides basic vocabulary to help your students engage more deeply with the music of Elektra.

**Bitonality** The combination of two keys at the same time. Bitonality may be used for the duration of entire compositions or on a smaller scale in individual chords. An example of this latter type is the “Elektra chord,” which Strauss uses in the Leitmotif (see below) of the character of Elektra. It is comprised of the simultaneous soundings of E major and C-sharp major, re-spelled enharmonically: E, G-sharp/F, B plus C-sharp/D-flat and E-sharp/F.

The Elektra chord can be heard in context at the very beginning of Track 1 of the musical examples. Composers sometimes use the dissonant clashes of bitonality to signify psychological turmoil, since bitonality by its nature contains harmonic impasses that are contrary to one another.

**Chord** A combination of notes sounded simultaneously, usually comprised of at least three different pitches. The triad, a type of chord built from a root pitch with two thirds arranged above it, is the basic building block of harmony. Chords are typically named according to the largest interval they span from their root. For instance, a seventh chord includes the note that is the distance of a seventh from its root.

**Chromaticism** Chromatic notes are those that don’t belong to the prevailing harmony or scale of a musical composition (so named because in early music notation these notes were colored). Chromatic is the reverse of diatonic, which refers to notes of a scale or harmony derived exclusively from those available in its given key. Chromaticism can add drama and intensity to music by introducing notes or chords that are dissonant to the key and that call for resolution.

**Consonance** A sweet, harmonious sound without any tension requiring resolution. The most consonant intervals are the unison and octave, fifth, sixth and third. Consonance is the opposite of dissonance.

**Dissonance** Two or more notes that are perceived to be in discord or that “sound wrong” together. Dissonant intervals include the 2nd, 7th, and tritone. Dissonance feels unstable to the listener and calls for harmonic resolution. It is the opposite of consonance.

**Leitmotif** Literally, “leading theme” in German, a leitmotif is a recurring musical motif that represents a person, place, emotion, idea, object, or any other element in a musical work. The use of leitmotifs helps to provide structural unity to a composition, and they may be combined together to form a dense and allusive web of thematic material. The idea originated in the mid-19th century and was developed into a compositional technique by Richard Wagner. Strauss uses leitmotifs to great effect in many of his works, including the opera Salome and Elektra.

**Orchestration** An aspect of composition, orchestration is the art of choosing which instruments should play each musical idea in a musical work. Successful orchestration requires that the instruments chosen is appropriate to the melody—that the musical line is within the instrument’s playable range and expressive capabilities. The art of orchestration also allows a composer to draw on and combine the disparate timbres of instruments to amplify melodic expression and create a wide range of musical colors.

**Tonality** The prevailing system of organizing harmony in Western music from roughly 1600 to 1910. Within the tonal system, chords are predominantly based on the pitches in a key’s scale, and these chords are organized into a hierarchy of greater and lesser importance based on their distance from the tonic, or home pitch. On a larger scale, tonal compositions are written in a single key, which begins and closes a work, with more exploratory harmonic material in the middle.

**Wagnerism** Richard Wagner was a seminal figure in the history of opera whose music and ideas about music have been divisive both during his lifetime and even now. Over 130 years after his death, Wagner’s innovations to harmony, thematic treatment, and musical structure were enormously influential. The scope of his innovations was such that his ideas spread beyond the musical world into the realms of visual artists, poets, philosophers, and novelists. Wagner was capable of inspiring both wonderful allegiance and vociferous dislike among his contemporaries. His followers are often called “Wagnerites,” and the movement inspired by his works “Wagnerism.”

In this scene, Orest has returned and encounters Elektra, but the two siblings do not recognize each other. However, the music reveals their relationship before the characters themselves make the discovery. The passage closes with a portion of the Children of Agamemnon motif.

This excerpt contains the Stranger motif, Orest’s Mission motif, and the Children of Agamemnon motif.

**Track 17: ELEKTRA AND OREST REUNITED**

In this scene, Elektra and Orest recognize each other and are reunited. The music amplifies this structurally important moment with two important motifs: the Love of Orestes and the Children of Agamemnon.

This excerpt contains the Elektra’s Love for Orest motif and the Children of Agamemnon motif.

**Track 18: DANCING HERSELF TO DEATH**

In this scene, Elektra has just learned that Orest has killed Klytämnestra and Aegisth, and she breaks into a triumphant dance that ultimately leads to her collapse and death.

This excerpt contains the Dance motif, Elektra’s Love for Orest, the Children of Agamemnon motif, and the Agamemnon motif.

**FOLLOW-UP:** Test students’ memory of the leitmotifs explored in the preceding activity. Have them turn to the quiz on the reproducible handout, and with their notes on the leitmotifs, play the tracks in the chart below. Students should note which leitmotif they hear in each track. For a more difficult version, have students turn over their handouts and have them complete the quiz entirely by memory. The tracks in the quiz are taken from a variety of scenes throughout the opera and differ from the examples heard at the beginning of this activity. If students can successfully identify the leitmotifs in this exercise, they will be well equipped to track the leitmotifs’ appearance throughout the performance of Elektra at the Live in HD transmission.

**Leitmotif**

1. Track 19
   - The Children of Agamemnon
2. Track 20
   - Elektra’s Hatred
3. Track 21
   - Agamemnon
4. Track 22
   - Elektra
5. Track 23
   - The Axe

18 19
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**Chromatic Harmony** Over the course of the 19th century, composers increasingly experimented with ways to expand their harmonic language, introducing unresolved dissonances, distant chords, and harmonies that confuse the identification of the key. Collectively these practices belong to what is known as chromatic harmony—augmenting the norms of tonal harmony with notes, chords, and progressions that do not belong to a composition’s basic key. (See Chromaticism below.)

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**Track 16: Elektra and Orest Meet as Strangers**

In this scene, Orest has returned and encounters Elektra, but the two siblings do not recognize each other. However, the music reveals their relationship before the characters themselves make the discovery. The passage closes with a portion of the Children of Agamemnon motif.

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**Track # Leitmotif**

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2 Track 20 Elektra’s Hatred
3 Track 21 Agamemnon
4 Track 22 Elektra
5 Track 23 The Axe
A Guide to Leitmotifs in *Elektra*

**Track 6: Agamemnon**

**Track 7: Elektra’s Hatred**

**Track 8: Elektra**

**Track 9: Elektra’s Love for Orest**

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**MUSICAL SNAPSHOT**

**The Multiple Musical Personalities of Elektra**

The music of Strauss’s *Elektra* is often described as comprising two polar opposites within one opera: violent, crashing dissonance (used to express Elektra’s trauma and obsession), juxtaposed with music of lush beauty (expressing characters’ love, future dreams, and joyful moments). Elektra herself is given music that falls into both categories. To hear the two vastly differing sides of Elektra, listen to the following examples. Texts and translations are provided in the reproducible handouts.

**Track 24:*** Elektra recounts the murder of her father and her own ill-treatment by his murderers, Elektra’s mother Clytemnestra and her lover, Aegisth.

**Track 25:** Elektra imagines a future life with Chrysothemis after the murder of their mother. She will devote herself to her sister and help prepare her for the arrival of a bridegroom.

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**Fun Fact:** Strauss’s first opera, *Guntram*, met with some success when he conducted the premiere in Weimar in 1894. But the first performance in his native city of Munich the year after was a dismal failure. Strauss took the rejection very personally. Years later, he placed a gravestone in the garden of his villa with the inscription, “Here rests the honorable and virtuous young man Guntram, who was horribly slain by the symphony orchestra of his own father.”
A Guide to Leitmotifs in Elektra

The multiple musical personalities of Elektra

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Students will enjoy starting the class with an open discussion of the Met performance. What did they like? What didn’t they? Did anything surprise them? What would they like to see or hear again? What would they have done differently? The discussion offers an opportunity to apply the notes on students’ My Highs & Lows sheet, as well as their thoughts about the visual design of the Met production—in short, to see themselves as Elektra experts.

As students explored in the English/Language Arts classroom activity Fate, Fault and Catharsis: A Close Look at Dramatic Structure in Elektra, the plot of Elektra is a powerhouse of dramatic structure. There is little extraneous action that does not propel the story towards the final catastrophe. Now that students have seen the opera in its entirety, ask them to reflect on the ending. Some of the questions you might want them to consider are the following:

• What happens to Elektra at the close? Strauss’s stage directions make it clear that she collapses and dies. What does she do and what happens to her in this production’s interpretation? What is her emotional state?
• Should Elektra have reacted differently to the completion of her mission? What does her reaction say about her psychological state throughout the opera?
• What happens to Orest at the close? Can students postulate what his future will be? What is his emotional state?
• What is left for Chrysothemis?
• Has the successful avenging of Agamemnon’s murder left his descendents better or worse off than they were before?

It may be helpful to provide students with a brief history of Elektra’s family and their inclination towards violence, included in this guide in the background section The Curse of the House of Atreus. Knowing more about the succession of crimes and atrocities that members of her family enacted upon each other may change students’ opinions of the rightness or wrongness of her pursuit of vengeance.

Elektra’s revenge directly results in the devastation of her family line. Students may enjoy drawing parallels between the crimes of the House of Atreus and contemporary examples of the cycle of violence. What are the consequences of using violence as a means of justice? What are the differences between a judicial system that imprisons punishments and an individual who does so?

Finally, ask students to think about the interpretation of this production and how it comments on the notions of revenge and justice. Is the ending of the opera cathartic?
Supporting the Student Experience during 

**The Met: Live in HD Transmission**

Watching and listening to a performance is a unique experience that takes students beyond the printed page to an immersion in images, sound, interpretation, technology, drama, skill, and craft. Performance activities help students analyze different aspects of the experience and engage critically with the performance. They will consider the creative choices that have been made for the particular production they are watching and examine different aspects of the performance.

Each Performance Activity incorporates a reproducible sheet. Students should bring this activity sheet to the Live in HD transmission and fill it out during intermission and/or after the final curtain. The activities direct attention to details of the production that might otherwise go unnoticed.

For the **Live in HD transmission of Elektra**, the first activity, **Archetypes and Adaptations**, prompts students to consider the director’s interpretive vision in his staging and the set and costume design. Any opera based on an ancient far-removed culture. The goal of this activity is to encourage students to think deeply about Elektra’s characters and themes and to evaluate how they stand up to changes in the story’s time period, location, and context.

The second, basic activity sheet is called **My Highs & Lows**. It is meant to be collected, opera by opera, over the course of the season. This sheet serves to guide students toward a consistent set of objective observations, as well as to help them articulate their own opinions. It is designed to enrich the students’ understanding of the art form as a whole. The ratings system encourages students to express their critique: use these ratings to spark a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) within their larger histories in Greek mythology.

**COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND ELEKTRA**

- **CCSS.ELA-LIT.9-10.1** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- **CCSS.ELA-LIT.9-10.3** Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

**My Highs & Lows**

- **a**
- **b**
- **c**
- **d**
- **e**
- **f**
- **g**
- **h**
- **i**
- **j**
- **k**
- **l**
- **m**
- **n**
- **o**
- **p**
- **q**
- **r**
- **s**
- **t**
- **u**
- **v**
- **w**
- **x**
- **y**
- **z**

**IN PREPARATION**

For this activity, students will need the Performance Activity reproducible handouts found in the back of this guide.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- To review and synthesize students’ understanding of Elektra
- To think critically about how staging affects audience interpretation
- To discuss students’ overall experience of watching Elektra
- To examine the opera’s characters within their larger histories in Greek mythology

**COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND ELEKTRA**

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-12.1** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-12.1d** Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue, resolve contradictions when possible, and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

**And Then What? Reflecting on the Cycle of Tragedy**

Students will enjoy starting the class with an open discussion of the Met performance. What did they like? What didn’t they? Did anything surprise them? What would they like to see or hear again? What would they have done differently? The discussion offers an opportunity to apply the notes on students’ **My Highs & Lows** sheet, as well as their thoughts about the visual design of the Met production—in short, to see themselves as Elektra experts. As students explored in the English/Language Arts classroom activity **Fate, Fault and Catharsis: A Close Look at Dramatic Structure in Elektra**, the plot of Elektra is a powerhouse of dramatic structure. There is little extraneous action that does not propel the story towards the final catastrophe. Now that students have seen the opera in its entirety, ask them to reflect on the ending. Some of the questions you might want them to consider are the following:

- What happens to Elektra at the close? Strauss’s stage directions make it clear that she collapses and dies. What does she do and what happens to her in this production’s interpretation? What is her emotional state?
- Should Elektra have reacted differently to the completion of her mission? What does her reaction say about her psychological state throughout the opera?
- What happens to Orest at the close? Can students postulate what his future will be? What is his emotional state?
- What is left for Chrysothemis?
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Elektra’s revenge directly results in the devastation of her family line. Students may enjoy drawing parallels between the crimes of the House of Atreus and contemporary examples of the cycle of violence. What are the consequences of using violence as a means of justice? What are the differences between a judicial system that imposes punishments and an individual who does so?

Finally, ask students to think about the interpretation of this production and how it comments on the notions of revenge and justice. Is the ending of the opera cathartic?
Excerpts taken from the Metropolitan Opera broadcast of December 26, 2009

Elektra
Susan Bullock

Chrysothemis
Deborah Voigt

Klytämnestra
Felicity Palmer

Orest
Evgeny Nikitin

Agamemnon
Wolfgang Schmidt

Conducted by
Fabio Luisi
Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and Chorus

GUIDE TO AUDIO TRACKS

1. Elektra. Elektra’s soliloquy
2. Klytämnestra. Klytämnestra searches for a cure to her nightmares
3. Elektra. Elektra proposes a solution
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5. Orest and Elektra. Orest reveals his true identity to Elektra
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7. Leitmotif: Elektra’s Hatred
8. Leitmotif: Elektra
9. Leitmotif: Elektra’s Love for Orest
10. Leitmotif: The Children of Agamemnon
11. Leitmotif: The Axe
12. Leitmotif: The Stranger
13. Leitmotif: Orest’s Mission
14. Leitmotif: The Dance
15. Elektra’s Monologue
16. Elektra and Orest Meet as Strangers
17. Elektra and Orest Reunited
18. Dancing Herself to Death
19. Quiz: The Children of Agamemnon
20. Quiz: Elektra’s Hatred
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22. Quiz: Elektra
23. Quiz: The Axe
24. Elektra recounts the murder of her father
25. Elektra speaks lovingly to her sister

THE MET: LIVE IN HD
ELEKTRA

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY
Fate, Fault, and Catharsis: A Close Look at Dramatic Structure in Elektra

Most Greek tragedy follows a standard, arc-like structure, and also includes a few classic high points and plot conventions. The ancient Greeks used specialized vocabulary to describe these moments—agnagnorisis, peripeteia, and catharsis. Definitions are provided below.

Use this handout to record your thoughts on how your chosen story may or may not include moments that correspond to these concepts from Greek tragedy.

Anagnorisis (uh-nag-NOR-uh-sis)
The moment of recognition, self-discovery, or sudden awareness of one’s true situation

Peripeteia (per-ih-pih-TAY-uh)
A sudden reversal of fortune, usually following anagnorisis

Catharsis (kah-THAR-sis)
The release felt by an audience after the fear and pity they experience while watching a tragedy
Excerpts taken from the Metropolitan Opera broadcast of December 26, 2009

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Susan Bullock

**CHRYSOTHEMIS**
Deborah Voigt

**KLYTÄMNESTRA**
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THE MET: LIVE IN HD

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CLASSROOM ACTIVITY
Fate, Fault, and Catharsis: A Close Look at Dramatic Structure in Elektra (CONT’D)

TRACK 1

ELEKTRA: Allein! Alas, all alone. Father has gone, shoehed away into his cold grave…

Where are you, father? Do you not have the strength to drag yourself to me?

(Track 2)

KLYTÄMNESTRA: These dreams must have an end. Whoever sends them, every demon will leave us alone, as soon as the correct blood has flown.

What blood must flow? Blood from your own neck when the hunter has caught you!

(Track 3)

ELEKTRA: (springing out of the darkness at Klytämnestra, and as she comes closer, growing more and more terrible) What blood must flow? Blood from your own neck when the hunter has caught you!

Was bluten muß? Dein eigenes Genick, wenn dich der Jäger abgefangen hat!

I hear him going through the rooms, I hear him lifting the canopy from the bed, who slaughters the victim in its sleep? He rouses you, you flee screaming, but he is at your heels, he drives you through the house! If you would go to the right, there stands the bed. To the left is the bath, foaming with blood! The darkness and the torches throw grim red nets of death over you…

Down the steps and through the vaults, through vault after vault goes the chase, and I, I, I, who sent him to you, I stand there and see you die at last!

Then you will dream no more, then I need dream no more, and they who still live can exult and rejoice in life!
CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Fate, Fault, and Catharsis: A Close Look at Dramatic Structure in Elektra (CONT’D)

TRACK 1

ELEKTRA: Allein! Alas, all alone. Father has gone, shovelled away into his cold grave…

(speaking to the ground) Agamemnon! Agamemnon!

Wo bist du, Vater? hast du nicht die Kraft, dein Angesicht herauf zu mir zu schleppen?

ELEKTRA: Alone! Alas, all alone. Father has gone, shovelled away into his cold grave…

Agamemnon! Agamemnon!

Where are you, father? Do you not have the strength to drag yourself to me?

TRACK 2

KLYTÄMNESTRA: Diese Träume müssen ein Ende haben. Wer sie immer schickt, jedesmal dass ein Dämon läßt von uns, sobald das rechte Blut geflossen ist.

Alone! Alas, all alone. Father has gone, shovelled away into his cold grave…

Agamemnon! Agamemnon!

Where are you, father? Do you not have the strength to drag yourself to me?

KLYTÄMNESTRA: These dreams must have an end. Whoever sends them, every demon will leave us alone, as soon as the correct blood has flowed.

TRACK 3

ELEKTRA: (springing out of the darkness at Klytämnestra, and as she comes closer, growing more and more terrible)

Was bluten muß? Dein eigenes Genick,

wenn dich der Jäger abgefangen hat!

ich hör’ ihn durch die Zimmer gehen, ich hör’ ihn den Vorhang vor dem Bette heben: wer schlachtet ein OpferTier im Schlaf? Er jagt dich auf,
schreien öffnetst du, aber er ist hinterdrein:
er treibt dich durch das Haus! Willst du nachts rechts,
da steht das Bett! Nach links, da schäumt das Bad
wie Blut! Das Dunkel und die Fackeln werfen
schwarzrote Todesnetze über dich –

(Klytämnestra, speechless with terror, tries to go into the house,
but Elektra holds her by her robe. Klytämnestra backs up against the wall. She is wide-eyed, and her stick falls from her trembling hands.)

Hinab die Treppen durch Gewölbe hin,

Gewölbe und Gewölbe geht die Jagd—

Und ich! ich! ich! ich! die ihn dir geschickt,

ich steh da und seh dich endlich sterben! Dann träumst du nicht mehr, dann brauchst ich

nicht mehr zu träumen, und wer dass noch lebt,

derjauchzt und kann sich seines Lebens freuen!

(They stand eye to eye, Elektra in wild intoxication,
Klytämnestra gaping in horror)

ELEKTRA: What blood must flow? Blood from your own neck when the hunter has caught you!

I hear him going through the rooms, I hear him lifting the canopy from the bed, who slaughters the victim in its sleep? He rouses you, you flee screaming, but he is at your heels, he drives you through the house! If you would go to the right, there stands the bed. To the left is the bath, foaming with blood! The darkness and the torches throw grim red nets of death over you…

KLYTÄMNESTRA: What blood must flow? Blood from your own neck when the hunter has caught you!

I hear him going through the rooms, I hear him lifting the canopy from the bed, who slaughters the victim in its sleep? He rouses you, you flee screaming, but he is at your heels, he drives you through the house! If you would go to the right, there stands the bed. To the left is the bath, foaming with blood! The darkness and the torches throw grim red nets of death over you…

THE MET: LIVE IN HD

ELEKTRA

THE MET: LIVE IN HD

ELEKTRA
THE MET: LIVE IN HD

ELEKTRA

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Fate, Fault, and Catharsis: A Close Look at Dramatic Structure in Elektra (CONT’D)

TRACK 4

CHRYSOthemIS: (rushing in through the gate, howling like a wounded animal) Orest! Orest is dead!

ELEktra: Be quiet!

CHRYSOthemIS: Orest is dead! I came out and they already knew. They were all standing around and they all knew; only we didn’t.

ELEktra: No one knows.

CHRYSOthemIS: They all know! It is not true, it is not true, I tell you; it is not true!

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Fate, Fault, and Catharsis: A Close Look at Dramatic Structure in Elektra (CONT’D)

TRACK 5

Orest: Wer bist denn du?

Elektra: Was kümmerst dich, wer ich bin?

Orest: Du mußt verwundetes Blut zu denen sein, die starben, Agamemnon und Orest.


Orest: Niemand weiß es.

Elektra: Niemand kann’s wissen. Denn es ist nicht wahr. (In despair, Chrysothemis throws herself to the ground. Elektra pulls her back up.) Ich sag dir doch, es ist nicht wahr!

Orest: Wer bist denn du?

Elektra: Was kümmerst dich, wer ich bin?

Orest: Du mußt verwundetes Blut zu denen sein, die starben, Agamemnon und Orest.


Orest: Niemand weiß es.

Elektra: Niemand kann’s wissen. Denn es ist nicht wahr. (In despair, Chrysothemis throws herself to the ground. Elektra pulls her back up.) Ich sag dir doch, es ist nicht wahr!

A newspaper account of the Berlin premiere emphasizes the score’s power to shock.

Who are you then?

What does it matter to you, who I am?

You must be of the same blood as the two who died, Agamemnon and Orest.

Of the same blood? I am that blood! I am the shamefully outpoured blood of King Agamemnon! Elektra is my name.

Orest: Nein!

Elektra: Ihr leugnet’s ab. Er bläst auf mich und nimmt mir meinen Namen.

Orest: Elektra!

Elektra: Weil ich nicht Vater hab’…

Orest: Elektra!

Elektra: …noch Bruder, bin ich der Spott der Buben!

Orest: Elektra! Elektra!

So seh’ ich sie? Ich seh’ sie wirklich? Du? So haben sie dich darben lassen oder— sie haben dich geschlagen?

Elektra: Laß mein Kleid, wühl nicht mit deinem Blick daran.

Orest: Elektra, höre!…

Elektra: Geh’ ins Haus, drin hab ich eine Schwester, die bewahrt sich für Freudenfeste auf!

Orest: Elektra, hö’ mich!

Elektra: Ich will nicht wissen, wer du bist. Ich will niemand sehn.


Orest: Laß mich!

Elektra: Hohl sind deine Wangen!

Orest: Hör zu, Orestes lebt! (Elektra turns round quickly.) Wenn du dich regst, verrätst du ihn.

Elektra: So ist er frei? Wo ist er?

Orest: Er ist unversehrt wie ich.

A newspaper account of the Berlin premiere emphasizes the score’s power to shock.
CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Fate, Fault, and Catharsis: A Close Look at Dramatic Structure in *Elektra* (CONT’D)

**TRACK 4**

CHRYSOThEMIS: (rushing in through the gate, howling like a wounded animal) Orest! Orest is dead!

**ELEKTRA**

Be quiet!

CHRYSOThEMIS: Orest is dead! I came out and they already knew. They were all standing around and they all knew; only we didn’t.

**ELEKTRA**

No one knows.

CHRYSOThEMIS: They all know! No one can know because it is not true.

**ELEKTRA**

it is not true, it is not true, I tell you; it is not true!

**CLASSROOM ACTIVITY**

**FATE, FAULT, AND CATHARSIS: A CLOSE LOOK AT DRAMATIC STRUCTURE IN**

*Elektra*

(Continued)

**TRACK 5**

**OREST**

Wer bist denn du?

**ELEKTRA**

Was kümmert’s dich, wer ich bin?

**OREST**

Du mußt verwandtes Blut zu denen sein, die starben, Agamemnon und Orest.

**ELEKTRA**

Verwandt? Ich bin die Blut des Königs Agamemnon! Elektra heißt ich.

**OREST**

Nein!

**ELEKTRA**

Er leugnet’s ab. Er bläst auf mich und nimmt mir meinen Namen.

**OREST**

Elektra! Elektra!

**ELEKTRA**

Weil ich nicht Vater hab’…

**OREST**

Elektra! Elektra!

**ELEKTRA**

…noch Bruder, bin ich der Spott der Buben!

**OREST**

Elektra! Elektra!

So seh’ ich sie? Ich seh’ sie wirklich? du? Sie haben sie dich darben lassen oder— sie haben dich geschlagen?

**ELEKTRA**

Laß mein Kleid, wühl nicht mit deinem Blick daran.

**OREST**

Was haben sie gemacht mit deinen Nächten? Furchtbar sind deine Augen.

**ELEKTRA**

Laß mich!

**OREST**

Hohl sind deine Wangen!

**ELEKTRA**

Geh’ ins Haus, drin hab ich eine Schwester, die bewahrt sich für Freudenfeste auf!

**OREST**

Elektra, hörr’ mich!

**ELEKTRA**

Ich will nicht wissen, wer du bist. Ich will niemand seh’n.

**OREST**

Hör mich an, ich hab’ nicht Zeit. Hör zu: Orestes lebt! (Elektra turns round quickly.) Wenn du dich regst, verrätst du ihn.

**ELEKTRA**

So ist er frei? wo ist er?

**OREST**

Er ist unversehrt wie ich.

A newspaper account of the Berlin premiere emphasizes the score’s power to shock.
**CLASSROOM ACTIVITY**

**Fate, Fault, and Catharsis: A Close Look at Dramatic Structure in Elektra (CONT’D)**

**ELEKTRA:** So rett’ ihn doch, bevor sie ihn erwürgen.

**OREST:** Bei meines Vaters Leichnam! dazu kam ich hier!

**ELEKTRA:** (arrested by his tone) Wer bist denn du?

(Silently, the grim old servant rushes in from the courtyard, followed by three other servants. He throws himself down in front of Orest and kisses his feet, while the others kiss his hands and the hem of his robe.)

(barely controlling herself) Wer bist du denn? Ich fürchte mich.

**OREST:** (gently) Die Hunde auf dem Hof erkennen mich, und meine Schwester nicht?

**ELEKTRA:** (crying out) Orest!

(painfully, her voice trembling) Orest! Orest! Orest!


---

Then rescue him, before they kill him.

By my father’s body! That is why I came here!

Who are you then?

Who are you then? I am frightened.

The dogs in the yard recognize me, but my sister does not?

Orest!

Orest! Orest! Orest!


**ELEKTRA:** So rett’ ihn doch, bevor sie ihn erwürgen.

**OREST:** Bei meines Vaters Leichnam! dazu kam ich hier!

**ELEKTRA:** (arrested by his tone) Wer bist denn du?

(Silently, the grim old servant rushes in from the courtyard, followed by three other servants. He throws himself down in front of Orest and kisses his feet, while the others kiss his hands and the hem of his robe.)

(barely controlling herself) Wer bist du denn? Ich fürchte mich.

**OREST:** (softly) Die Hunde auf dem Hof erkennen mich, und meine Schwester nicht?

**ELEKTRA:** (crying out) Orest!

(quietly, her voice trembling) Orest! Orest! Orest!

Then rescue him, before they kill him.

By my father’s body! That is why I came here!

Who are you then?

Who are you then? I am frightened.

The dogs in the yard recognize me, but my sister does not?

Orest!

Orest! Orest! Orest!
Unweaving a Tangled Web: Identifying Leitmotifs in Elektra

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Unweaving a Tangled Web: Identifying Leitmotifs in Elektra

TRACK 15: ELEKTRA’S MONOLOGUE

ELEKTRA: All alone! Well, quite alone! The father is strong, he won’t succumb to his own tears…

ELEKTRA: Where are you, father? Do you not have the strength to drag yourself to me?

ELEKTRA: It is the hour, it is our hour, the hour when they slaughtered you, Your wife and the man who sleeps with her in one bed, in your royal bed. They butchered you in the bath, the blood ran over your eyes and the bath steamed with your blood. Then the coward took you by the shoulders, dragged you out of the chamber, head first, with your legs trailing behind. Your eyes, wide-open, stared back into the house.

ELEKTRA: So you will come again, setting foot before foot, and suddenly you’ll be standing there, with both eyes wide open, and a royal crown of purple round your forehead, fed by the open wound in your head. ELEKTRA: Father! I want to see you, don’t leave me alone today! Show yourself to your child, if only as you did yesterday, as a shadow in the angle of the wall!

ELEKTRA: Father! Agamemnon! Your day will come.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Unweaving a Tangled Web: Identifying Leitmotifs in Elektra

TRACK 16: ELEKTRA AND OREST MEET AS STRANGERS

ELEKTRA: Who is the man, stranger? Why are you wandering around here as darkness falls, watching what others are doing?

ELEKTRA: I have business here. What is it to do with you?

ELEKTRA: I must wait here.

ELEKTRA: Wait?

ELEKTRA: You must be a member of the household.

ELEKTRA: Are you one of the maids from the house?

ELEKTRA: Yes, I serve in this house. But this is nothing that concerns you.

ELEKTRA: Be glad and go along.

ELEKTRA: I told you, I must wait here, until they call me.

ELEKTRA: The people inside?

ELEKTRA: You are lying. I know very well that the master is not at home.

ELEKTRA: And that woman, what has she to do with you?

ELEKTRA: I and another man who is with me have a message for the lady.

ELEKTRA: We have been sent to her because we can attest that her son Orest died before our eyes.

ELEKTRA: He was killed by his own horses.

ELEKTRA: The same age as he, and was his companion day and night.

ELEKTRA: What do you want, stranger? Why are you wandering around here as darkness falls, watching what others are doing?

ELEKTRA: Leave me in peace.

ELEKTRA: I must wait here.

ELEKTRA: Wait?

ELEKTRA: You must be a member of the household.

ELEKTRA: Are you one of the maids from the house?

ELEKTRA: Yes, I serve in this house.

ELEKTRA: But this is nothing that concerns you.

ELEKTRA: Be glad and go along.

ELEKTRA: I told you, I must wait here, until they call me.

ELEKTRA: The people inside?

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ELEKTRA: I and another man who is with me have a message for the lady.

ELEKTRA: We have been sent to her because we can attest that her son Orest died before our eyes.

ELEKTRA: He was killed by his own horses.

ELEKTRA: The same age as he, and was his companion day and night.

ELEKTRA: Must I see you? Must you come creeping into my sad corner, you herald of misfortune? Can’t you blare your message out inside, where it will please them?

ELEKTRA: Your eyes stare at me; his are decaying away.

ELEKTRA: Your mouth opens and shuts; his is stopped up with earth.

ELEKTRA: Your wife and the man who sleeps with her

ELEKTRA: alone! All alone! Your father is strong, he won’t succumb to his own tears…

ELEKTRA: You are lying. I know very well that the master is not at home.

ELEKTRA: I and another man who is with me have a message for the lady.

ELEKTRA: We have been sent to her because we can attest that her son Orest died before our eyes.

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ELEKTRA: What do you want, stranger? Why are you wandering around here as darkness falls, watching what others are doing?

ELEKTRA: Leave me in peace.

ELEKTRA: I must wait here.

ELEKTRA: Wait?

ELEKTRA: You must be a member of the household.

ELEKTRA: Are you one of the maids from the house?

ELEKTRA: Yes, I serve in this house.

ELEKTRA: But this is nothing that concerns you.

ELEKTRA: Be glad and go along.

ELEKTRA: I told you, I must wait here, until they call me.

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ELEKTRA: The same age as he, and was his companion day and night.

ELEKTRA: Must I see you? Must you come creeping into my sad corner, you herald of misfortune? Can’t you blare your message out inside, where it will please them?

ELEKTRA: Your eyes stare at me; his are decaying away.

ELEKTRA: Your mouth opens and shuts; his is stopped up with earth.

ELEKTRA: You are alive and he, who was better than you, a thousand times more noble, and whose life too much. The gods above would not tolerate such noisy merriment. So he had to die.
ELEKTRA: Alone! Weh, ganz allein! Der Vater fort, hinausgezogen in seine kalten Klüfte…

Where are you, father? Do you not have the strength to drag yourself to me?

It is the hour, it is our hour, the hour when they slaughtered you, Your wife and the man who sleeps with her in one bed, in your royal bed.

They butchered you in the bath, the blood ran over your eyes and the bath steamed with your blood. Then the coward took you by the shoulders, dragged you out of the chamber, head first, with your legs trailing behind. Your eyes, wide-open, stared back into the house.

So will you come again, setting foot before foot, and suddenly you’ll be standing there, with both eyes wide open, and a royal crown of purple round your forehead, fed by the open wound in your head.

ELEKTRA: Father! Agamemnon! Your day will come.

Father! Agamemnon! Dein Tag wird kommen.

So will you come again, setting foot before foot, and suddenly you’ll be standing there, with both eyes wide open, and a royal crown of purple round your forehead, fed by the open wound in your head.

ELEKTRA: Father! Agamemnon! Father!

Agamemnon! Agamemnon!

Where are you, father? Do you not have the strength to drag yourself to me?

It is the hour, it is our hour, the hour when they slaughtered you, Your wife and the man who sleeps with her in one bed, in your royal bed.

They butchered you in the bath, the blood ran over your eyes and the bath steamed with your blood. Then the coward took you by the shoulders, dragged you out of the chamber, head first, with your legs trailing behind. Your eyes, wide-open, stared back into the house.

So will you come again, setting foot before foot, and suddenly you’ll be standing there, with both eyes wide open, and a royal crown of purple round your forehead, fed by the open wound in your head.

ELEKTRA: Father! Agamemnon! Your day will come.

Alone! Alas, all alone. Father has gone, shovelled away into his cold grave…

Agamemnon! Agamemnon!

Where are you, father? Do you not have the strength to drag yourself to me?

It is the hour, it is our hour, the hour when they slaughtered you, Your wife and the man who sleeps with her in one bed, in your royal bed.

They butchered you in the bath, the blood ran over your eyes and the bath steamed with your blood. Then the coward took you by the shoulders, dragged you out of the chamber, head first, with your legs trailing behind. Your eyes, wide-open, stared back into the house.

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Agamemnon! Agamemnon!

Where are you, father? Do you not have the strength to drag yourself to me?

It is the hour, it is our hour, the hour when they slaughtered you, Your wife and the man who sleeps with her in one bed, in your royal bed.

They butchered you in the bath, the blood ran over your eyes and the bath steamed with your blood. Then the coward took you by the shoulders, dragged you out of the chamber, head first, with your legs trailing behind. Your eyes, wide-open, stared back into the house.

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Agamemnon! Agamemnon!

Where are you, father? Do you not have the strength to drag yourself to me?

It is the hour, it is our hour, the hour when they slaughtered you, Your wife and the man who sleeps with her in one bed, in your royal bed.

They butchered you in the bath, the blood ran over your eyes and the bath steamed with your blood. Then the coward took you by the shoulders, dragged you out of the chamber, head first, with your legs trailing behind. Your eyes, wide-open, stared back into the house.

So will you come again, setting foot before foot, and suddenly you’ll be standing there, with both eyes wide open, and a royal crown of purple round your forehead, fed by the open wound in your head.

ELEKTRA: Father! Agamemnon! Your day will come.
But what of me? Me! I lie there and know that the boy will never come again, never again, that the child lives down below in the abyss of horror, and those above here are alive and enjoying themselves...

**TRACK 17: ELEKTRA AND OREST REUNITED**

ELEKTRA: Orest! Orest! Orest!
Es rührt sich niemand!
O laß deine Augen mich sehn, Traumbild, mir geschenktes Traumbild, schöner als alle Träume!
Hehres, unbegreifliches, erhabenes Gesicht,
o bleib' bei mir! Läst dich in Luft nicht auf, vergiß' dir nicht, es sei denn, daß ich jetzt gleich sterben muß und du dich anzeigst und mich holen kannst: dann sterbe ich seliger, als ich gelebt! Orest! Orest! Orest!
(Örest lehnt über, um zu umarmen.)
Nein, du sollst mich nicht umarmen!

ELEKTRA: Doch ich! da liegen und zu wissen, daß das Kind nie wieder kommt, nie wieder kommt, daß das Kind da drunten in den Klüften des Grausens lungert, daß die da drinnen leben und sich freuen…

**TRACK 18: DANCING HERSELF TO DEATH**

(Elektra steps down from the threshold, her head thrown back like a maenad. She jerks her knees up, flings her arms around in some unknown dance, as she comes forward.

Chrysothemis appears at the door: behind her are torches, people jostling and men and women’s faces.)

CHRYSOThemIS: Elektra!

ELEKTRA: (stopping and staring at her) Schweig, und tanze. Alle müssen herbei! Hier schließt euch an! Ich trage die Last des Glücks, und ich tanze vor euch her. Wer glücklich ist wie wir, dem ziemt nur eins: schweigen und tanzen!

(She does a few more triumphant steps with the utmost effort, then collapses. Chrysothemis rushes to her. Elektra lies rigid. Chrysothemis runs to the palace door and beats on it.)

CHRYSOThemIS: Orest! Orest!

THE MET: LIVE IN HD
ELEKTRA

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY
Unweaving a Tangled Web: Identifying Leitmotifs in Elektra

**LEITMOTIF QUIZ**

After listening to each audio excerpt, identify the leitmotif that you hear.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Agamemnon
Elektra’s Hatred
Elektra
Elektra’s Love for Orest
The Children of Agamemnon
The Axe
The Stranger
Orest’s Mission
The Dance
ELEKTRA: Doch ich! Da liegen und zu wissen, daß das Kind nie wieder kommt, nie wieder kommt, daß das Kind da drunten in den Klüften des Grauens lungert, daß die da drinnen leben und sich freuen…

But what of me? Me! I lie there and know that the boy will never come again, never again, that the child lives down below in the abyss of horror, and those above here are alive and enjoying themselves…

Orest! Orest! Orest! No one is stirring!
Oh let me gaze at you, a vision in a dream, a vision given to me, fairer than any dream!
noble, ineffable, sublime features, Oh, stay by me! Do not melt into air, do not vanish from my sight, unless I now must die, and you have shown yourself to me to come and join you. Then I will die happier than I have lived! Orest! Orest! Orest!
No, you must not embrace me!

TRACK 18: DANCING HERSELF TO DEATH
(Elektra steps down from the threshold, her head thrown back like a maenad. She jerks her knees up, flings her arms around in some unknown dance, as she comes forward.)
Chrysothemis appears at the door: behind her are torches, people jostling and men and women’s faces.)

ELEKTRA: Be silent, and dance.
Join me, all of you! Close your ranks! I bear the burden of joy, and I lead you in the dance.
There is only one thing right for those as happy as we are: to be silent and dance!

Orest! Orest!
At the Met: Archetypes and Adaptations

In creating his production, director Patrice Chéreau and his designers, Richard Peduzzi and Caroline de Vivia, developed their own distinctive interpretation of ancient Mycenae. Where and when do you think this production is set? Take notes on what you see, and then reflect on what the designers’ interpretive choices say about the opera’s themes.

Set

What does this say about the story’s themes?

What Elektra wears

What Klytämnestra wears

What Orest wears

Who are the women at the start of the opera?

How are the characters in the story related?

Can you draw any conclusions about where and when this story takes place? What does this interpretation of Elektra imply about human nature? Do you agree?
CLASSROOM ACTIVITY
Musical Snapshots: The Multiple Musical Personalities of Elektra

TRACK 24

Elektra:

It is the hour, it is our hour,
the hour when they slaughtered you.
Your wife and the man who sleeps with her
in one bed, in your royal bed.
They butchered you in the bath, the blood
ran over your eyes and the bath
steamed with your blood. Then the coward
took you by the shoulders, dragged you
out of the chamber, head first,
with your legs trailing behind. Your eyes,
wide-open, stared back into the house.
So will you come again, setting foot before foot,
and suddenly you'll be standing there, with both eyes
wide open, and a royal crown
of purple round your forehead, fed by
the open wound in your head.
Agamemnon! Father!

Elektra:

From now on I will be your sister,
as I have never been before!
I will sit faithfully by you in your room
and wait for the bridegroom.
For him I will anoint you, and into the perfumed bath
you will plunge like a young swan
and you will rest your head on my breast,
and then you will shine through your veil
like a torch, as he leads you to the marriage bed
with his strong arms.

TRACK 25

Elektra:

At the Met: Archetypes and Adaptations

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Can you draw any conclusions about where and when this story takes place?
What does this interpretation of Elektra imply about human nature? Do you agree?
Elektra: My Highs & Lows

APRIL 30, 2016

CONDUCTED BY ESA-PEKKA SALONEN

REVIEWED BY ________________________________

THE STARS

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THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE

<table>
<thead>
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