

# ABSTRACT – PAGANINI PRIZE

The idea of a music competition dedicated to Niccolò Paganini (1782–1840) first emerged in 1940, but it was postponed due to the war. In 1953, the City of Genoa established the International Paganini Prize in homage to the great violinist; the first edition was held in 1954 under the artistic direction of Luigi Cortese. The competition quickly gained prestige, becoming a founding member of the World Federation of International Music Competitions in 1957. Among its distinguished winners are violinists such as Gyorgy Pauk, Salvatore Accardo, Gidon Kremer, Leonidas Kavakos, and Isabelle Faust.

In 2022, on the 240th anniversary of Paganini’s birth, the Genoese administration relaunched the competition, giving it a new international dimension. Giovanni Panebianco, senior official of the Italian government and former Secretary General of the Ministry of Culture, was appointed President of the Prize to guide this renewal project, aimed at enhancing the prestige of the competition, the city of Genoa, and Paganini’s legacy in the global musical landscape.

In 2025, the 58th edition of the Paganini Prize—already under the distinguished patronage of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI)—was awarded the prestigious Medal of the President of the Republic, Sergio Mattarella, a recognition that highlights the cultural significance and international prestige of the violin competition. The title was won by the young Chinese violinist Aozhe Zhang, with the unanimous vote of the jury chaired by Maestro Uto Ughi.

Particular importance was given to the significant expansion of the audience reached, thanks to the structural strengthening of communication activities, social media channels, and a high-quality streaming service. Compared to the previous edition, the increases were remarkable: YouTube views grew by more than +715%, and on the Chinese platform Amadeus.tv the increase exceeded +286%. A total of around 1,430,000 views demonstrates a substantial shift in the Paganini Prize’s ability to reach a broad, international, and geographically diverse audience, reinforcing its global visibility.

The strategic and programmatic guidelines for 2026–2027 confirm the role of the Prize as a “cultural infrastructure of excellence for Genoa and Italy,” focusing on the consolidation and systemic enhancement of international initiatives through the implementation of the “Paganini Abroad” program, supported by collaborations with MAECI, MIC, Embassies and Italian Cultural Institutes abroad, and by the network of “Paganini Ambassadors.”

## Institutional Events – Paganini Prize

### YEAR 2024

- In January, Simon Zhu, winner of the 57th edition of the Prize, performs at the Louvre in Paris.
- In June, the “Paganini Prize Evening” takes place in Rome at Palazzo Ruspoli. On this occasion, the signing of a historic agreement with NIAF (National Italian American Foundation) is announced for the organization of a tour in the USA, accompanied by promotional initiatives for Genoa.

- In September, another major concert is held at the Prado Museum in Madrid. The Annual Meeting of International Patrons also takes place, attended by the President of the Prado, Javier Solana.
- In October, after two concerts in New York organized by the Teatro Carlo Felice of Genoa with Giuseppe Gibboni, winner of the 56th edition, Simon Zhu performs at London's Guildhall with the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Antonio Pappano, in the presence of His Majesty King Charles III. For this concert, the famous violin once owned by Niccolò Paganini, the "Cannone," crafted by Guarneri del Gesù in 1743 and kept in the Paganini Rooms of Palazzo Tursi in Genoa, is used.

## YEAR 2025

- **14 January** – Paganini Prize in Oman, *Paganini for Everyone* project: Talk "Paganini's Violins and Italian Violin Making Between History and Practice," theoretical and practical session with musical performance (Muscat, Royal Opera House).
- **23 February** – Paganini Prize in Oman, *Paganini for Everyone* project: Talk "Paganini Prize: A 70-Year History" (Muscat, Royal Opera House); Paganini Prize Masterclass (Muscat, Royal Opera House, Theatre 2).
- **24 February** – Paganini Prize Concert (Muscat, Royal Opera House, Theatre 2).
- **9 April** – Benefit concert in support of the Gigi Ghirotti Foundation, performed by Maestro Uto Ughi at the Basilica SS. Annunziata del Vastato, Genoa.
- **9 May** – During the German Preselections (Berlin, in collaboration with the Italian Cultural Institute), violin concert by Maestri Alexandra Conunova and Nicola Bruzzo.
- **25 July** – Paganini Prize Concert (Anacapri, Villa San Michele), with Simon Zhu accompanied on piano by Sophie Pacini.
- **23 October** – Presentation of the volume on Paganini's "Ledger Book" and musical performance (Palazzo Tursi, Hall of Representation).
- **24 October** – International Study Day on the Cannone violin and its conservation, with musical performance (Palazzo Tursi, Hall of Representation).
- **26 October** – Gala concert for the benefit of the Gaslini Foundation, performed by the winner of the 58th edition with the Orchestra of the Teatro Carlo Felice.

## YEAR 2026

- **13 May 2026** – Concert by Aozhe Zhang, winner of the 58th edition of the Paganini Prize, at the Salle Garnier, Principality of Monaco.

## PAGANINI PRIZE COMMITTEE

- Dr. Silvia Salis, Mayor of Genoa
- Prof. Giovanni Panebianco, Executive President
- Dr. Elvira Bonfanti (Palazzo Ducale Genoa)
- Marquis Carlo Clavarino
- Maestro Nicola Costa (Giovine Orchestra Genovese)
- Dr. Enrico De Barbieri
- Prof. Luigi Giachino (Paganini Conservatory Genoa)
- Maestro Federico Pupo (Teatro Carlo Felice)

- Dr. Francesco Micheli
- Princess Martine Orsini
- Artistic Director: Maestro Nicola Bruzzo
- Secretary General: Dr. Lidia Bocca

## **PAGANINI AMBASSADORS**

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