

## MEDIA RELEASE

Avi Avital & Giocosio String Quartet: solo superstar meets prize-winning ensemble

# Mandolin maestro plucks all the right strings



*'Everything you never dreamt a mandolin could do.'* - **Haaretz Daily**

He's a 'musician on a mandolin mission' (*Sarah's Music*). Dubbed 'explosively charismatic' in the *New York Times*, Israeli superstar **Avi Avital** has singlehandedly upped the cool factor of the classical mandolin by 1000% through sheer charm and mindboggling virtuosity. See what all the fuss is about when he tours nationally for **Musica Viva** with the **Giocosio String Quartet** from **7 to 24 April 2018**, pairing captivating music by **Schumann, Bach and Bruce** with a **world premiere from Australian composer, Elena Kats-Chernin**.

The first mandolin soloist to be nominated for a classical GRAMMY, Avi Avital is a leading ambassador for his instrument and a driving force behind the reinvigoration of the mandolin repertory. His inspired music-making has electrified audiences around the globe, in venues from London's Wigmore and Royal Albert Halls to the Berlin Philharmonie and New York's Carnegie Hall. More than 90 pieces have been written especially for him.

"The mandolin speaks for itself," the 39-year-old says from Berlin where he's been based for the past eight years. Played all over the world, the mandolin features in countless cultures and subgenres, from bluegrass to baroque to rock and roll. Yet for generations, it has endured an unjust reputation as an 'amateur' instrument.

Avi is changing that perception. He relishes the moment when audiences grasp just what his instrument is capable of: "Wherever I play around the world, I feel that for most of the people it's absolutely the first time and there is a great curiosity and a great anticipation, which is wonderful for the concert atmosphere."

His own discovery of the mandolin occurred during after-school activities. "There was this youth mandolin orchestra in Beersheba where kids used to come together to play arrangements of classical pieces," he says. "A neighbour played in this orchestra and it was through him that I was introduced to the instrument."

Avi's bright yet intimate sound is a perfect match for the warm strings of the **Giocosio String Quartet**, whose zesty, characterful playing has helped them steadily build a reputation throughout Europe and Asia.

Based in Vienna, the Quartet lived up to their 'joyful' moniker at the **2015 Melbourne International Chamber Music Competition**, adding Second Prize, the Peter Druce Audience Award and the Musica Viva Australia Prize to an impressive swag of accolades. Alumni of the renowned European Chamber Music Academy, they have trained with chamber music greats from the Ysayë, Hagen, Keller and Alban Berg Quartets. The 2015/16 season saw them debut in London's Wigmore Hall and at the Musikverein in Vienna.

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The program starts with the first of Robert Schumann's heart-on-sleeve Romantic quartets, a chance to hear the Giocoso Quartet in one of their favourite works. Composed in 1842 as a birthday present for Schumann's wife Clara, its mood varies from dreamlike to daring.



Written especially for Avi and the Quartet, Elena Kats-Chernin's new work was commissioned for the tour by Kim Williams AM. "It looks fantastic," exclaims Avi of the freshly delivered score. "I know Elena's music and she was on top of my dream list for a commission for some time."

Fittingly, Kats-Chernin takes her inspiration from Monteverdi's *Orfeo*: the legendary musician, poet and prophet able to charm all living things with his music. "The story always fascinated me; the lovesick minstrel who ventures into the underworld to retrieve his wife," she writes of a piece that traces a path from joyous romance to divine fury.

Some say that Bach's D Minor Chaconne is the greatest piece of music ever composed – sublime in its expression, proportions and musical architecture. On this tour, Avi brings his own depth and artistry to this most famous of works, written for solo violin but sitting easily on the silvery tones of a solo mandolin.

The program concludes with David Bruce's tribute to the Celtic sun god, *Cymbeline*, which was composed for Avi in 2013. "It's one of the most performed pieces that I have in my repertoire and is one of my favourites," he comments. "It's like David designed a picture of sunrise. And of course, it's a metaphor for life, with the first movement representing birth and discovery and then little by little moving onto the final movement where you look back and you know that time is limited, the clock is ticking, and the material world turns to spirits."

**Avi Avital and the Giocoso String Quartet will tour to Sydney, Brisbane, Newcastle, Melbourne, Adelaide, Canberra and Perth. For bookings and further details, please visit [www.musicaviva.com.au/avital/](http://www.musicaviva.com.au/avital/).**

**The Giocoso String Quartet are also appearing in Hobart for Musica Viva Tasmania on 5 April at 8:00pm. Further information about that performance is available at <http://mvt.org.au/concerts/2018/giocoso-quartet/>.**

**Members of the Giocoso String Quartet will mentor talented young students at a masterclass in Perth on 21 April 2018. Members of the public are welcome to attend. For details, please see [www.musicaviva.com.au/masterclasses](http://www.musicaviva.com.au/masterclasses).**

### AVI AVITAL & GIOCOSO STRING QUARTET

#### TOUR DATES

Sydney **07 Apr 2018 2:00 PM**  
Sydney **09 Apr 2018 7:00 PM\***  
Brisbane **11 Apr 2018 7:00 PM**  
Newcastle **12 Apr 2018 7:30 PM**  
Melbourne **14 Apr 2018 7:00 PM**  
Adelaide **17 Apr 2018 7:30 PM**  
Canberra **19 Apr 2018 7:00 PM**  
Perth **21 Apr 2018 7:30 PM**  
Melbourne **24 Apr 2018 7:00 PM**

#### VENUES

Adelaide: **Adelaide Town Hall**  
Brisbane: **Conservatorium Theatre**  
Canberra: **Llewellyn Hall**  
Melbourne: **Melbourne Recital Centre**  
Newcastle: **Newcastle Conservatorium**  
Perth: **Perth Concert Hall**  
Sydney: **City Recital Hall**

#### ARTISTS

**Avi Avital** mandolin  
**Giocoso String Quartet:**  
**Sebastian Casleanu** violin  
**Teofil Todica** violin  
**Martha Windhagauer** viola  
**Bas Jongen** cello

#### PROGRAM

**SCHUMANN** String Quartet no 1 in A minor, op 41 no 1  
**KATS-CHERNIN** *Orfeo*\*\*  
**JS BACH** Chaconne from Partita in D minor, BWV1004  
**BRUCE** *Cymbeline* for mandolin and string quartet

*\*Sydney Weekday Concert: Kenneth W Tribe Tribute Concert.*

*\*\*Commissioned for Musica Viva by Kim Williams AM.*

Musica Viva's Masterclass program is supported by principal patrons Stephen Johns & Michele Bender, the Sydney Conservatorium Association (NSW), Lyn Hamill & Ian Dover (Queensland), Wesfarmers Arts (Western Australia), Anonymous Donor (South Australia), and Mary Turner OAM (Newcastle).

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