

Season 2011-2012

The Philadelphia Orchestra

Thursday, May 10, at 8:00

Saturday, May 12, at 8:00

Charles Dutoit Conductor

Eva Johansson Soprano (Elektra)

Melanie Diener Soprano (Chrysothemis)

Jane Henschel Mezzo-soprano (Klytämnestra)

Ain Anger Bass (Orest)

Siegfried Jerusalem Tenor (Aegisth)

Jessica Klein Soprano (Klytämnestra's Confidant)

Allison Sanders Soprano (Klytämnestra's Trainbearer)

John Easterlin Tenor (Young Servant)

Brandon Cedel Bass-baritone (Old Servant)

Oren Gradus Bass (Orest's Tutor)

Susan Neves Soprano (Overseer)

Kathryn Day Mezzo-soprano (First Maid)

Laura Vlasak Nolen Mezzo-soprano (Second Maid)

Maria Zifchak Mezzo-soprano (Third Maid)

Priti Gandhi Soprano (Fourth Maid)

Jennifer Check Soprano (Fifth Maid)

Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia (Men Servants, Maid Servants)

Alan Harler Artistic Director

Strauss *Elektra*, Op. 58

This program runs approximately 1 hour, 40 minutes, and will be performed without an intermission.

English titles by Christopher Bergen.

In the 2010-11 season The Philadelphia Orchestra celebrated its 30-year artistic collaboration with **Charles Dutoit**, who has held the title of chief conductor since 2008. With the 2012-13 season, the Orchestra will honor Mr. Dutoit by bestowing upon him the title of conductor laureate. Also artistic director and principal conductor of the Royal Philharmonic, Mr. Dutoit regularly collaborates with the world's pre-eminent orchestras and soloists. He has recorded extensively for Decca, Deutsche Grammophon, EMI, Philips, CBS, and Erato, and his more than 200 recordings have garnered over 40 awards and distinctions.

From 1977 to 2002, Mr. Dutoit was artistic director of the Montreal Symphony. Between 1990 and 2010 he was artistic director and principal conductor of The Philadelphia Orchestra's summer festival at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, and from 1991 to 2001 he was music director of the Orchestre National de France. In 1996 he was appointed music director of Tokyo's NHK Symphony; today he is music director emeritus. Mr. Dutoit has been artistic director of both the Sapporo Pacific Music Festival and the Miyazaki International Music Festival in Japan, as well as the Canton International Summer Music Academy in Guangzhou, China, which he founded in 2005. In 2009 he became music director of the Verbier Festival Orchestra. While still in his early 20s, Mr. Dutoit was invited by Herbert von Karajan to conduct the Vienna State Opera. Mr. Dutoit has since conducted at Covent Garden, the Metropolitan Opera, the Deutsche Oper Berlin, and the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires.

In 1991 Mr. Dutoit was made an Honorary Citizen of the City of Philadelphia. In 1995 he was named Grand Officier de l'Ordre National du Québec, and in 1996 Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the government of France. In 1998 he was invested as an Honorary Officer of the Order of Canada, the country's highest award of merit, and this past May was awarded an honorary Doctor of Music from the Curtis Institute of Music.

Mr. Dutoit was born in Lausanne, Switzerland, and his extensive musical training included violin, viola, piano, percussion, music history, and composition in Geneva, Siena, Venice, and Boston. A globetrotter motivated by his passion for history and archaeology, political science, art, and architecture, Mr. Dutoit has traveled all the nations of the world.

Born in Copenhagen, soprano **Eva Johansson** studied at the Royal Opera School there as well as at the Royal Conservatory, made her debut at the Royal Opera House in 1982 as the Countess in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, and sang as a resident artist for six years. In 1988 she was invited to appear at the Deutsche Oper Berlin, and she has maintained a close connection with that company ever since, singing leading roles in works by Mozart, Wagner, Strauss, and Weber, among others.

Ms. Johansson is making her Philadelphia Orchestra debut with these current performances. She is a frequent guest at such opera companies as the Vienna State Opera, the Metropolitan Opera, the Bavarian State Opera in Munich, the Semperoper in Dresden, the State Theater of Stuttgart, London's Royal Opera, the National Opera of Paris, and the Paris Opera, and at the opera houses of Nice, Geneva, Seville, Madrid, Stockholm, Oslo, Tel Aviv, and Barcelona, among others. She has also appeared regularly at the Bayreuth Festival in roles such as Elsa in *Lohengrin* and Freia in *Das Rheingold*.

Highlights of Ms. Johansson's recent seasons include Wagner's *Ring Cycle* in Zurich, Hamburg, and Vienna; the title role of Strauss's *Elektra* in Dresden, Zurich, Berlin, Copenhagen, Budapest, and Munich; the Dyer's Wife in Strauss's *Die Frau ohne Schatten* at the Deutsche Oper Berlin; Senta in Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman* in Hamburg; and Isolde in Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* in Tokyo. In the summer of 2008 she made her debut as Brünnhilde in Wagner's *Die Walküre* at the Aix-en-Provence Festival and also at the Salzburg Easter Festival with Simon Rattle. Ms. Johansson's other roles include Mimi in Puccini's *La bohème*, the title role in Puccini's *Turandot*, Tatyana in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, Leonore in Beethoven's *Fidelio*, and Eva in Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.

Ms. Johansson's recent and upcoming projects include the roles of Elektra in Rome and in Perth, Brünnhilde in the *Ring Cycle* in Vienna, Isolde in Tokyo, Senta in Beijing, and the Dyer's Wife in Barcelona.

Born near Hamburg, German soprano **Melanie Diener** studied with Sylvia Geszty and later with Rudolf Piernay. She studied music at the universities of Stuttgart, Mannheim, and Indiana, and she won the Salzburg Mozart Competition and the Queen Sonja International Music Competition.

After her debut as Ilia in Mozart's *Idomeneo* at the Garsington Opera in 1996, Ms. Diener established herself as a Mozart specialist in all of the international centers of the music world, with guest appearances at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, the Metropolitan Opera, the Vienna State Opera, the Salzburg and Aix-en-Provence festivals, the Palais Garnier in Paris, and in Dubai and Tokyo, among others.

Ms. Diener won international recognition with her performance as Elsa in Wagner's *Lohengrin* at the Bayreuth Festival in 1999. Her German repertoire includes Sieglinde in Wagner's *Die Walküre*, Elisabeth in Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, Agathe in Weber's *Der Freischütz*, the title role in Weber's *Euryanthe*, Leonore in Beethoven's *Fidelio*, and numerous roles in Strauss operas, such as Chrysothemis in *Elektra*, the Marschallin in *Der Rosenkavalier*, and the title role in *Ariadne auf Naxos*. Ms. Diener has also sung the title role in Janáček's *Káťa Kabanová* in Berlin and Vienna, Ellen Orford in Britten's *Peter Grimes* at the Vienna State Opera, and Ursula in Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler* at the Opéra Bastille in Paris.

As a concert performer and a singer of lieder, Ms. Diener has performed with leading orchestras in Europe and the U.S., including the Cleveland Orchestra, the Boston Symphony, and the New York Philharmonic in repertory including Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 and *Missa solemnis*, Britten's *War Requiem*, Zemlinsky's *Lytic Symphony*, Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder*, and Strauss's *Four Last Songs*. Ms. Diener made her Philadelphia Orchestra debut in February 2004. She is increasingly focusing on contemporary compositions and has also performed as a jazz singer.

Mezzo-soprano **Jane Henschel** made her Philadelphia Orchestra debut in 1984. She was born in Wisconsin, studied at the University of Southern California, and subsequently moved to Germany. Her operatic appearances include Baba the Turk in Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* at the Glyndebourne, Saito Kinen, and Salzburg festivals; Brangäne in Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* for the Los Angeles and the Paris operas; Klytämnestra in Strauss's *Elektra* at San Francisco Opera; the Principessa in Puccini's *Suor Angelica* with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra; Poulenc's *Dialogues of the Carmelites* in Amsterdam; the Kostelnička in Janáček's *Jenůfa* in Japan; and the Kabanička in Janáček's *Káťa Kabanová* for the Salzburg Festival.

For the Royal Opera Covent Garden, Ms. Henschel has sung the roles of Fricka in Wagner's *Die Walküre* and Waltraute in Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*, Ulrica in Verdi's *A Masked Ball*, Klytämnestra, Mrs. Grose in Britten's *The Turn of the Screw*, and Erda in Wagner's *Ring Cycle*. At La Scala in Milan she has sung Herodias in Strauss's *Salome*, Cassandre in Berlioz's *Les Troyens*, and Waltraute. She has sung the role of the Nurse in Strauss's *Die Frau ohne Schatten* in Amsterdam, London, Los Angeles, Munich, Paris, Vienna, Berlin, and at the Metropolitan Opera; Auntie in Britten's *Peter Grimes* at the Salzburg Festival; and Mistress Quickly in Verdi's *Falstaff* with Los Angeles Opera.

Ms. Henschel's other engagements include concert appearances with the Oslo Philharmonic, the London and BBC symphonies, the Deutsches Sinfonie Orchester Berlin, the Dresden Staatskapelle, the Berlin Philharmonic, the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, and the Orchestre de Radio France. Her recordings include Krasa's *Verlobung im Traum* (for Decca); *The Rake's Progress* (for Philips Classics); Albéniz's *Merlin* with Plácido Domingo, winner of a Grammy Award in 2001, and *Henry Clifford* (both for Decca); Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* (for EMI/Virgin), winner of a *Gramophone* Award in 2003; and Mahler's Eighth Symphony with the City of Birmingham Symphony for EMI.

Originally a student of physics and mathematics, Estonian bass **Ain Anger** commenced his vocal training at Tallin's Academy of Music in 1996. After initial professional experience in Estonia, he broadened his repertoire with the Leipzig Opera before joining the ensemble of the Vienna State Opera in the 2004-05 season. Since his house debut there he has gone on to sing over 40 roles on Vienna's main stage in works by Verdi, Mozart, Wagner, and Musorgsky. Guest engagements have taken him to Berlin, Montpellier, Munich, Paris, and Japan (on tour with the Vienna State Opera), as well as to the Bayreuth, Savonlinna, Helsinki, Bergen, and Lucerne festivals. Equally active on the concert stage, Mr. Anger has appeared as soloist with orchestras in New York, Cleveland, St. Louis, and Stockholm, and he has worked with such conductors as Lorin Maazel, Christian Thielemann, Seiji Ozawa, Zubin Mehta, Riccardo Muti, and Esa-Pekka Salonen. These current performances mark his Philadelphia Orchestra debut.

Last season's engagements included Mr. Anger's debut with the San Francisco Symphony and Michael Tilson Thomas in Beethoven's *Missa solemnis*, as well as his return to the role of Hunding in Frankfurt Opera's new production of Wagner's *Die Walküre* and his role debut as Rocco in Beethoven's *Fidelio* for Netherlands Opera. In addition to singing Fafner and Hunding in Wagner's *Ring* Cycle, Mr. Anger was also heard at the Vienna State Opera as Hermann in Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, Orest in Strauss's *Elektra*, Gremin in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, and Titurel in Wagner's *Parsifal*.

This season Mr. Anger returns to the U.S. for Verdi's Requiem with the San Francisco Symphony and James Conlon, in addition to giving performances of Mahler's Symphony No. 8 in Munich with the Bavarian Radio Orchestra and Mariss Jansons and appearing in Wagner's *Die Walküre* with Kent Nagano at the Bavarian State Opera. Other notable appearances this season include his return to Paris as Sarastro in Mozart's *The Magic Flute* at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Verdi's *La forza del destino* at the Vienna State Opera, and *Tannhäuser* with Opera Nomori in Tokyo.

German-born tenor **Siegfried Jerusalem** began his musical career as an instrumentalist before becoming an internationally-renowned tenor. In 1977 he appeared for the first time at the Bayreuth Festival, and since then he has continuously performed there. Mr. Jerusalem made his debut at Bayreuth as Siegfried in Wagner's *Ring Cycle* in 1988, and in 1989 he also appeared as Siegfried in Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*. In 1990 he appeared at the Metropolitan Opera in the *Ring Cycle* as Loge and Siegfried; this *Ring* performance was also broadcast on television. In 1993 he made his debut in the title role of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* at the opening of the Bayreuth Festival, which led to commitments in major opera houses as Tristan for many years.

Mr. Jerusalem's past projects have included the role of Aegisth in Strauss's *Elektra* in New York, London, Naples, Berlin, and San Sebastian with the West German Radio Orchestra, and at the Verbier Festival, as well as Herod in Strauss's *Salome* in Tokyo, at the Metropolitan Opera, and in Rome. In 2006 he appeared as Danilo in a new production of Léhar's *The Merry Widow* at the Berlin State Opera, conducted by Daniel Barenboim, and as Aegisth at the Tanglewood Festival under James Levine. These current performances mark Mr. Jerusalem's Philadelphia Orchestra debut.

Mr. Jerusalem has made numerous recordings, for which he has received several Grammy awards and other honors. In 1997 he received the Bundesverdienstkreuz 1st Klasse order of merit awarded by the Federal President of Germany.

Soprano **Jessica Klein**, a 2009 Juilliard Opera Center graduate, is making her Philadelphia Orchestra debut with these performances. This past summer she returned to the Castleton Festival and reprised the role of Giorgetta in Puccini's *Il tabarro*. Upcoming engagements include the role of Helmwig in Seattle Opera's 2013 production of Wagner's *Ring Cycle*. Over the past few seasons Ms. Klein joined Opera Theatre of Saint Louis as a Gerdine Young Artist, covering the roles of Mimì in Puccini's *La bohème* and Rosina in Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles*. She also appeared at New York City Opera as Anna in Strauss's *Intermezzo* (her debut), Kate Pinkerton in Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*, and covered the role of Donna Elvira in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. With the Juilliard Opera Center, Ms. Klein performed Alice Ford in Verdi's *Falstaff* and Mrs. Gibbs in Ned Rorem's *Our Town*. With the Chautauqua Institution in 2009 she performed Tatyana in Tchiakovsky's *Eugene Onegin*.

Soprano **Allison Sanders**, who is making her Philadelphia Orchestra debut, is a native of Memphis, TN. She is currently in the master's program at the Curtis Institute of Music. While at Curtis she has sung the roles of Marguerite in Gounod's *Faust*, Cleopatra in Barber's *Antony and Cleopatra*, Elettra in Mozart's *Idomeneo*, Lisak in Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen*, Melibea in Rossini's *Il viaggio a Reims*, Dido in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, and Gianetta in Donizetti's *The Elixir of Love*. She has also performed the roles of Flora in Verdi's *La traviata*, Bianca in Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*, Giovanna in Verdi's *Rigoletto*, Clothilde in Bellini's *Norma*, and Annie in Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* with the Opera Company of Philadelphia.

Tenor **John Easterlin**'s 2011-12 season engagements include his debut at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow in Teatro Real's production of Weill's *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, the Steuermann in Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman* at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, the Shabby Peasant in Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* with Madrid's Teatro Real, and the Scrivener in Musorgsky's *Khovanshchina* and Janáček's *The Makropulos Case* at the Metropolitan Opera. Future engagements include Andres in Berg's *Wozzeck* and Misail in Musorgsky's *Boris Godunov* with the Teatro Real and his debut at the Washington National Opera as Monostatos in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. Highlights of recent seasons include his debuts with the Vienna State Opera, the National Opera of Paris, and Glimmerglass Opera. Mr. Easterlin has appeared on PBS' *Great Performances* and *Live from Lincoln Center*, as well as a telecast of Los Angeles Opera's production of *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, which received Emmy, Peabody, and two Grammy awards. These current performances mark his Philadelphia Orchestra debut.

Bass-baritone **Brandon Cedel** is making his Philadelphia Orchestra debut. He is currently pursuing a master's degree at the Curtis Institute of Music, where he is a student of Marlena Malas. This season's engagements include Méphistophélès in Gounod's *Faust* and Capellio in Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* with the Curtis Opera Theater, Raimondo in Wagner's *Rienzi* with the Opera Orchestra of New York, and his Opera Santa Barbara debut as Figaro in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*. Mr. Cedel has attended the Music Academy of the West and has taken top prizes in the George London Foundation and Palm Beach Opera Vocal competitions, and second prizes in the Licia Albanese-Puccini Foundation Vocal Competition and Liederkrantz Vocal Competition General Opera Division, among others.

In the current season bass **Oren Gradus** performs with the Opera de Lausanne in Bellini's *Norma*, Houston Grand Opera in Donizetti's *Maria Stuarda* and Verdi's *Don Carlos*, and returns to the roster of the Metropolitan Opera for the roles of Colline in Puccini's *La bohème*, Caliban in *The Enchanted Island*, Méphistophélès in Gounod's *Faust*, and Leporello in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. In recent seasons Mr. Gradus has sung Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with the Milwaukee Symphony, returned to Dallas Opera as Henry VIII in Donizetti's *Anna Bolena*, and was heard at the Metropolitan Opera as Jake Wallace in Puccini's *La fanciulla del West*. He also appeared as Raimondo in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* with Houston Grand Opera, as Sarastro in Mozart's *The Magic Flute* for Israeli Opera and Cincinnati Opera, and made his debut at the Semperoper Dresden as Méphistophélès. Mr. Gradus completed his musical studies at the Oberlin Conservatory, after which he was invited to join the Pittsburgh Opera Center. These current performances mark his Philadelphia Orchestra debut.

Soprano **Susan Neves** has been heard in theaters such as the Opéra Bastille in Paris, the Metropolitan Opera, the Deutsche Oper Berlin, the Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona, L'Arena di Verona, and many others. Highlights of recent seasons include her debut at the Edinburgh Festival as Lady Macbeth in Verdi's *Macbeth*, Abigaille in Verdi's *Nabucco* at Palm Beach Opera, an appearance in Strauss's *Elektra* at the Metropolitan Opera, her Washington National Opera debut as Amelia in Verdi's *A Masked Ball*, and the title role in Puccini's *Turandot* at Pittsburgh Opera. Ms. Neves, who is making her Philadelphia Orchestra debut, is a native New Yorker, born to a French mother and a Portuguese father. She completed her musical studies at the Manhattan School of Music, where she earned a master's degree, and she was a winner of the International Luciano Pavarotti Vocal Competition.

In the 2011-12 season, mezzo-soprano **Kathryn Day** returns to Portland Opera to reprise her performances of Suzuki in Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*. She also returns to the Metropolitan Opera as the Maid in Massenet's *Manon* as well as the company's productions of Janáček's *The Makropulos Case* and Verdi's *La traviata*. Ms. Day's other operatic appearances include Ulrica in Verdi's *A Masked Ball*, Ortrud in Wagner's *Lohengrin*, and Azucena in Verdi's *Il trovatore* with Seattle Opera; Suzuki with Montreal Opera; Klytämnestra in Strauss's *Elektra* and Buryjovka in Janáček's *Jenůfa* with Long Beach Opera; Azucena with San Diego Opera; Herodias in Strauss's *Salome* with New Orleans Opera, Montreal Opera, and Austin Lyric Opera; Mrs. Roucher in Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking* with Austin Lyric Opera; Mrs. McLean in Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah* and the Old Baroness in Barber's *Vanessa* with Chautauqua Opera; and the Old Lady in Respighi's *La bella dormiente nel bosco* with the Spoleto USA and Lincoln Center festivals. She is making her Philadelphia Orchestra debut with these current performances.

Mezzo-soprano **Laura Vlasak Nolen** is a native of Texas and was recently honored by New York City Opera with the Richard F. Gold Career Grant. In the 2011-12 season she sings Octavian in excerpts from Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* with the Rochester Philharmonic and is soloist in Haydn's "Grosse Orgelmesse" and Mozart's *Missa brevis* in C, both with the New Choral Society (NY). Her 2010-11 season included a return to the Metropolitan Opera for Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffmann*, a concert with New York City Opera, Adalgisa in Bellini's *Norma* with Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Ines in Donizetti's *Maria Padilla* with Opera Boston, Mendelssohn's *Elijah* with the Phoenix Symphony, and Verdi's *Requiem* with Opera Naples. Ms. Nolen, who made her Philadelphia Orchestra debut in December 2008, was the New England Regional Winner and National Semi-Finalist in the 2005 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and has won encouragement awards in the George London and Sullivan foundation competitions. She is also a recent finalist in the Bel Canto Vocal Scholarship Academy and has participated in the Renata Scotto Opera Academy.

Engagements for mezzo-soprano **Maria Zifchak** during the 2012-13 season include a return to the Metropolitan Opera as Hannah in Donizetti's *Maria Stuarda*, as Inez in Verdi's *Il trovatore*, and as Annina in Verdi's *La traviata*. During the summer of 2013 she returns to the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis as Ruth in Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance*. Highlights of her current season include appearances at the Metropolitan Opera as Suzuki in Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*, Kasturbai in Glass's *Satyagraha*, and Annina in *La traviata*; Suzuki with Arizona Opera; and Mrs. Grose in Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* with Central City Opera. A 1998 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions winner, Ms. Zifchak was also a member of the San Francisco Opera's Merola Opera Program. Other distinctions have included the Richard F. Gold Career Grant and the Tito Capobianco Scholarship. She was also a winner of the 1999 Opera Index Awards. Ms. Zifchak is making her Philadelphia Orchestra debut with these current performances.

A native of Mumbai, soprano **Priti Gandhi**'s current engagements include the High Priestess in Verdi's *Aida* with San Diego Opera, Rosina in Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* with the Imperial Symphony, Holst's *Savitri* with San Diego New Music, and Orff's *Carmina burana* with the Memphis Symphony. In recent seasons she has appeared as Rosswisse in Wagner's *Die Walküre* with San Francisco Opera, in her role debut as the Countess in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* with San Antonio Opera, in her debut as Rosina at the Caramoor Music Festival, and with the New York Philharmonic in Strauss's *Elektra*. Ms. Gandhi's recordings include Anthony Davis's opera *Tania*, available on Koch International Classics, and Weill's *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* with Los Angeles Opera, also nominated for a Grammy Award. Ms. Gandhi, who is making her Philadelphia Orchestra debut with these current performances, was a prize finalist in the 2000 International Antonín Dvořák Competition and she was named a Western Regional Finalist of the 1999 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions.

In the 2011-12 season soprano **Jennifer Check** sings Sirin in Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitzeh* at Netherlands Opera, Almera in Nico Muhly's *Dark Sisters* with Gotham Chamber Opera and the Opera Company of Philadelphia, Mahler's Symphony No. 8 at the Virginia Arts Festival, and Verdi's Requiem with the Reno Philharmonic. Future engagements include her first performances of Lady Macbeth in Verdi's *Macbeth* with Opéra de Nancy et de Lorraine, Leonora in Verdi's *Il trovatore* with Utah Opera, as well as further performances of the High Priestess in Verdi's *Aida* at the Metropolitan Opera. Recent operatic engagements include the title role of Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride* in Valencia, the title role of Bellini's *Norma* in Palm Beach and Philadelphia, Lady Billows in Britten's *Albert Herring* at the Castleton Festival, and several appearances with the Metropolitan Opera. Her concert performances include appearances with the Milwaukee Symphony, the Spoleto Festival USA, the New Jersey Symphony, the Colorado Music Festival, the Verbier Festival, and the Oratorio Society of New York, among others. She is making her Philadelphia Orchestra debut with these current performances.

Mendelssohn Club began in 1874 as an eight-voice male chorus founded by William Wallace Gilchrist. Notable historic performances include the U.S. premiere of Mahler's Symphony No. 8 with Leopold Stokowski and The Philadelphia Orchestra, the first performance outside the Soviet Union of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 13, and the Philadelphia premieres of works by Brahms, Prokofiev, Scriabin, and Bartók. Mendelssohn Club has commissioned and premiered over 48 new works in the last 24 years. The ensemble has been recognized by the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations and earned the national ASCAP/Chorus America Award for Adventurous Programming. Alan Harler became Mendelssohn Club's 12th music director in 1988 and was named artistic director in 2009. He served for many years as Laura H. Carnell Professor and chairman of choral music at Temple University's Esther Boyer College of Music. In 2009 he was honored with Chorus America's Michael Korn Founders Award for Development of the Professional Art and the Musical Fund Society of Philadelphia's Honorary Lifetime Membership for a Distinguished Contribution to the Musical Life of Philadelphia.

FRAMING THE PROGRAM

Richard Strauss's riveting fourth opera, *Elektra*, written with the great Austrian poet Hugo von Hofmannstahl, initiated a remarkable partnership. Strauss and Hofmannstahl formed an operatic dynamic duo that can be mentioned in the same breath as Mozart and Lorenzo Da Ponte or Verdi and Arrigo Boito, the kind of genuine collaboration that has proved all too rare in the history of opera.

Their first project was Hofmannstahl's brilliant adaptation into German of Sophocles's ancient Greek drama *Elektra*. In 1903 Strauss saw a celebrated production in Berlin starring Gertrud Eysoldt, who had played the role of Salome in Oscar Wilde's play the year before. That earlier performance had led to Strauss's first great operatic success (and scandal) and the composer was keen to follow up, especially if it now meant the chance to work with Hofmannstahl.

The dysfunctional family feud among the members of the House of Atreus has begun long before the curtain goes up on the opera. King Agamemnon has been murdered by his wife, Klytämnestra, and her lover, Aegisth. Elektra and her sister Chrysothemis await the return of their banished brother, Orest, to exact revenge for the foul deed. Hofmannstahl, who had been reading the recently published works of Sigmund Freud, created a mesmerizing psychological exploration of a family in distress.

Strauss set the play in one continuous act that can be divided into seven scenes. After the opening one, Elektra, in one of the most demanding roles in the operatic repertory, dominates the opera as she encounters her siblings, mother, stepfather, and the court around them. Strauss's music reaches new extremes of Expressionist anguish and violence, marvelously contrasted at crucial moments with passages of ravishing lyrical tenderness.

Parallel Events

1908

Strauss

Elektra

Music

Bartók

String Quartet No. 1

Literature

Foster

A Room with a View

Art

Monet

The Ducal Palace

History

First Model "T" produced

Elektra

Richard Strauss

Born in Munich, June 11, 1864

Died in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, September 8, 1949

"We were made for each other and are certain to do fine things together if you remain faithful to me." So Richard Strauss wrote in a 1906 letter to Hugo von Hofmannsthal, who would become his principal librettist for nearly the next quarter century. The two had first met in Berlin in 1899; the following year the 26-year-old Austrian poet, who was a decade younger, contacted the composer concerning a ballet he was writing called *The Triumph of Time*. That project went nowhere and the two only renewed their association six years later when they initiated one of the great partnerships in the history of opera with *Elektra*.

"The Born Librettist" At one point while working on this first project Strauss requested some extra text and when Hofmannsthal sent him the added lines the composer was elated: "You are the born librettist—the greatest compliment, to my mind, since I consider it much more difficult to write a good operatic text than a fine play." Their partnership moved Strauss onto a new career path, shifting the focus of his compositional activity away from writing mighty symphonic poems, such as *Don Juan*, *Ein Heldenleben*, and *Also sprach Zarathustra*, which had cemented his reputation as a leading progressive figure in musical modernism. Strauss was apparently becoming tired of writing these kinds of pieces and was increasingly attracted to the stage, where he could call upon the symphonic structures he had mastered in a new combination with voice, words, and dramatic action. Working with Hofmannsthal, he would concentrate on composing operas until the last years of his long life. (Hofmannsthal's death in 1929 at age 55, two days after his son Franz committed suicide, devastated Strauss, who lived 20 more years, to age 85.)

While orchestral music had made Strauss famous (and infamous) in the 1890s, opera had initially proven a challenge. His first opera, *Guntram* (a Wagnerian concoction set to his own libretto), failed in 1894, although its successor, the light-hearted *Feuersnot*, fared better in 1901. Strauss's operatic breakthrough came in December 1905 with the scandalous *Salome*. Among the various reasons for the great success of his third opera was a compelling libretto—an abridged translation into German of Oscar Wilde's French play *Salomé*. Strauss was keen to follow up on this triumph, which had earned him a lot of money and allowed him to construct a posh Bavarian villa in Garmisch where he lived for the rest of his life. He realized that adapting a high-quality play helped to solve the problem of identifying a worthy post-Wagnerian libretto; other composers would likewise be drawn to so-called Literature Opera, such as Debussy had already done with *Pelleas and Melisande* and Alban Berg would later with *Wozzeck*. In contrast to Wagner, Strauss sought to create a vocal style that moved at "the pace of a stage play and frequently comes into conflict with the figuring and polyphony of the orchestra."

From Ancient Play to Modern Opera In 1903 Strauss had seen Gertrud Eysoldt, the actress who had triumphed the year before in Wilde's *Salomé*, create the title role in a new

Berlin production of Sophocles's *Elektra* directed by the legendary Max Reinhardt. The version presented of the ancient Greek drama was a new German adaptation by Hofmannstahl. Strauss was instantly attracted to the possibility of transforming the play into his next opera, despite some misgivings that the theme might be too close to *Salome* in "psychological content." He later recalled:

When I first saw Hofmannsthal's inspired play at the Kleines Theater with Gertrud Eysoldt, I immediately recognized, of course, what a magnificent operatic libretto it might be (and with the alteration I made in the Orest scene it has actually become one) and, just as previously with *Salome*, I appreciated the tremendous increase in musical tension to the very end. In *Elektra*, after the recognition scene, which could only be completely realized in music, the release in dance; in *Salome*, after the dance (the heart of the plot), the dreadful apotheosis of the end.

Strauss began work on the opera in 1906 and went into high gear during the summer of 1908, finishing it by the end of September. The premiere was given at a "Strauss Week" in Dresden in January 1909. *Elektra* did not prove quite as triumphant as *Salome* had in the same venue just over three years earlier, perhaps because the new opera was more challenging for the audience. Listeners were startled by the enormity of the orchestra, larger than any previously used in an opera. (Carl Mennicke, one of the first critics to write an extended essay on the work, commented that Strauss's "orchestra doth protest too much.") The violence, brutality, and anguish of the plot are reflected in the sheer level of dissonance, with passages that are bitonal and some that approach atonality. (Strauss wryly commented that "When a mother is slain on the stage, do they expect me to write a violin concerto?") Further productions were soon mounted in Munich, Berlin, Vienna, and Milan, and then the next year in New York (where it was given in French), the Hague, and London.

Dysfunctional Family Feuds The grisly tale was related in somewhat different versions by all three of the leading ancient Greek dramatists: Aeschylus in his trilogy the *Oresteia* and by Euripides and Sophocles in plays named after the heroine. Hofmannstahl chose to transform the latter—"Tragedy in one act; freely adapted from Sophocles" was his subtitle. The backstory of the dysfunctional family feuds among members of the House of Atreus would have largely been familiar to fin-de-siècle audiences: While King Agamemnon has been away 10 years fighting the distant war against the Trojans, his wife, Klytämnestra, has taken his enemy Aegisth as her lover. Upon Agamemnon's return to Mycenae, the two kill him, driving his daughter Elektra to seek revenge together with her sister Chrysothemis. (Years earlier Agamemnon had offered her other sister, Iphigenia, as a sacrifice.) Elektra longs for her brother, Orest, whom Klytämnestra banished for fear of reprisal, to return and avenge their father's murder.

Strauss cast the opera as one continuous act, lasting some 100 minutes, which can be considered as having seven scenes, all set before the royal palace in Mycenae. He employs a web of leitmotifs over the course of the work, beginning with a mighty theme roared by the orchestra that will be associated with the name of Agamemnon; the theme will be heard

often over the course of the opera and return at its very end. The opening scene acts as a sort of prelude and features a group of five maid servants and an overseer who comment on Elektra's degraded and distraught state, observing that she acts like a poisonous wild cat. One maid dissents from the general insults hurled at the princess and is herself beaten for her opinion—her music offers the first instance in the opera for a tender lyrical passage to provide contrast with a general mood of violence and despair. (These “violin concerto” moments are among the most moving in the opera, their power only heightened by the contrast with what surrounds them.)

Elektra is first heard in the second scene and will remain the focus for the rest of the opera—stamina is just one of the challenges of the enormously demanding soprano role Strauss wrote. In a powerful monologue she invokes her father's spirit and recounts his terrible murder, trapped in a net in his bath and axed to death by her mother and stepfather. She awaits the day when her banished brother, Orest, will kill the lovers and they all can celebrate a royal victory dance. This soliloquy brilliantly presents a portrait of a hysterical woman obsessed by the memory of her dead father. It hardly comes as a surprise to learn that Hofmannstahl read *Studies in Hysteria* by Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer before crafting his adaptation. (In 1913 Carl Jung proposed the theory of the “Elektra Complex,” exploring a daughter's relationship to her father, the female version of the Freudian “Oedipus Complex.”) Sexual imagery, allusions to bodies and beds, are recurring themes in the text.

The meeker Chrysothemis enters for the third scene and we can sense through her music that this younger sister is less neurotic and more traditional, longing for a family of her own and to escape from the tormented existence around her. She warns Elektra that their vengeful mother wants to lock her up in a dark tower. The Queen, together with her confidante and trainbearer, approaches on the way to offer a sacrifice. The stage instructions describe that Klytämnestra's “sallow, bloated face appears, in the lurid glare of the torches.” Klytämnestra seeks Elektra's help—she cannot sleep and is haunted by terrible dreams that will only end if she makes the right kind of sacrifice to propitiate the gods. Elektra initially responds by speaking in riddles, ultimately saying that there will be a human sacrifice when Orest returns and kills their mother and her lover. Klytämnestra is whispered information that elicits her manic laughter as she exits, ending the most harmonically adventurous scene in the opera.

The Tension Mounts As Chrysothemis returns for the fifth scene we learn the news: Orest is dead—two strangers have come bearing the terrible news. Elektra responds that if their brother cannot avenge Agamemnon's death then it will be left to the sisters alone to do the deed. She has the axe with which their father was murdered and they will use it now in turn. The crucial recognition scene follows in which one of the newly arrived strangers tells Elektra in more detail of Orest's death. An elderly servant and three companions enter at this point and fall to their knees as they recognize the man as the long-lost Orest himself, who comments: “The dogs in the courtyard know me, but not my own sister.” Elektra tells her brother of her torments, how ashamed she is of what she has become, and he pledges to exact revenge. This moving scene is one of the climaxes of the opera, which continues to

build in dramatic tension, and includes ravishing music, tender and lush, once the siblings have discovered each other's identity.

In the seventh and final scene Elektra hears Klytämnestra's shrieks as Orest has gone in to murder her. The commotion draws Chrysothemis and others, as Aegisth, with music that seems to mock his brief appearance, passes through on his way to the palace, where Orest kills him. Another climax is reached as the two sisters are heard in duet—their only extended instance of shared lyrical singing in the opera—celebrating the revenge and the promise of a “new life.” Elektra enacts her wild dance of royal victory, a dance of death that ends with her collapsing lifeless. Her self-destructive demise was Hofmannstahl's invention—in Sophocles Elektra lives, but for fin-de-siècle Germany hysteria unto death provides the necessary conclusion.

The Partnership after *Elektra* Strauss can be seen reaching a compositional limit with *Elektra*. The path he pursued with Hofmannstahl over the next two decades, while brilliant, is typically viewed as a retreat in various musical senses. A favorite game in music history is asking questions of “what ifs.” What if Schubert had lived beyond age 31, Mozart 35, or Mendelssohn 38? Strauss's friend and rival Mahler died in 1911 at age 50—what if Strauss's career had also ended at this point? He probably would have been remembered (as he justly is) as one of the greatest modernist figures who changed music history, but also as one increasingly heading in the direction associated with younger colleagues such as Arnold Schoenberg. *Elektra* suggested such a radical Expressionist future.

Strauss, however, lived on, and working with Hofmannstahl, ostensibly moved in another direction. While he had initiated their first collaboration, further projects were suggested by the librettist. They wrote five more operas together, continuing with the comic *Der Rosenkavalier* in 1911, which explored a Mozartean theme. There followed *Ariadne auf Naxos* (first version 1912), *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (The Woman without a Shadow, 1919), *Die ägyptische Helena* (The Egyptian Helen, 1928), and *Arabella* (1933). Greek mythology continued to provide subjects for some of these projects (as it did for the later *Die Liebe der Danae*, which is based on a scenario sketched by Hofmannstahl before his untimely death).

One can look beyond the most obvious musical features and discern life-long aesthetic and stylistic concerns in Strauss, such as his fascination with the relationship between music and words (the central subject of *Capriccio*, his last opera), his marvelous sense of irony, his brilliant deployment of orchestral forces, his daring but ultimately tonal harmonic palette. For the most part, *Elektra* is loud, dissonant, and violent, and yet the keen artistic and dramatic sensibility it presents may ultimately not be so much different than found in Strauss's later operas, and even in some of the soft, consonant, and lovely late instrumental pieces of his “Indian Summer,” which he wrote in his early 80s during the 1940s, after the fin-de-siècle battles of modernism were long past.

—Christopher H. Gibbs

Strauss composed Elektra from 1906 to 1908.

These are the first complete performances of the opera by The Philadelphia Orchestra. Elektra's monologue, Allein, Allein, was performed by soprano Inge Borkh in Ann Arbor on May 3, 1956, with Eugene Ormandy conducting.

The score calls for piccolo, three flutes (I doubling piccolo), three oboes (III doubling English horn), heckelphone, four clarinets, E-flat clarinet, bass clarinet, two basset horns, three bassoons, contrabassoon, eight horns (V, VI, VII, and VIII doubling Wagner tubas), six trumpets, three trombones, bass trombone, bass trumpet, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, castanets, cymbals, orchestra bells, snare drum, tam-tam, tambourine, triangle), two harps, celesta, and strings, in addition to the vocal soloists and mixed chorus.

Elektra runs approximately 1 hour, 40 minutes in performance.

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