

# Spring 2008 Newsletter

## Banff International String Quartet Competition

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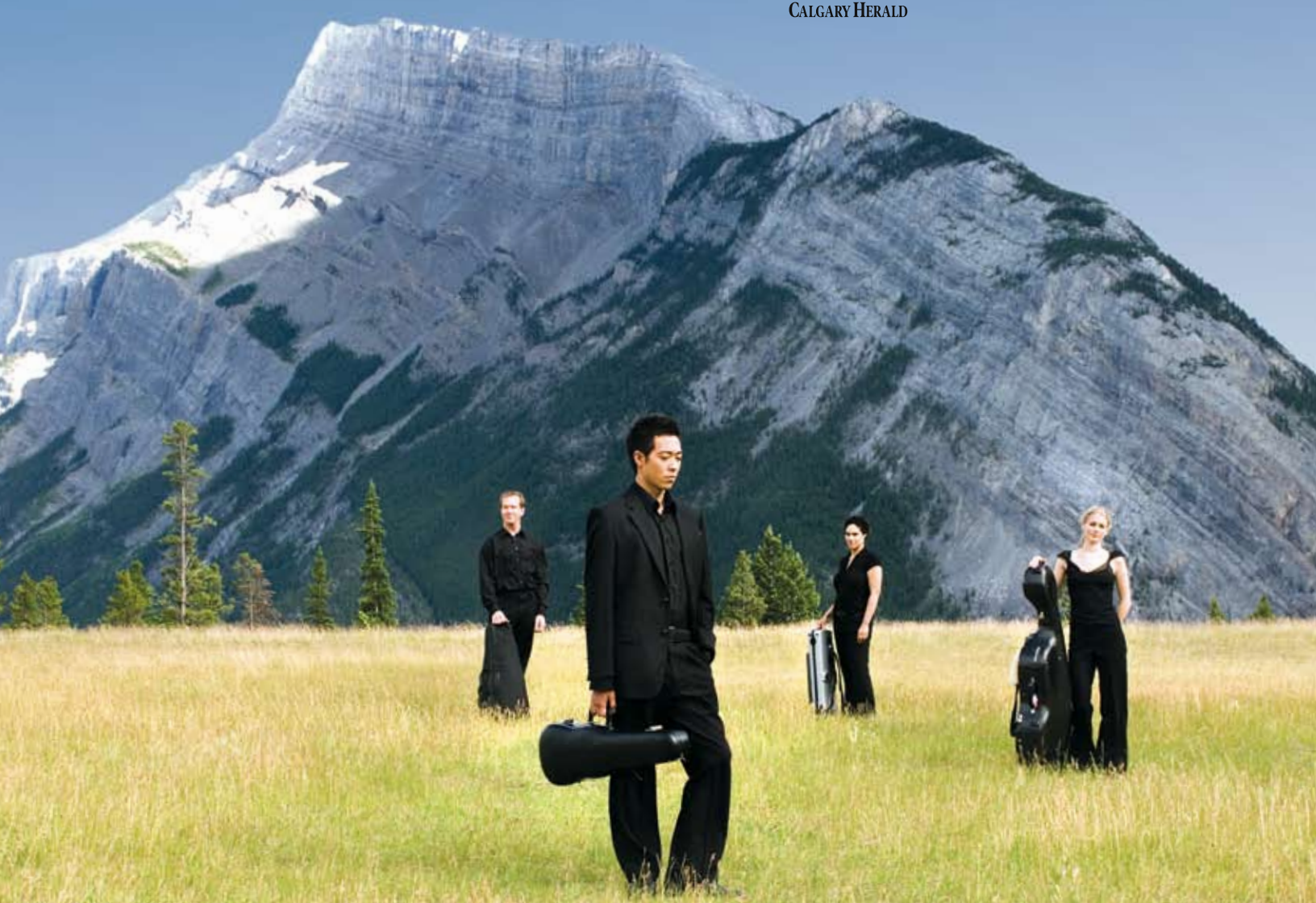


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# Director's Greeting

by Barry Shiffman



Those of you who attended the 2007 Banff International String Quartet Competition (BISQC) know that a wealth of extraordinary young quartets participated. It was a week of remarkable musicianship.

It was a fantastic moment to witness the wide-eyed excitement and joy on the faces of the TinAlley Quartet when it was announced that they had won the 2007 competition. One instruction given to the jury was to identify a group ready for the rigours of a concert career. As difficult as it is to win BISQC, the true challenge actually still lay ahead.

This past fall, BISQC arranged a European winner's tour of 11 concerts, which was a stunning opportunity to introduce the TinAlley Quartet to European audiences and presenters. It was also an exhausting experience, both physically and emotionally for the quartet. Over the next months and even years, the quartet will perform a number of important debuts, and performing each concert with the same level of excellence we all witnessed in Banff will be imperative to success.

In Europe, I heard the TinAlley's final performance at the famed Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. At intermission, the audience rose to their feet in applause. This is an audience that takes quartet music seriously, many bringing personal copies of the scores along to the hall to follow the interpretive choices of the performers. It can be a very intimidating experience. The TinAlley seemed unfazed by the environment. They had music to share, and share they did. Their performance that afternoon was full of the spirit of Banff: generous, youthful, and spontaneous. Knowing the grueling schedule they had endured for the two weeks prior to this important concert, I could not have been more proud. I am convinced that this group has what it takes to succeed.

BISQC can open doors, but it is up to the quartet to transform those opportunities into ongoing relationships. Within ten minutes of walking off the stage in Amsterdam, the director of the Concertgebouw invited the TinAlley Quartet to appear in their main stage series in 2010. Clearly, this group has what it takes to succeed.

Hope to see you all at the next competition - mark August 30 to September 5, 2010 on your calendars!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Shiffman', written in a cursive style.

Barry Shiffman, Director  
Banff International String  
Quartet Competition



# BISQC BRAVO Praise for quartets and audience

by Debra Hornsby

If you close your eyes, the 900 people seated around you might not exist. The audience is so focused on the performers on the stage of the Eric Harvie Theatre that there isn't a sound – not a single cough or rustle – as the Zemlinsky Quartet begins *Beethoven's Quartet in E-flat Major*. It is the next-to-final evening of the 9th Banff International String Quartet Competition (BISQC), and this is no ordinary audience.

"The BISQC audience is, quite possibly, the most dedicated string quartet audience on the planet," says Barry Shiffman, BISQC director and head of The Banff Centre's Music program. "They are a wellspring of support and enthusiasm. We strive to make BISQC feel more like a festival and less like a competition for the quartets, and the BISQC audience makes that possible."

From August 28 to September 2, 2007, nine of the world's finest young quartets competed in the triennial competition, vying for the honour of the RBC Awards over the course of 13 performances.

For the Czech Republic's Zemlinsky Quartet, the passionate interest of the BISQC audience is a joy. "You can feel their support," says violinist František Souček. "In other competitions, you might get 50 people attending the first round – here there are 600. Even when you make a mistake, they will come up to you afterward and say 'we are with you', and then you feel great."

The Zemlinsky, formerly the Penguin Quartet, competed in BISQC in 2001 and 2004, and it is not just the audience response that inspired them to apply to the competition again in 2007.

"BISQC has had an unbelievable impact on our career in terms of the contacts we have made here, and the confidence we have gained," says Souček. The fact that they took home second prize this year is "just icing on the cake" says violist Petr Holman. "It is not just the prize winners who flourish. This competition provides opportunities to every quartet, and if you seize the chance you can make your career." Following the 2004 competition, the Zemlinsky organized a small Canadian tour, and in 2007 they performed in a dozen concerts across Canada in the weeks following BISQC.

Violinist Lerida Delbridge of Australia's TinAlley String Quartet, who took first prize in the 2007 competition, agrees. "BISQC sets you up for an international career and provides opportunities which would be incredibly difficult to obtain as a young quartet starting out," she says. In November the TinAlley completed their first BISQC winner's tour, performing in 11 concerts in the Netherlands, Germany, and Austria.

Luckily, Delbridge says, competing in Banff means they were well prepared for the rigours of the road. "On tour we often had three or four days in a row of concerts with completely different repertoire and the competition prepared us mentally and physically for that aspect of touring. We weren't used to playing concerts in such close succession and I think we learned many things in Banff about ourselves and how to cope with that kind of pressure."

2008 will see the TinAlley touring across the United States and Canada, and the quartet already has dates in Germany and Holland lined up for 2009. "The most wonderful thing about winning the Banff competition is that we now have a real chance of pursuing our aim to exist as a full-time string quartet," says Delbridge. In addition to the winner's tours, TinAlley's first prize included \$20,000, custom bows by renowned bow maker François Malo, and a Banff Centre residency and opportunity to record a CD.

"The reputation of BISQC provides a badge of credibility for all of the invited quartets," says Shiffman. "But, for the winning quartet, the career boost is immense. Having experienced TinAlley's debut at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, standing in the middle of an enthusiastic audience on their feet yelling 'Bravo', I am confident that BISQC has once again identified a group that will make it."

***The TinAlley String Quartet return to Banff for the Friday, March 28 Concert Night Out performance as part of the 75th anniversary celebrations.***

TinAlley String Quartet, first prize winners of the 2007 BISQC. (l-r) Justin Williams, Michelle Wood, Kristian Winther, and Lerida Delbridge. Photo: Shawna Wheatley. Zemlinsky Quartet, second prize winners of the 2007 BISQC. (l-r) Petr Strizek, Vladimir Fortin, Petr Homan, and Frantisek Souček. Photo: Shawna Wheatley.

# Audio Homecoming

by Debra Hornsby

For Mark Willsher and Joe Fingerote, the 2007 Banff International String Quartet competition was a homecoming of sorts. Ten years ago, Willsher and Fingerote were roommates in Banff, as participants in the Centre's Audio Engineering Work Study program. For both, their experience at the Centre marked a turning point in their careers.

During this summer's competition, Willsher and Fingerote shared the cramped quarters of the Eric Harvie Theatre audio booth. As BISQC guest faculty engineer, Willsher focused on ensuring that the performance of each quartet was captured at the highest possible quality for the 2007 BISQC CD and for the hundreds of thousands of listeners tuned into BISQC via CBC Radio Two and [radio2.cbc.ca](http://radio2.cbc.ca).

Fingerote, executive producer of Radio Music, Arts, and Entertainment for CBC Alberta, was the driving force behind CBC's extensive coverage of BISQC, including over 15 hours of nation-wide broadcasts and — a first for CBC — live webcasts of the Saturday and Sunday evening performances.

Fingerote says the time he spent as an audio associate in Banff opened his eyes to the creative possibilities inherent in the recording industry. He had studied cello and piano at the University of Manitoba, and although he was attracted to the process of recording, he had conflicting feelings about abandoning performance. "In Banff I realized you could focus on recording and still be an artist. I learned I didn't have to abandon "art" when I moved into the recording studio, I could still contribute to and connect with the music."

"During that first summer in Banff I had the chance to work on jazz studio projects, film and television productions, and set up and record concerts ... It lit a fire in me and I knew I wanted to continue in this field." Fingerote

went on to study sound recording at McGill University, and to work as a broadcaster, producer, and executive producer at CBC.

Willsher's career after Banff took him even farther afield — into the recording studios of Los Angeles and London, England. Willsher spent three terms at Banff between 1996 and 2001. The connections he made at the Centre, in particular with faculty member George Massenburg, led to gigs at Skywalker Sound, and eventually to work as associate music producer for *Lord of the Rings: Return of the King*.

"Banff allowed me to experiment," Willsher says. "We worked with top-calibre artists and we were given the creative freedom to try different approaches. Once you get out there in the real world, you don't always have the ability to do that — the clock is always ticking." Willsher's current client list includes the Russian National Orchestra, Sony Pictures, New Line Cinema, the Kronos, St. Lawrence, Turtle Island, and Cypress string quartets, and Academy Award-winning composer Howard Shore; but he still makes time to return to the Centre regularly as guest audio faculty.

By some quirk of fate, both Fingerote and Willsher also credit the Centre with playing an important role in their personal lives — Willsher met his wife at the Centre, and Fingerote proposed to his then girlfriend soon after she visited him in Banff that first summer.

"Being here for BISQC brought back memories of an unforgettable time in my life," Fingerote says. "It's great to be back at the Centre and to be in a position to bring these amazing performances to listeners around the world."

Below: Jasper String Quartet members J Freivogel and Sae Niwa (l-r) perform on air for CBC Radio Two during BISQC, as commentator Geoff Nuttall of the St. Lawrence String Quartet and CBC broadcaster Katherine Duncan listen. CBC Radio Two executive producer Joe Fingerote, producer/engineer Mark Willsher, and senior audio associate Andrew Matthews (l-r), record a BISQC performance. You can listen to performances from each BISQC concert at the [www.cbc.ca/radio2](http://www.cbc.ca/radio2) Concerts on Demand website. Photos: Don Lee.





# Catching up with TinAlley

by Heidi Drewett

Awarded First Prize at the 9th Banff International String Quartet Competition in 2007, the TinAlley String Quartet has triumphantly toured Europe since their BISQC triumph. In February, I chatted with the quartet about their plans for 2008.

## **Tell us where you are right now and what you are doing.**

We are in Melbourne rehearsing for TinAlley String Quartet's (TASQ) first North American BISQC Winners Tour that begins in March. We are also busy preparing for recitals and trying to enjoy a few final days at the beach (it is summer in Australia) before we hit the Banff freeze.

## **How would you describe a typical day?**

In general, we rehearse at the Australian National Academy of Music in South Melbourne between 9:30 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. and then we each head home for a few more hours individual practice. We usually spend the evenings writing emails, planning TASQ's 2009 concert schedule, and putting together folios for corporate sponsorship. Then, if we have the energy, Michelle and Lerida work out, Kristian plays poker, and Justin makes numerous phone calls to the US Embassy to organize the quartet's visas.

## **Which city have you most enjoyed visiting and why?**

We loved visiting Heidelberg for the European Tour in November. We also loved The Hague, which we visited after the tour and spent time with Barry Shiffman and Henk Guitart (BISQC jury member, violinist, and conductor). We also love Banff, and we are not just saying that. The people are great and the animals are fantastic. The sushi train and Sukiyaki House are two of our favourite eating-places in the world!

## **How did winning BISQC open new doors for you?**

Many doors have opened, which is terrific. We now have management in Germany, France, Austria, The Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Belgium. We will be launching our National Concert Series in Australia in 2009. We have invites to many overseas festivals and are now being taken seriously as a professional string quartet, which has changed the way people deal with us.

## **Who has been your greatest support since winning BISQC?**

Definitely The Banff Centre. Barry Shiffman and Val Thompson, in particular, have been fantastic. We feel very fortunate to have such a great organization supporting the quartet. The quartet's primary sponsor, Kozminsky (a Melbourne jeweler) is wonderful. They just increased their sponsorship, so Michelle and Lerida will be wearing their jewelry on the BISQC tours.

## **This is your chance as a group to tell us your favourite experience?**

A night of card playing, a bottle of wine, an ipod, and the next day off. Priceless.

## **How have your lives changed as a whole after winning BISQC?**

We had many plans and goals before we won BISQC. Our grand design hasn't really changed. However, the win has meant that we can now realize our goals and dreams.

# Winners Worldwide

## BISQC Winners Alumni News 2008

**The Jupiter String Quartet**, winners BISQC 2004, released their Marquis Classics debut in September, 2007. The CD of Shostakovich and Britten Quartets was recorded at The Banff Centre as part of their first prize and received rave reviews. The Jupiter String Quartet is touring extensively in North America this spring.  
[www.marquisclassics.com](http://www.marquisclassics.com) | [www.jupiterquartet.com](http://www.jupiterquartet.com)

**The Daedalus Quartet**, winners BISQC 2001, is on tour throughout the Eastern United States this spring, with a trip into Ontario for a concert at Chamber Music Hamilton on Sunday, April 13, which will feature works by Beethoven and Brahms.  
[www.daedalusquartet.com](http://www.daedalusquartet.com)

**The Miró Quartet**, winners BISQC 1998, is touring extensively this spring, playing concerts in California, Texas, South Carolina, and Georgia, before heading to the Festival EuroArt Praha (Prague) for a trio of concerts.  
[www.miroquartet.com](http://www.miroquartet.com)

**The Amernet String Quartet**, winners BISQC 1995, is Ensemble-in-Residence at Florida International University, and has garnered worldwide praise and recognition.  
[www.amernet.us](http://www.amernet.us)

**The St. Lawrence String Quartet**, winners BISQC 1992, will perform at the acclaimed Spoleto Festival USA in Charleston, SC, which runs from May 23 to June 8, 2008.  
[www.slsq.com](http://www.slsq.com)

**The Manfred Quartet**, winners BISQC 1989, just released Bach – Coltrane: Raphaël Imbert - Manfred Quartet - André Rossi, a new CD, which combines Bach with the great themes of Coltrane.

**The Colorado Quartet**, winners of the first BISQC 1983, 25th Anniversary Concert takes place May 9, 2008 at Symphony Space in New York City, and features the *Tree of Life Suite* by Kirsten Volness (world premiere), *Britten Quartet #2*, and *Ginastera Quartet #2*.  
[www.coloradoquartet.com](http://www.coloradoquartet.com)

# Triumphant TinAlley Tour

Media highlights from the TinAlley String Quartet's European winner's tour, which included a performance at Amsterdam's famed Concertgebouw.



*"Attention to detail graciously married with emotional spontaneity."* - La Voix de Luxemburg

*"The TinAlley String quartet was something wonderful for the public to discover - this was no well-tempered string quartet but a young and extremely sensitive ensemble demonstrating top-notch musicality. An ensemble which precisely felt and conveyed the drama of each composition."*

- Musical Discoveries, Karen Streich Baden-Baden, Germany

*"The first concert of the Kammermusikalische Vereinigung Trier season was a gift. There is no other way to describe what took place in the concert hall of the Kurfürstlich Palace [with] the young Australian TinAlley String Quartet."*

- Trierisch Volksfreund, Trier, Germany



## Across Canada and on CBC

The Ottawa International Chamber Music Festival celebrates 25 years of BISQC from July 26 to August 9, 2008. Featured quartets include Canada's Tokai String Quartet (2007) and the St. Lawrence String Quartet (1992).  
[www.chamberfest.com](http://www.chamberfest.com)

Did you know that every minute of every concert from BISQC 2007 is archived and available online? With a big thanks to our friends at CBC's Concerts on Demand.

[www.banffcentre.ca/bisqc](http://www.banffcentre.ca/bisqc)

# Support BISQC 2010

August 30-September 5, 2010

Inspiring Creativity Through Donation

Thank you again to all our valued supporters of BISQC 2007. If you would like to support BISQC 2010 and play an integral part in what makes this competition so special and in turn contribute to the careers and development of the quartets then please contact us as below.

## Suggested Giving Levels

First Violin	\$0 - \$249	Second Violin	\$250 - \$499
Viola	\$500 - \$999	Cello	\$1,000+

## Donate Online

Please visit our website at [www.banffcentre.ca/support](http://www.banffcentre.ca/support) to make a donation using our secure online donation form (please indicate BISQC as the designation for your support).

## Donate by Mail

The Banff Centre  
Development Office  
Box 1020, Station 4  
Banff, Alberta T1L 1H5  
Canada

\* Please address your cheque to "The Banff Centre – BISQC".

\* Be sure to include your mailing address so we can send you a tax receipt.

## Donate by Phone

If you would like to speak to us in person, please call our Development Office: 403-762-6385 or toll free 1-888-495-4467 ext 2.

*"We had many plans and goals before we won BISQC. The win has meant that we can now realize our goals and dreams."*

- The TinAlley String Quartet, February 2008

## TinAlley String Quartet Tour Dates

### Spring Tour 2008

March 9 San Francisco, CA  
March 11 Vancouver, BC  
March 12 Vancouver, BC  
March 13 Vancouver, BC  
March 14 Vancouver, BC  
March 15 Kelowna, BC  
March 19 Banff, AB\*  
March 20 Calgary, AB\*  
March 28 Banff, AB  
March 29 Palo Alto, CA  
March 30 San Jose, CA  
April 1 New York, NY

### Fall Tour 2008

October 12 New Haven, CT  
October 18 Almonte, ON  
October 23 Toronto, ON\*  
October 24 London, ON\*  
October 25 Winnipeg, MB\*  
more venues to be confirmed!

\*with pianist Hinrich Alpers, laureate of the 2006 Honens International Piano Competition

## BISQC Boutique

The ninth BISQC commemorative CD is here!  
Add this beautifully designed two-disc set to your collection.  
Features all 2007 prize winners.

**TinAlley String Quartet** Beethoven, *F major Op. 18 No. 1*  
Mendelssohn, *A minor Op. 13*

**Tokai String Quartet** Debussy, *G minor No. 10*

**Ariel Quartet** Bartók, *No. 4*

**Koryo String Quartet** Kelly-Marie Murphy, *Dark Energy*

**Zemlinsky Quartet** Webern, *Six Bagatelles*  
Dvorak, *No. 14 Op. 105*



Cost is \$30 plus \$8 shipping

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The Banff International String Quartet  
Competition Newsletter Spring 2008  
is published by The Banff Centre.  
We welcome your comments.

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Photos by Don Lee © The Banff Centre, unless otherwise indicated.

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