

OPENING NIGHT WITH SIMONE DINNERSTEIN

THURSDAY, JULY 6 | 8 PM | THE BREAKERS

This concert is made possible through the generous support of **Jennie and Steve Huttler & Suzanna and John Laramée.**

Simone Dinnerstein, piano

COUPERIN	<i>Les Barricades Mystérieuses</i> (Approximate duration 3 minutes)
SCHUMANN	<i>Arabesque, Op. 18</i> (Approximate duration 7 minutes)
PHILIP GLASS	<i>Mad Rush</i> (Approximate duration 14 minutes)
COUPERIN	<i>Le Tic-Toc-Choc ou Les Maillotins</i> (Approximate duration 3 minutes)
INTERMISSION	
SATIE	<i>Gnossienne No. 3, Lent</i> (Approximate duration 3 minutes)
SCHUMANN	<i>Kreisleriana, Op. 16</i> I. Äußerst bewegt II. Sehr innig und nicht zu rasch III. Sehr aufgeregte IV. Sehr langsam V. Sehr lebhaft VI. Sehr langsam VII. Sehr rasch VIII. Schnell und spielend (Approximate duration 30 minutes)

All of the music on this program consists of musical forms that have a refrain. Glass, Schumann, Couperin and Satie constantly revisit the same material in these pieces, worrying at it, shifting it to different harmonies and into different rhythmic shapes. *Undersong* is an archaic term for a song with a refrain, and to me it also suggests a hidden text. Glass, Schumann, Couperin and Satie all seem to be attempting to find what they want to say through repetition, as though their constant change and recycling will focus the ear and the mind. This is music to get lost in. - Simone Dinnerstein, November, 2021

François Couperin (1668-1733): *Les Barricades Mystérieuses*

François Couperin was a French Baroque composer and part of a French musical family who for many generations held the post of organist at the Church of Saint-Gervais in Paris. At the age of seventeen, he was appointed as organist in the service of King Louis XIV, earning him the title of Couperin le Grand. He held several positions as a musician to the royal court, serving as a harpsichordist in many court chamber concerts and teaching. When Couperin was twenty-five, he was appointed a royal organist and later became the royal court's official harpsichordist for chamber music.

His keyboard music follows the style of Louis XIV's court and the "French manner" of 18th-century music influenced by Lully, characterized by its nobility, ornateness, fluency, gracefulness, and charm. He wrote around 240 pieces for the harpsichord grouped in ordres according to key and mood, with each piece in an ordre having a descriptive title. Couperin composed 27 ordres in four books, but he did not intend for any of them to be performed as a complete ordre.

Les Barricades Mystérieuses ("The Mysterious Barricades") is the fifth piece in Couperin's 1716-1717 publication, *Ordre 6ème de clavecin*, written for the harpsichord. The piece features the style brisé, also known as style luthé, which connotes the "broken" style of the French lutenists. The title of the piece is both enigmatic and elusive, possibly referring to the position of the hands on the keyboard, the rhythmic displacement, the continuous suspensions, or the masks worn by performers in a play staged for one of Couperin's patrons.

Written in rondo or *rondeau* form, the four parts or voices create a tapestry of melody and harmony that interact and overlap with remarkable texture and colors being created in this musically fascinating and alluring short piece. The opening melody, a jaunty exchange of voices between treble and bass, reappears, and, in fact, the piece is itself an ever-changing display of interwoven melodies, rhythm, and harmony. Notes touch one another, often creating bits of dissonance before resolution in both the refrain and the succeeding couplets, which journey on some mild harmonic wanderings before always resolving back to B-flat Major. There are many opportunities to build up and then relax the sound and the momentum and opportunities to create suspense and then resolution in this seductive, absorbing piece.

Overall, Couperin was one of the great keyboard composers whose influence is evident and honored in the music of Rameau, Chopin, Debussy, and Ravel. *Les Barricades Mystérieuses* is a seductive, absorbing piece that showcases Couperin's skill in creating a musically fascinating and alluring short work.

Robert Schumann (1810-1856): *Arabesque*, in C Major, Op. 18

Robert Schumann's father was a small-town bookseller who encouraged his son's inclination towards the arts. At the age of six, Schumann began to play the piano and to compose, and by the time he was fourteen, he was a published poet. At eighteen, he entered the University of Leipzig as a law student, but music proved too strong a calling for him to resist. In his third year he left the study of law with the intention of becoming a pianist. He became a pupil of Friedrich Wieck, who was one of that epoch's great teachers. Wieck told Schumann's mother that with two or three years of work, Robert's natural talent and artistic imagination could make him a superlative performer, but the young man's hand suffered some problems of an unknown source and he turned to a career as a composer, conductor, and critic.

In 1834, Schumann fell in love with a fellow Wieck pupil, and the two considered themselves secretly engaged to marry, until family disapproval successfully separated them for a time. In 1835, Schumann fell in love again, this time with Wieck's star pupil, his own sixteen-year-old daughter Clara, who had made her public debut when she was nine. She became a published composer at twelve and grew up to be one of the greatest pianists of her time. Her father did everything he could to break up the developing relationship between the two, but they found ways of communicating despite him, and five years later, on the eve of Clara's twenty-first birthday, they married. Most of Robert Schumann's piano music was written before 1840, the year of his marriage to Clara. The bulk of this work consists of collections of intimate miniatures that express the Romantic imagination.

Schumann wrote this brief *Arabesque* in 1838. He was rather dismissive of it, even labeling it "feeble," because he apparently wrote it not from artistic inspiration but with the express purpose of sales because of financial necessity. Written in a single movement, it is a short, colorful, poetic work, fancifully titled. The music is neither complex nor ornate in design and certainly owes nothing to Arabic art. In structure it resembles a rondo, with a major key principal theme that recurs three times in alternation with contrasting ideas in a minor tonality. Its initial recurring good nature with its rippling pianistic ornamentation progresses finally to a kind of wistful yearning and the serene affirmation of its sublime coda.

Philip Glass (b. 1937) *Mad Rush*

Philip Glass is a highly influential American composer and pianist of the 20th century who has had an extraordinary and unprecedented impact on the musical life of his time. He studied at the University of Chicago and the Juilliard School and spent two years in Paris studying with Nadia Boulanger and Darius Milhaud. While in Paris, he earned money by transcribing the sitar player Ravi Shanker's Indian music into Western notation, which he later incorporated into his own compositions. His style of music, termed minimalism, features repetitive musical ideas, a constant beat with shifting rhythms, and overlapping lines. Glass has composed for opera, dance, theater, chamber ensemble, orchestra, and film, and his scores have received Academy Award nominations. In recent years, Glass has written several new works, including an opera on the death of Walt Disney, *The Perfect American*, and a memoir, *Words Without Music*. He has also received numerous awards, including the U.S. National Medal of the Arts and the Glenn Gould Prize.

Mad Rush, adapted from an earlier organ piece *Fourth Series Part 4*, which had been commissioned by Radio Bremen for the Holland Festival, was performed by Glass in 1979 to honor the Dalai Lama's first public address in North America. The piece, with its meditative minimalism, can be stretched to an indefinite length, making it ideal for waiting for the Dalai Lama's arrival. *Mad Rush* features three repetitions of the whole, with two-note patterns playing against each other with a two-against-three rhythm contrasting with a four-bar idea of running 16th notes. The piece has only three chords, alternating between an F Major chord and either an A minor or G minor chord. Glass creates consonant harmony from these chords and their juxtapositions, which make up the entire tonal world of the work. There is no development, but Glass uses texture and rhythm to draw attention to the intricacies of his composition. The last section introduces a new melody consisting of the notes of the F Major and A minor chords plus an extra note, D-flat. *Mad Rush* has since been adapted for solo piano, where it produces a hypnotic effect combining a physical and spiritual experience.

François Couperin (1668-1733): *Le Tic-Toc-Choc ou Les Maillotins*

Couperin's *Le Tic-Toc-Choc* or *Les maillotins*, published in 1722, is a piece for solo harpsichord from Volume three, 18th *Ordre*, published in Paris. The four volumes for harpsichord are grouped into *ordres*, much like suites, containing traditional dances as well as pieces with descriptive titles. All of them contain Couperin's detailed indication of ornaments, which, in most of the harpsichord music of the period, a composer would not have written out, but rather left to the discretion of the player. Couperin directed that *Le-Tic-Toc-Choc ou Les Maillotins* be performed on a two-manual harpsichord, with one of the manuals pushed back. Pianists, however, usually play the notes as written, which positions the one hand on top of the other, making the piece very difficult as the notes must be played quickly by one hand and then the other. *Le tic-toc-choc*, an exciting little perpetual motion work, has been thought of as representing the rhythm of a clock. It has also been posited that the French words of the title are onomatopoeic and indicate pulsing and knocking. Overall, the music creates a fascinating rhythmic effect that sounds more complex than what each separate hand played alone would suggest.

The last part of the title, *Les Maillotins* musicologists interpret as signifying little hammers. Yet, historically, a *maillotin* was a member of a group of insurgents who, armed with lead maces (a *maillet* being a mace or mallet), led a riot in Paris against King Charles VI in 1382. Other commentators surmise that the piece was named for a family of ropedancers. Yet another theory is that because *maille* means 'stitch', *maillotin* may in fact refer to stitches, and the *tic-toc-choc* to the clacking of knitting needles.

Erik Satie (1866-1925): *Gnossienne No. 3*

French composer Erik Satie wrote a small number of extraordinarily idiosyncratic works that initially received little recognition. Satie studied at the Schola Cantorum under Vincent d'Indy and Albert Roussel. Despite collaborating with Cocteau, Diaghilev, and Picasso and becoming a mentor to Honegger, Milhaud, and Poulenc, he lived alone in a single room in a working-class suburb until his death in 1925. Satie allied himself with the Dada and Surrealist movements and often eschewed traditional forms and tonal structures in his music. He used titles to parody pretentiousness and sentimentality in music.

Satie's use of the word "Gnossienne" has caused much discussion among musicologists. The word originally referred to a ritualistic dance of antique Knossos in ancient Crete and some suggest that the word "gnossienne" may stem from the Greek "gnosis," meaning "knowledge." Satie set a lyrical line with many repetitions over a spare choral accompaniment using *Gnossienne No. 3*, composed in 1890, which first appeared in the *Figaro Musical* in September 1893. *Trois Gnossiennes*, the originally published grouping, generally lack climaxes and were written without time signatures or bar lines. Each of the three has short melodic lines of irregular phrase length repeated over a uniform rhythmic accompaniment using unusual harmonies with modal effects and dissonances.

In *Gnossienne No. 3*, Satie's main melody deliberately evokes a haunting feeling. He was influenced by the "fresh sounds from the east" he heard at the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1889. The piece is charming yet hypnotic, requiring the pianist to have a flexible sense of rhythm and the imagination to interpret Satie's colorful, written directives. Satie experimented with Ancient Greek modal scales, and in this *Gnossienne*, he seems to be employing the B Phrygian dominant scale. Replicating this exotic scale may have represented Satie's desire to promote the purity he felt inherent in folkloric society.

Gnossienne No. 3 resembles the unmeasured preludes of the French Baroque lutenists and harpsichordists whom Satie admired, yet this *Gnossienne* is composed in four-four time. The theme, positioned in the right hand, has a sense of wandering and a question-and-answer character. Mary E. Davis notes in her biography of Satie that the title may relate to Satie's interest in religion and occultism at the time, particularly his fascination with Gnosticism.

Robert Schumann (1810-1856): *Kreisleriana*, Eight Fantasies for Piano, Op. 16

The fabulist E.T.A. Hoffman (1776-1822) invented Johannes Kreisler, a fictional conductor and composer. Hoffman was a lawyer, judge, conductor, composer, music critic, and writer of fiction. Now he is most remembered for his fiction, as his works were the source for such musical works as Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker*, Delibes's *Coppelia*, and Offenbach's *Tales of Hoffman*. In 1812 and 1813, Hoffmann wrote two critical essays that helped to establish Beethoven's music and Mozart's *Don Giovanni* in the musical repertory, and Beethoven, to show his pleasure, composed a punning canon on Hoffmann's name. Hoffmann even went so far as to sign some of his essays with the name Johannes Kreisler, as the Kreisler of his fiction became his own *alter ego*, whom he pictured as a musician in emotional turmoil; Hoffman gave Kreisler an artistic soul, which prevented him from making peace with the Philistine society that he had to serve.

As a boy, Brahms, who sometimes referred to himself as "Kreisler Junior," copied his favorite Kreisler stories into notebooks he called Kreisler's Thesaurus. Some years earlier, Schumann, who became Brahms's mentor and idol, had entitled a set of eight short piano pieces *Kreisleriana*. Some musicians find reflections of specific incidents from the Murr-Kreisler stories in Schumann's *Kreisleriana*. After making appearances in two early volumes of Hoffmann's tales, Kreisler's "life" came to a literary climax in the unfinished novel *Kater Murr* ("Murr, the Tomcat, His Views on Life -- Together with Fragments of the Biography of Johannes Kreisler, the Conductor -- From Loose and Dirty Scraps of Paper"). In this fantastic, schizophrenic text, Murr appears, contented and robust, after writing his bourgeois philosophy of life on paper torn from Kappellmeister Kreisler's biography. The printer, who prepares the manuscript for publication, sets both texts in type as a book-within-a-book, or two concurrent books, so that Murr's worldly wisdom becomes interwoven with the story of Kreisler's struggles to live and work as an artist.

In 1838, when Schumann composed *Kreisleriana*, he was deeply in love with his piano teacher's daughter, Clara, who was then only nineteen, two years shy of the date when her father's objections could no longer prevent her from marrying. Robert wrote to her, "There is so much music in me now, and such beautiful melody! I have written a whole sheaf of new things, and I shall call them *Kreisleriana*. You, and the thought of you, play the principal role in them and I shall dedicate them to you -- yes to you and to no one else. You will smile so sweetly when you discover yourself in them." A year later, Schumann wrote to a Belgian admirer that he liked *Kreisleriana* best of his recent compositions, but in explaining Kreisler's identity, he added, "The titles of all my works never come to me until after I have finished writing them." These statements make *Kreisleriana* seem less a series of pictures of Hoffman characters than a collection of imaginative romantic images conceived in the struggling, romantic artist's spirit. For reasons lost to history, when he published the music, Schumann dedicated it not to Clara but to Chopin, who, in return, in 1840, dedicated his F Major *Ballade to Schumann*.

In *Kreisleriana*, the beauty of the musical statements outshines their presumed literary source. The eight fantasies of *Kreisleriana* contain a sequence of lovely romantic effusions that change quickly in character as they alternate between fast and slow, and are, by turns, passionate, contemplative, agitated, introspective, elfin, (or perhaps feline), retrospective, and valedictory.

Simone Dinnerstein



American pianist **Simone Dinnerstein** has a distinctive musical voice. The Washington Post has called her “an artist of strikingly original ideas and irrefutable integrity.” She first came to wider public attention in 2007 through her recording of Bach’s Goldberg Variations, reflecting an aesthetic that was both deeply rooted in the score and profoundly idiosyncratic. She is, wrote The New York Times, “a unique voice in the forest of Bach interpretation.”

Since that recording, she has had a busy performing career. She has played with orchestras ranging from the New York Philharmonic to the Melbourne Symphony and has performed in venues from Carnegie Hall to the Seoul Arts Center. Her 13 albums have all topped the Billboard classical charts, with her 2021 album, Richard Danielpour’s *An American Mosaic*, receiving a Grammy nomination in the category of Best Classical Instrumental Solo.

Simone counts herself fortunate to have studied with three unique artists: Solomon Mikowsky, Maria Curcio and Peter Serkin, very different musicians who shared the belief that playing the piano is a means to something greater. The Washington Post writes that “ultimately, it is Dinnerstein’s unreserved identification with every note she plays that makes her performance so spellbinding.” In a world where music is everywhere, Simone hopes that it can still be transformative..