



(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.

For this upcoming season, Ekstasis will perform their *Women's Voices* program at venues such as Bard College, The Eastman School of Music, Saugerties ProMusica, and WXXI Radio's Live from Hochstein. On January 11, 2020 at New York City's Merkin Hall they will perform a program entitled *Rêves Exstatiqes: French songs and vocalises*. This special program will feature guests: flutist Barry Crawford, mezzo-soprano Lynne McMurtry, violinist Jessica Tong, and violist David Rose.

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 New York state. 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. Her festival appearances include the Dvorak Society American Spring Festival, the Kronberg

Cello Festival, the Brancaleoni International Music Festival, the Sewanee Summer Music Festival, National Music Festival, Colorado Music Festival, Bay View Music Festival, and the Bowdoin Summer Music Festival.

Ms. Farny can be heard on recordings of chamber music with the Centaur label and she will release her debut solo CD of French cello music in January 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 Mallonée for her duo Amistella, with violist Kimberly Sparr. She premiered a new work for solo cello by Jorge Variego 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 Brancaloneoni 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 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.

ACCLAIM

"The Ekstasis Duo's program of French music cast a perfect and dreamy spell... I was absolutely entranced by the sensitivity and poetry of the way they shaped the music – lovely ideas, with the exacting technique to carry out these musical visions. And they know how to have fun too – they had the audience bouncing joyfully in their seats with Natasha Farny's arrangement of *Scaramouche* by Darius Milhaud. Natasha Farny and Eliran Avni are two very skilled musicians, who are creating something greater with this new partnership. Even our cynical engineers were touched by the music!"

— Excerpted letter from Mona Seghatoleslami, WXXI Radio Host

"She [Natasha Farny] has a big, generous, personal-sounding tone, through which she communicates big, generous, personal-sounding emotions. There is sensitivity in her work as well..."

— Boston Globe

"Pianist Eliran Avni plays expressively in both the fast and slow passages; his contribution is outstanding..."

— Fanfare Magazine

"The real deal... They played like virtuosi...with dozens of subtle flavors."

— Peter Hall, WNED

"Cellist Natasha Farny and pianist Eliran Avni opened their Friends of Vienna program with a sprightly performance of Darius Milhaud's *Scaramouche*. ...The concert concluded with violinist Yuki Numata Resnick joining Farny and Avni for Maurice Ravel's demanding Trio, one of the 20th century's masterpieces for piano trio.... Together, they made light work of the technical demands of the coloristic effects such as arpeggios, harmonics and glissandos indicated in the score, and beautifully captured the unusually rich texture of sound that Ravel created for the contrasting sonorities of the piano and the string instruments."

— (Friends of Vienna, September 15, 2018)
excerpted letter from Jan Jezioro, co-ordinator of the series



PROGRAMS

1. No Words Necessary

Featuring songs without words arranged for cello and piano spanning the ages from baroque to jazz. The audience will choose 10-12 works from a menu and determine both the program items and the order.

Menu:

- **Schumann** - Frauenliebe und Leben 9"
- **Mendelssohn** - Song without Words 5"
- **Brahms** - Meine Liebe ist Grün 2"
- **Kurt Weill** - Speak Low 4"
- **Mozart** - Non so più 4"
- **Sondheim** - The Worst Pies in London 3"
- **Tchaikovsky** - Kuda Kuda 6"
- **Alma Mahler** - Ekstase 3"
- **Ellington** - Sophisticated Lady 4"
- **Rachmaninoff** - Vocalise 6"
- **Nadia Boulanger** - Roses de Juin 3"
- **Debussy** - Romance 2"
- **Purcell** - When I am laid 5"
- **Ron Yedidya** - Lullabye (Bossa Nova) 4"
- **Chopin** - Polonaise Brillante 12"
- **Fauré** - Mandoline & C'est l'extase 5"

Total: 80 minutes



2. Enchanted Fairy Tales

Take a fantastical musical journey with us through different lands and tales.

Program:

- **Prokofiev** - Andante from Cinderella 5"
- **Beethoven** - "Magic Flute" Variations, WoO 46 11"
- **Martinů** - Variations on a Slovak theme 10"
- **Hindemith** - Phantasiestücke, op. 8, no. 2 9"
- **Cassadó** - Dance of the Green Devil 3"

Intermission

- **Caroline Mallonée** - Crossings 5"
- **Janáček** - Pohádka 11"
- **Rachmaninoff** - Little Red Riding Hood for solo piano 3"
- **Cui** - Orientale 3"
- **Debussy** - Petite Suite 12"
- **Prokofiev** - Cello Sonata, 2nd movement 5"

Total: 80 minutes



3. Women's Voices

Celebrating the amazing talent of female composers from the 19th and 20th centuries, these stunning and brilliant works, coupled with selected readings from their letters, provide insight into their thoughts about music.

Program:

- **Louise Farrenc** - Allegro Moderato from Sonata in B flat major op. 46 10"
- **Clara Schumann** - Three Romances 11"
- **Lera Auerbach** - Preludes nos. 7, 23 & 24 10"

Intermission

- **Ellen Taaffe Zwilich** - Lament 7"
- **Ethel Smyth** - Sonata in A minor, op. 5 20"
- **Hommage à Nina Simone** arr. D. Kaufman 10"
My Baby Just Cares For Me - Don't smoke in Bed - Love Me or Leave Me

Total: 68 minutes

4. La Vie en Rose: An evening of Parisian masterpieces

Readings of French poetry.

Program:

- **Louise Farrenc** - Sonata 18"
- **Franchomme** - Caprice no. 9 for solo cello 4"
- **Ravel** - Pièce en forme de Habanera 3"
- **Ravel** - Sonata op. posthume 13"

Intermission

- **Poulenc** - Improvisation for solo piano 3"
- **Roland Dyens** - Filmaginaires: Musique en quête d'image 5"
- **Debussy** - Beau Soir 3"
- **Poulenc** - Sonata 24"

Total: 73 minutes

5. German Romantics

In addition to the celebrated works, Ekstasis is excited to offer several hidden gems.

Program:

- **Fanny Hensel-Mendelssohn** - Fantasie 6"
- **Schumann** - Frauenliebe und Leben 9"
- **Kurt Weill** - Prologue, The Seven Deadly Sins for solo piano 4"
- **Kurt Weill** - Sonata 11"

Intermission

- **Bach** - Cello Suite No. 1, Prelude and Allemande 5"
- **Hindemith** - Phantasiestücke, op. 8, no. 2 9"
- **Brahms** - Sonata in E minor, op. 38 35"

Total: 80 minutes

6. Send in the Clowns!

As a subject, clowns are a perfect vehicle for exploring human states of being, such as comedy, tragedy, irony, and even insanity. We will juxtapose music with poetry by Surrealist poets and Shakespeare.

Program:

- **Stravinsky** Suite Italienne 18"
- **Leoncavallo** - Canio's Lament from "Pagliacci" 4"
- **Debussy** - Sonata 12"

Intermission

- **Stravinsky** - Petrouchka, Danse Russe, and Chez Petrouchka for solo piano 10"
- **Sondheim** - Send in the Clowns 4"
- **Milhaud arr. Farny** – Scaramouche 12"

Total: 60 minutes

7. Rachmaninoff Soirée

Through a reading of Rachmaninoff's letters, we will explore his anxieties and struggles so as to shine a light on the complexity of the artist's inner world. In addition, we will present the rarely-played solo cello sonata by Prokofiev.

Program:

- **Rachmaninoff** - Prelude and Dance Orientale, op. 2 10"
- **Prokofiev** - Sonata for solo cello, op. 134 9"
- **Rachmaninoff** - Vocalise 7"

Intermission

- **Rachmaninoff** - Etudes-Tableaux for solo piano 8"
- **Rachmaninoff** - Cello Sonata 35"

Total: 70 minutes

NOTE: The specific pieces listed in this section are suggestions. Ekstasis is open to discussing presenters' specific program requests and reserves the rights to amend any program based on touring schedule and other considerations. Each program is a mix of solos and duo pieces. Some have interactive elements of audience participation, all will include speaking from the stage and a Q&A post-concert.

OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

Ekstasis is excited to offer several different modules for outreach activities. Below you will find some ideas that can be grouped together to make a forty-five-minute presentation. We are looking forward to discussing with you how to create the best module for your activities.



OUTREACH ACTIVITIES INCLUDE:

- Narrated performance which includes a wide variety of styles and forms.
- Performances with school ensembles, such as a concerto or arranged piece.
- Coachings of student chamber and large ensembles.
- Interactive experience: involve young players through playing or clapping musical lines, such as a rhythmic ostinato pattern. Repertoire can be discussed in advance to include familiar music.
- Workshop a masterpiece: break down a Beethoven sonata movement for example, into the different sections, themes, patterns, and motives to give students a basic understanding of musical terminology.
- *Which do you prefer?* A game for students where the same phrase is played in different ways and the audience votes on which they prefer and why.
- *What's the style?* A juxtaposition of works from different periods: Baroque vs. Romantic, Jazz vs. Classical.
- *Cool sounds!* Demonstration and discussion of extended techniques in modern literature.
- *You know what I mean?* A game designed to teach students the inflections of a musical line. By making up words to musical phrases we learn about inflections, agogic accents, and focal phrasing points. Based on the "No Words Necessary" program.

All activities can be presented alongside pieces from our repertoire. We are always open to discussing the specific interests of your program and audience, so please don't hesitate to contact us with any questions or concerns.



More information is available at:
www.EkstasisDuo.com

EKSTASIS TECH RIDER

STAGE REQUIREMENTS

- One solid stand
- 3 chairs: two piano benches and one side chair for the page turner.
- A tuned grand piano/baby grand (not an upright or keyboard). Please inform the tuner that the official Ekstasis pitch is: A=441. The piano should be tuned the day of the performance. It is best to schedule the tuning between the dress-rehearsal and the performance and have the piano tuner available for the last 5 minutes of the dress-rehearsal time for any last-minute adjustments.
- One microphone on stand stage left. Wireless preferred.
- Page turner
- Basic lighting on stage and some light in the audience section to allow for reading the program.
- One tech rehearsal at the concert venue.

PRESENTER CHECKLIST

PR MATERIALS

Most recent bio may be downloaded from Ekstasis' website: www.EkstasisDuo.com
Please verify which publicity shot you would like to use for your event.

PROGRAM

Make sure to confirm program

ON STAGE

If possible, cello podium.

If available, shell. This is in case the hall has more than 200 seats and has a shell available. The concert is acoustic and the shell will enhance the audience enjoyment of the concert.

One \microphone on stand. Wireless preferred.

Schedule the tech rehearsal.

Schedule piano tuning for the day of the performance, preferably after the tech rehearsal and before the performance.

MEAL

Order food for meal before concert. Please note the food restrictions:

- For Ms. Farny: No fast food, please
- For Mr. Avni: Vegetarian (yes fish/seafood)

THANK YOU SO MUCH!