Avi Avital
with Omer Avital

Wednesday, April 10, 2019
Welcome to the
Cleveland Museum of Art

In the season ahead, the museum’s performing arts series continues its exciting schedule with a range of artists from traditions far and wide, old and new. This year, a major commissioning program brings six internationally respected composers to Cleveland from around the globe to create new works inspired by the museum’s collection. Co-sponsored by the Cleveland Foundation’s Creative Fusion program, the series of world premieres extends into 2020.

In the Galleries

Shinto: Discovery of the Divine in Japanese Art
Through June 30

Raúl de Nieves: Fina
Through April 28 at Transformer Station

Charles Burchfield: The Ohio Landscapes, 1915–1920
Through May 5

Renée Green: Partially Buried
Through May 19

Beyond Truth: Photography after the Shutter
Through May 26

Through June 9

Color and Comfort: Swedish Modern Design
Through February 9, 2020

Avi Avital with Omer Avital

Wednesday, April 10, 2019, 7:30 p.m.
Gartner Auditorium, the Cleveland Museum of Art

ENSEMBLE

Avi Avital, mandolin
Omer Avital, bass / oud
Yonathan Avishai, piano
Itamar Doari, percussion

PROGRAM

This evening’s program is presented without intermission and will be announced from the stage. It features selections from the Deutsche Grammophon recording Avital Meets Avital

This performance sponsored with support from the Stanley I. and Honnie R. Busch Memorial Endowment and the Jewish Federation’s Cleveland Israel Arts Connection.
"The music on this album tells the story of a special bond: the encounter of two musicians with divergent artistic paths but a similar family history. It is a musical conversation about the sounds and meanings of home, about memory, and about freedom.” —Avi Avital

Avital Meets Avital is the exhilarating and stylistically diverse testament of the meeting of two musicians—a classical mandolinist and a jazz bassist—who share not only a last name but the family history that comes with it. In this album they unearth that history and infuse it with sound.

Classically trained virtuoso Avi Avital and acclaimed jazz performer and composer Omer Avital grew up in the melting pot of 1980s Israel, and are both of Moroccan ancestry. Their shared last name is a marker of Jewish Moroccan families who changed the Moroccan name “Abutbul” to the more Hebrew-sounding “Avital” when they immigrated to Israel, a move that is perhaps symbolic of the will to assimilate. For many years Avi Avital and Omer Avital devoted themselves mainly to the Western repertoire: one to classical, the other to jazz. As their international careers took off, one moved to Berlin and the other to New York. But in the musical encounter that led to Avital Meets Avital, they were reunited across continents and genres by their shared heritage. From the intersection of Moroccan beats, Israeli harmonies, a classical sensibility and the improvisational freedom of jazz, an intimate reflection emerged on their shared roots and different journeys.

The instrumental pieces that were spun from the dialogue between the Avitals, most of which were specifically composed for this album, reflect in myriad ways the intensity and emotion of their quest to find “home”. And yet both musicians courageously abandon familiar terrain. Avi Avital, who has spent most of his life deepening the classical repertoire for the mandolin, uses the album to expand his musical horizons and to rediscover sounds and colours that shimmer from his past. Omer Avital likewise ventures beyond his customary world, exploring paths beyond jazz by embracing classical themes and forms.

The initial work on this album originated in 2012, when Avi Avital was invited by the Bremen Musikfest to put on a “surprise concert,” with the sole requirement that he stage something completely new. “I immediately thought of Omer for this project, though I could scarcely imagine what a musical collaboration between us would sound like,” says Avi. “Our first week of rehearsals and jamming in New York was, for me, nothing short of a revelation. Omer had already integrated materials from his cultural heritage into his work, but it was the first time I’d experienced that. I was given the freedom and the conducive environment to devote myself to improvisation, composition and the exploration of non-classical and Moroccan music. Those long-forgotten sounds flooded me with strong feelings of nostalgia and familiarity.”

In exploring their multifaceted identities and distinct musical backgrounds, Avi Avital and Omer Avital pour richly contrasting sounds into pieces that simultaneously merge and transcend their musical traditions. In Zamzama and Hijazain the Arabic maqamat (modes) emerge in full force. Ana Maghrebi (“I am Moroccan”) pays tribute to Andalusian music, and Maroc is based on the most typical Moroccan rhythm produced by the krakebs (large castanet-like instruments made of iron). Yet the ballads on the album—Lonely Girl and Ballad for Eli—are far more classical in outlook, and Avi’s Song takes inspiration from Balkan music, using an 11/8 rhythm as a basis. The final piece, The Source and the Sea by Israeli-Polish composer Moshe Vilenski, pays homage to the musicians’ parents’ generation, and its own experimentation with creating a new musical language that reflects a blend of cultural influences.

Transcending genres and decades, Avital Meets Avital takes us on a journey through longing, reminiscence, and sheer exuberant joy. The two musicians’ chamber-like interaction, enriched by the contributions of jazz pianist Yonathan Avishai and percussion artist Itamar Doari, gives rise to a vibrant and revealing conversation that renders existential and heartfelt yearning immediately tangible. The striking mosaic of shades and moods tells a story of self-discovery that is as intimately personal as it is universal.

Program notes courtesy of Deutsche Grammophon
Avi Avital

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 center stage.

An exclusive Deutsche Grammophon artist, he has made four recordings for the label. 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.

In 2018/19, Avital returns to Carnegie Hall to make his debut on the main stage with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. Highlights of that season in the US also include play-directing the Seattle Symphony, and performances with the Detroit Symphony, San Diego Symphony, and Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra. He also returns to Canada to perform with Les Violons du Roy, ahead of a North American tour in the following season. In the Spring of 2019, following on from his most recent Deutsche Grammophon recording, Avital tours North America with bassist Omer Avital. Recent appearances in the US also include performances with the St. Louis Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Montreal Symphony, and Chicago Symphony.

Avital's inspired music-making has electrified audiences in performances around the world. He has performed with orchestras such as the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Deutsche Symphonie Orchester Berlin, Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, Tonhalle Zurich, Israel Philharmonic, Dresden Philharmonic, and Tasmania Symphony Orchestra, 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.

He is a favorite 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 programs. 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, percussionist 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 programs featuring classical, jazz, and improvisations and a new collaboration with the Venice Baroque Orchestra and Georgian puppet theatre, Budrugana Gagra.

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 honored. He plays on a mandolin made by Israeli luthier Arik Kerman.

Strings: Thomastik-Infeld (154, Medium)
Omer Avital

Bassist and composer Omer Avital is one of today's most striking musicians. Praised by critics as, “extraordinary” (*New York Times*), “roaringly inventive” (*Jazziz*), “a pioneer in combining jazz with myriad world music elements” (*LA Times*) and, “one of the most exciting musicians to come onto the jazz scene in the last 20 years” (*DownBeat*), Omer Avital is a visionary composer and virtuoso musician whose genre-defying ensembles are pushing the boundaries of jazz expression and providing audiences with swing and spiritual sustenance in equal measure.

Among the many talented Israeli musicians who have appeared on the world jazz scene in recent years, Avital stands out from the rest. He is not part of this wave but rather one of those who initiated it—Omer Avital is a pioneer. The musician, who has lived in New York since 1992, is partly responsible for putting his native country on the jazz map. Critics from *Downbeat* and the *New York Times* have high praise for the classically trained virtuoso bass player; he has even been called the Israeli Charles Mingus.

Avital is a visionary who combines music from his cultural background with modern Western jazz. This makes for an atmospheric sound with contagious Middle-Eastern grooves, subtle jazz melodies, and orchestral arrangements of Sephardic compositions.

With his new album, *Abutbul Music* (recorded in Paris and released on the Jazz Village records label), Avital delivers once again a strong statement with a powerful sound, joyful rhythms and oriental melodies that draw on gospel and soul. Avital is continually evolving contemporary jazz, rightly been called one of the most unique musicians of his generation.

Yonathan Avishai

Based in France, pianist Yonathan Avishai is without doubt one of the major figures of the emerging Israeli jazz scene. Whether through a concert, in the theater or in a workshop, this unique musician, shares his passion for sound, music, and its history.

Yonathan, was born and grew up in Israel. He began studying the piano at a young age and discovered in his early teens jazz. Already at the age of 14 he formed his own groups and performed at clubs and festivals in his country. He often accompanied touring American musicians in Israel (Walter Blanding Jr., Marcus Printup, Allan Harris) and was part of Arnie Lawrence’s ensemble.

He was a member of “The Left Bank,” a cooperative association of musicians formed to promote original music in Tel Aviv. This experience led to an involvement with the social and local aspects of cultural development. Yonathan took part in organizing musical events in various facilities in the city. As a result of these activities, in 2001, he arrived at a socio-cultural center in Alsace (France) as a part of an European exchange program.

In 2002 he moved to Dordogne (France) and got involved in the local cultural scene. He studied musicotherapie in Bordeaux (*Atelier de Musicothérapie de Bordeaux*). Subsequently, he led workshops in facilities for special education, primary schools, music schools and developed a true passion for teaching and pedagogy. That same year he formed Third World Love—a quartet with Omer Avital, Avishai Cohen, and Daniel Freedman. The group recorded five albums and performed the world over. In 2006 Yonathan recorded the album *Soledad* (*Fresh Sound Records*) with the percussionist Bachir Mouhali. In 2008, in collaboration with director Sharon Mohar, Yonathan explored the field of music and theater. As a result, the “Compagnie L’air du jeu” (*The Playground Company*) came into existence and, in 2010, produced a show for kids entitled “Il était une fois un gribouille.” In 2010, Yonathan and drummer Bertrand Noël formed a duo and recorded a CD called *Lost Boys* (*Cristal Records*). In 2012, Yonathan moved to Yonne (France). He has recently created a new project called “Modern Times” with bassist Yoni Zelnik and drummer Donald Kontomanou.

Inspired by artists such as John Lewis, Art Ensemble of Chicago, and Mark Rothko—between tradition and modernity—Yonathan strives to deepen the dimensions of his music. Packing each note with a dramatic charge. He creates a poetic world rich in emotion and color. His compositions are restrained, subtle, and feature great refinement.
Itamar Doari

Itamar was born in Israel 1985. He began his musical training when he was only six years old, playing traditional percussion instruments such as frame drums, darbuka, riq, and more. Through the years he has had the honor to learn from some of the greatest music teachers in hand-drums and percussion from Israel and abroad, including Zohar Fresco, Glen Vallez, Sallem Darwish, and Ahmed Taher.

Itamar graduated from Klor Music School with honors in 2003. When he was just seventeen years old, already he was playing and touring around the world with a few of the more successful musicians known in Israel. Playing on some of the most well-known stages and festivals in Israel and around the world, Itamar has become a strong force in the world-wide percussion scene, making his unique way and sound and reaching big audiences around the world. He does so, playing different percussion instruments and collaborating with artists from different styles and origins world-wide. Itamar is a winner of the America-Israel Foundation scholarship for 2009/2010

Recent projects include three years of touring with Avishai Cohen, as well as recording three albums together—their latest album Seven Seas, which Itamar also co-produced, was nominated for the French Grammy award and listed as top on playlists in France, Germany, Sweden, and Spain. Itamar is a member in the band Yemen Blues, a new and unique collaborative project in which musicians from New York and Israel perform worldwide all year long. Itamar is also a partner in the latest international tour of Berry Sakharof, one of the greatest Israeli living legends. Their album You Are Here was named “best album of the year” in Israel in 2011. Itamar also took part in the albums of Idan Raichel Project, another band to win the “best album” and “best group performance of the year” in Israel. Among the other artists with whom Itamar collaborates in performances and recordings are Yasmin Levy, Shem Tov Levi, Fools of Prophecy, Sheva, Ahuva Ozeri, Omar Faruk Tkhabilak, Samir Makhull, Amal Murkus, Avshalom Farjun, and Shai Ben Tzur.

Performing Arts 2018–19

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Chamber Music in the Galleries
Wednesday, October 3, 6:00

Vox Luminis
Wednesday, October 24, 7:30

Chamber Music in the Galleries
Wednesday, November 7, 6:00

Oberlin Contemporary Music Ensemble
Sunday, November 11, 2:00

Chamber Music in the Galleries
Wednesday, December 5, 6:00

Paul Goussot
Sunday, December 9, 2:00

Henry Threadgill
Friday, January 11, 7:30

Chamber Music in the Galleries
Wednesday, February 6, 6:00

CIM Organ Studio
Sunday, March 3, 2:00

Chamber Music in the Galleries
Wednesday, March 6, 6:00

Carolin Widmann
Friday, March 29, 7:30

Emmanuel Culcasi
Sunday, March 31, 2:00

Chamber Music in the Galleries
Wednesday, April 3, 6:00

Avi Avital with Omer Avital
Wednesday, April 10, 7:30

Chamber Music in the Galleries
Wednesday, May 1, 6:00

Cenk Ergün
Wednesday, May 8, 7:30

UPCOMING PERFORMANCE

Cenk Ergün
Wed/May 8, 7:30, Ames Family Atrium. The second in a series of compositions commissioned by the Cleveland Museum of Art in partnership with the Cleveland Foundation, Formare is scored for female choir, children's choir, harpsichords and trombones. More than two dozen musicians are dispersed throughout the Atrium and the audience is encouraged to move through the space at their leisure. This world premiere performance features a coming together of several notable musicians and ensembles of Northeast Ohio, including the Cleveland Chamber Choir (under the direction of Scott MacPherson); the Cleveland Institute of Music Children’s Choir (under Jennifer Call); harpsichordists Peter Bennett, Michael Quinn, and QinYing Tan; and trombonists Lee Allen, Evelyn Proffit, Katie Lambert, and Zoe Cutler. A Cleveland Foundation Creative Fusion commission. Free; no ticket required.
Please **turn off all electronic devices** before entering the performance hall.

**Photography and audio/video recording in the performance hall are prohibited.**

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**These performances are made possible in part by:**
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Programs are subject to change.