



## Point scoring

With more than 350 instruments to assess in less than a week, the jury for the 14th Cremona Triennale making competition had their work cut out. Lutherie judge Raymond Schryer offers an insider's account

of work' was multiplied by a coefficient of 2.6; 'set-up' by 2.1, and so on. With this added weighting, each judge could theoretically award an instrument a top score of 100, and any instrument receiving more than 300 points in total progressed to the next round to be played by the tone adjudicators.

The 1–10 marking system may seem prescriptive but the system worked effectively. When picking up an instrument for the first time I would attribute a mark out of ten based on my first impressions. If I then noticed a mistake or problem with the instrument I deducted a point, or added one if something was better than I had first thought. It took on average five minutes to evaluate an instrument – longer for cellos and basses, which required a different light source for examining the varnish.

In many cases instruments lost most points on set-up. We were quite exacting when assessing the fingerboard, nut and saddle, and in several instances the bridge and neck fell short of the highest standards. Generally, the instruments awarded high marks for set-up also scored well with the musicians, although we had little interaction with the tone judges. Over lunch I would hear a tone judge comment that an instrument hadn't been played in, or that the pegs had slipped. In some cases this was probably due to the maker finishing an instrument at the eleventh hour and neglecting the playing-in part of the process.

The tone judges awarded scores from 1 to 8, also in four categories: timbre, strength, balance and playability. The adjudicators comprised Francisca Mendoza and Massimo Quarta (violins), Patrick Jüdt (viola), Robert Cohen (cello) and Alain Ruaux (double bass). Due to the 300-point rule, introduced at the last Triennale in 2012, far fewer entries ended up in the tone judges' hands. By the end of the sixth day of judging, the musicians had played 122 instruments – 59 violins, 31 violas, 22 cellos and 10 basses – after which the luthier adjudicators re-evaluated the

One of the highlights of my own making career came in 2003, when I won the gold medal for cello at Cremona's 10th International 'Triennale' Violin Making Competition Antonio Stradivari. Life came full circle this year when the Fondazione Stradivari invited me to sit on the jury for the 14th competition. The judging process took seven days, between 14 and 21 September, followed by the awards ceremony two days later. With over 350 instruments to inspect, by makers from 31 countries, the time could hardly have been busier.

The Triennale jury comprises two groups: luthiers examining workmanship and musicians evaluating tone. Instruments are entered anonymously, and those carrying a makers' brand or label are disqualified. All entries are

examined by the luthier jury panel, who select a shortlist for the musicians to test. For the five makers adjudicating – Andrea Frandsen, Nicola Lazzari, Tetsuo Matsuda, Luca Primon and myself – the week began with an introduction from jury president Paolo Salvelli and Virginia Villa, general director of Cremona's Museo del Violino (MdV) and the receipt of a booklet of regulations. Afterwards we moved to the museum's west wing, which became our home for the next few days.

The luthier jury members individually awarded each instrument with marks from 1 to 10 in 4 categories, and each category took a percentage of the total mark. 'Technical level of work' took 26 per cent of the total; set-up 21 per cent; varnish 22 per cent; and 'overall style and character' 31 per cent. To reach a percentage, therefore, 'technical level