



final rising note—Elektra asserts that Agamemnon will return (*so kommst du wieder*). We hear this figure again as Klytemnestra explains the power residing in the jewels—*Steine*, literally stones—that hang from her neck. When the “herald” reveals that Orest is alive, a ray of light emerges in the form of a muted fanfare, which reappears in the celebration after Orest dispenses his mother and her lover. Even Elektra’s final dance is prefigured early, before 60 bars have passed.

Of the score’s many beauties, Chrysothemis owns two that stand above the music’s contours, proclamations that detach themselves from their context and head for the sky: *Kinder will ich haben!* (her hymn to motherhood) and *Es ist Orest!* Chrysothemis wants to leave the past behind, but nothing about her suggests weakness. She is what she seems, a foil to her sister, and a tough one. She stands her ground against Elektra. No stranger to violence, she applauds the murders. And while Elektra appears to dismiss her sister’s yearning for children, she also sees Chrysothemis’s point. Children continue the bloodline. They fulfill the wishes even of the dead: *Glücklich ist, wer Kinder hat*, Elektra sings—“happy are they who have children.” And so she treats her brother with a mother’s sympathies. “Child,” she calls him, having traded her own hope of love for the revenge that fills her and inches toward birth.

Elektra has set this nightmare world right, but that act can have no encore. Her death is no ritual punishment devised for a strong woman. As the final C major chord confirms, it is an apotheosis. This museum’s closing time has come. 🌸

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## More about *Elektra*

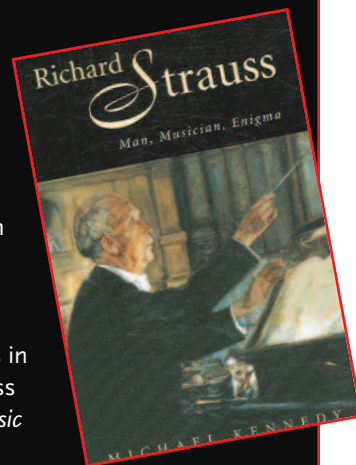
### Books

*Richard Strauss* by Matthew Boyden (Northeastern University Press).

*Richard Strauss: Man, Musician, Enigma* by Michael Kennedy (Cambridge University Press).

Boyden adopts a less traditional approach than Kennedy, but both are fluent writers who love their subject and offer many insights.

I offer a personal take on Strauss in my essay “First-Rate Second-Class Composer” in *For the Love of Music* (Oxford University Press).

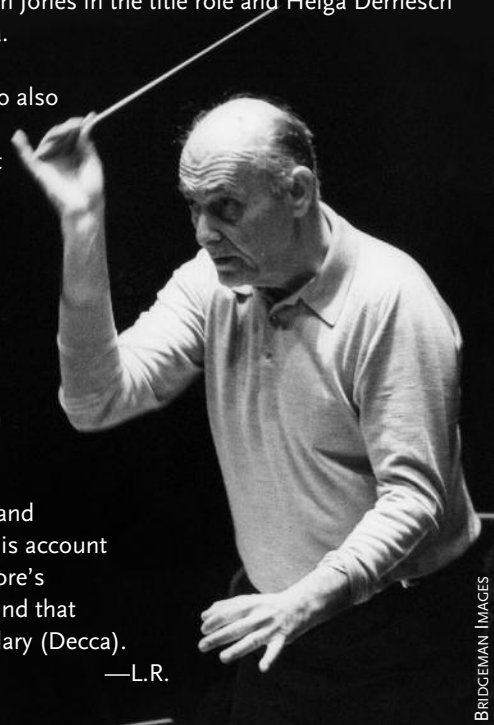


### Videos and Recordings

*Elektra* has been filmed and recorded often. Among the many video versions, two that stand out are those with Claudio Abbado conducting the Vienna Philharmonic and Christian Thielemann conducting the Munich Philharmonic. Abbado’s all-star cast includes Éva Marton, Brigitte Fassbaender, and Cheryl Studer and features eerily effective staging by Harry Kupfer (Arthaus Musik). Thielemann’s cast includes Linda Watson, Jane Henschel, and Manuela Uhl, in a minimalist production by Herbert Wernicke (Opus Arte). A historical footnote: Thielemann made his memorable U.S. conducting debut leading the Company’s 1991 production of *Elektra*, starring Gwyneth Jones in the title role and Helga Dernesch as Klytemnestra.

Georg Solti, who also made his American debut in San Francisco leading *Elektra* (in 1953), recorded the work with the Vienna Philharmonic in 1961. Featuring Birgit Nilsson, Regina Resnik, and Marie Collier, this account captures the score’s brilliance in sound that remains exemplary (Decca).

—L.R.



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