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Album review

Simone Dinnerstein



The Berlin Concert (Telarc)



You know you've made it as an artist when your album warrants a grandiose title like *The Berlin*

Concert. And if anyone has made it lately, it is pianist Simone Dinnerstein. Up until about a year ago, the Juilliard graduate was living the busy but anonymous life of so many working musicians. The tipping point came through a spectacular recording of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* on Telarc. The disc revealed a pianist who played with nuanced fire and virtuosic restraint, never sacrificing a thoughtful interpretation through a desire to impress with speed.

The Berlin Concert shows that same artist in different guises: more mature, confident and powerful, with a demonstrable range of colors. Her vivid reading of Beethoven's final piano sonata (No. 32 in C minor) imbues the work with vast subtleties and complexities, and a new sampling of Bach—the French Suite No. 5 and 13th *Goldberg* variation—proves that her initial splash was no studio fluke.

Most impressive, though, is Dinnerstein's performance of Philip Lasser's masterly *Variations on a Chorale of Bach*. The composer puts the master through his paces, from the stark, Bartókian glee of the sixth variation to the near-pop rippling of the twelfth. He even demonstrates an evolved sense of humor with the eleventh section, a "Variation of Variations." But Lasser, like Dinnerstein, shows restraint, carving out a beautifully calm space rather than impressing through velocity. In this, the artist and composer are an ideal match.

—Daniel Felsenfeld

Simone Dinnerstein performs at (Le) Poisson Rouge Thu 28.