

WIGMORE HALL

International String Quartet Competition 2025

Monday 31 March – Monday 7 April 2025

2025 Repertoire and Selection Process, Rules, Practical Information and Application Process

BACKGROUND

The Wigmore Hall International String Quartet Competition was established as the Portsmouth International String Quartet Competition in 1979, became the London International String Quartet Competition in 1988 and then moved under Wigmore Hall's management in 2010. The Competition was established with the intention of reflecting, and in the hope of extending, awareness and appreciation of the richness of the string quartet repertoire, and to promote the discovery and development of talent and audiences for the string quartet.

Every competing quartet must perform Haydn, Mozart, a 20th Century work and the compulsory contemporary work in the Preliminary Round. Each quartet selected for the Semi-final round must play 19th Century repertoire; quartets which progress to the Final round must perform a Beethoven quartet.

The Jury will take into consideration the choice and variety of the repertoire and the balance of the programme for each competing quartet.

Repertoire and Selection Process

Stage 1 - Selection Stage

- Stage 1 is a pre-recorded audition to be judged by our Selection Jury.
- Applicants must send **two** recordings for Stage 1, as follows:

Recording 1:

A high-quality WAV or 320MP3 (audio) file recorded on or after **Monday 13 May 2024** of the quartet performing:

- one complete Haydn quartet from List A below and
- Erwin Schulhoff: Five Pieces for String Quartet

List A: Haydn

Op. 20 No. 1

Op. 64 No. 1, No. 2, No. 3 or No. 4

Op. 33 No. 1 or No. 4

Op. 71 No. 1, No. 2 or No. 3

Op. 50 No. 2, No. 4 or No. 5

Op. 74 No. 1 or No. 2

Op. 54 No. 3

Op. 76 – any quartet

Op. 55 No. 1 or No. 3

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There is no restriction on the number or position of the microphones used for the audio recording, but the recording must be of professional quality and must not be edited or altered in any way. The recording should consist of one complete take only which covers **BOTH** pieces, i.e., with no breaks between movements and without any repeats; a very short break between the two pieces is allowable.

The Competition advises applicants not to submit recordings made at a concert, as audience and other ambient noise can detract from the quality of the recording. **The recorded audition can only be submitted only as a high-quality WAV or 320MP3 file; no other format can be accepted.**

Recording 2:

An **MP4 (video) recording** of the audition recording session. The MP4 file should be recorded with one fixed camera, to give a front view of the whole quartet, and should consist of one complete take only for each piece. ***The MP4 recording is for identity verification purposes only and does not therefore need to use moving camera shots or graphics; it should just be a visual record of the audition recording session. ***

Please note:

1. Please download the Recording Certification Template (please see Rule 5 below) from our website and take it to the recording session, so that it can be completed and signed as appropriate **BEFORE** you make your application.
2. The Competition reserves the right to disqualify applicants entering enhanced or modified recordings. No other format than WAV or 320MP3 files (audio) and MP4 files (video) will be accepted.
3. Any changes in the personnel of the quartet after the recordings have been made and submitted will result in the application being rejected.

Please note that your audio recording is the only part of the application materials that will be accessed by the Selection Jury during the Selection Stage. Members of the Selection Jury will listen 'blind' to all the submitted recordings and will not have access to any personal or biographical information, references or the video recording. Please therefore ensure that the submitted recording is made under the best possible conditions. Applications will be judged solely on the quality of the recorded performance, and this is the only criterion that the Selection Jury will use.

Stages 2, 3 and 4 - Public Rounds

Stage 2 - Preliminary Round must consist of two recital programmes as follows:

Recital 1:

- One complete Haydn quartet from List A above EXCLUDING the Op. 76 quartets; the chosen quartet must be a **different** quartet to the one recorded for Stage 1

AND

- The Competition compulsory work which is **Judith Weir: The Spaniard – String Quartet No. 2** (2023); *commissioned by Britten Pears Arts and Wigmore Hall for the Leonkoro Quartet*. Please note that the Leonkoro Quartet has exclusivity on the work from now until November 21 2024. After that date, scores and parts will be available from Wise Music Classical (wisemusicclassical.com). The Leonkoro Quartet will give the world première of the new work at the Aldeburgh Festival on June 13 2024, and the London première at Wigmore Hall on November 21 2024.

Recital 2:

- One complete late Mozart quartet from the ten in List B below:

List B: Mozart

G major K387

C Major K465

D minor K421

D Major K499

E^b major K428

D Major K575

B Flat Major K458

B Flat Major K589

A Major K 464

F Major K590

AND

- **Free choice** of any major 20th Century quartet written between 1900 and 2000, EXCLUDING Shostakovich. For example, Bartók (any quartet), Berg Lyric Suite, Britten (any quartet), Carter (any quartet), Elgar Quartet, Hindemith Quartet, Janáček (either quartet), Ligeti (either quartet), Prokofiev (either quartet), Ravel Quartet in F major, Schoenberg Quartet No. 3 or No. 4, Tippett (any quartet) are all acceptable choices.

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Stage 3 – Semi-finals: The ensembles which reach the Semi-finals must perform **one of their two choices of 19th Century repertoire written between 1810-1900**, from List C below. Competing quartets must prepare two complete quartets from this list and be prepared to play either of their choices should they reach the Semi-final. Once the Semi-finalists are known, the General Manager will choose the repertoire from their submitted choices, in order to achieve a balanced programme.

List C: 19th Century repertoire

Brahms	Any Quartet
Debussy	Quartet in G minor
Dvorak	Quartet in A flat major Op. 105 or Quartet in G major Op. 106
Franck	Quartet in D major
Mendelssohn	Any Quartet
Schubert	Quartet in G major D887, Quartet in G minor D173, Quartet in D minor D810 No. 14 or Quartet in A minor D804 No. 13
Schumann	Any Quartet
Smetana	Quartet in E minor Op. 116 No. 1
Tchaikovsky	Quartet No. 3 in E flat major Op. 30
Verdi	Quartet in E minor

Stage 4 - Final: Finalists must play any one of Beethoven's quartets **EXCEPT** Op. 18 and the *Grosse Fuge* Op. 133 (either as a stand-alone piece OR as the finale to Op. 130). Competitors must prepare two complete Beethoven quartets for the Competition and be prepared to play either of them should they reach the Final. Once the Finalists are known, the General Manager will choose the repertoire from their submitted choices, in order to achieve a balanced programme.

Rules

1. The Competition will be held from **Tuesday 1 – Sunday 6 April 2025** inclusive at the Royal Academy of Music and Wigmore Hall. Please note that Competitors must arrive in London on **Sunday 30 March 2025** in order to attend a briefing meeting on the evening of Sunday 30 March, as well as rehearsals and the Welcome Reception on **Monday 31 March 2025**.

2. Applications open on **Monday 13 May 2024** and close at **1.00pm GMT (UK time)** on **Thursday 17 October 2024**.

3. Recordings must be recent, recorded on or after **Monday 13 May 2024**.

4. Applications that arrive after the closing date, or that do not contain all the required material, will not be accepted.

5. The recording for Stage 1 must be certified by a recognised musician or the recording engineer as the recent work of the named performers. The certification should confirm the name of the quartet, the date and place of recording, and the repertoire. Competitors are advised to have the recording made professionally otherwise it may not do justice to their performance. A template for this document can be downloaded from our website.

6. The Competition is open to string quartets of all nationalities. The Competition is exclusively for string quartets; no other ensembles will be considered.

7. In order to meet the criteria, each member of a quartet must be 35 or under on **Tuesday 1 April 2025**.

8. The Competition is divided into four stages:

Stage 1 – Selection Stage: Pre-recorded audition by **WAV or 320MP3 and MP4 files only**

Stage 2: Competitors' Briefing on **Sunday 30 March 2025** (evening); rehearsals (daytime) and Welcome Reception (evening) on **Monday 31 March 2025**.

Preliminary Rounds on **Tuesday 1, Wednesday 2, Thursday 3 and Friday 4 April 2025**.

Stage 3: Semi-finals on **Saturday 5 April 2025**.

Stage 4: Final on **Sunday 6 April 2025**.

All Stages except Stage 1 will be open to the public and competitors will perform their programmes without interruption. Stage 2 Preliminary Rounds will be held at the Royal Academy of Music, Stages 3 & 4 at Wigmore Hall.

9. The order of performance for Stage 2 Preliminary Rounds will be decided by the General Manager of the Competition approximately 6 weeks before the Competition begins. The order of performance for subsequent rounds will be determined by the General Manager of the Competition in order to provide a balanced programme from the repertoire chosen by the selected quartets.

2025 Wigmore Hall International String Quartet Competition Rules, Repertoire and Application Process cont'd

10. For the purpose of the Competition, a string quartet is defined as a chamber music ensemble consisting of first and second violins, viola, and cello and in terms of repertoire, a piece of music written for a string quartet.

Allowed

- Works originally written for a string quartet.

Not allowed

- Arrangements of works originally written for ensembles other than a string quartet.
- New commissions, unless they have been commissioned by the Competition.

11. All applicants must submit their programme for Stage 1 on the official application form to correspond with the repertoire outlined in the Repertoire and Selection Process section.

12. Quartets selected for the Competition must submit their programme for Stages 2 (Preliminary Rounds), 3 and 4 on the official application form to correspond with the repertoire outlined in the Repertoire and Selection Process section.

13. Timings of all works must be submitted with programmes. The Jury reserves the right to penalise competitors who overrun.

14. The Jury's decision at any stage of the Competition is final and not open to discussion or correspondence.

15. Quartets will be informed by email whether they have been selected to progress to Stage 2 of the Competition by **Tuesday 12 November 2024**. Once accepted, their acknowledgement, programmes for Stages 2 (Preliminary Rounds), 3 and 4, 200-word biography, high resolution (minimum 300dpi) colour photograph and further entrance fee must be received by **Tuesday 19 November 2024**. The Selection Jury's decision to accept or refuse an application is final and requires no explanation. Subject to the advice of the Selection Jury, up to 12 quartets will be selected to compete in London.

16. The right is reserved to stream, broadcast or televise any stage of the Competition. However, competitors are not permitted to bring any photographic or recording equipment into any stage of the Competition.

17. Previous winners of the First Prize of the Competition are excluded from further participation in any subsequent Competition.

Practical Information

18. Selected quartets will be expected to arrive in London no later than the afternoon of Sunday 30 March 2025 and leave on Monday 7 April 2025.
19. The Preliminary Rounds of the Competition will take place from Tuesday 1 – Friday 4 April 2025 at the Royal Academy of Music in London. The Semi-finals will take place on the afternoon and evening of Saturday 5 April and the Final on the evening of Sunday 6 April, all at Wigmore Hall. All performances will be open to the public.
20. Selected quartets may also be asked to perform once outside the Competition timetable at lunchtime concerts in central London churches.
21. Please note that the First Prize winner will be required to remain in London on **Monday 7 April 2025** for possible media interviews, so travel arrangements must be flexible to allow for this.
22. Wigmore Hall will, if required, provide one return economy travel ticket to London, for the cello of each competing quartet, the cost of which will be reimbursed by Wigmore Hall after the Competition. No other travel expenses can be refunded. Each competing quartet is responsible for booking their travel.
23. The Competition is required by law to deduct Withholding Tax from any prize money payments made to competitors not resident (for tax purposes) in the UK. However, the Competition has entered into a global agreement with the Foreign Entertainers Unit of HMRC for the deduction of certain expenses. A tax deduction certificate will be given to these competitors as proof of Withholding Tax paid, if a tax deduction is made. This can be used to claim credit from the tax authorities in the competitor's country of residence. Further information will be available from the General Manager once a candidate has successfully passed the audition stage.
24. It is the responsibility of competing quartets to ensure that any necessary visas are applied for in good time before the Competition. Wigmore Hall is happy to write supporting letters but cannot make visa applications on behalf of any competing quartets.
25. Accommodation will be provided at a University Hall of Residence, and Wigmore Hall will pay for bed and breakfast for 8 nights for competing quartets (Sunday 30 March – Sunday 6 April 2025 inclusive). Any additional nights will be charged separately and must be booked and paid for direct.
26. Separate and dedicated rehearsal rooms for each quartet, including the provision of solid music stands, will be available at the Royal Academy of Music from Sunday 30 March – Friday 4 April. Rehearsal time in the Duke's Hall, the main Competition performance venue at the Royal Academy of Music, will also be available on Monday 31 March 2025, before the Competition starts. **We strongly advise competing quartets to take advantage of this rehearsal opportunity on Monday 31 March, as there will be no other rehearsal time in the Duke's Hall once the Competition has started.** Rehearsal time at Wigmore Hall will be available for the Semi-finalists and Finalists.

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27. The organisers of the Competition can accept no responsibility for loss or damage to candidates' instruments or any other property at any time. Candidates are advised to make their own insurance arrangements.
 28. All contestants shall agree to have their performances recorded, filmed, or broadcast on the Wigmore Hall website or on radio or television anywhere in the world. No payment will be made to contestants for the recording or broadcasting of Competition performances.
 29. Quartets which do not reach the Final stage will be given an opportunity, if they so wish, to discuss their performances in private with members of the Jury before the Final stage takes place.
 30. Each candidate, by signing the application form, agrees to be bound by all the rules of the Competition.
 31. Only the English text will be considered valid in the case of dispute and English Law will prevail.
 32. All communications should be addressed to: quartetcompetition@wigmore-hall.org.uk or by post to Ruth Wheal, General Manager, Competitions, Wigmore Hall, 36 Wigmore Street, London W1U 2BP UK.
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Application Process and Requirements for Entry

The deadline for applications is **1:00pm GMT (UK time) on Thursday 17 October 2024**. All application forms, references and other documentation plus the URLs for the recorded Selection Stage WAV or 320MP3 and MP4 files must be **received** by the Competition General Manager by this date and time.

Please **ONLY** use the online application form, which can be found on the 2025 Competition page on the website.

Please **DO NOT** email application materials; you must use the online application form and upload the required URLs and other materials.

Applications open on **Monday 13 May 2024**. To apply to enter the Competition you must:

- Pay your initial registration fee of £25 for each application via the online application form, by credit or debit card or by PayPal.
 - For quartets resident outside the UK please note that any card usage fees or bank charges are not included in the £25 fee and must be paid by the candidate (if applicable).
 - When you have paid your fee, uploaded all the required URLs and other materials, and completed and submitted the application form, you will receive an automated confirmation email. If you do not receive this email within 5 working days, please email quartetcompetition@wigmore-hall.org.uk to check that your application has been received.
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2025 Wigmore Hall International String Quartet Competition Rules, Repertoire and Application Process cont'd

You must upload the following **required materials** to the **online application form**:

- The URL to the location (on a file sharing site) of your WAV or 320MP3 (audio) recording of Haydn & Schulhoff.
- The URL to the location (on a file sharing site) of your MP4 (video) recording of the audio recording session.
- Certification of the WAV or 320MP3 and MP4 files confirming the date of the recording and verifying the recording as the recent work of the named competitors (see Rule 5).
- Copies or scans of the passport for **each** member of the quartet confirming each person's date of birth. NB: if you do not have passports, then ID cards (NOT drivers' licences) are acceptable for the purposes of application only. If you are accepted for the Competition, then you must apply for passports as soon as possible and send copies/scans to the General Manager once you have them.
- Current biography of the quartet plus a current CV for each member of the quartet with particulars of general education and professional training together with details of recent concert appearances. NB: please make this ONE document, not 5 separate ones.
- The names of TWO prominent musicians who will each provide a recent professional reference (letter of recommendation) for the quartet referring to this specific Competition. References (letters of recommendation) should be emailed direct to the General Manager, Competitions, at the above email address.

Incomplete or late applications will not be accepted.

Once a quartet has been selected for the Competition, you will be required to do the following:

Complete a second online form, which will require you to:

- Pay a further entrance fee of £35, payable online in the same way as the initial registration fee.
- Provide complete programmes for Stages 2, 3 and 4 of the Competition (Preliminary Round, Semi-finals and Final), with timings, publishers and editions.
- Upload an updated short biography of the quartet of 200 words maximum for inclusion on the website and in the printed programme which must cover the period up to and including April 2025.
- Upload one recent high-resolution **colour** photograph (**minimum 1MB or 300dpi**) of each quartet suitable for reproduction in the programme. Please include the photographer's name/credit if applicable.
- Confirm of whether the accommodation provided by the Competition is required.