

SAN FRANCISCO  
OPERA

**SAN FRANCISCO OPERA ANNOUNCES CASTING UPDATE FOR  
RICHARD STRAUSS' *ELEKTRA*, OPENING SEPTEMBER 9:**

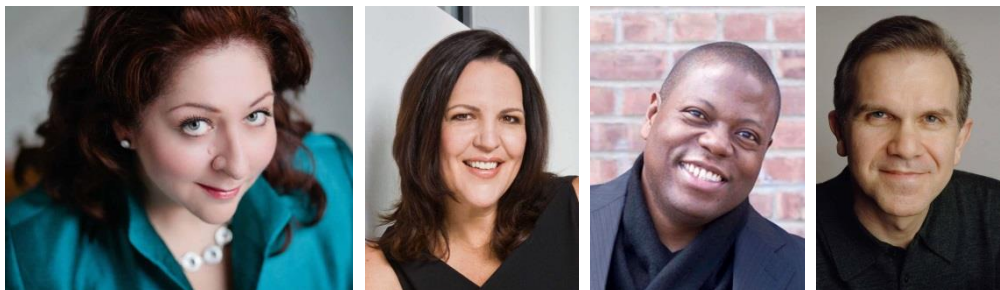
**MEZZO-SOPRANO MICHAELA MARTENS WILL SING KLYTEMNESTRA,  
REPLACING STEPHANIE BLYTHE**



Michaela Martens ©Tess Steinkolk; as Cassandre in *Les Troyens* (©Cory Weaver/San Francisco Opera)

***Elektra* Returns to Company Repertory in  
Bold Production by Keith Warner; Conducted by Henrik Nánási**

**Soprano Christine Goerke Heads Cast Including Soprano  
Adrienne Pieczonka as Chrysothemis, Bass-Baritone Alfred Walker as Orest and  
Tenor Robert Brubaker as Aegisth**



Christine Goerke; Adrienne Pieczonka; Alfred Walker; Robert Brubaker

**Tickets available at [sfopera.com](http://sfopera.com) and (415) 864-3330**

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (August 7, 2017) — San Francisco Opera announced today a cast change for Richard Strauss' *Elektra*, which opens on Saturday, September 9, in English director **Keith Warner**'s new staging at the War Memorial Opera House. American mezzo-soprano **Michaela Martens** will sing the role of Klytemnestra, replacing mezzo-soprano **Stephanie Blythe** who has withdrawn from the production for personal reasons.

Martens made her 2015 San Francisco Opera debut as Cassandre in Berlioz's towering Trojan War epic, *Les Troyens*. She returns to the Company to sing her first performances of another demanding operatic role, Klytemnestra, the murderous and guilt-ridden mother of Elektra in Strauss' 1909 opera with a libretto by Hugo von Hofmannsthal based on the Greek tragedy by Sophocles.

Known for her vivid portrayals of some of the most challenging mezzo-soprano roles in the repertory, Martens has performed on many of the world's leading stages including the Metropolitan Opera, Munich's Bavarian State Opera, Vienna State Opera, Grand Théâtre de Genève and English National Opera. Her other roles include Judith in Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle*; Kostelnička in Janáček's *Jenůfa*; Herodias in Strauss' *Salome*; Ortrud in Wagner's *Lohengrin* and Kundry in *Parsifal*. She will reprise her Klytemnestra with Houston Grand Opera in January 2018. Martens is a former Merola Opera Program participant, a past winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and holds a degree from The Juilliard School.

Conductor David Robertson, who led Martens in acclaimed performances at the Metropolitan Opera (John Adams' *The Death of Klinghoffer*) and Carnegie Hall (Adams' *The Gospel According to the Other Mary*), said of the mezzo-soprano: "She thinks deeply about what it is she does, but then lets that thought inform her instincts so that nothing she does ever feels calculated. There are things that she does both in the singing and sometimes when she's not singing that are so strong. They come from the way she inhabits the roles."

Martens joins a powerful *Elektra* cast headlined by acclaimed dramatic soprano **Christine Goerke** in the title role. With recent performances as Brünnhilde in the *Ring* at Canadian Opera Company, Houston Grand Opera and Washington National Opera, Goerke has emerged as one of today's leading Wagnerian sopranos. Her Straussian credentials are equally impressive, including the Dyer's Wife in *Die Frau ohne Schatten* at the Metropolitan Opera and *Elektra*, which she has performed to considerable acclaim at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, Lyric Opera of Chicago and in concert at Carnegie Hall. New York's *The Observer* proclaimed, "To the rarefied society of superb interpreters of Elektra, consisting of perhaps two or three singers in each generation, we can now welcome Ms. Goerke. Her dark, grainy soprano has developed into a mighty battering ram of sound, vaulting from thundering low tones to brilliant, steely

shafts of tone on top.” Goerke last appeared with San Francisco Opera in 2006 as Rosalinde in *Die Fledermaus* and returns this season in one of her greatest portrayals.

Canadian soprano **Adrienne Pieczonka** performs as Elektra’s sister Chrysothemis, a role she has sung around the world. The *New York Times* observed: “Pieczonka’s rich, clear voice conveys Chrysothemis’s affecting vulnerability. Yet in moments of frustration and despair, her singing has bright piercing power.” American bass-baritone **Alfred Walker** makes his Company debut as the avenging Orest and tenor **Robert Brubaker** is Aegisth.

Along with a cohort of commanding singing actors, Elektra requires a large orchestra capable of playing its complex textures throughout a wide, dynamic range. Hungarian conductor **Henrik Nánási**, in his premiere engagement with the Company, will lead the San Francisco Opera Orchestra in Strauss’ pyrotechnic score. The San Francisco Opera Chorus is prepared by **Ian Robertson**.

The production by original director **Keith Warner**, a co-production with the National Theatre in Prague and Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe, is staged for San Francisco Opera by director **Anja Kühnhold** in her Company debut. Warner said of his interpretation of the opera: “On one hand, *Elektra* is really an amazingly complex, deep piece and on the other it is an almost horror movie kind of thriller. We have decided to set the piece in a modern museum where a girl is going through and reading about Sophocles’ Electra and Carl Jung’s Electra complex. The artifacts and information trigger a series of memories in her and we go back into her story. She must confront the truth by confronting the terrible events that started this whole chain reaction of murder and mayhem.”

The production features the work of several artists who are new to San Francisco Opera, including set designer by **Boris Kudlička**, costume designer **Kaspar Glarner**, lighting designer **John Bishop** and video designer **Bartek Macias**.

Now In its 95th season, San Francisco Opera has presented Richard Strauss’ *Elektra* in nine previous seasons beginning in 1938 when conductor Fritz Reiner led a brilliant cast headlined by Hungarian soprano Rose Pauly—one of the past century’s ideal interpreters of the title role—and Swedish mezzo-soprano Kerstin Thorborg as Klytemnestra. An equally starry cast figured in the Company’s 1953 revival when Georg Solti conducted Inge Borkh in the title role, veteran German mezzo-soprano Margarete Klose as Klytemnestra—each in their United States debuts—and Paul Schöffler as Orest.

Sung in German with English subtitles, six performances of *Elektra* are scheduled for September 9 (7:30 p.m.), September 13 (7:30 p.m.), September 17 (2 p.m.), September 19 (7:30 p.m.), September 22 (7:30 p.m.) and September 27 (7:30 p.m.).



**Cast:**

*Elektra*  
*Klytemnestra*  
*Chrysothemis*  
*Orest*  
*Aegisth*  
*Tutor of Orest*  
*The Overseer*  
*Fifth Maidservant*  
*Maidservant 1*  
*Maidservant 2*  
*Maidservant 3*  
*Maidservant 4*  
*Trainbearer*  
*Young Servant*  
*Old Servant*  
*Confidante*

**Christine Goerke**  
**Michaela Martens**♪  
**Adrienne Pieczonka**  
**Alfred Walker**\*  
**Robert Brubaker**  
**Anthony Reed**†♪  
**Alexandra Loutsion**\*  
**Rhoslyn Jones**♪  
**Jill Grove**  
**Laura Krumm**♪  
**Nicole Birkland**♪  
**Sarah Cambridge**\*†♪  
**Amina Edris**†♪  
**Kyle van Schoonhoven**\*†♪  
**Bojan Knezevic**♪  
**Erin Neff**♪

**Creative Team:**

*Conductor*  
*Original Director*  
*Revival Director*  
*Set Designer*  
*Costume Designer*  
*Lighting Designer*  
*Video Designer*  
*Chorus Director*

**Henrik Nánási**\*  
**Keith Warner**\*  
**Anja Kühnhold**\*  
**Boris Kudlička**\*  
**Kaspar Glarner**\*  
**John Bishop**\*  
**Bartek Macias**\*  
**Ian Robertson**

**San Francisco Opera Orchestra and San Francisco Opera Chorus****Insight Panel: *Elektra*, September 7, 6:30 p.m., Dianne and Tad Taube Atrium Theatre**

San Francisco Opera and San Francisco Opera Guild present an Insight Panel discussion with members of the cast and creative team of *Elektra*. Get a rare behind-the-scenes glimpse into the creative process as panelists share their insights about the challenges and rewards of bringing *Elektra* to life. Free for San Francisco Opera members and students with valid ID and \$5 for the general public; tickets are available online at [sfopera.com/insights](https://sfopera.com/insights) and at the door.

San Francisco Opera is sponsored, in part, by The Dolby Family, Ann and Gordon Getty, John A. and Cynthia Fry Gunn, Franklin and Catherine Johnson, Edmund W. and Jeannik Méquet Littlefield Fund, Steven M. Menzies, Bernard and Barbro Osher, Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem, Dianne and Tad Taube, Phyllis C. Wattis Endowment Funds and Diane B. Wilsey. San Francisco Opera is supported, in part, by a grant from Grants for the Arts.

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Yamaha is the official piano of San Francisco Opera. Pianos generously provided by Piedmont Piano Company.

*Elektra* is made possible, in part, by: John A. & Cynthia Fry Gunn; and Joan & David Traitel, through the Great Singers Fund.



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To obtain further press information about *Elektra* and download photos from the 2017 Fall Season, please visit [sfopera.com/press](http://sfopera.com/press) or contact:

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