

“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
Corinna da Fonseca-Wollheim • March 12th, 2015

AVI AVITAL

MANDOLIN

Biography

The first mandolin soloist to be nominated for a classical Grammy, Avi Avital has been compared to Andres Segovia for his championship of his instrument and to Jascha Heifitz for his incredible virtuosity. Passionate and “explosively charismatic” (New York Times) in live performance, he is a driving force behind the reinvigoration of the mandolin repertory. More than 100 contemporary compositions have been written for him, 15 of them concertos including by Anna Clyne, Avner Dorman and Giovanni Sollima, which will be premiered in 2019/20. 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.

An exclusive *Deutsche Grammophon* artist, he has made four recordings for the label and the next one is already in the making. Recently released “Avital meets Avital” (2017) with oud/bassist, Omer Avital, explores their shared cultural heritage and brings their differing classical and jazz musical backgrounds into dialogue. Earlier releases featured original concerti and transcriptions by Vivaldi (2015) his own Bach concerto transcriptions (2012) and “Between Worlds” (2014), a cross-generic chamber collection exploring the nexus between classical and traditional music.

Avital’s inspired music-making has electrified audiences in performances around the world. He has performed with orchestras such as the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Deutsche Symphonie Orchester Berlin, Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, Tonhalle Zurich, Israel Philharmonic, Dresden Philharmonic, Tasmania Symphony Orchestra, St Louis Symphony Orchestra and Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal under conductors such as Zubin Mehta, Kent Nagano, Osmo Vänskä, Ton Koopman and Giovanni Antonini. Performances have taken him to Beijing’s National Centre for the Performing Arts, London’s Wigmore and Royal Albert Halls, Berlin Philharmonie, Zurich’s Tonhalle, Barcelona’s Palau de la Música Catalana, Paris Philharmonie, Vienna Konzerthaus, New York’s Carnegie Hall and Palais de Versailles with a live telecast on TV Arte.

IMPRESARIAT SIMMENAUER

He is a favourite on the international festival circuit having appeared at the Aspen, Salzburg, Tanglewood, Spoleto, Ravenna, Cheltenham and Verbier Festivals, amongst others, and he was Portrait Artist at the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival in 2017, which involved over 20 performances of 10 different programmes. Artistic partners in a variety of genres with whom he collaborates include Andreas Scholl, Juan Diego Flórez, Dawn Upshaw, Giora Feidman, Ray Chen, David Greilsammer, Richard Galliano, Ksenija Sidorova, Itamar Doari and the Dover and Danish String Quartets. He was featured artist in a Zeitsinsel at the Dortmund Konzerthaus where he curated a weekend of programmes featuring classical, jazz and improvisations and a new collaboration with the Venice Baroque Orchestra and Georgian puppet theatre, Budrugana Gagra.

Highlights of his 2018/19 season include performances with the Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra in Tokyo, Norwegian Radio Orchestra, Tonhalle Orchester Zurich, Monte-Carlo Philharmonic, Residentie Orkest, Detroit Symphony, San Diego Symphony, Seattle Symphony, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra at Carnegie Hall and a tour of Europe with The Knights.

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.

2018/2019

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