



OPUS 1



ISRAELI CHAMBER PROJECT
הפרויקט הקאמרי הישראלי

ISRAELI CHAMBER PROJECT

Winner of the 2011 Israeli Ministry of Culture Outstanding Ensemble Award, **the Israeli Chamber Project** brings together some of today's most distinguished young Israeli musicians for chamber music concerts and educational and outreach programs both in Israel and abroad. A dynamic ensemble comprising strings, winds, harp and piano, the Israeli Chamber Project has quickly made a name for itself through its passionate musicianship and creative programming. Based both in Israel and New York, the ensemble was created as a means for its members to give something back to the community where they began their musical education and to showcase Israeli culture, through its music and musicians, to concert goers overseas.

Since its founding in 2008, the Israeli Chamber Project has embarked on semiannual tours of Israel, where it has garnered rave reviews from the press and established itself as a major artistic force on that country's vibrant cultural scene. These tours have included performances on some of the premier chamber music series in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, as well as in remote towns where access to live chamber music is extremely rare. A strong advocate for music education, the Israeli Chamber Project has partnered with conservatories across Israel in order to offer lessons and masterclasses to students of all cultural and economic backgrounds, many of whom have little or no opportunity to work with internationally recognized musicians. Guest artists on ICP tours have included the Guarneri String Quartet's Michael Tree and Peter Wiley, and the Cleveland Orchestra's Principal Flutist Joshua Smith, among others.

An important part of the Israeli Chamber Project's mission is to support emerging Israeli composers by commissioning works specifically for the ensemble. Composers commissioned so far have included Matan Porat, Jonathan Keren, Gilad Cohen, Yohanah Chendler, Amit Gilutz, Ronnie Reshef, and Zohar Sharon.

In North America, the Israeli Chamber Project has appeared at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, The Morgan Library & Museum, Bargemusic, and at Symphony Space in New York City, The Morrison Artists Series in San Francisco, Carmel Music Society, The Clark Library at UCLA, and Ottawa's Chamberfest, among others, and has been featured on NPR's *Performance Today* and WQXR radio's *Young Artists Showcase*.

For the first 30 measures of *Sebes*, the violinist plays a second instrument that has been tuned *scordatura*. The mistuned fiddle blares forth with strident tritones in the opening solo, charging the atmosphere with electricity. The clarinetist also switches instruments, from A to B-flat clarinet, sailing in with a vibrant, energetic *perpetuum mobile*. At measure 30, Bartók allows a scant four bars for the violinist to switch to a normally tuned instrument before it rejoins the ensemble. Perhaps the violin cadenza toward the end is Bartók's reward for the acrobatics required to make the change.

Sebes is filled with the modal harmonies and compelling rhythms that characterize Bartók's other late works. It provides *Contrasts* with a lively and energetic conclusion.

Laurie Shulman ©2012

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Glenorchy Campbell, David Edelsohn, Jane Holcombe, Mattan Meridor,
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ISRAELI CHAMBER PROJECT

Tibi Cziger Artistic Director & Clarinet

Assaff Weisman Executive Director & Piano

Daniel Bard Violin | **Guy Ben-Ziony** Viola | **Yael Kareth** Piano

Michal Korman Cello | **Sivan Magen** Harp | **Itamar Zorman** Violin

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State University of New York

Debussy's opening *Prologue* is free and declamatory, with modal harmonies. His original title for *Sérénade* was "*Pierrot fâché avec la lune*" ["Pierrot angry at the moon"]. The cello uses a mandolin-like pizzicato. But these plucked strings have a mocking ring to them; we are not quite certain how seriously to take this suitor. The rippling harp part in the finale provides elegant, flowing accompaniment to the song-like cello lines.

Contrasts is the only chamber work in which **Béla Bartók** used a wind instrument. The piece was commissioned in 1938 by the jazz clarinetist and band leader Benny Goodman, probably at the suggestion of the Hungarian violinist Joszef Szigeti. It bears a joint dedication to Goodman and Szigeti. Goodman hoped for a two-movement work along the lines of Bartók's earlier violin Rhapsodies. His plan was to record the piece, neatly fitting it onto the two sides of a 78 rpm disc. At the premiere in 1939, Szigeti, Goodman, and pianist Endre Petri only performed *Verbunkos* and *Sebes* – but it is clear from Bartók's letters that he had three movements in mind all along.

Bartók wrestled with titles for the new work. He was likely swayed in his eventual choice of *Contrasts* by the diversity of tone color in his trio, but the three movements each have a distinct character.

Verbunkos means "recruiting dance." Of 18th-century origin, it is closely related to the *csárdás*. Before Hungary instituted compulsory military conscription, a *verbunkos* was used to encourage prospective soldiers to enlist. This first movement is march-like, albeit flexible in tempo. Clarinet is featured, but not at the expense of the violin. Bartók relegates piano to the background in a pattern that holds for most of *Contrasts*. The pianist functions primarily to underscore rhythm, often with *glissandi* or blocked chords, but rarely with melody. A brilliant clarinet cadenza at the close of the first movement highlights the instrument's flexibility.

Bartók's slow movement, *Pihenő* [Relaxation], belies its title. Far from releasing tension, it seems to radiate it. Mysterious trills and unresolved melodies ask more questions than they answer, transporting us deep into Bartók's Hungary. *Pihenő* shares much in spirit with the slow movements of the Fifth String Quartet (1934) and the Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion (1937). Joszef Szigeti praised Bartók's "unfailing sense of form, of equilibrium... that compelled him to add this -- as it turned out -- so necessary Nighthpiece, with its wonderful repose and outdoor feeling."

TIBI CZIGER CLARINET

Described as an “exciting soloist” by *The New York Times*, Israeli clarinetist Tibi Cziger is the Artistic Director and founder of the Israeli Chamber Project. A passionate chamber musician, Mr. Cziger appears regularly across Israel, Europe, and the US, and has been featured in television and radio broadcasts, performing a broad range of chamber music literature. He is also a founding member of the Gropius Ensemble, whose members both play and act. He has participated in festivals such as Marlboro, Musique en Brionnais (France) and the Jerusalem Chamber Music Festival, and has collaborated with Peter Wiley, Michael Tree, Bruno Canino, Mihaela Martin, and Joseph Kalichstein, among others.

Mr. Cziger appeared as a soloist with the Tivoli Symphony Orchestra in Copenhagen, iPalpiti String Orchestra at the Walt Disney Hall, St. Petersburg Chamber Philharmonic, Metropolis Ensemble, and the Israel Chamber Orchestra, and has performed as a guest clarinetist with chamber ensembles and orchestras in Israel, Europe, and the US. He is currently the principal clarinetist of the Israeli Camerata Orchestra.

Mr. Cziger holds an Artist Diploma from The Juilliard School, a Master’s degree from the University of Southern California, and a Bachelor’s degree *magna cum laude* from the Tel Aviv Music Academy. His main teachers include Charles Neidich, Yehuda Gilad, Richard Lesser, and Itzhak Kazzap.

Mr. Cziger’s awards include the America-Israel Cultural Foundation scholarships, as well as a special AICF scholarship for study abroad. Mr. Cziger is a Selmer-Paris Artist.

MICHAL KORMAN CELLO

A prize winner at both the Gaspar Cassado and Enescu International Cello Competitions, cellist Michal Korman has performed as a soloist with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra under Zubin Mehta, The Tokyo Philharmonic, Jerusalem Symphony, Tivoli Festival Orchestra (Denmark), Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional of Peru, Israel Camerata, and the Juilliard Chamber Orchestra, and has appeared in solo and chamber music recitals at Carnegie Hall’s Weill and Zankel Halls, Alice Tully Hall, the Gardner Museum, and the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, as well as at all of Israel’s major venues.

An avid chamber musician, Ms. Korman is a founding member of the Israeli Chamber Project and has participated in the Verbier festival and the Manchester International Cello Festival, as well as the Yellow Barn and Marlboro chamber music festivals, with which she has also toured. Ms. Korman has been featured on WQXR and Israel's national radio and television stations, and has performed and toured in Europe and across the US with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra directed by Daniel Barenboim.

Born in Jerusalem, Ms. Korman received her Artist Diploma and Master of Music degree from The Juilliard School as a student of Joel Krosnick and Timothy Eddy. She holds a Bachelor of Music degree *magna cum laude* from the Buchman-Mehta School of Music in Tel Aviv, where she studied with Hillel Zori. Her previous teachers include Uzi Wiesel and Sabena Frankenberg.

Michal Korman has been a recipient of the America-Israel Cultural Foundation scholarships as well as the Kleppel and Slatkin Scholarships.

SIVAN MAGEN HARP

Praised by the press as a “great musician who happens to be a harpist,” Sivan Magen is the only Israeli to have ever won the prestigious International Harp Contest in Israel. Mr. Magen is also a winner of the Pro Musicis International Award and is the 2012 Award Winner of the Borletti-Buitoni Trust – the first harpist to have been awarded that honor. He has appeared in recital at Merkin Hall, Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, Wigmore Hall, and as a soloist across the US, South America, Europe, and Israel.

A founding member of the Israeli Chamber Project, Mr. Magen is an avid chamber musician and has toured with Musicians from Marlboro and appeared in Paris at the Salle Gaveau, in New York at Alice Tully Hall, the Metropolitan Museum, and Bargemusic and at the Marlboro, Kuhmo, Giverny, and Jerusalem International Chamber Music festivals, collaborating with such artists as Nobuko Imai, Shmuel Ashkenazi, Gary Hoffman, Michel Lethiec, Charles Neidich, Carol Wincenc, Emmanuel Pahud, and members of the Guarneri Quartet. In 2011, Mr. Magen founded a trio with flutist Marina Piccinini and violist Kim Kashkashian.

Mr. Magen has recorded for the Koch and Azica labels, Israeli Radio and Television, New York's WQXR, APM's *Performance Today* and the French television channel Mezzo. He has collaborated

pour la fin du temps. This is the first recording of *Night Horses*, which was commissioned for the Israeli Chamber Project by the Adele and John Gray Endowment Fund, and is dedicated to the ensemble.

Based in Berlin, Porat studied with André Hajdu, Ruben Seroussi, and George Benjamin. His music has been widely performed throughout Israel and Europe. "Matan is one of Israel's most imaginative and lyrical young composers, and a long-time close friend and musical companion," says Artistic Director Tibi Cziger. "His music represents ICP's musical ideals perfectly. Most of us have collaborated with him previously, thus he composed with our individual playing styles in mind. We requested the Messiaen *Quatuor* instrumentation, but also sought music with a warm sound, a quality often lacking in pieces scored for clarinet quartet. *Night Horses* is our most popular commission to date."

Many of Porat's works have links to literature. He drew his inspiration for *Night Horses* from a written lecture of Jorge Luis Borges. The composer has written, "Borges argued that the original meaning of 'nightmare' is 'night horse,' and that for years people believed a black horse is invading their dreams, causing distress." He describes the piece as a rhapsodic fantasy, sometimes sweet, otherwise harsh and intense, commencing in a dream and concluding in awakening. Mixing gossamer arabesques, neo-impressionist galloping and some extended techniques for all four instruments, *Night Horses* draws you in and holds your attention.

Sivan Magen's 2010 arrangement for cello and harp of **Claude Debussy's** neo-Baroque *Cello Sonata* (1915) is also a first recording. The original, for cello and piano, launched a projected series of six sonatas "for diverse instruments." Debussy completed only three before his death in 1918.

Magen faced two main difficulties in adapting the piano part. "One was the chromaticism of the score, which requires some very fast pedal work on the harp. The other was the inherent difference in character between harp and piano. The harp's lower register is less clear and powerful, while its upper register tends to be more percussive," he explains. He altered some voicing of chords, and in one place changed the left hand register in order to facilitate a more powerful attack. Throughout, he sought a sound that preserved the punch and humor of the original score. "The piano part is reminiscent of harpsichord writing," he points out, "an aspect that the plucked harp serves well."

harp and violin registers contributes to the effectiveness of the *Fantaisie*. Rapid pedal changes and three delicate *glissandi* on diminished chords at the end give the harp a last flourish before the sentimental close.

One has to wonder if the title ***Musique de Chambre No. 1*** is ironic, coming from the pen of **Bohuslav Martinů**, one of the 20th century's most prolific composers of chamber music. Yes, he apparently planned a *Musique de Chambre* No. 2 which never came to fruition. Even so, prior to this work he had already composed some 90 works for various chamber combinations. He completed the *Musique de Chambre* in early March, 1959. He died that August.

Musique de Chambre is consistent with Martinů's lifelong penchant for odd combinations of instruments. He was very much at home writing for apparently disparate groups. In this case, he seems positively intoxicated by the singular sextet comprising clarinet, harp, piano, and string trio. Lavish textures revel in the kaleidoscope of instrumental color, with cameo moments for each instrument peppered throughout the three movements. Echoes of Janáček and Bartók (the latter particularly in the clarinet writing) are perceptible, but Martinů's distinctive use of timbre and tonality are very much his own.

Vibrant rhythms in the outer movements reveal a strong connection to the folk music of his homeland, despite his years in the USA and France. Oscillating triplets are a recurrent motive in the outer sections of the *Allegro moderato*, which is in clear ternary form. Martinů's warmly tonal vocabulary and free approach to modulation are descended from Fauré. In the central section, primarily stepwise motion in modally-inflected A major suggests Czech flavor.

The original title for this work was *Fêtes nocturnes*. If festive qualities dominate the outer movements, the central *Andante moderato* shares the mysteries of Bartók's 'night music.' Octaves in the harp and tone clusters in the piano establish the mysterious sound, expanding to provide a shimmering background to the clarinet. Here is music touched with fairy dust, evoking the world of Shakespeare's Peaseblossom and Mustardseed.

Folk elements return to dominate the bright, dance-like finale. Martinů indulges in some lush imitative writing and interpolates a brief violin cadenza. The form is again modified ternary, with a dramatic and exultant coda to conclude the work.

Bartókian night music also plays a part in the intricate, beguiling sonorities of **Matan Daniel Porat's *Night Horses***, a free rhapsody whose instrumentation matches Messiaen's *Quatuor*

with tenor Nicholas Phan to record of all of Britten's music for tenor and harp, and his performance of Ravel's Introduction and Allegro is featured on Marlboro's 60th Anniversary CD. Mr. Magen holds a Master's degree from The Juilliard School and a Premier Prix from the Paris Conservatory.

ASSAFF WEISMAN PIANO

Pianist Assaff Weisman's performances have taken him to some of the major venues in Europe, the Middle East, and the Americas. These include appearances at the Rudolfinum in Prague, Beethovenhalle in Bonn, Philips Hall in The Hague, and Lincoln Center in New York. As first prize winner in the 2006 Iowa International Piano Competition, he has appeared as soloist with the Sioux City Symphony, the American Chamber Orchestra, the Connecticut Valley Chamber Orchestra and the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional of Peru. His radio credits include WQXR's *Young Artists Showcase* and *The Voice of Music* in Israel, as well as multiple appearances on WGBH radio in Boston. His 2002 release of an all-Schubert recording for Yamaha's *NYC Rising Star* series quickly became one of its best sellers.

An avid chamber musician, Mr. Weisman has collaborated with Isidore Cohen and Michael Tree, among others, and has taken part in the Aspen Music Festival, Campos do Jordão (Brazil), Lima Chamber Music Festival (Peru), The Music Festival of the Hamptons, and Verbier (Switzerland). He is a founding member and the Executive Director of the Israeli Chamber Project, with which he has toured since 2008.

Mr. Weisman is a graduate of The Juilliard School, where he received both his Bachelor's and Master's degrees as a student of Herbert Stessin, and where he is a member of the Evening Division piano faculty. Prior to his studies in New York, Mr. Weisman studied with Professor Victor Derevianko in Israel where he was a winner of the America-Israel Cultural Foundation scholarships.

ITAMAR ZORMAN VIOLIN

Violinist Itamar Zorman was awarded the top prize at the 2011 International Tchaikovsky Competition in Russia and subsequently performed with Valery Gergiev and the Mariinsky

Orchestra. He also won the first prize as well as the special prize for a performance of a Mozart Concerto at the 2010 International Freiburg Competition. As winner of The Juilliard School's Concerto Competition, he performed with the Juilliard Orchestra and Conductor James DePreist at Avery Fisher Hall. He also took first prizes at the 2010 King Award Competition and the 2010 Manhattan School of Music Concerto Competition.

Mr. Zorman has performed as a soloist with the American Symphony Orchestra at Carnegie Hall, the Gelders Orkest at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, the St. Petersburg Philharmonic, the Jerusalem Symphony, Bäden Bädener Philharmonie, the Israeli Chamber Orchestra, and the Polish Radio Chamber Orchestra, among others.

As a chamber musician, Mr. Zorman has appeared at Alice Tully Hall, Zankel Hall, Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center in Washington DC, and at the Marlboro Music Festival. He is a founding member of the Israeli Chamber Project, as well as the Lysander Piano Trio, with which he won the first prizes at the 2010 Arriaga and Coleman competitions. He is supported by the America-Israel Cultural Foundation and the Ilona Feher Foundation.

A graduate of the Jerusalem Academy of Music, The Juilliard School, and the Manhattan School of Music, Mr. Zorman's teachers have included Hagai Shaham and Sylvia Rosenberg. He plays on a 1745 Pietro Guarneri violin from the private collection of Yehuda Zisapel.

SHMUEL KATZ VIOLA

Praised as a "world-class musician" by the leading German newspaper *Frankfurter Rundschau* and heralded by the *Ottawa Citizen* for his "uncommonly rich and introspective" playing, Shmuel Katz serves as principal violist with the Mostly Mozart festival orchestra and the Pennsylvania Ballet. He is a member of the Orchestra of St. Luke's and plays regularly with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, New York City Ballet, and New York City Opera. He is a member of the faculty of New York University, where he teaches viola, violin, and chamber music.

Mr. Katz has toured extensively with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra throughout Europe, Asia, and North America. He has appeared as concertmaster with Orpheus at Carnegie Hall and has recorded with them for the EMI label.

As a member of The Katz-Shtenberg Duo, Mr. Katz has performed recitals at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, Avery Fisher Hall, the National Library in Ottawa, and the Jerusalem Music Centre, among other venues. The duo's debut CD, privately released in 2006, received rave reviews in American Record Guide.

Mr. Katz received his Bachelor's and Master's degrees from the Manhattan School of Music, where he studied violin and viola with Pinchas Zukerman and Michael Tree. Prior to that he studied in Israel with Haim Taub, Ora Shiran and Yair Kless. He has also taken part in masterclasses given by Dorothy DeLay, Josef Gingold, Joseph Silverstein, and Alexander Schneider.

This debut recording highlights the diversity and variety that are hallmarks of the Israeli Chamber Project. The musical selections represent four nationalities and five distinct musical styles. No two instrumental combinations are identical. Two of the works are first recordings: one an ICP commission, the other an ensemble member's arrangement of a 20th-century classic in an arresting new instrumentation. ICP's repertoire celebrates the infinite variety of chamber music.

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921) was the rare pianist-composer who wrote idiomatically for harp. He composed several important pieces for the instrument, including the *Fantaisie*, Op. 95 (1893); the late *Morceau de concert*, Op. 154 for harp and orchestra, and this 1907 *Fantaisie*, Op. 124 for the singular combination of violin and harp. All these compositions show a rare understanding of the instrument's unique qualities. This duo is arguably the most important chamber work with harp of the late romantic era.

By definition, fantasies are free-form and sectional. While this one takes advantage of the flexibility implied by its title, the piece has its own internal logic. It begins and ends in A major, with intervening sections that modulate to F major, D major, and B-flat major (the latter in 5/4 time). It concludes with a 6/8 *Andante con moto* that has a strong Spanish flavor.

The musical language is conservative and tonal, with an occasional dash of whole-tone scales. Saint-Saëns includes some violinistic passage work in the F major and D major sections, but he writes well for both instruments, balancing them with skillful interplay. His understanding of

- 1 **Camille Saint-Saëns** *Fantaisie for Violin and Harp, Op. 124* (13:42)
Itamar Zorman, violin | Sivan Magen, harp

Bohuslav Martinů *Chamber Music No. 1*

- 2 Allegro moderato (7:00)
3 Andante moderato (6:48)
4 Poco allegro (5:46)
Tibi Cziger, clarinet | Itamar Zorman, violin | Shmuel Katz, viola
Michal Korman, cello | Sivan Magen, harp | Assaff Weisman, piano

- 5 **Matan Porat** *Night Horses* (9:49)

Commissioned for the Israeli Chamber Project by the Adele and John Gray Endowment Fund.

Tibi Cziger, clarinet | Itamar Zorman, violin

Michal Korman, cello | Assaff Weisman, piano

Claude Debussy *Sonata for Cello and Piano*

arranged for harp by Sivan Magen

- 6 Prologue (4:43)
7 Sérenade (3:29)
8 Final (3:54)
Michal Korman, cello | Sivan Magen, harp

Béla Bartók *Contrasts*

- 9 Verbunkos (5:37)
10 Pihenő (4:35)
11 Sebes (7:15)

Tibi Cziger, clarinet | Itamar Zorman, violin | Assaff Weisman, piano



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