



## INTERVIEW WITH CESARE MAZZONIS

**You have been appointed Artistic Director of the Premio Paganini that is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2004. Is there any change in comparison with previous editions?**

The most important change has obviously been the decision to make the competition biennial. This was done for various reasons. First of all, because it is fairly unlikely that you find an outstanding talent every year. In addition to this, it is a way of consolidating the effort and the importance of the event, to make it more effective and visible. Moreover, some slight changes in the conditions for admission and in the selection have been made.

**You have been a jury member for various musical competitions. In your opinion, do we still need competitions to discover young talents?**

A competition is, without a doubt, a valuable showcase, but with the defect that competitions have uselessly proliferated. This is true especially in Italy and in particular in the field of singing. The fact that competitions have multiplied means that there is an excessive number of prize-winners with respect to real talent, a waste of public and private money, a useless illusion for some young competitors, asking them to get prepared more for winning a competition than for their professional life. In spite of this, the serious and important competitions continue to be useful and represent a chance offered to young musicians to put themselves to the test, to get to know themselves and see how they measure up against other competitors.

**In the past, the Russian violin school established its leadership position, as is confirmed by statistical data. With the fall of the Soviet Empire, the situation changed in favor of the Asian countries. What is your opinion on this topic?**

In effect, the Conservatory of Moscow and other Russian schools represented the absolute top as regards instrumentalists' musical education, in particular for strings. We should remember that Ojstrach, Kogan and Rostropovic taught there. It is also important to remember, for instance, the level of strings in the Philharmonic Orchestra of Leningrad that today is Saint Petersburg. Since then, with the passing of the great masters, with the emigration of Jewish musicians first, and then Russian musicians in general, the situation, while still important, is not qualitatively the same. A new generation that is demonstrating considerable technical training and musical interest is now coming from the Far East. Let's wait and see!