

15th BANFF INTERNATIONAL STRING QUARTET COMPETITION

August 25 to 31, 2025

RULES, REGULATIONS, AND REPERTOIRE

ELIGIBILITY

1. The competition is open to string quartets of all nationalities whose members are each under the age of 35 as of September 1, 2025 (born on or after September 1, 1990).
2. First and second prize winners of any previous Banff International String Quartet Competition (BISQC) are ineligible to apply. For the purposes of this rule, this includes quartets or individual members of quartets.
3. Quartets that have already competed twice in BISQC are ineligible to apply. For the purposes of this rule, a quartet will be considered the same group if 50 percent of the personnel are returning.

APPLICATION PROCESS

4. All applying quartets will submit materials and fee via the BISQC Acceptd online application platform. This includes:
 - Complete all application questions on the Acceptd portal - <https://app.getacceptd.com/banff>
 - Pay a non-refundable application fee of \$250 CAD
 - Resume of the quartet's history including repertoire list and performance history for the period covering January 2022 to October 2024
 - Two professional quality high-resolution format (minimum 300 DPI) colour photographs, one in landscape orientation and one in portrait orientation, including photo credit details
 - A brief description of each member's training and experience
 - Proof of date of birth for each quartet member (e.g. copy of valid passport or birth certificate)
 - Two recommendations to be submitted directly by the recommenders via Acceptd
 - Three videos* (one per work) recorded after January 1, 2024. The three videos will contain:
 1. Two contrasting movements of a quartet by Franz Joseph Haydn from Opus 20, 33, 42, 50, 54, 55, 64, 71, 74, 76, 77;
OR
Two contrasting movements from one of the ten celebrated Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart quartets (K. 387, K. 421, K. 428, K. 458, K. 464, K. 465, K. 499, K. 575, K. 589, K. 590);
OR
Two contrasting movements from one of Ludwig van Beethoven's Opus 18 quartets.
 2. First movement from a quartet from the romantic or nationalist repertoire of the 19th century, or the Debussy Quartet, Op. 10, or the Ravel Quartet, or the Elgar Quartet, Op. 83, or Sibelius Quartet "Voces intimae", Op. 56. Quartets by Schubert or Beethoven will not be accepted in this round.

3. One complete quartet from the following list:
 - Béla Bartók: String Quartet No. 1 through No. 6
 - Alban Berg: Lyric Suite or String Quartet Op. 3
 - Benjamin Britten: String Quartet No. 1, Op. 25; or No 2, Op. 36; or No. 3, Op. 94
 - Henri Dutilleux: Ainsi la nuit
 - Alberto Ginastera: String Quartet No. 1, Op. 20 or No. 2, Op. 26
 - Paul Hindemith: String Quartet No. 4, Op. 22 or No. 5, Op. 32
 - Leoš Janáček: String Quartet No. 1, “Kreutzer Sonata” or No. 2, “Intimate Letters”
 - György Ligeti: String Quartet No. 1 or No. 2
 - Ruth Crawford Seeger: String Quartet
 - Arnold Schoenberg: String Quartet No. 3, Op. 30 or No. 4, Op. 37
 - Dmitri Shostakovich: String Quartet in F Major, No. 3, Op. 73; or in B flat Major, No. 5, Op. 92; or in E flat Major, No. 9, Op. 117
 - Mieczysław Weinberg: String Quartet No.1 through No. 17
 - Alexander Zemlinsky: String Quartet No. 3, Op. 19 or No. 4, Op. 25

****The videos must be of professional quality, shot by a single stationary camera in real-time, and must not be edited or altered in any way. You can record movements individually if preferred – you do not need to record multi-movement works in one take. Audio editing is strictly forbidden. Subtle audio processing (eg. reverb and equalization) may be used, as long as a natural impression of the ensemble is maintained. BISQC reserves the right to disqualify edited recordings or recordings that are not of professional quality. Physical DVDs or CDs, or digital audio recordings will NOT be accepted. Applicants must use the Accepted online application tool.***

5. Online applications, together with all required supporting documents and the application fee, must be submitted between the dates of **October 1, 2024 and March 1, 2025**. All application materials must be received by **March 1, 2025 (23:59 GMT-07:00)**.

JURY AND SELECTION PROCESS

6. All applications will be pre-screened by BISQC prior to the preliminary jury adjudication process. Any application not meeting the highest standards will not be forwarded to the preliminary jury for consideration.
7. The three preliminary jury members will review all submitted materials and select no more than 10 quartets to attend the competition.
8. Quartets selected for the 15th BISQC will be advised no later than April 30, 2025, by email and phone.
9. The quartets selected to participate in BISQC are strongly encouraged to arrive in Banff on Friday, August 22, 2025, but may travel on Saturday, August 23, 2025 as long as they arrive in Banff no later than 4pm. All competing quartets must remain on site through to departure on Monday, September 1, 2025.
10. Selected Quartets shall not communicate with jury members during the competition, nor shall any other person communicate with the jury members on behalf of any competitor. Violation of this rule may result in automatic disqualification from the competition.

11. The preliminary jury (3) and competition jury (7) will adjudicate the selected competing quartets using voting procedures prepared by BISQC's official mathematician. The decisions of the preliminary jury and competition jury shall be final, and no correspondence will be entered into regarding the decisions of either group.

COMPETITION REPERTOIRE & FORMAT

12. The quartet's selected repertoire for performance during the competition may include the works presented during the application phase.
13. Each quartet invited to BISQC will perform in the first four rounds and if selected, will perform a fifth time during the Final Round.
14. The competition format and required repertoire is as follows:

14.1) **ROUND 1: 21st Century Haydn**

Quartets will perform a complete work by Franz Joseph Haydn, as well as a complete quartet written on or after January 1, 2000. Total performance time of no more than 50 minutes. Time requirements of this round should be strictly observed.

Haydn Selections:

- Franz Joseph Haydn: String Quartet, Op. 20, No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6
- Franz Joseph Haydn: String Quartet, Op. 33, No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6
- Franz Joseph Haydn: String Quartet, Op. 42, No. 35
- Franz Joseph Haydn: String Quartet, Op. 50, No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6
- Franz Joseph Haydn: String Quartet, Op. 54, No. 1, 2 or 3
- Franz Joseph Haydn: String Quartet, Op. 55, No. 1, 2 or 3
- Franz Joseph Haydn: String Quartet, Op. 64, No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6
- Franz Joseph Haydn: String Quartet, Op. 71, No. 1, 2 or 3
- Franz Joseph Haydn: String Quartet, Op. 74, No. 1, 2 or 3
- Franz Joseph Haydn: String Quartet, Op. 76, No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6
- Franz Joseph Haydn: String Quartet, Op. 77, No. 1 or 2

14.2) **ROUND 2: Romantic**

Quartets will perform a complete quartet from the romantic or nationalist repertoire of the 19th century, or the Debussy Quartet, Op. 10, or the Ravel Quartet, or the Elgar Quartet, Op. 83, or Sibelius Quartet "Voces intimae", Op. 56. Quartets by Schubert or Beethoven will not be accepted in this round.

14.3) **ROUND 3: Kati Agócs World Premiere**

Quartets will perform a new quartet of approximately 9 minutes in length by Canadian composer Kati Agócs. The work will be available to quartets that successfully pass the preliminary screening round and accept the invitation to participate in the 15th BISQC. Score and parts will be sent to the competing quartets by June 4, 2025.

14.4) **ROUND 4: Beethoven/Schubert + 20th Century**

Quartets will perform the first movement of a Ludwig van Beethoven Op. 59 work OR the first movement of a Franz Schubert late work from the list below, PLUS one complete work from the 20th century list below:

Schubert Selections:

- Franz Schubert String Quartet No. 13, D. 804 (Rosamunde) 1st movement: *Allegro ma non troppo*
- Franz Schubert String Quartet No. 14, D. 810 (Death and the Maiden) 1st movement: *Allegro*
- Franz Schubert String Quartet No. 15, D. 887 1st movement: *Allegro molto moderato*

20th Century Selections:

- Béla Bartók: String Quartet No. 1 through No. 6
- Alban Berg: Lyric Suite or String Quartet Op. 3
- Benjamin Britten: String Quartet No. 1, Op. 25; or No 2, Op. 36; or No. 3, Op. 94
- Henri Dutilleux: *Ainsi la nuit*
- Alberto Ginastera: String Quartet No. 1, Op. 20 or No. 2, Op. 26
- Paul Hindemith: String Quartet No. 4, Op. 22 or No. 5, Op. 32
- Leoš Janáček: String Quartet No. 1, “Kreutzer Sonata” or No. 2, “Intimate Letters”
- György Ligeti: String Quartet No. 1 or No. 2
- Ruth Crawford Seeger: String Quartet
- Arnold Schoenberg: String Quartet No. 3, Op. 30 or No. 4, Op. 37
- Dmitri Shostakovich: String Quartet in F Major, No. 3, Op. 73; or in B flat Major, No. 5, Op. 92; or in E flat Major, No. 9, Op. 117
- Mieczysław Weinberg: String Quartet No.1 through No. 17
- Alexander Zemlinsky: String Quartet No. 3, Op. 19 or No. 4, Op. 25

Following the Beethoven/Schubert + 20th Century Round, the jury will select three quartets to advance to the fifth and Final Round.

14.5) **ROUND 5: Finals**

Each finalist quartet will present a program of not more than 45 minutes of music. The program must contain music by a minimum of three different composers. Individual movements of larger works are permitted, but the excerpts of movements are not allowed. The program is intended as an opportunity to demonstrate both excellence in performance and skill in curating. Time requirements of this round should be strictly observed.

Each quartet will submit a written description of the thought behind the chosen program. The written description should provide the listener, both audience and jurors, insight into the ideas behind the works. *Why these works? What are you exploring or illuminating by the selections?*

As the winning quartet will be expected to work with many presenting organizations on programming, this round provides an opportunity to demonstrate their interest and thoughtfulness in creative curating.

The finalists are welcome to program repertoire around a thematic idea that they choose, but a specific theme is not required.

The written narrative describing the program can be submitted in English or in another language. Any submissions not in English will be professionally translated by the competition and the English translation will be shared with the jury and public. The submission should be no more than 750 words.

15. If accepted to compete in the 15th BISQC, competitors will be advised, prior to arrival in Banff, as to which repeats will be accepted and which repeats must be omitted during performances.

16. The works from the repertoire list as stated on the application form will be the repertoire performed during the competition. No other work may be substituted without prior written approval of the BISQC Director.
17. Any quartet that has competed in a previous Banff International String Quartet Competition cannot present any of the same repertoire they performed for the public and jury in any previous BISQC.
18. Quartets are free to perform standing or sitting in any formation.
19. All performances take place in the Jenny Belzberg Theatre at Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

20. BISQC will provide the following to all invited quartets:
 - 20.1) Return economy airfare from the quartet's home base to the Calgary International Airport (including cello seat).
 - 20.2) Return ground transportation to the Banff Centre from the Calgary International Airport.
 - 20.3) Accommodation on Banff Centre campus from Friday, August 22 to Monday, September 1, 2025 (check-out Monday, September 1, 2025). Earlier arrival, if deemed necessary due to flight arrival times, are subject to availability of accommodation. Accommodation will be double occupation between quartet members when appropriate, or single rooms on request.
 - 20.4) All meals from Friday, August 22 through Monday, September 1, 2025.
 - 20.5) A separate rehearsal room for each quartet.
21. Obtaining appropriate travel documents and insurance is the sole responsibility of each competitor. BISQC accepts no liability of any kind whatsoever for any personal illness or injury sustained by the competitor or for loss or damage to a competitor's belongings, including instrument, during transit or while at the competition.
22. Under no circumstances will a change of personnel between the application process and the end of the competition in Banff be permitted.
23. BISQC has the right, without payment of any fee, to record, videotape, film, broadcast, or photograph any competition concerts or events for any purpose. All rights, including copyright in such media shall vest in and be owned by BISQC in perpetuity.
24. BISQC has the right to produce and distribute without limit or payment of any fee, audio and/or video recordings of all competition concerts or events in whole or in part.
25. The official language of the competition is English.

PRIZES

26. The following prizes shall be awarded:

1st Place Laureates: One quartet will be awarded a custom-designed, three-year artistic and career development program which includes:

- \$25,000 CAD cash prize;
- Winner's Concert Tours in career-building markets in Europe and North America, arranged by Banff Centre;
- A two-week residency at Banff Centre including a recording produced by Banff Centre;
- Coaching, career guidance, and mentorship;
- Southern Methodist University Peak Fellowship Ensemble-in-Residence Prize which includes a paid visiting residency at the Meadows School involving performances, coaching, and mentorship. This residency is valued at over \$110,000 CAD.
- A residency with the Esterházy Foundation, including concerts at Haydn Hall in Eisenstadt and the Lucerne Festival.
- St. Lawrence String Quartet Prize of main stage concert on at Stanford University's Bing Recital Hall as part of their Stanford Live series
- An opportunity for a two-week Chamber Music Residency at the prestigious Britten Pears Arts in England

2nd Place Laureates:

- \$12,000 CAD cash prize;
- A creative residency at Banff Centre including coaching and mentorship opportunities.

3rd Place Laureates:

- \$8,000 CAD cash prize;
- A creative residency at Banff Centre including coaching and mentorship opportunities.

The R.S. Williams & Sons Haydn Prize: \$4,000 CAD for the best performance of a Haydn quartet from Round 1.

The Canadian Commission World Premiere Prize, in honour of the R.S. Williams & Sons Company: \$4,000 CAD for the best performance in Round 3 of the commissioned quartet by Kati Agocs.

Career Development Prizes of \$5,000 CAD for each of the quartets not selected to the final round of the competition.

Prizes are in Canadian dollars and are subject to relevant Canadian government withholding taxes, with the exception of the Southern Methodist University Peak Residency. Funds for the SMU Residency are paid directly by SMU to the musicians of the winning ensemble and may be subject to United States withholding taxes.

All Prizes will be announced on Sunday August 31, 2025 at the Awards Ceremony following the final round of the competition.

27. All quartets accepted into the competition must agree that if they win first prize, they will perform in the Winner's Concert Tours arranged for them by BISQC or its designates in January 2026, Summer 2026, Fall 2026, Winter 2027, Summer 2027, and Spring or Summer 2028. Concert booking periods will be available to all accepted quartets by April 30, 2025. Any dates added to the tour after this date would need to be mutually agreed upon by the winning quartet.
28. BISQC does not retain any fees for its management service in arranging the Winner's Concert Tour but reserves the right to enter into an agreement with other management to secure concert engagements. Concert engagements obtained by BISQC or its designates as part of the first prize will not be subject to any fee payable to the prize-winner's current or future artist management. In addition, the winning quartet and its current or future artist management agree to give exclusivity within a 100 km radius to Winner's Concert Tour presenters for the concert season in which the quartet appears.
29. Should a situation arise where the winning quartet cannot procure the necessary travel documents or visas, or cannot fulfill the concert obligations, BISQC retains the right to transfer the winning prize to the 2nd or 3rd place quartets or a quartet of its choosing.
30. Should there be a change in personnel in any of the winning quartets after the competition, it must be communicated with BISQC for review. BISQC reserves the right to cancel the quartet's participation in the winner's career development program, including any future concert performances.
31. All competing Quartets coming to Banff Centre campus agree to comply with all provincial and Banff Centre mandated health and safety measures.
32. By agreeing to participate in the 15th BISQC, competing Quartets become ambassadors of Banff Centre and the Banff International String Quartet Competition and must conduct themselves in an exemplary manner. BISQC reserves the right to cancel the participation of Quartets and/or their members that display inappropriate behavior in advance of or during the competition or during the Winner's Concert Tour and Career Development period. Quartets will be required to sign a Code of Conduct as part of the application process and Winners will have a Code of Conduct included in their Career Development contract.

BANFF INTERNATIONAL STRING QUARTET COMPETITION

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*****If there is discrepancy between the BISQC website, Acceptd, and this document, this document shall be deemed correct. At its discretion, BISQC reserves the right to clarify these rules and update as necessary.*****