



Premio

**Guido
Cantelli**

XIII Edition Cantelli Prize

*International
Conducting Competition
"Guido Cantelli"*

October 3-6, 2024



INDEX

THE COMMITTEES AND THE JURIES	5
THE PRIZES	11
THE SEMIFINALISTS	15
CALL FOR COMPOSERS	53
THE PATRONS	57





THE COMMITTEES AND THE JURIES

XIII EDITION
"GUIDO CANTELLI" PRIZE

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Premio

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Cantelli**

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THE PRIZES

XIII EDITION

"GUIDO CANTELLI" PRIZE



Premio

**Guido
Cantelli**

FIRST PRIZE - € 12.000

offered by **CM Srl - Claudio Mazzucchelli**

SECOND PRIZE - € 8.000

offered by **Techbau S.p.A**

THIRD PRIZE - € 5.000

offered by **Fondazione Banca Popolare di Novara**

CRITICS' PRIZE - € 2.000

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YOUNG EMPATHY PRIZE - € 1.000

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PRIZE OF THE MILAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA





THE SEMIFINALISTS

XIII EDITION
"GUIDO CANTELLI" PRIZE



SERGEY AKIMOV

34 YEARS - RUSSIA

By winning the Dimitris Mitropoulos Competition in Thessaloniki in 2024, this young and promising conductor from Russia set the stage for his global career.

Before that, he had already drawn attention at Salzburg Festival within Nestle Young Conductors Award in 2018 where he conducted a concert with Camerata Salzburg. Born in Moscow, he had his first conducting lessons at the age of 13. He continued his studies at the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory, which he graduated with outstanding results.

He won the position of First Kapellmeister in Moscow Operetta Theatre in 2016 where he led such performances as "Die Fledermaus", "Die Lustige Witwe", "Ball im Savoy" among others.

In 2019 Sergey was appointed as a conductor in Studio New Music – a world known ensemble, specializing on avant - garde performances. Sergey Akimov gave numerous premieres of contemporary compositions as well as first performance of Gershwin's one - act opera "Blue Monday" and a chamber arrangement of Stravinsky's "Le Sacre du Printemps" in Russia. He also created various arrangements, including versions of symphonic works for chamber orchestra such as "Petrushka" by Stravinsky, Shostakovich "Jazz – suite No. 2" and others. His mentors include Gennadiy Rozhdestvensky, Fabio Luisi, Johannes Schlaefli, Howard Griffiths, Vladimir Jurowsky, Simone Young. The conductor resides with his family in Berlin.

With the perspective of the Youth Jury

-  **What was the most difficult challenge you faced as a conductor and how did you overcome it?**
Envy of colleagues' success. And that was the most stupid thing I had. When I had no success for many years I understood that life is not about conducting only. And not everything depends on me only. Fight for your life but be grateful for everything you have.
-  **What are your main sources of inspiration?**
People.
-  **How did you go from playing an instrument to conducting an orchestra?**
I found out that there are far more music in the world than the one written for my instrument. I cried so many times because of music by Puccini that I couldn't avoid the desire to direct these emotions via my hands.



SEBASTIAN ALMANZAR

29 YEARS - COLOMBIA

Born in Medellín (Colombia) Sebastián Almánzar started his musical education at the age of 5 with singing as his main instrument. Until 2017 he sang with and conducted some of the most important choirs in Medellín (Colombia). In 2012, he started his studies in conducting at Eafit University, with professors Cecilia Espinosa and Alejandro Posada. During those years he could work with orchestras such as Eafit symphony orchestra, Iberacademy Orchestra and Medellín Philharmonic orchestra. In 2018 he entered the University of Music and Performing Arts, Vienna under Professor Simeon Pirankoff and Thomas Kreuzberger (Piano). He has been a prizewinner in some National Colombian competitions, such as: "Young talents with the Eafit symphony orchestra" (Medellín, 2016), "1st Workshop and competition with the Medellín Philharmonic Orchestra" (Medellín, 2018), "Workshop and competition of the National symphony orchestra of Colombia" (Bogotá, 2017 and 2019). In February 2020 he was awarded 2nd Prize at the European Union conducting competition (Bulgaria). And he came back in September 2020 as guest conductor of the Pazardzhik symphony orchestra. Sebastian was selected as one of the 4 active conductors to be part of the "Ammodo Masterclass" with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and led by conductor Paavo Järvi. Sebastian has also participated in masterclasses led by Andres Orozco-Estrada, Marin Alsop, Roberto Gonzales-Monjas, Olivier Grangean, Philippe Augin. In February 2020, he had the wonderful opportunity to conduct the Vienna Symphony orchestra as a finalist in the Assistant-conductor audition, under Maestro Andrés Orozco-Estrada. In 2023 he finished his Master in Conducting in Vienna giving a concert at the Musikverein Theater with the ORF Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien. Sebastian has conducted the l'Orchestre Philharmonique Royal de Liège (OPRL) (Belgium) the Aarhus Symphony Orchestra (Denmark) and the Odense orchestra (Denmark) as he was invited to audition for the assistant conductor position. During the 2023/2024 season he has been working as assistant conductor for the French conductor Marie Jacquot with the Vienna symphony Orchestra, and the Euskadiko Orchestra in Spain. He also assisted Marta Gardolińska in a production of the "The Creation" at the Lorraine National Opera in Nancy. Sebastian will make his debut in the 2025/2026 season at the Royal Danish Opera conducting a production of the Tchaikovsky's "Nutcracker".

With the perspective of the Youth Jury

What advice would you give to a young person who dreams of becoming a conductor?

My advice to a young person dreaming of becoming a conductor is to stay incredibly curious. Wdive deeply into various musical styles and composers, and always seek to understand how different elements of music come together. Go to concerts, study scores meticulously, and never stop asking questions.

Do you have any particular ritual before going on the stage?

I love to go on stage alone, if possible, and be there before the musicians and audience arrive, even if just for a few minutes. Sometimes we forget how many great musicians have performed there throughout history. I enjoy being surrounded by that energy.

What is your opinion on the use of new technologies, such as social media and artificial intelligence, in the world of conducting?

Social media transforms classical music by breaking geographic and cultural barriers. Platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok enable conductors and orchestras to share performances and behind-the-scenes content globally, making our work more accessible. AI helps us by analyzing scores, aiding composition, but it can't replace human artistry.



GIOVANNI CONTI

28 YEARS - ITALY

Winner of the first prize at the CAMPUS Dirigieren competition among the best conducting students from German conservatories and the first edition of the Premio Angelo Mariani, Giovanni Conti was born in Varese.

Since the 2022/23 season, he has held the position of Kapellmeister at the Krefeld-Mönchengladbach Theater. He conducted Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's "Le nozze di Figaro" as part of the Trilogia d'Autunno series at the Ravenna Festival.

His most recent debuts have been with the Orchestra dell'Accademia del Teatro alla Scala and the Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano. In his first season at the Krefeld-Mönchengladbach Theater, he directed his own production of Giuseppe Verdi's "Rigoletto," which received great acclaim from both the public and critics. He also conducted performances of Vincenzo Bellini's "La sonnambula" and Giacomo Puccini's "Madama Butterfly."

This season saw his debut in works such as Gioachino Rossini's "Il viaggio a Reims," Richard Wagner's "Der fliegende Holländer," and Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's "Eugene Onegin." He graduated in conducting under Daniele Agiman from the Conservatorio di Milano and completed his studies with a Master's degree at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik in Stuttgart in the class of Rasmus Baumann. He participated as a student conductor at the Riccardo Muti Italian Opera Academy, having the opportunity to work alongside Maestro Muti and the Luigi Cherubini Youth Orchestra.

With the perspective of the Youth Jury

What does the Cantelli Award signify for you and what motivated you to participate?

The Cantelli Award is undoubtedly the most important conducting competition in Italy and, judging by the very high number of enrolments, it is also gaining international recognition. I decided to try it so as to test myself, to meet new people, and because it could represent a good leap forward in my career.

What advice would you give to a young person who dreams of becoming a conductor?

Firstly, understanding the origin of this dream: if it is about finding out what one feels to be one's own way of expressing who one is, go ahead; if it is about feeling superior to others, to command, to earn a lot, better leave it. The advice I feel to give is: study a lot and start early, without letting too much time passing.

What is your opinion on the use of new technologies, such as social media and artificial intelligence, in the world of conducting?

By nature, I have never been one who's able to show off too much, so my relationship with social media is not like that of many other conductors that I see. I believe that social media are indispensable tools to promote one's activity, without necessarily having to compel oneself to be different from who one is.



MATTEO DAL MASO

26 YEARS - ITALY

Matteo Dal Maso is an Italian symphonic and opera conductor. He is 1st prize winner of the 5th Athens International Conducting Competition and Audience prize winner of the Orchestra di Padova e del Veneto International Conducting Competition "Peter Maag".

Matteo gained his international reputation conducting many professional orchestras including BBC Philharmonic, The Hallé, Manchester Camerata, Northern Ballet, Romanian Chamber Orchestra, Dallas Winds, Orchestra Filarmonica Salernitana, Orchestra di Padova e del Veneto, Lithuanian State Symphony Orchestra, Orquesta Filarmónica de Gran Canaria, Athens Philharmonia Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Youth Orchestra, and Beogradski Simfoničari. In June 2021, Matteo made his Opera debut conducting Carmen at the JK Tyl Theater in Pilsen (CZ). His upcoming activities will see him conducting the Orchestra di Padova e del Veneto, the BBC Philharmonic, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic as well as serving as cover conductor and assistant conductor for the production of Britten's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" with Opera North.

Matteo has been assisting the BBC Philharmonic and Royal Liverpool Philharmonic working with conductors such as Domingo Hindoyan, John Storgards, Sir Andrew Davis, Elena Schwarz, Antony Hermus and Mark Wigglesworth.

Before starting his conducting studies at the world-renowned conducting class at the Royal Northern College of Music (UK) he studied clarinet at the Conservatorio G.Verdi of Turin.

With the perspective of the Youth Jury

When did you realise you wanted to become a conductor and what made you make this choice?

Before I dedicated myself to conducting, I had the fortune to play the clarinet in an orchestra for several years. From the beginning, I was always interested in the figure of the conductor. My passion for the great symphonic repertoire, such as the compositions of Tchaikovsky, Mahler and Strauss, inspired me to pursue this path.

How do you handle last-minute hitches?

The great conductor Gianluigi Gelmetti used to repeat this phrase to his students while conducting: cool mind and warm heart. This mantra has helped me to handle many situations. During a performance of La Scala di Seta that I conducted in Manchester, the soprano, entered one bar early. Calm is essential in handling such circumstances.

How did your passion for music come about?

My passion for music started during primary school, when my maths and science teacher, who was a great fan of classical music, used to explain operas in class and take us to attend rehearsals at the Teatro Regio in Turin. I still remember being fascinated by Mozart's Magic Flute.



WILLIAM DUTTON

29 YEARS - GREAT BRITAIN

William Dutton is fast making a name for himself as one of the most interesting and sensitive young artists in the UK. Having won the Strings Final of BBC Young Musician of the Year, he is now emerging as an exciting young conductor, having been the first British conductor ever admitted to the Italian Conducting Academy in Milan where he studied with Gilberto Serembe.

After returning to the UK, William made his professional conducting debut with the Amici Ensemble at the 2022 Harrogate International Music Festival, where he also curated the rest of the season. A semi-finalist at the 2023 Kodaly International Conducting Competition, he has also recently been appointed Principal Conductor of Arcadian Strings and the Bridge Ensemble in Leeds; highlights this season include performances with Oxana Shevchenko, Lawrence Power and MayahKadish.

William began his international music career at the age of 10. As a singer he won the BBC Radio 2 Young Chorister of the Year competition in 2006 which led to his BBC proms debut in 2007 and the release of his first album with Universal in 2007. As a violinist he studied at the Yehudi Menuhin School with Lutsia Ibragimova and Simon Fischer and went on to study with Svetlana Makarova in Switzerland where he was awarded 3rd Prize at the Concours d'Interpretation Musicale de Lausanne in 2017.

With the perspective of the Youth Jury

What are your main sources of inspiration?

To make great music, one finds inspiration from many different places. It can be the beauty nature, the taste of great food or even simply talking with a good friend. Since starting conducting, my greatest musical inspiration has always come from my teacher, Maestro Serembe.

What is your biggest dream and which stage/orchestra would you like to direct?

To have one's own orchestra is I think a dream job for many musicians. However, you learn so much with every orchestra that you conduct, and so I would love to have the possibility of conducting as many orchestras as possible. However ... if I were forced to choose one, it would probably be either the Vienna Philharmonic or Chicago Symphony!

Do you have any particular ritual before going on the stage?

I like to put a drop of perfume on (usually Penhaligon's). I try to find very small bottles so that I can choose a fragrance that suits the music I am about to do!



ANTHONY FOURNIER

30 YEARS - SWITZERLAND

Anthony Fournier is a Swiss conductor and violonist born in Sion, Valais.

He is also a composer and arranger for various projects and creations such as "The WIDE Show".

Anthony is the assistant conductor of the "Opéra National du Rhin" for the 2023-2024 season.

Anthony started playing the violin at the age of nine in Sion and embarked on high professional studies in Switzerland and abroad. Throughout his career, Anthony has been on the podium of several world-renowned competitions. Guided by his audacity and his desire for modernity, he performs both on different international classical stages, but also as a rock violinist since 2015.

In 2020, affected by a focal dystonia, he started studying conducting in Italy.

Navigating today between conducting, composing, creating big musical shows and teaching, the artist wishes to make the public discover the music he shares with passion thanks to his multiple facets as a musician. Anthony Fournier received the Cultural Prize of the City of Sion in 2017.

Anthony studied conducting in Italy and Switzerland receiving guidance from conductors such as Paavo Järvi, Gianandrea Noseda, Johannes Schlaefli, David Reiland, Guiseppe Montesano, Donato Renzetti.

He has collaborated with various orchestras such as the Tonhalle Orchestra of Zürich, the Orchestre National de Metz, the Lausanne Sinfonietta, the Basel Kammerorchester, the Orchestre Symphonique de Mulhouse, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg, the Moravian Philharmonic Orchestra, the Szolnok Symphony Orchestra, the St-Petersburg Youth Symphony Orchestra, the Savaria Symphony Orchestra.

With the perspective of the Youth Jury

When did you realize that you wanted to become a conductor and what made you make this choice?

I was a violinist and I have got a "focal dystonia", a disease which made me stop playing the violin. Then, I started conducting because I did not want to leave music. But I also always had this idea to start conducting when I was a violinist. I just did not have the time to start.

How did your passion for music come about?

I have always felt special when I was listening to music when I was young. My sister was doing figure skating with movie or classical music. I loved to be inspired by the music.

How would you adapt your direction to an audience of only children or only elderly?

The most important thing is to present classical music with universal tools. After all, old or young people are not so different. This music suffers from a lot of "clichés", and we need to explain the codes and the why of everything to make it more modern...



LEON FRANTZEN-MALESANI

25 YEARS - HOLLAND / ITALY

Born in the Netherlands and later moving to Italy, Germany and the UK, Leon began his musical journey with the violin and trombone. Growing up in Verona, he fell in love with opera and has worked on productions such as *La Bohème*, *La traviata*, *Dido and Aeneas*, *Così fan Tutte*, *Falstaff*, *Peter Grimes*, and *Bluebeard's Castle*.

Notable achievements include the third prize at the 2021 "Premio Frederick Fennell", the 2023 Mortimer Furber Prize for conducting at the Royal Northern College of Music and the 2023 "Kersjes Fonds Prize". Leon was appointed Resident Conductor with the Muscat Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in Oman, starting in the 2023/24 season.

His collaborations include the BBC Philharmonic, PSAPPHA, Orkest de Ereprijs, Northern Ballet, NEW Sinfonia, Chetham's Symphony Orchestra, Stockport Symphony Orchestra, National Youth Orchestra of the Netherlands, Orchestre Symphonique de Quebec, and Orchestre Metropolitain. He is the founder of the Maastricht Academic Chamber Orchestra and the Maastricht Winds Orchestra. Furthermore he has worked as assistant conductor for orchestras like the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Opera North, Askó Schönberg, RKST21 and the Belgian National Orchestra with conductors Jonathan Bloxham, Omer Meir Wellber, Mark Wigglesworth, Antony Hermus, Jac van Steen, Alpesh Chauhan, Eva Ollikainen, Leslie SUGANANDARAJAH, Christian Lindberg, Andrew Manze and Domingo Hindoyan. Leon studied conducting at the renowned Royal Northern College of Music.

With the perspective of the Youth Jury

When did you realize that you wanted to become a conductor and what made you make this choice?

I vividly remember my 12th birthday, when my grandparents gave me a CD of 'The Planets' by Holst.

I immediately fell in love with it and said, 'When I grow up, I want to conduct this piece!'

This moment marked the beginning of my journey in music, leading me to explore the beauties and complexities of conducting.

What are your main sources of inspiration?

My main sources of inspiration are often the architectural and natural beauties around me. All artists draw inspiration from the environments they find themselves in. When I find myself in an art gallery or on top of a mountain, I feel in perfect harmony with what is around me. This harmony deeply inspires my work.

What advice would you give to a young person who dreams of becoming a conductor?

Never give up. Conducting is an arduous path, full of ups and downs. I recommend going to as many concerts as possible, listening to unknown composers, comparing different performances and find information about the historical contexts of the music you are working on. The world of music is vast and there is still so much to discover!



LUKA HAUSER

26 YEARS - GERMANY

Luka Hauser is the newly appointed Kappellmeister and assistant conductor to Cornelius Meister at the Staatoper Stuttgart from the 2023/2024 season.

In this capacity, he will conduct performances of Giuseppe Verdi's Falstaff and Kurt Weil's Rise and Fall of the City of Mahogany. Other highlights include his debut with the Nürnberger Symphoniker, assisting at the Dutch National Opera with the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra and at the Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia in Valencia.

Most recently, Luka Hauser has gained valuable experiences as assistant to renowned conductors such as Zubin Mehta at the Staatsoper Unter den Linden in Berlin, Vladimir Jurowsky with the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin, Markus Stenz at the Teatro La Fenice in Venice, Markus Poschner at the Landestheater Linz and the Bayreuth Festival. He recently made his debuts with the Konzerthausorchester Berlin, the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra, the Symphonieorchester Liechtenstein, the Staatskapelle Weimar and the Thüringer Symphoniker, as well as assisting

With the perspective of the Youth Jury

What are your main sources of inspiration?

Everything in life! Music is the aural representation of all human emotions, love, passion, sadness, joy... So inspiration can come from a conversation with someone I love, it can come from a walk by the sea or from a painful experience. All emotions can be found in music.

What advice would you give to a young person who dreams of becoming a conductor?

Lots of courage! It is not a job, but a vocation that accompanies you throughout your life. Music is the most beautiful thing and sharing the stage with many musicians and making music together can bring much happiness.

How would you adapt your conducting to an audience of only children or only seniors?

Music is about emotional communication, no matter what age, the emotions are the same but the perspective changes throughout life. Basically, there is no need to change, only the way you think.



DANIEL ROS HERNÁNDEZ

31 YEARS - SPAIN

Daniel Ros (1992), from El Jimenado (Murcia, Spain), has been consolidated by his growing activity. He was assistant conductor of the ADDA-Sinfónica de Alicante orchestra during the 2019-2021 seasons. In addition, he was also assistant conductor of the Orquesta Sinfónica de la Región de Murcia during the 2019-2023 seasons. He studied the Master of Music in Orchestra Conducting at Codarts, Rotterdam, with Hans Leenders and Sander Teepen. He is also a member of the board of the AESDO and, since its foundation in 2023, he is the artistic and musical director of the Harmonix Orchestra (HXO) and the President of the Harmonix Foundation.

Of particular note is his new appointment as Chief Conductor of the Leiden Sinfonietta from April 2024 and the position as assistant conductor he won at Opera Zuid in the Netherlands for their production of two operas by Rossini on tour to different cities in the country during Spring 2024.

Daniel Ros has received the AESDO Prize in the First International Orchestra Conducting Competition "Lliria, city of music" (2021) and the Second Prize in the second edition (2023).

In 2019 he was awarded a scholarship as a trainee conductor by the National Institute of Performing Arts and Music (INAEM) and the JONDE. After attending the specialisation course, he was selected to conduct the orchestra in concert in the prestigious Sala Mozart of the Auditorio de Zaragoza.

His next engagements will take him to conduct in different countries such as Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Venezuela, Mexico and Germany.

With the perspective of the Youth Jury

How did you go from playing an instrument to conducting an orchestra?

I simply listened to what my body and mind were telling me. I have always felt that I needed to feel the sound of the full orchestra in my body and communicate what I feel inside. It's hard to explain, but it's a wonderful thing.

How would you adapt your direction to an audience of only children or only elderly?

Children are very important. They are the future. So I always try to make them feel part of the concert or performance, although sometimes it also happens with any type of audience. I believe a lot in spontaneity, as long as it is done with respect and education.

Do you have any particular ritual before going on the stage?

Not especially, although for me, the most special moment is just before going on stage, when the orchestra has finished tuning and everything is silent. At that moment I look up, I remember the important things, I take a deep breath and I go out on stage determined to enjoy.



ALVIN HO

31 YEARS - HONG KONG

Dynamic Hong Kong-born conductor Alvin Ho is the first prize winner of the Princess Astrid International Conducting Competition in Trondheim, Norway. He currently serves as Assistant Conductor of Florida's Naples Philharmonic Orchestra, following previous tenures with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and the Indiana Opera and Ballet Theatre.

Described by the late Bernard Haitink as "a thoughtful musician, extremely well-prepared and meticulous in his approach," Ho emphasizes a faithful representation of the music on the podium, focusing on genuine musical expression, subtlety, and precision rather than personal theatrics. This dedication has led to international engagements with orchestras across Europe, the United Kingdom, and the United States, including the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Jena Philharmonic, Luzern Festival Strings, Orchestra Giovanile Luigi Cherubini, and Cabrillo Festival Orchestra.

This season will see Ho making his debut with the Trondheim Symphony Orchestra and the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, alongside select performances with the Naples Philharmonic that range from standard concert programs to ballet collaborations. He continues his close mentorship with Riccardo Muti, who invites him to understudy his performances with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, and Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. Ho has been honored with the Karajan Conducting Fellowship by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, a prestigious role that placed him in residence at the Salzburg Festival. Additionally, he was named the Bruno Walter Conducting Fellow at the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music in the USA. His talents also earned him an invitation from Bernard Haitink to participate in a masterclass at the Lucerne Festival.

Beyond his achievements on the symphonic podium, Ho has made significant contributions to the operatic stage, collaborating with esteemed singers such as Riccardo Zanellato, Kristinn Sigmundsson, Mark Delavan, and Vittoria Yeo. He has covered seven productions at Indiana Opera, with a notable focus on Wagner's *Parsifal*. After a two-week study with Riccardo Muti, Ho conducted Verdi's *Macbeth* in concert form at the Ravenna Festival. His versatility extends to ballet, where he has conducted numerous performances at both the Indiana Ballet Theater and Naples Ballet.

Ho studied primarily with Arthur Fagen, Riccardo Muti, and Bernard Haitink. He holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Orchestral Conducting from Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, with a published thesis titled *A Conductor's Guide to Interpreting Beethoven's Ninth Symphony*.

With the perspective of the Youth Jury

What are your main sources of inspiration?

Jessye Norman used to say one has to love practising, simply because we spend so much time as musicians alone. I have learnt to inspire myself through my way of studying scores, which is a complicated process involving analyses, historical research and playing the score on the piano. Listening to great interpreters of the past also inspire me.

What does the Cantelli Prize mean to you and what motivated you to participate?

We will never know what the jury is looking for. So, to aim for a prize when participating in a competition is pointless and definitely a wrong motivation. The motivation is always the music, and whether I can leave the competition saying to myself, I have delivered a good interpretation from the podium.

What advice would you give to a young person who dreams of becoming a conductor?

My teacher Riccardo Muti passed to me the reply from Giuseppe Verdi, who was asked the same question. *Lavoro, lavoro, lavoro. Work, work, work.*



ARAM KHACHEH

27 YEARS - ITALY

Born in Italy in 1997 into a family of Persian-born artists, he studied cello and composition in Florence. In 2019 he graduated in Conducting with top marks and honours at the Conservatory of Brescia, and in '22 he obtained his master's degree at the Conservatory of Milan (again with top marks). He attended the courses of Gilberto Serembe (Italian Conducting Academy 2017 and 2018), Daniele Gatti (Accademia Chigiana 2020), Giampaolo Bisanti (Opera conductor Masterclass Liège 2023), Johannes Schlaefli (Kammerorchester Basel 2023).

So far, he has conducted orchestras such as I Pomeriggi Musicali, the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra, I Musici di Parma, Bazzini Consort, the Sichuan Philharmonic Orchestra, the Filarmonica dell'Opera Italiana 'Bruno Bartoletti', the UNIMI Orchestra, FORM - Filarmonica Marchigiana, the FVG Orchestra, the Orchestra Sinfonica Siciliana collaborating with soloists such as Gennaro Cardaropoli, Mario Brunello, Luigi Piovano, Giovanni Gnocchi, Felix Klieser, Richard Galliano, Alessandro Milani, Luca Ranieri, Giulio Tampalini, Danilo Rossi, Giovanni Sollima, Wayne Marshall, Andrea Lucchesini, Klaidi Sahatci, and singers such as Annalisa Stroppa, Luciano Ganci, Martina Gresia, Veronica Simeoni, Iván Ayón-Rivas and others. He is currently Music Director of the Bazzini Consort in Brescia, with whom he has conducted numerous opera and symphony concerts, with wide critical and audience acclaim.

With the perspective of the Youth Jury

What are your main sources of inspiration?

Inspiration can be found everywhere, in everyday life, when you relate to other artists, in nature, in history. I think that you just have to be ready to receive it, and at that point anything can potentially be a good source of inspiration.

What advice would you give to a young person who dreams of becoming a conductor?

What I keep telling myself every day: 'Study, always be ready, prepared. Approach this discipline with seriousness and respect'. To quote an exponent from a different discipline, 'Hard work beats talent if talent doesn't work hard'.

Are you for or against conducting by heart? If you are in favour, what are the advantages in your opinion?

If the natural mnemonic qualities allow this practice, then welcome... Personally, I agree with what a great conductor once said: The important thing is not so much about having the music in your head as the head in the music.



RICHARD OCTAVIANO KOGIMA

33 YEARS - BRAZIL

Richard Octaviano Kogima is a Brazilian conductor, composer and pianist currently based in Switzerland. Richard has performed throughout Brazil, United States and Europe in venues such as Tonhalle, Salle Cortot, DR Koncerthuset and Sala São Paulo.

He was invited by Herbert Blomstedt to accompany him in a 6 weeks tour with leading American orchestras, and had the opportunity to learn closely from Mr. Blomstedt during this period.

Since then, he enjoyed successful debuts in his homeland such as conducting the season opening of the Neojiba Orchestra among other prominent orchestras.

In 2023 Richard was an active participant at the Järvi Academy in Estonia. In 2024 he reached the quarter finals of the Malko Competition and was selected for the Tonhalle Conductors Academy with Paavo Järvi. A laureate of several international piano competitions, Richard has been awarded the "Nelson Freire Award" at the Geza Anda Piano Competition in 2021, as well as 1st Prizes at the Concours Flame (Paris), Landolt Competition and KIWANIS Chamber Music Competition Zürich. He trained as a pianist with Konstantin Scherbakov at the Zurich University of Arts and studied choir conducting with Markus Utz. He holds a Diplôme Supérieur from Ecole Normal de Musique de Paris and a Bachelor Degree from Universidade de São Paulo.

With the perspective of the Youth Jury

Are you for or against memorizing the direction? If you are in favor, what do you think the advantages are?

For me it's not about being for or against. I always prefer to conduct from memory, but sometimes I do it with the score in front of me. For me it is more natural to conduct without a score, but this does not mean that I am more or less prepared than if you conduct with a score. It's just a personal question.

What does the Cantelli Prize mean to you and what motivated you to participate?

The Cantelli Prize is a very prestigious and well-known award in the world of orchestral conducting. A competition is always a showcase to showcase your talent and skills in front of professional orchestras, which at the beginning of our career is difficult to have this kind of opportunity.

What are your main sources of inspiration?

I like to read a lot about what I'm going to direct, but most of all I like to be surrounded by simple things like nature, a good coffee or a good conversation.



MARIA KUROCHKINA

35 YEARS - RUSSIA

Maria Kurochkina graduated from Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatory in 2020. She holds a master's degree in symphonic conducting from the classes of G. Rozhdestvensky and I. Dronov and she conducted many performances of the Conservatory orchestras. She also served as Assistant Conductor of the Slobodkin Centre Chamber Orchestra, and the Moscow Conservatory Opera Theatre.

Maria participated in conducting masterclasses in London, Moscow and Perm with noted conductors Marin Alsop, Vasily Petrenko, Vasily Sinaisky, Yuri Temirkanov, Teodor Currentzis and others.

She was an active participant in the International Diaghilev Festival in Perm (2018 and 2019), and staged and conducted the world premiere of Ramazan Yunusov's chamber opera "Steps" for the International Diaghilev in 2019. In 2021 Maria has become a Fellow of Cabrillo Festival's Conductor Workshop, and in 2022 she became one of the 14 selected participants of La Maestra conducting competition organized by the Paris Philharmonie.

With the perspective of the Youth Jury

What advice would you give to a young person who dreams of becoming a conductor?

You are the only person who decides whether you become a conductor or not. No matter what everyone says, follow your dreams.

What was the most difficult challenge you faced as a conductor and how did you overcome it?

My most difficult challenge is sexism in the world of classical music.

Women still face much bigger obstacles on their way to becoming conductors.

The first time I said I wanted to be a conductor, almost everyone around me said I would never succeed because I am a woman.

I was harassed, discriminated against, discouraged - only because I am a woman.

How do you handle last-minute contingencies?

With humour!



MASON LUBERT

34 YEARS - USA

Mason Lubert is an American conductor known for his versatility across contemporary and traditional repertoire in both opera and symphonic programs. His performances include appearances with the Polish Baltic Philharmonic and the ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra, as well as collaborations with the Vienna-based artist agency Managing Artists Con Brio.

He has conducted programs featuring new works by Unsuk Chin, Christian Blaha, and Robert Paterson, and has led world premieres by Hannah Eisendle and Emmy-winning composer Jake Runestad.

Mason has been Assistant Conductor to Daniel Harding and assisted productions at Theater an der Wien's Kammeroper. He distinguished himself as a finalist in the Concurso Internacional de Dirección de Orquesta de UAL and has received invitations to conduct at the Mostly Modern Festival, Atlantic Music Festival Institute, Forum Dirigieren's Das Kritische Orchester, and in masterclasses with Péter Eötvös, Sian Edwards, and Lorin Maazel.

A student of Mark Stringer and Yuji Yuasa, Mason was trained at the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, where he was awarded a Magister Artium with distinction in 2020. He also holds a Bachelor of Music from the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University. A recipient of the American Austrian Foundation's Young Conductors Fellowship, Mason lives in Vienna with his wife Veronika, a performance psychologist for musicians.

With the perspective of the Youth Jury

When did you realize that you wanted to become a conductor and what made you make this choice?

When I was younger and playing in ensembles, I always had the urge to try conducting. Once I was finally given the chance to do it myself, I knew I was hooked.

What is your biggest dream and which stage/orchestra would you like to direct?

I aim to have good relationships with the people I work with, whoever and wherever they may be, built on mutual respect, ambition and musical honesty.

What was the most difficult challenge you faced as a conductor and how did you overcome it?

I demand a lot from myself, and as a conductor, it's sometimes tough not to get overly excited or demanding in rehearsals when the orchestra has other priorities. It can be counterproductive. Overcoming it is a process!



PIETRO MAZZETTI

28 YEARS - ITALY

Graduated in percussion from the Fiesole School of Music in 2017 with top marks and honors, and in orchestral conducting in Parma with top marks and honors, he is the musical director of the Orchestra Cupiditas, with which he has conducted numerous concerts, collaborating with international music festivals and public and private institutions. Since August 2018, he has been collaborating with the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino Foundation in educational performances produced with the Venti Lucenti company for more than 400 shows. After his debut with the 'Città di Grosseto' orchestra in 2019, in September 2021, he conducted the Arturo Toscanini Foundation orchestra of Parma during an operatic gala, establishing a collaboration for performances and concerts also in the presence of the President of the Republic, Sergio Mattarella. He made his debut at the Mancinelli Theater in Orvieto on August 28, 2021, conducting 'Cavalleria Rusticana,' having been selected by Maestro Ranzani following the opera workshop he led, and in December of the same year, he conducted the Cameristi del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino. Since March 2022, he has been conducting and collaborating with the Puccini Festival Orchestra in Torre del Lago. From December of the same year, he has been assistant to Maestro F.I. Ciampa at the Opernhaus Zurich ('La Traviata') and at the Teatro Regio di Parma ('Adriana Lecouvreur' and 'Il Trovatore,' for the Verdi Festival), a theater where he had debuted 'Il Matrimonio Segreto' in February 2023. In the fall of 2023, he conducted a gala for the Verdi Festival with the Toscanini Orchestra; he was also assistant to Maestro V. Galli for 'Rigoletto' in 2023 and for 'Cavalleria Rusticana - Pagliacci' in 2024 at the Opéra de Toulon, and to Maestro J. Bernacer for 'Don Carlo' in 2023 in Modena. Leading the Orchestra of the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, he performed in a symphonic concert on December 17, 2023, in the Zubin Mehta Hall; in January 2024, he conducted, for the first time in the history of the Magnani Theater in Fidenza, Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, and in February, he conducted a Rossini operatic gala at the Zaryadye Hall in Moscow with mezzo-soprano Vasilisa Berzhanskaya, where he returned in June for another gala. In May, he served as musical director on stage at the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino for the production of Puccini's 'Turandot,' conducted by Maestro Zubin Mehta. In July 2024, he was selected as an 'active observer' to attend the orchestral conducting masterclass at the Chigiana Academy, led by Maestros L. Acocella and D. Gatti."

With the perspective of the Youth Jury

When did you realise you wanted to become a conductor and what made you make this choice?

As I've been playing in an orchestra as a percussionist since I was eight years old, I was convinced from an early age that I would not limit myself to my instrument's sound. The orchestra and its sound were at the centre of my thoughts until one day I found myself in the position of having to 'beat time' at a rehearsal and that was when the change of perspective began.

What are your main sources of inspiration?

Love. What surrounds me, open spaces, buildings, dwelling more on what is natural than what is artificial. Every life experience generates a feeling and a sensation that I often reflect in the music I am playing.

How did you go from playing an instrument to conducting an orchestra?

Sometimes dramatic... From producing a sound to no longer producing it. I tried not to abandon the instrument altogether and I still have the pleasure of playing in an orchestra in certain contexts. I find it extremely exciting and rewarding.



GIACOMO POMATI

26 YEARS - ITALY

Born in 1998, he began studying music early on, starting with drums and later moving on to piano and saxophone.

In 2020, he graduated in percussion instruments from the Conservatoire de la Vallée d'Aoste under the guidance of Daniele Vineis. From 2021 to 2023, he studied orchestral conducting with Gilberto Serembe at the Italian Conducting Academy in Milan.

For the past two years, he has coordinated the Cinema Mu-To project as a conductor. This project is carried out in collaboration with the Silent Film Festival of Karlsruhe, the Conservatorio "G. Verdi" of Turin, and the Liceo Classico e Musicale Cavour. He has also been conducting the Ensemble Futura for nearly ten years, an orchestra composed of students from lower and upper secondary schools with a music program. This project is supported by the Regional School Office of Piedmont.

He has participated in several conducting masterclasses both in Italy and abroad (with Giuseppe Montesano, Riccardo Frizza, Donato Renzetti) and percussion masterclasses (Carmelo Giuliano Gullotto, Daniele Vineis, Edoardo Giachino). In 2018, he won the timpani audition at the Orchestra del Teatro Olimpico di Vicenza.

Since 2017, he has been the president of Archeia, an orchestra composed of musicians under 35 from all over Italy. In 2023, the orchestra presented its first fully self-managed season titled "Cruda Beltà."

With the perspective of the Youth Jury

What advice would you give to a young person who dreams of becoming a conductor?
To love music, first and foremost.

Sei a favore o contro la direzione a memoria? Se sei favorevole, quali sono i vantaggi secondo te?

Completely in favour. When I can, I always conduct by memory. The score creates a wall between the conductor and the orchestra. And then, as the greats say, you have to have the score in your head and not your head in the score.

How would you adapt your conducting to an audience of only children or only seniors?

I have done many concert lectures for school students as well as for older audiences. The secret is to make the audience an active listener, regardless of age. If you can get in touch with them everything becomes easier.



MIN GYU SONG

31 YEARS - SOUTH KOREA

Min Gyu Song is a Korean conductor who won the Orchestra Prize at the Erich Bergel International Conducting Competition.

Maestro Manfred Honeck, music director of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, praised him, saying, «He is highly musical, clearly knows what he wants, and can convey his ideas on the podium.

In conversations, he likewise impressed me with his knowledge of scores and his musical imagination». Following his success at the competition, Min Gyu Song was invited to guest conduct a concert broadcast on Romanian national television.

He has conducted over 20 professional orchestras, including the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, WDR Funkhausorchester Köln, Komische Oper Berlin, Bochum Symphony Orchestra, and Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra. His educational journey is a testament to his dedication and passion for music. He was the first Korean student of Steven Sloane at the Berlin University of the Arts (UdK), where he earned his master's degree. He also holds a bachelor's degree from the Detmold University of Music.

Min Gyu Song has participated in masterclasses and festivals, receiving guidance from world-renowned conductors such as Sir Roger Norrington, Johannes Schlaefli, Markus Stenz, and Osmo Vänskä. Recognized by these maestros, he has worked as an assistant conductor and actively conducts performances internationally. Starting in August 2024, Min Gyu Song will be a fellow conductor in the Korean National Opera Academy Program.

With the perspective of the Youth Jury

How did your passion for music come about?

My passion for music began when I was very young.

One defining moment was attending a concert with Brahms Symphony No. 1, which profoundly impacted me. The power of the music struck me deeply, and from that point on, I knew that I wanted to dedicate my life to music.

What does the Cantelli Prize mean to you and what motivated you to participate?

It is an excellent opportunity to show myself to the world and meet the Italian orchestra and audiences. Although I am only Asian for this edition, I grew up in Germany for half my life and have always dreamed of performing in Europe. This opportunity is one step closer to the bridge to the European audiences.

How do you handle last-minute contingencies?

One of my strengths is that I can calm myself down and see the situation, where I should start, and how I should come through. So, I sit in my chair, think about it, and start the process.



TOBY THATCHER

35 YEARS - AUSTRALIA / GREAT BRITAIN

Toby Thatcher is a British/Australian conductor. He is Artistic Director of digital contemporary sonic-arts startup Zeitgeist.

He has worked with ensembles internationally including Orchestre national de France, Ensemble Modern, Ensemble Intercontemporain, Slovenian Philharmonic, Orchestra national d'Île-de-France, Sinfonietta Cracovia, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Sinfonieorchester Basel, Panon Philharmonic, Auckland Philharmonia, Queensland Symphony Orchestra & Adelaide Symphony Orchestra. Toby has been a finalist in five international competitions, including those hosted by the hr-Sinfonieorchester Frankfurt, Croatian Radiotelevision Symphony Orchestra & Trondheim Symfoniorkester.

As an Assistant Conductor he has held positions with the Orchestre national de France, Sydney Symphony Orchestra & Orchestre national d'Île-de-France, and guest-assisted the London Philharmonic Orchestra & Philharmonia Orchestra. Between 2018-19, Toby was mentored by eminent Hungarian composer/conductor Peter Eötvös.

He graduated from the Royal Academy of Music with an MA in Music Performance where he studied oboe. As an orchestral musician he performed with the London Philharmonia, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, & London Sinfonietta. Toby has been invited as guest speaker by the Royal Academy of Music, University of the Arts London & the British Association of Romantic Studies. He has appeared multiple times on BBC Radio 3, & provided programme research for the BBC Proms.

With the perspective of the Youth Jury

How did your passion for music come about?

From the moment I can remember there was music playing in my family house. Classical, opera, jazz, rock, all sorts. There are stories of me as a baby singing, extremely loudly, as my parents pushed me around Melbourne, where I was born, in a pram. I've always loved how music triggers my imagination, and gives me energy.

When did you realize that you wanted to become a conductor and what made you make this choice?

From the moment I started playing in orchestras, I was curious about the psychology of conducting; about the ability to influence sound, and encourage energy, passion & belief in colleagues. When I was a teenager a famous Australian pedagogue gave me the opportunity to conduct a few bars of Beethoven's 5th in a rehearsal. The rest is history.

What does the Cantelli Prize mean to you and what motivated you to participate?

It's an immense opportunity, a second chance. Having been previously invited, and indeed a finalist, this gives me a chance to once again show who I am as a musician, and hope this jury appreciate my work, this time with the benefit of greater experience. This may well be my last ever competition, and I am determined to enjoy every moment of it.





CALL FOR **COMPOSERS**

THE WINNER



GIANLUCA PIOMBO

WINNER OF THE CALL FOR COMPOSERS OF THE XIII EDITION OF THE "GUIDO CANTELLI" PRIZE

Gianluca Piombo graduated with highest honors in Composition (MA) from the Conservatorio "A. Buzzolla" in Adria under the guidance of M° C. Carrara. He also holds a degree (MA) in Piano and Conducting (BA), the latter from the Conservatorio "A. Pedrollo" in Vicenza under the guidance of M° G. Andretta.

Particularly active as a composer, arranger, and conductor of operas for families and children, his latest works include: *La bottega di Figaro* (based on Rossini's *Barbiere di Siviglia*) and *Il Filtro Magico di Dulcamara* (based on Donizetti's *Elisir d'Amore*), both commissioned by the Fondazione Teatro di Pisa. As part of the celebrations for the 250th anniversary of Gaspare Spontini's birth, he created the score for *C'era una volta... Giulia la Vestale* (from *La Vestale*).

In 2022, he arranged Sergei Bortkiewicz's First Symphony in a version for piano four hands. The premiere took place in two charity concerts in support of Ukrainian refugees, under the patronage of the Honorary Ukrainian Consulate in Italy.

In 2023, he was the assistant to M° Aldo Sisillo for the new production of *Così fan tutte* at the Teatro Pergolesi in Jesi.

In 2024, he worked, together with composers Cristian Carrara and Marco Attura, on the critical edition of Spontini's opera *Alcidor* (commissioned by the Fondazione Pergolesi-Spontini). He gave the first performance in modern times, presenting to the public the most relevant arias of this opera.

As a composer, conductor, arranger or pianist, he has appeared in festivals and venues such as: Festival Pergolesi-Spontini, Festival della Valle d'Itria, Teatro Verdi (Pisa), Teatro Pergolesi (Jesi), Teatro Spontini (Maiolati Spontini), Dutch National Opera Academy (Amsterdam), Festival Dopo il Rumore (Vicenza), Sala SOSAT (Trento). He has published some of his works with Casa Musicale Sonzogno, EMA Vinci, and Editions Fertile Plaine.

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XIII EDITION

"GUIDO CANTELLI" PRIZE

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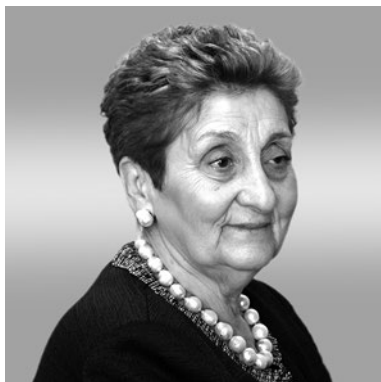
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