



On your marks

The system of allocating points both helped and hindered at last year's Triennale making competition. **Naomi Sadler** reports

Last October Cremona greeted its usual swarms of makers, dealers and violin fanciers for the annual Mondomusica trade fair. This year's cele-

bration of violin making, accompanied by plenty of wine and truffles, featured the tenth Triennale contest – officially II Concorso Triennale Internazionale degli Strumenti ad Arco 'Antonio Stradivari'.

It was a sizeable affair. Open to both professionals and amateurs, it attracted 309 entries (15% more than the previous competition) for the workmanship and tone juries to scrutinise. The system of allocating points eased the load somewhat, according to juror Francis Kuttner.

'Without question this was an excellent marking system,' he comments. Each instrument was assessed in four categories: technical (26%), set-up (21%), varnish (22%) and character/style (31%). This enabled the judges to award points for overall impression, rather than marking detailed aspects of the workmanship. It also allowed them to penalise immaculately crafted instruments that lacked character.

The competition gave equal weight to the workmanship and tone marks, which worked in the violin and cello categories, where there was an usual degree of consensus. Jan Špidlen's two violins were clear winners in both camps. 'They were complete instruments, with no weak spots,' Kuttner says. 'Špidlen knows how to work the wood – there was a texture to the wood, not a surface worked to death.'

Raymond Schryer's winning cello also attracted universal praise. 'It had a personal character, and that's something I like to see,' says juror Patrick Robin. 'The quality of the varnish was very good – it looked like a varnish that wouldn't harm the sound.'

According to Robin, the marking system caused frustration elsewhere, particularly in the viola category, where the two juries didn't agree. 'The musicians didn't get on with my favourite violas,' he says. As a result, although the winning viola had an even, powerful sound and was easy to play, Robin felt that other instruments displayed more character.

Meanwhile in the double bass section the jury was hampered by the lack of a bass expert – something Robin believes the organisers should consider for the next competition. Of the four entries, none satisfied the jury on all points, although Robin describes Marco Nolli's silver-medal-winning bass as showing 'a very nice quality of work'.

Overall, the jury was impressed by the level of the entries. 'A lot of instruments were really well made,' says Robin, who emphasised that all those presented in the final exhibition were of a high professional standard.

And had the organisers listened to critics of the 2000 Triennale, who accused the contest of bias against the Cremonese? Certainly the jury included Cremonese teacher Marcello Ive, and although no instrument from the town took gold, three Italians received medals. 'This will disillusion some people in the town, who expect to have a Cremonese winner,' says Giovanni Peterlongo, the president of the jury, 'but the results show that this was a very fair competition.' ■

ABOVE all instruments exhibited at the Triennale were of a high standard

JURY MEMBERS

President Giovanni Peterlongo (Italy) **Workmanship** Antonio Capela (Portugal), Marcello Ive (Italy), Francis Kuttner (USA), Tomáš Pilař (Czech Republic), Patrick Robin (France) **Tone** Simonide Braconi (Italy), Leonardo Colonna (Italy), Sergej Krylov (Russia), Cecilia Radic (Italy), Crtomir Siskovic (Slovenia)

FULL RESULTS

Vn gold & silver: J. Špidlen (Czech Republic), bronze: D. Sora (Italy) **Va** silver: D. Pawlikowska (Poland), bronze: Z. An (China) **Vc** gold: R. Schryer (Canada), silver: U. Hinsberger (Germany), bronze: S. Levaggi (Italy) **Db** silver & bronze: M. Nolli (Italy)



VIOLIN, GOLD

The only son of violin maker Přemysl Špidlen, **Jan Špidlen** was born in Prague in 1967. From an early age he showed a strong interest in art and music, and started learning the violin when he was five.

Špidlen studied wood carving at the Art and Industrial School in Prague before completing his training in Mittenwald. In 1989 he worked as a restorer at J. & A. Beare in London, where he encountered many fine, rare instruments. This violin (right) is modelled on a 1718 Strad but the f-holes show Vuillaume's influence.

'I have taken particular care with the edges,' says Špidlen, 'which are constructed according to Roger Hargrave's principles and are narrower and finer than usual.'

The slab-cut back has several tiny knots, which have been patched and the wood has been closed with a thin water-based coat and has a light oil ground. The varnish colour comes from a mixture of Venetian turpentine and madder pigments.

*Back length: 355mm,
stop length: 195mm,
upper bouts: 168mm,
middle bouts: 114mm,
lower bouts: 208mm.*

ED KEOHANE



THE VIOLIN IS MODELLED ON A 1718 STRAD
BUT THE F-HOLES ARE INFLUENCED BY VUILLAUME

VIOLA, SILVER

The youngest of the four top prizewinners, **Danuta Pawlikowska** was born in Nowy Targ, Poland, in 1971. After she completed her violin making course at the School for Fine Arts in Zakopane in 1991 she studied with her uncle, Jan Pawlikowski, in Krakow. She has had her own workshop in the city since 1995, and makes violins, violas and cellos.

This viola (above) is based around a Brothers Amati, though the dimensions have all been slightly reduced. All the wood is Polish and the instrument is finished with a golden, red-brown varnish.

Back length: 420mm, stop length: 204mm, upper bouts: 204mm, middle bouts: 141.5mm, lower bouts: 260mm.

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BASED ON A RUGERI MODEL, THE CELLO HAS VIOLIN-SIZED PURFLING OF MAPLE AND EBONY

CELLO, GOLD

Raymond Schryer was born in Sault St Marie, Canada, in 1961. A prizewinning violinist and violin maker, he began his violin making studies with his uncle, Fernard Schryer, when he was ten. He went on to study violin performance at the University of Western Ontario, before taking an apprenticeship with George Heini in Toronto. In 2002 Schryer won the Canadian Open Fiddle Championships and a gold medal (cello) in the Violin Society of America Competition.

The form of the cello (above) is influenced by a 1695 Francesco Rugeri and the instruments of Frank Ravatin,

although the f-holes owe more to Stradivari. Schryer says the Rugeri model 'appealed because of the voluptuous proportions, which contribute to its dynamic sound'.

The back and ribs are of well-flamed American big leaf maple and the belly is of German Alpine spruce. The violin-sized purfling is of maple and ebony and, in the tradition of Rugeri, willow has been used for the blocks and linings.

Back length: 746mm, stop length: 400mm, upper bouts: 359mm, middle bouts: 247mm, lower bouts: 448mm.

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DOUBLE BASS, SILVER

Born in 1963, **Marco Nolli** studied at the International Violin Making School in Cremona, where his teachers were Giorgio Scolari and Stefano Conia. He makes violins, violas, cellos and basses and won gold medals at the 1988 and 1994 Triennale competitions.

This bass (right) is modelled on a G.B. Ceruti from 1800. The wood is Balkan maple and Italian spruce, covered with a golden-amber spirit varnish.

'It produces a powerful, bright sound,' says Schryer, 'making it particularly suited to chamber music and solo work.'

Back length: 1136mm, stop length: 602mm, upper bouts: 534mm, middle bouts: 166mm, lower bouts: 683mm.

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