

PREMIO PAGANINI, SIMON ZHU IN CONCERT IN ANACAPRI

Genoa, July 23 – The series of events leading up to the 58th edition of the Premio Paganini concludes in Anacapri on July 25 with a concert by Simon Zhu at Villa San Michele, home to the Honorary Consulate of Sweden and the museum dedicated to Axel Munthe.

Simon Zhu, winner of the previous edition of the Premio Paganini, will perform alongside pianist Sophie Pacini as part of the concert series *Un'estate per sognare*, which caters to a wide and discerning international audience. This initiative is part of the ongoing journey that has seen the Premio Paganini strengthen its presence both in Italy and abroad, becoming a key player in events not only in major theaters but also in prestigious museums such as the Louvre and the Prado.

The concert program includes works by major classical and romantic composers, N.

Paganini *Variations on "Di tanti palpiti"*, W. A. Mozart *Sonata in E minor K. 304* for violin and piano, and J. Brahms *Sonata No. 3 in D minor Op. 108* for violin and piano, and will be preceded by the presentation of the 58th Competition, featuring speeches by Premio Paganini President Giovanni Panebianco, Artistic Director Nicola Bruzzo, and President of the International Jury Uto Ughi.

"This event once again demonstrates the cultural vitality of our city and confirms Genoa's role as a bridge between past and future, between art, history, and modernity," said Genoa's Mayor Silvia Salis. "The collaboration between the Premio Paganini, prestigious institutions like Villa San Michele and the Axel Munthe Museum is a great example of how our city can serve as a meeting point for diverse artistic expressions, capable of attracting and engaging a broad audience. I thank everyone who makes this wonderful cultural symphony possible and am proud that our city continues to stand out on the international stage."

"This is a prestigious initiative that strengthens Genoa's role in the international music and cultural landscape," added Cultural Councillor Giacomo Montanari. "The presence of world-renowned artists like Simon Zhu and Sophie Pacini, along with the collaboration of top-tier institutions such as Villa San Michele and the Axel Munthe Museum, reflects our city's commitment to promoting classical music and nurturing emerging talent. It also affirms Genoa as a city of opportunity for artistic development and the appreciation of both tangible and intangible cultural assets."

"We are pleased and honored to be guests in such a captivating location as Villa San Michele, home to a much-admired museum and concert series," said Giovanni Panebianco. "I would like to thank Kristina Kappelin, Superintendent of Villa San Michele and Honorary Consul of Sweden, who embraced and supported this initiative—an important and unprecedented collaboration in the artistic and musical fields. My thanks also go to Sylvain Bellenger, who once again inspired a visionary project to promote the great violinist, our competition, and the city of Genoa."

"I am delighted to return to this wonderful land, and Villa San Michele is a truly poetic—one could say magical—place. Being here as President of the International Jury for the Premio Paganini is deeply moving. I remember my first involvement with the Competition, when a very young Ilya Grubert won in 1977," recalled Uto Ughi. "So many years later, I will once again be face to face with the world's most talented young violinists in Genoa. I can't wait to hear them and feel their ability to move audiences and convey the deeper meaning of the pieces they perform. We must promote and support the younger generations of violinists—this is something I have always believed in and remain committed to through the foundation that bears my name."

"This is an extraordinary place, and the blend of history, art, music, and landscape could not have found a more perfect expression," said Paganini ambassador Sylvain Bellenger, former General Director of the Capodimonte Museum in Naples. "This is a long-overdue meeting between Axel Munthe and Paganini, brought together for the first time thanks to the historic Genoese competition and the vision of Villa San Michele's management. It is a meeting that feels utterly

natural—the kind of meeting history makes when driven by talent and virtuosity, when art becomes a remedy, enchantment, and consolation. Paganini lived his life as a practitioner of this enchantment. His fiery passion would have fascinated the great Swedish philanthropist, animal lover, and writer Axel Munthe, who crafted Villa San Michele like one might compose a sonnet or a musical piece—blending history, antiquity, symbolism, architecture, and landscape into an infinite harmony. That is the enchantment, renewed once more and forever, from Genoa to Anacapri, through the Premio Paganini and Simon Zhu, winner of the 57th edition.”

“The Premio Paganini is experiencing a particularly meaningful moment: on one hand, we are fully immersed in preparing for the upcoming edition of the Competition, already in close contact with the 24 outstanding candidates selected from around the world. On the other, we are now completing the final event leading up to the Competition, with previous winner, Simon Zhu,” said Nicola Bruzzo, Artistic Director of the Premio. “Since his victory on October 27, 2023, I’ve had the chance to work closely with him—accompanying his journey from the Louvre to the Prado and The Guildhall in London. I can attest to his astonishing artistic development. From talented winner, Simon has already grown into one of the most refined and naturally expressive musicians, as if he had an entire career behind him. I am proud of him and of the Premio Paganini, an institution that has proven capable of recognizing and rewarding such profound talent. Simon will perform with Sophie Pacini, an excellent pianist with an international career, in a program that best blends classical and Romantic styles while celebrating the figure of Niccolò Paganini. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Superintendent Kristina Kappelin, Dr. Luca Grossi, and Maestro Bo Löfvendahl, with whom it has been a true pleasure to collaborate on this beautiful project.”

Simon Zhu – Born in 2001, German violinist Simon Zhu is known for his musical depth and natural interpretation. Trained in Salzburg and Munich under Ana Chumachenco, he won the Premio Paganini in 2023. Since then, he has performed in prestigious venues such as the Louvre, the Prado, and the Guildhall in London, where he played Paganini’s legendary violin *Il Cannone* for King Charles III, accompanied by the London Symphony Orchestra under Sir Antonio Pappano. He is considered one of the most promising young violinists on the international scene.

Sophie Pacini – An Italian-German pianist, she is one of the most compelling voices on the European music scene. Educated at the Mozarteum in Salzburg, she studied with Karl-Heinz Kämmerling and Pavel Gililov. She has received numerous prestigious awards, including the ECHO Klassik as “Young Artist of the Year” and the ICMA – International Classical Music Award. Praised for her expressive intensity and strong musical temperament, she has performed in major concert halls and international festivals, establishing herself as a passionate and complete artist.

Kristina Kappelin, Director of Villa San Michele – “I enthusiastically welcomed the proposal to host one of the concerts of the prestigious Premio Paganini competition at Villa San Michele,” emphasized Kristina Kappelin. “An event of this caliber can only enhance our concert series and shine a spotlight on our museum for a truly special occasion.”