

## Concert Review: Simone Dinnerstein's live recital of Bach's Goldberg Variations nothing short of spellbinding

December 12, 2010

By John Terauds



Imagine a warm summer's day. You've wandered outside, lain down in a garden and your eyes are closed. You roll over on your face and take a deep noseful of earth and grass as your fingers explore the sharp, smooth, bumpy, prickly, soft surfaces around you.

This is the best analogy I can think of for the experience of hearing 38-year-old New Yorker Simone Dinnerstein's performance of J.S. Bach's Baroque masterpiece Goldberg Variations this afternoon at Koerner Hall.

Hers was an affirmation of existence at its most basic, most pungent and also most beautiful and exalted. The opening and closing Aria became the unbroken beginning and end and beginning of the circle of life. In between were the 30 variations, embodying innocence, laughter, hunger, joy, longing, love, loss, melancholy, tears, dancing, anger, reconciliation and everything else that constitutes the teeming, ugly-beautiful mess that is life.

I felt like I was burying my face deep in the bosom of a pungent, sweet life force. And I didn't want to let go.

It is such a rarity to experience an interpreter who has taken such profound ownership of a piece of music. These are Johann Sebastian Bach's notes, but this was Simone Dinnerstein's tale, told by an artist who has mastered every rhythm and utterance, yet, for all the polish and preparation, can command the energy and

the compulsion of deep belief to fashion this into a spontaneous experience.

This was Bach as exploited with all the colour of a modern concert grand piano. It was Bach with rubato, borrowed from the Romantic era. This kind of highly expressive interpretation may not be to every listener's taste, but it packed so much power and conviction that it was impossible to ignore.

As Dinnerstein's Goldbergs unfolded, I could no longer imagine the music being played any other way. She became the music, and the music became her, and I was the willing captive for this emotionally charged ride.

It was the sort of concert experience anyone would be lucky to have even just once in a lifetime.

<http://thestar.blogs.com/soundmind/2010/12/concert-review.html>