

Sunday, February 25, 2018, 3pm  
 Hertz Hall

**Sérgio & Odair Assad, guitar**  
**Avi Avital, mandolin**

**PROGRAM**

Johann Sebastian BACH (1685–1750)	Selections from Sonata in E Major, BWV 1016 Allegro Adagio ma non tanto Allegro
Franz Joseph HAYDN (1732–1809)	Sonata No. 50 in D Major, Hob.XVI:37 Allegro con brio Largo e sostenuto Finale: Presto ma non troppo
Claude DEBUSSY (1862–1918)	<i>La plus que lente</i>
Béla BARTÓK (1881–1945)	Romanian Folk Dances, Sz. 56, BB 68 Joc cu bata – Allegro moderato Braul – Allegro Pê-loc – Andante Buciumeana – Moderato Poarga romaneasca – Allegro Maruntel – Allegro
E. GISMONTI (b. 1974)	<i>Baiao malandro</i> Sérgio & Odair Assad

**INTERMISSION**

TRADITIONAL BULGARIAN/arr. Avital	<i>Bucimis</i> Avi Avital
Astor PIAZZOLLA (1921–1992)	<i>Histoire du Tango</i> Bordel 1900 Cafe 1930 Nightclub 1960 Concert d'aujourd'hui
Marc LAVRY (1903–1967)	Three Jewish Dances, Op. 192 Sher – Allegro Yemenite Wedding Dance – Andante Hora – Allegro vivo
Jacob Pick BITTENCOURT (1918–1969)	Three Brazilian Pieces Santa Morena
“PIXINGUINHA” (1897–1973)	Glória
BITTENCOURT	Assanhado

*All works arranged by S. Assad, unless noted.*

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### Selections from Sonata in E Major, BWV 1016 Johann Sebastian Bach

From 1717 to 1723, Bach was director of music at the court of Anhalt-Cöthen, north of Leipzig. He liked his job. His employer, Prince Leopold, was a well-educated man, 24 years old at the time he engaged Bach. (Bach was 32.) Leopold was fond of travel and books and paintings, but his real passion was music. He was an accomplished musician who not only played violin, viola da gamba, and harpsichord well enough to join with the professionals in his household orchestra, but also had an exceptional bass voice. He started the court musical establishment in 1707 with three players (his puritanical father had no use for music), and by the time of Bach's appointment, it had grown to nearly 20 performers equipped with a fine set of instruments. It was for this group that Bach wrote many of his outstanding instrumental works, including the *Brandenburg* Concertos, orchestral suites, violin concertos, and much of his chamber music. Leopold appreciated Bach's genius (his annual salary as Court Conductor was 400 *thalers*, equal to that of the Court Marshal, Leopold's second highest official), and Bach returned the compliment when he said of his Prince, "He loved music, he was well acquainted with it, he understood it." Bach was himself a skilled string player during those years (his son Carl Philipp Emanuel recalled, "He played the violin cleanly and penetratingly. He understood to perfection the possibilities of the stringed instruments"), and he composed most of his chamber works for violin, including the three sonatas and three partitas for unaccompanied violin and the six sonatas for violin and keyboard, before he left Cöthen in 1723.

The six sonatas originally for violin and keyboard largely follow the structure and style of the *sonata da chiesa*—four movements (slow-fast-slow-fast), imitative in texture, serious in expression—though one (No. 4 in C minor, BWV 1017) admits a lilting *Siciliano* as its opening movement, and another (No. 6 in G Major, BWV 1019) begins with a quick-tempo Allegro as the first of its five movements. The first Allegro of the E-Major Sonata, the work's second movement, is a lively dialogue

based on one of Bach's most lighthearted and easy-going themes, perhaps the progeny of some long-forgotten Saxon folksong. The third movement is an expansive song carefully spun out above the steady tread of the ostinato pattern in the bass. The sonata closes with a brilliant fugal Allegro.

### Sonata No. 50 in D Major, Hob.XVI:37 Franz Joseph Haydn

Haydn once said of himself that he was "not a bad piano player," but, though he was not a virtuoso on the instrument of the stature of his friend Wolfgang Mozart, he was a competent and busy keyboard performer and composer throughout his career. Haydn began playing the clavier as a child, and he studied the clavichord, harpsichord, and organ with fine teachers at the Imperial Choir School in Vienna. After leaving the school in 1749, he taught both clavichord and harpsichord, served as organist in a couple of minor Viennese posts, and mastered the art of accompaniment. He was nearly penniless in those early days, living in an attic in an undesirable quarter of the city, and he resorted to his clavier as a source of comfort, as he later told his biographer Albert Dies: "The severe loneliness of the place, the lack of anything to divert the idle spirit, and my quite needy situation led me to contemplations that were often so grave that I found it necessary to take refuge at my worm-eaten clavier... to play away my melancholy." His appointment in 1758 as Kapellmeister for Count Morzin (he gave the Countess clavier lessons) and two years later to the musical staff of the Esterházy family ameliorated his situation and greatly expanded the possibilities for his keyboard activities. He participated almost daily in chamber or solo performances at the Esterházy palaces, and occasionally acted as soloist in concertos, as well as serving as keyboardist for vocal concerts and such special occasions as the visit of the Empress Maria Theresa in 1773. After he was appointed director of the Esterházy musical establishment in 1766, he also participated as organist in many sacred and ceremonial events. With the completion of the family's opera house in 1776, Haydn's chief function as a keyboardist was as





continuo player and conductor from the clavier, a duty he also fulfilled in the performances of his symphonies. Even as late as his London visits in 1791 and 1794, Haydn still “presided at the pianoforte” for the presentations of his rapturously received symphonies, according to the eminent 18th-century British musical scholar Charles Burney. Haydn largely gave up playing during the years of retirement that followed his English tours, but he derived pleasure from having guests perform for him. He sold his harpsichord in 1808, a year before he died, but kept a clavichord, the species of keyboard instrument on which he had learned to play as a child, and he regularly entertained himself with “Gott erhalte Franz den Kaiser,” the Austrian anthem he had written and included in his Quartet in C Major, Op. 76, No. 3 (*Emperor*), until just five days before his death.

From his earliest clavichord *divertimentos* to his last set of three piano sonatas written in London, Haydn composed more than 60 solo keyboard sonatas, mostly for students and friends, though some were intended for performing virtuosos. Among the most important such compositions were six sonatas (H. XVI: 35–39, 20) published in Vienna in 1780 by Artaria, the first issue by that company of music by Haydn, who remained a client of the firm for the rest of his life. Haydn inscribed the collection to the sisters Caterina and Marianne Auenbrugger of Graz, a talented pair of pianists who, Leopold Mozart said, “play extraordinarily well and are thoroughly musical.” Reflecting the changing tastes of the time, the title page of the Auenbrugger sonatas noted that they could be played on either “clavicembalo [harpsichord] or forte piano,” though their dynamic range, ornamentation, and general style suggest that they were intended for the latter rather than the former. The first movement of the D-Major Sonata (H. XVI:37) is a microcosm of the best musical art of 1780: brilliant in its execution, crisp in its sonata form (a brief pause marks the arrival of the exposition’s second theme, a dainty, short-breathed tune sounded above sweet harmonies), and pleasingly varied in its moods (the opening is music-box cheerful, but the development section hints at something more pas-

sionate). The Largo, somber in character, is reminiscent of the harpsichord works of Couperin and Rameau in its ornate decoration. The finale is a rondo whose mock-serious first episode provides a foil for the high spirits of the rest of the movement.

### *La plus que lente*

#### Claude Debussy

Among the works Debussy composed in 1910 for his piano performances were the first book of *Préludes* and this little waltz. *La plus que lente* is notable for the imposed simplicity of its style and avoidance of the vast expressive resources that its creator had perfected in earlier works. (The title, literally, means “The More Than Slow,” and may be Debussy’s sly reference to the excessive vogue that the slow waltz enjoyed at that time in fashionable French society.) *La plus que lente* is pretty, almost too pretty, and Oscar Thompson, in his study of the composer, wrote that its “spirit is that of half-parody, half-earnestness.” When Debussy orchestrated the work later in the year, giving prominence to the nasal twang of the cymbalon, he noted that the music in that form was appropriate “for the countless five o’clock tea parties frequented by beautiful listeners whom I remember.”

### Romanian Folk Dances, Sz. 56, BB 68

#### Béla Bartók

Around 1905, during the difficult, poverty-ridden years after he completed his studies at the Liszt Conservatory in Budapest, Bartók was invited by a friend to spend a few days in the country. On the trip, he chanced to overhear one of the servant girls singing a strange and intriguing song while going about her chores. He asked her about the melody, and was told that the girl’s mother had taught it to her, as her grandmother had passed it on a generation before, and that there were many more such songs. Bartók encouraged her to sing the others that she knew, and he soon realized that this sturdy folk music was little related to the slick Gypsy airs and dances of the city cafés that had long passed for indigenous Hungarian music. He determined that he would discover all that he could about the peasant music of his own

and neighboring lands, and many of the years of the rest of his life were given over to collecting, cataloging, and evaluating this vast heritage. Milton Cross characterized the music that Bartók discovered: "The melody was severe, patterned after the rise and ebb, the inflection, of Hungarian speech; the rhythms were irregular; the tonality reached back to the modes of the church. It was savage music: intense, passionate, strong, and uninhibited. Nothing quite like it could be found anywhere else."

The style of this folk music immediately affected Bartók's mode of composition. While his larger concert works display the essence of folk songs rather than quoting them directly, some of the smaller ones are based faithfully on the models. Such is the case with this invigorating little set of Romanian folk dances. They were first arranged for solo piano in 1915, and orchestrated three years later. He collected the melodies for the six brief movements between 1909 and 1914, and set them in an almost unaltered fashion, adding mainly the enriched but characteristic harmonic background. The tunes for the first and fourth sections he heard played by a Gypsy violinist; for movements five and six, by a Romanian peasant fiddler; and for two and three, by a peasant on a rustic flute. The dances are mostly fast in tempo and fiery in nature, though the fourth dance, the centerpiece of the set, is slow and sinuous. The composer voiced his opinion of the exceptional quality of this village music with the words, "Folk melodies are a real model of the highest artistic perfection. To my mind, on a small scale, they are masterpieces, just as much as, in the world of larger forms, a fugue by Bach or a Mozart sonata." Elaborating further on the importance of European folk song in a 1931 letter to Ion Busitia, he wrote, "My true guiding idea, which has possessed me completely ever since I began to compose, is that of the brotherhood of peoples, of their brotherhood despite all war, all conflict.... That is why I do not repulse any influence, whether its source be Slovak, Romanian, Arab, or some other; provided this source be pure, fresh, and healthy!"

### *Histoire du Tango*

#### Astor Piazzolla

The Argentinean tango, like American ragtime and jazz, is music with a shady past. Its deepest roots extend to Africa and the fiery dances of Spain, but it seems to have evolved most directly from a slower Cuban dance, the *habanera* (whose name honors that nation's capital), and a faster native Argentinean song form, the *milonga*, both in duple meter and both sensuously syncopated in rhythm. These influences met at the end of the 19th century in the docklands and seamier neighborhoods of Buenos Aires, where they found fertile ground for gestation as the influx of workers streaming in from Europe to seek their fortunes in the pampas and cities of South America came into contact with the exotic Latin cultures. The tango—its name may have been derived from a word of African origin meaning simply "dance," or from the old Castilian *taño* ("to play an instrument"), or from a type of drum used by black slaves, or from none of these—came to embody the longing and hard lives of the lower classes of Buenos Aires, where it was chiefly fostered in bawdy houses and back-alley bars by usually untutored musicians. The texts, where they existed, dealt with such forlorn urban topics as faithless women, social injustice, and broken dreams. In the years around World War I, the tango migrated out of the seedier neighborhoods of Argentina, leaped across the Atlantic to be discovered by the French, and then went on to invade the rest of Europe and North America. International repute elevated its social status, and, spurred by the glamorous images of Rudolph Valentino and Vernon and Irene Castle, the tango became the dance craze of the 1930s. Tango bands, comprising four to six players (usually piano, accordion, guitar, and strings), with or without a vocalist, flourished during the years between the wars, and influenced not just the world's popular music but also that of serious composers: one of Isaac Albéniz's most famous works is his *Tango in D*; William Walton inserted a tango into his "Entertainment with Poems" for speaker and instruments, *Façade*; and Igor Stravinsky had the Devil in *The Soldier's Tale* dance a tango and composed a

Tango for Piano, which he also arranged for full orchestra and for winds with guitar and bass.

The greatest master of the modern tango was Astor Piazzolla, born in Mar Del Plata, Argentina, a resort town south of Buenos Aires, on March 11, 1921, and raised in New York City, where he lived with his father from 1924 to 1937. Before Astor was 10 years old, his musical talents had been discovered by Carlos Gardel, then the most famous of all performers and composers of tangos and a cultural hero in Argentina. At Gardel's urging, the young Astor moved to Buenos Aires in 1937, and joined the popular tango orchestra of Anibal Troilo as arranger and bandoneón player. Piazzolla studied classical composition with Alberto Ginastera in Buenos Aires, and in 1954, he wrote a symphony for the Buenos Aires Philharmonic that earned him a scholarship to study in Paris with Nadia Boulanger, the renowned teacher of Copland, Thomson, Carter, and many other of the best American composers. Boulanger, as was her method, grounded Piazzolla in the classical European repertory, but then encouraged him to follow his genius for the tango rather than write in the traditional concert genres. When Piazzolla returned to Buenos Aires in 1956, he founded his own performing group, and began to create a modern style for the tango that combined elements of traditional tango, Argentinean folk music, and contemporary classical, jazz, and popular techniques into a "Nuevo Tango" that was as suitable for the concert hall as for the dance floor. He was sharply criticized at first by government officials and advocates of the traditional tango alike for his pathbreaking creations. "Traditional tango listeners hated me," he recalled. "I introduced fugues, counterpoint, and other irreverences: people thought I was crazy. All the tango critics and radio stations of Buenos Aires called me a clown; they said my music was 'paranoiac.' And they made me popular. The young people who had lost interest in the tango started listening to me. It was a war of one against all, but in 10 years, the war was won." In 1974 Piazzolla settled again in Paris, winning innumerable enthusiasts for both his Nuevo Tango and for the traditional tango with his many appearances,

recordings, and compositions. By the time that he returned to Buenos Aires in 1985, he was regarded as the musician who had revitalized one of the quintessential genres of Latin music, and he received awards from *Down Beat* and other international music magazines and from the city of Buenos Aires, as well as a Grammy nomination for his composition *Oblivion*. Piazzolla continued to tour widely, record frequently, and compose incessantly until he suffered a stroke in Paris in August 1990. He died in Buenos Aires on July 5, 1992.

Piazzolla realized his electrifying blend of the fire and passion of the traditional tango with the vast expressive resources of modern harmony, texture, and sonority in some 750 widely varied works that explore the genre's remarkable expressive range, from violent to sensual, from witty to melancholy, from intimate to theatrical. In 1981, when he had just turned 60, Piazzolla composed his *Histoire du Tango*, in whose four movements he tried to encapsulate the evolution of both the styles and the performance venues of the dance.

### Three Jewish Dances, Op. 192

Marc Lavry

Marc Lavry, born in Riga, Latvia in 1903, graduated from the Riga Conservatory when he was 15 and continued his training at the Leipzig Conservatory and privately in Berlin with the visiting Russian composer Alexander Glazunov and Bruno Walter, Gustav Mahler's brilliant conducting protégé. Lavry quickly established himself as a gifted composer and an opera and theater conductor in Saarbrücken and Berlin, and in 1928, at age 25, he was appointed music director of the Berlin Symphony Orchestra. When the Nazis came to power in Germany in 1933, he returned to Riga to conduct the local opera company and radio symphony but with the rise of fascism in Latvia over the next two years, he decided to move to Palestine in 1935. Lavry resumed his parallel careers in Palestine (Israel, after 1949), becoming a leading musical figure in the country, refusing to perform any of his European works after he settled there, and devoting his compositions largely to Jewish subjects and themes—he wrote what is believed

to be the first opera with a Hebrew libretto (1945, *Dan ha'shomer* ["*Dan, the Guard*"]), headed the music department of the Jerusalem radio station, was the first to record "Hatikva," the country's national anthem, and had his tone poem *Emek* (1937, *Valley*) performed on the first American tour (1950) of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Leonard Bernstein. Marc Lavry died in 1967 in Haifa, where he had been invited four years earlier to conduct the Haifa Symphony and advance the city's musical life.

*The following information about Lavry's Three Jewish Dances (1945) appears on the web site of the Marc Lavry Heritage Society (marclavry.org).*

"*Sher (Scissors Dance)*. A Hassidic-Jewish style dance inspired by music to which he was exposed in his childhood.

"*Yemenite Wedding Dance*. Unlike typical energetic wedding dances, the wedding dance of the Yemenite bride is gentle, calm, and shy. The dance is performed in small steps and soft, round movements of the hands.

"*Hora*. In a radio interview, Lavry said, 'I remember that after I visited Kibbutz Degania, where we danced all night, the dance left a huge impression on me. An endless *Hora* dance, with shouts and rhythmic legwork—the young people were wonderful.' Lavry adapted the energetic and lively rhythm of the *Hora* dance into many of his works."

### ***Santa Morena and Assanhado***

#### **Jacob Pick Bittencourt (Jacob do Bandolim)**

Jacob Pick Bittencourt—commonly known by the stage name he chose after the instrument on which he became a virtuoso: "Jacob do Bandolim" ("Mandolin Jacob")—was born in Rio de Janeiro in 1918 and started playing violin and harmonica as a youngster. He discovered mandolin as a teenager and quickly became so proficient on the instrument that he performed on the radio and started his own band before he turned 20. Bittencourt demanded that his band (*Época de Ouro*—"Golden Age") perform perfectly and dress impeccably, a new image for Brazilian popular musicians, and he worked as

a pharmacist (his father's profession), insurance salesman, street vendor, and notary public until he established his musical career. He soon earned success with his performances, his recordings, and his compositions, more than a hundred pieces in a variety of traditional Brazilian styles. Bittencourt died in Rio on August 13, 1969, coming home from a meeting to plan a recording project to benefit his friend and fellow musician Pixinguinha, whose health and professional success had waned.

Bittencourt's *Santa Morena* (1954) is a traditional Brazilian *choro* in the style of a fast waltz. *Assanhado* (1961) is jazzy, upbeat, and given some piquancy by its occasional blue notes.

### ***Glória***

#### **Alfredo da Rocha Viana Filho ("Pixinguinha")**

Pixinguinha was one of the seminal figures in the performance, composition, and dissemination of Brazilian popular music in the early 20th century. Pixinguinha (pronounced, very approximately, "peek-sh'yun-Gih'nah"), born Alfredo da Rocha Viana Filho in 1897 into the family of a flutist in Rio de Janeiro, began playing his father's instrument as a child, composed his first piece at age 14, started appearing in neighborhood clubs the following year, and made his recording debut one year later. In 1914 he formed the first of his bands to perform in the traditional Brazilian dance styles that were then gaining popularity, though his success led to controversial engagements at some high-class venues where black musicians had not previously been allowed to play. In 1921 Pixinguinha's band *Os Oito Batutas* ("The Eight Amazing Players") toured to Paris, where they excited interest in Latin American music and were themselves exposed to the city's fervent jazz culture. By the time *Os Oito Batutas* returned home and began recording for RCA Victor, Pixinguinha had incorporated jazz influences into his music and sharpened his skills as a composer and arranger, one of the first Brazilian popular musicians to completely notate his scores. Pixinguinha continued to compose, record, and perform on both flute and tenor saxophone with Brazil's leading musicians



well into the 1950s, when samba and jazz began to push aside the older popular styles. Pixinguinha thereafter performed only rarely and died in 1973 while attending a baptism in a

church in Rio's fabled Ipanema district. *Glória* (1934) is a sentimental waltz that also lends itself surprisingly well to both up-tempo and jazz treatments.

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## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Brazilian-born brothers **Sérgio and Odair Assad** have created a new standard of guitar innovation and expression. Their exceptional artistry and uncanny ensemble playing come from a family rich in Brazilian musical tradition and studies under guitarist/lutenist Monina Távora, a disciple of Andrés Segovia. Their virtuosity has inspired a wide range of composers to write for them, including Astor Piazzolla, Terry Riley, Radamés Gnattali, Marlos Nobre, Nikita Koshkin, Roland Dyens, Jorge Morel, Edino Krieger, and Francisco Mignone. Sérgio Assad has added to their repertoire by composing music for the duo and for various musical partners, both with symphony orchestra and in recitals. They have worked extensively with such renowned artists as Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, Gidon Kremer, and Dawn Upshaw. Odair is based in Brussels where he teaches at the Ecole Supérieure des Arts, while Sérgio resides in San Francisco where he is on the faculty of the San Francisco Conservatory.

The Assad brothers began playing together at an early age and their international career began with a major prize at the 1979 Young Artists Competition in Bratislava. Their repertoire explores folk, jazz, and various styles of Latin music. Their classical repertoire includes transcriptions of the great Baroque keyboard literature of Bach, Rameau, and Scarlatti and adaptations of works by Gershwin, Ginastera, and Debussy—thus making their touring programs a compelling blend of styles, periods, and cultures.

They have collaborated with such notable orchestras as the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the orchestras of São Paulo and Seattle, and the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra.

In 2004 Sérgio and Odair arranged a special tour featuring three generations of the Assad

family, including their father, Jorge Assad (1924–2011), on the mandolin, and the voice of their mother, Angelina Assad. GHA Records released a live recording and a DVD of the Assad family live at Brussels' Palais des Beaux-Arts. In 2009 they were featured performers on James Newton Howard's soundtrack to the movie *Duplicity*. In the 2011 and 2012, the brothers toured a project entitled *De Volta as Raízes (Back to Our Roots)* with Lebanese-American singer Christiane Karam, percussionist Jamey Haddad, and composer/pianist Clarice Assad. Also that season Sérgio Assad premiered his concerto *Phases* with the Seattle Symphony and was nominated for two Latin Classical Grammy Awards for his works *Interchange* and *Maraeaipe*.

Other recent touring projects include a reunion of the Assad family in Qatar and across Europe with a finale at Le Palais des Beaux Arts, a tour and recording with Paquito D'Rivera called *Dances from the New World*, and a tour with jazz guitarist Romero Lubambo. In 2015–16 they toured with Yo-Yo Ma and other musicians from the Silkroad Ensemble.

The Assads have made a number of recordings on Nonesuch and GHA, including *Sérgio and Odair Assad Play Piazzolla* and *Jardim Abandonado*, which both received Latin Grammys. They recorded *Obrigado Brazil* with Yo-Yo Ma, with Sérgio arranging several of the works, and were featured on Ma's *Songs of Joy & Peace*, alongside guests including James Taylor and Dave Brubeck. Both recordings won Grammy Awards.

In 2015 Sérgio and Odair celebrated their 50th anniversary as a duo. Their first-ever performance together was in the fall of 1965 on a Brazilian television show called *Boussaude*. The celebration included a 27-city tour in Brazil followed by 10 more stops in North America,

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and was highlighted by a concert at the 92nd Street Y in New York. The Guitar Foundation of America awarded the brothers with its Lifetime Achievement Award in June 2015. Sérgio & Odair Assad are exclusively managed by Opus 3 Artists.

The first mandolin soloist to be nominated for a classical Grammy Award, **Avi Avital** is one of the foremost ambassadors for his instrument. Passionate and charismatic 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 Avital, while his inspired reimaginings of music for other instruments include the arrangements heard on his 2015 ECHO Klassik Award-winning Deutsche Grammophon recording, *Vivaldi*. "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."

Avital's unprecedented Grammy nomination honors his recording of Avner Dorman's Mandolin Concerto, a work he commissioned in 2006 and went on to record with New York's Metropolis Ensemble under Andrew Cyr. As the first mandolin soloist to become an exclusive Deutsche Grammophon artist, he has made three recordings for the label to date; besides *Vivaldi*, these are his 2012 debut, featuring his own Bach concerto transcriptions, and the 2014 album *Between Worlds*, a cross-generic chamber collection exploring the nexus between classical and traditional music. He previously recorded for SONY Classical and Naxos, winning a first ECHO Klassik Award for his 2008 collaboration with the David Orlowsky Trio.

Avital's inspired music-making has electrified audiences throughout Israel, Europe, Australia, Asia, and the Americas. Recent highlights include dates at 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, the Paris Philharmonie, and, with a live

telecast on Arte, the Palais de Versailles. In spring 2016, Avital undertook an international tour with a program of arrangements for mandolin, accordion, and percussion drawn primarily from *Between Worlds*. After more than 70 performances in Europe, Asia, and South America, the extensive US portion of the tour took him from coast to coast and was capped by appearances in Boston's Celebrity Series, at the National Gallery in Washington, DC, and at Manhattan's 92nd Street Y.

Avital has partnered leading artists in a variety of genres, ranging from star singers Dawn Upshaw, Andreas Scholl, and Juan Diego Flórez, to clarinetist Giora Feidman, violinist Ray Chen, pianist David Greilsammer, percussionist Itamar Doari, and the Enso and Danish String Quartets, as well as a host of international orchestras including the Mahler Chamber Orchestra and the Israel Philharmonic. He is also a favorite on the international festival circuit, having appeared at the Aspen, Salzburg, Tanglewood, Spoleto, Ravenna, and Verbier festivals, among many others.

Born in Be'er Sheva, southern Israel in 1978, 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. The winner of the first-prize Doris and Mori Arkin Award at Israel's prestigious Aviv Competitions 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. Avi Avital is exclusively managed by Opus 3 Artists.

Instrument: Arik Kerman (1998)

Strings: Thomastik-Infeld (154, Medium)

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