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2017-18  
CHAMBER  
MUSIC  
BEALL@  
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ANNIVERSARY

photo by Lisa-Marie Mazzucco

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# SIMONE DINNERSTEIN

March 18, 2018 | 3:00 p.m. | Beall Concert Hall

Aria with Thirty Variations  
("Goldberg Variations"), BWV 988

Johann Sebastian Bach  
(1685-1750)

Simone Dinnerstein, piano

*Simone Dinnerstein is represented worldwide  
by Andrea Troolin / Ekonomisk Mgmt.*

**The Goldberg Variations** Program Notes, by Lindsey Rodgers

*Clavier Übung / bestehend / in einer ARIA / mit verschiedenen Verænderungen / vors Clavicimbal / mit 2 Manualen. / Denen Liebhabern zur Gemüths- / Ergetzung verfertiget von / Johann Sebastian Bach / Königl. Pohl. u. Churfl. Sæchs. Hoff- / Compositeur, Capellmeister, u. Directore / Chori Musici in Leipzig. / Nürnberg in Verlegung / Balthasar Schmid.*

*Keyboard exercise, consisting of an ARIA with diverse variations for harpsichord with two manuals. Composed for connoisseurs, for the refreshment of their spirits, by Johann Sebastian Bach, composer for the royal court of Poland and the Electoral court of Saxony, Kapellmeister and Director of Choral Music in Leipzig. Nuremberg, Balthasar Schmid, publisher.*

In 1641, Bach included these words on the title page of the published edition of the Goldberg Variations. They serve as an ideal summary of this monumental work. In the simplest terms, the work is indeed "an ARIA with diverse variations"—thirty variations, to be exact, each based on the bass line of the aria's accompaniment. Yet to call them merely "diverse" doesn't do justice to the complexity and virtuosity of these variations "composed for connoisseurs"; significantly, they were written at a time when Bach was preoccupied with canonic writing (the sort of writing that appears in other



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in historic Beall Concert Hall.



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Sept. 30 | 3:00 p.m.



**DALI QUARTET  
WITH OLGA KERN**  
Oct. 21 | 3:00 p.m.



**AKROPOLIS  
REED QUINTET**  
Nov. 18 | 3:00 p.m.



**PRAŽÁK +  
ZEMLINSKY QUARTETS**  
Feb. 3 | 3:00 p.m.



**SMETANA TRIO**  
Feb. 24 | 3:00 p.m.



**BORODIN QUARTET +  
VADYM KHOLODENKO**  
March 17 | 3:00 p.m.



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Lincoln Center Mostly Mozart Festival, 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 a Sinfonica Brasileira, and the Tokyo Symphony.

Dinnerstein 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, in 2009 Dinnerstein founded Neighborhood Classics, a concert series open to the public hosted by New York public schools which raises funds for their music education programs.

Dinnerstein 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 is a Sony Classical artist. Dinnerstein is managed by Andrea Troolin at Ekonomisk Mgmt with booking representation through Helen Henson at Blu Ocean Arts.

**more info: [SimoneDinnerstein.com](http://SimoneDinnerstein.com)**

late works such as *The Musical Offering and Art of Fugue*). Because this is Bach, however, the Goldberg Variations are as emotional as they are cerebral; they have a tenderness and liveliness that enchants even first-time listeners unaware of the complexity beneath the surface.

The piece gets its name from a “too good to be false” story recounted by Bach’s first biographer, Johann Nikolaus Forkel. Johann Gottlieb Goldberg was a fourteen-year-old harpsichord prodigy (and a student of J.S. Bach and W.F. Bach) who worked for Count Hermann Carl von Keyserlingk, Russian ambassador to the Saxon court. As the tale goes, Count Keyserlingk suffered from insomnia and commissioned these variations so that Goldberg could play them to him at night to help him sleep. Alas, the story is likely not true: though Bach visited Keyserlingk in Dresden in November 1741, he did not dedicate the work to Count Keyserlingk; furthermore, the music—throughout, cheerful and energetic—seems unlikely to induce sleep, except for the fact that it takes about 60 to 80 minutes to play through. It is possible, however, that Count Keyserlingk obtained a copy of the published score for the use of his young harpsichordist. Bach may have based his variations on a similar work published in 1633 by Handel. Handel’s piece had 64 variations on an eight-bar bassline. Bach’s begins with the same eight notes, but then adds an additional 24, for a total of 32.

Bach grouped the variations in two different ways, in both twos and threes. Each variation is in binary form, meaning that the first and second halves both repeat; also, the work as whole forms two halves, with variation 15 dying away to close the first half and variation 16 launching into a French overture to start the second half. At the same time, Bach organized the variations in groups of three: the first variations (1, 4, 7, and so

on) take different forms, sometimes dance movements; the second variations (2, 5, 8, and so on) are a kind of “arabesque” that often requires the performer to play hand-over-hand; every third variation is a canon, with each successive canon beginning at a larger interval than the last. But Bach makes one crucial change to the pattern: in place of the final canon, he composes a quodlibet, a medley of popular tunes, in a four-part setting over the bassline. Apparently, performing this kind of medley was a Bach family tradition. Forkel wrote that they “sang popular songs, the contents of which were partly comic and partly naughty, all together and extempore, but in such a manner that the several parts thus extemporized made a kind of harmony together, the words, however, in every part being different. They ... not only laughed heartily at it themselves, but excited an equally hearty and irresistible laughter in everybody that heard them.” One can only imagine what it might have been like to experience this kind of merriment at a Bach family party!

Following the 30th variation, Bach wrote on the score “*Aria da capo @ Fine.*” In other words, play the aria again, just as you did an hour before. After traveling the journey of these thirty dazzling variations, we end as we began. Still, even if this final bit of music hasn’t changed, we have—and hopefully we have experienced the “refreshment of spirit” that Bach promised.



photo by Lisa-Marie Mazzucco

American pianist **Simone Dinnerstein** is a searching and inventive artist who is motivated by a desire to find the musical core of every work she approaches. The New York-based pianist gained an international following with the remarkable success of her recording of Bach’s Goldberg Variations, which she independently raised the funds to record. Released in 2007 on Telarc, it ranked 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. Her latest Sony album, Mozart in Havana, was released in April and reached number two on the Billboard Classical chart.

Dinnerstein’s performance schedule has taken her around the world since her acclaimed New York recital debut at Carnegie Hall’s Weill Recital Hall in 2005, to venues including the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Vienna Konzerthaus, Berlin Philharmonie, Sydney Opera House, Seoul Arts Center, and London’s Wigmore Hall; festivals that include the