



SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA PRESENTS RICHARD STRAUSS' *ELEKTRA*
War Memorial Opera House, June 7–27



Music Director Eun Sun Kim; San Francisco Opera Orchestra; Keith Warner's production of *Elektra*
Photos: Stefan Cohen (l), Cory Weaver (c, r)

The largest pit orchestra for nearly any work in the operatic repertoire will be led by Music Director Eun Sun Kim in Keith Warner's contemporary museum staging



Elena Pankratova (*Elektra*); Elza van den Heever (*Chrysothemis*); Michaela Schuster; (*Klytemnestra*); Kyle Ketelsen (*Orest*); William Burden (*Aegisth*)

Tickets available at (415) 864-3330 and [sfopera.com](https://www.sfopera.com)
Sunday, June 14 performance will be livestreamed

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (May 12, 2026) — San Francisco Opera presents Richard Strauss' 1909 masterwork *Elektra* from June 7–27. Caroline H. Hume Music Director Eun Sun Kim conducts the San Francisco Opera Orchestra in this tense, one-act thriller which requires one of the largest pit

orchestras of any work in the operatic repertoire. **Keith Warner's** popular staging, which updates the action to a contemporary museum, is directed by **Anja Kühnhold** and features an international cast.

Elektra was the first collaboration between composer Richard Strauss and librettist Hugo von Hofmannsthal, the artistic partnership that produced such 20th-century operas as *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Die Frau ohne Schatten* and *Arabella*. *Elektra* reimagines Sophocles' classic Greek tragedy as a suspenseful, psychological drama. Strauss' score utilizes more than 100 instruments in the pit to create dense harmonies and thundering rhythms that build tension throughout the opera's compact, 1-hour 45-minute duration.

Keith Warner's production is set in a museum where a young woman is inadvertently trapped overnight. Surrounded by an exhibit about ancient Greece and the House of Atreus, the woman's past traumas find expression in the cycle of violence that engulfed Agamemnon and his family during and after the Trojan War. The updated vision for Strauss and Hofmannsthal's opera resonated so strongly with Bay Area audiences when it was introduced here in 2017 that attendees returned for multiple performances. "I've seen *Elektra* before, several times, but this production, which I loved, is so detailed and thought-provoking (and emotion-provoking) that it repays repeated views," said one repeat attendee in a report by San Francisco Classical Voice. Warner's staging features the work of **Boris Kudlička** (set designer), **Kaspar Glarner** (costume designer), **John Bishop** (lighting designer) and **Bartek Macias** (projection designer). Chorus Director **John Keene** prepares the San Francisco Opera Chorus.

Last fall, San Francisco Opera Music Director **Eun Sun Kim** won considerable praise for the Company's new production of Wagner's *Parsifal*: "The orchestra under Eun Sun Kim combined delicacy and Wagnerian power in a way that was both intimate and monumental" (*San Francisco Chronicle*). Kim is currently in the midst of a Straussian year. Prior to leading her first-ever performances of *Elektra* in San Francisco, she conducted Richard Strauss' *Ein Heldenleben* with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and *Ariadne auf Naxos* with Berlin's Staatsoper Unter den Linden. During San Francisco Opera's 2026–27 Season, she conducts Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra*, Massenet's *Manon* and Wagner's *Das Rheingold*, along with an all-Strauss concert on November 6 featuring the composer's early tone poem *Till Eulenspiegel*, *Brentano Lieder* and a new suite of music from *Der Rosenkavalier*.

Elena Pankratova makes her Company debut in the formidable title role. The Russian soprano has performed *Elektra* on many of opera's leading stages, including in Vienna, Amsterdam, Dresden, Lyon and Naples. The Opera Critic said her portrayal is "... youthfully feminine, and captures one's empathy from her first 'Allein' in a reading well-detailed, punctuated with exemplary diction, and captivating in insight." Pankratova's American engagements to date have included the title role in

Puccini's *Turandot* at the Metropolitan Opera and Kundry in *Parsifal* with Houston Grand Opera, the latter under Eun Sun Kim's baton.

Elektra's sister Chrysothemis is performed by **Elza van den Heever**. Last seen on the War Memorial Opera House stage in Mozart's *Idomeneo* (June 2025) and Beethoven's *Fidelio* (October 2021)—both conducted by Eun Sun Kim—van den Heever is one of today's foremost sopranos on the opera stage today. The New York Observer said of her Salome at the Metropolitan Opera, "We're also living in the age of Elza van den Heever, whom I suspect is the most outstanding Strauss soprano of her generation ... she opens her mouth and out pours rivers of controlled, sparkling and nuanced sound." Van den Heever enjoys deep musical roots in San Francisco, including as a former San Francisco Opera Adler Fellow, Merola Opera Program participant and San Francisco Conservatory of Music graduate.

Michaela Schuster returns to the Company to take on the role of Elektra's embattled mother, Klytemnestra. Schuster made her memorable house debut during San Francisco Opera's 2022–23 Centennial Season as Madame de Croissy in Poulenc's *Dialogues of the Carmelites*. The *San Francisco Chronicle* reported, "The meat of this role is an extravagantly long and ferocious death scene that concludes the first of the opera's three acts, and Schuster delivered it with an unforgettable combination of arching vocal power and emotional turmoil."

Bass-baritone **Kyle Ketelsen**, last seen with the Company as Escamillo in *Carmen* in 2019, portrays Elektra's long-lost brother and would-be avenger, Orest. During the run of *Elektra*, Ketelsen performs in recital on June 16 at the Barbro Osher Recital Hall with San Francisco Opera Center Artistic Director and pianist **Carrie-Ann Matheson** and six participants in the 2026 Merola Opera Program. For tickets and more information about the recital, visit sfopera.com/srs.

Since 1992, **William Burden** has portrayed a diverse array of roles with San Francisco Opera, including Laca in Janáček's *Jenůfa*, Captain Vere in Britten's *Billy Budd* and George Bailey in Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer's *It's a Wonderful Life*. This season he makes his role debut as Klytemnestra's lover and accomplice, Aegisth.

San Francisco Opera has presented *Elektra* in ten previous seasons beginning in 1938 when conductor Fritz Reiner conducted one of the past century's ideal interpreters, Hungarian soprano Rose Pauly. The orchestra pit of the still-new War Memorial Opera House (which opened in October 1932) had to be enlarged to accommodate the near-100 instrumentalists that Strauss' score calls for in *Elektra*. The added space, which extends 4' under the stage and spans the length of the pit, is today called the "Torpedo Room" for how it resembles the inside of a submarine. A contemporary performance use for the Torpedo Room can be seen in the 2024 film [Eun Sun Kim: A Journey Into Lohengrin](#) (at the 37-minute mark).

LIVESTREAM on June 14 at 2 p.m. PT

The third performance of *Elektra* on Sunday, June 14 at 2 p.m. Pacific will be livestreamed. Livestream tickets, which include a 48-hour on-demand viewing window beginning Monday, June 15 at 10 a.m. PT, are \$25. For more information, visit sfopera.com/digital/livestream.

POST-PERFORMANCE TALKBACK WITH EUN SUN KIM: June 14

Following the Sunday, June 14 matinee of *Elektra*, Music Director Eun Sun Kim will host a post-performance talkback in the theater. Ticketholders are invited for a discussion about Strauss' tragic thriller and the work that goes into presenting it in the pit, on the stage and behind the scenes.

TICKETS AND INFORMATION

Tickets for *Elektra* (\$29–\$447) are available at the San Francisco Opera Box Office (301 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco), by calling (415) 864-3330 and online at sfopera.com. San Francisco Opera Box Office hours are Monday 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Tuesday through Friday 10 a.m.–6 p.m.; Saturday 10 a.m.–6 p.m. A \$2 per-ticket facility fee is included in Balcony 1, 2 and 3 zone prices; all other zones include a \$3 per-ticket facility fee. Current and future season subscribers receive a discount on additional tickets to the summer mainstage opera performances.

Tickets for the June 14 livestream are \$25 each. For more information, visit sfopera.com/digital/livestream.

Tickets for the June 16 Schwabacher Recital with Kyle Ketelsen and Carrie-Ann Matheson at the Barbro Osher Recital Hall are \$30 (general seating). Tickets can be purchased at the San Francisco Opera Box Office (301 Van Ness Avenue) in person, by phone at (415) 864-3330 and online at sfopera.com/srs.

The War Memorial Opera House is located at 301 Van Ness Avenue. Patrons are encouraged to use public transportation to attend San Francisco Opera performances. The War Memorial Opera House is within walking distance of the Civic Center BART/Muni Station and near numerous bus lines, including 5, 6, 49 and F Market Street. For further public transportation information, visit bart.gov and sfmta.com. For parking near the Opera House, visit sfopera.com/parking.

Gifts of all sizes help create San Francisco Opera's programs and are greatly appreciated. To donate visit sfopera.com/donate.

All casting, programs, schedules and ticket prices are subject to change. For further information about San Francisco Opera's 2025–26 Season, visit sfopera.com.

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ELEKTRA CASTING AND CALENDAR

*San Francisco Opera Debut †Role Debut

‡Current Adler Fellow ◊Adler Fellowship Graduate +Merola Opera Program Graduate

All performances take place at the War Memorial Opera House (301 Van Ness Avenue in San Francisco).

ELEKTRA by Richard Strauss

June 7 (2 p.m.), 11 (7:30 p.m.), 14 (2 p.m.), 19 (7:30 p.m.), 23 (7:30 p.m.), 27 (7:30 p.m.), 2026

San Francisco Opera production, originally created by San Francisco Opera, Prague National Theatre and Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe

Libretto by Hugo von Hofmannsthal after Sophocles' *Electra*

Approximate running time: 1 hour, 45 minutes without intermission

Performed in German with English supertitles

World Premiere: Dresden, January 25, 1909
First San Francisco Opera Performance: October 24, 1938
Most Recent: September 2017

Cast:

<i>Elektra</i>	Elena Pankratova*
<i>Klytemnestra</i>	Michaela Schuster
<i>Chrysothemis</i>	Elza van den Heever◊+
<i>Orest</i>	Kyle Ketelsen
<i>Aegisth</i>	William Burden†+
<i>Tutor of Orest</i>	Jongwon Han†◊
<i>The Overseer</i>	Alexandra Loutsion
<i>First maidservant</i>	Gabrielle Beteag†◊+
<i>Second maidservant</i>	Sadie Cheslak* ††+
<i>Third maidservant</i>	Laura Krumm†◊+
<i>Fourth maidservant</i>	Mary Hoskins††+
<i>Fifth maidservant</i>	Caroline Corrales†◊+
<i>Klytemnestra's trainbearer</i>	Alexa Frankian* ††+
<i>Old servant</i>	Andrew Thomas Pardini
<i>Young servant</i>	Chance Jonas-O'Toole* ††+
<i>Klytemnestra's confidante</i>	Sofia Gotch* ††+

Creative Team:

Conductor Eun Sun Kim

<i>Production</i>	Keith Warner
<i>Revival Director</i>	Anja Kühnhold
<i>Set Designer</i>	Boris Kudlička
<i>Costume Designer</i>	Kaspar Glarner
<i>Lighting Designer</i>	John Bishop
<i>Video Designer</i>	Bartek Macias
<i>Chorus Director</i>	John Keene
<i>Fight Director</i>	Dave Maier

San Francisco Opera Orchestra and San Francisco Opera Chorus

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Elektra is made possible, in part, by Dr. and Mrs. William M. Coughran, Bernard & Barbro Osher, Marieke & Jeff Rothschild and Jan Shrem & Maria Manetti Shrem.

OperaVision high-definition projection screens featured in the upper Balcony level, is made possible by the Taube Media Suite.

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Yamaha is the official piano of San Francisco Opera.

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PRESS PHOTOS: High-resolution, downloadable artist headshots and production images for *Elektra* are available at sfopera.com/press.

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