

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

prepared by Dr. Moses Renert

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 3 Preliminary Jurors review all eligible quartet applications via the BISQC Accepted platform. They are the only voting participants in a voting session.

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

Preliminary Jury Guidelines

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

The Preliminary Jury has these tasks:

1. To choose up to ten quartets to be invited to the 15th BISQC.
2. To choose the residual quartets who may be invited should any of the top quartets not accept the invitation.

The criteria for completing the above tasks:

1. The Applicant Quartets should be ready to take full advantage of an international performing career, commensurate with the career development program of the competition.
2. The applicant quartets 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 quartets to invite to the competition, 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 session after votes by Secret Ballot have 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.

Preliminary Jury Procedures

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

Procedure 1: Scoring by Secret Ballot

Each Juror is given secure access to the BISQC on-line application platform for review of eligible Applicant Quartets as defined in the BISQC Rules, Regulations, and Repertoire. Each Juror will then score each of the Quartets using the Official Rating Scale 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.

Further, each Juror will also note for each applicant Quartet their recommendation of whether the Quartet should be promoted to the next round, by selecting Yes, Maybe, or No in the on-line application platform. When all Jurors have completed their data entry using the on-line platform, the BISQC office will forward the completed information to the Official Mathematicians.

Procedure 2: Ranking the Quartets

The Official Mathematicians convert the scores provided by the Preliminary 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 Preliminary Juror whether there is a Quartet not on either slate whom the Juror feels strongly ought to be included. Each Preliminary Juror has the right to add one name to the residual slate. The Jury Facilitator invites each Preliminary 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 Preliminary Jury.

Procedure 5: Runoff Voting

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

Procedure 6: Reordering by Voting

Each Preliminary 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 Preliminary 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 application period closes:

Following the closing of the BISQC application period, the BISQC office will grant Jurors secure on-line access to the completed applications of applicant Quartets that met the eligibility requirements for the competition. Jurors will have a defined timeline for review of the Applicant Quartets and to complete

Procedure 1 – Scoring by secret ballot

The official mathematicians then enact

Procedure 2 – Ranking the Applicant Quartets (no residual slate required)

The Official Mathematicians provide the Jury with a First Slate of the top ranking Quartets, in alphabetical order, and a Residual Slate in ranked order. All of the Quartets on the First Slate participate and will be invited to BISQC.

To select the remaining Quartet(s), the Jury enacts
Procedure 3 – Completion of the residual slate

The Official Mathematicians create official ballots that include the Quartets on the Residual Slate and any Quartets that were added by the Jury. The Jury then meets for a Voting session and enacts
Procedure 4 – General discussion of the completed Residual Slate

Another round of scoring takes place according to
Procedure 1 – Scoring by secret ballot on the completed Residual Slate
Procedure 2 – Ranking the quartets of the completed Residual Slate

The Official Mathematicians provide the Jury with the completed 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 up to 10 Quartets to be invited to 15th BISQC and 3 alternate Quartets in ranked order.

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.