



Simone Dinnerstein in Recital
Works for Solo Piano



Home Concert and Fundraiser

May 5, 2019 | 4 pm
South Egremont, MA

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Simone Dinnerstein, Piano

American pianist Simone Dinnerstein is known for her “majestic originality of vision” (*The Independent*) and her “lean, knowing and unpretentious elegance” (*The New Yorker*).

2018 was a banner year for Dinnerstein, including a highly-lauded recital at the Kennedy Center, her debut with the London Symphony Orchestra, a live recital for BBC’s Radio Three, and an ambitious season as the first artist-in-residence for Music Worcester, encompassing performances, school outreach, master classes, and lectures. Future highlights include a European tour with Kristjan Jarvi and the Baltic Sea Philharmonic and a residency in San Francisco with the New Century Chamber Orchestra including a collaboration with Daniel Hope and Lynn Harrell for the Beethoven Triple Concerto.

Known for her highly-personal recital programs, she is increasingly branching out into interesting collaborations. Upcoming projects include performances conducting and leading from the keyboard with her newly-formed string ensemble Baroklyn; duo recitals with cellist Matt Haimovitz; and *Portals: Travels through Time*, a performance piece with violinist Tim Fain.

She spent 2018 touring Piano Concerto No. 3, a piece that Philip Glass wrote for her as a co-commission by twelve orchestras. *Circles*, her world premiere recording of the concerto with Grammy-nominated string orchestra A Far Cry, topped the Classical Billboard charts. At the New York premiere, *The New Yorker* was “struck dumb with admiration” by this new addition to the piano concerto repertoire. She has performed the concerto in the U.S. and abroad, including performances alongside the co-commissioning orchestras. Future performances will be held in France, Germany, Italy, and Canada.

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The Program

FRANÇOIS COUPERIN
(1668-1733)

Les Barricades Mystérieuses

ROBERT SCHUMANN
(1810-1856)

Arabesque in C Major, Op. 18

PHILIP GLASS
(1937-)

Mad Rush

FRANÇOIS COUPERIN

Le Tic-Toc-Choc, ou les Maillotins

ERIK SATIE
(1866-1925)

Gnossienne No. 3

ROBERT SCHUMANN
(1810-1856)

Kreisleriana, Op.16

1. Äußerst bewegt
2. Sehr innig und nicht zu rasch
3. Sehr aufgeregt
4. Sehr langsam
5. Sehr lebhaft
6. Sehr langsam
7. Sehr rasch
8. Schnell und spielend

= *Reception* =

She released *Mozart in Havana* in 2017, recorded in Cuba with the Havana Lyceum Orchestra. She went on to bring the orchestra to the United States for their first ever American tour, which was received with tremendous enthusiasm and was featured in specials for PBS and NPR. Also in 2017, she collaborated with choreographer Pam Tanowitz to create *New Work for Goldberg Variations*, which was on the year-end top ten lists of critics at *The New York Times* and *The Boston Globe*. This project continues to tour and will be given a run of performances at New York's Joyce Theater in 2019.

She first attracted attention in 2007 with her self-produced recording of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*. It was a remarkable success, reaching No. 1 on the U.S. Billboard Classical Chart in its first week of sales and was named to many "Best of 2007" lists including those of *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and *The New Yorker*. The recording also received the prestigious Diapason D'Or in France and established her distinctive and original approach. *The New York Times* called her "a unique voice in the forest of Bach interpretation."

Since 2007, she has made eight more albums with repertoire ranging from Beethoven to Ravel, all of which have topped the Classical Billboard charts. Her performance schedule has taken her around the world. She has performed at venues including Carnegie Hall, Boston's Symphony Hall, Vienna Konzerthaus, Berlin Philharmonie, Sydney Opera House, Seoul Arts Center, and London's Wigmore Hall; festivals that include the Lincoln Center Mostly Mozart Festival and the Aspen, Verbier, and Ravinia festivals; and performances with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, Dresden Philharmonic, Staatskapelle Berlin, RAI National Symphony Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Czech Philharmonic, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Minnesota Orchestra, Atlanta Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, Montreal Symphony Orchestra, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Orquestra Sinfonica Brasileira, and the Tokyo Symphony.

She has played concerts throughout the U.S. for the Piatigorsky Foundation, an organization dedicated to bringing classical music to non-traditional venues. She gave the first classical music performance in the Louisiana state prison system at the Avoyelles Correctional Center and performed at the Maryland Correctional Institution for

Women in a concert organized by the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra.

Dedicated to her community, she founded Neighborhood Classics in 2009, a concert series open to the public and hosted by New York public schools to raise funds for their music education programs. She also created a program called Bachpacking during which she takes a digital keyboard to elementary school classrooms, helping young children get close to the music she loves.

A winner of Astral Artists' National Auditions, she is a graduate of The Juilliard School where she was a student of Peter Serkin. She also studied with Solomon Mikowsky at the Manhattan School of Music and in London with Maria Curcio. She is on the faculty of the Mannes School of Music and lives in Brooklyn with her husband, son, and Old English Sheepdog, Daisy.

An Interview with Simone Dinnerstein

As you ready yourself to listen to Simone Dinnerstein this evening, would it surprise you to learn that she will also be listening to you? That's right. You are on her program (though this will need to suffice for a formal credit). A seasoned performer, Ms. Dinnerstein has honed the sixth sense that reads the emotional energy of an audience while they embark together on a musical excursion: in this case, charting an unexpected path through whimsical Couperin, eccentric Satie, fervent Glass, and darkly romantic Schumann. It's a useful ability when you strive to make every piece live in the moment, and, consequently, each performance of a program different than the last. But it's especially invaluable when you approach works for the first time and propose new relationships between them.

Tonight's program represents intriguing new terrain for Ms. Dinnerstein. Of the music being presented here, she has only performed Schumann's *Kreisleriana* in the past, and that was nearly two decades ago. She has composed each part of the program like a suite, with no pause between the compositions. The first grouping will be shorter than the second, purposefully creating asymmetry. "It's hard to know how that will feel until I've done it a few times," she says. "It's different than playing it in your

room.” In discussing her choices, Ms. Dinnerstein expresses the nervous excitement of not yet knowing if they will come together the way she thinks they will, though both her explanations and her track record suggest that the evening will exceed even her own daring expectations—and yours.

Q: The pieces on this program are not typically heard together. Is there a connective thread that links them together?

[SD]: When I chose to put these pieces side by side, I was thinking about music that returns to itself. I hesitate to use the word repetitive. Rather it seems like the composers are wrestling with something, the way you might keep turning over an idea in your head. It’s psychological. Every single piece seems to show how fleeting our emotions are, though we come back to them. The music describes our internal world. With the first Couperin piece, I can’t tell if it’s uplifting or incredibly sad. The same with the Satie. Everything in the program has a quality where you can’t be certain if it’s saying one thing or another. And when a phrase is repeated, it seems to mean something else. I like the ambiguity. I don’t want to know what it means. In fact, I don’t even want to decide how I’m going to play it in advance. It changes every time.

Q: The music travels on these paths largely through its piano figuration. Is this program also a study of motion?

[SD]: I hadn’t thought of it, but that’s a good point. I’m definitely using rhythm and pulse in different ways. Because the forms of the pieces are circular, they don’t necessarily feel like they’re on a trajectory. It’s more like a rhythm of life. The final movement of Schumann’s *Kreisleriana* is an amazing example of that. The way he’s written it, the two hands become completely out of synch with each other—as if the left hand has entirely lost the beat. To me, it represents someone becoming undone. I love how the concert ends with this utter disintegration of rhythm.

Q: Couperin, a contemporary of J.S. Bach, was a composer at the court of Louis XIV and wrote a well-known treatise that sheds light on Baroque keyboard fingerings and ornamentation. What was your point of entry for his music?

[SD]: I've never played any Couperin before, though I've certainly listened to him over the years. I'm not thinking too much about performance practice. I've always found ornamentation a bit frilly. I tend to like things more bare, so I can hear the bones of the piece. The whole touch and the color I'm going for are quite different than Bach.

Q: The titles of both Couperin pieces on the program are quite fantastical: *Les Barricades Mystérieuses* (*The Mysterious Barricades*) and *Le Tic-Toc-Choc, ou Les Maillotins* (*The Tic-Toc-Choc, or the Maillotins*), who were a family of spectacular rope dancers. How literally should we interpret them?

[SD]: With *Les Barricades*, there's speculation about whether or not it refers to virginity or chastity. I don't know what the title means, though there is something mysterious about it. I'm actually kind of obsessed with the piece. I can't stop thinking about it and wanting to play it. To me, it's a kind of totem. It reminds me of the Aria in Bach's *Goldberg Variations* in the sense that you feel like you could keep ending it and starting it over again.

Le Tic-Toc-Choc is an amazing piece to play and watch. It sounds like a machine, like a mechanical clock. It could be meant purely for fun, but it's more than entertaining. It's philosophical, too, like the ticking of time. It has a quality that minimalist music can achieve, where you're in a kind of groove that is moving you.

Q: *Le Tic-Toc-Choc* is a *pièce croisée*, meaning that the performer's hands were supposed to be playing two different keyboard manuals of the harpsichord in the same range. How do you play it on piano—by dropping the left hand down an octave?

[SD]: No, I'm playing them in the same octave. The hands completely cross over each other, which is very complicated. It's almost like playing marimba. You have to strike the hammers with your two hands in rapid succession on the same note. So your fingers are being used like mallets and get can get stuck into each other. It's gnarly. You really have to choreograph how you play it. And you need to have a piano that is extremely responsive and can repeat very quickly.

I've been going back and forth about whether or not I should take the repeats in *Le Tic- Toc-Choc*. It's a rondo form and it's unclear if you should repeat the opening material when you go return to it. I'm definitely thinking about how it relates to the pieces that surround it on the program. I'm playing it right after Philip Glass's *Mad Rush*, where everything is repeated. That piece has an ebb and flow that is very similar to the Couperin. There's a feeling of slight syncopation, where you start to hear different parts of the beat. You can be very aware of one voice that's syncopating in a certain kind of a way. And then suddenly you're not hearing that voice anymore. You're hearing another voice and he makes you feel the beat as being displaced in a different way. The pulse feels like it's shifting.

Q: What are the origins of *Mad Rush*?

[SD]: Glass wrote it to play on the organ at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine for the Dalai Lama's first public address in North America back in 1979. Apparently, they didn't know exactly when the Dalai Lama was going to arrive. They didn't want the people waiting to think there was a delay, so they asked him to write a piece of indefinite length. Even though the length of this version is fixed, it's not hard to imagine that it could keep on going.

I hear parts of it as playing with acoustics, though I don't know if that's related to the spatial environment of the cathedral or even if it's what he intended. What I've been finding with Glass's music is that it's really great not to have a plan and to just listen in the moment because the space where you perform really changes the sound. Of course, that's true of anything, but his music is very open, like Bach in a way. There's an abstraction they have in common.

Q: They also share an element of wonder. Does Erik Satie's *Gnossienne No. 3* have this in common with *Le Tic-Toc-Choc* and *Mad Rush*?

[SD]: Satie published three *Gymnopedie* and three *Gnossienne* together, though he eventually wrote more *Gnossienne*, a fantastical term that he came up with. The markings in the score are bizarre: "Plan carefully;" "Provide yourself with clear sightedness;" "Alone for a moment;" "So as

to get a hollow;” “Quite lost;” “Carry this further;” “Open your mind.” These are written right over the notes. I’m not able to make heads or tails of it. The commentary is dada-esque.

No one would know about the markings unless they’re playing it. Perhaps Satie didn’t particularly care about how it affected the musicians because what he wrote seems very personal to me, like a journal. I interpret the comments as having to do with his own feelings at those moments, which is similar to some of the markings in Schumann’s music. There’s something poetic about both of them.

Q: Another eccentricity is that Satie wrote the piece without bar lines that would give the rhythm formal units of measure. Why wouldn’t he include them?

[SD]: It’s ahead of its time, that’s for sure. So many composers now just don’t bother with a meter. And the pulse is clear in this case. It makes the music appear more continuous, almost like a run-on sentence, in spite of how short it is in length. It doesn’t need to be long in order for it to have lasting power. Although Satie and Schumann are obviously very different, I do think that they were using the music here as expressions of their internal states at the time, of their dream worlds.

Q: What would Schumann have been dreaming about?

[SD]: He wrote the *Arabesque* at a moment when he thought he would never marry Clara, the love of his life. With *Kreisleriana*, he composed it in just four days, which is incredible. And he wrote it for Clara, though he formally dedicated it to Chopin. What I really love is that he said she would find herself in the music, which is so beautiful, so passionate.

The *Arabesque* has some quick changes in mood and the most breathtaking coda at the end that completely takes it someplace else, written in Schumann’s music language but sounding absolutely contemporary. In comparison, *Kreisleriana* changes on a dime. Suddenly, you’ll be in a completely different headspace. I think that’s as much about Schumann himself as about his love for Clara.

Q: Is there a tidal push and pull even in the way that movements are put together?

[SD]: Yes, they really move from one to the other and are very specifically written to go in order. One leads to the other in interesting ways. The piece has many open-ended questions. For instance, with the third movement, you think you've been given finality and closure because it ends so ferociously. And then the fourth movement starts with such questioning and uncertainty. It shows that resolution was an illusion or else the music couldn't go into the next movement and the way it does. The ground has shifted underneath you and you're lost all over again.

Q: We know where Schumann was in his life when he composed these works. Are you in a particular place in your own life that has inspired you to explore the pieces in this program?

[SD]: My son is about to go to college, and I know that I'm about to start a different phase of my life where I don't have my child with me anymore. It makes me think back to when he was born, watching him grow up, and how the world shifts. It makes me think about circles. If I could say what I wanted the audience to take away from this program, it would be something about feelings of uncertainty, but it's difficult to put into words. That's why music is ineffable.



Interview by Lara Pellegrinelli, commissioned by Miller Theatre at Columbia University, 2018, and printed with her permission. Lara Pellegrinelli is a scholar and a journalist, who contributes to NPR and The New York Times. She teaches at The New School and Bard's Microcollege at Brooklyn Public Library.

Historical Notes



FRANÇOIS COUPERIN (1668-1733), was born into a French musical dynasty and became perhaps its best-known practitioner. Known later in life as *Couperin Le Grand* (*Couperin The Great*) to distinguish him from others in the family, he was taught initially by his father, Charles, and then by Jacques-Denis Thomelin and Michel-Richard Delalande, all important organists. The younger Couperin had a successful career, marrying at 21 and assuming increasingly important positions at the Court of Louis XIV that provided him the opportunity to meet leading musicians, composers, and aristocrats and to publish much of his music. J.S. Bach apparently knew and studied his publications, and reportedly exchanged letters with Couperin, though the correspondence does not survive. In 1716 Couperin published perhaps his most important historical work, *L'art de toucher le clavecin* (*The Art of Playing the Harpsichord*) that lays out his approach to keyboard performance practice and that includes discussions of fingering, ornamentation, and related topics.

Les Barricades Mystérieuses (*The Mysterious Barricades*), is from the sixth *ordre* (suite) in B-flat Major in the *Deuxième livre de pièces de clavecin*, published in 1717. It is an example of the *style brisé* (*broken style*) of French Baroque keyboard music that uses irregular arpeggios to create a musical texture, and that originated in French lute music. As with many Couperin titles, the meaning is now obscure but originally likely had erotic overtones well understood at the French court. The work has a magnetic quality that continually urges resolution but ends in a stalemate.

Le Tic-Toc-Choc, ou Les Maillotins (*The Clock Strike or the Malletteers**) is from the eighteenth *ordre* in F Major in the *Troisième livre de pièces de clavecin*, published in 1722. It is an example of a *pièce croisée* (*crossed piece*) where Couperin specified that the performer play on two keyboards in the same register, causing the hands to cross. The meaning of the title has been the subject of much debate, with suggestions including an 18th-century mechanical toy, 14th-century tax rioters, the Maillotins family of rope dancers, an olive press, and (as here) a regional French term for belfry

* speculative translation

clock figures striking the hour with mallets, which Couperin mimicked in his clock-like texture.



ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810-1856) was born in Zwickau, Saxony, and initially pursued law before dedicating his life to music. He studied piano with Friedrich Wieck, and famously fell in love with Wieck's daughter, Clara, eventually marrying her over her father's objections. His pianistic career ended early when he developed a chronic injury to his right hand, and he turned to composition and music criticism. In 1834 he co-founded *Die Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (*The New Journal for Music*) with Wieck and Ludwig Schunke, building it into an important publication and using it to promote the work of past and contemporary composers. He suffered throughout his life from a mental disorder that made him susceptible to periods of depression, and sought to be institutionalized in 1854 after a failed suicide attempt. He died two years later, possibly from mercury poisoning or from the brain tumor found during his autopsy.

Schumann, one of the greatest composers of the Romantic period, influenced musicians for the better part of the next century. His music for solo piano, often collections of miniature portraits, is particularly sensitive, and its sympathetic view of domestic life and love is unmatched by other composers. His unique blend of literary and musical imagery created a world at once reassuring and fantastical that opens a window into his soul and is the epitome of 19th-century Program Music. Clara Schumann, a virtuoso pianist and important composer in her own right, continued her performance career after her husband's death. In 1861 she premiered the *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel*, Op. 24, by long-time family friend, Johannes Brahms, and in 1878 joined the distinguished faculty at the Hoch'sche Konservatorium in Frankfurt. She died in 1896, outliving her husband by forty years.

Schumann wrote the *Arabesque in C Major*, **Op. 18**, in December 1838 in Vienna at a time when it appeared that his wish to marry Clara was hopeless. He described the *Arabesque* and its companion piece, *Blumenstück* (*Flower Piece*), as being in a lighter, more feminine style than his other music, and

that they were “delicate, for ladies.” In Vienna he suffered an episode of depression, and left the city in April when it was clear that his hopes of opening an office for *Die Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* were untenable.

***Kreiseriana*, Op. 16**, was written in four days in April 1838 and is considered one of Schumann's greatest works. The eponymous title character was a fictional conductor created by poet E.T.A. Hoffman as a musical genius (and Hoffmann alter ego) whose extreme sensibilities inhibited his creativity. Schumann used the character to explore a kaleidoscope of emotional states from depression to joy, portraying conflicting impulses with passages of high contrast. *Kreiseriana*, subtitled *Phantasien für das Pianoforte*, has eight movements and was Schumann's favorite work.



ERIK SATIE (1866-1925) was born in Honfleur to a French father and Scottish mother. He was instructed in music by a local organist and at age 13 entered the Paris Conservatoire, where he was promptly labelled untalented and one of the laziest students in the school. He left in 1883, tried again in 1885 with no better results, and left for good shortly thereafter. Satie was an eccentric with a satirical bent, who championed the new music of his time and whose art presaged the minimalist movement and surrealism of George Antheil, Kurt Weill, and Stravinsky. He spent some of his young adulthood as a pianist in the Montmartre cabaret scene, which generated an income but which he rejected aesthetically. At age 40, to the surprise of many, he entered Vincent d'Indy's Schola Cantorum de Paris to study counterpoint, earning a diploma in 1908. He rejected the large complex musical forms of the Romantic era and what he perceived to be the overblown self-importance of most late 19th- and early 20th-century music. Satie died at the age of 59 from cirrhosis of the liver and is buried in Arcueil, where he had lived alone in one room for 27 years.

The *Trois Gnossienne* were written around 1890, shortly after Satie's popular *Sarabande* (1887) and the *Trois Gymnopédies* (1888), using the same musical idiom. The cryptic title was coined by the composer—a new word for a new form—and has caused much speculation as to its meaning. One of the more plausible suggestions is that it derives from *gnosis*—the

Greek word for knowledge—and reflects Satie’s fascination with ancient gnostic religious sects that shunned the material world. The score, written without time signatures or bar lines, contains the composer’s ironic instructions to the performer that Satie ultimately indicated should not be read to the audience.



PHILIP GLASS (1937-) was born in Baltimore, MD, the son of Jewish émigrés from Lithuania, and is considered one of the most influential composers of the late 20th-century. Educated at the Peabody Institute, University of Chicago, and Juilliard, he studied with Nadia Boulanger in Paris on a Fulbright Scholarship, developing a deep-seated admiration for the music of J.S. Bach, Mozart, and Schubert, his favorite composer. Glass describes himself variously as a composer of music with repetitive structures and as a classicist who writes in the Western classical tradition as well as alternative styles—rock, electronic music, world music, and others. His minimalist style is familiar to audiences from the concert hall, film, opera, and other artistic media, and he is one of the most wide-ranging and influential collaborators on the music scene today. In 2017 he completed his Piano Concerto No. 3, which was written for and premiered by Simone Dinnerstein, and he continues to stretch the boundaries of music far beyond the world into which he was born.

Mad Rush was written in 1979 for solo piano or electric organ and was originally designed to welcome the Dalai Lama to the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City. Commissioned as a piece of indefinite length, the work contrasts two themes—one peaceful, one wrathful—that portray the play of deities in Tibetan Buddhist iconography. Glass visited India in the late 1960s, and was profoundly affected by Buddhism. He met the Dalai Lama in 1972 and became a fervent advocate for Tibetan independence. In comments before a performance in 2008, Glass indicated that the title, *Mad Rush*, was acquired after 1979 and that it is unrelated to the compositional circumstances of the work.

—T.A. McDade

Special Thanks...

...to Simone Dinnerstein, Adrian van Zon, Richard Collens, Malvina Wasserman, Perry Boles Books, John Lynn Jones, The Bistro Box, and Terrill McDade.



*Thanks for a wonderful season!
Have a great Summer and see you in the Fall.*

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