



Biography

AVI AVITAL Mandolin

"The words "superstar" and "mandolinist" still look odd next to each other. Yet in the classical world they are starting to be joined with some frequency.... Avi Avital who on Wednesday gave a performance of 18th-century Italian concertos at Zankel Hall with the Venice Baroque Orchestra.... was nothing short of electric." The New York Times, 12 March 2015

The first mandolin soloist to be nominated for a classical Grammy, Avi Avital is one of the foremost ambassadors for his instrument. Passionate and "explosively charismatic" (New York Times) in live performance, he is a driving force behind the reinvigoration of the mandolin repertory. More than 90 contemporary compositions, 15 of them concertos, have been written for him, while his inspired re-imaginings of music for other instruments include the arrangements heard on his 2014 recording *Between Worlds*. Enhanced by his infectious spirit of adventure and the warm rapport he fosters with his audience, Avital's championship of his instrument is taking the mandolin centre stage. "The exciting part of being a classical mandolin player," he says, "is that it opens a wide field for creative freedom. When I commission new pieces and engage with different musical styles, I feel that I am bringing to light new faces of this unique instrument, uncovering what is hiding there."

The first mandolin soloist to become an exclusive Deutsche Grammophon artist, he has made three recordings for the label most recently his ECHO Klassik Award-winning *Vivaldi* (2015). Earlier releases featured his own Bach concerto transcriptions (2012) and *Between Worlds* (2014), a cross-generic chamber collection exploring the nexus between classical and traditional music. He has also recorded for Naxos and SONY Classical winning a first ECHO Klassik Award for his 2008 collaboration with the David Orlowsky Trio.

Avital's inspired music-making has electrified audiences in performances around the world including Beijing's National Centre for the Performing Arts, London's Wigmore and Royal Albert Halls, the Berlin Philharmonie, Zurich's Tonhalle, Barcelona's Palau de la Música Catalana, Paris Philharmonie, Vienna Konzerthaus, New York's Carnegie Hall (Zankel Hall), and with a live telecast on Arte, the Palais de Versailles. He has performed with international orchestras from the Mahler Chamber Orchestra to the Israel Philharmonic, and is a favourite on the international festival circuit, having appeared at the Aspen, Salzburg, Tanglewood, Spoleto, Ravenna, Cheltenham and Verbier Festivals, amongst others.

Current highlights include engagements with the Deutsche Symphonie Orchester Berlin/Koopman, Maggio Musicale Fiorentino/Mehta, Dresden Philharmonic, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie, Stuttgart Philharmonic Orchestra, Venice Baroque Orchestra, Kremerata Baltica, Australia Brandenburg Orchestra, Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal/Nagano, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Zurich Chamber Orchestra, Israel Philharmonic Orchestra/Vänskä and a performance of Vivaldi The Four Seasons at the Hollywood Bowl.

Avital has partnered leading artists in a variety of genres, including Andreas Scholl, Juan Diego Flórez, Dawn Upshaw, Giora Feidman, Ray Chen, David Greilsammer, Mahan Esfahani, Richard Galliano, Ksenija Sidorova, percussionist Itamar Doari, and the Enso and Danish String Quartets. His latest collaboration with oud/bassist, Omer Avital draws on their shared musical heritage and combines a rich musical melting pot where the finesse of chamber music meets the raw emotional energy of jazz and world music. Avital meets Avital will be released on DG in 2017 and tours internationally through the 2016-17 season.

Born in Be'er Sheva in southern Israel, Avital began learning the mandolin at the age of eight and soon joined the flourishing mandolin youth orchestra founded and directed by his charismatic teacher, Russian-born violinist Simcha Nathanson. He later graduated from the Jerusalem Music Academy and the Conservatorio Cesare Pollini in Padua, Italy, where he studied original mandolin repertoire with Ugo Orlandi. Winner of Israel's prestigious Aviv Competition in 2007, Avital is the first mandolinist in the history of the competition to be so honoured. He plays on a mandolin made by Israeli luthier Arik Kerman.

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