

Competition Jury Voting Procedures for 15th Banff International String Quartet Competition (BISQC), 2025

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Participants

Jury Facilitator – The Jury Facilitator is a person closely linked with BISQC, typically the Competition Director, who is very familiar with the goals and philosophy of the competition. The Jury Facilitator is a non-voting participant in all voting sessions.

Jury – The 7 Jurors attend all of the competition performances. They are the only voting participants in voting sessions.

Official Mathematicians – The office of the Official Mathematicians monitors the voting process and the scoring procedures to ensure absolute fairness. They are non-voting participants in voting sessions.

Competition Jury Guidelines

The BISQC Jury Procedures are based on the “Optimal Jury Scoring System”, copyright #459777, by Dr. Ernest Enns and Dr. Moses Renert.

The Competition Jury has these tasks:

1. To choose the Winner of the R.S. Williams & Sons Haydn Prize for the best performance of a Haydn quartet.
2. To choose the Winner of the Canadian Commission Prize, in honour of the R.S. Williams & Sons Company for the best performance of the Kati Agócs World Premiere.
3. To choose 3 Quartets for the Finals round after 4 rounds of competition.
4. To rank the 3 Prize Winners after the completion of the Finals round.

The criteria for choosing the winning Quartets are:

1. The winning Quartet should be ready to take full advantage of an international performing career, commensurate with the career development program of the competition.
2. The winning Quartet should have an abundance of technical skill and a unique artistic voice and presence.

The Jury Facilitator and the Competition Director (if not the same person) have the right at any time to remind the Jury of the criteria that the competition has established for choosing the winning Quartets, in order to maintain the integrity of the process. The Jury Facilitator and the Competition Director may also invite discussion at any time during the voting sessions after votes by Secret Ballot had been submitted. In the unlikely case that a Juror votes in a fashion that compromises the integrity of the process, the Official Mathematicians will alert the Jury Facilitator. The Jury Facilitator may then decide not to include that Juror’s scores.

Any Juror who has or has had a previous professional or personal relationship with a member of a participating Quartet must notify the Jury Facilitator prior to the start of the competition. The Jury Facilitator may rule that the Juror (called Juror A) is ineligible to vote for a particular Quartet because of such a relationship. In that case, the Official Mathematicians evaluate the Quartet’s ranking as if Juror A had not scored on any of the Quartets. The Official Mathematicians will then assign a Juror A score to the Quartet which will maintain the same ranking when all jurors are involved in the ranking procedure. This procedure preserves the integrity of the scoring and ranking process, both for the Quartet concerned and for all other competing Quartets.

To avoid undue influence, Jurors must not communicate their views of performances and of participating Quartets with other Jurors at any time during the competition, except in discussions during the voting sessions.

Competition Jury Procedures

These procedures take place at different times during the voting sessions:

Procedure 1: Scoring by Secret Ballot

Each Juror is given an Official Ballot Form with the names of the Quartets to be scored. Each juror scores the Quartets on the Official Ballot Form using the whole numbers 1 to 20, with the lowest scores assigned to Quartets that, in the Juror's opinion, have least to commend them, and highest scores assigned to Quartets of exceptional achievement. Decimal scores are not allowed, and a Juror may assign the same score to more than one Quartet. Each juror decides their own scores without reference to other Jury members. When a Juror has finished entering all of the scores into the Official Ballot Form, the Juror gives the completed form to the Official Mathematicians.

Procedure 2: Ranking the Quartets

The Official Mathematicians convert the scores provided by the Jurors into individual rankings. The Official Mathematicians then produce a ranked list of the Quartets. To create the ranked list, the Official Mathematicians write in order the names of those Quartets which appear in the top ranking of the majority of the jurors, then those in the top two rankings, then those in the top three rankings, and so on until an ordered list of all Quartets has been obtained. The Official Mathematicians determine the cut-off point between the slates by identifying a statistically significant gap between consecutive results.

Procedure 3: Completion of the Residual Slate

The Jury Facilitator asks each Juror whether there is a Quartet not on either slate whom the Juror feels strongly ought to be included. Each Juror has the right to add one name to the residual slate. The Jury Facilitator invites each Juror who added a name to state briefly why the added Quartet should be included.

Procedure 4: General Discussion

The Jury Facilitator invites general discussion about the competing Quartets. The Jury Facilitator also invites the Official Mathematicians to share any scoring information that may assist the Jury.

Procedure 5: Runoff Voting

The Jury Facilitator asks each Juror to vote for one of two competing Quartets by a show of hands.

Procedure 6: Reordering by Voting

Each Juror is invited to suggest a different ordering. The Official Mathematicians will then list all of the possible orderings – the original ranking and all suggested reorderings. Each Juror will select one ordering from the list (either the original ranking or one of the suggested reorderings) and write the selection on a secret ballot. The Official Mathematicians then tabulate the jury selections. If none of the suggested reorderings wins a majority, the original ranking stands.

The Voting Sessions

Voting session after the 21st Century Haydn round:

Following the 21st Century Haydn round, the Jurors convene for a voting session that consists of:

Procedure 1 – Scoring by secret ballot for the performance of the Haydn quartet

Procedure 1 – Scoring by secret ballot for the performance of the 21st Century quartet

The official mathematicians then enact

Procedure 2 – Ranking the Quartets for the Haydn performance (no residual slate required)

Procedure 2 – Ranking the Quartets for the 21st Century performance (no residual slate required)

Voting session after the Romantic round:

Following the Romantic Round, the Jurors convene for a voting session that consists of

Procedure 1 – Scoring by secret ballot for the performance of the Romantic round

The official mathematicians then enact

Procedure 2 – Ranking the Quartets for the performance of the Romantic round (no residual slate required)

Voting session after the Kati Agócs World Premiere (Canadian Commission) round:

Following the Kati Agócs World Premiere round, the Jurors convene for a voting session. The Jury Facilitator invites the composer of the commissioned composition to describe their impressions of the performances. Voting commences after the composer leaves the room, and consists of

Procedure 1 – Scoring by secret ballot for the performance of the Kati Agócs World Premiere

The official mathematicians then enact

Procedure 2 – Ranking the Quartets for the performance of the Kati Agócs World Premiere (no residual slate required)

Voting session after the Beethoven/Schubert + 20th Century round:

Following the Beethoven/Schubert + 20th Century round, the Jurors convene for a voting session that consists of

Procedure 1 – Scoring by secret ballot for the performance of the Beethoven or Schubert movement

Procedure 1 – Scoring by secret ballot for the performance of the 20th Century quartet

Procedure 1 – Scoring by secret ballot for overall impression of the 4 rounds (21st Century Haydn, Romantic, Kati Agócs World Premiere, Beethoven/Schubert + 20th Century)

The official mathematicians then enact

Procedure 2 – Ranking the Quartets for the performance of the Beethoven or Schubert performance (no residual slate required)

Procedure 2 – Ranking the Quartets for the performance of the 20th Century performance (no residual slate required)

Choosing 3 Quartets for the Final Round:

Shortly after the first 4 rounds (21st Century Haydn, Romantic, Kati Agócs World Premiere, and Beethoven/Schubert + 20th Century) are completed, the Official Mathematicians create a weighted ranking using these weights:

Performance of the Haydn quartet: 13 out of 80

Performance of the 21st Century quartet: 7 out of 80

Performance of the Romantic quartet: 13 out of 80

Performance of the Kati Agócs World Premiere: 7 out of 80

Performance of the Beethoven or Schubert quartet: 13 out of 80

Performance of the 20th Century quartet: 13 out of 80

Overall impression of all rounds: 14 out of 80

The Official Mathematicians provide the Jury with a First Slate of the 2 top ranking Quartets, in alphabetical order, and a Residual Slate of the 2 Quartets that are ranked in positions 3 and 4, in ranked order. In case of ties, the Official Mathematicians may increase or decrease the number of Quartets in either slate to reflect the scores accurately.

All of the Quartets on the First Slate participate in the Final Round. To select the remaining Quartet(s), the Jury enacts

Procedure 3 – Completion of the residual slate

Procedure 4 – General discussion

The Official Mathematicians then create official ballots that include the Quartets on the Residual Slate and any Quartets that were added by the Jury. Another round of scoring takes place according to

Procedure 1 – Scoring by secret ballot

Procedure 2 – Ranking the quartets

The Official Mathematicians provide the Jury with the Residual Slate in ranked order. The Jury Facilitator then puts into action

Procedure 4 – General discussion

Procedure 6 – Reordering by voting

The Official Mathematicians provide the Jury Facilitator with the names, in alphabetical order, of the 3 quartets that move on to the Final Round.

Ranking the 3 Prize Winners:

Immediately after the Final round is completed, the Jurors convene for a voting session. The Official Mathematicians provide the Jury with official ballots that contain the names of the 3 Quartets that participated in the Final round. The Jury commences voting according to

Procedure 1 – Scoring by secret ballot for the Final round performance

Procedure 1 – Scoring by secret ballot for overall impression of the quartets during the entire competition

The Official Mathematicians then enact

Procedure 2 – Ranking the quartets for the Final round performance

Procedure 2 – Ranking the quartets for overall impression of the quartets during the entire competition

The Official Mathematicians then construct a weighted ranking using these weights:

Performance of the Haydn quartet: 13%

Performance of the 21st Century quartet: 7%

Performance of the Romantic quartet: 13%

Performance of the Kati Agócs World Premiere: 7%

Performance of the Beethoven or Schubert quartet: 13%

Performance of the 20th Century quartet: 13%

Performance of the Final round: 20%

Overall impression of all rounds: 14%

The Official Mathematicians provide the Jury with the 3 Quartets in ranked order based on the weighted ranking. For the sake of comparison, the Official Mathematicians also provide the jury with the 3 Quartets in ranked order based on overall impression. The Jury Facilitator then puts into effect

Procedure 4 – General discussion

Procedure 6 – Reordering by voting

The Official Mathematicians provide the Jury Facilitator with the names of the 3 prize winners in ranked order.

Choosing the winner of the R.S. Williams & Sons Haydn Prize for the best performance of a Haydn quartet:

The Official Mathematicians reserve the name of the winning Quartet of the Haydn performance until the completion of the first 4 rounds. In case there is a tie for the top ranking, the Official Mathematicians notify

the Jury of the tie during the voting session that follows the Beethoven Finals round. In that case, the Jury Facilitator puts into action:

Procedure 4 – General discussion

Procedure 5 – Runoff voting

Choosing the winner of the R.S. Williams & Sons Commission Prize for the best performance of the commissioned Canadian composition performed during the Kati Agócs World Premiere round:

The Official Mathematicians reserve the name of the winning Quartet of the commissioned piece until the completion of the first 4 rounds. In case there is a tie for the top ranking, the Official Mathematicians notify the Jury of the tie during the voting session that follows the Finals round. In that case, the Jury Facilitator puts into action

Procedure 4 – General discussion

Procedure 5 – Runoff voting

Contingencies

Although the majority of contingencies have been covered in this Official Manual, there may be instances when the Jury or the Official Mathematicians find no specific direction on how to act. In such instances the Competition Director has the authority to make a ruling to address the contingency, and his/her ruling is final and irrevocable.