

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 1, 2026

Press Contact:
Last Light Productions
Web bridgetowerproject.com
Email info@lastlightproduction.com

BRIDGETOWER PROJECT BRINGS LONG OVERLOOKED AFRO-EUROPEAN VIRTUOSO TO THE SPOTLIGHT

New album and Carnegie Hall world premiere feature Pulitzer Prize–winning poet Rita Dove, multi-GRAMMY winner Paquito D’Rivera, Tchaikovsky Gold Medalist Ilya Kaler, and Steinway Artist Rasa Vitkauskaite

Bridgetower Project: Beethoven, Florence Price & Paquito D’Rivera (world premiere)

Ilya Kaler, violin | Rasa Vitkauskaite, piano

with Rita Dove, reading selected poems from *Sonata Mulattica*

Special guest artists: Paquito D’Rivera, clarinet | Jonathan Cohler, clarinet | Dave Eggar, cello | Gregg August, double bass

Boston, MA — Ongaku Records, Inc. & Last Light Productions, LLC announce the release of *Bridgetower Project*, developed in collaboration with former U.S. Poet Laureate and Pulitzer Prize winner **Rita Dove** and multi-GRAMMY winner **Paquito D’Rivera**. The album highlights the remarkable story of Afro-European violin virtuoso George Bridgetower — the original dedicatee and inspiration behind one of Beethoven’s most celebrated works, *Violin Sonata No. 9 in A Major, Op. 47*, premiered by Bridgetower and Beethoven in 1803.

Yet for more than two centuries, the sonata has carried the name of French violinist Rodolphe Kreutzer — who never performed it and dismissed it as excessively difficult. *Bridgetower Project* reclaims the sonata as the “Bridgetower,” restoring the legacy of the artist for whom it was originally written and reframing it as the bold artistic partnership it was from the start.

Timed to Beethoven’s 200th death anniversary in 2027 and Bridgetower’s 250th birth anniversary in 2028, the album brings together an extraordinary constellation of artists. Violinist **Ilya Kaler** — the only artist in history to win first prizes at all three of the most prestigious violin competitions: the Tchaikovsky, the Paganini, and the Sibelius — performs alongside **Rasa Vitkauskaite**, a Steinway Artist praised by *Fanfare* as “a Beethoven interpreter of penetrating insight.”

Rita Dove, who served as U.S. Poet Laureate from 1993 to 1995 and became the youngest person ever appointed to the position, contributes selected poem readings from her acclaimed poetry book *Sonata Mulattica* — the work that has been central to Bridgetower’s modern rediscovery. The album also presents the world premiere recording of a new chamber work by **Paquito D’Rivera**, inspired by Bridgetower’s only surviving composition, *Henry*. D’Rivera — whose Guggenheim Fellowship, NEA Jazz Masters Award, and National Medal of the Arts mark him as one of the most celebrated figures in both jazz and classical music — performs the work alongside world-renowned clarinet soloist Jonathan Cohler, clarinet; five-time GRAMMY-nominated cellist Dave Eggar; and GRAMMY-nominated bassist Gregg August.

“This project is about restoring authorship, identity, and voice,” said executive producer Daniel Faneuf. “Bridgetower’s story reminds us how easily artistic contributions can disappear from cultural memory. Had his legacy been fully recognized, generations of musicians — especially artists of color — might have found in him a powerful source of inspiration and belonging.”

Recorded at Shalin Liu Performance Center (Massachusetts), Oktaven Audio (New York), and Mountainside Studio (Virginia), the album was produced by Ongaku Records’ Jonathan Cohler and Rasa Vitkauskaite, with four-time GRAMMY Award winner Brad Michel serving as lead engineer.

The project will be presented in performance at Carnegie Hall’s Weill Recital Hall on **Saturday, October 3, 2026 at 7:30 pm**. Tickets available [HERE](#).

Single Release Schedule

May 24, 2026 — Beethoven, *Violin Sonata No. 9 in A Major, Op. 47 “Bridgetower”*: I. Adagio sostenuto – Presto (Now available at ffm.to/bridgetowersonata)

June 19, 2026 — Rita Dove reading “The Bridgetower” from *Sonata Mulattica*

July 17, 2026 — Florence Price, *Adoration* (arranged for violin and piano)

August 7, 2026 — *Bridgetower Project* released on all major streaming platforms and in physical CD format.

Pre-order album at shop.bridgetowerproject.com.

Track Listing

01. Introduction

BEETHOVEN *Violin Sonata No. 9 in A Major, Op. 47 “Bridgetower”*

02. I. Adagio sostenuto – Presto

03. II. Andante con variazioni

04. III. Presto

05. FLORENCE PRICE *Adoration* (arr. for violin and piano by Elaine Fine)

06. PAQUITO D’RIVERA *Bridgetower Reimagined: Contradanza Mulattica*

New commission for a small chamber ensemble inspired by George Bridgetower’s only surviving composition, *Henry* (World Premiere)

RITA DOVE Selected poems from *Sonata Mulattica*

07. The Bridgetower

08. Vienna Spring

09. Polgreen, Sight-Reading

10. The Performer

About the Artists

Ilya Kaler (violin)

The only violinist ever to win gold medals at all three of the world's most storied competitions — the Tchaikovsky, the Sibelius, and the Paganini — Ilya Kaler has been described by *Gramophone* as a “magician, bewitching our ears” for his hauntingly beautiful sound and mesmerizing phrasing. His acclaimed recordings on Naxos, Ongaku, and Melodiya span solo, concerto and chamber repertoire. His most recent release pairs the Mendelssohn *Violin Concerto in E Minor* and *Double Concerto in D Minor*, recorded with Rasa Vitkauskaite and conductor Jonathan Cohler (Ongaku 024-132). Violin professor at the Cleveland Institute of Music, Kaler has also taught at the Eastman School of Music and Indiana University, and performs each summer at Chautauqua, Keshet Eilon, and the Montreal Chamber Music Festival. He is a frequent juror at the Sibelius, Henri Marteau, and International Music Competition of China.

Rasa Vitkauskaite (piano)

Internationally acclaimed Lithuanian pianist Rasa Vitkauskaite has been praised for her “artistry of poetic and observant sensitivity” (*Gramophone*) and described as “a Beethoven interpreter of penetrating insight” (*Fanfare*). Principal pianist of the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra and a Steinway Artist, she has performed in more than thirty countries worldwide. In 2027, she will release the complete Beethoven Violin Sonatas with Tchaikovsky Gold Medal-winning violinist Ilya Kaler, continuing a long-standing artistic collaboration. Her recording of Mozart's *Piano Concerto No. 20 in D minor* and Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor* has been compared to the legendary Rudolf Serkin recording with the New York Philharmonic. Vitkauskaite won the Grand Prix at the Mendelssohn Cup Piano Competition in Italy and was featured on Chicago's prestigious Dame Myra Hess Memorial Concert Series, broadcast live on WFMT and affiliated stations nationwide.

Rita Dove (poet)

The youngest U.S. Poet Laureate ever appointed (1993–1995) and winner of the 1987 Pulitzer Prize in Poetry, Rita Dove is one of the most honored literary figures of our time. Her poetry book *Sonata Mulattica* — a landmark in Bridgetower's rediscovery — exemplifies her lifelong engagement with music and performance. Her text has been set to music by John Williams in a song cycle premiered at Tanglewood with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and she later collaborated with Williams and Steven Spielberg on *America's Millennium* at the Lincoln Memorial. Her honors include the National Medal of Arts, the National Humanities Medal, the Wallace Stevens Award, and 29 honorary doctorates from institutions including Yale, Harvard, Columbia, and University of Pennsylvania.

Paquito D'Rivera (composer & clarinet)

Winner of more than a dozen GRAMMY and Latin GRAMMY Awards, Paquito D'Rivera is one of the most complete musical artists of our era — a virtuoso clarinetist and saxophonist whose compositional voice moves with equal authority through jazz and the classical tradition. A founding member of Dizzy Gillespie's United Nations Orchestra, he has appeared as soloist with the London Symphony, London Philharmonic, National Symphony, and Orchestra of St. Luke's, and his compositions have been performed by Yo-Yo Ma, trumpet virtuoso Pacho Flores, and Imani Winds. His honors include the NEA Jazz Masters Award, the National Medal of the Arts, the Kennedy Center's Living Jazz Legend Award, and a Guggenheim Fellowship, which led to his appointment as Composer-in-Residence at the Caramoor Center. His more than 30 solo albums represent one of the most distinguished discographies in contemporary music.

###