

NEXT GEN WINNERS

2017 BBC New Generation Artists announced

By Stephanie Powell

The **BBC** has announced a bevy of new artists for its annual **New Generation Artists** (NGA) program, run via Radio 3. Among the string-playing inductees are Ukrainian violinist **Aleksey Semenenko**, string quartet **Quatuor Arod**, and jazz bassist **Misha Mullov-Abbado**.

The string players will be a part of NGA's 2017–19 season, and will have the opportunity to perform live and in the studio, work

with BBC orchestras, and collaborate with past NGA artists. In addition, **BBC Radio 3** has announced a weekly program dedicated to the NGA artists, which at press time was scheduled to run on Wednesdays beginning October 4. The program will feature new material from current NGAs and archived recordings.

Semenenko performed with the **Odessa Pihlharmonic Orchestra** at age seven, and has gone on to perform with the **Moscow Virtuosi**, the **Kiev National Orchestra**, and at the **Kennedy Center** in Washington, D.C. Quatuor Arod formed in 2013 and quickly earned first prize at the **Carl Nielsen Chamber Music Competition** in 2015 and the **ARD International Chamber Music Competition** in 2016. The quartet

has performed on the festival circuit, including a summer stint at **Verbier**, and is currently the artist-in-residence at the **Queen Elisabeth Music Chapel**. Mullov-Abbado is a student at both Cambridge University and at the Royal Academy of Music. He won the **Kenny Wheeler Jazz Prize** and the **Dankworth Prize** in 2014, and is currently a band leader and composer for various groups.



Quatuor Arod



5 MINUTES WITH . . .

VIOLINIST FRANCESCA DEGO

In her orchestral debut recording, Italian-American violinist Francesca DeGo tackles two pieces of Italian origin: Paganini's Violin Concerto No. 1 and the lesser-known Wolf-Ferrari Violin Concerto. The Paganini, which celebrates its 200th anniversary this year, brings DeGo full circle in a way—she took home first prize at the 2008 Paganini



VIOLINIST DMITRI KOGAN (1978–2017)

Russian violinist **Dmitri Kogan** has died of lymphatic cancer. He was 38. Kogan was artistic director of the **Moscow Camerata Chamber Orchestra**, and came from a musical family. His father was a conductor and his mother was a pianist, while his grandparents were renowned violinists **Leonid Kogan** and **Elizabeth Gilels**. In 2010, Kogan was designated an "Honored Artist of the Russian Federation."

CHIARA QUARTET PARTS WAYS

After nearly 18 years of performing together, the **Chiara Quartet**, made up of violinists **Rebecca Fischer** and **Hyeyung Julie Yoon**, violist **Jonah Sirota**, and cellist **Gregory Beaver**, have decided to part company. "This was and is a decision that we came to mutually and with tremendous care and love, for each other and for our music-making," the group said in a statement. "After recognizing that our individual creative spheres needed to expand beyond our quartet, we are excited to send our energies into a wider space in the next phase of our lives." The quartet will continue to reunite occasionally for special projects as the members each explore solo careers and teaching opportunities.

Competition as the first Italian female prize-winner since 1961, and received the Enrico Costa prize as the youngest finalist in the competition.

The Wolf-Ferrari concerto was originally written in the 1940s for violinist Guila Bustabo, but fell out of the standard repertoire during the height of the World War II, as the composer was of Italian-German heritage. “Although it has missed out on a place in standard repertoire, Wolf-Ferrari’s concerto is a jewel for which I feel a kind of historical responsibility, as well as a personal infatuation,” DeGo says. “With this recording, I hope to help reclaim its rightful place in the violin repertoire, alongside one of the most virtuosic and theatrical violin works of all time—Paganini’s magnificent Violin Concerto Number 1.”

She took time out of her recital schedule to discuss the works on her new album, and offer advice to young violinists entering the beginning of their recording careers. —SP

Can you talk about the Italian masterpieces selected for this orchestral debut—how and why did you select them?

In 2014, I was asked to choose and perform a rare Italian concerto for a tour in Russia. I looked into different possibilities and something about the Wolf-Ferrari just caught my attention immediately.

I decided to pair it with Paganini 1 for my debut orchestra recording because both concertos are so lyrical and incredibly Italian. The soaring themes need to be theatrical but extremely pure, and the virtuosic passages are humorous and full of character, just like in “bel canto” style opera.

How did you prepare for your orchestral debut?

I’ve played the Paganini dozens of times, but I firmly believe it is technically one of the most demanding pieces in the repertoire: Everything needs to be 250 percent secure

because Paganini just tends to “feel” different under pressure. [Because it is] so difficult to handle for the muscles, I also gave myself practice goals to build up the stamina I needed in the studio.

On the other hand, I feel a kind of historical responsibility toward the Wolf-Ferrari because so few people know it, so I made sure I had complete knowledge of the score and had performed it extensively before recording it.

What advice do you have for young violinists entering the beginning of their recording careers?

Unfortunately today’s musical industry tends to push young musicians toward uniformity. The high technical standards in competitions and discography have made us fixated with a level of perfection that is hardly human. If undertaken with the right attitude, recording can give us the chance to actually say something very personal with our interpretations, so I think the foremost consideration should be choosing the right repertoire and performing it as much as possible before bringing it to the recording studio. You have to be very passionate about your idea if you want to be convincing to others.

What can you tell us about Wolf-Ferrari’s Violin Concerto? What draws you to this piece?

I like to think of Wolf-Ferrari’s Concerto as a German-style Romantic work with an Italian soul. The composer grew infatuated with the young American violinist Guila Bustabo and the succession of warm, light, passionately dense, and virtuosic elements in the concerto really make it a work of love, so different from most of the music being written in the ‘40s.

The violin is the prima donna taking center stage like the diva in an opera by Puccini. Wolf-Ferrari is a composer who yearned for the past, and I think this can be considered one of the reasons this wonderful piece was undeservedly forgotten for so long.

Two hundred years after its premiere, how does it feel to record and celebrate Paganini’s Violin Concerto No. 1?

I’ve always wanted to record this concerto, so to be able to do so on its 200th birthday is very exciting. My approach to one of Paganini’s most performed and beloved pieces is built on a thorough structural knowledge of the score, style, orchestration, and profound connection with theater. I find that it’s an enormous responsibility to try to convey my vision and ideas without drifting away from the markings, articulation, and effects Paganini wrote so precisely. Studying with Salvatore Accardo definitely gave me the means to achieve this by digging away at the many layers of interpretative tradition that have somehow encrusted Paganini’s music to the point of being sometimes considered unavoidable.

Can you tell us about the gear you used during the recording?

I’ve been extremely lucky for most of my professional life to perform on the most wonderful antique Italian violins, including the “ex-Ricci” del Gesù I used to record Paganini’s *24 Caprices*. Unfortunately, I don’t know who used to play the gorgeous Francesco Ruggeri violin I now perform on, but I am totally in love with it. You learn to analyze an instrument’s strengths and weaknesses and in time that knowledge plays an important role in shaping the interpretation itself.

I love being inspired by the endless possibilities in tone production that the Ruggeri gives me. It is one of the last violins made by the famous Cremonese maker, dated 1697, a year before he died. The bow I use is a Dominique Peccatte, made around 1850. It’s a red-blooded bow, full of character. It took me some time to get used to it, but now I find it’s the perfect companion to the Ruggeri. I use Pirastro Evah Pirazzi strings for G, D, and A, and Pirastro Gold on the E. I find they have the right mix of power and color, and the E is very reliable.

MILESTONES



The **Manhattan International Music Competition** has announced its 2017 winners: 17-year-old German violinist **Anne Luisa Kramb** took home first place in the strings category, which includes \$2,500 and a recital at **Carnegie Hall**.

The Switzerland-based **Tibor Varga Violin Competition** has announced two second-place winners, but no first-place winner. Jurors couldn’t decide between 24-year-old **Stella Chen** from the US, and 16-year-old **Saki Tozawa** from Japan. Each violinist won a prize of CHF 10,000, while third place went to 23-year-old **Julie Svěcená** from the Czech Republic.