

SAPPHO

OPERA IN THREE ACTS

BY PEGGY GLANVILLE-HICKS

DEBORAH POLASKI

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It was as the role of Brünnhilde in Harry Kupfer's 1988 staging of Wagner's *Ring* in Bayreuth that **Deborah Polaski** emerged as one of the world's major dramatic sopranos. She went on to sing the role there more times than any soprano since before the Second World War and portrayed Wotan's daughter in major international houses around the world in the years to come. Deborah Polaski has sung in Amsterdam, Barcelona, Berlin, Chicago, Cologne, Dresden, Florence, Leipzig, London, Madrid, Milan, Munich, New York, Paris, Prague, with the Salzburg Festivals, in Sydney, Tokyo, Vienna and Zurich, among others. Although Brünnhilde was her calling card, other big Wagnerian roles complete her repertoire: Senta, Venus, Ortrud, Sieglinde, and Kundry. She invests each of these most complex and difficult roles with a mixture of steeliness, vulnerability and lyric beauty.



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Deborah Polaski is also renowned as one of the outstanding Isolde of her time. She first sang the role in Freiburg in the eighties, made it her own and has sung it since in Dresden, Salzburg (with Abbado), Florence (Mehta), Tokyo (Abbado), Berlin (Barenboim), Barcelona (de Billy), Hamburg (Young) and Vienna (Welser-Möst), among others. She has recorded excerpts and, as with many of her Wagner roles, her performance is captured on DVD.

Her repertoire, however, is not confined to Wagner. She is also an extraordinary Elektra, has more than 190 performances to her credit with the world's top conductors and directors and has recorded it twice, with Barenboim and Bychkov. Her repertoire also includes Marie in *Wozzeck*, Kostelnicka in *Jenůfa*, Cassandre and Didon in *Les Troyens*, Färberin in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, the title role in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Ariane in *Barbe-Bleue*, Die Frau in *Erwartung*, Kabanicha in *Katja Kabanova*, and in 2012 she made her role debut as Gräfin Geschwitz in *Lulu* in Berlin. With dramatic flair and integrity, she completely inhabits these characters, extracting every nuance of meaning from the texts.

Her concert work includes performances with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra (Maazel), the Berlin Philharmonic (Abbado), and collaborations with Boulez, Bychkov, de Billy, Levine, Luisi, Märkl, Mehta, Prêtre and Young, to name a few. Her relationship with Barenboim has included concerts with the Staatskapelle Berlin in the Berlin Philharmonie, and appearances in Carnegie Hall and in Paris. With Barenboim she has also appeared as a recitalist, although she regularly worked with pianist Charles Spencer. Together they have appeared in some of the world's finest recital halls.

In 2003 the Austrian government bestowed on her the title of Kammersänger in recognition of her contribution to Vienna's cultural life and in 2010 she received an Honorary Doctorate in Performing Arts from her alma mater, the University of Cincinnati. Aside from exciting plans on the opera stage, Deborah Polaski is also much in demand as a singing teacher around the world, both as a private teacher and in Master Classes.