



(Photos: Isabelle Wroblewski)

Ekstasis Duo

Music that lifts the spirit can be intensely joyful, profoundly moving, and unforgettable. Ekstasis is committed to creating juxtapositions and similarities through daring programming. We thrive on the contrast, intensity, and passion that we find in these compositions. We aim to share music that electrifies our audience and offers every possible emotion on the spectrum.

Cellist Natasha Farny and pianist Eliran Avni first met as students at Juilliard. After recent exciting and well-received performances in New York City and upstate New York, the two decided to embark on a new mission: to create compelling programming celebrating masterpieces alongside the secret jewels of lesser known works and present them as a duo.

The duo will perform concert programs that tell a story, ruminate on the human condition, or set an atmosphere through sound. These programs offer solo works alternating with chamber music, and occasionally will expand to include friends and the use of multimedia, such as readings, video, and visual art. Through this kind of programming, Ekstasis seeks to create a more cohesive and interesting curated experience for the audience.

Artist Biographies



Natasha Farny, Cello

American cellist Natasha Farny has distinguished herself as a talented artist of significant versatility, sensitivity, and experience. An accomplished soloist, Ms. Farny has performed with such orchestras as the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Buffalo Philharmonic, and several local orchestras throughout the Western New York region. She has performed solo and chamber music tours across Germany, the Czech Republic, and Brazil, and has played at distinguished national venues throughout the United States, including Chicago's Dame Myra Hess Memorial Concerts, Brooklyn's Bargemusic "Here and Now" Series, Florida's BIG ARTS Sanibel series, Maryland's Resonance series, and the Camerata Musica series in Washington State. Among the festivals at which she has participated are the Czech Republic's Dvorak Society American Spring Festival, Germany's Kronberg Cello Festival, Piobbico, Italy's Brancaloneoni International Music

Festival, Tennessee's Sewanee Summer Music Festival, National Music Festival (MD), Colorado Music Festival, Michigan's Bay View Music Festival, and the Bowdoin Summer Music Festival.

Ms. Farny can be heard on recordings of chamber music with the Centaur label. She will release her debut solo CD of French cello music in 2020. Nationally, Ms. Farny has performed live on radio programs including WFMT's "Live from WFMT" in Chicago, Illinois, and WXXI's "Live from Hochstein" series in Rochester, New York,

Eager for new pathways, Ms. Farny has experimented with many different musical styles and instruments. She learned the Theremin cello during collaborations with the Asko/Schoenberg Ensemble, the London Sinfonietta, and the International Contemporary Ensemble. The multi-city performance project of the complete works of Edgard Varèse was held at the Holland Festival (Amsterdam), Festival d'Automne (Paris), the Southbank Centre (London), and at the Lincoln Center Festival in New York City. She has recently begun studying Baroque cello, and has delved into jazz improvisation with Fredonia string colleagues, performing as a member of FredFour, a string quartet with double bass.

Ms. Farny is also active as a new music performer. Recognized with an "Encore Grant" in 2012 from the American Composers Forum, Ms. Farny's recent residencies at the Avaloch Farm Music Institute resulted in performances of a new work by Caroline Mallonee for her

duo Amistella, with violist Kimberly Sparr. She plans to premiere a new work for solo cello by Jorge Variago at the Sewanee Summer Music Festival in the summer of 2019. Additional research interests include cataloging, promoting, and performing works for cello by women composers.

A vibrant teacher, Natasha Farny has been invited to give master classes at various institutions, including Weimar's Hochschule für Musik Franz Liszt in Germany, the Brancaleoni International Music Festival in Italy, and the Eastman School of Music. As cello professor at the School of Music at the State University of New York in Fredonia, she oversees the Fredonia cello choir and coordinates the string chamber music program. Ms. Farny has been honored there with several awards, including grants from the Faculty Student Association and the United University Professions, as well as the Hagan Young Scholar Artist Award for outstanding artistic performance.

Natasha Farny holds bachelor's degrees begun at the Curtis Institute of Music and finished at Yale University, a master of music degree from the Eastman School of Music, and a doctorate of musical arts degree from The Juilliard School.



Eliran Avni, Piano

Praised as possessing both “ironclad technique” and “ample suppleness” by *The New York Times*, Eliran Avni is an emerging force in the contemporary classical music scene. Hailed as “The new hope of Israeli music” by *Ma’ariv*, he made his debut with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of Zubin Mehta at age 17. Since then, he has appeared as a soloist and chamber music collaborator throughout Europe, North and South America, as well as in his native Israel, and has played for live broadcasts for the Israeli and German broadcasting systems.

As a soloist, Eliran is known as a preeminent interpreter of the music of composer Avner Dorman. Solo performance highlights include

Dorman’s *Azerbaijani Dance* with the Israel Philharmonic and Zubin Mehta at Carnegie Hall, Rachmaninoff’s 3rd Piano Concerto with the Alabama Symphony, and the Grieg Concerto with the Oakland East Bay Symphony.

Having developed a strong affinity for chamber music after studying with world-renowned musicians Yo-Yo- Ma and Isaac Stern, Mr. Avni has collaborated with numerous artists such as Yehonatan Berick, Daniel Müller-Schott, Sharon Kam, Terrence Wilson, Jennifer Aylmer, William Sharp, and the Chicago Chamber Music Players, as well as actors Sigourney Weaver and Richard Chamberlain. In 2010, Eliran co-founded SHUFFLE Concert, a mixed chamber ensemble of six virtuoso musicians based on his original performance concept which has the audience select music to be performed during the concert from a varied list of composers and genres. He served as Artistic Director of the ensemble from 2010-2018, performing throughout the US, Canada, and Israel.

On the recording front, Eliran Avni has recorded for the Naxos, Tzadik and SHUFFLE Concert labels. He has recorded two CDs of composer Avner Dorman’s music: “The Piano Works of Avner Dorman,” recorded at Tanglewood’s Ozawa Hall and produced by Grammy winner David Frost, and a recording of Dorman’s Chamber Concerti with the Metropolis Ensemble and Maestro Andrew Cyr, both for Naxos. For Tzadik, he performed chamber music on composer Andrew Laster’s album, “Andrew Laster: Riptide.” With SHUFFLE Concert, he released its original self-titled album.

A charismatic lecturer and teacher, Eliran has presented master classes and lectures on the connection between music and emotion in both the United States and Israel, and has taught

at prestigious institutions such as The Juilliard School and the Bowdoin Summer Music Festival.

Having begun his childhood musical training at the Tel Aviv Academy with Marina Bondarenko, Eliran won first prize in both the Clairmont and Rachmaninoff Competitions at the age of 16. From 1989-2000, he was an annual scholarship recipient of the Israel-America Cultural Foundation. Dr. Avni received both his BM and MM degrees while studying with Dr. Yoheved Kaplinsky at The Juilliard School and completed his DMA degree as a student of both Dr. Kaplinsky and Jerome Lowenthal. His dissertation: "The Musician's Challenge: Merging Emotion and Structure in Performance", written under the advisement of Carl Schachter, presents an original methodology designed to assist musicians in discovering and understanding the emotional content of musical works.