
INTERNATIONAL LUTHERIE COMPETITION RULES

PHILHARMONIE DE PARIS – TALENTS & VIOLON'CELLES

14 – 18 JANUARY 2026

The **International Lutherie Competition**, to be held during the Philharmonie de Paris String Quartet Biennial, continues Paris's historic tradition of great competitions in instrument-making. This third edition is dedicated to the viola. Celebrating the transmission of trade and passion, this event seeks to recompense both the talents of today and the up-and-coming talents of tomorrow—with a contest for each category: “Talents of Today” for confirmed luthiers, showcasing the excellence and expertise in the trade today; and “Talents of Tomorrow” for students of lutherie, shining the spotlight on emerging talents now learning the trade at various schools and training centres.

The instruments will be judged by a jury of 6 (six) members, half of whom will be confirmed professional musicians (the “musician jury”) while the other half will be luthiers, instrument makers or recognised experts (the “luthier jury”).

A seventh person will be appointed president of the jury. The list of jury members and its president are still to be defined; registered competitors will be kept informed as the event's organisation evolves, and the competition website will be updated.

The organisational committee is made up of members of the Philharmonie de Paris and Talents & Violon'celles. On the one hand, this committee receives, checks, and validates the registration of the candidates and, on the other hand, it validates instrument eligibility before examination by the jury.

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1. COMPETITOR ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

"TALENTS OF TODAY" CATEGORY,

To be eligible for the competition, competitors must provide proof of their professional luthier status in the form of ad hoc documents in accordance with the administrative provisions of the country in which they do this work. Competitors may conduct their professional activity under any legal status.

Instruments that do not meet the eligibility criteria will be considered not eligible to compete.

School/training centre and student eligibility for the "Talents of Tomorrow" category

To open the field of competition to the full range of schools and training centres, the "Talents of Tomorrow" category is open to students enrolled at any public or private institution offering a curriculum on the art of instrument making leading to a diploma or certificate attesting to their students' completion of the course.

Students shall compete under their own name, but on behalf of their educational institution.

Teachers at educational institutions (as specified above) can compete in the "Talents of Today" category if and only if they can show that they actively work as a professional luthier in addition to their teaching. To apply, they must provide the same documents as other "Talents of Today" competitors.

The organizing committee reserves the right to examine any application from a student who does not meet the above criteria.

Prevention of conflicts of interest

In order to avoid any risk of conflict of interest, members of the Philharmonie de Paris, Talents & Violon'celles and members of the jury, as well as their personnel and associates, are prohibited from entering the competition.

2. NUMBER OF MAKER(S) PER INSTRUMENT

"Talents of Today" category

Instruments may have been made entirely by one person or by multiple people.

If made by multiple people, each maker's name must be specified in the registration.

Competitors compete under their own name, regardless of the legal form of their company. Associate competitors are grouped together in the final competition ranking.

"Talents of Tomorrow" category

Instruments may have been made by a single student or by multiple students.

If made by multiple students, each maker's name must be specified in the registration.

There is no limit to the number of students who can be named as the makers of an instrument.

3. NUMBER OF INSTRUMENT(S)

"Talents of Today" category

A maximum of 1 (one) instrument can be entered by competitors in the "Talents of Today" category.

"Talents of Tomorrow" category

A maximum of 2 (two) instruments per school can be entered in the Competition.

If a student is affiliated with multiple schools, their participation will be counted as an entry for each school.

4. REGISTRATION

Registration opens on 31st January 2025 at 3 pm, Paris time (CET).

Registration closes on 24th November 2025 at 12pm, Paris time (CET). The organisational committee's confirmation of receipt establishes the date and time of registration.

Once 100 instruments have been validated by the organisers, registration will close. This will be announced on the website: <https://philharmoniedeparis.fr/en/musee-de-la-musique/international-lutherie-competition>.

The organisational committee reserves the right to deny any registration that is incomplete or that does not comply with the registration documents provided.

Registration is to be submitted on-line at the following address: <https://philharmoniedeparis.fr/en/musee-de-la-musique/international-lutherie-competition>.

The form is available in French or English, which are the only two languages allowed.

The form must be completed on-line. The competitor will receive an email indicating the documents to be submitted and the bank details for payment of the registration fee via wire transfer. The registration will be confirmed after receipt of payment and validation of the required documents. Any incomplete registration will be denied.

A confirmation email will be sent, validating the registration.

5. REGISTRATION FEE

The registration fee is €200 (two hundred euros) for one instrument of the category "Talents of today".

The registration fee is €200 (two hundred euros) for the first instrument and €100 (one hundred euros) for the second instrument, for the category "Talents of tomorrow".

No fees will be refunded if entered instruments are removed from the competition.

Registration is final and non-refundable. There will be no refunds unless the competition is cancelled, in which case all sums received will be refunded.

Any information regarding registration can be requested at:
lutheriecompetition@philharmoniedeparis.fr

6. INSTRUMENT ELEGIBILITY

6.1 GENERAL CONDITIONS FOR ALL CATEGORIES OF COMPETITORS

Precedence

Instruments entered must not have received any awards at previous competitions.

Instruments entered must have been completed less than two years before the competition is held (i.e., date of manufacture after January 2024).

Guarantee of anonymity

The instrument must not bear any trademark or distinguishing sign allowing it to be attributed to a contemporary instrument maker or educational institution, failing which the instrument will be disqualified. Any signature, iron branding or identifying mark preventing anonymity are strictly prohibited and will disqualify the instrument.

Presentation conditions

All instruments must be presented with a modern setup, new strings and a chin rest, ready to be played.

Right of withdrawal

The organisers reserve the right to withdraw from the competition any instrument whose design and manufacture do not reflect the state of the art and the principles and techniques broadly accepted in the field, or that show insufficient mastery of the practices and techniques of the trade. Instruments presenting any obvious health and safety risks or any signs of xylophagous insects shall be removed from the competition.

Insurance

All instruments entered in the competition must be insured at their owner's expense.

6.2 REQUIREMENTS FOR INSTRUMENTS ENTERED IN THE "TALENTS OF TODAY" CATEGORY

Model

The instrument's pattern, shape and string length can be freely chosen by the makers.

Models copying or inspired by antique instruments, as well as new creations and innovations, are allowed as long as modern-day and classical viola repertoires can be played on the instrument in normal conditions.

Instrument materials

The main parts of the instruments must be made of wood. Makers are free to choose the varieties of wood, subject to compliance with the official criteria for the use of wood in force in the territory of the European Union at the date of the Competition. The following are considered the main parts of the instrument: the top (table), the back, the ribs (sides), the neck and the scroll.

Makers are free to choose the materials making up all other parts.

Manufacturing techniques

Competitors agree to pledge that all wooden parts of instruments entered in the competition have been finished by hand. The use of manual or digital machinery is tolerated solely for the initial stages of the production process.

Makers are free to choose the production techniques for all other materials.

Varnish

All styles of varnish are allowed. Pigments, resins and stains can be natural or synthetic.

Presentation materials

Participants must provide a set of spare strings and a good quality viola case.

6.3 REQUIREMENTS FOR INSTRUMENTS ENTERED IN THE "TALENTS OF TOMORROW" CATEGORY

Model

Instruments submitted and made by competitors in the "Talents of Tomorrow" category shall be scrupulously inspired by the viola, the so-called « Stauffer », attributed to Girolamo Amati viola "Stauffer", Cremona 1615 (Stauffer Fondation - exhibited in Museo del Violino, Cremona).

The general aim is to reproduce the luthier's style and inspiration with a modern setup. Candidates are not obliged to reproduce the modifications induced by the use, the restorations or the evolution of its materials and its structure during the time.

All candidates will receive by post the same documentation of the instrument, published by the Museo del Violino in the form of a leaflet including the main dimensions, 1:1 scale photographs of the table, the back and the profile of the body on the low strings side, and the four main views of the head.

The technical documents provided are valid throughout the duration of the competition.

Materials

The entire instrument, with the exception of the endpin and the tailgut, must be made of wood. The wood varieties used for the main parts must correspond to those identified on the reference instrument, the so-called viola “Stauffer”. The top (table), back, side and the peg box must visually resemble the original the so-called viola “Stauffer”.

Manufacturing techniques

Competitors agree to pledge that all parts of the instrument entered in the competition have been finished by hand, except the endpin, the tailpiece, the tailgut and the pegs. The use of manual or digital machinery is tolerated solely for the initial stages of production.

The varnish must be made and applied with the materials and technical possibilities of the time of creation of the reference instrument

Variation in shades and artificial wear are allowed.

7. PERMISSION

Competitors authorise minor repairs to be done on the instruments during the Competition by a professional selected by the organisational committee.

For the entire duration of the Competition, competitors authorise the organisers to present their instruments within the permanent collection of the Musée de la musique and in the rooms of the Philharmonie de Paris, on public display.

The instruments will be played by the members of the jury and the musicians of the Orchestre de Paris.

8. RENUNCIATION

The jury’s decisions are final. The integrity of the jury may not be called into question, and there will be no possible recourse following the announcement of the Competition winners.

9. PRIZES AND AWARDS

“Talents of Today” category

The jury ranks the top three instruments after the final round : First, Second and Third Prize (respectively). The winners will receive a “Jury Award - Talents of Today” certificate proving their ranking in the competition.

Three “Coup de Coeur” may be awarded by the “Luthiers Jury”, the “Musicians Jury” and viola musiciens of the Orchestre de Paris.

A “Special Prize” may be awarded by the audience.

“Talents of Tomorrow” category

The jury ranks the top three instruments winning “First, Second and Third Prize” (respectively) of the “Jury Award – Talents of Tomorrow”. The winning students will receive a certificate proving their ranking in the competition.

One jury’s choice award “*Coup de Coeur*” may be attributed to one of the top 3 (three) instruments in the “luthiers jury” ranking.

The “First Prize” instrument will be purchased by the Musée de la musique and be integrated the instrumental collection of its educational department. The purchase price of this acquisition is fixed at €8,000 (eight thousand euros) including VAT. This sum will be paid to the school attended by the winning student(s).

10. COMPETITION PROCEDURE

The procedures for depositing and retrieving the instruments will be specified in September 2025 at the latest.

10.1 RECEIPT OF THE INSTRUMENTS

10.1.1 HAND DELIVERY

10.1.2 RECEIPT BY CARRIER

10.1.3 RETRIEVING INSTRUMENTS AFTER THE COMPETITION

10.2 INSTRUMENT ELIGIBILITY TEST

An initial examination is carried out by the organizing committee. Instruments that do not meet the criteria set out in points 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 of these rules will be excluded from the competition and kept in a secure location until they are removed at the end of the competition.

10.3 ROUND ONE

“Talents of Today” category

Each instrument is meticulously examined by each member of the “**luthiers jury**”.

Each jury member gives a score out of 100 for all the following criteria:

Title	Description
Setup, playability	Including the soundpost, the bridge, the tailpiece, the end pin, preparation of the fingerboard, neck ergonomics, etc.
Varnish, finish coat	Appearance, transparency, sheen, colour, patina, etc.
Model	Design of the model, F-holes, arching, proportions, scroll, etc.
Workmanship	Quality of the seam adjustments, the purfling, the finishing details
Artistic impression	Choice of materials, stylistic consistency, artistic impression

A sound and musical test is performed on each instrument by each member of the “**musicians jury**”.

Each jury member gives a score out of 100 for all the following criteria:

Title	Description
Playability	Handling, ease of playing, quality of string setup
Balanced tessitura	Balance between low and high notes, evenness of timbre in lows and highs, etc.
Projection, perceived power	Sound dynamics (piano/forte), attacks, perceived intensity of sound, etc.
Artistic impression	Musical expressiveness, range of timbres, etc.

After this first round, only **the 15 (fifteen) highest-scoring instruments** will advance to the next round.

If there is a tie between two or more instruments, the tie will be broken by a jury vote including the chairperson of the jury.

“Talents of Tomorrow” category

Each instrument is meticulously examined by each member of the **“luthiers jury”**.

Each jury member gives a score out of 100 for all the following criteria:

Title	Description
Setup, playability	Including the soundpost, the bridge, the tailpiece, the end pin, preparation of the fingerboard, neck ergonomics, etc.
Varnish, finish coat	Appearance, transparency, sheen, colour, patina, etc.
Likeness to the original model	F-holes, arching, proportions, scroll, etc.
Workmanship	Quality of the seam adjustments, the purfling, the finishing details
Artistic impression	Choice of materials, stylistic consistency, artistic impression

A sound and musical test is performed on each instrument by each member of the **“musicians jury”**.

Each jury member gives a score out of 100 for all the following criteria:

Title	Description
Playability	Handling, ease of playing, quality of string setup
Balanced tessitura	Balance between low and high notes, evenness of timbre in lows and highs, etc.
Projection, perceived power	Sound dynamics (piano/forte), attacks, perceived intensity of sound, etc.
Artistic impression	Musical expressiveness, range of timbres, etc.

After this first round, only **the 5 (five) highest-scoring instruments** will advance to the next round.

If there is a tie between two or more instruments, the tie will be broken by a jury vote including the chairperson of the jury.

10.4 ROUND TWO: PUBLIC SEMI-FINALS

“Talents of Today” category

Each selected instrument will be played, behind a screen, in front of the jury by musicians of the Orchestre de Paris.

Each jury member gives a score out of 100 for all the following criteria:

Title	Description
Balanced tessitura	Balance between low and high notes, evenness of timbre in lows and highs, etc.
Projection, perceived power	Sound dynamics (piano/forte), attacks, perceived intensity of sound, etc.
Artistic impression	Musical expressiveness, range of timbres, etc.

After this semi-final, only **the 8 (eight) highest-scoring instruments** will advance.

If there is a tie between two or more instruments, the tie will be broken by a jury vote including the chairperson of the jury.

“Talents of Tomorrow” category

Each selected instrument will be played, behind a screen, in front of the jury by musicians of the Orchestre de Paris.

Each jury member gives a score out of 100 for all the following criteria:

Title	Description
Balanced tessitura	Balance between low and high notes, evenness of timbre in lows and highs, etc.
Projection, perceived power	Sound dynamics (piano/forte), attacks, perceived intensity of sound, etc.
Artistic impression	Musical expressiveness, range of timbres, etc.

After this semi-final, only **the 3 (three) highest-scoring instruments** will advance.

If there is a tie between two or more instruments, the tie will be broken by a jury vote including the chairperson of the jury.

10.5 ROUND THREE: PUBLIC FINALS

“Talents of Today” category

Each selected instrument will be played, behind a screen, in front of the jury by musicians of the Orchestre de Paris.

The entire jury will judge the instruments based on the following criteria:

Title	Description	Number of attributable points
Balance, power, projection	Evenness of timbre, dynamics, projection	10 points
Artistic impression	Musical expressiveness, range of timbres, etc.	10 points
Total		20 points

If there is a tie between two or more instruments, the tie will be broken by a jury vote including the chairperson of the jury. If there is a tie between two, two prizes may be awarded.

The 3 (three) instruments receiving the highest scores will win first, second and third prize in the Competition.

The jury, after deliberation, reserves the right to attribute a “luthiers” jury’s choice award (“Coup de cœur”) based on a vote by the “luthier jury”.

The jury, after deliberation, reserves the right to attribute a “musicians” jury’s choice award (“Coup de cœur”) based on a vote by the “musicians jury”.

An “Orchestra de Paris’ choice award” (“Coup de cœur”) may be attributed.

An “audience’s choice award” (“Special Prize”) may also be attributed.

“Talents of Tomorrow” category

Each selected instrument will be played, behind a screen, in front of the jury by musicians of the Orchestre de Paris.

The entire jury will judge the instruments based on the following criteria:

Title	Description	Number of attributable points
Balance, power, projection	Evenness of timbre, dynamics, projection	10 points
Artistic impression	Musical expressiveness, range of timbres, etc.	10 points
Total		20 points

The jury ranks the top three instruments, respectively winning “First, Second and Third Prize” of the “Jury Award – Talents of Tomorrow”.

If there is a tie between two or more instruments, the tie will be broken by a jury vote including the chairperson of the jury. If there is a tie between two, two prizes may be awarded.

A jury’s choice award (“coup de cœur”) may be attributed by the “luthiers jury”.

11. PUBLICATION OF THE RESULTS

No intermediate results will be published during the competition (in particular the list of the instruments admitted to the semi-finals and finals).

At the end of the competition, results will be published on the websites of the co-organizers:

- The list of participants
- The names of candidates whose instruments have been admitted to the semi-finals
- The names of candidates whose instruments have been admitted to the finals
- Competition results (prizes and “Coup de coeur” awards)

In addition, before 28th February 2026, each participant will receive by e-mail:

- A certificate of participation
- A summary of the first-round assessments, including:

Average luthier jury score, average musician jury score, overall average score

Highest overall average score, lowest overall average score, overall average score.

No ranking (partial or final) will be published or communicated to participants.

12. IMAGE RIGHTS

Competitors authorise the organisers to take photographs of the works they enter in the Competition, for publication or archival purposes.

Competitors authorise the organisers to publish, by any means whatsoever, images of the instruments entered in the competition and any images of the competitors that may be taken during the competition.

Photographs and any other audio-visual document produced by the competition may then be submitted to the Musée de la musique for documentation purposes.

13. DISPUTES

French law is the only law recognised by the organisers.

The English translation of these Rules is solely for the convenience of the competitors. In the event of controversial interpretation, only the French text will be considered valid.