

ELEKTRA: TRAGIC OPERA IN ONE ACT

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Elektra: Tragic Opera in One Act by Hugo von Hofmannsthal

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HUGO VON HOFMANNSTHAL

**ELEKTRA: TRAGIC
OPERA IN ONE ACT**

ELEKTRA

TRAGIC OPERA IN ONE ACT

By HUGO VON HOFMANNSTHAL

MUSIC BY
RICHARD STRAUSS

PRICE 50 CENTS

ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY CHARLES T. MASON

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ARGUMENT

The scene represents the rear of the palace of old King Agamemnon, with its courtyard and servants' quarters. King Agamemnon is dead, having been murdered by Aegisthes, the paramour of his Queen Klytaimnestra. He has left three children: Orestes, the son, and two daughters, Chrysothemis and Elektra. All three children have been cruelly treated both by their mother and the usurper Aegisthes. Orestes has been banished and Elektra is barely tolerated about the royal establishment. All three children know of the murder of their father, and their hate of their mother is only equalled by their fear of her and the tyrant Aegisthes. Elektra, by brooding over her parent's death and the awful crime of her mother, is bent upon avenging the murder of the old king. Klytaimnestra, constantly haunted by her sin and living in dread of the return of Orestes, appeals to Elektra to tell her by what new sacrifice of human blood she may know once more the peace of sleep. Elektra denounces her and draws a vivid picture of the fate which awaits her at the hands of the avenger when he shall return. Klytaimnestra is informed that two messengers, an old man and a youth, have brought the welcome news that Orestes is dead. Elektra's sister informs her that all the palace has now heard the tidings, but Elektra will not believe that her brother is dead. She urges Chrysothemis to assist her in avenging the murder of their father, but the weaker sister shrinks from the task. The youth who has accompanied the old messenger appears in the court. He is Orestes himself. The brother and sister do not recognize each other at first, but when they do, Elektra realizes that the hour has come for which she has longed. She is so different from the happy child that Orestes remembers, and she deplores to him the cruelty she has suffered at the hands of her mother and Aegisthes. Orestes and the old man are now summoned to an audience with Klytaimnestra, who wishes to hear from their own lips the news of Orestes' death. No sooner have the two entered the palace than Klytaimnestra is heard to scream, and Elektra, waiting anxiously, knows that Orestes has avenged the crime. A fight ensues in the palace, some of the servants taking the part of Orestes and others the part of the dead Queen. The tyrant Aegisthes arrives, is greeted by Elektra, who leads him to the door of the palace, and unsuspecting, he enters to meet his doom at the hands of the avenger. Elektra's joy is unbounded; as she is urging her sister and the servants to join her in the dance of triumph, her physical strength gives way and she sinks prostrate to the ground.

CHARACTERS:

ELEKTRA

CHRYSOthemis

Klytemnestra

Aegisthus

Orestes

FOSTER FATHER OF ORESTES

A YOUNG SERVANT

AN OLD SERVANT

THE CONFIDANT

OVERSEER OF THE SERVANTS

TRAINBEARER

1st SERVING WOMAN

2nd SERVING WOMAN

3rd SERVING WOMAN

4th SERVING WOMAN

5th SERVING WOMAN

DRAMATIS PERSONAE:

ELEKTRA

CHRYSOthemis

Klytämnestra

Aegisth

Orest

Der Pfleger des Orest

Ein junger Diener

Ein alter Diener

Die Vertraute

Die Aufseherin

Die Schleppträgerin

Dienerinnen und Diener

Erste Magd

Zweite Magd

Dritte Magd

Vierte Magd

Fünfte Magd

ELEKTRA

(An interior court formed by the rear of the palace and the servants' quarters.—The maids are grouped around the well, which is at the left side of stage, near front.—Among them is THE SURVEILLANTE.)

FIRST MAID *(lifting her jug)*.
Elektra, where is she?

SECOND MAID.
'Tis now the hour when
Her father's name she shouts aloud,
The walls re-echoing her noise.

(ELEKTRA rushes from a gallery hidden in shadow.—All turn towards her.—ELEKTRA, her arm raised before her face, springs backwards, like an animal regaining its burrow.)

FIRST MAID.
Did you see?
Oh, how she looks at us!

SECOND MAID.
Like a wild cat, no less.

THIRD MAID.
I saw her there yesterday, moaning...

FIRST MAID.
At sunset there she always kneels and
moans.

THIRD MAID.
We both approached her,
Perhaps too closely.

FIRST MAID.
She dislikes to be watched.

THIRD MAID.
Yes, we came too near;
Breathing like a cat towards us:
"Shoo! flies," she cried, "Shoo!"

FOURTH MAID.
"Shoo! flies, shoo!"

THIRD MAID.
"Far from my plains begone!"
And with her broom menaced us.

FOURTH MAID.
"Shoo! flies, shoo!"

THIRD MAID.
"Come not here to mock my tears,
Suck not the foam from my bitter
mouth."

FOURTH MAID.
"Go, hide yourself," she cried to us:
"Eat meat, and drink but little,
Go to bed—begone!"
But she...

THIRD MAID.
I would soon...

FOURTH MAID.
Know how to answer her!

THIRD MAID.
"But when you are hungry,"
I told her, "you also eat!"
She sprang at me, her eyes ablaze,
Her fingers clawing, and she shouted:
" 'Tis a vulture whom I nourished!"

ELEKTRA

(Der innere Hof, begrenzt von der Rückseite des Palastes und niedrigen Gebäuden, in denen die Diener wohnen. Dienerinnen am Ziehbrunnen, links vorne. Aufseherinnen unter ihnen.)

ERSTE MAGD *(ihr Wassergefäß aufhebend)*.

Wo bleibt Elektra?

ZWEITE MAGD.

Ist doch ihre Stunde,
die Stunde, wo sie um den Vater heult,
dass alle Wände schallen.

(ELEKTRA kommt aus der schon dunkelnden Hausflur gelaufen. Alle drehen sich nach ihr um. ELEKTRA springt zurück wie ein Tier in seinen Schlupfwinkel, den einen Arm vor dem Gesicht.)

ERSTE MAGD.

Habt ihr gesehn,
wie sie uns ansah?

ZWEITE MAGD.

Giftig, wie eine wilde Katze.

DRITTE MAGD.

Neulich lag sie da und stöhnte—

ERSTE MAGD.

Immer, wenn die Sonne tief steht,
liegt sie und stöhnt.

DRITTE MAGD.

Da gingen wir zuzweit
und kamen ihr zu nah—

ERSTE MAGD.

Sie hält's nicht aus,
• wenn man sie ansieht.

DRITTE MAGD.

Ja, wir kamen ihr zu nah. Da pfauchte
sie wie eine Katze uns an.
"Fort, Fliegen!" schrie sie, "fort!"

VIERTE MAGD.

"Schmeissfliegen, fort!"

DRITTE MAGD.

"Sitzt nicht auf meinen Wunden!"
und schlug nach uns mit einem Strohwisch.

VIERTE MAGD.

"Schmeissfliegen, fort!"

DRITTE MAGD.

"Ihr sollt das Süsse nicht abweiden
von der Qual. Ihr sollt nicht schmatzen
nach meiner Krämpfe Schaum."

VIERTE MAGD.

"Geht ab, verkriecht euch," schrie sie
uns nach. "Esst Fettes und esst Süsses
und geht zu Bett mit euren Männern,
schrie sie,
und die—

DRITTE MAGD.

ich war nicht faul—

VIERTE MAGD.

die gab ihr Antwort!

DRITTE MAGD.

"Ja, Wenn du hungrig bist,"
gab ich zur Antwort, "so isst du auch,"
da sprang sie auf und schoss grässliche
Blicke, reckte ihre Finger wie Krallen
gegen uns und schrie: "Ich füttere mir
einen Geier auf im Leib."