Program notes By Robert Kirzinger

True to the ensemble’s mission of pursuing the fundamentally interesting, BMOP’s “Strange Bedfellows” concert brings together concertos for rare and elusive solo instruments, in a genre that came into being essentially to enforce variety. From its beginnings as a settled genre in the mid-1700s, the concerto has thrived on the physical imbalance and narrative drama of the one, or few, against the many: the solo instrument in its ingenuity and virtuosic brilliance countering the sheer potential of force and diversity afforded by the ensemble. The listener already attributes to that abstract soloist (or, far more rarely, small group of soloists) a unique and noble personality even before the performer him or herself shows up on the stage—usually nattily, and distinctively, decked out, in comparison with the typical wardrobe homogeneity of the orchestra. For the composer, this situation already suggests intriguing challenges, both pragmatic and philosophical, or political, if you want to put it that way. These out-of-the-way solo instruments, two of which (the theremin and the electric guitar) didn’t even exist before about 1920, suggest another level of consideration, engendering in the composer the instinct to champion their peculiarities and specialties, to prove them fully worthy of their roles as monarch-of-the-moment.

Luciano Berio 1925–2003)

Chemins II su Sequenza VI

The viola, like the horn, is a common enough sight in concert music, but until the mid-20th century its heyday as a featured solo instrument was the period of the late Baroque to classical era, the concertos of Telemann being the most important. Berlioz’s oddball *Harold in Italy* is the lone major concertante work for viola in the Romantic era; as a corollary, there were no famous soloists other than the part-timer Paganini. In the early 20th century, there are Paul Hindemith’s solo sonatas, the chamber concertos (opp. 36/4 and 48), and a full-fledged orchestral concerto, as well as concertos by Bartók and Walton, and since then the repertoire has expanded enormously. This century has also seen major solo artists dedicate their careers to the viola, including, currently, Yuri Bashmet, Kim Kashkashian, Nadia Sirota, Garth Knox, and many others.

The great Italian composer Luciano Berio was associated with the most innovative and influential post-World War II generation of composers that included Boulez, Nono, and Stockhausen, but his musical education was the most traditional of the bunch. His intellectual interests were broad and intense, encompassing semiotics and linguistics (Umberto Eco was a close friend), philosophy, anthropology, and historicity, all of which directly informed his work. Folk music was also a big part of his thinking. He was married for many years to the soprano Cathy Berberian, and both during and after their marriage wrote many important works for her, including *Sequenza III*, *Circles*, *Recital*, and *Opera*, all of which challenged the conventional ideas of the concert and performance experience. His orchestral work *Sinfonia*, a postmodern tour-de-force that borrows wholesale from Mahler, Beckett, and Levi-Strauss, and on a smaller scale from dozens of other sources, is one of the most important works of the 20th century. Berio’s *Sequenza* series, a cycle of solo works for most of the orchestral instruments plus a few others (voice, guitar, accordion), was a seminal accomplishment.Berio, borrower and recontextualizer, followed up on several of the *Sequenzi* with ensemble works using a solo piece as the central armature. The first few of these he called *Chemins* (French meaning “roads” or “paths”), beginning with *Chemins I* for harp and ensemble, based on *Sequenza II* for harp. The present piece *Chemins II* for viola and small ensemble, based on *Sequenza VI* for solo viola, has its own further spawn: *Chemins IIb* for small orchestra, *Chemins IIc* for clarinet and ensemble, and *Chemins III* (*Chemins II* plus orchestra). There are also *Chemins* pieces on the *Sequenzi* for oboe, guitar, trumpet, and alto saxophone, as well as the violin-and-orchestra *Chorale*, based on *Sequenza VIII*.Berio described these pieces as being layered like onions, but in each case one can readily hear the source, and what the viola plays in *Chemins II* is the solo work. (Both were written in 1967.) The other instruments echo, mimic, and mock the viola, with expanded and extended harmonic (and of course timbral) complexity ensuing. The viola’s part is fundamentally a tremolo quadruple-stop shifting chord, sometimes arpeggiated quickly, a nod to Paganini’s violin caprices and a far cry from the yearning melancholy associated with the instrument. The initial energy proves impossible to maintain, resulting in dissipation like frequent pauses for breath before a resurgence and even heightened tension as the viola’s part rises ever higher. The ending is quiet and questing. Throughout, the ensemble’s sound, tied directly to the soloist’s, also transforms subtly, moving from reactive pointillism to more sustained and independent fragments. A quick burst during the viola’s final quiet soliloquy briefly suggests escape.

Keeril Makan b. 1972)

Dream Lightly

In spite of its being based substantially on an instrument that has existed in similar form for hundreds of years, no instrument has defined or been defined by music of the past century than the electric guitar. Guitars amplified via microphones were introduced in the 1910s or so, and the pickup guitar was patented in the early 1930s, after which it became a staple of dance bands, primarily as part of the rhythm section. Some great jazz performers took it up as a solo instrument, and in rock music players from Chuck Berry to Jimi Hendrix to Kirk Hammett elevated it to unfettered popular heroism. Most remarkably, all of its greatest players have developed a distinctive voice through choice of guitar, amplifiers, and the proliferation of effects pedals (overdrive, chorus, phase, and lots of proprietary names and ideas), as much as by their chords, rhythms, and technique. These extensions of the instrument are unprecedented in such a short span of time, and outstrip the degree of evolution of any other instrument over hundreds of years (excepting the more recently ubiquitous synthesizer). It is capable of being both a guitar and an electronic instrument of great possibility. Concert composers that have written extensively for electric guitar include Glenn Branca, Steven Mackey, and Peter Ablinger, among many others.

Keeril Makan played violin and oboe and began composing in high school. He attended Oberlin University and the University of California – Berkeley. Among other awards and recognitions, he received the Luciano Berio Rome Prize from the American Academy in Rome. He is an assistant professor of music at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He is currently at work on an opera based on Ingmar Bergman’s *Persona* in collaboration with Jay Scheib for the group Alarm Will Sound, as well as a major work commissioned by Meet the Composer for for Either/Or. Monograph recordings of his music have been released by the Tzadik and Starkland labels, with a third due for release by Mode Records.Makan’s *Dream Lightly* is a concerto for the electronicized guitar written specifically for Seth Josel. Makan wrote the piece on a commission from the American Composers Orchestra, which gave the premiere with Josel under Jeffrey Milarsky on November 14, 2008. Makan has made a practice of discovering an instrument’s sonic capabilities beyond its traditional techniques through direct work with that instrument. He makes music from oft-ignored artifacts of performance, such as slight variations in pitch, the harmonic resonance of unplayed strings, the noise of key clicks, sounds that draw the curious listener in, sharpening focus, allowing detail to become narrative. In the case of *Dream Lightly*, the guitar’s being constrained to harmonics is both a narrowing of its timbral and pitch world and an expansion of one’s assumptions about the instrument. Typical of his approach, Makan worked out the viable harmonics on electric guitar for himself, paying particular attention to slight variances in pitch. The composer’s own program note follows.

*In* Dream Lightly*, we are placed in a world that is beautifully paralyzed, or perhaps paralyzed by beauty. The music does not move; it has fallen asleep but is not aware of it. It is stuck in a continual repetition of similar thoughts, slightly changing and rearranging them, cast in subtly changing environments.*

*The guitarist almost always plays harmonics. These are notes produced by lightly touching the string at certain points to create sounds that sound higher and more fragile than ordinary pitches. The world of harmonics hovers above the guitar, oftentimes slightly, but purposefully, out of tune with instruments played in a conventional manner. The traditional tuning of the orchestra reflects a desire to move forward, to be able to modulate, and is a compromise between this desire and the way vibrating strings and air columns naturally work. The tuning of harmonics is derived from the open string; it is a static world, complete unto itself.The piece explores the dissonance that exists between the harmonics on different strings of the guitar, as well as between the tuning of the guitar’s harmonics and the tuning of the orchestra. All of the music is derived from or in response to the guitar. It is not a concerto in the traditional sense, as the soloist and the orchestra are not antagonists. Rather it is as if the orchestra exists inside of the guitarist’s head, helping, supporting, and coloring. There is a passage where the guitarist gently strums the instrument, not playing harmonics. Whether this is a moment of clarity or a deeper sleep is uncertain. After this, the music returns to its initial thoughts but eventually pushes forward, whether to wakefulness or deeper slumber, is again uncertain.*

Andrew Norman b. 1979)

Air: for theremin and orchestra

Andrew Norman wrote his Concerto for theremin for virtuoso Carolina Eyck and the Heidelberg Philharmonic during his tenure as Composer for the City of Heidelberg in 2010–11. It was premiered April 13, 2011, in Heidelberg. His Heidelberg position is but one of Norman’s many recent accomplishments, which also include the Rome Prize and the Berlin Prize. This season is the first of his two years as composer-in-residence of the Boston Modern Orchestra Project.

Norman was born in the Midwest, grew up in central California, and now lives in Brooklyn. He studied the piano and the viola before entering the University of Southern California, where he worked with Donald Crockett, Stephen Hartke, and Stewart Gordon. He also studied with Martha Ashleigh. He later attended Yale University, working with Aaron Kernis, Martin Bresnick, and Ingram Marshall. His works include chamber and orchestral pieces, such as *The Companion Guide to Rome*, a cycle inspired by that city’s churches written for the Janaki Trio and the Scharoun Ensemble; *Gran Turismo* for eight violins; and several works for orchestra, including the very well-received *Drip Blip Sparkle Spin Glint Glide Glow Float Flop Chop Pop Shatter Splash*, a veritable catalog of orchestral character and compositional technique commissioned by the Minnesota Orchestra. He has also been commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, New York Youth Symphony, the Orpheum Stiftung for the Tonhalle Orchestra of Zurich, and Young Concert Artists, among others. His *Apart, Together*, commissioned by the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra for their 40th anniversary, was premiered this past December in Pennsylvania and New York City, followed by a European tour.The theremin was one of the first viable electronic instruments, and one of the most persistent, surviving now even in an age when computer synthesis dominates non-acoustic music (including most pop). It is named after Léon Theremin (aka Lev Termen), a Russian scientist, who took out a patent on the instrument in 1928. Its unique sound recommended it to composers of film music, particularly in the science fiction realm, as well as to progressive-minded concert composers including Varèse, Schnittke, and Grainger. Robert Moog made a number of the instruments in the 1950s, helping extend its popularity, and in the mid-1990s a feature-length documentary about the theremin created another surge of curiosity. Thereminists Dalit Warshaw, Lydia Kavina, and Brian Robison are among composers who have written significant recent works for the instrument.The theremin is operated via the proximity of the player’s two hands to two antennas—typically the right hand controlling the pitch, and the left the volume. The two antennas control oscillators in the instrument (which the player never touches), which are in turn amplified through a loudspeaker. Like a cello or violin, the theremin is capable of producing any pitch in its range, and partly for that reason is a difficult and subtle instrument to play. But the physical act of playing also seems dancelike, and the sonic result, influenced by that dance, can be highly nuanced.The composer writes:

*The theremin’s unusual history gave me a lot to think about as I started to write a piece for theremin and orchestra, but in the end it wasn’t its historical and cultural connotations that got my creative juices flowing, it was the astonishing range of things the instrument itself can do. Perhaps most compelling to me among these things is the ability of the theremin to sound uncannily human. It was with this in mind that I decided to write a work that is less “concerto” and more “concert aria.” This is a piece that treats the theremin like a hyper-human voice — a voice that can sing lower than the lowest basso profundo and higher than the highest coloratura soprano, a voice that can sing softer than any one instrument in the orchestra and louder than all of them put together, and, perhaps most alluringly, a voice that can sing the most impossibly long phrases without having to breathe like a normal human. Long-lined lyricism and its place in the discourse of contemporary classical music is something I’ve been thinking a lot about in the last few years, so this chance to write for theremin, to indulge my most lyrical tendencies and write more vocally than I have in years, has come at the perfect time for me.*

*Like the theremin itself, with its retro-futurist, high culture-meets-pop culture connotations, the piece I wrote is wide ranging in its sonic associations. Without really intending to, I ended up in a sound world that is somewhere between Bernard Herrmann and Iannis Xenakis (think two parts Hollywood Regency glamour to one part Saarinen-style Midcentury Modern). It was an odd place to inhabit, to be sure, but the more I worked on the piece the more I saw this sound world, full of chromatic harmonies and keening glissandos, as a fitting extension of the theremin itself, a projection of this instrument’s unlikely yet endearing synthesis of faded Old World nostalgia and Sci-Fi kitsch.*

*Air*—the title suggests much, being the Anglicization of “aria,” the space between the player’s hands and the instrument, and even, in a way, the acoustic quality of the theremin’s sometimes-eerie/airy sound. (Ives suggested an “ether organ” for his Fourth Symphony; “aetherophone,” according to Michael Steinberg, was another name for theremin.) The piece begins as pure aria, the soloist lightly accompanied by harp and strings. A surge of rising scale figures in the ensemble establishes an articulated texture countering the theremin’s role, and the increased presence of the piano, with its chords and fixed, tempered scale, balances the glissandi and other ambiguities inherent in the music of the theremin and strings, which culminates in a dense wave of sound before dissipating. The theremin has a solo cadenza, and achieves a kind of détente with the piano as the piece approaches a conclusion that recalls its beginning.

Avner Dorman b. 1975)

Mandolin Concerto

The instrument we mostly think of as being a standard mandolin is the Neopolitan mandolin: a small lute-like body with four double courses of strings, tuned like a violin and played with a pick, usually via tremolo (fast strumming). This is the mandolin popular in the U.S. as a bluegrass instrument, and it is this type of mandolin that is played by Avi Avital. It was essentially settled in its form (Paul Sparks tells us in the New Grove Dictionary) by the mid-1700s. Its similar-sounding cousin, the mandolino, had a toehold in the middle Baroque orchestra (especially as an obbligato presence—that is, a soloist accompanist to a solo voice or other instrument), and Vivaldi, among others, wrote concertos for it, but as a concert instrument the whole family has been marginalized since that time, despite their continuing presence in various regional folk traditions, particularly Italian popular music. Avital has had a hand in changing this situation in the present day with his artistry and his enthusiasm for commissioning new works, including Avner Dorman’s concerto (with support from the Festival NESSIAH in Pisa, Italy, the Israeli Ministry of Education, and the Yehoshua Rabinovitch Fund in Tel Aviv). Avital premiered Dorman’s concerto in Pisa in December 2006 with the Rostov State Orchestra led by Andrea Gottfried.

Born in Israel, Avner Dorman studied music and physics at Tel Aviv University, working with Josef Bardanashvili, and came to the United States to earn his doctorate at the Juilliard School under John Corigliano. He lives in New York City. At age twenty-five, he was honored with the Prime Minister’s Award for his *Ellef Symphony*. His music has been performed by the philharmonic orchestras of Israel, New York, Los Angeles, Munich, and Hamburg, as well as at the Cabrillo Festival, under such conductors as Zubin Mehta, Marin Alsop, Ascher Fisch, and Simone Young. Andrew Cyr led the Metropolis Ensemble in recordings of Dorman’s concertos for mandolin (with Avi Avital), piccolo, and piano, and the Concerto Grosso for the Naxos label. His piano sonatas nos. 1-3 and other solo piano music are also available on Naxos, performed by Eliran Avni, and a forthcoming CD features his Third Violin Sonata, *Niggunim*, played by Gil and Orli Shaham. Avital’s children’s piece for narrator and orchestra, *Uzu and Muzu from Kakaruzu*, will be premiered in March by the Stockton (CA) Symphony, and the Alabama Symphony takes his *Astrolatry* to Carnegie Hall in May.Dorman’s style blends elements of middle eastern folk music—its scales and rhythms as well as its emotional core—with a deft and modern sense of large-scale structural flow and instrumental texture. He describes his concerto for mandolin and string orchestra as “neo-baroque,” and treats the solo/ripieno (or ensemble) relationship much as, say, Vivaldi would do; he also relates the middle part of the concerto to the harmonic-patterned textures of Bach. The concerto, in three connected parts, begins with a meditative solo that establishes the harmonic world of the piece. Slow phrases alternate with fast—aria versus dance, in a sense—until gradually each has evolved into a complete idea, whereupon development and transformation take place. Toward the end of the eighteen-minute piece, the soloist engages in soulful play with solo viola and cello, and retuning the mandolin *en passant* creates an atmosphere of strangeness to start the suspended, prayerlike ending.

Eric Chasalow b. 1955)

Horn Concerto

Compared to the theremin or the electric guitar, the French horn is of course a “normal” instrument in concert music, but its store of concerto vehicles is nonetheless small. Some of this has to do with the transformation of the instrument since the 1700s, when the horn was a valveless curl of tubing and a player had to carry multiple horns corresponding to different keys. Evolution of playing technique and the addition of valves in the early 1800s expanded its chromatic potential. Around 1900 the so-called “double horn,” combining two different lengths of tubing, was invented, and it is this horn that is most often used today. Mozart’s four concertos for the valveless (so-called “natural”) horn are the wellspring. There are no solo horn concertos by significant composers of the 19th century, excepting Carl Maria von Weber’s rather radical Concertino and an early effort by the young Richard Strauss. These remain in the repertoire almost by default. In the 20th century the repertoire has expanded greatly, and some of the horn’s most important concerto vehicles have been written within the past twenty years, including concertos by Oliver Knussen, György Ligeti (who calls for multiple types of horn), and Elliott Carter.

The New Jersey born composer Eric Chasalow has been a member of the Brandeis University faculty for over twenty years. He is particularly known for his works integrating electronics, including his *Dream Songs*, written for BMOP and premiered under Gil Rose’s direction in May 2001. He attended Maine’s Bates College and studied composition at nearby Bowdoin with Elliott Schwartz. He also attended the New England Conservatory and went on to earn a doctorate at Columbia University, a hotbed for electronic music studies, where he came into contact with some of its pioneers including Babbitt and Davidovsky and also worked with the flutist/composer Harvey Sollberger. When he joined the Brandeis faculty, he completely updated and revamped the school’s electronic music curriculum and studio. Chasalow has received commissions from Boston Musica Viva, Dinosaur Annex, the Fromm Foundation, and Parnassus, among many others. His most ambitious piece in recent seasons was his 2007 multimedia opera *The Puzzle Master*, a retelling of the Icarus myth. Other recent and current projects include commissions from Chamber Music America for the New York New Music Ensemble and from the Barlow Foundation for the Talea Ensemble, and a forthcoming CD, *Are You Radioactive, Pal?*, on Albany Records. He is also writing a short piece with electronics for the Lydian String Quartet.Chasalow has known horn player Bruno Schneider for many years. As he recalled, “Bruno’s older brother was an exchange student for a year, living with my family when I was growing up, so the families became very close. When Bruno had his first orchestra positions and came to New York, we met and became good friends.” Chasalow wrote a piece for Schneider in 1979, and later wrote the solo piece *Winding Up* at his request. The present concerto seems to have supplanted, at least temporarily, Schneider’s more recent call for a substantial piece for horn and electronics. “I can no longer remember how I decided to write the concerto—it sort of evolved from knowing [Bruno] and his playing, which is very elegant, and eventually hearing in my head a kind of music I thought would really suit him.” Chasalow completed the concerto in 2009 and immediately proposed it to BMOP, but vicissitudes of scheduling delayed the premiere until this season.Chasalow keeps just enough of the standard characteristics of the classical concerto to make his subversions of that form evident. In the first movement, “Confident and insistent,” the orchestra begins alone with sharp, punchy, syncopated rhythms, rapid fire exchanges among winds, percussion, and strings, promising a powerful entrance by the soloist. Concerning that entrance, Chasalow writes, “It would keep the listener waiting for something else and make the next event matter a lot…. With each delay [of that next event], the stakes became higher.” The orchestra continues on its energetic way, with punctuations by the soloist, whose second big event is in the way of a rhetorical “…but then....”Instead of a single, central slow movement, there are two, in the first of which (“Meditative, a long expanding breath”), the composer writes, “the horn slowly starts to find its voice, gradually adding pitches to its tune.” The orchestra is active, but its quiet bustling weaves a gossamer atmosphere. Chasalow makes good use of the contrast between stopped and open horn. The movement ends accelerating into a short cadenza, which the composer describes as “too short and in the wrong place,” setting up the expectation of a fast finale. The composer thwarts this with another slow movement (“Distant”), featuring muted horn at its most lyrical accompanied primarily by muted violins. Starkly contrasting with this sustained music are the sharp chords and rhythms of the finale (“Moving by angle and accent”), which revisits the energy of the opening, the horn now much more active (along with, in fact, some “stuck” notes in the orchestra). The opening returns verbatim later: “About two-thirds through, we get an actual literal recapitulation of the tutti that started movement I. The horn once again plays its one pitch, but this time with more energy, and it eventually breaks free of the stuck note, which is very exhilarating. With this release, the rest of the movement can fulfill the development of both first and fourth movements.” But the horn has broken free even of this mode, and ends with an introspective recollection of an earlier self.

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Guest Artists

Dalit Warshaw, an internationally acclaimed composer, educator, pianist and thereminist, has had her works performed by over twenty-six orchestral ensembles, including the New York and Israel Philharmonic Orchestras (Zubin Mehta conducting), the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Houston Symphony, the Y Chamber Orchestra, the Colorado Symphony, the Albany Symphony and the Grand Rapids Symphony.

Having studied theremin with the renowned Clara Rockmore from an early age, she has appeared as thereminist with such ensembles as the New York Philharmonic, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the American Composers Orchestra and the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic.Awards and grants include five ASCAP Foundation Grants to Young Composers, a Fulbright Scholarship to Israel (2001–2002), a Fromm Music Foundation Grant from Harvard University, and a Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In 1984, she became the youngest ever to win the BMI Award for Student Composers, with her orchestral piece *Fun Suite*, written at the age of eight.A full-time composition faculty member at the Boston Conservatory since September 2004, Dr. Warshaw is a graduate of Columbia University and the Juilliard School. Her CD, *Invocations*, was released in January 2011 and is available on Albany Records.

 Seth Josel earned his Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Art at Yale University after acquiring his Bachelor of Music at the Manhattan School of Music. His teachers included Manuel Barrueco and Eliot Fisk. He is a recipient of a Fulbright-Hays grant and was also a grantee at the Akademie Schloß Solitude. As ensemble player and soloist Josel has been involved in the first performances of more than one hundred works. He has collaborated and consulted closely with such composers as Mauricio Kagel, Helmut Lachenmann, Tristan Murail and James Tenney. Josel has concertized throughout Europe as well as the U.S. and Canada, and has been a guest performer with leading orchestras and ensembles, including the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the Southwest German Radio Orchestra, the DSO Berlin and the Schönberg/ASKO Ensemble. From 1991 to 2000, he was a permanent member of the ensemble musikFabrik. In recent seasons, he has been guesting regularly with KNM Berlin and Ensemble SurPlus. In addition to his three solo CDs featuring American music, he has recorded with, amongst others, musikFabrik, the DSO Berlin, Rundfunksinfonie-Orchester Berlin and Champ d’Action. He also recorded Berio’s “Sequenza XI” for the complete “Sequenza” cycle released on Mode Records as well as Peter Ablinger’s “33-127.”John Stulz, violin, is a passionate ambassador for classical and contemporary music, having worked closely with such diverse artists as Pierre Boulez, George Benjamin, Steven Mackey, Steve Reich, and Donald Crockett. As executive director of What’s Next? Ensemble, John helped found the annual Los Angeles Composers Project in 2009, having since brought together over one hundred young musicians to perform the music of over thirty-five local composers. In addition to contemporary music, John has served as principal violist of many orchestras including the Schleswig-Holstein Festival Orchestra, performing in many of the great halls in Europe under the direction of Christoph Eschenbach. John holds a bachelor’s degree in music from the University of Southern California where he studied viola with Donald McInnes and played chamber music with Midori Goto and is currently pursuing a Masters in Music at the New England Conservatory studying under Garth Knox and Kim Kashkashian.Avi Avital is internationally regarded for his performances at venues including Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center in New York, Berlin Philharmonic Hall, KKL Luzern, Forbidden City Concert Hall in Beijing and Wigmore Hall in London. He has appeared as soloist with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, I Pomeriggi Musicali di Milano, San Francisco Chamber Orchestra and Berliner Symphoniker under the batons of Mstislav Rostropovich, Sir Simon Rattle and Philippe Entremont, among others.

Avital is the first mandolin player to receive a Grammy nomination in the category “Best Instrumental Soloist” for his recording of Avner Dorman’s Mandolin Concerto with Andrew Cyr and the Metropolis Ensemble. He has won numerous competitions and awards, including Germany’s ECHO Prize for his 2008 recording with the David Orlowsky Trio and the Aviv Competition, the preeminent national competition for Israeli soloists. Avital has released numerous recordings in the disparate genres of klezmer, baroque and new classical music for the Deutsche Grammophon, Sony Classical BMG and Naxos labels.In 2012, Avital joins the Silk Road Project workshop to collaborate on a new work by composer David Bruce. He premieres a commission by Ariel Blumenthal with violinist Ittai Shapira in memory of journalist Daniel Pearl and returns to the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra. Avi Avital recently signed an exclusive agreement with Deutsche Grammophon, who will release a Bach album in June 2012.

Bruno Schneider, Swiss horn player, began playing the horn at the Music Conservatory in La Chaux-de-Fonds with Robert Faller. After having passed the Professional Capacity diploma there in 1979, he went on to study at the Music Academy in Detmold with Michael Hoeltzel, where he received a Virtuosity with distinction in 1981. Having played for fifteen years as solo horn in Zürich, Münich and Geneva in the OSR (Suisse Romande Orchestre), he now teaches at the Music Conservatory in Geneva and at the Musikhochschule in Freiburg. Composers including Norbert Moret, Jost Meyer, Eric Chasalow, and Jörg Widmann have written compositions for him.

Founder of the Académie de cor de La Chaux de Fonds and of the Swiss Horn Society, Schneider has served as Vice President of the International Horn Society and hosted the International Horn Symposium in 2007 at La Chaux de Fonds. Schneider performs worldwide as a soloist and as a chamber music musician with ensembles including the wind ensemble Sabine Meyer, of which he is one of the founding members. Schneider has recorded for AVI, EMI, Claves, Arion, Erato and CPO, performing major works of the horn repertoire. Since 2003, he has been Solo Horn in the Lucerne Festival Orchestra directed by Claudio Abbado.