

## Simone Dinnerstein's Aspen recital adds luster to her growing reputation

By Kyle MacMillan  
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Simone Dinnerstein is emerging as one of today's most compelling pianists. (Photo by Lisa Marie Mazzucco)

All classical-music fans have artists they will go out their way to hear, and pianist Simone Dinnerstein has become one of mine. Her spellbinding recital Thursday evening (July 14) at the Aspen Music Festival explained why. She has a playing style that is eminently refined yet unforced and genuine.

Just four years ago, Dinnerstein grabbed the classical world's attention, when her recording of Johann Sebastian Bach's "Goldberg Variations" unexpectedly jumped to No. 1 on the classical charts. Since then, she has emerged as one of the most compelling pianists of our time.

She opened with Robert Schumann's "Fantasiestücke," Op. 12, and I would have gone home satisfied if there had been nothing else on the program. These eight "fantasy pieces" are kind of art songs without words — intimate, self-contained musical worlds. And Dinnerstein brought each vibrantly to life, adroitly ranging across the broad range of emotions they contain.

She brought tenderness and sensitivity to the opening piece, “Des Abends (At Evening),” capturing that quiet, restful feeling that accompanies sunset. She then changed radically with a powerful, robust take on the second “Aufschwung (Soaring).” And she proceeded from there, each piece different in mood and feel, and each showing a different side of her playing.

If there were any lingering doubts about her technical facility, they were conclusively erased in the “Traumes Wirren (Dream Confusion),” where she displayed amazing dexterity and fluidity in the lightning fingerwork it demands. A few “Wows” could be heard in the audience at its conclusion.

Dinnerstein built her fame on Bach, and he remains the mainstay of her repertoire. She brings directness and depth to his music, and more important, a transcendent sense of purpose. All these qualities could be heard Thursday night, beginning in Bach’s Partita No. 2 for Keyboard in C minor, BWV 826.

She opened the second half with three transcriptions of Bach’s organ works, each by a different pianist, starting with Ferruccio Busoni’s take on “Nun freut euch, lieben Christen gmein.” After another by Wilhelm Kempff came Myra Hess’ delicate transcription of “Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring.”

Rounding out the evening were Franz Schubert’s Four Impromptus, Op. 90, D. 899.

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