The Eye is the First Circle

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World Premiere
Simone Dinnerstein
The Eye is the First Circle

October 14 | 15 | 16 | 17, 2021
Alexander Kasser Theater

Arts + Cultural Programming
Montclair State University
PEAK Performances presents

**A World Premiere**

**Simone Dinnerstein**

*The Eye is the First Circle*

Conceived, Directed, and Performed by **Simone Dinnerstein**

Visual Design by **Simone Dinnerstein** and **Laurie Olinder**,

with **Davison Scandrett** and **Simon Harding**

Featuring *The Fulbright Triptych* by **Simon Dinnerstein** and

Piano Sonata no. 2, *Concord* by **Charles Ives**

Projection Designer **Laurie Olinder**

Lighting Designer **Davison Scandrett**

Associate Video Designer/Engineer **Simon Harding**

Sound Designers **Simone Dinnerstein**, **Adam Abeshouse**

Production Manager/Stage Manager **Betsy Ayer**

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**Program**

*The Eye is the First Circle*  
Simone Dinnerstein (b. 1972)

1. Emerson
2. Hawthorne
3. The Alcotts
4. Thoreau

Duration: 55 minutes, no intermission.
In consideration of both audiences and performers, please turn off all electronic devices. The taking of photographs or videos and the use of recording equipment are not permitted. No food or drink is permitted in the theater.

This season is made possible, in part, with funds from:
The Alexander Kasser Theater Endowment Fund
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The New Jersey State Council on the Arts, a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts

From Simone Dinnerstein

As Emerson wrote in his essay “Circles,” “The life of man is a self-evolving circle, which, from a ring imperceptibly small, rushes on all sides outwards to new and larger circles, and that without end.”

The Eye is the First Circle is a very personal piece that, at its core, explores how my family’s world shaped my relationship to art. I devised it using my father Simon Dinnerstein’s Fulbright Triptych and Charles Ives’s Concord Sonata. My intellectual, emotional, and artistic response to each work, and to the connections I saw between them, is what formed the larger circle I drew.

I envisioned The Eye is the First Circle as a single artwork with many kinds of expression. To craft it, I collaborated closely with the projection designer Laurie Olinder, along with lighting designer Davison Scandrett and associate video designer/engineer Simon Harding. Laurie’s rich imagination, consummate eye for composition, and artistic skill brought the visual ideas to life. The pieces of the puzzle that I wanted to interweave—such as using hidden cameras inside the piano, interspersing natural and human sounds of the world around us, and filming myself in the actual garden that was the subject of the copper plate at the center of the triptych—were discussed with the entire artistic team. A member of the Alexander Kasser Theater’s stage crew sat at the piano as a stand-in for me so that the four of us could be out in the theater, viewing the stage and constructing the work.
While creating this production, I discovered that I had an aptitude for visual composition and for directing. It was as if I discovered a sixth sense that I had never used before, and I felt the joy of generating an artistic experience that expanded beyond music, the area where I am most used to expressing myself. When I began, I did not know what the end point would be. As Emerson wrote, “The one thing which we seek with insatiable desire is to forget ourselves, to be surprised out of our propriety, to lose our sempiternal memory, and to do something without knowing how or why; in short, to draw a new circle.”

Many thanks to my father, Simon Dinnerstein, for being so generous and supportive with the creative use of his *Fulbright Triptych*. A huge thank you to Jed Wheeler for his belief in this project from its first seed of an idea three years ago. It would not have been created without his encouragement and advice and the institutional support of PEAK Performances. Enormous thanks to Louis Mintz and Beverly Crilly for welcoming us into their home and garden to film. It was a very moving experience for me to return to the space that contains my very first memories. And thank you to Rob Schwimmer for providing the Haken Continuum and recording me on it, as well as to Patti Hagan for allowing us to film it in her spectacular garden. Thank you to Thomas Moore for first introducing me to Emerson’s “Circles”; to Bill Morrison for rising early to record the birds; to Rashaun Mitchell + Silas Riener for the loan of their magic-making bobinette; and to my loving husband, Jeremy Greensmith, for making me the beautiful Ives hammer and for reading Emerson aloud to me during the lockdown. Many people contributed their skills and advice in the making of this piece, and I am so grateful to all of them: Arin Arbus, Dean Bell, Donald Berman, Carolyn di Liberto, Julia Foulkes, Mark Irchai, Jeanne Kierman Fischer, Sarah Kirkland Snider, and Jeanie Schneider.

**About the Artists**

**Simone Dinnerstein** (Concept/Director/Performer) is an American pianist. She lives in Brooklyn, NY, with her husband, son, and dog, less than a mile from the hospital in which she was born. 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 and the Montreal Symphony Orchestra to the London Symphony Orchestra and the Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale Rai. She has performed in venues from Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center to the Berlin Philharmonie, the Vienna Konzerthaus, the Seoul Arts Center, and the Sydney Opera House. She has made ten albums, all of which topped the Billboard classical charts, with repertoire ranging from Beethoven to Ravel.

In recent years, Dinnerstein has created projects that express her broad musical interests. Following her recording Mozart in Havana, she brought the Havana Lyceum Orchestra from Cuba to the United States for the very first time, raising the funding, booking the concerts, and organizing their housing and transport. Together, Dinnerstein and the orchestra played eleven concerts from Miami to Boston. Philip Glass composed his Piano Concerto no. 3 for Dinnerstein, co-commissioned by twelve American and Canadian orchestras. She collaborated with choreographer Pam Tanowitz to create New Work for Goldberg Variations, which was met with widespread critical acclaim. Working with Renée Fleming and the Emerson String Quartet, she premiered André Previn and Tom Stoppard’s Penelope at the Tanglewood, Ravinia, and Aspen music festivals. Most recently, she created her own string ensemble, Baroklyn, which she directs from the keyboard. Their performance of Bach’s cantata Ich habe genug in March 2020 was the last concert she gave before New York City shut down.

Dinnerstein is committed to giving concerts in nontraditional venues and to audiences who don’t often hear classical music. For the last three decades, she has played concerts throughout the United States for the Piatigorsky Foundation, an organization dedicated to the widespread dissemination of classical music. It was for the Piatigorsky Foundation that she gave the first piano recital in the Louisiana state prison system at the Avoyelles Correctional Center. She has also performed at the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women in a concert organized by the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. Dinnerstein founded Neighborhood Classics in 2009, a concert series open to the public and hosted by New York City Public Schools to raise funds
for their music education programs. She also created a program called Bachpacking during which she takes a digital keyboard to elementary school classrooms, helping young children get close to the music she loves. She is a committed supporter and proud alumna of Philadelphia’s Astral Artists, which supports young performers.

Dinnerstein 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* comments 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, she hopes that it can still be transformative.

**Adam Abeshouse** (Sound Designer) has produced and engineered recordings for labels including Bridge, DG, SONY, Telarc, BMG, ANGEL-EMI, Naxos, Hyperion, and more as well as for National Public Radio and the Library of Congress. In 1999, he won the GRAMMY Award for Classical Producer of the Year, and was nominated again in 2003. Abeshouse won a second GRAMMY Award in the Best Classical Instrumental Solo Performance category for producing and engineering Garrick Ohlsson’s *Beethoven Sonatas, Vol. 3*. In 2012, he won an Echo Klassik Award for Best Audio for Video Production with the San Francisco Ballet production of *A Little Mermaid*. In 2013, he produced and engineered the CD for Emanuel Ax’s *Variations*, which also won an Echo Klassik Award. The discography of artists that Abeshouse has worked with includes Itzhak Perlman, Joshua Bell, Emanuel Ax, Garrick Ohlsson, Leon Fleisher, Simone Dinnerstein, the Guarneri String Quartet, the Juilliard String Quartet, the Kronos Quartet, the Academy of St. Martin in the Field, the English Chamber Orchestra, the London Symphony, Boston Symphony Orchestra, composers George Crumb and André Previn, and many others. In 2002, Abeshouse founded the Classical Recording Foundation to meet the growing need for artists not supported by major labels to be able to record music about which they are passionate.

**Betsy Ayer**’s (Production Manager/Stage Manager) recent favorites include *Requiem*, the Shed; *Idomeneo*, Salzburg Festival; *Only the Sound Remains*, White Light Festival; *Glass Handel*, Opera Philadelphia; and *St. Matthew Passion*, Lincoln Center/Park Avenue Armory. She has also stage managed for Brooklyn Academy of Music
(BAM), New York City Opera, the Teatro Real in Madrid, the Santa Fe Opera, and Glimmerglass Opera. Recent semi-staged concert productions include Berlin Philharmonic, London Symphony Orchestra, and Los Angeles Philharmonic. Recent dance credits include Four Quartets, Bard Summerscape and Barbican Centre, London; Trisha Brown Dance Company; FLEXN at the Park Avenue Armory/international tour; New York City Ballet; and Susan Marshall & Company. Theater credits include Lincoln Center Festival, Shockheaded Peter, Classic Stage Company, New York Theatre Workshop, and Manhattan Theatre Club. Concert credits include interim production manager, Carnegie Hall. She is a graduate of Smith College.

Simon Dinnerstein is an American artist, known for the painted work, The Fulbright Triptych. The work was started in Germany in 1971 while he served as a Fulbright Scholar in Graphics. It was completed in 1974. A largely autobiographical work, it combines stark realism with American figurative tradition to produce a secular rendering of the usually religious form, the triptych. Widely praised, with each viewer bringing a different sensibility and interpretation of the work, the painting is the subject of numerous essays and articles, including by art critics Roberta Smith, John Russell, Guggenheim Foundation director Thomas M. Messer, art historian Albert Boime, artist George Tooker, writer Anthony Doerr, composer George Crumb, poet Dan Beachy-Quick, actor John Turturro, and Pulitzer Prize winner Jhumpa Lahiri. http://www.simondinnerstein.com

Simon Harding (Associate Video Designer/Engineer) is an award-winning set and video designer for live performance, interested in modalities of performance that create a living space between objects and the body. He has designed nationally and internationally for theater, dance, and performance art work. Harding began in the theater as an actor and director, branching into design after becoming a co-founder and the resident designer for SaBooge Theatre. With SaBooge, he designed sets and lighting for all of their productions, including the critically acclaimed shows Hatched, Fathom, and Every Day above Ground. Harding’s designs include Custodians of Beauty (Palissimo Dance), Strangers in Paradise (Opera Omaha), Jack Spicer’s Billy the Kid (3 Headed Calf), Up and Away (Trusty Sidekick), The Iceman Cometh [Act IV] (Target Margin Labs), Here We Are (The Living Theater), the.humanest (Incubator Arts Project), Measure Back (Christopher McElroen), Tyson vs. Ali (Reid Farrington/3LD), and BAM Poetry Project (BAM).
Charles Ives (Composer) was an American modernist composer, one of the first American composers of international renown. His music was largely ignored during his early life, and many of his works went unperformed for many years. Later in life, the quality of his music was publicly recognized, and he came to be regarded as an “American original.” He was also among the first composers to engage in a systematic program of experimental music, with musical techniques including polytonality, polyrhythm, tone clusters, aleatory elements, and quarter tones. His experimentation foreshadowed many musical innovations that were later more widely adopted during the 20th century. Hence, he is often regarded as the leading American composer of art music of the 20th century.

Sources of Ives’s tonal imagery included hymn tunes and traditional songs; he also incorporated melodies of the town band at holiday parade, the fiddlers at Saturday night dances, patriotic songs, sentimental parlor ballads, and the melodies of Stephen Foster. https://charlesives.org

Laurie Olinder (Projection Designer) is a multimedia designer, painter, and photographer. Olinder has designed projections for many composers and theater artists including John Adams, the Kronos Quartet, the Brooklyn Philharmonic, Gavin Bryars, Michael Gordon, Henryk Górecki, David Lang, Maya Beiser, and Julia Wolfe among many others. Recent projection design and video projects include Vaya, Vaya with vocalist Mahsa Vahdat and the Kronos Quartet, and Wick Simmons’s Exquisite Drones with composers inti figgis-vizueta, Conrad Tao, and Jack McGuire. Coming up this fall 2021, Olinder will do video design for Elysian Fields’ Transience of Life.

Olinder’s other credits include Anatomy Theater (REDCAT Theater, LA Opera); The Sinking of the Titanic (Big Ears Festival); Brooklyn Youth Chorus with the Kronos Quartet (Roulette, Brooklyn, NY); Silent Cranes (Roulette, Brooklyn), composed by Mary Kouyoumdjian; Bubbles (Roulette, Brooklyn), composed by Alexandra Vrebalov; The Difficulty of Crossing a Field, David Lang (Montclair State); Brooklyn Village composed by David T. Little, with the Brooklyn Philharmonic and the Brooklyn Youth Chorus (Roulette, Brooklyn); Persephone (Brooklyn Academy of Music); Ridge Theater’s Lightning at Our Feet (Brooklyn Academy of Music); and Ridge Theater’s The Death of Klinghoffer by John Adams (Brooklyn Academy of Music).
Olinder is a founding member of New York’s Ridge Theater and has been recognized with an OBIE Award, a New York Dance and Performance “Bessie” Award, and an Eliot Norton Award for Outstanding Design in the Theater and a NYFA fellowship.

Davison Scandrett (Lighting Designer) is a “Bessie” Award–winning lighting designer and production manager based in Brooklyn, NY. In addition to creating the visual design for the PEAK Performances commission of New Work for Goldberg Variations by Simone Dinnerstein and Pam Tanowitz, he has also designed works by Rashaun Mitchell + Silas Riener, Charles Atlas, Sonya Tayeh, Merce Cunningham, Sarah Michelson, Netta Yerushalmy, Moriah Evans, Mina Nishimura, Dylan Crossman, Andrew Ondrejcak, Rebecca Lazier, and the Off-Broadway productions of Mike Birbiglia’s Thank God for Jokes and Neal Brennan’s 3 Mics. Production management credits include projects with Wendy Whelan, Marina Abramovic, Bill T. Jones, Benjamin Millepied, Kyle Abraham, BalletBoyz, Jennifer Monson, Brian Brooks, Silk Road Ensemble, Steve Reich, Stephin Meritt, Brooklyn Rider, The Knights, Lyon Opera Ballet, Lincoln Center Festival, and the Paris Opera Ballet. He served as director of production for the Merce Cunningham Dance Company from 2008 to 2012 and is currently the design and production consultant for the Merce Cunningham Trust.

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**Arts + Cultural Programming** (ACP) produces and presents dance, music, theater, opera, and circus performances in the Alexander Kasser Theater, on the campus of Montclair State University, for MSU students and the general public. Through its internationally acclaimed live performing arts series PEAK Performances, ACP defies convention by supporting new performance ideas without compromise. ACP believes that for the performing arts to be sustainable, audiences must evolve and that the way to achieve this goal is to empower the best artists of our time to achieve new heights of imagination. With its newly launched PEAK Plus video-capture program, ACP makes live performances accessible worldwide, drastically expanding audiences for new work. Through its Creative Thinking course, ACP engages artists to participate in a groundbreaking research laboratory, illustrating for students of all fields of study that art and science are symbiotic. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are core values manifested in ACP’s long-standing embrace of work by artists not yet supported by other major institutions in the region. Because ACP provides the highest-quality production values, audiences have an opportunity to engage with creative viewpoints that are bold and insightful and fully realized. PEAK Performances is credited with 57 world premieres, 54 US premieres, and 66 commissions. For five successive years The New Jersey Council on the Arts awarded ACP a Citation of Excellence in performance programming.

**ACP gratefully acknowledges our student staff and volunteers.**

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